

Cyrus Lakdawala

The Modern Defence

move by move



EVERYMAN CHESS

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Cyrus Lakdawala is an International Master, a former National Open and American Open Champion, and a six-time State Champion. He has been teaching chess for over 30 years, and coaches some of the top junior players in the US.

Also by the author:

I ... d6: Move by Move

A Ferocious Opening Repertoire

Capablanca: Move by Move

Play the London System

The Caro-Kann: Move by Move

The Four Knights: Move by Move

The Slav: Move by Move

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Series Foreword

Move by Move is a series of opening books which uses a question-and-answer format. One of our main aims of the series is to replicate - as much as possible - lessons between chess teachers and students. All the way through, readers will be challenged to answer searching questions and to complete exercises, to test their skills in chess openings and indeed in other key aspects of the game. It's our firm belief that practising your skills like this is an excellent way to study chess openings, and to study chess in general. Many thanks go to all those who have been kind enough to offer inspiration, advice and assistance in the creation of *Move by Move*. We're really excited by this series and hope that readers will share our enthusiasm.

John Emms
Everyman Chess

Bibliography

Books

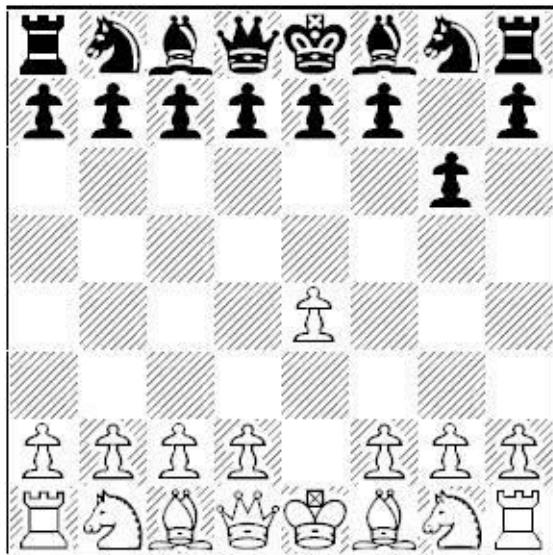
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Chess Informant
The Week in Chess

Introduction

I recall a game I played during a lunch break in seventh grade against one of the history teachers. He opened with 1 e4. At the time I read *Canadian Chess Chat* magazine, which was permeated with the games of Canada's chess god, Duncan Suttles, who opened 1 ... g6! on every white first move.



Now from my rudimentary understanding, I reasoned that there was no higher chess authority than Suttles, so like a faithful acolyte I dutifully followed suit and played 1 ... g6!. The history teacher closed his eyes and nodded wisely, as if confirming some long-held suspicion about my intelligence level. Then he issued this ominous prediction: "You have just lost the game!" "Why!?" I whined vehemently. The wise teacher went on to explain: "Both players should fight for the centre of the board, therefore 1 ... g6 is a weak move which hands White central control."

Even then, intuition warned me that something was off with the teacher's bogus assessment. Forty years later, I confidently assert that the teacher was wrong, and the Modern Defence is sound, and the stats are there to prove it. Luckily, I didn't believe him and play the Modern to this day.

The Modern is indeed a scary, counter-intuitive opening and the rules which govern are quite distinct from those in other, more orthodox openings. We Modernists view life on the chess board with extraterrestrial, alien perception. After all, as the teacher pointed out, Black, in hypermodern fashion, cedes White central control without a fight. But giving away the centre is not done with a motivation of generosity or trepidation. The plan is to later chip away at White's centre from the sides and tear it down.

The second scary issue people have with the Modern (as John Watson once pointed out) is the fact that many of the lines look similar, except for some minute, imperceptible shift, and that one tiny shift may completely alter your strategy from the other look-alike variation. The structure alters in astonishingly disorienting ways, like some alien shape shifter, who appears differently each day. Both we and our opponents walk theoretical corridors on unsteady legs, but this is not such a big problem if you think about it.

Have you ever eaten a curry so hot that there actually is no taste except for the all-encompassing bonfire in your mouth (I am Indian and have endured this experience many, many times)? The Modern is a bit like this: it is so complicated that it is easy to play! If chaos and complexity increase past the limits of the understanding of most club players – or even GMs for that matter – the participants basically tend to

play by feel. This in turn means that the Modern player is accustomed to such chaos, while White encounters it rarely and is often left groping about for the right plan.

If you just go through the games of this book and study the great Modernists and post-Modernists, like: Duncan Suttles, Ray Keene, Jon Speelman, Nigel Davies, Colin McNab, Tiger Hillarp Person, Zurab Azmaiparashvili and Peter Svidler, I bet you will not be overwhelmed and boggled by the complexity, unlike many of your unfortunate opponents, who don't encounter Modern all that often.

The Mechanics of the Modern Defence

Unlike classical, solid opening lines like 1 e4 e5, the Caro-Kann, or the Queen's Gambit Declined, the Modern doesn't fight for central control, or solidity, or even seek to equalize. We begin asymmetrically and challenge White from our very first move. For years I endured from lower-rated players playing White, the Exchange Slav and the Exchange French, both with the intent to take the life out of positions, and allow my lower-rated opponents to deaden the position and draw.

A few years back I got tired of this weasely strategy from my more cowardly opponents and added my childhood favourite 1 ... g6 against any first move. I noticed with shock that after a year my stats were actually equal to or better than with the Slav, the Caro-Kann, the French and the Sicilian. The number of draws went way down, and my losses in turn thankfully did not increase (too much at least!). I am normally associated with super-solid lines like the Slav and Caro, but now add 1 ... g6 (and the Modern's introverted brother 1 ... d6) as one of my main openings as Black.

1 ... g6 Against Everything!

The Modern represents a one-size-fits-all line. We play it against virtually every (well, okay, maybe not against 1 b3!) main white first move choice: 1 e4, 1 d4, 1 c4, and 1 Nf3.

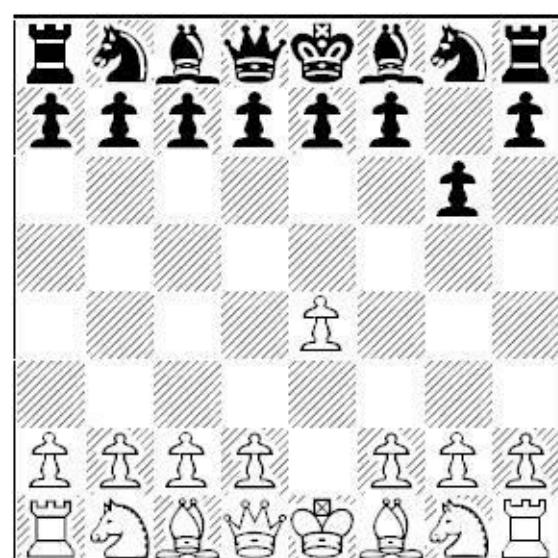
Here is an old school Modern, one of my all time favourites:

Game 1

D.Janosevic-D.Suttles

Belgrade 1969

1 e4 g6



Enter the rabbit hole, my friend. I still remember the initial shock I received when first going over the game in 1969; a mind-altering experience.

2 d4 Bg7 3 Nf3 d6 4 Nc3 c6

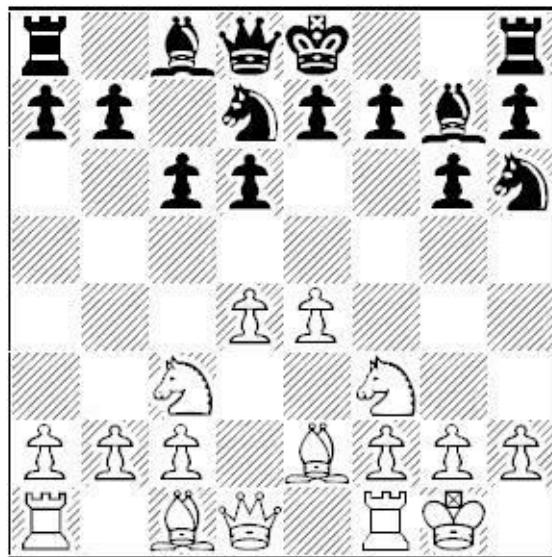
Back in the old days we all played ... c6 Moderns since it never occurred to us to play 4 ... a6!

Question: What are the differences between ... c6 and ... a6?

Answer: I think 4 ... a6! is an improvement for this reason: in the ... c6 lines Black often plays ... b5, ... a6, ... Bb7, and ... c5 later on. Well, in the ... a6! lines we cut out the single redundancy of the ... c6 middle man, and gain a tempo by simply eliminating an often unnecessary move.

5 Be2 Nd7 6 0-0 Nh6!?

Hallucinogens are optional. As always, Suttles imposes his anarchistic Suttleszian world view upon the board. You must keep in context that in 1969 Yoko hadn't yet messed everything up with The Beatles. We all dressed outlandishly, all the while thinking aberrant, odd thoughts and doing groovy, psychedelic, perplexing things!



Question: Black's move has to be bad, right?

Answer: Good and bad, virtue and sin go out the window in these 60's Modern dreamscapes. Black's eccentric last move keeps open possibilities of ... f6 and ... Nf7 or even ... f5. Normal would be something like 6 ... Qc7 7 a4 Ngf6 8 h3 0-0, V.Topalov-R.Rauschenbach, Frankfurt (rapid) 1997, but Suttles never ever played Moderns like this one.

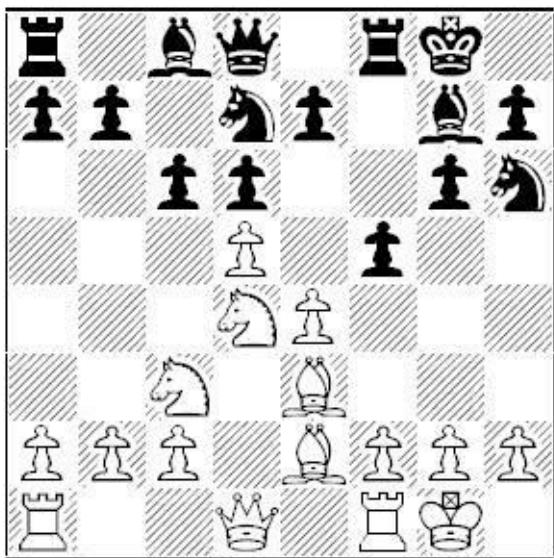
7 Bg5

Provoking ... f6. The trouble is Suttles probably intended to play the move anyway. Better was 7 Re1 Qc7 8 a4 0-0 9 h3 Kh8!? 10 Bc4 e5 with an edge to White, E.Jimenez Zerquera-D.Suttles, Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970.

7 ... f6 8 Be3 0-0 9 d5 f5!?

IM Andrew Martin suggests 9 ... c5, keeping White's knight out of d4.

10 Nd4



White wins a pawn after 10 dx_c6 bx_c6 11 Nd4 Ne5 12 Nx_c6! Nx_c6 13 Qd5+ Nf7 14 Qx_c6 Bd7, but those two open files should give Black some Benko Gambit-style compensation.

10 ... Bxd4!?

Question: What the hell!?

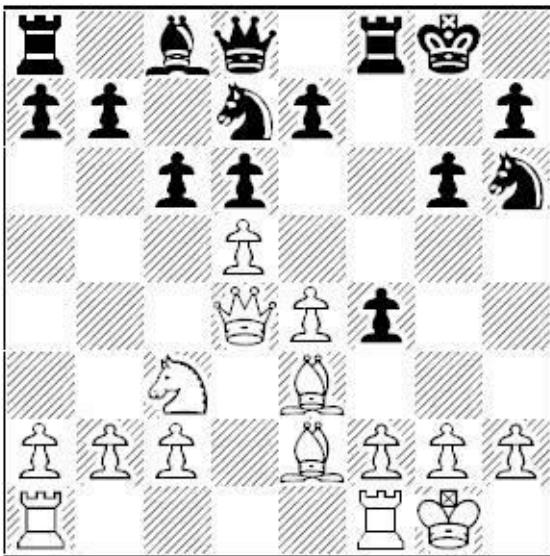
Answer: No, this isn't a dream, or a move played on the theory that a few bitter greens enhance the salad. We are reminded of the lyrics of the Gordon Lightfoot song: "Carefree Highway, let me slip away, slip away on you." Are you confused yet? I'm not sure if this move deserves a '??' or a '!!', so I hedged my bets and gave it one of each. Who knows if Suttles' win was the result of a mindbendingly deep strategic plan, or simply an accident of grace which fell before his feet.

I realize Black's last move looks as out of place as Hulk Hogan at the library. It certainly feels like Black pushes his position far past tolerable limits of endurance by casually handing over his monster dark-squared bishop for no visible compensation, the original sin in the Modern. Keep in mind, though, every religion cherishes its dogmas, which unbelievers like Suttles reject. In this case Black does indeed accrue a subtle gain in exchange for the trade: he takes control over e5. The rest of humanity would go for 10 ... Ne5.

11 Qxd4

White's bishop gets the double boot after 11 Bxd4 c5 12 Be3 f4 13 Bd2 Ne5.

11 ... f4!



Black's idea: create an artificial hole on e5 for a knight.

12 dxc6 bxc6 13 Bc4+!?

White chickens out.

Question: Why didn't White go for the c6-pawn with 13 Qc4+?

Answer: This jittery rendition of his previous idea was probably White's best plan. He was probably nervous about Black's initiative after 13 ... Nf7 14 Qxc6 Rb8 15 Bc1.

Question: Is Black's sac sound?

Answer: Who knows? But clearly Black gets all sorts of practical chances after the sac:

1. He owns the e5-square.
2. Tricks with ... f3 are in the air.
3. He may get Benko Gambit-like pressure down the queenside files.

13 ... Nf7 14 Bxf4?

"White has been suitably confused", writes Martin. White sacs a piece for three pawns, but in doing so loses the initiative. Perhaps he didn't like his position after 14 Bc1 g5!.

14 ... e5

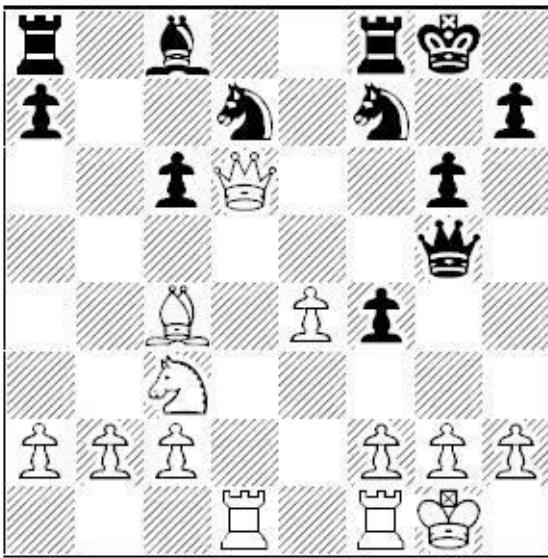
Thanks!

15 Qxd6 exf4 16 Rad1??

I would remove that nasty f-pawn with 16 Qxf4.

16 ... Qg5

The immediate 16 ... f3 also looks strong.



17 Bxf7+

He cuts Black's Siamese twin knights surgically free of one another. Instead if 17 Qxc6 Nde5! and now if White bites with 18 Qxa8?? he gets mated after 18 ... Nf3+! 19 Kh1 Qh5!.

17 ... Rxf7 18 Qxc6 f3

Leaving an ugly scar around the White king's face.

19 g3 Nb6 20 Nd5 Bd7 21 Qd6 Nc4!?

As always, Suttles takes the complicated route over the simple one. The comps say 21 ... Rc8! is stronger.

22 Qb4 Rc8 23 b3 Ne5

Now there are just too many attackers around White's king.

24 Ne3 Qh6 25 Rd5 Ng4!

Removing the defender of g2, the mating square.

26 Nxg4

White's knight proves a dismal flop in his capacity as king's guard.

26 ... Bxg4

Threat: ... Qh3.

27 h4 Rxc2 28 Rfd1 Rc8

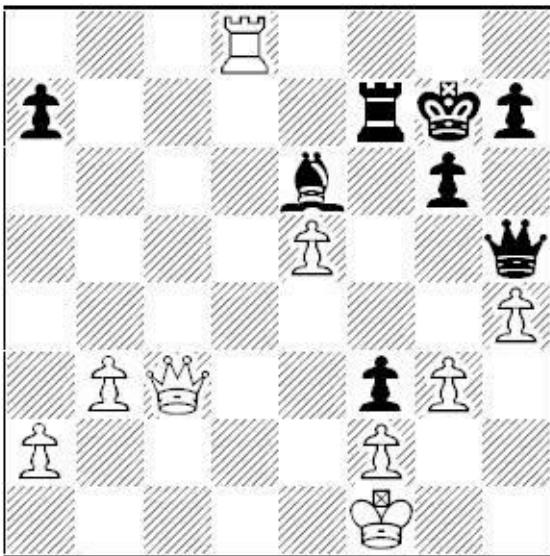
Houdini gives the bizarre comp line 28 ... Qe3!? 29 Qb8+ Kg7 30 Qe5+ Kh6 31 Rf1 (31 fxe3?? f2+ mates in three moves) 31 ... Qe2 32 Qg5+ Kg7 33 Qe5+ Rf6! 34 Qe7+ Kh6! when Black suddenly threatens ... Qxf1+!, mating, and if 35 Rdd1 Qa6!. But this line is even too weird for Suttles!

29 e5

White can force queens off in the line 29 Rd8+ Rf8 30 Rxc8 Bxc8 31 Qc4+ Kh8 32 Qd4+ Qg7, but he can't save the game after 33 Qxg7+ Kxg7 34 Rc1 Bb7.

29 ... Be6 30 Rd8+ Rxd8 31 Rxd8+ Kg7 32 Qc3 Qh5 33 Kf1?

33 Qe1 is necessary, but Black is winning since White gets tied down to his first rank and Black's king is safe from perpetual check.



Exercise (combination alert): Black to play and win.

Answer: 33 ... Qf5!

Double attack. Black's threats grow numerous and omnidirectional as he menaces deadly checks on h3 and b1. White can only stop one of them. After this cruel shot, White's king gets yanked from its reverie and tossed carelessly into a netherworld of tormented spirits.

34 Rd6

Walking into a mate. Marginally less hopeless was 34 Qc1 Qh3+ 35 Ke1 Qg2 36 Qe3 Qg1+ 37 Kd2 Rc7! when White's king gets hunted down.

34 ... Qb1+ 0-1

A yawning chasm opens up before White's king, who slumps over like a gunshot victim. 35 Qe1 Bh3+ mates.

Summary

Perhaps the Modern allows Black greater creative leeway than any other opening.

Acknowledgements

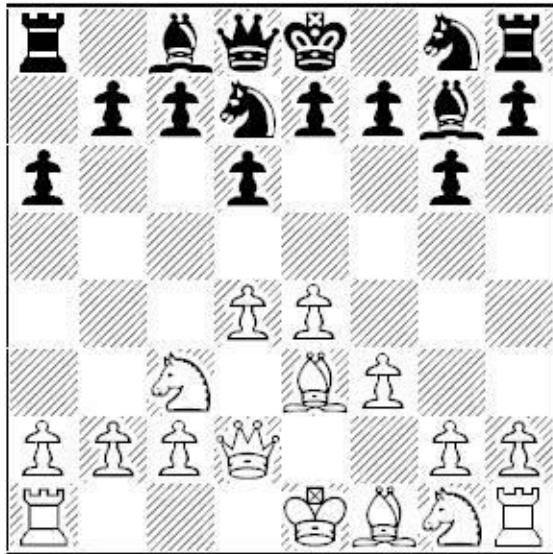
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May all your opponents overconfidently close their eyes and nod wisely upon seeing you play 1 ... g6!

Chapter One

The Pseudo-Dragon

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 Be3 a6 5 Qd2 Nd7 6 f3



Some players are so loyal to their ideals that they can never be bought off or negotiated away from their core beliefs. In this case, your opponent is likely a pure attacker who believes Black has committed the original sin of falling behind in development without culpability, and White feels he is the instrument of divine punishment to come. However, matters are not so simple. We, on the other hand, refuse to make eye contact with White, frustrating attempts to open the position at every turn. I actually believe we enter a favourable version of a Sicilian Dragon. Why favourable?

There are two critical differences; I believe both to be in Black's favour:

1. Black's king, unlike in most Dragons, remains uncommitted. White has trouble hunting down a moving target. Black can castle queenside, keep his king in the middle, or castle kingside later on.

2. Black's pawns are rather fixed and rigid in most Dragons. In the Modern, the opposite is the case. White may attack the same way as in a Dragon, with f3, g4, h4, but Black has access to a million shifts in structure. For example, he can play his pawn to h6, to h5, or leave it alone on h7. Black may develop his knight to f6, but can also play ... e6 (or ... e5), and ... Ne7, or even ... Nh6 in some cases. In essence Black's structure remains a lot shiftier in the Modern.

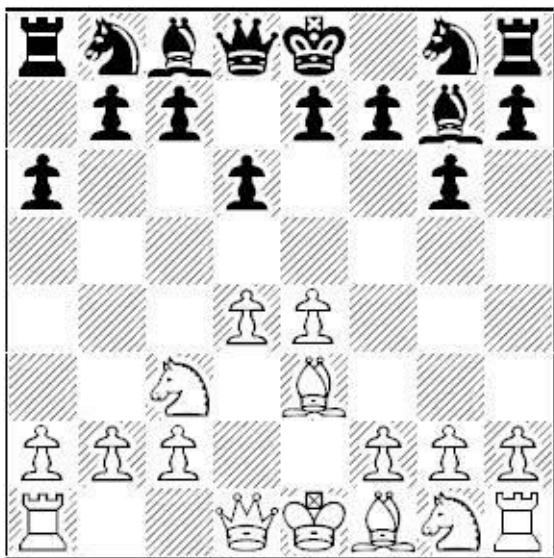
In a sense, the first two chapters are the most important of the king's pawn section of the book since they are so common. I arrive at positions from Chapters One and Two in about 60% of my Modern games, so study them well and be familiar with Black's plans and ideas.

Game 2

C.Eichler-T.Hillarp Persson

Nuremberg 2007

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 Be3 a6



The alien arrives on Planet Earth. She looks like us and lives among us, but something isn't quite right: she just doesn't act human! Welcome to that strange place called the Modern Defence. Instead 4 ... Nf6 would be our goody-two-shoes cousin, the Pirc.

Question: How do the Modern and Pirc differ?

Answer: In the Pirc, Black plays a very early ... Nf6, which usually induces Nc3 from White. This means Pircs tend to be king's pawn games. Black in the Modern, on the other hand, delays the development of the g8-knight. This means White has the option of entering e4, d4, c4 King's Indian Defence-like structures, which we examine later in the book. Also, by avoiding an early ... Nf6, we take most of the sting out of White's dreaded e5 thrust, which can be so painful for those poor, misguided Pirc folk out there. The Modern pawn structure tends to be a lot more fluid and I believe the positions flow toward the abstract more than the straightforward ones reached from Pirc.

5 Qd2

Question: What do we do if White plays 5 f4 here?

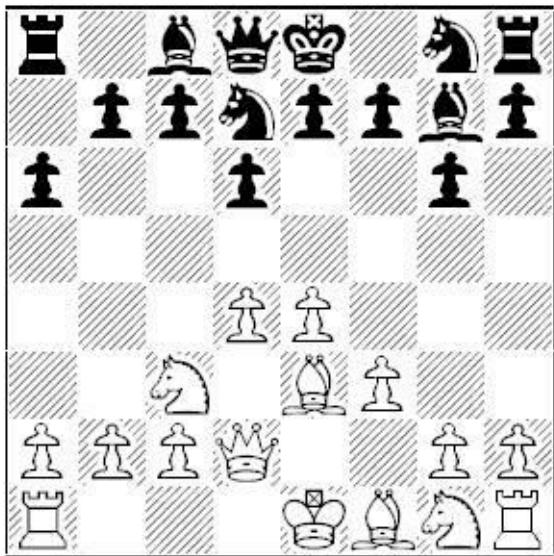
Answer: Please see Chapter Three on the Austrian Attack! It's just a transposition.

5 ... Nd7

Question: What is Black's plan?

Answer: Generally, Black strives for a delayed, and possibly favourable Sicilian Dragon, with a hint of Sicilian Najdorf – perhaps more a Dragadorf – by continuing with ... Bb7, ... Rc8, and ... c5.

6 f3



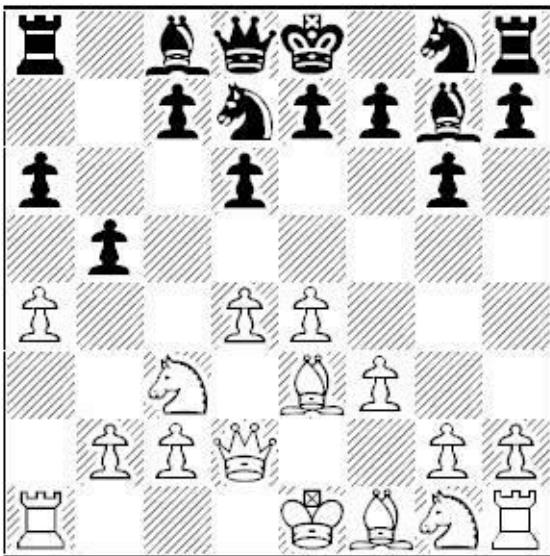
Question: What is the point of playing 6 f3?

Answer: Defence of the e-pawn is one of White's biggest headaches in the ... a6 Modern lines. By reinforcing e4, White simply frees himself from this worry. White also invariably plans a pawn storm, with h4-h5 and going bonkers on the kingside. As we will learn, the only problem with White's plan is that nobody told him Black's king doesn't make his home on the kingside yet! So sometimes we get the effect of a heavily-armed swat team raiding an empty home. The down side to 6 f3 is that it isn't a developing move and blocks f3, the natural square for the g1-knight. This in turn tends to clog White's development.

Question: How do we proceed if White stops us from an early ... b5 by playing 6 a4?

Answer: We take a look at the Hippopotamus lines next chapter. Essentially we play 6 ... b6 and then follow through with a super-flexible ... e6, ... Ne7, and ... Bb7 set-up.

6 ... b5 7 a4



A common theme in the ... a6 and ... b5 Modern lines. White seeks confrontation while he remains slightly ahead in development. In the next three games we look at 7 h4, 7 g4, and an early queenside castling plan for White.

7 ... b4 8 Nd1

The main move.

Question: Isn't it passive?

Answer: It is, but White may later transfer the knight to f2 where it backs up e4, and also may play a role in a future kingside attack.

After 8 Nd5 c5!? (quite risky; I would probably play 8 ... a5 and then hit the d5-knight with ... c6 next) 9 dx5 dx5 10 Bf4 Ra7 11 0-0-0 (if 11 Rd1 e6 12 Ne3 Bxb2 13 Ne2 Bg7, but 11 c3 prevents Black's coming trick) 11 ... e6 12 Ne3 Bxb2+! 13 Kxb2 Qf6+ Black regains the piece with an extra pawn, but even here White seems to get some compensation based on his control over c4 and d6, M.Roobol-N.Davies, Haarlem 2001.

8 ... c5

Logically chipping away at White's centre and the long diagonal.

9 c3

Challenging Black's space on the queenside.

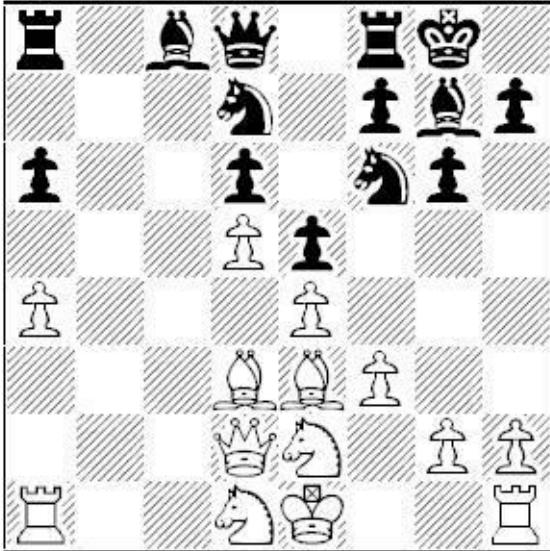
Question: Why not push past to d5?

Answer: Believe it or not, I only found a single game in the database with that plan. The implication: it isn't very good for White! Black seems to have a nice looking King's Indian-like position. I like Houdini's cheeky plan: 9 d5 Ne5! 10 Nf2 f5! when White's pieces look tangled and misplaced.

9 ... bxc3 10 bxc3 Ngf6 11 Bd3 0-0 12 Ne2 cxd4

Black can also retain tension with 12 ... Qc7, which doesn't give White the open c-file or access to c3 with his knight. Then 13 0-0 e5 14 Qa2 d5!? 15 exd5 Bb7 16 Be4 exd4 17 cxd4 was C.Lupulescu-V.Barnaure, Bucharest 2007. Black has full compensation for the pawn: for example, 17 ... Nxe4! 18 fxe4 cxd4 19 Nxd4 Nf6, and now if White tries to hang on to everything with 20 Nf2? he walks into 20 ... Nxe4! 21 Nxe4 Qe5 when Black favourably regains his piece.

13 cxd4 e5 14 d5?



Exercise (combination alert): White attempts a misguided intention to play in King's Indian Sämisch style, with the added benefit of an open queenside. Black has access to a tactic which destroys the dream. Do you see it?

White should maintain the central tension and castle: 14 0-0 d5! with equal chances.

Answer: 14 ... Nxd5! 15 exd5

This probably makes matters worse. I would apologize and back away, sans one pawn, with 15 Bf2. 15 ... e4!

Double attack. White must cough up the extra piece with interest.

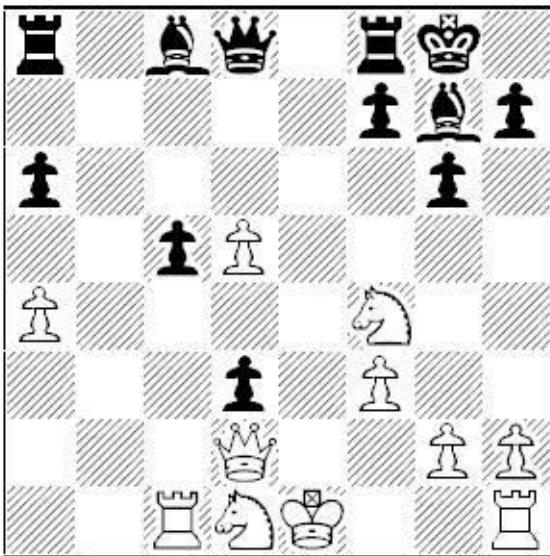
16 Rc1?!

White should minimize the damage with 16 Bg5 f6 17 Bxe4 fxg5 18 Rb1 g4. Even here, Black's bishops rule and he owns the dark squares.

16 ... exd3 17 Nf4

17 Qxd3 Qh4+ 18 Bf2 Qxa4 clips the a-pawn.

17 ... Ne5! 18 Bxc5 dxc5



Question: Does Black stand better or is he winning?

Answer: The disconcerting truth:

1. White is temporarily down a pawn.
2. He lags in development.
3. Black owns the bishop pair in an open position.
4. Black rules the dark squares.

Conclusion: What happens when things are worse for White than the worst-case scenario?

19 0-0

Question: Why didn't White take on d3?

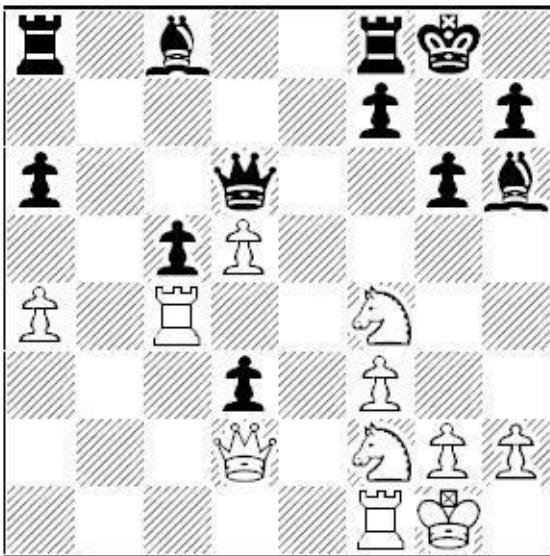
Answer: If White takes the time to recapture the pawn, his king gets caught in the centre after 19 Qxd3 Re8+ 20 Kf1 when his odds of survival look pretty miserable. He can't block the check with his knight since 20 Ne2?? Qg5! wins.

19 ... Bh6

Placing a tractor beam on the knight is not as strong as it looks. The comps like 19 ... Re8!, assessing it as winning for Black.

20 Nf2 Qd6 21 Rc4?

White still has chances to hang on after 21 g3! Bf5 22 Ne4 Bxf4 23 Qxf4 Qxf4 24 gxf4.



Exercise (combination alert): White's last move is a mistake.

Find one move and his position collapses.

Answer: 21 ... a5!

With a single stroke, Black reconciles multiple goals:

1. Transfer the light-squared bishop to its most damaging post: the a6-f1 diagonal.
2. If White's rook chooses to move after ... Ba6, then ... c4 gives Black two deeply connected passers.

22 g3

White gets caught in a million pins after 22 N2xd3? Ba6, and if the rook tries to save itself with 23 Re4?? then Black exploits the f4-pin with 23 ... Bxd3.

22 ... Ba6 23 Ne4 Qb6 24 Rcc1

It's suicide to give Black a pair of entrenched passers, but then again, it's suicide whichever way he plays! Black should have no problem converting after 24 Qxd3 Bxc4 25 Qxc4 Bxf4 26 gxf4 Qb4!.

24 ... c4+

Black's passers cross-pollinate and immerse themselves into White's territory.

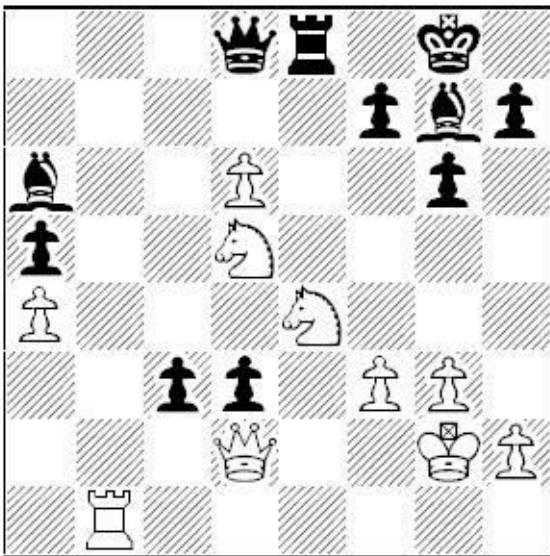
25 Kg2 Bg7 26 Rb1 Qd8?!

Perhaps Black already ran low on the clock. Rather than this disconsolate retreat, Tiger should seize the juicy hole on d4 by ploughing forward, with 26 ... Qd4!. Nobody called the queen beautiful in the flower of her youth, but here she emerges in her full radiance.

27 Rfc1 Rb8 28 d6 Rxb1 29 Rxb1 Re8 30 Nd5 c3?

The c-pawn, with quivering anticipation, incorrectly inserts itself into the debate. However, Tiger's imagination proves more fanciful than the requirements of the actual position! Black finds himself lost in a maze of details and intricacies (and probably desperately short on time as well), unable to locate the correct plan to consolidation.

Black should still be winning if he hands back the exchange with 30 ... Rxe4! 31 fxe4 Qxd6 32 Qxa5 h5.



Exercise (critical decision): White, after enduring an awful, rotten, terrible, really, really bad first 30 moves of pure misery, is suddenly presented with a miraculous opportunity to force Black's once ferocious initiative to cough and sputter out. White obviously must take the offered c-pawn, but with which knight?

31 Nexc3?

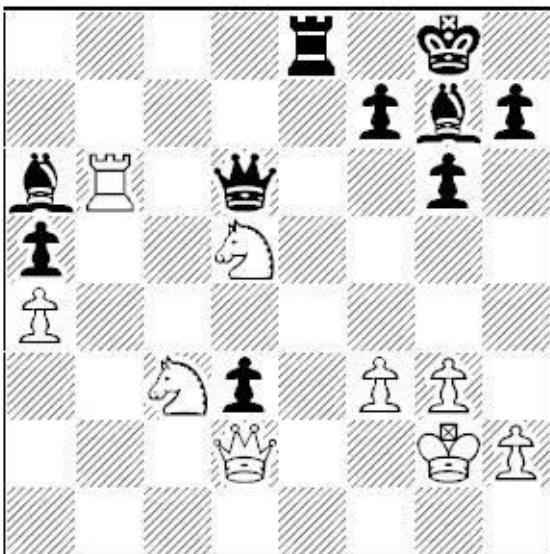
The wrong knight! White misses his chance to turn the game around.

Answer: 31 Ndxc3! f5 32 Ng5!! Bc4! (32 ... Bxc3?? walks into 33 Qa2+! Kg7 34 Qf7+ Kh6 35 Qxh7+ Kxg5 36 Qh4 mate!) 33 Qf4! when *Houdini* assesses this mess as better for White.

31 ... Qxd6

Life offers few second chances. White finds himself busted once again.

32 Rb6?



Exercise (combination alert): White's last move, a double attack, contains a hole in it. Black to play and win.

Answer: Overload.

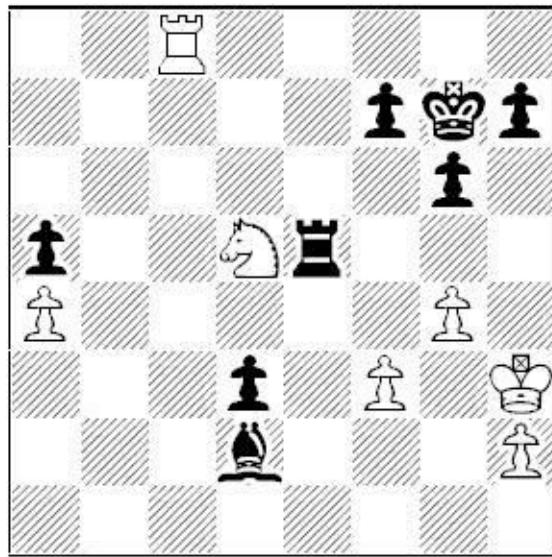
32 ... Bxc3! 33 Rxd6

33 Qxc3?? Qxd5 34 Rxa6 Re2+ mates.

33 ... Re2+ 34 Kh3

The naked king runs out of his house at the first smell of smoke. 34 Kf1 Bxd2 35 Rxa6 Re1+! 36 Kf2 Bb4! 37 Nxb4 d2 wins.

34 ... Bc8+ 35 g4 Bxd2 36 Rd8+ Kg7 37 Rxc8 Re5



Black's rook and bishop is a happy, compatible couple, derived by a shared dream: promote their offspring from d3 to the eighth rank.

38 Nb6 Bf4 39 Kg2

39 Rd8 Re2 does the trick too.

39 ... d2 0-1

Summary

White's position looks too passive to exploit his slight development lead after 7 a4.

Game 3

N.Ioseliani-P.Svidler

World Team Championship, Lucerne 1997

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 Be3 a6 5 Qd2 Nd7 6 f3

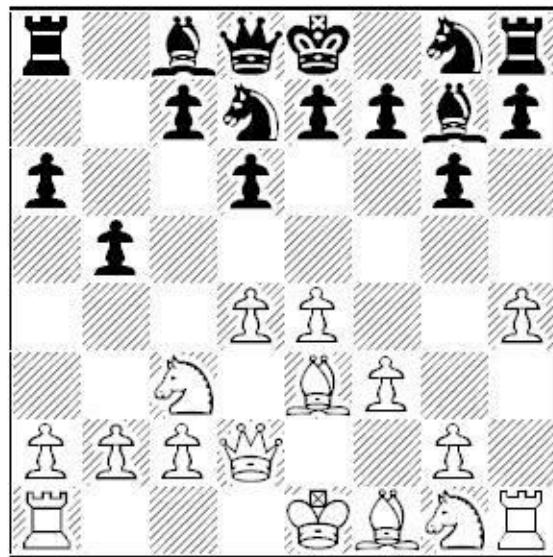
The immediate 6 h4 can also be played.

Question: Can White mix a4 and f3 in such positions?

Answer: This rare plan is playable, but strikes me as somewhat illogical since White, having played a4, is pretty much committed to kingside castling. So in essence, it knocks out one of his main options. An example: 6 a4 b6 7 f3 e6! (normally I only enter the Hippopotamus if White's knight has already committed to f3; this is the rare exception to the rule) 8 h4 h5 9 Bg5 Ne7 10 Nh3 Bb7 11 Be2 c5 12 dxc5

dxc5 13 Rd1 Ne5 14 Qf4 Qb8 15 0-0 N5c6 16 Qxb8+ Rxb8 17 Bf4 Rc8, M.Lazic-A.Delchev, Turin 2000. The computers say equal, but I doubt their word. Black's control over the central dark squares gives him the edge. Also, I don't see a good plan for White.

6 ... b5 7 h4



White plays it like a pure Sicilian Dragon.

7 ... Ngf6

By no means forced:

a) 7 ... h5 8 Nh3 Ngf6 9 Ng5 Nb6 10 b3 c6 (you don't have to play for ... c5 every single time in this line) 11 Rd1 0-0 12 Ne2 Qc7 and Black stood no worse in this complex position, M.Perez Candelario-J.Granda Zuniga, Zafra 2009.

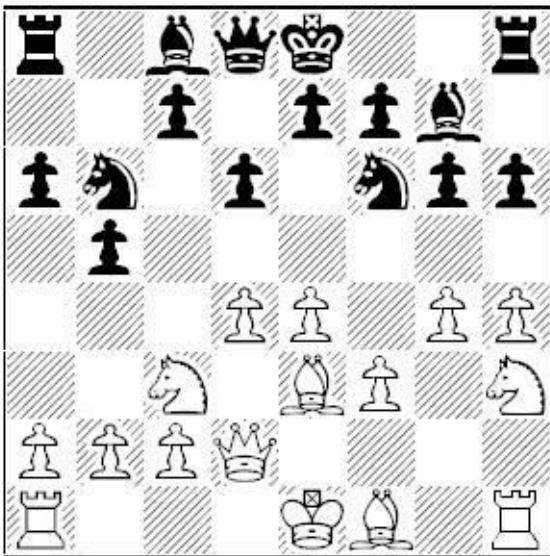
b) 7 ... h6 is normally my personal preference in such positions. Black plans to meet h5 with the bypass move ... g5.

8 g4 h6!?

Question: How will Black ever castle now?

Answer: Maybe he never will, or he may go the other direction. Remember, things change. He may castle kingside ten moves (or 20 or 30!) from now when White's guns aren't quite so trained upon his kingside. I realize Black's last move has the appearance of straining against the conventional letter of the law: don't weaken pawns on the side you are likely to castle. Yet in an odd way the move remains faithful to the spirit of the position: don't give your opponent an easy target for confrontation.

9 Nh3 Nb6!



Question: What is Black's idea?

Answer: Multipurpose:

1. If White ever plays e5, then Black retains a firm grip on the d5-square.
2. Black may later play ... b4, forcing White's knight to b1. If Ne2, then Black can play ... Nc4!, swapping off White's powerful dark-squared bishop.
3. White must watch out for both ... Nc4 and ... Na4 if she castles queenside.
4. Black makes room for a future ... Nfd7 and c5, which begins an attack and increases the scope of the g7-bishop.

10 0-0-0

With 10 g5 White gives the knight a nice post on g5 at the cost of some structural damage: 10 ... hxg5 11 Nxg5 Bb7 12 a4 b4 13 Nd1 a5 14 c3 Ba6!? (Svidler offers a Benko Gambit-style sac on the queenside; I would just play the rote 14 ... bxc3 15 Nxc3 Kf8 with a dynamically equal position) 15 Bxa6 Rxa6 16 cxb4 axb4 17 Qxb4 0-0 and I'm not so convinced about the soundness of the sac, but Svidler did manage to win in V.Koziak-P.Svidler, Warsaw 1999.

10 ... b4!

Perfectly timed, when White's knight must head for the worst square.

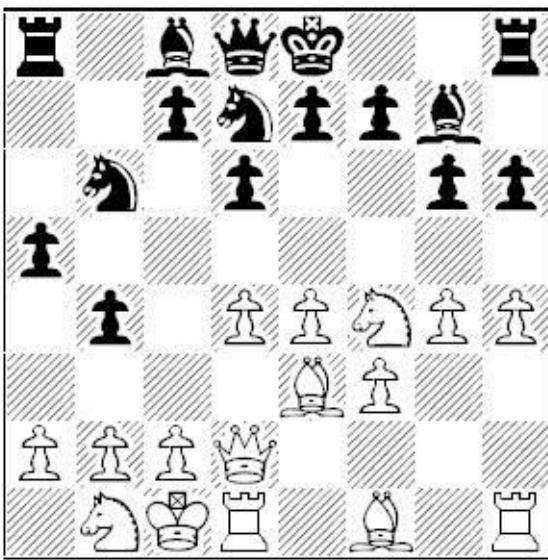
11 Nb1

11 Ne2?! Nc4 12 Qd3 Nxe3 13 Qxe3 Nd7 is in Black's favour since his powerful dark-squared bishop fears no counterpart on White's side.

11 ... a5 12 Nf4

Perhaps thinking about e5-e6.

12 ... Nfd7!



Denying White any line-opening targets.

13 Bb5?!

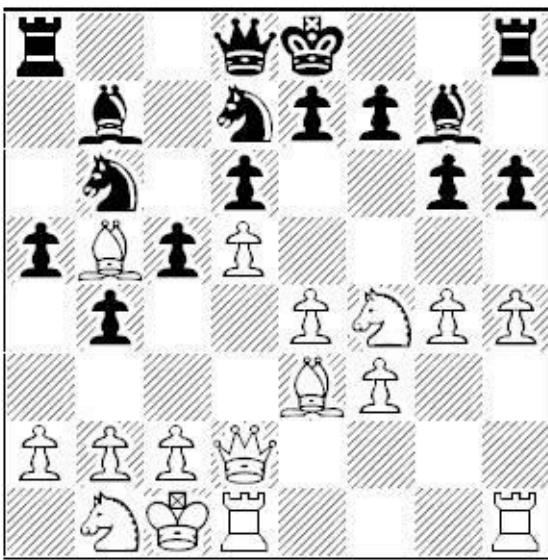
The beginning of an incorrect plan. I would play 13 Qf2 to revive the sleeping knight on b1. Even here, I don't like White's game since it's hard to find a line-opening target. Black, on the other hand, has access to a clear target: White's king.

13 ... Bb7 14 d5

White inhibits Black's c-pawn.

14 ... c5!!

Hey, I said: "White inhibits Black's c-pawn!" Svidler sets a trap which almost qualifies as Nixonian in the depths of its deviousness.



15 dxc6?

White misses her opportunity to muck it up with 15 Ne6! fxe6 16 dxe6 Bc6! 17 Bxc6! Nc4 18 Bd4! 0-0! with raging complications, which *Houdini* assesses as slightly in Black's favour.

15 ... Bxc6!

Svidler's clever point.

16 Qe2

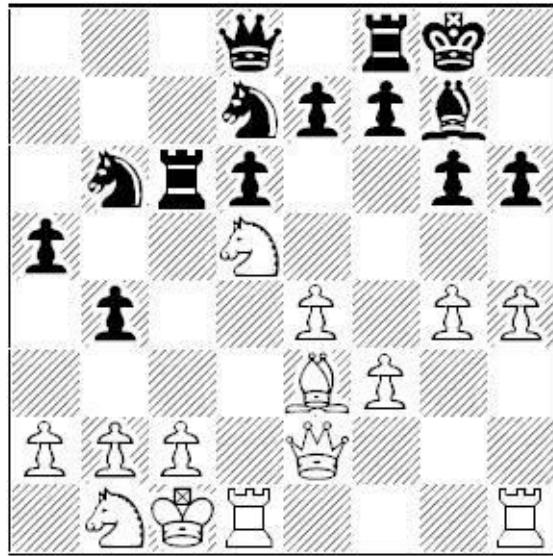
Question: Am I awake or dreaming? Why didn't White take on c6?

Answer: When you see a super GM hang a piece and it looks too good to be true, it probably qualifies as just that! 16 Bxc6?? is met with the crushing 16 ... Nc4! when the knight claps his hands to get White's attention. Now we begin to see some of the nasty offshoots behind 9 ... Nb6.

16 ... Rc8 17 Bxc6 Rxc6

Suddenly, this just looks like a not-so-great Dragon for White.

18 Nd5 0-0!

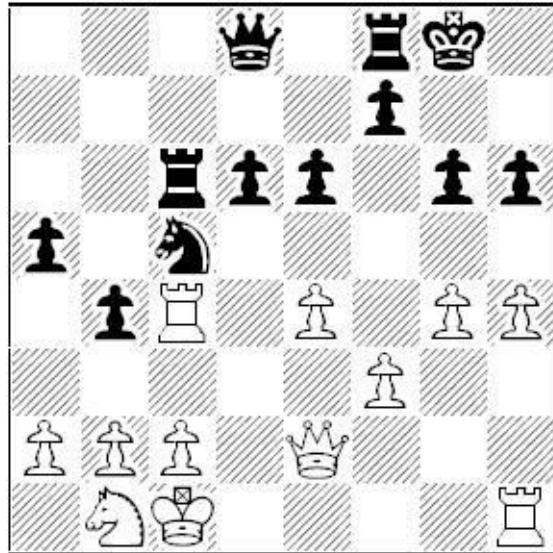


Black finally castles when his attack is faster than White's.

19 Bd4 Bxd4 20 Rxd4 e6 21 Ne3 Nc5 22 Nc4?

She should play 22 b3 e5! 23 Rd2 Ne6, but even then her position looks awful.

22 ... Nxc4 23 Rxc4



Exercise (combination alert): Black to play and force the win of material.

Answer: 23 ... d5! 24 exd5 exd5 25 Rd1

No choice, since 25 Rd4? b3! 26 a3 bxc2 27 Nd2 Ne6 is crushing.

25 ... Nd3+!

Snagging the exchange.

26 Qxd3 Rxc4 27 Nd2

This knight, locked away for so long on b1, only desires news of the outside world. White gets tied down to the defence of her king after 27 Qxd5 Qc7.

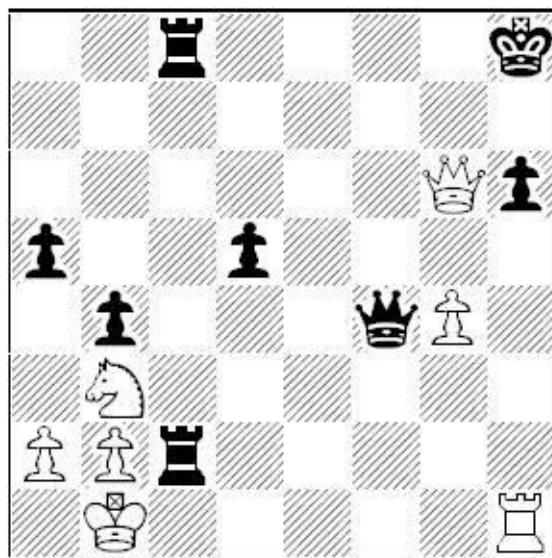
27 ... Rc6 28 h5 Qg5 29 hxg6 fxg6 30 Kb1 Rfc8 31 Nb3 Rxc2 32 f4!

A good practical try. Ballooning expenses fail to curb Ioseliani's expansive hopes to stir up some dust and trouble around Black's king.

32 ... Qxf4!

Svidler displays masterful control with this confident response. Black's king finds himself stripped of most of his pawn cover, yet Svidler, in comp-like fashion, works out a defensive/offensive algorithm for every eventuality.

33 Qxg6+ Kh8 34 Rh1



Exercise (combination alert): The opposing attacks are asymmetrical in force: Black's works; White's doesn't. How would you play for Black?

Answer: Play on White's weak back rank.

34 ... Rh2! 0-1

Black's rook expels the intruding h1-rook the way a violent cough discharges phlegm from the lungs. After 35 Re1 there is the startling move 35 ... Qe5!!.. The queen, once so unassuming and demure, now takes matters into her own hands by bottling White's temporary initiative and sealing the lid tightly.

Summary

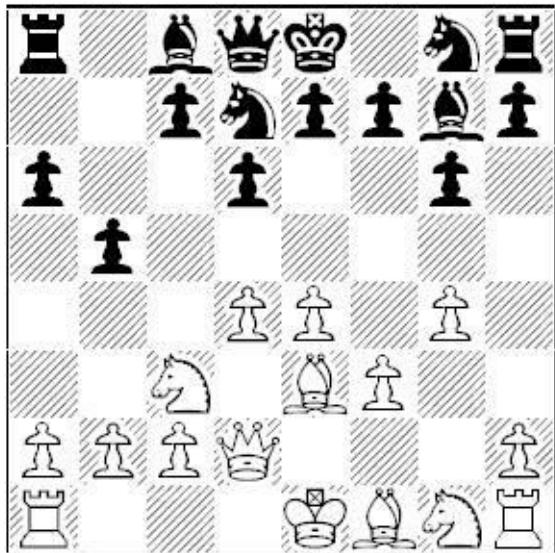
Keep in mind the themes ... h6 in response to White's kingside pawn storm, and also ... Nb6 to fight for the central light squares. We see more of these plans later in the book.

Game 4

D.Urbe Arteaga-O.Almeida

Sabadell 2010

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 Be3 a6 5 Qd2 Nd7 6 f3 b5 7 g4



Question: What is the difference between 7 g4 and 7 h4?

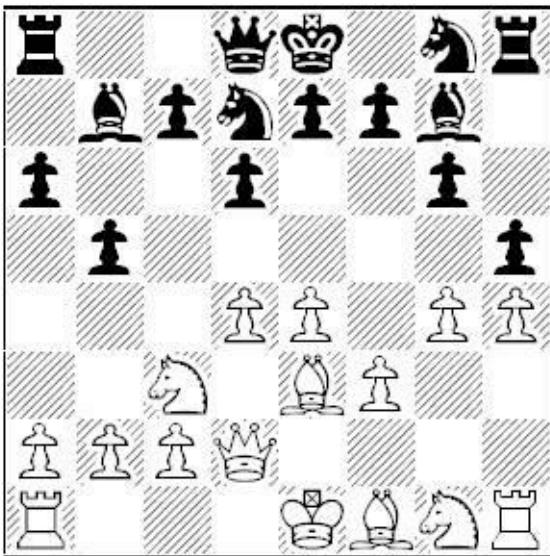
Answer: Usually very little, and often the two transpose. One difference is that after 7 h4, Black has the 7 ... h5 option, which makes White's g4 more difficult, but also hands White the g5-square for his knight; a trade-off.

7 ... Bb7 8 h4

With 8 g5!? White hopes to make life difficult for Black by preventing ... Nf6, but this doesn't bother Black: 8 ... e6 (a new move in the position, planning to develop the knight to e7, and one which looks like an improvement over 8 ... h6 and 8 ... e5) 9 a3 (9 h4 h5 leads to a position similar to my game against Carreto, the next game in the book) 9 ... h6 10 h4 hxg5 11 Bxg5 (now White's h4 pawn could turn into a source of concern should queens come off the board) 11 ... Ne7 12 d5?! (a dubious fishing expedition; he should keep his cool and play something like 12 Nge2) 12 ... exd5 13 exd5 Nb6 14 0-0-0 f6 15 Bf4 Nbx d5 White only got fishing chances for the pawn in N.Arutyunov-C.Lakdawala, San Diego (rapid) 2010.

8 ... h5

After 8 ... h6 9 Nge2 c5 10 dxc5 b4 11 Nd5 dxc5 12 0-0-0 e6 13 Ndf4 Qc7 I like Black's flexibility in the coming complications. White, on the other hand, has already committed his king to queenside castling, N.Ribshtain-B.Avrukh, Ramat Aviv 1999.



9 g5

Question: What if White tries the plan of taking on h5, followed by Nge2, Ng3, and h5, prising open the kingside?

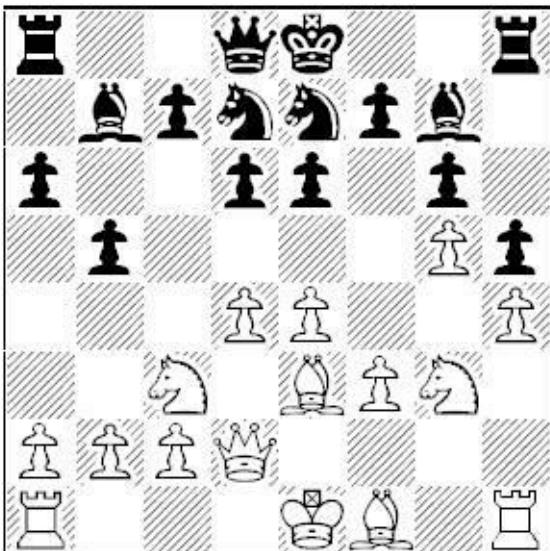
Answer: After 9 gxh5 Rxh5 10 Nge2 e6 (menacing White's h-pawn) 11 Bg5 Bh6! 12 f4 Bxg5 13 fxg5 b4 14 Nd1 Bxe4 15 Rh2 Rh8 16 Ng3 Bf3 17 Qxb4 Ne7 I prefer Black due to his structural superiority.

9 ... e6 10 Nge2

Question: What if White tries a plan of sac'ing a piece on e6?

Answer: Here is a game where White attempted just that: 10 Nh3 Ne7 11 Nf4 0-0 12 Bh3 e5!. No sacs for you today. Never forget our greatest strength in the Modern: our hyper-flexible pawn structure. Now White saw nothing better in A.Randazzo-K.Movsziszian, Lorca 2001, than the dismal 13 Nfe2, after which he must have realized that it took him three moves to develop his knight to e2.

10 ... Ne7 11 Ng3



Exercise (planning): White is all set to dampen Black's spirit with a curtain of fire, with an eventual f4-f5 pawn break. Is there a way Black can gum up the works of this plan?

Answer: 11 ... d5!

Black renders f4 essentially unplayable. Compare this to the next game where Black plays the same plan.

12 exd5??

White wants access to e4, and is willing to give up control over d5 and f5 to get it – too much in my opinion.

Question: Why not castle queenside and retain the central pawn tension?

Answer: Please see the next game in the book! In this case, after 12 0-0-0 0-0 Black's king is safe and he is ready to attack White's king.

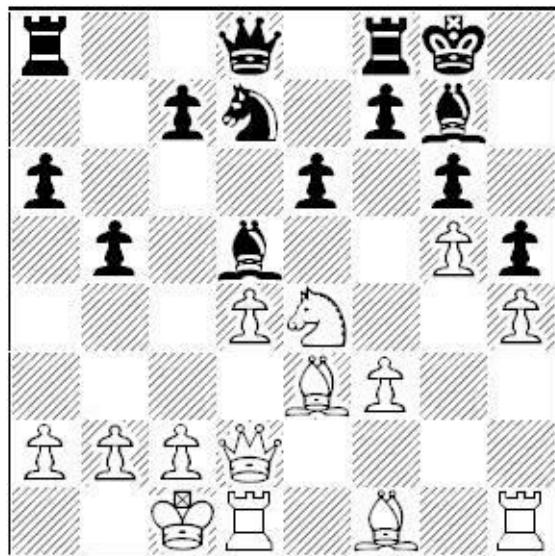
Question: Well then, what would you suggest for White?

Answer: I would go for a French-like structure with 12 e5 c5 13 f4, and probably castle kingside where White's king looks safe. Even then, this looks like a nice French or Advance Caro-Kann structure for Black.

12 ... Nxd5 13 Nxd5 Bxd5

Just to show you the level of strategic ignorance in the comp world, several of my engines (I shield their identities to not humiliate them) advocate the weak 13 ... exd5? which allows White to renew his f4-f5 attacking ideas.

14 Ne4 0-0 15 0-0-0



Like a good citizen, but now Black's king looks a lot safer than White's. On the one hand we have White's ambition; on the other hand we have the facts, which seem to hold an insurmountable lead!

Question: What is so great about Black's position?

Answer: Black's strength isn't so much a strength as much as a function of White's weakness. I repeat: White's king is a lot less safe than Black's.

Question: What else can White do besides castling queenside?

Answer: I would think about castling kingside if I were White.

Question: You can't be serious?

Answer: My intuition whispers: White's king is safer there (out in the open!) than on the queenside.

15 ... Qe7 16 Rg1!?

Perhaps he should take time out for 16 Kb1.

16 ... Rfd8

Now ... c5 is in the air, but greed isn't always a bad thing. I don't see why Black didn't play 16 ... Bxa2!.

17 Bd3!?

White, who lives in a high-crime area, unwisely continues to go to sleep with his front door unlocked. Still no 17 Kb1.

17 ... Bxa2

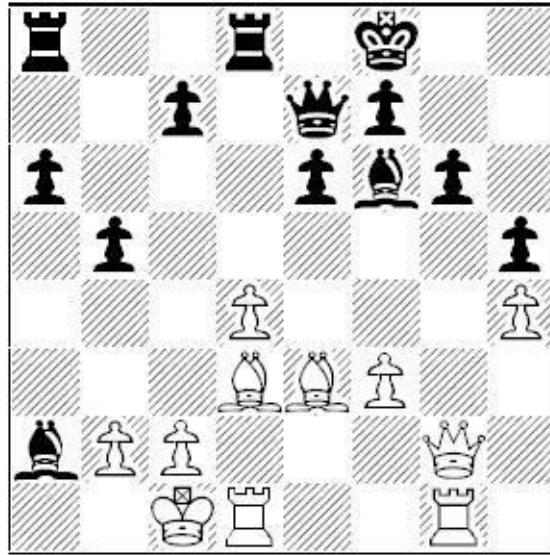
Why not?

18 Nf6+!?

White decides he won't hold the game playing strategically, and goes kamikaze.

18 ... Nxf6 19 gxf6 Bxf6 20 Qg2 Kf8

Comps prefer 20 ... Kh8!.



Exercise (critical decision): Clearly White must take radical action.

We can sac a bishop on g6, or hem in Black's wayward a2-bishop by playing 21 b3. What would you do?

21 b3?

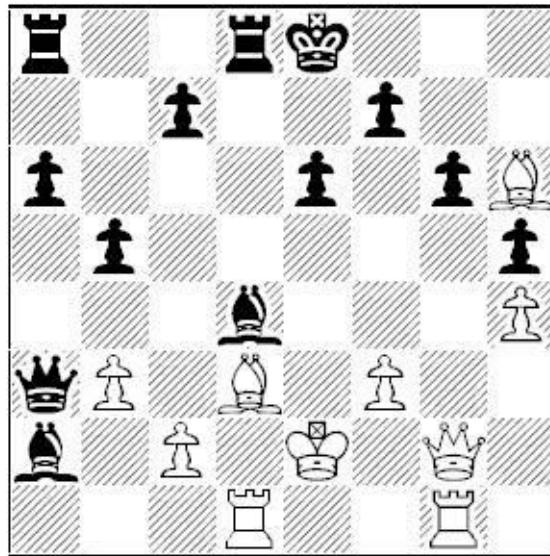
Not radical enough. White had to go for it.

Answer: 21 Bxg6! fxg6 22 Qxg6 Qf7 23 Qh6+ Ke7 24 b3 and the position still favours Black, but White gets practical chances in the muddle ahead.

21 ... Qa3+

Also good for Black is 21 ... Bxd4 22 Bxd4 Rxd4 23 Kb2 Bxb3 24 cxb3 Rad8 25 Qc2 Qxh4 when he harvests five pawns for the piece.

22 Kd2 Bxd4 23 Bh6+ Ke8 24 Ke2



24 ... Qc5

Question: Isn't it a no-brainer to take the exchange on g1 and add to the coffers?

Answer: Some no-brainers require more thought than others. I'm pleased to see that you took my theory on the virtues of greed to heart. However, too much of anything degenerates into a vice. I'm sure Black is winning after taking the exchange, but it would be prudent avoid it. Doing so gives away too many dark squares, which in turn, hands White swindling chances.

25 Bxg6!?

Long-brewing resentment tends to lead us down the path of disproportionate overreaction. The sac is technically unsound, but White, facing an existential crisis, decides to go with the theory: if you are busted, you may as well stir the jug, drink the poisoned Kool-Aid and sac rather than suffer a lingering death by slow-motion decay. After all, a position sinks only so far, until there is nothing more below to sink to.

25 ... Bxg1!

Now is the right time to take it.

26 Bxf7+! Ke7!

Now White has nothing better than to force a lost ending. White can only dream about 26 ... Kxf7?? 27 Qg7+ Ke8 28 Qg8+ Ke7 29 Bg5+.

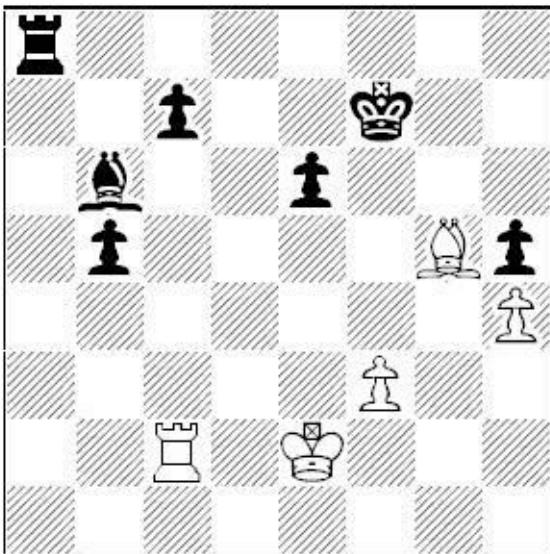
27 Qg5+ Qxg5 28 Bxg5+ Kxf7 29 Bxd8 Bb6 30 Bg5 a5 31 Ra1 a4!

Black's bishop, a single soldier well dug into enemy territory, although doomed, resolves to make White pay a dear price before handing over his life.

32 Rxa2 axb3! 33 Rb2

If 33 Rxa8?? b2 and Black, down a rook (for now!), wins.

33 ... bxc2 34 Rxc2



The ending isn't much of a fight, and a single glance of the ruins conveys to the sensitive reader the profound depths of White's suffering:

34 ... c5 35 Rd2 Ra7 36 Rd6 Rb7 37 Be3 Ke7 38 Rd1

38 Rxb6? isn't much of a combination since 38 ... Rxb6 39 Bxc5+ Rd6 40 Ke3 Kd7 41 Bxd6 Kxd6 leaves White resigning in the king and pawn ending.

38 ... c4 39 Rg1

Cheapo alert on g7.

39 ... Kf7 40 Rg5 Bxe3 41 Kxe3 b4 42 Rxh5

New cheapo alert on h7 this time.

42 ... Kf6 43 Kd2 c3+ 0-1

Summary

When your opponent's g-pawn surges to g5, you can always develop your g8-knight to e7.

Game 5

G.Carreto-C.Lakdawala

San Diego (rapid) 2006

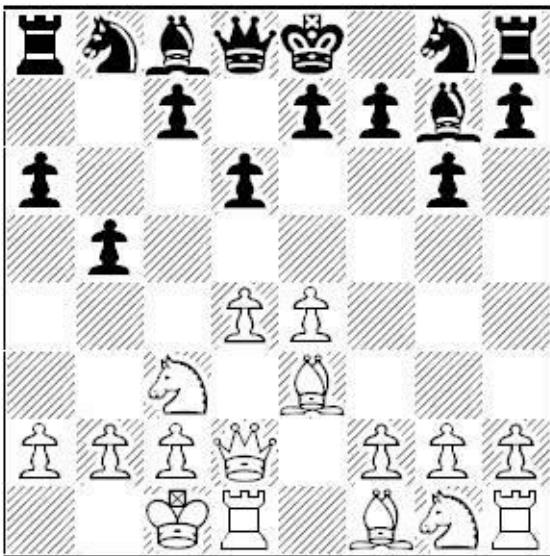
1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 Be3 a6 5 Qd2 b5

Possibly an inaccurate move order. Your older, wiser writer of today plays 5 ... Nd7.

Question: Why do you think playing the knight to d7 is more accurate?

Answer: Both moves are probably playable, but keep in mind: Black lags in development, so it is wiser to try and catch up, rather than play ... b5, which allows White a contact point to open the position.

6 0-0-0!?



Question: Isn't this committal?

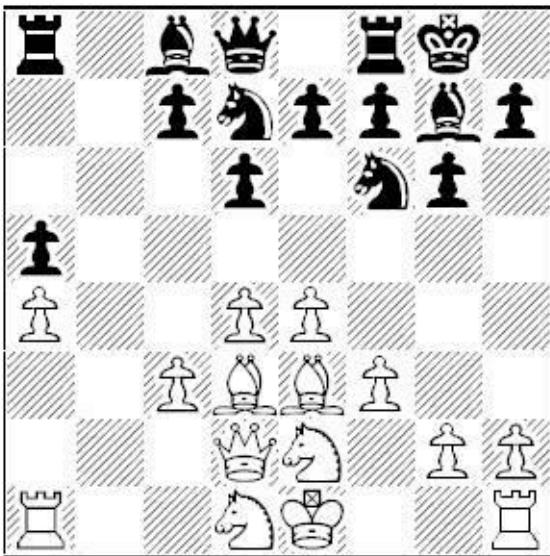
Answer: It certainly is. The idea behind early castling is that White refuses to play games with Black about where his king should reside. He simply castles, increases his lead in development, and plans to blast open the centre to exploit his lead, irrespective of where Black places his king.

Question: How do we counteract this plan?

Answer: We don't allow White to open the centre!

Question: What if he plays 6 a4 to try and exploit his development lead?

Answer: Tiger Hillarp actually gives the move an exclam in his book, adding: "If it was not for this move I would play 5 ... b5 more often than 5 ... Nd7." After 6 ... b4 7 Nd1 (if 7 Nd5 a5 8 c3 e6 9 Nf4 and White's knight looks misaligned on f4, K.Neven-H.Janning, correspondence 2000) 7 ... a5 8 c3 bxc3 9 bxc3 Nf6 10 f3 0-0! (Tiger says 10 ... c6?! "fell into disgrace after the game Anand-Khalifman, Las Palmas 1993": 11 Bh6! 0-0 12 h4! with advantage to White) 11 Bd3 Nbd7 12 Ne2 ...



... it's important not to allow White a slightly favourable Sämisch KID by blindly entering 12 ... e5?!
13 d5.

Question: Why a favourable Sämisch?

Answer: This is a better version than normal Sämisch lines since the queenside has already opened. Any open lines on the queenside tend to favour White in KID positions in general.

Thus correct is 12 ... c6! and after 13 0-0 e5 14 Nf2 d5 Black equalized in L.Ljubojevic-J.Ehlvest, Linares 1991.

6 ... Bb7

This commits the bishop early. Today, I would play 6 ... Nd7.

Question: Why would you need the bishop on c8?

Answer: Two reasons:

1. If White manages to play e5, then the bishop keeps an eye on e6 pawn sacs, and also keeps control over f5.

2. In lines where White tosses in h4 and Black responds with ... h5, White often heads for g5 with his knight, with Nh3. In this instance, we have the option of chopping the knight with ... Bxh3.

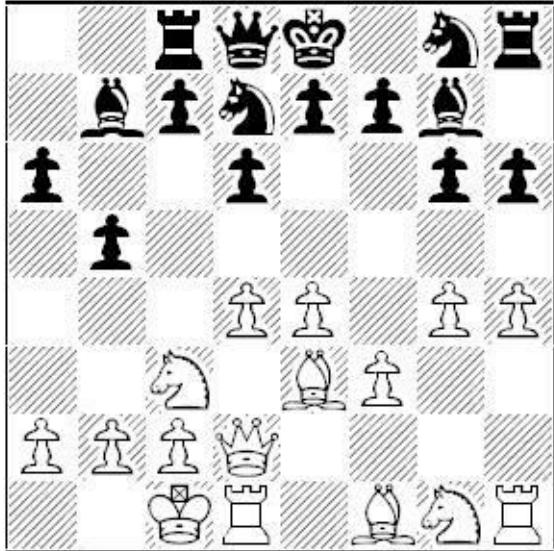
Question: Is 6 ... b4 reasonable?

Answer: The rule of thumb: avoid ... b4 unless White tosses in a4 himself. 7 Nce2 a5 8 h4 Nf6 9 f3 h5 10 Nh3 Bxh3 11 Rxh3 c6 was S.Ulyanin-A.Feoktistov, St Petersburg 2009, and now White should exploit his development lead with 12 e5!, with advantage.

7 f3 Nd7 8 g4 Rc8

Perhaps Black should forego the rook back-up and strike immediately in the centre with 8 ... c5! 9 dxc5 Nxc5 10 Bd4 (White can't get cute with 10 Nxb5?? axb5 11 Bxc5 due to 11 ... Rxa2 12 Bxb5+ Kf8 13 c3 Qa5 and Black wins) 10 ... Bxd4 11 Qxd4 Nf6 12 Nge2 (12 g5 Ne6 13 Qd2 Nd7 doesn't bother Black) 12 ... Rc8 13 Kb1 and Black had achieved a decent Dragadorf position in P.Negi-D.Khismatullin, Moscow 2007.

9 h4 h6



10 Bh3!

He hopes to exploit the rook's position on c8.

Question: Why can't White loosen the pawn front near Black's king with 10 h5 g5?

Answer: I don't see a single game in the database with this plan. The implication: the plan isn't so great for White. Let's play around with it: 11 Nge2 (Black stands better after 11 f4?! gxf4 12 Bxf4 c5) 11 ... c5 12 Ng3 and now I like the plan 12 ... cxd4 13 Bxd4 Be5!. Black's grip on the central dark squares gives him equal chances at a minimum.

10 ... e6

I didn't want to give him line-opening options like 10 ... Ngf6 11 g5.

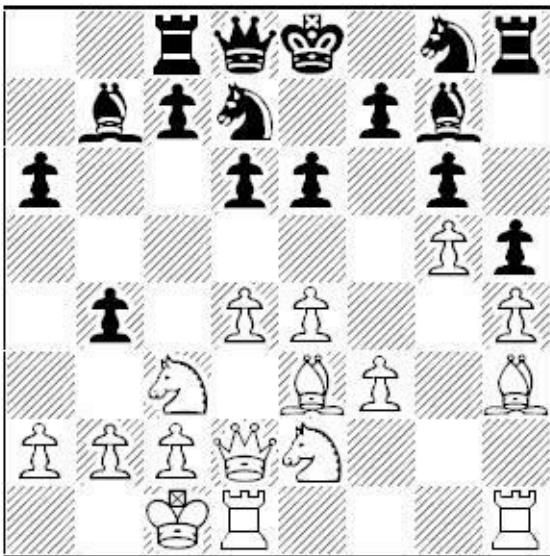
11 g5 h5?!

Black is okay after 11 ... Nb6!.

12 Nge2??

He misses an opportunity. I am in trouble after 12 d5! e5 (12 ... exd5 13 Bd4! is also in White's favour) 13 f4! when the game opens too quickly for Black's comfort.

12 ... b4



Question: You said not to play ... b4 unless White plays a4, didn't you?

Answer: Well, yes, but this is an exception, since we send his knight to a vulnerable or passive square.

13 Nb1

He can also play 13 Na4 Rb8 14 b3 with even chances.

13 ... Rb8!?

Question: Aren't you moving that rook an awful lot?

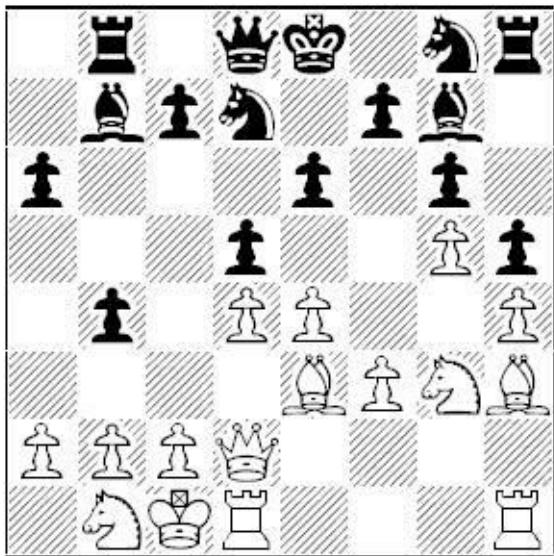
Answer: I live in fear that my substandard brain may, without warning, concoct and unleash some fanciful, paranoid notion, which in turn escorts me, struggling, kicking and screaming though its ugly door. I got sick and tired of that bishop on h3 taking indirect aim at my rook. However, you are right. Typically, I putz around with strategic niceties rather than fight for the initiative, which can be achieved with 13 ... c5! 14 dxc5 dxc5 15 Nf4 (15 Qd6 is met with the simple 15 ... Qe7). This looked terrifying to me, but Black's position is resilient enough to absorb a sac on e6: 15 ... Qc7!. Now if White goes for it, the complications end in Black's favour after 16 Bxe6? fxe6 17 Nxe6 Bxb2+ 18 Kxb2 Qe5+ 19 Nd4 Nb6!.

14 Ng3?

With the strategic threat f4, Rhf1 and f5. Black must react quickly to prevent this position.

White should go for 14 Nf4 a5 15 d5 exd5 16 Nxd5 Ne7 with equal chances.

14 ... d5!



Exactly the same strategic plan as Black played in the previous game.

15 Rhe1

Question: How does Black's last move halt White's central intentions if he sacs with 15 f4, intending 15 ... dxe4 16 f5?

Answer: White doesn't get enough for the piece after 16 ... exf5 17 Bxf5 gxf5 18 Nxf5 Bf8 and now what? Black is ready to unravel with ... Ne7.

Question: Fair enough. What about 15 Qxb4 to free up c3 for the b1-knight?

Answer: That plan is probably White's best in the position. The end position looks interesting after 15 ... dxe4 16 f4 Ne7 17 Qd2 Nf5 18 Nxf5 exf5 19 c4.

15 ... Ne7 16 Bf4?

White indulges in too many counter-flowing, overlapping shifts and ideas. It isn't too late to take on b4 and implement your second plan with 16 Qxb4!.

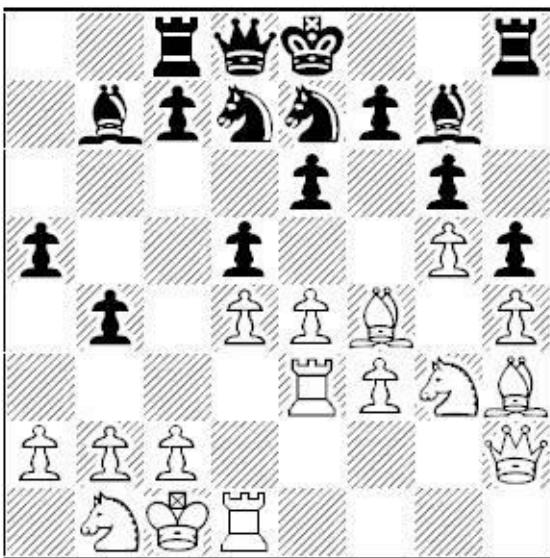
16 ... a5

Now White has nothing to do but await Black's attack.

17 Qh2 Rc8

Back again! This is the third time the rook moved, but as the saying goes: the third time's the charm.

18 Re3



Question: White's last move strikes me as wall-to-wall artificial. Am I correct?

Answer: It turns out the rook isn't well placed on e3. White, perhaps out of ideas, mysteriously lifts his rook and hopes for something good to happen.

Question: What exactly is White's plan?

Answer: I have no idea why he lifted the rook. White continues with an opaque agenda, perhaps not even known to himself, as he busies himself with obscure tasks, like the office worker making a show of work for the boss.

18 ... 0-0 19 Ne2 Re8 20 Nd2 c5

Good things come to those who wait. At long last, Black's counterattack begins.

21 Be5?

Now his position gets even worse. The time has arrived to sac and exchange to appease Black's initiative with 21 dxc5 d4 22 Rd3 Nxc5 23 Nc4 Nxd3+ 24 cxd3.

21 ... Nxe5 22 dxe5 d4 23 Nc4

23 Rd3 Ba6 doesn't look like much fun either.

23 ... Ba6 24 b3

24 Nd6 fails to 24 ... dxe3 25 Nxf7 Qb6.

24 ... Bxc4 25 bxc4 Qc7

Double attack: e3 and e5.

26 Red3 Qxe5

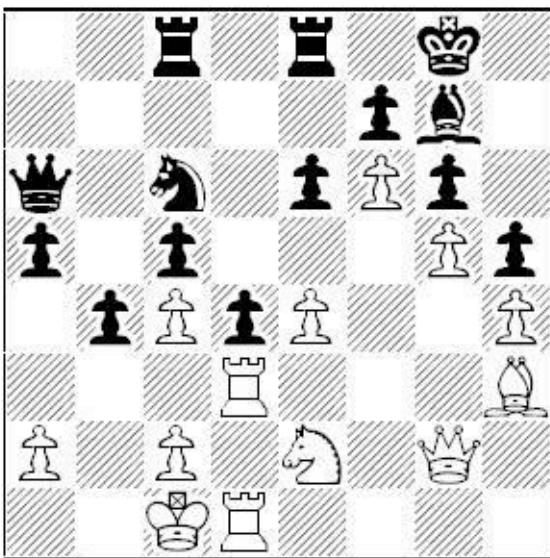
The comps prefer 26 ... Nc6! 27 f4 a4.

27 Qg2 Qd6 28 f4 Qa6 29 f5 Ne6!

This move required some accurate calculation.

30 f6!

His best try. 30 fxg6? fxg6 31 Nf4 Ne5 consolidates.



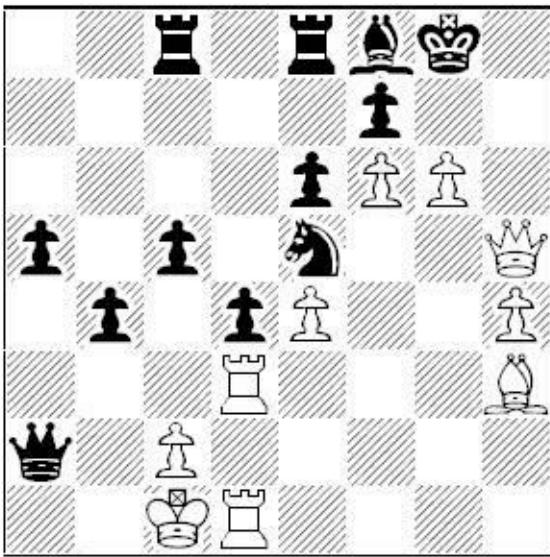
30 ... Bf8 31 Nf4 Ne5 32 Nxh5!

White, realizing he goofed up strategically earlier, decides an emergency is not the time for mea culpaing or regrets, and goes ahead and sacs. Gulp! School bullies perpetrate their cruelties on smaller, weaker children to demonstrate their power. Carreto is one of those mad dog masters who poses a grave threat to any titled player, since he invariably goes psycho in every game. The knight refuses to take “no” for an answer and seeks entry without invitation. Suddenly, Black’s king is no longer safe from the gusts of White’s fury.

32 ... gxh5!

Clocks ran low, and I thought about chickening out and declining, then fortunately worked out a win by one tempo.

33 Qe2 Qxc4 34 Qxh5 Qxa2 35 g6!



Exercise (critical decision): White’s pieces mill about, whispering mean things about my king, like uneasy mourners at their enemy’s funeral. Should I take on g6 with the knight or the f-pawn?

Answer: When our choices boil down to a single response, it ceases to be a choice.

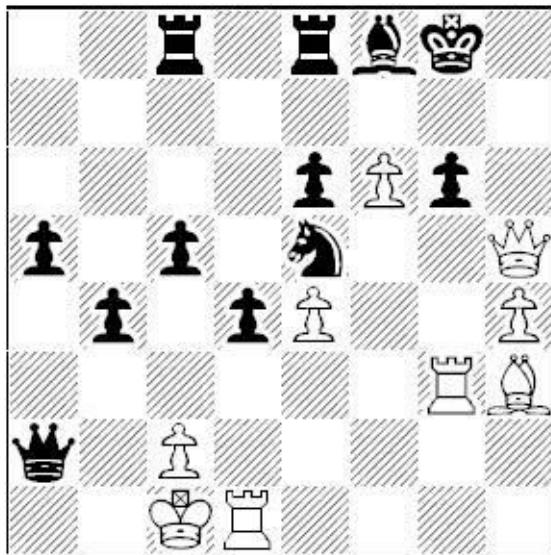
35 ... f x g6!

The only move. As we all know, a thin blanket usually doesn't do the job on a cold night, but in this instance, Black's king remains safe. 35 ... Nxg6? leads to a forced perpetual check after 36 Rg3 Rc7 37 Rxg6+ fxg6 38 Qxg6+ Kh8 39 Rg1 e5 40 Rg5! Qa1+ 41 Kd2 Qc3+.

36 Rg3!

While it's true that I may be a Birkenstock-wearing/love-and-light/tree hugger type, yet I have limits to the tolerance for abuse. White's overt hostility continues to radiate bad vibes, and now I strike.

Instead 36 Qxe5?? Bh6+! wins the queen.



Exercise (combination alert): The portrait is almost finished, but the artist so far hasn't been able to get the eyes right. Time to finish the portrait. Fight back and end White's attack. How can Black accomplish this feat?

Answer: Deflection.

36 ... Qa1+! 37 Kd2 Qc3+! 0-1

How unpleasant to encounter the ghost of Christmas past. The queen, who a few moves ago was no more than an asterisk, now emerges in triumph. Once in a great while, even a dullard like me gets to shine and dazzle the crowd!

Summary

1. When White castles queenside early, don't allow him to open the centre.

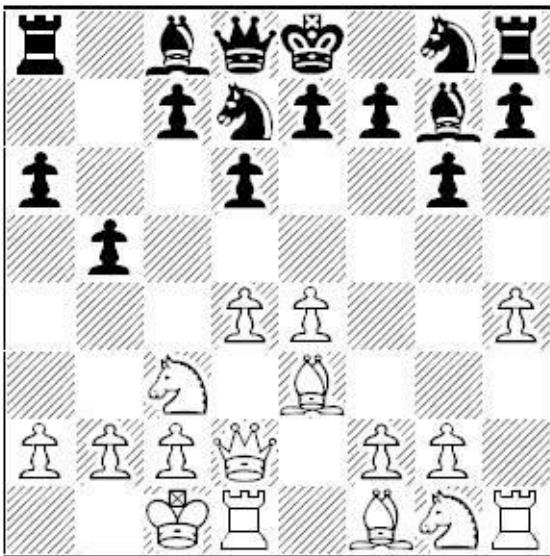
2. Perhaps the 5 ... b5 6 a4! move order is playable, but let's not provoke fate. Better to develop first with 5 ... Nd7, and only then play for ... b5.

Game 6

A.Dunis-N.Sulava

French League 2002

1 d4 g6 2 e4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 Be3 a6 5 Qd2 Nd7 6 0-0-0 b5 7 h4



7 ... h5!

Question: Why an exclam. Can't Black also play his pawn to h6?

Answer: Not here. ... h6 is an okay way to meet h4 in positions where White has already committed to f3, but here White, after 7 ... h6?!, can transpose to a favourable version of the Austrian Attack, with 8 f4!. Now the problem is h5 is a serious strategic threat, so Black saw nothing better than to hand over a tempo and play 8 ... h5 himself. Perhaps this position is playable, but I doubt it. This opening is just too sharp to be cavalier about a tempo loss. Svidler ended up losing after 9 Nf3 Bb7 10 Ng5 Nh6 11 e5 Nb6 12 Bd3 Qc8 13 Rhf1 Nd5 14 Nce4 0-0 15 f5!? Nxf5 16 Rxf5 gxf5 17 Ng3. Comps assure me that Black is doing great here, but I don't trust them, and Svidler ended up getting slaughtered from this point in S.Ganguly-P.Svidler, World Team Championship, Ningbo 2011.

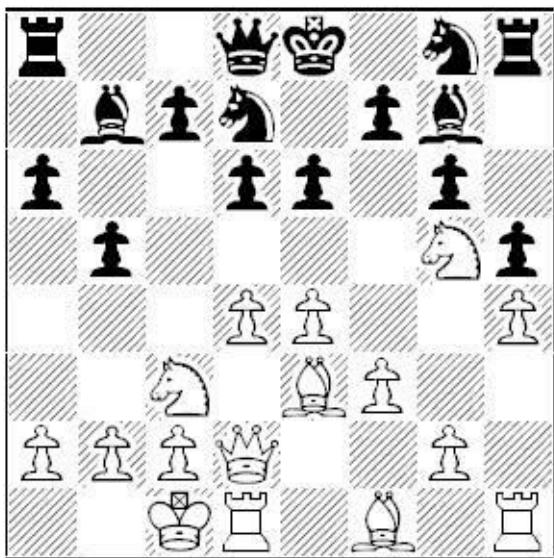
8 Nh3 Bb7 9 Ng5 e6!

I like this move, which eliminates any and all e5, e6 ideas from White.

a) 9 ... Nh6?! is an odd but playable alternative: 10 f3 Rc8 11 Ne2 c5 12 d5?! (better is 12 dxc5) 12 ... Ne5 13 Nf4 Qb6 and Black already looked better in M.Cuhra-T.Civin, Tabor 2010.

b) However, Black should avoid 9 ... Ngf6? 10 e5! b4 (10 ... dxe5 11 dxe5 Nxe5 12 Qxd8+ Rxd8 13 Rxd8+ Kxd8 14 f4 also favours White), as in L.Dominguez Perez-V.Bologan, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011. At this point Dominguez agreed to a draw to qualify for the next round. White has a powerful attack brewing after 11 e6! fxe6 12 Ne2! e5 13 Qd3!.

10 f3



10 ... Ngf6!

Question: Shouldn't the knight develop to e7 after Black has taken the trouble to play ... e6?

Answer: The Modern is a world of subtle shifts. Here Black correctly develops to f6, making it difficult for White to implement an effective g4 break.

11 e5!?

An ambitious move, which hands over the central light squares to try and seize control of the central dark squares.

11 ... Nd5

11 ... dxe5?! 12 dx5 Nxe5? fails to 13 Qxd8+ Rxd8 14 Rxd8+ Kxd8 15 f4.

12 f4 Qe7

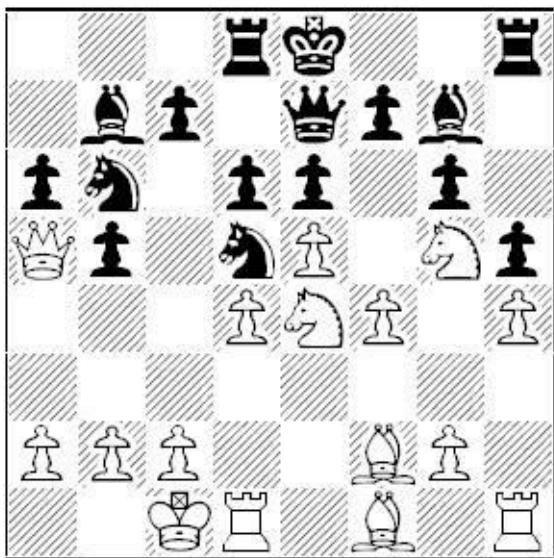
As usual we continue our sneaky, shifty policy of castling late, thus depriving White of our king's home address.

13 Nce4 N7b6

Black's grip on the light squares easily compensates for White's extra space. The position looks dynamically balanced, but stylistically I prefer Black.

14 Bf2 Rd8 15 Qa5!?

Why is it that every fairytale princess is cursed? I sense a slightly jarring element to the move, like an exceptionally beautiful woman with a missing front tooth.



Question: Aren't you being a little melodramatic? White controls the dark squares, so he removes his queen from the tactically vulnerable d-file to a square which increases that control.

Answer: You may be correct on paper, but he also trades one tactically vulnerable square for his queen, only to replace it with another just as tactically vulnerable, all in the name of setting up a thinly disguised and not very effective cheapo. Your theory that it increases control of the dark squares looks to me like a poor mimicry of Black's endeavour to control the light squares.

I would stay away from the queenside and play 15 g3.

15 ... 0-0!

I'm not sure if Black gets full compensation if he falls for White's 'trap' and hands over an exchange for a pawn in the line 15 ... Nxf4!? 16 exd6 Rxd6 17 Nxd6+ Qxd6. Black's pieces look very active, and his control over d5 and the light squares in general looks like it gives him compensation.

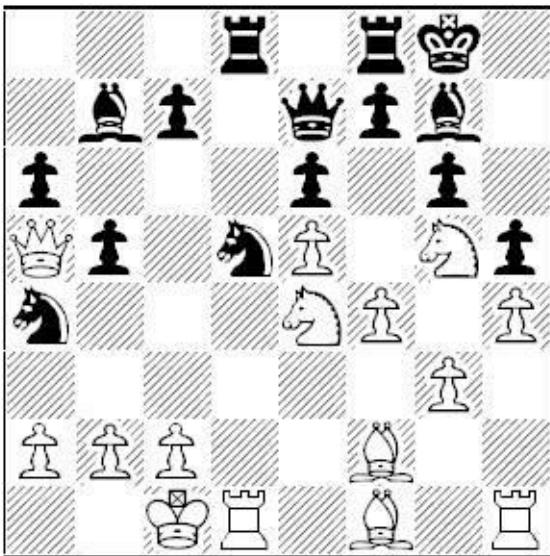
16 g3 dxe5 17 dxe5

Question: Isn't capturing in the direction of the centre more thematic?

Answer: It is normally, but in this case Black begins to take over the initiative after 17 fxe5?! f6! 18 exf6 Nxf6 19 Nxf6+ Bxf6 20 Rh2 e5! when Black's pieces achieve scary activity.

17 ... Na4!

Spiderman swings from building to building, neutralizing the threatened Bc5 in the process.

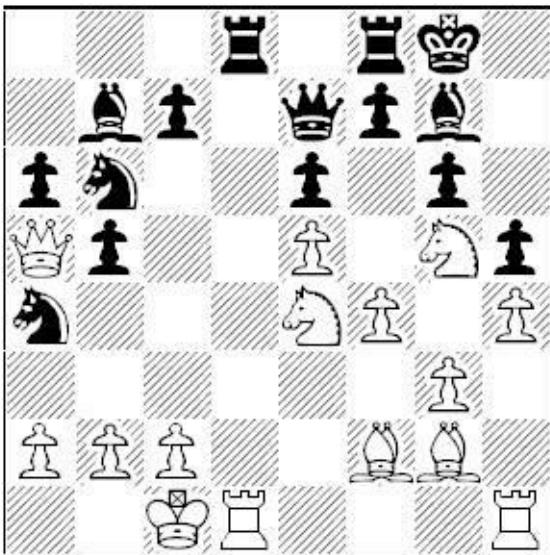


18 Bg2?

White's natural looking last move was incorrect. Now Black grabs the initiative. He had to play the odd-looking 18 Bc4 to prevent Black's next trick. Of course, 18 b3?? walks right into 18 ... Qa3+ 19 Kd2 Ndc3+.

18 ... Ndb6!

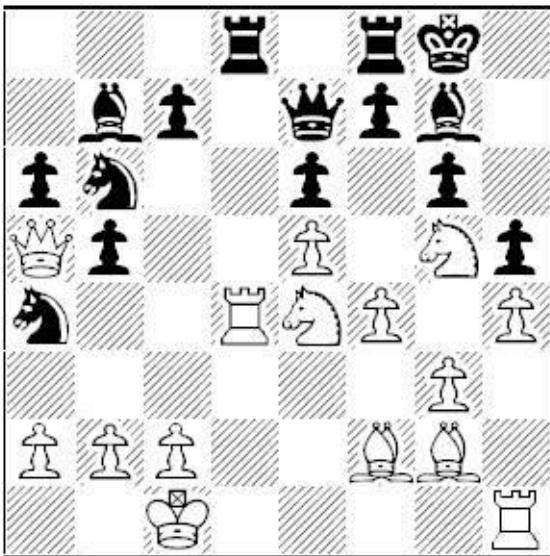
Black's last move chemically alters the nature of the position, as the spirited knight zigzags his way to glory. Suddenly Black menaces tricks on b2 and c4.



19 Rd4

Question: Doesn't White win a piece with the simple tactic 19 Nf6+?

Answer: You can't just stop there. When you analyze a forcing line, don't be lazy. Follow through and work it out to its completion. When we continue the analysis, we see the truth: White loses after 19 ... Bxf6 20 exf6 (20 Bxb7 Bxg5 21 hxg5 loses to 21 ... Nc4) 20 ... Qxf6! and the problem is White doesn't have time to take on b7 due to the mate threat on b2.



Exercise (combination alert): Look for a tactic for Black.

Answer: Play for a fork trick on c4.

19 ... Nxb2!

White's king stands aghast at the knight's blatant breach of etiquette. Black's knights work in tandem. The one on b2 reminds me of a war movie scene of the Nazi officer on the motorcycle, while the one on b6 is his sidekick junior officer riding in the sidecar.

20 Nf6+

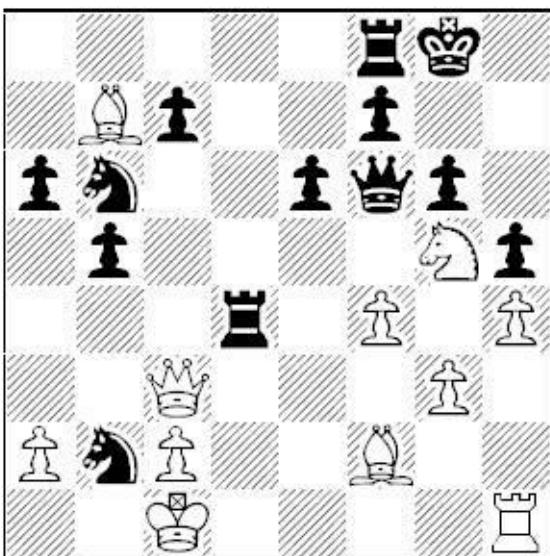
Loses, as does everything else:

- a) 20 Kxb2 fails to the simple 20 ... Rxd4 when White can't recapture due to the fork on c4.
- b) 20 Rxd8 Rxd8 21 Bc5 Qd7 changes nothing. Black's haughty b2-knight remains immune.

20 ... Bxf6 21 exf6 Qxf6 22 Bxb7

22 Rxd8 Rxd8 23 Bxb7 N2c4! is curtains for White.

22 ... Rxd4 23 Qc3?



Exercise (combination alert): White just blundered in a lost position. Do you see why?

Answer: 23 ... Rd1+! 0-1

Now 24 Kxb2 Na4+ forks on the other side.

Summary

In the position after 6 0-0-0 b5 7 h4, we should avoid ... h6 ideas and play the immediate 7 ... h5! in response.

Game 7

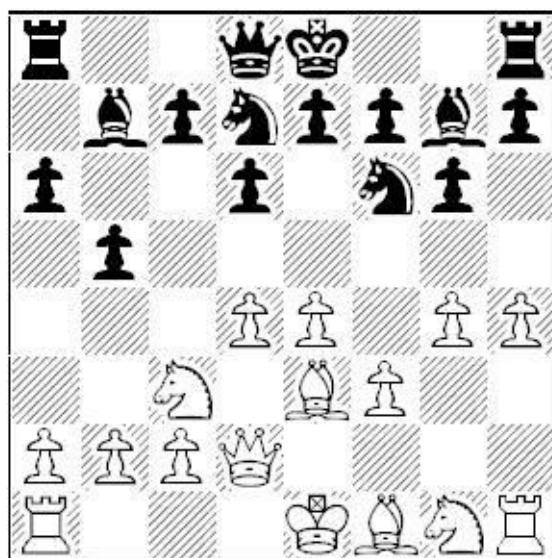
Ma Qun-Li Chao

Hefei (rapid) 2010

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 Be3 a6 5 Qd2 b5 6 f3 Nd7 7 h4 Ngf6

Just as Svidler played earlier in this chapter. To reinforce, Black normally plays either 7 ... h6, which is my usual preference, or 7 ... h5.

8 g4 Bb7!?



Question: Why would you give such a natural developing move the ‘interesting’ annotation?

Answer: Because in this instance, Black basically ignores White’s kingside pawns storm, avoiding both ... h5 and ... h6, basically having faith in the integrity of his position and its ability to absorb the storm.

Question: Is this true? A master-strength friend of mine told me Black had to play ... h6 or ... h5?

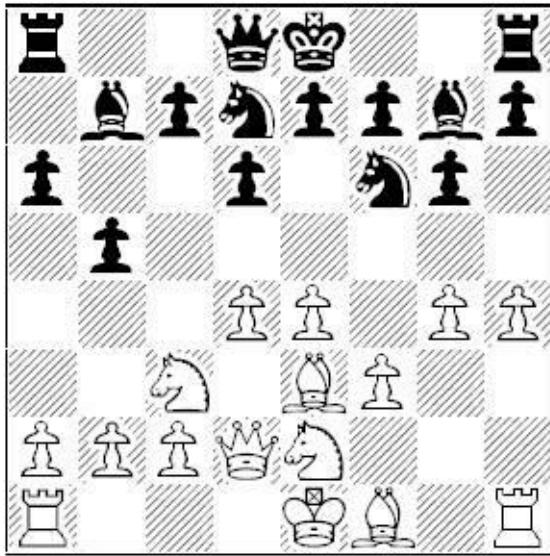
Answer: My heartfelt advice: stop listening to your friend. Rules are made to be broken, including this one. I leave you with the immortal words of the Pink Floyd song from the Animals album: “He was told what to do by the man!”

8 ... h6 would transpose to Ioseliani-Svidler.

9 Nge2

Question: What happens on 9 h5?

Answer: We ignore it and play 9 ... Nb6. Black isn't particularly concerned that the h-file can open since his king remains reasonably safe on e8 and he may castle queenside later. Here 9 ... Rg8 is also reasonable, when White has no entry down the h-file.



9 ... Nb6

To make room on d7 for the f6-knight, and also create the strategic threat of ... Nc4.

Question: Why not play 9 ... h5 now?

Answer: After 10 g5 Nh7 Black's knight looks lost and confused on h7; d7 is a far superior square.

10 b3

10 Ng3 avoids weakening the queenside, but now we play it: 10 ... h5! 11 g5 Nfd7 12 a4 b4 13 Nd1 a5 14 b3 (14 c3 looks better) 14 ... c5 15 Nf2 Rc8 16 Rc1 0-0 17 Be2 d5!. White found himself in trouble, slightly overextended, and with his king looking far less safe than Black's in D.Mastrovasilis-V.Bogdanovski, Thessaloniki 2001.

