

Grandmaster Repertoire

Victor
Mikhalevski

**Beating
Minor
Openings**



Tired of bad positions? Try the main lines!

QUALITY CHESS



Grandmaster Repertoire 19

Beating Minor Openings

By

Victor Mikhalevski



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Preface

Dear Chess Friend,

I would like to begin by telling you a short story of how this book was born. Some time after my previous work, *Grandmaster Repertoire 13 – The Open Spanish*, was published, I was approached by Quality Chess about writing a repertoire book on the Slav Defence, while my friend Boris Avrukh was considering a book on the Anti-Grünfeld. However, after a discussion between Quality Chess, Boris and myself, we realized it would make much more sense if Boris wrote about the Slav, which is part of his opening repertoire, leaving me to cover the Anti-Grünfeld, which I have faced in many games. The readers have already received Avrukh's great book on the Classical Slav; whereas my Anti-Grünfeld project expanded into the book you are now holding in your hands (or viewing on your electronic device).

The Anti-Grünfeld is a serious subject requiring specialist knowledge, but the Quality Chess team and I agreed that it was too narrow a topic to fill an entire book. The subject matter was therefore widened into a complete repertoire against all “Minor Openings”. For the purposes of this book, a “Minor Opening” will be defined as any recognized opening that does not begin with 1.d4 or 1.e4 – notwithstanding the fact that many such openings which begin with 1.c4 or 1.Qf3 are not that minor at all.

In order to satisfy the needs of a wider audience, I ended up covering three different systems against the chameleonic 1.Qf3. Obviously there is my specialist subject of 1...Qf6 2.c4 g6, including the Anti-Grünfeld; but there is also 1...Qf6 2.c4 b6 to satisfy Queen's Indian players; as well as 1...d5 for those who are willing to play the black side of a Queen's Gambit in the event of 2.d4.

Considering the multitude of possible transpositions to other openings (especially 1.d4 openings), it was never going to be possible to cater for every possible repertoire preference. However, with three distinct repertoires against 1.Qf3, I have taken every reasonable step to ensure that the majority of readers will have an option that fits with their existing repertoire. I have endeavoured to consider all logical move orders and have pointed out transpositions whenever I spotted them, which I hope will simplify the reader's task.

I have to admit that when I started working on this project, I had no idea how much time it would require. However, now the process is at an end, I have no doubt that it has been worth the effort. I hope that this book will serve you well for many years to come.

Victor Mikhalevski
Beer-Sheva, August 2016

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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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Introduction

How does one go about constructing a repertoire against a vast assortment of irregular opening systems? When writing this book, I generally relied on the rule that if White does not occupy the centre with his pawns, then Black should take the opportunity to do so himself. I have therefore chosen to recommend active, space-gaining options for Black, without descending into over-the-top aggressiveness.

The contents of this book have been grouped into five main sections, as summarized below. Before going into details though, I would like to say a little bit about a theme that crops up time and time again in this book.

Reversed Openings

Several parts of the book will see us playing a standard opening with reversed colours and a tempo less. Actually, if we assume that White plays something other than 1.d4 or 1.e4 and Black plays ...d5 and/or ...e5, then White is almost certain to be playing some sort of recognizable Black defence with an extra tempo. Generally I consider this a healthy way to play with Black – although an obvious caveat is that we must avoid extremely sharp variations where the opponent's extra tempo could come with maximum impact. Instead we will play actively but cautiously, with the aim of reaching a position where the extra tempo isn't so relevant. Such positions tend to be objectively equal – but it's a comfortable form of equality for Black, as he will effectively be playing as White, often with a slight space advantage to build upon.

If White plays a reversed opening which allows you to establish an ideal centre with pawns on d5 and e5, then you should almost always take that opportunity. However, it quite often happens that White will allow you to play one of these moves but not the other. For example, in this book I recommend meeting 1.c4 with 1...e5, and 1.f4 with 1...d5. Should a dedicated 1.d4 player feel wary about facing a Sicilian Defence with reversed colours and a tempo less? Will a 1.e4 fan be uneasy playing against the Dutch Defence under the same circumstances? (There are many other examples of a similar theme.)

I actually don't see this as a problem at all. As I mentioned earlier, we will be avoiding any super-sharp variations where White's extra tempo will make a big difference. Instead, Black can simply enjoy the luxury of having a firm foothold in the centre, and he will go on to develop his pieces on natural squares. Even if we have to play a bit more conservatively than we would on the white side of the opening, we should still be able to reach a comfortable position, often with chances to press for a slight advantage. A strong player should possess enough 'chess culture' to handle positions and structures which lie outside of his normal repertoire.

Having dealt with the subject of reversed openings, I will now tell you a bit about the contents of each of the five sections of the book.

Part 1 – Various 1st Moves

This section comprises four chapters, starting with White's weird first moves and building up to the semi-mainstream options of 1.f4, 1.g3 and 1.b3, the last of which remains a relatively common occurrence even at GM level. After 1...e5 2.Qb2 Qc6 3.e3, I have chosen the solid but

active 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ rather than 3...d5 – virtually the only time in the book where I have chosen not to play both ...e5 and ...d5 when given the chance.

Part 2 – 1.c4 e5

This is the biggest section of the book, spanning eight chapters and over 150 pages. As I mentioned earlier, I recommend meeting 1.c4 with 1...e5. We will answer the popular 2.g3 with 2...c6 in order to occupy the centre with ...d5. The other main move is 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3$, when I favour 2... $\mathbb{Q}b4$. Both of these recommendations have been holding up well in recent praxis and analysis, and I found a lot of promising new ideas for Black.

Part 3 – 1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is a nightmare subject from an author's perspective! The problem is that there is no single 'correct' choice against it, as everything depends on your repertoire preferences against other first moves. For example, 1...c5 is a decent move, but only if you are happy to revert to a Sicilian after 2.e4. Besides, 2.c4 would lead to an English Opening where my recommendation of 1...e5 has been avoided.

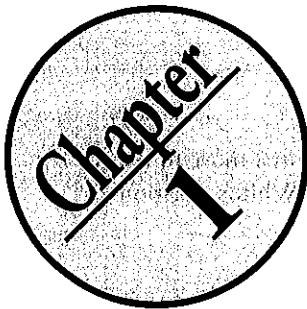
Anyway, in Chapters 13-18 I have covered 1...d5, which avoids transposing to an unwanted variation of the English while inviting a transposition to a 1.d4 d5 system. The two main options for this book are 2.c4 d4!, gaining space in the centre, and 2.g3, where 2... $\mathbb{Q}g4$! is my preference.

Part 4 – 1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6

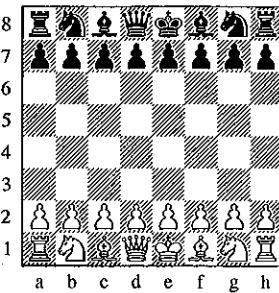
The last two sections of the book are devoted to 1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$, which allows Black to revert to his preferred Indian defence after 2.d4. Chapters 19-22 cover a defensive system with 2...b6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$, which will be suitable for Queen's Indian players. In Chapter 22, our move order allows White to transpose to one of the main lines of the Queen's Indian, which traditionally arises after 1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b6 4.g3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6.0–0 0–0. If your current preference in the Queen's Indian is to meet 4.g3 with 4... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ rather than 4... $\mathbb{Q}b7$, then I would suggest learning something about the latter move as well, just in case someone transposes to it by playing d2-d4 at an early stage. It was already a huge challenge to provide three repertoires against 1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$, and trying to cater for all possible repertoire choices within the Queen's Indian would be a step too far.

Part 5 – 1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

This section deals with a number of set-ups, but the most theoretically critical by far is the Anti-Grünfeld. I have extensive experience in this domain, and I have provided a lot of ideas which I believe will be of great value to my fellow Grünfeld practitioners. White has several other set-ups that do not involve transposing to mainstream theory with d2-d4. In such cases, I have often recommended playing in the spirit of the Grünfeld with an early ...d5, which may sometimes be supported by ...c6. However, there are other cases where I have opted for a King's Indian set-up with ...d6, where I felt it was more appropriate. Die-hard King's Indian fans may wish to ignore my early ...d5 suggestions and find their own ...d6-based solutions, but I would encourage readers to be flexible in their thinking. A great example is Chapter 24, where I have suggested ...d5 in some places and ...d6 in others, according to what I believe works best against the particular set-up chosen by White.



Various 1st Moves

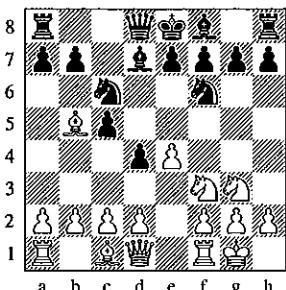


Irregularities

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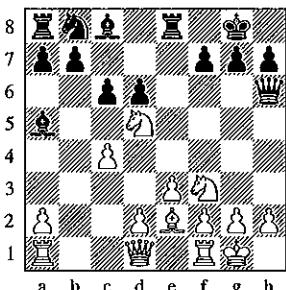
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D) note to move 5



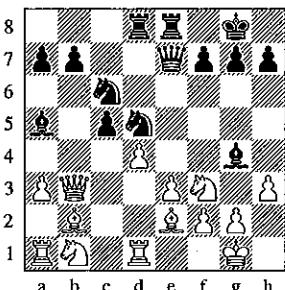
7...h5!N

E23) note to 5.c4



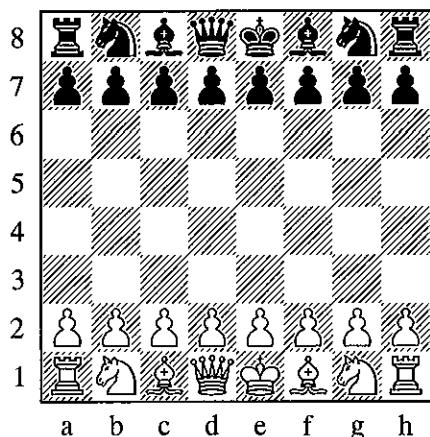
11...♗d7!N

E232) note to 11.a3



15...cx d4!N

What better place to begin our journey than the starting position of the game of chess?



White has twenty legal moves – and don't worry, we are not going to analyse all of them! Obviously 1.e4 and 1.d4 are the two most popular, and readers will have their favourite defences against both of them. 1.c4 and 1.Qf3 are the other two mainstream choices, and the majority of this book is devoted to Black's task of meeting them. 1.f4, 1.g3 and 1.b3 are all fairly respectable, and they will be covered in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 respectively.

Before then, the present chapter will deal with five oddball alternatives: A) 1.g4?, B) 1.h3?!, C) 1.a3, D) 1.Qc3 and E) 1.b4.

Moves such as 1.d3 and 1.c3 are playable and do not weaken White's position, but I don't see any particular point in them, other than avoiding theory. 1...d5 is a good answer in either case.

A) 1.g4?

This opening is named after the Swiss IM Henri Grob. White doesn't fight for the centre and offers Black a clear target to attack. I would therefore have to conclude that it is one of the worst opening moves available. Compare, for instance, 1.a4?!, which basically

hands the advantage of the first move to Black, but doesn't actively harm White's position in any serious way.

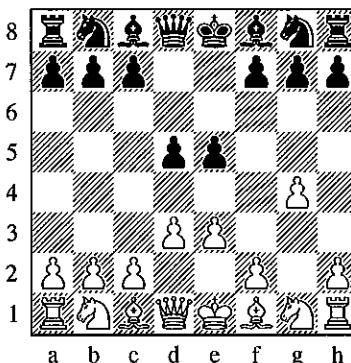
1...d5!

I think this is the best way to prove the wrongness of White's first move.

2.Qg2

White sacrifices a pawn in the hope of exploiting the weakening of the a8-h1 diagonal.

2.e3?! e5 3.d3 occurred in Rivas Pastor – Botsari, Stockholm 2000,



when 3...h5!N would have given Black an easy advantage.

2.h3 was a pet line of IM Basman in the late 1970s and 80s. 2...e5 3.Qg2 h5?! The most aggressive. (3...c6 is a reasonable alternative) 4.gxh5 Qf6 5.d3 Exh5# Black was better in Raygrotzki – Frolov, Schwaebisch Gmuend 1994, due to his strong centre and White's weakened kingside.

2.g5?

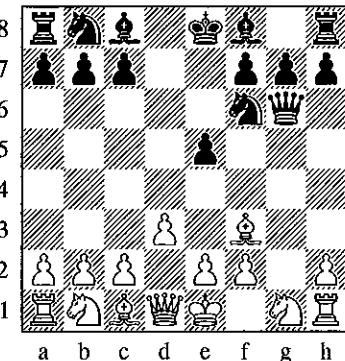
This wastes additional time and allows Black to strike with ...h6 at a time of his choosing.

2...e5 3.Qg2

3.d3 h6! 4.gxh6 (4.Qf3 Qc6 5.gxh6 Qxh6#) 4...Qxh6#

3.h4 h6! 4.d3 ♜e7 (4...hxg5?! N 5.♕xg5 f6 6.♗d2 ♜e6 is also clearly better for Black)
 5.gxh6 ♜xh6† In Pacher – Hracek, Slovakia 2011, Black had good central control, a lead in development and the better pawn structure.

3...♛xg5 4.♗xd5 ♜f6 5.d3 ♛g6 6.♗f3



6...e4! 7.dxe4 ♜c6†

Black is building a strong initiative, while White's development is seriously delayed.

2...♜xg4!

Obviously there is nothing wrong with 2...c6 3.h3 e5, but the text move is the most principled continuation, which aims to punish White.

3.c4

This is the point of White's pawn sacrifice. White develops pressure on the light squares, which can be augmented by ♜b3, hitting both b7 and d5. However, Black has at least two ways to get an advantage.

3...c6

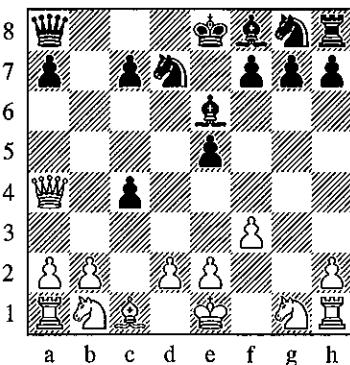
This is the safer option.

The sharper continuation is:

3...dxc4?! 4.♗xb7 ♜d7 5.♗xa8

5.h3 is met by 5...♝f5, intending 6.♗xa8?! ♛xa8 7.♗f3 ♜e5! 8.♗c3 ♜xf3† 9.exf3 ♜d3 10.♗a4† ♜d8 and Black is better.

5...♛xa8 6.f3 e5 7.♗a4 ♜e6

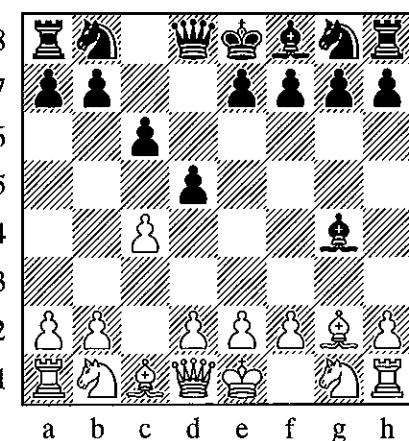


8.b3?!

Attempting to open the a-file.

8.♗a3 ♛d8! is a clever indirect defence of the c4-pawn, which leads to Black's advantage.
 8...♛d8!

The threat of ...♛h4† is very annoying for White. 8...♝e7?! is also possible; in either case Black has a powerful initiative for the sacrificed exchange.



4.♗b3

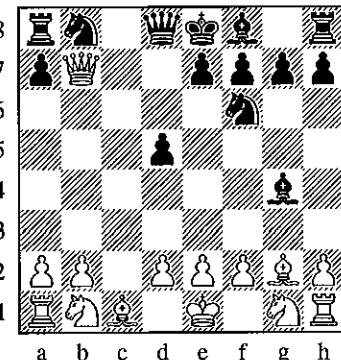
No better is:

4.cxd5 cxd5 5.♗b3 ♜f6

Black cannot keep his extra pawn by means of 5...♛c7?! 6.♗c3 e6?? due to 7.♗a4† and White wins a piece.

6.♗xb7

6.♗c3 e6 7.♗xb7 ♜bd7 transposes.



6... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

7.d4? $\mathbb{B}b8$ 8. $\mathbb{W}a6$ (8. $\mathbb{W}xa7?$ loses instantly:

8... $\mathbb{W}c8$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ e5! 10.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 11. $\mathbb{W}a4$

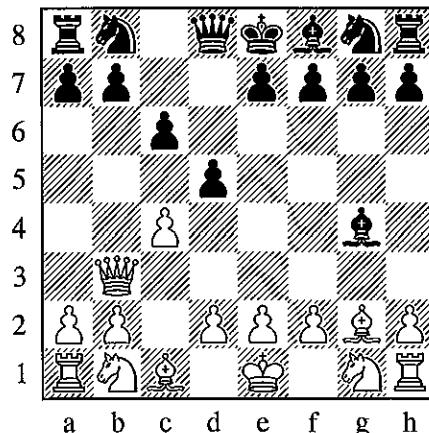
$\mathbb{B}b4\rightarrow$ Vlassov – Meessen, Moscow 2009)

8...e5! White is in trouble, as 9.dxe5? $\mathbb{W}c7!$

10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5\rightarrow$) 10... $\mathbb{W}xe5$ gives Black a decisive advantage.

7...e6 8. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{B}c8$

The a-pawn does not matter at all. For example:



4...e6! 5.cxd5

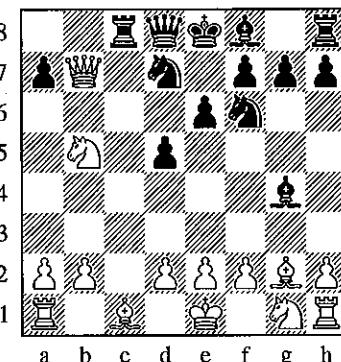
The alternative is:

5. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}gf6\bar{f}$

This position has occurred in a few games; Black's chances are higher due to his better development. For example:

7. $\mathbb{W}xc6$ $\mathbb{B}c8$

Black easily regains the pawn.

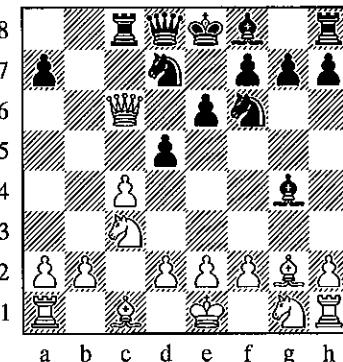


9. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$

9. $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 10. $\mathbb{W}a4$ 0-0 was also great for Black in Ariston – S. Saunders, email 1995. The text move was White's attempted improvement, but he would have been better off looking for an improvement eight moves earlier.

9... $\mathbb{B}c7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$

Black had a huge initiative for the sacrificed pawn in Ariston – Laczay, email 2006.



8. $\mathbb{W}a6$ $\mathbb{B}xc4$ 9.d3

9. $\mathbb{W}xa7?$ is bad as after 9... $\mathbb{W}c8!\rightarrow$ White's queen is in serious danger.

9... $\mathbb{W}c8\bar{f}$

5...exd5

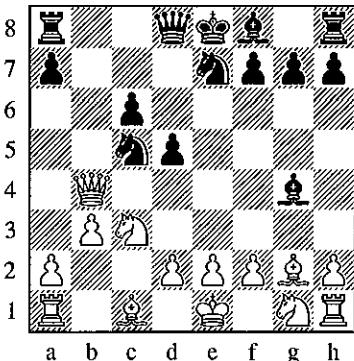
But not 5...cxd5?? 6. $\mathbb{W}a4\bar{f}$ winning a piece.

6. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

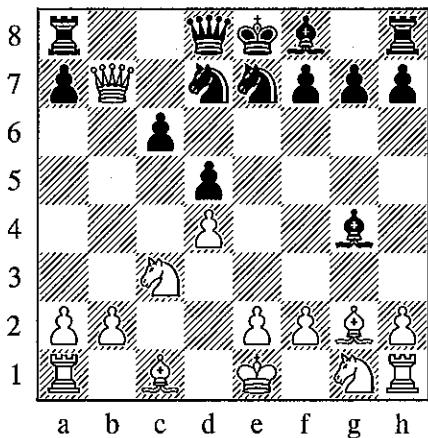
7. $\mathbb{W}xc6??$ loses to 7... $\mathbb{B}c8$ of course.

7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8.d4

It is worth mentioning that after 8.b3 $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ 9. $\mathbb{W}b4$ the double attack on c5 and g4 isn't dangerous for Black, due to:



9... $\mathbb{A}d7!$ In order to meet 10. $\mathbb{W}xc5??$ with 10... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ and the queen is trapped.



8... $\mathbb{E}b8$ 9. $\mathbb{W}a6$ $\mathbb{E}b6$ 10. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 11.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$
12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$

Black had the better game in Ohtake – Parsons, corr. 2014.

B) 1.h3?!

This move was championed by IM Basman in the 1990s. Obviously White can't fight for an advantage this way, but it shouldn't be too bad as it doesn't create any weaknesses. Starting from the second move, White may start playing as if he was Black and hope that the h3-pawn will be useful.

1...d5

1...e5 is also reasonable; the choice is a matter of taste.

2.a3?!

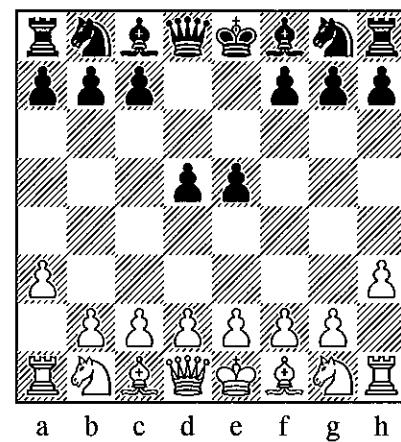
Basman's "Creepy Crawly Formation" is just a waste of time.

2.g4?! transposes to the note on 2.h3 in variation A.

White's best bet would be to play a normal reversed opening, beginning with 2.d4 or 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$. The h3-pawn has the potential to be useful, but Black obviously has no cause for complaints, having the freedom to effectively play as White.

2...e5

Black takes the centre and already has the better position.



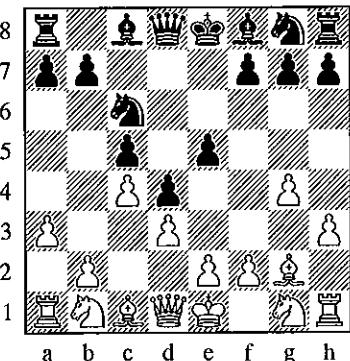
3.c4

This was Basman's usual choice.

3...dxc4?!

Taking the pawn is the most ambitious approach. In order to win it back, White has to either waste a few tempos with his queen or exchange the light-squared bishops, which should work in Black's favour as we will see.

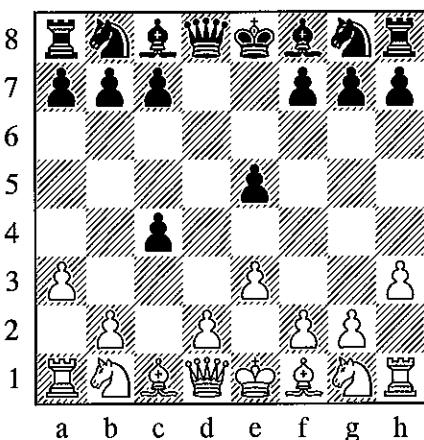
3...d4 is a perfectly good alternative, for instance: 4.d3 c5! (This looks like an improvement over 4...a5, which occurred in Basman – Budnikov, London 1993) The position starts to resemble a reversed Benoni. 5.g4 Otherwise what was the point of h2-h3? 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$



This position was reached in Ackley – Gordon-Brown, England 2015. Black has several playable options, but I especially like 6...h5!N 7.g5 $\mathbb{Q}ge7$, followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ to take aim at White's kingside weaknesses.

4.e3

4. $\mathbb{W}a4\text{?}!$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\text{!}N$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (5. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and White is already in trouble on the b3-square) 5...e4 6. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ a6 \overline{t} is good for Black.



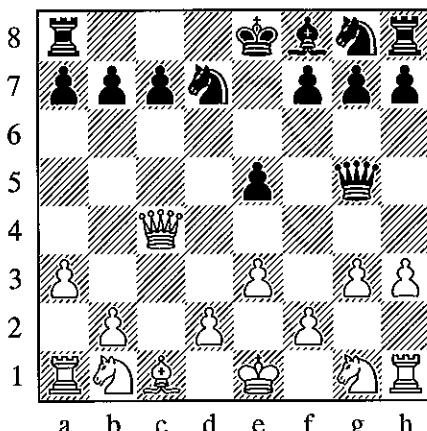
4... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 5. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

A couple of Basman's opponents went for 5... $\mathbb{W}d5$, but I prefer rapid development over pawn-grabbing.

6. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 7. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}g5\text{!}$

Provoking a weakening of the kingside.

8.g3



8... $\mathbb{Q}d6\text{N}$

A slight improvement over 8... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ as played in D. Smith – Pontikis, email 2004.

9.d3 $\mathbb{W}e7\text{!}$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}gf6$

Black's chances are slightly higher.

C) 1.a3

This waiting move is better than the previously considered alternatives, although White can't hope to obtain any opening advantage with it. Should you encounter it, you will want to head for a reversed opening which you're comfortable with, so the choice will depend on individual preferences. I will provide a few guidelines, while pointing out some specific cases where a2-a3 may prove useful or otherwise.

1...e5

1...d5 is another reasonable answer.

White can consider playing 2.d4!?, when the a2-a3 move is of some value, although Black should not be worse of course. The best continuation is 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6, intending ...c5, as recommended by Boris Avrukh in the first chapter of *Grandmaster Repertoire 11*.

Alternatively, 1...g6!? is a nice idea to make White's first move look pointless, while 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ can't be bad either, keeping all of Black's options open.

2.e4!?

2.h3?! d5 leads back to variation B.

2.b4 transposes to variation E1 below.

2.c4 is a somewhat logical move, but it transposes to the English Opening – see variation E of Chapter 5 on page 113.

I picked the text move as the main line in order to emphasize some interesting points about reversed 1.e4 e5 openings with the a2-a3 move included.

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

Fans of the King's Gambit may consider 2...f5!?, although 3. $\mathbb{Q}c4$? leads to a reversed system where a2-a3 serves the purpose of preserving the bishop.

3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$

At first I believed that 3...d5!? 4.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ would lead to a good version of the reversed Scotch, as the two main lines of 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ and 5. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ both lead to positions where the extra a2-a3 move is of no use whatsoever. However, I then realized that 5. $\mathbb{W}h5$! was a good choice, as Black is deprived of the ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ move, which comes close to refuting the queen move in the version with reversed colours. True, Black can still play 5... $\mathbb{W}d6$ with near-equal chances, but it feels like a small moral victory for White to have found a clear use for a2-a3.

4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

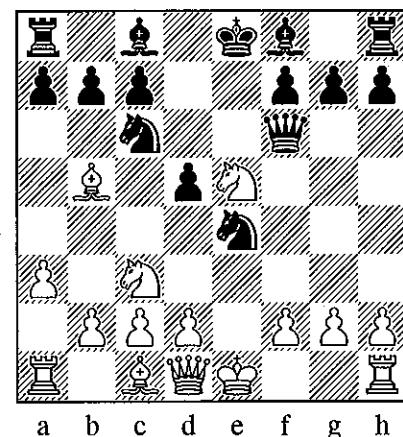
With this move, we suddenly transpose to a relatively common sideline of the Four Knights Game where White plays 4.a3. The Greek author and analyst Ntirlis covered this very well in *Playing 1.e4 e5*, so I will just give a shortened version of his analysis to show the most important details. Black's best antidote is:

4...d5! 5. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

5.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 7.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ is the main line of the Four Knights with reversed colours; White's extra a2-a3 move is useless, so Black is effectively playing as White and is obviously at least equal.

5... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}f6$

6... $\mathbb{W}g5$? is a sharp alternative which can also be investigated.

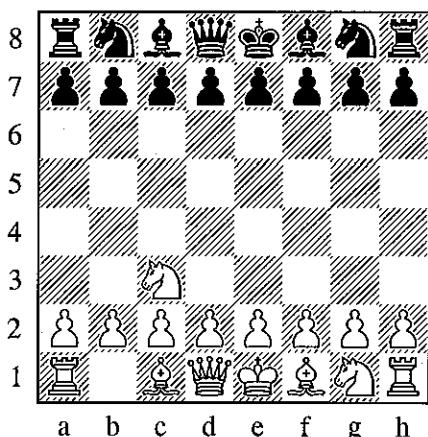


7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 8.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 9. $\mathbb{E}e1$ 0-0!?

9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 10.dxc3 0-0 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ gave Black simple equality in Van den Berg – Op den Kelder, Hengelo 2005. The text move is an interesting pawn sacrifice.

10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ dx e 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bx c 12. $\mathbb{E}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 13. $\mathbb{E}e3$ c5 \mathbb{E}

Black had full compensation in Raijmaekers – Gerhards, corr. 2014.

D) 1.♘c3

This is most commonly known as the Dunst Opening, although it also goes by several other names. It has been a favourite choice of GM Andreikin in blitz games.

1...d5 2.e4

This is the only reasonable attempt to avoid mainstream theory. This position can also be reached via the Scandinavian Defence after 1.e4 d5 2.♘c3.

2.d4 transposes to the Veresov, which is beyond the scope of this work. I would recommend Boris Avrukh's *Grandmaster Repertoire 11* for dealing with this and other sidelines after 1.d4.

2...d4!

This move is characteristic of my overall approach against irregular openings. Black is not satisfied with equality, and seizes space in the centre at the first available opportunity.

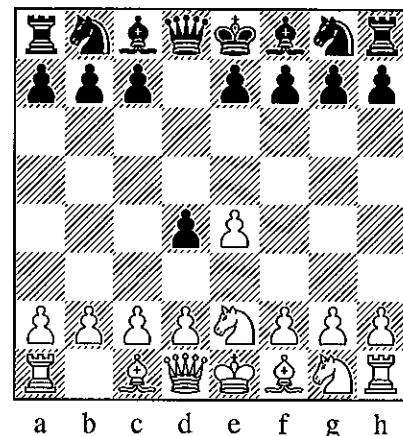
I will just mention in passing that 2...dxe4 3.♘xe4 gives Black an improved version of a Caro-Kann after either 3...♝f5 or 3...♝d7. The point is that Black has not had to waste time putting his pawn on c6, and will often be able to gain a tempo by playing ...c5 in one move. If you already play the Caro-Kann, then you may find this the more convenient option.

3.♘ce2

White intends to transfer the knight to g3. Other knight moves are hardly satisfactory for him:

3.♘d5? is not a good idea because of 3...e5! and White already has to worry about saving his knight. 4.c3 (4.♘f3? c6—+ traps the knight) 4...c6 5.♗b4 ♘f6 and Black is better.

3.♘b1 ♘f6 4.d3 (4.e5 ♘d5 is also better for Black) 4...e5 Black already has the upper hand due to his space advantage and the time lost by White.

**3...c5**

GM Bauer recommends 3...e5 in *Play the Scandinavian*, but I prefer the text move as I want to develop the knight to c6 before deciding what to do next.

4.♘g3

4.♘f3 ♘c6 5.♘g3 is variation D1 below.

4.d3

This gives up on the idea of developing the light-squared bishop to c4. Instead White will aim for a reversed King's Indian.

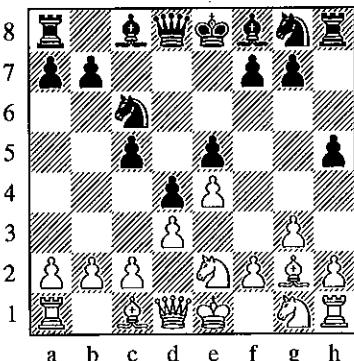
4...♘c6 5.g3

5.f4 seems a bit premature in view of: 5...e5

6.♘f3 (6.g3 h5! 7.♘f3 h4 is rather annoying

for White) 6...exf4!? (6... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ is also good) 7. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 9.0–0 0–0 \bar{f} and I prefer Black, Madynski – Magee, Dublin 2012.

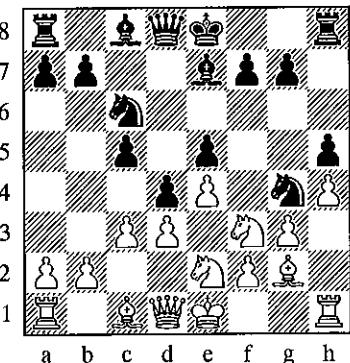
5...e5 6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ h5!



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

Black has a good version of a reversed King's Indian, as he has not yet committed to ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and can therefore threaten ...h4. It should also be noted that the e2-knight is not well placed at all – White would much prefer to have it on c4.

8.h4 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 9.c3 $\mathbb{Q}g4\bar{f}$



In Renner – Volke, Germany 2000, Black obtained a clear edge, as White's thematic plan of f2-f4 would permanently weaken the g4-square.

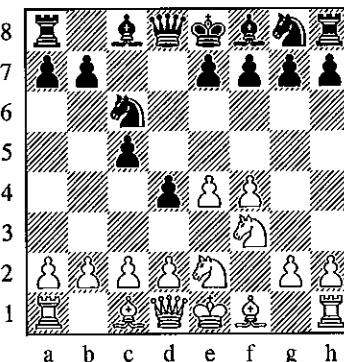
I also considered:

4.f4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

5.d3 transposes to 4.d3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5.f4 as mentioned above.

5. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ h5 7.d3 h4 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}eg1$ e5 10.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ h3 12. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 13.gxh3 $\mathbb{Q}d6\bar{f}$ with better chances for Black in Larsson – Yunusov, email 2007.

Now I would like to offer a new idea:



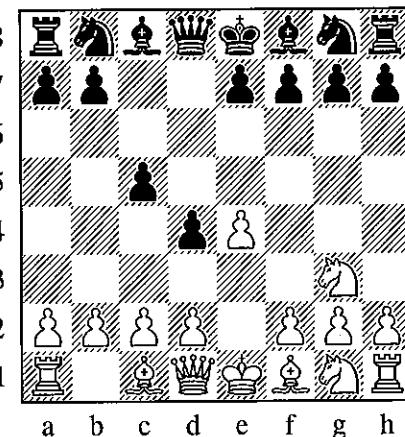
5...h5!N

Black advances his h-pawn in anticipation of $\mathbb{Q}g3$. Now the knight turns out to be stuck on e2.

5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is a reasonable alternative.

6.d3 g6!? 7.c3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8.cxd4 cxd4 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a5

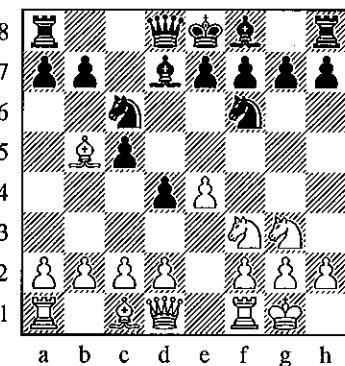
With slightly better chances for Black, thanks to his space advantage and the misplaced knight on e2.



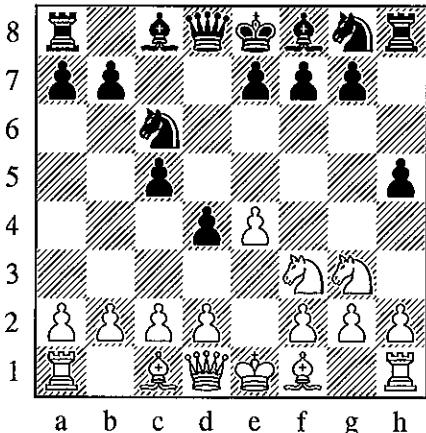
4...Qc6

From this position D1) 5.Qf3 has been the most popular choice, but D2) 5.Qc4! is more accurate.

Practice has also seen 5.Qb5 Qd7 6.Qf3 (6.f4 h5! 7.Qf3 h4 8.Qe2 h3 9.gxh3 Qxh3# and Black is better) 6...Qf6 7.0-0 and here I would like to improve Black's play with:



7...h5!N As you will see, this is my favourite move against the Dunst Opening. 8.d3 h4 9.Qe2 h3#

D1) 5.Qf3 h5!

The idea of ...h4 turns out to be highly irritating for White.

6.h4

6.Qc4 is met by 6...h4 7.Qe2 h3# and White has to weaken his pawn structure on the kingside.

6...a6!?

This has hardly ever been played, but I think it is worth investing a tempo to prevent the 7.Qb5 pin.

7.Qc4N

I only found one game with Black's last move, which continued 7.a3 Qf6 8.d3 g6 (8...Qg4!N) 9.Qe2 Qg4 10.0-0 e5 and Black was better in Stephan – Ham, corr. 2014.

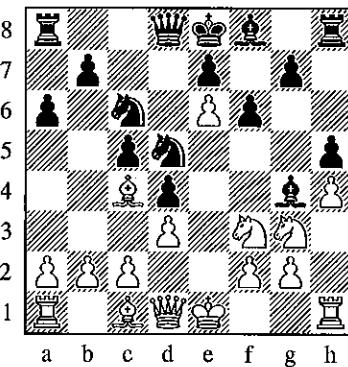
7.d3 Qf6 doesn't seem to change much.

7...Qf6 8.d3

8.Qg5 is met by 8...Qe5#.

8...Qg4 9.Qf4

9.e5 Qd5 10.e6!? is a tricky attempt but 10...f6! is a good answer, for instance:



11.We2 Wd6 12.Qe4 Wxe6 13.Qxc5 Wxc2# 14.Qxe2 e6# with a clear positional advantage for Black.

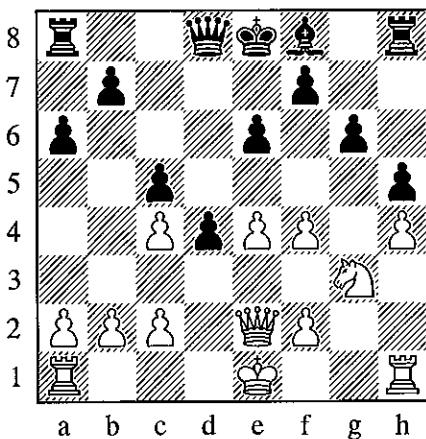
9...e6 10.Wd2 Qxf3 11.gxf3 Qd7

White has a dodgy structure and the g3-knight is misplaced. A logical continuation is:

12.We2 Qde5 13.Qxe5

13.♗b3? is met by 13...♝f6 and the f3-pawn falls.

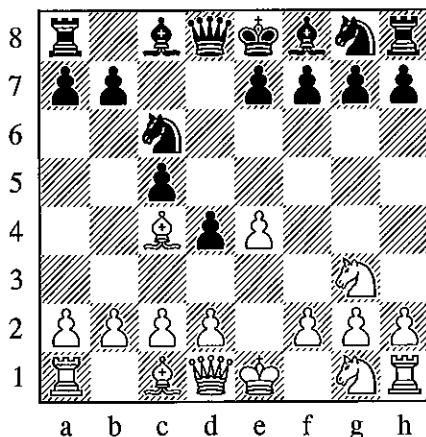
13...♝xe5 14.f4 ♘xc4 15.dxc4 g6



16.e5 ♘e7 17.0–0–0 ♘xh4 18.c3 ♘e7†

It's still an interesting position, but I don't think White has enough play for the pawn.

D2) 5.♗c4!



This move is more precise, as it delays the ...h5-h4 idea.

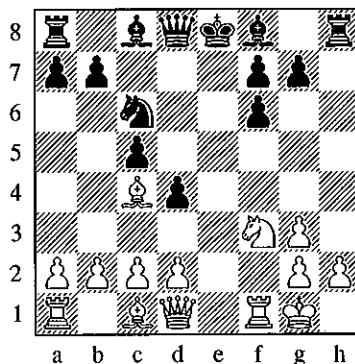
5...♝f6

This is a generally useful developing move, but I am especially interested in renewing the ...h5 plan.

6.d3

6.f4 h5 7.d3 occurred in Larsson – Lukasova, corr. 2015. Now I like 7...h4!N 8.♘3e2 and only then 8...b5! 9.♗b3 a6 10.♗f3 e6† with some preference for Black.

6.♗f3 h5! is our typical idea, aimed against the g3-knight. 7.e5 (7.h4 ♘g4† is better for Black) 7...h4! 8.exf6 hxg3 9.fxg3 exf6 10.0–0 This was Sidenko – Degterev, email 2008, and now I like:



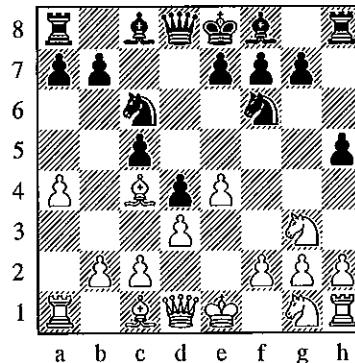
10...♝d6!N 11.♗e1† ♘f8 12.d3 ♘c7 With a comfortable position for Black.

6.a4

White is trying to secure the future of his light-squared bishop.

6...h5! 7.d3

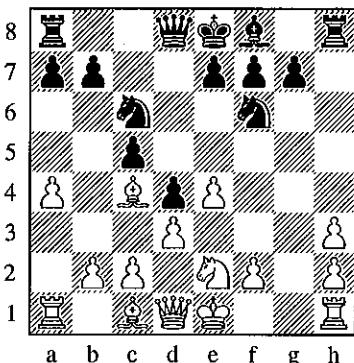
7.h4 occurred in Wettering – Moot, corr. 2007, and now after 7...g6!N 8.d3 ♘g7 9.♗f3 ♘g4† Black is better.



7...h4 8.Q3e2 h3 9.Qxh3

9.g3 was played in Mannhart – Buchnicek, corr. 1999. I suggest the improvement 9...a6!N 10.Qb3 Qg4 11.f3 Qd7† with better chances for Black.

9...Qxh3 10.gxh3

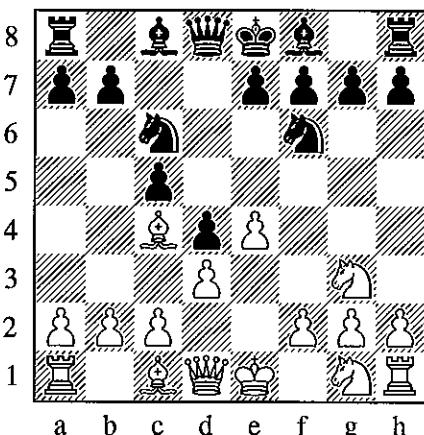


10...e6! 11.f4 Qc7 12.Qg1 0–0–0 13.Qf3 Qa5 14.Qa2 c4 15.0–0

15.Qd2? runs into 15...c3! 16.bxc3 dxc3 17.Qe3 Qxe4†.

15...Qxh3

In Stephan – R. Bauer, corr. 2014, Black had slightly better chances in a complicated position.



6...b5!?

This has hardly ever been played, but I like the scheme of development it entails.

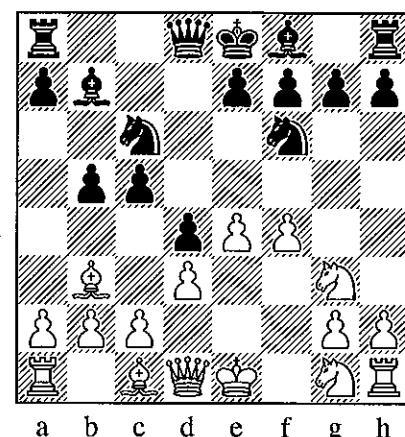
7.Qb3

Obviously 7.Qxb5?? fails to 7...Qa5†.

7...Qb7N 8.f4

8.Qf3 e6 9.0–0 Qe7 10.Qf4 0–0–0 is also good for Black.

White can also try 8.a4, but after 8...a6 the inclusion of those pawn moves is unlikely to affect the evaluation all that dramatically.



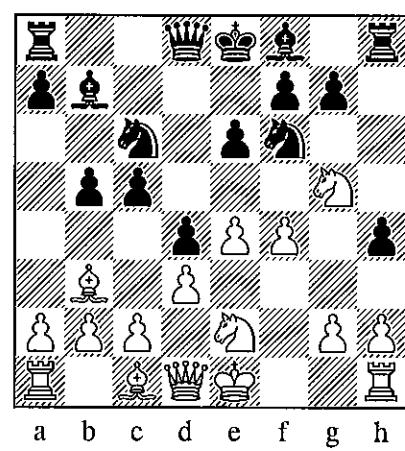
8...h5!

As usual.

9.Qf3

9.e5? is well met by 9...h4! 10.Q3e2 Qd5†.

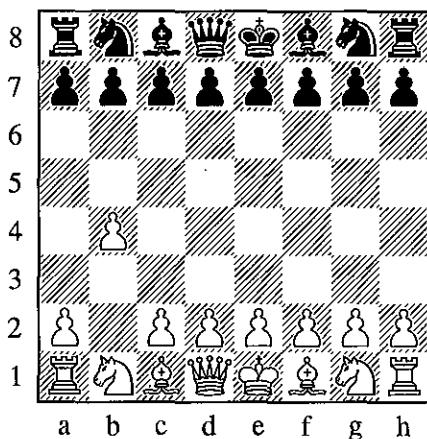
9...h4 10.Qe2 e6 11.Qg5



11... $\mathbb{Q}h7!$? 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 13.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}f6\bar{f}$

Black has an excellent position.

E) 1.b4



This is the Sokolsky Opening. White's idea is to fianchetto the dark-squared bishop and create some pressure along the dark diagonal. Compared with the Larsen Opening of Chapter 4, placing the pawn on b4 has pros and cons. On the plus side for White, the advancing b-pawn rules out certain set-ups for Black, such as 1...e5 followed by 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$. However, the significant drawback is that the b4-pawn can be attacked.

1...e5

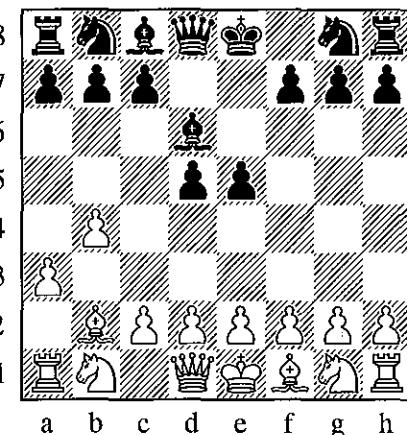
We will consider E1) 2.a3 and E2) 2. $\mathbb{Q}b2$.

2.b5?! presents Black with an easy target: 2...a6! 3. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ (3.e3 axb5 4. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ c6 5. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d5† is a dream opening outcome for Black, with a strong centre and open a-file, with a weak pawn on a2 as a target) 3...axb5 4. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ (4.e3?! is well met by 4... $\mathbb{W}e7!$ intending 5. $\mathbb{Q}xb5?$ $\mathbb{W}b4!$ winning a piece) 4...d5 5.e3 c6† Black has the better structure and will follow up with ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$, developing with gain of tempo.

E1) 2.a3

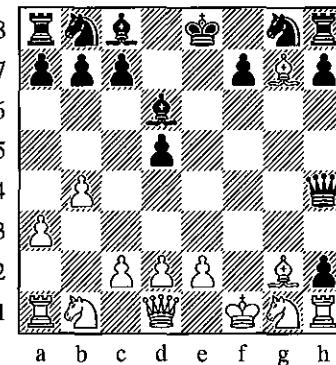
This slow move is not in the spirit of White's opening system.

2...d5 3. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$

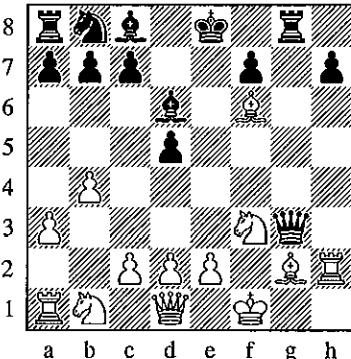


4.e3

4.f4? can be refuted with precise play:
4...exf4! 5. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{W}h4\ddagger$ 6.g3 fxg3 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ gxh2†
8. $\mathbb{Q}f1$



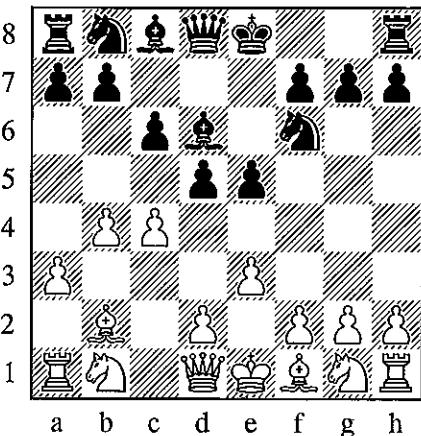
8... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ An important detail. (After 8...hxg1=†? 9. $\mathbb{Q}xg1$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ White was all right in Zala – Letay, Budapest 2010)
9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}g3$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ (10. $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ $\mathbb{Q}h3!$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ is deadly) 10... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xh2$



11... $\mathbb{W}g6!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}f6\#$
14. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}xe5+$ Black recovered the sacrificed material with a decisive advantage in Dolejs – Davis, corr. 2013.

After 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 5.e3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6.c4 Black's simplest continuation is 6...c6, which transposes to the main line below. Alternatively, 6...dxc4? 7. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ e4 8. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 0–0 is also quite reasonable.

4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5.c4 c6

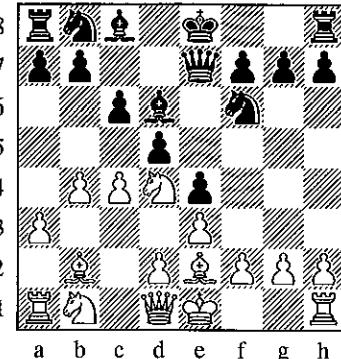


6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

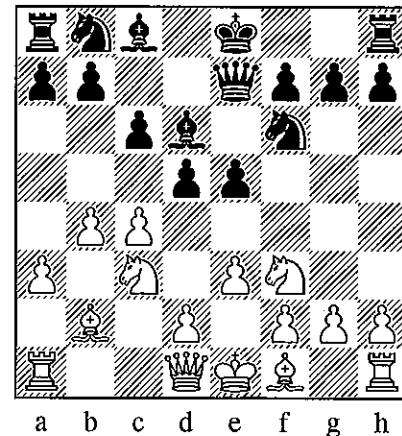
This seems like White's most interesting try. Other moves are easy to meet:

7.d4 e4 8. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ (8. $\mathbb{Q}e5?$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7\#$ favours Black as White can't support the knight on e5, Bulcourf – L. Bronstein, Buenos Aires 1992)
8...0–0 Black has a comfortable version of a reversed French Defence.

7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ e4!N (7...0–0 was fine for Black in Alekseev – Sambuev, St Petersburg 2000, but the text move is more precise) 8. $\mathbb{Q}d4$



8...dxc4! This exchange is perfectly timed after the bishop has gone to e2, as White will have to waste a tempo moving his bishop again. 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ a5! 10.b5 c5 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5\#$ Black gains even more time against the bishop, and enjoys some advantage.



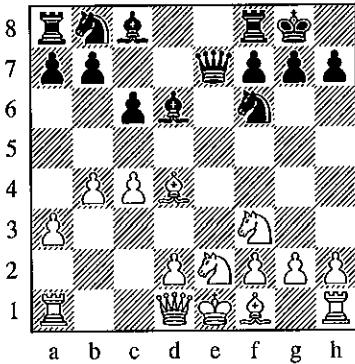
7...d4 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0–0!

A logical pawn sacrifice.

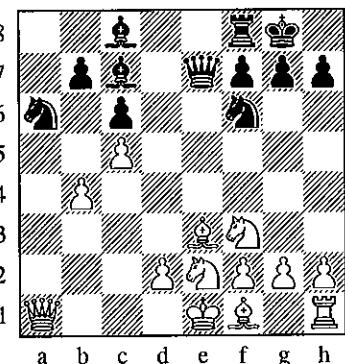
9.c5

9. $\mathbb{Q}g3N$ c5!# and Black's chances are higher due to his better development and extra space.

9.exd4 exd4 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ looks extremely dangerous as it opens the e-file against White's king. A strong reply is:

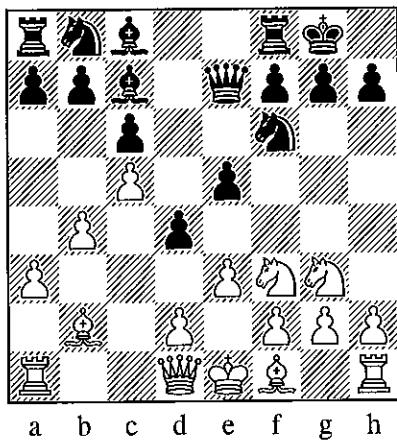


10...a5! 11.c5!N (11.Qe3 axb4 12.axb4 Qxa1 13.Qxa1 Qxb4# Domingo – H. Muller, email 2010) 11...Qc7 12.Qe3 axb4 13.axb4 Qxa1 14.Qxa1 Qa6



White is unable to hang on to his extra pawn and finds himself in an inferior position. 15.b5 (15.Qb2?! Qd5#) 15...Qxc5#

9...Qc7 10.Qg3



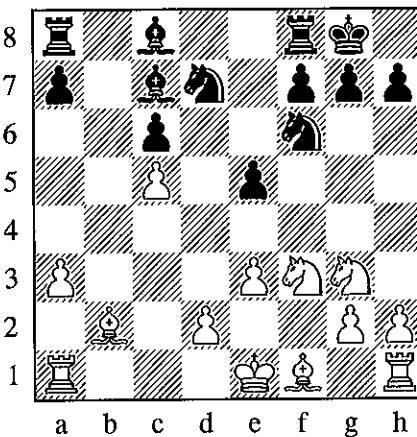
10...b6! 11.Qc2

11.cxb6 axb6 followed by ...c5 is also better for Black, Louro – Smirnovs, email 2010.

11...bxc5 12.Qxc5

12.bxc5 Qg4# followed by ...Qbd7.

12...Qxc5 13.bxc5 dxe3 14.fxe3 Qbd7

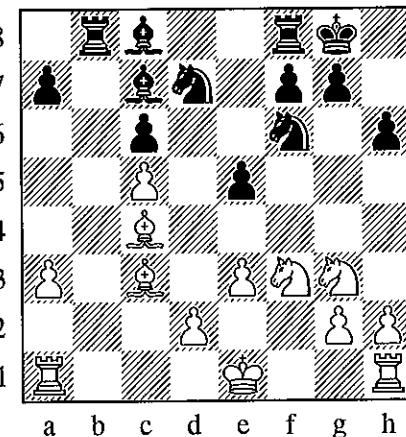


15.Qc4

15.Qc1N Qb8 16.Qa1 Qe8 also gives Black a slight edge.

15...Qb8 16.Qc3 h6

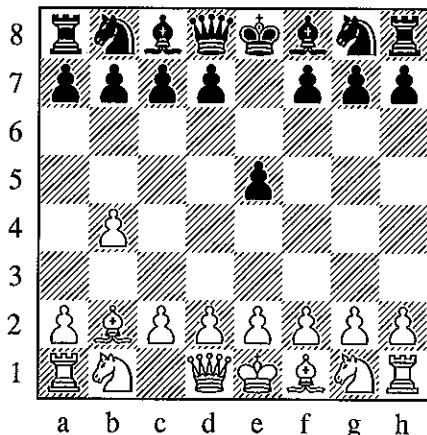
16...Qd5 was a reasonable alternative in Schott – Drossler, email 2009.



17.0–0 ♜e8 18.d4 exd4 19.exd4 ♜f8?

With some edge for Black in Schott – Lehnhoff, email 2009.

E2) 2.♗b2



2...♝xb4!

Challenge accepted!

3.♞xe5

This exchange may seem to favour White, who has exchanged his flank pawn for Black's central one. However, this conclusion is erroneous as White is spending a lot of time on bishop moves, enabling Black to build up a lead in development. The open e-file may also prove useful.

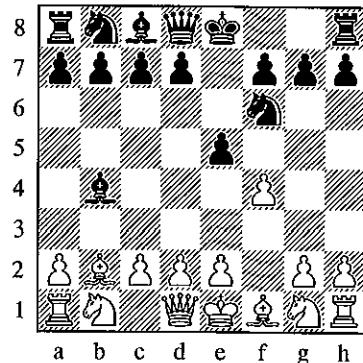
Before going any further, we should check a dubious alternative:

3.f4? ♜f6??

Black ignores the hanging pawn on e5 and concentrates on rapid development.

3...exf4? seems to favour White. 4.♝xg7 ♜h4† 5.g3 fxg3 6.♝g2 gxh2† 7.♝f1 hxg1=♛† 8.♝xg1 ♜g5 9.♝xh8 and Black still has to prove his compensation for the sacrificed exchange.

3...d6 is a good alternative though, and 3...♝h6?! could also be considered.



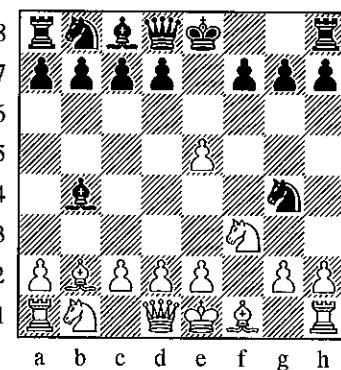
4.fxe5

4.♝xe5 0–0 just gives White a stupid version of the 3.♞xe5 line.

4.a3 ♜a5 does not really help White: 5.fxe5 ♜g4 6.♝f3 d6 (6...d5!?) 7.exd6 Otherwise Black wins a pawn. (7.♝c3 ♜xc3 8.♝xc3 ♜xe5†) 7...♝xd6 8.e4 0–0† with a strong attack.

4...♝g4 5.♝f3

5.c4 d6!N (5...♝e3 is also good enough for advantage: 6.♝b3 ♜h4† 7.g3 ♜e4 8.♝f3 ♜c2† 9.♝d1 ♜xa1 10.♝xa1 ♜c6† Kulbacki – Hahn, East Lansing 1982) 6.♝f3 (6.exd6? ♜xd6† is even more unpleasant) 6...0–0!† and Black's initiative is extremely strong.



5...d6! 6.c3

6.a3 ♜a5 transposes to 4.a3 above.

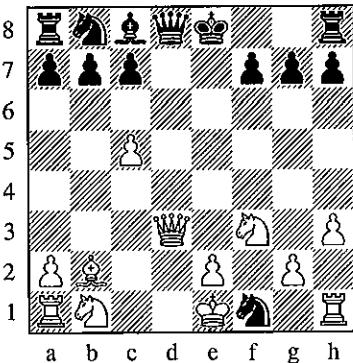
6.e6 0–0 7.exf7† ♜xf7† with a free initiative.

6...♝c5 7.d4 dx5! 8.h3

Maybe White should have tried taking on c5 and trying to round up the knight on h1,

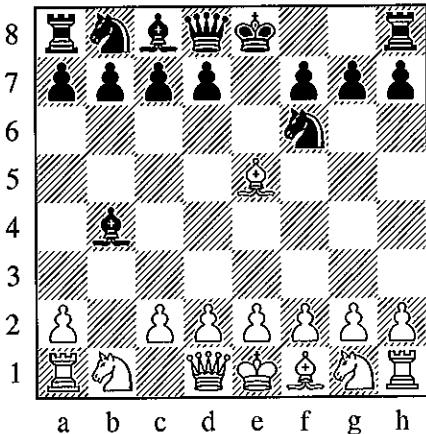
although his position seems dubious there too.

8... $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 9. $\mathbb{W}d3$ exd4 10.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 11.dxc5



11... $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 12.exd3 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ 13. $\mathbb{E}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}a6\bar{f}$
Van Rooijen – G. Toth, Internet 2013.

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

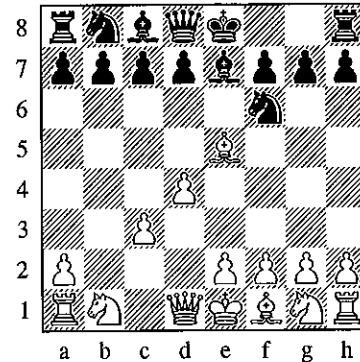


I considered three main options for White:
E21) 4.e3, **E22) 4.Qc3** and **E23) 4.Qf3**.

4.e3 0–0 (4...d5!?) 5.Qf3 transposes to the note on 5.e3 in variation E23. Instead 5.Wf3?! would make no sense in view of 5...Qe7!, by contrast with a similar position from the 4.a3 line considered below.

4.Qc3?! looks dubious as it takes away both the c3-square from the queen's knight and the

option of retreating the bishop to b2. 4...Qe7 5.d4 (5.Wc2 is too slow: 5...c5! intending ...Qc6 yields Black better chances, De Rosario – Alexopoulos, Dobbs Ferry 1984)



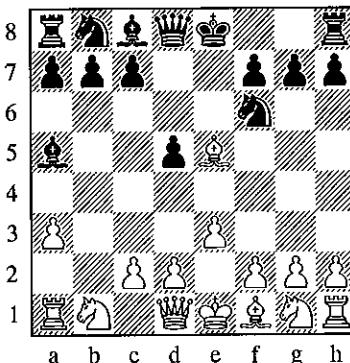
5...c5!N Once again, this is the most accurate. 6.Qf3 Qc6 7.e3 d5! and Black's chances are slightly higher.

4.a3 $\mathbb{Q}a5$

4...Qe7 should be fine, but the bishop is actually pretty well placed on a5.

5.e3 d5!

It's important to start with this move as 5...0–0 allows 6.Wf3! with the idea of 7.Qxf6. The difference between this and the 4.e3 line is that ...Qe7 is unavailable here.



6.Qf3

6.c4?! is dubious in view of 6...Qc6! 7.Qb2 d4!. The same idea can be found in the note

to White's 5th move in variation E21 below.

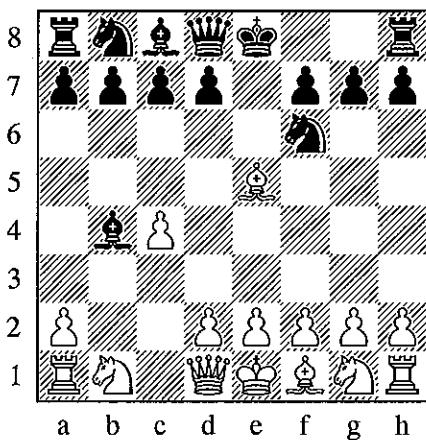
6...0-0 7.c4

7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ gives Black a better version of the Ivanchuk – Giri game, referenced in the notes to variation E23 on page 28, as the dark-squared bishop is better placed on a5. The best continuation is 7...c5† followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$.

7... $\mathbb{E}e8$

7... $\mathbb{Q}f5$! is a reasonable alternative but the text move is simplest, as it transposes exactly to variation E231 on page 29.

E21) 4.c4



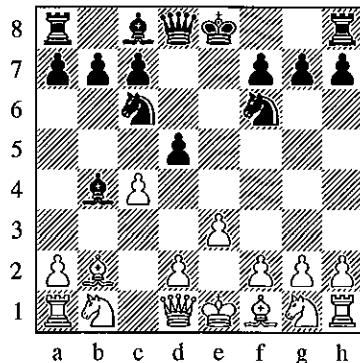
This is one of the most popular moves in the position, which I find rather surprising. Instead of developing his kingside pieces, White keeps making moves on the opposite side of the board.

4...d5!

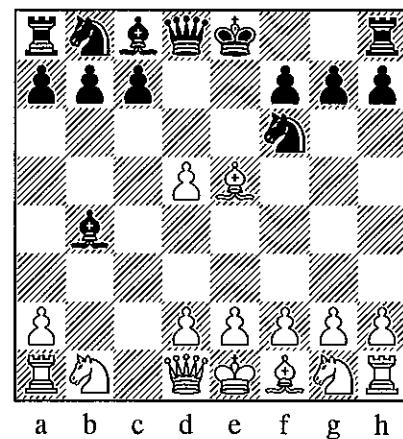
Not giving White time to breathe.

5.cxd5

The slow 5.e3 runs into: 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}b2$?! (6.cxd5? N is better, but after 6... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 7. $\mathbb{W}a4$ † c6 8. $\mathbb{W}xb4$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 9. $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10.d4 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}b4$ b5 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ a5 Black keeps the upper hand)



6...d4! 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ Black's advantage was unquestionable in Lien – Sjol, Oslo 2005.



5...0-0!

This small trick enables Black to recapture on d5 with the knight without leaving the g7-pawn hanging.

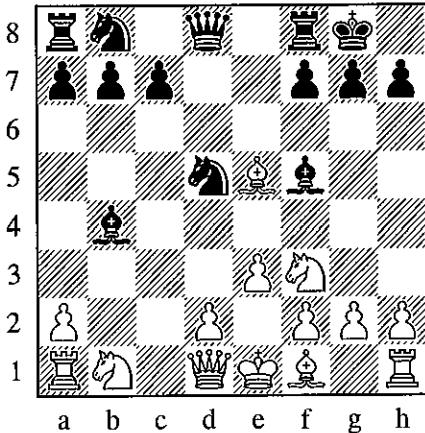
6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ is even worse: 6... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 7. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ †

6... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 7.e3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$!

7. $\mathbb{E}e8$ is a good alternative. This position is mentioned briefly on page 29 – see the note on 7.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$.

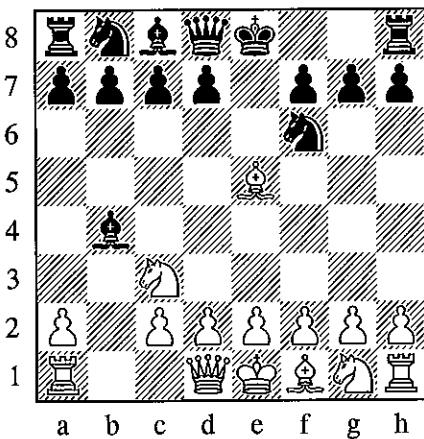
The text move is a tempting option against White's chosen move order, as Black is hoping to take advantage of the weak d3-square.



8.Qe2 Qd7 9.Qb2 c6 10.0-0 Qe7?

Black had the more comfortable position in Dzieniszewski – Egoshin, corr. 2012.

E22) 4.Qc3



This move isn't as bad as it looks. White loses the option of Qb2 but tries to prepare 5.Qxf6 followed by Qd5.

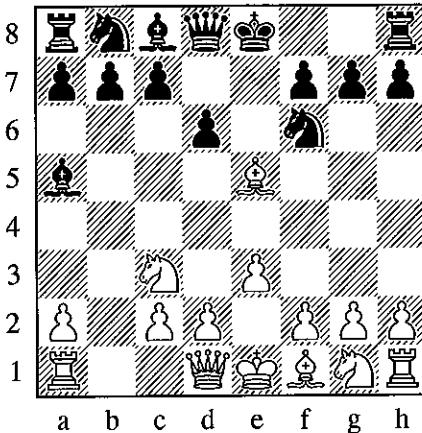
4...Qa5!

I've decided to offer this prophylactic move, which takes the bishop out of the forking zone.

White's idea would work after something like 4...Qc6 5.Qxf6 Qxf6 6.Qd5 Qe5 7.Qxb4 Qxb4 8.Qb1! Qe4 9.Qb2! and White is more or less okay.

5.e3 d6!N

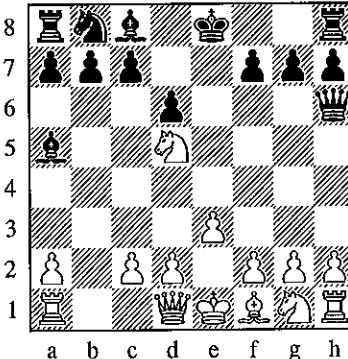
5...Qc6 was not bad in Grossmann – Stiller, Germany 2007. However, I find it more logical to avoid blocking the c-pawn in order to have the option of ...c6 in case White's knight arrives on d5.



6.Qg3

6.Qf4 0-0 7.Qd3 Qbd7 8.Qge2 Qc5? with a comfortable position for Black.

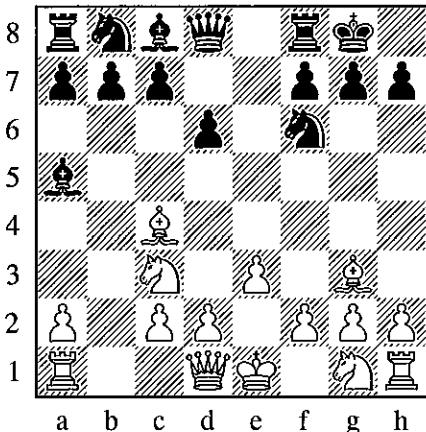
6.Qxf6 Qxf6 7.Qd5 Qh6!



8.Qf3 c6 9.Qf4 0-0? Black was better in De Kruif – Slade, Guernsey 2012; there is a simple plan of ...d5, ...Qc7, ...Qd7 and so on.

6...0-0 7.Qc4

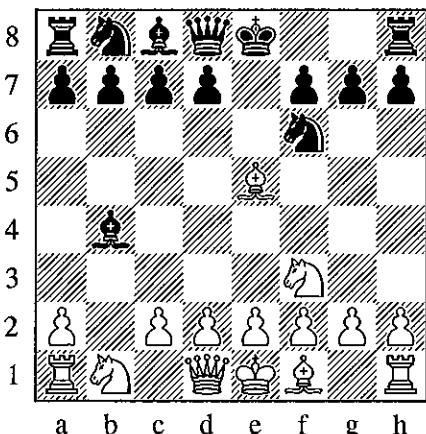
I also considered 7.Qd3N Qxc3 8.dxc3 Qbd7 9.Qe2 Qc5 10.Qh4 Qe7 with a slight superiority for Black.



7... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 8. $dxc3$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 10. $\mathbb{W}d3$
 $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Black had an obvious advantage in Fehr – Bock, corr. 1994.

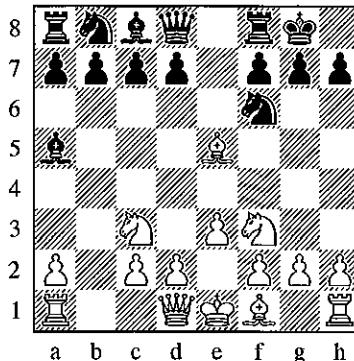
E23) 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$



This time White makes a sensible developing move before doing anything committal.

4...0–0 5.c4

5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ can be met by the typical 5... $\mathbb{Q}a5$, avoiding a potential $\mathbb{Q}d5$ fork. 6.e3 This position has been reached a few times, and I would like to offer essentially the same improvement as in variation E22 above:



6...d6!N 7. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c6 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ Black enjoys slightly better prospects thanks to his bishop pair.

5.e3 $\mathbb{Q}e8$

The immediate 5...d5!? also makes sense.

6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

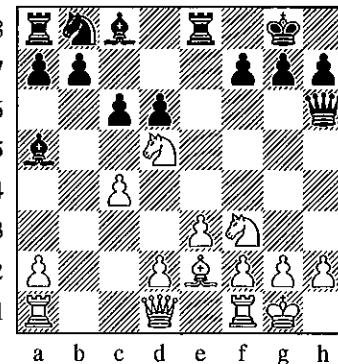
6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d5! 7.0–0 c5! 8. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ Ivanchuk – Giri, Leon (rapid) 2013. Black is better thanks to his strong centre and easy development.

6... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ d6 is pretty similar.

7...d6 8. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}h6$ 10.c4
10.0–0 c6 also favours Black.

10...c6 11.0–0!?

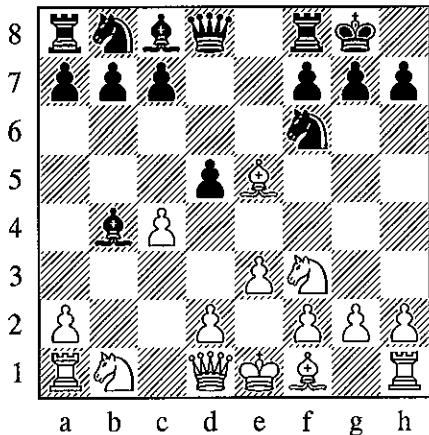


11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$!N

I prefer Black's chances with the two bishops. The last move is a clear improvement over 11... $cxd5$?! 12. $\mathbb{W}a4$, when White regained the piece with a slight positional advantage in Kuhlmann – J. Markus, Netherlands 1998.

5...d5 6.e3

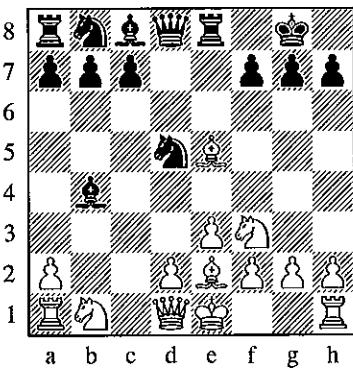
6.cxd5 leads back to variation E21.

**6...♝e8**

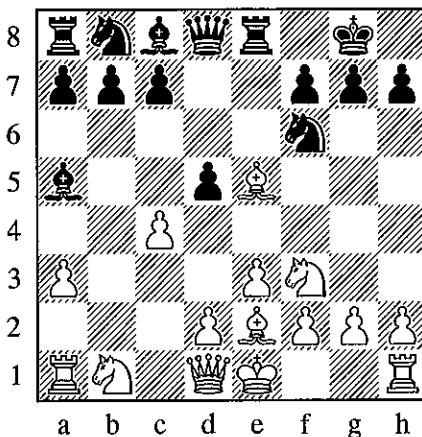
White has tried several moves here, and there are many possible transpositions. I will take E231) 7.a3 and E232) 7.♗b2 as the two main options.

7.♗e2 c5 8.cxd5 ♜xd5 is similar to variation E231 below. I don't think it requires any special attention, especially as there is quite a high probability of a direct transposition after a2-a3 and ...♜a5 at some point in the future.

7.cxd5 ♜xd5 has occurred in a few hundred games, but I don't think White has anything better than 8.♗b2, when 8...c5 leads straight to variation E232. It is worth mentioning that 8.♗e2? has been White's second most popular move, but it is a blunder due to:



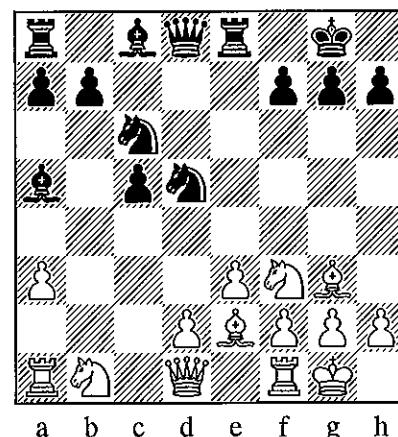
8...♝xe5! 9.♛xe5 ♛f6 and Black wins material, as 10.f4 ♛xe3 is crushing.

E231) 7.a3 ♜a5 8.♗e2**8...c5??**

The immediate ...♞c6 is possible, but I generally prefer to bring the knight into play behind the c-pawn.

9.cxd5 ♜xd5 10.0-0 ♜c6 11.♗g3??

11.♗b2 has been more popular, but then 11...♞f5 transposes to variation E232 below.

**11...h6!**

11...♝e6 allows 12.♗h4 f6 13.♗c2 ♜c8 14.♗d3 h6 15.♗c3 and White was okay in Bitoon – So, Manila 2008.

The text move is more accurate, as it enables Black to meet $\mathbb{A}h4$ with ...g5.

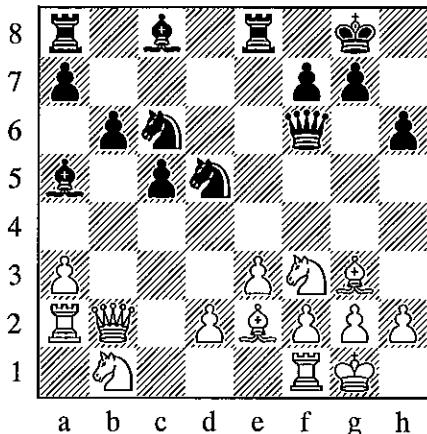
12. $\mathbb{W}c2$

12. $\mathbb{A}a2$ is met by 12... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ when Black transfers the knight to e4 and retains the upper hand.

12... $\mathbb{W}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{E}a2$ b6 14. $\mathbb{W}b2$

14. $\mathbb{B}b5$ $\mathbb{B}b7\mp$ followed by ... $\mathbb{E}ad8$ also favours Black, as White's queenside is stuck.

This position was reached in Jimenez Ariza – Ugrinovsky, email 2012. My suggestion for Black would be:



14... $\mathbb{Q}d4!?$ N

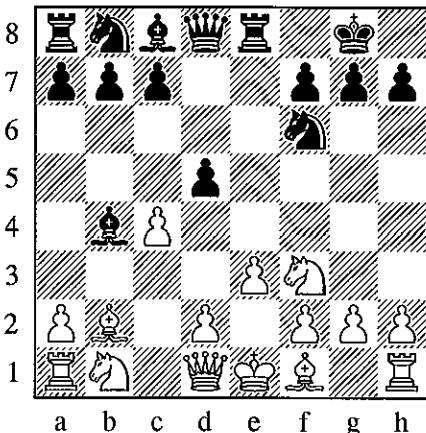
14... $\mathbb{B}b7$ N also looks promising.

15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4↑

Black controls more space and White's queenside pieces are awkwardly placed.

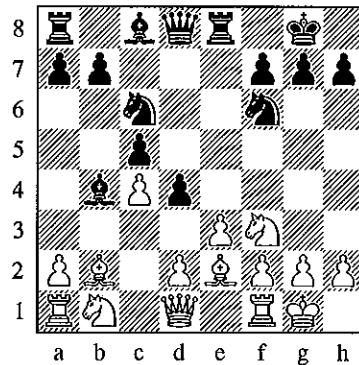
E232) 7. $\mathbb{A}b2$

This has been White's most popular move. The earlier note on 7.cxd5 has already shown why it is important for White to safeguard the bishop.



7... $c5$ 8. $cxd5$

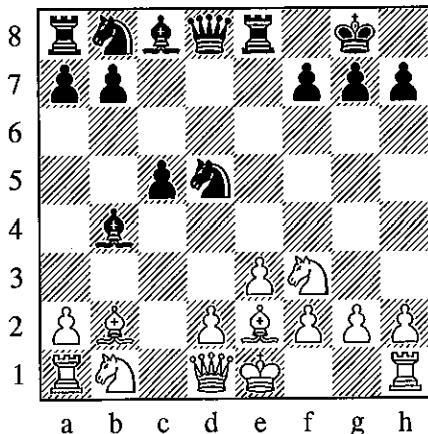
White has nothing to gain by delaying this move. For example: 8. $\mathbb{E}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (the computer suggests the immediate 8...d4!N 9.exd4 $\mathbb{W}e7$ when Black has a promising initiative for the pawn) 9.0–0 d4!



10. $\mathbb{W}c2$ (10.exd4 cxd4 11.d3? $\mathbb{W}e7$! was a disaster for White in Neumann – Martins, email 2008) 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4\mp$

8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9. $\mathbb{E}e2$

9. $\mathbb{B}b5$ gives Black more than one good option. 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (9... $\mathbb{Q}c6!?$ N is an ambitious alternative, daring White to damage Black's structure at the cost of the light-squared bishop) 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 11.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}b7b6$ (11...c4!N looks interesting) gave Black comfortable play in Wantoch Rekowski – Morley, corr. 2009.



9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}f5$

Black's pieces are extremely active, and tactical opportunities may easily present themselves.

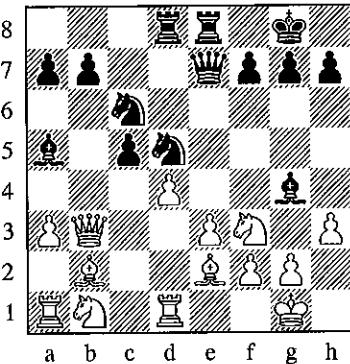
11.a3

After 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 12.dxc3 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{B}ad1$ $\mathbb{B}ad8$ Black was at least equal in Morley – Lo Nigro, corr. 2007.

11.d4 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 12.a3 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{B}ad8$ 14. $\mathbb{B}d1$!?

$\mathbb{Q}g4$! 15.h3

This position was reached in Teichmann – Gupta, Dubai 2006. All of Black's pieces are on excellent squares, and he could have unleashed the potential in his position with:



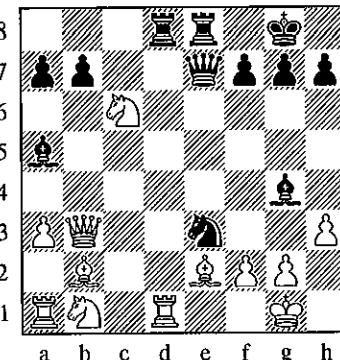
15... $cxd4$!N 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

16.hxg4 $dxe3$ 17.fxe3 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 18. $\mathbb{B}xd8$ $\mathbb{B}xd8$ —+ gives Black an overwhelming initiative; there

is not much White can do to defend against ... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}b6\#$.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$! 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

17.fxe3 $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{B}xd1\#$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xd1$ $\mathbb{W}xe3\#$ is winning for Black.

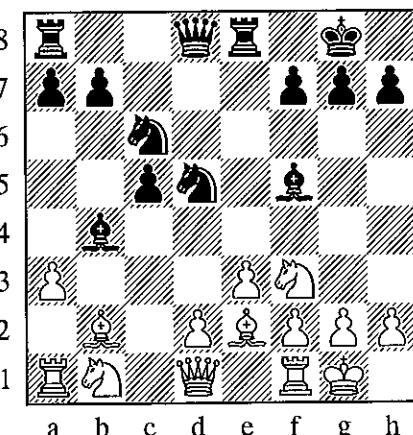


17... $\mathbb{B}xd1\#$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd1$

18. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $bxc6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ leaves White in big trouble, as 20.hxg4? $\mathbb{W}e1\#$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7\#$ would be fatal for him.

18... $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$

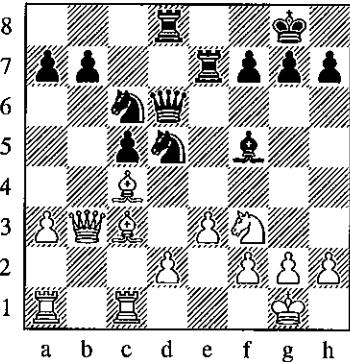
With an extra pawn and a strong pair of bishops, Black should win the endgame.



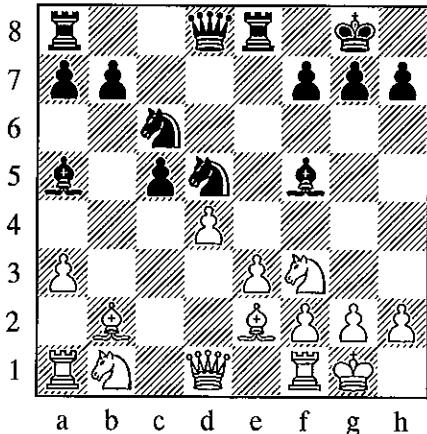
11... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 12.d4?!

White should prefer something else, but I want to draw attention to some of the tactical opportunities which might otherwise be easy to overlook.

12. $\mathbb{W}b3$ seems like White's best attempt to reach an acceptable position. A good reply is: 12... $\mathbb{W}d6!$? (12... $\mathbb{W}b6$ has been more popular; Black is at least equal here too, but the position after 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ is drier than I would like.) 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}fc1$



This position was reached in Alm – Nisipeanu, Barcelona 2012. Black has more than one decent continuation, but 16... $\mathbb{Q}xc3N$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $b6\#$ seems simplest to me.

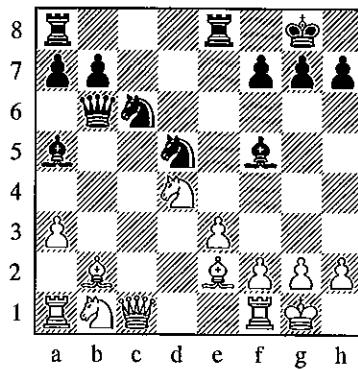


12... $\mathbb{W}b6!$

This attack on the b2-bishop forces White to move either his rook or his queen to an awkward square.

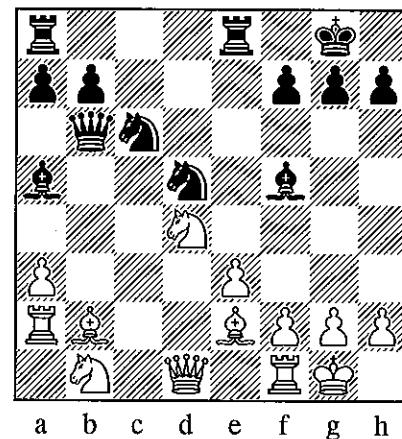
13. $\mathbb{R}a2$

13. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ occurred in Petrochenko – Belenkaya, St Petersburg 2015, and now Black's strongest continuation would have been:



14... $\mathbb{Q}f4!N$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d3!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6\#$ and the tactics work resoundingly in Black's favour.

13... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

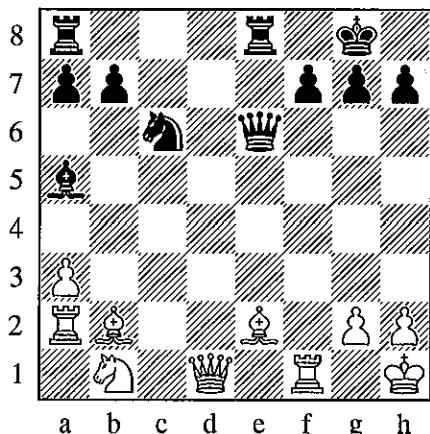


14... $\mathbb{Q}xe3!$

Black finds a devastating combination.

15. $\mathbb{R}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$

White actually resigned here in Ladeira – Brizzi, email 2013. The continuation would have been:



18...Qh5 **Wxa2** **19.Qxf7†** **Wxf7** **20.Exf7**
Qxf7–+

Black has two rooks and a pawn for the queen, and should win with accurate play.

Conclusion

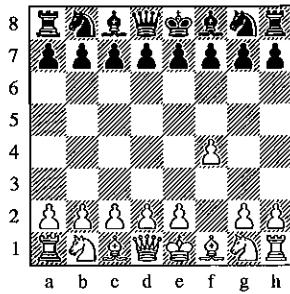
The weird moves 1.g4?, 1.h3?! and 1.a3 are obviously nothing for Black to worry about – although the last two at least avoid harming White's position. Variation C contained some interesting examples of reversed Open Games, where I showed how to avoid certain lines where the extra a2-a3 move may benefit White.

1.Qc3 is not a bad move, and has many transpositional possibilities. I like Black's chances after 1...d5 2.e4 d4! 3.Qce2 c5, when Black secures a space advantage. My favourite move for Black is ...h5!, which underlines the unfavourable position of the knight on g3.

Finally we dealt with the Sokolsky. After 1.b4 e5 2.a3 d5, Black develops quickly and smoothly, with good chances to get an advantage. The main line is 2.Qb2 but, after 2...Qxb4 3.Qxe5 Qf6, I have shown that Black's rapid development and active piece play count for more than White's extra central pawn.



Various 1st Moves



Bird's Opening

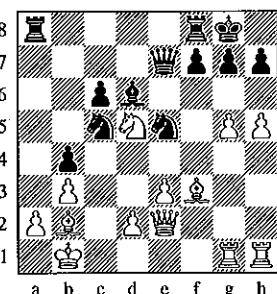
Variation Index

1.f4

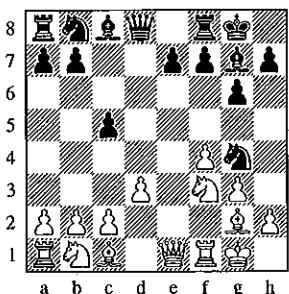
1...d5

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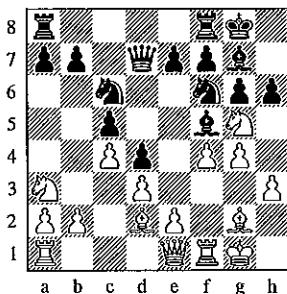
B1) after 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$?



C241) after 10. $\mathbb{Q}c1$



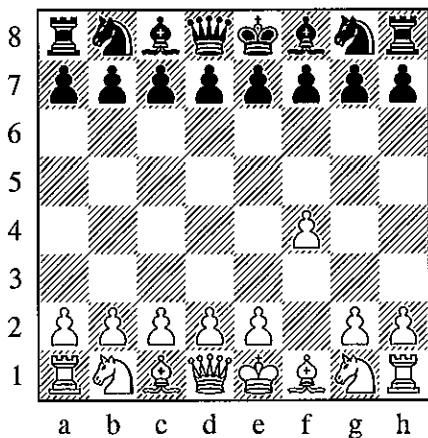
C242) after 13.g4



19... $\mathbb{Q}a7!$ N

10...h5!N

13... $\mathbb{Q}xg4!$ N

1.f4

This move is named after Henry Bird, an Englishman who popularised 1.f4 in the 19th century. I must admit that my original intention was to recommend From's Gambit, 1...e5, in an attempt to refute 1.f4 (or at least force White to convert to a King's Gambit!). However, to my surprise I couldn't even find clear equality in any of the lines, and so I had to switch to something more solid.

1...d5

This is the classical reply. Its only drawback is that it gives rise to a reversed Dutch Defence with an extra tempo for White. Nevertheless, Black is certainly not worse, and he has quite good chances to take over the initiative.

We will analyse A) 2.g3, B) 2.b3 and C) 2.Qf3, the last of which is the main line by far.

2.c4 d4 3.Qf3 g6 is covered later under the 2.Qf3 move order.

2.e3

White sometimes plays this to avoid 2...Qg4, which is an option against 2.Qf3. It makes no difference to us though.

2...g6 3.c4?

3.Qf3 is better, and is covered later under

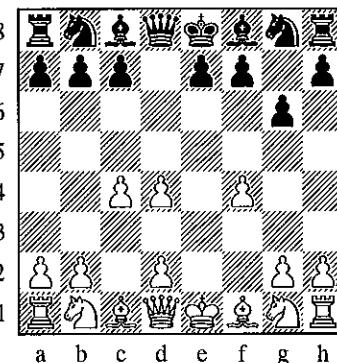
variation C1; and the same can be said for 3.Qe2 Qg7 4.Qf3.

3...d4!

The most principled reaction.

4.exd4

Now in Hromadka – Pokorny, Prague 1933, Black should have played:

**4...e6!N**

I want to recapture on d4 with a knight rather than waste time with the queen. The optimal set-up involves a bishop on g7, with knights on e7 and c6. A likely continuation is:

5.Qf3 Qe7 6.Qa3 Qbc6 7.Qc2 Qf5±

Black wins back the d-pawn with a clear positional advantage.

A) 2.g3 h5!

This aggressive move looks strong. The same idea can occur in similar positions in the Dutch with colours reversed.

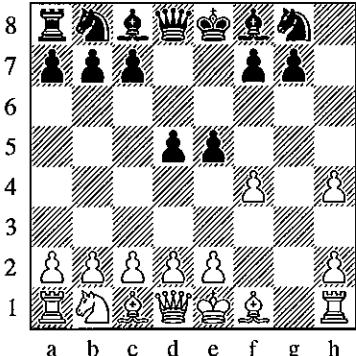
I should mention that Black can also play the simple 2...g6 3.Qg2 Qg7 4.d3 Qf6 when White has nothing better than 5.Qf3, transposing to the later variation C12.

3.Qf3

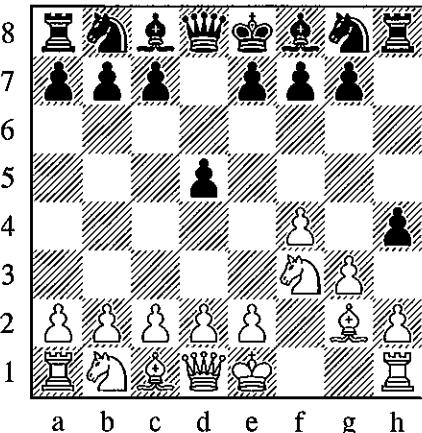
3.Qg2 is unlikely to have any independent value after 3...h4.

3...h4 4.Qg2

4. $\mathbb{Q}xh4?!$ allows a powerful positional exchange sacrifice: 4... $\mathbb{Q}xh4!$ 5. $g \times h4$ e5 The threat of mate in one causes White a lot of problems.



6.d3 (6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}xh4\#$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}xf4\#$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9. $\mathbb{W}f1$ $\mathbb{W}g4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\#$) gave Black a huge initiative for the exchange in Komora – Mozes, Szeged 1997) 6... $\mathbb{W}xh4\#$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xf4\#$ 8.e3 $\mathbb{W}h6$ With a pawn for the exchange, plus a strong centre, easy development and a vulnerable king on d2, Black was obviously better in Schuette – Mozes, Berlin 1990.



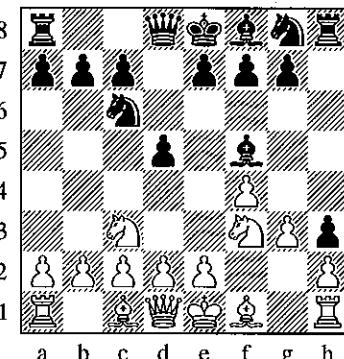
4... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$

The best move, maintaining the tension on the kingside and waiting to see what White does.

5. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$

5.d3 from Dussol – Flear, Saint Affrique 2007, can be met by 5... h3N 6. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7. e3 $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$ with slightly better chances for Black.

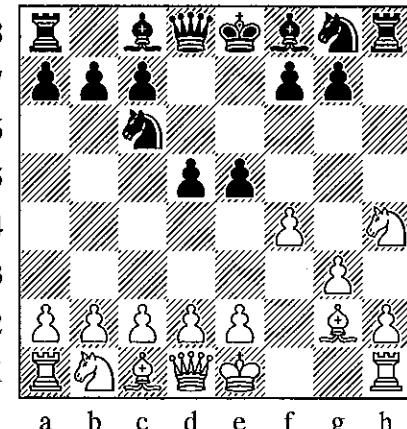
5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ h3 6. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5?!$ (6... $\mathbb{Q}f6?!$ 7. d4 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 8.e3 e6 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ was also better for Black in Crook – E. Tate, Maryland 1989)



7.d3 e6 8.e3 a6! Preventing the $\mathbb{Q}b5$ -d4 manoeuvre. 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5\#$ Once again, Black's chances are to be preferred.

Grabbing the h4-pawn is still dangerous, this time because of:

5...e5!



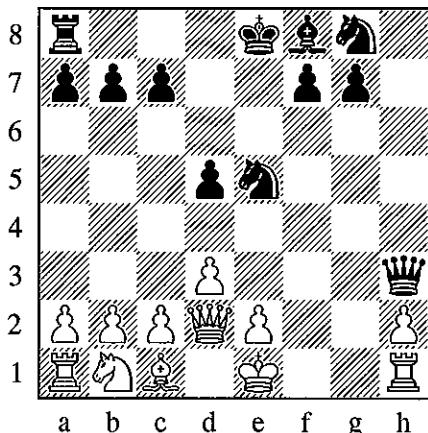
6.fxe5N

6.0–0? exf4 7.e4 $\mathbb{Q}c5\#$ soon led to a rout in Weisenburger – Pirrot, Bad Woerishofen 2015.

6... $\mathbb{Q}xh4!$ 7.gxh4 $\mathbb{W}xh4\#$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$

Black has a strong initiative and should at least be able to win back the material. For example:

9.d3 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 10. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2\#$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}g4\#$
12. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}h3\#$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$



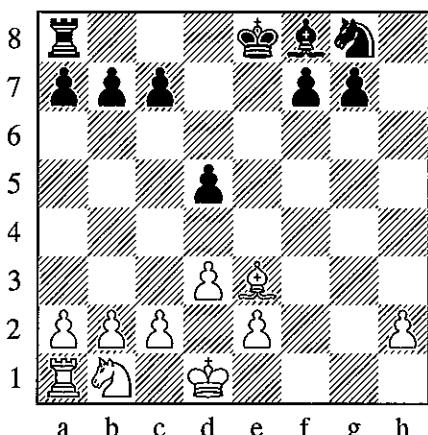
13... $\mathbb{W}h4\#$! 14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

14. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$ is even worse.

14... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}f2\#$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{W}xf2$

17. $\mathbb{W}e3\#$ $\mathbb{W}xe3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$

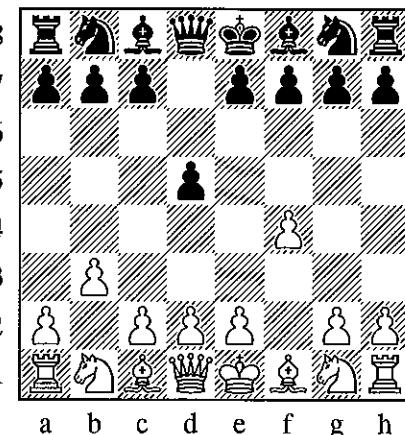
White has avoided the immediate danger to his king, but the weak h-pawn remains a problem for him.



18... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 19.h4 $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$

With a better endgame for Black.

B) 2.b3



White is going for a mix of Bird's Opening with the Larsen. He wants to take full control over the central e5-square.

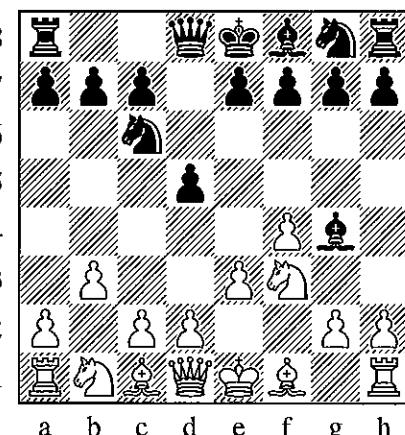
2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

Black is also determined to fight for the centre. I considered B1) 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ and B2) 3. $\mathbb{Q}b2$.

3.e3?! allows 3...e5 when Black is already better.

B1) 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 4.e3

4. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ transposes to 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ in the notes to variation B2 below.



4...e5! 5.fxe5 ♜xe5 6.♗e2 ♜xf3

This is the most straightforward option.

An interesting alternative is:

6...♜xf3† 7.♕xf3 ♜h4†

This leads to serious complications, although I would say Black is taking the greater risk. In any case, I will present my analysis so that you can make up your own mind.

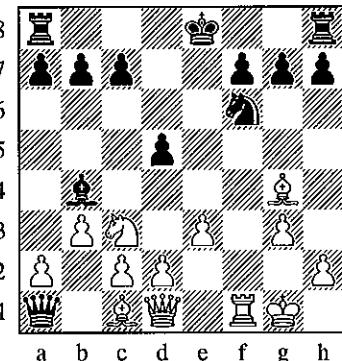
8.g3

8.♗f1? ♜f6† Sanchez Piquero – Castro Perez, Gijon 1994.

8...♜f6 9.♗xg4 ♜xa1 10.♗c3

Black has won an exchange but his queen is stranded, so he has to be extremely careful – especially after the following improvement for White:

10...♝f6 11.0–0 ♜b4

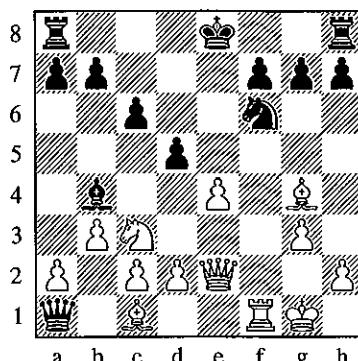


12.♗e2!N

12.♗xf6?! gxf6!N (This novelty is strongest, although 12...♜xc3 13.♗f1 ♜f6† was also better for Black in Petro – A. Horvath, Hungary 1995) 13.♗xd5 h5! 14.♗xc7† (14.♗f3? ♜d6–+; 14.♗h3? ♜a3–+ is the idea behind Black's previous move) 14...♝d8 15.♗d5 hxg4 16.♗xb4 ♜c8 and White does not have enough compensation for the two sacrificed exchanges.

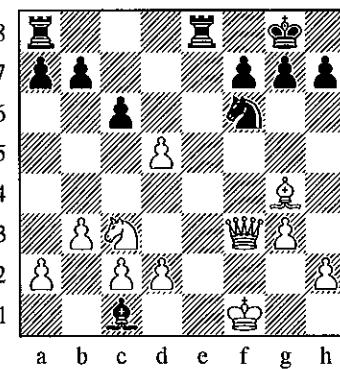
12.♗xd5!N is interesting, but it only leads to a draw after: 12...♝xd5 13.♗f3 0–0 14.♗xd5 ♜xa2 15.♗xb7 ♜a5 16.♗f5 ♜a1 17.♗f1 ♜a5=.

12...c6 13.e4



13...0–0! 14.♗a3! ♜xf1† 15.♗xf1 16.♗xd5 ♜fe8! 17.♗f3 ♜c1!

This clever resource is the only move which enables Black to retain the balance.



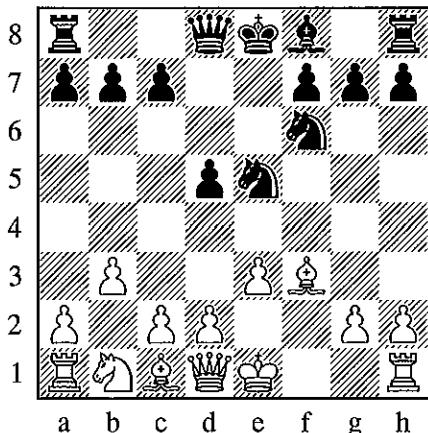
18.d3

Or 18.♗xc6 bxc6 19.d3 ♜d2 20.♗e4 ♜xe4 21.♗xe4 ♜ad8 and Black is okay.
18...♜d2 19.♗e4 ♜xg4! 20.♗xg4 f5! 21.♗f6† ♜h8 22.♗xf5 gxf6 23.♗xc6 bxc6 24.♗xf6† ♜g8 25.♗xc6

The position remains complicated but approximately balanced.

7.♗xf3 ♜f6

Black simply develops his pieces on natural squares, which seems a much easier approach than the line given in the previous note. We will follow a nice illustrative example.



8. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $c6$ 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 11. 0–0–0
0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $b5!$

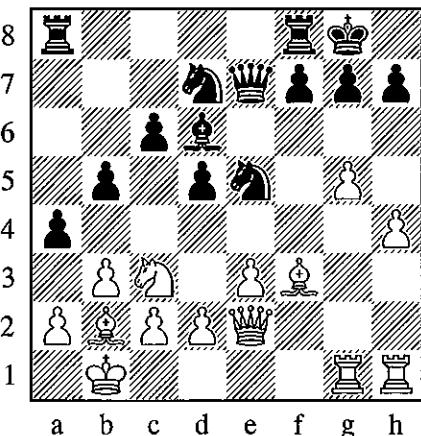
Launching an attack on the queenside. The position is pretty much a diagonal mirror image of the Yugoslav Attack versus the Dragon, but Black has a clear head start in the attacking race.

13. $g4$ $a5$ 14. $g5$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 15. $h4$ $a4$

Black's attack flows easily.

16. $\mathbb{Q}dg1?$!

This is too slow, but it is hard to offer much advice to White as he simply has a bad position.

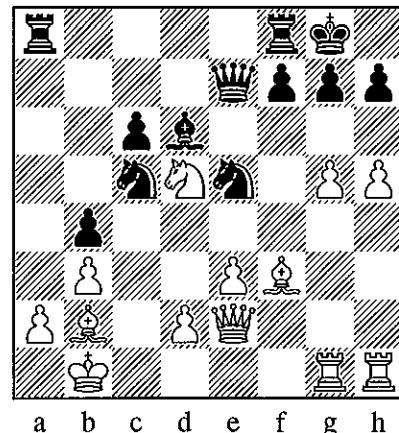


16... $axb3$ 17. $cx b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$

17... $\mathbb{Q}b6?$ is also good.

18. $h5$ $b4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$

This is White's last practical chance. Now in Chernyshov – Svidler, Voronezh (rapid) 2003, Black could have crowned his excellent play up to this point with:



19... $\mathbb{W}a7!N$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}fb8$

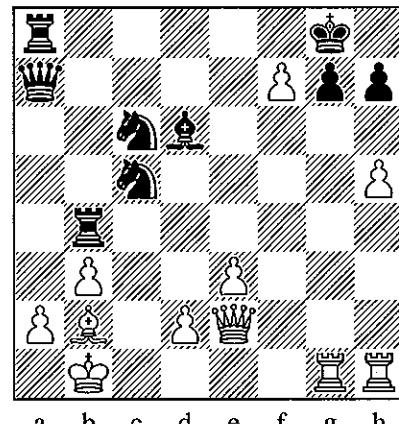
White's only chance is:

21. $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 22. $g6$

Perhaps this is what Svidler was worried about, but Black is winning with precise play.

22... $\mathbb{Q}xb4!$ 23. $gx f7†$

23. $gxh7†$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xg7†$ $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ wins easily.

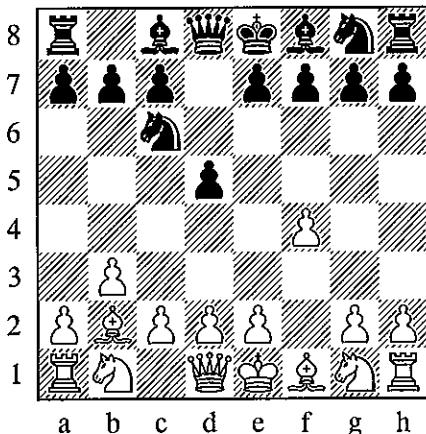


23... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xg7†$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 25. $\mathbb{W}f3†$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

But not 25... $\mathbb{Q}e8??$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xc6†$.

26.♕f6† ♔e8–+

The checks have run out, leaving Black two pieces up and with mating threats of his own.

B2) 3.♗b2**3...♗g4!?**

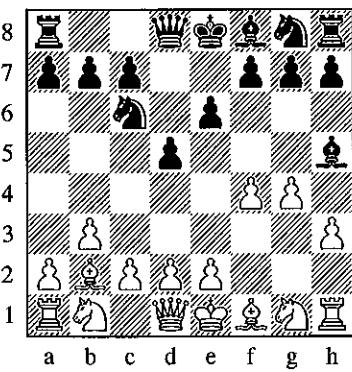
This rare continuation seems to promise Black easy play.

4.g3

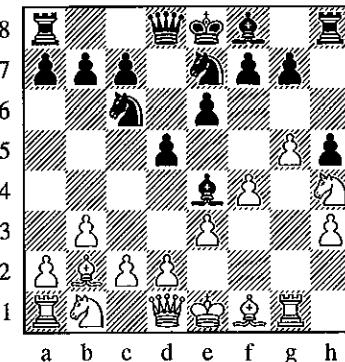
4.♗f3 can be answered by 4...♗xf3 5.exf3 ♖d6 6.g3 0–0–0 with a comfortable position for Black, in Sikorova – Sammalvuo, Istanbul 2003.

4.h3 ♗h5 5.g4 e6

5...♗g6 is likely to transpose after 6.♗f3 e6. Instead 6.f5? runs into 6...e6! intending 7.e4? (or 7.h4 ♗e7!?) 7...♗h4† 8.♗e2 exf5 9.exf5 0–0–0!–+ and Black launches a decisive attack.

**6.♗f3 ♗g6 7.e3 h5! 8.g5 ♗ge7! 9.♗h4 ♗e4****10.♗g1**

Lorincz – P. Petran, Budapest 1996.

**10...♗f5!N**

This seems like an obvious improvement, leading to a positional edge for Black.

11.♗xf5 ♗xf5†**4...e5!?**

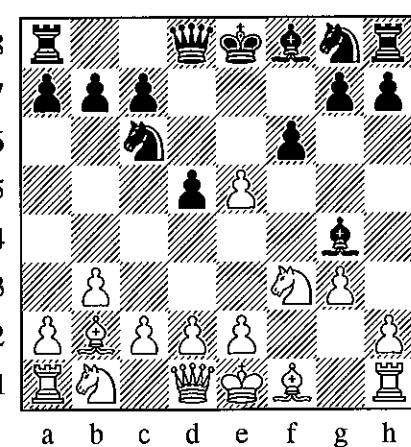
A promising pawn sacrifice.

4...f6!? is a reasonable alternative.

5.fxe5 f6 6.♗f3N

6.♗h3?! occurred in Kupreichik – Yusupov, Yerevan 1982, and now 6...h5!†N would have given Black a strong initiative, while White experiences problems with development.

The text move is a better try, but I still like Black's prospects after:

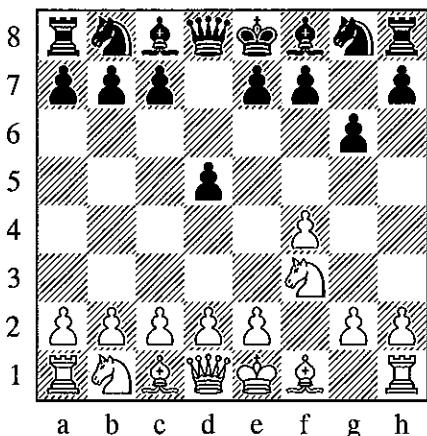


6... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 7. $\mathbb{B}g2$ 0–0–0 8.0–0 h5

With a promising initiative for the sacrificed pawn.

C) 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g6

2... $\mathbb{B}g4$ is an interesting alternative but I like the classical approach.



Now White must make an important choice, the two main options being C1) 3.e3 and C2) 3.g3.

An unorthodox alternative is:

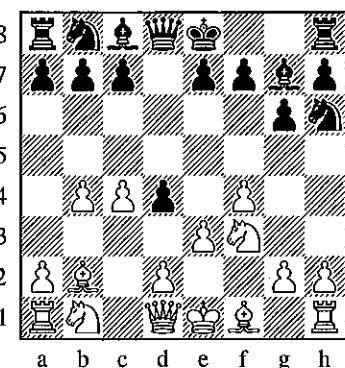
3.c4 d4

The most ambitious reply, although 3...c6 is also fine.

4.b4!?

White is trying to surround and capture the d4-pawn.

4... $\mathbb{B}g7$ 5. $\mathbb{B}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 6.e3



6...e5!

6...c5 7.bxc5 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ was a reasonable alternative in Vavra – Bazant, Czech Republic 2004, but the text move is more aggressive.

7.fxe5 dxе3 8.d4

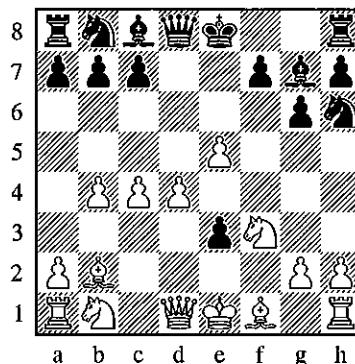
8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ exd2† 9. $\mathbb{Q}bx d2$ 0–0 10.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g4$

11. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\#$

8.dxe3 $\mathbb{W}xd1\#$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$

11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\#$ Black wins back a pawn and obtains better play.

We have been following Zhdanenia – Schulz, email 2012, and here I found a strong idea for Black:



8...g5!N

In the style of From's Gambit.

9.h3

9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ g4 10. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ f6! Undermining White's centre. 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0–0! and Black is fine.

9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ h5!

With the initiative.

C1) 3.e3 $\mathbb{B}g7$

Now White's two main options are C11) 4.d4 and C12) 4. $\mathbb{Q}e2$.

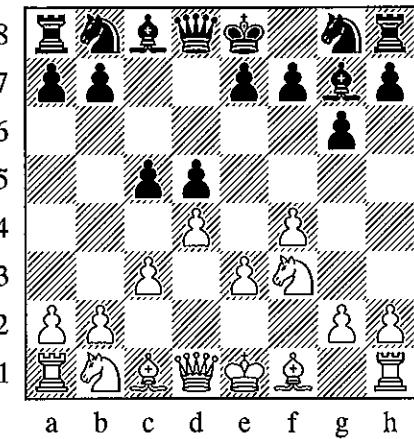
4.c4 can be safely met by 4...c6 or 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, but there is also the intriguing option of 4...d4!? 5. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 6.exd4 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ as in Straub – Krafzík, Merano 2001, when the loss of Black's dark-squared bishop is offset by White's damaged pawn structure.

C11) 4.d4 c5 5.c3

This way White plays the Stonewall system of the Dutch with reversed colours and an extra tempo.

5.c4?! cxd4 6.Qxd4 (or 6.cxd5 Qf6! 7.Qxd4 Qxd5??) 6...Qf6?? left the f4-pawn looking distinctly out of place in Schell – Birnbaum, Karlsruhe 2003.

5.Qe2 cxd4 6.exd4 Qc6 7.c3 (7.0–0 is covered on the next page; see 6.d4 cxd4 7.exd4 in the notes to variation C12) 7...Qg4 8.Qe5 (8.0–0 is the same transposition again) 8...Qxe2 9.Qxe2 e6 10.0–0 Qge7 11.Qd2 Qf5 Black has a comfortable position; the knight will go to d6 at some point, although Black does not have to hurry with it.



5...Qc7?!

5...Qf6 is also perfectly reasonable.

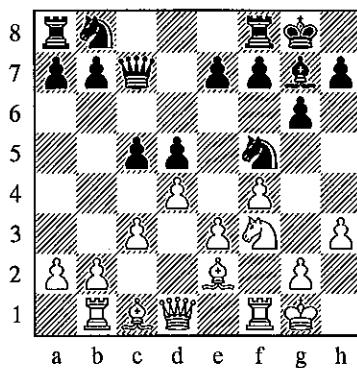
6.Qd3

In the event of 6.Qe2 Qh6 Black will not develop his light-squared bishop for a while, and will instead transfer his knights to d6 and f6 in order to establish firm control over the e4-square.

6...Qh6 7.0–0 Qf5 8.Qh4?!

8.Qb5† doesn't make much sense as after 8...Qd7 9.h3 Black answers with 9...c4!! and forces an exchange of White's light-squared bishop.

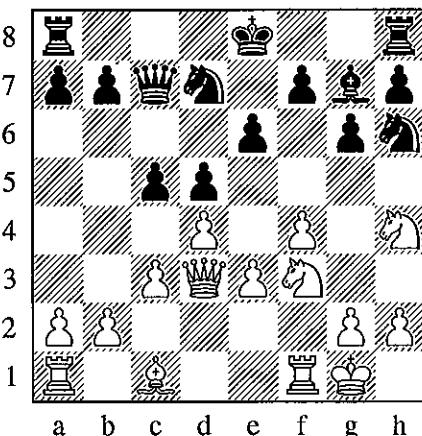
I think the as-yet-untested 8.Qe2N is White's best continuation. Nevertheless, Black is doing fine after: 8...0–0 9.h3 Qxb1? (9...Qc8? 10.g4 Qd8 is also reasonable) 10.Qxb1 Qf5



11.Qd3 e6 12.Qf2 Qd7! Black's knights are no worse than White's bishops in this closed structure.

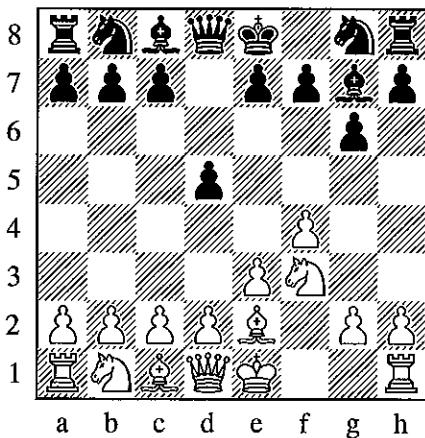
8...Qxd3 9.Qxd3 Qd7 10.Qd2 e6 11.Qdf3

This position was reached in Beaumier – Gulko, St Martin 1993. Now I prefer:



11...0–0N 12.b3 Qfc8??

With a positional edge for Black.

C12) 4.♘e2

This move generally leads to a reversed Classical Dutch.

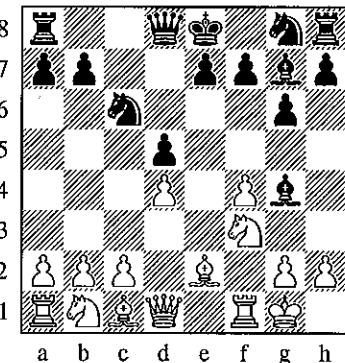
4...c5 5.0–0 ♘c6 6.d3

6.d4 cxd4

6...♗f6 is a reasonable alternative.

7.exd4 ♘g4!!

I like this idea of Makogonov, who was one of the strongest players in the world in the 1940s. Black's light-squared bishop is not especially useful, so he prepares to exchange it for the potentially strong knight on f3.



8.c3 ♘xf3

8...♗f6 was played in Bohatirchuk – Makogonov, Kiev 1938, but it seems simpler to remove the knight before it has a chance to move to e5.

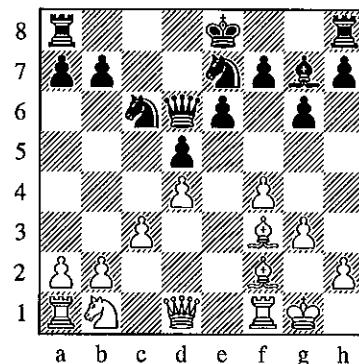
9.♗xf3 e6!

Choosing a flexible set-up with the knight on e7.

10.♗e3 ♗ge7 11.♗f2 ♖d6 12.g3

Or 12.♗d2?! h5 13.♗a3 ♗f5 with a comfortable position for Black.

This position was reached in Wood – Seirawan, Seattle 1994. Now I would like to offer for your attention:



12...h5!N

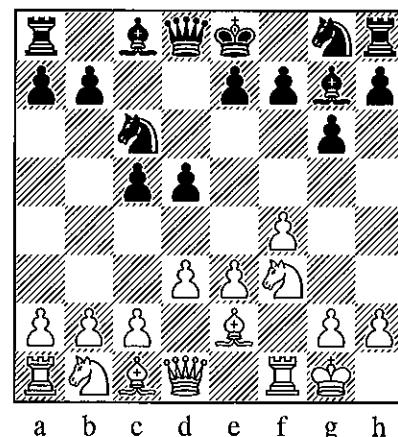
Threatening to open the h-file by means of ...h4, while keeping the option of queenside castling.

13.h4

This prevents any kingside attack, but now it's a good moment for Black to castle short.

13...0–0 14.♗d2 ♗f5†

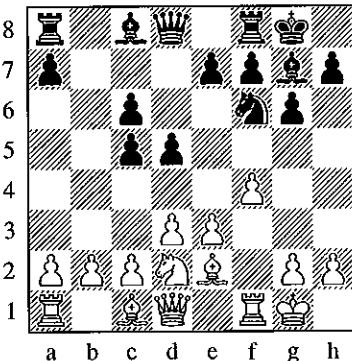
Black has a harmonious position, with a simple plan of preparing a minority attack on the queenside.



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

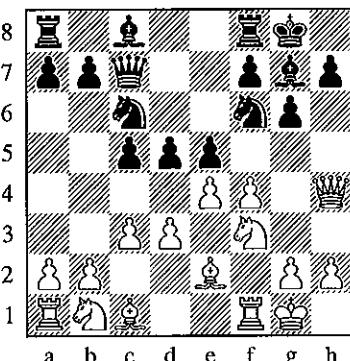
Now White's two main options are C121) 7.a4 0–0 and C122) 7. $\mathbb{W}e1$.

7. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 0–0 8. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ occurred in Hoang Nam Thang – Tran Vinh Loc, Dong Nai 1995, and now I like the direct:



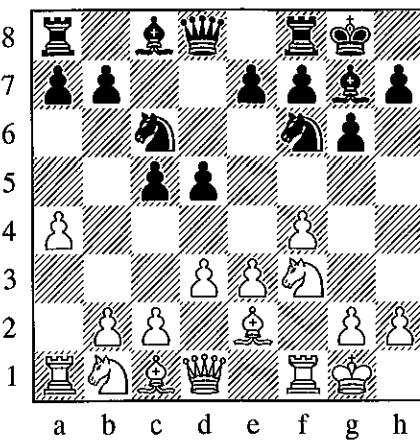
9... $\mathbb{W}e8$!N 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ With the idea of ...e5, 11.e4 (11.d4 a5! is also in Black's favour) 11...e5! 12.f5 gxf5 13.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and Black is better thanks to his good control over the centre.

White has also tried: 7.c3 0–0 8. $\mathbb{W}e1$ (8. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 9. $\mathbb{W}e1$ e5! Braun – Felber, Long Island 1997) 8... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 9. $\mathbb{W}h4$ e5 10.e4



This was Just – Noonan, Skopje 1972, and now 10...exf4!N 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$! would have favoured Black.

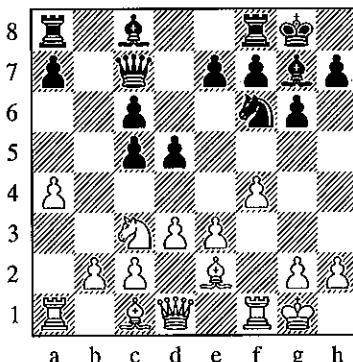
C121) 7.a4 0–0

8. $\mathbb{W}e1$

This looks like an odd follow-up to White's last move, but it is quite a popular approach in the Classical Dutch.

8. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ a6 9. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e5! gave Black an obvious advantage in Taylor – Golod, Las Vegas 2006.

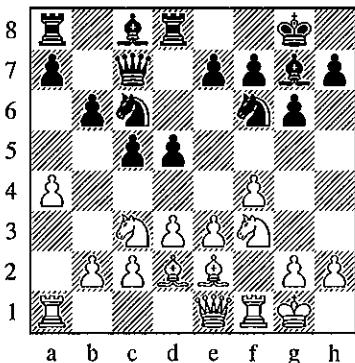
8. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$! (This looks more flexible than 8... $\mathbb{Q}d6$, which allows White to switch plans with 9.d4? under better circumstances) 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6! 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$



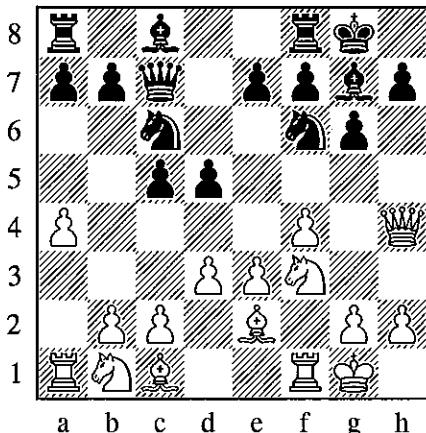
This position occurred in Navinsek – Kukovec, Ljubljana 2005, and now Black could have obtained the better chances with 10... $\mathbb{Q}d8$!N \bar{F} intending ...d4 at an appropriate moment.

8... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 9. $\mathbb{W}h4$

9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ was played in Paltrinieri – Dvirnyy, Montecatini Terme 2011. Here I would like to offer 9... $\mathbb{E}d8!?$ N with the possible follow-up: 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ b6! (The most accurate, as the immediate 10...a6 gives White a chance to play 11.a5!)



11. $\mathbb{E}c1!?$ (11. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ is conveniently met by 11... $\mathbb{W}b8$ followed by ...a6) 11...a6 Taking away the b5-square and thus preparing ...d4. 12.e4 dxе4! 13.dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ 14.e5 $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5\#$ and the weak light squares yield Black some advantage.

**9...a6!?**

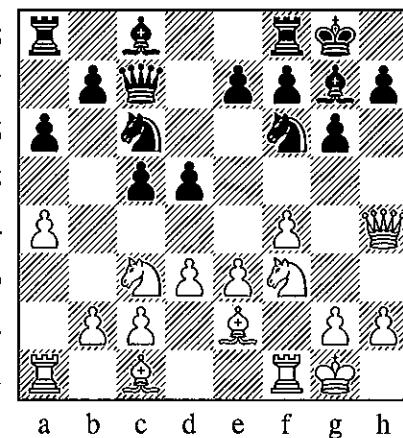
Prophylaxis against 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$.

9... $\mathbb{E}d8$ is a reasonable alternative.

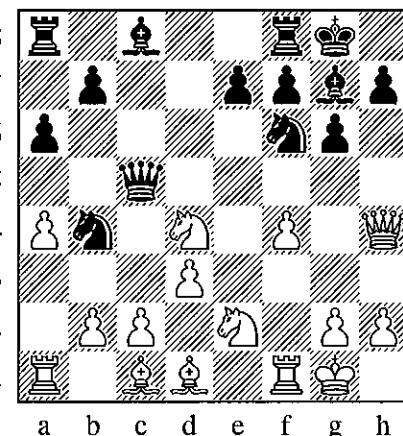
10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ N is well met by 10... $\mathbb{E}f5!$ intending ...c4, and if 11.c3 $\mathbb{E}ad8\#$ Black is better.

Now in Gavritenkov – Poley, Tula 2000, Black should have continued:

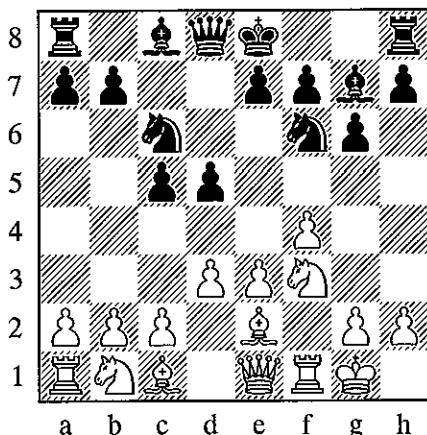
**10... $\mathbb{Q}b4!N$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ d4!**

With the following point:

12.exd4 cxd4 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ **14... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 15.c3 $\mathbb{Q}xd3\#$**

Black wins back the pawn and obtains a clear advantage.

C122) 7.♕e1



This is the most popular continuation. Nevertheless, despite being a tempo down, Black has no problem handling the transfer of the queen to h4.

7...0-0 8.♕h4

8.a4 leads back to the previous variation.

8.♗bd2 ♖c7 9.♕h4 transposes to the note to White's 9th move below.

8..♖c7

Other moves are possible, but it is always useful to control e5.

9.♗c3

9.♗bd2

This allows Black to cause problems with:

9...♗g4! 10.♗b3N

10.♗g5 was played in Vreeken – Gresser, Split 1963, but it isn't dangerous in view of the simple 10...h5!N 11.♗b3 c4! 12.dxc4 dxc4 13.♗xc4 ♗b4!.

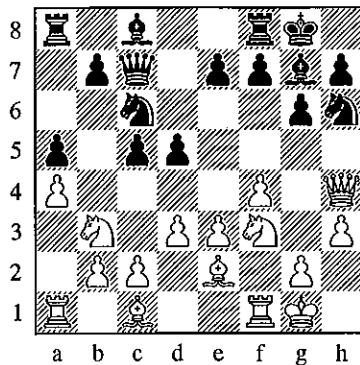
10...a5!

Underlining the unfortunate position of the knight on b3.

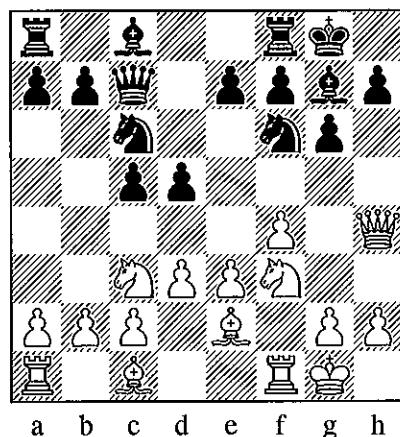
11.h3

11.a4 d4!; 11.♗xc5 is met by 11...♗b4!, both here and on the next move.

11...♗h6 12.a4



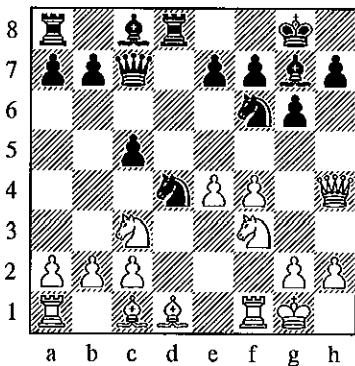
12...♗b4! 13.c3 ♗xd3! 14.♗xd3 c4! Regaining the piece with some advantage.



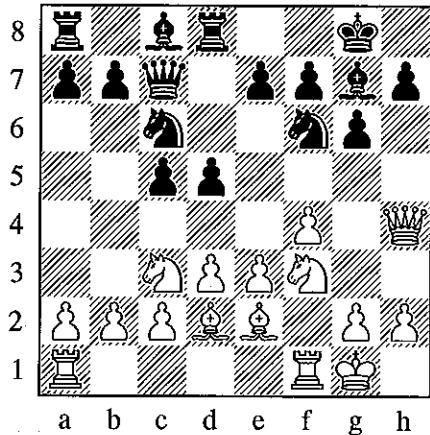
9...♗d8! 10.♗d2

10.a4 a6 11.♗d2 occurred in Rhodes – Stephan, corr. 2007, and now 11...d4N is similar to our main line.

10.e4 dxe4 11.dxe4 ♗d4 12.♗d1 was played in Rotstein – K. Andersen, Dresden 2012, when Black could have seized the initiative with:



12...b5!N 13.e5 b4 14.exf6 (if 14.Qa4 Qd5# Black is extremely active) 14...Qxf3# (avoiding 14...Qxf6 15.Qg5) 15.Qxf3 Qxf6+



10...d4 11.Qe4?

11.Qd1N is better, although Black retains the upper hand after 11...dxe3 12.Qxe3 Qd5#.

11...dxe3 12.Qxe3 Qd4#

Black's advantage was unquestionable in Shtembuliak – Arabidze, Illichevsk 2008.

C2) 3.g3 Qg7 4.Qg2

This set-up means that White is playing a Leningrad Dutch with reversed colours and an extra tempo.

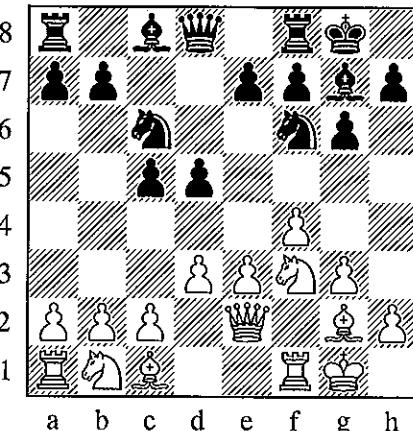
4...Qf6

Another possible move order is 4...c5 5.0–0 Qc6 6.d3 Qf6.

5.0–0 0–0 6.d3 c5

White has four main options: C21) 7.e3, C22) 7.Qc3, C23) 7.c3 and C24) 7.Qe1.

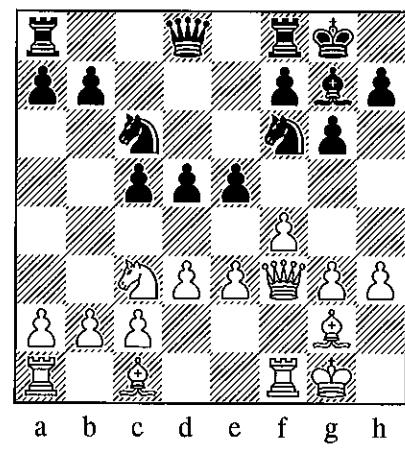
C21) 7.e3 Qc6 8.Qe2



Against this rare line I would like to recommend a straightforward plan.

8...Qg4!? 9.h3 Qxf3 10.Qxf3 e5 11.Qc3

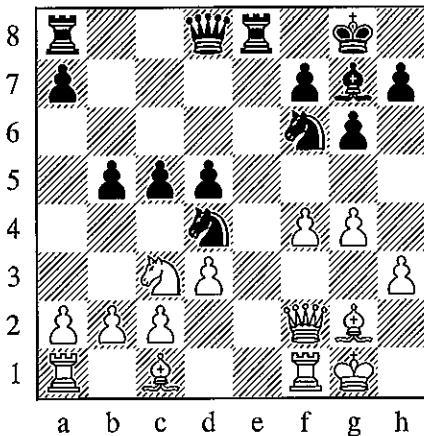
11.fxe5 Qxe5 12.Qf2 occurred in Popchev – Lajthajm, Stara Pazova 2001. Now I would like to offer 12...Qc8!!N 13.Qc3 Qd7 14.Qe2 Qfe8, with the idea of ...c4, with roughly equal chances.



11...exf4 12.exf4

Or 12.♘xf4 d4 13.exd4 ♖h5! 14.♗f2 ♖xd4 15.♕e3 f5!? and Black is doing well.

12...♗d4 13.♗f2 ♕e8 14.g4 b5?!



15.♕e3?!

15.g5? is wrong in view of 15...♗h5 16.♗xd5 b4! 17.♗xa8 bxc3 18.♗e4 ♗f5! 19.bxc3 ♗xc3--+ with decisive threats.

15.a3 is the lesser evil, although the initiative is still on Black's side after: 15...b4! 16.axb4 cxb4 17.♗xd4 bxc3 18.♗xc3 ♗xg4 19.d4 ♗h6± Followed by ...♗f5.

15...♗xc2 16.♗xc2 ♕xe3 17.g5 ♗h5 18.♗xd5

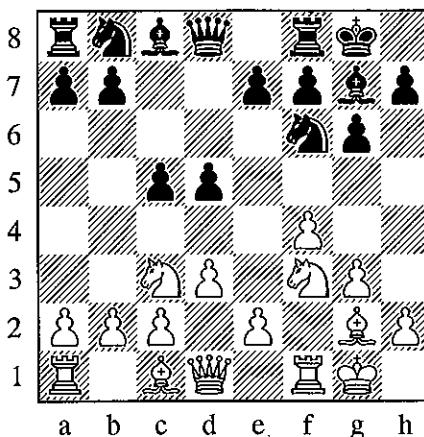
In Healey – Raoof, England 2010, Black missed a strong idea:

18...♗d4!#N

With a powerful initiative.

C22) 7.♗c3

White invites us to advance the d-pawn, so we will oblige him,



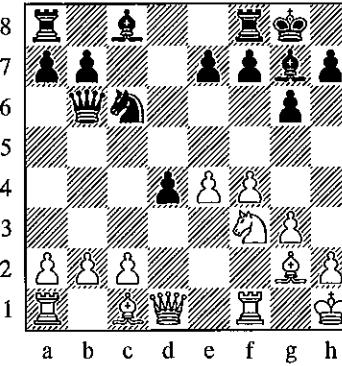
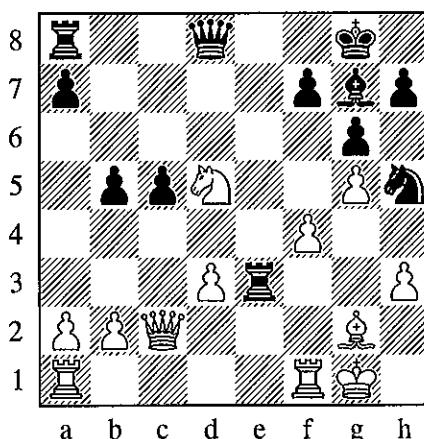
7...d4 8.♗a4

The alternative is:

8.♗e4 ♗xe4 9.dxe4 ♕b6! 10.e3

Practice has also seen 10.h3 ♗c6 11.g4 ♗e6 12.a3 (or 12.f5 ♗c4 followed by ...♗a6 and ...c4) 12...♗a6? 13.♗h1 ♕ad8 14.♗e1 ♗b4 15.♗d1 ♗a2! 16.f5 (16.♗d2 ♗c3#) 16...♗xc1 17.♗xc1 ♗c4 with a decisive advantage for Black in Jakubiec – Hera, Oberwart 2007.

10...♗c6 11.exd4 cxd4 12.♗h1

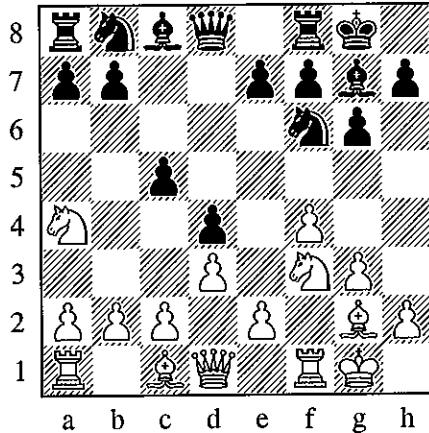


12... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 13.h3

In Hartmann – Egger, Bavaria 2002, Black should have played:

13... $\mathbb{Q}e6!N$

With a superior position; the additional h2-h3 move has caused a slight loosening of White's kingside.



8... $\mathbb{W}a5!$ 9.c4

9.b3 weakens the c3-square. 9... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ 12. $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ with a slight edge for Black thanks to the holes on e3 and c3.

9... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$

With this and the following move, Black takes full advantage of the fact that the c6-square has not yet been occupied by the b8-knight.

10.b3 $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ 11.e4

Or 11. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ with a comfortable position.

11...dxe3 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$

12. $\mathbb{W}xe3?!$ is strongly met by 12... $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$.

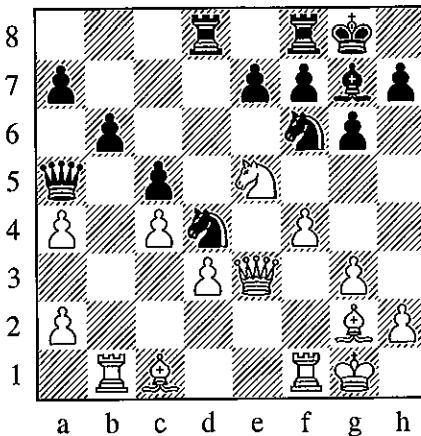
12... $\mathbb{Q}xa4$

12... $\mathbb{W}c7?!$ is a good alternative but the text move is simpler.

13.bxa4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. $\mathbb{B}b1$ b6 15. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$

16. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8\#$

Black is better as he is about to win the a4-pawn, while the d4-knight is excellent. It is worth mentioning the following tactical point.

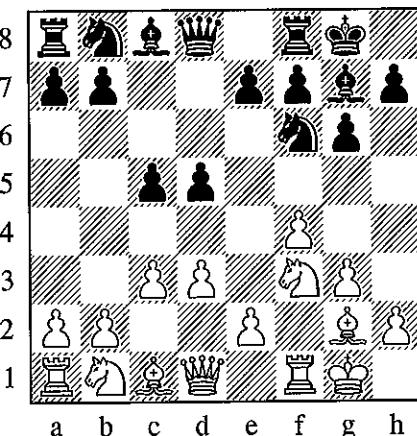


17. $\mathbb{Q}c6?$

Attempting to avoid the loss of a pawn leads to even greater problems for White.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ 19. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$

C23) 7.c3

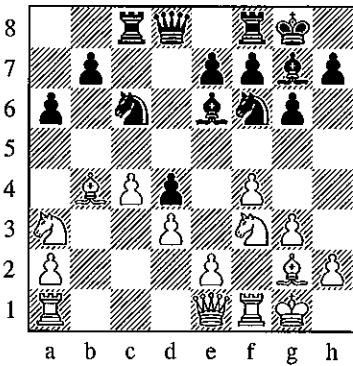


Nakamura has used this line in a few of his blitz games. However, the real specialist is the Icelandic GM Henrik Danielsen.

7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

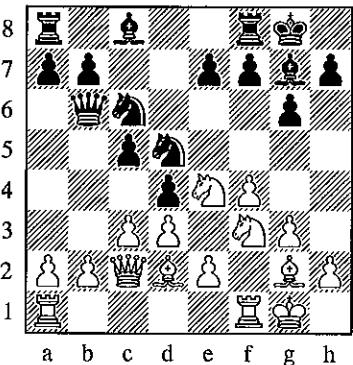
The knight is heading for c2 – a typical manoeuvre in these positions.

8. $\mathbb{W}e1$ d4! As a general rule, Black will play this move whenever White is ready to play e2-e4. 9. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (or 10. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{W}d7!$?N 11.c4 $\mathbb{B}ab8$ followed by ...b5) 10... $\mathbb{B}c8$ 11.c4 a6 12.b4 cxb4 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$



13... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ b5!= With an obvious advantage for Black, Wenzel – T.L. Petrosian, Dubai 2013.

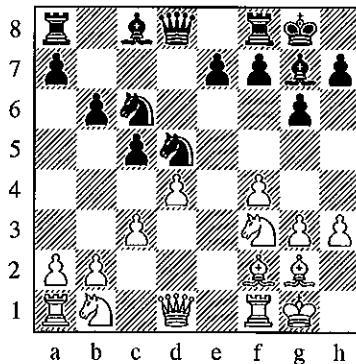
8. $\mathbb{W}c2$ is another attempt to prepare e2-e4, so... 8...d4! 9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ (9.e4?! is dubious in view of 9...dxe3 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d1?$ c4+) 9... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ Here I found an improvement over Van Rekom – Van Kampen, Twente 2007:



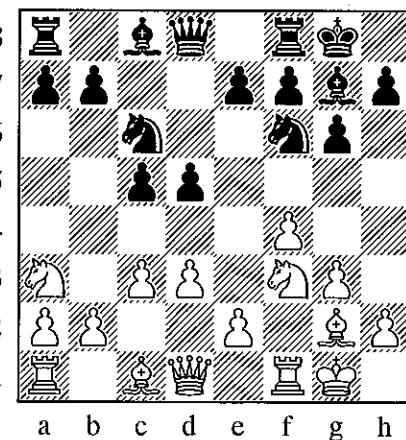
11...c4?!N Utilizing the position of the queen on the same diagonal as the white king. After

12. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ cxd3 13.exd3 $\mathbb{Q}f5\bar{f}$ followed by ... $\mathbb{B}ac8$ Black is better.

8.h3 d4 9.e4 (9. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ occurred in Timoshenko – Novikov, Philadelphia 1999, and now the simple 10...e5!N leads to Black's advantage) 9...dxe3 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ b6 11.d4 (or 11. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{B}ad8$ with roughly equal chances) 11... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f2$



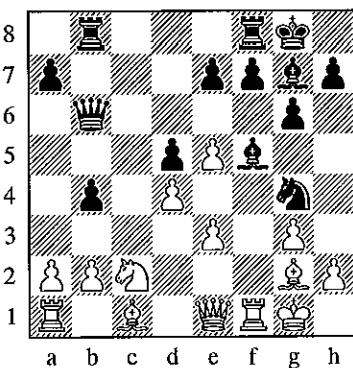
This was M. Ivanov – Murzin, Belgorod 2009, and now 12...cxd4?!N 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ e6= reaches a balanced position.



8... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

In the event of 9. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ I would like to offer 9... $\mathbb{W}d6$!N, a useful move which covers the e5-square. Play may continue 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ b5 11.b4 cxb4 12.cxb4 d4! followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ and Black is fine.

9. $\mathbb{W}e1$ b5 10. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ b4 11. $\mathbb{Q}e5!$! (11. cxb4 is better, although after 11... cxb4 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a5 13. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ Black retains a slight edge) 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 12. fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13. cxb4 cxb4 14. d4 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 15. e3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ †



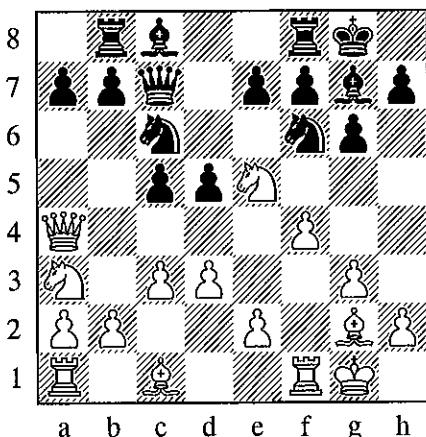
Black is already doing well, and after the further 16. $\mathbb{W}d1?$ $\mathbb{Q}bc8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e1?$ $\mathbb{Q}h6+$ his advantage was decisive in Nakamura – Svidler, Moscow (blitz) 2010.

9... $\mathbb{W}c7$

Challenging the knight.

10. $\mathbb{W}a4!$?

As played in Danielsen – Lauber, Germany 2001. Here I found a nice idea for Black:



10... a6! N

But not 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 11. fxe5 $\mathbb{W}xe5??$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$.

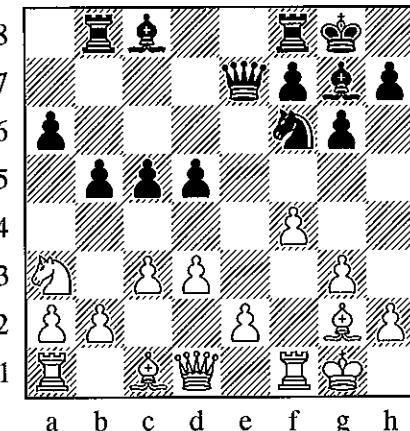
11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

This is the only move that makes any sense.

11... b5!

11... bxc6 is decent for Black but the pawn sacrifice is just too tempting.

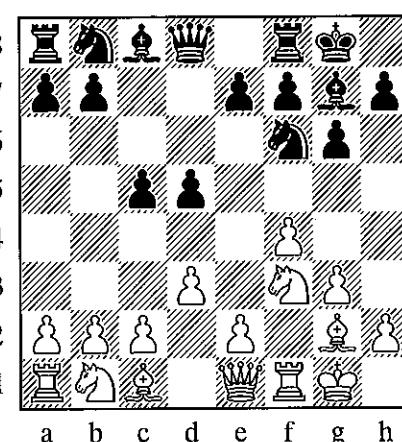
12. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d1$



13... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ h5!

Black has a serious initiative for the pawn.

C24) 7. $\mathbb{W}e1$



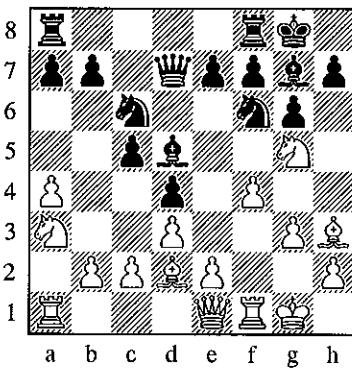
Kamsky played this a couple of times in 2010, and it's a typical move in the Leningrad set-up. White is preparing e2-e4, so our next move should be obvious.

7..d4

Preparing to take the e-pawn en passant. White sometimes plays C241) 8.e4 anyway, but the main line is C242) 8.Qa3.

8.c3 Qc6 has been covered on page 50 under the 7.c3 Qc6 8.We1 d4 move order.

8.a4 Qc6 9.Qa3 Qe6!! Black prepares ...Wd7, while the bishop is ready to come to d5 when necessary. 10.Qd2 This position has occurred at least three times in the praxis of one of the world's top female players, Anna Muzychuk. 10...Wd7 11.Qg5 Qd5 12.Qh3 Now in A. Muzychuk – Stefanova, Beijing (blitz) 2012, Black could have seized the initiative by means of:



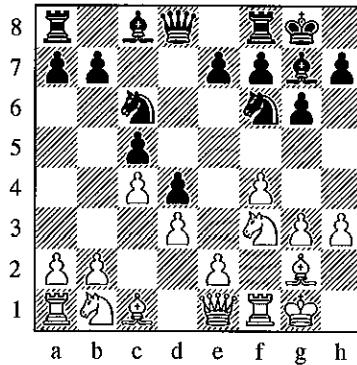
12...Qg4!N 13.c4 dxc3 14.bxc3 h6 15.Qf3 Qad8 With the idea of ...Qfe8 and ...e5.

8.c4

This has been a favourite line of the Uruguayan GM Rodriguez Vila. White's idea is to prepare b2-b4.

8...Qc6 9.h3

9.Qa3 prepares the thematic transfer of the knight to c2. I would like to answer it with a new idea: 9...Qe8?!N Preparing ...e5. 10.Qc2 a5 11.h3 e5 12.fxe5 Qxe5 13.Qxe5 Qxe5 14.Qf4 Qe7! Followed by ...Ra6 and pressure along the e-file.

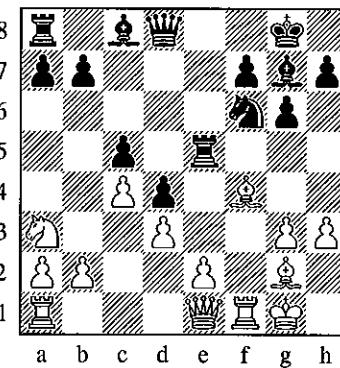


9...Qe8?!

Black prepares ...e5, a thematic move for these positions which allows him to get closer to the backward pawn on e2.

10.Qa3 e5 11.fxe5 Qxe5 12.Qxe5 Qxe5 13.Qf4

Now in Rodriguez Vila – Abdalla, Sao Bernardo do Campo 2012, Black missed a strong idea:



13...Qh5!N 14.Qxe5 Qxe5 15.Qf3

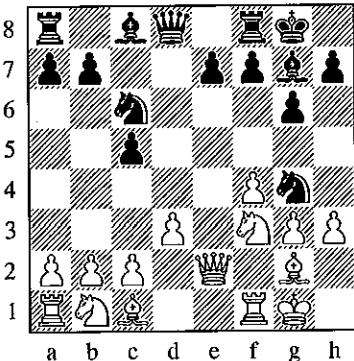
15.g4 Qf4 also gives Black a strong attack.

15...Qd7

With an extremely strong initiative due to the weakness of the dark squares.

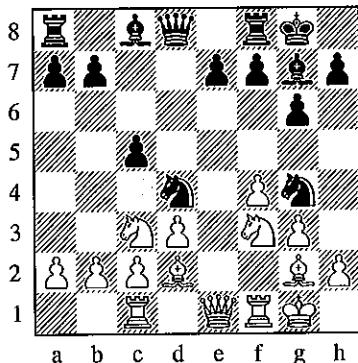
C241) 8.e4 dxe3 9.Qxe3

9.Wxe3 Qg4 10.We2 Qc6 11.h3 occurred in Pareja Alvarez – Esquivias Gomez, San Sebastian 2008. Now the correct knight retreat was:



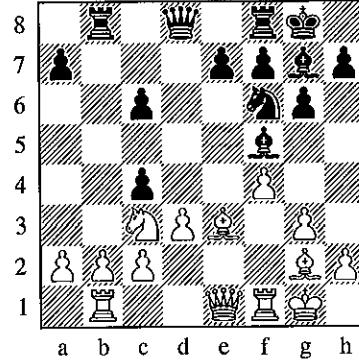
11... $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ N Followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$, with a slight superiority for Black.

9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ occurred in Sadykov – Mikhailova, Sukhumi 2006, and now I prefer:

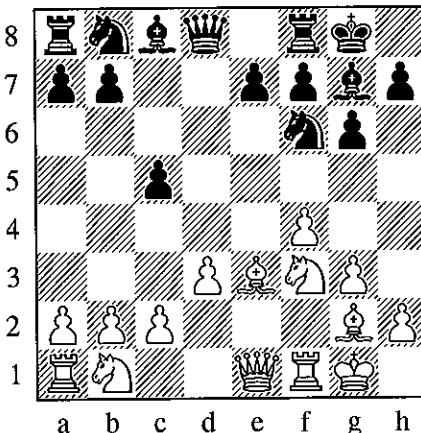


12... $h5!$ N Securing the f5-square and retaining slightly better chances.

9. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ can be strongly answered by the unexpected 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ N (9... $\mathbb{Q}fd7?$ was also reasonable in Blatny – Babula, Zlin 1998) 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bxc6$ The pressure along the b-file and the h8-a1 diagonal is annoying for White, for example: 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (after 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{B}b8!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $c4$ 13. $dxc4$ $\mathbb{W}d4\#$ Black regains the pawn with a comfortable position) 11... $\mathbb{B}b8!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $c4!$



14. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{B}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $cx d3$ 16. $cxd3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$ Black wins an exchange.



9... $\mathbb{Q}g4!?$

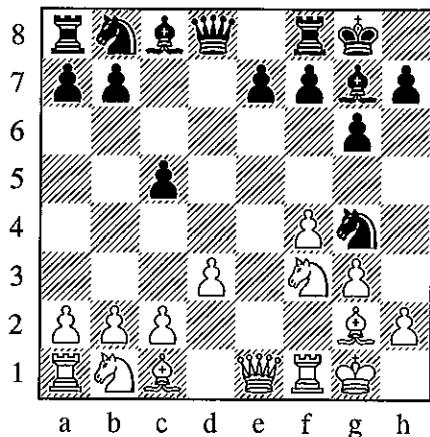
9... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ also gave Black a decent position in Munoz Orts – Barcelo Pujadas, Calvia 2007, but I like the idea of sending the knight towards f5.

10. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

10. $\mathbb{Q}c3??$ loses to 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4!$.

10. $\mathbb{Q}e5!?$ N $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 11. $fxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ gives White some compensation for the pawn, but Black definitely should not be worse.

This position was reached in Schmikli – Buzeti, Hungary 2012. I would like to recommend what has by now become a familiar plan for us:



10...h5!N

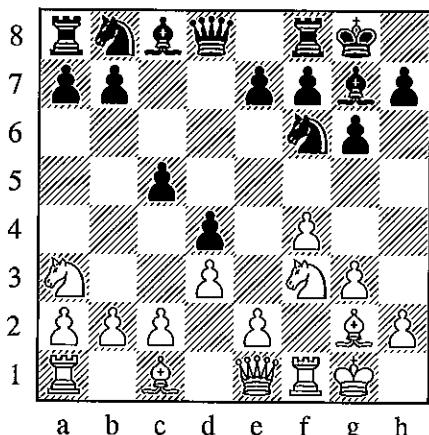
Securing the future outpost for the knight on f5.

11.h3 ♜h6

Followed by ...♜c6 and ...♞f5, with slightly better chances for Black.

C242) 8.♞a3

This is the most popular move, improving the knight and avoiding any committal pawn moves for the moment.

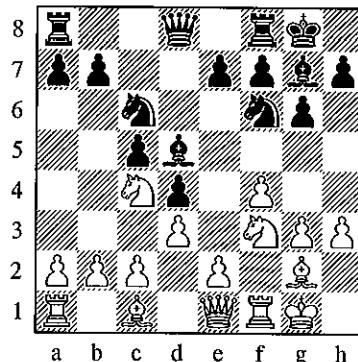


8...♞c6 9.♝d2

9.c3 transposes to 8.♗e1 d4 9.♞a3 in the notes to variation C23.

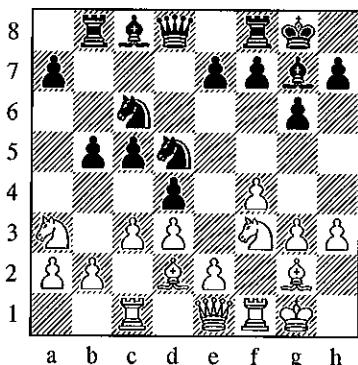
9.c4 has been covered on page 52 – see 8.c4 ♜c6 9.♞a3 in the notes to White's 8th move.

9.♞c4 ♜e6 10.h3 ♜d5 is fine for Black. An instructive mistake is:



11.e4? Now in Reinderman – Ni Hua, Beijing (blitz) 2008, it seems that both players missed 11...♝xe4!N† when Black wins a pawn for nothing.

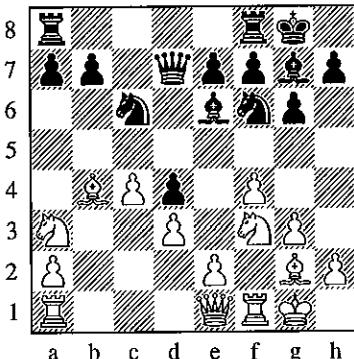
9.h3 ♜d5?! 10.♝d2 ♜b8 11.c3 b5 12.♝c1 (or 12.c4 bxc4 13.♝xc4 e6 with a slight edge for Black) Gelashvili – Tiviakov, Saint Vincent 2000. Now I would like to recommend:



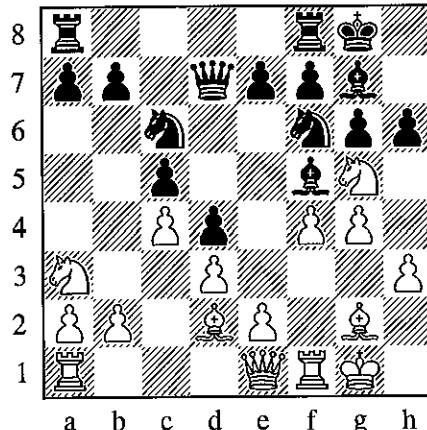
12...e5!N 13.c4 bxc4 14.♝xc4 exf4 15.gxf4 ♜ce7!† The knight is heading for f5, with an obvious advantage for Black.

9...♜e6 10.c4 ♜d7 11.♝g5

I also checked: 11.b4N cxb4 12.♝xb4



12... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}e6!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bxc6$ and Black is better thanks to the weakness of the e3-square.

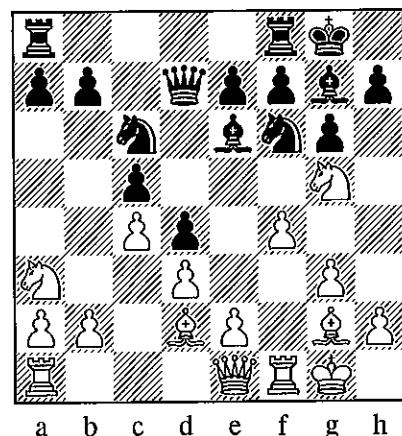


13... $\mathbb{Q}xg4!N$ 14. $hxg4$ $hxg5$ 15. $fxg5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$
16. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $f5!+$

With a healthy extra pawn.

Conclusion

Bird's Opening is a serious system which shouldn't be underestimated. Most of the variations remind us of the Dutch Defence with reversed colours and an extra tempo for White. This is not a bad outcome at all though. True, we obviously can't press for an advantage in the way that we might do with the white pieces. Nevertheless, the Dutch is an opening with certain positional deficiencies, which are not suddenly eradicated by one extra tempo. So although White is not objectively worse with correct play, we should still be happy to reach a sound, active position with the black pieces, with reasonable practical chances to take over the initiative, as demonstrated in many of the lines in this chapter.



11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12. $h3?$

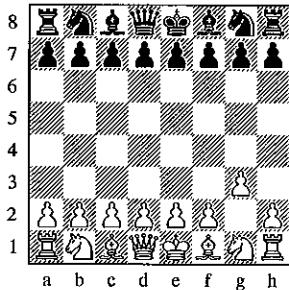
White should have tried 12.b4, though after 12... $cxb4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $h6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}fe8!$, followed by ...e5, Black is still better.

12... $h6$ 13. $g4$

Now Black's play in Johannessen – Bjerke, Gausdal 1995, can easily be improved by means of:

Chapter 3

Various 1st Moves



1.g3

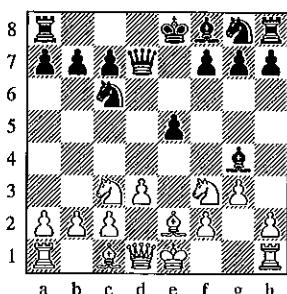
Variation Index

1.g3

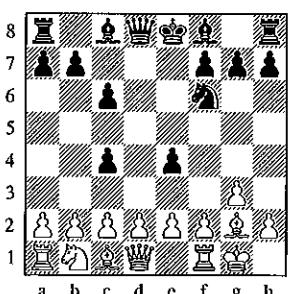
1...e5

A) 2.e4?!	57
B) 2.♘f3?!	58
C) 2.d4!? exd4	60
C1) 3.♘f3	60
C2) 3.♗xd4	62
D) 2.♗g2 d5	63
D1) 3.♘f3	64
D2) 3.c3	65
D3) 3.d4	66
D4) 3.c4	67
D5) 3.d3 ♘f6 4.♘f3 ♗d6!?	70
D51) 5.c4	72
D52) 5.0-0	74
D521) 6.c4	74
D522) 6.♘bd2	77
D523) 6.♘c3	79

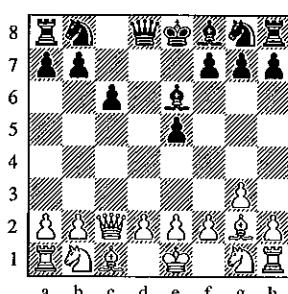
A) After 7.d3



B) note to 8.b3



D4) after 6.♗c2



7...0-0-0!N

8...h5!N

6...♘h6?N

1.g3

This is not a bad move at all, and it can easily transpose to other openings such as the English or Reti. The only drawback of White's first move is that it gives Black the freedom to occupy the centre whichever way he wishes. My recommendation is:

1...e5

I analysed four options: A) 2.e4?!, B) 2.Qf3?!, C) 2.d4? and D) 2.Qg2.

2.c4 transposes to Chapter 7.

2.d3 d5 has no real independent significance. For example: 3.Qf3 (3.Qg2 leads straight to variation D5) 3...Qd6 White surely has nothing better than 4.Qg2, when 4...Qf6 transposes to variation D5.

A) 2.e4?!

This is a rather ill-fated attempt to transpose to a 1.e4 e5 system such as the Vienna or Glik Four Knights. However, Black can ruin White's plan with:

2...d5!

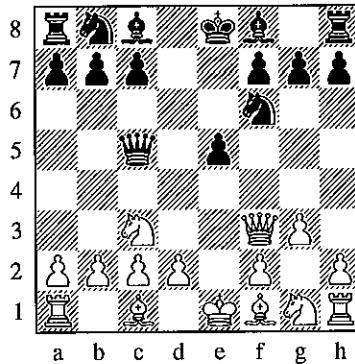
Taking advantage of the weakened kingside. For some reason, in the majority of games Black has allowed White's move order to go unpunished with 2...Qf6, 2...Qc6 or 2...Qc5.

3.exd5

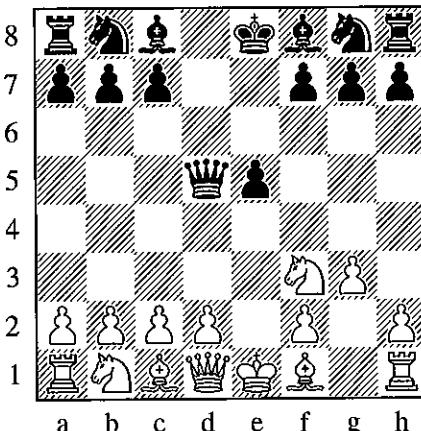
3.Qg2?! doesn't make much sense as White wastes too much time on bishop moves. 3...dxe4 4.Qxe4 (4.Qc3?!) is the best try, but after 4...f5 5.d3 exd3 6.cxd3 Qf6 7.Qf3 Qd6# White does not have enough for the sacrificed pawn) 4...Qf6 5.Qg2 Qc5 Black already had an obvious advantage in Bergmann – Stern, Berlin 2010.

3...Qxd5 4.Qf3

4.Qf3 occurred in Vukelic – Sekulovska, Skopje 2010, when 4...Qc5!N 5.Qc3 Qf6 would have left the white queen exposed to attacks from the black pieces. For example:



6.Qg2?!, Qc6 7.d3 Qd4 8.Qd1 Qg4#; or 6.Qb5† c6 7.Qd3 Qg4 8.Qg2 Qbd7#; or 6.Qh3?!, Qc6 7.Qxc8 Qxc8# and Black is at least slightly better in all cases.

**4...Qg4! 5.Qe2**

5.Qg2? from Polk – R. Klinger, Bergen 2005, loses immediately to 5...e4!N 6.Qe2 (6.Qc3 runs into 6...exf3! 7.Qxd5 fxg2 and Black wins.) 6...Qd8! 7.Qc3 exf3 8.Qxd5 fxe2+ and Black is a piece up for nothing.

5...Qc6

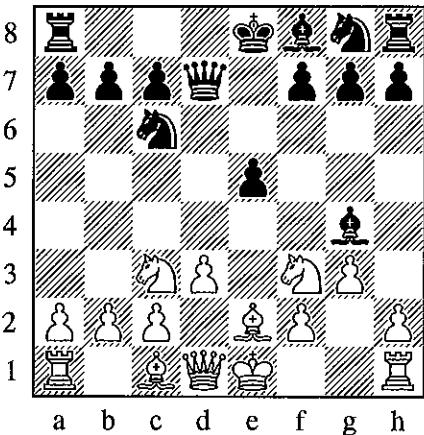
Now 5...e4? 6.Qc3 exf3?? doesn't work in view of the intermediate 7.Qb5†+–.

6.♕c3

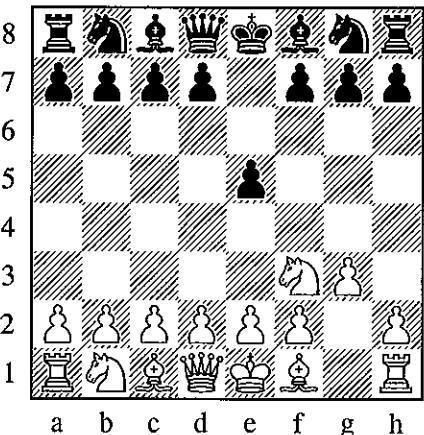
6.h3 ♕f5 7.♕c3 ♖d7 8.♕b5 0–0–0!† is also better for Black.

6...♖d7 7.d3

This position occurred in Tuominen – Pietinen, Finland 1991. I would like to offer a simple improvement:

**7...0–0–0!N 8.0–0 f5†**

With an obvious edge for Black.

B) 2.♕f3?!

This surprising idea was introduced at Baden-Baden 1925 by the Czech innovator, Richard Reti, against none other than Alekhine himself! White is playing Alekhine's Defence

with g2-g3 as an extra move. Nevertheless, he can hardly hope for an opening advantage.

2...e4

This is the most principled continuation, although there is also nothing wrong with 2...♕c6, which was played by Rabinovich against Reti later in the same tournament.

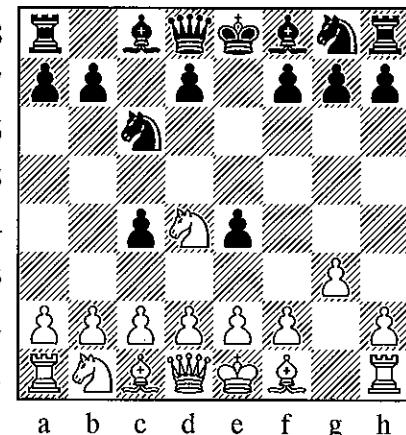
3.♕d4 c5?!

I believe this is the most suitable choice in terms of leading to a position where g2-g3 is of little use to White.

3...d5 was played by the fourth World Champion. 4.d3 exd3 5.♖xd3?! (5.cxd3 is better) 5...♕f6 (5...c5!N 6.♕f3 ♕f6 7.♕g2 ♕c6† promises Black better chances) 6.♕g2 ♕b4†? 7.♕d2 ♕xd2† 8.♕xd2 and White was okay in Reti – Alekhine, Baden-Baden 1925.

4.♕b3 c4 5.♕d4 ♕c6

A similar set-up with reversed colours is well known. It's actually not such a great line for White against the Alekhine, but it's an excellent choice against the g2-g3 version; now e2-e3 will lead to a serious weakening of the light squares, and in some variations Black can use the g3-pawn to launch an attack with ...h5-h4.

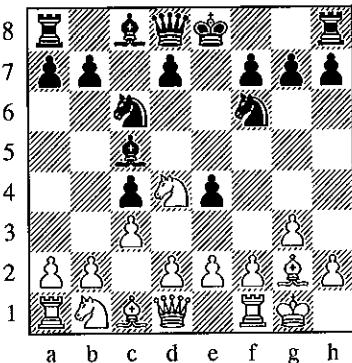


6.♕xc6

White has also tried:

6.c3 ♕c5 7.♕g2 ♔f6 8.0–0

Now I would like to bring to your attention the natural improvement:



8...d5!N

8...♕xd4 9.cxd4 ♕xd4 10.d3!N (10.♕a4?! 0–0 11.♕xc4 ♕b6 12.d4 d5† was better for Black in Wohl – Hamdouchi, Gibraltar 2003) 10...d5 11.dxc4 dxc4 12.♕a4† ♕d7 13.♕xc4 is roughly equal.

9.♕xc6 bxc6

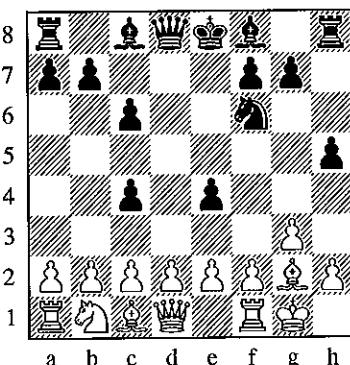
We have transposed to the following recent game.

10.b3 0–0! 11.bxc4 dxc4 12.♕a3 ♕d5†

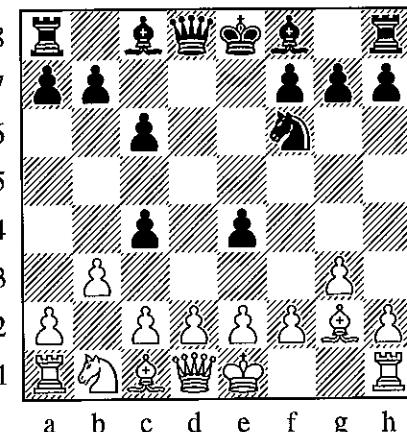
Black's doubled pawns are not really weak, and White was seriously cramped in Durarbeyli – Kharlov, Kazan 2013.

6...dxc6 7.♕g2 ♔f6 8.b3

8.0–0 occurred in Durarbeyli – Abasov, Baku 2011, when Black could have launched a direct attack: 8...h5!N



9.d3! The best try, adhering to the principle of meeting a flank assault with a counterattack in the centre. Nevertheless, after 9...cxd3 10.exd3 exd3 11.cxd3 ♕e7 12.♕e1 ♕e6 13.♕c3 h4 14.♕f4 ♕f8 Black's king is safe enough, and Black's position is slightly better thanks to the isolated pawn on d3.



8...h5!N

Once again, this surprising attack is Black's best continuation.

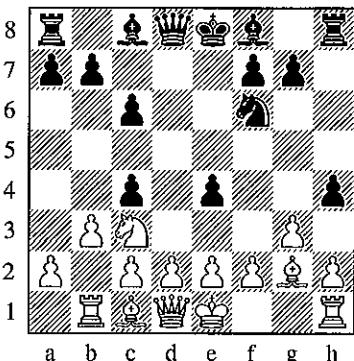
That being said, 8...cxb3 9.axb3 ♕c5 10.♕c3 0–0 11.♕b2 ♕e8 was also not bad at all for Black in Prusikin – Murdzia, Griesheim 2004.

9.h3

This is a natural reaction, preparing to meet ...h4 with g3-g4. Nevertheless, the inclusion of these pawn moves has helped Black to soften White's kingside. Let's check some of White's other ideas:

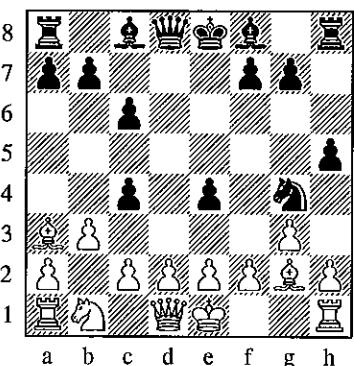
9.♕b2 h4 10.bxc4 h3 11.♕f1 ♕g4† with more than sufficient compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

9.♕c3 h4 10.♕b1 (10.♕xe4?? loses to 10...♕xe4 11.♕xe4 ♕d4+–)

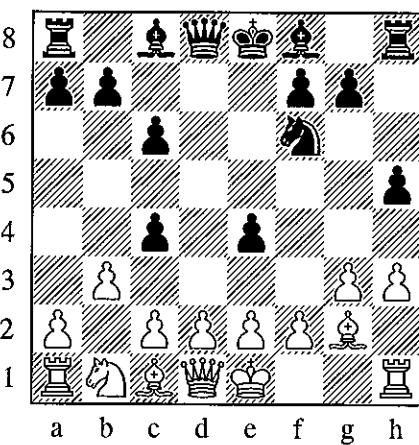


10...e3! Black has an extremely strong attack, for instance: 11.fxe3 (or 11.dxe3 $\mathbb{W}a5\#$) 11...hxg3 12.hxg3 $\mathbb{W}xh1\#$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xh1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$

Finally, 9. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ is well met by 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ with the following idea:



10. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{W}d4!$ 11.0–0 $\mathbb{W}xa1$ With a material advantage.



9... $\mathbb{W}a5!$

A beautiful resource! White's best reply is:

10.e3

Black's idea is to meet 10.bxc4 with 10...e3! 11.fxe3? $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$.

10.0–0? is even worse due to 10...h4 11.g4 $\mathbb{W}e5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ with a decisive attack.

10...cx b3 11.cxb3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$

Black retains the upper hand thanks to the backward pawn on d2, which can easily be targeted along the open d-file.

C) 2.d4?

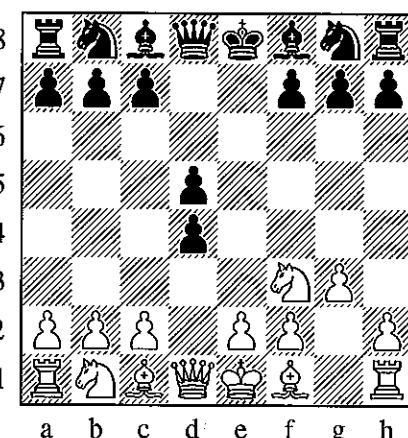
This reversed Scandinavian was another interesting invention of Richard Reti.

2...exd4

Now it is worth considering the two typical Scandinavian moves: C1) 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ and C2) 3. $\mathbb{W}xd4$.

C1) 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

I don't see much point in trying to hold on to the extra pawn.



4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6.0–0 0–0

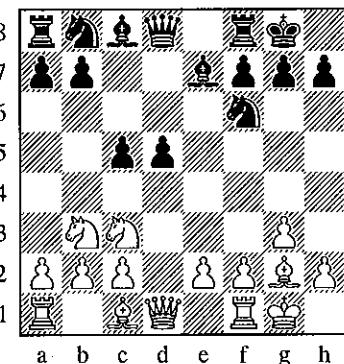
White is a tempo up on the black side of a popular line of the Scandinavian. However, this is less of a problem than you might think.

7.♘f4

A natural alternative is:

7.♘c3 c5 8.♗b3

If the b8-knight was on c6, we would have a popular position with colours reversed. As we will soon see, there are actually some advantages that come with the knight's presence on b8.



8...♗e6!?

The only game in this line continued: 8...d4 9.♘a4? (9.♘e4N was necessary, with a roughly equal position.) 9...♗a6! And the a4-knight was a problem for White in Moffat – Manouck, Mermaid Beach 1998.

9.e4

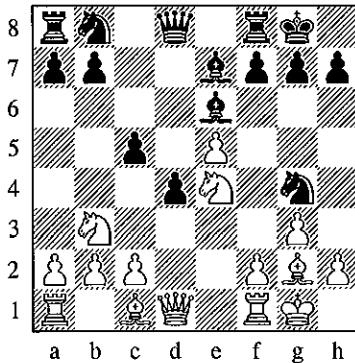
A key point is that 9.♘g5 isn't dangerous because of 9...♗bd7! – an important resource which yet again shows that being a tempo down is not all bad.

9...d4 10.e5

10.♗e2 ♗c6 is fine for Black.

10...♗g4 11.♗e4

In the event of 11.♗xb7 ♗d7! 12.♗d5 (12.♗xa8? ♖xa8† leads to an extremely strong attack) 12...♗b8 13.♗xe7† ♖xe7 14.♗g2 ♗gxe5 Black's chances are higher.



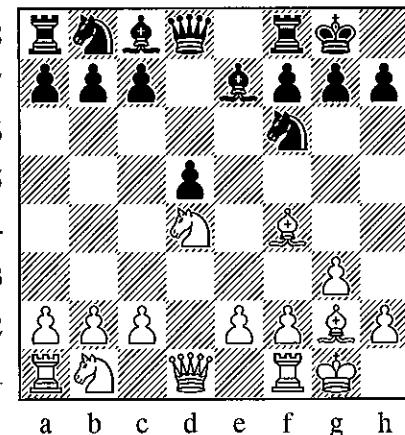
11...♗d7 12.f4 ♗h6! 13.c3 ♖b6! 14.♗f2

14.cxd4 is strongly met by 14...c4!.

14...♗f5

And Black is fine.

The text move was played in was Stevic – Martinovic, Sibenik 2009. I would like to recommend:



7...♗h5!?

This seems safest to me. The only practical drawback is that it might lead to an early repetition of moves.

7...c5 8.♗b3 ♗c6 9.♗c3 ♗e6 10.♗g5 is more complicated, despite the fact that White has lost a tempo on ♘c1-f4-g5 moves. Nevertheless, the position is playable for both sides, and you could consider playing this way if you are unhappy with the prospect of

an early repetition. If you wish to study the position in more detail, you should search for it with reversed colours, as it has occurred many times via the Scandinavian.

8.♗e3

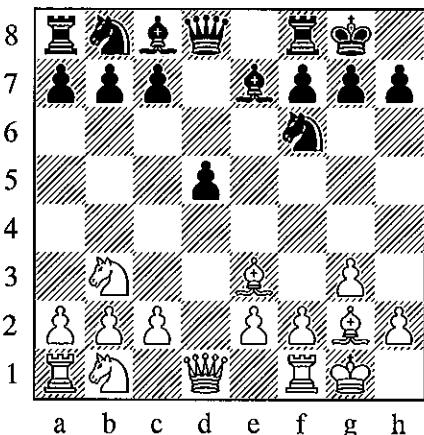
8.♗c1 ♗f6 is hardly an improvement for White.

8...♗f6!?

The loss of a tempo is no problem for Black, as White's bishop is not really any better on e3 than on c1.

9.♗b3

9.♗c3? is impossible as 9...c5 10.♗b3 d4 wins a piece, which explains my previous comment.



9...a5!?

This seems like an appropriate reaction to White's last move.

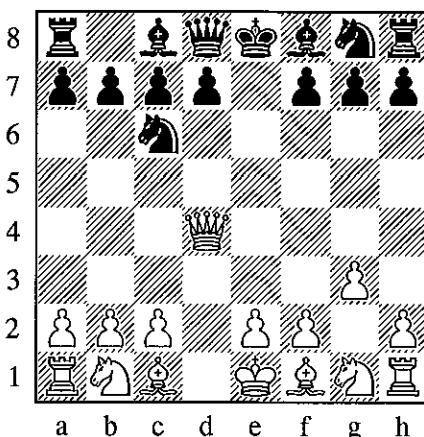
10.a4

10.c4 dxc4 11.♗d2 ♗d5 12.♗xc4 ♗e6 gives Black a comfortable position.

10...♝e8 11.♗a3 c6 12.c4 ♗g4 13.h3 ♗h5

Black has no problems.

C2) 3.♗xd4 ♗c6



4.♗a4

I also checked:

4.♗d1

This is a pet line of WGM Chelushkina.

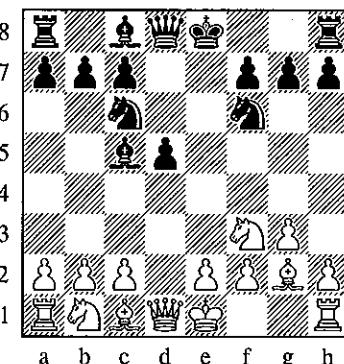
4...♗f6 5.♗g2 d5!?

This seems to be the most accurate move order. Quite surprisingly, it has never been tested in tournament practice.

If Black starts with 5...♗c5 then White may be tempted to try 6.♗h3!?, although Black had no particular problems after 6...0-0 7.0-0 ♜e8 8.♗c3 h6 9.♗f4 d6= in Gochev – Todorov, Borovetz 2002.

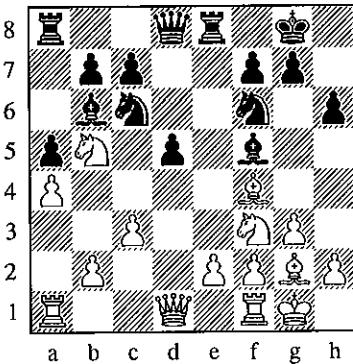
6.♗f3 ♗c5

This position has occurred in practice via the 5...♗c5 6.♗f3 d5 move order.



7.c3 0-0 8.0-0 h6 9.a4 a5

9...a6!? also deserves attention, keeping the b5-square under control.
 10.♕a3 ♜f5 11.♕b5 ♜e8 12.♕f4 ♜b6†



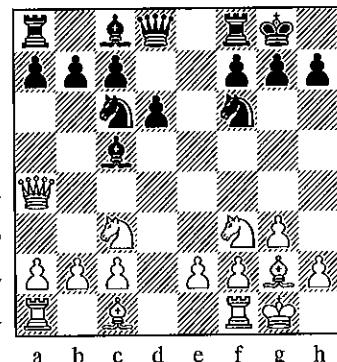
Superior central control gave Black the better chances in Chelushkina – M. Maric, Valjevo 2011.

4...♞f6

The stem game continued 4...♞c5 5.♗g2 ♔ge7 (5...♞f6 would transpose to our main line) when Black's knight was slightly misplaced in Reti – Sämisich, Baden-Baden 1925.

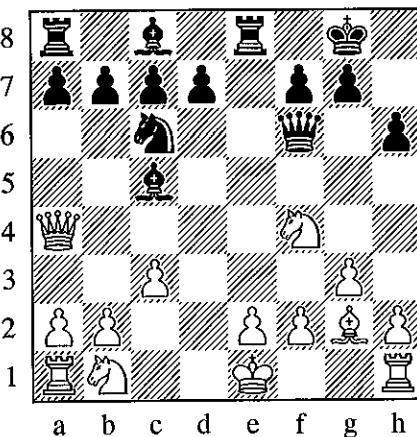
5.♗g2 ♞c5 6.♗h3

6.♗f3 0–0 7.0–0 d6 (there is also nothing wrong with 7...d5) 8.♗c3 occurred in Jitovsky – Seifert, Czechoslovakia 1992, when the most accurate continuation would have been:



8...h6! N† Preventing ♘g5, with a nice position and easy development for Black.

6...0–0 7.♗c3 ♜e8 8.♘g5 h6 9.♘xf6 ♜xf6
 10.♘f4



This position was reached in Aleksandrov – Shulman, Minsk 1996. I would like to recommend:

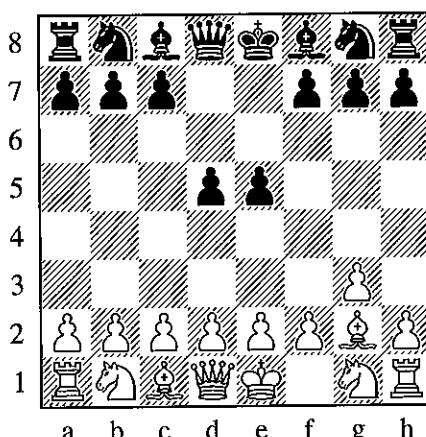
10...g5!N

The point is that White needs to defend f2, so the knight has to move away from the d5-square.

11.♘d3 ♜b6 12.♘d2 d6†

Followed by ...♞d7, with two bishops and a healthy position for Black.

D) 2.♗g2 d5



The most logical. White is allowing us to occupy the centre with our pawns, and there is no reason to decline the invitation.

I considered five main options: D1) 3.♘f3, D2) 3.c3, D3) 3.d4, D4) 3.c4 and D5) 3.d3.

3.b3 ♘f6 4.♗b2 ♘c6 is covered in variation B of the next chapter.

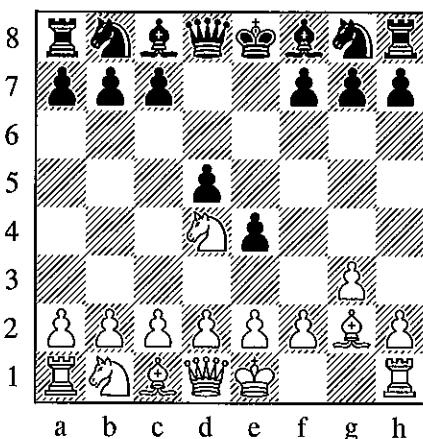
D1) 3.♘f3

This line was introduced by the great Bent Larsen and it worked extremely well for him. Later, however, Black found good ways to deal with it.

3...e4

The most natural answer.

4.♘d4

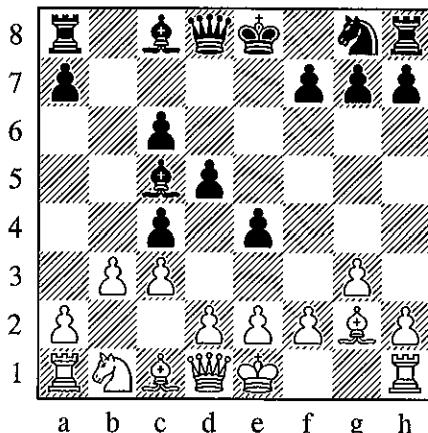


4...c5

Just as in variation B, chasing the knight works well.

5.♘b3 c4 6.♘d4 ♘c5 7.c3 ♘c6 8.♘xc6 bxc6 9.b3

9.0–0 ♘f6 transposes to the note to White's 6th move in variation B.



9...♘f6!N

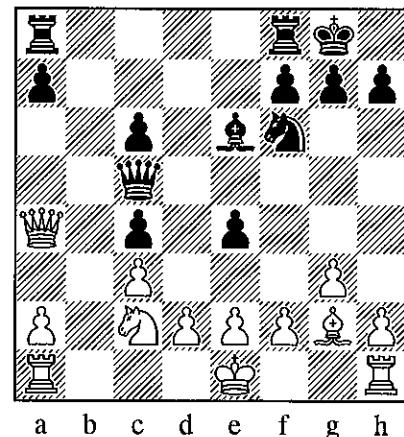
It's important to leave a pawn on c4 to keep the d2-pawn fixed.

9...cx b3 10.ax b3 h5 led to a quick win in one game, but White's play can be improved. 11.♘a3?! (11.d3?! was better, with a complicated position after 11...♗f6 12.♘f4 ♘h6) 11...♗b6 12.h4 ♘h6 Black soon won, although the position isn't too bad for White yet, Hulak – Beliavsky, Pula 2000.

10.bxc4

10.♘a3 ♘e7 11.♘xc5 ♘xc5 12.bxc4 dxc4† leads to a similar situation (12...♗xc4? 13.d3 exd3 14.exd3 ♘a6† is also interesting).

10...dxc4 11.♘a4 ♘d5 12.♘a3 0–0 13.♘xc5 ♘xc5 14.♘a3 ♘e6 15.♘c2



15... $\mathbb{Q}ab8!$ 16.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}b2!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}fb8$
18. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2\#$

And Black's chances remain higher, thanks to the weak pawn on d2.

D2) 3.c3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4.d4

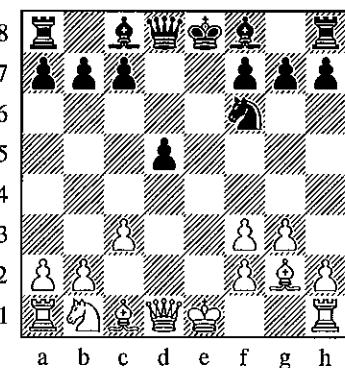
Now we have a reversed Gurgenidze variation of the Caro-Kann.

4... $\mathbb{Q}bd7?$

I've decided to choose this rare move as it has a simple idea behind it. If White exchanges on e5, Black will get easy development with chances to claim a slight edge. There is another benefit of the text move, which will become clear a few moves later in the main line below.

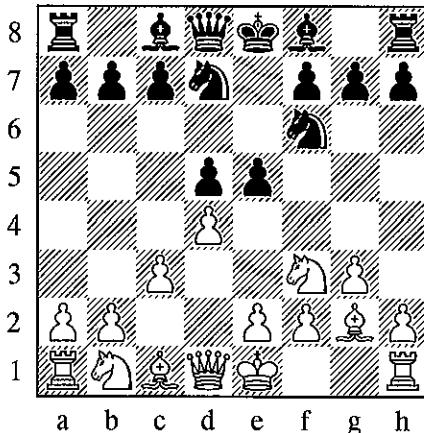
5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

5.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (after 6. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}gf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ c6 9.0–0 0–0 it's White who has to fight for equality, Reschke – Perlitz, Frankfurt 2011) 6... $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 7.exf3? This occurred in Oganian – Gukasian, Anapa 2008, and now I would like to offer the simple:



7... $\mathbb{Q}e7?N$ 8.0–0 0–0 with a comfortable position for Black.

The text move was played in Staller – Bhend, Bad Ragaz 1991. I would like to improve with:

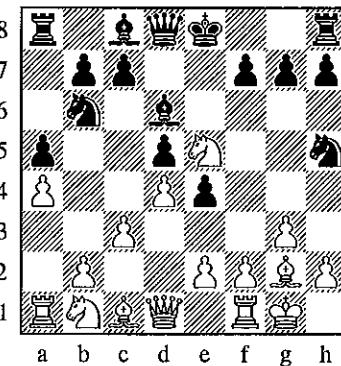


5... $\mathbb{Q}e4!N$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$

One of the benefits of the knight on d7 is that Black can play this way without suffering from doubled pawns, as would have been the case if Black had played 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$. Moreover, the c6-square is left for the black c-pawn in order to put a solid barrier in front of the g2-bishop.

7. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$

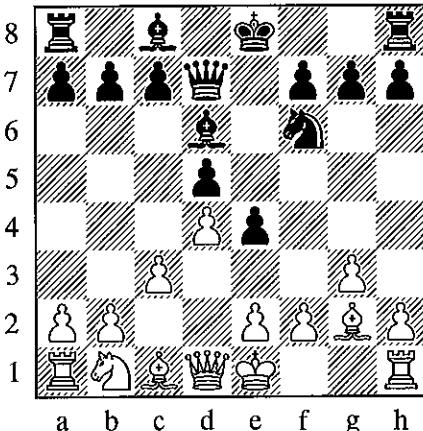
7. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ can be met by: 7... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ 8.a4 a5 9.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ (10.e3 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 11.exf4 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ c6 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ f6 15. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$ and I prefer Black)



10...f6 11.e3 $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 12.fgx3 fxe5 13.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}c5\#$ Black is better thanks to his strong centre and the vulnerable pawn on e5, while the check on h5 doesn't cause any damage.

7... $\mathbb{W}xd7!?$

This looks odd, but I want to prevent the $\mathbb{Q}g5$ pin.



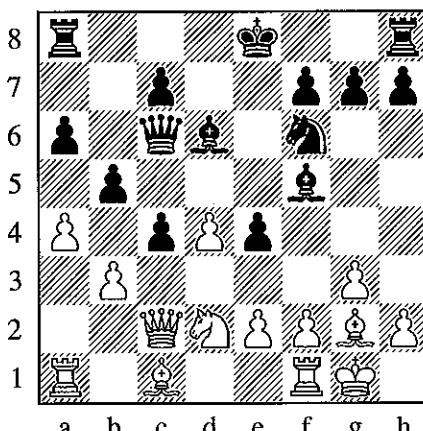
8.c4

8. $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$ $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ is the point of Black's previous move, bearing in mind that 9.h3? is refuted by: 9... $\mathbb{Q}xf2!$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{W}f5\uparrow$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $g5-$

8...dxc4 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 11.0-0

11. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\uparrow$ would be annoying for White.

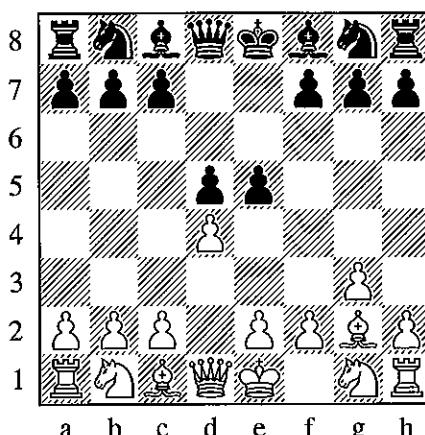
11...b5 12.a4 a6 13.b3



13...c3! 14.axb5 axb5 15. $\mathbb{E}xa8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 0-0

Black has a more pleasant position thanks to his space advantage.

D3) 3.d4



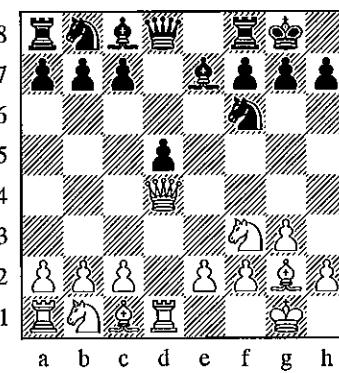
This move was yet another Reti invention.

3...exd4

Black might also consider 3...e4!?, when 4.c4 c6 reaches the English Opening – see variation B of Chapter 8.

4. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

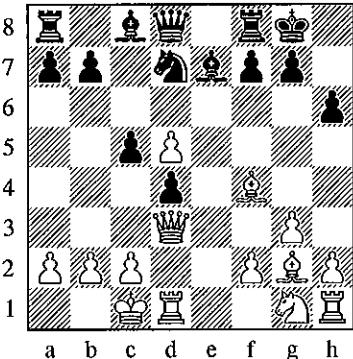
5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6.0-0 0-0 7. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ occurred in Cvorovic – Dizdarevic, Solin 1994. Black's play can be easily improved by means of:



7...c5!N 8. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\bar{f}$ Black is better thanks to his strong centre.

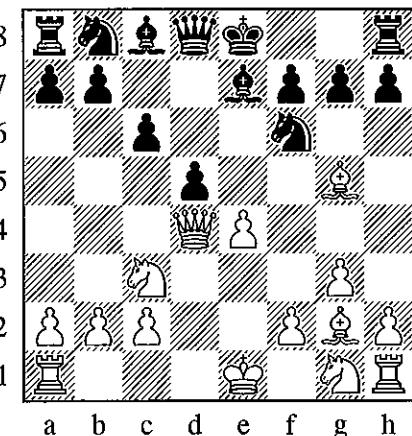
5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c6 7.e4

I suggest meeting 7.0–0–0 with 7...h6!N (7...0–0 is also not bad: 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ [8...h6!] 9.h4 $\mathbb{W}b6\#$ was the stem game Reti – Rubinstein, Marienbad 1925) 8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 0–0 9.e4 c5 10. $\mathbb{W}d3$ d4 11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$



13.d6 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}xg5\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 17.c3 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 18.cxd4 c4# Black has the better pawn structure and the safer king.

The text move occurred in Krstic – Lukin, Zadar 2005. Here Black's play can be improved by means of:

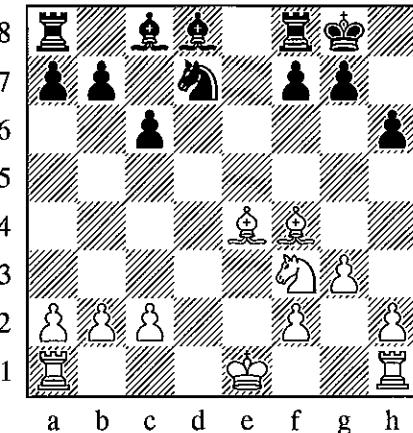


7...h6!N 8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

8. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 9.e5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10.0–0–0 0–0 11.f4 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$ and Black is doing very nicely.

8...dxe4 9. $\mathbb{W}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$
11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$

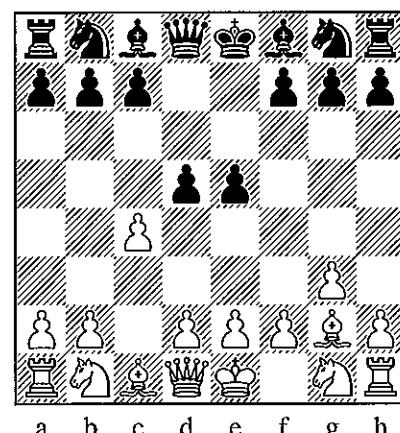
12... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ doesn't win a piece because of 13.0–0–0!.



13.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$

With some edge for Black thanks to the bishop pair.

D4) 3.c4



3...dxc4!?

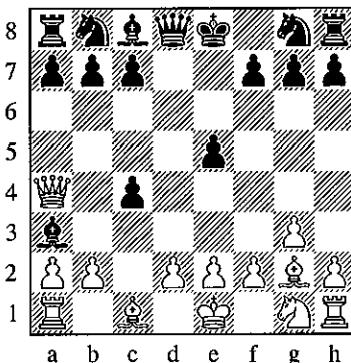
I've decided to go with this line as it takes White out of his comfort zone. Nevertheless, 3...d4! is a reasonable alternative.

4. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$

White's other main try is:

4. $\mathbb{Q}a3 \mathbb{Q}xa3$ 5. $bxa3$

5. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$ can be met by:



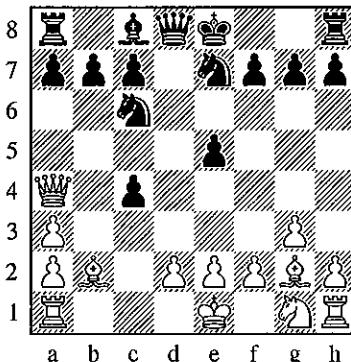
5... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ N (rather than 5... $c6$, as occurred in Weyrich – Bromann, Germany 2010, and a few other games) 6. $\mathbb{W}xa3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7. $\mathbb{W}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 8. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ (or 10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ with a slight edge for Black) 10... 0–0 11. $e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ 13. $f3$ $\mathbb{Q}dc6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ and Black has fine compensation for a pawn.

5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

After 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 7. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{W}d5\#$ Black was a healthy pawn up in Fedorowicz – Bisguier, New York 1977.

6... $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 7. $\mathbb{W}a4$

This position was reached in Conquest – B. Lalic, Southend 2001, and now I would like to offer:



7... $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ N

Black gives up the e5-pawn but keeps the one on c4 and wins a few tempos.

8. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 0–0 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

9. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$

9... $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 11. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ a6

13. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ b5 14. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5\#$

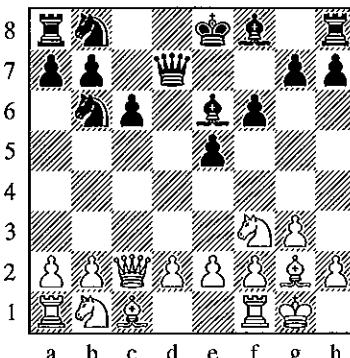
With some initiative for Black.

4... $c6$ 5. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 6. $\mathbb{W}c2$

The best retreat.

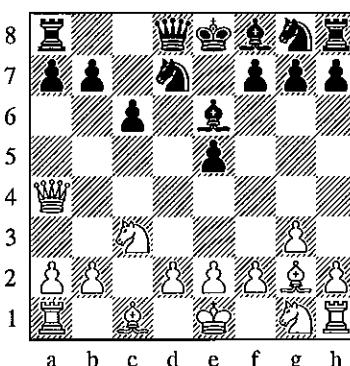
After 6. $\mathbb{W}c3$ f6! White's queen is misplaced.

7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 9. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$



11... $c5!$ 12. $a4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13. $a5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5\#$ Black had the edge in Artamonov – Kharlov, Samara 2013.

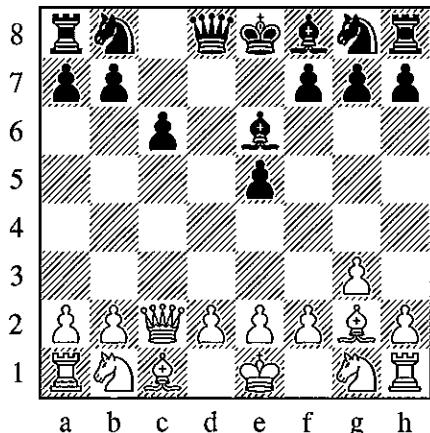
6. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ occurred in Sergeev – Brener, Marianske Lazne 2008. I would like to propose:



7... $\mathbb{Q}gf6!$ N 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 9. 0–0 (9. $\mathbb{Q}g5?$ is met by 9... $\mathbb{Q}xf2\#$! 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$) 9... 0–0 10. $d4$ (This time 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ is answered by 10... $\mathbb{Q}f5$)

10...exd4 11.Qxd4 Qg4 With a roughly equal position.

After the text move I found a surprising new idea.



6...Qh6!?

The knight is heading towards d4.

7.d3

Another interesting line is:

7.Qf3 Qa6!

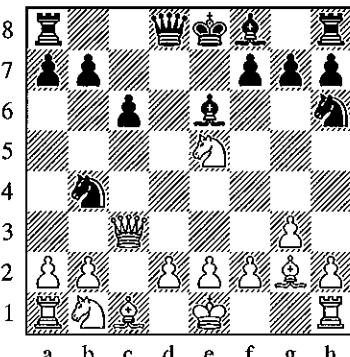
Black sacrifices a pawn for the initiative.

8.Qxe5 Qb4 9.Wc3

9.Wa4? fails to 9...Wd4!+.

9.Wd1!? f6 10.Qf3 Qxa2 11.Qc3 Qxc1

12.Wxc1 Qb4 13.0–0 0–0 14.d4 a5= and the chances are about equal.



9...Qd5 10.Wc2

After 10.Qxd5 Wxd5 11.Qf3 Qh3 Black prevents short castling and obtains a serious initiative for a pawn.

10...Qb4=

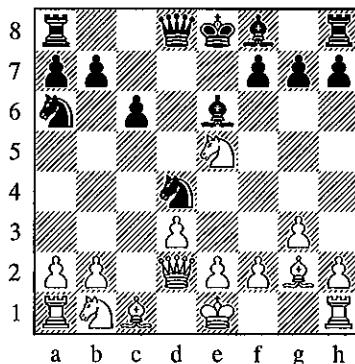
With a surprising repetition of moves.

7...Qf5 8.Qf3 Qa6!?

The simple 8...f6= is also fine.

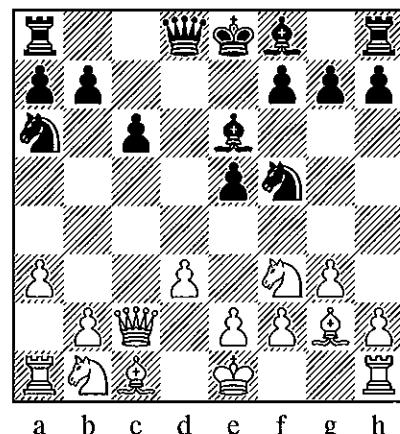
9.a3

9.Qxe5? is bad due to 9...Qd4 10.Wd2 (10.Wa4 Qb4 11.Qa3 Qd5!+; 10.Wd1? would be a blunder in view of 10...Wa5!+ and Black wins a piece)



10...Qb4 11.0–0 (11.Qa3? Wa5!+)

11...Qdc2+ Black wins the exchange.



9...f6 10.Qbd2

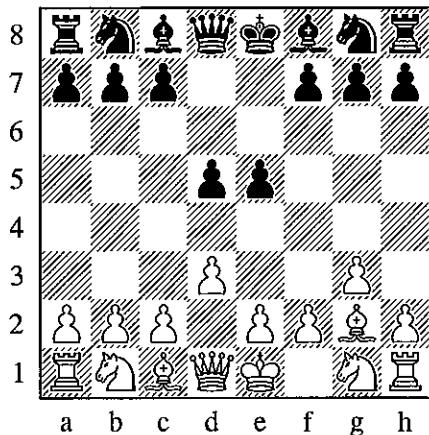
Or 10.0–0 Qe7 with a flexible position.

10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11.0–0 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{B}c8$

With roughly equal chances.

D5) 3.d3

This is the most natural move. White is playing a Modern Defence with an extra tempo.



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

Being a tempo down, Black should content himself with a modest plan of development, rather than going for anything too ambitious with an early ...f5.

4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

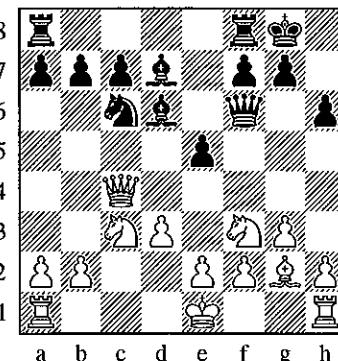
4.c3 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ is likely to transpose to one of our main lines after a subsequent $\mathbb{Q}f3$.

4.a3 prepares b2-b4, but this plan only really makes sense when Black's knight has gone to c6. Instead we should play 4...c6 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}d6$, when Black already has a more pleasant version of our main line.

4. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ also fails to present any problems, as it's easy for Black to protect the centre. 4... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c6 6.e4 dx \mathbb{Q} e4 (6...d4!?) is possible too) 7. $\mathbb{Q}xf6 \mathbb{Q}xf6$ (7...gx \mathbb{Q} f6!?) is also interesting, although there's no real need for it) 8. $\mathbb{Q}xe4 \mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}g4$ 10.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ Black's position is more pleasant thanks

to his bishop pair and extra space in the centre.

4.c4 can be answered by: 4...dx \mathbb{Q} c4!? (as usual, 4...d4 is a reasonable alternative) 5. $\mathbb{W}a4\# \mathbb{Q}d7$ 6. $\mathbb{W}xc4 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}d6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0–0 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6 \mathbb{W}xf6$

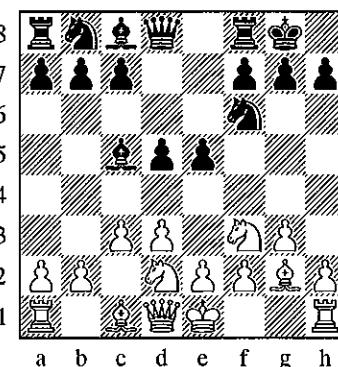


11. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ (11.0–0N was better, leading to equal play) 11... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ cxd6 13.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}b3 \mathbb{Q}e6\#$ Black had the easier game in Mackowiak – Ptacnikova, Olomouc 2010.

A final alternative is:

4. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}c5$ 5.e4

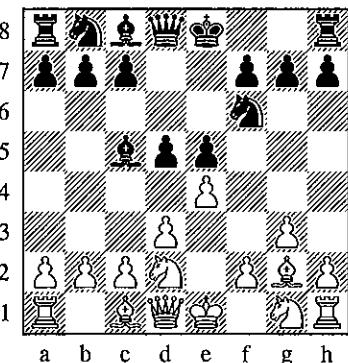
a) 5.c3 0–0 6. $\mathbb{Q}gf3$ occurred in Garcia Iturriaga – Ponce Lopez, Madrid 1997.



Now I would like to offer 6... $\mathbb{W}e7\#N$ 7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ with a comfortable position for Black.
b) 5.e3 0–0 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$ 8.b3 (8.h3N seems more logical although 8...h6

9.a3 a5 10.b3 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 11.g4 $\mathbb{Q}h7\bar{f}$ is still nice for Black) Now in Bui Duc Huy – Nguyen Cong Tai, Hue 2009, Black could have played 8... $\mathbb{W}d7!$ N 9. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$, with a slight edge due to his central control.

The text move has been played several times, but it is premature due to:



5...dxe4! 6. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

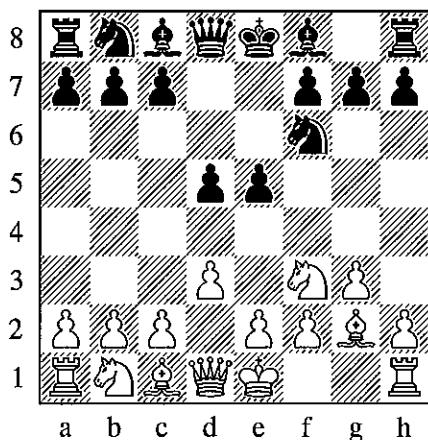
6.dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$! 7. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$! (7... $\mathbb{Q}xf2\ddagger$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 9. $\mathbb{W}h5$ was less clear in Maciejewski – Blucha, Karvina 1992) 8.0–0 0–0 9.c3 a5 \bar{f} Leiser – Brockhaus, Hamburg 1993.

6... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

7.dxe4? is refuted by 7... $\mathbb{Q}xf2\ddagger$.

7...0–0 \bar{f}

Already it is obvious that White has to fight for equality, Natacheev – Nyshanbayev, Anapa 2009.



4... $\mathbb{Q}d6$?

I've decided to choose this flexible set-up.

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

This is a more obvious move, but I was not completely happy after:

5.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6.c4?

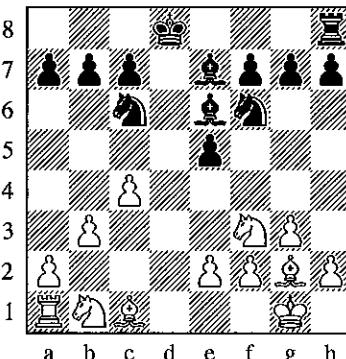
This tricky move order presents a problem for our repertoire.

6...dxc4

I believe 6...0–0 is Black's best approach, but after 7.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ we transpose to a major branch of the English Opening, which usually arises after 1.c4 e5 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4.g3 d5. As you can see in Chapter 10, I have chosen to recommend 2... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ for this book.

I considered the text move in an attempt to avoid that transposition, but I couldn't find a clear path to equality after:

7.dxc4 $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 9.b3 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd8\ddagger$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$



11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$!

11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$? is well met by 11... $\mathbb{Q}d4$! 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe6\ddagger$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2\ddagger$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ c6 and Black is okay.

11...h6 12. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$

Bezold – Holzke, Senden 1998. Now after:

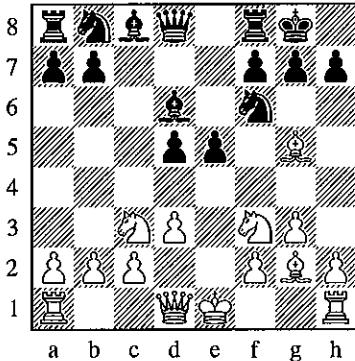
13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$!N $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b2\pm$

White's position is slightly better.

White's two most obvious continuations are D51) 5.c4 and D52) 5.0–0.

5.♗bd2 doesn't have much independent value, as after 5...0–0 6.e4 (or 6.0–0) 6...c6 7.0–0 we have transposed to variation D522.

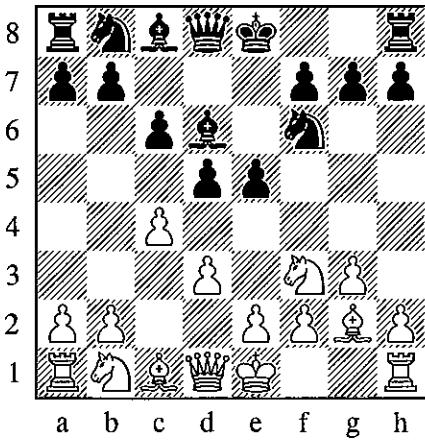
5.♗c3 c6 6.e4 (for 6.0–0 0–0 see variation D523) 6...0–0 7.exd5 (7.0–0 is the same transposition as before) 7...cxsd5 8.♗g5 occurred in Gyurkovics – Szitas, Hungary 2011. Now Black should have protected his centre with the simple:



8...♗e6!N 9.♗xf6 (or 9.♗d2 ♗e7!) 9...♗xf6 10.♗d2 ♗c5! An important intermediate move. 11.0–0 ♘d8! and Black is better.

D51) 5.c4 c6

5...d4!? is a reasonable alternative but I have chosen to maintain a flexible centre for now.



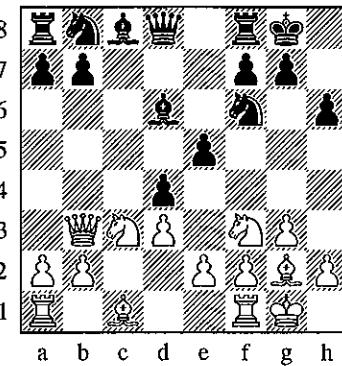
6.cxd5

6.0–0 0–0 transposes to variation D521 below.

6.♗b3 h6!?

White's last move applied some pressure on the d5-pawn, so it is worth preventing ♗g5. 6...d4!? is a sensible alternative.

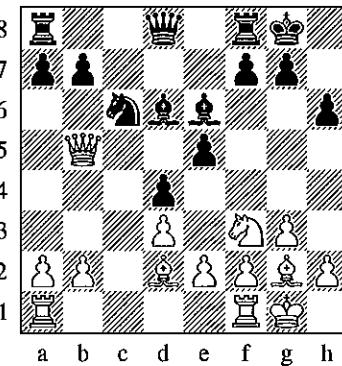
7.0–0 0–0 8.cxd5 cxsd5 9.♗c3 d4



10.♗d5

10.♗b5 ♗e6 11.♗a4 ♗c6 12.♗xd6 ♗xd6 is good for Black, despite the fact that he had to part with his dark-squared bishop.

10...♗xd5 11.♗xd5 ♗c6 12.♗d2 ♗e6 13.♗b5



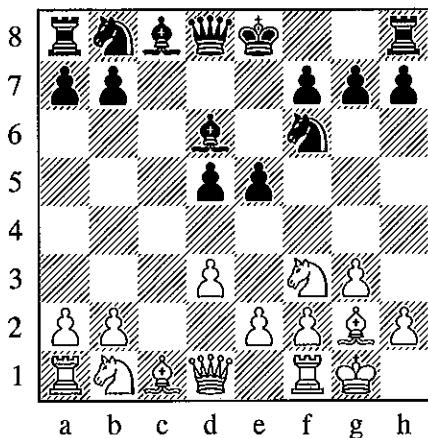
13...♗d7!N

I prefer this, although 13...♗c7 14.♗fc1 a6 15.♗a4 ♗fc8 16.a3 ♗b6 17.b4 ♗e7! also gave Black slightly better chances in Hickl – Kindermann, Nussloch 1996.

14.♗fc1 ♗ac8!

Followed by ...a6 and doubling rooks along the c-file.

6...cxd5 7.0–0

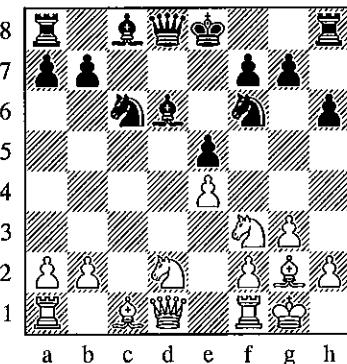


7...h6!?

A useful move, preventing the $\mathbb{Q}g5$ pin.

8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

8.e4 has been tested just once. 8...dxe4 9.dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ Hillarp Persson – Wells, York 2000. Now I would like to offer:



10... $\mathbb{Q}e6!?$ N 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ 12.b3 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ 0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ With roughly equal chances.

8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9.e4

9.a3 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11.b4 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ (12... $\mathbb{W}d7!?$ N) 13. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{W}d7\bar{f}$ and Black

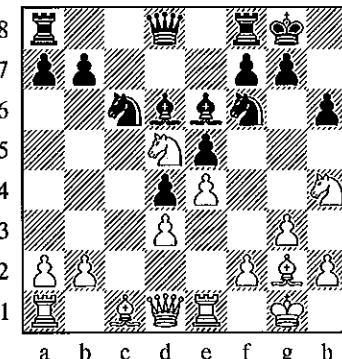
was slightly better in Hickl – Short, Lugano 1986.

9...d4

Now it makes sense to take some space, as the move comes with a tempo.

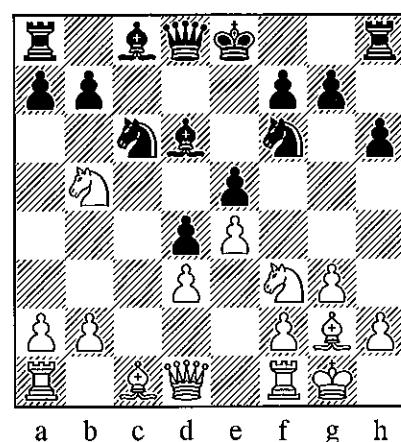
10. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

I also considered: 10. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ N 0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h4$



12... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\bar{f}$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 14.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and Black is doing fine.

Now in Lavritov – Liebus, Klaipeda 2001, Black should have played:



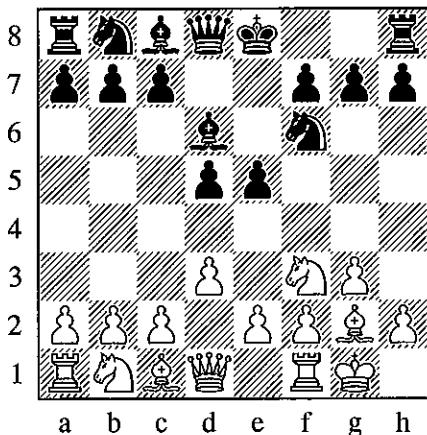
10... $\mathbb{Q}e7!?$ N 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

Or 11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 13.exf5 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14.g4 $\mathbb{Q}ac8\bar{f}$ with a good position for Black.

11...0–0 12.♘a3 ♘g4! 13.h3 ♘e6†

Black obtains a favourable reversed King's Indian; the a3-knight is misplaced, and the c-file has already been opened.

D52) 5.0–0



This is the most natural move, keeping all White's options open.

5...0–0

Black replies in kind. From here we will focus on D521) 6.c4, D522) 6.♘bd2 and D523) 6.♘c3, after first checking a few sidelines.

6.c3 doesn't have much independent value. Black replies with 6...c6, when I don't see anything better for White than preparing e2-e4, which means a probable transposition to variation D522 below, as the b1-knight will surely go to d2 at some point.

6.♘g5

This seems a little premature.

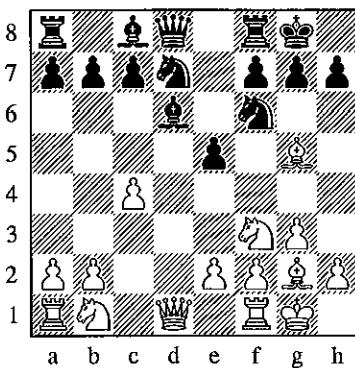
6...♗bd7 7.c4

7.♗fd2 h6 8.♗xf6 ♗xf6 9.c4 d4 10.a3 a5† and Black was better in Lomsadze – Ter Sahakyan, Chotowa 2010.

7.♗c3 c6 8.e4 h6 9.♗c1 ♘e8† gave Black an improved version of the Caro-Kann line noted below in Cabezas Ayala – Yudasin, Cala Galdana 1994.

7...dxc4! 8.dxc4

Now in Suttles – Pritchett, Nice (ol) 1974, it would have made sense to play:



8...h6!N

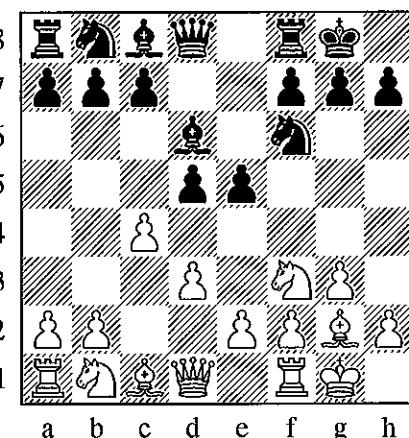
Challenging the bishop immediately and forcing White to reveal his intentions.

9.♗d2 ♘e7

With a comfortable position for Black.

D521) 6.c4

This is an attempt to steer the game into some sort of reversed Benoni or King's Indian after 6...d4. This would be a perfectly decent way for Black to continue, but I have instead opted for a more flexible approach.

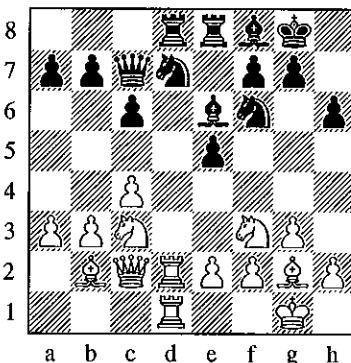


6...c6?!

Supporting the centre, just as in the earlier variation D51.

7.cxd5

7.a3 h6 8.Qc3 dxc4 9.dxc4 ♕e6 10.b3 ♘c7 (10...a5!N 11.♘c2 ♘a6 12.♗b2 ♘c7=) 11.♗b2 ♘bd7 12.♘c2 ♘fe8 13.♕ad1 ♘f8 14.♗d2 ♘ad8= 15.♗fd1?! occurred in Hausrath – Gustafsson, Germany 2011. Now I would like to recommend:



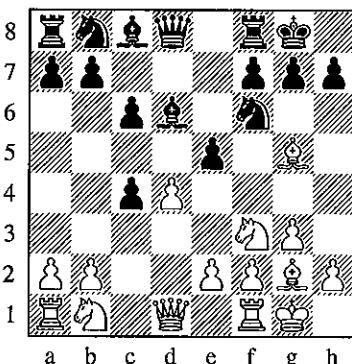
15...b5!N Exploiting White's inaccuracy on the previous move. 16.♗e4 ♘xe4 17.♗xe4 bxc4 18.bxc4 f6 Followed by ...♗b6 and the c4-pawn is vulnerable.

7.♗g5

White puts pressure on the centre – an interesting move, if played in conjunction with the following improvement:

7...dxc4 8.d4!N

8.dxc4 occurred in Ollech – Hunhoff, Germany 2012, when 8...h6N 9.♗xf6 ♘xf6 10.♗c3 ♘c7 would have given Black a good position. The text move is more challenging.

**8...♗e7! 9.dxe5**

After 9.♗bd2?! exd4 10.♗xc4 ♘d8! 11.♗xd6 ♘xd6 Black retains an extra pawn and better chances.

9...♘xe5 10.♘c2

Or 10.♗xe5 ♘xe5 11.♗d2 ♘e8 12.♗c3 ♘e6 followed by ...♗bd7 and Black is doing fine. 10...♘c7 11.♗bd2 h6 12.♗xf6 ♘xf6 13.♗xc4 ♘a6

With comfortable play for Black.

White has also tried:

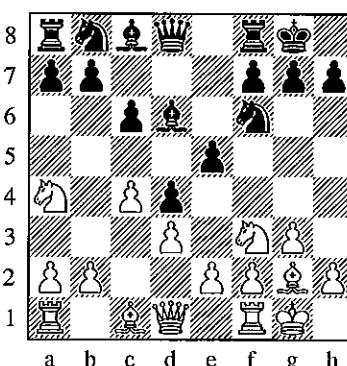
7.♗c3 d4

Now is a good time for this pawn advance, as it comes with a tempo.

8.♗a4

8.♗e4 ♘xe4 9.dxe4 c5!? Black strengthens the centre and prepares ...♘c6. 10.♗e1 (10.♗h4 can be answered by the simple 10...g6!) 10...♘c6 11.♗d3 ♘e6 12.b3 a6 13.f4 f6 14.♗d2 b5 Black had a positional advantage in Schaefer – Bianco, Val Gardena 2012.

In Movsziszian – Inkiov, La Roda 2004, it would have been interesting for Black to try:

**8...♗a6!N**

Preparing ...c5 while making it hard for White to prepare b2-b4, as the following line demonstrates.

9.a3?!

White should prefer 9.b3 although 9...c5 10.a3 ♘b8 followed by ...b6 gives Black good chances.

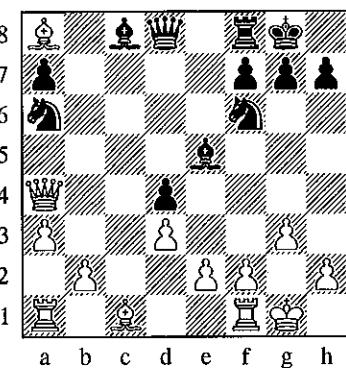
9...b5!

Trapping the knight on a4 – but there is still the following tactical line to consider.

10.cxb5

10.Qxd4 exd4 11.cxb5 Qc7 12.bxc6 Qe6† is also better for Black.

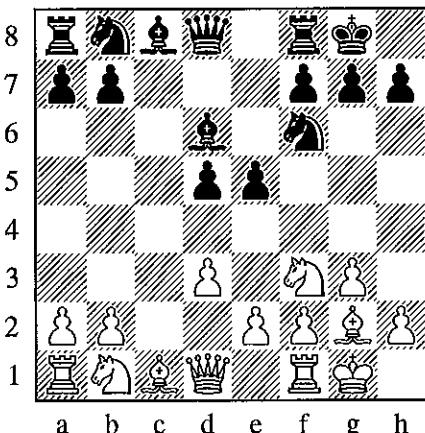
10...cxb5 11.Qxe5 Qxe5 12.Qxa8 bxa4
13.Wxa4



13...Qd7! 14.Qc6 Qc5 15.Wb5 Qxc6 16.Wxc6 Qb3 17.Qb1 Wb8†

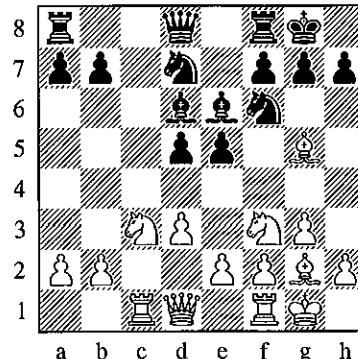
Black is clearly better.

7...cxd5



8.Qc3

8.Qg5?! is premature. 8...Qe6 9.Qc3 Qbd7
10.Qc1 Now in Nogueiras Santiago – Tal,
Saint John 1988, Black should have gone for
the simple:

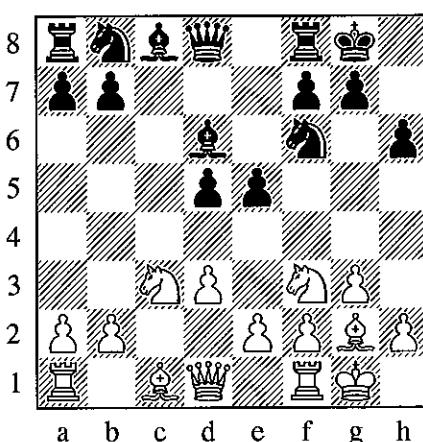


10...h6?!N 11.Qxf6 Qxf6† With an edge for
Black, thanks to his strong centre and bishop
pair.

8...h6

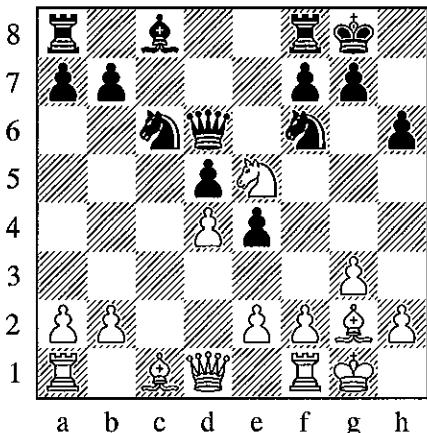
This was Svidler's choice, preferring to part with his dark-squared bishop instead of allowing the Qg5 pin.

Nevertheless, 8...Qc6 is a reasonable alternative. 9.Qg5 Qe7 10.d4?!N (10.a3 h6 11.Qd2?! Qe6 12.b4 a6† was excellent for Black in Shoker – Ahmad, Cairo 2009) 10...e4 11.Qe5 h6 12.Qf4 Qf5 13.Wd2 Wc8 14.Qac1 Qh5 15.Qe3 Qf6!=



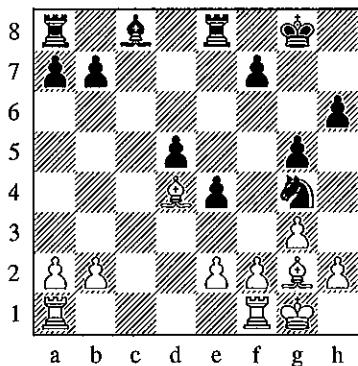
9.Qb5 Qc6 10.Qxd6 Wxd6 11.d4 e4
12.Qe5

12.Qf4 might lead to a repetition of moves after: 12...Wb4 13.Qe5 Qxd4 14.a3 Wxb2
15.Qb1 Qxe2† 16.Qh1 Wa2 17.Qa1 Wb2=



12...Qd7!N

12...Qxe5 is riskier: 13.Qf4 Qfg4 (perhaps 13...Qfd7!? could be considered) 14.dxe5 We6 15.Qd4 g5 16.Qd2 Wxe5 17.Qc3 Wxd4 18.Qxd4 Qe8



This was Kamsky – Svidler, Tashkent 2012, and now 19.f4!N would have exploited the unfortunate position of the knight on g4, giving White a good initiative for a pawn.