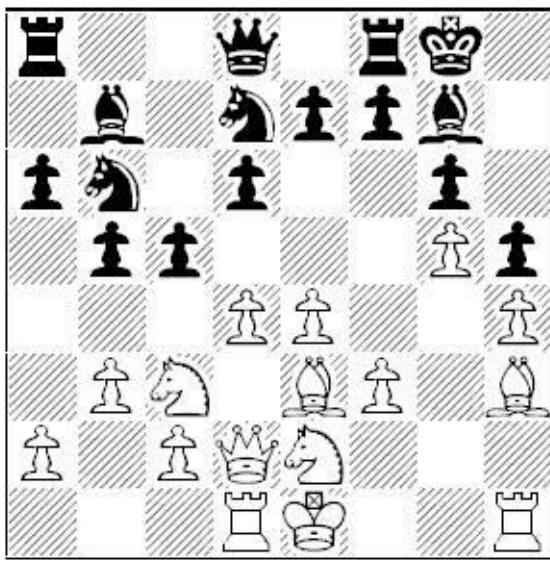
10 ... h5 11 g5 Nfd7 12 Bh3

12 Ng3 preserves the option of developing his bishop to g2, to support his e4-pawn after he plays f4. Here 12 ... c5 13 Nce2 Qc7 14 Bg2 was seen in T.Michalczak-C.Crouch, Würzburg 1993. Now I would continue with 14 ... cxd4 15 Bxd4 Bxd4. Black gets a nice game no matter how White recaptures: 16 Qxd4 e5 17 Qd2 d5 with an excellent looking Najdorf-style position, or 16 Nxd4 d5! with a perfectly timed central counter.

12 ... c5 13 Rd1

It would be foolish to castle queenside into the teeth of Black's attack, after having weakened with b3.

13 ... 0-0



14 dxc5

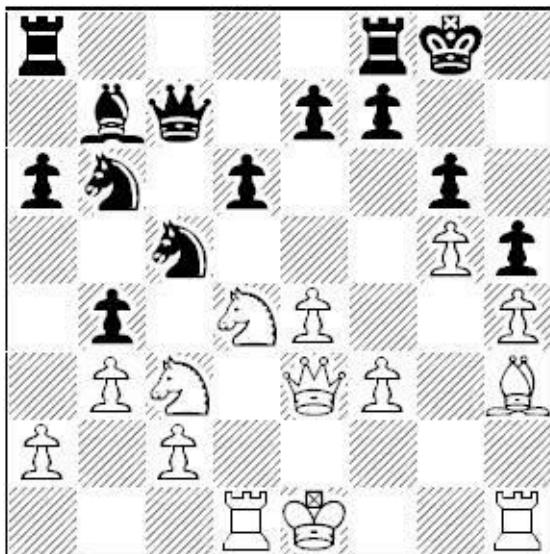
Question: Why in this chapter is White so hesitant to push forward with d5?

Answer: Generally, the release of central tension this way favours Black, who usually later counters and chips away with ... e6 ideas. In this case, Black would respond with 14 d5 b4 15 Nb1 a5 16 f4 Bc8 17 0-0 a4. Now what? White's only logical plan is to plough forward with 18 f5 Ne5 19 Nf4, but then 19 ... Qc7 intends to prise open the queenside with ... c4 soon. Black's king looks safe enough and his counterplay on the queenside is very real.

14 ... Nxc5 15 Bd4 Bxd4 16 Nxd4?!

Once again, Black now reaches a good looking Dragadorf situation, where he has the superior pawn structure and a reasonably safe king. Probably better is 16 Qxd4 Qc7 when Black prepares ... e5 and/or ... d5 ideas, as well as play down the open c-file.

16 ... Qc7 17 Qe3 b4!



18 Nb1

Question: What about sac'ing a piece with 18 Nce2 e5 19 Nf5?

Answer: Your sac idea is both bold and complex, and that is probably how White should play, since his dismal retreat clearly hands Black the initiative. I still prefer Black's chances, though, after 19 ... gxf5 20 Bxf5 Bc8 21 Ng3 Bxf5 22 exf5 d5 23 Nxh5 d4. It takes strong defensive skills and a humble personality (unfortunately, you will get checkmated once in a while!) to successfully navigate the ... a6 Modern lines.

18 ... e5!

Now Black grabs the initiative. Principle: meet a wing attack with a central counter.

19 Ne2 d5!

Same principle. Black stands clearly better.

20 Ng3 Ne6 21 Bxe6!?

He picks his poison. White eliminates the powerful black knight, but also transforms the f-file into a conduit from which Black's attack flows, while Swiss-cheesing his kingside pawn cover, especially f4.

21 ... fxe6

Now Black's clearly superior structure constitutes equity to cash in later on.

22 0-0 Nd7 23 c4 d4

Black has access to giant holes on f4 and c5, and stands clearly better.

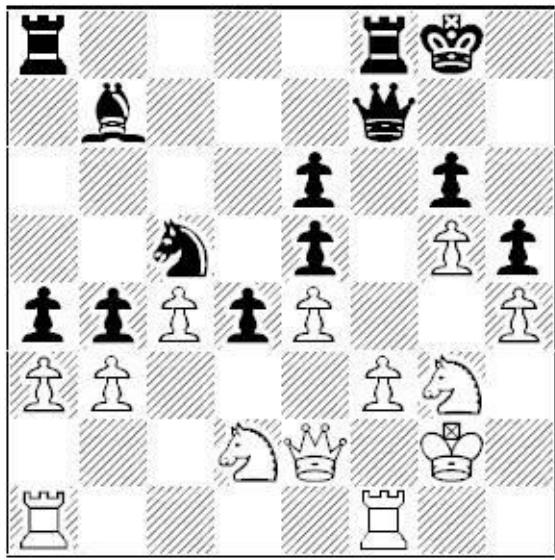
24 Qe2 Nc5 25 Kg2 a5 26 Nd2 a4 27 Ra1

Otherwise he faces invasion down the a-file.

27 ... Qf7

He can also play 27 ... Qe7 to discourage White's next move.

28 a3



An attempt at a queenside distraction.

28 ... bxa3??

Probably the worst of Black's options. Black's position is ripe with the promise of hidden energy, like a boulder on a mountain top. One strong gust of wind and it begins to roll down on everything in its path. 28 ... Qf4! looks promising after 29 axb4 Nxb3 30 Nxb3 axb3 when the h4- and g- pawns fall soon. Essentially Black gets a superior version than the one he got in the game.

29 b4 Nb3 30 Rxa3 Qf4 31 Nxb3 axb3 32 Rxb3 Qxh4 33 b5 Qxg5 34 Rh1?

Hmm. This looks less a sac and more a cry for help. Well, we all do these crazy things in rapid

games. White's sac is completely unsound and the harsh glare of reality outshines White's forlorn dream of attack. He had to try 34 Kh3 h4 35 Nh1 Rac8 when Black still must work to convert his advantage.

34 ... h4 35 Rh3 Rac8

There is no rush to take the knight.

36 Qd3 Kg7 37 Rb1 Rh8 38 Ra1 hxg3 39 Rxg3 Qh6 40 Kf2 Ra8 41 Rxa8 Rxa8

Threatening a check on a2.

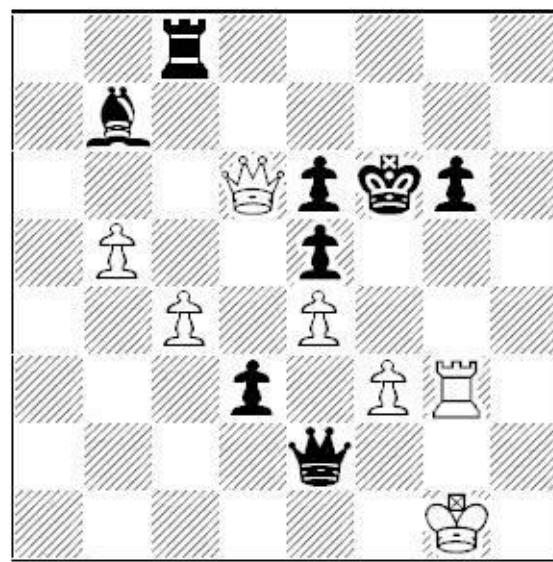
42 Qe2 Rc8 43 Qa2 Qe3+ 44 Kg2 d3!

Multipurpose: He stops Qa7, gets his own passer in motion, and blockades the advance of White's queenside passers.

45 Qa3 Kf6

Oh, no you don't! Black's king cuts off the check on e7.

46 Qd6 Qe2+ 47 Kg1



Exercise (critical decision): This is easy, right? 47 ... d2 and White resigns ... or does he? Why is pushing Black's d-pawn to d2 a blunder, and what should we play instead?

Answer: First things first! Prevent the sneaky perpetual check attempt before pushing the d-pawn.

47 ... Rg8!

It is so easy to throw away 46 moves of hard work with the careless 47 ... d2?. Then follows the disconcerting 48 Rxg6+. The rook, previously only a blurred presence at the edge of vision, makes a dramatic and unexpected entrance: 48 ... Kxg6 (forced) 49 Qxe6+ and however much Black's king wiggles, he must submit to the indignity of perpetual check. The secret of winning a won game is to play with alert confidence, without sinking into a dull hubris.

48 Rg4

Threatening a desperado check on f4.

48 ... g5! 0-1

Captioning White's despair. This is simply a way of courteously informing the cheapo-seeking White rook to bugger off. White wisely decides it is high time to raise the white flag.

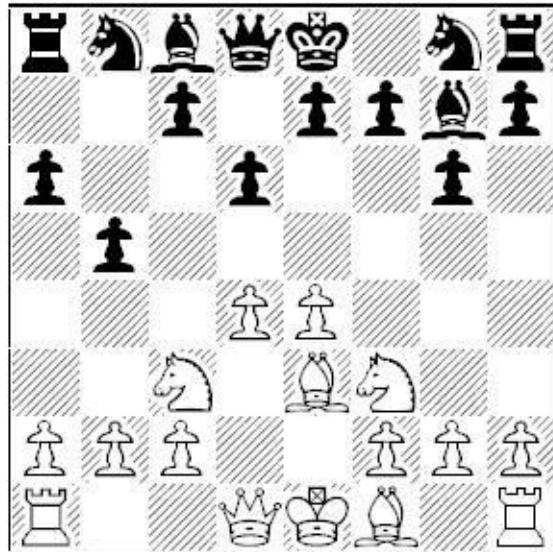
Summary

It isn't obligatory to meet White's kingside pawn storm with an early ... h6 or ... h5. You can play 7 ... Ngf6 and 8 ... Bb7, just so long as you meet 9 h5 with 9 ... Nb6 or 9 ... Rg8.

Chapter Two

Classical Lines from White

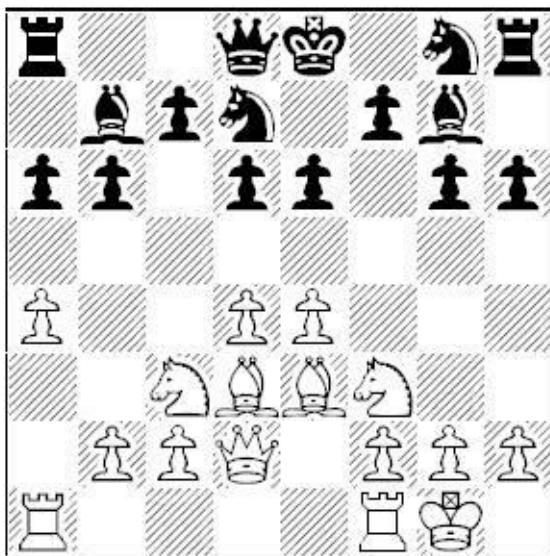
1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 Be3 a6 5 Nf3 b5



Study this chapter carefully since this is a very common set-up for White who begins exactly as in Chapter One. However, then, sooner or later, he chooses to develop his knight to the f3-square, and not necessarily on the fifth move, as in this diagrammed position.

Usually White plays a4 loosening up our queenside pawn front, and follows with a later c3, engaging us in some heavy duty strategic manoeuvring. The positions reached remain flexible with multiple possible set-ups, and I would flood the intro to this chapter with diagrams if I pasted every position you need to know! In Wizard of Oz-like fashion, the positions tend to begin quietly in black and white, and only later may burst into brilliant colour.

We also look at the elusive Hippopotamus formation, as in the next diagram, which normally drives the aggressive white player crazy with frustration, mainly because we refuse to provide him with a target.



Whichever way he tries to open the position, we sidestep and close, laying in wait for our proper time to engage him.

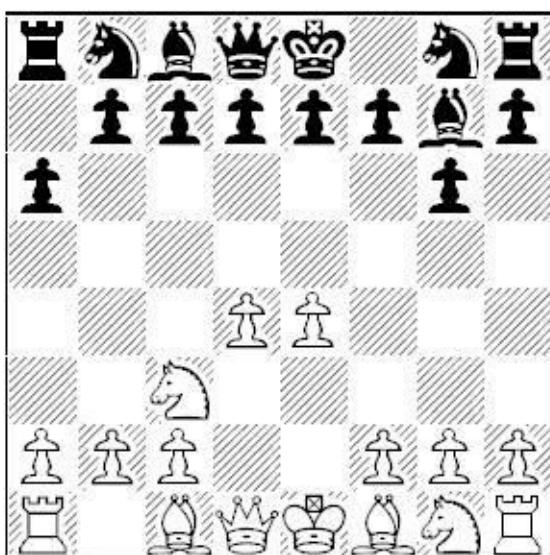
And, finally, we examine the somewhat milquetoast and fading Old Classical set-up for White with 4 Nf3 and 5 Be2. In this case Black has nothing to fear, as we enter an extinct volcano. Our plan ... b5, ... Nd7, and ... c5 is quite effective.

Game 8

T.Kulhanek-K.Chernyshov

Chrudim 2004

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 a6



Question: What is going on with Black's move order?

Answer: This is a move order tweak which increases Black's options to muck things up, mainly against the Austrian Attack, and possibly takes White out of his theoretical comfort zone.

4 Be3

Here is one benefit of the 3 ... a6 move order: If 4 f4 d5!?, and then:

a) 5 Nxd5 e6 6 Ne3 Qxd4 7 Bd3 Nc6 8 Nf3 Qc5 9 0-0 Nf6 10 Kh1 Bd7 11 c3 was V.Kotronias-A.Wohl, Cutro 2004. Now Black can try 11 ... 0-0-0!? with a very sharp position.

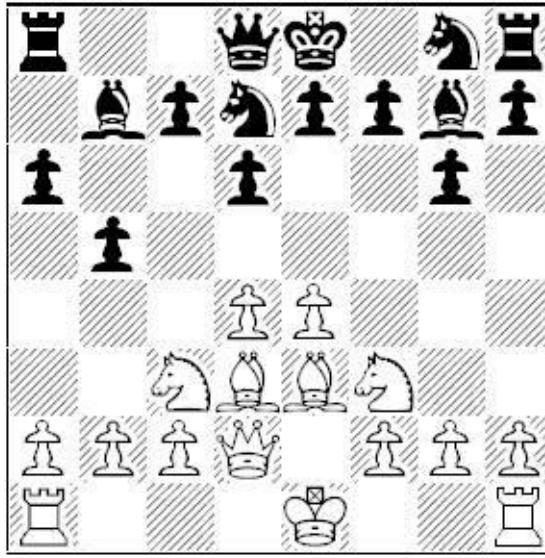
b) 5 e5 leads to a bizarre Gurgenidze-like Modern, where Black plays for a pure light-square strategy: 5 ... h5 6 Be3 Nh6 7 Qd2 Ng4 8 0-0-0 Nxe3 9 Qxe3 Bg4 10 Nf3 e6 11 Be2 Nc6 12 Rdg1 Qe7 13 h3 Bxf3 14 Bxf3 h4! and I suspect Black can engineer a successful ... c5 break later on, J.Dorst-K.Chernyshov, Pardubice 2010.

c) After 5 exd5?! Nf6 6 Bc4 Nbd7 Black will eventually regain the lost pawn with a favourable looking ... Nf6 Centre-Counter position.

4 ... b5 5 Qd2 Bb7 6 Bd3 d6 7 Nf3

As stated above, in this chapter we cover lines where White avoids f3 or f4 and develops his g1-knight to its most natural square.

7 ... Nd7



8 a4

Question: What if White refuses to disturb the queenside and just castles kingside?

Answer: Then we disturb it for him, with our thematic ... c5 break: 8 0-0 c5. Now in both lines White ends up in a passive-looking Dragon position which gives Black no trouble:

a) 9 Rfe1 cxd4 10 Bxd4 9Ngf6 11 a3 0-0 12 Rad1 Qc7 was V.Onoprienko-A.Shchekachev, Paris 1996.

b) 9 dxc5 Nxc5 and Black already has a pleasant Dragon position; White's pieces are too passive to extract an edge, J.Meister-E.Inarkiev, Moscow 2004.

8 ... b4 9 Ne2 a5

Black can also hit back and cover b4 with his c-pawn: 9 ... c5 10 c3 Ngf6 11 Ng3 bxc3 12 bxc3 Ng4 which picked off the bishop pair with equality at a minimum for Black in S.Krylov-Z.Azmaiparashvili, Istanbul Olympiad 2000.

10 Ng3 c5 11 0-0

White prefers to play in Open Sicilian style. Most players support d4 with a pawn with 11 c3, although after 11 ... Ngf6 12 h3 h5!? 13 Bg5 cxd4 14 cxd4 0-0 15 0-0 e5 Black achieved a decent Closed

Ruy Lopez position in A.Kinsman-H.Hamdouchi, Toulouse 1996.

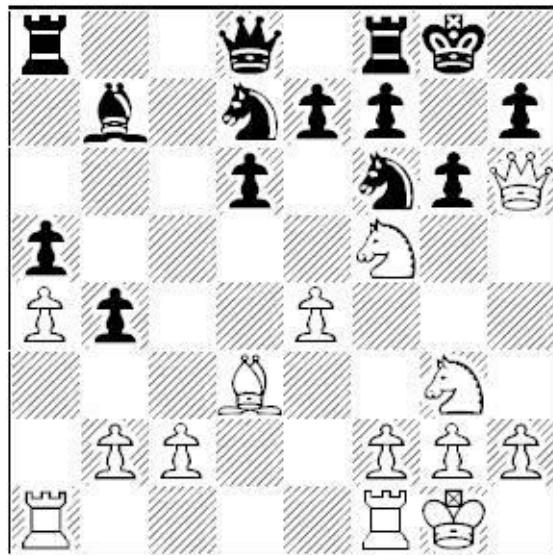
11 ... cxd4 12 Nxd4 Ngf6 13 Bh6 0-0 14 Ndf5!

White begins a dangerous looking attack, but as we shall soon see, Black's resources are more than adequate to the defensive task ahead.

14 ... Bxh6

It's easy to see that the knight is poisoned: 14 ... gxf5?? 15 Qg5 Ne8 16 Bxg7 wins, since 17 Nh5 follows on the recapture.

15 Qxh6



Exercise (critical decision): What about now? Can Black get away with taking White's hanging knight on f5, or should he submit to caution and retreat with 15 ... Ne8, to cover the mate threat on g7? Think carefully about your decision. Only one of them works!

Answer: 15 ... Ne8!

The Modern is not an opening for the haughty of spirit! Black must decline, bend and defend the mate. He can't get away with 15 ... gxf5?? 16 Nxf5 Ne8 when 17 e5! unleashes the d3-bishop, igniting White's unstoppable attack.

16 Ne3 Ne5

A good central counter to White's attempt at a wing attack. Black adds pressure to both e4 and the attacking bishop on d3.

17 f4

Question: Isn't Black likely to get mated!?

Answer: Please strive to remain calm. We need excellent defensive skills and good nerves to survive White onslaughts against the ... a6 Modern. Have faith in the inherent soundness of Black's position. We can't be blown away so easily.

17 ... d5!?

Principle: counter in the centre when attacked on the wing. I prefer the destabilizing (but nerve-wracking!) line 17 ... b3! 18 Rf3 bxc2 19 Ngf5 f6! 20 Bxc2 Bxe4 21 Rg3 Rf7. Perhaps White has full compensation for the pawn in the form of attacking chances, but intuition tells me Black is solid enough to

survive and hang on to the extra pawn.

18 e5

The human move. *Houdini* likes 18 Rad1 Qc7 19 exd5 Nxd3 20 Rxd3 Ba6 21 c4 Bxc4 22 Nxc4 Qxc4 23 Nf5! Qc5+ 24 Kh1 f6! with a sharp, unclear position. If Black survives the coming attack, his superior structure is money in the bank for old age.

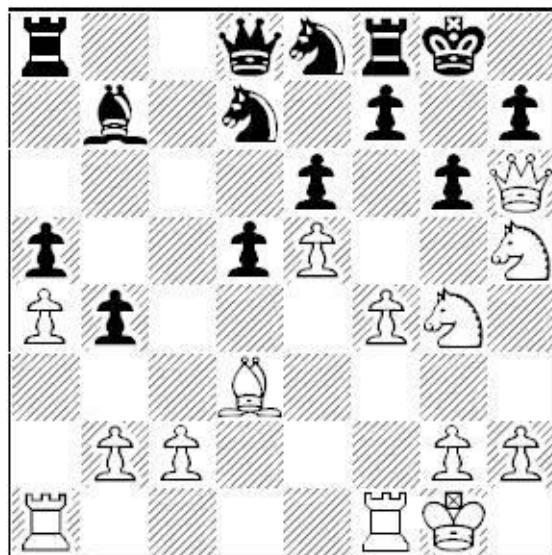
18 ... e6

This kind of position arises from Scheveningen Sicilian and also Classical French lines.

19 Ng4 Nd7

Black can also eliminate a key white attacker with 19 ... Nxd3 20 cxd3 f5! (the central counter) 21 exf6 Nxf6 22 Ne5 d4! and Black goodifies his bad bishop! Chances look equal.

20 Nh5!



Visually scary stuff, but keep in mind: for now White has no threats to speak of.

20 ... Ba6 21 f5!? Bxd3

The comps like 21 ... gxh5!, a move no human in his or her right mind would play! After 22 fxe6 Bxd3 23 exd7 hxg4 24 dxe8Q Qxe8 25 cxd3 Qxe5 it's advantage Black.

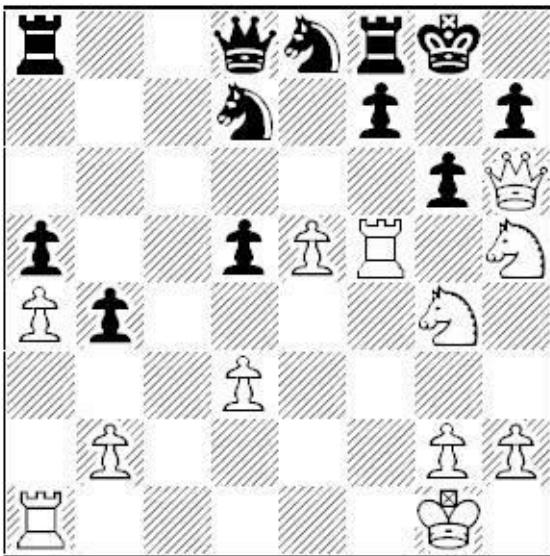
22 cxd3

Question: Shouldn't White have a mate after 22 f6?

Answer: You can't attack purely through intuition. Your suggestion may look scary, but it fails to generate a single threat. Black wins after 22 ... Qb6+ 23 Kh1 gxh5 24 cxd3 hxg4 25 Rf4 Nxe5.

22 ... exf5 23 Rxf5!

Here comes another wave. White attacks with gusto, as he dangles bait on f5 and h5, hoping Black bites.



Exercise (planning): Both hanging white pieces are immune. He also threatens to bang down a knight on f6, winning on the spot. How does Black defend?

Answer: Cover the sensitive f6-square.

23 ... Ra6!

So far so good. Still, aversion of a disaster is no cause to celebrate a victory.

Instead 23 ... gxf5?? fails to 24 Nhf6+ Ndxsf6 25 Nxsf6+, while 23 ... gxh5?? 24 Nf6+! Ndxsf6 25 Rg5+ mates.

24 Rg5!?

White goes all in and refuses to back off, while Black's nervous king sits still on g8, like old bones in the forest.

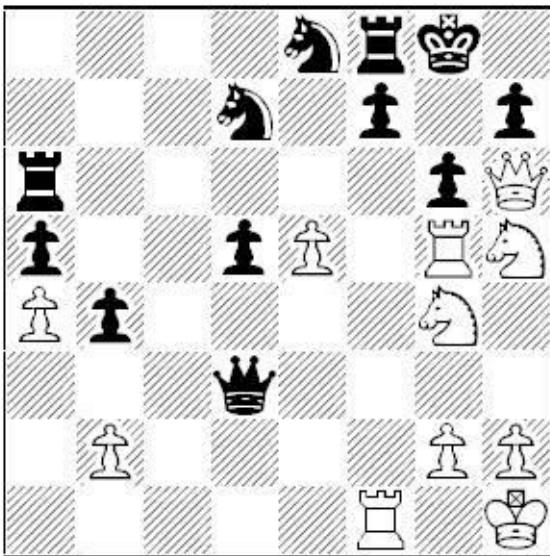
Question: How is it possible that Black can hope to defend with so many attackers around his king?

Answer: Demonstrate the specifics. The comps (and I) prefer Black, whose king, you leave for dead. Yet he has a knack for not being so. I agree that White's attackers, ominous as they may appear, clot the kingside. But in reality they are neutrals, like the Swiss. An attack doesn't succeed on looks alone. Analysis must back up the claim.

24 ... Qb6+! 25 Kh1 Qd4!

Principle: counter in the centre when attacked on the wing. Black's defensive meanderings appear starkly antithetical to White's purposeful, straight-line intent to deliver mate.

26 Rf1 Qxd3



A new dynamic appears: White's weak back rank. The embezzler siphons off a little cash from the office fund, hoping the larceny goes unnoticed. There is but a slim distinction between intent and action. White desperately wants to deliver checkmate, but has no clear method of implementing the desire. All his fragmented attacking ideas swirl up in an impossible dream of a sparkling final combination which will never be. Now we witness that White's pieces are simply stuck, like the mammoth in the ooze of the tar pit which kills it.

27 Ng3 f6

Another central counter. 27 ... Re6 also looks strong.

28 Nf2

White's attack also looks out of gas in the line 28 Rf3 Qc2.

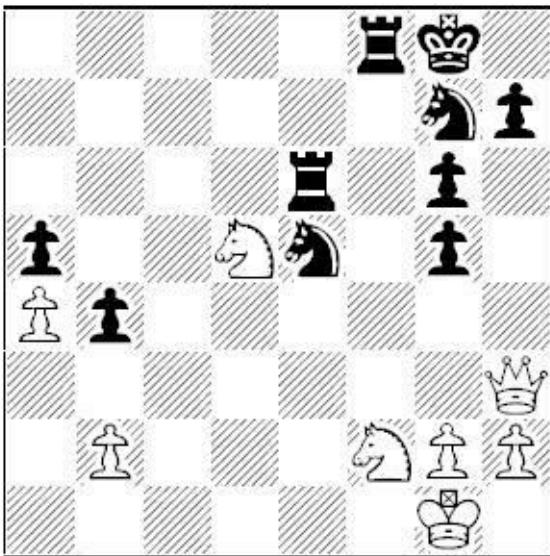
28 ... Qxf1+!?

The queen attempts to get White's notice, the way a respectful butler tries to get the master's attention by clearing his throat. The comps prefer 28 ... Qc2.

29 Nxf1 fxg5 30 Kg1 Re6 31 Qh3??

The takeoff is always scarier than the landing. White puts up a better fight after 31 Qxg5 Nxe5 32 Qd8.

31 ... Ng7 32 Ne3? Nxe5 33 Nxd5



Exercise (combination alert): Look for a way to exploit White's weak back rank.

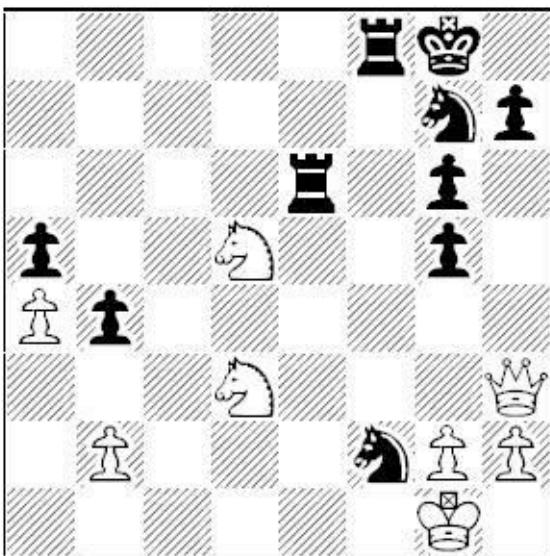
Answer: 33 ... Ng4!

Likewise, 33 ... Nc4! also works.

34 Nd3

He must cover e1.

34 ... Nf2!



Overload. Another sweet back-rank shot.

35 Qxe6+

If 35 Qg3 Nxd3 and White is unable to recapture due to the deadly rook check on e1.

35 ... Nxe6 36 Nxf2 Nc5 0-1

Summary

If White refuses to play c3 after our ... c5, we simply play ... cxd4, with an equal Dragon-style position.

Game 9

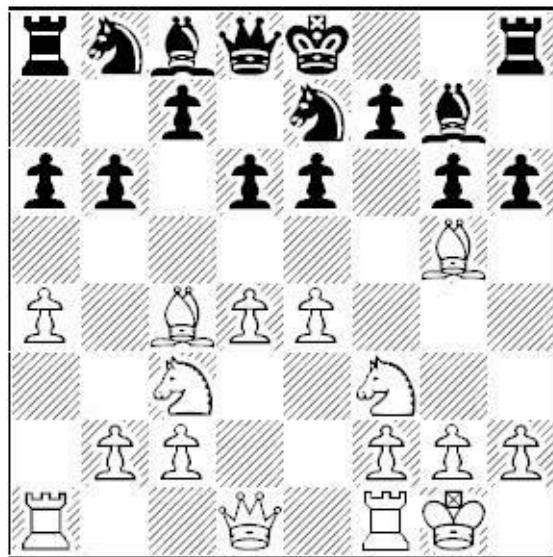
A.Shirov-Z.Azmaiparashvili

Dubai (rapid) 2002

1 e4 d6 2 d4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 Be3

Question: Are there positions in the 4 Nf3 move order where White's bishop doesn't post on e3?

Answer: It's rare, but here is one possibility: 4 ... a6 5 a4 b6 (we enter the Hippo, which we look at later in this chapter) 6 Bc4 e6 7 Bg5?! (I think this move actually hurts White, who wants to provoke ... h6; the trouble with this plan is Black actually wants to play the move anyway, and gets to do so with a free kick on the bishop later on) 7 ... Ne7 8 0-0 h6.



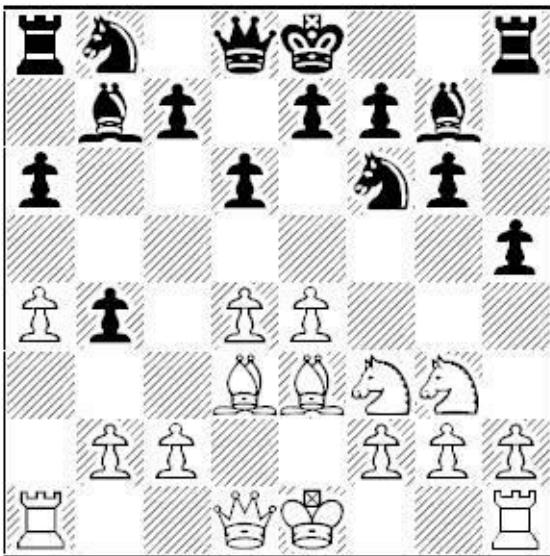
Now White saw nothing better to retreat to e3 anyway, when the free ... h6 move constituted a gain of time for Black in E.Sevillano-C.Lakdawala, San Diego (rapid) 2004. Instead 9 Bh4 Nd7 10 Re1 Bb7 11 h3 was tried in A.Mirzoev-K.Solomon, Cappelle la Grande 2011. Now, instead of castling, more enterprising is to fight for the dark squares with 11 ... g5 12 Bg3 Ng6.

4 ... a6 5 Nf3 b5 6 Bd3 Bb7

Question: Didn't you say in Chapter One that this may be an inaccurate move order, and preferred 6 ... Nd7 instead?

Answer: I did, but in a slightly different position, where White's queen was already posted on d2. Tiger Hillarp feels that you can play ... Bb7 when White's queen isn't on d2, since after 7 a4 b4 8 Ne2 Black's b-pawn isn't under attack. Still, I think you are right. An early ... Bb7 may not be bad in this position, but it is however a bad habit! There is no benefit, so why not always play ... Nd7 first?

7 a4 b4 8 Ne2 Nf6 9 Ng3 h5!?



A new move at the time this game was played. I admit to a fondness for such h-pawn pushes, which effectively radicalize the position.

Question: What is Black's idea?

Answer: Black threatens to dislodge and disrupt a defender of e4, with ... h4.

More normal here would be 9 ... Nbd7 10 h3 0-0 11 a5 c5 12 c3, and now Black took a chance with the enterprising 12 ... c4!? 13 Bb1 b3 with an interesting, unbalanced game in P.Rusan-M.Marin, Predeal 2007. White's bishop and rook on a1 and b1 are buried for now.

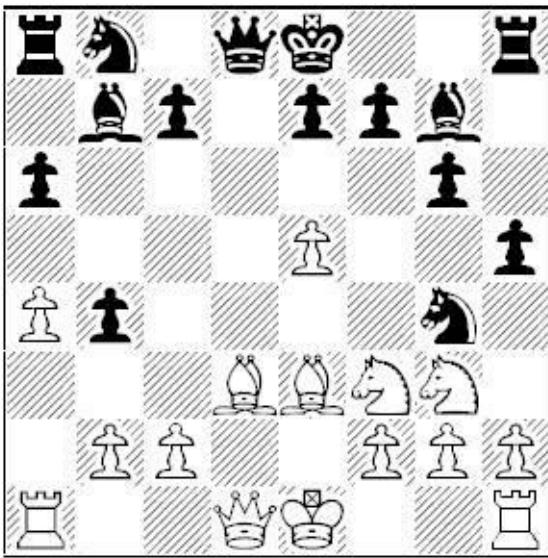
10 e5!?

The most radical of White's options. He seeks to punish Black for his non-developing last move, by creating an immediate crisis in the centre and threatening to ram his e-pawn to e6. Alternatively:

a) 10 Bg5 Nbd7 11 Qe2 Nh7 12 Bd2 h4 13 Nf1 c5 14 c3 bxc3 15 bxc3 was R.Todor-M.Schlosser, Austrian League 2009. Now I would go for 15 ... cxd4 16 cxd4 Nc5! (remember this trick – it crops up quite often) 17 Bc2 Ne6 and I like the zany feel to Black's position, which seems to contain adequate counterplay.

b) After 10 h4 Ng4 11 Bd2 c5 12 c3 0-0 the inclusion of h4 and ... h5 has sharpened the game and didn't hurt Black in S.Ansell-M.Drummond, Queenstown 2009.

10 ... dxe5 11 dxe5 Ng4



12 e6!?

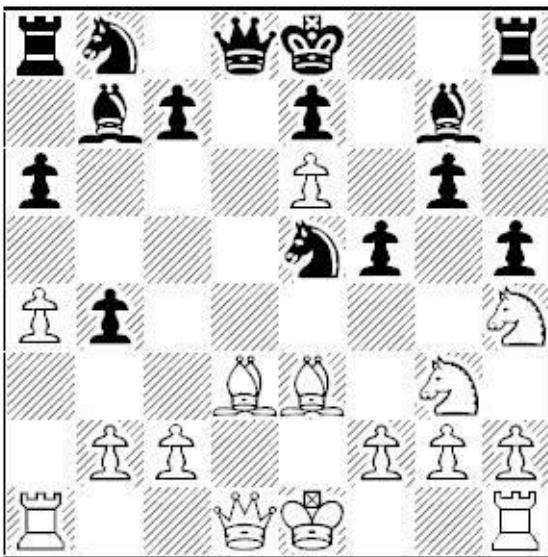
Desire and pain always walk hand in hand. Shirov's instincts egg him on to try and refute Black's previously provocative play, but in doing so he puts his position at grave risk of overextension. A more cautious path lies in 12 Bf4 Nc6 13 Be4, although Black looks okay here.

12 ... f5 13 Nh4

The imminence of the coming clash contours the landscape. Shirov seeks sac targets on g6 or f5. In the Introduction I mentioned that some lines of the Modern are so horrendously complex, that they are actually easy to play, since you basically just guess and pray your intuitive feel is on the right track! We have arrived at just one of those positions.

13 ... Ne5??

We all assume we are going to hit the bullseye on the first arrow. Black is favoured in the crazy comp line 13 ... Bxb2! 14 Nxg6 Nxe3 15 fxe3 Qd5!. Now White must play 16 Nf4, since 16 Nxh8?? loses on the spot to 16 ... Bc3+!.



Exercise (critical decision): Shirov concocted his grand plan, but now follows the troublesome question of the details: to sac

or not to sac? Would you go for 14 Nxg6 or should White hold back?

14 Bf4?

In the arena when the opposing gladiator is doing his best to lodge his spiked morningstar into the base of your skull, that is not the most timely moment for nuance! Shirov uncharacteristically fails to conform to our expectations by backing off from a thematic and promising sac.

Answer: 14 Nxg6! and all bets are off if White embraces the crazy: 14 ... Nxg6 15 Nxf5 Kf8! (not 15 ... Bxb2? 16 Nh6! Kf8 17 Qxh5) 16 Nxe7 Kxg7 17 Qe2 Nc6 18 0-0-0 offers White terrific compensation for the piece. In fact, he may well have a winning attack in this position.

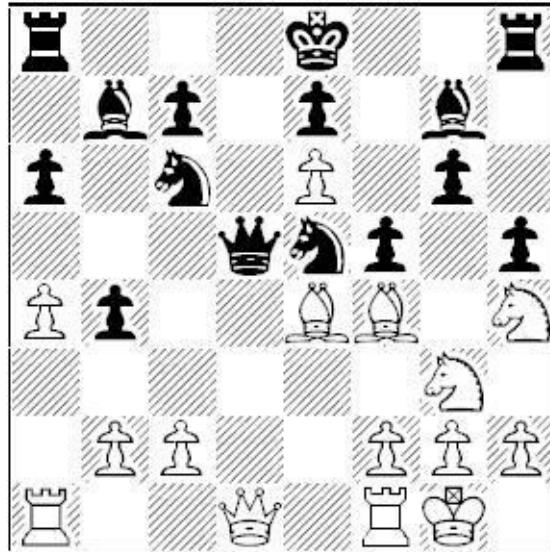
14 ... Qd5!

Powerful centralization. The advantage swing to Black.

15 0-0 Nbc6

Also very strong is the line 15 ... Nxd3! 16 Qxd3 Qxd3 17 cxd3 Bf6! when Black's g-pawn is taboo, due to the pressure down the open g-file.

16 Be4!?



A startling move which, however, fails to dent Black's advantage. Do you get the feeling that the interpretation of 'normal' for Shirov and Azmai is not what it is for you and me?

16 ... Qxe6!?

Black gets a very promising ending after 16 ... Qxd1! 17 Bxc6+ Nxc6 18 Raxd1 Bf6! 19 Nf3 h4 20 Ne2 Nd8!.

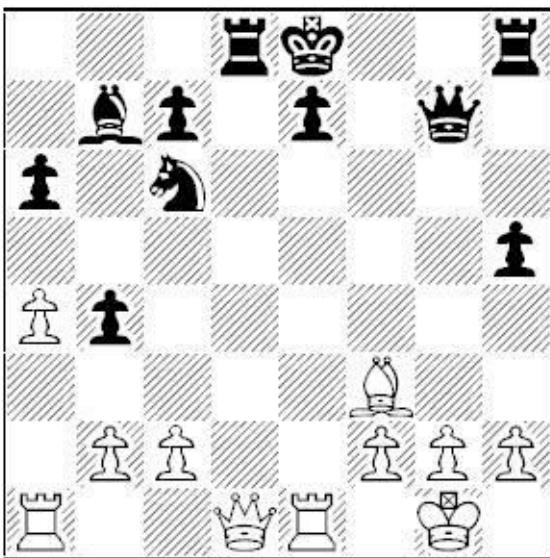
17 Bd5 Qd6 18 Nhxf5!?

Shirov tries to edit and revise his earlier decision, and goes for a sac, but this time it fails to reach the same level of potency as the one he had on move 14.

18 ... gxf5 19 Nxf5 Qf6 20 Nxg7+ Qxg7 21 Bxe5 Qxe5 22 Re1

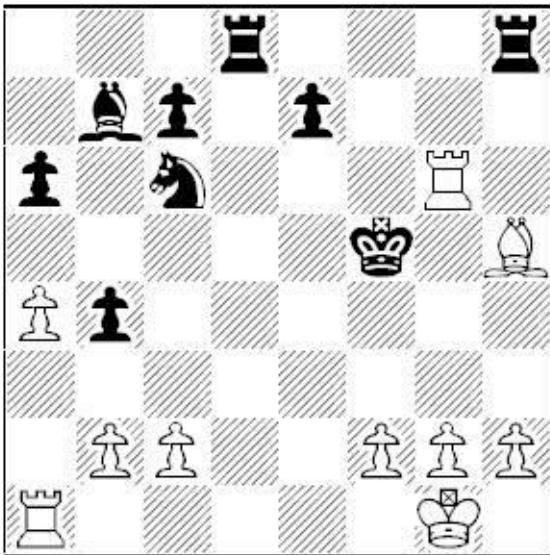
If 22 Qf3 Rh6! 23 Qf7+ Kd7 and Black's king is safe, due to the ... Rd6 resource.

22 ... Qg7 23 Bf3 Rd8!



Azmai goes for the initiative, refusing to defend with 23 ... Qg5.

24 Bxh5+ Kf8 25 Qf3+ Qf6 26 Re3 Qxf3 27 Rxf3+ Kg7 28 Rg3+ Kf6 29 Rg6+ Kf5!



Black's king, who looks dead, is partially alive, and about to go zombie on us! To checkmate, one requires attackers, a resource Shirov lacks at the moment.

30 g4+ Kf4

Black's king is the drunk driver who drives the wrong way down a one-way street, yet his guardian angel manages to keep him in perfect safety from accidents.

31 Rg7 Ne5!

In for a penny ... One must sometimes unleash the forces of hell to defend heaven. Black initiates a multipurpose pawn sac which covers f7 and targets f3. Azmai comes to the realization that pawns are unimportant and stakes everything on his growing initiative.

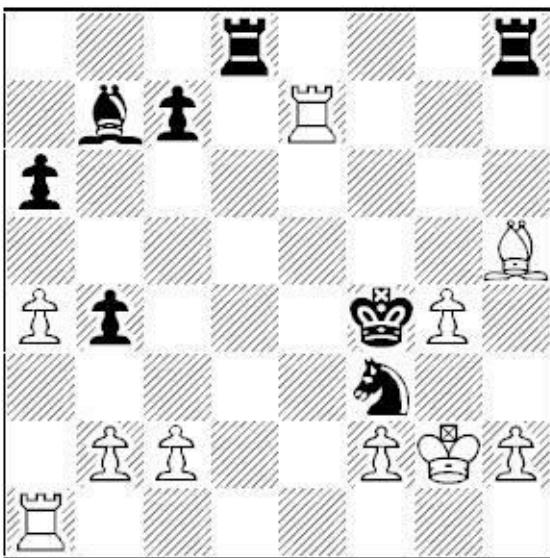
32 Rxe7

He agrees to meagre payment for his toil.

32 ... Nf3+

Suddenly it is Black, not White, who attacks.

33 Kg2



Exercise (combination alert): Black to play and win.

The alternatives don't look so tempting either, though:

- a) 33 Kh1 Rxh5! 34 gxh5 Nd2+! 35 f3 Bxf3+ 36 Kg1 Rg8+ 37 Kf2 Rg2+ 38 Ke1 Rxh2 wins.
- b) 33 Kf1 Nxh2+ 34 Ke2 Bf3+ 35 Ke1 Bd5! 36 Rd1 Nf3+ 37 Ke2 Bc4+ also wins.

Answer: Eliminate the defender of the light squares.

33 ... Rxh5! 34 gxh5 Rg8+ 35 Kf1

White's depressing alternatives:

- a) 35 Kh1 Ne5+ 36 f3 Bxf3 mate.
- b) 35 Kh3 Bc8+ 36 Rd7 Bxd7 mate.

35 ... Rg1+ 36 Ke2 Rxa1

When the star witness for the prosecution mysteriously turns up dead, you can bet it is no accident.

Two extra pieces should do the job!

37 Rf7+ Kg5 38 Rg7+ Kf4 39 Rf7+ Ke5 40 Rxc7 Be4 41 Re7+ Kf4 0-1

Summary

Keep an eye out for the disruptive idea ... h5 when White's g3-knight defends e4.

Game 10

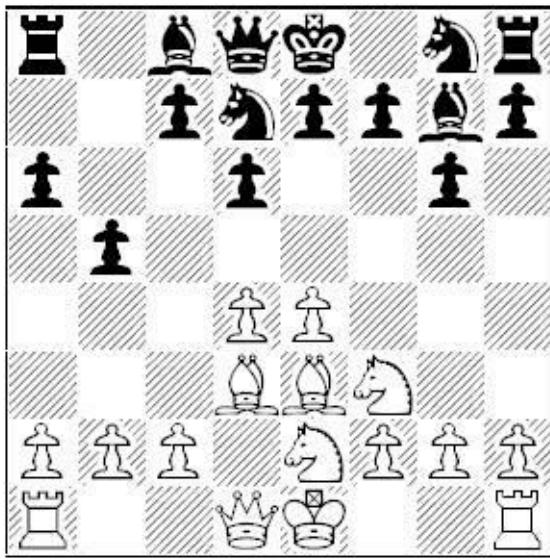
K.Movsziszian-Z.Azmaiparashvili

Dortmund 1992

1 d4 d6 2 e4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 Be3 a6 5 Nf3 b5 6 Bd3 Nd7

The safer, if not better, move order for Black.

7 Ne2



White proceeds to transfer his knight to g3 without the inclusion of a4.

Question: Why avoid a4?

Answer: I think White is better off tossing in a4 first. The philosophy behind the avoidance of a4 is White wants to build up on the kingside and play for mate on that wing. He sees a4 as a distraction on the queenside, the wing he seeks to avoid.

7 ... c5 8 c3

Question: As a general question, do you believe White gets a better chance for an edge by tossing in c3, or by avoiding it, playing for an Open Sicilian Dragon position?

Answer: Since White tends to end up with a rather passive Dragon, I feel his best shot at an edge is to go for the c3-structures.

8 ... Ngf6

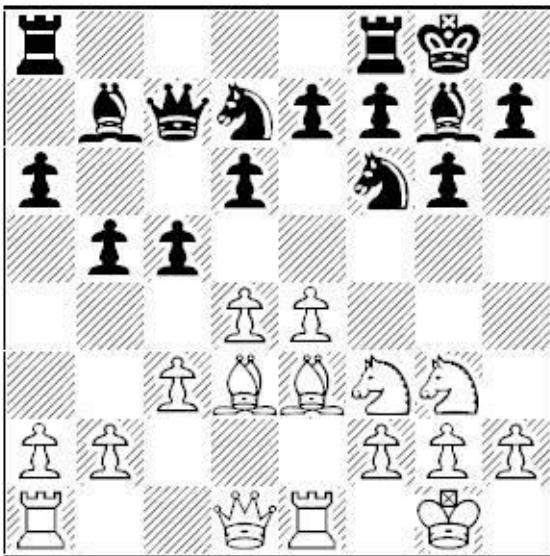
As usual, Black's flexible set-up allows him some choice:

a) 8 ... e5 looks a shade early: 9 dx5 dx5 was P.Cladouras-M.Muse, German League 2004, and now maybe White can squeeze a little something from the position with 10 c4!.

b) 8 ... e6!? is an attempt to keep the central structure fluid and prevent sudden e5-e6 thrusts from White. 9 0-0 Bb7 10 a4 c4 11 Bc2 Ngf6 12 Ng3 0-0 was R.Pita Romero Rodriguez-K.Movsziszian, Mondariz 2002, and now White should cover against ... Ng4 by tossing in 13 h3. Even so, Black's queenside chances should give him adequate play against the coming kingside build-up from his opponent.

c) 8 ... Bb7 usually just transposes to our main game.

9 0-0 Bb7 10 Ng3 0-0 11 Re1 Qc7



12 h3

Question: Is it always necessary to play h3 for White?

Answer: If White plays Qd2 without h3, this allows Black the bishop pair with ... Ng4. For example, 12 Qd2?! Ng4! (going after White's important dark-squared bishop) 13 Bg5 f6 14 Bh4!? e5 (14 ... g5!? 15 Nf5 gxh4 16 Qf4 Nge5 17 dxe5 Nxe5 also looks fine for Black) 15 h3 Nh6 (now ... g5 is a real threat) 16 Nf1 and White looks to have lost ground with all his random bishop moves.

12 ... e5!

If you compare this to a normal Breyer Ruy Lopez, Black seems to have landed into a very nice version.

Question: How so?

Answer: In the Breyer Lopez, to reach this structure Black plays ... Nc6, ... Nb8, ... Nd7, ... Be7, ... Re8, ... Bf8, ... g6, ... Bg7, and ... c5. In our version Black cut out the middleman and achieved it much quicker. Of course we must factor in that White didn't move his light-squared bishop so many times as he would in the Lopez, but still, Black is ahead in this version.

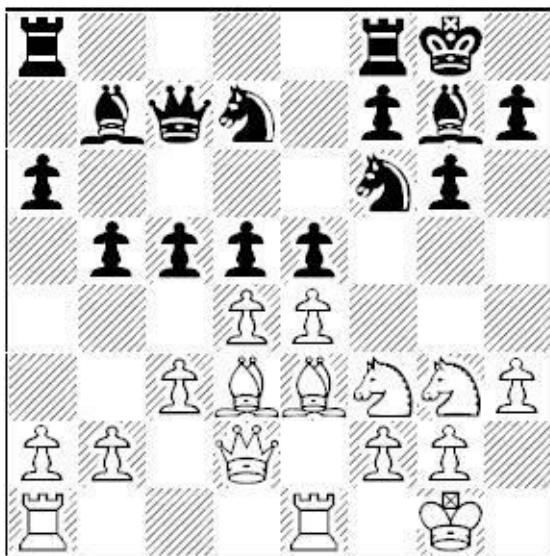
13 Qd2

Question: What is Black's plan if White closes the centre?

Answer: After 13 d5 I would toss in 13 ... c4 14 Bc2 and then Black has a choice of plans:

1. Continue with queenside play with ... Nc5 and ... a5;
2. Play for the ... f5 break, undermining White's d5-pawn.

13 ... d5!



Now we get a position so complex that it is hard to put into words. As usual, the chaos-loving Azmai looks for trouble. In this instance, his move is also quite strong.

Instead the calmer 13 ... Rfe8 indirectly threatens White's e-pawn and forces a resolution of central tension. Black stands equal in this case.

14 Bh6

In such high tension situations, fight the urge to break the central tension. I prefer Black at the end of the lines 14 dxe5 Nxe4 15 Bxe4 dxe4 16 e6 exf3 17 Qxd7 Rac8 and 14 exd5 exd4 15 cxd4 c4.

14 ... dxe4

Black chooses a good moment for the tension break, which induces a concession from White. He can also simply increase central tension with 14 ... Rfe8.

15 Bxe4

He concedes the bishop pair in an open position. 15 Nxe4 leads to an isolani position after 15 ... exd4 16 cxd4 c4. I prefer Black, but this is probably just stylistic bias.

15 ... Nxe4 16 Nxe4 exd4 17 Bxg7 Kxg7 18 cxd4 Rad8

Black prefers central activity and rapid development over structural advantage. He can also opt for the isolani situation with 18 ... c4 19 d5 when it's hard to say if White's passed, isolated d-pawn is a strength or a weakness.

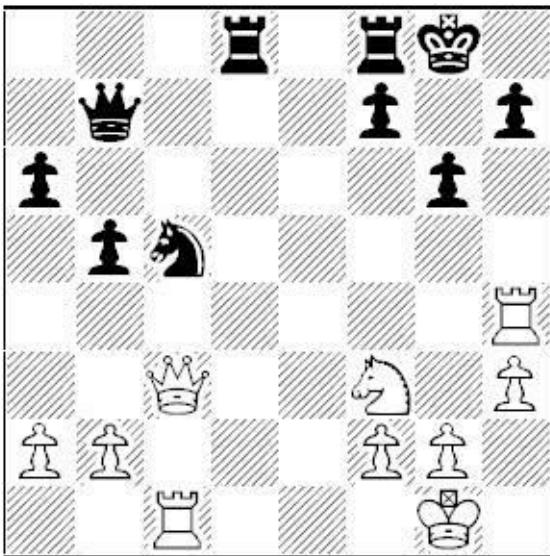
19 dxc5 Bxe4

Azmai decides the knight is too powerful on e4 and hands back the bishop for the knight.

20 Rxe4 Nxc5 21 Qc3+ Kg8 22 Rc1 Qb7!

No problem. Black easily sidesteps the pin.

23 Rh4!?



The rook capers away in pursuit of a mirage. The only difference between an ambition and a dream is that a dream is harder to come to fruition. Love of attack has a nasty way of despoiling a normally pristine environment, like the drunk who barfs in the fresh winter's snow outside the bar at closing time. But it's hard to fault White for succumbing to temptation. The fact is his attack isn't as great as it appears. I would have backed the rook up to e3 instead.

Question: Man, you are a downer when it comes to attacking! Doesn't White stand better? It looks like he has strong attacking chances.

Answer: I prefer Black and feel White builds his attack on shifting sand. It's highly unlikely Black will get mated with the centre wide open.

23 ... Ne4

Principle: counter a wing attack in the centre.

24 Qe3

Eyeing the h6-square.

24 ... Rfe8!

Black ignores it.

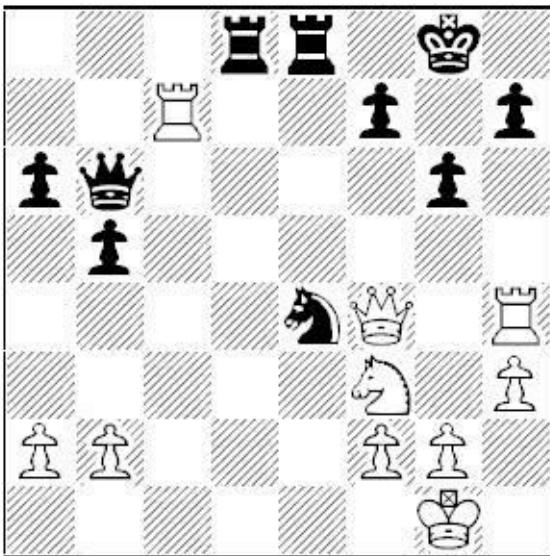
25 Qf4

After 25 Qh6?! f5 26 Ng5 Nf6 the branches sway in the wind but don't break. This game reminds me of White's non-attacking situation in the first game of this chapter. Black's powerfully centralized defenders ensure he won't get mated.

25 ... Qb6

Black targets f2, reminding White that he also has weaknesses.

26 Rc7



Exercise: White returns the favour on f7. Make a decision:
shall we take on f2 with check or is it a trap?

26 ... Rd1+

Answer: It's a trap! Black loses after the hasty 26 ... Qxf2+?? 27 Kh2 Nd6 28 Qh6.

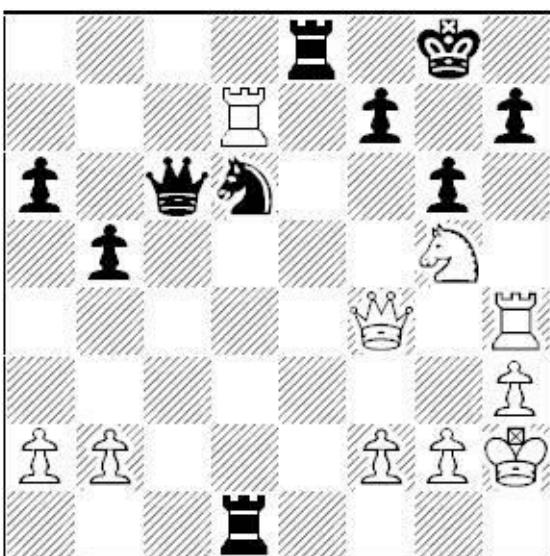
27 Kh2 Nd6

Threatening c7. Notice how Azmai isn't intimidated by White's attack and opts to avoid a queen trade which he could do with 27 ... Qd6.

28 Rd7 Qc6 29 Ng5

The murderer desperately attempts to scrub away the bloodstains which stubbornly continue to resist the bleach.

29 Ne5 leads to perpetual check after 29 ... Rxe5 (White also holds the game after 29 ... Qc1 30 Qxc1 Rxc1 31 Nd3 Rc4 32 Rf4) 30 Rxh7 Kxh7 31 Rxf7+ Nxf7 32 Qxf7+ when White draws, despite a pair of rooks in the hole.



Exercise (critical decision): White just offered us a rook on d7.

Should we take it or defend with 29 ... h5 instead?

Answer: 29 ... Qxd7!

In many societies it is impolite to decline a gift. White's last move was a blunder and his attack now fails. Azmai sees through White's attempts at misdirection and subterfuge, and puts an end to all of White's tricks. Another very good reason to take the rook is Black loses on any decline.

30 Nxh7 Ne4!

Covering f6 and threatening ... Qd6.

31 Qh6

The intruder enters the house with silent deliberation, but soon White's assault ends gracelessly. The aerodynamics of the attack were not as sound as once believed.

31 ... Qd6+ 32 f4 Qd4! 0-1

Black's queen moves short/long, like the tapping of Morse code as she expands her arc of power and finally forecloses on White's attack. Centralization is the universal panacea to all attacks. Black covers mate cheapos on h8 and also generates a mating threat of his own on g1, rendering White defenceless.

Summary

When White avoids a4, he can easily end up in an inferior version of a Ruy Lopez Breyer, where he may be the one fighting for equality.

Game 11

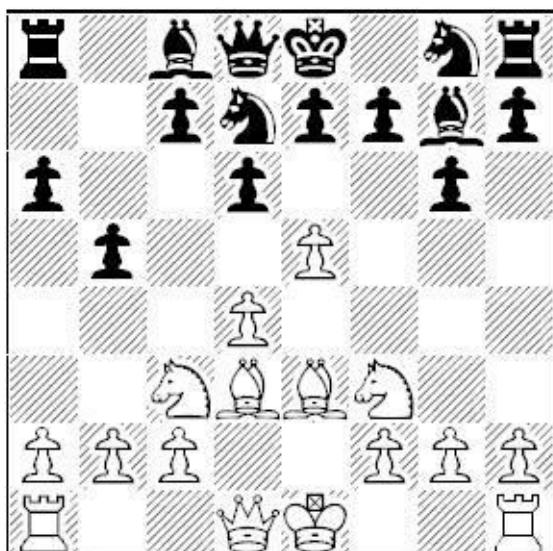
A.Fishbein-C.Hansen

Kerteminde 1991

1 e4 g6 2 d4 d6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 Nf3 a6 5 Be3 b5 6 Bd3 Nd7

White's coming idea can also be played on the move order 6 ... Bb7 7 e5. Now I suggest 7 ... e6! which should soon transpose to the game. Instead 7 ... Nd7 8 e6 gets us into the Anand-Svidler pawn sac mentioned below.

7 e5



Question: Isn't White's last move a blunder, giving away a pawn?

Answer: Matters are not so simple. White has tactics on, of all things, Black's rook on a8 if he takes the pawn.

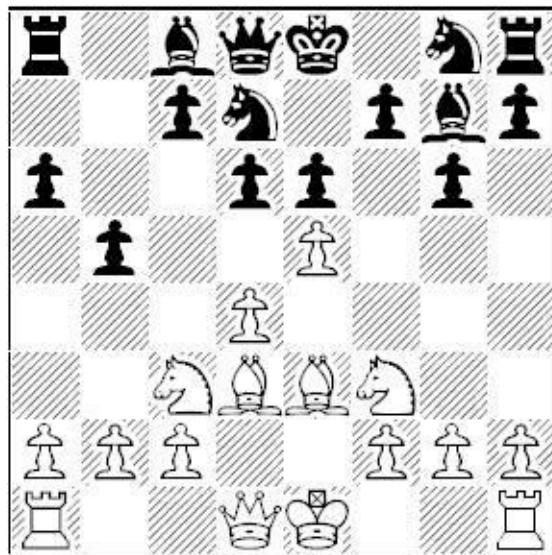
7 ... e6!

I prefer this rare move to the more common 7 ... Bb7 which allows White his intended sac with 8 e6.

Question: Is this sac strong for White?

Answer: Actually, I feel Black also gets dynamically equal chances in this one. The only reason I prevent it is out of a curmudgeonish desire to deny White his wish! 8 ... fxe6 9 Ng5 Nf8 10 0-0 Nf6 11 Re1 Qd7 12 Bd2 h6 13 Nf3 Rb8 gave White full compensation for the pawn, since Black's king was denied a safe haven across the board, while his passive pieces slaved over his extra e6-pawn in V.Anand-P.Svidler, Linares 1998.

Note too that White's e-pawn is covered tactically, since 7 ... dxe5?! 8 Be4 Rb8 9 dxe5 Nxe5?? 10 Qxd8+ Kxd8 11 0-0-0+ Ke8 12 Ba7! wins material.



8 Bg5

I love it when White plays the natural Bg5 on our Hippo formation, since we later get a free ... h6 and possibly ... g5 option later on.

Question: Is this a Hippopotamus with Black's b-pawn on b5, rather than on b6?

Answer: Technically, the Hippo proper has Black's pawn on b6. This one is a bit of a hybrid, so let's call the one with Black's pawn on b5 the Pseudo-Hippo.

Question: What if White tries a strategy of direct assault on d6, starting with 8 exd6 cxd6 9 Ne4 Qc7 10 Bf4?

Answer: No problem. Black hits back in the centre with 10 ... e5 11 Qe2 Ne7 when White is in danger of a future coiled spring effect from Black's central pawn expansion, R.Schuermans-

T.Vandenbussche, Ghent 2010.

8 ... Ne7 9 a4!

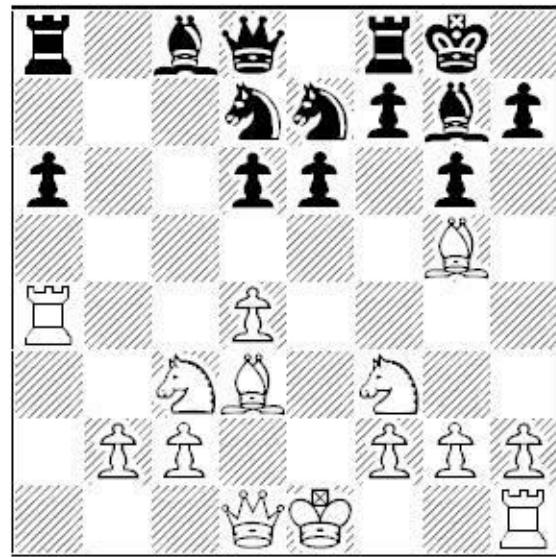
Taking advantage of the ‘pseudo’ part of the Hippo by creating confrontation on the queenside.

9 ... bxa4!

Question: Why didn’t Black push by?

Answer: In this case Black looks loose after 9 ... b4?! 10 Ne4 h6 11 Bh4 dxe5 12 Nxe5 Nxe5 13 dxe5 g5 14 Bg3.

10 exd6 cxd6 11 Rxa4 0-0



Question: Isn’t the a6-pawn a target?

Answer: It may be a bit of a worry for Black, but I feel his central pawn influence compensates. The position looks balanced, although I would toss in 11 ... h6.

12 0-0

Question: Why not 12 Qd2 to prevent ... h6?

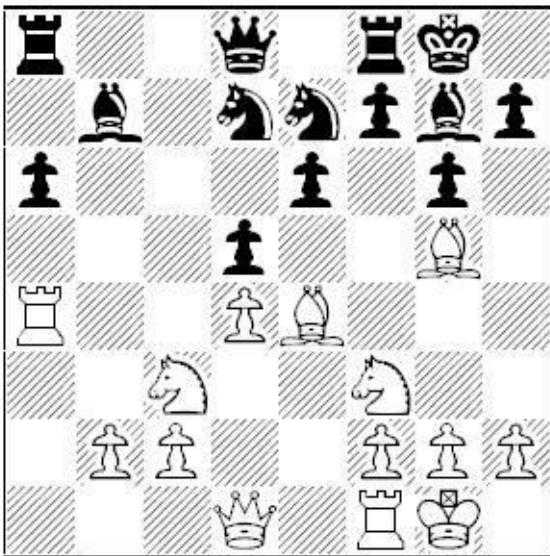
Answer: White loses the initiative in that line after 12 ... Bb7:

a) If 13 Be4 Bxe4 14 Nxe4 d5 15 Ng3 f6 16 Be3 Nb6.

b) 13 Ne4?! is even worse: 13 ... Nb6 14 Ra1 f5 15 Nc3 Bxf3 16 gxf3 Bxd4 17 Rxa6 Rxa6 18 Bxa6 Bf6 leaves Black with a clear structural advantage.

12 ... Bb7 13 Be4 d5!

Counterintuitive, but excellent judgement. Black didn’t want to trade off the bishops because he needed his not-so bad, ‘bad’ bishop to support d5 after a future ... f6 and ... e5 plan.



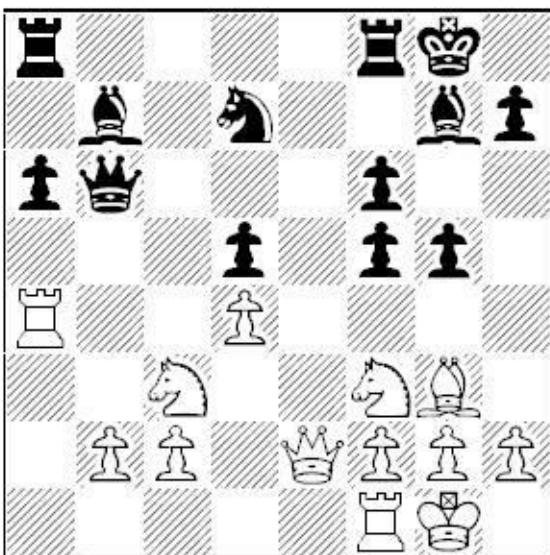
14 Bd3 f6 15 Bh4

Black rolls forward after 15 Bd2?! e5.

15 ... Nf5 16 Qe2 Qb6 17 Bxf5 exf5

Threat: ... g5 and ... f4.

18 Bg3 g5!



White's position, so far relatively angst free, suddenly becomes a source of multiple worries. The advantage swings to Black:

1. Whose technically crippled kingside pawn majority is anything but handicapped, whereas White's 'healthy' majority on the other side sits useless in its currently frozen state.
2. Who owns the bishop pair in a semi-open position.
3. Who controls the light squares.

19 h4 f4

The f-pawn painfully grinds against White's position, like a dislocated shoulder.

20 Bh2

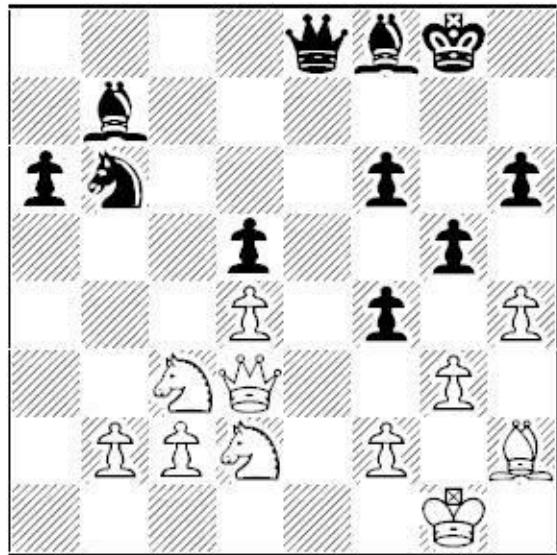
The eyeless, dark creature at the bottom of the ocean moves only by feel. The plight of White's bishop, stapled to h2, is a painfully familiar sight to me. This is what happens when things go wrong for

White in a London System.

20 ... h6 21 Qd3 Rfe8 22 Raa1 Qe6

Black transfers his queen over to tend to his slightly weakened light squares on the kingside.

23 Rae1 Qf7 24 Qf5 Nb6 25 Nd2 Rxe1 26 Rxe1 Re8 27 Rxe8+ Qxe8 28 Qd3 Bf8 29 g3



A necessary evil. White hopes to wash away the grime of the last ten moves.

Question: Isn't White okay now? His bishop attains freedom.

Answer: He swaps one problem for another, by opening the position for Black's bishop pair and fixing Black's majority.

29 ... fxg3

Black's jumbled structure suddenly reassembles, like a once dismembered creature returning to life in a horror film.

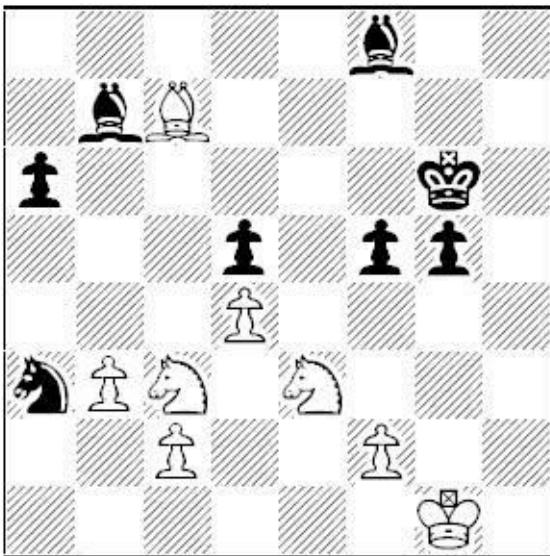
30 Bxg3 Kg7 31 Nf1 Qg6

Black hopes to take the queens off the board, thereby eliminating perpetual attempts from White.

32 hxg5 hxg5 33 Qxg6+

The trouble with 33 Qe2!? is that White's king would be in more danger than Black's.

33 ... Kxg6 34 Bc7 Ne4 35 b3 Na3 36 Ne3 f5



Exercise (critical decision): An abundance of options can be as disconcerting as too few. White can play 37 Nxd5 in exchange for his c2-pawn, or he can try and take the mobility out of Black's kingside pawn majority with 37 f4. Which one would you play?

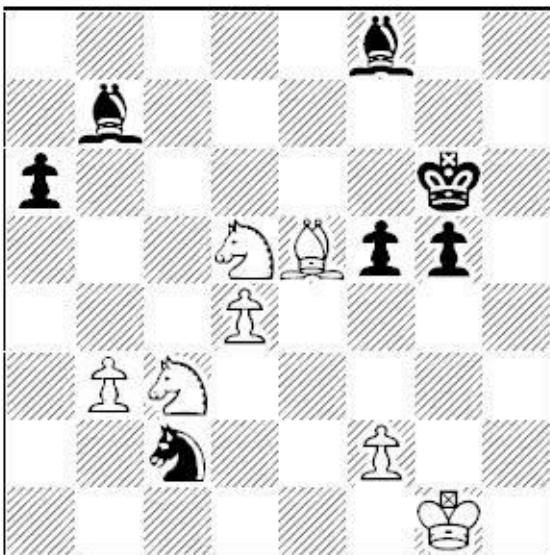
37 Nxd5?

A mistake. Not only does White open the position for Black's bishops, but now he must also nurse three isolanis.

Answer: Principle: rigidity in the pawn structure helps the side with the knights. Therefore White should play 37 f4! g4 38 Ne2.

37 ... Nxc2 38 Be5

38 Bb6 Bg7 places White's d-pawn in the line of fire.



Exercise (planning): White's tender pawns, by now rubbed raw, begin to ooze blood. Black to play and force the win of a pawn.

38 ... f4

Black incorrectly strengthens his game, rather than cash out.

Answer: 38 ... Na1! (it's actually difficult to spot such moves, because of our ingrained aversion to decentralization) 39 b4 Nc2 picks off the b-pawn.

39 Nb6 Kf5

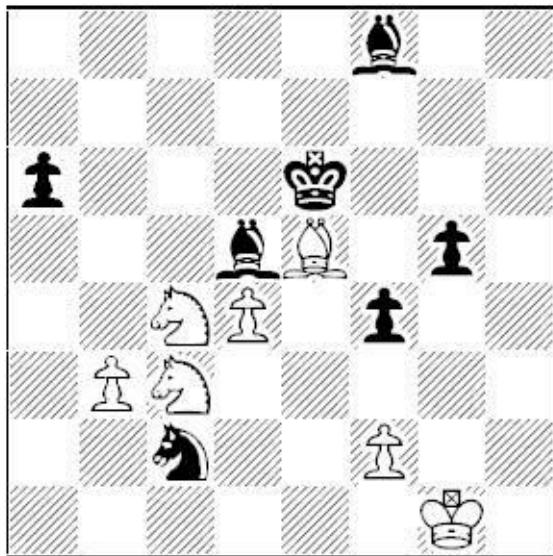
Beam me up Scotty. Another Black plus king position for the ending.

40 Nc4 Ke6??!

Black once again misses looping back to the old pattern: 40 ... Na1! picking up the b-pawn.

41 Na4 Bd5 42 Nc3

White clings to his queenside pawns the way a child would her favourite doll, fearing that if she puts it down, another child may take her cherished doll away.



Exercise (combination alert): Black has access to a counterintuitive, forcing sequence which wins a pawn. Take a few minutes. Can you spot it?

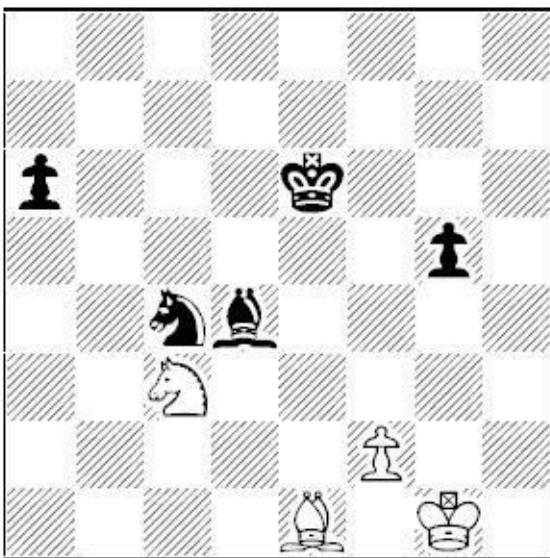
Answer: 42 ... Bxc4!

Black fixes White's broken pawns – temporarily!

43 bxc4 Na3! 44 c5 Bxc5!

Overload. Black consumes the pawn like the guy who picks up a piece of broken chocolate off the floor, and guiltily looking around to see that no one is watching, eats it anyway.

45 Bxf4 Bxd4 46 Bd2 Nc4 47 Be1



Exercise (critical decision): Should we reduce the forces further by swapping our bishop for White's knight on c3?

Answer: We should. Black's remaining knight is perfectly placed to support his passed a-pawn. Meanwhile, White's king is too far away to offer effective help.

47 ... Bxc3! 48 Bxc3 Kf5 49 f3?

The tipping point. White provides Black with another target. He was better off leaving the pawn where it stood.

a5 50 Kf2 a4

Black's threat: ... a3, ... a2, ... Na5, ... Nb3 and promote on a1.

51 Ke2 Kf4

Black's king approaches since White's bishop is unable to give check.

52 Bf6 Ne5!

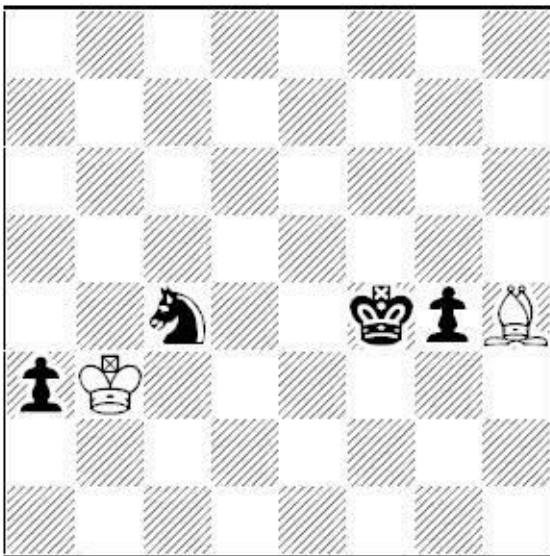
Target: f3. A second pawn falls.

53 Be7 Nxf3

The bishop and king team can't deal with passers on both wings. Meanwhile, Black's king and knight duo give each other smug, knowing looks, confident of their coming victory.

54 Kd3 Ne5+ 55 Kc3 g4 56 Bh4 a3! 57 Kb3 Nc4!

The unfortunate White king is tethered to his defence of the a-pawn's queening ambitions.



58 Kxc4 a2 59 Bf6 g3 0-1

Summary

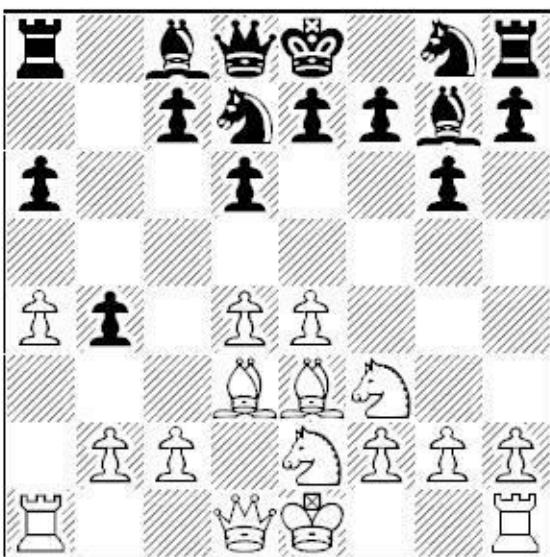
I would advise against allowing White his e6 pawn sac. My preference is for us to play 7 ... e6! ourselves, negating White's future sac.

Game 12

P.Meister-V.Baklan

Bad Wiessee 2011

1 d4 g6 2 Nf3 Bg7 3 Nc3 a6 4 e4 b5 5 Bd3 d6 6 Be3 Nd7 7 a4 b4 8 Ne2



We reach the same position as we did in the Shirov-Azmaiparashvili game from this chapter, except that Black interchanged ... Nd7 for ... Bb7.

Question: And you prefer this move order, correct?

Answer: Correct. Black's bishop doesn't block the b-file on b7 in this case. Both are playable, but this one is safer, without any penalty for Black.

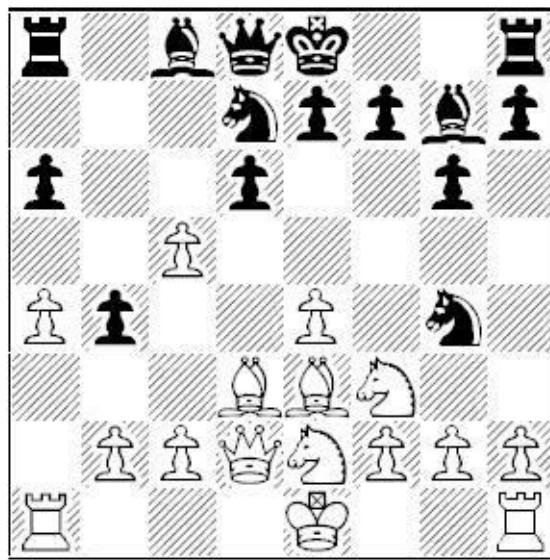
8 ... Ngf6

Instead 8 ... c5 9 c3 bxc3 10 bxc3 Ngf6 11 0-0 0-0 12 Ng3 was A.Shchekachev-Z.Azmaiparashvili, Internet (blitz) 2003. Now instead of trading on d4, I would play 12 ... Qc7 with a decent game for Black.

9 Qd2 c5 10 dxc5??!

Only played so far this one time, but I tossed this game in because this is the kind of move a club player may try on you. 10 c3 is what we are used to.

10 ... Ng4!?



Black speculates with an interesting pawn sac.

Question: Is there anything wrong with just recapturing the pawn on c5?

Answer: Both recaptures are also fine for Black:

a) 10 ... Nxc5 would be my choice.

Question: Give up a pawn?

Answer: A thrill goes through every fat kid as he enters a candy store, but too much candy constitutes a vice. White can win a pawn, but Black gets loads of compensation after 11 Qxb4!? (I also prefer Black after 11 Ng3 Ng4 12 Bd4 Nxd3+ 13 Qxd3 e5 14 Be3 Nxe3 15 fxe3 Be6) 11 ... a5!. Now White has a comp-like way of hanging on to his pawn, but he ends up with a sorry looking game at the end of the line: 12 Qb5+ Bd7 13 Qc4 Rc8 14 Bxc5 Rxc5 15 Qb3. Black gets the bishop pair and two open lines on the queenside for the pawn, a bargain.

b) After 10 ... dxc5 11 Bh6 Bxh6 12 Qxh6 Qc7 13 b3 Bb7 I doubt that White has anything here either since Black retains a hold on the key dark squares.

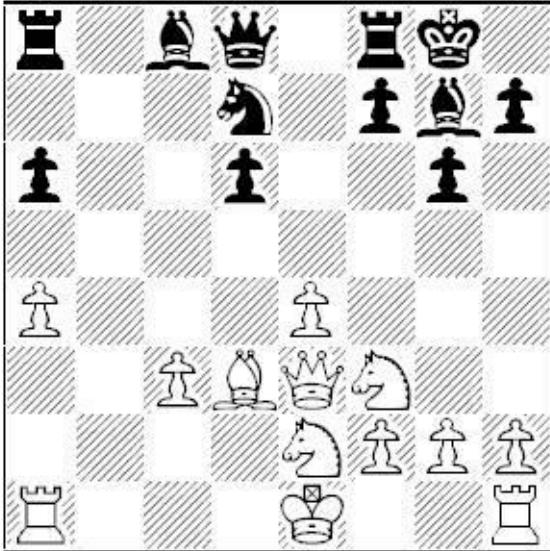
11 cxd6 Nxe3 12 Qxe3 exd6 13 c3??

13 Bc4! is a superior way to cover b2 indirectly.

13 ... bxc3 14 bxc3

Perhaps White has better drawing chances if he deliberately falls for the following combination: 14 Nxc3!? Rb8 15 Rb1 Rxb2! 16 Rxb2 Bxc3+.

14 ... 0-0



Question: Does Black have full compensation for the pawn?

Answer: The comps claim it's equal, but I don't like White's game, which strikes one as an unnerving landscape from another time, like the Great Depression. Black has:

1. The bishop pair in an open position.
2. Dark-square control.
3. The more active pieces in general.

At this point I will bet White regretted his earlier pawn grab in exchange for a sour position. It's worth remembering, Midas starved because he couldn't eat pizza made of gold. This isn't one of those pox-on-both-houses situations. Black's position is a lot easier to play than White's.

15 0-0 Qc7 16 Rfd1 Re8

Black targets e4, c3, and a4.

17 Qf4 Bb7 18 Be2 Nc5! 19 Qxd6 Qxd6 20 Rxd6 Bxe4 21 Bxe4 Nxe4 22 Rc6 Rac8! 23 Rxc8

Avoiding the cheapo 23 Rxa6?? Nc5 which wins a piece.

23 ... Rxc8

So Black soon regains his lost pawn with perhaps a minute edge.

24 Rd1 Bf6

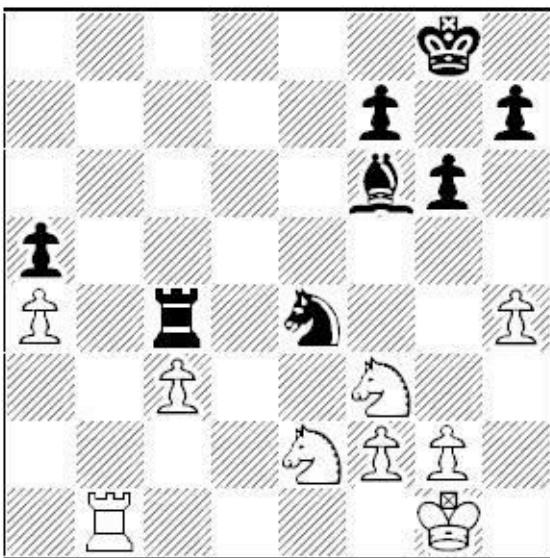
No rush.

25 Rb1 a5 26 h4?!

Plan A (hold on to the extra pawn) failed miserably. Time to move on to ...

Plan B: reduce the pawns and generate enough piece activity to achieve a draw. However, this is not the way to start. Better to play 26 Rb5 Nxc3 27 Nxc3 Bxc3 when White hangs on to the a-pawn: 28 g3 Rc4 29 Rb3 Bf6 30 Ra3. Passive as White is, he should be able to hold things together.

26 ... Rc4!



Suddenly, White must nurse several weak pawns as his forlorn pieces sit moping in a support group for the depressed.

27 g4??

Yipes! Wisdom dictates that it is best not to spit into the wind. This looks like time pressure psychosis, to which we all occasionally succumb. As we know, it is easy to live in false hope. Psychologically, the move is quite understandable. White, sick with longing for the elusive initiative, tosses in a hyper-aggressive move from an inferior position as a way of announcing to Black: "I am not powerless!" when in reality he has the sneaking suspicion that he is indeed powerless, and should just sensibly defend.

If you can't halt the tide of Black's initiative, the next best thing is to soften the coming blow. White should get enough counterplay to hold the game if he embraces the sensible with 27 Rb8+ Kg7 28 Rb7! (target: f7) 28 ... Rxa4 29 Ned4 (threatening tricks on e6) 29 ... Bxd4 30 cxd4 when White should hold the draw.

27 ... Nxc3

Ask and ye shall receive. Triple attack on a4, e2, and g4. White drops more material.

28 Rb8+ Kg7 29 g5

Or 29 Nxc3 Rxg4+ 30 Kf1 Bxc3 31 Rb7 h6! and a4 falls as well.

29 ... Nxe2+ 30 Kf1 Nf4 31 gxf6+ Kxf6 32 Rb6+ Ne6 0-1

Summary

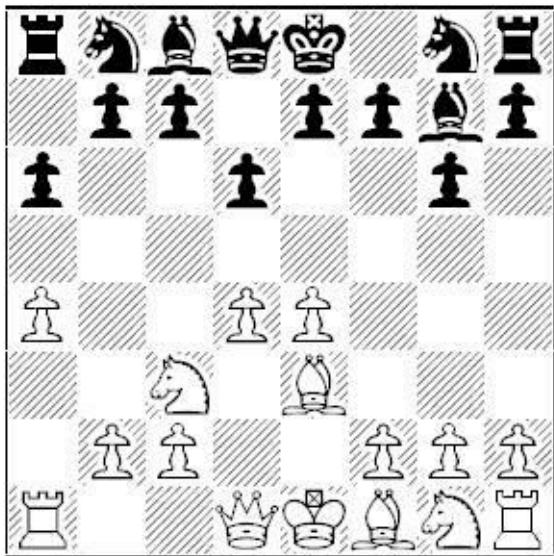
I would meet 10 dxc5?! with a powerful pawn sac offer: 10 ... Nxc5 or 10 ... Ng4!? as played in the game. Black seems to get a nice game whether or not White accepts.

Game 13

Y.Masserey-B.Avrukh

Biel 2002

1 e4 d6 2 d4 g6 3 Be3 Bg7 4 Nc3 a6 5 a4



Question: White prevented our fundamental ... b5 plan.
What do we do about it?

Answer: Enter the Hippopotamus formation, which is actually quite easy to play as Black. Our universal set-up: ... a6, ... b6, ... Bb7, ... Nd7, ... e6, ... Ne7, ... g6, ... Bg7, ... h6 – no matter how White sets up.

Question: Isn't your suggested set-up a tad passive for Black?

Answer: One player's passivity is another's flexibility. Black's position is maddeningly hard to dent. We use the martial arts principle of denying the opponent a stationary target and lure him into our territory, where our king can be as hard to catch as a greased pig.

5 ... b6

We end any a5 ideas White may have had, preparing to meet a5?! with the bypassing ... b5.

6 Nf3

I mentioned this earlier, but it's worth repeating 6 f3 isn't very conducive with a4. Next game we look at 6 Bc4.

Question: What about 6 f4?

Answer: We look at a similar Austrian Attack line next chapter. My feeling is a4 also doesn't mix well for White with f4 lines, since it removes his key queenside castling option. Here 6 ... Bb7 7 Nf3 Nd7 8 Bd3 e6 9 0-0 was V.Anand-T.Hillarp Persson, Benidorm (rapid) 2003. I would continue with the thematic 9 ... Ne7 and if White goes for it we basically ignore him after 10 f5 exf5 11 exf5 Nf6 12 Qd2 Qd7 13 Rae1 0-0-0!. Black's light-square control compensates for White's space.

6 ... Bb7 7 Bd3

White tends to the security and comfort of his e-pawn.

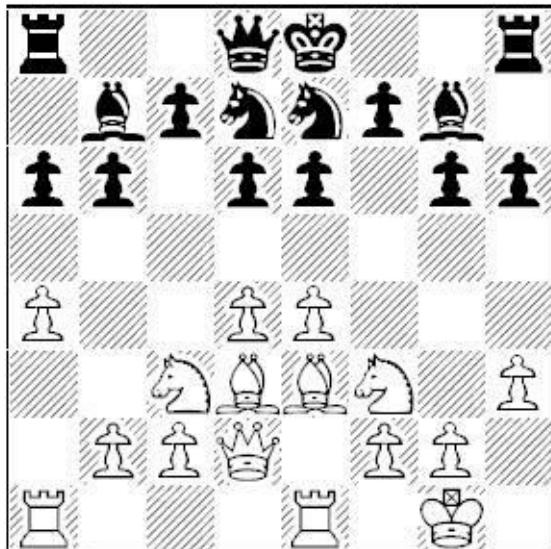
7 ... Nd7 8 0-0 e6!

We avoid giving White any e5 targets by avoiding the Pirc-like 8 ... Ngf6.

9 Qd2 h6 10 h4?!

An artificial method of oxygenating a stuffy position. Such hyper-aggressive thrusts are exactly what

we Hippos love to see. The move straddles the border between over-exuberance at best and folly at worst. White sets himself up for future ... g5 attacking thrusts later on. He should probably play 10 h3 Ne7 11 Rfe1.



Question: How does Black castle?

Answer: He doesn't and goes 11 ... g5!. Keep in mind this dark-squared strategy, ... g5 and ... Ng6, which is often played in the Hippo. Here 12 d5 Ng6 (Black can also consider 12 ... e5 and then gather for an attack on the kingside with ... Ng6) 13 Nd4 Qe7 14 Bc4! (White pressures e6) 14 ... Bxd4! 15 Bxd4 Rg8 16 Be3 Nde5 17 Be2 Qf6 18 Bd4 Nf4 19 Rad1 0-0-0 was seen in A.Moroz-E.Najer, Pardubice 2005.

Question: Whose position do you prefer?

Answer: I realize this won't be very helpful. My head says White, but my heart yells Black!

10 ... Ngf6 11 Rfe1 Ng4

Black makes good use of the g4-square which White hands him.

12 Bf4 e5! 13 dxe5 dxe5 14 Bg3 c6!

Black has reached a Pirc set-up where White tossed in the questionable h4 move.

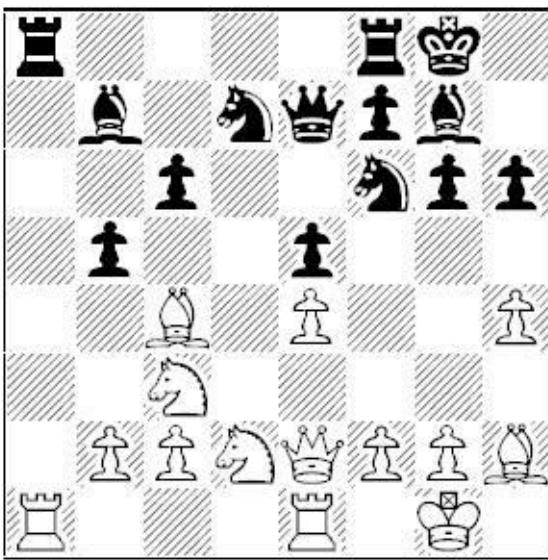
15 Bc4 Qe7 16 Qe2 Ngf6 17 Bh2

The bad London System bishop once again.

17 ... 0-0 18 Nd2 b5

Black begins to make territorial gains on the queenside.

19 axb5 axb5



20 Bd3

Question: Why not to a2 instead? It feels like White is being awfully obliging and may be a victim of a chess case of the Stockholm Syndrome.

Answer: Perhaps it would be best to consult Patty Hearst on the matter and direct your emails to her. White probably felt his bishop was vulnerable to future tricks along the a-file and opted to play it to a safer but more passive square.

20 ... Nc5

Black's position improves steadily. He can pick up the bishop pair any time he wants and also worries White with future ... Ne6, and ... Nd4/ ... Nf4 ideas.

21 Reb1 Nh5

Attacking h4.

22 g3

That is one ugly bishop on h2!

Question: Isn't 22 Bg3 the lesser evil?

Answer: I don't think so. White's position looks hideously weak on the dark squares after 22 ... Nxg3 23 fxg3. In essence, he needs his horrible dark-squared bad bishop!

22 ... Rfd8 23 Qe3 Nf6 24 Kg2?

He had to try 24 Rxg3 Bxg3 25 Be2.

24 ... Ng4 25 Qe2 Qd7!

The pileup along the d-file eventually earns Black a pawn.

26 Bg1!

A prisoner can always dream of escape, can't he?

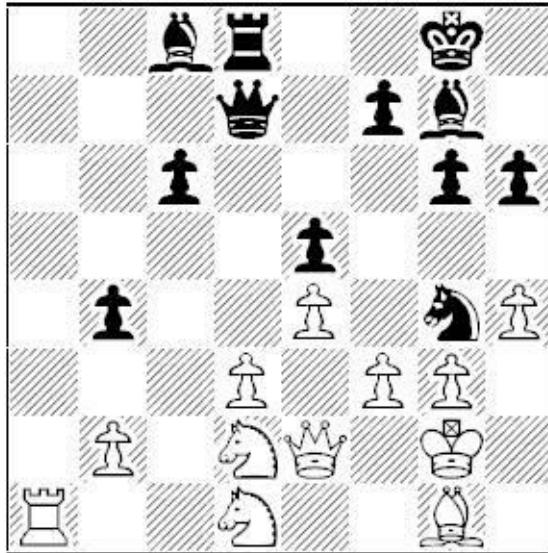
26 ... b4?!

The immediate 26 ... Nxd3 was more accurate. White falls under tremendous pressure after 27 cxd3 Ba6!.

27 Nd1 Nxd3 28 cxd3 Rxa1 29 Rxa1 Bc8!

Better than 29 ... Qxd3 30 Qxd3 Rxd3 when 31 Nc4 Bc8 32 Ra8 Rxd1 33 Rxc8+ Kh7 34 Rxc6 regains the lost pawn.

30 f3



Free at last. Finally, the bishop manages to escape by puncturing the once impermeable membrane of pawns, which kept him trapped.

30 ... Qxd3 31 Qxd3 Rxd3 32 Nf1 Nf6 33 Ra8

Better was 33 Bc5.

33 ... Rd8

Now Black is just up a pawn in the ending.

34 Kf2 Bf8 35 Ke1 Re8 36 Nd2 Be6 37 Rxe8

Every trade helps Black. I would have kept rooks on the board.

37 ... Nxe8 38 Bb6 Nf6 39 Ke2 Be7 40 Bf2

White has no way to improve his position and can do nothing but wait.

40 ... Bc8 41 Kd3 Ba6+ 42 Nc4 Nd7 43 b3 Nc5+ 44 Kc2

Handing over both bishops with 44 Bxc5 is also untenable for White.

44 ... Bxc4!

Black makes a newly minted passed b-pawn.

45 bxc4 h5 46 Nb2 Nd7 47 Nd3 c5 48 Kb3!

Here he comes.

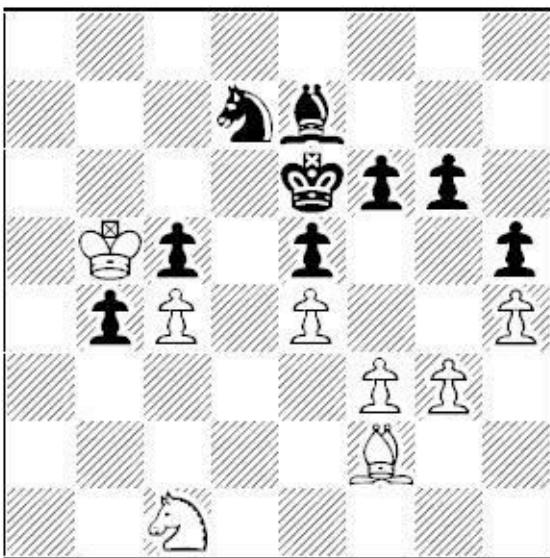
48 ... f6 49 Ka4 Kf7 50 Kb5

Question: Shouldn't Black be worried about c5?

Answer: This is similar to how my dogs feel just after burying a precious bone, unsafe from the hungry, covetous gaze of the salivating Pomeranian next door. Black's c-pawn is in no physical danger since White loses the king and pawn ending.

50 ... Ke6 51 Nc1

51 Bxc5?? Nxc5 52 Nxc5+ Bxc5 53 Kxc5 b3 would be a pretty silly way to lose a chess game. Never agree to a race when the opponent gets a head start!



White's game plan:

1. Don't do anything.
2. Continue doing nothing.
3. Repeat steps one and two!

Black has multiple problems to overcome in the ending:

1. He has a slightly bad bishop.
2. He is tied down to his c5-pawn by those entrenched white pieces that refuse to go away, like annoying children around an exasperated babysitter.
3. White's pieces, including his king, are as active as can be.

Exercise (planning): How does Black make progress?

Answer: Start trouble by opening a second front on the kingside.

51 ... f5!

Suddenly, White's king and knight are the bored cops who half-heartedly walk their beat, blissfully unaware of the criminal activity on the other side of the street.

52 Nb3

If White tries for a fortress with 52 exf5+ gxf5 53 f4 e4 54 Nb3, it falls short after 54 ... Bf6!:

a) 55 Bxc5? Nxc5 56 Nxc5+ Kf7 57 Nb3 (57 Kxb4?? once again loses the king and pawn ending after 57 ... Be7) 57 ... e3 58 Nc1 b3! deflects and wins.

b) 55 Kc6 (White's best shot) 55 ... Bc3 56 Kb5 Kd6 57 Nxc5 Bd2! 58 Nb3 e3 59 Bg1 e2 wins the bishop.

52 ... f4!

Multipurpose:

1. The move coagulates White's kingside pawns where they sit, creating convenient targets, like f3.
2. When White exchanges, e5 opens up for Black's knight.
3. After White exchanges, Black can play ... g5!, creating a passed h-pawn.

53 gxf4

White can't dodge his troubles by avoiding this capture. For example:

- a) 53 Kc6 fxg3 54 Bxg3 g5! creates the deadly outside passer as well.
- b) 53 g4 hxg4 54 fxg4 Nf6 55 Nd2 b3! wins.

53 ... exf4 54 Nc1 g5!

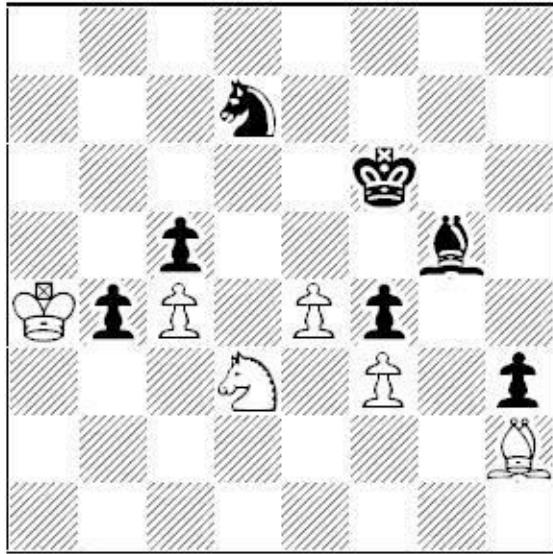
Black creates an outside passed, h-pawn.

55 hxg5 Bxg5 56 Nd3

Black wins the queening race after 56 Bxc5 Ne5.

56 ... h4 57 Bg1 h3 58 Bh2 Kf6 59 Ka4

Not 59 Nxf4?? Bxf4 60 Bxf4 b3 and the bishop can't be in two places at once.



Exercise (planning): Find Black's breakthrough.

Answer: 59 ... Ne5! 60 Nxc5

After such a long, transfixed stare at c5, the knight's eyes narrow as he finally takes the pawn.

60 ... Nxf3

White's bishop had hoped to elude his loan shark pursuers by sneaking around, wearing sunglasses and a false moustache. Unfortunately, he gets recognized and beaten up.

61 Nd3 Nxh2 62 Nf2 f3 63 Kxb4 Bd2+ 64 Kb5 Be3 65 Nxh3 Ng4 66 c5 Ne5 0-1

Summary

From my experience, the Hippo tends to induce strategic confusion and sometimes overconfidence from White.

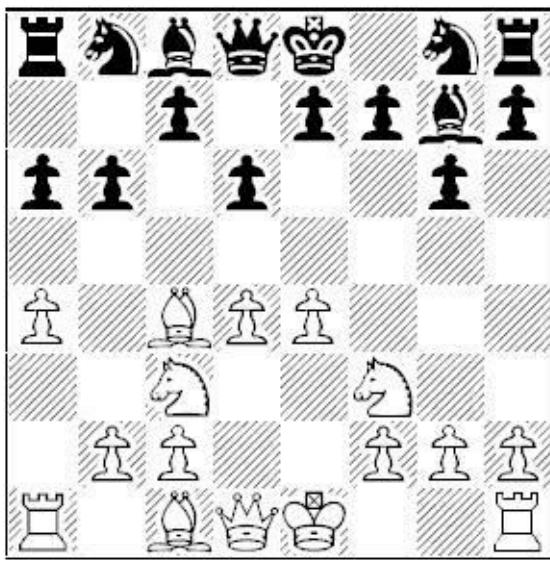
Game 14

A.Aitbayev-P.Kotsur

Pavlodar 2007

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 Nf3 a6 5 a4 b6 6 Bc4

The favourite move of the no-nonsense player. White takes direct aim at f7 and openly declares his hostile intentions.



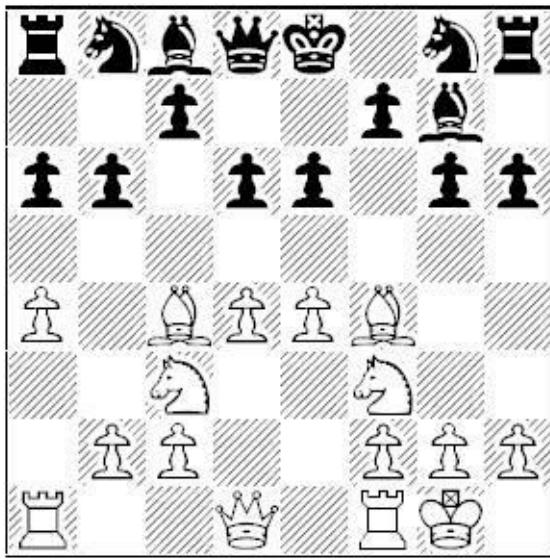
6 ... e6!

Once again, we play innocent – for now. The Hippo is the ideal weapon versus the hyper-aggressive opponent. Black immediately blunts the bishop's point. As always, White's position looks a lot more wonderful than it actually is. Without a clear target, the leaderless white pieces tend to mill about without purpose, waiting for something to happen.