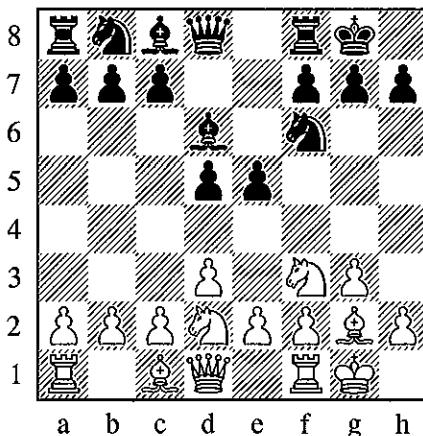
13.Qf4 Qh5! 14.Qxd7

14.Qxf7 We6! 15.Qe5 Qxf4 16.gxf4 Qxf4 leads to a slight edge for Black.

14...Wxd7 15.Qd2 Rac8=

With the centre blocked, the knights are not really any worse than the bishops, so the chances are roughly equal.

D522) 6.Qbd2

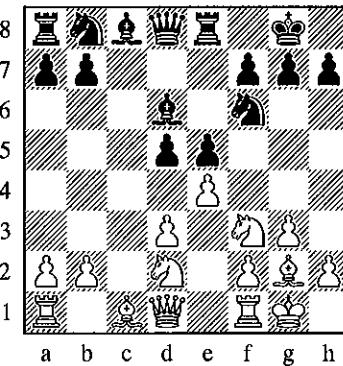


This is a typical way of preparing e2-e4.

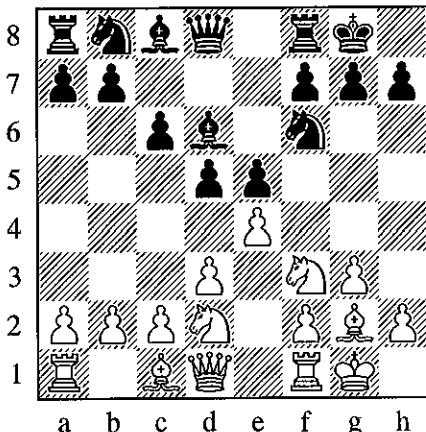
6...c6 7.e4

7.c3 Be8 makes little difference, as White will surely follow up with e2-e4 in the near future.

White can steer the game in a slightly different direction with 7.c4!?. Be8 8.cxd5 cxd5 9.e4 as in Shoker – M. Fischer, Clichy 2003. Here Black should have played:



9...Qc6!N 10.exd5 Qxd5 11.a3 (or 11.Qc4 Qc7) 11...Qc7! 12.Qe1 Qf5 13.Qe4 Qb6= and White will find it hard to justify the weakness on d3.



Technically speaking, I would consider this position to be a Caro-Kann, as it has most commonly arisen after the opening moves 1.e4 c6 2.d3 d5 3.Qd2 e5 4.Qg3 Qd6 5.g3 Qf6 6.Qg2 0-0 7.0-0. My recommendation for Black is based on Lars Schandorff's coverage in *Grandmaster Repertoire 7*, but I have made a few tweaks and included some more recent practical examples.

7...Qe8 8.Qe1 Qbd7 9.c3

White has tried a bunch of alternatives on the last few moves, but I don't think it's necessary to analyse them as Black's ideas remain pretty similar. The only people likely to encounter this variation on a regular basis are Caro-Kann players, who can refer to a specialist work such as Schandorff's for further details.

9...Wc7

The immediate 9...a5!? has also scored well for Black.

10.Wc2

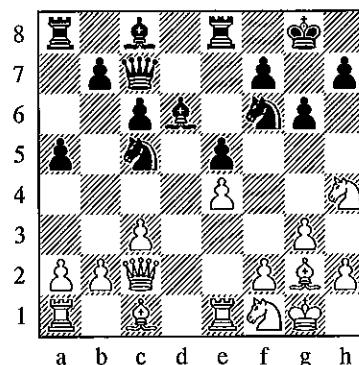
10.d4 leads to simplifications and easy equality after: 10...exd4 11.Qxd4 dxe4 (11...Qe5!? could also be considered) 12.Qxe4 Qxe4 13.Qxe4 Qxe4 14.Qxe4 Qf6= Da Silva Filho – Plumhoff, email 2001.

10...a5!

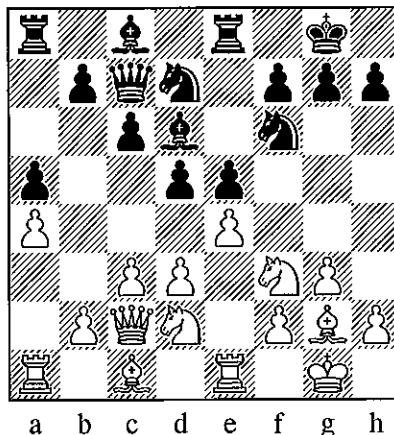
This move has a few purposes. Firstly, Black takes some space and introduces the possibility of ...a4 to cramp White. Secondly, he discourages b2-b4 in response to ...Qc5. And thirdly, he prepares ...b6 and ...Qa6, when the bishop will be positioned safely behind the a-pawn.

11.a4

White can also ignore the queenside with: 11.Qf1 dxe4 12.dxe4 Qc5 13.Qh4 g6 Schandorff suggested this as a novelty, and it was subsequently tested in a game.



14.Qe3 (14.Qg5 Qe7# is a brief line which was mentioned by the Danish GM) 14...Qc6 15.b3 This was A. Markos – Juhasz, Miskolc 2011, and now I prefer the flexible 15...Qf8N# when Black has the more harmonious position.



11...b6 12.d4

If White does not play this, Black will simply play ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ and then take aim at the d3-square with moves like ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$, ...dxe4, ... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ and so on.

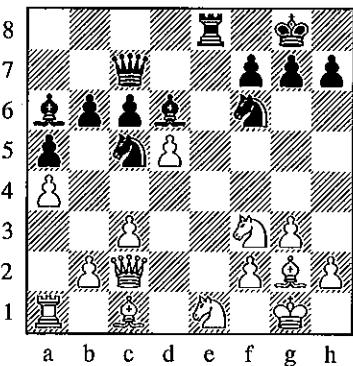
12...exd4

12... $\mathbb{Q}a6!$?N also looks fully adequate for Black.

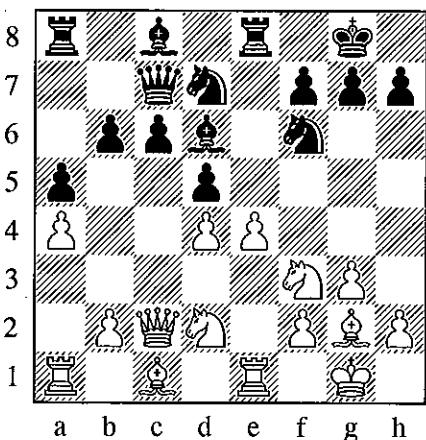
13.cxd4

White has to recapture this way to equalize.

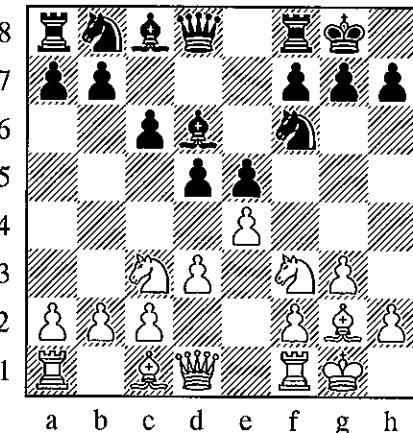
13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$! $\mathbb{Q}a6$ (13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ is also good)
 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xe1\uparrow$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$
 17. $\mathbb{Q}df3$ occurred in Posch – Golubovic, Oberwart 2001. Here I found an improvement which was overlooked by Schandorff:



17... $\mathbb{Q}e2!$?N 18. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4\uparrow$ With a serious initiative for Black.

**13...dxe4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$
 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7=$**

Black was comfortably equal in Janse – Lauber, Stockholm 2013 (17... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ N is also absolutely fine).

D523) 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c6 7.e4**7...dxe4?!**

This exchange makes sense while playing against the g2-bishop, which will henceforth be restricted by its own pawn.

7...d4?! does not seem like a good version of a reversed King's Indian for Black.

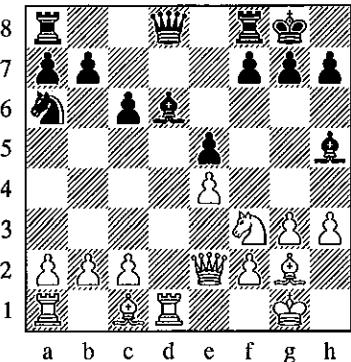
7... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$! looks like a reasonable alternative though, if Black wants to maintain the central tension.

8.dxe4**8. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 9.dxe4**

The knight trade does not alter the evaluation a great deal.

9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 10.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$
 11. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ (12... $\mathbb{Q}c7$! is also possible as 13. $\mathbb{W}xd6$? runs into 13... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ –+)
 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ f6= Gufeld – Razuvayev, New York 1989.

This position was reached in Panchenko – Yakovich, Kursk 1987. Now I prefer:

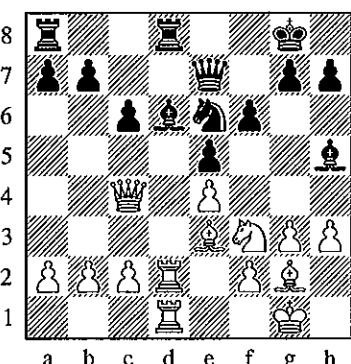


12... $\mathbb{W}e7N$

This seems like the best place for the queen.

13. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{B}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{B}d2$ $\mathbb{B}fd8$
16. $\mathbb{B}ad1$ f6!

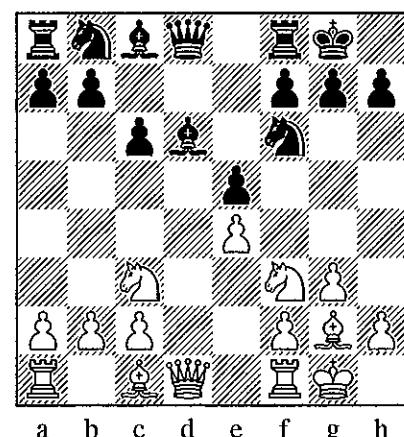
Intending ... $\mathbb{Q}f7$. The position is equal, and it might even end in an early draw after:



17. $\mathbb{Q}h4?$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}e7$

20. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{W}f7=$

Neither side can avoid the repetition.



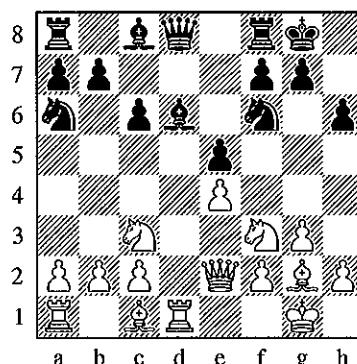
8... $\mathbb{N}a6!$

I find this a highly logical choice, as Black intends to bring the knight to an active position on c5, from which it may later go to e6 and possibly d4. At the same time, the c8-h3 diagonal is left open for the light-squared bishop.

9.h3

This move is often played in such positions in order to prevent any incursions to g4. Other options include:

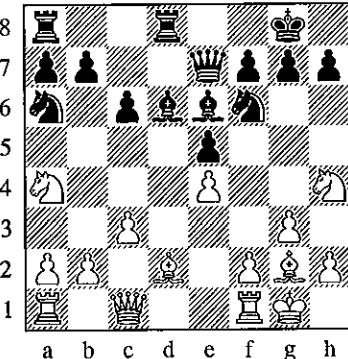
9. $\mathbb{W}e2$ h6!? 10. $\mathbb{B}d1$ (10. $\mathbb{Q}h4N$ is more accurate, but after 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6=$ Black experiences no problems) Here I found a significant improvement over Hickl – Boensch, Potsdam 1988:



10... $\mathbb{Q}g4!N$ 11.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5=$ Followed by ... $\mathbb{W}e7$, ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and ... $\mathbb{B}ad8$, with a good position for Black.

9.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 13. $\mathbb{B}e3$ occurred in Tischbierek – Wells, Germany 1998. Here I would like to offer: 13... $\mathbb{W}c7!N$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ and Black is doing fine.

9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}a4?!$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 14.c3 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ White's knight is left in an unfavourable position:

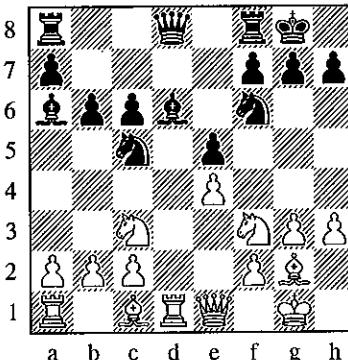


15.b4 b5 16.Qb2 c5 17.a3 Qac8 At this point a draw was agreed in Hickl – Luther, Lippstadt 1994, but Black stands better.

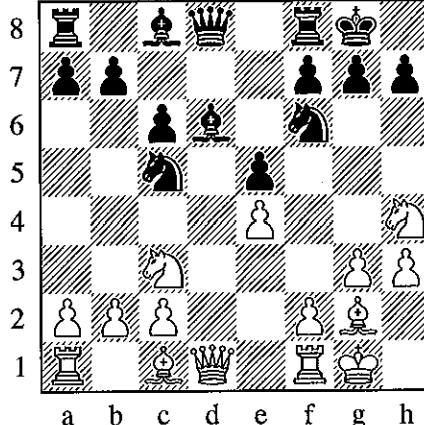
9...Qc5 10.Qh4

Bringing the knight to f5 is a typical plan in these positions, but on this occasion Black can just ignore it.

10.We2 b6 11.Ed1 Qa6 12.We1 occurred in Hickl – Fernandez Romero, Seville 2006, and now I prefer:



12...Wc7!N Black put the queen on e7 in the aforementioned game, but I would rather not present a target for the knight coming to f5. Now after 13.Qh4 Wfd8 14.Qf5 Qf8 15.Qxd8 Wxd8 16.Qg5 Qcd7 17.Qd1 h6 18.Qc1 Qc5 Black has a comfortable position.



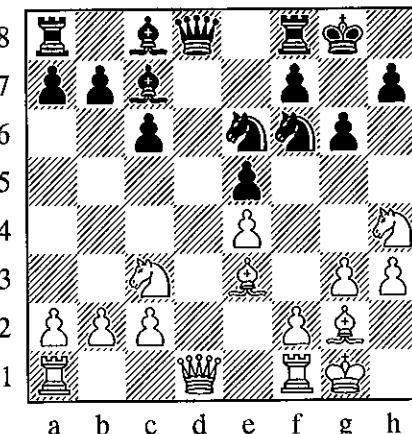
10...We6! 11.Qf5 Qc7 12.Qe3

12.Qf3!N deserved attention. However, after 12...g6! 13.Qd1 Qd7 14.Qh6† Qg7 15.Qe3 We7! Black is better thanks to the useful options of ...Qb6 and ...Qd4.

12...g6! 13.Qh4

13.Qh6† Qg7† followed by 14...Qb6 is also better for Black.

Here I found an improvement over Rohde – Browne, USA 1989.



13...We7!N†

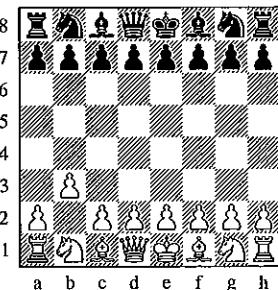
With this precise move, which will almost certainly be followed by ...Qd8, Black obtains some advantage.

Conclusion

A kingside fianchetto is a typical feature of many openings. The only drawback of doing it at the very start of the game is that it gives Black total freedom to occupy the centre with his pawns. Black should take that opportunity and then do what is necessary to maintain the pawn centre and develop the pieces to good squares. Typical ideas include ...c6, to strengthen d5 and nullify the g2-bishop, and ...h6, to prevent the ♘g5 pin. In the event that White plays for e2-e4, Black may consider either exchanging pawns on e4 or maintaining the tension with ...c6. I've avoided playing ...d4 in most of the lines, although you might consider that too, depending on how you feel about the reversed Benoni or King's Indian positions. Ultimately, I hope I have demonstrated that if White doesn't fight for the centre from the very beginning, the best he can hope for is equality.



Various 1st Moves



Larsen's Opening

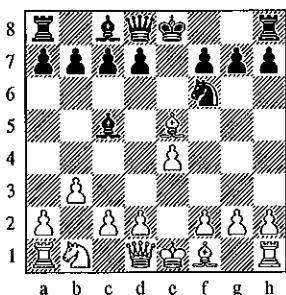
Variation Index

1.b3

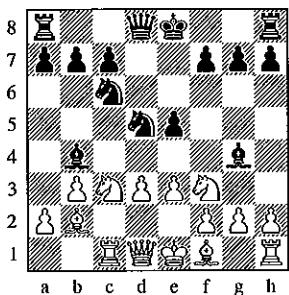
1...e5 2.Qb2 Qc6

A) 3.e4??!	84
B) 3.g3	84
C) 3.Qf3	86
D) 3.c4 Qf6	86
D1) 4.Qc3	88
D2) 4.e3	89
E) 3.e3 Qf6	91
E1) 4.Qf3	91
E2) 4.Qb5 Qd6	93
E21) 5.Qxc6	94
E22) 5.Qf3	95
E23) 5.Qe2	96
E24) 5.Qa3 Qa5 6.Qe2 a6	98
E241) 7.Qf3	99
E242) 7.c4	101

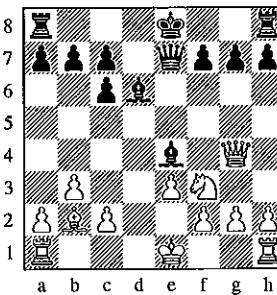
A) after 6.Qxe5



D2) note to 6.a3



E21) after 11.Qf3



6...Qc7!N

9...Qd4!N

11...Qb4!N

1.b3

This is among the most respectable of White's irregular first moves. White intends to put his bishop on b2 and develop an active position based on the power of that piece.

1...e5

1...d5 is also perfectly playable, but I want to meet White's opening head on, by establishing a barrier in the path of White's precious bishop.

2.♗b2 ♜c6

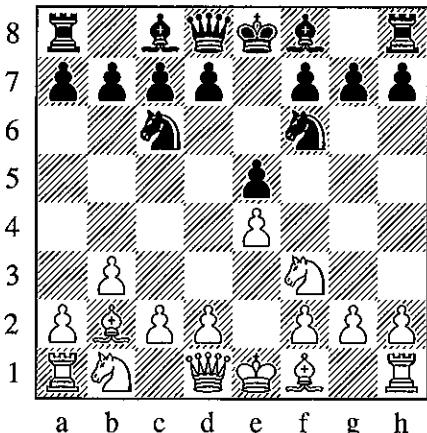
We will analyse A) 3.e4?!; B) 3.g3; C) 3.♗f3; D) 3.c4 and E) 3.e3, the last of which is the main line by far.

A) 3.e4?!

This leads to a bizarre mix of 1.e4 and the Larsen, which can't be good.

3...♜f6 4.♗f3

4.♗c3 ♜c5 5.h3?! (5.♗f3 transposes to the note on 5.♗c3 below) 5...d5! Black can get a good game with any sensible move, such as castling, but I like the idea of opening the centre and seizing the initiative after White has wasted time in the opening. 6.exd5 ♜xd5 7.♗b5 0–0 8.♗xc6 bxc6 and Black was better in Conley – Wygrecki, Lansing 1988.

**4...♝c5! 5.♗xe5?**

This is the obvious move to consider, but it is too optimistic.

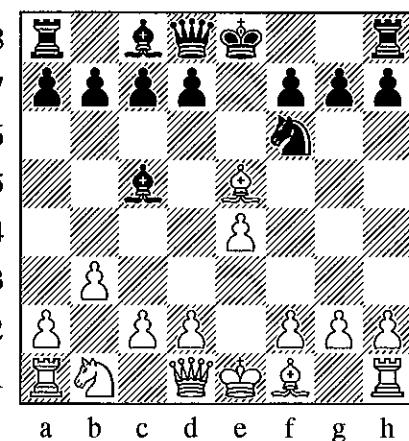
5.♗c3 0–0 (5...♝g4 is less clear due to 6.d4! exd4 7.♗d5) 6.♗c4 d6 gives Black a good version of the Italian Game, as the bishop is misplaced on b2.

5.♗b5 ♜xe4! 6.0–0 0–0 7.♗e2 ♜f6 8.♗xc6 dxc6 9.♗xe5N (9.♗xe5?! ♜g4† was even worse for White in Walther – Leisebein, email 2005) 9...♗d6† and Black's chances are higher thanks to the bishop pair.

5...♝xe5 6.♗xe5

After 6.d4 ♜b6 7.dxe5 ♜xe4 8.♗d4 ♜g5† White was in trouble in Zvarik – Skou, Gibraltar 2014.

Now in Kukk – Vasta, Internet 2009, Black should have played:

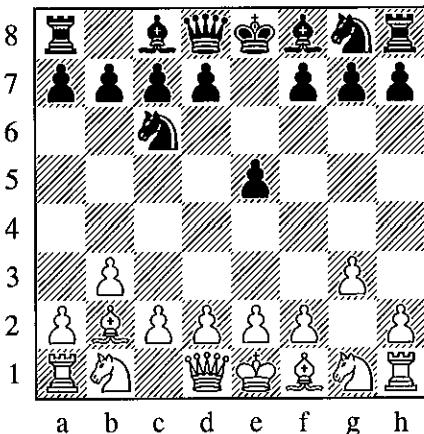
**6...♝e7!N 7.♗g3**

Or 7.d4 ♜xe4†.

7...♝xe4† 8.♗e2 0–0†

Black is clearly better.

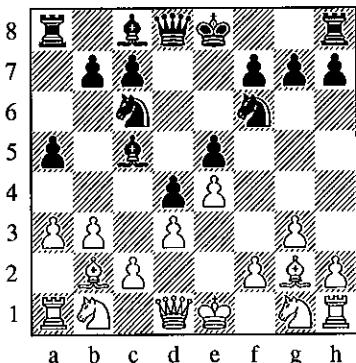
B) 3.g3



The double fianchetto might be good for some blitz games, but White can hardly fight for the opening advantage after giving away the centre entirely.

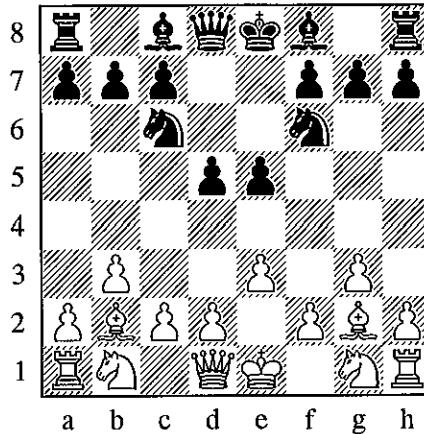
3...d5 4.♗g2 ♕f6 5.e3

5.d3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 6.e3 (6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0-0 7.e3 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 8.0-0 occurred in Nikolayevsky – Hickman, Box Hill 2004, and now 8... $\mathbb{Q}f5$!N 9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ would have given Black a solid and slightly better position) 6...d4? 7.e4 a5 8.a3 In Bezold – Aagaard, Budapest 2003, Black could have gone for simple play with:



8...0-0! N 9.Qf3 h6 10.Qbd2 Qg4 11.h3 Qe6
Black is at least not worse.

After the text move I would like to propose a rare but interesting continuation.



5...h5!? 6.h3 ♡f5

Black prepares long castling.

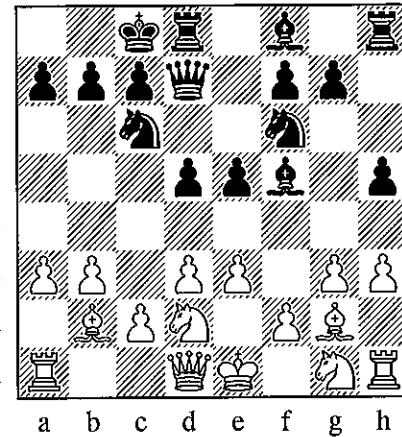
7.d3

7.Qf3 was played in Breederveld – Marell, corr. 2012. I think Black could have obtained a fine game with 7...We7N 8.0-0 e4 9.Qh4 Bh7 10.f3 We6! followed by long castling.

7... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0-0-0 9.a3

9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ doesn't change much. 9... $\mathbb{A}d6\mp$
Breederveld – Johnson, email 2010.

This position was reached in Gonzalez Zamora – Mellado Trivino, Manresa 1998, and now I would like to recommend:

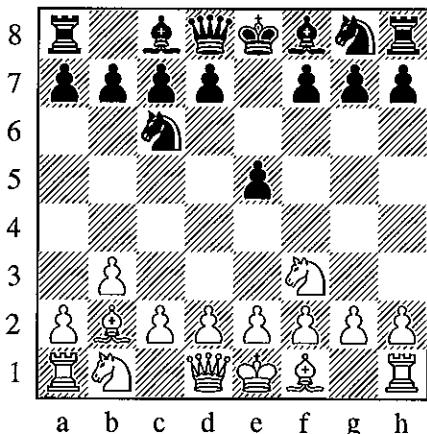


9...♝d6!?N 10.♗gf3 ♜b8†

With the idea of ...e4.

C) 3.♗f3

This way White allows his knight to be kicked, hoping that the ...e4 advance will increase the power of the b2-bishop on the long diagonal.



3...e4 4.♗d4

I also considered:

4.♕e5 ♜g5!?

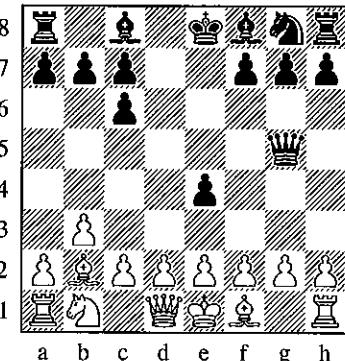
4...♝f6!? 5.♗c4 ♜e6 is also good for Black. For instance, 6.d4 exd3 7.cxd3 d5† Rieke – Razmyslov, Coria del Rio 2006.

I found the text move as a novelty, but then it was actually played in a game in 2016.

5.♗xc6

5.h4 weakens the kingside. 5...♝f6 6.♗c4 ♜d8 7.e3 ♜f6 Followed by ...d5 and Black is doing well.

5...dxc6



6.g3N

6.c4?! was played in Karlsson – Wikner, Sweden 2016, when 6...♞f5N followed by ...0–0–0 would have given Black some advantage.

6...♝f6 7.♗g2 ♜f5 8.♗a3 0–0–0 9.♗c4 ♜c5

With a comfortable position for Black.

4...♝f6!?

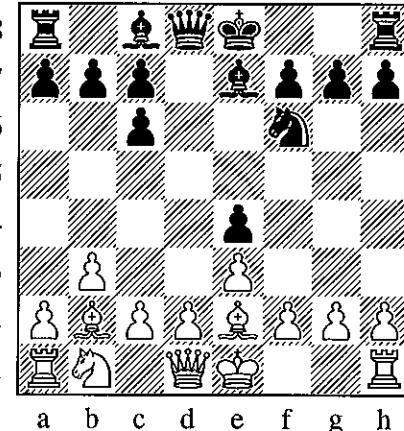
4...♝xd4 5.♗xd4 ♜f6 6.e3 is covered on page 92 under variation E1. The text move may lead to a different version of the ...dxc6 structure.

5.♗xc6

5.e3 transposes to variation E1.

5...dxc6 6.e3 ♜e7 7.♗e2

This was Guenzel – Tabor, email 1996, and now I suggest:



7...0–0–0N 8.0–0–0 ♜f5

And Black obtains a comfortable position.

D) 3.c4

A mix of the Larsen with the English.

3...♝f6

Black develops quickly and prepares ...d5, which should lead to a reasonable version of

a reversed Sicilian. White’s main options are **D1) 4.♗c3** and **D2) 4.e3**.

4.♗f3?!

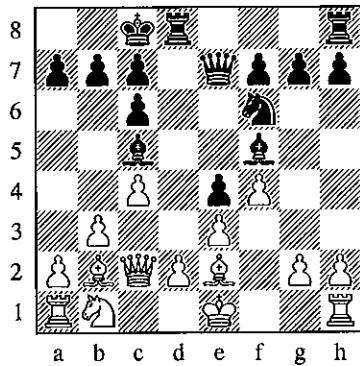
This move led to one of the most famous opening catastrophes ever to have occurred at GM level.

4...e4 5.♗d4 ♜c5 6.♗xc6

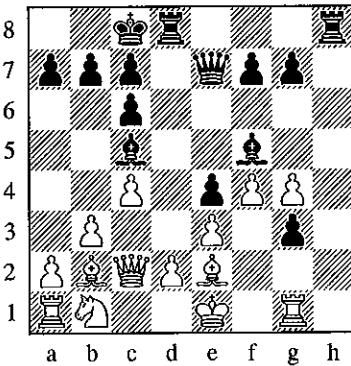
6.♗c2 is preferable, but the opening is clearly not going well for White in any case.
6...dxc6 7.e3 ♜f5!

Underlining the weakness of the d3-square.

8.♗c2 ♜e7 9.♗e2 0–0–0 10.f4?!



10...♗g4! 11.g3 h5! 12.h3? h4! 13.hxg4 hxg3
14.♗g1



14...♗h1!

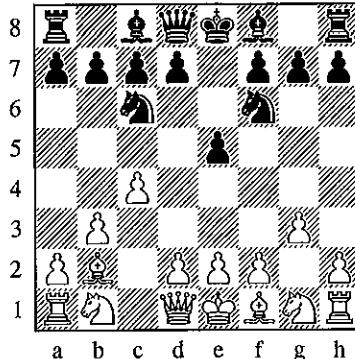
Black could also have started with 14...♗xe3!
15.dxe3 and only then played 15...♗h1! with similar ideas.

15.♗xh1 g2 16.♗f1 ♜h4† 17.♗d1 gxfl=♕†

And with checkmate imminent, White resigned in Larsen – Spassky, Belgrade 1970.

4.g3?!

This move is also dubious in view of:

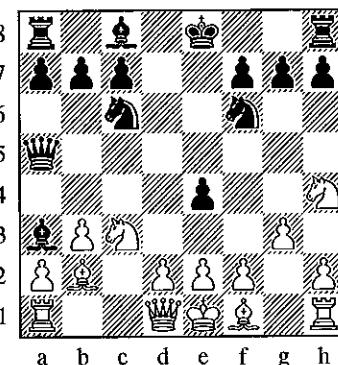


4...d5! 5.cxd5

After 5.♗g2 d4! Black takes space and restricts the b2-bishop. White has a poor version of a reversed Benoni, for instance:
6.d3 ♜c5 7.♗f3 0–0 8.♗bd2 h6! 9.0–0 ♜e6† Lu Chan Hung – Le Thanh Tai, Vietnam 2012.

5...♗xd5! 6.♗f3 e4 7.♗c3 ♜a5 8.♗h4 ♜a3!

Exchanging off White’s strong bishop and leaving the knight misplaced on h4.



9.♗xa3

After 9.♗b1 ♜xb2 10.♗xb2 0–0 11.♗g2 ♜h3 12.♗e3 ♜xf1 13.♗xf1 ♜ad8 Black was clearly better in Adeborg – Carlhammar, Eksjo 1986.

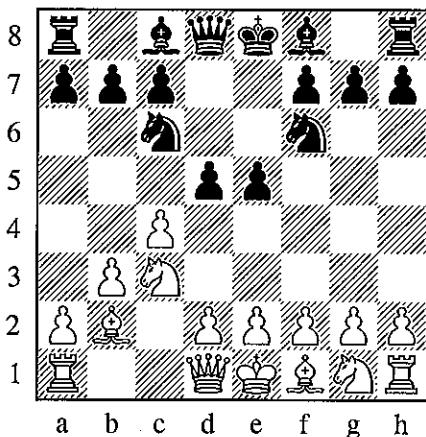
9... $\mathbb{W}xa3$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

10. $\mathbb{Q}g2?$ $g5$ traps the knight.

10... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 0–0–0†

With an obvious advantage for Black, Pejic – Vlatkovic, Becici 1993.

D1) 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5



Obtaining a good version of an Open Sicilian with reversed colours.

5.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6.g3

A natural alternative is:

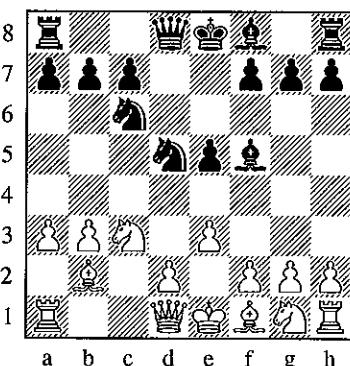
6.e3 $\mathbb{Q}f5??$

This rare move looks quite promising.

6... $\mathbb{Q}db4$ can be answered by 7. $\mathbb{W}b1!$ followed by a2-a3.

7.a3

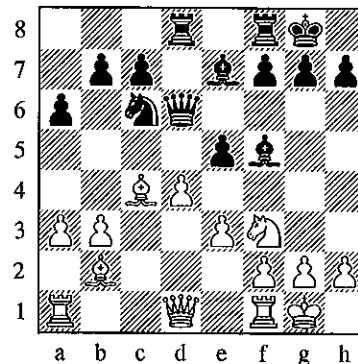
7. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 9. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ (or 9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}d7!$ and Black is doing fine) 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ was pleasant for Black in Breederveld – Kurgansky, email 2013.



Now in Nichols – Luers, Internet 2012, it would have been worth covering the b5-square with:

7...a6!N 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 11.0–0 0–0–0† 12.d4 $\mathbb{Q}ad8!$

With the following idea:



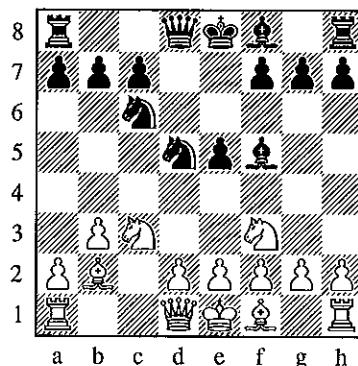
13.dxe5 $\mathbb{W}g6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}a5!$

Black has an extremely strong initiative.

6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

This can be met by the rare but powerful move:

6... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$



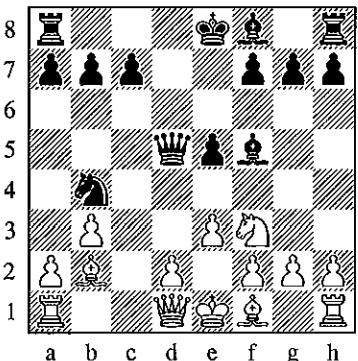
7. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ N

7.e3 $\mathbb{Q}db4!$ 8.e4 $\mathbb{Q}g4\bar{f}$

7.a3?! e4†

7. $\mathbb{W}c1$ e4 8. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ occurred in Hryniw – Masarik, email 2010, when 8... $\mathbb{W}xh4$ N 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 0–0–0† would have been good for Black.

7... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 8.e3 $\mathbb{Q}b4!$



9.♗c4 ♗d3† 10.♔f1 ♗d6 11.♗c3
11.♗c2 ♗g6†

11...e6!

Black is better thanks to the strong knight on d3 and the king on f1.

9.e3 (Now 9.♗g2?! e4 10.♗h4 is inappropriate due to 10...0–0† threatening ...g5) 9...♗g4 10.♗e2 0–0 11.h3 ♗f5† Black’s advantage is beyond doubt.

7...♗f6! 8.♗g2 ♗c5 9.e3

Also after 9.♗f3N e4 10.♗d4 ♗xd4 11.cxd4 ♗b4† 12.♗f1 e3 13.f4 0–0 Black is better.

9...♗f5

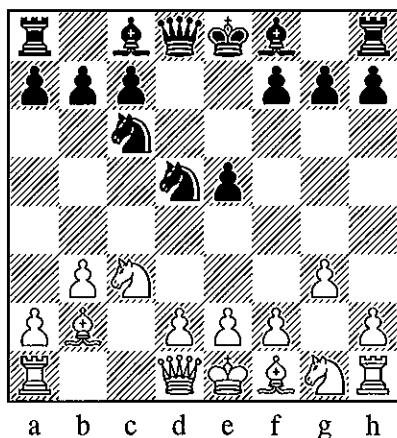
9...0–0 also gives Black an excellent position.

10.♗e2 e4†

Black was better in Wotulo – Solozhenkin, Noumea 1995.

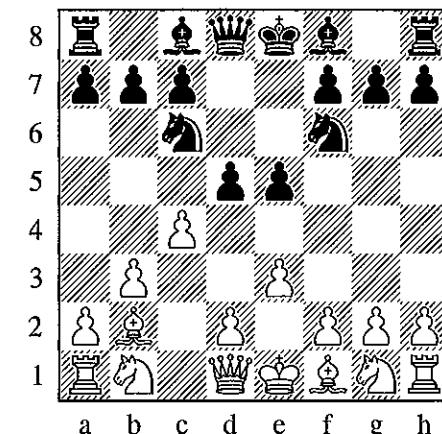
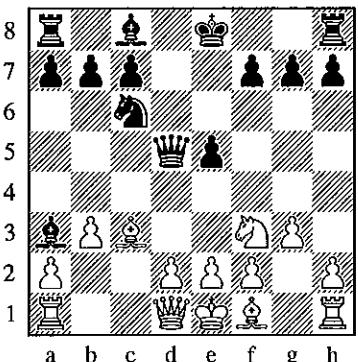
D2) 4.e3 d5

4...g6 is a reasonable alternative if Black wants to avoid the reversed Hedgehog.



6...♗xc3 7.dxc3

Black is ready to meet 7.♗xc3N with: 7...♗d5! 8.♗f3 ♗a3! (8...e4 is less accurate due to 9.♗h4 followed by ♗e3 and ♗g2)



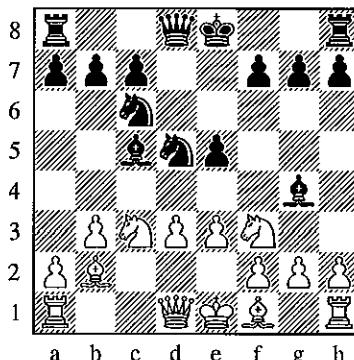
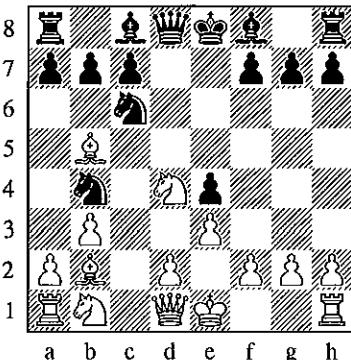
5.cxd5

After 5.♗f3?! d4† the b2-bishop is having a bad day.

5...♗xd5 6.a3

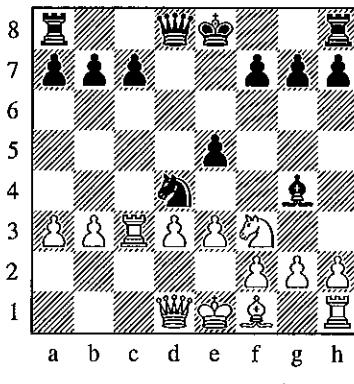
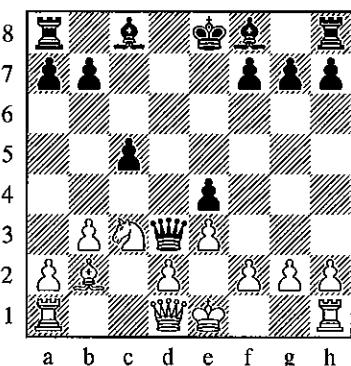
6.♗c3 transposes to 6.e3 in the notes to variation D1 above.

After 6.♗b5?! ♗db4! the weakness of the d3-square is a problem for White. 7.♗f3 e4 8.♗d4



8... $\mathbb{B}g5!$ 9.0–0?! (9. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ was preferable, but Black is still better after 9... $bxc6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}f1 \mathbb{W}g6!$)
9... $\mathbb{Q}h3\uparrow$ Fries Nielsen – Rosmann, Hamburg 2009.

6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e4 7. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ c5 9. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$
10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d3\uparrow$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$

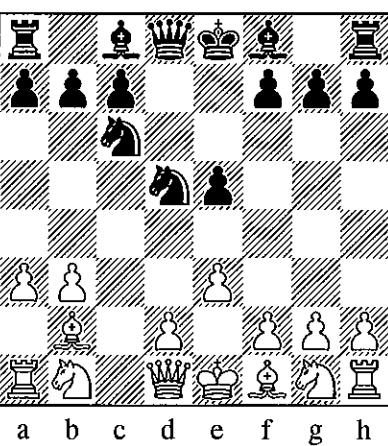


12. $\mathbb{W}b1$?! (12.f3N is necessary, and leads to a roughly equal position after 12... $exf3$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ f6 14. $\mathbb{E}c1 \mathbb{W}f5$) 12... $\mathbb{W}xb1\uparrow$ 13. $\mathbb{E}xb1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0–0–0 15. $\mathbb{E}bc1$ b6 \uparrow Black had a positional advantage in Dimitrijevic – Glek, Internet 2004.

Another instructive example continued:

6.d3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$! 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$?

A serious mistake. The right continuation was 8. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ N 0–0 9. $\mathbb{E}c1$ (but not 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$? $\mathbb{Q}xe3$! 10. $fxe3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 11. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2\uparrow$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}f4\uparrow$) 9... $\mathbb{Q}b4$! 10.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$! 11. $gxf3$ (11. $axb4$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$) 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd2\uparrow$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{W}h4$!
with a position of dynamic equality.

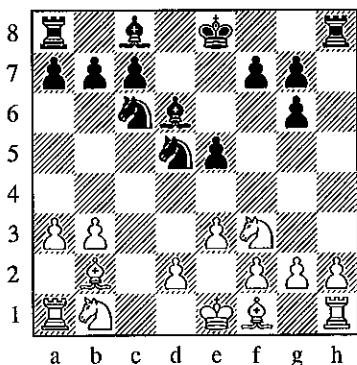


8... $\mathbb{Q}b4$! 9. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$!N
I like this new move the most, although I should also mention that 9... $\mathbb{W}f6$! also brought Black a serious advantage in Berkes – Navara, Gothenburg 2005.
10.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$ 12. $\mathbb{E}xc3$

12...e4!! 13. $exd4$ $exf3$ 14. $gxf3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6\uparrow$
White's pawn structure is hideous.

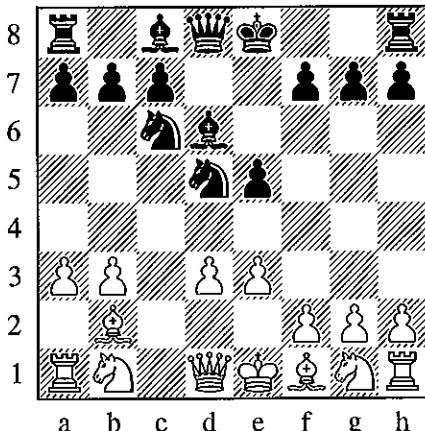
6...♝d6 7.d3

In the event of 7.♗c2 I would like to offer the extremely rare: 7...♝g5?! 8.♘f3 ♛g6 9.♗xg6 (After 9.d3 0–0 10.♗bd2 ♜e6 White experiences some problems developing his kingside.) 9...hxg6



10.d3 f6 Black is already pretty comfortable, and after the weird 11.♗g1?! ♜e6† he stood better in Radjabov – Dreev, Hyderabad 2002.

The text move leads to a reversed Hedgehog where White can hardly hope for an opening advantage, despite the extra tempo.

**7...♝g5?!N**

I want to make it harder for White to finish his kingside development with ♜e2 and 0–0.

7...0–0 is the main line.

8.♘f3

8.h4 can be met by 8...♛e7 when White's kingside has been weakened.

8...♛g6 9.♗bd2 0–0 10.♗c4 ♜e8

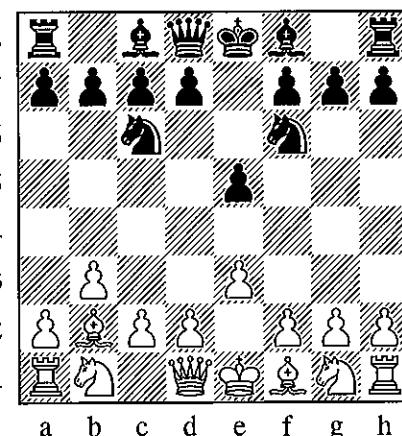
Objectively the position is equal, but I like Black's chances as it will not be easy for White to finish developing on the kingside.

E) 3.e3

White prepares to develop his bishop to b5, indirectly attacking the e5-pawn.

3...♞f6

3...d5 leads to a different type of game. The two moves are equally playable, but I prefer not to allow the knight to be pinned.



White may proceed with E1) 4.♘f3 or E2) 4.♗b5.

4.c4 takes us back to variation D2.

E1) 4.♘f3

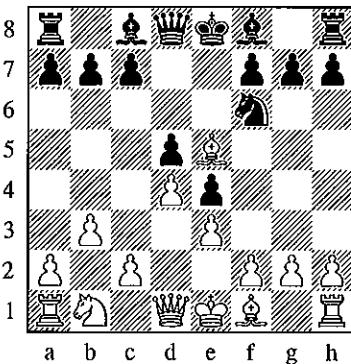
White allows his knight to be chased, hoping that the weakening of the a1-h8 diagonal will make up for the loss of time.

4...e4 5.♗d4

The alternative is:

5... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ d5!? 7.d4

Black also gets a good game after: 7.c4 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ (or 8. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ Roettinger – H. Wittmann, Fuerth 2015, 8...dxc4N 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 0–0 10.f4 exf3 11. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 12.g3 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 13.0–0 c6 \bar{f} and Black is better) 8... $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ This was Peck – T. Haslinger, Millfield 2003, and now the most accurate seems to be 9...dxc4!N 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ with some edge for Black, thanks to the weak d2-pawn.



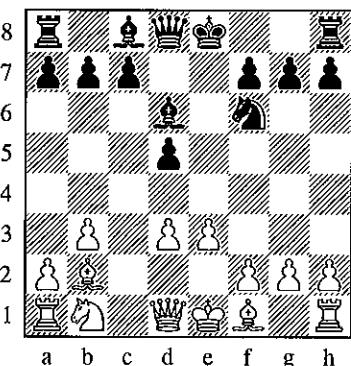
7...exd3 8.cxd3

8. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ was good for Black in Sijses – Fages, email 2006.

8... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

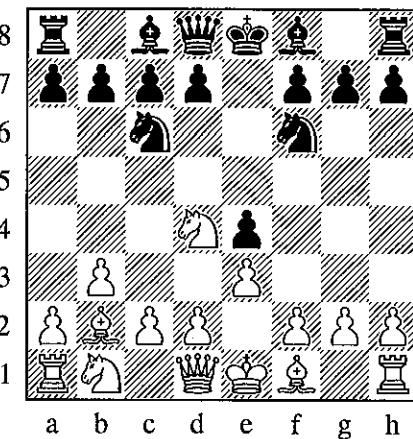
9. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ was comfortable for Black in Gonzalez Rodriguez – Epishin, Dos Hermanas 1998.

The text move was played in Gonzalez Rodriguez – Alonso Rosell, Catalonia 2012. I suggest improving Black's play by means of:



9...0–0N 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ a5!? 11.0–0 a4

And White is under some pressure.



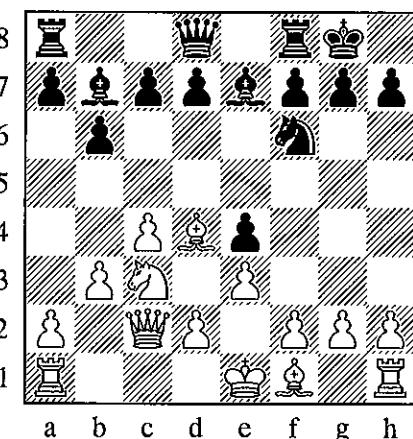
5... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7.c4 0–0 8. $\mathbb{W}c2$

8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ b6! 9. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ transposes.

8...b6!

8...c6 did not go so well for Black in Larsen – Parma, Vinkovci 1970.

9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$

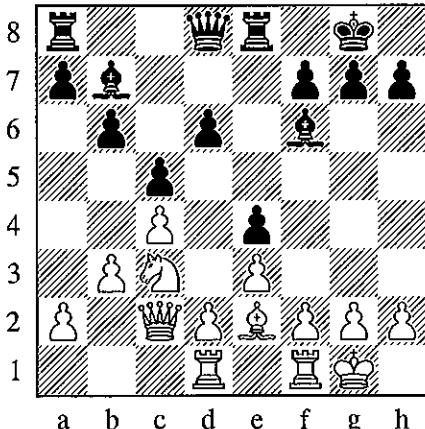


10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

In an older game, which arrived here via a transposition, White played the dubious 10.d3!?, which after 10... $\mathbb{Q}e8!$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 12.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5\bar{f}$ led to an extra pawn for Black in Planinec – Mecking, Vrsac 1971.

10...d6 11.Qd1?N

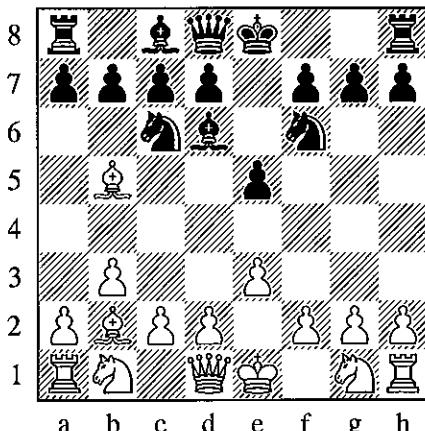
11.Qc1 Ee8 12.d3 exd3 13.Qxd3 c5 14.Qxf6 Qxf6 15.Qd5 Qxd5 16.cxd5 h6 (16...g6?!N) was equal in Nettelbeck – Gatterer, email 2011.

11...Ee8 12.0–0 c5 13.Qxf6 Qxf6**14.Qd5**

14.f3 Qxc3 15.Wxc3 Wc7 is also level.

14...Qxd5 15.cxd5 a6

With an equal position.

E2) 4.Qb5 Qd6

At first it may seem strange to block the d7-pawn, but Black intends to answer Qxc6 with

...dxc6, when the c8-bishop can be developed normally. If White does not exchange on c6, then Black can regroup with a plan such as ...Qe7, ...c6, ...Qc7, ...d5 and ...Qg6.

We will analyse E21) 5.Qxc6, E22) 5.Qf3, E23) 5.Qe2 and E24) 5.Qa3, after checking a few minor options:

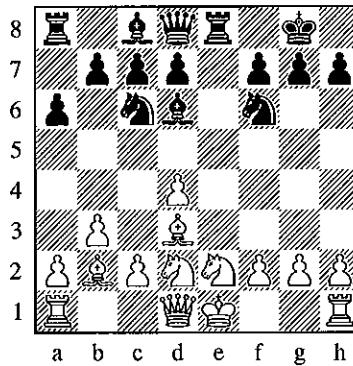
5.d3 can be met by 5...Qe7! followed by regrouping exactly as described above. The plan works especially well here, as White has to waste time to save his bishop from being trapped. 6.d4 e4 7.Qe2 c6 8.c4 Qc7 9.Qc3 d5† Wlogalski – Song, Lille 2012.

5.d4?

Blocking the b2-bishop is hardly in the spirit of White's set-up.

5...exd4 6.exd4 0–0 7.Qe2 Ee8 8.Qd2 a6 9.Qd3

9.Qxc6 dxc6† was also comfortable for Black in Olea Perez – Menendez Rey, Asturias 2000.

**9...Qb4!**

Black eliminates the light-squared bishop and obtains some advantage.

10.Qc4 Qxd3† 11.Wxd3 Qb4† 12.c3 d5! 13.Qe3

13.cxb4 dxc4 14.bxc4 We7† leaves White stuck in an annoying pin.

13...Qd6†

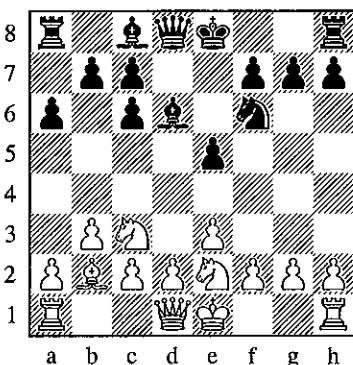
Neff – Sepp, Tallinn 2003.

5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

This has been tested by McShane, but it is not too impressive after:

5...a6 6. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $dxc6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$

We have reached a version of variation E23 where White has played an unnecessary $\mathbb{Q}c3$, rather than the more popular plan of d2-d3 followed by $\mathbb{Q}d2$.



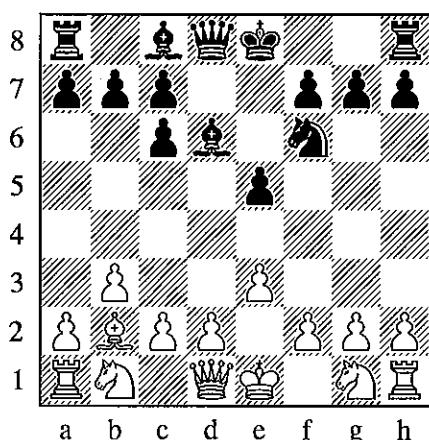
7...0-0

I also like the plan of long castling:

7... $\mathbb{Q}e6!$?N 8.0-0 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 9.f4 (9. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ 0-0-0?)
9...0-0-0?

8.0-0 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 9.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 10. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 11.fxe5
 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$

Black was better in McShane – Jones, Germany 2012.

E21) 5. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $dxc6$ 

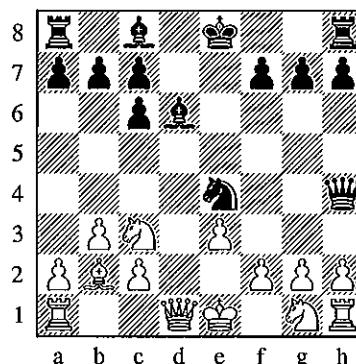
As we will see in some of the later lines such as variation E23, Black is often willing to provoke this exchange with ...a6, so it hardly seems a good idea for White to play it immediately. Nevertheless, there are some players who seem happy to define the pawn structure early, rather than giving Black the option of ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$. Nakamura has played this way in a couple of rapid games, and the Colombian IM Gonzalez Rodriguez has played it many times.

6.d3 e4!?

I like this rare line, which opens the position for the black bishops.

7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

7.dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}h4$!? is also promising for Black, for instance:



9. $\mathbb{W}f3$ (or 9. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$)
9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 0-0-0? With the bishop pair in an open position, Black's chances were preferable in Gonzalez Sanz – Narciso Dublan, La Pobla de Lillet 1999.

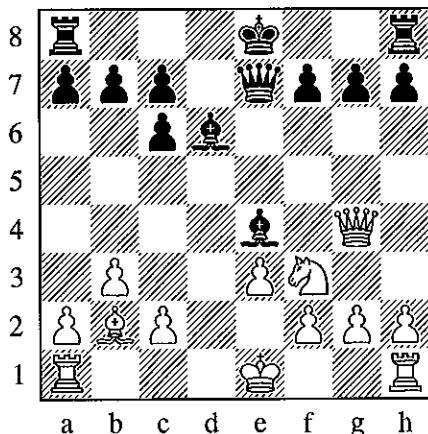
7... $\mathbb{Q}f5$! 8. $dxe4$

8.d4 0-0 is good for Black.

8. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $exd3$ 9. $cxd3$ 0-0 10. $\mathbb{Q}gf3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$? and Black's bishop pair yields him the advantage, Gonzalez Rodriguez – Sanchez Ibern, Barcelona 2010.

8... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 10. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{W}e7!$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$
 11. $\mathbb{W}xg7?$ is bad due to: 11...0-0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}f6$
 $\mathbb{W}e6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}e5-$

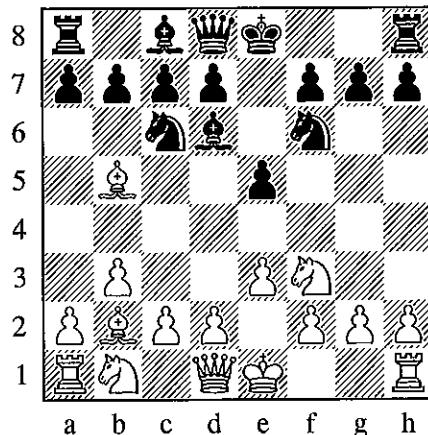
Now in Gonzalez Rodriguez – Avila Jimenez, Barcelona 2011, Black should have taken the opportunity to create a weakness with:



11...♝b4†!N 12.c3 ♝d6†

With excellent prospects for Black.

E22) 5. Δf_3



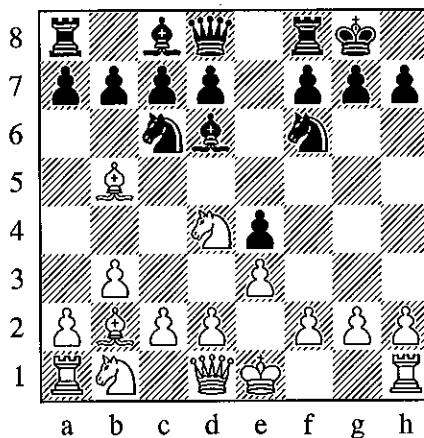
This provocative move is answered by the principled:

5...e4! 6.♘d4

I once tried 6. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ but got nowhere after: 6...0-0 7.0-0 (7.f4 occurred in Shkuro – Moiseenko, Alushta 2008, when Black's play can be easily improved by means of 7...a6!N 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ followed by ...d5) 7... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ After trading the dark-squared bishops, Black obtains a comfortable position. 8. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ V. Mikhalevski – Avrukh, Ramat Aviv (rapid) 1998.

6..9-01?

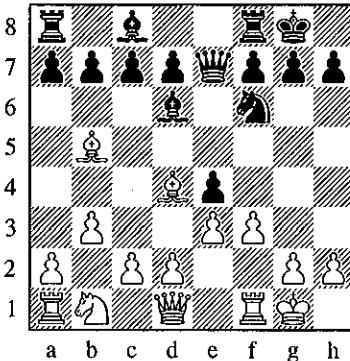
I prefer this extremely rare move over the much more common 6... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$. I don't see any reason to rush with the exchange, as neither $\mathbb{Q}f5$ nor an exchange on c6 seems dangerous for Black. Now our plan will be to prepare ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$.



7. e2! N

7. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{A}e5\#$ gave White nothing in Wicklund Hansen – Westerinen, Helsingør 2007.

In the event of 7.0–0 we can switch plans with 7... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}e7!$. White tried 9.f3 in Gillani – Sadvakasov, Mallorca 2004, when Black's most precise reply would have been:



9... $\mathbb{B}c5!$ N 10. $\mathbb{B}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $d5\bar{f}$ With a slight edge for Black.

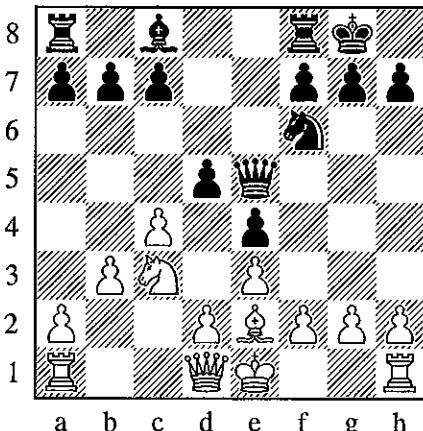
7... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}e7!$

Now ... $\mathbb{B}c5$ cannot be stopped, and Black should be able to claim a slight edge due to his space advantage.

9.c4

9.f4 exf3 10. $\mathbb{B}xf3$ $\mathbb{B}c5$ 11. $\mathbb{B}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $d5\bar{f}$ is pleasant for Black.

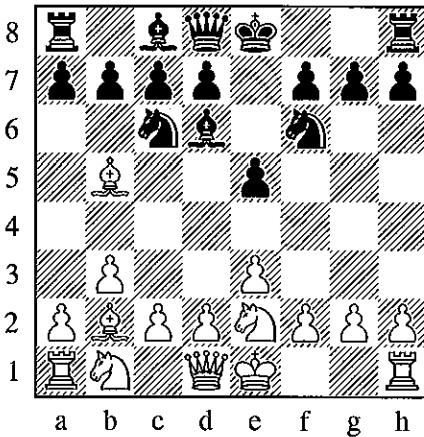
9... $\mathbb{B}c5$ 10. $\mathbb{B}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $d5$



12.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 14.0-0 $\mathbb{B}f5$

The position is close to equal, but White still faces some challenges due to the backward d-pawn.

E23) 5. $\mathbb{Q}e2$



A flexible set-up. White is ready to exchange his light-squared bishop in the hope of creating some play on the kingside.

5...0-0

There is nothing wrong with the immediate 5...a6 6. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ dxc6.

6. $\mathbb{Q}g3$

White has also tried:

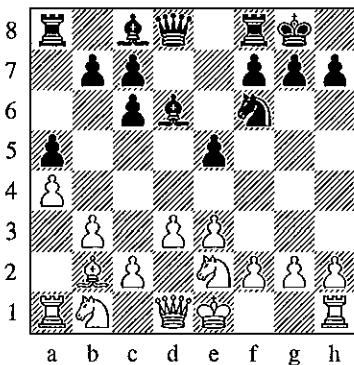
6.0-0 a6 7. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ dxc6 8.d3 $\mathbb{W}e7$ (8...a5!? 9.a4 e4!? looks decent for Black too) 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{B}e6$ 10.h3 $\mathbb{B}ad8$ with roughly equal chances in Sasikiran – P.H. Nielsen, Esbjerg 2003.

6. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ dxc6 7.d3 a5!

This is more accurate than 7... $\mathbb{B}e6$, as played in Nakamura – Hovhannisyan, Internet 2011.

8.a4

8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ occurred in Guadamuro Torrente – Nicolas Zapata, Linares 2013, and now the consistent continuation would have been 8...a4N 9.e4 b5!? when Black has a good version of the Exchange Spanish.



8...e4!

We have already seen a similar idea in variation E21. Here it works even better, as White has committed to quite a rigid queenside formation.

9.dxe4N

9.d4 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ f5 gave Black easy play in Garofalo – M. Andersen, Barcelona 2015.

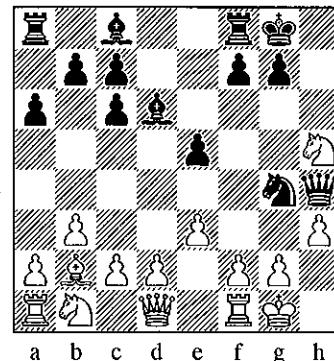
9... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\uparrow$ 11.c3 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d6\bar{f}$

Black has the better chances thanks to his strong bishop pair.

8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ was not so impressive in Grabuzova – Hou Yifan, Sochi 2007, although Black’s position is still fine of course.

9. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4\uparrow$ 10.h3 $\mathbb{W}h4\uparrow$

Black wins back a pawn and obtains a good position. For example:

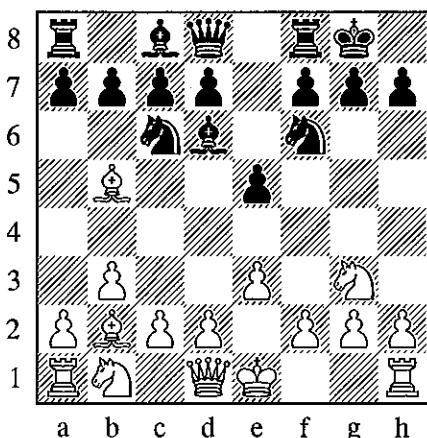


11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

11. $\mathbb{Q}g3\uparrow$? $\mathbb{Q}xf2\uparrow$ is excellent for Black.

11... $\mathbb{W}xh5$ 12.hxg4 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 13.f3 $\mathbb{Q}f5\uparrow$

Black was at least equal in Fels – Wydornik, email 2013.



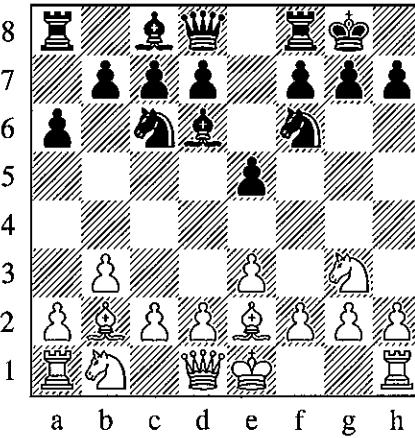
6...a6 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2\uparrow$?

With this move White tries to avoid going along with Black’s plan.

7. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ dxc6 8.0–0

Now I like the surprising:

8...h5!



7... $\mathbb{Q}e7\uparrow$?

Preparing ...d5 as quickly as possible, without worrying about the bishop pair.

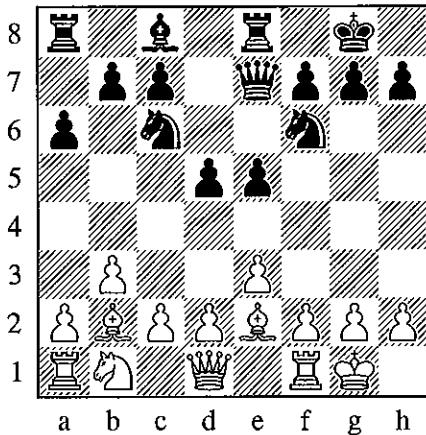
7... $\mathbb{B}e8$ is a logical alternative, intending ... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ and ...d5.

8.♗f5

8.0–0 d5 gave Black an easy game in Zeh – Friedrich, email 2012.

8...♝e8! 9.♗xe7† ♜xe7 10.0–0 d5

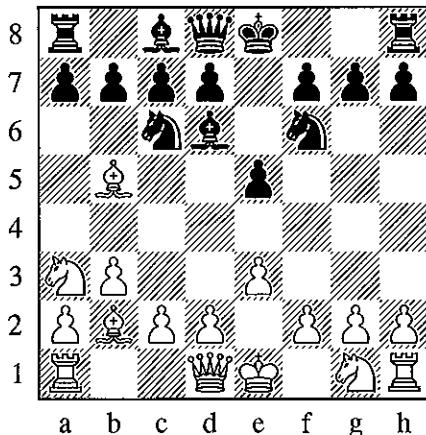
Black's pawn centre fully compensates for the bishop pair, for instance:

**11.f4 h6**

11...e4 also proved fully playable in Zeh – Oehler, email 2012.

12.♝e1 exf4 13.♝xf4 ♛e5=

Zeh – Hahn, email 2011.

E24) 5.♗a3

White is trying to exploit the awkward position of the dark-squared bishop by threatening ♛c4.

5...♞a5

This weird-looking move is the main line. The idea is obviously to nullify the threat of ♛c4, thus leaving both sides with a temporarily misplaced knight. Meanwhile Black intends to chase the bishop away with ...a6, which will often be followed by ...b5.

6.♝e2

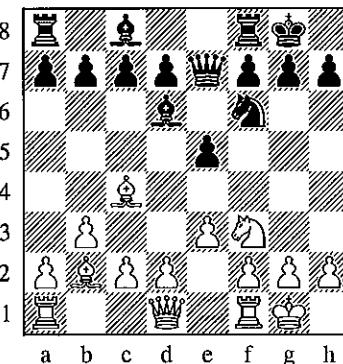
White anticipates the attack on his bishop and creates a positional threat of ♛b5.

The simplest response to 6.♗f3 is to transpose to variation E241 with 6...a6 7.♝e2 ♜e7.

6.♛c4

This simple knight trade is hardly a good way to fight for an advantage.

6...♛xc4 7.♛xc4 0–0 8.♗f3 ♜e7 9.0–0

**9...e4??**

9...c6 is a good alternative, with the idea of ...♝c7 and ...d5.

10.♝h4

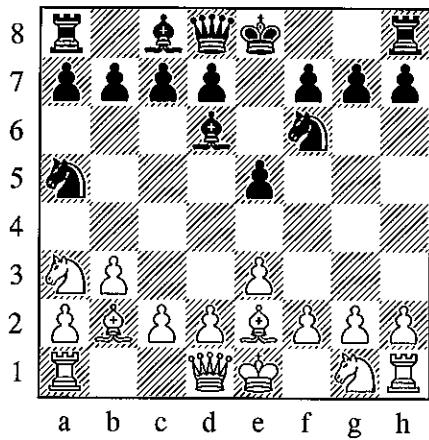
10.♝d4 is strongly met by 10...♝e5! 11.g3 c5 12.f4 exf3 13.♝b5 ♜xb2 14.♝xd6 ♜e5 15.♝xc8 ♜axc8 16.♝xf3 d5 and Black is doing fine.

10...♝e5 11.d4

After 11.♕f5 ♕c5 12.♗xe5 ♕xe5 13.♕g3 d5 it's White who has to fight for equality, Hamad – Gleizerov, Amman 2008.

11...exd3 12.♗xe5 ♕xe5 13.♗xd3 d5 14.♕f3 ♜e7

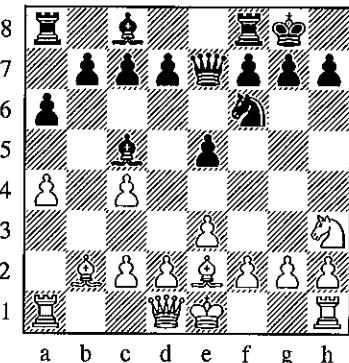
With a comfortable position for Black in Murey – Skripchenko, Paris 2003.



6...a6

This is the natural way to cover the b5-square. We will analyse E241) 7.♕f3 followed by the more popular E242) 7.c4.

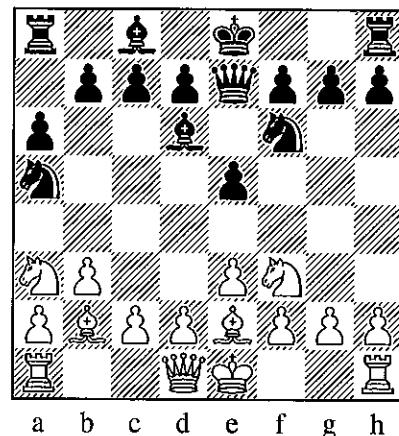
7.♕c4 ♜xc4 8.bxc4 has been tried a few times, but White's experiment has not been successful after: 8...♜e7! 9.a4 (or 9.♕f3 b6†) 9...0–0 10.♕h3 ♜c5



11.f4? (White should have played 11.0–0N although the simple 11...d6 gives Black

a pleasant position) 11...♝xe3! 12.♗xe5 (12.dxe3 ♜b4† was Black's idea) 12...♞a7+ and soon Black won in Sakaev – Sveshnikov, Gausdal 1992.

E241) 7.♕f3 ♜e7



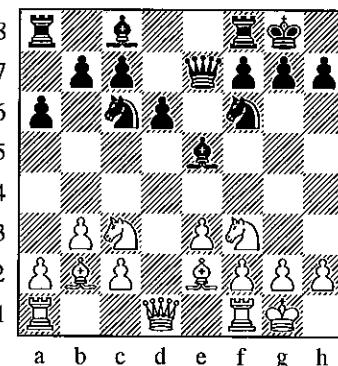
Defending the e-pawn while forcing White's knight to retreat.

8.♘b1

White hopes that the loss of time with his knight will be outweighed by the unfortunate position of Black's knight on a5, bishop on d6 and queen on e7.

8...0–0 9.c4!?

The other main option is:
9.d4 exd4 10.♗xd4 ♜e5! 11.♗c3 ♜c6! 12.0–0 d6 13.♗f3



13... ♕f5! 14. ♦c1??

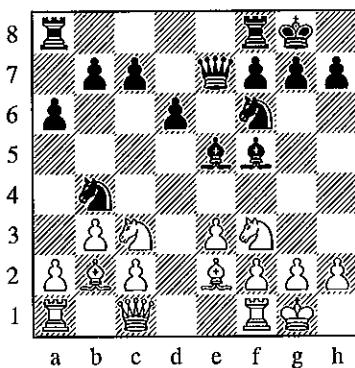
A clever move. White intends to take on e5, and wants to answer ...dxe5 with ♘a3.

The immediate 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $dxe5$ is good for Black.

14... b4!?

Black is willing to sacrifice a couple of tempos in order to provoke a2-a3, thus taking away this square from the dark-squared bishop.

14... $\bar{g}ad8$ is a logical alternative.



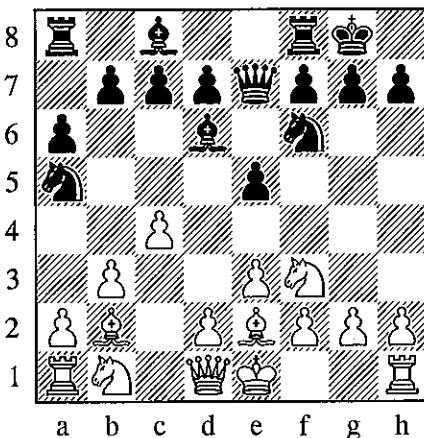
15.  d1

After 15.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c6=$ the position is equal (but please note that 15... $\mathbb{Q}xc2?$ is bad as after 16. $\mathbb{B}a2\pm$ the knight is trapped on c2).

Now I prefer the simple:

15...♝ad8N

With a comfortable position for Black; although 15...c5!? was also quite acceptable in Jobava – Karjakin, Beijing 2012.

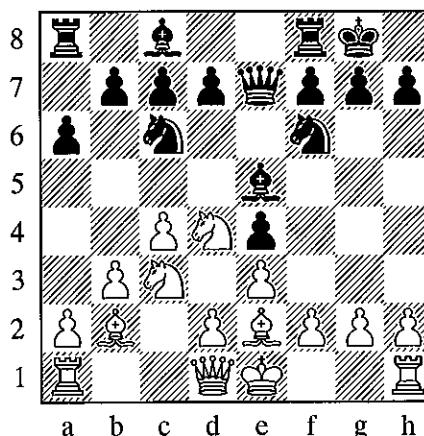


9...e45

9...b6 and 9... \mathbb{Q} c6 have also been played, but I consider the text move the most principled.

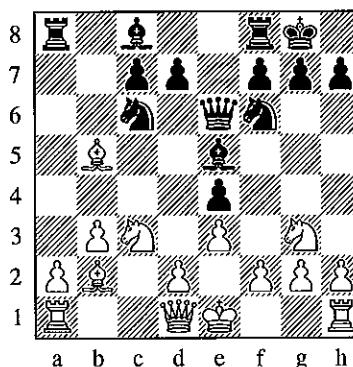
10. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$

This seems the most precise, as it solves the problem of the misplaced knight on a5 while challenging the strong knight on d4.



12.5c2N

This seems like a logical attempt to improve over: 12. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $b5!$ 14. $cxb5$ $axb5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$



15... $\mathbb{Q}a6$! 16. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ Black had fine compensation for the sacrificed pawn in Carapinha – Kravosky, email 2011.

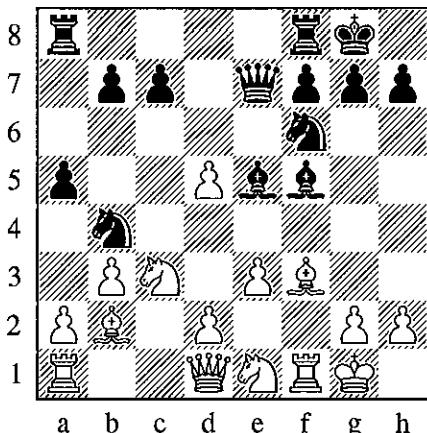
12...a5! 13.0-0

Or 13.a3 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ preparing ...d5.

13...d5! 14.cxd5 ♜b4!

The point of Black’s 12th move. My analysis continues:

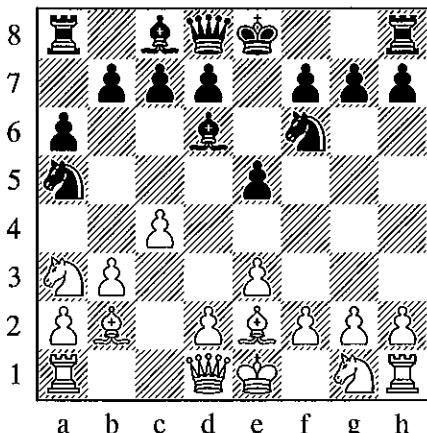
15.f4! exf3 16.♗xf3 ♜f5! 17.♗e1



**17...♝fe8? 18.a3 ♜d3 19.♗xd3 ♜xd3
20.♕e2 ♜xe2 21.♔xe2 ♜ad8 22.♖ac1 ♜xd5**

Black has a slight edge thanks to his better pawn structure.

E242) 7.c4



White takes some space in the centre and vacates the c2-square, thus giving his knight a route to a brighter future.

7...0-0 8.♗c2 ♜e8 9.d3

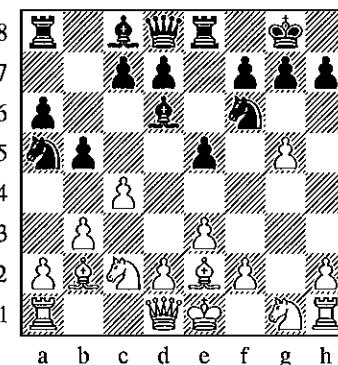
White takes the e4-square under control and prepares ♜f3.

9.g4?!

This has been played a few times, but it seems to me that White is becoming a bit too creative for his own good. We will follow a model game from Black’s perspective:

9...b5! 10.g5

I also checked 10.♗f3 e4 11.♗e2N (or 11.g5 Yurtseven – Ivanenko, Lvov 2015, 11...bxc4!N 12.gxf6 exf3+) 11...bxc4 12.bxc4 ♜e5! and Black obtains the better chances after exchanging White’s strong dark-squared bishop.

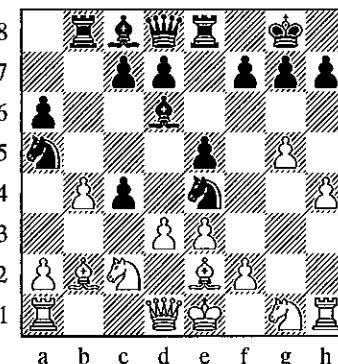


10...♝e4 11.h4 bxc4 12.b4

12.bxc4 ♜b8 13.♗b1 ♜b7+ is also excellent for Black.

12...♜b8 13.d3?

Already at a serious disadvantage, White makes a further mistake and his position soon collapses:



13... $\mathbb{Q}xb4!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}d2\#$

16. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7\#$

Black soon won in Alvarez Pedraza – Bruzon Batista, Bogota 2014.

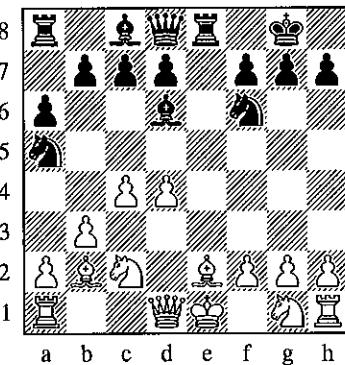
Another unimpressive attempt is:

9.d4?! exd4 10.exd4?!

Opening the e-file against his own king hardly seems a wise plan for White.

10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$?! allowed 10... $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$ in Punzon Moraleda – Keuter, corr. 2013.

10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4N$ is the best try, although 10...b5! followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ retains some initiative for Black.



10...b5!

This is a typical resource in this variation of the Larsen. Black develops quickly and makes real use of the supposedly misplaced knight on a5.

11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ bxc4 12.bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ d5#

Black soon won in Gofshtein – Avrukha, Israel 2008.

9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

As usual, this move should be met by the natural:

9...e4! 10. $\mathbb{Q}h4$

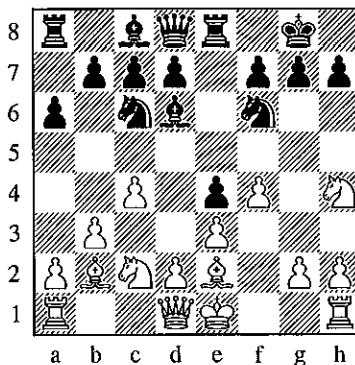
10. $\mathbb{Q}fd4$ c5?N (10... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ was also fine in Wallner – Pacher, Aschach 2013) 11. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ (or 13. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$) 13...d5 and Black is doing well.

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

Black wants to play ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ followed by recapturing with the knight.

11.f4

In this position from Zurek – Hracek, Czech Republic 2002, Black should have played:



11...g6!

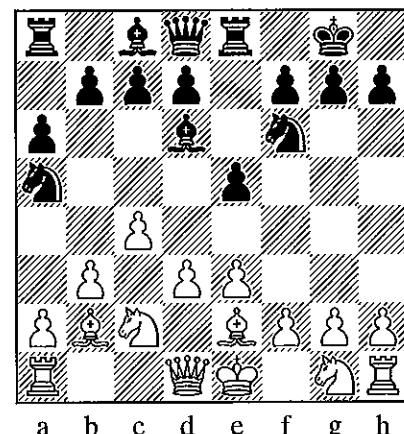
Restricting the knight on h4. For example:

12.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$?

12... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ followed by 13... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ is also good.

13. $\mathbb{W}e1$ d6#

Black intends ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ or even ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$, attacking the knight on h4 while preparing ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ to neutralize White's prized bishop.



9...b5!

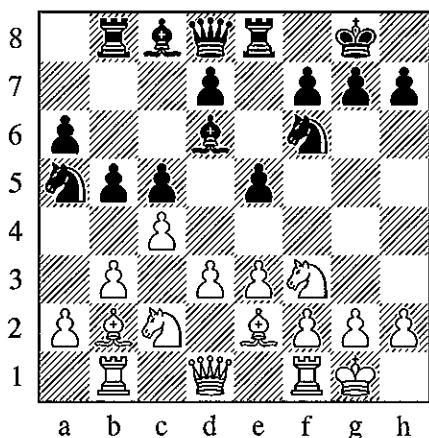
This is my favourite move in this variation – although 9... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11.e4 b5 12.0–0 bxc4 13.bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ was also okay for Black in B. Kovacevic – Marzolo, Warsaw 2005.

10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ c5!

Before bringing the knight back to c6, Black takes some space in the centre.

11. 0–0 $\mathbb{B}b8!$ 12. $\mathbb{B}b1$

12.e4 bxc4 13.dxc4 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ Black went on to install a knight on d4 and eventually won in De Ridder – Verleur, corr. 2011.

**12...bxc4**

12... $\mathbb{Q}c6N$ can also be considered.

13.bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 14.d4 cxd4 15.exd4 e4 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ **d5 17.c5 h5**

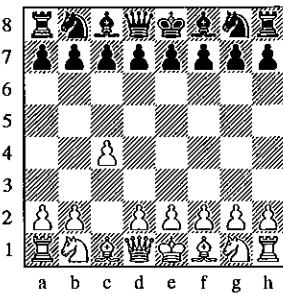
Black is certainly not worse in this double-edged position. Indeed, in Punzon Moraleda – Ruemmele, corr. 2012, Black went on to prove the superiority of his kingside play and won convincingly.

Conclusion

Larsen’s Opening is a respectable choice, as it gives White some active possibilities without compromising his position in the way that some of the other irregular first moves do. Nevertheless, I like Black’s prospects after 1...e5 2. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$. In the event of 3.c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ Black can generally follow up with ...d5, leading to a pleasant version of a reversed Sicilian. Alternatively, after 3.e3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}b5$, the clever 4... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ enables Black to guard the e5-pawn while minimizing the disruption to his development. If White exchanges on c6 then ...dxc6 gives Black easy piece play, especially in conjunction with ...e4 to open lines for his bishops. Otherwise the c6-knight will be moved to either e7 or a5, depending on how White develops. Black has several promising ways to regroup his pieces, and the analysis and practical examples indicate that White can hope for equality at best.



1.c4 e5



Rare 2nd Moves

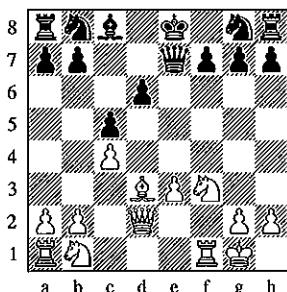
Variation Index

1.c4

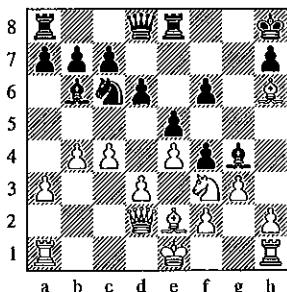
1...e5

A) 2.g4?!	105
B) 2.♘c2	106
C) 2.d4	107
D) 2.e4	110
E) 2.a3	113
F) 2.d3	113

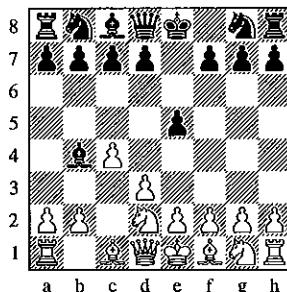
C) note to 3.♗xd4



D) after 14.♕e2



H) after 3.♗d2



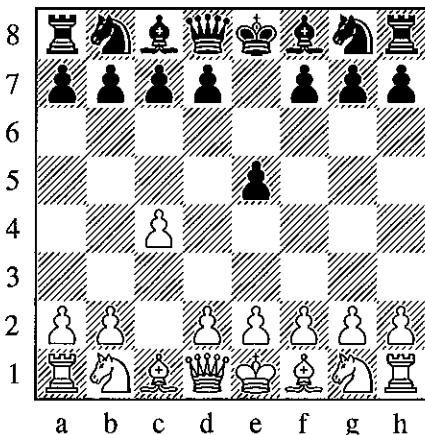
9...♝f6N

14...a5!N

3...c5!N

1.c4 e5

There are many possible replies to the English Opening, but I like the idea of planting a pawn in the centre.



White's two most popular and challenging moves are 2.g3 and 2.Qc3, and they will be covered in Chapters 7-9 and 10-12 respectively.

2.e3 and 2.Qf3 are reasonably important sidelines, which will be analysed in the next chapter.

Before then, the current chapter will deal with an assortment of rare moves: A) 2.g4?!, B) 2.Wc2, C) 2.d4, D) 2.e4, E) 2.a3 and F) 2.d3.

2.b3 will almost certainly transpose to Larsen's Opening. For instance, 2...Qf6 3.Qc3 (3.Qb2 Qc6 is variation D of Chapter 4) 3...d5 4.cxd5 Qxd5 5.Qb2 Qc6 and we have reached variation D1 of Chapter 4 on page 88.

2.h4?!

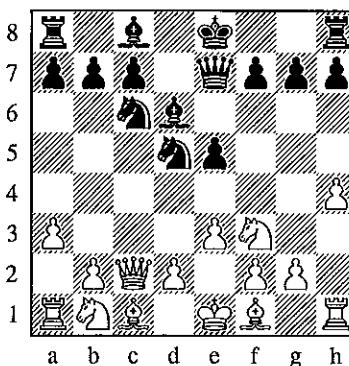
This bizarre move was tested by the Dutch IM Manuel Bosboom at least four times in 1992. It seems to me that its main purpose is to depart from theory as soon as possible, but it's hardly a good idea to spend a tempo weakening the kingside.

2...Qf6 3.e3 Qc6 4.a3 d5!

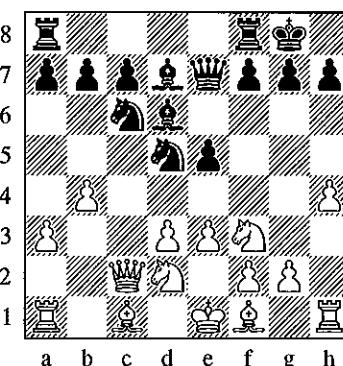
Black is happy to play a reversed Open Sicilian with the bad move h2-h4 on the board.

5.cxd5 Qxd5 6.Wc2 Qd6 7.Qf3 We7

Black prepares ...e4 and postpones short castling.

**8.d3 0-0**

Now that the b1-h7 diagonal is closed, Black can castle without being attacked by Qg5.

9.b4 Qd7 10.Qbd2**11...b5! 11.Qg5 a5! 12.bxa5 Wxa5+**

Black skilfully created a target on a3 and obtained a clear advantage in Bosboom – Akopian, Tilburg 1992.

A) 2.g4?!

With this rare move White seems to be aiming for some sort of 'light-squared strategy', but it is much too weakening.

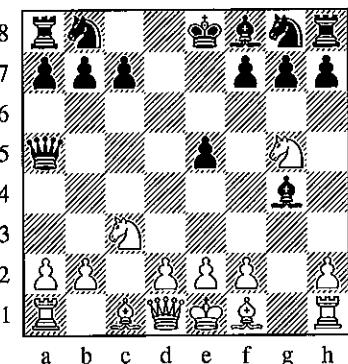
2...d5!

Immediately punishing White for his opening experiment.

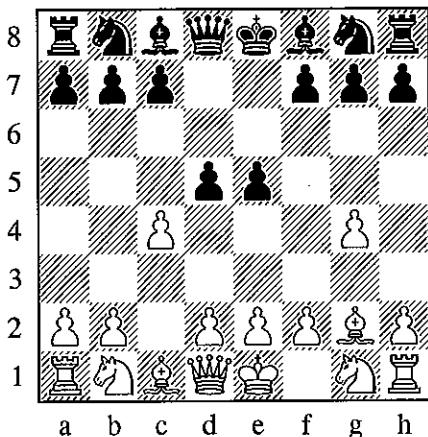
3.♗g2

White has transposed to a version of the Grob with 1.g4 d5 2.♗g2 e5 3.c4, having avoided 2...♗xg4 – but his position is still worse.

3.cxd5 leads to a loss of a pawn after the simple: 3...♗xd5 4.♕f3 ♗xg4 5.♕c3 ♗a5 6.♗g5!? (6.♗b3?! ♗xf3 7.exf3 ♗b6† leaves no questions; also after 6.♗g2 ♗c6 7.♗g5 ♗h5† White doesn't get enough for the pawn)



6...♗h5! 7.♗b3 ♗b6 8.♗d5 ♗xb3 9.axb3 ♗d8† Despite White's temporary activity, Black should have no problem consolidating.

**3...dxc4! 4.♗a4† c6 5.♗xc4 ♗e6**

In variation D4 of Chapter 3, I analysed a similar position with the g-pawn on g3 instead of g4. Black was doing fine in that line, and it's obvious that having the pawn on g4 makes things worse for White.

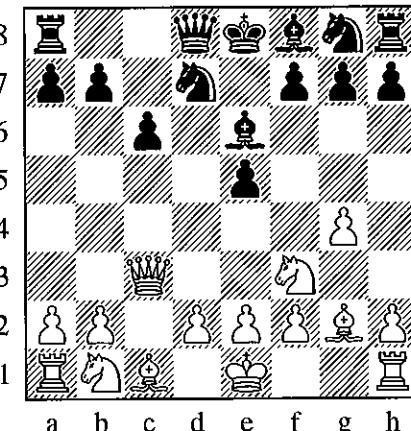
6.♗c3

6.♗c2 ♗xg4† gave Black a healthy extra pawn in A. Mastrovasilis – Landa, Internet (blitz) 2006.

6.♗a4 can be met by 6...♗d7? 7.h3 h5! 8.gxh5 ♗gf6† and Black was clearly better in Jensen – Phillips, email 2003.

6...♗d7 7.♗f3

7.h3 ♗gf6† gave Black a clear advantage in Hons – Cermak, Brno 2009, due to the simple ideas of ...♗d5 and ...h5.



7...♗gf6! 8.♗xe5 ♗xe5 9.♗xe5 ♗xg4 10.♗c3 ♗d6 11.h3 ♗f6†

L. Fischer – Karst, Wiesbaden 1997.

B) 2.♗c2

An extremely rare continuation, but there is some logic behind it, as the queen could be well placed here in a reversed Open Sicilian. I like the way my countryman dealt with this system.

2...d6?!

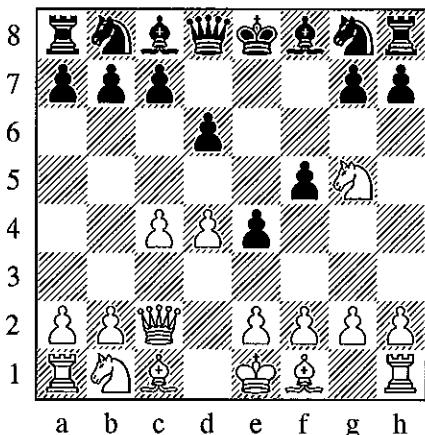
Other moves are playable, but the text is a good choice as it leads to positions where the queen is virtually useless on c2.

3.Qf3 f5 4.d4?!

White should have settled for the more modest 4.d3, but it's obvious that he has no chance of an opening advantage.

4...e4 5.Qg5

We have transposed to a version of the 1.d4 d6 2.c4 e5 3.Qf3 e4 4.Qg5 f5 system, where White has played the useless move 5.Qc2?!.

**5...c6 6.Qc3 Qf6**

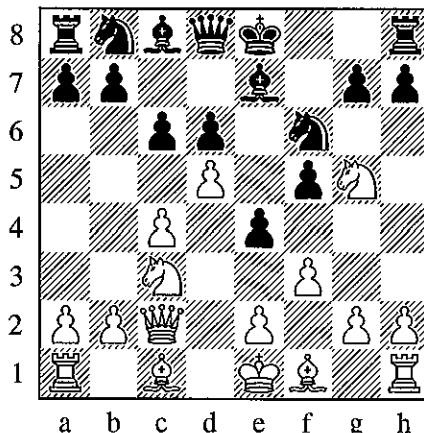
6...Qe7! (either here or on the previous move) would have been more accurate – Black wants to develop his bishop to this square anyway, so he may as well gain time by attacking the knight. The text move is still at least equal for Black though.

7.d5?!

Premature. White should have preferred 7.e3 or 7.Qh3.

7...Qe7 8.f3?!

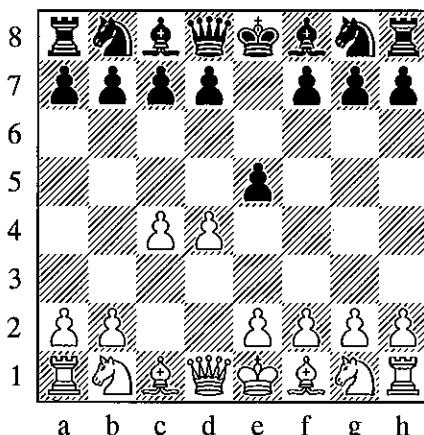
White is playing too ambitiously.

**8...Qxd5! 9.Qgxe4?**

9.cxd5 Qxg5 10.Qxg5 Wxg5 11.fxe4 0–0! also favours Black, but this would have been the lesser evil for White.

9...Qb4! 10.Wb3 d5!–+

White's position soon collapsed in Schmittdiel – Psakhis, Leeuwarden 1993.

C) 2.d4

This can hardly promise any advantage for White, as he is likely to waste two tempos on queen moves.

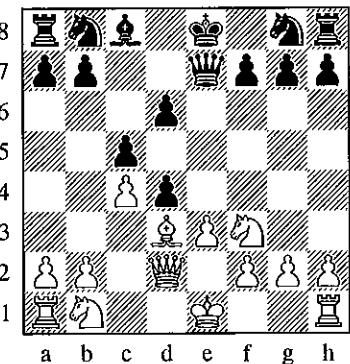
2...exd4 3.Wxd4**3.Qf3**

This leads to a weird reversed Scandinavian with the pawn on c4. I recommend meeting it with:

3... $\mathbb{Q}b4\uparrow$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

Black obtains a comfortable position after 4. $\mathbb{Q}bd2N$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 0-0 6.e3 d5 7.a3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ followed by ...c5.

4... $\mathbb{Q}xd2\uparrow$ 5. $\mathbb{W}xd2$ c5 6.e3 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ d6
7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8.0-0 dxe3 9.fxe3 d6 is the same thing.

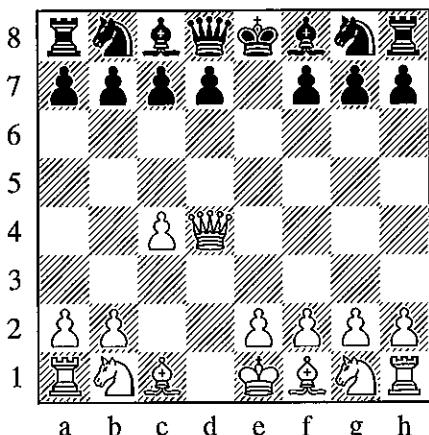


8.0-0 dxe3 9.fxe3

Now in Risdon – Tudor, corr. 2011, the natural continuation would have been:

9... $\mathbb{Q}f6N$

White has a degree of compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but he is fighting for equality at most.



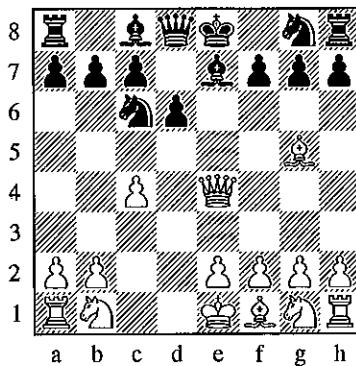
3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4. $\mathbb{W}d1$

4. $\mathbb{W}e4\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

This line has been tested a few times by the Israeli IM David Kudischewitsch. Black's most accurate response is:

5...d6!

The idea is to play ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and then recapture on e7 with the queen, followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ to exploit the unfavourable position of the white queen.

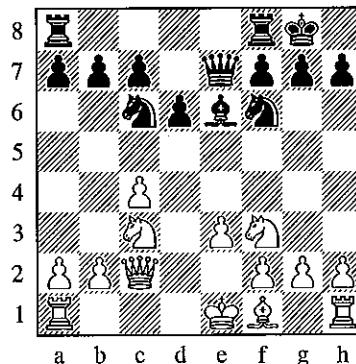


6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

After 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6\uparrow$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 8.e3N $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9. $\mathbb{W}c2$ 0-0 White has nothing better than 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$, transposing to the line below.

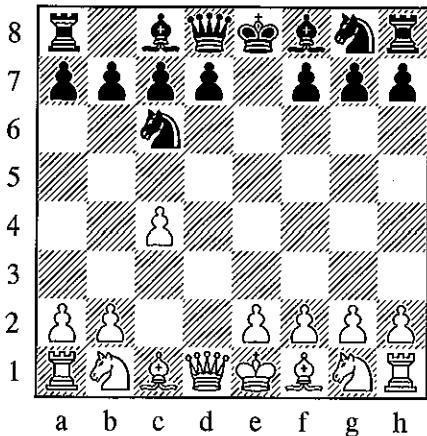
6... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 8.e3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9. $\mathbb{W}c2$ 0-0
10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

This occurred in D. Nemeth – Gross, Prague 2007, and now I would like to offer:



10...d5!N 11.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 12. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}bx5$

With a slight edge for Black thanks to his better development.



4...Qf6 5.Qc3

5.Qf3?! allows 5...d5! 6.cxd5 Qxd5 (or 6...Qxd5?) 7.Qxd5 Qxd5 and Black is already better, Peters – Schmitt, Altenkirchen 2012.

5...Qb4! 6.Qd2

This is White's safest move, and it should be enough to give him equal chances.

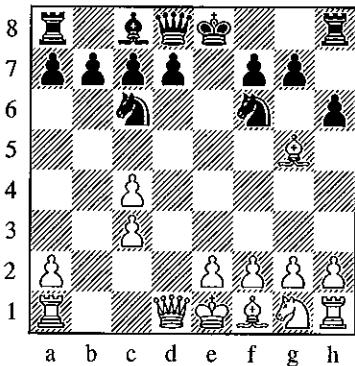
6.Qg5

This seems too ambitious, and Black has a choice of interesting replies.

6...Qxc3†

6...Qe4? 7.Qxd8 Qxc3 was a tempting queen sacrifice seen in I. Rodriguez – Ruiz Peyre, San Francisco 2000. The critical line continues 8.Qb3N Qe4† 9.Qd1 Qxf2† 10.Qc1 Qxd8 11.Qg3 Qxh1 12.Qxg7 Qe8 with a complicated position.

7.bxc3 h6



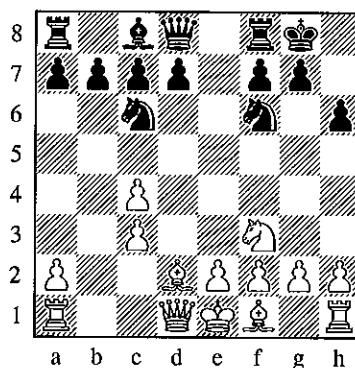
8.Qd2??

If the bishop was going to go to d2, it should have done so on move 6.

8.Qh4 is preferable, but after 8...b6 9.Qf3 Qb7 10.e3 Qe7† Black is better.

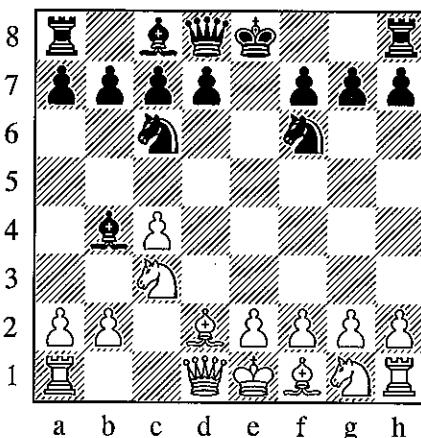
8...0–0 9.Qf3

In Moldt – Roedl, Bad Nauheim 1948, Black's most accurate continuation would have been:



9...Qe4!N 10.e3 Qe8 11.Qd3 d5

With an obvious advantage for Black.



6...d6 7.Qf3 Qf5 8.e3 0–0 9.a3!?

9.Qe2 Qe8 10.0–0 a5 was also good for Black in A. Gomez – Remon, Holguin 1992.

9...Qxc3 10.Qxc3 Qe4 11.Qc1 Qxc3 12.Qxc3 Qf6

With roughly equal chances.

D) 2.e4

This move can hardly be a good idea. Could you imagine someone playing 1.e4 e5 and then 2.c4? That's exactly the position on the board. Obviously the main drawback of this set-up is the weakening of the d4-square.

2...♝c5

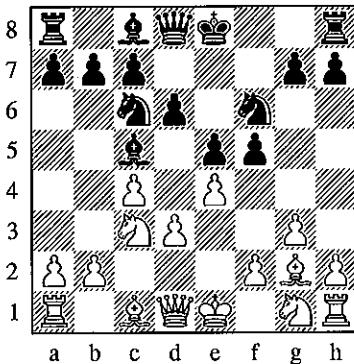
I suggest delaying the development of the king's knight in order to preserve the option of ...f5. The bishop obviously belongs on c5, as control over the d4-square is key.

3.♝f3

3.g3 d6 4.♝g2 ♛c6 5.d3 f5 6.♝c3 transposes to 3.♝c3 below.

3.♝c3 d6 4.g3 ♛c6 5.♝g2 f5! 6.d3 ♛f6

White is playing the well-known Botvinnik System of the English – but Black enjoys the huge benefit of having his bishop on c5 instead of the usual g7 or e7.

**7.♝f3**

This is White's best try, although Black retains a pleasant advantage.

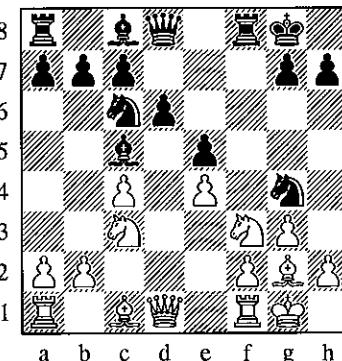
7.♝ge2 from Kampman – Sielecki, Netherlands 2012, can be strongly answered by 7...♝g4!N 8.0–0 f4! 9.h3 0–0! 10.hxg4 ♝xg4!+ and Black's attack is too strong.

White's play in the following game wasn't impressive either: 7.♝h3 0–0 8.0–0 h6

9.♝d2 fxe4 10.♝xe4 ♜xe4 11.dxe4 ♜e6
12.♝h1 ♜d7 13.♝g1 ♜xc4 0–1 Colin Mancera – Gulko, St Martin 1992.

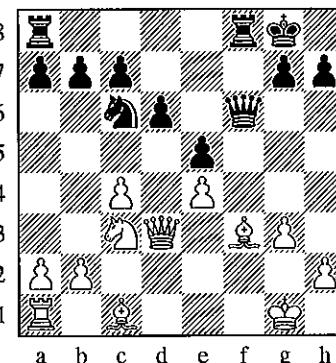
7...fxe4 8.dxe4 0–0 9.0–0 ♜g4!

It's not easy to deal with Black's initiative, as the following examples demonstrate.

**10.♝d3**

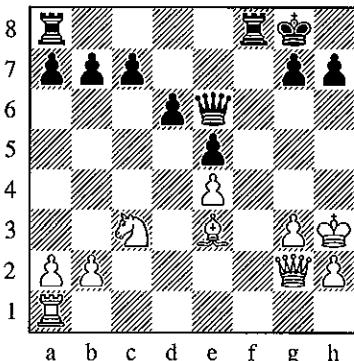
10.h3 is strongly met by 10...♝d4! intending 11.♝xd4 ♜xf2! 12.♝xf2 ♜xd4 13.♝f3 ♜f6! 14.♝g2 ♜xf2 15.♝xf2 ♜xh3 16.♝d5 ♜f7 17.♝e3 ♜g6! and Black's advantage is decisive.

10...♜xf2 11.♝xf2 ♜xf2† 12.♝xf2 ♜g4 13.♝g1 ♜xf3 14.♝xf3 ♜f6

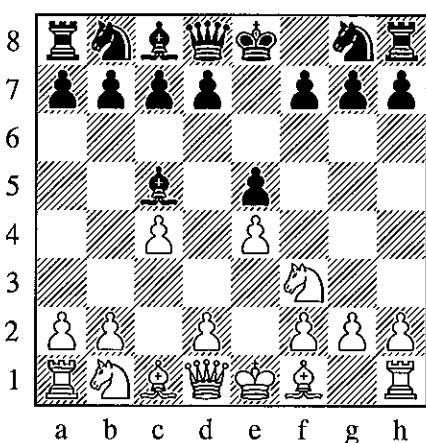


15.♝g2 ♜b4! 16.♛e2 ♜c2 17.♝xc2 ♜xf3† 18.♝h3 ♜f1† 19.♝g2 ♜xc4 20.♝e3 ♜e6†

I was surprised to find two games which reached this position. White did not last much longer in either of them:



21.g4
 21.♕h4 c6 22.♗d1 ♕f6 23.g4 ♕af8 24.♗g3
 b5 0–1 Rahde – Caire, email 2008.
 21...h5 22.♕h4 g5† 23.♗xg5 ♕f2 24.♗g1
 ♕xh2† 25.♗g3 ♕xb2 26.gxh5 ♘h8 27.♗c1
 ♕g8
 0–1 Van Osmael – Lesko, corr. 2011.



3...♝c6 4.♝c3
 4.♝xe5?? is a blunder in view of 4...♝xe5
 5.d4 ♕b4†.

4...d6 5.d3

5.♗a4

This move, from Shirazi – Shipman, New York 1983, doesn't make much sense as it can be easily ignored.

5...f5!N 6.d3

6.♗xc5 dxc5 7.d3 (7.exf5? is hardly a good idea in view of 7...e4 8.♗g1 ♕xf5†) 7...fxe4

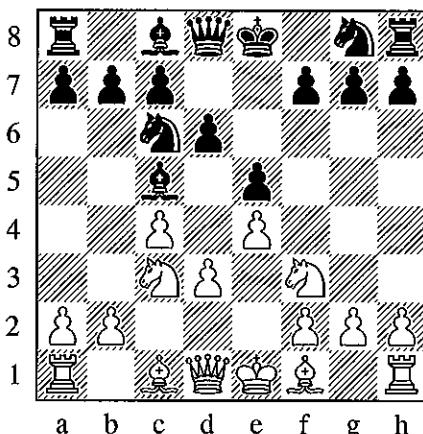
8.♗g5! ♕f5! 9.♗xe4 ♕xe4 10.dxe4 ♕xd1†
 11.♗xd1 ♕d8† 12.♗d2 ♕f6† and Black's advantage is unquestionable.

6...♝f6

6...♝b4†! is also good for Black.

7.♗xc5 dxc5 8.exf5 ♕xf5 9.♗e2 ♕d6†

Black has a comfortable advantage as the d3-pawn is weak.



5...f5

That's why Black was in no hurry to develop the g8-knight.

6.♗g5

6.♗e2 ♕f6 7.0–0 (7.♗g5 transposes to 7.♗e2 in the note to White's next move)
 7...0–0 8.♗e3 ♕d4 is similar to the 7.♗e2 line in the notes below; the position of the black pawn on h7 instead of h6 does not change the evaluation.

6...♝f6!

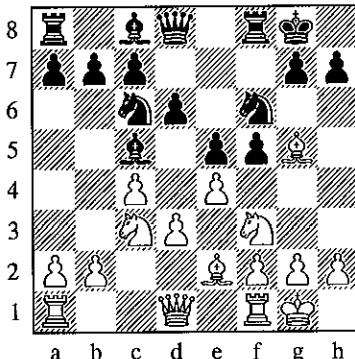
6...♝ge7 has been played more frequently, but there is no need to fear the following pin.

7.♗d5

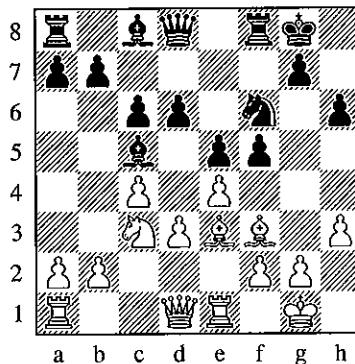
This seems like the only way to challenge Black, but it's not dangerous at all.

7.♗e2 0–0 8.0–0 was played in Thomas – Tomaros, Edmonton 2005, and now I suggest:

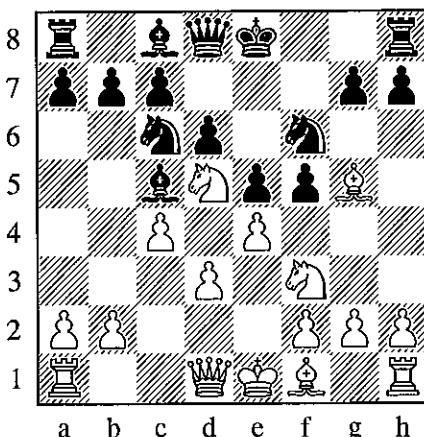
1.c4 e5



8...h6N 9.Qe3 Qd4! 10.h3 (or 10.Qd2 c6
11.Qd1 Qxf3† 12.Qxf3 f4 13.Qxc5 dxc5†)
10...c6 11.Qe1 Qxf3† 12.Qxf3



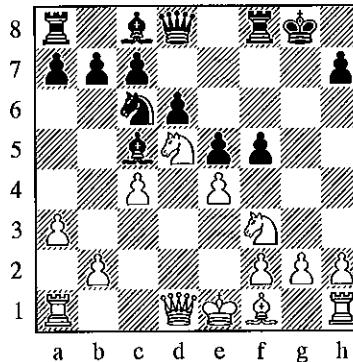
12...f4! 13.Qxc5 dxc5† Black is in full control thanks to the weakness of the d3-pawn and the d4-square, as well as the prospect of a kingside attack.



7...0-0 8.Qxf6†

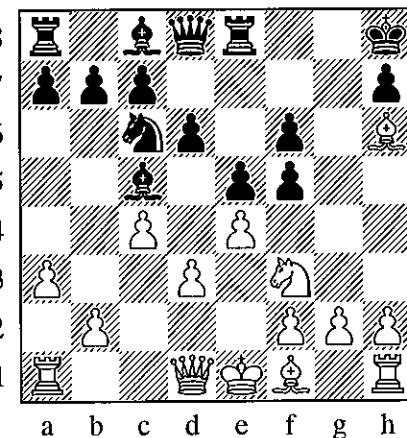
I also considered 8.exf5N Qxf5 9.Qe2 Wd7 10.Qxf6† gxf6 11.Qh6 Qfe8 12.0-0 Qh8 13.Qe3 Qg8 and Black retains a slight edge.

Another game continued: 8.a3 fxe4 9.Qxf6 (9.dxe4? is refuted by 9...Qxf2†) 9...gxf6 10.dxe4 f5



11.Qd3 fxe4 12.Qxe4 Qd4 Black had excellent prospects in Kruimer – Ayrosa, corr. 2007.

8...gxf6 9.Qh6 Qe8 10.a3 Qh8



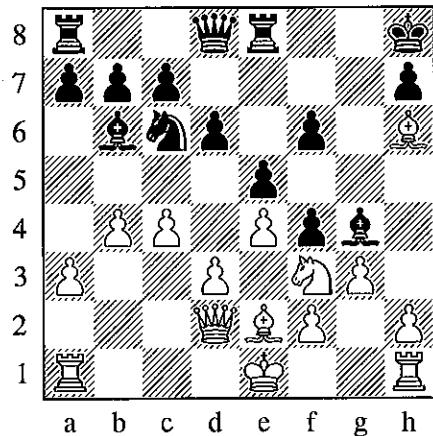
11.b4

Also after 11.g3 We7 Black's chances are higher.

11...Qb6 12.Qd2? f4! 13.g3 Qg4 14.Qe2

This position was reached in Blaine –

Broyles, email 2007. Black has many strong continuations, but my favourite idea is:



14...a5!N

Either opening the a-file for the rook, or provoking a further weakening of White's dark squares. Black's advantage is close to decisive.

E) 2.a3

This has a similar idea to variation B with 2. $\mathbb{Q}c2$, insofar as White is making a move which should be useful in a reversed Open Sicilian. So once again, Black should refrain from ...d5.

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

2...d6 is a sensible alternative.

3.e3

After 3.d3 Black could consider, among other ideas, 3...c5?! with ...d5 to follow.

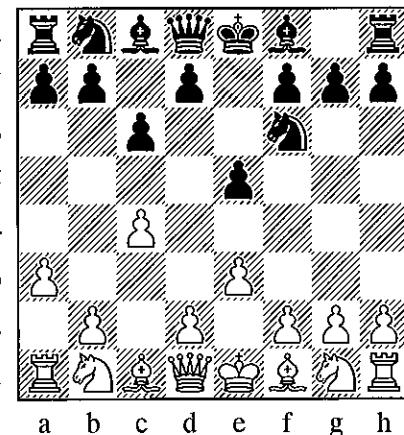
3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ can be met by 3...c6, with similar ideas as in our main line.

3...c6!

It makes sense to play a reversed Alapin, as a2-a3 is unlikely to be of much use to White.

3...c5?! followed by ...d5 looks playable,

although in that case Black would have to be mindful of playing a reversed Kan a tempo down.



4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

4.d4 exd4 5.exd4 d5 is another reversed variation where a2-a3 is not the best way to have spent an extra tempo.

4...e4 5. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ d5

Black is playing a reputable system with reversed colours. It would be an exaggeration to claim that a2-a3 is a completely useless move, but it is certainly not the best use of a tempo, so Black is definitely not worse.

F) 2.d3

This is a rare but quite reasonable move. The d3-pawn would work well in a reversed Open Sicilian, but it can also fit in with a Botvinnik or other closed set-up.

2... $\mathbb{Q}b4\ddagger$

Other moves are playable, but this move seems like a good match with our repertoire choice against 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3$.

3. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

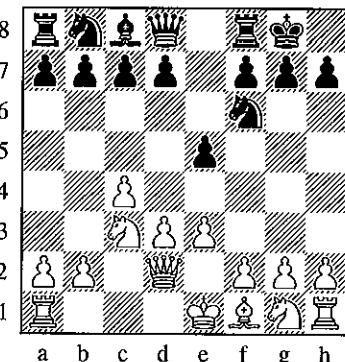
This used to be a pet line of the Hungarian GM Istvan Csom.

3... $\mathbb{Q}c3$ transposes to variation B of Chapter 10.

White may also try:

3... $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2\#$ 4. $\mathbb{W}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0–0 6.e3

Kommer – Hoogeboom, Arnhem 1996.



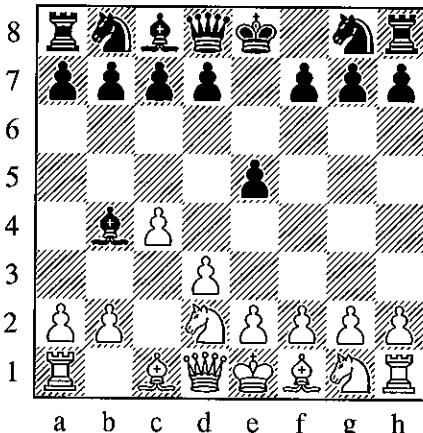
6...c6!N 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

I also considered 7.d4 exd4 (the solid 7...d6!? is also possible) 8. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ d5 9. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 11. cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ with equal chances.

7... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d5 9. cxd5 cxd5 10. d4 e4 11. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7=$

Despite White's extra tempo compared with the reversed 3... $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$ Sicilian, the position remains roughly equal.

Here I would like to introduce an interesting novelty.



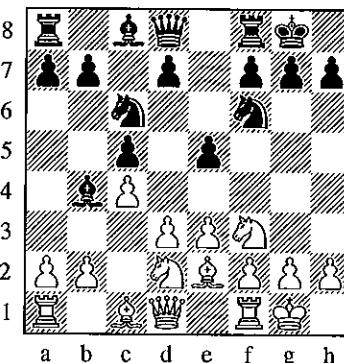
3...c5!N

Before developing the knight to c6 Black seizes some space in the centre. The weakening of the d5-square should not matter too much, as White's knight should be on c3 to take advantage of it.

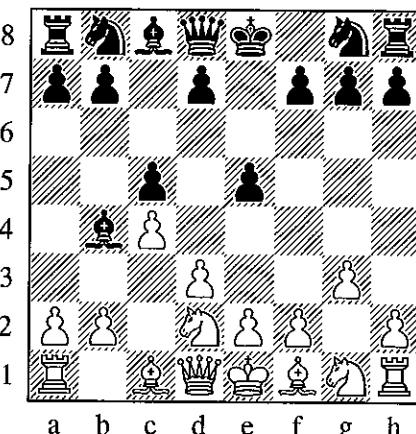
4.g3

4.a3 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ is likely to transpose to one of the lines below.

After 4. $\mathbb{Q}gf3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5. e3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0–0 7.0–0 I would like to point out a small finesse:

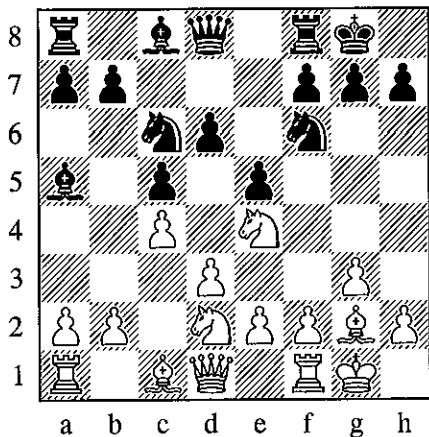


7... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ Avoiding the plan of $\mathbb{Q}b3$ followed by a2-a3, which would have given White a long-term advantage of the two bishops. 8.a3 d6=



4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}gf3$ d6 7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}a5$
8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 0–0 9. $\mathbb{Q}ge4$

9. $\mathbb{Q}de4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ h6 11. $\mathbb{Q}ge4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7=$ is also fine for Black.



9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$
12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}d7=$

With roughly equal chances.

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with an assortment of rare lines after 1.c4 e5. Certain options, such as 2.g4?!, 2.d4 and 2.e4, suffer from clear drawbacks, as they either weaken White's position or lead to a loss of time. On the other hand, 2.Wc2, 2.a3 and 2.d3 are not so bad, as White simply makes a noncommittal move and treats the position like a Sicilian. In each case, I have avoided playing into a reversed Open Sicilian where the extra tempo could become significant, and have instead aimed for positions where White's spare tempo is of little benefit. We may therefore conclude that White's chances for obtaining an advantage in any of these lines are slim at best.



1.c4 e5

2.e3 and 2.Qf3

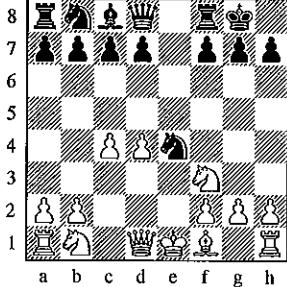
Variation Index

1.c4

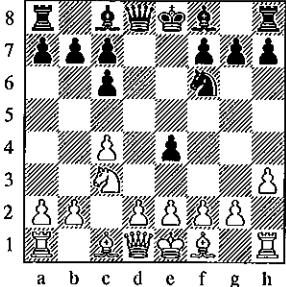
1...e5

A) 2.e3 Qf3	117
A1) 3.Qf3	117
A2) 3.d4	118
A3) 3.Qc3 Bb4 4.Qge2 0-0 5.a3 Be7	120
A31) 6.Qg3	123
A32) 6.d4 exd4	125
A321) 7.Qxd4	125
A322) 7.Wxd4	126
B) 2.Qf3 e4 3.Qd4 Qc6!	128
B1) 4.Qc2	129
B2) 4.e3	130
B3) 4.Qxc6 dxc6 5.Qc3 Qf6	132
B31) 6.d4?!	133
B32) 6.h3	134
B33) 6.Wc2	135
B34) 6.e3	137

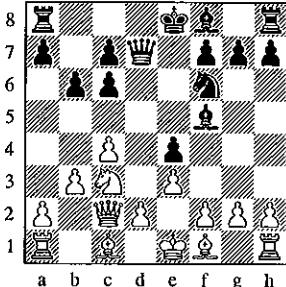
A2) note to 5.Qc3



B32) after 6.h3



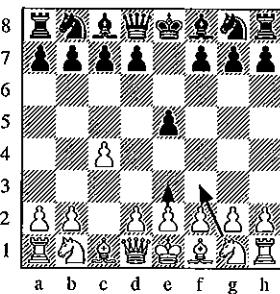
B34) after 9.b3



8...Qg5!N

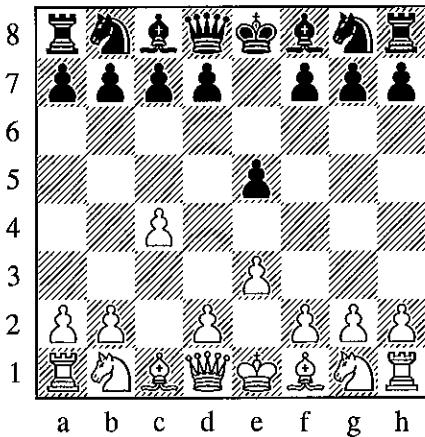
6...e3!N

9...h5!N



1.c4 e5

This chapter will deal with two significant sidelines in A) 2.e3 and B) 2.Qf3.

A) 2.e3

This is another way for White to aim for a good version of a reversed Open Sicilian. Unlike some of the lines from the previous chapter, the text move has the advantage of being useful in other scenarios as well – so it's not just a simple case where Black can choose some Anti-Sicilian line where White has a redundant extra move.

2...Qf6

We will start with this natural developer. Now we will consider the sidelines A1) 3.Qf3 and A2) 3.d4, followed by the most popular A3) 3.Qc3.

3.a3 leads back to variation E of the previous chapter.

3.b3 d5 4.cxd5 Qxd5 5.Qb2 Qc6 transposes to the Larsen Opening.

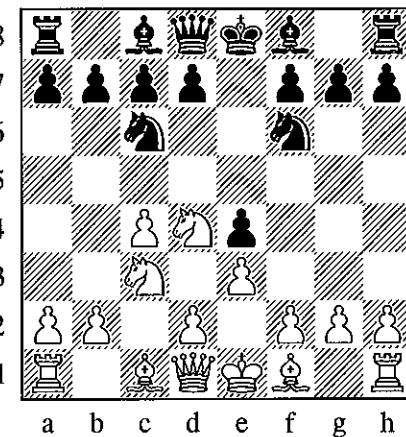
3.d3 doesn't have much independent value either, as after 3...Qb4† we are likely to transpose to variation F of the previous chapter.

A1) 3.Qf3

A pretty rare move order.

3...e4 4.Qd4 Qc6 5.Qc3

5.Qxc6 dxc6 6.Qc3 transposes to variation B34 at the end of the chapter.

**5...Qc5!?**

Challenging White's most active piece.

6.Qf5!?

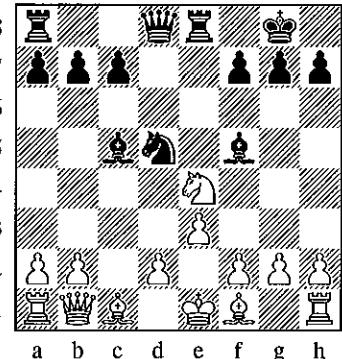
This seems like the most ambitious reply, but Black has enough resources to counter it.

6.Qb3 Qb4 7.Qc2 Qxc3 8.Qxc3 0-0 9.Qe2 d5 gave Black a comfortable position in Langmyhr – Harestad, Copenhagen 2012, as the knight is misplaced on b3.

6.Qxc6 dxc6 is similar to the later variation B34, but Black has played ...Qc5 instead of ...Qf5. Although this would not be my first choice via the other move order, I still see no problems for Black. For example: 7.d3! A natural attempt to exploit the aforementioned fact. 7...exd3 8.Qxd3 Qe6 9.0-0 Qd6! Followed by ...0-0-0 and Black is in good shape.

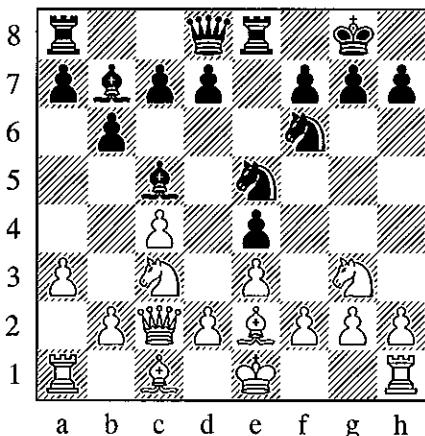
6...0-0 7.Qg3 Be8 8.a3

8.Qc2 doesn't reach the goal after: 8...Qb4
 9.Qb1 d5! 10.cxd5 Qbxd5 11.Qcxe4 Qxe4
 12.Qxe4 Qf5



13.f3 Qf6 14.Qd3 Qxe4 15.fxe4 Qxe4 16.Qxe4
 Wh4† 17.g3 Wxe4† Black has regained the pawn, and his superior pawn structure gives him the better chances.

8...b6 9.Qc2 Bb7 10.Qe2 Qe5



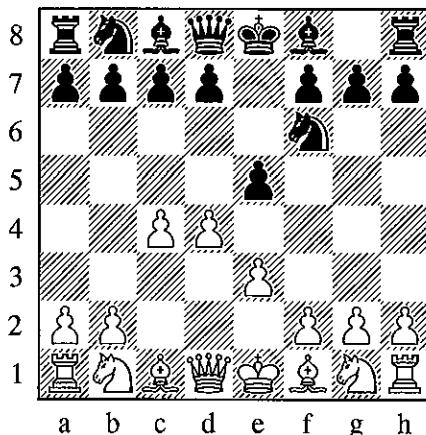
11.0-0

11.Qgxe4?! Qxe4 12.Qxe4 Wh4 13.d3 f5 is too risky for White.

11...Qg6 12.b4 Bd6 13.Bb2 Be5=

Black had no problems in Cardoso – Lizorkina, Internet 2011.

A2) 3.d4



Curiously, this position has often been reached as a result of White declining the Budapest Gambit with 1.d4 Qf6 2.c4 e5 3.e3.

3...exd4

Black can also start with 3...Bb4†.

4.exd4

4.Wxd4?! is a senseless loss of time: 4...Qc6 5.Wd1 d5! 6.a3 Qe6 7.cxd5 Qxd5† and Black had a useful lead in development in Kurrik – Keres, Tartu 1935.

4...Bb4†

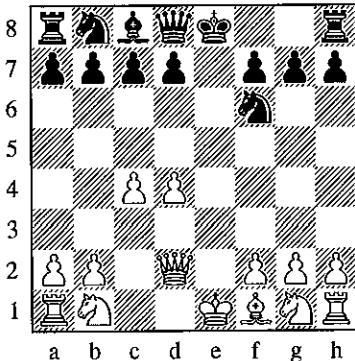
4...d5 is a good move, transposing to a harmless variation of the Exchange French. You can find this analysed, from Black's point of view, in both *Playing the French* and *Grandmaster Repertoire 16*. But just in case you prefer not to transpose to that opening, the text move gives you another good option.

5.Qc3

Inferior is:

5.Qd2?! Qxd2† 6.Wxd2

After 6.Qxd2 0-0 7.Qd3 d5 8.Qe2 Qc6 9.0-0 dxc4† Black creates an isolated pawn and obtains the better chances, Anfinogenov – Volkov, Moscow 2008.



6...0-0 7.Qf3

7.Qd3 d5 8.Qe2 dxc4 9.Qxc4 Qc6 10.Qbc3 $\mathbb{W}d6\#$ and once again Black has good prospects against the IQP, Hakiki – Sadorra, Kuala Lumpur 2007.

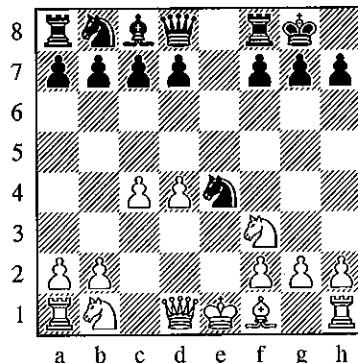
7.Qc3 $\mathbb{Q}e8\#$ 8.Qe2 d5 9.cxd5 occurred in Guliev – Prihodko, Dimitrovgrad 2010. Now Black's play can be improved by means of 9...Qg4!N 10.0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 11.Qgxe2 Qxd5 12.Qhe1 Qc6# with a slight edge for Black, for the same reason as above.

7...Qe4!

7...d5 also favours Black.

8.Qd1

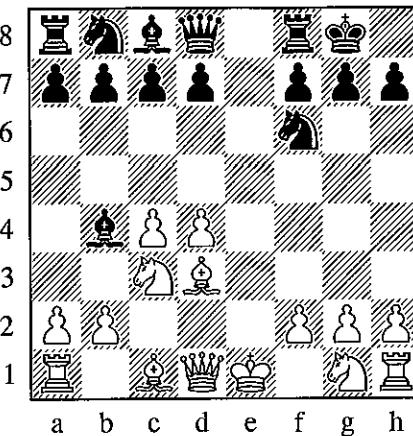
Now in Samiakos – Van Duuren, Heraklion 2008, the most accurate would have been:



8...Qg5!N 9.Qe2 Qxf3# 10.Qxf3 $\mathbb{Q}e8\#$ 11.Qe2 d5! 12.0-0 dxc4#

And once again White does not have anything to compensate for the isolated d-pawn.

5...0-0 6.Qd3

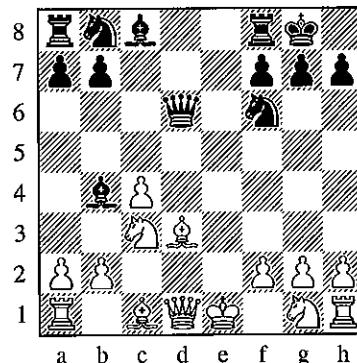


6...c5!

Once again, 6...d5 would transpose to a variation of the Exchange French where Black is at least equal. The text move is rare, but it's an interesting option for those who wish to keep the game in independent territory.

7.d5

In the event of 7.dxc5 Black has a strong and surprising resource: 7...d5! 8.cxd6 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ Thanks to his development advantage Black is doing fine, for example:



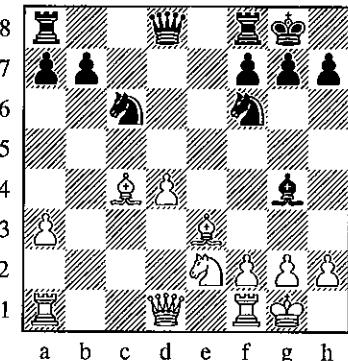
9.Qe3 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 10.Qe2 Qxc3# 11.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12.Wc2 Qe6 13.Qf3 Qxc4= Black regains the pawn with a good position.

7.a3 Qxc3# 8.bxc3 d5

We have finally transposed to a very rare position from the Exchange French.

9.Qe2 dxc4 10.Qxc4 cxd4 11.cxd4 Qc6 12.0–0 Qg4 13.Qe3

13.f3 was played in Lundin – Edlund, Gothenburg 2005, when 13...Qf5!= would be my choice.

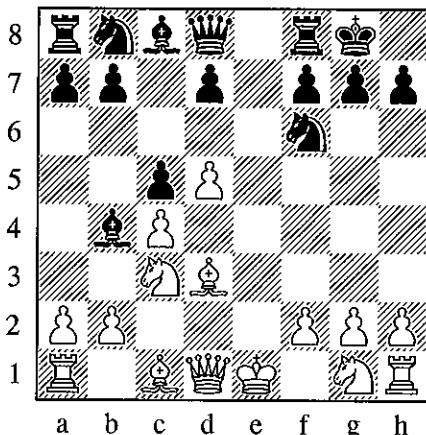


13...Qc8N

13...Qd5 was also reasonable in Lepan – Sancho, Romans 1999.

14.h3 Qh5

With approximate equality.

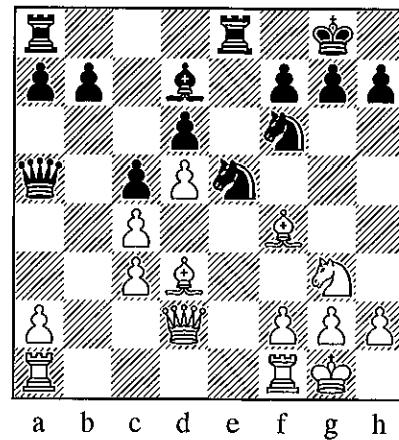


7...Qxc3#!

7...d6 gave White time for 8.Qge2 in Hoi – Richter, Copenhagen 2014. I would prefer to double White's pawns while I have the chance.

8.bxc3 d6 9.Qe2 Qbd7 10.0–0 Qe5

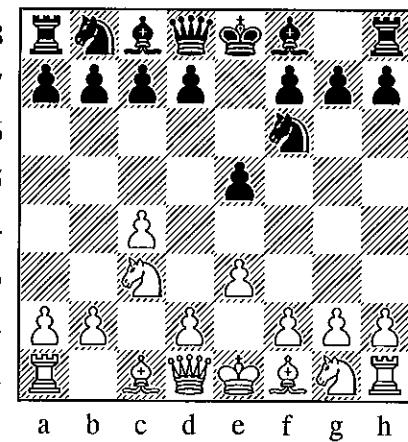
11.Qf4 Qe8 12.Qg3 Wa5 13.Wd2 Qd7



14.Wae1 Qxd3 15.Wxd3 Qxe1 16.Wxe1 Qe8

Although the position is objectively equal, there is definitely some potential for Black to try and exploit White's dodgy pawn structure.

A3) 3.Qc3



This is the most popular and flexible choice.

3...Qb4

This is the most logical choice for our repertoire as we will be playing the same way against 2.Qc3, although there are a few differences. Firstly, Qd5 is not much of a reply here because we can simply trade the knight off without having to waste time moving the

bishop again. On the other hand, White has time to bring the second knight to e2 here, before Black gets a chance to damage White's structure with ...Qxc3.

4.Qge2

The most logical, preparing to recapture on c3 while maintaining an unblemished structure. The play is strongly reminiscent of the reversed Rossolimo variation of the Sicilian.

4.d4 exd4 5.exd4 leads back to variation A2.

4.Qc2 leads to variation F4 of Chapter 10.

4.Qb3 can be met by 4...Qc6, though Black could also consider 4...a5 by analogy with variation E of Chapter 10.

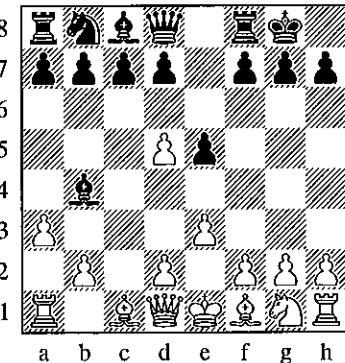
4.Qd5

This rare move doesn't promise any advantage.

4...Qxd5 5.cxd5 0–0 6.a3

6.Qc4 occurred in the old game Von Bardeleben – Mieses, Berlin 1897. Black's best reply is 6...Qg5!N 7.Qf3 and now the important intermediate move 7...Qg4!. White has two plausible responses:

- a) 8.Qxe5 is met by 8...Qe4 9.Qb3 (9.a3? loses to 9...Qd6!–+; 9.f4 Qxe3†!) 9...Qxg2†.
- b) 8.Qf1 e4 9.Qd4 Qxd1† 10.Qxd1 c6 11.Qc4 b6 reaches a complicated, non-standard position with roughly equal chances.

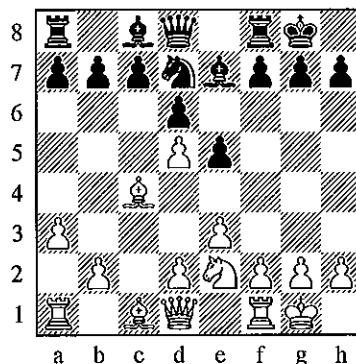


6...Qe7 7.Qc4

7.d3?! c6 8.dxc6N (8.Qf3?! loses a pawn without sufficient compensation: 8...Qa5† 9.Qd2 Qxd5 10.Qc3 d6† Schulz – S. Ivanov, Rethymnon 2003) 8...Qxc6 Black will follow up with ...d5, with better chances thanks to his strong centre.

7...d6 8.Qe2 Qd7 9.0–0

Here I found a nice idea:

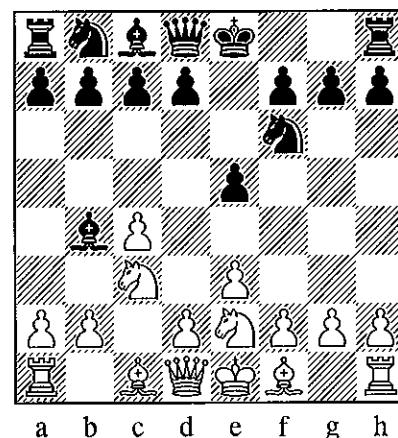


9...c5!N

Getting rid of the potential weakness on c7.

10.d3 Qb6 11.Qb3 Qd7=

Black has no problems.



4...0–0 5.a3

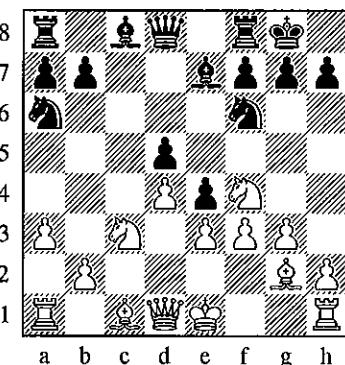
It makes sense to prod the bishop. Other moves are either less logical or don't have any independent value.

5... $\mathbb{N}c7$

In the Rossolimo variation, White sometimes exchanges the knight on c6 and opens the centre, but we should not forget that we're a tempo down compared to those positions, and so I prefer this quiet retreat.

White's two main moves are **A31) 6. $\mathbb{N}g3$** and **A32) 6.d4**. Before analysing them, let's check a few less common options:

6.g3 c6 (6...d5!?) 7. $\mathbb{N}g2$ d5 8.cxd5 cxd5 9.d4 e4 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 11.f3 (11.0–0 would have been safer) Now in Baches Garcia – Visser, Sitges 2003, Black's most ambitious continuation would have been:



11...g5!N 12. $\mathbb{Q}fe2$ exf3 13. $\mathbb{N}xf3$ $\mathbb{N}h3$ White must find a way to complete development and castle, while Black's weakened kingside does not seem like much of a problem. Black is certainly not worse.

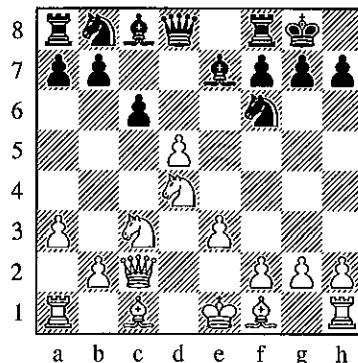
6. $\mathbb{W}c2$

This would be a useful move in a reversed Open Sicilian, but Black can do better with: 6...c6!

Preparing ...d5 followed by recapturing with the pawn.

7.d4 exd4 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ d5 9.cxd5

This was Balashov – J. Turner, Schwaebisch Gmuend 1996, and now I would like to recommend:



9...cxd5!N

Vacating the c6-square for the knight.

10. $\mathbb{N}b5$!?

Otherwise 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6=$ gives Black a comfortable position.

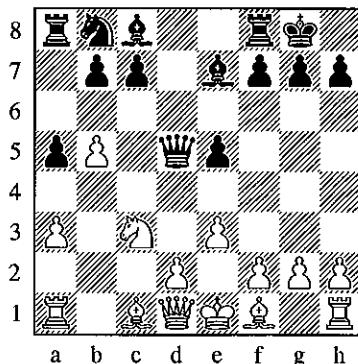
10...a6 11. $\mathbb{N}a4$

White is trying to obstruct Black's queenside development, but there is an easy fix:

11... $\mathbb{W}d6$!

Now ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ can't be stopped, while the bishop on a4 is misplaced.

6.b4 is a rare move which was first played by GM Seirawan. I've decided to meet it with: 6...a5!? (6...c6 also looks reasonable) 7.b5 d5 8.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 10. $\mathbb{N}c3$



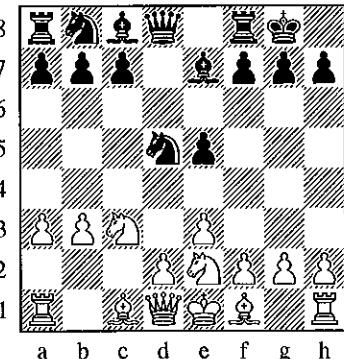
10... $\mathbb{W}d6$!N (10... $\mathbb{W}d8$ was less active in Brozhik – Moliboga, Kiev 2006) 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{N}e6$ With a roughly equal position.

6.b3

This is even less common than the line above.
6...d5

6...c6?! is also reasonable. 7.d4 was played in Zeller – I. Farago, Boeblingen 1995, and now 7...d6?!N would have given Black a solid position.

7.cxd5 Qxd5



8.Qxd5?N

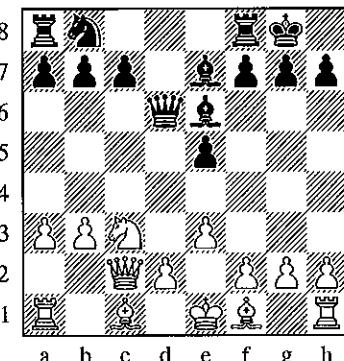
This is more accurate than 8.Qc2, which Black can meet with 8...Qe6! intending 9.Qxd5 Qxd5 10.Qc3 Qd7† with an ideal position.

8...Qxd5 9.Qc3

Obviously retreating to d7 doesn't make much sense with the bishop still on c8, so...

9...Qd6 10.Qc2 Qe6

Black would prefer to have the queen on d7 rather than d6; nevertheless, his position is still decent. For example:



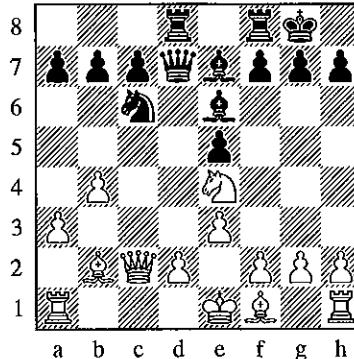
11.Qb2

11.Qb5?! Qd7 12.Qxc7 Qxb3† is better for Black.

11.Qe2 can be met by 11...a6 12.0–0 f5 13.Qb2 c5 14.Qfd1 Qc6 with roughly equal chances.

11...Qc6 12.Qe4 Qd7 13.b4 Qad8

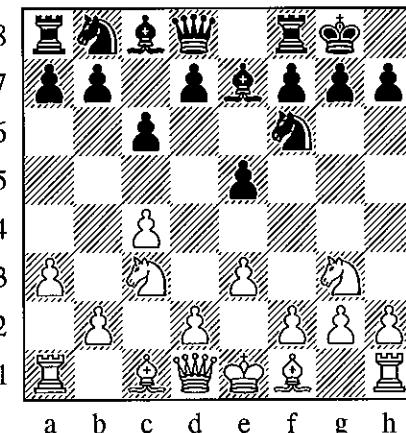
Black seems fine, for instance:



14.b5 Qa5 15.Qxe5 f5 16.Qg3 f4! 17.exf4 Qf6!

With a promising initiative for the sacrificed material.

A31) 6.Qg3 c6



Black's idea is obvious – he wants to take the centre with ...d5, so White tries to get there first:

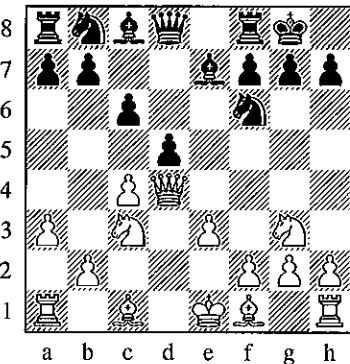
7.d4 exd4 8.exd4

8.♕xd4?

The queen turns out to be vulnerable here.

8...d5

One way or another, White's queen will come under attack.



9.♕e2

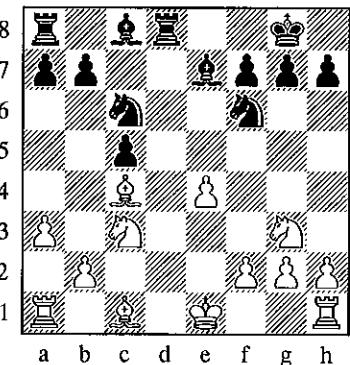
9.cxd5 cxd5 10.♕e2 ♔c6 11.♗d1 d4 (11...♔e6?! 12.0-0 ♕c8 also looks good for Black) 12.exd4 ♕xd4† and Black will enjoy the bishop pair in an open position, Meister – Gajewski, Germany 2010.

9...c5 10.♗d1 dxc4

10...d4?! could also be considered.

11.♕xd8 ♕xd8 12.♗xc4 ♔c6 13.e4

In Novgorodskij – Sherbakov, Omsk/Perm 1998, Black's best continuation would have been:

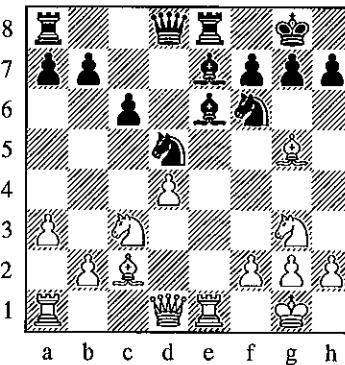


13...♔e6!N 14.♗xe6 fxе6†

Black has excellent control over the centre, and White is in no position to take advantage of the isolated e-pawn.

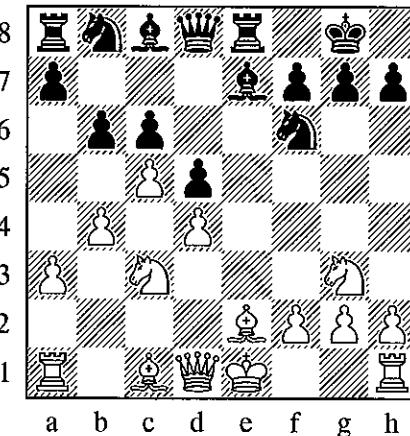
8...d5 9.c5

9.♕e2 dxc4 10.♗xc4 ♔bd7 11.0-0 ♔b6 reaches a position where the knight on g3 is misplaced, as it has less influence on the centre compared with the usual f3-square. 12.♗b3 ♔bd5 13.♗e1 ♔e6 14.♗g5 ♔e8 15.♗c2 Now in Bezold – Lukacs, Gyula 1997, Black should have played:



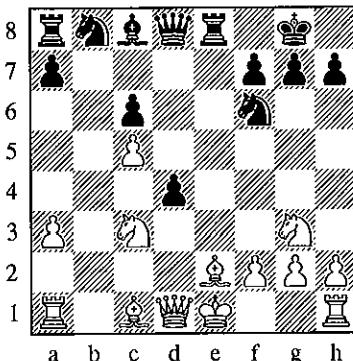
15...h6!N 16.♗d2 ♕b6 With a comfortable position.

9...♔e8 10.♗e2 b6 11.b4



11...a5!N

11...bxc5 12.bxc5 ♗xc5 13.dxc5 d4 was a direct attempt to solve Black's problems in Papaioannou – Gelfand, Plovdiv 2003. However, White could have obtained some edge with:



14.Qg5!N dxcc3 15.Qxd8 Qxd8 16.Qxf6 gxf6
17.Qc1± Black faces a slightly unpleasant endgame due to his damaged pawn structure.

12.Qf4 h5!

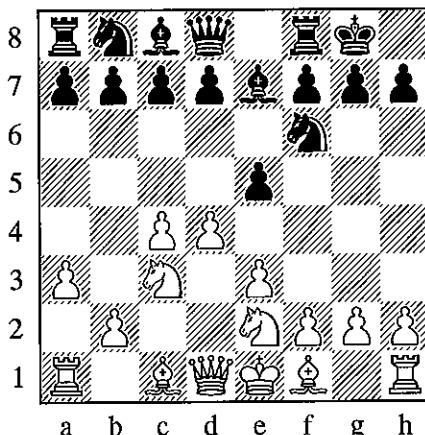
A nice way to draw attention to the knight on g3. My analysis continues:

**13.0–0 h4 14.Qh5 Qxh5 15.Qxh5 axb4
16.axb4 Qxa1 17.Qxa1 Qa6 18.Qa3 Qc7!**

And Black is doing fine.

A32) 6.d4

This time White takes some space in the centre without committing his knight to a potentially unfavourable square.



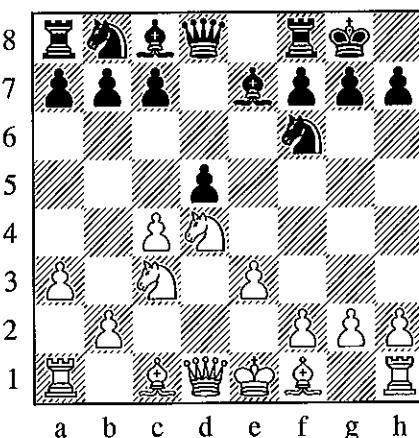
6...exd4

And now we have a split between A321)
7.Qxd4 and A322) 7.Qxd4.

7.exd4 Qe8 (7...d5! is also fine for Black) 8.g3
d5 9.cxd5 Qxd5 10.Qg2 Qe6 11.0–0 Qc6
12.Qe3 Qd7= gave Black a comfortable game in Low – Yakovich, Bad Wiessee 1999.

A321) 7.Qxd4 d5!

When given the chance to play ...d5 in this variation, Black should not hesitate. White has tried several moves from here, none of which leads to any advantage for him.

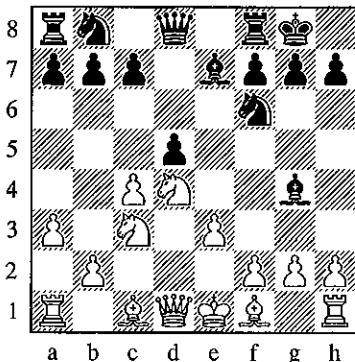


8.b4

8.Qd3?! c5 (8...dxc4!N 9.Qxc4 c5 is also good for Black) 9.Qf5 dxc4 10.Qxe7† Qxe7
11.Qxc4 Qd8 12.Qe2 Qc6† Black's better development was the defining feature in Barcza – Browne, Hastings 1972.

8.cxd5 Qxd5 9.Qd3 Qxc3 10.bxc3 c5 11.Qe2
Qc6 gave Black easy play in Bernei – S. Toth, Hungary 2009.

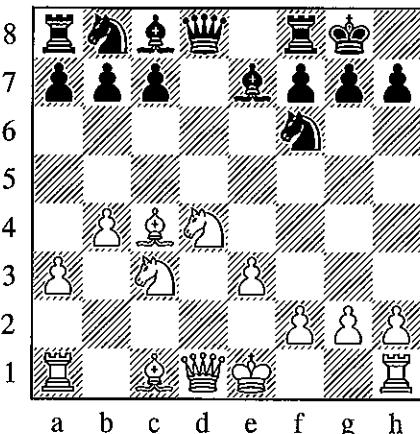
8.Qf3 Qe6 9.Qd4 Qg4 (9...Qc8 would repeat of course, but why not try to exploit White's loss of time?)



10.f3?! (10.Qe2= is better) 10...Qc8! 11.cxd5 Qxd5 Black had the more pleasant position due to the weakening f2-f3 move in Rodgaard – Lukacs, Copenhagen 1987.

8...dxc4 9.Qxc4

This position occurred in Sunye Neto – Trois, Sao Luis 1981. I would like to offer a surprising improvement:



9...Qc6!N 10.Qxc6 Qxd1† 11.Qxd1 bxc6

Despite the doubled pawns, Black is fighting for the advantage due to his lead in development and the weakening of White's queenside caused by b2-b4.

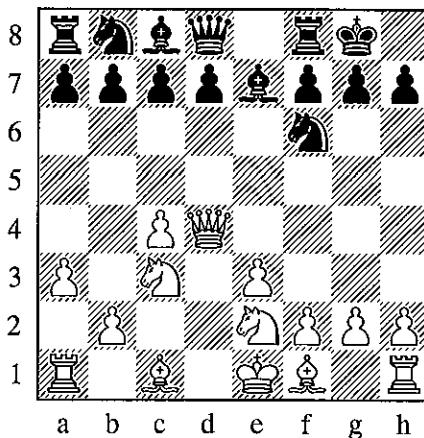
12.0–0 a5!

Exploiting the aforementioned fact.

13.bxa5 Qxa5 14.a4 Qe4

With some initiative for Black.

A322) 7.Qxd4



This is the most challenging way to recapture, as White prevents ...d5.

7...c6?!

A new idea of the young Ukrainian GM Ilya Nyzhnyk. Black is determined to play ...d5 in order to make the most of his development advantage and the exposed position of the white queen.

In most of the previous games Black preferred the obvious 7...Qc6, but after 8.Qd1 followed by Qf4 White takes full control over the important d5-square.

8.Qf4!

Obviously White should try to prevent Black's main idea.

8.Qg3?! transposes to 8.Qxd4?! in the notes to variation A31.

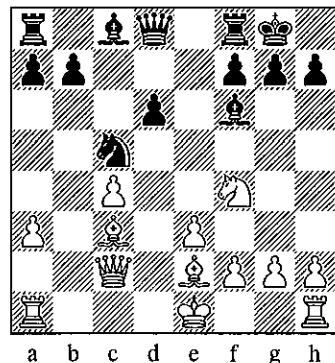
8...Qa6!

The knight is heading for c5, highlighting the weakness of the b3-square.

9.Qe2

9.b4?N is a principled move, when the critical line is: 9...c5! 10.bxc5 Qxc5 11.Qd1

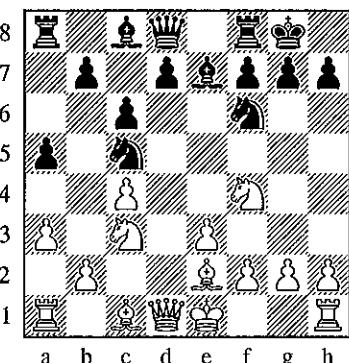
Qfe4 12.Qb2 Qf6 13.Wc2 Qxc3 14.Qxc3 d6 15.Qe2



15...Qf5! 16.Wb2 Qe5! 17.Qxe5 dxe5 18.Wxe5 Wa5† 19.Qf1 Qe4 Black's initiative fully compensates for the sacrificed pawn.

9...Qc5 10.Qb1

In the event of 10.Wd1N Black plays 10...a5, securing the position of his knight on c5 and preparing ...d6 followed by ...a4. The former move is important, as it enables Black to protect the knight on c5 after Qd3 with ...Qfd7, and thus to keep the a4-pawn protected.



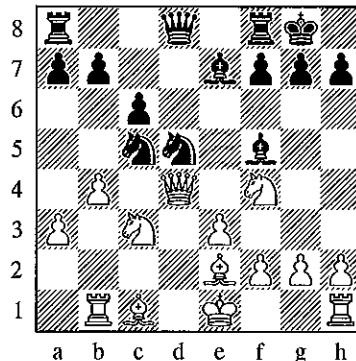
White can try to prevent this plan with 11.Qd3?!, but in that case Black can switch plans with 11...Qce4 12.Qxe4 Qxe4 13.0–0 d5 with a good position.

10...d5!

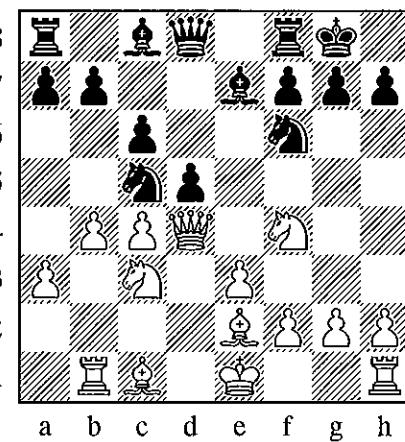
This move is possible due to the unfortunate position of the rook on b1.

11.b4

After 11.cxd5 Qf5! 12.b4! Black replies with: 12...Qxd5! (but not 12...Qxb1? 13.bxc5± threatening both 14.d6 and 14.Qxb1)

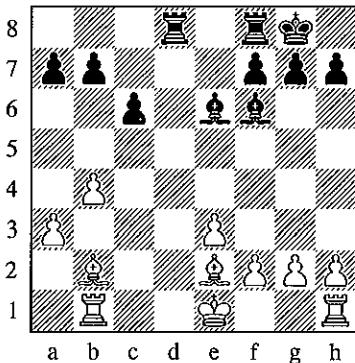


13.Qcxd5 cxd5 14.Qxd5 Qxb1 15.bxc5 Wc8† and White's compensation for the exchange is insufficient.



11...Qe6! 12.Qxe6 Qxe6 13.cxd5 Qxd5 14.Qxd5

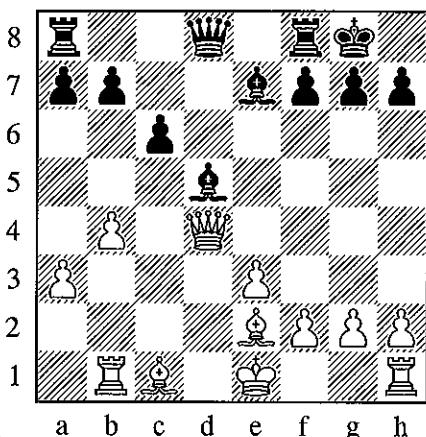
14.Qe4?N deserved attention, but Black is still doing well after: 14...Qf6! 15.Qxf6† Qxf6 16.Wxd8 Wxd8 17.Qb2



17... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ (17... $\mathbb{Q}xb2!?$) 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ Black's position is slightly more pleasant thanks to his control over the d-file.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

Black has clearly solved his opening problems, but can he fight for the advantage?



15.f3 $\mathbb{Q}h4\#!$ 16.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$

A draw was agreed here in Grachev – Nyzhnyk, Denizli 2013. It was a well-played game by Nyzhnyk, but he might have done well to play on. Here is how the play might have continued:

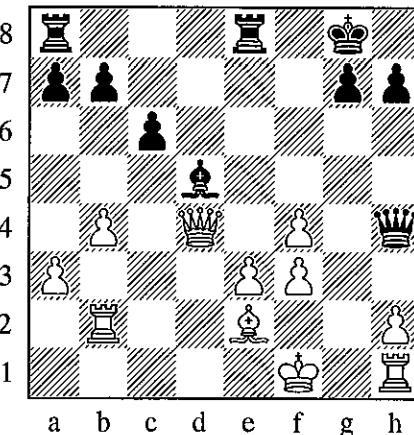
19. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ f5!

Fixing the weakness on e3.

20. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}f6$

Black is preparing to double rooks along the e-file. There is also a nice tactical point:

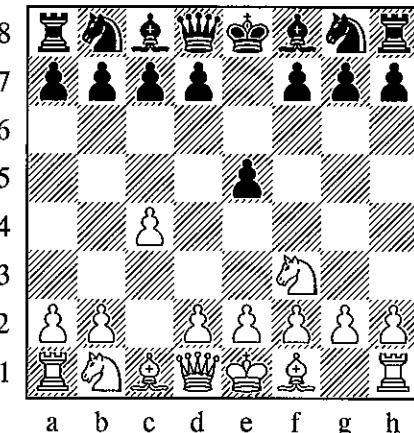
21. $\mathbb{W}d4$ f4! 22.gxf4 $\mathbb{W}h4\#!$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f1$



23... $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ 24.f5 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 25.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}xf5\#$

Due to the weak pawns on d4 and f3, White will have to suffer for a long time to hold the endgame.

B) 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$



This move was introduced by Tartakower in 1923 and later picked up by Reti, Nimzowitsch, Rubinstein and even Botvinnik, among many others.

2...e4

Other moves are possible, but chasing the knight is the most principled.

3.Qd4 Qc6!

Developing with tempo, and inviting an exchange on c6 which will accelerate Black's development.

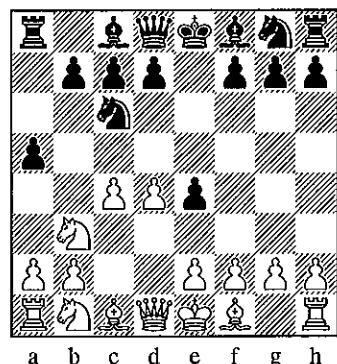
White's most sensible continuations are **B1) 4.Qc2, B2) 4.e3 and B3) 4.Qxc6.**

4.Qb3

This is similar to variation B1, but it's not such a good square for the knight. An interesting reply is:

4...a5? 5.d4

5.a4?! is exactly the move Black was trying to provoke. 5...Qf6 6.Qc3 Now in Chekhov - Kan, Leningrad 1939, the most accurate would have been: 6...d5!N 7.cxd5 Qb4 8.d3 (8.e3 is strongly answered by 8...Qg4!) 8...exd3 9.exd3 Qd6 10.Qg5 h6 11.Qh4 Qe7 12.Qe2 Qfxd5 and Black is better thanks to the weak pawn on d3.



5...exd3 6.exd3

6.e4? occurred in Esnault - Hinault, France 1992, when Black overlooked 6...a4N 7.Q3d2 Qb4! with a near-decisive advantage.

6.Qxd3 is also better for Black after: 6...Qf6 7.Qc3 d5! 8.Qxd5 a4! 9.Qd4 Qxd5 10.cxd5 Qxd5 11.Qxc6 Qxc6

6...a4 7.Q3d2 Qf6 8.Qe2 Qe7 9.0-0 0-0

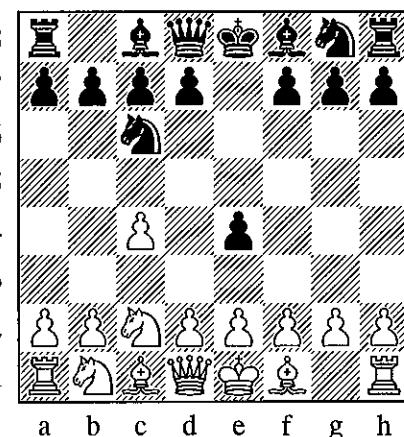
10.Qc3

10.Qf3 d5! gives Black easy play.

10...d5! 11.Qxa4 Qd4 12.Qc3 Qxe2† 13.Qxe2 dxc4 14.dxc4 Qd3†

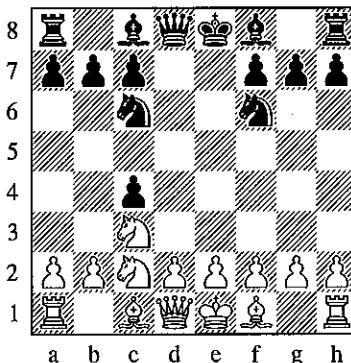
Black has more than enough compensation for a pawn.

B1) 4.Qc2



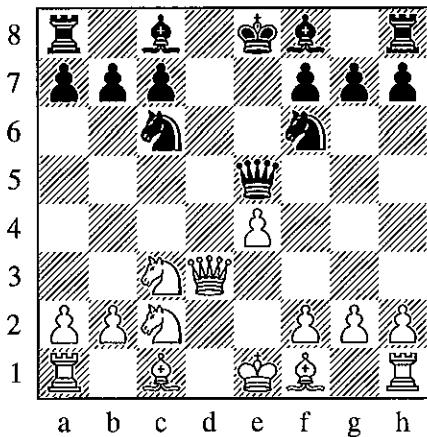
4...d5! 5.cxd5

5.Qc3?! is dubious in view of: 5...dxc4! 6.Qxe4 Qf6 7.Qc3 Now in Hebert - Atalik, Stratton Mountain 2000, the most accurate would have been:



7...Qe6!N 8.d4 cxd3 9.exd3 Qd7 10.Qe2 0-0-0 and Black is better thanks to the weak d3-pawn.

5... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 7.d4 exd3 8. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$
9.e4



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

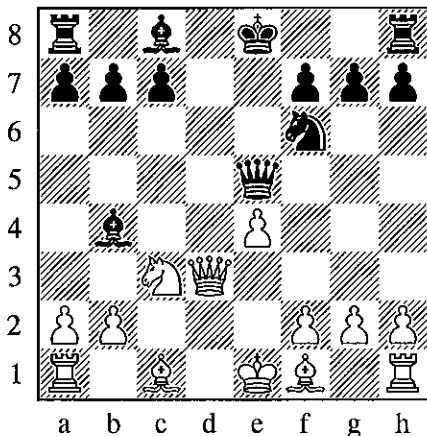
9... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ was the less accurate continuation of Macieja – Bu Xiangzhi, Stepanakert 2005.

9... $\mathbb{Q}b4!?$ is an interesting alternative.

10. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$

10. $\mathbb{W}b5\#$ $\mathbb{W}xb5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xb5\#$ c6 12. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$
 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ transposes to the note below.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$



11.f3!N

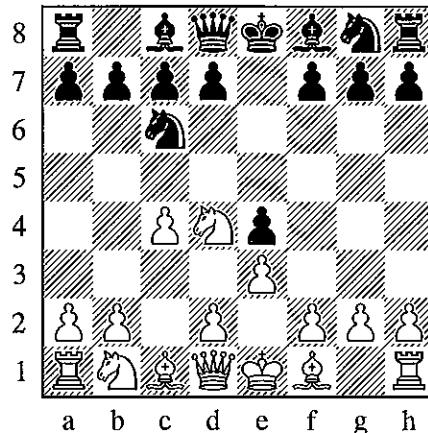
After 11. $\mathbb{W}b5\#$ $\mathbb{W}xb5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xb5\#$ c6 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ it was White who had to think of

equalizing in Thorsteinsson – Baumgartner, corr. 2013.

11...0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13.0–0–0 c6 14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 15.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$

Black is doing well.

B2) 4.e3



4... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 5.exd4 $\mathbb{W}f6!?$

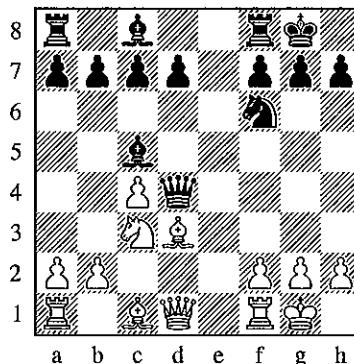
An interesting idea, hitting the front d-pawn before White can get coordinated.

6.d5

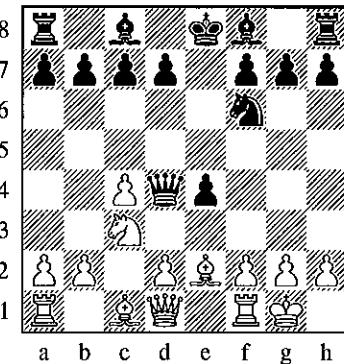
White has also tried sacrificing the pawn with:

6. $\mathbb{Q}e2!?$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

I also considered: 8.d3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd3
10. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 0–0



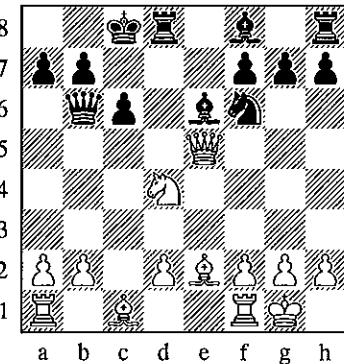
11.Qe3!N (11.Qg5 b6 12.Qf3 Qb8 was also fine for Black in Cardoso – Endean, Internet 2012) 11...Qd6 12.Qg5 b6 13.b4! Qxb4 14.Qb5 Qc6! 15.Qd4 Qd6 and White has nothing better than repeating the position:
16.Qb5=



8...d5 9.cxd5 Qxd5 10.Qb5
10.d3N Qxc3 11.bxc3 Qxc3 12.Wa4† c6
13.Qxe4† Qe7 14.Qb1 Qf6 15.Qb2 Qg6
16.Qxg6 hxg6 17.Qxg7 Qh4 leaves Black with a slight edge due to his better pawn structure.

10...Wb6 11.Wa4 c6 12.Qxe4† Qe6 13.Qd4
Qf6 14.Qe5 0-0-0!

Interestingly, it's a complete role reversal from move 6, as it is now Black who sacrifices a pawn for the initiative.



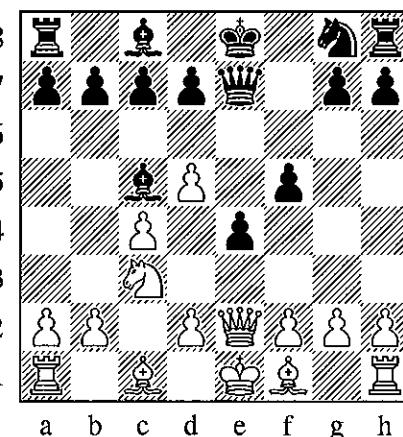
15.Qxe6 Qd6! 16.Wf5 fxe6 17.Qxe6† Qb8≈
Black had fine compensation in Cardoso – Kurgansky, corr. 2010.

6...Qc5 7.We2 We7 8.Qc3

8.d3!N exd3 9.Qxe7† Qxe7 10.Qxd3 d6 leads to an equal endgame.

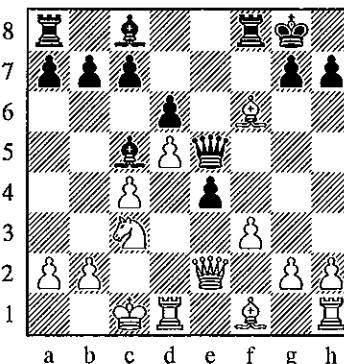
8...f5!

This strong move was played twice in the same tournament in 1928 by Fritz Sämisch. The database shows that 8...Qf6 had been played five years earlier, by Grünfeld against Tartakower.



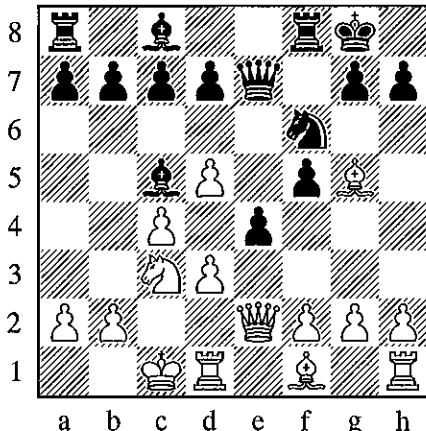
9.d3 Qf6 10.Qg5 0-0-0 11.Qd4

In the second game White deviated with:
11.dxe4 fxe4 12.Qd4 0-0-0 13.f3?! Wc5!
14.Qxf6



14...Wf4†! 15.Qb1 exf3! 16.Wxf3 Wxf3
17.gxf3 Qxf6† Black had a clear positional advantage in Walter – Sämisch, Brno 1928.

The text move was played in Reti – Sämisch, Brno 1928. In that game Black got a worse endgame after exchanging on d3, but a clear improvement would have been:



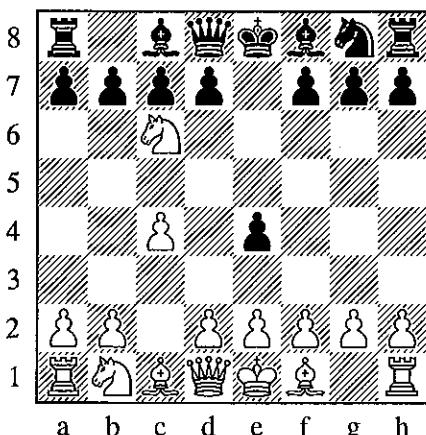
11...d6!N 12.♗e1

12.dxe4 fxe4 transposes to Walter – Sämisch above.

12...♘f7! 13.♗d2 ♘d4

And Black is doing fine.

B3) 4.♘xc6



This line was popularized in the 1980s and 90s by GM Jacob Murey, and has more recently been picked up by the young Russian

GM Rakhmanov. The database also contains a few examples involving some of the great players of the past.

4...dxc6

Black should obviously recapture this way in order to open the diagonal of the c8-bishop, as well as the d-file for his queen, which will make it harder for White to advance his d-pawn.

5.♘c3

This natural continuation has been seen in the majority of games.

The only deviation at GM level occurred in a game of the American Larry Christiansen, who experimented with 5.b3 in Christiansen – Comp Milano Pro, USA 1996. I would like to offer a slightly more accurate set-up than the one chosen by the computer: 5...♗f6N 6.♘c3 ♘f5 7.e3 ♘d7 and White has an inferior version of variation B34, as b2-b3 has deprived him of the ♘b3 resource.

5...♗f6

We now have a reversed version of a well-known Sicilian variation which occurs after 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.e5 ♘d5 4.♘c3 ♘xc3 5.dxc3 ♘c6. Rakhmanov is probably the world's leading expert on the black side of this system, which explains why he sometimes plays it with White as well. The position generally remains closed for quite some time, so it does not matter too much that we are playing a tempo down with reversed colours.

White's four main options are **B31) 6.d4?!**, **B32) 6.h3**, **B33) 6.♗c2** and **B34) 6.e3**.

6.d3?! exd3 is the same as variation B31.

6.g3?!

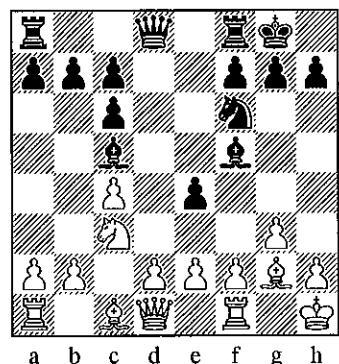
First played in 1925, this must rank as one of Richard Reti's least successful innovations.

6...Qc5! 7.Qg2

7.Qb3 0–0 8.Qg2 Qe8 9.0–0 occurred in Comp Renaissance Sparc – Gulko, Boston 1993, and now I like the simple 9...Qb8!N \bar{F} followed by ...Qf5, when the queen has nothing to do on b3.

7...Qf5 8.0–0 0–0 9.Qh1

So far Black had done everything right in Reti – Torre Repetto, Marienbad 1925. Now the most accurate continuation would have been:

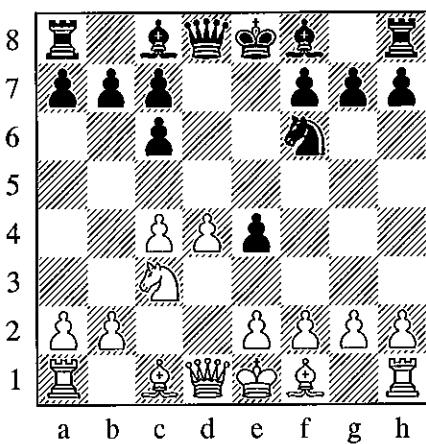


9...Qd7!N 10.Qb3 Qab8 \bar{F}

White will have serious problems completing his development.

B31) 6.d4?!

This is positionally risky and has never been tested at GM level as far as I can see.



6...exd3 7.exd3

This is the natural recapture, but the resulting structure favours Black, as the backward d-pawn is a long-term weakness, and the d4-square may also be used as an outpost.

7.Qxd3 Qxd3 8.exd3 Qf5 is similar, but an even worse version for White.

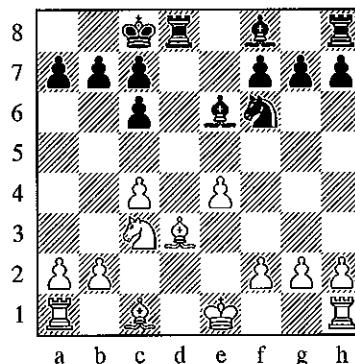
7.e4?!

This attempt to keep an extra pawn on the kingside occurred in the game Weber – Richter, Germany 1996. I would like to improve Black's play with:

7...Qe6!N 8.Qxd3

8.Qxd3 Qg4! 9.Qe2 Qxd1† 10.Qxd1 0–0–0 \bar{F} and Black is better thanks to his active pieces and the various holes in White's position.

8...Qxd3 9.Qxd3 0–0–0



10.Qe2 Qb4 11.Qg5 h6

11...Qxe4?! is an interesting exchange sacrifice, but there is no particular need for it.

12.Qxf6 gxsf6 13.Qd1 Qdg8! 14.g3 Qxc3† 15.bxc3 Qg5! \bar{F}

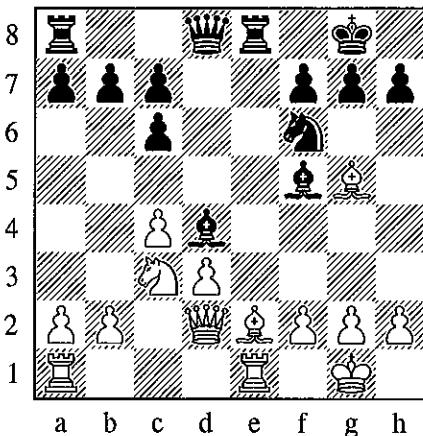
Both sides have some pawn weaknesses, but White's queenside pawns are easier to attack than Black's kingside ones.

7...Qc5 8.Qe2 0–0 9.0–0 Qf5 10.Qg5

10.Qe3?!N is another try, but 10...Qd4 is still slightly better for Black.

10...♝e8 11.♗d2 ♝d4 12.♗fe1

This position occurred in the old game Fox – J. Morrison, Toronto 1936. Now Black's play can be improved by means of:

**12...h6!N 13.♗h4**

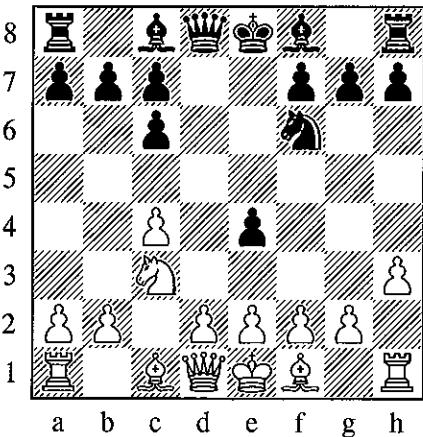
Or 13.♗f4 ♛d7! 14.♗f1 ♛e5!.

13...♝e5!

With the idea of 14...♛d4, getting rid of the pin and preparing ...♝ad8. Black is obviously better.

B32) 6.h3

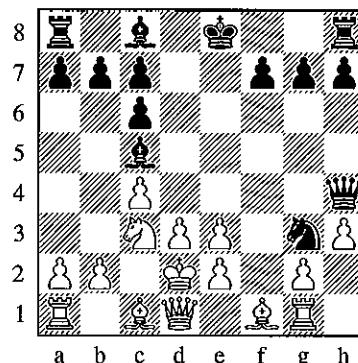
This move has been tested at least three times by Murey. I found a fascinating new idea for Black:

**6...e3!?**

6...♝c5 7.e3 ♛f5 is a sensible alternative.

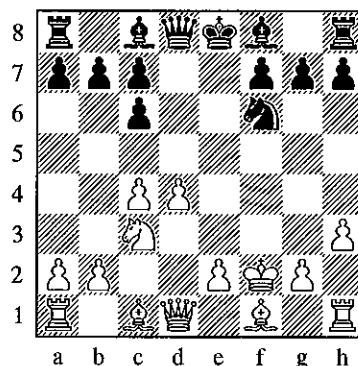
7.dxe3

7.fxe3? is too dangerous: 7...♛h5 8.d3 ♛g3 9.♗g1 ♛h4 10.♗d2 ♛c5



11.♗c2 0–0 12.♗e1 ♛e8! and Black is clearly better.

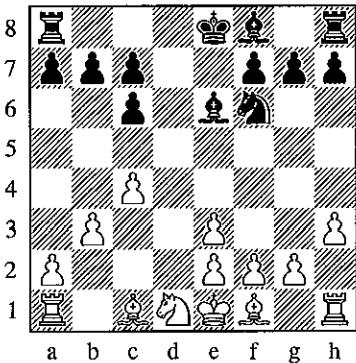
7.d4?! is also inadvisable for White due to:
8...exf2† 8.♗xf2



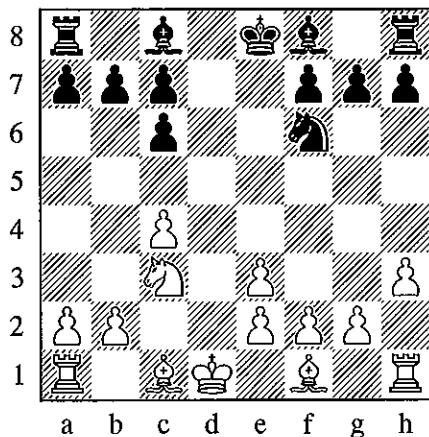
8...♝b4! 9.♗f4 ♛f5 10.e3 ♛e7! Black takes the e4-square under control and obtains a slight edge.

7...♛xd1† 8.♗xd1

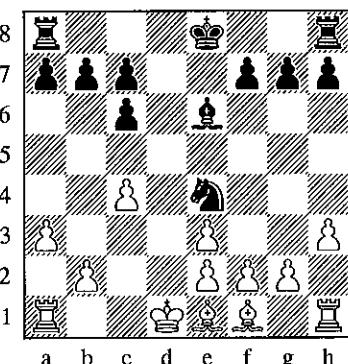
I also considered: 8.♗xd1 ♛e6 9.b3 (9.♗c3 ♛xc4 10.e4 ♛b4 11.♗d2 0–0–0 12.a3 ♛c7 and Black's chances are slightly better)



9...0–0–0 10.a3 Qe4 11.Qb2 Qc5 (11...Qe7!?)
12.b4 Qb3 13.Qb1 c5 14.Qd3 Qxc4 15.Qb2 f6# Black regains the pawn and keeps some initiative.

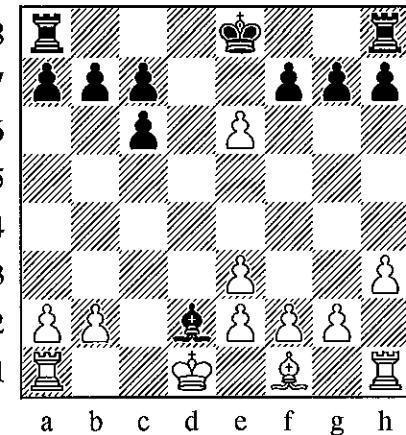


8...Qb4 9.Qd2 Qe6 10.Qd5
10.a3 Qxc3 11.Qxc3 Qe4 12.Qe1 also turns out well for Black after:



12...a5! 13.a4 Qxc4 14.Qc2 Qc5# Once again, Black has won back the pawn and obtained a nice position with better development.

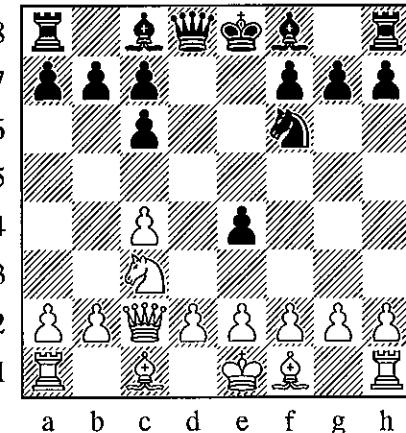
10...Qxd5 11.cxd5 Qxd2 12.dxe6



12...0–0–0! 13.exf7 Qa5# 14.Qc2 Qd2#
15.Qb3 Qf8

Black has fine compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

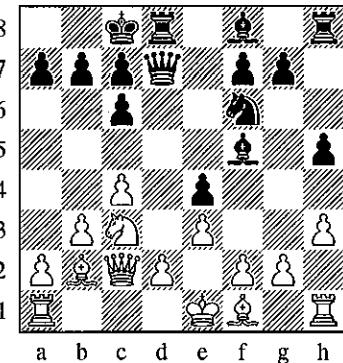
B33) 6.Qc2



6...Qf5 7.h3!?

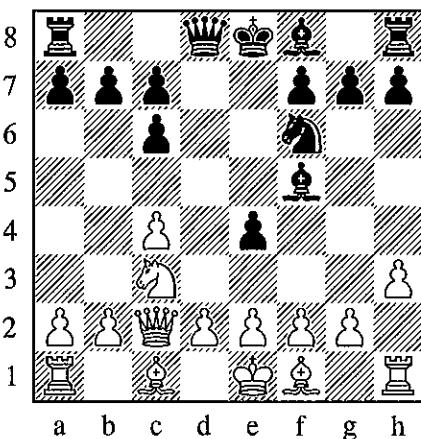
This flexible move is similar to Murey's pet line as analysed above, but Black obviously does not have the option of responding with ...e3 this time.

Practice has also seen: 7.e3 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 8.h3 (8.b3 0–0–0 9.h3 h5 transposes) 8...h5 9.b3 0–0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ This was Murey – Chomet, France 2000, and now the most accurate seems to be:



10...c5! N 11.a3 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ h4 with a slight superiority for Black.

This position was reached in Murey – Sax, Bagneux 1984. I think Black should have continued:



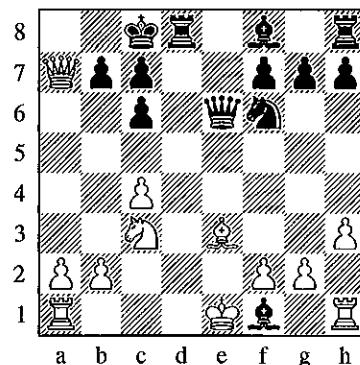
7... $\mathbb{W}d7N$

This is a standard developing move, and it invites a transposition to the 7.e3 line noted above. White has a few possible ways to deviate from it, but they promise nothing good for him.

8.g4

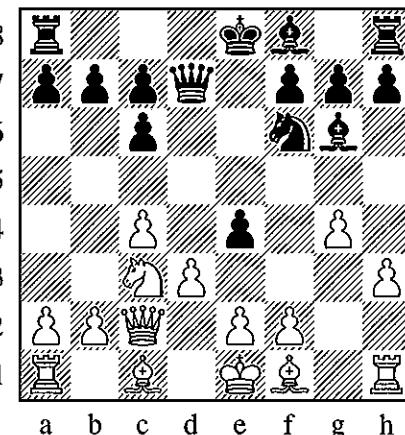
8.e3 leads straight to the 7.e3 line of course.

8.d3 0–0–0! leads to similar variations: 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ exd3 10.exd3 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 11. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $\mathbb{W}e6$



13. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ (13. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{W}xc4$ 14. $\mathbb{W}a8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15.0–0–0# $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$ leads to a position from the main 8.g4 line with the g-pawn on g2, which doesn't change much) 13... $\mathbb{W}xc4\#$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ With the pawn on g4, the king would have gone to g2 – but again, it doesn't make much difference to the evaluation. 14... $\mathbb{W}a6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xa6$ $\mathbb{W}xa6\#$

8... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 9.d3



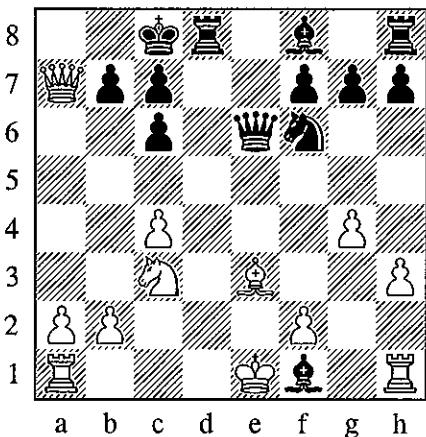
9...0–0–0!

Indirectly protecting the e4-pawn due to the potential mate on d1.

10.Qe3 exd3 11.exd3 Qxd3?!

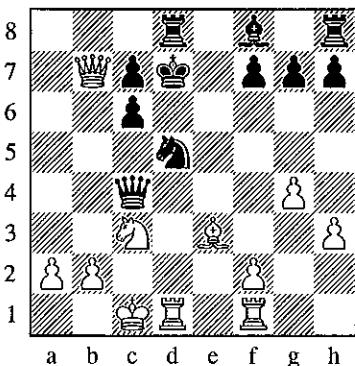
It is worth mentioning that Black is not obligated to play this way, and a positional approach such as 11...h5!? 12.g5 Qg8 would also give him slightly better chances. Nevertheless, I will focus on the more concrete approach.

12.Qa4! Qxf1! 13.Qxa7 We6!



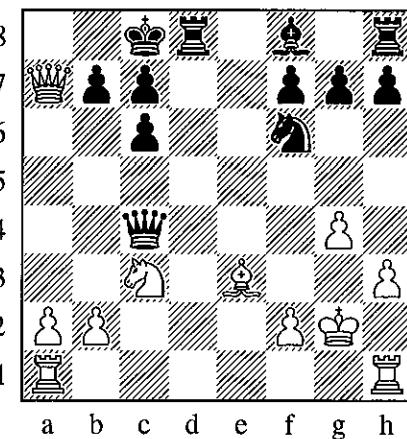
14.Qxf1!

14.Qxf1?! does not help White after:
14...Wxc4 15.Wa8† Qd7 16.0–0–0† Qd5
17.Wxb7



17...Qb4! Forcing White to sacrifice the exchange. 18.Qxd5† cxd5 19.Wxd5† Wxd5 20.Qxd5 Qd6† Black has good chances to convert his material advantage into a win.

14...Wxc4† 15.Qg2



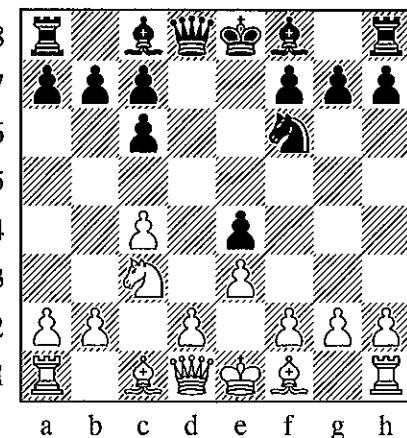
15...Qd5! 16.Qhd1 Wa6

16...Qxe3†? 17.fxe3 Qd6 18.Wa8† Qd7
19.Wxb7 We6! also looks promising – it's a matter of taste as to whether you prefer the queens on or off.

17.Wxa6 Qxe3†#

Black keeps an extra pawn going into the endgame.

B34) 6.e3



6...Qf5 7.Qb3!

This clever move order is an attempt to interfere with Black's plan of castling on the

queenside. The same concept is also well known in the analogous Sicilian variation with reversed colours. In recent years, it has been championed by Rakhmanov – both as Black in the Sicilian, and with White in the English with an extra tempo.

7.♗c2 transposes to the note to White's 7th move in variation B33.

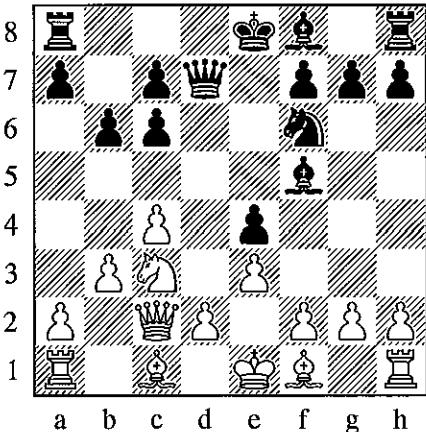
7...b6!?

I prefer to maintain the option of long castling. True, the pawn move slightly weakens Black's queenside, but it should not be too serious.

A reasonable alternative is 7...♝b8 8.♗c2 ♜d7 9.b3 ♜e7 10.♗b2 0–0 11.h3 as in Rakhmanov – Moiseenko, Khanty-Mansiysk 2013. Black's king doesn't feel entirely safe on the kingside, but the position is still roughly equal.

8.♗c2

I also considered: 8.♗a4N ♜d7 9.h5 10.b4 ♜e7 (10...a5 11.c5! is very messy)

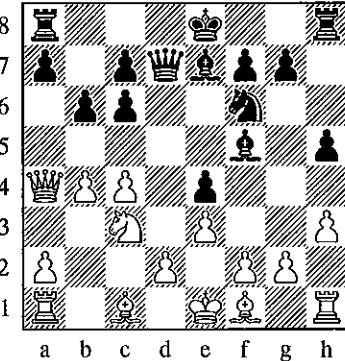


9...h5!N

9...♝e7 was a reasonable move in Rakhmanov – Seirawan, Berlin (blitz) 2015, but I would prefer not to commit the bishop just yet.

10.♗b2 h4 11.h3 ♜h6 12.♗e2 ♜d6 13.♗d4 ♜h7

Black's chances are by no means worse in this complicated position. He controls plenty of space, and he still enjoys a good deal of flexibility, as his king can either castle long or go to f8, depending on the situation.



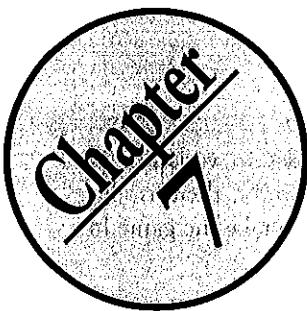
11.♗b2 (11.♗e2 c5! 12.♗xd7† ♜xd7† gives Black a favourable endgame) 11...a5! 12.b5 0–0–0 13.♗d1 c5† Black has achieved exactly what he wanted: the queenside is closed, and so his king is perfectly safe.

8...♜d7 9.b3

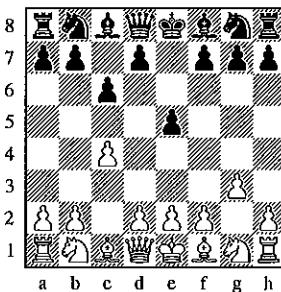
Conclusion

We have dealt with two really interesting sidelines of the English. After 2.e3 ♜f6 3.♗c3 ♜b4 4.♗ge2 0–0 5.a3 ♜e7 Black is a tempo down on the reversed Rossolimo, but he still gets good chances with the simple plan of ...c6 followed by ...d5. In the event that White tries hard to prevent this, then Nyzhnyk's plan is a perfect example to follow.

We then looked at 2.♗f3, when 2...e4 3.♗d4 ♜c6! leads to a different type of struggle. The critical continuation is 4.♗xc6 dxc6 5.♗c3 ♜f6, when Black enjoys free development while White pins his hopes on the benefits of his slightly better pawn structure. A long and complicated battle is likely to ensue, but Black's chances are certainly not worse.



1.c4 e5

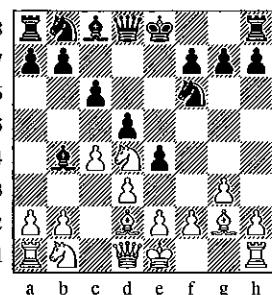


2.g3 c6 Sidelines

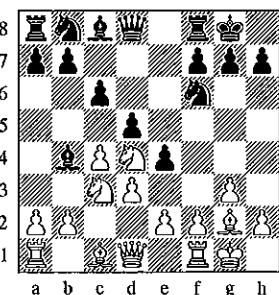
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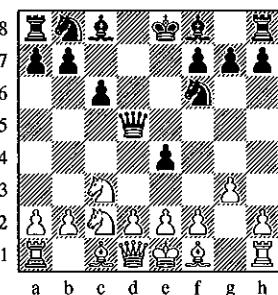
D1) note to 7.♗c3!



D1) after 8.0–0!



D232) after 7.♗c3!



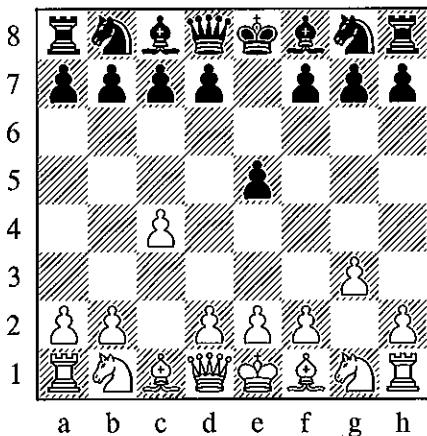
7...♗c5!N

8...e3!N

7...♗e6!N

1.c4 e5 2.g3

This used to be a relative sideline, but it now stands alongside 2.♗c3 as one of the two ‘big moves’. This shift in popularity must be at least partially due to the fact that 2.g3 was recommended in Kosten’s *The Dynamic English* and Marin’s *Grandmaster Repertoire 3*, both of them extremely influential repertoire books.

**2...c6**

Black has many possible set-ups, but I am recommending the principled plan of occupying the centre with the pawns.

3.d4 is White’s most challenging move, and it will be examined thoroughly in the next two chapters.

Before then, we will deal with the following sidelines: A) 3.♘a4?!; B) 3.d3; C) 3.♗g2 and D) 3.♗f3.

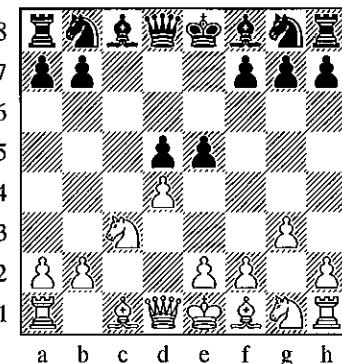
3.♗c3

This doesn’t have any independent value as Black can easily transpose to the next chapter – but he also gets a few independent options which White could have avoided with the 3.d4 move order.

3...d5 4.cxd5

4.d4 has been played a few times. Black’s simplest reply in terms of our repertoire

is 4...e4, which transposes to variation D of the next chapter. However, there is also 4...dxc4!N if you want to take the game in an original direction.

4...cxd5 5.d4**5...exd4!**

5...e4 transposes to variation A of Chapter 9, but the text move highlights the deficiency of White’s move order.

6.♗xd4 ♗f6

Black will follow up with ...♗c6, gaining time against the queen and ensuring a comfortable position. We could carry on analysing of course, but it’s clear that Black has a healthy position, and there is always the backup plan of transposing to Chapter 9 with 5...e4, so it’s clear that this line is no threat to us.

By the way, if White had played 3.♗g2 in the above line instead of 3.♗c3, there would not be much point in 5...exd4, as White could simply play 6.♗f3! to avoid losing time with the queen. (See 5.d4 in the notes to variation C below, where I recommend transposing to Chapter 9 with 5...e4.)

3.b3

This was once used by Petrosian to defeat Korchnoi in their 1971 Candidates match. Despite the favourable outcome on that occasion, it is hardly a good idea for White to allow Black so much control over the centre.

3...d5 4.Qb2 d4

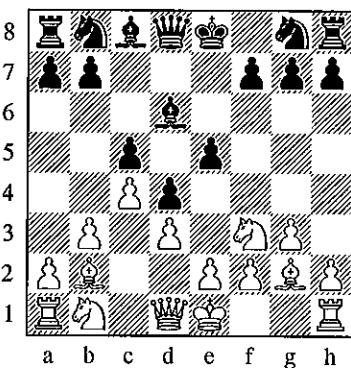
4...Qd6 is also fine of course, but I find the text move the most logical as it immediately shuts in the b2-bishop.

5.Qf3 Qd6 6.d3

Or 6.c5 Qxc5 7.Qxe5 Qf6 8.Qg2 0–0 9.0–0
Qe8 and Black is doing well.

6...c5 7.Qg2

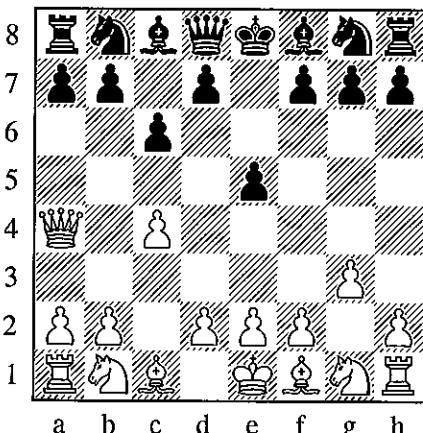
Now I would like to improve Black's play from T.V. Petrosian – Korchnoi, Moscow (9) 1971, with the natural developing plan:



7...Qc6N 8.Qbd2 Qf6†

With an excellent reversed Benoni for Black, due to the misplaced bishop on b2.

A) 3.Qa4?!



The idea of this move is obvious: White anticipates ...d5, and wants to prevent Black

from recapturing on d5 with a pawn. The same idea is sometimes seen against the 2.c3 Sicilian – and it's a bad move there as well, for exactly the same reason...

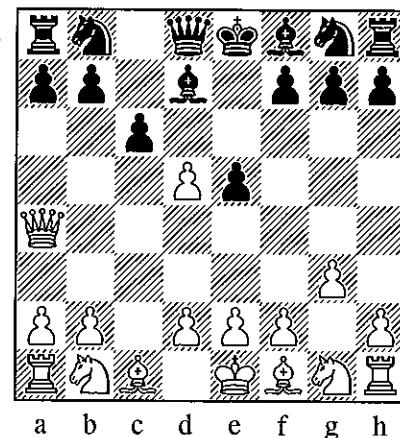
3...d5! 4.cxd5

4.Qg2?N may be White's best attempt to reach an acceptable position. At the very least, Black can play 4...dxc4, with a surprising transposition to variation D4 of Chapter 3 on page 67. However, it looks more ambitious to play 4...d4?!, reaching a strange kind of reversed Benoni with the white queen on an odd square.

4...Qd7?N

This is the clever concept which makes Black's previous move work.

4...Qxd5? was completely the wrong idea in Djordjevic – Kurtovic, Yugoslavia 1991.



5.Qb3

I will treat this as the main line, as it is White's only serious attempt to hold on to his extra pawn.

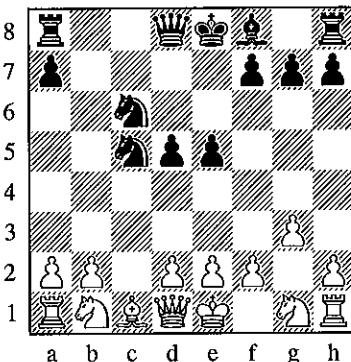
5.Qe4? is bad in view of 5...Qd6† followed by ...Qf6, when Black gains even more time by chasing the white queen.

5.d6 ♜xd6 6.d3 ♜f6 7.♗g2 0–0 8.♗f3 h6 is slightly better for Black.

5.♗h3 cxd5 6.♗xd7† ♜xd7 7.♗xd7† ♜xd7 gives Black a slightly better endgame.

5...cxd5! 6.♗xd5

After 6.♗xb7 ♜c6 7.♗h3 ♜f6! 8.♗xd7† ♜xd7 it turns out that the knight on c6 is untouchable, so White has to spend more time getting his queen out of danger. 9.♗b3! (9.♗xc6?? ♜c8–+) 9...♜c5 10.♗d1



10...♝a5! 11.b3 ♜c8 12.♗a3 ♜e7 13.♗h3 0–0 14.0–0 ♜fe8† White has managed to survive the opening, but Black's initiative is still worth more than a pawn.

6...♜c6

Black has an improved version of a reversed Morra Gambit, as the exposed white queen enables him to develop even faster than he normally would.

7.♗h3!?

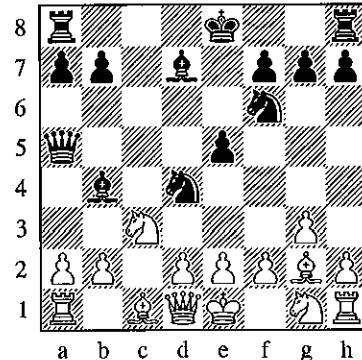
This seems like the best attempt to make sense of White's set-up.

The alternative is:

7.♗g2 ♜f6 8.♗b3 ♜a5! 9.♗c3 ♜d4 10.♗d1
10.♗xb7? ♜d8† is too dangerous for White.

10...♜b4!

And now, quite surprisingly, White has nothing better than:



11.♗f1!

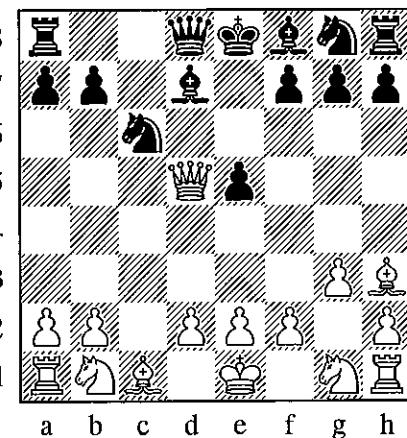
The point is that the natural 11.♗f3? runs into 11...♜xc3! 12.dxc3 ♜a4! 13.b3 ♜xc3† 14.♗d2 ♜c2† 15.♗f1 ♜xal+ with a decisive material gain.

11...0–0

11...♜c8!? is also promising.

12.d3 ♜ac8 13.♗d2 ♜b6†

Black has more than enough play for the pawn, as he is well ahead in development and White's king is stuck in the centre.



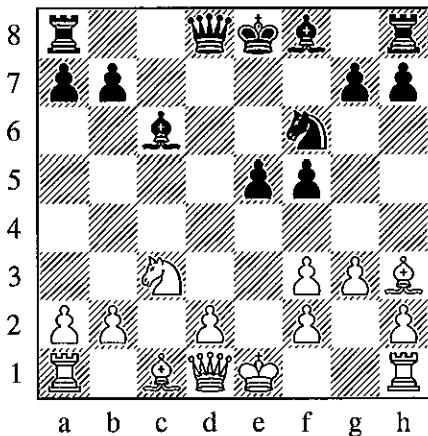
7...f5!

The best move, avoiding the bishop exchange and insisting on winning a tempo against the queen by developing the knight to f6.

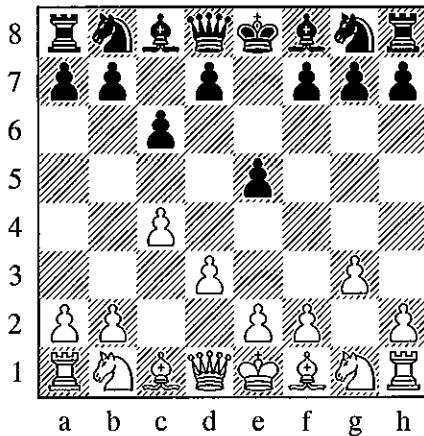
8.♗c3 ♜f6 9.♗b3 ♜d4 10.♗d1 ♜c6

Black continues to improve his pieces with gain of time.

11.♗f3 ♗xf3† 12.exf3



B) 3.d3

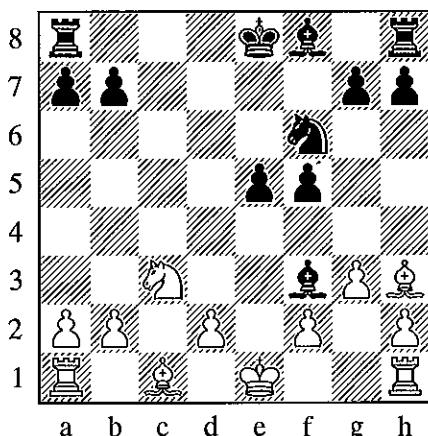


12...♗d3! 13.♗e2

13.♗g2 ♗c5 14.♗e2 0–0–0† is also better for Black.

13...♗xf3 14.♗xf3 ♗xf3

Finally Black has regained his pawn while keeping a good position. A likely continuation is:



15.0–0 ♗g4! 16.♗g2 ♗xg2 17.♗xg2 ♗f7†

Black keeps a slight edge thanks to the weak d-pawn.

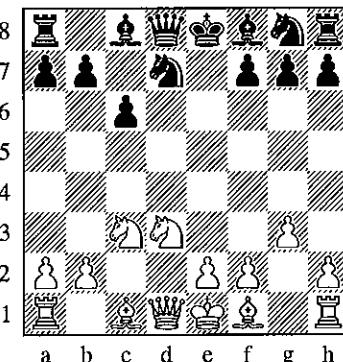
This is occasionally tried by players looking to avoid theory, but it is obviously not the most challenging set-up as it gives Black complete freedom to occupy the centre.

3...d5 4.♗d2?!

Too passive to be true!

4.cxd5 cxd5 5.♗g2 transposes to variation C1 below.

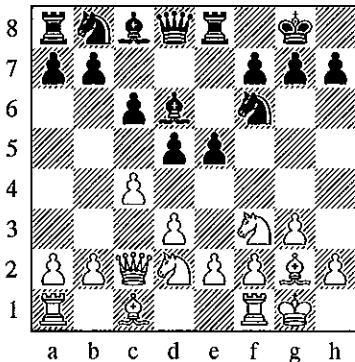
4.♗f3 dxc4N 5.♗c3?! (5.♗xe5?? ♗a5† would be embarrassing for White) 5...cxd3 6.♗xe5 This may be White's best continuation, but it's hardly a serious way to fight for an opening advantage. Black can answer it, for example, with: 6...♗d7 7.♗xd3



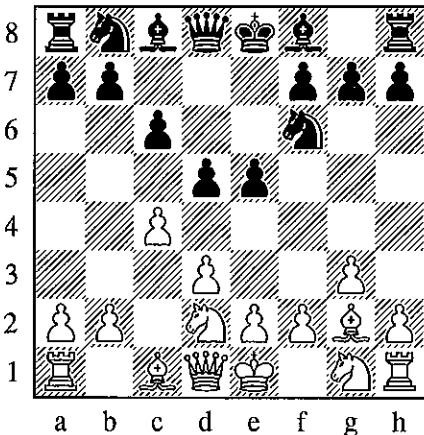
7... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3\uparrow$ 9. $exd3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ With a good position.

4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

5. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}gf3$ 0-0 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 8.0-0 occurred in Reshevsky – Portisch, Lugano 1968. The most accurate continuation seems to be:



8... $h6!N$ 9. $a3$ $a5\mp$ With an edge for Black, thanks to his central control.



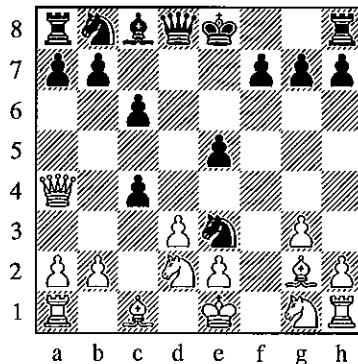
5... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$

Black develops actively and eyes up the f2-pawn.

6.cxd5

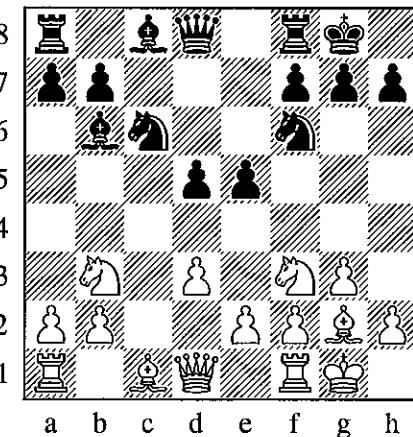
6. $\mathbb{Q}b3?$ occurred in Nithander – A. Smith, Sweden 2013, when Black overlooked a powerful idea: 6... $\mathbb{Q}xf2\uparrow!N$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $dxc4$

8. $\mathbb{Q}d2?$ (White should return the extra piece with 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$, although 8... $cxb3$ 9. $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 0-0 \mp leaves Black a healthy pawn up) 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4\uparrow$ 9. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 10. $\mathbb{W}a4$



10... $b5!$ The queen is trapped! The only way to keep the game going is 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xb5$, but after 12... $\mathbb{W}b6!$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ $axb6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $cxd3\mp$ White's position is virtually hopeless.

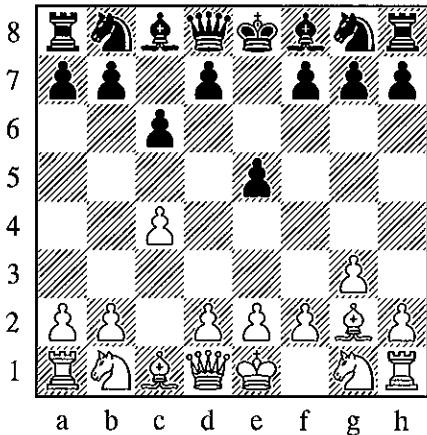
6... $cxd5$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9.0-0 0-0



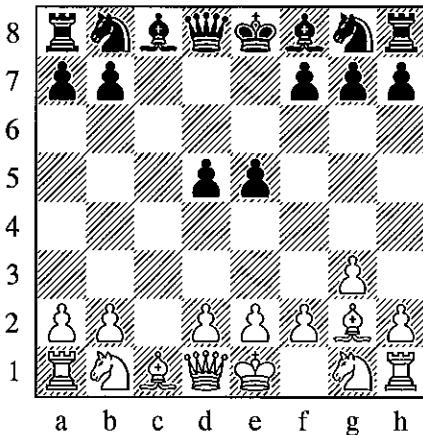
10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $h6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8\mp$

White's opening was obviously not a success in Bilek – Portisch, Teesside 1972.

C) 3.♗g2



4...cxd5

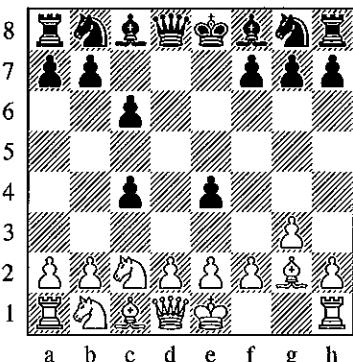


This time White develops his bishop in the hope of attacking Black's pawn centre.

3...d5 4.cxd5

After 4.d4 Black has the easy option of 4...e4, transposing to variation B of the next chapter, but 4...dxc4?! may be even better.

4.♗f3? doesn't make sense: 4...e4 5.♗d4 dxc4 6.♗c2 Black has more than one good continuation, but the following novelty is my favourite:



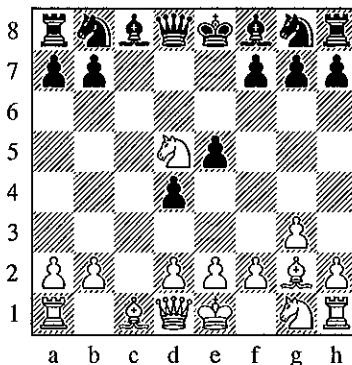
6...♝a6!N (6...f5!? also gave Black the upper hand in Korley – Gulko, Internet 2012) 7.♗xe4 ♜f6 8.♗g2 ♜e6† Black is better as White can't finish development without advancing his d-pawn, which will result in a weak pawn on d3.

Let's analyse C1) 5.d3 and C2) 5.♗b3.

5.d4 is actually White's best move, but it has no independent value because 5...e4 leads straight to variation B of the next chapter.

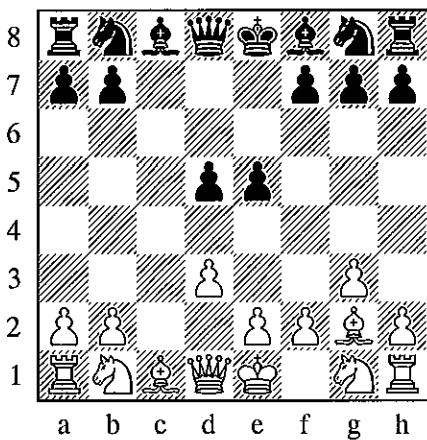
5.♗f3 ♜c6 6.0–0 ♜d6 7.d3 ♜ge7 8.e4 d4 9.♗bd2 0–0 10.♗c4 ♜c7 11.a4 ♜e6† and Black was better in Muhtarov – Truskavetsky, Alushta 2009.

5.♗c3?! is dubious due to the simple 5...d4 6.♗d5, Eppler – Kober, Gruenheide 1996, and now:



6...♝e6!N 7.♗b3 (or 7.e4 ♜e7†) 7...♝e7 8.♗b5† ♜d7 9.♗xe7 ♜xe7† and Black is clearly better.

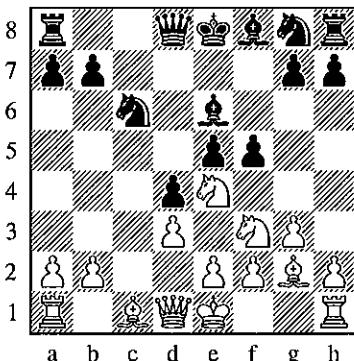
C1) 5.d3



This is too modest, and Black's chances are slightly higher after:

5...Qc6 6.Qf3

I also checked: 6.Qc3 Qe6 7.Qf3 d4 8.Qe4 f5!N (8...Qb4†? was also good for Black in Kovac – Marton, Presov 2002)



9.Qed2 Qf6 10.0–0 Qe7 11.Qg5 Qd5† With slightly better chances for Black, thanks to his strong centre.

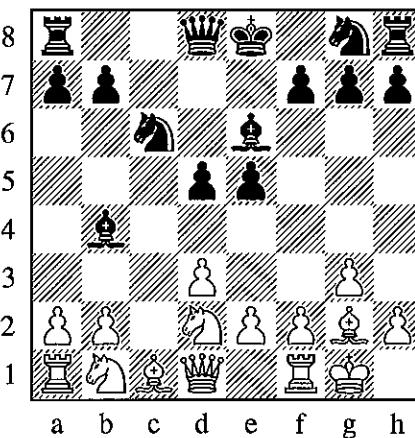
6...Qb4† 7.Qfd2

7.Qbd2?! occurred in Paniego Alvarez – Jose Iraeta, Barcelona 1996, when Black should have played: 7...e4!N 8.dxe4 dxe4 9.Qg1 A sad move to make, but there is nothing else. 9...Qf6† Black is obviously better.

7.Qd2 e4 8.Qg1 Qe7† also favoured Black in S. Nemeth – Brestak, Hungary 2004.

7...Qe6 8.0–0

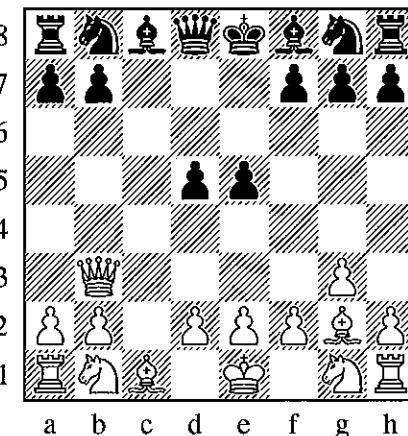
Now in Vakhidov – Sandipan, Raipur 2002, Black should have played the simple:



8...Qf6N

With some advantage, thanks to the strong centre.

C2) 5.Qb3



This is certainly a principled move, but it is likely to transpose to another variation of the English which is known to favour Black.

5...Qf6

5...Qe7?! is a low-theory alternative, but I think Black should be happy to transpose to the variation in question.

6.Qc3

We have reached the target position, which usually arises after 1.c4 e5 2.g3 Qf6 3.Qg2 c6 4.Qc3 d5 5.cxd5 cxd5 6.Qb3.

6...Qc6!

This pawn sacrifice leads to a strong initiative for Black.

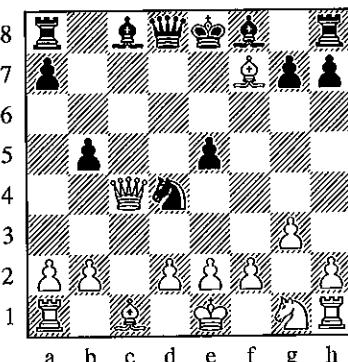
7.Qxd5 Qd4 8.Qxf6†

The following alternative is much worse:

8.Qc4? Qxd5 9.Qxd5 b5! 10.Qxf7†

10.Qc6†? is refuted by 10...Qd7 11.Qxd7†

Qxd7 12.Qd3 Qc6 and Black wins on the spot.



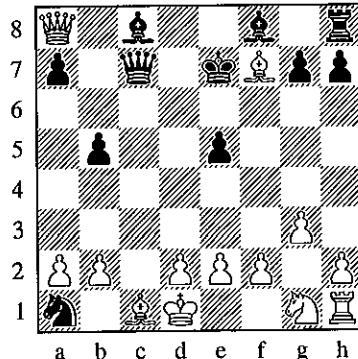
10...Qe7 11.Qd5 Qc2† 12.Qd1 Qxa1

This has been known to be good for Black since 1958.

13.Qxa8

13.d4 Qxd5 14.Qxd5 Qb8 15.dxe5 Qe6!
16.e4 Qc8 17.h3 Qc2 and Black's extra rook was enough to win the game in D. Byrne – Sherwin, New York 1958.

13...Qc7



14.Qe4N

After 14.Qb3? Qe6!–+ 15.Qe4 Qxb3 White resigned in Schreiber – B. Schneider, Dortmund 1986.

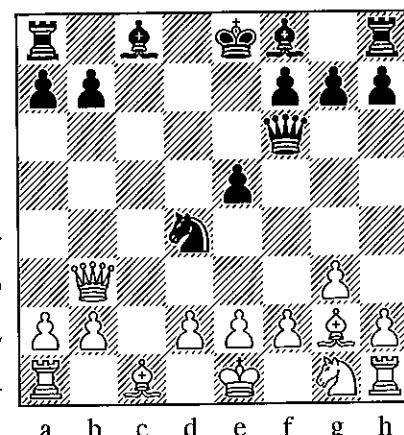
The text move is White's only chance, but he is barely clinging on.

14...Qxf7 15.Qf3 Qb7 16.Qf5† Qe8 17.Qb1 Qf7!†

Black is substantially better.

8...Qxf6!

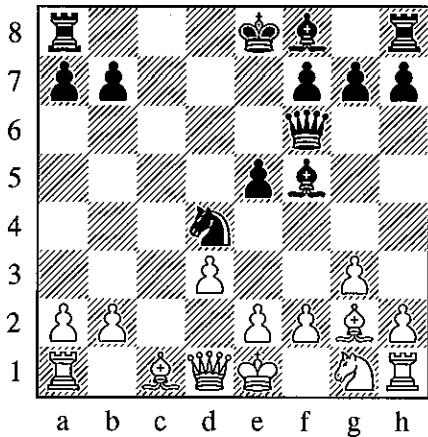
8...Qxf6?! is also promising for Black, but I would prefer to avoid damaging my pawn structure without a compelling reason to do so.



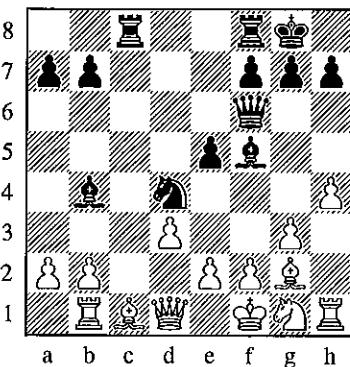
White has two plausible queen moves:
C21 9.Qd1 and **C22** 9.Qd3.

C21) 9.♗d1 ♜f5 10.d3

10.e4? loses to 10...♛c6!+ as first played in Frumkin – Pador, New York 2007.

**10...♝c8 11.♗f1**

11.♗b1 ♜b4† 12.♗f1 (12.♗d2? is bad due to 12...♜xd2† 13.♗xd2 ♜c2 14.♗d1 0–0–+ and White is much too far behind in development) 12...0–0 13.h4 Now in Gadia – Szmetan, Brasilia 1969, Black should have responded calmly with:



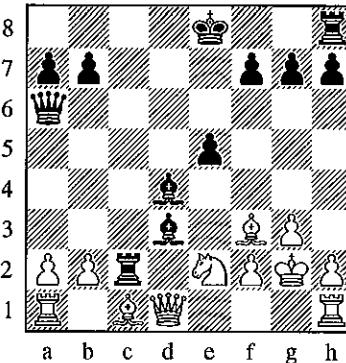
13...h6!N Simply preventing ♛g5. 14.a3 ♜c5† and Black is better.

11...♝c5!

Fast development combined with an attack on f2 promises Black the upper hand.

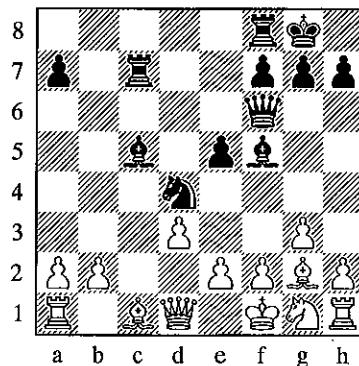
12.♗f3

12.e3? is bad in view of: 12...♛a6! 13.exd4 (or 13.e4 ♜g4! 14.f3 f5! 15.fxg4 fxg4–+ and White's position is hopeless) 13...♜xd3† 14.♗e2 (14.♗e1? exd4–+ is even worse) 14...♜xd4 15.♗f3 ♜c2 16.♗g2



16...♝xe2! This exchange sacrifice leads to a huge advantage for Black thanks to his domination over the light squares. 17.♗xe2 ♜xe2 18.♗c2 0–0–+ Philippe – Naranja, Havana (ol) 1966.

White is also struggling after: 12.♗xb7 ♜c7! 13.♗g2 0–0

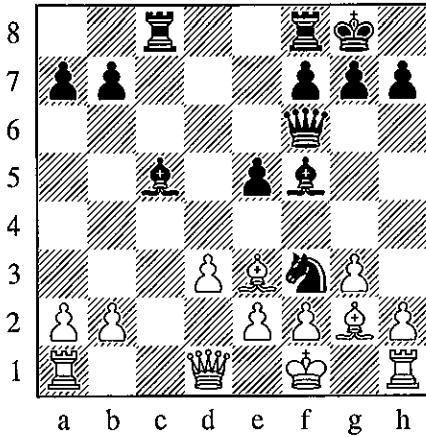


14.♗d2N (14.e3? ♜c2! was winning for Black in Pennings – Gertners, email 2002) 14...♝g4!† White is under serious pressure.

12.♗e3N may be the best defence, though Black retains at least a slight edge after:

12... $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$
 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}a4\ddagger$ (or 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$
18.dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}d7\mp$) 17... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!\mp$

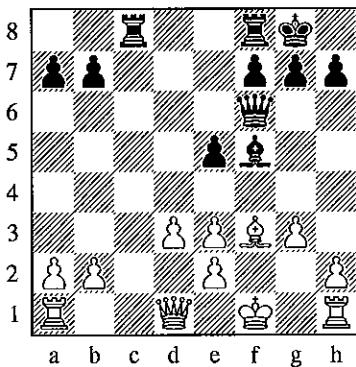
12...0-0 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$



14. $\mathbb{Q}xc5\text{N}$

This is the only move to keep White in the game.

14. $\mathbb{Q}xf3?$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 15.fxe3 was played in Hausner – Baumbach, Leipzig 1978, when Black overlooked a winning continuation:

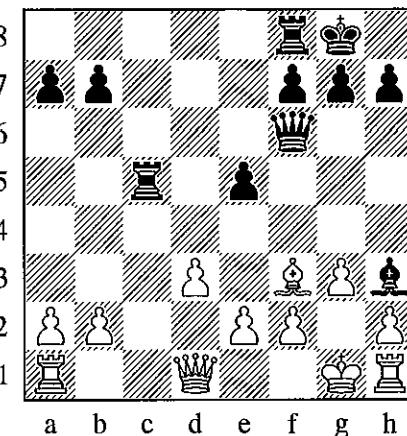


15... $\mathbb{Q}fd8!-\dagger$ Threatening ...e4, with a decisive advantage.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}h3\ddagger$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}gl$

16. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ is answered by 16... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ 17.f3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ with the idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}c2$. Despite his extra pawn,

White is still struggling due to his poor coordination and Black's control over the c-file.



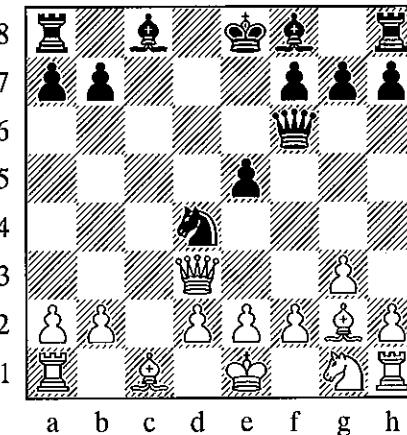
16... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$

Hitting the b2-pawn and defending b7, thereby preparing ... $\mathbb{Q}fc8$.

17. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}fc8\mp$

Followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}c2$ and Black is better.

C22) 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$



The purpose of this move is to meet ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ with $\mathbb{Q}e4$.

9... $\mathbb{Q}d7?!$

A natural sacrifice of a second pawn. Black's idea is to prevent, or at least delay, the

development of White's kingside, especially the knight, as shown in the note to White's next move.

9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$? is a reasonable alternative.

10. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$

10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$?

This doesn't work in view of:

10... $\mathbb{Q}b5$! 11. $\mathbb{W}e4$

11. $\mathbb{W}b1$ is met by 11... $\mathbb{W}c6$! intending 12. $\mathbb{Q}h4$? $\mathbb{Q}c2\#$ (12... $\mathbb{W}c7\#$) 13. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$! and the knight on c2 is untouchable.

11. $\mathbb{W}c3$ runs into 11... $\mathbb{Q}b4$! 12. $\mathbb{W}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\#$ when White must give up a piece in order to avoid having his queen trapped.

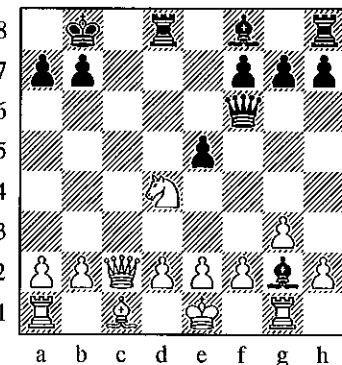
11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d3$

Black has gained the move ... $\mathbb{Q}d7-c6$ for free, and can increase his advantage with:

12...0-0-0! 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c2\#$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$

15. $\mathbb{E}g1$

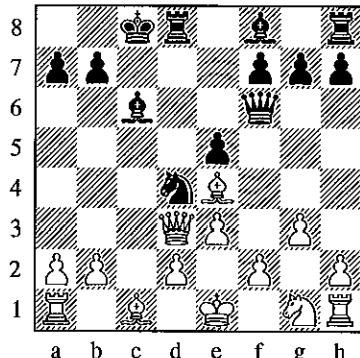
In Svebis – Langrock, Pontresina 2000, Black kept a big advantage after retreating the bishop to d5, but it would have been even stronger to play:



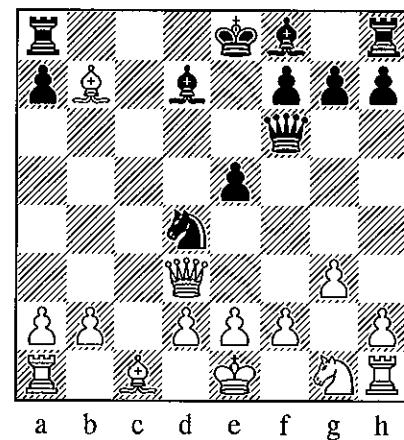
15... $exd4\#N$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ d3 17. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$!

With a decisive initiative.

Another noteworthy game continued: 10.e3?! $\mathbb{Q}c6$! 11. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ (after 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\#N$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 12. $exd4$ $\mathbb{W}xh1$ 13. $\mathbb{W}b5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $exd4\#$ Black is an exchange up) 11...0-0-0! A clever move, which enables Black to maintain his initiative.



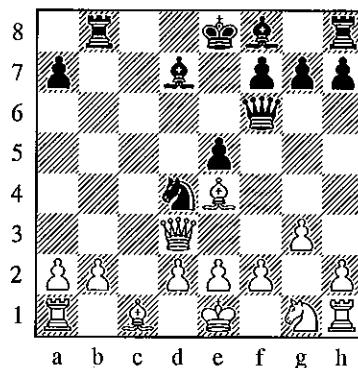
12. $\mathbb{W}b1$! $\mathbb{W}e6$! 13.f3 f5! 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ h5#! Black had great play for a mere pawn in M. Gurevich – Sveshnikov, Moscow 1992.



10... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$!

This seems to be White's best chance, although his position will remain difficult for quite some time.

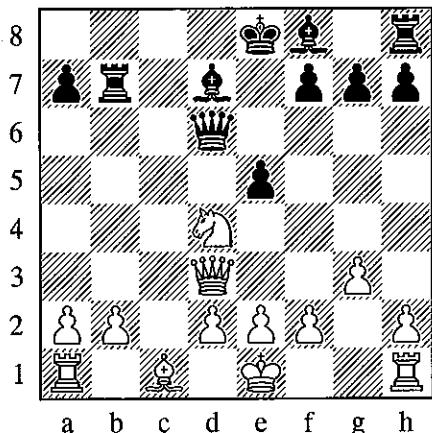
11. $\mathbb{Q}e4$? was the dubious continuation of L. Mueller – Miskulin, Olomouc 2011. Black's play can be improved by means of:



11... $\mathbb{W}d6!$ N Intending to mobilize the f-pawn.
 12. $\mathbb{W}e3$ f5 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$ and White faces a difficult task.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}d6!$

White's idea is based on simple tactics:
 12...exd4? is met by 13. $\mathbb{W}e4\#$ and White wins the exchange.



13. $\mathbb{W}f3$

13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 14.exd3 $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$ and despite being two pawns down, Black's position is promising thanks to the powerful bishops and White's doubled pawns – which are not only weak in themselves, but also obstruct the development of the c1-bishop.

13... $\mathbb{W}b6!$ 14. $\mathbb{W}e4$

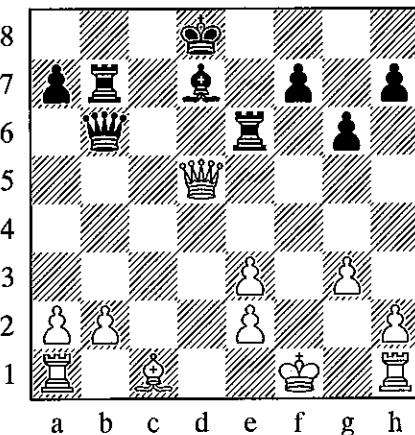
14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ is met by 14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15.e4 $\mathbb{W}a6!$ when Black prevents White from castling short and sets up some unpleasant threats.

14... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xe5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$

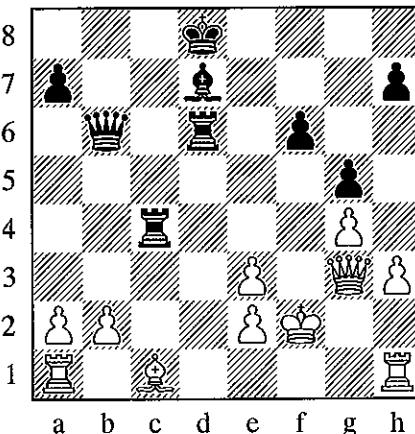
Black is temporarily three pawns down but he will win one of them back immediately, while retaining a serious initiative.

16. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d5$ g6 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 20.dxe3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$

White has suffered serious structural damage, and the opposite-coloured bishops only increase Black's attacking potential. I will include the remaining moves of a correspondence game where White was unable to withstand Black's initiative.



21. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 22. $\mathbb{W}g5\#$ f6 23. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 24.g4
 g5 25. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 27.h3



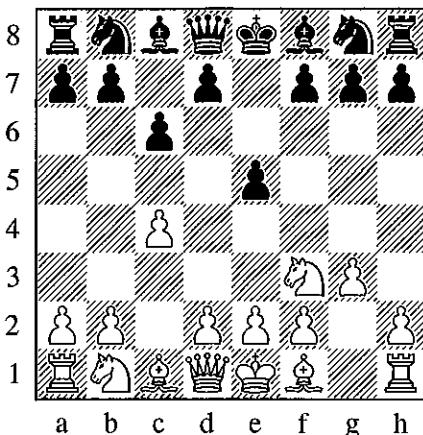
27...h5! 28. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

28.gxh5 $\mathbb{Q}f4\#$ wins quickly.

28...hxg4 29.h4 gxh4 30. $\mathbb{W}xh4$ g3# 31. $\mathbb{W}xg3$
 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 32.e4 $\mathbb{Q}xc1\#$

White resigned in Pfalz – Wichert, corr. 2006.

D) 3.Qf3



White is treating the position as a reversed Alapin (2.c3) Sicilian with g2-g3 as an extra tempo. His idea is to lure the pawn to e4 and then attack it with Qc3 and Qg2.

3...e4 4.Qd4 d5

The rare D1) 5.d3?! deserves serious attention in my opinion, but D2) 5.cxd5 has been played almost automatically in most games.

D1) 5.d3?!

Benko introduced this against Tal in the 1962 Candidates tournament at Curacao. It has not attracted many followers, but it's an interesting move.

5...Qf6!

The most accurate. Black develops a piece and protects the centre – what more could you ask for?

6.Qg2!

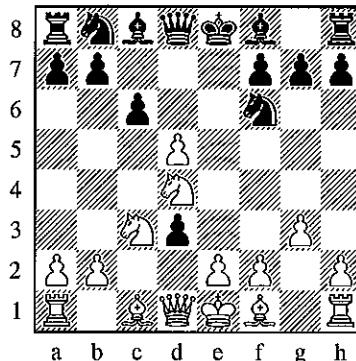
6.Qc3

This move poses fewer problems.

6...exd3 7.cxd5

7.Qxd3N can be met by 7...c5 8.Qb3 d4 9.Qe4 Qg4!= intending ...Qe5 and Black is fine.

I also considered 7.exd3N Qb6!? 8.Qf3 d4 9.Qe2 Qg4!? 10.Qg2 (10.Qfxd4? Qc5 is too dangerous for White) 10...Qb4† 11.Qd2 Qxf3 12.Qxf3 a5 13.0–0 Qxd2 14.Qxd2 0–0 15.Qf4 Qd8 Followed by ...Qa6 and Black obtains a comfortable position.

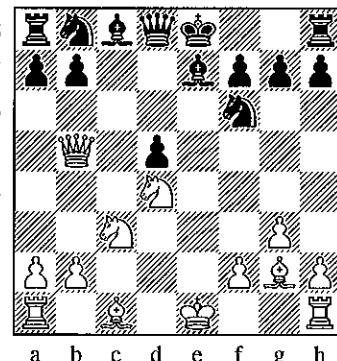


7...dxe2 8.Qxe2†

After 8.Qxe2 Qxd5 9.0–0 Qc5 10.Qf3 0–0 11.Qxd5 cxd5 12.Qe3 Qb6 Black is doing fine.

8...Qe7 9.Qg2 cxd5 10.Qb5†N

10.Qg5?! 0–0 11.0–0–0 occurred in Wong – Lai, Hong Kong 2013, when 11...Qe8N 12.Qhe1 Qd7 would have been favourable for Black.



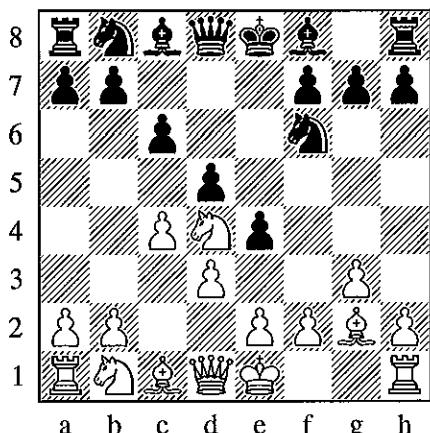
10...Qbd7 11.0–0!

In the event of the immediate 11.Qxd5 Qxd5 12.Qxd5 Qb4† Black takes advantage of position of the white king in the centre.

11...0–0 12.Qxd5 Qxd5 13.Qxd5 Qb6!

The chances are level, for instance:

14.♗xd8 ♗xd8 15.♗b5 ♗d7 16.♗c3 ♗c6=



6...♗b4†!

6...♗c5 has been played a few times at GM level but I decided to put it aside, as I could not find clear equality after 7.♗b3! ♗b4† 8.♗d2 ♗xd2† 9.♗xd2±, as was first seen in Benko – Tal, Curacao 1962.

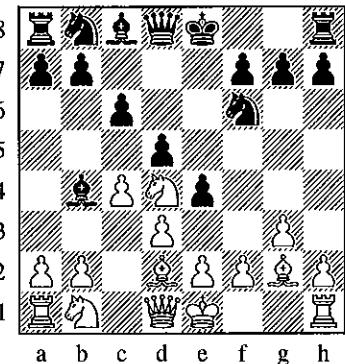
The idea behind the text move is to lure White's bishop to d2.

7.♗c3!

The only chance to fight for the advantage.

7.♗d2

This occurred in Oreshkin – Fesenko, Chelyabinsk 2008. Now I would like to bring to your attention a strong novelty:



7...♗c5!N

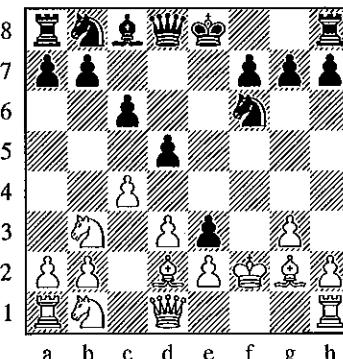
Black takes advantage of the unfavourable position of the bishop on d2.

8.♗b3

8.♗c3 0–0 9.0–0 e3! is a positional pawn sacrifice, the purpose of which is to damage White's structure. 10.fxe3 dx4 Black is fine, as 11.dxc4 ♗g4 12.♗d2 ♗e8 leads to a comfortable position for him.

8...♗xf2†! 9.♗xf2 e3†!

This combination would be no good if the bishop was on c1, as White could simply retreat his king to g1.



10.♗xe3

After 10.♗xe3 ♗g4† 11.♗f3 Black can choose between repeating the position with 11...♗e5† 12.♗f2 ♗g4†, and playing on with 11...♗f6†! 12.♗f4 g5, which transposes to the main line.

10...♗g4† 11.♗f3 ♗f6† 12.♗f4 g5 13.e3 gxf4 14.exf4 ♗d7!

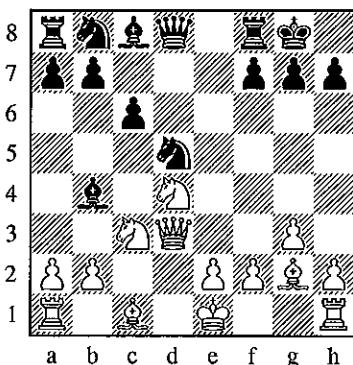
With a dangerous initiative.

7...0–0!

I considered the untested 7...e3, but found that White can exploit the position of the black king in the centre: 8.♗xe3! (8.fxe3 dx4 9.dxc4 ♗xc3† 10.bxc3 0–0 gives Black good compensation due to White's ruined structure) 8...c5 9.♗a4†! (9.cxd5 cxd4 10.♗xd4 ♗xd5 11.♗xg7 ♗g8 12.0–0 ♗e6 is less clear) 9...♗bd7 10.cxd5 cxd4 11.♗xd4 ♗a5 12.♗xf6 gxf6 13.0–0± White's chances are higher.

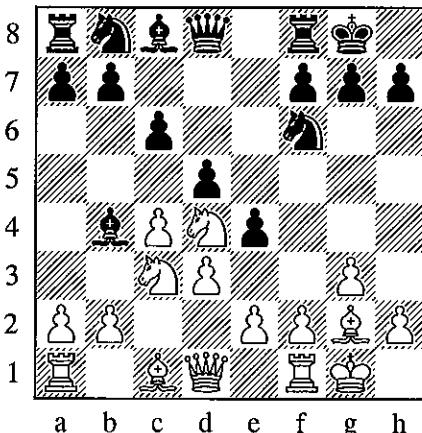
8.0-0!

I also checked: 8.cxd5N $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ (8... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 9.dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 10.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 11.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}fxd1$ is slightly better for White.) 9. $\mathbb{W}d2$ exd3 10. $\mathbb{W}xd3$



10... $\mathbb{W}a5!$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 12.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8=$ With equal chances.

This position was reached in Uddenfeldt – Wahlbom, Skellefteå 1972. I would like to introduce an interesting and strong novelty.

**8...e3!N**

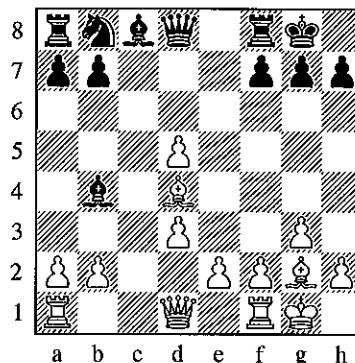
An important idea, sacrificing a pawn in order to damage White's structure.

9.f4?!

9.cxd5 exf2† 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ 11.e3 cxd5 is good for Black.

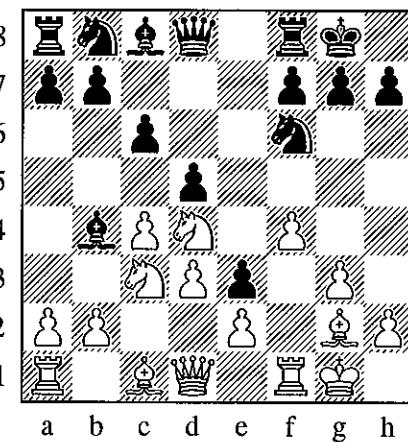
9.fxe3 dxc4 10.dxc4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 11.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ and Black has full compensation due to White's two pairs of doubled, isolated pawns. A good plan for the next few moves will be ...a6 followed by ...c5.

9. $\mathbb{Q}xe3?$ sees White give up a piece for three pawns: 9...c5 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 11.cxd5 cxd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$



12... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 13.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ With mutual chances.

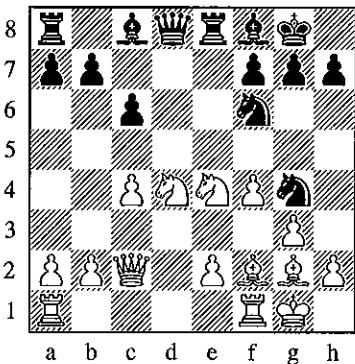
The text move seems like the most ambitious try. White hopes to surround the pawn and eliminate it under ideal circumstances – but we will obviously have something to say about that.



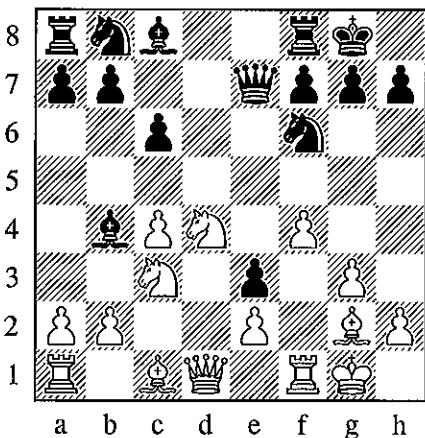
9...dxc4 10.dxc4 $\mathbb{W}e7$

Defending the pawn while preparing ... $\mathbb{A}d8$.

The straightforward pawn sacrifice also looks interesting: 10... $\mathbb{Q}bd7?$! 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}df6$



15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ g6 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ a5 With some initiative thanks to the weakened dark squares.

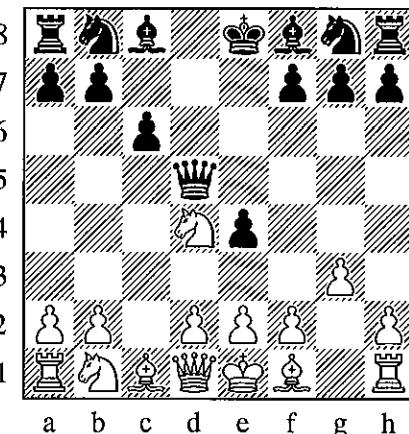
**11. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{E}e8!$**

Black is doing well. (However, please note that 11... $\mathbb{A}d8$ is well met by 12. $\mathbb{A}d1!$ \pm with the threat of $\mathbb{Q}f5$.)

D2) 5.cxd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$

5...cxd5 is playable, but White's extra g2-g3 move would certainly be of some use in the

reversed Alapin. The text move has been more popular and I think it's the right choice.



White has three reasonable moves: D21) 6.e3, D22) 6.Qb3 and D23) 6.Qc2!.

D21) 6.e3

In the Alapin after 1.e4 c5 2.c3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 4.d4 cxd4 5. $\mathbb{W}xd4$, the reply 5...e6 yields excellent theoretical and practical results for Black. However, in the current version with reversed colours, the moves g2-g3 and e2-e3 do not combine particularly well.

6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

This tempo-gaining move is the obvious choice.

I suggest meeting 7.Qg2 with 7...We5! (the immediate 7...Qc5 is slightly inaccurate in view of 8.d3!) when White has nothing better than transposing to our main line with 8.Qc3.

7... $\mathbb{W}e5$ 8.Qg2 $\mathbb{Q}c5$

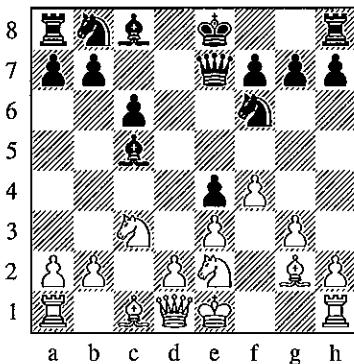
White has tested numerous continuations from this position, none of which promises him any advantage.

9.d3

This move was played in a couple of recent GM games.

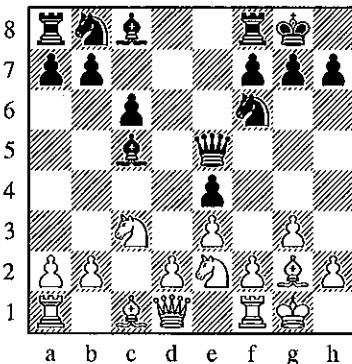
After 9.0–0 0–0 White has nothing better than 9.d3 exd3 10.♗xd3, transposing to the main line.

9.f4?! ♗e7 10.♘de2 (10.0–0N is slightly better, but Black retains the upper hand after the simple 10...0–0†) This position was reached in Heberla – Semcesen, Wrocław 2010, when Black should have played the simple:



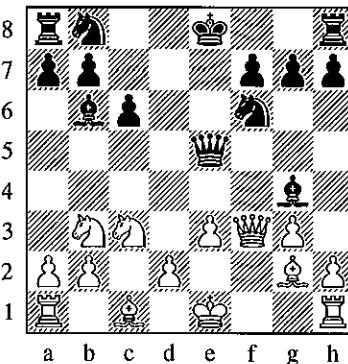
10...0–0!N With a preferable position, for instance: 11.a3 a5 12.♗c2 ♘e8 13.h3 h5†

After 9.♘de2?! 0–0 10.0–0 the most precise reply is:



10...♗d8!N (10...♗f5 was played in Bilek – Gheorghiu, Teesside 1972, when 11.♘xe4!N ♘xe4 12.d4= is a clever trick which enables White to free himself) 11.♗c2 ♘f5† Black is better thanks to his space advantage and the backward pawn on d2.

9.♘b3?! ♘b6 10.f3 (10.d4 exd3 11.♗xd3 0–0 12.0–0 ♘d8 13.♗c2 ♘a6† and Black was better in Kron – Mityarov, Ulan Ude 2013) 10...exf3 11.♗xf3 ♘g4!



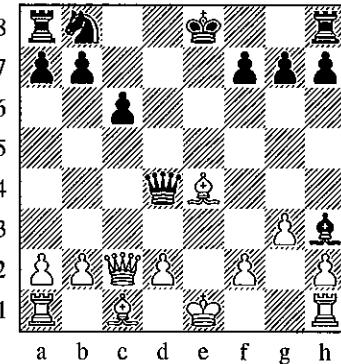
12.♗f2?!N (12.♗f4 occurred in Ngo – Tran, Cao Lanh Dong Thap 2006, when 12...♗xf4!N 13.gxf4 ♘a6† would have left White with a lot of weaknesses) 12...♘a6! 13.0–0 0–0 14.d4 ♘h5† Black is better due to the vulnerability of White's central pawns.

9.♗c2 ♘xd4 10.exd4 ♘xd4 11.♘xe4 ♘xe4 12.♘xe4

12.♗xe4† ♘xe4† 13.♘xe4 ♘h3! was fine for Black in De la Fuente Gonzalez – Gallardo Garcia, Madrid 2007.

12...♘h3!

The most accurate, although 12...♘a6!N is a reasonable alternative.



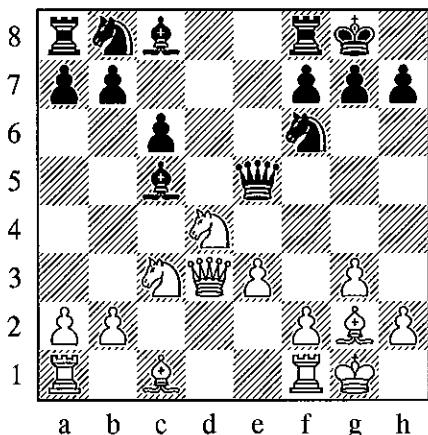
13.d3 ♘d7 14.♗e3N

After 14.♗d2 0–0 15.♗c3 ♖d6 16.0–0–0 ♗g4 17.♗d2 b5 18.b3 a5 White was under some pressure in Kashlyak – Genga, corr. 2014.

14...♖b4† 15.♗d2 ♖a4 16.b3 ♖b5 17.♗c3 0–0 18.0–0–0 a5

With a comfortable position for Black.

9...exd3 10.♗xd3 0–0 11.0–0



11...♗d8!N

11...♘a6 is less convincing: 12.a3 ♗b6 13.b4 ♖d8 14.♗b2± Abasov – David, Bratto 2013 (14.♗c2?! was also reasonable in A. Zhigalko – C. Balogh, Warsaw 2013). I don't see a clear route to equality here.

The text move is better as White will have to deal with the pin along the d-file before getting a chance to complete development.

12.♗d1

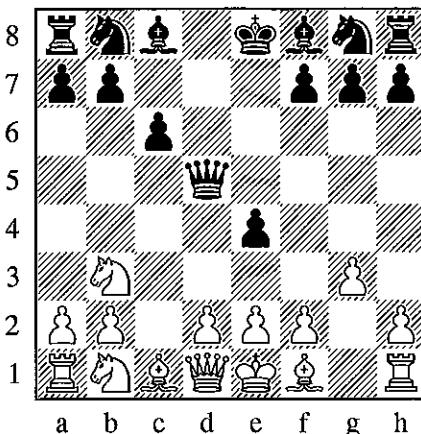
I also considered 12.♗c2 ♗f8 13.♗d1 ♘a6 14.a3 ♗g4 15.f3 ♗h5 with a roughly equal position.

12...♗b6 13.♗f1 ♗g4 14.f3 ♗h5 15.g4 ♗g6 16.f4 ♖c7 17.h3 h6∞

Black's bishop may be blocked out of play with f4–f5 at any moment, but the rest of

his pieces are more active than their white counterparts. It's a double-edged situation but I slightly prefer Black, as it's not easy for White to get properly coordinated.

D22) 6.♗b3



This move is not the best way to fight for an advantage, as the knight often proves to be misplaced on b3.

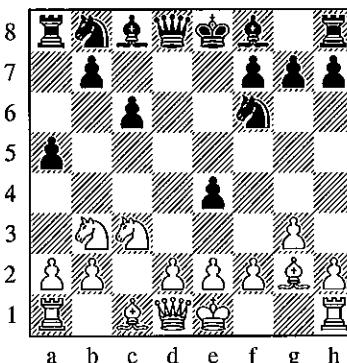
6...♗d8 7.♗g2

7.♗c3 ♖d8!N

7...♗h5 has been played but I prefer the text move, as I want to ensure that d2-d3 (or -d4) will lead to an IQP for White.

8.♗g2 a5!

Highlighting the unfavourable placement of the knight on b3.

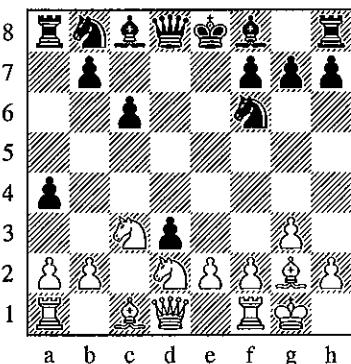


9.d4

It is hard for White to do without this move. 9.a4?! is met by 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ with the threat of ... $\mathbb{W}b6$. 10.e3 (10.d3 may be the lesser evil – but if that is White's best, he should go for the IQP structure a move earlier rather than weakening the b4-square) 10... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6\#$ Followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ -b4 and Black is better.

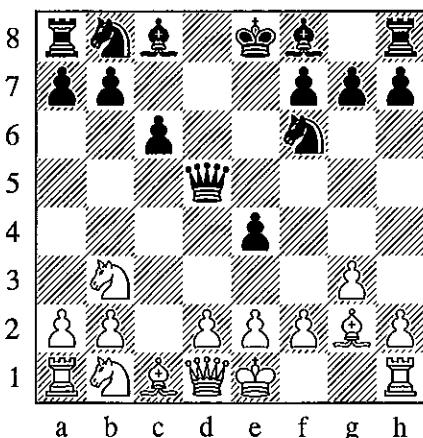
9...exd3 10.0–0?

10. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 11.exd3 a4 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ is also pleasant for Black.

10...a4 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 

11... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 0–0 13. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 14.exd3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$

Black has a good game thanks to the isolated pawn on d3.

7... $\mathbb{W}d8$?N

An interesting novelty. The queen is well placed on the d-file, making it difficult for White to advance the d-pawn.

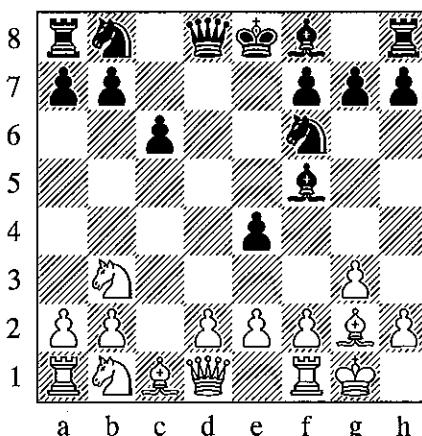
7... $\mathbb{W}h5$ was played in the majority of games from this position.

8.0–0

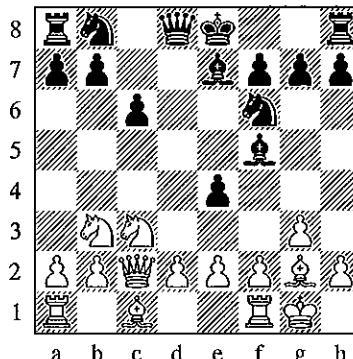
8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ transposes to 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ in the notes above.

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

Black develops a piece while overprotecting the e4-pawn.

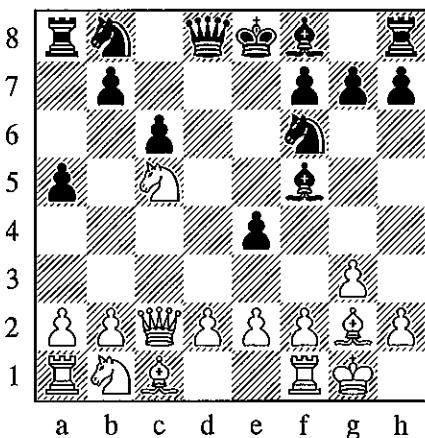
9. $\mathbb{W}c2$

9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}c2$ (10.d3 exd3 11.exd3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ and Black is fine thanks to the isolated pawn on d3)



10...a5! Once again, Black threatens to trap the knight on b3. 11.e3 $\mathbb{W}d3!$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ exd3 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6=$ with a roughly equal endgame.

9...a5! 10. $\mathbb{Q}c5$



10... $\mathbb{W}d4!$

This strong move virtually forces the knight to go back.

11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

11. $\mathbb{Q}xb7?$ loses to 11... $\mathbb{Q}a7!+-$ and the knight is trapped.

11. $\mathbb{Q}a4?!$ avoids repeating the position but the knight is misplaced, and after 11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12.b3 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}e6\mp$ Black is better.

11... $\mathbb{W}d6?!$

11... $\mathbb{W}d8=$ repeats of course. The text move is an extra option if Black is not satisfied with a draw.

12.d4 exd3 13.exd3 a4 14. $\mathbb{Q}e1\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$

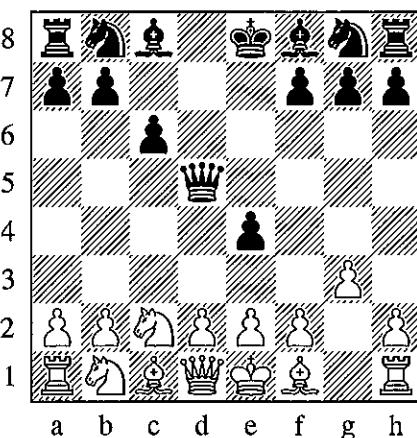
14... $\mathbb{Q}e7?$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ leads to trouble for Black.

15. $\mathbb{Q}3d2$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$

White has some compensation for the pawn due to Black's uncastled king, but it is not easy for him to create threats. The position could be

analysed further and any result is possible, but from a theoretical perspective we don't need to go any further here, as we have already seen that Black has a draw in his pocket in this line.

D23) 6. $\mathbb{Q}c2!$

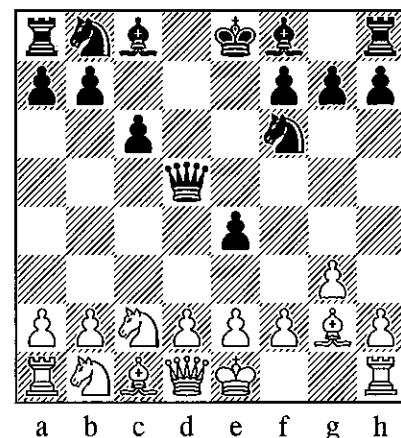


This is White's best try. Essentially he has an improved version of the previous variation, as his knight is not stuck on b3 and can instead move to the much better e3-square.

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

We will analyse D231) 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ followed by the more precise D232) 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3!$

D231) 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$



This has only been played a few times in this specific position – but the game count immediately jumps to well over a hundred. The explanation is that most games arrived here via the alternative move order of 1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♜f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.♗f3 e4 5.♗d4 d5 6.cxd5 ♘xd5 7.♗c2.

In any case, the text move is slightly inaccurate as Black can continue:

7...♝h5!

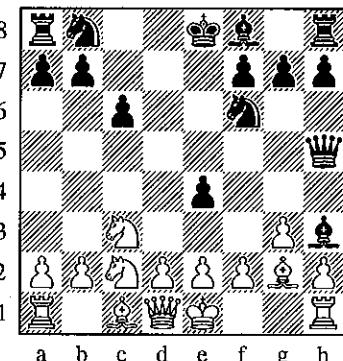
Interestingly, 7...♝e6!? 8.♗c3 transposes to variation D2322 at the end of the chapter. Although I believe I have shown that Black is doing fine there, I would recommend going for the present variation if given the choice, as Black has an easier time equalizing and even fighting for the advantage after the text move.

8.b3

The alternative is:

8.♗c3 ♜h3!

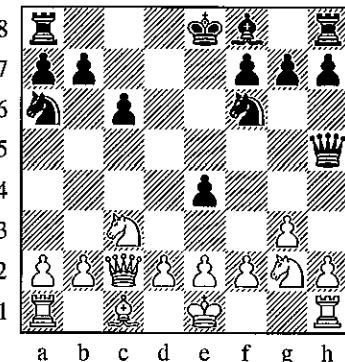
This enables Black to solve his main problem: the weakness of the e4-pawn.



9.♗e3

9.0–0 from Leer Salvesen – Brynell, Gausdal 2001, can be answered by 9...♝g4!N 10.f3 ♜c5† 11.♗e3 (or 11.e3 ♜xg2 12.fxg4 ♜h3 13.♗f4 ♜f3 14.♗xe4†! ♜xe4 15.♗xe4 ♜d7!†) 11...♝xe3 12.dxe3 exf3 13.exf3 0–0 with a slight edge to Black thanks to his better pawn structure.

9...♝xg2 10.♗xg2 ♜a6! 11.♗c2

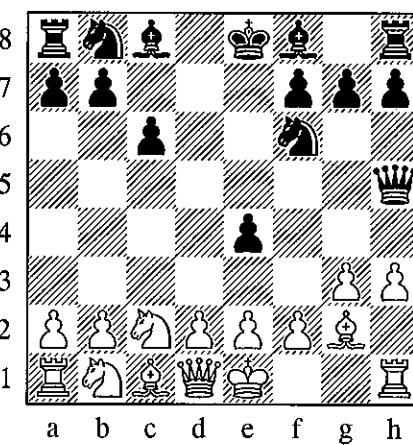


11...♝b4?N

11...♝e5!? 12.d4 exd3 13.♗xd3 ♜b4 14.♗b1 ♜e7 15.0–0 0–0 was also slightly preferable for Black in Filip – Portisch, Palma de Mallorca 1970. The text move seems even more accurate though.

12.♗b1 ♜e5 13.a3 ♜bd5 14.♗xd5 ♜xd5†

White still has to solve the problem of the backward d-pawn.



8...♝g6!

Discouraging d2-d3.

9.♗c3 ♜d6!

This is the best square for the bishop as it leaves the e-file open for Black's rook, which is needed to protect the e4-pawn.

9... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ has been played in some games, but I would prefer to keep that square free for the knight.

10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

After 10.d3 exd3 11. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 12.exd3 0–0 13.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ Black obtained a comfortable endgame in Marangunic – Rogoff, Zagreb 1971, and a few subsequent games.

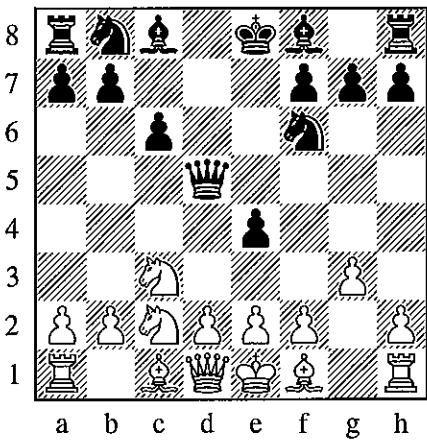
10...0–0 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$

Black is in time to meet this with:

11... $\mathbb{Q}e8$

Black reached his ideal set-up and enjoyed the better chances in Andriasian – T.L. Petrosian, Yerevan 2012. The move order below is more accurate for White precisely because it makes it harder for Black to achieve this ideal configuration.

D232) 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3!$



Now D2321) 7... $\mathbb{W}h5$ has been the most popular, but I believe the novelty D2322) 7... $\mathbb{W}e6!N$ to be more accurate.

D2321) 7... $\mathbb{W}h5$

This move is an attempt to reach the ideal set-up from the previous variation, but White can prevent it.

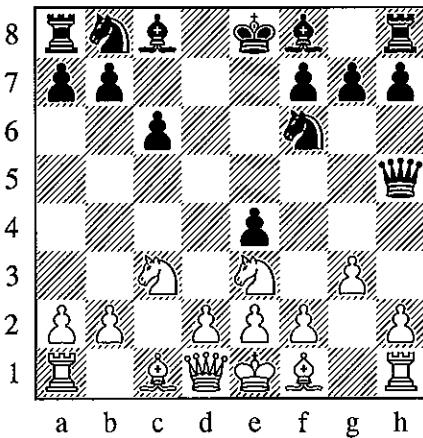
8. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$

This strong move was introduced by the Hungarian GM Ferenc Berkes. The idea is simply to open a path for the white queen to attack the e4-pawn. Other moves give Black no problems, for instance:

8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ transposes to 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ in the notes to variation D231 above.

8.h3?! is a waste of time as ... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ is not a real threat here. 8... $\mathbb{W}g6!$ Black protects the e4-pawn in advance and restrains the white d-pawn. 9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ With this move we transpose to variation D231, where it was shown that Black is doing well after 9... $\mathbb{Q}d6!$.

8.d3 exd3 9. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ is best met by 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7N=$ intending ...0–0 and ... $\mathbb{Q}d8$. (10... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ was played in Svidler – Topalov, Flor & Fjaere 2014, but I see no point in allowing 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6!N$ bxc6 12. $\mathbb{W}xa6$.)



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

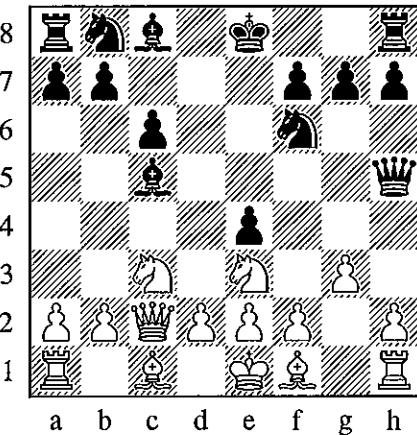
This is Black's latest try but it does not solve his opening problems.

8... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ is questionable due to 9. $\mathbb{W}b3! b5$ (or 9... $b6$ 10. $\mathbb{W}a4!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xf1\pm$) 10. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xf1\pm$ and White was better in Berkes – Borisek, Heraklion 2007.

9.♕c2

9.♕g2?! can be met by 9...♝xe3! 10.dxe3 ♘h3! with some edge for Black.

9.♕a4!? 0–0 10.♗xe4 ♗xe4 11.♘xe4 transposes to the main line.

**9...0–0!?**

After 9...♝xe3 10.fxe3 ♜e5 11.♕g2 ♘f5 12.0–0 0–0 13.b3 ♘bd7 14.♕b2 ♜e6 15.♗xf5 ♜xf5 16.♗xe4 ♜g6 17.♗f1 White had fine compensation for the exchange, and went on to win a good game in Anand – Adams, Shamkir 2015.

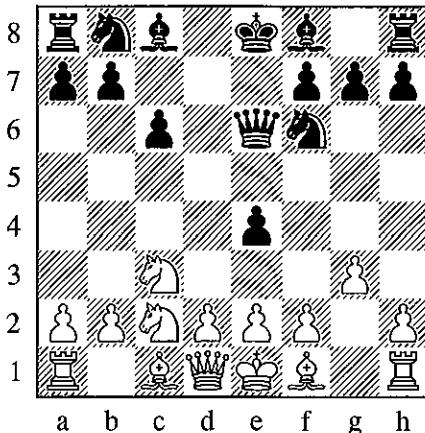
The text move is an attempt to improve Black's play, but I can't say I completely believe in it.

10.♗xe4 ♗xe4 11.♘xe4†

I analysed a few possibilities from here, but was unable to find full compensation for the pawn.

D2322) 7...♜e6!N

It took me a while to realize that Black does best to put the queen here in order to keep the important e4-pawn well protected.

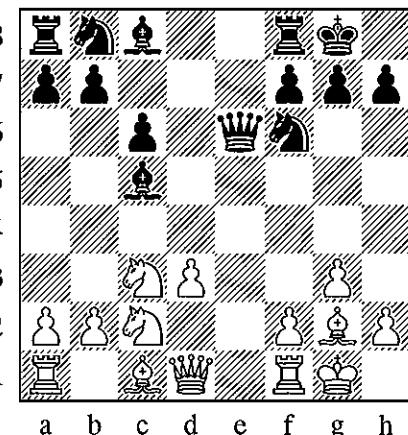
**8.♕g2**

I found one game from this position, which arrived here via the 7.♕g2 move order.

8...♝c5 9.0–0 0–0 10.d3 exd3 11.exd3!N

11.♗xd3 occurred in Notten – Grzeskowiak, Finland 1987, and now I don't see many problems for Black after 11...♜e7!= followed by ...♝a6 and ...♝e6.

The text move is stronger and more dynamic. Despite the isolated pawn, Black's task isn't easy, as he is behind in development and White intends to advance the pawn to d5.

**11...♝a6!**

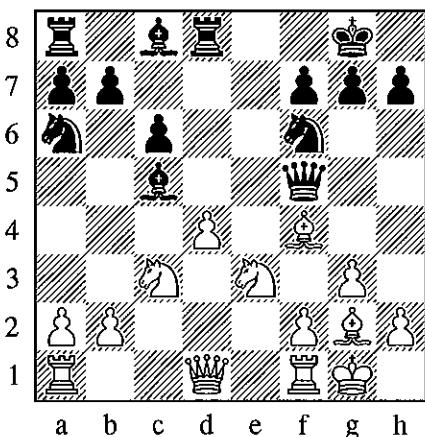
11...♝d8 12.d4 ♘a6 is the same thing.

12.d4 ♜d8 13.♗f4 ♜f5!

Black brings the queen to a better position.

14.♘e3

14.♗e1 ♜g6! 15.♗e2 (or 15.♘e4 ♜xe4 16.♗xe4 ♜f5=) 15...♗b6= looks fine for Black.

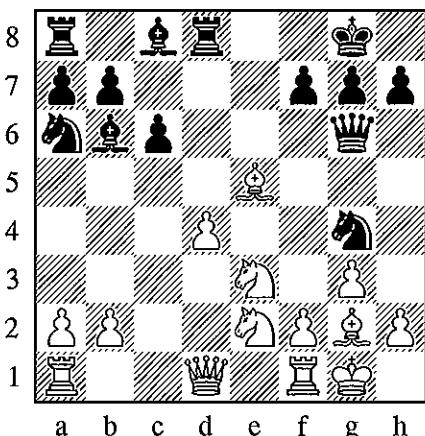


14...♜g6 15.♗e2

15.♗e5 ♜g4!= is equal.

15...♝b6 16.♝e5 ♜g4!

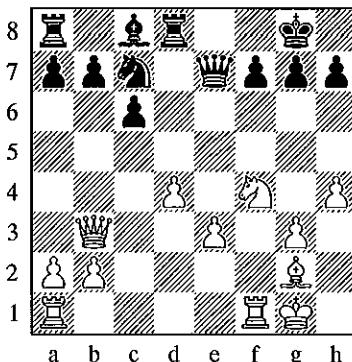
The most accurate. Minor-piece exchanges should generally favour Black, as they will dampen White's initiative while making it easier for Black to target the IQP.



17.♗f4 ♜g5 18.h4 ♜xe3 19.fxe3?

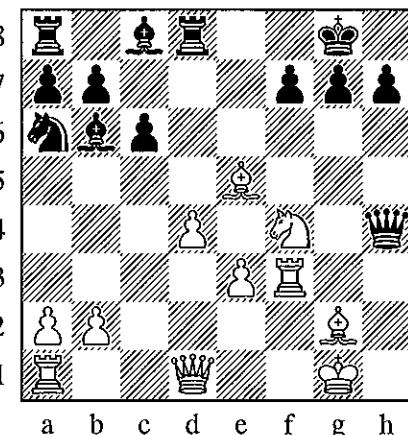
This is the most critical continuation, sacrificing two pawns for some initiative.

I also checked an alternative: 19.♗b3 ♜e7 20.fxe3 ♜c7 21.♗xc7 ♜xc7



22.d5 ♜xd5 23.♗xd5 cxd5 24.♗xd5 ♜e6= and Black equalizes.

19...♜xg3 20.♗f3 ♜xh4



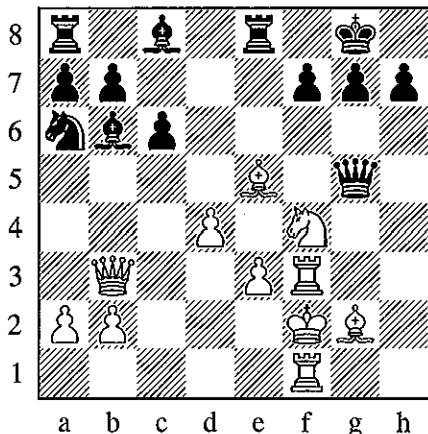
21.♗b3! ♜f8! 22.♗af1! ♜g5!

The only move to maintain the balance.

23.♗f2?!

23.♗d6 ♜d8 gives White nothing better than 24.♗e5, when 24...♜f8= repeats.

23...♜e8



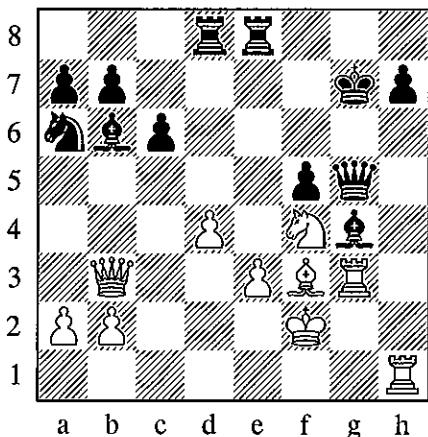
24. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$

24. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5=$ could be analysed further, but it seems to me that Black has both the quantity of material and quality of position needed to counteract White's queen.

24... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $f5$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

$\mathbb{Q}ad8$

Black can withstand the attack, for instance:



28. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $fxg4$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

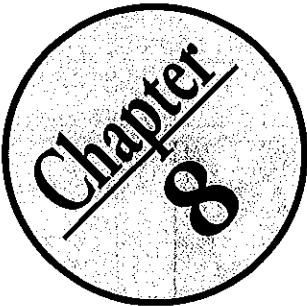
31. $\mathbb{Q}xh7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8=$

I found no more than a draw for White.

Conclusion

If White simply allows us to occupy the centre with ...d5 then we should have no problems at all. Even when White arranges to attack the d5-pawn with the bishop on g2, knight on c3 and queen on b3, we saw that Black can simply sacrifice it in the spirit of the Morra Gambit to obtain a dangerous initiative.

3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is more interesting, and it seems to me that there is a lot to be discovered. For instance, after 3...e4 4. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ d5, even Benko's 5.d3!? deserves more attention than it has received so far. Berkes' novelty in the 5.cxd5 line presented the biggest challenge of the chapter, but I eventually found that 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ could be answered by 7... $\mathbb{Q}e6!N$ when I do not believe Black is worse.



1.c4 e5

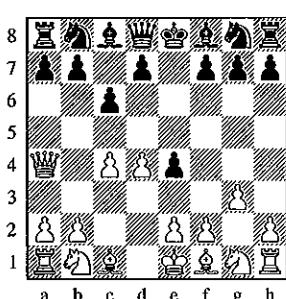
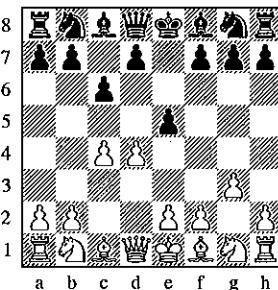
3.d4

Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 c6 3.d4

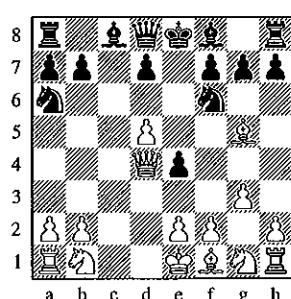
3...e4

A) 4. $\mathbb{W}a4$	166
B) 4. $\mathbb{A}g2$	168
C) 4.d5	171
D) 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5	175
D1) 5. $\mathbb{W}b3$	175
D2) 5. $\mathbb{Q}h3!$? h6! 6.cxd5 cxd5 7. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!$	
9. $\mathbb{Q}fxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c7†$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$	177
D21) 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$?	178
D22) 13. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$	179



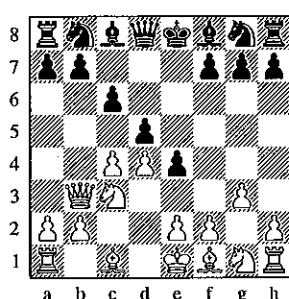
A) after 4. $\mathbb{W}a4$

4...d5!N



C) note to 6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

7... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ N

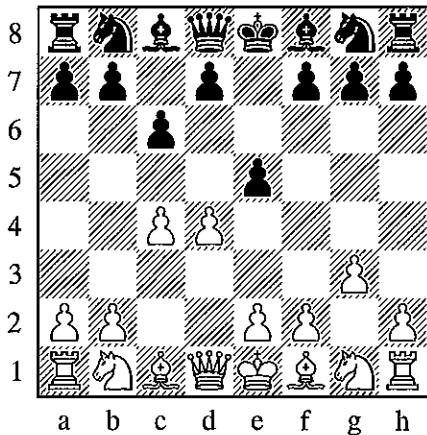


D1) 5. $\mathbb{W}b3!$

5...dxc4!N

1.c4 e5 2.g3 c6 3.d4

This is White's main line against 2...c6. It's a thematic reaction, which is well known from the Alapin Sicilian. In that opening the ...g6 system is a reputable line, so White has good reason to suppose that his extra g2-g3 move will prove useful.

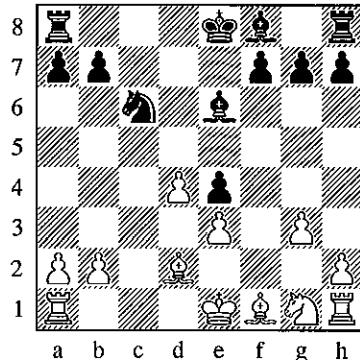
**3...e4**

Black takes space and prepares ...d5. White will obviously try to attack or undermine our central pawns, but I believe Black's position is resilient enough.

We will analyse four main moves: A) 4. $\mathbb{W}a4$, B) 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$, C) 4.d5 and finally the main line of D) 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$.

4.f3 looks like a weird choice, but after 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 6.cxd5 cxd5 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ we reach a position covered on page 190 – see 7.f3 in the notes to variation B of the next chapter.

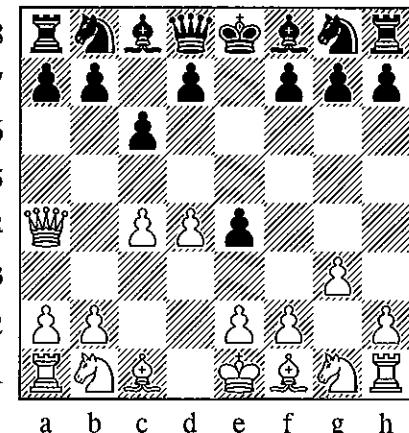
4. $\mathbb{W}b3$ has the idea to put pressure on Black's centre while preventing a ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ pin. I propose: 4...d5 5.cxd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$! The most accurate. 6. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ cxd5 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 8.f3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$! 9.fxe4 (9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8=$ is also fine for Black) 9... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ dxе4 11.e3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$



12... $\mathbb{Q}b4$! 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8\#$ and Black was better in Damljanovic – Vasilevich, Kavala 2009.

A) 4. $\mathbb{W}a4$

This is an extremely rare move, but rather an interesting one. White's idea is to pin the c6-pawn and thus to prevent the normal recapture with ...cxd5. Given the chance, he will attack the e4-pawn next, so Black needs to come up with something.

**4...d5!N**

Despite White's last move, this still seems to be the best continuation for Black.

4... $\mathbb{Q}a6$? can also be considered. For example, 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ f5N (5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ from Carlstedt – Tikkanen, Odense 2011, should have been

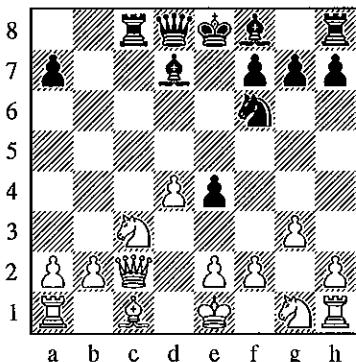
answered by 6.a3!N \pm) 6. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{W}b6?$ 7. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{W}b4\ddagger$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 9.e3 $\mathbb{W}h6$ 10.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ and though I prefer White, Black's position looks playable.

5.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}d7!$

Black wants to either recapture on d5 or obtain a development advantage and the initiative.

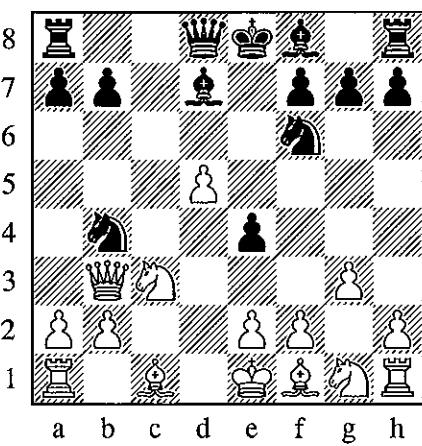
6.dxc6

I also analysed: 6. $\mathbb{W}b3$ cxd5 7. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}h3!$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xc6\ddagger$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c5$



12... $\mathbb{W}a5!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 14.e3 0–0 Black has good compensation for the sacrificed material, thanks to the weak light squares in White's camp.

6... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8.d5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 9. $\mathbb{W}b3$



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

Black combines rapid development with an attack on f2.

10. $\mathbb{Q}h3?$

After 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ (10... $\mathbb{W}b6?$ deserves attention too) 11. $\mathbb{W}xb4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 13.e3 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8\ddagger$ Black has more than enough compensation for a pawn.

A more interesting alternative is:

10. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}b6!$

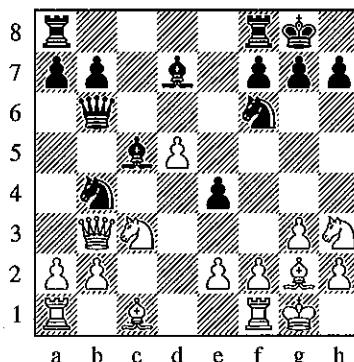
Black has to play energetically.

11. $\mathbb{Q}h3!$ 0–0!

The materialistic 11... $\mathbb{Q}xh3?$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2\ddagger$ leads to an edge for White after: 13. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ e3 (or 13... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a4\pm$) 14. $\mathbb{Q}g2\pm$

12.0–0

12.a3?? loses the queen after 12... $\mathbb{Q}d3\ddagger$.



12...h6!

An accurate move, preventing both the h3-knight and the c1-bishop from coming to g5.

13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8\infty$ also gives Black good compensation.

13... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 14.fxe3 a5! ∞

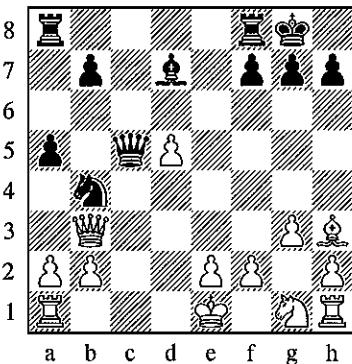
Black has a healthy initiative for the pawn. It's important that 15.a3 can be met by 15... $\mathbb{Q}bx5$.

10...0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ a5!

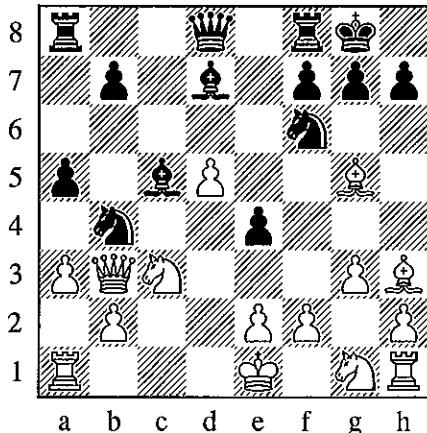
The possibility of ...a4 is quite annoying for White.

12.a3

I also considered: 12.♕xf6 ♕xf6 13.♕xe4 ♕e7 14.♕xc5 ♕xc5



15.♕xd7 (or 15.♕d1 a4 16.♕f3 f5! with a promising initiative) 15...♕c2† 16.♔f1 ♕xa1 17.♕xb7 ♕ab8 18.♕c6 ♕d4 With roughly equal chances, as White has two pawns for the exchange.



12...♕b6!

An important idea.

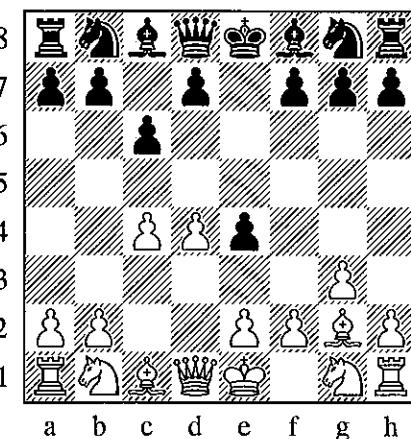
13.♔f1!

The only move, as 13.axb4?? ♕xf2† 14.♔d1 axb4+ leads to a decisive attack.

13...♗bx d5 14.♕xb6 ♕xh3† 15.♔xh3 ♕xb6 16.♗g2 ♕fc8!=

With a level endgame.

B) 4.♗g2



This move often transposes to the main 4.♗c3 lines, but it also leads to some independent possibilities which will be considered in this section.

4...d5 5.cxd5

5.♗c3 leads straight to variation B of the next chapter.

5...cxd5 6.♗h3

The same comment as above applies after 6.♗c3 ♗f6.

6...♗c6

When White exchanges on d5 early, I generally prefer to develop the knight on this square.

7.♗c3 h6!

It is vital to control the g5-square in order to prevent the ♗g5 pin. Now Black is ready to develop his king's knight to f6.

8.0-0

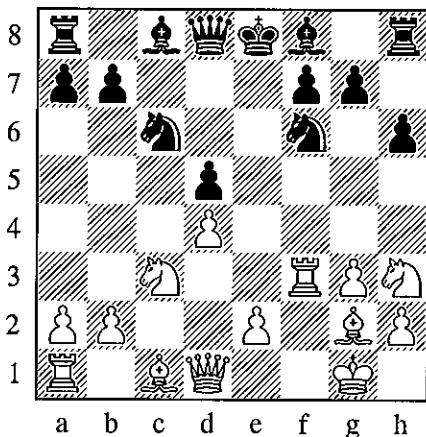
8.♗f4 ♗f6 with the idea of ...g5 is fine for Black.

8...Qf6 9.f3!

White has to open up the position in order to achieve anything with his lead in development.

9...exf3 10.Qxf3

10.exf3 Qe7 11.Qe3 Qf5 was good for Black in Seeman – Kulaots, Tartu 2010.

**10...g5!**

10...Qe7 11.Qf1 with the idea of Qf4 was better for White due to the annoying pressure on d5 in Larsen – Sax, London 1980, and a few subsequent games.

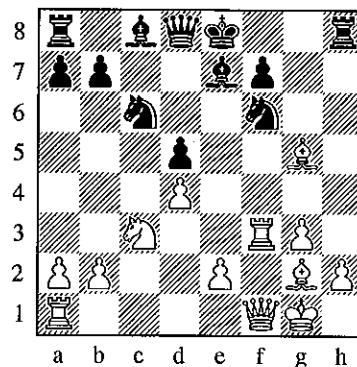
When I first started analysing this line I was a little scared to offer the text move, as it looks risky to play this way with the kingside still undeveloped. However, the concrete features of the position make it possible, and I couldn't find anything convincing for White. Black's main idea is to take away the f4-square, while also preparing ...Qg7 and threatening ...g4. Obviously White's development advantage plays its role too, so the position is double-edged.

11.Qf1N

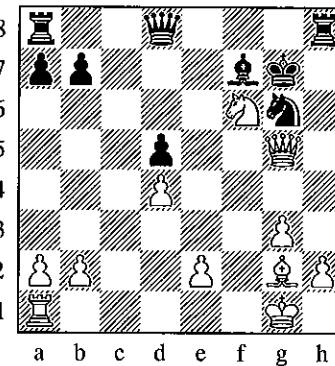
This has not yet been tested, but it seems to me like the most natural choice.

11.Qxg5?! hxg5 12.Qxg5 Qe7 13.Wf1 has been tried. At first it looks like White is being too

optimistic, but he seems to have just enough compensation for the piece. I will give the rest of the correspondence game:



13...Qe4! 14.Qxe7 Qxe7 15.Qxf7 Qe6
16.Qxe4 Qxf7 17.Qf6+ Qf8 18.Wf4 Qg6
19.Wg5 Qg7 White is a rook down but he has enough pieces in play to force a perpetual.



20.Wf1 Qe6 21.h4 Wf8 22.Qh5+ Qh7 23.Qf6+ Qg7 24.Qh5+ ½-½ Degtyaryov – Villarreal, corr. 2010. The computer agrees with every move since the piece sacrifice, so a draw seems to be the correct result.

11...Qg7

The bishop is better placed on g7 than e7, as it puts indirect pressure on d4.

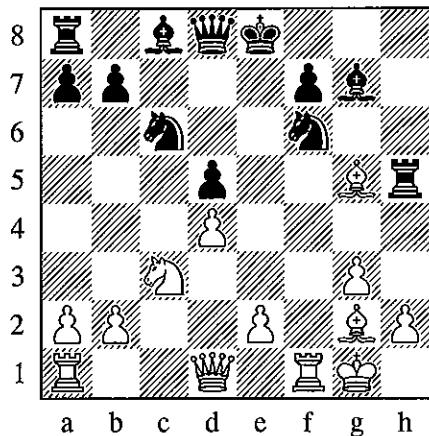
12.Qxg5!

This intuitive piece sacrifice is the best way to fight for the initiative.

After the quiet 12.e3 0–0 13.Qf2 ♜f5 Black has no real problems.

12...hxg5 13.♕xg5 ♜h5!

Black has to unpin his knight as quickly as possible.



14.♕xf6!

14.h4?! allows Black to counter-sacrifice an exchange with 14...♜xg5 15.hxg5 ♜h5!, when he obtains the better position.

14...♜xf6 15.e3! ♜h6 16.♕xd5

White picks up a third pawn. Normally an extra piece would be worth more in such a position, but Black is still not fully developed, so the position remains unclear.

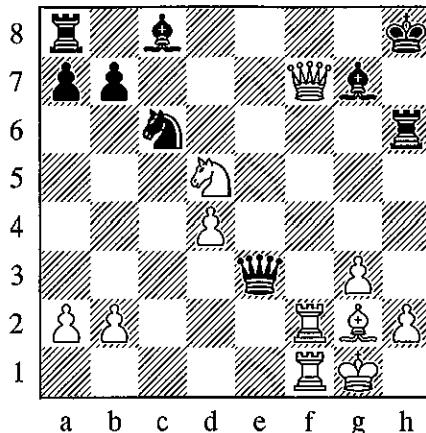
16...♝g7 17.♝f2 ♜f8 18.♝b3 ♜g8 19.♕c3

19.♝af1 ♜h8! completes an impressive run from the black king. Play continues 20.♝xf7 ♜e6 21.♝xg7 ♜xg7 22.♝xb7† ♜d7 and Black is certainly not worse.

19...♝e7 20.♝af1!?

20.♝d5 ♜d8 leads to a repetition.

20...♝xe3 21.♝xf7† ♜h8 22.♝d5



22...♝e6!

The only move.

23.♝xe6 ♜xe6 24.♝c7 ♜xd4!

Once again Black has no choice. The pawn has to be eliminated in order to prevent its advance.

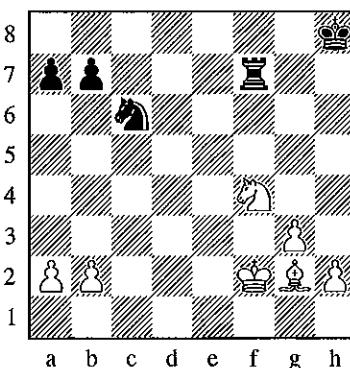
25.♝xa8 ♜f6!

Black establishes a strong pin and now threatens ...♝c4. Despite his extra material, White has no more than a draw.

26.♝xc6

26.♝e4 ♜h3! 27.♝g2 ♜e6=

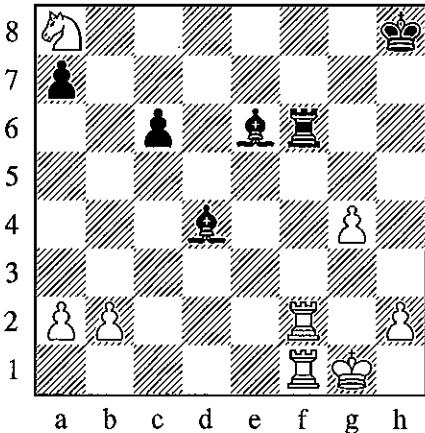
26.♝c7 avoids a forced draw but is risky for White after: 26...♝c4 27.♝d5 ♜f7 28.♝f4 ♜xf1 29.♝xf1 ♜xf2 30.♝xf2



30... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{R}c7!$ Materially White is fine, but he is under some pressure due to Black's active rook.

26...bxc6 27.g4!

27... $\mathbb{Q}g2?$ is strongly met by 27... $\mathbb{Q}d5\#$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{E}f7\#$ and Black traps the knight on a8.

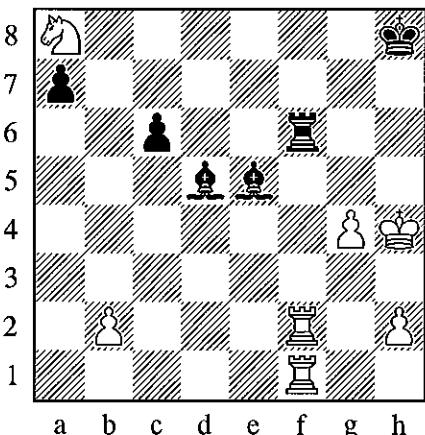


27... $\mathbb{Q}xa2?$

27... $\mathbb{Q}xg4?!$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{E}g6$ 29. $\mathbb{E}f8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 30. $\mathbb{E}f7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h6=$ also leads to sufficient compensation for the exchange.

28. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5\#$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5\#$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}h4$

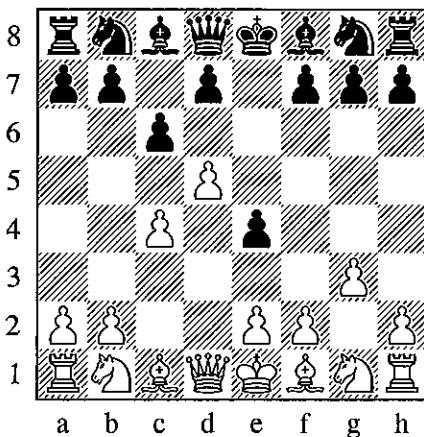
30. $\mathbb{E}f4?$ c5!– traps the knight.



30... $\mathbb{E}h6\#$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7=$

Thanks to the strong bishops and the vulnerable king on g5, Black maintains the balance. One of his ideas is to play ... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ followed by perpetual checks with the rook on the h6-, g6- and f6-squares.

C) 4.d5



This rare but interesting line has been tested by Carlsen, Ivanchuk and some other GMs. White's idea is to break the connection between Black's d- and e-pawns, and thus to create a target on e4.

4... $\mathbb{cxd5?}$

This has only rarely been played, but it's the most logical choice as it virtually forces White to recapture with the pawn.

5.cxd5

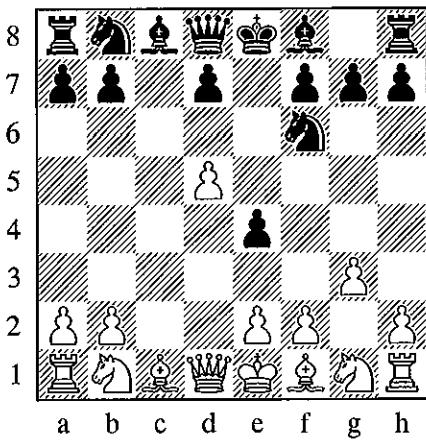
After 5. $\mathbb{W}xd5?!$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ White is forced to waste time moving his queen, without gaining anything in return.

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

This is the most accurate move order, for reasons that will become clear.

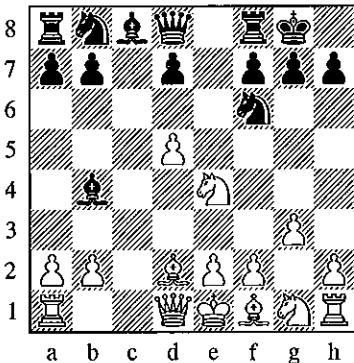
After 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xb4!N$ $\mathbb{W}xb4\#$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ White is slightly better as Black can't

capture on d5. Compare this to the main line to see what I mean.



6.♘g2

6.♘c3 ♘b4 7.♘d2 0–0! is a good move which relies on a simple tactic. 8.♘g2 (The tactical point is that 8.♘xe4?? is refuted by:



8...♘xe4 9.♘xb4 ♘b6!+ when the double attack on f2 and b4 decides the game) 8...♗e8 9.♘h3 d6 Black was doing fine in Schrancz – Schuster, email 2009.

6.♗d4?!

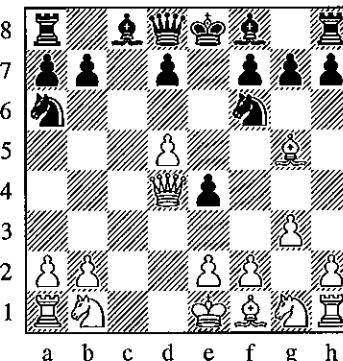
This move seems slightly careless in view of: 6...♘a6!

The threats of ...♘b4 and ...♘c5 mean that White has to fight for equality.

7.♘g5

I also considered 7.♘c3 ♘c5 8.♗e5† ♘f8 9.♘xe4 d6! 10.♗f4 ♘xd5 11.♗g5 ♘b4† 12.♘d2 ♘xg5 13.♘xg5 ♘xd2† 14.♘xd2 ♘d7 and Black's chances are slightly better thanks to his lead in development.

Now the best way for Black to cause problems is:



7...♘c5!N

7...♘b4 was the less accurate continuation of Spiridonov – Komarov, Varna 2010.

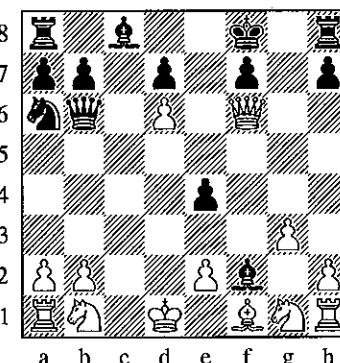
8.♗e5† ♘f8 9.d6!

The only move.

9...♗b6

9...h6!?? is also better for Black, but it turns out that he has no need to fear a check on e7.

10.♘xf6 ♘xf2† 11.♘d1 gxh6 12.♗xf6

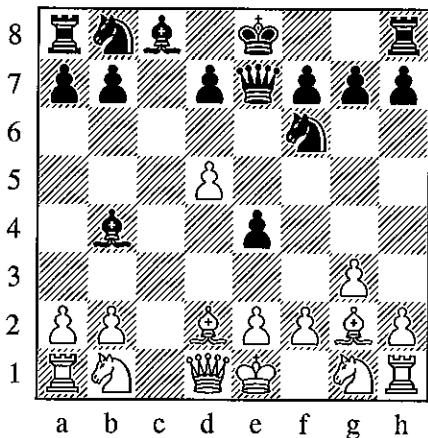


12...♗d4†! 13.♗xd4 ♘xd4 14.♘c3 b6 15.♘g2 ♘c5 16.♘h3 ♘b7†

Black has the better endgame.

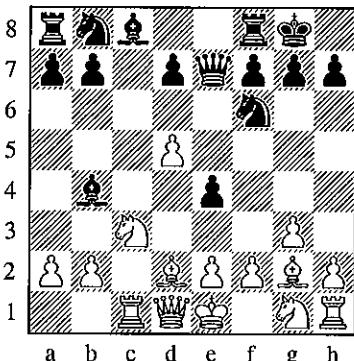
6... $\mathbb{Q}b4\uparrow$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}e7!$

This is where it starts to become clear that Black has an improved version of the 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4\uparrow$ line in the notes above.



8. $\mathbb{Q}xb4N$

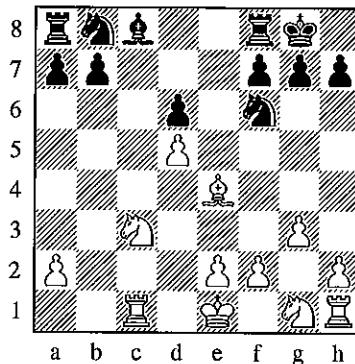
The alternative is: 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0–0 9. $\mathbb{E}c1N$ (9. $\mathbb{Q}h3?$ d6 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{W}xb4\uparrow$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xd2\uparrow$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ gave Black a dream endgame with a great knight against a mediocre bishop in Hildebrand – Konstantinov, corr. 2013)



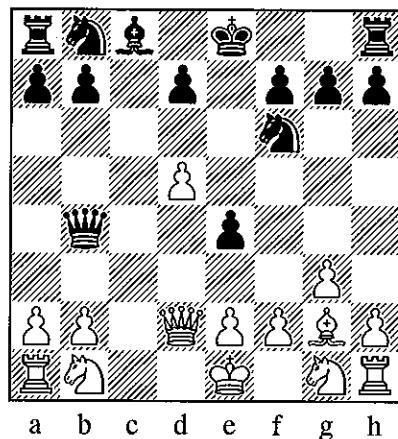
9... $\mathbb{Q}a6!$ Before playing ...d6, Black has to protect the dark-squared bishop (the immediate 9...d6? is met by 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4\uparrow$). 10. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ d6 11.0–0 h6 Black is at least equal.

8... $\mathbb{W}xb4\uparrow$ 9. $\mathbb{W}d2$

The temporary pawn sacrifice 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ doesn't bother Black either: 9... $\mathbb{W}xb2$ (9...0–0? also makes sense) 10. $\mathbb{W}c1$ (or 10. $\mathbb{E}c1$) $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 0–0 12.0–0 d6 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}gxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ with equal chances) 10... $\mathbb{W}xc1\uparrow$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ d6



13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ a6 16.f3 b5 17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ g6 Black has no problems, while White must worry about the prospect of a typical 'bad bishop' endgame, especially if a few more pieces come off.



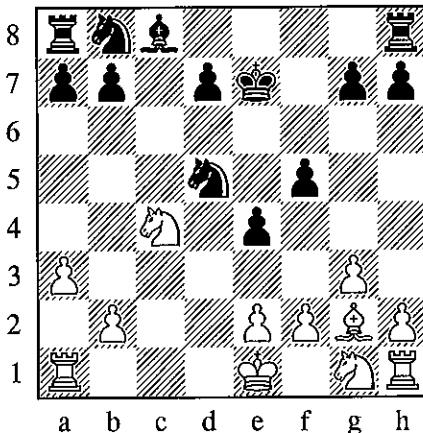
9... $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$

That's why it was important to prefer 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ over 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4\uparrow$. Nevertheless, Black still has to be careful as White develops some initiative for the pawn.

10.a3! $\mathbb{W}xd2\uparrow$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ f5 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7!$

12...0–0 should be playable too, although 13.♗d1 ♗f6 14.♗d6 ♗c6 15.f3! (but not 15.♗xf5?! d5†) is mildly unpleasant for Black.

The text move is best. The idea, in conjunction with the next move, is to stop White's knight from getting to d6.

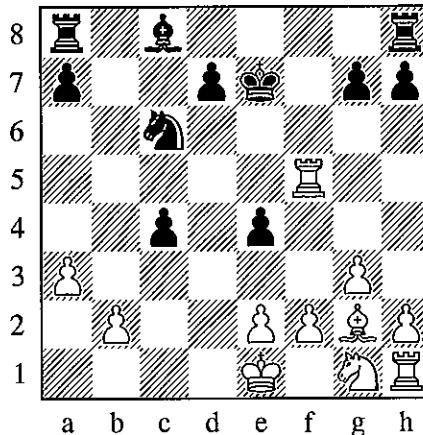


13.♗d1 b5!

It is too late to backtrack with 13...♗f6?!, as after 14.♗d6 g6 15.f3! exf3 16.exf3 ♗c6 17.♗h3 ♗e8 18.♗f2! Black is under some pressure.

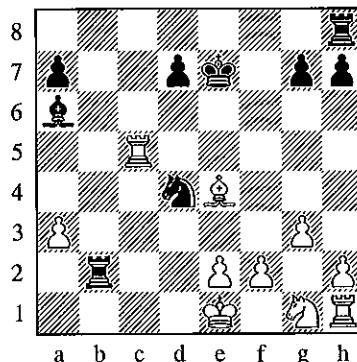
14.♗xd5 bxc4 15.♗xf5 ♗c6!

Black develops quickly and intends to create counterplay against the weak b2-pawn.



16.♗c5

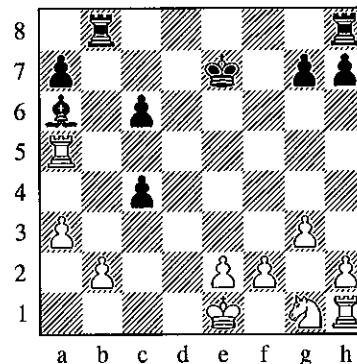
16.♗xe4 ♗b8 17.♗c5 gives us the extra option of 17...♗xb2? (17...♗a6 transposes to the main line) 18.♗xc4 ♗a6 19.♗c5 ♗d4 and Black's development advantage compensates for the pawn. A logical continuation is:



20.♗d5 ♗xe2 21.♗d2 ♗xd2 22.♗xd2 ♗xg1 23.♗xg1 d5 With an equal endgame.

16...♗a6 17.♗xe4 ♗ab8 18.♗f3

18.♗xc6? dxс6 19.♗a5 is strongly met by:

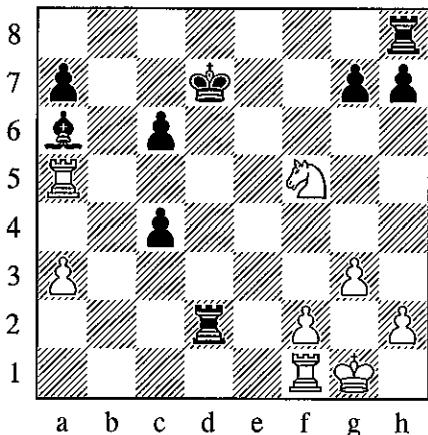


19...♗hd8! 20.♗xa6 c3! 21.♗f3 cxb2 22.0–0 b1=♗ 23.♗xb1 ♗xb1† With better chances for Black.

18...♗xb2 19.0–0 ♗xe2 20.♗xc6 dxс6 21.♗d4

21.♗xc6 ♗e6 22.♗c7† ♗f6 is equal.

21...♗d2 22.♗f5† ♗d7 23.♗a5



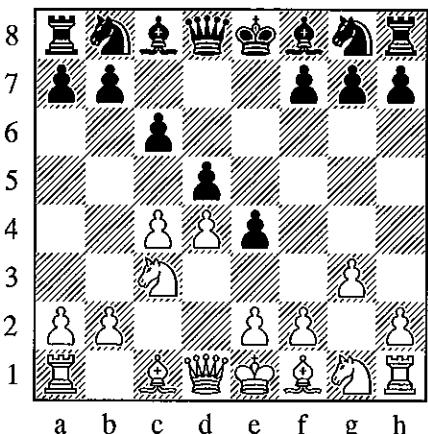
23...Bf8!

An important resource.

24.Qe3 Bb5 25.Qxa7† Qd6 26.a4 Ba2=

Black is not worse, as his active pieces and passed c-pawns give him plenty of counterplay.

D) 4.Qc3 d5

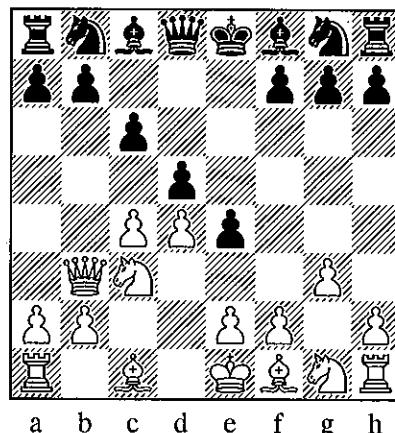


This is a common tabiya for the 3.d4 variation. In the rest of this chapter we will deal with two interesting options: D1) 5.Qb3?! and D2) 5.Qh3?!

The two most popular moves are 5.cxd5 and 5.Qg2, and you can find them analysed in the next chapter.

D1) 5.Qb3?!

White puts pressure on the d5-pawn without allowing ...Qc6, which is what happens in the 5.cxd5 cxd5 6.Qb3 line (see variation A of the next chapter).



5...dxc4!N

I only found one game with White's last move, in which Black immediately erred with 5...Qf6?!, after which 6.cxd5 cxd5 7.Qg5 transposed to an unfavourable line which Black should most definitely avoid.

The text move was mentioned by Marin in his excellent book *Grandmaster Repertoire 3* as the reason why he rejected 5.Qb3 for White.

6.Qxc4 b5?!

Other moves are possible, but this seems like the greatest challenge to White.

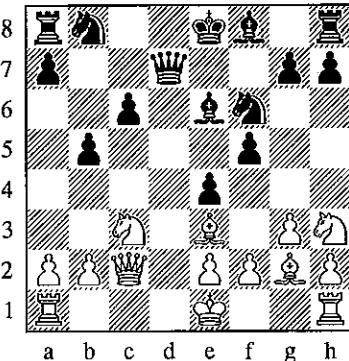
7.Qb3 Qxd4

Marin stopped at this point with the following comment: "The position looks playable, but I do not think White has a convincing route to an advantage." I agree with his assessment, and will provide a few lines to demonstrate it.

8.Qg5?!

This seems like the trickiest move, creating an immediate threat of $\mathbb{Q}d1$.

8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 9. $\mathbb{W}c2$ f5 seems decent for Black, for instance: 10. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$



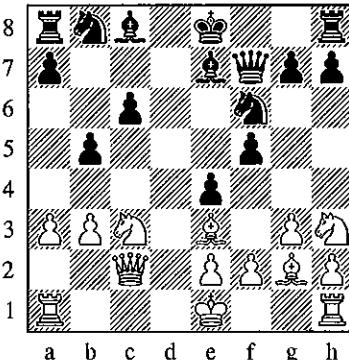
12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ (12. 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}a6!$ with the idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ also looks good for Black) 12... $\mathbb{W}b7$ 13. 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ White has about enough compensation for a pawn, but I don't see why Black should have many problems.

I also considered:

8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 9. $\mathbb{W}c2$ f5

Black should try to keep his extra pawn for a while – not only for materialistic reasons, but also because the e4-pawn performs an important role of blocking the long diagonal.

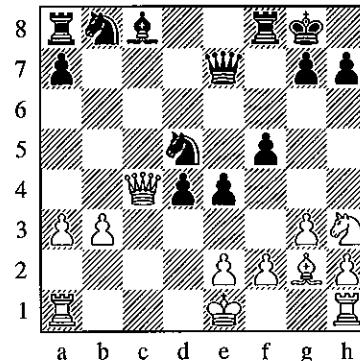
10. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. a3 $\mathbb{W}c4$ 13. b3 $\mathbb{W}f7$



14. $\mathbb{Q}xb5!$

White exploits the pin along the c-file to regain his pawn, but Black has a good reply. 14... $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 0-0 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ c5 18. $\mathbb{W}c4$ cxd4!

The roles have reversed: now it is Black who sacrifices material to seize the initiative.

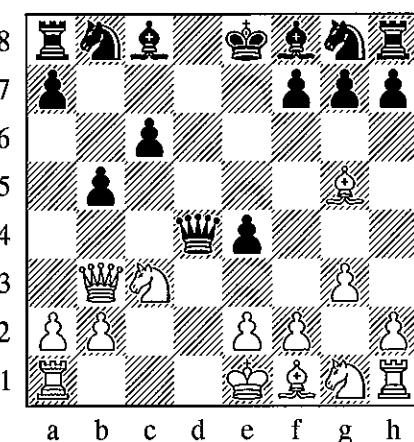


19. $\mathbb{W}xd5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xd4$

After 20. $\mathbb{W}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}d7!$ Black threatens to trap the queen with either ... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$. White has nothing better than 21. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c7!$, but after 22... $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7\#$ Black is better thanks to his strong centre.

20. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8\equiv$

Black's activity provides full compensation for the pawn.

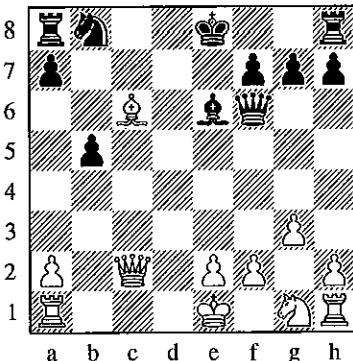


8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Black returns the extra pawn in order to catch up on development.

11.♗d1

Black has nothing to fear after: 11.♗xf6 ♗xf6 12.♗xe4 (12.♗xe4 ♗d7! 13.♗xc6 ♘c8! gives Black a serious initiative for a pawn) 12...♗xb2 13.♗xf6† ♗xf6 14.♗xc6†



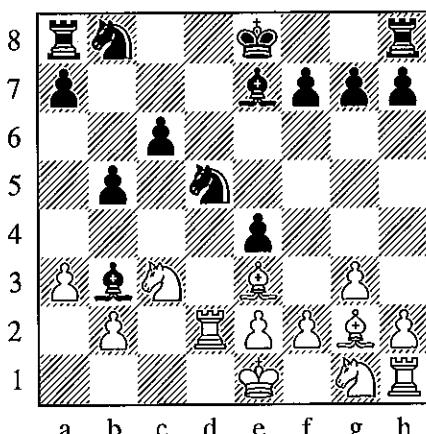
14...♗f8! 15.♗d1 ♗xc6 16.♗xc6 ♘c8 17.♗xb5 g6 18.♗f3 ♗g7 Black secures the position of his king and his chances are by no means worse.

11...♗c5 12.♗e3 ♗b4 13.a3

13.♗d2 ♗c5 14.♗e3 ♗b4 results in a repetition.

13...♗b3 14.♗xb3 ♗xb3 15.♗d2 ♗d5

15...♗bd7!= also seems fine.

**16.♗xb5 a6! 17.♗d4**

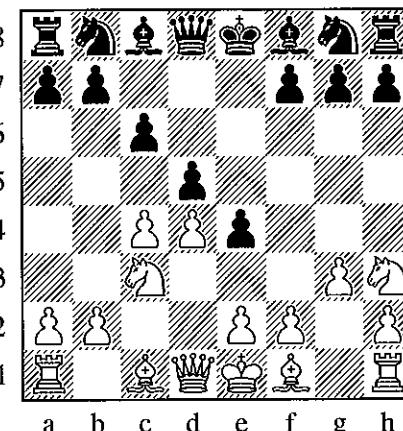
17.♗xd5?! axb5 is better for Black.

17...♗xe3 18.fxe3 ♗d5 19.♗h3 ♗d7=

Material is level and Black is doing fine as he has managed to keep White's light-squared bishop boxed in.

D2) 5.♗h3?!

This is another interesting attempt to deviate from the two main lines from the next chapter.

**5...h6!**

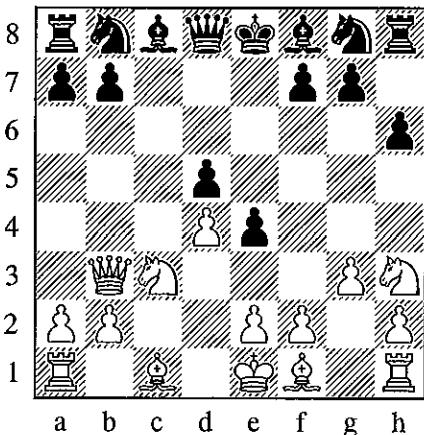
Marin mentions 5...♗e7 as a satisfactory solution for Black, but I believe the text move to be the most accurate solution. Black takes the important g5-square under control before developing his knight to f6.

6.cxd5

There is little point in delaying this exchange. For example: 6.♗f4 ♗f6 7.♗b3?! (7.cxd5 cxd5 transposes to the next note) and now both 7...g5?! and 7...dxc4 8.♗xc4 ♗d6 offer Black better chances, while highlighting the fact that White would have been better off exchanging on d5.

6...cxd5 7.♗b3

7.♗f4 ♗f6 hardly gives White anything better than transposing to the main line with 8.♗b3.



7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!$

Black answers the attack on d5 with a counter-threat against d4. We will see exactly the same idea in variation A of the next chapter.

9. $\mathbb{Q}fxd5$

9.e3

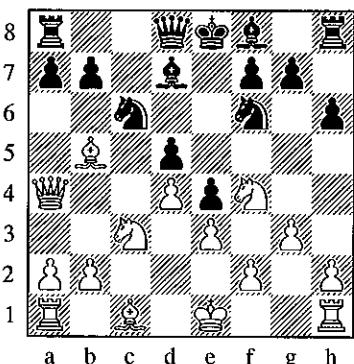
This enables Black to relieve the pressure on the d5-pawn with:

9... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ N 10. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$

10. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}a4$ is the same thing.

10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$

Threatening ...g5 followed by ...a6.



12. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$

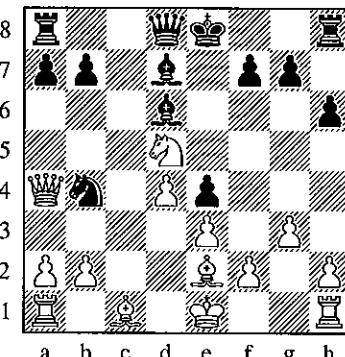
The d5-pawn is toxic: 12. $\mathbb{Q}fxd5??$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ a6 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$) White's last move hopes for 14...axb5?? 15. $\mathbb{W}xa8$, but the simple 14... $\mathbb{Q}c8!$ wins for Black.

12... $\mathbb{Q}d6$

This is not the only playable move, but it seems like the cleanest equalizer to me.

13. $\mathbb{Q}fxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$

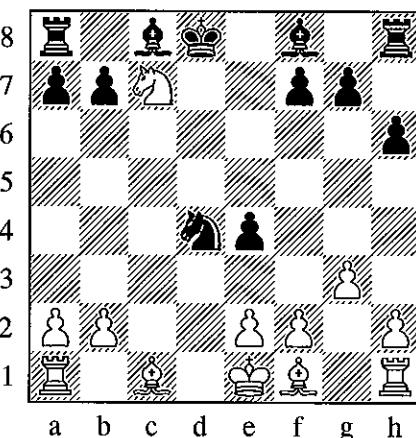
It seems that neither side can avoid the repetition after:



15. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$

9... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

12. $\mathbb{Q}c7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$



White may try the following options:

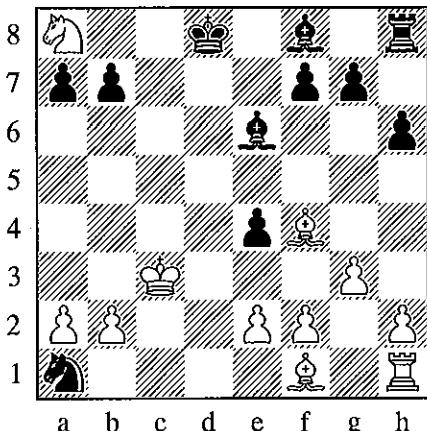
D21) 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4?$ or D22) 13. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$.

D21) 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4?$ $\mathbb{Q}c2\#$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

This is the point of White's previous move: he can bring his king to a more active square because the dark-squared bishop is already out.

14...Qxa1 15.Qxa8 Qe6! 16.Qc3!

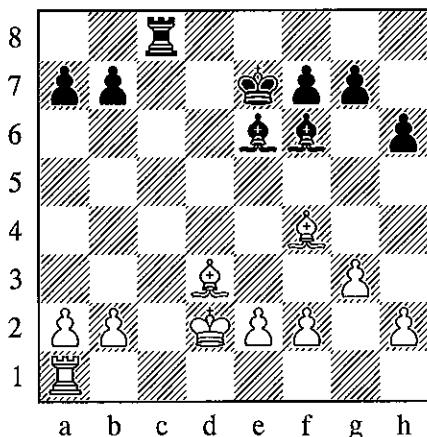
Preventing an annoying check on b4.



16...Qe7! 17.Qg2 Qf6† 18.Qd2 Qe7!

19.Qxa1 Qxa8 20.Qxe4 Qd8† 21.Qd3 Qc8!

An important move, threatening ...Qxb2 followed by ...Qc3†.



22.Qb1 Qxa2

Black can also start with 22...g5!? and after 23.Qe3 Qxa2 24.Qa1 Qd5 25.Qxa7 Qxb2 the endgame is equal.

23.Qa1 Qd5 24.e4 Qxb2 25.Qxa7=

In this roughly equal position a draw was agreed in Tikkainen – Grandelius, Malmo 2013.

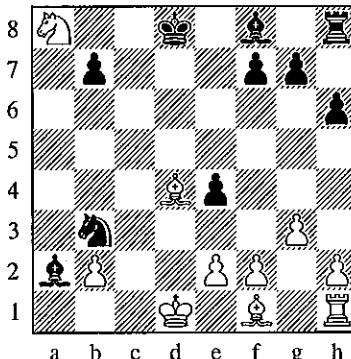
D22) 13.Qxa8 Qc2† 14.Qd1 Qxa1

We have reached something resembling variation A of the next chapter, except that here the knights have vanished from g1 and g8, and Black has the extra ...h6 move. Interestingly, although the present version is much less common than the one in the next chapter, it is actually the better bet from White's point of view, as Black's e-pawn interferes with the development of the knight on g1. As we will see, in variation A of the next chapter White has to work hard to secure equality, whereas here the position is genuinely balanced.

15.Qg2N

This variation has only occurred in a single game so far, so it's an exciting new direction to study. There is no recognized theory, but I have given the text move as the main line because it seems the most natural.

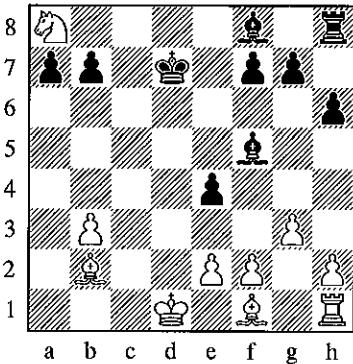
The one existing game soon turned bad for White after: 15.Qe3 Qe6 16.Qxa7?! Qxa2 17.Qd4 Qb3 (the computer points out that 17...Qb4!N is even better, but the text move is strong and easy to understand)



18.Qc3 Qc5 19.e3 Qd7† J. Akesson – A. Smith, Sweden 2016.

Another obvious move to consider is:
15.b3N Qf5 16.Qb2 Qxb3 17.axb3 Qd7

White is unable to save the knight on a8, despite having a few tempos available.

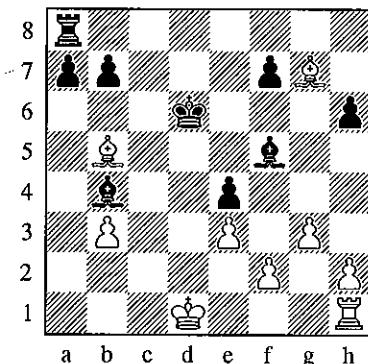


18.e3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$

19. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8\#$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ is also equal.

19... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xa8$

The chances are roughly balanced, as taking the h6-pawn would be too dangerous:



21. $\mathbb{Q}xh6?$

21. $\mathbb{Q}c2=$ should be preferred.

21... $\mathbb{Q}c8!$ 22.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ 23.g4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$

White is forced to return his extra pawn with:

24. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 25.bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}xc4\#$

Black is the slight favourite, as his two connected passed pawns are more dangerous than White's majority on the kingside.

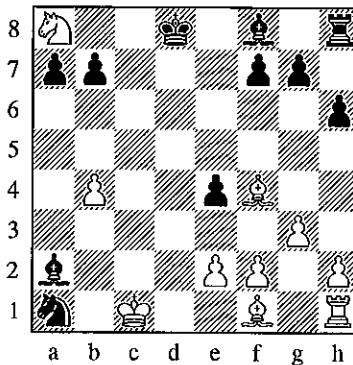
White's other plausible move is:

15. $\mathbb{Q}f4N$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

16. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ is covered under 15. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ – see the note to White's 17th move in the main line below.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 17.b4

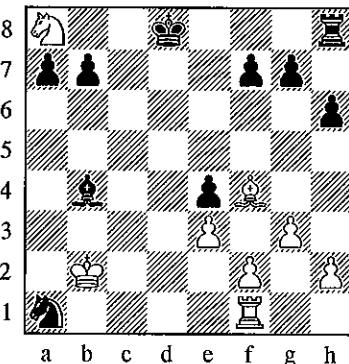
Freeing the b2-square, but Black can happily ignore it with:



17... $\mathbb{Q}xb4!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 19.e3!

19. $\mathbb{Q}xa1?!$ is dubious in view of 19...g5 20. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}h3\#$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}a8$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#$ and Black is the favourite – he has three pawns for a piece and White's knight is poorly placed on a8.

19... $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$



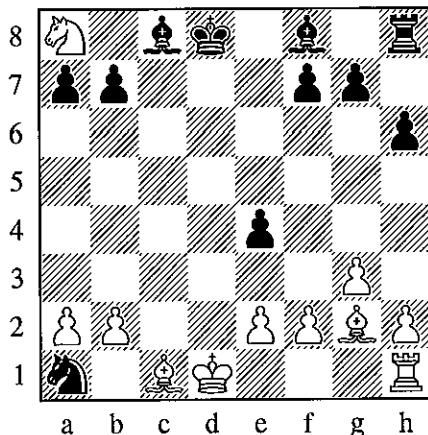
20...g5!

The following sequence looks relatively forced.

21. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d1\#$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ b6 24. $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c7!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xa7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$

27.♕xf7 ♕f8! 28.♕xf8 ♕xf8 29.g4! b5!

With a drawn endgame.

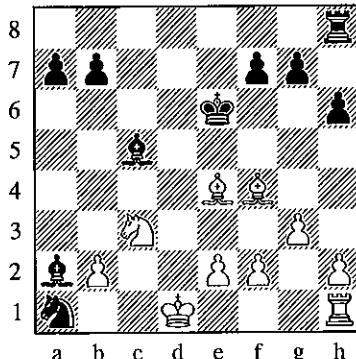


15...♝e6

15...f5? could also be investigated.

16.♗xe4 ♗xa2 17.♗xb7

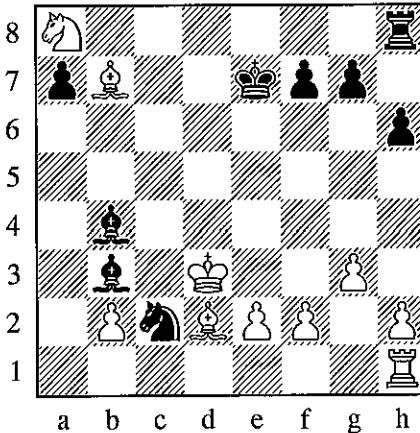
Black is fine after: 17.♕f4 ♕c5 18.♗c7 ♘e7 19.♗d5† ♘e6 20.♗c3 (20.♗c7† ♘e7= would be safer for White)



20...♗d8† 21.♗e1 ♕c4 22.♗xb7 ♕d4 23.♗e4 ♕xc3† 24.bxc3 ♕d5 25.♗xd5† ♕xd5 White should be able to hold, but the passed a-pawn may cause him some discomfort.

17...♗b3† 18.♗d2 ♗b4† 19.♗d3 ♗c2
20.♗d2 ♗e7

White is a pawn up but he needs to play accurately to draw, as his king is in some danger.



21.♗c7!

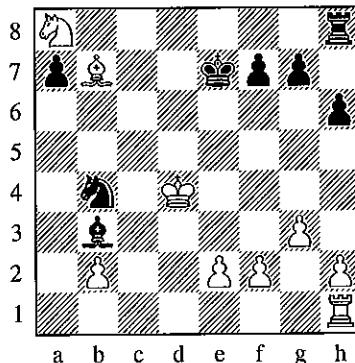
21.♗xb4†?

This simplifying move looks tempting but it actually seems to lose.

21...♗xb4† 22.♗d4

22.♗c3 produces a double attack but it doesn't help to save the a8-knight: 22...♘d5!
23.♗xb4 (or 23.♗xd5 ♘xd5† 24.♗d4 ♘d6 25.e4 ♘e7 26.e5† ♘d7→) 23...♗xb7 24.♗c1 ♘b8! 25.♗c7 ♘d7! 26.♗b5 ♘c6 27.♗c5 a6→

The text move is a better try but Black is still winning after:

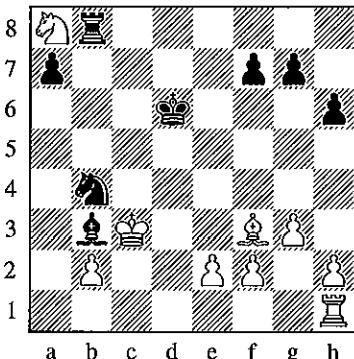


22...♗b8! 23.♗f3 ♘d6

Threatening ...♘d5 when the knight on a8 will be trapped.

24.♗c3!

Attempting to set a trap.

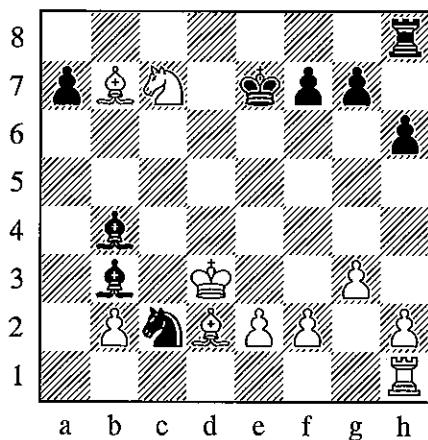


24... $\mathbb{Q}d5\#$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d3 \mathbb{Q}e5!$

25... $\mathbb{Q}xa8?$ is wrong in view of 26.e4! and White equalizes.

26. $\mathbb{Q}a1 \mathbb{Q}xa8+$

Black should eventually be able to convert his extra piece into a full point.



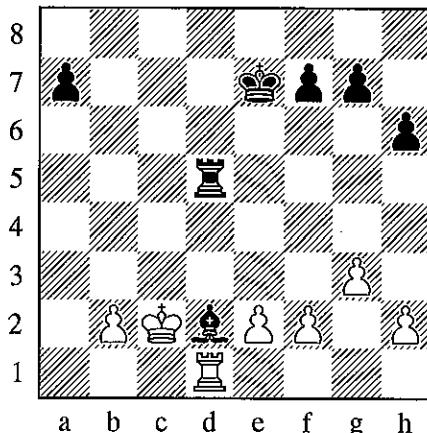
21... $\mathbb{Q}d8\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d5\#!$

The only move.

22... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xc2 \mathbb{Q}xd2$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{Q}xd5$

25. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

The pin enables White to restore material equality. Best play continues:



25... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xd2 \mathbb{Q}xf2$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}a1 \mathbb{Q}xh2$

28. $\mathbb{Q}xa7\#$

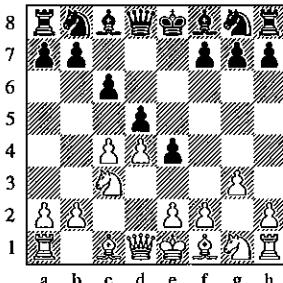
With an equal rook endgame.

Conclusion

2...c6 is an active and reliable weapon against the 2.g3 English. White's most popular move is 3.d4, when 3...e4 continues Black's policy of taking space in the centre. Given the chance, Black will usually follow up ...d5, even when White tries to discourage it with 4. $\mathbb{Q}a4$. After the most popular continuation of 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5, this chapter devoted quite a lot of space to the fascinating queenless positions which can occur after 5. $\mathbb{Q}h3?!$ h6! and so on. So far, the critical variations have received hardly any practical testing, but I'm sure it is only a matter of time until that changes. In the meantime, I believe my analysis has demonstrated that Black is not worse at all.



1.c4 e5



5.cxd5 and 5.Qg2

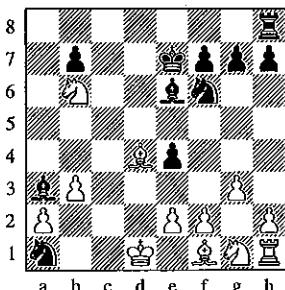
Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 c6 3.d4 e4 4.Qc3

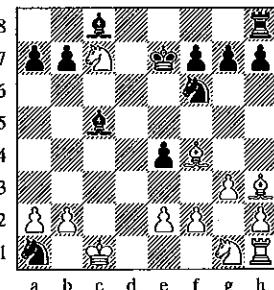
4...d5

A) 5.cxd5 cxd5 6.Qb3 Qc6! 7.Qxd5 Qxd5 8.Qxd5 Qxd4	184
9.Qc7† Qd8 10.Qxa8 Qc2† 11.Qd1 Qxa1	
A1) 12.Qe3??	186
A2) 12.Qh3	187
A3) 12.Qf4	188
B) 5.Qg2 Qf6 6.cxd5 cxd5 7.Qg5 Qbd7	190
B1) 8.Qh3	192
B2) 8.e3	193
B3) 8.Qa4!?	195
B4) 8.Qb3 Qd6!	197
B41) 9.Qb5!?	198
B42) 9.Qh3!	200

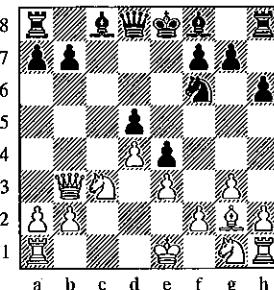
A1) after 16.Qb6



A2) after 15.Qc1



B2) after 10.Qb3



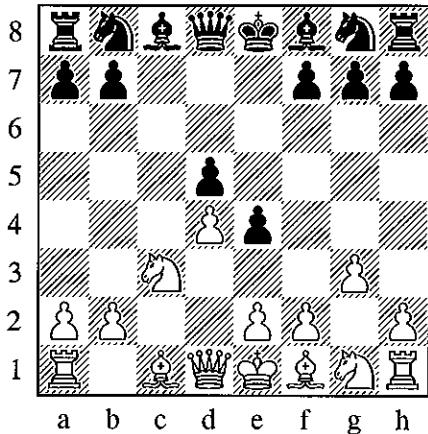
16...Qg4!N

15...Qxf2!N

10...Qb5!N

1.c4 e5 2.g3 c6 3.d4 e4 4.Qc3 d5

This chapter deals with the most critical theoretical paths of the 2.g3 c6 variation. As I mentioned on page 175, White's two most popular moves are A) 5.cxd5 and B) 5.Qg2.

A) 5.cxd5 cxd5**6.Wb3**

This is an important option which leads to complicated play.

6.Qg2 Qf6 transposes to variation B.

6.h4 from Fridman – Stocek, Warsaw 2012, is hardly a serious attempt to fight for an opening advantage. I would like to recommend the following improvement: 6...Qc6!N 7.Qh3 h6! This is a common theme in these positions, preparing to develop the knight to f6 without allowing the Qg5 pin. 8.Qf4 Qf6 Black develops easily and can already claim a slight edge due to his space advantage.

6...Qc6!

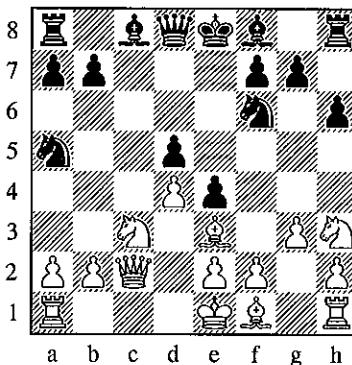
An important move, without which Black would have a problem with the d5-pawn. The database reveals that it was first played in a correspondence game in 1999, but I first became aware of the idea when Karjakin played it against Gelfand in 2008 (see variation A1

below), and I have since played it twice with good results. Mihail Marin also points out the strength of this move in *Grandmaster Repertoire 3*, where he mentions it as the reason why he rejected this line for White in that book.

6...Qf6?! would of course be met by 7.Qg5 when Black has a problem with the d5-pawn.

7.Wxd5

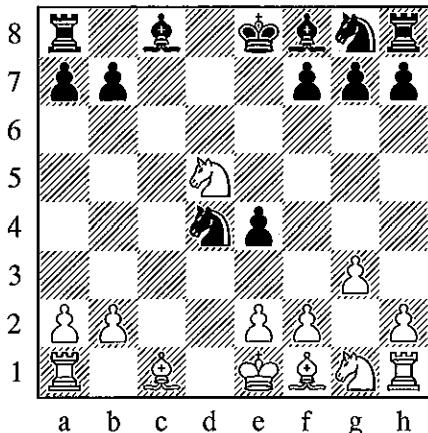
7.Qe3?! doesn't make much sense, as I demonstrated in the following game: 7...Qf6! Now this move is possible as White's bishop is busy protecting the d4-pawn. 8.Qh3 Qa5! 9.Qc2 h6! Now Black takes away the g5-square.



10.Qf4 Qf5 (10...Qc6!? is also good) 11.e3 Wd7! I already had a clear advantage in Mensch – V. Mikhalevski, Biel 2010.

7...Wxd5 8.Qxd5 Qxd4

An interesting situation has arisen. On the queenside things are symmetrical, and both of the rooks on that flank will soon be lost to the respective knight forks. On the kingside, however, the pawns on g3 and e4 are not of equal value: the latter takes away the important f3-square from the white knight and restricts White's light-squared bishop on the long diagonal. Thus, even though White is first to move, he is the one who must play more accurately to maintain the balance.



9.Qc7†

9.Qe3?!

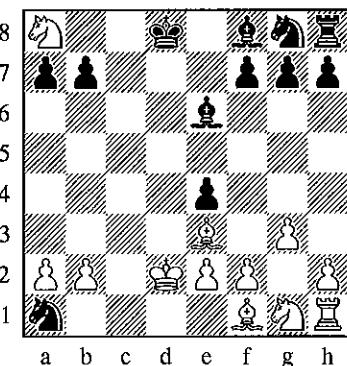
The purpose of this move seems to be to put the king on d2 instead of d1, but it's not a good idea at all.

9...Qc2† 10.Qd2

10.Qd1?! could transpose to variation A1 after the a1- and a8-rooks disappear, but 10...Qxe3†! is an even simpler way for Black to get an advantage.

10...Qxa1 11.Qc7† Qd8 12.Qxa8 Qe6†

The database gives the game Suba – Korneev, Navalmoral 2009, but the moves end here with the result of 0–1, which seems odd. In any case, play may continue:



13.Qc1

13.Qxa7? is even worse as White gets hit by an attack: 13...Qb4† 14.Qc1 Qxa2+ Black intends ...Qb3†, while 15.b3 can be

answered by 15...Qa3† – an unbelievable juxtaposition of pieces along the a-file!

13...Qxa2 14.b4 Qc4 15.Qb2 Qb3 16.Qxa7 Qxb4 17.Qb6 Qe6†

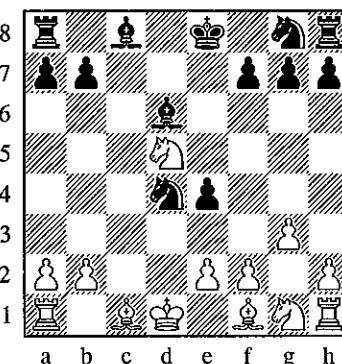
And Black is better.

9.Qd1

This occurred in Vo Thanh Ninh – Goh Wei Ming, Ho Chi Minh City 2011. Black's best answer is:

9...Qd6N

For example:



10.Qg2

10.Qf4 Qe6! 11.Qxd6 Qxd5 12.Qe5 Qe6 13.e3 Qe7 14.Qe2 f6 is also slightly better for Black.

10...Qf5 11.Qe3 Qe6 12.f3 exf3 13.Qxf3 Qe4 14.Qc3 Qc6†

Black's better pawn structure gives him the edge.

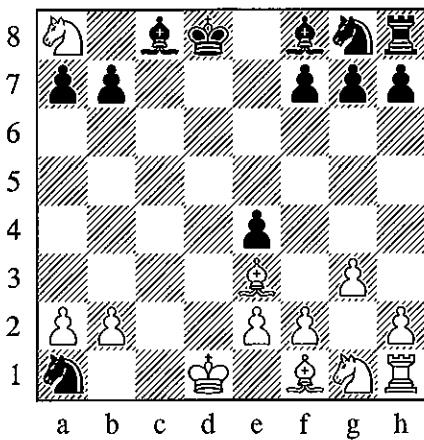
9...Qd8 10.Qxa8 Qc2† 11.Qd1 Qxa1

The position is still close to symmetrical. The chances are roughly equal, although the cramping influence of the e4-pawn makes it slightly more difficult for White to complete development.

We will consider A1) 12.Qe3?!, A2) 12.Qh3 and A3) 12.Qf4.

1.c4 e5

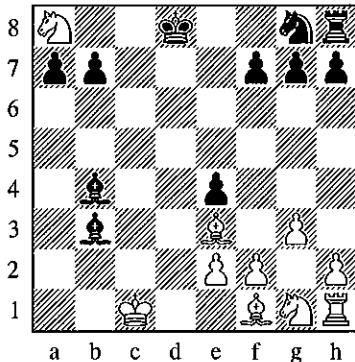
A1) 12.♗e3?!



This was introduced by GM Solak in 2006 and was repeated by Gelfand, but it is slightly inaccurate.

12...♗e6! 13.♗xa7

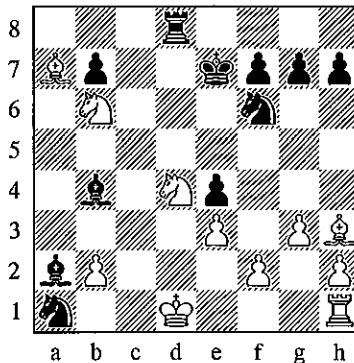
The stem game continued: 13.b3 ♗xb3 14.axb3 ♗xb3† 15.♔c1 ♗a3† 16.♔d2 ♗b4† 17.♔c1



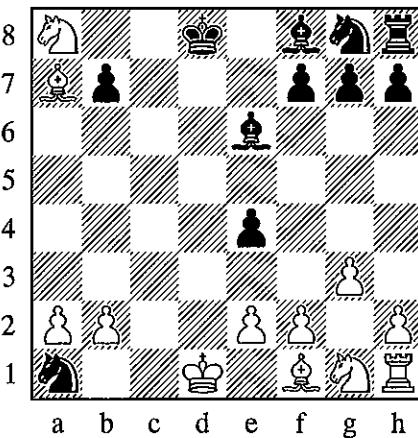
17...b6! A typical scenario for this variation: White is temporarily a piece up, but the knight on a8 is trapped. 18.♗b2 ♗d5 19.♗xb6 axb6 20.♗xb6† ♗e7† Material is level but White's king is under attack, so Black was clearly better in Solak – Volokitin, Murska Sobota 2006.

13.♔h3 ♗xa2 14.♗xa7 ♗b4 15.e3 ♗f6 16.♗e2 ♗e7 17.♗b6 ♗d8† 18.♗d4 occurred

in Gerber – Raetsky, Lenk 2011. I would like to improve Black's play by means of:



18...♗b3!N 19.♗e2 ♗xd4† 20.exd4 ♗e6 21.♔xe6 ♗xe6† Black is better thanks to White's misplaced pieces on the queenside and the weak pawn on d4.



13...♗f6

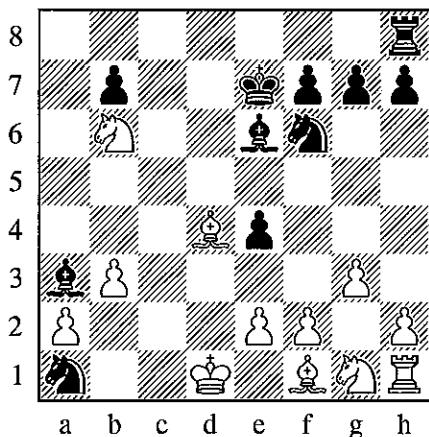
13...♗xa2?! is also playable, when 14.♔h3 transposes to the 13.♔h3 line above.

14.b3

14.♔h3 and 14.e3 should also transpose to the 13.♔h3 line. It's interesting that both players steered the game in a different direction, but from a theoretical perspective it doesn't matter a great deal, as Black is better in either case.

14...Qa3! 15.Qd4 Qe7 16.Qb6

All this occurred in Gelfand – Karjakin, Odessa (rapid) 2008. Now Black's play can be improved by means of:

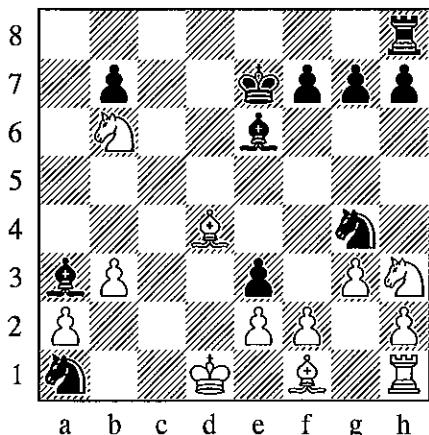


16...Qg4!N

A clever resource. Black is threatening both ...Qd8 and ...Qxf2†!.

17.Qh3 e3!

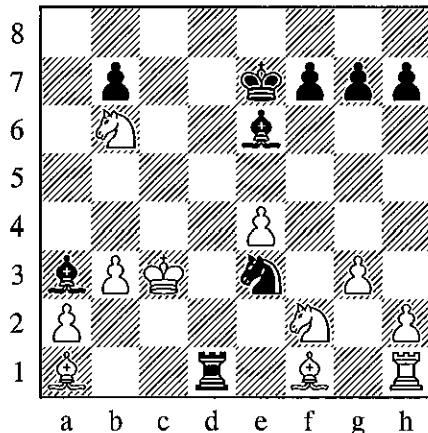
A strong follow-up.



18.Qxa1 Qd8† 19.Qc2 exf2

Black's attack is worth more than the sacrificed material. My analysis continues:

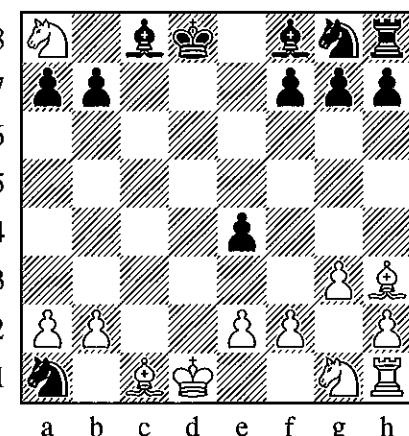
20.e4 Qe3† 21.Qc3 Qd1 22.Qxf2



**22...Qc1†! 23.Qd4 Qc2† 24.Qd3 Qe1†!
25.Qd2 Qxa1†**

Material is almost level and Black has an obvious advantage.

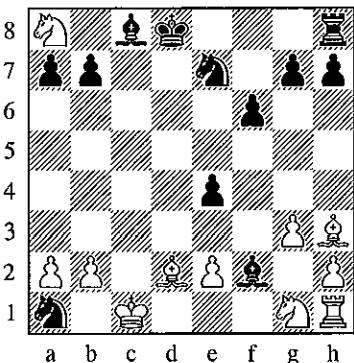
A2) 12.Qh3



White prevents ...Qe6 but allows another strong bishop move.

12...Qc5! 13.Qf4

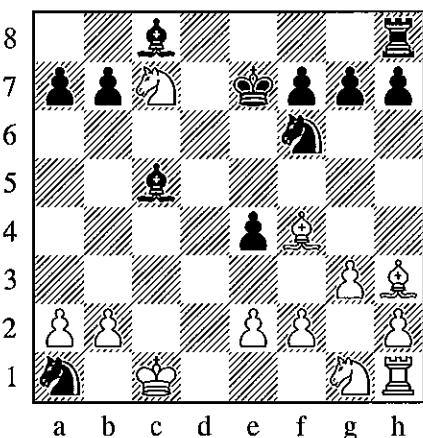
I faced 13.Qg5† in Suba – V. Mikhalevski, Benidorm 2008, but missed the strongest reply: 13...Qe7!N 14.Qc1 f6! 15.Qd2 Qxf2† Black stands better. It is worth mentioning the following line:



16. ♕b1 ♖xg1! 17. ♕xc8 ♖xc8 18. ♖xg1 ♕d7!+ with an extra pawn for Black.

13... ♔f6! 14. ♔c7 ♕e7 15. ♔cl

This position occurred in Perez Fungueiro – Bernal Moro, Seville 2004. Now I would like to introduce an obvious novelty:



15... ♗xf2!N 16. ♔b5

After 16.♗g2 ♕d7 17.e3 ♜e1!† Black transfers the bishop to a5 and soon gobbles up the knight on c7.

16... ♔d5! 17. ♔d6† ♔f6 18. ♔b1 ♔c2!

A nice tactical resource, luring the white king to an unfavourable square.

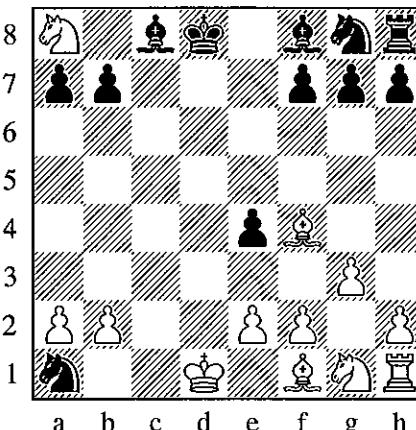
19. ♕xc2 ♕xg1! 20. ♕g2

The idea behind Black's 18th move is to meet 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc8?$ with 20... $\mathbb{E}xc8\#$ and the check gives the g1-bishop time to escape.

20... ♕b6 21. ♕xe4 ♕f5! ♦

Black's superior pawn structure gives him the upper hand.

A3) 12. ♕f4



12... \hat{Q} e6!

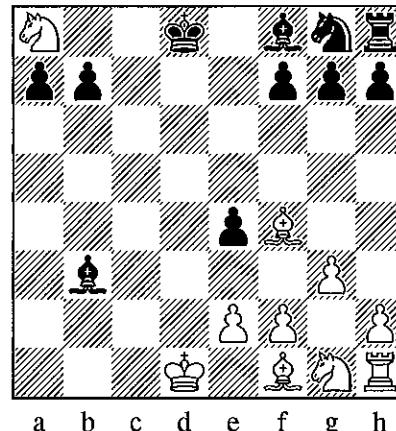
Originally I looked at 12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, which is theoretically okay, and should lead to approximate equality after 13. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ or 13. $\mathbb{Q}c7$.

However, I subsequently realized that the text move is stronger. Now Black can fight for an advantage, although White seems to be able to hold with precise play.

13.b3 $\text{\kappa}xb3$!!

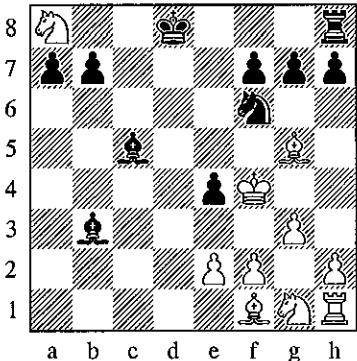
Black gives up his knight for two pawns plus a realistic chance to trap the knight on a8.

14.axb3 ♗xb3†

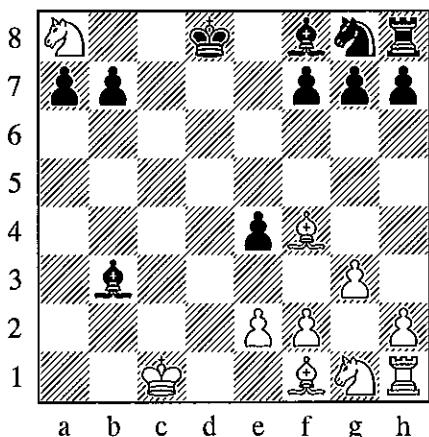


15.Qc1

15.Qd2? is worse: 15...Qb4† 16.Qe3 (16.Qc1 Qf6! is nasty for White) 16...Qf6 17.Qg5 (17.Qc7 runs into 17...Qg4†!+) 17...Qc5† 18.Qf4



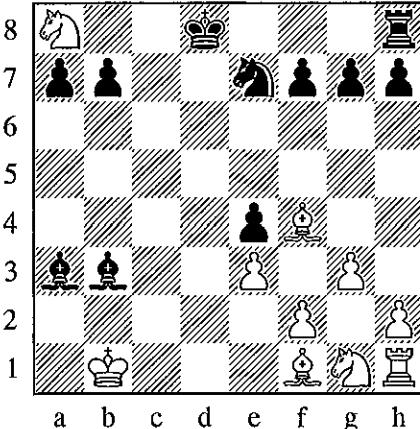
Now Black's play in Rout – Zelesco, Canberra 2011, can be corrected by means of 18...Qe7!N–+ when Black picks up the loose knight and obtains a winning endgame.

**15...Qa3† 16.Qb1 Qe7!**

The most accurate.

17.e3!

The attempt to extricate the knight by means of 17.Qc7 is strongly met by 17...Qc4! (17...a6! also makes sense) 18.Qc2 Qg6 19.Qc3 b5 20.Qa6 Qxf4 21.gxf4 Qe7–+ with a decisive advantage, despite White's small material plus.

**17...g5!**

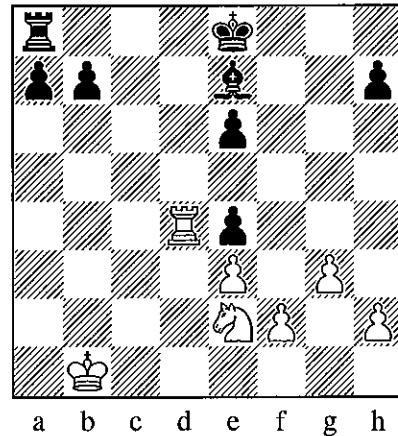
Black is deflecting the bishop away from c7 in order to trap the knight on a8.

17...Qd5 was less accurate in Debasish – Vishnu, Dharamshala 2014.

18.Qxg5 Qd7 19.Qh3†!

19.Qe2 Exa8 20.Qh3† gives Black the useful option of 20...Qe8! 21.Qc3 Qd5† as in Stockfish – Komodo, engine game 2011.

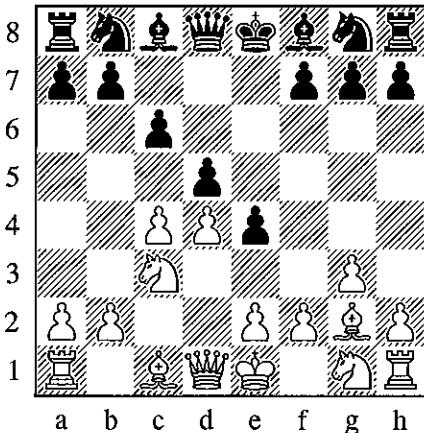
19...Qe6 20.Qxe6† fxe6 21.Qxe7 Qxe7 22.Qe2 Exa8 23.Qd1† Qe8 24.Qd4



24...Qd8! 25.Qxe4 Qd2 26.Qf4 Qxf2 27.Qxe6 Qf7 28.Qh6

White's accurate defence brought him closer to a draw in De Bari – Penafiel Lopez, corr. 2009. Nevertheless, it is clear that Black is the one who has been pressing for more.

B) 5.♗g2



This is Marin's recommendation, and I tend to agree with him that it is White's best try for an advantage.

5...♝f6

This natural move leads to a position which is often reached via the 2...♝f6 3.♗g2 c6 move order. Obviously we need to take into account the ♘g5 pin, but I think Black has enough resources to deal with it.

My first instinct was to try and make 5...h6?! work, but I eventually had to conclude that it was too slow. The problem line is: 6.cxd5 cxd5 7.f3! (7.♗b3 is much less dangerous for Black) 7...exf3 8.♗xf3 This is what Marin recommends for White. 8...♝c6 9.0–0 ♐f6 10.♗e5 ♘e6 11.♗xc6 bxc6 12.e4± White's chances are higher, thanks to his better development.

6.cxd5

6.♗g5 ♐bd7 7.cxd5 cxd5 is a simple transposition.

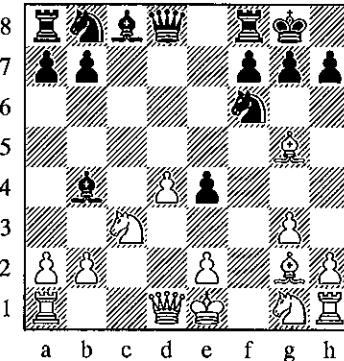
6...cxd5 7.♘g5

This is the critical move, pinning the knight in order to put pressure on d5.

7.♗h3 h6 (7...♝b4!? also makes sense) 8.0–0 ♐c6 leads back to variation B of the previous chapter.

7.f3 ♛b4

This should give Black decent chances after: 8.♘g5 0–0 9.fxe4 dxe4



10.♗xe4

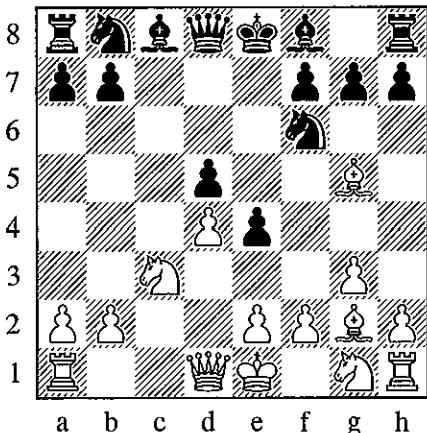
10.♗xf6N ♛xf6 11.♗xe4 is a principled continuation but 11...♝c6 12.a3 ♛a5 13.♗f3 ♘h3! gives Black good compensation for a pawn.

10.e3 occurred in Damljanovic – Komarov, Le Port Marly 2009. Black's play can be improved with: 10...♝xc3†!N It is useful to make this exchange before White can develop the other knight to e2. 11.bxc3 ♐bd7 Black will follow up with ...h6 or ...♛a5, forcing an exchange on f6 and obtaining a comfortable position.

10...♝e8 11.♗g2 ♛a5! 12.♗f3
12.♗xf6 ♘xc3† 13.bxc3 ♛xc3† 14.♗f2
♛e3† 15.♔e1 ♛c3†= is a surprising draw.

12...♝xc3† 13.bxc3 ♛xc3† 14.♗d2 ♛d3!
White doesn't seem to have anything better than:

15.♗f4 ♛c3† 16.♗d2 ♛d3 17.♗f4 ♛c3† 18.♗d2
½–½ Kerr – Schramm, corr. 2010.



7...Qbd7

This is an important concept: Black wants to be ready to recapture on f6 with the second knight, thereby keeping the d5-pawn well protected.

I analysed four main options: B1) 8.Qh3, B2) 8.e3, B3) 8.Wa4!?, and B4) 8.Wb3.

8.Qxd5?? is a blunder in view of 8...Wa5†+ when Black wins a piece.

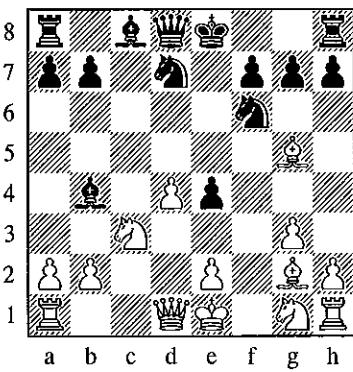
8.f3

This has been played a few times. Black's response is the same as in the note to move 7 above.

8...Qb4! 9.fxe4

9.Qh3 was played in Adla – Del Rey, Aragon 2015. This move should not have any independent value after 9...0–0N, when 10.fxe4 dxe4 transposes to the line below.

9...dxe4



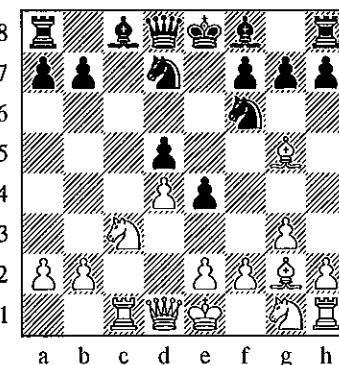
10.Qh3N

10.Qxf6?! is met by the intermediate 10...Qxc3†! (and obviously not 10...Qxf6?? 11.bxc3 Qxf6† and Black was better in Rego – Serna Lara, La Roda 2014. 10...0–0 11.0–0 Qxc3 12.bxc3 h6 13.Qxf6 Qxf6 14.Qf2 Qf5

Black is doing fine; the e4-pawn is securely defended and White's queenside pawns may prove weak as the game goes on.

8.Qc1

This is a useful waiting move, but it doesn't look dangerous as White does not threaten Black's centre. A simple improvement is:



8...h6!N

8...Qd6? allows 9.Wa4! 0–0 10.Qxd5 and Black had no real compensation in D'Costa – Shaw, England 2014.

9.Qf4

9.Qxf6 Qxf6 10.f3 (10.Qb5? is never dangerous because of 10...Wa5† or 10...Qb4†) 10...Qd6 11.fxe4 dxe4 12.Qxe4 Qxe4 13.Qxe4 Wa5† 14.Qf2 Wxa2 and I prefer Black.

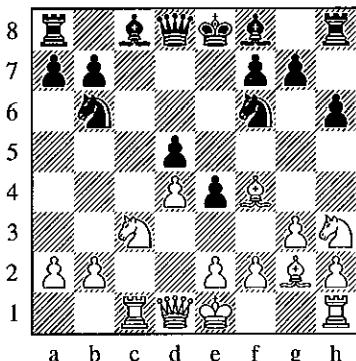
9...Qb6

Knowing how Black should support his pawn centre is one of the keys to success in this system.

10.Qh3

Attempting to win material at the cost of development is risky for White: 10.Qb5 Qb4†

11. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}a6$ $bxa6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ e3! and Black obtains a strong initiative.



10... $\mathbb{Q}d6!$?

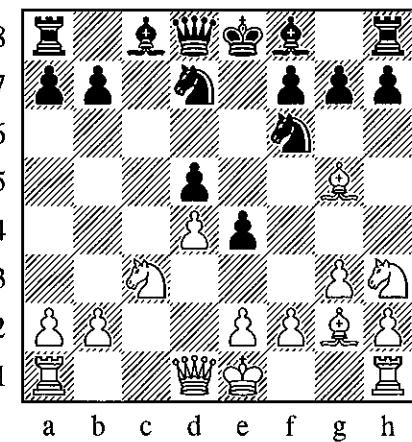
This seems simplest, although a decent alternative is: 10...g5?! 11. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12.0–0 0–0 13.f3 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 14.fxe4 dxe4! 15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 16. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ Black is about to eliminate the dark-squared bishop and has no real problems.

11. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6=$

Black is fine.

B1) 8. $\mathbb{Q}h3$

This is a typical move in such a structure, but it gives Black time to clarify the situation on the kingside.



8... $\mathbb{h}6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

This is the most ambitious reply, which aims to show that the d7-knight is misplaced. The drawback is that the knight on h3 has nowhere to go.

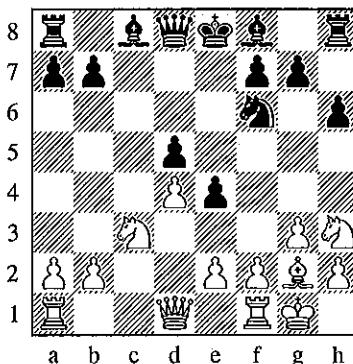
9. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

This way White keeps his knight on track for f4, but the exchange on f6 simplifies Black's development, while also giving him the advantage of the bishop pair.

10.0–0

10.e3?! is too slow. 10...g5! Black restricts the h3-knight while preventing f2-f3 on account of the potential ...g4 fork. 11. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ Now in Ano Tafalla – Saldana Caballe, Tarragona 2015, Black could have obtained the better chances with 11... $\mathbb{Q}g7!$ N 12. $\mathbb{W}b3$ 0–0 \bar{F} , as White has wasted too much time with his king's knight.

Now I would like to improve Black's play from Weber – Sadler, London 2014, with:



10... $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ N 11.f3

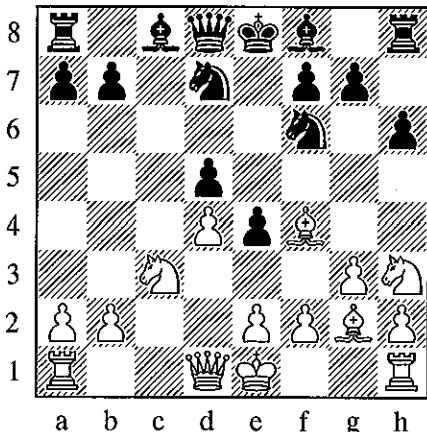
11. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 0–0 gives Black good compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

11...0–0 12.fxe4 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 13. $\mathbb{E}c1$

13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ allows 13... $\mathbb{Q}xh3!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ with a slight preference for Black.

13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$

Black has a good position and intends ... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ next.

**9...g5!N**

I found a few games where Black put either his queen or his knight on b6, but the text move is stronger and more ambitious.

10.Qe5

After 10.Qc1 Qb6 11.0–0 Qg7 12.f3 0–0 13.Qf2 Rxe8 Black is not worse; White is unable to win a pawn by capturing on e4, as the d4-pawn will be hanging at the end.

10...Qb4!

Black is reducing the pressure on d5.

11.f4?!

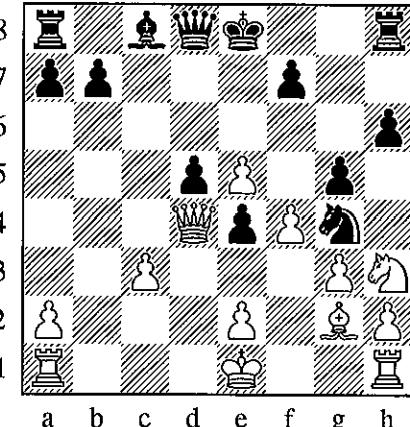
This is the most interesting idea I could find for White, but Black has more than one reasonable reply.

11...Qxc3†

11...0–0?? 12.fxg5 hxg5 13.0–0 Qxe5 14.dxe5 Qxc3 15.bxc3 Qg4 16.Wd2 Wb6† 17.Qh1 Wh6 is an interesting line which results in dynamic equality.

12.bxc3 Qxe5 13.dxe5 Qg4 14.Wd4

14.Wa4† Qf8 15.Wd4 Wb6 16.fxg5 Qe3 17.Qf2 Qg4†= is a possible drawing line.



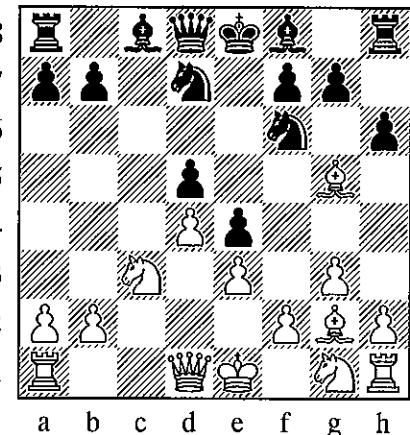
14...Wb6! 15.0–0 Wxd4† 16.cxd4 Qe3

17.Qfc1 Qf5

The pawn structure is highly irregular. However, I am sure that Black is not worse as his pieces are active enough – especially his knight.

B2) 8.e3 h6

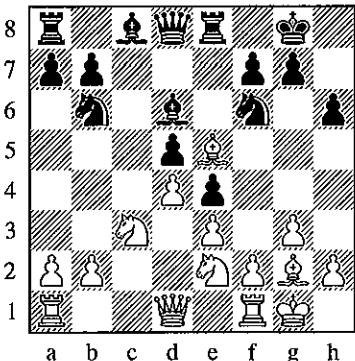
This is Black's usual follow-up to ...Qbd7.

**9.Qxf6**

This is not a critical test of Black's opening system, but it is still worth giving some details of how Black should arrange his pieces.

In the event of 9.Qf4? I suggest deviating with: 9...Qb6?N (9...Qb4 10.Qge2 g5 11.Qe5 We7

was also reasonable in Adams – Bogner, Germany 2013) 10.Qge2 Qd6 11.Qe5 0–0 12.0–0 Be8 Forcing White to trade off the bishop.

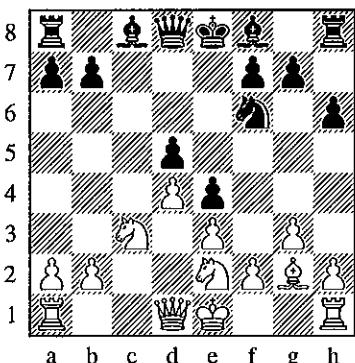


13.Qxf6 Wxf6 14.a4 This seems like the only chance to cause problems, but Black is fine after: 14...Qe6 15.a5 Qc4 16.b3 Qa3 17.Qf4 Qxf4 18.gxf4 Rac8 19.Wd2 We7=

9...Qxf6 10.Wb3

10.Qge2

Here I found another nice idea:



10...Qg4!N

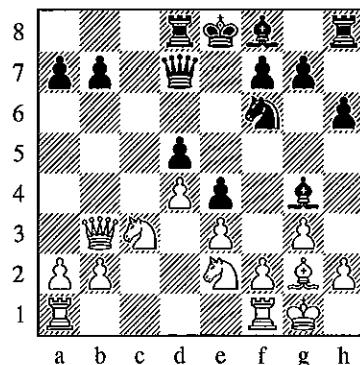
10...Qd6 was another sensible choice in Paszewski – Dragun, Hucisko 2016.

11.0–0

My idea is to meet 11.h3 with 11...Qe6, when it will be more difficult for White to play f2-f3, as his kingside dark squares will now be more vulnerable. 12.0–0

(12.Qf4 Wd7 13.0–0 Qd6 14.Qxe6 fxe6 15.f3 exf3 16.Qxf3 0–0–0=) 12...Qd6 13.Qf4 0–0 Black is fine.

11...Wd7 12.Wb3 Qd8

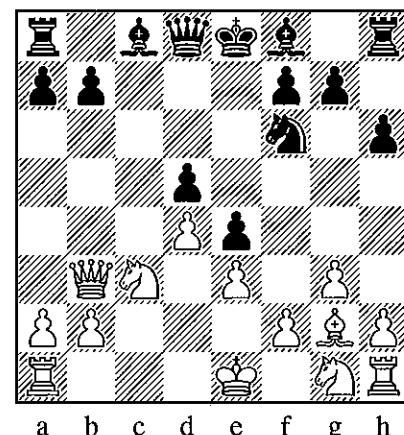


13.f3

13.Qf4 g5! leads nowhere for White.

13...Qxf3 14.Qxf3 exf3 15.Qxf3 Qe7 16.Qa1 0–0=

The text move is a natural attempt to put pressure on the d5-pawn, and it has been seen in a couple of games. I would like to recommend the amazing computer idea:



10...b5!N

A powerful pawn sacrifice.

11.Wxb5†

Capturing the pawn is the critical idea to check, but Black gets more than enough compensation.

11.Qxb5? Bb8+ wins material for Black.

11.Qge2?! is strongly met by 11...b4 12.Qa4 Wa5, with ideas of ...Qd7 or ...Qa6.

11.a3?! may be White's best, simply preventing the b-pawn from advancing any further. Play may continue 11...Bb8 12.Qge2 Qd6 13.0–0 Qe6 14.Qf4 Qxf4 15.exf4 0–0= with equal chances.

11...Qd7 12.Qb3

12.Wa6 Bb8† is also good for Black.

12...Bb8 13.Wc2 Bb6 14.Qge2!

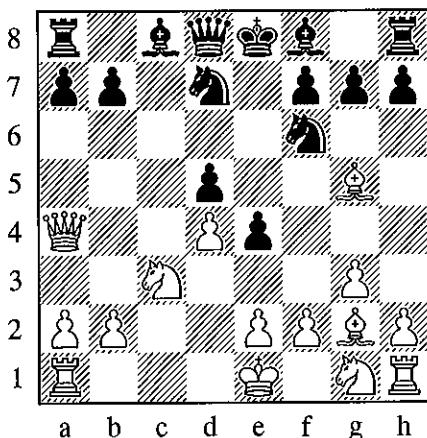
This is White's best chance to equalize.

14.Qb1 protects the b2-pawn but 14...Qb4 15.Qge2 Qb5 yields Black a strong initiative.

14...Wxb2 15.Wxb2 Bxb2 16.0–0 Qd6 17.Bab1 Bc2 18.Bb7 0–0!

White will have to fight for a draw.

B3) 8.Wa4!?



This way White creates a threat of Qxd5.

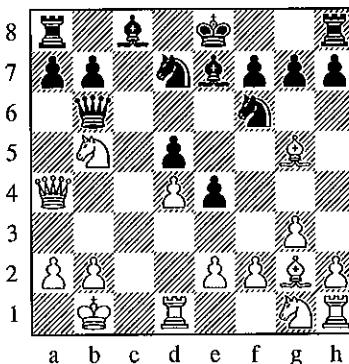
8...Bb6!

A strong counterattacking move.

9.Qd2!?

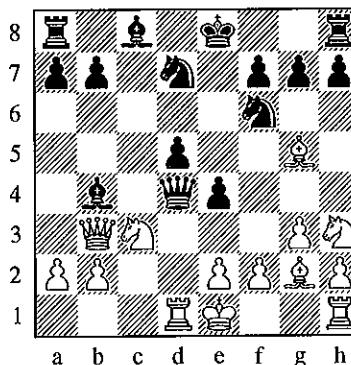
A clever way to protect the b2-pawn. White has also tried some other options:

9.0–0–0 Qb4! 10.Qb5 Qe7! 11.Qb1 (or 11.Qxf6 Qxf6 12.Qc3 Qc6 13.f3 Wxa4 14.Qxa4 exf3 15.Qxf3 0–0 16.Qc3 Qb6 with a good position for Black)



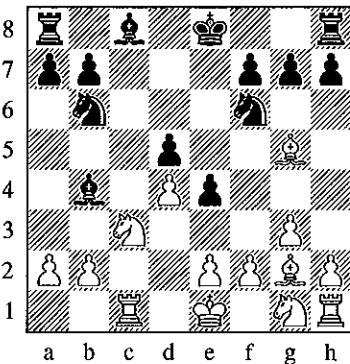
11...0–0 12.Qc1 This was Torkkola – Ebeling, Helsinki 2012, and now the most accurate would have been 12...Wd8!N† with ...Qb6 to follow.

9.Wb3 Wxd4 10.Qh3 Qb4 11.Qd1 (or 11.Qe3 Qxc3† 12.bxc3 We5 13.Qf4 0–0 14.Qd1 Qb6 15.Qd4 Wc7 16.0–0 Qe6= with roughly equal chances)



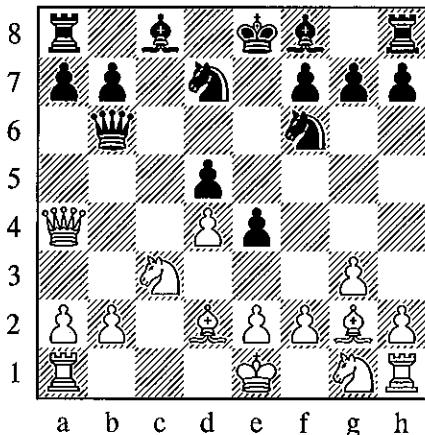
11... $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#$ 12.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}e5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ and Black was fine in Parsons – Hagberg, corr. 2012.

9. $\mathbb{W}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 11. $\mathbb{R}c1$ Now Black's play in Le Quang – Geirnaert, Schelle 2015, can be improved by means of:



11... $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ N 12.a3 (12. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $gxf6$ 13.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#$ 14. $\mathbb{R}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}hc8$ is even more pleasant for Black) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13.f3 $\mathbb{Q}d8!$ 14.fxe4 $dxe4$ 15.e3 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4!$

And Black creates sufficient counterplay.

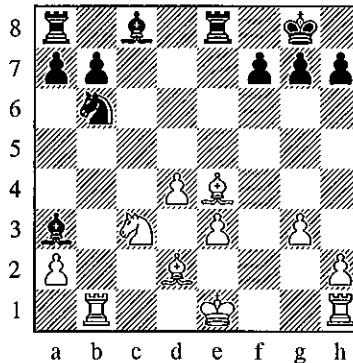


9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

9... $\mathbb{W}xb2?$ would be a blunder in view of 10. $\mathbb{R}b1$ $\mathbb{W}a3$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xa3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ and Black loses material.

10. $\mathbb{Q}h3$

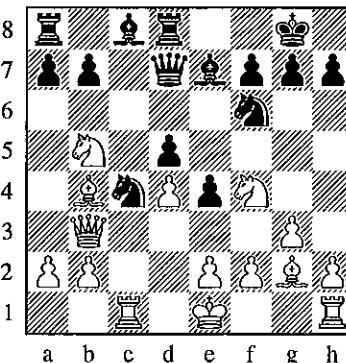
10.f3!N looks like a serious alternative: 10...0–0! 11.fxe4 $dxe4$ 12.e3 (12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ is better for Black due to his lead in development) 12... $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}a3$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xa3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ White will regain the pawn but Black can maintain the balance. My analysis continues: 15... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$



18... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ A useful simplifying operation. 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8=$ With roughly equal chances.

10...0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}b3$

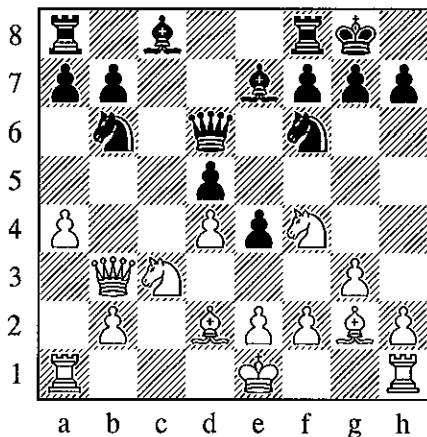
Black is ready to meet 12. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ with: 12... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ 13. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{R}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8!$



16. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 21.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ With sufficient compensation for a pawn, thanks to the pressure along the c-file.

12...Qb6 13.a4

13.Qb5 converts to the previous note.



13...Qe6!N

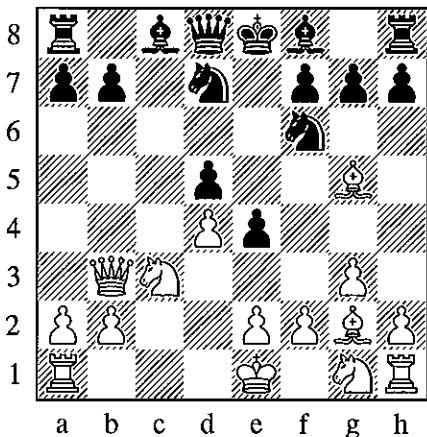
I like this move as it strengthens the centre.

13...Qf5 was played in Jiřovský – Navara, Prague 2014, but after 14.a5!N Qc4 15.Qfxd5! Qxd2 16.Qxe7† Qxe7 17.Qxd2 Black still needs to prove his compensation.

14.Qxe6 Qxe6 15.h4 Qc4 16.Qh3 Qc6=

Black is fine.

B4) 8.Qb3



Marin gave this as a novelty in his 2009 book. Since then, it has been tested in a handful of games.

8...Qd6!

Black takes the b8-h2 diagonal under control, while the d5-pawn is still untouchable. This strong idea was introduced by the Greek GM Dimitrios Mastrovasilis and it clearly improves over Mihail's 8...Qb6.

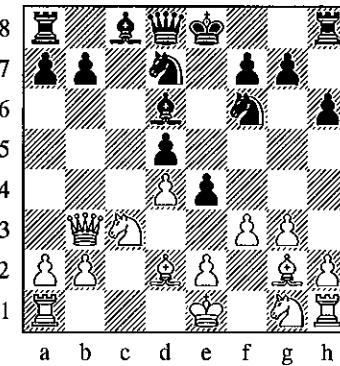
8...h6 is less accurate due to 9.Qf4! Qa5 10.Qd2! Qb6 11.Qxd5 Qxd5 12.Qxd5 Qf6 13.Qb3± and White was better in Bacrot – Carlsen, Biel (blitz) 2012.

White's two most important tries are **B41) 9.Qb5!?** and **B42) 9.Qh3!.**

Less challenging is:

9.f3 h6! 10.Qd2

10.Qxf6 Qxf6 11.fxe4 dxe4 12.Qxe4 Qxe4 13.Qxe4 0–0 14.Qd5 (or 14.Qf3 Qe6 with an initiative for Black) 14...Qa5† (14...a5!?) 15.Qf2 Qd7≈ Black had good play for a pawn in Mkrtchian – Zawadzka, Wrocław 2014.

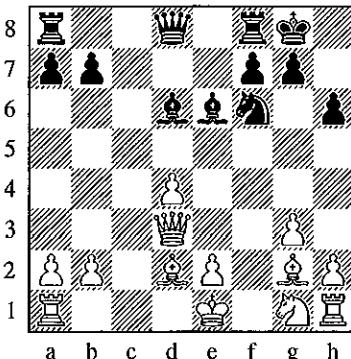


10...0–0 11.fxe4

11.Qxd5 Qxd5 12.Qxd5 Qf6 13.Qb3 Qe6† is dangerous for White, as he has wasted too much time in the opening.

11...dxe4 12.Qxe4 Qxe4 13.Qxe4 Qf6 14.Qg2 Qe6 15.Qd3

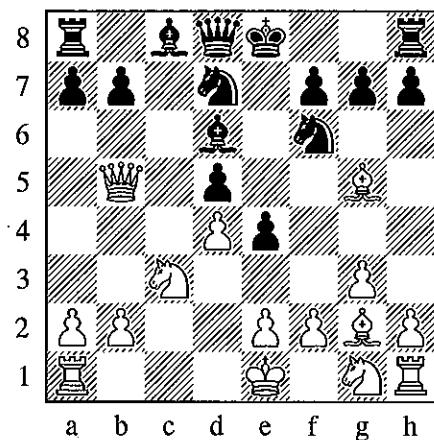
This position occurred in Lechtnsky – D. Mastrovasilis, Germany 2013, and now Black's most accurate would have been:



15... $\mathbb{Q}e8!$ N†

Intending ... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}c4$. It seems to me that White is in some trouble.

B41) 9. $\mathbb{W}b5!$?



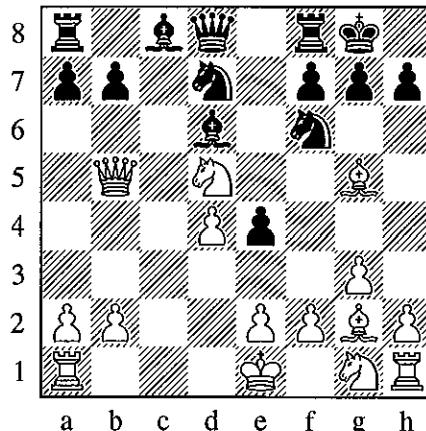
An interesting idea – White pins the d7-knight and prevents a check on a5, thereby preparing $\mathbb{Q}xd5$.

9...0–0

Black is forced to sacrifice a pawn.

9...a6? is refuted by 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$ † and White wins a pawn for nothing.

10. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$



10...a6!?

This seems most natural to me, so I have given it as the main line.

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that 10...h6 is a viable alternative: 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ † $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 13.e3 a6 14. $\mathbb{W}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 17.a3 f5 Black had good compensation and he eventually won in Hessenius – Grebenschchikov, corr. 2014.

11. $\mathbb{W}a4$

11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$?! $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ † $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}a4$ b5† gives Black a dangerous initiative.

11...b5!

It's necessary to determine the position of the queen before deciding whether or not to unpin the knight by means of ...h6.

12. $\mathbb{W}c2!$

Other retreats are less challenging:

12. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ †! 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ b4! 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ † $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 15.a3 $\mathbb{W}b5$ 16.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (17. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{W}xb4$ † 18. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ † also favours Black) 17... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ † with a promising position.

14... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 15.h4

15.a3 $\mathbb{W}b5$ also gives Black a promising initiative.

15...Qd8 16.Qh3 h6

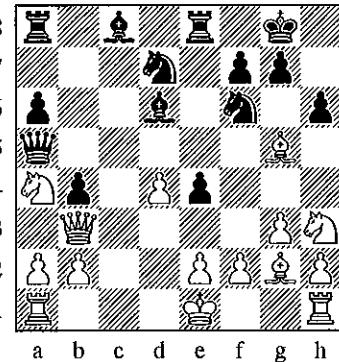
Black has good compensation for the pawn.

12.Wb3 Qe8! 13.Qc3

13.e3 is met by 13...Wa5† 14.Qf1 Qxd5

15.Wxd5 Qc7! followed by ...Qb6 and Black is fine.

13...Wa5? 14.Qh3 b4 15.Qa4 h6



16.Qe3

16.Qf4 Qxf4 17.Qxf4 g5 18.Qh3 Qf8! and Black's position is preferable thanks to the misplaced knight on h3.

16...Qb7 17.0–0 Qc6 18.Qc5 Qxc5 19.dxc5 Qxc5 20.Qxc5 Wxc5†

Black has restored material equality while keeping the better position.

12...h6!

With White's queen posted on c2, 12...Wa5? 13.Qd2 b4 is bad in view of 14.Qxf6† Qxf6 15.Wc6!†.

13.Qxf6†

13.Wc6

This double attack is strongly met by:

13...Qb7! 14.Wxd6

14.Wxb7 hxg5 with the idea of ...Wa5† is dangerous for White.

14...Qxd5 15.Wxd5

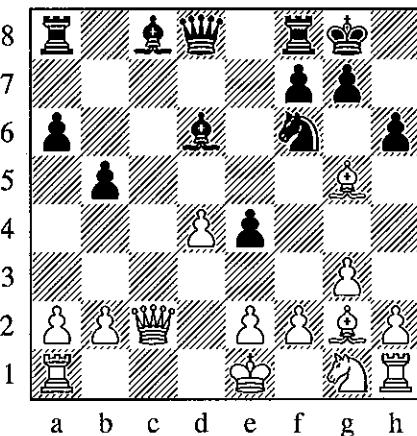
15.Qxf6? is refuted by 15...Wa5†! 16.Qf1 (or 16.b4 Wa3!) 16...Qxf6 with a decisive advantage for Black.

15.Qe3 is not so bad, although 15...Qc8 16.Qh3 g5! 17.0–0 Qc2 still gives Black more than sufficient compensation for a pawn.

15...hxg5 16.Wxg5 Qb6 17.Qd1 Qc8

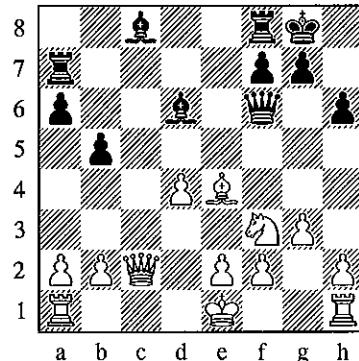
Black has full compensation; his ideas include ...Qc2 and ...Qc4.

13...Qxf6



14.Qxf6

I also checked: 14.Qxe4 Ra7 15.Qxf6 Wxf6 16.Qf3 (16.a3 Wxd4 17.Qf3 Wf6 is also fine for Black thanks to his strong bishop pair)

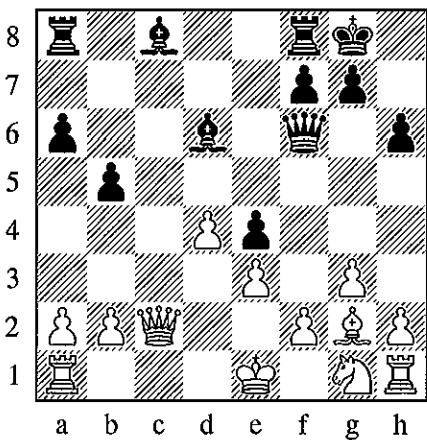


16...Qb4† 17.Qf1 Qh3† 18.Qg1 Qc8

19.Qd1 We6 20.Qd3 Rac7 White's position is dangerous despite his two extra pawns, as his rook on h1 is completely out of play.

14... $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 15.e3

15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{B}a7$ transposes to the previous note.



15... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

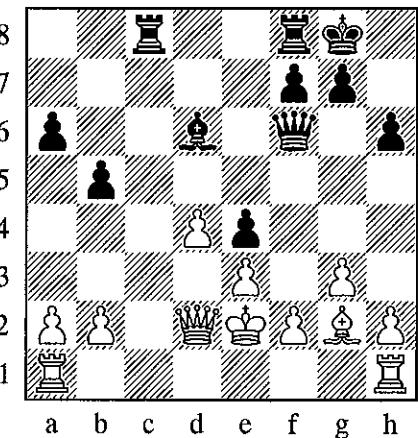
16. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{B}ac8$
19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{B}c2$ gives Black a promising initiative.

16... $\mathbb{B}ac8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d2$

17. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{B}c2$
transposes to the previous note.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xe2!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$

18. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}e6\infty$ and Black has good counterplay along the c-file.



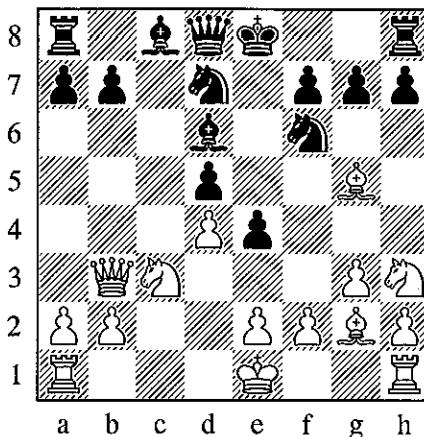
18... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d1!$

The bishop is untouchable in view of the deadly check on c2.

19... $\mathbb{W}e6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{B}c4$

Black will follow up with ... $\mathbb{B}fc8$, with at least enough play for the pawn.

B42) 9. $\mathbb{Q}h3!$

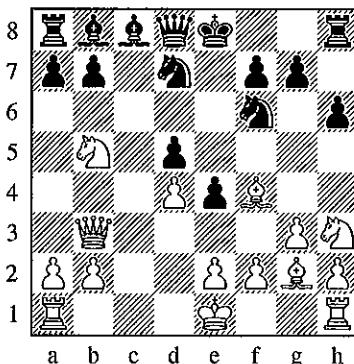


The most accurate. White gets ready to retreat the dark-squared bishop to f4 and then recapture there with his knight.

9... $\mathbb{h}6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6N$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 11.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ is also good for Black, as 12. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 0–0 offers him a strong initiative for the pawn.

I also considered: 10. $\mathbb{Q}b5N$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

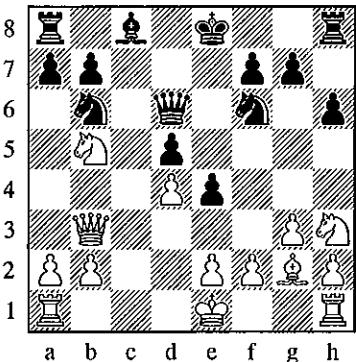


11...0–0! 12. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $axb6$ 16.0–0 $\mathbb{W}d6$ Black is doing fine.

10...Qb6 11.Qe5!

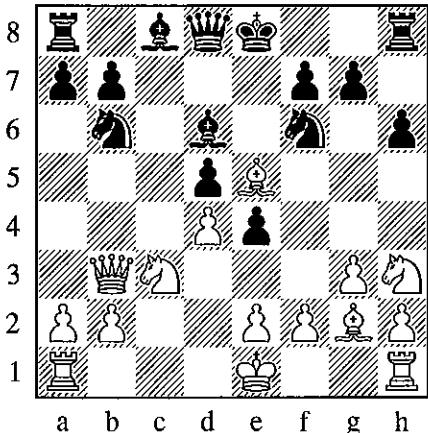
The only serious attempt to set problems.

11.Qxd6 Wxd6 12.Qb5N (12.0–0 0–0 13.e3 Qg4† Lederer – V. Mikhalevski, Beersheba 2014) The text move is a possible attempt to improve White's play, but Black is more than okay after:



12...Wd8! 13.Wa3 We7! 14.Wc5! Qf8† Followed by ...Qd7! and Black solves his opening problems while enjoying the benefits of his strong pawn centre.

The text move was played in Sukharev – Tugaj, Kharkov 2000. I found an important improvement:

**11...g5!N**

Black restricts the knight on h3 – otherwise Qf4 might prove to be annoying.

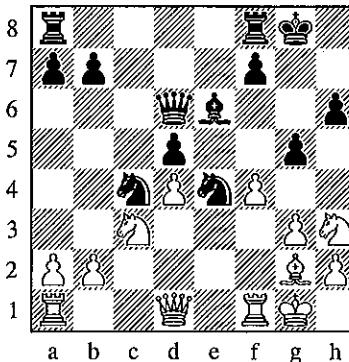
12.0–0 0–0 13.f4

13.f3 exf3 is the same thing.

13...exf3 14.exf3 Qe6 15.f4

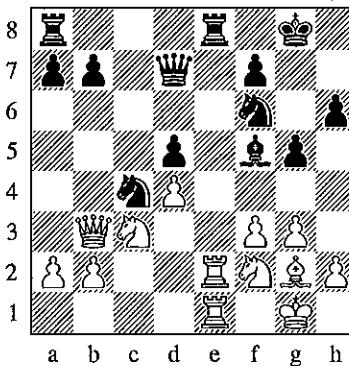
I considered two other moves:

15.Qxd6 Wxd6 16.f4 Qe4 17.Wd1 Qc4! gives Black enough activity, for instance:

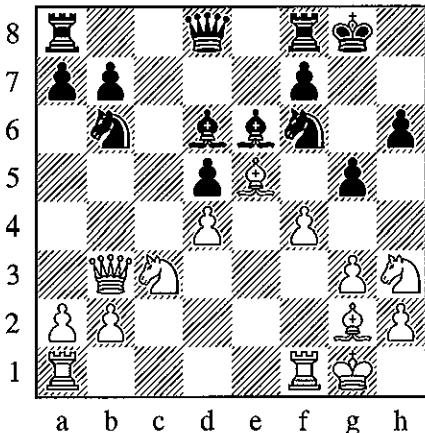


18.Wh5 Qxh3 19.Qxh3 Qcd2! 20.Wfd1 Wf6 21.Qxe4 Qxe4= I don't see how White can cause problems.

15.Qfe1 should be met by: 15...Qxe5 16.Qxe5 Qc4 17.Qe2 Qe8 18.Qae1 Wd7 19.Qf2 Qf5



20.Qxc8† Qxe8 21.Qxe8† Wxe8 22.Qxd5 Qxd5 23.Wxc4 We1† 24.Qf1 Qe3 25.We2 Wc1 With sufficient compensation for the pawn.



15...Qxe5

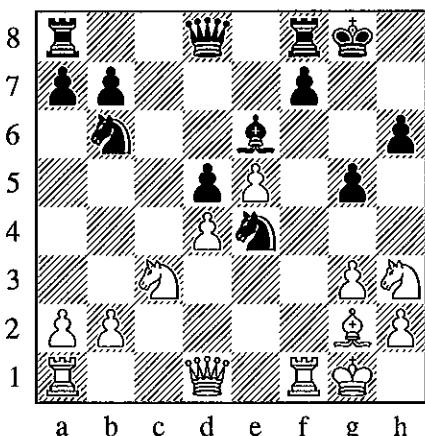
15...Qe4!? seems an equally valid move order, when 16.Wd1 Qxe5 17.fxe5 transposes to the main line.

16.fxe5

16.dxe5?! d4?? should make us happy.

16...Qe4 17.Wd1!

17.Wad1 Qxc3 18.bxc3 (or 18.Wxc3 Wc8! and Black is fine) 18...Qg7 19.Qf2 Qc4= leads to approximate equality.



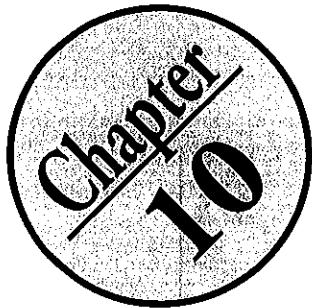
17...f5 18.exf6 Qxc3 19.bxc3 Wxf6

Both sides have slight weaknesses, but it seems to me that Black is not worse.

Conclusion

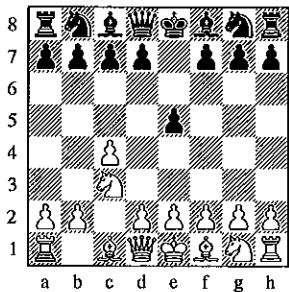
The 2.g3 c6 system offers a lot of fascinating positions; none more so than after 3.d4 e4 4.Qc3 d5. We saw that 5.cxd5 cxd5 6.Wb3 Qc6! leads to an unusual scenario where both sides take each other's rooks in the corners, but the e4-pawn establishes a space advantage which enables Black to fight for more than just equality.

We finished by analysing 5.Qg2 Qf6 6.cxd5 cxd5 7.Qg5 Qbd7, where Black often has to sacrifice the d5-pawn. I believe I have shown that this is a fully viable approach, and that Black's position is perfectly playable in all of the lines.



1.c4 e5

2.♘c3 ♖b4



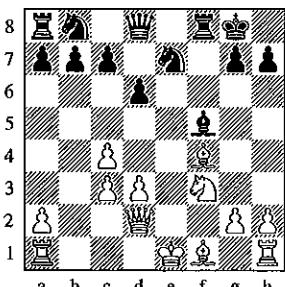
Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3

2...♖b4

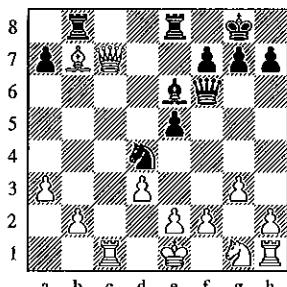
A) 3.d4	205
B) 3.d3	206
C) 3.e4	207
D) 3.♗f3 ♖xc3	209
D1) 4.dxc3	209
D2) 4.bxc3	211
E) 3.♗b3 a5!!	212
E1) 4.g3	213
E2) 4.♗d5	215
F) 3.♗c2 ♗f6	216
F1) 4.g3	216
F2) 4.a3	219
F3) 4.♗f3	221
F4) 4.e3 0–0	223
F41) 5.a3	223
F42) 5.♗ge2	224

B) after 10.♗d2



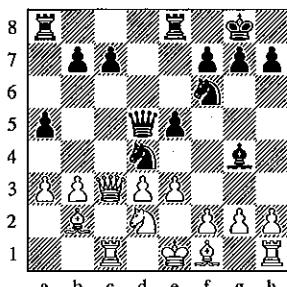
10...♗e8!N

F1) note to 6.♗f3



15...♗ed8!!N

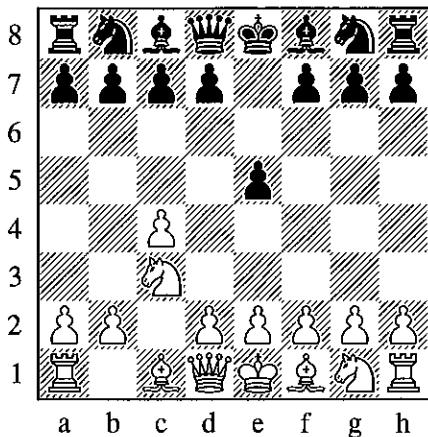
F41) after 13.♗c1



13...a4!N

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3

This natural move remains a popular guest at all levels. I suggest playing in the spirit of the Rossolimo with reversed colours.

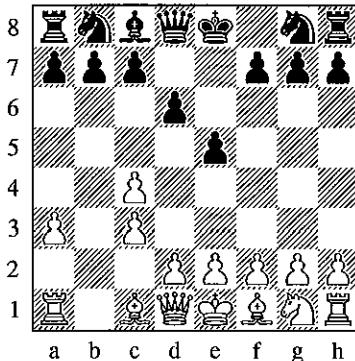
**2...♗b4**

White's two most popular replies are 3.g3 and 3.♘d5, and they will be dealt with in Chapters 11 and 12 respectively.

Before then, there are several other playable moves to consider, and this chapter will deal with A) 3.d4, B) 3.d3, C) 3.e4, D) 3.♘f3, E) 3.♗b3 and F) 3.♗c2.

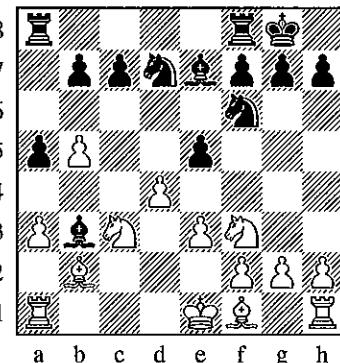
3.e3 gives Black a choice: 3...♗f6 has been covered in variation A3 of Chapter 6, but there is also a good argument for 3...♗xc3 followed by ...d6, in the same spirit as some of the other lines where White allows his pawns to be doubled.

3.a3? wastes an important tempo, as Black was planning to take on c3 anyway. 3...♗xc3 4.bxc3 (4.dxc3 d6 will also leave White basically a tempo down on one of the other lines after any normal developing move; moreover, the a-pawn would actually be better on a2 than on a3!) 4...d6



Now 5.g3 would leave White essentially a tempo down on variation B of the next chapter, while 5.d4 ♘f6 6.e3 would be a curious transposition to a Nimzo-Indian where Black is once again a tempo up, as his e-pawn has gone to e5 in one move rather than ...e7-e6-e5.

3.♘a4!? is a rare move which has only occurred once at GM level, although the same idea exists as a relatively well-known sideline with reversed colours against the Rossolimo. White's idea is to avoid an exchange on c3, but the knight is obviously not well placed on a4. 3...♗f6 4.a3 ♗c7 5.e3 0-0 6.b4 a5 7.b5 d5 8.cxd5 ♗xd5 9.♗b2 ♗e6 10.♘f3 ♘bd7 11.♘c3 ♗b3 12.♗xb3 ♗xb3 13.d4 Here I would wish to deviate with:



13...exd4!N (13...♗d6 was also not a bad choice, and led to a roughly level position in Damljanovic – Esen, Warsaw 2013) 14.♘xd4

a4! 15.♗c1 ♘fd8 16.♗e2 ♘c5 With a good position for Black.

A) 3.d4

This is a highly uncommon move, though not necessarily a bad one.

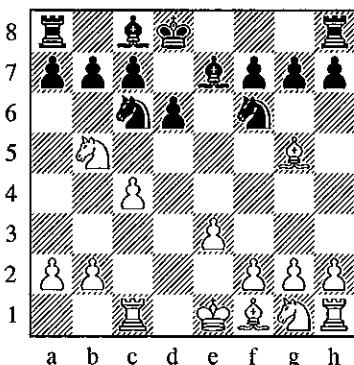
3...exd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6

Black blocks the attack on the g7-pawn and intends to gain a tempo against the queen with ...♘c6.

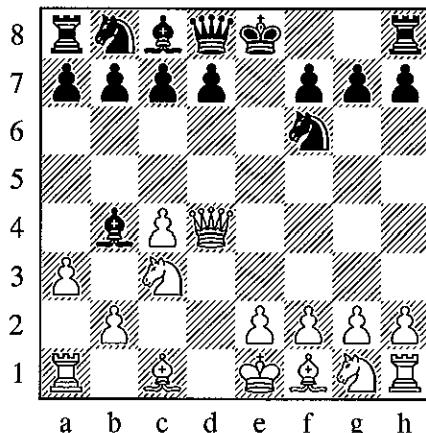
Black has even played 4...♗f6!? a few times, after which 5.♗e4† ♗e7 6.♗xe7† ♘xe7 7.♗d2 0–0 8.e3 d6 leads to equal chances.

5.a3

5.♗g5 This pin doesn't present a problem for Black. 5...♘c6 6.♗e3† (6.♗xf6?! ♘xd4 7.♗xd8 ♘xd8 is slightly better for Black thanks to the bishop pair) 6...♗e7 7.♗xe7† ♘xe7 8.♗c1 (8.♗f3 h6 9.♗f4 d6= with roughly equal chances) 8...d6 9.♗b5 ♘d8 10.e3



This was Dietrich – Gold, Oberweissenbrunn 1994, and now 10...h6!N 11.♗h4 g5 12.♗g3 ♘e4 would have been promising for Black.



5...♘c6!N

5...♘xc3† was played in Kuenitz – Gnichtel, Mehlingen 1997, but it is obviously more logical to gain a tempo against the queen.

6.♗d3

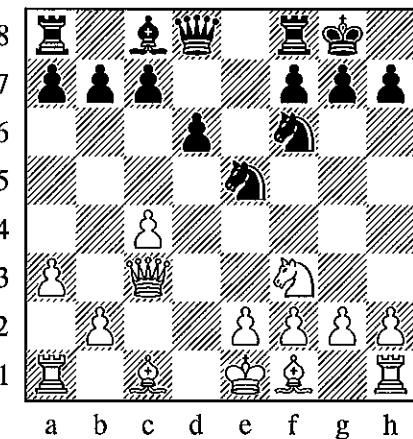
6.♗e3† ♗e7 7.♗d5 0–0 8.♗xe7† ♘xe7 9.♗f3 d5† leads to Black's initiative thanks to his development advantage.

6...♗e5!

Another useful intermediate move.

7.♗g3 ♘xc3† 8.♗xc3 d6 9.♗f3 0–0!

A logical pawn sacrifice. Black is trying to exploit his development advantage.



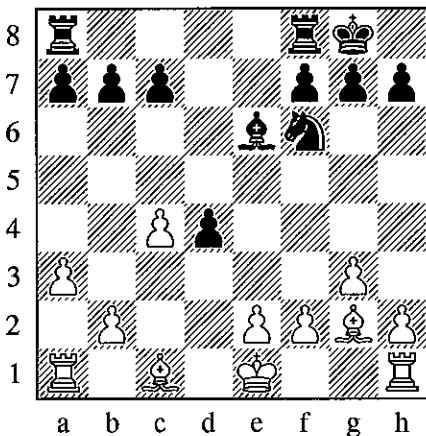
10.♗xe5 dxe5 11.g3!

11.♗xe5?! ♜e8 gives Black a serious initiative for a pawn.

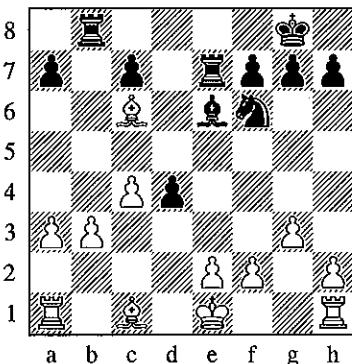
The text move is best, as White's light-squared bishop will be at its most effective on the long diagonal.

11...♜e6 12.♗g2 ♜d4 13.♗xd4 exd4

Black's lead in development balances out White's bishop pair, as the following lines demonstrate.

**14.b3 ♜fe8 15.♗f4**

After 15.♗xb7 ♜ab8 16.♗c6 ♜e7 Black has a good initiative for the pawn. Best play continues:



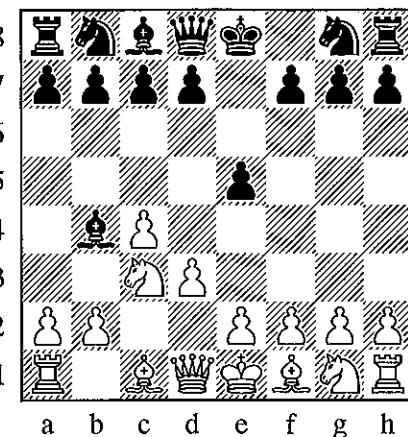
17.♗d2! ♜f5! 18.♗b4 ♜e6 19.♗f3 ♜e5 20.c5 ♜c2= Black wins back the pawn and obtains a good position.

15...c6 16.0–0–0 ♜f5! 17.e3 ♜e4! 18.♗xe4 ♜xe4 19.♗hf1 dxe3=

With a drawish endgame.

B) 3.d3

This rare line can also arise after 2.d3 ♜b4† 3.♗c3.

**3...♗xc3† 4.bxc3 d6**

The most likely outcome from here is a transposition to one of the 3.g3 lines covered in the next chapter.

5.e4

This avoids the transposition, for the time being at least.

5.g3 ♜e7 6.♗g2 converts to variation B4 of the next chapter.

5.♗f3 c5!? 6.g3

This move order can easily transpose to the next chapter, but the game may also remain in independent territory as follows:

6.♗c6

6...♜e7 7.♗g2 0–0 is covered on page 236 – see 7.♗f3 c5 in the notes to variation B4 of the next chapter.

7.♗g2 ♜ge7 8.e4

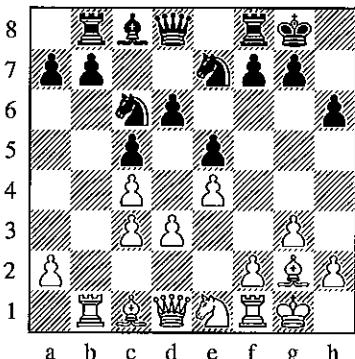
8.0–0 0–0 converts to the same line as in the previous note.

8...0–0 9.0–0 h6

9...♗e6!? is also sensible.

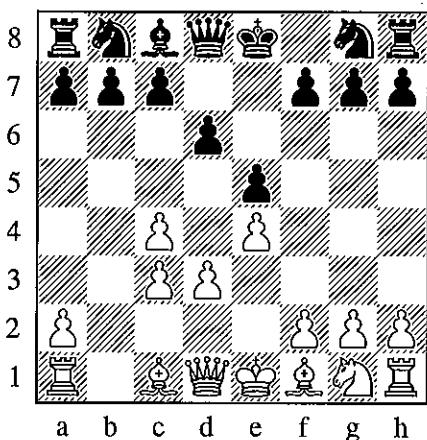
10.♗b1 ♘b8 11.♗e1

This occurred in Lerner – Onischuk, Cuxhaven 1993, and now I would like to recommend:



11...f5!N 12.f4 fxe4 13.♗xe4 ♘h3 14.♗g2
♗d7=

Black has no problems.



5...♗e7 6.f4

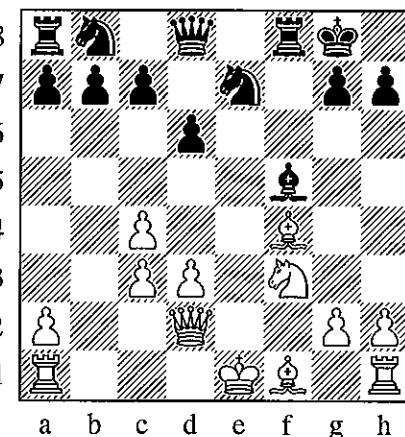
This looks a little premature.

6.g3 0–0 7.♗g2 c5 followed by ...♗bc6 gave Black a pleasant version of the next chapter in Einwiller – Luett, Bad Woerishofen 1999, as White has committed to e2-e4 rather early.

6...exf4 7.♗xf4 0–0 8.♗f3 f5 9.exf5 ♘xf5

10.♗d2

We have been following Dobosz – Koepke, Austria 2013. Now Black could have played:



10...♗e8!N 11.♗e3

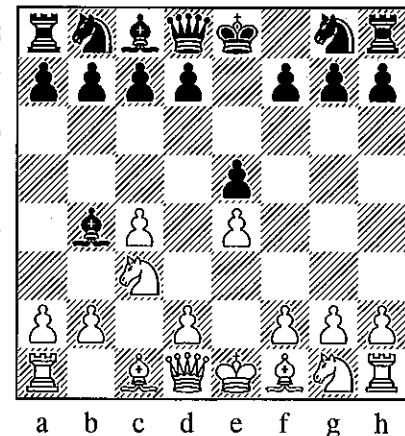
11.♗e2? is strongly met by 11...♗xd3!.

11...♗g4 12.0–0–0 ♘d7

With a promising position for Black.

C) 3.e4

This move weakens the d4-square and enables Black to get active play in the centre.



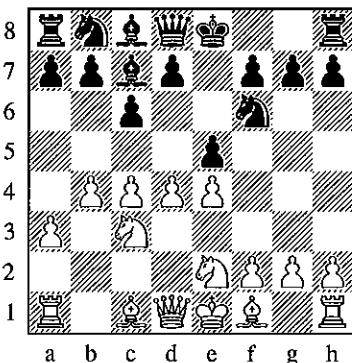
3...♗f6 4.d3

4.♗ge2 c6

Taking in account White's slow development, it makes sense to open up the position with ...d5.

5.a3 ♜a5 6.b4 ♜c7 7.d4

This move is more preventive than aggressive: White's idea is to meet 7...d5 with 8.cxd5 cxd5 9.♗g5!.



7...a5!N

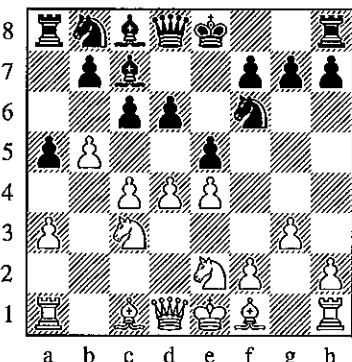
I favour this new move, although 7...exd4 8.♗xd4 0-0 9.♗d3 d5 was also good for Black in Starr – Abdullah, Grand Rapids 1989.

8.b5

8.dxe5?! axb4! 9.exf6 ♜xf6!± is excellent for Black.

8...d6 9.g3

9.dxe5 dxe5 10.♗xd8† ♜xd8 gives Black fine prospects due to White's weak dark squares.



9...♜g4 10.♗g2 exd4 11.♗xd4 ♜bd7 12.♗b1 0-0 13.0-0 ♜e8

Black is doing fine.

4...c6

Once again Black is preparing ...d5.

5.♗f3 0-0!

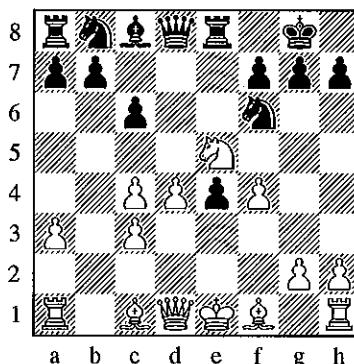
A logical pawn sacrifice.

The immediate 5...d5?! would be premature due to 6.cxd5 cxd5 7.♗a4†! ♜c6 8.♗xe5±.

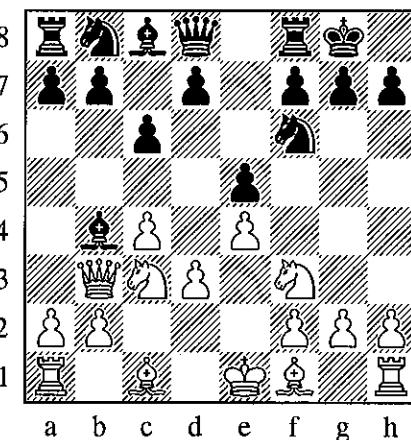
6.♗b3

After 6.♗xe5 d5! 7.exd5 cxd5 8.d4 ♜c6! White will need to give back his extra pawn in order to finish development.

6.a3 is too slow: 6...♜xc3† 7.bxc3 d5 8.♗xe5 ♜e8 9.f4 dxe4 10.d4 Now Black's play in the game Hertneck – Bruehl, Altenkirchen 2001, can be improved by means of:



10...♜a5!N 11.♗c2 c5! 12.d5 ♜bd7± and Black is better.



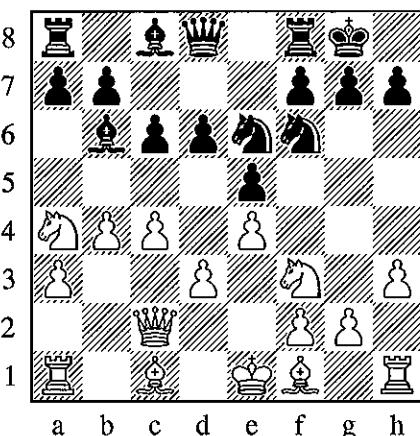
6...♕a6!N

6...♕a5?! occurred in Hort – Rukavina, Brno 1975, but the text move sees Black develop more quickly.

7.a3 ♕a5 8.♗c2 d6 9.b4 ♕b6 10.h3

10.♕a4 is strongly met by 10...♗g4†.

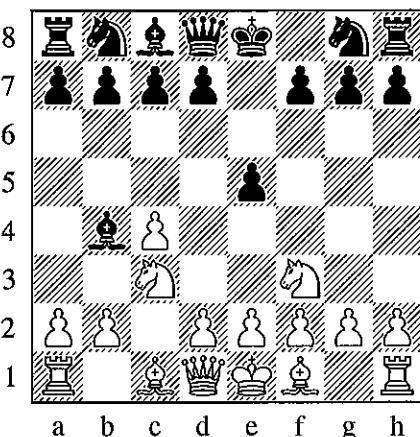
10...♗c7 11.♕a4 ♗e6



12.♕xb6 axb6 13.♔e2 ♕h5 14.g3 c5

Black is at least equal.

D) 3.♕f3



Compared with the 2.♕f3 line from Chapter 6, Black can't advance his e-pawn here, but

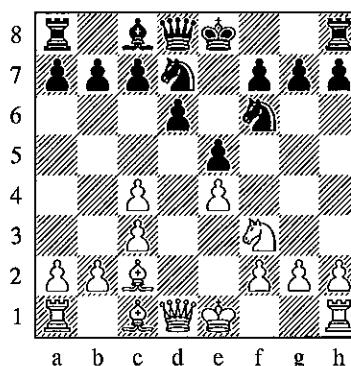
he can compromise White's pawn structure instead.

3...♗xc3

We will analyse D1) 4.dxc3 and D2) 4.bxc3.

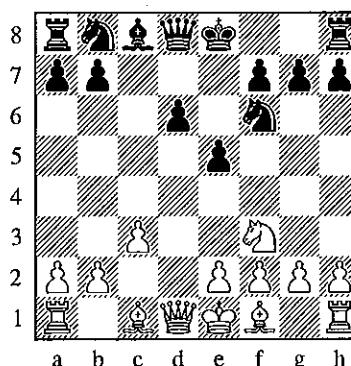
D1) 4.dxc3 d6 5.g3

5.e4 ♔f6 6.♗d3 ♔bd7 7.♗c2 occurred in Skembris – Vidarsson, Kopavogur 1994, and now I would like to offer the simple:



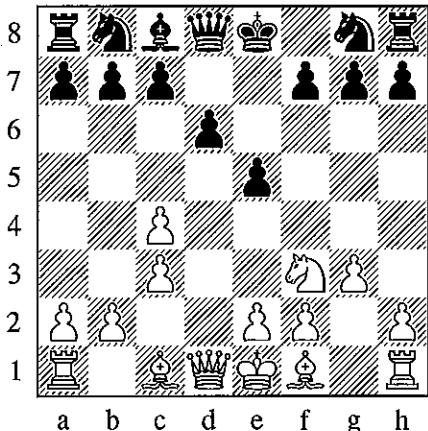
7...♗c5!N 8.♗e2 ♗g4 9.h3 ♘h5 10.b4 ♘e6
With a comfortable position for Black.

5.c5 ♔f6 6.cxd6 cxd6 sees White swap off one of his doubled pawns, at the expense of some time. The most interesting continuation from here is:



7.e4!N It seems quite logical to try and fix Black's central structure. (7.♗a4†? occurred in Wenzel – Vatter, Germany 1994, and now

7... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ N 8. $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ a5! 10. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ is preferable for Black thanks to his better development.) 7... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0-0= With easy equality for Black.

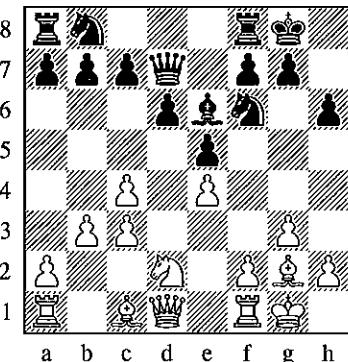


5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

Now we have a reversed Rossolimo variation of the Sicilian.

6...h6 7.0-0

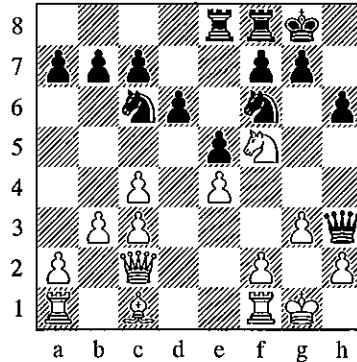
White has also tried: 7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0-0 8.e4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 9.b3 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 10.0-0



10...a5!N (10... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ led to roughly equal chances in Leroy – Shchekachev, St Quentin 2001) 11.a4 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ b6 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ Black has a comfortable position.

7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

Another good example continued: 8. $\mathbb{W}c2$ 0-0 9.e4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10.b3 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ (11...a5!?) 12. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{W}xh3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$



14.f3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ Black is preparing ...f5. (15... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ N is also possible, with the same idea) 16. $\mathbb{W}g2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 17.g4? $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 18.h4 $\mathbb{Q}e6\uparrow$ Black obtained the upper hand in Ibragimov – Sutovsky, Montreal 2006.

8.c5!?

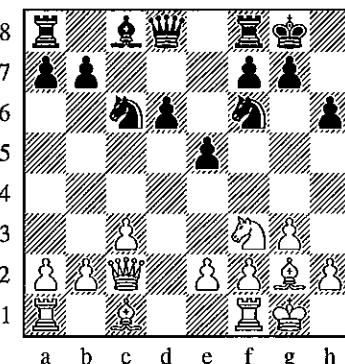
We have already seen a similar idea earlier.

8...0-0!

Once again, Black should ignore it.

8...d5 is inaccurate, as 9.b4 a6 10.c4!± put Black under some pressure in Uhlmann – Gavrikov, Tallinn 1987.

9.cxd6 cxd6 10. $\mathbb{W}c2$



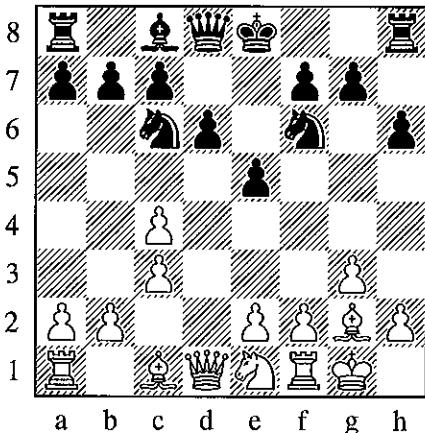
10...d5!N

10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ occurred in Hempel – Nowak, corr. 2008, when 11...d5N would

have reached my desired position below – but it seems more precise to advance the central pawn immediately.

11.♗d1 ♜e6

I prefer Black's chances due to his strong centre.



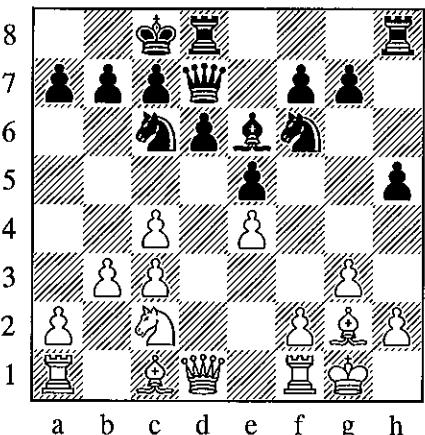
8...♝e6 9.b3 ♜d7 10.e4

After 10.♕c2 ♜h3 11.♕e3 h5! 12.♕d5 ♜xg2 13.♕xg2 h4 14.♗h1 0–0–0† Black had a dangerous initiative on the kingside in Taimanov – Rublevsky, St Petersburg 2001.

10...0–0–0

10...♝h3?! is also fine, and 11.f3 ♜xg2 12.♕xg2 ♜e7 was equal in Dimovski – Ristic, Bela Crkva 1986.

11.♕c2 h5



12.f3!?

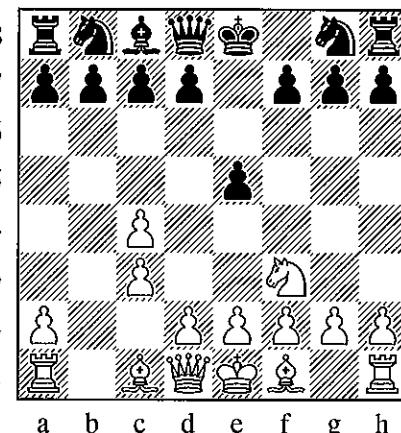
12.h4N should have been preferred.

12...h4

Black had a dangerous initiative on the kingside, Hulak – Bologan, Ohrid 2001.

D2) 4.bxc3

This time White recaptures towards the centre.



4...d6 5.d4

5.d3 leads back to the 5.♕f3 line in the notes to the earlier variation B.

5.g3 ♜e7 (5...♝f6!?) 6.♗g2 transposes to variation B2 of the next chapter.

5.c5

Once again, this attempt to damage Black's pawn structure isn't dangerous as long as Black ignores it.

5...♝f6 6.cxd6 cxd6 7.g3 0–0 8.♗g2 ♜c6 9.0–0 ♜e6

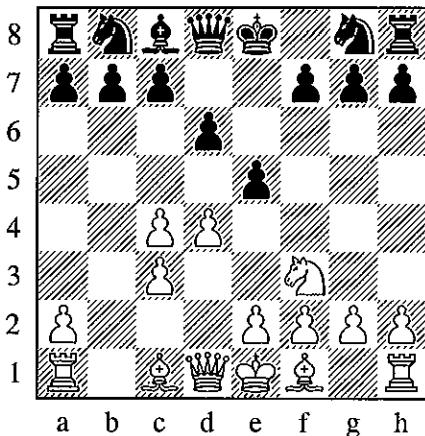
9...♝e8 was a bit less precise in Gerasimov – Glek, Tomsk 2001.

10.d3

10.♕g5 makes no sense in view of 10...♝f5 11.d3 h6.

10...h6 11.c4

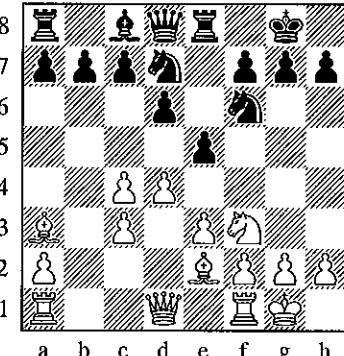
11.♗b1 ♖d7 is roughly equal; Black's plan consists of ...♝ac8, ...♝fd8 and ...d5.
 11...♝d7 12.♗b1 ♝ab8 13.♗a3 ♝fc8 14.♗d2 d5
 Black had a good game in Franke – Mroczeck, email 2011.



5...e4!?

This way Black stops White from occupying the centre with e2-e4.

5...♝d7 is also playable: 6.e3 (6.e4 ♐gf6 7.♗d3 b6! 8.0–0 ♘b7 9.♗e1 0–0= led to a solid position for Black in Farago – Malich, Halle 1978) 6...♝gf6 7.♗e2 0–0 8.0–0 ♘e8 9.♗a3 This was Drossel – Salden, Leutersdorf 2003, and now Black can continue with:



9...b6!N 10.♗d2 ♘b7 Black has a comfortable position and White's bishop has an uncertain future on a3.

6.♗d2

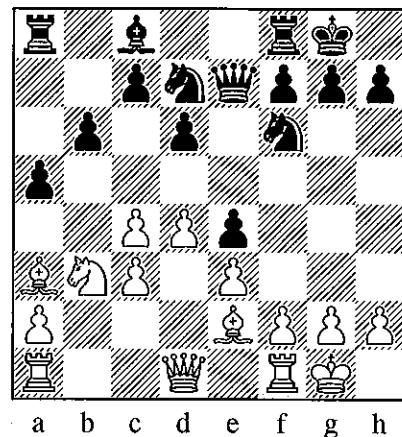
6.♗g5?! ♘f6 7.g3 h6 8.♗h3 ♘c6 is pleasant for Black.

6...♝e7 7.e3

7.g3 f5 8.♗g2 ♘f6 also looks good for Black.

7...♝f6 8.♗e2 0–0 9.0–0 ♘bd7 10.♗a3 b6
 11.♗b3 a5!?

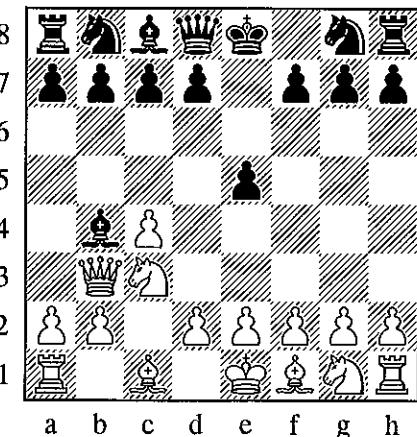
11...c5N also looks reasonable.



12.♗c2 ♘e8 13.♗ab1 ♘a6 14.♗fd1 ♘e6

Black was starting to take over in Datta – Lee, Stillwater 2002.

E) 3.♗b3



White gains a tempo against the bishop while avoiding the doubling of his pawns, though in some lines the queen will be misplaced on b3.

3...a5!?

3...♕c6 is a reasonable alternative. However, I have decided to go with the pawn move, having in mind an interesting novelty on the next turn – see variation E2 below for further details.

White's two main options are E1) 4.g3 and E2) 4.♗d5. Others include:

4.a3 ♜xc3 5.♗xc3 d6

5...♝e7?! 6.♗f3 d6 7.b3 ♜f6 8.e3 0–0 was also good for Black in Lobron – Keitlinghaus, Germany 1990.

6.g3

6.e4?! ♜c6 7.♗f3 ♜g4 and Black was already taking over the d4-square in Richardson – Mantovanelli, Internet 2005.

6.e3 ♜f6 7.d4 ♛e7 8.♗f3 ♜c6 9.♗e2 0–0= with a comfortable position for Black.

6...♜f6 7.♗g2 ♜bd7 8.d3 0–0

The position is about equal but White's next move weakens the light squares.

9.e3?!

Now in Jestico – Johnson, Coventry 2015, Black should have played:

9...♝c5!N†

Black intends ...a4 with a clamp on the queenside, and 10.b3?! would lead to even bigger problems for White after 10...e4!..

4.♗f3 d6!?

This seems like an interesting novelty. Black delays ...♝c6 in order to render a possible ♜d5 less effective.

5.e3

5.♗d5 ♜f6 transposes to variation E2.

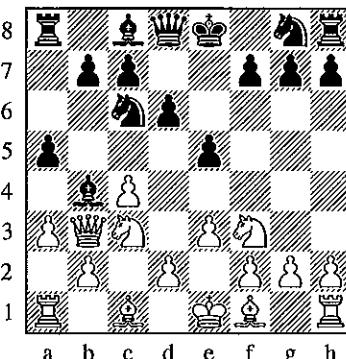
5.g3 ♜c6 6.♗g2 ♜f6 7.0–0 0–0 transposes to the note on 6.♗f3 in variation E1.

5...♝c6

With this move we transpose to a few games.

6.a3

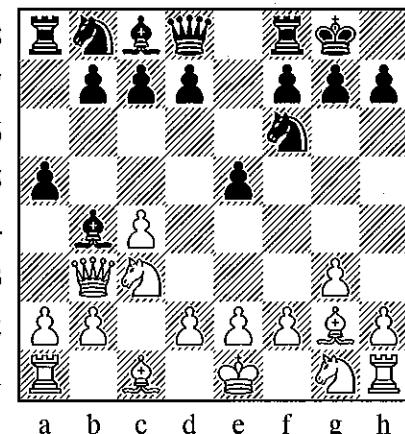
This position occurred in Contin – Caruana, Martina Franca 2008. I would like to improve Black's play with:



6...♜xc3!N 7.♗xc3 ♜f6 8.b3 ♜g4 9.♗b2 0–0
10.d3 ♜d7 11.♗e2 ♜f6=

With roughly equal chances.

E1) 4.g3 ♜f6 5.♗g2 0–0



6.a3

I considered two other continuations:

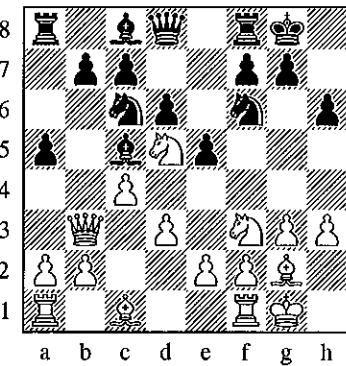
6.♗f3 ♜c6 7.0–0 d6

7...♝e8?! with the idea of ...♝d4 also looks good.

8.d3 h6 9.♗d5 ♜c5 10.h3

10.♗d2 a4! (this improves over 10...♝xd5 from Uhlmann – Khalifman, Germany 1992) 11.♗c2 ♜e6 12.♗xf6† (12.e4?! ♜g4!?) 12...♝xf6 with a comfortable position for Black, Groth – Sousa, corr. 2012.

This position occurred in Uhlmann – Sasikiran, Dresden 2005. A useful improvement is:



10...♝xd5!N 11.cxd5 ♜e7 12.♗d2 a4 13.♗c2 f5 14.e3 ♜e8

The ideas of ...♝f7 and ...f4 mean that White is under pressure.

6.e3 d6?!N 7.♗ge2 ♜f5!

Black takes the important d3-square under control and offers the b7-pawn.

8.♗xb7?!

8.0–0 is the lesser evil, though it isn't much fun for White after 8...♝d3! 9.♗xb7 ♛bd7! 10.♗xa8 ♛xa8.

The text move runs into another powerful exchange sacrifice.

8...♛bd7!

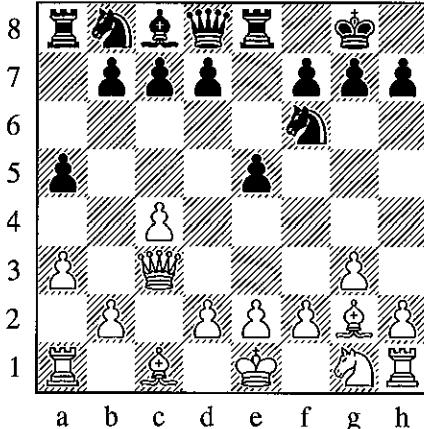
The knight is aiming for c5 and d3.

9.d4

9.♗xa8? ♛c5! is hopeless for White
9...♝b8 10.♗g2 ♛d3! 11.a3 a4! 12.♗xa4
♛xc3† 13.bxc3 c5!

White is under serious pressure.

6...♝xc3 7.♗xc3 ♜e8



8.d3

The other main candidate is:

8.♗f3 d5 9.cxd5

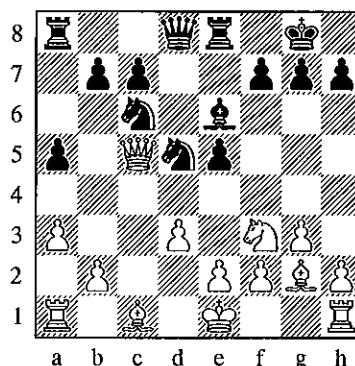
Otherwise ...d4 will come.

9...♝xd5 10.♗c4

10.♗c2 e4 11.♗d4 ♛f6† (11...♜a6?!N†)
12.e3?! b6!† followed by ...c5 and Black was clearly better in Martinez – L. Bronstein, Buenos Aires 1991.

10...♝c6 11.d3 ♜e6 12.♗c5

Now I would like to introduce an improvement over Kelly – Conquest, Birmingham 2000.



12...a4!N

Fixing White's queenside. The key line continues:

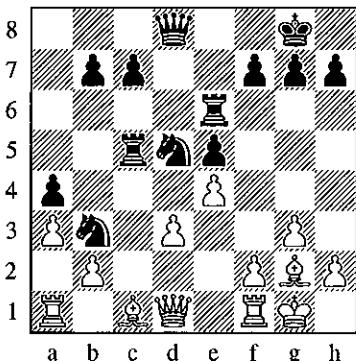
13.♗g5?

13.0–0 is better, but 13...♝a5! 14.♗d2 ♛d7† favours Black.

The text move looks ambitious but it leads to even greater problems for White.

13...♝a5 14.♛xe6 ♜xe6 15.♗c2 ♔d4 16.♗d1
♝c5 17.0–0 ♔b3 18.e4

18.♗b1?! ♜ec6! 19.♗d2 ♜c2+ makes things easier for Black.



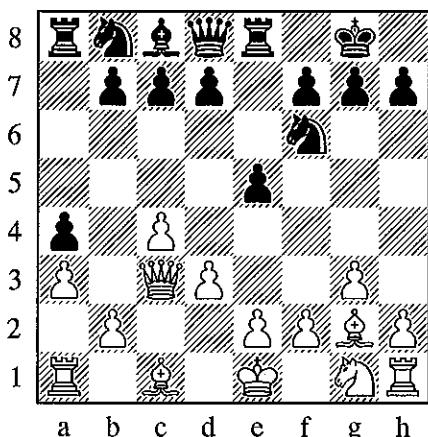
18...♝f4! 19.gxf4 ♜xa1 20.♗e3 ♜b3 21.♗xc5
♝xc5 22.fxe5 ♜d4!+

Black is clearly better.

8...a4!?

Fixing the queenside.

8...h6 has been played, but I don't see any point in allowing 9.b3N.



9.♔g5!?

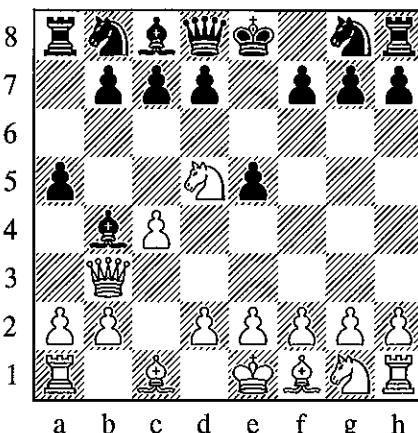
9.♗f3 h6! 10.e4 (10.0–0 d6 followed by ...♗c6 is also more pleasant for Black)

10...d6 11.0–0 c5 12.b4 axb3 13.♗xb3 ♜c6+ gave Black a positional edge in Pruskin – He. Gretarsson, Germany 1999.

9...d6 10.♗f3 h6 11.♗xf6 ♜xf6 12.♗d2
♗d7 13.0–0 ♜e7

Black is certainly not worse.

E2) 4.♗d5



4...♝f6!N

This is the big idea referred to in the comments to 3...a5. Black offers a pawn sacrifice for the sake of fast development.

4...♗c6 has been the usual choice.

5.♗f3

Accepting the sacrifice is risky for White: 5.♗xb4 axb4 6.♗xb4 ♜c6 7.♗c3 d5! and Black has a dangerous initiative.

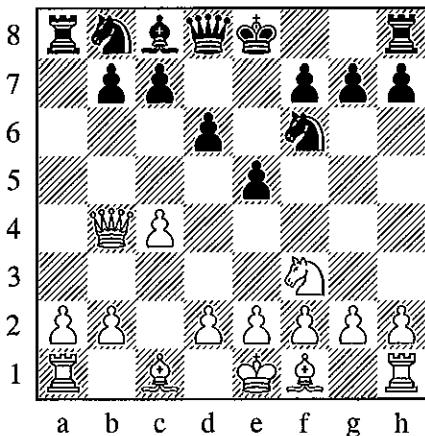
5.a3 ♜xd5 (5...♜e7?! looks like a reasonable alternative) 6.cxd5 ♜c5 7.♗g3 ♜f6 8.♗f3 d6 is good for Black.

5...d6! 6.♗xb4

6.a3 ♜xd5 (6...♜c5!?) 7.cxd5 ♜c5 8.e3
0–0 9.d4 exd4 10.exd4 ♜b6+ and Black is better thanks to his fast development and the weakness of White's central pawns.

6...axb4 7.♗xb4

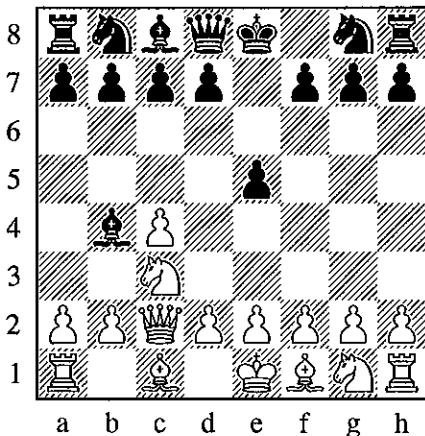
White has a slightly better version of the 5.♕xb4 line mentioned above, but Black is still doing well after:



7...♗c6 8.♗c3 ♗e4 9.♗c2 ♗c5 10.d3 ♗g4†

With a strong initiative.

F) 3.♗c2

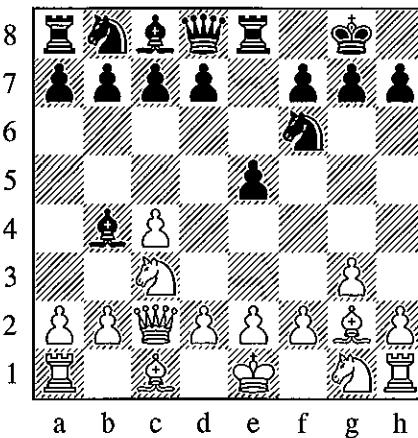


White gets ready to recapture on c3 with the queen if needed. The queen is less exposed on c2 than on b3, so we will handle things slightly differently than in variation E.

3...♗f6

White's four main moves are F1) 4.g3, F2) 4.a3, F3) 4.♗f3 and F4) 4.e3.

F1) 4.g3 0-0 5.♗g2 ♕e8



6.♗f3

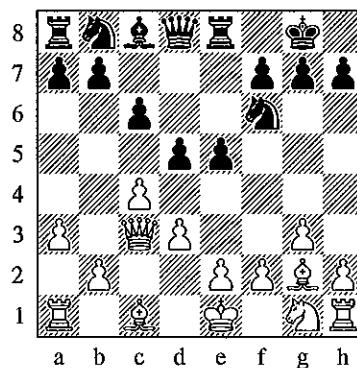
6.d3 c6

Black is preparing ...d5.

7.a3

7.♗g5 h6 8.♗xf6 ♕xf6 9.a3 ♕xc3† 10.♗xc3 d6 11.♗f3 ♕g4 12.0-0 ♗d7 was equal in Taimanov – Niebling, Grieskirchen 1998.

7...♕xc3† 8.♗xc3 d5



9.cxd5?!

This inaccurate move gives Black the c6-square for his knight.

9...cxd5 10.♗g5 ♗c6 11.♗xf6?!

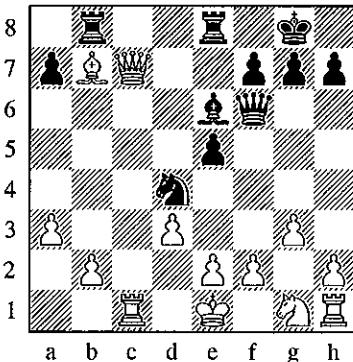
A principled, but bad decision. White cannot afford to spend time grabbing a pawn. Black's development advantage is too large.

11...♕xf6 12.♗xd5 ♗d4†

White's position is extremely dangerous.

13. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{B}ab8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c7$

Now in Ljubojevic – Anand, Monte Carlo (rapid) 1997, Black could have virtually finished the game by means of:



15... $\mathbb{B}ed8!!N$

Threatening ... $\mathbb{B}xb7!$.

16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

16. $\mathbb{B}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ with the deadly threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ wins for Black.

16... $\mathbb{B}xb7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2!!$

19. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g2!$

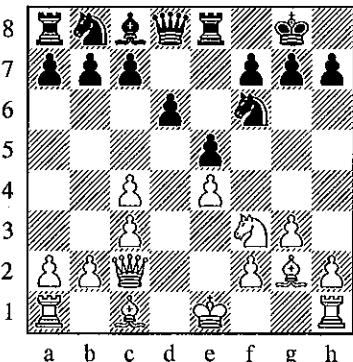
Black wins.

6.e4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 7.dxc3

7. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ c6 8.d3 d5 was promising for Black in Vogel – Peters, Hessen 1999.

7...d6 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

We have reached a reversed Rossolimo Sicilian. Despite White's extra tempo, Black should not have any real problems. I suggest:



8...a5!N

8...a6 is another thematic idea, and after 9.0–0 b5 10.cxb5 axb5 Black had a good position in Bukal – Barlov, Mendrisio 1989.

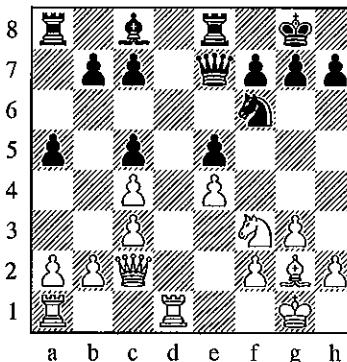
9.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 11. b3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. a4 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ h6 15. f3 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ and Black is fine.

10... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ g6! does not change much.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$

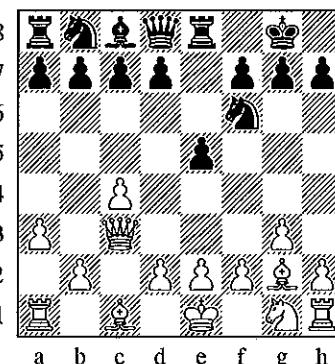


13. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ g6 14. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ c6 17. f3 $\mathbb{Q}ad8$

The chances remain roughly equal.

6.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 7. $\mathbb{W}xc3$

This occurred in Arsh – Pashkov, Kazan 2010, and now I would like to introduce:



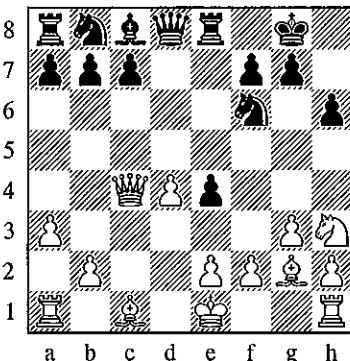
8.♗h3

8.f3 is strongly met by 8...d5! 9.cxd5 ♘xd5 with Black's initiative.

8.b4 d5! 9.cxd5 ♘xd5 10.♘c2 ♜f5 11.e3 a5 12.b5 ♘d7 13.♗b2 ♜c8 14.♗e2 c5† also turns out well for Black.

8...d5 9.d4 dxc4 10.♘xc4 h6!

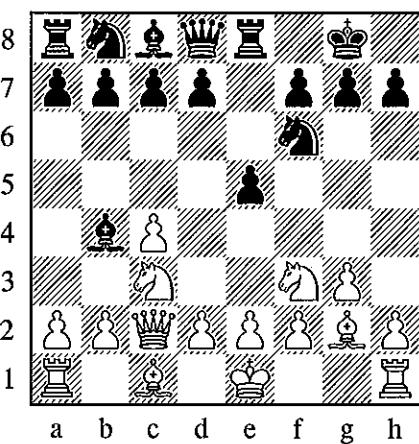
By taking the important g5-square under control, Black prevents a pin and makes it hard for White to find a good role for his dark-squared bishop.



11.e3 ♜g4 12.♗f4 ♜f3! 13.0–0 ♜xg2 14.♗xg2 ♘bd7 15.♗d2 ♘b6 16.♗b3 ♘d7 17.♗ac1 c6†

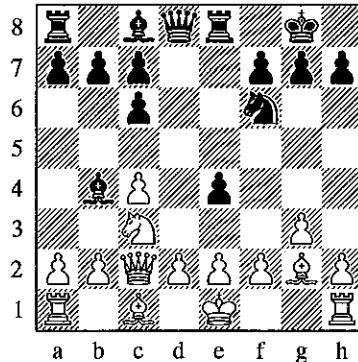
Black has a comfortable position with good control over d5, while White's bishop is not much good at all.

In this already rare position I prefer the almost untested continuation:

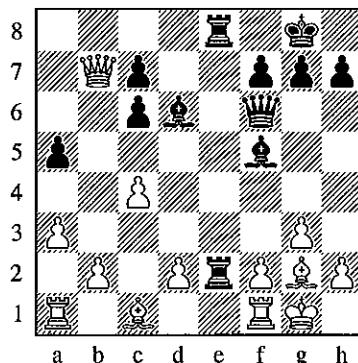


6...e4!? 7.♗g5

7.♗d4 occurred in W. Schmidt – Rath, Esbjerg 1976, when 7...♘c6!N is a strong idea, offering a pawn for the initiative. 8.♗xc6 dxc6



9.♗xe4 If White does not accept the sacrifice, Black will simply play ...♗f5 with a positional advantage. 9...♗f5 10.♗xf6† ♘xf6 11.♗b3 a5 12.a3 ♘d6 13.0–0 (or 13.e3?! a4 14.♗d1 ♘d3†) 13...♗xe2 14.♗xb7 ♘ae8



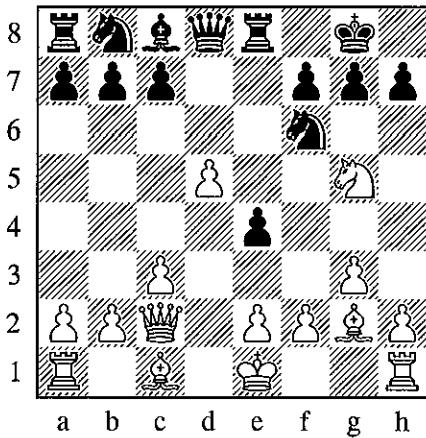
15.d4! The best try; nevertheless, after 15...♗xd4 16.♗xc6 h6† White is under some pressure.

7...♗xc3 8.dxc3 d5!?

8...♗e7 9.0–0 d6 is also equal; the text move helps White to improve his pawn structure but is also more active, so the choice is a matter of taste.

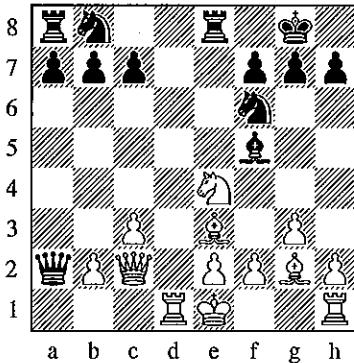
9.cxd5

All this occurred in Kradolfer – Maier, Switzerland 2013, and now I prefer:



9...♗xd5!N 10.0–0

I also checked: 10.♗e3 ♗f5 11.♗d1 ♗xa2 12.♗xe4



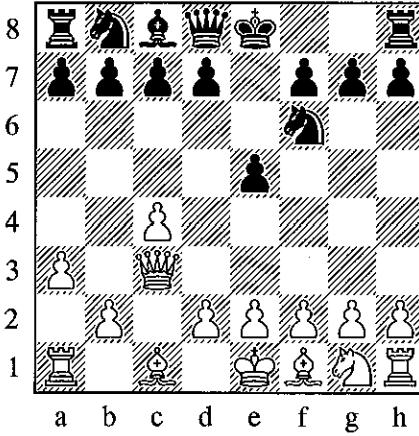
12...♗h8! 13.0–0 ♘c6 14.f3 ♗e6† With a slight edge for Black.

10..h6 11.♗d1 ♗c6 12.♗h3 ♗f5

Black is doing fine, and he may consider playing against the white knight with ...g5 followed by ...♗e6.

F2) 4.a3 ♗xc3 5.♗xc3

White hopes to make use of the bishop pair, but he is behind in development and Black may gain additional time against the queen at some point.



5...♗c6 6.♗f3

White has also tried:

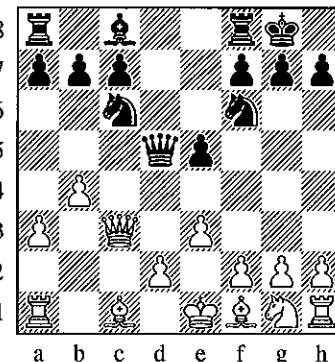
6.b4 0–0 7.e3

It's important to notice that 7.b5 ♘d4 8.e3 doesn't win a pawn in view of 8...♗e8! and Black is already a bit better.

7...d5

7...♗e8!? also deserves attention, with ...d5 to follow.

8.cxd5 ♗xd5



9.b5?

9.♗b2 is better, but Black is still more than okay. 9...♗e8 10.♗f3 ♗g4 11.♗c4 ♗d7 12.♗b5 ♗ad8 13.d3 ♗xf3 14.gxf3 Now in Schulz – Mainka, Luxembourg 1988, Black should have played 14...♗e6!N† with the ideas of ...♗d5 and ...a6.

The text move was essentially refuted in the following game:

9... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ 10.exd4? exd4 11. $\mathbb{W}c4 \mathbb{Q}e8\#$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{W}g6!+$

Black is already winning, but it is worth seeing the rest of this beautiful game by Shirov.

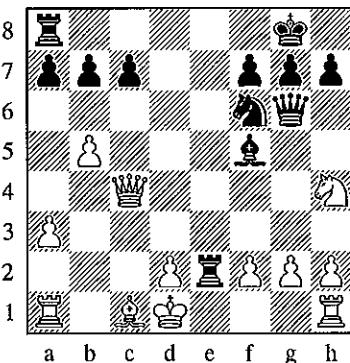
14. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}e6!$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c2 d3!$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xd3 \mathbb{Q}f5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2!$

Brilliant play by Black.