7 0-0 h6

I would play 7 ... Ne7. Rule of thumb: always encourage the shallow Bg5?! since we always gain a tempo after ... h6.

8 Bf4



8 ... Bb7

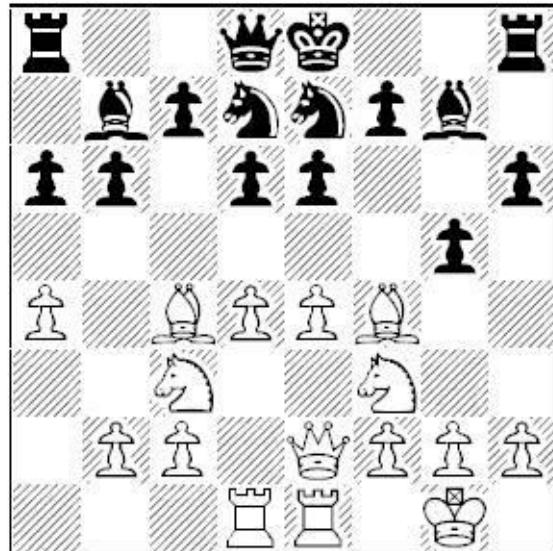
Question: Does the order matter on the moves ... Ne7, ... Nd7, and ... Bb7?

Answer: Normally, no, but my personal preference is to play ... Ne7 first, just in case my king needs to make a quick exit and castle kingside.

9 Qe2 Ne7 10 Rad1 Nd7 11 Rfe1

A Norman Rockwell moment, as Fred Reinfeld's cherished dream comes to fruition. I remember having White in this position in a game played at age 15 against a hated teen rival. I thought I was crushing my opponent, played ultra-aggressively, and got crushed and humiliated instead! I don't believe White even holds an advantage here. There is something about the Hippo that gets White's blood boiling, like when the normally placid Spock is transformed into a total bugger during the pon farr – the 'amok time' mating ritual for Vulcans!

11 ... g5!



Black unveils our essential central dark-square strategy, much more in the taunting spirit of the Hippo than the more conformist 11 ... 0-0, which is also okay, but lacks the spirit of adventure of 11 ... g5!.

12 Bc1

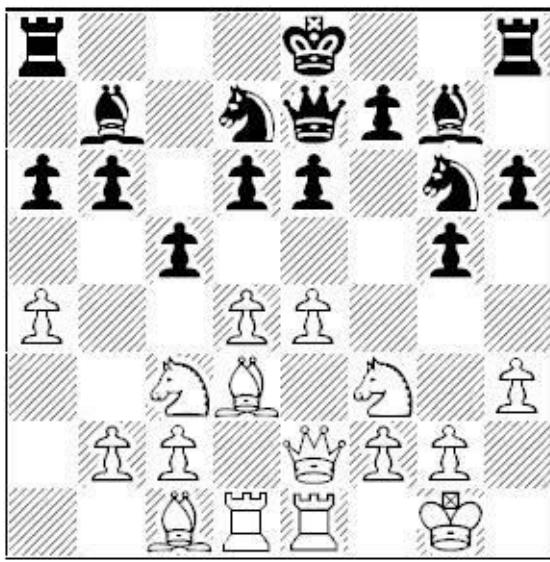
Question: All the way back?

Answer: There's no place like home. The bishop tends to get in the way on every other square. 12 Bg3 is riskier, since then the bishop is vulnerable to ... h5 ideas from Black, but there is something to be said about posting it there: Black will have a much harder time engineering the ... c5 break.

12 ... Ng6 13 h3 Qe7 14 Bd3

Victory! White doesn't see much of a point to posting his bishop on c4, so he backs it up to d3, a place he could have secured in one move, rather than two.

14 ... c5!



A warning: be very careful about playing such a break. If you mistime it and allow White to blast open the centre, you may get crushed. In this case, Black's timing is exemplary since White has no way to exploit the slight opening of the game.

15 d5

15 dxc5 Nxc5 looks like a Kan Sicilian gone slightly wrong for White.

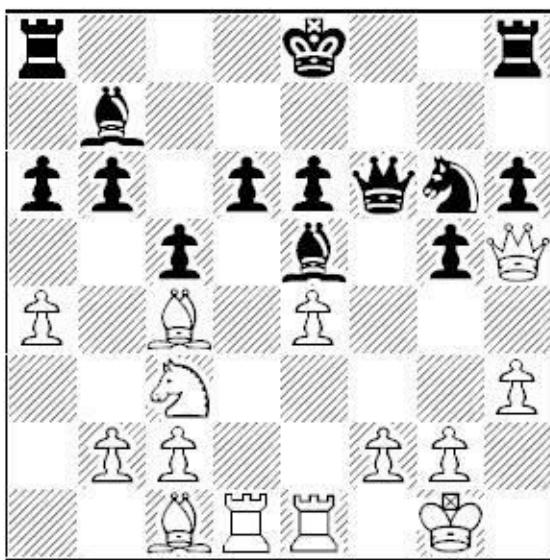
15 ... Nde5

The dark-square strategy begins to take effect, as Black occupies e5.

16 Nxe5 Bxe5 17 Qh5 Qf6! 18 dxe6?!

The flow of White's position begins to noticeably spasm and stutter about here. This may end up helping his opponent, as White opens the f-file and strengthens Black's centre. Still, it's hard to fault White for going after Black's king.

18 ... fxe6 19 Bc4



Exercise (planning): The time has arrived to make a decision about Black's king. Should we castle long or tempt fate

by remaining in the centre with 19 ... Ke7?

19 ... Ke7!

Oddly enough, Black's king looks quite safe here. Black avoids the rote 19 ... 0-0-0 when 20 Qe2! targets a6.

20 Rd3

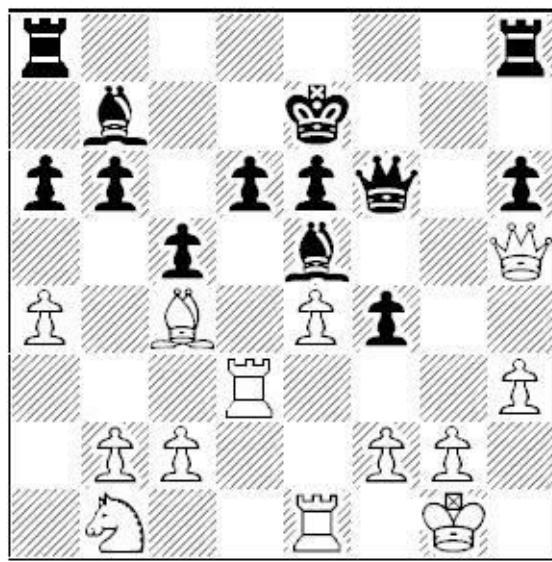
The beggar rook scavenges for scraps of counterplay along the third rank, and also covers c3.

20 ... Nf4 21 Bxf4 gxf4!

And thou shalt have dominion over the dark squares. Advantage Black:

1. Who may soon occupy the open g-file, aiming at White's king.
2. Who owns the bishop pair, but much more importantly retains an iron grip on the central dark squares.
3. Who enjoys the more fluid pawn structure in both centre and queenside.

22 Nb1!?



Ingenious, but it doesn't worry Black. Here we witness the co-mingling of forced bravery out of necessity, much like the doctor who treats a gangland patient, and who does well not to ask how his patient received the gunshot wound. White thinks about Rb3, and also redirects his knight to better pastures. The problem is the rook looks klutzy out and about this early in the game, and is in danger of being chased around by Black's pawns and pieces.

22 ... Bc6

Attacking a4 and allowing coverage of b6.

23 Rb3

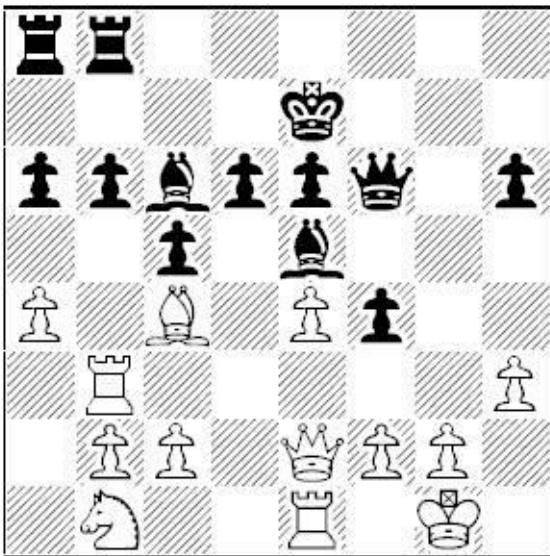
The rook, after murmuring a prayer, charges in.

23 ... Rhb8

Well, I guess Black isn't going to occupy the open g-file after all! A flowing mind, open to all possibilities, is a dangerous weapon in a chess game.

24 Qe2?

White certainly can do with a bit of good news about now, but unfortunately, none is forthcoming. His last move was a blunder. 24 Nc3 was necessary, when Black continues to hold a strategic advantage.



Exercise (combination alert): Taking the pawn on a4 is a good move, but Black has a deeply hidden combination which is even stronger. Can you spot the idea the GM missed?

24 ... Bxa4

Not such a bad move, but Black missed an immediate game ender.

Answer: 24 ... b5!! 25 axb5 axb5 26 Bxb5 Rxb5 27 Rxb5 f3! 28 gxf3 (28 Qd3 Rg8 29 g3 Qf4! 30 Kf1 Rxg3! 31 fxg3 Qxg3 is crushing) 28 ... Qf4 (the queen doles out punishment the way a stern grandmother smartly smacks the misbehaving grandchild on the knuckles; the comps tell us 28 ... Qh4! is even stronger and mates in ten moves) 29 Kf1 Qh2 30 Qd3 Bd4! 31 Re3 Bxb5!! 32 Qxb5 Bxe3 33 fxe3 Ra1 mates.

25 Ra3 b5

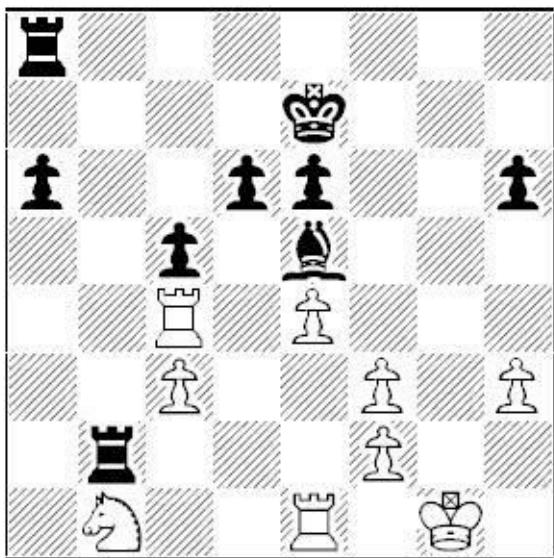
It isn't clear if Black's bishop on a4 is being rescued or taken hostage.

26 c3

26 Nc3 f3! is also winning for Black.

26 ... f3! 27 Qxf3 Qxf3 28 gxf3 bxc4! 29 Rxa4 Rxb2 30 Rxc4?

30 Kf1 Rab8 31 Na3 Ra2 is also hopeless for White.



Exercise (combination alert): White, in a lost position, just blundered into a mate in four. Can you spot it?

30 ... Rab8

Good enough.

Answer: Even better is 30 ... Rg8+! 31 Kf1 (31 Kh1 Rxh2 leaves White just as mated as in the other line) 31 ... Bh2! with unstoppable mate next move.

31 Na3

The three-legged cat runs as fast as he can from the neighbour's dog.

31 ... Ra2 0-1

Following 32 Nb1 Rg8+! (the pedestrian 32 ... Ra1 also wins) 33 Kf1 Bh2! the dying white king wordlessly mouths a final curse before expiring.

Summary

The Hippopotamus is a mysterious and potent line against this particular white set-up.

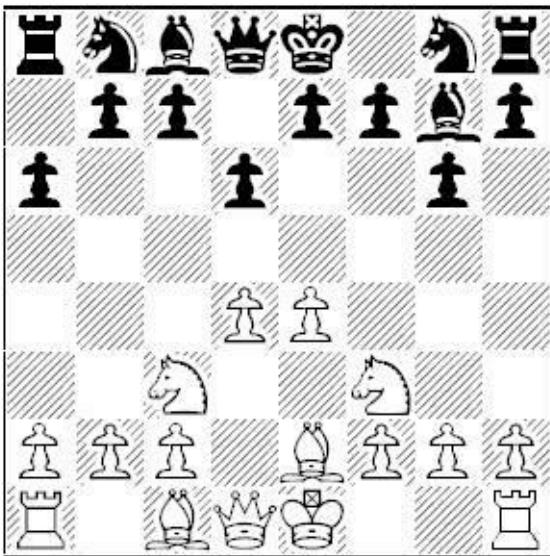
Game 15

J.Cuartas-T.Hillarp Persson

Calvia Olympiad 2004

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nf3 d6 4 Nc3 a6 5 Be2

This is the old school Classical line versus the Modern where White delays Be3. White's move order has gone down in popularity recently and been supplanted by the early Be3 lines.



Question: Why do people favour Be3 lines over the early Nf3 variation?

Answer: For one simple reason: in the Be3 lines White retains flexibility to play f3, f4, or Nf3, while the Old Classical locks White into Nf3.

5 ... b5!

Question: Oh, no! In other places in the book you extol the virtues of playing ... Nd7 before ... b5, but here you switch the order and give it an exclam! Why?

Answer: Actually next chapter we also play ... b5 before ... Nd7. I am the first to admit that the Modern is a perplexing and difficult opening to learn. Modern Godfather Tiger says 5 ... Nd7?! is inaccurate on this move order, since White can play 6 0-0 b5 7 d5! with an edge to White, as he has Nd4 in the air. Even here, though, I don't believe Black's position is the end of the world, and he only stands slightly worse after 7 ... Bb7 8 Nd4 Ngf6.

6 0-0

I think White has a better shot at an edge with 6 a4 b4 7 Nd5 a5 8 c3 e6 9 Ne3 Ne7 10 0-0 Bb7, H.Stevic-I.Nepomniachtchi, European Championship, Aix-les-Bains 2011. It looks still okay for Black, though, who can play ... bxc3, followed by ... Nd7 and ... c5 soon.

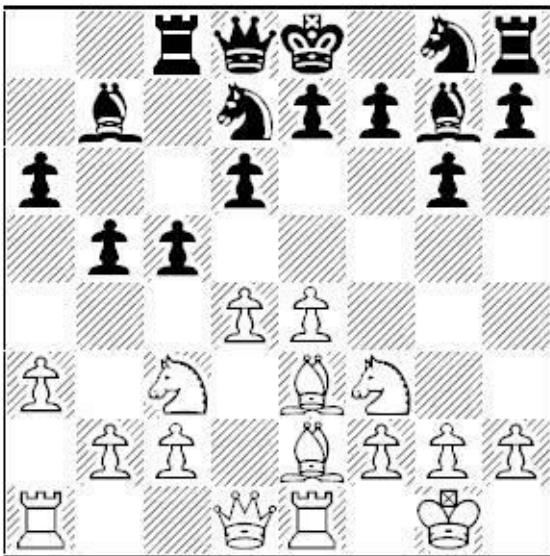
6 ... Bb7 7 a3

Something to remember: if you manage to induce a3 from White, you usually equalize in most Modern lines.

7 ... Nd7 8 Be3 Rc8 9 Re1

After 9 Qd2 c5 10 Rfe1 cxd4 11 Nxd4 Ngf6 12 f3 0-0 all White got for his trouble was a completely harmless Dragon in L.Rouillon-A.Dunnington, Cannes 2000.

9 ... c5



10 d5

Very few players push past to d5 in such positions.

Question: Why? The move looks like it gives White a solid space edge.

Answer: For now. The trouble with the plan: Black eventually chips away with ... e6 and often ends up with greater central control or a good Schmidt Benoni set-up. This game is a good demonstration of how Black should play against this plan.

Perhaps White should go for 10 a4 b4 11 Nd5 Ngf6 (11 ... e6 allows White to speculate with 12 Bf4!?).

10 ... Ngf6 11 Nd2??

He worries about ... b4 and a loose e-pawn. White's eventual goal should be to play for e5, although here it looks very difficult to achieve. I would go for 11 h3 which prevents ... Ng4. Also, White tries to make sure Black can't hit back in the centre with ... e6 by keeping an eye on the d6-square.

Question: Doesn't White drop a pawn after 11 ... b4?

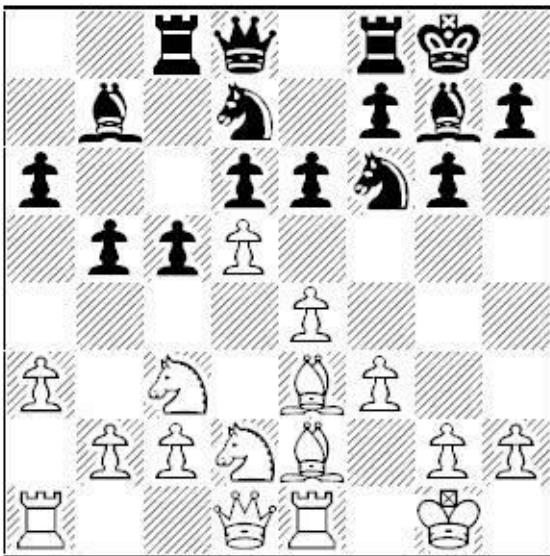
Answer: No. After 12 axb4 cxb4 13 Na2 a5 (13 ... b3?! 14 cxb3 Nxe4 15 Bd4 looks better for White) 14 Nd2 White achieves a better position than he got in the game.

11 ... 0-0 12 f3??

Awfully passive. Perhaps White should try and fight for space himself with 12 f4 e6 13 dxе6 fxе6 14 Bf3 Qc7, but even here I prefer Black.

12 ... e6!

The goal achieved: greater central pawn influence.

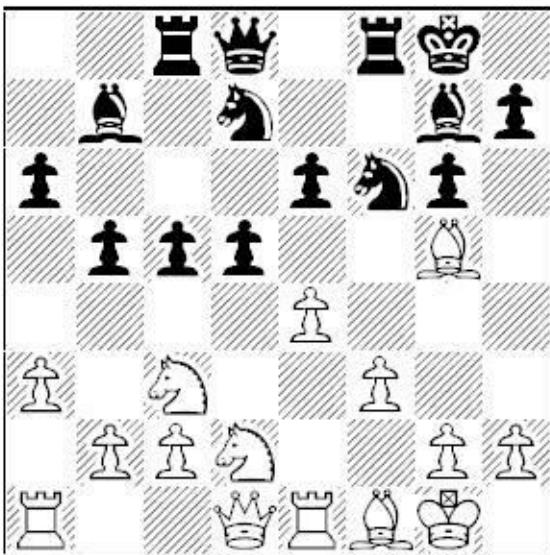


13 dxe6 fxe6 14 Bf1 d5

Black takes over the initiative and threatens ... d4.

15 Bg5?

I freely admit that White's position stinks after 15 exd5 exd5 16 Bf2, but this is infinitely better than what happens to him in the game.



Exercise (combination alert): Sometimes an absolutely logical move can still be incorrect. In this case the geometry provides a quirky way for Black to achieve a winning position. Do you see Black's shot?

Answer: Discovered attack/Windmill.

15 ... Ng4! 16 fxg4

Acquiescing to a strategically lost position since there was little choice. White enters a nightmarish windmill if he is gullible enough to enter 16 Bxd8?? Bd4+ 17 Kh1 Nf2+ 18 Kg1 Nxd1+ 19 Kh1 Nf2+ 20 Kg1 (the king sways back and forth, like a hula doll on a car dashboard) 20 ... Nxe4+ 21 Kh1 Nf2+ (déjà vu; the time traveller's greatest fear: getting caught in an endless negative time loop) 22 Kg1 Nd3+ 23

Kh1 Nxel leaves Black up a full rook.

16 ... Qxg5 17 Nf3

17 exd5 exd5 18 Nde4 Qe5 is just as awful for White.

17 ... Qxg4 18 Qe2

Question: Why couldn't White regain his pawn on d5?

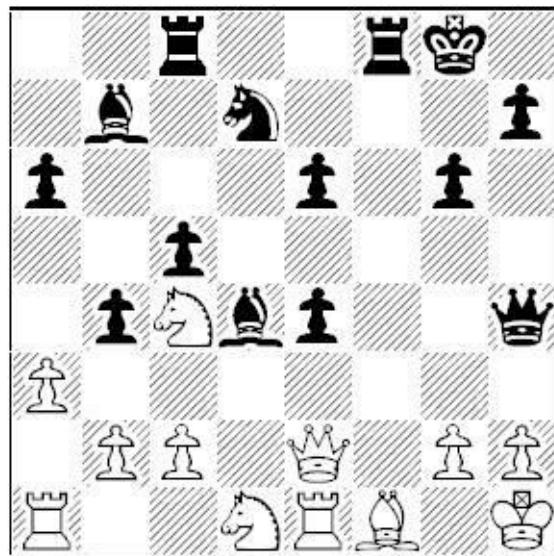
Answer: Again, the math is against him. After 18 exd5 exd5 19 Nxd5? the simplest is 19 ... Rxf3! winning.

18 ... b4 19 Nd1 dxe4 20 Nd2 Bd4+ 21 Kh1 Qh4!

Question: Shouldn't Black be trading queens if he is up two pawns?

Answer: This case is an exception since Black has a winning attack if he keeps queens on the board.

22 Nc4



Exercise (combination alert): Every black piece oozes power, so it should be no surprise that Black has two distinct killing shots. Both are hard to see, so take your time, and remember you only need to uncover one of them.

22 ... Be5!?

An ingenious idea which falls slightly short of the requirements of the position. Moves like this show why Tiger is one of my favourite players. Each game I get the feeling he strives to rewrite the rules, as he crosses out the old ones, all the while fearing the virus of reason. If it looks a bit crazy to allow a swap of his powerhouse dark-squared bishop, it is!

Question: Then why don't you give him a question mark for the move?

Answer: Because Black's position is so strong that he still should win, even after the inaccuracy!

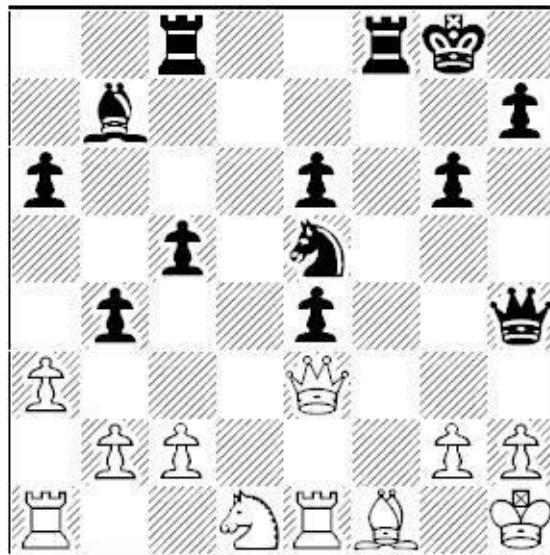
Answer to Exercise: There were two good shots:

a) 22 ... Nb6!! 23 Nxb6 (23 Nde3 Rf2 24 Qd1 Rd8 is completely crushing) 23 ... Be5 24 g3 e3+ 25 Bg2 Bxg3! 26 Bxb7 Rf2!

b) 22 ... e3! 23 Ncxe3 (if 23 Ndxe3 Nf6! and there is no good defence to the coming ... Ne4!) 23 ... Be5 24 Ng4 Rf5!! when the White king's would-be guardians and saviours aren't doing much of a job saving him, since he is curiously helpless against the coming ... Rh5 or ... Rcf8: 25 Nde3 Rh5 and nothing can save him.

23 Nxe5 Nxe5 24 Qe3?

24 Kg1 was necessary.



Exercise (combination alert): Here we go again.
Black's cup runneth over. Look for a knockout.

24 ... Ng4?!

Answer: 24 ... Nf3!! 25 gxf3 Rxf3 26 Qe2 Rxfl+! 27 Rxfl e3+ prises open the long diagonal and wins the house.

25 Qg3 Qxg3 26 hxg3 a5 27 Kg1 Rcd8?!

Natural, but the comps say he moved the wrong rook.

Question: What could possibly be wrong with the move?

Answer: It weakens c5, which White soon exploits.

28 Be2 Ne5 29 axb4 axb4

Whatever White's defensive plan, now would be a very good time to implement it, since his position teeters on the verge of collapse.

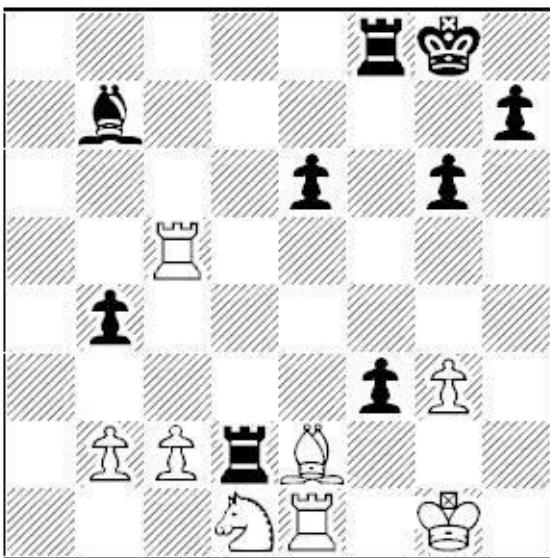
30 Ra5!

Now we see why Black's 27th move was the case of the wrong rook.

30 ... Rd2! 31 Rxc5 Nf3+?

The temporary ceasefire ends. This is a classic case of right idea; wrong move order. Black, giddy from the exhilaration of his own audacity, tosses White a piece, but mistimes it. Correct was 31 ... Rf5! 32 Rc7 Rf7 and if 33 Rxf5 Nf3+! (now the idea works) 34 gxf5 exf5 35 Bc4 f2+ 36 Nxf5 Rxf5! wins.

32 gxf3 exf3



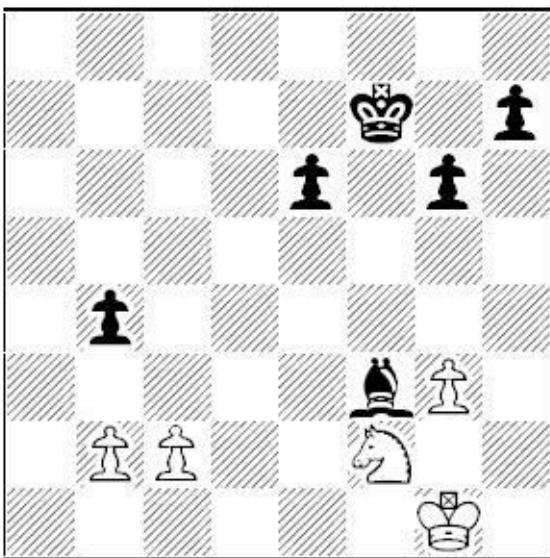
Exercise (critical decision): Does White get away with 33 Bc4?

33 Re5?

It's a bad time to have a crisis of faith when you are pinned down by enemy crossfire. The rook flinches out of instinct.

Answer: He does! 33 Bc4 f2+ (33 ... Rg2+ 34 Kh1 Rxc2 35 Rf1! saves White) 34 Nxf2 Rdx2 35 Bxe6+ Kh8 36 Bh3 and, miraculously, White pulls off a 'Hallelujah!' worthy escape.

33 ... fxe2 34 R5xe2 Rxe2 35 Rxe2 Rf3 36 Re3 Kf7 37 Rxf3+ Bxf3 38 Nf2



The position settles, leaving Black up a clear pawn, good enough for a win. Compare this bishop versus knight pawn-up ending to the Dominguez-Ivanchuk ending next chapter.

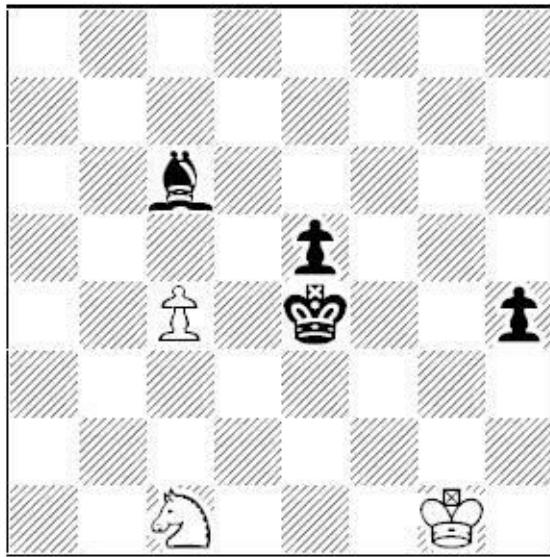
38 ... Be2 39 Ne4 h6 40 Kf2 Bd1 41 c3 Bc2 42 Nd2 bxc3 43 bxc3 e5 44 c4 Ke6 45 Ke3 g5

Tiger soon creates two passed pawns. White's passed c-pawn is more of a liability than a strength.

46 Nf3 Ba4 47 Nd2 Be6 48 Nb3?

48 g4! fixes a pawn on a vulnerable square, but it was imperative that White prevent ... h5. In that case Black's win is not such a trivial matter.

48 ... h5 49 Nc1 h4 50 gxh4 gxh4 51 Kf2 Kf5 52 Kg1 Ke4!



Reminding White that he must worry about a vulnerable remaining pawn.

53 Kg2 Bd7

Of course he had to stop Kh3.

54 Nb3 Bc8 55 Kf2 Bg4 56 c5

56 Kg2 Kd3 57 c5 Be6! 58 Na5 e4 and one of Black's pawns promotes.

56 ... Kd5 57 Nd2

57 Kg2 e4 58 Kf2 h3 59 Kg3 e3! 60 Nc1 Kxc5 wins.

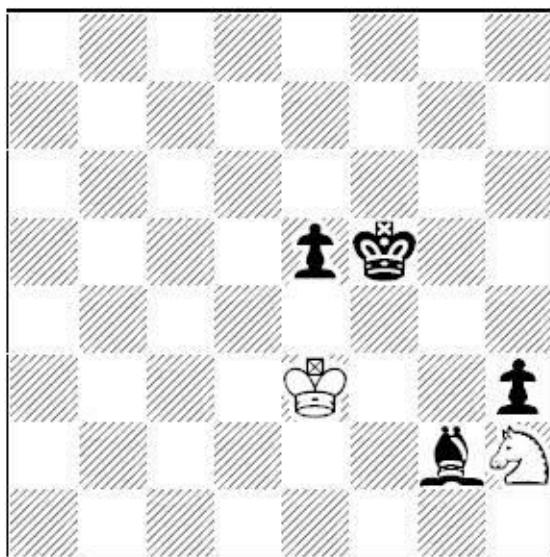
57 ... Kxc5

Now basic care is required and the win falls into place. Unfortunately for White, Black owns the correct coloured bishop, just in case White gets clever and sacs his knight for the e-pawn.

58 Ke3 Kd5 59 Nf1 Ke6 60 Ke4 Bf5+ 61 Ke3 Kf6 62 Nh2 Bc8 63 Nf3 h3 64 Kf2 Kf5 65 Ke3

65 Kg3 e4 is also good enough.

65 ... Bb7 66 Nh2 Bg2!



Incarcerating the knight. Black must now have asked himself the age-old kid question: are we there yet?

67 Ke2 Kf4 68 Kf2

Only awkward silence ensues as the two kings face each other.

68 ... e4 0-1

Black's e-pawn polishes his crown as he prepares for coronation.

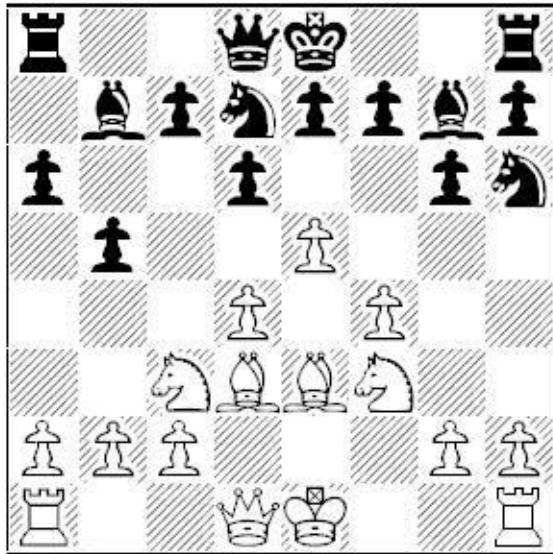
Summary

The Old Classical line where White avoids an early Be3 has gone out of fashion, and probably for good reason.

Chapter Three

The Austrian Attack

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 f4 a6 5 Nf3 b5 6 Bd3 Nd7 7 Be3 Bb7 8 e5 Nh6



An excruciatingly difficult test doesn't always have to be synonymous with pain. This chapter, more than any other in the book, requires meticulous preparation on our part. In the Austrian Attack, Black lives on the brink, like a person with a congenital heart defect who is never confident he will wake up the next morning. But cheer up, the danger is not one sided. White expands at full throttle and often finds himself at risk of overextension.

A radical idea generally first takes hold on the fringes and only then slowly creeps toward the consensus of the middle. The theory that an early ... c5 thrust 'must' be played is something of a universal article of faith in the chess world. However, a plan is not a signed contract. We can change it if need arises. In this book we abandon the theoretical move 8 ... c5, which chips away at White's centre but dangerously opens the position before we are ready to do so, and replace it with the bizarre-looking 8 ... Nh6 when we implement a light-square strategy with ... Nb6 and ... Qd7 to follow. This is based on the theory: just because someone uses a tool incorrectly doesn't prove the tool is without value. In this case the early ... c5, at the time of this writing, remains in some theoretical danger. So let's make the switch to the ... Nh6 plan, which so far has scored well for Black.

Game 16

A.Hunt-P.Svidler
Gibraltar 2012

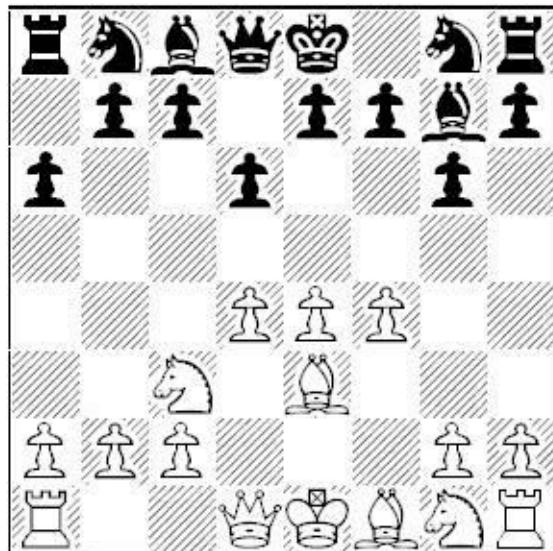
1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 Be3

Question: Aren't you in the wrong chapter?

Answer: It's important to know that the 4 Be3 line can also transpose to the Austrian Attack.

Remember, we don't know where White's f-pawn ends up. It may stay where it lies on f2, push up one to f3, or in this case move up two to reach the Austrian Attack.

4 ... a6 5 f4



5 ... b5

Question: Didn't you say it was more accurate to play ... Nd7 before playing ... b5?

Answer: I did, but that was in another chapter and a different set of circumstances. In the case of the Austrian, pushing ... b5 immediately is considered the most accurate move. Nobody said the Modern Defence was easy to master!

Question: Why more accurate?

Answer: First, Modern Godfather Tiger Hillarp Persson gives this move order an exclam. White's e-pawn is the root of his anxiety in the Austrian since he no longer has access to f3. By playing an early ... b5 we prepare to hit e4 with ... Bb7. Also, a future ... b4 may undermine the c3-knight's support for the e-pawn.

6 Bd3

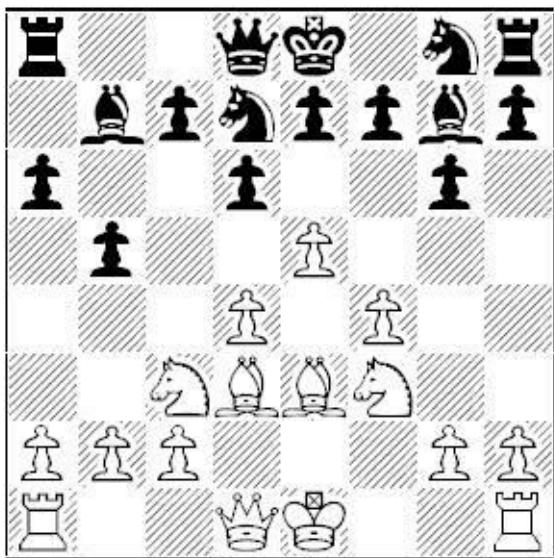
Later in the chapter we look at odd 6 Be2, intending Bf3 and e5.

6 ... Bb7 7 Nf3 Nd7

We can actually kick White's knight unprovoked in this position, but my tendency is to usually wait for White to initiate the motion with a4 first.

After 7 ... b4!? 8 Ne2 Nf6 9 Ng3 I like Modern Founding Father GM David Norwood's 9 ... h5!? from D.Bailey-D.Norwood, Toronto 1989. Maybe it's just me, but I don't like Black's position if he handles the Austrian in pure Pirc style with something like 9 ... 0-0 10 Qd2 a5 11 f5! Ng4 12 Bg5 c5. This was Xu Yuhua-Li Chao, Hefei (rapid) 2010, where GM Jones likes White's position after 13 Qf4 when a lot of white pieces cluster around Black's king.

8 e5



Familiarize yourself with this position. It may well be our biggest threat from White in the entire book.

8 ... Nh6!

“Perhaps 8 ... Nh6 is the critical move in the line at this time,” write Jones and Rendle on the ChessPublishing website. In my opinion 8 ... Nh6 is Black’s best move in the position, which so far has scored well for him.

Question: Isn’t 8 ... c5 Black’s main line?

Answer: It is, but the move contains the seed of a deadly, fundamental flaw: it opens the position when Black lags in development and I don’t believe Black equalizes after correct play from White, who scores above average after 9 Be4! Bxe4 (9 ... Qc8 10 Bxb7 Qxb7 11 dxc5 dxe5 12 Qd5!) also looks like a grind for Black, A.Grischuk-E.Bacrot, Dubai (rapid) 2002) 10 Nxe4 cxd4 11 Bxd4 dxe5 12 fxe5. I don’t like Black’s position since e6! is in the air, M.Adams-M.Bezold, British League 2001.

We also won’t be covering 8 ... e6 9 a4 b4 10 Ne4.

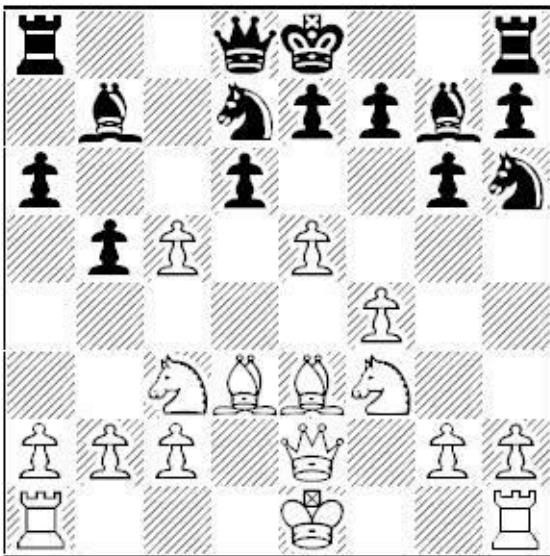
9 Qe2

White’s most dangerous move. We look at 9 Be4 a couple of games later in Ye Jiangchuan-Bacrot.

9 ... c5!?

A risky but dynamic option. Black hopes to break up White’s centre at the risk of opening the centre too early. Next game we look at 9 ... Nb6.

10 dxc5



10 ... dxe5!

A theoretical novelty and a clear improvement for Black over the previously played:

a) 10 ... Nxc5 11 Bxc5! dxc5 12 0-0-0 Qb6 13 Be4! (principle: when your opponent owns the bishop pair, swap one of them off if possible) 13 ... Bxe4 14 Qxe4 0-0 15 Nd5 Qa7 16 Ne3! (now Black's knight looks out of place on h6) 16 ... Rfd8 17 g4 left White with both a bind and attacking chances in I.Saric-M.Muse, Sibenik 2008.

b) 10 ... 0-0!? offering a pawn for development was tried in A.Suetin-A.Sznapik, Sochi 1974. Now White can simply ignore the offer and play 11 Be4! with a nagging edge.

11 fxe5

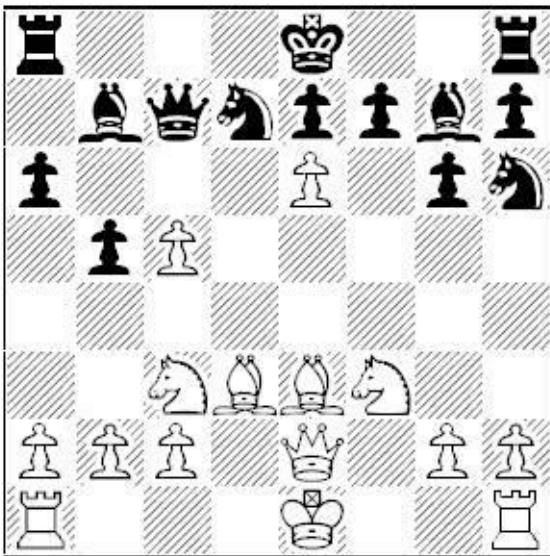
Jones and Rendle suggest 11 Nxe5! as White's critical try for an advantage. Let's examine deeper with a training game I played against *Houdini*: 11 ... Nxe5 12 fxe5 0-0 13 0-0! Qc7 14 Rae1!. White holds the edge. I had a lot of trouble regaining the lost pawn, but felt like Black had just enough counterplay anyway.

11 ... Qc7

Jones and Rendle say 11 ... 0-0?! is a mistake, giving 12 e6! with some advantage to White.

12 e6!?

Black also looks fine after 12 Be4 Bxe4 13 Nxe4 Nxe5 14 0-0-0 Nhg4.



12 ... fxe6 13 0-0-0 Nf5

Question: Why didn't Black take on c5?

Answer: He could have but perhaps Svidler was nervous about this tricky line: 13 ... Nxc5 14 Bxc5 Qxc5 15 Ne4 Bxe4! (perhaps Svidler only considered 15 ... Qb6?! 16 Nd6+!! exd6 17 Qxe6+ Kd8 18 Rxe1 which looks rough for Black) 16 Qxe4 Rd8. However, Black looks okay here due to his dark-square power.

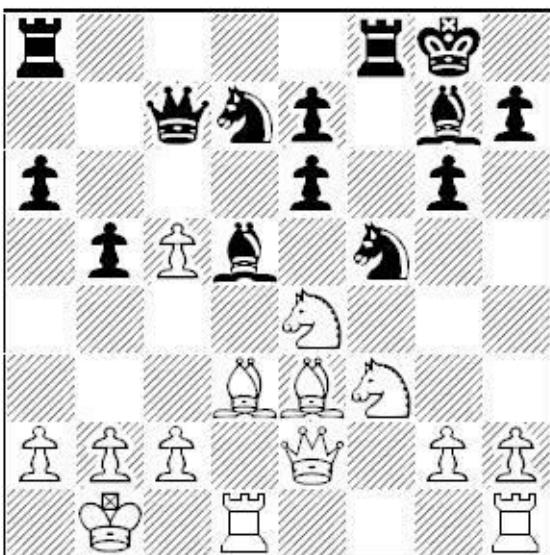
14 Ne4

Absolute anarchy erupts after 14 Ng5!? Bxc3 15 Nxe6 Bxb2+ 16 Kb1 Qe5 17 Bxf5 Nf6! (not 17 ... gxf5?? 18 Qh5 mate!) 18 Bh3 Nd5 and it's anybody's game.

14 ... 0-0 15 Kb1

Black holds his own after 15 Bf2 Bd5.

15 ... Bd5



I already prefer Black's position.

16 a3?

This innocent looking move signifies a monumental shift of scale and dimension by allowing Black a connection point on b4, after which his attacking prospects spike like a cardiogram. “16 Bf2 was necessary here, although White is basically having to find only moves in order to survive,” write Jones and Rendle.

Question: I disagree. What is wrong with White’s game? Just look at those sickly, doubled e-pawns Black must defend.

Answer: This is like the surgeon telling the widow: “The surgery was successful, but the patient died on the table.” Black’s attacking chances outweigh the minor inconvenience of the doubled e-pawns. Note that White’s kingside attack hasn’t even begun yet, like a dreamer’s forest fire which consumes nothing at all.

16 ... Rab8

Black’s attack is clearly faster.

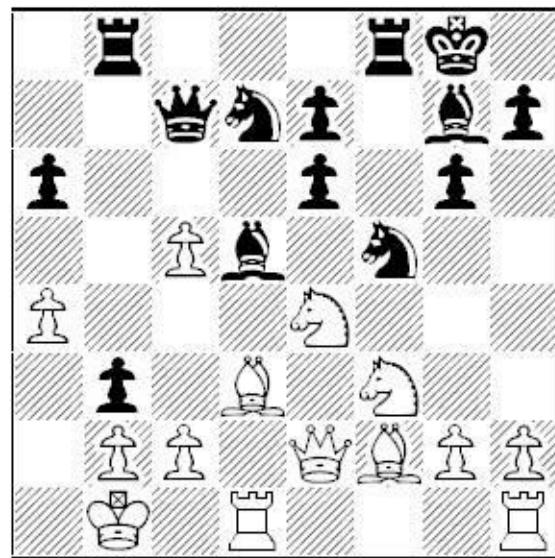
17 Bf2

Question: Shouldn’t White stop Black’s plan by tossing in 17 c3?

Answer: Your suggestion fails to slow down the attack after 17 ... a5. Now do you really want to play 18 b4?

17 ... b4 18 a4 b3

Black proceeds to soften up the pawn front in front of White’s king. It’s funny how one’s self-confidence expands exponentially when you point your loaded Glock19 at the opponent’s head.



19 c4

White tries to push the issue away with a barge pole.

19 c3 Qa5 20 g4 Nh6 doesn’t help White.

19 ... Bxe4! 20 Qxe4 Nxc5 21 Bxc5 Qxc5 22 Qxe6+

22 Ng5 is met with 22 ... Nd4.

22 ... Kh8 23 Rhe1??

He refuses to answer any of the urgent messages left on his phone machine. He should try 23 Bxf5.

23 ... Rb6

23 ... Qa5! is even stronger.

24 Qd5 Qb4 25 Bxf5

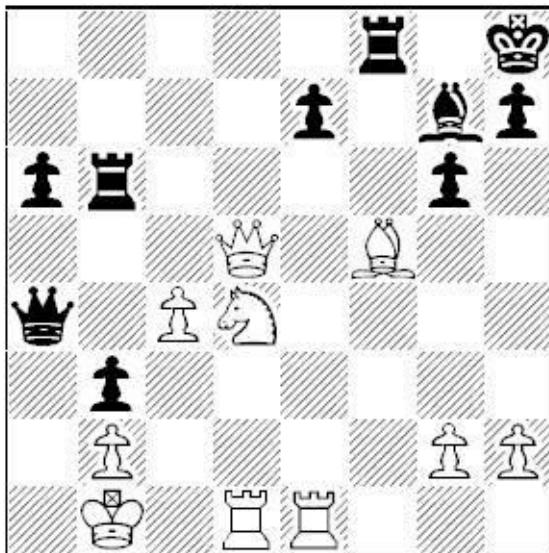
White is also totally busted after 25 Re5 Rd6! 26 Qa5 Qxc4!.

25 ... Qxa4!

White forces are the skinny guards with the sticks, while Black's unstoppable attackers remind us of Bruce Lee cracking heads in a blur of motion, with those nasty nunchucks.

Black's queen gazes menacingly in the direction of a2 with folded arms.

26 Nd4



26 ... Rxf5!

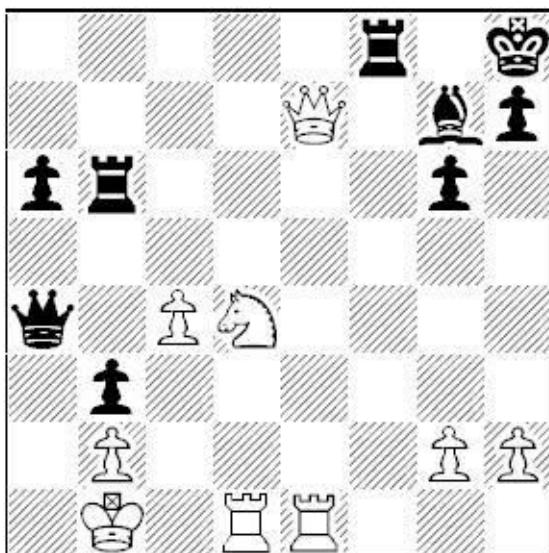
Svidler offers his b6-rook. For the record, 26 ... Qa2+ and 26 ... Rd6 also wins.

27 Qd8+

Of course, 27 Nxf5?? walks into mate in two moves: 27 ... Qa2+ 28 Kc1 Qxb2 mate.

27 ... Rf8 28 Qxe7

The 'free' rook on b6 is not so free after 28 Qxb6 Qa2+ 29 Kc1 Bh6+! 30 Rd2 Qa1 mate.



Exercise (calculation): Every sniper's dream: a clear line of sight to the target. Black to play and force mate.

This is a tough workout, but let's give it a shot. Go as far as you can.

Answer: 28 ... Qa2+ 29 Kc1

The king, coaxed out into the open, looks as perplexed as the newborn accustomed to the comforts of the womb life, who must now fend for himself in the outside world.

29 ... Qa1+ 30 Kd2 Qxb2+ 31 Ke3 Qf2+

The queen circumnavigates the board the way a plane, unable to land, circles a busy airport.

32 Ke4 Rf4+ 33 Kd5

Sci-fi novels constantly remind us of the fact that in space no one can hear you scream. Without intervention, White's king is destined to die alone.

33 ... Rxd4+ 34 Rxd4 Qxd4 mate (0-1)

The glass slipper fits the queen's foot perfectly. An impressive 13-ply if you made it to the finish line without moving the pieces.

Summary

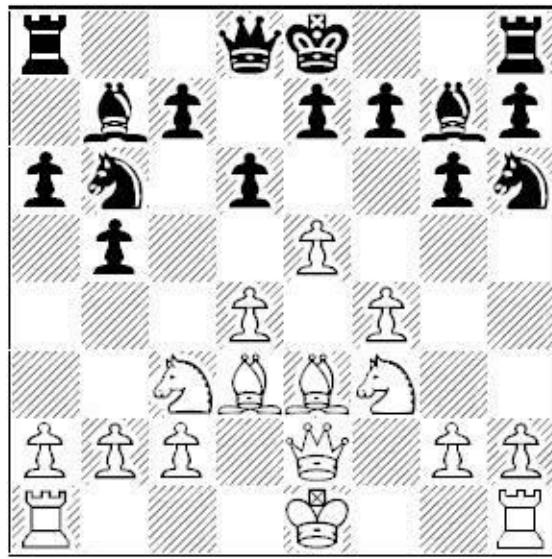
I predict 8 ... Nh6! may replace 8 ... c5 over time as Black's main line versus the Austrian Attack.

Game 17

P.Carlsson-T.Hillarp Persson

Swedish Championship, Gothenburg 2005

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 f4 a6 5 Nf3 b5 6 Bd3 Nd7 7 Be3 Bb7 8 e5 Nh6 9 Qe2 Nb6



Question: Isn't this move illogical since
Black will have a hard time achieving ... c5?

Answer: It isn't a matter of logic as much as it is of philosophy. Last game, Svidler played 9 ... c5, admittedly the logical move. But that move has its share of dangers. On the one hand, Black frees his game; on the other, he opens the game when behind in development. With 9 ... Nb6 Black doesn't try for an early freeing break and instead goes for a Nimzowitschian light-square blockade plan on d5.

10 a4

White creates confrontation since he leads in development, but I doubt this yields anything for him.

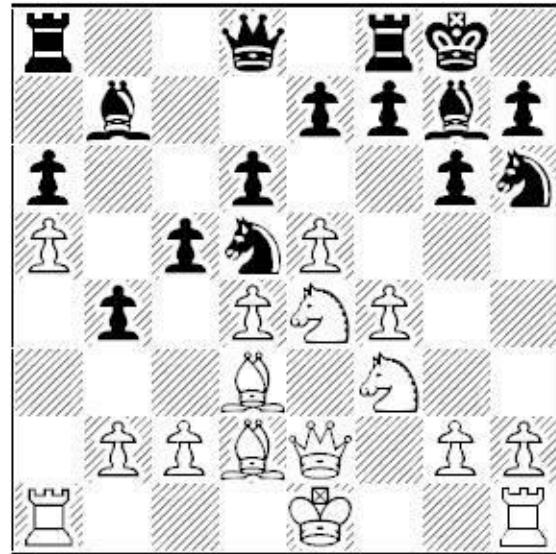
Next game we look at the sharper plan of castling long.

10 ... b4 11 Ne4 0-0 12 a5

Question: This just chases Black's knight to where it wants to go. Shouldn't he just castle instead?

Answer: Your suggestion looks more logical. 12 0-0 a5 13 Nfg5 (this turns out to be a waste of time; 13 c3 looks like a better try for an edge) 13 ... Qd7 14 b3 f6 15 Nf3 Nd5 16 Bd2 Qc6 17 Ng3 dxe5 18 fxe5 was M.Zufic-V.Nevednichy, Bosnjaci 2005. Now I would continue with 18 ... Nf7 when Black gets sufficient counterplay.

12 ... Nd5 13 Bd2 c5!



Well timed, now that Black is safely developed.

14 dxc5 dxe5

As always, Black takes on e5 when White captures on c5.

15 Nxe5

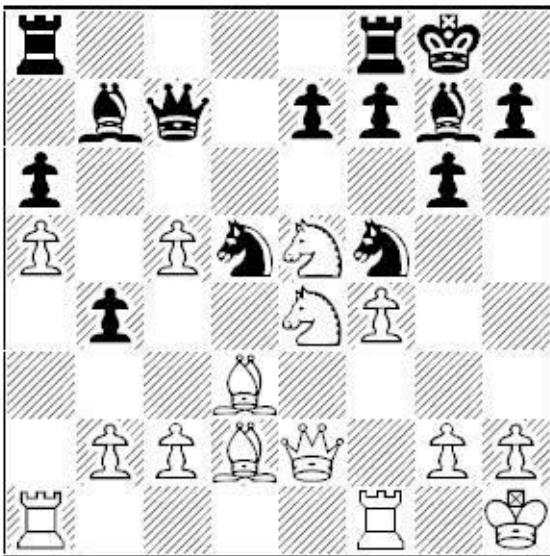
White's alternative to try and extract a semblance of an edge lay in 15 fxe5 Ng4 16 Nf2 Nxf2 17 Qxf2 Qc7 18 0-0 Rac8, but even here I would have no qualms taking on Black.

15 ... Qc7

Question: Isn't White up a pawn?

Answer: A pawn for now, but it looks like a pretty shaky extra pawn, since he can't hang on to it for long.

16 0-0 Nf5 17 Kh1



Exercise (combination alert): Black to play and regain the lost pawn.

Answer: 17 ... Nxf4!

Undermining.

18 Bxf4 Bxe5

I prefer Black, who controls the healthier pawn majority.

19 Qd2 Bxe4! 20 Bxe4 Rad8

The c5-pawn is doomed.

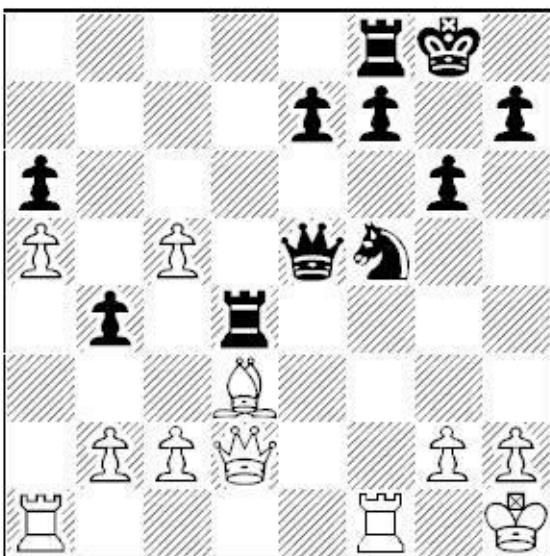
21 Bd3

White probably has better chances to maintain the balance if he continues with 21 Bxe5 Qxe5 22 Qf4 Qxc5 23 Bxf5 Qxf5 24 Qxf5 gxf5 25 Rxf5 Rd2 26 Rc5.

21 ... Rd4!

Powerful centralization. Black begins to take over an initiative and covers the b4-pawn as well.

22 Bxe5 Qxe5



Exercise (critical decision): You have a choice:

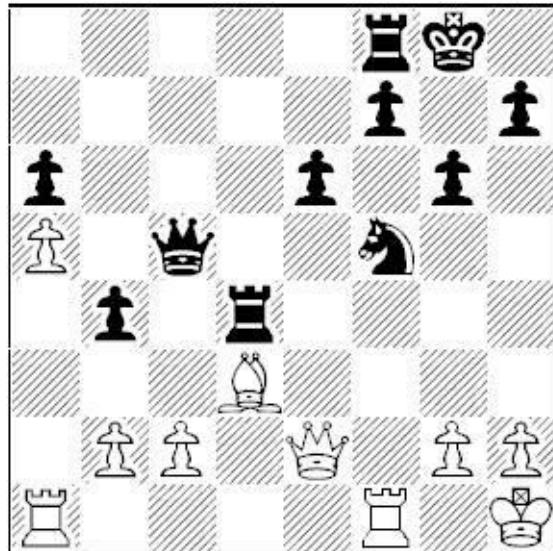
- a) 23 Rae1, developing with tempo.
- b) 23 Qe2, breaking the pin on the bishop and taking aim at a6.
Which one would you go for?

23 Rae1?

After the tempo gain, White ends up a pawn in the hole without any compensation.

Answer: He probably generates enough counterplay with 23 Qe2! Qxc5 24 Bxf5 gxf5 25 Qxa6 Qxc2, and White's passed a-pawn should earn him enough to hold it.

23 ... Qxc5 24 Qe2 e6 25 Ra1



Exercise (planning): White leads by two attackers to zero on a6.

Yet Black can hold on to the pawn tactically. How?

Answer: Take aim at White's king.

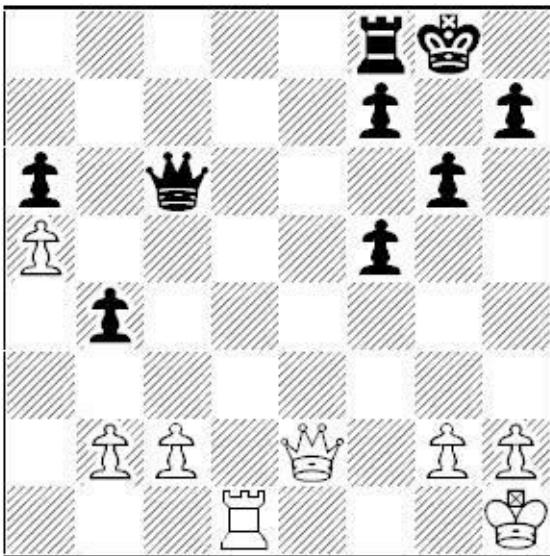
25 ... Qd6!

Black mails the ransom note which reads: "Hand over a pawn or face terrifying consequences."

26 Bxf5

26 Bxa6?? is met with the crushing game ender on the other side of the board: 26 ... Rh4! when Black threatens both h2 and a huge fork on g3.

26 ... exf5 27 Rad1 Rxd1 28 Rxd1 Qc6



Question: Is Black really winning? He is just up one doubled pawn in a major piece ending.

Answer: A grain of sand on a beach is insignificant. That same grain of sand in your eye is a problem. It isn't a matter of just one pawn:

1. Black is up a clean extra pawn.
2. c2 is target pawn.

3. In such positions king safety is a huge issue. Black has two extra pawns comforting his king while White's king is far less protected.

Conclusion: White is busted.

29 Qd3 Re8 30 h3 Re4 31 c3 bxc3 32 bxc3 Rc4?!

An inaccurate move which allows White back into the game. Black keeps his grip after 32 ... Qe6!.

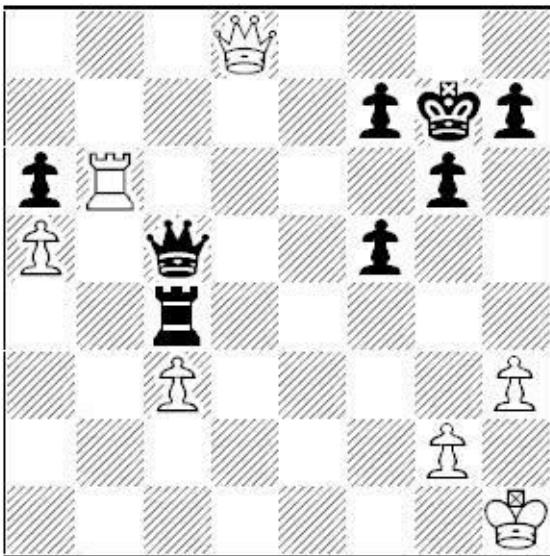
33 Rb1?

White missed his chance for serious counterplay with 33 Qd8+! Kg7 34 Rd6! Qe4 35 Qf6+ Kh6 36 Rd4! Rxd4 37 cxd4 when conversion will not be so easy due to White's dangerous passed d-pawn and Black's semi-exposed king.

33 ... Kg7

Probably the result of time pressure. He should just take the pawn on c3: 33 ... Rxc3 when White is busted.

34 Rb6! Qc5 35 Qd8!



White generates tricks on f6, as well as Rb8 ideas. Suddenly, the attackers, a band of regimental misfits, go at Black's king with full force, out to prove a point to redeem themselves.

35 ... Re4

Tiger hurries to bring his rook into the action. He can also consider 35 ... Qe5 36 Rb8 Qe1+ 37 Kh2 Kh6 38 Qf8+ Kg5.

36 Qf6+

White motions to come forward and the king has little choice but to obey, since any king move along the back rank loses instantly.

36 ... Kh6

Black crouches in his bunker, preparing for incoming fire.

37 Rb1?!

Not 37 Qxf7?? Re1+ 38 Kh2 Qe5+ 39 g3 Qe2 mate, but White's best chance was to enter 37 Kh2 Qc7+ 38 Qd6 Qxc3.

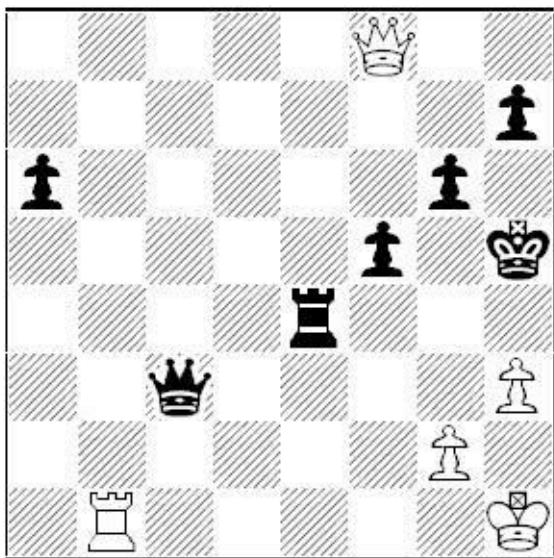
37 ... Qxa5 38 Qxf7

Suddenly, White's queen grows old, tired and ineffective in the attack, an ageing beauty who realizes that cosmetics fail to hide the onset of wrinkles.

38 ... Qxc3

The game is over. There is no perpetual check and White's rook is tied down to the defence of his own king.

39 Qf8+ Kh5



Paradoxically, Black's king, exposed with all eyes upon him, is the safer of the two. Time to hang on as the raft approaches white water. This is one of those positions where the first impression is that both sides are simultaneously losing. Closer inspection reveals that White's king safety unravels faster into dissolution. Black's king looks like he seeks a face-to-face meeting with his rival on h1, based on the philosophy: keep friends close and enemies even closer.

40 g4+?

It's hard to score when the opponent keeps moving the goal posts. Black's king constantly changes addresses on a regular basis in an attempt to elude his pursuers and fall off the grid. White can put up more resistance with 40 Qf7 h6 41 Qd5.

40 ... fxg4 0-1

White accepts his destiny with a fatalistic shrug and resigns.

Summary

By playing 9 ... Nb6, Black delays his early ... c5 ideas in favour of a light-squared blockade.

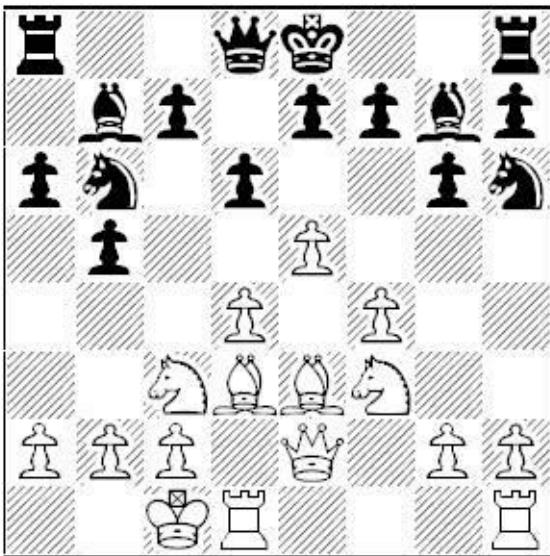
Game 18

L.Dominguez Perez-V.Ivanchuk

Barcelona 2006

1 e4 g6 2 d4 d6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 Be3 a6 5 f4 b5 6 Bd3 Bb7 7 Nf3 Nd7 8 e5 Nh6 9 Qe2 Nb6 10 0-0-0

This plan is quite dangerous for Black. White, unafraid of Black's attacking prospects, castles queenside and dares Black's king to go the other way.



Question: Should we take the dare?

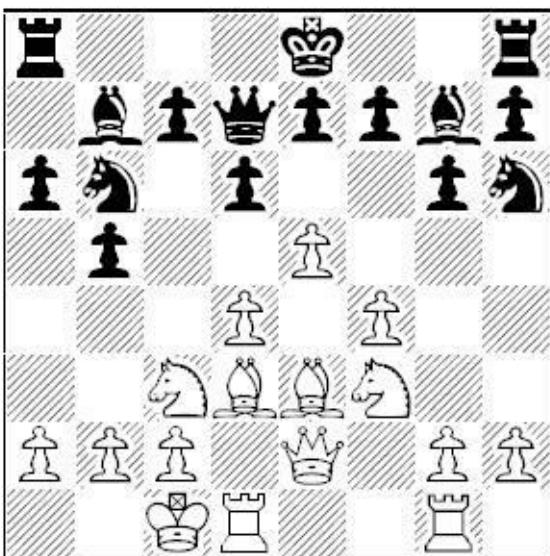
Answer: I would keep all options open. My intuition says Black's grip on the central light squares will keep us reasonably safe if we do choose to castle kingside later on.

10 ... Qd7 11 Rhg1

The implication of this plan remains unspoken, yet both players are aware of future consequences.

Question: This looks unnatural since White doesn't even threaten g4. Why not push his h-pawn up instead?

Answer: Dominguez plans to push g4 anyway as a sac. Your suggestion is safer but less vigorous. Tiger faced it once: 11 h3 Nf5 12 Bf2. Now I don't like the 12 ... e6 of B.Byklum-T.Hillarp Persson, Stockholm 2006, which invites g4. Instead, I suggest 12 ... Bh6 which inhibits g4, and if 13 g3 Ng7 14 Kb1 0-0 followed by ... f6.



11 ... 0-0!?

Question: Why did Black castle into an attack?

Answer: Black signs on the dotted line, and enters high-danger territory, inviting his opponent to do his worst. From my own perspective, I feel that if a voice calls to you from the shadows of a darkened alley, you would be well advised not to enter! A less intrepid soul like me would stall castling and play 11 ... Nf5 12 Bf2 h5. Defensive paranoia is an under-appreciated virtue.

12 g4!?

We catch a fleeting glimpse of the firestorm to come, as both sides refuse to back down.

Question: Why sac when White has 12 h3 instead?

Answer: Black can begin a central counter with 12 ... f6 with sufficient counterplay. Essentially White must sac if he wants a fully fledged attack.

12 ... Nxg4 13 Ng5 Nxe3

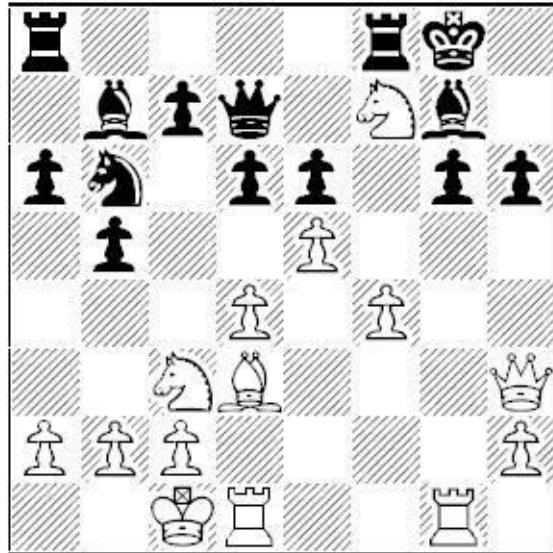
Black can also try 13 ... f5!? which allows White crazy ideas like 14 exf6 Nxf6 (in 14 ... exf6 White is most certainly going to go for it with 15 Nxh7!) 15 f5!? b4 16 Nb1 gxf5 17 Rdf1 e6 18 Nxe6! Qxe6 19 Bh6 which regains the piece but perhaps fails to gain an advantage.

14 Qxe3 e6

To put an end to f5 line opening ideas, but this also allows White's queen access to h3.

15 Qh3 h6 16 Nxf7!?

White deposits more coin into his attacking venture. Kasparov said: "Intelligence without audaciousness is not enough." Dominguez, whose last move certainly qualifies as audacious, has a distinct predilection for entering lines where his side gives freely to charity.



Question: Isn't this crushing?

Answer: Such positions are certainly easier to play from the attacker's perspective, but I'm not so sure White stands better from a theoretical standpoint.

16 ... Qxf7!?

Black's position looks easier to defend than the game continuation in the line 16 ... Rxf7! 17 Rxg6

dxe5 18 dxe5 Nd5.

17 Rxg6 Qxf4+ 18 Kb1 Rf7

Mikhail Golubev suggests 18 ... Bf3 as an alternative, but Black remains under heavy pressure after 19 Qxe6+ Rf7 20 Rf1.

19 Rdg1??

19 Rf1! Bf3 20 Qxe6 transposes to the above note on Golubev's suggestion.

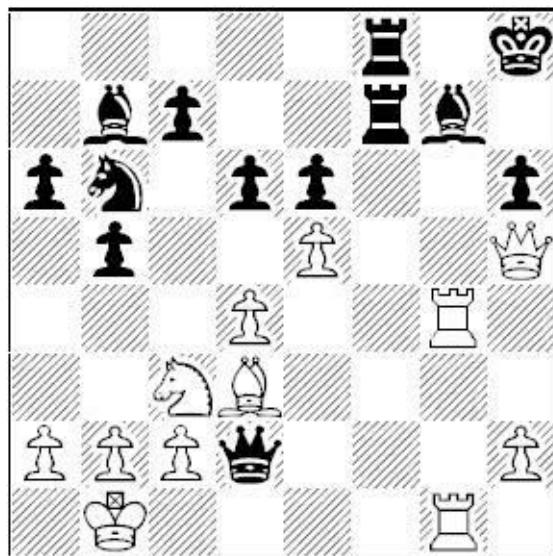
19 ... Kh8?

This could have been a fatal slip. The comps like 19 ... Bf3! and claim things are equal.

20 R6g4?

White misses the killing combination 20 Ne2! Qd2 21 R1g5!! when Black must give up heavy material to avoid the rook sac on h6.

20 ... Qd2! 21 Qh5 Raf8



Exercise (critical decision): Should White go for the kill with 22 Qg6?

22 a3!

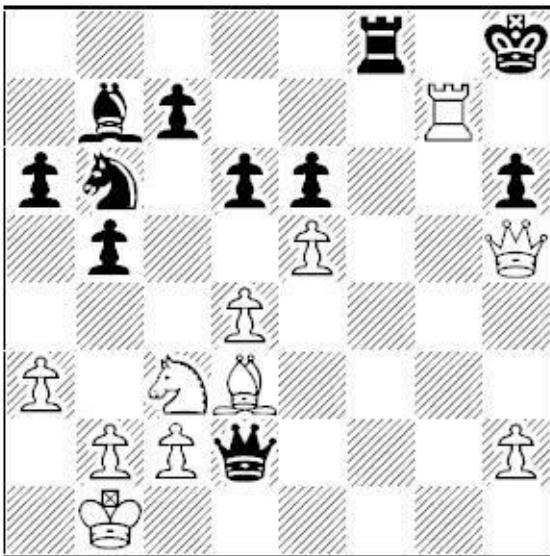
Answer: No! It's a trap! Rat-quick, Dominguez dodges the intended blow by wisely airing out his king. 22 Qg6?? walks into the back rank cheapo 22 ... Rf1+! 23 Rxfl Rxfl+ 24 Bxfl Qe1+ 25 Nd1 Qxd1 mate! The lesson: no matter how tempting or how obvious a crushing shot looks, calm down and double check your analysis before actually playing the move on the board.

22 ... Re7 23 Rxg7

The human move isn't as strong as it looks. *Houdini* points out an impossibly difficult combination which runs: 23 Qg6! Rf5 24 d5!!.. Then:

- 24 ... Nxd5 25 Ne4 Qe3 26 Nf6! wins.
- 24 ... Bxd5 and now the freaky 25 Rd4! wins.

23 ... Rxg7 24 Rxg7



Exercise (critical decision): It looks like Ivanchuk is about to get mated. So how did he manage to survive another 45 moves?

Answer: 24 ... Rf1+!

Deflection, and the only move.

25 Bxf1 Kxg7 26 Bd3 Qg5 27 Qe8

White still holds the initiative and seeks to win at least one pawn on the queenside.

27 ... dxe5 28 dxe5 Qxe5 29 Qe7+ Kg8 30 Qe8+ Kg7 31 Qe7+ Kg8 32 Bh7+ Kh8 33 Bg6 Qg7 34 Qd8+ Qg8 35 Qf6+ Qg7 36 Qd8+ Qg8 37 Qxc7! Nd5 38 Qe5+ Qg7 39 Qb8+ Qg8 40 Qe5+ Qg7 41 Qxe6 Qf6 42 Qxf6+

Why not? He is up a pawn. Also tempting was 42 Qe8+ Kg7 43 Nxd5 Qf1+ 44 Ka2 Bxd5+ 45 b3.

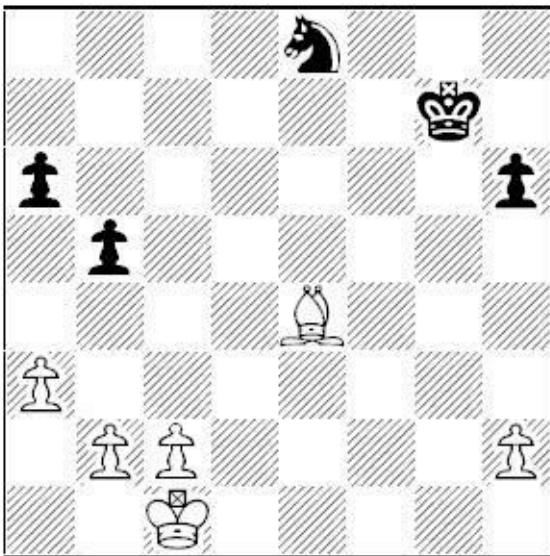
42 ... Nxf6 43 Bf5 Kg7 44 Kc1 Ne8 45 Ne4!

Forcing Black's next move, or else his king can't enter the action.

45 ... Bxe4

Black begrudgingly gives up bishop for knight in order to fight another day.

46 Bxe4



Black is busted:

1. He is a pawn down.
2. White's bishop is the superior minor piece. The principle: bishops are superior to knights in endings where there are opposite wing pawn majorities.

Question: What makes the bishop superior?

Answer: The bishop is a long-range piece and may perform both offensive and defensive functions. The short-range knight, on the other hand, can only do one or the other task, so in essence, it's virtually a half-piece in such situations.

46 ... Nd6 47 Bd3 a5

It's important not to allow White to fix too many black queenside pawns on the light squares, the same colour as his bishop.

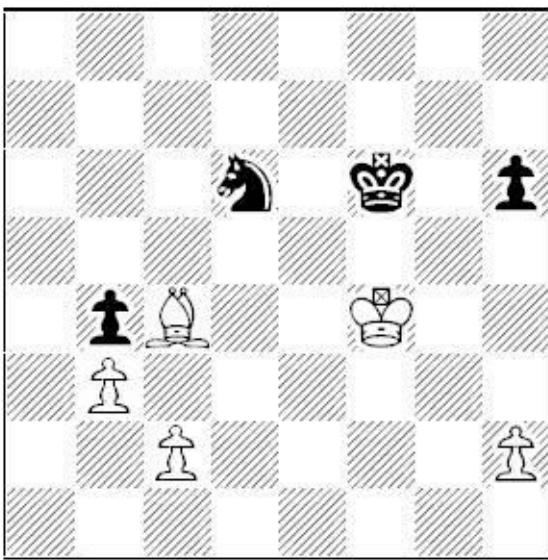
48 Kd2 Kf6 49 Ke3 Ke5

Appearances are deceiving. Soon White is the one who forces a superior king position.

50 Kf3 b4 51 axb4 axb4 52 Kg4 Kf6 53 Kf4 Ke6 54 b3!

White, like Mitt Romney with his dog Seamus, lashes b4 to the roof of his car, hoping to create a potential target for his king, and drive off with Black's b-pawn later on.

54 ... Kf6 55 Bc4!



Forcing access to e4.

55 ... Nf5 56 Ke4 h5

56 ... Kg5 fails to 57 Bd3 Nh4 58 Kd5 Nf3 59 Kc5 Nxh2 60 Kxb4 when White wins since his bishop can sac or at least slow down Black's passer, while his own on the other wing pushes through.

57 Be2!

Luring the h-pawn forward.

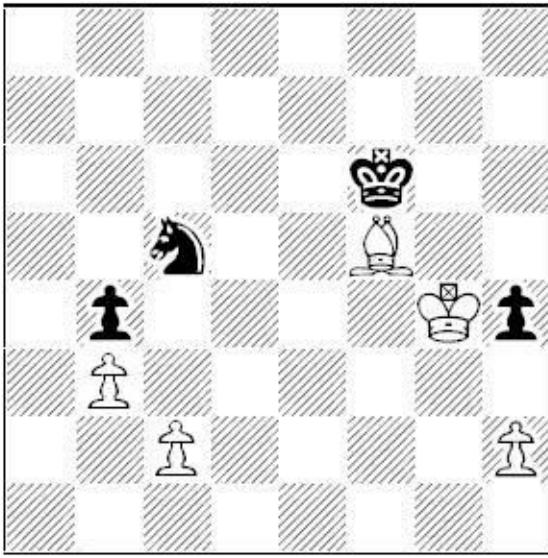
57 ... h4

57 ... Kg5? walks into 58 Bxh5!.

58 Bg4 Nd6+ 59 Kf4

59 Kd4 Nf5+! and if 60 Kc5? Ne3! when Black should draw.

59 ... Nb7 60 Bf5 Nc5 61 Kg4



The h-pawn is doomed.

61 ... h3 62 Bh7 Ne6

Ivanchuk continues to fight, despite the foreboding math on his side.

63 Bd3

It's never too late for the idiotic in a chess game. 63 Kxh3?? walks into 63 ... Ng5+ when Black

draws by murdering the priest in front of the altar.

63 ... Ke5 64 Kxh3 Nf4+

The beggar knight scavenges for scraps of counterplay where none exists.

65 Kg4 Nxd3

He will be too slow in the race.

66 cxd3 Kd4 67 h4 Kc3 68 h5 Kxb3 69 h6 1-0

Summary

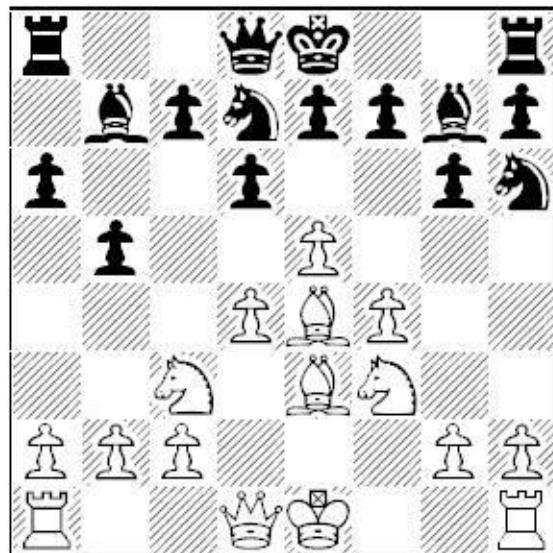
10 0-0-0 is quite dangerous for us. If you don't like the way Ivanchuk played in the game then you can stall castling with 11 ... Nf5 12 Bf2 h5. But keep in mind, I don't believe Black stood worse after he castled. The only trouble is such positions are simply difficult to navigate over the board.

Game 19

Ye Jiangchuan-E.Bacrot

Batumi (rapid) 2001

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 Be3 a6 5 f4 b5 6 Nf3 Nd7 7 Bd3 Bb7 8 e5 Nh6 9 Be4



This plan, so scary for Black in the mainline with 8 ... c5, doesn't pack quite the bite it does there since the centre isn't wide open.

9 ... Qc8

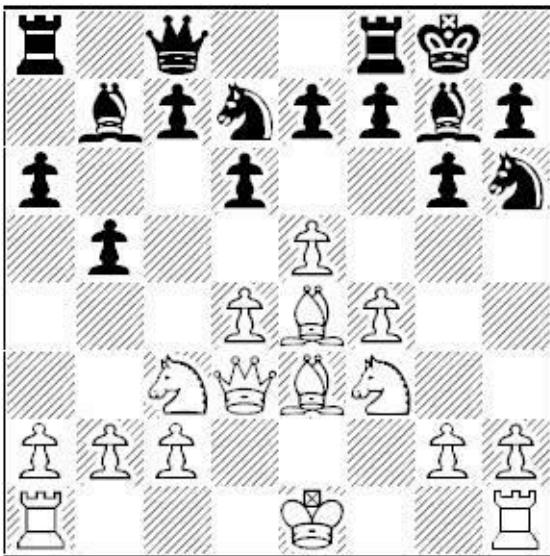
More logical than playing the queen to b8. Black isn't going to take on e4 and give White's c3-knight a free central jump.

Question: Why more logical?

Answer: Black's entire universe revolves around his control over the light squares, so it makes sense to place the queen on one.

10 Ng5!?

A theoretical novelty. White's knight flings itself forward. White can also try 10 Qd3 0-0!?.



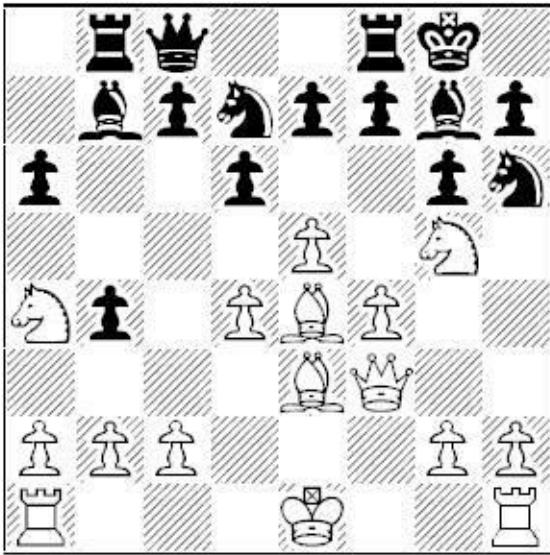
Question: Isn't it crazy to castle directly into an attack?

Answer: There is a fine line between crazy and self-confident! (But you do have a point! Black's move looks scary, indeed, and I would probably have stalled with 10 ... Nb6.) After 11 0-0-0 c6 (threatening ... d5) 12 Ng5 Nb6 13 h4 d5 14 Bf3 b4 15 Ne2 a5 (threat: ... Ba6) 16 Ng3 Ba6 17 Qd2 Nc4 18 Qe1 f6 Black's attack proved more potent in the chaos which followed, A.Green-J.Rowson, Edinburgh 2009.

10 ... b4 11 Qf3 Rb8!

Still refusing to comply and take on e4.

12 Na4!? 0-0



13 0-0-0

Question: Why not castle kingside, when Black has no countering attack?

Answer: 13 0-0 is no less sharp. Play might continue: 13 ... Nf5 14 Bf2 h6 15 Nh3 e6 16 g4 Ne7.

Maybe I'm crazy but I prefer Black, who has ... f5 and ... c5 ideas in the air. White's attacking chances don't scare me all that much here.

13 ... Bxe4 14 Qxe4

Black holds his own in the line 14 Nxe4 Nf5 15 g4 Nxe3 16 Qxe3 Nb6 17 Nxb6 cxb6 when the open c-file compensates for White's kingside and central space.

14 ... Qb7!

Rule of thumb: Black generally gets decent endings from the Austrian Attack – barring any cataclysmic shifts in material or structure.

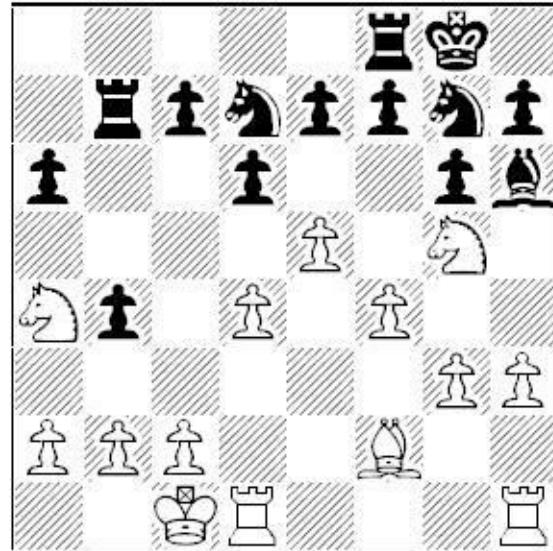
Question: Doesn't White still hold an edge due to his extra space?

Answer: I suppose one could argue that point. But one player's space advantage is another's overextension.

15 Qxb7 Rxb7

Now the pace of the game slows, with both sides indulging in some leisurely window shopping for a plan.

16 h3 Nf5 17 Bf2 Bh6! 18 g3 Ng7!



Question: Why the unforced retreat?

Answer: Black covers e6 in preparation for ... f6.

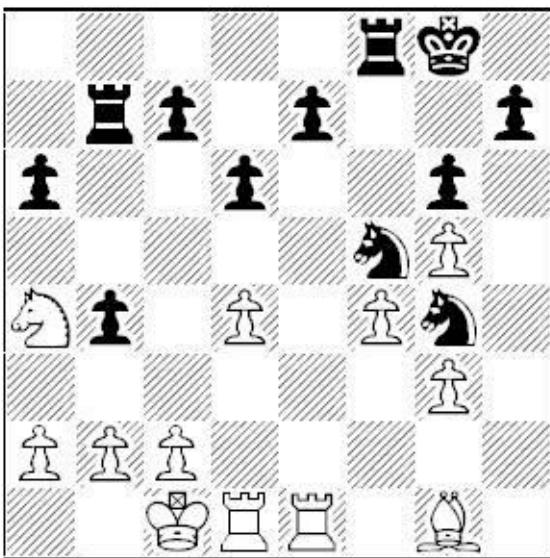
19 h4 f6 20 exf6

20 e6 looks better, but I like Black's game at the end of the variation 20 ... f6 21 hxg5 22 hxg5 Nxe6 23 gxh6 (22 Rxh6? walks into 22 ... Nxg5) 22 ... Nd8.

20 ... Nxf6

Better is 20 ... exf6! 21 Nf3 f5! when Black's grip on the light squares grows.

21 Rhe1 Bxg5!? 22 hxg5 Ng4 23 Bg1 Nf5



Now this is what Nimzowitsch was talking about! Black's knights entrench themselves into the kingside light squares like a virus.

24 Rd3 Kf7 25 Kd1

Question: Why does White hold back on playing 25 d5 which would reactivate his sleeping bishop?

Answer: You are right, but the trouble is it also weakens his d-pawn, so there is no rush.

25 ... h6

A move which induces White to open the f6-square for business again. 25 ... Rh8 intending ... h6 and ... Rxh6 was an alternative.

26 gxh6

After 26 Ke2?! hxg5! (Black can always change his mind and reinforce with 26 ... h5) 27 fxg5 Kg7, strangely enough, Black stands better, since White lacks a good way to endanger the dangling knight on g4. Black may play ... e5 soon.

26 ... Nfxh6 27 Ke2 Nf6 28 Kf3

The knights stand guard over the perimeter around Black's king, refusing to allow unauthorized personnel entry.

28 ... Nd5

I would keep a grip on the g4 blockade and play 28 ... Rh8.

29 b3

29 g4!? may be hasty: 29 ... Kg7 30 Be3 c6 31 Rd2 e6!, and Black is ready for ... Rbf7.

29 ... Rh8 30 c4! Nf6

30 ... bxc3 31 Nxc3 c6 is also possible.

31 Rdd1 Nf5 32 Bf2 Rbb8 33 Rh1

White is finally ready to play g4.

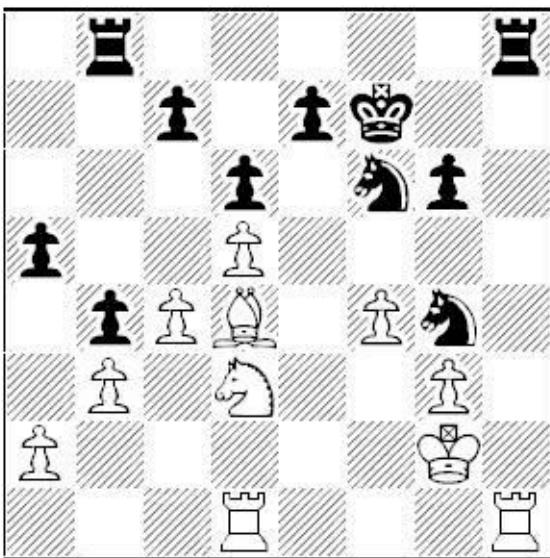
33 ... Nh6

Oops! Never mind.

34 Nb2 Nhg4 35 Nd3 a5 36 d5

White takes space and prepares to activate his bishop to d4.

36 ... Nh2+ 37 Kg2 Nhg4 38 Bd4



The once bad bishop emerges in triumph – possible evidence of Tartakower's theory about the worst bishop being better than the best knight.

38 ... Rh5! 39 Rxh5 gxh5 40 Rh1 Rg8 41 Kf3 Kg6 42 Re1 Re8 43 Bxf6

Okay, maybe the bishop wasn't so great after all.

43 ... Nxf6 44 Nf2 Kf7

Instead 44 ... Kf5 45 Nd1 Ng4 46 Ne3+ Nxe3 47 Rxe3 e5 48 dxе6 Rxe6 49 Rxe6 (49 Rd3 c6 is fine for Black) 49 ... Kxe6 50 Ke4 c6 is a drawn king and pawn ending.

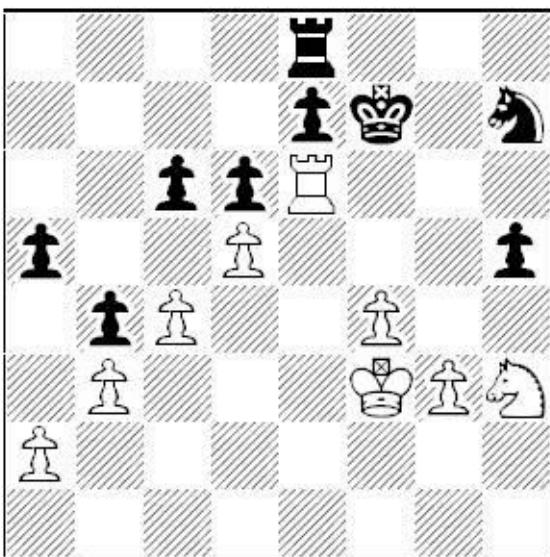
45 Nh3 Nh7

An emissary arrives from Black's court to h7. White, however, has no intention of signing an early peace treaty.

46 Re6!?

About here White begins to overpress, imagining himself to control the advantage, due to the scar on e6, which is only visual evidence of an old wound. In reality, the ending is about equal.

46 ... c6!



47 Ke4?!

White can force Black to play exactly to hold the draw after 47 Ng5+! Nxg5+ 48 fxg5.

47 ... cxd5+ 48 cxd5 Rc8 49 Kf5?

Off the cliff. White can still hold the game if he plays 49 Ng5+ Nxg5+ 50 fxg5.

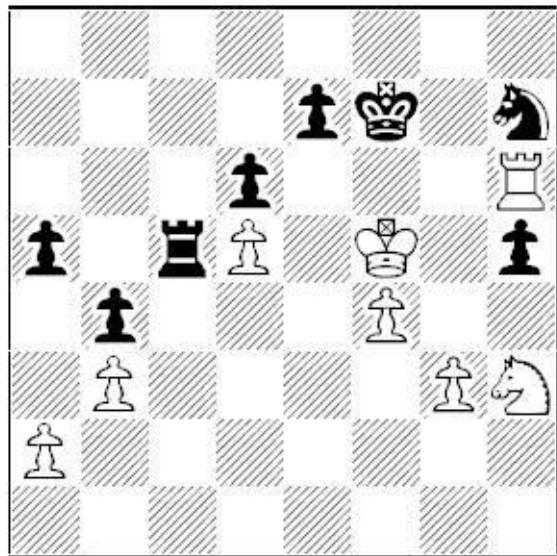
49 ... Rc5!

Target: d5. The best con artists are skilled psychologists. Black lures White's rook into his camp.

50 Rh6?

The four scariest words in chess are: "I have an idea!" White's rook is the Kim Kardashian of the board, craving attention but providing little substance to the requirements of the position.

Black should still be winning the rook and pawn ending after the superior 50 Ng5+ Nxg5 51 Kxg5 Rxd5+ 52 f5 Rd3 53 Kf4 Rd2.

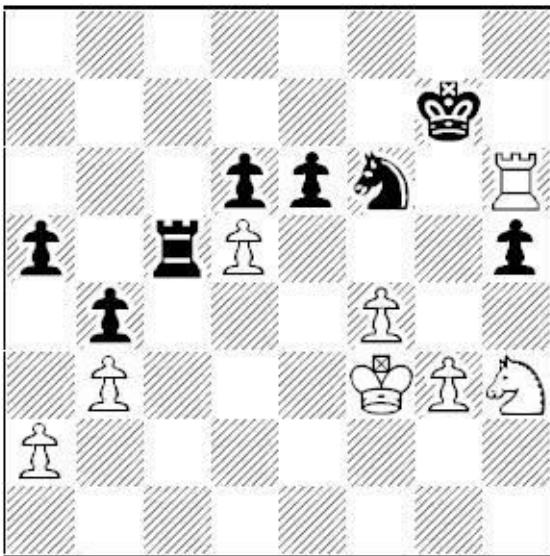


Exercise (combination alert): White, hoping to bend the game to his will, blundered on his last move, a time pressure error which drops material. It's time for punitive action, and the long-delayed vendetta on White's wayward rook begins now. Come up with a way to trap the rook.

Answer: 50 ... e6+! 51 Ke4

51 Rxe6?? Rxd5+ picks up a rook.

51 ... Nf6+ 52 Kf3 Kg7!



As with all misjudgements in life, we are eventually presented with a costly bill. Defendants only repent after they stand in front of the judge. White's epiphany: he isn't winning and he isn't drawing, since his rook is caught, deep in enemy territory. The most painful way to lose a chess game is when it's by your own hand.

53 Rx_f6

Whatever remaining resistance White hoped for melts like butter on a baked potato.

53 ... Kxf6 54 dx_e6 Kxe6 55 Nf2 Rc1

55 ... Rc3+! is more accurate.

56 Ne4 Ra1 57 Ng5+ Ke7 58 Ke4 Rx_a2 59 Kf3 Rb2 0-1

Summary

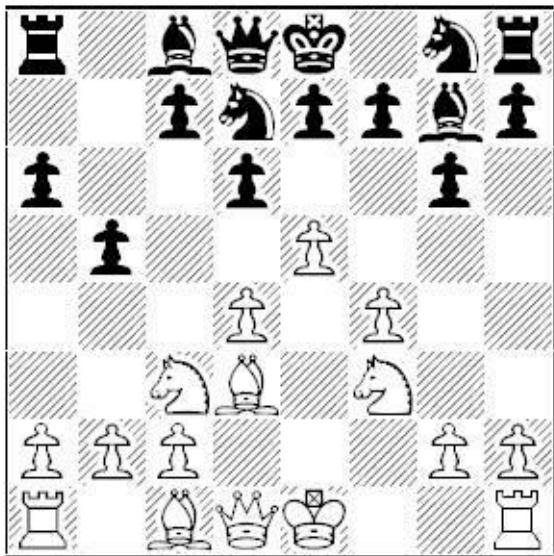
In general, the light-square control and blockade plan should always be in the back of your mind in this line, especially after a swap of light-squared bishops.

Game 20

A.Tzermiadinos-K.Georgiev

Chania 1991

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 f4 a6 5 Nf3 b5 6 Bd3 Nd7 7 e5



Prepare yourself for another dangerous subset. In this case White plays e5 early without the inclusion of Be3.

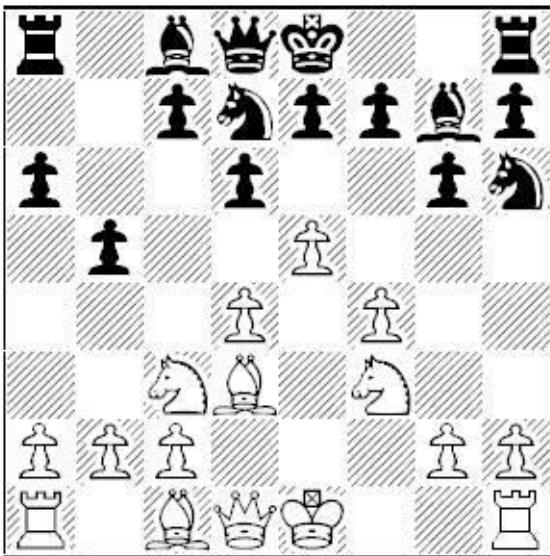
Question: Which version do you think is most dangerous for Black?

Answer: My feeling is the toughest line we face is the one where White sets up with Be3 and Qe2. If you don't believe me, then just ask Ivanchuk from a couple of games ago!

Question: What if White completes his development by castling and only then opens the centre with e5?

Answer: Then we abandon our ... Nh6 plan and go back to ... c5. For example: 7 0-0 c5! 8 e5 cxd4 9 Be4 Rb8 (*Houdini* prefers 9 ... dxc3!? 10 Bxa8 Qc7, threatening to pick off the bishop with a check on a7; then 11 Kh1 dxe5 gives Black two healthy pawns for the exchange) 10 Nxd4 dxe5! 11 Nc6 Qb6+ 12 Kh1 Ngf6 13 Nxb8 Qxb8 and once again, Black looks good with a pair of pawns for the exchange, R.Burton-T.Hillarp Persson, Guernsey 2010.

7 ... Nh6



8 0-0

Now we get an independent line.

Question: What happens if White plays 8 Be3?

Answer: After 8 ... Bb7 we simply transpose to the earlier games in this chapter.

Others:

a) 8 a4 b4 9 Ne4 Bb7 10 0-0 c5! (good timing) 11 e6!? fxe6 12 Neg5 was M.Rahal-M.Vassallo Barroche, Barbera del Valles 2003. Now Black should continue 12 ... Bd5 13 Qe1 Nf5! with possibly slightly more than equality.

b) 8 f5!? (sometimes these Austrian Attack guys really go off the cliff in their frantic attempts to crush us) 8 ... Nxf5 9 Bxf5?! (after 9 g4 I would probably sac back with 9 ... Nxd4!? 10 Nxd4 Nxe5, with three healthy pawns plus initiative for the piece) 9 ... gxf5 10 e6?! fxe6 11 Ng5 Nf6 12 Qe2 b4 13 Nd1 Qd7 left White two pawns down and busted in L.Henris-T.Vandenbussche, Aalst 2005.

8 ... 0-0

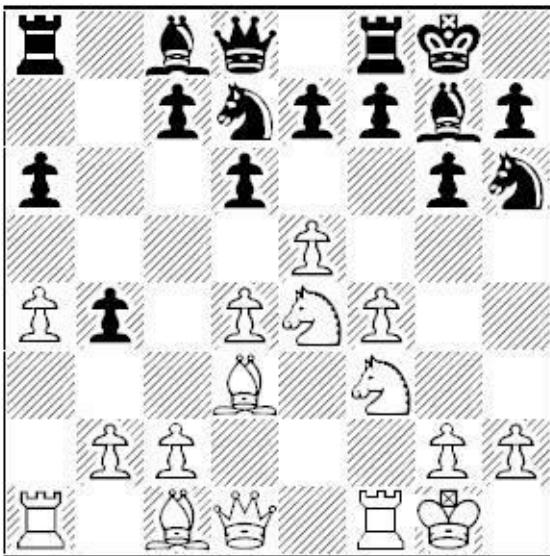
Every game in my database has Black castling.

Question: Can Black delay castling?

Answer: I played around with the position and concluded that castling was best. I tried the funky idea 8 ... Bb7 9 a4 b4 10 Ne4 d5!? 11 Nc5! (stronger than 11 Neg5) 11 ... Nxc5 12 dxc5 a5 13 Nd4 c6 and didn't much care for Black's position.

9 a4 b4 10 Ne4

Next game we look at 10 Nd5.



10 ... c5

Question: Obligatory?

Answer: No. We can also go for 10 ... a5 and play for a central light-square strategy: 11 c3 bxc3 12 bxc3 Nb6 and maybe White has only a small edge, S.Norrelykke-I.Mathe, correspondence 2007.

11 dxc5

11 e6!, which has only been played twice, is the critical continuation. Then 11 ... fxe6 12 Neg5 was seen in R.Soltanici-K.Movsziszian, Benasque 2011, and now instead of playing our knight to f6, I suggest 12 ... Nb6 13 Qe1 Rf6 14 dxc5 Nd5 with a cluttered position probably slightly in White's favour.

11 ... d5!?

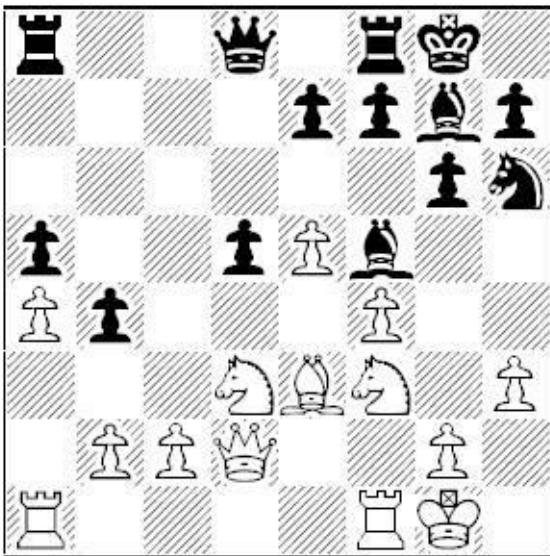
Black goes for a French-like structure.