18. $\mathbb{Q}h4$

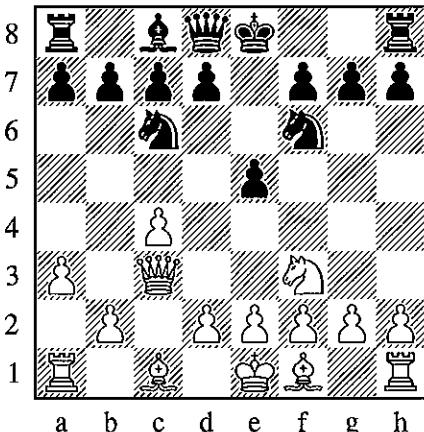
18... $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 19. $\mathbb{W}e3 \mathbb{Q}e8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e5 \mathbb{Q}c2\#$

21. $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{W}h5\#$ also wins for Black.



18... $\mathbb{W}h5!$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}c2\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$
21. $\mathbb{W}xe8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$

White resigned in Tahirov – Shirov, Calatrava 2007.



6...d6

We have reached a version of the Anti Nimzo-Indian where Black is a tempo up, as

the e-pawn arrived on e5 without the typical stop on e6.

7.e3

White continues developing modestly, hoping that his bishop pair will eventually tell.

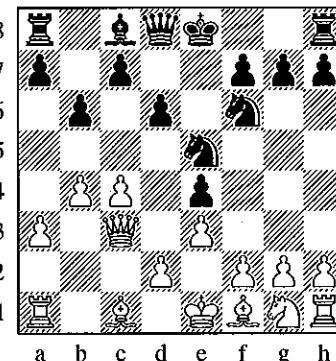
Another possible continuation is 7.g3 0–0 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ a5 9.d3 h6 10.0–0 a4!N with a comfortable position for Black.

7...e4

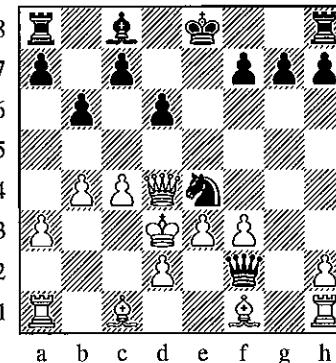
Black tries to develop some initiative before White completes his development.

8. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

8. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 9.b4 b6!? (9... $\mathbb{Q}g4!?$ N 10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ a5 is also promising for Black)



10.f4?? White was already struggling, but after this awful move he is losing. 10...exf3 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ (11.gxf3 $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ 12.fxe4 $\mathbb{W}h4\#$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}xe4\#$) 11... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 13.gxf3 $\mathbb{W}h4\#$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}f2\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$



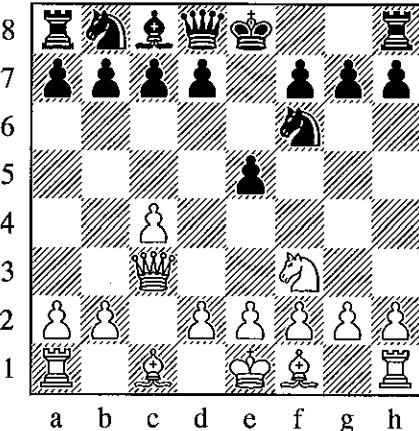
15... $\mathbb{W}xf3!$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xh8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$
 18. $\mathbb{W}g7$ (18. $\mathbb{W}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}c5\#$) 18... $\mathbb{E}g8!$ White
 was completely lost in Rogers – Wang Hao,
 Kuala Lumpur 2005.

8... ♔e5 9.b4 0-0 10.♔b2 ♕e8

Black is now ready to play ...c5, so White prevents it.

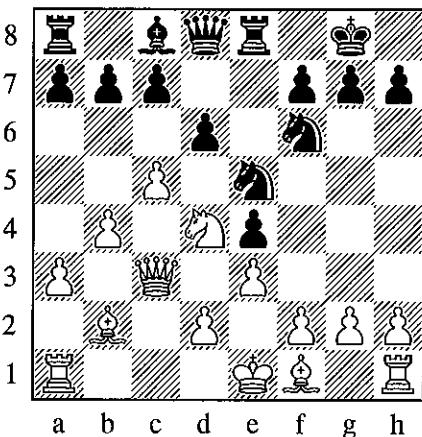
11.c5

Now in Onischuk – Vydeslaver, Halle 1995,
Black missed a strong response:



5...e4 6. $\mathbb{W}e5\ddagger$

White can also keep the queens on with: 6.Δd4 0–0 7.b4 White is trying to exploit the potential of the a1-h8 diagonal. 7...d6 8.Δb2 This position occurred in Solak – Moiseenko, Antalya 2013. I would like to correct Black's play with:



11...d5!N 12.b3 dxc5 13.bxc5 c6??

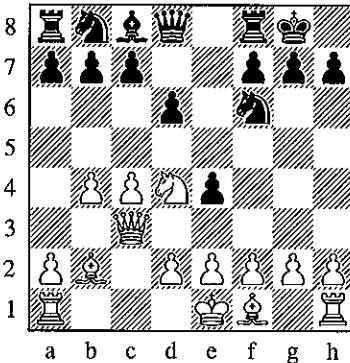
Followed by ... $\mathbb{W}g5$, with a useful initiative for Black.

F3) 4. Nf3

Against this move, it is actually quite reasonable to exchange on c3 unprovoked, as Black can gain time against the knight with ...e4.

4... ♘xc3!?

5.dxc3 occurred in Korchnoi – Adler, Switzerland 2008. Black can answer it with the simple 5...d6!N, which leads to a good version of variation D1, as White has spent a tempo moving his queen to the less-than-ideal c2-square.



8... $\mathbb{H}e8$?N (the immediate 8...c5?!N is also good enough for equality) 9.g3 c5 10.bxc5 dxc5 11. $\mathfrak{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 12. $\mathfrak{Q}g2$ $\mathfrak{Q}c6$ 13.0-0 $\mathfrak{Q}f5$ 14.a4 $\mathbb{H}ac8$ = With equal chances.

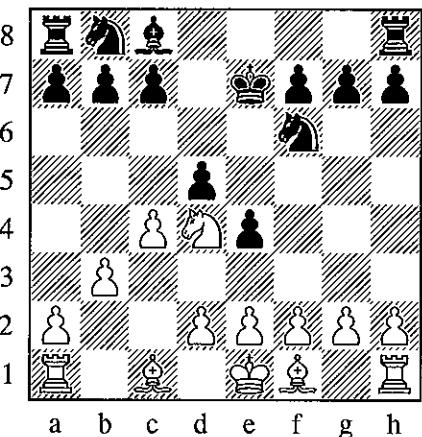
6... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 7. $\mathbb{W}xe7\#$ $\mathfrak{Q}xe7$ 8. $\mathfrak{Q}d4$

We have reached an interesting queenless position, where it seems to me that Black's smooth development will make up for White's bishop pair.

8...d5 9.b3

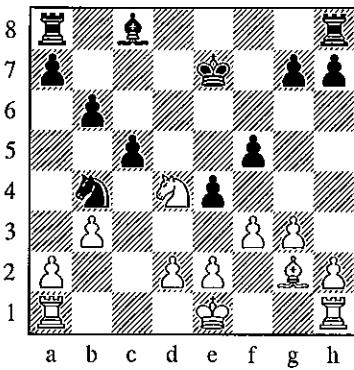
9.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10.b3 c5 11. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ occurred in Luce – Bischoff, Mendoza 1985, and now 11... $\mathbb{Q}c6N$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ f6= would have reached a normal position.

9.d3 dxc4 10.dxe4!? is an interesting positional pawn sacrifice, (10.dxc4N looks safer, with roughly equal chances after 10... $\mathbb{E}d8=$) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 11.f3 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 12.e4 White hopes that her bishop pair and extra central pawn will provide compensation, but in the next few moves she struggles to show it. 12...c5 13. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15.a4 This was Leme – Alexandria, Lucerne (ol) 1982, when the simple 15... $\mathbb{E}ad8\#$ would have given Black the upper hand.

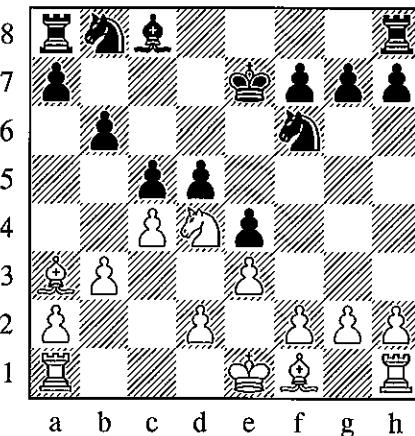


9...c5 10. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ b6 11.e3

Black also equalizes after: 11.cxd5!N $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12.g3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ f5 14.f3 $\mathbb{Q}db4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$



16.a3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exf3 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 20.b4 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 21.bxc5 bxc5=



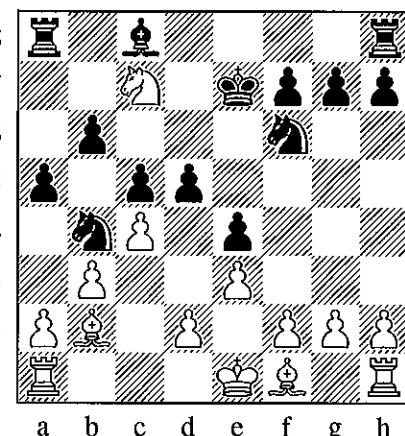
11...a5!

Black is preparing ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ -b4.

12. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c7$

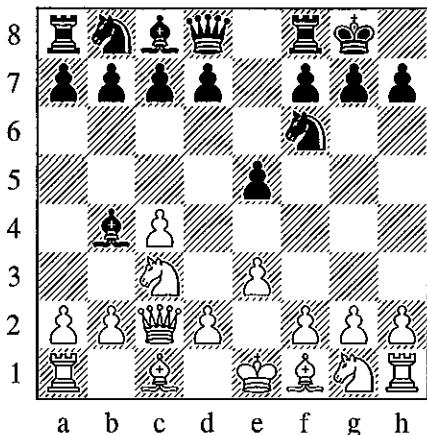
14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ can be met by 14...dxc4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ when it is now clear how White will justify the loss of a pawn.

Now Black's play in Chuprov – Zvjaginsev, Serpukhov 2007, can be improved by means of:



14... $\mathbb{Q}b8!N$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 18.d3 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19.dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 20.f3 $\mathbb{Q}c6=$

With a pleasant endgame for Black.

F4) 4.e3 0–0

White generally either prods the bishop with F41) 5.a3 or prepares it with F42) 5. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$.

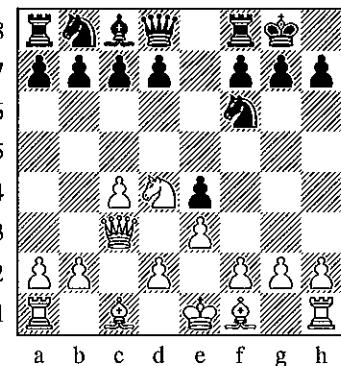
5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$!?

This looks like the most accurate way to play. Black is following the same formula as in variation F3 above.

5... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ would give White a chance to play 6.d3, obtaining the d2-square for the retreat of the f3-knight.

6. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ e4 7. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

Now in Manojlovic – Jevtic, Serbia 2007, Black could have obtained a fine position with:

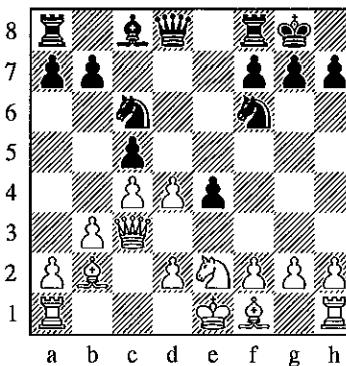


7...c5!N 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d5 9.b3

9.cxd5?!. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}a6\bar{F}$ is dangerous for White.

9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ d4!?

10...dxc4= is decent but the text move is more ambitious.

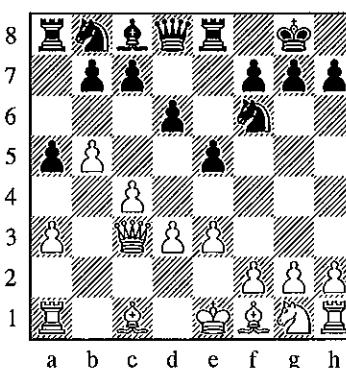
11.exd4

11... $\mathbb{Q}b4$! 12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$! 13. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c2\bar{F}$
14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ =

And Black is fine.

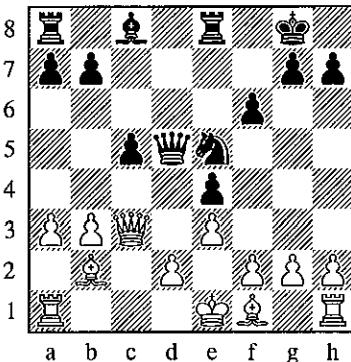
F41) 5.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 6. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 7.d3

7.b4 a5! 8.b5 d6! 9.d3 occurred in Eingorn – Sasikiran, Moscow 2001, when Black's most logical follow-up would have been:

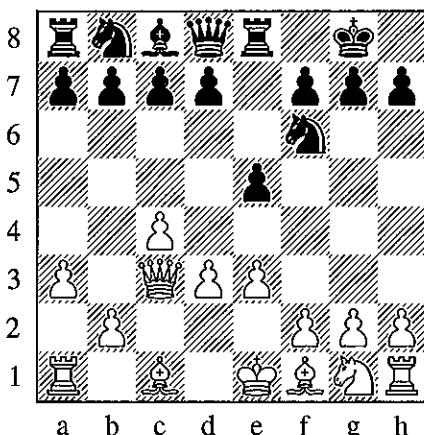


9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$?N 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$! 12.f3 $\mathbb{Q}f5\bar{F}$ With better chances for Black.

Another good example for Black continued:
7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e4! 8. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ c5 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10.b3 d5
11.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$! 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ b6 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}xd5\bar{F}$ is also better for Black) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$
13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ f6 \bar{F}



Black has already won the opening battle, and the further inaccuracy 15... $\mathbb{W}xe5?$ led after 15... $\mathbb{B}xe5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}xc4$ 17.bxc4 $\mathbb{B}g5!$ 18. $\mathbb{B}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{B}d8\#$ to a serious advantage for Black in Comas Fabrego – Morozevich, Pamplona 1998.



7...a5!?

Preventing White from expanding on the queenside.

8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9.b3 d5 10.cxd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

This occurred in Mirovshchikov – V. Popov, St Petersburg 2002, and now I would like to improve upon Black's play with:

13...a4!N

The immediate 13... $\mathbb{B}a6!?$ N with the idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ is also interesting. My analysis continues

14. $\mathbb{W}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 15.e4 $\mathbb{W}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{B}b6!$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xb3$ $\mathbb{B}xb3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7=$ intending ... $\mathbb{Q}b5$, with roughly equal chances.

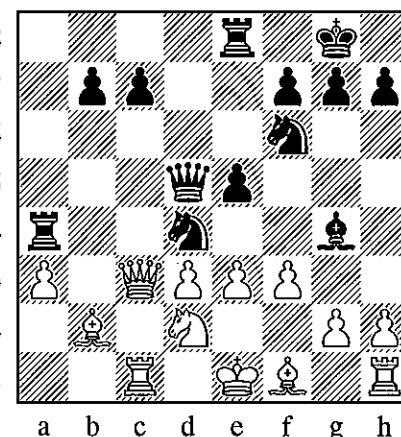
14.bxa4

14.b4 $\mathbb{Q}a6!$ is extremely strong, as 15. $\mathbb{W}xc7?$ is refuted by 15... $\mathbb{W}a2!+$. Instead 15. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ is necessary, though Black retains the upper hand with 15... $\mathbb{B}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{B}ee6\#$.

14... $\mathbb{B}xa4$ 15.f3

15. $\mathbb{W}xc7?$ is still dangerous, this time in view of: 15... $\mathbb{W}b5!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 17. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{W}g5\#$

The text move looks natural but Black can counter it with a strong piece sacrifice:

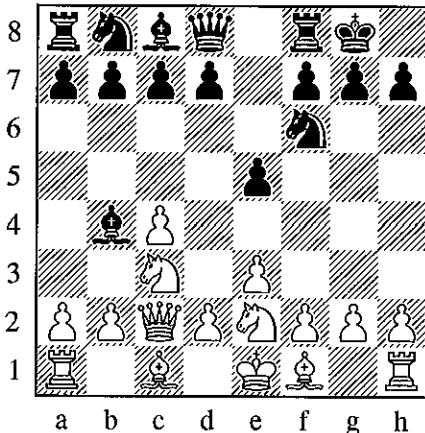


15... $\mathbb{Q}xf3!$ 16.gxf3 $\mathbb{Q}xh3\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 18. $\mathbb{W}c2!$ $\mathbb{B}g4!$ 19.h3 $\mathbb{B}g6$ 20. $\mathbb{B}h2$ $\mathbb{W}xe3\#$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}a7\#$

Black's initiative promises at least equal chances, and in a practical game White's task would be even more difficult.

F42) 5. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$

This move has the obvious idea of playing a2-a3 following by recapturing on c3 with the other knight.



5... $\mathbb{B}e8$

This is a typical idea in the Rossolimo Sicilian, which can be applied here as well. Black creates an escape square on f8 for the bishop.

Funnily enough, when the book was nearing completion, I realized that 5...c6!? would be an easier repertoire choice, as the natural 6.a3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ transposes to a line considered on page 122 – see 6. $\mathbb{W}c2$ c6! in the notes to variation A3 in Chapter 6. Therefore you don't actually need to learn the 5... $\mathbb{B}e8$ line – but since I have already analysed it, I will leave it here anyway so that you will have it as another option against White's move order in the current chapter.

6.a3

6. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

This was once played by the young Kamsky, but it remains a rare choice.

6... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 7. $cxd5$ c6!

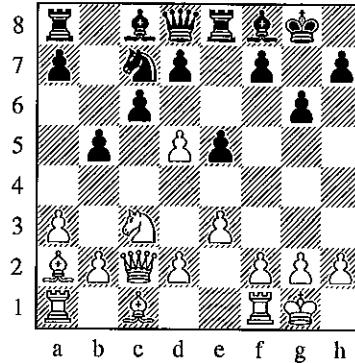
Black's easiest approach is to get rid of the d5-pawn.

8.a3 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$!

The knight is coming to c7 to force an exchange of the d5-pawn.

10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ g6 11.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ b5 13. $\mathbb{Q}a2$

Have I found a nice way for Black to fight for the advantage?



13...a5!N

With the idea of ...b4.

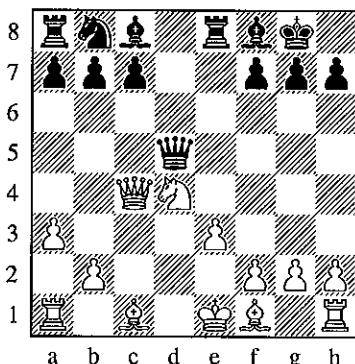
13... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ was also fine for Black: 14. $dxc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 15. d3 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 16. e4 Kamsky – Spasov, Manila 1990, and now 16...d5!N would have equalized.

14. $dxc6$ $dxc6$ 15. d3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$

Black has a slightly more pleasant position due to his space advantage plus the weak pawn on d3.

6... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 7. g3

After 7. d4 exd4 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ d5 9. $cxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 11. $\mathbb{W}c4$ Black has a splendid move:



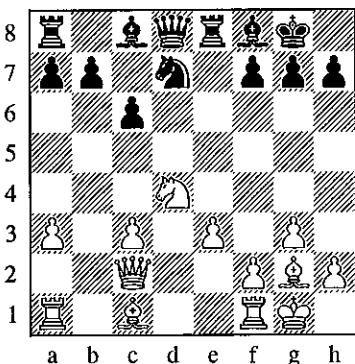
11... $\mathbb{W}d8$! Black keeps the queens on in order to exploit his development advantage. 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c5 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ With a promising position for Black in McNab – Grandelius, Istanbul (ol) 2012.

7...c6

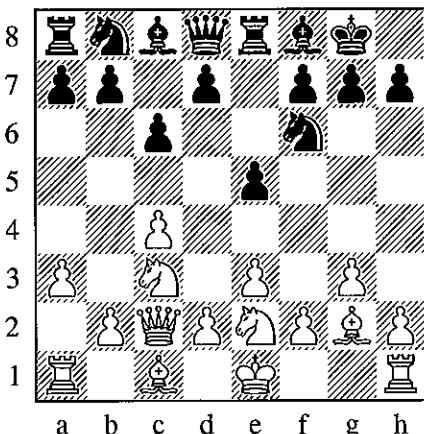
A logical move, preparing ...d5.

8.Qg2

8.d4 exd4 9.Qxd4 d5 10.cxd5 Qxd5 11.Qg2 Qxc3 (11...Qxe3!?) N 12.Qxe3 Wxd4 13.Qe4! We5 14.Qxh7† Qh8 is also roughly equal)
12.bxc3 Qd7 13.0–0



This was Trois – Slipak, Villa Martelli 2009, and now Black could have continued 13...Qe5N 14.f4 Qc4 15.e4 Wa5= with a good position.



8...d5 9.cxd5

9.d3?! occurred in Kaps – Nodirjanova, Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010, when 9...d4! Nf would have given Black the better chances due to the space advantage.

9...cxd5 10.d4 Qc6!?

Black allows the creation of an isolated pawn, as his pieces will be rather active in the ensuing position.

10...e4 has been tested a few times, and is also perfectly playable.

11.0–0

11.dxe5 Qxe5 12.h3 (12.0–0 Qg4 13.Qd4 Wd7 gives Black good prospects on the light squares) 12...g6!? led to roughly equal play in Zakhartsov – Vetroshko, Lvov 2012.

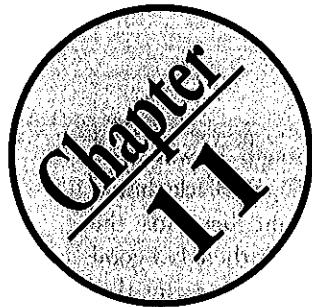
11...Qg4 12.h3 Qxe2 13.Qxe2 exd4 14.exd4 Ec8 15.Wd3 Qe4 16.Qe3 Qa5=

Black obtained a good position in Bischoff – Naiditsch, Pulvermuehle 2004.

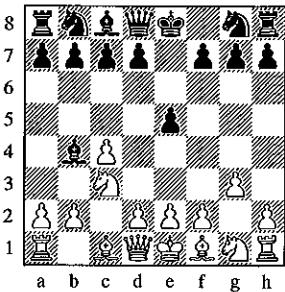
Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with an assortment of lines after 1.c4 e5 2.Qc3 Qb4. It is hard to generalize as the lines are all different, but it is fair to say that most of White's rare third moves either have some sort of positional drawback or allow Black easy development in a position with doubled c-pawns – although we will continue our study of such positions in the next chapter.

The most interesting lines of this chapter are the ones where White uses his queen to avoid doubled c-pawns. In the event of 3.Wb3 I really like the rare 3...a5!?, in conjunction with the 4.Qd5 Qf6! pawn sacrifice. The final section dealt with 3.Wc2 Qf6, where Black has a pretty comfortable version of a reversed Rossolimo.



1.c4 e5



3.g3

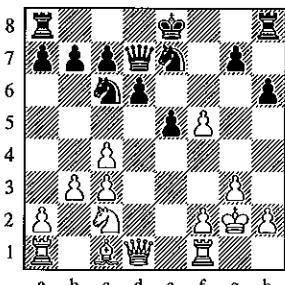
Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘b4 3.g3

3...♗xc3

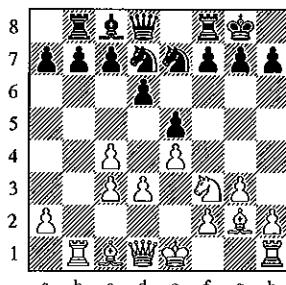
A) 4.dxc3 d6 5.♗g2 ♘c6	228
A1) 6.e4	228
A2) 6.c5!?	229
A3) 6.♘f3	230
B) 4.bxc3 d6 5.♗g2 ♘e7	231
B1) 6.♗b1	232
B2) 6.♘f3	233
B3) 6.d4	235
B4) 6.d3	236

A3) After 13.exf5



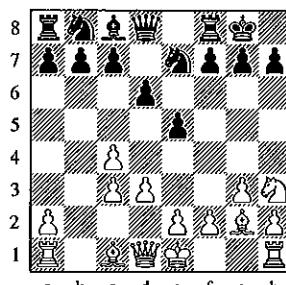
13...0-0-0!N

B4) note to 7.♘h3



9...b6!N

B4) after 7.♘h3



7...c5!N

1.c4 e5 2.♗c3 ♗b4 3.g3

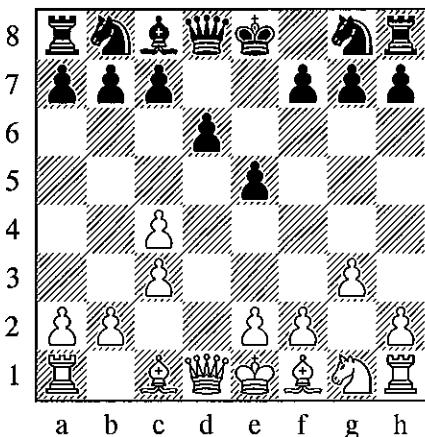
These days this option is less popular than 3.♗d5, but the text move used to be the main line and the two options have been played in roughly the same number of games overall. The kingside fianchetto makes a lot of sense as the bishop will clearly be well placed on g2.

3...♗xc3

Both recaptures are playable; we will start with A) 4.dxc3 before analysing the more common B) 4.bxc3.

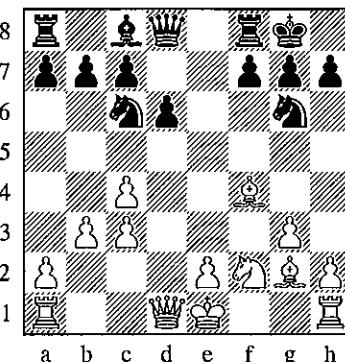
A) 4.dxc3 d6

This resembles a well-known variation of the Rossolimo with reversed colours, but things are not that easy for White. Black could indeed play ...♗f6 and settle for playing that system a tempo down with reversed colours; however, there is a good argument for developing this knight to e7 instead, in order to play an early ...f5. In the Rossolimo White often retreats the knight from f3 in order to unblock his f-pawn, but Black will not have that problem here.

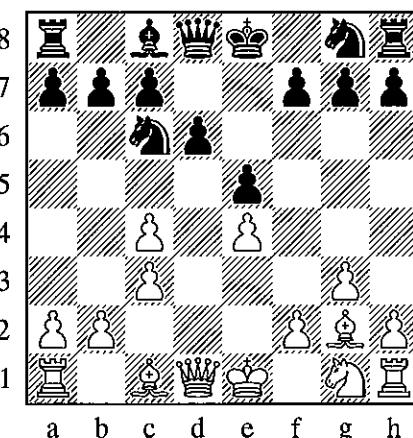
**5.♗g2 ♗c6**

I prefer to start by developing this piece before making any commitments on the kingside. White's three most important options are A1) 6.e4, A2) 6.c5?! and A3) 6.♗f3.

6.b3 is extremely rare, though it was once played by Ponomariov. 6...♗ge7 Black should generally develop the knight here for the reasons described above, unless there is a good reason not to. 7.♗h3 0–0 8.f4?! It seems that White is getting a bit too creative for his own good. 8...♗g6 9.♗f2 exf4 10.♗xf4



10...♗xf4?!N (10...♗e7 11.e4 ♗ce5† was also better for Black in Ponomariov – Mchedlishvili, Warsaw 2010) 11.gxf4 ♘h4 12.♗d2 ♘e8† White may start to regret his opening choice.

A1) 6.e4

This is a pet line of the Latvian GM Miezis, who has played it at least ten times.

6...♗e6 7.♗e2 ♘d7

Black keeps things flexible on the kingside and takes control of the c8-h3 diagonal.

8.h3

8.♕f3 ♘h3 (8...h6!? 9.h3 ♔ge7 transposes to our main line and also makes sense) 9.♘xh3 ♗xh3 gave Black comfortable equality in Heemskerk – Pavlovic, Hilversum 2009; his next job will most likely be to prepare ...f5.

8...♔ge7

As usual, we develop the knight here to avoid blocking the f-pawn.

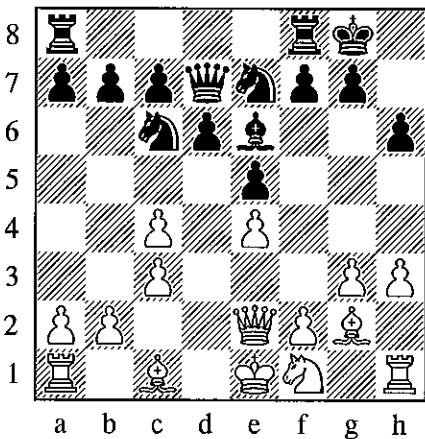
9.♕f3 h6 10.♕d2

Sending the knight towards e3 is a typical plan in these positions.

10.b3 0–0 11.♕d2 transposes to the next note.

10...0–0 11.♕f1

After 11.b3 a6 12.♗b2 f5 13.exf5 ♗xf5 14.♕e4 ♘h8 15.h4 ♗e6 16.f3 ♗ab8 Black was ready to play ...b5 and stood better in Miezis – Medvegy, Liverpool 2006.



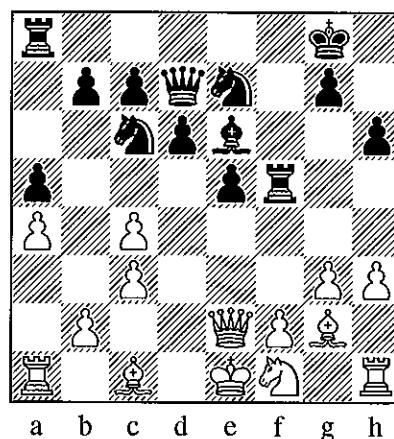
11...a5!?

I believe this to be the most accurate, although 11...♝ae8 12.b3 f5 was also promising for Black in Miezis – Hector, Germany 2011.

12.a4

In the event of 12.♕e3 a4 13.♕d5 ♘a5!, followed by ...f5, the c4-pawn is becoming a target.

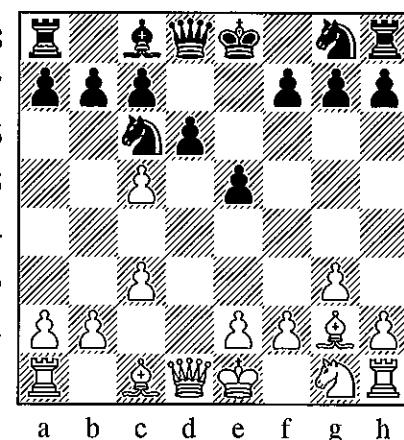
12...f5? 13.exf5 ♗xf5



14.♕e3 ♗f7†

White is already worse; he cannot castle as the h3-pawn will hang, and meanwhile he must worry about ...♝af8.

A2) 6.c5!?



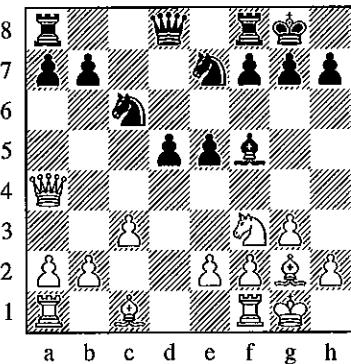
We have seen similar attempts to damage Black's pawn structure in the previous chapter.

6...♔ge7!

Just as before, Black should simply ignore it. His last move prepares ...d5, so White had better exchange on d6 while he has the chance.

7.cxd6 cxd6 8.e4

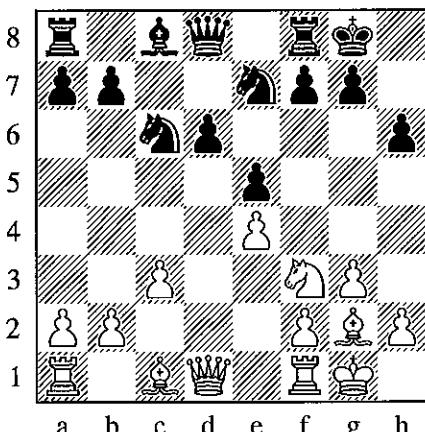
Another game continued: 8.♘f3 0–0 9.0–0 d5 10.♗a4 ♖f5 (10...h6!= also looks logical, securing the e6-square for the bishop)



11.♗d1 ♖c7 12.b3 ♖fd8= Black was doing fine in Ruckschloss – Berescu, Banská Štiavnica 2006, thanks to his strong centre.

8...0–0 9.♘f3 h6! 10.0–0

Now Black's play in Vaarala – Adhiban, Oslo 2013, can be improved by means of:



10...f5!N

With this dynamic move Black gets ready to eliminate the e4-pawn, which will enable him

to play ...d5 and control the centre. The rook on f8 also approves of the decision!

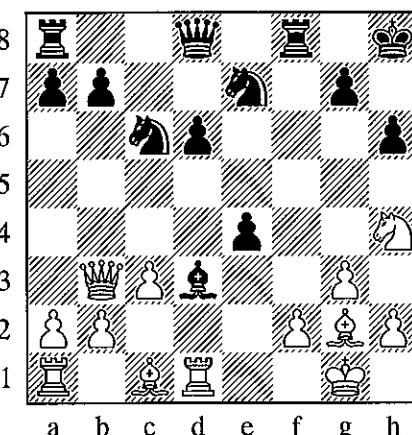
11.♗b3† ♖h8 12.exf5 ♖xf5 13.♗h4 ♖d3

14.♗d1

14.♗e1 d5 looks good for Black.

14...e4

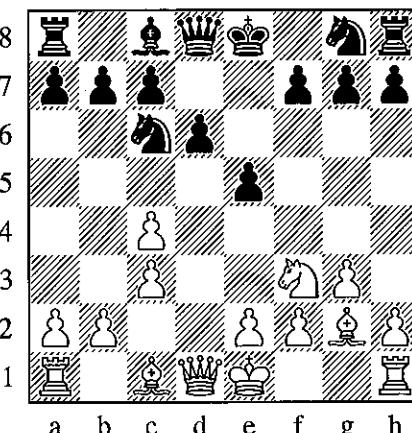
White has a chance to force a draw here; it's not his only option of course, but I don't think he has anything better.



15.♗xh6?! gxh6 16.♗e6 ♖g7 17.♗g4† ♖h8
18.♗e6 ♖g7=

With a repetition.

A3) 6.♘f3



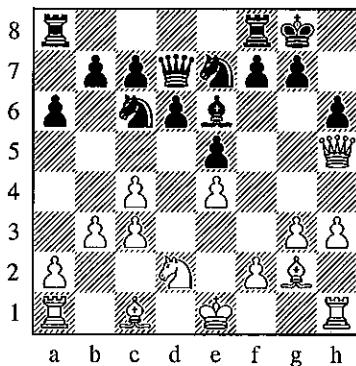
I suggest meeting this with the rare but nonetheless highly logical move:

6...h6

The immediate 6... $\mathbb{Q}e6?$! is strongly met by 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ ±, so the text move is intended to prepare it.

7.0–0

Another good example continued: 7.e4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 8.b3 (8. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 9.h3 $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ leads back to variation A1) 8... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 9.h3 $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0–0 11. $\mathbb{W}h5?$! a6! Preparing ...b5.



12.a4 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 13.0–0 b5! 14.f4 f6 15.axb5 axb5 16.fxe5 dxe5= Black was on top in Miezis – Gyimesi, Cork 2005.

7... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 8.b3 $\mathbb{Q}ge7$

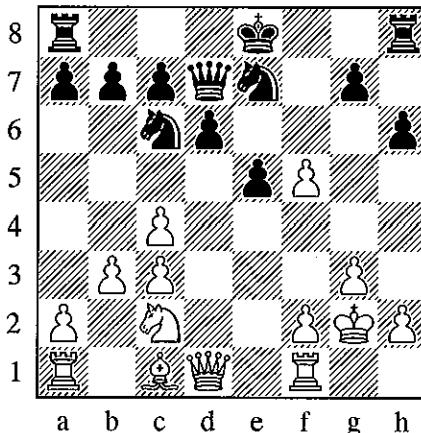
8... $\mathbb{W}d7$ is equally valid and may transpose.

9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 11.e4 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ f5

12...0–0–0?! followed by ...f5 was also strong.

13.exf5

Now I would like to introduce a simple novelty to avoid a check on h5.



13...0–0–0!N

In the only game from this position Black played 13... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$, and after 14. $\mathbb{W}h5!$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xf7!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7=$ the endgame was equal in Jobava – Azmaiparashvili, Kallithea 2008.

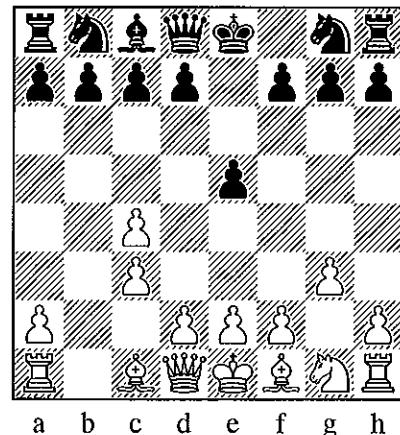
14. $\mathbb{W}e2$

14.g4 is well met by 14...h5 15.f3 $\mathbb{Q}df8$, followed by ...g6 to open the kingside.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xf5!$

Black's opening has clearly been a success.

B) 4.bxc3



White is following one of the classical principles of chess by capturing towards the centre.

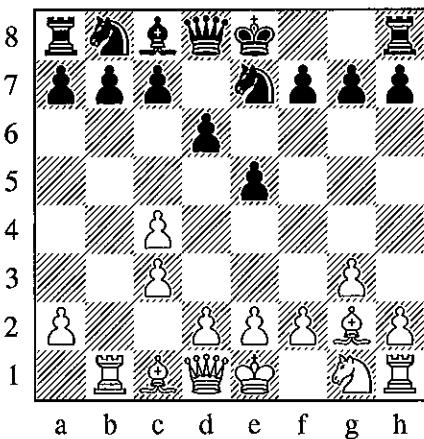
4...d6 5.Qg2 Qe7

Black used to prefer 5...Qc6 but the text move has taken over as the main line nowadays. Black is developing in the most flexible way, by leaving both the c- and f-pawns free to advance.

We will consider four main options:

B1) 6.Qb1, B2) 6.Qf3, B3) 6.d4 and B4) 6.d3.

6.e3 is occasionally seen but it doesn't threaten Black at all. 6...0–0 7.Qe2 Qbc6 8.0–0 Qe6 9.d3 Qd7 and Black was fine in Chiburdanidze – Levitina, Shanghai 1992.

B1) 6.Qb1

White more or less forces Black to develop his knight to c6 and thereby prevents the ...c5 set-up. However, there is a price to pay in moving the rook to b1 so early in the game.

6...Qbc6 7.d3

7.Qf3 doesn't change much, and after 7...0–0 8.0–0 b6 9.d3 we convert to the main line.

7.d4

This can be viewed as an attempt to play in the same manner as in variation B2 below, having deprived Black of the option of a ...c5 set-up. However, there is a concrete

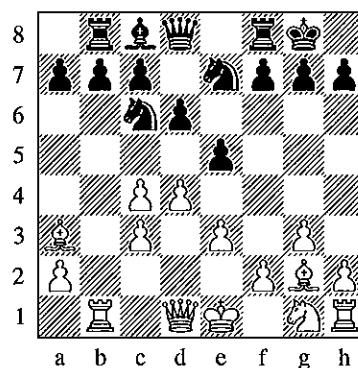
drawback as the rook on b1 may be attacked by Black's light-squared bishop.

7...0–0 8.Qa3 Bb8

Black protects the b7-pawn and takes the rook off the long diagonal, thereby preparing both ...Qf5 and ...b6.

9.e3?!

9.Qf3N is better, but then 9...Qf5 reminds us that the rook is misplaced on b1. 10.Qc1 f6 and Black is at least equal.

**9...b6!**

The pawn on c4 is becoming a target. White attempts a tactical solution but it leads to even greater problems:

10.c5?! dx5 11.d5 Qa5 12.Qxc5 Qf5

Forcing White to exchange his dark-squared bishop.

13.Qxe7 Qxe7?

Black was clearly better in Salvador – Torre, Boracay Island 2012, thanks to the numerous holes in White's position.

7...0–0 8.Qf3 b6 9.0–0

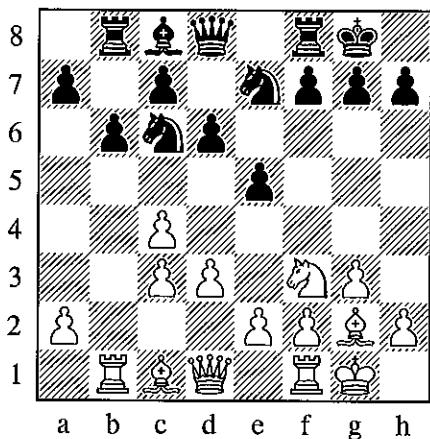
In this already pretty rare position, Black has a pleasant choice.

9...Bb8?!

9...f6 is another sensible move, covering the g5-square in order to play ...Qe6 followed by ...Qd7. After 10.Qe1 (10.Qd2 Bb8?!) N resembles our main line) 10...Qe6 11.Qc2 Qd7 12.Qe1 Qh3 13.Qh1 Qae8 14.Qe3 Qd8!

the position was balanced in Labok – Psakhis, Ramat Aviv 2000.

I consider the text move to be a slightly more flexible and precise choice. The point is that the pawn is not always needed on f6, and it might go to f5 in one move, as in the following example:



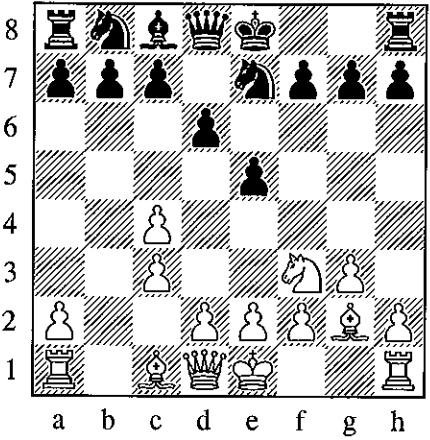
10.Qe1

If White plays a waiting move, Black can either prepare ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ with ...h6 or look to improve his position in some other way.

10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ f5

Black was at least equal in Znamenacek – Laketic, Prague 1989.

B2) 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$



This logical developing move is usually connected with a d2-d4 set-up rather than one with d2-d3. I would like to introduce an interesting new concept:

6...c5!?

Black is fighting for space in the centre, while preventing any possibility of c4-c5 to swap off one of White's doubled pawns.

Most games have continued with either 6... $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ or 6...0–0. The latter move is a good, flexible choice, which preserves the option of ...c5. White can prevent this with 7.d4!?, in which case 7... $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ immediately transposes to 7... $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0–0 in the notes to variation B3 below.

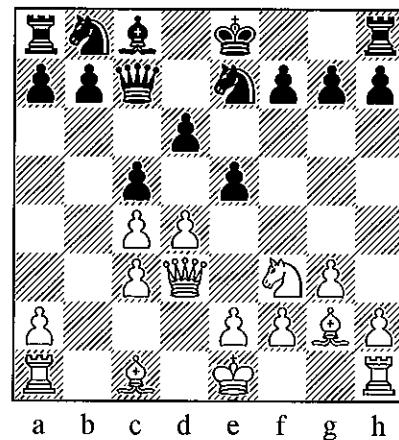
7.d4

7.d3 0–0 transposes to the note on 7... $\mathbb{Q}f3$ in variation B4. The text move leads to a weird version of a Nimzo-Indian, where both sides have their chances.

7... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 8. $\mathbb{W}d3!?$

A tricky move order.

8.0–0 0–0 9. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ transposes to our main line.



8... $\mathbb{Q}bc6$

8...0–0 is playable but I find 9.Qg5!? slightly annoying – this is one of the points of White's previous move.

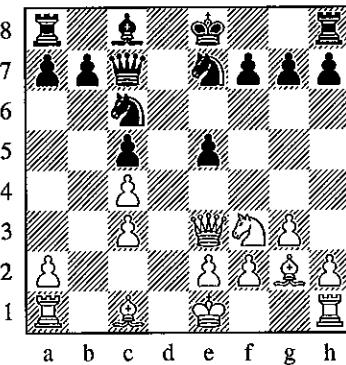
9.0–0

9.dxc5?

This is another option which is only available thanks to White's tricky move order.

9...dxc5 10.Qe3!

A very concrete idea, exploiting the fact that Black has no good way to protect the c5-pawn.



10...0–0!

However, he can sacrifice it!

11.Qxc5 b6 12.Qb5 a6 13.Qa4 Qd7 14.Qa3

I also checked the following alternatives:

14.c5 Qa5 15.Qa3 (15.Qh4 Qxc5=) 15...b5

16.Qxe5 Qxe5 17.Qxa5 Qc6 18.Qf4 Qxc5

with a nice initiative for a pawn.

14.0–0 Qd4 15.Qd1 Qxf3† 16.Qxf3 Qad8

17.Qc2 Qe6 Black wins back the pawn while keeping the better structure, although White should be able to hang on to equality thanks to his bishop pair.

14...Qe6 15.c5 b5! 16.0–0 Qfd8

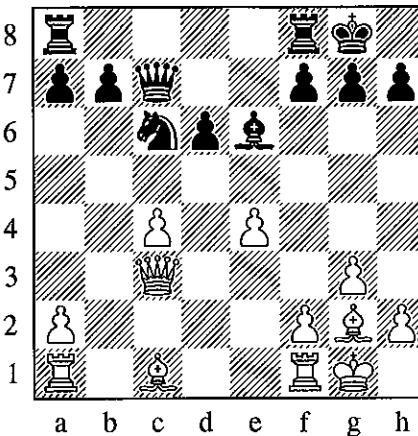
Black has good compensation for the sacrificed pawn, thanks to his well-placed pieces and White's damaged pawn structure.

9...0–0 10.e4

After 10.d5 Qa5 11.e4 b6 12.Qd2 Qd7! Black has a good position. His ideas include

...Wa4 and ...Qa6 to attack the c4-pawn, as well as kingside counterplay with ...f5.

10...cxd4 11.cxd4 exd4 12.Qxd4 Qxd4
13.Qxd4 Qc6 14.Qc3 Qe6

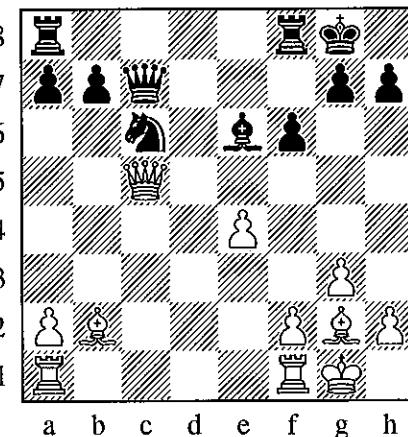


15.c5

After 15.Qa3 Qac8 16.Qfd1 Qfd8 the mutual pawn weaknesses on c4 and d6 make the position approximately equal.

15...dxc5 16.Qxc5 f6! 17.Qb2

In the event of 17.Qf4 Qf7= the black queen is happy enough.



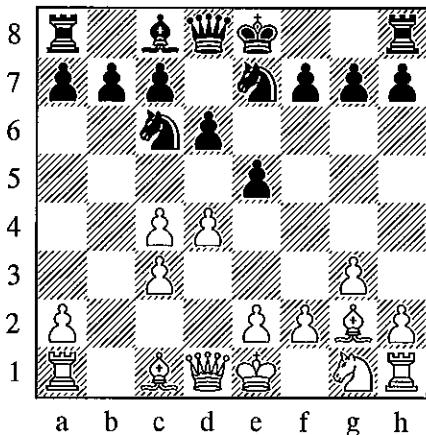
17...Qac8 18.Qfd1 Qfd8=

Black is well coordinated and I don't see how

White can do anything special with the bishop pair, so the chances are equal.

B3) 6.d4 ♜bc6

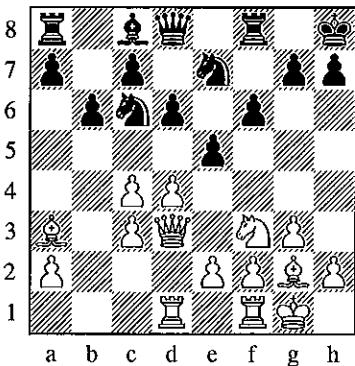
This position has often arisen via the 5...♜bc6 move order.



7.e4

7.♘a3 0–0 8.♗f3 f6 9.0–0 transposes to 7.♗f3 below.

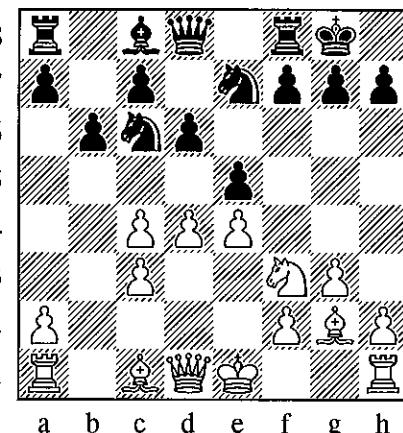
7.♗f3 0–0 8.0–0 f6 This may look a little passive, but it's not bad at all. Black is strengthening his centre while preparing to transfer the queen to either f7 or h5. 9.♘a3 ♘h8 10.♕d3 b6 11.♖ad1 A draw was rather prematurely agreed here in Bunzmann – Eingorn, France 2005. A logical continuation would be:



11...♝e8 Preparing ...♝h5. Black is at least equal, and it is not easy to suggest a good plan for White. 12.c5?! would be a mistake in view of 12...bxcc5 13.dxc5 d5! when the bishop on a3 is misplaced.

7...0–0 8.♗f3 b6

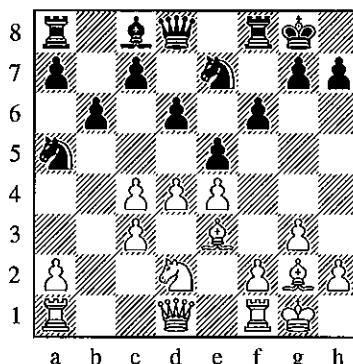
Black prepares to attack the weak c4-pawn, in the spirit of the Nimzo-Indian.



9.0–0 f6 10.♘e3 ♜a5 11.c5

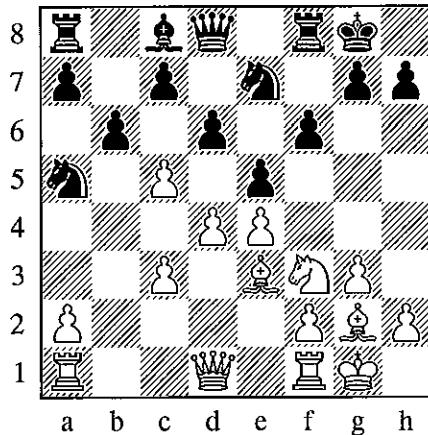
White gets rid of his weak pawn but the c4-square remains weak.

11.♗d2 occurred in Filguth – Madeira, Cabo Frio 1984, and now I would like to offer the natural improvement:

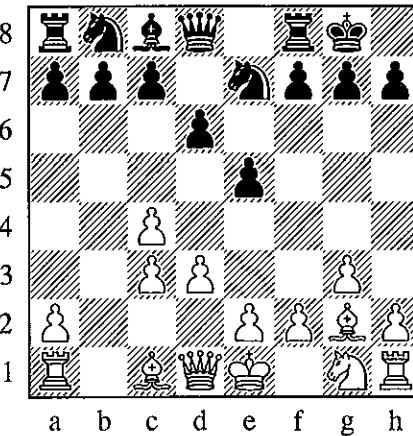


11...♞a6!N 12.♗e1 ♜e8! (but not 12...♝xc4? 13.♗b3±) 13.♗f1 ♜f7 14.♕a4 ♜b7 15.f3 f5

16.exf5 $\mathbb{W}xf5=$ With a comfortable position for Black.



B4) 6.d3 0–0



11... $\mathbb{Q}g4!?$ N

11... $\mathbb{W}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e2?!$ occurred in the game S. Novikov – Caruana, Dagomys 2010, when 12... $\mathbb{B}xc5!N$ 13. $\mathbb{D}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ would have given Black a promising position. However, White has an obvious improvement in 12. $\mathbb{C}xd6N$ $\mathbb{C}xd6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d3$, when Black is doing okay but his queen is not so well placed on e8. The idea of the text move is to get a slightly better version of this line.

12.cxd6

12. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{W}e8!=$ gives White nothing.

12... $\mathbb{C}xd6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 14. $\mathbb{D}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d7=$

Even though White no longer has doubled pawns, Black still has the convenient plan of doubling his rooks along the c-file, with pressure against the c3-pawn.

I suggest delaying the development of the queen's knight in order to preserve the options of ...c5, ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ or even ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, depending on White's next move.

7. $\mathbb{Q}h3$

After 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ c5 8.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 9. $\mathbb{B}b1$ I would like to offer a slight adjustment on Dunn – Hodgson, Edinburgh 1989, with: 9...b6!N 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{W}d7=$

7. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$

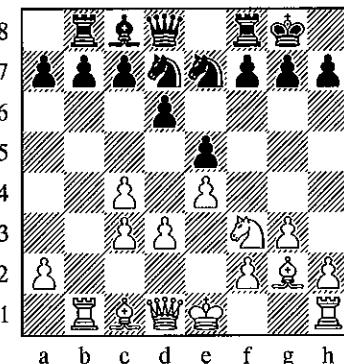
Black protects the b7-pawn indirectly.

8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{B}b8$

Preparing ...b6 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$.

9.e4

Now I would like to introduce a novelty.

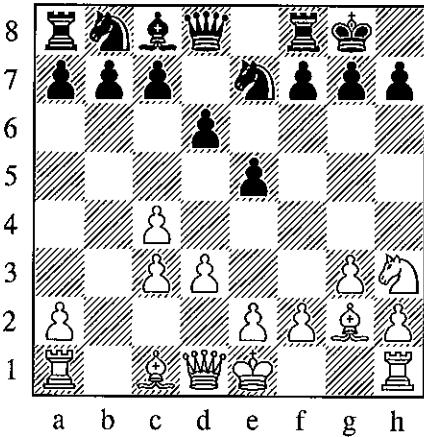


9...b6!

Shirov was successful with 9...f5 but I don't fully trust it: 10.exf5 ♜f6 11.0–0!N (11.♗g5?! ♜xf5 12.0–0 ♜d7 13.♗e1 h6 was good for Black in Ljubojevic – Shirov, Moscow [blitz] 1993) 11...♜xf5 12.♗h4 ♜g4 13.f3 ♜h5 14.g4 ♜c6! 15.♗b2! (in the event of 15.gxh5 ♜xh5 16.♗e1 ♜f4 the threat of ...g5 means that White has nothing better than allowing a repetition after 17.♗h1 ♜h3† 18.♗g2 ♜f4†=) 15...♜d7 16.♗f5 ♜g6 17.f4! With some initiative for White.

10.0–0 ♜b7 11.♗e2 ♜c5 12.♗e3 ♜d7=

Black has a solid position and he will look to play ...f5 when the time is right.



7...c5!

7...♝bc6 8.0–0 ♜d7 9.f4 ♜c8 10.♗f2 occurred in Kosov – Ovetchkin, Novokuznetsk 2008, when 10...exf4!N would have led to mutual chances. However, the text move seems preferable to me.

8.f4 ♜bc6 9.0–0 ♜c7 10.e4

In such positions, it is vital to prevent White from playing f4-f5 followed by a kingside pawn storm. So...

10...exf4! 11.♝xf4

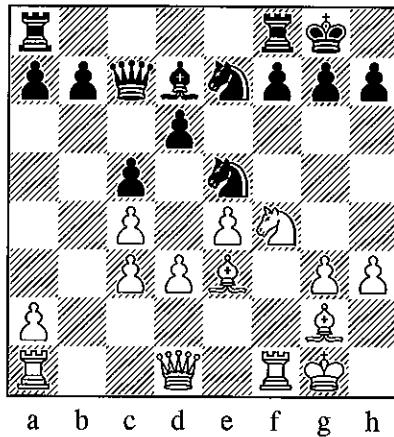
11.gxf4 should be met by 11...f5! – again, before White gets a chance to play f4-f5

himself. Black has a good position, especially considering the long-term weakness of White's pawn structure.

11...♞e5

A good square for the knight.

12.h3 ♜d7 13.♗e3



13...♞g6!?

This is not the only reasonable move, but it is quite logical to challenge and possibly exchange White's one remaining knight. We have reached an interesting middlegame with roughly equal chances.

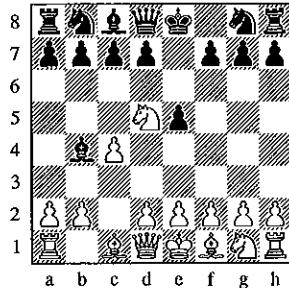
Conclusion

3.g3 is a logical move, and 3...♝xc3 leads to an interesting game whichever way White recaptures. 4.dxc3 d6 5.♗g2 ♜c6 gives Black a rather pleasant version of a reversed Rossolimo, as he can derive some benefit from the fact that his knight has not yet committed to the f6-square. 4.bxc3 is the more popular option, when I suggest the most flexible plan of development with 4...d6 5.♗g2 ♜e7. Black's exact choice of set-up will depend on what White does next, but it is worth remembering that ...c5 followed by ...♝bc6 is an unusual but rather promising plan which enables Black to claim a good share of space in the centre.



1.c4 e5

3.♘d5



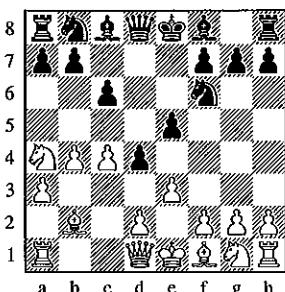
Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘b4 3.♘d5

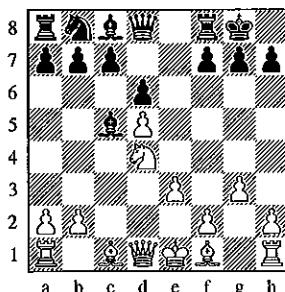
3...♗c5

A) 4.b4 ♘f8!	240
A1) 5.a3	240
A2) 5.♗b3	241
A3) 5.♗b2	242
B) 4.e3 ♘f6	244
B1) 5.b4	244
B2) 5.d4	245
B3) 5.♗e2	247
C) 4.♘f3 c6 5.♘c3 d6	249
C1) 6.g3	249
C2) 6.d4	251
C3) 6.e3 ♗e7! 7.d4 exd4 8.♗xd4 ♘f6	
9.♗e2 0-0 10.0-0 d5? 11.cxd5 cxd5	253
C31) 12.b3	254
C32) 12.♗b3?!N	255

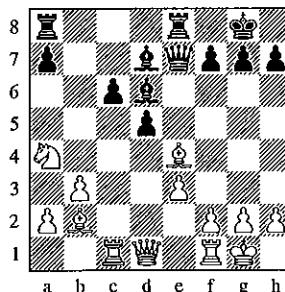
A1) after 9.♗a4



B3) after 9.♗xd4



C31) after 18.♗xe4



9...c5!N

9...c6!N

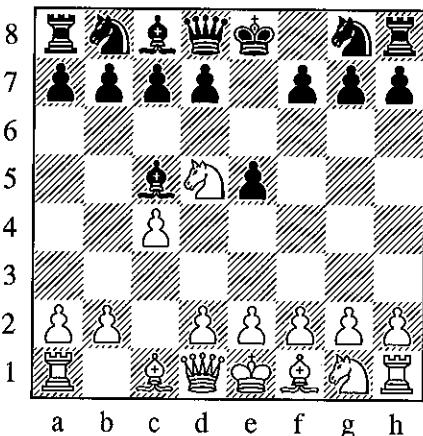
18...♗h4!N

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♜b4 3.♘d5

This is generally considered the most critical test of Black's last move.

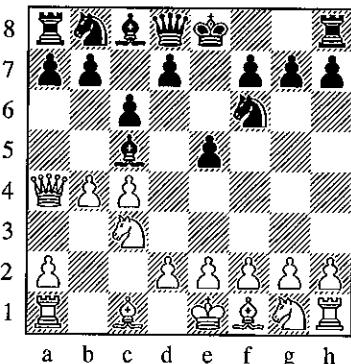
3...♝c5

Black is now ready to take the centre by means of ...c6 and ...d5 – that is why he was happy to lure the knight to d5.



We will analyse three main moves: A) 4.b4, B) 4.e3 and C) 4.♗f3.

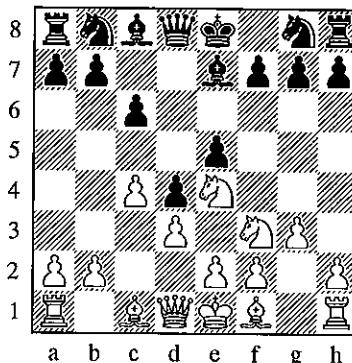
4.♕a4?! is intended to discourage ...c6 followed by ...d5, as the c-pawn will be pinned. However, placing the queen on such an odd square cannot promise White anything good. 4...c6 5.♘c3 ♜f6 6.b4 Now in Benes – Svatos, Czech Republic 2002, Black should have gone for the simple retreat:



6...♜e7N 7.♗f3 e4 8.♗d4 d5 9.cxd5 0–0!?

Followed by ...cxd5 and Black is better.

4.d3?! does nothing to stop Black from carrying out his plan. 4...c6 (4...♞e7N isn't a bad move in itself, but it seems more logical to drive the knight back and take over the centre) 5.♘c3 d5 6.♗f3 d4 7.♗e4 ♜e7 8.g3 This position occurred in Solys – Vysochin, Warsaw 2009. Here I would like to offer:



8...♝c7?!N The idea is to strengthen the centre in preparation for ...f5. For example: 9.♗g2 f5 10.♗ed2 ♜f6 (10...c5? 11.0–0 ♜c6 also looks promising) 11.0–0 0–0!?

4.g3?!

This move also fails to set any problems.

4...c6 5.♘c3

5.♘e3 is best answered by 5...d5!N, though 5...♞f6 was also pleasant for Black in Vassiliev – Grandelius, Golden Sands 2013.

5...d5 6.♗f3?!

6.cxd5 cxd5 7.♗g2 ♜f6 gives Black easy play.

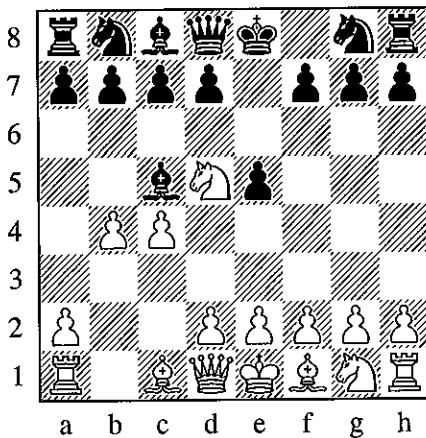
The text move is intended to meet 6...e4 with 7.d4, when White is not doing so badly, but a more convincing reply is:

6...dxc4! 7.♗g2

7.♗xe5?? is impossible in view of: 7...♛d4+ 7...♞f6 8.0–0 ♜bd7!?

1.c4 e5

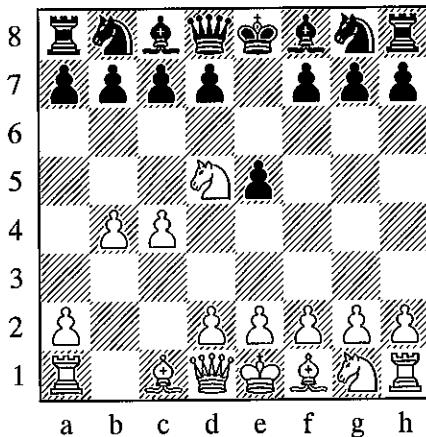
A) 4.b4



Hitting the bishop is a natural and aggressive idea.

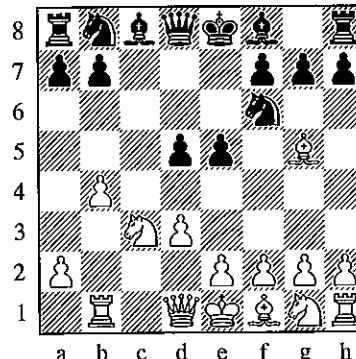
4...♝f8!

An amazing situation has arisen: Black has, in effect, answered 1.c4 with 1...e5 and then given White three(!) free tempos, which seems like a comical waste of time. But when you look at the position, it does not take long to see that the knight on d5 is about to be pushed back by ...c6, while the b4-pawn also requires protection.



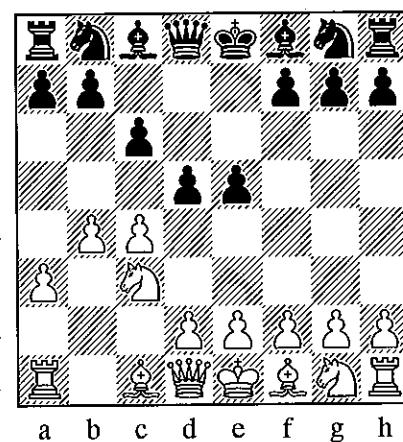
White may proceed with A1) 5.a3, A2) 5.♝b3 or A3) 5.♝b2.

5.♝b1?! was tested just once, and deservedly so. 5...c6 6.♝c3 d5 7.cxd5 cxd5 8.d3 ♛f6 9.♝g5? This was Sargissian – Volkov, Rijeka 2010, and now White's inaccurate opening play could have been punished by means of:



9...a5!N 10.bxa5 (10.♝xf6? gxf6–+; 10.a3 axb4 11.axb4 ♛c6 12.b5 ♜b4–+ and White is in deep trouble) 10...♛xa5 11.♝d2 ♜b4+ Black has a serious development advantage.

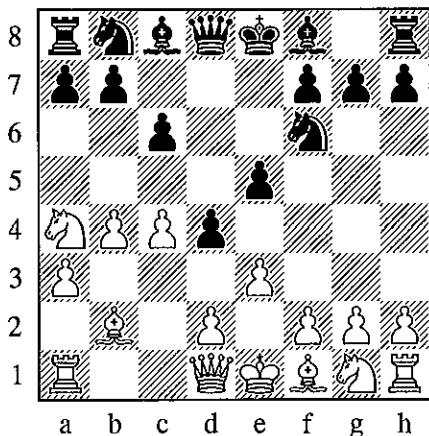
A1) 5.a3 c6 6.♝c3 d5



7.e3 ♛f6 8.♝b2 d4!?

8...♝e6 was okay in Korobov – Moiseenko, Kiev 2013, but the text move is more ambitious.

9.♝a4



9...c5!N

9...a5 is less precise because of 10.c5! as in Zhak – Lupynin, corr. 2008.

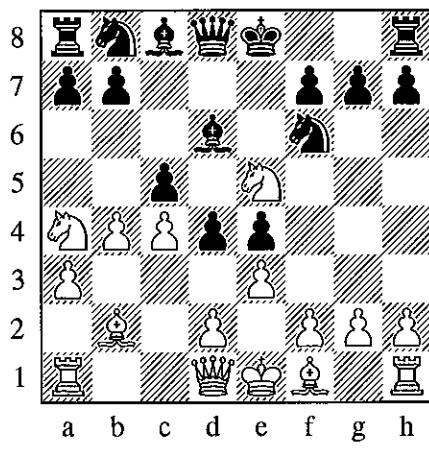
10.♘f3?!

10.♘xc5 ♜xc5 11.bxc5 0–0 12.♘f3 ♜c6?? resembles a favourable reversed Benko Gambit for Black.

10.bxc5 ♜c6 11.♘f3 ♜f5 gives Black excellent prospects: White's extra pawn is not doing anything and his knight is misplaced on a4.

The text move is an interesting attempt to attack our pawn centre, but we have a good answer available:

10...e4! 11.♘e5 ♜d6!



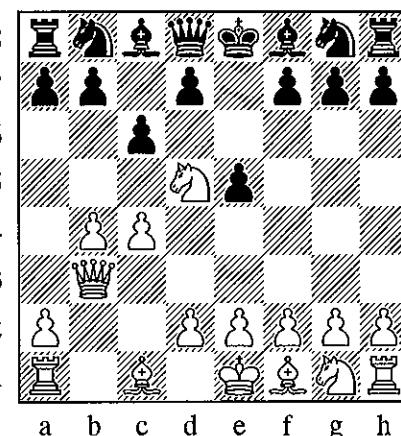
12.f4

12.exd4?! cxd4 13.♘xd4? loses to 13...♛e7! as White's knight is trapped in the middle of the board.

12...exf3 13.♘xf3 dxe3 14.dxe3 0–0

Black has a promising initiative.

A2) 5.♗b3 c6

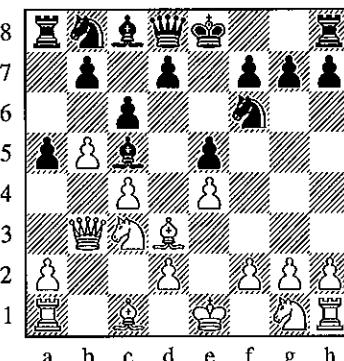


6.♘c3

6.♘e3?! was played in Schuurman – Peek, Amsterdam 2001. I suggest 6...♝f6N in order to prepare ...d5. A logical continuation is 7.♘f3 e4 8.♘d4 a5 9.b5 ♜c5 10.♘b2 a4 11.♗c2 a3 12.♘c3 0–0 13.g3 d5 and Black is certainly not worse.

6...♝f6 7.♘f3

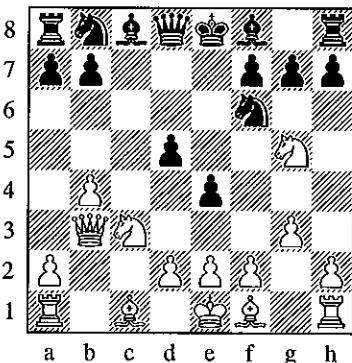
7.e4 is well met by 7...a5, fighting for the dark squares. 8.b5 ♜c5 9.♘d3?!



This was Salmensuu – Timman, Koge 1997, and now 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ N 10. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ 0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $d6\bar{f}$ would have been promising for Black.

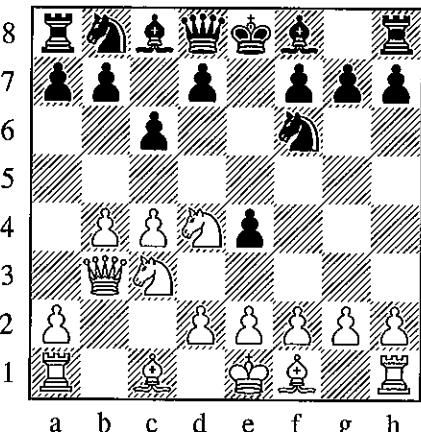
7...e4 8. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

8. $\mathbb{Q}g5?$! is the wrong direction for the knight. 8...d5 9.cxd5 cxd5 10.g3? occurred in Gross – Lau, Germany 1985, and now Black could have obtained a huge positional advantage by means of:



10...h6!N 11. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ d4 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\bar{f}$ With total domination in the centre.

The text move occurred in Semcesen – Vysochin, Lvov 2010. Black has a few playable moves, but my choice would be:



8... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$?N 9.e3

9. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ is nothing to worry about: 9...0–0

10.e3 d6 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\bar{f}$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 12.h3 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ Followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and Black's position is more pleasant.

9...0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d5 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.b5!?

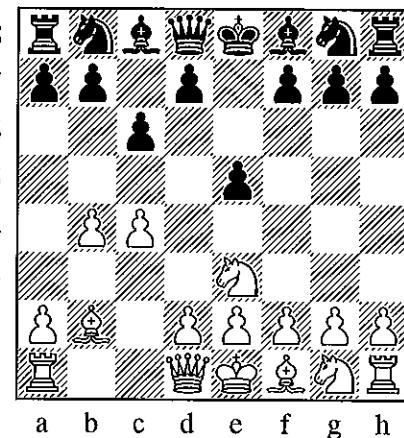
Otherwise Black plays ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ with a comfortable game.

12...a6 13. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ axb5 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}cxb5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d7=$

With equal chances.

A3) 5. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ c6 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

It's an irregular position, to say the least! Black should start by reinforcing his central pawn, thus making ... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ into a real threat.



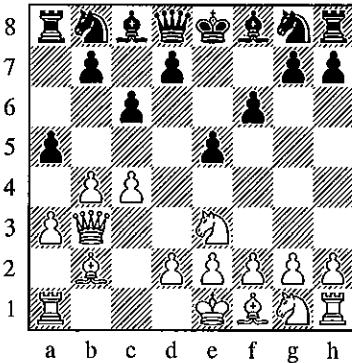
6...f6 7.a3

7. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ 8.g3 d5! 9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d4 \bar{f} was better for Black in Shaked – Timman, Hoogeveen 1998.

White has also tried:

7. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ a5 8.a3

8.b5 occurred in Jina – Johansen, corr. 2000. My suggestion is: 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$?N 9. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ d5 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 11.bxc6 bxc6 12.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ A difficult move to anticipate. 13.dxc6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\bar{f}$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\bar{f}$ Black's development advantage gives him serious compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

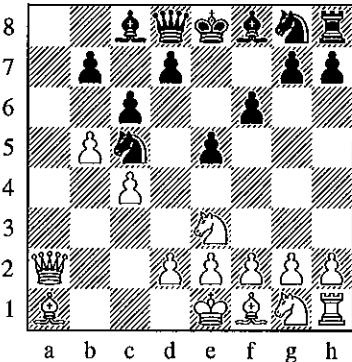


8...axb4 9.axb4 Qxa1† 10.Qxa1 Qa6!

The most accurate, although 10...Wb6 11.b5 Qc5 was also good for Black in Malina – Strutinskaya, Elista 2000.

11.b5

11.Qc3 Wb6 12.b5 Qc7† also favours Black.
11...Qc5 12.Wa2



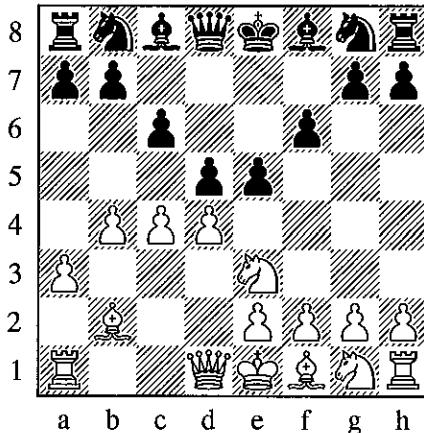
12...Qe7!N

12...Qe6 occurred in Kund – Rathbone, email 2001. I prefer to develop another piece and gain space in the centre.

13.Qf3 d5 14.cxd5 Qxd5 15.bxc6 bxc6
16.Qxd5 Wxd5 17.Wxd5 cxd5†

7...d5 8.d4

White could consider 8.cxd5?!N cxd5 9.d4 in order to avoid Black's idea in the main line below. Play may then continue 9...e4 10.Wb3 Qe6 11.B3 exf3 12.exf3 Qc6 13.Qd3 Qd6 14.Qe2 Qge7 15.0–0 0–0 and the chances are roughly equal.



8...a5!N

8...e4?! 9.g3 f5 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.Qh3 Qf6 12.Qg2 was slightly more pleasant for White in Kryvoruchko – Vysochin, Alushta 2011.

9.c5!?

9.dxe5? axb4!† and White's queenside falls apart.

9.cxd5?! axb4! 10.a4 exd4 11.Wxd4 Qa6!† is better for Black.

9.b5 is safest, though after 9...dxc4 10.bxc6 Qxc6 (10...b5?! is an unclear alternative) 11.dxe5 Wxd1† 12.Qxd1 Qe6 Black has nothing to worry about.

9...b6!?

White appears to be under some pressure, but he can maintain dynamic equality as follows.

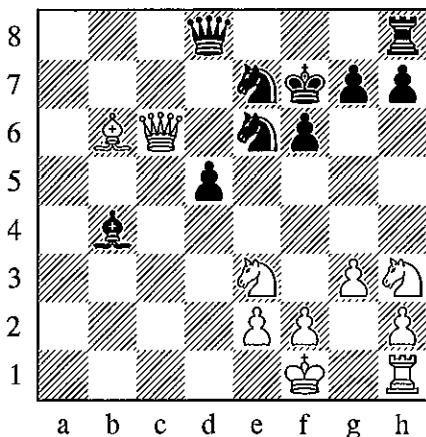
10.g3! exd4 11.Qxd4 Qd7 12.Qh3 axb4 13.axb4 Qxa1 14.Qxa1 bxc5 15.bxc5 Qxc5

White's queenside has disappeared but he can utilize his lead in development.

16.Wc3 Qxh3 17.Qxh3 Qe6 18.Wxc6† Qf7 19.Qb6

Black would be in trouble if he did not have the following pair of intermediate moves.

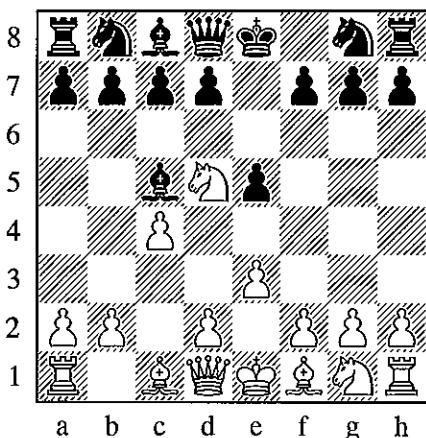
19... $\mathbb{Q}b4\uparrow$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7!$



21. $\mathbb{Q}xe6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f4\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}d2=$

The complications have subsided and the endgame is drawish.

B) 4.e3



A logical continuation. White puts a barrier in front of Black's dark-squared bishop and prepares to chase it with d2-d4.

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

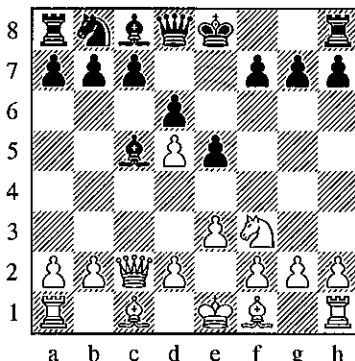
White has three main options: B1) 5.b4, B2) 5.d4 and B3) 5. $\mathbb{Q}e2$.

A rare alternative is:

5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6.cxd5 d6 7. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

7. $\mathbb{Q}a4\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}d7N$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ protects the bishop on c5, with no problems for Black.

7.d4 exd4 (7... $\mathbb{Q}b4\uparrow$?) 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 0-0 was also fine for Black in Carvalho -- Nilsson, email 1998.



7... $\mathbb{Q}e7N$

Avoiding 7...0-0 8. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ as occurred in Murx – Tatar, engine game 2010.

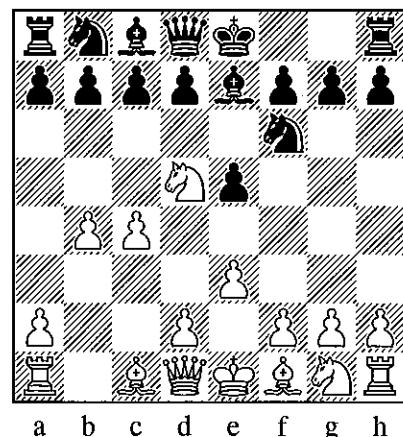
8.b4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$

Obviously 8... $\mathbb{Q}xb4??$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}a4\uparrow$ must be avoided.

9. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ a5 10.a3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12.0-0 0-0=

Black is fine, bearing in mind that 13.d4 can be met by 13...e4, keeping the a1-h8 diagonal closed.

B1) 5.b4 $\mathbb{Q}e7!$?



This move has never been tested at GM level, though it seems to be Black's safest bet as it leads to an improved version of the 3...♝e7 variation. The differences are that White has already committed to e2-e3, while the b-pawn can be used as a hook.

6.♗xe7!?

This untested move seems like White's most interesting try.

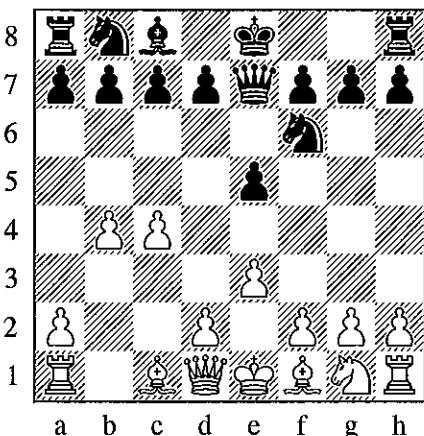
6.♗b2 gives Black two safe options:

a) 6...d6 7.♗xe7 ♜xe7 8.d4?! exd4 9.♗xd4 ♜c6 10.a3 ♜xd4 Having swapped off White's dark-squared bishop, Black obtained a comfortable position in Ter Minasjan – Delemarre, Germany 2001.

b) 6...♝xd5!?

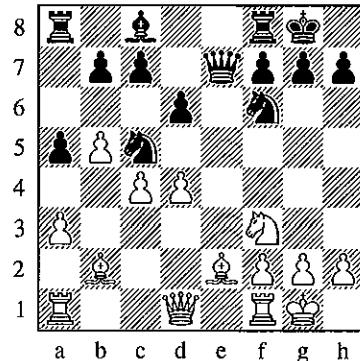
N 7.cxd5 d6 is a reasonable alternative. Play may continue 8.♗e2 0–0 9.♗c3 a5 10.a3 ♜f5 11.♗e2 ♜d7 12.0–0 c6 with roughly equal chances.

6...♜xe7



7.♗b2 0–0 8.♗f3 d6 9.♗e2

I also checked: 9.d3 a5 10.a3 ♜c6 11.b5 ♜b8 The knight is heading for the newly created outpost on c5. 12.♗e2 ♜bd7 13.0–0 ♜c5 14.d4 exd4 15.exd4



15...♝a4! An important resource, which enables Black to equalize. 16.♗a2 ♜xb2 17.♗xb2 ♜e8 18.♗d3 ♜g4=

9...e4 10.♗d4 c5!

Black takes advantage of the presence of the pawn on b4.

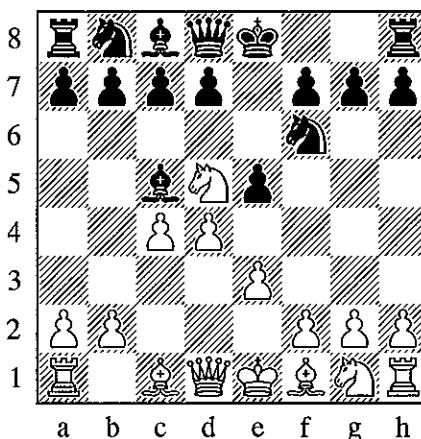
11.bxc5 dxc5 12.♗b3 ♜c6 13.0–0 ♜e5

Underlining the weakness of the d3-square.

14.f3 exf3 15.♗xf3 ♜b8!=

Followed by ...b6, with equal chances.

B2) 5.d4



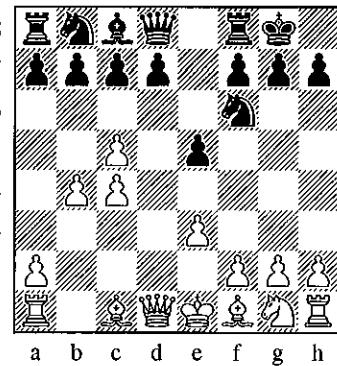
5...♝xd5 6.cxd5

An unusual structure arises after: 6.dxc5 ♜f6 7.b4

Here I found an important improvement:

7...0-0!N

7...b6 from Schroll – Jovanic, Budva 2009, can be answered by 8.Qf3!N e4 9.Qd4 with slightly better chances for White.



8.Qe2

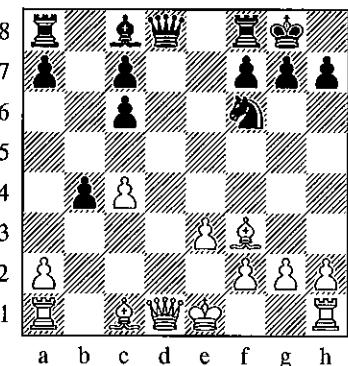
8.Qf3 e4! 9.Qd4 d6 10.cxd6 Qxd6 11.c5 We7 12.Qb2 Qd8 13.Qb3 a5 14.a3 Qc6! gives Black enough counterplay to compensate for White's bishop pair.

8.Qb2 d6 9.cxd6 cxd6 10.a3 Wb6 11.Qf3 a5 12.c5! dxc5 13.b5 e4 14.Qd2 Qd8 15.Wc2 Qf5 16.h3 Qbd7 White has some compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but Black is by no means worse.

8...b6

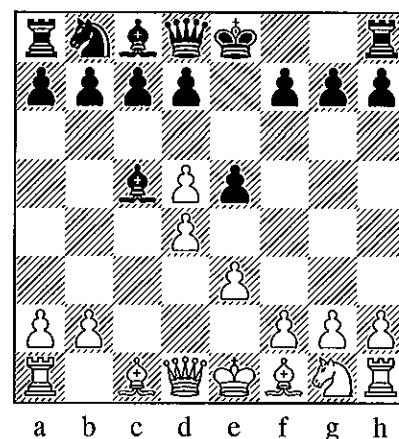
8...d6!? is possible too.

9.Qf3 bxc5 10.Qxe5 cxb4 11.Qf3 Qc6 12.Qxc6 dxc6



13.a3! Wxd1† 14.Qxd1 Qe6 15.axb4 Qxc4

The position is dynamically balanced.



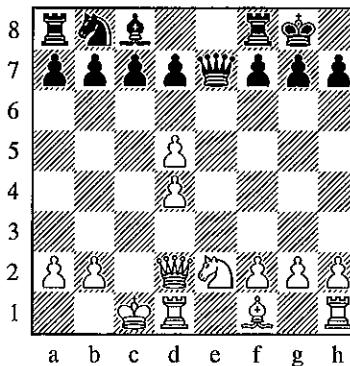
6...exd4 7.exd4 Qb4† 8.Qd2

Interestingly, the strongest move in this position has been a rare choice.

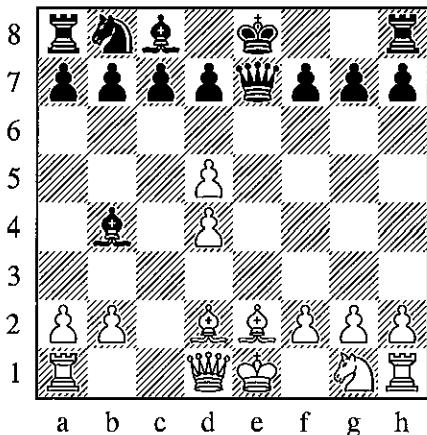
8...We7†! 9.Qe2

9.Qe2 0-0! 10.Wxe7 Qxe7 11.Qc4 Qf6 12.Qe2 d6 gives Black good prospects.

9.Qe2 0-0 10.Qxb4 Wxb4† 11.Qd2 We7 12.0-0-0 occurred in Korchnoi – I. Sokolov, Wijk aan Zee 1993, and now Black's play can easily be improved by means of:



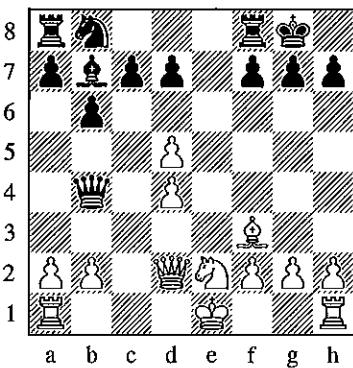
12...d6!N 13.Qc3 Qd7 14.Qd3 a6 Black certainly can't be worse.



9...0-0! 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

I considered two other moves:

10. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{W}xb4\#$ 11. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d6!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b6
13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 14. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{W}b4\#$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$



15... $\mathbb{Q}a6$!? (15... $\mathbb{W}d6$!N is enough for equality) 16. a3 $\mathbb{W}b3$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 18. a4 $\mathbb{W}b4$ =
Biebinger – Kakabadze, Germany 1997.

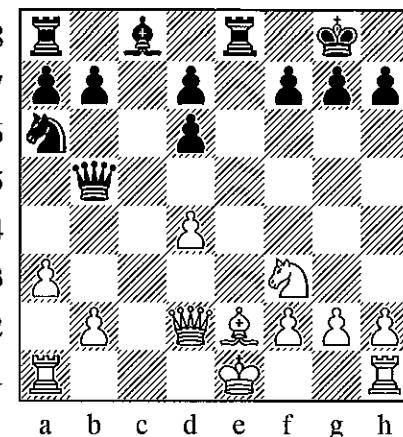
10. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 11. 0-0 $\mathbb{W}xe2$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{R}xe2$
13. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ d6 14. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{E}xe1\#$ 15. $\mathbb{E}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$
16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ can be met by 16... $\mathbb{Q}a6$, intending 17. $\mathbb{E}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$! 18. $\mathbb{E}xd7$? $\mathbb{Q}e8$!# and suddenly the rook is trapped) 16... $\mathbb{Q}a6$
17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ The endgame is drawish, though Black can certainly keep playing with the weak d5-pawn as a target.

10.. $\mathbb{E}e8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{W}xb4\#$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$!

13. a3 $\mathbb{W}b5$

13... $\mathbb{W}d6$!? 14. 0-0 $\mathbb{W}xd5$? is unacceptable in view of 15. $\mathbb{E}fe1\pm$ and Black is in trouble.

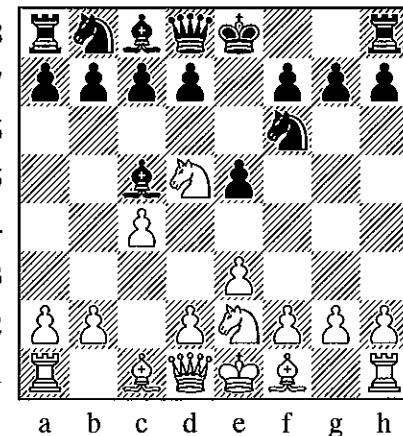
14. d6 cxd6



15. $\mathbb{E}cl$ d5 16. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ d6 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$
 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ =

Black's extra pawn is nothing special, but he is certainly not worse.

B3) 5. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

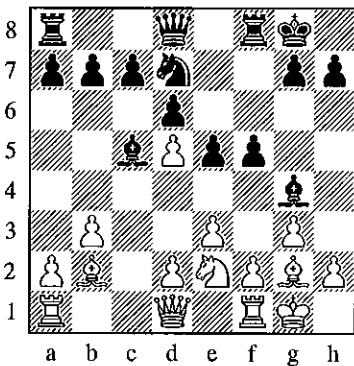


5... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

5...0-0!?, 6. g3 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 7. cxd5 d6 is a possible transposition, but we may as well reduce White's options by trading knights immediately.

6.cxd5 0–0 7.g3 d6 8.d4

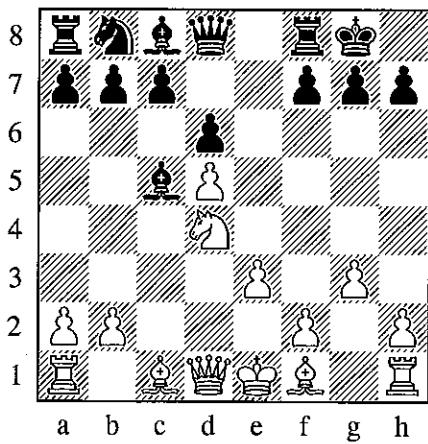
8.♗g2 can be met by 8...♗g4, making it harder for White to play d2-d4. 9.0–0 f5 (9...♝d7 is also possible and may transpose) 10.b3 ♐d7 11.♗b2 This position occurred in Vitiugov – Esen, Antalya 2013, and now I would like to offer:



11...♗e7!N 12.♗e1 e4! Highlighting the light-square holes in White's camp. 13.♗c2 ♗xe2! Now Black is destroying a potentially dangerous knight. 14.♗xe2 ♘e5 The knight is heading to d3. White can swap it off, but after 15.♗xe5 dx5 16.♗c1 ♘d6 17.d3 exd3 18.♗xd3 e4 I prefer Black.

8...exd4 9.♗xd4

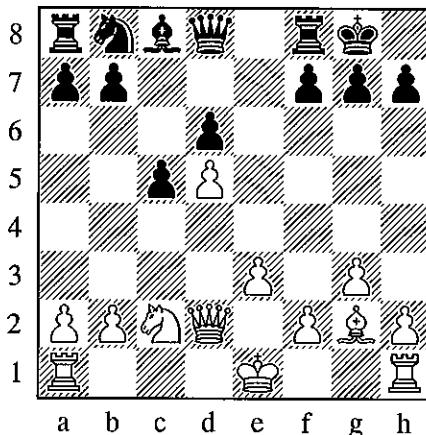
This position was reached in Azmaiparashvili – Bruzon Batista, Beersheba 2005, and now I found a clear improvement for Black:

**9...c6!N 10.♗g2**

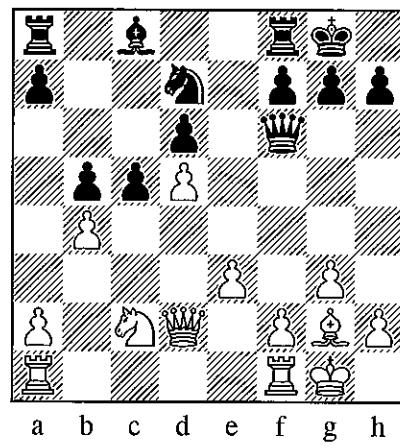
10.dxc6 ♗xc6 11.♗xc6 bxc6 is slightly better for Black on account of the weakened light squares.

10...♗b4† 11.♗d2 ♗xd2† 12.♗xd2 c5 13.♗c2

I also considered 13.♗e2 ♘d7 14.♗c3 ♜e8 15.0–0 a6 16.a4 ♜b8 with the idea of ...b5 and Black is fine.

**13...♗f6 14.b3 b5 15.b4!?**

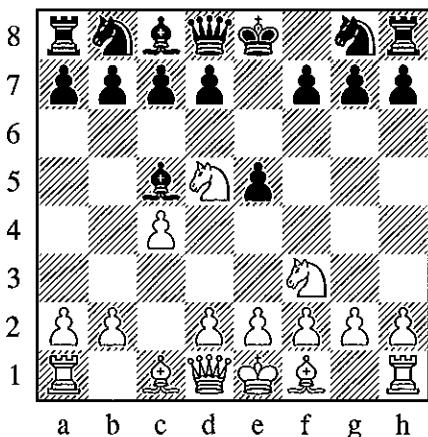
15.0–0 can be met by 15...a5! 16.f4 ♘d7 with mutual chances.

15...♘d7 16.0–0

16...a5! 17.bxc5 Qxc5 18.Qd4 b4=

With roughly equal chances.

C) 4.Qf3

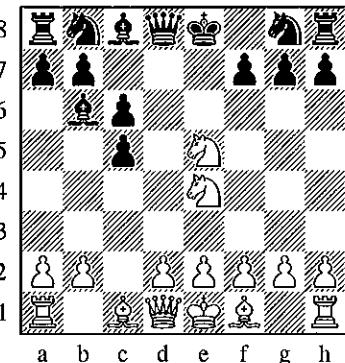


This is the main line. White is not worried about having his knight chased by ...e4, as d2-d4 will be a good reply. A better idea for Black is:

4...c6 5.Qc3 d6

White's three main replies are C1) 6.g3, C2) 6.d4 and C3) 6.e3.

6.Qe4 ♜b6 7.c5?! is a dubious concept, as White is taking action having only developed two pieces. 7...dxc5 8.Qxe5



8...Qf6! (White was probably counting on 8...♛d5?!, when 9.Qc4!= would give him

a reasonable game) 9.Qxf6† ♛xf6 10.Qf3 0-0 Black had a clear lead in development in Bricard – Taimanov, Bad Wildbad 1990.

C1) 6.g3

This has been a pretty rare choice but it's a natural move to consider.

6.Qf6 7.Qg2

7.d4 exd4 8.Qxd4 is covered under the 6.d4 move order – see 8.g3 in the notes to variation C2 below.

7.d3

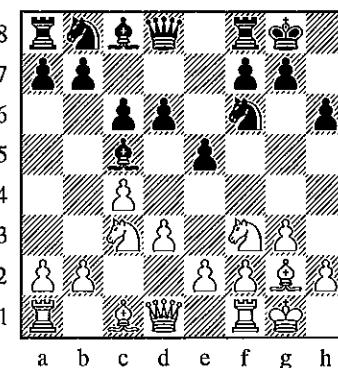
This move seems to be intended to prevent ...e4, but it was not a real threat anyway.

7...0-0

7...h6?? 8.Qg2 0-0 is a perfectly valid move order.

8.Qg2 h6 9.0-0

This position has occurred in a few games. So far Black has tested three different moves, but I would like to introduce a fourth:



9...a5?N

Taking a bit of space on the queenside while creating an escape square for the bishop on a7. Although it's a novelty here, it transposes to another game which we will follow for a few more moves.

10.a3

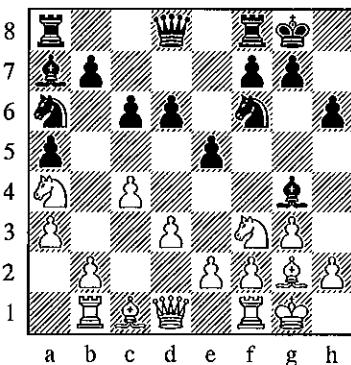
10.d4 is almost the same as our main line, but White has lost a tempo due to

d2-d3-d4. After 10...exd4 11.Qxd4 a4! Black can proceed in exactly the same way as we will see below. The extra ...h6 move does not seriously affect the evaluation, but it certainly can't hurt Black's chances.

10...Qg4!?

10...Bxe8 and 10...Qa6 are reasonable alternatives; the choice is a matter of taste.

11.Bb1 Qa6 12.Qa4 Ba7



13.b4 axb4 14.axb4 b5 15.cxb5 cxb5 16.Qc3

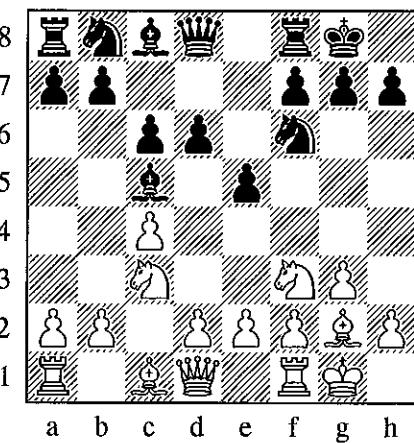
This was T. Nguyen – Hebert, Paris 1995, and now Black could have continued:

16...Qc7N

Intending ...Bb6, with at least equal chances.

7...0-0 8.0-0

This position occurred in Suslova – Demina, St Petersburg 2010. I would like to offer the following new idea:



8...a5!?

Black secures position of the dark-squared bishop, just like in the previous note.

9.d4

9.d3 h6 transposes to the 7.d3 line above.

9...exd4 10.Qxd4 a4!

10...Bxe8? is also fine, for instance 11.b3 Qbd7 12.Qb2 Qb6 13.e3 a4 14.Bc1 Qg4 with roughly equal chances.

The text move is the most ambitious choice. Black takes some more space on the queenside, making the most of the loose position of the knight on d4.

11.e3 a3 12.b3

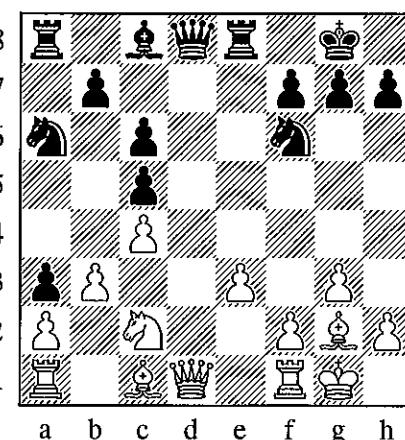
12.Qa4 leads to the damaging of White's pawn structure. 12...axb2 13.Qxb2 Ba7 14.Wc2 We7 and Black cannot be worse.

12...Bxe8

The immediate 12...Qa6 is similar and may transpose.

13.Qa4 Qa6 14.Qxc5 dxc5 15.Qc2

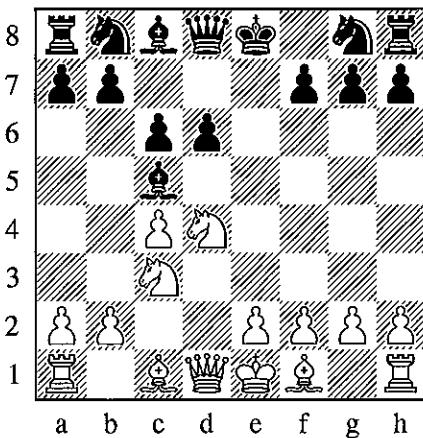
15.Qe2 can be met by 15...Qb4 16.Qd2 Qf5= and Black is fine.



15...Qf5! 16.Wxd8 Wexd8 17.Qxa3 Qb4=

Black has a strong bind on the queenside to compensate for the missing pawn.

C2) 6.d4 exd4 7.♗xd4

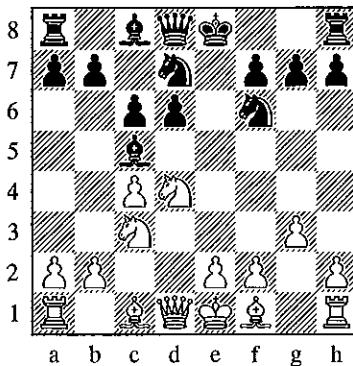


7...♗f6 8.♗b3

This retreat should not be too dangerous for Black.

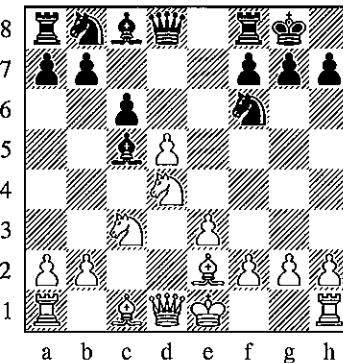
8.♗g5? is bad in view of 8...♗b6! 9.♗a4 ♖b4† 10.♗d2 ♖xc4 11.e3 ♖d5 12.♗xc5 dxc5 13.♗e2 ♗e4† and Black is a pawn up.

8.g3 and now 8...d5 has been used twice by the young Russian GM Artemiev, including one game in August 2016, shortly before the publication of this work. Nevertheless, I would like to recommend a new approach: 8....♗bd7?N

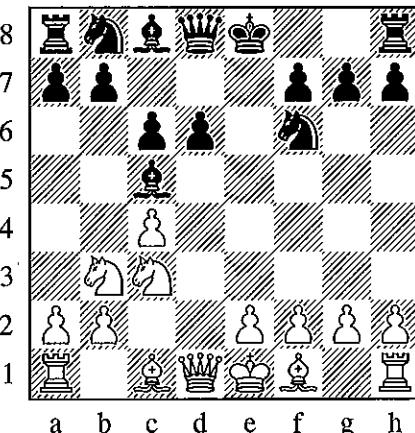


9.♗g2 ♗e5 10.b3 0–0 11.♗b2 ♗e8 12.0–0 a6!? Securing the a7-square for the dark-squared bishop. 13.♗a4 ♗a7 14.♗c2 ♗g4 15.♗ad1 ♖c7 Black has no problems.

8.e3 0–0 9.♗e2 d5 10.cxd5 (I also checked 10.0–0N dxc4 11.♗xc4 ♗bd7 12.♗e2 ♗b6 13.♗c2 ♗e7 [but not 13...♗xd4?! 14.♗d1±] 14.♗d1 ♗d8 with equality)



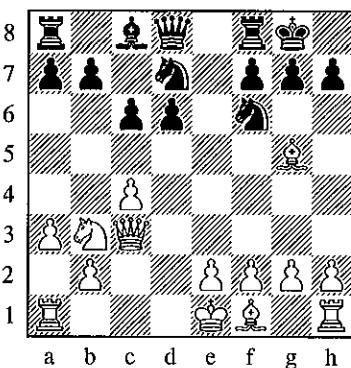
10...cxd5! Black recaptured with the knight in most games. I found the text move as a novelty and played it – alas, unsuccessfully – before the book was published. The game continued logically with 11.0–0 ♗c6 12.♗xc6 bxc6 13.b3 ♗d6 14.♗b2 ♗e7, reaching a position discussed under variation C31.



8...♗b4 9.♗d2

White unpins the knight on c3 and prepares a2-a3.

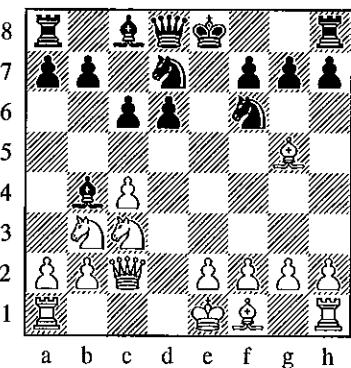
9. $\mathbb{W}d4?$! avoids doubled c-pawns but is a little too slow. 9...0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ This position occurred in Agrest – I. Sokolov, Sweden 2000. Now I would like to introduce:



12... $\mathbb{Q}e8!$ N 13.e3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$) 15. $\mathbb{W}xe5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5!$ is also slightly better for Black) 14...h6 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ d5 The initiative is on Black's side.

9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}c2$

Now Black's most accurate move is:



10...0–0!N

10...h6 11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 0–0 12.e3 was the actual move order of the game quoted just below. However, White had the option of backtracking with 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2?$, which will not be possible if Black postpones ...h6 until after e2-e3 has been played.

11.e3 h6 12. $\mathbb{Q}h4$

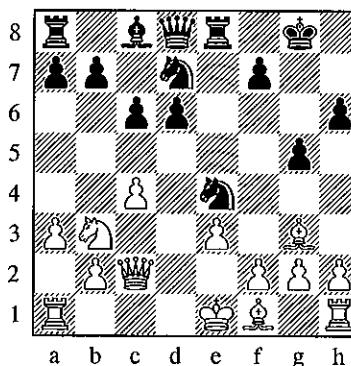
We have now transposed to the game, without allowing White the option of $\mathbb{Q}d2$.

12... $\mathbb{Q}e8$?

12... $\mathbb{Q}e5$?N also makes sense, with the idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$.

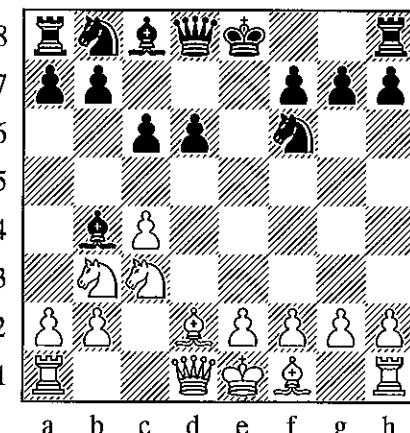
13.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ g5 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c2$

This position was reached in Heberla – I. Sokolov, Warsaw 2013. Now I would like to bring to your attention:



16... $\mathbb{W}e7$?N 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}df6$ 18.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ c5 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 21.hxg3 $\mathbb{Q}ab8$

Black's last move prepares ...a6 and ...b5; it's a complex middlegame with roughly equal chances.

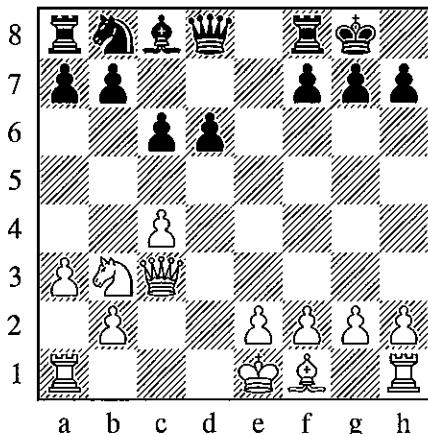


9...0–0 10.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$

Black exchanges White's dark-squared bishop and obtains a comfortable position. For example:

12.♗d4 ♘xc3 13.♗xc3

Now I would like to improve upon Black's play in Cyborowski – Vysochin, Wrocław 2012.

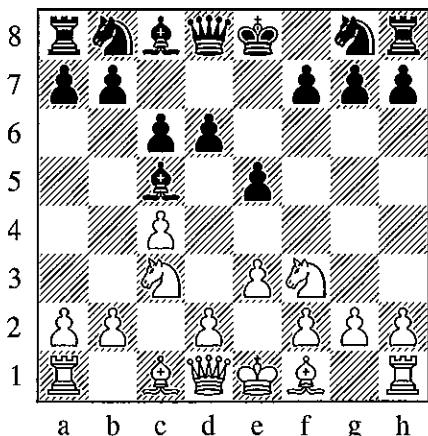


13...a5!N 14.♗d1 a4 15.♘d4 ♘a6 16.e3 ♘c5

The knight is perfectly placed here. A logical continuation is:

17.♘e2 ♘e4 18.♗c2 ♘a5† 19.♔f1 ♘e5

The computer calls it equal, but for a human player it's obvious that White still has to solve the problem of his misplaced king.

C3) 6.e3

This is the most logical choice, preparing d2-d4.

6...♗e7!

6...♗f6 allows 7.d4 exd4 8.exd4± with a slight edge for White.

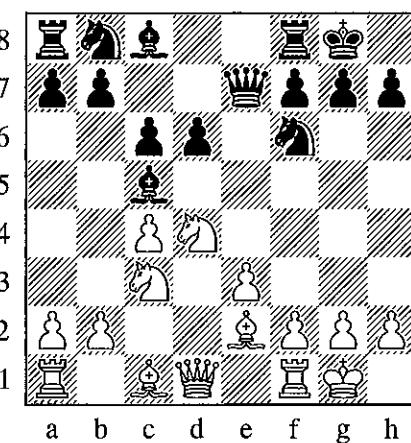
The point of the text move is obvious: Black prevents White from recapturing on d4 with the e-pawn and supports a possible ...e4 advance.

7.d4

This is White's usual choice.

7.♘e2 e4! 8.♘d4 ♘f6 9.♘d3 d5 does not give him much: 10.0–0 0–0 11.cxd5 cxd5= Black was fine in Salvado – Vegteleki, corr. 2013. It's a reversed Alapin Sicilian with an extra tempo for White, but the most desirable set-up for his pieces would be ♘d2-c3 and ♘d2 rather than ♘c3, so Black should be quite happy.

7...exd4 8.♘xd4 ♘f6 9.♘e2 0–0 10.0–0

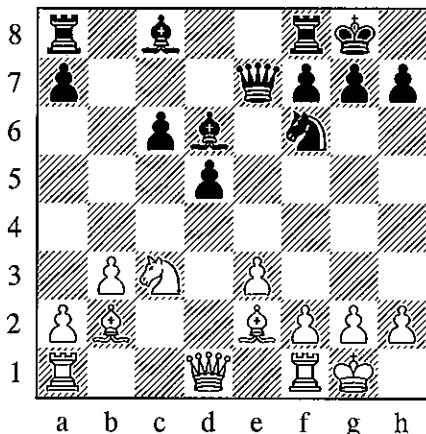
**10...d5!?**

I've decided to recommend this rare move, which was introduced by Naiditsch in 2004 but has not been repeated for some reason. Black's idea is to fight for the initiative before White gets a chance to get fully coordinated.

11.cxd5 cxd5

Now we have a final split between C31) 12.b3 and C32) 12.♗b3!?

**C31) 12.b3 ♜c6
13.♕xc6 bxc6 14.♗b2 ♜d6**



Interestingly, this position has arisen through a completely different opening, as well as the aforementioned Naiditsch game, plus my own game against Bachmann.

15.♗c1

In the event of 15.♗f3 I would like to recommend: 15...♝e4!N (15...♝d8 was also fine in M. Gurevich – Naiditsch, Ajaccio 2004) White's most natural continuation is 16.♗c1, when 16...♝d7 transposes to the main line below.

15.♗a4 ♛e4 16.♗c1 occurred in Bachmann – Mikhalevski, Las Vegas 2016, which arrived here via the move order noted earlier on page 251.

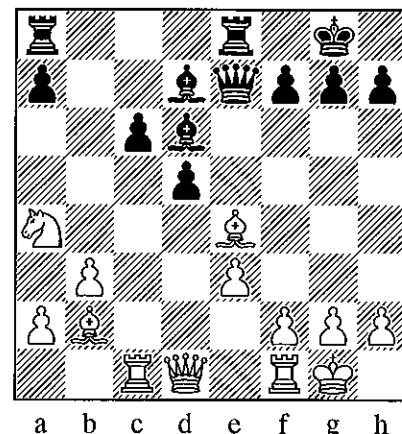
Here I decided to put my bishop on b7, which is not so bad, but the game did not turn out well for me.

I should instead have preferred 16...♝d7N, which transposes to the note to White's next move.

15...♝d7 16.♗f3

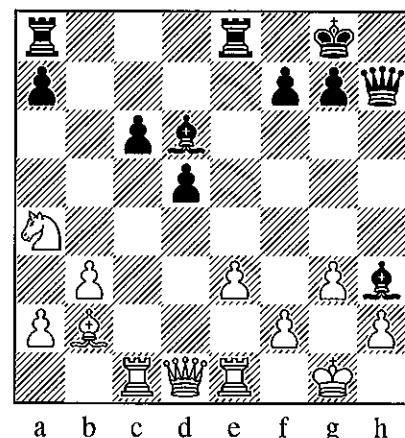
16.♗a4 ♛e4 17.♗d3 ♜fe8 also looks roughly equal, and it could transpose to the main line if White plays 18.♗xe4.

16...♜fe8 17.♗a4 ♛e4 18.♗xe4

**18...♝h4!N**

This strong intermediate move provokes a weakening of White's kingside, albeit at the cost of a pawn.

After 18...♝xe4 19.♗c5± a draw was agreed in Toran Albero – Parma, Kapfenberg 1970, but White stands better.

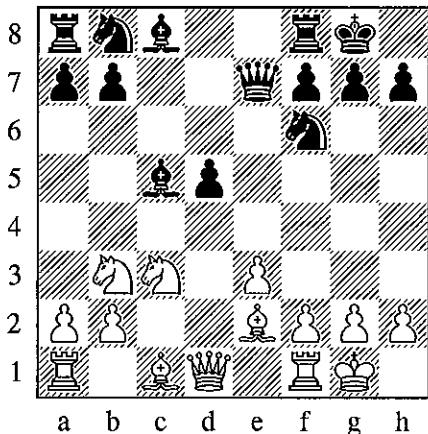
19.♗xh7† ♛xh7 20.g3 ♜h3 21.♗e1

21...♝b4 22.♝c3 ♝a3 23.♝c2
23.♝b2 ♘b4= would repeat.

23...♝d6

Black has full compensation for the sacrificed pawn thanks to the weakened light squares.

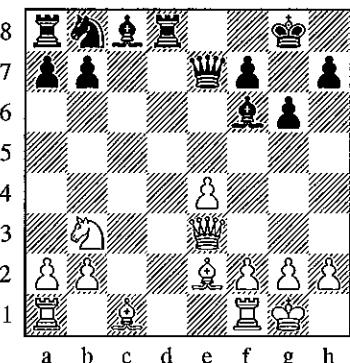
C32) 12.♗b3!?



This is the critical continuation, which Gurevich avoided when facing Black's novelty over the board.

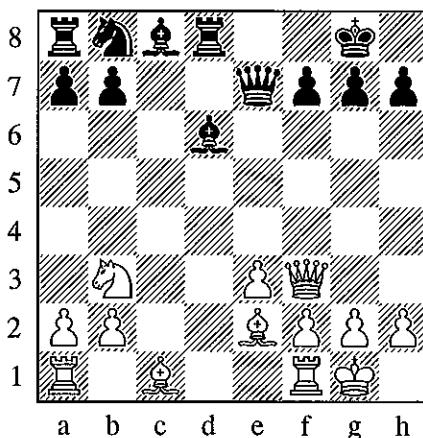
12...♝d6 13.♗xd5 ♘xd5 14.♗xd5 ♘d8
15.♗f3

I also considered: 15.♗h5 g6 16.♗h6 ♘e5
17.e4 ♘f6 18.♗e3



18...a5! With a promising initiative.

15.♗b5 a6 16.♗h5 g6 17.♗h6 ♘e5! is similar to the line above; Black has ...a6 as an extra move, but it will probably come to the same thing if he follows up with ...a5.



15...♝c6 16.♗d1

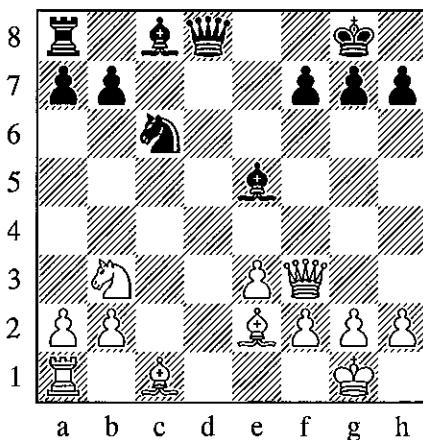
16.♗d4 ♘e5 17.♗xc6 bxc6 18.♗xc6 ♘f5 gives Black a strong initiative thanks to his superior development. It is not easy for White to get his queenside pieces into the game.

16...♝e5

Black puts pressure on b2, thus making it difficult for White develop his queenside.

16...g6? is another possible direction that could be investigated.

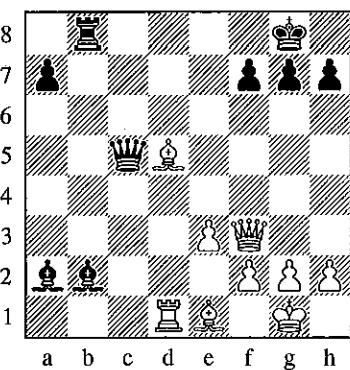
17.♗xd8† ♘xd8



18.♕d2 ♕xb2 19.♕d1 ♕e7 20.♕a5 ♕xa5

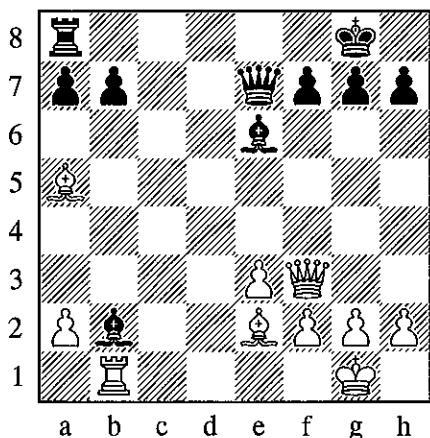
21.♕xa5 ♕e6 22.♕b1

22.♕a6!? is interesting, but it is not enough to obtain an advantage: 22...♗b8 23.♕xb7 ♕c5 24.♕e1 ♕xa2 25.♕d5



25...♕xd5 26.♕xd5 ♕xd5 27.♕xd5 ♕c3!=

Leading to a drawish rook endgame.



22...♕c8! 23.♕f1

After 23.♕xb2 ♕a3! 24.♕xb7 ♕xa5 Black's active pieces provide full compensation for the pawn.

23...♕a3 24.♕xb7 ♕xa2 25.♕xb2 ♕xa5=

Material is equal and the endgame is drawish. Black's passed a-pawn has the potential to be strong, but it is too far back to cause White serious problems. On the other hand, even if White somehow manages to win the a-pawn, any rook or queen endgames with four pawns versus three on the kingside should normally be drawn, which acts as a useful insurance policy.

Conclusion

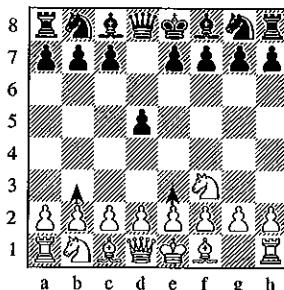
The 2...♕b4 system is a good weapon against 1.c4 e5 2.♕c3, as Black avoids the biggest theoretical variations without worsening his position. 3.♕d5 is the most challenging response, but after 3...♕c5 Black is ready to take over the centre with ...c6 and ...d5.

4.b4 ♕f8! is an amusing but strong idea which gives Black a full share of the chances. 4.e3 ♕f6 also turns out fine after each of White's three main responses.

Finally, 4.♕f3 is the main line, when 4...c6 5.♕c3 d6 leads to a further branching, 6.e3 ♕e7! 7.d4 exd4 8.♕xd4 ♕f6 being the critical path. Naiditsch's 10...d5!? idea seems to me to be completely okay, and the fact that most of my analysis is original makes it all the more appealing as a practical weapon.



1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5



2.b3 and 2.e3

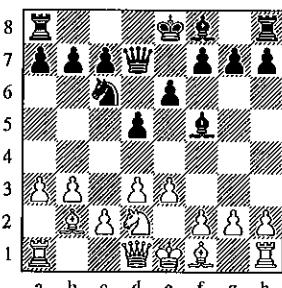
Variation Index

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

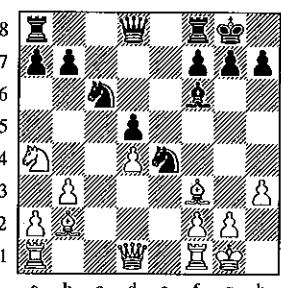
1...d5

A) 2.b3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$	258
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A2) 3. $\mathbb{Q}e5$	260
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B2) 4.b3 c5 5. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6.cxd5 exd5	266
B21) 7. $\mathbb{Q}b5$	267
B22) 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 8.0-0 0-0 9.d4 cxd4 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$	269
B221) 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$	270
B222) 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$	272

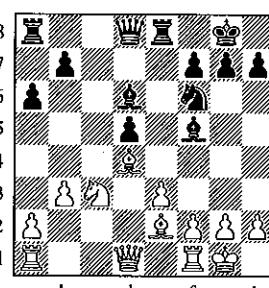
A2) after 9.a3



B1) note to 11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$



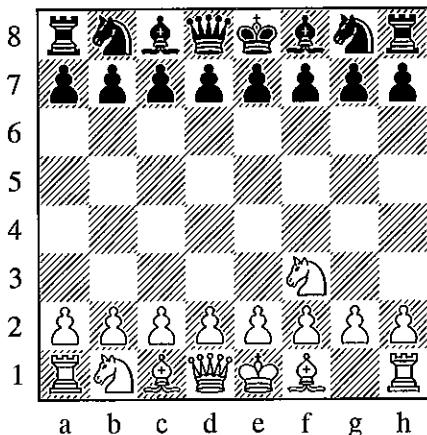
B222) after 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$



9...e5!N

14... $\mathbb{Q}e8!N$

16... $\mathbb{Q}c8!N$

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 

This chapter is the first of many that deal with this most flexible of opening moves. I have decided to begin our coverage with the most classical of replies, whereby Black occupies the centre with one of his pawns.

1...d5

This will be the natural choice for anyone who likes to answer 1.d4 with 1...d5. Obviously White can transpose to that realm with 2.d4, but in this book we will focus on his attempts to avoid doing so.

In this chapter we will deal with A) 2.b3 and B) 2.e3.

A) 2.b3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$

I think this is a good choice, as b2-b3 is not the most useful move in a reversed Trompowsky. The text move makes a lot more sense here than in variation B, as the pawn on b3 prevents the plan of 3.c4 followed by a quick $\mathbb{W}b3$.

White's three main replies are A1) 3.g3, A2) 3. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ and A3) 3.e3.

3. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

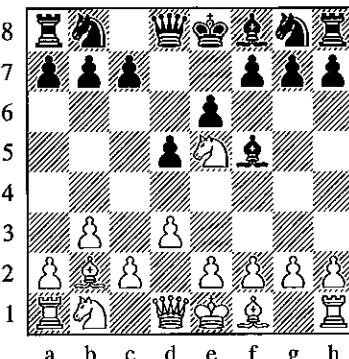
4.g3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 5.exf3 transposes to variation A1,

while 4.e3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ leads to variation A3.

4... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 5.d3

5.e3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ converts to variation A2.

This is already an extremely rare position.

5... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$

6.f4 $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ was fine for Black in Tsepennikova – Pak, Novosibirsk 2002.

6... $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8.e3

This transposes to a recent game. Black's safest continuation is:

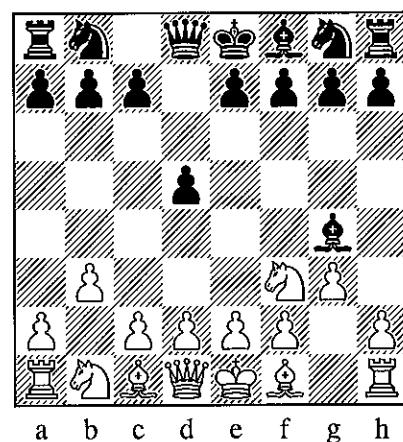
8...h6N

8...0–0–0! was equally playable but more double-edged in Rapport – Rohl Montes, Tromso (ol) 2014.

9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$

With equal chances.

A1) 3.g3



This is a rather rare move order.

3... $\mathbb{Q}xf3?$

This is not the only good move but it seems a safe choice, especially now that White does not have the option of $gxf3$ with the idea to play on the g-file.

4.exf3 e6 5. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ g6 7. $\mathbb{W}e2!$

The most accurate move order – White makes a useful move and forces Black to prevent $\mathbb{W}b5\#$.

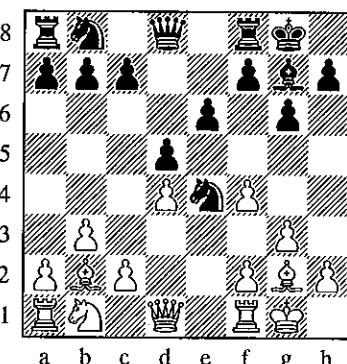
It is worth comparing the alternative:

7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8.f4 0–0 9.d4

9.d3 c5 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 13.c3 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ and Black had no problems in Perez Garcia – Agdestein, Gibraltar 2015.

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

Black's idea is to exchange a pair of knights. This option would obviously not be available if the white queen was already on e2.



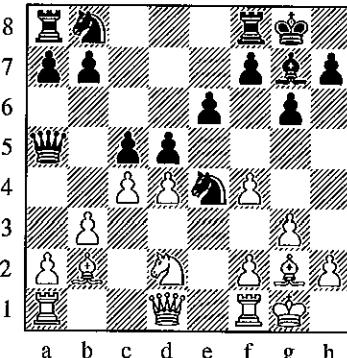
10.c4!?

N 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2N$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12.a4 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 13.c4 c6 14.a5 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ with roughly equal chances.

10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ occurred in L. Milov – S. Savchenko, Donetsk 1998. I would like to offer 10...c5! N 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ dxe4 12. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14. $\mathbb{W}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ with equal chances.

10...c5! 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}a5!$

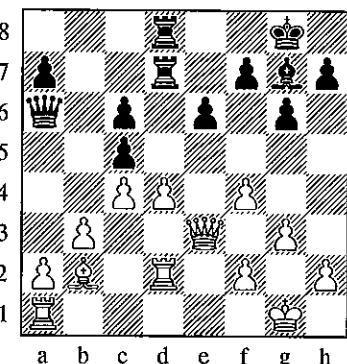
A temporary pawn sacrifice.



12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ dxe4 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6

Black will regain the pawn thanks to the pin along the diagonal.

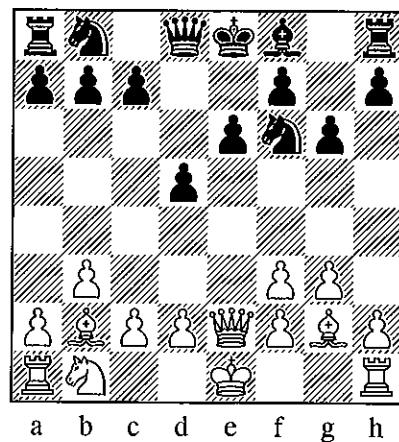
15. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$



19. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ cxd4 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

22. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xa2=$

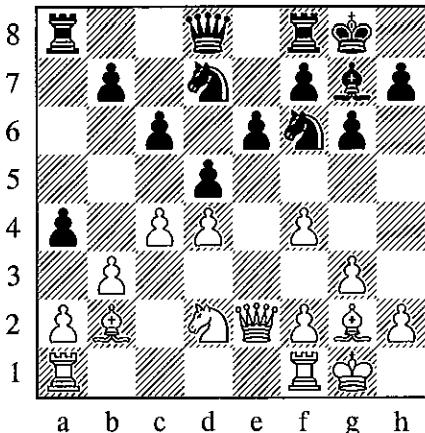
With a drawn endgame.



7... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 8. f4 c6

8... $\mathbb{Q}g7?$ proved to be a blunder after 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\pm$ in Goletiani – Cinar, Tbilisi 1999.

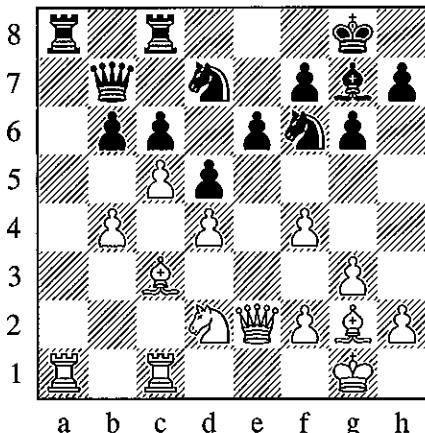
9.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 10. d4 0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a5 12. c4 a4



13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14. $\mathbb{B}fc1$ axb3

14... $\mathbb{B}fd8!N$ 15. c5 b5 16. b4 h5 also looks equal.

15. axb3 $\mathbb{B}fc8$ 16. c5 b6 17. b4 $\mathbb{W}b7$

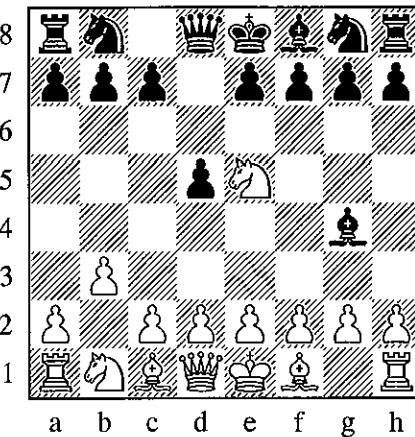


18. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{B}xa1$ 20. $\mathbb{B}xa1$ $\mathbb{B}a8$

21. $\mathbb{B}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$

The position remained balanced in Artemiev – Leko, Moscow 2014.

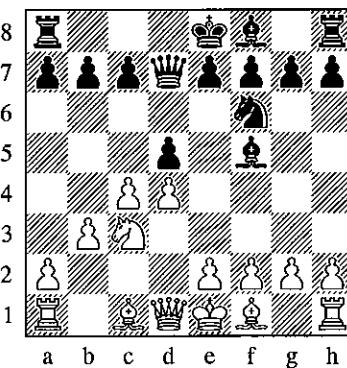
A2) 3. $\mathbb{Q}e5$



This has been played several times by the young Hungarian super-GM Rapport.

3... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 4. e3

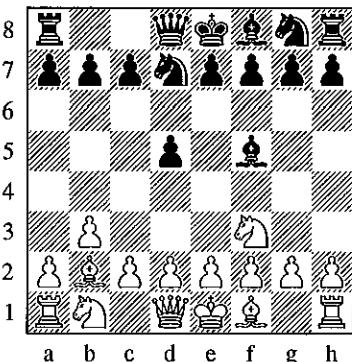
4. d4 is hardly consistent with White's second move. A good example continued: 4... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 6. c4?! White is opening up the position while lagging in development. 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$



7... e5! This pawn sacrifice is possible thanks to a better development. 8. dx5 d4 9. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 10. a3 a6 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 0–0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3?$ $\mathbb{Q}c5\mp$ and White's position quickly collapsed in Dimakiling – E. Sveshnikov, Al Ain 2012.

4. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

This odd move avoids transposing to any of the lines below, but it costs him a tempo and so Black shouldn't have any problems.



5...e6N

In the game quoted below, Black started with 5...Qf6, but I would prefer to transpose to it without giving White the option of Qh4 to eliminate our bishop.

6.g3 h6 7.Qg2 Qgf6

We have now arrived back at a game which continued:

8.d3 Qd6 9.0–0 0–0 10.Qbd2

This position has been reached several times with White to move.

10...Qh7

With equal chances in Nakamura – Lu Shanglei, Dubai (blitz) 2014.

4...Qd7 5.Qxd7

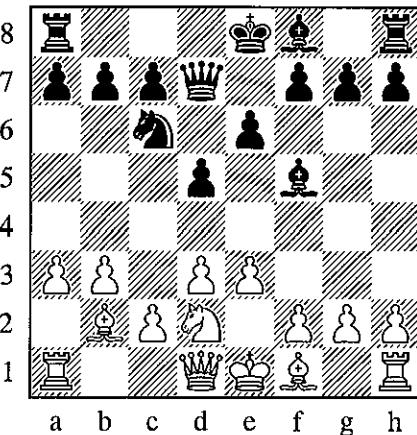
5.Qb2 e6 6.Qc2 (6.Qxd7 Qxd7 transposes to our main line) 6...Qxe5 7.Qxe5 Qf6 8.0–0 Qd6 and Black is fine.

5...Qxd7 6.Qb2 e6 7.d3 Qe7

7...Qf6 is also possible, when 8.Qd2 leads back to the 3.Qb2 line in the note to move 3.

8.Qd2 Qc6 9.a3

Now I would like to recommend:



9...e5?!N

9...Qg6 10.g3 f6 11.Qg2 Qe7 12.Qe2 a5 13.0–0 0–0 occurred in Rapport – Ramirez, Reykjavik 2014, and is playable as well.

10.b4 a6 11.Qe2

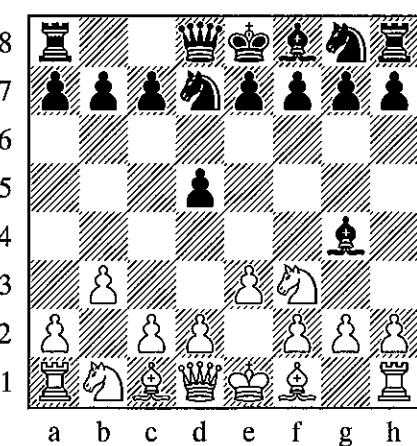
11.g3?! invites 11...0–0–0 12.Qg2 h5 with good prospects for Black.

11...Qe7

With roughly equal chances.

A3) 3.e3 Qd7

3...e5?! is a lively alternative which could also be investigated. The text move is a solid, dependable choice.



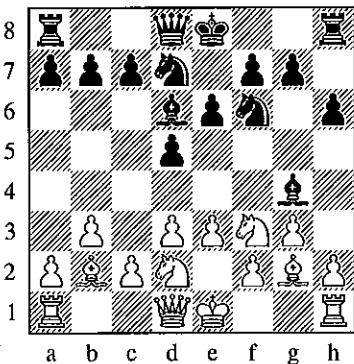
4. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

Inserting 4.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ does not really change anything.

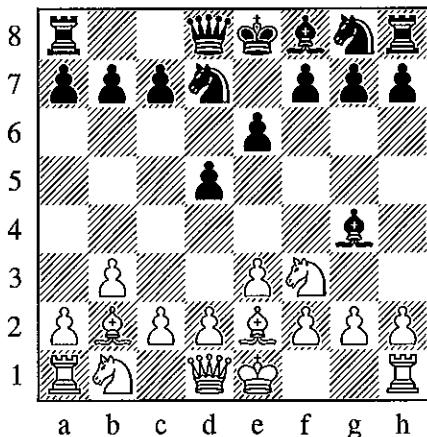
4...e6 5. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

5.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ doesn't have any independent value.

5.d3 h6!? is a useful precaution to save the light-squared bishop from exchange. 6. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ 7.g3 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ This position occurred in Moradiabadi – Holt, Richardson 2013. Now I would like to offer:



8... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$?N 9.0–0 (9.a3 $\mathbb{Q}e5!?$ =) 9... $\mathbb{Q}a3=$ and Black is doing fine.

5... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 6.0–0

A high-level game continued:
6.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 7.d3

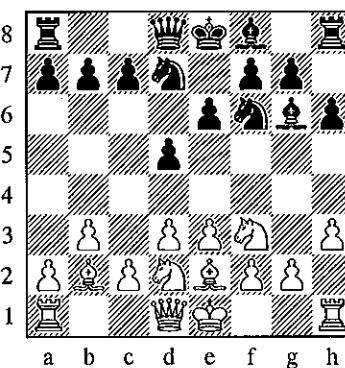
White takes the e4-square under control and prepares g2-g4 followed by $\mathbb{Q}h4$ to eliminate the light-squared bishop.

7...h6

Prophylaxis against White's idea.

8. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$!?

One of many possible ways to play. Black prevents any advance of the e-pawn and ensures that the light-squared bishop will remain safe from exchange.

9. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$

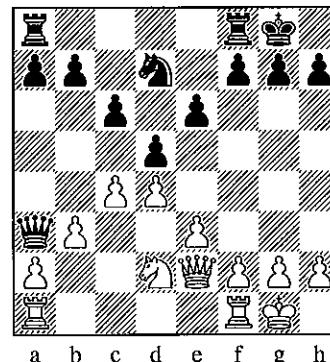
10... $\mathbb{Q}a3$!N is an interesting alternative, preventing White from bringing his bishop back to b2.

11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0–0 12.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13.c4 a5 14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$

With equal chances in Salov – Anand, Madrid 1993.

6... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 7.c4

Delaying this move leads nowhere for White:
7.d4 0–0 8. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 13. c4 c6

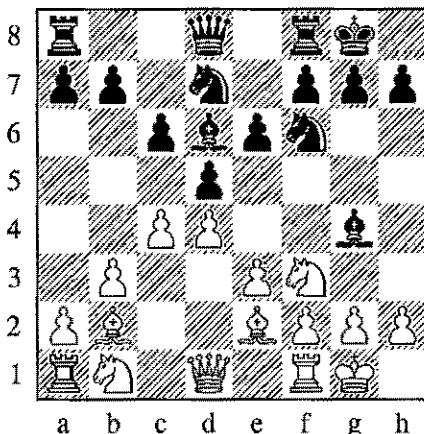


14.♗fc1 ♘fe8 15.♗c2 ♘ad8 16.♗d1 ♖e7=

Black had no problems in Schmittdiel – Hort, Bad Neuenahr 1989.

7...0–0 8.d4 c6

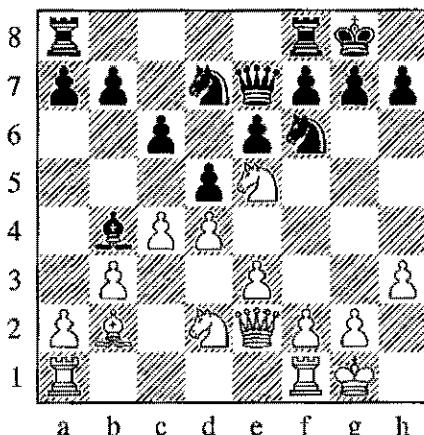
We have reached a harmless version of a Slav. A possible continuation is:



9.♗bd2 ♖e7 10.h3 ♗h5 11.♗e5 ♗xe2
12.♗xe2 ♗b4!?

An interesting idea, not allowing White to stabilize the centre with f2-f4.

12...♗fd8 is also roughly equal, bearing in mind that 13.f4! is still not a good idea on account of 13...♗b4!.



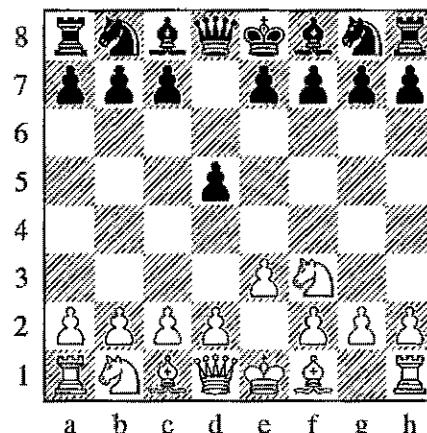
13.a3!N

13.♗xd7 ♖xd7 14.♗f3 ♗e4 gave Black no problems in Krause – Van Linde, Bad Zwischenahn 2002.

13...♗xd2 14.♗xd2 ♗e4 15.♗c2 ♗xe5
16.dxe5 ♖g5=

With equal chances.

B) 2.e3



One of the ideas behind this move order could be to prepare c2-c4 without allowing ...d4 in reply. It's hardly a challenging opening choice though, and Black has a wide variety of options.

2...♗f6

I've decided to choose this flexible move, which keeps a variety of options open.

2...♗g4? would be asking for trouble, as after 3.c4 e6 4.♗b3 Black experiences some problems protecting the b7-pawn.

3.c4

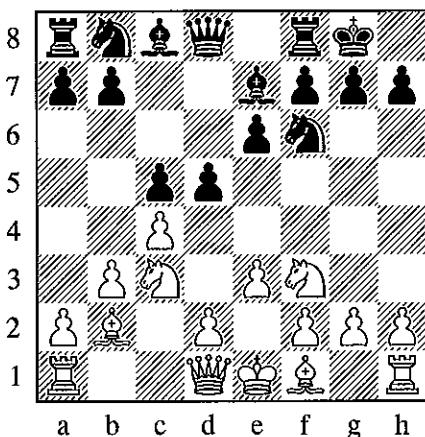
3.b3 can be met by 3...♗g4 with a likely transposition to Variation A3.

3...e6

Supporting the central pawn. White's two main possibilities are B1) 4.♗c3 and B2) 4.b3.

4.d4 will not be considered here, as it transposes to a harmless variation of the Queen's Gambit Declined (or the Queen's Indian, if Black continues with 4...b6).

B1) 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 5.b3 0-0 6. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ c5

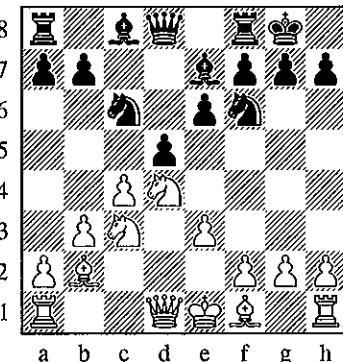


7.cxd5

7.d4 cxd4 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

8.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ b6 10.0-0 dxc4 11.bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ gave Black good prospects against the hanging pawns in Langeweg – Portisch, Amsterdam 1967, as both the bishop on d3 and the knight on c3 are misplaced.

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



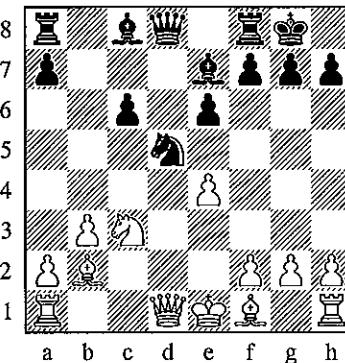
9.cxd5

9. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 gave Black a solid position in Riis – Korolev, Denmark 1999.

9... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 11.e4

White does not have time for 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2?$ on account of 11... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$

Now in Lazic – Tirard, Cutro 2004, Black's easiest way to maintain the balance would have been:

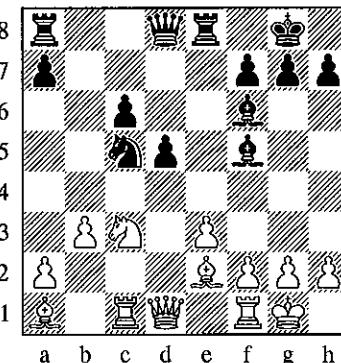


11... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ N 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1\#$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6=$

White is not compelled to repeat the position, but he gets no advantage from avoiding it.

7...exd5 8.d4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 10.0-0

10. dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 13.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ occurred in Farago – Acs, Balatonlelle 2002. I would recommend the simple:



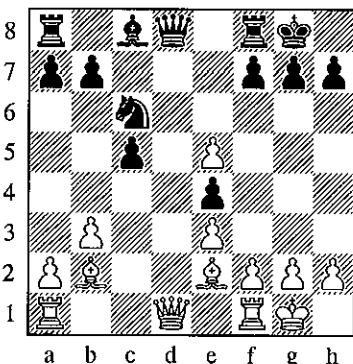
15... $\mathbb{Q}c8!$ N 16. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7=$ With a roughly equal position.

10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11. $\mathbb{E}c1$

A rare alternative is:

11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ dxe4 12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ 13.dxe5

Now I would like to recommend:



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

The knight is heading for d3.

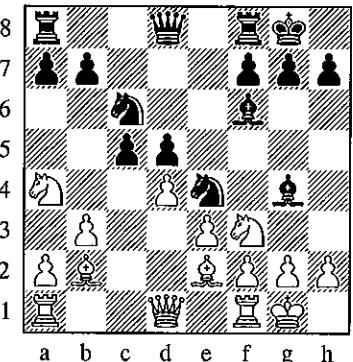
13... $\mathbb{W}g5$ is less accurate because of 14. $\mathbb{W}c2!$ N (14. $\mathbb{W}d5?$ $\mathbb{Q}d8\#$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xe4?$ $\mathbb{E}d2-$ was a disaster for White in Blatny – K. Müller, Austria 2001) 14... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 15.e6!±, which promises White a slight edge.

14. $\mathbb{W}c1!$ $\mathbb{W}g5!$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ 16.f4 $\mathbb{W}g6$
17. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ exd3

Black has excellent compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

11. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$

White has tried a few moves from here:



12.h3

12.dxc5? $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#$

15. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 17.gxf3 $\mathbb{Q}h3\#$ and Black won an exchange in Ananchenko – Gubernatorova, Krasnodar 1997.

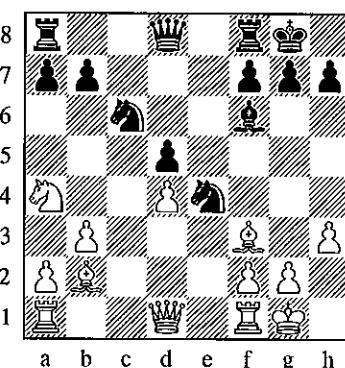
12. $\mathbb{E}c1$ cxd4 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ N $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ is also equal) 14... $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16.exd4 and in this equal position a draw was agreed in O'Kelly de Galway – Parma, Beverwijk 1963.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

13.gxf3N may lead to a perpetual after:
13... $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$
16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}g5\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ =

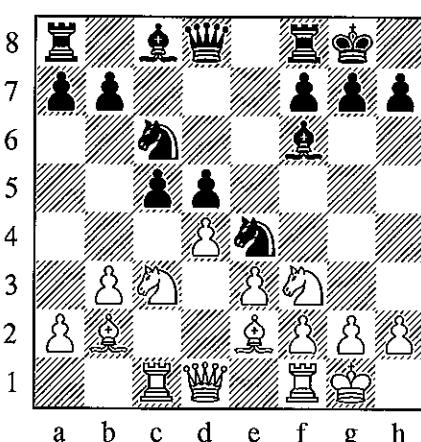
13...cx d4 14.exd4

This was Miles – Petursson, Lone Pine 1978, and now I prefer:



14... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ IN 15. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

With a pleasant position for Black.

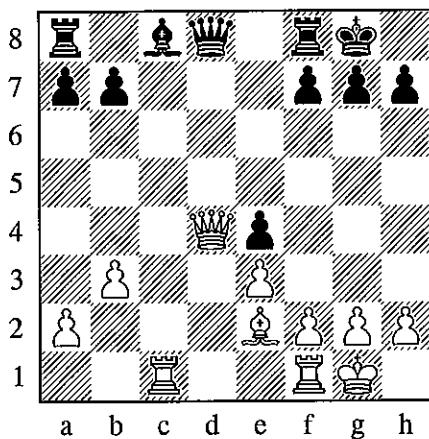


1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d511...cxd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13. exd4 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ was fine for Black in Vedral – Netusil, Prague 2005.

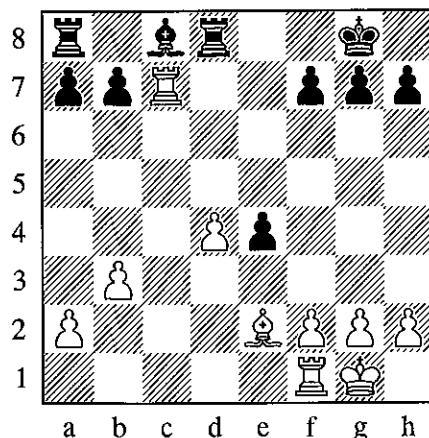
12...dxe4 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xd4$

15. exd4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5=$ Ostl – Mozny, Germany 1992.

15... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 16. exd4 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c7$

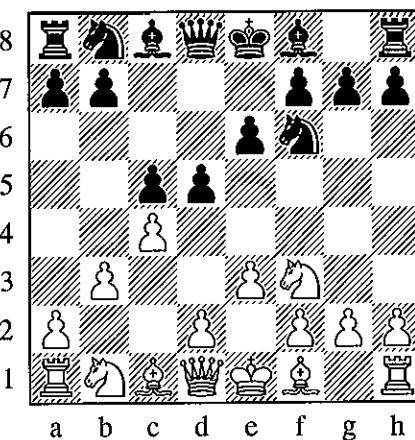
17. $\mathbb{Q}fd1N$ is better, although Black reaches a level endgame with just a few careful moves: 17... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18. f3 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 19. fxe4 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}dc1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{Q}xc8=$

Now in Rossi – Sciacca, Celle Ligure 1995, Black could have safely taken the pawn:

17... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8=$

White has enough compensation for equality, but clearly nothing more.

B2) 4.b3 c5

5. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

5. cxd5 exd5 does not have much independent significance. 6. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ immediately transposes to our main line; while 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ and 6. $\mathbb{Q}b5\uparrow$ have been played a few times, but White almost always follows up with $\mathbb{Q}b2$ in the near future, thereby transposing to one of the lines below.

5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6. cxd5

6. $\mathbb{Q}e2?$ allows 6...d4! 7. exd4 cxd4 when Black has a useful space advantage while both of White's bishops are passive. 8. d3 e5 9. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ Black was clearly better in Adamowicz – Mirzoev, Rewal 2014.

6. g3?!

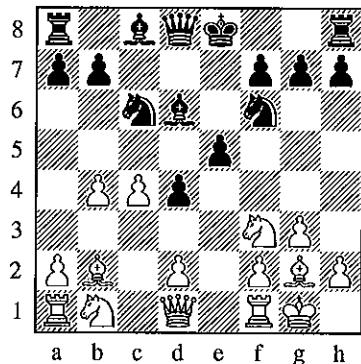
This is not quite as bad as the line above, as the bishop will be better placed on g2 in the ensuing structure. Nevertheless, Black should still go for it:

6... d4! 7. exd4 cxd4 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ e5

The bishop on g2 is on the normal square for a reversed Modern Benoni, but the one on b2 is simply misplaced.

9.0–0 ♘d6 10.b4?

After 10.d3 0–0 White was only slightly worse in Basso – Donchenko, Doha 2014. The text move is an attempt to solve White's problems by tactical means, but it simply does not work.



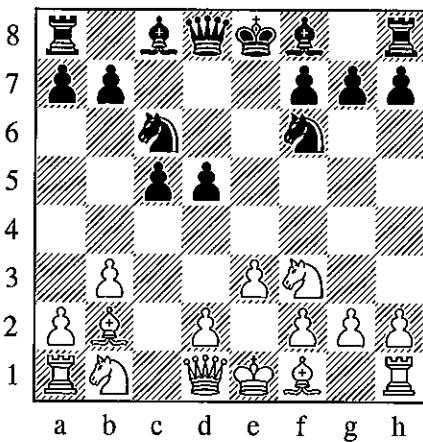
10...♗xb4! 11.♗xe5 ♘xe5 12.♘a4†

12.♘a3 ♘a5 13.♗b3 ♘d6 14.♗e1† ♘e6+ left Black a piece up in J. Cruz – Alonso Rosell, Montcada 2015.

12...♗c6 13.♗xc6† bxc6 14.♗e1 0–0 15.♗xe5 ♘b8

White managed to win back the sacrificed piece, but Black was left with a decisive initiative in D. Gurevich – Robson, Saint Louis 2010.

6...exd5



White's two main options are B21) 7.♗b5 and B22) 7.♗e2.

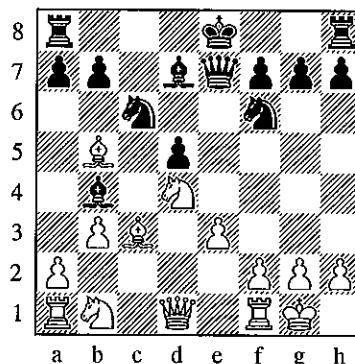
A relatively rare alternative is:

7.d4 cxd4 8.♗xd4 ♘b4† 9.♗c3 ♘e7??

9...♘a5 has been more common.

10.♗b5 ♘d7 11.0–0

Now in Heikkinen – Lagland, Finland 1984, the simplest continuation would have been:



11...0–0N 12.♗xb4 ♘xb4 13.♗xc6

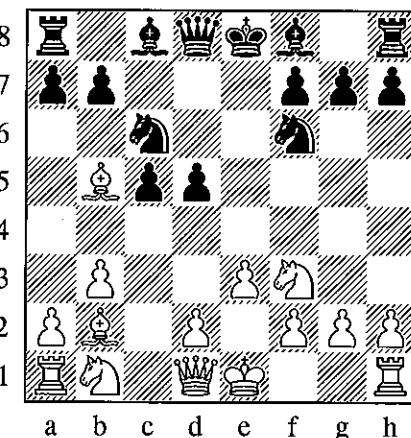
Or 13.♗xc6 bxc6 14.♗d3 a5 with a modest edge for Black.

13...bxc6 14.♗d2 ♘d6

Followed by ...c5, with a slightly more pleasant position for Black.

B21) 7.♗b5

This has been played in quite a lot of games, but the pin is of little concern to Black.



7... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 8.0-0

8.d4

This should transpose to our main line as long as Black reacts correctly with:

8...cxd4!

8...0-0 9.dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 10.0-0 has led to impressive practical results for White. A good example continued: 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 13.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h4!$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 16.g3 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe2\pm$ This has been known to be better for White since Karpov – Lautier, Monte Carlo (blindfold) 2000.

9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10.0-0 0-0

We have transposed to the main line below.

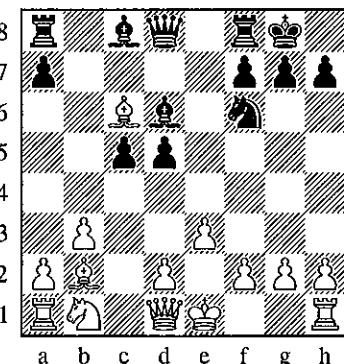
8. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

It is important to mention that the attack on c6 can be ignored.

8...0-0! 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 11.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b8\mp$ gave Black the more active position in Taimanov – Kaidanov, Belgrade 1988.

In Barbeau – Leveille, Quebec 1990, Black should have continued with:

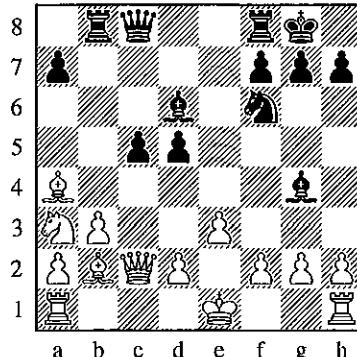


10... $\mathbb{Q}b8!$ N

Now White's light-squared bishop is out of play.

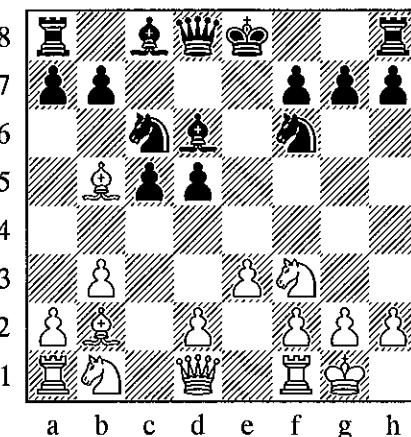
11. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}c8!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}a4$

13. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ is strongly met by 13...c4! 14.bxc4 a6 15. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{W}e6!$ and White is under pressure.



13... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d3!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

White's position is perilous, as his king is stuck in the centre and his minor pieces are poorly placed.



8...0-0 9.d4

9. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 10. d3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ and Black was doing well in Zagorskis – Bluvshtein, Bled (ol) 2002.

9.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ was also pleasant for Black in Inarkiev – S. Ivanov, Moscow 2004.

9...cxd4 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

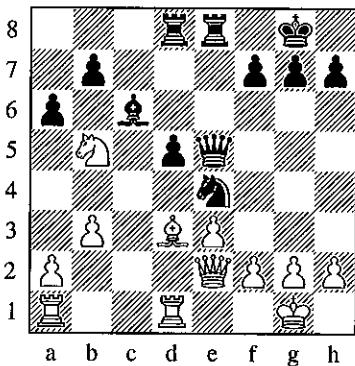
10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 11. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ c5 13. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ was slightly better for Black in Grecescu – Golod, Plovdiv 2008.

10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

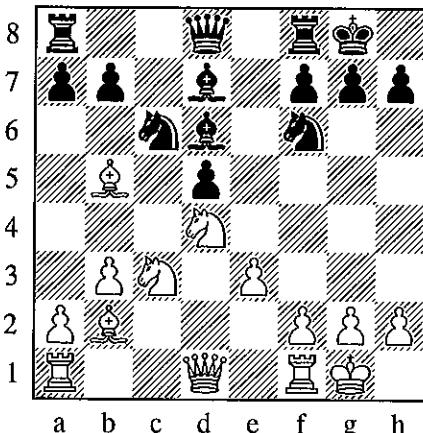
11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ a6 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ was

another opening success for Black in Korchnoi – Larsen, Brussels 1987.

Another example continued: 11.♗e2 ♜e8 12.♕c3 ♜xd4 13.♗xd4 ♜e5 14.♗d2 ♜c6?! (Black has another good option in 14...♝g4, with an exact transposition to variation B221, except that one extra move has been played here) 15.♗fd1 ♜e7 16.♗d3 ♜ad8 17.♗b5 ♜e4 18.♗e2 a6 19.♗xe5 ♜xe5

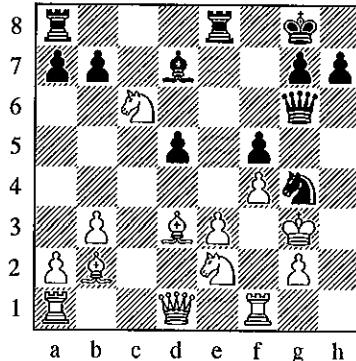


A draw was agreed here in Winants – Lukacs, Wijk aan Zee 1988, as 20.♗xe4 ♜xb5 21.♗d3 ♜c6 followed by ...d4 is equal.



11...♝e8 12.♕ce2 ♜e5 13.♗xc6 bxc6

13...♝xh2†?! looks tempting but it is not quite sufficient against accurate play from White: 14.♗xh2 ♜g4† 15.♗g3! ♜g5 16.f4 ♜g6 17.♗d3 f5



18.♗e5! ♜xe5† 19.♗f2 ♜g4† 20.♗e1 ♜xe3 21.♗d2 ♜xg2 22.♗g1 ♜xg1† 23.♗xg1 ♜c4† 24.♗d1 ♜xd2 25.♗xd2 Materially Black is more than okay, but White has the advantage thanks to his fantastic minor pieces.

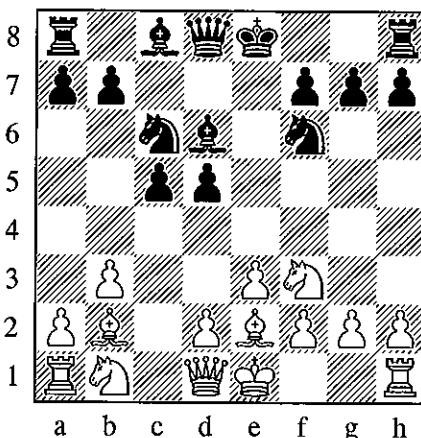
14.♗xe5 ♜xe5 15.♗a4

15.♗d3 c5= is also fine for Black.

15...c5 16.♗xd7 ♜xd7 17.♗c1 ♜c8

With equal chances, Aronian – Gelfand, Moscow 2014.

B22) 7.♗e2 ♜d6



This is the most active square for the bishop.

8.0–0

8.d4 can be met by 8...cxd4 9.♗xd4 0–0 (9...♝b4† is an additional option but I don't

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

think it's an improvement) 10.0–0 and we have transposed to the main line.

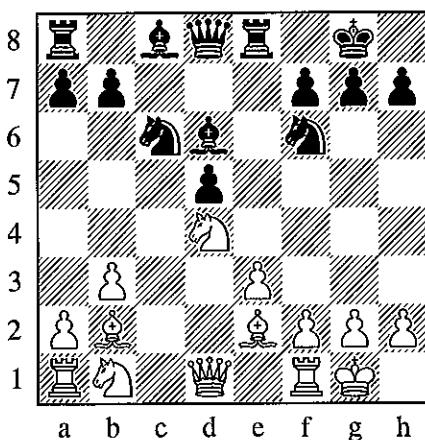
8...0–0 9.d4

9.d3?! is too timid. Black has a pleasant choice between a neutral move such as 9... $\mathbb{E}e8$, with an easy game, and the more ambitious 9...d4?! as in Goletiani – V. Georgiev, Chicago 2006.

9...cxd4

Black should make this exchange in order to avoid losing a tempo with his bishop after dxc5.

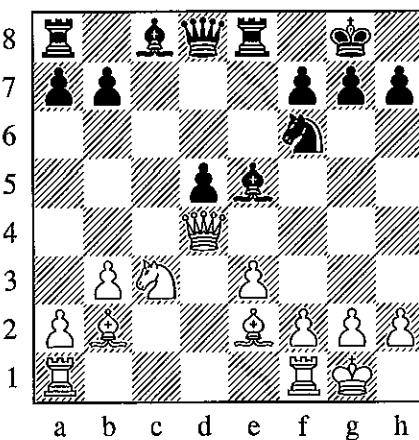
10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{E}e8$



White's two main options are B221) 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ and B222) 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$.

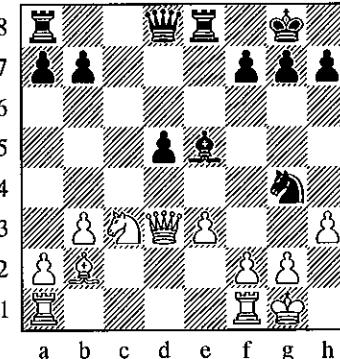
11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ occurred in Al Halila – Parligras, Abu Dhabi 2014. My suggestion would be 12...a5!N 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ when Black is at least equal. The same type of structure can arise in variation B222 below, but here Black has a slightly improved version as his a-pawn has gone straight to a5, rather than wasting time stopping on a6.

B221) 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$



13. $\mathbb{W}d2$

13. $\mathbb{W}d3$? is an interesting deviation which changes things slightly. I suggest 13... $\mathbb{Q}g4$?N 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 15. h3 and now a slight change compared with the main line below:



15...d4! An important intermediate move. 16. exd4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 17. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2\#$ 18. $\mathbb{E}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xd3$ $\mathbb{E}ad8=$ Black is okay in this endgame with rook and pawn versus two minor pieces, as the rooks will be exchanged sooner or later.

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

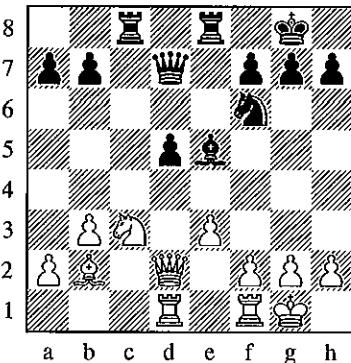
13...d4?! can be met by 14. $\mathbb{E}ad1\pm$.

14. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$

Another game continued:

14.♕b5 ♕d7

14...♚e7?!N also looks reasonable.
15.♕xd7 ♜xd7 16.♗ad1 ♜ac8



17.♘a4?

White can't unpin the knight by means of
17.♔a1?? in view of 17...♜xc3 18.♕xc3 ♔e4.

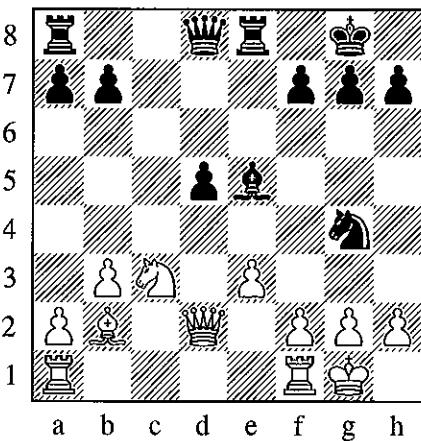
17.♗d3N is correct, but Black is clearly out
of danger.

17...♝f5 18.♕xe5 ♜xe5 19.♗d4 ♜xd4
20.exd4 ♜c2†

Black had clearly taken over in Van der
Sterren – Van der Wiel, Wijk aan Zee 1995.

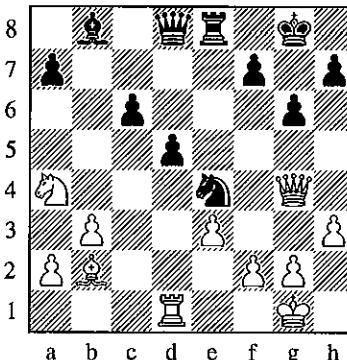
14...♞xg4

14...♗xh2†? doesn't work as after
15.♗xh2 ♞xg4† 16.♗h3 ♜g5 17.♗d4
♗h5† 18.♗g3 ♞h6 19.♗h1 ♞f5† 20.♗f4†
Black's compensation is insufficient, Miles –
Ljubojevic, Bugojno 1978.



15.h3 ♜f6 16.♗fd1 ♜c8 17.♗ac1 ♜c6
18.♘b5

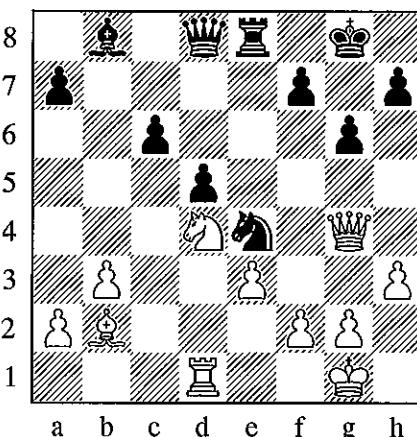
18.♘a4 ♜e4 19.♗e2 ♜b8 20.♗xc6 bxc6
21.♗g4 g6 is fine for Black, especially after the
following strange move:



22.h4? h5 23.♗h3 ♜e5! Black was better in
J. Ivanov – Korneev, Tenerife 2001, thanks to
White's misplaced queen and knight.

18...♞e4 19.♗e2 ♜b8 20.♗xc6 bxc6 21.♗g4
g6 22.♘d4?!

White should have brought the knight back
to c3, although Black is fine anyway. After
the text move he could have obtained some
advantage with:

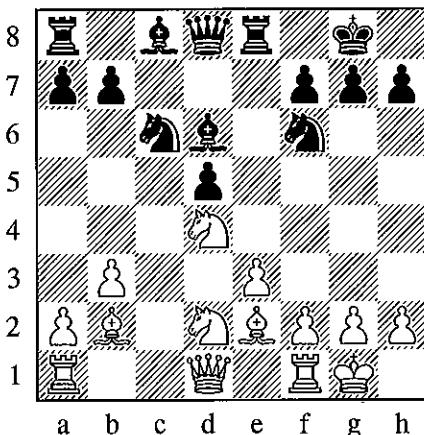


22...♝c7!N

22...♝f6 23.♗e2 ♜d6 24.♘f3 led to equal
play in Brunner – Timman, Biel 1995.

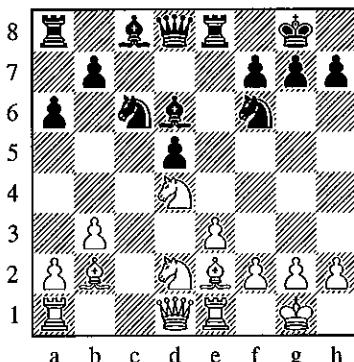
1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d523. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 24. $\mathbb{W}f3$ c5 25. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c4†

With some initiative for Black.

B222) 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 

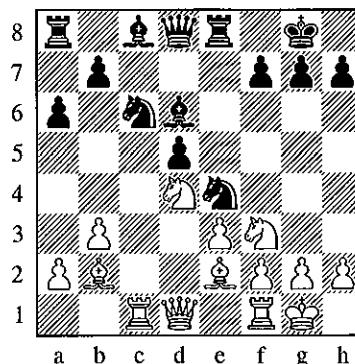
11... a6

The only drawback of this move is that the pawn may want to go to a5 following an exchange on c6. However, there is no guarantee that White will make that exchange – and in the meantime, it is useful to cover the b5-square.

12. $\mathbb{R}c1$ 12. $\mathbb{R}e1$ can be met by:

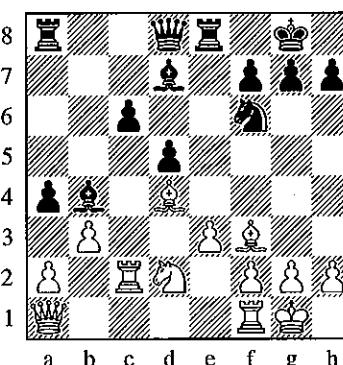
12... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$! N (There is also 12... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$, as in Suba – Parligras, Iasi 2014, and now 13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$! N is equal) 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ = and Black is fine.

After 12. $\mathbb{Q}2f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 13. $\mathbb{R}c1$ Black can continue with:



13... $\mathbb{W}f6$! N (13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ = was also okay in Nemitz – Koch, Porz 1991) 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ and White has nothing better than repeating: 15. $\mathbb{Q}2f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ =

An older but high-level game continued: 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$! bxc6 13. $\mathbb{R}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ a5 15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 16. $\mathbb{R}c2$ a4 17. $\mathbb{W}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ (17... $\mathbb{W}e7$! N)



18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ (18... $\mathbb{Q}d6$! N seems okay too) 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{W}xb4$ 20. a3 axb3 21. axb4 $\mathbb{R}xa1$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{R}xf1$ † 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{R}b8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{R}b6$ = With a drawish endgame, Andersson – Spassky, Gothenburg 1971.

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

The simplest way to equality.

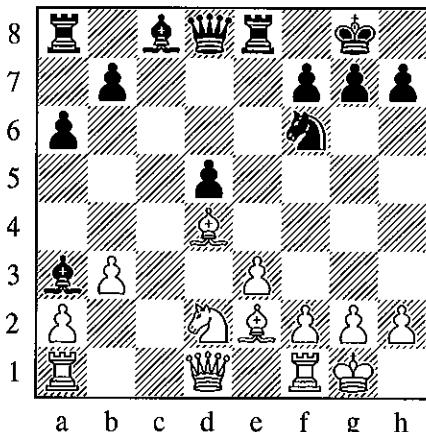
If Black does not want to allow the repetition mentioned in the next note, then 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$?

is a sensible way to maintain the tension, with roughly equal chances.

13.♕xd4 ♕a3 14.♕a1!?

An attempt to play for a win.

14.♕c3 ♕b4 leads to a repetition: 15.♕c1 ♕a3=



14...♗f5

Both of Black's bishops are extremely active now.

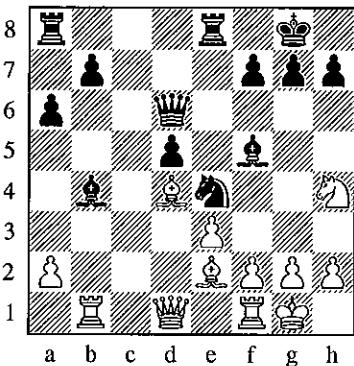
15.♗b1

The alternative is:

15.♗f3 ♗e4 16.b4! ♘d6?! 17.♗b1!?

White should have preferred 17.♗h4 N
♗d7 18.f3 ♗g5 19.♗c5 ♘f6 20.♗d4 with a roughly equal position.

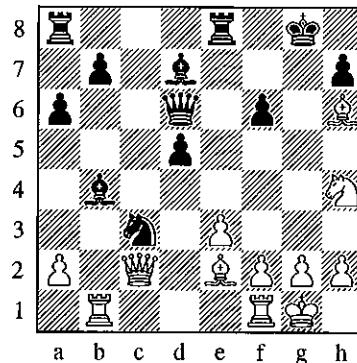
17...♗xb4 18.♗h4



18...♗d7!N

18...♗e6?! allowed 19.♗xg7! with unclear but roughly equal play in Goudriaan – E. Danielian, Wijk aan Zee 2012.

19.♗xg7 f6! 20.♗h6 ♗c3 21.♗c2
21.♗f4 ♗xe2† 22.♗xe2 ♘xf4 23.exf4 ♘xe2
24.♗xb4 b5 results in a favourable endgame for Black.



21...♗e4! 22.g3 ♗xe2† 23.♗xe2 ♘b5†

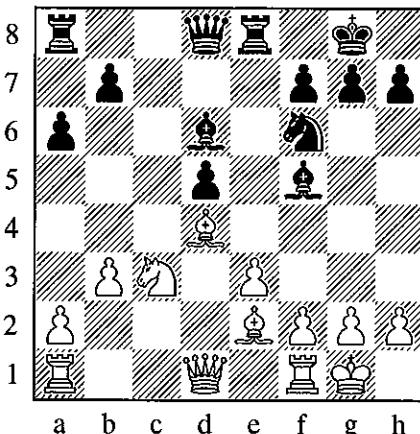
Black is better, although White retains some practical compensation due to the weaknesses on the kingside.

15...♗d6!?

After 15...♗f8 16.♗c3 ♗e4= a draw was agreed in Kogan – Gulko, Nova Gorica 1997.

16.♗c3

In Toivola – Tuovinen, Helsinki 1997, the most accurate continuation would have been:

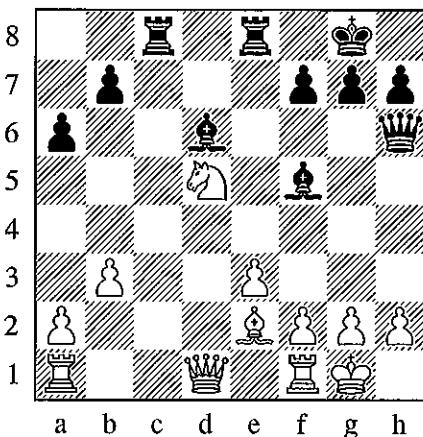


1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d516... $\mathbb{E}c8!N$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

17. $\mathbb{Q}f3?!$ can be met by 17... $\mathbb{E}e6!$ intending 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (18. h3 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ is also more pleasant for Black) 18... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xh2\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ and Black is better.

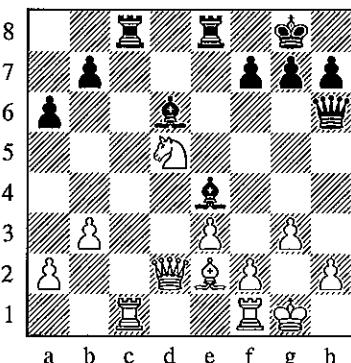
17... $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}h6$

Black has a lot of activity for a pawn, and White has to be careful to maintain the balance.

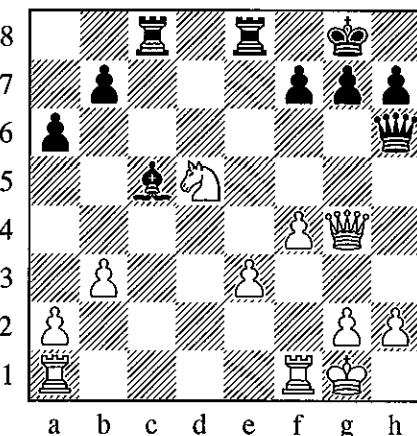


19. f4!

19. g3 is dangerous: 19... $\mathbb{Q}c2!$ 20. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$



21... $\mathbb{E}cd8!$ 22. $\mathbb{E}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 23. $\mathbb{E}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ Winning an exchange. 24. $\mathbb{E}xe4$ $\mathbb{E}xe4\#$

19... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xg4$ 21... $\mathbb{Q}xe3\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$

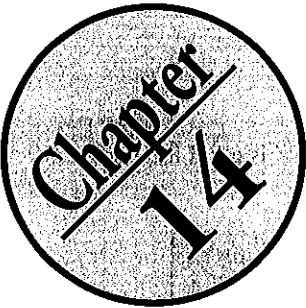
22. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ is fine for Black.

22... $\mathbb{W}b6!$

Regaining the piece, with equal chances.

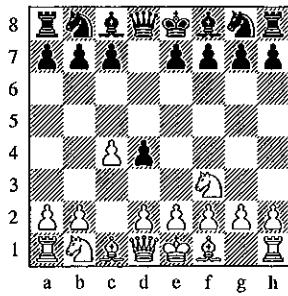
Conclusion

This chapter introduced the important topic of 1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 by covering two sidelines. 2. b3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ gives Black a pleasant version of a reversed Trompowsky. Depending on White's reaction, he may either double White's pawns by taking on f3, or simply develop with ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, ... $\mathbb{E}e6$ and so on, with a safe and solid position. 2. e3 also tends to be connected with a queenside fianchetto, the most common continuation being 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. c4 e6 4. b3 c5 5. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$, which normally leads to an IQP structure after a subsequent d2-d4. The ensuing positions are complex and interesting, but Black's chances are generally not worse at all.



1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

2.c4 d4



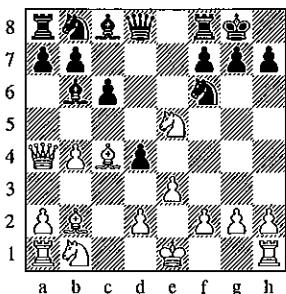
Variation Index

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 2.c4

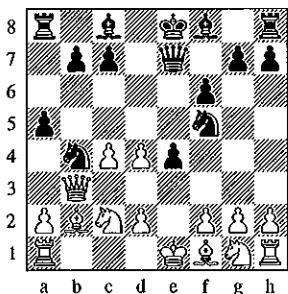
2...d4

A) 3.c5?!	276
B) 3.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ e5	278
B1) 5.d3	278
B2) 5.0-0	281
C) 3.b4 f6 4.e3 e5	284
C1) 5.exd4	287
C2) 5.c5 a5	289
C21) 6. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$?!	289
C22) 6. $\mathbb{Q}c4$	290
C23) 6. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ †	292
C24) 6. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ †	295

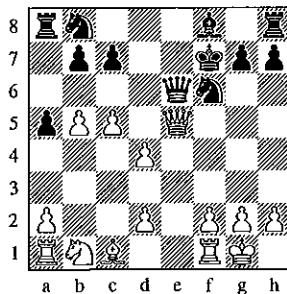
A) note to 5.b4



C1) after 12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$



C21) after 14.0-0



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

12... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ †!N

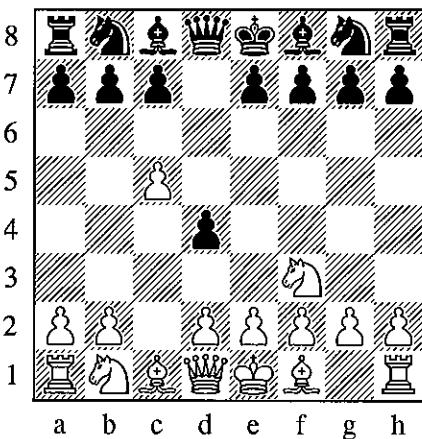
14... $\mathbb{Q}d5$!N

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 2. c4 d4

You could also consider 2...c6, 2...e6 or 2...dxc4, according to your preferred response to the Queen's Gambit. It would be hopelessly impractical to cover all of these options in one book, but luckily the text move can be played by anyone. It also fits perfectly with my philosophy of playing ambitiously and gaining space when White gives us the option to do so. While analysing this variation, I received generous help from my friend GM Boris Avrukh.

In this chapter we will analyse A) 3.c5?!, B) 3.g3 and C) 3.b4.

3.e3 is the other main move, and it will be analysed in the next chapter.

A) 3.c5?!

This advance is premature.

3...e5!

Fast development is the key here.

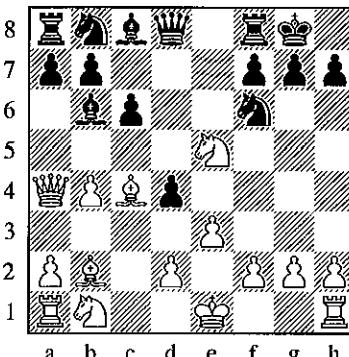
4. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 5. b4

I also considered:

5. $\mathbb{W}a4\ddagger$ c6 6. b4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. e3 0-0
9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}e8!$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}b3$ dxe3

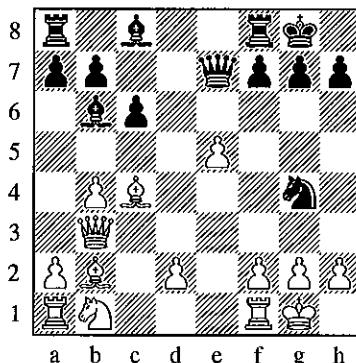
12. dxe3 a5 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5\ddagger$ is good for Black too.

**9... $\mathbb{W}e7\ddagger$**

The most accurate, although 9... $\mathbb{Q}c7\ddagger$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\ddagger$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ a5 \ddagger was also better for Black in Schebler – Turov, Pardubice 2004.

10. exd4

10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ dxe3 11. dxe3 $\mathbb{Q}xe3!$ 12. fxe3 b5
13. $\mathbb{W}a3$ bxc4 \ddagger
10... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11. 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 12. dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}b3$

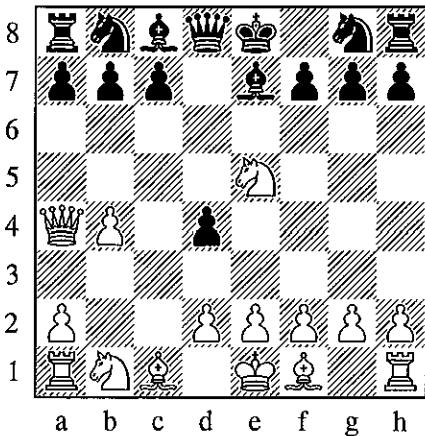


13... $\mathbb{Q}d8!$ 14. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xh2\ddagger$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\ddagger$ $\mathbb{W}xf7$
16. $\mathbb{W}xf7\ddagger$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5\ddagger$

Despite being a pawn down, Black's advantage is unquestionable.

5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6. $\mathbb{W}a4\ddagger$

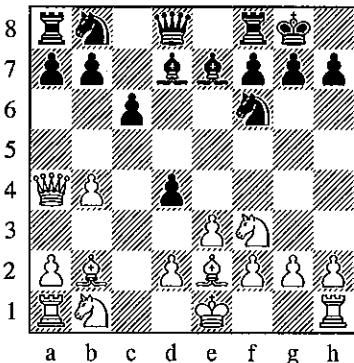
In Ortmann – Khenkin, Bad Wiessee 2011, Black's best continuation would have been:



6...c6!N 7.b5

7.♗b2 ♗f6 8.e3 dxе3 9.dxe3 0–0 10.a3 (10.♗e2 is strongly met by 10...b5!) 10...♗f5 11.♗e2 ♗bd7 with a slight edge for Black.

7.♗f3 ♗f6 8.♗b2 ♗d7! is a nice indirect defence of the d4-pawn. 9.e3 (9.♗c2 a5!) 9...0–0 10.♗e2



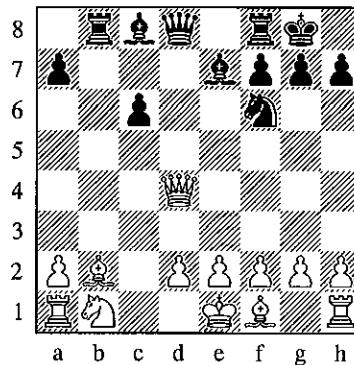
10...♗a6! 11.a3 (11.♗xa6 bx'a6 12.♗xa6 dxе3 13.fxe3 ♗d5!) is also better for Black) 11...c5 12.b5 ♗c7 13.exd4 cxд4 14.♗xd4 a6 15.♗c3 axb5 16.♗c2 ♗e8 17.0–0 ♗c5! and the initiative is on Black's side.

7...♗f6!

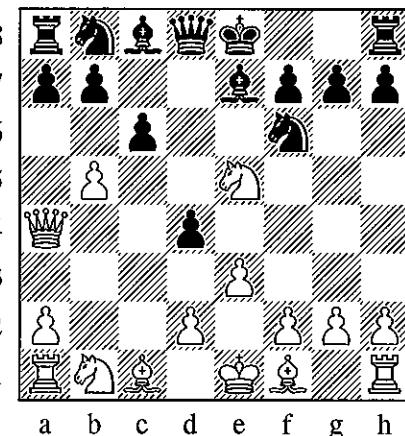
Black offers a pawn in order to increase his development advantage.

8.e3

Accepting the pawn would be risky: 8.bxc6 0–0! 9.♗b2 ♗xc6 10.♗xc6 bxc6 11.♗xd4 (11.♗xd4 ♗b8 is also good for Black) 11...♗b8



12.♗xd8 (12.e3?! ♗f5! is even worse) 12...♗xd8 13.♗e5 ♗b5 14.♗c3 ♗e4 15.e3 ♗xc3 16.♗xc3 (16.♗xb5? ♗xb5!) 16...♗b2 17.♗c4 ♗bxg2 18.0–0 ♗f5! Black is better thanks to his bishop pair and active rooks.



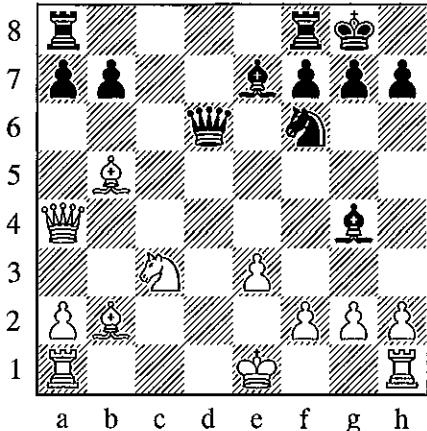
8...dxe3 9.dxe3 0–0 10.♗b2

After 10.bxc6 ♗xc6 11.♗xc6 bxc6! with the idea of ...♗d5 White is under pressure.

10...♗d6 11.♗e2

11.♗d2 ♗d8 12.♗d1 ♗e6 13.a3 ♗d5 14.♗ef3 a6! is also good for Black.

11...♗bd7 12.♗xd7 ♗xd7 13.♗c3 cxb5 14.♗xb5 ♗g4

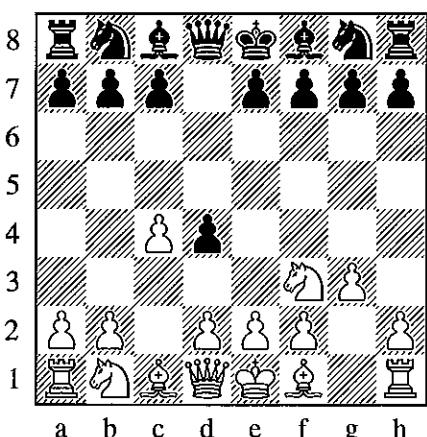
1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

15.0–0 a6 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}d2!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$
18. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ b5 19. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{E}ad8\#$

Black is better.

B) 3.g3

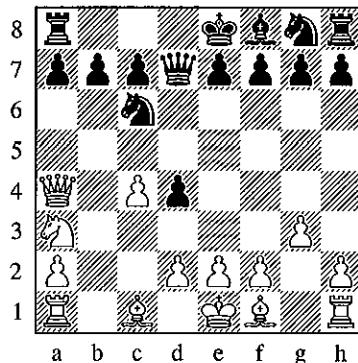
White is playing a closed Benoni with reversed colours.



3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

The pawn sacrifice 4.b4! was tested just once, but nevertheless it deserves some attention. 4... $\mathbb{Q}xb4!$ (I considered 4...e5!N 5.b5 e4, but 6.bxc6 exf3 7.cxb7 $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 8. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$ 9. $\mathbb{W}xd7\#$ 10. $\mathbb{W}h3\#$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 11.e3 seems to be marginally better for White) 5. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

Now I would like to improve upon Black's play in Trauth – Dittmar, Arco 2012, with:



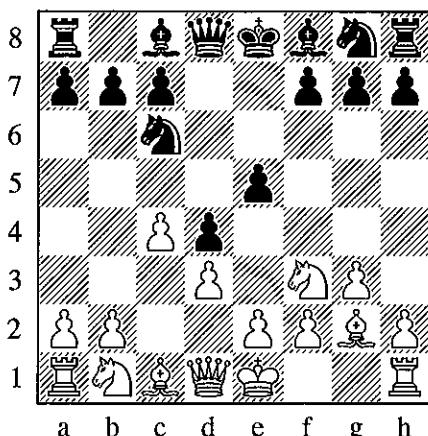
8... $\mathbb{Q}f6\#N$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ e5 10.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ Black has no real problems and White still has to justify his pawn sacrifice.

4...e5

In this position B1) 5.d3 has been the most popular choice, but I believe B2) 5.0–0 to be slightly more accurate.

5.b4? is simply bad here due to 5...e4! 6. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7.b5 (or 7.a3 a5 8.b5 $\mathbb{Q}e5\#$) 7... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ and Black was clearly better in Jandke – Sprotte, Germany 1994.

B1) 5.d3

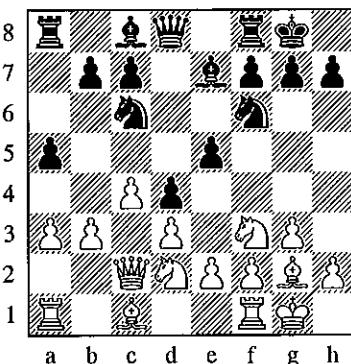


5... $\mathbb{Q}b4\#?$

5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is likely to transpose to variation B2 after 6.0–0. The text move is a useful extra option, which I would tend to prefer against the particular move order chosen by White.

6. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

6. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ a5 7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8.a3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9.b3 0–0 10. $\mathbb{W}c2$ (10. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ is a more typical plan, bringing the knight to c2. After 11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ we have transposed to the 6. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ line below, as White can bring either knight to c2, via f3–e1 or b1–a3.) I faced the text move a couple of years ago. The game continued:



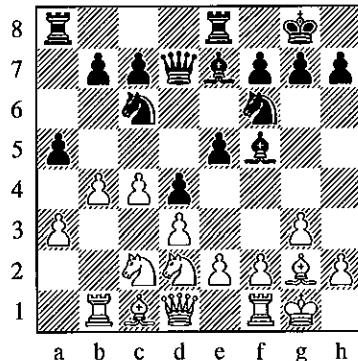
10... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ Black develops smoothly. 11. $\mathbb{E}b1$ h6 12.h3 $\mathbb{E}e8$ Black had a comfortable position and was on the way towards threatening ...e4 in Gao Rui – V. Mikhalevski, Santa Clara 2014.

The other playable move is:

6. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$

White is intending to develop his queen knight via a3 to c2 in order to support an eventual advance of the b-pawn.

6...a5 7. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8.0–0 0–0 9. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10.b3 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 11.a3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13.b4
13. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}a1$
 $\mathbb{W}d6\bar{F}$ was good for Black in A. Ivanov – S. Savchenko, Peterhof 2008, as he managed to prevent the advance of the b-pawn and took the important e4-square under control.



13...axb4 14.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 15.b5 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$

This position occurred in Trois – Van Riemsdijk, Santos 1997, and now I would like to offer:

18... $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ N

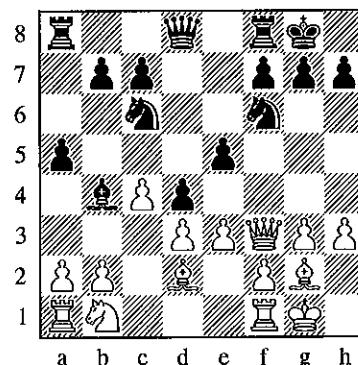
Intending ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$, taking control over the c5-square with a good position.

6...a5

This move is always useful to restrain a future advance of White's b-pawn.

7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

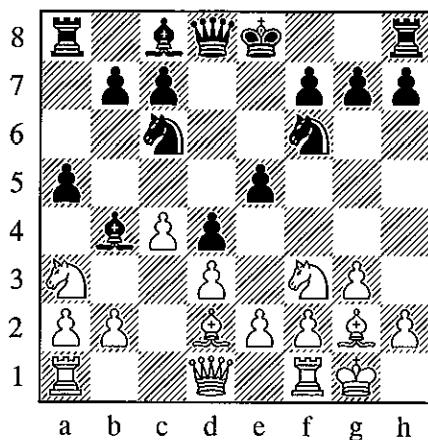
8.e3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$?? (I played 8...0–0, which also makes sense, but the text move is more ambitious) 9.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 0–0



11.a3N (11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$?! allowed 11...dxe3! 12. $\mathbb{W}xe3$? $\mathbb{Q}d4\bar{F}$ with a clear plus for Black in Baigorri Navarro – Martinez Martin, Madrid 2010)
11... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d1$ a4 \bar{F} Black is better thanks to

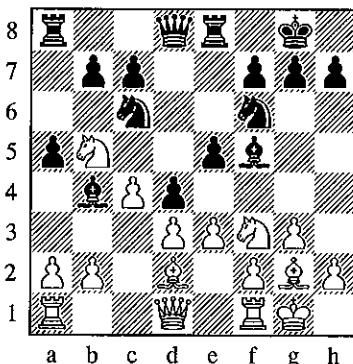
1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

his space advantage and the misplaced bishop on d2.

8...0-0 9. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

The main line. Alternatives are pretty rare:

9. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ The knight looks good here, but it doesn't support the advance of the b-pawn.
9... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 10. e3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$!



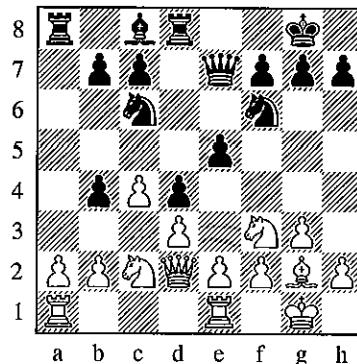
11. e4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12. h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5\mp$ Black was better in Speelman – Nakamura, Isle of Man 2004.

9. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ axb4 10. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{E}e1$

11. $\mathbb{W}d2$ occurred in Grebenkin – Burmakin, Omsk/Perm 1998. I suggest meeting this move with 11...h6!N, with a likely transposition to the line below after 12. $\mathbb{E}fe1$ $\mathbb{E}d8$.

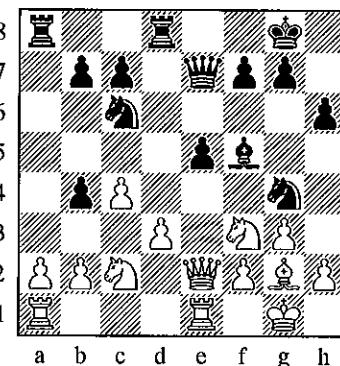
11... $\mathbb{E}d8$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$

This was Gdanski – Van Kampen, Warsaw 2013, and now I would like to offer:



12...h6!N

A useful move, covering the g5-square and ensuring that the bishop will be happy on f5.
13. e3 dxе3 14. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$! 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$!
White gets no time for h2-h3.



16. d4 $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{E}xd4$
19. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{E}ad8\mp$

Black is on top.

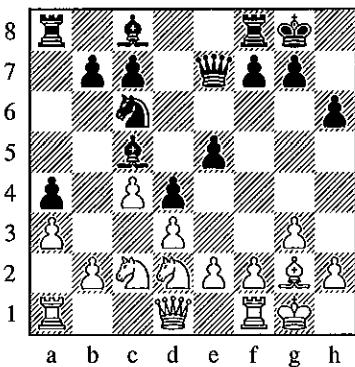
9... $\mathbb{Q}c5$

It is also possible to leave the bishop on b4, but I like the idea of avoiding exchanges and challenging White to find a use for the bishop on d2.

10. a3

The idea behind this move is obvious.

10.♗g5 h6 11.♗xf6 ♛xf6 12.♗d2 ♛e7 13.a3
a4 is good for Black, for instance:

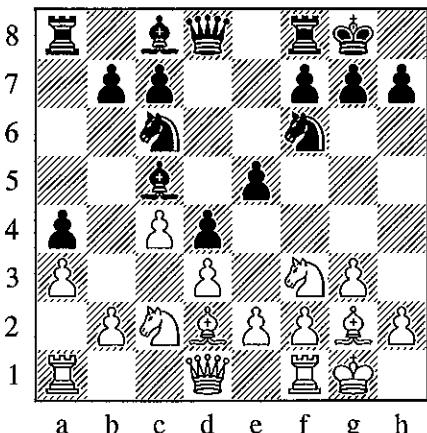


14.b4 (or 14.e3 ♜d8 15.♗e2 ♜f5†) 14...axb3 15.♗xb3 ♜d6† and Black was better in Kivipelto – Kupreichik, Stockholm 2013, due to the weak pawn on the a-file. (But please note that 15...♗xa3?? would lead to disaster after 16.c5!).

10...a4!

A typical move in such positions, ensuring that a future b2-b4 will weaken White's queenside structure.

10...e4 11.♗h4!N is messy.



11.♗b4

11.♗b4 ♜d6! maintains control for Black.

11...♜d6! 12.♗xc6

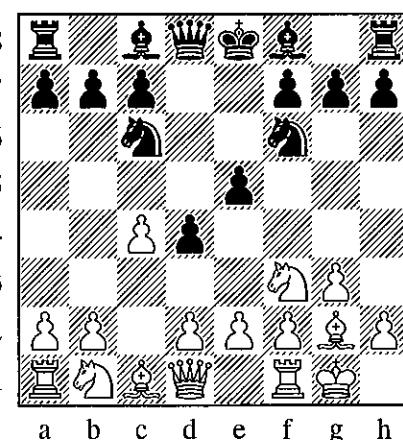
A draw was agreed here in Cardon – Meulders, Sas van Gent 1988, but Black could have played on.

12...bxc6N†

Only Black can be better, thanks to his space advantage and the backward pawn on b2.

B2) 5.0–0 ♜f6

5...e4!? is an interesting alternative, and the reason why some players prefer 5.d3 with White. Play continues: 6.♗e1 h5 (6...♗f6?! 7.d3 exd3 8.♗xd3 ♜e7 9.b4!± is good for White) 7.♗xe4 h4 8.d3 Delchev and Semkov recommend this for Black, and it certainly leads to interesting play with some attacking chances for the pawn. I am not completely convinced that Black can justify the material investment, which is why I went for the text move instead, but attacking players could certainly consider this option as well.



6.d3

6.b4!? is an attempt to deflect Black's knight away from the defence of the e5-pawn. 6...e4! The most accurate. (White hoped for 6...♗xb4 7.♗xe5! ♗xe5 8.♗a4†, although even here Black should not have any real problems) 7.♗g5 ♗xb4 8.♗xe4 ♗xe4

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

9. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}h3=$ (9...0-0!!) Black obtained a comfortable position in Psakhis – Zhuravliov, Sverdlovsk 1979.

6...a5!?

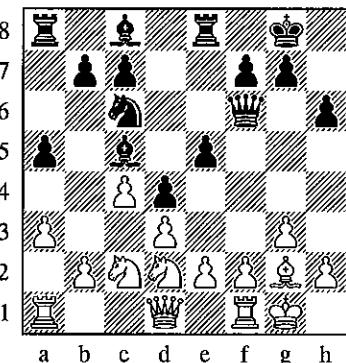
A sensible precaution, preventing a possible b2-b4 well in advance.

7.e3

7. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

8. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 0-0 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. e4?! was a poor choice by White in Gabriel – Rausis, Germany 1992. Black stands better and has a number of good options, but I prefer the simple 10...h6N 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\bar{f}$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$.

8...0-0 9. a3 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$!?

The more popular 12...a4 has scored well and is a decent move, but the text is more ambitious as Black safeguards his bishop from being exchanged.

13.e3!?

13. f4 $\mathbb{W}g6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 15. fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ left White under some pressure due to the weak dark squares in Schott – Hoegerl, email 2009.

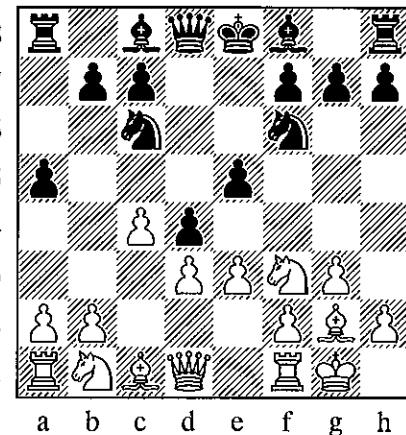
The text move seems like a natural choice but Black is doing well after:

13...dxe3 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$

After 14.fxe3 $\mathbb{W}g6\bar{f}$ Black's position is better thanks to his bishop pair and the vulnerability of White's central pawns.

14... $\mathbb{Q}f8\bar{f}$

The d3-pawn and d4-square are weak, and so Black is better.



7...dxe3

I consider this the most solid choice, although 7... $\mathbb{Q}c5$!?, 8. exd4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ (or even the pawn sac 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$!?) certainly deserves attention as well.

8. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

9.d4 transposes to the next note after 9...exd4 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$.

9...0-0 10.h3

It is useful for White to cover the g4-square.

10.d4 exd4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xd4$

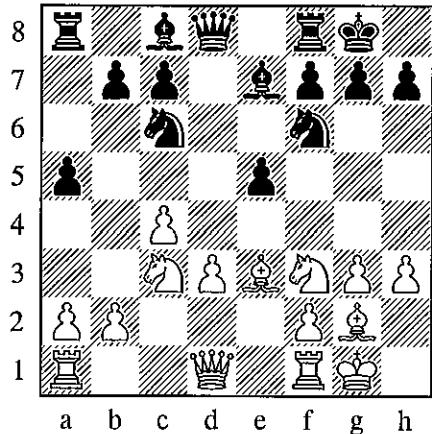
12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ c6 13. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ can be met by 13... $\mathbb{Q}g4$! intending 14.f3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15.b3 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ with roughly equal chances.

12...c6

Once again, the position is roughly equal, for example:

13. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. b3 $\mathbb{Q}d7=$

Vallejo Pons – Gelfand, Monte Carlo 2005.

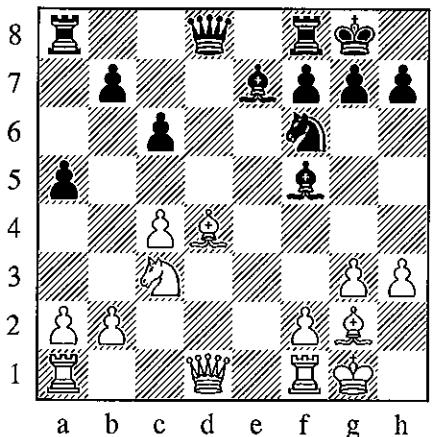


10... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 11.d4 exd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

13. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ c6 15. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$
16.b3 $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7=$ led to equal play in Tomashevsky – Wang Hao, Nizhniy Novgorod 2007.

13...c6

Obviously Black should put a barrier in the way of the g2-bishop.



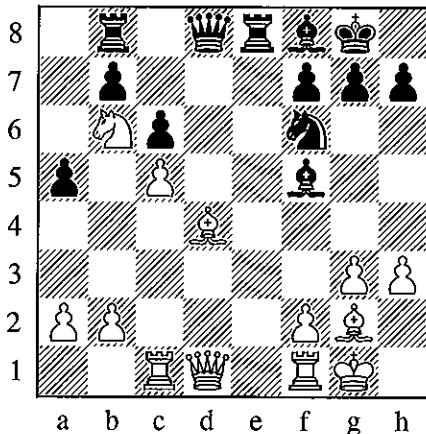
14. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

15. $\mathbb{Q}e1!?$ N is a sensible move, but Black should be fine after a few patient moves: 15... $\mathbb{Q}b8!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ $\mathbb{W}xe8$ Black has no need to fear an exchange on f6, as his powerful bishops would be more important

than his doubled pawns. 18. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d7!=$ and Black is about to equalize.

15... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 17.c5

This occurred in Gabuzyan – Tomashevsky, Yerevan 2014, and now I suggest:



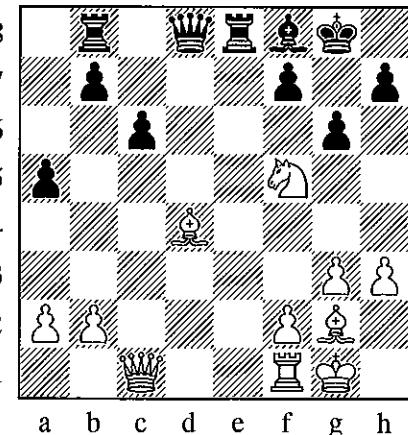
17... $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$ N

I believe this to be the most accurate, although 17...h5!? could also be considered.

18. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$

This seems like the only real chance to cause problems, but Black can maintain the balance as follows.

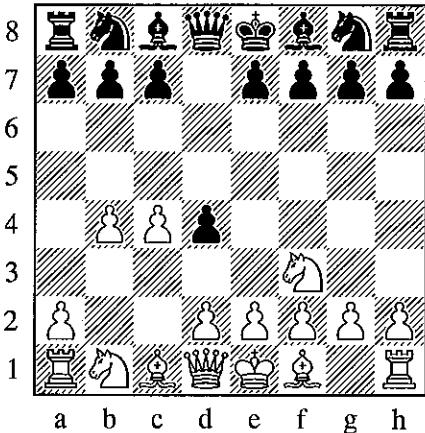
18... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d3!$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1$
21. $\mathbb{W}xc1$ g6



22. $\mathbb{Q}d1!$ $gxf5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}a7$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ $\mathbb{W}xb8$
 25. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}g5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}e6=$

White has enough activity to compensate for the missing pawn, but not enough to claim an advantage.

C) 3.b4



White is playing a kind of reversed Benko Gambit, but Black does not have to put a pawn on c5 and can instead build a strong centre by means of ...f6 and ...e5.

3...f6 4.e3

Challenging the central pawn is White's main idea.

4. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ e5 5. e3 transposes to 5. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ in the notes to White's next move in our main line.

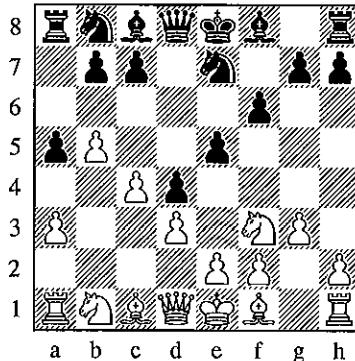
Black has nothing to fear after:

4. d3!? e5 5. a3 a5 6. b5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Delchev and Semkov give 6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ as more accurate, but I think the two moves are equally playable, with each having its own pluses and minuses.

7.g3

The Bulgarian authors argue that 7. e3N is good for White but I see no problem after 7... $\mathbb{Q}f5$.



7...c6!?

N 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 9. a4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ was also roughly equal in Van der Werf – Burg, Wijk aan Zee 2013.

The text move looks like the most challenging option for White to face. Given the chance, Black will exchange on b5 and gain access to the d5-square.

8.a4

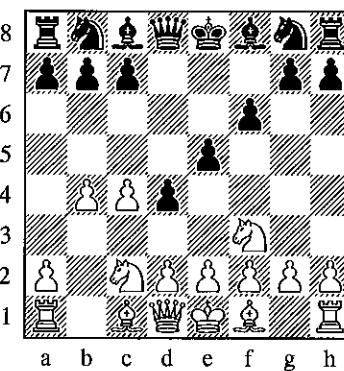
8. bxc6 will be met by 8... $\mathbb{Q}exc6$ so that the other knight can go to c5 later.

8... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\uparrow$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ 0–0 11. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e6=$

Followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, with a comfortable position for Black.

4. $\mathbb{Q}a3\uparrow$? e5 5. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

This has been tested by Aronian and some other strong GMs, although quite a few of the games were rapid or blitz encounters. I like the recommendation of Delchev and Semkov:



5... $\mathbb{Q}a6!$

5...c5 6.bxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 7.d3 should be roughly equal but it's handy to gain a tempo against the b-pawn.

6. $\mathbb{B}b1$

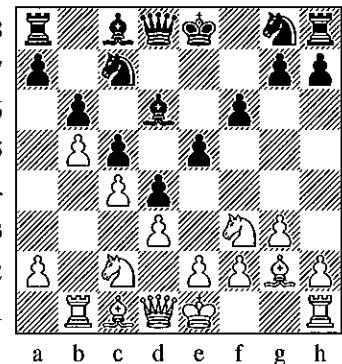
6.a3 c5 7.g3 can be met in a few ways. I suggest 7... $\mathbb{E}e6!$ (7...e4 8. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ f5 9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ is interesting, but I don't see any need for Black to risk having his centre undermined) 8.d3 cxb4 (even 8...b5? 9.cxb5 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ could be considered) 9.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ when White may have enough compensation for equality in the reversed Benko, but he certainly has no advantage.

6...c5 7.b5

7.bxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 8.d3 $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ is a nice idea pointed out by Delchev and Semkov. Play may continue 9.e3 (or 9. $\mathbb{B}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$) 9... $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ dxe3 11.fxe3 $\mathbb{W}e7$ with some advantage for Black.

7... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 8.d3 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 9.g3 b6 10. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

In Aronian – Topalov, Paris (rapid) 2016, Black should have played:



10... $\mathbb{B}b7N$ 11.0–0

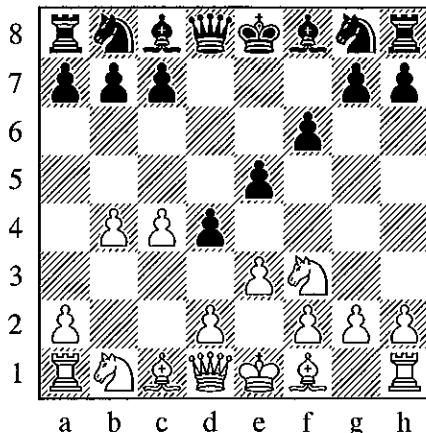
11.a4!? a5 (11...a6 12.a5! is slightly annoying) looks roughly equal after 12.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ or 12.bxa6 $\mathbb{Q}xa6$.

11...a6 12.a4 axb5 13.axb5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Delchev and Semkov carry on the analysis, but for such a rare line I think it's fine to stop here and say that Black has decent prospects. Just be careful to avoid a move like ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

while the b7-bishop is undefended, as $\mathbb{Q}fxd4$ would come as a nasty surprise.

4...e5



White's two main options are C1) 5.exd4 and C2) 5.c5. Before analysing them, we will consider several less common alternatives:

5. $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$ This piece sacrifice is something Black must always watch out for in these positions, but here it simply doesn't work: 5...fxe5 6. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7. $\mathbb{W}xe5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 8.c5 $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$ White's compensation was insufficient in Abrahams – Thomas, Hastings 1951.

A questionable sacrifice is:

5. $\mathbb{Q}b2?!$ dxe3 6.fxe3 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 7.c5

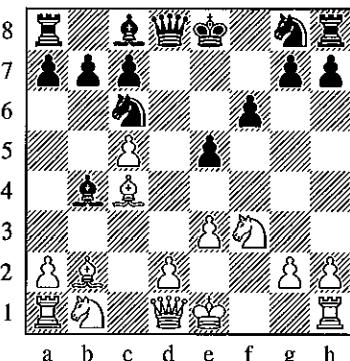
7.a3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ hardly helps White: 8. $\mathbb{W}c2$ (or 8.d4 Saadi – Redolfi, Cordoba 1968, 8...e4N 9. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ f5?) 8... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ g6 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11.0–0 Now the improvement 11...c6!N followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ leaves White with no compensation (rather than 11... $\mathbb{Q}c6?!$ when 12. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ made things messy in Bunzmann – Raetsky, Biel 2000).

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

7... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ should be good for Black too, but the text move is even more convincing.

8. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

Now in Bergmann – Souza, Brazil 1996, the strongest continuation would have been:

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d58... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ N 9.0-09. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7\bar{F}$ 9.... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 10. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$

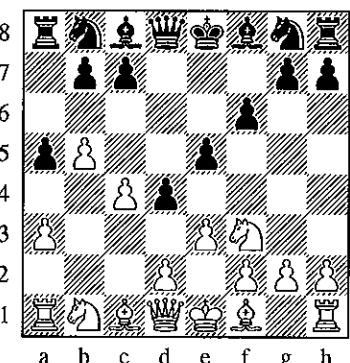
Intending ... $\mathbb{W}d5$, with the makings of a positional advantage to go with the extra pawn.

5.a3 a5!?

Aiming to win control over the c5-square.

6.b5

6.exd4 e4 7. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ axb4 9. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10.f3 bxa3 11. $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ $\mathbb{W}xa3$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xe4\bar{F}$ $\mathbb{Q}f7=$ leads to a good position for Black.



6...d3!N

6...c5 is a decent alternative which was played in Schlick – Jaworski, Poland 1971.

The text move is more ambitious. A possible continuation is:

7. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ a4 8. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ fxe5 9. $\mathbb{W}h5\bar{F}$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xe5\bar{F}$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6\infty$

With a complex, unclear position.

5. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}h6!?$

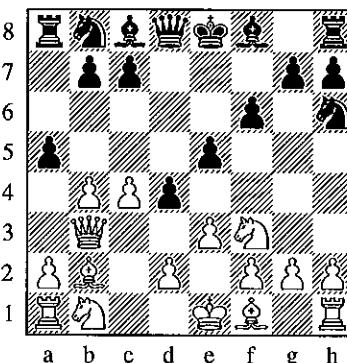
The knight will be well placed on f7. It is important to do this before White plays d2-d3 in order to avoid the simple reply of exd4 followed by $\mathbb{Q}xh6$.

6. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

6.exd4?! is strongly met by the typical 6...e4 7. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\bar{F}$.

6...a5!

6...c5 7.bxc5 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8.exd4 occurred in Gentilleau – Rytshagov, Istanbul (ol) 2000, when 8...e4!N 9. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}h4\infty$ would have led to unclear complications.



7.a3N

7.exd4?! was well met by the thematic 7...e4 8. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ (8. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{W}e7\bar{F}$) 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6\bar{F}$ in A. Ivanov – Baklanov, email 2001.

7.b5?! a4 8. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ 9.e4 (9. $\mathbb{Q}d3?$ is refuted by 9...e4! 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ d3+) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6\bar{F}$ is also better for Black.

7...c5 8.exd4

In the event of 8.bxc5 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9.exd4 exd4 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 11.0-0 0-0= Black is doing fine.

8...cxsd4

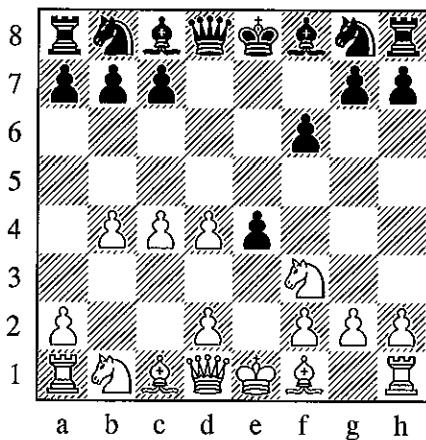
8...exd4 9.bxc5 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ also looks good for Black.

9.c5 $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ axb4 11. axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ b6 is also good for Black.

10...b6!

Black at least equalizes.

C1) 5.exd4 e4!

This is an important resource, as we have already seen in a few of the notes above.

6.♗e2

I also checked the two possible knight moves:

6.♘h4 ♗xd4 7.♘c3 e3!

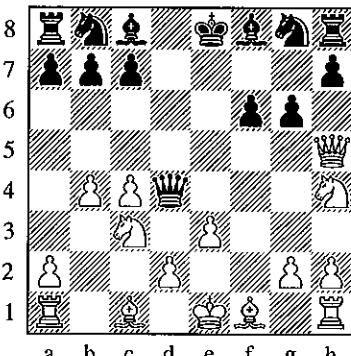
A double attack on f2 and h4.

8.♗h5†

8.f4 ♘xb4 9.♘f3 ♗xf4† is also clearly better for Black, who is two pawns up.

8...g6 9.fxе3

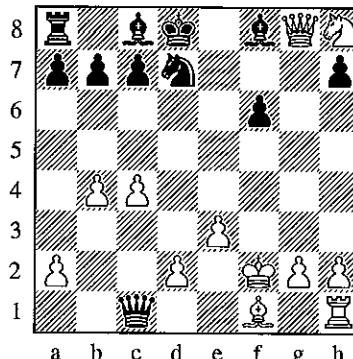
9.♘xg6?? exf2† 10.♗d1 ♘g4† wins outright.

**9...♗xc3! 10.♘xg6 ♗xa1 11.♘xh8† ♖d8†**

White has insufficient compensation for a piece. For instance:

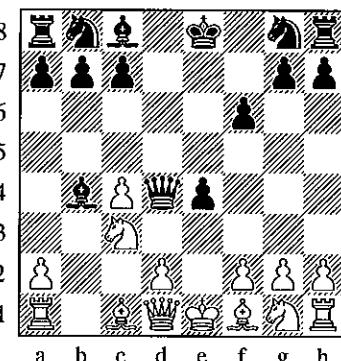
12.♗d5†**12.♗d1 ♘e6†****12...♗d7 13.♗xg8 ♗xc1† 14.♗f2**

Now Black's play in Reshetkov – Bogdanovich, Odessa 2010, can be improved by the simple:

**14...♗xd2†N 15.♗e2 c6 16.♗d1 ♗xb4++**

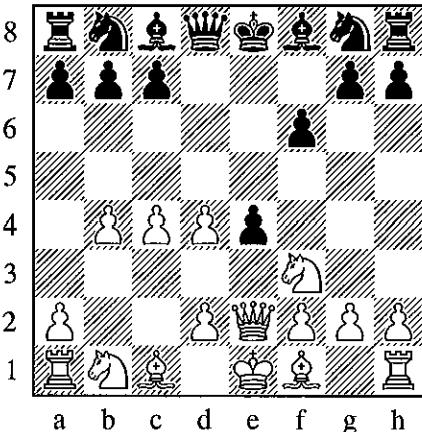
Black protects the bishop on f8 and wins the game.

The rare 6.♘g1? may actually be the least of the evils, although Black is still doing well after: 6...♗xd4 7.♘c3 ♘xb4



8.♗e2!N (8.♗b2 occurred in Wood – Rodford, corr. 1973, when either 8...♘c6 or 8...♘h6 would have been advantageous for Black) 8...♗d8! 9.♘xe4 ♘c6† Black retains a slight edge.

White's last move pins the e-pawn, but not for long:

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d56... $\mathbb{W}e7!$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!$

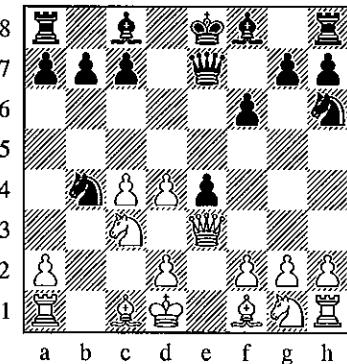
Black will win back either the b4- or the d4-pawn, obtaining an edge.

8. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$

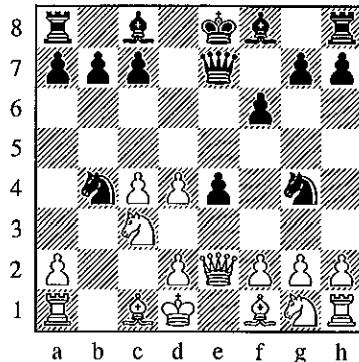
8... $\mathbb{Q}h6?$ is a second promising option.

9. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

9. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ occurred in Vokac – Fiala, Prague 2012, and now Black has more than one possible improvement:



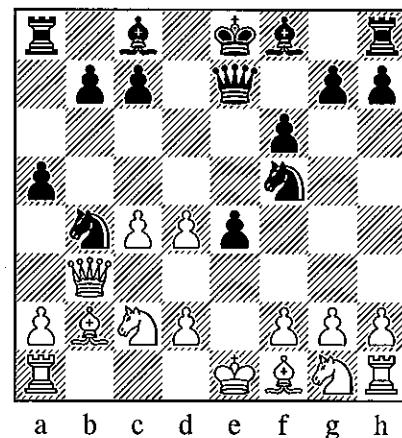
10... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ N (there is also 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$ N 11. f3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 13. $fxc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ 15. d4 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ c5! 18. d5 $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ and Black's advantage is indisputable) 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$ (11. $\mathbb{W}g3$ h5! F and White is in trouble)



11... $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ F Black has an excellent position, especially as his last move prepares to meet 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$ with 12... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0–0–0–+.

9... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 11. $\mathbb{W}b3$ a5! 12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

Now Black's play from Granda Zuniga – Short, Lima 2012, can be improved by means of:

12... $\mathbb{Q}d3!$!N 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ a4!

An important intermediate move.

14. $\mathbb{W}b4$

14. $\mathbb{W}c3$ is even worse: 14... $exd3!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (or 15. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ a3! 16. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $axb2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe7!$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ $dxc2$ –+) 15... a3 16. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}e4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ c5 18. $dxc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 19. 0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ and Black is winning.

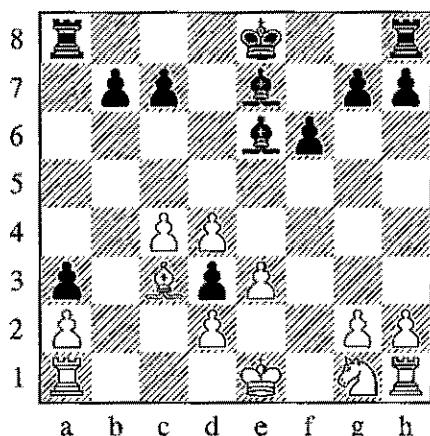
14... $exd3!$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xe7!$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$

17.fxe3

17.dxe3? is strongly met by 17... $\mathbb{Q}b4\uparrow$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ a3 19. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\uparrow$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b2!$ and Black wins.

17...a3 18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!$

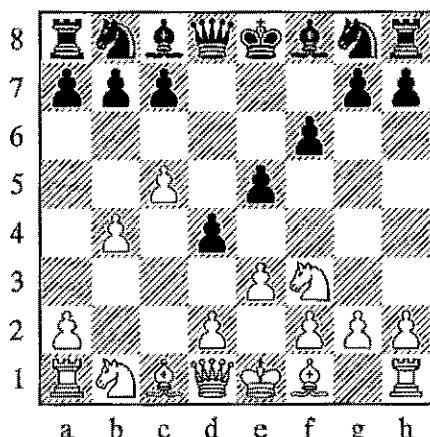
This leads to a clear positional advantage.

**19.c5**

After 19.d5 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}a4\uparrow$ White's structure falls apart.

19...b6 20.cxb6 cxb6†

Black's bishops are strong and the a2-pawn is a long-term weakness.

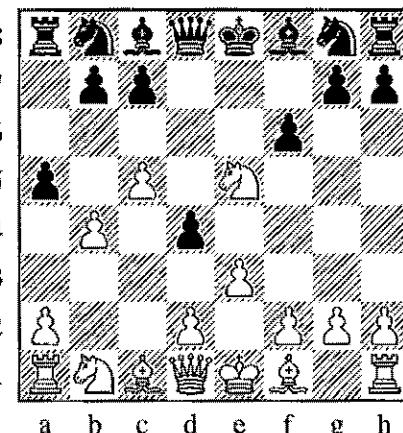
C2) 5.c5

This is the main line. White vacates the c4-square in order to create threats along the a2-g8 diagonal.

5...a5

Black wastes no time in undermining White's pawn wedge. We will analyse C21) 6. $\mathbb{Q}xe5\uparrow$, C22) 6. $\mathbb{Q}c4$, C23) 6. $\mathbb{Q}b5\uparrow$ and C24) 6. $\mathbb{Q}a4\uparrow$.

6.exd4? e4 gives White an even worse version of variation C1 above.

C21) 6. $\mathbb{Q}xe5\uparrow$ 

Delchev calls this a forced draw, but Black can actually avoid it if he wishes.

6...fxe5 7. $\mathbb{Q}h5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ transposes to our main line after 8. $\mathbb{Q}xe5\uparrow$.

8. $\mathbb{Q}f5\uparrow$

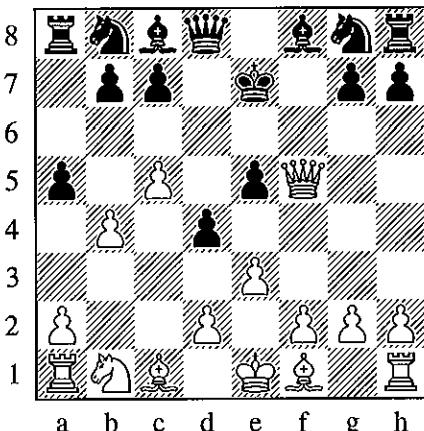
If Black is content with a draw, he can easily get it with: 8... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}h5\uparrow$! (9. $\mathbb{Q}xe5\uparrow$? is bad due to 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$! 10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8\uparrow$ –) 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7=$

However, we also have the option of playing on with:

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

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

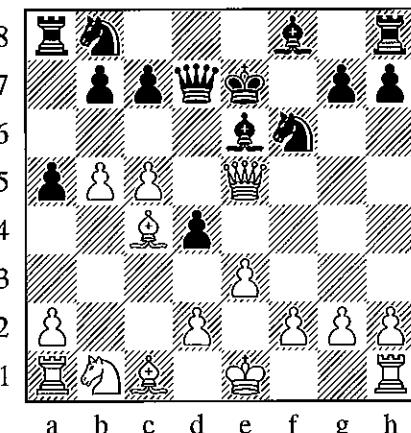
This leads to complicated play, with Black ultimately emerging on top.

9. $\mathbb{W}xe5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 11. b5

After 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xc7\#$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}f4$ axb4 14. exd4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ White did not have enough compensation in Moroni – Rambaldi, Civitanova Marche 2013.

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

11...c6 was played in Van Wely – Kramnik, Nice (rapid) 2008. The text move is an improvement, and has since been tested in a couple of correspondence games.

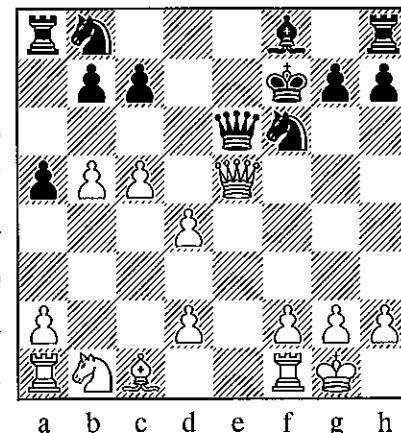


12. exd4

12.0–0 d3# with the idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ is also good for Black, Calio – Genchev, corr. 2014.

12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ can also be met by 12... d3#.

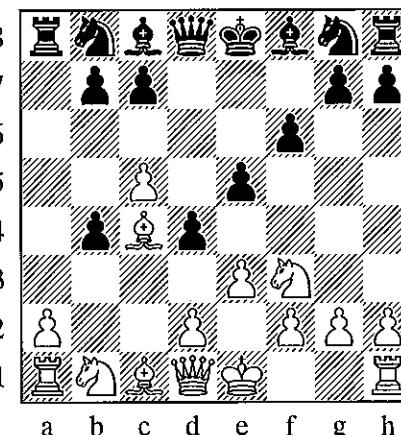
I also considered 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xc7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 14.0–0 d3! 15. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7\#$ and Black is about to consolidate.

12... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe6\#$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 14.0–014... $\mathbb{Q}d5\#N$

14... $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 15. dx e5 enabled White to straighten out his pawn structure, when he was more or less okay in Stephan – Roubaud, corr. 2012. The text move is more ambitious.

15. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ g6 16. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7\#$

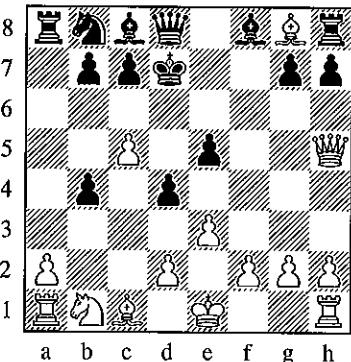
Black is well on the way towards getting fully coordinated, and his extra piece should prove more valuable than White's three pawns.

C22) 6. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ axb4

This leads to some sharp tactics but it all turns out well for Black in the end.

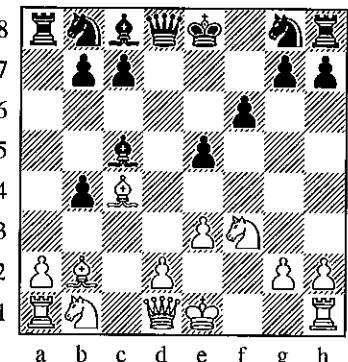
7.exd4

Once again, 7.Qxe5?! fxe5 8.Wh5† does not work: 8...Qd7! 9.Qxg8 (9.Qf5†? Qc6!—+ shows why it is in White's interests to provoke ...c6 by means of 6.Qb5†; see variation C23 below for more about that) Now Black's play in D. Toth – Korpa, Hungary 2012, can be improved by means of:



9...Wf6! 10.Qc4 Qxc5 11.0–0 Qc6† and Black is a healthy pawn up.

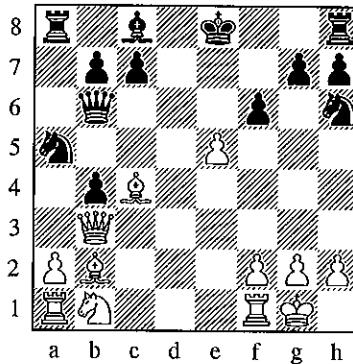
7.Qb2 occurred in Chuchelov – Schenk, Germany 2010. The most accurate reply is 7...dxe3!N 8.fxe3 Qxc5, when my analysis continues:



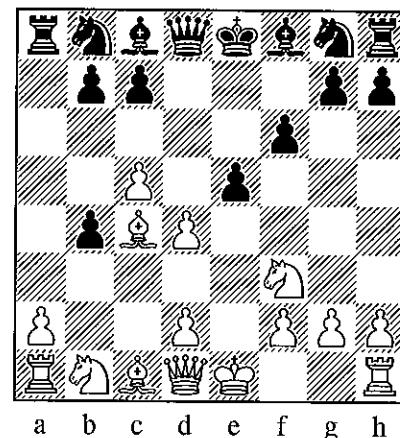
9.d4 exd4 10.exd4 Qb6 11.0–0 Qc6
12.Qbd2 Qge7 13.Wb3 Qa5 14.Wxb4 Qxc4
15.Qxc4 (or 15.Qxc4?! Wd5 16.We2 Qe6

17.Qae1 Qd7†) 15...0–0 16.Qxb6 cxb6† Black's advantage is evident.

A final possibility is: 7.Wb3 Qh6 8.0–0 Qxc5 9.exd4 Qxd4 10.Qxd4 Wxd4 11.Qb2 Wb6 12.d4 Qc6 13.dxe5 Qa5



14.Wc2N (14.Wd3?! Qf5 15.We2 0–0–0—+ was even worse for White in Chouari – Pupke, Internet 2004) 14...Qxc4 15.Wxc4 Qe6†



7...e4!

An important move, especially considering that 7...exd4 was the only continuation mentioned by Delchev in *The Modern Reti*.

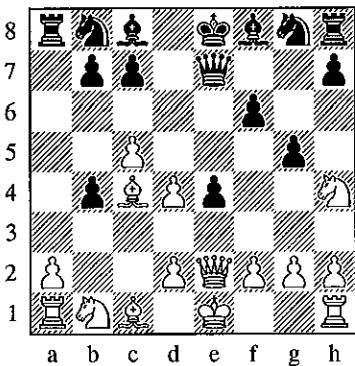
8.We2 We7 9.Qg1!N

This is clearly White's best chance.

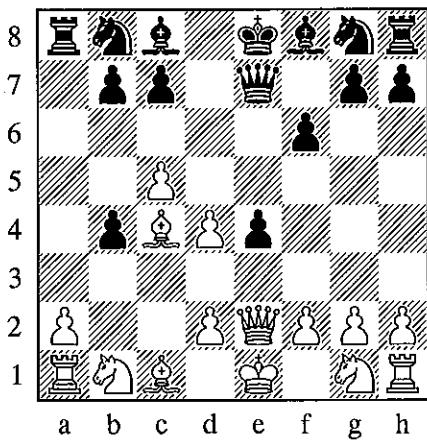
The most direct refutation of 9.Qh4?! is to trap the knight with: 9...g5! (The positional

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

9...g6?! also turned out well for Black after 10.d3? f5!† in Lagno – Ponomariov, Khanty-Mansiysk [rapid] 2013)



It's important to add that 10. $\mathbb{W}h5$ † $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}g6$? does not work on account of 11... $\mathbb{W}e8$!.



9... $\mathbb{Q}h6$! 10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. f3 exf3 12. gxf3
12. $\mathbb{W}xc7$ † $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14. a3 b3!†
also favours Black.

12... $\mathbb{W}xe2$ †

12... $\mathbb{Q}f5$?! 13. a3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ † is also good.

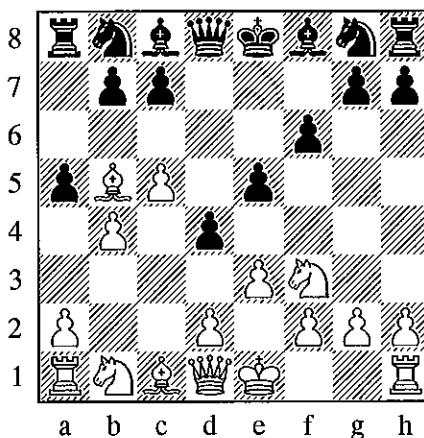
13. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14. d3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. a3 b3 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$
16. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$? is bad due to 16... 0–0–0†.

16... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 18. dxc4 $\mathbb{Q}f7$!

Black's initiative gives him more than enough compensation for a pawn.

C23) 6. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ †

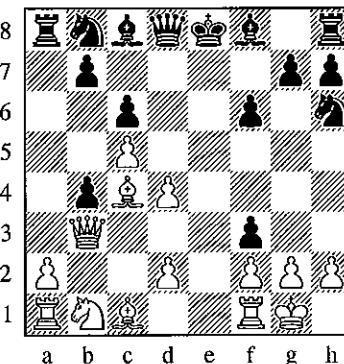
I have already alluded to the fact that this is a subtle improvement over the previous variation (see the 7. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$?! line in the notes to variation C22 for a reminder of why the c6-square is important). Nevertheless, Black can still get an excellent game if he knows what he is doing.



6... c6 7. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ axb4 8. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$?

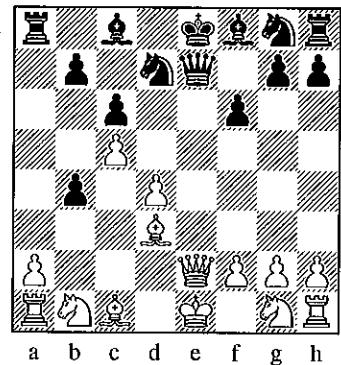
This sacrifice ultimately proves to be unsound, but it looks scary and was recommended by Delchev, so I think it is right to present it as the main line.

8. $\mathbb{W}b3$? is another direct attacking attempt which doesn't reach the goal: 8... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 9. exd4 (9. 0–0 dxе3 10. fxe3 e4 11. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ † is also great for Black, as 12. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ can be met by 12... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$!–+) 9... e4 10. 0–0 exf3



11.♕e1† ♕e7 12.♗b2 fxg2 13.d5 cxd5 14.♗xd5 ♗c6+– White failed to get any compensation for the sacrificed piece in Papin – Illingworth, Melbourne 2014.

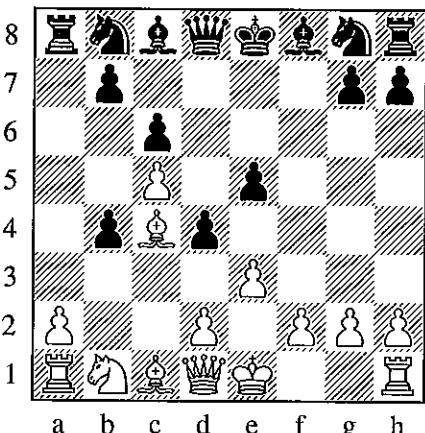
8.exd4 is objectively the best try, but Black gets a comfortable game after: 8...e4 9.♗e2 ♘e7 10.♗g1 ♖d7 11.d3 exd3 12.♗xd3



12...b6! 13.cxb6 (13.♗e3 bxc5 was also good for Black in Hacker – Oreopoulos, corr. 2013) 13...♗xb6† and Black is better.

8...fxe5!

8...♗h6 has achieved good results but taking the knight is stronger.



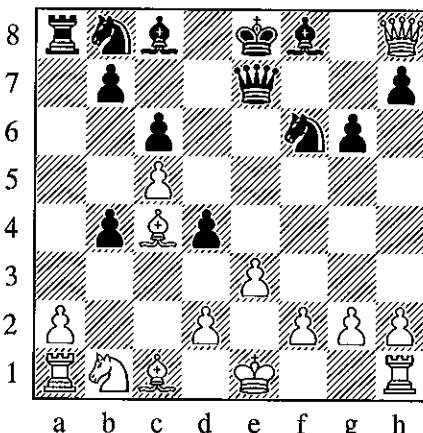
9.♗h5† g6!

Delchev only considers 9...♗d7?, which is bad due to 10.♗f5† ♖c7 (because the

c6-square is not available!) 11.♗xe5† ♖d7 12.♗e6† and White is close to winning.

10.♗xe5† ♘e7 11.♗xh8 ♗f6

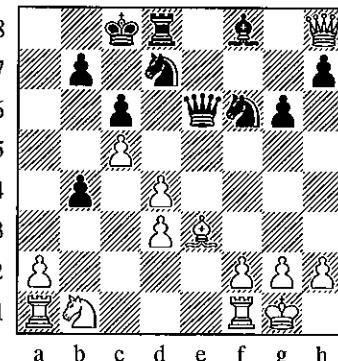
White is the exchange and a pawn up, but his queen is stuck in the corner with no obvious escape. Black's next move will almost certainly be ...♗e6, followed by rapid development and threats against White's queen and/or king.



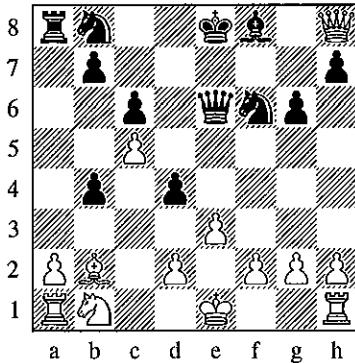
12.d3

12.a3? ♗e6 13.♗xe6 ♘xe6 14.♗b2 b3! gives Black a decisive advantage.

12.0-0 ♗e6 13.♗xe6N (13.d3? ♗xc4 14.dxc4 ♗d7! 15.♗d1 ♗g7 16.♗xd4† ♖c7 was winning for Black in Davis – Zelesco, Cammeray 2013) 13...♘xe6 14.d3 ♗bd7 15.exd4 0-0-0 16.♗e3



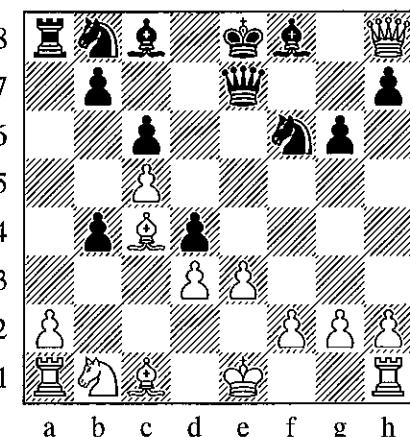
16...♗e7! 17.♗g5 ♘f7!† and Black is clearly better.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d512. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7\#$ does not help White.
13... $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 

14. g4

14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$ is met by the simple 14... $\mathbb{Q}bd7-$ followed by ...0–0–0 and ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$, when White has no way to save his queen.14... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 15. g5 $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ also fails to save the game:
16...0–0–0! 17. f3 $\mathbb{Q}dxc5$ 18. fxe4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$
19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}d3\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}xe4-$ +16...0–0–0 17. f3 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 18. 0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}h6$

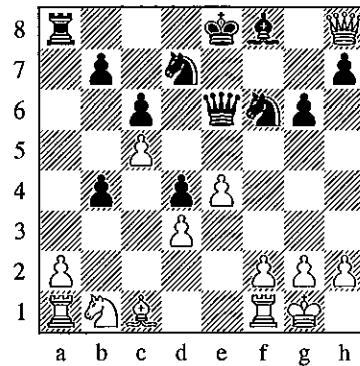
White resigned in Stella – Bertagnoli, Ortisei 2013.

12... $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

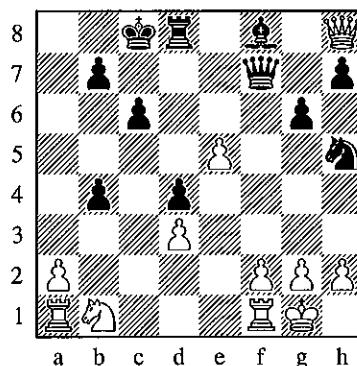
I also analysed:

13. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 14. e414. 0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 15. exd4 0–0–0 transposes to

the note on 12. 0–0 above.

14... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 15. 0–0–015. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}f7!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ wins.15...0–0–0 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}g7$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}h8$ $\mathbb{W}f7\#$

White is in trouble. A possible continuation is:

19. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 20. e5 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 21. $\mathbb{E}e1$ 21. e6 $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xh7$ does not save the queen after 22... $\mathbb{Q}g7-$ + followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}h8$.21... $\mathbb{W}e6$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xh7$ $\mathbb{Q}g7-$ +

Black picks up the queen and obtains a winning position.

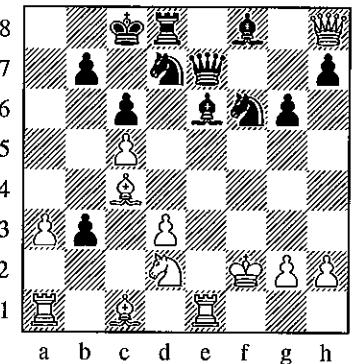
13... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ Black is preparing ...0–0–0 to be followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$, and there is not much that White can do about it.

14. a3

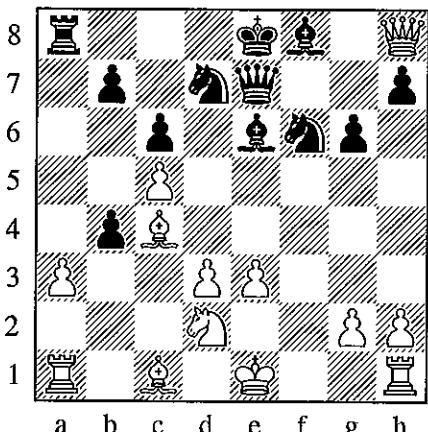
14.0–0!N was a better try, though after 14...0–0–0 15.exd4 ♜h6 16.♗xd8† ♜xd8 17.♗e1 ♜d5 Black keeps the upper hand.

14...dxe3 15.fxe3?

15.0–0! had to be tried, though Black keeps a big advantage with accurate play: 15...b3! Once again, Black ensures that the a-file will remain closed before he castles. 16.♗e1 exf2† 17.♗xf2 0–0–0!



18.♗xe6 (18.♗xe6 ♜xc5† 19.♗f1 ♜h6 20.♗xd8† ♜xd8 21.♗xb3 ♜h5† is also excellent for Black, as the bishop on c4 is in trouble while the h2-pawn is also hanging) 18...♗g7 19.♗xd8† ♜xd8 20.♗xb3 ♜g4† 21.♗xg4 ♜h4† 22.♗f1 ♜xa1†

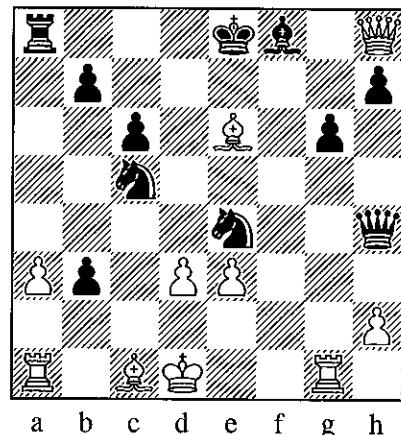


15...b3!

Once again, Black keeps the a-file closed.

16.♗e4 ♜xe4 17.♗xe6 ♜h4†! 18.g3 ♜xg3 19.♗g1 ♜e4† 20.♗d1 ♜dxc5

White has saved his queen but his position is a wreck, and the game is soon over.

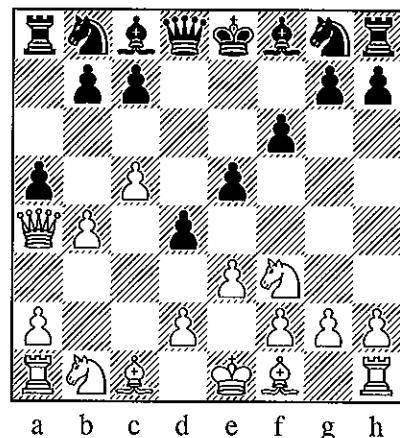


21.♗e5 ♜f2† 22.♗e2 ♜fxd3 23.♗d4 ♜f2†

White resigned in Panjwani – So, Edmonton 2014; a model game from Black's point of view.

C24) 6.♗a4†

Since the sacrificial attempts of the previous two variations do not work for White, attention has recently shifted towards this move.

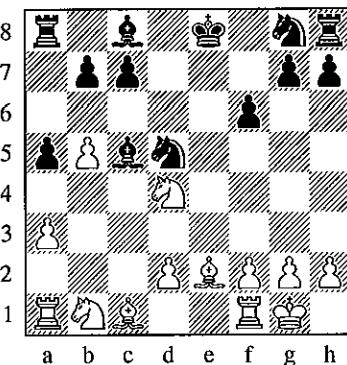


6...♝d7

6...♝c6!? has only been played a couple of times but it seems like another solution:

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

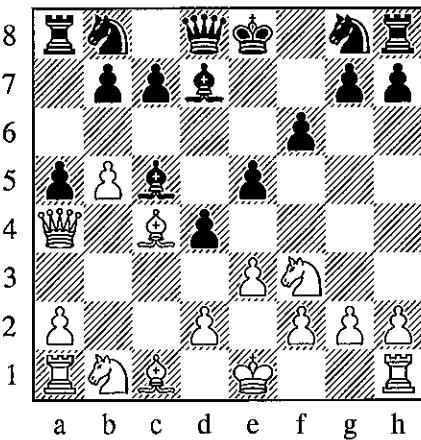
7. b5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 8. a3 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 9. exd4 exd4 10. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}e7\#$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 12. 0–0 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$



14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ occurred in Demuth – So, Montpellier 2015, when 14... $\mathbb{Q}f4\#N$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ would have been comfortable for Black) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7=$ Mareco – Ni Hua, Baku 2015.

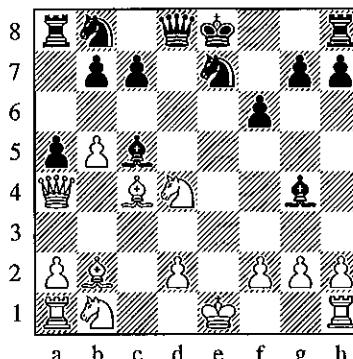
7. b5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

8. exd4 exd4 does not present any problems. For instance: 9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ (9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}e7\#$) forces the unpleasant 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$, after which 10... $\mathbb{Q}h6\#$ favours Black) 9... $\mathbb{W}e7\#$! (9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ transposes to the main line below, but the text move seems like a good way to exploit White's decision to take on d4 prematurely) 10. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ Black was better in A. Burnett – Ochsner, Reykjavik 2015.

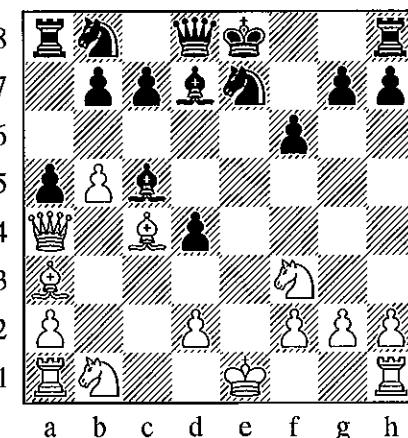
8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. exd4 exd4 10. $\mathbb{Q}a3$!

10. 0–0 gives Black time for 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\#$ with an excellent position.

10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$?! $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ occurred in Ramirez – Edouard, Arlington 2015, when Black could have obtained an advantage with:



11... $\mathbb{Q}d7\#N$ A strong move, based on the following tactical point: 12. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2\#$! 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}d3\#$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xg7$ $\mathbb{W}d4\#$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ Black has a clear advantage, as Edouard pointed out in his annotations.

10... $\mathbb{Q}a6$!

A clever defence.

11. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 12. $d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$!

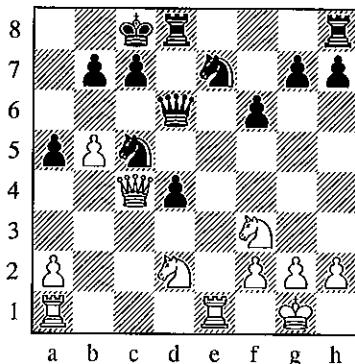
The position remains complicated but

roughly equal, as the following examples demonstrate.

13. $\mathbb{W}b3$

13. $\mathbb{B}c1$ b6 14. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ 0–0–0
16. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ was pretty similar in Demuth – Duda, Ruzomberok 2014. White retains sufficient compensation for a pawn, but Black is objectively not worse.

Delchev and Semkov also analyse: 13. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 14. $\mathbb{B}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ 0–0–0



18. $\mathbb{B}ac1$ b6 19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 20. $\mathbb{B}xe4$ Here I found a minuscule improvement: 20... $\mathbb{B}d7$!?
(20... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 21. $\mathbb{B}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ should lead to a level endgame, as the Bulgarian authors point out)
21. $\mathbb{B}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $bxc5$ 23. $\mathbb{B}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$
24. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ c6 The endgame should be a draw, but White has to be slightly careful as Black has the more active king.

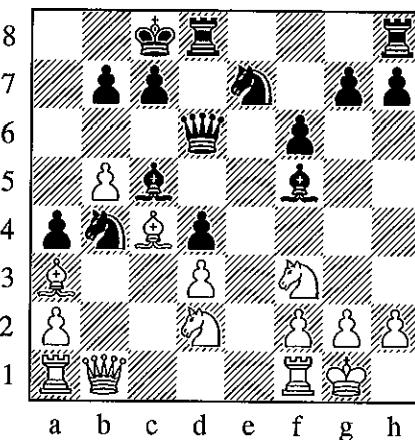
13... $\mathbb{W}d6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ a4!?

14... 0–0–0 was also dynamically balanced in Fraczek – Van Assche, corr. 2013.

15. $\mathbb{W}b1$ 0–0–0

Both sides have their chances in this somewhat irregular position. The following correspondence game featured accurate play by both sides; there is no need to memorize it, but it is worth playing through the moves

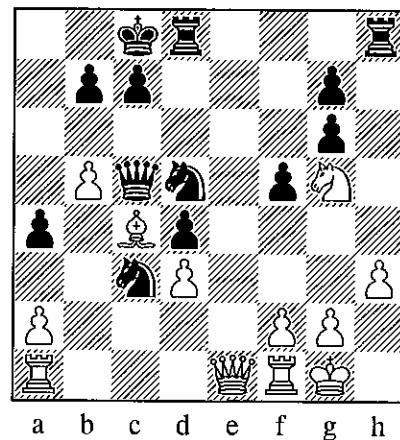
in order to understand the ideas and resources available to both sides.



16. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $hxg6$ 18. h3 f5
Preventing $\mathbb{Q}e4$.

19. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}bd5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$
22. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}ed5$!?

Interestingly, Black is happy to go from being a pawn up to the exchange for a pawn down. He can afford to do so because his knights are so well placed and the b5-pawn is weak.



23. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$

The position remained dynamically balanced in Koegler – Ruefenacht, corr. 2012, and a draw was subsequently agreed on move 33.

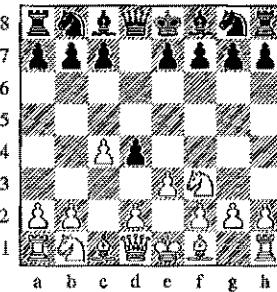
Conclusion

2.c4 is an important option, but I believe in Black's chances after the space-gaining 2...d4. We saw that 3.c5?! is well met by 3...e5!, while the reversed Benoni after 3.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ e5 gives Black nice prospects. The theoretically sharpest variations occur after 3.b4 f6 4.e3 e5, when Black must be ready for some active tries involving c4-c5 and possibly a $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ sacrifice at some point. The good news is that none of these aggressive ideas work against accurate play by Black, so the relatively calm 6. $\mathbb{W}a4\uparrow$ seems to be White's best bet — but I don't see any major problems for Black there either.



1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

3.e3



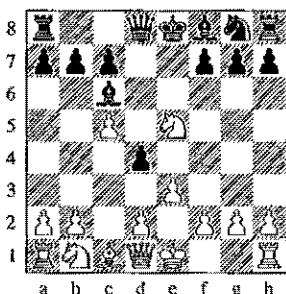
Variation Index

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 2. c4 d4 3. e3

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

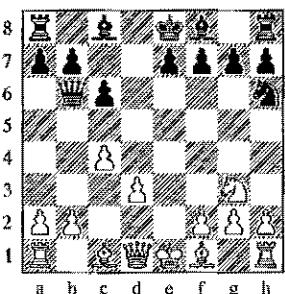
A) 4.a3	301
B) 4.d3	302
C) 4.b4 dx \mathbb{e} 3 5.fxe3 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$	303
C1) 6. $\mathbb{Q}a4\#$	303
C2) 6.d4 e5!	304
C21) 7. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$	304
C22) 7.a3	306
D) 4.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$	309
D1) 6.d3	309
D2) 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c6 7.d3 $\mathbb{Q}h6!$	310
D21) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$	311
D22) 8.h3	311
D23) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$	312
D24) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d8$	316
D241) 9. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$	316
D242) 9.d4	317

note to move 4



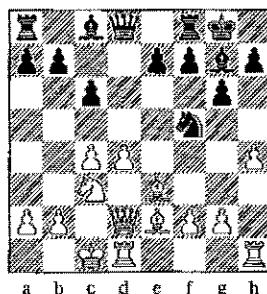
7... $\mathbb{W}g5!N$

D21) after 9. $\mathbb{Q}g3$



9... e5!N

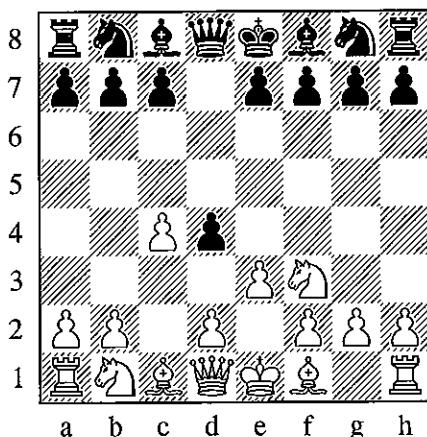
D242) note to 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$



13... b5!N

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 2. c4 d4 3. e3

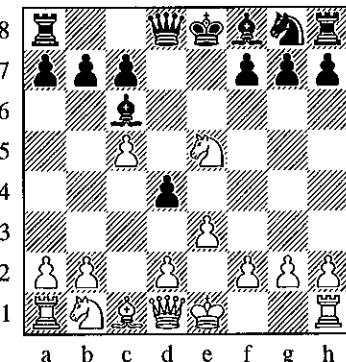
This is the main line; White fights for the centre by challenging our strong pawn.

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

I analysed four main options: A) 4.a3, B) 4.d3, C) 4.b4 and D) 4.exd4.

4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ transposes to variation D after 4... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 5. exd4 $\mathbb{W}xd4$.

4.c5?! has the idea to activate the f1-bishop, but it turns out badly for White. 4...e5 5. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ Now in Wronn – Hess, Travemuende 2002, Black should have played:



7... $\mathbb{W}g5!$ N 8. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xg2$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}xc6\#$ White's opening has been an utter failure.

4. $\mathbb{W}a4?$!

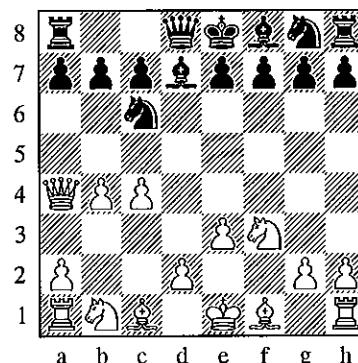
This eccentric move also fails to impress.

4... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 5. b4

5. $\mathbb{W}b3$ e5! was better for Black in Moehring – Fridman, Senden 1999; the b7-pawn is untouchable and the queen is misplaced on b3.

5... dxе3! 6. fxе3

6. dxе3 occurred in Kett – S. Ledger, Liverpool 2008, and now 6...e6!N would have been good for Black, bearing in mind that 7.b5? is refuted by 7... $\mathbb{W}f6$! 8. bxс6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ and Black wins.

6... e5! 7. $\mathbb{W}b5$?

7.b5 was better, but after 7...e4!# Black retains the upper hand.

7... a6!

Perhaps White had overlooked that taking the b7-pawn would cost him his queen. Now he is forced to make a humiliating retreat.

8. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ e4+–

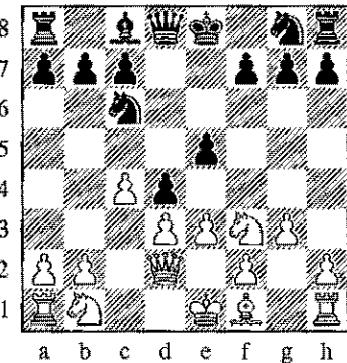
Fluvia Poyatos – Narciso Dublan, L'Estartit 2008.

4.g3 e5 5.d3

This move order is rare and rather suspicious. That said, 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ dxе3 is clearly good for Black as well.

5... $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2\#$ 7. $\mathbb{W}xd2$

7. $\mathbb{Q}bxд2$ dxе3! 8. fxе3 $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ favours Black, as the pawns on d3 and e3 are weak.



7... $\mathbb{Q}f6N$

7... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ was also good for Black in Evtyugin – Kolanek, Internet 2011, but the text move seems like the more human choice.

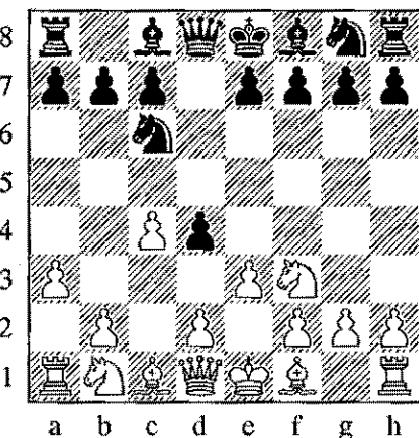
8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $dxe3!$ 9. $fxe3$

9. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ is met by 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ and Black is better.

9... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ 10.e4 $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$

Black has a clear positional advantage due to the weakening of the d4-square, not to mention White's bad bishop.

A) 4.a3



This move prepares b2-b4, but it is too slow to cause Black any problems.

4...e5 5.d3

No better is:

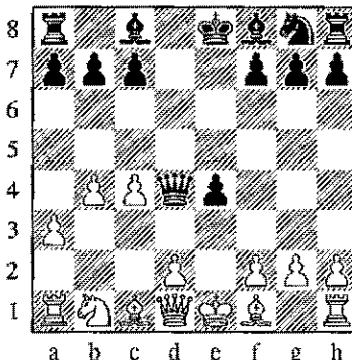
5.b4 e4

5... $dxe3?$ makes sense too; 6. $dxe3$ $\mathbb{W}xd1\#$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ e4N 8. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ f5 9. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and Black's position is to be preferred.

6. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

6.b5?! $exf3$ 7. $bxg6$ $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ 8. $cxb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 9. $gxh3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ clearly favours Black.

6... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 7. $exd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$



8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

Now in Galkin – Volkov, Internet (blitz) 2007, Black should have played:

9... $\mathbb{Q}f5!N\#$

Black is better due to the backward pawn on d2 and the weak square in front of it.

5... $dxe3?$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$

6. $fxe3?$ N can be met by 6...e4? 7. $dxe3$ $\mathbb{W}xd1\#$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 10.b4 b6 (Black can also start with 10...0–0?) 11. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 0–0= followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ and Black obtains plenty of positional compensation for a pawn.

6... $\mathbb{Q}ge7!$

The knight will be perfectly placed on f5.

7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6!

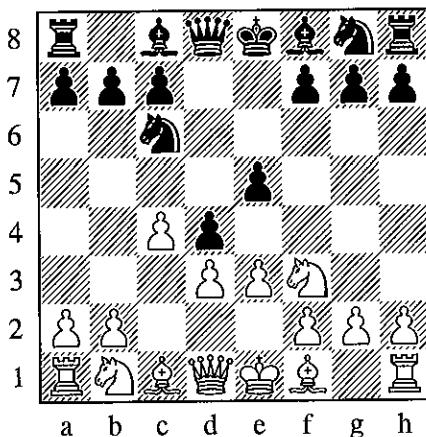
Preparing to attack on the dark squares.

9.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 10. $fxe3$ $\mathbb{Q}h6\#$

Black's opening proved a complete success in Bregadze – So, Lubbock 2013.

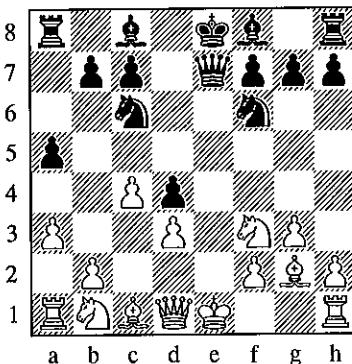
1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

B) 4.d3 e5

5. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

5.a3 leads back to variation A above.

5.exd4 exd4 6.g3 (6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ transposes to the main line below) 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ Black has good prospects, for instance: 7.a3 a5 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}e7\#!$



9. $\mathbb{W}e2?$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\#$ Titz – Stanec, Graz 2005.

5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c5\?!$ 7.exd4 exd4 8. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

I also considered:

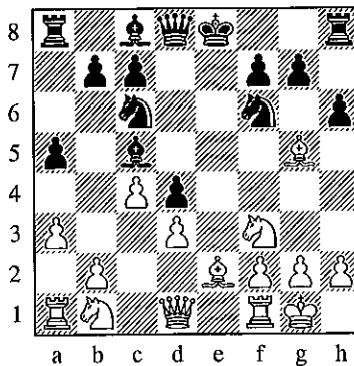
8.a3N a5 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

After 9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ White cannot put additional pressure on d4, and so Black is better thanks to his space advantage.

9. $\mathbb{W}a4\?!$ 0–0 10.b4 is an interesting try, but 10... $\mathbb{E}e8\!?$ 11. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6\!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5\!$ 13.b5

$\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ looks fine for Black.

9...h6

10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

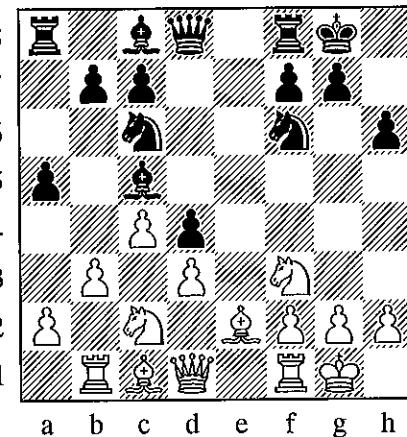
10. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ g5! 12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$ is promising for Black.

10... $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

With a comfortable position for Black.

8...0–0 9. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ h6 10. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ a5 11.b3

This position was reached in Dvirnyy – Schiatti, Correggio 2007. Black's play can be improved with:

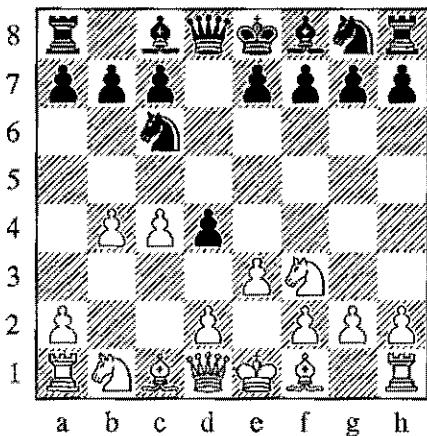
11... $\mathbb{E}b8\#N$

With the following idea:

12.a3 b5!

Black takes the initiative on the queenside.

C) 4.b4



This is the second-most-popular move. White sacrifices a pawn in order to occupy the centre with his pawns.

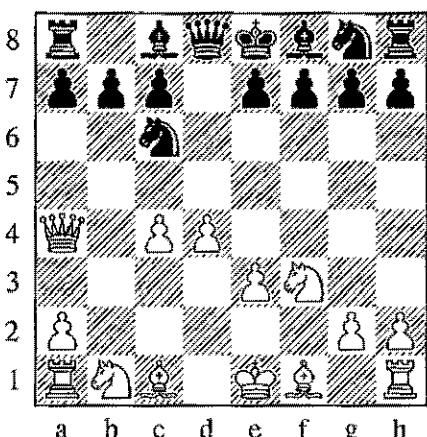
4...dxe3

The principled way to deal with a gambit is to accept it.

5.fxe3 ♜xb4

White can either throw in C1) 6.♗a4† or play C2) 6.d4 immediately.

C1) 6.♗a4† ♜c6 7.d4



7...♝d7

Black has played 7...e6 in some games, but I prefer to develop quickly while keeping the option of playing ...e5 in a single move.

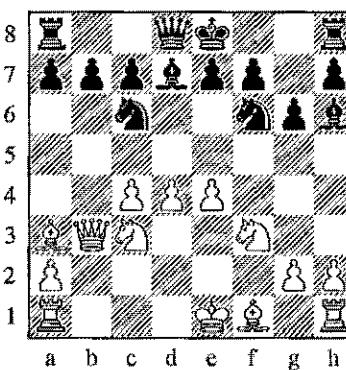
8.♗b3 ♜f6!

Delchev and Semkov give 8...e5 but I slightly prefer the text move.

9.♘c2N

9.♕xb7?? loses to 9...♜b8 10.♗a6 ♜b4.

9.♘a3 g6! Black is going to develop his dark-squared bishop to h6 in order to put pressure on e3. 10.♕c3 ♜h6 11.e4? Now in Amanov – Shen, Los Angeles 2013, Black missed a powerful idea:



11...♝g4!N 12.d5 ♜xf3 13.gxf3 ♜d4 14.♗a4† c6 Black's advantage is close to decisive.

9...e5! 10.d5

10.dxe5 ♜b4† 11.♗bd2 ♜g4† is obviously good for Black.

10.♕xe5 ♜xe5 11.dxe5 ♜e4 12.0–0 ♜c6† also favours Black thanks to White's awful pawn structure.

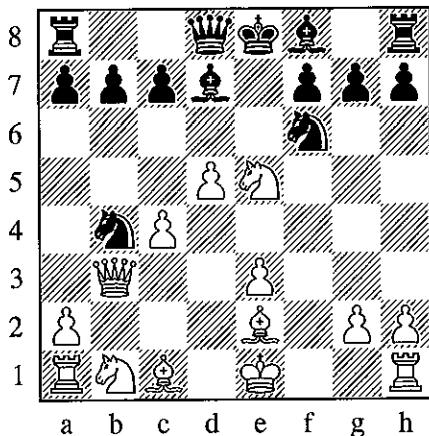
10...♞b4

Black is preparing to transfer the knight to c5 via a6.

11.♞xe5

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

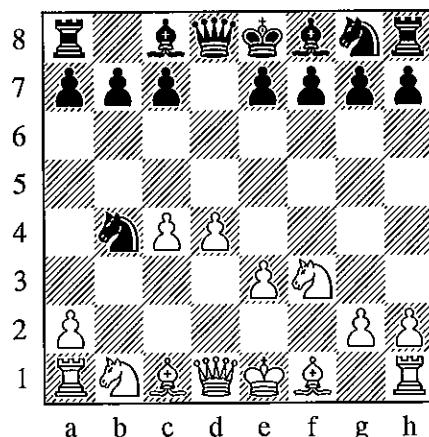
11.a3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5\#$ gives Black an obvious positional advantage.



11... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 0-0 13. 0-0 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7\#$

Black's advantage is unquestionable, as his pieces are excellent and White has numerous weaknesses, especially on the dark squares.

C2) 6.d4



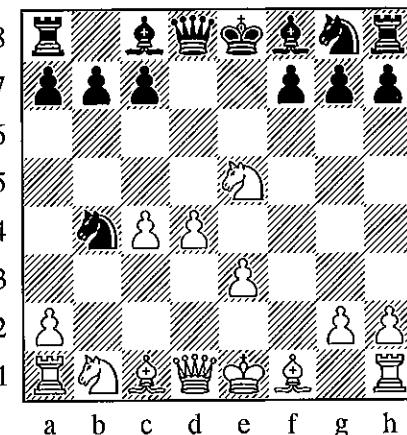
6... e5!

This move has been known ever since Rubinstein introduced it in 1924! Black sacrifices the pawn back in order to fight for the initiative.

We will analyse C21) 7. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ and C22) 7. a3.

C21) 7. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

By accepting the counter-sacrifice, White allows his king to be displaced.



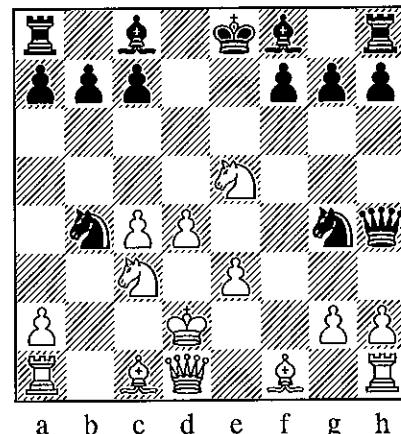
7... $\mathbb{W}h4\#$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

8.g3? loses to 8... $\mathbb{W}e4$ when Black is threatening both ... $\mathbb{W}xh1$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}c2\#$, Tagliagambe – Martinez, Milan 2006.

8. $\mathbb{Q}e2!?$ N is not disastrous, but Black retains the upper hand after 8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9. a3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0-0! with a strong initiative.

8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$!

Black exchanges White's strong knight on e5.



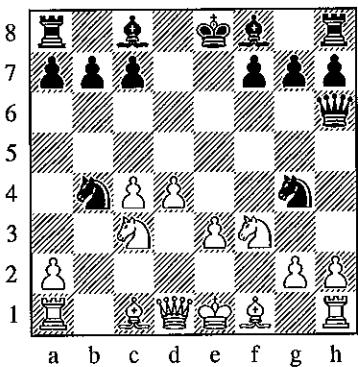
10.a3

It is worth pointing out that 10.♕a4†N ♜c6! 11.♕xc6 ♜d7! favours Black.

White's best chance to reach an acceptable position may be the untested:

10.♗f3 ♘h6 11.♗e1N

11.♗e2?! occurred in Brglez – Hiltunen, Canada 1996, and now 11...♝f5!N 12.e4 ♜e6† would have led to complications which strongly favour Black.



11...c5! 12.♗b5 ♜d6 13.a3

Delchev and Semkov point out that 13.e4 ♜g6 14.♗xd6† ♘xd6 15.a3 ♜c6 16.d5 ♜ce5 17.h3 ♜xf3† 18.♗xf3 ♜e5 19.♗g3 0–0 20.♗b2 ♜e8 sees Black establish a successful blockade on e5. Next he can open the centre with ...f5, so his chances are excellent – bearing in mind that White cannot castle!

13...♗a6

13...♗c6 14.dxc5 ♜b8 15.♗d6† ♜xd6 16.cxd6 is a weird line where Black has enough compensation, but there is no need to go for something as double-edged as this.

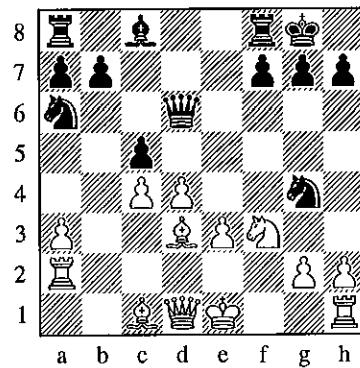
14.♗xd6†

14.c4? is worse on account of 14...♝f4!.

14...♘xd6 15.♗d3 0–0 16.♗a2

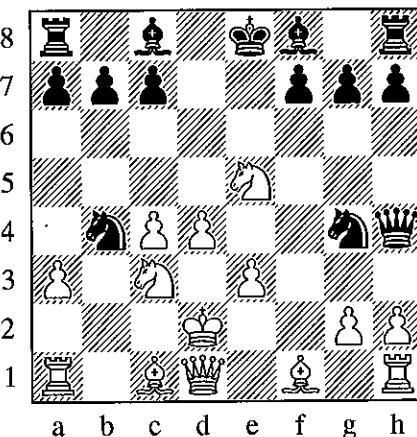
Delchev and Semkov conclude their excellent analysis of this variation with 16...cxd4 17.exd4 ♜f6 18.♗f2 ♜g4 19.♗e3 ♜ae8 20.♗e1 b5!, when Black wins control

over the d5-square and is definitely not worse. However, I like the following idea even more:



16...f5!?

Establishing an outpost on e4, while planning to complete development with ...♜d7, ...♝ae8, ...♝c7 and so on. This way, Black strengthens his position without opening lines for White's pieces. If White tries to block the centre with d4-d5, Black always has the undermining option of ...b5. Black definitely has the initiative.



10...♝xe5 11.axb4N

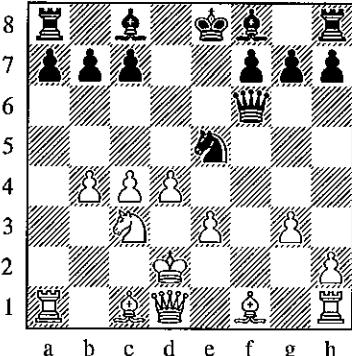
11.g3?

This inferior move was played in Kustar – Lukacs, Zalakaros 1997, when Black missed a strong idea:

11...♘f6!N 12.axb4

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

12. $dxe5$ $\mathbb{W}d8\#$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}xd1\#$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 0-0-0# 16. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 18. $cxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5\#$ leaves Black with an extra pawn in the endgame.

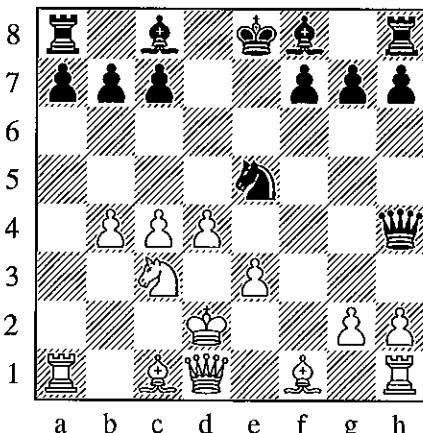
12... $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

13. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$ c6! 14. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}f3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$
16. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xh1\#$

13... $\mathbb{Q}xc4\#$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6\#$

Black has an extra pawn and the better structure, and the white king is also misplaced.

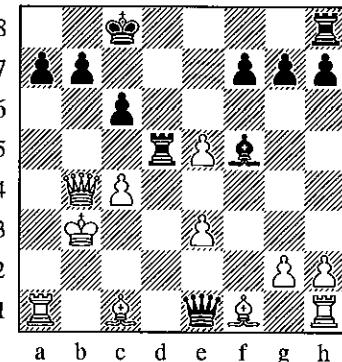
The text move is White's only chance to get a playable position, but Black keeps a significant advantage after the following accurate continuation:

11... $\mathbb{Q}xb4\#$ 12. $dxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$ 13. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$ c614. $\mathbb{W}xb4$ 0-0-0#

This virtually forces White to give up his queen.

15. $\mathbb{W}d6$

15. $\mathbb{Q}d5?!$ runs into: 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd5\#$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}e1\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

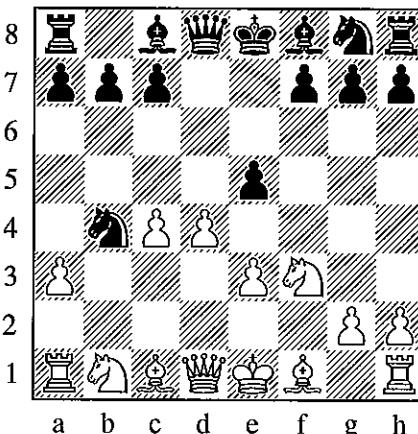


17... $\mathbb{Q}c2\#$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{W}xb4$ 19. $cxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8\#$ with a powerful attack.

15... $\mathbb{Q}he8\#$ 16. g3 $\mathbb{W}e7\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 18. $exd6$ $\mathbb{W}e5\#$ 19. $a3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8\#$

Materially White is just about okay, but Black clearly has the initiative.

C22) 7.a3



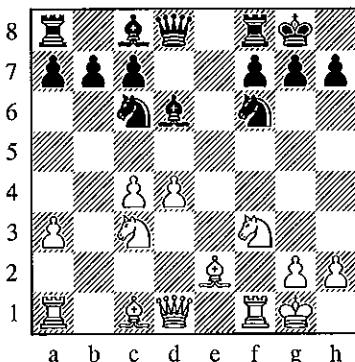
This is the most popular continuation.

7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

After 8. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ e4! 9. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}h4\#$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ (11. $\mathbb{Q}g3?$ fails to 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$) Black's play in Mueller – Fier, Gibraltar 2014, can

be improved by means of 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ $\mathbb{N}\bar{f}$, when Black's superior pawn structure makes the difference.

8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ (Delchev analyses 8...e4 9. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ f5 in detail, but the text move is better) 9.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd4 11.exd4 0–0



12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 13. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7\bar{f}$ (13...g5! \mathbb{N} also deserves attention) Black kept an extra pawn and the better chances in Gindi – Battaglini, Jerusalem 2014.

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

8... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ \mathbb{N} could be considered, but there is no real need for Black to search for an improvement.

9.d5

White has also tried:

9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ exd4 10.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$

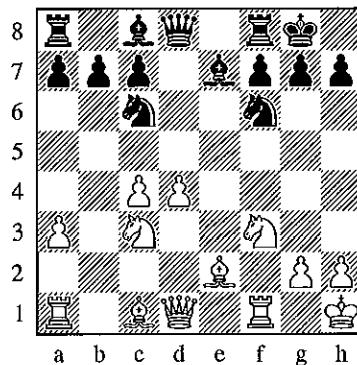
I prefer this over 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$, which was played in Suc – Korneev, Nova Gorica 2014.

11.0–0 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

After 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5\bar{f}$ White's initiative is insufficient.

12.d5 occurred in Tschann – Friedrich, Germany 2013, when 12... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ \mathbb{N} would have retained an edge for Black.

This position was reached in Jakel – Flear, Antwerp 1993, and a few other games. I agree with Delchev and Semkov that the most accurate continuation is:



12... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ \mathbb{N}

The bishop is heading to g6 to shore up the kingside.

13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

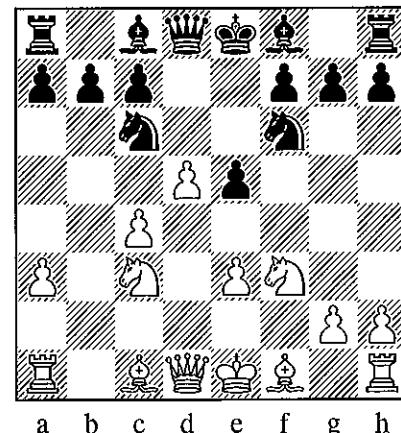
13. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ does not change much.

13...a6!

Simplest. The Bulgarian authors give 13... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b5?$ a6 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 16.d5 $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ as good for Black, but 17.dxc6 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}fxd8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 20.cxb7 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 21.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ leads to heavy simplifications and a likely draw.

14. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6\bar{f}$

White does not have enough for the pawn.

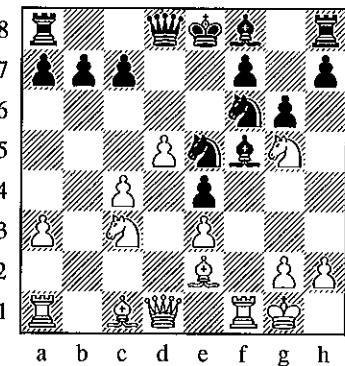


9...e4!

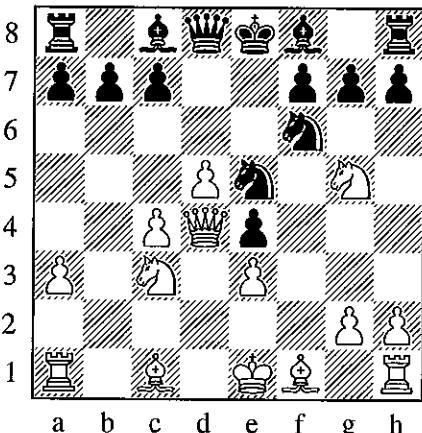
Once again Black meets the d4-d5 push with this dynamic response.

10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 11. $\mathbb{W}d4$

11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ occurred in Lemberger – Patocka, corr. 2006, and is also given by Delchev and Semkov as sufficient reason to favour a different option on move 9. However, it seems to me that Black has more than one good response: 11... $\mathbb{Q}f5!?$ N (there is also 11... $\mathbb{Q}ed7!?$ N 12. $\mathbb{Q}gxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ with good prospects for Black) 12. 0–0 (12. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}cxe4$ g6 also gives Black good play on the dark squares) 12... g6



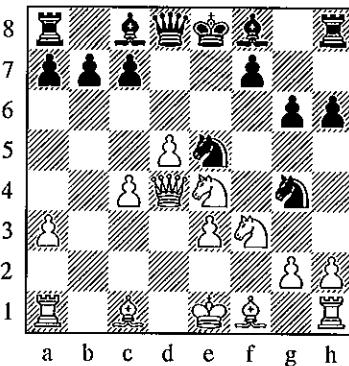
Now 13. $\mathbb{Q}cxe4!?$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d4$ is a small tactical trick which enables White to regain his pawn, but after 15... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 0–0 Black keeps the better chances due to his compact structure and prospects of playing on the dark squares.



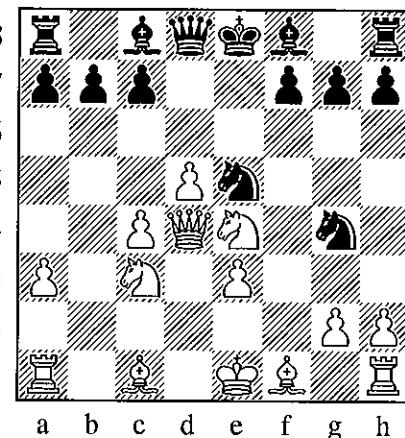
11... $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}gxe4$
12. h3 $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 13. hgx4 was seen in Bogosavljevic – Nikolic, Vrsac 2012, and here

13... f6! N 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xg4\#$ would have given Black an extra pawn and a clear advantage.

12. $\mathbb{Q}cxe4!?$ h6 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g6! is a clever idea which gives Black the advantage. For example:



14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5!?$ $\mathbb{Q}g7!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}h4\#$ 17. g3 $\mathbb{W}e7$ White's structure is overextended and he will soon find himself with a bad bishop against a strong knight.



12... c5!

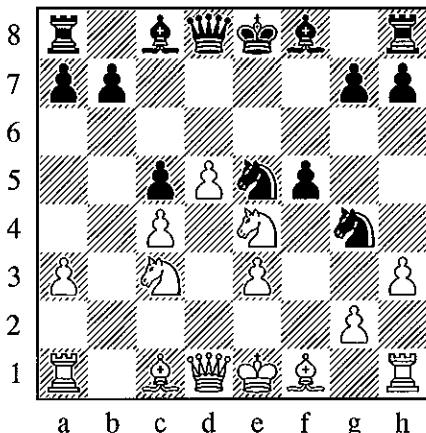
12... $\mathbb{W}h4\#$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ f5 14. h3 fxe4 15. hxg4 $\mathbb{W}xh1$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xe5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ is messy.

13. $\mathbb{W}d1$

13. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$? is bad because of 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}h4\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}f2\#$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xh2\#$.

13...f5 14.h3!

Now Black could play either 14... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ or 14... $\mathbb{W}h4\#$ 15.g3 $\mathbb{W}h6$ with at least equal chances, but he has something even stronger.



14... $\mathbb{Q}h2!!$

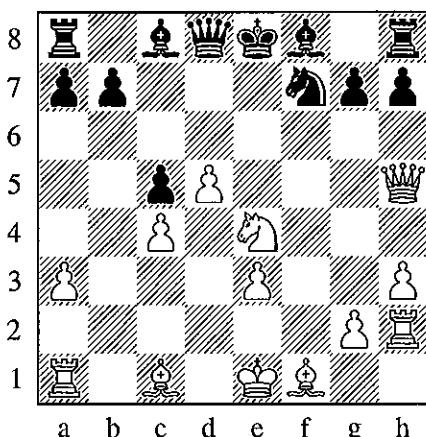
Forcing White's rook to a bad square and preventing the opening of the h-file.

15. $\mathbb{W}xh2$ fxe4 16. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$

Black is clearly better. It is worth mentioning that grabbing the e-pawn would lead to even greater problems for White:

17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$

This greedy move will soon be punished.

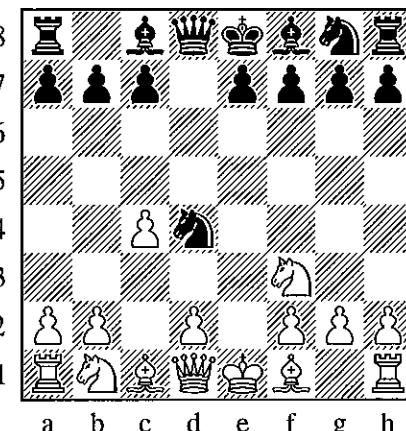


17...g6 18. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 19. $\mathbb{W}a2$ 0–0–+

White is hopelessly uncoordinated.

D) 4.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

This is the main line. White clearly cannot tolerate the knight on d4 for long, so his next move is obvious.

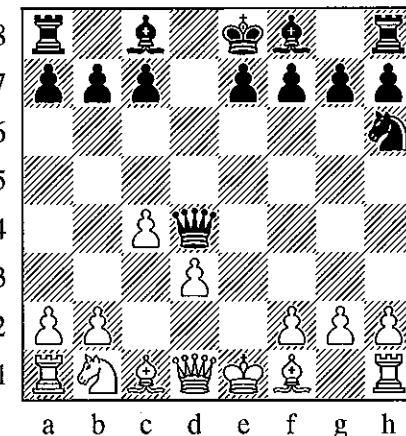


5. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$

We will consider D1) 6.d3 followed by the main line of D2) 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$.

6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ should be met by 6... $\mathbb{Q}h6!$, which is virtually guaranteed to transpose to one of the variations below.

D1) 6.d3 $\mathbb{Q}h6!$

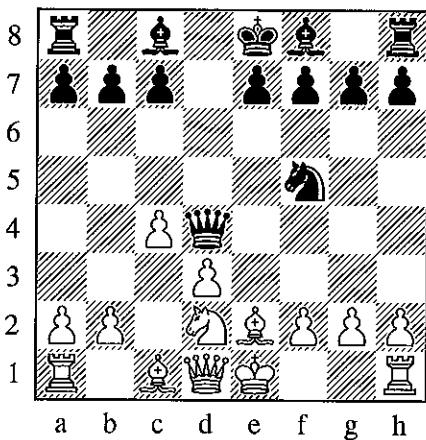


1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

A typical idea in this variation. The knight is heading for f5 in order to fight for the d4-square.

7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c6 transposes to variation D23.

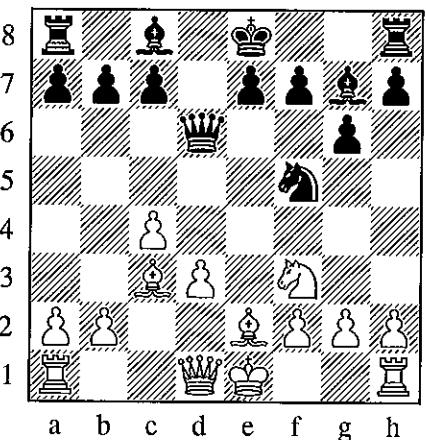
I also considered 8.0–0N e5 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ 0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ f6 13. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}ad8=$ and Black is doing fine.

8...g6! 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}d6!$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

10. d4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 11. c5 $\mathbb{W}d5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ e5 13. dxе5 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 14. fxе3 $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{W}e7\#$ is also good for Black.

10... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

Now in Neumeier – A. Smith, Germany 2010, Black should have played:



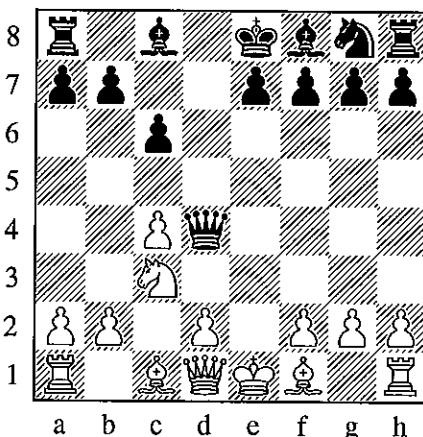
11...0–0!N 12. d4

12. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ and 12. 0–0 can both be met by 12...c5, when Black obtains full control over the d4-square and is clearly better.

12...b6!

12... $\mathbb{E}d8\#?$ also favours Black.13.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}b7\#$

Black has the more pleasant position, as the pressure on d4 is annoying for White.

D2) 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c6

The most logical move, covering both d5 and b5.

7.d3

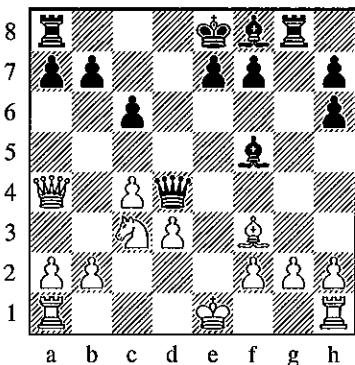
White can hardly manage without this move.

7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 8. d3 transposes to variation D23.7... $\mathbb{Q}h6$!

The knight will play a pivotal role in the fight for the d4-square, and the dark squares in general.

White's four most important options are D21) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$, D22) 8. h3, D23) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ and D24) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$.

After 8.♘xh6?! gxh6 the slight damage to Black's pawn structure is outweighed by the serious weakening of White's dark squares. 9.♕e2 ♘g8 10.♗f3?! (White should prefer 10.g3, although 10...♞f5 followed by ...0–0–0 is still better for Black) 10...♞f5 11.♗a4



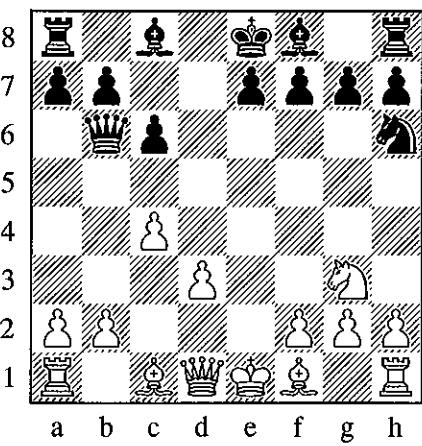
We have been following Reina Bernal – Korneev, Malaga 2002, and here the simple 11...0–0–0!N† would have offered Black a clear advantage.

D21) 8.♘e2

The idea behind this odd-looking move is to put the knight on g3 in order to counter the plan of ...♞f5. However, it seems to me that White's manoeuvre is too time-consuming to be any good.

8...♗b6! 9.♕g3

Here Black has a simple improvement:



9...e5!N

In the only game which reached the above position, Black played aggressively but soon went astray and got crushed: 9...♝g4 10.d4 e5 11.h3 ♜f6 12.dxe5 ♜b4†? 13.♕d2 ♜g4? 14.♗c2! 0–0–0 15.♕xb4 ♜xb4† 16.♗c3 Black lost a piece and resigned two moves later in Baramidze – Rapport, Austria 2010.

10.♘e2 ♜f5 11.0–0

11.♗xf5 ♜xf5 12.0–0 ♜c5† is obviously more pleasant for Black.

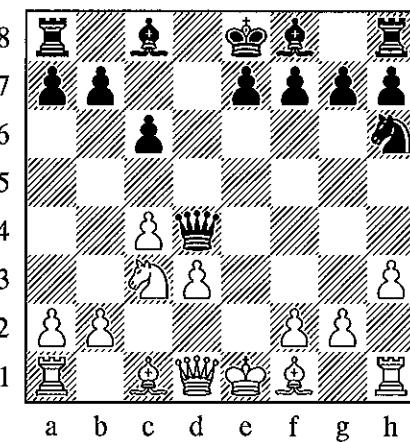
11...♜xg3 12.hxg3 ♜c5 13.♗b1 a5!

Preventing b2–b4.

14.♗f3 0–0†

Black enjoys full control over the d4-square, while the d3-pawn remains a long-term weakness.

D22) 8.h3



This modest-looking move holds surprisingly aggressive intentions.

8...♞f5 9.g4?!

This is the consistent move, but the entire concept looks dubious.

9.♘e2 is objectively a better move, but in that case White simply has an inferior version of

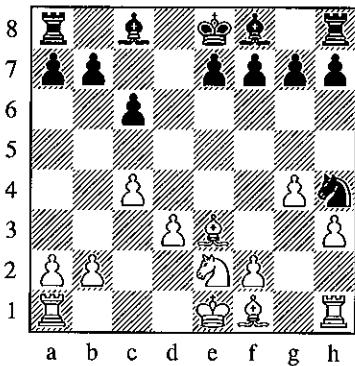
variation D23 due to the unnecessary h2-h3 move.

9... $\mathbb{W}e5\#!$

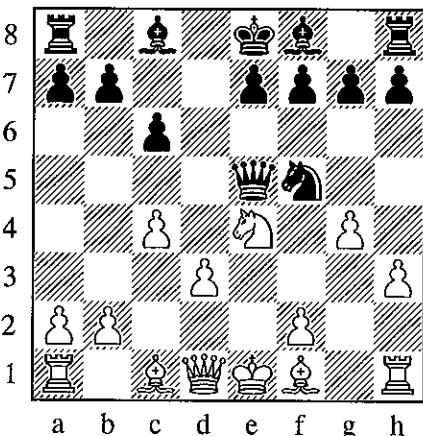
Without this zwischenzug, White's idea would have been justified.

10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

The alternative is: 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}xe2\#$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ (11. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ allows 11... $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$) 11... $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



12... h5! Damaging White's kingside structure.
13. gxh5 $\mathbb{R}xh5$ 14. 0-0-0 g6 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{R}h8\#$
Black was better in Bashkov – Ovetchkin, Ufa 1999, thanks to his superior pawn structure.



10... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 11. f4

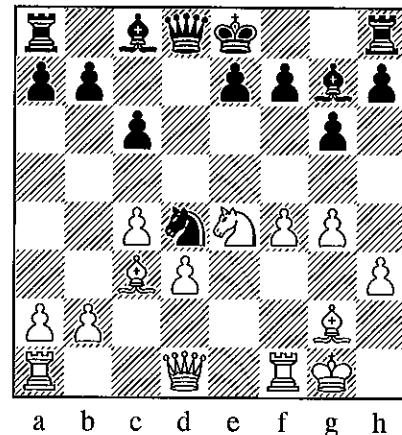
White continues to play aggressively, but all these pawn moves leave holes which can be exploited later in the game.

11... $\mathbb{W}a5\#!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d8\#$

Black retains control over the d4-square.

13. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ g6 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 15. 0-0?

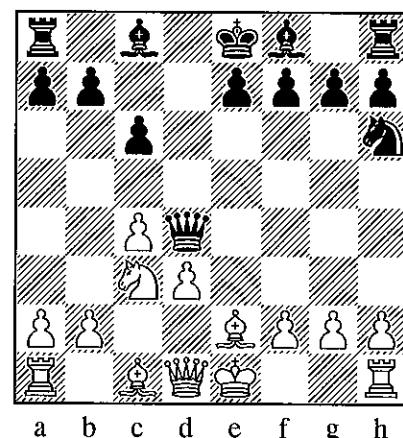
15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ is a slight improvement, although 15... h5# still favours Black.



15... h5! 16. g5 0-0 17. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$

Black had an obvious positional advantage in Naiditsch – Bauer, Mulhouse 2011.

D23) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$



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

8... g6?! is a good alternative, as long as Black meets 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ with 9... $\mathbb{W}d7$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$. (Instead 9... $\mathbb{W}d8$ would be a mistake due to 10. g4! when the knight is stuck on h6.)

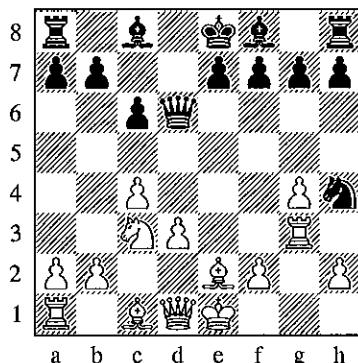
9.0–0

9.g4?!

Once again this kingside lunge looks dubious.

9... $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 10. $\mathbb{B}g1$ $\mathbb{W}d6!$ 11. $\mathbb{B}g3$

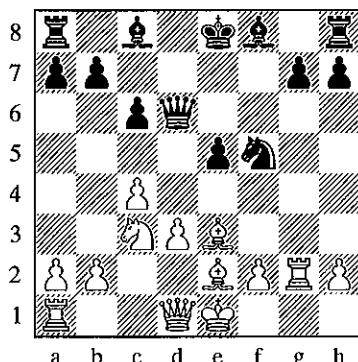
Now Black has a pleasant choice.



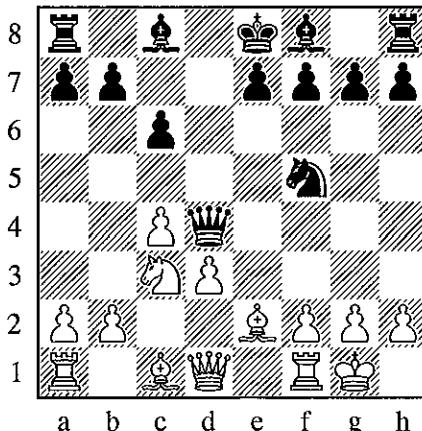
11...e5!?

11...h5?! 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}b4\#$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 15.gxh5 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 16. $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ was better for Black in Getz – Hammer, Sandefjord 2012.

I would be tempted to try the text move though, based on the following idea:

12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ f5! 13.gxf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 14. $\mathbb{B}g2$ 14... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$!14... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}a4$ looks unclear.15.fxe3 $\mathbb{W}h6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$

Followed by ...0–0–0 and White is under pressure.



9...e5!

9...g6 10.g4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d6!?$ N should be good enough to equalize, but I believe Black can and should play more ambitiously.

Delchev and Semkov recommend the sophisticated 9... $\mathbb{W}d8!?$ in their recent book. This seems playable too, but I prefer the text move in conjunction with the strong follow-up on move 11.

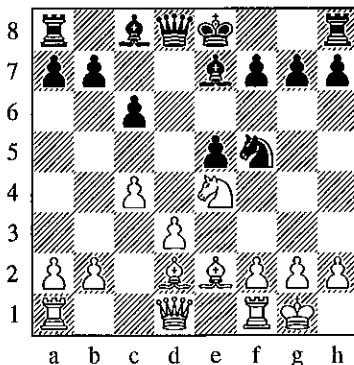
10.g4

This weakening move is played in order to develop the dark-squared bishop to e3.

White has also tried:

10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d8!$

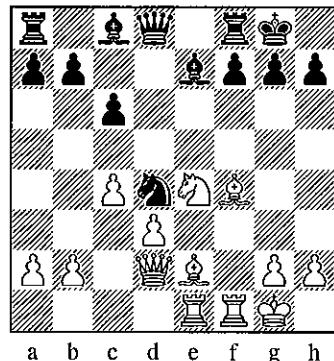
11... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ was also decent for Black in Suba – Ftacnik, Warsaw 1987, but I think the queen is better on d8.



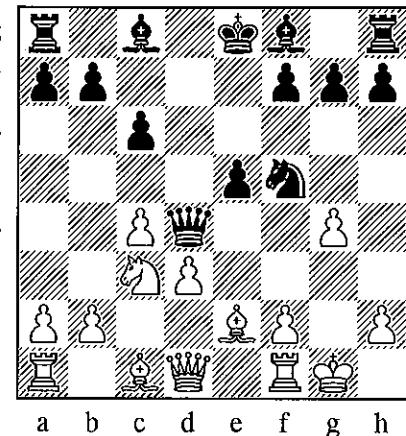
12.f4

12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ is good for Black.12...exf4 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf4N$

13. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ occurred in M. Andersen – Hector, Copenhagen 2013, when Black could have obtained some advantage with 13... $\mathbb{Q}d4\bar{t}$ followed by ...0–0.

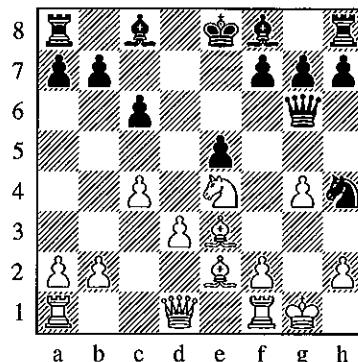
13...0–0 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 15. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ 15...f5 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ b6! 17. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7\bar{t}$

Followed by ...c5, with a positional edge for Black.

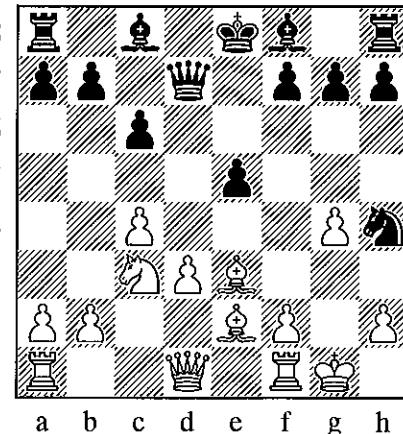
10... $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d7!$

The idea behind this slightly surprising retreat is to play ...h5, while the queen on d7 puts additional pressure on g4. Delchev does not mention it in either his White or Black repertoire books which cover this variation.

I also checked the alternative: 11... $\mathbb{W}d6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}g6?!$ (12... $\mathbb{W}c7$ looks better, when 13.f4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14.f5 h5 15.h3N leads to a double-edged situation; White's kingside has been weakened, but the knight on h4 is misplaced.) Black eventually prevailed in Illescas Cordoba – Salov, Dos Hermanas 1995, but White's play can be improved by means of:



13. $\mathbb{Q}g5!N$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. f4! $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 15. fxg5 $\mathbb{W}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}b4!$ a5 18. $\mathbb{W}a3$ With a slight edge for White.



12.d4

The most logical way to counter Black's attack on the kingside is to open up the centre.

12.f4 exf4 13. $\mathbb{W}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. d4 0–0 \bar{t} is better for Black.

12...h5! 13.f3!

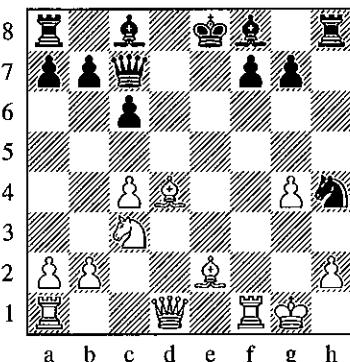
The best defence.

After 13.h3?! hxg4 14.hxg4 ♖f5† the opening of the h-file proves dangerous for White.

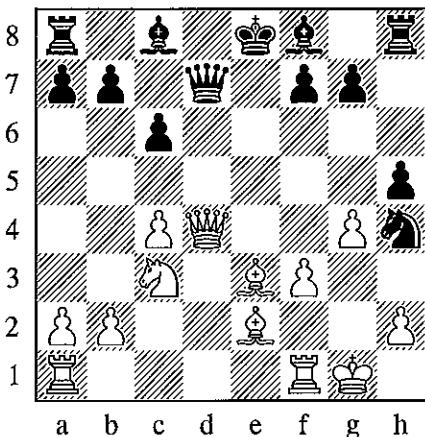
13...exd4 14.♕xd4!

White has to trade queens in order to avoid the attack on the kingside.

14.♕xd4? is strongly answered by: 14...hxg4 15.fxg4 ♜c7!



16.♖f2 ♜e6 17.♗b3 0–0–0 18.♘xa7 ♜d6†
Black has a strong attack; for example, 19.♗b6? ♜xh2†! wins immediately.



14...♗xd4 15.♗xd4 ♜e6 16.♘e4 ♜g6

The queens are off and material is equal; nevertheless, Black can still try to exploit White's kingside weaknesses. Best play continues:

17.b3! f6!

Black secures the f7-square for his king.

17...♗f4 18.♗d1 is roughly equal.

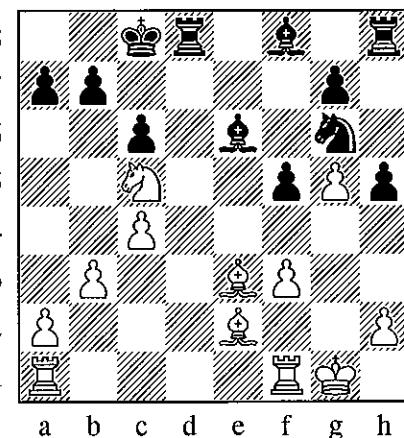
18.♗e3!

18.♘c5 is strongly answered by: 18...♗f4! 19.♗ae1 ♜f7! 20.♗xe6 (20.♗xb7? doesn't work because of 20...♗b4 21.♗e3 ♜xe1 22.♗xf4 ♜b4) 20...♗xe6 21.♗e3 ♜e8!† And Black maintains some pressure.

18...0–0–0!

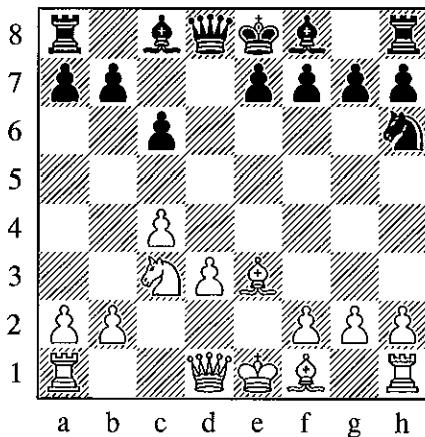
We are following a correspondence game, where White was unable to solve his problems.

19.g5 f5 20.♘c5



20...♗f4! 21.♗xf4 ♜xc5† 22.♗g2 g6

Black eventually managed to convert his nagging initiative into a victory in Hlavacek – Krause, Internet 2013.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5**D24) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d8$** 

This is the most accurate; Black moves his queen out of harm's way and prepares ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$.

White may try D241) 9. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ or D242) 9. d4.

D241) 9. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ gxh6

This exchange is slightly better here than on the previous move, but Black is still more than okay.

10. d4

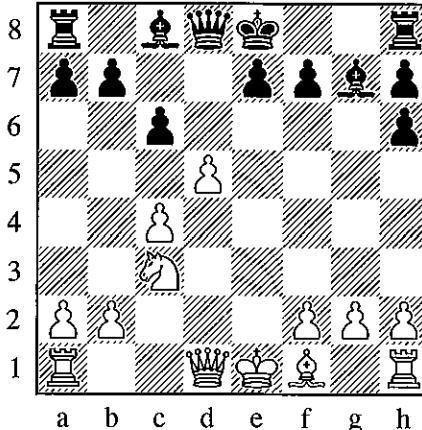
10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ has been played a few times but it's obvious that Black is doing well against the backward d-pawn. The text move is more challenging, as White tries to play actively on the light squares.

10... $\mathbb{Q}g7$

The immediate 10... $\mathbb{Q}g8!?$ is interesting too.

11. d5

Black answered with 11... $\mathbb{W}d6$ in Zvjaginsev – Granda Zuniga, Pamplona 1996, and numerous other moves have also been tried. Instead I would like to propose something completely new:

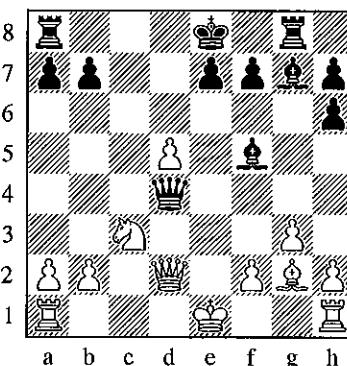
**11... $\mathbb{Q}g8!?$ N**

The purpose of this move is to make it harder for White to develop his light-squared bishop.

12. $\mathbb{W}c2$

By protecting the b2-pawn, White prepares to recapture on d5 with the knight.

12. g3 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ cxd5 15. cxd5 (15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!?$ allows 15... $\mathbb{W}xb2\#$) 15... $\mathbb{W}d4!$ It makes sense for Black to exchange queens, as his king will no longer be in danger in the centre.

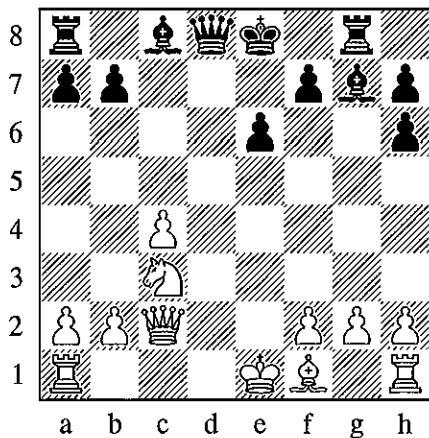


16. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 17. 0–0 $\mathbb{E}c8$ 18. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{E}g6!$ Black is a slight favourite due to his strong bishop pair.

12... cxd5 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ e6 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

14. $\mathbb{W}xh7$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ followed by

$\dots\mathbb{Q}c6$ gives Black a strong initiative for the sacrificed pawn.



14... $\mathbb{W}a5!$ 15.g3

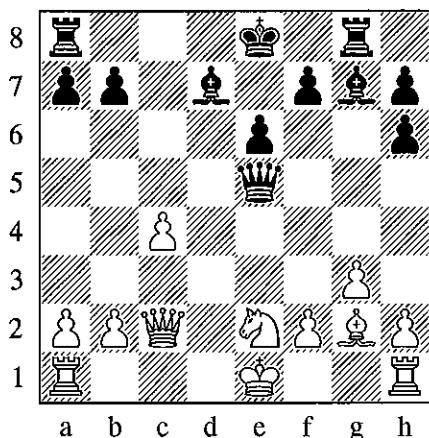
15.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}g1$ $\mathbb{W}c8\bar{f}$ is better for Black.

15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

White had better put his bishop here before Black has time to play ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$.

16... $\mathbb{W}e5\bar{f}!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

17. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ 0–0–0 \bar{f} leaves White in difficulties with his king.



17... $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 19. $\mathbb{W}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$
20. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7!$

Black's can improve his pieces with ... $\mathbb{Q}g5$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}b6$. White faces a tough battle against the bishop pair in the endgame.

D242) 9.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f5$

Here we get a different pawn structure, but once again White will have to face the future without his dark-squared bishop.

10. $\mathbb{W}d2$

After 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ g6 11.0–0?! (11. $\mathbb{W}d2$ transposes to our main line) 11... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 12.d5 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 13.fxe3 0–0 \bar{f} Black was obviously better in Anic – Giorgadze, Solin 1998.

10...g6

A typical idea for the entire variation: the bishop will exert serious pressure along the a1-h8 diagonal.

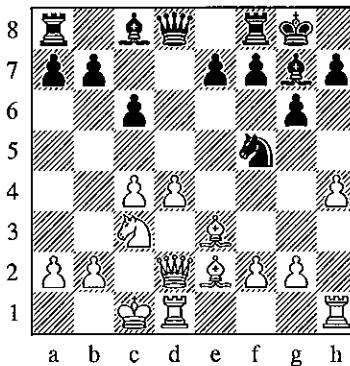
11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

11.d5 was played in Pakleza – Wojtaszek, Warsaw 2014. Black's most precise answer would have been: 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe3\bar{N}$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ 0–0 \bar{f} Black is better thanks to his powerful bishops – especially the one on g7.

11.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0–0

This position has given Black the upper hand in a number of games. For example:
13.h4

I would like to introduce a strong novelty.

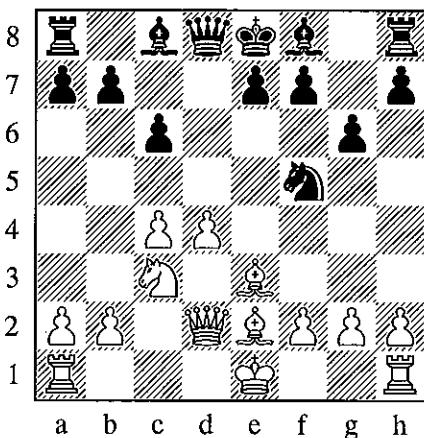


13...b5!N

13...c5!? 14.dxc5 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 15.h5 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16.hxg6 hxg6 led to a victory for Black in Dzhakaev – Navara, Pardubice 2011, but 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$!N would have made things tricky; best play continues 17... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $\mathbb{Q}fc8!$ with approximate equality.

14.h5 $\mathbb{W}a5!$ 15.cxb5 cxb5 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 17.hxg6 hxg6=

Black has a serious initiative on the queenside.



11... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

12.0–0–0 transposes to the previous note.

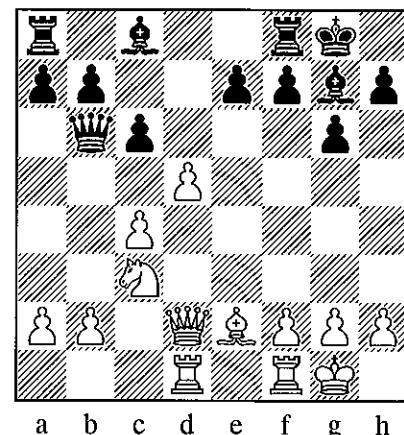
12...0–0 13.0–0 $\mathbb{W}a5$!?

A decent alternative is: 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ (14.fxe3 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ occurred in Rumpl – Pitl, Austria 2011, when 15... $\mathbb{Q}e6$!N 16. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$! would have been good for Black) 14... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 15.d5 cxd5 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ axb6 18. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 21.cxd5= A draw was soon agreed in Ramirez – Tomashevsky, Tromso 2013.

14.d5 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$! 16. $\mathbb{W}d2$

White should have preferred 16. $\mathbb{W}xe7$!N $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ cxd5 18.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ with approximate equality.

Now Black's play in Beliavsky – Leitao, Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010, can be improved by means of:



16... $\mathbb{Q}f5$!N 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$

With slightly better chances for Black, thanks to the strong bishop on g7 and the pressure along the a1-h8 diagonal.

Conclusion

3.e3 is a principled answer to our 2...d4 system, but we have seen that 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ offers Black at least equal chances. 4.b4 is an interesting gambit, but 4... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 5.fxe3 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ offers Black excellent chances as long as he is willing to return the extra pawn at the right moment, with 6.d4 e5! being one key line. This main theoretical line of the chapter is 4.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c6 7.d3, when 7... $\mathbb{Q}h6$! is the key move which enables Black to successfully fight for the dark squares. The analysis demonstrates that Black has the easier game and White will have to play well to secure equality.



1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

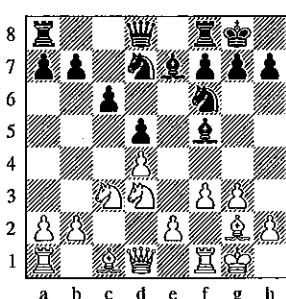
2.g3

Variation Index

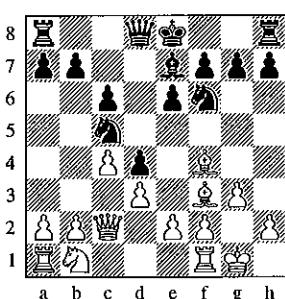
1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 2.g3

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

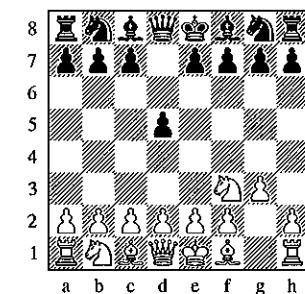
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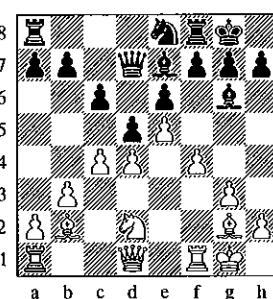
11... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ N



11... $\mathbb{Q}cd7!$ N



15... $\mathbb{Q}c7!$ N



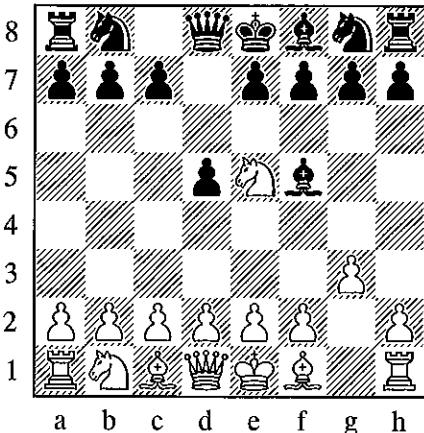
1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d51. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 2. g3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$

I like this move, as I don't believe there is anything to fear from the immediate 3. $\mathbb{Q}e5$; and against 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$, Black will neatly finish developing his queenside with 3... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ before deciding what to do next.

We will analyse A) 3. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ and B) 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$. The latter is the main line, and coverage of it will be spread over this and the following two chapters.

A) 3. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

This early attempt to fight for the initiative isn't dangerous for Black. After retreating the bishop, he will play ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ to challenge the knight while gaining time for development.

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

White may follow up with A1) 4.c4 or A2) 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$.

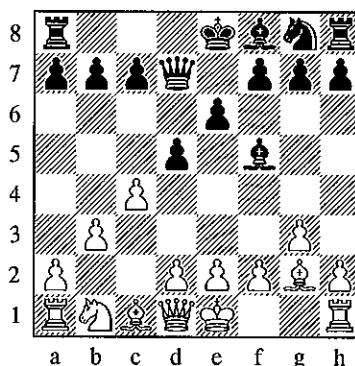
4.d4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ transposes to variation A2) 5...e6 6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ led to a comfortable position for Black in Romanishin – Bagirov, Helsinki 1992.

A1) 4.c4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$!

This is the simplest way to deal with White's last move, although 4...f6!? is also interesting.

5. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 6. $\mathbb{W}b3$

I also checked: 6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ e6 7. b3 (7. $\mathbb{W}b3$ c6 8. d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$?! d4 was good for Black in Poley – Rublevsky, Aalborg 1993)

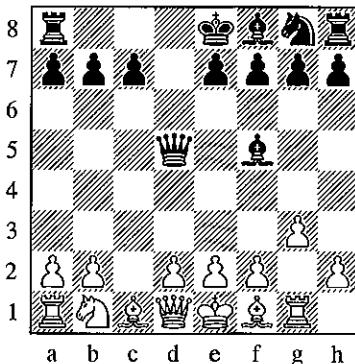


7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (7... $\mathbb{Q}e4$!?) N is interesting) 8. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. d3 0–0 10. 0–0–0 c6 (10...a5!?) Black was solid and equal in Maletin – Andreikin, Tomsk 2006.

It is hardly logical for White to play:

6. cx d5! $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}g1$

7.f3 allows Black to win a pawn with 7... $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ e6 with a fine position (there is also 9...c6, as in Lagarde – Arkell, Hastings 2015).



7... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$

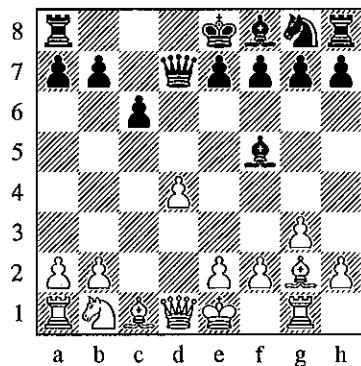
7... $\mathbb{Q}xb1?$ allowed the intermediate 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2!$
 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}a4\uparrow$ c6 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ with a slightly more pleasant position for White in Hodgson – Sherbakov, Leeuwarden 1994.

The text move is a natural improvement which removes the queen from a possible attack.

8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c6 9.d4

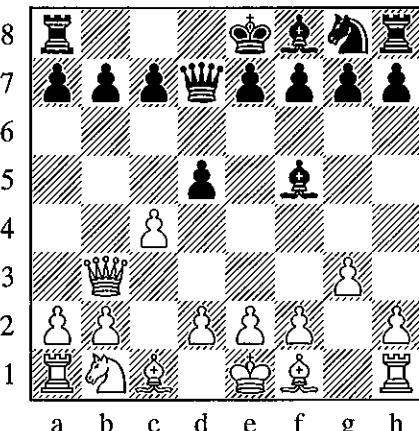
9.d3 e5 \mp favours Black, as White has lost his right to castle on the kingside.

Now in Bibens – Cavril, France 2001, Black could have obtained a good game with:



9... $\mathbb{Q}d8N$

The position is close to equal, but only Black can be better due to White's inability to castle short.

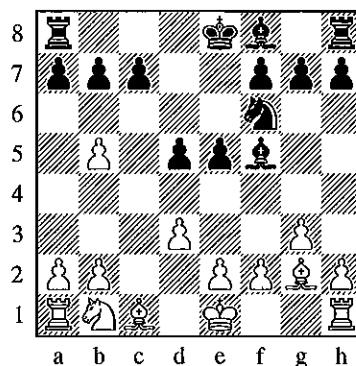


6... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$

Black protects the b7-pawn and pins the c-pawn.

7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

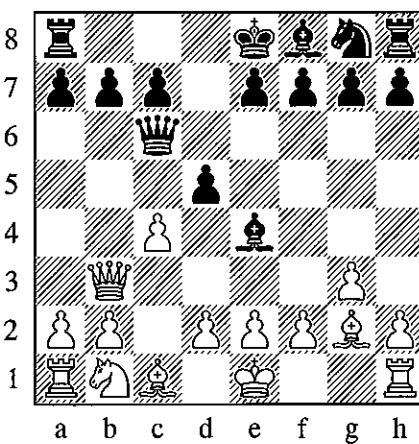
7. $\mathbb{Q}b5?$ gives Black a favourable endgame.
 7... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ e5 9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10.d3 Now Black's play in Salov – Dreev, Elista 1998, can be improved by means of:



10...a6!N 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (After 12. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ Black is slightly better thanks to his more compact pawn structure) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ c6 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ is annoying for White) 14... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ Black has a slightly more comfortable position.

7... $\mathbb{Q}e4!$

7...0-0-0? is also good, for instance: 8. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6 10. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ 11.d3 $\mathbb{Q}c5=$ and Black forces a good endgame. The text move seems even better though.

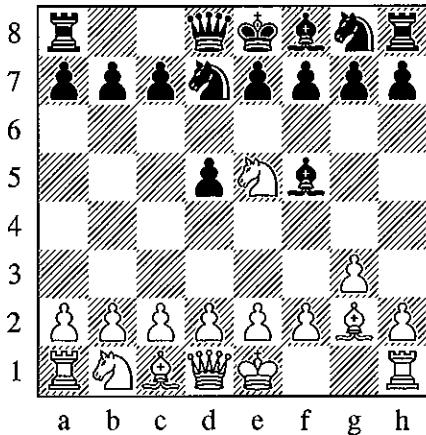


8.f3

8. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ dx $e4$ 9.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is also good for Black.

8...dxc4 9. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 10.e4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$

Black had an extra pawn and slightly better chances in Bryndin – Yagupov, St Petersburg 2004.

A2) 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ **5.d4**

5. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 6.c4 transposes to the note on 6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ in variation A1.

5. $\mathbb{Q}xf7?$! $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\#$ e6 7. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}gf6\#$ reached an approximate material balance in Jovanovic – Sakaev, Kragujevac 2009, but Black's extra piece should be more useful than White's three pawns.

5...e6 6.c4 c6 7.0–0

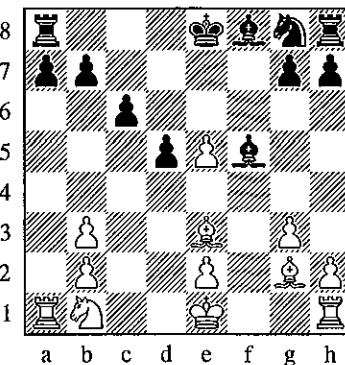
White has also tried:

7. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 8. dx $e5$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 9. cx $d5$

9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 10. ax $b3$ occurred in Thiede – Appel, Germany 2006, and now I would like to offer 10...f6?N 11. f4 fx $e5$ 12. fx $e5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ dx $c4$ 14. bx $c4$ $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ 15. 0–0= with roughly equal chances.

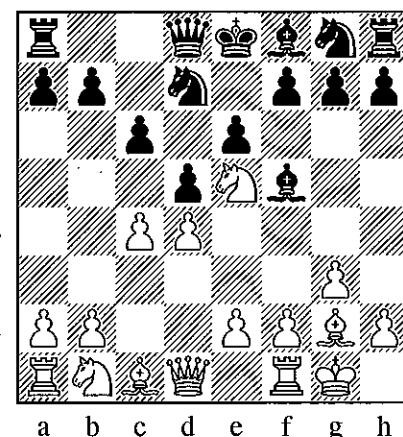
9... $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 10. ax $b3$ ex $d5\#$! 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ f6 12. f4 fx $e5$
13. fx $e5$

In Siikaluoma – Motyka, corr. 2006, Black should have continued:



13... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ N 14. 0–0 g6 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$

With a good position.

**7... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$**

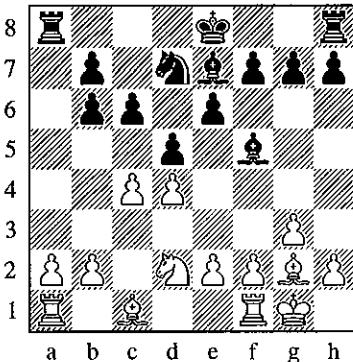
This position can arise via a few different move orders. It should be fine for Black as the knight cannot stay on e5 forever, while the bishop on g2 faces a solid pawn barrier in the centre.

8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

8. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$? Black is covering the e5-square as White is planning $\mathbb{Q}f3$ -e5. 10. $\mathbb{W}b3$ 0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ h6= Tappyrov – Derbenev, Kostroma 2011.

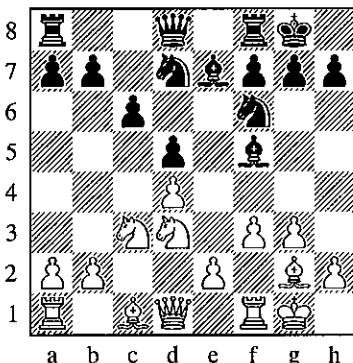
8. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

11.♗xb6?! (11.e4 dxe4 12.♗xe4 transposes to our main line) 11...axb6 Black's structure is healthy and the open a-file gives him good prospects in the endgame, for instance:

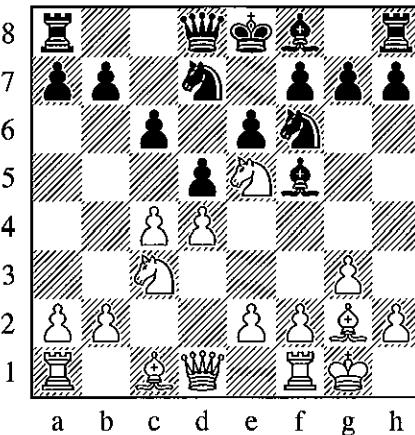


12.e4 dxe4 13.♗xe4 14.♗f6† ♗xf6 15.♗e3 0–0† White had to deal with pressure against the d4-pawn and along the a-file in Pieper Emden – Christiansen, Germany 1988.

8.cxd5 exd5 9.♗c3 ♗e7 10.♗d3 (10.♗f4 0–0 This position has sometimes arisen with Black to move, but even without this tempo Black is perfectly fine. For example, 11.h3 h6 12.g4 ♗h7 with a slight edge for Black in Aleshnia – Bubir, corr. 2009.) 10...0–0 11.f3 Now I would like to improve Black's play from Viladiu Martinez – De la Villa Garcia, Sitges 1993, with:



11...♗b6!N 12.♗f2 c5!= Black prevents e2-e4 and obtains a good position.



8...♗e7 9.♗b3 ♗b6 10.♗xd7 ♗xd7 11.e4 dxe4 12.♗xe4 ♗f6!

Even though this variation is not theoretically critical, it is still important to play accurately.

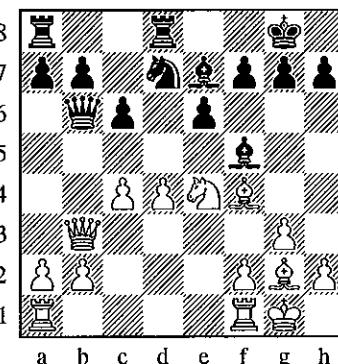
12...0–0

This has been a more popular choice but I rejected it on the basis of the following line:
13.♗f4!

Preparing ♗d6.

13...♗fd8

Black can't win the d4-pawn with 13...♗xe4 14.♗xe4 ♗xd4, as in Gurieli – E. Danielian, Batumi 2012, because of 15.♗xh7!N ♗xh7 16.♗c2†! (16.♗fd1 allows the intermediate 16...♗c5 17.♗xd4 ♗xb3 18.axb3 ♗fd8 19.♗xd8 ♗xd8 20.♗d1 ♗g6 and Black is close to equality) 16...♗g8 17.♗ad1 ♗f6 18.♗xd7± and White is better.



14. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

This time 15... $\mathbb{W}xd4?$ simply loses material:

16. $\mathbb{B}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e7=$

15... $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 16. $a xb3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ is slightly better for White.

16. $\mathbb{W}c3$

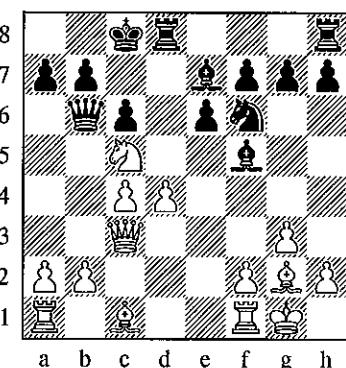
I prefer White's position with the two bishops. (Instead 16. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ can be answered by 16... $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 17. $a xb3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 18. $\mathbb{B}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}c2!$ 19. $\mathbb{B}dc1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 20. $d xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ and the bishop can't be trapped.)

The text move leads to equality with no particular problems, as the following lines demonstrate.

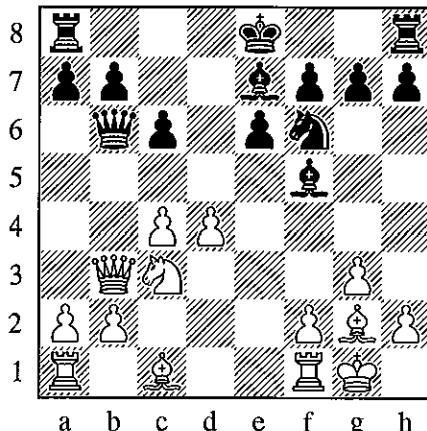
13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

The attempt to open the h1-a8 diagonal by means of 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#N$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 14. d5 leads to massive exchanges and eventual equality: 14... $cxd5$ 15. $cxd5$ $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 16. $a xb3$ 0-0 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 18. $\mathbb{B}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 19. $d xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{B}ab8$ 21. $\mathbb{B}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3=$

13. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ occurred in Gutman – Porper, Korbach 2007, when Black should have played: 13... 0-0-0! N 14. $\mathbb{W}c3$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4\#N$)



14... $\mathbb{W}xd4!$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ With good compensation for the small material deficit.



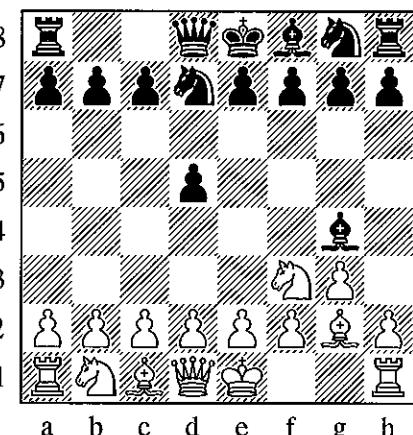
13.... $\mathbb{Q}d3!N$

13... 0-0-0? also worked fine in the following game: 14. d5 $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 15. $a xb3$ $cxd5$ 16. $cxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $exd5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ (or 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{B}ab8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 21. $\mathbb{B}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}f6=$) 19... $fxe6$ 20. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f7=$ Gutman – Fiebig, Dortmund 2008. The text move is even simpler though.

14. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{W}a6!=$

Black provokes either a favourable exchange of the light-squared bishops or a weakening of the d5-square.

B) 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$



This early development of the knight allows

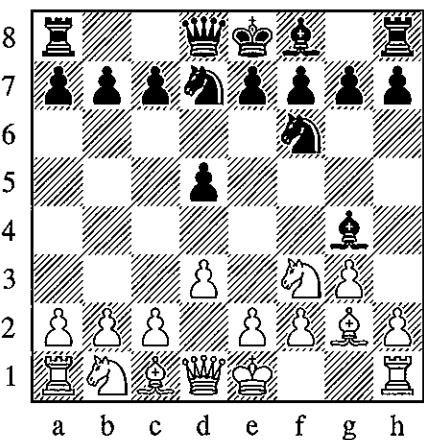
Black to rule out any further $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ideas. In the rest of this chapter we will analyse B1) 4.d3 and B2) 4.c4.

4.0–0 is covered in the next two chapters.

4.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ is virtually certain to transpose to one of the main variations.

4.d4 is also likely to transpose elsewhere. For example, 4...e6 5.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ (or 6.c4 c6 with the immediate transposition to variation B222) 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ 0–0 8.e4 c6 transposes to variation C2 of the next chapter.

B1) 4.d3 $\mathbb{Q}gf6$



5. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

5.0–0 c6 transposes to variation D of the next chapter. In this section I will focus on a few rare lines where White delays castling.

5.c4 e6 6.0–0 transposes to variation B221.

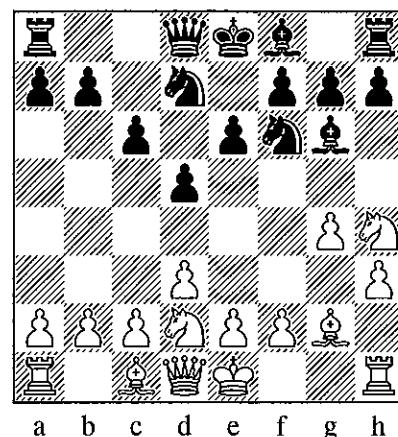
5.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 6.g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ e6 8.e3 should be met by 8...c6, when I don't see anything better than 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$, transposing to our main line.

5...c6 6.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 7.g4

This seems like the only option with any independent value.

7... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ e6

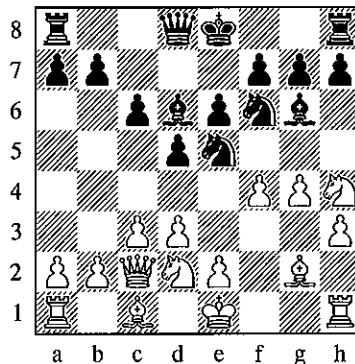
When the knight arrives on h4 I prefer this pawn on e6 instead of e5, in order to cover the f5-square.



9.e3

Quite surprisingly, this position occurred in two of Kramnik's games, though one of them was a blitz encounter.

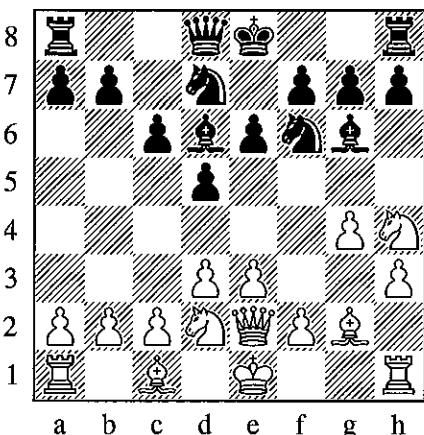
After 9.c3 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 10. $\mathbb{W}c2$ in Granda Zuniga – Alonso, Buenos Aires 2012, I like 10... $\mathbb{Q}e5!?$ N, intending to move the other knight away and provoke an exchange on g6. Play may continue: 11.f4 (11.g5 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ fxg6 with a comfortable position for Black)



11... $\mathbb{Q}g8!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ 13.e3 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ and Black is doing fine.

9... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$

Now I would like to follow Marin's recommendation.



10... $\mathbb{W}e7!$

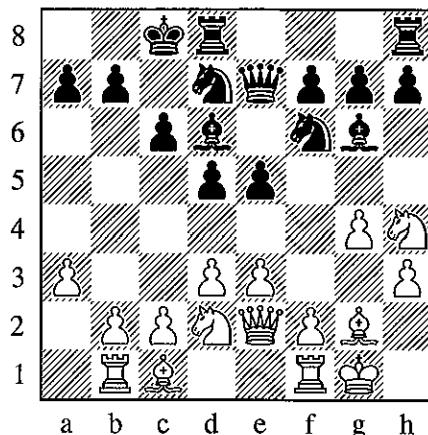
10... $\mathbb{W}c7$ was the continuation of Morozevich – Kramnik, Moscow (blitz) 2007, and Svidler – Kramnik, Moscow 2011, but Marin points out two problems with it. Firstly, Black releases the indirect pressure against the h4-knight; and secondly, it allows White to castle in relative safety, as the queen on c7 and bishop on d6 are the wrong way around when it comes to creating mating threats.

11.0–0N

After 11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ Black went for long castling in Julia – Alonso, Montevideo 2011, but 11...a5!N 12.a4 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ seems safer, with no problems at all for Black.

11. $\mathbb{Q}df3$ in Panno – Ricardi, Buenos Aires 1985, can be answered by 11...e5!N with the idea of 12... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ followed by ...e4. Play may continue: 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ hxg6 13.g5 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 14.h4 $\mathbb{Q}hf8$ Black intends to transfer the knight to e6, and is doing fine.

11...0–0–0 12. $\mathbb{B}b1$ e5 13.a3



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

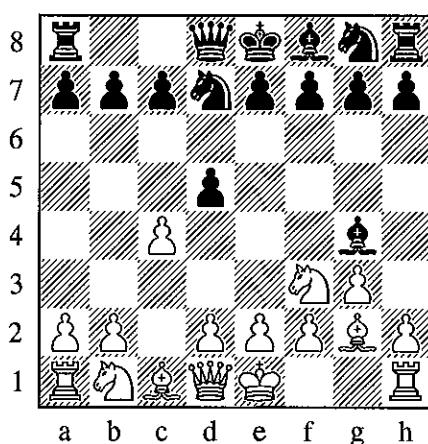
Marin gave 13...e4 in this position but I would prefer to improve the knight before taking any action in the centre. One of the points of this move is:

14.b4 $\mathbb{Q}a4=$

Blocking White's queenside play, with roughly equal chances.

B2) 4.c4

White tries to attack on the queenside.

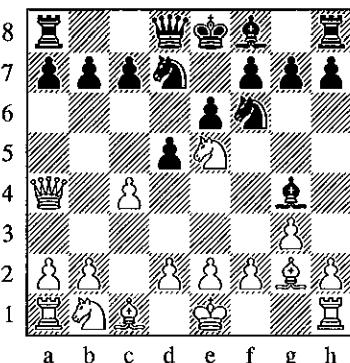


4...e6

We will analyse B21) 5. $\mathbb{W}b3$, B22) 5.0–0–0 and B23) 5. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$.

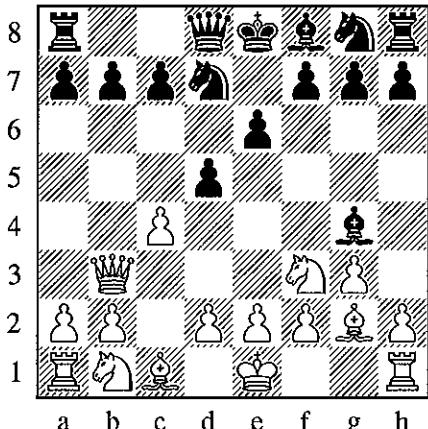
All of 5.d4 c6 6.0–0 ♔gf6, 5.d3 ♔gf6 6.0–0 and 5.b3 ♔gf6 6.♗b2 c6 7.0–0 will be considered under the 5.0–0 move order.

5.♔a4!? ♔gf6 6.♕e5 gives Black a choice:



6...b5!? This is the cleanest solution, as Black forces a draw. (If you wish to play for a win then 6...♗f5 7.♕xd7 ♗xd7 8.♗xd7† ♕xd7= reaches an equal endgame with everything to play for, as in Kirov – Portisch, Budapest 1975) 7.♗xb5 ♘b8 8.♗c6 ♘b6 A draw was agreed in Vulicevic – Klein, New York 1995, as 9.♔a4 is met by 9...♗b4 10.♗c6 ♘b6= and neither side can avoid the repetition.

B21) 5.♗b3

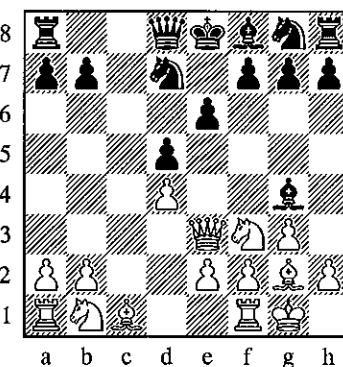


White's idea is to lure the black knight to c5, where it is slightly misplaced.

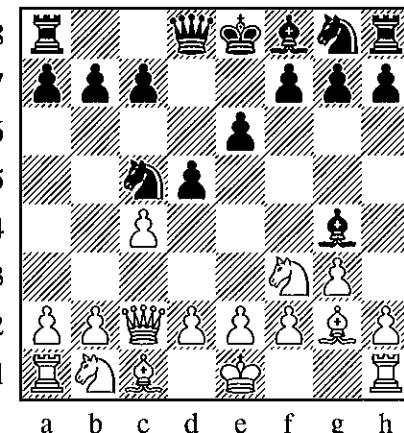
5...♘c5 6.♗c2

After 6.♗c3 c6 7.0–0 ♔f6 8.d4 ♘cd7 the queen is misplaced on c3 and so Black had no problems in Pavlov – Vysochin, Kiev 2006.

6.♗e3 c6 7.d4 ♘d7 8.cxd5 cxd5 9.0–0 occurred in N. Petrov – Haynes, Reykjavik 2016. In the game Black manoeuvred his knight via e7 to f5, but the queen is not well placed on e3 so I see no reason to chase it away. Instead I prefer simple development with:

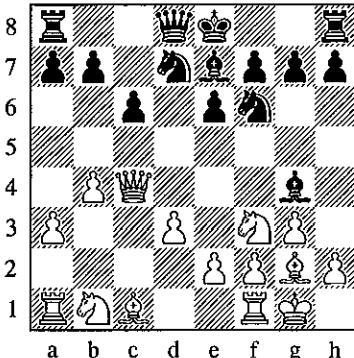


9...♔gf6N 10.♗b3 ♘b6 11.♗c3 ♘e7= With approximate equality.



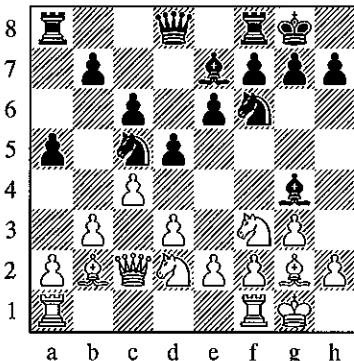
6...c6 7.d3 ♘f6 8.0–0 ♘e7 9.♗e3

9.b4N is premature: 9...♘cd7 10.a3 dxc4 11.♗xc4 (11.dxc4 a5 12.b5 cxb5 13.♗d4 ♘c8! 14.♗xb5 ♘b6 gives Black the upper hand due to White's weakened queenside)

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

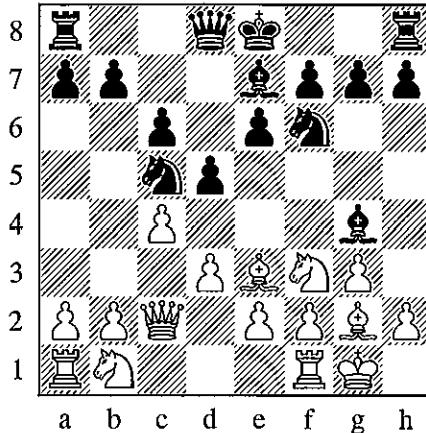
11... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$! 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ (12. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 0-0-0 is better for Black due to White's bad pawn structure)
12... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ a5! With some initiative for Black.

9.b3 0-0 10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ a5 11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ occurred in Roiz – Pavasovic, Novi Sad 2009. I think Black should have played:



11...h6?!N Securing the future of the light-squared bishop. For example: 12. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}cd7$ 13. h3 $\mathbb{Q}f5=$

Finally, 9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ was played in Kengis – Gabriel, Germany 2002. Here I would like to recommend: 9... $\mathbb{Q}cd7!$ N Although White has won a tempo with his $\mathbb{W}b3$ -c2 manoeuvre, Black's position is very solid and he should not have problems equalizing.

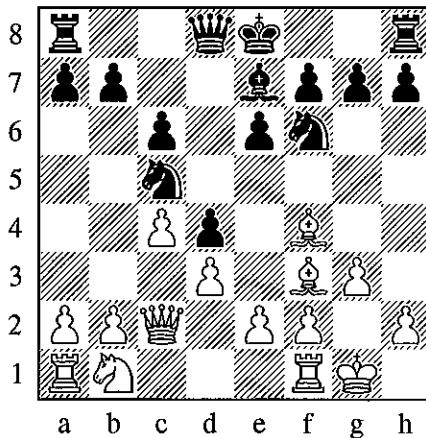
9... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$?

I don't mind trading off this bishop, as it enables Black to gain both space and time.

10. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ d4 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

Another game continued: 11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ a5 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ e5 13. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0-0 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15. e3 e4? 16. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$? 17. exd4 exd3 18. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}fe4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6=$ And in this equal position a draw was agreed in Kengis – Bareev, Germany 2001.

The text move was played in Romanishin – Pavasovic, Bratto 2009. I would like to improve Black's play with:

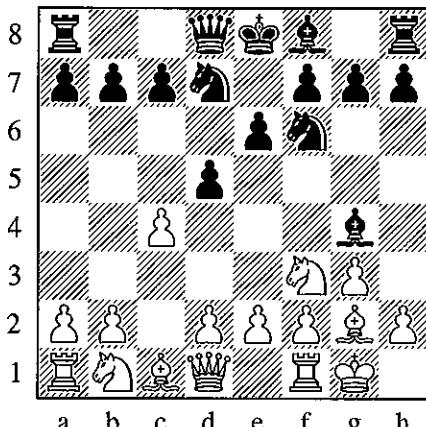
11... $\mathbb{Q}cd7!$ N=

Preventing b2-b4, while rendering the e2-e3 break ineffective. A brief illustrative line is:

12.e3?! e5 13.♗g5 h6 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6

With a good position for Black.

B22) 5.0–0 ♗gf6



In this section I'm going to consider all major lines for White except 6.cxd5 exd5, which transposes to variation B23.

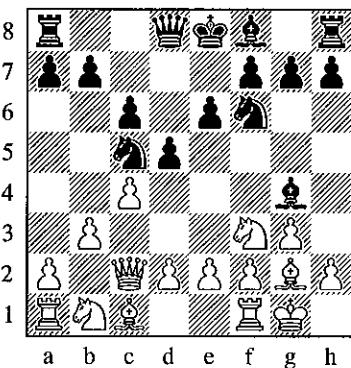
The three main paths are **B221) 6.d3!?**, **B222) 6.d4** and **B223) 6.b3**.

6.♗b3 ♗c5 7.♗c2

7.♗e3 ♗e7 8.d4 ♗cd7 9.♗e5 ♗h5 10.♗c3
c6 11.cxd5 occurred in Wohl – Filippov, Ubeda 1998, when the simple 11...cxsd5IN would have been fine for Black.

7...c6 8.b3

8.d3 leads back to variation B21.



8...♗e7

8...♗d6?! 9.♗b2 0–0 was also okay for Black in Burmakin – Lacrosse, Le Touquet 2006.

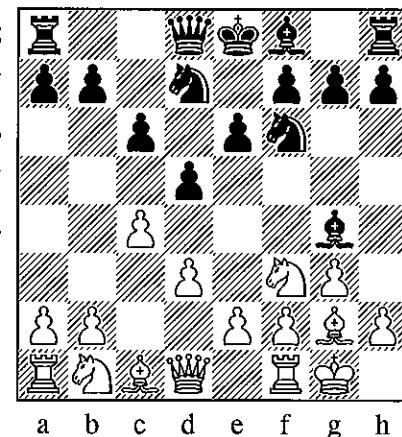
The text move is likely to transpose to an earlier variation after:

9.♗b2 0–0 10.d3

This position has been covered on the previous page – see the 9.b3 line in the notes to variation B21.

B221) 6.d3!?

White's clever move order has the point of meeting 6...♗c5?! with 7.d4 ♗e7 8.♗b3!, when Black obviously can't play ...♗b6 as the pawn is still on c7, while 8...♗b6? – which works fine in the analogous position where an exchange has occurred on d5 – runs into 9.c5 when White wins a pawn.



7.♗c3

7.cxd5 exd5 8.h3 (8.♗c3 ♗c5 transposes to variation B232) 8...♗xf3 9.♗xf3 ♗c5 10.♗g2 (10.♗c3 leads to variation B2321) 10...0–0 11.e3 ♗e8 12.♗d2 a5 13.♗f3 ♗e7 14.♗c2 a4 led to approximate equality in Roiz – Pavasovic, Heraklion 2007.

7...♗c5

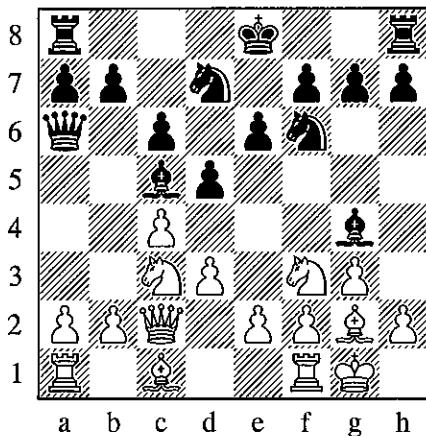
Black does not mind allowing d3-d4 with tempo, because he will obtain a comfortable

version of a Closed Catalan with his bishop actively developed on g4. That said, 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7?$ is a decent alternative.

8. $\mathbb{W}b3$

8.cxd5 exd5 transposes to variation B232.

8... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 9. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}a6$



10.cxd5?!

10.b3 occurred in Cvorovic – Jovanic, Solin 2005. Black should continue with the natural 10...0–0N, and after 11.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ b5 he is by no means worse.

10...cxd5!

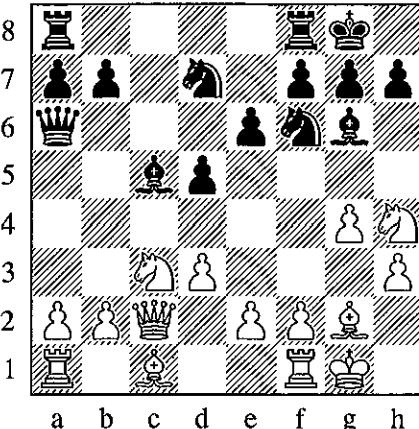
10...cxd5?! would give Black an inferior version of variation B232, as his queen is misplaced on a6.

11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 0–0

11... $\mathbb{Q}h5?$ is also possible although it may just transpose after 12.h3.

12.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 13.g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$

White will obtain the advantage of the bishop pair, but Black's position remains solid, while White's kingside has been slightly weakened and the g2-bishop is not doing much.

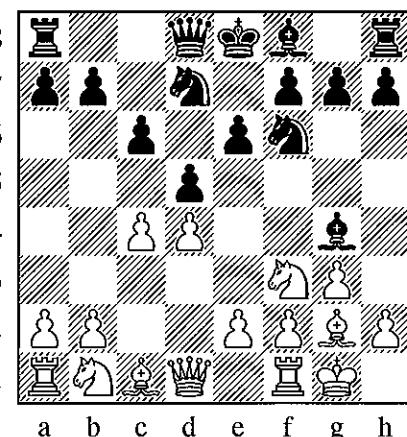


14. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ hxg6 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}ac8=$

The chances are roughly equal, for the reasons mentioned above.

B222) 6.d4 c6

We have reached something resembling a Closed Catalan, except that Black's bishop has been developed outside the pawn chain, which will make his task easier.



7. $\mathbb{W}b3$

Hitting the b7-pawn is the obvious way to make use of the fact that the bishop is not on c8.

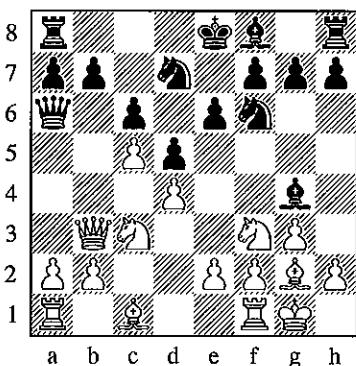
7... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

8.c5

This space-gaining move isn't great, as Black will be able to undermine White's centre with ...b6.

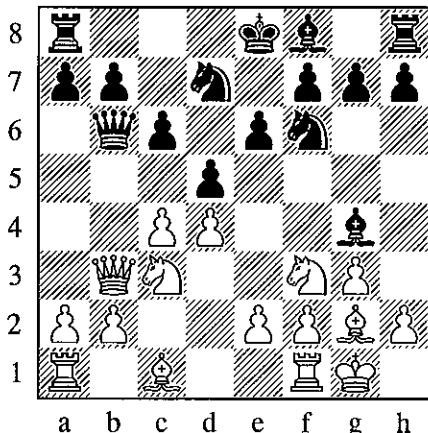
8... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

Another game continued: 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ b6 10.cxb6 axb6 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12.e4!? 0–0 Black is keeping the a8-h1 diagonal closed. 13.exd5 exd5 14. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ Black was by no means worse in Teterov – S. Zhigalko, Minsk 2014.



9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ b6 11.cxb6 axb6 12.e4 0–0 13.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

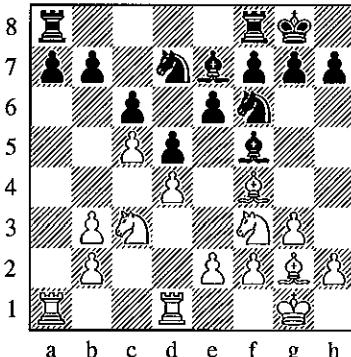
With equal chances, Matnadze – Aranaz Murillo, Linares 2014.



8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

9.c5 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ converts to the previous note.

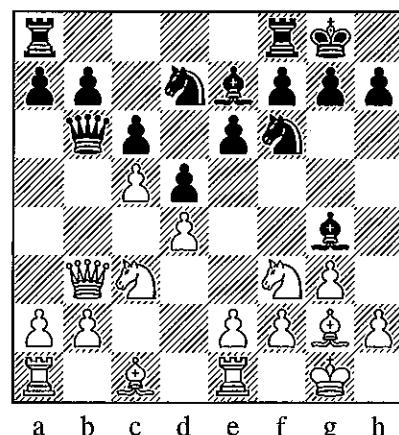
After 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 11.c5 $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 12.axb3 Black should play:



12...h6! (12... $\mathbb{Q}c2$ is too optimistic: 13. $\mathbb{Q}dc1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$! 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ dx $c4$ and now in Kamsky – Kramnik, Nice 2009, White could have obtained some advantage with 16. $\mathbb{Q}d1$! N $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 18.gxf4±) 13.b4 a6= Black was fine in Condie – Orr, London 1986.

9...0–0 10.c5

10.e4 dxe4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 15.axb3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}ec1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ and Black was fine in Koehler – Ritz, Germany 2002.



10... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$!

Now 10... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ can be answered by 11.e4! to exploit that slightly unfortunate position of the queen on a6; that is why White put the rook on e1 on the previous move.

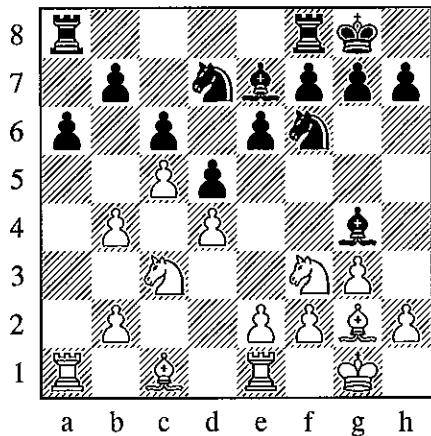
11.axb3 a6

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

Black should neutralize the pressure along the a-file and prevent a future b4-b5 advance.

12.b4

All this occurred in Grischuk – Motylev, Moscow (blitz) 2014, and a few other games. I would like to recommend:



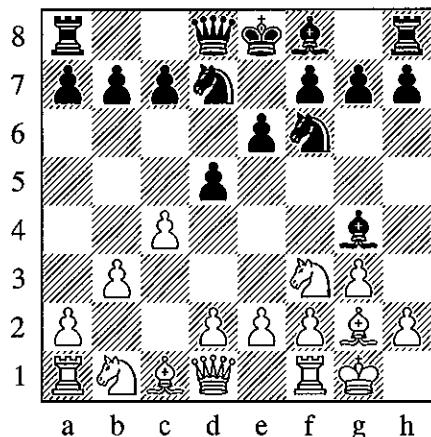
12... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ N 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

13. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ is fine for Black.

13...h6=

Black has prevented e2-e4 and secured the future of his light-squared bishop, so the chances are equal.

B223) 6.b3



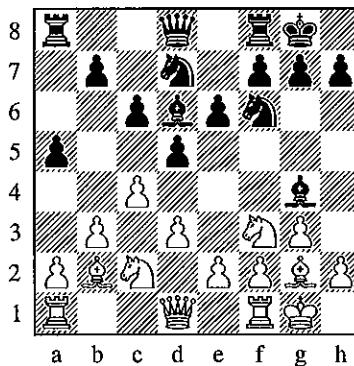
White is preparing a double fianchetto.

6...c6 7. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$

Black develops the bishop actively and takes the e5-square under control. White's main options are B2231) 8.d4 and B2232) 8.d3.

8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0–0 9. d3 (9. d4 $\mathbb{W}e7$ gives Black a good version of a Closed Catalan with the light-squared bishop in front of the pawn chain instead of being on c8) 9... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 10. a3 a5 11. h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{E}fe8=$ Black obtained a solid and equal position in Telljohann – Erdos, Deizisau 2011.

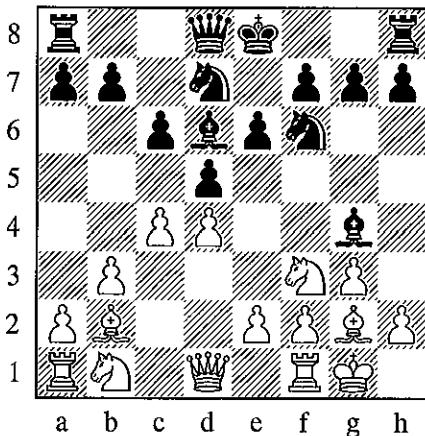
8. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 0–0 9. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ a5 10. d3 In this position Black has tried a number of ideas, but I would like to introduce a new one:



10...h6!=N Safeguarding the future of the light-squared bishop, while White doesn't have any concrete ideas. Play may continue 11.cxd5 cxd5 12. $\mathbb{Q}cd4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 13. a4 $\mathbb{E}fc8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4=$ with equal chances.

B2231) 8.d4

I have already mentioned a number of times that the Catalan-style position is fine for Black when his light-squared bishop is outside the pawn chain.



8...0-0 9.Qbd2

White has also tried:

9.Qe5 Qf5

Black improves his control over the e4-square.

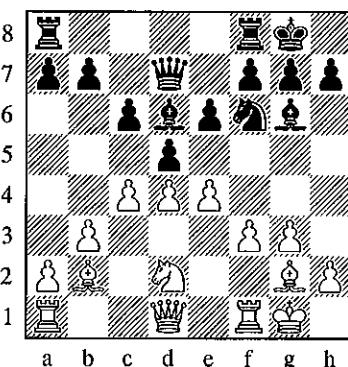
10.Qd2

White's idea is to advance his e-pawn after a preparatory f2-f3.

10...We7 11.Qxd7

11.a3 Qfd8 12.Qdf3 Qe4 Semi-pinning the f3-knight, as Black would be happy to trade the light-squared bishops. 13.b4 dxc4! Black obtained a comfortable position and a draw was agreed in Azmaiparashvili – Kramnik, Dortmund 1992.

11...Wxd7 12.f3 Qg6 13.e4



13...Qe7!

This cold-blooded move provokes the e4-e5 advance in order to exploit the resulting

weaknesses in White's position.

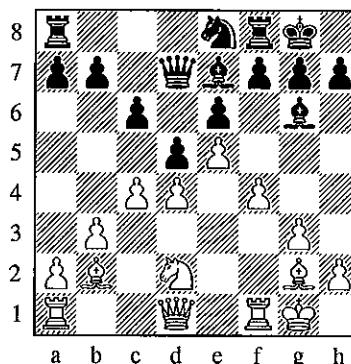
Botvinnik chose 13...dxe4 14.fxe4 e5, but after 15.Qf3 he still had some problems to solve in Romanovsky – Botvinnik, Leningrad 1930.

14.e5

14.We2 a5 15.cxd5 cxd5 16.e5 Qe8 17.Qfc1 Qc7= with roughly equal chances.

14...Qe8 15.f4

This was Recasens Sanchez – Latorre Lopez, corr. 2006, and now I recommend:



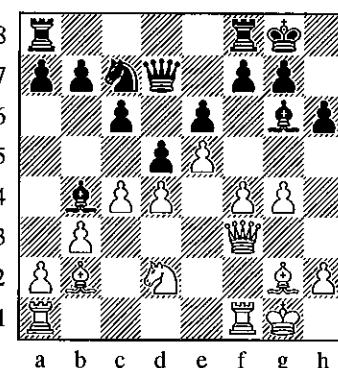
15...Qc7!N

Although Black's position may look passive, it has plenty of potential. For example:

16.g4 h6 17.Qf3

This direct attacking attempt doesn't achieve the goal in view of:

17...Qb4!



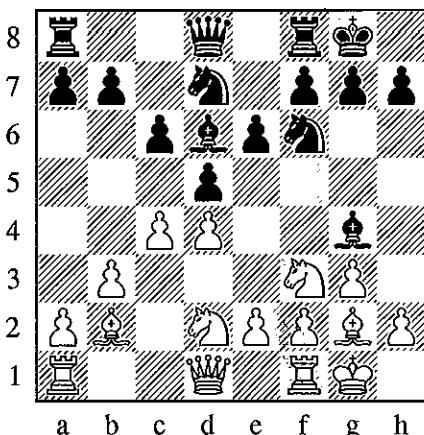
18.f5

After 18.Qad1 Qc2 19.Qc1 Qh7 20.Qc3 Qe7 Black's apparent waiting tactic has the point

of meeting 21.f5? with 21...f6!?, opening the position in his favour.

18...exf5 19.gxf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$

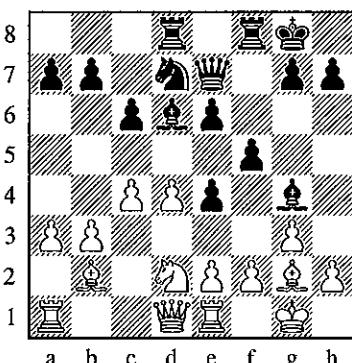
With some edge for Black.



9... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

10. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ transposes to the previous note.

10.a3 has the point of preventing the exchange of the dark-squared bishops. I would like to recommend: 10... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$! (instead of the more common 10...e5) 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$! 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $dxe4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ f5



14.b4 (14.f3 runs into 14... $\mathbb{Q}h5$! 15.fxe4 f4! with the idea to meet 16.e5 with 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$! 17.dxe5? $\mathbb{Q}c5\#$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ fxg3 19.hxg3 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ with a decisive attack) 14... $\mathbb{W}g5$ 15.f4?! $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ With some initiative for Black, Bagirov – Oll, Vilnius 1997.

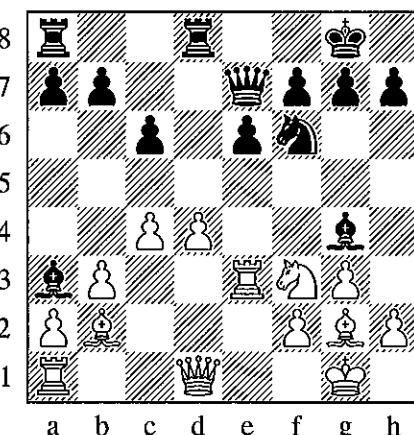
10... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$!?

I prefer this over the more common 10... $\mathbb{Q}a3$.

11.e4

This is the obvious move, but Black is ready to meet it with:

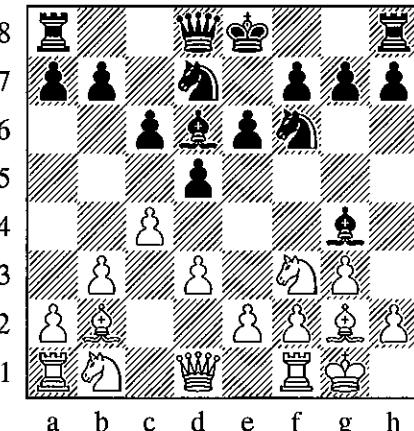
11... $dxe4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$
14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}a3$



15. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$
18. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$

Black was comfortably equal in Dobai – Pinkas, Gyor 1997.

B2232) 8.d3



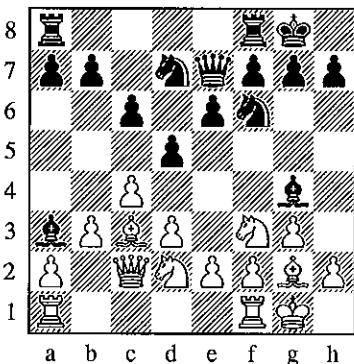
This is the more thematic choice for White's opening system, as he keeps the a1-h8 diagonal open for the dark-squared bishop.

8...0-0 9.♗bd2

9.♗a3 a5 10.♗c2 transposes to the earlier note on 8.♗a3.

9...♝e7 10.a3

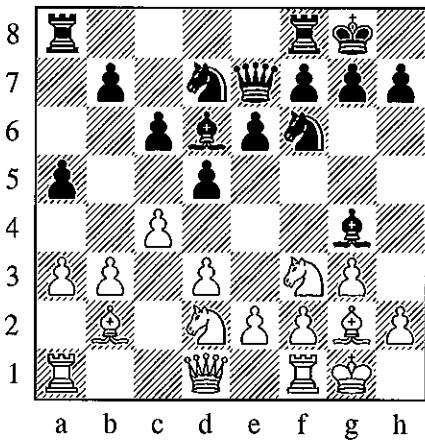
10.♗c2 ♜a3 11.♗c3 (after 11.♗xa3 ♜xa3 12.♗c1 ♜e7 13.d4 e5 Black solved his opening problems with ease in Jorgensen – Rosell, Horsens 1978)



This was Nithander – M. Andersen, Vaxjo 2014, and now I prefer the direct 11...e5! N with a comfortable position for Black.

10...a5

A natural move, preventing b3-b4. 10...e5!? could also be investigated.



11.♗c2

Another game continued 11.h3 ♜h5 12.♗c2 h6 13.e4 dxe4 14.dxe4 ♜g6= when the advance of the e-pawn gave White nothing in V. Szabo – Ovod, Oropesa del Mar 2000.

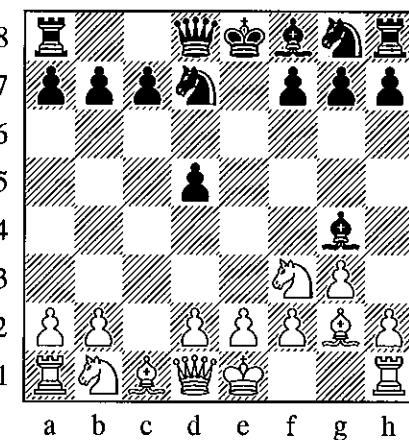
11...h6

This is always a useful move to keep the light-squared bishop safe.

12.♗fe1 e5! 13.h3 ♜e6

Black's strong centre gave him slightly better chances in Glud – Gyimesi, Porto Carras 2011.

B23) 5.cxd5 exd5



6.0-0

6.d3 ♜gf6 7.0-0 and 6.♗c3 c6 7.0-0 ♜gf6 8.d3 are both covered under variation B232 below.

6.h3 ♜xf3!? 7.♗xf3 c6 will almost certainly transpose to variation B232 after either 8.0-0 ♜gf6 or 8.d3 ♜gf6 9.0-0.

6.♗b3 ♜gf6!

Rather than misplace the knight with 6...♘c5, it makes sense to develop a piece while protecting the b7-pawn indirectly.

7.d4

7.♗xb7?? loses to 7...♘c5 8.♗b5† c6!

9. $\mathbb{W}xc6 \dagger$ $\mathbb{Q}d7 \rightarrow$ and the queen was trapped in Vukovic – Ursic, Ljubljana 2001.

The text move stops ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ and thus makes $\mathbb{W}xb7$ a real threat.

7... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

8. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ in Fominykh – Hasanova, Nojabrsk 2005, can be answered by 8... $\mathbb{Q}e6!?$ N 9.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c6= with equal chances.

8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

9... $\mathbb{Q}e6!?$ N is equal too.

10. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 0–0 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$ c6 12.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e8=$

With a roughly equal position in Almasi – Duda, Budapest 2014.

6... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$

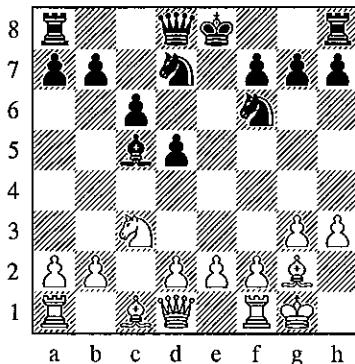
Once again, White can define the central structure with B231) 7.d4 or B232) 7.d3.

7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c6 doesn't have any independent value as White will have to move his d-pawn in the near future.

7. h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ c6 9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

9. d3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ converts to variation B2321.

9... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$



10...0–0N

10...d4! also looks fine for Black: 11. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0–0 14. d3 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ with an equal position in Wang Yue – Zhou Weiqi, China 2013.

11. d4

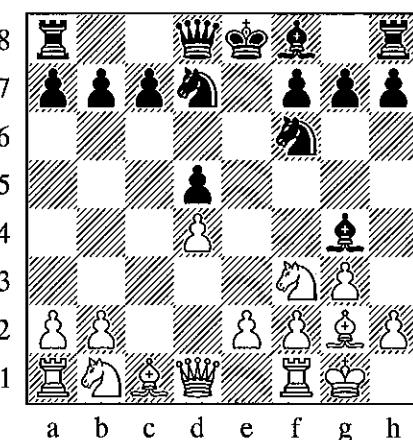
11. d3 is the same transposition again.

The text move seems like a tricky move order, as I don't advocate exchanging on f3 in the 7.d4 line below. Nevertheless, it still doesn't give White anything special. For example:

11... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 12. a3 a5

With roughly equal chances.

B231) 7.d4



This has occurred in quite a few games but it doesn't combine well with the kingside fianchetto.

7...c6 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

I also checked:

8. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 9. $\mathbb{W}e3 \dagger$

This would make more sense with h2-h3 and ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ included, as then White has the option of $\mathbb{Q}h4-f5$.

9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. b3

Now 10. h3N can be answered by 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6!?$, which was not possible after 7.h3.

10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ h6 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (11... $\mathbb{Q}f5!?$ N is also good for Black) 12. $\mathbb{W}d3$ 0–0 with equal chances in Alexisco – Nasi, Internet 2008.

10... $\mathbb{W}d8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

Now I would like to improve upon Lomer –

Behle, Halle 2000, with:

15...e5!?

Black gets rid of the backward pawn and equalizes without any problems.

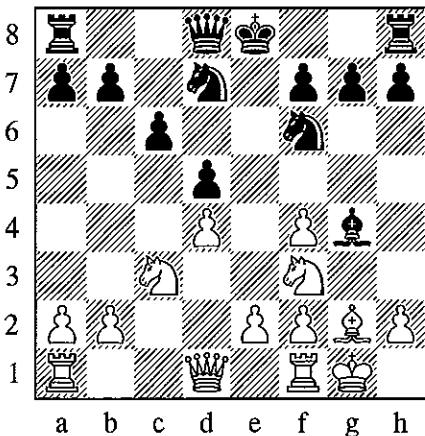
8...♝d6!

This active development of the bishop makes perfect sense, especially considering the weakening of the b8-h2 diagonal which will most likely occur after h2-h3.

9.♝f4

9.h3 ♜f5 10.♝h4 ♜e6 11.♛d3 0-0 12.♝f5 occurred in Weltz – Mittelstaedt, Wildflecken 1988, and now the simple 12...♝c7N promises Black slightly better chances.

9...♝xf4 10.gxf4



10...♞xf3

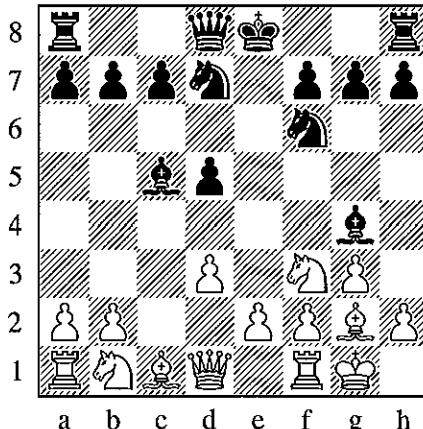
Eliminating the knight before it can go to e5.

11.♝xf3 0-0

Only Black can be better, Dunnington – Shirot, Gausdal 1991.

B232) 7.d3 ♜c5

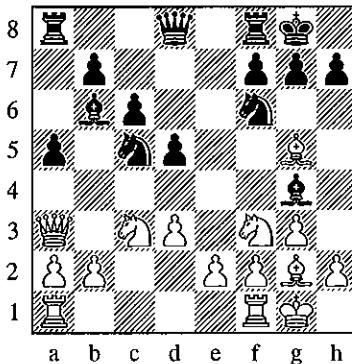
The bishop is usually well placed in this type of position. White is invited to play d3-d4, when his position loses much of its dynamism.



8.♝c3

8.♛c2 can't set any problems either: 8...0-0 9.h3 ♜xf3 10.♝xf3 c6 11.♝d2 ♛e7 12.e3 a5 Black had a comfortable position in Svidler – Kasimdzhanov, Tashkent 2012.

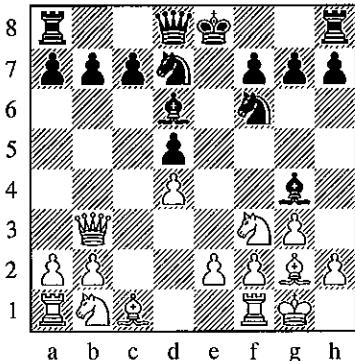
8.♛b3!? is an attempt to exploit the fact that ...c6 hasn't been played yet, which rules out ...♜b6, while the c5-square is taken by the black bishop, which prevents Black from playing ...♞c5. 8...♜b6 9.♝c3 ♜c5 10.♛b4 a5 11.♛a3 0-0 12.♝g5 c6



13.♝a4 ♜xa4 14.♛xa4 Now I would like to improve upon Black's play in Miroshnichenko – Salgado Lopez, Cappelle-la-Grande 2008, with 14...♜e6!N followed by ...♝e8 or ...h6 and Black is doing fine.

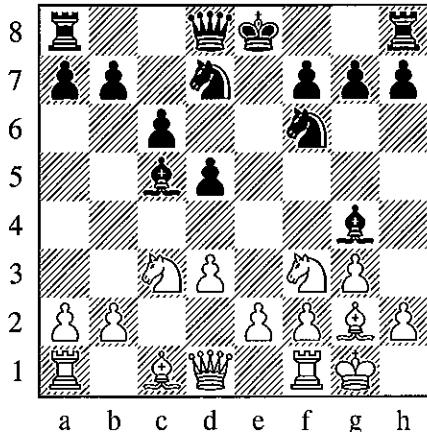
1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

8.d4 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ (9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c6 transposes to variation B231 with an extra move played) Now in Gregory – S. Berry, Paignton 2012, Black should have played:



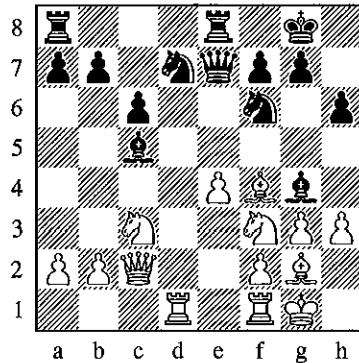
9... $\mathbb{Q}b6$! This move would be impossible with pawns on c4 and e6, as noted on page 329.
10. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ c6 With roughly equal chances.

8... c6



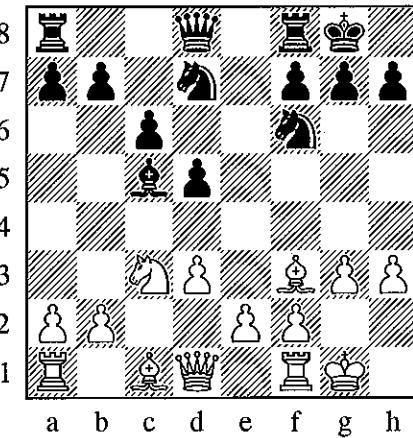
White's two main options are B2321) 9.h3 and B2322) 9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$.

Another possible continuation is: 9. $\mathbb{W}c2$ 0–0 10.e4 dxe4 11.dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ h6 13. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 14. h3 Now the right decision is:

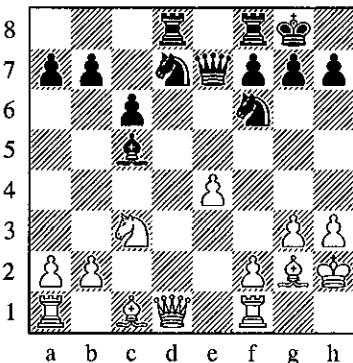


14... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$! 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ (17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ was similar in W. Loeffler – Bars, email 2014, but the text move seems more natural) 17... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 19. f4 $\mathbb{W}c5$ = An almost identical position occurs in the 11.e4 line in the note to variation B2321 except that Black's pawn is on h6 instead of h7, which makes no real difference.

B2321) 9.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 0–0

11. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

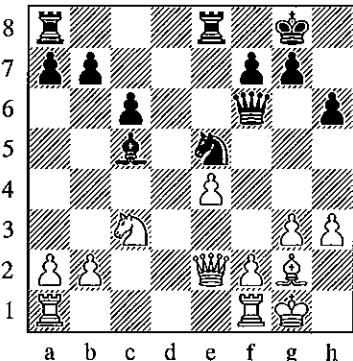
White may also try: 11. e4 dxe4 12. dxe4 $\mathbb{W}e7$! The most flexible move; Black is preparing ... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}fe8$, while ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ can be played at any moment. 13. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ White is preparing the advance of the f-pawn.



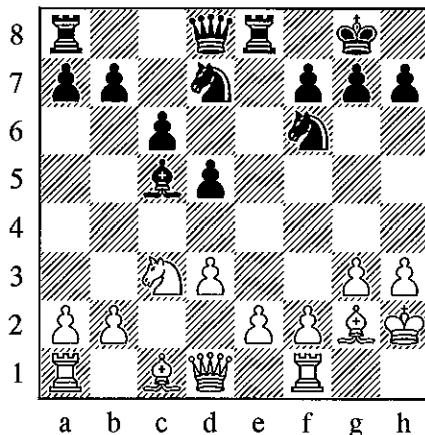
14... $\mathbb{B}fe8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 17. $\mathbb{B}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 19.f4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ (21.bxc3 keeps the queens on but the position remains equal after 21...g6=) 21... $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 22.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 23.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{B}xd5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ cxd5 26. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8!$ The rook endgame is equal and a draw was soon agreed in Bocharov – Grachev, Vladivostok 2014.

11... $\mathbb{B}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h2$

12.e4 dxe4 13.dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e2$ occurred in Wohl – Zhao, North Geelong 2012, and now I would like to recommend:



16... $\mathbb{B}ad8!N$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ b5! 18.f4 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 19.e5 $\mathbb{W}e6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{B}xd8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ and Black is fine.

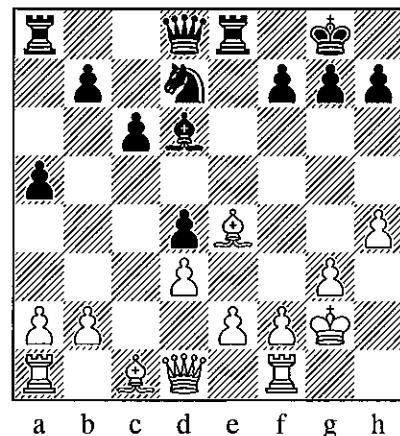


12...d4

Black can also invite a transposition into the 11.e4 line above with 12... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 13.e4 dxe4 14.dxe4 $\mathbb{B}ad8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ and so on.

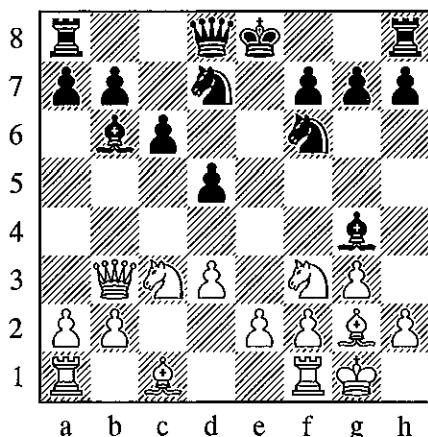
13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ a5 16.h4

Now Black's play in Grigoryan – Dreev, Warsaw 2013, can be improved by means of:



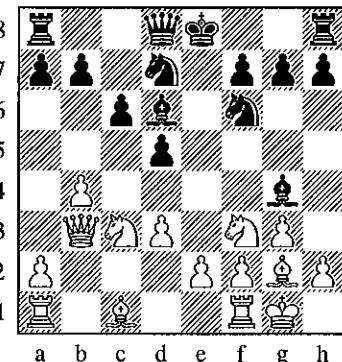
16... $\mathbb{W}f6!N$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a4 18. $\mathbb{B}e1$ h6 19. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$

Black is at least not worse.

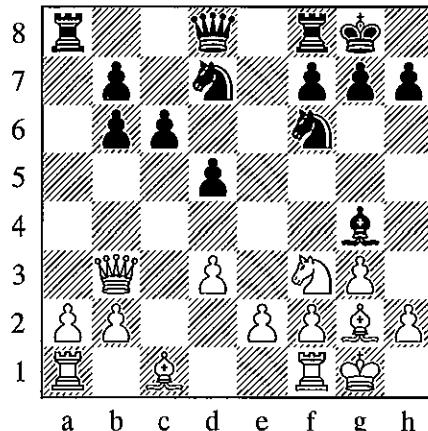
1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5B2322) 9. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}a4$

This is the consistent follow-up, forcing an exchange of the dark-squared bishop.

10. $\mathbb{W}a3$ prevents short castling; the simplest reply is 10... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 11. b4 (11. $\mathbb{W}b3$ leads to a repetition) 11... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}b3$. Now in Hausrath – Trella, Duesseldorf 2005, Black should have played the obvious:



12...0–0!N 13. b5 The minority attack is no problem. 13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. $bxc6$ $bxc6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}b8=$ (16... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 17. $exf3$ isn't so clear) Despite the slightly weak pawn on c6, the position is equal.

10...0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $axb6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$

The queen has done her job on b3, so she retreats in order to make way for the bishop to be developed on b2.

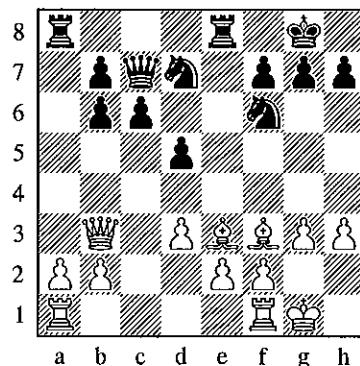
12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13. h3 was played in Franciskovic – Berzina, Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010, and now 13... $\mathbb{Q}xf3N$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ transposes to the 12. h3 line below.

12. h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8!?$

I prefer this over 13... b5, despite Black's win in Andriasian – Kasimdzhanov, Dubai 2014. 13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. e3 is also not quite to my liking.

14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$

Here a draw was agreed in Krysztofiak – Erdos, Warsaw 2010. A logical continuation would be:



15.♗d4

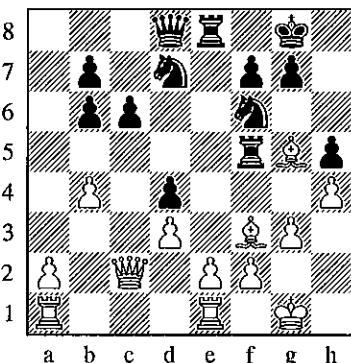
After 15.♗f4 ♖d8 the loss of tempo isn't important, as Black is likely to win it back with ...♝c5-e6 or ...♝e5-g6.

15...c5 16.♗c3 d4 17.♗d2 ♐e5 18.♗g2 ♘e6

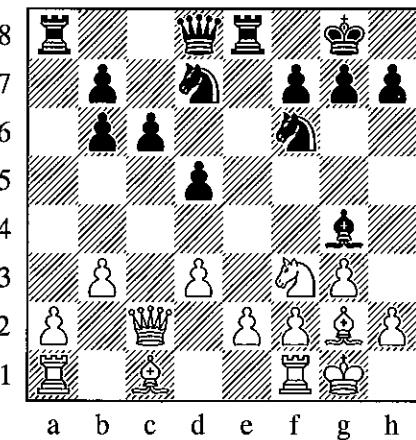
Black will double the rooks along the e-file with an equal position.

12...♝e8 13.b3

Another instructive line is: 13.♗e1 ♗xf3 14.♗xf3 d4 15.♗d2 h5 (15...♝e5! 16.♗g2 h5 also makes sense) 16.♗g5 ♘a5! 17.h4 ♘f5! A strong rook transfer. 18.b4 Now Black's play in Amin – Shyam, Abu Dhabi 2014, can be improved by means of:



18...♝e5!N 19.♗g2 ♐eg4 20.♗f3 ♖d6! (20...♝e5= repeats the position but Black can play for more) 21.♗b2 ♐e3!F With a strong initiative.

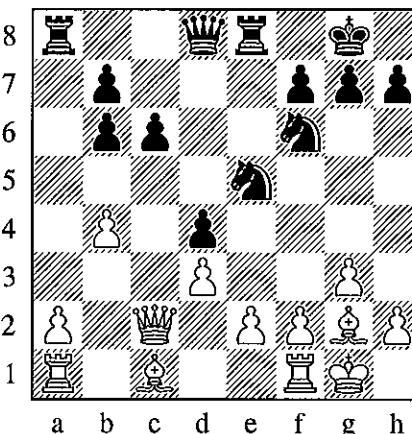


13...♝xf3 14.♗xf3 d4 15.b4

15.♗b2N ♐e5 16.♗g2 ♖d6= is also equal.

15...♝e5 16.♗g2

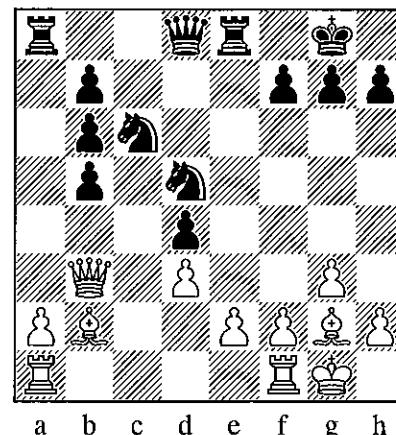
This position was reached in Akopian – Dastan, Yerevan 2014. I would like to improve Black's play with:



16...♝d5!N 17.b5

17.♗d2 can be met by 17...b5! 18.a4 bxa4 19.♗xa4 ♖xa4 20.♗xa4 ♐c7! followed by ...♝b5 and Black is fine.

17...cxb5 18.♗b2 ♐c6 19.♗b3

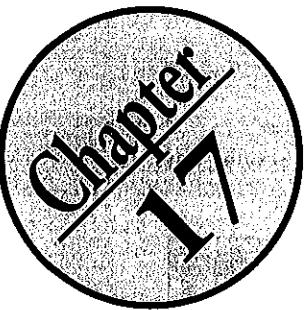


19...♝c3! 20.e3 ♐a4!=

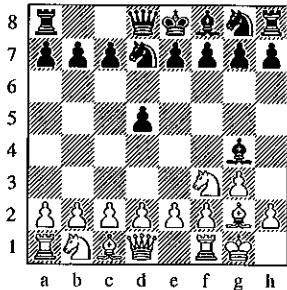
The position remains dynamically equal.

Conclusion

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 2. g3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ may give rise to a variety of structures and positional themes. 3. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is pretty harmless for Black, so it is no surprise that White prefers 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ in most games, after which 3... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is my choice. This chapter has mainly focused on 4. c4 e6, when the path divides according to whether White plays 5. 0–0 or releases the tension with 5. cxd5 exd5. There are many possible pawn structures and scenarios that may occur, but in general Black's extra space in the centre should ensure that he enters the middlegame with a healthy position. The number of possible lines and move orders makes it practically impossible to memorize everything, so I would suggest focusing on the ideas and plans which apply to different variations and structures so that you can make the right choices when you encounter these lines over the board.



1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5



4.0-0

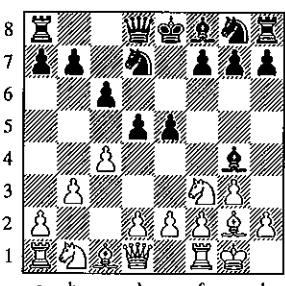
Variation Index

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 2. g3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 4.0-0

4...c6

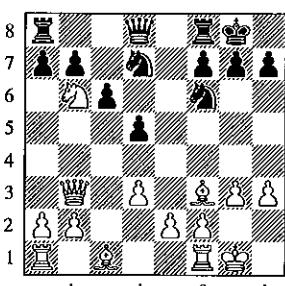
A) 5.b3	344
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C) 5.d4 $\mathbb{Q}gf6$	347
C1) 6.b3	347
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D322) 9. e4!?	359

A) note to 6. $\mathbb{Q}b2$



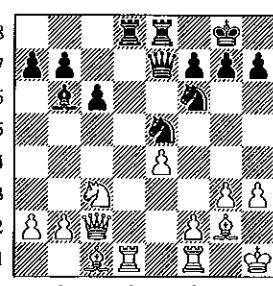
6...d4!?

D321) after 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$



13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$!?

D322) after 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$



18... $\mathbb{Q}c5$!?

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d51. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 2. g3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 4. 0-0

With this move White finishes developing his kingside before revealing his plan.

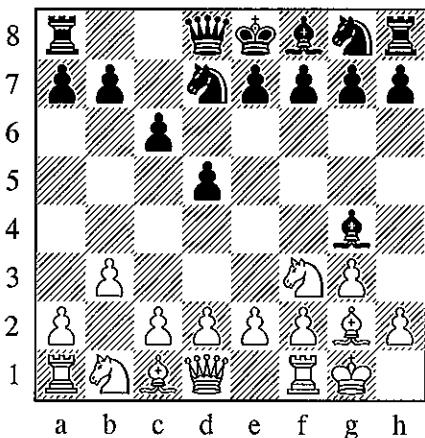
4...c6

Black supports his centre and prepares ...e5. Interestingly, the immediate 4...e5?! is risky, but only a small number of players have reacted to it correctly. The critical line is 5.d4! e4 5. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ intending c2-c4, when Black's centre comes under pressure; White has achieved a huge practical score from this position.

White has four main options: A) 5.b3, B) 5.c4, C) 5.d4 and D) 5.d3.

5.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ doesn't have much independent value. True, 6.d4 does not transpose exactly to variation C, as White usually plays without h2-h3 there, but Black can proceed in exactly the same way as in that line.

A) 5.b3

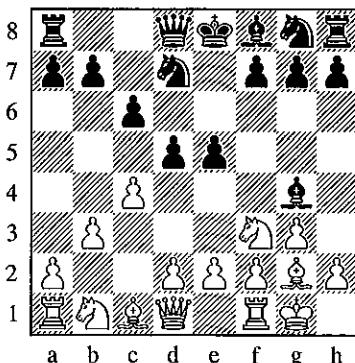


White opts for a double fianchetto without committing any of his central pawns.

5...e5 6. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 6.d3 $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ converts to variation D2.

6.c4 from Podzielny – Budnikov, Germany

1991, can be answered in several ways, but I rather like:



6...d4?N 7.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 8.d3 $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ 9.Qb2 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 10.Qbd2 0-0 11.a3 a5 With a comfortable position for Black.

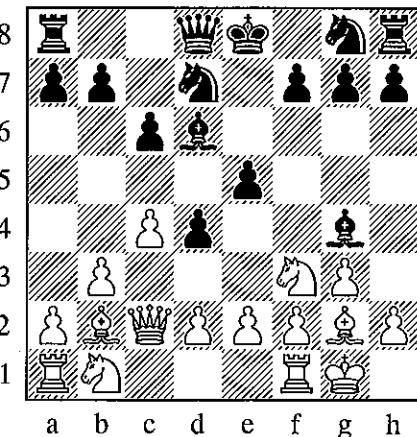
6... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 7.c4

7.d3 $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ is another transposition to variation D2.

7...d4 8. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

The immediate 8.e3? loses a piece after 8...e4+ of course.

The text move prepares to challenge Black's central pawn wedge with e2-e3. I would like to introduce a promising novelty.

8... $\mathbb{Q}h6!N$

8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9.e3 c5 was roughly equal in Paragua – Psakhis, Ubeda 2001.

9.e3

9.d3 is safer, but after 9...0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ f6 Black has a comfortable game.

The text move is White's main plan, but it is strongly answered by:

9... $\mathbb{W}f6!$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

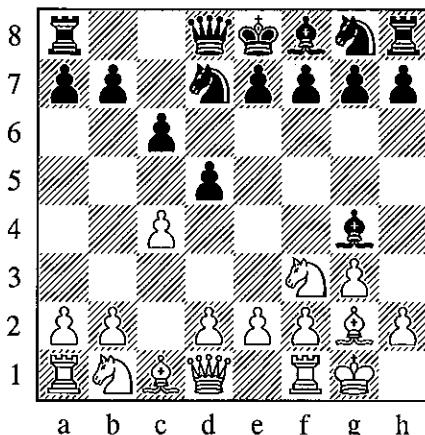
10. $\mathbb{Q}h4?$ g5! traps the knight for insufficient compensation.

10... $\mathbb{R}e2$

The rook is trapped and White's compensation isn't enough.

11.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ exd4 13. $\mathbb{W}e4\#$ $\mathbb{W}e7$
14. $\mathbb{W}xc7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$

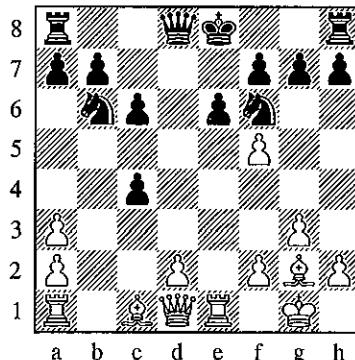
B) 5.c4



This runs into a concrete problem.

5... $\mathbb{Q}xf3!$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

The alternative is: 6.exf3 dxcc4 7. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 8. $\mathbb{E}e1\?!$ (White should accept that he is a pawn down and search for compensation with 8.b3N, although 8...cxb3 9.axb3 e6 gives Black a solid position with at least equal chances) 8...e6 9.f4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10.f5 $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 11.bxa3



11... $\mathbb{W}d4!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}d3!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}xf5\#$ White obviously did not have enough for two pawns in Niermann – Schischke, Wuppertal 1994.

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

This was the idea of course, with a double attack on f3 and c4.

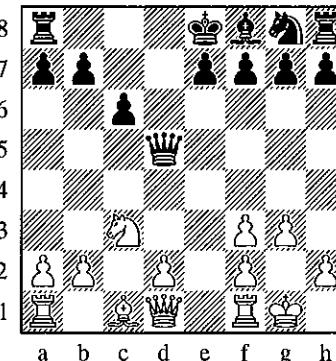
7. $\mathbb{W}b3$

7.cxd5

This allows Black to create an isolated d-pawn.

7... $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 8.exf3 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

This occurred in Allahverdiev – Postny, Porto Carras 2005, and now I would like to introduce:



9... $\mathbb{W}d3\?!$

Holding up the d2-d4 advance. Play may continue:

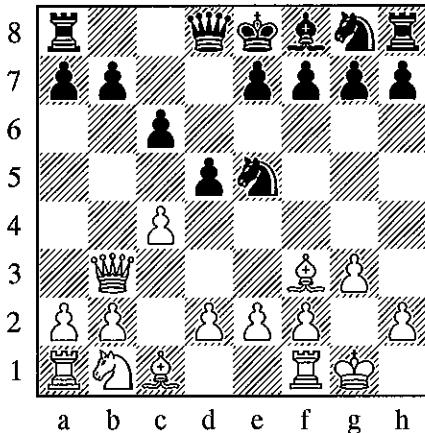
10. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 11. $\mathbb{E}e1$

11. $\mathbb{W}a4$ gets nowhere after 11...a6 12. $\mathbb{W}f4$

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

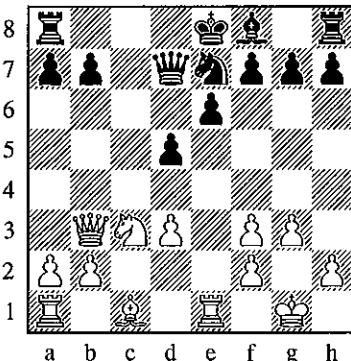
$\mathbb{Q}d8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}c7$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{W}b6$ e6 15. d4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}d5$.
 11. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 12. axb3 a6 13. d4 e6 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ 15. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 17. dxcc5 $\mathbb{E}xd1\uparrow$ 18. $\mathbb{E}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ reaches an endgame where only Black can have winning chances.
 11... e6 12. $\mathbb{E}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13. d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$

Black is at least equal.



7... $\mathbb{Q}xf3\uparrow$ 8. $\mathbb{W}xf3$

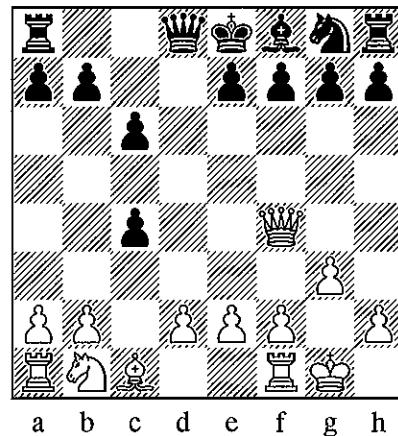
Another game continued: 8. exf3 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 9. cxd5 $\mathbb{W}xc4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e6 11. d3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{E}e1$



12... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ A temporary pawn sacrifice.
 13. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 0–0–0! 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 16. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\uparrow$ 17. $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 18. $\mathbb{E}e3$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 19. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ g6! Black obtained a slight edge in Vocaturo – Lenderman, Puerto Madryn 2009.

8... dxc4 9. $\mathbb{W}f4$

9. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ b5 11. d3?! cxd3 12. $\mathbb{E}d1$ e5 13. $\mathbb{E}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}e6\bar{f}$ and Black was better in Mueller – Gyimesi, Germany 1999.



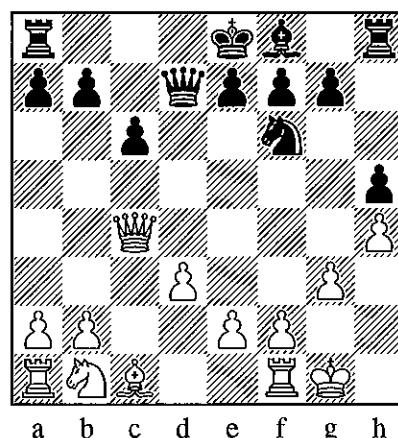
9... h5? 10. h4

10. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ h4 would be annoying for White.

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

10... $\mathbb{Q}h6\uparrow N$ is also possible: 11. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 13. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{B}g7$ 14. d4 $\mathbb{E}c8!$ with a roughly equal position.

11. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 12. d3



12... g6!

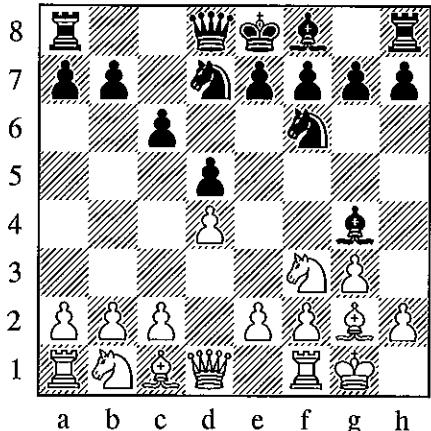
The bishop will be excellent on g7.

12... $\mathbb{W}h3$ doesn't make much sense: 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$
 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$

13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0–0=

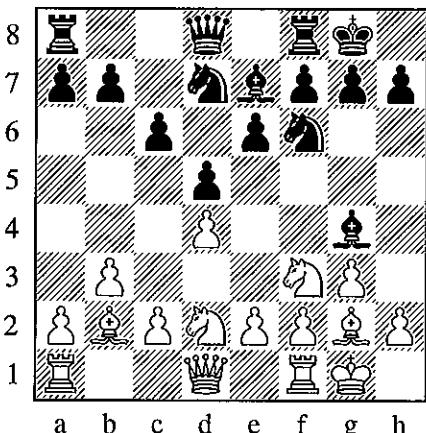
Gabuzyan – Malakhatk, Abu Dhabi 2010.

C) 5.d4 $\mathbb{Q}gf6$



We will consider C1) 6.b3 and C2) 6. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$.
6.c4 e6 leads back to variation B222 of the previous chapter.

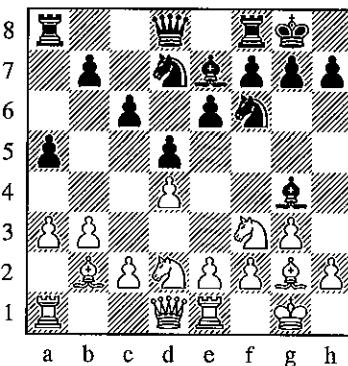
C1) 6.b3 e6 7. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ 0–0



9.c4

9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ is well met by 9...a5! 10.a3 (10.e4
 $dxe4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ a4 was more pleasant for Black

in Peelen – Brenninkmeijer, Groningen 1985)
and now the instructive continuation:

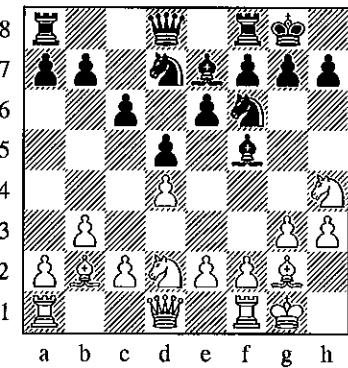


10...a4! 11.b4 b5 Black takes control over the c4-square and obtains a better position. 12.e4 can simply be ignored with 12... $\mathbb{Q}b6!\mp$ as in Aggelis – Siebrecht, Aghios Kirykos 2008.

9.h3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}h4$

10. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ h6! 11.c4 $\mathbb{W}c7$ was more pleasant for Black in Wessman – Yakovich, Gothenburg 2002.

The text move was played in Sutkovic – Turzo, Calicut 1998, and here I recommend:



10... $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ N 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

11.f3? is exactly what Black was trying to provoke. 11... $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ 12.fxe4 (12.g4? $\mathbb{Q}g3!\mp$ is even worse) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}hf3$ dxе4 14. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ f5 \mp and Black is clearly better.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ f5!

Black has an excellent version of a Stonewall, as the light-squared bishop has gone; moreover, the h2-h3 move has weakened White's kingside, so it will be hard for him to remove the e4-knight with f2-f3.

9...a5

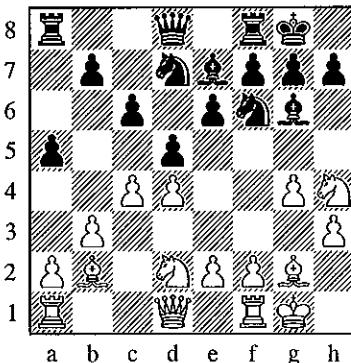
A typical idea in this type of position. Black advances his pawn to a4 creating an annoying tension on the queenside.

10.a3

10. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ gives Black a pleasant choice between 10... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ and 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 11. dx e 5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$, with a comfortable position in either case.

10.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 11.g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h4$

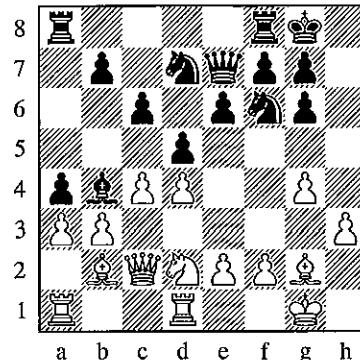
12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$! runs into 12... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 13. dx e 5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. e4 $\mathbb{Q}c5$! when Black exploits the weak d3-square. 15. exd5 cxd5 16. cxd5 exd5 17. f4 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ Now in D. Zaitsev – Kulikov, Kstovo 2007, Black should have played 18... $\mathbb{Q}e4$! N 19. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ (or 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ dx e 4 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}fxd8$! followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ and Black is better) 19... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ f5! with some advantage.



12...a4! 13. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ hxg6 14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. a3?!

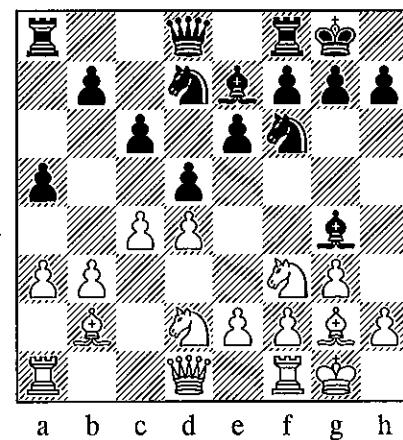
16. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ would have kept things roughly equal, although Black is obviously comfortable.

Now in Donchenko – Zheliandinov, USSR 1977, Black missed a nice positional motif:



16... $\mathbb{Q}xd2$! N 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$! T

The knight will reach c4, with some edge for Black.



10...h6

Black prepares an escape route for the light-squared bishop, which is about to go to f5.

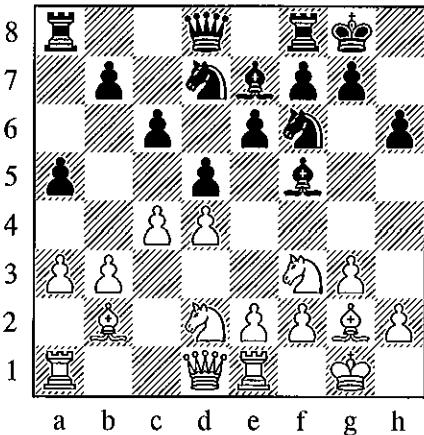
11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ can be met in exactly the same way.

11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$! N (11... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ is also okay, and a draw was agreed here in Bu Xiangzhi – Matalakov, Helsingør 2014) 12. h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}hxg3$ f5! and Black is doing fine.

11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$!

Black establishes control over the e4-square.



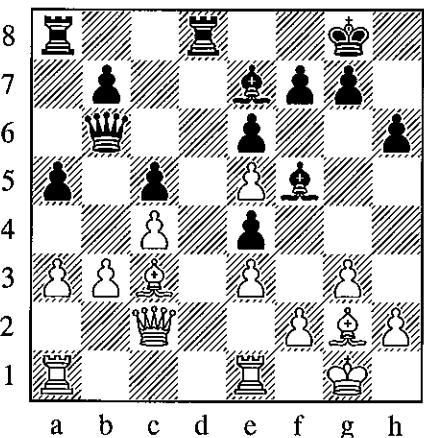
12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 13. $dxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $dxe4$

15. $c3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$

15... $\mathbb{W}xd1!?$ N 16. $\mathbb{B}exd1$ $\mathbb{B}fd8=$ is completely equal too.

16. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{B}fd8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $c5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

In Vijayalakshmi – Zubarev, Borup 2012, the most precise continuation would have been:



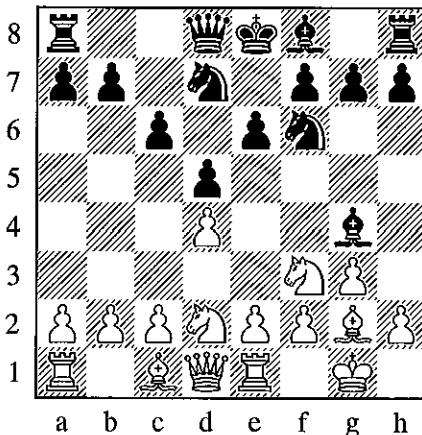
18... $\mathbb{W}c6$ N 19. $a4$ $b6=$

A draw looks inevitable.

C2) 6. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $e6$ 7. $\mathbb{B}el$

White is preparing e2-e4.

7. $b3$ is likely to transpose to variation C1.



7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. $e4$

8. $c3$ is sometimes played, but after 8...0–0 White usually follows up with 9. $e4$ anyway, leading to variation C22 below.

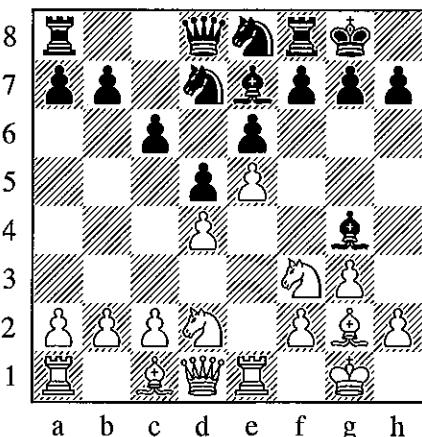
8...0–0?

8... $dxe4$ has been a frequent choice but I prefer to keep more tension in the position.

8... $h6!?$ is an interesting option, preparing a retreat to $h7$. A possible continuation is 9. $c3$ 0–0, transposing to variation C22 below.

We will analyse **C21) 9. $e5$** followed by the more popular **C22) 9. $c3$** .

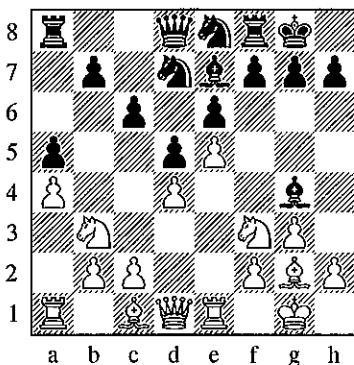
C21) 9. $e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$



1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5**10.c3**

I also checked: 10.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ (10... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$? makes sense too) 11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ a5! A typical reaction when the knight arrives on b3. 12.a4 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ b6 With an equal position in Hahnewald – Forchert, Boeblingen 1998.

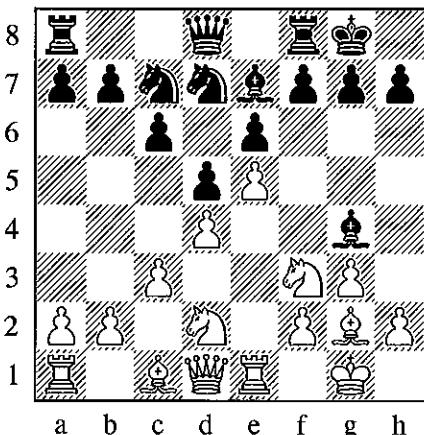
10. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ a5 11.a4 Here I would like to improve upon Black's play in Harikrishna – Dvirnyy, Porto Rio 2014, with:



11... $\mathbb{Q}c7!?$ N 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ b6 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ h6 14.c4 $\mathbb{W}c8$ 15. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ with equal chances.

10... $\mathbb{Q}c7!?$

I like this rare move. The reasoning for it can best be understood by comparing it to the main line of 10...c5 11.dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b3$, when White is ready to trade off the knight on c5. The idea of the text move is to go for the same plan, but to have the option of ... $\mathbb{Q}7a6$ at the end of the sequence, as it is useful to keep a knight on c5.

**11.h3**

11. $\mathbb{W}e2$ can be met by 11...a5!N (the immediate 11...c5 was also decent in Kudr – Cimicki, Internet 2012) 12.a4 c5 with good prospects for Black.

11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ N is a possible attempt to inhibit ...c5, but after 11...a5! 12.a4 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ c5 Black is doing well.

11... $\mathbb{Q}h5$

11... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$? could also be considered.

12. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ c5

Black had a comfortable game in Volkmann – Baumegger, Austria 1996.

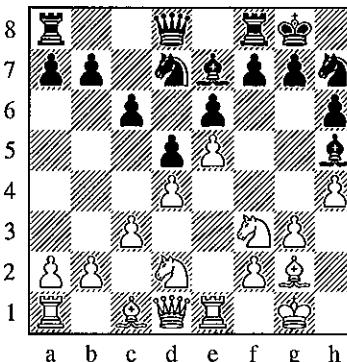
C22) 9.c3 h6!

This is a clever waiting move, which also creates a good escape square for the knight if White proceeds with e4-e5.

White's two main tries are C221) 10.e5 and C222) 10. $\mathbb{W}b3$.

C221) 10.e5 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 11.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

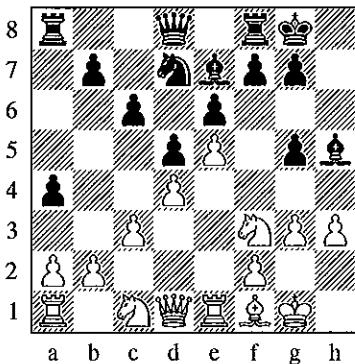
12.h4 is a logical move which restricts the knight on h7. A good reply is:



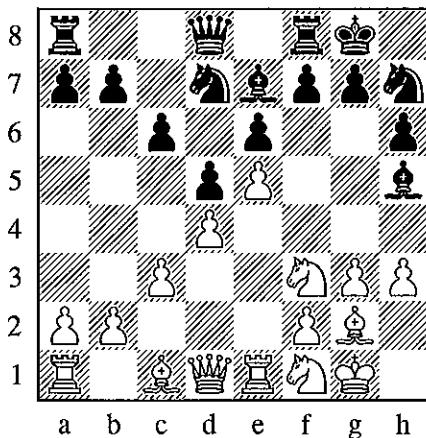
12...a5!N Black takes some space on the queenside, delaying ...c5 until an opportune moment. (12...c5 in Kuzubov – Carlsson, Dubai 2011, could be met by 13.c4!N; even here the position is roughly equal, but I think

Black can do better) 13.a4 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathfrak{Q}hf8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e3$ c5† and I prefer Black.

12. $\mathfrak{Q}b3$ a5 13. $\mathbb{A}e3$ a4 14. $\mathfrak{Q}c1$ $\mathfrak{Q}g5$ 15. $\mathbb{A}xg5$ h $xg5$ 16. $\mathfrak{Q}f1$ occurred in Danielsen – Brunello, Skanderborg 2010. This would have been a good moment for:



16...c5!N 17. $\mathfrak{Q}d3$ f5! 18.exf6 $\mathbb{A}xf6$ 19.g4 $\mathfrak{Q}f7$ = With a healthy, if somewhat irregular, position for Black.



12... $\mathfrak{Q}g5$!N

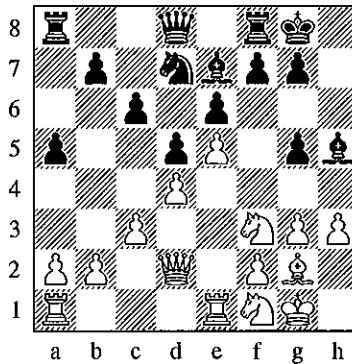
An important move. Black is not in a hurry to play ...c5.

The immediate 12...c5?! can be met by 13.c4!N to open the long diagonal for the g2-bishop (but not 13.g4? $\mathfrak{Q}g6$ 14. $\mathfrak{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ † and Black was better in Mamedov – Eljanov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010). 13... $\mathfrak{Q}b6$ (13...dxc4

14.d5!±) 14.cxd5 $\mathfrak{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathfrak{Q}e3$ and White is slightly better.

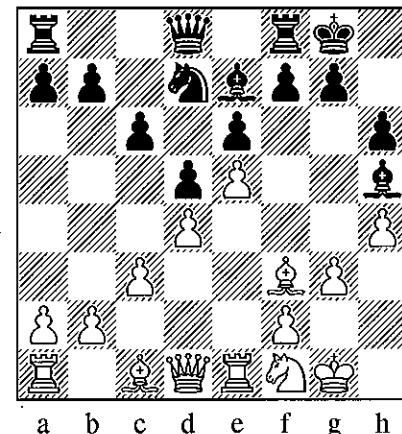
13.h4

After 13. $\mathbb{A}xg5$ h $xg5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ a5! Black takes some space and waits for the right moment to play ...c5 – in other words, as soon as c3-c4 ceases to be a good response.



For example, if White plays 15. $\mathfrak{Q}e3$ then 15...c5! makes sense; the point is that 16.c4? is met by 16...cxd4† with tempo, which prevents White from playing cxd5.

13... $\mathfrak{Q}xf3$ † 14. $\mathbb{A}xf3$

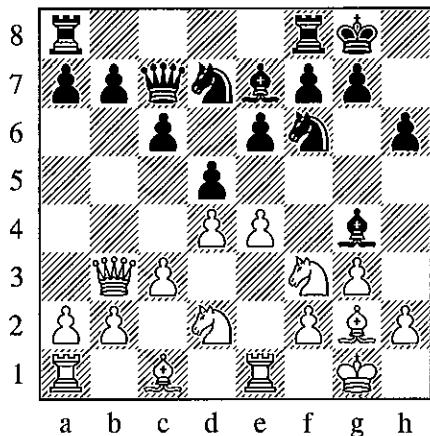


14... $\mathfrak{Q}g6$! 15. $\mathfrak{Q}e2$

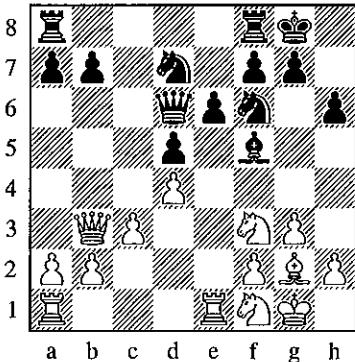
15. $\mathfrak{Q}f4$ c5! is strong, as 16.c4 can be met by 16... $\mathfrak{Q}b6$! 17.cxd5 $\mathfrak{Q}xd5$ † when the bishop on f4 comes under attack.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d515...c5 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$

Black is slightly better.

C222) 10. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 

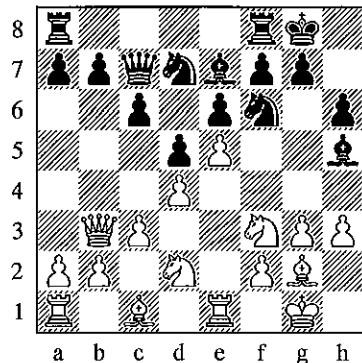
11.h3

11.e5 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 12.c4 a5! is better for Black.I also checked: 11.exd5 cxd5 12. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 

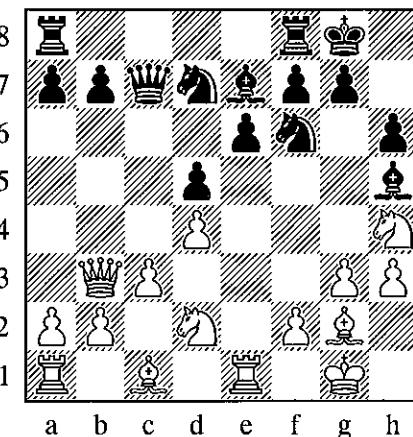
15. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ 16. c4 (16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ is equal)
 16...dxc4 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$?! (17. $\mathbb{W}xc4N$ should be preferred, although 17... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}c5$ $\mathbb{W}fd8$ is fine for Black) 17... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ed1$ $\mathbb{W}c5$
 White's compensation for the sacrificed pawn was questionable in Yandemirov – Izoria, St Petersburg 2002.

11... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 12.exd5

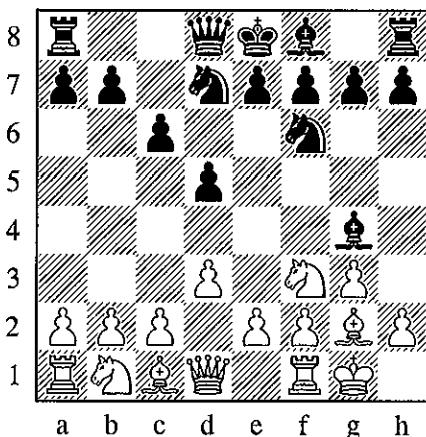
12.e5 occurred in Vasovski – Chuchelov, Ohrid 2001, when Black should have gone for our thematic retreat:

12... $\mathbb{Q}h7N$ 13. c4 $\mathbb{W}fd8$ This move would be impossible with the knight on e8. 14. $\mathbb{W}e3$ dxc4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6\bar{F}$ and Black is better.12...cxd5 13. $\mathbb{Q}h4$!?

This tricky move introduces the positional threat of g3-g4. In Forster – Stojanovic, Switzerland 2013, the best reply would have been:

13...g5!N 14. $\mathbb{Q}hf3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f5$?! exf5 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8\bar{F}$ is better for Black, as White has problems finishing development.14... $\mathbb{Q}g6$

With a comfortable position for Black.

D) 5.d3 ♜gf6

We have reached a popular tabiya. The main line is 6.♘bd2, and we will analyse it separately in the next chapter.

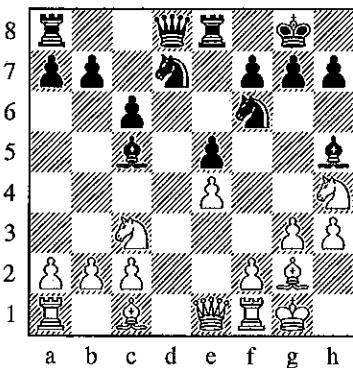
Before then, we will deal with the three most significant alternatives, namely **D1) 6.♘c3**, **D2) 6.b3** and **D3) 6.h3**.

6.c4 e6 has been covered via the 4.c4 move order – see variation B221 of Chapter 16.

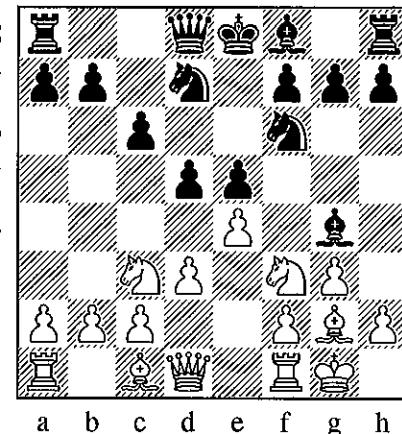
6.♗e1 doesn't have any independent value, as 6...e5 7.e4 dxe4 8.dxe4 ♜c5 9.♘bd2 0–0 reaches variation A of the next chapter.

D1) 6.♘c3 e5 7.e4

7.h3 ♜h5 does not change much: 8.e4 dxe4 9.dxe4 (9.♘xe4 is covered on page 371 – see 9.♘xe4 in the notes to variation B3 in the next chapter) 9...♜c5 10.♗e1 0–0 11.♘h4 ♜e8 (11...b5!! could also be considered)



12.♗h1 (12.♘a4 ♜f8 13.♘e3 b5 14.♘c3 ♜c5 15.f3 ♜e6 16.♗d1 ♜c7† Karasev – Tseitlin, St Petersburg 1997) 12...♗f8 13.♘a4 ♜e7 14.♘f5 ♜e6† and Black was slightly better in Neubauer – Posch, Austria 2000.

**7...dxe4 8.dxe4**

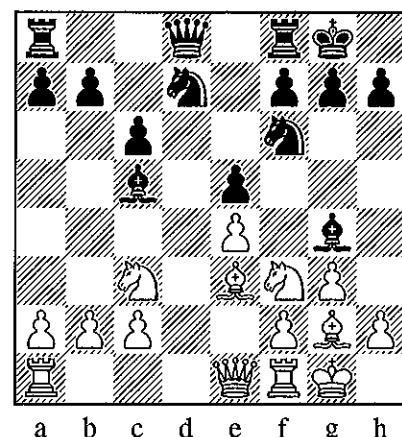
8.♘xe4 converts to the note to move 8 in variation A of the next chapter.

8...♜c5 9.♗e1

9.h3 ♜h5 transposes to the 7.h3 line in the notes above.

9...0–0 10.♘e3

This was D. Lau – Chuchelov, Dortmund 1993, and now I would like to offer:

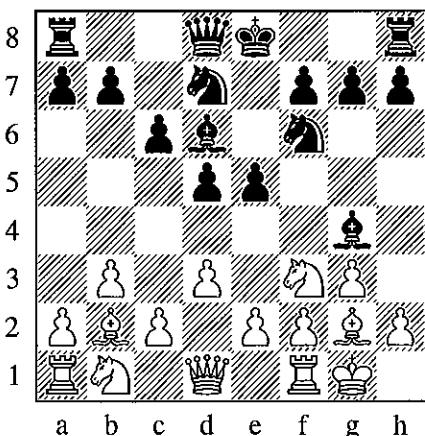


1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d510... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ N

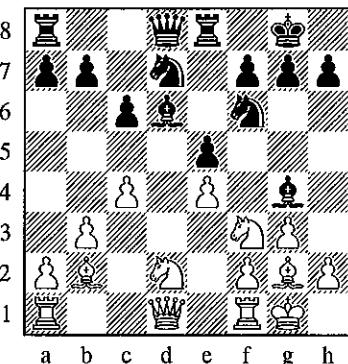
10... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$?! 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{W}b6\bar{f}$
 is also promising, but I would be tempted to delay the exchange on f3, as White may spend a tempo provoking it with h2-h3.

11. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{W}b6\bar{f}$

Black has slightly better chances in the ensuing endgame, as the knight on c3 is misplaced.

D2) 6.b3 e5 7. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ **8. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$**

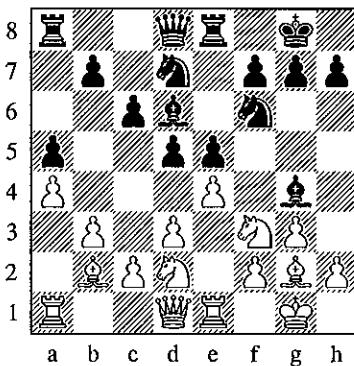
8.c4 0-0 9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 10.e4?! is dubious in view of: 10...dxe4 11.dxe4 (11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 12.dxe4 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ was also better for Black in Konopka – Velicka, Lazne Bohdanec 1999, thanks to the weakened d4-square)

11... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}d3\bar{f}$ Black

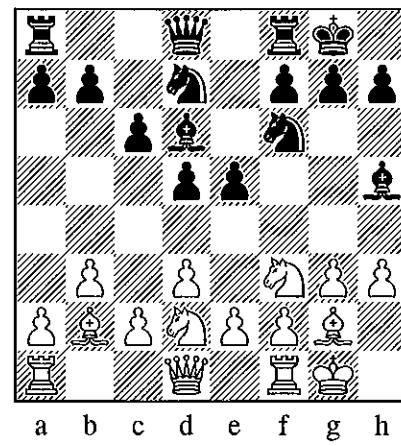
was better in Vaher – Nyback, Harjumaa 2010, thanks to the weakened d3- and d4-squares.

8...0-0 9.h3

9.e4 is likely to transpose, as it's hard to see how White can benefit from not chasing the bishop. For example: 9... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ a5 11.a4 (White usually plays 11.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$, either here or on the previous move, transposing to positions covered below under the 9.h3 move order) Now in Vaarala – Mirzoev, Fagernes 2011, a good continuation would have been:



11...h6!N Maintaining the parallel with the 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ line analysed in the notes to the main line below. White will probably have to transpose to it by playing h2-h3 in the near future; and if he doesn't, Black's ideas remain the same anyway.

9... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 

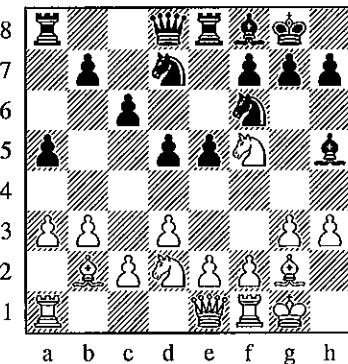
10.e4

White can also try delaying this move with:
10.♘h4 ♘e8 11.♘f5

11.♗e1 occurred in Harika – Zatonskikh, Beijing (rapid) 2011, when I prefer:
11...a5!N 12.a3 (12.e4?! a4† is good for Black; 12.a4 ♘b4! produces an annoying pin, provoking a weakening of White's position after 13.c3 ♘d6, when Black is better.) 12...♘c5! 13.e4 ♘e6 With a comfortable position for Black.

11...♗f8 12.♗e1 a5! 13.a3

Here I like the natural developing move:



13...♗c7!N

13...♗g6 14.♗h4 was roughly equal in Lobron – Kramnik, Munich 1994.

14.e4 ♘ad8†

Black is better, for example:

15.f4 dxе4 16.♗xe4 ♘xe4 17.dxe4

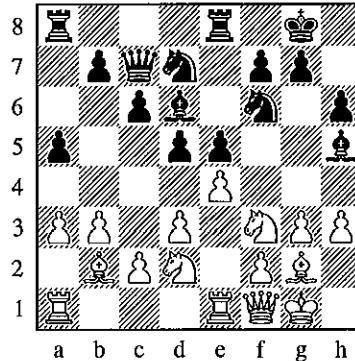
17.♗xe4 exf4 18.♗xf4 ♘c5†

17...f6†

10...♗e8 11.♗e1

This is a thematic way to remove the pin on the f3-knight.

11.♗e2 a5 12.a3 ♘c7 13.♗fe1 h6 14.♗f1 occurred in Ubilava – Allahverdiev, Montánchez 1998, when Black's play can be improved with:

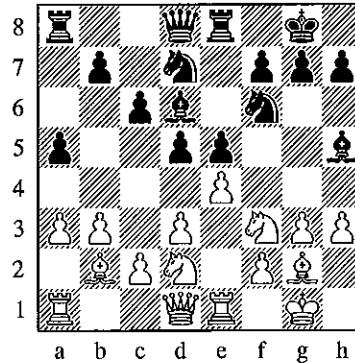


14...♗g6!N 15.♗h4 ♘h7 16.♗e2 ♘c5 17.♗f5 (or 17.♗f3 ♘d4! 18.♗xd4 exd4 19.♗f5 ♘e5†)
17...♗xf5 18.exf5 ♘d4† Black provokes the weakening c2-c3 and obtains a slight edge.

11.♗e1 a5 12.a3

12.exd5 cxd5 13.g4 ♘g6 14.♗h4 a4! looks promising for Black.

After 12.a4 I like 12...h6!N 13.♗f1 (or 13.♗e2 ♘b4†) 13...♗c7 14.♗e3 dxе4 15.dxe4 ♘ad8 16.♗f5 ♘b4 17.c3 ♘f8† and Black is better.

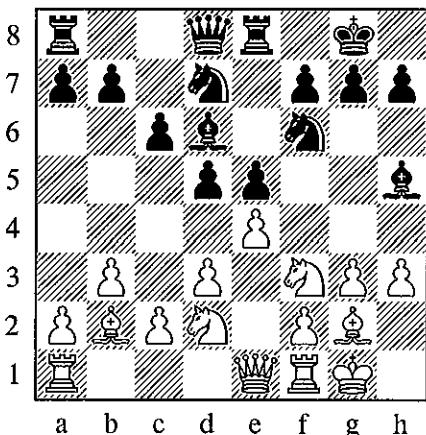


12...b5

12...h6!N is interesting too, for example:
13.g4 ♘g6 14.♗h4 ♘h7 15.♗f5 ♘xf5
16.exf5 ♘c5 17.♗f3 ♘b6 18.♗g3 ♘d4
19.c3 ♘c5 20.h4 ♘ad8†

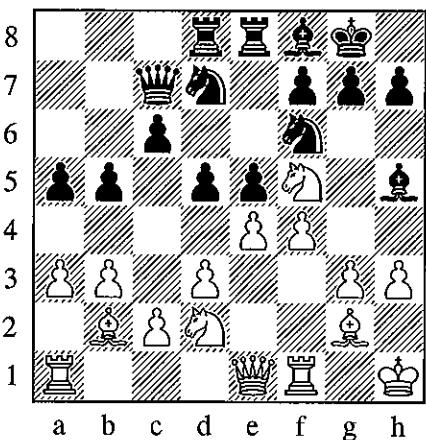
13.♗f1?! dxе4 14.dxe4 ♘c5†

Black obtained the upper hand in Sturua – Kramnik, Moscow 1992.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

11...a5 12.a3 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{W}ad8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ b5
15. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16.f4

This is the logical way to advance White's kingside play, but Black is well placed to meet it.



16...exf4!

16...dxe4 is less precise due to 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$! N (17.dxe4 was the move order of the Kunte – Ponomariov game quoted below) 17...exf4 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ when White is okay.

17.gxf4

17. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$! threatens ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$, and White has trouble holding his position together.

17...dxe4 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

18.dxe4 returns to the game Kunte – Ponomariov, Zagan 1997, when 18... $\mathbb{Q}g6$! \bar{F} gave Black the better chances.

18... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}fg3$

19. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$! 20. dxe4 g6! \bar{F} also favours Black.

19... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 20. dxe4 f6! \bar{F}

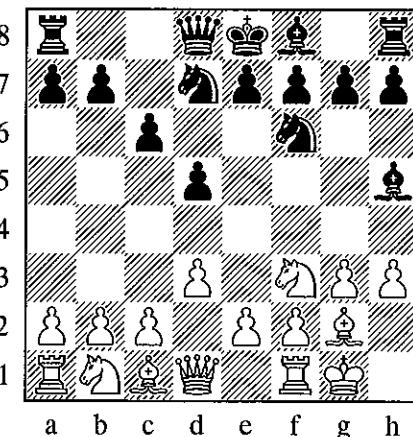
White had some problems due to his loose kingside pawns in Berchtold – Steinkellner, corr. 2013.

D3) 6.h3

This time White puts the question to Black's bishop before committing any more of his central pawns.

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

6... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$! is possible but I generally prefer to keep the bishop, unless White has already committed to a formation where the exchange on f3 particularly makes sense.



White's two main options are D31) 7. $\mathbb{W}e1$ and D32) 7. c4.

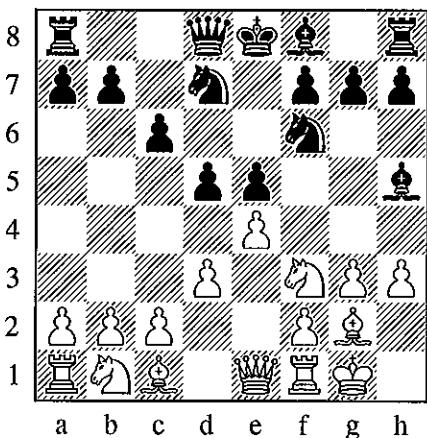
7. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ e5 transposes to variation B of the next chapter.

D31) 7.♗e1

White is preparing e2-e4 while delaying the development of the queenside knight. This line usually transposes elsewhere, as the knight is likely to go to c4 from either d2 or a3, or to c3.

7...e5 8.e4

A pretty rare move order is 8.♘h4 ♗c5 9.e4 (9.♘c3 0–0 10.e4 is the same thing; while 9.♘d2 transposes to variation B21 of the next chapter on page 368) 9...0–0 10.♘c3 dxe4 11.dxe4 We have transposed to the 7.h3 line in the notes to variation D1 on page 353.

**8...dxe4 9.dxe4 ♗c5 10.b4**

The main line is 10.♘bd2, and it immediately converts to variation B32 of the next chapter.

10.a4 is an attempt to take some space on the queenside. Black can choose 10...0–0, when 11.♘a3 ♘e8 12.♘c4 leads to variation B233 of the next chapter.

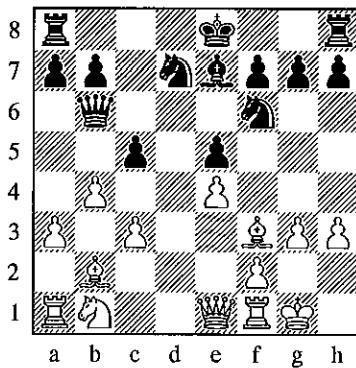
10...♗e7

10...♘xf3? is also interesting.

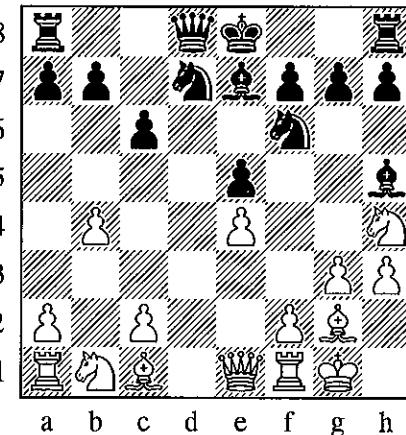
11.♘h4

11.♘b2 occurred in Nguyen – Hoang,

Ho Chi Minh City 2012, when I think it could be worth trying: 11...♗xf3N (11...a5?N makes sense too) 12.♘xf3 ♘b6 13.a3 (13.c3 c5 14.a3 is the same thing) 13...c5 14.c3



14...♗e6! 15.♘g2 ♘b6 The knight is perfectly placed here, eyeing the weak c4- and a4-squares. 16.♘d2 h5! Black is doing fine.

**11...0–0!?**

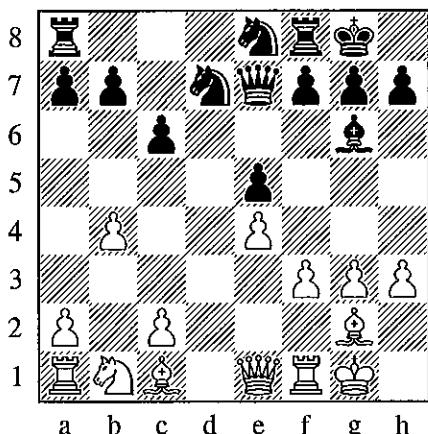
In a couple of preceding games Black played 11...♗g6, but it turns out that Black can allow the exchanging of the e7-bishop.

12.♘f5 ♘g6!N

This is slightly more accurate than 12...♗e8, as played in Haub – Hagen, Copenhagen 2013.

13.♘xe7† ♘xe7 14.f3 ♘e8

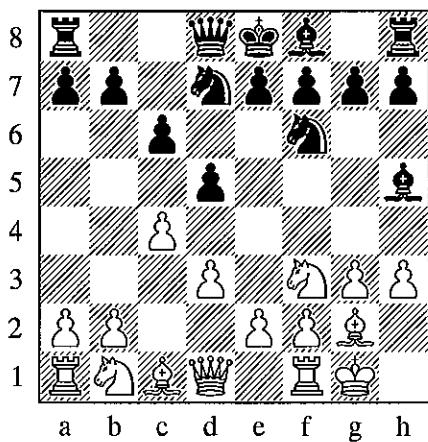
The knight is heading towards the weakened c4-square, which would not have been possible with the rook on e8.



15. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ f6 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6=$

The c4-outpost makes up for the loss of the bishop pair, so Black is not worse.

D32) 7.c4



White is delaying the development of his queen's knight in order to preserve the option of $\mathbb{Q}c3$.

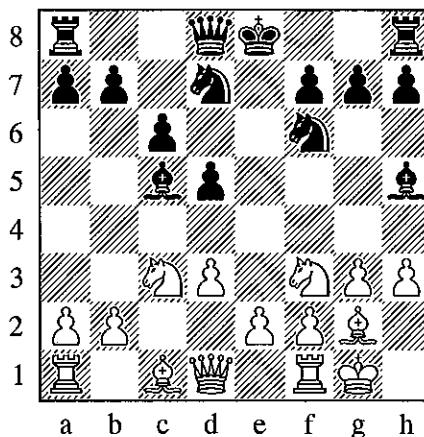
7...e6 8.cxd5 exd5

8...cxd5 9.g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ was not entirely to my liking.

It is worth comparing this position to variation B2321 of Chapter 16 on page 338. In that line we answered h2-h3 with ... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$, because the exchange was well suited to the ...exd5 structure. Here we have already committed to ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$, so it is fair to say that White has a slightly improved version of that variation. That said, I believe Black is still well within the equalizing zone.

White's two main options are D321) 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ and D322) 9. e4!?

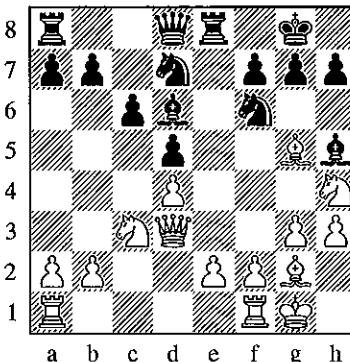
D321) 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$



10. $\mathbb{W}b3$

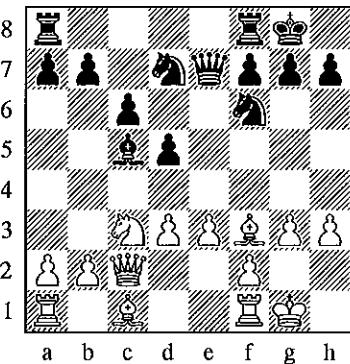
10. e4 dxe4 11. dxe4 0-0 transposes to variation D322.

After 10. d4 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 0-0 12. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ Black's most accurate continuation is:



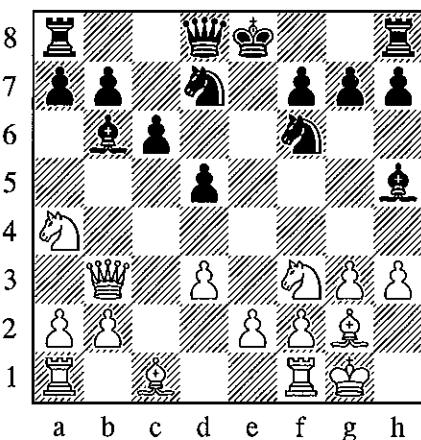
13...h6!N (13...Qf8 was roughly equal in Vidit – Robson, Chennai 2011) 14.Qd2 Qf8 and Black is doing well.

I also considered: 10.Qc2 0–0 11.e3!? White is planning on transferring the queen's knight to f4 via e2. (11.e4 dxe4 12.dxe4 transposes to variation D322) 11...Qxf3 12.Qxf3 We7



13.Qe2 a5 14.Qg2 Hfe8 15.b3 Qa3= Black easily equalized in Pelletier – Grachev, Zürich 2012.

10...Qb6 11.Qa4

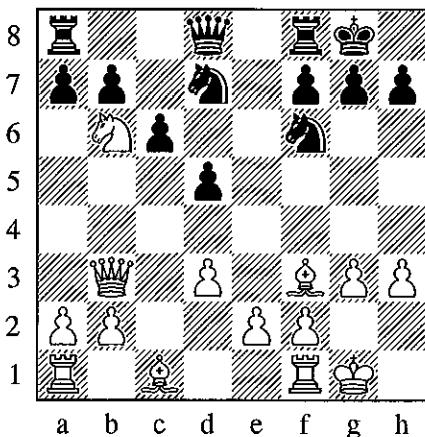


11...Qxf3?!

Eliminating the knight, which may become more important than Black's light-squared bishop. I prefer this move over the more popular 11...0–0.

12.Qxf3 0–0 13.Qxb6

Now I would like to recommend the intermediate:



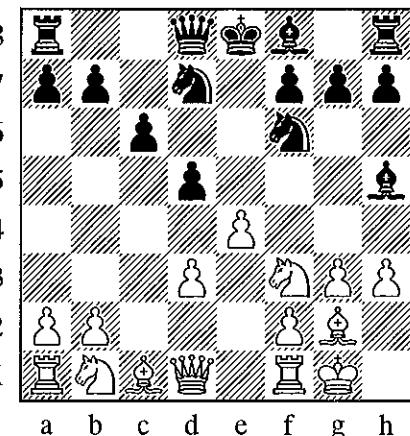
13...Qc5!N

After 13...axb6 14.Qe3 in Sundararajan – Haslinger, Haarlem 2013, Black was unable to play 14...Qc5?! on account of 15.Qxc5 bxc5 16.Wxb7 winning a pawn. Hardly a disaster of course, and Black went on to win the game anyway, but it seems more accurate to activate the knight.

14.Qc2 axb6=

Despite White's bishop pair, the position is balanced.

D322) 9.e4!!?



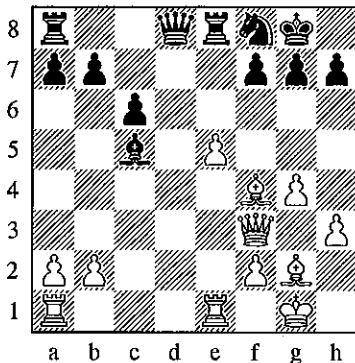
1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

A rare but interesting attempt to mobilize White's central majority.

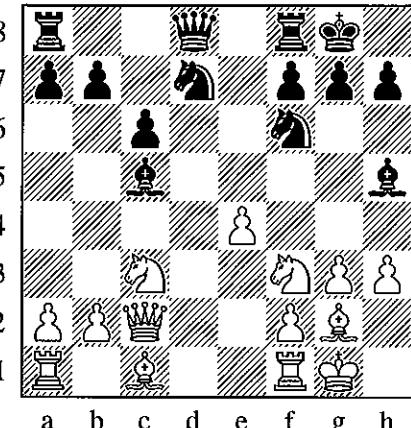
9...dxe4 10.dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ transposes to the main line.

12.g4 has been played just once, but it's a serious move which deserves to be considered. 12... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 13.e5 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8=$

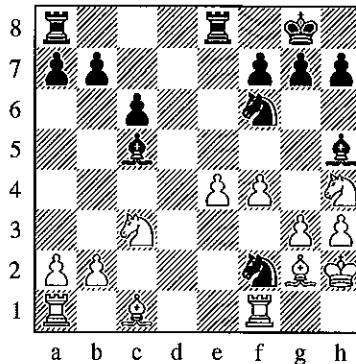


The knight is heading for e6. The position is roughly equal, but now White went wrong with 18. $\mathbb{Q}ed1?$, allowing 18... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 19. b4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}g6\#$ and Black was better in Al Huwar – Andriasian, Abu Dhabi 2009.

12... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

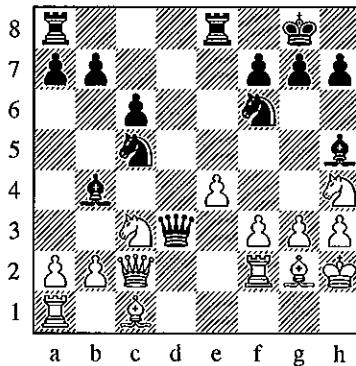
White prepares to complete his development with $\mathbb{Q}ad1$.

13. $\mathbb{Q}h4?$ is an aggressive attempt to mobilize the kingside pawns. Play continues: 13... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 16. f4 $\mathbb{Q}f2\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h2$

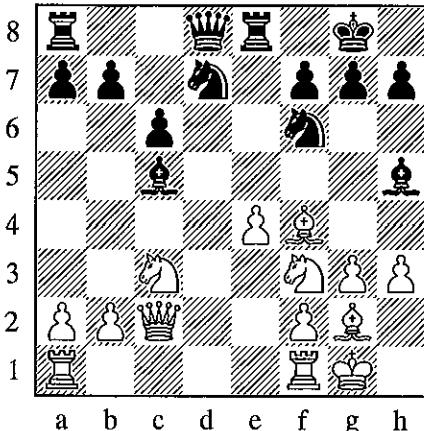


17...g5! A clever idea to save Black's bishop from being trapped. 18. fxg5 $\mathbb{Q}6xe4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 20. g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ In this roughly equal position a draw was agreed in Urban – Kveinys, Lubniewice 2005.

13. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ sees Black attacking in the centre before White's kingside attack gets off the ground. 14. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. f3 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f2$



16... $\mathbb{Q}ad8!N$ This ensures an equal endgame. (After 16... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ a draw was agreed in Voitsekhovsky – Sitnikov, Tomsk 2006, but 17. $\mathbb{Q}f1!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ would have given White chances for an advantage) 17. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6=$ Black is fine.



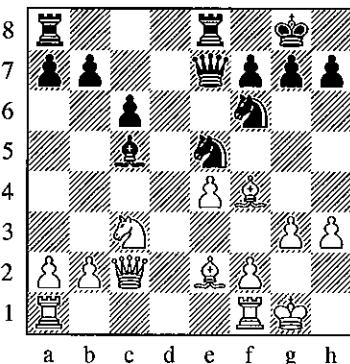
13... $\mathbb{Q}xf3!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

This move covers the d3-square but the e4-pawn may become a target. I would like to highlight that with:

15... $\mathbb{W}e7!?$ N

15... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$? $\mathbb{W}e7$ was good for Black in Fressinet – Andriasian, Dubai 2014, but White could have done better with 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ N, intending 16...h6 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ followed by 19.f4.

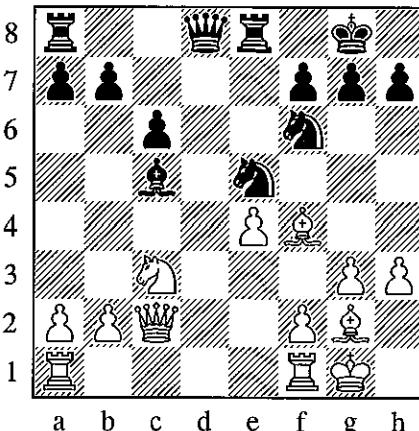


16. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3!$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$!

After 17... $\mathbb{Q}xf4?!$ 18.gxf4 Black cannot prevent e4-e5.

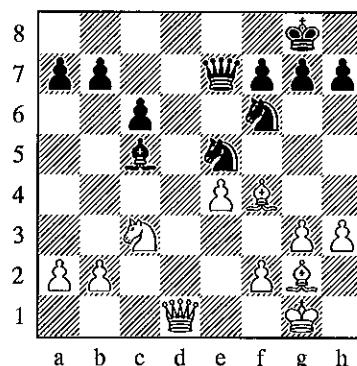
18. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1\#$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 21.gxf4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 22.e5 $\mathbb{Q}f8\#$

With a slight edge to Black.



15... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

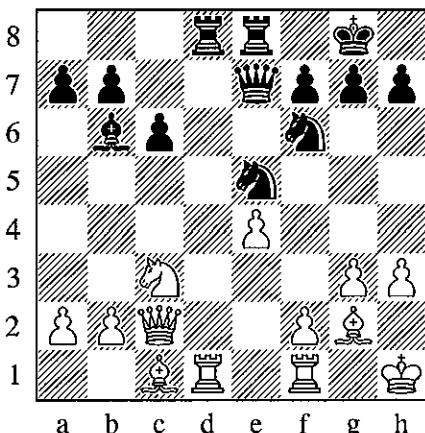
17. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1\#$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xd1$ has also been played, and now I propose:



19...a6!N= (19... $\mathbb{Q}fd7?!$ was also playable in Yevseev – Nazaretyan, Tyumen 2012, although White could have tried to cause problems with 20. $\mathbb{Q}a4!$ N $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h2$, preparing f2-f4) The text move prepares to meet $\mathbb{Q}a4$ with ... $\mathbb{Q}a7$; and if White can't find a way to mobilize his f-pawn, I see no cause for concern.

17... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

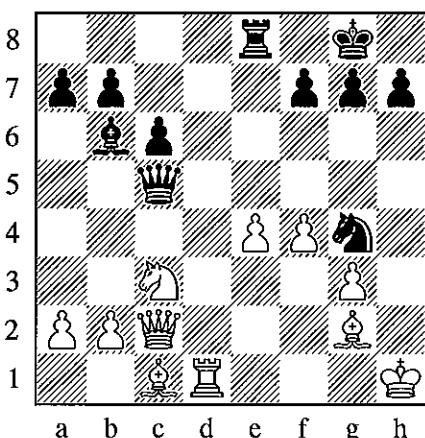
This occurred in Arutinian – Oparin, Pardubice 2012, and now I would like to recommend:

18... $\mathbb{W}c5!$ N

With the following idea:

19.f4

Other moves are possible but this is clearly the critical one to consider.

19... $\mathbb{B}xd1$ 20. $\mathbb{B}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}eg4!$ 21. $hxg4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ Threatening ... $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ and mate.**22.f5!**

22.e5? is a losing move: 22... $\mathbb{B}e6$ 23. $f5$ $\mathbb{B}xe5$
24. $\mathbb{B}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}f2\#$ -+

22... $\mathbb{Q}f2\#$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}f2\#$ =

With perpetual checks.

Conclusion

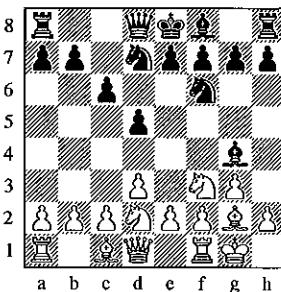
This chapter has dealt with several set-ups after White castles early. In some variations Black's moves are pretty intuitive; on the other hand, there are certain cases where some specific knowledge is important. A good example is variation C2, where Black allows White's pawns to stand on d4 and e4, and encourages a further advance with e4-e5. The plan of ...h6 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ is far from obvious, but the analysis shows that it can work beautifully. Another important concept is White's plan of meeting ...c5 with c3-c4, so you need to keep in mind the correct timing of the ...c5 move.

At the end of the chapter we dealt with quite a challenging line in 5.d3 $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ 6.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 7.c4 e6 8.cxd5 exd5, when the position is considerably more dynamic than in most Reti lines. My analysis shows that Black has plenty of resources, but you need to keep a watchful eye on White's kingside pawn majority.



1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

6. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$



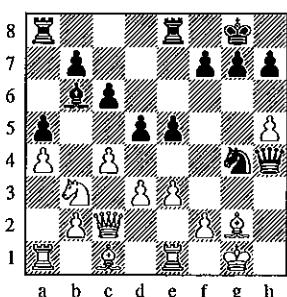
Variation Index

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 2. g3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 4. 0–0 c6 5. d3 $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

6...e5

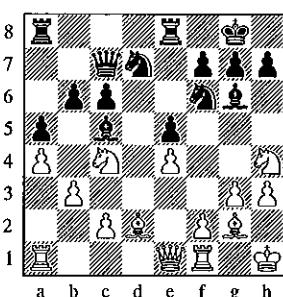
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B) 7.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$	366
B1) 8.g4	366
B2) 8. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5!$	368
B21) 9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$	368
B22) 9.c4	369
B3) 8.e4 dx e 4 9. dx e 4 $\mathbb{Q}c5$	371
B31) 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$	373
B32) 10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ 0–0	375
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B323) 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$	382
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B2) note to move 9



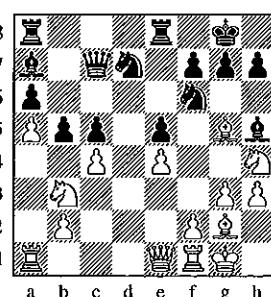
17... $\mathbb{Q}h2\#N$

B3221) after 18.b3



18... $\mathbb{Q}d4!N$

B3231) after 18.c4!



18... bxc4!N

1.Qf3 d5 2.g3Bg4 3.Bg2Qd7 4.0-0 c6
5.d3Bgf6 6.Bbd2 e5

White's knight usually goes to the d2-square in this system, while Black's last move requires no explanation.