11 ... dxe5 12 fxe5 (if 12 c6 Nb8 13 Nxe5 Nf5 and Black should be able to round up and regain c6 eventually) 12 ... Nxe5 13 Nxe5 Qd4+ 14 Kh1 Qxe5 15 Bf4 Qd5 16 Qe1 also looks quite playable for Black, S.Schabane-J.Seret, French League 1992.

12 Nf2 Nxc5 13 Be3 Nxd3

Black seizes the bishop pair and also greater influence on the light squares.

14 Nxd3 a5 15 Qd2 Bf5 16 h3



16 ... f6

Black begins to chip away at White's central space, but creates weakness in doing so. I would go for 16 ... Be4 17 g4 f5! with a rich strategic fight ahead.

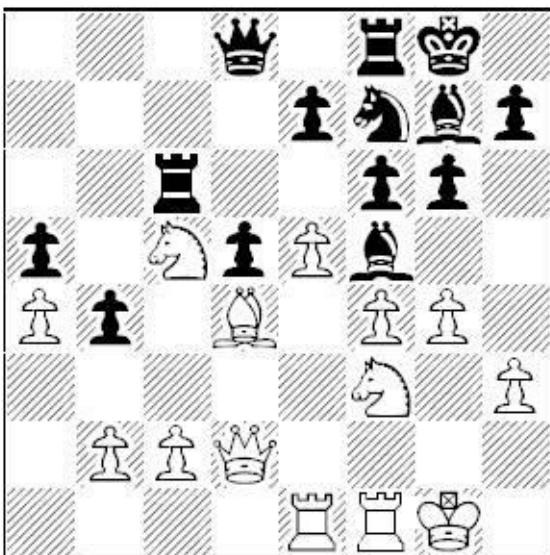
17 Bd4

17 Nd4 is also possible.

17 ... Nf7 18 Rae1 Rc8 19 Nc5 Rc6!

Covering e6, the most vulnerable point in Black's position.

20 g4!?



It was probably a moment similar to this when Darth Vader decided to build the Death Star. As the saying goes: nothing ventured ... It is in the nature of such moves to produce great reward, as well as great disappointment. The attack looks somewhat unjustified, but facts and evidence are the eternal enemy of the faithful.

Question: What don't you like about White's plan of attack?

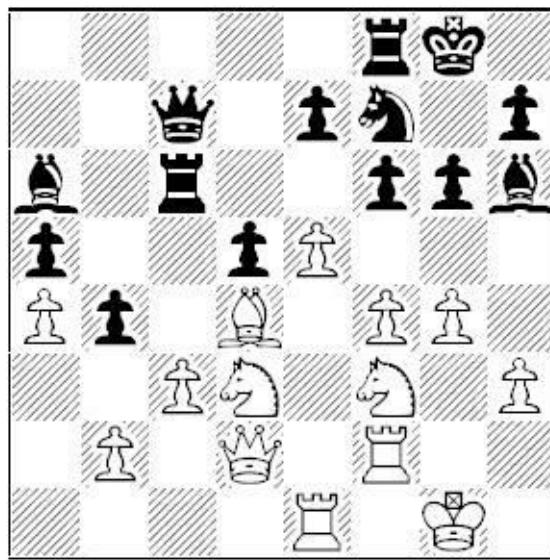
Answer: Maybe I am only introducing my own stylistic bias, but Black's king looks well protected and White's attack has the feel of force without direction, a blind shark looking for prey.

Question: What plan do you suggest instead?

Answer: The same one he engaged in before he got distracted: fight for the central dark squares.

20 ... Bc8 21 Rf2 Qc7 22 Nd3 Ba6 23 c3 Bh6?!

He gives White an opportunity. 23 ... bxc3 24 Bxc3 Bxd3 25 Qxd3 fxe5 26 Nxe5 Nxe5 27 Bxe5 Qd8 looks even.



24 g5?!

White continues to fall off message as more unwilling recruits are indentured to fight in the fruitless kingside campaign. Instead White should turn his attention to the other wing: 24 cxb4! leads to an edge after 24 ... Bxd3 25 Qxd3 Bxf4 26 b5.

24 ... fxg5 25 fxg5

25 cxb4 is more accurate, and if 25 ... Bxd3 26 Qxd3 axb4 27 fxg5 Nxg5 28 Nxg5.

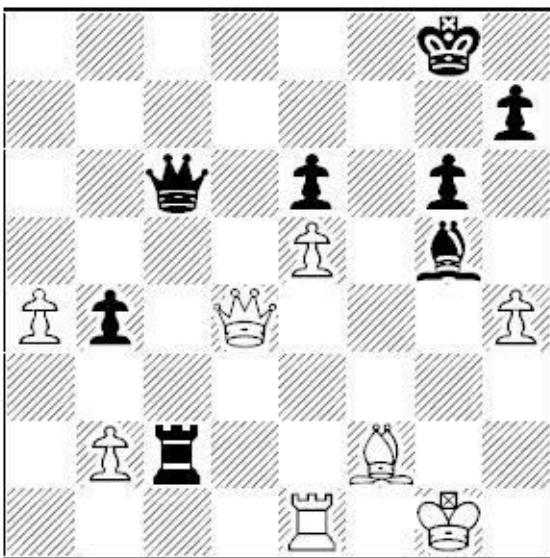
25 ... Bxd3

The bishop secretly harbours malice toward the good-natured knight. Black had better, though. He wins a pawn with 25 ... bxc3! 26 bxc3 Bxg5! 27 Nxg5 Nxg5 28 Rxf8+ Kxf8 29 Qxg5 Bxd3. Maybe he feared White's attacking chances based on the opposite-coloured bishops, although that works both ways, since White's king looks somewhat unsafe as well.

26 Qxd3 Nxg5 27 Nxg5 Rxf2 28 Bxf2 Bxg5 29 cxb4 axb4 30 Qxd5+ e6 31 Qd3

The game remains sharp and now it is White's king who is the more exposed. His passed a-pawn represents his source of counterplay.

31 ... Rc2 32 Qd4 Qc6 33 h4?!



In time pressure, White's heart just isn't in his defensive work, like the bored, break-taking government clerk. In his continuing attempts to seize the initiative, he inadvertently weakens the pawn front around his king.

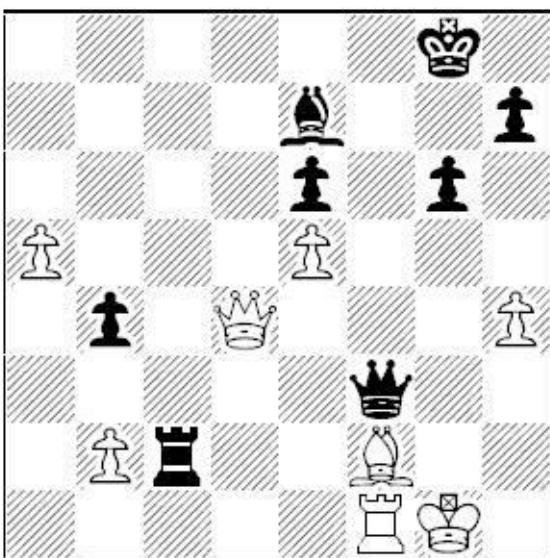
33 ... Be7 34 Rf1

White realizes he won't survive 34 a5? Rc4! 35 Qd1 h5! when h4 hangs and Black also threatens a rook check on g4.

34 ... Qf3!

Even stronger than taking on a4. Black's queen squeezes the white king's cheeks like some dreaded great aunt on a visit.

35 a5



Exercise (planning): Black would love to play 35 ... Bc5, but the problem is White would check on d8. Come up with a winning plan for Black to deal with this problem.

35 ... Kg7?

A swing and a miss. Time pressure makes fools of us all.

Answer: 35 ... h5! gives Black's king a run square to h6, and renews the ... Bc5 threat. If 36 a6? (36 Qe3 Qg4+ 37 Qg3 Rxf2! wins, as White's king and queen embrace each other and mutter tearful goodbyes) 36 ... Bc5 37 Qd8+ Kh7 38 Qc7+ Kh6 and White runs out of checks.

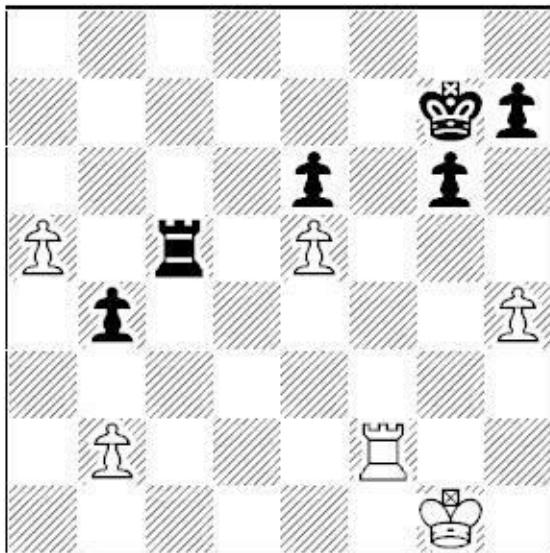
36 Qe3?

36 Qa7! holds the position together.

36 ... Qg4+ 37 Qg3 Qxg3+ 38 Bxg3 Bc5+?

Simply grabbing b2 wins after 38 ... Rxb2! 39 Ra1 b3 40 a6 Bc5+ 41 Kf1 Ra2.

39 Bf2 Bxf2+ 40 Rxf2 Rc5



Exercise (critical decision): Time trouble is finally over. White has one last chance to circumvent fate and keep manifest destiny at bay. He has a decision to make in the rook and pawn ending: should he push with 41 a6, or protect his e-pawn with 41 Re2?

41 Re2?

Answer: Principle: avoid passivity in rook and pawn endings at all costs. White holds the draw after 41 a6! Ra5 42 Rf4 Rx a6 43 Rxb4.

41 ... Rx a5 42 Re4 b3 0-1

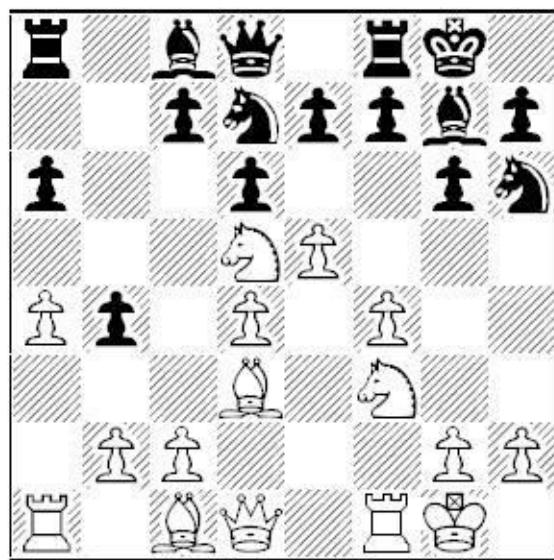
Question: Premature resignation?

Answer: White's position is lost after 43 Rb4 Rx e5 44 Rxb3 Re4 45 Rb7+ Kh6 46 h5 Kxh5 47 Rxh7+ Kg4 48 Rb7. He remains down a pawn and his depressed king continues to mope, vacant-eyed on g1, but I would still play it out as White.

Summary

There is no easy equalizer against the early e5 White set-up. You can choose between a quick ... c5 plan, or the ... Nb6 central light-square strategy.

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 f4 a6 5 Nf3 b5 6 Bd3 Nd7 7 e5 Nh6 8 0-0 0-0 9 a4 b4 10 Nd5



Question: Why would White play to an unstable square when he has e4 instead?

Answer: White reasons that he gains a tempo on b4 and plans to redeploy his knight to e3, where it fights for the central light squares, and especially f5. White's plan strikes me as somewhat artificial and I don't believe he gets anything from it.

10 ... a5 11 Ne3 Bb7 12 Ng5

The normal plan 12 Qe2 c5! looks at least equal for Black, mainly since White wasted too much time with unforced knight moves.

Question: Can White go for his thematic e6 pawn sac since Black's light-squared bishop moved its coverage of e6?

Answer: I have grave doubts about White's compensation after 12 e6 fxe6 13 Ng5 Rf6 14 Ng4 Nxg4 15 Qxg4 Nf8.

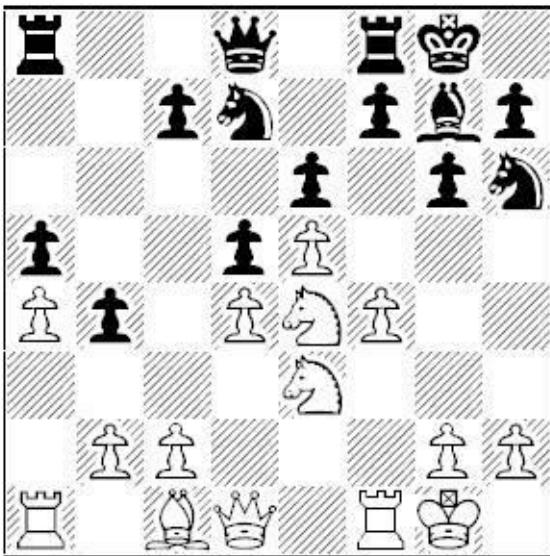
12 ... e6

Black halts e6 tricks.

13 Be4

The thematic move, but now this allows Black to switch the pawn structure à la French/Scheveningen Sicilian to favour his remaining bishop.

13 ... Bxe4 14 Nxe4 d5!



15 Ng5

Seven out of 15 moves have been made with White's knights.

Question: What about a plan of plugging the hole on c5 with his knight, to prevent Black from playing the move himself?

Answer: White ends up in an awful French position after 15 Nc5? Nxc5 16 dxc5 f6! 17 exf6 Qxf6 when ... Qd4 is a serious strategic threat and White's pieces trip over each other.

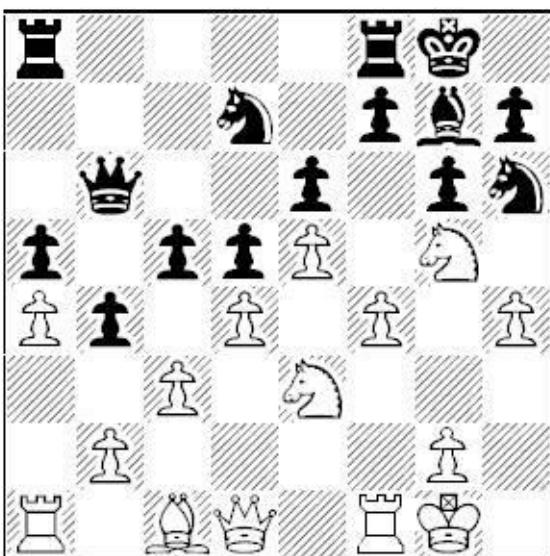
15 ... c5

I already prefer Black. This position has all the signs of a sour White French written over it.

16 c3

Perhaps White can try 16 Nf3 cxd4 17 Nxd4 Re8 18 Ng4.

16 ... Qb6 17 h4?!



Welcome to project overboard. I realize White possibly reaches the 'what else?' stage and makes a stab at an attack in a surge of overcompensatory zeal, but his move drives into an attacking cul-de-sac, since he begins an attack from a position of inferiority. A strategically deteriorating position has a way of

prompting rash action, like a man who, in a moment of passion, proposes to the girlfriend he doesn't love.

Question: What weakness? He controls central space and follows principle by attacking.

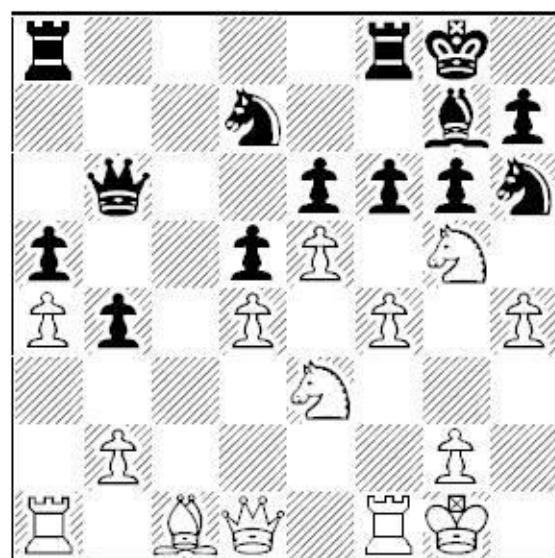
Answer: Here is the trouble:

1. White's queenside pieces are undeveloped into a jumble, so in effect, he launches an attack when behind in development. White's lazy bishop for now radiates its unbishopness, and masquerades as a glorified pawn.
2. While it's true that White controls central space, his centre is under siege at every possible point: c3, d4 and soon Black will also play ... f6. This means the centre and queenside are sure to open – not good if you are the attacking side. I would admit inferiority and play 17 Qd3 to try to develop and keep some grip on White's centre.

17 ... cxd4

Principle: counter in the centre when attacked on the wing.

18 cxd4 f6!



Same principle.

19 Nf3

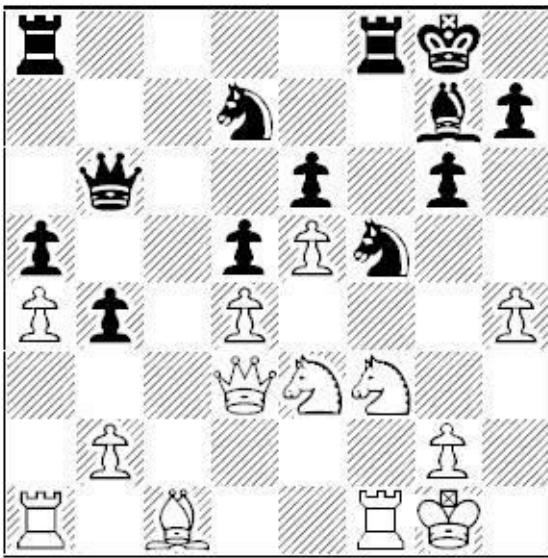
Question: Why back off when White can saddle Black with a backward e6 pawn after 19 exf6 Nxf6?

Answer: A misassessment. This lands White in a God-awful French where his kingside is riddled with holes on g4 and e4, and his d4-pawn is under siege.

19 ... fxe5 20 fxe5 Nf5

I don't particularly like this move since it allows White to ease his central piece congestion somewhat. Black can play the nonchalant retreat 20 ... Nb8! to redeploy to c6, where it increases the pressure on d4.

21 Qd3?



Exercise (combination alert): White's last move neglected Black's very serious threat in the position. This is the hip-hip-hooray moment for Black. How can we push White's position past the critical mass level and destroy him?

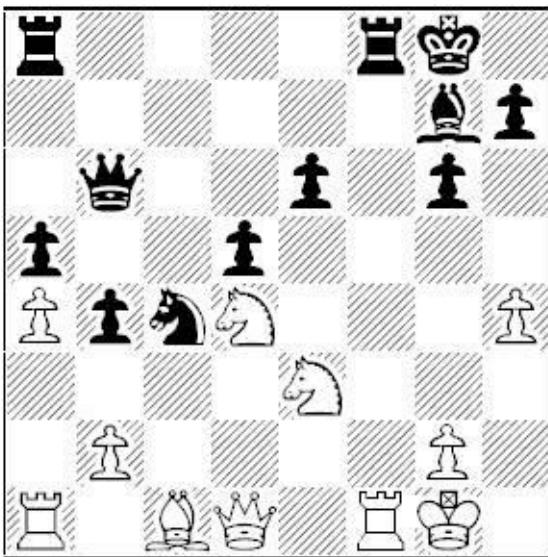
Answer: 21 ... Nxd4!

Soon White's centre magically dissipates as Black's pieces reconstitute in the centre, as if Scotty beamed the away team to the planet below.

22 Nxd4

One of the cute points of Black's trick: 22 Qxd4 is met with the killer zwischenzug 22 ... Rxf3! which regains the piece with two pawns interest, as e5 also falls.

22 ... Nxe5 23 Qd1 Nc4!



Black's lords pin over White, as his powerhouse forces diminish all those around who pretend to be their equal. White has no way to hang on to his extra piece and his position soon collapses.

24 Nec2

Time for Black to cash out.

24 ... b3! 0-1

We thank thee for the meal we are about to receive. 24 ... e5 also wins easily. Playing on now would be as futile a gesture as King Canute sitting on his throne on the beach, commanding the tide not to come in.

Summary

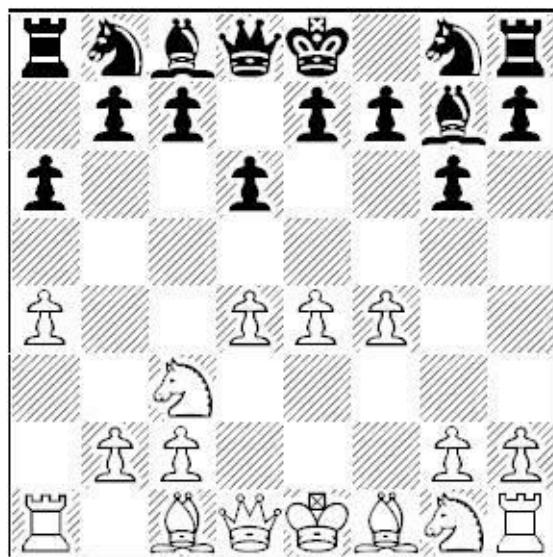
10 Nd5 is too slow, after which it is probably White who must fight for equality.

Game 22

M.Alonso Fernandez-K.Movsziszian

Albacete 2004

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 f4 a6 5 a4?!



I have always thought that a4 is medically unsafe for White and doesn't particularly mix well with the Austrian Attack set-up.

Question: Why wouldn't a4 mix well?

Answer: Twofold:

1. a4 ruins White's queenside castling option.
2. The game may transpose to Pirc lines with ... Nf6 and ... c5, in which case Black is handed use of the b4 square.

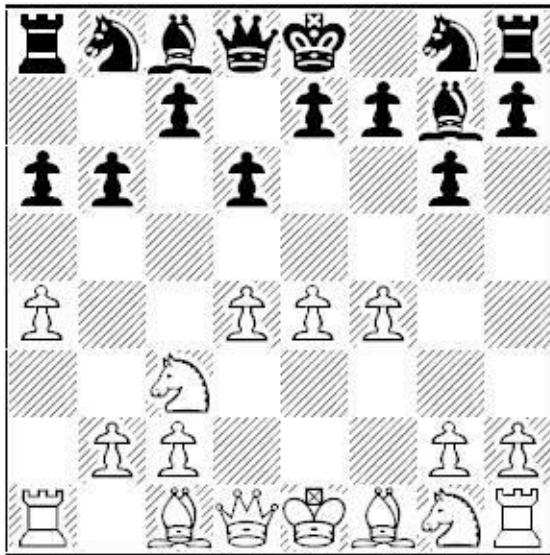
Next game we look at the set-up 5 Be3 b5 6 Be2.

5 ... Nf6!

Question: Hey! Earlier in the book you offended Pirc players worldwide by referring to them as your "goody-two-shoes cousin!" Now, suddenly you are eager to enter Pirc. Why?

Answer: Modern players should always remain flexible and switch over to the Pirc whenever they get a good version – this position being one of them.

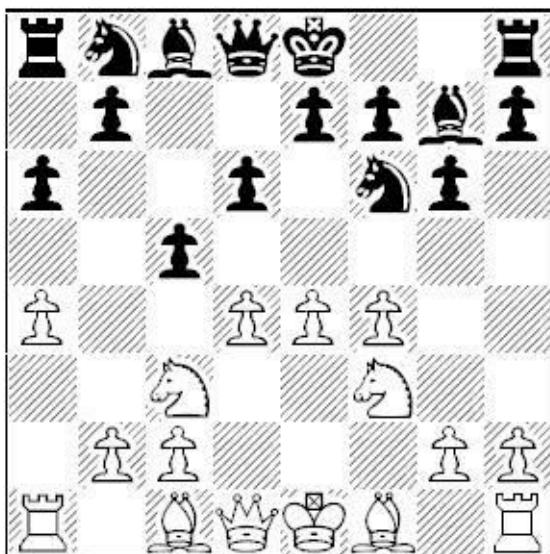
Question: Should we be playing the Hippopotamus set-up with 5 ... b6 instead?



Answer: My personal preference is to only play the Hippo when White commits to Nf3 lines or develops his bishop early to c4. In this case White has done neither. But it is playable: for example, 6 Nf3 e6 7 Bd3 Ne7 8 0-0 0-0 9 Ne2 c5 10 c3 Nbc6 11 Be3, B.Lindberg-K.Angskog, Swedish League 2010. Now 11 ... f5!? looks like it leads to an interesting strategic fight ahead. The main reason I like 5 ... Nf6! better is that we transpose to a Pirc line where the inclusion of a4 and ... a6 is in Black's favour, since it knocks out all Bb5+ ideas from White.

Tiger Hillarp gives 5 ... Nc6 as Black's best move, pointing out that the a4/a6 duo is once again in Black's favour. An example: 6 Be3 Nf6 7 Nf3 0-0 8 Be2 b6 9 0-0 e6 10 Kh1 Nb4 (there is the b4 square for us) 11 e5 Nd7 12 Ne4 Bb7 13 Nf2 c5 14 c3 (okay, well, that didn't last long!) 14 ... Nd5 15 Bd2 cxd4 16 cxd4 f6! and White's centre is under pressure, T.Spiess-T.Hillarp Persson, Recklinghausen 2001.

6 Nf3 c5!



We strike the centre immediately.

7 d5

In each of White's options we end up with similar plans. A palaeontologist must deduce the shape and size of an unknown dinosaur on the basis of the discovery of only a few bones. We must deal with White's options the same way. Our conclusion will be: we get a favourable Pirc every time:

a) 7 dxc5 Qa5 8 Bd3 Qxc5 9 Qe2 Bg4 10 Be3 Qa5 11 0-0 Nc6 12 h3 Bxf3 13 Qxf3 0-0 was D.Berczes-N.Resika, Budapest 2001. We reach a Pirc position where the inclusion of a4 and ... a6 is in Black's favour.

Question: How so?

Answer: Here is the trouble with a4:

1. Black can use the b4 square for his knight or queen.
2. White is denied the option of a3 and b4.

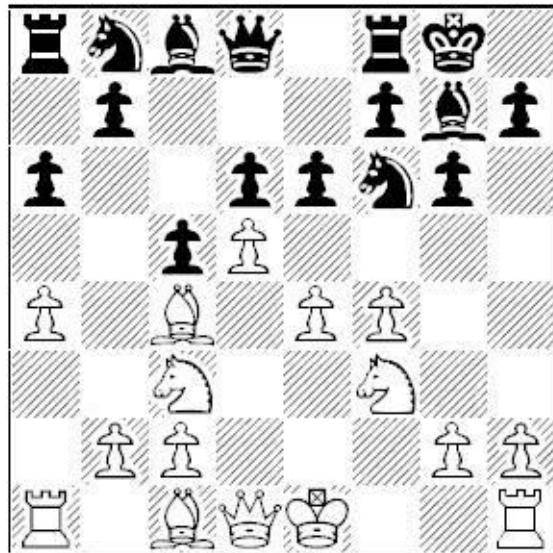
b) Normally in Pirc lines White tosses in Bb5+ before e5. In this case he is denied the option, and after 7 e5?! Nfd7 the trouble is, without an earlier Bb5+, White's centre collapses quickly: 8 Be3 cxd4 9 Bxd4 dxe5 10 Nxe5 Nxe5 11 Bxe5 Qxd1+ 12 Rxd1 Bxe5 13 fxe5 Be6 14 Nd5 Bxd5 15 Rxd5 e6 16 Rd4 Nd7 17 Re4 Rc8 and White found himself in trouble defending e5, since ... Rc5 is coming soon, F.Niebling-P.Svidler, Mainz (rapid) 2002.

c) 7 Be2 may be White's best option, since in this one he gets equality! After 7 ... cxd4 8 Nxd4 0-0 9 0-0 Nc6 (play transposes to a Dragon known to be harmless to Black) 10 Be3 (or 10 Nb3 Be6 11 f5 Bxb3 12 cxb3 Rc8 with a dynamically balanced position, H.Schneider-V.Beim, Passau 1998) 10 ... Bg4! Black equalized in N.Short-V.Anand, Dubai (rapid) 2002.

7 ... 0-0 8 Be4

White hopes to inhibit ... e6.

8 ... e6!



Played anyway. Our prime directive in these structures is to enforce ... e6, to chip away at White's centre.

9 0-0

This move may not be the most accurate since White gets a Schmidt Benoni with the unfavourable f4 tossed in.

Question: It looks to me like f4 helps White not Black.

Why do you think f4 hurts White?

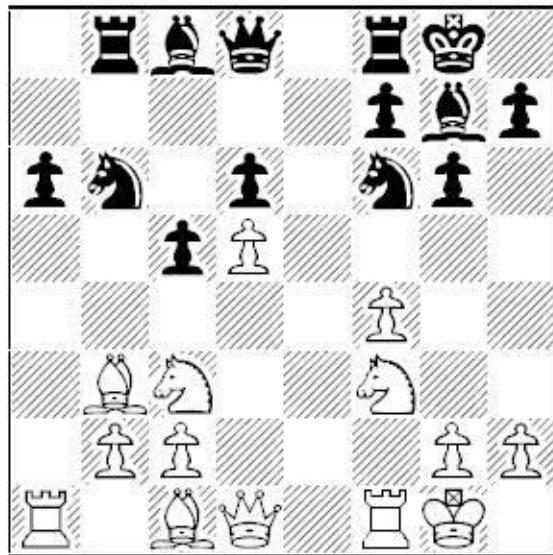
Answer: Going f4 weakens the key e4- and e3-squares.

Instead 9 dx_e6 Bx_e6 10 Bx_e6 fx_e6 was seen in K.Tan-E.Senador, Kuala Lumpur 2007. Play may go 11 e5!? dx_e5 12 Qxd8 Rx_d8 13 Nx_e5 Nd₅ 14 Bd₂ Bx_e5 15 fx_e5 Nx_c3 16 Bx_c3 Nc₆. A knight lover like me always prefers Black in such endings.

9 ... exd5 10 exd5??!

This recapture leaves White with a lifeless position. I would go for 10 Bxd5!? Nx_d5 11 Nx_d5 Nc₆ 12 c₃.

10 ... Nbd7 11 Bb3 Rb8 12 a5 b5 13 axb6 Nxb6



Black already stands better: ... c4 is in the air and White must tend to his weak d5-pawn.

14 Nd2 Bb7

Even better was 14 ... Ng4!. Threat: ... Bd4+ and fork on f2. Following 15 Nf3 c4 16 Ba4 Nx_a4 17 Nx_a4 (White must cover against ... Qb6+) 17 ... Qc7 (threatening a sneaky check on a7) 18 Kh1 Re8 White's position is under pressure.

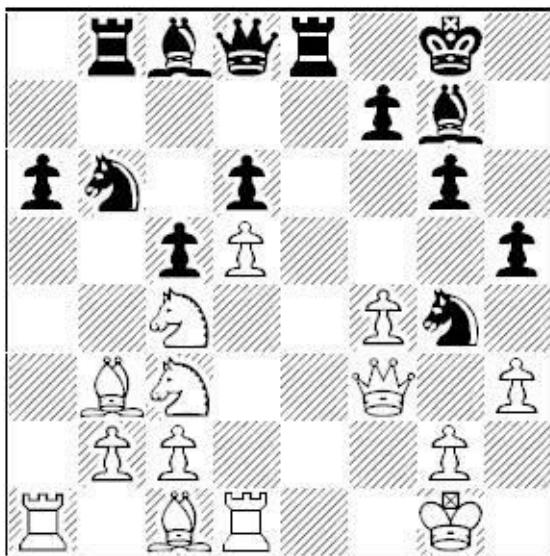
15 Qf3 Re8 16 Rd1

Many dream of winning Wimbledon; nobody dreams of ending up as the ball boy.

16 ... Be8!?

Black halts f5 ideas and goes for a cheapo on g4. 16 ... Qc7 looks strong as well, with the idea of ... c4, while 17 Nc4 Nfx_d5 picks up the d-pawn.

17 h3 h5 18 Nc4 Ng4!



The knight steps into g4, as if the square was a perfectly tailored suit made just for him. The cloud of White's barely suppressed anxiety grows thicker as Black plays for multiple weak squares and pawns. Slowly, the infection in White's weakened central squares spreads, like a genetic disease passed from parent to child through the bloodstream.

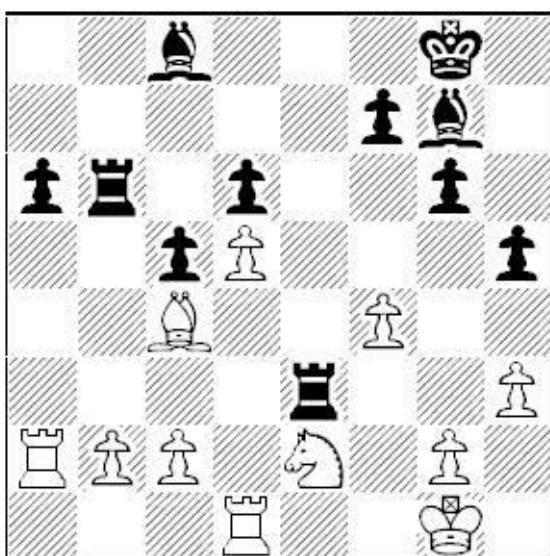
19 Ne2

Not 19 hxg4?? Bxg4 20 Qf1 Bxc3 21 bxc3 Be2!; the knife in the darkness. Black regains his piece with interest.

19 ... Qe7 20 Nxb6 Rxb6 21 Bc4 Ne3

White also collapses quickly after 21 ... Rb4!.

22 Bxe3 Qxe3+ 23 Qxe3 Rxe3 24 Ra2



Exercise (critical decision): Black can take on b2 two different ways, but only one is correct. Which one?

Answer: 24 ... Bxb2!

24 ... Rxb2? 25 Rxb2 Bxb2 26 Rb1 Bg7 27 Rb8 Re8 28 Bxa6 lets White off the hook.

25 Rb1 Rxе2!

The point. White can't exploit the pin after all.

26 Raxb2

26 Bxe2?? reminds me of the police search for the fugitive who lurks surreptitiously in the bushes on b1. Unfortunately he feels a sneeze coming on! 26 ... Bd4+ picks off the rook.

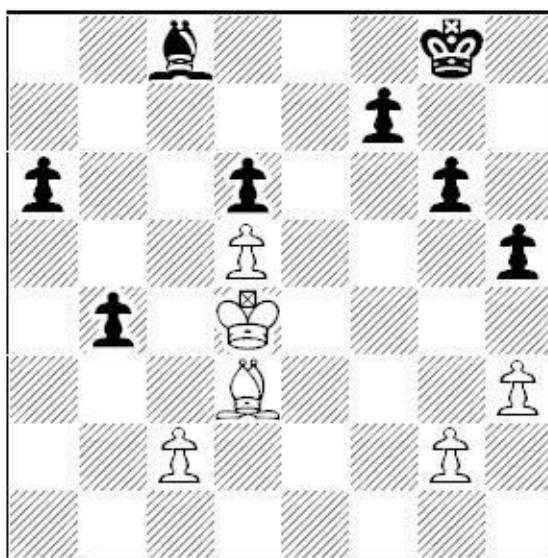
26 ... Rxb2 27 Rxb2 Re1+

I would play 27 ... Re4 without tossing in the check on e1.

28 Kf2 Re4 29 Bd3

Black should win the rook and pawn ending after 29 Rb8 Rxf4+ 30 Ke3 Rxc4.

29 ... Rxf4+ 30 Ke3 Rb4 31 Rxb4 cxb4 32 Kd4



The dismayed king arrives, like a sparrow who finds the nest disturbed and chicks missing.

32 ... a5 33 Bb5

White's king fails to find a discernible connecting route to a5. He loses the queening race in the line 33 Kc4 Ba6+ (33 ... Bd7 is also good enough).

33 ... h4 34 Bd3 Kg7 0-1

Summary

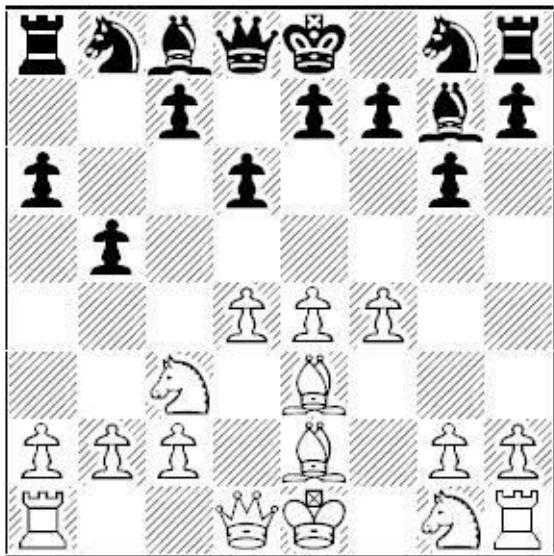
5 a4?! always seems to land White in a lame version of a Pirc, no matter how he plays it.

Game 23

J.Fluvia Poyatos-T.Hillarp Persson

Barcelona 2003

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 Be3 a6 5 f4 b5 6 Be2



Question: Why would White develop the bishop to a passive square when d3 is available?

Answer: In the main line of this chapter White usually goes for the set-up Bd3, e5 and Be4. In the 6 Be2 line White seeks a similar plan: Be2, Bf3 and e5.

Question: So are the two lines essentially equivalent?

Answer: I don't think so. We can mess White up in this one, since his plan contains the seed of a few flaws in both scenarios:

1. If we play 6 ... Nd7 and he responds with 7 Bf3, then we play 7 ... e5!, which throws a monkey wrench into the works of his plan.

2. If we play 6 ... Nd7 and he responds with 7 e5 we simply move our rook to b8. White's problem now is his bishop sitting on f3 eats up the g1-knight's best square. Also, Black generally castles kingside sooner or later in this line. If this is the case, then why did White aim his light-squared bishop in the opposite direction, and at a waste of time to boot?

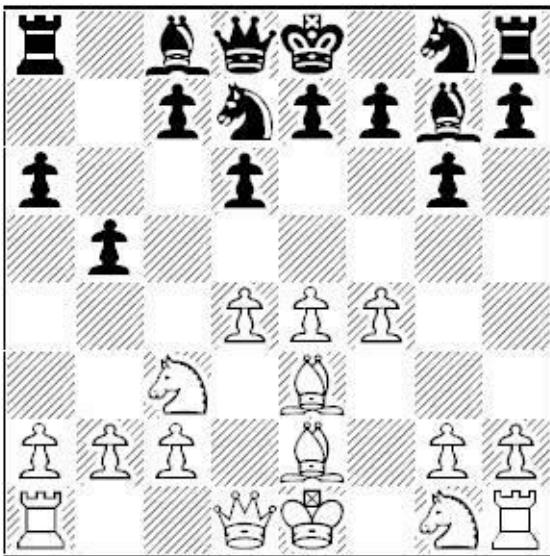
6 ... Nd7!

Given the Tiger seal of approval as well. 6 ... b4 is the main move, but as Tiger points out in his Modern book, 7 Na4! is quite awkward for Black.

Question: Don't you mean the other way around?

What does White's knight do on a4?

Answer: It inhibits both the ... c5 and ... e5 pawn breaks – Black's two main breaks in the line.

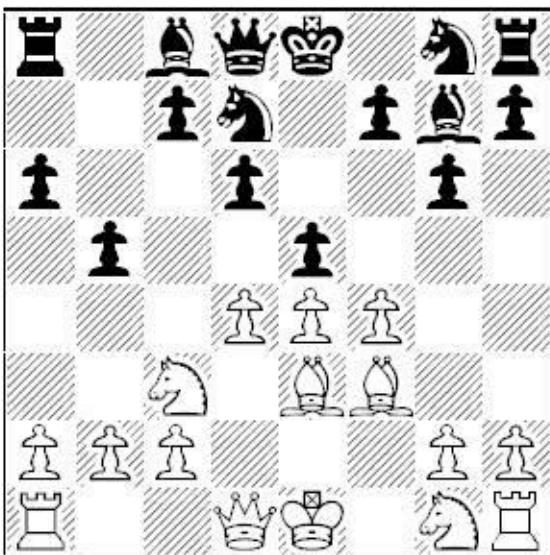


7 Bf3

Question: What if White beats us to ... e5 by playing the move himself?

Answer: After 7 e5 we can play 7 ... Nb6! 8 Bf3 d5! (now White's f3-bishop aims the wrong way) 9 b3 Nh6 (9 ... h5!? intending ... Nh6 next move is an untried option, and probably what I would play in the position) 10 g4!? f6 11 h3 Nf7 12 Qd2 fxe5 13 dxе5 e6 14 g5 Qe7 15 Qf2 Nd7 (15 ... Bf8! is a possible improvement; Black gets to roll his central pawns after 16 Nge2 c5) 16 Bxd5!? Nfxe5! (16 ... exd5 17 Nxd5! gives White a lot for the piece) 17 Bxa8 Nd3+! 18 cxd3 Bxc3+ 19 Ke2 Bxa1 20 Nf3 Bg7 and the game is up for grabs for either side, D.Marciano-B.Avrukh, Cappelle la Grande 1999.

7 ... e5!



Gumming up White's e5 plan.

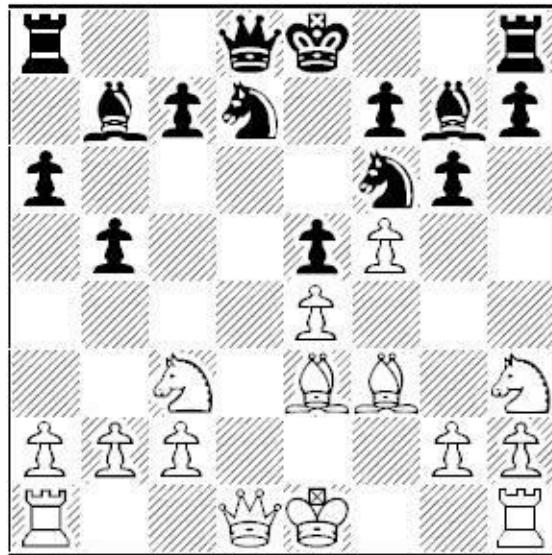
8 dxе5

White's best plan may be to retain central tension. After 8 Nge2 Bb7 9 a3 Ngf6 10 0-0 0-0 11 dxе5 dxе5 Black completed his development with a good position, E.Aranovitch-E.Neiman, Cannes 2007.

8 ... dxе5 9 f5

White loses time with 9 Qd5?!. He is better off playing to d2 right away. After 9 ... Rb8 10 0-0-0 Ngf6 11 Qd2 Bb7 12 g4 b4 Black already had the initiative in a position which looks like a souring Open Sicilian for White, J.Hector-T.Hillarp Persson, Swedish League 2004.

9 ... Bb7 10 Nh3 Ngf6



Now ... b4 is in the air.

11 a3

The weaker 11 Nf2?! b4 12 Na4 gxf5! 13 exf5 e4 14 Be2 was Z.Lanka-P.Petran, Groningen 1991, and now Black can take over the game with 14 ... Nd5! 15 Qd2 Bc6.

11 ... Qe7

Black stands better after 11 ... gxf5! 12 exf5 e4 13 Be2 Qe7 14 0-0 0-0-0!.

12 g4 gxf5 13 gxf5 Nb6 14 Qe2

The trouble with 14 b3 Nfd7 is that White can't castle long anymore, but perhaps this is how he should play.

14 ... Nc4 15 Bc1

White avoids 15 0-0-0?! Nxa3!.

15 ... Nd7

Better is 15 ... 0-0-0 16 b3 Na5!, intending ... Nc6 and ... Nd4, with the initiative.

16 b3 Nd6 17 Nf2 Rd8?!

I don't think Black has anything to fear if he castles queenside.

18 Be3 Bf6!

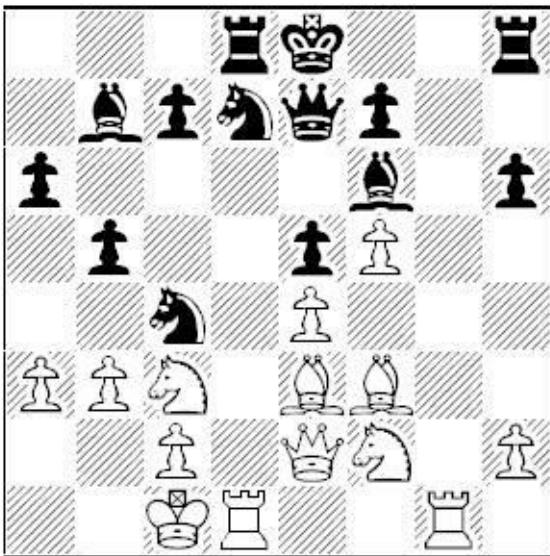
A future ... Bg5 bishop swap would leave White with a remaining bad bishop.

19 Rg1 h6 20 0-0-0??

It turns out White's king is a lot safer in the centre or on the kingside.

20 ... Nc4!

The c4-square is the platform from which Tiger's boorish knight insists on monopolizing the table conversation.



Exercise (critical decision): Black's last shot was undoubtedly a surprise

for White and a much needed transfusion of reserves for Black's attack. The question is should White accept the knight or not?

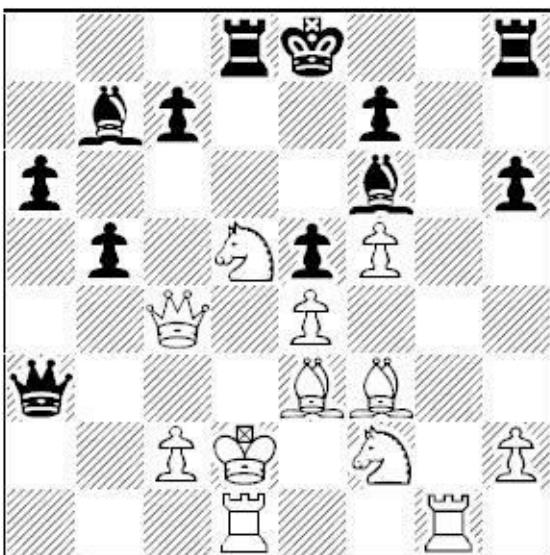
21 bxc4?

Answer: White had to suck it up and decline with 21 Kb1. Then I would even consider not taking the pawn and going for the dark squares with 21 ... Nxe3! (White gets compensation in the line 21 ... Nxa3+ 22 Ka2 Bg5 since Black's a3-knight remains out of play) 22 Qxe3 Qc5!.

21 ... Qxa3+ 22 Kd2?

The leaky quarters of the queenside grow unbearable for White's clumsy king, while Black's forces have the appearance of limitlessly multiplying. Admittedly the line 22 Kb1 Qb4+ 23 Ka2 Qxc3 24 Qd3 Qxc4+ 25 Qxc4 bxc4 seems unappealing for White; nevertheless, this is how he should play it.

22 ... Nb6+ 23 Nd5 Nxc4+ 24 Qxc4!?



Question: Isn't this an inappropriate sac?

Answer: Using a salad fork on your main course is inappropriate. This questionable show of force goes way past inappropriate, as White hopes his soufflé rises twice! White's once repressed queen vents her grievances with a passionate outpouring of emotion, as White throws away material as if it were a free and ever-replenishing commodity. He may have been better off trying the slightly less hopeless option 24 Ke1 Bxd5.

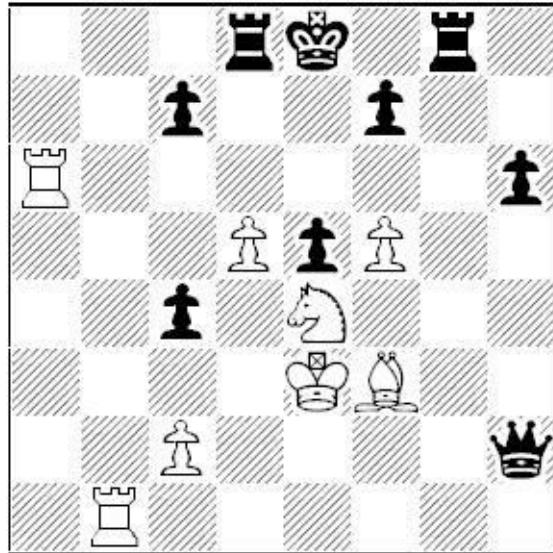
24 ... bxc4

Well, Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations* did warn of the societal dangers of wealth concentrated in the hands of a few.

25 Ra1 Qb4+ 26 Ke2 Bxd5 27 exd5 Bg5 28 Ne4 Bxe3 29 Rgb1 Qe7 30 Kxe3 Qh4 31 Rxa6 Qf4+ 32 Ke2 Qxh2+ 33 Ke3

The queen's love for White's king goes unreciprocated, as he continues to reject her advances.

33 ... Rg8!



Question: Why did Black deliberately walk into the knight fork?

Answer: The knight is White's last truly dangerous piece, so Black would be happy to swap a rook for it. 34 Nf6+ Kf8 35 Nxg8 c3! is quite awful for White, whose exhausted king, hoping to get a few hours of much needed sleep, too soon finds the morning light leaking through the shutters, waking him up.

34 Rh1 Qxc2 35 Rxh6 Rb8 36 Nf6+ Kd8! 0-1

White's knight nods, as if acknowledging a private meaning. The 'hanging' rook can't be touched: 37 Nxg8 Rb3+ and the rook sends White's king to eternity, wherever that is.

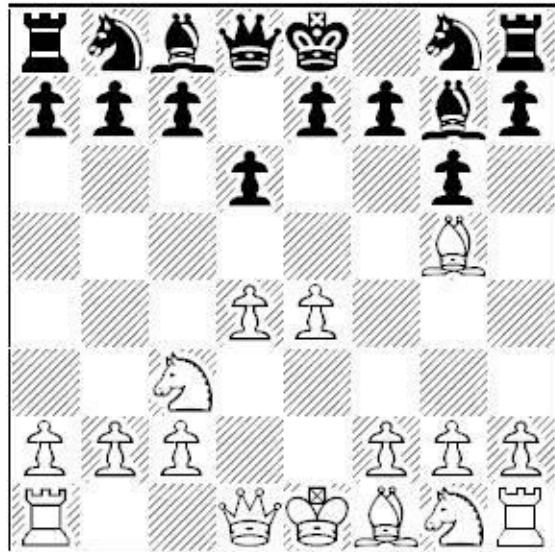
Summary

The 6 Be2 plan strikes me as over-clever and under-effective. We can mess White up by meeting it with 6 ... Nd7!.

Chapter Four

To Nowhere: 4 Bg5

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 Bg5



Unhappily, chess is one of those endeavours where kindness and a lack of killer instinct constitute anything but virtues. An opponent who fires his bishop off to the mysterious g5-square on the fourth move is very likely one who is out to mate you quickly. A move like this may appear rather thuggish to us refined Modern folk (it is!), but I must remind you that religious ritual tends to appear as vapid, insincere dogma to those without faith. The Bg5-loving opponent definitely generates faith in his or her own ability to deliver checkmate. We all jealously guard that part of our chess which emphasizes our uniqueness, and White does just that.

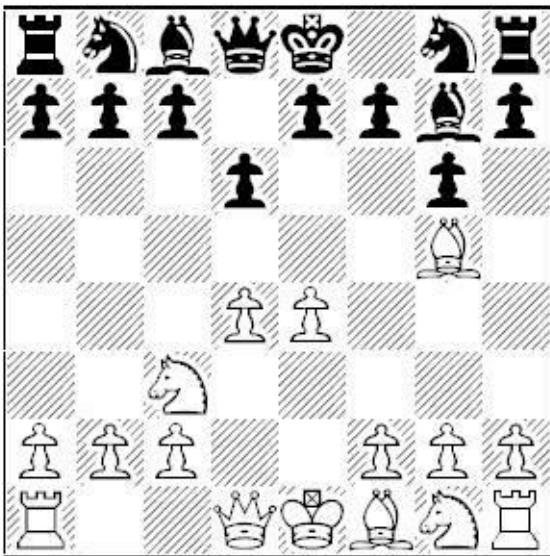
White's position remains quite flexible. He may play Qd2 and follow with Nf3, or even f4, with a hybrid of Chapters Two and Three from this book. Often though, White gets inferior versions since his d4 point is less well protected than normal.

Game 24

Y.Yakovich-Z.Azmaiparashvili

New York 1994

1 e4 d6 2 d4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 Bg5



Question: What is the purpose of placing the bishop on g5 when there is no black knight yet on f6?

Answer: This is the line I suggested for White in my Veresov book, since it suits the super aggressive, Type-A chess personality who always plays for mate. The line is quite similar to White's plans in Chapters Two and Three: White normally plays Qd2 which keeps his f-pawn flexible: f4, and sometimes Nf3, often follow. The bishop on g5 inhibits Black from playing either ... e6 Hippo lines, or ... e5.

Question: Is there a downside to White's plan?

Answer: The downside: White's grip on d4 is less firm than in the Be3 lines, and we often base our counterplay on this fact.

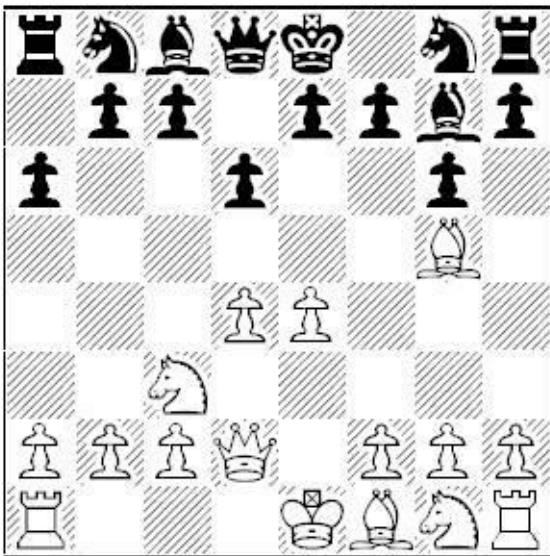
4 ... a6

We still play our ... a6 plan, statistically the highest scoring, despite the alteration from White. Another interpretation is to strike at d4 immediately with the Sniper-like 4 ... c5.

Question: If you play 4 ... c5 yourself, then why cover 4 ... a6 in the book?

Answer: My 4 ... c5 was an experiment which I may or may not repeat! 5 Bb5+ (this move gives Black a nice position; White scores heavily after 5 dxc5! Qa5 6 Qd2 Qxc5 7 Nd5! so I'm not likely to repeat the experiment!) 5 ... Bd7 6 Bxd7+ Nxd7 7 Nge2 cxd4 8 Nxd4 Qb6 9 Nb3?! Bxc3+! 10 bxc3 Ngf6 11 0-0!? Nxe4 12 Bh6 f5 and White didn't get enough attack or activity for the pawn plus damaged structure in J.Humphrey-C.Lakdawala, San Diego (rapid) 2012.

5 Qd2



The most flexible of White's options. In this chapter we also look at 5 f4.

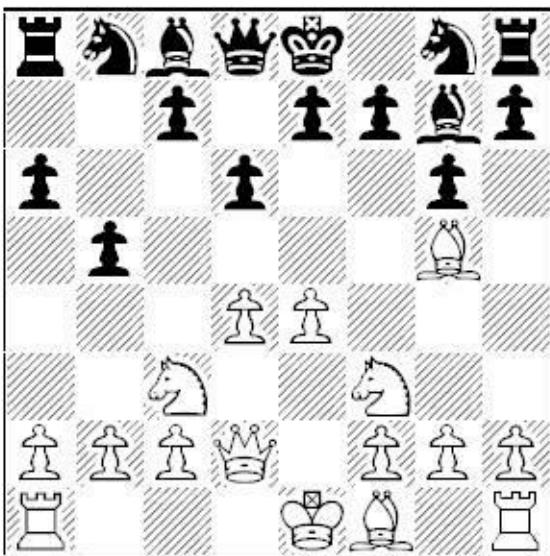
Question: What if White plays 5 a4? Now we can't play the Hippopotamus set-up, since ... e6 is not possible.

Answer: If White plays that way we should hit back at his weakest point, d4. A good example is the following game: 5 ... Nc6! 6 Nge2 Nf6 7 f3 e5 8 d5 (8 dxe5 Nxe5 also looks fine for Black) 8 ... Ne7 9 Qd2 h6 10 Be3 c6! 11 dxc6 bxc6 12 a5 d5 13 Bc5 Be6; Black already looks better due to his strong central control, M.Ulibin-P.Svidler, St Petersburg 1998.

5 ... b5

Next game we look at the move order 5 ... Nd7 6 Nf3 b5 7 a4.

6 Nf3



White prefers to play in Chapter Two style.

Question: What about the Chapter One plan, with f3?

Answer: The f3 plans don't work so well for White since his bishop sits on g5. When White later pushes g4, his own piece on g5 impedes the path of his pawn storm. Also, when Black responds with ... h5, White lacks the bypass move g5, again, due to the unfortunate placement of his bishop.

It probably makes more sense to loosen Black immediately with 6 a4, after which 6 ... b4 7 Nd5 a5 8 c3 c6 9 Ne3 bxc3 10 bxc3 Nf6 11 Bd3 Ba6 12 f4!? turned into a strange Austrian Attack hybrid, not unfavourable to Black in M.Feygin-M.Roobol, Dutch League 2007.

6 ... Bb7

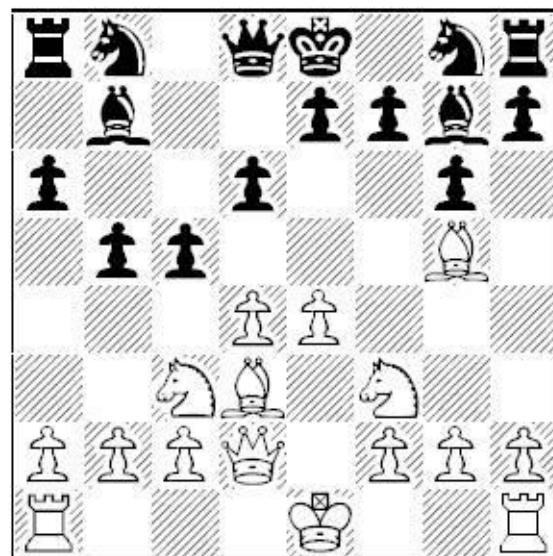
6 ... Nd7 transposes to my game against Graves, which is next up.

7 Bd3??

I suggest 7 Bc4 in my book *A Ferocious Opening Repertoire*. I feel this is the point where White begins to drift. If White hopes to get anything at all in this line, it must be based on an early disturbance of Black's equilibrium. Perhaps even better than 7 Bc4 is a quick 7 a4! b4 8 Nd5: for example, 8 ... a5 9 Bd3!? (this is actually a pawn sac by White) 9 ... h6 10 Bh4 g5 11 Bg3 g4 12 Ng1 c6 (12 ... Bxd4? drops a piece to the check) 13 Ne3 Bxd4 14 0-0-0 and White's development lead compensates for the pawn.

7 ... c5!

Now we begin to see one of White's problems in the line: Black achieves ... c5 without preparation since White's bishop, normally on e3, finds itself off on an adventure on g5.



8 dxc5

White, relying on his development lead, doesn't mind opening the position.

8 ... dxc5 9 0-0-0!?

I told you these Bg5 guys are aggressive. In this case the accommodations on the queenside are not up to the king's usual five-star standard. Perhaps the time has arrived for a radical pawn sac with 9 Nd5!? c4 10 Be2 Bxb2 11 Rd1 Bxd5 12 exd5.

9 ... c4!

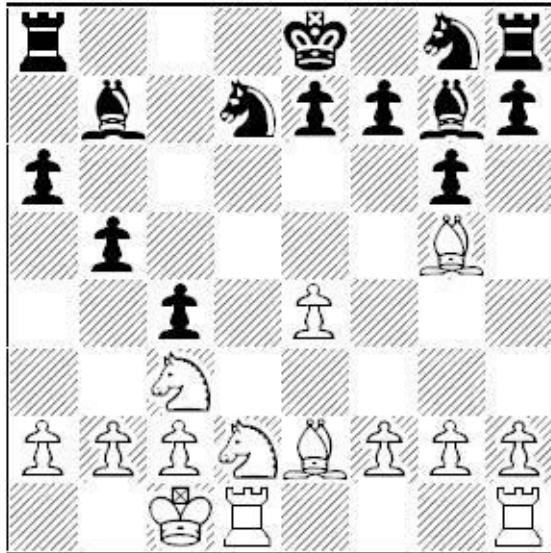
If queens come off the board, this partially negates the ill-effects of White's development lead.

10 Be2 Qxd2+ 11 Nxd2

Question: Why not recapture with the bishop to avoid ... Bxc3 ideas?

Answer: He would like to, but that recapture would leave his e-pawn weak after 11 Bxd2?! Nf6 12 e5 Ng4, which double attacks f2 as well as e4.

11 ... Nd7



A structure lover like me would jump at the chance to take immediately on c3.

12 a4?!

Question: You just gave White a dubious mark, yet he follows the principle: open the position when ahead in development. Why?

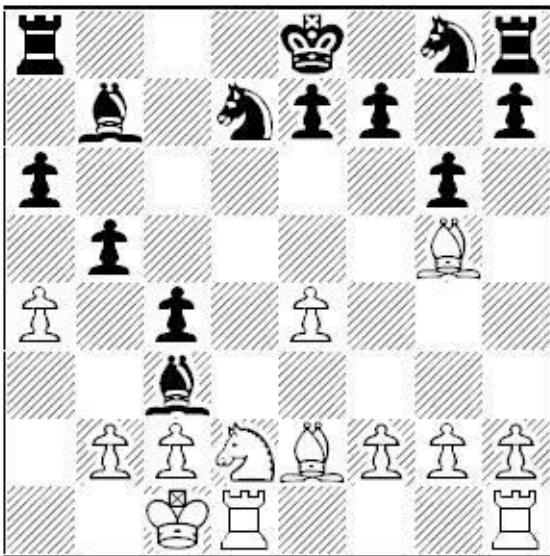
Answer: You attempt to divide a number by zero. An overwhelming will to succeed isn't enough if your position lacks the essential requirements to implement your plan. The principle isn't: open your own king's position when ahead in development, which is exactly what White just initiated.

Question: But queens are off the board. Isn't this justification for White's move?

Answer: Players also get mated in endings, just as White did this game!

Instead 12 Nd5 Rc8 13 f3 e6 14 Nc3 (14 Ne3?! c3 favours Black) 14 ... Bxc3! 15 bxc3 is similar to the game continuation.

12 ... Bxc3!



Excellent judgment. Black tacks down the c-pawns firmly, as if to a bulletin board at the grocery store.

Question: Really? Give up control over the dark squares to damage White's pawns?

Answer: This is where strategic intuition comes into play. As we soon see, the permanent damage to White's pawn structure outweighs dark-square issues since a secondary factor takes birth: White's king safety.

13 bxc3 Nc5!

Forcing resolution and opening the a-file for Black's rook.

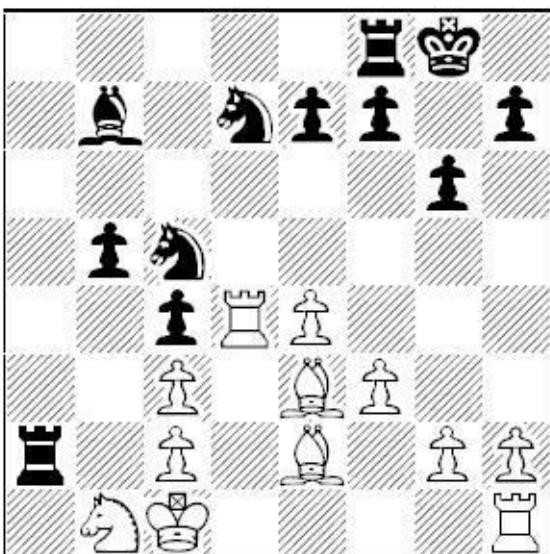
14 axb5 axb5 15 f3 Nf6 16 Be3

Somehow, the bishop doesn't appear nearly as scary as he used to be.

16 ... Nfd7

Covering c5 and preparing to meet any Bd4 with ... e5.

17 Nb1 0-0 18 Rd4 Ra2



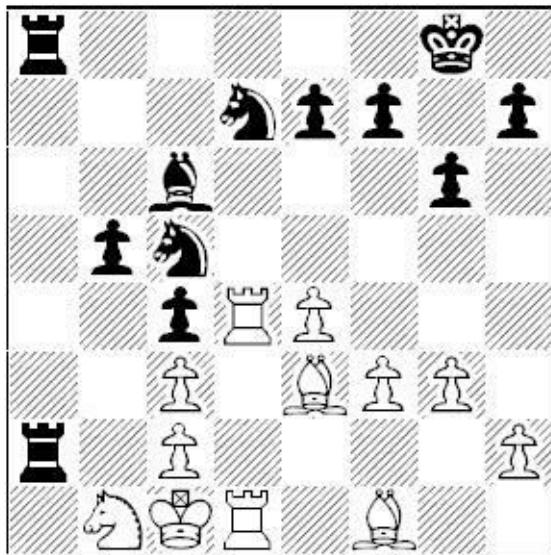
Entering the premises without a warrant. Black seeds the queenside, fertile soil with his attackers.

19 Rhd1 Bc6!

White's rooks have no entry down the d-file, while Black's queenside build up is very real.

20 Bf1 Rfa8 21 g3??

White plans Bh3 next, probing connection points and hoping for the spark which smashes Black's blockade. However, he overlooks a dire threat. The fact that queens are off the board doesn't give White license to relax. He had to try 21 R4d2 and pray.



Exercise (combination alert): White's king looks out of place, like some politician who doles out soup to the homeless (his other pieces!) as a photo opportunity. Carpenters understand: measure twice, then cut. Black to play and force checkmate!

Answer: 21 ... Rxc2+!

This shot qualifies under the in-case-you-hadn't-noticed category!

22 Kxc2

The effects of the king's antidepressant soon begin to wear off.

22 ... Ra2+ 0-1

It's mate next move.

Summary

In my opinion White's best shot at an edge in the Bg5 lines is to meet ... a6 with a quick a4.

Game 25

C.Lakdawala-P.Graves

San Diego (rapid) 2011

1 e4

Yes, some days the meek too are buffeted by intermittent gusts of bravery.

1 ... g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 Bg5

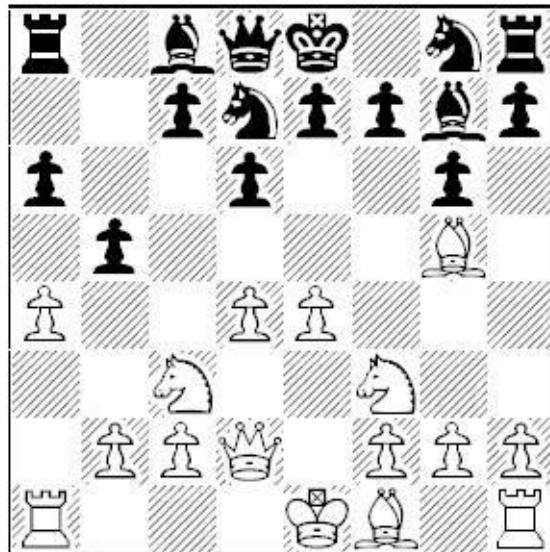
Practising what I preached from my Veresov book.

4 ... a6 5 Qd2 Nd7 6 Nf3

It isn't too late for White to switch to Austrian Attack mode with 6 f4 b5 7 Nf3 Bb7 8 e5 f6!. This is another downside with mixing Austrian Attack with Bg5: ... f6 counters come with gain of tempo. Here 9 Bh4 Nh6 10 Bd3 was A.Motylev-G.Lorscheid, Hoogeveen 2003, and after 10 ... fxe5 11 fxe5 0-0 Black holds his own in a sharp situation.

If 6 h4 h5 7 0-0-0 then Black can play 7 ... c5.

6 ... b5 7 a4



White's only realistic try for an edge, based on the principle: engage in confrontation when leading in development.

7 ... b4 8 Nd5 a5 9 Bc4

Targeting f7.

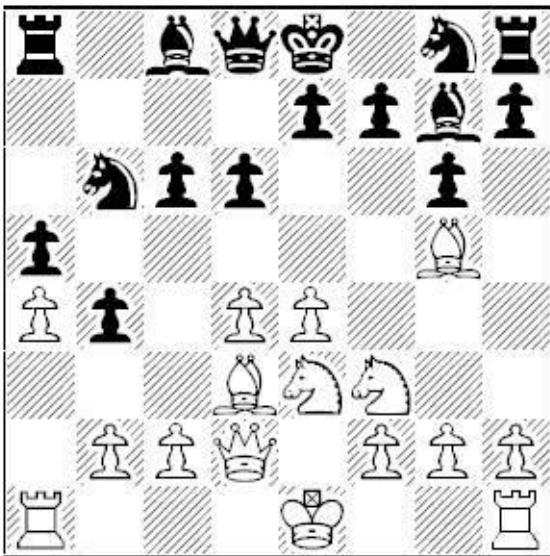
Question: Can White try to radically open the position with 9 e5?

Answer: The idea is dangerous, but Black seems to have more than adequate resources after 9 ... Bb7 10 Bc4. Now, Black holds his own in the complications arising from the line 10 ... h6! (10 ... dxe5?! 11 dxe5 Nb6 12 Bb5+ Kf8 13 Nxb6 Qxd2+ 14 Nxd2 cxb6 15 Nc4 Bxg2 16 Rg1 Bh3 was E.Mnatsakanian-Z.Szymczak, Kirovakan 1978; White's development lead may be meaningful after 17 Nxb6) 11 Qf4 (threatening to target f7 with a Nxc7+ discovery) 11 ... dxe5 12 Nxc7+ Qxc7 13 Qxf7+ Kd8.

9 ... c6 10 Ne3!

A new move and an improvement over 10 Nf4? Nb6 11 Bb3, as in G.Szabo-S.Levay, Predeal 2006. Now Black should go for 11 ... h6 12 Bh4 g5! 13 Nh5 Bf8! 14 Bg3 Bg4! when the frisky h5-knight gets trapped.

10 ... Nb6 11 Bd3!?



Shockingly, I grow courageous in my old age and offer a speculative pawn sac in return for development, chasing after an elusive attack, just as I was always smitten by the ‘bad’ girls in high school.

Question: What pawn sac?

Answer: In such positions always be on the lookout for ... h6, ... g5, and ... g4, which chases away the defender of d4, and then ... Bxd4.

11 ... c5

Question: So why did your opponent reject it?

Answer: Peter said he thought White got too much for the pawn – especially in a rapid G/40 like this one – in the line 11 ... h6 12 Bh4 g5!? 13 Bg3 g4 14 Nh4 Bxd4 15 c3 bxc3 16 bxc3 Bf6 17 Nhf5 h5, while I thought the position was simply unclear.

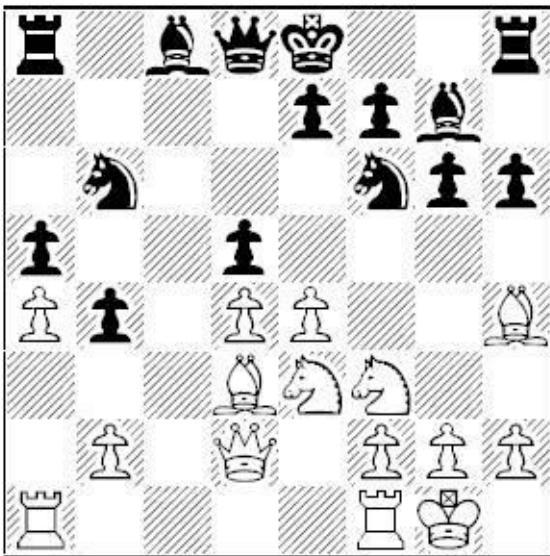
Question: Unclear? Isn’t Black, who is way behind in development with misplaced pieces, engaging in an egregious violation of principle in grabbing this pawn?

Answer: This is exactly how I would play the position as Black. If we held a referendum on the soundness of White’s attack, I’m sure after the votes were counted, a healthy majority would agree with your point of view. Still, a pawn is a pawn, and Fischer once said a pawn is worth a little trouble. For the record, the comps think the position is about equal. Remember, we Modernists tend to be a greedy lot who believe we are destined to survive just about any attack White throws at us!

12 c3 cxd4 13 cxd4 Nf6

Too late to change his mind about the pawn. Black’s manoeuvre no longer works: 13 ... h6 14 Bh4 g5?! 15 Bg3 g4? 16 Nh4 Bxd4?? 17 Bb5+ wins Black’s bishop.

14 0-0 h6 15 Bh4 d5!?



The right idea, but possibly one move too soon.

16 e5

I considered but then incorrectly rejected 16 Bxf6!:

a) 16 ... Bxf6 17 e5 Bg7 18 Bb5+ Bd7 19 Rfc1 with a pleasant strategic bind.

b) 16 ... exf6 17 Nxd5 Nxd5 18 Bb5+ Bd7 19 exd5 Bxb5 20 Rfe1+ Kf8 21 axb5 and Black is in trouble, as 21 ... Qxd5?? is met with 22 Rxa5!.

16 ... Ne4 17 Qe2 0-0 18 Nd2

Challenging the intruder on e4 and clearing a path for f4-f5.

18 ... Bb7??

He should trade knights on d2, when White only has a tiny edge due to his extra space.

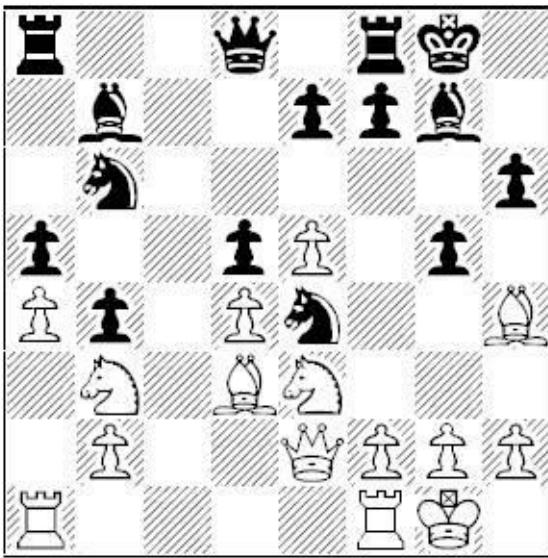
19 Nb3!

The knight walks by, snubbing his brother on e4. Black's e4-knight, in grave danger of getting booted around with f3 and f4, cringes like the unfortunate subject of a mad scientist's evil experiment.

19 ... g5

Why is it that I always feel like a fraud in such positions? Stylistically, I rarely end up attacking. So when I do, the world feels reversed and upside down. It's a bit like the investment banker going up to the homeless guy and asking him for spare change! Black's last forced move seizes some space, but also dreadfully weakens his king's pawn front. Growth, so essential and beneficial to a child, turns calamitous to the fully grown adult, since growth at later stages in life constitutes some variation of a cancer. The effects of 19 ... g5 soon spread.

Black's dismal alternative would be 19 ... Ra7 20 f3 Ng5 when f4 and f5 are coming. After 21 f4 Ne4 22 f5 g5 the pawn front around his king has been severely disturbed.



Exercise (combination alert/planning): White doesn't need to move the attacked bishop. Do you see another move which flares up White's attacking prospects?

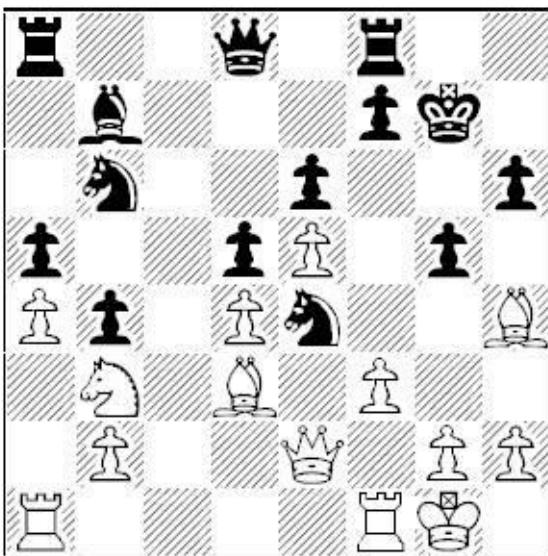
Answer: 20 Nf5! e6

If 20 ... gxh4 21 Bxe4 and he can't recapture the bishop since Qg4 is threatened.

21 Nxg7

Destroying the dark matter which surrounds Black's king.

21 ... Kxg7 22 f3!



Time to swat the hated intruder on e4.

22 ... gxh4

The obedient school children queue up along the h-file.

Question: Why doesn't Black try 22 ... Nd6, avoiding doubled h-pawns?

Answer: In that case White's attack may even be stronger than the one I got in the game since the powerful dark-squared bishop remains on the board. 23 Be1 Nf5 24 f4 is no improvement for Black.

23 fxe4

Black is busted since his king is too exposed to survive.

23 ... Qg5

The queen strives to shore up the haemorrhaging dark squares surrounding her king. If Black tries to open the centre quickly with 23 ... dxe4, it fails to 24 Rf6! exd3 25 Qg4+ Kh7 26 Qxh4 when Black must give up his queen.

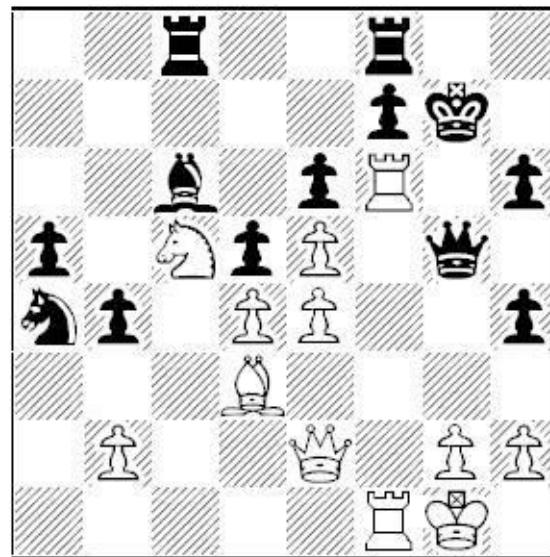
24 Nc5 Bc6

Slightly more accurate is 24 ... Bc8, covering the tender e6-square.

25 Rf6 Rac8 26 Raf1

The rooks transform into a lucrative, for-profit commercial enterprise along the f-file. I saw 26 Rxe6, but considered it a distraction.

26 ... Nxa4



Exercise (combination alert): Black cooks with too many pans on the defensive fire. Technically, his last move was an error, but not really since he was lost anyway. Find one good move and Black's game collapses.

Answer: Undermine e6.

27 Rxf7+! Rxf7 28 Nxe6+ Kg8 29 Rxf7 1-0

Tears flow and benedictions are recited as Black's queen passes away.

Summary

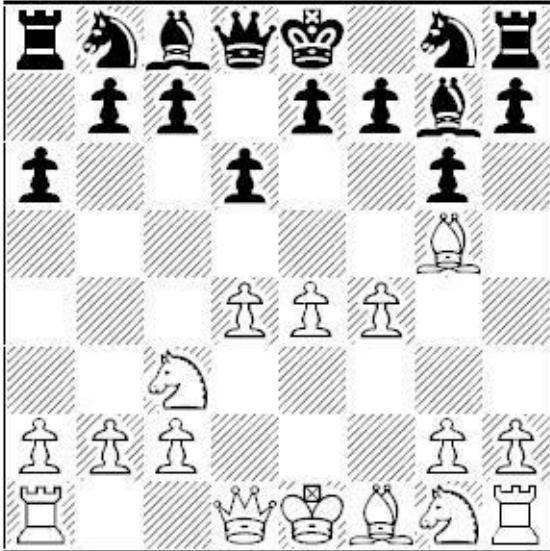
We must play very accurately in this line if White arranges a well-timed a4 in response to our ... b5. We do indeed, however, equalize if we manage to avoid White's traps and tricks along the way.

Game 26

D.Sermek-L.Thiede

Bled 2000

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 Bg5 a6 5 f4



Question: Is this an Austrian Attack now?

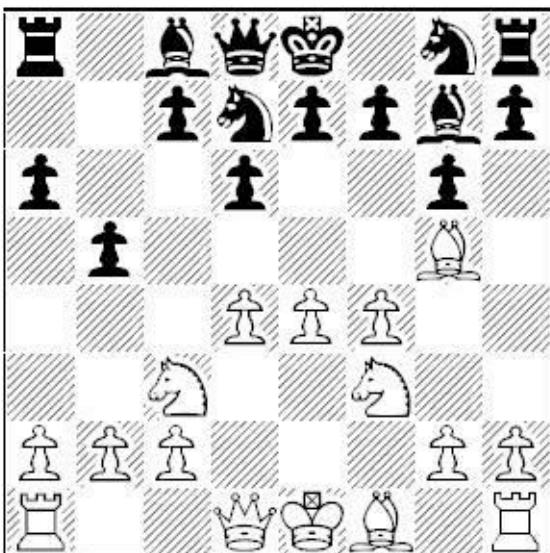
Answer: Not quite. White enters a hybrid Bg5/Austrian Attack, where his dark-squared bishop resides outside his pawn chain.

Question: Is this a strength or a weakness for White?

Answer: A little of both. The bishop is admittedly annoying for us, pinning our e-pawn, but the upside is White's d4 isn't quite as secure. We should pound away at that square as quickly as we can in order to destabilize White's centre.

Remember, White can also play the flexible move order 5 Qd2 first, and next play f4. For example: 5 ... b5 6 f4 Bb7 7 a4!? (I'm not a big fan of a4 mixing with the Bg5/Austrian formations and would continue to develop with 7 Nf3 instead) 7 ... b4 8 Nd5 a5 9 Nf3 Nf6 10 Bxf6 exf6 was J.Dodgson-T.Hillarp Persson, Jersey 2004, and now 11 f5 0-0 12 Bd3 led to a messy position.

5 ... Nd7 6 Nf3 b5



7 Bd3

Question: Can White just go for it with an immediate 7 e5?

Answer: He can, but we may go for it right back with 7 ... f6!, more effective now that it is with tempo, courtesy of the bishop on g5. A.Shabalov-A.Martin, Gausdal 1991, continued 8 Bh4 Nh6 (I would play 8 ... Bb7 first) 9 Bd3 0-0 10 Qe2. After 10 ... Nb6 I wouldn't mind taking Black's side, reminiscent of pleasant versions of positions we reached last chapter.

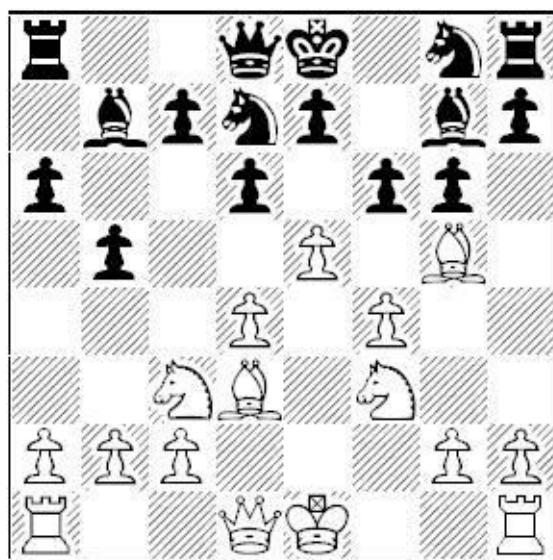
7 ... Bb7 8 e5

Instead 8 0-0 c5 9 e5 cxd4 10 Ne4 Qb6 11 exd6 was tried in T.Seeman-E.Agrest, Stockholm 1998. Now Black can win a pawn in the line 11 ... f6 12 Bh4 f5 13 Neg5 Qxd6 14 Qe2 Nc5 when White gets some compensation.

Question: Enough compensation?

Answer: The comps say yes, since White leads in development and may exert pressure down the e-file, but I would still take Black.

8 ... f6!



Now we see one of White's problems with placing the bishop on g5: ... f6 arrives with tempo.

9 Bh4 Nh6!

Question: Black's guns are more heavily trained on e5 than White's. Why didn't he win a pawn?

Answer: White gets excellent compensation after 9 ... fxe5 10 fxe5 dxe5 11 Be4! when Black lags in development and the centre opens.

10 Qe2 0-0 11 0-0-0!?

A sharp position arises where I believe Black holds his own.

11 ... b4

I would follow the Chapter Three light-square game plan: 11 ... Nb6 followed by ... Qd7.

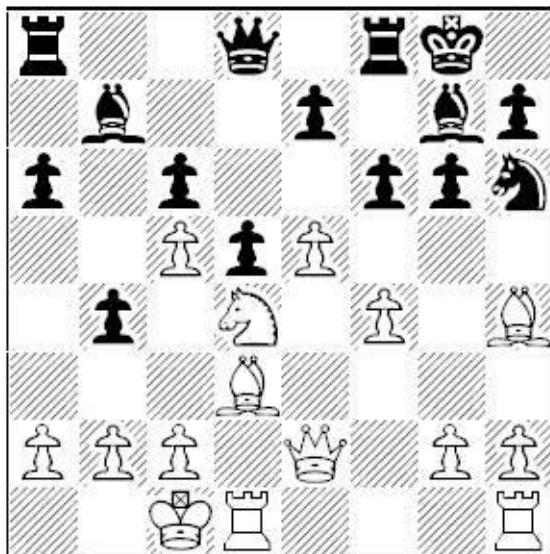
12 Ne4 d5?!

Once again, I prefer 12 ... Nb6!.

13 Nc5! Nxc5 14 dxc5

White holds the edge since he enjoys easy access to d4 for his knight.

14 ... c6 15 Nd4

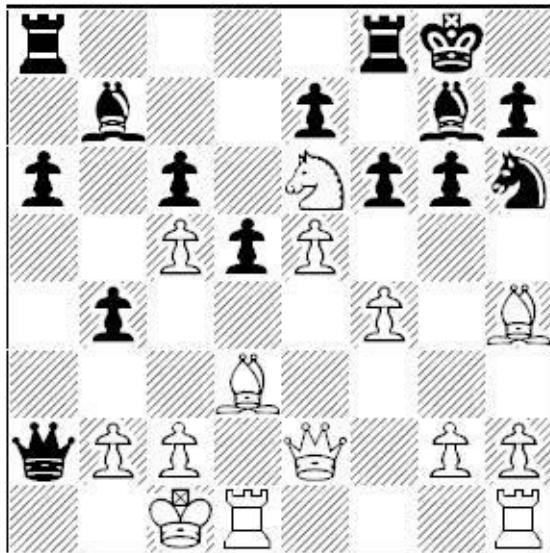


White immediately zones in on the vulnerable e6-square.

15 ... Qa5 16 Ne6?!

Suddenly, the inevitability of White's advantage ceases to be so inevitable, as he barters away a good position for a tiny material gain. Rather than engage in such intermittent distractions, White should focus on consolidation of his position with 16 Kb1! fxe5 17 fxe5 Rf4 18 Nb3 Qd8 19 Bg5 Rf8 20 Nd4 when Black is in danger of a squeeze.

16 ... Qxa2!



Now Black gets terrific play for the exchange.

17 Nxf8?!

The knight fails to live up to previously high expectations. In such positions board control trumps material considerations. On a whim, White incorrectly switches from Marxist to free-market economics, optimistic of a surging GDP growth rate of material. He should go for 17 Nxg7! to eliminate his dark-square woes: 17 ... Bc8! (17 ... Kxg7?? 18 exf6+ exf6 19 Qe7+ Rf7 is met with 20 Bxf6+) 18 exf6 exf6

19 Qe7 Rf7 20 Qe8+ Kxg7 21 Qxc6 with a chaotic position.

17 ... Rxf8 18 exf6 exf6

Threat: ... Qa1+ and ... Qxb2.

19 c3 Bc8

Covering e6 and threatening a cheapo on g4. 19 ... bxc3 20 bxc3 Qa4 is also possible.

20 Qc2 Ng4

20 ... b3! 21 Qb1 Qa4 keeps White tied down.

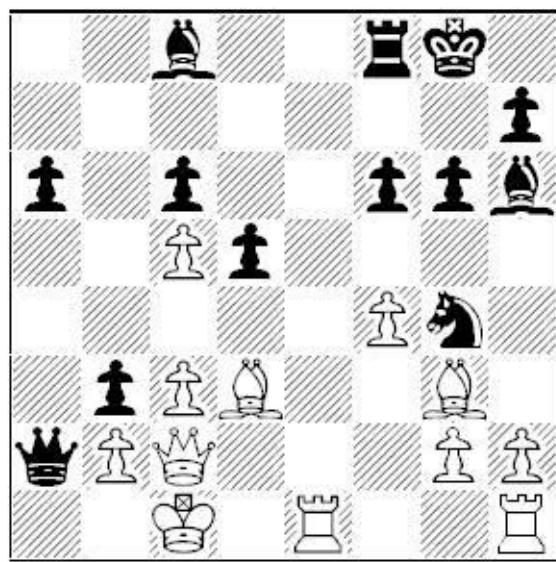
21 Rde1?

I would offer the material back with 21 cxb4 Ne3.

21 ... Bh6!

Adding an accessory to his growing knife collection.

22 Bg3 b3!



Time to tie White's queen up with kidnapper's duct tape. It's also doubtful White can survive 22 ... Ne5!.

23 Qb1

The queen sends out warm greetings from inside her prison cell. White's king and queen continue to cohabitate, scrunched in together. Nothing brings two people closer than a shared suffering.

23 ... Qa4 24 Rhf1 Ne5 25 Kd2!

I have found that in most relationships, one loves the other more than the other loves him or her back. The king, in a depression too deep to fathom with a single reason, abandons his queen to evacuate the danger zone and reach the safer shores of the kingside.

25 ... Nxd3 26 Qxd3

The queen, steeped for so long in shadows and gloom, emerges to bask in the daylight once again.

26 ... Bf5 27 Qd4 Qa2 28 c4 Qa5+ 29 Ke3 Qb4! 30 Kf3 Qxc4

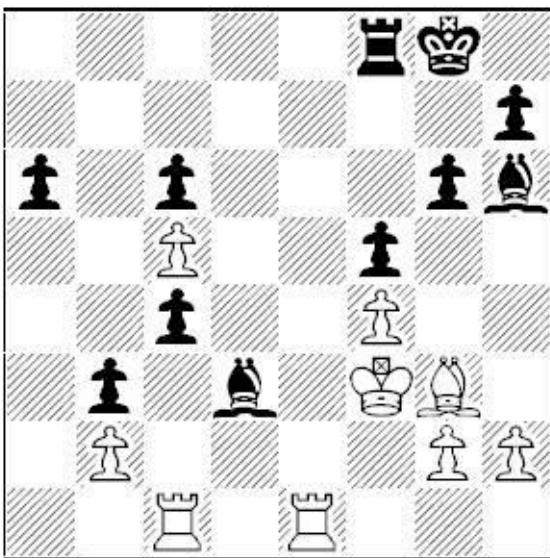
The steady leakage of pawns turns from a drip to a flow.

31 Qxc4 dxc4

This is going to be a rough ending for White:

1. Black has two healthy pawns for the exchange.
2. The bishop pair is a force to be reckoned with.
3. Black has access to the simple plan: force a pawn or two through on the queenside and promote.

32 Rc1 Bd3 33 Rfe1 f5



Exercise (planning/critical decision): Black plans ... Bg7, with devastating effect. White must choose between two plans:

1. Play 34 Re7 and on 34 ... Bg7, return the exchange on g7. In this case White remains two pawns down, but relies on the drawing power of the opposite-coloured bishops.
2. Refuse to give Black a thing and play 34 Red1, intending to hang on by meeting 34 ... Bg7 with 35 Rd2.

Which one would you go for?

34 Red1?

This fails as a plot-advancing idea.

Answer: He should go for plan A: 34 Re7! Bg7 35 Rxg7+! Kxg7 36 Be1! when Black still experiences difficulties converting, despite two extra pawns, due to White's powerful blockade on the dark squares, coupled with the opposite-coloured bishops. Even in this superior line, White's discomfort continues but remains bearable, like a low-grade, chronic ailment one is accustomed to endure throughout life.

34 ... Bg7 35 Rd2

White's defenders are in a tangle and there isn't enough time for Be1, Rf2 and Bc3.

35 ... a5!

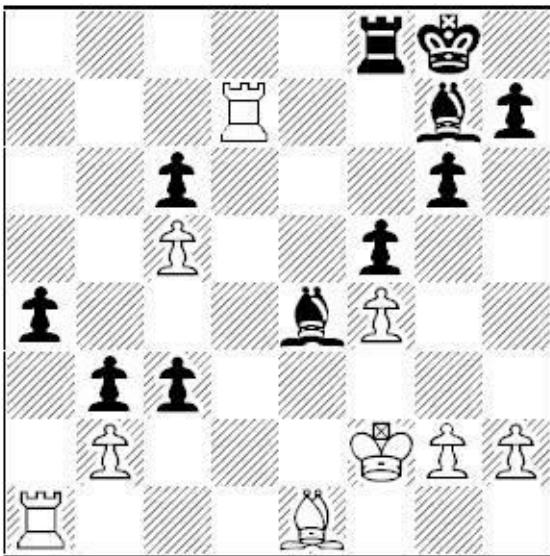
Here they come.

36 Be1 a4 37 Ra1 Be4+ 38 Kf2 c3

There was nothing wrong with the stoic but very strong 38 ... Ra8.

39 Rd7

This time the opposite-coloured bishops' plan fails miserably to 39 bxc3?? Bxc3 40 Rxa4 Bxd2 41 Bxd2 b2. Opposite-coloured bishops don't work all that well as a drawing mechanism if applied down a rook!



39 ... Bd4+!

Flashy and strong. There were many other ways to win. White hoped for 39 ... cxb2 40 Rxg7+ Kxg7 41 Bc3+ which shouldn't save him anyway, since Black's passed pawns embed themselves too deeply.

40 Rxd4 cxb2 41 Rad1 a3

Only one extra rook for White; too many deeply passed potential queens for Black.

42 Bc3 b1Q 43 Rxb1 Bxb1 44 Ra4 a2

44 ... b2 45 Rxa3 Rb8 also did the trick.

45 Ra7 Rd8 46 Ke2 Bc2 47 Rg7+ Kf8 48 Rxh7 Rd1 49 Ra7 Rb1 50 Kd2 Be4 0-1

Black promotes after 51 g3 b2! 52 Rxa2 Rd1+.

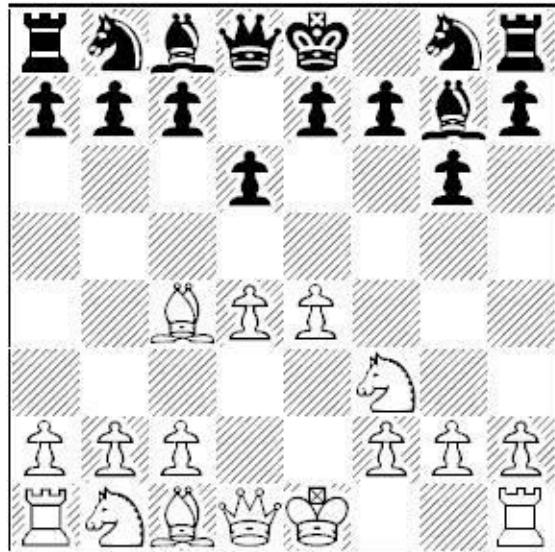
Summary

I believe Black is better off in a Bg5/Austrian Attack hybrid, when compared to some of the nastier lines we faced last chapter. So if White really wants an Austrian Attack, then he may be better off playing the real Austrian Attack rather than this hybrid version.

Chapter Five

Bc4: Cro-Magnon Lines

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nf3 d6 4 Bc4



I endured long-standing residual resentment against the move Bc4, dating back to the summer of 1968. It was then, on a family camping trip that I played my first chess game against my father. Dad, taking White, made the following outrageous prediction: "Watch, I'm going to mate you in four moves!" Of course, I vehemently challenged this monstrous claim. The game (F.Lakdawala-C.Lakdawala, Montreal 1968) went:

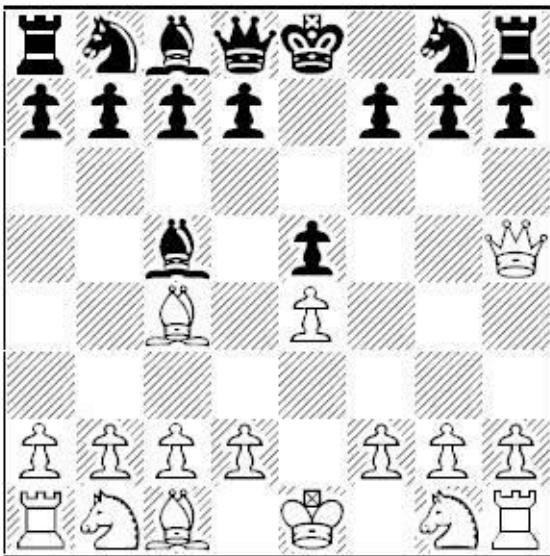
1 e4 e5

Of course, today we understand that 1 ... g6! represents a huge improvement.

2 Bc4

The much hated Cro-Magnon move appears in its most primitive form.

2 ... Bc5 3 Qh5



At this point my dad, with Machiavellian cunning, advised: “My queen is attacking your king’s pawn. If I were you, I would bring out your queen’s knight and protect it.” So in my innocence, the e-pawn was duly protected ...

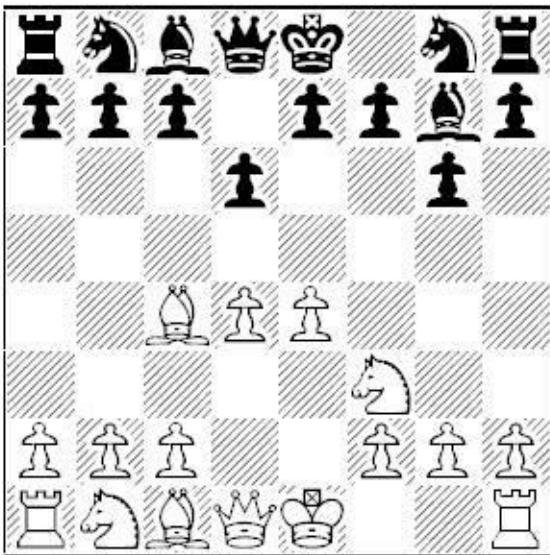
3 ... Nc6?!

Probably not best.

4 Qxf7 mate

So now you know the inception point of where it all began.

My epiphany: a bishop posted on c4 taking a bead on f7 represents a danger for Black. In this chapter we examine Modern Bc4 lines in all their thuggish manifestations. And in every case I recommend the same antidote: play a quick ... e6, blunt that hateful bugger on c4 and go Hippo on your opponent. The diagrammed position below is just one example.



White thinks he will soon enter Pirc after 4 ... Nf6, when he plans Qe2 and a quick e5 to follow. Instead we bog him down and play 4 ... e6, when his prideful bishop on c4 stares hypnotically into the vast nothingness of our Modern wall.

1 Nf3 g6 2 e4 Bg7 3 d4 d6 4 Bc4

Andrew Martin, who authored a book on the Hippopotamus (which I owned but can't find now; some irresponsible student borrowed and never returned it!), wrote: "Bc4 systems are among the easier for Black to combat. The bishop on c4 is vulnerable to a pawn attack from Black and White, and often has to lose time as a result."

4 ... e6

I would sidestep the dangerous 4 ... Nf6 5 Qe2 Nc6 6 e5 and now Tiger recommends either 6 ... Nd7 or the "chaotic" 6 ... Ng4!?.

Question: Why does the Pirc version make you nervous?

Answer: It isn't that I dislike Black's position. It's more that it gives White the kind of open, tactical game that Bc4 players typically enjoy. The Hippo has a way of removing White's fun from the position and bogging him down in strategic swamp land.

5 Bg5??

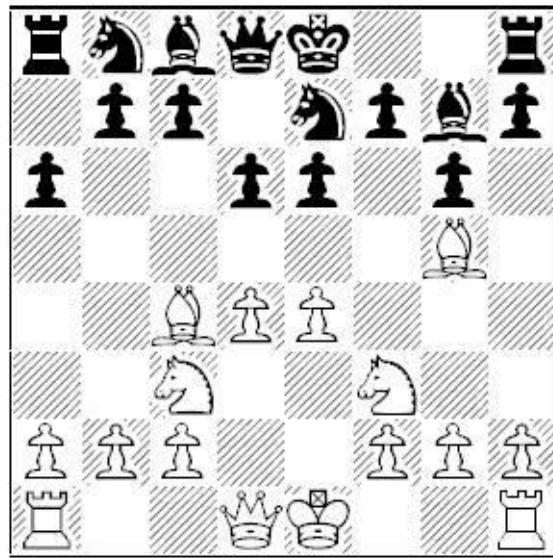
They all seem to play this move without thought, incorrectly reasoning that they develop with gain of time, when in reality they lose a tempo later on to ... h6.

White should get his c4-bishop out of the way of an oncoming ... d5, with 5 Bb3.

5 ... Ne7 6 Nc3

White can also play 6 c3, stabilizing his centre. We take a closer look at this structure next game.

6 ... a6



7 0-0

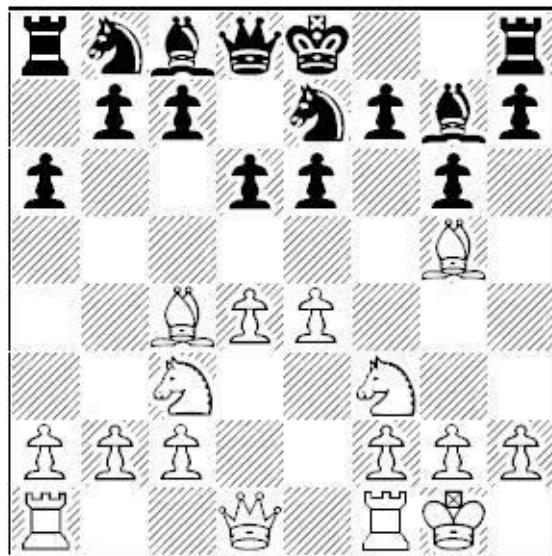
Question: Would it make more sense to inhibit ... b5 by tossing in 7 a4?

Answer: There are two schools of thought on this question:

a) The first, as you said, inhibit the coming ... b5 with a4.

b) The counter argument: White leads in development. So why not welcome ... b5, which gives White more opportunity to open the position? Your version may go something like 7 ... b6 8 0-0 Bb7 9 Qd2 h6

(the old tempo gain, which White mistakenly perceives as a weakness) 10 Be3 Nd7 11 h3 Nf6 12 Bd3 d5! 13 e5 Ne4 14 Qe2 Nxc3 15 bxc3 a5 and we reach a French-like structure, which we encounter over and over in this chapter, C.Arduman-I.Nikolaidis, Elista Olympiad 1998.



7 ... b5!?

Today, your wiser, more cautious writer would probably have omitted an early ... b5. Perhaps Black should keep White guessing, with a move order like 7 ... h6! 8 Be3 Nd7.