We will analyse A) 7.e4 and B) 7.h3. In most games White plays both of these moves in the near future, and I will examine such an approach under variation B. Variation A will just look at any rare lines where White plays 7.e4 without h2-h3.

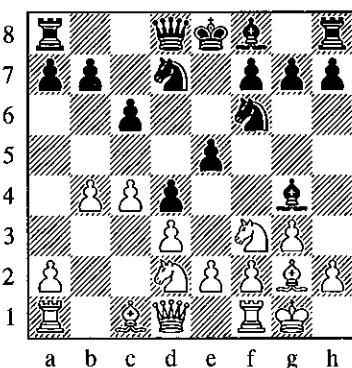
7.c4

This move is rare, both with and without the inclusion of h2-h3 and ...Bh5. I recommend the same reply for Black in both cases:

7...d4 8.b4?

8.h3 Bh5 transposes to 8.c4 d4 in the notes to variation B.

The text move seems too optimistic. In Othman – Goloshchapov, Dubai 2014, Black could have fought for the advantage with:



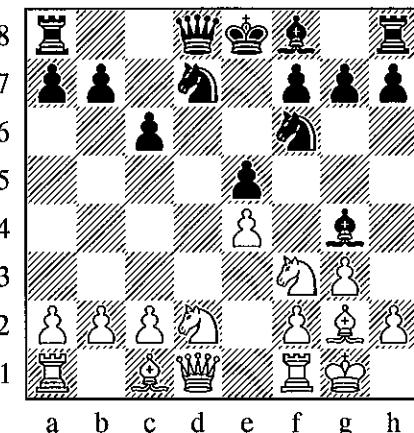
8...Bxh4!N 9.Bb1 a5 10.a3 Bd6! 11.Bxb7 0-0
12.h3 Bc5 13.Bb1

And now any sensible retreat along the c8-h3 diagonal leads to an edge for Black. For example:

13...Bf5!?

A) 7.e4 dxe4 8.dxe4

8.Qxe4 is harmless: 8...Bxe4 9.dxe4 Be7 (there is also nothing wrong with 9...Bc5) 10.c3 0-0 11.Be3 Bc7 12.Bc2 Bc5 13.Bxc5 Bxc5 14.b4 Qd7 A draw was agreed here in Azaladze – Belikov, Alushta 2012, but I prefer Black's position.



8...Bc5 9.Bc1

9.h3 is the main line, but after 9...Bh5 we transpose to variation B3.

9.c3 a5

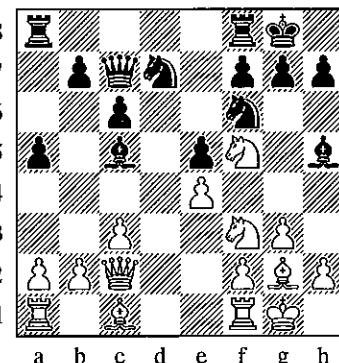
This move prevents b2-b4 and thus secures the position of his bishop on c5.

That said, 9...0-0 is a reasonable alternative.

10.Bc2 0-0 11.Bc4

11.h3 Bh5 transposes again – see the 10.c3 line in the notes on page 372.

11...Bc7 12.Be3 Bh5 13.Bf5



This was Belozerov – Zakharov, Kolontaevo 1997, and now I prefer:

13...♝fe8!N 14.h3 ♘f8 15.♗g5 ♘d7= With roughly equal chances.

9.♔e2 0–0

Placing the queen on e2 has a clear drawback: the f3-knight is still pinned, and so it can't go to h4 as it does in the main lines with the queen on e1.

10.♘c4

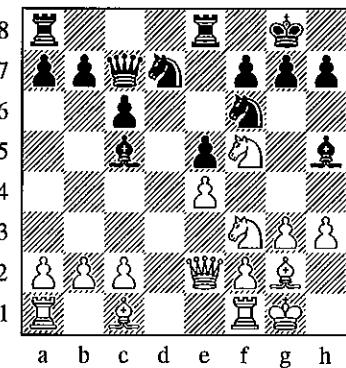
10.h3 ♘h5 converts to variation B31.

10.a4 a5 11.♘c4 ♜c7 12.♗e3 (12.h3 is better, with the usual transposition)

12...♘h5 13.♘f5 This was Vavruska – Sosna, Luhacovice 1993, and now I like 13...♝fd8!N. White can hardly do without 14.h3 anyway, which leads to a pleasant position for Black after 14...♝f8 with the idea of ...♘c5.

10...♜c7 11.♗e3 ♘h5 12.♘f5 ♜fe8 13.h3

As you can see, this move almost always features in White's plans at some point, and White gains nothing by delaying it. On the contrary: in this particular case, he has committed to a unnecessary transfer of the knight to f5.



13...♝f8 14.♔e1?!

14.♘h4!N should be preferred, though after 14...♘c5 15.g4 ♘g6 Black is doing fine.

14...♘c5 15.♘d2 a5?

Black was better in Weiss – Ragger, Austria 2002 (15...♝ad8!?? is also good).

9...0–0 10.♘c4

Once again 10.h3 is the most popular, when 10...♘h5 converts to variation B32.

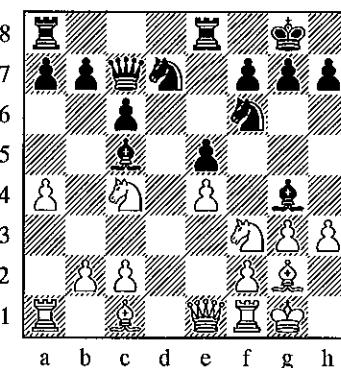
10...♝e8 11.b4

11.♗e3 ♘h5 12.♗f5 occurred in Haub – Maiorov, Sautron 2010, when 12...♝f8!N 13.h3 ♘c5 14.♘h4 ♘e6 would have reached a preferable position for Black.

11.a4 ♜c7 12.h3

12.b3 b5?! 13.♗e3 ♘h5 14.♗f5 ♘f8 15.♗g5?! h6 16.♘d2 ♘c5 gave Black a slight edge in Appel – Kindermann, Germany 2001.

12.♗e3 was Kozul – Burmakin, Nova Gorica 2003, and now I prefer 12...♘h5?!N 13.♘h4 ♘f8 followed by 14...♘c5 when Black obtains a comfortable position, as the knight on e3 is misplaced.



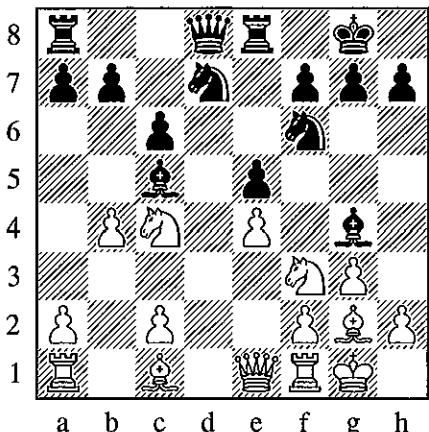
12...♝e6!

12...♘h5 would lead to something similar to variation B3233, but with 12...♜c7 played instead of 12...♘b6.

The text move highlights another drawback of White's strategy: the longer he delays h2-h3, the greater the chance that Black will find a better square than h5 for the bishop.

13.♔e2 b5! 14.♘cd2 a6 15.♗g5 ♘f8 16.♗h1 h6 17.♗xe6 ♘xe6??

Black had a fine position in Weber – Taimanov, Germany 2005.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d511... $\mathbb{Q}f8$

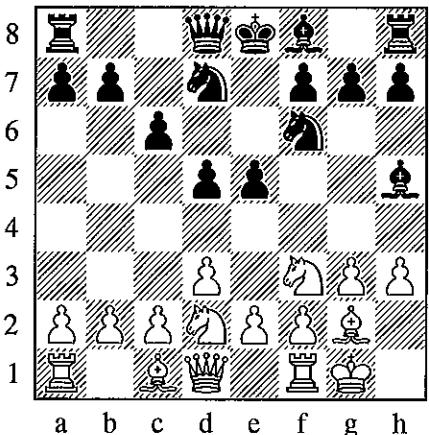
11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$?! 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14. f3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ looks good for Black too, Graf – Wedberg, Manila (ol) 1992.

12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13. a3 b5 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 15. c4 a5!

A nice counterblow, which enables Black to fight for the initiative.

16. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ axb4 17. axb4 $\mathbb{W}xa1$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ bxc4 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}b8$

Black was slightly better in Badea – Fressinet, Bucharest 2001.

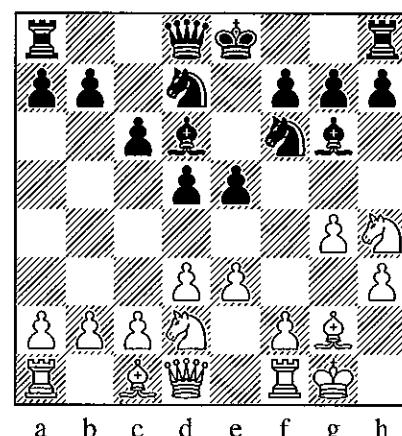
B) 7. h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 

One of the points of 6. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ is that White is ready to recapture on f3 with the knight, so there would be no sense whatsoever in exchanging on f3 here.

We will analyse B1) 8.g4, B2) 8. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ and B3) 8.e4, the last of which is the most popular move by far. Other moves do not require much attention:

8. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ is likely to transpose to one of the later variations after 9. $\mathbb{Q}h4$, or 9. e4 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ (the e5-pawn is untouchable as 10. exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$?? is refuted by 11... $\mathbb{B}e8+$).

8.c4 is a rare move which allows Black to gain space with: 8... d4! 9. a3 a5 10. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 12. g4?! (12. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is better, although 13... 0–0 14. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5=$ is still pleasant for Black) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 0–0 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$?! $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 15. dx e4 (or 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}g5+$) 15... a4! Black was substantially better in Sponer – Kveinys, Dresden 1996.

B1) 8.g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 10. e3

This is an aggressive set-up, intending to launch the f-pawn.

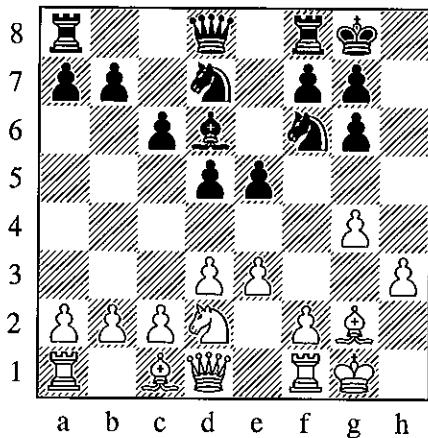
10... 0–0!

After 10... $\mathbb{Q}f8$?! 11.f4 $\mathbb{Q}6d7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e1$ f6 13.e4 d4 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 16.exf5± White's opening proved a total success in Caruana – Movsesian, Dubai 2014.

11. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$

11.f4 isn't dangerous in view of 11...exf4 12.exf4 h6! 13. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ fxg6† when, despite the doubled pawns, Black stands better as White's pawn advances have weakened his kingside.

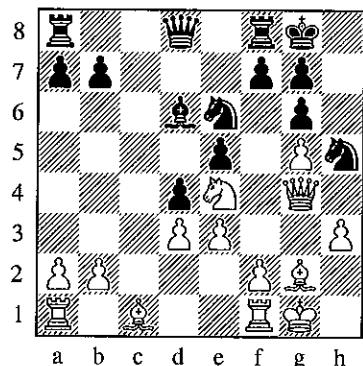
11...hxg6



12.c4 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13.g5 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.h4?!

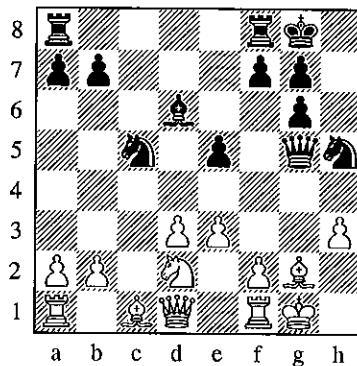
This natural move is an error. I checked two alternatives:

15. $\mathbb{W}g4$ N is strongly met by: 15...d4! 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$

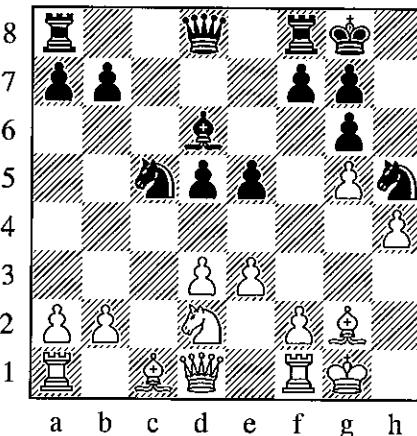


17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (after 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ dxе3† Black wins back the d3-pawn and obtains a better position) 17... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ dxе3 20.fxe3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$! With a double attack on g5 and d3.

15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$!N deserves attention, with interesting play after: 15... $\mathbb{W}xg5$ † 16. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

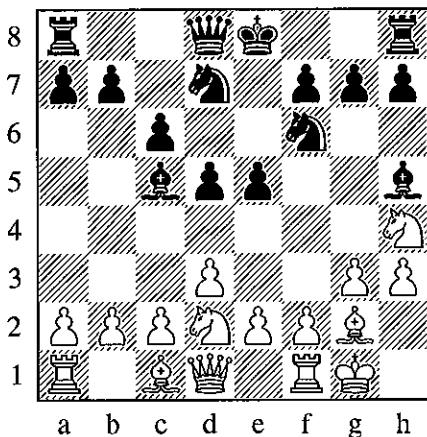


16...a5! Securing the position of the knight on c5. 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 18.b3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}c2$ e4! And Black is not worse.



15... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ †

White must have either overlooked or underestimated this move, which gave Black the upper hand in Smirin – Hracek, Sibenik 2006.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5**B2) 8. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5!$** 

This is the best square for the bishop. White may proceed with **B21) 9. $\mathbb{W}e1$** or **B22) 9. c4.**

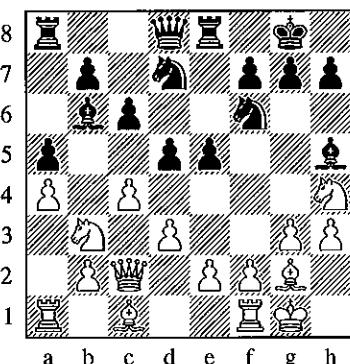
I also checked:

9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 10. c4

10.a4 a5 11. $\mathbb{W}e1$ 0-0 12.g4? is bad in view of 12... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 13.hxg4 $\mathbb{W}xh4$ 14.gxh5 $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ with a strong attack, Kalogeris – Suarez Gomez, Chania 2014.

10...0-0 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$ a5 12.a4 $\mathbb{Q}e8$

Black is fine. It is important to mention the following tactical point:

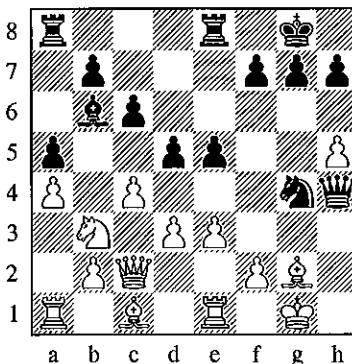


13.g4? $\mathbb{Q}xg4!$

This piece sacrifice works best with the white knight on b3; if it was still on d2, then $\mathbb{Q}f3$ would be a valuable defensive resource.

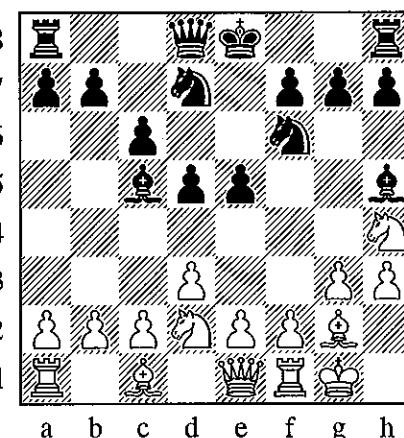
14.hxg4 $\mathbb{W}xh4$ 15.gxh5 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16.e3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

In Paetzold – Rook, Internet 2013, the most efficient winning line would have been:



17... $\mathbb{W}h2\#N$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}xh5$

Intending ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$, with a huge attack.

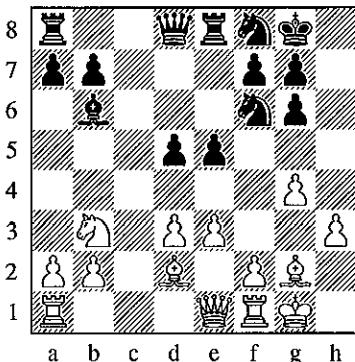
B21) 9. $\mathbb{W}e1$ 

White unpins the e-pawn, thus preparing e2-e4.

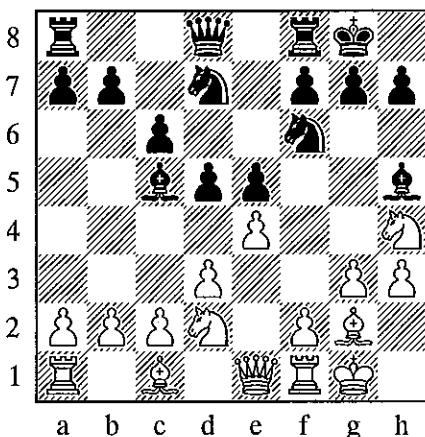
9...0-0 10. e4

10. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 11. e4 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ transposes to our main line.

10. g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 11. e3 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ (11...a5!? deserves attention) **12. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ hxg6 13. c4 $\mathbb{Q}f8\#?$** (13...d4!N might be even stronger) **14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 15. cxd5 cxd5 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$** Now in Almasi – Shirov, Warsaw 2010, Black should have continued:

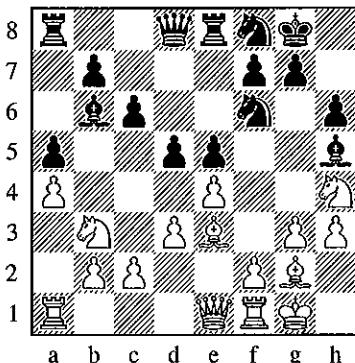


11... $\mathbb{Q}e6!N$ 12.a4 $a6\bar{f}$ With the better position.



10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 12.a4

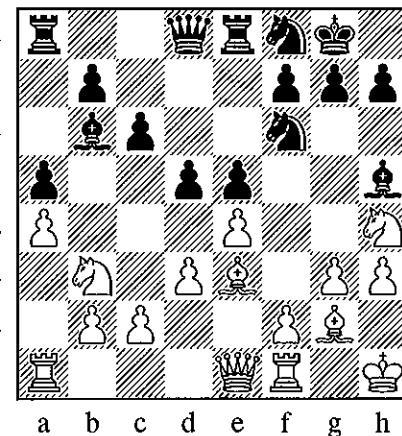
After 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ I would like to offer the immediate: 12... $h6!N$ (12... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ also made sense in Vajda – Zhao, Sydney 2013) 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 14.a4 a5



15. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $dxe4$ 17. $dxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$
Followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and Black is doing fine.

12...a5 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

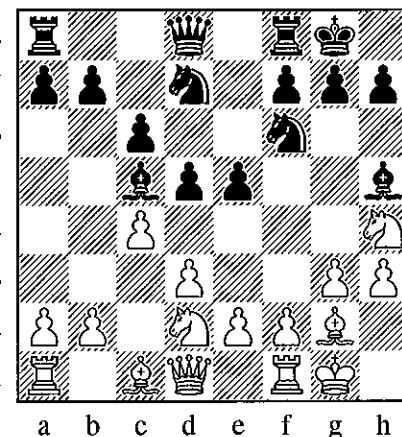
Now I would like to improve Black's play from Hickl – Torre, Zagreb 1987, with:



14... $\mathbb{Q}xe3!N$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $b6$

And I prefer Black.

B22) 9.c4 0–0

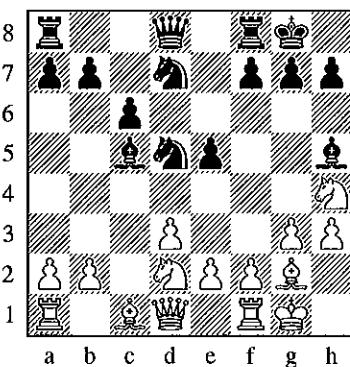


10.g4

If White wants to make this move, it has to be done with the knight on d2 in order to avoid a piece sacrifice (compare the 9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ line in the notes on the previous page).

10.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$

10...cxd5?! can be met by: 11.g4!N A precise move order, as now the piece sacrifice doesn't work. (11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ is less accurate as after 11... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ White can't play 12.g4?? in view of 12... $\mathbb{Q}xg4!$ 13.hxg4 $\mathbb{W}xh4$ 14.gxh5 $\mathbb{Q}f6-$ + with a decisive attack. Instead, 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ was roughly equal in Polgar – Pelletier, Geneva 2013.) 11... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ \pm And Black experiences some problems with his centre.

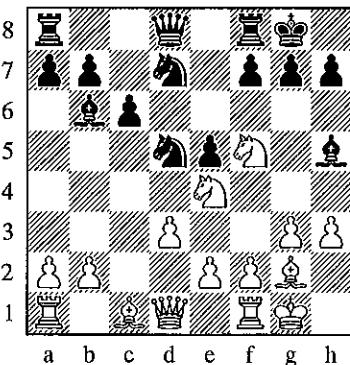


11. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$

This position has occurred in two games of the Dutch IM Manuel Bosboom.

12. $\mathbb{Q}f5$

12. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ was the attempted improvement in Bosboom – Van Kampen, Amsterdam 2011, but Black could already have obtained some advantage by means of 12... $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ \mp .



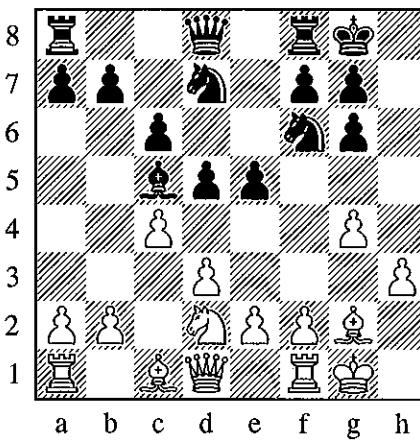
12... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3?$ $\mathbb{Q}e7!$

Black wants to exchange the annoying knight on f5.

14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7\mp$

Black was better in Bosboom – Giri, Wijk aan Zee 2009.

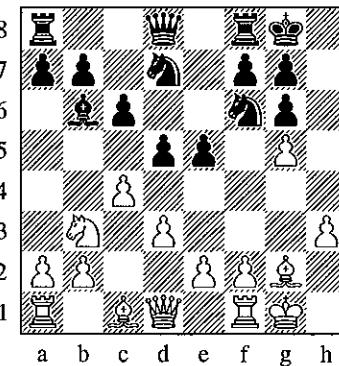
10... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $hxg6$



12. $\mathbb{g}5$

12. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}e7=$ was fine for Black in I. Balogh – Arngrimsson, Arad 2013; it is hard to understand the logic in provoking ... $\mathbb{Q}b6$.

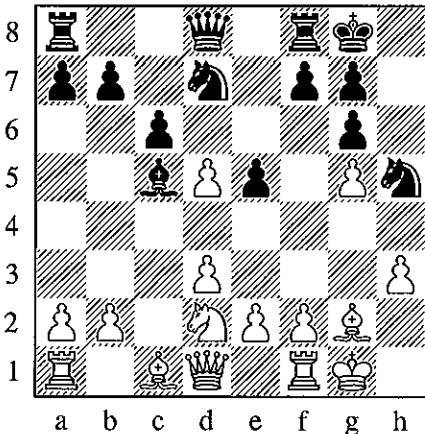
Another game continued: 12. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 13. $g5$ (13.cxd5?! $\mathbb{Q}xd5\mp$)



13... $dxc4!$ 14. $dxc4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{R}d1$ $\mathbb{R}d8=$ Intending ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$, with a promising position for Black in Ubilava – Sturua, Protvino 1993.

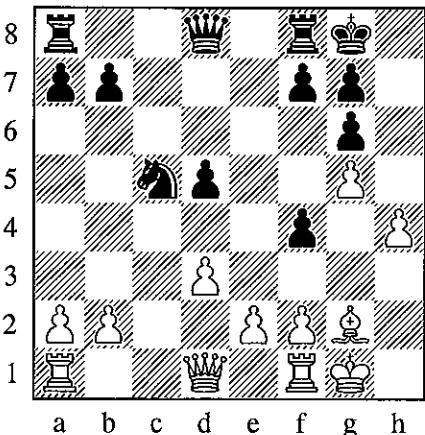
The text move leads to concrete play, but White is risking more than Black.

12...♝h5 13.cxd5



**13...♞f4! 14.♝e4 cxd5 15.♞xc5 ♜xc5
16.♝xf4 exf4 17.h4**

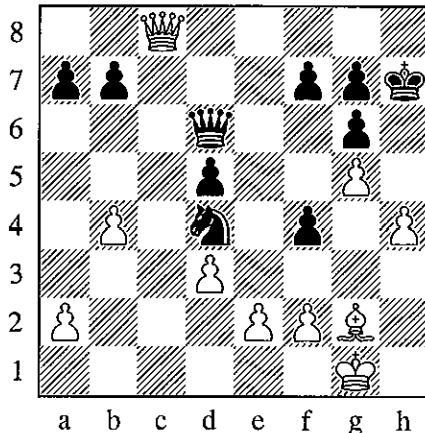
This was Kotov – Medina Garcia, Casablanca 1974, and now I would like to introduce:



**17...♝d7!N 18.♜c1 ♜ac8 19.b4 ♜e6
20.♞d2 ♜d6**

Black has a nice position with a safer king. A logical continuation is:

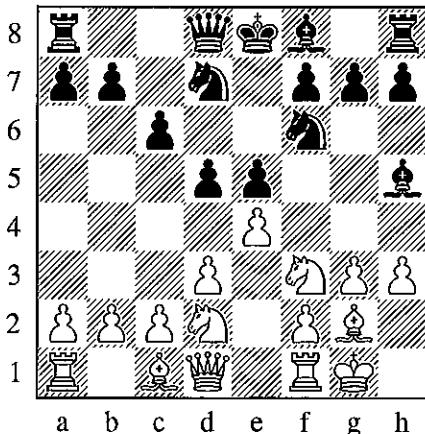
**21.♜xc8 ♜xc8 22.♜c1 ♜xc1† 23.♜xc1 ♜d4
24.♜c8† ♔h7**



25.♛xb7 ♜xe2† 26.♚f1 f3! 27.♜xf3 ♜f4=

The computer calls it dead equal, but in a practical game White would still have to be careful as the queen and knight have the potential to be a deadly combination.

B3) 8.e4



As I mentioned earlier, this is the main line by far.

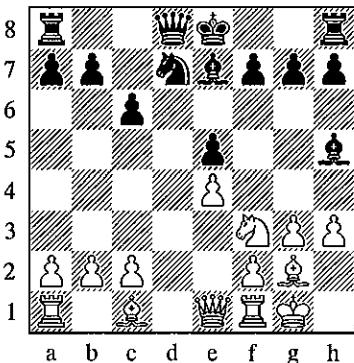
8...dxe4 9.dxe4

A much less popular alternative is:

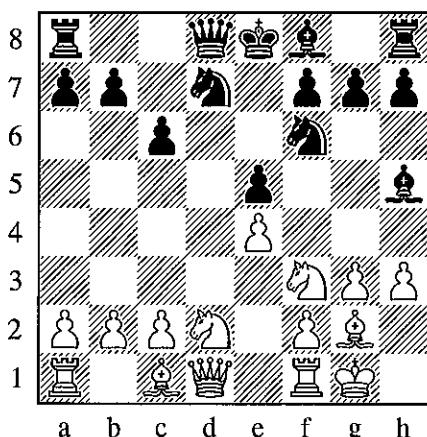
**9.♞xe4 ♜xe4 10.dxe4 ♜e7 11.♛e1
11.♛e2 0–0 12.♝e3 ♜c7 13.♝ad1** occurred in N. Fries Nielsen – Aagaard, Odense 2012. I think Black should proceed with 13...♝ad8!N, intending to meet 14.c3 with

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

14...a5, with at least equal chances.

11...0-0 12.b3 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 12... $\mathbb{W}c7$!N could be a minor improvement, enabling the king's rook to go to d8.13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ f6 14. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$

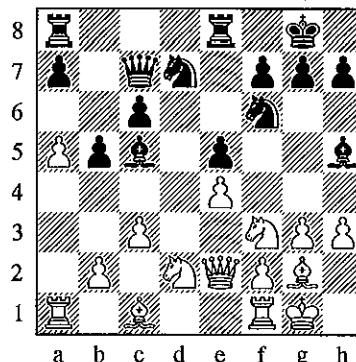
Black had a pleasant position in Fridman – Krivoshey, Dos Hermanas 2003.

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

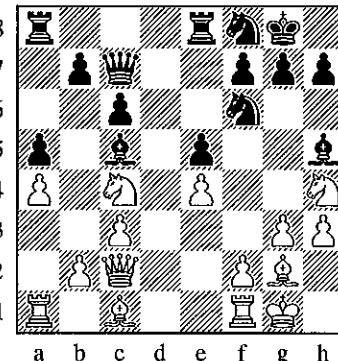
This is the best square for the bishop, as it pins the f2-pawn and avoids coming under attack from the thematic $\mathbb{Q}h4$ -f5 manoeuvre, which could be the case if it went to e7. The only negative aspect is that White can gain a tempo against the bishop on the other flank with $\mathbb{Q}b3$, but I don't believe this to be a problem.

We will analyse B31) 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ and B32) 10. $\mathbb{W}e1$.

I also checked: 10.a4 0-0 11.a5 Queen moves would transpose to one of the two main lines.
11... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13. $c3$ b5



Black is doing fine, and in the game the optimistic 14.g4?! $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ led to a slight edge for Black after 15... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16. $b4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ in Oney – Pinter, Heraklion 1997, thanks to the weakness of the f4-square.

10.c3 a5 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$ 11.a4 0-0 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$ is likely to transpose to 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$ after 12... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$.11...0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13. $a4$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$!Black is preparing ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, ...f6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ – a typical regrouping for this type of position.15. $\mathbb{Q}h2N$ After 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $g4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$

the f4-square was a long-term weakness in Pews – Sukhanitskij, Internet 2011.

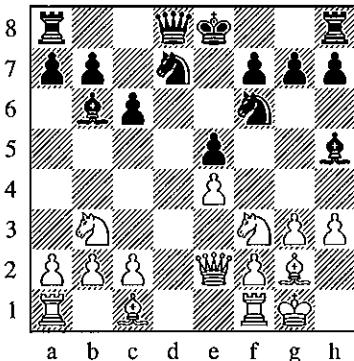
15... $\mathbb{Q}6d7$ 16. f4 f6=

The position remains balanced.

Another rare alternative is:

10. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$

11. $\mathbb{W}e1$ 0–0 transposes to variation B322.



11...0–0 12. a4 a5 13. $\mathbb{W}c4$

This seems a slightly odd square for the queen, but it serves the purpose of unpinning the f3-knight.

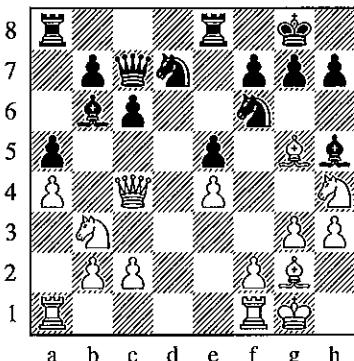
13... $\mathbb{W}c7!$

I believe this to be slightly more accurate than the more common 13... $\mathbb{W}e8$.

14. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

After 15. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ Black is going to exploit the weakness of the f4-square with the help of ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$.

This position was reached in Sorensen – K. Berg, Copenhagen 1986. I found a nice improvement for Black:

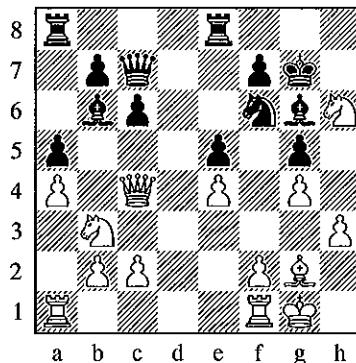


15... $\mathbb{h}6!N$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 17. g4

This is the critical reply, utilizing the position of the queen on c4 to prevent the bishop from moving to g6. Nevertheless, Black is fine after:

17... $\mathbb{g}5!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xh6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$

White has won a pawn but Black gets something more valuable: the open h-file!



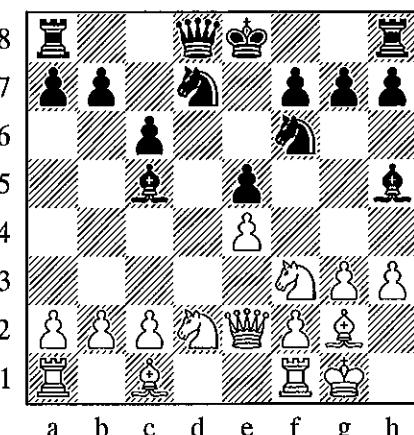
20. $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 21. $\mathbb{g}xf5$

21. $\mathbb{exf5?}$ $e4\#?$ does not help White.

21... $\mathbb{Q}h8$

With a dangerous initiative.

B31) 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$



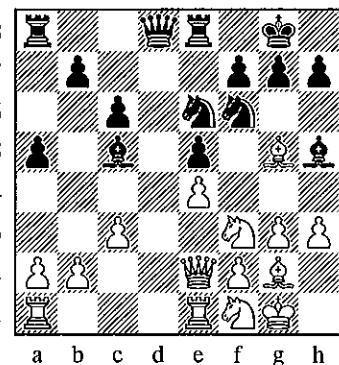
The main disadvantage of this move is the fact that White's knight remains pinned. He can break it with g3-g4, but this will seriously weaken the f4-square. On the plus side, the

queen does not obstruct the f1-rook. The move was even tried by Anand a couple of years ago, albeit in a blitz game.

10...0-0 11.a4

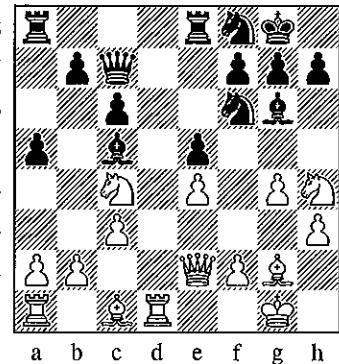
11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ converts to the 10. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ line noted above.

11. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ is not in the spirit of White's system. 12... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 13. c3 a5 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$



15. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}e1$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ Black was certainly not worse in V. Onischuk – Musakaev, Kharkov 2011.

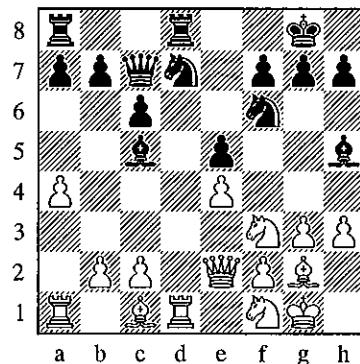
Another game continued: 11. c3 a5 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ (12... $\mathbb{W}c7!?$) 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14. g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$



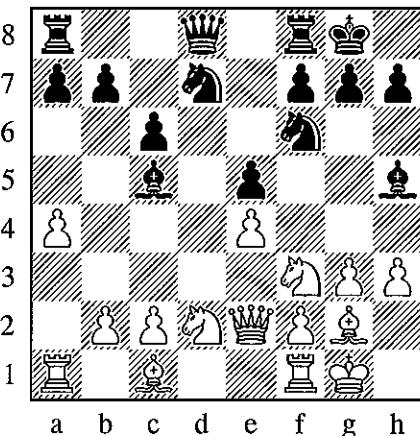
16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $hxg6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}b6$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ Black was doing well in

A. Onischuk – Ibragimov, Lindsborg 2004; again, the f4-square is a problem for White.

11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12. a4 (12. g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ occurred in Seeman – Laurusas, Liepaja 2014, and now 13... $\mathbb{Q}fd8!$ N 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 15. a4 a5 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $gxf6$ would have been good for Black thanks to the f4-outpost) 12... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ (12... a5!?) 13. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ This was Marin Fernandez – Jirovsky, Andorra 2000, and now I like:



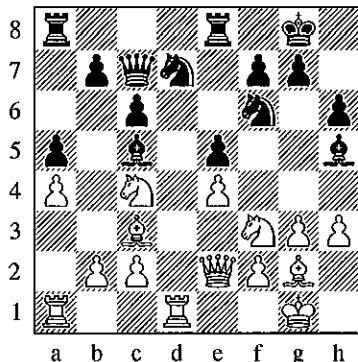
13... a5! N And if 14. g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8\#$ Black transfers the knight to e6, with the better chances.



11...a5 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14. g4

White often plays this at some point in the $\mathbb{W}e2$ lines, but Black should generally be happy to see it, as he now gets the easy plan of ... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ -e6 to target the weakened f4-square.

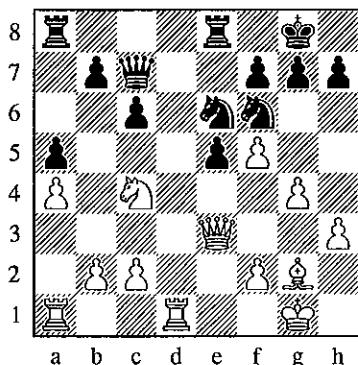
14. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$? is a less committal alternative. Black should reply with a useful waiting move of his own: 14... $h6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (15. $g4N$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $b6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6=$ is fine for Black)



Now in Itkis – Belov, Alushta 2000, Black could have exchanged the dark-squared bishops by means of 15... $\mathbb{Q}b4!N$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $axb4$, with equal chances, as 17. $\mathbb{W}e1$ can be answered by 17... $\mathbb{Q}c5$.

14... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16. $g5$

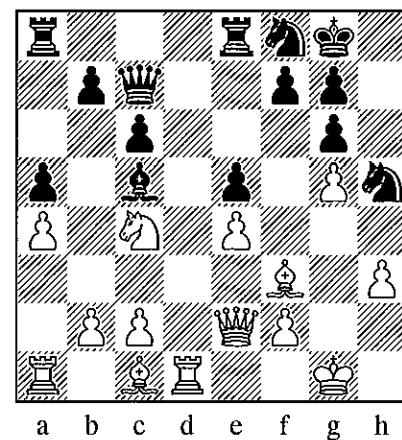
Another game continued: 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 19. $exf5$



Here it is worth considering 19... $\mathbb{Q}d4!N$ (19... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ was also fine for Black in Dzagnidze – Stefanova, Batumi 2012) 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ with equal chances.

16... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $hxg6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

Here I found a marginal improvement:



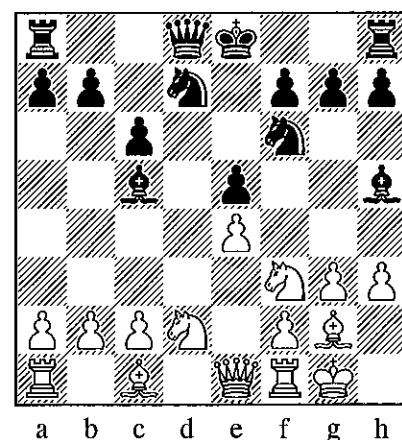
18... $\mathbb{Q}g3!N$

18... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $exf4$ was equal in Anand – Ragger, Dubai 2014.

19. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 21. $h4$ $\mathbb{Q}hf4$

Objectively the position is still about equal, but I slightly prefer the version with a knight on f4, rather than the ... $exf4$ structure from the game.

B32) 10. $\mathbb{W}e1$



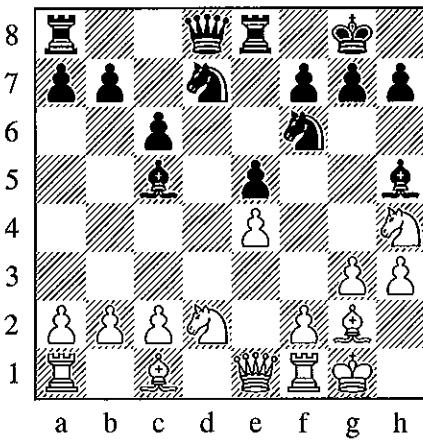
White is unpinning his f3-knight in order to play $\mathbb{Q}h4$. At the same time, the queen also protects the e4-pawn, thus freeing up the other knight.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5**10...0-0**

White's three main options are **B321)** 11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$, **B322)** 11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ and **B323)** 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$.

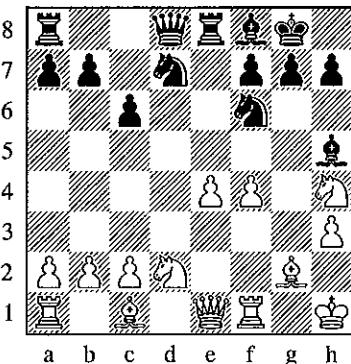
11.a4 should be met by 11... $\mathbb{E}e8$, with a likely transposition to variation B233 after 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$.

11.a3 is a pretty rare line, preparing b2-b4 followed by $\mathbb{Q}b2$. 11... $\mathbb{E}e8$ (11... a5!? also makes sense) 12.b4 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ (13... $\mathbb{Q}b6$!?) 14. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ b5 15. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ c5 transposes to the 13. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ line in the notes to variation B232 on page 383.

B321) 11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ **12. $\mathbb{Q}b3$**

I considered a couple of other moves:

12. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 13. f4? is premature. 13... exf4 14. gxf4 This occurred in Pujari – Neelotpal, Mumbai 2011, when Black missed a strong idea:



14... $\mathbb{Q}d5$!N Threatening ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$. 15. a3 $\mathbb{W}b6$ Black prepares ... $\mathbb{Q}e3$ and thus deflects the d2-knight away from the defence of e4. 16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$! and Black is better.

12. $\mathbb{Q}f5$

This doesn't make much sense due to:

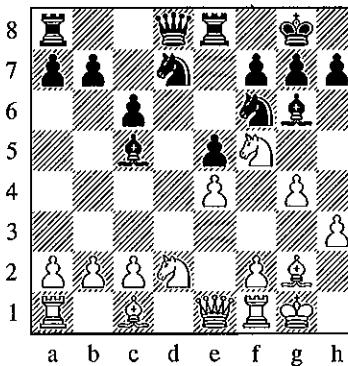
12... $\mathbb{Q}g6$

And now White has nothing better than retreating to h4, because allowing ... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ is in Black's favour.

13. g4?

13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$?! $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 14. exf5 e4 and Black was better in Chernushevich – Fontaine, Besancon 2005.

The text move occurred in Christiansen – Beliavsky, Brussels 1992, and now Black should have played:

**13... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$!N 14. gxf5**

14. exf5 e4! 15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$!

14... $\mathbb{Q}h5$!T

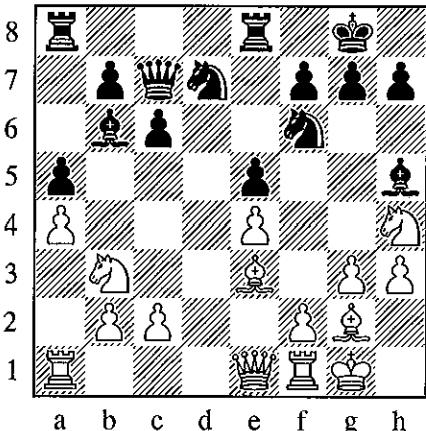
With better chances.

12... $\mathbb{Q}b6$!

Black should retain control over the a7-g1 diagonal.

13. a4 a5 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$

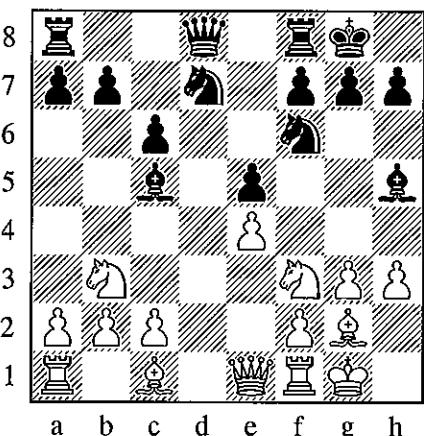
14... $\mathbb{Q}f8$!N could also be considered.



15. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $hxg6$
18. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6=$

With a promising position for Black in Stany – Raznikov, Golden Sands 2013.

B322) 11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$



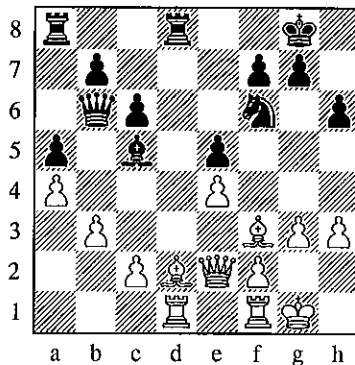
This move is not without venom.

11... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 12. $a4$ $a5$

White's two main tries are B3221)
13. $\mathbb{Q}bd2!?$ and B3222) 13. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$.

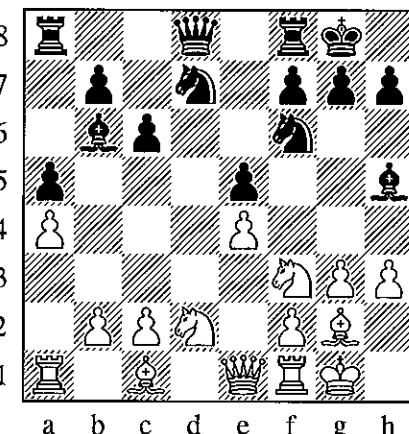
13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$
16. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $b6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ was
equal in Smejkal – Kuczynski, Polanica Zdroj
1991.

Another sensible game continued: 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$
 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e2$
 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 17. $b3$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $h6$



19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$
22. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4=$ (22... $\mathbb{Q}c5!?$ N) White's control
over the open file was balanced by Black's
superior minor piece in Ju Wenjun – Girya,
St Petersburg 2012.

B3221) 13. $\mathbb{Q}bd2!?$

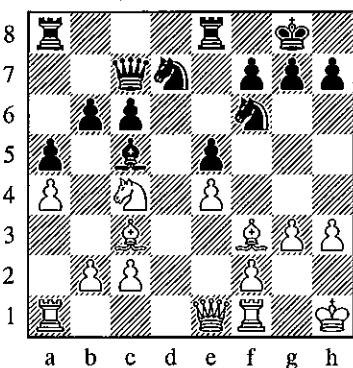


A clever idea. Having just provoked ... $a5$,
White brings the knight back to $c4$ in order
to play the 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ line with Black having
committed to the ... $a5$ structure, which we
can avoid against the 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ move order, as
shown later in variation B3233.

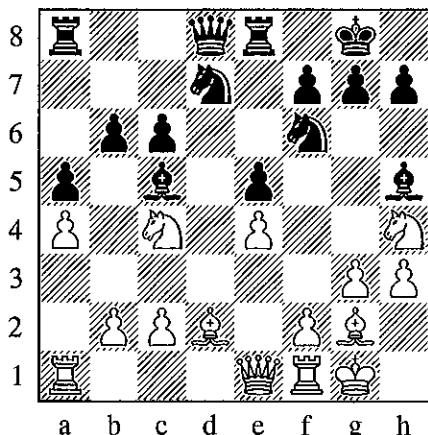
13... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $b6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h4$

Another game continued: 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 20. f4 f6 21. fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ Black trades off his useless knight. 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ fxe5 23. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 25. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4=$ With roughly equal chances, Efimenko – Ragger, Dubai 2014.

16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (17. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ transposes to our main line below) 17... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ This position occurred in Sommerbauer – Banusz, Austria 2012, and now I prefer:



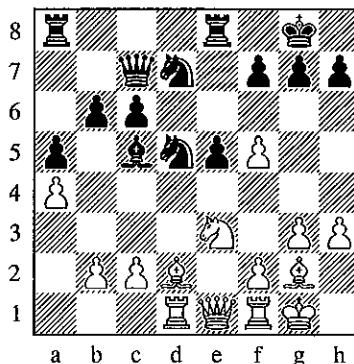
18... $\mathbb{Q}d4!N$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ g6? 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (20. h4 h5=) 20... b5! 21. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 22. axb5 cxb5 23. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4=$ and Black is fine.



16... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

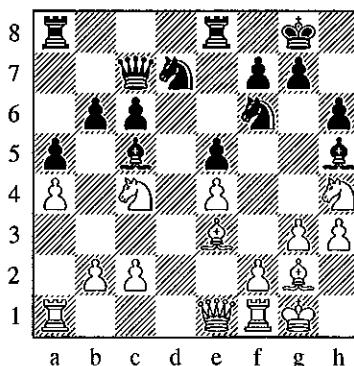
17. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 19. exf5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ is equal. Then 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3?!$ was an inaccuracy in

Vaganian – Fahnenschmidt, Germany 1992, allowing Black to obtain the upper hand with:



20... e4!N 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ cxd5 22. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}c6\#$

17. $\mathbb{Q}g5?!$ is an interesting provocation. 17... h6 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (18. $\mathbb{Q}d2N$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7=$ looks fine for Black) White's idea is that the bishop on h5 starts to feel uncomfortable. The exchange of the dark-squared bishops is double-edged, as White is left with a 'bad' bishop, but on the other hand he weakens the d6-square. In Rusan – Ceteras, Deva 1998, Black should have played:



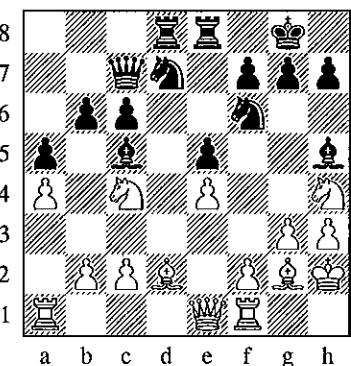
18... $\mathbb{Q}xe3N$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ b5 20. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}eb8$ With the possible continuation: 21. g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ fxg6 23. axb5 cxb5 24. $\mathbb{W}b3\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 26. c4 $\mathbb{Q}b6=$ Followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$.

17. $\mathbb{Q}h2?!$

This resembles the main line, but the differing king position changes a few of the details.

17... $\mathbb{E}ad8$

The immediate 17... $\mathbb{Q}g6!$? is also reasonable. 18.f4 exf4 (after 18... $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ exf4 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ Black's idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ does not work as the h3-pawn is defended) 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 20.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ hxg6 22. $\mathbb{W}d2$ g5 23. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{E}xe5$ 25. $\mathbb{R}ae1$ $\mathbb{E}ae8$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 27. $\mathbb{R}e1$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ The centralized knight on d5 plus the slight vulnerability of White's king compensates for the bishop pair.



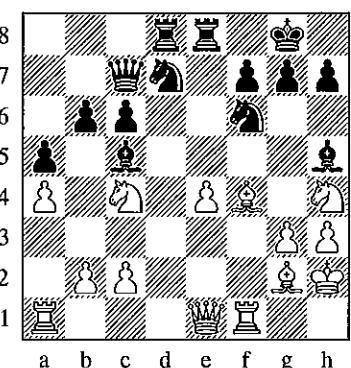
18.f4

This was played in the only game, but it does not present many problems.

18.f3!N looks better, intending to put the queen on e2. Nevertheless, the position remains about equal after 18... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 20. $\mathbb{R}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 21.c3 $\mathbb{R}d7$ with a long manoeuvring game ahead.

18...exf4 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$

19.gxf4? runs into 19... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and Black wins.

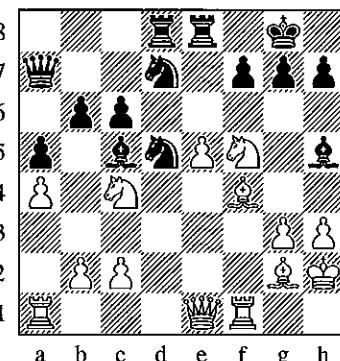


19... $\mathbb{W}a7$ 20.e5

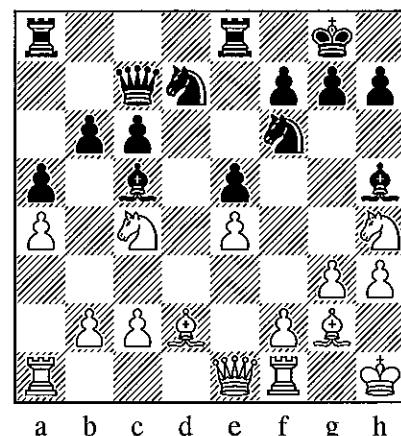
20.g4N $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ hxg6 22. $\mathbb{R}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8=$ is also fine for Black.

20... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f5$

In Akopian – Hracek, Cap d'Agde 1996, Black could have fought for the advantage with:



21...f6!N 22. $\mathbb{Q}cd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{E}e6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{E}ee8$ 26.e6 $\mathbb{Q}c5\mp$



17... $\mathbb{Q}g6!?$

The point of this subtle move is to put some pressure on the e4-pawn.

17... $\mathbb{E}ad8!?$ N is interesting too.

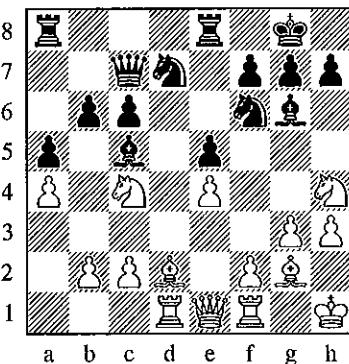
18.b3

The value of Black's last move can be seen after: 18.f4? $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ exf4 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

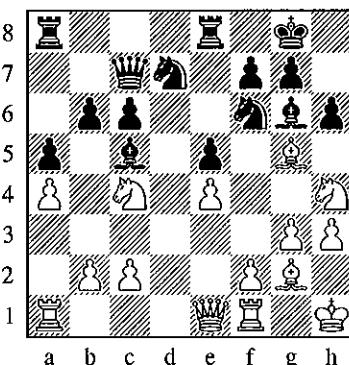
(20. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ g5+) 20... $\mathbb{W}c8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h8!?$
 With the simple plan of ... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, when White will not be able to take on f6 with check.

18. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ was played in Art. Minasian – Neelotpal, Moscow 2004, when Black could have simplified the position with:



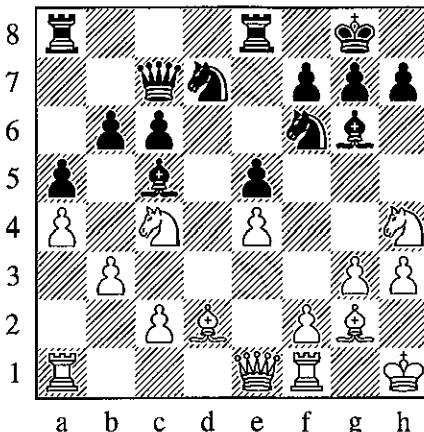
18... b5!N 19. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ bxa4 20. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}a7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ hxg6 22. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{W}xb6=$ With equality.

18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ occurred in Movsesian – Alavkin, St Petersburg 2007, and now 18... h6!N would have been a good choice, for instance:



19. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ (19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ is also fine for Black) 19... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ fxg6= With an equal position.

Now in Spangenberg – Fiorito, Argentina 1995, Black missed a nice idea:

18... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ N 19. c3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$

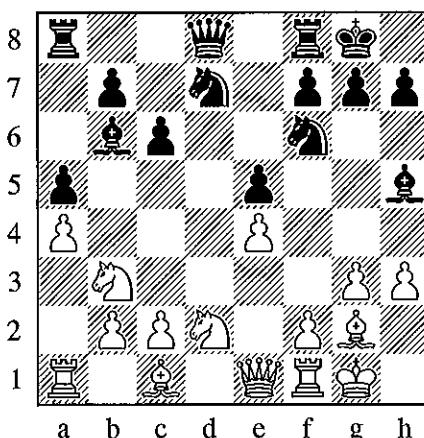
Black has invested a couple of tempos in order to block the e1-a5 diagonal, thus preparing ...b5.

20.f4

I also checked 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ hxg6 21. $\mathbb{W}e2$ b5 22. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6!?$ = followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ and Black is fine.

20... b5! 21. axb5 cxb5 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 23. fxe5 $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ hxg6 25. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}e6=$

With a good position for Black.

B3222) 13. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ 

This is a pet line of the Croatian GM Kozul. The knight is heading for c4.

13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

This move was tested just once in Kozul – Gyimesi, Sibenik 2007. I would like to improve Black's play with:

15... $\mathbb{W}c7!N$

Play may continue:

16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 17. $f4$ $exf4!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $gxf6\bar{f}$ is better for Black.

16. $f4$ $exf4$ 17. $gxf4$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 18. $e5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $f5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ and Black is fine.

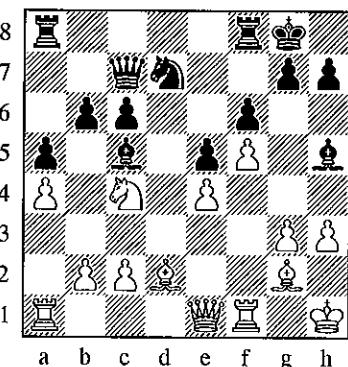
16. $f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $f6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ is more comfortable for Black thanks to his better bishop.

16... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $b6$ 18. $f4$ $f6$

This leads to an improved version of the aforementioned game as Black has avoided losing time with ... $\mathbb{Q}e8$. Interestingly, we have now transposed to another game of Kozul's, which featured the 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ move order.

19. $f5$

Now in Kozul – Handler, Austria 2013, Black could have used what should now be a familiar idea for us:



19... $\mathbb{Q}d4!N$

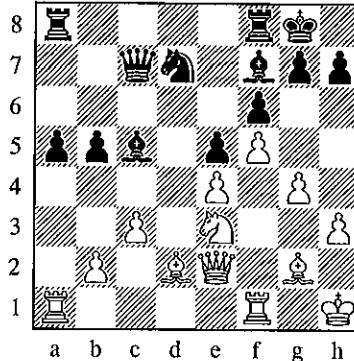
Intending to provoke c2-c3.

20. $c3$

I doubt that White has anything better, for instance: 20. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $b5!$

22. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 23. $axb5$ $cxb5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5\bar{f}$

20... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 21. $g4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $b5$ 23. $axb5$ $cxb5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



24... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $h6$ 27. $h4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$

28. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7\bar{f}$

I prefer Black.

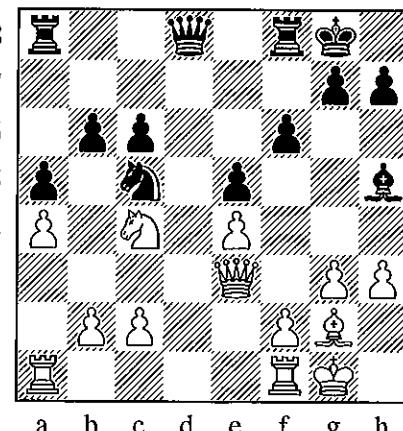
15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Black is preparing ... $f6$ in order to obtain the $f7$ -square for his bishop.

16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $b6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3!?$

17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $f6$ 18. $f4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ has been covered under the 15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ line above.

17... $f6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}e3$



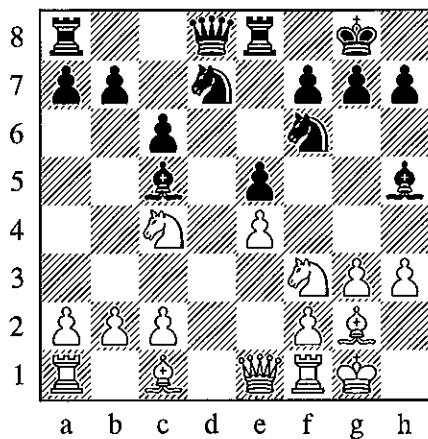
19... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$

The position is equal and the correspondence players soon agreed a draw.

22.b3 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 23. $\mathbb{B}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{W}xd8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$
25.h4

½–½ Dearnley – Gorokhov, corr. 2015.

B323) 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{B}e8$



Black protects the e5-square, while the f8-square may be used by his minor pieces.

We have a final split between B3231)
12. $\mathbb{Q}h4$, B3232)
12.b4 and B3233)
12.a4.

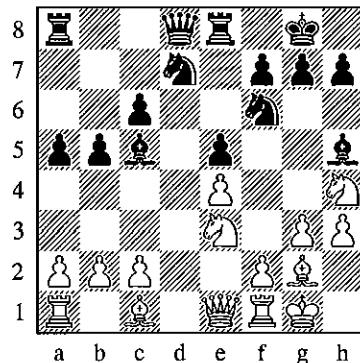
B3231) 12. $\mathbb{Q}h4$

We have seen this typical move in many variations. White may follow up with any of $\mathbb{Q}f5$, g3-g4 followed by $\mathbb{Q}xg6$, or $\mathbb{Q}h1$ followed by f2-f4.

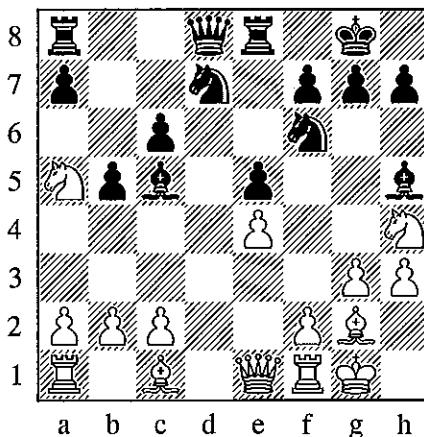
12...b5 13. $\mathbb{Q}a5$

While the king's knight is playing on the kingside, the other one is creating threats on the queenside.

13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ may look wrong as both of White's knights are aiming at f5. Nevertheless, Black's task isn't easy, and I found it necessary to improve on the few existing games with 13...a5!N. The idea becomes clear after:



14.a4 b4! Black can afford to give up the c4-square, as $\mathbb{Q}c4$ can always be answered by ... $\mathbb{Q}b6$. 15. $\mathbb{Q}hf5$ (If the pawn was still on a7, White could have continued with 15.a5 followed by $\mathbb{Q}c4$) 15... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}a7$!
17.c3 b3! 18.c4 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$! and Black is doing fine.

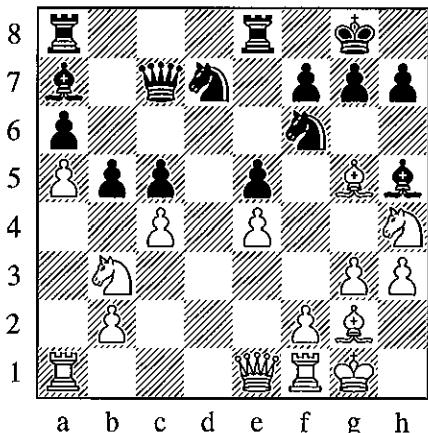


13... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14. a4

14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$? led to Black's advantage after 15... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ c5! 17. c4 bxc4 18. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ c3! 19. bxc3 c4# in Lenic – Ragger, Heraklion 2004.

14... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ a6 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ c5 17. a5 $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

A clever idea, which is intended to block the dark-squared bishop on a7. In this complex position I found a key improvement over some high-level games:

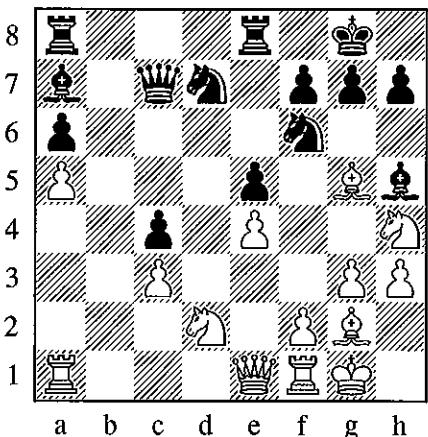


18...bxc4!N

18...♗ab8 was the choice of Kramnik and others, but it does not equalize: 19.♘d2 h6 20.♗c3 ♗f8 21.f4! (21.g4 ♗g6 22.f4 exf4 23.♗xf4 ♖d7 24.e5?! ♘d3!?) was better for Black in Aronian – Korobov, Ohrid 2001) 21...exf4 22.♗xf4!± White was better in Aronian – Kramnik, Shanghai 2010 (22.gxf4?! ♗e6 23.e5!± was also good in Movsesian – Buhmann, Germany 2009).

19.♘d2 c3! 20.bxc3 c4!

The point of the novelty. Black opens the a7-g1 diagonal which White tried so hard to block.



21.g4 ♗g6 22.♗e2 ♗c5 23.♘xg6 hxg6

24.♘xc4 ♗e6 25.♗d2 ♖ec8

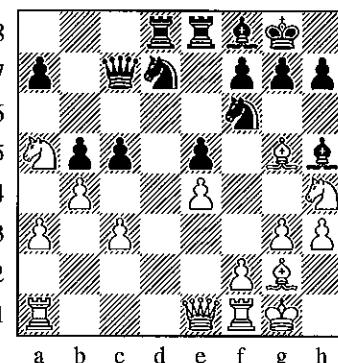
Black has good positional compensation for the pawn thanks to his active pieces and the weak f4-square.

B3232) 12.b4

This has been White's second-most-popular choice, but it weakens his queenside and should not be of any concern to us.

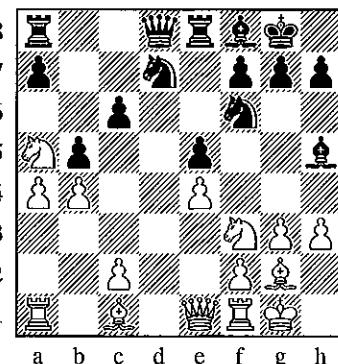
12...♗f8 13.♗b2

Another game continued: 13.♗h4 b5? 14.♗a5 c5 15.a3 ♖c7 16.c3 ♖ad8 17.♗g5



17...c4! 18.a4 a6 Black had good chances due to the misplaced knight on a5 in Markos – Kuipers, Zürich 2010.

13.a4 from S. Ernst – Van den Doel, Germany 2007, can be met by: 13...b5!N 14.♗a5 (14.axb5 cxb5 15.♗e3 ♗g6! 16.♗f5 ♖c7! is better for Black)

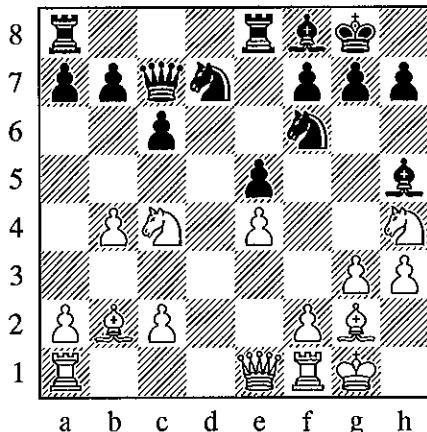


1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

14...bxa4! 15. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ (or 15. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ c5 16. b5 a6)
 15...c5! 16. b5 a6 and Black seizes the initiative.

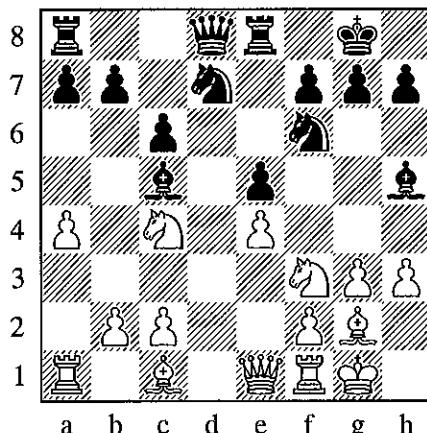
13... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h4$

14.a4 b5 15.axb5 cxb5 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3?$ $\mathbb{Q}g6+$
 was excellent for Black in Paschall – Nguyen
 Huynh Minh, Budapest 2008.



14...b5 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ a5! 16. a3 $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ 17. $\mathbb{B}b1$ axb4
 18. axb4 $\mathbb{Q}a2$

Yet again, Black obtained the upper hand in
 Iskandarov – Bukavshin, Maribor 2012.

B3233) 12.a4

This has been the most popular choice,
 securing the position of the knight on c4.

12... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$

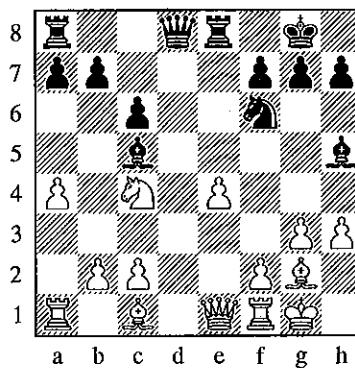
12...a5 would convert to variation B3221.
 Black has a playable position there too but,
 given the choice, I would prefer not to fix my
 queenside structure at this stage of the game.

13. $\mathbb{Q}a5$

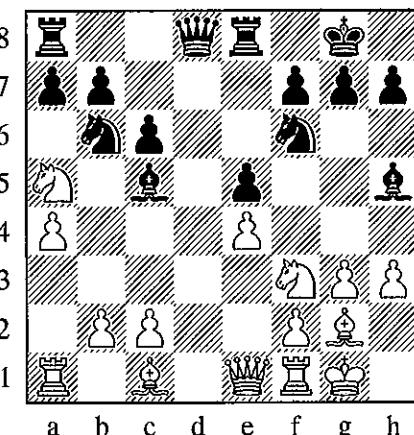
13. $\mathbb{Q}cd2$ can be met by 13... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ when
 I don't see anything better for White than
 repeating.

13. $\mathbb{Q}cxe5??$ is a blunder in view of 13... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$
 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ and White must lose material.

Black should be happy to see 13. $\mathbb{Q}fxe5??$ as
 well: 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$



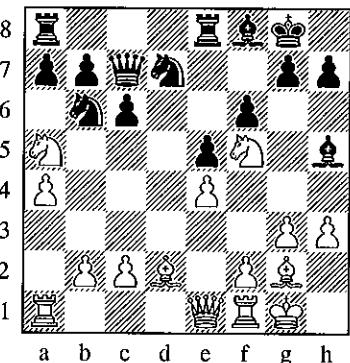
14... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ Intending 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ f5! with an
 obvious advantage.



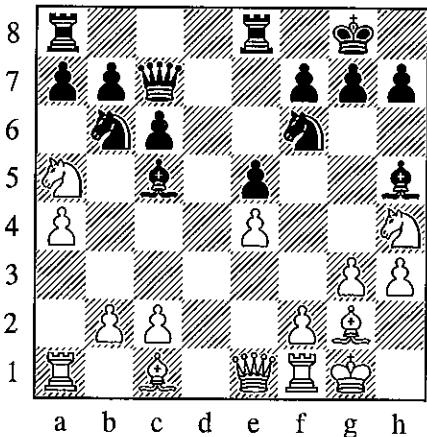
13...Wc7 14.Qh4

14.Qb3 Qf8 15.Qg5 Qfd7 16.Wc3 f6 17.Qe3 Qc8! 18.a5?! Qd6† gave Black a slight edge in Amin – Ragger, Dubai 2014.

14.Qd2 fails to pose any problems: 14...Qfd7 15.Qh4 f6 16.Qf5 Qf8



17.b3 Qc5 18.Qb4 Qe6 (18...Qad8?!) 19.Qxf8 Qxf8 20.f3 Qad8† Black had the more comfortable position in Goldin – Sarkar, Orlando 2011.



14...Qfd7

This is a pet line of the Hungarian GM Gyimesi.

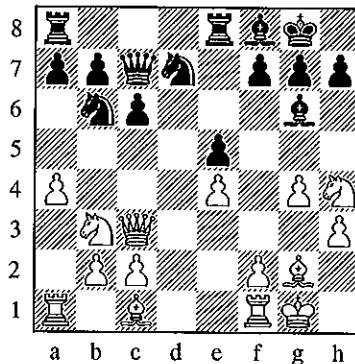
15.b4

White has also tried:

15.Qb3 Qf8 16.g4 Qg6 17.Wc3

I also considered 17.a5!N Qc8 18.Qe3 Qd6 19.Qxg6 hxg6 20.Qe2 b5 21.axb6 axb6 followed by ...Qb7 and ...Qdc5, with equal chances.

Now in Drasko – Krivokapic, Cetinje 2013, Black could have equalized with:

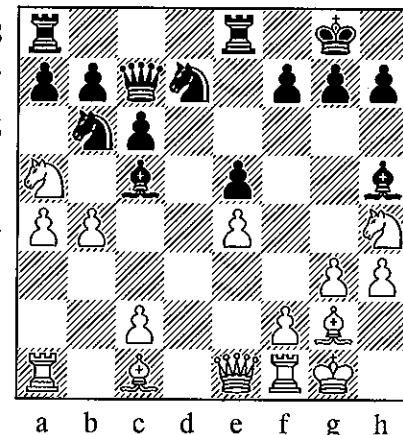


17...a5!N

Based on the following tactical point:

18.Qxg6 hxg6 19.Qxa5?! Qc5!

And Black wins back the a4-pawn with a good game, since 20.b3? Qbxa4† is no help at all to White.



15...Qf8 16.c4

16.Qf5 from Werle – Gyimesi, Germany 2010, can be strongly answered by 16...c5!N 17.Wc3 Qac8 18.b5 c4 and Black is fine.

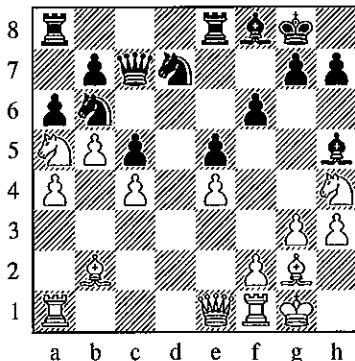
16...c5 17.b5 a6 18.Qd2

Another instructive line continues:

18. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ f6!

A logical improvement, freeing the f7-square for the bishop.

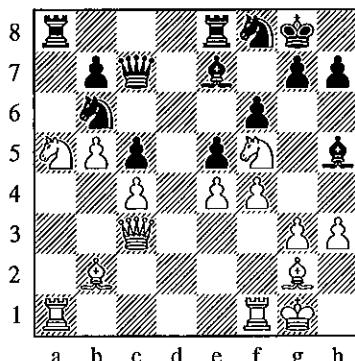
18...axb5 19.axb5 $\mathbb{Q}a7$?! 20. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ was better for White in Movsesian – Gyimesi, Ohrid 2001.



19. $\mathbb{W}c3$ N

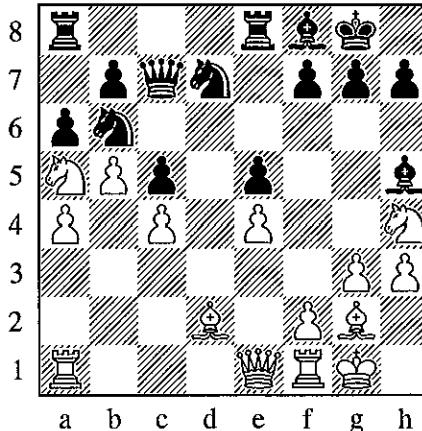
19. $\mathbb{Q}f5$?! is strongly met by 19... $\mathbb{Q}xa4$!
 20. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ axb5 21.cxb5 (21. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ b6 22. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ bxc4 23. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ b5 24. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ and Black's passed pawns on the queenside are dangerous) 21...b6 Black regained the piece with a slightly better position in A. Johansen – Latta, corr. 2010.

19... $\mathbb{Q}e7$! 20. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 21.f4 axb5 22.axb5



22... $\mathbb{Q}e6$! 23.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$! 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4
 25. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$! 26. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ †
 28. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$

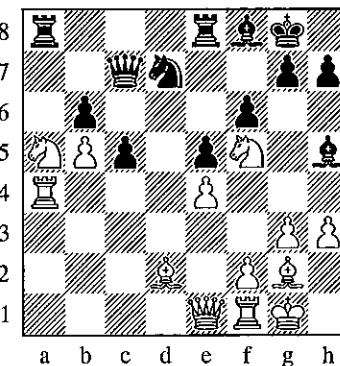
With good positional compensation for the sacrificed pawn.



18...f6 19. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$!

A logical regrouping, which solves the problem of the passive knight on d7.

This time 19... $\mathbb{Q}xa4$?! doesn't quite work:
 20. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$! (20.bxa6 b6 21. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 24. $\mathbb{W}a1$ bxa5 25. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ = is equal) 20...axb5 21.cxb5 b6 This was Moranda – Ragger, Legnica 2013, when White overlooked a strong idea:

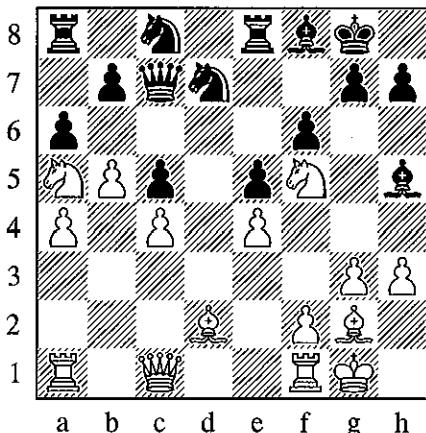


22. $\mathbb{W}b1$! bxa5 23. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ Followed by $\mathbb{Q}e3$ with better chances.

20. $\mathbb{W}c1$

White is transferring the queen to c2.

20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}db6$ leads to roughly equal chances, as the other knight is coming to d6 next.



20...Qf7!N

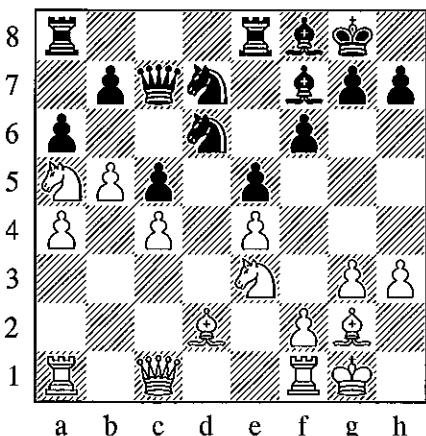
In the only existing game Black played 20...Rd8, which is unnecessary in this position and thus a slight waste of time. 21.Qc2 Qdb6 22.Qe3± Sparacini – Engelberg, corr. 2013.

21.Qe3

The knight is heading for d5, but...

21...Qd6!

The pressure on the b5-pawn makes a difference.



22.Qc2

The previous comment refers to the line 22.Qd5?! Rxd5 when White cannot recapture with the c-pawn.

22...Qb6 23.Rfd1 g6

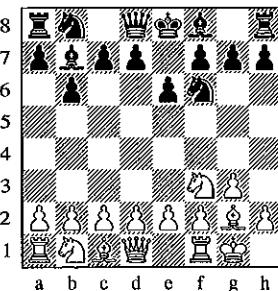
The position is balanced, although it's obvious that a long and complex battle lies ahead.

Conclusion

I hope I have managed to prove that the system beginning with 2...Qg4 is a safe and reliable choice against the Reti. At the same time, this chapter featured some of the most strategically complicated positions in the book, so it's clear that White's opening system should not be taken lightly. Both sides have a wide choice of options and move orders, making it an especially difficult opening to analyse. On the positive side, there are a lot of recurring motifs that crop up again and again, so it should be possible to absorb the main ideas without attempting the impossible task of memorizing all the variations.



1. ♜f3 ♜f6 and 2...b6



2.g3

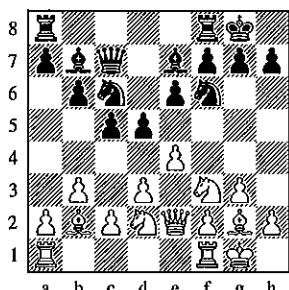
Variation Index

1. ♜f3 ♜f6 2.g3

2...b6 3. ♜g2 ♜b7 4.0-0 e6

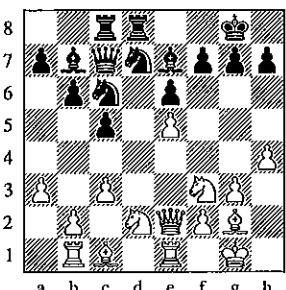
A) 5.b3	389
B) 5.d3 d5	391
B1) 6.c4	392
B2) 6.e4	393
B3) 6. ♜c3	394
B4) 6. ♜bd2 ♜e7 7.e4 c5!?	395
B41) 8. ♜e2	396
B42) 8. ♜e1 ♜c6	398
B421) 9.c3	399
B422) 9.e5 ♜d7	402
B4221) 10.c4	402
B4222) 10. ♜f1	403

A) note to 9.e4



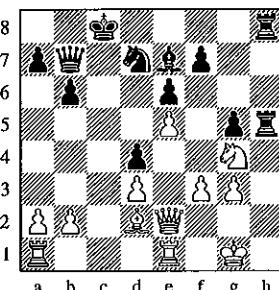
11...d4!N

B421) after 15. ♜b1



15...c4!N

B422) after 21.f3?



21... ♜xe5!!

1.♗f3 ♗f6 2.g3

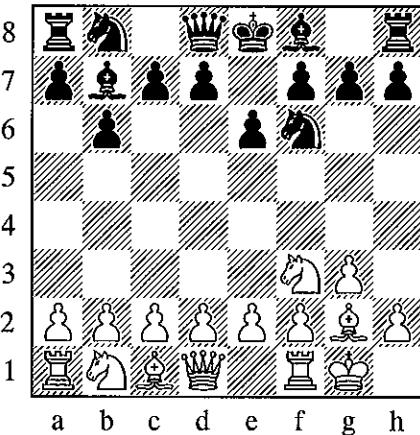
2.c4 b6 will be examined in the next three chapters.

2...b6

This would be the typical choice for Queen's Indian players. Black gets ready to oppose the bishop on the long diagonal.

3.♗g2 ♗b7 4.0–0

Other options, such as 4.c4, 4.d3, 4.d4, and 4.b3, will all transpose sooner or later.

4...e6

In this chapter we will consider A) 5.b3 and B) 5.d3.

5.c4 transposes to variation C of the next chapter.

5.d4 gives Black a choice.

5...♗e7 is playable, when 6.c4 may lead to a normal Queen's Indian.

On the other hand, 5...c5 is another reasonable move, although 6.c4 cxd4 7.♗xd4 leads to a slightly different version of the Hedgehog which is not covered in this book.

A) 5.b3

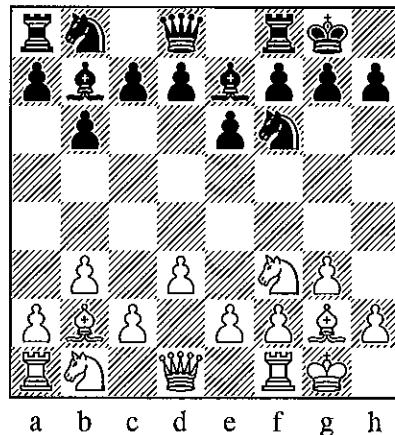
The double fianchetto may well transpose to a later chapter after a subsequent c2-c4. Here we will focus on White's independent possibilities.

5...♗e7 6.♗b2 0–0 7.d3

7.d4 is a version of the Queen's Indian with a delayed c2-c4.

7.c4 leads straight to Chapter 21.

7.e3 c5 8.c4 transposes to variation A of Chapter 21.

**7...d5**

Having made the obvious developing moves, it is time for Black to take some space in the centre.

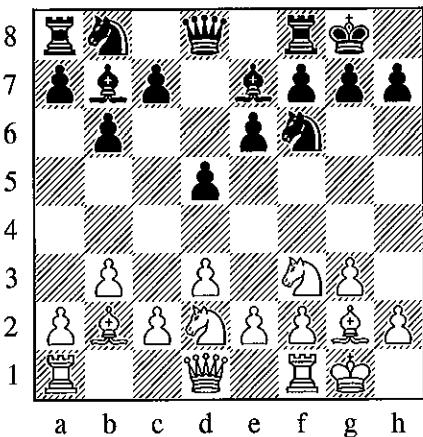
8.♗bd2

8.c4 c5 transposes to variation C of Chapter 21.

8.e3 has little independent significance: 8...c5 9.♗e2 (9.♗bd2 transposes to 9.e3 in the notes to the main line below; 9.c4 transposes to variation C3 of Chapter 21) 9...♗c6 Now White has nothing better than 10.c4, transposing to the note on 10.d3 in variation A of Chapter 21. (Instead after 10.e4 d4! the

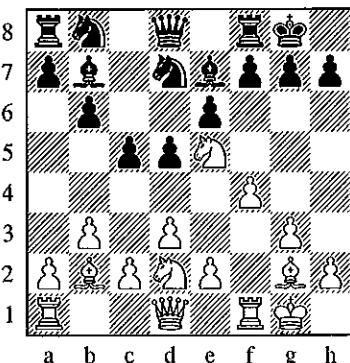
1. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6

bishop on b2 will be misplaced, as in some of the lines below.)



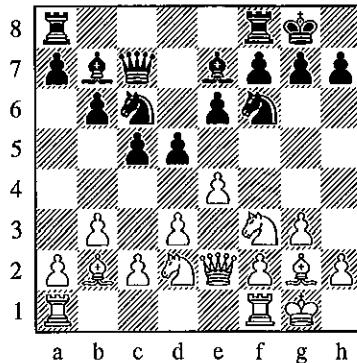
8...c5 9.e4

9. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ is not a bad move, though it is extremely rare. I like 9... $\mathbb{Q}fd7!?$, challenging the enemy knight while keeping the option of developing our other knight to c6. For example: 10. $f4!?$ (10. $\mathbb{Q}xd7N$ is better, though after 10... $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 11. $e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{R}ad8=$ Black cannot be worse)



This position was reached in Clyde – Ouellet Leveille, Montreal 2001, when 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe5N$ 11. $fxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$ would have been good for Black.

9. $e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 11. $e4$ (11. $c4$ transposes to variation C2 of Chapter 21) Now I would like to improve upon Black's play in Nakamura – Simonian, Internet (blitz) 2010, with:



11... $d4!N$ 12. $c3$ $e5$ The position starts to resemble a reversed King's Indian where the bishops on b2 and b7 are both oddly placed, but White's bishop is more of a problem as it is completely shut out of play by the $d4-e5$ pawn wall. Moreover, the earlier $b2-b3$ has weakened White's queenside.

White has also tried:

9. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $e4$ $d4$

Once again, Black takes some space and restricts White's dark-squared bishop.

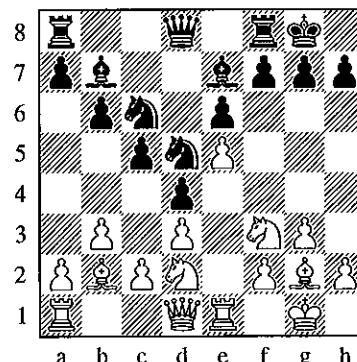
11. $e5$

11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ doesn't make much sense. 11... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $e5!?$ Karlsson – Browne, Gjovik 1983.

11. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $e5!?$ gave Black a good version of the reversed King's Indian in Vaganian – Kurajica, Krk 1976. It's not only the b2-bishop, but also the rook and queen which are somewhat misplaced on the e-file.

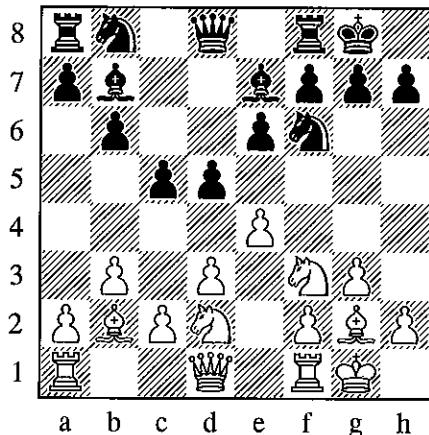
11. $h3$ $e5$ was also pleasant for Black in Onischuk – Buchenau, St Petersburg 2012.

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



12.h4 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ b5 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$
 $dxc3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}df3$ h6 \bar{f}

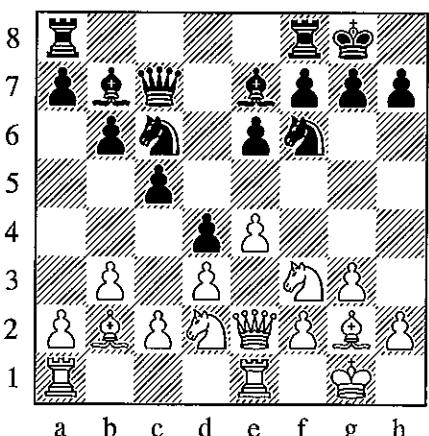
Black had the better chances in Rakhmanov – Ghaem Maghami, Dubai 2014.



9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$

10.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{E}el$ b5 gave Black a good version of a King's Indian Attack in Mrsevic – Pikula, Bar 2007. The dark-squared bishop usually belongs on f4 in such positions, and the b2-pawn may serve as a hook on the queenside.

10... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 11. $\mathbb{E}el$ d4



12.c3!?

12. $\mathbb{Q}f1$?! e5 was better for Black in Koskoska – Skripchenko, Leon 2001, as almost all of

White's pieces are misplaced for the King's Indian set-up.

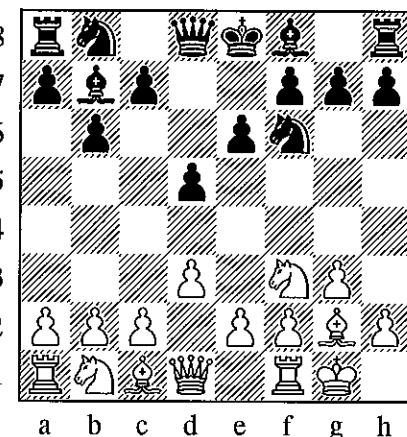
12.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5\bar{f}$ is also good for Black. For instance, 13.h4 transposes to the Rakhmanov – Ghaem Maghami game mentioned above.

The text move was played in Opitz – Bittner, email 2013. My suggestion would be:

12...e5N

With good prospects for Black.

B) 5.d3 d5



We have reached another version of the King's Indian Attack, where White's main options are B1) 6.c4, B2) 6.e4, B3) 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ and B4) 6. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$.

6.b3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 0–0 leads back to variation A.

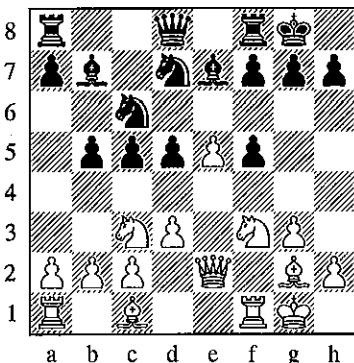
6. $\mathbb{E}el$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7.b3 0–0 8. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ c5! 9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ transposes to the note on 9. $\mathbb{E}el$ in variation A.

6.c3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ c5 will almost certainly transpose to one of the lines beginning with 6. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$, as covered under variation B4 below.

6. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ is not too scary: 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7.e4 0–0 8.e5 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 9. $\mathbb{W}e2$ c5 10.f4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b5

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6

12.f5?! exf5 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ Now Black's play in Haub – Bischoff, Crailsheim 1999, can be improved by means of:



13...a6!N 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}dxe5!$ Intending 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ when Black regains the material with some advantage.

6.a4

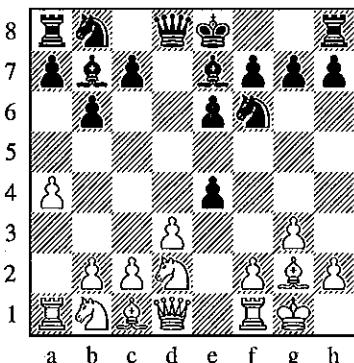
This is also extremely rare. 6...a6 would be fine, but Black can also ignore the pawn with:

6... $\mathbb{Q}e7?$ 7.e4

7.a5 0–0 8. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ c5 9.e4 b5 10.exd5 occurred in Hernando Pertierra – Rausis, Lausanne 2000. Now I prefer 10... $\mathbb{Q}xd5?!$ N 11. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ (or 11. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ a6 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$) 11... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ a6 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and Black is fine.

7...dxe4 8. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$

In D'Amore – Vocaturo, Spoleto 2011, Black should have played:



8... $\mathbb{W}c8!N$

A typical idea, forcing the dxе4 structure.

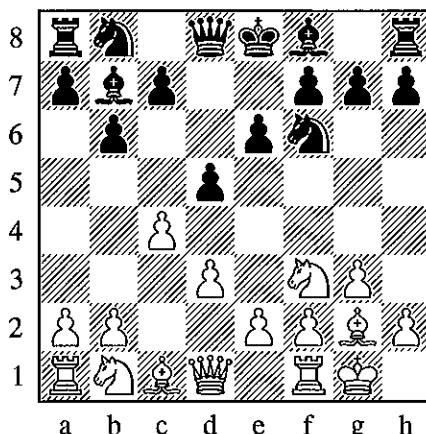
9. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

9.dxe4 0–0 10.e5 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\mp$

9... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 10.dxe4 0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c5 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$

With slightly better chances for Black. The a2-a4 move turns out to be useless.

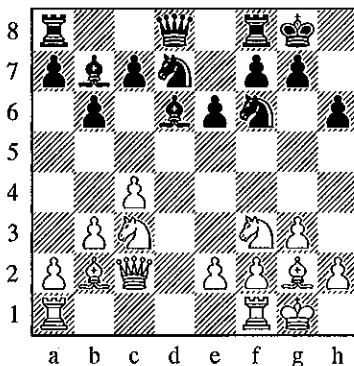
B1) 6.c4



I suggest meeting this move with the rare:

6... $\mathbb{dxc4}?$ 7. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$

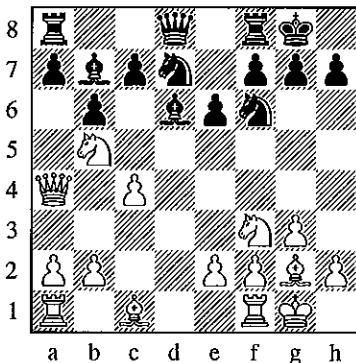
After 7.dxc4, in Teufl – Gaertner, Austria 2004, Black should have played: 7... $\mathbb{Q}d6!N$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0–0 9. $\mathbb{W}c2$ h6 10.b3 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ (11. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ can always be answered by 12...a6! when the c7-pawn is untouchable: 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc7?$ $\mathbb{E}c8\mp$)



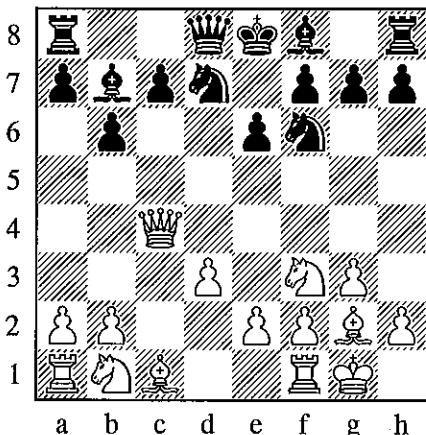
11... $\mathbb{W}b8!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ a6 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$
 $\mathbb{W}b7\text{--}$ Black has no problems equalizing.

7... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 8. $\mathbb{W}xc4$

8.dxc4 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ was played in Todorcevic – Abramovic, Novi Sad 2000. I would like to improve Black's play with:



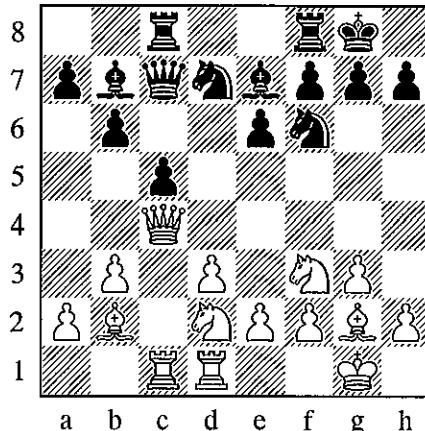
10... $\mathbb{Q}e7\text{!N}$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ a6!= Once again, the c7-pawn turns out to be inedible. For example, 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc7?$ $\mathbb{W}c8\#$, or 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc7?$ $\mathbb{E}c8\#$ trapping the knight.



8...c5 9.b3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{E}c8$
12. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13. $\mathbb{E}ac1$

13.a3 $\mathbb{E}fd8$ was also level in Korchnoi – A. Sokolov, Clermont Ferrand 1989.

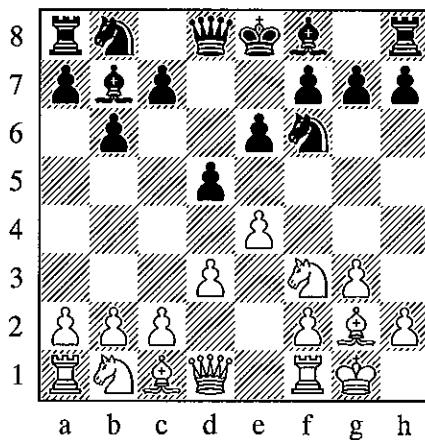
This position was reached in Grachev – Mishuchkov, St Petersburg 2012. I prefer the natural:



13... $\mathbb{E}fd8\text{N=}$

Developing the last piece, with a comfortable position for Black.

B2) 6.e4



This immediate advance doesn't promise anything good for White.

6...dxe4 7. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$

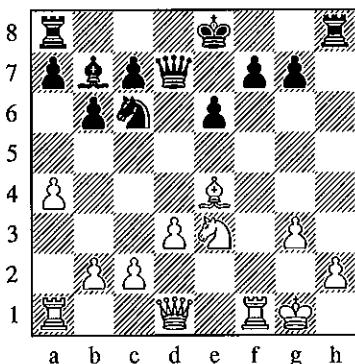
7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ is the alternative, which usually leads to simplifications. 7...h6 8. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 9.dxe4 (9. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 10.dxe4 $\mathbb{E}xd1$ 11. $\mathbb{E}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0–0–0= is also harmless) 9... $\mathbb{E}xd1$ 10. $\mathbb{E}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ Preparing long castling. 11.b3 0–0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{E}g8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ In this comfortable position for Black, a draw was agreed in Yandemirov – Landa, Smolensk 1997.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b67... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$

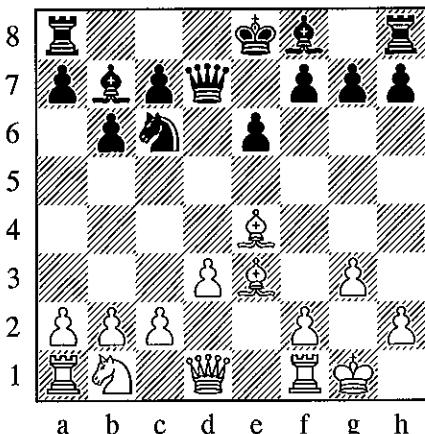
I want to force White to take on e4 right away.

7... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ would allow 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$.**8. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$**

Another game went 10.a4 h5 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ h4 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ hxg3 13. fxg3 $\mathbb{Q}c5\#$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ and a draw was agreed in Giorgadze – Stean, Hastings 1979. However, Black could easily have continued with:



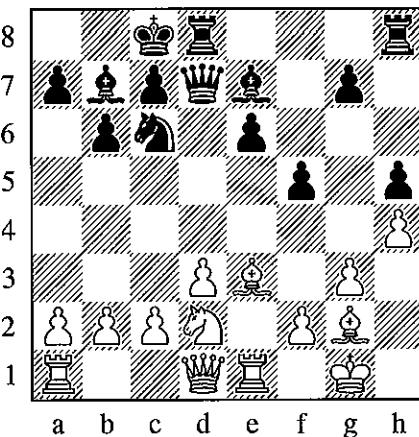
15...f5 16. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ g5# With good attacking chances.

**10...0–0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ f5 12. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ h5 13. h4**

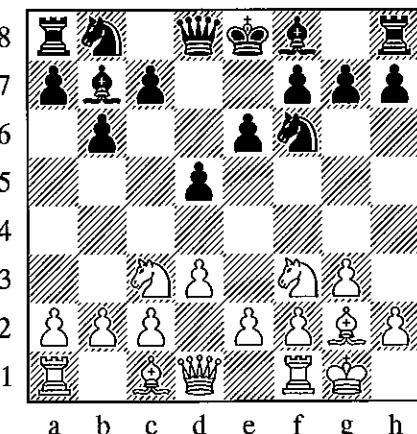
13. $\mathbb{Q}f3N$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. d4 (14. h4 $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$) 14...h4 15. c3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ also gives Black the better chances.

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

13...e5? could also be considered, but I like Black's concept in the game.

14. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ **14...g5! 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 16. $\mathbb{h}xg5$ h4**

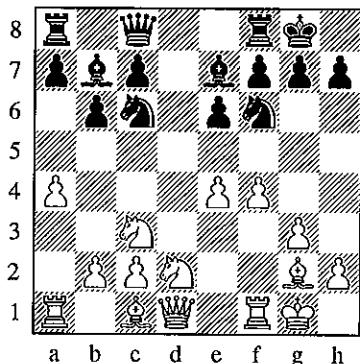
Black had a strong attack in Schilling – Schuster, email 2006.

B3) 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 

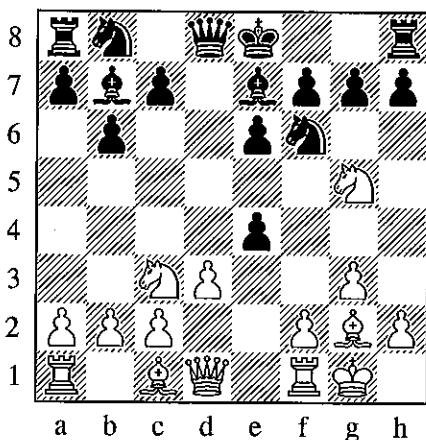
White prepares the e2-e4 trick in a way that enables him to recapture with a knight on that square.

6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7. e4 $\mathbb{d}xe4$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

8.♕d2 0–0 9.a4 ♜c8 10.dxe4 ♜c6 11.f4 was a rather unconvincing plan by White in T.L. Petrosian – Severina, Abu Dhabi 2015, especially after the accurate reply:



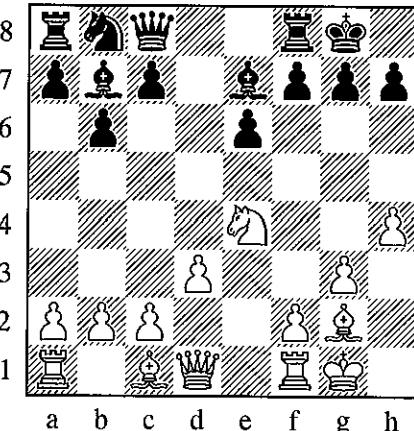
11...♗d8!N 12.e5 ♜d7 13.♗f3 ♜c5 14.♕de4 ♜d4 15.♗f2 ♜f5 16.♗h1 h5† Black is better.



8...0–0 9.♗gxe4 ♜xe4 10.♗xe4 ♜c8 11.h4 11.♗e3 c5 12.♗d2 ♗xg2 13.♗xg2 ♜c6 was more pleasant for Black in Eliskases – Taimanov, Saltsjobaden 1952.

11.♗e1 occurred in Lisitsin – Antoshin, Leningrad 1956. I propose 11...c5!N with the idea of ...♜c6 and Black is fine.

The text move was played in Stefanova – Kosteniuk, Beijing (blitz) 2014. Once again, I prefer:



11...c5!N

Taking some space before bringing the knight to c6.

12.♗f4

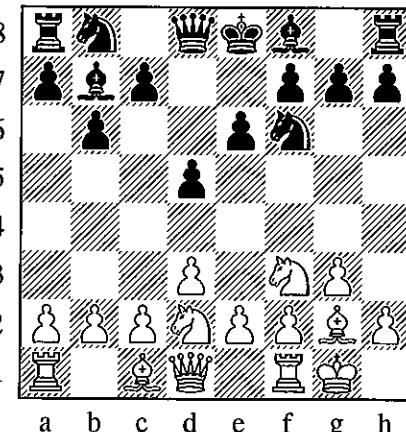
12.♗g5 ♜d7 13.♗e1 ♜c6 is similar.

12...♗d7 13.♗e1 ♜c6

With a good position for Black.

B4) 6.♗bd2

This is the most common way to prepare e2-e4.



6...♗e7 7.e4

7.b3 0–0 8.♗b2 c5 leads back to variation A.

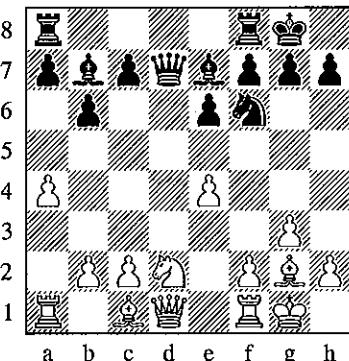
7. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ c5 8. e4 transposes to variation B42 below.

7. $\mathbb{W}e1$ doesn't make much sense as after 7...c5 8. e4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ White will have to play $\mathbb{W}e2$ sooner or later, which will leave him a tempo down on variation B41 below.

7.e3 doesn't have any independent value after 7...c5 8. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9.b3, Inarkiev – Gordievsky, Khanty-Mansiysk 2013, when 9...0–0N 10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ transposes to the note on 9.e3 in variation A.

7. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ looks a little premature. 7... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 9.a4 0–0 10. e4 A weird combination of moves. 10...dxe4! 11. dxe4?!

Now the strongest continuation is:



11... $\mathbb{Q}ad8!N$ (11...e5!? was also more pleasant for Black in Dumitache – Arencibia Rodriguez, Moscow 1994) 12. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ (or 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$) 13. c3 $\mathbb{Q}d7\bar{F}$) 12...e5! \bar{F} and Black is better.

7...c5?!

It is worth comparing this to variation A42 of Chapter 24 on page 494. Here we are playing the opposite side of the position with a tempo less, which is no problem at all, as the extra $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ move takes some useful options away from White.

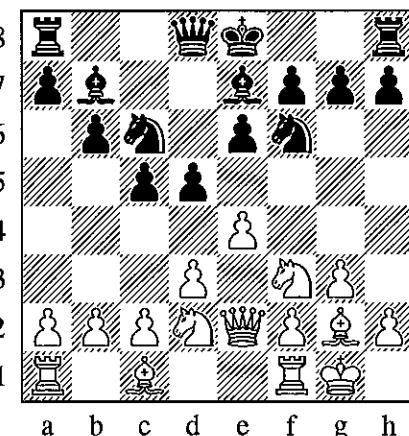
Many moves have been played here, but the two most important options are B41) 8. $\mathbb{W}e2$ and B42) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e1$.

8.c3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ usually transposes to variation B421 after 9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$.

8.e5 doesn't have any independent value, as after 8... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ (or 9. h4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$) 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ we convert to variation B422.

8.exd5 doesn't make much sense as White's main plan is to play e4-e5 and build an attack on the kingside. 8...exd5 9. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ With equal chances in Di Lascio – C. Shytaj, Taranto 2002.

B41) 8. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$



9.c3

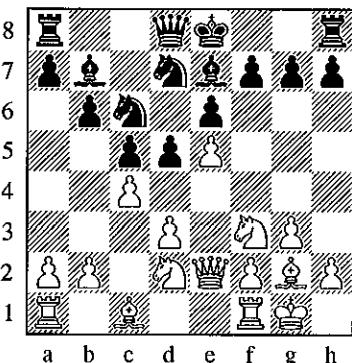
Other options include:

9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ transposes to the note on 9. $\mathbb{W}e2$ in variation B42.

9.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10. c4

10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ transposes to the note on 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ in variation B422.

Now I like the rare:



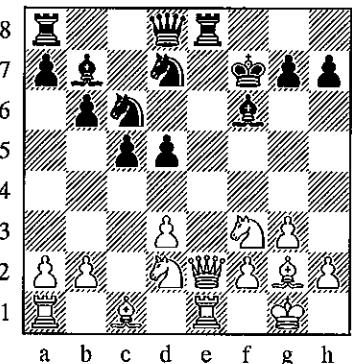
10...0-0 11.Qe1

11.cxd5 exd5 12.e6 fxe6 13.Wxe6† ♕h8
14.Wxd5 occurred in Meyer – Ziller,
Hassloch 1998, when 14...Wc7!N would
have given Black a strong initiative.

11...Qe8!

This is one of the reasons why I like the idea
of castling on the previous move.

12.cxd5 exd5 13.e6 Qf6! 14.exf7† ♕xf7



15.Qg5†

15.Wd1 ♕g8†

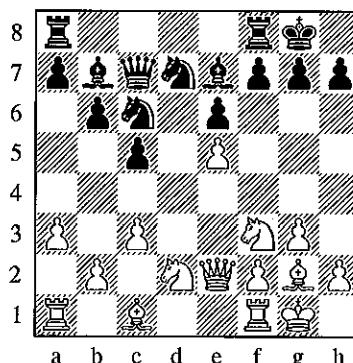
15...Qxg5 16.Wh5† ♕g8 17.Qxe8† Wxe8

18.Qxd5† ♕h8 19.Wxg5 Qf6 20.Qg2 Qd8†

Black is going to win back the d3-pawn,
obtaining slightly better chances.

9...Wc7 10.Qe1

After 10.a3 I want to offer: 10...dxe4?!N
11.dxe4 0-0 12.e5 Qd7

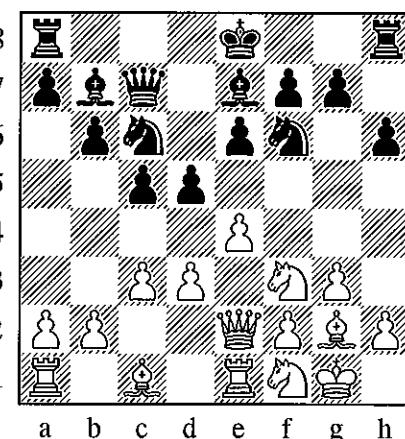


Now White's best bet seems to be 13.Qe1,
transposing to variation B421. (13.Qc4 can be
answered by the typical 13...Qa6! with the idea
of ...Qa5, and Black is doing well.)

10...h6 11.Qf1

11.a3 transposes to the note on 9.a3 in
variation B42.

In the event of the knight retreat, I like the
idea of:



11...d4?!

This idea should always be kept in mind
when the knight has gone to f1.

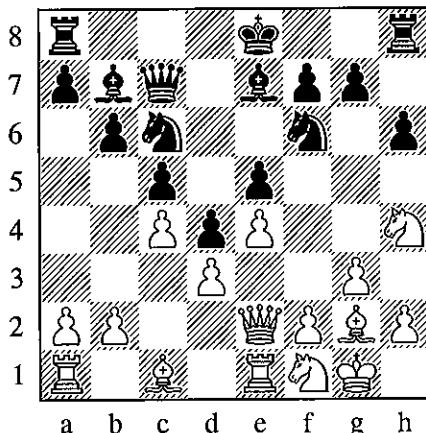
12.c4

12.e5 Qd7 13.h4 b5 transposes to the note
on 10.e5 in variation B421.

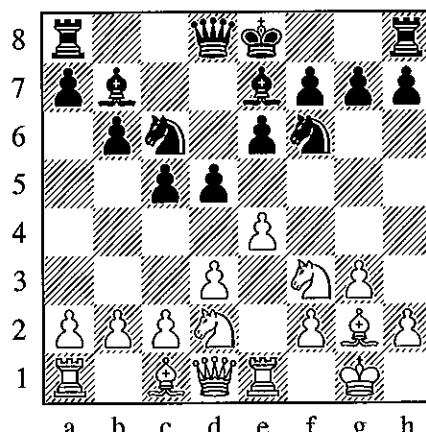
12...e5 13.Qh4

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6

This position was reached in Haddouche – Talbi, Monastir 2014. My suggestion is:

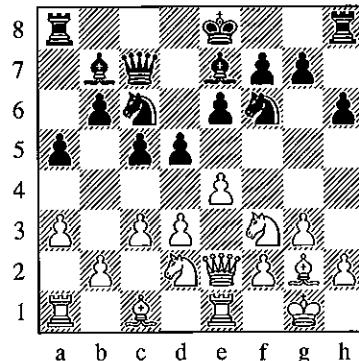
13... $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$ N 14. $\mathbb{Q}f5 \mathbb{Q}f8$

Followed by ...g6 and Black is fine.

B42) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e1 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 

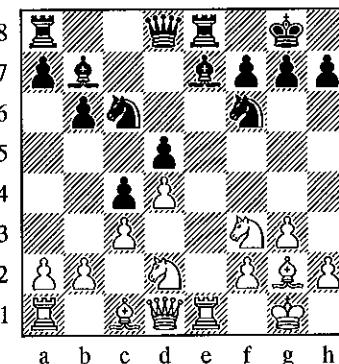
We have arrived at a popular position, which can also arise via different openings, such as the French Defence. White may keep things flexible with B421) 9.c3 or take space in the centre with B422) 9.e5.

9.a3 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ (10.c3 transposes to variation B421) 10...h6 11.c3 a5!? is a sensible precaution to prevent b2-b4. A logical continuation is:



12.exd5 exd5! 13. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 0–0! 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6 \mathbb{W}xc6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ (15. $\mathbb{W}xe7??$ loses to 15... $\mathbb{R}ae8$) 15... $\mathbb{R}fe8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e5 \mathbb{W}c7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g4 \mathbb{W}d7$ and Black was fine in Teran Alvarez – Illescas Cordoba, Dos Hermanas 1998.

9.exd5 exd5 10.d4 can be safely met by 10...0–0, now that White has given up his main attacking plan. 11.c3 $\mathbb{R}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ c4 13. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ Now I prefer:



13... $\mathbb{Q}d6!?$ N Covering the e5-square. (13...b5 14. $\mathbb{Q}e5 \mathbb{Q}xe5$ 15. dxе5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}c5$ was also good for Black in Giffard – Klovans, Cappelle-la-Grande 2005) 14. $\mathbb{R}xe8\#$ $\mathbb{W}xe8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f1 \mathbb{W}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{R}e8=$ Black has a comfortable game.

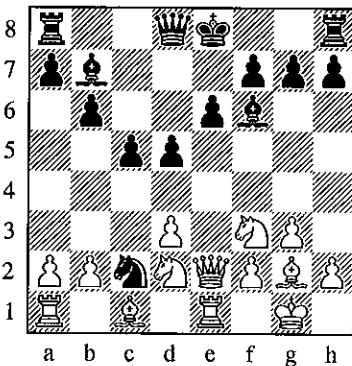
9. $\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{Q}b4!?$

9... $\mathbb{W}c7$ is also fine, and can be used on move 11 as a means of avoiding the early repetition that could occur in the next note.

10.e5

After 10. $\mathbb{W}d1$ Black can, at the minimum, repeat the position with 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 11.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$



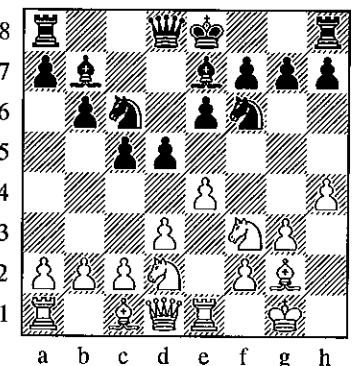
12. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xe1$

13... $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ 0–0 was similar in Stjazhkina – Zhukova, Warsaw 2001.

13...0–0

In Weindl – S. Martin, Germany 2006, Black had quite a healthy version of the material balance of rook and two pawns versus two minor pieces.

9.h4



A pretty rare option.

9... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 10.exd5

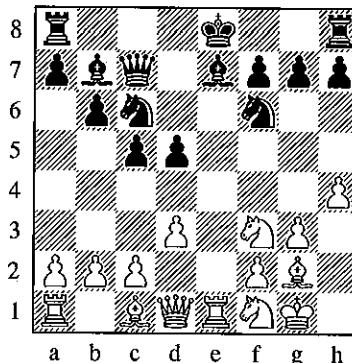
10.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$ transposes to the note on 10.h4 in variation B422.

10.c3 h6 11.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ g5 13.hxg5 hxg5 14.g4 0–0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}dg8$ gave Black

better chances in Ribeiro – Illescas Cordoba, Linares 1995.

10...exd5 11. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

This was Goulenok – Plantet, Montigny le Bretonneux 2005, and now I recommend:



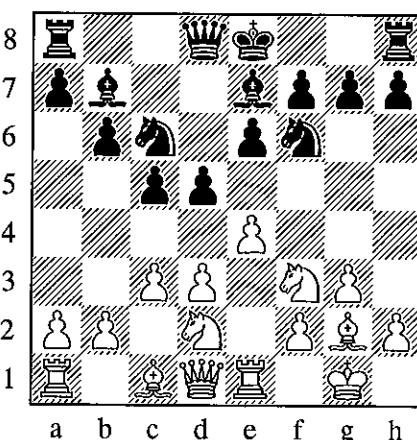
11...0–0!N

This is generally the right way to castle when White has already exchanged on d5.

12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$

Black is certainly not worse.

B421) 9.c3



This flexible move avoids determining White's position in the centre.

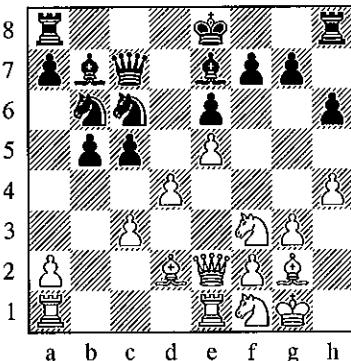
9... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 10.a3

White is getting ready to advance on the queenside if Black castles on that side.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6

10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ leads back to variation B41.

An important game continued: 10.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$ b5 12. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ h6 13. h4 d4!? 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (14. cxd4 cxd4 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$) 14... dxc3 15. bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16. d4 Now I would like to improve upon Black's play in Nepomniachtchi – I. Popov, Jerusalem 2015, with:

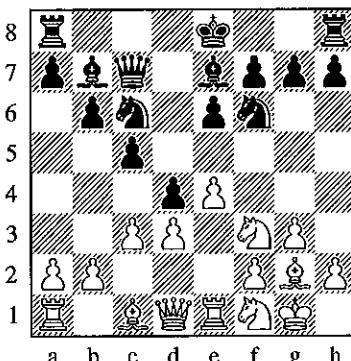


16...a6!N I want to keep the c4-square available for ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ -c4. For example, 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}a5\bar{f}$ with better chances for Black.

10. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

I would like to meet this move with the relatively rare:

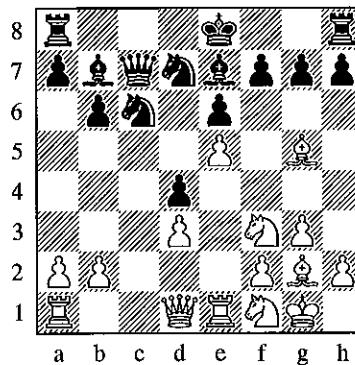
10...d4!?



11.e5

11. c4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ e5 (12... $\mathbb{Q}d6!$?N) 13. h4 0–0 gave Black a good version of a reversed King's Indian in Sofieva – C. Ionescu, Badalona 1994.

11. cxd4 cxd4 12. e5 (12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ e5 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}a4$ 0–0! 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ was winning for Black in Loginov – Vitiugov, St Petersburg 2006) 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$



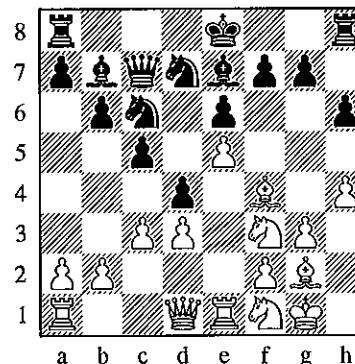
This was Loginov – Yemelin, Budapest 1994, and now the simple 13... $\mathbb{Q}xg5$!N 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ h6 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16. a3 a5 \bar{f} would have given Black a slight edge.

11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ h6 13. h4 occurred in Kochyev – Keitlinghaus, Dortmund 1991, and now I suggest 13...b5!N with a surprising transposition to the Nepomniachtchi – Popov game referred to above.

12...h6!? 13. h4

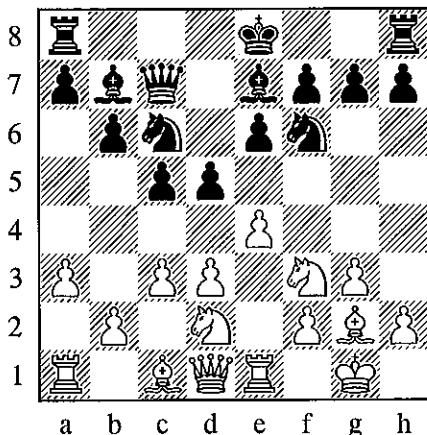
This was Reinke – Kirwald, Germany 1995, and now it looks tempting to continue:



13... $\mathbb{g}5$!N 14. $\mathbb{h}xg5$ $\mathbb{h}xg5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ dxc3

16.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}cxe5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ e5
19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0–0–0!

Black is at least equal.

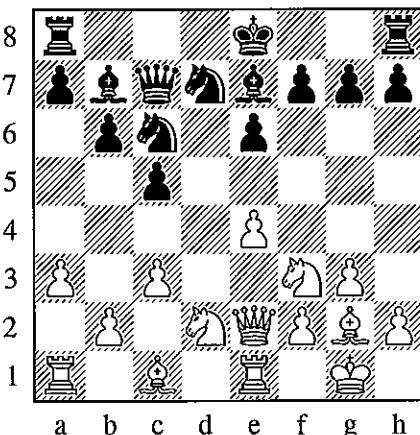


10...dxe4 11.dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$

11...0–0 is likely to lead to the same position after 12.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$.

12. $\mathbb{W}e2$

12.e5 0–0 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ transposes.



12...0–0N 13.e5

This logical move transposes to some existing games.

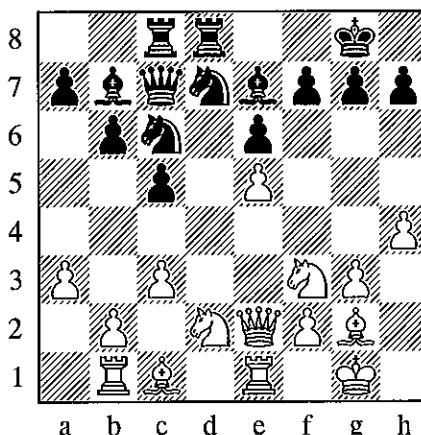
13. $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$ allows 13... $\mathbb{Q}a6!$ when the pin is rather annoying for White. 14.e5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 16.b3 $\mathbb{E}fd8$ Followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}b8-c6$ and Black obtains comfortable play.

13... $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 14.h4

14. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ c4 16. $\mathbb{E}ed1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5\#$ led to a clear advantage for Black in Ziska – Burmakin, Tromso 2010.

14... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 15. $\mathbb{E}b1$

Now I would like to improve upon Black's play in Tibensky – Rigo, Martin 2003, with a positional pawn sacrifice.



15...c4!N 16. $\mathbb{W}xc4$

Or 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6!$ 17.b4 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 18.bxa5 $\mathbb{Q}xc4\#$ and Black's chances are better.

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

Black is going to exploit the weakness of the d3-square.

17. $\mathbb{E}e3$

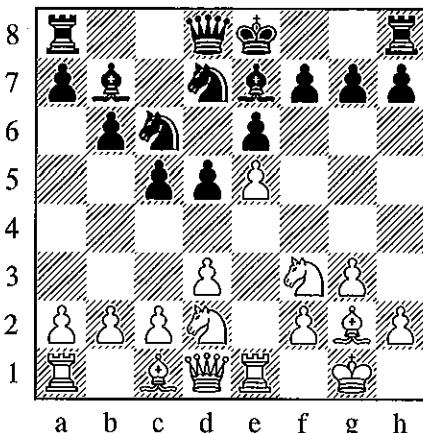
After 17.b4 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 18.b5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7\#$ it is difficult for White to hold all of his weaknesses.

17... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 19. $\mathbb{E}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}g6\#$

Black has more than enough compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6

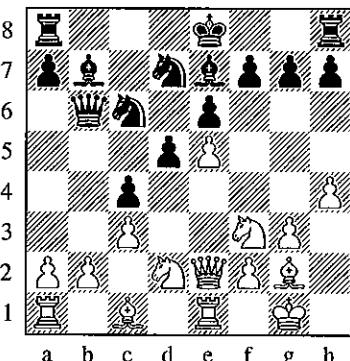
B422) 9.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$



This is a thematic plan for White, who would like to use his extra space on the kingside to build an attack. The only problem here is that we have not yet castled – and actually it is Black who will often have chances to attack on the kingside.

The two main options are **B4221) 10.c4** and **B4222) 10. $\mathbb{Q}f1$.**

10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ b5?! I like this rare move, once again delaying castling. 11.c3 $\mathbb{W}b6$?N (11... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ was also reasonable in Hoge – Korth, Muensterland 2005) 12.h4 c4! 13.dxc4 (also after 13.d4 b4 I prefer Black) 13...bxc4



14.b3 cxb3 15.axb3 a5! with slightly better chances for Black.

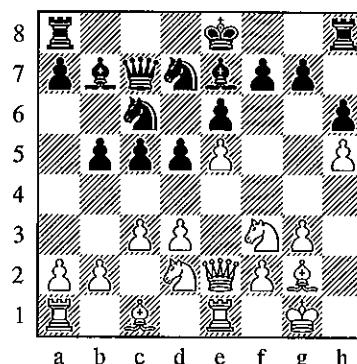
10.h4 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$ h6 12.h5

12. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ transposes to variation B4222 below.

12...b5 13.c3

13. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ b4 14.c4 bxc3 15.bxc3 c4? 16.d4 (or 16.dxc4 $\mathbb{Q}a6$) 16... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}a4$ with some edge for Black in Sullivan – Ivanchuk, Groningen 1986.

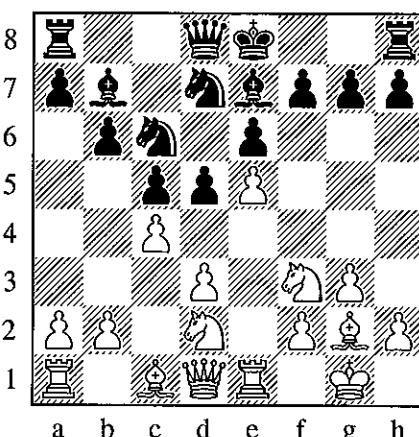
Now I would like to improve upon Black's play in Kozhuharov – Prohaszka, Basel 2012, with:



13...c4!N 14.d4 b4 15. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8\bar{F}$

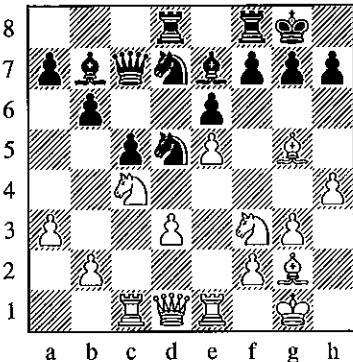
Black obtains good play on the queenside, while it's hard for White to organize much of an attack because the black king is still on e8.

B4221) 10.c4



10...dxc4!! 11.dxc4

11.♕xc4 0–0 12.h4 ♜c7 13.♗f4 ♘ad8
 14.♘c1 ♘b4 15.a3 ♘d5 16.♗g5 occurred in Amin – Burmakin, Cappelle-la-Grande 2010, and now I prefer:

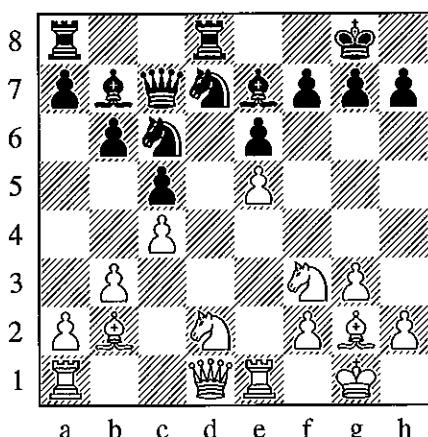


16...h6!N 17.♘d2 (17.♗xe7?! ♘xe7± only helps Black to bring his knight to f5) 17...b5 18.♗a5 ♘a8 With roughly equal chances.

11...0–0!N

For some reason, Black has avoided this move in all preceding games. However, it works fine now that the centre has been opened. It is also noticeable that the white knight would be much better placed on c3 than on d2.

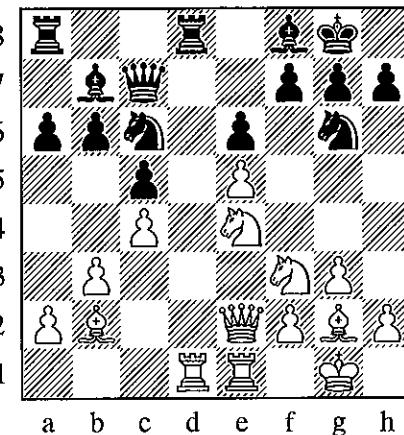
12.b3 ♜c7 13.♗b2 ♘fd8



14.♗e2N

In the only game, which arrived here via transposition, the continuation 14.a3 ♘f8 15.♗c2 ♘d7 16.h4 ♘ad8 led to a good position for Black in Zilka – Michenka, Ostrava 2007.

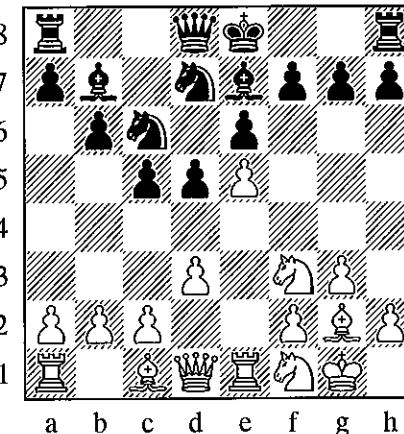
14...♘f8 15.♗e4 ♘g6 16.♗c3 a6 17.♗ad1 ♘f8 18.♗e4



18...h6!=

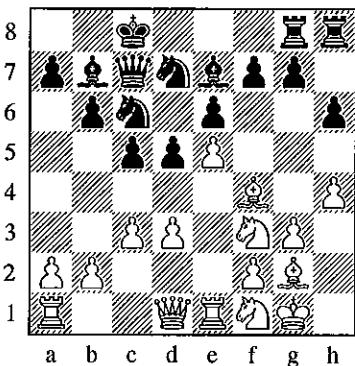
Black is not worse. However, please note that 18...♘gxe5?! would be wrong in view of 19.♗xe5 ♘xe5 20.♗h5 ♘xd1 21.♗xd1 ♘g6 22.♗g5 h6 23.♗xe6 ♗e7 24.♗xf8 ♘xf8 25.♗xb7 ♗xb7 26.♗d6!± when White's bishop is superior to Black's knight.

B4222) 10.♗f1

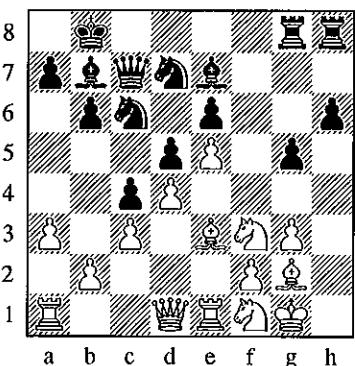


10...Wc7 11.We2

After 11.Qf4 h6 12.h4 0–0–0! Black evacuates the king to the queenside, while the h4-pawn will be used as a hook for our attack. 13.c3 Wdg8 Black has the better attacking prospects, for instance:



14.h5 g5! 15.hxg6 fxg6 16.d4 g5 17.Qe3 Wb8
Good prophylaxis. The king is safer on the b-file. 18.a3 c4!†



19.g4? h5! N† with a strong attack on the kingside. (19...Qf8?! 20.Qg3 Qg6† was also better for Black in Buzbuchi – Eckert, Chicago 1986.)

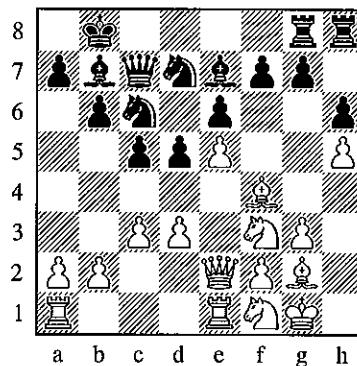
11...h6 12.h4

This has been the usual choice. It is understandable that White wants to hold up the ...g5 advance – but the trouble is that when it finally does arrive, it is likely to come with greater force.

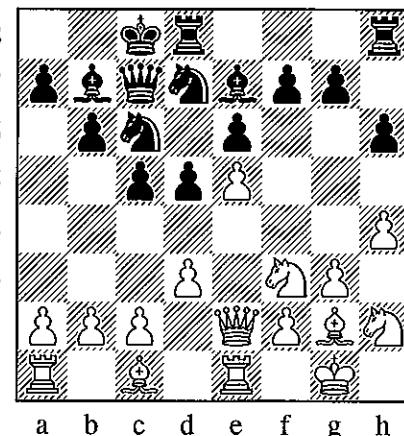
Perhaps White should prefer 12.c3, when 12...0–0–0 13.d4 g5 14.Qe3 Wb8 led to roughly equal chances in Rybansky – Kabanov, Pardubice 2000.

12...0–0–0 13.Q1h2

Another good example continued: 13.c3 Wb8 A useful move, taking the king off the c-file and the c8-h3 diagonal. 14.h5 Wdg8 15.Qf4



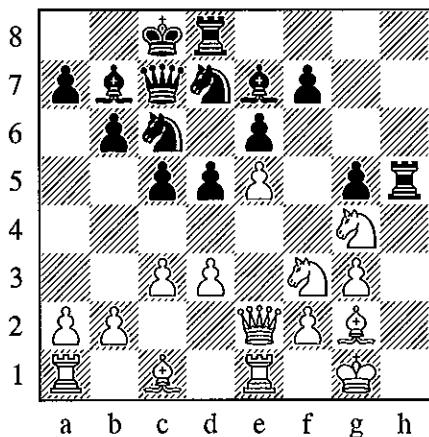
15...g5! 16.hxg6 fxg6 17.d4 g5 18.Qe3 g4 19.Qd2 h5† Black's kingside initiative gave him the better chances in Arzumanian – Stavrianakis, Rethymno 2014.

**13...g5! 14.hxg5**

14.h5 was played in Madina Yadarola – Tristan, Benavidez 2013. Now I would like to offer: 14...Wde8!N Black protects the

e6-pawn and prepares ...f5. For example, 15.♗g4 f5 16.exf6 ♘xf6 17.c4 dxc4 18.dxc4 ♗g7 and the weakness of the e6-pawn is compensated by the activity of Black's pieces.

14...hxg5 15.♗g4 ♘h5 16.c3



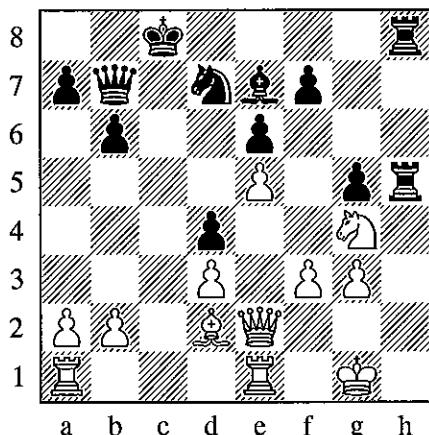
16...d4!

Opening the long diagonal with powerful effect.

17.cxd4 ♗xd4 18.♗xd4 cxd4 19.♗d2 ♘dh8

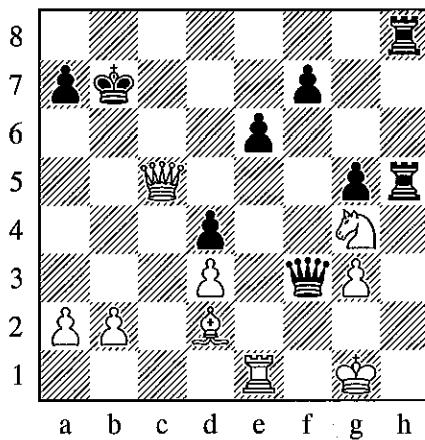
20.♗xb7† ♘xb7 21.f3?

A mistake, but White was in trouble in any case.



21...♗xe5!! 22.♗ac1† ♘c5! 23.♗xe5 ♘xf3 24.♗xc5† bxc5 25.♗xc5† ♘b7

Amazingly, this position has been reached in two games.



26.♗e7†

26.♗b5† ♘a8 27.♗h2 ♘xh2 0–1 was the more recent game, Bednar – Macko, Slovakia 2014.

26...♘a8

The checks had run out, so White resigned in Movsesian – Delchev, Sibenik 2006.

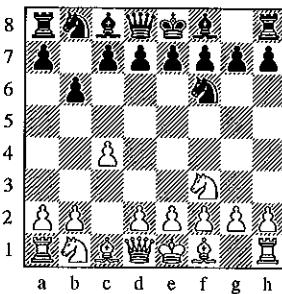
Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with a few different versions of the King's Indian Attack. After posting the bishop on b7, Black can generally get a solid, harmonious position with the simple plan of ...e6, ...d5, ...♗e7 and ...c5. Sometimes he will seize additional space in the centre with ...d4 and ...e5, leading to a reversed King's Indian structure. This is generally most effective when White has placed his bishop on b2 and/or his knight on f1. In the main line after 6.♗bd2 ♘e7 7.e4 c5 followed by ...♗c6, it is especially important for Black to remain flexible and delay castling until it becomes clear which side the king should go. If White blocks the centre with e4-e5, you may get a chance to castle on the queenside and launch a devastating attack, following in the footsteps of Delchev in the model game above.



1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6

2.c4



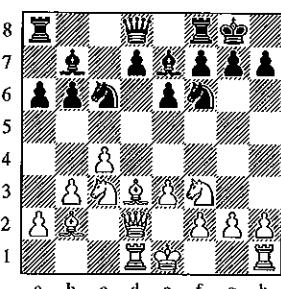
Variation Index

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4

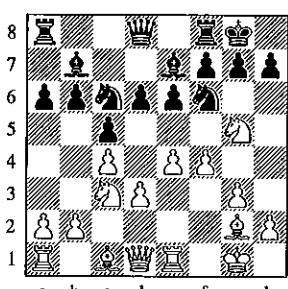
2...b6

A) 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$	407
B) 3.b3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ e6	408
B1) 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$	409
B2) 5.e3	411
C) 3.g3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ e6 5. 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6. d3 0-0 7. e4 d6 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c5	412
C1) 9.b3	415
C2) 9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ a6	417
C21) 10.d4	418
C22) 10.b3	419

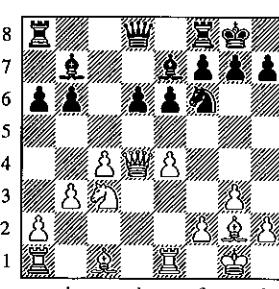
B1) note to 7. $\mathbb{Q}c2$



C) note to move 9



C22) after 13. $\mathbb{W}xd4$



11...b5!N

11...b5!N

13...b5!N

1.♕f3 ♕f6 2.c4 b6

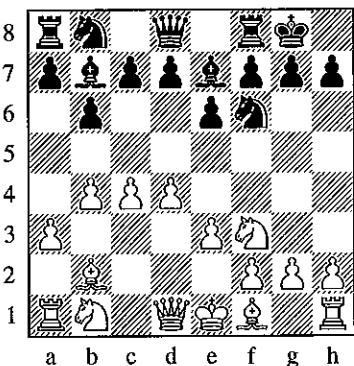
This set-up is a natural fit for Queen's Indian players. We will analyse A) 3.♕c3, B) 3.b3 and C) 3.g3.

3.d4 e6 leads straight to the Queen's Indian.

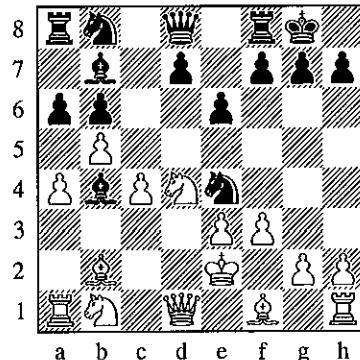
3.d3 prepares e2-e4, but the move doesn't seem to have any independent value and soon transposes to variation C. 3...♗b7 4.e4 (4.♕c3 e6 5.e4 d6 also transposes) 4...d6 5.♕c3 e6 6.g3 ♘e7 7.♗g2 0-0 8.0-0 with the aforementioned transposition.

3.e3 ♘b7 4.♗e2 (4.d4 once again leads to a Queen's Indian after 4...e6) 4...e6 5.0-0 (5.b3 ♘e7 6.♗b2 0-0 7.0-0 comes to the same thing) 5...♘e7 6.b3 0-0 7.♗b2 transposes to variation B2.

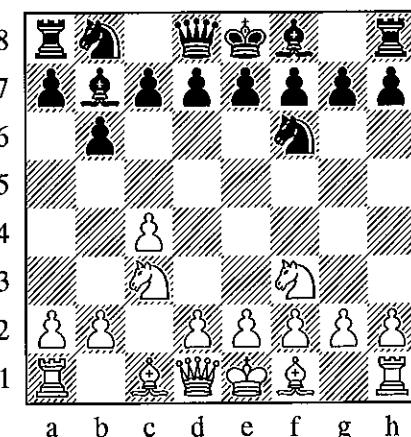
3.b4 is an extremely rare move, which was tested at GM level by Jesus Nogueiras. 3...♗b7 4.♗b2 e6 5.a3 ♘e7 6.e3 0-0 7.d4 This position can be reached via some other openings, including 1.b4. Black's strongest continuation is:



7...c5! 8.b5 a6! Provoking a weakening of the b4-square. 9.a4 cxd4 10.♗xd4 ♘e4! 11.f3 ♘b4† 12.♗e2 Now Black's play in Vladimirov – Magerramov, Riga 1980, can be improved by means of:



12...♗c5!N 13.♗f2 (13.♗c2 ♘a5+) 13...d6+ with a clear advantage for Black.

A) 3.♕c3 ♘b7**4.♗c2**

White prepares to advance his e-pawn two squares.

4.d4 e6 is a Queen's Indian of course.

4.d3 has been covered in the note on 3.d3 above.

4.g3 e6 5.♗g2 is mentioned in the note on 5.♕c3 in variation C, and is likely to transpose to Chapter 22.

4.b4

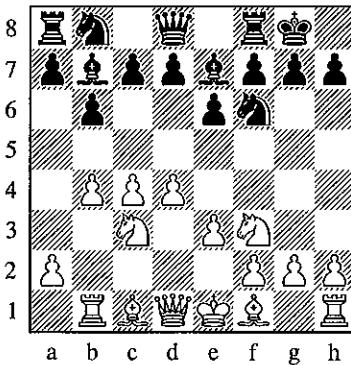
This has been tested just once. An interesting

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6

reply, in the spirit of 1.b4 e5, could be:

4...e5!?

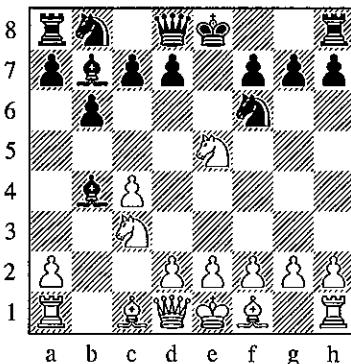
There is absolutely nothing wrong with
4...e6 5. $\mathbb{B}b1 \mathbb{Q}e7$ 6.e3 0-0 7.d4, Zvjaginsev
– Hammer, Kallithea 2008.



And now strong is: 7...d5!=

5. $\mathbb{Q}xe5 \mathbb{Q}xb4$

A possible continuation is:



6. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 0-0 7.e3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}c5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{Q}ce4$

10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4 \mathbb{Q}xe4$ 11. 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$

With roughly equal chances.

4.e3

This move order doesn't seem to have any independent value.

4...e6 5. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

5.d4 is a Queen's Indian.

5.b3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ transposes to variation B1.

5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6.0-0 0-0 7.b3

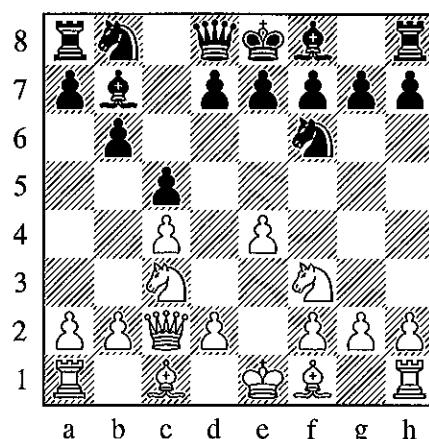
7.d4 on this or the previous move would transpose to the Queen's Indian.

7...c5 8. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

We have transposed to variation B1.

4...c5 5.e4

Now I prefer the rare:



5... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$

Taking control over the d4-square.

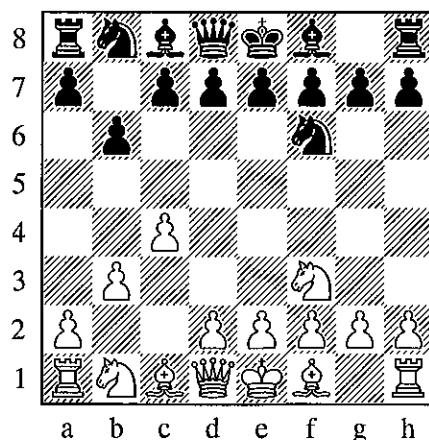
6.d3

6.e5?! is dubious as after 6... $\mathbb{Q}h5\#$ the e5-pawn is getting weak.

6...e6 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{Q}e7$ 8.0-0 0-0 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ d6#

Black was better in Zhukhovitsky – Krutyanski, Moscow 1964.

B) 3.b3



This is a relatively rare option. White does not seem to be pushing for an opening advantage, but just to get a playable position.

3... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

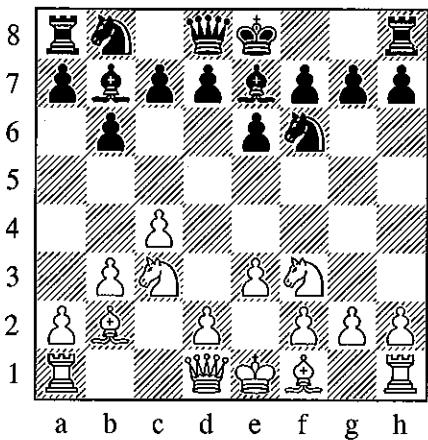
4.e3 e6 is likely to transpose, as the bishop will surely go to b2 in the near future.

4...e6

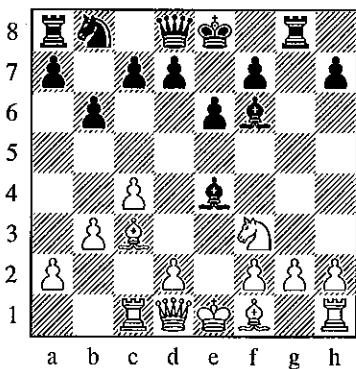
White's two main options are B1) 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ and B2) 5.e3.

5.g3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ transposes to the note on 5.b3 in variation C.

B1) 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6.e3



6.e4?! is a questionable attempt to unbalance the game. 6... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ occurred in Markovic – Vukanovic, Niksic 1997, and now I prefer:



10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$!N 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ Black intends to castle on the queenside, obtaining an edge thanks to the weird position of the white pieces.

6...c5 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

I also considered:

7.d4 cxd4 8. $\mathbb{W}xd4$?

This recapture is extremely rare.

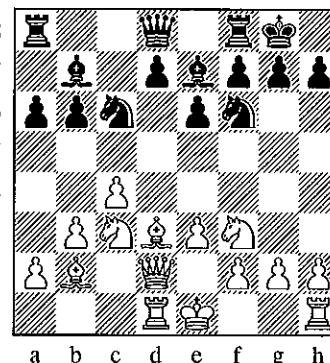
8.exd4 d5 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ occurred in Avrukh – Smirin, Netanya (blitz) 2009, when 9...dxc4!N 10.bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11.d5 (or 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$) 11... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ would have given Black the upper hand.

8...0–0 9. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

Safer is 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d6 10. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11.0–0 a6 12.h3 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ with roughly equal chances, Wegerer – Othman, Dubai 2002.

9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{W}d2$ a6 11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

In Forintos – Csom, Budapest 1973, Black missed a strong idea:



11...b5!N

The point is revealed after:

12.cxb5 axb5 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$! 14.a4 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$!

With some initiative for Black.

7...0–0 8.0–0 d5 9.cxd5

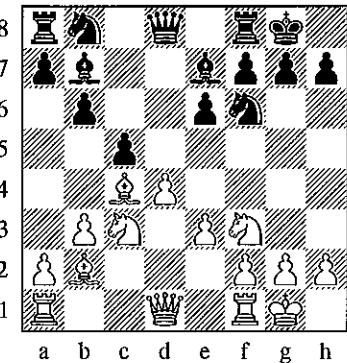
9.d4 dxc4?!

This pretty rare move seems to be the most accurate, as 9...cxd4 gives White the additional option of 10. $\mathbb{W}xd4$!?

10. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$

10.bxc4 cxd4 11.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}c6=$ leads to a comfortable position for Black, as the c3-knight would be better on d2 in this structure.

10.dxc5 cxb3 11.cxb6 bxa2 12.bxa7 $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ is completely equal.



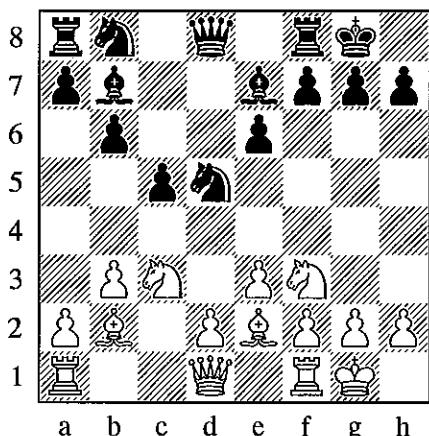
10...cxd4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

11. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ is a level endgame.

11... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$

With a balanced position in Neelotpal – Hera, Ranshofen 2012, and some other games.

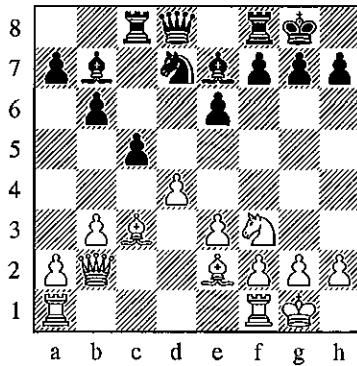
9... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$



10. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

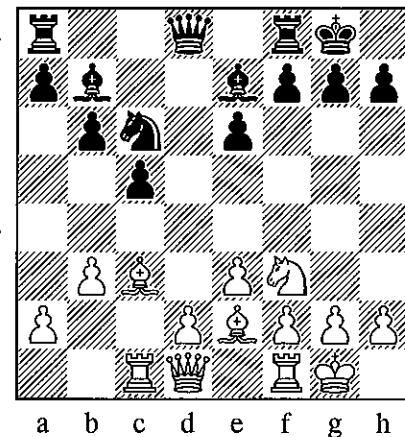
After 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 11. d4 there are a few ways to equalize, but the natural 11... $\mathbb{Q}d8N$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7=$ would be my choice.

10.d4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ Black develops flexibly. 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}b2$ Luce – James, Hastings 1995. The easiest path to equality is:



13... $\mathbb{Q}f6!?$ N 14. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ cxd4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}e7=$

10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$

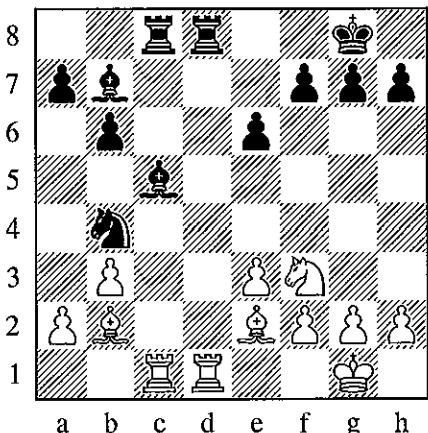


12.d4

12. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}b1$ (or 14. $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15. dxc3 $\mathbb{W}e7=$ Andersson – Hennings, Sochi 1973) 14... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15. dxc3 $\mathbb{W}e7$ was level in Becerra Rivero – Akopian, Lawrence 2014.

12... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 13. dxc5?!, $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}fxd8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$

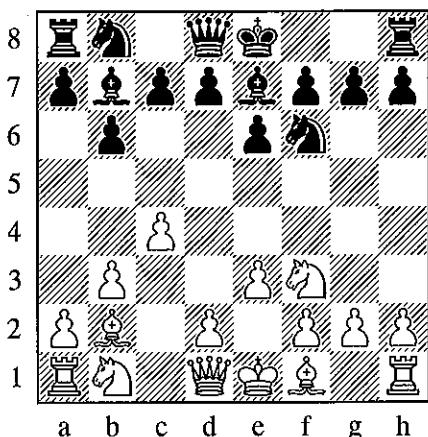
We have been following Averkin – Karpov, Moscow 1973, when the future World Champion could have set some problems with:



16... $\mathbb{Q}xd1\#$?! N 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$

Black's pieces are more active, and he is ready to meet 18.a3?! with 18... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$!.

B2) 5.e3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$



6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ leads back to variation B1 above.

If White instead tries 6.d4 then the immediate 6...c5! makes a lot of sense (6...d5 is also playable of course). 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (7.d5?! does not work due to 7...exd5 8.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$? $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 0–0+) 7...exd5 8.cxd5 d5 We have reached another version of the 4.e3 Queen's Indian.

6...0–0 7.0–0 c5 8.d4

8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ once again converts to variation B1.

8.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9.d3 d5 10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ is covered under 8.d3 below.

8.d3 is too soft to set any problems. 8...d5 9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ (9.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ was comfortable for Black in Garifulin – S. Pavlov, Odessa 2010) 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ Black was fine in Andersson – Ribli, Las Palmas 1974.

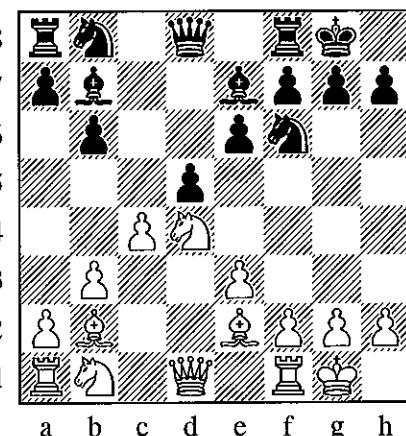
8... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

9.exd4 d5 gives Black a good version of the 4.e3 Queen's Indian, as White's light-squared bishop is on e2 instead of the more active d3-square.

9. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ is virtually untested. A sensible continuation is 9...d6 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ (11. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ transposes to the Wegerer – Othman game in the notes on page 409) 11...a6 with roughly equal chances.

9...d5?!

Usually Black prefers 9...a6.



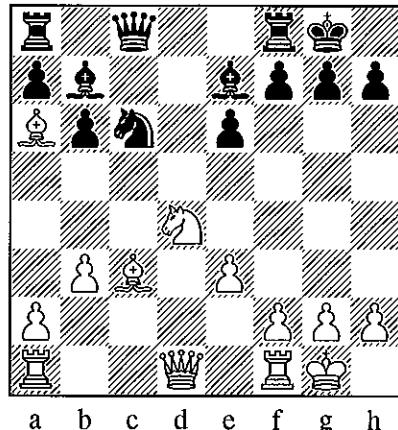
10.cxd5

Another sensible continuation is: 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (Also after 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{W}b8=$ Black has

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6

no problems) 12... $\mathbb{B}c8$ 13.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ exd5 17. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ f6 18. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{E}fd8=$ White had no chance to exploit the IQP in Von Kiedrowski – Warnk, Moerlenbach 2004.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}a6$ $\mathbb{W}c8$

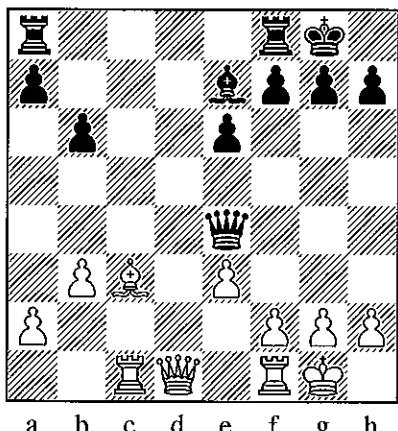


14. $\mathbb{Q}xb7!?$ N

14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}g4$ g6 was equal in Dittmar – Struk, Oberwart 2002, as White had no way to exploit the weakening of the a1-h8 diagonal.

14... $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 16. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{W}e4!$

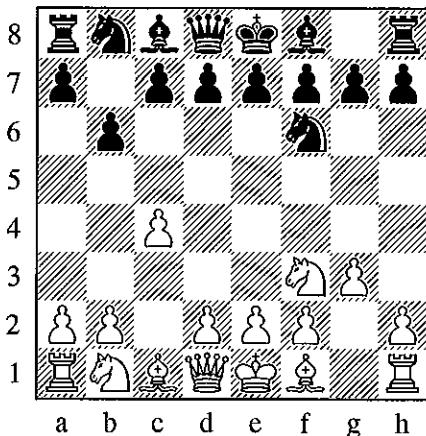
Preventing $\mathbb{W}g4$.



17. $\mathbb{W}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 18. $\mathbb{E}cd1$ $\mathbb{W}fc8=$

Black is fine.

C) 3.g3



If White intends to play in the style of the English Opening (i.e. avoiding the Queen's Indian transposition with an early d2-d4) then this is his most logical and challenging way of doing so.

3... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

4.d4 e6 is the Queen's Indian again. (4...g6!? is an independent alternative which has become quite popular lately.)

4...e6

This is the typical move, staying on track for a Queen's Indian in the event that White plays a quick d2-d4.

5.0-0

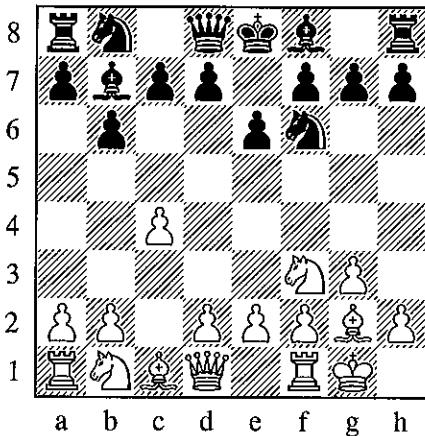
This is the most flexible choice as White is unlikely to do without it, while Black now has to choose a set-up.

After 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ play is likely to transpose, either to Chapter 22 after 6.0-0, or to the Queen's Indian after 6.d4.

5.b3 doesn't have any independent value and after 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 0-0 (or 6...c5

7.0–0 0–0) 7.0–0 c5 we have transposed to Chapter 21.

I also considered 5.d3, but after 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (6.0–0 0–0 and 6.e4 d6 7.0–0 0–0 both transpose to our main line) 6...0–0 7.e4 c5 8.0–0 d6 we eventually convert to variation C.



5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Now 6.d4 is the usual Queen's Indian transposition.

Apart from that, 6.b3 is examined in the next chapter, while the big main line of 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ can be found in Chapter 22. In the remainder of this chapter we will consider the relative sideline of:

6.d3

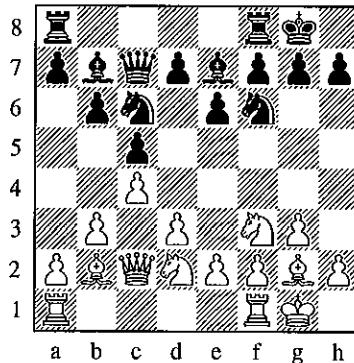
This was introduced in the 1920s by Richard Reti, who won at least a few games with it. White's idea is to play e2-e4 and block Black's light-squared bishop.

6...0–0

The most flexible.

7.e4

7. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ c5 8.b3 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{W}c2$ occurred in Jobava – Jenni, Yerevan 2000, and now I prefer:



10... $\mathbb{Q}b4!N$ 11. $\mathbb{W}b1$ $\mathbb{W}fd8$ Provoking 12.a3, and after 12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$ d5= Black is fine.

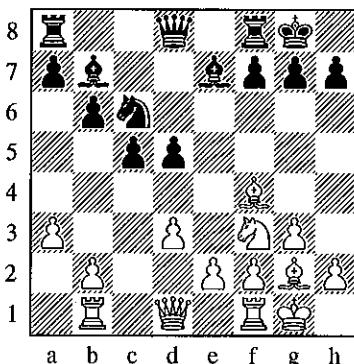
White has also tried:

7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c5 8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

8.e4 d6 transposes to our main line.
8...d6 9.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{W}b1$ d5 11.cxd5

11. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}c8!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 13.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ gave Black a good position in Rajabi Hezar – Ghaem Maghami, Teheran 2005.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5



13.d4!N

13. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ from Lombard – Lehmann, Stary Smokovec 1969, can be met by 13... $\mathbb{Q}d4!N$, transferring the knight to e6, when only Black can be better.

13...c4! 14.b3 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 15.bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$

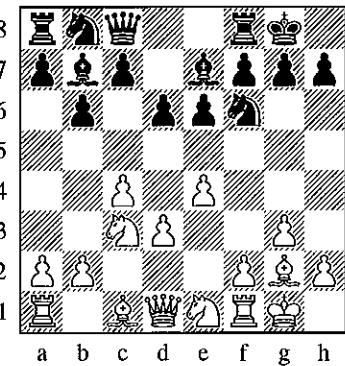
With roughly equal chances.

7...d6 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

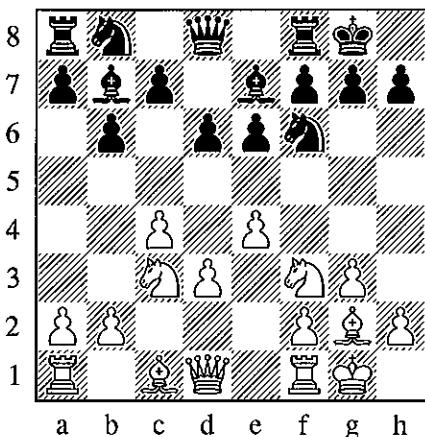
8. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ creates a threat of 9.e5, so I would like

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6

to offer a simple way to prevent it. 8... $\mathbb{W}c8!N$ Protecting the b7-bishop. (8... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 9.d4 c5 10.d5 was slightly better for White in Speelman – H. Olafsson, Hastings 1990) 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$



9...c5! As soon as White is ready to play d3-d4, Black takes this square under control. 10.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13.f4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 14.b4 $\mathbb{E}b8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ a6 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}c7=$ Black is by no means worse.

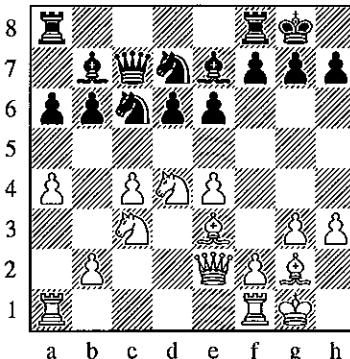


8...c5

White sometimes plays C1) 9.b3 but the main line is C2) 9. $\mathbb{E}e1$.

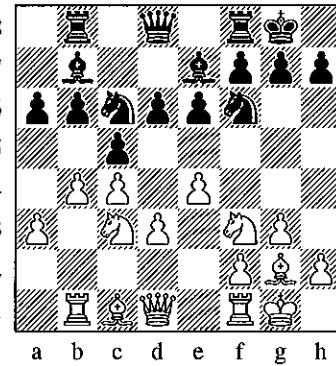
9. $\mathbb{W}e2?!$ loses control over d4. 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10.h3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}de5\bar{F}$ and Black was better in Kallio – Ahlander, Stockholm 1999, thanks to his control over the central dark squares.

9.h3 a6 The ideas behind this move are to secure the c7-square for the queen and to prepare ...b5. 10.a4 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13.d4 cxd4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ Beliavsky – S.B. Hansen, Germany 2004. Now I prefer the direct:



14... $\mathbb{E}ac8!N$ 15.b3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 17. $\mathbb{E}ab1$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ and Black is fine.

9.a3 prepares a queenside expansion. 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{E}b1$ a6? 11.b4 $\mathbb{E}b8$



12.h3 (12. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13.b5 axb5 14.cxb5 was Meister – Plaskett, Internet 2007, and now Black would be better after the accurate 14... $\mathbb{Q}d4!N\bar{F}$) 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ b5 Black had a comfortable position in Korchnoi – Andersson, Banja Luka 2007.

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

This extravagant move has twice been played by Morozevich. White's idea is to advance the f-pawn, rather like the 9.Qe1 line analysed below.

9...Qc6

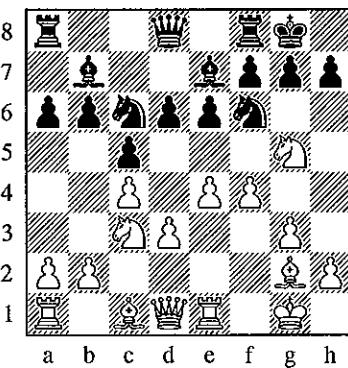
I prefer this over 9...Qfd7, as seen in Morozevich – Lutz, Biel 2003.

10.f4 a6!

10...Qd7 occurred in Morozevich – Sargissian, Yerevan 2008. Once again though, I want to move forwards rather than backwards...

11.Qe1

11.Qf3 b5! 12.cxb5 axb5 13.Qxb5 Wb6 14.a4 Qa6 15.Qc3 Qb4 gives Black a strong initiative for the sacrificed pawn.



11...b5?N

11...Wc7 was playable but less interesting in Murden – Andeer, corr. 2014.

11...h6 12.Qf3 b5 13.cxb5 axb5 14.Qxb5 Wb6 15.a4 Qa6 is another version of the same idea.

12.cxb5 Qd4?

12...axb5 13.Qxb5 Wb6 14.a4 Qb4 is also interesting.

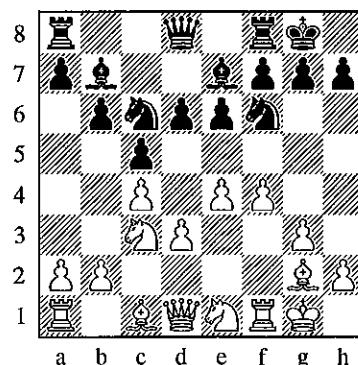
13.bxa6 Qxa6=

Black has promising play for a pawn.

9.Qe1

This is similar to the previous line, in that White prepares to advance his f-pawn but reduces his control over the important d4-square.

9...Qc6 10.f4



10...a6! 11.g4?

With the knight on g5 this move would not make any sense.

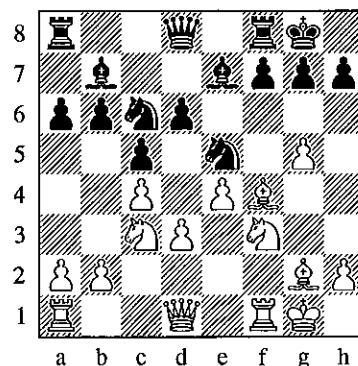
11...Qd7 12.Qf3

12.g5 Qd4, with the idea of ...b5, was also fine for Black in Baart – Borm, Velp 1977.

12...e5? 13.g5

13.f5 would be answered by 13...Qd4† with good control over the dark squares.

13...exf4 14.Qxf4 Qde5

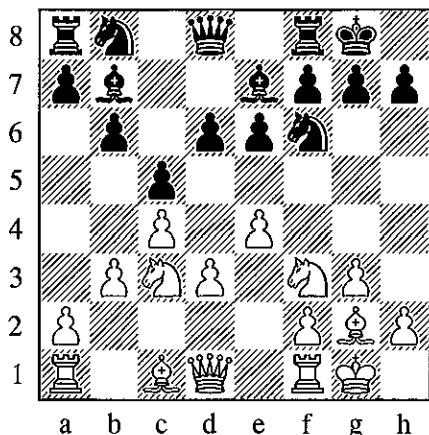


15.Wd2 Qxf3† 16.Qxf3 f6!

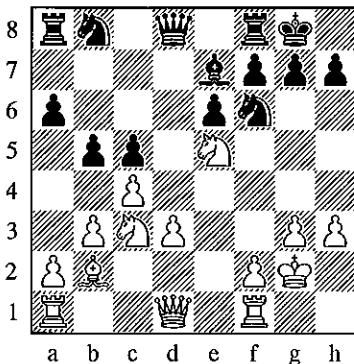
Black was taking over the initiative in Dzindzichashvili – Browne, Tilburg 1978.

C1) 9.b3

White proceeds quietly, solidifying his queenside before opening any lines in the centre.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b69...a6 10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

10.h3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$! is an interesting way of preparing queenside action. 11. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ b5 12.e5 dxе5 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ Now I would like to improve Black's play from Portisch – Yudasin, Manila 1990, with:



14... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$!N 15.d4 (15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$) 15... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 16. dxе5 bxc4 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 18. bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ With an equal position.

10... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

This is a pet line of the Scottish GM Colin McNab.

11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. dxс5?! bxc5 was better for Black thanks to the weak dark squares in McNab – Adams, Dublin 1993, although I like 14...dxс5?!N= even more.

11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$!?

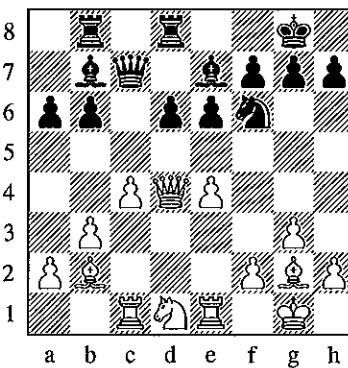
11... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$? also leads to a typical Hedgehog position.

12. d4 cxd4 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

16. $\mathbb{Q}ed1$ occurred in Portisch – Andersson, Wijk aan Zee 1978, when 16... $\mathbb{Q}a8$!N= would have been a nice way of preparing ...b5 at some point.

Another game continued 16.h3 $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ with roughly equal chances, Kirov – Kharitonov, Sochi 1979.

The text move was played in Yermolinsky – Urday Caceres, New York 1993. My preferred continuation would be:

16... $\mathbb{Q}e8$!N

Intending ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$. A possible continuation is: 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}bc8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ =

11... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$!

12... $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ was the less accurate continuation of McNab – Khantuev, Coulsdon 2006.

13. $\mathbb{Q}cd1$!?

Preparing d3-d4 seems like the only ambitious try for White.

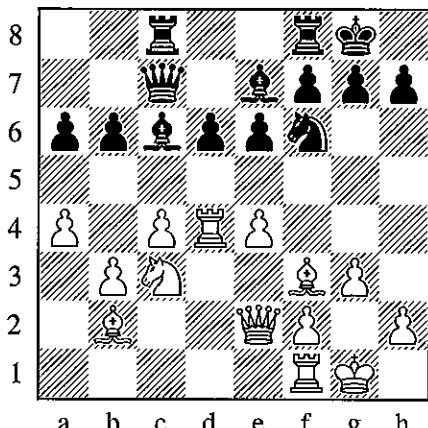
13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ was at least equal for Black in Djosic – Todorovic, Paracin 2011.

13... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ † 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. a4

15.d4 cxd4 16.Qxd4 b5 gives Black comfortable play.

15...Qac8 16.d4 cxd4 17.Qxd4

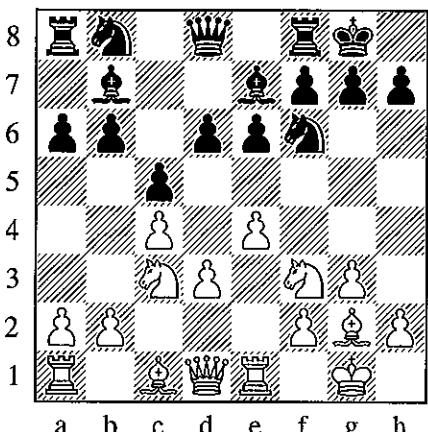
White has prevented ...b5 for now, but Black still has a comfortable game after something like:



17...Qd7 18.Qfd1 Qfd8 19.Qg2 Qc5 20.Qc2 Qf6 21.Qd2 Qe7=

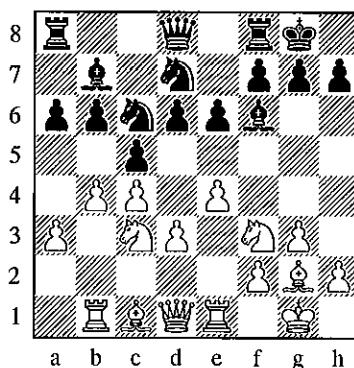
With equal chances.

C2) 9.Qe1 a6



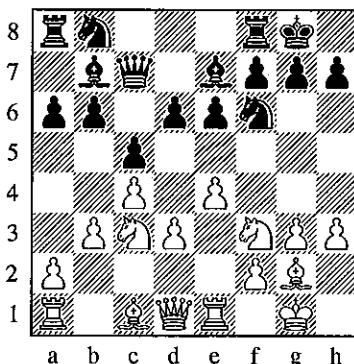
And now White has a choice between the immediate C21) 10.d4 and the preparatory C22) 10.b3.

10.a3 Qc6 11.Qb1 Qd7 12.b4 Qf6!? underlines the weakness of the dark squares. (12...Qde5!? was a good alternative seen in Ushenina – Hou Yifan, Beijing 2013)



13.Qd2 Qb8† Black was positionally better in Arkell – Gordon, North Shields 2012.

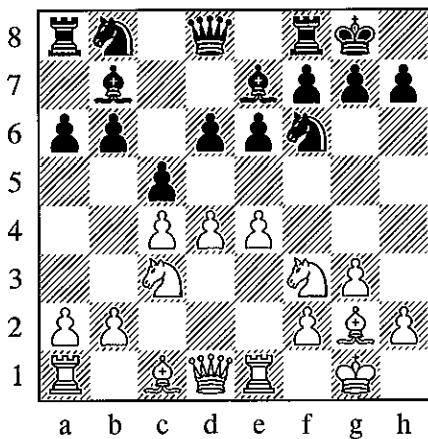
10.h3 Qc7 This move is directed against d3-d4. 11.b3 Hort – Koneru, Marianske Lazne 2010. Now I would like to offer:



11...Qfd7!N Black is preparing ...Qf6 to take advantage of the weakened dark squares, while also making it difficult for White to advance the d-pawn. 12.Qe3 (12.d4 cxd4 13.Qxd4 can be answered by 13...b5!) 12...Qe5 13.d4 Qxf3† 14.Qxf3 cxd4 15.Qxd4 b5! With a fine position for Black.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6

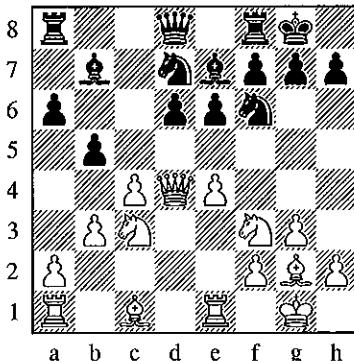
C21) 10.d4



This is a sensible enough move; the only problem is that White will be a tempo down on a theoretical position due to the time spent on d2-d3-d4.

10...cxd4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

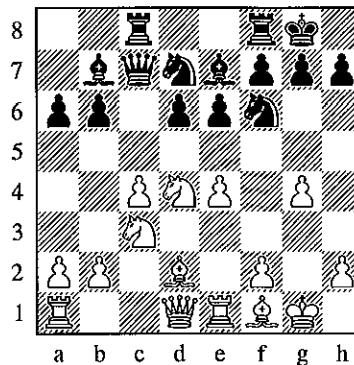
11. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 12. b3 allows Black to take advantage of his extra tempo with: 12...b5!N (12... $\mathbb{W}c7$ was roughly equal in Larsen – Suba, Las Palmas 1982)



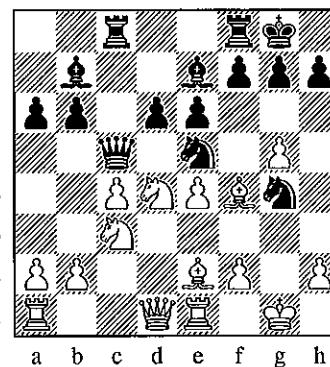
13. cxb5 (13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ b4 14. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ e5 is also better for Black) 13...axb5 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$!F Black's central pawns are worth more than White's flank pawns.

11... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$

12. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 14. g4?! occurred in Alburt – Shamkovich, Philadelphia 1989, when Black's play can be improved with:



14... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ N 15. g5 $\mathbb{Q}fg4!$! The knight is stranded behind enemy lines, but it gives Black a lot of tactical resources. 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (16. h3 $\mathbb{W}c5!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4!$ F illustrates Black's idea) 16... $\mathbb{W}c5!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

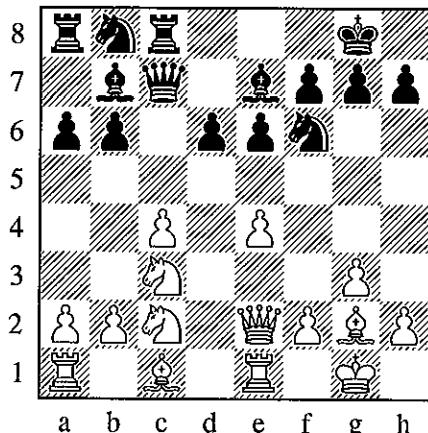


17... $\mathbb{Q}g6!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 20. f4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ f5!F and White's weaknesses start to tell.

12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ may be White's best, although it reaches a well-known position where it is normally White to move. Black's extra tempo should be enough to equalize; for instance, 12... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ (12... $\mathbb{Q}c6?$ also makes sense) 13. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 14. b3 $\mathbb{W}b8$ 15. f4 $\mathbb{E}fe8$ with roughly equal chances, B. Grabarczyk – Fedorchuk, Ustron 2006.

12...♝c8 13.♝c2?!

White's play is not the best, but it is worth checking how Black should deal with it.



13...♝fd7!N

13...♝xc4? falls into a trap: 14.♝xc4 ♜xc4 15.e5! ♜xg2 16.exf6± You should always be on the lookout for tricks involving e4-e5 in this structure.

13...♝bd7 is a reasonable move but it gives White time to consolidate. 14.♝d2 ♜ab8 15.b3= Marovic – Browne, Banja Luka 1979.

The text move is strongest, as it makes ...♝xc4 into a real threat.

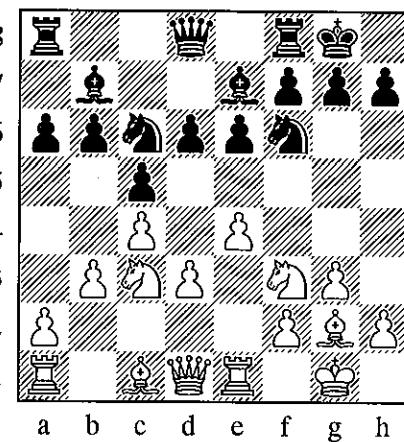
14.♝a3

14.b3 should be met by 14...b5† of course.

14...♝f6†

Black has the better chances due to White's poor piece coordination.

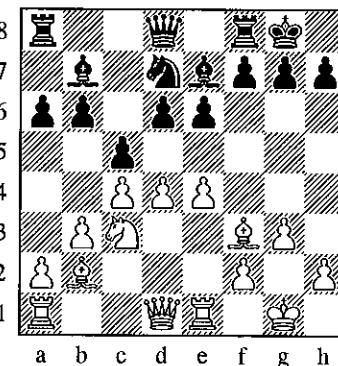
C22) 10.b3 ♜c6



This is an old line; most of the games in it were played around thirty to forty years ago.

11.d4

11.♝b2 can be met by 11...♝e5? (11...♜b8 was also fine in E. Olafsson – Karpov, Bad Lauterberg 1977) 12.d4 ♜xf3† 13.♝xf3 ♜d7?! with the following idea:

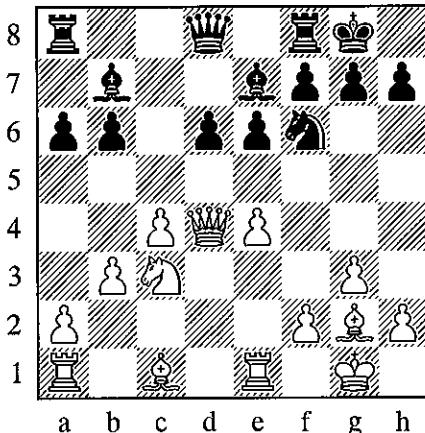


14.d5N (14.♝g2 ♜c7 15.♝e2 ♜f6 16.♝d2 occurred in Marquez Abreu – Zeihser, email 2009, and now 16...b5!N offers good prospects for counterplay) 14...♝f6 15.♝d4! 16.♝d1 e5=

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6

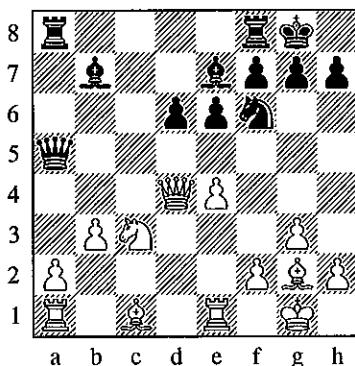
11...cxd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xd4$

This position was reached in Portisch – Andersson, Wijk aan Zee 1978. Once again, Black has a way to exploit the extra tempo resulting from d2-d3-d4.



13...b5!N 14. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

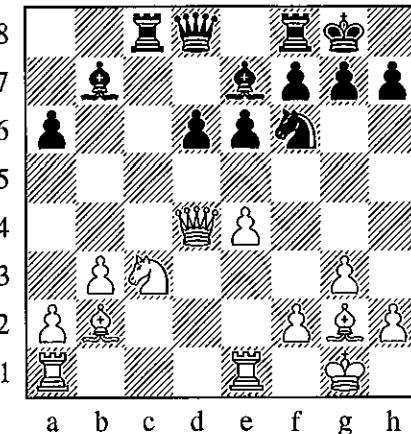
14.cxb5 axb5 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ is strongly answered by: 15... $\mathbb{W}a5!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$



16... $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ White must sacrifice an exchange for questionable compensation.

18.e5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 19. $\mathbb{B}xe5$ dx5 20. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}b6\bar{f}$

14...bxc4 15. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d4$



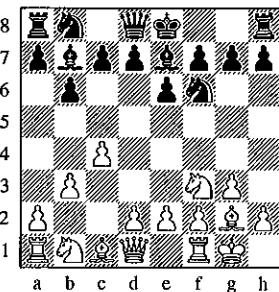
16... $\mathbb{B}c7$ 17. $\mathbb{B}ac1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{B}ed1$ $\mathbb{B}fc8=$
Black has no problems.

Conclusion

After dealing with a few miscellaneous lines after 1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 b6, we moved on to the important topic of 3.g3 $\mathbb{B}b7$ 4. $\mathbb{B}g2$ e6 5.0–0 $\mathbb{B}e7$. This chapter focused on 6.d3, which may not be so popular nowadays, but was tested by some of the world's top players a few decades ago. Play continues 6...0–0 7.e4 d6 8. $\mathbb{B}c3$ c5 when a subsequent pawn advance to d4 will cost White a tempo. This should assure Black of a reasonable game, but it is important to be aware of how Black may utilize it – especially when it comes to tactical opportunities involving a ...b5 break.



1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6



6.b3

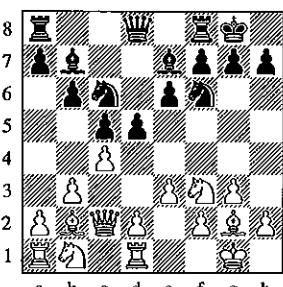
Variation Index

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2. c4 b6 3. g3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ e6 5. 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6. b3

6...0-0 7. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ c5

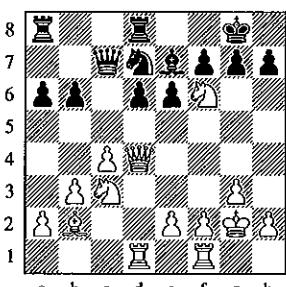
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D24) 11. $\mathbb{Q}cl$	443

A) note to 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$



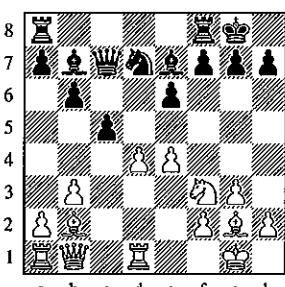
10... $\mathbb{Q}b4!N$

B21) after 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$



15... $\mathbb{Q}xf6!N$

D22) after 14. d4

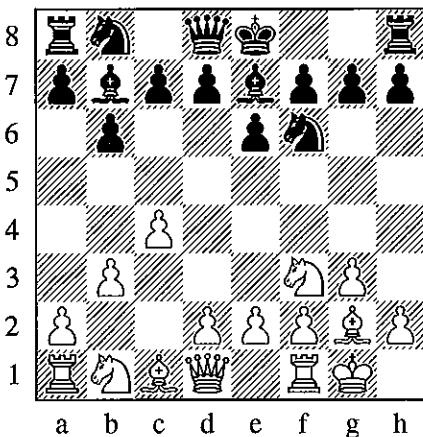


14... $\mathbb{Q}ad8!N$

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ 2. c4 b6 3. g3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ e6
5.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6. b3

The queenside fianchetto is a typical device for White in these positions.

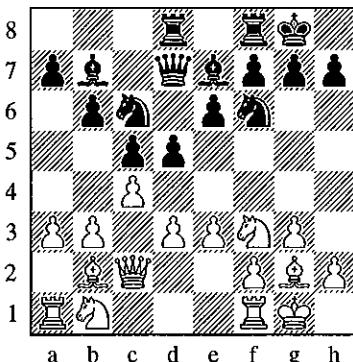


6...0–0 7. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ c5!?

I regard this as the most flexible choice. One of Black's ideas is to meet 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ with ...d5, followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ and trading knights on c3. Against several other moves, we will play ...d5 anyway.

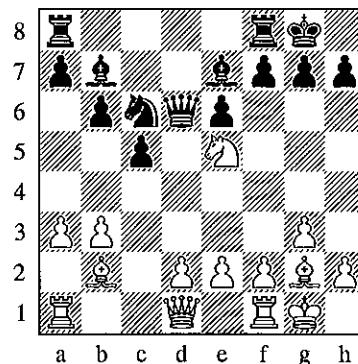
White's four main options are **A) 8.e3**, **B) 8.d4**, **C) 8.d3** and **D) 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$** . A few miscellaneous moves are:

8. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. a3 (9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5 10. cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ transposes to the note on 10. $\mathbb{W}c2$ in variation D2) 9...d5 10. e3 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 11. d3 $\mathbb{Q}ad8$



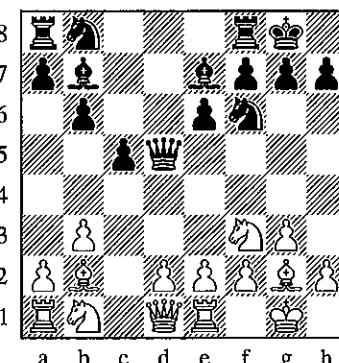
12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ dxc4 13. bxc4 $\mathbb{W}c8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{W}a8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}db1$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ with a comfortable position for Black in Kozul – Dizdar, Slavonski Brod 1995.

8.a3 is very rare. 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5 As a general rule, I recommend playing this move as soon as the white knight lands on c3. 10. cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}d6$



13. b4!N (13. $\mathbb{W}c2$!?) $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ was good for Black in Schindwein – Gscheidlen, Baden 1992.) 13... $\mathbb{W}c7$! 14. bxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6=$

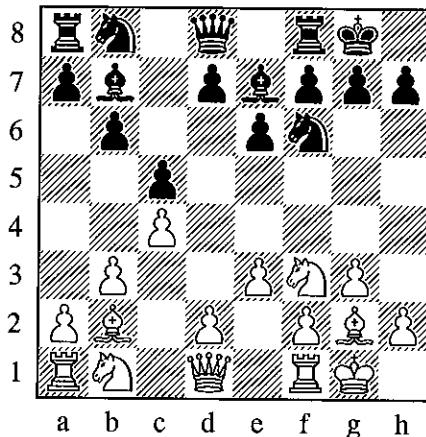
8. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ prepares e2-e4. 8...d5 9. cxd5 occurred in Mihok – D. Fernandez, Kecskemet 2013, and now 9... $\mathbb{W}xd5$!N is my preference, for example:



10. e4!? (10. d4 cxd4 11. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$; 10. d3 $\mathbb{W}d7$!?) 11. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$

13.♕xg2 ♔fd7=) 10...♔d8 11.♕a3 ♔c6
12.♕c4 ♕c7 13.♕e2 ♕ac8 With equal chances.

A) 8.e3



8...d5

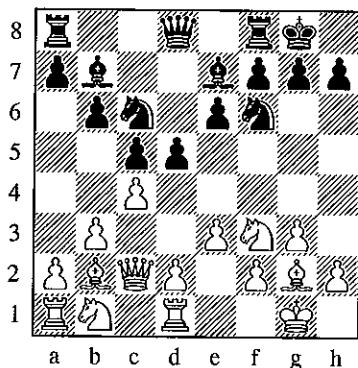
Sometimes Black gets this position if he starts with 7...d5.

9.♕e2

9.♕c3 transposes to variation B of the next chapter.

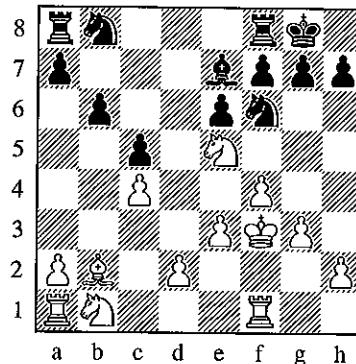
9.d3 doesn't have much independent value after 9...dxc4 10.bxc4 ♔c6, as the natural 11.♕e2 transposes to the note on 10.d3 below.

9.♕c2 ♔c6 10.♕d1? was a mistake in Gulko – Browne, San Mateo 1989, which Black could have punished with:



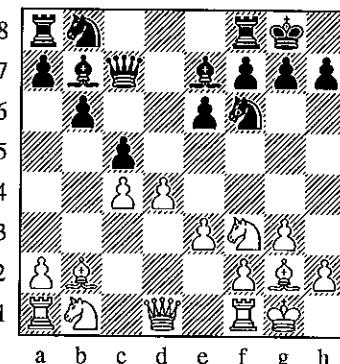
10...♔b4!N 11.♕c3 dxc4 12.bxc4 ♔d3!†

9.♕e5 is rare but deserves attention, as White wants to gain some space with f2-f4. 9...♔c7 10.f4 dxc4 11.bxc4 ♕xg2 12.♕xg2 ♕b7† 13.♕f3 ♕xf3† 14.♕xf3 occurred in Milov – Giertz, Switzerland 1997. Now Black should have continued:



14...♕e8!N It is important to come up with a plan to prevent a4-a5, which occurred in the aforementioned game. Now the key line continues 15.a4 f6 16.♕g4 ♔c6 17.♕c3 ♔d6 18.d3 a5! with ...♔b4 to follow, and I prefer Black.

9.d4 dxc4 10.bxc4 ♕c7



11.♕bd2

11.♕e2 cxd4 12.exd4 ♔c6 13.♕bd2 ♕ac8 is likely to transpose elsewhere. For example, 14.♕ac1 ♕fd8 15.♕fd1 is covered under

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6

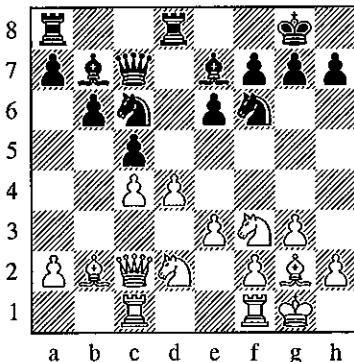
12.d4 cxd4 13.exd4 $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$
15. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ in the notes to the main line.

11... $\mathbb{B}d8$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$

12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ cxd4 13.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. $\mathbb{B}ac1$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$
15. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ is the same transposition as noted above.

12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13. $\mathbb{B}ac1$

In Ganesh – Bitoon, Chennai 2010, the most logical continuation would have been:



13... $\mathbb{B}ac8N$ 14. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ h6

Black has a comfortable position as White's queen is slightly misplaced on c2.

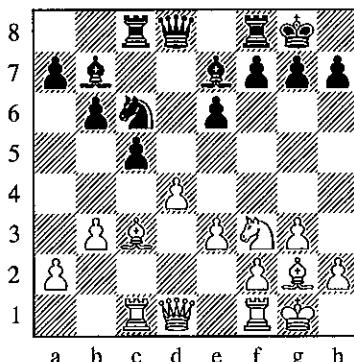
9.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$

The correct recapture.

10.d4

10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ is not dangerous at all after
10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ or 10... $\mathbb{E}f6$.

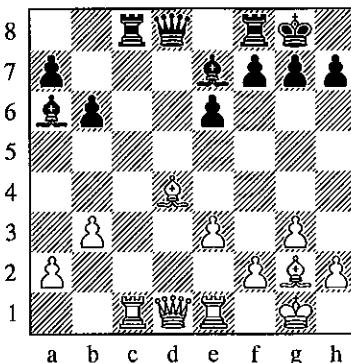
10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 13. $\mathbb{B}c1$



13... $\mathbb{B}a6!$

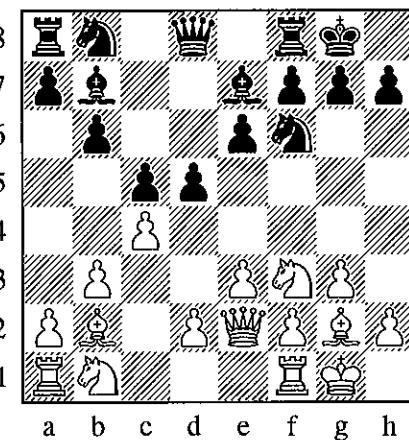
Before taking on d4, Black unpins the knight.

14. $\mathbb{E}el$ cxd4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4!N$
16. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{B}b4$ 18. $\mathbb{E}xc8$
 $\mathbb{E}xc8$ 19. $\mathbb{B}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ favoured Black in Will – Zalkind, Albena 2013, thanks to his control over the c-file.



16... $\mathbb{B}xc1$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xc1$ $\mathbb{B}b4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xc3$
 $\mathbb{W}d7=$

Followed by ... $\mathbb{B}c8$, with a completely equal position.



9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{E}d1$

10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ dxc4 (10...d4! also makes sense)
11.bxc4 transposes to variation B of the next chapter.

10.d4 is likely to transpose to the note on 12.d4 below after 10...dxc4 11.bxc4 cxd4

12.exd4 $\mathbb{E}c8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$
15. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ and so on.

10.d3 dxc4 11.bxc4

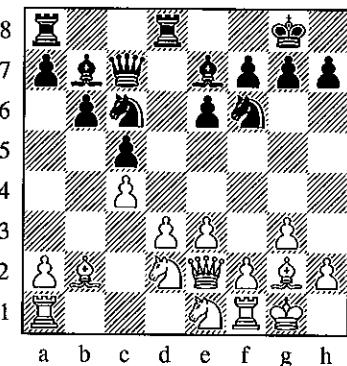
11.dxc4 is just equal. For example, 11... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ a6 13. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 14. $\mathbb{E}xd8$ $\mathbb{E}xd8$ and a draw was agreed in Forintos – Balashov, Cienfuegos 1975.

11... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ leads to the next chapter – see 12.d3 in the notes on page 449.

12... $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

White prepares the advance of the f-pawn.

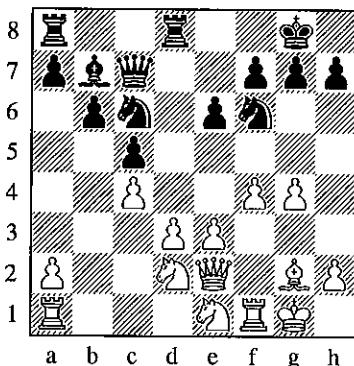


13... $\mathbb{Q}e8!$ 14.f4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$

After neutralizing the strong dark-squared bishop, Black obtains the upper hand.

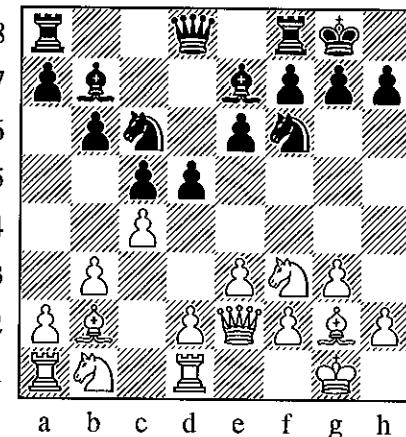
15. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 16.g4

This position was reached in Bezold – Gustafsson, Pulvermuehle 2006. Now I would like to offer the cold-blooded:



16... $\mathbb{E}d7!N$ 17. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{E}ad8\bar{f}$

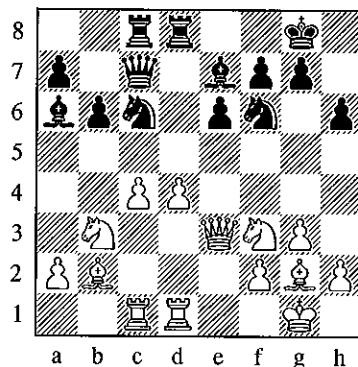
White doesn't seem to have much of an attack.



10...dxc4 11.bxc4 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12.d3

12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ is the most popular move by far, and it transposes to variation B2 in the next chapter.

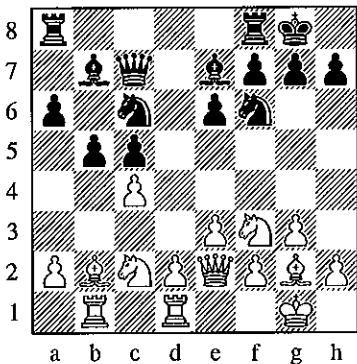
12.d4 is a pretty rare option. 12...cxd4 13.exd4 $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ (White does not have the option of 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3?$ here because of 14... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$) 14... $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 15. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ h6 16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e3$ Now I would like to deviate from the game Taimanov – Rozentalis, Copenhagen 1996, with:



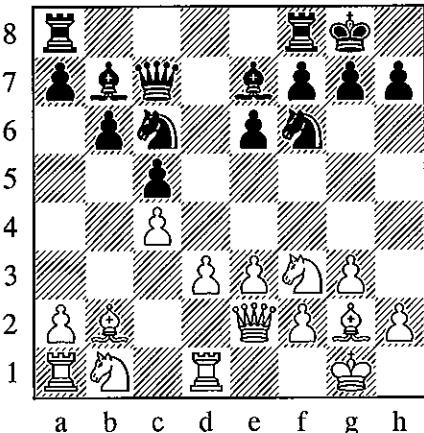
17... $\mathbb{W}b8!N$ Not only taking the queen off the file of the white rook, but also preparing active counterplay with ... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$. The chances are roughly equal.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6

12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ a6 13. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ allows Black to get active with: 13...b5?! A typical idea for this structure. 14. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ (14. cxb5 axb5 15. $\mathbb{W}xb5$ is met by 15... $\mathbb{E}fb8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}db1$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}g4$ [or 18. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}a7!$] 18...g6 with good compensation for the pawn) This was Haik – Vera Gonzalez Quevedo, Sochi 1985, and now I would like to correct Black's play with:



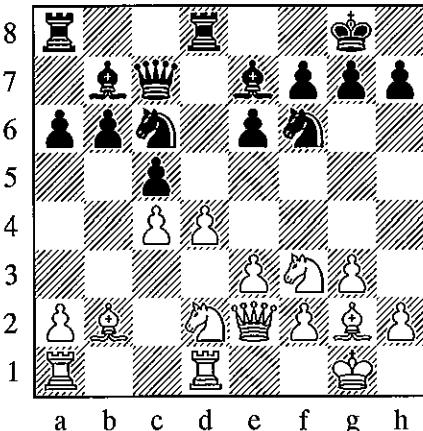
14... $\mathbb{Q}a5!?$ N 15. d3 bxc4 16. dxc4 $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ With equal chances.

12...a6 13. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ transposes to the next chapter – see 12.d3 in the notes on page 449.

13... $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 14. d4

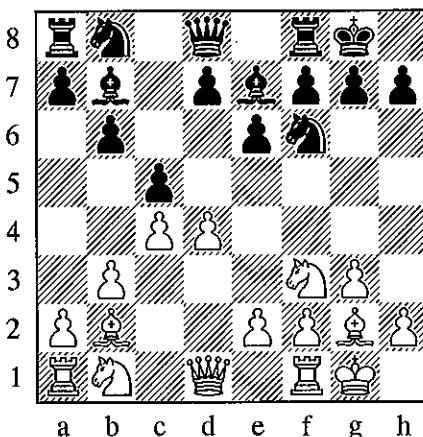
I would like to improve upon Black's play in Piasetski – Levin, Cutro 2010, by means of:



14...h6! N 15. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{E}b8$
17. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}a8=$

17... $\mathbb{E}bc8$ is also fine if Black is happy to repeat.

B) 8. d4



White steers the game towards a Hedgehog structure.

8...cx d4

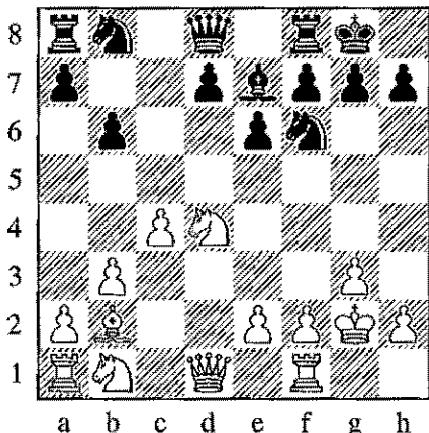
We will analyse B1) 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ and B2) 9. $\mathbb{W}xd4$, after briefly checking a couple of weird alternatives:

9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ is pretty rare. White converts to a Fianchetto Queen's Indian a tempo down, as Black usually gets this position

after purposefully wasting a tempo with ... $\mathbb{Q}a6-b7$, having lured the knight to the inferior d2-square. Here White puts the knight on d2 voluntarily, which makes no sense at all. 9... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}b7\uparrow$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ Black was doing fine in Stoltz – Sämisich, Berlin 1931, and the verdict was the same seventy years later in Haba – Hracek, Czech Republic 2001.

9. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ is even stranger. Black equalizes easily by means of: 9... $a6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ Otherwise the previous move has no sense. White wants to recapture on d4 with the c2-knight, but after 10... $b5$ Black had a comfortable position in Bazan – Hase, Buenos Aires 1982.

B1) 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$



The exchange of the light-squared bishops usually simplifies Black's task of equalizing.

10...d5!?

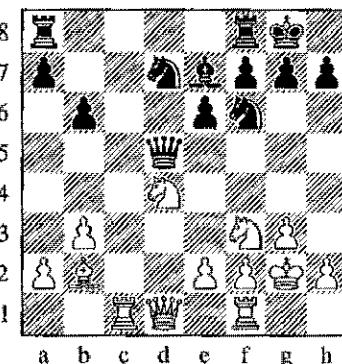
An attempt to solve Black's opening problems instantly.

11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d7!?$

Black covers the light squares and prepares the ... $\mathbb{Q}a6-c5$ manoeuvre.

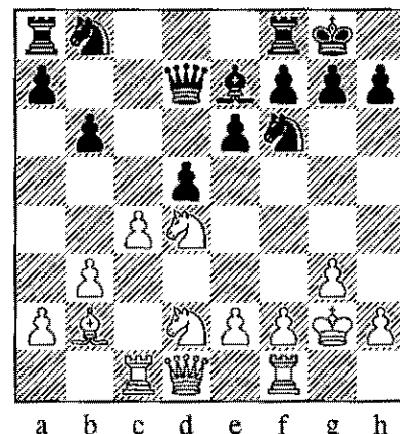
12. $\mathbb{B}c1!?$

Black has no problems after: 12. $cxd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5\uparrow$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}2f3$ (13. $\mathbb{Q}4f3$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ the players agreed a draw in this equal position in Flohr – Smyslov, Moscow 1955) 13... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 14. $\mathbb{E}c1$



14... $\mathbb{W}b7\uparrow$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ (The point of Black's last move is that 15. $\mathbb{Q}c6!?$ is met by 15... $\mathbb{Q}c5\mp$) 15... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{E}c4$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{E}ac8=$ Deforel – Fernandez Fornes, corr. 2012.

The present position was reached in Smyslov – Bonch Osmolovsky, Moscow 1946, among other games. Strangely, Black has not yet played:



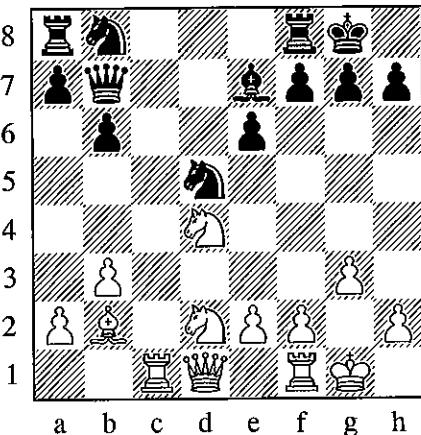
12... $\mathbb{W}b7!N$

Removing the queen from the d-file and placing her opposite the white king. After this move we transpose to a little known game.

13.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ **14.Qg1**

14. $\mathbb{Q}2f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is fine for Black.

Now I would like to offer:



14...Qd7?N

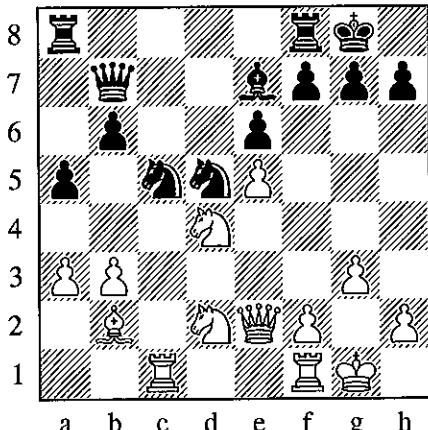
Although 14... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ was also not bad in Baumann – Lares, Worms 2013.

15.a3 a5!

Preventing White from taking space on the queenside.

16.e4 Q5f6 17.We2 Qc5 18.e5 Qd5

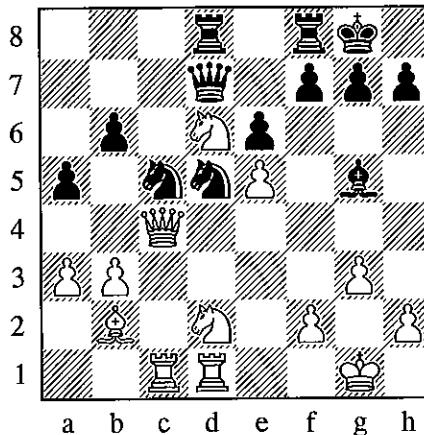
We have reached a lively middlegame. Here is a sample continuation:



19.Qfd1 Wad8 20.Qb5 Qg5? 21.Qd6

I also checked 21.f4 $\mathbb{Q}xf4!$ 22.gxf4 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 23.Wg4 $\mathbb{Q}fd3$ and Black should be fine.

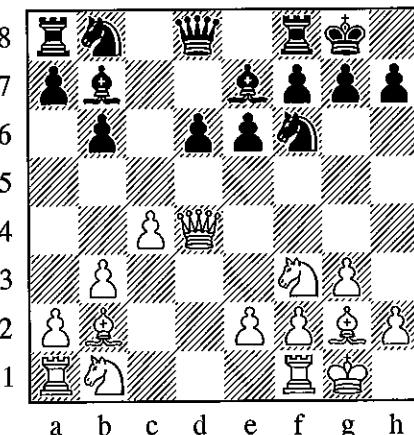
21...Wd7 22.Wc4



22...f5! 23.a4 Qb7 24.Qa3 Qe7 25.Qxb7 Qc8!=

And Black equalizes.

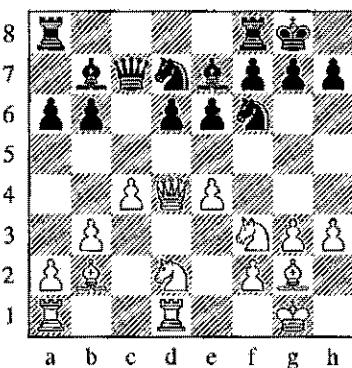
B2) 9.Wxd4 d6



Taking into account the slightly misplaced queen on d4, Black is happy to adopt the Hedgehog set-up.

10.Qc3

I also checked: 10.♗d1 ♗bd7 11.h3 (11.♘c3 a6 12.e4 transposes to the note on 12.♗fd1 in variation B22) 11...a6 12.♗bd2 An extremely rare set-up. Usually the knight goes to c3, 12...♗c7 13.e4 Savchenko – Khismatullin, Khanty-Mansiysk 2012. Now I would like to underline the questionable position of the knight on d2 by means of:

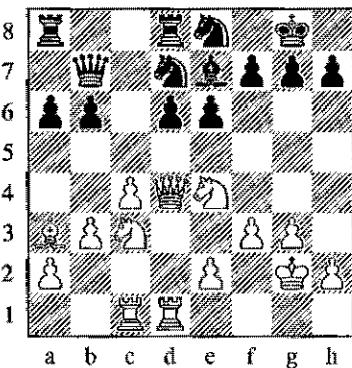


13...e5!N 14.♗e3 ♘c5 15.♗e1 a5= And Black is fine.

10...♗bd7

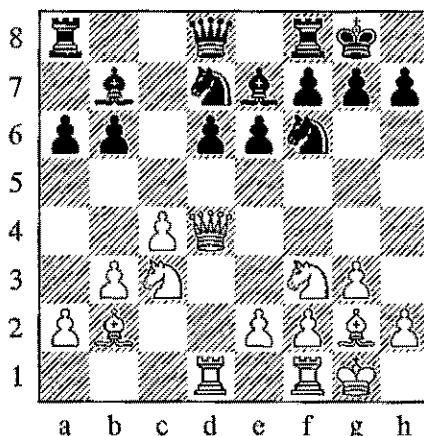
And now the two main options are B21) 11.♗ad1 and B22) 11.e4.

11.♘g5 ♖xg2 12.♗xg2 ♗c7 13.♗fd1 (13.♗ge4 ♗fd8 14.f3 a6 15.♗d2 ♘c5 16.♗xf6† ♖xf6 is equal, and after 17.e4 a draw was agreed in Pinter – Ribli, Las Palmas 1982) 13...♗fd8 14.f3 a6 15.♗ac1 ♗b7 16.♗ge4 ♘e8 17.♗a3 This position was reached in Nikolic – Papaioannou, Istanbul 2000, and now I prefer:



17...♗e5!N I don't see how White can prevent the ...b5 break. The tactical point of Black's last move is that 18.♗xd6?! is met by 18...♗xd6 19.♗xe5 ♗xc4! 20.bxc4 ♗xa3 with some edge for Black.

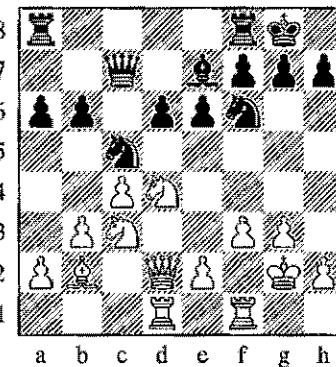
B21) 11.♗ad1 a6



12.♗g5

12.e4 transposes to the note on 12.♗ad1 in variation B22xx.

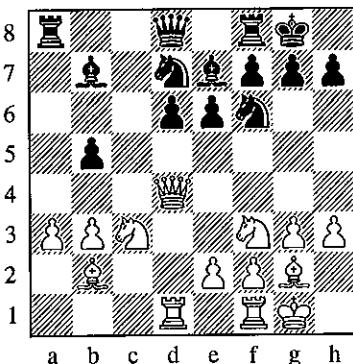
12.♗d2 ♗c7 13.♗d4 ♗xg2 14.♗xg2 ♘c5 15.f3 occurred in Shamkovich – Csom, Cleveland 1975. Now Black must decide where to place his rooks, and my preference is:



15...♖ac8!N 16.e4 ♗fe8= With a typical Hedgehog position.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6

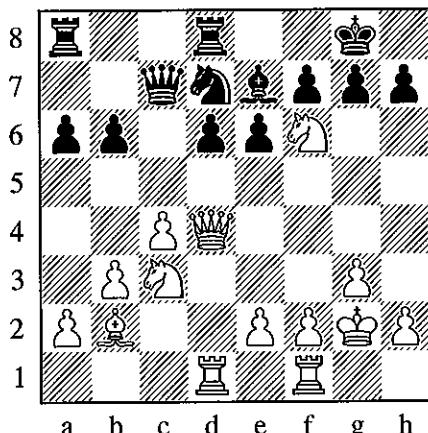
12.h3 allows 12...b5! 13.cxb5 axb5 14.a3 as in Panchanathan – Kongavel, Nagpur 2008. I would like to improve Black's play with:



14...e5!N I want to drive the queen away in order to make it harder for White to play e2-e4. 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ (15. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{W}b8!$) 15... $\mathbb{W}b8!$ Protecting the b5-pawn indirectly. 16. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ g6! Black is doing well, for instance: 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xd5$ $\mathbb{E}fb8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ Black's extra central pawn is clearly exerting a greater influence than White's extra flank pawn.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}ge4$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$
15. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ †

I would like to introduce a powerful novelty.



15... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$!N

Sacrificing a pawn for the initiative.

The seemingly automatic 15... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ has been played in several games.

16. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ †! 17. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}a3$

18. $\mathbb{W}b4$? runs into 18... $\mathbb{Q}c6$! 19. $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ † with the idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ and White experiences serious problems.

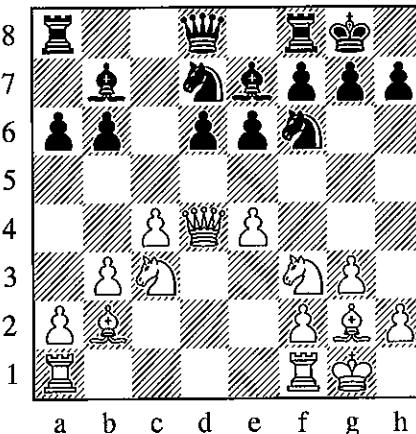
18... $\mathbb{Q}c6$! 19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

19. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ = is another route to equality.

19... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 21. $c5$ $bxc5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ =

Black has regained the pawn and his superb knight makes up for the slight weakness of his queenside pawn structure.

B22) 11.e4 a6



12. $\mathbb{E}fe1$

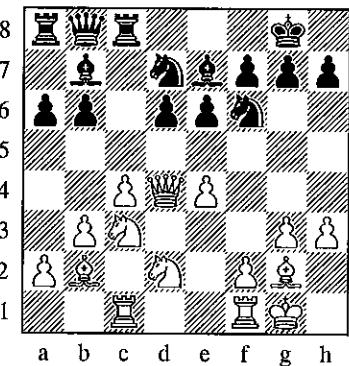
White has tried all kinds of moves, most of which do not change the character of the position a great deal. Here are a few examples:

12. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ is a slight inaccuracy, as it allows 12...b5! since the a2-pawn has lost its protection. 13.cxb5 axb5= Lentrodt – Hoffmann, Munich 1993.

12.♕d2 ♕c7 13.♕ac1 ♕ac8 14.h3 ♕fe8 gave Black no problems in Polugaevsky – Langeweg, Amsterdam 1981.

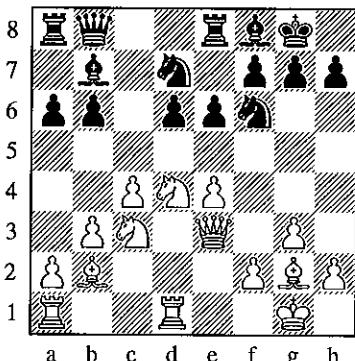
12.♕e3 ♕c7 13.♕d4 ♕fe8 14.♕ad1 ♕f8 15.♕fe1 ♕ad8= with a solid Hedgehog position in Vallejo Pons – Adams, Linares 2005, and some other games.

12.♕ac1 ♕b8 13.♕d2 ♕c8 14.h3



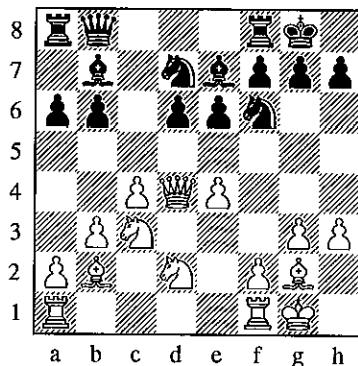
This was Garcia Padron – Suba, Las Palmas 1979, and now I would like to recommend 14...b5?!N with roughly equal chances.

12.♕fd1 ♕b8 13.♕e3 White is freeing the d4-square for the knight. 13...♕e8 14.♕d4 ♕f8 This is a thematic regrouping, and in this particular position it also prepares ...d5.



15.♕d2 Sensibly stepping off the e-file. 15...♘c5 16.♕e1 ♕c7 17.h3 ♕ad8 With roughly equal chances in Karjakin – Lysyj, Kazan 2014.

12.h3 can be met by the following clever idea: 12...♕b8 13.♕d2

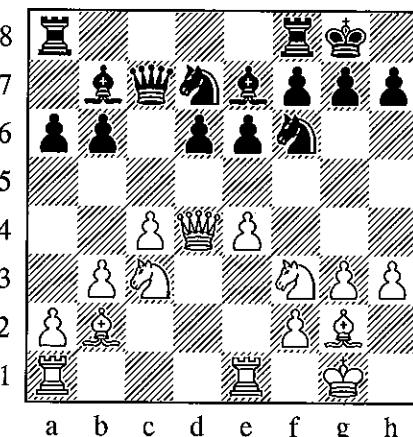


And now the clever 13...♕c7?!= was played in Beck – Bouchez, email 2008. The queen makes way for the rook to come to c8 or d8, having spent a tempo to lure the white knight to a slightly worse square. The chances are balanced, and a typical Hedgehog manoeuvring battle lies ahead.

12...♕c7 13.h3

13.♕ad1 ♕ad8 14.h3 ♘c5?! led to roughly equal play in Teo Kok Siong – Goormachtigh, Moscow (ol) 1994. I like the knight development with the concrete threat of ...e5.

The text move was played in Granda Zuniga – Matamoros Franco, Linares 2013. Once again, I like:



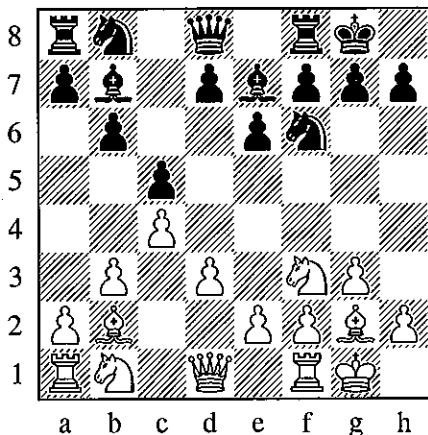
13... $\mathbb{Q}c5!?$ N

Threatening ...e5. The pressure against the e4-pawn means that White has no time to carry out his typical regrouping plan of $\mathbb{W}e3$ and $\mathbb{Q}d4$. A logical continuation would be:

14.e5 $dxe5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{B}ad8=$

And Black has no problems.

C) 8.d3

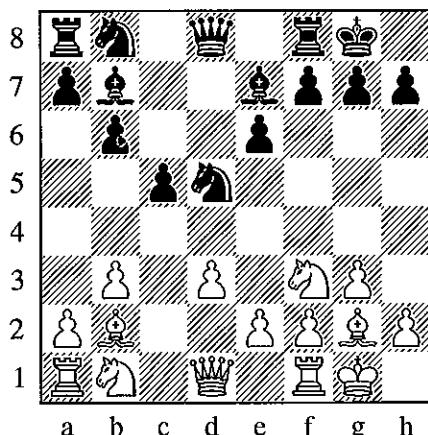


White is looking for a flexible set-up.

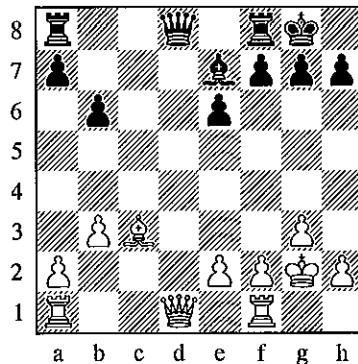
8...d5

Meanwhile Black takes some space in the centre. We will consider C1) 9.cxd5, C2) 9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ and C3) 9.e3.

C1) 9.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

10.d4 is hardly a good idea as White loses an important tempo. 10...cxd4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$



15... $\mathbb{B}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}fxd8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $gxf6\#$ Black's active rooks gave him the more pleasant endgame in Timofeev – Shimanov, Warsaw (rapid) 2011.

10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11.a3

11. $\mathbb{R}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15. a3 $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ with a comfortable position for Black in Forintos – Brzozka, Krakow 1959.

11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ b5 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ occurred in Nikolaevsky – Smyslov, Moscow 1963, and now I would like to offer the simple 12... $\mathbb{Q}xe3!?$ N 13. fxe3 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ f6 with a slight edge for Black.

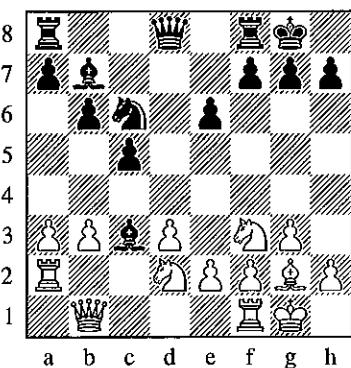
11... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$

Black neutralizes the strong bishop on b2 and targets the weak dark squares in White's camp.

12. $\mathbb{W}c1$

12. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ transposes to the note on 11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ just above.

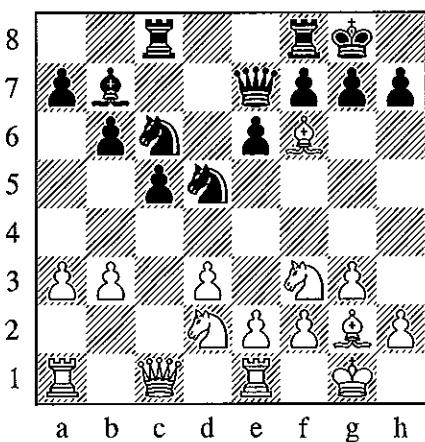
12. $\mathbb{W}b1?!$ is too sophisticated. 12... $\mathbb{Q}c3$
13. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a2$



14...a5! 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ Black had a slight edge in Csom – Barbero, Hungary 1995, due to the weak dark squares.

12... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

Bjarnason – Thorhallsson, Iceland 1997.
Now I prefer:



14... $\mathbb{W}xf6!?$ N 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

Or 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ when the knight on e4 is misplaced.

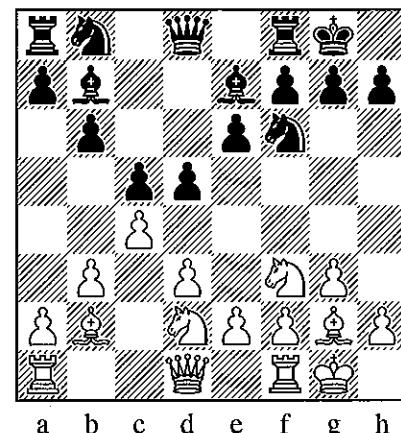
15... $\mathbb{Q}a8!$

With the following idea:

16. $e4$ $\mathbb{Q}de7$ 17. $e5$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}cd8\#$
Followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ and Black is better.

C2) 9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

White makes a sensible, flexible developing move.

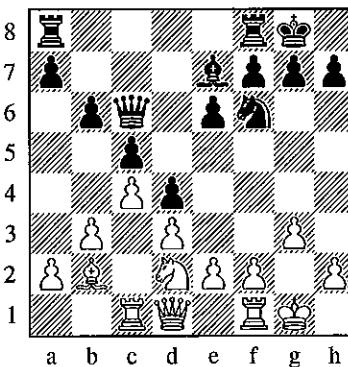


9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $e3$

Other options include:

10. $e4?!$ $d4$ leaves the b2-bishop completely blocked in. 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$ (11. $e5$ is met by 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}b8!$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8!$ 14. $a3$ $a5$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ and Black wins a pawn) 11... $e5$ Black obtained a good version of the reversed King's Indian in Gritsenko – Kovalenko, Sochi 2012, thanks to White's misplaced bishop.

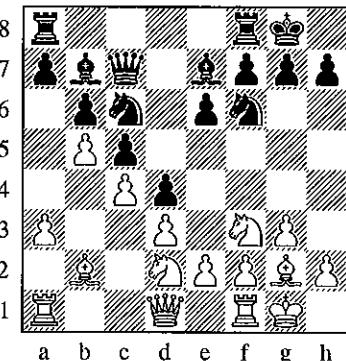
10. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ is well met by 10... $d4!$ because White can't challenge the centre with $e2-e3$ due to the loose pawn on $d3$. 11. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$



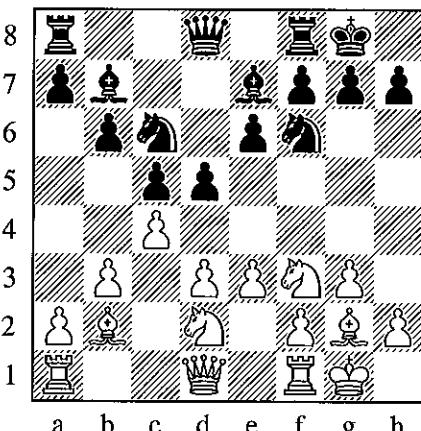
1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6

Black was fine in Pilaj – Zumtobel, Schladming 1994. In the event of 14.e3N Black can play 14...e5= to keep White's bishop locked in.

10.a3 d4 If White allows us to gain space, I don't see any reason to reject the kind offer.
 11.b4 $\mathbb{W}c7$ The queen is well placed here, guarding the bishop on b7 and supporting the ...e5 advance. 12.b5 Waldmann – Exler, Vienna 2009. Now the natural improvement is:



12... $\mathbb{Q}a5!?$ N 13.e3 (13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{R}ad8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$ e5 15. e3 $\mathbb{Q}fe8=$) 13...dxe3 14.fxe3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ Black will exert pressure along the d-file, and his chances are certainly not worse.



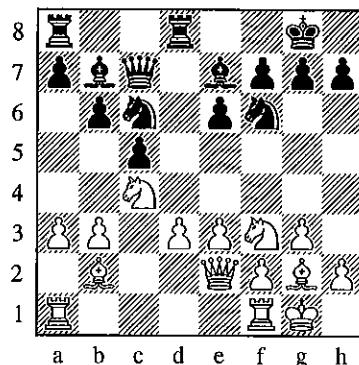
10... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$

11.a3 $\mathbb{R}fd8$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ dxc4! 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$

13.bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ was fine for Black in Valkesalmi – Pihlajasalo, Helsinki 1997.

13.dxc4N $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is also harmless.

So far Dvirnyy – Campese, Fiuggi 2007.



13...b5!N

I like the idea of chasing the knight and forcing the play.

14. $\mathbb{Q}ce5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Black has no problems at all.

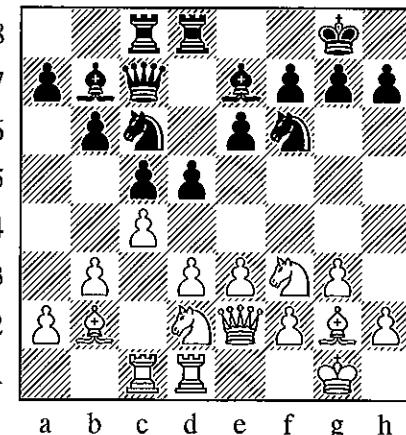
11... $\mathbb{R}fd8$ 12. $\mathbb{R}ac1$

12. $\mathbb{R}fd1$ $\mathbb{R}ac8$ 13. $\mathbb{R}ac1$ is just a transposition.

12.a3 leads back to the note to White's previous move.

12. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ dxc4 13. bxc4 transposes to the note on 10.d3 in variation A.

12... $\mathbb{R}ac8$ 13. $\mathbb{R}fd1$



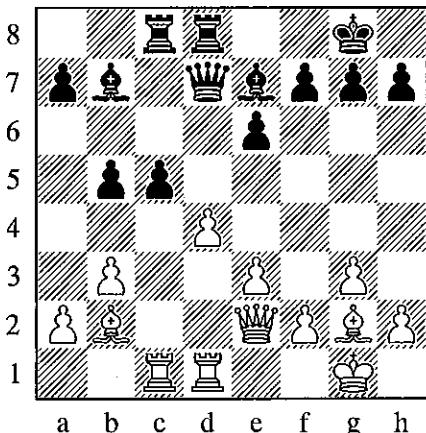
13...dxc4!?

13... $\mathbb{W}b8$ is also playable. I analysed: 14.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$ N (15.a3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ h6 was equal in Jakovenko – Karpov, Moscow [blitz] 2009) 15...b5 16. $\mathbb{Q}ce5$ (16. $\mathbb{Q}cd2$ would be a strong idea, intending to gang up on the weak c5-pawn, if it were not for 16... $\mathbb{Q}db4!$, which seems good for Black) 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ (or 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}a8$) 17... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18.f4 $\mathbb{Q}e7=$ and Black is okay.

Although my proposed novelty is not forced, it certainly seems like the easiest way to clarify the position and solve Black's opening problems.

**14. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ b5 15. $\mathbb{Q}ce5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$
17. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 18.d4**

18. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8=$ gets nowhere for White.



18... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ cxd4 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}b7\#$
21. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}xf3\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{E}xc1$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xd8\#$
 $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ f5=

With a drawish endgame.

C3) 9.e3

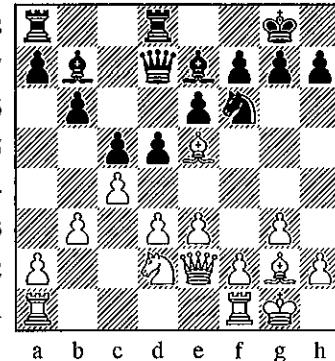
White is preventing ...d4, while the e2-square is vacated for the queen.

9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ transposes to the note on 10.d3 in variation A.

10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ transposes to variation C2.

10. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ leads to simplifications: 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$
11. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$



13...dxc4! 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 15.dxc4 (after 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc4!?$ b5 \bar{f} the knight doesn't have a good retreat square; 15.bxc4! is also inaccurate due to 15... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16.d4 $\mathbb{Q}e8\bar{f}$) 15... $\mathbb{E}d7=$ with equal chances in Garrido Olivares – Fernandez Garcia, Madrid 2014.

10.a3 dxc4!?

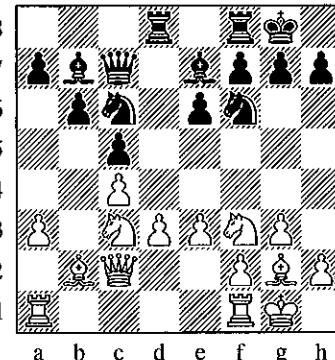
This move has not been too common, but once again I like the fact that it clarifies the situation in the centre and makes Black's next few moves more obvious.

11.bxc4

After 11.dxc4N $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 12. $\mathbb{E}xd1$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{E}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ Black is fine.

11... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$

13. $\mathbb{W}e2!?$ N $\mathbb{E}d7$ is also roughly equal, and resembles the positions from several other lines.



13... $\mathbb{W}b8$

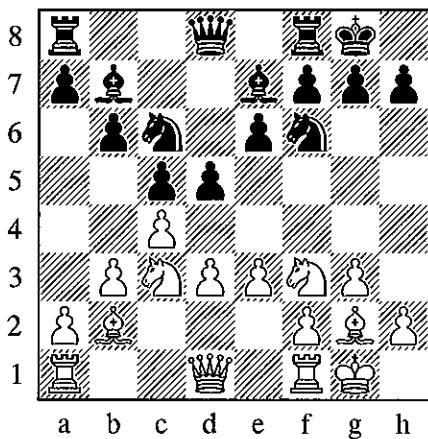
13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is a reasonable alternative which leads to equal play.

14. $\mathbb{Q}ad1 \mathbb{W}a8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{Q}e5!$

Provoking a weakening of the d4-square.

16. e4 $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf3 \mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g4 \mathbb{Q}f6$

With a comfortable position for Black in Deak – Boricsey, Hungary 2008, thanks to White's weakened dark squares.



10...dxc4!?

Once again I have opted to clarify the situation in the centre.

11. dxc4

11. bxc4 reaches a position covered on page 448 – see 11. d3 in the notes to variation B in the next chapter.

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

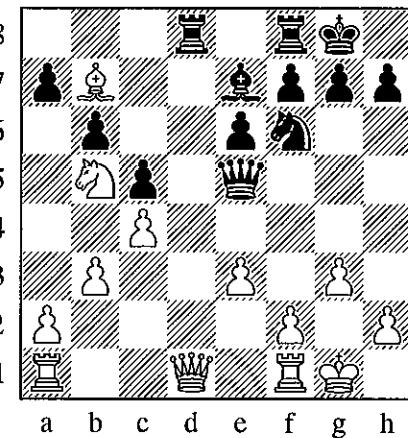
Black is not afraid of:

12. $\mathbb{Q}b5 \mathbb{W}b8$

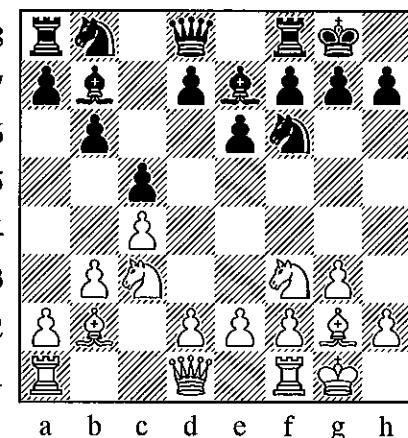
The plan is simply to play ...a6 and return with the queen to c7. White's only chance to cause problems is:

13. $\mathbb{Q}e5?N$

13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ a6 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{W}c7$ was equal in Barczay – Jovcic, corr. 1975.

13... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5 \mathbb{W}xe5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb7 \mathbb{E}ad8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{W}b8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{Q}e8!=$

Followed by 18... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ and Black equalizes.

D) 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 

8...d5

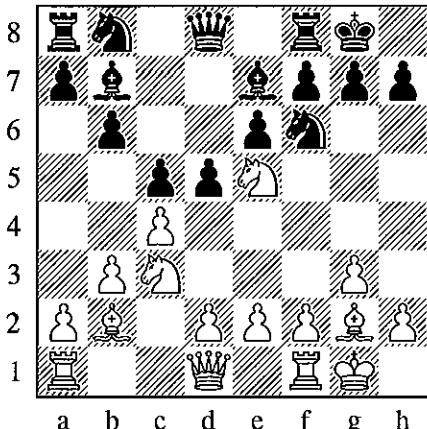
As I explained at the start of the chapter, this is a good way to respond to the knight's arrival on c3.

White may react with D1) 9. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ or with D2) 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$.

9. e3 dxc4 10. bxc4 reaches variation B of the next chapter.

D1) 9.Qe5

White pins the d5-pawn and avoids committing his central pawns for the moment.

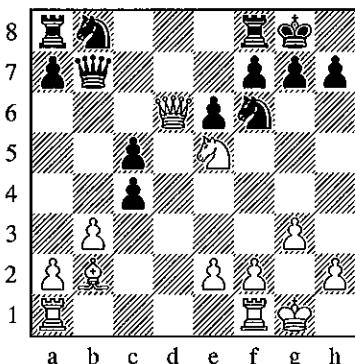


9...Qc7!

A good old move! It was tested in the 1930s by Bondarevsky and Makogonov, and thirty years later by Keres. Black simply unpins the d5-pawn and challenges the knight on e5 – although please note that he is not threatening to take it immediately, as the reply $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ would result in a material gain for White.

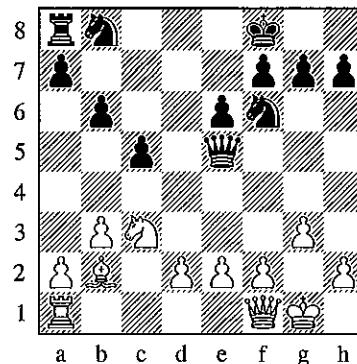
10.Qb5

10.d4?! is dubious due to: 10...dxc4 11.Qb5 $\mathbb{W}c8$ 12.Qxb7 $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 13.dxc5 bxc5 14.Qd6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 15.Qxd6



15...Qe4! 16.Wd1 c3 and Black was better in Levenfish – Bondarevsky, Tbilisi 1937.

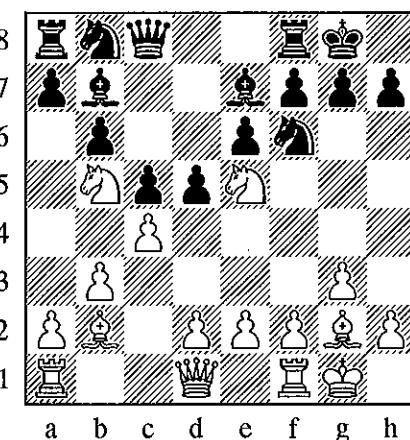
10.cxd5 $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 11.d6 might look scary at first, but the simplifications turn out well for Black:
11...Qxg2 12.dxe7 Qxf1 13.exf8=Q† Qxf8
14.Qxf1



14...Qc6 15.Wg2 Qc8 With a slight edge for Black in Ragozin – Bondarevsky, Leningrad/Moscow 1939.

10...Qc8

The b5-knight can be pushed back any time.

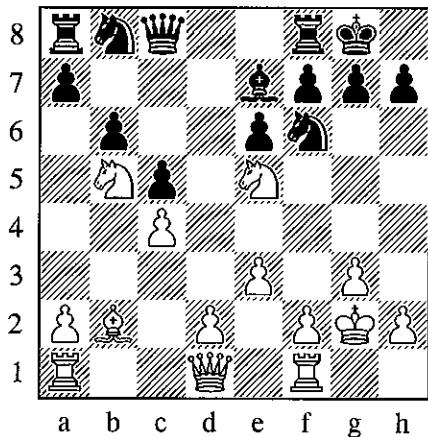
**11.e3**

11.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ is equal, and the attempt to play ambitiously with 12.f3?! backfired after 12...Qbd7 13.Qc4 Qc6! 14.Qc3 Qd8 15.Wc2 Qc7 16.Qa1 Qac8 17.Qe4 b5† in Levenfish – Makogonov, Leningrad 1939.

11...dxc4 12.bxc4 Qxg2!

12... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$
 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ was equal in Larsen – Keres, Winnipeg 1967, but Black can play for more.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$

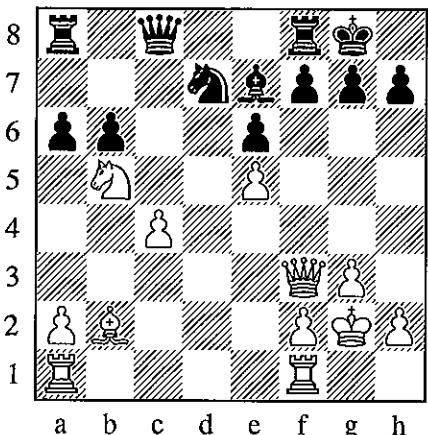


13... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ N

Improving over 13... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ from Hook – Wagner, Arvier 2006.

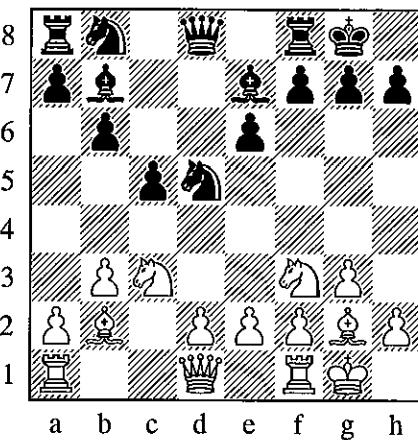
The text move enables Black to fight for the advantage, for instance:

14. d4 cxd4 15. exd4 a6 16. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$
 17. dxе5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$



18. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{W}c5!$ 19. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 20. exd6 e5#

D2) 9. cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$



10. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

This is the usual move. I considered three other possibilities:

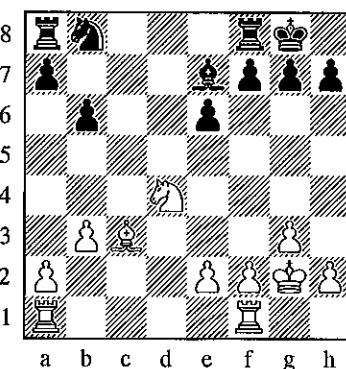
10. d4

This is considered drawish as it leads to mass exchanges.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ cxd4

Black can consider 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$ if he wants to keep more pieces on the board.

12. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$



14... $\mathbb{Q}c8!$

Black needs to develop the knight.

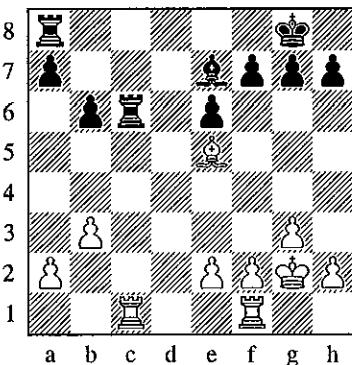
15. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$

15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$

transposes to the next note with 17. $\mathbb{Q}b2$.

15... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

17.♗b2 ♘ac8 18.♗xc6 ♘xc6 19.♗c1 ♘xc1
20.♗xc1 was agreed drawn in Ruck – Markus, Rogaska Slatina 2009.



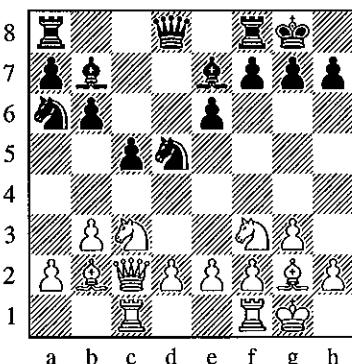
17...♘ac8 18.♗xc6 ♘xc6 19.♗d1 f6 20.♗d7
♗f8 21.♗f4 a6 22.♗a7 b5 23.♗e3 ♘d6 24.h4
h5

A draw was agreed in Darga – Lombard, Skopje (ol) 1972, as White cannot make progress.

10.♗c1

I suggest meeting this with the rather rare:
10...♗a6!?

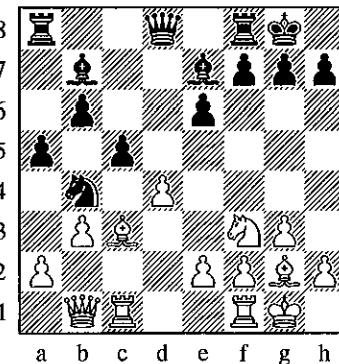
11.♗xd5 ♗xd5 transposes to variation D24.
Now I would like to improve upon Black's play in Golombek – Trifunovic, Prague 1946, with:



11...♗ab4! N 12.♗b1 ♗xc3 13.♗xc3
13.dxc3 ♗c6 14.♗e5 ♗c7 15.♗xc6 ♗xc6
16.c4 ♘ad8= is fine for Black.

13...a5!?

14.♗g5 ♗xg5 15.♗xb7 ♗a7 16.♗f3 ♗d7= is also equal.



14...cx d4

15.♗fd1 d3!?

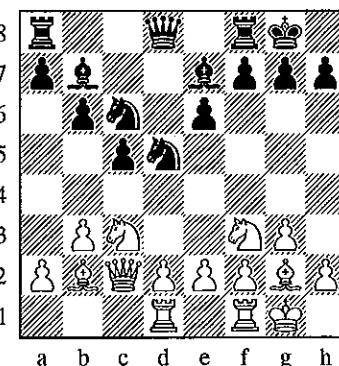
is level.
15...♗xg2 16.♗xg2 ♗d5† 17.♗f3 ♗fd8=

10.♗c2 ♗c6 11.♗ad1

11.♗xd5 ♗xd5 12.♗c4 ♗h5 13.♗f4
♗ad8 was equal in Andersen – Pietzsch, Copenhagen 1960.

11.♗ac1 ♘c8 12.♗b1 ♗f6!? 13.♗xd5 ♗xb2
14.♗xb2 ♗xd5 15.♗e5 ♗d6 16.♗xc6 ♗xc6
17.♗xc6 ♘xc6= was another level endgame in Graf – Ivanchuk, Merida 2007.

The text move has the idea to prepare d2-d4.
I therefore propose:



11...♗f6! N

There was also nothing wrong with
11...♗c8= in Sanguineti – P. Martin, Buenos Aires 1955.

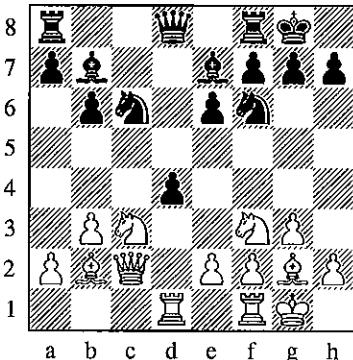
1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6

12.d4?!

This is the only critical move worth checking, but it turns out to be a bit too ambitious.

12.d3 $\mathbb{W}d7$ and 12. $\mathbb{W}b1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ both lead to a pleasant position for Black.

12...cxd4

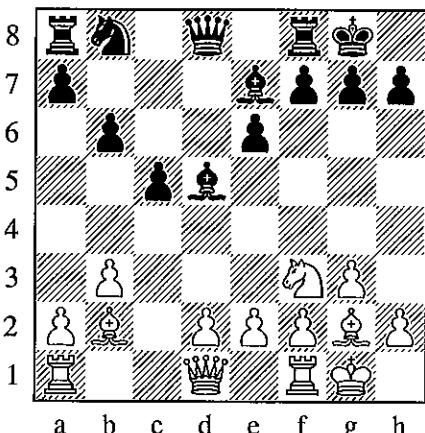
13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$

This tactical attempt does not work.

13.e3 is better, when White should be able to regain his pawn and equalize.

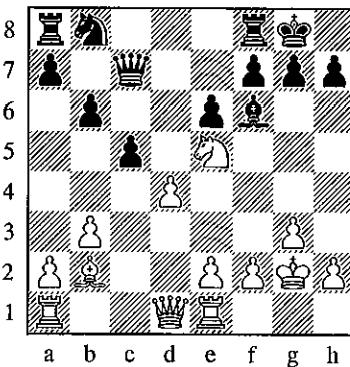
13... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14. $\mathbb{B}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{B}ab8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}c5$

And Black keeps his extra material.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 

We have a final division between these options: D21) 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$, D22) 11. $\mathbb{W}b1$, D23) 11. d4 and D24) 11. $\mathbb{B}c1$.

11. $\mathbb{B}e1$ is obviously designed to prepare e2-e4, but 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$! 12. d4 $\mathbb{Q}e4$! prevents it. 13. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$



15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 16. $dxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{B}ad8$ 18. $\mathbb{B}ed1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ With a slight edge for Black in Ksieski – Kholmov, Moscow 1991.

11.d3

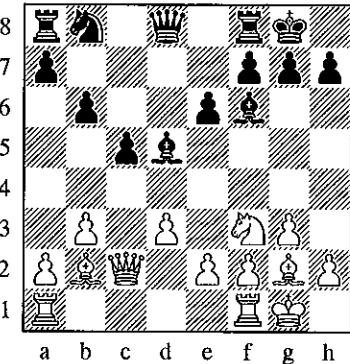
This is hardly challenging.

11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$! 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$

12. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6=$ was slightly better for Black in Ichim – Lilienthal, Warsaw 1935.

12. $\mathbb{W}d2$ may be best but it can hardly trouble Black; for instance, 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{B}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{B}ac8$ 17. $\mathbb{B}ac1$ $\mathbb{B}fd8=$ and a draw was agreed in Clausen – Fedder, Copenhagen 1985.

Now in Wheeler – Sevillano, Agoura Hills 2013, Black should have played:



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

Highlighting the vulnerable position of the white queen.

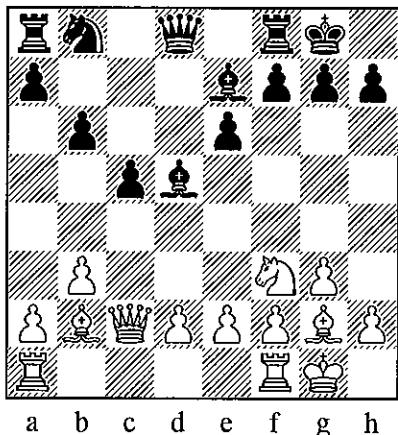
13.a3

13.e4 is met by 13... $\mathbb{Q}b4$.

13... $\mathbb{B}c8!$ 14.e4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 16. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$

With an edge for Black.

D21) 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$

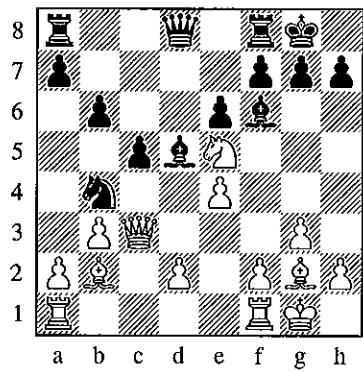


11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12.e4

12.a3?! from Ardura Fernandez – Gonzalez Alvarez, Asturias 1999, can be strongly answered by 12... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ N 13.b4 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 14. $\mathbb{B}ad1$ $\mathbb{B}c8!$ and Black is better.

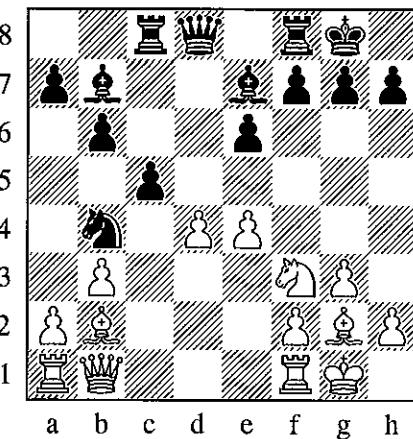
12... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}b1$

13. $\mathbb{W}c3?$! $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ in Andrianov – Smagin, Moscow 1982, is best answered by:



14... $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ N 15. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ f6 16. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ Black is better due to the weakened d3- and d4-squares.

13... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 14.d4 $\mathbb{B}c8!$



15.a3

15. $\mathbb{B}d1$!N can be met by 15...c4! 16.bxc4 $\mathbb{B}xc4$ and Black is fine.

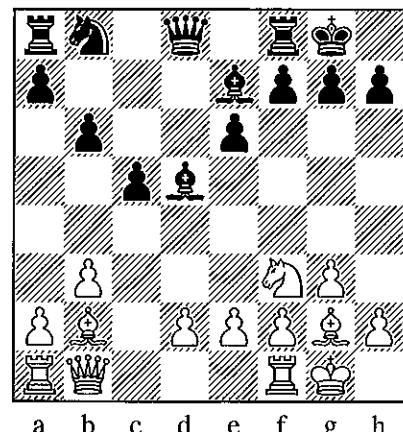
15... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16.dxc5

16. $\mathbb{B}d1$?N cxd4 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ is equal too.

16... $\mathbb{B}xc5=$

The players agreed a draw in Kristiansen – Gereben, Oslo 1978; indeed, Black's isolated c-pawn is balanced by the weak pawn on b3.

D22) 11. $\mathbb{W}b1$



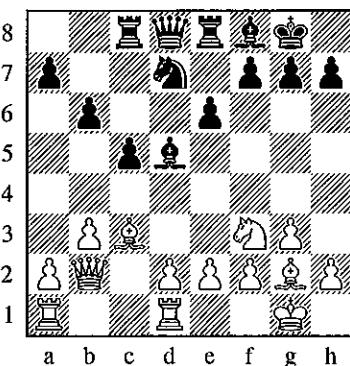
1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6

This move looks a little artificial to me, although it does at least keep the queen out of the range of the black knight.

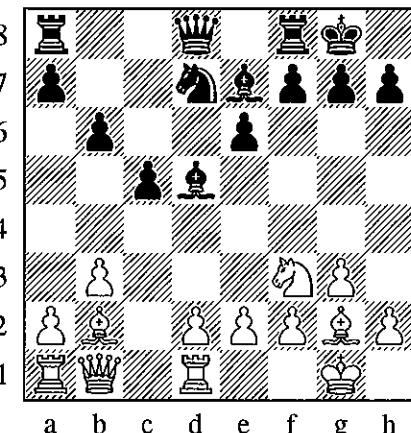
11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

After 12.d4 a draw was agreed in Csom – Ribli, Hungary 1996. Indeed the position is equal: 12...cxd4 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5=$

12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ prepares $\mathbb{W}b2$ with a battery on the long diagonal. 12... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ (14... $\mathbb{Q}f6!?=$)



15.d4 $\mathbb{W}c7!$ Intending to mirror White's queen manoeuvre. 16. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ Black was comfortable in Krasenkov – Beliavsky, Lvov 2000.

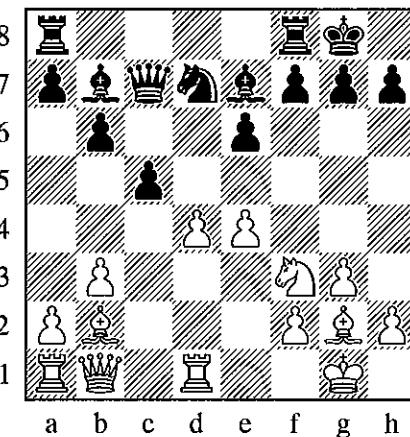


12... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13.e4

13.d4 $\mathbb{W}b7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ cxd4 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8=$ was also fine for Black in Barczay – Lengyel, Budapest 1970.

13... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 14.d4

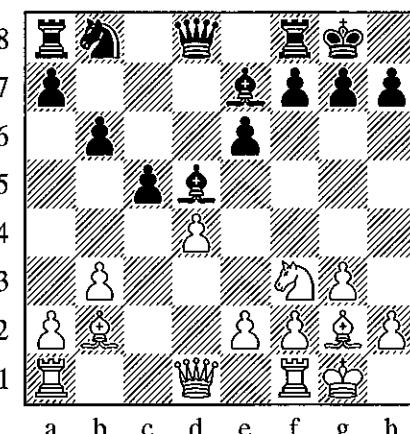
We have been following O. Foisor – Sarthou, Saint Affrique 1995. Now I prefer:

14... $\mathbb{Q}ad8!N$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c2$

15.d5?! exd5 16.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}f6\bar{=}$ favours Black as the d5-pawn turns out to be weak.

15... $\mathbb{W}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{W}a8=$

D23) 11.d4



11...Qa6!?

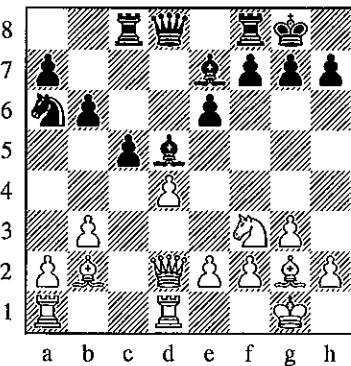
This is a rare choice, but we have already seen the same idea in a similar position on page 439.

12.dxc5

12.Qd3 Qb4 13.Qd2 cxd4 14.Qxd4 Qf6
15.Qxb4 Qxb2 was equal in Stahlberg – Keres, Budapest 1950.

Black also had no trouble after 12.Qc1 Qc8 13.dxc5 Qxc5 14.Qxc5 Qxc5 15.Qa1 f6 16.Qd1 Wa8= and a draw was soon agreed in Andersson – Portisch, Szirak 1987.

After 12.Qd2 Qc8 13.Qfd1 I would like to improve on Zakhartsov – Poluljahov, Krasnodar 2001, by means of:



13...Wc7N 14.Qac1 Wb7= and Black easily solves his opening problems.

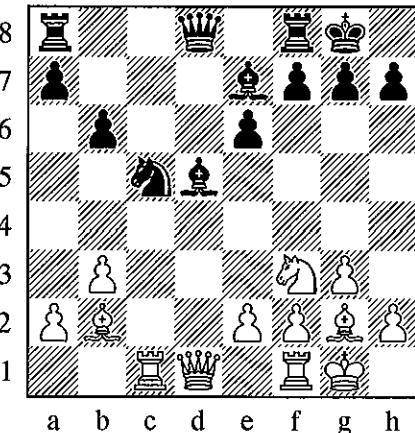
12...Qxc5

This position can also after the development of the queen's knight to d7, and has been known to be equal for many years.

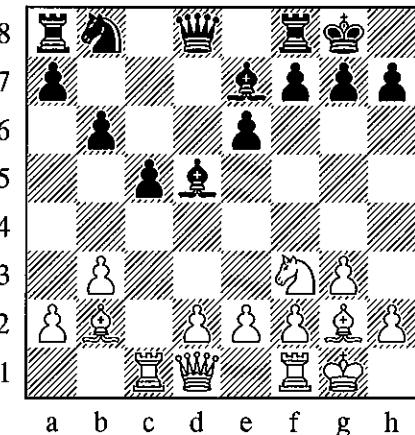
13.Qc1

13.Qe5 Qxg2 14.Qxg2 Wc7= was equal in Hoenlinger – Takacs, Vienna 1927, and a few other games.

13.b4N Qe4 14.Qd4 Qf6= does not alter the evaluation.

**13...Qc8 14.Qe5 Qxg2 15.Qxg2 Wc7=**

Darga – Hort, Las Palmas 1973. Obviously White cannot win a piece with 16.b4 because of the intermediate check on b7.

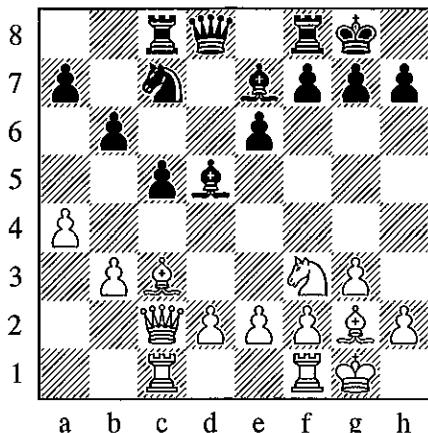
D24) 11.Qc1

Once again, I decided to recommend my favourite rare knight move:

11...Qa6!?

The knight seems to be more flexibly placed on a6 than on d7, and I find it surprising that the move has only been played once.

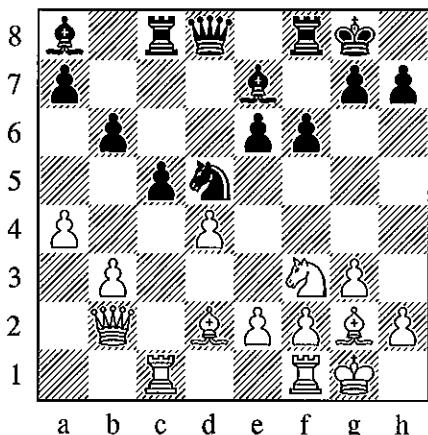
12.Wc2 Qc8 13.Qc3 Qc7 14.a4



14... $\mathbb{Q}a8$

14... $\mathbb{Q}a6!?$ N also looks good as the knight gets access to the b4-square.

15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ f6 16.d4 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$



17... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ N

17...f5!? led to interesting play in Eljanov – Kasimdzhanov, Konya 2011, but I would prefer to avoid weakening the e5-square without a really compelling reason.

18. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$

18... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7=$

18... $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8=$

Black has equalized.

Conclusion

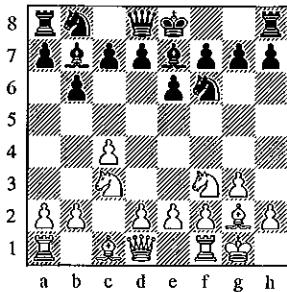
The variations covered in this chapter are not exactly at the cutting edge of opening theory, but it still helps to have a clear idea of what you are doing.

After 6.b3 0–0 7. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ c5 White has the option of 8.d4, which leads to a relatively harmless version of the Hedgehog without too many problems for Black.

Against most other options, I suggest taking some space in the centre with 8...d5. White has various set-ups available but I have generally stuck to a few clear plans. Given the chance, it would be good to gain space with ...d4 and ...e5. If White prevents this with e2–e3, then we will typically play ...dxc4 in the near future, followed by arranging our pieces according to the structure that occurs after White's choice of recapture. Finally, White may react with cxd5, when we almost always recapture with the knight. In some of the lines near the end of the chapter, we saw that developing the second knight to a6 could prove surprisingly effective.



1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6



6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

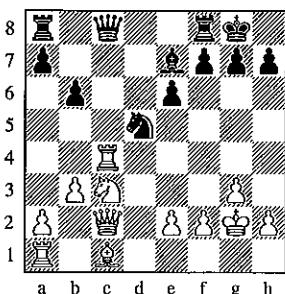
Variation Index

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2. c4 b6 3. g3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ e6 5. 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

6...0-0

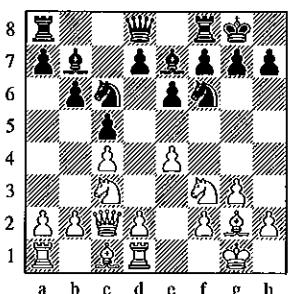
A) 7. $\mathbb{Q}c2$	446
B) 7. b3 d5 8. e3 c5 9. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ dx c 4 10. bx c 4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$	447
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B2) 12. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ a6	450
B21) 13. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$	450
B22) 13. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$	452
B221) 14. d3	452
B222) 14. d4	453
C) 7. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ d5 8. cxd5 exd5 9. d4 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ c5 11. dx c 5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$	455
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A) note to 8.e4



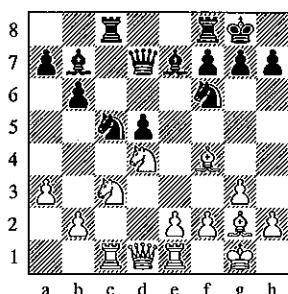
15... $\mathbb{Q}e8!N$

A) after 9. $\mathbb{Q}d1$



9... $\mathbb{Q}g4!N$

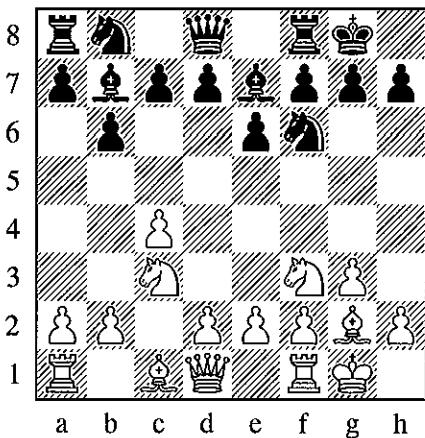
C1) after 14. a3



14... $\mathbb{Q}fe4!N$

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2. c4 b6 3. g3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ e6
 5.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0



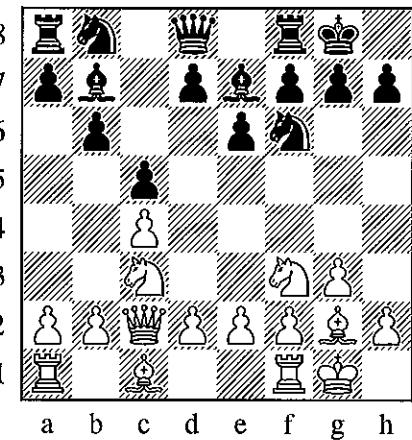
From this important tabiya, we will consider three main options: A) 7. $\mathbb{Q}c2$, B) 7. b3 and C) 7. $\mathbb{Q}e1$.

7.d4 transposes to the Queen's Indian.

7.d3 has been covered on page 413 – see 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ in the notes to variation C of Chapter 20.

A) 7. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ c5!

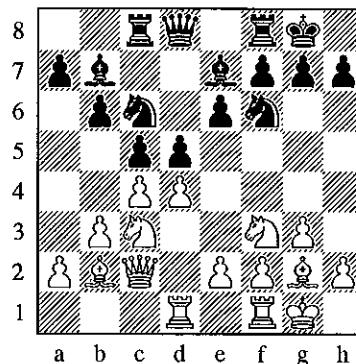
This is a good moment to invite a Hedgehog set-up.



8.e4

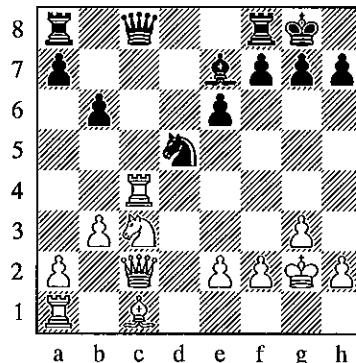
8.e3 d5 9.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10.d4 occurred in Mainka – Tolhai, Liechtenstein 1993, and now the natural 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6N$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ leads to a slight edge for Black.

8.b3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 10. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ d5 11. d4 was played in Marttala – Ostberg, Boras 1979. Black has a few decent options, but the most direct would be:



11...dxc4!N 12. dxc5 cxb3 13. axb3 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 16. cxb6= axb6= With full equality.

8.d4 cxd4 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 11. b3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{E}d1$ (12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 13. cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}bxd5$ was equal in Pytlakowski – Penrose, Helsinki 1952) 12...d5 13. cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14. $\mathbb{E}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{E}c4$ Now I would like to improve Black's play from Moen – Diesen, Asker 1988, by means of:



15... $\mathbb{W}e8!N$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5 17. $\mathbb{B}a4$ $\mathbb{B}c8$
 18. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xe2=$

White's last move is intended to prepare d2-d4 without allowing the exchange of light-squared bishops, but Black can easily thwart his plan.

8... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$

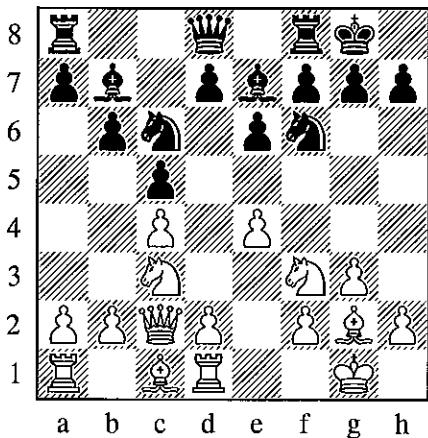
Taking control over the d4-square.

9. $\mathbb{B}d1$

9.e5? $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ d6 11.d4 cxd4 12.exd6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8\#$ was clearly better for Black in Salgado Lopez – Matamoros Franco, Linares 2013.

9.d3 d6 10.h3?! $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}de5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ and Black had won control over the d4-square in Predke – Lysyj, Moscow 2012.

Now in Peng – Spoelman, Wijk aan Zee 2007, Black missed a strong positional plan.



9... $\mathbb{Q}g4!N$

This move is directed against d2-d4, and also prepares ... $\mathbb{Q}ge5$.

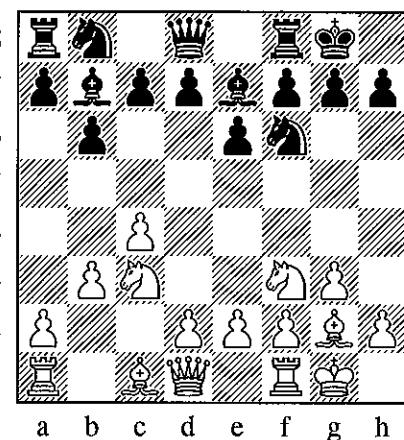
10.h3

10.d4 cxd4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{B}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13. $\mathbb{B}d2$ f5! gives Black a promising initiative.

10... $\mathbb{Q}ge5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 12. d3 $\mathbb{Q}c6\#$

Black's control over the d4-square gives him the edge.

B) 7.b3



This is not the most theoretically critical line, but it's a sensible move which has been played by Kramnik among many other strong players.

7...d5 8.e3

8.d4 leads to a harmless variation of the Queen's Indian.

8.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ doesn't seem to have any independent value, with 9. $\mathbb{B}b2$ c5 and 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10. $\mathbb{B}b2$ c5 both transposing to variation D2 of the previous chapter.

8. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ has been tested by a few strong players, but 8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 9. d4 c5= reaches a rare line of the Queen's Indian where Black is doing fine.

8. $\mathbb{B}b2$

Rather a provocative move. Black can accept the challenge with:

8...d4!! 9. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

9. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ c5 10. e3 dx e3 11. fx e3 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ gave Black no real problems in Gonda – Blomqvist, Budapest 2013.

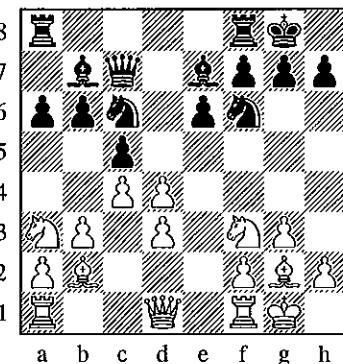
1. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6

9...c5 10.d3

10.e3 a6 11. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ d3 12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ and Black was fine in Dvorak – Kulovana, Znojmo 2007.

10...a6 11. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12.e3 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 13.exd4

Now in Mareco – Onischuk, Tromso (ol) 2014, the correct recapture would have been:



13...cxd4!N

Avoiding unnecessary exchanges.

14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ e5 15. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Black has slightly better chances in this reversed Modern Benoni; the b2-bishop is not well placed at all.

8...c5 9. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

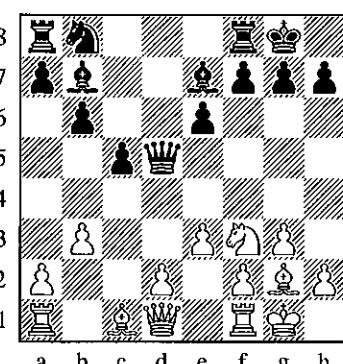
I also considered:

9.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

The easiest answer to 10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ is 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ N

11. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ (or 12. $\mathbb{E}c1$ a5=)12...a5 13. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ a4 with an equal position.10... $\mathbb{W}xd5$!N

This is a novelty but it seems like the obvious choice, as the queen is in no danger.



11.d4

11. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 12. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 13. d4 (or 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8=$) 13... $\mathbb{E}ac8=$
11...cxd4 12. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$?

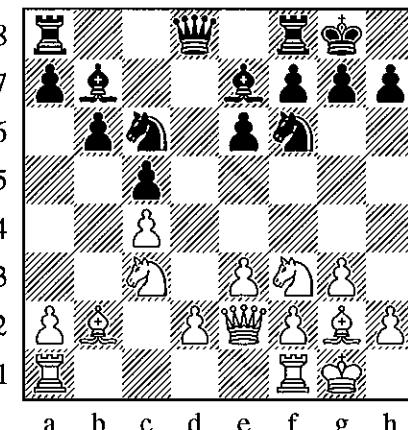
Simplifying the position.

13. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$
16. $\mathbb{E}xa1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{E}c1$ h6=

9...dxc4 10.bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$

11.d3 is likely to transpose after 11... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ to the note on 12.d3 below, while 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ transposes to variation B1.

In the event of 11.d4?!, $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ cxd4 13. exd4 $\mathbb{Q}c8\#$ the c4-pawn is vulnerable and the knight on c3 turns out to be misplaced, Bennulf – Ziegler, Stockholm 1991.

11... $\mathbb{W}c7$

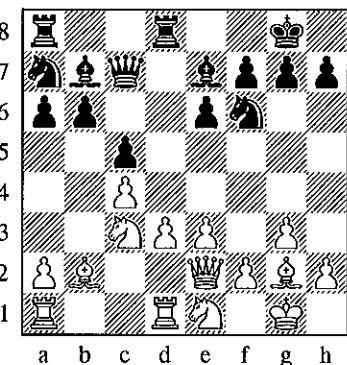
This position has been reached in a few hundred games. There are many possible transpositions which make it tricky to study, but I decided to consider B1) 12. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ and B2) 12. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ as the two main options.

12. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ a6 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ transposes to variation B21 with a couple of extra moves played.

12. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ a6 13. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ leads to variation B22.

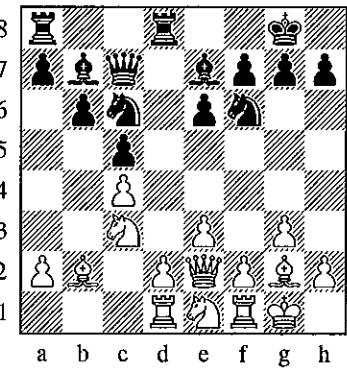
12. $\mathbb{R}ab1$ is an extremely rare move order, though it may convert to a more popular line. 12...a6 13. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{B}fd8$ 14. d3 $\mathbb{B}ab8$ The b6-pawn will require protection. Now 15. $\mathbb{B}fd1$ is a natural move which transposes to variation B1 below.

12. d3 $\mathbb{B}fd8$ 13. $\mathbb{B}fd1$ a6 14. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ (both 14. $\mathbb{B}ab1$ and 14. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ are likely to transpose elsewhere) 14... $\mathbb{Q}a7$! This is a useful idea to know about, and we will see more of it in the pages ahead.



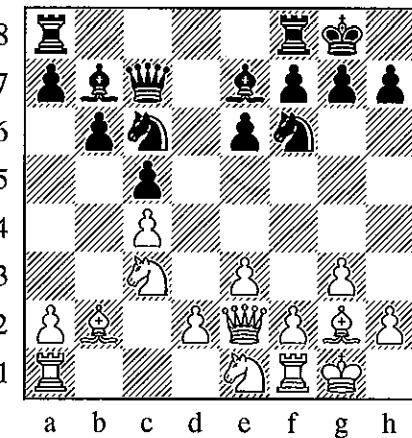
15. a4?! White prevents ...b5 but weakens the b4-square. 15... $\mathbb{B}xg2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\#$ With a slight edge for Black in Huzman – Karpman, Simferopol 1991.

12. $\mathbb{B}ad1$ If White chooses this rook for the d-file than he probably intends to advance his f-pawn. 12... $\mathbb{B}fd8$! 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ Now I would like to offer:



13... $\mathbb{B}d7$! N (13... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ occurred in Markowski – Graf, Dresden 2006) 14. f4 $\mathbb{B}ad8$ 15. g4 We have transposed to variation B1 below.

B1) 12. $\mathbb{Q}e1$



White prepares a kingside offensive, which generally involves an advance of the f- and g-pawns. The most popular move has been 12...a6, but I prefer:

12... $\mathbb{B}fd8$!?

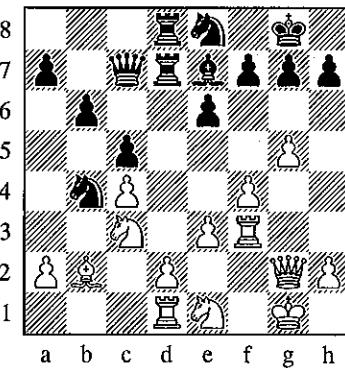
A natural move, intending to exert pressure along the d-file.

13. f4 $\mathbb{B}d7$ 14. g4 $\mathbb{B}ad8$ 15. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 16. $\mathbb{B}xb7$

A natural alternative is:

16. g5! N $\mathbb{B}xg2$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{B}f3$

White prepares a direct attack along the h-file with $\mathbb{B}h3$ and $\mathbb{W}g4-h5$.



1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6

18...f5! 19.e4

19.gxf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6\bar{}$ is better for Black.

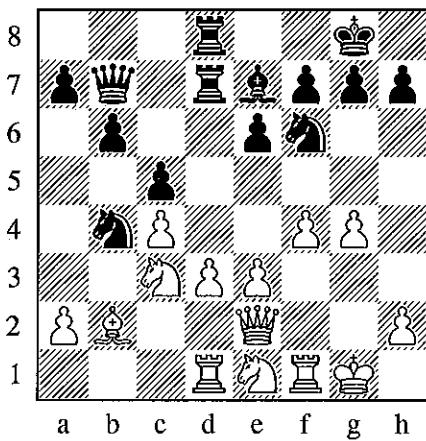
After 19. $\mathbb{E}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ the h7-pawn can be protected by means of ...g6; that's why Black played ...f5 on the previous turn.

19... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 20.exf5 exf5 21.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}d6=$

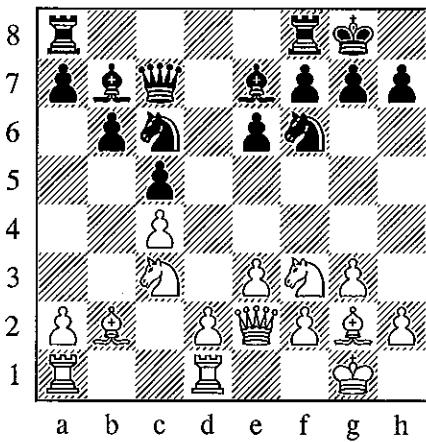
Black will neutralize the strong knight with ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ (... $\mathbb{Q}e7$), with roughly equal chances.

16... $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 17.d3

This position was reached in P.E. Nielsen – Ochsner, Denmark 2013. I would like to offer:

17... $\mathbb{Q}e8!?$ N 18.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 19.g5

After 19.f5 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ Black neutralizes the pressure on the kingside and obtains a good position.

19... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 20. $\mathbb{E}f3$ f5!=B2) 12. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ 

This time White focuses on the centre rather than the kingside.

12...a6

Black starts to prepare a future ...b5 break.

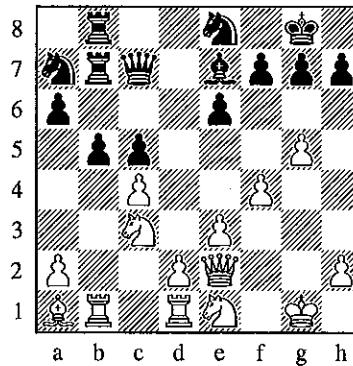
White's main decision concerns the placement of the queen's rook, so we will consider B21) 13. $\mathbb{E}ab1$ and B22) 13. $\mathbb{E}ac1$.

B21) 13. $\mathbb{E}ab1$

White is thinking about putting pressure on the b-pawn; or at least making it more difficult for Black to play ...b5.

13... $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 14.d3

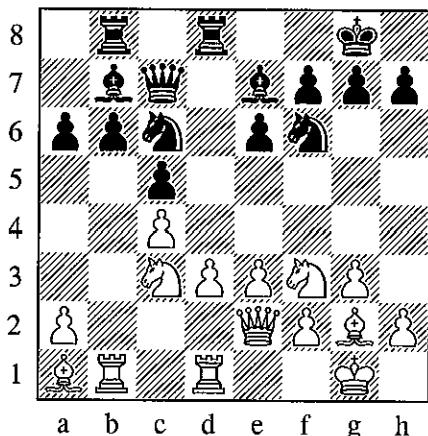
14. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{E}ab8$ Black would like to prepare ...b5, although the short-term plan is just to safeguard the b6-pawn. 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ (15.d3 transposes to the main line) 15... $\mathbb{Q}a7!$ As mentioned earlier, this is an important resource in these positions. 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{E}xb7$ 17.f4 $\mathbb{E}db8$ 18.g4 b5 19.g5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$



20. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}g2$ bxc4 $\bar{}$ Black obtained the upper hand in Sunye Neto – Ribli, Las Palmas 1982.

14... $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}a1$

After 15.a3, in Dvirnyy – Salgado Lopez, Skopje 2013, Black could have played 15... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ N 16. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ b5 with at least equal chances.



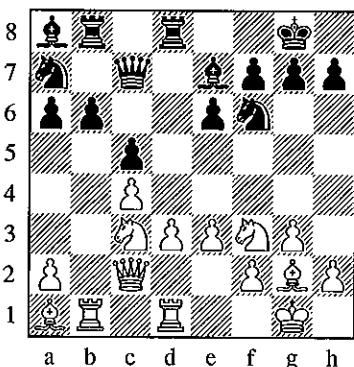
15...Qa7

Once again, the knight goes to this odd-looking square to support the advance of the b-pawn.

16.a4

16.d4 was played in Korchnoi – Ki. Georgiev, Lugano 1986, and now the cold-blooded 16...b5!N 17.dxc5 ♕xc5 18.Qd2 ♕xg2 19.Qxg2 ♕c6† 20.♕f3 ♕xf3† 21.♕xf3 ♕f8= would have reached an equal ending.

16.♕c2 occurred in Mamedov – Onischuk, Tromso (ol) 2014. I would like to correct Black's play with 16...g6!, preparing ...b5 and keeping the c6-square available for the a7-knight. For example:



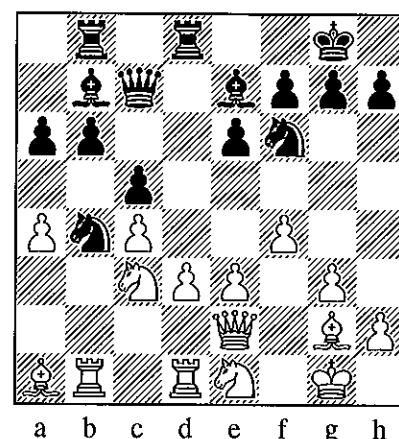
17.Qe1 (17.♕a4?! can be met by 17...b5! 18.♕xa6 b4 19.Qe2 ♕c6! with an annoying

threat of ...Qc8 and ...Ra8) 17...Bxg2 18.Qxg2 b5=

The text move prevents ...b5 definitively, but weakens the b4-square, so...

16...Qc6 17.Qe1 Qb4 18.f4

18.Qh3 is not challenging at all. 18...Rd7!N (Black can repeat moves by means of 18...Rc6 19.Qg2 Rc7= but I think he can play for more) The text move is intended to provoke a weakening of the d4-square; in the event of 19.e4 Black plays 19...Rdd8!, vacating the d7-square for the knight (in case e4–e5 comes), with slightly better chances due to the weak d4-square.



18...Rxg2 19.Qxg2

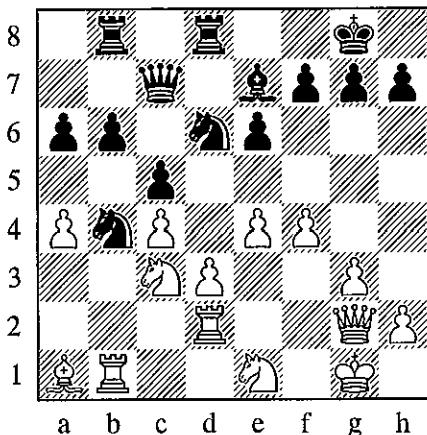
19.Qxg2 Qe8!?, 20.Qf3 Qd6 21.Qa2 Qc6 22.e4 f6 23.Qc3 Qf7 was good for Black in Drasko – Svetushkin, Porto Carras 2011.

19...Qe8!?

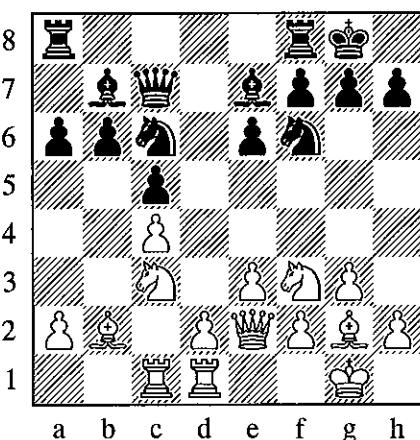
Black transfers the knight to a better position.

20.Qd2 Qd6 21.e4

Black has more than one good continuation, but my favourite is:

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b621... $\mathbb{Q}b7!?$ N

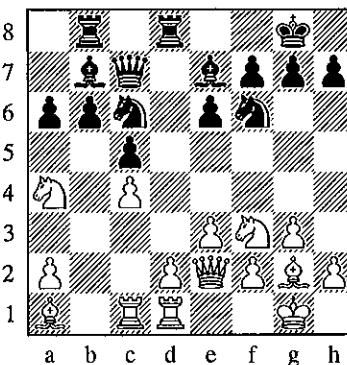
Intending to transfer the knight via a5 to c6.

21... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ with the idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ was also good for Black in Roeder – Tiviakov, Vlissingen 2002.22. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}a5\ddagger$ B22) 13. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ 

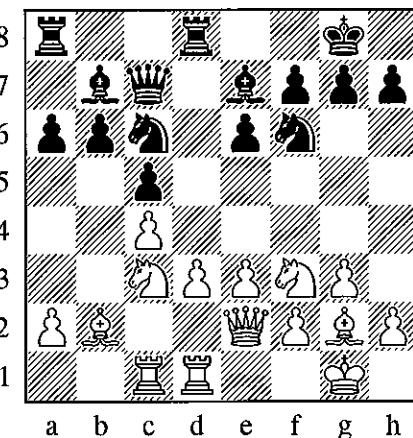
The previous variation showed that it is hard for White to prevent ...b5 – unless he plays a2-a4, in which case Black gets an outpost on b4. The text move is another way to discourage ...b5, as the X-ray along the c-file may become annoying for Black.

13... $\mathbb{E}fd8$

We will consider B221) 14.d3 and B222) 14.d4.

14. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ occurred in Kramnik – Mista, Doha 2014, and now Black missed a nice idea:15... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ N Vacating the c6-square for the bishop. For example, 16.d4 $\mathbb{E}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{E}bc8$ with a slight edge for Black, as White's minor pieces on the queenside are misplaced.

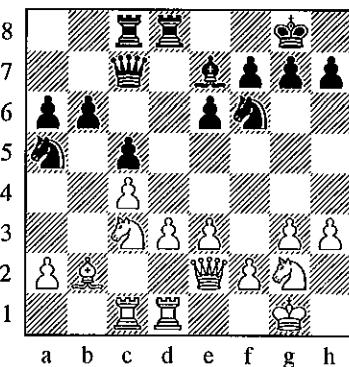
B221) 14.d3



This line has scored well for White, but objectively it doesn't seem to be any better than variation B21 where the rook was on b1.

14... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}a1$

15.h3 Qa5 16.Qe1 Bxg2 17.Qxg2 occurred in Dubov – Dragun, Warsaw 2013, and now I would like to recommend:



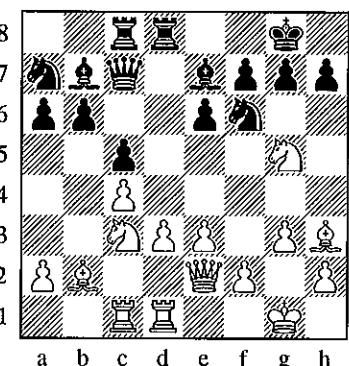
17...Bb8!N Intending ...b5, and if 18.a4 Qc6 the knight is heading for b4, with a promising position for Black.

15.Qh3

This move looks too optimistic.

15...Qa7 16.Qg5

16.e4 b5 17.We3 bxc4 18.dxc4 Bxd1† 19.Bxd1 Bd8 20.Qe1 occurred in Albut – Furman, Minsk 1976, when 20...Qd7?N would have been promising for Black (the game continued 20...Qc6?! 21.Qd5! with complications; Black is still objectively better, but the text move is simpler).



16...Wc6!N

Over-protecting the e6-pawn. 16...b5 17.Qxe6 fxe6 18.Qxe6† Wh8 was unclear in Plaskett – I. Rogers, Blackpool 1988.

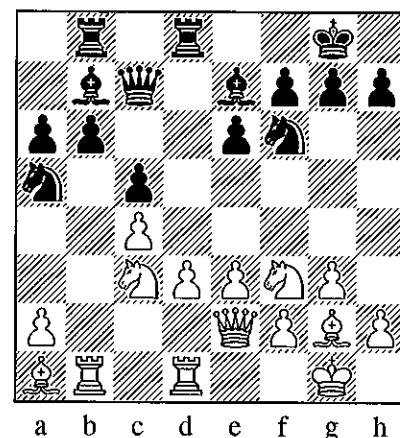
17.e4 b5

With a comfortable position for Black, as White's activity on the kingside leads nowhere.

15...Qa5 16.Qb1 Bb8N

16...Qd7 17.Wb2 was agreed drawn in Buhmann – Desboeufs, email 2004.

After the text move we have something similar to variation B21, except that the black knight is on a5.



17.Qd2

17.Qd2 Bxg2 18.Qxg2 occurred in Genov – Shalamberidze, Malatya 2013, and now 18...b5N leads to easy equality as the pawn cannot be captured.

17...Qc6 18.a4

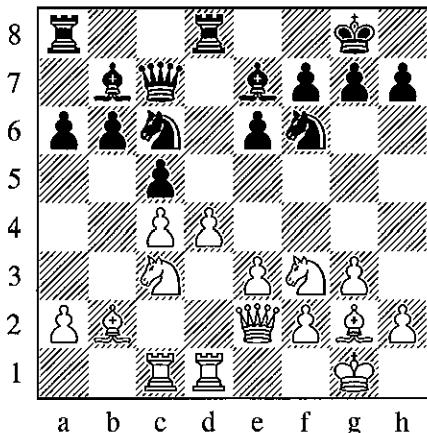
Now Black's play in V. Mikhalevski – Yartsev, Israel 2011, can be improved by means of:

18...Qa8!N=

Vacating the c6-square and preparing to bring the a5-knight via c6 to b4.

B222) 14.d4

This time White tries to take the initiative in the centre.



14... $\mathbb{Q}a5$

Black attacks the c4-pawn, which has been loosened by White's last move.

15.d5?

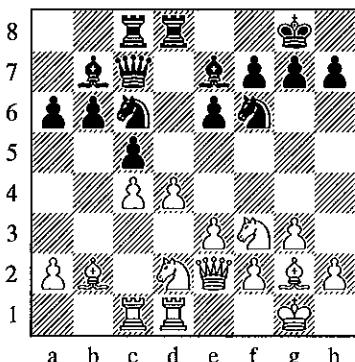
This leads to complications and eventual equality.

15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

This is a more solid alternative. I think Black's most accurate reply is:

16... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ N

16... $\mathbb{Q}c6$! is also playable, and 17. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ was unclear in Shulman – Sargissian, Wheeling 2014.



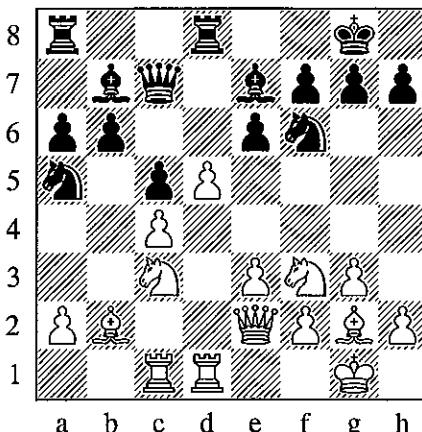
17. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

17.a3 $\mathbb{Q}a5$! and White can't play $\mathbb{Q}b3$ anymore. 17.dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ is also roughly equal.

17...a5!

Preparing both ...a4 and ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$.

18. dxc5 bxc5 19. $\mathbb{E}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{E}xd8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d1=$



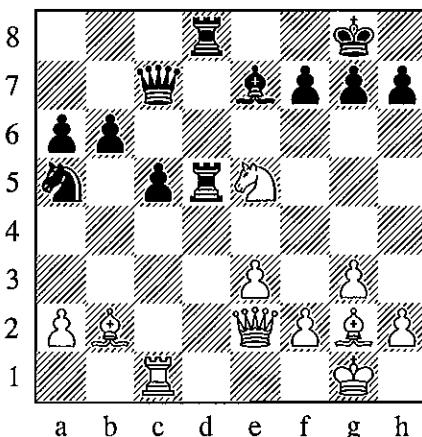
15... $\mathbb{exd}5$ 16. $\mathbb{cxsd}5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$? gave White no real compensation for the pawn in Durarbayli – Yu Yangyi, Antalya 2013. 17... $\mathbb{W}c6$!N followed by transferring the queen to e6 would have been the most accurate way to prove Black's advantage.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

17... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ was also playable in Denker – Owens, New York 1955, but White should have answered it with 18. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ N.

18. $\mathbb{E}xd5$ $\mathbb{E}xd5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$

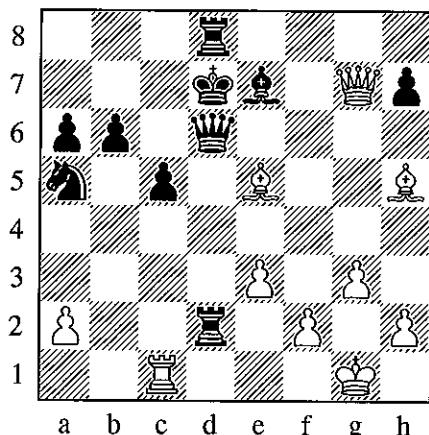


20. Qxf7!

This beautiful move leads to a forced draw.

20. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ is good for Black.

20... $\mathbb{E}d2$ 21. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xg7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$
 23. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}h5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

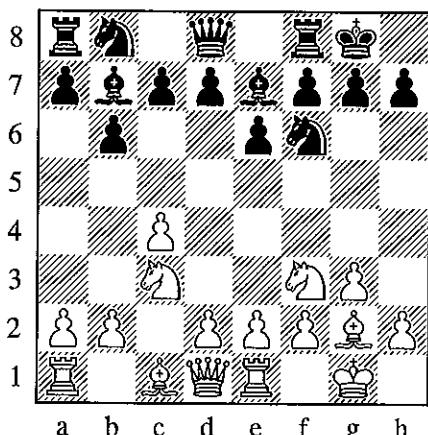


25...g8N

The most forcing, although 25... $\mathbb{W}d5$ led to a quick draw after 26. $\mathbb{Q}g4\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}h5\uparrow$ in Maack – Demchenko, email 2010.

26. $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f3\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$
With perpetual check.

C) Z. Hel



This is the most challenging move, preparing e2-e4.

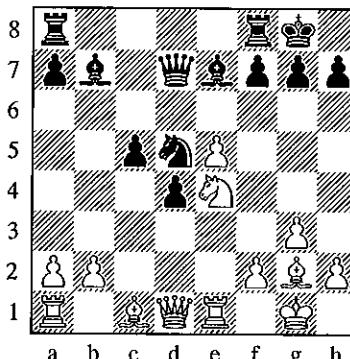
7..d5

7...c5 leads, after 8.e4 followed by d2-d4, to a version of the Hedgehog that I would rather avoid.

8.cxd5

The following alternatives are not dangerous at all:

8. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 9. $d4$ $c5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ (10. $cxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$)
 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $exd5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $c4$ was
 not worse for Black in Wirthensohn – Lim,
 Thessaloniki [ol] 1988) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 11. $dxc5$
 $bxc5$ 12. $cxd5$ $exd5$ 13. $e4$ $d4$ 14. $e5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$
 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ This was Mrva – Medvegy, Austria
 2006, and now I would like to recommend:



15... $\mathbb{E}fe8!!$ N 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ c4 18. $\mathbb{Q}d6$
 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 20.exd6 $\mathbb{W}d5\#$ Black is better

8.14

This gives Black a comfortable version of a Queen's Indian after:

8...dxc4! 9.♘a4 a6 10.♗xc4 b5 11.♗b3 c5
12.♗d1 ♗bd7 13.dxc5 ♗xc5 14.♗e5 ♗b6!

14... $\mathbb{A}xg2$ is more common but the text move is stronger.

15. ♜xd7

15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ is strongly met by 15... $\mathbb{Q}g4! \mp$ as in Glinz – Lebedev, email 2007.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...b6

15... $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$

Or 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2\#$ and the bishop is untouchable in view of the check on c6.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xf2\#!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb7$

Black's accurate play netted him a pawn in Alatortsev – Levenfish, Moscow 1940.

8...exd5 9.d4

9. $\mathbb{W}c2?$! is dubious as it allows 9...d4! 10. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ c5 11. $\mathbb{W}f5$ a6 12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. d3 $\mathbb{Q}d5\#$ when Black was better in Esimov – Stromboli, St Eufemia d'Aspromonte 2010, thanks to his space advantage.

The text move transposes to a Queen's Indian, where the position would usually arise after 1. d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2. c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b6 4. g3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ (4... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ is the other main move) 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6. 0–0 0–0 7. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ d5 8. cxd5 exd5 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$.

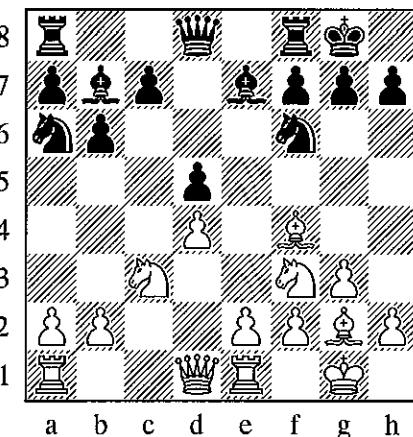
Most of the time in this book, I have not analysed transpositions to well-known 1. d4 openings, as they are not what this book is about. However, in this particular case I have made an exception, because this variation is theoretically critical and is often regarded as being slightly better for White. Moreover, many QID players prefer to avoid the ...d5 pawn structure, for example with 7... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ instead of 7...d5 in the line above. In the rest of this chapter I will show you how to meet White's most popular attempts, while demonstrating what I believe to be a convincing route to equality.

9... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

This is the best square for the knight, as it supports the ...c5 push without obstructing any of the other pieces, as would be the case if the knight went to d7. Since the Queen's Indian falls outside of the main topic of this book, I will not analyse all of White's options but will instead focus on his best and most popular attempts to get an advantage.

10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

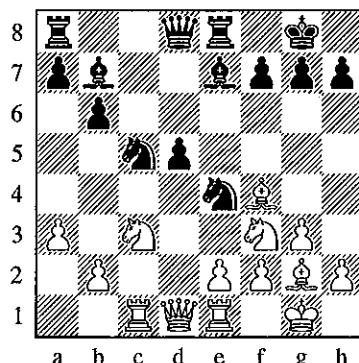
Other moves have been tried but the text is by far the most logical and popular, as White develops his bishop to an active square while vacating the c1-square for the rook.



10...c5 11. dxc5

This is the usual move, and is recommended by GM Khalifman in his popular *Opening for White According to Kramnik* repertoire series.

The main alternative is: 11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 12. a3 (12. dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}axc5$ transposes to variation C2; incidentally, Khalifman mentions in a note and gives 12... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ as Black's best, but fails to consider 13. $\mathbb{Q}f1!$, which promises White an edge according to my analysis) 12... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 13. dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}axc5$



14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$

17. $b4 \mathbb{Q}xd4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd4 \mathbb{Q}e6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $d4$ Black is doing well here, as has been known since Piket – Salov, Wijk aan Zee 1998.

11. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

This has been tried by some strong players over the years, but it's a pretty rare line these days.

11... $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

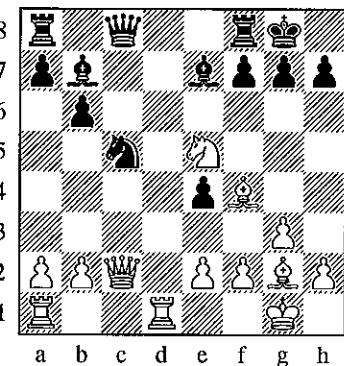
12. $dxc5 \mathbb{Q}xc3$ 13. $bxc3 \mathbb{Q}xc5$ was good for Black in Ernst – Tomashevsky, Novi Sad 2009.

12... $dxe4$ 13. $dxc5 \mathbb{Q}xc5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$

14. $\mathbb{B}c1 \mathbb{W}e8!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{B}d8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c2 \mathbb{W}c6$ and Black was fine in Timman – Gavrikov, Biel 1995.

14... $\mathbb{W}c8!$ 15. $\mathbb{B}ed1$

Now in Van Wely – Korchnoi, Hoogeveen 2001, Black should have played:



15... $\mathbb{W}f5!$ N

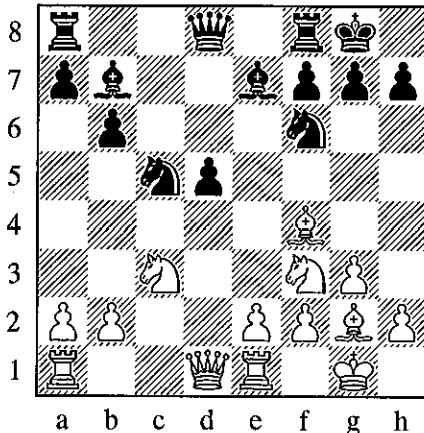
I also considered 15... $\mathbb{W}e6$ N, but it is better to leave the e6-square vacant in case the knight requires it.

16. $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{B}fc8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d6 \mathbb{Q}xd6$ 18. $\mathbb{B}xd6 \mathbb{Q}d3$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d2 \mathbb{Q}xf4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xf4 \mathbb{W}xf4$ 21. $gxf4$ $g6$ 22. $\mathbb{B}ad1 \mathbb{B}c2=$

Black equalizes easily.

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

11... $bxc5$ would leave Black's pawns too vulnerable, so the text move is better. It may appear as though the IQP will be a problem, but Black's piece activity makes up for it.



White's two main options are C1) 12. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ and C2) 12. $\mathbb{B}c1$.

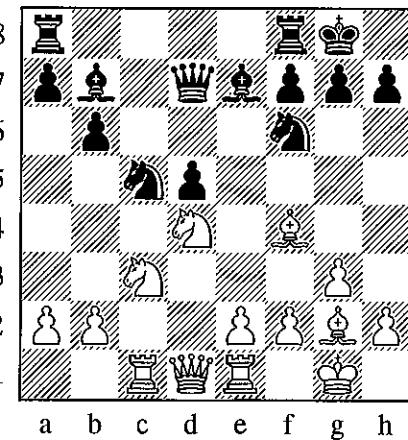
12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ doesn't have any independent value and transposes to variation C22 after 12... $\mathbb{Q}fe4$ 13. $\mathbb{B}c1$.

C1) 12. $\mathbb{Q}d4 \mathbb{W}d7!$

12... $\mathbb{Q}fe4$ invites a transposition to variation C21 below, but White can deviate with 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 14. $\mathbb{B}c1$ as in Filippov – Gashimov, Istanbul 2003.

13. $\mathbb{B}c1$

13. $\mathbb{W}c2$ has been played a few times but 13... $\mathbb{Q}fe4$ N 14. $\mathbb{B}ed1 \mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ (or 15. $bxc3 \mathbb{Q}e4=$ with ... $\mathbb{B}ac8$ to follow) 15... $\mathbb{B}ac8$ 16. $\mathbb{B}ac1 \mathbb{B}fe8$ is fine for Black, despite the isolated pawn on d5.

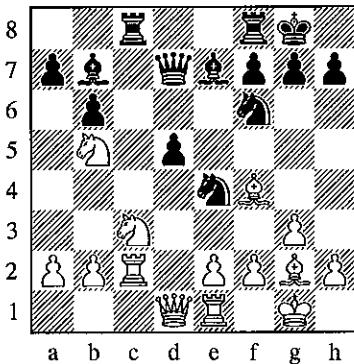


1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2... $b6$ 13... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 14.a3

14.b4?! in Tetenkina – Akesson, Stockholm 2003, was dubious due to 14... $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ N when White's position has been needlessly weakened.

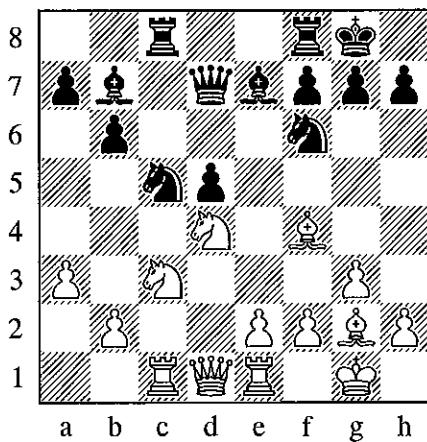
14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ was also unimpressive in Lalith – Prince, Bhiwani 2010, due to 14... $\mathbb{E}fd8!$ N 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 17.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ and White is under some pressure.

14. $\mathbb{E}c2$ can be answered by: 14... $\mathbb{Q}ce4!$?N (14... $\mathbb{E}fd8!$? was also pretty good in Yilmaz – Balashov, Moscow 2012) 15. $\mathbb{Q}db5$



15... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 16.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 18. $\mathbb{E}xc3$ $\mathbb{E}xc3$ 19.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}c6=$ Black is fine, as the weakness of the c3-pawn compensates for the isolated d-pawn.

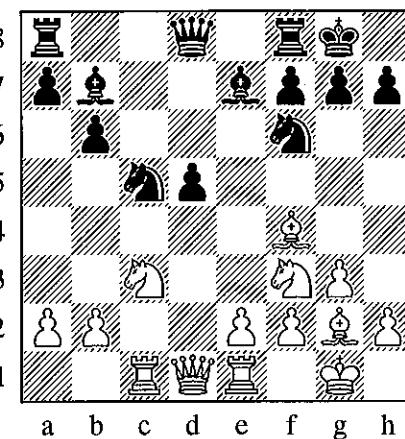
After the text move Black's most accurate continuation seems to be:

14... $\mathbb{Q}fe4!$ N 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $dxe4$ 16.b4 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xa4$ $a6=$

And Black is fine.

C2) 12. $\mathbb{E}c1$

This is the main line.

12... $\mathbb{Q}fe4$

The most popular move, and a particular favourite of the Ukrainian GM Kryvoruchko. White may respond with C21) 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ or C22) 13. $\mathbb{Q}e5$.

13. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

This has been known to be harmless for two decades.

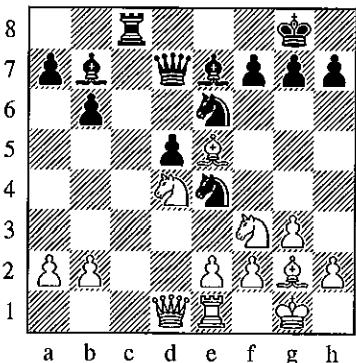
13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}bd4$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}a4$ was seen in Pelletier – Werle, Germany 2002, and now the most accurate is 16... $\mathbb{E}fe8!$ N 17. $\mathbb{E}c2$ a5 when Black is fine.

14... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}bd4$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 16. $\mathbb{E}xc8$ $\mathbb{E}xc8$

Although there is no need to improve Black's play, it is worth pointing out that the other recaptures are also fine for him:

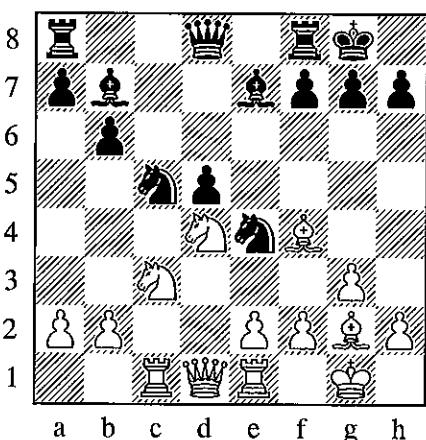
16... $\mathbb{W}xc8!$?N 17.a3 a5 18. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5=$ 16... $\mathbb{Q}xc8!$?N 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7=$



17. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18. a3 a5 19. e3 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g4$

In this equal position a draw was agreed in Kramnik – Hübner, Yerevan (ol) 1996.

C21) 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$



This was Khalifman's main line in the first edition of his Kramnik-themed repertoire book.

13... $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$

The modern improvement over 13... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, which was considered by Khalifman.

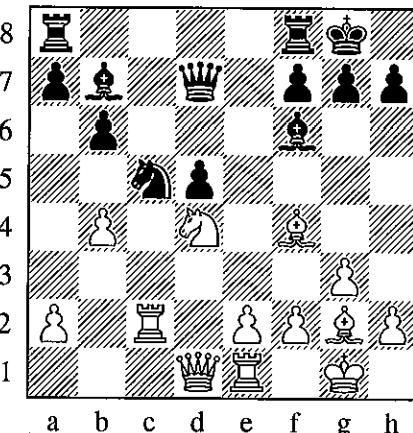
14. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

White is unpinning the knight on d4.

15... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16. b4=

16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ (Black can also start with 16... $\mathbb{W}ac8$) 17. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{W}ac8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ h6 19. h4 $\mathbb{Q}e4=$

gave Black a good position in Adhiban – Kosteniuk, Doha 2015.



16... $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$

The simplest.

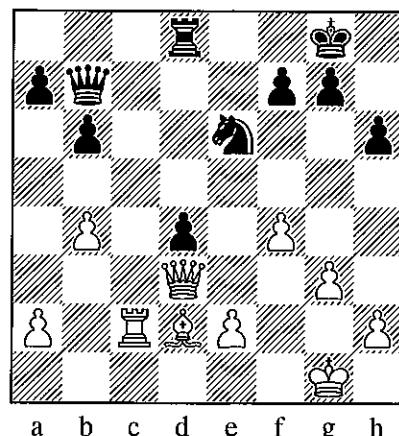
17. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d3$ d4 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}xb7$

We have already seen a similar position with the inclusion of the moves a2-a3 and ... $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ in the Piket – Salov game mentioned on page 457. Black is doing fine here too, as Kryvoruchko has demonstrated in a couple of recent games.

20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}ac8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}ec1$ $\mathbb{W}xc2$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{W}d8$
23. f4

23. a3 $\mathbb{W}d5$ 24. f3 h6 is equal.

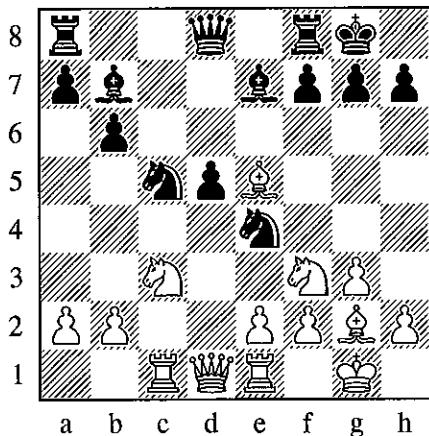
23... h6



24.f5 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ h x g5=

Gonzalez Vidal – Kryvoruchko, Tsaghkadzor 2015.

C22) 13. $\mathbb{Q}e5$



This transfer of the bishop to d4 is Khalifman's recommendation in the more recent edition of *Opening for White According to Kramnik*.

13... $\mathbb{E}e8$

The most natural move.

13... $\mathbb{E}c8$ has also been played, but Black did not manage to equalize in Gelfand – Bacrot, Ashdod (rapid) 2015.

14. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

An important resource, which must be considered carefully.

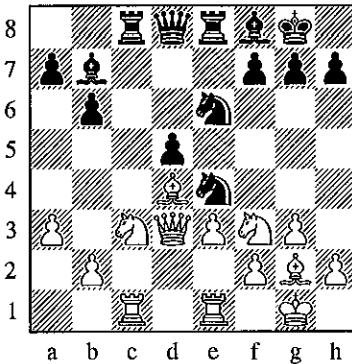
Harmless is: 14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. a3 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18. e3 $\mathbb{W}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 20. exd4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{E}xc3$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ h5 23. h4 g6 24. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 25. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ = In this equal position, a draw was agreed in Lalith – Kryvoruchko, Al-Ain 2015.

14.a3

This move isn't dangerous for Black either.

14... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. e3 $\mathbb{E}c8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d3$

17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ occurred in V. Popov – Chernyshov, Tomsk 2006, when 17... $\mathbb{E}xc1$!N 18. $\mathbb{W}xc1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}fxd4$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}d1$ a6= would have yielded equal chances.



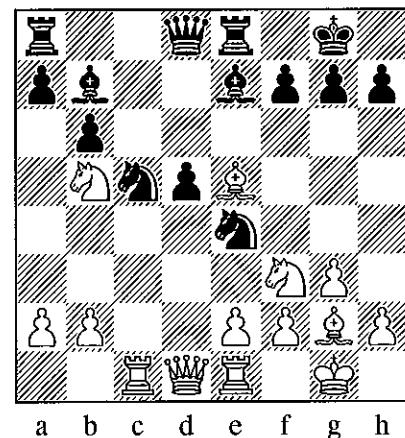
17... $\mathbb{E}e7$

Intending to double on the c-file.

17... $\mathbb{G}6$? also looks reasonable.

18. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ =

The position is balanced, and two moves later a draw was agreed in Kuzubov – Maiorov, Neustadt an der Weinstrasse 2009.



14... $\mathbb{Q}f8$!

This precise move should lead to equality if followed up correctly.

15.b4

15. $\mathbb{Q}c7$? would be a blunder in view of

15...♝xe5! 16.♞xa8 ♝e7–+ and the knight on a8 is trapped.

15...♞e6 16.♗b3

Tihonov – Maiorov, Minsk 2009.

16...a5!N

Technically this is a novelty but it's actually old news, as Khalifman analysed it in his book.

17.♘c7

17.a3 axb4 18.axb4 ♜c8 is fine for Black.

17...a4!

An important intermediate move.

18.♗e3

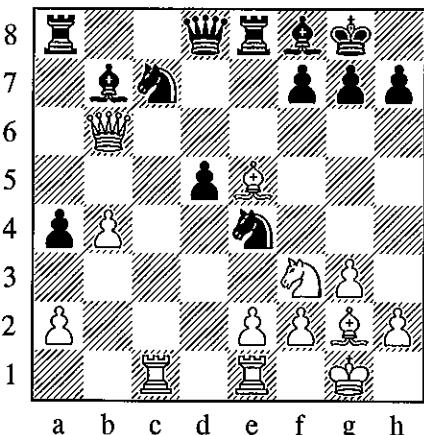
18.♘xe6 axb3 19.♘xd8 ♜exd8 20.axb3 ♜xb4 21.♘ed1 ♜c5 22.♘d4 ♜a2 is equal.

18...♞xc7 19.♗xb6!

19.♗xc7? is bad because of 19...♝xb4!–.

19.♗xc7 ♜f6 is good for Black, who will follow up with either ...♞xg3 or ...♝xb4.

We have reached a crucial position.



19...♝a6!

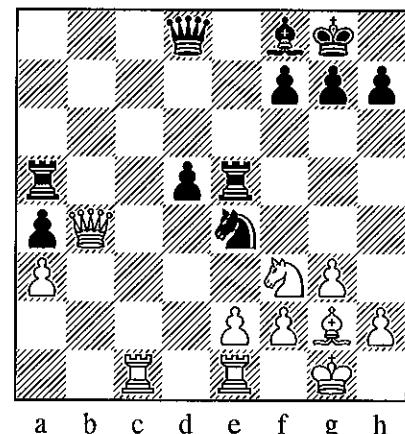
Khalifman only considers 19...♞e6 and 19...♝xe5. The text move is a clear

improvement, which leads to an equal position as follows.

20.♗xb7 ♞xb4 21.a3

21.♗c7 is strongly met by: 21...♞d6 22.♗xd6 ♜xd6 23.♗xf7 ♜e7! Play continues with either 24.♗xe7 ♜xe7 25.♗xe7 ♜xe7 26.♘d4 ♜c8, or 24.♗f4 ♜eb8 25.♗xb4 ♜xb4 26.♗xd5† ♜h8, with a good position for Black in both cases.

21...♜e7! 22.♗b5 ♜a5! 23.♗xb4 ♜xe5



24.♗c8! ♜xc8 25.♗xa5 ♜e8 26.♗xa4 ♞c3=

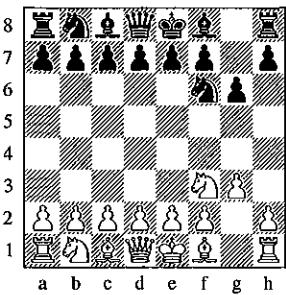
Black regains the sacrificed pawn and obtains an equal position.

Conclusion

This is an important chapter, as the lines examined here are popular for White at all levels. 7.b3 d5 8.e3 c5 9.♗b2 dxc4 10.bxc4 ♘c6 offers Black good chances, and in many of the lines he can strive for more than equality; the ...♞a7 resource is an especially important concept to keep in mind. 7.♗e1 is more theoretically challenging, but I believe 7...d5 8.cxd5 exd5 to be fully satisfactory for Black. It is important to know some precise theory here, especially in the critical variation C22, as the best moves would be difficult to find over the board.



1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6



2.g3

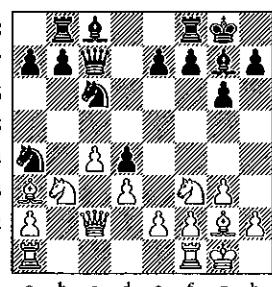
Variation Index

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.g3

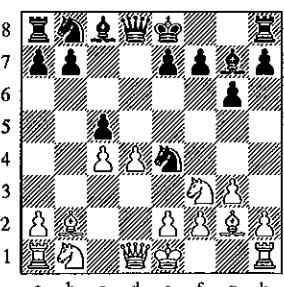
2...g6

A) 3.b3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ d5!! 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c5	463
A1) 6.c4	464
A2) 6.0-0 0-0	465
A21) 7.c4	465
A22) 7.d4	467
A23) 7.e3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$	469
A231) 8.d4	469
A232) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e5$	470
B) 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 4.0-0 d5 5.d3 0-0	471
B1) 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$	472
B2) 6.c4	473
B3) 6.c3	474
B4) 6. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$	476
C) 3.c4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5	479
C1) 5.cxd5	480
C2) 5.0-0 c6	480
C21) 6.d3	482
C22) 6.cxd5	483

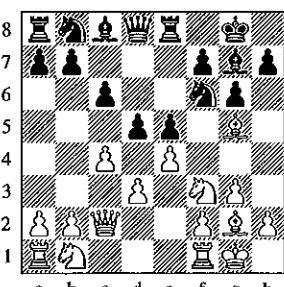
A1) after 15. $\mathbb{Q}c2$



C) note to move 5



C21) after 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$



15... $\mathbb{Q}d8!N$

8... $\mathbb{Q}b6!N$

9...d4!N

1.♗f3 ♗f6 2.g3 g6

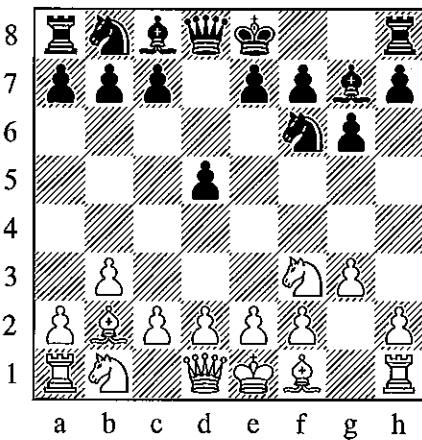
This move will be the usual choice of Grünfeld and King's Indian players. If White does not intend to transpose to either of those openings by playing an early d2-d4, then his main options are A) 3.b3, B) 3.♗g2 and C) 3.c4.

A) 3.b3

White's idea is to oppose Black's dark-squared bishop with his own bishop.

3...♗g7 4.♗b2 d5!?

I've decided to choose this instead of the more popular 4...d6; although the latter move is fine of course.



5.♗g2

5.c4 0–0 transposes to variation A3 of the next chapter.

5.d4!?

This cannot be considered as a serious option after the bishop has gone to b2.

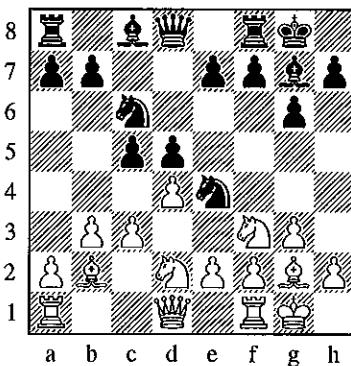
5...c5! 6.♗g2

6.dxc5 ♜a5† 7.♗bd2 ♜xc5 (now Black is threatening 8...♗g4, which prevents normal development with 8.♗g2) 8.e3 In Gabarro Figueiras – Ordóñez Cabaneros, Catalonia 1996, a logical continuation would have

been 8...♗c6!N 9.a3 a5 10.♗g2 0–0 11.0–0
♗d8 and I prefer Black.

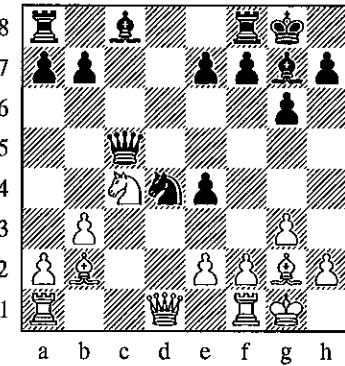
6...♗e4 7.0–0 ♗c6 8.c3 0–0 9.♗bd2

Black clearly has a comfortable position and in the game he found a nice way to put White under pressure.



9...♝a5? 10.♗xe4 dxe4 11.♗d2 cxd4 12.cxd4
♗xd4 13.♗c4 ♜c5

With the following nice idea:



14.♗xe4

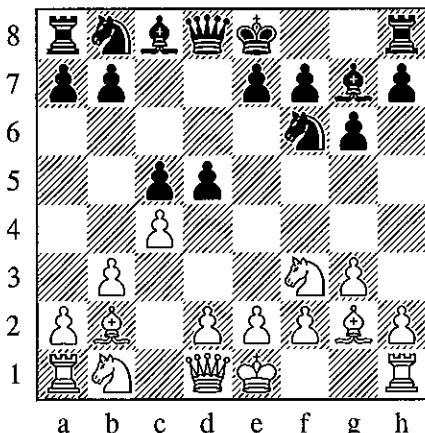
14.e3 ♜c6 15.♗xe4 ♜f5 is also slightly better for Black.

14...♝g4! 15.♗xd4 ♜xd4†

Alonso Alvarez – Sion Castro, Benasque 1999.

5...c5

White's main options are A1) 6.c4 and A2) 6.0–0.

A1) 6.c4**6...d4 7.b4**

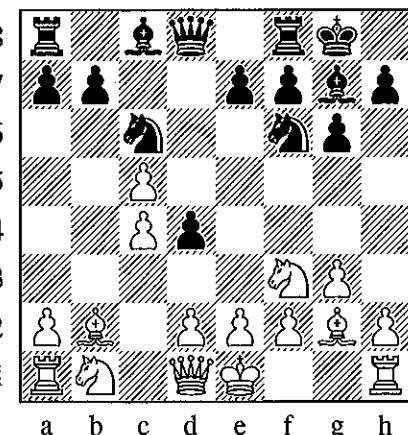
7.e3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8.exd4 cxd4 9.0–0 0–0 converts to variation A21.

7...0–0 8.bxc5

8.0–0 is another transposition – see the note to White's 8th move in variation A21.

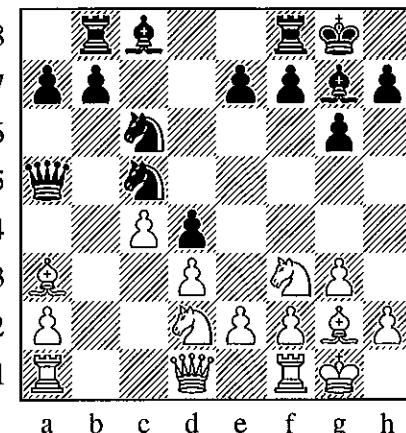
8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

Black supports the d4-pawn, which does a good job of blocking the b2-bishop. The pawn on c5 will not last long.

**9.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10.d3 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$**

11. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}h5$

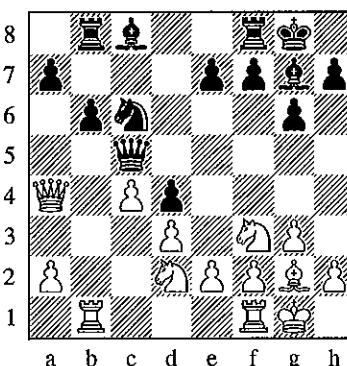
was better for Black in Thiede – Ellers, Germany 2004.

11... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ **13. $\mathbb{W}c1$**

Practice has also seen:

13. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 14. $\mathbb{B}b1$ Dizdar – Fedorov, Dubai 2003. 15... $\mathbb{A}fc8!N$ 16. $\mathbb{B}b5$ (16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xa5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ 18. $\mathbb{B}c1$ b6†) 16... $\mathbb{W}d6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}a3$ b6 and I prefer Black. 14...b6 15. $\mathbb{W}a4$

Now Black's play in Schebler – Guner, Izmir 2004, can be improved by means of:

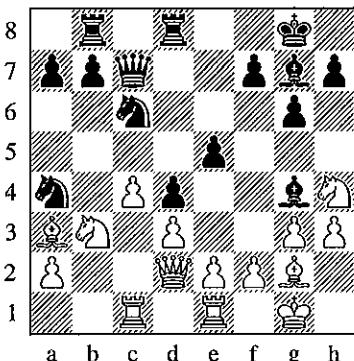


15... $\mathbb{Q}d7!N$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xa5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa5$

With roughly equal chances – although Black can certainly try to make use of his bishop pair.

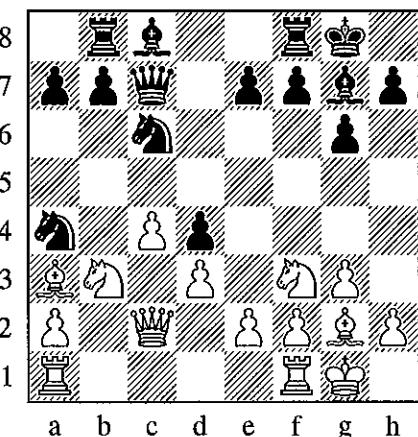
13... $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

14. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$
17. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ e5 18. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 19.h3 occurred in
Icy45 – Tatar, Internet 2007.



Now 19... $\mathbb{Q}c8!?$ N looks more accurate than 19... $\mathbb{Q}e6$, as it enables Black to meet 20. $\mathbb{Q}c5?$ with 20... $\mathbb{Q}f8!?$.

14... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c2$



15... $\mathbb{E}d8!?$ N

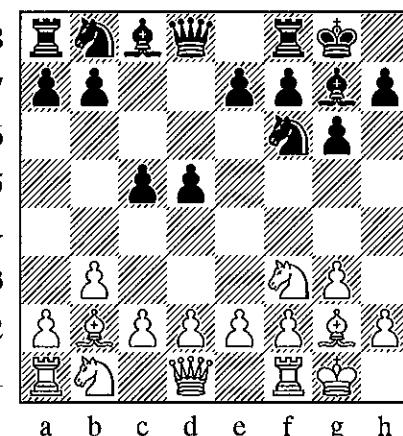
The most flexible move, strengthening the centre and delaying the development of the light-squared bishop.

15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ isn't necessary; after 16. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 17.e3 dxе3 18.fxe3 h6?! 19.d4± Black came under some pressure in Kramnik – Svidler, Sochi 2015, and soon his position collapsed.

16. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ 17.e3 e5 18.exd4 exd4=

Black is doing fine.

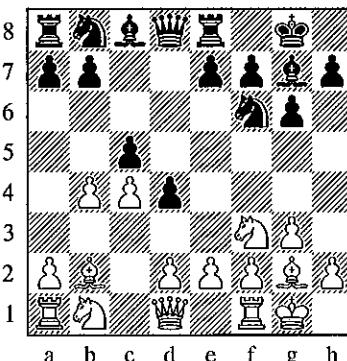
A2) 6.0–0 0–0



And now there are three main options:
A21) 7.c4, A22) 7.d4 and A23) 7.e3.

A21) 7.c4 d4 8.e3

8.b4 is a tricky move but 8... $\mathbb{E}e8!$ is a good answer to prepare ...e5. A couple of possible continuations are:

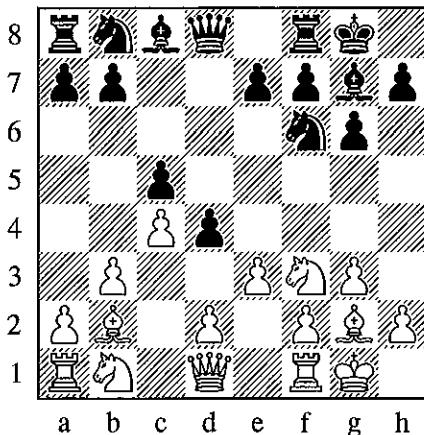


a) 9.d3 e5 10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ cx b 4 11.a3 Mundorf – Jens, Netherlands 2013. 11... $\mathbb{Q}f8!?$ N 12.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ Black has a good version of the reversed Benko Gambit.

b) 9.bxc5 e5 10.d3 $\mathbb{Q}a6!?$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ with roughly equal chances, Perez Fernandez – Dijon, corr. 2015.

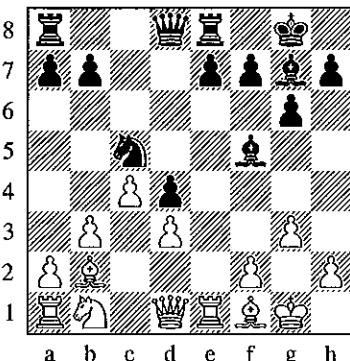


8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9.exd4 cxd4

Black should be pretty comfortable in this reversed Benoni.

10.d3

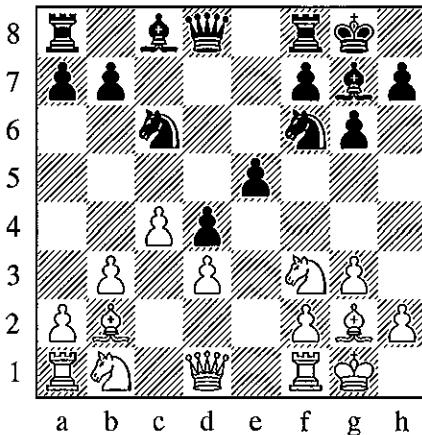
10. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 12. $\mathbb{E}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14.d3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ occurred in Forintos – Steinfl, Chianciano 1989, when Black should have played:



15...e5!N With the following idea: 16.b4 $\mathbb{W}b6!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ e4 19.g4 exd3 20.gxf5 $\mathbb{E}e2!+$

10...e5!?

In most of the preceding games Black preferred 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$.

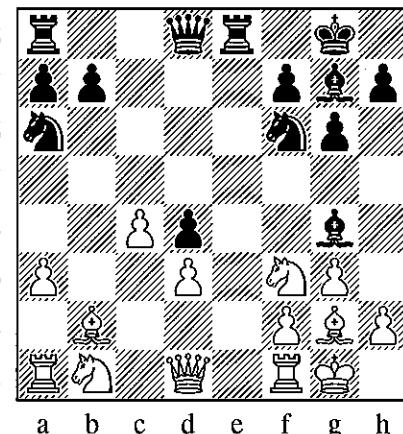


11.b4!N

11. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ was played in Malescusi – Colica, Milan 2014, when 11... $\mathbb{E}e8N$ would have been best.

11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ has the idea to meet 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ with: 12... $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}ge4$ (13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ enables Black to repeat with 13... $\mathbb{Q}f6=$ as a minimum) 13...f5 14. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}c7\mp$ Black stands better as the knight on a4 is misplaced.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 13.a3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$



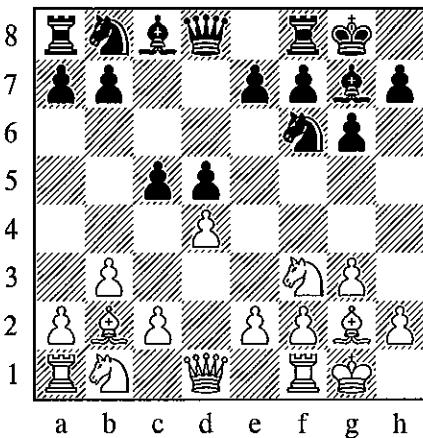
15. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

Or 15.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 17.a4 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}c7\mp$ and White's knight is stuck on b1.

15... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}dc5\bar{f}$

Black is well coordinated and the d3-pawn could become a target.

A22) 7.d4



White plays a weird Grünfeld with reversed colours.

7... $cxd4$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

This position is well-known with White to move, as it occurs when Black plays an early ...d6 followed by ...d5. GM Kotronias recommends exactly that set-up for Black in the *Fianchetto Systems* volume of his King's Indian repertoire series, and demonstrates that Black is fine. In the present version, with an extra tempo, Black has reasonable chances to fight for the advantage.

8. $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$

This loses even more time for White.

8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}c7!$

This move prepares ...e5 and vacates the d8-square for the rook.

10. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ transposes.

10.e3 e5 11.c4 occurred in Pohjala – Kulaots, Tallinn 2015; the most accurate reply is 11... $\mathbb{E}d8!$ N 12.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5\bar{f}$ with an edge for Black.

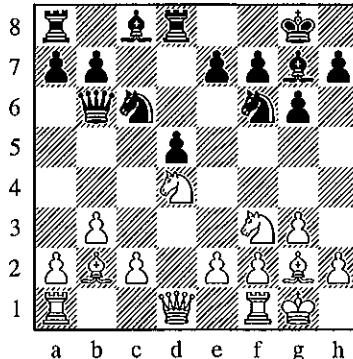
10... $\mathbb{E}d8$

10...e5 was also good for Black in Filip – Geller, Stockholm 1962.

11. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

11. $\mathbb{W}c1$ a6 12.c4 d4 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ axb5 14.cxb5 e5 \bar{f} gave Black the upper hand in Van Egmond – Van Kooten, Haarlem 1999.

11... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}bd4$

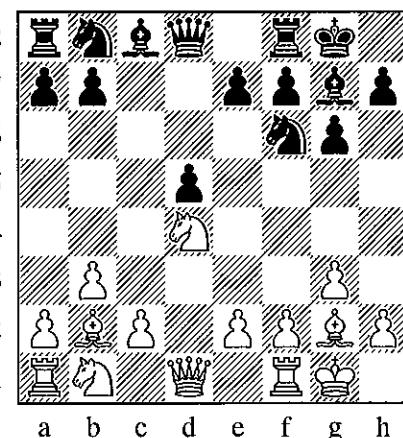


12... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$

A clever move! The d4-knight is misplaced, and ... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ideas are in the air.

13. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 14.e3 e5 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\bar{f}$

With an obvious advantage for Black, Kosic – Makarov, Podgorica 1993.



8... $\mathbb{E}e8!?$

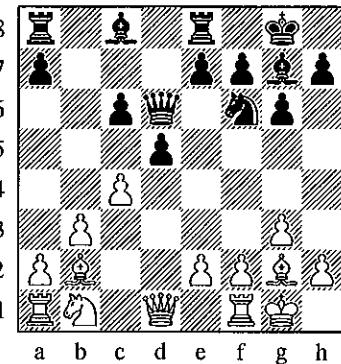
Black prepares ...e5 in order to meet $\mathbb{Q}f3$ with ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

9.c4

9.e3?! e5 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{Q}c6\#$ led to a passive position for White in Vijayalakshmi – Bharathi, Panaji 2012.

9. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e5 \mathbb{W}d6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6 bxc6$ 12. c4 occurred in Perhinig – Kavcic, Austria 2008, and now I would like to offer:

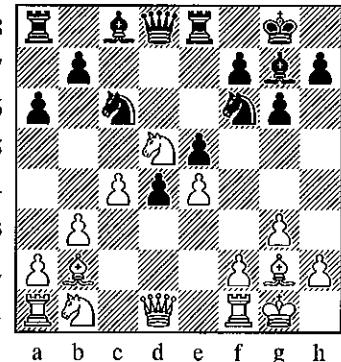


12... $\mathbb{B}b8!N$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}f5$ 14. $\mathbb{B}c1 \mathbb{B}bd8$ With a slight edge for Black.

9...e5 10. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d4 11. e3 dxе3 12. fxе3 $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$ was poor for White in Pohjala – Kokkila, Finland 2014.

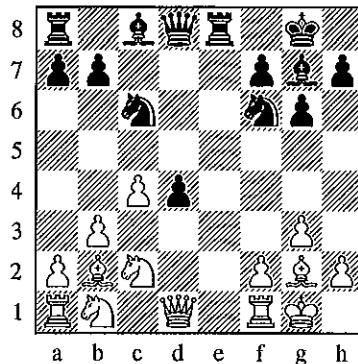
10. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ a6 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d4 12. $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 13. e4 and now Black should have undermined the position of the d5-knight in Czarnecki – Dragun, Warsaw 2008, by means of:



13... $\mathbb{B}b5!N$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a3 \mathbb{B}b8\#$ Preparing ...bxc4.

10...d4 11. $\mathbb{Q}b4$

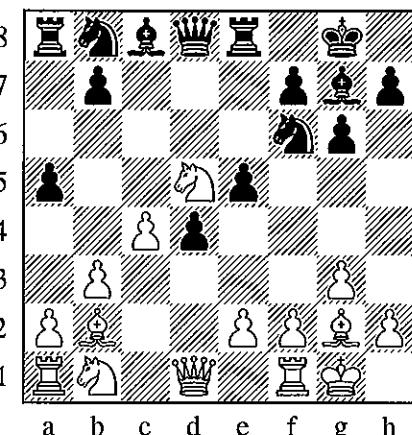
11.e3 occurred in Al Huwar – Al Sayed, Doha 2011, when 11... $\mathbb{Q}c6!N$ 12. exd4 exd4 would have been good for Black. The tactical point is:



13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6!?$ (13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$ loses to 13... $\mathbb{Q}e4!-+$)
13... $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xd4 \mathbb{Q}h3\#$ The serious weakening of the light squares yields Black a clear advantage.

11...a5 12. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

Here I would like to improve upon Black's play in Panchenko – Kochetkov, Voronezh 1997.

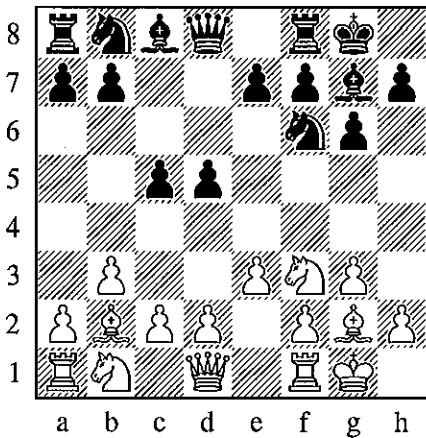


12... $\mathbb{Q}a6!N$ 13. e3 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14. cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$
15. e4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Black's superior development gives him the better chances.

A23) 7.e3

This variation has been quite a popular choice among strong players when they are looking to avoid mainstream theory.

**7...Qc6**

White's main options are **A231) 8.d4** and **A232) 8.Qe5**.

8.c4 d4 leads back to variation A21.

8.d3?! can be punished by 8...d4! when Black seizes space and restricts the b2-bishop. 9.e4 (9.exd4 cxd4 is also better for Black) 9...e5† (Black might also start with 9...Qe8!?) In Kholmov – Suetin, Sochi 1974, Black obtained a favourable reversed King's Indian due to the misplaced bishop on b2.

A231) 8.d4 cxd4!

It is best to clarify the situation in the centre.

9.exd4

9.Qxd4 Qxd4 10.Qxd4

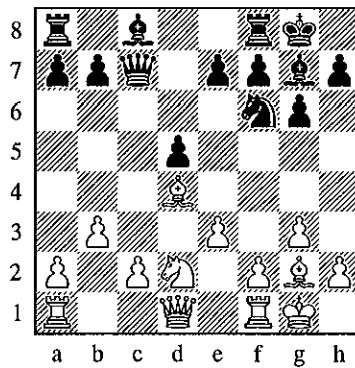
After 10.exd4 Qf5 11.Qd2 a draw was agreed in Kholmov – Mohr, Belgorod 1990, but I prefer Black.

10...Rc7

Black prepares ...e5.

11.Qd2

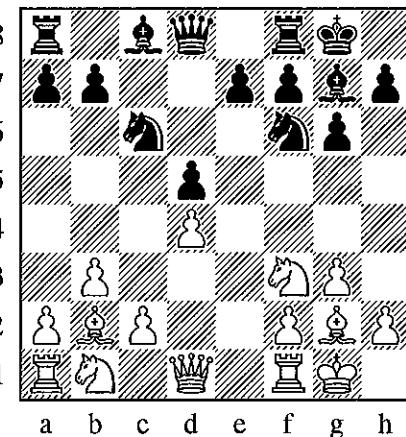
11.f4 weakens the light squares on account of 11...Qf5†.



11...e5 12.Qb2 Qg4 13.Qf3

And now the most accurate in G. Fischer – Andersson, Bad Wiessee 2015, would have been:

13...h5!N†



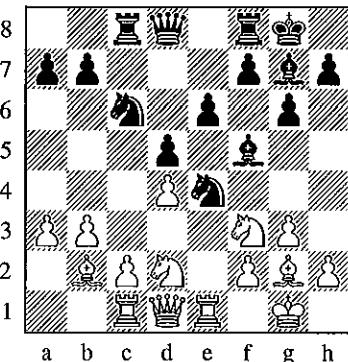
9...Qf5 10.Qe5

10.Qe1 Rc8 11.c3 occurred in Pinter – Jankovic, Austria 2012, when I recommend 11...Qe8!N 12.Qbd2 e6 13.h3 h5 14.Qh4 Qd3 with a slight edge.

Also after 10.Qa3 Rc8 11.c4 Qe4 Black's position was more pleasant in Westerberg – Gdanski, Sweden 2016.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

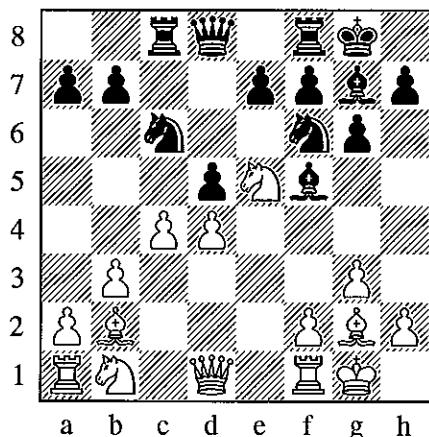
10.a3 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ e6 13. $\mathbb{Q}cl$
and here Black's play in Bartel – Nezad, Dubai
2014, can be improved by means of:



13...b5!N 14.c3 $\mathbb{Q}h6!$??

10... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 11.c4

This position has been reached in a few games, but so far nobody has found the strongest continuation.

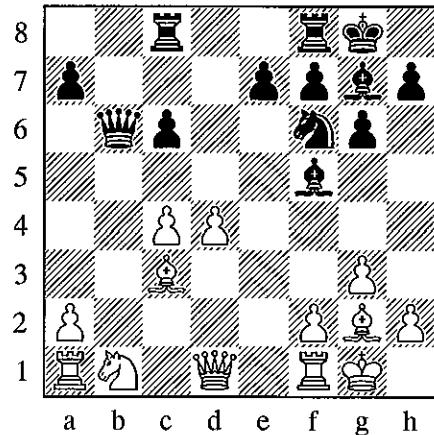


11...dxc4!N 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

12.bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 13.dxe5 $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$
 $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ leads to a clear advantage for Black.

12...bxc6 13.bxc4 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

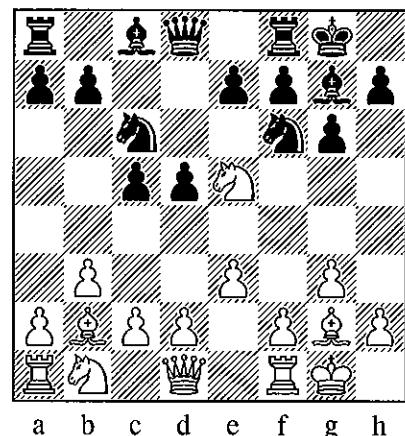
14. $\mathbb{W}b3?$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ is even worse for White.



14... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$
 $\mathbb{Q}fd8!$

Black wins back the d4-pawn and obtains a serious edge.

A232) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e5$



8... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

It is also worth noting that 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ gave Black a good game in Short – Kasparov, Saint Louis (blitz – 3) 2015.

9. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4!$

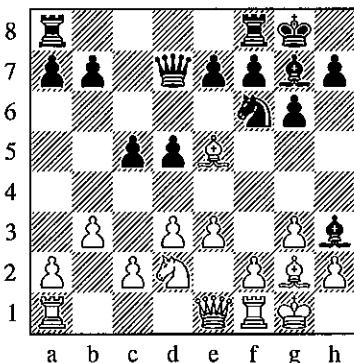
Black provokes f2-f3 and prepares ... $\mathbb{W}d7$.

10. $\mathbb{W}c1$

10.f3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$ (11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ was played in Wockenfuss – Baeuml, Bad Wiessee 1998,

and now 11... $\mathbb{Q}e8N$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ would have been at least equal for Black) 11... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 12.d3 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ Black's position was slightly more pleasant in Badea – Djukic, Bucharest 2002.

10. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 11.d3 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ occurred in Bellon Lopez – F. Olafsson, Las Palmas 1974. I think Black should delay exchanging bishops for a few more moves:



12... $\mathbb{B}ac8!?$ N 13.a4 b6 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ The position is basically equal, but Black is slightly for preference due to his extra space in the centre.

10... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 11.d3

11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d4 12. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{B}ac8\bar{f}$ was good for Black in Felbinger – Garau, corr. 2012.

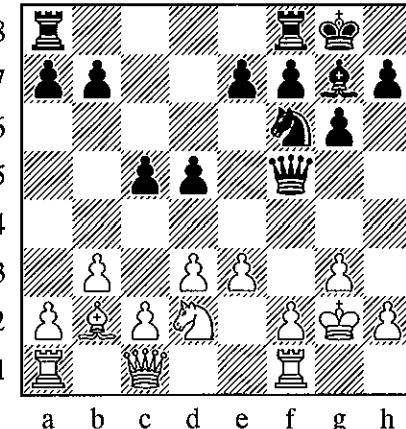
11. $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 12.d3 was seen in Ivanka Budinsky – N. Gaprindashvili, Lucerne (ol) 1982, and now 12...h5!N 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ h4 \bar{f} looks strong.

11... $\mathbb{W}f5$

11...h5!? looks promising here too.

12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$

Now the most ambitious continuation would be:



14...e5!?

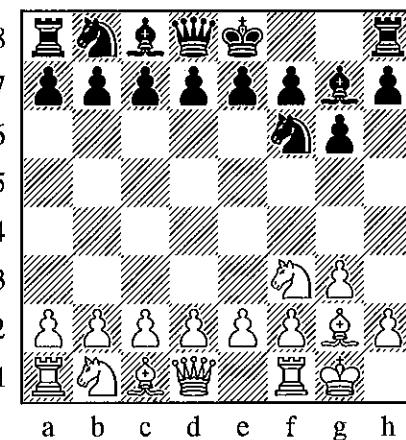
It's a pleasant choice though, as 14... $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ was also slightly better for Black in Carlsen – Radjabov, Stavanger (blitz) 2013.

15.f3 $\mathbb{W}e6$

Black has the upper hand thanks to his strong centre.

B) 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 4.0–0

Other moves have no independent value as the king is bound to go this way sooner or later.



4...d5 5.d3

5.c4 transposes to variation C2.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

5.d4 leads to a Grünfeld with c2-c4 deferred.

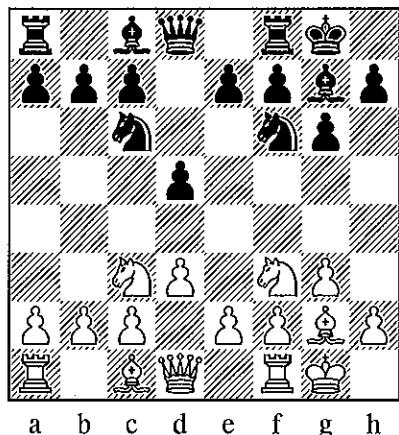
5.b3?! is a weird move order. Black could obviously just steer the play back into variation A, but it is more ambitious to punish White's eccentric play immediately with: 5... $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ 6.c3 (6.d4 c5 7. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ has been covered on page 463, in the note on 5.d4?! in variation A) 6...0-0 7. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ c5 8.d3 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ Black was better in Janssen – Giri, Boxtel 2011.

5...0-0

White's four most likely options are B1) 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$, B2) 6.c4, B3) 6.c3 and finally B4) 6. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$.

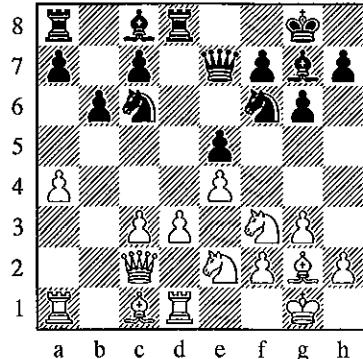
B1) 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$!?

6...c5 is a reasonable alternative, leading to a reversed Fianchetto King's Indian.

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

White is preventing the ...e5 advance.

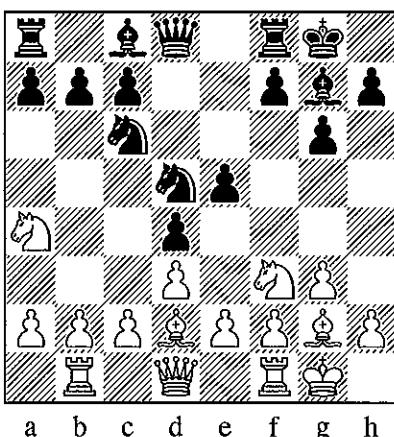
7.e4 d4 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ e5 9.c3 dxc3 10.bxc3 b6 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 12.a4 $\mathbb{W}d8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d1$ Now I would like to recommend:



13... $\mathbb{Q}a5$!N (13... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ proved playable in Ivanchuk – Topalov, London 2012, but the text move is more flexible) 14.h3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15.d4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ Black is slightly better.

7...d4 8. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ e5 10. $\mathbb{E}b1$

Now I would like to offer:



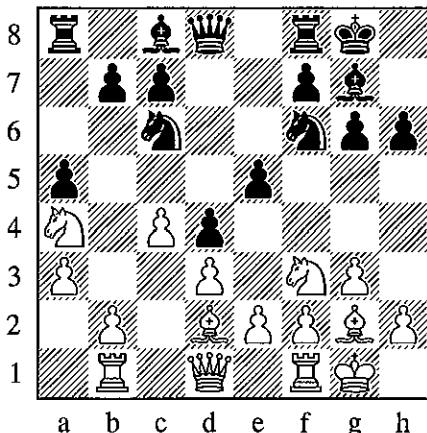
10...a5!N

The immediate 10...h6 was played in Shoker – Efimenko, Abu Dhabi 2013.

11.a3 h6 12.c4

After 12. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 13. $\mathbb{E}e1$ b6 the black pawns are doing a good job of restricting White's pieces. 14.c4 $\mathbb{Q}de7$ Black's position is more pleasant thanks to his space advantage.

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



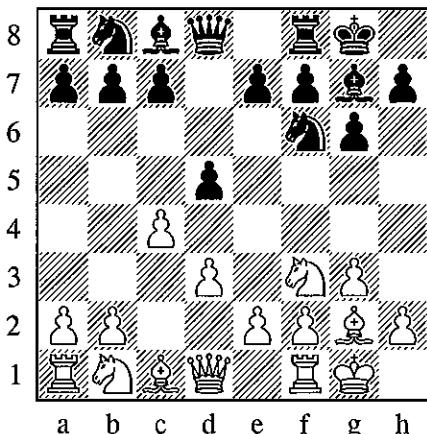
13.e3

13.b4 axb4 14.axb4 e4! 15.Qe1 e3! 16.fxe3 dxе3 17.Qc3 (17.Qxe3? Qg4+) 17...Qd4 is better for Black.

13...dxе3 14.Qxe3 Qg4 15.Qc5 Qe8 16.h3 Qf6=

Black is fine.

B2) 6.c4



6...Qc6?

One of many possible options.

7.Qa3

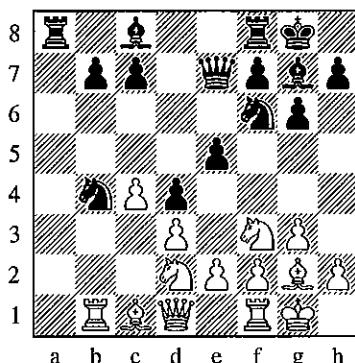
Here are a few alternatives:

7.Qc3 d4 8.Qa4 e5 9.Qg5 h6 10.Qxf6 Qxf6
11.a3 a5 12.Qe1 Qb8† Followed by ...b6, with better chances for Black in Lyrberg – Baburin, Copenhagen 1999, thanks to his space advantage.

7.cxd5 Qxd5 8.Qbd2 a5!? 9.Qb1 a4 led to a comfortable position for Black in Parish – Calugar, South Padre Island 2014.

7.Qbd2 d4 and here I considered two moves:

a) 8.a3 a5 9.b3 e5 10.Qb1 Qe7† resulted in a miniature: 11.b4? axb4 12.axb4 Qxb4

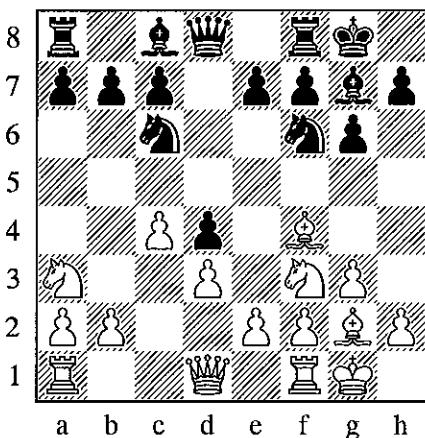


13.Qxe5? White had obviously overlooked 13...Qa2! and, seeing that he would have to lose the exchange, he resigned in Lobron – Korchnoi, Bad Kissingen 1981. Interestingly, the exact same position arose in 1998 in a game between players rated in the 2100s, and in that encounter White played on and eventually won! Obviously it's a different situation playing against Korchnoi – but it's still a good example showing the value of fighting on in bad positions.

b) 8.Qa4 should be met by 8...a5 and now White's best try seems to be: 9.Qg5!N (9.c5 occurred in Murphy – Shepherd, Gatwick 2011, when 9...e5N† would have given Black an easy edge) 9...Qd7 10.Qde4 h6 11.Qxf6† exf6! 12.Qf3 Qe8 13.Qe1 Qb4 14.Qd1 c5=

7...d4 8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

This position was reached in Bauer – Lafarge, Metz 1996. White's last move was obviously directed against ...e5, but Black can get a fine position with the help of a remarkable idea.



8... $\mathbb{Q}e8!?$ N 9. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}b8!!$

Threatening ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$.

10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ c6! 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

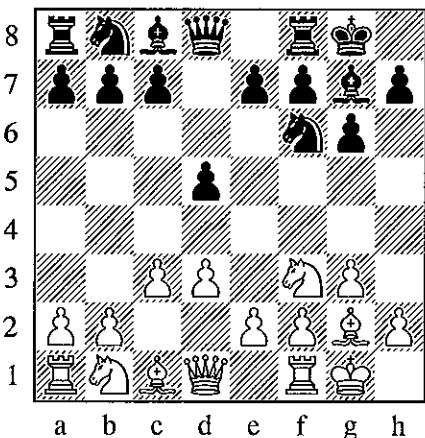
11. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ a5 is similar and may transpose.

11...a5 12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$

The knight will go to c5; Black is not worse.

B3) 6.c3

Black has several possible ways of meeting this move, but I think the most active is to play a reversed Fianchetto King's Indian.



6...c5

Obviously the extra tempo will be of some value to White, so we may have to avoid playing too sharply. In the following section I will show how to neutralize the extra tempo and reach a pleasant position.

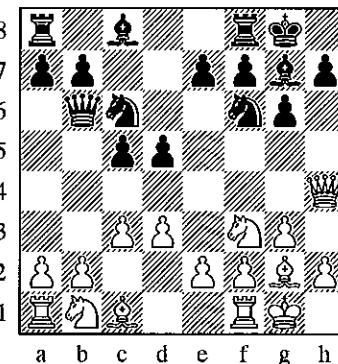
7. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

7. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}h4$

8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ d4 9. cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ cxd4 11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ h6 12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ was played in Gross – Zezulkin, Czech Republic 2003. I would like to improve Black's play with 12... $\mathbb{Q}b6!?$ N 13. $\mathbb{W}b5$ a6 14. $\mathbb{W}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6=$ with roughly equal chances.

8... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$

Black is preparing 9...h6 by attacking the b2-pawn.



9.a4!?

9.e4! dx e 4 10. dx e 4 occurred in Matikozian – Kudryavtsev, Los Angeles 2012, when Black missed the strong 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4!?$ N. The plan is ...h6, while after 11.h3 $\mathbb{Q}ge5\mp$ Black is clearly better as the white queen has nothing to do on h4.

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

Black would like to exploit position of White's queen by means of ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$.

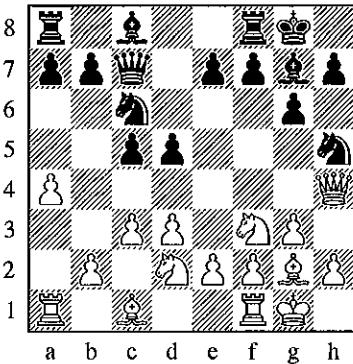
10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

10.g4! weakens the kingside: 10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11.g5 (11.h3! h5 \mp) 11... $\mathbb{Q}e8\mp$

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

Renewing the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$.

The immediate 10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ runs into 11.a5! with the idea to meet 11... $\mathbb{Q}xa5?!$ with 12. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13.g4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 14.g5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ and White is clearly better.



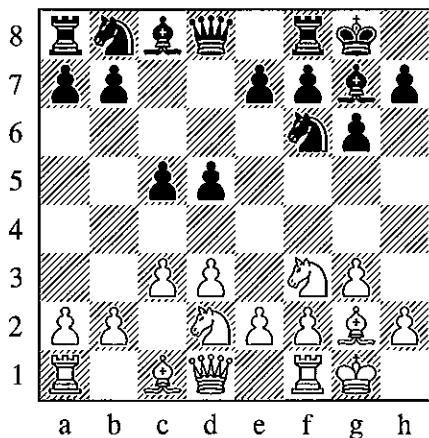
11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $h6!$ 12.g4

A sad necessity.

12... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $b6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

$\mathbb{W}xg4\bar{t}$

Black is better thanks to the bishop pair.



7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8.e4

8. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $b6$ 9. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 10.e4 e5 (10...e6?!)

11.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13.a4 $\mathbb{E}ad8=$ was level in Artemiev – Bukavshin, Voronezh 2010.

8...e5

Black's plan is to play ... $h6$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$, when the e5-pawn can be protected by ... $\mathbb{W}c7$.

9. $\mathbb{E}e1$

White has tried all kinds of moves here. A few examples:

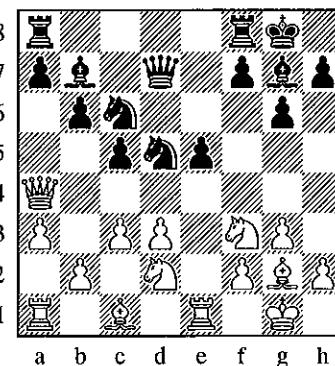
9.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ and now both 10. $\mathbb{E}e1$ and 10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $h6$ 11. $\mathbb{E}e1$ will be covered on page 478 – see 10.c3 in the notes to variation B4.

9. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 10. $\mathbb{E}e1?!$ $d4!$ and White's pieces have nothing to do on the e-file, Kleinman – Dorsch, Parsippany 1999.

9.a4 $h6$ 10.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ with roughly equal chances, Rossetto – Hase, Montevideo 1976.

9. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $h6$ 10. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13.a4 $\mathbb{E}ad8=$ Black stabilizes his position and obtains comfortable play, Silveira Filho – Matsuura, Vitoria 2009.

9. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{W}d7?!$ Black is preparing a queenside fianchetto. 10.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 11. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $b6$ 12.a3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$

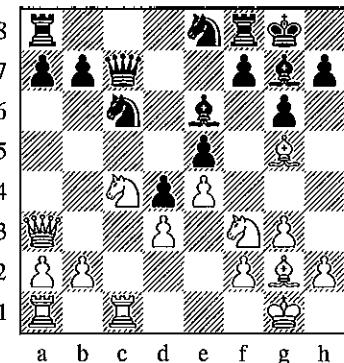


13.c4?! (13. $\mathbb{Q}c4N$ $\mathbb{E}ad8=$ would be better, but Black is doing fine after bringing his rooks to the central files) 13... $\mathbb{Q}de7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{E}ad8\bar{t}$ White's decision to weaken the d3-pawn and the d4-square wasn't justified, Movsziszian – Alsina Leal, Catalonia 2014.

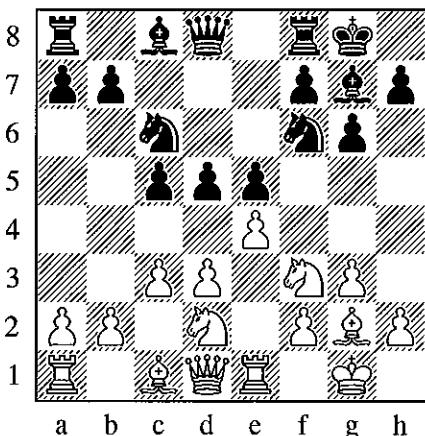
9. $\mathbb{W}b3$ exerts pressure in the centre, so 9...d4? is an appropriate reply – this is a good

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

example of a line which is equal with colours reversed, and where the missing tempo does not harm our chances much. A recent game continued: 10.cxd4 (10. $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{Q}e8=$ is similar) 10...cxd4 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{Q}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{W}c7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}fc1 \mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}a3$



14...f6! (the less accurate 14... $\mathbb{E}c8$ had been played previously) 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{E}f7$ 16. b4 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ Black was fine in Sepp – Meskovs, Viljandi 2015.



9...h6 10. $\mathbb{W}b3$

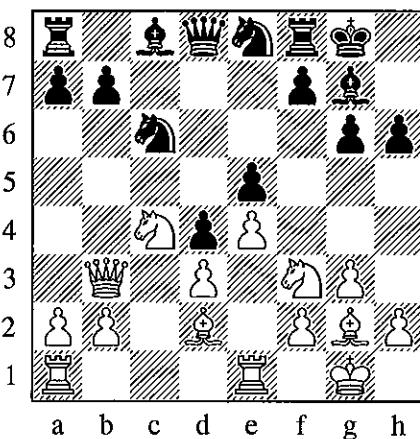
10.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ leads to the 10.c3 line in the notes to variation B4 below.

10.a3 dxе4!! I think this exchange makes sense after White has weakened the light squares on the queenside. 11.dxe4 (Perhaps White should prefer 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4N$ although 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 12.dxe4

$\mathbb{W}xd1$ 13. $\mathbb{E}xd1 \mathbb{Q}a5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}b3$ 15. $\mathbb{E}ab1 \mathbb{Q}e6=$ is comfortable for Black) Sahetchian – Daillet, Paris 1999. 11... $\mathbb{Q}e6!N$ 12.b4 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{E}fd8\bar{f}$ Black has the better game.

10...d4 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{Q}e8$ 12. cxd4 dxе4 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

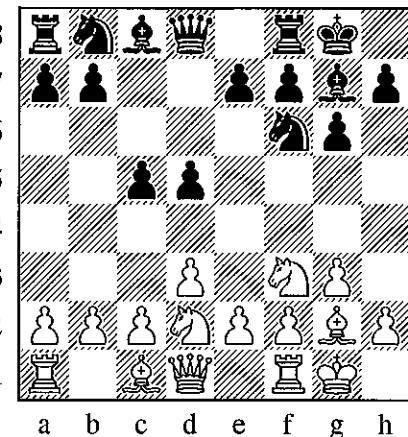
This position was reached in Bezuch – Klimov, Warsaw 2012, when a good continuation would have been:

13... $\mathbb{Q}d6!N$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd6 \mathbb{W}xd6\bar{f}$

I prefer Black's position after the knight trade.

B4) 6. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ c5

Here too, I am happy to play a reversed opening a tempo down.



7.e4

7.c3 leads back to the previous variation.

7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8.exd5!?

This has not been the most popular choice, but it seems like White's best chance to utilize his extra tempo.

8.c3 transposes to variation B3.

8. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

This has been by far the most common, but Black gets an easy game after:

8...dxe4! 9. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

The alternative is 9.dxe4 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 10.c3, and

now I like the rare 10...e5!? 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$ h6

12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8=$ when Black was fine in Sliwa – Pytlakowski, Katowice 1952.

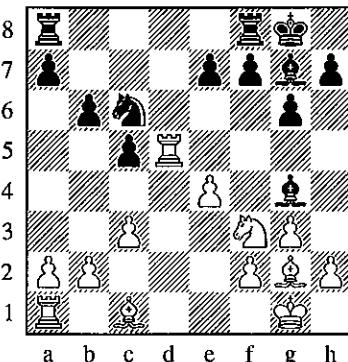
9... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 10.dxe4

10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ In Braunstein –

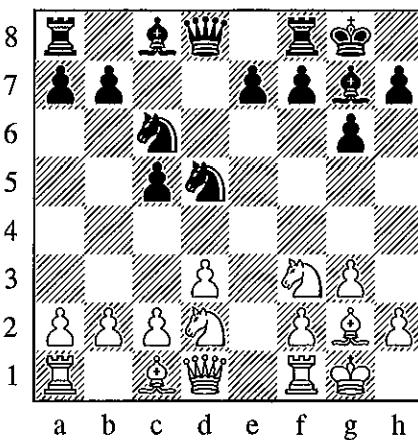
Noack, Leutersdorf 2009, the improvement 11... $\mathbb{W}d7N$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b6 \mp would have given Black the better game, as the rook is misplaced on h4.

10... $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ b6 13.c3

In Piroth – Halasz, Hungary 1998, Black should have continued:

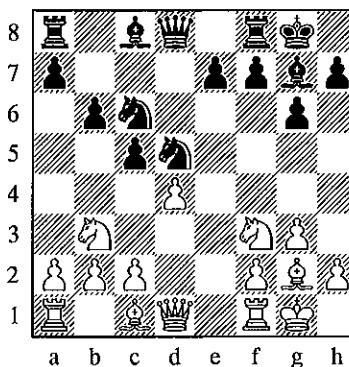
**13... $\mathbb{Q}a5!N$**

With a fine game, for example:

14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ e6 16. $\mathbb{Q}dd1$ e5 17. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8\mp$ **8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$** **9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$**

9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ e5 10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ transposes to our main line.

9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ is hardly the ideal square for the knight. 9...b6 10.d4 (After 10.c4 $\mathbb{Q}c7\mp$ White can't exploit the opening of the long diagonal and so Black is better thanks to the weakening of d3 and d4, Engels – Rellstab, Bad Oeynhausen 1939)



10...c4! 11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ c3 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4N$ cxb2 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5\mp$ Black stands better (a similar idea exists with reversed colours).

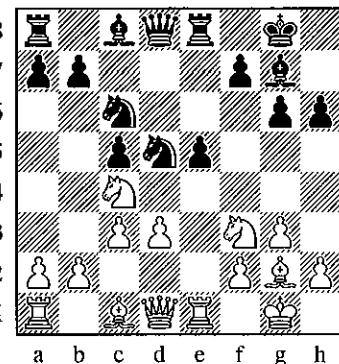
9...e5 10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

10.a3 h6 11. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12.c3 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$ b6= and Black was fine in Shoker – Eljanov, Tsaghkadzor 2015.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

10.c3 h6 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{E}e8$

We have reached another typical situation where the extra tempo is of limited use to White:



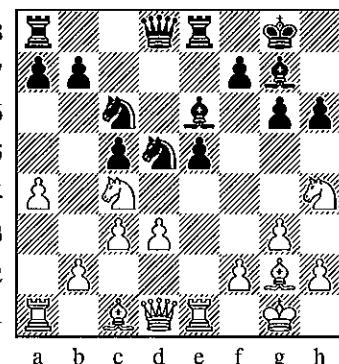
12.a4

12. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (13. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15. b3 $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 17. $bxc4$ b6 \bar{f} and Black was better in Barlov – Banas, Belgrade 1988) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}b5$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ This was Mirumian – Baburin, Yerevan (ol) 1996, and now the correct 15... $\mathbb{E}ed8!N$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{E}d5!$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{E}xd3\bar{f}$ would have given Black the better endgame.

12... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}h4$

13. a5 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8!N$ (After 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ = a draw was agreed in Kunte – Gopal, Chennai 2008) 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ It's a typical King's Indian position with reversed colours, where Black is certainly not worse.

13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

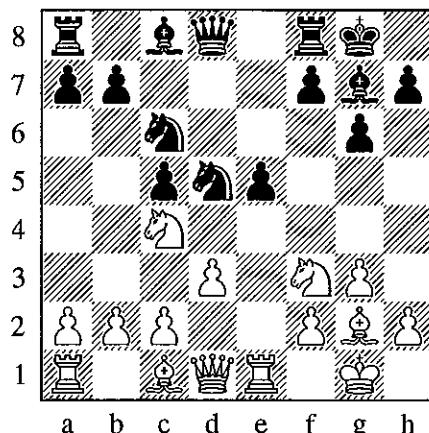


14.a5

14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ (14... $\mathbb{Q}f5=$ would repeat the position but Black can play for more) 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6!\bar{f}$ with a slight edge for Black, Hickman – Howell, Isle of Man 2005.

14... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{E}ad8\bar{f}$

Once again, Black was more comfortable in Kulhanek – Petr, Czech Republic 2013.



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

10... $\mathbb{E}e8!?$ is strongly answered by 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5!^\pm$ when the extra tempo is significant.

11.c3

11. a4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. c3 transposes to the main line.

11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. a4

12. d4! is answered by 12... $\mathbb{Q}c7!$.

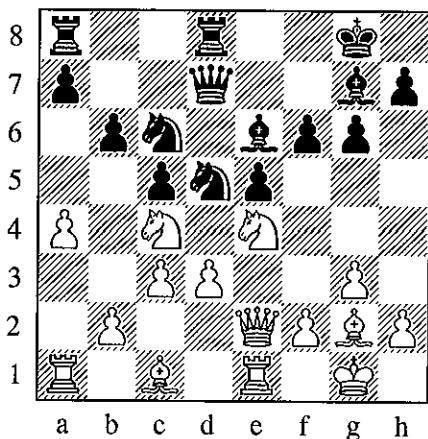
12... $\mathbb{W}d7$

Black could also consider 12... $\mathbb{Q}c7!N$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ with equal chances.

13. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ b6 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}fd8!?$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$

The reason for choosing the f-rook is revealed after 15. a5 $\mathbb{E}ab8$ with roughly equal chances.

This position was reached in Caruana – Le Quang Liem, Dubai 2014. In the game Black moved his king to h8, but it would have been more purposeful to play:



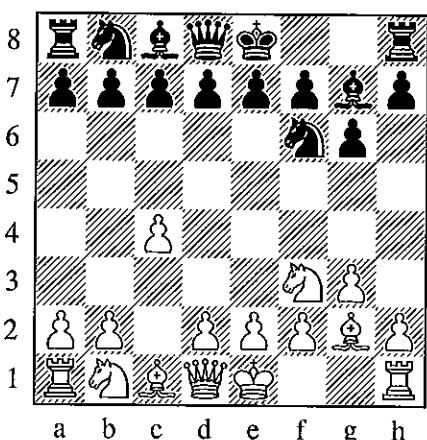
15...Qde7!N

Forcing White to think about the d3-pawn, while preparing to meet Qed6 with ...Qf5.

16.a5 Qab8∞

Black's chances are not worse in this double-edged position.

C) 3.c4 Qg7 4.Qg2



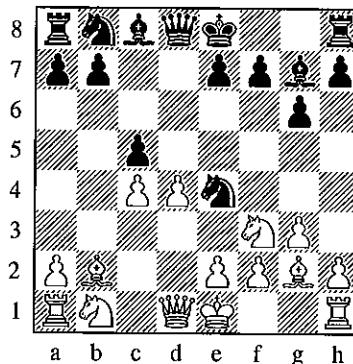
4...d5

Those who yearn for the ...cxd5 structure should play 4...c6; the position after 5.0–0 d5 will be discussed in variation C2 below.

White may proceed with C1) 5.cxd5 or C2) 5.0–0.

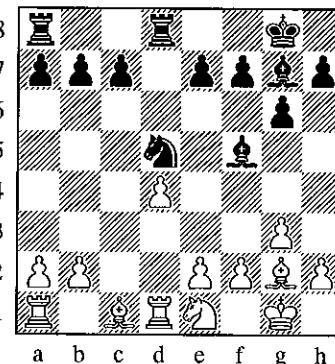
5.d4 leads to the Fianchetto Grünfeld, both now and later.

5.b3?! is dubious. 5...Qe4 6.d4 dxc4 7.bxc4 c5 This structure normally occurs in the ...c6 line, so here Black has saved a tempo by playing ...c7-c5. 8.Qb2 In Sorokin – Makarov, Sochi 2004, Black should have played:

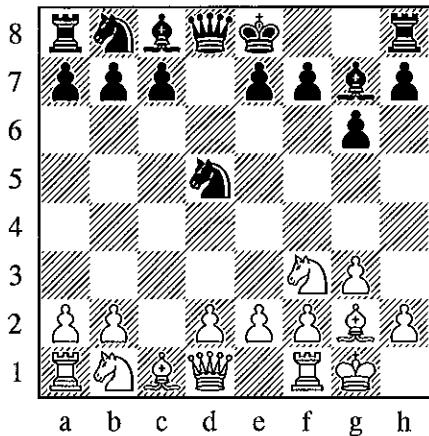


8...Qb6!N 9.Qb3 Qc6!† White's centre is under heavy fire.

5.Qa4† Qd7 6.Qxd7† Qbx d7 does not threaten Black at all. 7.cxd5 Qxd5 8.Qc3 Qb6 9.0–0 0–0 10.Qxd5 Qxd5 11.d4 Qd8 12.Qd1 Qf5 13.Qe1 Now I would like to offer:

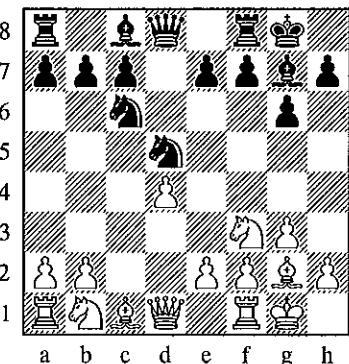


13...Qb6!N (13...Qg4 14.Qf1 c6 was also pretty good for Black in Urban – Kempinski, Warsaw 2001) 14.Qxb7 Qab8 15.Qf3 Qxd4† With some pressure on the queenside.

C1) 5.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6.0-06... $\mathbb{Q}c6$!?

This is my preferred move order.

6...0-0 7.d4 (7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ leads to variation B of Chapter 26) leads to a Fianchetto Grünfeld where Black has already castled, which is not the most precise thing to do. 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ Now White has the extra option of:



8.e4!? (8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ reaches a normal position where Black can choose between 8... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ and the trendy 8... $\mathbb{Q}f5$, which is a pet line of Maxim Vachier-Lagrave) 8... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 9.d5 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ This variation is by no means bad for Black, but my recommended move order avoids it altogether.

By the way, Black can also consider 6... $\mathbb{Q}b6$, but then White may go for the English set-up with 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8.d3. The resulting position falls outside of our repertoire, so I prefer to prevent it by keeping the knight on d5 for a while.

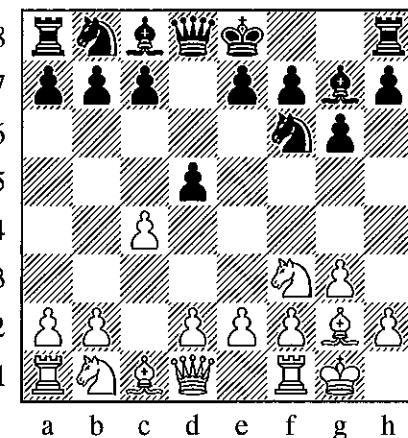
Obviously the aforementioned move orders are perfectly playable and the choice is mostly a matter of taste.

7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

After 7.d4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ Black avoids the line with e2-e4 and d4-d5 and reaches a popular variation of the Fianchetto Grünfeld.

7...0-0

We have reached a position which will be analysed in detail in variation B of Chapter 26.

C2) 5.0-0

5...c6

If you prefer the ... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ set-up in the Fianchetto Grünfeld, then 5...0-0 can be played. In that case, 6.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 7.d4 transposes to 6...0-0 7.d4 in the notes to variation C1 above. Compared to the standard move order beginning with 1.d4, Black has lost the option of an early ... $\mathbb{Q}b6$, and must be ready for the line with 8.e4 and 9.d5, as mentioned in the earlier discussion.

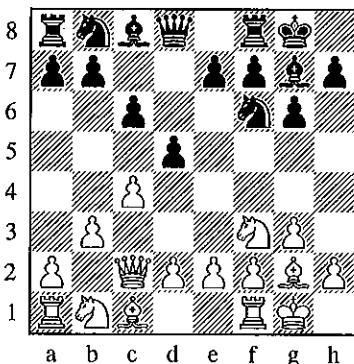
After the text move White's main options are **C21) 6.d3** and **C22) 6.cxd5**.

6.b3 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 7.d4 0–0 transposes to a popular variation of the Fianchetto Grünfeld.

6. $\mathbb{W}c2$ 0–0 7.b3

7.d3 converts to variation C21.

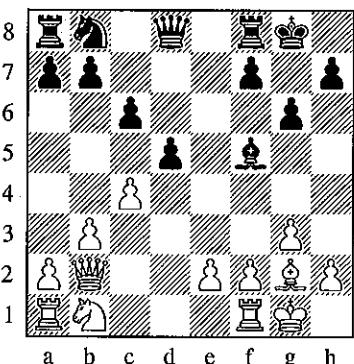
The text move can be answered by:



7...e5!?

7...d4 is a reasonable alternative. For example, 8.d3 c5 9.b4 cxb4 10.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ bxa3 12. $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ was a reversed Benko Gambit in Dizdarevic – Gelfand, New Delhi/Teheran 2000.

8. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 9.d4 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 10.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xb2$



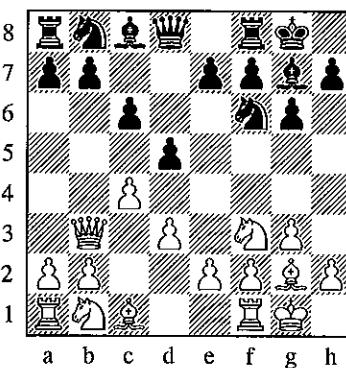
13...dxc4! 14.bxc4 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 16.e4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}b4!$?

Black had the better chances in Art. Minasian – Gustafsson, Rijeka 2010.

An important alternative is:

6. $\mathbb{W}b3$ 0–0 7.d3

White has been scoring well in this line recently, and so I needed to improve Black's play. So here is an almost completely new idea:



7...d4!?

Black's idea is to support the d4-pawn by means of ...e5, while the white queen is misplaced and obstructs the b2-b4 advance.

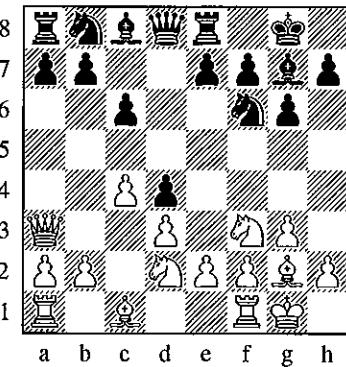
8. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

8. $\mathbb{Q}e1N$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 10. $\mathbb{W}c2$ e5 11.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 12.b3 a5 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5=$ is comfortable for Black.

8.e3 dxe3 9. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ occurred in Nagorni – M. Schneider, Eckernfoerde 2007, when 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4N$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ would have been good for Black.

8... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 9. $\mathbb{W}a3$

Or 9. $\mathbb{W}a4$ e5 10.b4N (10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ a5= Deghose – Noble, email 2009) 10... $\mathbb{Q}f5=$ and Black is doing fine.

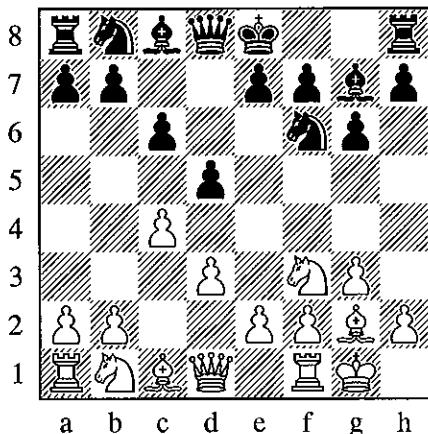


1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

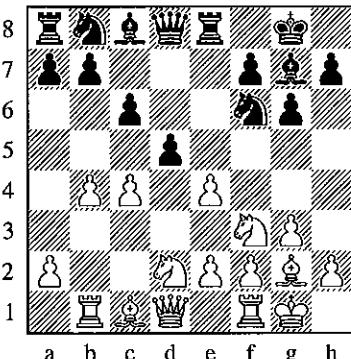
9...e5N

9... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ was played in Owens – Ress, Internet 2013, but the text move seems more natural to me. A possible continuation is:
 10.c5 $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 11.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8!$
 Black is fine.

C21) 6.d3

6...0-0 7. $\mathbb{W}c2$

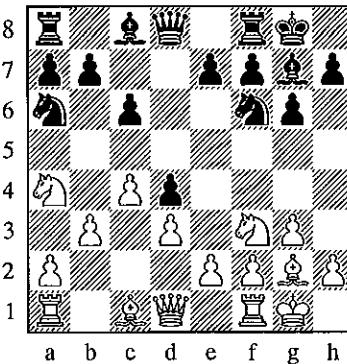
7. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ The combination of this move and the earlier c2-c4 does not leave a good impression. 7... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 8. $\mathbb{W}b1$ (8. $\mathbb{W}c2$ e5 9. e4 $dxe4$ 10. $dxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6\#$) was better for Black due to the hole on d4 and the unfortunate placement of the white pieces, Reinhardt – Bochis, Baden 2013) 8...e5 9. b4 e4 10. $dxe4$



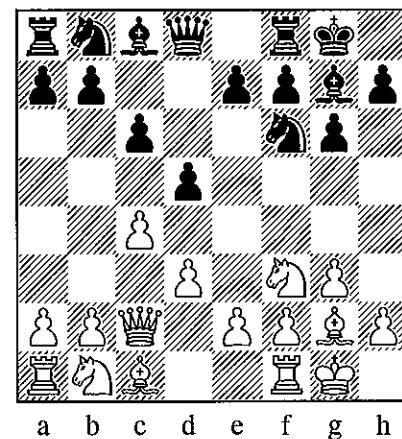
In I. Grigoriev – Aranda Gonzalez, Benidorm 2009, the improvement 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!N$

11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $dxe4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ f5 would have led to a slight edge for Black.

White has also tried 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d4 8. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 9. b3 when I found another new idea:



9... $\mathbb{E}e8!N$ (9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 11. b4 e5 was playable in Al Sayed – Wang Hao, Dubai 2014, but I don't think Black needs his knight on d7) 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ e5 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ f6 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ f5 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15. b4 $\mathbb{Q}c7=$ Followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and Black is fine.

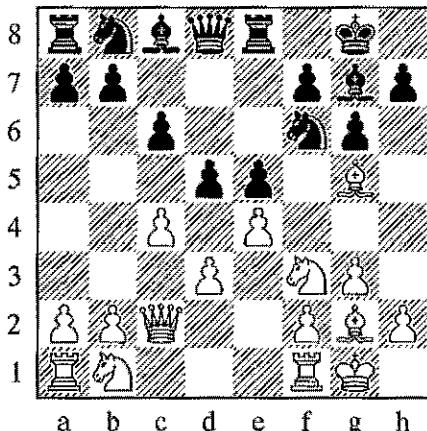
7... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 8. e4

8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ is an attempt to prevent the advance of the e-pawn. I would like to offer 8...d4!N in order to take some space. For example, 9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ (10. $\mathbb{Q}e5?$ is strongly met by 10... $\mathbb{Q}h5\#$) 10...a5 11. a4 e5 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}c7=$ and Black is doing well.

8...e5 9.Qg5

9.Qc3 d4 10.Qe2 a5 11.h3 Qa6† and Black was better in Ujtelky – Khasin, Belgrade 1968.

The text move was played in Anastasian – Sakaev, Ubeda 2001. I would like to recommend:



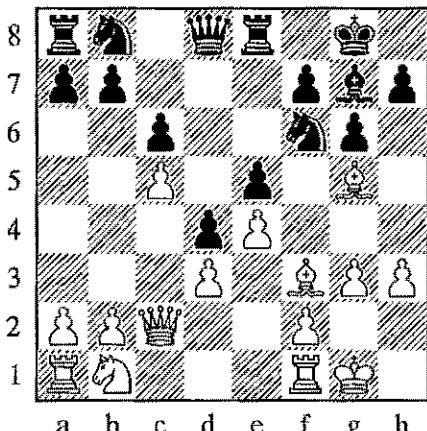
9...d4!N

Once again, I favour the space-gaining approach.

10.c5

Both 10.b4 We7 11.a3 a5† and 10.Qa3 c5 11.Wd2 Qc6 12.Qc2 Wd6† favour Black.

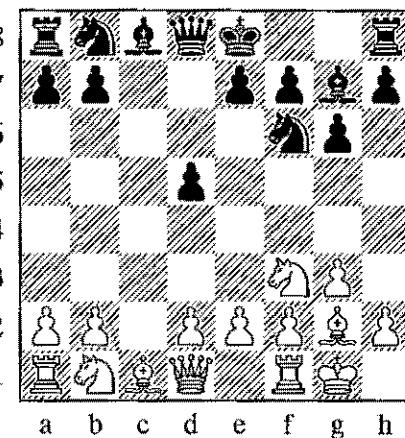
10...Qg4? 11.h3 Qxf3 12.Qxf3



12...a5? 13.Qd2 h6 14.Qxf6 Wxf6 15.a3 a4†

I prefer Black.

C22) 6.cxd5 cxd5

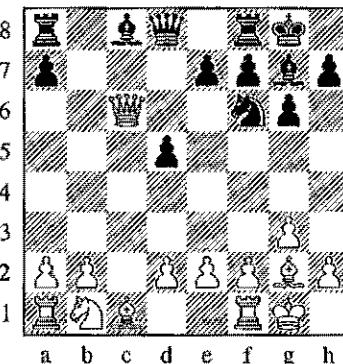


7.d3

Obviously 7.d4 and 7.Qe5 0–0 8.d4 both lead to popular variations of the Fianchetto Grünfeld.

7.Qc3 0–0 doesn't have any independent value, and is likely to transpose to either our main line after 8.d3 or the Grünfeld after 8.d4.

7.Wa4† Qc6 8.Qe5 is a rare attempt. I would like to offer an ambitious new idea: 8...0–0?N (8...Qd7 was played in Ponkratov – Frolyanov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2013; 8...Wb6? is also reasonable) 9.Qxc6 bxc6 10.Wxc6

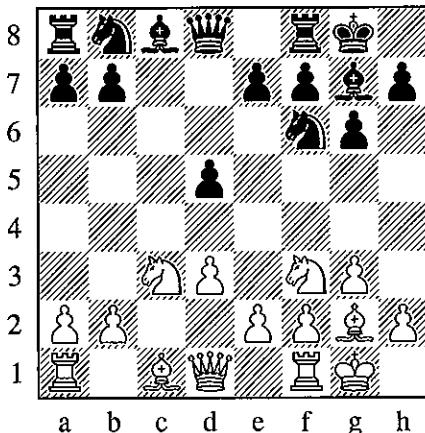


1. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

10... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 11. $\mathbb{W}a6 \mathbb{W}d7$ 12. d4 $\mathbb{B}fc8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{B}ab8\bar{\infty}$ Black's initiative offers sufficient compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

7...0-0 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

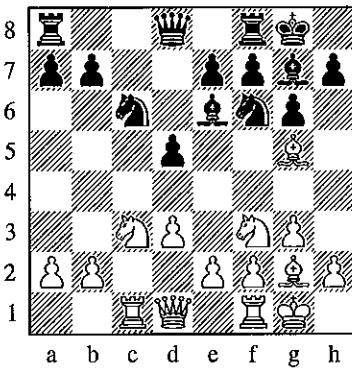
This is a popular position which can be reached via a few different move orders.

8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

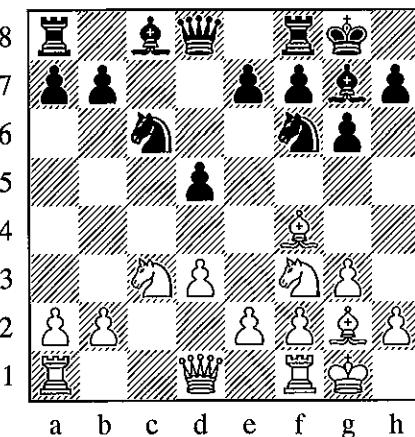
9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ was strongly answered by 9...d4! 10. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ a6 11. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ b5! 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{B}c8\bar{F}$ with better chances for Black in Giardelli – Kasparov, Malta (ol) 1980.

9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5?$ 10. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ b6 was another pleasant position for Black in Sola – Gracia, Buenos Aires 1997.

9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ (9...h6 is more popular but less accurate in my opinion) 10. $\mathbb{E}c1$ Kostov – V. Schneider, Albena 2009. Now I would like to offer:



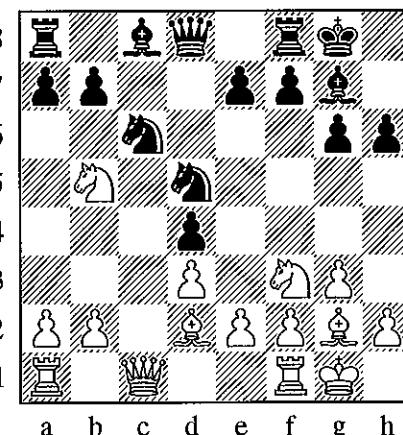
10... $\mathbb{B}c8\bar{N}$ 11. $\mathbb{W}a4$ (or 11. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ b6) 11... $\mathbb{W}d7$ With roughly equal chances.

9...d4 10. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

10. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ b6 12. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{B}b7$ 13. a3 $\mathbb{B}c8$ 14. b4 $\mathbb{W}d7\bar{F}$ gave Black the better chances in Stryjecki – Harikrishna, Internet 2005.

10... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ h6 12. $\mathbb{W}c1$

Now Black's play can be improved with a simple intermediate move:



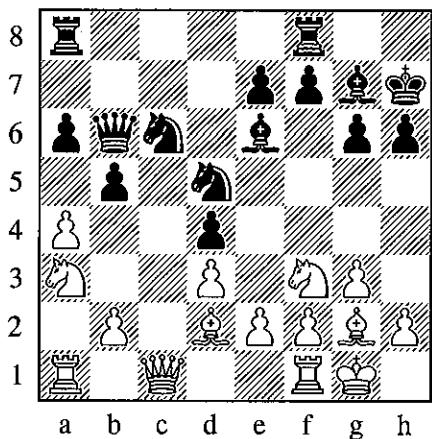
12...a6!N

12... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}c5$ forced Black to take time out to defend the d4-pawn in Vokac – Hrbolka, Ceske Budejovice 1992.

13. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. a4 b5 16. $\mathbb{Q}a3$
 $\mathbb{Q}b6\#$

Conclusion

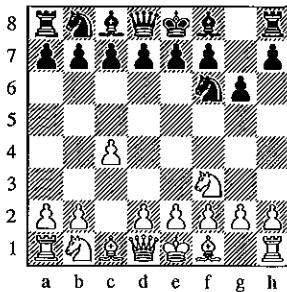
The sidelines with the early kingside fianchetto can produce many transpositions, both to each other and to more mainstream openings, especially after a d2-d4 advance. Sometimes the move orders are tricky and one has to know exactly how to react against each of them. I hope I provided you with sufficient information to do so. In several lines Black may fight for the advantage, while in others the play is roughly equal.



Black has great chances on the queenside.



1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6



3.b3 and 3.b4

Variation Index

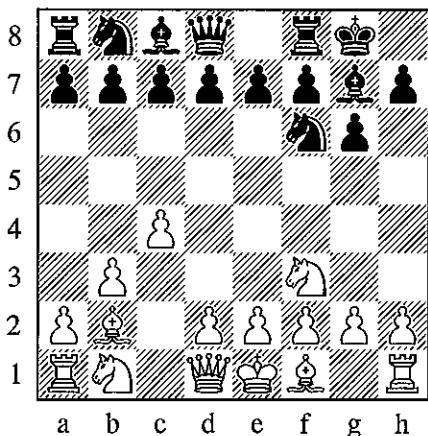
1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4

2...g6

A) 3.b3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 0-0	487
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A2) 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$	488
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B342) 7.d3	505

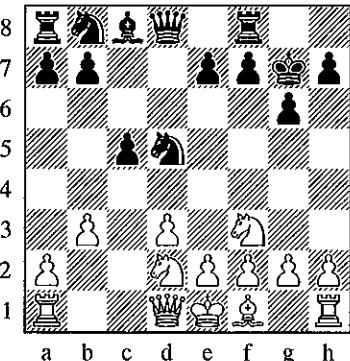
1.♗f3 ♗f6 2.c4 g6

In this chapter we will deal with various set-ups involving the white bishop on b2, which occur after A) 3.b3 and B) 3.b4.

A) 3.b3 ♗g7 4.♗b2 0–0

Before committing any of the central pawns, it makes sense to castle and invite White to declare his intentions. We will analyse A1) 5.d4, A2) 5.♗c3, A3) 5.g3 and A4) 5.e3.

5.d3 is a rare move which I would like to meet with the even more uncommon 5...d5!?. 6.♗bd2 c5 7.cxd5 ♗xd5 8.♗xg7 ♗xg7 when Black had a good game in Wolosz – Kokeny, Hungary 2010. For example:



9.♗c1N b6 10.g3 ♗c6 11.♗g2 e5 12.a3 ♗b7
With a comfortable position for Black.

A1) 5.d4 c5!

Striking at the centre. This is a perfect example of why it made sense not to commit to ...d6 or ...d5 too early.

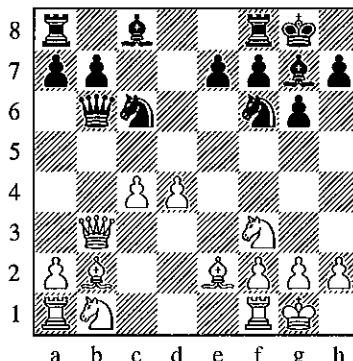
6.e3

6.dxc5 ♗a6 gave Black a comfortable position in Neumeier – R. Mueller, Berlin 2000.

6.d5?! White isn't ready for this advance. 6...e6! 7.♗c3N (7.dxe6 occurred in Gloor – Spalit, Katowice 2014, and now 7...dxe6!N is better for Black thanks to his development advantage) 7...exd5 8.♗xd5 (8.cxd5 d6† gives Black a favourable Modern Benoni) 8...♗c6 9.g3 ♗xd5 10.♗xg7 ♗a5† 11.♗d2 ♗xd2† 12.♗xd2 ♗xg7 13.cxd5 ♗e7 14.e4 d6 Followed by ...f5 and Black is better.

6...cxd4 7.♗xd4

7.exd4 d5 gives Black an excellent reversed Queen's Indian, for instance: 8.♗e2 ♗c6 9.0–0 dxc4? 10.bxc4 ♗b6! 11.♗b3?! (11.♗c1 ♗e4 12.♗bd2 ♗xd4! 13.♗xd4 ♗xd4 14.♗xd4 ♗xd4 15.♗xe4 ♗xe4 16.♗f3 ♗e5 17.♗b1 ♗c7 is also slightly better for Black)



11...♗e4! 12.♗d1 ♗d8 13.♗bd2 ♗f5† White's position was becoming unpleasant in Karayel – Haj Bakkor, Istanbul 2013.

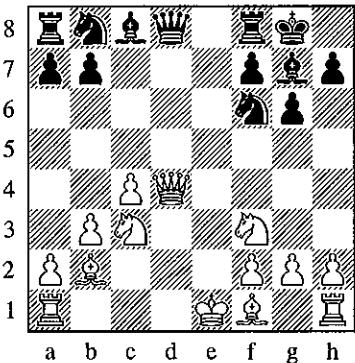
1. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

7...d5

White's position is surprisingly tricky, as the following lines demonstrate.

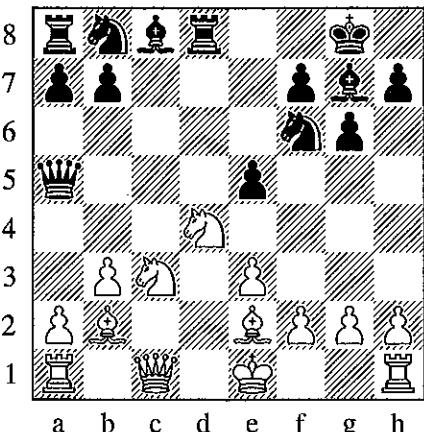
8.cxd5

8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ meets with the energetic response: 8...e5! 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d4! 10.exd4 exd4 11. $\mathbb{W}xd4$



11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$!N (11... $\mathbb{W}a5$!?) gave Black a promising initiative in a couple of games but I like the text move even more) 12. $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$! and Black is better.

8... $\mathbb{W}xd5$! 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 11. $\mathbb{W}c1$ e5

12. $\mathbb{Q}db5$?

12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is the lesser evil although Black still has every reason to be happy after 12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$!.

12...a6 13. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ b5?

M. Grabarczyk – Bartel, Wroclaw 2009.

A2) 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c5!

Now that White has blocked the a1-h8 diagonal with the knight, I like this move with the idea of ...d5.

6.g3

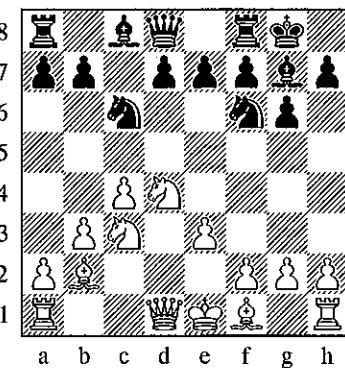
The other natural continuation is:

6.e3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7.d4

7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d5 8.cxd5 (8. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 10.cxd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 11.0–0 e5? Paglilla – Choma, Buenos Aires 2003) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ This was Tihonov – Babujian, Lvov 2007, when Black could have retained the upper hand with 10...e5!N.

7...cxd4 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

8.exd4 d5! Underlining the unfortunate position of the knight on c3. 9.h3 (after 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ dxc4 10.bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$? the misplaced knight starts to tell) 9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$! 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ dxc4 11.bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}e4$? White's centre was under pressure in Paasikangas Tella – Peptan, Svitavy 1993.

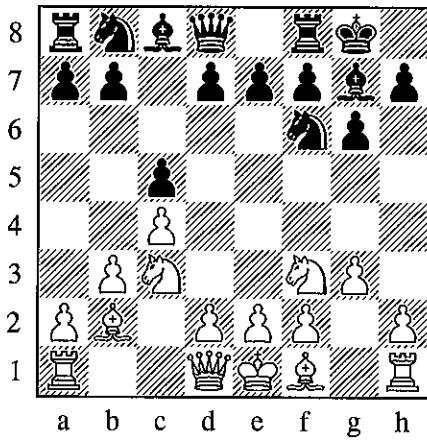
8... $\mathbb{W}a5$! 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

9. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ occurred in Raud – Najdorf, Mar del Plata 1941. I suggest the immediate 9...d5!N 10.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ dxc4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}f4$ a6 14.0–0 b5 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$? with better chances for Black.

The text move was played in Bisguier – Frias Pablaza, Chicago 1988. Now the most accurate is:

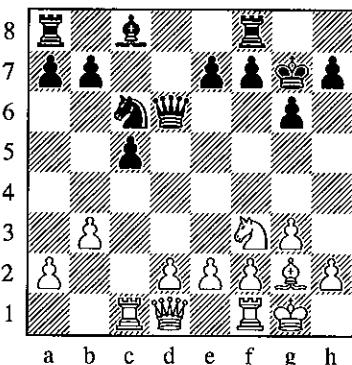
9... $\mathbb{Q}d8!N$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11. $exd4$ d5 12.c5
 $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 13.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 14.0–0 b6 15.b4 $bxc5$
16. $bxc5$ $\mathbb{Q}ab8\#$

And Black is better.



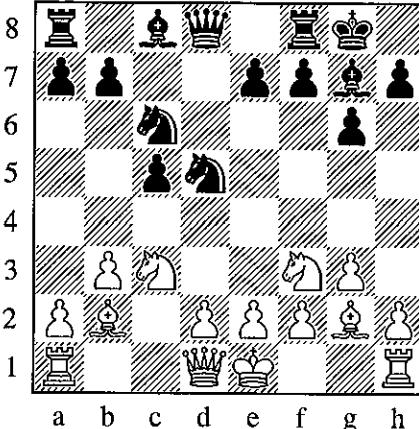
6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d5 8.cxd5

8. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 10.cxd5
 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 11.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ is another natural continuation, when I prefer:



12... $\mathbb{Q}f5!N$ (12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ has been played in a few games) 13. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ (13.d3 $\mathbb{Q}ac8$) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$
14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8!$ with some edge for Black.

8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$



9. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

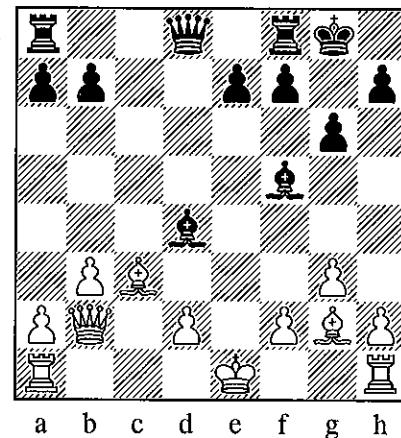
After 9.0–0 b6! 10. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$
12. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2\#$ Black was slightly better in Ivkov – Ljubojevic, Amsterdam 1972, and a few other games.

9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4!?$

10...e5! is a good alternative.

11.e3 $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ 12.exd4 cxd4 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$
14. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

Black's opening has clearly been a success, especially after the following improvement:

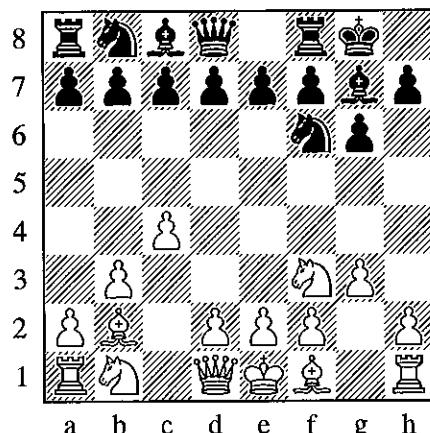


14... $\mathbb{Q}c8!N$

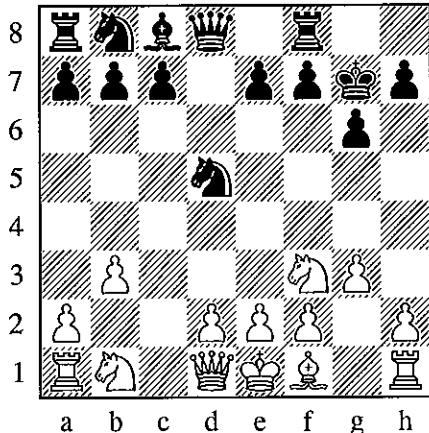
14... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ retained slightly better chances for Black in Larsen – Beliavsky, Las Palmas 1974, but the text move is more accurate.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6**15.0-0**15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ is the idea of course.**15... $\mathbb{W}d7!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ e6 17. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8\#$**

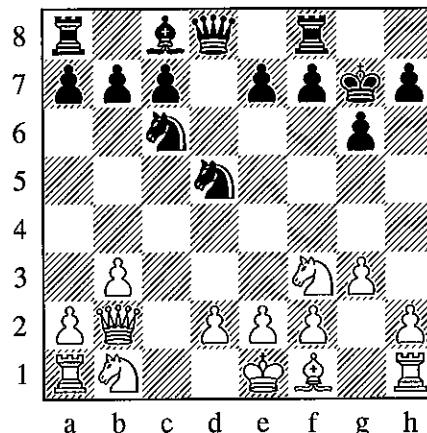
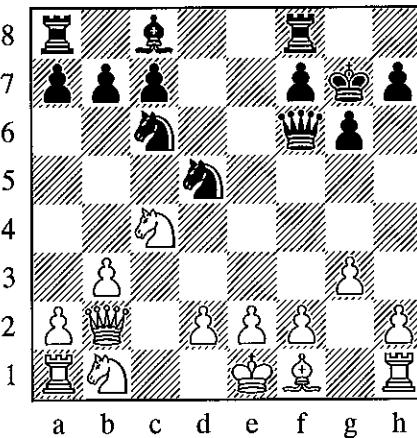
White is under some pressure.

A3) 5.g3**5...d5!?**

5...d6 is more popular, and leads to a different type of game.

Instead I have decided to recommend this sideline, which is clearly in the spirit of the Grünfeld. White may respond with A31) 6.cxd5 or A32) 6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$.**A31) 6.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$** **8. $\mathbb{W}c1$** 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ transposes to variation A32 below.**8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{W}b2\ddagger$**

This position was reached in Filgueira – Fusco, Buenos Aires 2009. I found a significant improvement for Black:

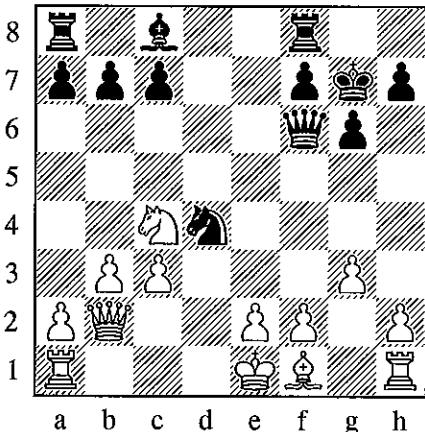
**9...e5!!N 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$** Or 10. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e4 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 14.dxc3 f5 15.f3 h6 16. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ exf3 17.exf3 $\mathbb{Q}d8!$ and Black's position is more pleasant.**10... $\mathbb{W}f6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$** 11.d4 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ gives Black a dangerous initiative.

11...Qd4

11...Wxb2? 12.Qxb2 Qd4 could be considered, but it seems more natural to keep the queens on.

12.Qc3 Qxc3 13.dxc3

13.Wxc3? Qc2† wins material.

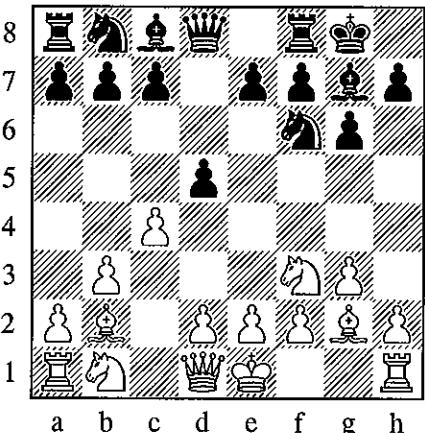


13...Qf3†! 14.exf3 Wxf3

White must return the piece:

15.Qg2 Wxg2†

A32) 6.Qg2



6...Qc6!

6...c6 is far more popular but I prefer the text move; Black is preparing ...d4.

7.cxd5

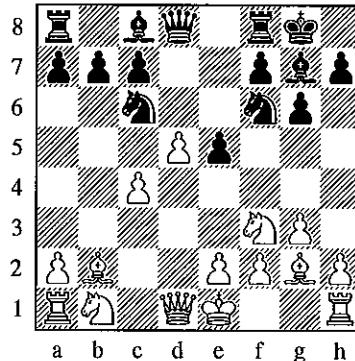
7.d4

This allows Black to get active play with:

7...dxc4 8.bxc4 e5! 9.d5

The alternative is: 9.0–0 exd4 10.Qxd4 Qxd4 (10...Bb8!?) 11.Qxd4 (11.Wxd4 Wxd4 12.Qxd4 occurred in Garcia Garcia – Vidarte Morales, Barcelona 2005, and now 12...Bd8N keeps some initiative for Black) 11...c6!N (11...We7 was also decent in Halme – Skripko, email 2008) 12.e3 Ae6= with roughly equal chances.

The text move is the ambitious choice, but the complications turn out well for Black.



9...e4! 10.Qg5

10.dxc6 Wxd1† 11.Qxd1 exf3 12.Qxf3 bxc6† L. Popov – Balshaw, corr. 2008.

10...e3!?

10...Qa5 has been played a few times and is also at least equal for Black.

11.fxe3

11.dxc6?? is impossible because of 11...exf2† 12.Qxf2 Qg4†.

11.f4 Qa5 12.Wa4 b6 also favours Black.

11...Qg4! 12.Qxg7 Qxe3 13.Wc1 Qxg2† 14.Qf2 Qxg7 15.Qxg2 Qe8! 16.Qc3 Qe5†

7.0–0 d4

This is the main point of the previous move.

8.d3

8.b4 d3? 9.b5 Qb4 10.Qc3 dxe2 11.Wxe2 occurred in Kaid – Wuebbeke, Germany 1998.

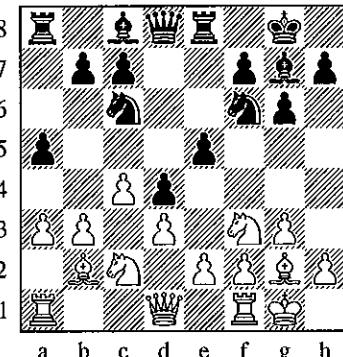
1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

Now I want to offer 11... $\mathbb{Q}d3!$?N 12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}fxe1$ e5 15.d3 a6= and Black is fine.

8...a5!

It is worth preventing b3-b4 before taking space with ...e5.

9. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ e5 10. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 11.a3



11... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 12.b4 $\mathbb{Q}b6!$

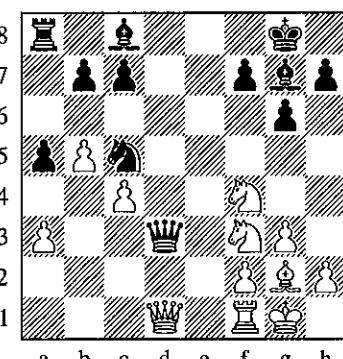
A sneaky move, heading for a4.

13.b5 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 14. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}8d7$ 15.e3 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 16.exd4

16. $\mathbb{Q}a1?$! $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $dxc3\bar{t}$ is better for Black.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 17. $\mathbb{E}xb2$ exd4 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$

19. $\mathbb{E}e2$ $\mathbb{E}xe2$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f4$



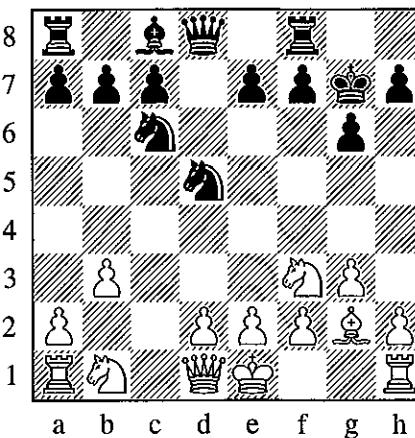
21... $\mathbb{W}d6!$?N

21... $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 22. $\mathbb{E}xd1$ led to an eventual draw in O'Connell – Hobel, corr. 2014.

22. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ cxd6=

Black is fine. He can complete development with ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$, and White must also watch out for ... $\mathbb{Q}b2$, which could come at any moment.

7... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$



9.d4!

9.0–0 e5 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 11.dxc3 occurred in Novak – Tylecek, Hrabyne 2003, and now 11... $\mathbb{W}e7N$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ reaches a comfortable position for Black.

9... $\mathbb{Q}g4?$

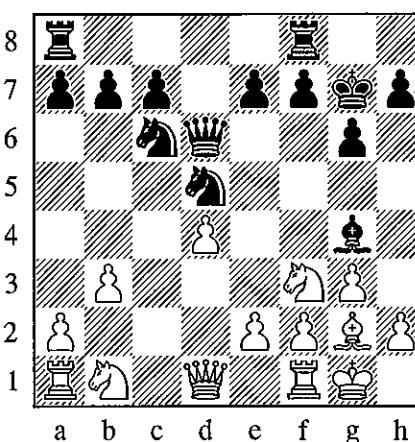
9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 10.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}cb4?$ was wrong because of 11.a3± in Lazic – Ilincic, Jahorina 2000.

10.0–0

10.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 12.0–0 $\mathbb{E}ad8$ leaves White under pressure in the centre.

10... $\mathbb{W}d6!$

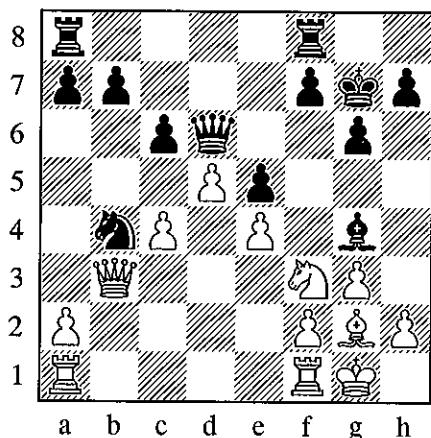
Even without the g7-bishop, Black has good prospects of counterplay with ...e5.



11.e4 ♜db4 12.d5 ♜e5 13.♗bd2 c6 14.♗c4
♝xc4N

14...♝xf3 15.♝xf3 ♜xf3† 16.♛xf3 ♛f6
17.♛xf6† ♜xf6 18.e5† gave White a modest
initiative in Sachse – Koestner, email 2013,
although Black held the draw easily enough.
The text move seems easier to me though.

15.bxc4 e5 16.♗b3



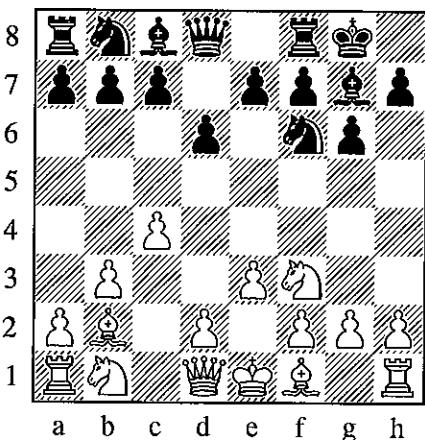
16...♝xf3!

The knight must be eliminated.

17.♝xf3 b6=

Black will exchange on d5 and bring his
knight to c5 via a6.

A4) 5.e3 d6



This time I propose a King's Indian set-up. White may proceed with A41) 6.♗e2 or A42) 6.d4.

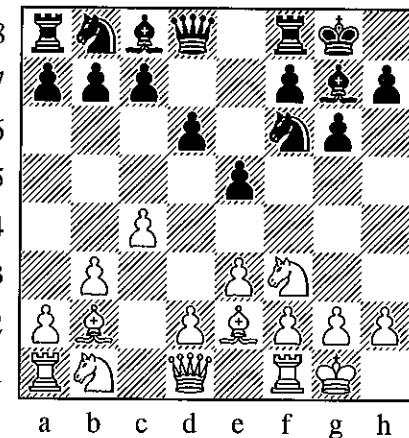
6.d3 e5 7.♗e2 is covered under 7.d3 in the
notes to variation A41 below.

A41) 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0

7.d4 transposes to the note on 7.♗e2 in
variation A42.

7.d3 e4!? 8.dxe4 ♜xe4 9.♗xg7 (I also checked
9.♗c1N ♜xb2 10.♗xb2 ♜c6 11.0–0 ♛e8
12.♗fd2 ♛f6=) 9...♜xg7 10.♗d4† ♛f6
with equal chances in Belva – Van Uytven,
Charleroi 2004.

Now I would like to offer the rare but
promising idea:



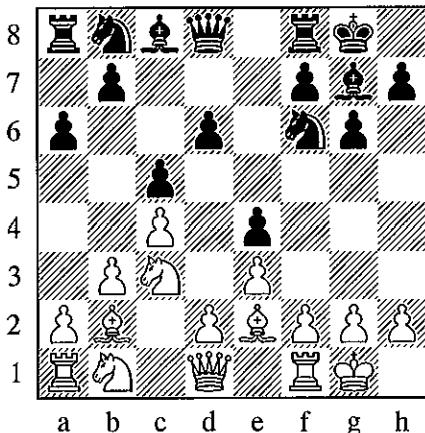
7...e4!?

8.♗d4

8.♗e1 can be met by 8...c6, supporting
the advance of the d-pawn. 9.d3 d5 10.♗d2
♗e8 11.♗c2 ♛f5 12.♗d1 ♜bd7= Benko –
Petrosian, Portoroz 1958.

8...c5! 9.♗b5 a6 10.♗c3

Now I would like to improve upon Black's
play in Agdestein – Van Wely, New York 1994,
by means of:



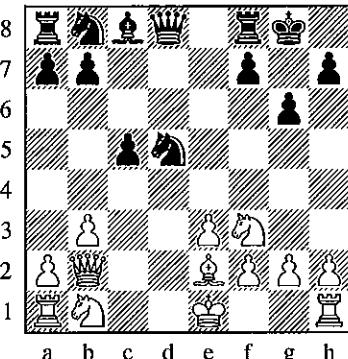
10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$!N 11.d3 exd3 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$
13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$

Black is slightly better due to the weird placement of White's knights.

A42) 6.d4 e5

As we will see, this offers Black fine prospects for counterplay. We will analyse A421) 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ and A422) 7.dxe5.

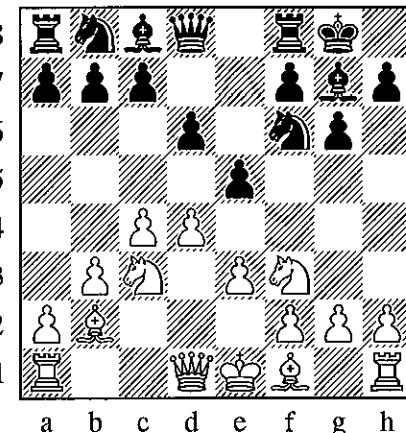
7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ can be met by 7...exd4 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ c5! 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 10.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 11. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ and now I would like to offer:



12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$!N I want to play ... $\mathbb{W}f6$ and recapture on f6 with the d7-knight. (The immediate 12... $\mathbb{W}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ was less ambitious, but still roughly equal in Podolchenko – Arshchenko, Ohrid 2009.)

A421) 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

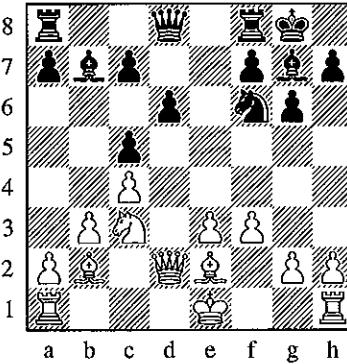
Here I like the following plan:



7...exd4!? 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

Black gets a lot of activity after:

9. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 10. $\mathbb{W}d2$ c5 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 12.f3
12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 13.gxf3 $\mathbb{E}e8$ was good for
Black in Valerga – Zarnicki, Villa Gesell
1997.
12.0–0 N $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xb2$
 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ gives Black comfortable equality.

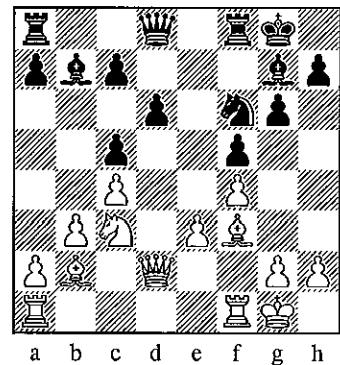


12... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 13.0–0 f5

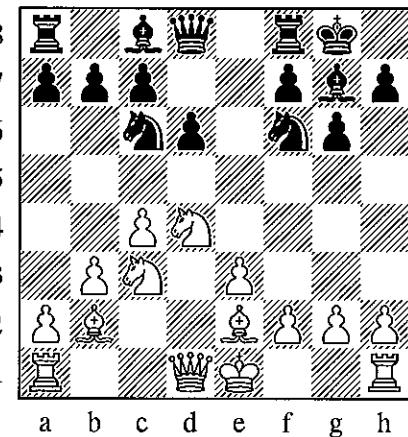
13... $\mathbb{E}e8$!N 14. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ = also makes sense.

14.f4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

This occurred in Shariyazdanov – Turov,
St Petersburg 2003. Now I would like to
improve upon Black's play with:



15... $\mathbb{Q}xf3!N$ 16. $gxf3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$
With a slight edge for Black.



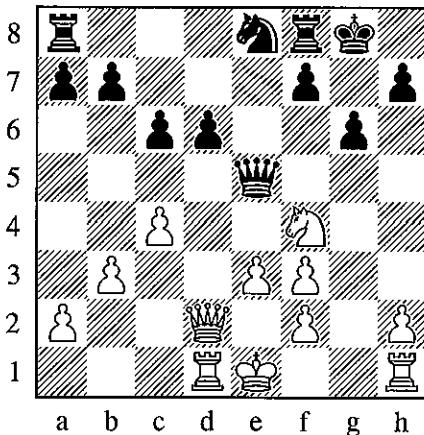
9... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$
11. $\mathbb{W}d2?!$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xb2$
 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 14.f3 $\mathbb{Q}c6\#$ was hardly an opening success for White in Burger – Dean, Chicago 1973.

11... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4!$
14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}e7N$ 15.0–0 $\mathbb{W}e5$ is equal.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 15. $gxf3$ c6 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}a5\#$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d2$
 $\mathbb{W}e5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

We have been following Ionescu – Shishkin, Bucharest 2006. I think Black should have continued:



18... $\mathbb{Q}d8!N$

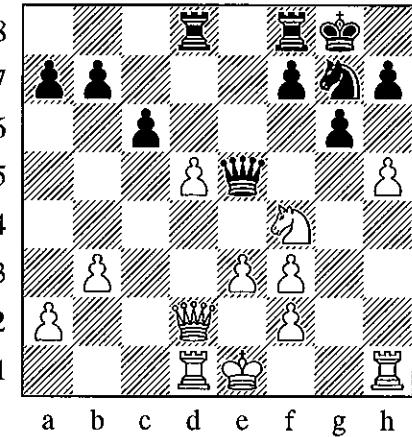
Freeing the knight from the defence of the d6-pawn while supporting a future ...d5 break.

19.h4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 20.h5

If White plays more slowly then ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ will give Black a comfortable game.

The text move is more critical, but Black has an excellent answer.

20...d5! 21.cxd5



21...g5! 22.h6 gxf4 23.Qg1

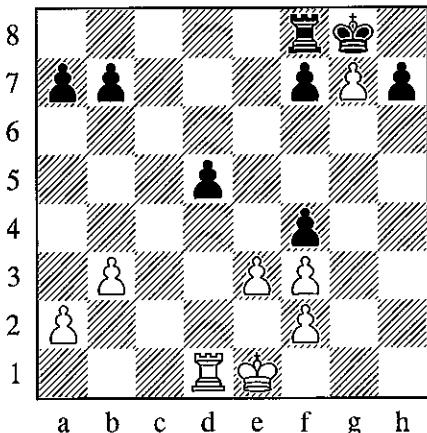
23.hxg7? $\mathbb{Q}fe8!$ is good for Black.

23... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xg7\#$ $\mathbb{W}xg7$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xd5$

25.hxg7? $\mathbb{Q}fd8!\#$ puts White in trouble.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

25...cxd5 26.hxg7

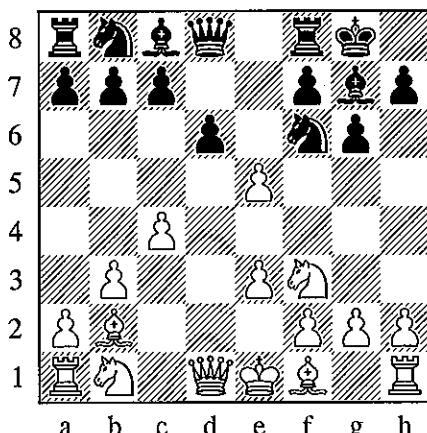


26... $\mathbb{R}c8!$ 27. $\mathbb{R}xd5 \mathbb{R}c2$

The rook endgame should be a draw, although White will have to be slightly more careful as his king is cut off on the first rank.

A422) 7.dxe5

Which option do you think Black should prefer – 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ or 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$? In fact I have something completely different in mind!

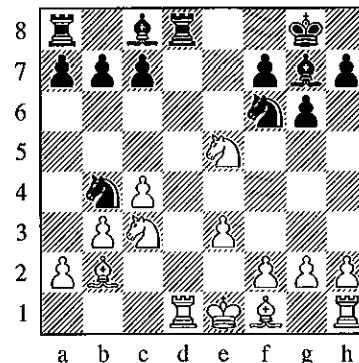


7...dxe5!

This amazing new idea was introduced by the young but extremely strong Chinese GM Ding Liren.

8. $\mathbb{W}xd8 \mathbb{W}xd8$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

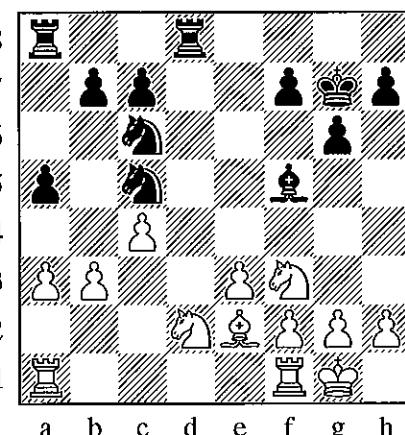
9. $\mathbb{Q}xe5N$ should be met by: 9... $\mathbb{Q}a6!$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}b4$ 11. $\mathbb{R}d1$ (11. $\mathbb{R}c1 \mathbb{Q}f5\#$ does not help White)



11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12.f3 $\mathbb{R}xd1\#$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ (13. $\mathbb{Q}xd1?$ $\mathbb{R}d8\#$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e1 \mathbb{R}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d1 \mathbb{Q}xa2$ is worse for White as he can no longer castle) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ Black regains the pawn and reaches a comfortable position.

9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}e4!$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xg7 \mathbb{Q}xg7$ 12.a3 a5! 13. $\mathbb{Q}bd2 \mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{Q}f5$ 15.0-0

Here I found a way to improve Black's play.

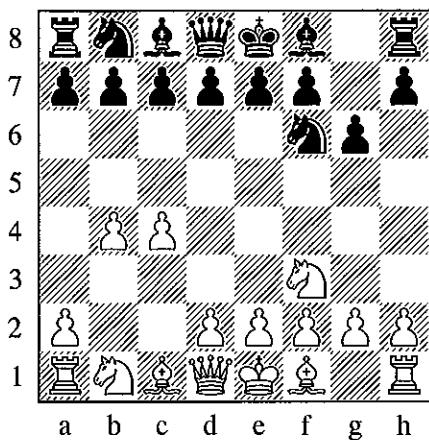


15... $\mathbb{Q}c2!N$

15... $\mathbb{g}5!$? 16.h3 h5 17.b4 axb4 18.axb4 $\mathbb{R}xa1$ 19. $\mathbb{R}xa1 \mathbb{Q}xb4$ was also promising for Black in Bu Xiangzhi – Ding Liren, China 2014. The text move is even better though.

16.♖d1 ♖d3 17.♕e1 ♕d7†

Doubling rooks and putting White under greater pressure.

B) 3.b4

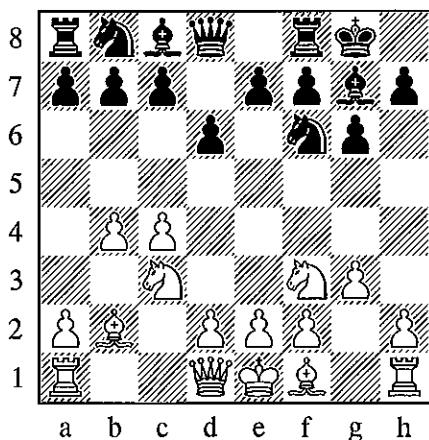
This is a bit more ambitious than the previous variation, but the drawback is that the b-pawn may find itself under attack.

3...♗g7 4.♘b2 0-0

Once again, Black postpones any commitment of his central pawns for as long as possible. White may proceed with B1) 5.♘c3, B2) 5.g3 or B3) 5.e3.

B1) 5.♘c3 d6 6.g3

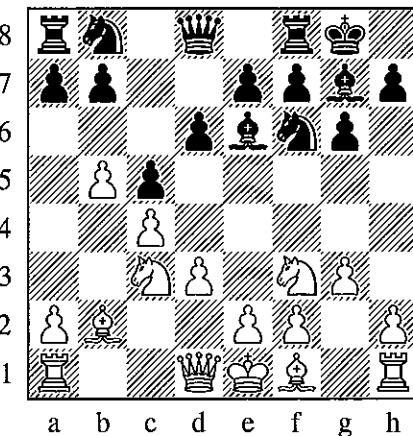
6.e3 transposes to variation B31.

**6...c5!?**

I came up with this interesting idea over the board, and I have no hesitation in recommending it.

7.b5!?

7.bxc5 is more prudent, and after 7...dxc5 8.♗g2 ♘c6 9.0-0 b6 10.d3 ♘b7 11.♗b1 ♕d7= the chances were balanced in Cvek – Konopka, Kunzak 2001.

7...♗e6 8.d3**8...d5!?**

8...a6!? also favoured Black in Andreikin – V. Mikhalevski, Plovdiv 2010, but the text move may be even better.

9.♘g5

9.♗g2 dxc4† is also good for Black.

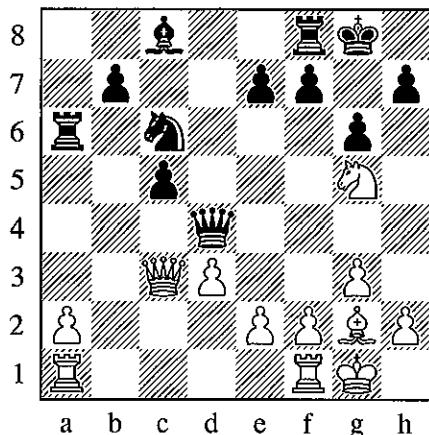
9...♗c8 10.cxd5

10.♘xd5 ♘xd5 11.♗xg7 ♘xg7 12.cxd5 ♘xd5 13.♘f3 a6 14.a4 c4†

10...♘xd5 11.♕d2 a6!

Black continues to target White's overextended queenside.

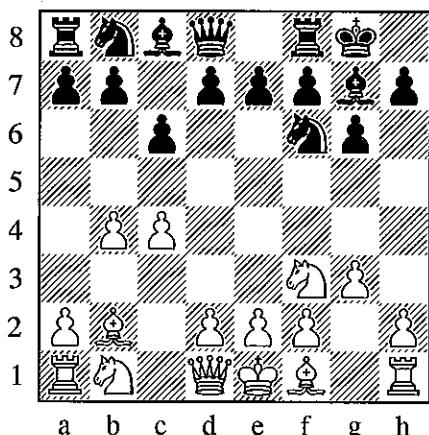
12.bxa6 ♘xa6 13.♗g2 ♘xc3 14.♗xc3 ♘xc3 15.♘xc3 ♘c6 16.0-0 ♘d4



17.Qfc1 Wxc3 18.Qxc3 Qd4 19.Qf1 b6

Black keeps a slight advantage.

B2) 5.g3 c6



Compared with the earlier variation A3, the ...d5 plan works even better here because the c4-pawn is not defended, and if White takes on d5 then the b4-pawn will become a target.

6.Qg2

6.Wb3 d5 7.d3 (7.cxd5 Wxd5 8.Wxd5 Qxd5 9.Qxg7 Qxg7 10.a3 a5 11.bxa5 Wxa5† gave Black strong pressure along the a-file in Trassl – Pohl Kuemmel, Bavaria 2006) 7...a5 8.a3 dxc4 9.dxc4 axb4 10.axb4 Wxa1 11.Qxa1 Qa6!† Black's development advantage

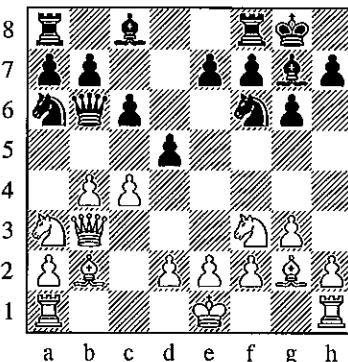
gave her a clear initiative in Stefanova – Zhu Chen, Doha 2011.

6...d5 7.cxd5

I also considered:

7.Qa3 Wb6 8.Wb3 Qa6

The b-pawn is vulnerable, as is often the case in this system.



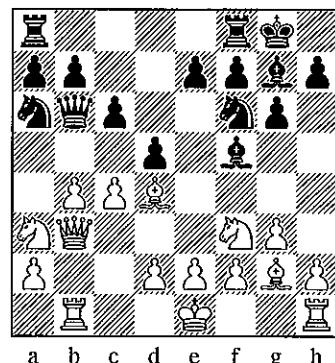
9.Qb1

9.cxd5 Qxd5 10.Qxg7 Qxg7 11.b5 Qc5 12.Wc4 Qf6! 13.bxc6 Qe6 14.Wc1 Wxc6 15.d4 (or 15.0–0 Wac8 with slightly better chances for Black thanks to the misplaced knight on a3, Ackley – Ewan, corr. 2013) 15...Qce4 16.Wxc6 bxc6 17.Qe5 Wfc8 18.f3 Qd6† Gardner – Rozanski, corr. 2013.

9.Qf5 10.Qd4

10.c5?! Wxb4 11.Wxb4 Qxb4 12.Qxf6 Qxb1 13.Qxg7 Qxg7 14.Qxb1 Qxa2† gave Black the better endgame in Aronian – Yandemirov, Linares 2000.

In M. Burgess – J. Howell, Oakham 1986, Black missed a strong continuation:



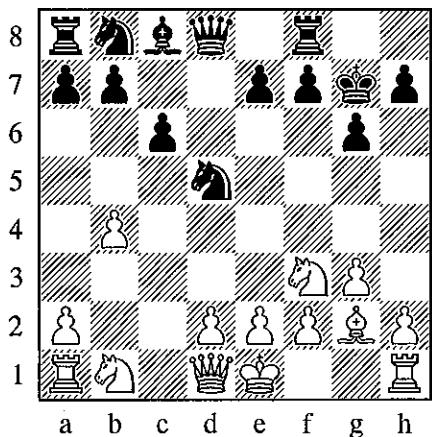
10...c5!N 11.bxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 13.d3 dxc4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{E}ab8\#$

Black is better thanks to the bishop pair.

7... $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$

The point of the ...c6 move was not to prepare ...cxd5, but rather to prepare ... $\mathbb{W}b6$ to intensify the pressure on the b4-pawn.

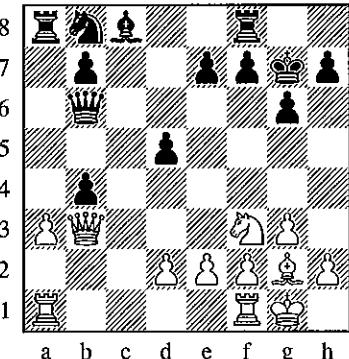
8. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$



9.a3

9. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 10.a3 a5 11.e4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12.bxa5 $\mathbb{E}xa5$ 13.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$ was excellent for Black in Akopian – Salgado Lopez, Legnica 2013.

Another game continued: 9. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 10.a3 a5 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ axb4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ cxd5 13.0–0

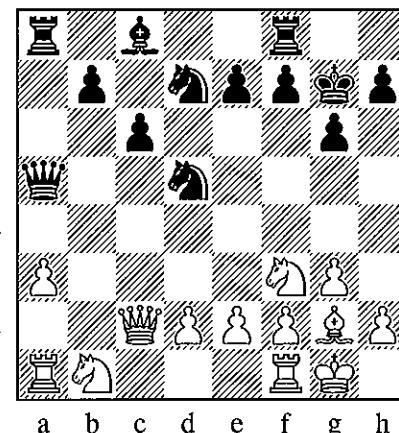


13... $\mathbb{W}f6!$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d8\#$ The

former world champion was slightly worse in Capablanca – Tylor, Ramsgate 1929.

9...a5 10.bxa5 $\mathbb{W}xa5$ 11.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$

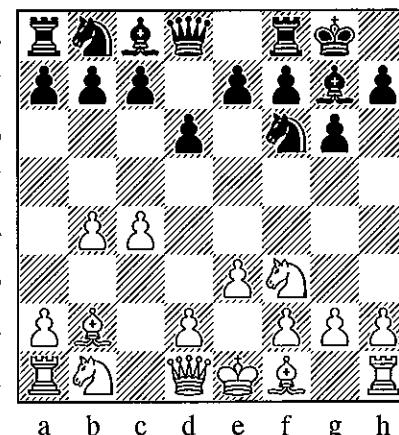
Now I would like to improve on Black's play from Emma – Najdorf, Buenos Aires 1973, with:



12... $\mathbb{E}d8?N$ 13. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}7b6$ 14.e4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15.d4 e5! 16.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

With a pleasant position for Black.

B3) 5.e3 d6



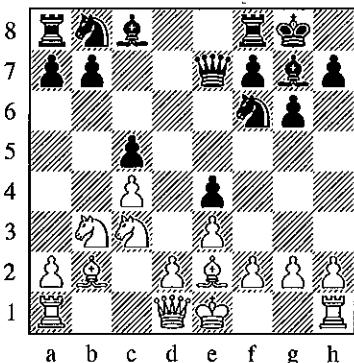
Just as in the 3.b3 section, I am recommending a King's Indian against the e2-e3 set-up. Here we have some additional resources as the b4-pawn can be used as a target.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

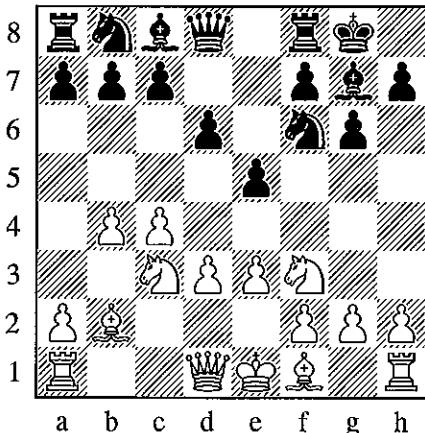
We will analyse B31) 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$, B32) 6.d3, B33) 6.d4 and B34) 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$.

B31) 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e5 7.d3

7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ e4 8. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ c5 is good for Black, for instance: 9.bxc5 (9. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10.b5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 11.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8\#$ also favoured Black in Sokolsky – Kholmov, Kiev 1954) 9...dxc5 10. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$



11.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12.f3 This was Dimitrijevic – Jansa, Kragujevac 1974, and now 12... $\mathbb{E}d8!$ N is better for Black.



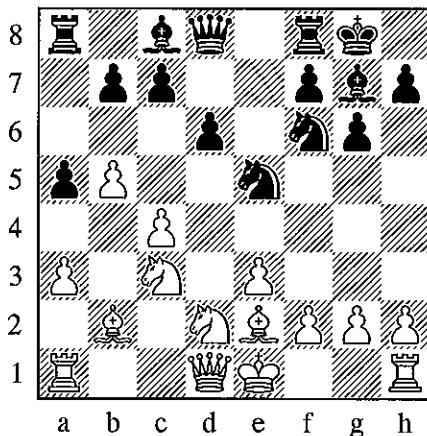
7...e4! 8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

8. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2!$ is one of the tactical points behind Black's last move.

8.dxe4 should be met by the intermediate

8...a5! 9.b5 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 10. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ with a comfortable position for Black thanks to his control over the c5-square.

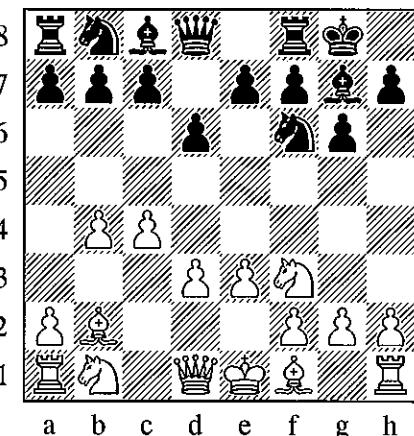
8...exd3 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10.a3 a5 11.b5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$



12... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 13.f3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$

Black had good prospects in Gelashvili – Bonin, Philadelphia 2011, thanks to the outpost on c5.

B32) 6.d3



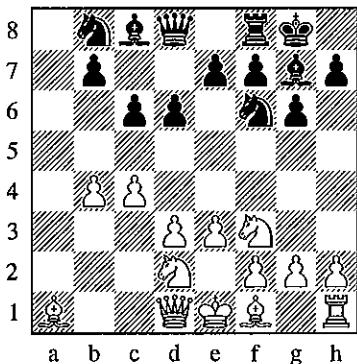
6...a5!

If Black is going to play this move then it's best to do it before White plays $\mathbb{Q}bd2$.

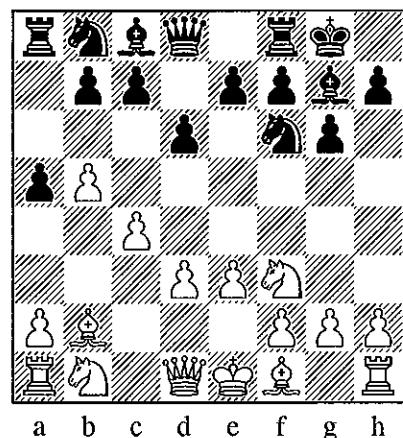
The point is that after a2-a3, it is useful to force White to recapture on a1 with his bishop instead of the queen.

7.b5

7.a3 axb4 8.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ c6? 10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$?! occurred in Lenic – Rade, Sibenik 2012, and now Black could have caused problems with:



10... $\mathbb{Q}a6!$ N 11. $\mathbb{W}b3$ b5! Fixing the b4-pawn. 12.cxb5 cxb5 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 15.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}a8!$ Black is better due to the weakness of the b4-pawn and the unfortunate position of the white queen.



7...e5 8. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

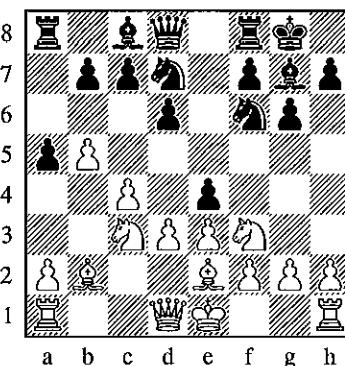
The alternative is:

8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

9. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a4 12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

e4! 13.d4 $\mathbb{Q}d3\#$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ exd3 15. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ 17.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7=$ gave Black a good position in Hecht – Geller, Moscow 1977.

9...e4!



10. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

10.dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ is good for Black thanks to his control over the c5-square.

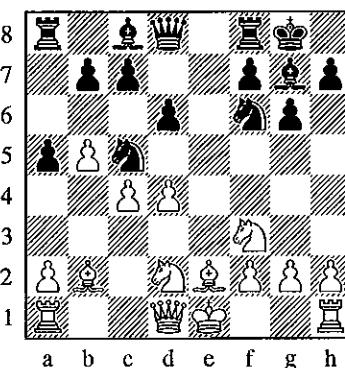
10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ f5 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ with some pressure against the e3-pawn.

10... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 11.dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}fxe4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

Once again the c5-outpost promised Black easy play in McClain – Glembek, corr. 2015.

8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 10.0–0

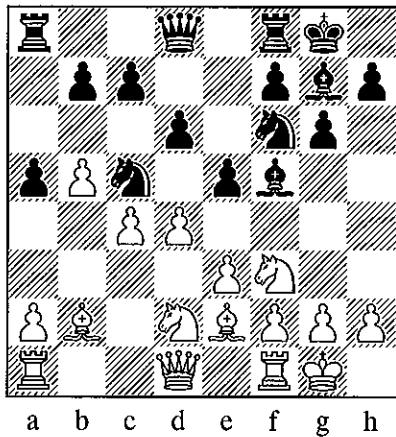
10.d4 exd4 11.exd4 occurred in Nabaty – Huguet Mainar, Navalmar 2012, when Black missed a powerful idea:



11... $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ N \bar{T} It's not clear how White should deal with ... $\mathbb{Q}f4$, as 12.g3 $\mathbb{Q}h3\bar{T}$ is unsatisfactory for him.

10... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 11.d4

Now in Panchenko – Tuzan, Sochi 1990, Black could have caused problems with:



11...exd4!N 12.exd4

12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7!$ with better chances for Black.

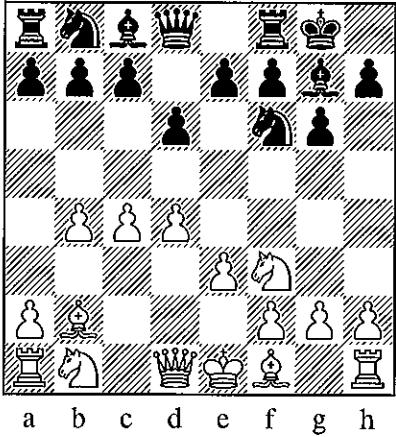
12... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$

13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8!$ is very unpleasant for White.

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

With an edge for Black, thanks to the weak light squares.

B33) 6.d4

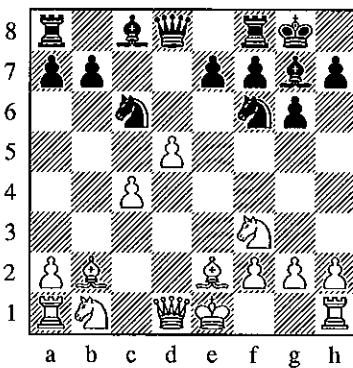


6...c5!

6...e5 is a reasonable move, but striking at the b4-pawn is just too tempting.

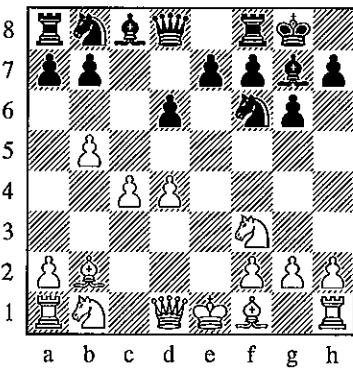
7.a3

7.bxc5 dxc5 8.Qe2 cxd4 9.exd4 Qc6 10.d5N (10.0–0 Qb6!) is a surprising transposition to page 487 – see the note to White's 7th move in variation A1)



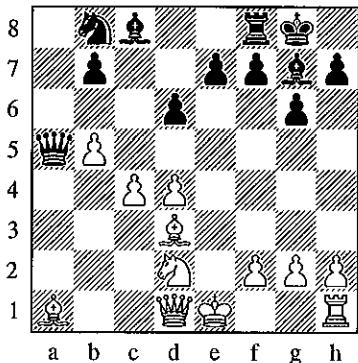
10... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}fc8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ and White is under some pressure.

7.b5 should be met by 7...cxd4 8.exd4, and now I would like to introduce:

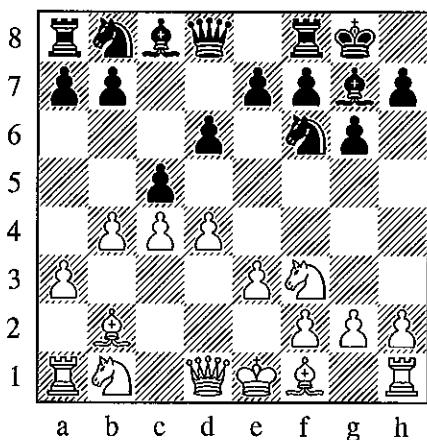


8...a6!N White's king is stuck in the centre and so Black is opening as many lines as possible. (8...e5 9.Qe2 e4 10.Qfd2 Qe8 was also better for Black in Mikhalchishin – Svidler, Warsaw 1999)

9.a4 axb5 10.axb5 $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$
12. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$

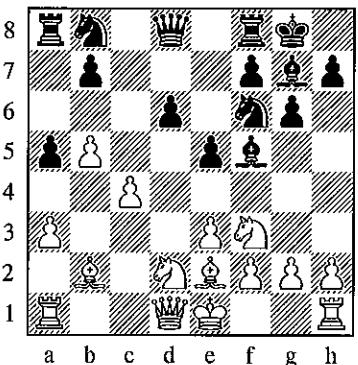


14... $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $d5! \mp$ Black maintains the initiative.

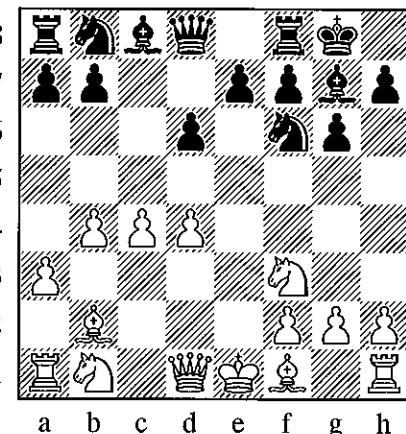


7...cxd4 8.exd4

I also considered: 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ a5 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ e5
10. $\mathbb{Q}4f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12.b5 $\mathbb{Q}b8$



13.c5!N (after 13.0–0?! $\mathbb{Q}bd7\mp$ the knight was heading for c5 in Kaenel – Razuvaev, Bern 1998) The text move is a necessary improvement for White, and after 13...dxc5 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ the chances are roughly equal.

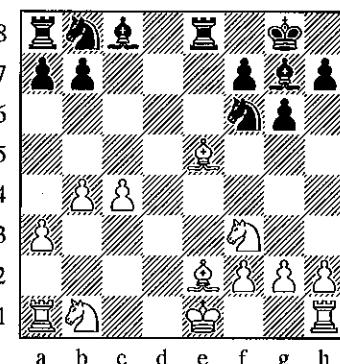


8...e5! 9.dxe5

9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ e4 10. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ d5 11.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12.b5
 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $dxc4$
16. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4\mp$ favoured Black in Korchnoi – Nunn, San Francisco 1995.

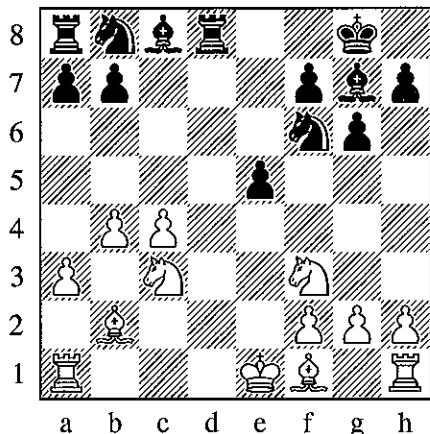
9...dxe5 10. $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

11. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ occurred in Reefschlaeger – Balinov, Seefeld 2002. I found the following way to improve Black's play:



12... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ N 13.0–0 a5! 14.b5 $\mathbb{Q}bd7\mp$ With a clear edge for Black.

Now in Kalinitschew – Krasenkov, Berlin 1990, Black could have posed serious problems by means of:



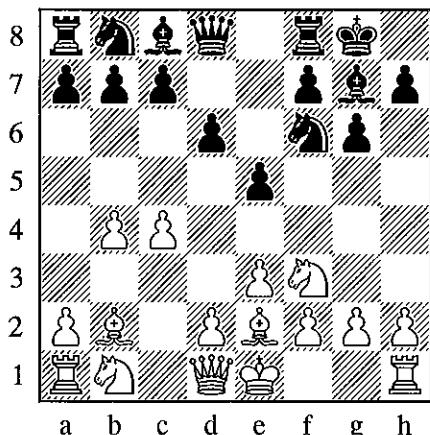
11... $\mathbb{Q}c6!N$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5!$

Black has a significant lead in development. White's best chance seems to be:

13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14. $cxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $exd4$
16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1\#$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7\#$

Black keeps some chances thanks to his development advantage.

B34) 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ e5



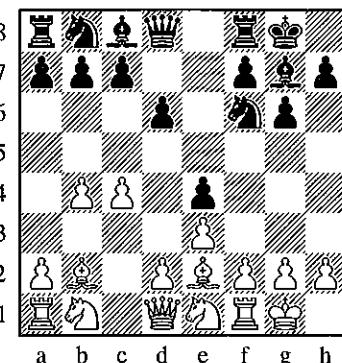
Now we have a final split between two main moves: B341) 7.d4 and B342) 7.d3.

7.0–0 e4!!?

If Black can play like this with the b-pawn on b3 then why not here too?

8. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

8. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ c5 9. $bxc5$ $dxc5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. f3
(11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ transposes to the Dimitrijevic – Jansa game given in the note to White's 7th move in variation B31) 11...exf3 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ Now I would like to improve upon Black's play in Ivlev – Vitolins, Riga 1964, by means of: 12...a5!N 13. a4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$



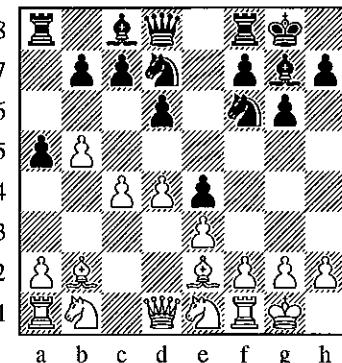
8...a5 9. b5

9.a3 d5! is good for Black.

9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 10. d4

10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ can be met by 10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ with a comfortable position for Black.

This position was reached in Ambrosi – Innocenti, Lucca 2000. I have two possible improvements:

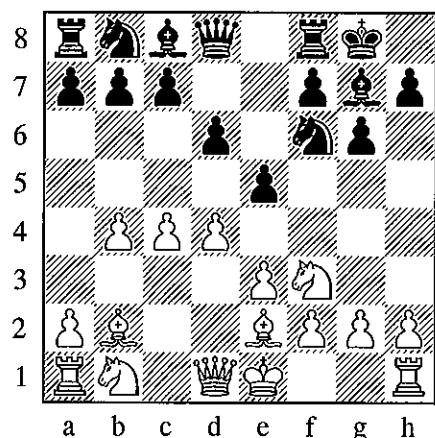


10..c5!N

Or 10... ♜b6N, with promising play for Black in either case.

B341) 7.d4

White takes some space in the centre but allows us to open lines.



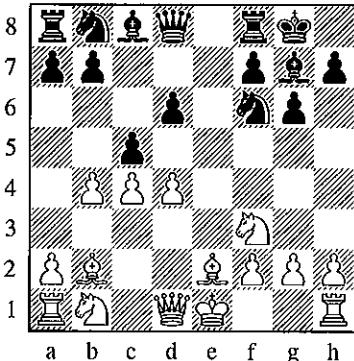
7...exd4 8.♘xd4

8.exd4

Against this move I would like to offer a rare but promising idea:

8...c5!

Yet again, the exposed b4-pawn is a source of concern for White.



9.dxc5!?:N

After 9.bxc5 dxc5 10.d5 $\mathbb{W}b6!$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ the weakness of

the dark squares gave Black the upper hand in Lindstrom – Krakovsky, email 2009.

I also considered 9.b5N $\mathbb{N}e8$ 10.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f5$
 11.dxc5 dxc5 12. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ and Black
 obtains a pleasant position.

9...dxc5 10. $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{B}xd8$ 11. b5 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ a6
 13. 0-0 axb5 14. cxb5 $\mathbb{Q}bd7\bar{f}$

White experiences problems.

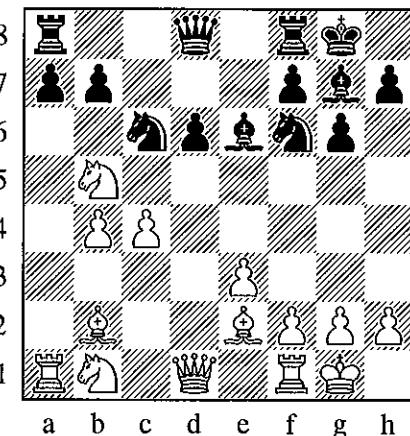
8...6512

8...a5 9.b5 ♕bd7 is a good alternative.

9. ♔b5!!? ♔c6 10. a3!!

10.bxc5 dxc5 11.0–0 ♜e6 12.♗d2 ♛e7† was better for Black in Kaenel – Gallagher, Switzerland 1995, and a few other games.

10...cxb4 11.0-0 ♜e6 12.axb4



12...d5! 13.c5 a6 14.♘d6 ♘xb4†

Once again Black succeeded in breaking down his opponent's queenside, Espig – Savon, Odessa 1976.

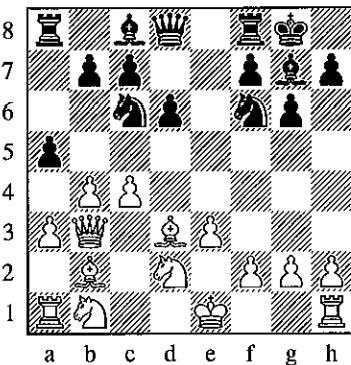
B342) 7.d3 e4!

I like this rare move as it doesn't allow White to consolidate his position.