Question: So you are saying Black shouldn't gain a free tempo?

Answer: Argument for the prosecution: by tossing in ... b5 Black gains a tempo and space as well; argument for the defence: ... b5 doesn't often work well in Hippo structures since it allows White line openings on the queenside. My preference today is to avoid an early ... b5.

8 Bd3

Instead 8 Bb3 h6 9 Be3 Bb7 10 d5 e5 was tried in G.Pons Boscana-K.Movsziszian, Binissalem 2004. Black plays for ... f5 while White hopes to prise open the queenside with a quick a4 and later c3. Note that ... b5 in this kind of position hurts rather than helps Black.

8 ... h6 9 Be3 Nd7 10 a4 b4 11 Ne2 c5 12 c3 bxc3

Today, I would retain tension and play 12 ... Rb8.

13 bxc3 Qc7 14 Rc1

This move slightly weakens his a-pawn and also his rook may want to challenge the b-file. More accurate was 14 Qd2.

14 ... c4

This commits Black to a ... d5 French structure. I had my eye on his a4-pawn.

15 Bb1 Bb7 16 Nd2

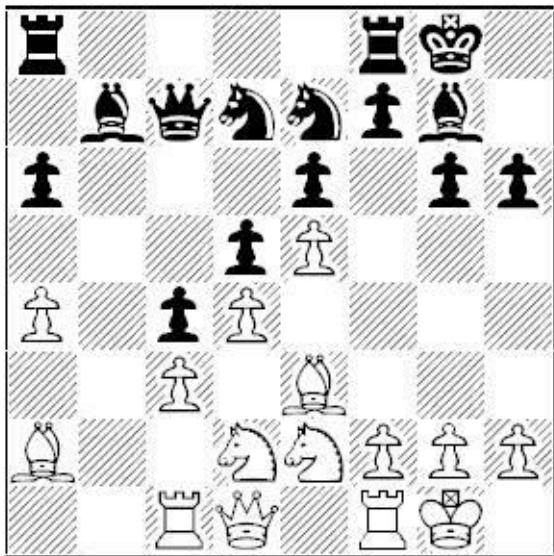
On 16 Qd2 I had planned 16 ... Nf6 17 Ng3 Ng4 to eliminate his powerful dark-squared bishop.

16 ... 0-0 17 Ba2??

A waste of time. Never force the opponent to enter a plan he intended to play all along. White should focus his attention on a kingside attack.

17 ... d5 18 e5

18 exd5 Bxd5 19 Nf4 Nf5 is White's alternative, where I like Black's position.



18 ... f5

Seeking kingside space as well.

Question: Why is that important?

Answer: A cramped king's position is vulnerable to attack.

19 Nf4

Question: If he takes en passant he hands you a backward e-pawn doesn't he?

Answer: The e-pawn isn't really weak and Black routinely accepts such a potential weakness to increase piece activity in French Defence. Black stands well after 19 exf6 Rxf6 20 Nf3 Raf8 when he may soon contemplate exchange sacs on f3.

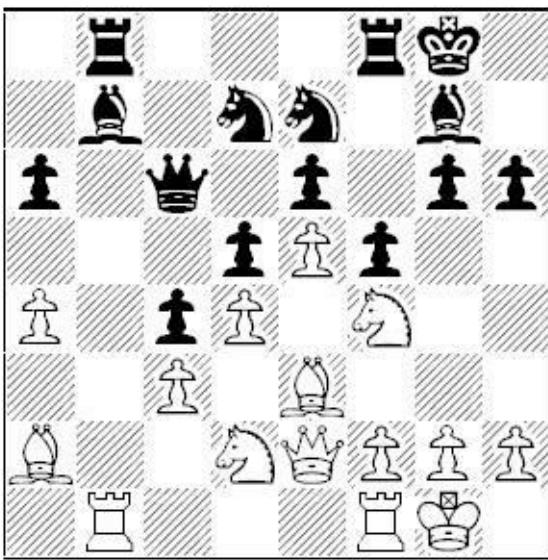
19 ... Qc6

Covering e6 and keeping an eye on a4.

20 Rb1!? Rab8

I saw no need to enter the complications stemming from 20 ... g5 21 Nxe6 Qxe6 22 Rxb7 f4 23 Nxc4.

21 Qe2??



He goads me to trap his bishop with ... g5 and ... f4 to loosen up the black kingside pawn cover.

21 ... g5 22 Nh5 Qxa4!?

Chickening out by settling for a pawn. A braver man would have risked 22 ... f4!? 23 Bxf4 gxf4 24 Qg4 Nf5.

23 Nxg7

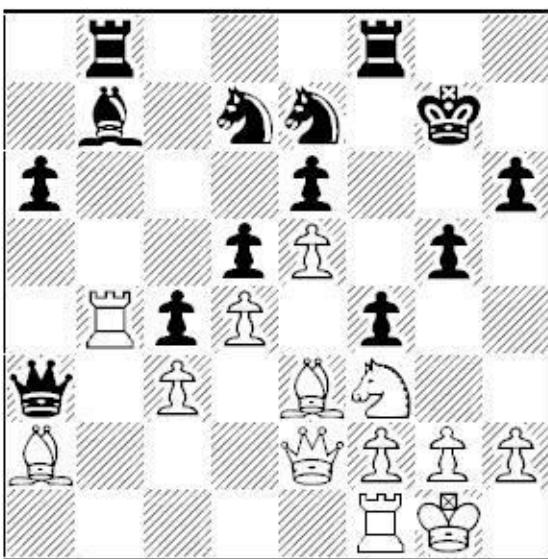
Removing a key defender.

23 ... Kxg7 24 Nf3 f4 25 Rb4

The rook on b4 may be more a vulnerability than a tempo gain. Perhaps he should just retreat with 25 Bc1.

25 ... Qa3

The comps like 25 ... Qa5!.



26 Bc1?

White finds himself in the throes of a heart-pounding attacking fever, as he generously burns more incense on the shrine of his future attack. He achieves good play for the pawn if he finds 26 Qc2! (threat: Ra4, trapping Black's queen) 26 ... Bc6 27 Bc1 Qa5 28 Bb1 Nf5 29 Rxb8 Rxb8 30 g4! fxg3 31 fxg3 when White's kingside attacking chances compensate for his missing pawn.

26 ... Qxc3

Black is up two pawns, for which White's attacking chances don't compensate. When an opponent goes off on a dangerous but unsound attack, I desire victory, not out of competitiveness, but more from a sense of justice.

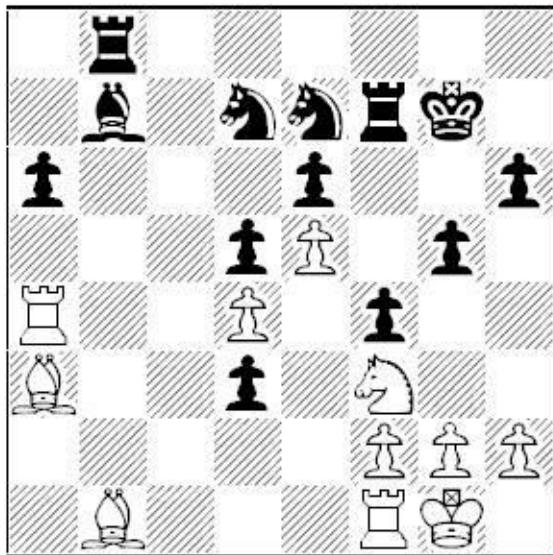
27 Ra4 Qd3

The practical move. I just wanted the queens off the board and wasn't interested in speculating with lines like 27 ... g4 28 Nh4 f3.

28 Qxd3 cxd3 29 Ba3 Rf7

Better is 29 ... Bc6! 30 Rxa6 Ra8!.

30 Bb1



Exercise (critical decision): I looked at two ideas:

a) Play 30 ... Nb6 followed by 31 ... Nc4.

b) Play 30 ... Bc6, sac'ing my a6-pawn, and after 31 Rxa6 Bb5 place my hopes on the passed d3-pawn.

One of them leads to a winning position for Black, while the other leads to approximate equality. Which one would you go for?

30 ... Bc6?

Answer: 30 ... Nb6! leads to a winning position after 31 Rb4 Nc4 32 Rb3 (32 Bc1 Nc6 33 Ra4 g4 wins too) 32 ... Nc6 33 h3 d2.

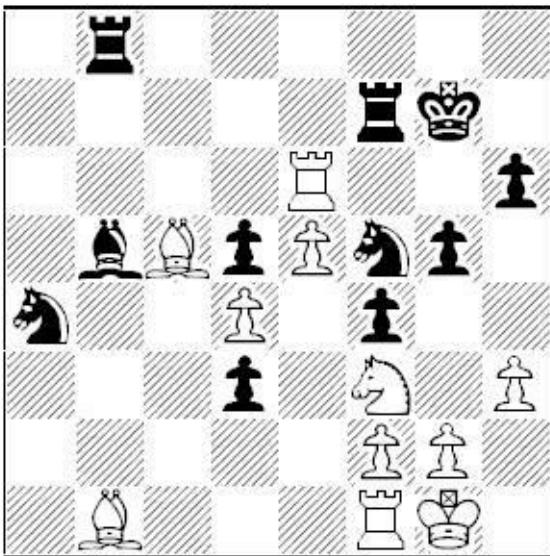
31 Rxa6 Bb5!?

The penitent mortifies his own flesh as he hands over e6 with regret, in order to expiate past sins.

32 Rxe6 Nf5 33 h3 Nb6 34 Bc5

34 Rd1? Nc4! and if 35 Rxd3?? Bd7 leaves White with too many hanging pieces.

34 ... Na4!



35 Ba2?

Time pressure. He had to try 35 Rd1 Nc3 36 Rxd3 Bxd3 37 Bxd3 when Black only stands slightly better.

35 ... Nc3

This knight becomes poison to all it touches, in a not-so-subtle attempt to shanghai the a2-bishop into indentured servitude.

36 Bb1

36 Bb3 Bc4 wins.

36 ... Bc4 37 Nd2 Rb2 0-1

The banker sees little reason to extend White's pieces a further line of credit, as White loses heavy material.

Summary

Don't be in a big rush to toss in an early ... b5 in the Hippo, even if White allows it. By doing so you allow White to prise open the queenside faster than we would like.

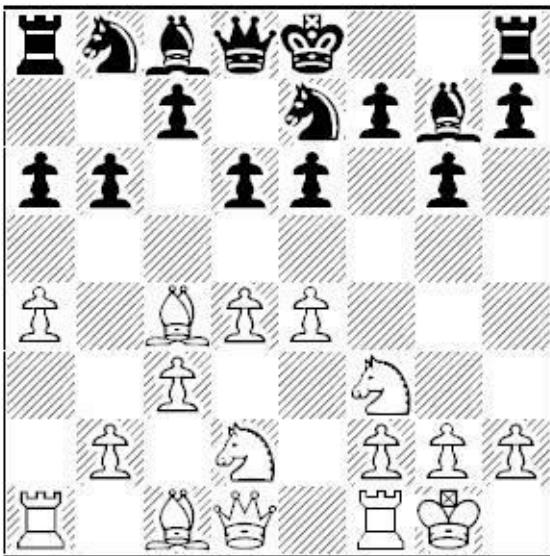
Game 28

F.Krahe-V.Malakhatko

Bad Wiessee 2006

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nf3 d6 4 Bc4 e6 5 0-0 Ne7 6 Nbd2 a6 7 a4 b6 8 c3

White decides to stabilize his centre rather than place a piece on c3.



Question: Is there a downside to the move?

Answer: White's game grows more solid but also less dynamic in this structure.

8 ... 0-0 9.Qe2 c5

Question: Isn't Black opening the game too early?

Answer: No. This is the downside we talked about. White's passive play emboldens Black to strike immediately since he doesn't lag too far behind in development.

10.e5

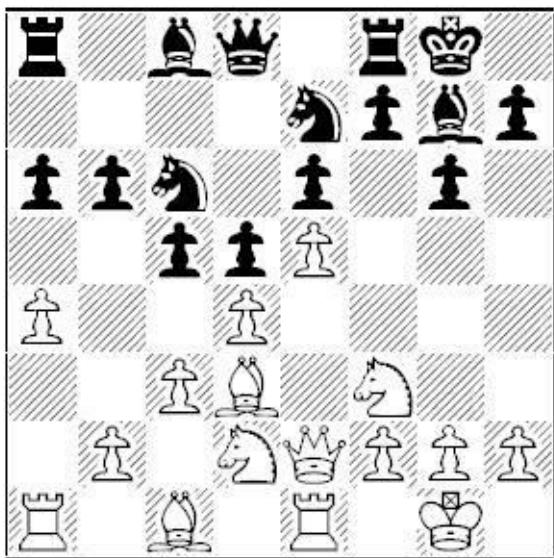
Question: What happens if White pushes the d-pawn instead?

Answer: After 10.d5 Black has a choice between a King's Indian-style position with 10...e5 or a Schmidt Benoni-like position after 10...exd5 11.exd5 Nd7. In both cases Black looks healthy.

10...d5

As always, with tempo on White's unfortunate bishop. Once again we reach a hybrid French structure, with Black's dark-squared bishop on g7.

11.Bd3 Nbc6 12.Re1



Question: It looks to me like White has an attack brewing on the kingside after Nf1, Ng3, and h4. What does Black do to counter this plan?

Answer: Let's solve this with an exercise:

Exercise (planning): As you mentioned, if left alone White plots to build up in degrees on the kingside. Where is our source of counterplay?

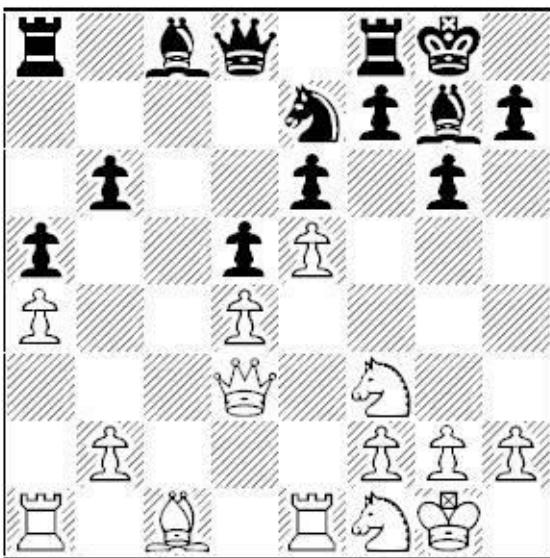
Answer: The b4-square.

12 ... cxd4 13 cxd4 Nb4 14 Nf1?!

Question: Shouldn't White try and preserve his attacking bishop?

Answer: I agree he should, but Black still gets plenty of counterplay on the queenside and c-file after 14 Bb1. Black responds 14 ... a5 15 Nf1 Ba6 16 Qd1 Rc8 17 Ra3 Qd7.

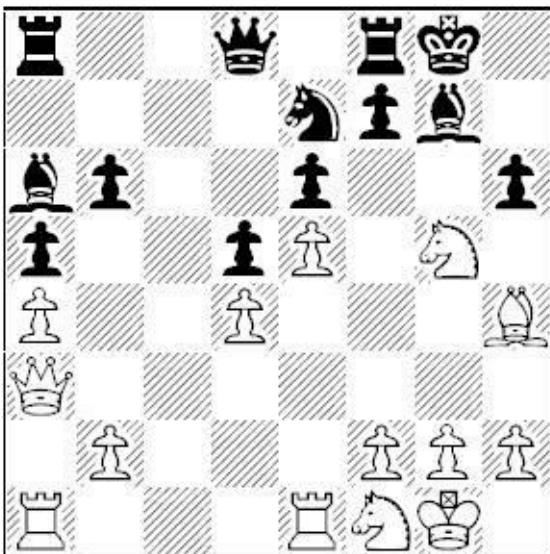
14 ... Nxd3 15 Qxd3 a5!



On a6, nobody dares call the bishop bad.

16 Bg5 h6 17 Bh4 Ba6 18 Qa3 g5! 19 Nxg5

After sufficient baiting from his opponent, White, in a compulsion to scratch the itch, complicates with a piece sac.



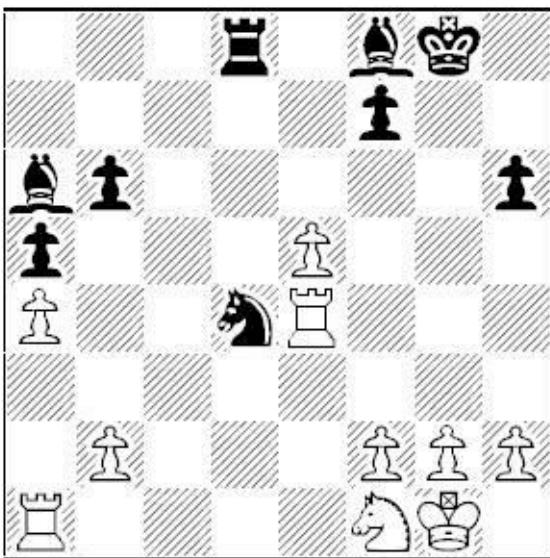
Exercise (critical decision): Should we accept immediately or should we enter the complications stemming from the zwischenzug 19 ... Nf5?

Answer: 19 ... Nf5!

The zwischenzug is powerful. It turns out that White leaned too far over the tips of his skis and risked a tumble of overextension. The knight boldly confronts his attacker while allowing discoveries on his queen.

White gets loads of attacking chances in the line 19 ... hxg5?! 20 Bxg5 Ra7 21 Ng3 (intending Nh5) 21 ... f6 22 exf6 Bxf6 23 Bxf6 Rxf6 24 Nh5.

20 Nxe6 Qxh4 21 Nxf8 Bxf8 22 Qf3 Nxd4 23 Qxd5 Rd8 24 Qe4 Qxe4 25 Rxe4



Question: Didn't this work out well for White, who got rook and two pawns for two minor pieces?

Answer: Quite the opposite. White finds himself broke as outlays for the attack far outstrip income. Assessments cannot be boiled down so simply by pure accounting and arithmetic. Those two minor pieces, a pair of fire breathing bishops in an open position, turn out to be not so minor after all. Black's other pieces also radiate powerful activity. Black came out well ahead in the mêlée.

25 ... Bg7 26 Ng3 Bd3 27 Rg4 Bg6 28 Re1 h5! 29 Rh4 Nc2 30 Rf1 Bxe5

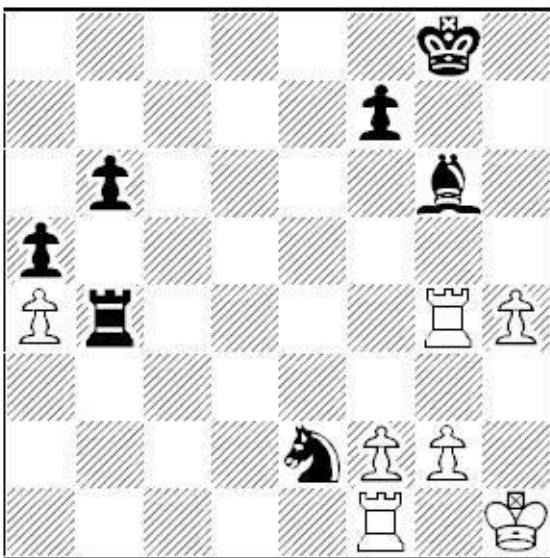
A good deal for Black: White's e-pawn in exchange for his h-pawn.

31 Nxh5 Rd2 32 Nf4 Bxf4!?

He can also play to retain both bishops with 32 ... Bh7.

33 Rxf4 Nd4 34 Rg4 Ne2+ 35 Kh1 Rxb2 36 h4 Rb4!

Exposing White's frailties to daylight. It is pretty clear that White's previous altruism exhausted all modes of attack, as he simply runs out of viable or even conceivable attacking options. He can't exchange rooks, meaning he allows Black to pick off a4.



37 f4

White blocks the swap attempt with a bit of post-recklessness remorse, as his dishevelled and harried rook on g4 looks less an attacker and more a miner trapped in the shaft. 37 Rxb4? axb4 38 Re1 Nc3 39 Re3 b3! wins.

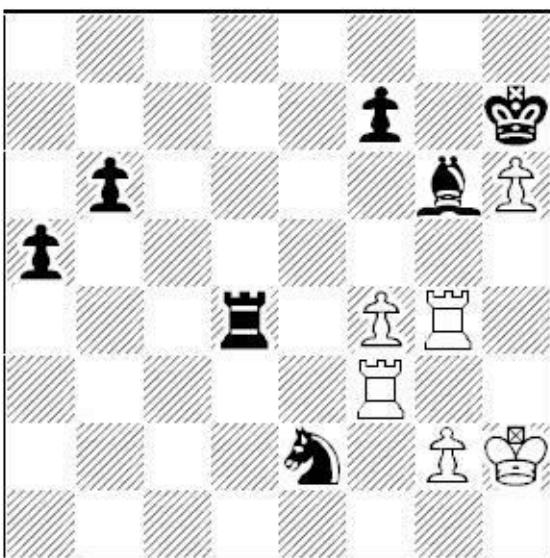
37 ... Kh7

Negating White's threat to push his h-pawn forward.

38 Kh2 Rxa4 39 h5 Bd3

The careless 39 ... Bxh5?? allows White right back into the game with 40 Rh4 Kh6 41 g4.

40 Rf3 Rd4 41 h6 Bg6!



The bird repeats his song which sounds no less beautiful as an encore, as he denies the luckless rook entry to g7.

42 Rh4 b5

Nothing can stop Black's two rolling passers.

43 g3 b4 44 f5 Rxh4+

Black fails to acquit himself as a good host to White's poor rook.

45 gxh4 Bh5 46 Re3 Nc3 0-1

Summary

The c3 lines versus the Hippo may stabilize White's centre, but also leak much of the dynamism within White's game.

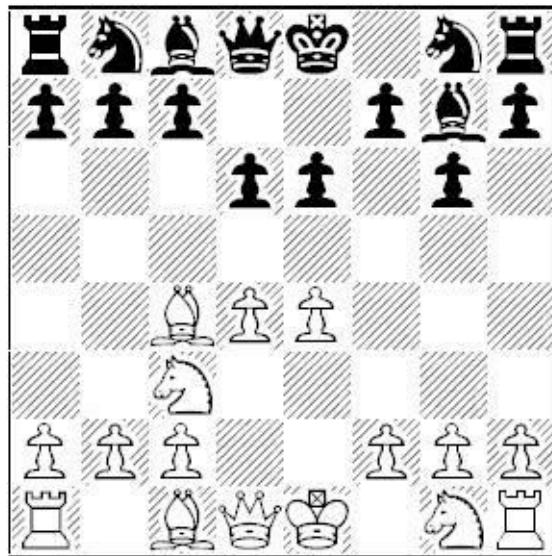
Game 29

V.Iyer-C.Lakdawala

San Diego (rapid) 2012

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 Bc4 e6

Tiger prefers 4 ... Nf6 in this position, while I prefer the less Pircish Hippopotamus formation versus the Bc4 guys.



Question: What is the reason for your preference?

Answer: The following reasons:

1. It's easy to remember. Just always play Hippo versus virtually any white set-up with Bc4.
2. From my experience against the thuggish Cro-Magnon Bc4 lines, White players always seem to have just one plan in mind: Qe2 and then stuff their e-pawn into our position with the disruptive e5 and sometimes e6. By playing the ... e6 Hippo set-ups, we render White's e5 plan ineffective.

Question: Why ineffective?

Answer: The second White plays e5, we slip by with ... d5 and bog White down in a nice French-style structure, where we frustrate White's attempts to open the position.

3. White's bishop, besides hitting a wall on e6, is vulnerable to ... Ne7 and ... d5, once again steering the game into weird hybrid French Defence-like positions, not unfavourable for us.
4. Lastly, If Black plays in Pirc style we discard the subversive edge so traditionally associated with the Modern.

5 Be3!

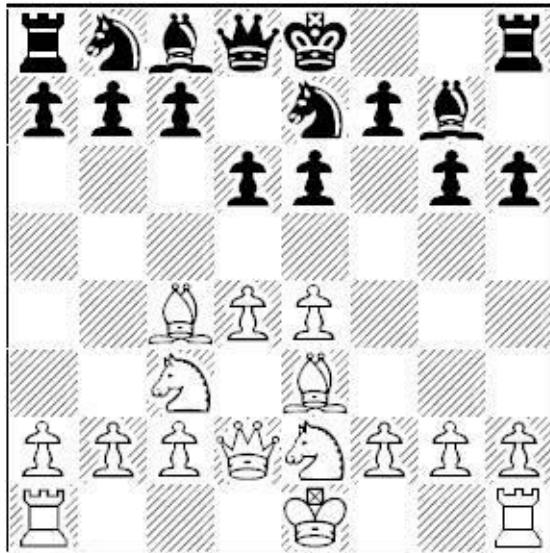
Correctly avoiding the 'tempo-gaining' (but actually tempo-losing) manoeuvre 5 Nf3 Ne7 6 Bg5?! h6.

5 ... Ne7 6 Qd2 h6

Question: Aren't you violating principles with all these leisurely pawn moves?

Answer: Not if the position remains closed or rigid.

7 Nge2



My 15-year-old student, Venkat, a terrific attacker and tactician, playing White is fond of f3, g4, and h4 Dragon-like set-ups for White against the Pirc and Modern.

7 ... d5!?

Injecting the position with a French flavour. 7 ... a6 keeps it within the Hippo realms: 8 a4 b6 9 h4 d5 (back to the French!) 10 exd5 (10 Bd3 Nbc6! intending ... Nb4 looks equal at a minimum for Black) 10 ... exd5 11 Bb3 (11 Bd3 Nbc6! intending ... Nb4 is the same idea as before) 11 ... Be6 12 0-0-0 Nbc6 13 h5 g5 14 Kb1 Qd7 15 f4 g4 16 Ng3 was R.Magee-J.Boyd, Sheffield 2011. Here I would go for 16 ... f5. Remember: Cro-Magnon Bc4 aficionados normally hate blocked positions.

8 exd5

He hands over the f5-square. Now the game looks somewhat like an exchange French – not exactly the most favourable playing field if you are a psycho attacker on the white side.

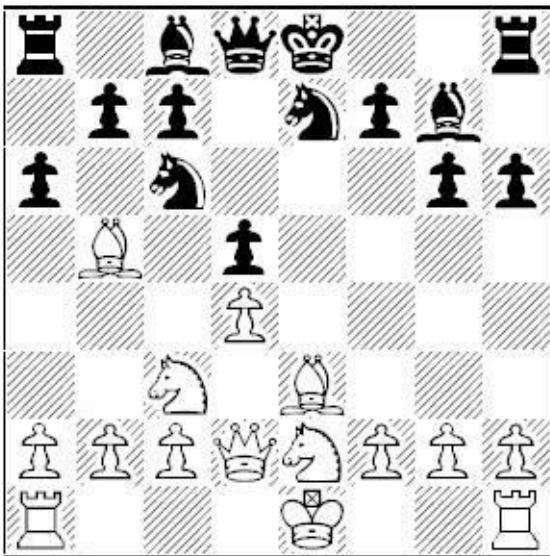
Question: Wouldn't White be better off maintaining central tension with 8 Bd3?

Answer: Venkat said he wanted to resolve the tension since he didn't like the idea of ... dxe4 or ... e5 hanging over his head on each move.

8 ... exd5 9 Bd3 Nbc6 10 Bb5!?

He moves his bishop around an awful lot. I expected 10 a3.

10 ... a6



11 Bxc6+

Now he gives me bishop pair based on the fact that knights work well in rigid positions.

Question: Do you agree with his decision?

Answer: I don't, because in making the exchange White also handed over light-square control. I expected 11 Ba4.

11 ... Nxc6

Question: Wouldn't it be better to recapture with the pawn, to open the b-file, in case White decides to castle queenside?

Answer: Not if he can establish a blockade on c5, which he can after 11 ... bxc6?! 12 Na4 when the rigidity of the structure begins to favour White.

12 0-0

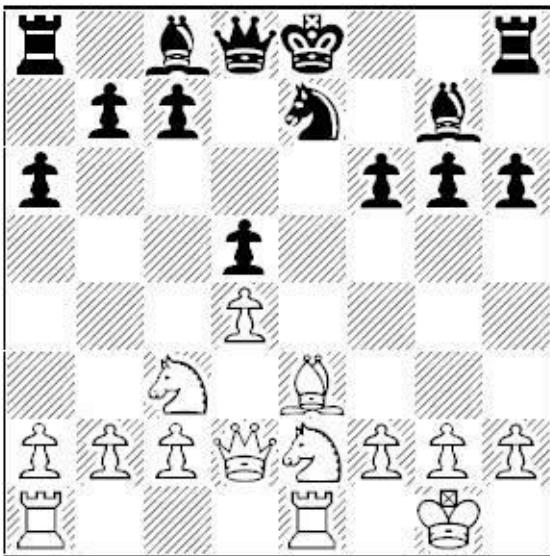
This sober move shocked me because Venkat loves to castle queenside and then push all his pawns on the other wing. Then I realized: he expected me to castle queenside. I expected my opponent to play 12 0-0-0 Be6 13 Nf4 Qd7 14 Rfe1 0-0-0 with an equal position.

12 ... Ne7

Question: Isn't this position drawish?

Answer: Not really; virtually all the pieces remain on the board and we have a knight versus bishop imbalance as well. If the Exchange French was all that drawish, then IMs and lower-rated GMs would have scored easy half-points versus Korchnoi in his prime – which they didn't.

13 Rfe1 f6!



Question: What? How can such an act of sedition remain unpunished?

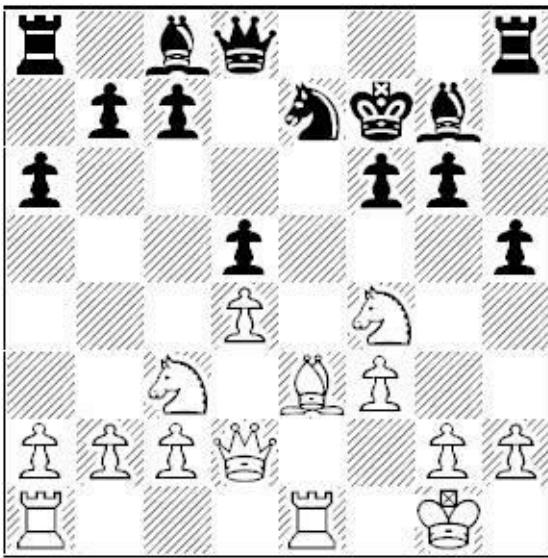
Answer: Sorry about that. Too much *My System* from a misspent youth. Here is the idea: since I can't castle kingside, the plan is ... Kf7, followed by a slow kingside pawn expansion and possible attack against White's king. Also, never condemn a move just because it looks ugly. Only the idea behind a move and its effectiveness matter. It's easy to exaggerate a trivial, perceived defect and create a problem out of something which in reality remains inconsequential.

I had originally intended 13 ... Be6, but then saw 14 Nf4 Qd7 15 Nd3 when I need to watch out for both Ne5 and Nc5.

14 Nf4 Kf7 15 f3

To preserve his bishop. *Houdini*, highly critical of my odd 13th move, now recommends 15 Qe2! and hates my position, which I don't think is so bad after 15 ... Bf8! despite the ominous plus over minus reprimand from the comp. In the interests of justice (and also to humiliate the cocky, know-it-all comp!) we played on: 16 Bd2 h5 17 Rad1 (we see that *Houdini* is a student of Fred Reinfeld) 17 ... Bf5 18 h3 Qd6 19 Qf3 c6 20 Rc1 Re8 21 Nd3 Bxd3 22 Qxd3 Qd7 and now contrite *Houdini* apologized and said the game was even – it isn't. Black now holds a microbe of an edge!

15 ... h5



I begin to expand on the kingside.

16 Qd3?!

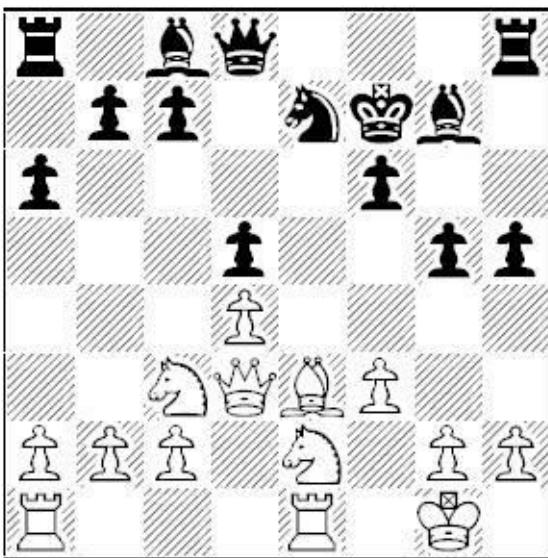
We all make such shallow moves in rapid games. Venkat spaces out, forgetting that he loses a tempo to ... Bf5, now or later on. Better to play 16 Re2 to double rooks on the e-file.

16 ... g5

Get off my property! Black informs the squatter knight that he entered private land and must vacate immediately.

17 Nfe2

I was positive he would go for the shady sac 17 Ncxd5?! gxf4 18 Nxf4 c6! when White lacks full compensation.



17 ... h4

Question: Why not gain a tempo with 17 ... Bf5?

Answer: To keep options open. The tempo doesn't run away.

18 h3

Now I began to worry about the manoeuvre Nd1, Nf2, and Ng4.

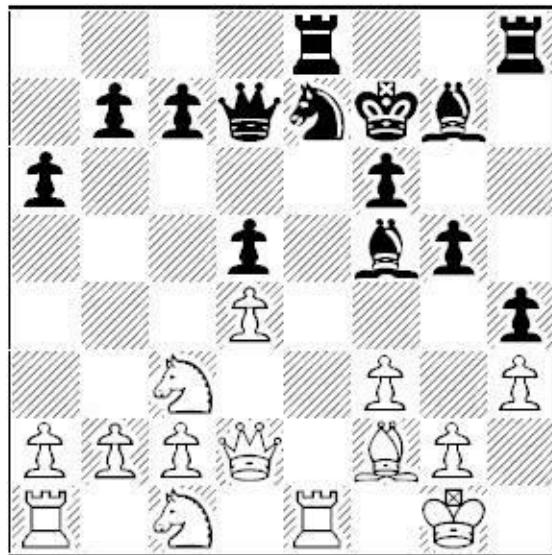
Question: Why not 18 f4 to try and open lines?

Answer: Despite *Houdini*'s blessings, such a move is a huge strategic error. After 18 ... g4 White has an awful bishop, and you just punctured f5 and e4 for Black's bishop. White may, in fact, be strategically lost here.

18 ... Bf5 19 Qd2 Qd7 20 Bf2

Remember 20 f4?? g4 still applies. I expected 20 Nd1 with the aforementioned plan: Nf2 and Ng4.

20 ... Rae8 21 Nc1!?



Goading Black into a sac on h3.

Question: Is the sac playable?

Answer: It's playable and unclear.

21 ... Ng6

No thanks. I wasn't interested in 21 ... Bxh3!? 22 gxh3 Qxh3 when Black gets compensation for the piece, but not the advantage.

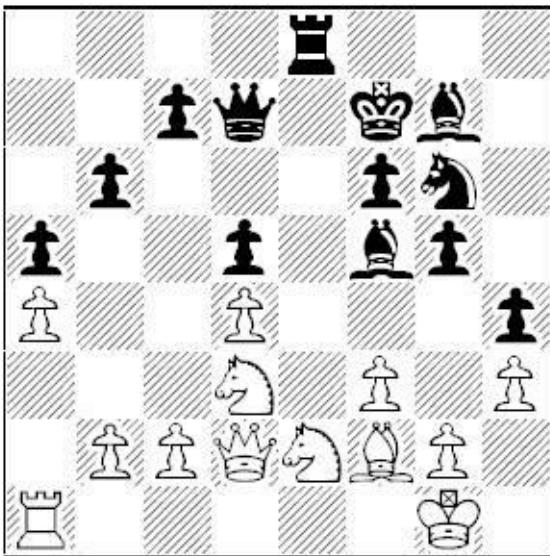
22 Nd3 a5 23 Rxe8

White gains nothing from 23 Nc5 Qc6.

23 ... Rxe8 24 Ne2!?

Ambitious, keeping one pair of rooks on the board, proving he is after my king. I expected 24 Re1 Rxe1+ 25 Bxe1 Bf8, favouring Black, with the bishops and space advantage.

24 ... b6 25 a4



Exercise (planning): Black's position is good.
Now make it even better with a long-range plan.

Answer: Transfer the dark-squared bishop to its optimal post on d6.

25 ... Bf8!

The plan: ... c6, ... Bd6, ... Bc7, and ... Qd6 trying for infiltration on h2. Or, ... Bd6 and ... Bxh3, if possible. Once again, I remind you that f4 is always met with ... g4!.

26 b3? Bd6??

Timing is everything in chess. Black's game is technically still winning after this move, but I rejected the rather obvious shot 26 ... Bxh3! 27 gxh3 Qxh3 when White's king won't last long.

27 Nc3?

Venkat told me he had planned the suicidal 27 c4??, but then noticed 27 ... dxc4 28 bxc4 Qe6! with a crushing double attack on e2 and c4.

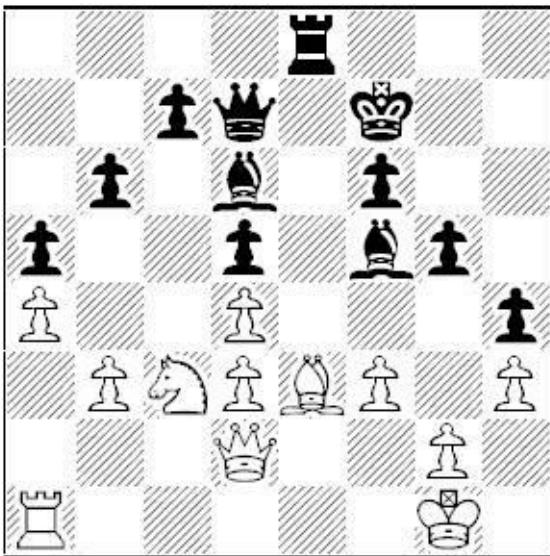
27 ... Nf4!

Even stronger than 27 ... Bxh3! which also looks winning.

28 Be3

White agrees to endure a foul-smelling sty of a pawn structure, since 28 Nxf4?? Bxf4 29 Qd1 Qc6! 30 Be1 Re3! wins.

28 ... Nxd3 29 cxd3



Exercise (planning/combination alert): Well, what about now? Does the sac on h3 work?

29 ... Bb4?!

I am determined to win the race to the bottom. My agony is similar to the NBA 3-point specialist who suddenly grows cold and misses basket after basket, just when his team needs him the most.

Answer: Once again, the sac on h3 is decisive after 29 ... Bxh3! 30 gxh3 Qxh3 31 Nd1 (31 Re1 Qg3+ 32 Kf1 h3 33 Qf2 h2! 34 Ke2 Qh3 35 Rh1 g4! wins) 31 ... Bf4! (this move, much stronger than capturing on f3, is hard to find in a rapid game, or even a slow tournament game) 32 Qf2 (opening the g-file is suicide for White), and now Black has the remarkable bypass 32 ... g4!! 33 Bxf4 gxf3 when White, up two pieces, stands helpless.

30 Rc1 Re6

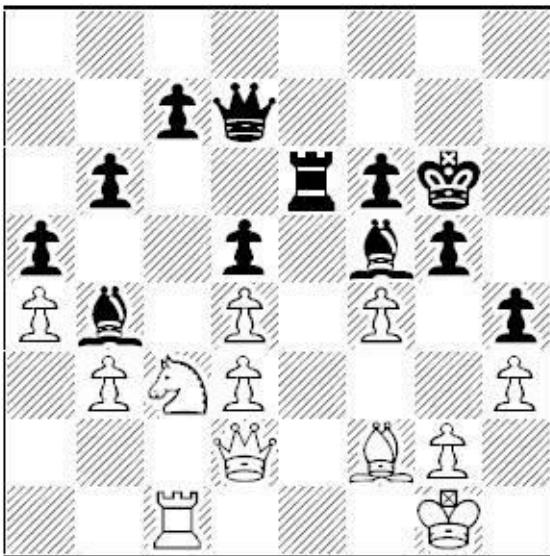
Multipurpose:

1. Black contemplates ... Rc6.
2. Black prepares for a future doubling of major pieces on the e-file.

31 Bf2

Intending f4, to try and muck things up a bit.

31 ... Kg6 32 f4!?



Question: Is this the proper moment for White to initiate a precipitous course of action?

Answer: Venkat, playing on my time woes, grows weary of playing on the undercard and seeks a shot at the title, even if the odds are against him. It's hard to fault White for complicating. Moreover, ... g4 isn't so great, now that h4 hangs.

32 ... c6

I had seven minutes to my opponent's 19 at this point, so I stabilized the centre to reduce cheapo potential.

33 Qd1 Bd6

Back again. The bishop sets his sights on White's king.

34 fxg5 fxg5 35 Qf3 Rf6 36 Rf1 g4

Introducing a vexing new problem for White to solve. After cutting the tether the pitbull pawn predictably attacks. By now you may have noticed that your writer isn't exactly a vast reservoir of attacking talent, and you have a right to ask: how many times in one game is he going to miss a killing sac on h3? Answer: A lot! Once again I missed my favourite non-shot: 36 ... Be6! 37 Qe3 Bf4 38 Qe2 Bxh3! and there it is again.

37 Qe3

White is paralysed after 37 hxg4 Bxg4 38 Qe3 Qf5.

37 ... g3 38 Be1 Qe7

I was down to a couple of minutes and desperately wanted queens off the board.

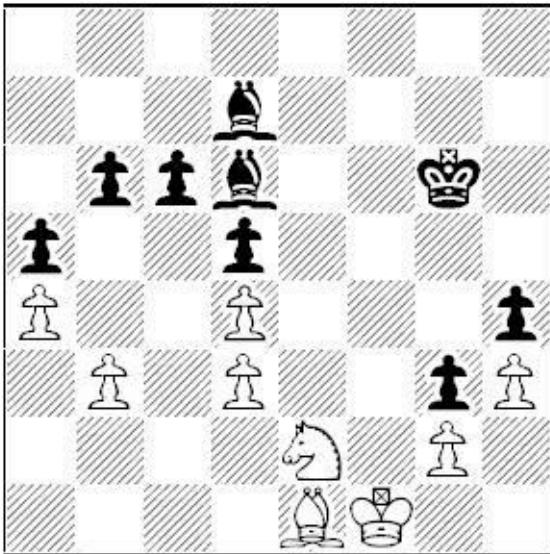
39 Qf3 Bd7 40 Qe2?

It's a mistake to try and blitz if you have time and the opponent has very little. Black still has work ahead to convert 40 Qxf6+ Qxf6 41 Rxf6+ Kxf6 42 Kf1.

40 ... Qxe2

Thank God. The white queen's dreams of infiltration finally come to an end.

41 Nxe2 Rxf1+ 42 Kxf1



Exercise (planning): Black's position requires just one correct idea to get us over the hump to victory. Black to play and win material.

Answer: Step 1: attack d3.

42 ... Bf5 43 Nc1

Step 2: remove the defender of d3.

43 ... Bf4 0-1

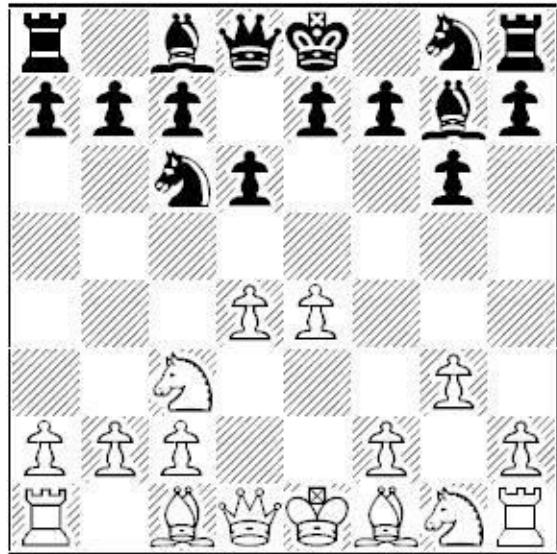
Summary

After 4 ... e6 you can play the position in Hippo or French style, depending on your taste.

Chapter Six

The Fianchetto Line

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 g3 Nc6



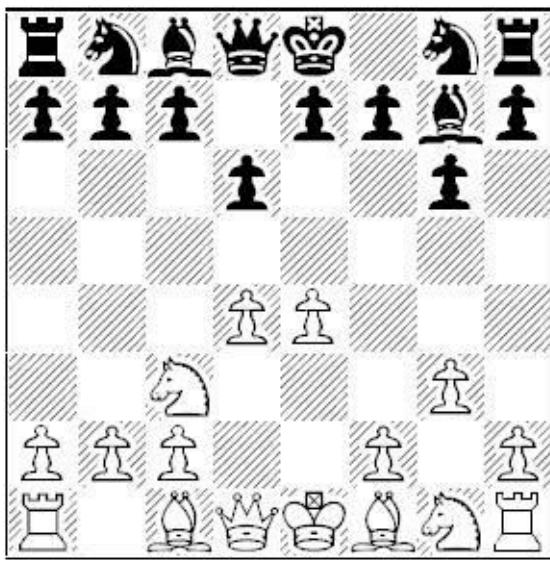
White hopes to bog us down in this chapter. The real star of the show is heavyweight strategic manoeuvring, while tactics merely play a supporting actor's role. This doesn't bother us a bit. Most Modernists are pretty handy when it comes to bewildering shifts in pawn structure. In this chapter we temporarily abandon our ... a6, ... Nd7, and ... b5 plan, and supplant it with ... Nc6 and ... e5 ideas, which lead us to equality.

Game 30

V.Spasov-J.Speelman

Biel Interzonal 1993

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 g3



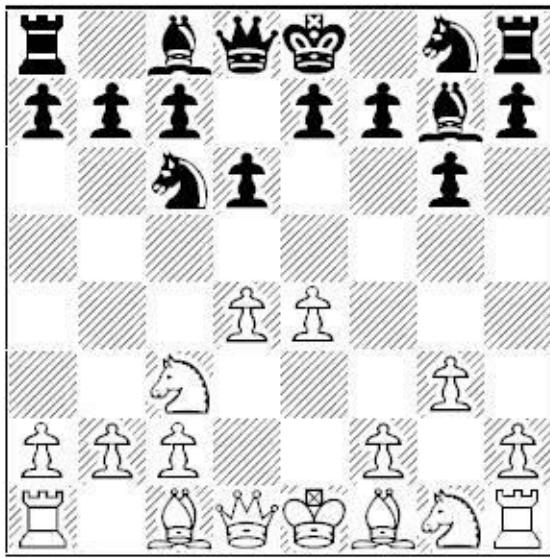
I heartily agree with IM John Watson, who called the Fianchetto line “annoying”.

Question: What is annoying about it?

Answer: Much like the c3 lines we look at next chapter, the Fianchetto variation is ultra solid for White, and offers us few targets of attack. Basically, White hopes to squeeze us with his extra space, normally with slow kingside expansion.

In the last game of the chapter we look at 4 Nge2. Tiger called this move order “somewhat trickier than 4 g3, since it leaves Black guessing what will come next.” Now our problem is if we play 4 ... Nc6 then White can dodge the Fianchetto line and head back to Chapter One, with 5 Be3! throwing us off our ... a6 stride.

4 ... Nc6



British GMs, like Jon Speelman and Nigel Davies, found a good solution to try and rouse White into action: provocation!

Question: Don't we lose time initiating the provocation?

Answer: All of White's 'time' gains come in the form of pawn moves, like d4-d5 and f2-f4; neither of which help his development.

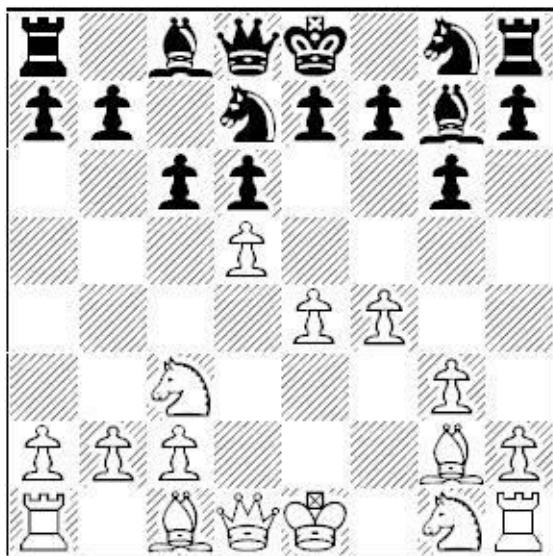
5 d5!?

Challenge accepted. Most Fianchetto guys aren't this hot headed, though. Next game we look at the calmer 5 Be3.

5 ... Ne5 6 f4

Otherwise the knight sits happily in the centre.

6 ... Nd7 7 Bg2 c6



Finally, Black takes time out to pinch White in the centre.

Question: Shouldn't we be worried about White's attacking chances stemming from his massive space?

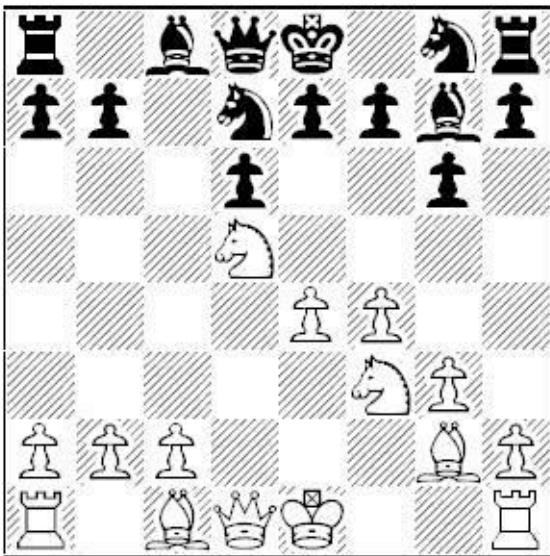
Answer: What attack? Think about it this way. Imagine White begins the game with an Austrian Attack structure, then on a whim fianchettoes on the kingside, which makes no sense. Well, that is basically what we have here, although you may well point out that both d5 and f4 were free moves for White. And in case you were wondering about the stats: Black scores 83% from this position – not so bad!

8 Nf3

This makes more sense than playing the knight to the more passive e2-square. After 8 Nge2 Qb6 9 Qd3 Nc5 10 Qc4 Nf6 11 Be3 cxd5 12 exd5 Bd7 (the greedy 12 ... Qxb2!? is also quite playable) 13 Bxc5 dxc5 14 0-0-0 0-0 15 h3 Ne8 16 g4 Nd6 17 Qd3 Qa5 18 Kb1 b5 Black's attack flowed quicker in J. Sprenger-I.Ibragimov, Bad Wildbad 2000.

8 ... cxd5 9 Nxd5

Better than 9 exd5?! Bxc3+! 10 bxc3 Ngf6 11 Qd4 Nb6 12 c4 Qc7 13 Nd2 Bf5 when White's position was riddled with weak pawns in M.Popchev-N.Davies, Albena 1986.



9 ... Nb6!?

Question: The fourth knight move out of nine?

Answer: True, and yet Black doesn't really look too far behind in development. The crucial ingredient in the assessment, as mentioned before, is that most of White's 'free' moves were non-developmental pawn moves.

Question: Why did Black move an already developed piece to b6 when he could challenge the knight the other way and increase his development with 9 ... Ngf6?

Answer: Your suggestion looks more logical and is the move I would play. Having studied and being a fan of Jon Speelman's games, I have come to the conclusion that it is next to impossible to predict his moves. My theory: his wild hair somehow subtly influences his brain, inducing odd move choices! Only he can give you the answer.

10 0-0 Nxd5 11 Qxd5

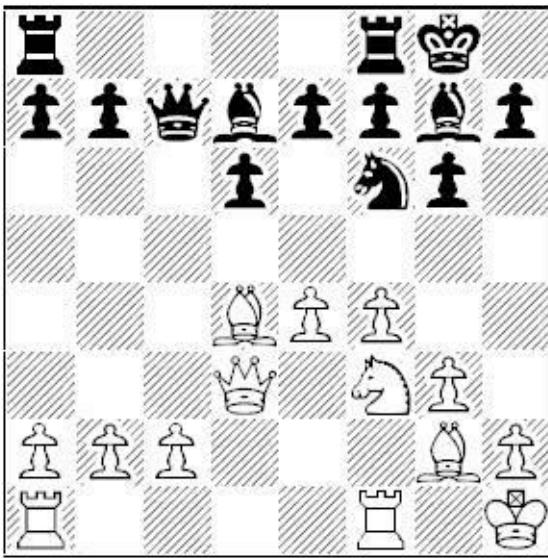
Question: Why not recapture with the e-pawn, with potential pressure down the e-file later on?

Answer: Having played f4, White is denied Bg5 ideas so e7 is rather easy to protect. If 11 exd5 Qb6+ 12 Kh1 this is how I would play Black: 12 ... h5!? 13 Re1 Nh6, and Black sets up with ... Nf5 when ... h4 is constantly in the air.

11 ... Qb6+ 12 Kh1 Nf6 13 Qd3 0-0 14 Be3 Qc7

Black reaches an equal Dragon set-up. Of course b2 is prohibited: 14 ... Qxb2?? 15 Rfb1.

15 Bd4 Bd7



16 c4

White goes for a Maroczy bind formation, hoping to extract something from his extra space.

Instead 16 e5!? Bf5!? (Black can also chicken out and play 16 ... dxe5) 17 exf6 Bxd3 18 fxg7 Bxf1 19 gxf8Q+ Rxf8 20 Rxf1 Qxc2 looks like unclear fun. Black gets a queen and two pawns for three minor pieces.

16 ... Bc6 17 Rae1 Rad8

Now ... e5 is in the air.

18 Bc3 b6

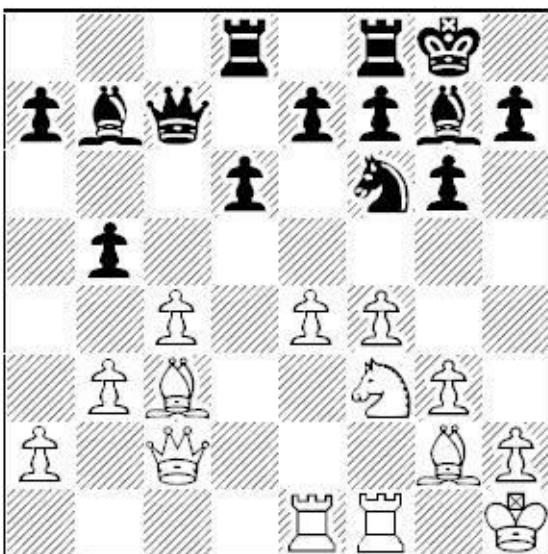
Stillness doesn't necessarily constitute a lack. Speelman, uncharacteristically laid back, decides to nice it up, declining to stir up trouble with 18 ... e5 19 Nd2 exf4 when the position sharpens.

19 Qc2 Bb7 20 b3

I don't believe in White's attacking chances if he speculates with 20 e5!? Ng4 21 h3 Nh6 22 g4 Qxc4 23 exd6 exd6 24 f5.

20 ... b5!

The hypermodern ideal: chip away at the opponent's centre from the wings.



21 e5

Of course White avoids 21 cxb5?? Rc8 22 Rc1 Nxe4.

21 ... dxe5 22 fxe5!?

The hungry bird takes the bait and follows the hunter's trail of bread crumbs. It looks as if Spasov mistakenly believes he stands better; a cardinal chess sin – overestimating attacking chances and taking on numerous pawn weaknesses. I would go for 22 Bxe5 Qc5, but even then I prefer Black.

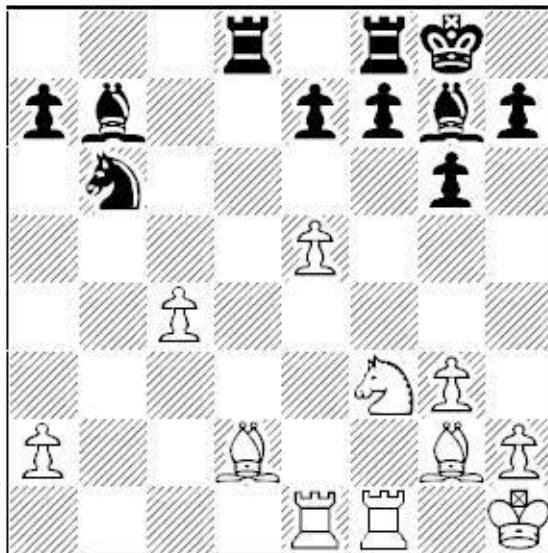
22 ... Nd5!?

Tricky, but not as strong as 22 ... Ng4!.

23 Bd2??

White has better chances to hold his position together with 23 cxd5 b4 24 Rc1 bxc3 25 Qxc3.

23 ... bxc4 24 Qxc4 Qxc4 25 bxc4 Nb6



White is in trouble since he carries a mortgage debt of three isolanis.

26 Bb4 Rfe8 27 e6!?

Wearily, the pawn continues its death march up the e-file. White makes matters worse by firing another volley into the void. The notion that achieving e6 somehow pierces Black's defences proved to be a disastrous idée fixe in White's mind for some time now. White should decrease his weakness load by targeting f7 with 27 Ng5! Bxg2+ 28 Kxg2 Nxc4 29 Nxf7 Rd3 when he only stands slightly worse.

27 ... f5

Black dreams of a beautiful future with ... Kg7, ... Kf6, and ... Kxe6 later in the ending.

28 Nd2 Bxg2+ 29 Kxg2 Bh6!

Targeting the defender of c4.

30 Rd1 Rd4 31 Nb3

White may have better drawing chances in the line 31 Bc3 Rd3 32 Nb1 Red8 33 Rxd3 Rxd3 34 Rf3 Rxf3 35 Kxf3 Nxc4.

31 ... Rxc4 32 Bc5 Bg5 33 Rd4 Rxc5!

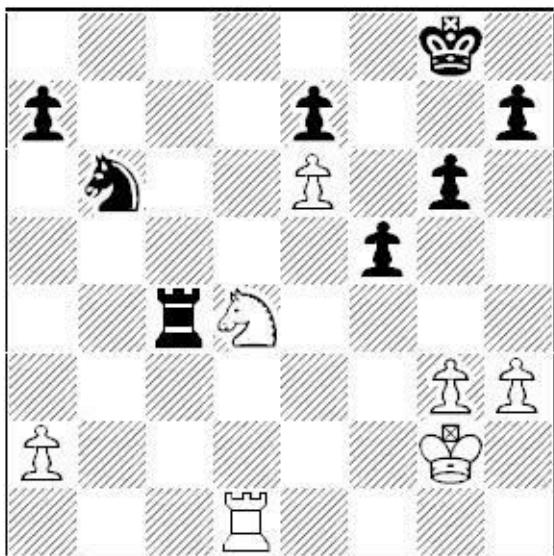
Principle: simplification benefits the material-up side.

34 Nxc5 Be3 35 Nb3 Bxd4 36 Nxd4 Rc8 37 h3 Rc4!

White's knight lacks a stable post.

38 Rd1

Good people don't always fall in love with other good people. White's rook lives in disharmony with his knight, like a man trapped in a loveless marriage – yet a marriage vow he still believes in. This is a bad deal for White's rook, who is forced into passive consent, propping up the d4-knight.



Exercise (planning): Come up with a clear plan to convert Black's position to a win.

Answer: Step 1: Transfer the king to f6, where it cosies up to White's weak e6-pawn, whose remaining moments of life tick down to zero.

38 ... Kg7

Destination: f6. Black's king strolls the sumptuous palatial grounds in search of low-hanging fruit.

39 g4 Kf6 40 Rd3

Step 2: Transfer knight to c7, where it adds a second attacker on e6.

40 ... Nd5! 41 Kg3 Nc7 0-1

Step 3: Eat the pawn on e6!. White's pawn, a ship adrift and lost in the fog, finally sinks.

Summary

White's tempo gains are illusionary after 5 d5. Black is happy to lure the pawns forward.

Game 31

A.Frois-N.Davies

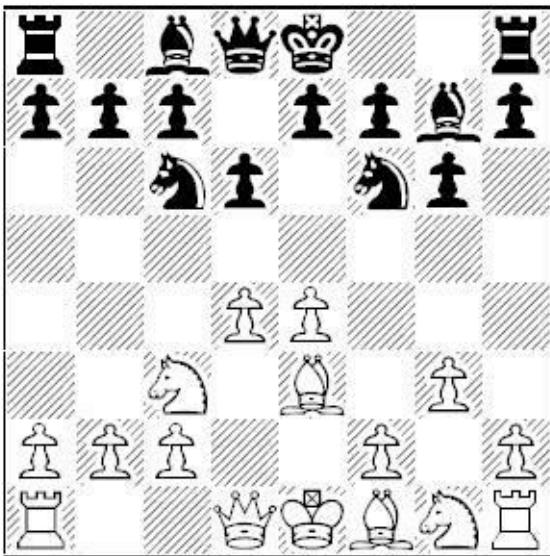
Cala d'Or 1986

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 g3 Nc6 5 Be3

White sensibly protects his d-pawn rather than chase the rainbow by pushing his d-pawn, as we examined last game.

Instead 5 Nge2?! doesn't make much sense since White weakened the f3-square: 5 ... Bg4! 6 Be3 Bf3 7 Rg1 Nf6 8 Bg2 Bxg2 9 Rxg2 0-0 and White's fianchettoed rook leaves one with an odd impression, as Black more than equalized in J.Lamorelle-V.Tkachiev, Cannes 1999.

5 ... Nf6



Question: Doesn't such a move violate your anti-Pirc bias?

Answer: I have no problems with the Pirc, as long as we get a favourable one! In this case, we make White use up a move to cover the g4-square, since the annoying ... Ng4 is in the air.

6 h3 e5

We fight back in the centre:

7 dxe5

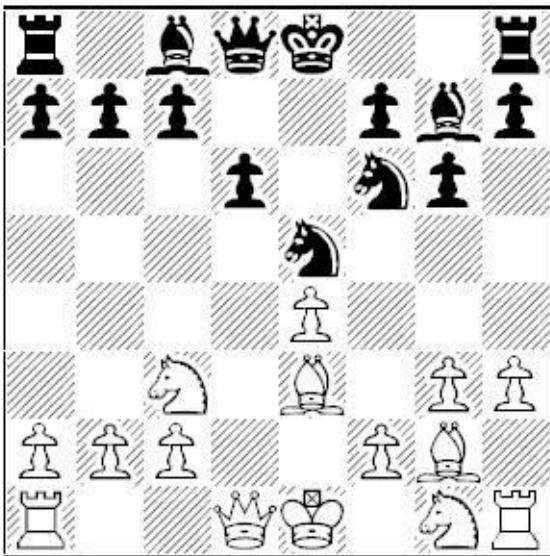
If 7 Nge2 d5!? and after 8 Bg2 Nxe4 9 Nxe4 dxe4 10 d5 Na5 11 Bxe4 Nc4 12 Bc1 0-0 13 Bg2 f5 14 0-0 Nd6 15 b3 f4 Black took over the initiative in J.Cobb-A.Khalifman, Eupen 1997.

Question: Why doesn't White gain a tempo with 7 d5?

Answer: Central resolution tends to favour Black in such cases, since he gets a nice looking King's Indian, whichever way he plays it. To me this is a bit like saying: *Weekend at Bernie's* was a lousy movie so let's go ahead and make the sequel, *Weekend at Bernie's II*! The fianchetto line is quite harmless for Black; by playing 7 d5, White transfers to a harmless and possibly even worse sequel, a KID position where White's c-pawn sits on c2 rather than on c4. After 7 ... Ne7 (7 ... Nd4 also looks good; Black would be happy to give up a pawn to take command of the dark squares) 8 Qd2 Bd7 9 0-0-0 0-0 10 f3 Nh5! 11 Nge2 (to meet 11 g4 with 11 ... Nf4!) 11 ... f5 12 Rg1 Nf6 13 Bg2 b5 14 Rde1 a5 Black's attack looks more dangerous than White's, P.Potapov-D.Markosian, Nabereznye Chelny 2008.

7 ... Nxe5 8 Bg2

8 f4 tends to weaken White's e-pawn. After 8 ... Nc6 9 Bg2 0-0 10 Nge2 Re8 11 Qd2 Na5 12 b3 Bd7 13 0-0-0 Bc6 the pressure on e4 gives Black sufficient counterplay, D.Sermek-I.Smirin, Istanbul Olympiad 2000.



8 ... 0-0

Question: Why didn't Black gain a tempo with 8 ... Nc4 9 Bc1?

Answer: Because he loses the move back when White plays b3.

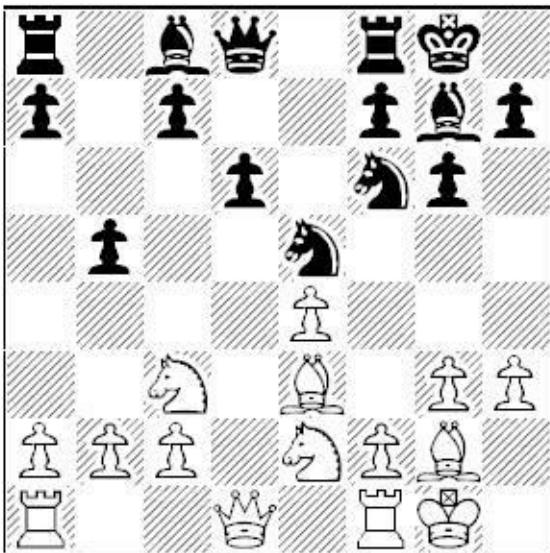
9 Nge2 b5!

The patented pawn thrust by which Black takes the initiative.

10 0-0

Best. Davies gives the lines:

- a) 10 Nxb5!? Rb8 11 Nxa7 Bb7 when Black gets ferocious activity for the material.
- b) 10 f4?! Nc4 11 Bd4 c5! looks heavily in Black's favour.



10 ... b4!

Well timed.

Question: Do you still stand by your motto of avoiding
... b4 unless White tosses in a4 first?

Answer: Perhaps it is a matter of taste, but, yes, from my experience, more often than not, unprovoked ... b4 moves tend to be too loosening for Black. However, in this case GM Davies prepared a specific assessment at the end of his line. So the motto should be: avoid an unprovoked ... b4 *unless* you attain a specific goal in doing so.

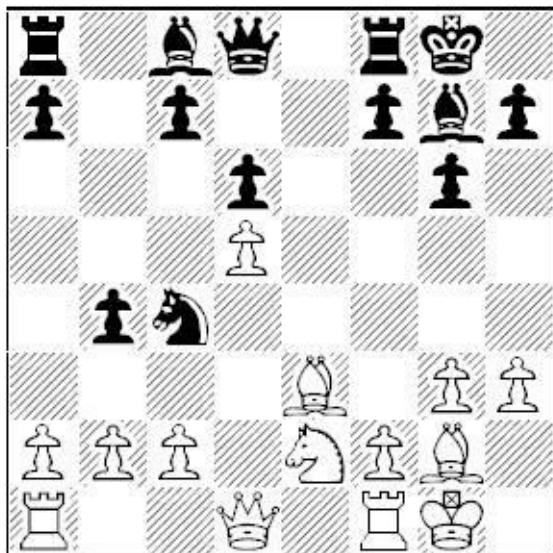
Question: Why not gain a tempo with 10 ... Nc4?

Answer: Be careful. There are tactics in play down the h1-a8 diagonal. 11 e5! wins material for White.

11 Nd5 Nxd5 12 exd5

12 Qxd5?! just loses a tempo to 12 ... Be6.

12 ... Nc4!



Double attack: b2 and e3. Clear proof that parties can have different opinions, but not different facts. In defiance of my earlier anti- ... b4 rhetoric, Black emerges from the complications in good shape. Now we see Davies's idea when he initiates his plan beginning with 10 ... b4!.

13 Bd4 Nxb2 14 Qb1 Na4 15 Qxb4

Davies writes: "Maintaining material parity, but Black is better here because of his superior development." And I would add, Black's slightly superior pawn structure as well.

15 ... Bd7 16 Rab1 Re8 17 Be3

Rather than this retreat, maybe White should go for 17 Bxg7 Kxg7 18 Nd4.

17 ... a5 18 Qb3

18 Qa3! looks more accurate.

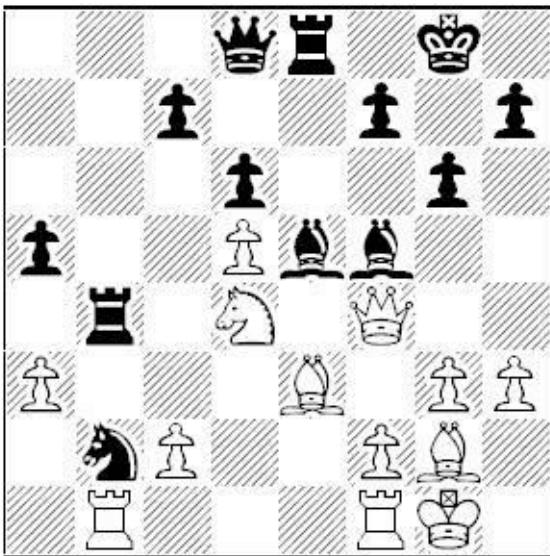
18 ... Rb8 19 Qc4 Nb2 20 Qf4 Rb4

No rest for White's queen.

21 Nd4 Bf5

More accurate is 21 ... Be5! 22 Qf3 Nc4 when the pressure builds.

22 a3 Be5



Exercise (critical decision): White is getting pushed around in a big way. Is it time to sac his queen with 23 axb4, or should he exercise biblical forbearance with 23 Qf3 instead?

23 Qf3?!

White appears to begin a pronouncement, but thinks better of it by approaching the problem with guarded indecision.

Answer: The time had arrived to raise the treble a notch with a bold sac: 23 axb4! Bxf4 24 Bxf4 Nc4 25 bxa5 Nxa5 26 Nxf5 gxf5 when White's rook and piece, coupled with his superior structure, should give him good chances to hold it together.

23 ... Rxd4 24 Rxb2 Be4

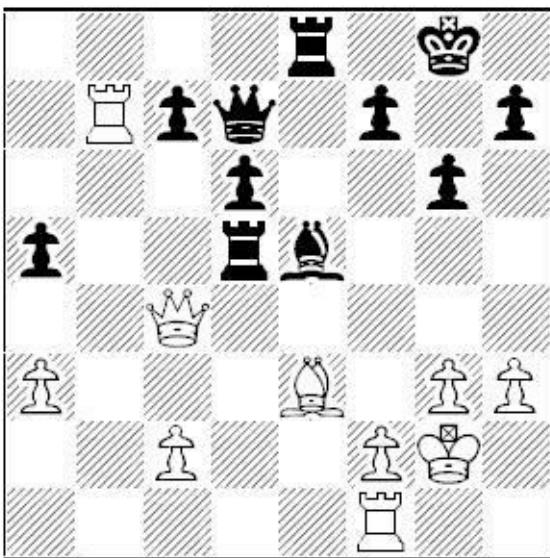
This wins a pawn, but gives White hope. Instead 24 ... Rc4! tightens the screws.

25 Qe2 Bxg2 26 Kxg2 Rxd5

26 ... Qa8! was the better way to accomplish the goal.

27 Rb7 Qd7 28 Qc4?

White regains his pawn with 28 c4! Qc6 29 Rxc7!.



Exercise (combination alert): White threatens both the hanging rook on d5 and also c7. Find a trick for Black to keep all his material.

Answer: Interference.

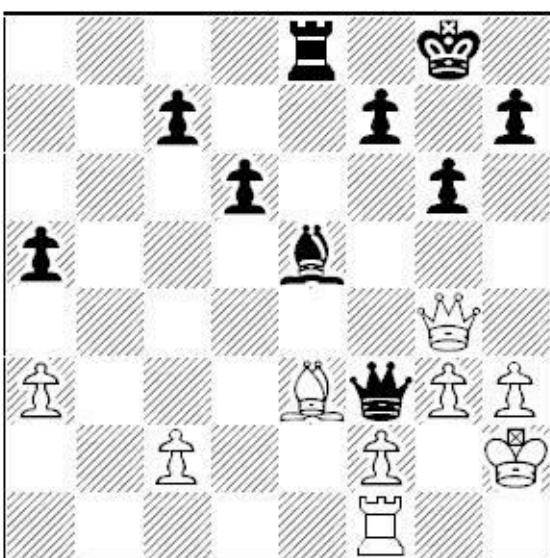
28 ... Rc5! 29 Bxc5

The bishop shuts his eyes and counts to ten, hoping to avoid losing his temper with the meddling rook.

29 ... Qc6+ 30 Kh2 Qxb7 31 Be3 Qf3

Threat: ... Bxg3+.

32 Qg4?



Exercise (combination alert): White covered Black's threat with his last move and his king remains persistently entrenched.
But look closer: did White really cover all of Black's tricks?

Answer: Black can play the intended deflection faux sac anyway on g3.

32 ... Bxg3+! 33 Qxg3 Rx e3!

All this rain must get depressing for White. Davies is impressively resourceful with his endless stream of dirty tricks. The overload shot is only possible due to that fat, sedentary rook on the sofa on f1. Well, White probably expected the worst anyway.

34 fxe3 Qxf1 35 Qg5 Qf2+ 36 Kh1 Qf1+ 37 Kh2 Qf2+ 38 Kh1 Qe1+! 39 Kh2 Qc3! 0-1

Some families are democracies, while other are dictatorships where one parent is the unquestioned ruler. In this case the black queen, who rules with an iron fist, is a strict constitutionalist when it comes to prosecuting the opponent's counterplay. Davies cuts his meat into bite-sized, swallowable portions to steer clear of choking from future perpetual check attempts from White, or future queening races.

Summary

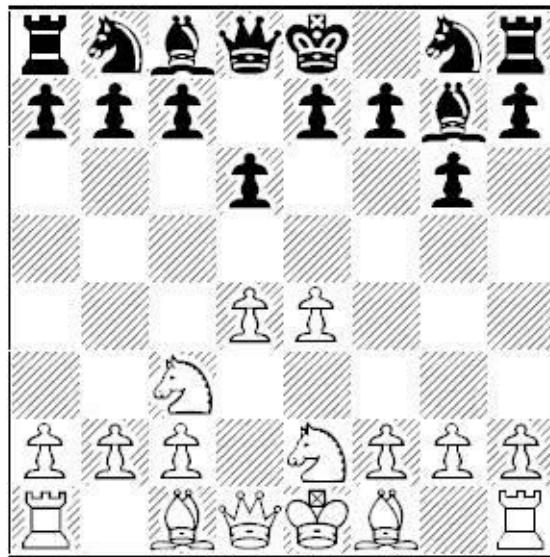
Black receives sufficient piece play after 7 ... Nxe5 to offset White's extra central space.

Game 32

F.Perez-H.Danielsen

Reykjavik 2012

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 Nge2



This is the tricky move order we talked about earlier in the chapter.

4 ... Nd7!

Question: Won't we just transpose to the Fianchetto line after 4 ... Nc6?

Answer: The trouble is White isn't committed to the Fianchetto line just yet. If he plays 5 Be3 we end up in a version of Chapter One, but in a line we don't play! In this case, I like Tiger's recommendation 4 ... Nd7!, the move Danielsen played in the game.

5 g3

5 Be3 a6! is no problem for us and we transpose back to lines from Chapter One.

5 ... c5!

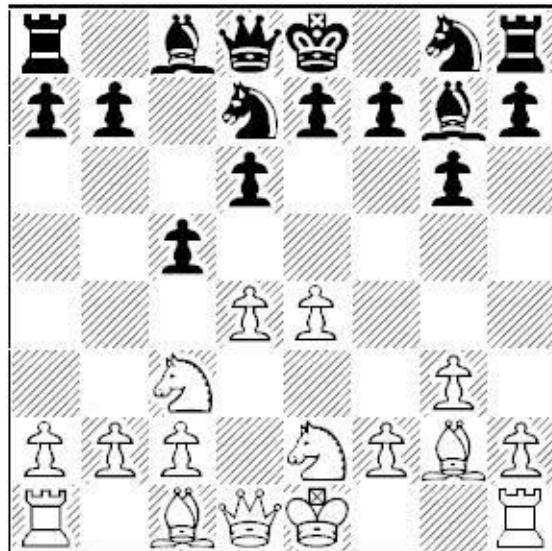
Black plays as if against a fianchetto line of Sicilian Dragon, rather harmless for White.

Instead 5 ... a6 6 Bg2 b5?! 7 e5 Rb8 8 e6! fxe6 9 Nf4 gives White terrific compensation for the pawn,

which in all probability, he may soon win back anyway.

6 Bg2

As we have observed in other games from this book, an early 6 d5?! is generally rather limp for White, who will find it next to impossible to ever play for an e5 pawn break. However, 6 Be3 b6 7 Bg2 Rb8 will probably just transpose to the game continuation.



6 ... Rb8

Question: Why this artificial move rather than just 6 ... cxd4?

Answer: First, 6 ... cxd4 may not be Black's best move order, since after 7 Nxd4 it will be next to impossible to achieve ... a6 and ... b5 due to the weakness of the c6-square. So basically, Black changes the order and plays ... Rb8 and ... b6 first, leaving options open later for ... cxd4 when favourable. Remember, don't fear d5 from White, where he ends up with a passive position with nothing to do.

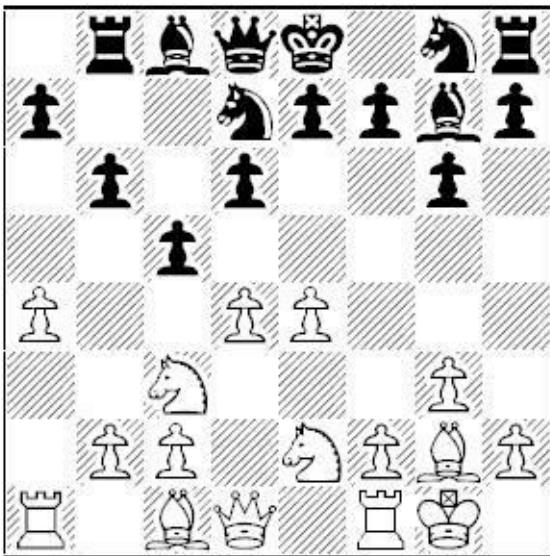
7 a4

Just in case Black contemplated ... b5.

Question: If White plays 7 Be3 should we play ... b5 or ... b6?

Answer: Play 7 ... b6 and continue with our plan. Let's just make White worry about ... b5.

7 ... b6 8 0-0



8 ... a6

The position remains without a localized, central core, a bit like the internet. I'm not sure if the inclusion of ... a6 is necessary and would just fianchetto with 8 ... Bb7.

Question: Can we now play 8 ... cxd4?

Answer: You can, but what is the rush? I think it's better to keep White guessing. A game continued: 9 Nxd4 Bb7 10 Nd5 a6 11 Be3 Ngf6 12 Nxf6+ Nxf6 13 e5 and now in R.Fontaine-N.Ronchetti, Palermo 2007, Black should play 13 ... Nd5! 14 e6 0-0 15 exf7+ Rxf7 16 Ne6 Nxe3 17 Nxd8 Nxd1 18 Nxf7 Bxg2 19 Kxg2 Nxb2 when he gets compensation for the exchange.

9 h3 Ngf6

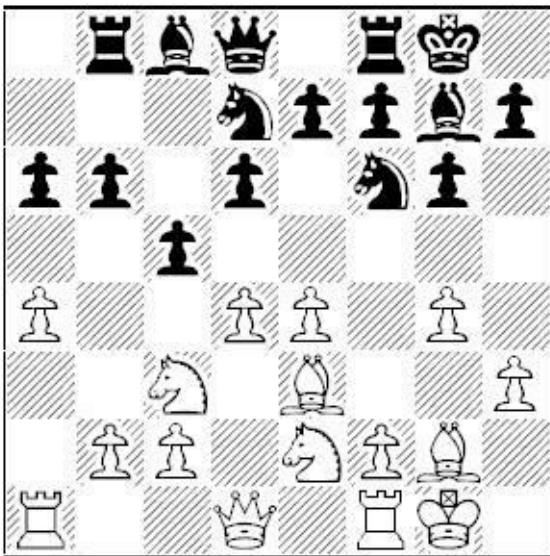
Once again I would toss in 9 ... Bb7 first.

10 Be3

Houdini seems to think White gets full compensation with the pawn sac 10 e5!? dxe5 11 dxe5 Nxe5 12 Qxd8+ Kxd8 13 Bf4 Nfd7, but unless White has something concrete within the next 10 moves or so, he will just be down a pawn.

10 ... 0-0 11 g4!?

White decides to launch a Sicilian style pawn storm on the kingside. 11 Qd2 intending Bh6 is a calmer alternative.



11 ... cxd4

Correct timing based on the principle: open the centre when attacked on the wing.

12 Bxd4

Question: Why not recapture with the knight?

Answer: Since White is going for it on the kingside he wants his knight into the mix of the attack on g3. 12 Nxd4 Bb7 13 g5 Ne8 14 h4 Rc8 is the alternative, with a Sicilian Dragon, Fianchetto variation-style position.

12 ... Bb7 13 Ng3 e5

This move leads to a structure closer associated with Najdorf. Black wants a piece of the centre and is willing to take on a backward d-pawn to do it.

14 Be3 Nc5 15 b4?!

This is one of those feel-good, lash-out moves which fails to improve White's game an iota. He sends Black's knight to where it wants to go and loosens his queenside.

15 ... Ne6 16 g5?!

Playing like there is no tomorrow. White already looks a tad overextended.

16 ... Ne8 17 Nd5

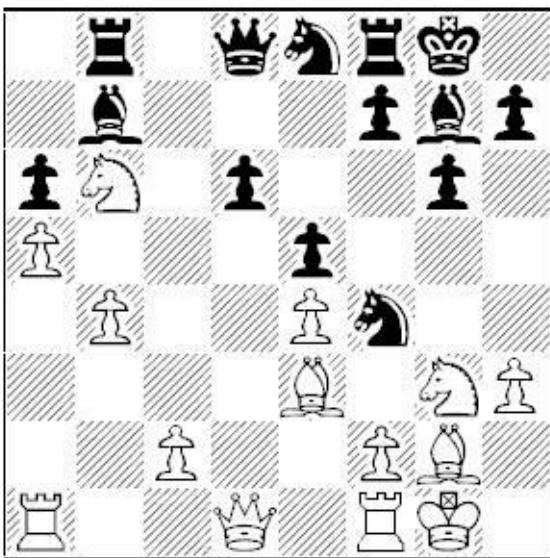
He probably didn't like the looks of 17 h4 Nf4.

17 ... Nxg5 18 Nxb6 Ne6

18 ... f5! also looks good.

19 a5 Nf4

Anyone who plays the Pelikan or Najdorf Sicilian knows that in such positions Black's kingside attacking chances outweigh White's build-up on the queenside.



20 Ra3?!

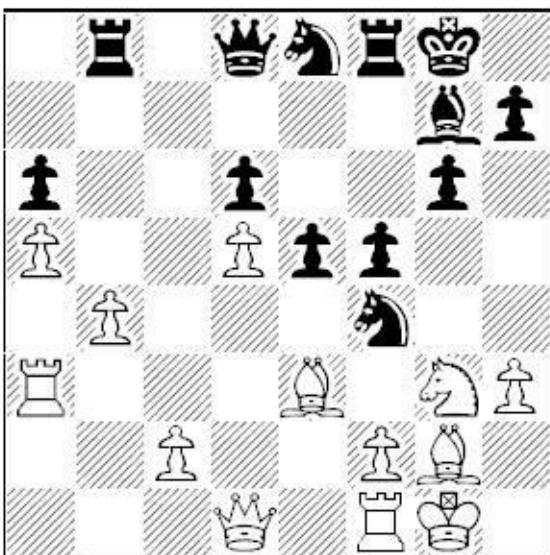
He should play 20 f3.

20 ... f5

20 ... Nxg2! 21 Kxg2 f5 looks quite awful for White.

21 Nd5 Bxd5 22 exd5?

White had to cough up an exchange, with 22 Bxf4 Bc4 23 Bd2.

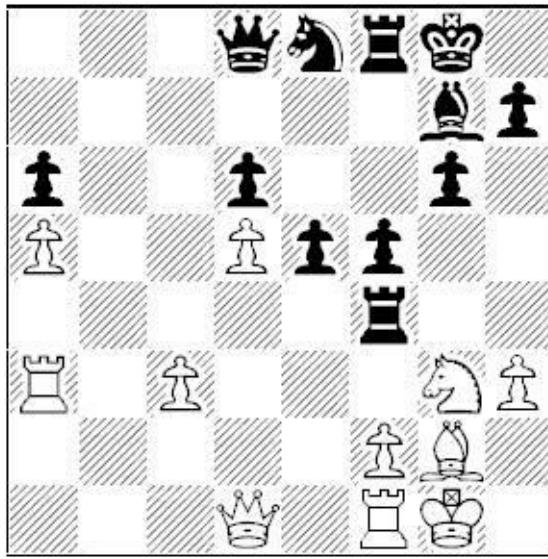


Exercise (combination alert): Bit by bit we witness the systematic fragmentation of White's harmony, until the cumulative effect arrives. Both parties miss a not-so-difficult combination for Black. Black to play and win a piece.

22 ... Rxb4?!

Answer: The wheels of justice fail to turn. Of course Black is still winning, but he had much better. Sometimes even GMs make hasty decisions. Black probably took the free pawn instantly. If Danielsen had taken a few more seconds, he would have found 22 ... Nxg2! 23 Kxg2 f4 forking.

23 c3 Rc4 24 Bxf4 Rxf4



White remains dead lost, down a pawn, while carrying the burden of a rotten position as well.

25 Qd3 Nc7 26 Ne2 Rh4 27 Rb3 e4 28 Qc4 Nb5 29 Rxb5!

The only chance. He desperately seeks a vein of opportunity from which initiative – however slight – may flow. White's game, currently a dismal 'F' grade, hopes for a shot at working its way up to a solid 'D' if he takes on a project for extra credit. He wouldn't have lasted long after 29 Qb4 f4!.

29 ... axb5 30 Qxb5 f4 31 f3 e3 32 a6 Rh5 33 c4 Rhf5

The top priority is to keep White's passed a-pawn in check.

34 Rb1 R5f7 35 c5 dxc5 36 Qxc5

The billiard balls bounce off the sides and coalesce on the queenside.

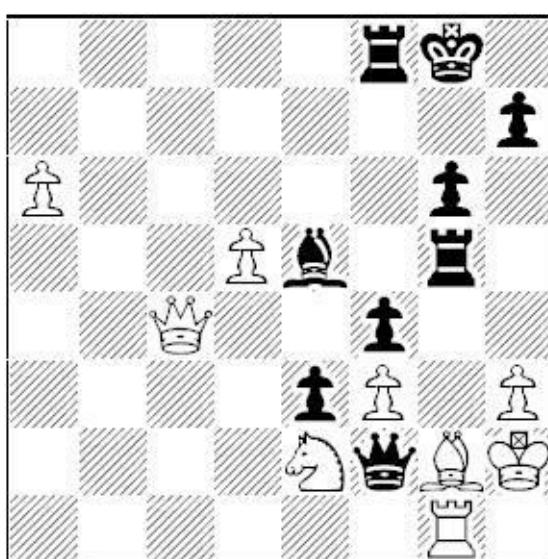
36 ... Be5 37 Rb6 Qh4!

Reminding White that his king isn't all that safe.

38 Qc4 Qf2+ 39 Kh2 Rf5!

Threatening to swing to g5.

40 Rb1 Rg5 41 Rg1



Exercise (planning): Black has his opponent tied up, but not knocked out. How would you continue the attack/initiative as Black?

Answer: Return some material to create passed pawns of your own.

41 ... Rxg2+! 42 Rxg2 Qxf3

White's kingside pawn cover falls away, as Black proceeds to denude White's king, the way a big coal corporation strip mines a mountainside.

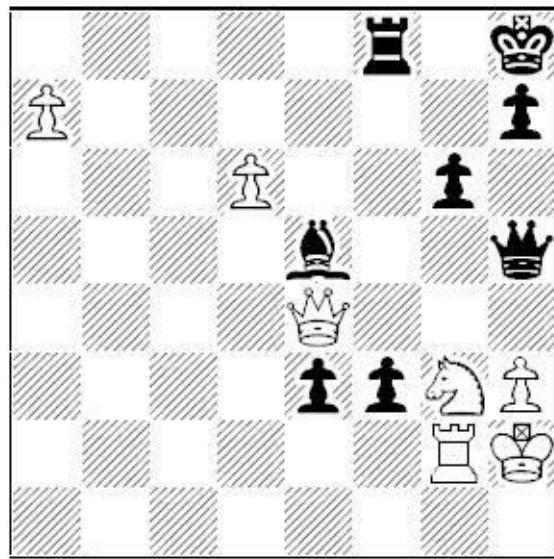
43 a7 Qh5

Clearing the path for ... f3+.

44 d6+ Kh8 45 Qe4 f3+

White's king, who would like to get off at the next bus stop, runs for cover as Black's check rings like a leper's bell.

46 Ng3



Exercise (combination alert): White threatens to make a queen on a8, but his king lives in dire danger, reminding us of the Warren Zevon song: "Send lawyers, guns, and money!" What would you play here for Black?

Answer: Ignore it! Now White's universe takes on a bizarre twist.

46 ... fxg2! 0-1

Forced mate in 26 announces *Houdini!* After 47 a8Q g1Q+! 48 Kxg1 Qd1+ 49 Kh2 Qd2+ 50 Qg2 Bxg3+ 51 Kxg3 Qxd6+ 52 Kh4 (this king, a bit like Keith Richards, takes a beating from life's revelry, yet keeps bravely rocking on) 52 ... Qf4+ 53 Qg4 Qf2+ 54 Qg3 Rxa8 it's time for White to take an antacid.

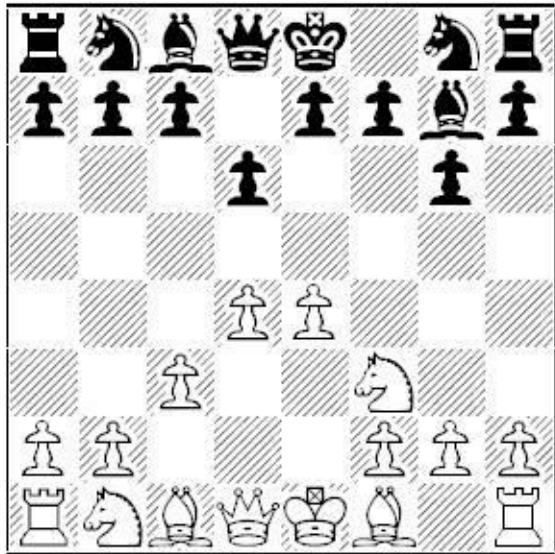
Summary

On the tricky 4 Nge2 order, remember that White hasn't committed to the Fianchetto line and may transpose back to Chapter One. So avoid putting your knight on c6 and respond with 4 ... Nd7 instead.

Chapter Seven

Coward's Variation

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 c3

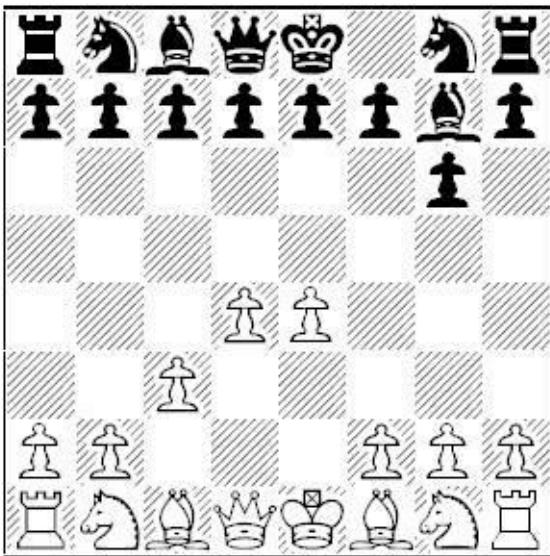


The c3 line proves to be the surly, uncooperative co-worker whom everyone in the office dislikes. In some chapters of this book you may feel inundated with data which you have trouble assimilating. This chapter isn't one of them! People who play the early c3 lines are normally ultra-safe players who tend to want to avoid a fight (i.e. your writer!). They usually play the line because the positions are quiet and easy to learn. Equalizing with Black is easy (which is a bit like saying: "I'm really good at tic-tac-toe!"); on the other hand, finding dynamic winning chances is not so easy.

I suggest two ways to try and stir up a fight in the chapter. Firstly, we can provoke with an early ... Nc6. If White pushes his d-pawn we get our imbalanced position. A word of warning: don't underestimate this line. The c3 system's unseen dulling influence, seemingly written in invisible ink, can insidiously turn visibly deadly. If Black sits around, White slowly makes space gains on the queenside so we must remain aggressive. Secondly, we have an even more radical option: play ... c5 and ... Nc6!?. When White kicks us with d5, we send our knight to the rim with ... Na5, after which we arrive in a sharp King's Indian-like position.

Game 33
C.Lakdawala-P.Graves
San Diego (rapid) 2010

1 d4 g6 2 e4 Bg7 3 c3



“I am not a coward”, said the coward.

3 ... d6

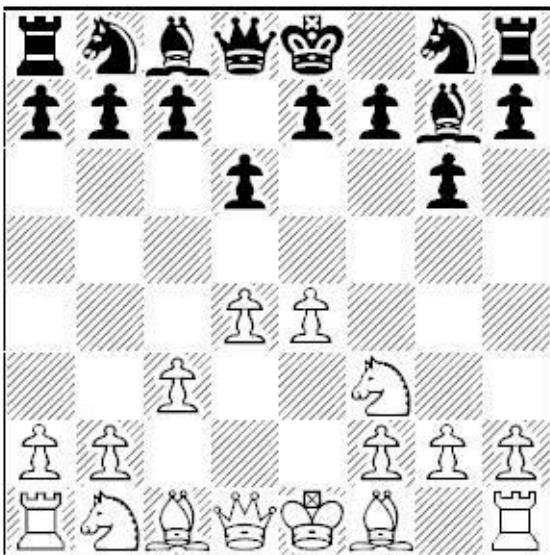
Black also has the option 3 ... d5!? 4 exd5 (a personal preference; 4 e5 with a Gurgenidze Pirc-style game is also an option for White) 4 ... Qxd5 5 Nf3 c5 and we reach a c3-Sicilian where Black has committed to an early ... g6 line.

Question: Can White avoid c3-Sicilian positions?

Answer: Sure, White can just play the 3 Nf3 d6 4 c3 move order, and this removes the possibility of c3-Sicilian position transpositions.

4 Nf3

We reach the starting position of Coward’s Variation, my favourite line versus Modern when I’m White.



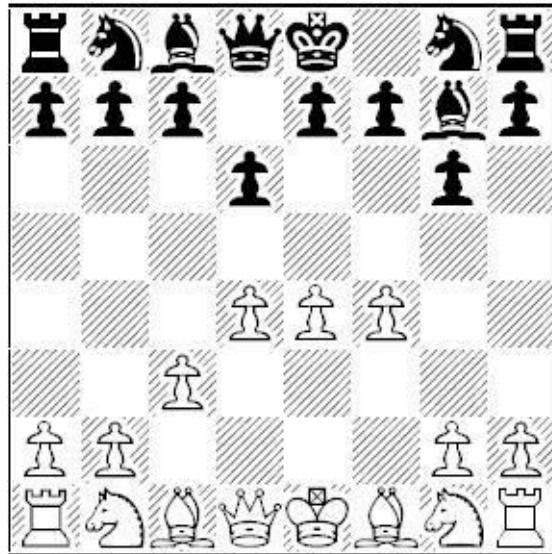
Question: Why do you call it Coward’s Variation?

Answer: First, any line I play tends to distinctly veer in that direction! This is about the safest way White can meet Modern. Going c3 bolsters the d4 point and White hopes for something with his space edge, without handing Black even a trace of counterplay. Tiger calls this line “Lazy Variation” because it is so simple to play for White. Basically, this line vacuums the position of sharpness as White forces a game of trench warfare instead.

Question: Do you think White can force an edge with it?

Answer: No. In fact, there are multiple equalizing methods. However, if you are playing for a win as Black – and most Modern players tend to be combative, stick-it-to-the-man types – the trouble for us in this line is to find ideas which allow us dynamic potential. Not such an easy job!

Before moving on, 4 f4 is another rare offshoot we should be familiar with.



Question: Anything to worry about?

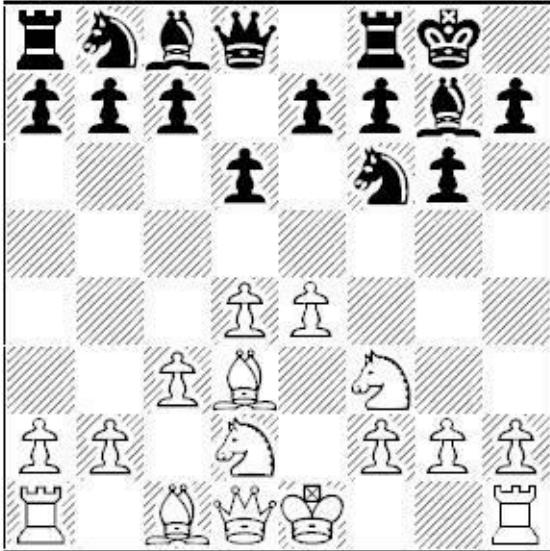
Answer: I don't think so. The line, to my mind, is a tad schizophrenic, mixing the super quiet c3 with the violent Austrian Attack. It doesn't score particularly well for White either. Following 4 ... Nf6 5 Bd3 (5 e5 gives Black a very nice looking Alekhine's Defence situation after 5 ... dxe5 6 fxe5 Nd5 7 Nf3 0-0 8 Bc4 c5 9 0-0 Nc6 10 dxc5 Be6 11 Re1 Qd7 12 Na3 Rad8; Black had more than enough compensation for the pawn and will probably win it back soon, C.Chase-A.Ivanov, Chelmsford 2001) 5 ... 0-0 6 Nf3 c5 7 0-0 (7 dxc5 Nbd7! is a sound pawn sac: 8 cxd6 exd6 9 0-0 Nc5 10 Qc2 Re8 and Black got more than enough compensation in P.Poloch-K.Movsziszian, Imperia 2009) 7 ... cxd4 8 cxd4 in case you were wondering, White scores a less-than-impressive 36% from this position. After 8 ... Nc6 (now ... Nb4 is in the air) 9 Nc3 Bg4 10 Be3 White found his wobbly centre under some pressure in B.De Baenst-B.Jobava, Istanbul 2004.

4 ... Nf6

Switching to the Pirc is perfectly fine against such milquetoast play from White. Next game we look at the more provocative 4 ... Nc6!?.

5 Nbd2 0-0 6 Bd3

Unlike in some other chapters in this book, here Black lacks obvious points of attack in White's centre.



Question: What is Black's equalizing plan?

Answer: Play ... e5 at some point or another, where we essentially reach a very satisfactory position for Black.

6 ... Nc6

Also possible is 6 ... c5, as we'll see later in the chapter.

7 0-0 e5 8 dxe5

Naturally, I jump at the precious opportunity to steer the game down an even duller lane.

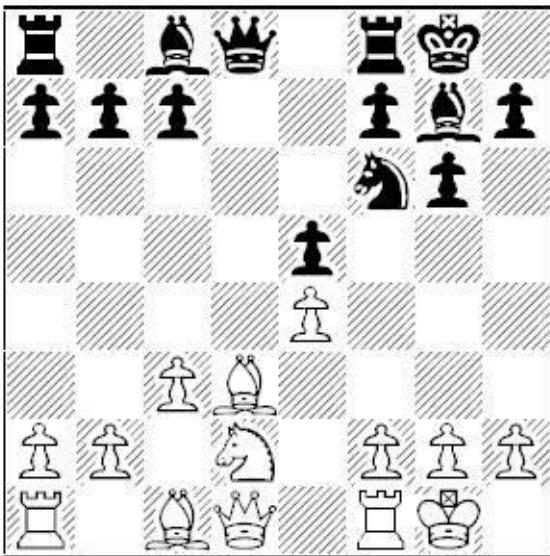
Instead 8 Re1 Nh5 (Tiger prefers 8 ... Nd7) 9 Nb3 Bg4 (an aggressive black attacking idea in the position lies in 9 ... h6, intending ... Qf6 and ... Nf4, followed by a build-up with ... g5 and maybe ... h5) 10 Be2 a5! 11 a4 exd4 is dynamically equal, C.Lupulescu-I.Kurnosov, Rijeka 2010. If White recaptures with his c-pawn, he gives up the b4-square.

8 ... Nxe5

Trades help Black if simple equality is what he is after. Instead 8 ... dxe5 9 Nc4 Nh5 10 Bg5 Qe8 11 Re1 h6 12 Be3 Qe7 is a bit sharper than the version we get after the game continuation, A.Dreev-M.Makarov, Elista 1997.

9 Nxe5 dxe5

I doubt you will be shocked when I announce that Black achieved easy equality.



Question: Why would you disgrace the white pieces by handing over equality without a fight?

Answer: Essentially there are two philosophical camps when playing the white pieces:

a) Enter the theoretically best line and try to squeeze out at least a ‘+=’ edge, no matter what kind of position arises.

b) Use the white pieces to force the kind of position you play best – even if you hand Black equality. Obviously, I am a camp ‘b’ guy! When I land in complex super tactical positions, I play below my rating and routinely manage to make a fool of myself. Conversely, my strength rockets in quiet positions or endgames. I score over 90% as White in the painfully boring c3 Modern lines. So it makes sense to go where the money is.

10 Nc4 Nd7

Slightly more combative is 10 ... Nh5 11 g3 Qe7 12 b3 Rd8 13 Qc2 Nf6, as in E.Meduna-J.Ehlvest, Lubniewice 1994. Now I would play 14 a4 and expand on the queenside.

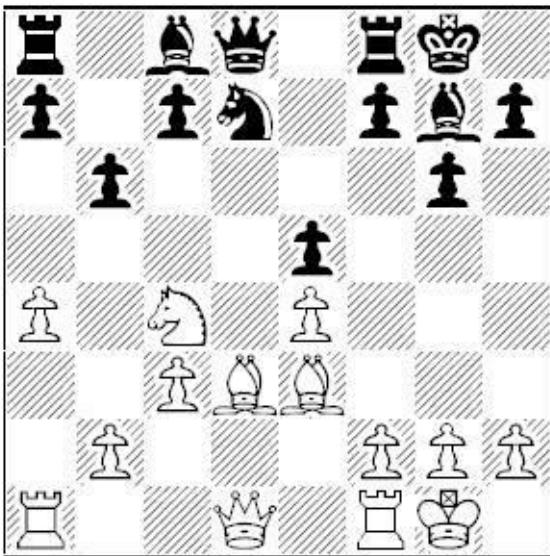
11 Be3 b6

Question: Why doesn’t Black just get on with it and get active with 11 ... f5?

Answer: Black achieves some measure of activity, but also weakens his pawn structure and provides White with targets after 12 exf5 gxf5 13 f3, but perhaps you are correct. Black can get squeezed if he plays too safely in this line.