8.dxe4

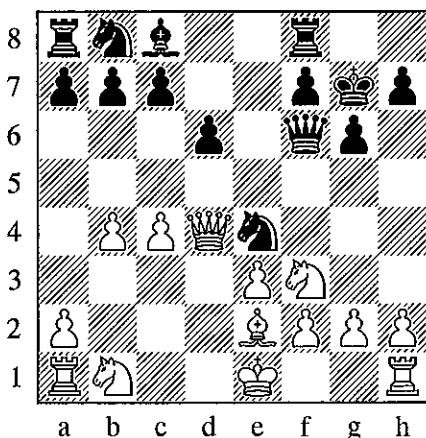
1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

8. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ exd3 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. a3 a5 11. $\mathbb{W}b3$ occurred in Bukhman – Filipek, Polanica Zdroj 1996. Now I would like to offer:



11... $\mathbb{Q}g4!N$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}c3\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xf6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 15. b5 $\mathbb{Q}e5\bar{f}$ Black is better thanks to his control over the c5-square.

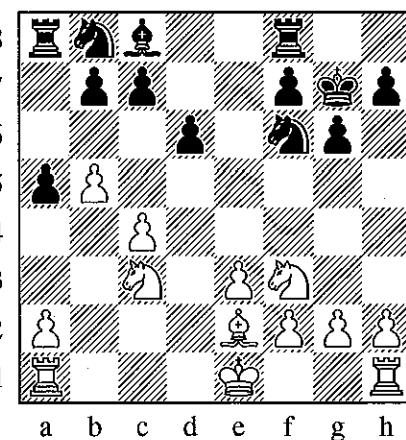
8... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}d4\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}f6$



11. $\mathbb{W}xf6\uparrow$

11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ is conveniently met by 11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$! 12. $\mathbb{W}xf6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 13. a3 a5! and once again White must weaken the c5-square: 14. b5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ dx e 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}fd8\bar{f}$ White was under some pressure in Kharitonov – Chiburdanidze, USSR 1979.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ a5! 13. b5



13... $\mathbb{Q}bd7!$

I chose the less accurate 13...b6 in Yermolinsky – V. Mikhalevski, Los Angeles 2003.

14. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c5N$

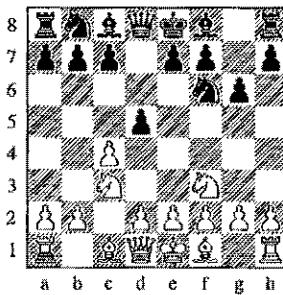
With a slightly more pleasant position for Black. (14... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ was also decent in Nicklich – Felkel, email 2009.)

Conclusion

These set-ups with a queenside fianchetto are playable, but Black should not have too much trouble getting a healthy, active position. It was good to discover that the ...d5 plan works well when White plays g2-g3, while ...d6 proves more effective against e2-e3. In the lines where White puts his pawn on b4, you should always be on the lookout for a disruptive ...a5 to open the a-file or win control over the c5-square. In certain positions, the ...c5 break can also work well.



1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6



Anti-Grünfeld

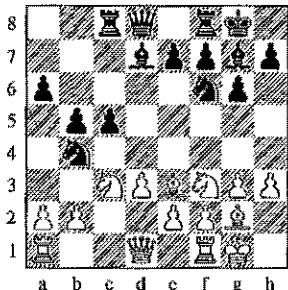
Variation Index

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 g6 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

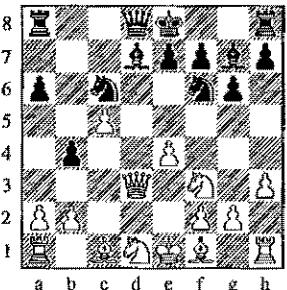
3...d5

A) 4.e3	508
B) 4. $\mathbb{Q}a4\#$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ dx $c4$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ a6	508
B1) 7.g3	509
B2) 7.d3	511
B3) 7. $\mathbb{Q}b3$	512
B4) 7.d4	513
B5) 7.e4	516

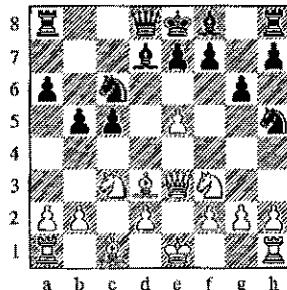
B1) after 14.h3



B4) note to 10.Qe2



B5) note to 10.Qe4



14...Qbd5!N

12...Qc7!N

11...Qg7!N

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ 2. c4 g6 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

This move is the gateway to the main Anti-Grünfeld. White is ready to answer 3... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ with 4.e4, steering the position towards a King's Indian, so if Black wants a Grünfeld structure he has to play:

3...d5

In this chapter we will deal with A) 4.e3 and B) 4. $\mathbb{W}a4\ddagger$.

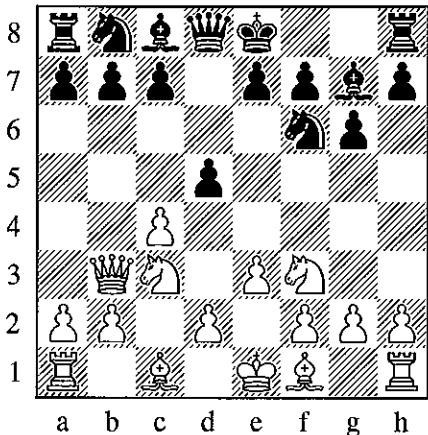
4.d4 would obviously be a normal Grünfeld.

After 4.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ White has several alternatives which do not involve an early d2-d4. These will be discussed in detail in the next two chapters.

A) 4.e3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5. $\mathbb{W}b3$

5.d4 leads to a normal Grünfeld, both here and on the next move.

5.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ leads to 4.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5.e3, as covered in a note at the start of the next chapter on page 520.

**5...e6 6. $\mathbb{W}a3$**

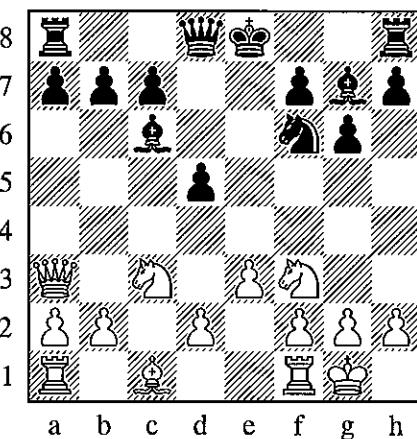
White is trying to interfere with our short castling.

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

Black intends to block the a3-f8 diagonal, either with ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$, or with ...a5 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$. A similar idea can be applied in the main Grünfeld when the queen goes to a3.

7. cxd5 exd5 8. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 10.0-0

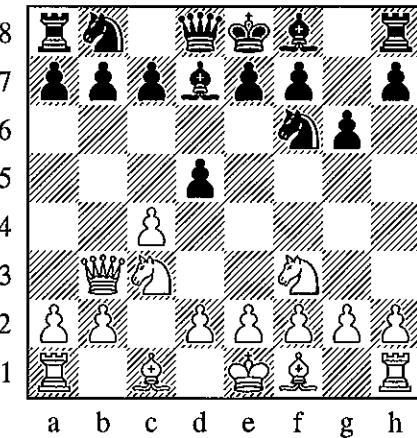
10. $\mathbb{Q}e5N$ can be met by: 10... $\mathbb{W}d6!$? (10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is also equal) 11. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ cxd6 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6=

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

Preventing $\mathbb{Q}e5$.

11. d3 $\mathbb{W}d6!$ 12. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$ 0-0 14. d4 $\mathbb{Q}e4$

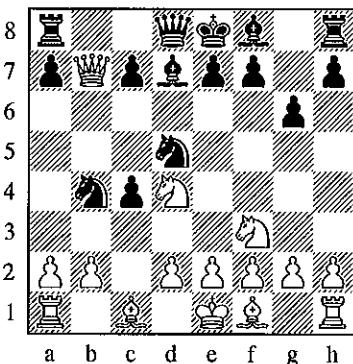
Black was slightly better in Romanov – Navara, Czech Republic 2011.

B) 4. $\mathbb{W}a4\ddagger$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 5. $\mathbb{W}b3$ 

White hopes that the bishop on d7 will get in the way of Black's other pieces.

5...dxc4 6.♗xc4

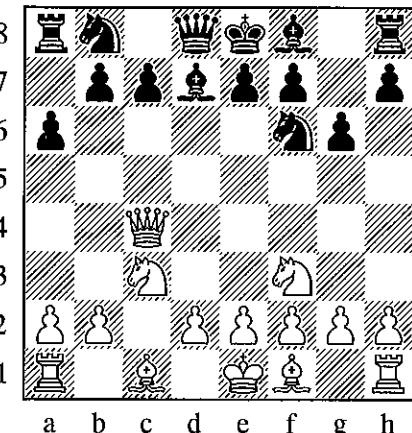
6.♗xb7? has never been played, and indeed after 6...♝c6 7.♝b5 ♝d5 8.♝bd4 ♝cb4 White's position is already beyond repair, for instance:



9.a3 (9.e3 ♘b8 10.♗xa7 ♘a8 11.♗b7 f6 12.♗xc4 ♘b8! 13.♗a7 e5!+) 9...♘b8 10.♗xa7 ♘a8 11.♗b7 ♘g7 12.♗b1 c5! and Black wins.

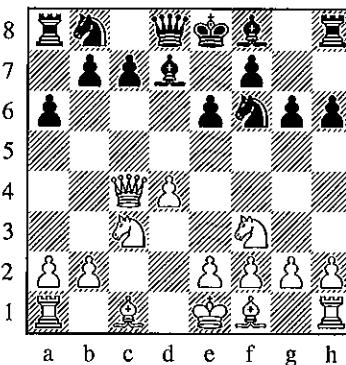
6...a6

While writing this book I was pleasantly surprised to discover that I was the first player to employ this idea back in 1998. Black is saving a tempo on ...♘g7 and preparing ...b5.



We will consider five main options:
B1) 7.g3, B2) 7.d3, B3) 7.♗b3, B4) 7.d4 and B5) 7.e4.

7.♗g5?! is dubious. 7...e6 8.d4 h6 9.♗f3. Now I would like to improve upon Black's play in Rohacek – Hajek, Slovakia 2012, with:



9...b5?N 10.♗d3 c5 11.dxc5 ♘xc5 12.♗e3 ♘b6 13.♗xc5 ♘xc5 Followed by ...b4, with slightly better chances for Black.

B1) 7.g3

This move is what Lev Psakhis played against me in the aforementioned stem game. Since Black is going to weaken the a8-h1 diagonal, White is developing his bishop onto it. Despite this logical basis, it is not too challenging.

7...b5

This is obviously the main idea behind the previous move. Black advances his queenside pawns in order to fight for the centre.

8.♗b3

8.♗h4

This move was introduced by Nigel Davies in 2002.

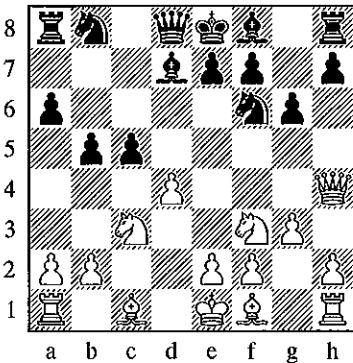
8...c5 9.d4!?

This has hardly been seen.

9.d3 ♘c6 10.♗g2 h6 11.0–0 ♘g7! creates a threat of ...g5. (11...♝bd7 occurred in

Davies – Rowson, Southend 2002) 12.Wh3 (12.Wf4 0–0 and I prefer Black, as the queen is misplaced on f4) 12...Qd7 13.Wh4 Qc6† Moessle – M. Bauer, email 2010.

9.Qg2 Qc6 It makes sense to oppose the g2-bishop. 10.0–0 Now I would like to improve upon Black's play in a couple of games with: 10...Qg7!!N 11.d4 b4 12.Qd1 cxd4 13.Qxd4 Qxg2 14.Qxg2 0–0 15.Qe3 Wb6=

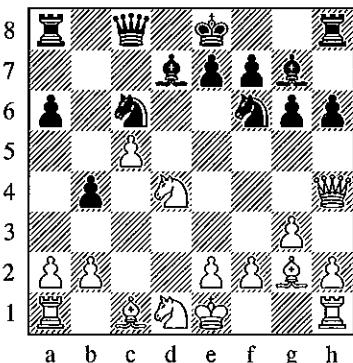


9...b4 10.Qd1 Qc6 11.dxc5 Qg7 12.Qg2 h6 13.Qd4

Or 13.Wf4 0–0 14.0–0 Qe6! 15.a3 Wb8 with good compensation for a pawn.

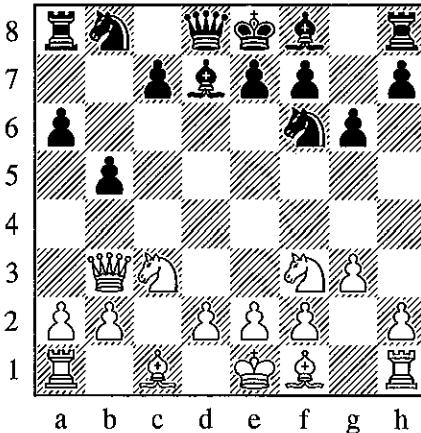
13...Wc8

13...Wc7 14.Qxc6 Qxc6 15.Wf4 Wb7 16.Qxc6† Wxc6 17.0–0 Wxc5= also equalizes.



14.Qxc6 Qxc6 15.Qxc6† Wxc6 16.0–0 Wxc5 17.a3 Wb8=

The players soon agreed a draw in Budkin – Yloenen, email 2014.



8...c5 9.d3

Things are not much different after:

9.Qg2 Qc6

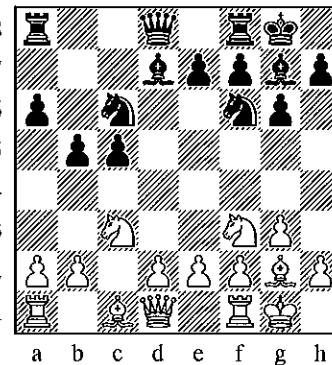
9...c4 was tested in a couple of games and should also be good for Black.

The text move is an easy solution though, as White won't be able to avoid d2-d3 for long.

10.0–0

10.d3, either now or on the next move, transposes to our main line.

10...Qg7 11.Wd1 0–0

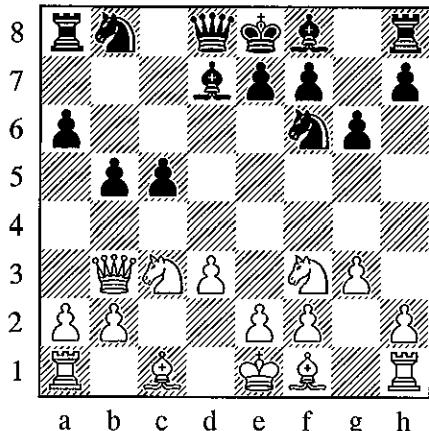


12.d4??

The time really has come for White to play 12.d3, when 12...Bc8 converts to our main line.

12...b4 13.Qa4 cxd4†

White's move order has backfired, as the d4-pawn is untouchable.



9...Qc6 10.Qg2 Qc8!

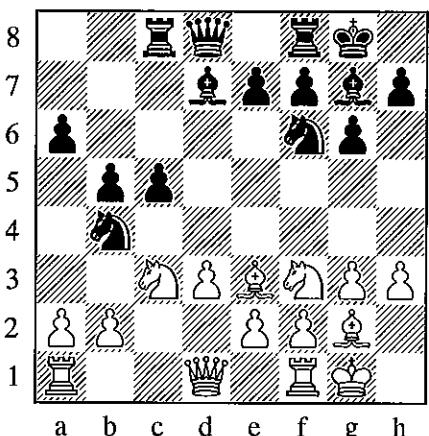
Black finishes developing the queenside pieces and easily solves his opening problems.

11.Qd1

11.0–0 occurred in Ruck – Bagi, Hungary 2011, when 11...Qg7N would have been the natural reply, after which 12.Qd1 transposes to the main line.

11...Qg7 12.0–0 0–0 13.Qe3 Qb4? 14.h3

Now I would like to offer:



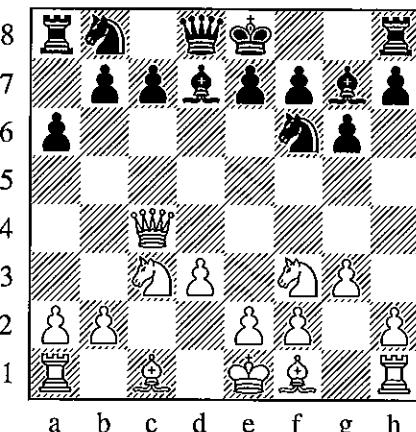
14...Qbd5!N

Instead of 14...Qfd5, which was also fine for Black in Psakhis – V. Mikhalevski, Ramat Aviv 1998.

15.Qd2 Qc6

With a slight edge for Black.

B2) 7.d3 Qg7 8.g3



This position has occurred only once in Topalov – Shirov, Villarrobledo (rapid) 2008. Here I would like to offer:

8...b5!N 9.Qd4

Naturally I considered some other possible queen moves.

9.Qb3 c5 10.Qg2 Qc6 11.0–0 Qc8 transposes to the note to White's 11th move in variation B1.

9.Qf4 c5 10.Qg2 Qc6 11.Qd2 Qc8= with a good position for Black.

9.Qc5 Qc6 10.Qf4 is an attempt to prevent ...Qd6. (10.Qg2 Qd6 11.Qxd6 exd6 12.Qd2 Qbd7 13.Qc1 Qc8 14.0–0 0–0= and Black is fine) 10...Qfd7 11.Qe3 h6 With an obvious threat of ...g5. 12.h4 b4 13.Qd1 Qd5 14.Qg2 c5 Black is certainly not worse.

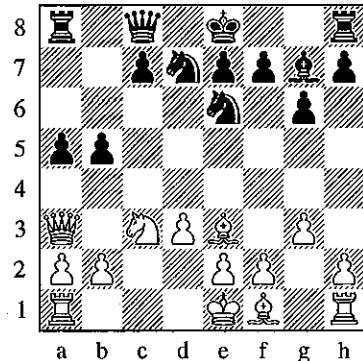
9...Qc8

Preparing ...c5.

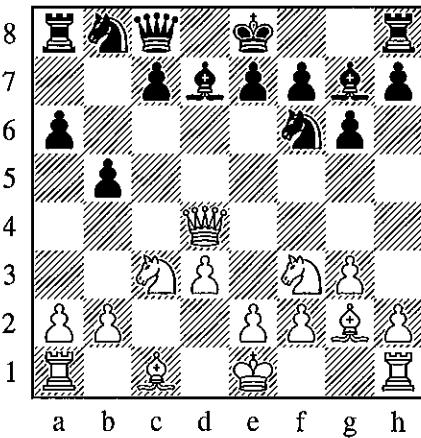
10.Qg2

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ 11. $\mathbb{W}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8!$ Suddenly Black is transferring his knight to e6. 12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}a3$ a5 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$



15. $\mathbb{W}b3$ (15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ b4 16. $\mathbb{W}b3$ c6 17. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ a4) 15... $\mathbb{W}b7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ a4 17. $\mathbb{W}c2$ 0-0 18. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c6 Black is slightly better.

10...c5 11. $\mathbb{W}e5$

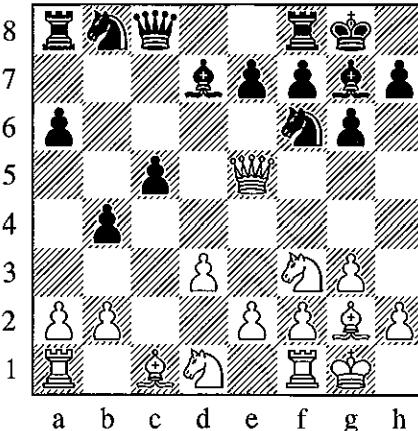
11. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13. 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b8=$ is fine for Black.

11...0-0 12.0-0

12. $\mathbb{W}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}bd7\bar{w}$ offers Black fine compensation for a pawn thanks to the misplaced queen on d6.

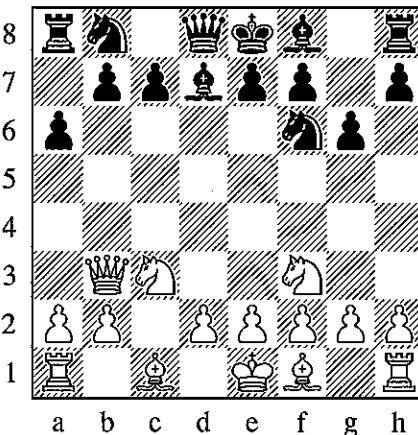
12...b4 13. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ is good for Black.



13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. a3 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 15. $\mathbb{axb4}$ $\mathbb{cx b4}$ 16. $\mathbb{W}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$

The position remains approximately equal.

B3) 7. $\mathbb{W}b3$ 

White removes the queen in anticipation of ...b5.

7...b5

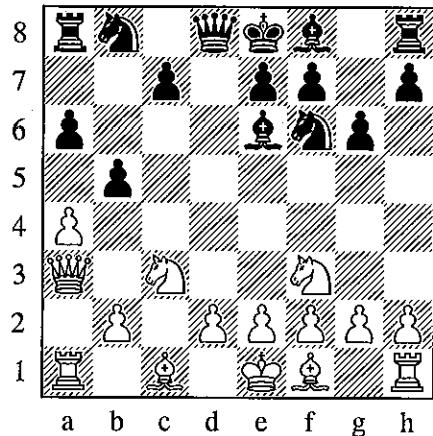
No matter – we can play it anyway.

8.a4

8.d4 transposes to the note to White's 8th move in variation B4.

8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 9. $\mathbb{W}a3$

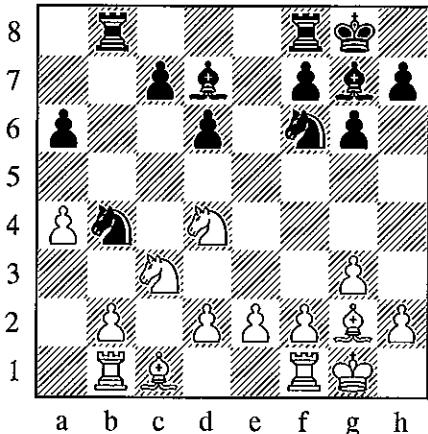
After 9.♗b4 ♜c6 10.♗c5 ♜d7! the queen starts to feel uncomfortable on c5.



9...b4!

A typical sacrifice. Black gives up a pawn in order to obtain the initiative plus the b4-square for his knight.

**10.♗xb4 ♜c6 11.♗c5 ♜d6! 12.♗xd6 exd6
13.g3 ♜b4 14.♗d4 ♜d7 15.♗g2 ♜b8
16.0–0 ♜g7 17.♗b1 0–0**



18.b3?!

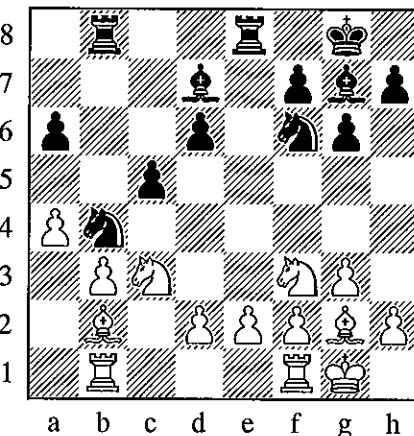
White should prefer 18.♗f3?!N ♜bd5 19.♗d4 ♜b4= with a repetition.

18...c5 19.♗f3 ♜fe8

White came under unpleasant pressure in a few games from this position.

20.♗b2

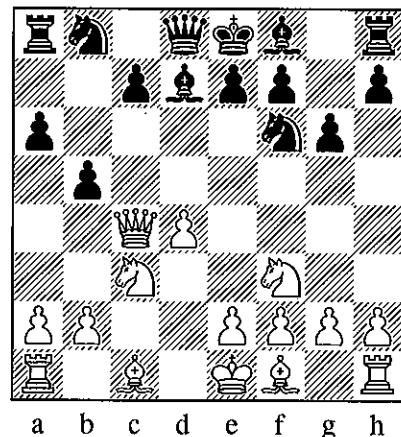
20.♗e1 ♜c6 21.♗c2 ♜d4 22.♗xd4 cxd4 23.♗d5 occurred in Kovalyov – Ni Hua, Edmonton 2009, and now 23...♗f5!N promises Black the upper hand.



**20...♗e6 21.d4 ♜xb3 22.dxc5 dxc5 23.♗d2
♗c2 24.♗bc1 ♜d7+**

Avrukh – Svidler, Germany 2007.

B4) 7.d4 b5



8.♗d3?!

A relatively rare retreat, although it has been tested by Kramnik.

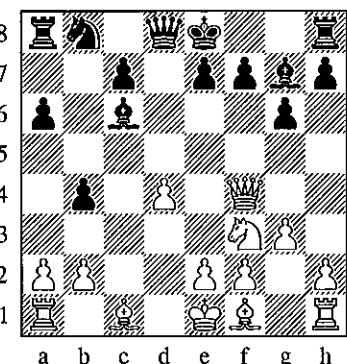
1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

8. $\mathbb{W}b3$ c5 9. dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 10. e4 0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ transposes to the Russian System of the Grünfeld.

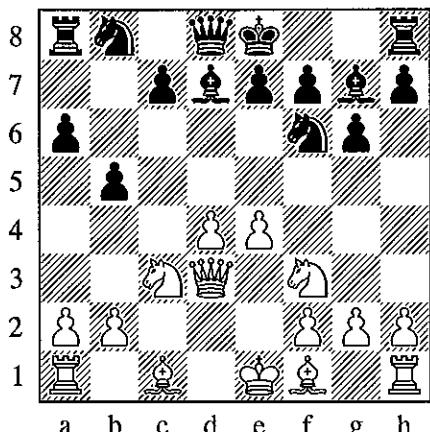
8... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 9. e4

9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ c5! 11. dxc5 b4! 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ gave Black a strong initiative for the pawn in V. Popov – Svidler, Krasnoyarsk 2003.

Another instructive line is: 9. g3 b4! 10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$



12... $\mathbb{W}d6$! (12...0–0 was less accurate in Kramnik – Vachier-Lagrave, Hoogeveen 2011) 13. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$! 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 0–0= Fichaud – Fenwick, email 2011.



9... b4 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

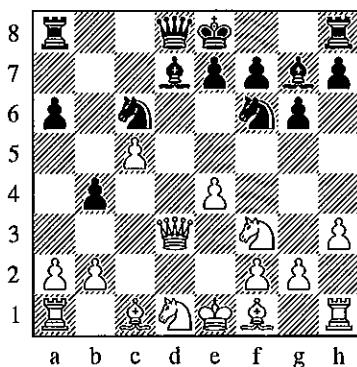
I also checked:

10. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ c5! 11. dxc5

11. $\mathbb{e}5!$?N $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 12. dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{fxe}6$ 15. f4 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0–0 18. 0–0 a5= with equal chances.

11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. h3

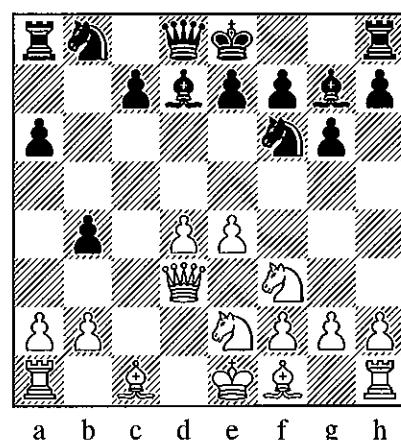
White is preparing an advance of the e-pawn. Now Black's play in Sulypa – Peelen, Wijk aan Zee 2010, can be improved by means of:



12... $\mathbb{W}c7$?N 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$ 0–0 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}fd8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$

15... $\mathbb{Q}e5$? also promises good compensation. 16. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}b7$

With good compensation for a pawn, thanks to the misplaced knight on d1.



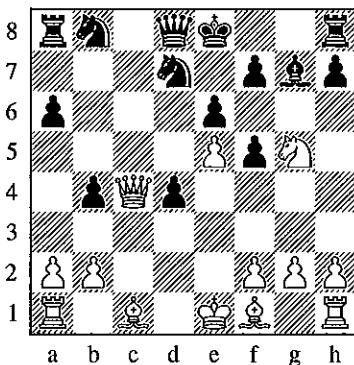
10... c5!

A rare choice, but the best move.

11. dxc5

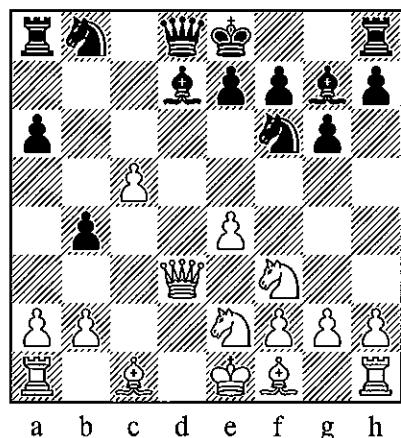
An interesting alternative is:

- 11.e5!N $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c4$
12. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0–0 14.dxc5 $\mathbb{W}a5!$
15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ (15. $\mathbb{Q}ed4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e4=$)
- 15... $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 16.hxg3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ 18.c6 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ is also dynamically balanced.
- 12... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ e6 14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ cxd4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$



- 16.f4 0–0 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xb4$
- 18... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8!$ does not help White.
- 18... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$

The position remains complicated but roughly balanced.

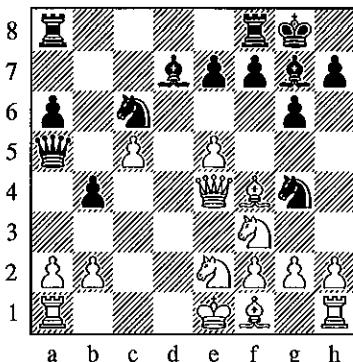


11...0–0!

Black creates enough counterplay thanks to his development advantage.

12. $\mathbb{Q}ed4?$ N

12.e5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (14.e6 $f5!$) 14... $\mathbb{W}a5!$ Black had an excellent position in Matsenko – Sychev, Moscow 2015, due to the following point:



15.h3 b3† 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c2†$

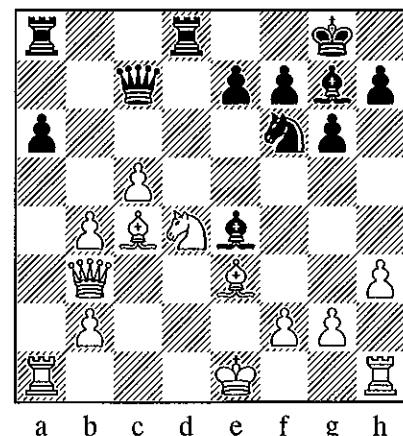
12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}a4!$

Rather an annoying move for White. This could be analysed in a lot more detail, but we are already in uncharted territory within an unusual variation, so I will just give a brief sample line to illustrate Black's chances.

15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

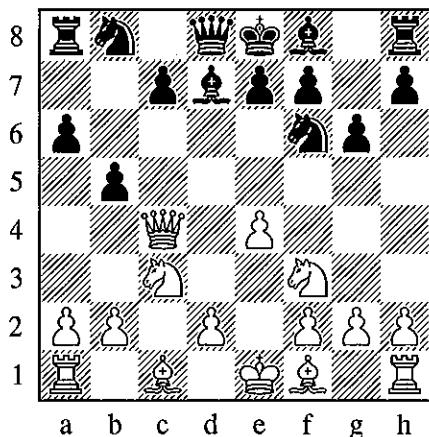
15.b3? runs into 15... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ of course.

15... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 16.a3 $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 17.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

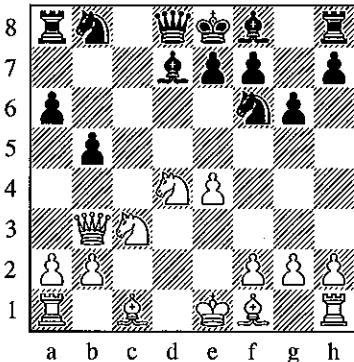


1. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g619... $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ 20.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}ab8$

Black keeps some initiative.

B5) 7.e4 b5**8. $\mathbb{W}e2$**

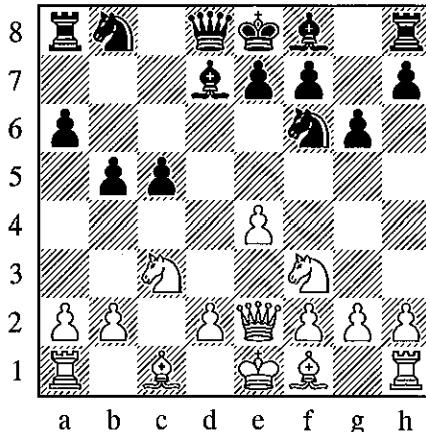
8. $\mathbb{W}b3$ c5 gives White nothing, for instance:
9.d4 (9.e5N is better, but Black is doing fine
after 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10. $\mathbb{W}d1 \mathbb{Q}d5=$) 9...cxd4 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$
In Solonar – Perlitz, Frankfurt 2009, Black
missed a good chance to push White's pieces
back:



10...e5!N 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c2 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$
 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 0-0! 15. $\mathbb{W}xc6$ axb5 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$
 $\mathbb{W}a5\uparrow$! 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}ab8!$ With a nice initiative.

8...c5

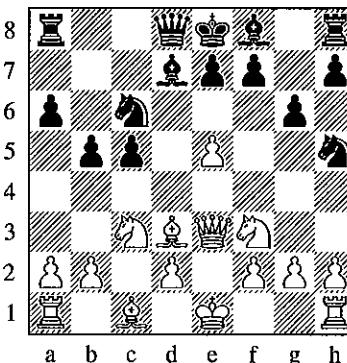
Black is taking the important d4-square
under control.

**9.e5**

9.a4 $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ worked out well for Black after:
10.axb5 axb5 11. $\mathbb{W}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}a1$
13. $\mathbb{W}c4?$ (13. $\mathbb{W}d1!$ N $\mathbb{Q}g7=$ reaches a position of dynamic equality) 13... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c2 \mathbb{Q}b3$
15. $\mathbb{W}xb3$ $\mathbb{W}xc1\uparrow$ Guilleux – Adhiban,
Figueres 2012.

9... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

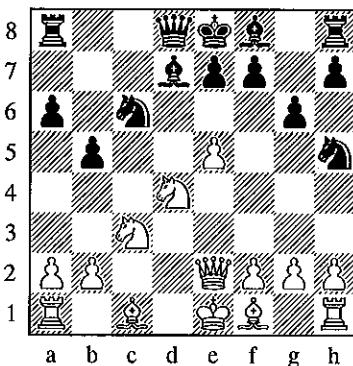
10. $\mathbb{W}e3?!$ is dubious because of: 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$
11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (11. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ e6 12. $\mathbb{W}e3 \mathbb{Q}b4$ gives Black a dangerous initiative) Now I would like to improve with:



11... $\mathbb{Q}g7!$ N Transferring the knight to f5.
(11... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ was less accurate in Shchekachev – Khalifman, Moscow 2006) 12. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{E}c8$
13.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d3\uparrow$
Black has more than sufficient compensation for a pawn.

White has also tried:

10.d4 cxd4 11.Qxd4 Qc6



12.Qb3

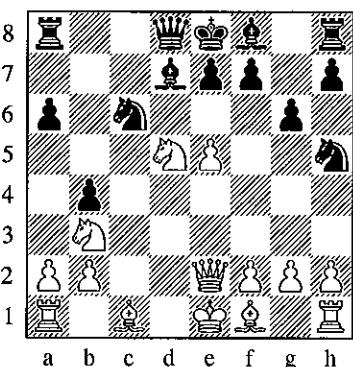
12.Qxc6?! Qxc6† gave Black an easy life in Marholev – Le Roux, Sautron 2012.

12...b4 13.Qd5

13.Qa4?! Qxe5! 14.Wxe5 Qg7 15.We4 Qxa4

16.Wxb4 Qc6† Marholev – Maruejols, Cappelle-la-Grande 2013.

The text move was played in Ovetchkin – Shivananda, Mumbai 2010. I would like to recommend:

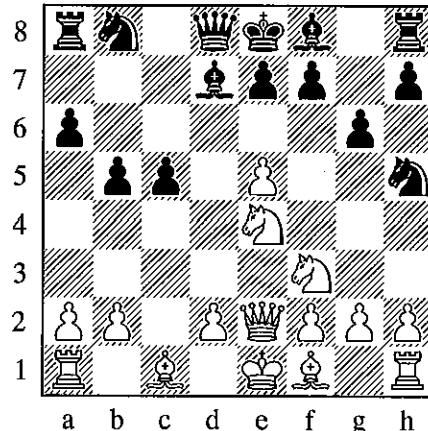


13...Qe6!N 14.Qf4 Qxf4 15.Qxf4 Qg7 16.We3

16.Qd1 Qd5=

16...Qd5 17.Qd1 0–0 18.Qe2 e6 19.Qf3 Qe7

With roughly equal chances.



10...Qc6! 11.Qxc5 Qg4!

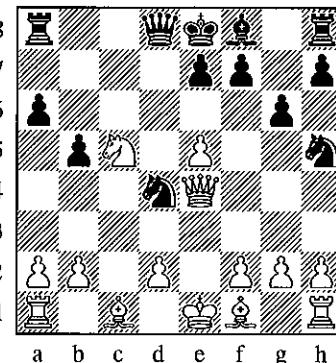
11...Qf5 is less accurate. 12.d3 Rc8 In Ponkratov – Kurnosov, Taganrog 2011, White could have got some advantage with 13.Qd2!N.

12.We4 Qxf3

White faces a difficult decision.

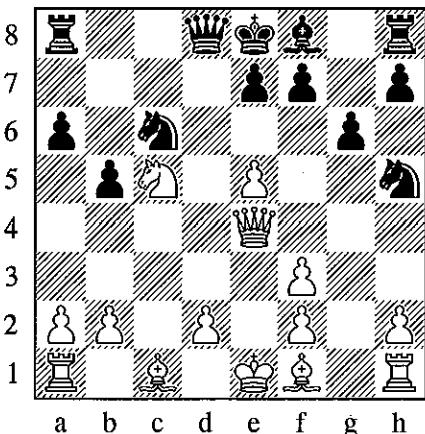
13.gxf3

Another game continued: 13.Wxf3 Qd4 14.We4 (14.Qd3 Rc8 15.b4 Qg7 16.Qb2 Qxc5†)



14...f5! 15.exf6 Qxf6 16.Wd3 Rc8 17.b4 e5

18.Qb2 Qxc5 19.bxc5 Wd5!† Pares Vives – Leenders, email 2011.



Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the major topic of the Anti-Grünfeld. We started by checking the novel plan involving 4.e3 followed by $\mathbb{W}b3$ and $\mathbb{W}a3$ to interfere with Black's castling plans. It's a creative but artificial-looking idea, and Navara found a convincing way to deal with it. The main topic of the chapter was 4. $\mathbb{W}a4\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 5. $\mathbb{W}b3$, which remains quite a popular choice for White. Still, I believe I have demonstrated that 5...dxc4 6. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ a6 gives Black good prospects, thanks to the simple plan of ...b5 followed by rapid deployment of the pieces. Nevertheless, it is worth paying attention to all five of the main lines covered, as the positions can become quite irregular and hard to navigate.

13... $\mathbb{E}c8$ 14.a4

14. $\mathbb{Q}xa6?$ $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ 15. $\mathbb{W}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f8\bar{F}$ and Black is clearly better.

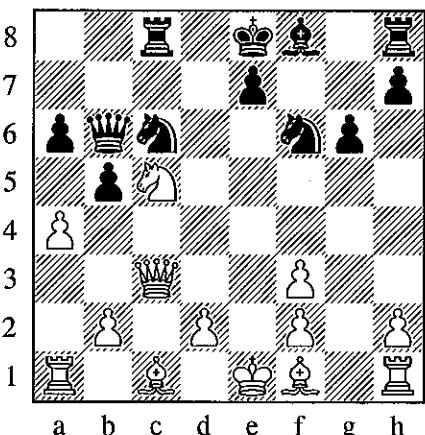
14...f5! 15.exf6?

This was White's choice in the only game.

15. $\mathbb{W}d3$ was the lesser evil, although 15... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$

16.b4 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{W}d5\bar{F}$ still favours Black.

15... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c3$



17... $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ 18.a5

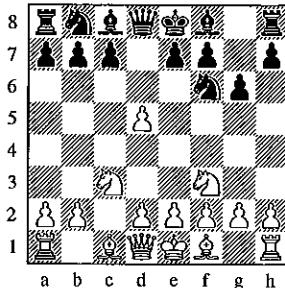
18. $\mathbb{W}xh8$ $\mathbb{W}xc5-$ does not change anything.

18... $\mathbb{W}a7$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xh8$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$

Black had a decisive attack in Jankowicz – Szczepanski, email 2006.



1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6



4.cxd5

Variation Index

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2. c4 g6 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5 4. cxd5

4... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

A) 5.d3	520
B) 5.g3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7. 0-0 0-0	521
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1.Qf3 Qf6 2.c4 g6 3.Qc3 d5 4.cxd5 Qxd5

Apart from 5.d4 Ag7, which leads to a normal Grünfeld, White has tried all kinds of moves here.

5.Wb3 is perhaps the most theoretically challenging move, so I have covered it separately in the next chapter.

Before then, we will analyse A) 5.d3, B) 5.g3, C) 5.h4, D) 5.Wc2, E) 5.Wa4† and F) 5.e4.

After 5.Qxd5 Wxd5 White's best set-up looks to be 6.g3 Ag7 7.Qg2 0-0 8.0-0 Qc6, when we transpose to variation B2.

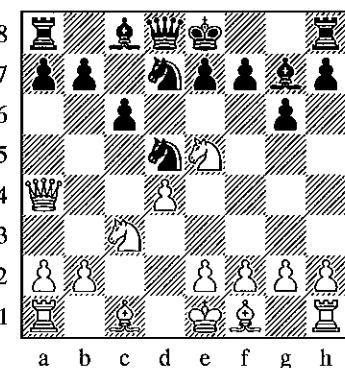
5.Qe5?!

This weird move was played in Salgado Lopez – Volokitin, Mamaia 2012. The game was agreed drawn a few moves later so the move isn't worth taking seriously – but for the record, Black should play:

5...Ag7N 6.Wa4†

After 6.d4 0-0 it's unclear what the knight is doing on e5.

6...c6 7.d4 Qd7



8.Qxd5

Neither 8.Qf3 Q7b6† nor 8.Qxd7 Wxd7!† is any good for White.

8...Qxe5 9.Qf4 Qd7 10.e3 0-0†

Followed by ...c5 or ...e5, when Black is better thanks to his development advantage.

5.e3

This is a pretty rare occurrence at GM level, although it may transpose to some more popular set-ups.

5...Ag7 6.Qc4

6.d4 reaches a sideline of the Grünfeld.

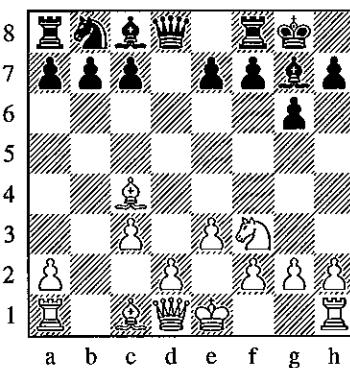
6.Wb3 Qb6 7.d4 transposes to variation A of the next chapter.

6...Qxc3

6...Qb6?! is possible too, but it may transpose to the Panov Caro-Kann after 7.Qb3 c5 8.d4 cxd4 9.exd4, and so I decided to avoid it.

7.bxc3 0-0

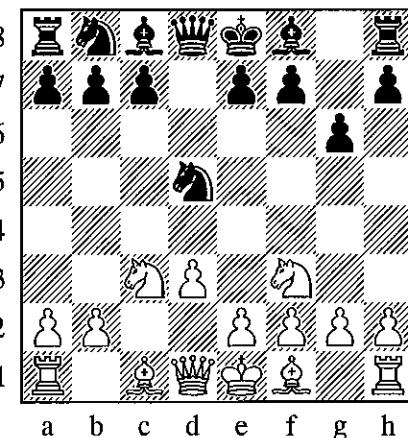
White has nothing better than:



8.d4 c5

Transposing to a sideline of the Grünfeld where White plays an early e2-e3.

A) 5.d3



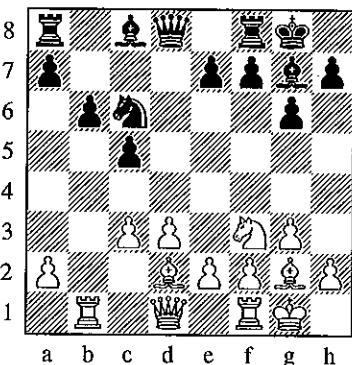
This seemingly modest move has the purpose of meeting 5... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ with 6. $\mathbb{Q}d2$, when White can recapture on c3 with the bishop.

5... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

Bearing in mind the above point, it seems logical to exchange immediately. Surprisingly, this move has not been played in many games at all.

6.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7. $\mathbb{W}c2$

7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ c5 8.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ (10. $\mathbb{W}a4!$? $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ b6=) 10...b6 11.0–0 was played in Rusev – Leenhouts, Cappelle-la-Grande 2014. I would like to offer:



11... $\mathbb{W}d7$?N A small finesse to discourage White's queen from going to a4. 12. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ =

7...c5!

7...0–0 8.g3 c5 was objectively okay for Black in Kramnik – L'Ami, Wijk aan Zee 2011, but the early castling enabled White to develop interesting play with h2-h4. That is why I prefer to develop some other pieces before committing the king.

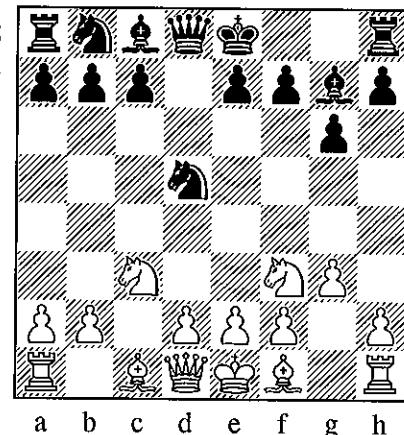
8.g3

In Haude – Peschlow, Germany 2009, Black castled, but I would prefer:

8...b6N 9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ =

As recommended by Kramnik in his notes to his win over L'Ami.

B) 5.g3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$



6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

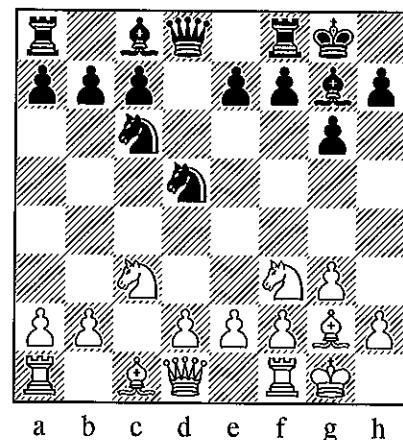
6. $\mathbb{W}a4!$? $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0–0 8.0–0 transposes to variation B1.

6. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0–0 8.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ transposes to variation B2.

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

This is my preferred move order, keeping in mind that White could still convert to a Fianchetto Grünfeld with d2-d4.

7.0–0 0–0

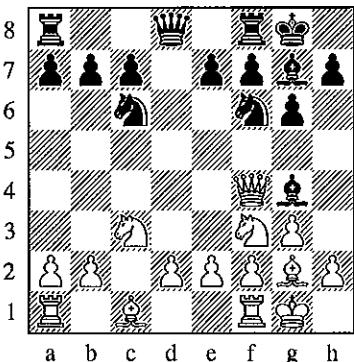


1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

I analysed two main options: B1) 8. $\mathbb{W}a4$ and B2) 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$.

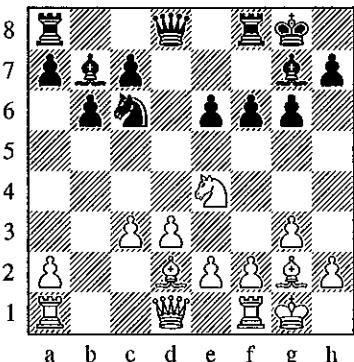
The most popular move has been 8.d4, transposing to the Grünfeld. Apart from that, White has tried several other ideas:

8. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 9. $\mathbb{W}e4$ (9. $\mathbb{W}a4$ b5 10. d3 e6 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5=) 9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10. $\mathbb{W}f4$



This was DeBarnot – Garcia Palermo, Zarate 1973, and now 10... $\mathbb{E}e8!N$ 11. d3 $\mathbb{W}d7=$ would have been fine for Black.

8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ e6 9. $\mathbb{Q}ge4$ (9. d3 b6 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}ce7$ was good for Black in Heberla – Vachier-Lagrave, Germany 2011) 9... b6 10. d3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 12. $\mathbb{B}xc3$ f6 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ A. Maric – Veroci, Zlatibor 1989. Now I would like to offer:



13... $\mathbb{Q}a5!N$ Black intends ...h6 followed by ...f5, with promising play.

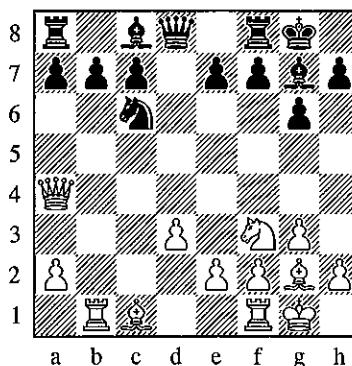
8.d3

The same type of pawn sacrifice is known in a similar position with reversed colours.

8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9. $\mathbb{B}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 10. $\mathbb{E}b1$

10. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1!N$ (10... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 12. $\mathbb{E}b1$ yielded White good compensation in Stamenkov – Nedev, Struga 2010) 11. $\mathbb{W}xa1$ f6 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8\bar{F}$

10... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}a4$



11... $\mathbb{E}b8!$ 12. $\mathbb{W}h4$

Danin – Nozdrachev, Voronezh 2014.

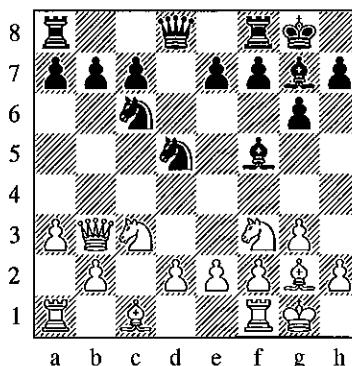
12... h5! $\bar{F}N$

White's compensation seems insufficient.

8.a3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 9. $\mathbb{W}b3$

9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 10. $\mathbb{B}xc3$ was Alterman – Khmelniker, Israel 2012. Now I would recommend 10... $\mathbb{Q}a5!N$ 11. d4 c5 12. e4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. e5 h6 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{C}xd4$ 15. $\mathbb{C}xd4$ b6 with equal chances.

The text move occurred in Sierra Soria – Fernandez Fernandez, Parla 2008, when Black should have played:



9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$ N

I also checked 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ but found it to be good for White after 10. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 11. $\mathbb{W}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$.

10.dxc3

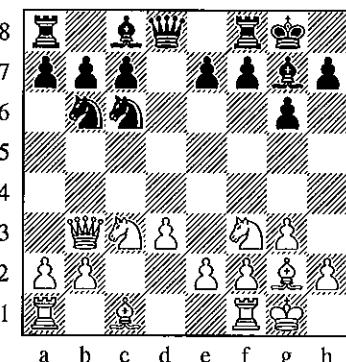
Or 10.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}a5=$ followed by ...c5.

10... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 11. $\mathbb{W}a4$ b6 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}e8!$

Black is fine.

8. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 9.d3

Now I would like to offer the relatively rare:

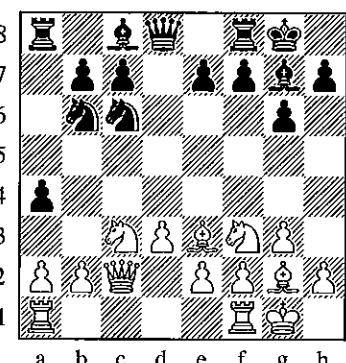


9...a5?! 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ occurred in Marra – Matsuura, Curitiba 2010, when 11...a4?!N 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}d7?$ = would have been fine for Black.

10...a4 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$

After 11. $\mathbb{W}a3?!$ e5 12. $\mathbb{B}ac1$ $\mathbb{W}e8\#$ White's queen was not entirely safe in Marra – Matsuura, Santos 2011.

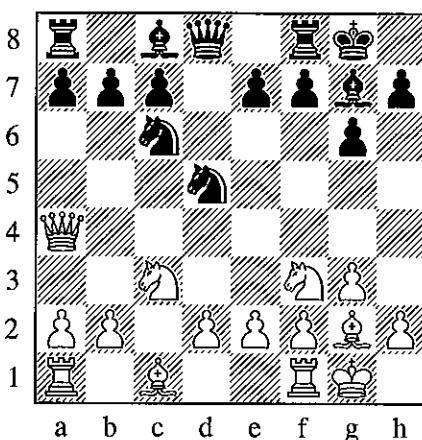


11... $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ N

The less accurate 11...a3 was played in Romanishin – Yrjola, Tallinn 1987.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 13.a3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{B}ac1$ $\mathbb{W}b5=$

B1) 8. $\mathbb{W}a4$



The plan of swinging the queen to the kingside is not too threatening.

8... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 9. $\mathbb{W}h4$

9. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 10. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 11.d3 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 12. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ e5 gave Black easy equality in Sandstrom – Wolff, Kiljava 1984.

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

This is the most forcing route to an equal game.

A second good option is: 9...e5?! 10. $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{B}xd8$ 11.d3 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ h6 was equal in Schlosser – Herbrechtsmeier, Germany 1987) 12...f6 13. $\mathbb{B}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 16. $\mathbb{B}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ N (An improvement upon 17... $\mathbb{Q}c2$, when 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ was equal in Kramnik – Mamedyarov, Baku [rapid] 2009) 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}e8\#$

10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

After 10. $\mathbb{W}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}h4$ Black can choose between repeating with 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and playing

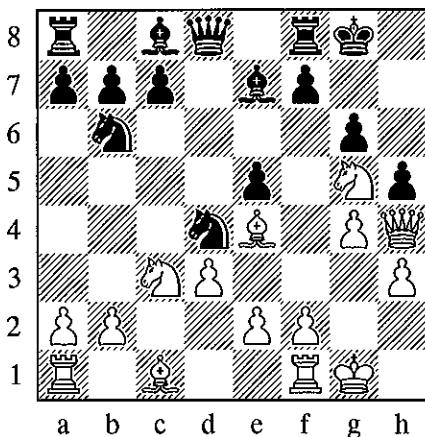
on in an equal position with 11...e5!?, as in the previous note.

10...h5 11.d3 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12.h3 e5 13.g4! $\mathbb{Q}e7!$

14. $\mathbb{Q}e4?!$

White should force a draw with: 14.gxh5N $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5=$

In Ramakrishna -- Negi, Nagpur 2008, Black missed a chance to get an advantage:

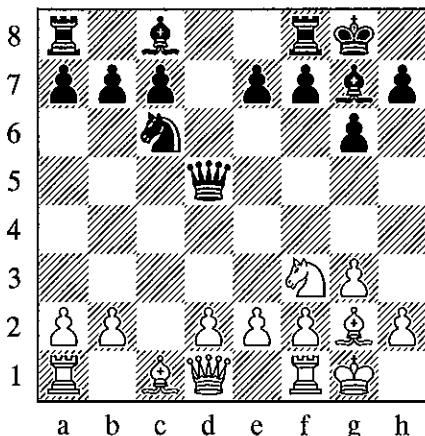


14... $\mathbb{Q}g7!N$ 15.gxh5 f5 16. $\mathbb{W}g3$ fxe4

17. $\mathbb{Q}gxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xe4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h7\#$

Black's extra piece is more significant than White's pawns.

B2) 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$



This is an important position, which can occur via a few different move orders.

9.d3 $\mathbb{W}b5$

9...e5 would be a reversed Dragon, but it would be senseless to block the g7-bishop when we do not have to.

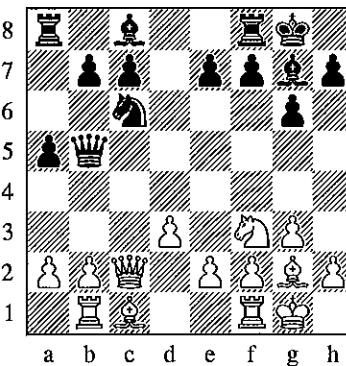
10. $\mathbb{B}b1$

10.a4 weakens the b4-square. 10... $\mathbb{W}b4?!$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1?!$ (White should prefer either 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6=$ or 11. $\mathbb{B}b1$ a5!=) This was Javakhadze – Juhasz, Kemer 2009, and now 11...a5!N 12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ would have been slightly better for Black.

Some other games have continued:

10. $\mathbb{W}c2$ a5 11. $\mathbb{B}b1$

11.a4 can be met by 11... $\mathbb{W}b6?N$ (11... $\mathbb{W}b4$ 12. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13.b3 was roughly equal in Furman – Bronstein, Baku 1972) 12. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13.b3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ with a slight edge for Black.

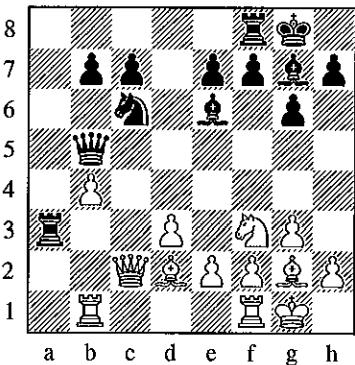


11...a4 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13.b3 axb3 14.axb3 occurred in S. Ilic – Nedev, Plovdiv 2014, when 14... $\mathbb{Q}d5N\#$ would be a natural improvement of Black's play.

12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13.b3 axb3 14.axb3 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 15.b4

Paunovic – Fernandez Garcia, Sanxenxo 2012. Now the most accurate is:



15...b6!N

Preventing $\mathbb{W}c5$.

16. $\mathbb{W}c1$

16. $\mathbb{W}fc1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 17.e4 doesn't win material because of 17... $\mathbb{Q}a2!$.

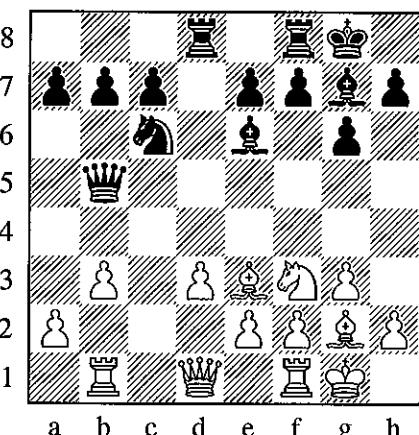
16... $\mathbb{B}fa8\mp$

10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

10...a5?! is a logical alternative.

11.b3 $\mathbb{W}ad8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

Another logical continuation is: 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 13.a4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ c5 15. $\mathbb{W}fc1$ b6 16. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}b2\uparrow$ f6 19.d4 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ with equal chances in Ptacnikova – Wei Yi, Reykjavik 2013.



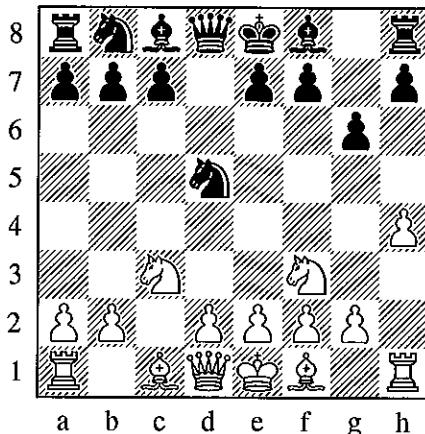
12... $\mathbb{Q}d4?!$ N

12... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$! left Black's queen feeling

uncomfortable in Kramnik – Svidler, Internet (blitz) 1999.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14.a4 $\mathbb{W}b4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$
16. $\mathbb{W}c2$ c6 17.b4 a6=

C) 5.h4



This aggressive continuation has gained some popularity. I suggest ignoring the h-pawn for the time being and concentrating on development.

5... $\mathbb{Q}g7$

We will consider C1) 6.h5 and C2) 6.e4.

C1) 6.h5 $\mathbb{Q}c6$!

Continuing the policy of rapid development.

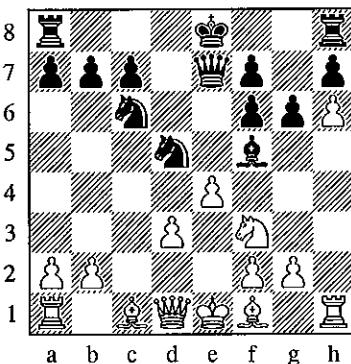
7.d4

7. $\mathbb{W}b3?!$ was played in Kanep – Sanchez Ibern, Gibraltar 2013, and now 7... $\mathbb{Q}e6$!N would have left White's queen misplaced.

7.e4 weakens the d4-square. 7... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$! 9.h6 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ White seems to be heading for trouble, but he found a clever way to maintain the balance: 10.d4! $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 14.0–0 0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ In this level position a draw was agreed in Vallejo Pons – Svidler, Porto Carras 2011.

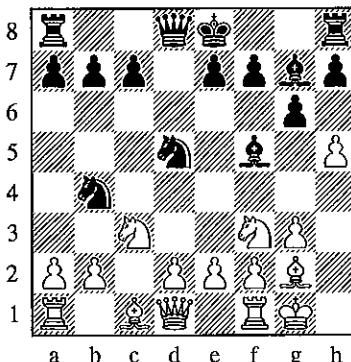
1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

7.h6 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ forces the exchange of the dark-squared bishop, but White is wasting a lot of time. (Safer would be 8.d4N $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 9. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5=$ with a repetition) 8... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ (9.d3 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 10.dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}b6!\mp$) 9...exf6 10.d3 $\mathbb{W}e7!\mp$ White's lack of development will tell, as Black has the simple plan of long castling following by ... $\mathbb{Q}he8$. 11.e4 In Teske – Bosiocic, Austria 2012, Black should have played:



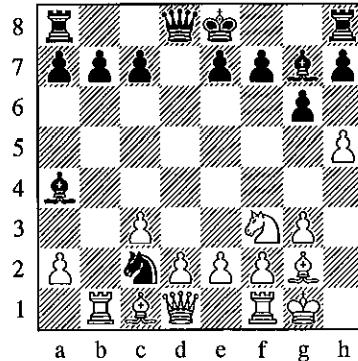
11...0-0-0!N 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}db4$ 13.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xd3\#$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}c5\#$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}xf5\#$

7.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f5?$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ (8.d4? is bad because of 8... $\mathbb{Q}db4!$ 9.e4 $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$) 8... $\mathbb{Q}cb4$ 9.0-0 In Gupta – Liu Xiangyi, Olongapo City 2015, Black could have equalized with:

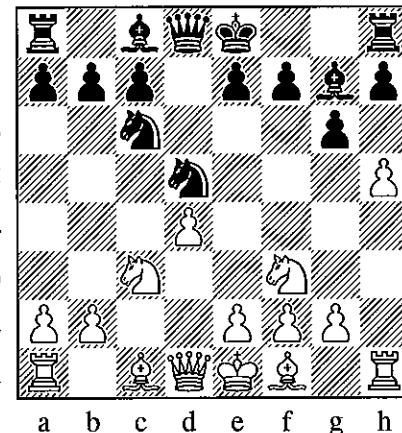


9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#$ 10.bxc3 (10.dxc3 $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}c2=$) 10... $\mathbb{Q}c2=$ 10... $\mathbb{Q}c2?$

(10... $\mathbb{Q}c2?$ is strongly met by 11.g4!+) 11. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d1$



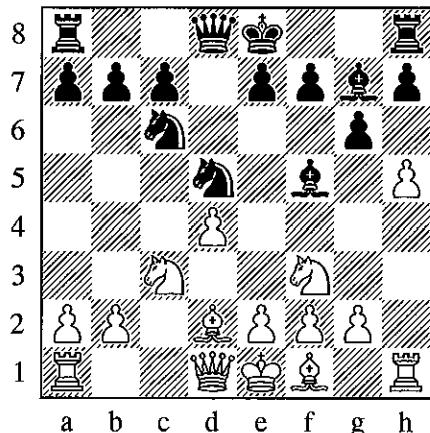
13... $\mathbb{W}d7!$ 14.h6 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15.e4 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 17.d4! $\mathbb{Q}h4!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 19.gxh4 b6= With roughly equal chances.

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

Developing another piece while preventing e2-e4.

8. $\mathbb{Q}d2?$

8. $\mathbb{W}b3$ was played in Vallejo Pons – Safarli, Khanty-Mansiysk 2013, and now 8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$!N would have given White nothing better than 9. $\mathbb{W}d1$ offering a repetition. Instead 9. $\mathbb{W}xb7?$! $\mathbb{Q}db4$ is too risky; 10. $\mathbb{W}b5$ (10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xc7$ $\mathbb{W}xc7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ wins material) 10... $\mathbb{Q}c2\#$ (10... $\mathbb{W}d7?$ is also worth considering) 11. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}2xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4\#$ →



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

8... $\mathbb{Q}xd4??$ is impossible because of 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$
 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 10. $\mathbb{W}a4\ddagger$.

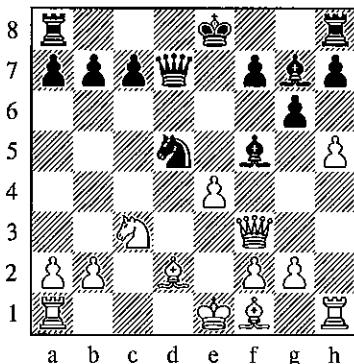
8...e5 was played in Aronian – Svidler, Nice 2010, but the text move is slightly more accurate.

9.e3

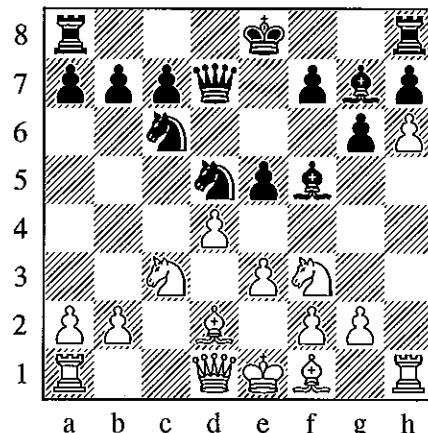
After 9.e4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 10.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ f6 (12... $\mathbb{Q}d8!?$ = is a solid alternative) 13.h6 $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ fxg5 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 0–0–0 White does not have enough compensation for the pawn.

9...e5 10.h6

The difference between 8... $\mathbb{W}d7$ and 8...e5 can be seen after: 10.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 11.e4 $\mathbb{Q}xf3\ddagger$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xf3$



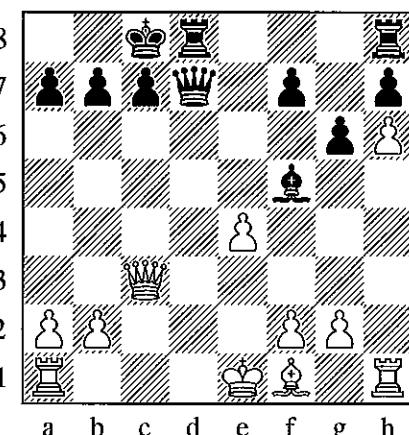
12... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ This move would be impossible with the queen on d8. 13. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3\ddagger$ 16.bxc3 0–0–0 With a slightly more pleasant position for Black.



10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 12.e4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\ddagger$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3\ddagger$

14...0–0–0 15.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xc3\ddagger$ should come to the same thing.

15. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 0–0–0



16.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}he8\ddagger$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 18.0–0

18. $\mathbb{W}c2?$ allows 18... $\mathbb{Q}xe2\ddagger$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8\mp$.

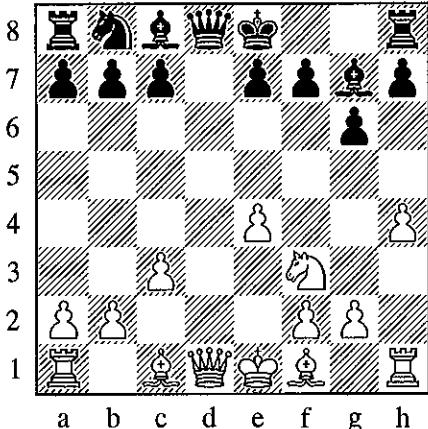
18... $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 19.fxg6 fxg6=

With roughly equal chances.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6**C2) 6.e4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 7.dxc3**

This is a fresh idea, which was introduced by Wang Yue in July 2015.

7.bxc3 transposes to the note on 7.h4 in variation F2.



7... $\mathbb{B}xd1\#$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$

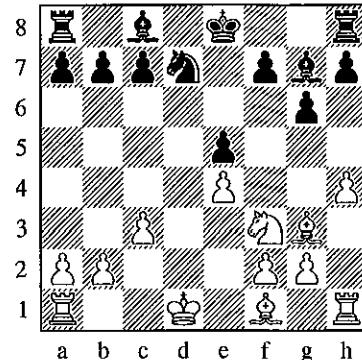
White's idea is to get a modified version of the well-known endgame of the 5.e4 line with Black's dark-squared bishop on g7. This way he discourages the thematic plan of ...f6 and ...e5, as recommended in variation F1.

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

The most flexible choice – the knight is heading for c5 to attack the e4-pawn.

9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

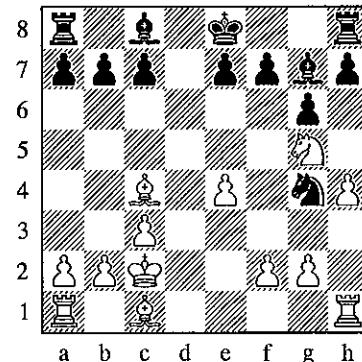
9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ e5 10. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ occurred in Moskow – Tigran, Internet 2015, and now Black's play can be improved by means of:



10... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ N 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (11. $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$! $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ is better for Black) 11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12.b4 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ b6=

9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

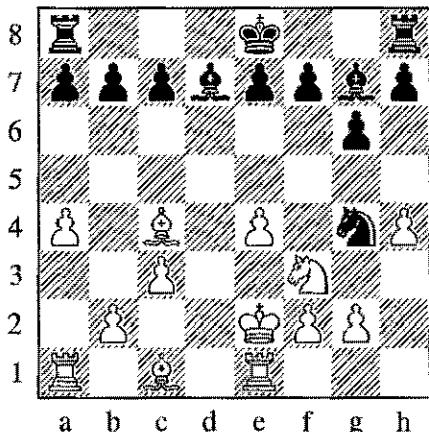
I also considered: 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c2!$ (11. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#?$ is dubious as after 11... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ White has to worry about the dual threats of ...h6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}xf2\#$; 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ is less accurate as after 11... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ a5 13.a4 b6! White's king becomes a target for the light-squared bishop)



11... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ a5 13.a4 e6 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15.h5 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ Black shouldn't have any problems equalizing.

10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12.a4

Here I found quite an important novelty.



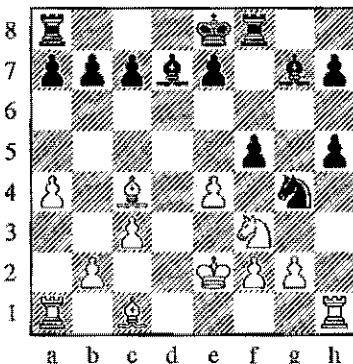
12... $\mathbb{E}f8!$ N

12...e6 13.h5 0-0-0 14. $\mathbb{E}h1\pm$ left Black under some pressure in Ni Hua – Wei Yi, Danzhou 2015.

The text move is a useful improvement. Black still protects the f7-pawn and prepares long castling, but the rook also supports a future advance of the f-pawn.

13. $\mathbb{E}d1$

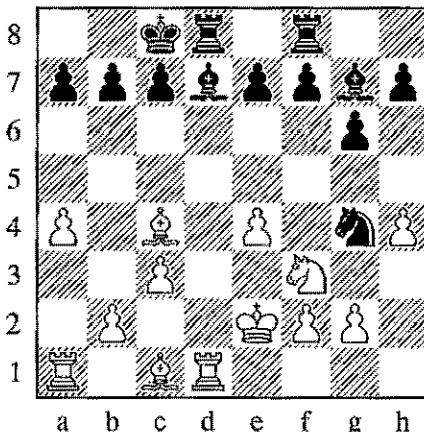
13.h5 gxh5 14. $\mathbb{E}h1$ enables the black rook to prove its worth: 14...f5!



15.e5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 17. $\mathbb{E}xh5$ 0-0-0=

13...0-0-0

Black is not worse, for instance:

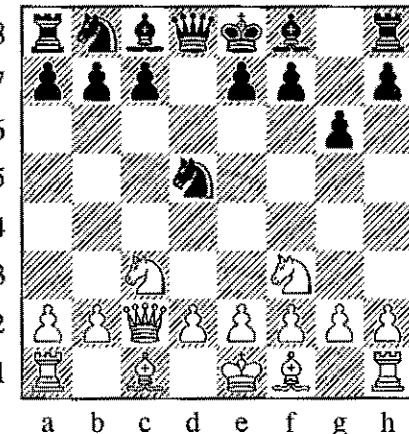


14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

This seems like the only serious attempt to cause problems.

14... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ h6=

D) 5. $\mathbb{Q}c2$



The first high-level test of this line was as late as 2011, when Topalov played it against Kamsky in their Candidates match. The game continued 5... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 6.e4, but I would prefer to take the game in a different direction.

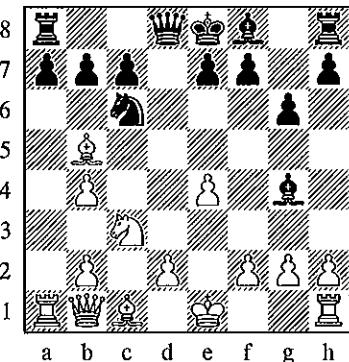
5... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$

Black is fighting for the centre, in particular for the d4-square. We will analyse D1) 6. $\mathbb{Q}b3?$ followed by the usual D2) 6.d4.

1.♕f3 ♕f6 and 2...g6

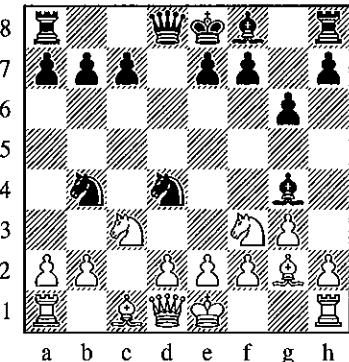
6.e3 has been tested just once. 6...♕db4?!N (6...♗g7 7.a3 0–0= was also fine for Black in H. Olafsson – Wei Yi, Reykjavik 2013) 7.♗b1 ♕f5 8.e4 ♗g4 We have transposed to the 6.e4 line below.

6.e4 ♕db4 7.♗b1 ♗g4 8.a3 ♕xf3 9.axb4 (9.gxf3 ♕a6 10.♗b5 ♗g7† and Black was better in Cabrera – Asis Gargatagli, Sitges 2011, due to the numerous weaknesses in White's position) 9...♗g4 10.♗b5 This position was reached in Hoang Canh – Nguyen, Ho Chi Minh City 2013. I would like to recommend:

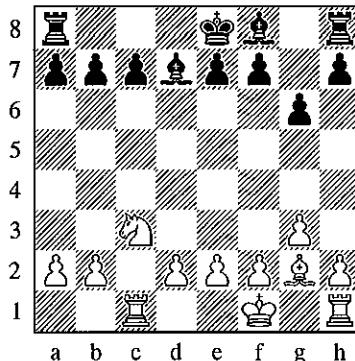


10...♗g7!N 11.d3 0–0 12.♗xc6 bxc6 13.♗e3 ♗b8 14.♗c5 a5! 15.bxa5 (15.♗a4 axb4 16.♗xb4 ♗d8=) 15...♗xa5!= With roughly equal chances.

6.g3 ♕db4 7.♗d1 ♗g4! 8.♗g2 ♕d4 White already has to be careful:

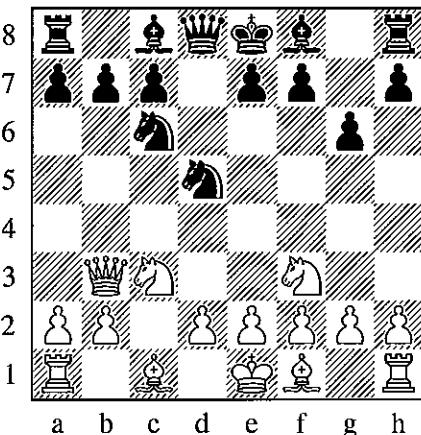


9.♗xd4?! (9.♗e5?!N is better: 9...♗f5 10.0–0 ♕c2 11.♗c1 ♗g7 12.♗f3 ♕xf3† 13.♗xf3 ♕f5 14.♗d1 ♕c2=) 9...♗d3†! 10.♗f1 ♗xd4 11.♗a4† ♗xa4 12.♗xa4 ♕d7! 13.♗c3 ♕xc1 14.♗xc1



This was Isajevsky – Gabrielian, Kazan 2013, and now 14...0–0–0–0!N would have promised a slight edge for Black, thanks to the bishop pair.

D1) 6.♗b3!?

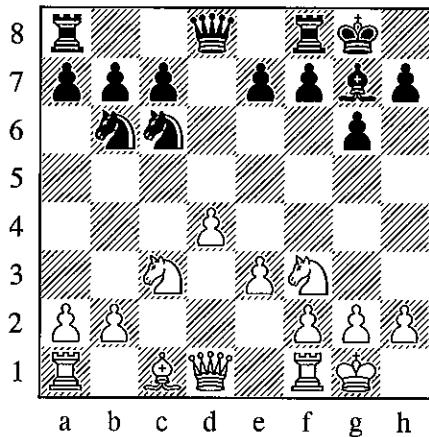


This may look like a waste of a tempo, but White provoked the b8-knight to c6 and so the typical play with ...c5 is now impossible.

6...♗b6 7.d4 ♕e6 8.♗d1 ♗g7 9.e3 0–0 10.♗e2 ♕c4 11.♗xc4 ♕xc4 12.0–0–0–0! ♗b6!

The knight had nothing to do on c4, so we should retreat it to b6 where it controls the d5-square.

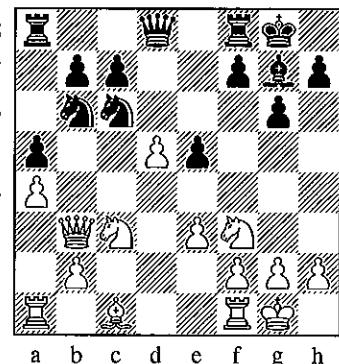
12... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13.b3 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ occurred in Vallejo Pons – Wei Yi, Leon 2014, when White could have set problems by means of 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4! \pm N$.



13. $\mathbb{W}c2! ?N$

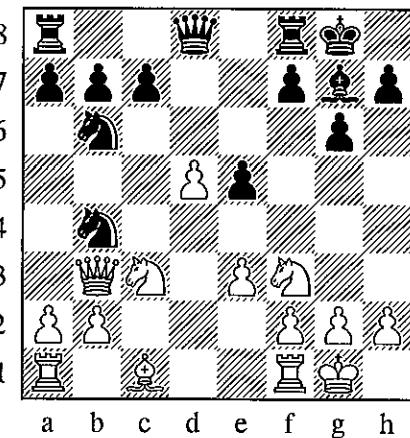
13... $\mathbb{B}b1$ e5 14.d5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15.e4 c6 16.dxc6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ is equal.

From White's point of view, the text move is an improvement over the following game: 13.a4 a5 14. $\mathbb{W}b3$ (14.b3! ?N e5! 15. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 16.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ c6 is equal) 14...e5 15.d5



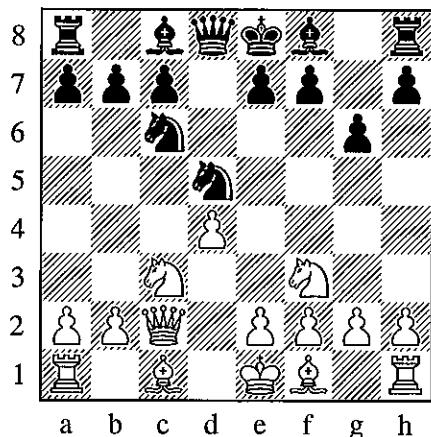
15...e4! 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4 \mp$ The inclusion of the pawn moves to a4 and a5 favoured Black in Yewdokimov – Peric, Kecskemet 1990.

13...e5 14.d5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}b3$



15...e4! 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}4xd5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e7=$
Black has no problems.

D2) 6.d4



6... $\mathbb{Q}db4!$

A very concrete continuation based on the tactical features of the position.

7. $\mathbb{W}a4$

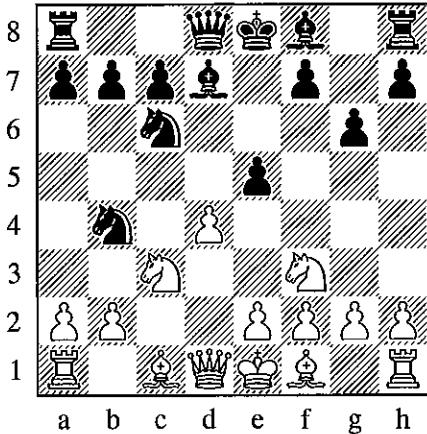
7. $\mathbb{W}b3$ doesn't make much sense, as after 7... $\mathbb{E}e6$ White has nothing better than 8. $\mathbb{W}a4$.

7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Black is threatening to capture the d4-pawn and so White's reply is more or less forced.

8. $\mathbb{W}d1$ e5

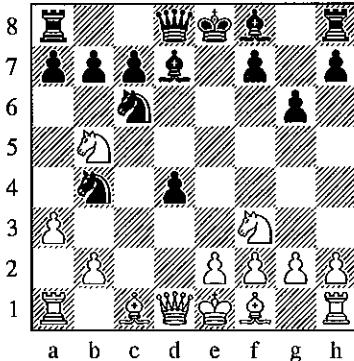
This move is possible thanks to Black's development advantage; he wants to exploit the weakness of the c2-square.

**9. dxe5****9.a3?!**

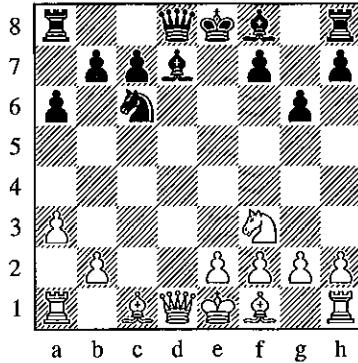
This dubious continuation leads to Black's advantage.

9...exd4 10. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

After 10.axb4 dxc3 11.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0–0– \bar{F} Black enjoyed a useful lead in development in Alekseev – Kurnosov, Taganrog 2011.

**10...a6! 11. $\mathbb{Q}bx d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$** **13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$**

Now the only question is how to set the most problems for White. In my opinion, the most accurate way is:

**13... $\mathbb{Q}f6!N$**

13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ gave Black slightly better chances in Dorfman – Vachier-Lagrange, Caen 2011, but the text move is more convincing. Black's idea is to inhibit the development of the dark-squared bishop.

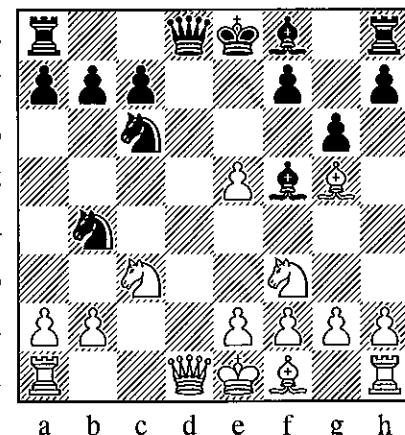
14. g3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0–0–0 16.0–0 $\mathbb{R}he8\bar{F}$

White is under serious pressure.

9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

The only move.

10.e4? is bad in view of 10... $\mathbb{W}xd1\uparrow$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 0–0–0 \uparrow 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4\bar{F}$.

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

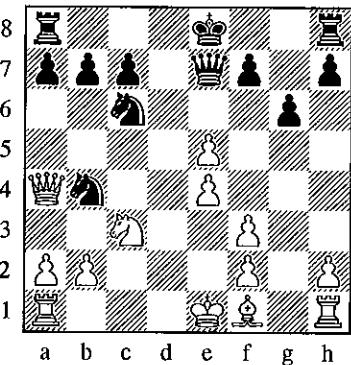
10... $\mathbb{Q}c2\uparrow$ has resulted in a couple of draws, but I am not convinced that it equalizes. The text move is the main line for good reason.

11.e4

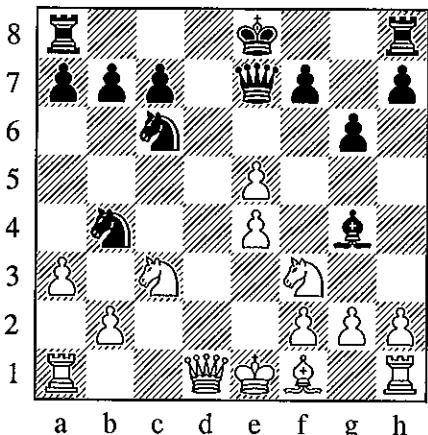
11.♕xe7 ♕xe7 12.e4 ♕g4 is a transposition.

11...♕g4 12.♕xe7 ♕xe7 13.a3!

13.♕a4? is poor. 13...♕xf3 14.gxf3 occurred in Arnaudov – Bosiocic, Zagreb 2012, and now Black has an obvious improvement:



14...0–0–0!N Black already has a decisive initiative. For example, 15.♕e2 ♕d4! 16.0–0 ♔d5 17.♕b3 ♔f4 18.♔h1 ♕h4+ and White's position collapses.



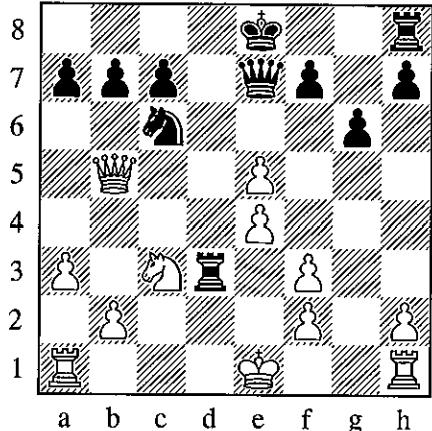
13...♕xf3

13...♕d8 could transpose after 14.♕a4 ♕xf3 15.gxf3, but the text move is more forcing.

14.gxf3 ♕d8 15.♕a4 ♔d3† 16.♕xd3 ♕xd3

17.♕b5!

A double attack on d3 and b7.



17...♗d4!

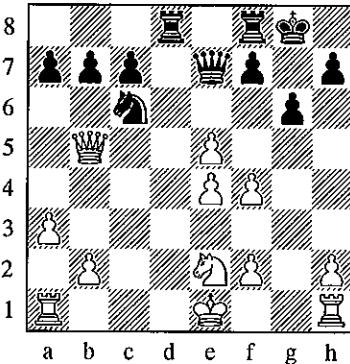
17...♕xf3?! is also playable, despite my eventual defeat in Lenderman – V. Mikhalevski, Wheeling 2013.

The text move has occurred in fewer games but it is slightly more accurate. Black's idea is to capture on e5 with the knight after castling.

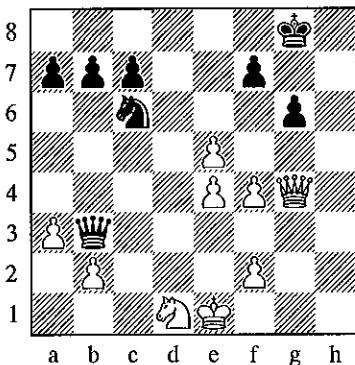
18.♔d5

18.♕xb7?! is dubious in view of 18...♕xe5 19.♔d1 0–0–0.

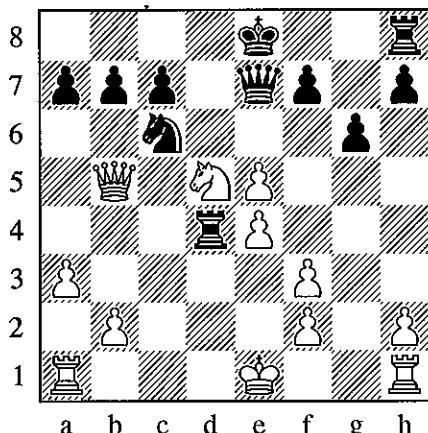
18.♔e2?!N ♕d8 19.f4 (19.♔d1 ♕xd1† 20.♔xd1 0–0! 21.f4 ♕d8† 22.♔c1 ♕d7† leaves Black with more than sufficient compensation) 19...0–0



The following game featured pretty accurate play on both sides: 18.f4 0–0 19.h4 $\mathbb{W}e6$ The queen threatens to go to g4. 20. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 21.h5 $\mathbb{W}b3$ 22.hxg6 hxg6 23. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 24. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1\#$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$



27... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ 28. $\mathbb{W}d7$ $\mathbb{W}d3$ 29. $\mathbb{W}d8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$
30. $\mathbb{W}f6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 31. $\mathbb{W}d8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ Zhao Jun – Gao Rui, Ho Chi Minh City 2012.

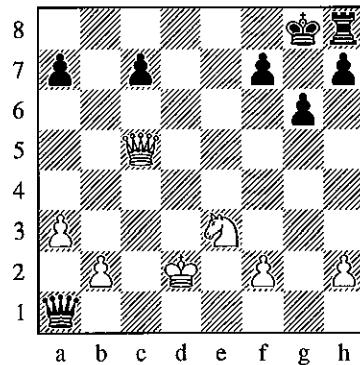


18... $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xb7$

I also considered 19.0–0N 0–0 20. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5\#$ 21.exd5 $\mathbb{W}g5\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}g5\#$ = with a draw.

19... $\mathbb{Q}xe4\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

20.fxe4 $\mathbb{W}xe4\#$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xh1\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xa1$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xc6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 24. $\mathbb{W}c5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ and now it is White who must force a perpetual:



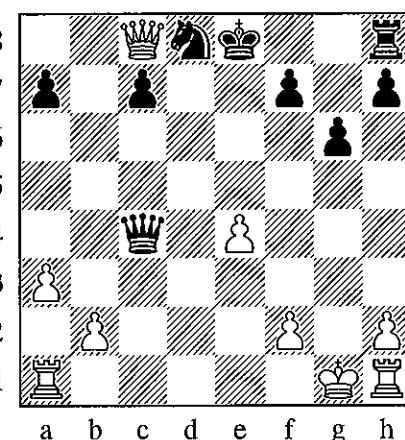
25. $\mathbb{W}e5!$ $\mathbb{W}b1$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ h5 27. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$
28. $\mathbb{Q}d7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8=$

20... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}c8\#$

Another game continued: 21.fxe4 $\mathbb{W}d3\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 23. $\mathbb{W}a8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xh8$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 25.h3 $\mathbb{Q}f3\#$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ And in view of the perpetual check, a draw was agreed in Csonka – Bagi, Hungary 2012.

21... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 22.fxe4 $\mathbb{W}c4\#$! 23. $\mathbb{Q}g1$

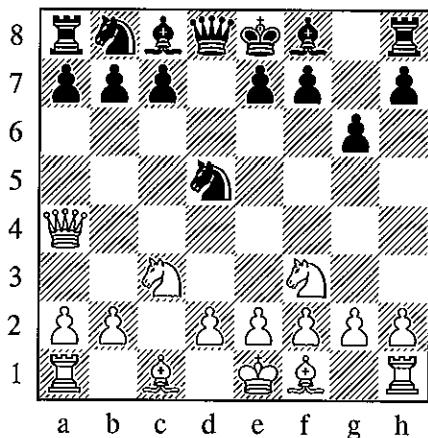
Another draw was agreed here in Pascual Perez – Starke, Internet 2012. This time it was not completely forced, but Black is still fine after:



23...0–0 24. $\mathbb{R}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 25. $\mathbb{W}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}f4\#$

With full compensation for the exchange.

E) 5.♕a4†



This has been historically the most popular move of all, but modern theory does not regard it as particularly challenging.

5...♝c6

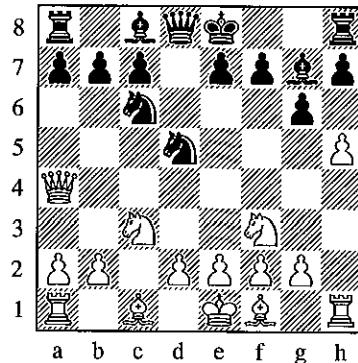
If Black is satisfied with equality, the text move is the easiest way to reach it. Otherwise you can investigate 5...♝d7, which leads to more of an unclear game.

White's two main options are E1) 6.♗xd5 and E2) 6.♗e5.

6.g3 is an extremely rare option, although after 6...♝g7 7.♗g2 0–0 8.0–0 it transposes to variation B1.

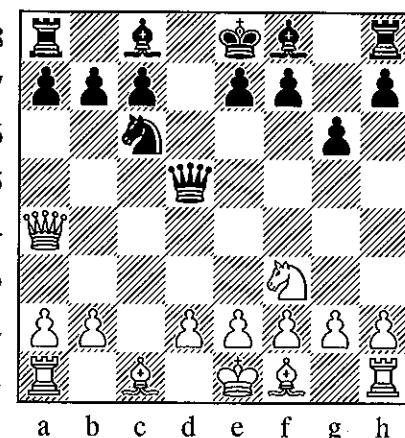
6.e3 is even more uncommon. 6...♝b6 (6...♝g7?! deserves attention as 7.♗b5 can be ignored by means of 7...0–0!=) 7.♗h4 ♘g7 8.♗b5 ♘d7 9.d4 e5 10.♗xd8† ♘xd8† Black was already more comfortable in Wang Yue – Morozevich, Nice 2009.

6.h4 ♘g7 7.h5 occurred in Moradiabadi – Troff, Los Angeles 2012. I would like to improve upon the young American's play with:



7...♗d6!N 8.e3 ♘b6 9.♗h4 (9.♗d1 ♘f5!?)
9...♝f5 With some edge for Black.

E1) 6.♗xd5 ♘xd5



This continuation is pretty rare and insufficiently studied, but it contains some interesting points.

7.e4

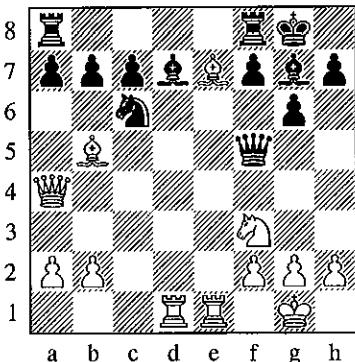
Now I would like to recommend the precise retreat:

7...♗e6!

7...♗d6 has been played in the great majority of games, and after 8.♗b5 ♘g7 9.d4 0–0 the position is roughly equal. I believe the text move is more accurate; the main idea is to prevent d2-d4.

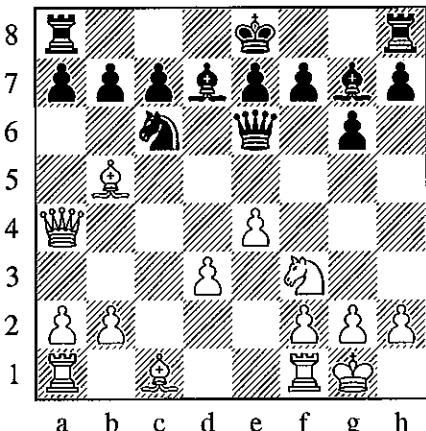
8. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 9.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 10.d3

10.d4 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 0-0 13.d5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ occurred in Eriksson – Jarvenpaa, Helsinki 2008, when Black should have continued:



15... $\mathbb{Q}fe8!N$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{W}g4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8\#$ Black has full material compensation for the queen and his pieces are better coordinated.

The present position was reached in Rohde – Comp Battle Chess 4000, Boston 1993. I would like to recommend the simple:



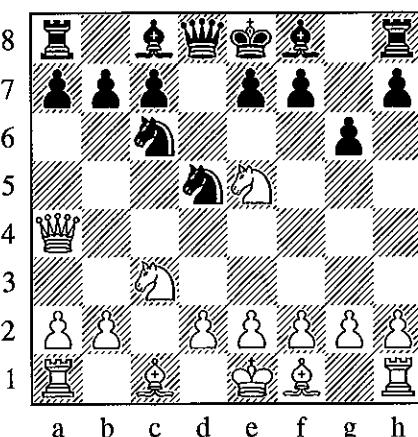
10...0-0 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ a6 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

12. $\mathbb{Q}c4?$ loses material to 12... $\mathbb{W}g4$, hitting the f4-bishop while threatening ...b5.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8!$

Black is slightly better, as the c7-pawn is inedible.

E2) 6. $\mathbb{Q}e5$



This is the only serious way to challenge Black's last move. However, it turns out that Black can live with the soon-to-be-doubled pawns thanks to his lead in development.

6... $\mathbb{W}d6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

7.d4? is bad because of 7... $\mathbb{Q}b6\#$.

7... $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 8. $\mathbb{W}xc6\#$

8. $\mathbb{W}d4$

This double attack is harmless due to:

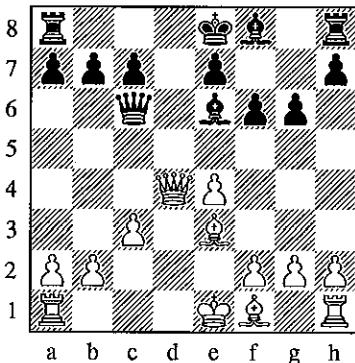
8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$ 9. $dxc3$

9. $\mathbb{W}xh8?$ fails to 9... $\mathbb{Q}xa2-$ with the idea of meeting 10. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ with 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and Black wins, Kutyneč – Bures, Pardubice 2013.

9. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 10. $bxc3$ occurred in Shimanov – Salem, Athens 2012. My choice would be 10... $\mathbb{Q}g7N$ 11. $g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0-0= followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ and Black is fine.

9. $bxc3$ $f6$ 10. $e3$ was seen in Bogosavljević – Ristić, Vrbas 2015. I would prefer the most natural 10... $e5!N$ 11. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xc6\#$ $bxc6$ when Black has easy play, while his doubled pawns on the c-file are insignificant as they cannot be attacked.

9... $f6$ 10. $e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



11...Bd8?N

11...Bg7?! was also equal in Efimov – Cani, Imperia 2011.

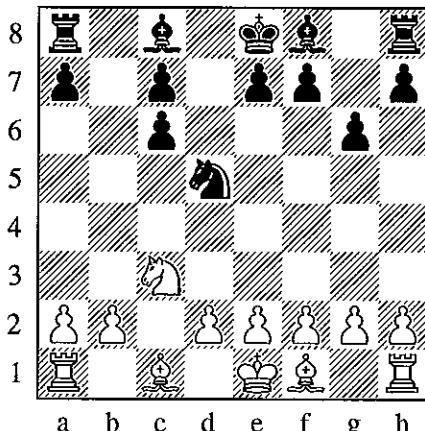
12.Bxa7 Bxe4 13.f3 Bh4† 14.Bf2 Bg5

15.Be3 Bh4†=

With a draw by repetition.

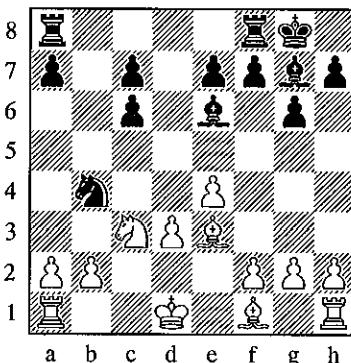
8...bxc6

Black's speedy development is enough to offset the doubled pawns. Nevertheless, a lot of strong players have attempted to prove something for White, so it is worth paying attention to some of the details that follow.



9.g3

9.e4?! is dubious as it weakens the d4-square.
9...Qb4 10.Qd1 Qe6 11.d3 Qg7 12.Qe3 0–0!
(12...a5 was less accurate in Panchanathan – Bacallao Alonso, Badalona 2011)



13.Qc5 (13.a3 Qb3† 14.Qd2 Qc2†) 13...Bfb8!

14.d4 (14.Qxe7? Qxa2!+) 14...Qxd4 15.Qxd4 Bd8† Mrva – Kriebel, Tatranske Zruby 2011.

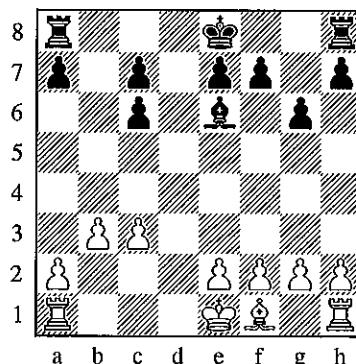
9.b3

This is a more sensible alternative, but Black has more than one decent reply.

9...Bg7

9...Qxc3?! is also good enough to equalize.

10.Qb2 Qxc3 11.Qxc3 Qxc3 12.dxc3 Qe6



13.e4

13.0–0–0 a5 14.g3 a4 15.Qg2 Ba6 16.c4 0–0 17.Qb2 Bb8 18.Qc3 axb3 19.axb3 Ni Hua – Laylo, Guangzhou 2010. Black has more than one way to equalize, but my preference would be: 19...Ba3?!N 20.Qb1 c5 21.Qhd1 Qg7=

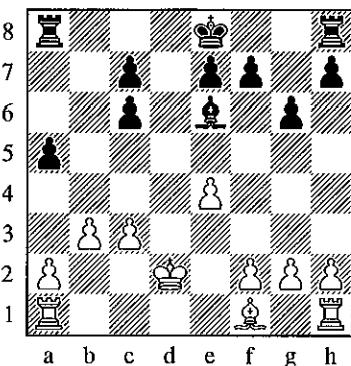
13...a5!

After 13...0–0–0?! 14.Qa6† Qb8 15.Qe2 Qd6 16.Qe3 c5 17.Qe2 Black found himself

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

under some pressure in Turov – E. Hansen, Oslo 2013.

14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$



14...0–0!N

14...0–0–0†?! 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ was slightly better for White in Ni Hua – Rodshtain, Biel 2011.

15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{B}fb8!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c5=

9... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11. b3

11. e3?! from Matviishen – Kanmazalp, Lvov 2014, can be strongly answered by 11... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ N 12. d4 $\mathbb{Q}d8!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ c5! with some initiative for Black.

11. $\mathbb{Q}e4$?! is also weak. 11... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 12. 0–0 In Alonso Rosell – Fluvia Poyatos, Barcelona 2015, 12... $\mathbb{B}b8!$ N would have put White under some pressure.

11. 0–0 0–0 12. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{B}ab8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ cxd5 14. b3 c5 was equal in Beltran Rueda – Jerez Perez, Barcelona 2015.

11. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 12. 0–0 0–0 13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{B}ab8$ Black was on the more comfortable side of equality in Franco Alonso – Sanchez Ibern, Leon 2012.

11. a3

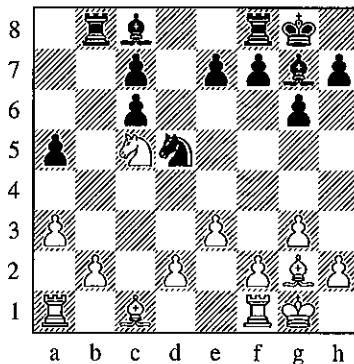
White is taking the b4-square under control in order to prevent ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$. A good reply is: 11... $\mathbb{B}b8!$ 12. e3 0–0 13. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}c8!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c5$

14. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$?! $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 17. $\mathbb{R}el$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}b1$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ c5† was better for Black in T.L. Petrosian – Gupta, Kavala 2012.

14...a5 15. 0–0

Vitiugov – Areshchenko, Olginka 2011.

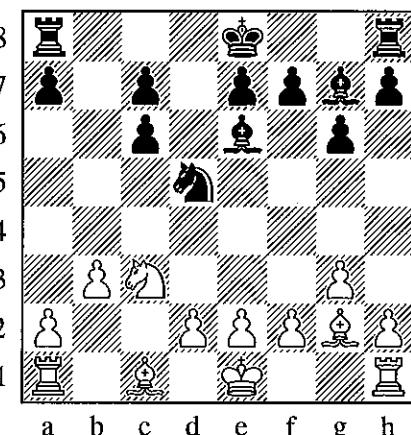
Now I would like to offer:



15...e5!N

Preventing d2-d4 and preparing ... $\mathbb{B}b5$. For example:

16. e4 $\mathbb{B}b5!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{B}b3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{B}b5$ =



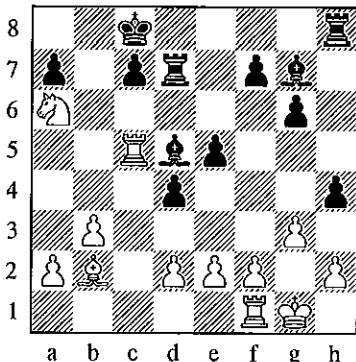
11...0–0–0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

White has also tried:

12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ cxd5 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ d4 14. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 15. 0–0–0 15. f3 e5 16. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ f5 17. $\mathbb{R}c1$ was L'Ami – Sutovsky, Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010, and now I prefer 17... $\mathbb{B}he8$!N 18. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ = with roughly equal chances.

15...e5 16.Qac1 h5 17.Qc5 h4 18.Qa6 Qd7
19.Qc5

This position occurred in Andreikin – Nepomniachtchi, Dagomys 2010. I think the most accurate continuation is:

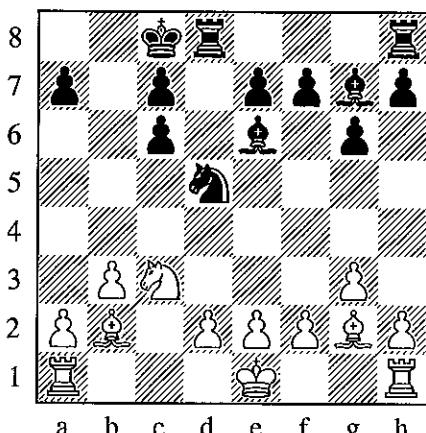


19...hxg3!?

The immediate 19...Qf8!?

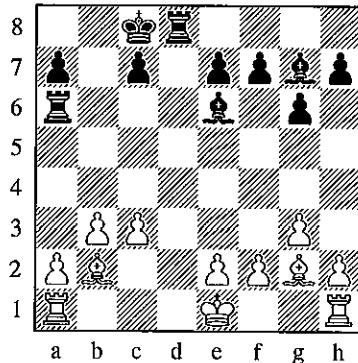
N is also about equal.
20.fxg3 Qf8 21.Qb5 Qb7 22.Qc5 Qd5 23.Qa3
23.Qxb7?!! Qxc5 24.Qb5 d3†??
23...a6 24.Qa5 Qxc5 25.Qxc5 Qxc5 26.Qxc5
f5=

With full equality.



12...Qxc3 13.Qxc3

13.Qxc6 is met by 13...Qd6 14.Qg2 Qa6
15.dxc3 Qd8 when White has no chance of
exploiting his extra pawn, for instance:



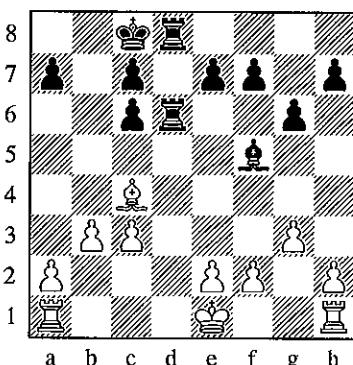
16.Qe4 Qad6 17.Qd3 Qf5 18.0–0–0 Qxd3
19.exd3 Qxd3=

13...Qxc3 14.dxc3 Qd6 15.Qd1

15.f4?! Qhd8 16.Qf2 c5 was more pleasant
for Black in Bruzon Batista – Nepomniachtchi,
Havana 2010.

15.h4 from Hera – Groszpeter, Hungary
2012, can be answered by the simple
15...h5!?, when the inclusion of the last two
moves doesn't really change anything.

Finally, 15.Qe4 Qhd8 16.Qd3 Qf5 17.Qc4 was
seen in Reinderman – Ni Hua, Wijk aan Zee
2010. The simplest continuation would be:



17...Qe6! N 18.Qxe6† Qxe6 19.Qd1 Qed6=

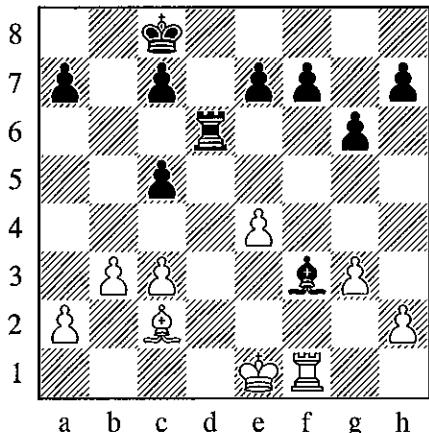
With equal chances.

15...Qhd8 16.Qxd6 Qxd6 17.Qe4 c5 18.Qc2
Qf5 19.e4

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

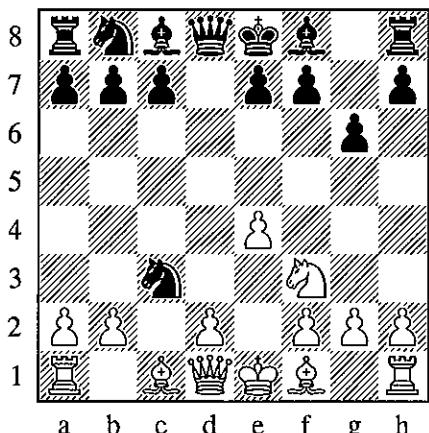
Trading bishops would leave White's queenside pawns vulnerable.

19... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 20.f3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f1$



21... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$! 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4\uparrow$
24. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ h5 25. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6=$

White has enough activity to make up for the missing pawn, but a few mistakes enabled Black to get a winning position in Markos – Li Chao, Shenzhen 2011.

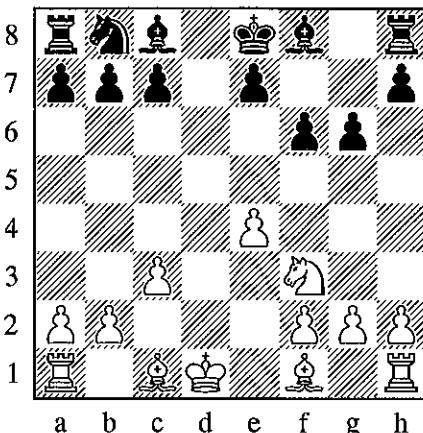
F) 5.e4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 

In the past this line was considered rather toothless, and generally led to an equal endgame after F1) 6.dxc3. Recently White has

been paying more attention to F2) 6.bxc3!!, which is more challenging.

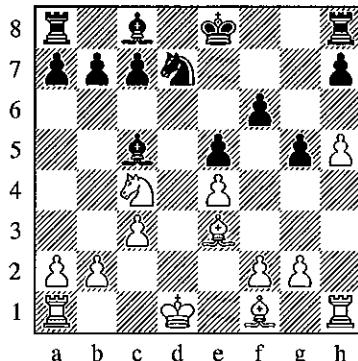
F1) 6.dxc3 $\mathbb{Q}xd1\uparrow$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ f6

Usually White plays like this if he does not mind a draw. Indeed the endgame is equal.

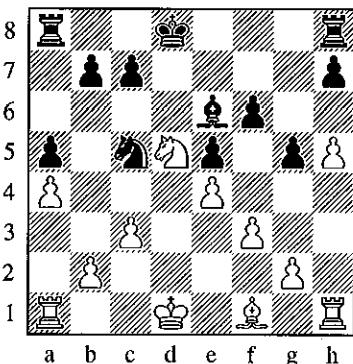
8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

Both 8. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ e5 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ and 8. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ e5 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ are covered in the notes to White's next move in the main line.

8.h4 is an attempt to provoke a kingside weakness. 8...e5!!? 9.h5 g5! Black actually has no need to fear the weakening of the f5-square. 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ L'Ami – Gao Rui, Doha 2014. Now I would like to offer:



12...a5!N 13.a4 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$
 (15.f3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ g4! 18. $\mathbb{Q}c2$
 $\mathbb{Q}g8$ is also equal) 15... $\mathbb{Q}d8!$ 16.f3 $\mathbb{Q}e6!$



17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ (After 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf6?$ c6! \bar{f} White experiences problems with the knight.)
 17... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ c6 19. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ h6=

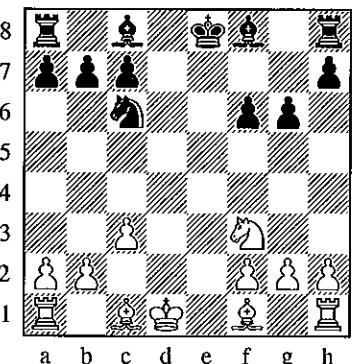
8.e5

This move prevents ...e5 but enables the black pieces to take up active positions.

8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9.exf6

9. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 0–0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6
 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5\bar{f}$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ Breier – Ipatov, Palma de Mallorca 2009. Now Black's play can be improved by means of: 13... $\mathbb{Q}e6\bar{f}N$ 14.c4 (or 14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ g5 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ with better chances for Black) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d3\bar{f}$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ a5 \bar{f} 16. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}hc1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5\bar{f}$ Black has the upper hand thanks to the strong bishop on d5 and the unfortunate position of White's king.

9...exf6

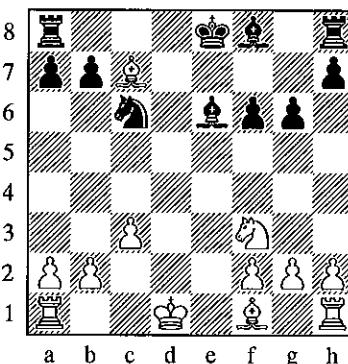


10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

After 10. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ the most accurate is 10... $\mathbb{Q}f5\bar{f}N$ (although 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6\bar{f}$ was also fine for Black in Vaganian – Donchev, Haifa 1989) 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1\bar{f}$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8\bar{f}$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ with a likely draw.

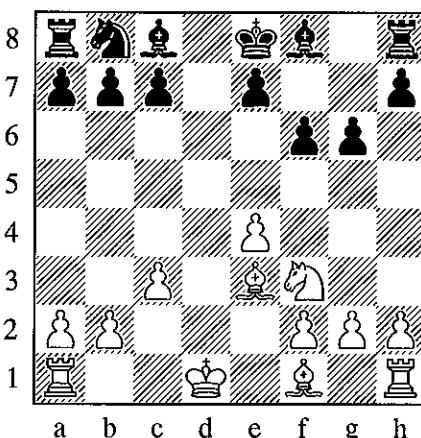
10... $\mathbb{Q}e6\bar{f}$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$

Steingrimsson – Sanchez Almeyra, Biel 1992. Now I would like to improve upon Black's play with:



11... $\mathbb{Q}f7\bar{f}N$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 15. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}he8\bar{w}$

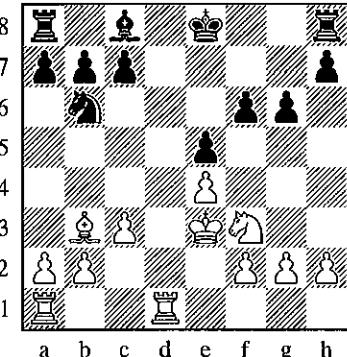
With good compensation for the pawn, thanks to the powerful bishop pair and the uncomfortable position of the white king.



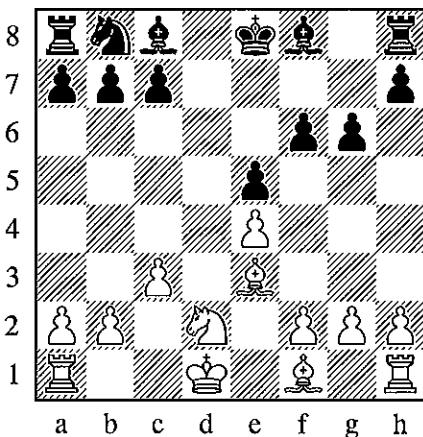
8...e5 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

9. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ transposes to the main line.

I also considered: 9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}hd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ (13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ = Najdorf – Mecking, Wijk aan Zee 1978)



13...a5 14.a4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ and Black was fine in Neelotpal – Ganguly, Kolkata 2013.



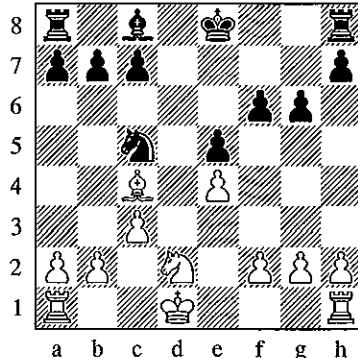
9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Black's idea is obvious: he wants to trade the dark-squared bishops.

10. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

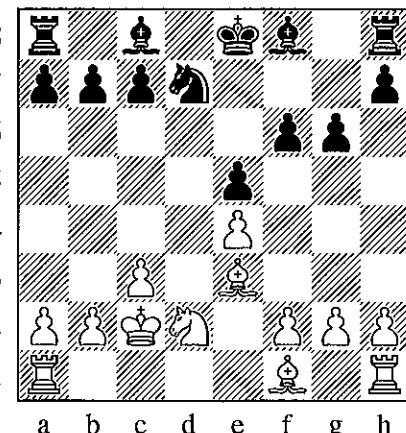
White will surely play this move at some point. Here are a few examples where he delayed it:

10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ (11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $g3$ $a5$ 13. $f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 15. $fxe5$ $fxe5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}hf1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ = was equal in Kotsur – Vachier-Lagrange, Al Ain 2012) 11... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$



12. $b4$ (12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $a5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}hd1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ was slightly more pleasant for Black thanks to a nominally better bishop in Pohl Kuemmel – Schruefer, Germany 1981) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ We have transposed to 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ in the notes to the main line below.

10. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ is a logical alternative, with which White prevents the exchange of the dark-squared bishops. 10...a5 11. $a4$ $b6$ 12. $f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}hd1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}hd8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $h5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ = and soon a draw was agreed in Sokolovs – Navara, Morso 2002.

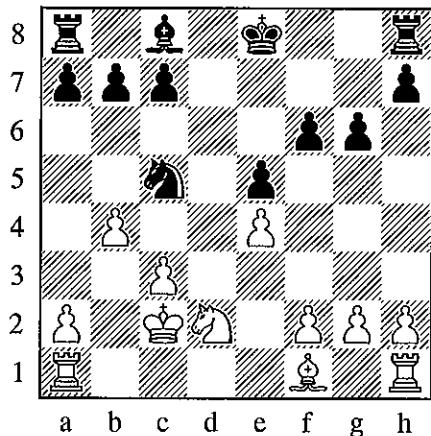


10... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ has also been tried; I propose 11...a5!N 12. $a4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ with equality.

11...Qxc5 12.b4

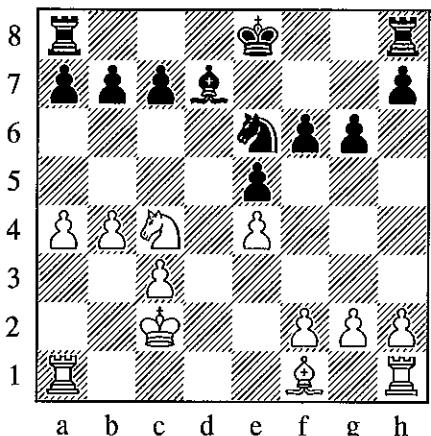
Another well-played game continued 12.f3 a5 13.Qc4 Qe7 14.Qb3 Qe6 15.Qhd1 b6 16.Qd2 Qd7 17.Qad1 Qad8 18.Qc1 Qa4† 19.b3 Qxd2† 20.Qxd2 Qc6 with equal chances in Vakhidov – Safarli, Dubai 2014.

**12...Qe6 13.Qc4**

After 13.Qc4 (or 13.Qb3 Qe7 14.Qc4) 13...Qe7 14.Qb3, I would like to recommend 14...b6?!N 15.a4 Qb7 16.f3 f5 and Black is not worse.

13...Qd7 14.a4

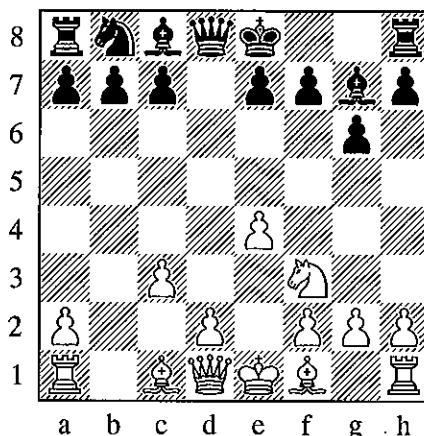
This position occurred in the game Alterman – Rodshtain, Israel 2009. I like the computer's suggestion:

**14...a5!N 15.Qxa5**

15.bxa5?! Qc5† is better for Black.

15...b6 16.Qb3 Qxa4 17.Qc4 Qe7=

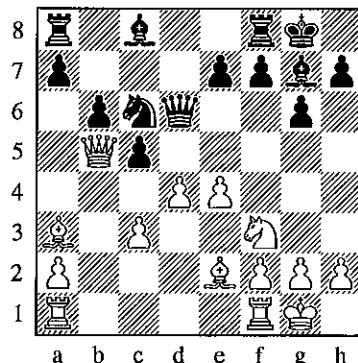
With a comfortable position for Black.

F2) 6.bxc3? Qg7

Several moves have been tested here, but I will mainly focus on F21) 7.Qc4 and F22) 7.Qe2.

7.d4 is a normal Grünfeld of course.

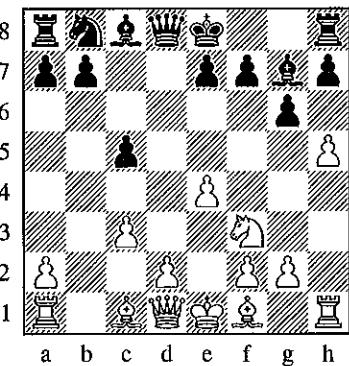
7.Qb3 is extremely rare and doesn't promise much. 7...0–0 8.Qe2 c5 9.0–0!N (9.a4 Qc6 10.0–0 Qc7 was fine for Black in Wild – Lais, Postbauer 2006) 9...Qc6 10.Qb5 Qd6 11.Qa3 b6 12.d4



1. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

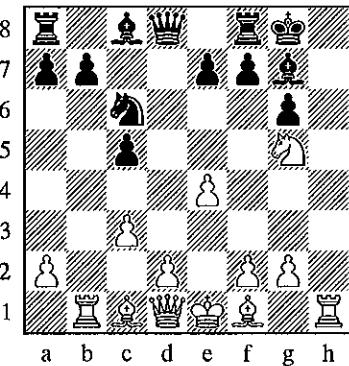
12... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 13.dxc5 $\mathbb{W}f4\infty$ Black has fine compensation for a pawn.

7.h4 This early aggression doesn't reach the goal. 7...c5 8.h5 Totic – Atalik, Herceg Novi 1999. Black should have reacted with the cold-blooded:



8...0–0–0!N 9.hxg6 hxg6 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}d6!$ 11. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ b6 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8!=$ Black is transferring the knight to e6 and has no problems.

7. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ is another rare move. 7...0–0 8.h4 (8.d4 c5 is a normal Grünfeld) 8...c5 9.h5 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10.hxg6 hxg6 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5?!$ Now Black's play in Va. Popov – Turov, St Petersburg 1994, can be improved by means of:



11... $\mathbb{W}d6!N$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$ b6 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8\mp$ White's knight on g5 isn't doing much, while Black has taken control over the centre.

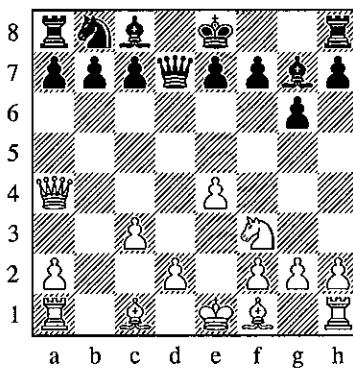
7. $\mathbb{W}a4\ddagger?!$

This extremely rare move was played by Bent Larsen.

7... $\mathbb{W}d7!N$

I've decided to introduce this novelty.

7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0–0 9.0–0 c5 10. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}c7=$ was fine for Black in Larsen – D. Byrne, San Antonio 1972, but White's play can be improved.

8. $\mathbb{W}b3$

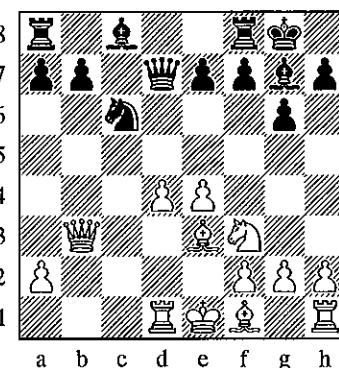
a) 8. $\mathbb{W}c2$ is hardly challenging because of 8...c5.

b) 8. $\mathbb{W}xd7\ddagger$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 9.d4 transposes to a harmless variation of the Grünfeld.

c) 8. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ c6 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0–0 10. $\mathbb{W}a3$ b6 11.d4 c5 is another Grünfeld transposition.

d) 8. $\mathbb{W}a3$ 0–0 9.d4 b6 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ c5 11.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ a6 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ cxd4 14.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ b5= with equal chances.

8...0–0 9.d4 c5 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ cxd4 11.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$



12... $\mathbb{W}d6$! 13. $\mathbb{B}e2$

Or 13.h3 $\mathbb{W}b4\#$ with an equal endgame.

13... $\mathbb{B}g4$ 14.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 15.e5 $\mathbb{B}d5!$ 16.exd6 $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 17.dxe7 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 18.axb3 $\mathbb{Q}d5=$

White has the two bishops while Black has the better structure and a solid outpost for his knight, so the position is equal.

7. $\mathbb{B}a3$

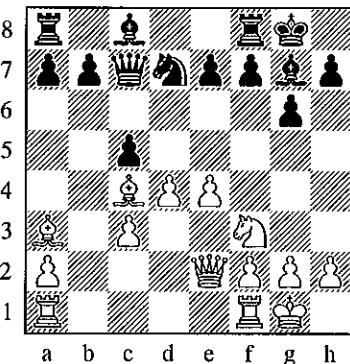
White is trying to prevent ...c5.

7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 8. $\mathbb{B}c4$

8. $\mathbb{B}e2$ c5 9.0–0 0–0 10.d4 b6!? reaches a rare but good-for-Black version of the Grünfeld, as White's dark-squared bishop isn't great on a3.

8...c5 9.0–0 0–0 10.d4 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$

This position was reached in Lenic – Sutovsky, Moscow 2011. Here I suggest:



11... $\mathbb{W}a5\#$ 12. $\mathbb{W}b2$

Or 12. $\mathbb{B}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 13. $\mathbb{B}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ with better chances for Black.

12... $\mathbb{B}5!$ 13. $\mathbb{B}e2$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 14. $\mathbb{B}ab1$ a6

Black has a pleasant position.

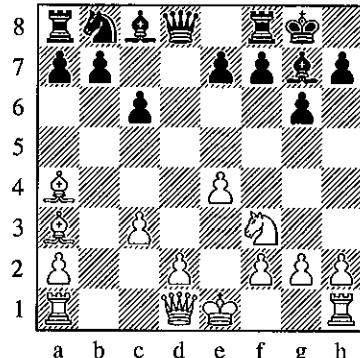
7. $\mathbb{B}b5\#$ c6 8. $\mathbb{B}a4$

8. $\mathbb{B}e2$ c5 transposes to variation F22.

8...0–0 9. $\mathbb{B}a3?$

9.d4 transposes into the Exchange variation of the Grünfeld with an early $\mathbb{B}b5\#$.

9.0–0N would be better than the text move, although 9... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 10. $\mathbb{B}b3$ c5 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6=$ is absolutely fine for Black.



9... $\mathbb{W}a5\#$

A clever move. Black creates a threat of ...b5 and thus lures White's dark-squared bishop to b4 in order to hit it with the c-pawn.

9...b5 was less precise, but still perfectly playable for Black in Corral Blanco – Perez Garcia, Linares 2015.

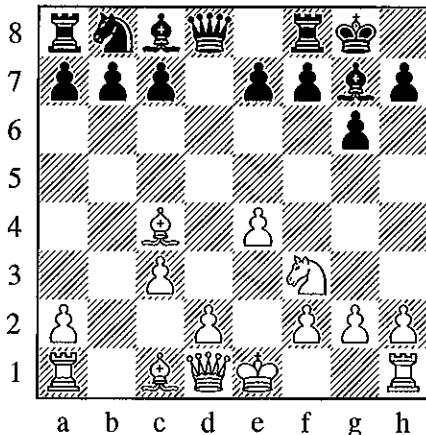
10. $\mathbb{B}b4$ $\mathbb{W}c7\#$

White is unable to prevent 11...c5. For example:

11.d4? c5! 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ b6 13. $\mathbb{B}b4$ a5=+

Black wins a piece.

F21) 7. $\mathbb{B}c4$ 0–0



8.0–0

8. $\mathbb{B}a3$ can be answered by 8...c5! with the idea: 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc5?$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 10.d4 $\mathbb{Q}d7\#$

8...c5 9. $\mathbb{B}b1$

9.e5 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10.d4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ is another good version of the Grünfeld for Black, as White has mixed up two systems. Usually the knight belongs on e2 when the bishop has gone to c4.

9.h3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c4 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$ occurred in Capece – Malcanek, Reggio Emilia 1966, and now 12... $\mathbb{W}c7!?$ N would have yielded some edge for Black.

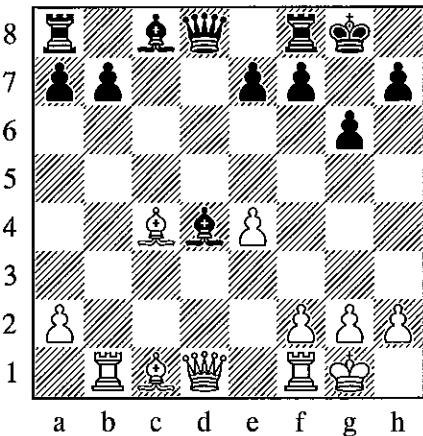
9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

It seems to me that White's only critical idea is the following pawn sacrifice:

10.d4!? $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

Black has a pleasant choice, as 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ is fine as well.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$



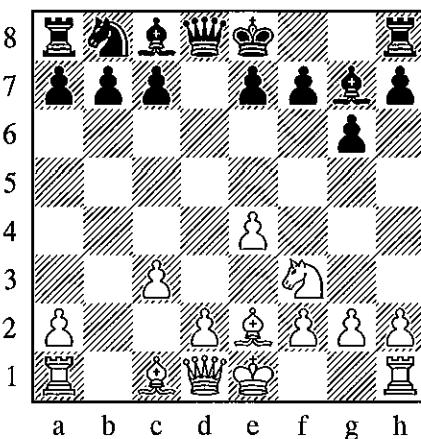
13. $\mathbb{W}a4!$ N

13. $\mathbb{Q}a3!?$ occurred in Vigo Allepuz – Lorenzo de la Riva, Cerdanya del Valles 2013, and now 13... $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ N 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{fxe6\#}$ is slightly better for Black.

The text move yields sufficient compensation, but certainly no advantage for White. For example:

13... $\mathbb{W}d6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$
16. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8=$

F22) 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$



This continuation started to become popular as recently as 2014, although it had been known since 1969.

7...c5!

The most precise. Instead 7...0–0 would enable White to transpose to a favourable version of the Grünfeld after 8.d4 c5 9.0–0, when he has saved half a tempo by omitting $\mathbb{Q}b1$.

8.0–0

Now 8.d4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ leads to a good version of the Grünfeld for Black. Usually White plays $\mathbb{Q}b1$ instead of $\mathbb{Q}e2$ in order to avoid precisely this position.

8. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$

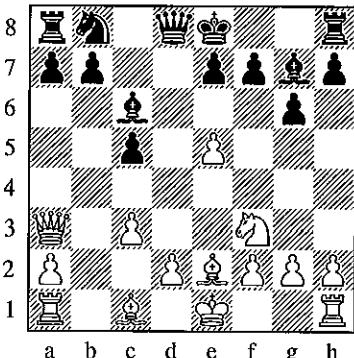
This has been tested in only a few games, including twice by Alexander Beliavsky in 2014.

8... $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$

Both of Beliavsky's opponents played 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$.

9. $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10.e5

10. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ N leads to equality after: 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}g5!?$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15.c4 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 16.d3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 0–0=



10... $\mathbb{Q}d5?$ N

10...0–0 11.0–0 c4 12.e6 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 13.exf7† $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ was also decent for Black in Vl. Popov – Jansen, email 2012.
11.d4 cxd4 12.cxd4 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 14.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c6=$

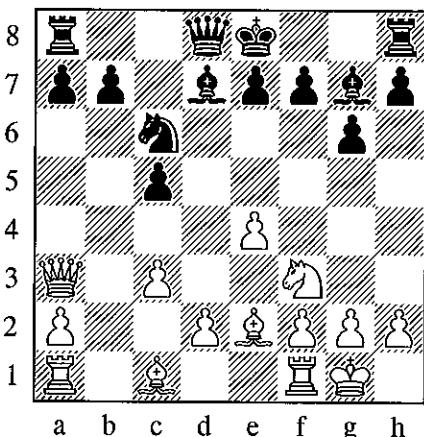
Black has no problems.

8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{W}a4$

9. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 0–0 10.d4 would be an odd version of the Grünfeld for White, as the dark-squared bishop belongs on e3 rather than on b2.

9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}a3$

At this point I would like to introduce an important novelty.



10... $\mathbb{W}b6!$ N

10... $\mathbb{W}a5$ has been the most popular choice so far, but the text move has the advantage of

clamping down on the d4-square, and thus making it difficult for White to gain space in the centre. It is not easy for White to attack the queen.

11. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

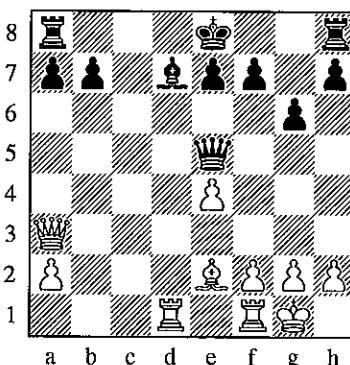
11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ c4 14. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ 0–0= is also fine for Black.

11.d3 $\mathbb{W}a5!$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xa5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 14.d4 cxd4 15.cxd4 0–0 16. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ b5= reaches a roughly equal endgame.

11... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 12.d4?

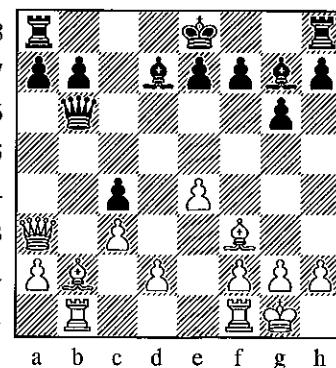
A temporary pawn sacrifice.

I also considered: 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 13.d4 cxd4 14.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}e5$

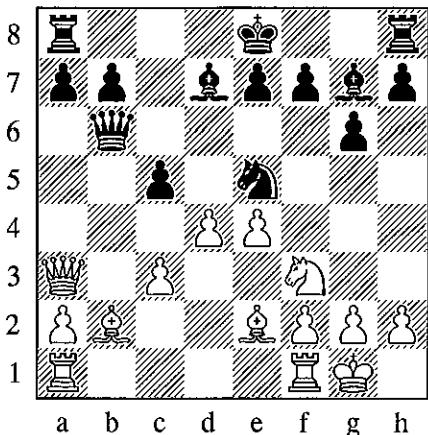


17. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 0–0=

Another important line is: 12. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ † 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ c4! Black prevents White from establishing an ideal pawn centre.



14.d4 cxd3 15.c4 $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 17.e5
 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ Black is doing well.



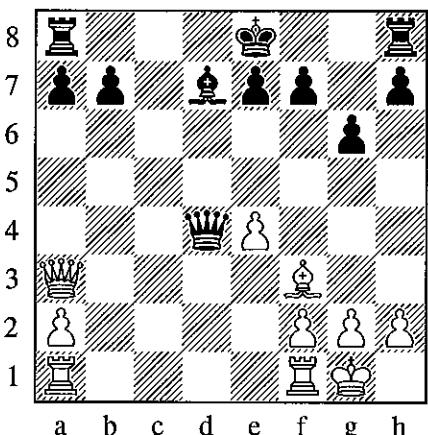
12... $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$

Black has to accept the challenge.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ cxd4 14.cxd4

14. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ d3 transposes to the 12. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ line noted above.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$



16.e5 $\mathbb{Q}c8?$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}c5$

19. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5=$

Black has returned the extra pawn and has absolutely no problems in the arising endgame.

Conclusion

After 4.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ White has all kinds of options which do not involve transposing to a mainstream Grünfeld with d2-d4. Black must be ready for any kind of game.

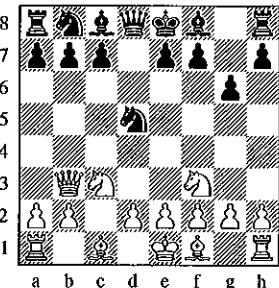
To take one example, after 5.h4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ White can play for a risky attack with 6.h5, but he might also change direction completely with 6.e4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 7.dxc3, hoping for an improved version of a standard endgame.

Elsewhere in the chapter, 5. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ 6.d4 stands out as a complex variation requiring close attention, while 5. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ may be theoretically harmless, but it will still demand precise endgame play from both players.

Another highlight came in the final section under 5.e4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 6.bxc3!? when, a few moves down the line, I am happy to offer 10... $\mathbb{W}b6!$ as a strong novelty which appears to solve all of Black's opening problems.



1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6



5. $\mathbb{W}b3$

Variation Index

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 g6 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5 4.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5. $\mathbb{W}b3$

5... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 6.d4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$

A) 7.e3	550
B) 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 8. $\mathbb{W}c2$ h6	552
B1) 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$	552
B2) 9. $\mathbb{Q}h4$	553
C) 7.e4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$	555
C1) 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$	556
C2) 8.d5	557
C3) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$	558
C4) 8. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ †	559
D) 7. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$	562
D1) 8. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$	563
D11) 9.e3	564
D12) 9. $\mathbb{Q}d1$	565
D2) 8. $\mathbb{W}a3$ c5!?	566
D21) 9.e3	567
D22) 9.e4!?	568
D23) 9. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$	571
D231) 10.e4!?	572
D232) 10.e3	573

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ 2. c4 g6 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5 4. cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$
5. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

White's idea is to recapture with the queen on c3, so instead we will retreat the knight from the centre and perhaps follow up with ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ to gain time against the queen at some point.

5... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 6. d4

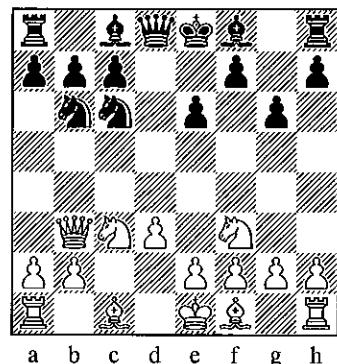
6.e4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7.d4 transposes to variation C.

6. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

An extremely rare move, which promises no advantage; the provocation of ...e6 is not worth two tempos. The text was played mostly during the early stages of development of this system.

6...e6 7. d3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

8. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}g7$! N (8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e5 10. g3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ was roughly equal in Branicki – Korchnoi, Lodz 1955) 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e5= and I prefer Black.



8...e5!N

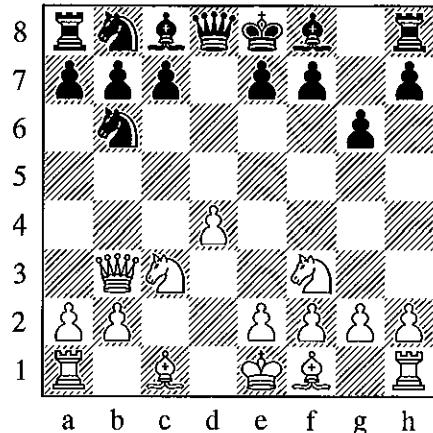
A strong novelty. Instead 8...h6 was played in Devos – Denker, Hastings 1945, but it wasn't necessary, as Black should not be worried about $\mathbb{Q}g5$.

9.g3

9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$?! doesn't make much sense because of 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ followed by ...h6.

9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$! 10. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ † 13. exf3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$

Black's position is clearly more pleasant.



6... $\mathbb{Q}g7$

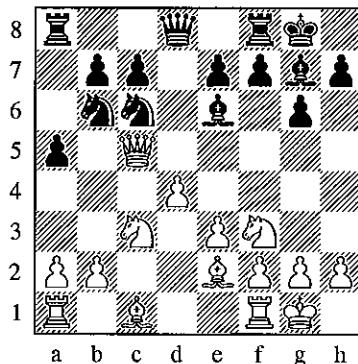
White has tried four moves: A) 7.e3, B) 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$, C) 7.e4 and D) 7. $\mathbb{Q}f4$.

A) 7.e3

This is too modest to be considered a serious attempt for an opening edge.

7...0–0 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

9. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10.0–0 a5! 11. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ occurred in Urseanu – Samarian, Bucharest 1951, when Black's play can be improved with:



11... $\mathbb{Q}d6$! N 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ (or 12. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ a4 13. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14. e4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15. e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ =) 12... $\mathbb{Q}d5$!=

9. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ c5!

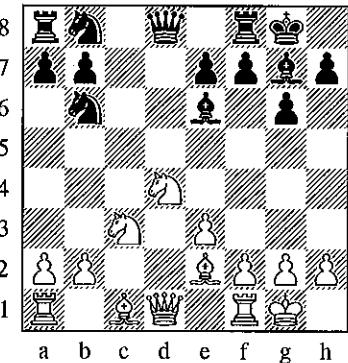
This move, which was not played until 2015, is a convincing improvement over previous games.

10.0–0

10.dxc5 $\mathbb{W}xd1\#$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ (or 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}6d7$) 11... $\mathbb{Q}a4$ is fine for Black.

10... $cxd4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4N$

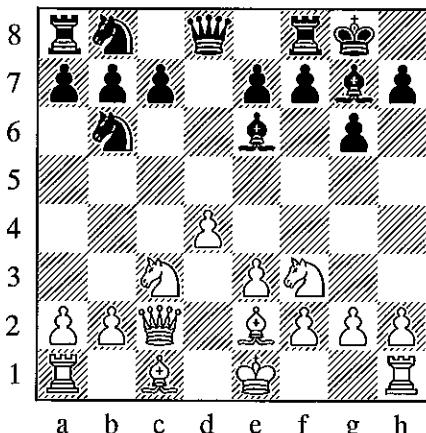
11.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}c6\#$ occurred in Thanarotrung – Kananub, Bangkok 2015. The text move is an obvious improvement.

11... $\mathbb{W}d7!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe6 \mathbb{W}xe6$

It is hard for White to do anything with the two bishops because Black's pieces are so active. For example:

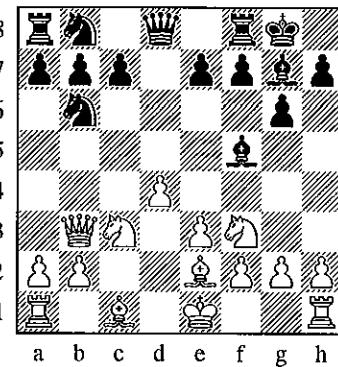
13. $\mathbb{Q}b5 \mathbb{Q}a6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d4 \mathbb{W}d7$ 15.b3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}fc8!$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d2 \mathbb{Q}xd4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd4 \mathbb{W}xd4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c2=$

With easy equality.

9... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ 10. $\mathbb{W}d1$

After 10. $\mathbb{W}b3$ Black can, at the very least, repeat moves by means of: 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (10... $a5?$

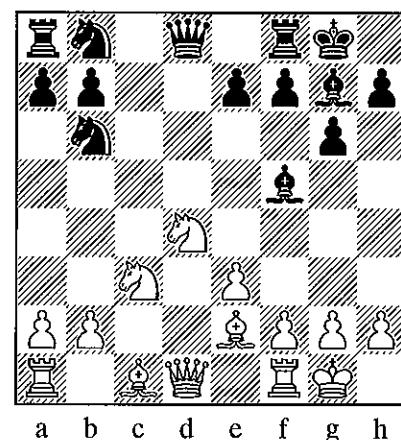
11.0–0 a4 12. $\mathbb{W}a3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ also looks equal, Skarp – Stoltz, Stockholm 1946) 11. $\mathbb{W}c2 \mathbb{Q}f5$ 12. $\mathbb{W}b3$



From this position Giri played on with 12... $\mathbb{Q}8d7?!$ (if Black wants to play for a win then 12... $a5?!$ looks better, as in the 1946 game quoted above) 13.e4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ but was slightly worse after 14.d5 (there is also 14. $\mathbb{W}c2!?\pm$) in Papaioannou – Giri, Reykjavik 2015.

10... $c5!$

We have already seen this idea after 9. $\mathbb{W}d1$.

11.0–0 $cxd4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12... $\mathbb{W}d7?!$ N

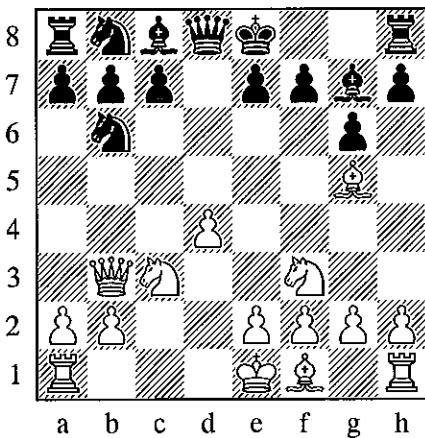
12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13.e4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}xd4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ was equal in Serper – Kalinitchew, Novosibirsk 1989.

It is not especially important for Black to improve on the above game; nevertheless, I want to emphasize the point that the loss of the bishop does not harm Black.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}xf5=$

The rest of Black's pieces will coordinate perfectly after ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, ... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ and so on.

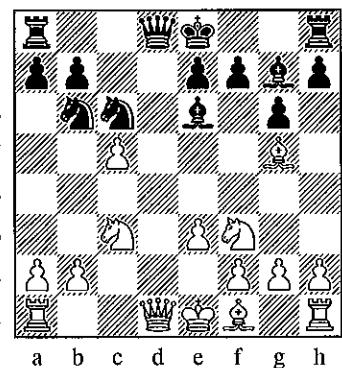
B) 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$



This has been a popular choice, and it can lead to heavy complications.

7... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 8. $\mathbb{W}c2$

8. $\mathbb{W}d1$ can be met by 8...c5! again. 9.e3?! ($9.dxc5?!$ N is better and leads to an equal position: 9... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12.0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 13.e4 $\mathbb{Q}c6=$) 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $dxc5?!$



This was Engqvist – Moberg, Sweden 2008, and now 10... $\mathbb{Q}d5$! N 11. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 12. $bxc3$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ would have given Black some advantage.

8...h6

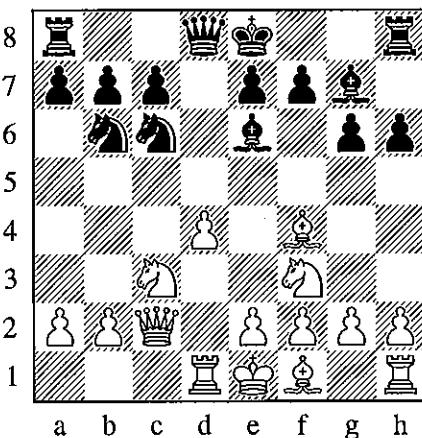
White may choose B1) 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ or B2) 9. $\mathbb{Q}h4$.

B1) 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

This transposes to a sideline of 7. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (see variation D1 on page 563 for the comparable line) except that the black pawn is on h6 instead of h7. There could be a rare scenario where Black plays ...f6 and the weakening of g6 might help White, but in general it looks pretty inconsequential.

9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

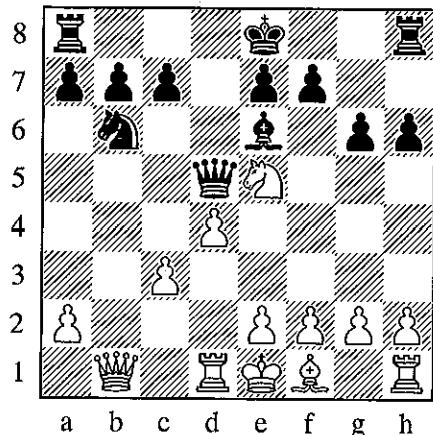
10.e3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}d1$ 0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c5 13.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ gave Black a comfortable position in I. Ivanov – Barbeau, Quebec 1988.



10... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

A weak alternative is: 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2?!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 14. b3 Here a draw was agreed in Herraiz Hidalgo – Mogranzini, Roquetas de Mar 2009, but Black could easily have played on with 14... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4\#$ as his position is better.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 13. $bxc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}d5$

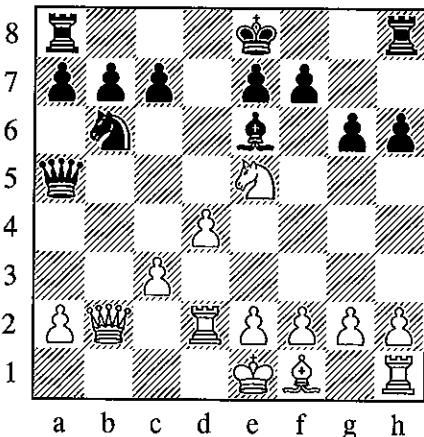
**15. $\mathbb{W}d2$**

15.e4!N is better and leads to equal play after:
 15... $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 16. $\mathbb{W}b4$ 0–0 17.d5 (or 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}b3$
 18. $\mathbb{W}a5$ $\mathbb{W}a2=$) 17... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ One of a few good
 options. 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}a1\uparrow$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}a2=$

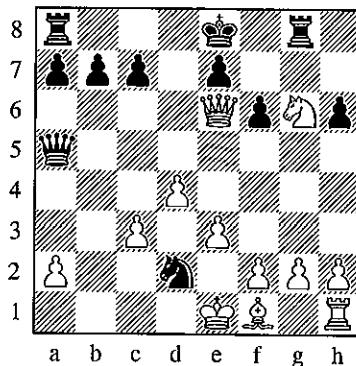
15... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}b2?$

16. $\mathbb{W}d3$ is better, although 16... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 17.e4 f6
 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0–0–0 still gives Black some initiative.

Now Black's play in Poloch – Toma, Frydek Mistek 2009, can be improved by means of:

**16... f6!N 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}b4$**

White also fails to solve his problems
 after: 18. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 19.e3 (19. $\mathbb{Q}f4?$ $\mathbb{Q}f7\rightarrow$)
 19... $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xe6$



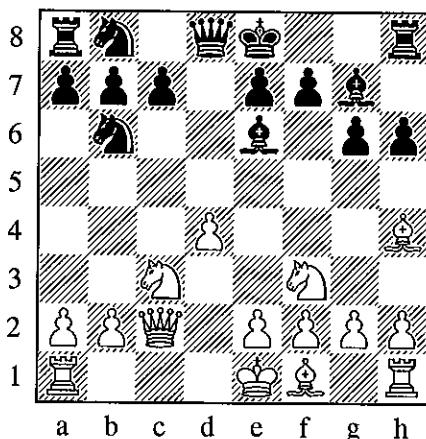
20... $\mathbb{Q}b3\uparrow$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4\uparrow$ 22. $cxd4$ $\mathbb{W}h5\uparrow$
 23. $g4$ $\mathbb{W}xg6\mp$

**18... $\mathbb{W}xb4$ 19. $cxb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$
 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$**

21. $\mathbb{Q}g6?$ $\mathbb{Q}d8\!\!\!-\!\!\!+$ is even worse for White.

21... a5! 22. $bxa5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa5\mp$

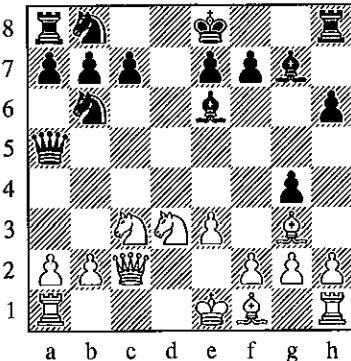
Black is the clear favourite in this endgame.

B2) 9. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ **9... g5!?**

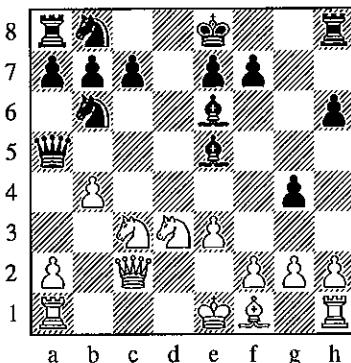
9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ has been more popular but I prefer
 this sideline.

10. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ g4 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

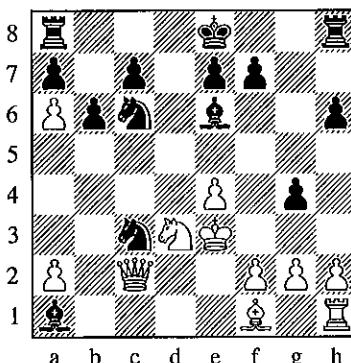
11. $\mathbb{Q}e5\?!$ is dubious due to: 11... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 12. $e3$
 $\mathbb{W}c5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

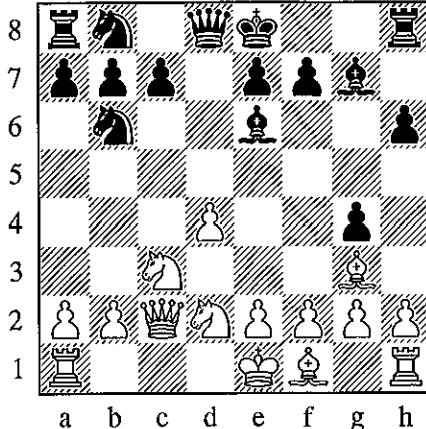
14. $\mathbb{Q}e5?$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ was necessary, although 14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc7 \mathbb{Q}f5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}b3 \mathbb{Q}c8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb6 \mathbb{W}xb6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ axb6 leaves Black with the better chances thanks to his bishop pair)
14... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 15. b4



15... $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ 16. $bxa5 \mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{Q}xa1$ 18. e4 $\mathbb{Q}c3\uparrow$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 20. a6 b6

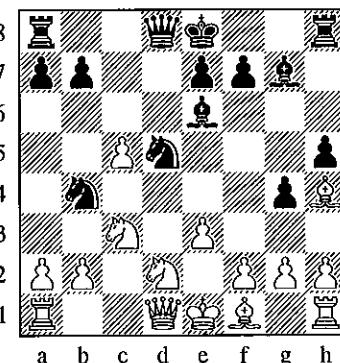


21. $\mathbb{Q}b2 \mathbb{Q}xb2$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}b5 \mathbb{Q}xb5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xc6\uparrow \mathbb{Q}f8$
24. $\mathbb{W}xa8\uparrow \mathbb{Q}g7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c6 \mathbb{Q}d6\rightarrow$ Maiorov – Khenkin, Metz 1991.



11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. e3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d1$ h5 14. a3

We must also consider:
14. $\mathbb{Q}h4!?$ c5 15. $dxc5 \mathbb{Q}d5$



16. $\mathbb{Q}ce4!N$

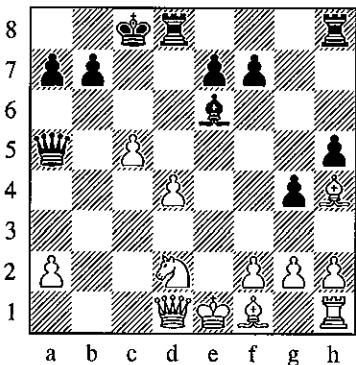
This is more challenging than 16. $\mathbb{W}a4\uparrow$ when, in Mirzoev – Anagnostopoulos, Gazi 2014, Black could have continued with the simple 16... $\mathbb{Q}c6!N$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}de4 \mathbb{Q}xc3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc3 \mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$ 19. $bxc3 \mathbb{W}d5=$ with equal chances.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 17. $\mathbb{E}b1 \mathbb{Q}c3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc3 \mathbb{Q}xc3$

The position is extremely complicated. According to my analysis, best play continues:

19. $\mathbb{E}xb4! \mathbb{W}a5!$ 20. $\mathbb{E}d4$
20. $\mathbb{W}a4\uparrow \mathbb{W}xa4$ 21. $\mathbb{E}xa4$ 0–0–0 is okay for Black.

20... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 21. $exd4$ 0–0–0



22. $\mathbb{W}a1!$ $\mathbb{W}b4!$ 23. a3 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{R}xd4$
25. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{R}e8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}a4!$ 27. f3 $\mathbb{Q}xa3$

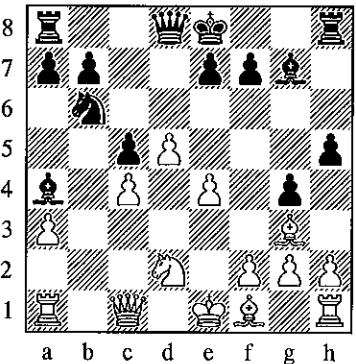
The position remains dynamically balanced, although in practice it could still go either way.

14... $\mathbb{Q}d5$

All of this was my over-the-board improvisation, and I was surprised to find out that my play was subsequently followed by Vachier-Lagrange.

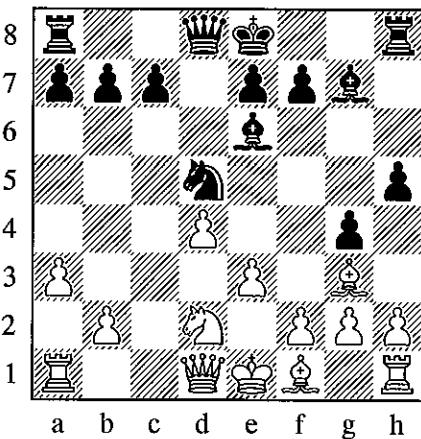
15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

The MVL game continued 15. e4?! $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 16. $\mathbb{B}xc3$ c5 17. d5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. c4 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}c1$ and now I would like to recommend:



19... e6!N (the less accurate 19... h4 was played in Pelletier – Vachier-Lagrange, Legnica 2013) 20. $\mathbb{E}b1$ (20. $\mathbb{Q}e2?$ runs into 20... h4! 21. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}f6\#$) 20... 0–0 \bar{f} With some initiative for Black.

15... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$



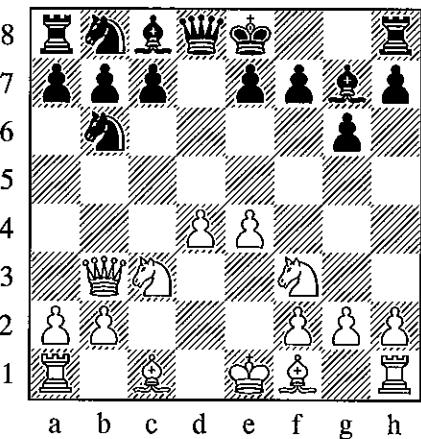
16. $\mathbb{Q}h4!$ c5! 17. e4 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 18. d5

18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}b8!$ favours Black.

18... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{R}c8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 22. a4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$

Black had a promising position in E. Hansen – V. Mikhalevski, Victoria 2012.

C) 7. e4



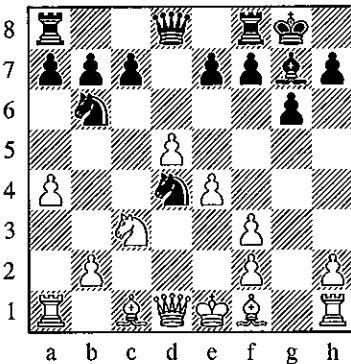
Taking space in the centre is a natural plan, which also stops Black from gaining time against the queen with ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$, due to the possibility of d4-d5.

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

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

Threatening to take on f3 and d4. White's four main tries are C1) 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$, C2) 8. d5, C3) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ and C4) 8. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$.

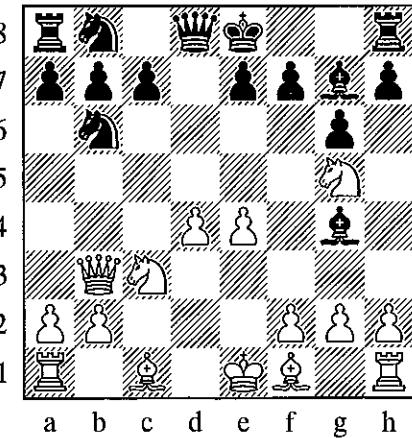
8.a4 is interesting but harmless: 8... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ (9.a5!N may lead to a forced draw after: 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10.axb6 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}a4\#$ c6 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f3\#$) 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10.d5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ 0-0



12.a5 (12. $\mathbb{Q}e3\#$! c5 was better for Black in Maksimovic – Murariu, Eforie Nord 2014) 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ c5 14. dxc6 15. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ a6 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 Black had a good position in Ivanchuk – Svidler, Warsaw 1999.

C1) 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

This move is extremely rare, but it is not without venom.



8...0-0 9.h3!

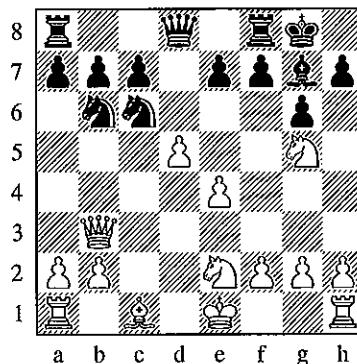
9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\#$

This move is the reason why White usually starts with 8. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$.

10...c5 transposes to variation C4.

11.d5

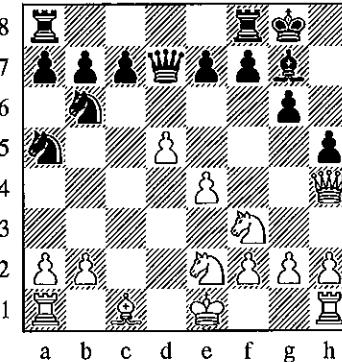
11. $\mathbb{Q}h3\#$!N is better, but it doesn't promise White any advantage. 11...h6 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xd7$ (13. $\mathbb{W}h4\#$! g5 14. $\mathbb{W}h5$ f5 15. e5 $\mathbb{W}e8\#$) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xd7=$

11... $\mathbb{Q}a5\#$

11... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 12.0-0 h6= was playable for Black in Steingrimsson – Abello, La Massana 2013, but the text move is stronger.

12. $\mathbb{W}h3$

12. $\mathbb{W}b4\#$! $\mathbb{Q}ac4$ 13.0-0 $\mathbb{W}d6\#$ is simply better for Black.

12...h6 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{W}h4$ h5

15.0-0

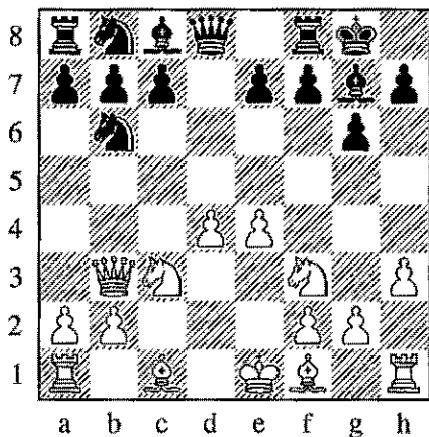
15. h3? is too slow: 15... $\mathbb{W}b5$! 16.g4 $\mathbb{W}b4\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$

15...c6

With a comfortable position for Black.

9...♝c8 10.♝f3

This position occurred in Barlov – Honfi, St Ingbert 1991, and a few subsequent games. Black's best continuation is:



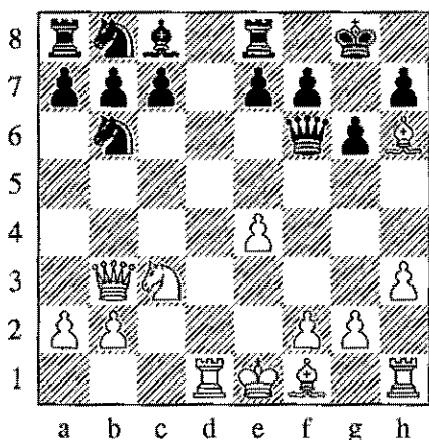
10...♝xd4!

Black can afford to give up his bishop because White's development has been pretty slow.

11.♝xd4

11.♝h6 ♝g7 12.♝xg7 ♛xg7 13.♝d1 ♘d7 gives White some activity for the pawn but no advantage.

11...♝xd4 12.♝h6 ♕e8 13.♝d1 ♘f6



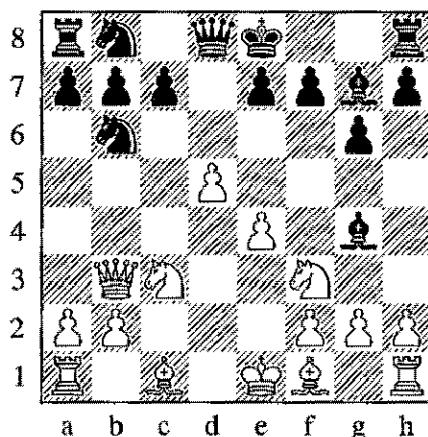
14.♝b5

14.♝e2 ♝e6 15.♝b5 ♛8d7= is also fine for Black.

14...♝c6 15.♝g5 ♘g7

White's compensation is sufficient only for equality.

C2) 8.d5



Another sideline, which has been known since the game Romanishin – Korchnoi, Tbilisi 1976.

8...0–0

Korchnoi's 8...♝xf3 9.gxf3 c6 is less accurate due to 10.a4±, which has done well for White in some recent games.

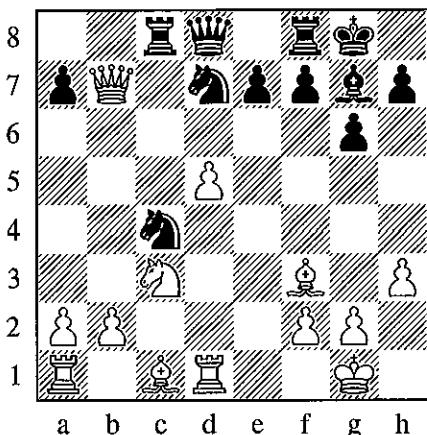
9.♝e2 c6 10.h3

10.0–0 cxd5 11.exd5 ♛8d7 12.♝d1 ♘e5 13.♝xe5 ♘xe2 14.♝xe2 ♛xe5 15.♝h6 ♕e8 was equal in Kantorik – Pacher, Teplice 2011.

10...♝xf3 11.♝xf3 cxd5 12.exd5 ♛8d7 13.0–0 ♕c8 14.♝d1 ♘c4! 15.♝xb7

Here I found a useful improvement for Black,

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6



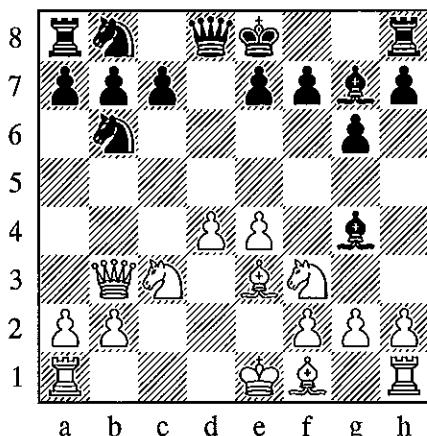
15... $\mathbb{E}b8!$ N

15... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ was played in Neelotpal – Adhiban, Kolkata 2012, when it seems that both players missed 18.d6!N e6 19. $\mathbb{E}ac1\pm$.

16. $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $\mathbb{E}a8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}b7$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{E}xb2$ 20. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5!$

Black has sufficient compensation for the pawn.

C3) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



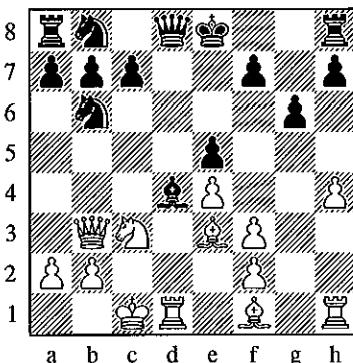
An interesting pawn sacrifice.

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

Black should accept the challenge.

9.gxf3 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 10. $\mathbb{E}d1$

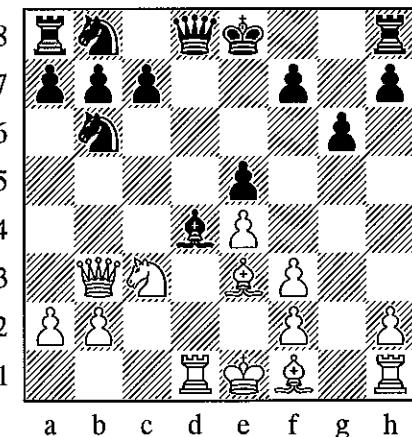
10.0–0–0 was introduced by Fressinet.
10...e5 11.h4



11... $\mathbb{W}e7!$ N (11... $\mathbb{Q}xe3\#$ 12.fxe3 $\mathbb{W}f6$ 13.h5 g5 14.f4 led to a lot of complications in Fressinet – So, Wijk aan Zee 2011. The text move was subsequently suggested by So as an improvement.) 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ exd4 13. $\mathbb{E}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}8d7=$ Black is ready to castle on the queenside, with a safe position and chances to exploit his better structure in the long run.

10...e5

10...c5?! also makes sense.

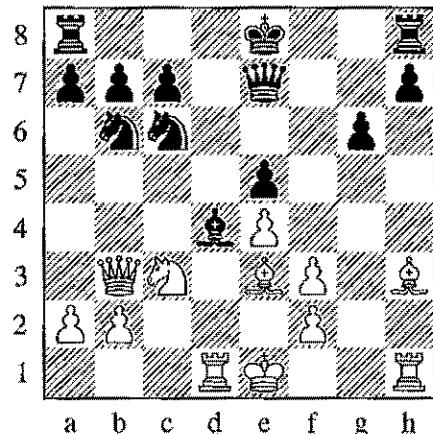


11.h4!

11. $\mathbb{W}a3$ enables Black to secure an endgame edge with: 11... $\mathbb{W}e7!$ N (11...c6 12.f4 was

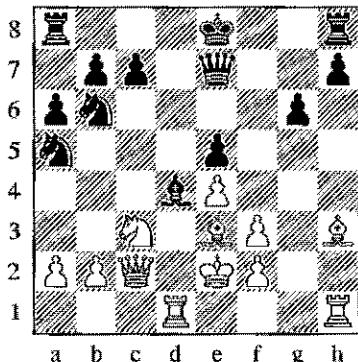
unnecessarily complicated in Bruno – Dvirnyy, Forni di Sopra 2012) 12. $\mathbb{W}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $exd4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\#$ Black is slightly better thanks to his superior pawn structure and development advantage.

11... $\mathbb{W}e7!$ 12. $h5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6?$ 13. $hxg6$ $fxg6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h3$
White needs to prevent ...0–0–0.



14...a5?N

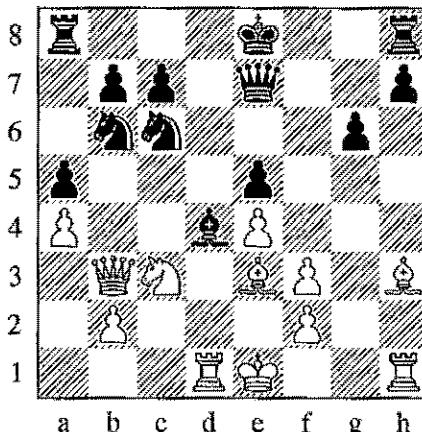
14...a6 is playable too. 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c2?!$ (16. $\mathbb{W}e6=$ was better) Now in Lu Shanglei – Wang Yue, Xinghua 2012, Black should have played:



16... $\mathbb{Q}d8?N$ With better chances for Black. (In the game he played 16...0–0? and got into serious trouble after 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5! \pm$.)

15. $a4!?$

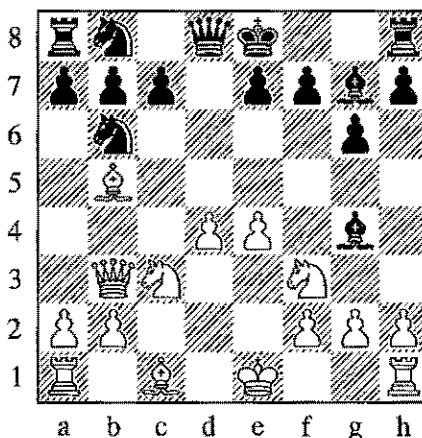
15. $a3$ $a4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 19. $fxe3$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ and Black is fine.



15... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 17. $fxe3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$

The position remains complicated but dynamically equal.

C4) 8. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$



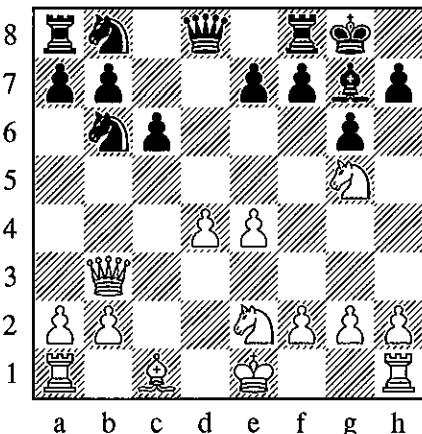
This used to be considered the most challenging line in the Anti-Grünfeld. White is provoking ...c6 in order to take away that square from the black knight. Compare 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ in the notes to variation C1 above.

8... $c6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2!$

10... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ is dangerous on account of 11. $h4!$.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g611. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$

White intends to attack on the kingside with $\mathbb{Wh}3$.



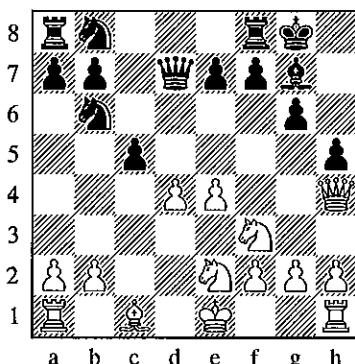
11...c5?!

The older move is 11... $\mathbb{Q}a6$, which leads to a lot of complications.

The text move is the latest trend in this line. Before White can start his attack on the kingside, Black counterattacks in the centre. It involves a temporary pawn sacrifice, but Black makes up for it through the activity of his pieces.

12. dxc5

I faced the overoptimistic 12. $\mathbb{W}h3$?! in a recent game: 12...h6 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$! 14. $\mathbb{W}h4$ h5



15. $\mathbb{h}3$? (15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ is a better try although

15...cx4 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ still favours Black) 15...cx4 16. g4 d3 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}g3$ h4 19. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ g5=+ Wang Qibiao – V. Mikhalevski, Rockville 2015.

12... $\mathbb{Q}6d7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xb7$

This is the most critical continuation.

13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$?! makes no sense because of 13... $\mathbb{W}a5$ †.

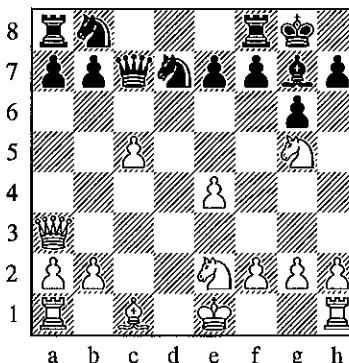
13. $\mathbb{W}a3$

This attempt to hold on to the c5-pawn has occurred only once, and it doesn't create many problems.

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

The game continued: 13...h6 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$! $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (14... $\mathbb{W}c7$?!N) 15. 0–0 b6 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$! a5 18. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ bxc5 20. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 21. b3 $\mathbb{W}b7$ (21...a4?!N) 22. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 23. a4 (23. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ †!N $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 24. a4± was better) 23... $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ And in this position, with compensation for a pawn, a draw was agreed in Lupulescu – Safarli, Skopje 2013.

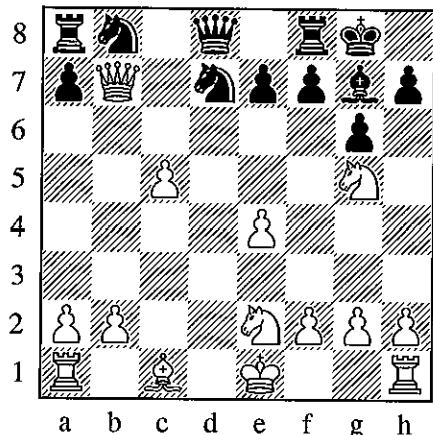
The text move seems preferable to me. The idea is to lure the bishop to e3 in order to exploit its position later on.

14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

14. 0–0 $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}h3$ h6 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ h5= is fine for Black.

14... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$?! 16. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ =

With sufficient compensation for a pawn.



13...♝a5† 14.♗d2

14.b4 is met by the pretty 14...♝xc5!= when Black has no problems at all.

14...♝a6!

Despite being two pawns down, Black offers an exchange of queens in order to exploit White's pawn weaknesses.

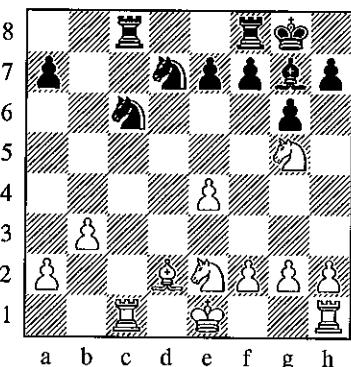
15.♛xa6

After 15.♛xa8? ♜c6† the queen is trapped and Black's chances are higher, as White can't castle.

15.c6!?

This is quite a clever move, but it's not enough to obtain an advantage.

15...♝xc6 16.♛xc6 ♜xc6 17.♜c1 ♜ac8 18.b3

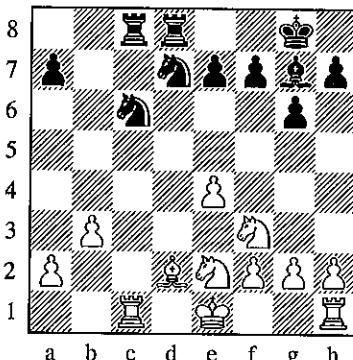


18...♝fd8!

An improvement of the young Polish GM Swiercz over Vachier-Lagrave's 18...♝b2. The idea is based on the vulnerability of the white bishop on d2.

19.♗f3

19.♝e3N ♜b4 20.0–0 ♜xa2 21.♜xc8 ♜xc8 22.♜xa7 ♜c2 yields Black good compensation for a pawn. For example: 23.♜d1 ♜xe2 24.♝f1 ♜c3 25.♜xd7 ♜f6 26.♝f3 ♜a2 27.e5 ♜a1† 28.♝e1 ♜xe5 29.♜xc7 ♜f6 30.♜e8† ♜g7 31.♝c5 h5=

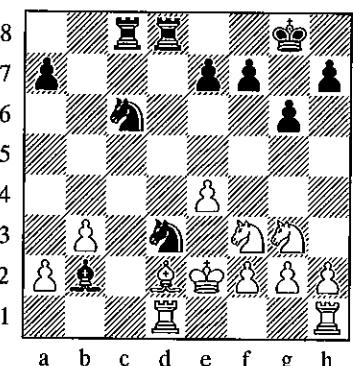


19...♝b2 20.♜d1!?

20.♝c2N is better, although 20...♝b4 21.♜xc8 ♜d3† 22.♝f1 ♜xc8 leaves Black with sufficient compensation for a pawn.

20...♝c5 21.♝g3 ♜d3† 22.♝e2

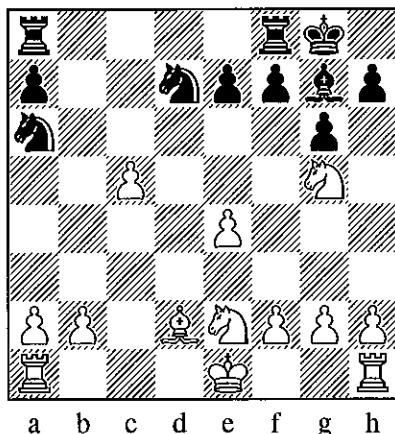
Now in Lupulescu – Swiercz, Hockenheim 2014, Black could still set some problems with:



22...♝fd8!

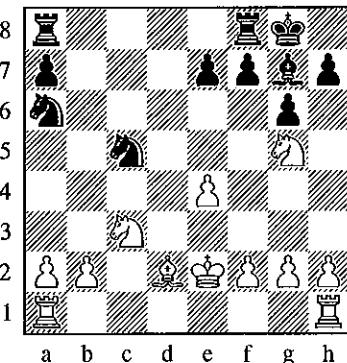
All of the white pieces are restricted.
 23. $\mathbb{Q}e3$
 This seems natural, but it is well met by:
 23... $\mathbb{Q}cb4!$

15... $\mathbb{Q}xa6$



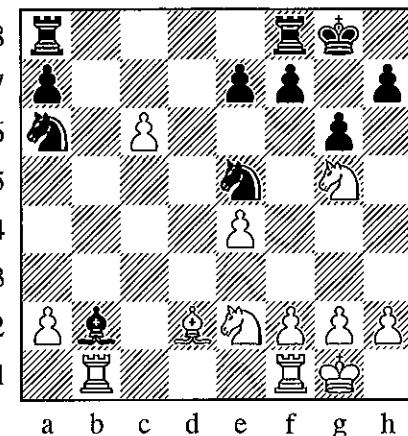
16.c6

After 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}dxc5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ in Wojtaszek – Gupta, New Delhi 2012, Black's play can be improved by means of:



17... $\mathbb{Q}ab8!N$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ (18. $b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}hd1$ $\mathbb{Q}fc8$ gives Black some initiative) 18... $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ f6 20. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ Black is not worse as he can meet 21. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ with: 21... $e5!$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (22. $\mathbb{Q}xa7?!$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}fb8\#$ is unpleasant for White) 22... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 23. $a3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ With a slight edge for Black.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xb2!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ 18. 0–0



18... $\mathbb{Q}c4!N$

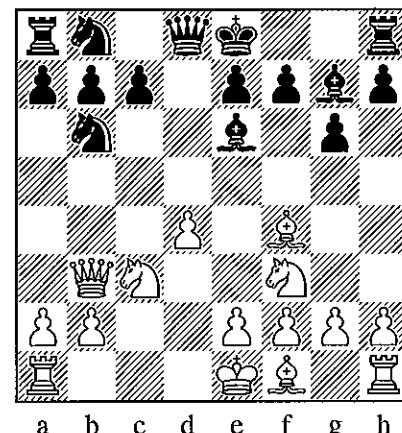
The most accurate route to equality.

In all preceding games, including Korobov – Navara, Jerusalem 2015, Black played 18... $\mathbb{Q}ab8$.

19. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}fc8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}a5!=$

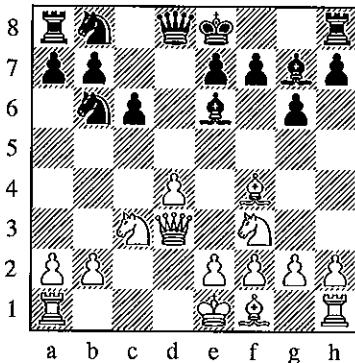
Black picks up the c-pawn, with easy equality.

D) 7. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$



White's two main options are D1) 8. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ and D2) 8. $\mathbb{Q}a3$.

8. $\mathbb{W}b5\uparrow$ was tested just once in Rakhmanov – Torrecillas Martinez, Catalonia 2012. Black should have reacted with 8...c6!N 9. $\mathbb{W}d3$ (9. $\mathbb{W}a5$ 0–0 10.e4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. $\mathbb{B}d1$ [or 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4=\text{ }]$ 12... $\mathbb{Q}8d7$ 13.h4 $\mathbb{Q}c8!$ with equal chances)



9... $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (10. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ is answered by 10... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $c5!=\text{ })$ 10... $cx d5$ 11. e3 $\mathbb{W}a5\uparrow$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6=\text{ and Black is fine.}$

8. $\mathbb{W}d1$

It is hard to see the logic behind this rare retreat, although it is by no means a bad move.

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

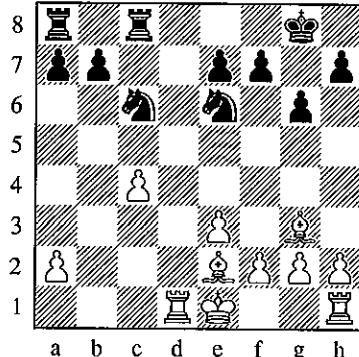
We are already familiar with this typical way to make use of Black's development advantage.

9. e3

9. e4?!N has not been tested yet. A good reply is: 9... $xd4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}bx d4$ 0–0! 12. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $bx a6$ 13. 0–0 $\mathbb{W}c8!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $fxe6\text{?}$ The activity of the black pieces compensates for the damaged pawn structure.

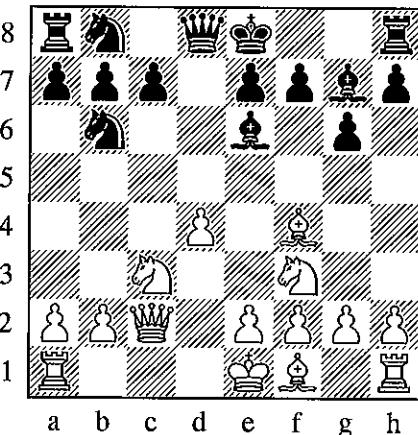
9... 0–0 10. $dxc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$ 11. $bx c3$ $\mathbb{W}xd1\uparrow$ 12. $\mathbb{B}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 16. c4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

In Grigorianants – Navara, Wroclaw 2014, Black's most accurate continuation would have been:



17... $\mathbb{Q}c5\uparrow$!N 18. 0–0 $\mathbb{B}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{B}xd1$ 20. $\mathbb{B}xd1$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 22. $\mathbb{B}d7$ $b6=$
Black is fine.

D1) 8. $\mathbb{W}c2$

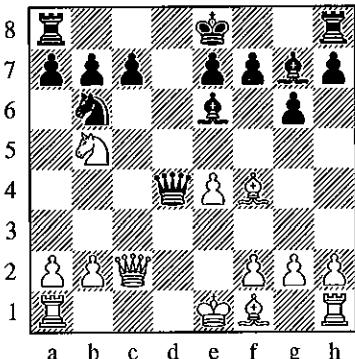


This line is out of fashion these days.

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

White has two sensible ways to defend the d-pawn: D11) 9. e3 and D12) 9. $\mathbb{B}d1$.

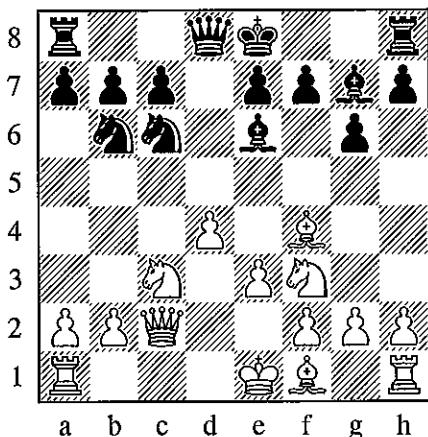
After 9. e4?! Black should take up the challenge with: 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd4\uparrow$!N (Black has wimped out with 9... $\mathbb{Q}b4?$ in a few games, after which 10. $\mathbb{W}d1\pm$ led to an edge for White) 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

11... $\mathbb{W}b4\text{!}$ An important intermediate move.
12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc7\text{!}$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe6\text{!}$ $fxe6$
15. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 16. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4=$ White has about enough compensation for the pawn, but no advantage.

D11) 9.e3

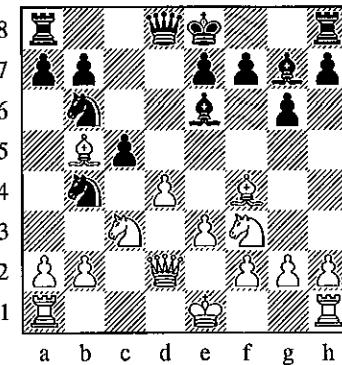
This modest move promises no advantage.

9... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 10. $\mathbb{W}d1$

10. $\mathbb{W}c1$ in Pribyl – Kirov, Lodz 1979, can be answered by 10...c5!N 11. $\mathbb{Q}b5\text{!}$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12.0–0 cxd4 13.exd4 $\mathbb{E}c8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 0–0 with slightly better chances for Black thanks to the isolated d-pawn.

10. $\mathbb{W}d2$ in Wager – Fraser, Aberystwyth 2014, should be met in the same way:
10...c5!N 11. $\mathbb{Q}b5\text{!}$ (11.dxc5? is wrong in view

of 11... $\mathbb{Q}c4\text{!}\#$; 11. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{E}c8$! 12. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}c4\text{!}$
13. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{Q}d3\text{!}\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}xc8$
with some initiative for Black)



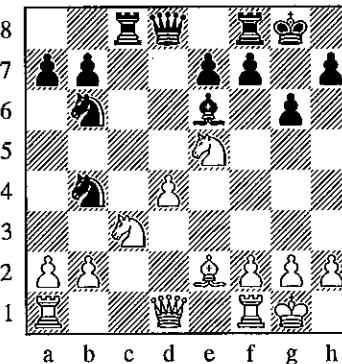
11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{dx}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}xd2\text{!}$
14. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}c4\text{!}\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0–0! Black has at least enough activity for the pawn.

10...0–0 11.a3

A harmless alternative is:

11. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ c5 12.0–0 $\mathbb{E}c8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c5$
13.a3 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{dx}c5$ $\mathbb{E}xc5$
16. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ occurred in Gausel – Jansa, Oslo 1991, and now 16... $\mathbb{E}xc1\text{!}N$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ $\mathbb{W}d7\text{!}\#$
would have posed some problems to White.
13... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ cxd4 15.exd4

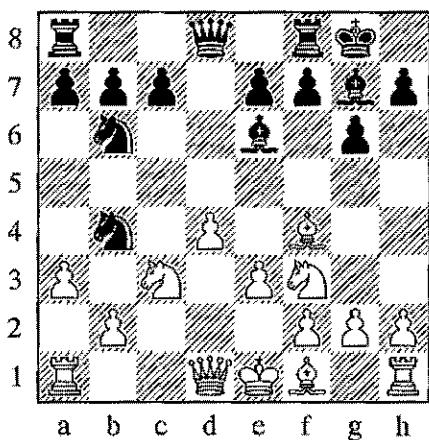
Now Black's play in Padavsky – Hort, Monte Carlo 1968, can be improved by means of:



15... $\mathbb{Q}d5\text{!}N$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e1$
17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is strongly met by 17...f6! 18. $\mathbb{Q}g4$
 $\mathbb{Q}c4\text{!}\#$.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#$ 18. $\mathbb{B}xe2$ $\mathbb{W}d6$

With some edge for Black thanks to the IQP.



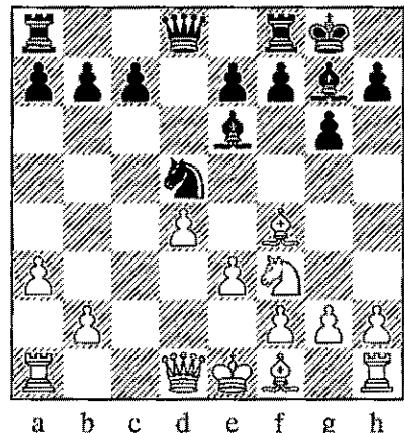
11... $\mathbb{Q}4d5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $c5!$ was a little better for Black in Botos – Trbojevic, Hungary 2012.

12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ in M. Ivanov – Delemarre, Germany 2004, is best met by 12... $\mathbb{Q}xc3!N$ 13. $bxc3$ $c5!$ with a comfortable position for Black.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xd5!N$

Improving on 12... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$, which was played in Kholmov – Hort, Moscow 1975.



13. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{A}xe5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $c5!$

Once again this pawn sacrifice works well.

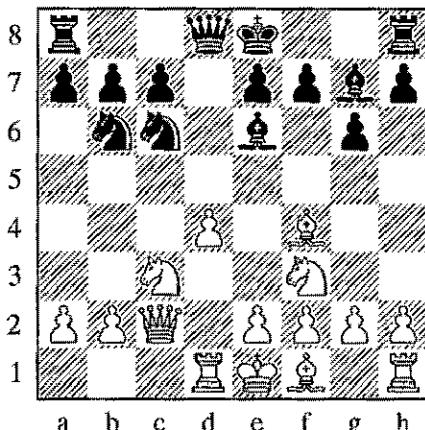
15. $dxc5$ $\mathbb{W}a5\#$ 16. $b4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $a5$ 18. $b5$ $\mathbb{R}fd8$ 19. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$ gives Black lots of activity for the pawn.

17... $\mathbb{R}fd8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}b2$ $a5$ 19. $b5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 20. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}c5=$

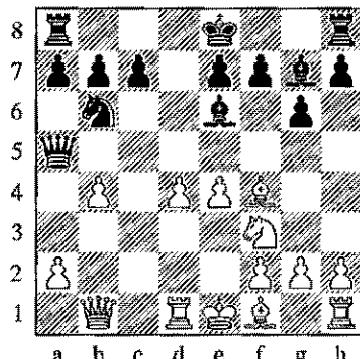
I doubt that White has anything better than offering to repeat the position with 22. $\mathbb{Q}e5$.

D12) 9. $\mathbb{B}d1$



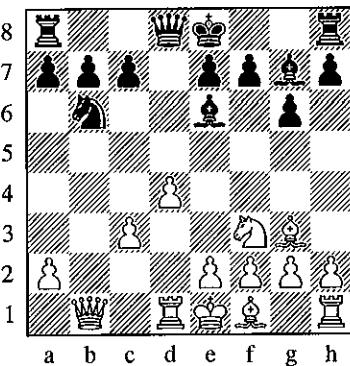
9... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 10. $\mathbb{W}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}4d5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

An absolutely harmless alternative is: 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 12. $e4$ $\mathbb{W}a5\#$ 13. $b4$ (13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xa2$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 15. $\mathbb{B}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ was better for Black in Wild – R. Mueller, Schwaebisch Gmuend 2015) In Commons – Krnic, Sombor 1976, Black should have played:



13... $\mathbb{W}xa2!N$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xa2$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 15. $\mathbb{B}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 0–0 Black's chances are slightly higher.

11. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 12. bxc3 occurred in an old game Reinhardt – Richter, Berlin 1937, when Black should have played:



12...0–0!N 13. e4 c5! With the idea of meeting 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2?$ with 14... $\mathbb{Q}a4!+$.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 12. bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5?!$

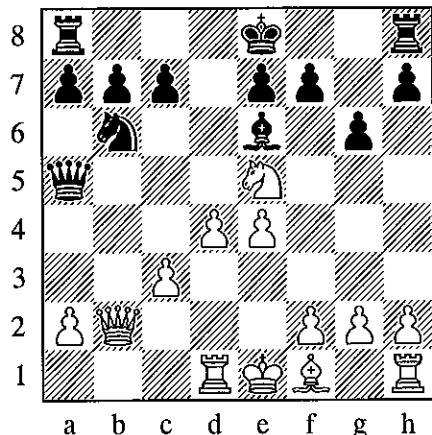
White should prefer 13. dx e5 although 13... $\mathbb{W}c8$ is pleasant for Black.

13... $\mathbb{W}d5$ 14. e4 $\mathbb{W}a5$

14... $\mathbb{W}xa2?!$ could also be considered.

15. $\mathbb{W}b2$

This position occurred in Ghaem Maghami – Chirila, Las Vegas 2014. Now the most accurate for Black seems to be:



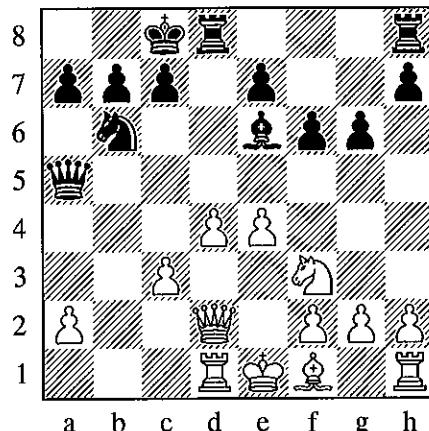
15...0–0–0!N

15...f6?N 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}b4$ $\mathbb{W}xb4$ 18. cxb4 c6 is also quite promising.

16. $\mathbb{W}d2$

16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ f6 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$

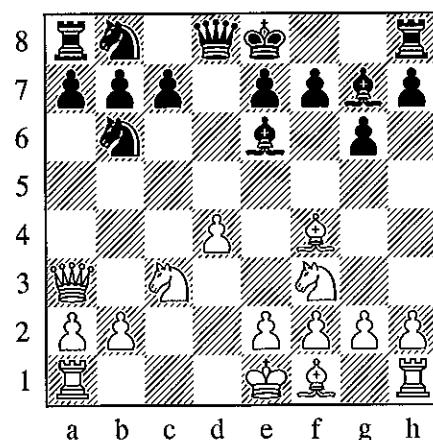
16...f6 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$



17... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 18. d5 $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$

With ...e6 coming, Black is clearly on top.

D2) 8. $\mathbb{W}a3$

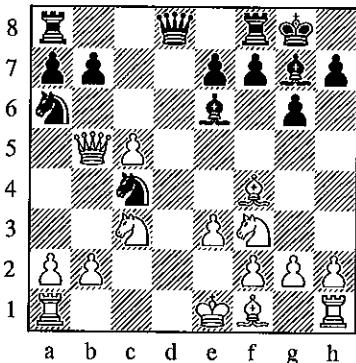


8...c5?!

This is the modern way of solving our opening problems in the Anti-Grünfeld. Black sacrifices a pawn in order to build a lead in development.

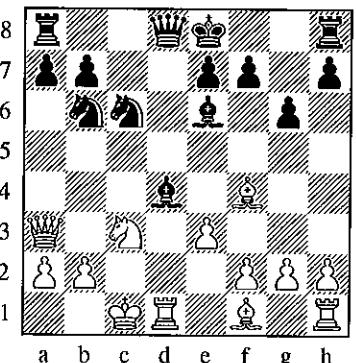
We will analyse D21) 9.e3, D22) 9.e4!? and D23) 9. $\mathbb{W}xc5$.

9.dxc5 has not yet been tried because of: 9... $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ 10. $\mathbb{W}b4$ (10. $\mathbb{W}b3$ 0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}d4!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $fxe6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xe6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ with a useful lead in development) 10...0–0 11. e3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}b5$



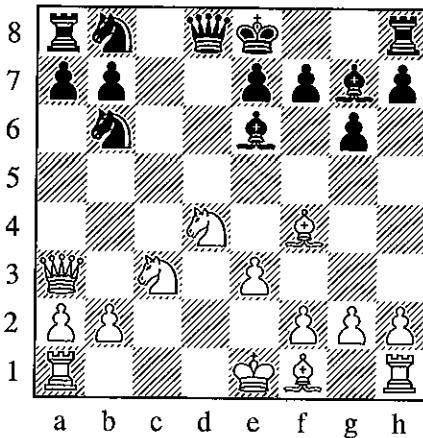
12... $\mathbb{Q}c8!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}xc5!$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$ 15. $bxc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ Black's chances are slightly higher.

9.0–0–0 has been tested just once. 9...cxd4!N (9... $\mathbb{Q}8d7$ was not so good in Lalith – Van Beek, Leiden 2012) 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11. e3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$



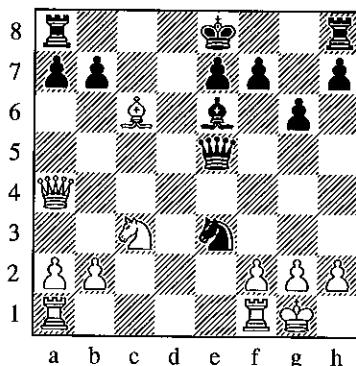
12. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ Preventing short castling. (12. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 0–0 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}c8!$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ is fine for Black) 12... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ Followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}cb4$ and Black is fine.

D21) 9.e3 cxd4 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$



10... $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

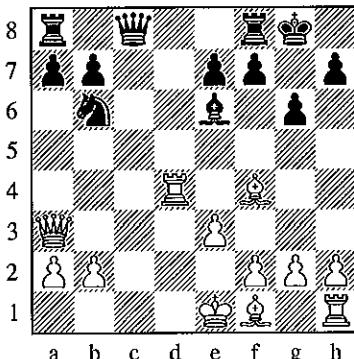
After 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ there is nothing wrong with the simple: 11... $\mathbb{W}xd4!$?N (11...0–0 was also roughly equal in Moradiabadi – Ganguly, Guangzhou 2010) 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\uparrow$



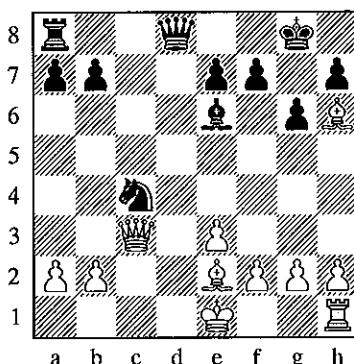
16... $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $bxc6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}e5=$

11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

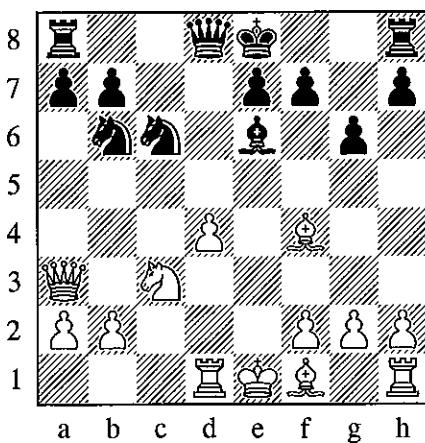
12. $\mathbb{Q}b5?$ N is an interesting attempt to recapture on d4 without creating an isolated pawn. 12...0–0 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ Black's lead in development compensates for the bishop pair, for example:

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6

15. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ (15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c1\uparrow$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}c2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 19. 0-0 $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 20. axb3 $\mathbb{Q}d6=$) 15... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}xd8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}c3$



18... $\mathbb{W}a5!$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xa5$ (19. b4?! $\mathbb{W}e5$ is good for Black) 19... $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ 20. b3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ f6= Black has enough activity to counter the bishop pair, especially with the plan of ...a5-a4.



12...0-0!N

A natural improvement over 12... $\mathbb{Q}d5$, which was slightly inaccurate because of 13. $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ in Inarkiev – Sutovsky, Poikovsky 2013.

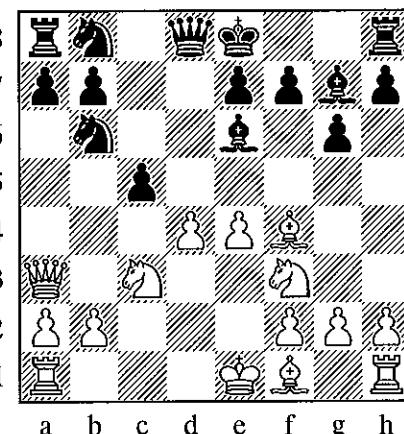
13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 15. 0-0 $\mathbb{W}b6$
16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

16. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}b4!$ is pleasant for Black.

16... $\mathbb{E}ad8=$

Black is doing fine.

D22) 9.e4!?



An interesting temporary pawn sacrifice.

9... $\mathbb{c}xd4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 0-0!

Black sacrifices the exchange for the sake of the initiative.

11. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$

In return for the exchange, Black has an extra pawn and a lead in development. This position has been tested in some high-level games, which we will follow for a while.

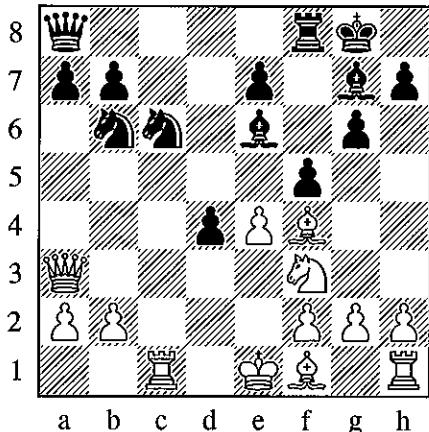
13. $\mathbb{E}c1!$

White takes the c4-square under control.

13.♗d3?! ♜c4! gives White nothing better than 14.♕xc4 ♜xc4† with better chances for Black, as White can't castle on the kingside.

13...f5!

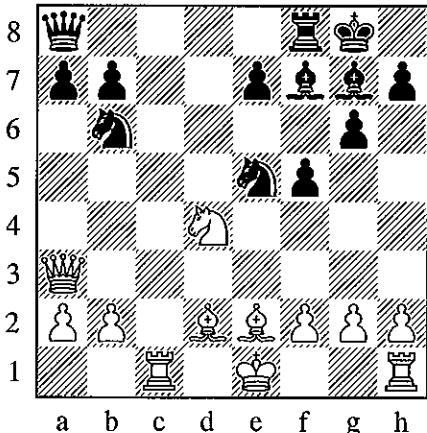
Black is trying to open up the position in order to exploit White's lack of development.



14.e5 ♜d5 15.♗d2 ♜xe5 16.♗xd4 ♜f7

17.♗e2 ♜b6!

This move carries an obvious threat of ...♜ec4, but there is also a secondary idea of ...♝d8 to bring the queen into play with tempo.



18.b3

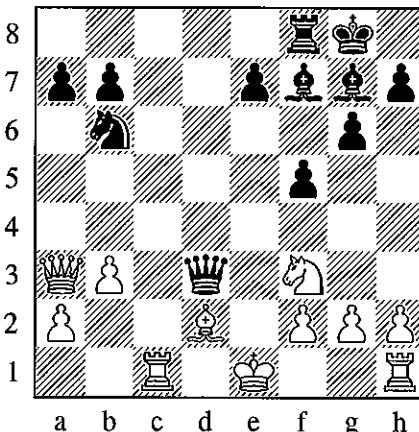
After 18.♗h3 in Wagner – Seger, Germany 2014, Black's play can be improved by means

of 18...♝d8!N 19.♗c3 ♜d5 20.0–0 ♜xc3 21.bxc3 ♜xa2 with roughly equal chances.

18...♝d8 19.♗f3

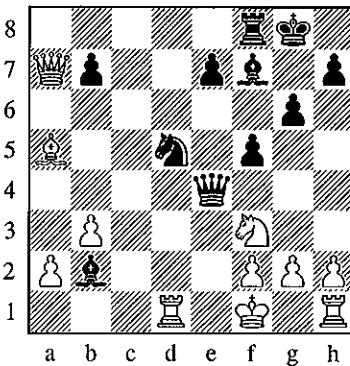
19.♗c3 is well met by 19...♜d5.

19...♝d3† 20.♗xd3 ♜xd3



21.♗xa7 ♜b2! 22.♗xb6

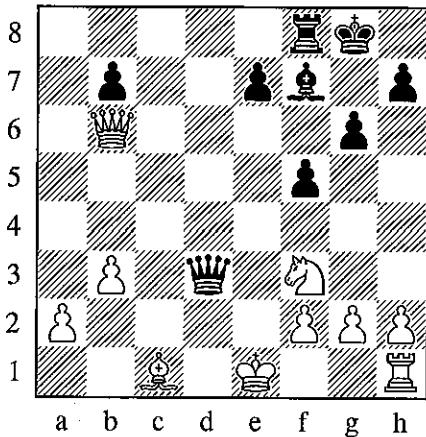
22.♗d1? is bad because of: 22...♜d5! 23.♗a5 ♜e4† 24.♗f1



24...b6! 25.♗xb6 ♜f4 26.♗a6 ♜c2 27.♗e1 ♜d5—+ With a decisive attack.

22...♝xc1 23.♝xc1

White is a piece up but his king remains stuck in the centre. Black has just enough time to bring his rook into action and keep the initiative burning.

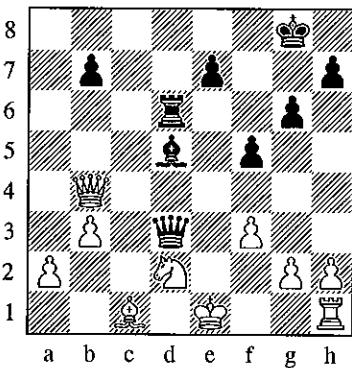


23... $\mathbb{E}d8$ 24. $\mathfrak{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}d6$ 25. $\mathbb{W}a7$

25. $\mathbb{W}b4$

This was White's choice in the stem game where 17... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ was first played.

25... $\ddot{\text{Q}}$ d5! 26.f3



26... $\mathbb{W}e3\ddagger!N$

This suggestion of Krasenkow improves over 26... $\mathbb{E}e6\text{?}!$ as played in Svidler – Sutovsky, Rhodes 2013.

27. dI

27.♔f1? is refuted by: 27...♝c6 28.♗b2
♝e6!–

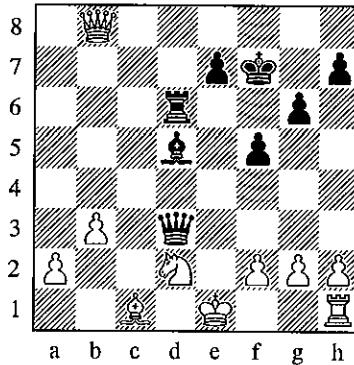
27... ♕xf3+ 28. ♔c2

28.gxf3? $\mathbb{W}xf3\#$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}c2 \mathbb{W}xh1\#$ is in Black's favour.

28... ♗xp2 29. ♘d1 f4

With good compensation for the sacrificed piece. (Black also has good alternatives on the 29th move.)

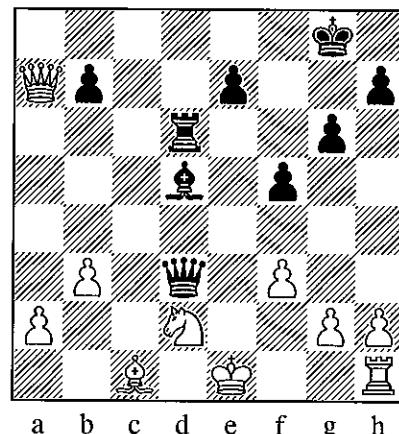
25. $\mathbb{W}xb7N$ awaits a practical test. My analysis continues: 25... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 26. $\mathbb{W}b8\# \mathbb{Q}f7$



27.f3! The only move to survive. 27... $\mathbb{W}e3\uparrow$
 28. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ Another only move. 28... $\mathbb{Q}xf3\uparrow$
 (28... $\mathbb{W}c3?=?$) 29.gxf3 (29. $\mathbb{Q}c2?$ is bad here
 due to 29... $\mathbb{Q}e4\uparrow$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2\rightarrow$) 29... $\mathbb{W}f3\uparrow$
 30. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{W}xh1$ With a complex position of
 dynamic equality.

25... ♕d5! 26.f3

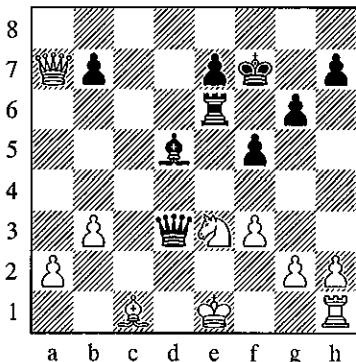
Here I found an important improvement, which ultimately leads to a forced draw.



26...c6!N

26... $\mathbb{A}e6$ † is less accurate. 27. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{E}a6$
 28. $\mathbb{W}c5$ $\mathbb{E}xa2$ 29. $\mathbb{W}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ † 30. $\mathbb{Q}e1\pm$
 Navara – Wei Yi, Wijk aan Zee 2015.

27. $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{E}e6\#$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}f7!$ Preparing ...f4.



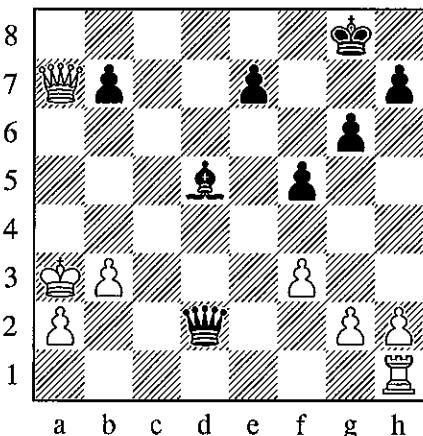
29. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ f4 30. $\mathbb{E}e1$ fxe3# 31. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{E}a6$ 32. $\mathbb{W}c5$ $\mathbb{E}xa2\#$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3=$ The endgame is drawn, although White has to be slightly careful due to the pawn minus.

27... $\mathbb{E}xc1\#$!?

28. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ $\mathbb{W}c3\#$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}b1$

After 29. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}a1\#$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{W}xh1$ it is White who must be careful to maintain the balance.

29... $\mathbb{W}d3\#$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}xd2\#$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}a3$



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

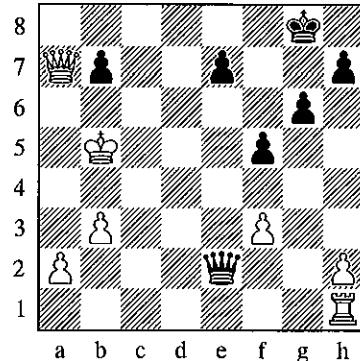
A crucial resource.

32. $\mathbb{W}xf3$

32. $\mathbb{W}b8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 33. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}a5\#$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}d2\#$ = is a simple perpetual.

32... $\mathbb{W}d6\#$ 33. $\mathbb{b}4$

The alternative is: 33. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}d7\#$! 34. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{W}d2\#$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}e2\#$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{W}d2\#$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}e2\#$



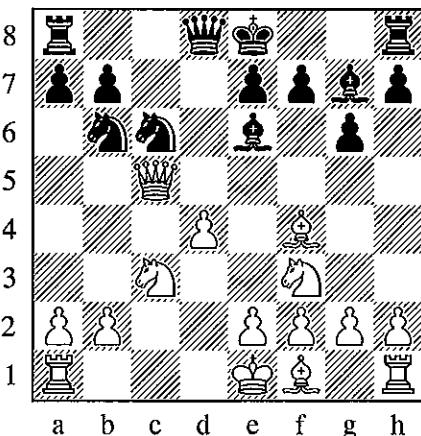
38. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ This is White's only way to escape the perpetual, but after 38... $\mathbb{W}f2\#$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}xf3\#$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{W}xh1$ 41. $\mathbb{W}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}e4=$ Black is fine.

33... $\mathbb{W}d3\#$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}d2\#$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d3\#$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}c2\#$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

37. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}e2\#$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{W}f2\#$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}xf3\#$ = is similar to the note above.

37... $\mathbb{W}c3\#$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}c2\#$ =

D23) 9. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$



Taking the c5-pawn is obviously a critical test. Now D231) 10. $e4?$ is an interesting deviation from D232) 10. $e3$.

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ and 2...g6**D231) 10.e4!?**

White offers to return his extra pawn in the hope of preventing Black from castling.

10... $\mathbb{E}c8!$

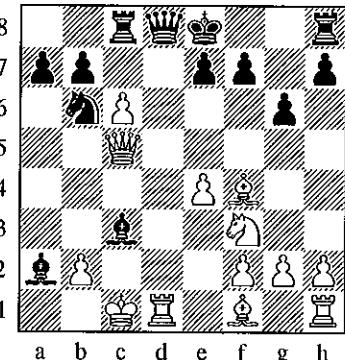
I discovered this improvement some time ago, but am unable to claim it as a novelty as MVL played it in October 2015.

After 10... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}a3$ a6 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 17.0–0 $\mathbb{E}c8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ White was slightly better in Vazquez Igarza – Wei Yi, Gibraltar 2015.

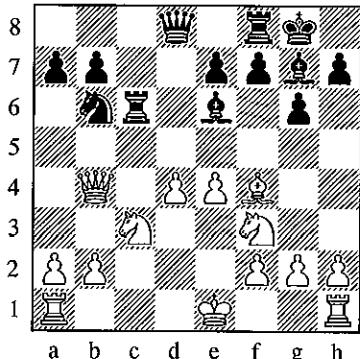
11. $\mathbb{W}a3N$

This is the move I spent most of my time analysing.

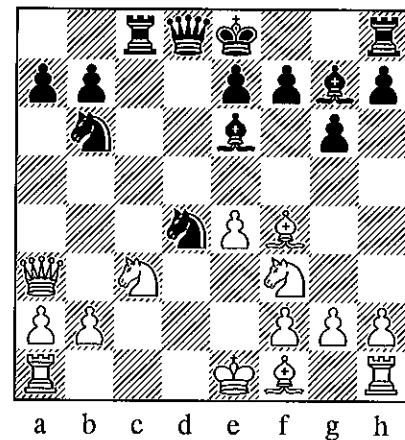
11.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}xa2!$ 12.d5 $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$ 13.dxc6 (13.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 14. $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 16.dxc6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6\uparrow!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5\uparrow$ gives Black a strong initiative)



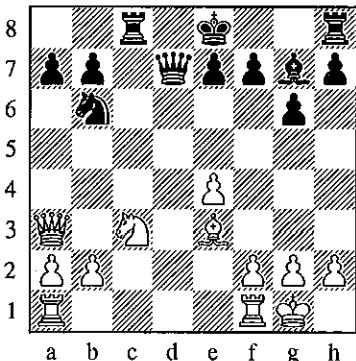
13... $\mathbb{Q}xb2\uparrow!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 0–0 16.c7 $\mathbb{W}a4\uparrow$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4\uparrow$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ a6 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ Black has a favourable endgame.

11. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}b4$ 

13... $\mathbb{F}5\uparrow N$ I found this move and the following analysis before the MVL game. (13... $\mathbb{E}c4$ was the less accurate continuation of Radjabov – Vachier-Lagrave, Berlin 2015) 14. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 15.dxe5 (15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}c4\uparrow$ is promising for Black as White can't castle short) 15... $\mathbb{E}c4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}a4!$ 17.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 18.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}xe4=$ and Black is fine.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ **12.0–0–0**

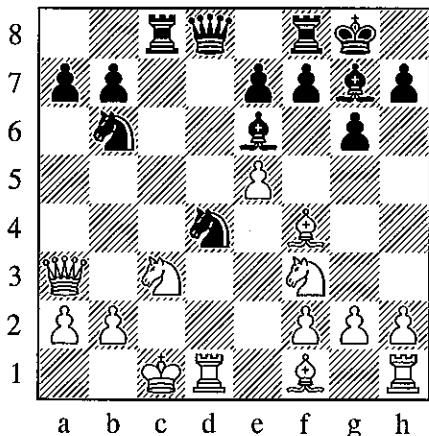
12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ gives White no advantage, for instance: 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd7\uparrow$ (15. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ exd6 is equal too) 15... $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 16.0–0 (16. $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ b5 18. $\mathbb{W}xd7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 19.0–0 e6 20. $\mathbb{Q}b6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{E}c2=$)



16... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $e6!$ Taking away the d5-square. 18. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 19. $fxe3$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 0-0 22. $a4$ $\mathbb{W}b3$ ∞ With full compensation.

12...0-0 13.e5

13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $b6\infty$ gives Black good compensation for the pawn.



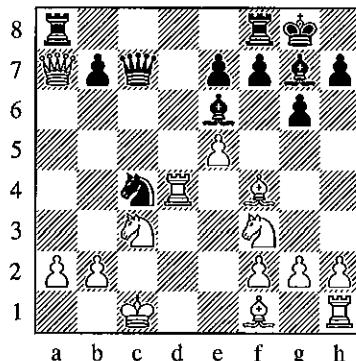
13... $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xa7$

14. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1\uparrow$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ is slightly better for Black.

14... $\mathbb{W}c7!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$ is no good due to 15... $\mathbb{Q}fd8-$.

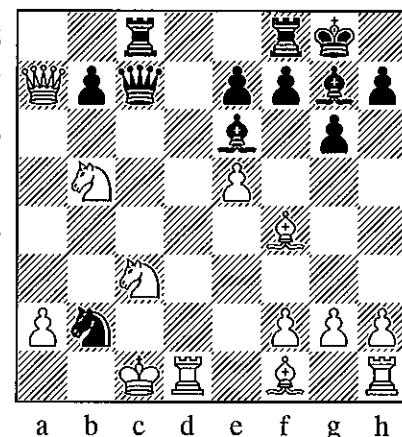
15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ (15... $\mathbb{Q}xb2??$ doesn't work because of 16. $\mathbb{W}a3!+-$) Now the queen is trapped and so White's next move is forced:



16. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2=$ With a position of dynamic equality.

15... $\mathbb{Q}xb2!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}db5$

Now we get a forcing sequence leading to an equal endgame.



16... $\mathbb{Q}xd1!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$

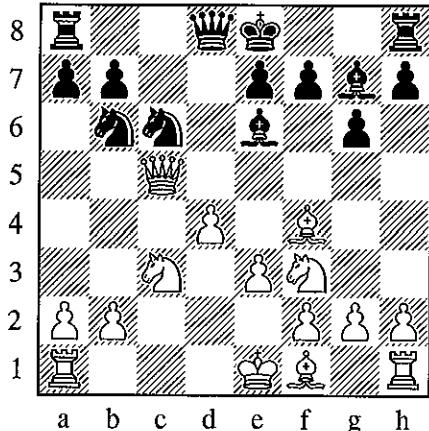
An important intermediate move.

18. $\mathbb{Q}xe6!$ $\mathbb{Q}b5\uparrow$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 22. $f4$ $g5!-$

White's bishop pair is not too meaningful as Black's pieces are so active.

D232) 10.e3

This is the most natural and popular move, defending the extra pawn and challenging Black to prove his compensation.

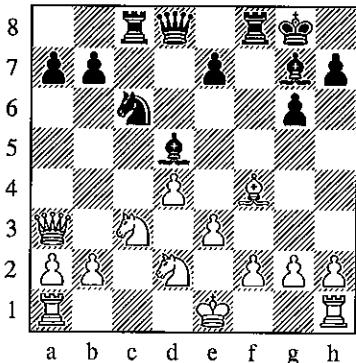


10... $\mathbb{B}c8$ 11. $\mathbb{W}a3$

11. $\mathbb{W}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5!?$ N Black blocks the fifth rank and prepares ...h6. (In the only preceding game Black played 11...h6, which was also roughly equal in Agdestein – Y. Vovk, Fagernes 2015) 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ h6 13. $\mathbb{W}g3$ 0–0 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5=$ with a good position for Black.

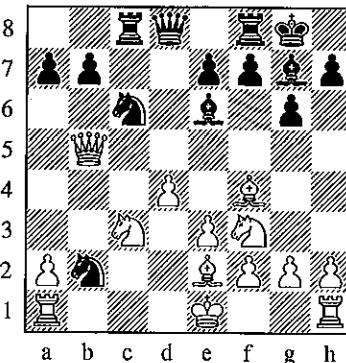
11...0–0 12. $\mathbb{B}d1$

12. $\mathbb{Q}d2!?$ is dubious in view of: 12... $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ f5! 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ f4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$

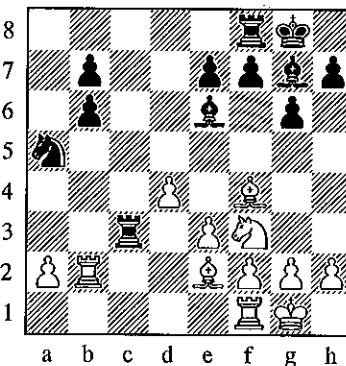


16... $\mathbb{Q}xd4!?$ N (A clear improvement on 16... $\mathbb{B}xf4?$, after which 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 18. exf4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 19. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c2?$ 20. $\mathbb{W}h3+–$ was disastrous for Black in Papin – Nyback, Plovdiv 2012) 17. exd4 $\mathbb{B}xf4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 19. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}xd4=$ White is under serious pressure.

White has also tried: 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 14. $\mathbb{W}b5$



14... $\mathbb{W}b6!?$ (14... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 15. 0–0 $\mathbb{W}a5$ also looks roughly equal) 15. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ axb6 16. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ $\mathbb{B}xc3$ 18. 0–0 Now I would like to improve upon Black's play in Zhou Weiqi – Robson, Ningbo 2013, with:



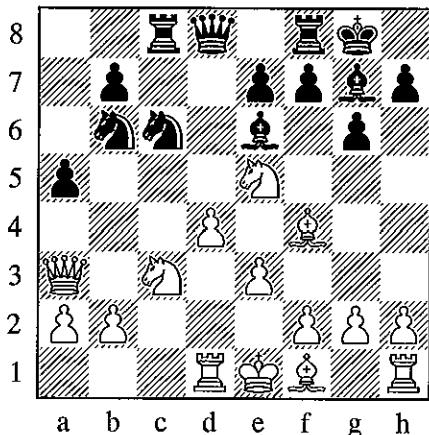
18... $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$ N 19. $\mathbb{B}b4$ (or 19. $\mathbb{B}b5$ $\mathbb{B}a8=$) 19... $\mathbb{B}c8=$ with a roughly equal endgame.

12...a5!

A typical idea in the Anti-Grünfeld. Black is preparing ... $\mathbb{B}b4$.

13. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

13. $\mathbb{Q}e2?$ would be a mistake in view of 13... $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$



13...♝b4!N

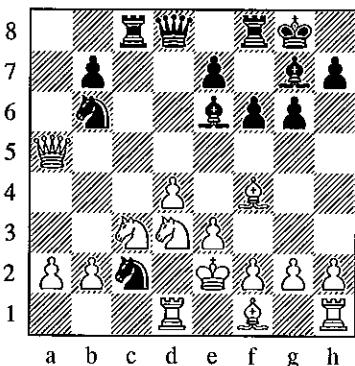
This is a serious improvement over 13...♝d5 from Sadorra – Ganguly, Subic Bay 2009.

14.♗xa5

14.♗d2? f6 15.♗f3 ♘c4 16.♗b3 ♗d7+ is dangerous for White.

14...♝c2† 15.♗d2

15.♗e2?! f6 16.♗d3 gives Black a choice:



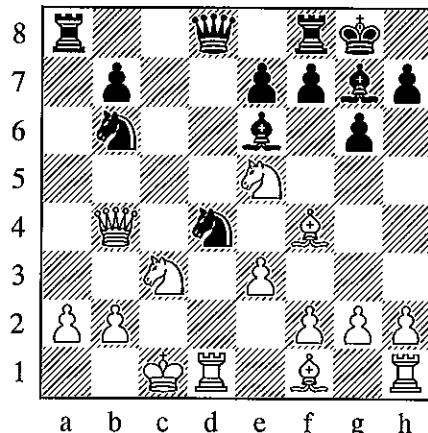
16...g5! This is an adventurous winning attempt. (If Black is content with a draw, he can force it with 16...♝a8 17.♗c5 ♗c8=) 17.♗g3 ♘g4† 18.f3 ♘xe3! 19.fxg4 ♗xd4 Black has a dangerous attack for the sacrificed piece.

15...♝xd4! 16.♗c1!

16.♗e1?! is dubious: 16...♝c4! 17.♗xd8 ♘c2† 18.♗e2 ♗fxd8†

16...♝a8! 17.♗b4

17.♗c5? loses to 17...♝b3†! 18.axb3 ♗a1† 19.♗c2 ♗xd1 20.♗xd1 ♘xb3†–+.



17...♝d5! 18.♗xd5

18.♗xd4?! ♘xc3 19.♗xc3 (or 19.bxc3 ♗a5→) 19...♗b6 20.♗d4 ♗xa2† with a strong attack.

18...♗xd5 19.♗xd4 ♗xa2 20.♗d2 ♘b3!?→

Black's powerful attack is more important than for the sacrificed material.

Conclusion

This chapter on the popular and critical 5.♗b3 brings our coverage of the Anti-Grünfeld to an end. Of the four main branches, 7.e3 and 7.♗g5 are not too threatening, although neither of them should be forgotten about. 7.e4 ♘g4 contains several interesting sub-variations; in particular, 8.♗b5† used to be considered the most challenging for Black, but the 11...c5?! pawn sacrifice has proven to be a good answer.

The final section on 7.♗f4 ♘e6 contains some of the most complicated variations in the book, especially after 8.♗a3 c5!?, when both 9.e4!? and 9.♗xc5 demand especially careful attention. In general, the Grünfeld is an opening containing many sharp, forcing lines, and so a lot of analytical and memory work is needed to play it – and the same is true of the Anti-Grünfeld.

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