12 a4

White normally hopes to extract an edge by playing for slow, queenside space in such positions.



12 ... Bb7

Question: Why does your opponent ignore your build-up?

Answer: He doesn't want to provide White with line-opening targets on the queenside. 12 ... a5 is also possible, but then Black must be on the lookout for b4 from White.

13 Qc2

Clamping down to arrest ... f5 ideas. Black will just ignore 13 a5.

13 ... Qe7 14 b4 Kh8

He toys with the possibility of ... f5 later and attack on the kingside.

15 f3 Qh4?!

Having watched thousands of horror films, I conclude that it's quite common to bring the dead back to life. The queen excursion looks like a waste of time and Black should just allow her to rest in peace. Better to just play 15 ... Rfd8, but even there I still prefer White, who built up a little space on the queenside.

16 Rfd1 Bh6 17 Bf2

Of course, I don't want to swap off my good bishop.

17 ... Qe7 18 Ne3

Eyeing d5 and f5.

18 ... Nf6 19 a5

The correct timing for the move since Black lacks any bypassing ... b5 ideas.

19 ... Rfd8 20 Qe2

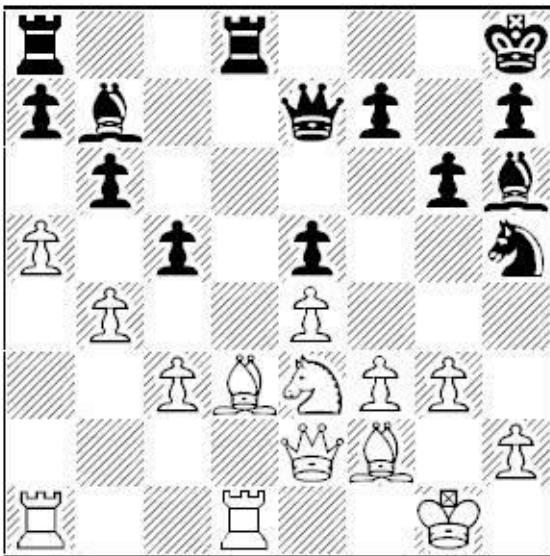
White keeps open possibilities of Ba6, to weaken and enter Black's queenside.

20 ... Nh5 21 g3

The slight weakening doesn't particularly bother White.

21 ... c5?

Black should just play 21 ... Nf6 and wait.



Exercise (planning): A move which erases his old beliefs (sit tight and do nothing precipitous), and writes new ones (generate counterplay by engaging in a clash), but in doing so, Black just broke the principle: don't bring on unwanted attention to yourself on the opponent's strong wing. Come up with a clear plan to exploit the violation.

Answer:

Step 1: dig a pawn into a6, which later gives us possibilities of entrenching a piece into b7.

22 a6 Bc6

Step 2: open the queenside by weakening c5 and taking control over c4.

23 bxc5! bxc5

23 ... Qxc5? drops the e-pawn to 24 Ng4 Qf8 25 Nxe5.

24 Bb5!

Step 3: remove Black's main defender of his queenside light squares.

24 ... Bxb5

Sometimes we find ourselves in incongruous situations where we dislike a thing, but also dislike the unpleasant object's absence! Black is forced to swap off a not-so-great piece, yet he needs it, despite its inferiority, to cover his light squares.

25 Qxb5 Nf6

25 ... Bxe3 26 Bxe3 Rac8 27 Rxd8+ Qxd8 28 Bxc5 picks off c5.

26 Nc4

The human move. The comps like 26 Qb7.

26 ... Bf8

26 ... Rdb8 is met with 27 Qc6 Bf8 (27 ... Rc8? 28 Qb7 is even worse for Black) 28 Rab1.

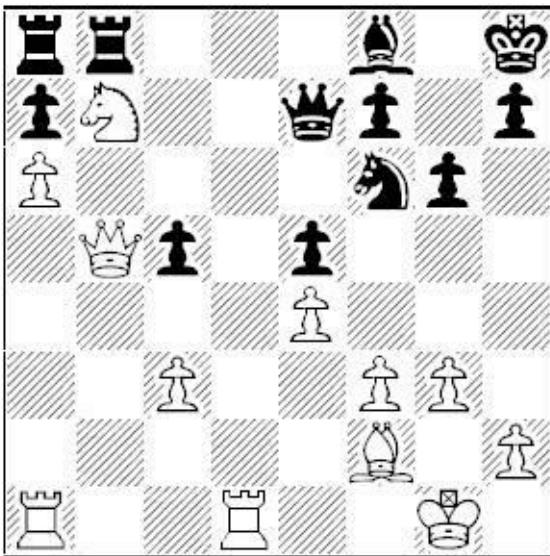
27 Na5

Houdini wants White to sac a piece for a deadly a-pawn with 27 Qb7! Qe6 28 Rxd8 Rxd8 29 Qxa7! Qxc4 30 Qb6, but this is not something you do in a rapid game, unless you are a very, very confident calculator – which I am not!

27 ... Rdb8

The wrong rook. Now the other one gets stuck on a8.

28 Nb7



The knight creates one of those mysterious, alien-made crop circle patterns. White's queen and knight team invade the queenside, like one of those terrifying, life-threatening, baby stroller/jogging mom combinations which nearly always run you down as you walk the same side of the street.

28 ... Rc8 29 Qc4 Rc7 30 Rd6 Nd7 31 Rad1 Nb6 32 Qb5

It's just a matter of time before Black drops a pawn.

32 ... Rac8

Perhaps his best chance is to go into fortress mode with 32 ... Qe8! 33 Qxe8 Rxe8 34 Rd8 Rxd8 35 Rxd8 Kg7 36 Na5 Nc8.

33 c4

I always play hesitantly in such situations. Should I go for selfish, short-term self-interest and take the c5-pawn, possibly allowing Black counterplay down the file later on, or should I, with altruistic intention, continue to build the position and decline? I don't know!

33 ... Kg7 34 Kg2 h5

If you are all tangled up, don't begin an attack. He had to try 34 ... Qe8.

35 Bxc5

Threat: Rxg6+. The bishop blesses the diagonal with a beneficent gesture as he accepts the offering.

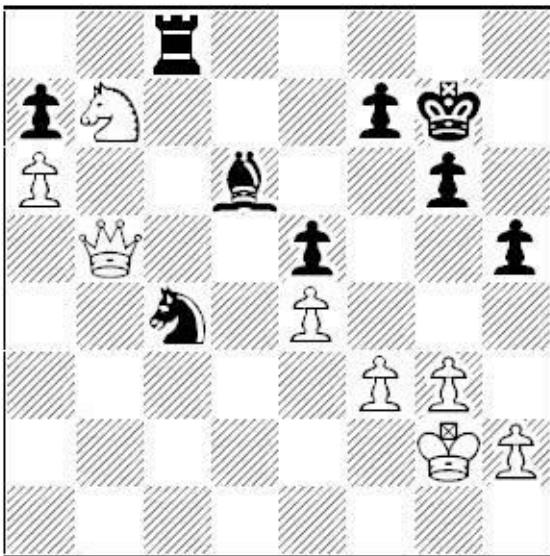
35 ... Rxc5 36 Nxc5 Qxd6

In the hopes of creating a fortress.

37 Rxd6 Bxd6 38 Nb7

The wolf under the covers puts on grandma's bonnet.

38 ... Nxc4



Exercise (combination alert): We reach the ‘almost there’ moment. Black’s last move was a time pressure mistake in a losing position. He isn’t dead yet, but being on life support doesn’t quite constitute being alive either. Do you see a tactic?

Answer: 39 Nxd6 Nxd6 40 Qxe5+ 1-0

The feral cat supplements her diet through nest predation.

Summary

Don’t underestimate the insidious nature of the c3 lines. If you play too quietly as Black, White slowly expands and takes over.

Game 34

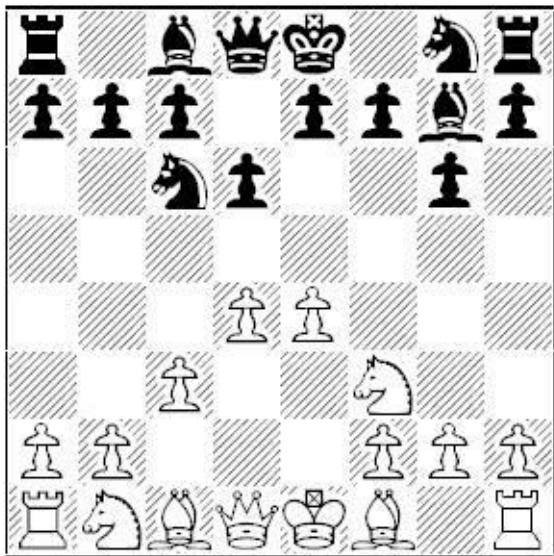
B.Baker-C.Lakdawala

San Diego (rapid) 2012

1 Nf3

Remember, just because White plays 1 Nf3 or 1 d4, doesn’t mean we are free from entry into the e-pawn Modern lines.

1 ... g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 e4 d6 4 c3 Nc6



We provoke White into pushing on our knight, a little like a mirrored Alekhine's Defence. Since I needed a win, I also considered going Hippo with 4 ... Nd7 5 Bd3 e6 6 0-0 Ne7 7 Re1 b6, as Black did in F.Handke-M.Krasenkow, German League 2006.

Question: Is the Hippopotamus formation playable on the c3 systems?

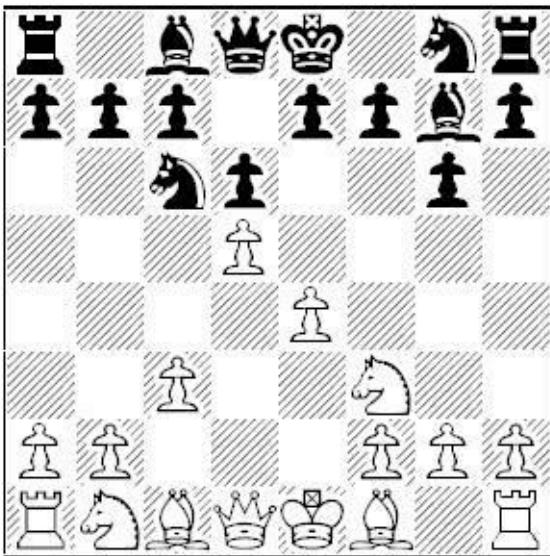
Answer: My Hippo rule of thumb: the formation is very playable on any system where White commits to either Nf3 or Bc4.

5 d5!?

Honestly, I was a bit relieved since this was the final round and my opponent led by a half point, so I absolutely had to win.

Question: What would you have played if your opponent had gone for the quiet 5 Bd3?

Answer: I probably would have just gone for an ... e5 set-up and played for complications later. The position is quiet and equal, but not a dead draw by any means.



5 ... Nb8

Question: Why go back when e5 is available?

Answer: I don't care for Black's game after 5 ... Ne5 6 Nxe5 Bxe5 7 Nd2 when White soon gains a tempo on the bishop, S.Tiviakov-J.Plaskett, Benidorm 2009.

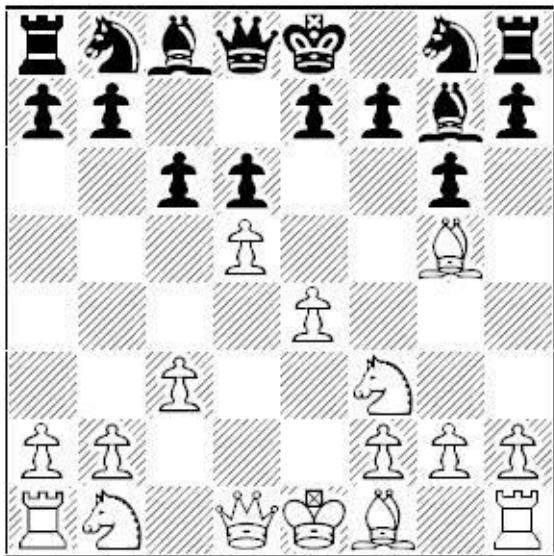
6 Bg5

A new move. He develops a piece and removes ... e6 possibilities.

Question: After 6 c4, isn't he then up a move in a King's Indian?

Answer: This is different from both the KID and Benoni. While it's true that Black lost two moves with his knight, while White only lost one with c3 and c4, Black's dark-squared bishop looks radiant along its diagonal. Also, Black can chip away at White's centre with ... c6. Here 6 ... Nf6 7 Nc3 0-0 8 Bd3 was K.Wolter-T.Weischede, German League 1994, and now rather than 8 ... e5?! which really does lead to a tempo-down KID, Black gets a reasonably dynamic game after 8 ... Bg4 9 h3 Bxf3 10 Qxf3 Nbd7 11 Qe2 c6, when his control over the central dark squares and fluid structure compensate White's space and bishop pair.

6 ... c6



We begin to chip away at White's imposing space advantage.

7 Nbd2 Nf6

Question: Why not trade a wing pawn for a central pawn with 7 ... cxd5?

Answer: There is no rush. After 8 exd5 White may later apply pressure down the newly opened e-file.

8 dxc6

Now Black gets to develop for free and also swaps pawns favourably. The alternative is to maintain the tension with 8 Bc4 Nbd7, but then White has to be on the lookout for ... Nb6.

8 ... Nxc6

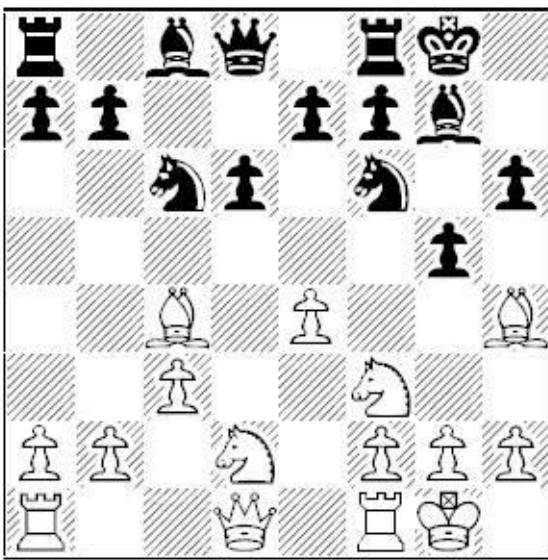
Question: Did you consider recapturing with the pawn?

Answer: No, development matters more.

9 Bc4 0-0

Black achieved a nice looking Dragon versus a harmless White set-up.

10 0-0 h6 11 Bh4 g5!?



Question: Why voluntarily weaken your kingside pawns?

Answer: In order to pick up the bishop pair. In general, to get something one must offer something back in return.

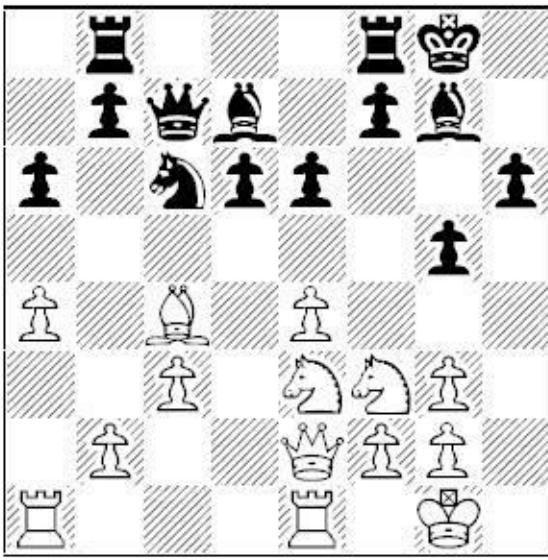
12 Bg3 Nh5 13 Re1

I preferred Black's two minor pieces to White's rook and two pawns at the end of the variation 13 Nxg5!? Nxg3 14 Nxf7 Rxf7 15 Bxf7+ Kxf7 16 fxg3+!? Kg8.

13 ... Nxg3 14 hxg3 Rb8

Intending to stir up trouble with ... b5 and ... b4.

15 a4 a6 16 Qe2 Qc7 17 Nf1 Bd7 18 Ne3 e6



The position looks dynamically balanced, with White's slightly better structure versus Black's bishop pair and control over dark squares, but in reality, I felt Black stood slightly better.

Question: And you are not concerned about your backward d-pawn?

Answer: No, the weakness is just cosmetic, since d6 is easily covered.

Question: Doesn't White have a dangerous attack brewing on the kingside?

Answer: I was worried about it, but for now the threat feels faint and far distant. I felt he needed the weakening f4 move to make headway, which gave Black lots of counterplay. Also, f4 is not so easy to implement without putting his pieces on awkward squares.

19 Red1 Rfd8 20 Qd2 Be8

Black intends to soften White's queenside with ... b5 and ... b4.

21 b4!?

Perhaps it is possible to simultaneously make a crafty and naive move. I was happy to see this ambitious move, which gains space, but also creates a new target for Black on c3. White blocks all ... b5-b4 intentions, but in doing so creates a new set of problems.

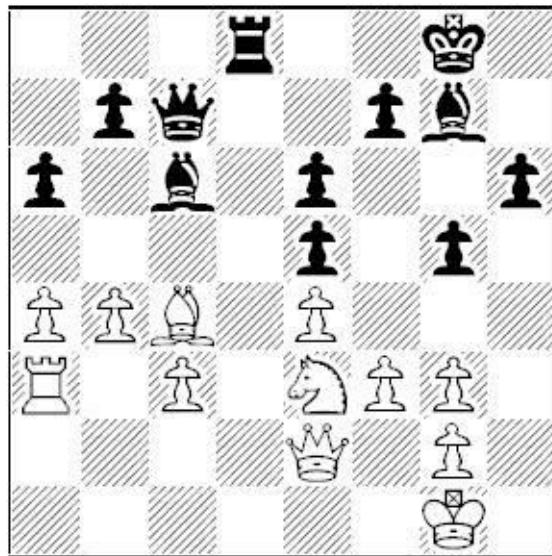
21 ... Rbc8 22 Ra3

I was more concerned about 22 Nd4, which sets up sacs on e6 and prepares f4.

22 ... Ne5! 23 Nxe5 dxe5!

One must be careful with such moves, since even a tiny shift in structure takes on great consequence when seen through the prism of 25 moves later. Suddenly my king looks completely safe as f4 is squelched. Strangely enough, White's new queenside pawn majority is meaningless since he will find it impossibly difficult to push forward with success.

24 Qe2 Rx d1+ 25 Qxd1 Rd8 26 Qe2 Bc6 27 f3



Exercise (planning): Black's bishop pair doesn't look all that impressive at the moment. Find a plan which weakens White on the dark squares.

Answer: Pierce the meticulously guarded dark-squared barrier on b4.

27 ... a5! 28 Ra2 Bf8 29 b5

Pretty much forced, but now the g1-a7 diagonal opens for Black's dark-squared bishop.

29 ... Be8 30 Ng4 Kg7 31 Rc2 Bc5+

In one swoop the bishop surfaces from the wormhole to exit on the other side of the Milky Way.

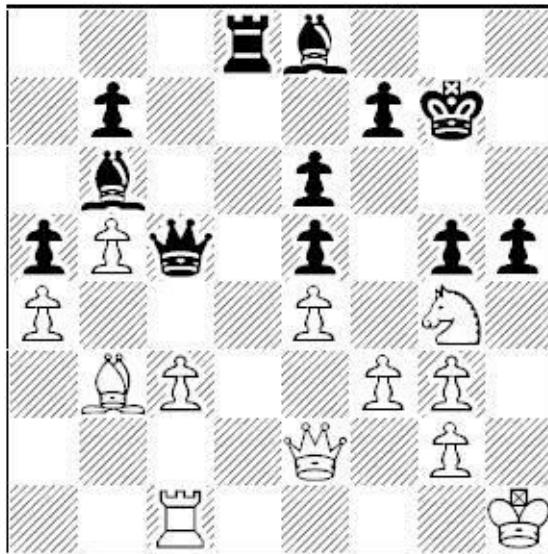
32 Kh1 Bb6

Clearing the square for ... Qc5.

33 Bb3 Qc5

Well, I can dream of mate in one, can't I?

34 Rc1 h5



King security often decreases by gradual degrees, rather than in one fell swoop. The white king's health is of grave concern now and likely to become a greater worry as time passes.

35 Nh2 Qa3

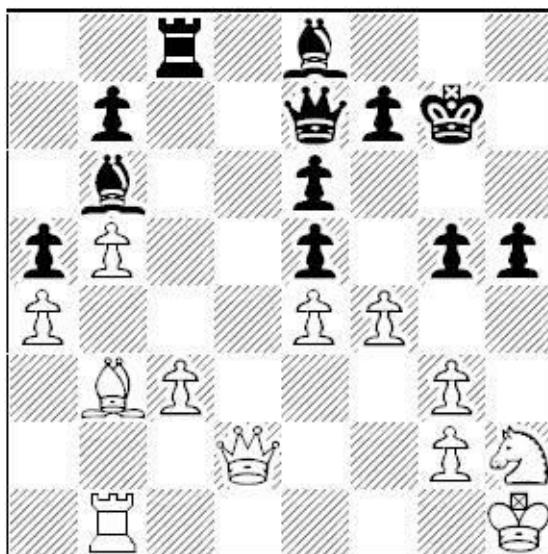
Low on time, I begin to drift, but luckily for me, no harm done. Better was 35 ... Rd6! 36 Bc4 f6 to activate the light-squared bishop and slowly prepare for a kingside attack, or a central break with a future ... f5.

36 Rb1 Rc8 37 Qd2 Qe7

Well, that adventure was a dead end.

38 f4!?

The f-pawn, who for so long stewed in a stupor of indecision and reluctance, finally gathers resolve and takes the plunge. In doing so, White contravenes all established government safety regulations and goes forward with his hazard-fraught project to induce mutual chaos.



Question: Didn't you say earlier "f4 is squelched?"

Answer: I did, but keep in mind the single most powerful universal constant: things change! Technically, 38 f4!? is a bad move, but as Alekhine once said: "Chess is not all logic."

Question: Isn't your claim that White's last move has merit outrageous? You may as well declare Ringo the most musically gifted Beatle.

Answer: I realize the appearance of White's last move comes across as nine parts distraction, one part reality, but the practical aspects of a move must also come in to consideration. My opponent rolls the dice with a cunning and calculated gamble in the mutual time scramble. Bruce, probably correctly, felt he wouldn't hold the position with a fortress plan, and in playing 38 f4!? multiplies the complexity level. So the move has practical, if not strategically based merit.

38 ... Rd8 39 Qe2 exf4 40 Qxh5 f5

Ejecting the intruder. Also strong is *Houdini*'s tricky 40 ... Bxb5, threatening ... fxg3 and ...Rh8.

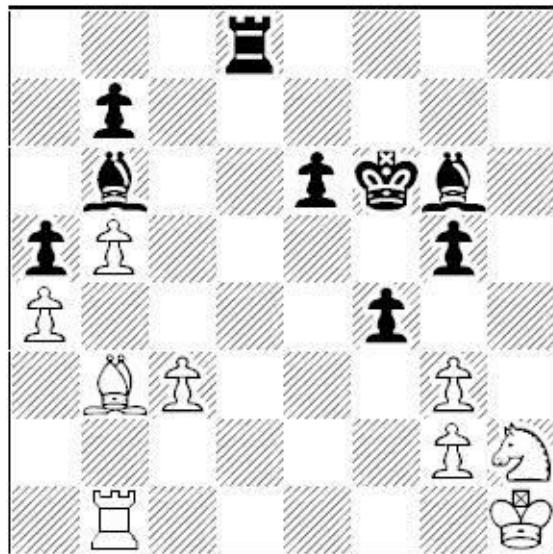
41 Qf3 fxe4

41 ... Bg6! coordinates Black's forces and prepares ... Rh8 later on.

42 Qxe4 Bg6 43 Qe5+ Qf6 44 Qxf6+

Bruce avoided my trap 44 Re1?? Qxe5 45 Rxe5 fxg3 46 Rxg5 Bf2! 47 Bc2 Rh8 48 Rxg6+ Kf7, which costs White a rook to avoid immediate mate.

44 ... Kxf6



Black's luxurious position looks a lot like the vision of the mansion I want to live in when I finally strike it rich. The ending is hopeless for White for the following reasons:

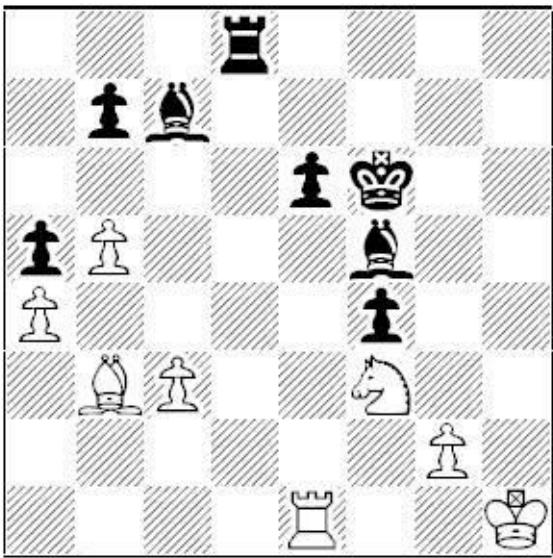
1. Black owns the bishop pair in an open position and after the laboratory accident, Black's monster dark-squared bishop transforms into a hideously evil super-villain along the g1-a7 diagonal.

2. White's queenside pawn majority is hopelessly blockaded on c5, so in essence, he remains a pawn down. Meanwhile, Black's powerful central majority symbolizes his wealth, like the hood ornament on a BMW.

3. White's king is in serious danger along the open h-file.

45 Rf1 Bc7 46 gxf4 gxf4 47 Re1 Bf5 48 Nf3

48 Bd1 e5 won't save White either.



Exercise (planning/calculation): White's last move was a time pressure mistake in a busted position. Without moving the pieces, visualize a forcing sequence which wins a piece or mates.

Answer: 48 ... Rh8+ 49 Kg1 Bb6+

Black's pieces follow White's king like cans tied to the newlyweds' car bumper.

50 Kf1

50 Nd4 e5 wins a piece.

50 ... Bd3+ 0-1

Summary

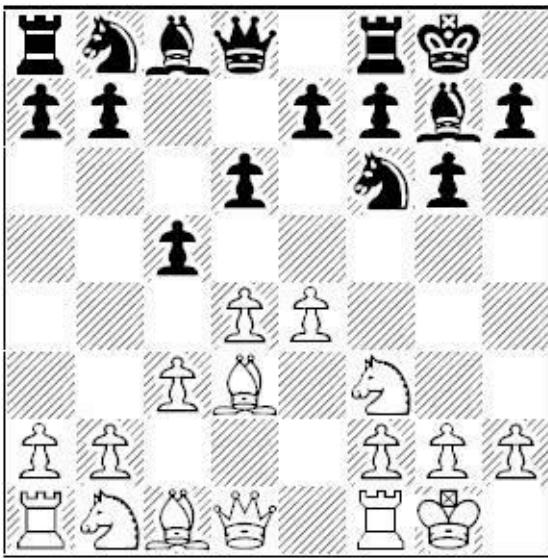
After 4 ... Nc6 we shouldn't fear 5 d5.

Game 35

S.Zagrebelny-A.Morozevich

Novgorod 1997

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nf3 d6 4 c3 Nf6 5 Bd3 0-0 6 0-0 c5



The ... c5 challenge is an alternative to both ... e5 and Hippo set-ups against the c3-line.

7 h3

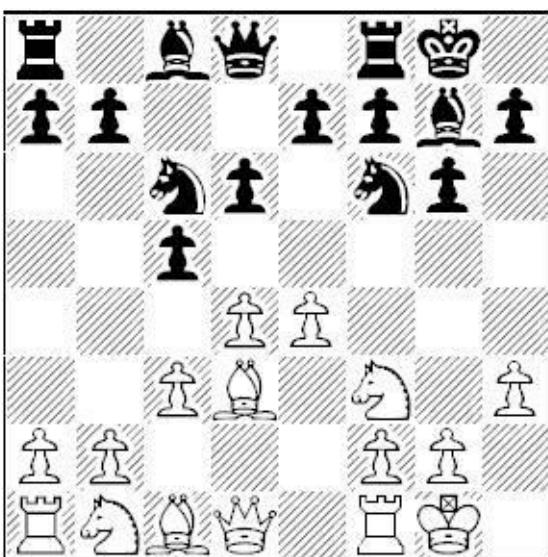
Question: Doesn't the position lose most of its dynamic potential if White chickens out and trades?

Answer: True, but remember we who play the black pieces should be satisfied with an equal position with all the pieces still on the board:

a) After 7 dxc5 dxc5 8 h3 Nc6 9 a4 Qc7 10 Na3 a6 11 Qe2 Nh5 Black achieved equality in S.Karjakin-P.Svidler, Moscow (blitz) 2010. A key idea to remember: we worry White with ... Nf4 hanging over him.

b) 7 Re1 Nc6!? leads to play similar to the game: 8 h3 Nd7 9 d5 Nce5 10 Bc2 Nxf3+ 11 Qxf3 b5, and I prefer Black at this point, P.Kalaitzoglou-C.Sandipan, Paleochora 2011.

7 ... Nc6!?



"This move leads to very complicated play which is more typical of a King's Indian", writes GM Volzhin. But I should add, it leads to the KID only if White agrees to d5.

8 d5

White accepts the challenge. 8 dxc5 transposes to the Karjakin-Svidler note, above.

8 ... Na5 9 c4

Now the game turns into a strange KID.

Question: Why strange?

Answer: Two points away from the norm:

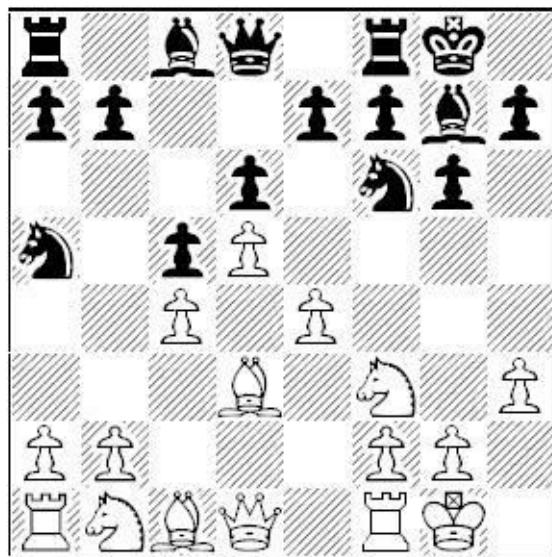
1. White is down a move since he took two moves to play c4.
2. Black's knight on a5 is generally considered an inferior post in main lines of KID.

Question: So who came out ahead?

Answer: I think it's a fair trade and chances are dynamically balanced.

Question: What if White tries to immediately exploit the knight's offside position with 9 b4?

Answer: Then we in turn exploit White's loose rook on a1 with 9 ... cxb4 10 cxb4 Nd7.



9 ... e5

Question: Can Black play Benoni style with 9 ... e6?

Answer: Nobody has tried that move. I don't really like Black's position if White just plays for space with 10 Nc3 exd5 11 exd5!, but maybe your suggestion is playable and needs testing.

10 a3

Threatening to trap the wayward knight next move.

10 ... b6 11 b4 Nb7 12 Ra2!?

Volzhin is pretty tough on White, handing him a question mark and calling this move "ridiculous". I feel the move is odd more than bad. More normal is 12 Nc3, where Volzhin points out a plan for White to transfer his bishop to a4.

12 ... Kh8

Question: What is the point of Black's last move?

Answer: He plans ... Ng8 and ... f5 at some point.

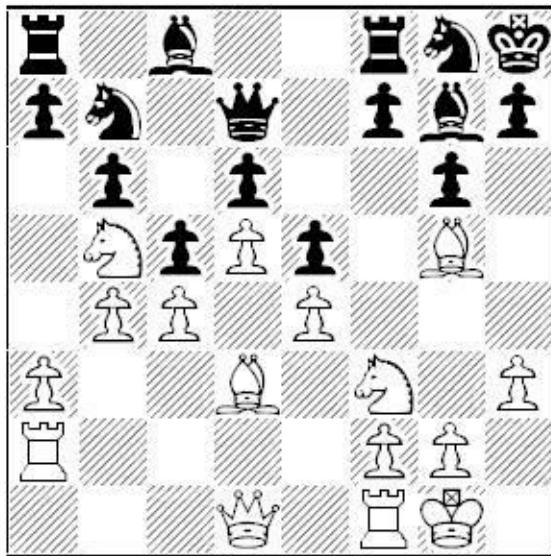
13 Bg5 Qe8

In a position very similar to this, GM Alex Ivanov tried in a blitz game against me the manoeuvre 13 ... cxb4!? 14 axb4 a5 to create a puncture on c5. The trouble with this plan is it opens the queenside and b5 for White's forces.

14 Nc3 Ng8 15 Nb5

Volzhin didn't like this one either, but I don't see how it hurt White in any way.

15 ... Qd7



16 Nd2

Better to fight to prevent ... f5 with 16 g4!.

Question: That looks crazy. Aren't you opening up White's king?

Answer: I kind of like White's position after 16 ... h5 17 Nh2 Nf6 18 f3 when he swings his a2 rook to g2 next. Black may also consider the radical 16 ... f5!? 17 exf5 a6! 18 Nc3 e4! 19 Nxe4 gxf5 20 gxf5 Qxf5 when I'm not sure if he gets enough for the pawn.

16 ... f5

Probably better than getting distracted on the other wing with ideas like 16 ... a5!?.

17 exf5

Question: What about just holding the fort with 17 f3?

Answer: Possible, but Black has two plans available:

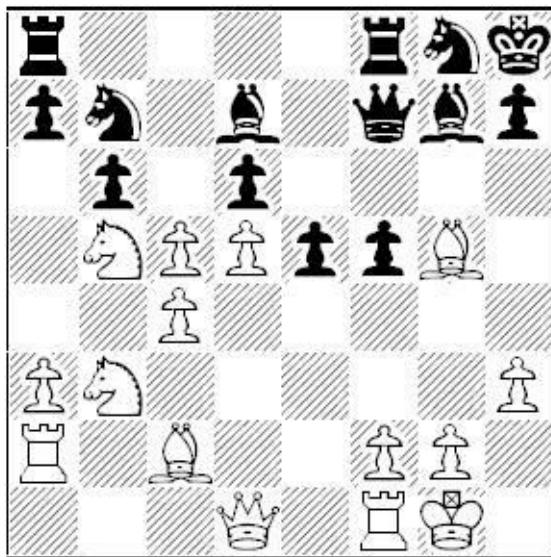
- 17 ... f4 and pawn storm the kingside.
- 17 ... Bh6 to swap off or activate Black's bad bishop.

17 ... gxf5 18 Be2

The typical break 18 f4? is a blunder here due to 18 ... e4 when Black threatens both bishop on d3 and also ... a6.

18 ... Qf7 19 Nb3 Bd7 20 bxc5?

It was time to retreat with 20 Nc3.



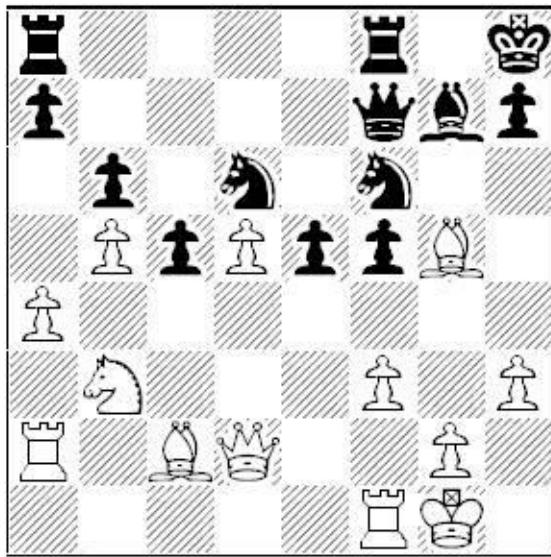
Exercise (planning): White's last move allows Moro to reshuffle the structure in his favour. Do you see a path which leads Black out of the cloudy present into a happy, preordained future?

Answer: The swap on b5 drastically weakens White's d-pawn.

20 ... Bxb5! 21 exb5 dxc5!

Volzhin writes: "White has a weak pawn on d5; all his pieces are uncoordinated, while Black has an advantage in the centre, a strong passed c-pawn and a fantastic place for his 'bad' knight on d6."

22 f3 Nd6 23 a4 Nf6 24 Qd2



Exercise (critical decision/combo alert): If we play 24 ... Nxd5, then White plans to pile up on our knights on d6 and d7. However, we can get away with it. Work out why.

Answer: White's unwieldy threats down the d-file are nothing but an afterthought. We get away with it due to the counterattack on his a2-rook.

24 ... Nxd5!

Moro feeds the rookie the ball and allows him to take the key shot in the game.

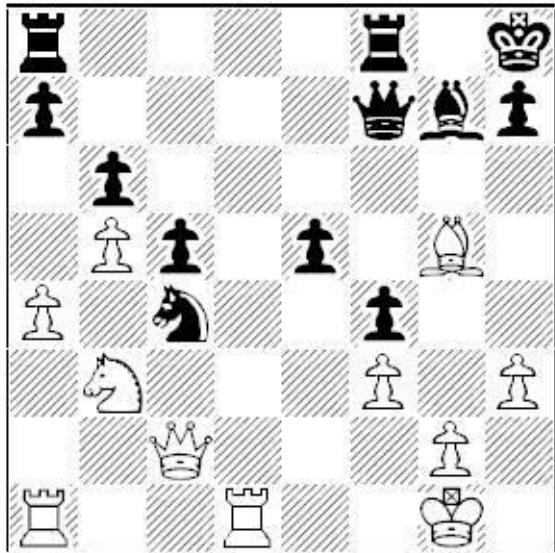
25 Rd1 Nb4!

White finds the cupboards bare and must learn to go hungry. I hate White's situation where you realize your less-than-perfect calculation blew it and in the end, nothing computes.

26 Raa1 Nc4

Black's knights jump about as light footed as kittens at play.

27 Qe2 Nxc2 28 Qxc2 f4



Destination: e3.

29 Qe4

I would try 29 Re1 Ne3 30 Rxe3 which, admittedly, looks hopeless as well.

29 ... Ne3 30 Rdb1 Qh5

Close proximity to power often manifests as grave peril to the marginal of society. In this case, the old queen dislikes her klutzy assistant on g5 and orders him about, the way an old curmudgeon despises all youth.

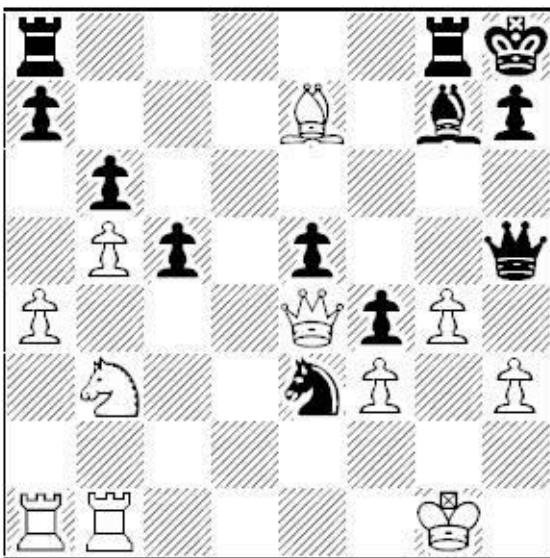
31 Be7

The bishop steps aside with shallow affability, all the while seething at the affront.

31 ... Rg8

Moro plays for mate.

32 g4



Exercise (planning): Make a decision. Should Black take on h3 or not?

Answer: He should decline.

32 ... Qh6!

32 ... Qxh3? lets White right back into the game after 33 Ra2!, intending to swing over to h2.

33 h4 Rae8 34 Bg5 Qe6 35 Ra2

35 h5? Bf8 36 Bh4 Rxg4+! wins on the spot.

35 ... h6

Black stuffs the kidnapped bishop into the trunk of his car.

36 Rh2 Bf8 37 Nd2 Rg7 38 Kf2 Rd7

If we shorten the war, we save lives. He can also go for the pedestrian win of material with 38 ... hxg5 (a fissure opens and swallows up the bishop) 39 hxg5+ Kg8.

39 Ke2 Bg7 40 Qc6 Rd6 0-1

Black wins heavy material after 41 Qe4 Rxd2+! 42 Kxd2 Qa2+. Nothing escapes the omnidirectional gaze of Black's all-seeing queen. I'm afraid the busses don't stop in the crime-infested neighbourhood of White's king.

Summary

The combative ... c5/ ... Nc6 combination lands us in an odd KID if White chooses to push to d5.

Game 36

C.Lakdawala-D.Aldama

San Diego (rapid) 2012

1 Nf3 d6 2 d4 Nd7

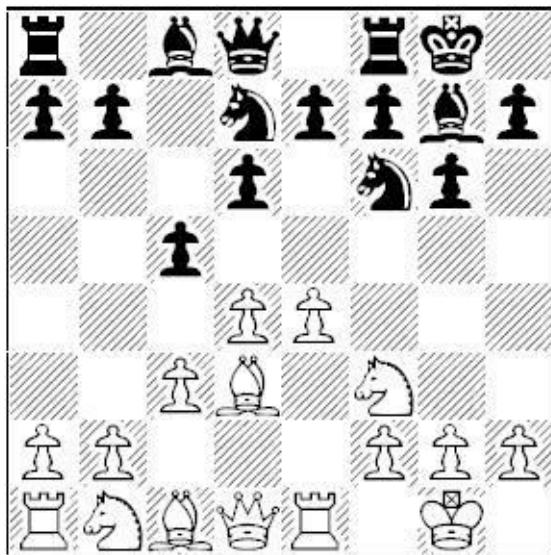
Question: Does this still count as the Modern?

Answer: Yes, an early ... d6, ... Nd7, and ... g6 transposes to the Modern, just as long as Black holds off on an early ... Nf6, which would turn the game into Pirc.

3 e4 g6 4 c3 Bg7 5 Bd3 Ngf6

Back to the Pirc.

6 0-0 0-0 7 Re1 c5!?



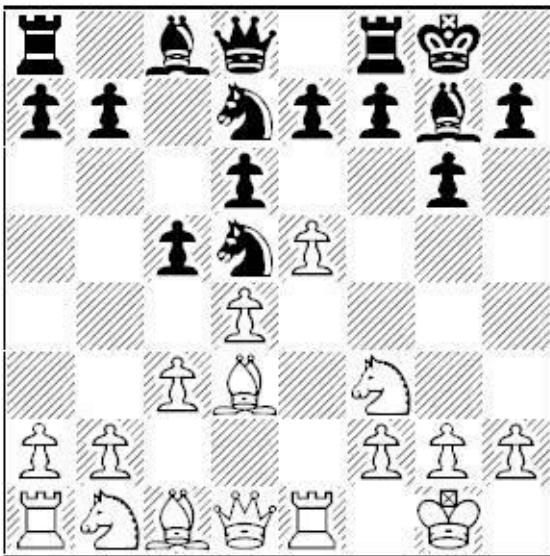
Question: This move is a bit odd, correct?

Answer: Correct. IM Aldama is gifted tactically, but often shaky when it comes to theoretical disputes, so he tosses in an odd move to try and throw off, and provoke his easily confused opponent – and it works like a charm! The move ... c5 itself isn't so weird. After all, Moro played it last game, but only in conjunction with ... Nc6. The combination of the more passive ... Nd7 and ... c5 is the odd part. 7 ... e5 is normal here, but then expect a boring game!

8 e5!?

Going for a refutation, but Black's position cannot be run over so easily. The stabilizing 8 h3 may be White's best move: 8 ... e5 (White may get a tiny edge in the line 8 ... cxd4! 9 cxd4 e5 10 Nc3 exd4 11 Nxd4 a6; still, Black's d6 isn't so weak and his pieces remain active here) 9 dxe5 dxe5 10 a4 Qc7 11 Na3 h6 12 Bf1. I prefer White, who may be able to make something of the weak light squares c4 and d5, P.Neuman-D.Navara, Czech League 2006.

8 ... Nd5!



I originally thought my opponent had blundered when he played this new move, but it proved to be a clear improvement over the previously-played passive 8 ... Ne8.

9 exd6 exd6 10 dxc5 Nxc5!

Piece activity matters more than structure.

11 Bc2

Question: Did both players miss 11 Bxg6 which wins a pawn?

Answer: That was my original intention, but then I realized my opponent offered a pawn sac when he played 8 ... Nd5! and so I chickened out. If I take the pawn he gets tons of play after 11 ... hxg6 12 Qxd5 Be6. For the pawn Black gets:

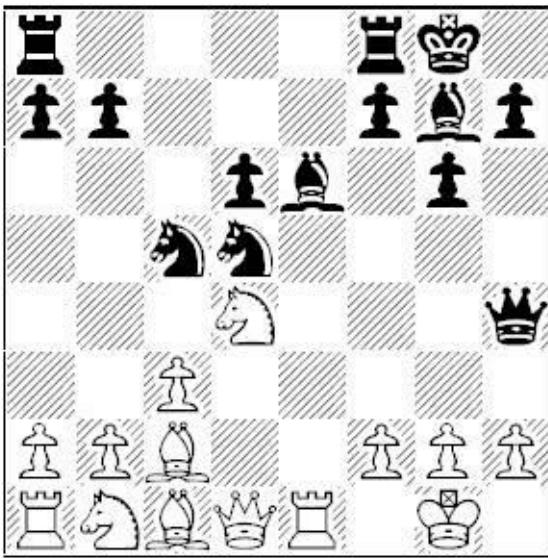
1. The bishop pair.
2. A grip on the light squares.
3. A development lead.

11 ... Be6 12 Nd4!?

I originally intended 12 Nbd2, planning on Nb3 and Nbd4, but then panicked when I saw the trick 12 ... Bxc3!. White can't immediately take the bishop since the queen gets trapped. But what I missed was the counter trick 13 Rxe6! making air for my queen. Then comes 13 ... Bxd2 14 Re2 Bxc1 15 Rxc1 Nf6 16 Rd2, but even this is nothing special. The position is probably equal.

12 ... Qh4!?

An ominous shadow begins to envelop my king's vision. Black's pieces begin to loiter around my king, at first more with insinuation than direct menace.



13 Na3

I should play 13 g3! Qh3 14 Nd2 Nf6 15 Nxe6 fxe6 16 Qe2 Rae8 when we reach a classic dynamic versus static advantages/disadvantages position. White holds the bishop pair and light-square control, while Black's aggressive piece placement on the kingside may make trouble for White.

Question: Whose position do you prefer?

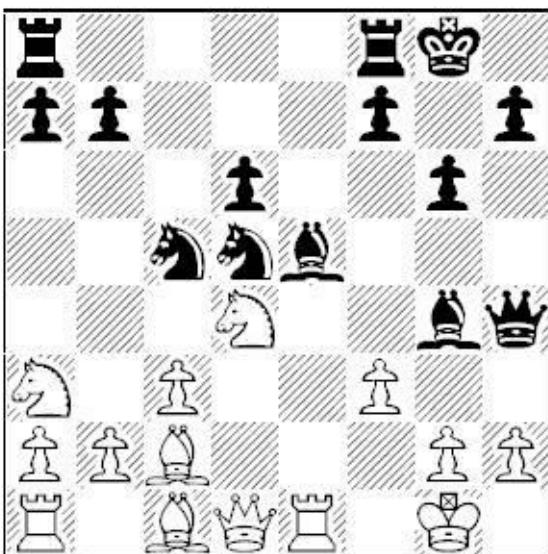
Answer: I prefer White, but this is a stylistic bias. Here we may witness a collision of expectations derived through alternative assessments. White thinks he stands better – and so does Black! In my opinion, White's long-term benefits outweigh the risks to his king.

13 ... Bg4!

Very annoying, provoking pawn weakness around White's king.

14 f3 Be5!

In ancient societies, the threatened curse of the shaman/witch doctor played the role of filling the void of a lack of a criminal justice system. The position suddenly smells and tastes like a Ruy Lopez Marshall Gambit. Aldama, an attack junkie, just shed a piece as casually as an insect would its outer skin.



Exercise (critical decision): White has a choice:

- a) Take the hanging bishop on g4 and allow Black into h2.
- b) Play 15 g3 Bxg3 and then toss in the unexpected zwischenzug 16 Re2.

One of the lines is unclear; the other clearly favours Black. Can you do better than your confused writer?

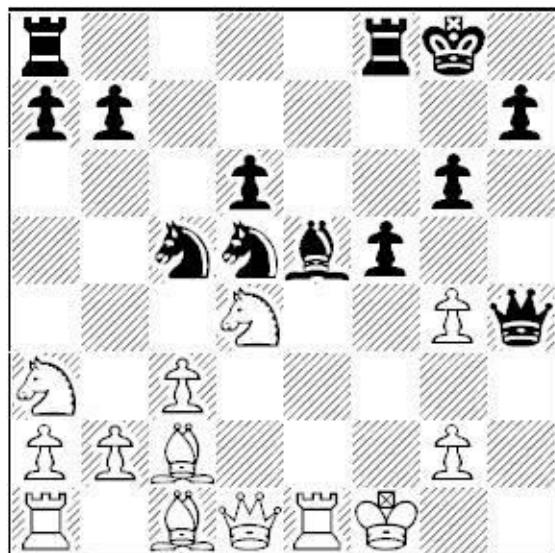
15 fxe4?!

Now White's position begins to sag like a melting candle. One is reminded of the lyrics from the Bowie song 'Scary Monsters': "She opened strange doors that we'd never close again!" I mistakenly thought this would lead to a quick draw, but grossly underestimated Black's attacking potential. It's a tough thing to fully divorce yourself from philosophical beliefs seeded into your mind as a child. Unfortunately, I find it impossible to escape the ghost of Aaron Nimzowitsch, whose theories continue to haunt me to this day. No matter how hard I try, I continually underestimate a position's dynamic potential and tend to overthink/overestimate strategic considerations.

Answer: Correct was 15 g3! Bxg3 16 Re2!. I actually saw this move during the game because it reminded me of Capablanca's amazing 16 Re2!! (coincidentally also played on the 16th move) in his Marshall Gambit game against Marshall himself from their famous 1918 encounter. Somehow I mistakenly thought the same idea didn't apply here, but it does. 16 ... Rae8 17 Bd2 leads to mutual chances.

15 ... Qxh2+ 16 Kf1 Qh1+ 17 Kf2 Qh4+ 18 Kf1 f5?

18 ... Bg3! is the correct path, and if 19 Nf3 Qh1+ 20 Ng1 Rae8! with a strong attack.



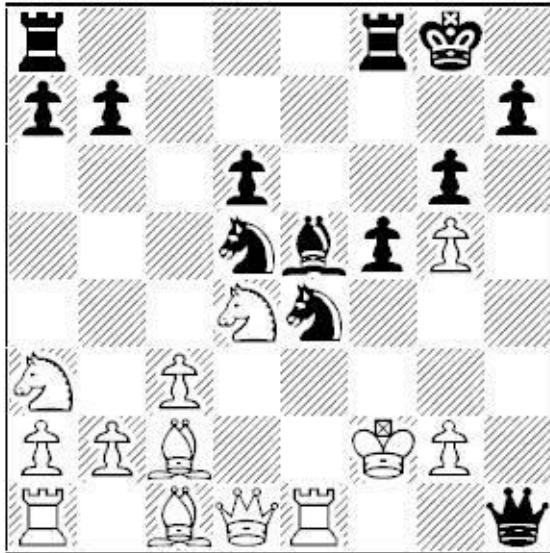
Now White has two good continuations. Unfortunately, I played continuation number three!

19 g5??

By now my fevered mind conjured threats – real and imagined – everywhere, the way a schizophrenic sees threatening images as he looks into a candle flame. I was just about to play the correct 19 Nf3!, but then impulsively changed my mind and banged out the moronic move I played in the game. After 19 ... fxe4 20 Qxd5+ Kg7 21 Ke2! gxf3+ 22 gxf3 Rae8 23 Be3 we have a totally unclear situation. I don't believe White's chances are any worse. White also has 19 gxf5!, and Black has nothing better than to take the perpetual check with 19 ... Qh1+ 20 Kf2 Qh4+.

19 ... Qh1+! 20 Kf2 Ne4+!

Gulp! Houdini evaluation: -32.35!

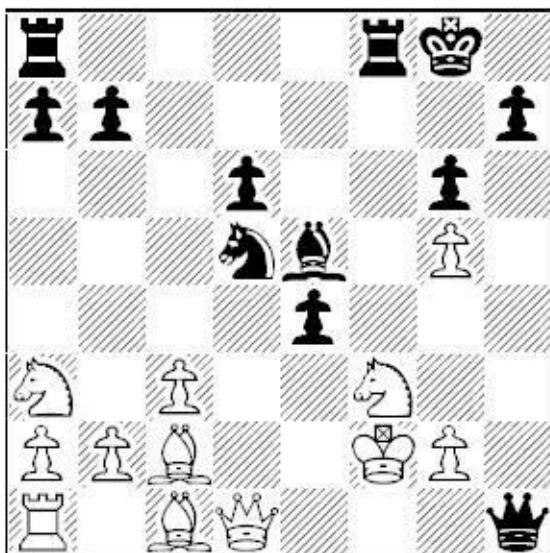


I considered resignation, but hubris mixed with embarrassment wouldn't allow it in just 20 moves. So I played on.

21 Rxe4

A theatrical gesture, mainly for show.

21 ... fxe4+ 22 Nf3



Exercise (planning/combination alert): The comps say it's mate in 14 moves. How would you continue Black's attack?

Answer: Destroy White's last defender. The trampled battlefield of White's kingside is by now scorched, blackened by fire, and stained by blood.

22 ... Rxf3+! 23 gxf3

An abundant stockpile of wealth is of little comfort to a lonely, dying man. My harried king, with little time to mourn, buries the knight in a hastily constructed makeshift grave and moves on, hoping to outdistance his pursuers.

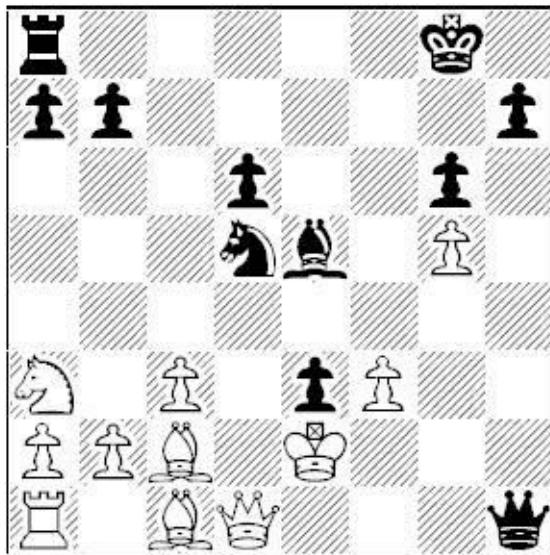
23 ... e3+??

Still winning, but 23 ... Qh2+! 24 Kf1 Qh3+! mates, since he brings his bishop into the attack with check. I saw this line during the game as my life flashed before my eyes.

24 Ke2

The wounded animal in the forest seeks out a cave to curl up and lie still, preserving its precious remaining life energy while recuperating from its injury.

Not 24 Bxe3?? Qh2+! 25 Ke1 Bg3+ 26 Kf1 Nxe3 mate.



Question: A two-part question:

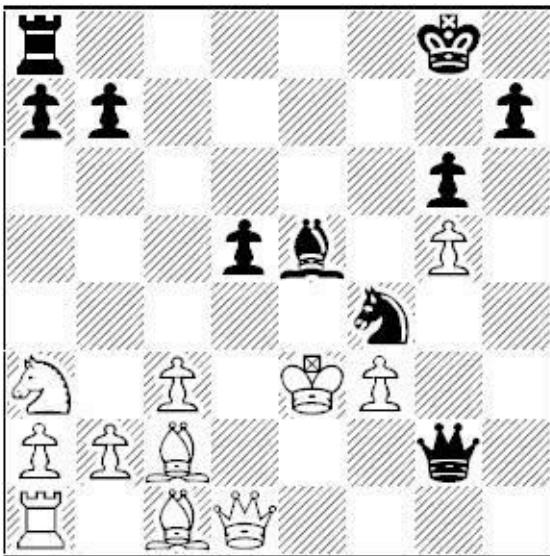
1. Is there a ChessBase symbol for ‘Adverse reaction to medication?’
2. Are we allowed to return the book to get our money back?

Answer: First, I wish I could scapegoat the pharmaceutical industry for my bad position, but lack of chess talent seems to be the core issue here. Second, no, you can’t get your money back. All sales of this book are final!

24 ... Qg2+ 25 Kd3 Nf4+! 26 Kxe3

Getting dealt unlucky tarot cards means nothing to an unbeliever of prophecy. One thought which comforted me during the game: each moment the smirking abomination on e3 is allowed to live unchallenged is an insult to my opponent! I saw the line 26 Kc4 and felt Black’s win would be too easy after 26 ... e2 27 Qe1 Qxf3 28 Bxf4 Bxf4 29 Qg1 Re8 when that advanced e-pawn soon costs White a full rook.

26 ... d5!



Question: Why an exclam? Black's last move threatens nothing.

Answer: Galileo was simply shown the instruments of his (future) torment to extract a signed confession. Black cleverly cut off all escape routes for my poor, tired king. White is totally helpless since more than half his army is on strike, picketing the queenside, demanding higher wages and better working conditions.

Question: Can you remind the reader just what it is about this line which appeals to you from the white side?

Answer: I admit my enthusiasm for the White side had indeed dampened somewhat by this point in the game!

27 Bb3 Kg7

27 ... Rd8! 28 Nb5 Bb8!, clearing the e-file, is curtains for White.

28 Bxd5 Rd8

28 ... Re8! 29 Be4 Rd8! 30 Qe1 Nh3! ends the game.

29 c4 Qxg5

I'm still totally busted.

30 Kf2 Nh3+?

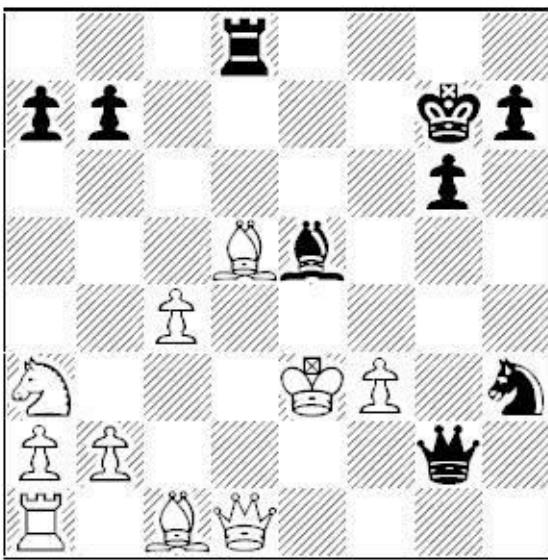
If there are too many members of a conspiracy, the secret always leaks out. Perhaps Black's problem throughout the game is that he got confused from having a glut of wins! Thank God for our mutual time trouble. Here my opponent missed 30 ... Qh4+! 31 Ke3 Nxd5+! 32 cxd5 Bf4+! 33 Ke2 Qh2+ 34 Kf1 Qh1+ 35 Ke2 Qg2+ 36 Kd3 Rxd5+.

31 Ke2?

In his current schizoid state, the white king feels a pull in many directions. After the strange comp selection 31 Ke1! Qh4+ 32 Kd2 it's anybody's game.

31 ... Qg2+ 32 Ke3

Certainly not 32 Kd3?? Nf2+ forking.



He had eight seconds on his clock while I had about a minute and a half. Essentially we were both living off the five second time delay, praying that our clocks didn't run any lower.

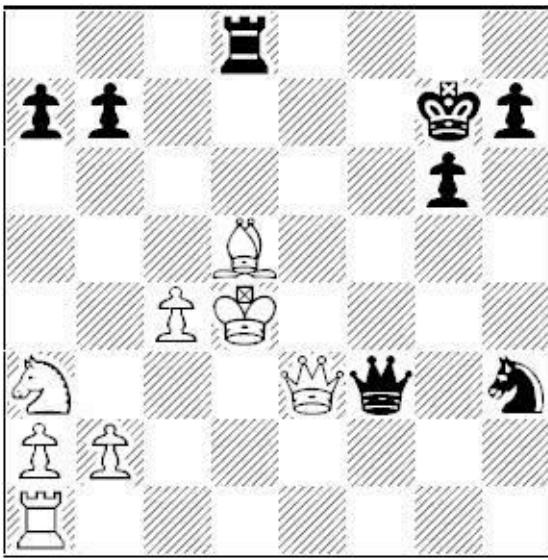
32 ... Bf4+?

He chases my king to safety. His last chance to victory lay in 32 ... Nf4!.

33 Kd4 Bxc1 34 Qxc1 Qxf3??

It isn't easy to find good moves in what has essentially degenerated into a glorified bullet game. He either missed or rejected the perpetual check after 34 ... Nf4! 35 Qxf4 Qxb2+ 36 Ke3 Re8+ 37 Kd3 Qxa3+ 38 Kd4 Qb2+ 39 Kd3 Qe2+ 40 Kd4.

35 Qe3



The queen and king grip arms and hug in warm reunion. Praise Buddha! To my utter shock, I realized White is winning.

35 ... Qg4+ 36 Kc3 Rf8? 37 Qe5+?

Sigh ... My opponent and I both wish to issue a joint apology to the reader for our bad moves. We both missed 37 Qe7+!.

37 ... Kh6 38 Rh1 Rf5? 39 Qe3+ Kg7 40 Rxh3 1-0

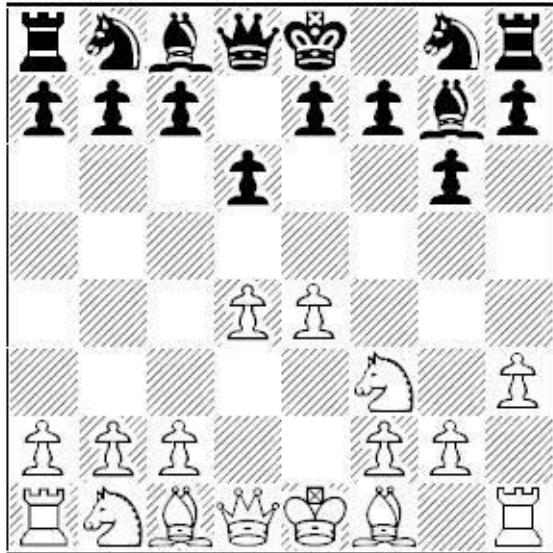
Summary

Black seems to achieve dynamic equality after Aldama's novelty 8 ... Nd5!.

Chapter Eight

Odds and Ends

In this chapter White continually crosses the border illegally into no man's land, in the hopes of confusing us. We examine a few oddball but dangerous lines which don't fit neatly into other chapters. An example:



What could be more harmless than White's set-up? Well, if we blindly play 4 ... a6, thinking we transpose to some earlier chapter, then White eagerly unties the string and hands us an unwanted parcel with 5 c4!, tricking us into a King's Indian-style position where ... a6 doesn't always fit well. In all the examples in the chapter, we remain okay as long as we stay alert against White's shady plots and tricks.

Game 37

K.Griffith-C.Lakdawala

San Diego (rapid) 2012

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nf3

We must be vigilant here not to walk off our theoretical path in this move tricky move order.

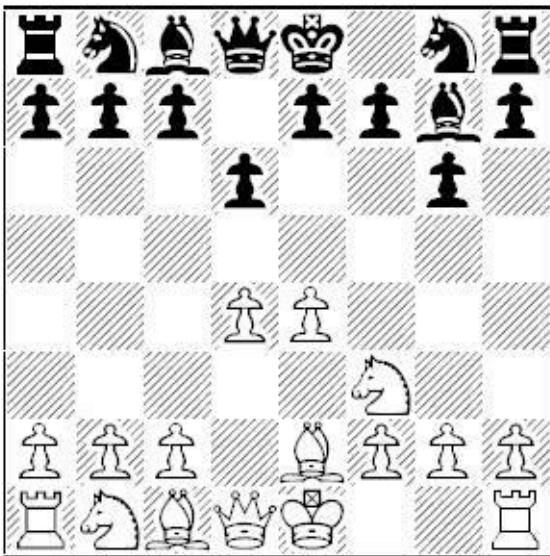
Question: Tricky? What could be more innocuous than White's move order?

Answer: Matters are not so simple. Play on ...

3 ... d6 4 h3

He cuts out ... Bg4 ideas (no problem; I never play those lines anyway!), and keeps options open for his c-pawn, which can stay where it is, play to c3, or to c4 in King's Indian style.

4 Be2 is also played here.



Now I would suggest that we be good citizens and fall back on the Pirc with 4 ... Nf6!.

Question: What is wrong with 4 ... a6?

Answer: Beware: you just walked into White's move order trap. He switches to the King's Indian with 5 c4!. Now we have two problems:

1. Most Modern guys don't play the formal KID, so we got snookered out of our normal lines.
2. Even if we do play the KID, ... a6 doesn't often fit neatly into Black's schemes.

After 4 ... Nf6 5 Nc3 0-0 6 0-0 a6 (6 ... c6 with an old school Pirc is also fine here: for example, 7 h3 Nbd7 8 Bf4 Qa5 9 Qd2 e5 Black equalized effortlessly in V.Kramnik-G.Kasparov, Moscow (rapid) 1996) 7 a4 b6 8 Re1 e6 with a dynamic Hippo, but with Black's knight on f6, which is okay, D.Jakovenko-P.Svidler, Moscow (blitz) 2009.

4 ... Nc6!?

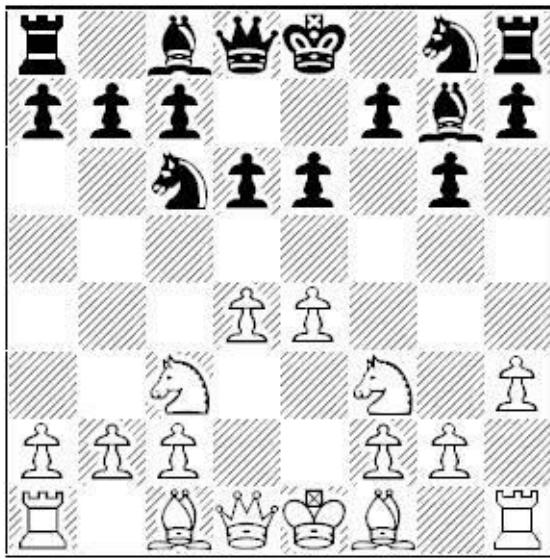
Provocation. Remember, 4 ... a6 5 c4! is still just what White hopes for.

5 Nc3

Question: What were you planning on 5 d5?

Answer: I intended 5 ... Nb8 with play similar to my game against Baker from the last chapter.

5 ... e6!?



Oh, no! I have fallen under the spell and seduction of one of those strange moods and enter an odd Hippo with my knight on c6.

Question: Doesn't your move deserve a '?!' mark since you get misplaced knights when compared to the normal Hippopotamus?

Answer: I don't think so. The c6-knight can always play to e7 and the other one to f6. Normal, though, is 5 ... e5.

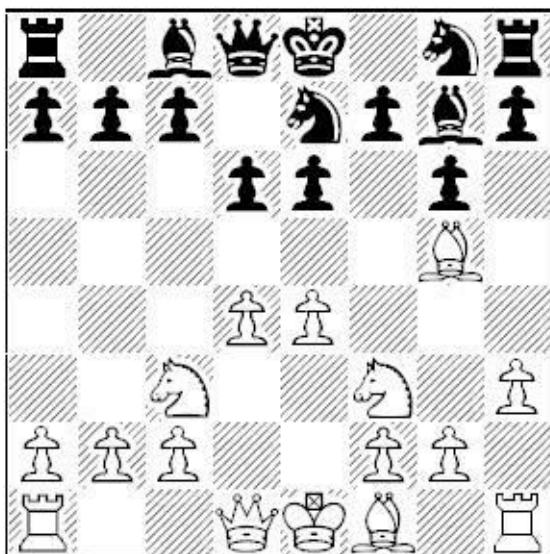
6 Bg5

Better to play to e3. As I mentioned before in this book, the automatic Bg5 constitutes a slight inaccuracy in Hippo lines, since it hands Black a future ... h6 and maybe even ... g5 for free.

Question: Wouldn't 6 d5 open the game favourably for White?

Answer: Not really. White gets less than nothing after 6 ... exd5 7 Nxd5 Nf6 8 Bg5 h6.

6 ... Nce7



Question: This is not a normal Hippopotamus. How do you play to untangle your knights from their present jumble?

Answer: I considered two schemes of development:

a) Simply develop the g8-knight to f6.

b) If favourable circumstances arise, I can play ... h6 and on Bh4, ... g5 followed by ... Ng6. Then I have the option of developing the g8-knight to either e7 or f6.

7 Bc4

Ah, yes, c4, the treasured bishop's square of chess thugs worldwide. My opponent is a young, tactically gifted master. Translation: he always plays for mate! In this case, the bishop hits a wall on e6 and is also vulnerable to ... d5 tricks from Black.

Question: So is his last move weak?

Answer: No, it's a matter of style. One great benefit White receives from playing a bishop to the a2-g8 diagonal is that Black has an almost impossible time engineering a future ... f5 break, since this would weaken the e6-square.

7 ... a6 8 a4 b6 9 0-0

Now that I know where he lives, going ... h6 and ... g5 grows more tempting.

9 ... h6 10 Bh4

Or 10 Be3 Nf6 and Black begins to toy with ... d5 ideas.

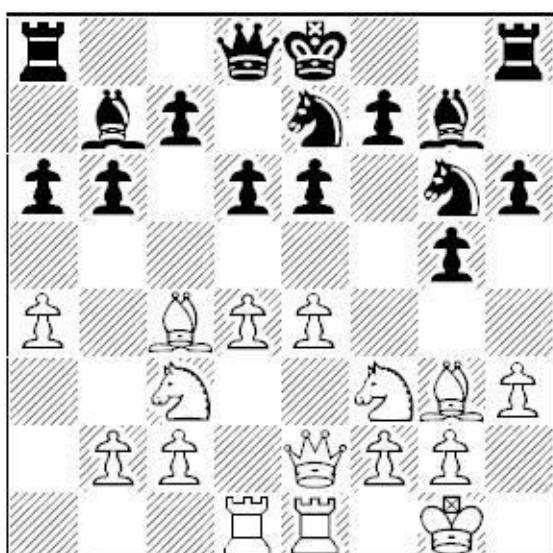
10 ... g5!?

Scoffing at the final chance for normal with 10 ... Nf6.

11 Bg3 Ng6 12 Re1 N8e7

12 ... Nf6 is also possible, but I didn't like the idea of giving him a contact point to open the position on e5. I was nervous about lines like 13 e5 Nh5 14 Bh2 Nh4 15 exd6 cxd6 16 Nd5, but looking at it now, with calmer eyes, Black looks okay here too.

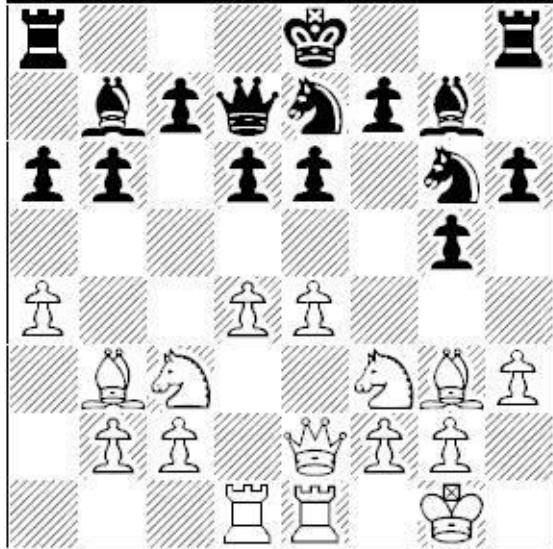
13 Qe2 Bb7 14 Rad1



Question: All of White's pieces look like they are on perfect squares. Meanwhile, how do you plan to develop your introverted forces?

Answer: Ah, the bliss of Reinfeldian nirvana. But Black asks the question: now what? Such positions, cosmetically beautiful from the outside, are a bit like dying and going to heaven, and then realizing heaven lacks sinner servants to do the laundry, mow the lawn, or pick up dog poop in the backyard of your heavenly mansion. The claim of White's big advantage rings untrue like a man who flatters his aged, face-lifted great aunt on how radiantly lovely she looks.

14 ... Qd7 15 Bb3



15 ... Kf8!?

Black's king demands his inalienable right to continue to exist!

Question: What? Your last move looks like a mouse slip.

Answer: I felt castling either direction placed danger to my king, so the optimal Black defensive set-up might be king on f8, and rooks on h8 and e8. I didn't care for Black's position after 15 ... 0-0-0?! 16 Bc4 a5 17 Bb5, or 15 ... 0-0?! 16 h4!.

16 h4!

White tests the temperature of the bath water. Principle: create contact and engage the opponent when ahead in development. Now both kings slowly suffer increased exposure.

16 ... gxh4 17 Nxh4 Nxh4 18 Bxh4 Ng6 19 Bg3

I like Black's position after 19 Qh5 Nxh4 20 Qxh4 h5.

19 ... h5

Here I come, charging ahead from the back ranks!

20 f4!?

Logical, but not without risk. White plays to prise open Black's king with an eventual f5. The trouble is in doing so his own king risks the same fate.

20 ... Re8 21 Qf2 h4 22 Bh2

Threat: f5 and f6.

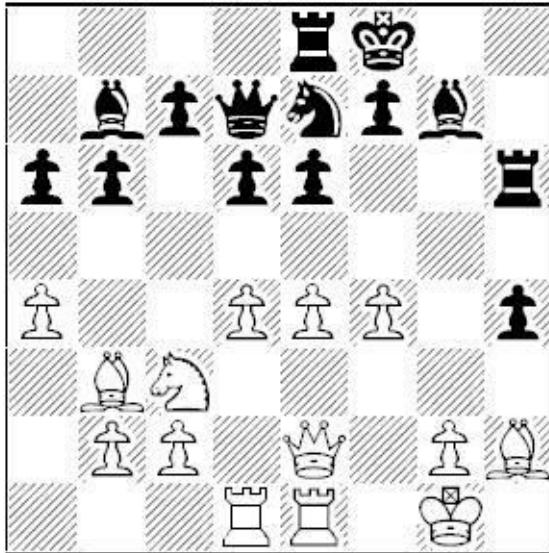
22 ... Ne7

Evading f5.

23 Qe2!?

My opponent begins to drift. Better to keep building with 23 Re3.

23 ... Rh6!



Multipurpose:

1. The rook may later swing to g6 to zone in on g2.
2. Black takes control of f6, making White's plan of f5-f6 very difficult to achieve.

24 Qg4?!

He incorrectly provokes ... f5. Now Black takes over the initiative.

24 ... f5

As the door opens just a crack, Black seizes an opportunity to barge his way in. The backlash invalidates White's decision to provoke this move. I also considered 24 ... d5.

25 Qh3

If 25 exf5?! exf5 26 Qh3 Rg6 27 d5 Rg4 when White's kingside is stricken with a degenerative illness of unknown origins.

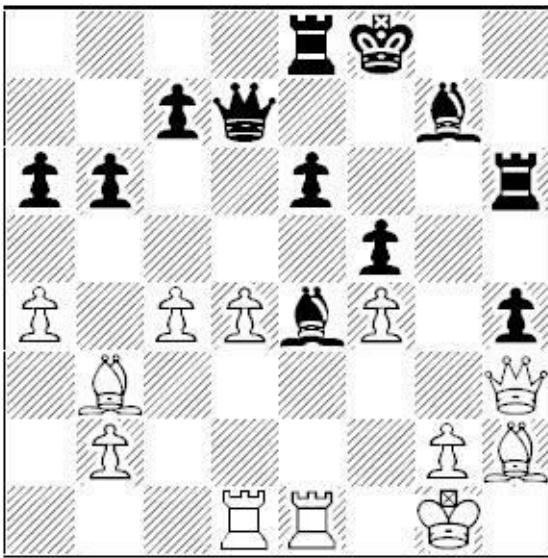
25 ... d5! 26 exd5

Black takes over the queenside after 26 e5 c5 which looks like a French gone wrong for White, as does 26 exf5 Nxf5.

26 ... Nxd5 27 Nxd5 Bxd5 28 c4?!

He pushes a reset button with an etch a sketch, shaking it up and starting all over. White lashes out from a position of inferiority, loosening his position beyond repair, while entering ever more extreme, untenable territory just to fan a flagging attack. I think he would be better off with 28 Bxd5 Qxd5 and going passive, but, admittedly, this doesn't look very tempting.

28 ... Be4



29 Rx e4!?

He seeks a viable way to create complications, as he sincerely prays all his faits agree to accomplish. By sac'ing the exchange White hopes to wrest the initiative, but finds his happiness lacks savour, owing that it is most certainly of a temporary nature. I have observed that when a political battle brews between monied corporate interests and grassroots people-power, the corporate team with the money tends to win. In this instance, Black material outweighs White's desire for initiative and complications. Still, I feel his move is his best practical chance since after 29 d5 exd5 30 cxd5 Bxb2 White remains down a pawn and tied up.

29 ... fxe4 30 d5 c5

An anchor for Black's bishop on d4.

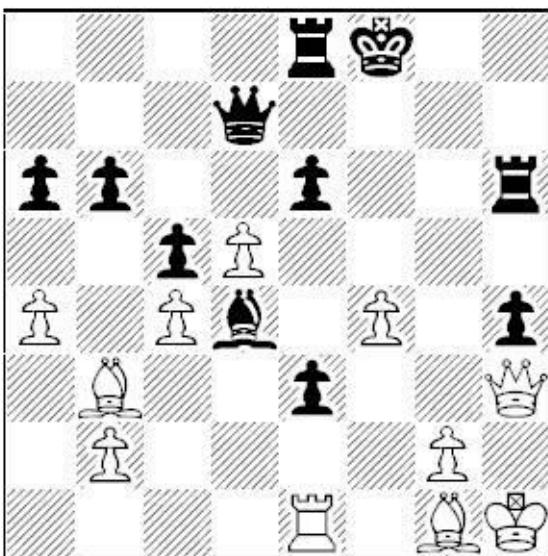
31 Re1

31 dxc6 Qxc6 32 f5 fails to 32 ... Qc5+.

31 ... Bd4+

'Hi!' The seldom-heard-from bishop drops in to say hello.

32 Kh1 e3 33 Bg1



Exercise (planning): How can Black consolidate his material advantage?

Answer: Simplification.

33 ... Qg7!

Threatening to force an ending with ... Qg3.

34 d6

34 Bh2 prevents Black's next move, but is just as hopeless after 34 ... exd5 35 cxd5 Bxb2.

34 ... Qg3

How glorious the feeling to fall into one of those bounteous positions where all is right with the universe and your pieces alight on perfect squares. The rest was easy.

35 Re2 Rd8 36 Bxe3 Qxh3+ 37 gxh3 Bxe3 38 Rxe3 Rxd6 0-1

Summary

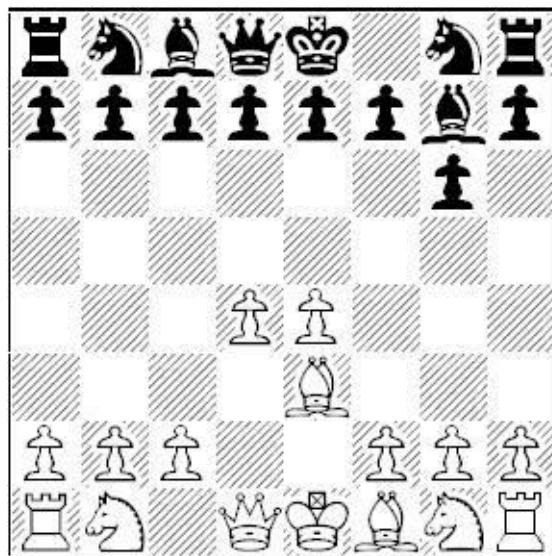
When White plays an early Nf3 and h3, avoiding Nc3, be careful not to play too mechanically with ... d6 and ... a6. White tricks you into an unfavourable KID with c4 if you do.

Game 38

D.Karatorossian-K.Chernyshov

Budapest 2004

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Be3



One of those moves which hides in dusty old chess books and pops up at us once in a while.

Question: What is the point of Be3 without Nc3?

Answer: We enter yet another episode of White's endless attempts to trick us into some kind of King's Indian line where we mistakenly toss in some non-KID move by accident.

Question: The move looks quite reasonable for White since he can always transpose to Chapter One with Nc3 and Qd2 later, correct?

Answer: Well, I'm not so sure. Please see Black's next move!

3 ... c5!?

We hope to exploit White's move order by playing down the long diagonal.

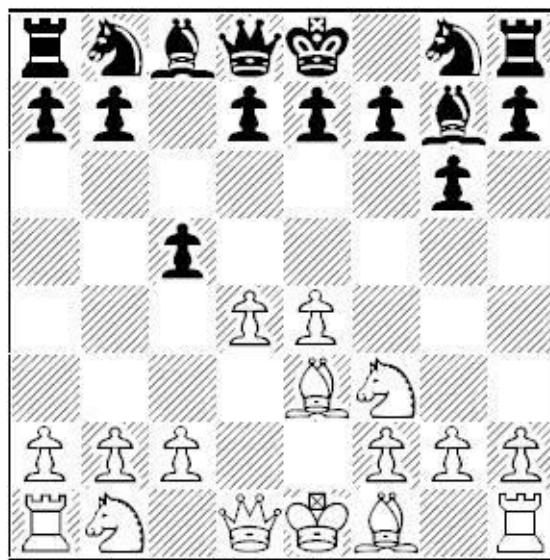
Question: Is there anything wrong with 3 ... d6?

Answer: The move is also fine and transposes to either earlier lines or the Averbakh (Chapter Nine), depending on how White responds.

4 c3

Instead after 4 Nc3 cxd4! (4 ... Qa5?! 5 Nf3 leads to an Accelerated Dragon where White's eventual Nb3 gains him a tempo over normal lines) 5 Bxd4 Bxd4!? (now we head into strange byways) 6 Qxd4 Nf6 7 Nd5 Nc6 8 Nxf6+ exf6 9 Qd2 (9 Qd6 Qe7 10 Qxe7+ Kxe7 11 Be2 d6 is an equal ending since White has no reasonable way of exploiting d6) 9 ... d6 10 0-0-0 Be6 Black's activity and open lines easily compensate the weakness of d6, E.Sutovsky-R.Kasimdzhanov, Batumi (rapid) 2001. If White decides to grab the pawn we get plenty of play for it after 11 Qxd6 Qb6.

Question: Don't we get tricked into theoretical Dragon lines we don't know after the simple 4 Nf3?

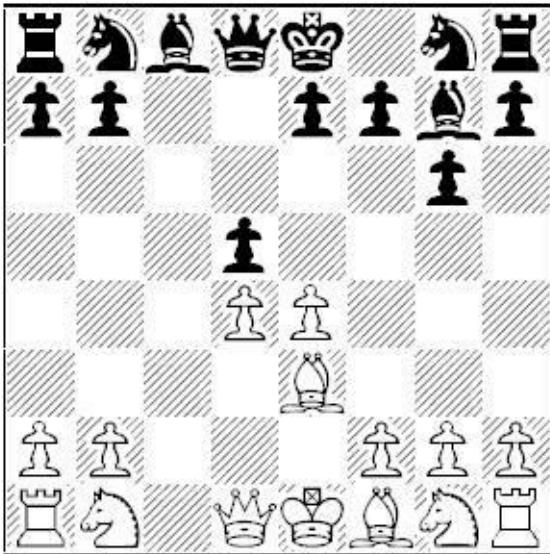


Answer: No. Our solution: we don't play ... cxd4 and enter the Dragon (a good title for a movie?). Instead, we go for 4 ... Nf6! 5 Nc3 Ng4!, since without that dark-squared bishop, White will have a very difficult time launching a kingside attack. After 6 Bg5 cxd4 7 Nxd4 Qb6!, as in J.Osmer-I.Schneider, German League 1997, I like Black's chances in the line 8 Nd5 Qxd4 9 Qxg4 (not 9 Nc7+? Kd8 10 Qxd4 Bxd4 11 Nxa8 Bxf2+ which is quite awful for White since his a8-knight never sees the light of day) 9 ... Qxb2 10 Rd1 Be5 (the more speculative 10 ... 0-0!? also looks like fun) 11 Bxe7 Nc6 with crazy complications where Black holds his own.

4 ... cxd4 5 cxd4

Better than 5 Bxd4?! e5! 6 Bc5 Nf6 7 f3 d5 when Black stands better due to his development lead and greater central control.

5 ... d5!



Question: ... d5 isn't normal for Black in a Modern, so why play it now?

Answer: Neither was White's 3 Be3 normal. We adapt to changing circumstances. Sometimes we must play the hand we are dealt, rather than the one we wish for. In this case Black gets a nice position no matter how White continues from this point. Also, I remind you again: this line is purely voluntary from Black's side. We can bypass the entire line if we refuse to cooperate with 3 ... d6, rather than 3 ... c5!?

6 e5

After 6 exd5 Nf6 7 Bb5+ Nbd7 8 Nc3 0-0 9 d6 exd6 we reach a position out of a Pseudo Panov (1 e4 c6 2 c4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 cxd5), but in this case we get a nice version for Black, since in the normal line White's bishop doesn't usually develop to the passive e3-square.

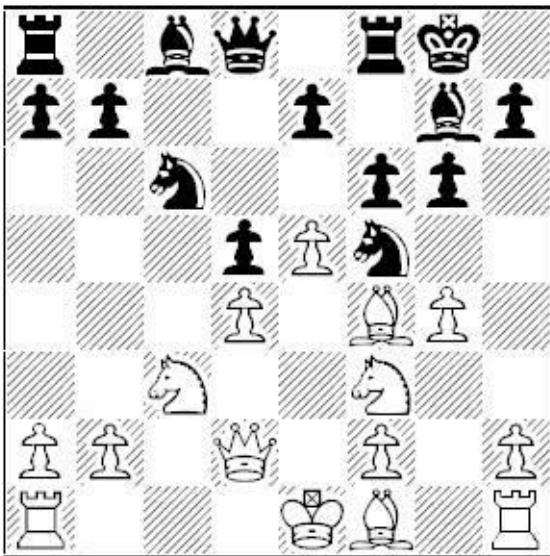
6 ... Nh6 7 Nc3 Nc6 8 Nf3 0-0

Black can also try the riskier 8 ... Bg4 9 Qb3 Qd7! when his d-pawn isn't really hanging since White loses it right back with an inferior position, R.Przedmojski-E.Kengis, Suwalki 1999.

9 Qd2 Nf5 10 Bf4 f6!

Destabilizing White's pawn wall.

11 g4?!



Exercise (critical decision): We realize intuitively
White sorely needs punishment for his rash pawn stab
last move. But which way? We can play:

- a) 11 ... fxe5, which follows the principle: counter in the centre when attacked on the wing.
 - b) 11 ... Nfxd4 takes the nuclear option and sacs a piece in the middle for three pawns.
Should we go for innocent idealism and sac? Or should we be ruthlessly practical and abstain?
- 11 ... Nfxd4!?**

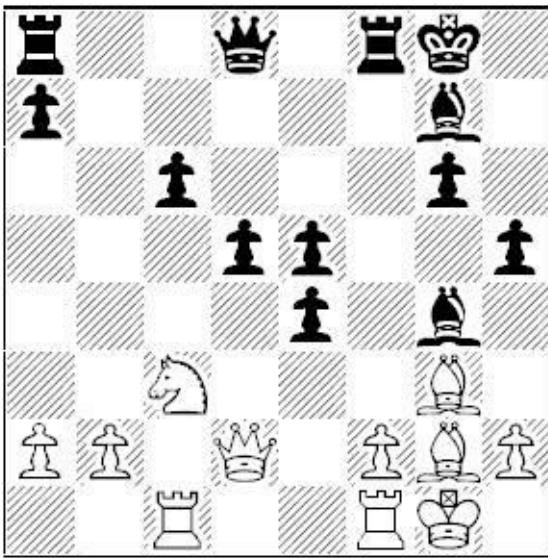
Black incorrectly believes White's last wild move necessitates a stinging reproach with a counter-strike to set the world aright. True, Black gets a good position after this fancy sac, but he violates the law of Occam's razor: the simplest path tends to be the best one.

Answer: In this case Black's advantage is undisputed after 11 ... fxe5! 12 dxe5 Nh6! 13 h3 e6 when White's position reeks of a distinctly overextended feel.

12 Nxd4 fxe5 13 Nxc6 bxc6 14 Bg3 Bxg4

Black emerged with three healthy central pawns for the piece, but the problem is White may be able to sac back for all three of them to achieve equality.

15 Bg2 e4 16 0-0 e5 17 Rac1 h5



Threatening ... h4.

18 Nxe4!

White manages to draw back from the brink by wisely returning the capital to reduce his pawn debt.

18 ... dxe4 19 Qxd8 Raxd8 20 Bxe4

White equalized.

20 ... Bh3 21 Rfe1 Rd4!

Black attempts to pull off a scam as sneaky as one of those annoying emails you receive from the Nigerian prince who promises you millions of dollars (in the future!), if only you are willing to agree to send him a money order first.

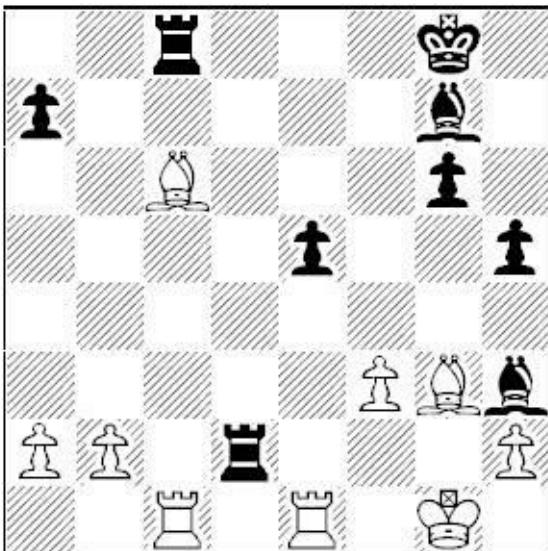
22 Bxc6!

The correct pawn. The careless 22 Bxg6?? drops a piece to 22 ... h4, as does the line 22 Rxc6? h4! 23 Bxh4 Rf4!.

22 ... Rc8 23 f3

Necessary, but as is often the case, eradication of one problem inadvertently manufactures another: White saves his g3-bishop from ... h4 harm, but the move also tears a hole in the fabric of his second rank.

23 ... Rd2



24 Bxe5

Slightly inaccurate. White keeps the balance after 24 b4! Kh7 25 Bxe5 Rg2+ 26 Kh1 Rxa2.

24 ... Bxe5 25 Rxe5 Kg7

Correct was 25 ... Rg2+! 26 Kh1 Rxb2 27 Rec5 Kg7 when Black retains chances, despite the reduced material.

26 f4?

He hopes to cover g2, but the trouble is he doesn't! 26 b4! should hold the game.

26 ... Rxb2

26 ... Rg2+! 27 Kh1 Rxb2 is a better version for Black than the one he gets in the game.

27 a4?!

He takes a risk in an attempt to save his a-pawn, but keep in mind: the hero who attempts to save the drowning victim may also drown along with her.

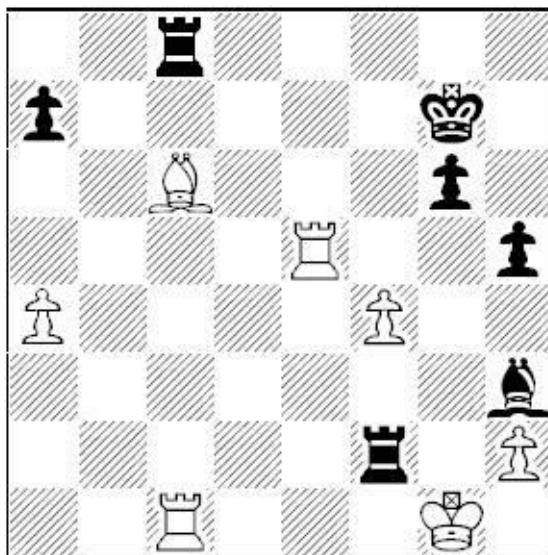
27 Re7+! Kh6 28 Re3! is White's best defensive shot and the correct way to try and hang on to his material. If Black tries to win a pawn with 28 ... Bd7 29 Rec3 Rxc6?! it fails to 30 Rxc6 Bxc6 31 Rxc6 Rxa2 32 f5, regaining the pawn with a draw.

27 ... Rg2+! 28 Kh1

The king moves over as far as he can to avoid the rook's taint.

28 ... Rf2 29 Kg1??

He should just give up a pawn with 29 Rec5 Rxf4.



Exercise (combination alert): Black to play and win:

Answer: 29 ... Rxc6! 0-1

That poor, pinned c6-bishop was one of those guys who looked older than his actual age, with a hard life written all over his face. To White's surprise, Black reaches into his saddle bag and pulls out a bowie blade he kept hidden there, as the two hanging but not so hanging black rooks loom over White like death.

Summary

If you don't care for the positions we get after 3 Be3 c5!?, then it is perfectly fine to fall back on the familiar with 3 ... d6. Also, we must remain flexible. Sometimes in the Modern Black can substitute ... d5! over ... d6.

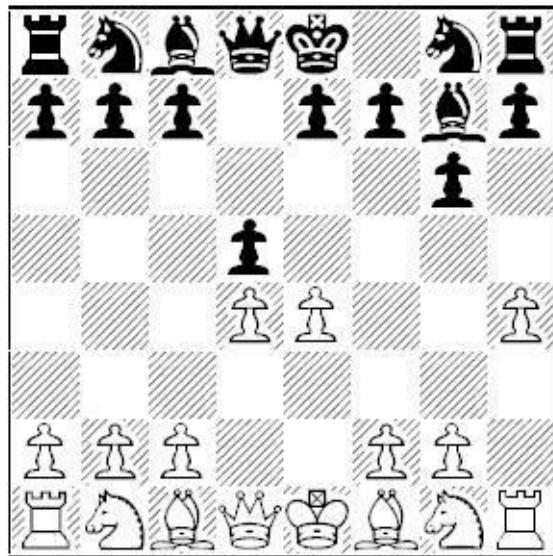
Game 39
S.Sadek-H.Ibrahim
Cairo 2011

This game we examine an early h4 from White in its various forms.

1 d4

We should also consider 1 e4 g6, and then:

- a) 2 h4 d5! 3 exd5 Nf6 tricks White into a Centre-Counter where h4 looks out of place, H.Schaack-L.Gutman, Lugano 1989.
- b) 2 d4 Bg7 and then:
 - b1) 3 h4 d5!.



Principle: a central counter to cripple a wing attack. After 4 exd5 Qxd5 5 Nf3 Bg4 we enter a strange Centre-Counter where, once again, White's h4 makes absolutely no sense, W.Kobese-V.Bologan, Gibraltar 2006.

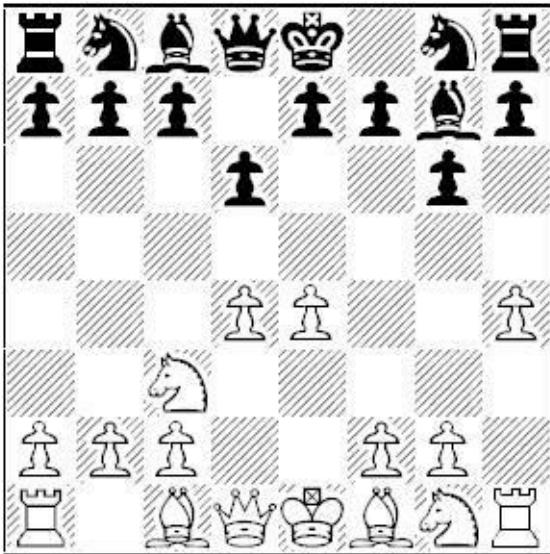
b2) 3 Nc3 d6 4 h4 transposes to the game.

1 ... d6

Question: Is this still Modern?

Answer: It is if Black plays ... g6 next.

2 e4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 h4



Question: Isn't this some older discarded line from White?

Answer: Be careful, these lines are still dangerous. A rusty old knife kills just as efficiently as a new one.

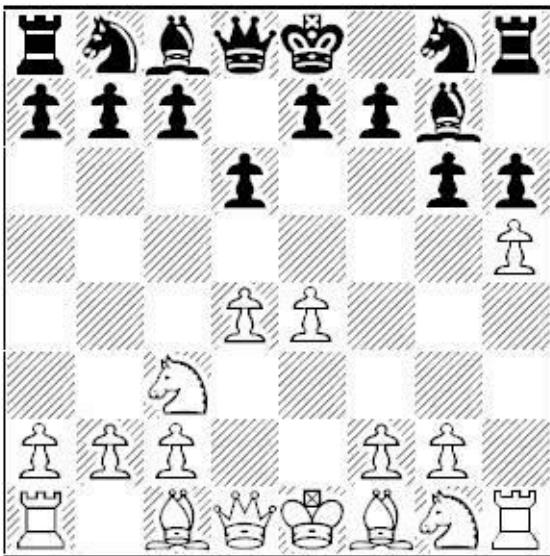
Question: What if White plays 4 Be2 and keeps us guessing about h4?

Answer: Then just go ahead and play as if in earlier chapters with 4 ... a6. One important point to keep in mind: White can no longer snooker us into some weird King's Indian since his c3-knight blocks his c-pawn. Now if he insists on ramming forward with 5 h4, then I suggest the sneaky 5 ... h6! (I see no reason to hand over the g5-square for his knight by complying with 5 ... h5) 6 Be3 b5 7 a3 Bb7 8 f4 h5! 9 Nf3 Nh6! (following our Austrian Attack recipe) 10 Ng5 e6, which led to a typically sharp Austrian Attack position where White's e2-bishop found himself away from his optimal post on d3 in T.Kos-A.Gorbatov, Pula 1998.

4 ... h6

Not the only option. Instead 4 ... Nf6! (not the natural but poor 4 ... h5?! when White gets a super aggressive, favourable version of a Hippo; soon his knight arrives on g5, causing Black all kinds of trouble after 5 Bc4! e6) 5 Be2 (once again hoping to engineer h5) 5 ... c5! 6 dxc5 Qa5 7 Bd2 Qxc5 8 h5 gxh5 9 Nh3 Nc6 10 Nf4 Bg4 11 f3 Be6 and White's pieces look more passive than in a normal Dragon, A.Rodriguez Vila-V.Tkachiev, Villa Martelli 1997.

5 h5



Question: Isn't White just prising us open?

Answer: This is one of those positions which is actually quite nice for Black, yet students of mine who play the Modern seem to fear White's early h4 ideas.

5 ... g5 6 f4

Logical, but don't get nervous. Black holds his own.

6 ... gxf4 7 Bxf4 Nc6 8 Nf3

8 Be3 may be a tad more accurate since it covers d4 without allowing a pin on g4. These positions tend to quickly grow irrational, as did 8 ... e6 9 Nf3 a6 10 Qd2 Nf6 11 0-0-0 Ng4 12 Bg1 b5!? 13 Rh4 e5 in G.Sarthou-G.Chepukaitis, Internet (blitz) 2003.

8 ... Bg4

Occupying the hole on g4 and threatening ... Nxd4.

9 d5!?

Comittal. Pawns, like the ageing, only move in one direction. Alternatives:

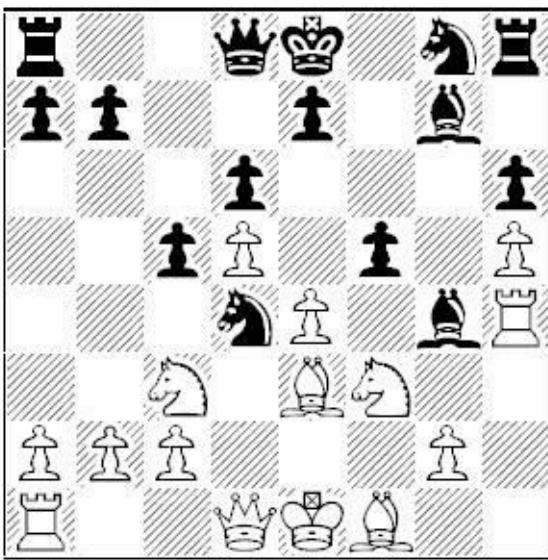
a) 9 Be3 Nf6 when White's h-pawn is in some danger.

b) 9 Bb5 a6 10 Bxc6+ bxc6 11 e5 e6 12 Qe2 Ne7 13 0-0-0 and Black looks okay in this odd position.

9 ... Nd4 10 Be3

10 Be2 Nxe2 11 Qxe2 Bxc3+ 12 bxc3 Nf6 looks like strange fun.

10 ... c5 11 Rh4 f5!



Dismantling White's centre. Surreal stuff. This is starting to look like a Duncan Suttles game. Black offers his opponent's rook an opportunity to amend his ambivalence and sac.

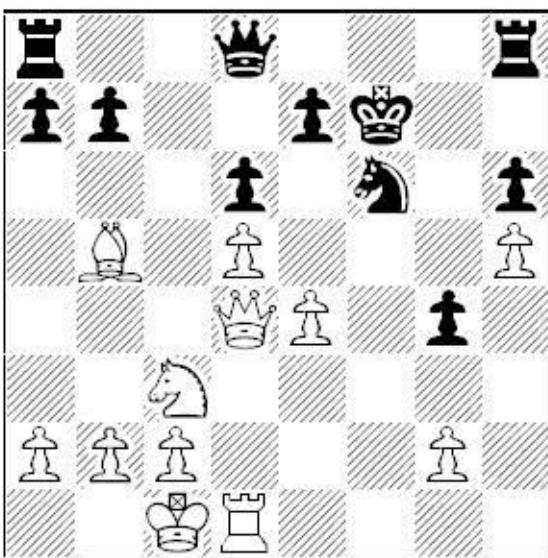
12 Rxg4!

And he does just that. In life we often wait around with hands in pockets for an injustice to be exposed and righted. White feels Black has played the opening unsoundly (Black hasn't; we Modernists are a misunderstood and persecuted minority in the chess world), and seeks justice by trading in an old dream for a new one. Sac'ing the exchange looks logical since White loses the initiative following the alternatives:

a) 12 exf5?! Bxf3 13 gxf3 Qb6.

b) 12 Be2?! Nxe2 13 Qxe2 Bf6! wins the exchange, since if the rook moves Black then has ... Bxc3+ followed by ... fxe4.

12 ... fxg4 13 Nxd4 cxd4 14 Bb5+ Kf7 15 Bxd4 Bxd4 16 Qxd4 Nf6 17 0-0-0



Question: Isn't Black getting crushed!?

Answer: We are all willing to accept delays and inconvenience, if in turn we receive gratifying end

reward for our suffering. I would assess this as dynamically balanced. It isn't so easy to get at Black's king. Let's do a planning exercise to try and work out a defensive scheme for Black.

Exercise (planning): As you just mentioned, Black's king feels insecure. White threatens to prise open further with e5 next. Come up with a way to halt White's intention.

Answer: 17 ... Qg8!

Black checks a box on his lengthy defensive to-do list. The queen check on g5 disrupts White's goal.

18 Rf1

Now 18 e5? is met with 18 ... Qg5+ 19 Kb1 Qxe5.

18 ... Qg5+ 19 Kb1 Qxh5 20 Rf5 Qh1+ 21 Bf1

After 21 Rf1 Black can take a draw by repetition with 21 ... Qh5, or go for the full point with 21 ... Qh2!.

21 ... Qh4!

Black, who can relax a bit since the terror of the initial freefall is over, keeps coming up with clever methods of hobbling White's e5 attempts.

22 a3

Once again 22 e5? fails to 22 ... Qe1+ 23 Nd1 dxe5.

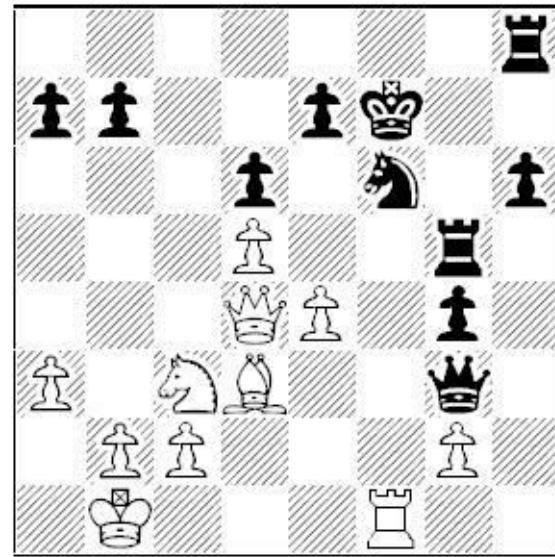
22 ... Rag8??

This looks like the wrong rook. There is no reason to leave a7 hanging.

23 Bd3??

White misses the tactical idea 23 Nb5! (threat: Nxd6+ followed by g3! disconnecting Black's queen from f6) 23 ... Rg6 24 Qxa7.

23 ... Rg5 24 Rf1 Qg3



25 Nb5??

Both sides play too spiritually minded in this game, each one offering pawns left and right. Better is 25 Qxa7!.

25 ... Re5

The rats continue to run the maze without discovering the exit. Black counterattacks incrementally in fitful spurts, then abruptly pulls back, as if fearing a hidden, punishing reprisal. He just can't seem to put his finger on a way to put White away. White's attack comes to a dead end after 25 ... a6! 26 Nc7 Qxg2

27 Ne6 Re5.

26 Nc7 Rc8

Take on g2!

27 Ne6 b6 28 Qa4 Qxg2! 29 Qxa7!

At long last, both sides wake up and realize money plays an important function to one's happiness!

29 ... g3

The deeply entrenched g-pawn is a huge promotion worry for White.

30 Qxb6 Qh2

30 ... Qd2! cuts off White's next move.

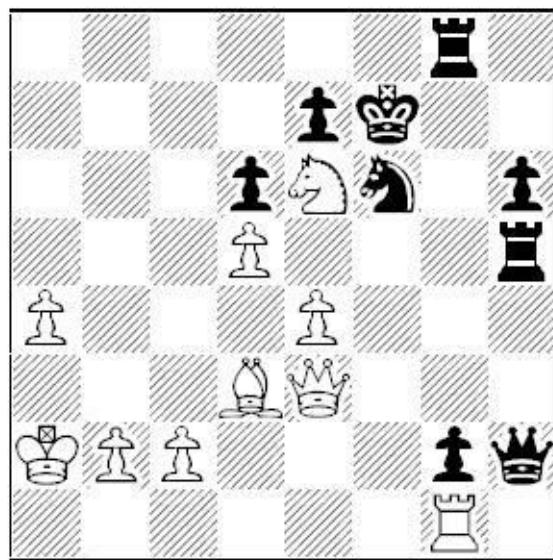
31 Qe3 g2 32 Rg1 Rg8 33 a4

Both parties try to create a new queen.

33 ... Rh5

Black either ignored or missed 33 ... Nxd5!.

34 Ka2!



Just because you are losing doesn't mean you should lose your cool. In such desperate situations, instinct drives the losing side on with the simple imperatives: survive and swindle! White sets a devilish trap ...

34 ... Qe5

... which Black avoids. 34 ... Qxg1? walks into a bizarre perpetual check trap after 35 Qxg1 Rh1 36 Nd8+!! Ke8 37 Bb5+ Kf8 38 Ne6+ with a draw. Very strong, though, was 34 ... Rh3!.

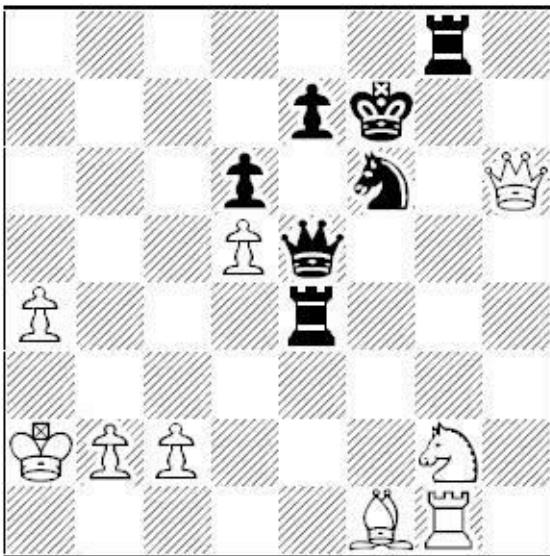
35 Nf4 Rh4! 36 Nxg2

36 Ne6 Rh1 is curtains for White.

36 ... Rhg4!

Tying White up in the pin.

37 Bf1 Rxе4 38 Qxh6



Exercise (planning): How do we convert Black's advantage?

Answer: Turn our attention to the unattended white king. *Houdini* announces a forced mate in 11 moves.

38 ... Rb8!

Black's rook, thwarted from his previous ambitions down the g-file, decides to vent his rage on the b-file instead.

39 Qc1 Rx a4+ 40 Kb1 0-1

The shock of being tossed out into the streets is all the more great for one who once lived a sheltered life of privilege. If 40 ... Rba8 41 c4 Qe4+ 42 Qc2 Ra1 mate.

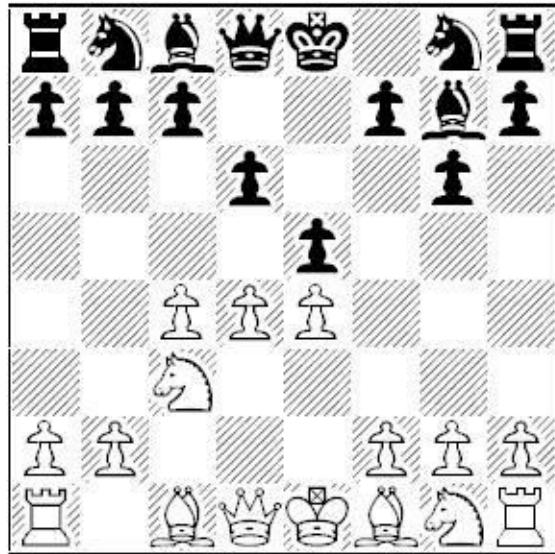
Summary

Be familiar with all of White's early h4 attempts. And, remember, sometimes the best recipe is an early ... d5! on our part, where we trick White into an inferior version of the Centre-Counter.

Chapter Nine

The Averbakh Variation

1 d4 g6 2 c4 Bg7 3 e4 d6 4 Nc3 e5

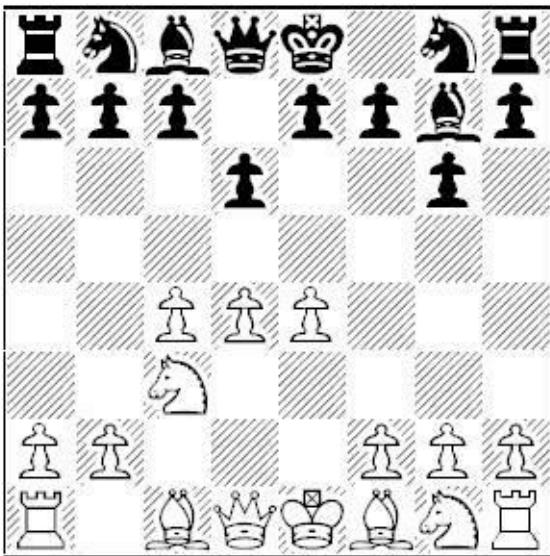


We enter the queen's pawn section of the book. Most of the positions we reach look like the King's Indian, but always in a mutated form, which hopefully may confuse your opponents. Our goal: elude White's KID theoretical knowledge the way a fish evades a larger predatory fish by hiding in seaweed. The diagrammed position is an example of one of the many un-KID mutations we may reach.

If White takes on e5, we recapture with the pawn, offering a strange but very playable ending where our experience should be a valuable asset in the coming moves. White constantly peers through the keyhole, eager to discover our set-up, yet our inherent structural flexibility obscures the view.

Game 40
E.Bareev-A.Morozevich
Monaco (rapid) 2005

1 d4 g6 2 c4 Bg7 3 e4 d6 4 Nc3



4 ... e5

We offer to enter a dynamic ending.

Question: Why not just play 4 ... Nf6 and enter the King's Indian?

Answer: Go for it if you already play the KID. But keep in mind the KID, probably the hardest opening to master in chess, is more a full time job than an opening! The ECO codes run the staggering gamut, from E60-E99. I have found 4 ... e5 to be as reliable and a heck of a lot easier to study. Also, as White everyone sports some pet line versus KID which they have played and understood for decades. Every time I play 4 ... e5, they pause to think, having met the move rarely, if at all.

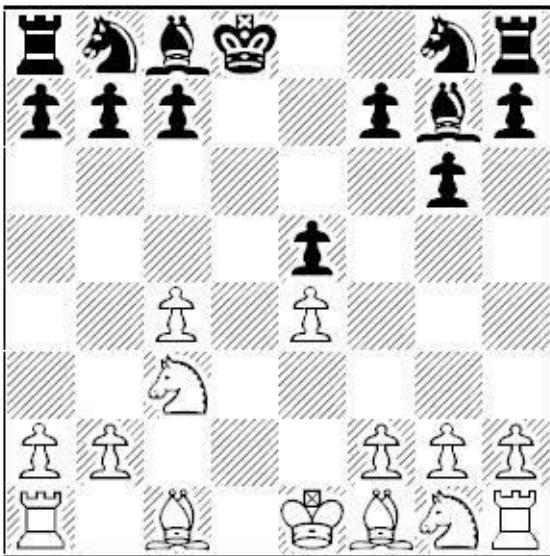
Question: Will we cover 4 ... Nc6?

Answer: No. In the past I fooled around with it as Black, and am convinced it stinks. At the very minimum, White gets a better than normal King's Indian. 5 d5! Nd4 6 Be3 c5 7 Nge2 Nxe2 (Black scores a sorry 36% after 7 ... Qb6; there are several lines which lead to an advantage for White) 8 Bxe2 Nf6 9 0-0 0-0 10 Qd2 Qa5 11 f3 a6 12 a3 Nd7 13 Rfc1 Rb8 14 Rab1 Qc7 15 b4 b6 and Black lacked counterplay in C.Lakdawala-R.De Guzman, San Francisco 2002.

5 dx5

This move is what you may get the most at a club level. In this chapter we also examine the alternatives 5 d5, 5 Nf3, 5 Nge2, and 5 Be3.

5 ... dx5 6 Qxd8+ Kxd8

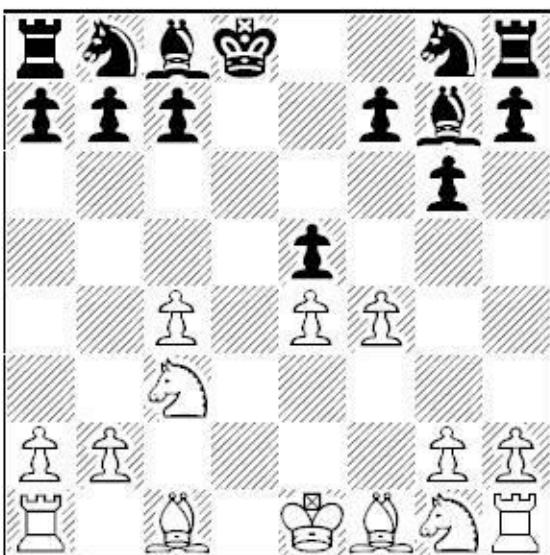


Question: Isn't this bad for Black, who loses castling privileges and falls behind in development to boot when White castles queenside?

Answer: Black scores 50% from this position, slightly higher than normal. Your assessment is also 50% fair, but omits key factors:

1. White must nurse a hole on d4, which Black may later exploit.
2. Black's king lurks about in the centre, but this may turn into a virtue later on since queens have come off the board.
3. In such positions, Black often sticks White with a bad bishop by playing ... Bh6 and swapping off White's good dark-squared bishop. Conclusion: despite appearances, chances are dynamically balanced.

7 f4!



White's best shot at an advantage.

Question: Why does White offer to take on an isolani when it's an ending?

Answer: It is and it isn't an ending. For now, think of the position as more of a queenless middlegame. Black can still easily get mated. Second, White follows the principles: when leading in development, open the position and create confrontation.

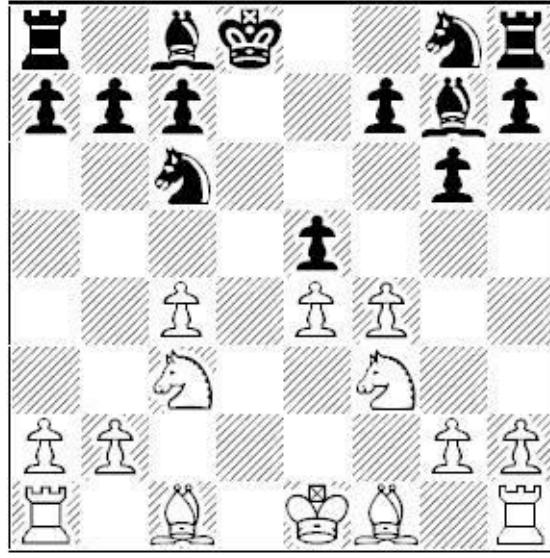
7 ... Nc6

Black eyes d4, but in doing so gives White's knight access to d5 for a while. Alternatives:

a) 7 ... Nd7 8 Nf3 c6 9 Be2 Ke8 (9 ... f6 is also common here) 10 h3 f6 11 g4 exf4 12 Bxf4 Nh6! (from f7, Black covers the sensitive d6- and e5-squares) 13 0-0-0 Nf7 14 Bc7 Nde5 15 Nxe5 fxe5 16 Na4 b6 17 c5 b5 (Black thwarts every attempt by White to open the position) 18 Nc3 Be6 with balanced chances, M.Petursson-I.Rogers, Malmo 1993.

b) 7 ... Be6 8 Nf3 Nd7 9 Be3 h6 10 0-0-0 Kc8 (10 ... exf4!? 11 Bxf4 Bxc3 12 bxc3 Ngf6 is a risky alternative) 11 fxe5 Ne7 12 Nd5 Nc6 13 Nf4 Ndx5 14 Nxe6 fxe6 15 Nxe5 Nxe5 16 Be2 b6 17 c5 Kb7 18 Rhf1. The players agreed to a draw here in N.Vitiugov-I.Nepomniachtchi, Olginka (rapid) 2011. Once again, White failed to dent Black's wall.

8 Nf3



8 ... Be6 9 Be3

Question: Doesn't Black worry about Ng5 and Nxe6+, picking off the bishop pair?

Answer: Your suggestion costs White a lot of time. Also, I don't see a single game in the database with your plan, which is a bad sign if IMs and GMs dodge it. Let's look.

I took Black versus *Houdini* to test out your idea: 9 Ng5 exf4 10 Bxf4 Be5! 11 0-0-0+ Ke7 12 Bd2 h6 13 Nd5+ Bxd5 14 exd5 hxg5 15 dxg6 bxc6 16 Bxg5+ f6 17 Be3 Rxh2 and White had compensation for the pawn, but no advantage. Your move actually looks playable!

9 ... Nf6

I think this move is more accurate than 9 ... f6 10 0-0-0+ Kc8 11 Nd5 Nh6 12 fxe5, as in Hoang Thanh Trang-E.Postny, Budapest 2002. But even here, Black should be okay after 12 ... Nxe5! 13 Nxf6! Nh7 14 Nxe5 Nxe5 15 Nd5 c6 16 Nf4 Bxc4, regaining the lost pawn.

10 h3 Kc8

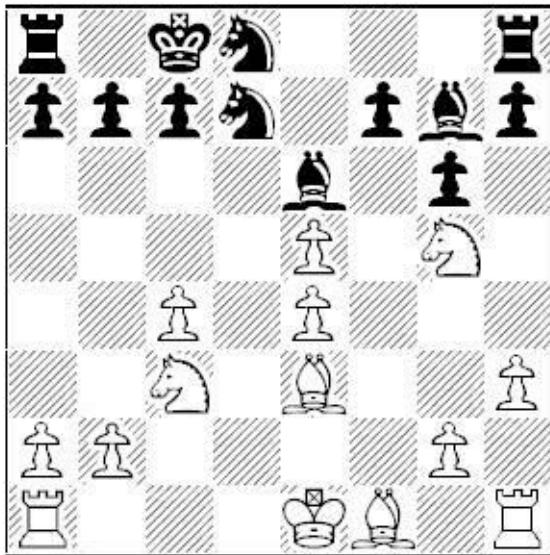
Wisely evacuating the open file.

11 fxe5 Nd7 12 Ng5?!

He wastes time and swaps, both which benefit Black. Bareev took your Ng5 advice, but I think at the

wrong moment! I feel this is the point where White's game begins to deteriorate.

12 ... Nd8!



Moro strives with great labour to outweird his competitors.

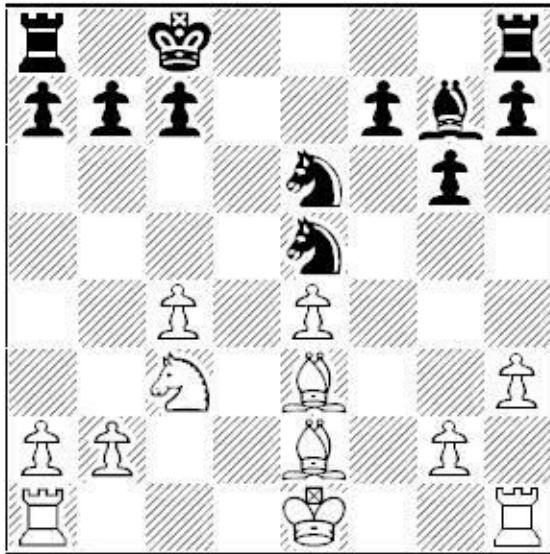
Question: What is the idea behind the retreat?

Answer: Dual purpose:

1. Black recaptures on e6 with his knight, who controls the key d4- and f4-squares, while retaining structural integrity.
2. Black clears the way for ... c6, to keep White's knight out of d5.

Overall, Moro's move looks better than 12 ... Ncxe5.

13 Be2 Nxe5 14 Nxe6 Nxe6



I already prefer Black:

1. Who retains the superior pawn structure.
2. Who controls the hole on e5, the potential hole on d4, and the dark squares in general.
3. Who shouldn't experience king safety issues, since after ... c6 and ... Kc7, he doesn't fear Bf4 as he

controls that key square as well.

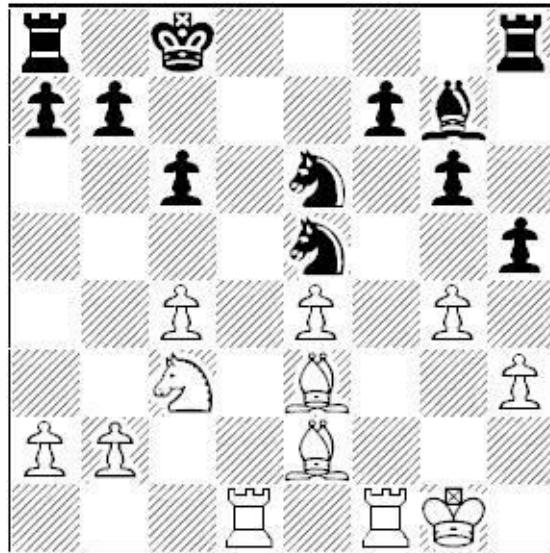
4. Who, weirdly enough, seems to have gotten the better of it with the minor pieces since his knights look even better than White's bishops, despite the open position.

Conclusion: White's dynamic chances fail to fully compensate structural defects.

15 0-0 c6 16 Rad1 h5

To halt or discourage any idea of kingside expansion with g4.

17 g4!?



Question: What now? Bareev played the move anyway!

Answer: To delete this message, please press '#'! Some people just have a stubborn streak!

17 ... h4!

Exhibiting a deep understanding of the position.

Question: Why on earth won't Black open the h-file where his rook stands?

Answer: He follows the principles: don't open the game or get drawn into confrontation when lagging in development. 17 ... hxg4?! allows White to eliminate a bad piece with 18 Bxg4! (18 hxg4?! Bh6! clearly favours Black; the fight for a grip over the dark squares remains the overriding narrative in the position) 18 ... Nxe4 19 hxg4.

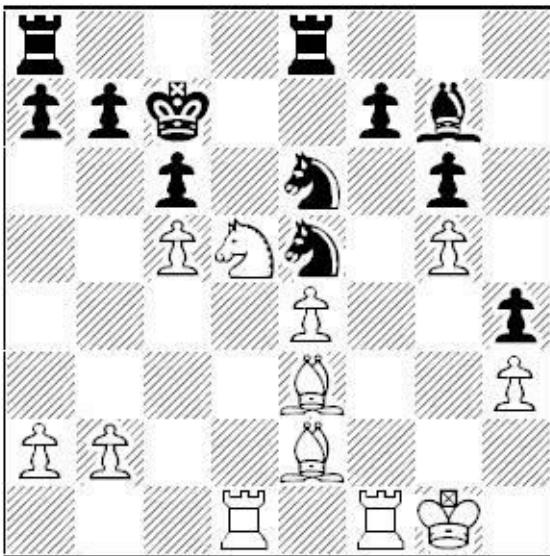
18 g5!?

Committal, but Bareev wants Bg4 at any cost. Also, he probably feared a blockade on g5 and a swap of dark-squared bishops after ... Bh6.

18 ... Re8 19 c5 Kc7

We reach a volatile turning point. If Black completes his development he stands clearly better due to his many strategic plusses, while White's deteriorating position becomes a portal to desperate action. So ...

20 Nd5+!



White issues a very large cheque, despite a rapidly depleting bank balance. I believe it was Chief Crazy Horse who once howled the Sioux war cry: "Today is a good day to die!"

Question: You gave Bareev's move an exclamation mark. Why?

Answer: Bareev's ungratified desire for initiative and attack festers into rage. Obviously, such a move is irrevocable, like the sound of a door slamming shut on a parting, divorcing couple. In giving up the piece Bareev hands Moro a load of practical difficulties on his defensive plate. Keep in mind, a brilliant positional player like Bareev doesn't give up a piece lightly in an ending. In doing so he acknowledges his strategic difficulties and takes the nuclear option. He also forces Moro to strain his cerebral defensive arteries to their maximum, as White's pieces demonstrate violent proclivities.

20 ... cxd5 21 exd5 Nf8 22 Bf4 Rad8?!

Under heavy strain, Moro fails to find the best defensive path, which lay in the cold-blooded 22 ... Nfd7! 23 Bh2 Rf8 when White lacks full compensation for the piece.

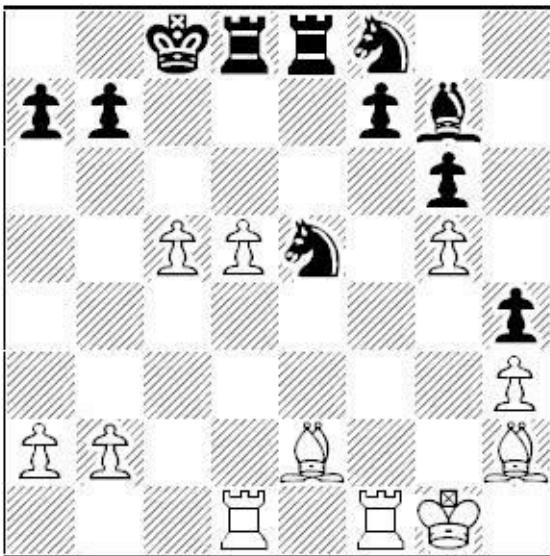
23 Bh2!

Threatening f7.

23 ... Kc8

Black has little choice but to back off and suffer the insult mutely:

- a) 23 ... Rd7? 24 Bb5 regains some material.
- b) 23 ... Re7?? walks into 24 d6+.



Exercise (critical decision): Now White has a choice:

- a) Kill the defender of f7 with 24 Bxe5, followed by 25 Rxf7.
- b) Play for mate with 24 c6. Which path would you take?

24 c6?

Overly optimistic.

Answer: White should bow to reality and regain some of his lost material with 24 Bxe5! Bxe5 25 Bg4+ Kb8 26 Rxf7 when he may get full compensation for the piece.

24 ... bxc6 25 dxc6 Rxd1

White's ammunition continues to dwindle.

26 Bxd1 Re7

One pawn is just not enough for a piece, no matter how active White's pieces remain.

27 b4 Ne6 28 b5 Nxg5

Correction: zero pawns for the piece!

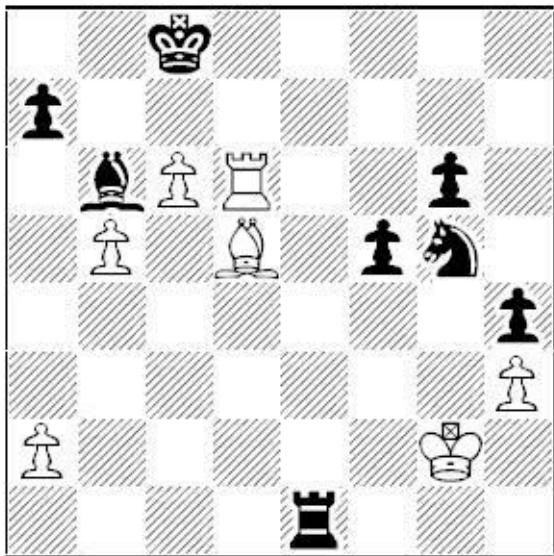
29 Kg2 Nc4! 30 Bf4 Ne3+

There goes White's precious bishop pair.

31 Bxe3 Rxе3

The once lush tactical environment dries up into a desolate moonscape. White has nothing for the piece. Bareev could easily have resigned here. Sometimes when hopelessly busted, we are driven by a primal instinct to stay alive just for the sake of remaining alive, despite the utter hopelessness of achieving the goal. So Bareev decides to continue with his masochistic experiment to discover how much pain he can endure.

32 Rf4 Re4 33 Rf2 f5 34 Bb3 Bd4 35 Rd2 Bb6 36 Rd6 Re1 37 Bd5



Exercise (combination alert): Not all combinations lead to mate or queen forks. Sometimes we force a series of moves to simplify to the win. In this case, Black to play and force rooks off the board, and with it all of White's dwindling hopes of counterplay.

Answer: 37 ... Rg1+ 38 Kh2 Bc7! 0-1

Summary

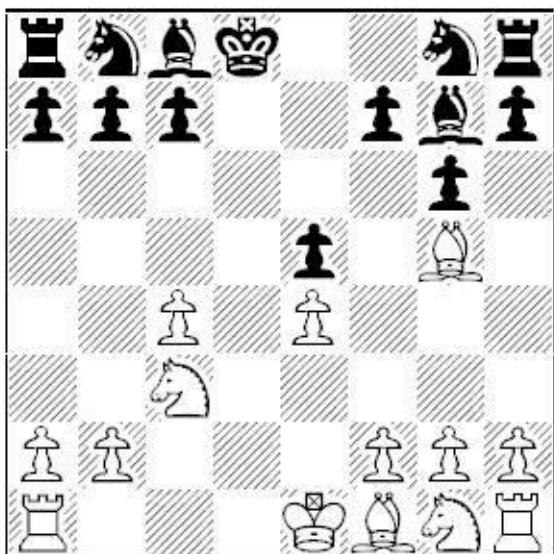
Black holds his own in the ending which arises in the 4 ... e5 line of the Averbakh.

Game 41

B.Baker-C.Lakdawala

San Diego (rapid) 2012

1 d4 g6 2 e4 Bg7 3 c4 d6 4 Nc3 e5 5 dxe5 dxe5 6 Qxd8+ Kxd8 7 Bg5+



A harmless line, where White hopes to inoculate himself from the temptation of launching an early attack. It has been my experience that opponents who play this move do so by instinct rather than from a defined plan. This check, played quite often by White, is exactly what Black wants.

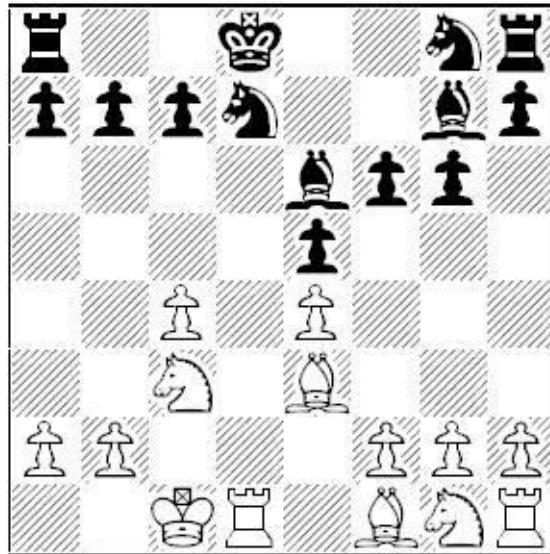
Question: Isn't the move disruptive for Black?

Answer: Not at all; Black nearly always needs ... f6 anyway. Compare to the Janosevic-Suttles game from the Introduction. In that game White also played Bg5 to induce ... f6, a move Black wanted anyway.

7 ... f6 8 Be3

8 0-0-0+ Nd7 9 Be3 Bh6 is exactly what Black is looking for, M.Dandridge-A.Wojtkiewicz, USA 1996.

8 ... Be6 9 0-0-0+ Nd7



10 f4!?

The decision to allow a future splintering of his structure in exchange for activity may not be as correct as it was last game, since it comes with a noticeable degradation of structure, without a corresponding decline in Black's king safety.

Question: You don't seem too enthusiastic about the move this time. Why?

Answer: If you are going to go for f4, then play it on the 7th move, as Bareev did last game. In this case White plays the same move, but after losing a tempo with 7 Bg5+, which renders the f4 thrust not so dangerous for Black.

I would go for the more cautious plan 10 g3 to meet ... Bh6 with f4!, although I freely admit this looks pretty milquetoast for White after 10 ... Nh6 11 f3 Nf7 12 Bh3 Bxh3 13 Nxh3 c6, as in R.Schwab-K.Kargl, Austrian League 1995.

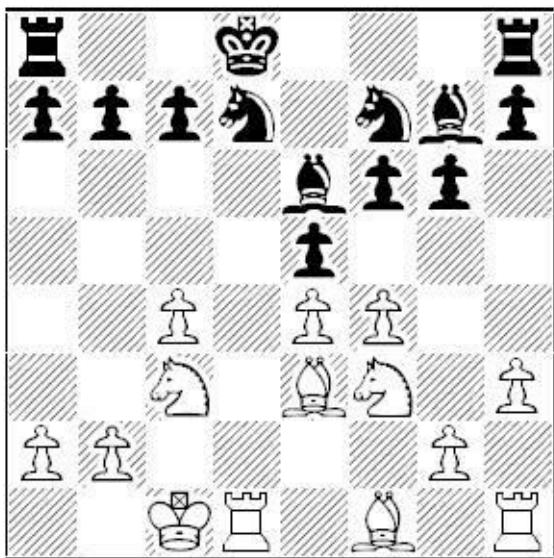
10 ... Nh6!

A pawn sac.

11 h3

He tosses my offer aside as one would junk mail. On 11 fxe5 I had planned the pawn sac 11 ... Ng4 12 exf6 Bxf6 13 Kd2 Nxe3 14 Kxe3 Bxc3 15 bxc3 with loads of compensation for Black.

11 ... Nf7 12 Nf3



12 ... exf4!?

Somewhat dangerous, since I volunteer to open the centre, but I was playing for a win and seeking complications.

Question: Why play the move if you increase danger to your king?

Answer: The danger is minimal. In return, I get control over e5 and hand White an isolani. So essentially I give up short-term initiative, hoping for a long-range return. Examined in the cold light of reason, perhaps you are right and the simple 12 ... c6 may be a better idea.

13 Bxf4 c6 14 Be2

I didn't fear 14 Nd4 Re8.

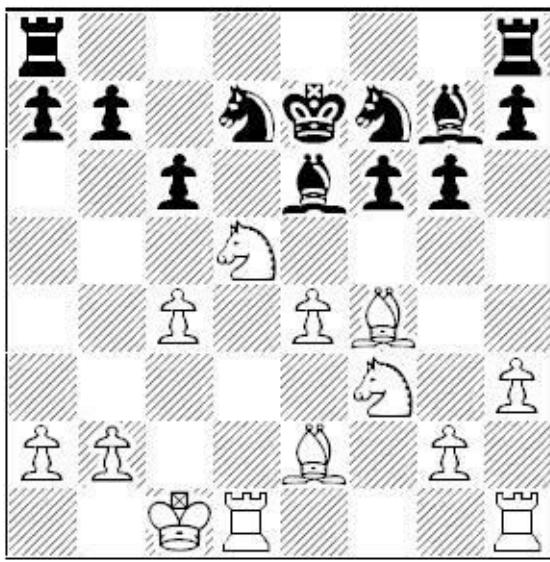
Question: What about White picking up the bishop pair?

Answer: I was okay with it. Every piece which comes off the board helps Black.

14 ... Ke7

Connecting the rooks.

15 Nd5+!?



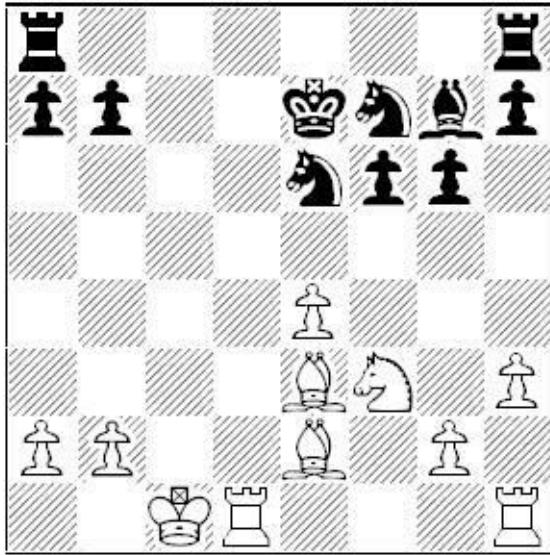
The creature awakens from dormancy. White takes action, hoping to apply it retroactively to make up for earlier sluggish opening play.

Question: Did you just walk into a shot?

Answer: The dramatic knight, the sole believer among those who lack faith, dutifully hopes to stir up trouble. I saw 15 Nd5+, but didn't fear it since more pieces come off the board – but at a cost: White gets the bishop pair.

15 ... cxd5 16 cxd5 Nc5 17 dxe6 Nxe6 18 Be3??!

18 Bh2 was correct.



Exercise (planning): White's last move was inaccurate. Why?

Answer: Because it allowed:

18 ... Bh6!

Principles:

1. When the opponent has the bishop pair, exchange one of them off.
2. Black's king will be a lot safer with the removal of White's best minor piece.
3. White is in danger of being left with a slightly bad remaining bishop.
4. White's dark squares get dramatically eroded after the swap.

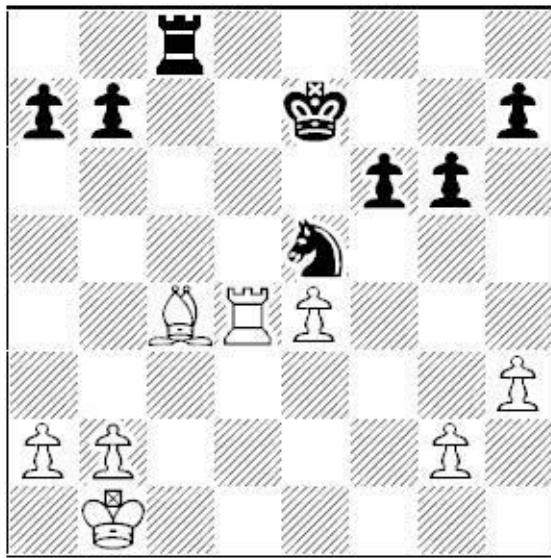
19 Bxh6 Nxh6 20 Nd4!?

More trades; more trouble for White. I expected 20 Kd2, intending to activate the king on e3.

20 ... Rac8+

Pushing White's king away from the centre.

21 Kb1 Nxd4 22 Rxd4 Rhd8 23 Rhd1 Rxd4 24 Rxd4 Nf7 25 Bc4 Ne5



Advantage Black:

1. Who has good knight versus so-so bishop.
2. Whose king sits centralized while White's sulks off in the corner.
3. Who controls the dark squares.

Question: I don't understand why the knight is superior to the bishop.

Isn't the bishop also optimally posted after 26 Bd5?

Answer: It is, but the bishop shoots off into air and fails to disturb Black. White's main problem is that his e-pawn is fixed on the same colour of his bishop, meaning dark-square weakness in the centre.

26 Bd5 Rc7 27 Rd2 b6 28 Rc2

No real choice in the matter. A rook swap accentuates his bad bishop's badness, but if he refuses to play the move his king languishes.

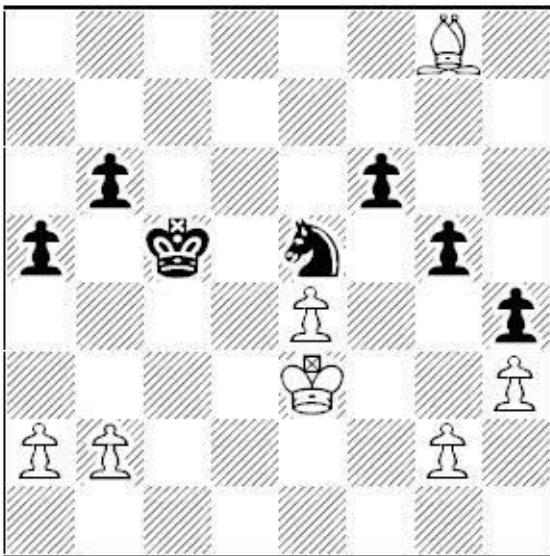
28 ... Rxc2 29 Kxc2 Kd6 30 Bg8 h5 31 Kd2

On 31 Kc3 Black easily outflanks White's temporary barricade with 31 ... h4 32 Kd4 g5 33 Bh7 Nc6+ 34 Kc4 (or 34 Ke3 Kc5) 34 ... Ke5. Now White loses the race after 35 Kb5 Ne7 36 Ka6 Kf4 37 Kxa7 Kg3 38 Kxb6 Kxg2 39 e5 f5! 40 a4 Kxh3 41 a5 Kg4! 42 a6 h3 43 a7 Nc8+.

31 ... h4

Target: g2. Too many White pawns are fixed on the same colour as his remaining bishop.

32 Ke3 Kc5 33 Bd5 g5 34 Be6 a5 35 Bg8



Exercise (planning/critical decision): We were both low on the clock. I knew in my heart Black should be winning. But which way?

- a) Play 35 ... Nc4+ and enter the king and pawn ending.
- b) Play 35 ... a5 and ... b5, and only then go into the king and pawn ending with 35 ... Nc4+.
- c) Avoid all king and pawn endings, and play 35 ... Ng6 to go after his g2-pawn. If he protects the pawn with his king, this allows Black's king infiltration on d4.

35 ... Ng6??!

This cuts it too close. The fixed kingside pawns result in a Pavlovian conditioning effect on my knight, who involuntarily salivates at the thought of a tasty treat on g2.

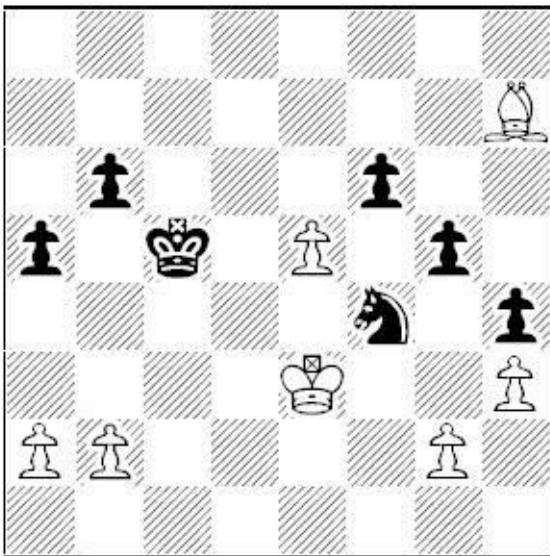
Answer: Plan 'b' which I almost played, is the simplest path to the win, but plan 'a' fails. I calculated:

- a) 35 ... Nc4+? 36 Bxc4 Kxc4 37 e5 fxe5 38 Ke4 b5 39 Kxe5 Kd3 40 Kf5 Kc2 41 Kxg5 Kxb2 42 Kxh4 Kxa2 43 g4 b4 44 g5 b3 45 g6 b2 46 g7 b1Q 47 g8Q+ should be drawn.
- b) 35 ... a4! 36 Be6 b5! 37 b3 (no choice, since he loses the king and pawn ending if he allows ... Nc4+) 37 ... a3 38 Bd5 Ng6 39 Bg8 Nf4 40 Kf3 Kd4 and Black's king infiltrates.

36 Bh7 Nf4?

It isn't too late to retrace my steps with 36 ... Ne5!.

37 e5!



Now White gets serious counterplay.

37 ... fxe5 38 Ke4 Kd6 39 Kf5 Nxg2 40 Kxg5 Kd5 41 Bd3!

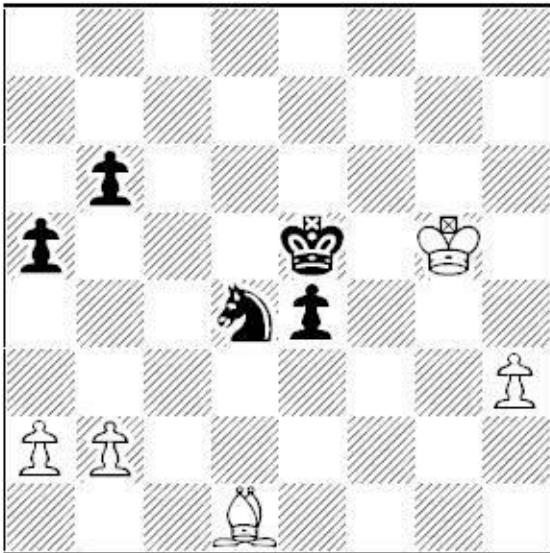
Every time I think his position reaches a breaking point, my opponent comes up with some hidden resource which keeps him alive. I expected 41 Kg4?? e4.

41 ... e4 42 Bf1 Ne3 43 Be2 Ke5 44 Kxh4 Nf5+!

44 ... Kf4? 45 Kh5 Ng2 46 Kg6 e3 47 Kf6 a4 48 Ke7 Ke5 49 Kd7 Nf4 50 Bf1 Nxh3 51 Kc6 reduces the pawns enough to hold the draw.

45 Kg5 Nd4 46 Bf1?

The force of the undertow sucks the bishop down to the muck at the bottom. Throughout the game, the unfortunate bishop proves to be White's Yoko, scorned and reviled for the ruination of his position. White still holds the draw with the problem-like 46 Bd1!!.



Question: You loaded up this game with tediously long analytical side lines. Do you really expect the reader to slog through them all?

Answer: I agree that sidelines are a chore. However, if you get into the habit of going over the sidelines in your mind's eye, after time this greatly enhances your analytical powers over the board. So don't be lazy! Let's change old habits and start now!

Exercise (calculation): Ready? Go! 46 ... e3 47 h4 Ke6 48 h5 e2

49 Bxe2 Nxe2 50 h6 Kf7 51 Kf5 Nc1 52 a3 Nd3 53 Ke4! Nxb2

54 Kd5 b5 55 Kc5 b4 56 axb4 a4 57 b5. 23-ply! If you saw this to the end you have GM potential! Both parties promote to a new queen, but Black's extra knight isn't good enough for a win.

46 ... e3 47 h4 Nf3+! 0-1

White flagged here. Black wins by forcing White to block his own passer: 48 Kh5 (not 48 Kg4?? Nh2+) 48 ... a4! 49 Be2 Kf4 50 Bd1 b5 51 a3 Kg3 52 Kg6 Nxh4+ 53 Kf6 (if White's king reaches the vulnerable Black queenside pawns, he draws) 53 ... Kf2 54 Ke5 e2 55 Bxe2 Kxe2 56 Kd5 Kd3 57 Kc5 Kc2 58 Kxb5 Kb3!. Whew! Disaster narrowly averted! Black wins by a tempo. Note that if Black goes for the superficial 47 ... e2? 48 Bxe2 Nxe2 49 h5 Ke6 50 a4 Nd4 51 Kg6 Nf5 52 b3 he can't make progress.

Summary

7 Bg5+ is harmless, since it fails to address the key issue of Black's safety early in the game.

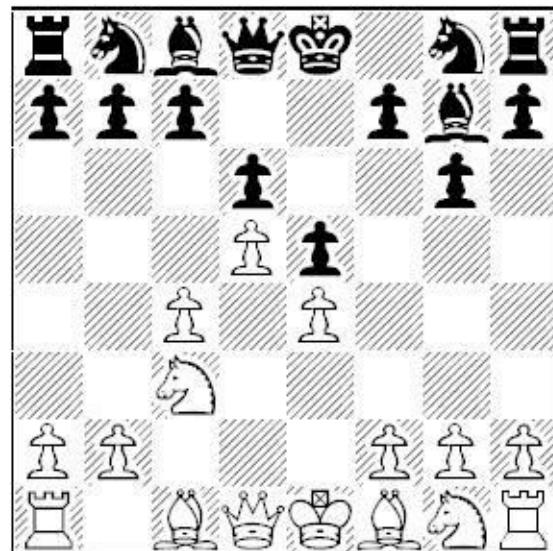
Game 42

M.Matulovic-D.Suttles

Sousse Interzonal 1967

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 c4 d6 4 Nc3 e5 5 d5

White refuses to play pawn tension games with Black and hopes for a King's Indian, but we don't have to comply.



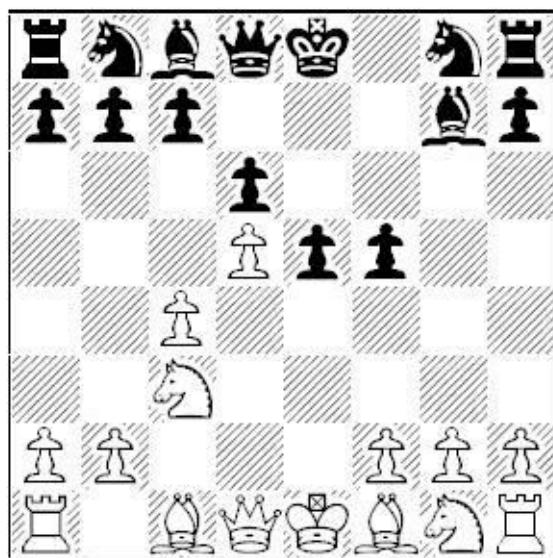
Question: What do you mean by that?

Answer: Well, Black in this instance doesn't even play for ... f5. Instead, we go for the strange plan ... h5 and possibly ... Bh6, swapping away White's good bishop. This plan is actually not so radical and is mirrored by the same plan in the Bronstein French Winawer: 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 b6!? intending a future ... Ba6.

5 ... Nd7

Alternatives:

a) 5 ... f5!? is a radical move which exudes a strained quality and I would avoid it as Black. It's very beneficial for Black to achieve ... f5, but to lose castling rights for it? I'm not so sure. Play continues 6 exf5 gxf5.



Question: Why not recapture with the bishop and keep castling rights?

Answer: Because we hand over title and deed to the key e4-square to our opponents, too high a price.

After 7 Qh5+ Kf8 8 Bd3 (Palliser's suggestion of 8 Nh3!? Nf6 9 Qh4 is also quite reasonable) 8 ... Nf6 9 Qd1 Na6 10 Nge2 Qe8 maybe Black is okay, but I don't particularly care for his disjointed position, K.Sasikiran-T.Hillarp Persson, Malmo/Copenhagen 2005.

b) With 5 ... Ne7 Black hopes for a tempi up KID, but there is a subtle flaw in the line: 6 Bd3 0-0 7 h4! (this is where Black really could use a knight at f6!) 7 ... f5 8 h5 f4 9 hxg6 hxg6 was J.Hrtanek-J.Malis, Czech League 1995. Now 10 Be2! intending Bg4 gives White a good KID.

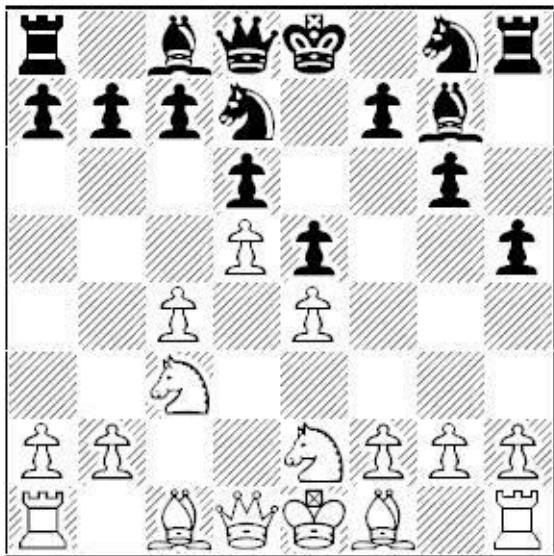
c) After 5 ... a5 (keeping all options open) 6 Bd3 Na6 7 Nge2 f5!? (7 ... Nf6 transposes to the KID) 8 exf5 gxf5 9 Ng3 f4 White has many tempting options and I'm not so crazy about Black's position, Y.Balashov-A.Morozhevich, Moscow 2005.

d) 5 ... Nf6 is the KID for the orthodox among us.

6 Nge2

After 6 Bd3 Ne7 7 Nge2 f5! (well timed since White lacks a Qh5+ option) 8 f3 Black gets a favourable KID, S.Foisor-Wang Yue, Gibraltar 2008.

6 ... h5!



If memory serves, Matulovic claimed Suttles played chess like a “drunk goose” just before this game. Some quotes you just never forget.

Question: Isn’t Black supposed to play for ... f5?

Answer: Not always, and almost never if your name is Duncan Suttles! In this instance White sets his pieces in anti- ... f5 fashion, planning Ng3 and Bd3, but doesn’t quite know what to do if Black simply avoids ... f5.

Also possible is 6 ... a5 7 Ng3 (waiting for the ... f5 which will never come) 7 ... h5! 8 Bd3 Nc5 9 0-0 Bd7 10 Bc2 Bh6!. Another plus from ... h5: Black dumps his bad bishop for White’s powerful dark-squared counterpart. Black stood at least equal in T.Taylor-H.Kallio, Budapest 2003.

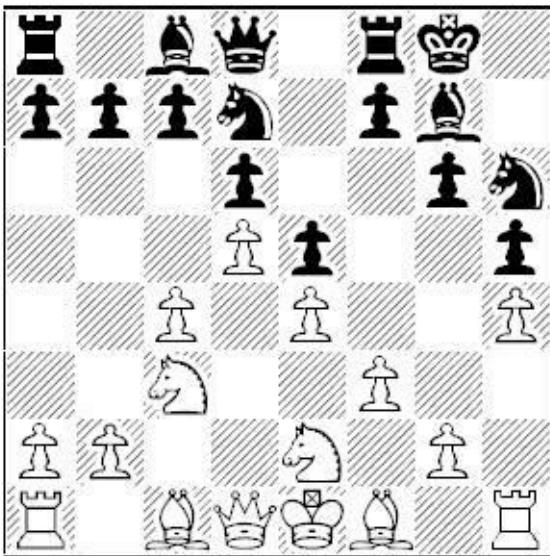
7 h4 Nh6!?

Question: Hey, you said the idea was ... Bh6, didn’t you?

Answer: Suttles never cooperated! He always liked to keep as many pieces as he could on the board. Logical would be 7 ... Bh6! with equality.

8 f3 0-0!?

I would play 8 ... f5.



9 Bg5

Now ... f6 only helps Black and gives him more flexibility. He should probably just play to e3.

Question: Isn't Black getting killed after 9 g4 hxg4 10 fxg4 Nxg4 11 h5?

Answer: Someone is getting killed but it isn't Black! 11 ... Qf6! (target: f2) 12 Qc2 Qf2+ 13 Kd1 Qf3 14 Rg1 Nf2+ 15 Ke1 Nc5 looks resignable for White.

9 ... f6 10 Be3 a6 11 Qd2 Kh7 12 Ng3

Inhibiting ... f5.

12 ... Nf7 13 Bd3 c5

Black stakes a little queenside space.

14 0-0-0!?

Perhaps he should keep Black guessing and play 14 Nf1, intending g4.

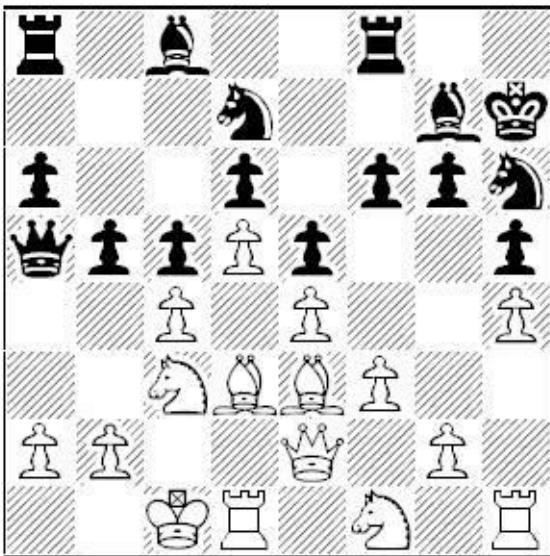
14 ... Qa5 15 Nf1 Nh6??

A distraction. He should proceed with queenside activity immediately with 15 ... b5! 16 Kb1 Nb6.

16 Qe2

White gets loads of light-squared play for the pawn after 16 g4! hxg4 17 fxg4 Nxg4 18 h5 g5.

16 ... b5!



Of course in such positions there is no need for further preparation. Just open lines, even if it costs a pawn.

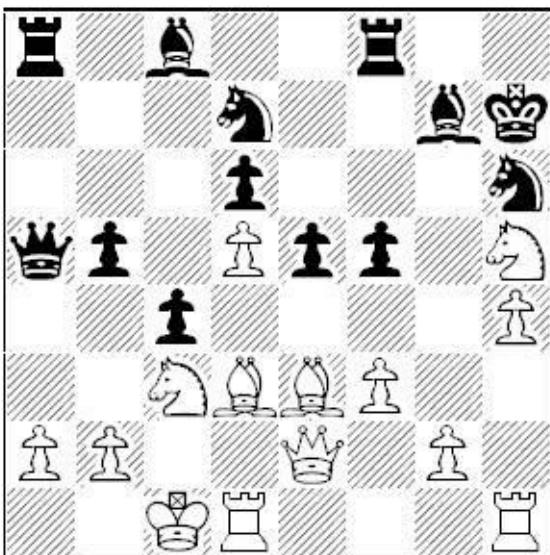
17 cxb5 f5

Orthodoxy at long last.

18 exf5 gxf5 19 Ng3

Back again. Black gets full compensation for his investment in his attacking chances in the line 19 Nd2 axb5 20 Bxb5 Ba6.

19 ... axb5 20 Nxb5 c4



Exercise (critical position): In such hair trigger attacking situations a sole slip can be fatal. White's choices:

- a) Stay calm and back up with 21 Bb1.
- b) Go bonkers and sac a piece with 21 Nxc4.

One of them leads to horrific complications with mutual chances; the other allows Black to take over the game. Think carefully. Which one would you pick?

21 Nxg7?

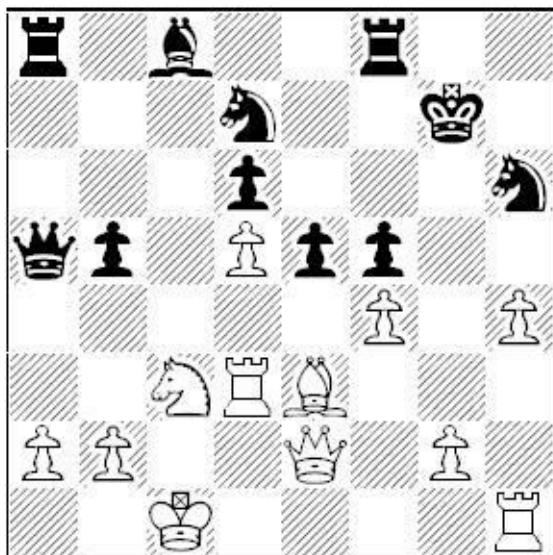
Unlike the common cold, some maladies, like hangovers, are self-inflicted. White, incorrectly sensing whispered invitations from opportunity, jumps at his chance. Unfortunately, he accidentally sets off the explosive by stumbling over the tripwire. The sac is unsound.

Answer: Patience was required with 21 Bb1! b4 22 Ne4! (this is the correct moment to offer a sac.) 22 ... c3! with an unclear, god awful mess of a position. Black gets slaughtered if he accepts: 22 ... fxe4? 23 Nxg7 Kxg7 24 Bxh6+ Kxh6 25 Qxe4.

21 ... cxd3 22 Rxd3

Dreaming of f4 and an eventual Rg3+.

22 ... Kxg7 23 f4



Exercise (combination alert): Find Black's trick which wins even more material.

Answer: 23 ... b4!

Double attack. Both the c3-knight and ... Ba6 are threatened.

24 fxe5 Nxe5

His threats remain.

25 Bd4 bxc3!

Not fearing ghosts on e5. It's hard to shake that black hole feeling, as Black happily sucks up all that enters.

26 Rxc3

26 Bxe5+ dxe5 27 Qxe5+ Kh7 28 Rxc3 Qxa2 29 Rc7+ Rf7 and White's attack runs out of steam.

26 ... Qxd5

Time for an alarming disclosure: White's sacrificial binge has been a dismal failure. The elusive non-attack remains the gnawing ache at the centre of White's being, as Black's king, the prize, remains nothing more than an alluring form in the mist. The annoying fact that White is down two full pieces for essentially diddly squat remains a gigantic impediment to the fulfilment of the goal, since his threats are rendered null and void.

27 Rd1 Rxa2 28 Rc7+ Kg8

The object of White's ardour continues to elude.

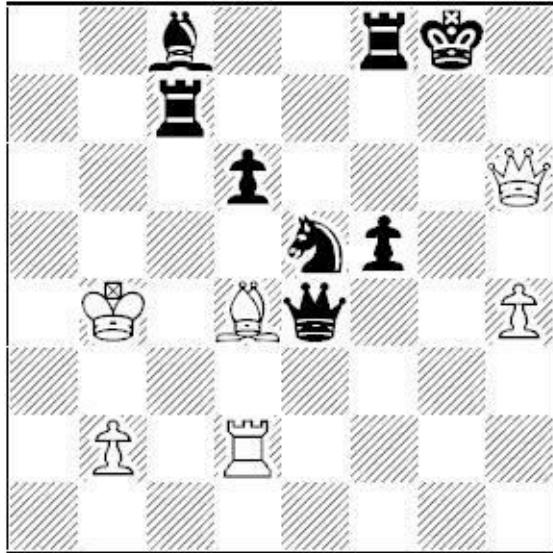
29 Qh5 Ra1+ 30 Kc2 Qxg2+

White's king and Black's queen look like secret lovers, compelled to keep a distance and avoid eye contact while out in public.

31 Rd2 Qe4+

Houdini announces forced mate in 11 moves.

32 Kc3 Rc1+ 33 Kb4 Rxc7 34 Qxh6



Exercise (combination alert/calculation): This is a really tough one, so give yourself about ten minutes to work out the answer.

Let's give the cerebral cortex a vigorous workout.

Black to play and force mate in seven moves. Go!

Answer: 34 ... Qb7+!

White's king receives notice as impersonally as a court summons to appear before the judge seven days from today. There are other slower mates. Only Black's last move achieves the goal in seven.

35 Ka3

Entering the death spiral. Black lacks even a teacup full of mercy in the ocean of rage.

35 ... Qa6+

The GM (then IM) blows the calculation exercise! Now it's back to mate in 11 moves! Correct was 35 ... Qa8+! 36 Kb3 (or 36 Kb4 Rc4+ 37 Kb3 Qa4 mate) 36 ... Qd5+! 37 Ka3 Nc4+ 38 Kb4 Qa5+ 39 Kb3 Nxd2+ 40 Qxd2 Be6 mate!

36 Kb4

Oops, now it's mate in two. Matulovic could stretch it out longer with 36 Kb3.

36 ... Rb7+

36 ... Rc4+! 37 Kb3 Qa4 mate is one move faster.

37 Bb6 Rxb6+ 0-1

White's unfortunate king is the one guy in the group who misses the joke everyone else in the room seems to understand.

Summary

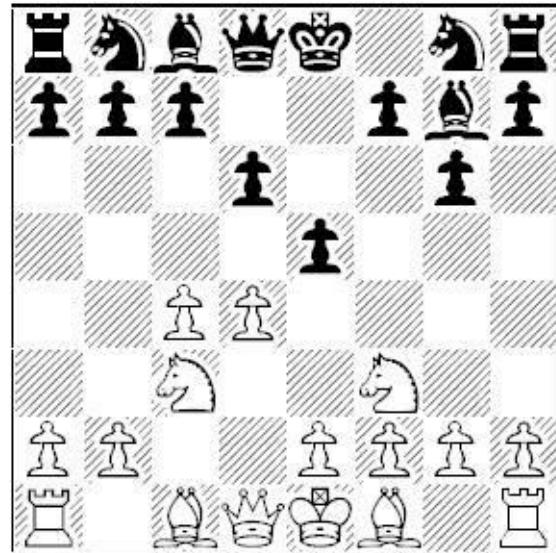
I like 6 ... h5! mainly because it crosses White up. You don't have to follow Suttles' strange contortions.

The simple ... Bh6! plan hands you equality.

Game 43

A.Karpov-Y.Seirawan
Roquebrune (rapid) 1992

1 d4 d6 2 Nf3 g6 3 c4 Bg7 4 Nc3 e5



Question: This is a little different. White played the more useful Nf3 over the normal e4. Is the exchange on e5 now a problem for Black?

Answer: Next chapter we take a much closer look at the ending: 5 dx_e5 dx_e5 6 Qxd8+ Kxd8. It may be a slightly better version for White than the ones we looked at the beginning of this chapter, but it's nothing Black can't handle.

5 e4 Nc6 6 Bg5

6 d5?! Nce7 gives Black the favourable King's Indian, since it enables him to achieve ... f5 in one shot, without a knight in the way on f6.

6 ... f6 7 Be3 Nh6

Now ... Ng4 is in the air.

Question: Can we dump our bad bishop here with 7 ... Bh6 instead?

Answer: Sure, that is also thematic. 7 ... Bh6 8 Qd2 Bxe3 9 Qxe3 Bg4 (forcing central resolution) 10 d5 Nce7 11 Nd2 was G.Grigorov-Z.Azmaiparashvili, Kallithea 2009, and now 11 ... f5 looks fine for Black, who isn't encumbered by a bad bishop anymore.

8 dx_e5!

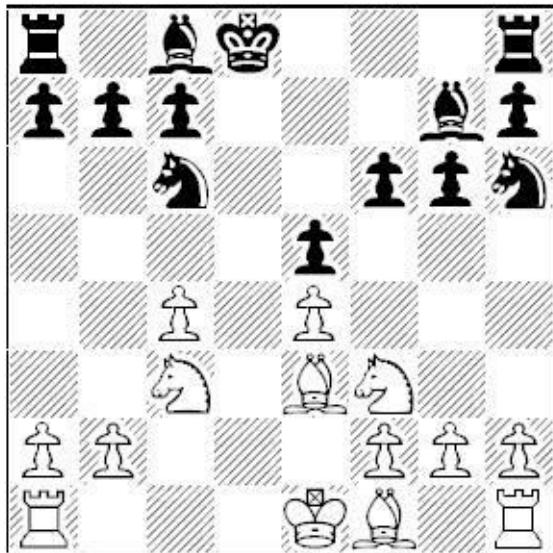
The ending places the maximum pressure on Black. Retaining the central tension fails to achieve an edge: for example, 8 h3 0-0 9 Be2 Nf7 10 0-0 f5 and I would be happy with Black, V.Bhat-H.Nakamura, Mainz (rapid) 2008.

8 ... dx_e5

I don't care for Black's game after 8 ... fxe5 9 c5! 0-0 10 Bc4+ Kh8 11 h3, as in E.Bacrot-E.Sutovsky, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005.

9 Qxd8+ Kxd8

9 ... Nxd8? 10 Nd5 Ne6 11 Bxh6! picks off f6.



10 0-0-0+

After 10 h3 Be6 11 0-0-0+ Kc8 12 g4 Nf7 Black is solid, but probably still a shade from equality, Su.Polgar-Z.Azmaiparashvili, Dortmund 1990.

10 ... Bd7 11 h3 Kc8 12 c5

The Karpov squeeze begins.

12 ... Nf7

The wayward knight is welcomed home without recrimination or judgement.

13 Be4 Ncd8 14 b4! c6 15 Nd2

Target: d6.

15 ... Be6 16 Be2!

Swaps help Black.

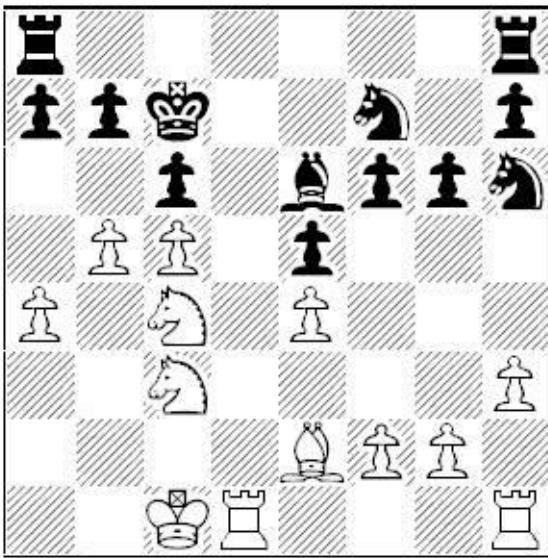
16 ... Bh6!

As I said, swaps help Black!

17 Bxh6 Nxh6 18 Nc4 Ndf7 19 a4 Kc7

Seirawan navigated the opening with great accuracy. His rooks connect as he equalizes.

20 b5?!



Premature. The move weakens c5, which Seirawan later pounces on. The magnetic allure of unhindered expansion is the aphrodisiac Karpov can't resist.

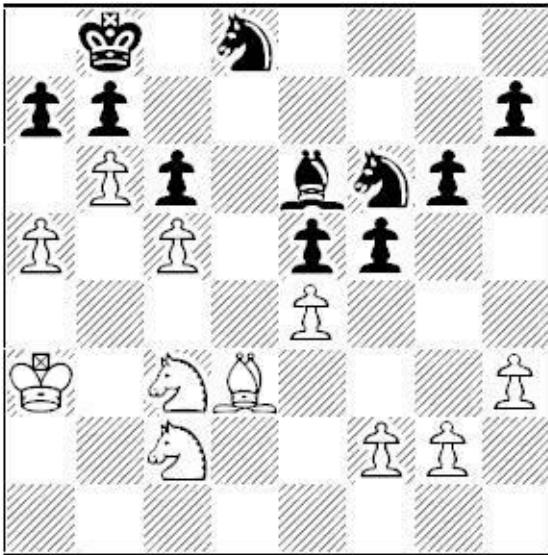
20 ... Rad8 21 b6+ Kb8!

More accurate than 21 ... axb6?! 22 cxb6+ Kc8 23 a5 when White can milk the plan: Na4, Nc5, and play a6 at the appropriate moment.

22 Ne3 Rd4! 23 Nc2 Rxd1+ 24 Rxd1 Rd8 25 Kb2 f5!

Ambitious, and much stronger than 25 ... Rxd1 26 Bxd1 a6.

26 a5 Ng8 27 Rxd8+ Nxd8 28 Ka3 Nf6 29 Bd3



Exercise (planning): Despite appearances, Black stands a shade better – but only if you find the right plan.

Answer: 29 ... fxe4!

A eureka moment for Black, whose position continues to trend in an upward trajectory.

Question: Why did Black volunteer an isolani in an ending?

Answer: With his last move Black achieves two goals:

1. He opens the d5-square for his pieces.
2. He ties White down to c5 by playing his knights to e6 and d7. Eventually he plays ... Bd5 and ... Bxe4, destroying a defender of c5.

30 Nxe4 Nd7!

A move which pre-empts White's assertions of authority on the queenside. Target: c5. Now White's joy curdles with the recognition that his queenside expansion failed to achieve its aim and that his position clearly eroded, like a receding gum line.

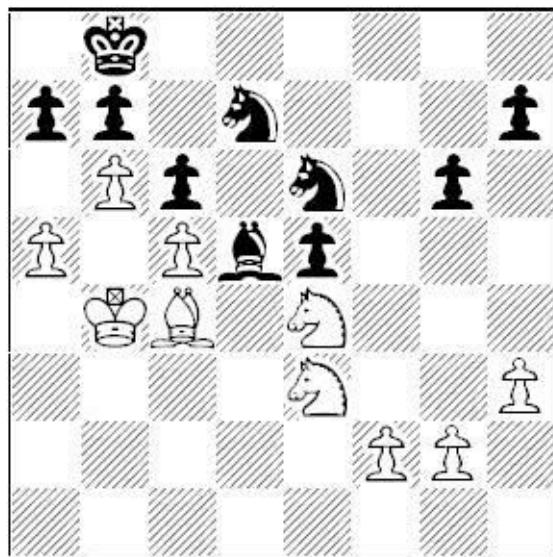
Question: So are you saying Karpov shouldn't have pushed his queenside pawns?

Answer: No, that would be like dumping a full pack of doggie treats on the floor and then advising my dogs: "Only eat them when you are hungry." Queenside expansion was indeed Karpov's best plan, but he pushed it too fast and too far, and now stands somewhat overextended. White now settles himself to the urgent task of tending to the new necessities of the position: how to save the game?

31 Ne3 Bd5 32 Kb4 Ne6?!

The correct move order is 32 ... Bxe4! 33 Bxe4 Ne6.

33 Bc4!



The bishop, in a burst of defiance, concocts a spirited insurrection. After this clever trick, White hangs on to his sickly c5-pawn, for a while at least.

33 ... Nf4 34 Ng5 h6 35 Nf7 Bxf7 36 Bxf7 Nd3+!

Black's only chance at a win is this unbalancing try. 36 ... g5 37 Kc4 Nf6 is equal.

37 Kc4 N3xc5

At long last, the knight finally sinks his teeth into the elusive prey.

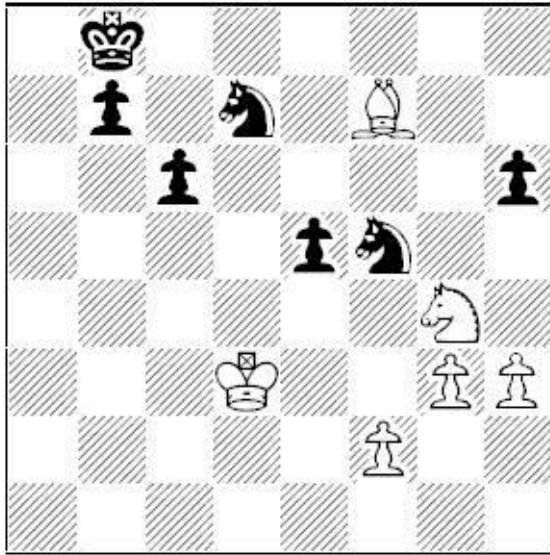
38 Bxg6 axb6 39 axb6 Na4 40 Ng4 Naxb6+

Sending the last of White's queenside pawns to oblivion. Why is it that a life of luxury always seems to be at someone else's expense? In this instance, Black profits from the pawn grabs as White grows increasingly poor.

41 Kd3 Nd5

Threatening a fork on f4.

42 g3 Ne7 43 Bf7 Nf5



44 Kd2!?

Question: What is the point of White's last move?

Answer: He plays it to threaten Be6 without getting forked on c5.

44 ... Kc7 45 Be6 Nd4 46 Bxd7 Kxd7 47 Nxe5+

Black looks slightly faster in the line 47 Nxh6 Ke6 48 Ng4 b5.

47 ... Ke6 48 Ng4 h5 49 Ne3 b5 50 Kd3 c5 51 f4 Nf5 52 g4 Ng3!

52 ... c4+ 53 Nxc4 bxc4+ 54 Kxc4 Nd6+ 55 Kd4 h4 is in all likelihood a draw.

53 Nc2?

53 f5+! Ke5 54 Nc2 hxg4 55 hxg4 Ne4 56 Na3 holds the draw.

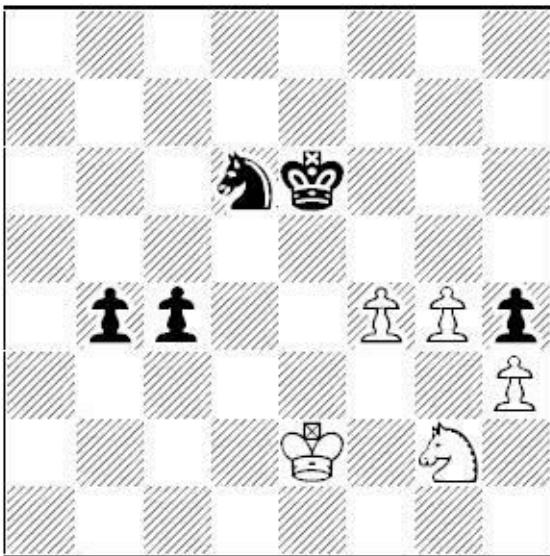
53 ... h4!

It's crucial that Black keeps one kingside pawn alive in case White sacs his knight for the queenside passers.

54 Ne3 c4+ 55 Kd2

55 Kd4! Ne2+ 56 Ke4 Ng1 57 Kd4 Nxh3 58 Ng2 Kd6 59 f5 holds the draw.

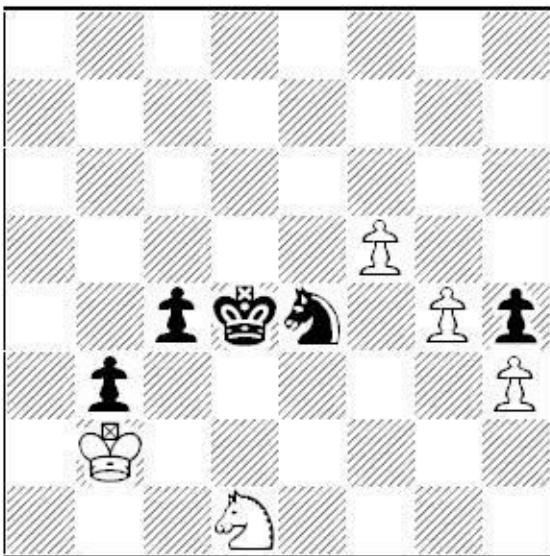
55 ... Ne4+ 56 Ke2 Nd6 57 Ng2 b4



Supernatural technique. Seirawan managed to activate his queenside passers, all the while containing White's on the other side. Amazingly enough, *Houdini* demonstrates a problem-like draw here anyway.

58 Nxh4?

Speed, not numbers, is what counts. Now Black's pawns run down the board faster. White holds on if finds the impossible-to-find 58 Kd2! b3 59 Kc3 Ne4+! 60 Kb2 Nc5 61 f5+ Ke5 62 Ne3 Kd4 63 Nd1 Ne4.



It looks like zugzwang. Black's pawns are embedded deeper, and his king and knight dominate their counterparts. But chess is a quirky mistress. White now achieves the unachievable with 64 f6!! Deflection. The f-pawn's slow trek up the file feels longer to him than the sum of his entire life. In races like this, it's imperative to avoid some kind of rounding error in one's calculation. Make certain to reset the counter at the start:

a) 64 ... Nxf6 65 g5 Nh5 66 g6 (all of a sudden, Black's knight must babysit White's passed g-pawn)
66 ... Kd3 67 Nc3 Ke3 68 Na4 Kf4 69 Nb6 Kg3 70 Nxc4 Kxh3 71 Ne3 and Black can't make progress.

b) 64 ... Ng5 65 Ka3 Ke5 66 Kb4 Kd5 67 Kc3 Ne4+ 68 Kb4 Ke6 69 Kxc4 Nf2 70 Nc3 b2 71 Kb3 Nxh3 72 Kxb2 Nf2 73 Ne2 Kxf6 74 Ng1 also holds the draw.

58 ... b3 59 Kd2 Ne4+ 60 Kc1 0-1

Karpov flagged but his position was hopeless after 60 ... c3 61 Nf5 Nd2! 62 Nd4+ Kd5 63 Nxb3 Nxb3+ 64 Kc2 Kc4 65 f5 Nd4+ 66 Kc1 Kd3 when Black queens first.

Summary

You can still play for the ... e5 ending if White replaces e4 with Nf3, but the path to equality is tougher than in the first couple of games of the chapter.

Game 44

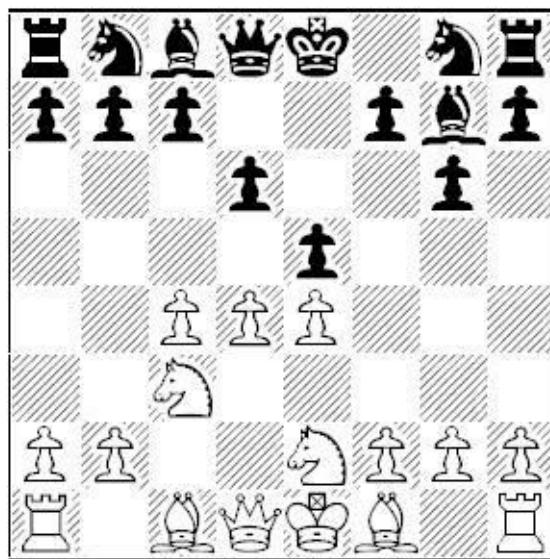
E.Ermenkov-Z.Azmaiparashvili

Elenite 1994

1 e4 d6 2 d4 g6 3 c4 e5

3 ... Bg7 4 Nc3 e5 5 Nge2 is simply another move order.

4 Ne2 Bg7 5 Nbc3



5 ... Nc6 6 Be3!

According to Tiger, this line is White's most dangerous in the Averbakh Modern systems, and I agree.

Question: Isn't White just backing us into a King's Indian Sämisch?

I see no way out of that for Black.

Answer: Please see Black's next move!

6 ... Nh6

I believe this is the best of Black's many options:

a) After 6 ... Nf6 7 d5 Ne7 8 f3 White gets a favourable King's Indian Sämisch, Z.Azmaiparashvili-A.Luckans, Liepaja 2006.

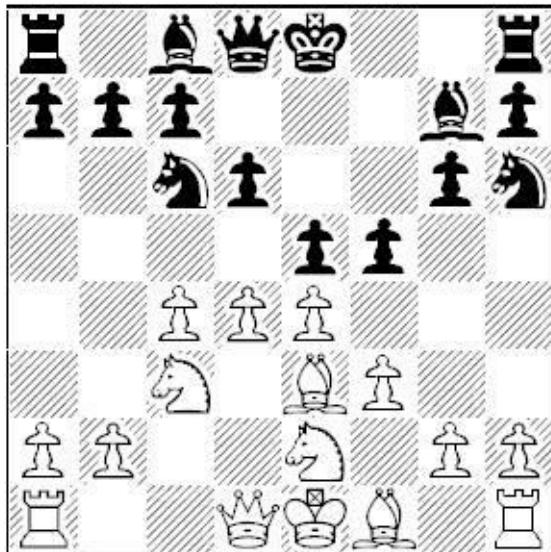
b) 6 ... exd4 7 Nxd4 Nge7 8 h4! f5 9 h5 Rf8 10 hxg6 hxg6 11 Rh7 Rf7 12 Rxg7! Rxg7 13 Bg5 gave White tremendous compensation for the exchange in V.Anand-S.Mamedyarov, Moscow 2007.

c) 6 ... f5 looks premature: 7 exf5 gxf5 (or 7 ... Bxf5 8 d5 Nce7 9 Ng3, with advantage White, who controls the key e4 blockade square) 8 dxe5 dxe5 9 Qxd8+ Nxd8 was K.Bischoff-U.Wallrabenstein, Dresden 1997. Now Black looks slightly loose in the ending after 10 g3.

d) 6 ... Nge7?! 7 d5 (unfortunately now there is no vacancy on e7) 7 ... Nb8 and Black lands in a KID tempi behind from normal.

7 f3 f5

Once again Black manages the ... f5 break without a blocking KID knight on f6.



8 d5 Ne7 9 Qd2 Nf7 10 g3

Laying down a marker to demarcate the boundary to his territory by preventing ... f4 KID Black counterplay. The alternative, 10 0-0-0, leads to a KID Sämisch hybrid. Black looks like he gets reasonable chances after 10 ... f4 11 Bf2 g5 12 h3 h5 13 Kb1 Ng6 14 c5 g4, as in S.Semkov-K.Georgiev, Plovdiv 1988.

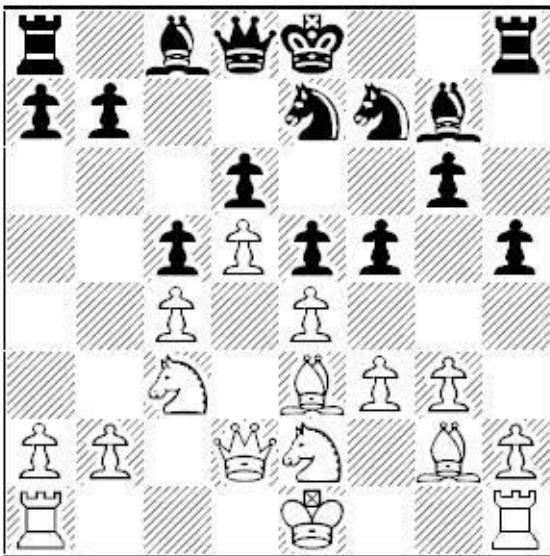
10 ... c5

I think it's a good idea to toss in ... c5, which makes it a lot harder for White to pry open the queenside.

Question: Doesn't White achieve that aim by capturing en passant right now?

Answer: No. The en passant activates Black's position. After 11 dxc6 bxc6 Black's d-pawn isn't so weak, thanks to that f7-knight. Also, White just opened the b-file for his opponent and gave Black future ... d5, or ... c5, ... Nc6, and ... Nd4 ideas.

11 Bg2 h5!



An experiment, but a very good one. After the rote 11 ... 0-0 White simply stands better in a g3 KID after 12 0-0 Bd7 13 a3.

12 0-0?

White should halt Black's h-pawn with 12 h4, but even then, Black can later play for ... f4 or ... g5 if White decides to castle short.

12 ... h4 13 Rae1?!

Intending an f4 break, rather than the traditional b4, which I think was a better plan since White was never able to implement his plan.

13 ... a6 14 b3 Bd7 15 Nc1

In order to transfer the knight to d3.

Question: Why doesn't White go ahead and play the immediate 15 f4?

Answer: It is an option, but his king doesn't look all that safe after 15 ... hxg3 16 hxg3 Qa5.

15 ... Qa5!

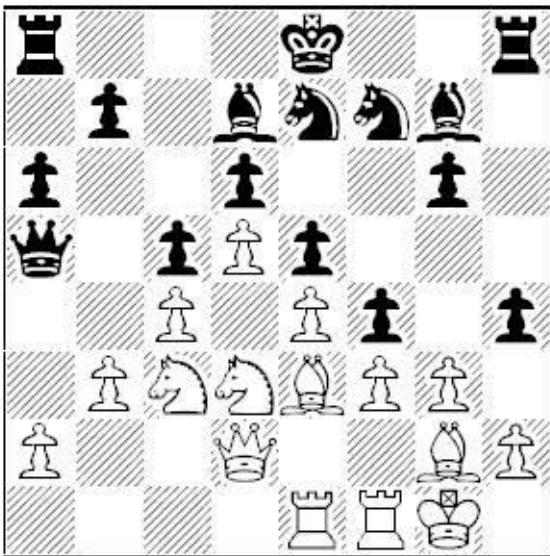
Nice! Now f4 isn't so easy to achieve since White's c3 knight will be loose as soon as he opens Black's a1-h8 diagonal.

16 Nd3

Black stands better in the line 16 Nd1 Qxd2 17 Bxd2 h3 18 Bh1 b5.

16 ... f4!

Much stronger than 16 ... hxg3 17 hxg3 f4. Black has other plans for his h-pawn.



17 gxf4?

A huge strategic error. White hands Black the e5-square. White should go for 17 Ne2 Qxd2 18 Bxd2 h3! 19 Bh1 g5 when he still stands worse, due to his terrible h1-bishop.

17 ... exf4

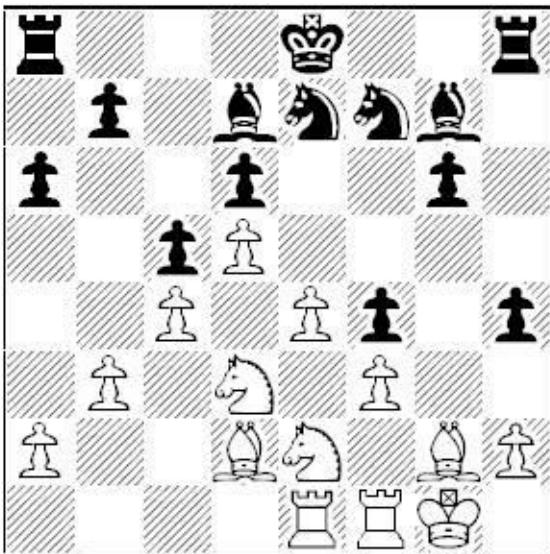
Question: Isn't White just dropping a piece here?

Answer: White has a tactical way out of the piece loss, but his position still stinks!

18 Ne2!

Ermakov relied on this trick to save himself but it fails to save him from the coming strategic nightmare which lies ahead.

18 ... Qxd2 19 Bxd2



Exercise (planning): Find just one powerful idea and you render White's game hopeless.

Answer: Bury White's bishop alive on h1.

19 ... h3!

The walkway along the h-file creaks from the weight of the all-powerful h-pawn, which dares to disturb the calm of the innermost recess of White's sanctum. Here we see the old sci-fi story repeated over the chess board:

1. Scientist builds beautiful, 'fully functional' android.

2. Love starved scientist succumbs to human weakness and makes excellent use of 'fully functional' aspect of fembot creation.

3. Beautiful, enraged android, now in love with scientist, discovers existence of scientist's flesh-and-blood wife and goes on jealousy fuelled, homicidal rampage.

Question: You see all this in the h-pawn's march?

Answer: I do. Don't you? The moral: sometimes an experiment assumes power more terrible and awesome than anything the creator conceived in their most fevered imaginings!

20 Bh1

The bishop, unhappy with his current reputation, takes on a new and far more humble persona on h1.

20 ... g5

A strategic nightmare for White:

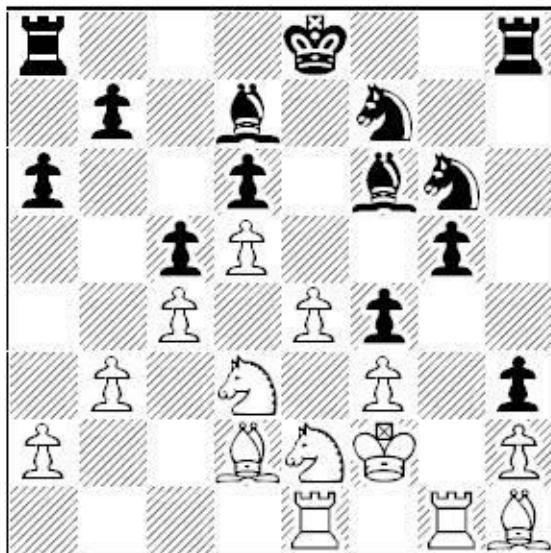
1. White's bishop, technically alive on h1, is no more than living flesh without will. No power on earth is capable of rousing the bishop from his snoring, drunken sleep.

2. Black rules over the key e5 -square.

3. If the game opens on the queenside, White will find himself effectively a piece down, thanks to his h1-bishop.

4. White's king lives unhappily in crowded coexistence in his overpopulated world and must watch out for ... Bd4+ at all times.

21 Kf2 Ng6 22 Rg1 Bf6



23 Ndxsf4!?

White swallows the antidepressant, which has the effect of numbing all feelings – good or bad, and goes ahead and sacs. This is a measure of White's deepening antipathy toward the hated, unwelcome visitors on f4 and h3. Beset from all fronts, he implements a radical solution to his compromised

situation, which continues its steady deterioration from every angle. White reasons that only with such a cataclysmic course can he hope to obliterate the hopelessness of the normal course of events.

Question: Isn't this suicide to enter an ending with only two pawns for the piece?

Answer: Don't throw a brick at your television just because you don't approve of the programme. If all your forces have been forced south, then there is only one direction for the counterattack. The sac is indeed suicide, but it's also suicide not to play the move! Black can then eventually open the queenside, when White finds himself effectively down a piece, thanks to the deadweight on h1. White's desperate sac hopes to arrest the rapidly forming fungus and decay.

23 ... Nxf4 24 Nxf4 Bd4+!

A nice zwischenzug, after which White must cough up an entire rook, rather than just one piece. Attackers hate it when an unexpected counterattack resource abruptly drains the aggressor's position of hostility, as well as the romance and charm of an earlier sac.

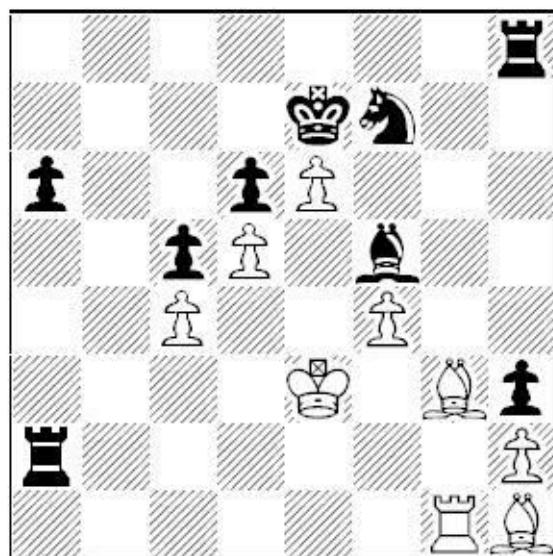
25 Ke2

No choice since if White avoids giving up more material with 25 Be3? gxf4! 26 Bxd4 cxd4; then the exhausting old problem of White's dead h1-bishop returns in its tiresome, circular pattern once again.

25 ... gxf4 26 Bxf4 Bxg1 27 Rxg1

White would have a great position if only he weren't down a rook for two pawns!

27 ... Ke7 28 Bg3 b5 29 f4 bxc4 30 bxc4 Rab8 31 e5 Bf5 32 e6 Rb2+ 33 Ke3 Rxa2!

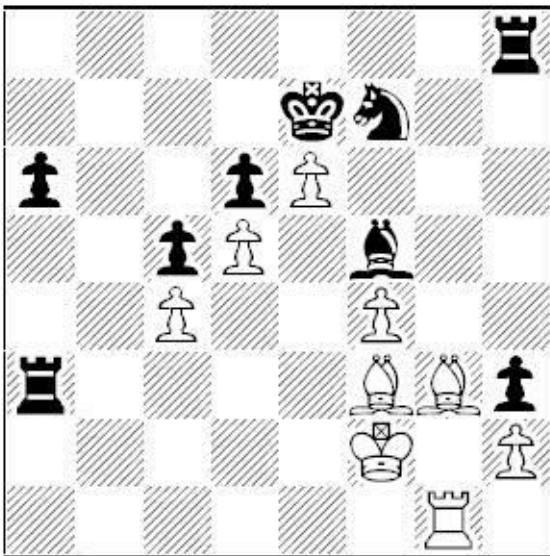


A good plan. Azmai offers his knight to break up White's last hope, his passed e-pawn.

34 Bf3

No thanks.

34 ... Ra3+ 35 Kf2



Exercise (planning): We have all been here: We are completely winning, but only if we find a good plan for Black.

Answer: Promote the passed a-pawn.

35 ... a5!

Note that Azmai isn't tempted to activate his h8-rook, since it stands sentinel against Bh4+.

36 exf7 Ra2+ 37 Ke3 Kxf7 38 Bd1 a4 39 Be1 Rg2 40 Rxg2 hxg2 41 Bf2 a3 0-1

Summary

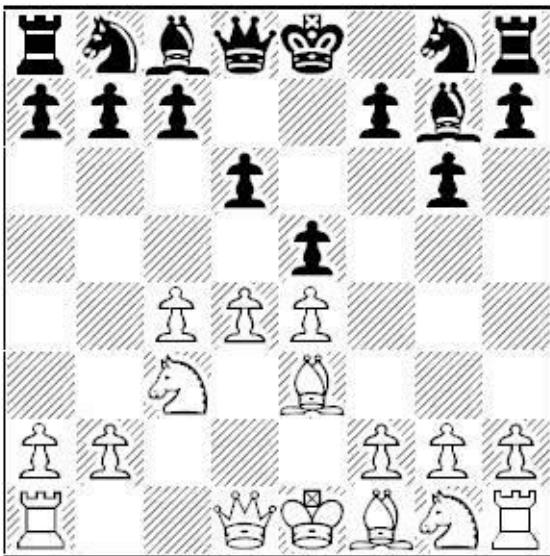
White tends to hold on to a mild edge after 6 Be3, the best of White's options versus the Averbakh. But don't despair: the position is complex and weird enough that we get plenty of chances, especially if we familiarize ourselves with Black's position.

Game 45

J.Hammer-R.Mamedov

Lubbock 2009

1 d4 g6 2 c4 Bg7 3 e4 d6 4 Nc3 e5 5 Be3?!



Question: Why is this move dubious when we just transpose to the 5 Nge2 line?

Answer: We don't. Your argument may be the case of the sheepdog accusing Sinead O'Connor of having too much hair. In this case we exploit White's slightly inaccurate move order and play an independent line with:

5 ... exd4!

We give White a Maroczy bind, but also gain a tempo in a couple of moves.

6 Bxd4 Nf6

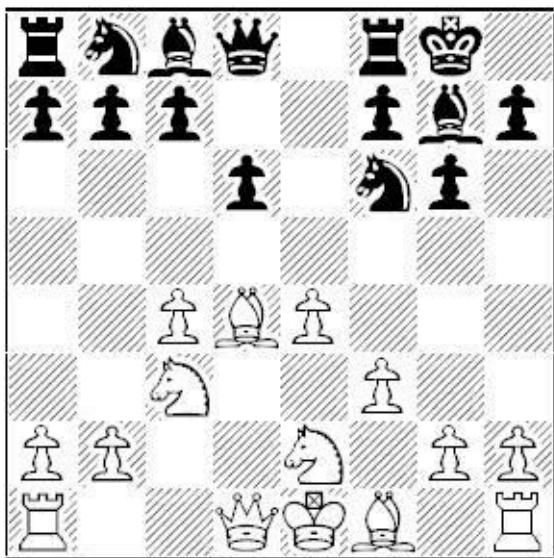
The point. A future ... Nc6 gains a tempo over normal ... exd4 lines.

7 f3

Question: Can't White avoid tempo loss simply by tossing in 7 Nd5?

Answer: In that case you save a tempo loss on White's bishop, only to lose it with the knight instead! A tempo is a tempo, wherever its inception. White ends up in a sour position after 7 ... Nc6 8 Bxf6 Bxf6 9 Nxf6+ Qxf6 10 Qd2. Black leads in development and White also has a bad bishop to worry about. His extra space fails to compensate for these defects.

7 ... 0-0 8 Nge2



8 ... a6

Question: This looks pointless. What is the idea?

Answer: Black leads in development. This in turn, calls for the principle: create confrontation when ahead in development.

Question: What confrontation?

Answer: The b5/c4 point. Black engineers ... b5 soon, challenging White's bind.

Instead 8 ... Nc6 9 Be3 Ne5 10 Nd4 a6 11 Qd2 c5! (one problem with playing the knight to d4 is Black may get a free ... c5 kick) 12 Nc2 Be6 13 b3 Ne8 14 Rd1 b5! was C.Steinbacher-A.Mueller, German League 1997. The comps say the position is even, but I don't trust them. Black's lead in a confrontational situation takes on meaning here.

9 Qd2 Nc6

At long last, the much anticipated tempo gain arrives.

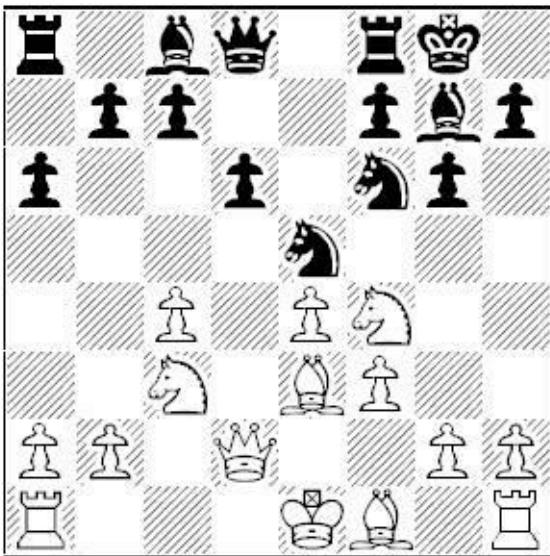
10 Be3

Of course it's suicidal for White to allow Black to trade knight for bishop on d4, since in doing so, he totally loses a grip on the dark squares.

10 ... Ne5

Harassment. Black targets c4.

11 Nf4



Question: Why to f4 rather than d4?

Answer: White must pick his poison. From f4, the knight inhibits a ... d5 break, but makes ... b5 easier. If White plays his knight to d4, we have the opposite, where he controls b5, but loses his hold on d5. In essence, Black engineers either ... b5 or ... d5, depending on how White sets up.

11 ... c6!

Intending ... b5 soon.

Question: But doesn't this chronically weaken d6?

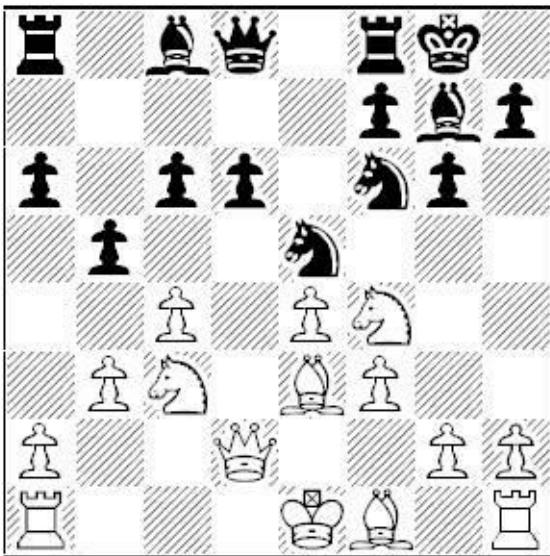
Answer: I see your point. A small animal who becomes conspicuous in the forest soon becomes a dead animal. Yet in this case, Black plans to give up d6 should White go after it.

12 b3

After 12 0-0-0 b5! who cares about d6? We offer White a Trojan horse. Here is a sample game snippet versus *Houdini*: 13 Qxd6 Nfd7 14 c5 (White tries desperately to close queenside lines) 14 ... Qa5 15 Kb1 Re8 (... Bf8 is coming, regaining the pawn) 16 h4 Bf8 17 Qd2 b4 18 Nce2 Nc4, and *Houdini* says the position is even, but I doubt its word. Not only does Black regain his pawn, but he also picks off White's powerful dark-squared bishop for a knight, retaining the better chances.

12 ... b5!

Confrontation! Nobody on White's side kept watch over this pawn, like a television playing in the background, away from the people in the other room.



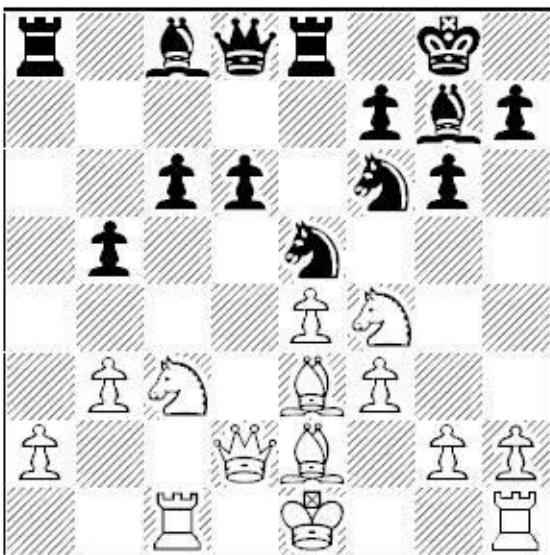
13 cxb5??

Threads of White's overall strategy continue to adhere to places best left ignored. The capture away from the centre accelerates the degradation, which soon gains momentum as the rot continues in White's position. White soon finds to his chagrin, the seemingly inconsequential shift in his defensive barrier turns out to be a problem of monumental proportions. He should settle for 13 Rc1 with a slightly inferior position.

13 ... axb5 14 Rc1

White is already in trouble. His game spins totally out of control after the natural 14 Rd1? b4! 15 Nce2 d5! 16 exd5 g5! 17 Nd3 Nxd3+ 18 Qxd3 Nxd5. White isn't going to last long here lagging so far behind in development.

14 ... Re8 15 Be2



Exercise (critical decision): Black leads in development. This in turn

calls for the principle requiring confrontation and game opening. We would like to play 15 ... d5, but White has more pieces than we do trained on that square. Would you play the move anyway or hold back?

Answer: We all dream of limitless freedom. The initiative, like you and me, needs nourishment, or it dies. We should go for it!

15 ... d5! 16 0-0

No choice, since 16 exd5? b4 17 Na4 g5! regains the pawn and leaves White disastrously behind in development.

16 ... dxe4 17 fxe4 Qe7

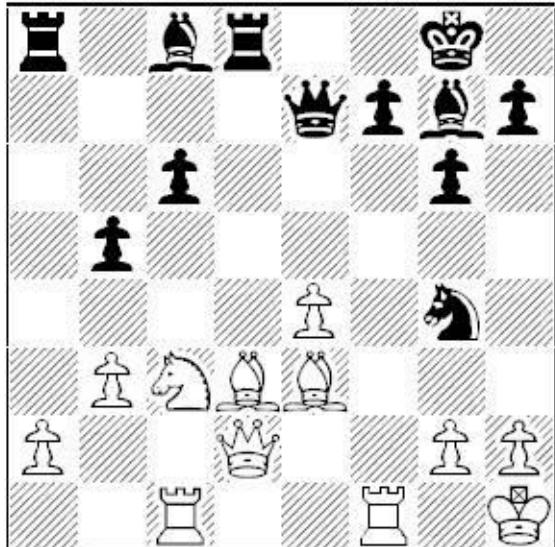
Black achieved a strategically won game:

1. He controls the key e5-square.
2. He has his eye on a target isolani on e4. In fact, he threatens ... b4 followed by ... Nxe4.
3. Either knight to g4, hitting White's all important dark-squared bishop, is in the air.

18 Nd3 Nxd3 19 Bxd3 Ng4! 20 Kh1??

After this final inaccuracy in a very difficult position, nothing halts the wave of the unfolding disaster which lies ahead. The natural 20 Bg5? loses to 20 ... Qd6! 21 Bf4 Qd4+ 22 Kh1 Rd8 23 Rf3 Qxd3!! 24 Rxd3 Rxd3 25 Qe1 Bxc3! 26 Rxc3 Rd1!, so White had to try 20 h3! Nxe3 21 Qxe3 Be5 with an admittedly awful position, but at least better than what he got in the game.

20 ... Rd8!



Now White's queen busies herself here and there, propping up this piece or that one, like an overbearing mother drowning her children in unasked for advice.

21 Bf4 b4

Even stronger was 21 ... g5!! 22 Bg3 (22 Bxg5?? loses on the spot to 22 ... Rxd3!) 22 ... h5 23 Qe2 h4 24 Be1 Qd6 25 e5 Qxe5! (the hasty 25 ... Qxd3?? walks into 26 Rd1!) 26 Qxe5 Bxe5 27 Bb1 Nxh2 and White can resign.

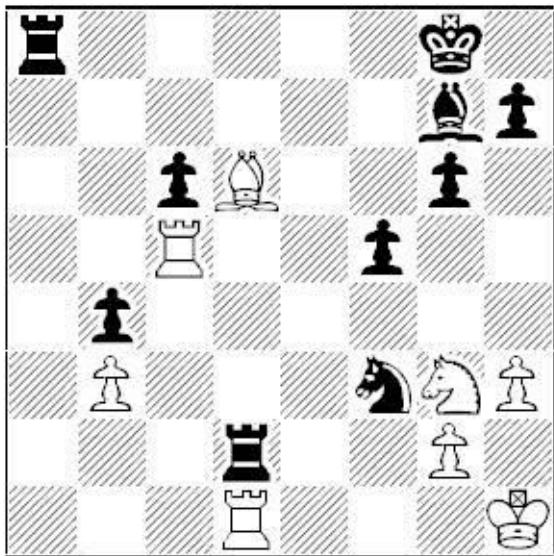
22 Na4 Ba6 23 Nc5 Bxd3 24 Nxd3 Qxe4 25 Nc5

25 Rf3?? Rxd3 26 Rxd3 Qxd3! is nothing more than an amplified echo of the earlier fork trap.

25 ... Rxd2 26 Nxe4 Re2 27 Rc4 f5 28 Ng3 Rexa2 29 h3

29 Rxc6 Rb2 is also hopeless for White.

29 ... Nf2+ 30 Kh2 Nd3 31 Bd6 Rb2 32 Rd1 Ne5 33 Rc5 Nf3+ 34 Kh1 Rd2!



Black continually issues and renews ever new threats. This forcing simplification trick, playing on White's weak back rank, exhausts the remainder of White's meagre defensive reserves.

35 Rcc1

35 Rxd2?? walks into a mate in four moves after 35 ... Ra1+.

35 ... Rxd1+ 36 Rxd1 Nd4 37 Bxb4 Nxb3

Black is up two clean pawns and the rest is just a mop-up operation.

38 Rd3 c5! 39 Rxb3 Rb8 40 Ne2 Rxb4 41 Rd3 Rb1+ 0-1

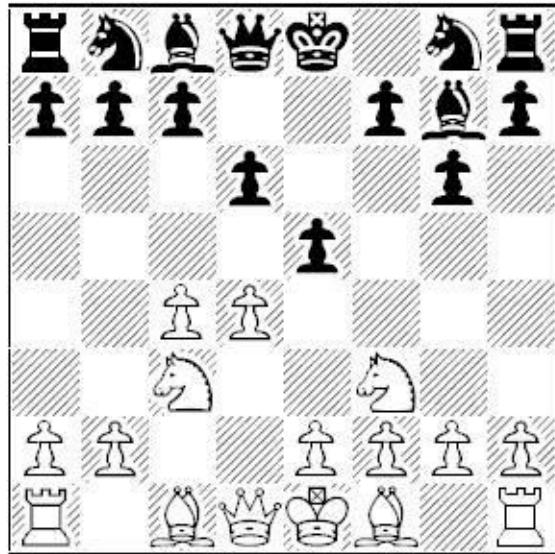
Summary

The inaccurate 5 Be3?! leads to a KID Sämisch situation where we enjoy a full tempo up over the book lines.

Chapter Ten

Offbeat Averbakh Lines

1 d4 g6 2 c4 Bg7 3 Nf3 d6 4 Nc3 e5



After a short intermission from last chapter we continue along and fill the theoretical vacuum with more Averbakh lines, but this time slightly unusual choices from White. In essence, only one game in this chapter, Nielsen-Rogers, is of any worry to us theoretically. There White opts to enter the queenless middlegame, just as he did in the first two games of Chapter Nine, but this time he replaces e4 with the more useful Nf3, a developing move. So he gets a slightly better version than last chapter. Still, this is not a sky-is-falling issue. Just study Rogers' defensive technique carefully and you will have the position under control.

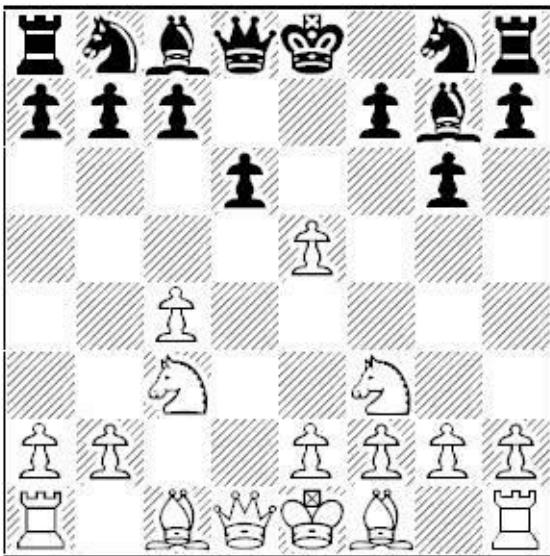
Game 46

P.H.Nielsen-I.Rogers
Calvia Olympiad 2004

1 d4 g6

GM Ian Rogers, a very likeable guy, is an adventurer at heart. He once declined a draw two pawns down against me (well, okay, he had some compensation for the pawns and he probably sensed he faced an inept opponent!), and rudely went on to defeat your untalented writer. I asked him after the game if he thought he stood better when down two pawns. He replied: "No, you stood better but I couldn't get myself to take the draw. The position was too interesting!"

2 c4 Bg7 3 Nf3 d6 4 Nc3 e5 5 dxе5!



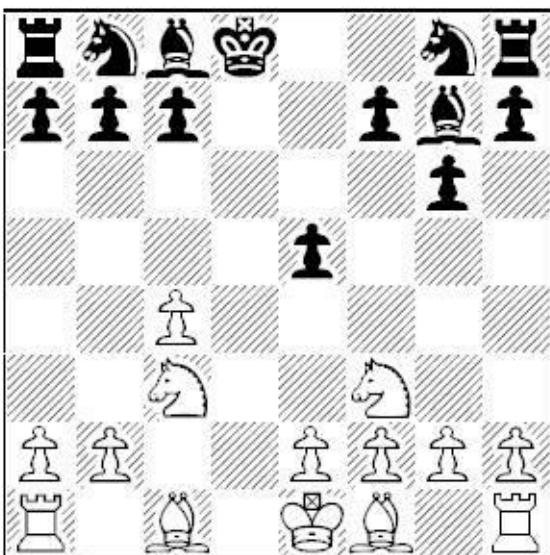
Question: Why an exclamation mark?

Answer: This ending is slightly more dangerous for Black than the ones we examined last chapter, mainly because the developing Nf3 is more useful than e4. Also, in this version White hasn't created a hole on d4.

Question: So then why agree to enter it as Black?

Answer: Even though our path may be a bit rockier, the line is still quite playable for Black. Also, these queenless middlegames are specialized positions, meaning White rarely gets them while we Modern players reach them far more often. After playing them for a while, we should be far better versed in the subtleties than our opponents.

5 ... dxe5 6 Qxd8+ Kxd8



7 Bd2!

The most accurate continuation and the main choice of 2600 + players.

Question: Why not gain time by checking on g5, followed by castling queenside with check?

Answer: Someone gains time, but not White! Remember, we talked about the bishop check on g5 last chapter? Essentially White hands Black a free move since we want ... f6 anyway. 7 Bg5+?! is played much more often but it's inaccurate! After 7 ... f6 8 0-0-0+ Nd7 9 Bd2 guess what? We reached our game position where White generously gave us the very useful ... f6 free of charge.

7 ... f6

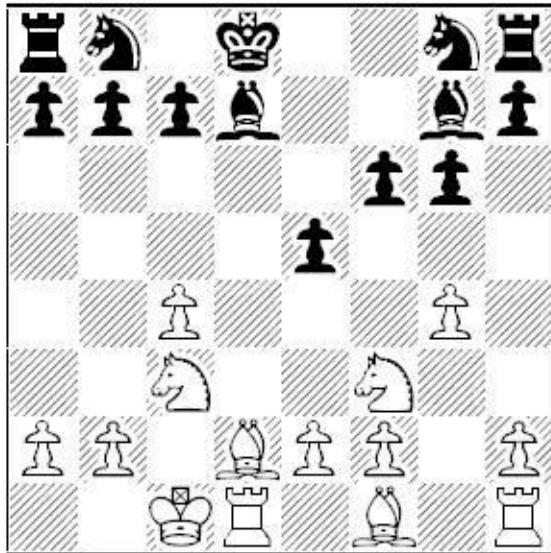
Question: Wouldn't developing a piece be better?

Answer: Black wants to develop his bishop to its optimal square, e6, without being harassed by Ng5. The problem is Black scores poorly after 7 ... Be6 8 0-0-0 Nd7 9 Ng5! Bxc4 10 e4 Bxf1 11 Rxf1 Nh6 12 f4!. White has a dangerous development lead, so he logically opens at every opportunity. After 12 ... c6 13 fxe5 Ke7 14 Nf3 Ng4 15 Bg5+ Ke8 16 e6 fxe6 17 Rd6 Nf8 the comps say equal, but I don't believe the assessment; White still applied the pressure in V.Kramnik-V.Topalov, Monaco (rapid) 1998.

8 0-0-0 Bd7

After 8 ... Ke8 9 h3 Be6 10 b3 Nh6 11 Nd5 Bxd5 12 cxd5 Nf7 13 Ba5 b6 14 Bc3 a5 15 e3 Nd6 16 Nd2 Nd7 believe it or not, White's bishop pair didn't constitute much of an edge here. In fact, Black went on to win in M.Roiz-Z.Azmaiparashvili Internet (blitz) 2003.

9 g4!



Question: This move looks somewhat random. What is the point?

Answer: It's a strong move:

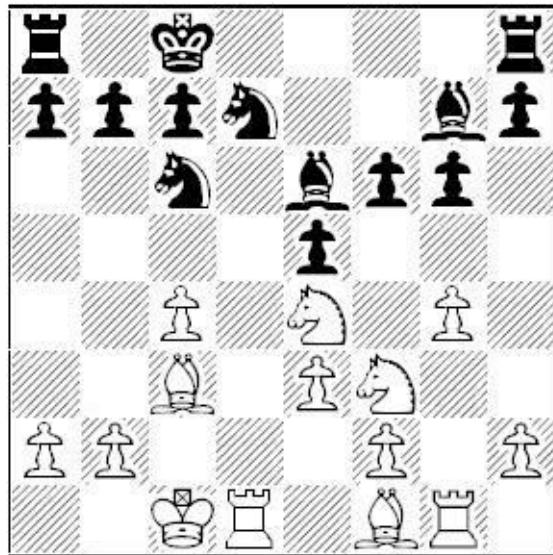
1. White gains space on the kingside.
2. White prevents the natural ... Nh6, since it would lead to unfavourable (for Black) confrontation after g5!.

9 ... Kc8 10 Rg1 Ne7 11 Ne4

Eying c5. Looks can be deceiving. Black's pieces appear as the chess board's dispossessed and destitute, huddled around a fire, trying to stay warm. However, in reality, White simply lacks targets and

his advantage is in question.

11 ... Be6 12 e3 Nd7 13 Bc3 Nc6



14 h4

Question: Isn't Black just getting slowly squeezed after 14 b4?

Answer: Your suggestion may indeed be White's only real try for an advantage, but it's also double edged and White risks potential overextension. Here is a sample against *Houdini*: 14 ... a6 15 Kb2 Nb6 16 Kb3 a5 17 b5 a4+ 18 Kb2 Na5 19 c5 a3+ 20 Ka1 Nd5. Houdini assesses as equal, but I feel White has the slightly better chances due to the extra queenside space.

14 ... a5!

Staking out a little space of his own and discouraging White from queenside expansion.

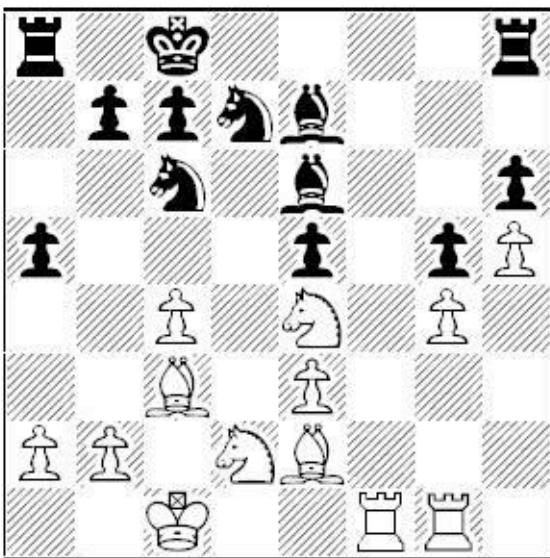
15 h5 g5!

Oh no you don't! Black refuses to open the position anywhere at anytime. Some adversaries are just too powerful to challenge head on. Black acknowledges White's development lead and continually closes the game, smothering White's potential piece activity with a damp blanket.

16 Nfd2 h6 17 Be2 Bf8 18 f4

Once again trying to open when leading in development, but Rogers simply ignores it.

18 ... Be7 19 fxg5 fxg5 20 Rdf1



White's forces, dazzling in their tuxedos and evening gowns, hope for a night out on the town, but discover to their chagrin that only McDonald's and Burger King stay open this late. He lacks an entry point along the f-file – or anywhere else for that matter.

20 ... Kb8!

Question: Why can't he connect the rooks quicker with 20 ... b6?

Answer: Black's king doesn't look all that comfortable looking down the barrel of White's light-squared bishop after 21 Bf3 Kb7.

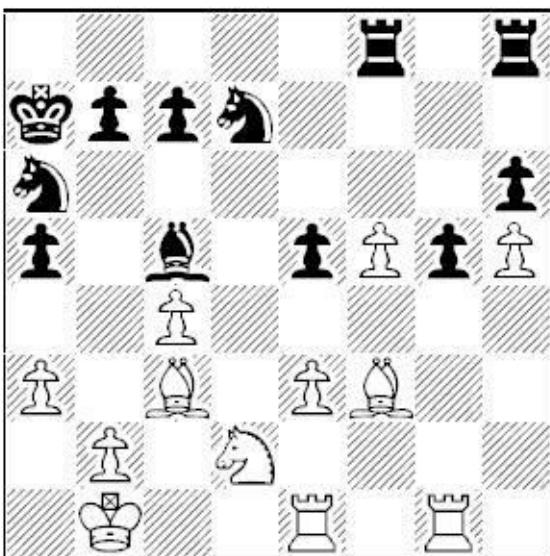
21 Bf3 Nb4 22 Kb1 Ka7

At last. Black connects his rooks.

23 a3 Raf8!

Reminding White that his last move was not a real threat. Rogers stands his ground, unclouded by feelings of nervousness induced by simple self-preservation.

24 Ng3 Bc5 25 Nf5 Bxf5+ 26 gxf5 Na6 27 Re1



27 ... Bb4!

Principle: when the opponent has the bishop pair, remove one of them if you can. Black's move is much stronger than 27 ... Rxf5 28 Bg4 Rf7 29 Bxa5 when White still has hopes based on his bishop pair.

28 axb4 axb4 29 Bd4+!?

He prefers to play a pawn down rather than grovel with a bad bishop after 29 Bxb4 Nxb4 30 e4 when that sorry bishop, a redundant spare part, sits around whistling with hands in pockets, staring at the ceiling.

29 ... exd4 30 exd4 Rxf5 31 Bg4 Rf4! 32 Re4

32 Bxd7?? Rxd4 regains the piece with two pawns interest.

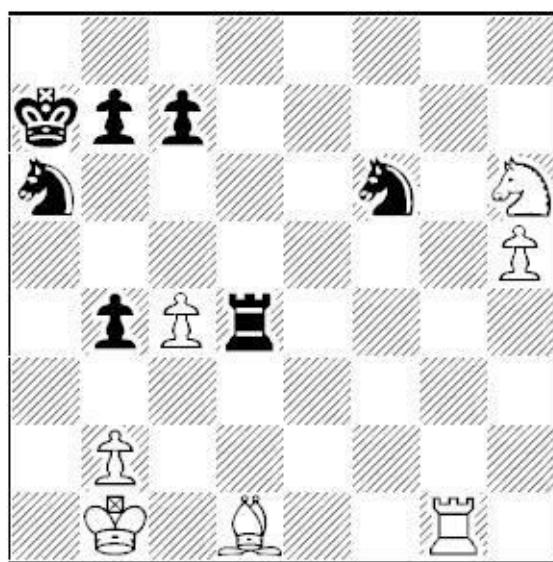
32 ... Rxe4

32 ... Rf2! retains the advantage.

33 Nxe4 Re8?!

Black should try and hang on to the extra pawn with 33 ... Nb6 34 b3 Rd8.

34 Nxg5 Nf6 35 Nf7 Re4 36 Nxh6 Rxd4 37 Bd1



Exercise (combination alert): White's passed h-pawn is a grave concern for Black, but all is not lost. Black has a hidden trick which forces a draw at the very minimum. How?

37 ... b3

A heckler appears in the audience.

Answer: Black achieves a draw or better with 37 ... Nxh5! 38 Bxh5 Rh4 39 Rg5 b3! (the point; White's back rank is loose) 40 Kc1 Rxc4+ 41 Kb1 (41 Kd1 Rc2 picks off b2, when White must sweat and pray to earn the draw) 41 ... Rh4. Black has a forced repetition draw if he wants, but why not go for the win? After 42 Kc1 Rh2! (no draw!) 43 Ng4 Rc2+ 44 Kb1 Rg2 45 Kc1 Nb4 46 Bg6 Na2+! he picks off b2.

38 Nf5 Rf4 39 Ng3 Nc5 40 Rf1 Rxf1?!

Now White stands clearly better due to his passed pawn. Black should try 40 ... Rd4, but even then he struggles for a draw.

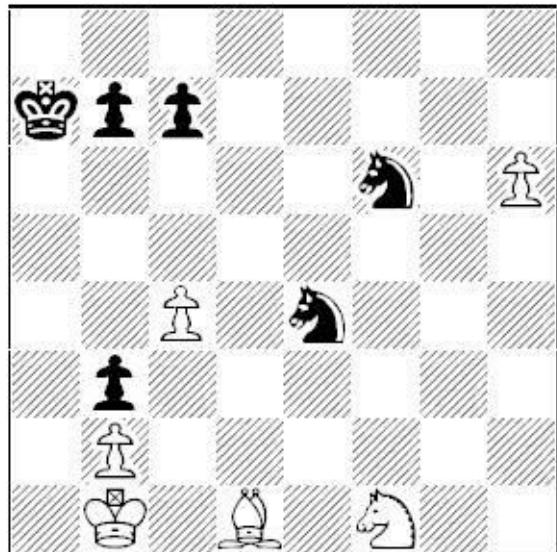
41 Nxf1

White's passed h-pawn takes on great meaning.

41 ... Nce4 42 h6?

White reasons the creature's body lies inert on the laboratory table. All that is needed now is a spark

of life. After a bit of not-so-judicious reflection, White engages in a hasty attempt to promote. Unfortunately, the pawn, impervious to reason, covers his ears with hands, refuses to listen to wise council, and pushes forward. White has excellent chances to convert to a win after the correct 42 Ne3!.



Exercise (combination alert): White just overextended with his natural last move. Black's knights are uniquely qualified for the task of outflanking and winning the h-pawn. How?

Answer: 42 ... Ng5! 43 Ne3 Nf7! 44 Nf5 Ng8! 45 h7

The general weighs options and issues the order: “Forward!”

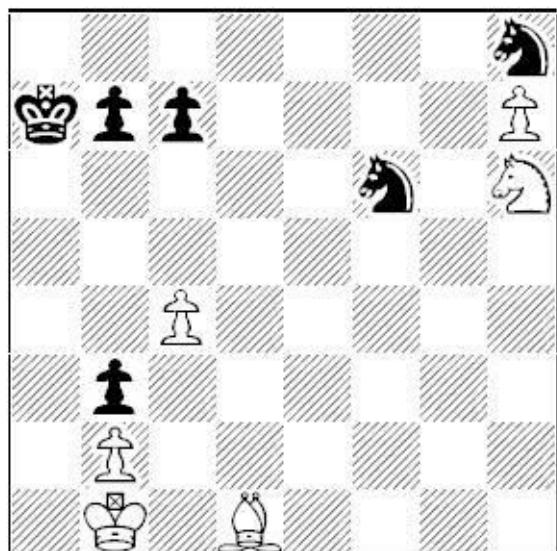
45 ... Nf6

And back again. The tiny island of hope on h7 finds itself surrounded by a vast ocean of menace.

46 Nh6

A final cheapo attempt.

46 ... Nh8!



And now for my next trick ...

47 Bxb3 Nxf7

A hand appears from under the bed to grab hold of the h-pawn's ankle. With limitless attention span, the knight pair, after long silent stalking over the sickly h-pawn, finally pounce on and consume their prey.

48 Bc2 Ng5 49 b4 ½-½

Summary

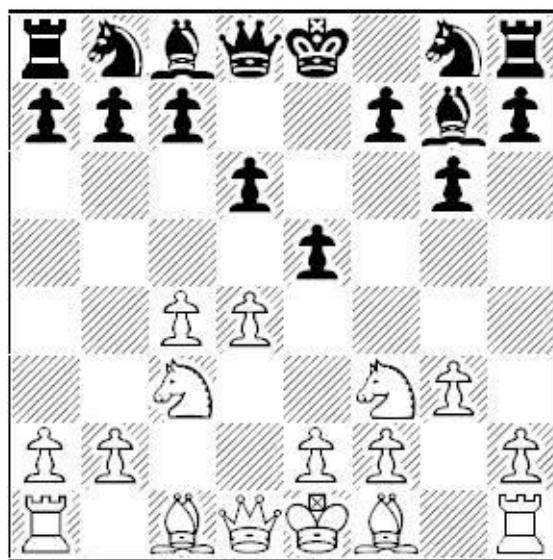
Rogers' play is a model of how to conduct the defence from Black's side in this dangerous ending.

Game 47

P.San Segundo Carrillo-Z.Azmaiparashvili

Oviedo (rapid) 1991

1 c4 d6 2 Nc3 e5 3 Nf3 g6 4 d4 Bg7 5 g3



Question: Is White forcing us into a g3-King's Indian?

Answer: Entering one would be our choice, not the opponent's. Remember, as long as we avoid ... Nf6, we remain free from the KID proper. That said, now the positions are KID-like, which may throw your booked-up opponents off their theoretical stride.

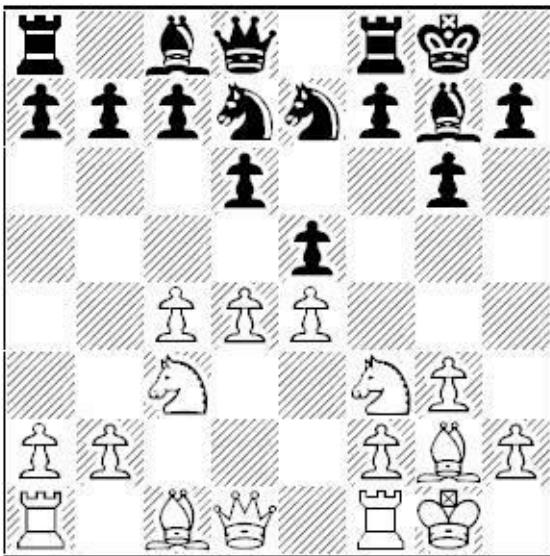
5 ... Nd7 6 Bg2 Ne7

Azmai, who has a flair for the outlandish, insists on remaining in the Modern World.

Question: Why not 6 ... f5 and then ... Ngf6 where we can get a KID several moves up from normal?

Answer: In this case ... f5 looks premature. For example: 7 dxе5! Nxе5 (7 ... dxе5?? 8 Ng5 wins at least an exchange) 8 Nxе5 Bxе5 (8 ... dxе5? 9 Qxd8+ Kxd8 10 Bg5+ followed by queenside castling looks nightmarish for Black) 9 Qb3 left Black uncomfortably behind in development in I.Malpass-J.Manis, correspondence 2002.

7 0-0 0-0 8 e4



8 ... exd4

Question: Why did Black just give up the centre?

Answer: Black enters a formation called the ‘little centre’, the logical recourse, since without it he ends up in an awkward looking g3-KID. In most database games, virtually everyone as Black plays ... exd4 at some point or another, although I found one very playable, interesting non- ... exd4 idea: 8 ... c5!?. I don’t see an effective way for White to exploit this strange move, which isn’t mentioned in Avrukh’s mammoth repertoire work, which likes this line for White. After 9 d5 (9 dxe5 Nxe5 10 Nxe5 Bxe5 looks quite okay for Black, who has a grip on d4, to compensate for his backward d-pawn) 9 ... a6 10 a3 h6 11 Ne1 b5! Black looked fine in J.Markos-Y.Zilberman, Pardubice 2007.

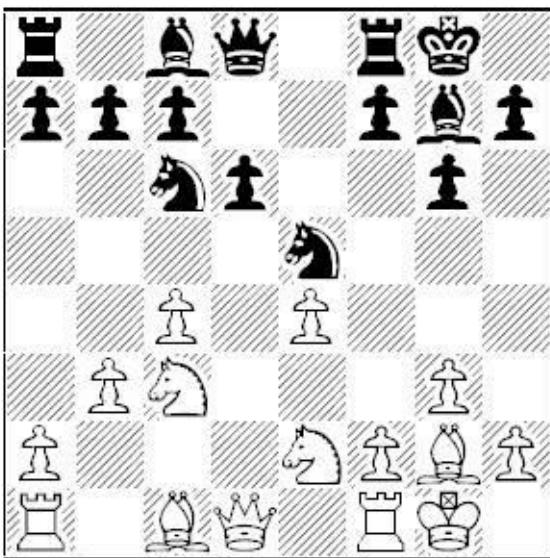
9 Nxd4 Nc6 10 Nde2

Question: Why back off when he can swap on c6 and damage Black’s pawn structure?

Answer: One player’s damage is another’s structural benefit. Black’s “damage” isn’t so bad since the b-file opens for his rook and he also takes control over the key d- square: 10 Nxc6 bxc6 11 Qc2 Ne5 12 c5 Rb8 13 f4 Nc4 14 Rd1 d5! 15 b3 (Black gets ferociously active after 15 exd5?! Bg4) 15 ... Qe7! 16 bxc4 Qxc5+ 17 Kh1 Qxc4 18 e5 d4 and Black regained his piece with good counterplay in J.Borges Mateos-L.Nisipeanu, Barcelona 2005.

Instead 10 Be3 Nde5 11 Nxc6 (11 b3? Ng4 12 Nxc6 Nxe3! 13 Qc1 bxc6 14 Qxe3 was L.Yu-M.Mahjoob, Subic Bay 2009, where Black managed to swap off his opponent’s powerful dark-squared bishop) 11 ... bxc6 gave Black the initiative in A.Reutov-G.Guseinov, Alushta 2011. Now 12 b3 is met with 12 ... Nxc4.

10 ... Nde5 11 b3



11 ... f5!?

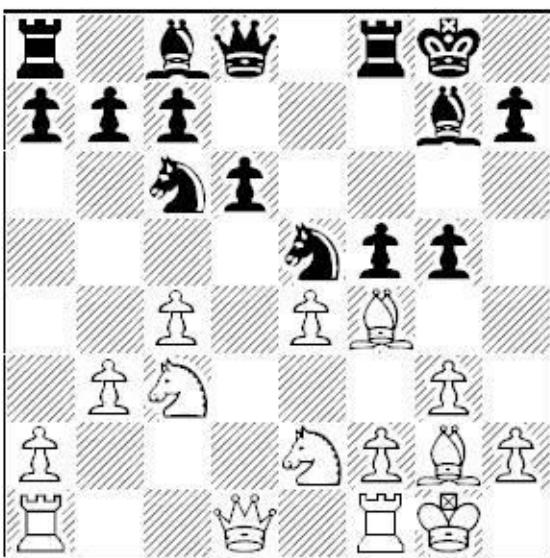
Azmai looks for trouble. I would play it more in KID-style with 11 ... a5, and if 12 h3 a4! with strong queenside counterplay.

12 Bf4

Question: Why does White avoid gaining a tempo with 12 f4?

Answer: A pawn tempo is not the same as a developing tempo. Black doesn't mind getting kicked about if he can loosen White's pawn front after 12 ... Ng4 13 h3 Nf6 14 exf5 Bxf5 (14 ... gxf5!? with play later down the opened g-file is also possible) 15 g4 Be6. White gained some space, but is vulnerable to a future ... h5 or sacs on g4.

12 ... g5!?



An extension of his belligerence.

13 Bxe5

13 Be3 Ng4 14 Bd2 f4! looks dangerous for White.

13 ... Nxe5 14 exf5 Bxf5!?

Warrior cultures regard fearless exposure to peril as a virtue, and its hated twin, cautious self-preservation, a weakness. Most of us, through evolutionary distillation, carry innate self-preservation instincts embedded in our genes. Azmai may be an exception to the majority of the human race. Time after time, his instinct bids him to enter dark caves of chaos, supremely confident in his ability to sort through the fearful unknown. Here Azmai bravely (or foolishly!) sacs a pawn to retain the bishop pair. He also looks just fine after the safe move 14 ... c6 15 Nd4 Bxf5 16 Nxf5 Rxf5. White must choose between fragmented and contradictory plans: accept b7 or decline.

15 Qd5+ Rf7 16 Rad1

Exercising caution, as well as respect for his opponent. 16 Qxb7!? c6 17 Qa6 Bc8 18 Qa4 Bg4 offers Black scary looking compensation for the pawn.

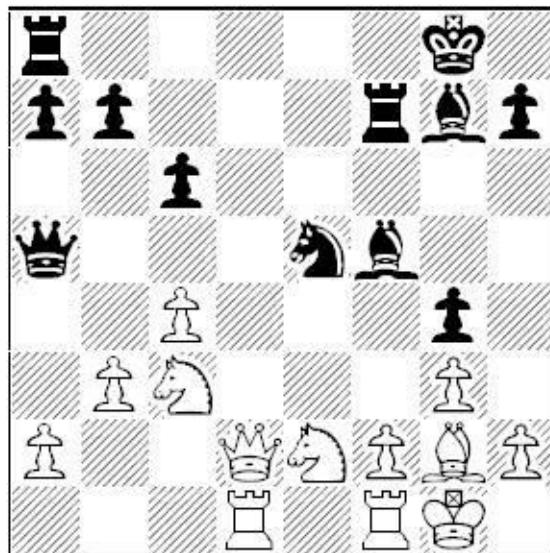
16 ... c6!

I insist! Azmai, with unstinting hospitality, once again offers a pawn.

17 Qxd6!?

The queen, a tad shy of contrition, decides to accept the second offering, but in doing so, greatly amplifies Black's piece activity.

17 ... Qa5 18 Qd2 g4



Question: What does Black get for his pawn?

Answer: The bishop pair and a grip on f3, from which Black's knight expands its power and influence by orders of magnitude.

19 Kh1!?

Probably not a great idea. White is willing to take heat for his extra pawn, but greatly underestimates the force of Black's tremendous piece activity. Perhaps it was time to return the loot with 19 Na4 Nxc4! 20 Qxa5 Nxa5 21 Nd4.

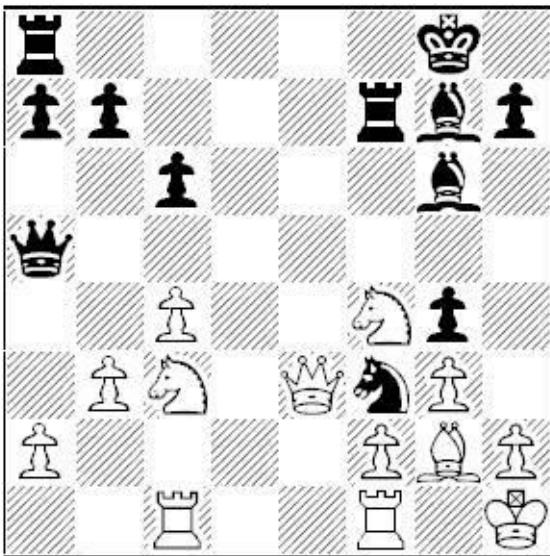
19 ... Nf3

The knight sprawls in languid ease on f3, oblivious to ejection attempts.

20 Qe3 Bc2

The comps point out the inhuman 20 ... Rff8! 21 Qc1 Rae8 when White is under heavy strategic pressure.

21 Rc1 Bg6 22 Nf4??



Exercise (combination alert): White's last move was a major blunder. How can we exploit it?

Answer: Chase and disconnect White's queen from the c3-knight. In an incandescent instant, all hell breaks loose on White.

22 ... Bd4! 23 Qe6

The queen moves aside with a distasteful grimace to sulk on e6, more alone than she ever could imagine. With her kids all grown and gone, she feels somewhat irrelevant now.

23 ... Bf5! 24 b4

A desperate hope to befuddle his way out of the mess. White's confused forces twist and turn like moving question marks, hoping to evade that which is inevitable. White understands the end is near and chooses to go down raging with weapon in hand against insurmountable numbers. If 24 Qh6 no deer votes to lengthen the hunting season. Then 24 ... Bxc3 wins a clean piece.

24 ... Qxb4 25 Nd3 Qxc3! 0-1

Summary

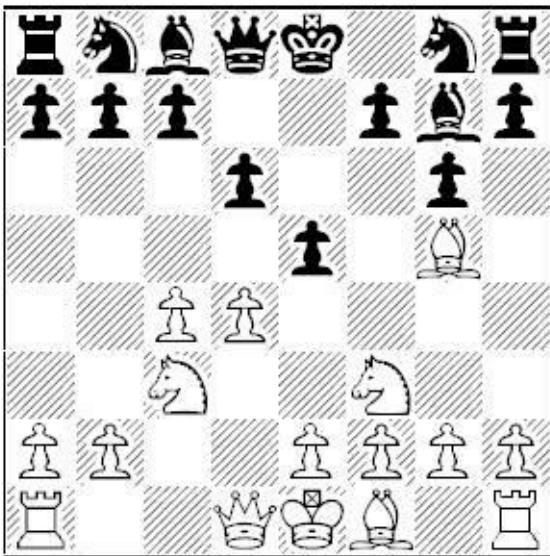
After 5 g3 you can either head into a normal KID, or go Modern on him and play one of the weird offshoot lines, which really don't look (to me at least) inferior to the straight KID.

Game 48

Duong The Anh-Dinh Duc Trong

Vietnamese Championship, Dalat City 2004

1 d4 d6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 e5 4 Nf3 Bg7 5 Bg5



Question: Does this come under the heading of one of those cases where White thinks he disrupts us, but we really don't mind playing ... f6?

Answer: Exactly correct.

5 ... f6 6 Bd2

Question: After 6 Bh4, won't we just transpose to some King's Indian after White plays e4?

Answer: We don't give him the chance and immediately seize the initiative with 6 ... g5! 7 Bg3 f5!, threatening to smother the bishop with ... f4 next. Following 8 h3 g4! 9 hxg4 fxg4 10 dxе5 (White decides to sac a piece rather than drop a pawn for nothing after 10 Nd2 exd4) 10 ... gxе3 11 exd6 cxе6, as in M.Orsag-O.Chernikov, Brno 1993, I don't believe in White's compensation after 12 Nb5 Bxb2.

6 ... Ne7

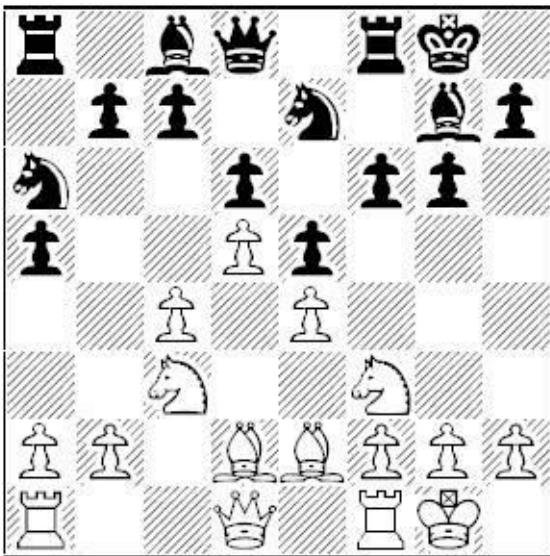
6 ... Nc6 keeps e7 open for the c6-knight. White lands in a cheap imitation of a Gligoric KID after 7 d5 Nce7 8 e4 when Black remains unhindered in his ... f5 break, now or in a few moves.

7 d5

Question: What happens if White retains the central tension with 7 e4?

Answer: Then we enter a little centre KID a full tempo up from normal with 7 ... exd4 8 Nxd4 f5 9 Be3 (there is White's tempo loss) 9 ... Nbc6, with equality, if not more for Black.

7 ... a5 8 e4 0-0 9 Be2 Na6 10 0-0



10 ... Bd7

Question: What is Black waiting for? Shouldn't he play 10 ... f5?

Answer: He can, but he may have feared the standard Bayonet KID pawn sac manoeuvre 11 Ng5 h6 12 Ne6 Bxe6 13 dxе6 Nc5 14 Be3 Nxe6 15 c5. However, I don't believe White gets full compensation after 15 ... Nd4.

11 Ne1 f5

Now he plays the break since White no longer has access to the scary Ng5 and Ne6 trick.

Question: Is Black up a full move over the KID?

Answer: He is. However, his knight sits on the more passive e7-square rather than on f6, so sometimes there are also downsides to playing these odd Modern move orders. I would say the position is dynamically balanced.

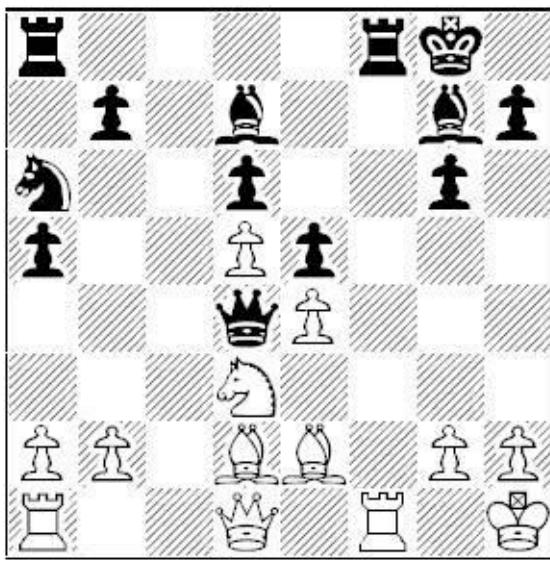
12 Nd3 c6 13 f3 cxd5 14 Nxd5?

A bad idea. White voluntarily eliminates Black's worst placed minor piece. Better to go for 14 cxd5.

14 ... Nxd5 15 cxd5 Qb6+ 16 Kh1

16 Nf2, walking into a pin, looks no better.

16 ... fxe4 17 fxe4 Qd4!



A shadowy intruder emerges as White's forces sound the alarm. Black's queen engages in a radical usurpation of power in the middle of the board.

18 Bxa5 Qxe4

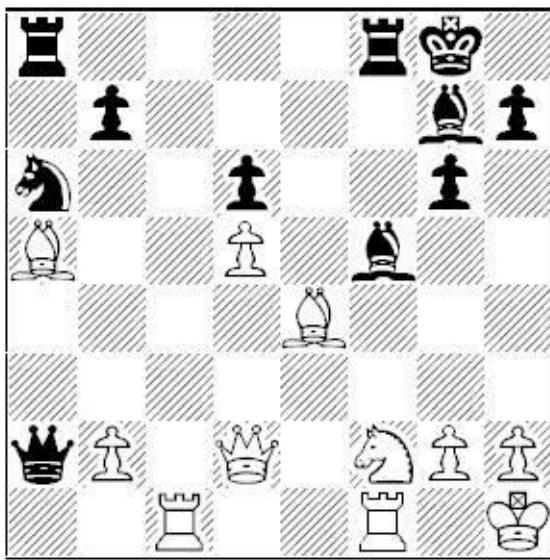
A good deal for Black, who just traded wing pawn for central pawn.

19 Bf3 Qc4 20 Nf2 Bf5

Black prepares ... e4.

21 Qd2 e4! 22 Rac1 Qxa2 23 Bxe4?

White's best hope to hold the game lay in 23 Nxe4 Bxe4 24 Bxe4 Nc5 25 Bb1 Qxa5 26 Qxa5 Rxfl+ 27 Rxfl Rxa5 28 b4 Rb5 29 bxc5 Rxc5 when he can still put up resistance due to the bishops of opposite colour.



Exercise (combination alert): White continues to pick up troubles like lint in a dryer. His last move overlooked a trick. Black to play and win material.

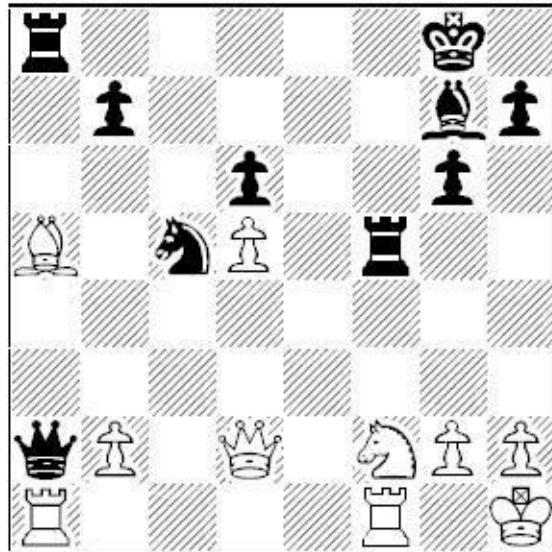
Answer: 23 ... Nc5!

Triple attack: a5, e4 and a knight fork on b3. From c5, the knight looms above White's pieces,

forbidding and austere.

24 Bxf5 Rxf5 25 Ra1

25 Bc3 loses material to 25 ... Nb3.



Exercise (combination alert): White reshuffles his forces, tired of the perpetual disarray. As a result, his pieces fall even more askew and out of sync. Black can end the game with one accurate move. Do you spot it?

25 ... Qxb2

The first rule of martial arts: when you have your attacker down, don't take your foot off his throat.

Answer: Black misses a chance to end it immediately with the nonchalant 25 ... Nb3! 26 Rxa2 Nxd2 when the a-file protrudes like an addict's vein, as White's forces get tangled in a deadly pin.

26 Rab1

White desperately roots for counterplay the way my dogs dream of digging up ancient bones in the backyard. 26 Rad1 loses to 26 ... Qxd2 27 Bxd2 Raf8 28 Be3 Ne4 29 Kg1 Nc3.

26 ... Qd4

26 ... Rxf2! also works.

27 Nh3 Qxd5

White casually wears and discards pawns like cheap garments.

28 Qxd5+ Rxd5

The sum of Black's joys: two extra pawns for nothing.

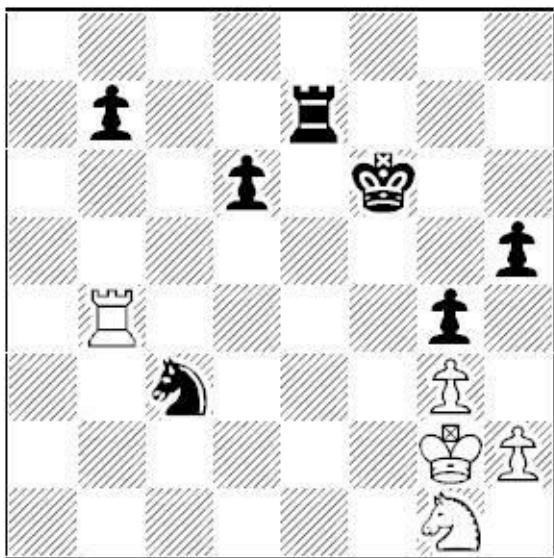
29 Bb6 Rf8 30 Rfe1 Re5 31 Red1 Ne4 32 Bd4 Rd5

Every trade helps Black.

33 Bxg7 Rxd1+ 34 Rxd1 Kxg7 35 g3 g5 36 Rd4 Re8 37 Kg2 h5 38 Rb4 Re7 39 Ng1 Kf6 40 Nf3 g4 41 Ng1?!

Why go to the most passive square purposefully? Maybe to foster the illusion of safety? The knight averts his eyes, the way a person does when running into an unpleasant acquaintance. Now the exhausted knight and king lean on each other for support.

41 ... Nc3!



Stalemating White's unfortunate knight, who isn't exactly winning the hearts and minds of his comrades.

42 Kf2 d5 43 h3 Kg5 44 hxg4 hxg4 45 Rb3 d4 46 Rb4 d3 0-1

Summary

5 Bg5 is on the cusp of deserving a ‘?!’ mark. It can easily land White in a KID a full move down.

Game 49

I.Bern-S.Mohr
Gausdal 1989

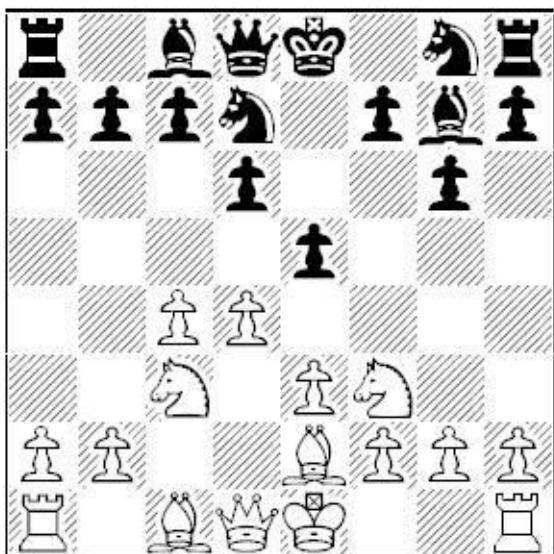
1 c4 e5 2 Nc3 d6 3 e3 g6 4 d4

Meek stuff. Black should equalize without much sweat in this line.

4 ... Nd7 5 Nf3 Bg7

Another route to this position would be 1 d4 g6 2 c4 Bg7 3 Nf3 d6 4 Nc3 e5 5 e3 Nd7.

6 Be2



Question: Is this a kind of King's Indian Attack versus French, but in reverse?

Answer: Correct, but with one subtle difference: our g8-knight is yet to commit itself, which allows us to get weird!

6 ... Nh6!?

This byway takes on a life of its own.

Question: Isn't his move weak? Why play the knight to the rim?

Answer: We Modern players must avoid wallowing in mind-created Tarraschian orthodoxy phobias. Sometimes one should embrace the uncomfortable or the weird if the idea behind the move is sound. Black's move is dual purpose:

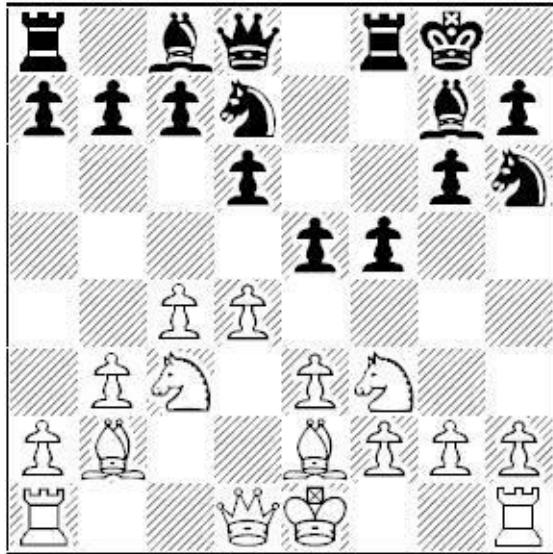
1. We keep ... f5 clear.
2. We leave open possibilities of ... Nf5 later on.

Question: Is there anything wrong with going into a KIA reversed with 6 ... Ngf6?

Answer: No problems with that line if you are happy in KIA positions. 7 0-0 0-0 8 b4 Re8 is a book KIA versus French, a move down.

b) 6 ... Ne7 is similar to 6 ... Nh6. After 7 0-0 0-0 8 b3 h6 9 Bb2 f5 Black readies himself for a kingside pawn storm with ... g5 soon, R.Alonso-G.Vescovi, Sao Paulo 1999.

7 b3 0-0 8 Bb2 f5



9 dxe5

Based on the principle: counter in the centre when attacked on the wing.

Question: But White hasn't been attacked yet on the kingside has he?

Answer: No, but he will be soon, and so takes pre-emptive measures.

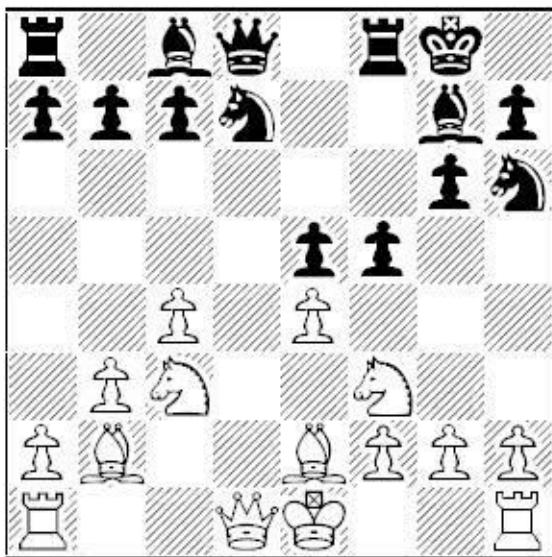
Question: Can White trick us into some kind of King's Indian with 9 d5?

Answer: He then tricks himself into a god awful KID:

1. Since he hasn't even achieved e4.
2. White's fianchettoed b2-bishop looks misplaced as it stares at the pawn wall on e5.
3. Closing the centre allows Black to immediately attack without fear of a central counter, with ... g5 and a kingside pawn storm.

9 ... dxe5 10 e4

10 0-0 e4 11 Nd4 Ne5 hands Black e5, a springboard for the coming kingside attack.



After the text, we reach a KID, but with three favourable items in Black's ledger:

1. White took two moves to achieve e4.
2. The b2-square may not be the best post for White's dark-squared bishop.
3. White's only source of counterplay resides on the queenside; he will need b4 sooner or later. This in turn means his b3-b4 constitutes a tempo loss.

Conclusion: Black achieved a favourable KID.

10 ... c6 11 0-0 Nf7

Compare this position to one where a Black knight would be on e7: f7 is a better square since it covers the sensitive d6-square.

12 b4

There is White's second tempo loss. Still, the move is necessary.

12 ... Qe7 13 c5 Re8

Black can also go for a direct kingside pawn storm plan with 13 ... f4 14 Nd2 Nf6 15 Nc4 Be6 16 f3 g5.

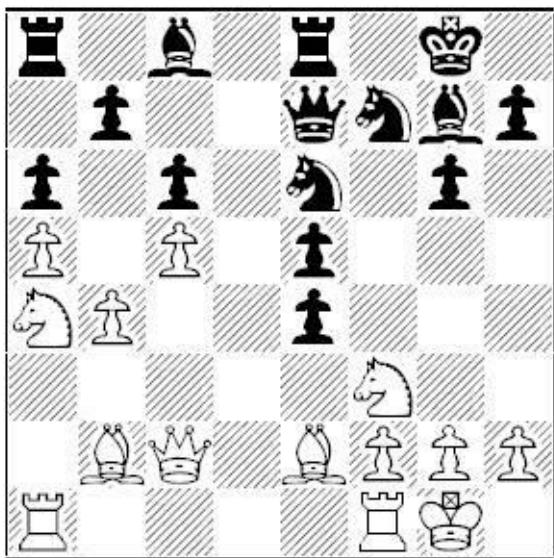
14 a4 Nf8!

Now d4 and f4 beckon.

15 a5!? a6

Black is willing to hand over b6 to freeze White's queenside pawns.

16 Qc2 Ne6 17 Na4 fxe4!



He puts his finger on the fundamental dynamic of the position: superior piece play for Black. Compare this move to Seirawan's similar idea last chapter in his game against Karpov. Black opens f5 and d5 as potential occupation sites.

Question: Doesn't the e5-isolani matter?

Answer: Not if the pawn remains amply defended.

18 Qxe4 Nf4

Black seeks to keep the discourse open and vibrant on the kingside.

19 Bc4 Bf5 20 Qe3 Be6

Challenging White's best piece.

21 Bxe6 Qxe6 22 h3 Rad8 23 Rad1

Note how useless b6 turns out to be for White. Also, the a4-knight's strange behaviour soon manifests as the subject of gossip and innuendo.

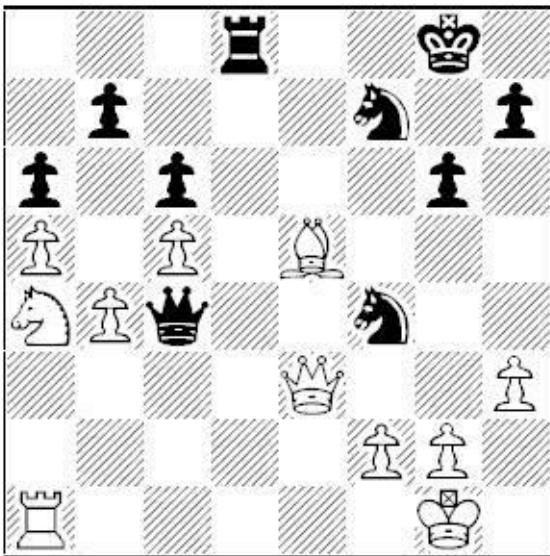
23 ... Qa2!

A manoeuvre designed to take control over the d-file.

24 Rxd8 Rxd8 25 Ra1 Qc4

White, in deep strategic trouble, does his best to enforce order to an opposing army which quickly grows uncontrollable. His next move is a blunder.

26 Nxe5? Bxe5 27 Bxe5



Exercise (combination alert): The air is fraught with expectancy, as we all sense Black's coming combination. But where is it?

27 ... Nxg2?

Answer: Black misses a trick which wins a piece, starting with 27 ... Ne2+! 28 Kh2 Rd3!, disconnecting the queen from the e5 bishop, and if 29 Nb2 Rxe3 30 Nxc4 Re4!.

28 Qg3?

A re-blunder! He should just take the g2-knight.

28 ... Nxe5 29 Qxe5 Nh4!

The flick of the knife nicks f3 and g2, which no physician is capable of un-nicking to stop the bleeding.

30 Qc3

Neither will White survive for long after 30 Qe3 Qd5 31 Qg3 Nf3+.

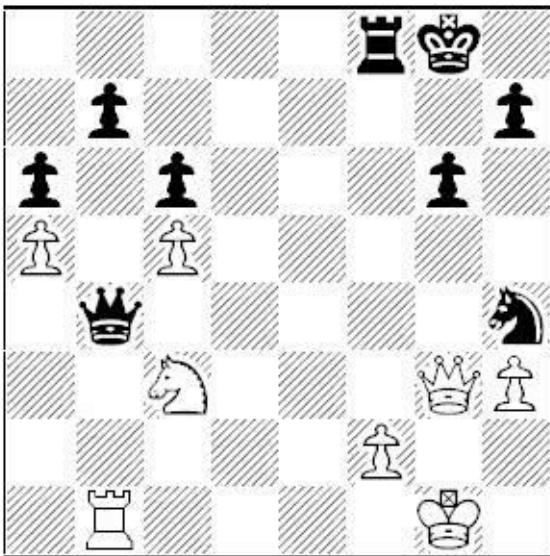
30 ... Qe4

Black's queen and knight, business partners in soothing, reassuring, loathsome tones of undertakers, arm in arm, escort White's king to a selection of reasonably priced coffins. It is now an open secret that Black harbours ambitions to deliver checkmate as dark forces engulf White's king.

31 Qg3 Qxb4

Good enough, but 31 ... Nf3+! 32 Kh1 (the harried king seeks respite from the glares of the enemy all around him, as he lurches erratically to dodge the incoming projectiles) 32 ... Rf8 33 Qg2 Rf5! is crushing.

32 Nc3 Rf8 33 Rb1



Exercise (combination alert): Black to play and force the win of material.

Answer: 33 ... Nf3+! 0-1

Interference. 34 Qxf3 Qxb1+! 35 Nxb1 Rxf3 wins the exchange.

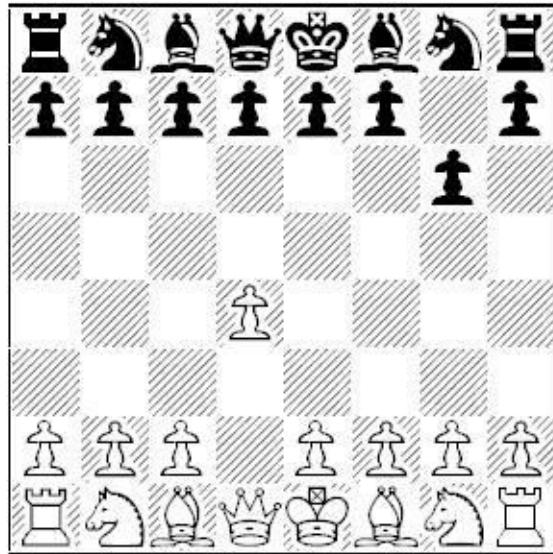
Summary

In the e3 lines White hopes to lure you into a French versus KIA, but a move up for him. Instead, I suggest Modernizing your opponent with the strange ... Nh6!? manoeuvre.

Chapter Eleven

Anti-Queen's Pawn Lines

1 d4 g6



The Modern is kryptonite to White's anti-queen's pawn lines: the Colle, Torre, London and Trompowsky. Not a single one of these systems works well versus Modern. If the anti-queen's pawns were movies, they would flop at the box office and go straight to DVD. In every case we get either a favourable King's Indian or Leningrad Dutch set-up, where the kingside proves to be a tempting canvas for us to paint our grievances. The Colle is so patently weak against the Modern that it doesn't deserve a game, and instead simply gets chastised in the notes! The other three aren't so hot either and prove to be a salad made with soggy lettuce.

Game 50

P.Maza Broto-Y.Solodovnichenko

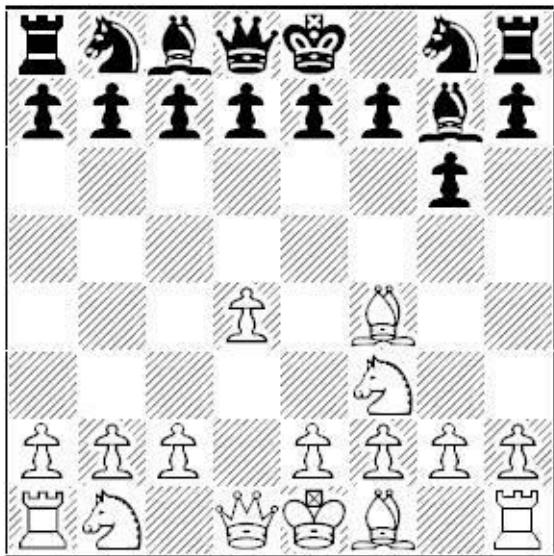
Pamplona 2011

1 d4 g6 2 Nf3

Question: Why aren't you covering the Colle versus the Modern in this chapter?

Answer: Mainly because the Colle is so patently bad against Modern that it doesn't deserve a game! Watch: 2 e3 Bg7 and now if White is an absolute Colle purist and insists with 3 Bd3?!, he essentially walks into our coming ... e5 and ... e4: 3 ... d6 4 c3 e5 5 Nd2 f5. Essentially, White fights for equality – and probably won't get it!

2 ... Bg7 3 Bf4?!



Question: What!? Am I seeing correctly? You give your beloved London System move a dubious mark?

Answer: Painful as it is, duty calls and I must chastise the cherished opening. I don't play the London versus the Modern move order. In fact, in my excellent London book, otherwise chock full of Londony goodness, I don't even include a chapter against Modern. The implication: the London stinks versus the Modern. In the normal London versus King's Indian, Black strains to enforce ... e5. In this case, we reach our recurring theme: no knight on f6 to block access to a quick ... e5. In essence this leaves Black a move up over normal KID lines.

3 ... d6 4 e3 Nd7 5 h3 e5 6 Bh2 Qe7 7 Be2 Ngf6

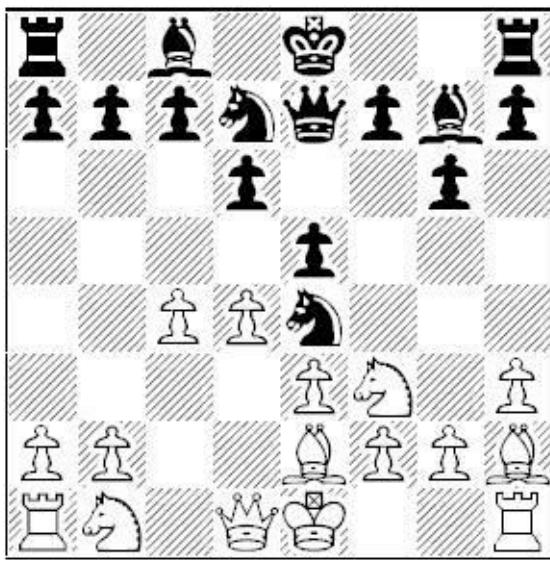
Question: What about ... f5 now that White's bishop has moved to e2?

Answer: Playable now, but I still prefer the game continuation. After 7 ... f5 8 0-0 Nh6 9 c4 0-0 10 Nc3 c6 11 b4 Nf7 12 c5! it's about equal and gives White the London position he is generally after, H.Kreindl-J.Horvath, Rethymnon 2003.

8 c4

The passive 8 c3 is probably White's best choice here.

8 ... Ne4!



Question: Dangling in mid air? What is the purpose?

Answer: This is an idea borrowed from the Leningrad Dutch, which ruins White's easy London flow and makes it hard to develop harmoniously.

9 Nc3??

White authors the book which writes of his own future misfortune. He opts for a radical option, whereby he allows Nimzo-Indian-like damage to his queenside structure, but without the traditional gain of the bishop pair in return. His options fail to thrill as well: for instance, 9 Nbd2?! Nxd2 10 Qxd2 e4 sends the knight packing back into its cage on g1.

Question: I realize White's position isn't so great, but how can he course correct?

Answer: 9 0-0 0-0 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 Nbd2 looks quite passive for White, but may be his best option.

9 ... Nxc3 10 bxc3

Question: Doesn't the open b-file give White compensation for his structural woes?

Answer: Having twins doesn't necessarily double the parents' joy, and mutation doesn't always constitute error, but in this case I believe it does. We enter that scary zone where the line between understanding and ignorance is written in a grey blur. In Nimzo-Indians Black must at least give up the bishop pair to achieve such positions; in this case Black hasn't handed over a single concession.

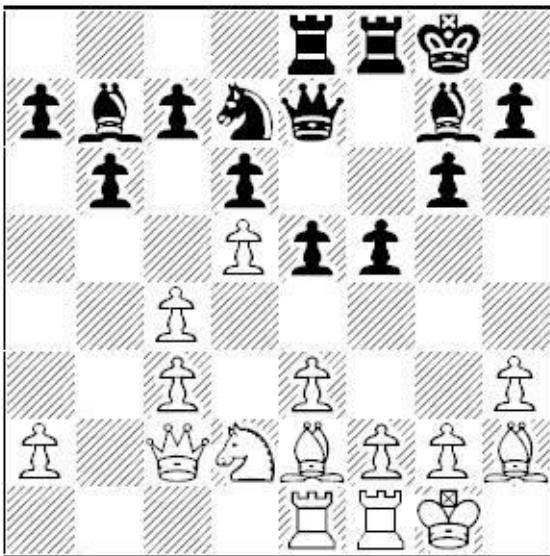
10 ... 0-0 11 0-0 b6!

Rigidity of structure is in Black's best interest. He clamps down on possible c5 breaks from White.

12 Qc2 Bb7 13 Rae1 Rae8 14 Nd2 f5

Black begins his kingside assault while White's corresponding counterplay on the opposite wing remains invisible.

15 d5??



Upgrading from uncomfortable to rotten. By locking the centre, White gives his opponent license to attack on the kingside.

15 ... c6!

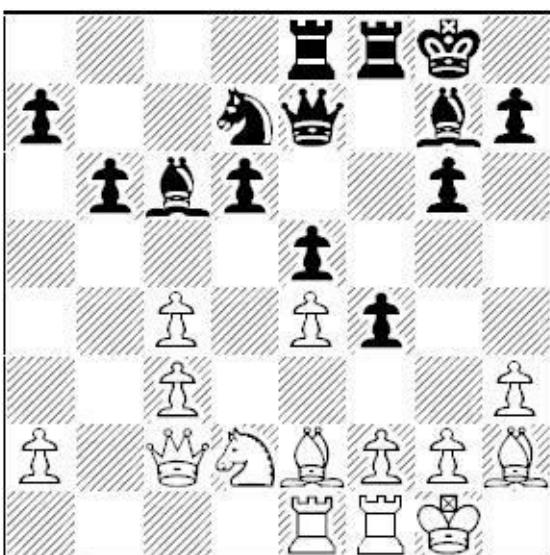
Question: Didn't you just say Black would attack on the kingside?

Answer: I forgot to mention: Black can even go after his opponent down the c-file. Also promising is to begin a direct assault on White's king with 15 ... g5!.

16 dxc6

Now White's ugly, doubled c-pawns jut out like a broken and splintered arm. If instead 16 Qa4 Nc5 17 Qxa7 b5! (threatening a queen trap with ... Ra8 and ... Ra6) 18 dxc6 Ra8 19 Qb6 Ra6 20 Qxb5 Bxc6 21 Qb2 Rfa8 22 Ra1 Qb7 23 Qxb7 Bxb7 White ends up in a miserable ending since his extra a-pawn falls.

16 ... Bxc6 17 e4 f4



The London from hell:

1. White's pawn structure is in shambles, and Black can apply pressure down the c-file.

2. Black controls a hole on c5.

3. Black may attack unhindered on the kingside.

4. White's comatose h2-bishop is nothing more than a glorified pawn for now.

18 a4 Nc5 19 Ra1

Not 19 a5? when Black simply takes the gift and hangs on to it: 19 ... bxa5 20 f3 Rb8 21 Rb1 a4.

19 ... Qc7

19 ... a5 (fixing the target on a4) 20 Rfb1 Rb8 21 f3 Qd7 22 Bd1 is also quite miserable for White.

20 f3 h5

Black begins to expand on the other wing.

21 Kh1 g5 22 Bg1

White's bishops pace their prison cell.

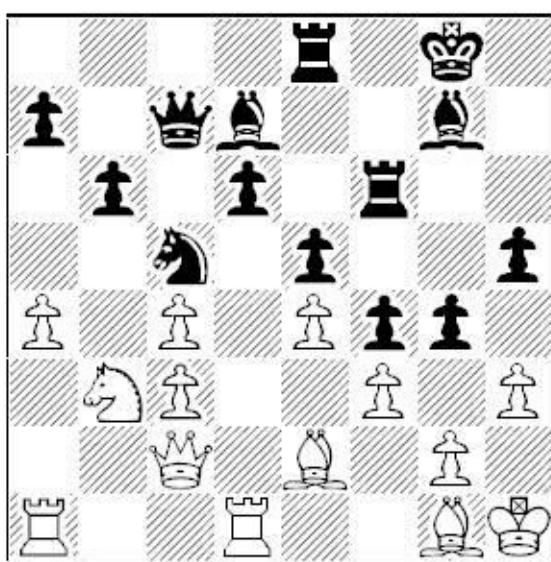
22 ... Bd7 23 Rfd1 Rf6

Dual-purpose:

1. Black lifts the rook into the attack.

2. Black protects his one weakness on d6.

24 Nb3 g4



Here come the pawns. Even small creatures, when multiplied, are capable of killing. Accidentally bump a wasps' nest, and they boil out and sting until the heart stops. What I meant to say earlier: the King's Indian from hell! White's king senses shadowy, menacing shapes all around him.

25 Bf1

Maybe White's only prayer lies in 25 fxg4 hxg4 26 Bxc5! (26 hxg4? Rh6+ 27 Bh2 Kf7 28 Nd2 Reh8 29 Nf1 Bf6 is utterly hopeless for White) 26 ... bxc5 27 Bxg4 Bxg4 28 hxg4 Rg6 when he has some hope of survival.

25 ... Rg6 26 Nxc5 bxc5 27 Qd3 Kh8!

Making room for the other rook on g8.

28 Rd2 Qc8!

The five-year-olds frolic on the playground when suddenly the all-powerful eight-year-old bully appears on c8. Black generates and multiplies threats with ease.

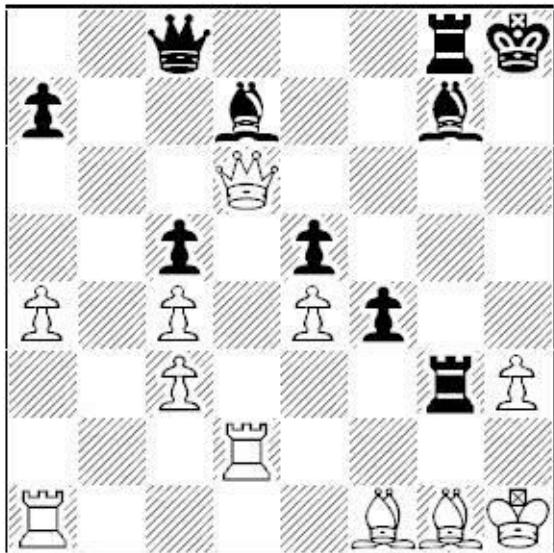
29 Kh2 Rg8 30 fxg4

If 30 a5 Bf8 and there is no reasonable defence to ... gxh3.

30 ... hxg4 31 Kh1 gxh3 32 gxh3 Rg3!

The maid ignores the 'Do not disturb!' sign and enters the room.

33 Qxd6?



Exercise (combination alert): White's king, coiled in misery, sits with head buried between his knees. White just blundered in a hopeless position. Find the knockout.

Answer: 33 ... Rxg1+! 0-1

The rook is immune since 34 Kxg1? Bf8+ picks off the queen.

Summary

The London System doesn't work out well against Modern since Black achieves a KID versus London position a tempo up from normal.

Game 51

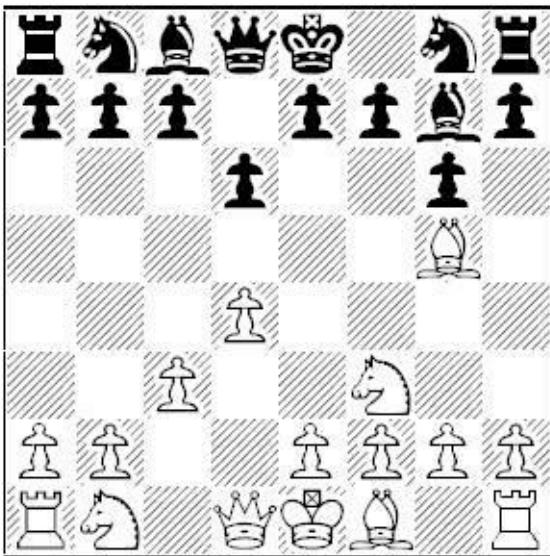
S.Mihajlovskij-I.Kurnosov

Saratov 2006

1 d4 g6 2 Nf3 Bg7 3 c3

White erects a solid pawn wall on d4 and plans to post his bishop on g5, Torre Attack-style.

3 ... d6 4 Bg5



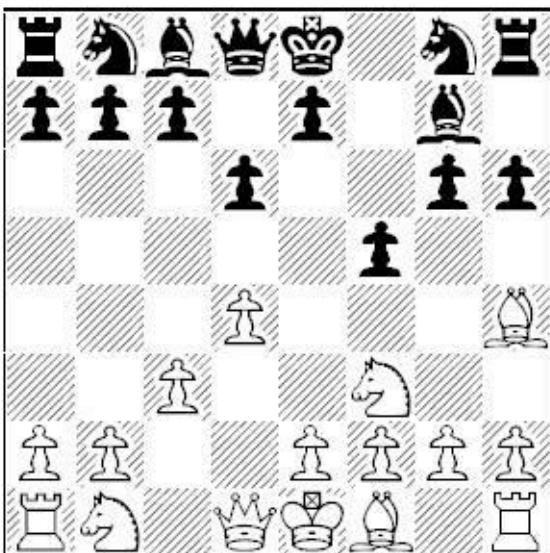
Question: Are we forced into some kind of Pirc now?

Answer: No. Once again we avoid ... Nf6 and instead lure White into a version of a Leningrad Dutch, favourable to Black.

4 ... h6!

4 ... Nf6 5 Nbd2 0-0 6 e4 transposes to the Pirc.

5 Bh4 f5!



Dual purpose:

1. We threaten to win a piece with ... g5 and ... g4.
2. We prevent e4.

6 e3 g5

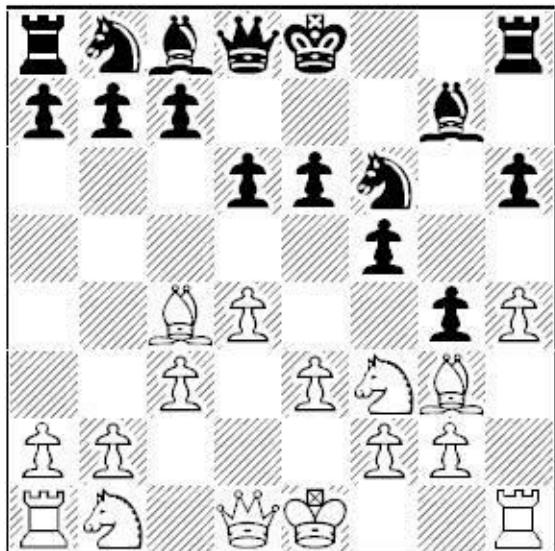
Question: Isn't Black getting a little carried away with such testosterone-infused play?

Answer: The sudden burst of hostile energy seems profoundly out of character and temperament for us normally sweet-natured Modern folk. If you think about risk versus benefit, then Black's last move is a reasonable gamble. Of course, we risk overextension with such a move, but the rewards of grabbing territory are also great if we get away with it. You may also be overestimating the risk factor to Black since he hasn't yet committed to kingside castling.

7 Bg3 Nf6 8 Bc4

White can also set up to keep control over e4 with 8 Nbd2 e6 9 Qc2 Nbd7 10 0-0-0 Qe7 11 Bd3. Here the players agreed to a premature draw in M.Illescas Cordoba-J.Nogueiras Santiago, Linares 1994.

8 ... e6 9 h4 g4



10 Ng1!

Question: Why not retreat to the more natural d2-square?

Answer: I think White wants to watch over f4, as 10 Nfd2 Nh5 is awkward for him.

10 ... Qe7 11 Ne2 e5 12 h5 Nc6 13 Qc2

The problem with the b3-square is that White grows vulnerable to both ... b5 and ... Na5: 13 Qb3 a6 14 Bh4 Qd7 15 dxe5 dxe5 when ... Na5 and ... b5 remain in the air, and Black stands slightly better, A.Muir-M.Pein, British Championship, Blackpool 1988.

13 ... Bd7 14 Bd3

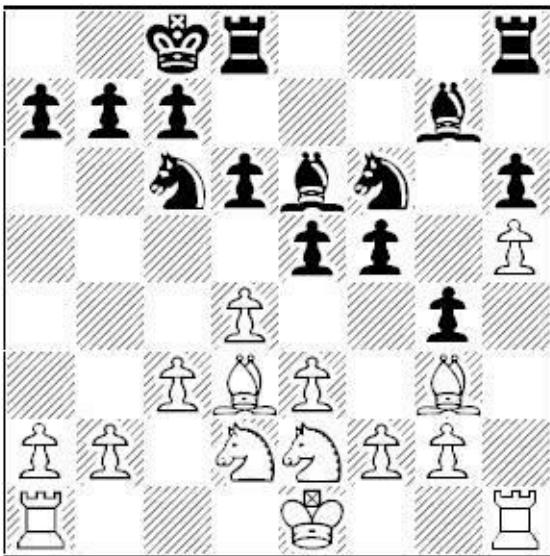
Question: Isn't he just losing a tempo?

Answer: White provokes ... e4, which opens up f4 for his knight.

14 ... Qe6! 15 Qb3 0-0-0 16 Qxe6 Bxe6

Black stands better due to his extra space and the weakness of h5.

17 Nd2



17 ... Rdf8!?

Question: The wrong rook?

Answer: Admittedly a circuitous route, but if he played the h8-rook to f8 then he faced a pin with Bh4.

18 dxe5 dxe5 19 0-0-0 Nd7 20 Bc4 Nc5 21 Kc2

Houdini suggests a reckless looking but sound line: 21 b4!? Bxc4 22 Nxc4 Ne4 23 b5 Nd8 24 Bxe5!. It isn't an easy thing to perform acrobatic feats within the confines of a claustrophobic environment, but after 24 ... Bxe5 25 Nxe5 Nxf2 26 Ng6 White should hold the game. Keep in mind this is a comp line. For us humans, the tallying and accounting with total precision isn't as easy.

21 ... a5

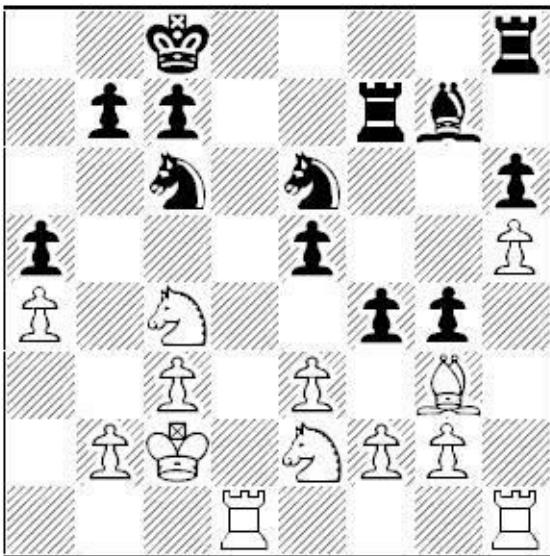
Ensuring freedom from b4. Black can also go for the forcing line 21 ... f4!? 22 exf4 Bf5+ 23 Kc1 Nd3+ 24 Bxd3 Bxd3 25 Rhe1 Bxe2 26 Rxe2 exf4 27 Bh2 Rf5 when h5 remains in danger.

22 a4 Rf7 23 Bxe6+ Nxe6 24 Nc4

Black unifies his forces, narrowing power into a laser beam directed at the ... f4 break. Now the moment arrives.

24 ... f4

The door remains jammed, so Black resolves to kick it in.



25 Bh4 Bf6! 26 Rd5 Bxh4 27 Rxh4 fxe3!

Target: f2. Black's pieces begin to misbehave and cause problems in general.

28 Nxe3

The parties squabble on which way to divide the spoils. 28 fxe3 also drops a pawn to 28 ... Rf2 29 Rd2 Rxg2.

28 ... Rxf2 29 Rd2 Rd8 30 Nxg4 Rxg2 31 Rxd8+ Ncxd8 32 Kd3

The king enters the house, attempting a spur of the moment rescue, but returns to find a nest of rats living in his house.

32 ... Nf7!

Black's knights move in and out, like spirits in an abandoned castle. How annoying for White. Black simultaneously covers both his hanging pawns and remains up one.

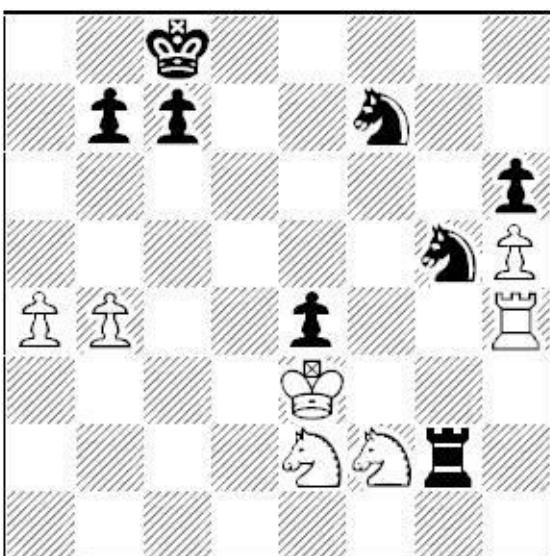
33 Ke3

Threatening Kf3.

33 ... Neg5! 34 b4 axb4 35 cxb4 e4

Now White, in deep trouble anyway, blunders.

36 Nf2? 0-1



Exercise (combination alert): A question for the reader:
why did White suddenly resign?

Answer: Because of 36 ... Nd6!. The knight inclines his head and gives thanks to White's king. Black threatens a devastating check on f5. This forces 37 Rf4 and now the geometry works beautifully for Black after 37 ... Nc4+!. The soaring knight punctuates the skyline with an exclamation mark. White gets forked next move.

Summary

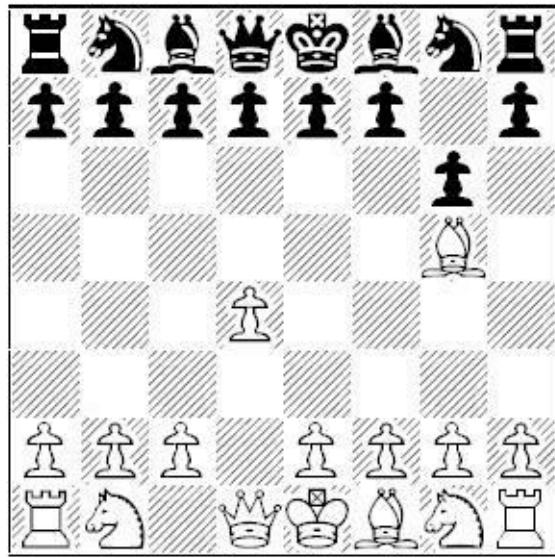
We trick White into a passive Torre versus Leningrad Dutch formation if he insists on taking the Torre Attack route versus the Modern.

Game 52

S.Kovacevic-O.De la Riva Aguado

Suances 1997

1 d4 g6 2 Bg5



The pin to nowhere.

Question: What is the difference between
the Trompowsky and the Torre Attack?

Answer: They are very similar versus Modern. Essentially in the Trompowsky, White withholds playing Nf3, at least for a while, but can easily transpose to the Torre Attack if he later plays his knight to f3.

2 ... Bg7 3 c3

Guarding against ... c5/ ... Qb6.

Question: Do we transpose to an earlier chapter if White plays 3 e4 here?

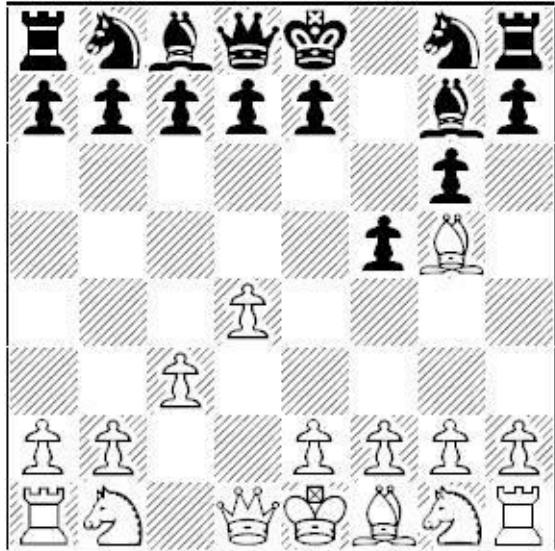
Answer: No! 3 e4 is just a shaky move after we take advantage of the long diagonal with 3 ... c5

which leaves White in danger, no matter how he replies:

a) 4 c3 Qb6 with a simple double attack on d4 and b2, thanks mainly to White's bishop goofing off on g5.

b) 4 Nf3 cxd4 5 Nxd4 and now the simplest is 5 ... Nc6 with an incredibly good version of an Accelerated Dragon, since nobody understands just what White's bishop is doing on g5.

3 ... f5!



Here we go again, back to the Leningrad Dutch.

4 Nd2 Nh6

Question: A slightly different set-up from last game?

Answer: Correct. Black still plays in Leningrad Dutch style, but instead of chasing the bishop with ... h6 and ... g5, goes for a tempo gain with ... Nh6 and ... Nf7.

5 Ngf3

Question: Don't we stand worse if White enforces a quick e4?

Answer: Quite the opposite. White loses time and stands slightly worse after 5 e4 fxe4 6 Nxe4 d5! 7 Ng3 Nf7 8 Be3 e5. Here 8 ... 0-0 is also fine: 9 f4!? c5! was G.Nierlich-M.Hillmann, Leipzig 2005, and now if White gets greedy with 10 dxc5 e5! 11 fxe5 Nc6 he finds himself lagging dangerously behind in development.

5 ... Nf7!

There is our tempo gain.

6 Bf4?!

Once again White lands in a noxious version of the London system. He should play 6 Bh4, but I don't care much for his position even then since Black can play 6 ... d5! with a kind of super Leningrad/Stonewall Dutch hybrid where Black, not White, controls the key e5 square.

6 ... d6 7 e3

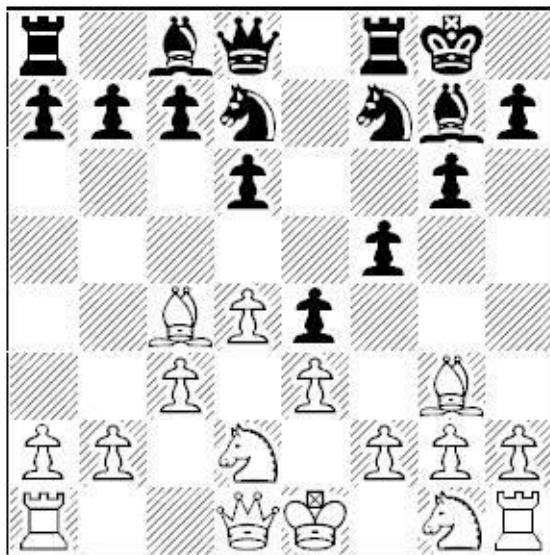
I also hate White's game after 7 h3 e5 8 Bh2 e4 9 Ng1.

7 ... e5 8 Bg3 e4 9 Ng1

Johnny comes marching home again. Back to the old drawing board. White's opening has been a

dismal failure.

9 ... Nd7 10 Bc4 0-0



11 f4?

A self-inflicted wound, which reminds me of the old joke about a man who murders his parents and then pleads for mercy before the judge, citing that he is an orphan. If White's opening were a play, the crowd would be throwing rotten fruit and vegetables at the performers on stage. White should probably just brace himself for the coming onslaught by playing 11 Ne2.

11 ... exf3 12 Ngxf3 Qe7

Targets: e3 and e4.

13 Bf2 Nf6

It gets worse and worse. Now the g4-square is added to the mix.

14 h3?!

Better to just castle.

14 ... Bh6

Black twists the knife cruelly on White's chronic puncture on e3.

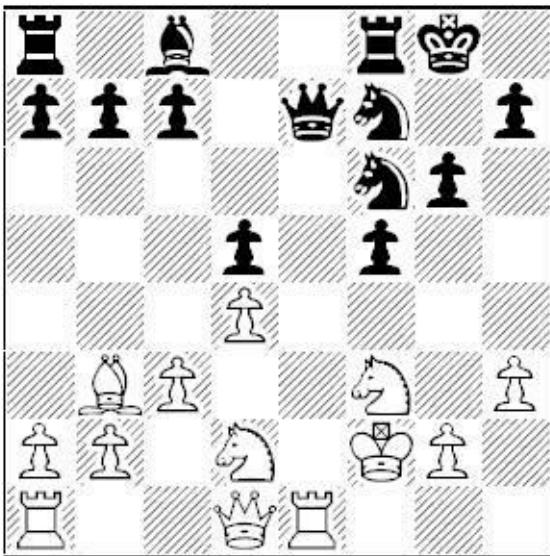
15 0-0

White washes his hands of the proceedings and walks away from e3, since White gets tied into a pretzel after 15 Qe2 d5 16 Bb3 Re8 17 Nf1.

15 ... d5 16 Bb3 Bxe3

So Black is up a pawn for nothing. Well, at least on the bright side, White no longer has to worry about a chronic weakness.

17 Re1 Bxf2+ 18 Kxf2



18 ... Qd8

Question: Why didn't Black just block the attack rather than back down?

Answer: Two reasons:

1. Black controls a hole on e4, so he has no interest in plugging the hole with a pawn – even if it's passed.
2. Black ends up giving White some counterplay with a powerful knight versus his bishop in the line 18 ... Ne4+ 19 Nxe4 dxе4 20 Bxf7+ when White's knight reaches e5.

19 Kg1 c6 20 c4!

Question: Why did White offer to take on an isolani?

Answer: He is desperate to weaken Black's grip on e4. White squeezes his eyes shut, takes a few deep breaths and resolves to challenge the bully. I have noticed that the state of being in crisis itself suffuses you with a kind of desperation energy which can't be faked or manufactured any other way. My brain magically works faster and more efficiently, but only when I'm busted!

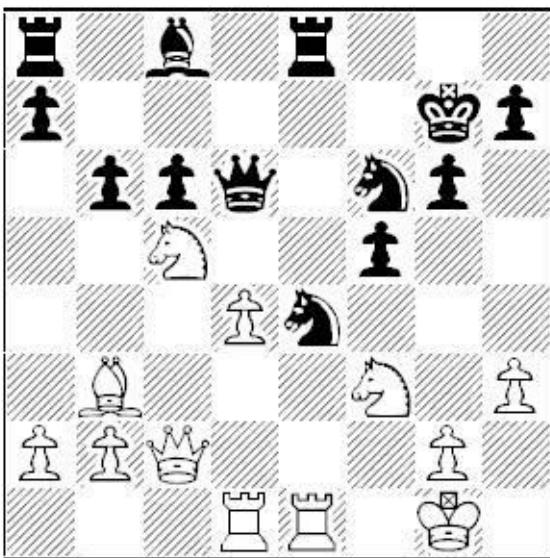
20 ... dxc4??!

This move activates White's position somewhat. Better to ignore the offer and play 20 ... Ne4! when White no longer has the good knight on e5 scenario available.

21 Nxc4

The prisoners are released and now enjoy an unimpaired vista of liberation.

21 ... Kg7 22 Nce5 Nd6 23 Nd3 Nde4 24 Qc2 Qd6 25 Rad1 Re8 26 Nc5 b6



27 Nd3?!

White misses his shot to get back into the game with 27 Nxe4! Rxe4 28 Rxe4, and if 28 ... Nxe4?! White suddenly gets a big surge of counterplay after 29 Qc4!.

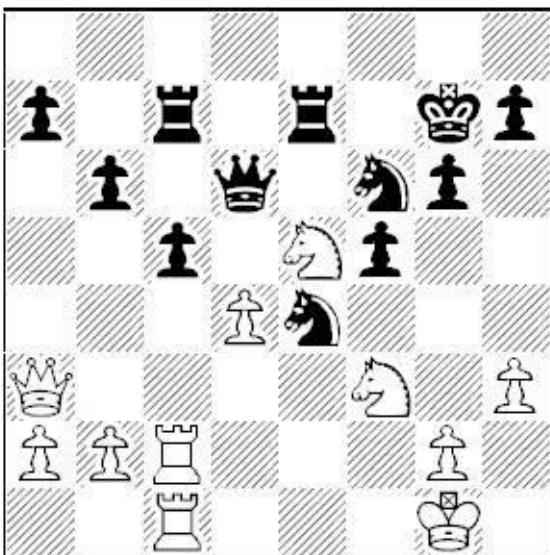
27 ... Be6 28 Nde5 Bxb3 29 Qxb3 Re7 30 Re2

Maybe the time has come for the desperado 30 g4!?.

30 ... Rc8 31 Rc1 c5!

Undermining the e5 support point.

32 Rec2 Rcc7 33 Qa3



Exercise (planning): We sense potential byways of untapped energy for Black, like logs of wood yet unlit in the fireplace. How can Black channel his discontent and ignite it into an attack?

Answer: 33 ... g5!

The g-pawn's push shreds the final vestiges of the White king's dream of a safe haven. The destabilizing idea ... g4 hangs over White's head.

34 Nd3?! Rcd7

Even stronger is 34 ... Ng3!.

35 Nde5 Rd8

Houdini suggests the inhuman line 35 ... g4! 36 Nxd7 Rxd7 37 dxc5 Qd1+! 38 Ne1 Qd4+ 39 Kh1 bxc5 with a winning attack.

36 dxc5 bxc5 37 Nc4 Qg3 38 Qe3 Rde8 39 Qe1

An attempt to circumvent justice by offering to enter a pawn-down ending.

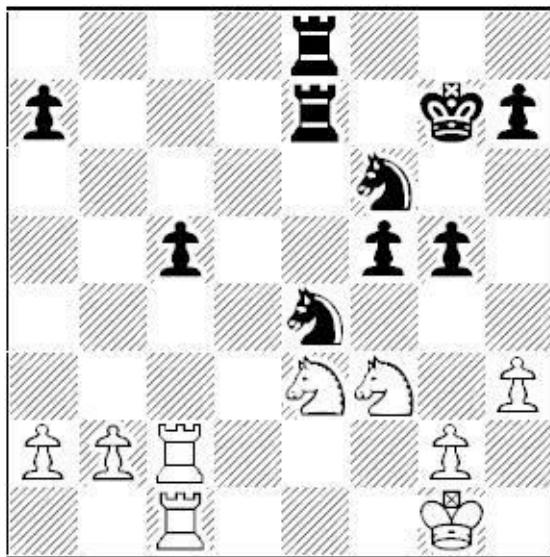
39 ... Qf4!

No thanks. The queen weaves and undulates, like a rattlesnake after prey. Black is after a much bigger pay-day than just a pawn-up ending.

40 Qe3 Qxe3+!

Black changes his mind, since he now has a combination.

41 Nxe3



Exercise (combination alert): The crumbling pier, though originally constructed of a sturdy wood, is no match for the pounding waves and time. Black to play and force the win of material.

Answer: 41 ... Ng3! 0-1

Double attack. Black threatens both the knight on e3 and a fork on e2, and if 42 Kh2 Rxe3 43 Kxg3 g4! wins a piece.

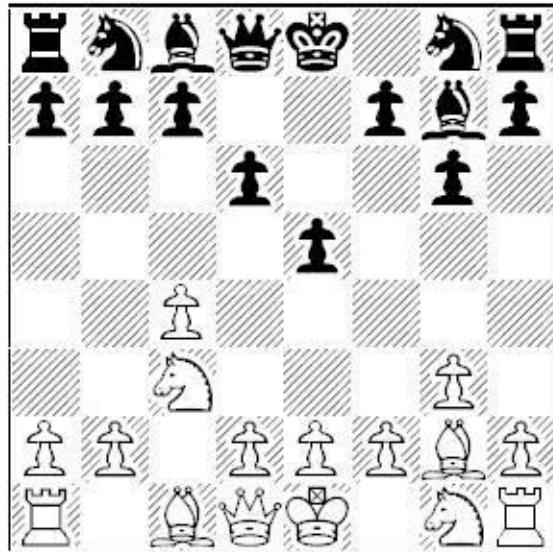
Summary

All my favourite White openings – Colle, London, Torre Attack and Trompowsky – all happen to stink against the Modern!

Chapter Twelve

The English

1 c4 g6 2 Nc3 Bg7 3 g3 d6 4 Bg2 e5



In ancient cultures people always viewed their rulers under the assumption that the rulers alone communicated with the gods and did their bidding. In this chapter we do the same by turning toward Kasparov's omniscience against English set-ups. White has the pick of three key ones. In all three cases we can be assured of sufficient play for Black:

a) 5 d3 f5 6 e4 Nf6, the Botvinnik English 'V' formation. Kasparov plays for a ... c6 and eventual ... d5 plan.

b) 5 d3 f5 6 e3, the e3-English. This time Kasparov borrows a plan from the Leningrad Dutch and sets up with ... c6, ... a5, ... Be6, ... Na6, and ... Nc7, challenging White on the queenside, or with the standard ... c6, ... Be6, and ... d5 plan, depending on how White sets up.

c) Finally, against the Nf3 English, Kasparov opts for a reversed Closed Sicilian and mimics a plan Spassky used to crush Geller, known from the late 60's.

Game 53

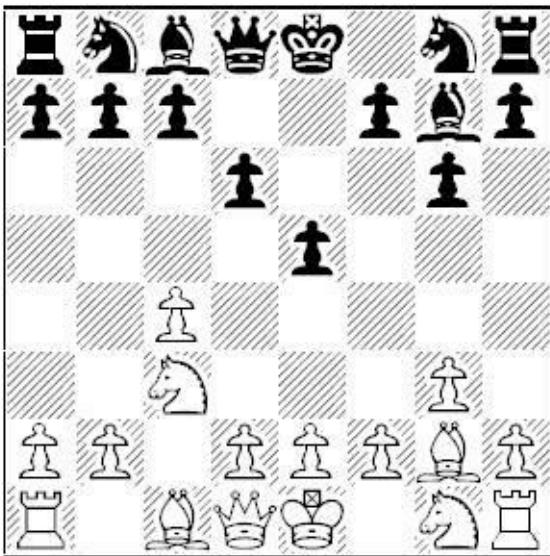
L.Ljubojevic-G.Kasparov

Linares 1992

1 c4 g6

Legitimacy at last! A world champion plays the Modern move order.

2 Nc3 Bg7 3 g3 e5 4 Bg2 d6



5 d3

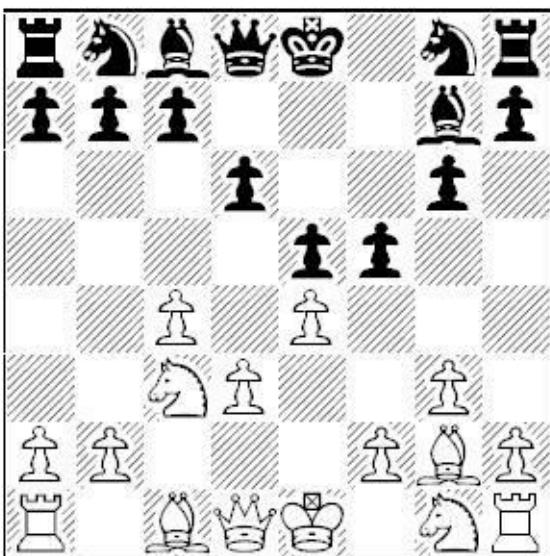
Question: Why does White usually toss in d3 first rather than e4, e3 or Nf3?

Answer: Mainly to keep Black guessing. 5 d3 is a neutral move which fits with all three lines.

Question: What if White bypasses d3 all together and plays 5 e4 intending Nge2 and a straight d4 if Black fails to develop his knight on c6?

Answer: You can try 5 ... c6 (5 ... Nc6 isn't the end of the world for Black either) 6 Nge2 h5!? 7 h4 (on 7 d4 ignore it and invite our familiar queenless middlegame with 7 ... h4) 7 ... Bg4 8 d3 Nd7 9 Be3 Ngf6 10 f3 Be6 11 Qd2 d5 is a strategy somewhat similar to Kasparov's, W.Sepetavc-V.Burmakin, Oberwart 2000.

5 ... f5 6 e4



The Botvinnik English.

Question: Should White worry about the hole on d4?

Answer: Not yet. As long as White has some coverage on the square, it is useless for Black to place a piece there since White simply exchanges on d4, forcing us to plug the square with a pawn.

6 ... Nf6 7 Nge2

Question: Should we be concerned about the possibility of future hanging pawns after 7 exf5 gxf5?

Answer: The pawns for now control many key central squares, so it looks fine for Black after 8 Nge2 c6 9 d4 0-0 when Black's pawns constitute a strength more than a weakness.

7 ... 0-0 8 h3

Kasparov criticized this move in his *Informant* notes and thought castling was a better option.

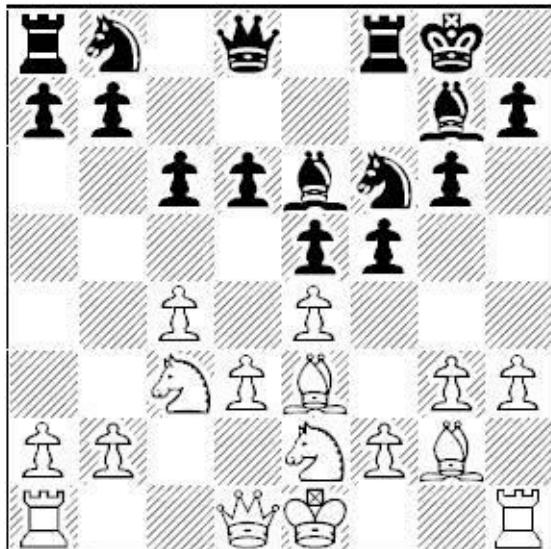
Question: What is the difference?

Answer: I'm not really sure why he felt the move was inaccurate, since White nearly always tosses in h3 at some point. At any rate, Kasparov thought White's best plan was to trade early on f5 and follow with d4. Like this: 8 0-0 c6 9 exf5 gxf5 10 d4 Na6 11 b3 with perhaps an edge to White, but I wouldn't mind taking on Black's position, D.Kokarev-I.Kovalenko, Magnitogorsk 2011.

8 ... c6!?

I prefer this move, containing more of a shifty Modern feel to it than the traditional 8 ... Nc6 pure reversed Closed Sicilian set-up.

9 Be3 Be6!



Question: What is Black trying to achieve?

Answer: Black's rudimentary but effective strategy: enforce ... d5.

10 Qd2?!

Kasparov also didn't like this move. Strangely enough, this natural developing move loses the initiative and fails to thwart Black's plan. 10 exf5 looks like a better way to slow Black's plan of a

looming ... d5. Then 10 ... gxf5 11 Qd2 was seen in R.Manner-V.Spielmann, Mehlingen 1999.

Question: What stops Black from playing 11 ... d5 now?

Answer: Then White has the tricky response 12 d4! when he stands a shade better. Black should just go for something quiet, like 11 ... Nbd7, with dynamic equality.

10 ... fxe4! 11 Nxe4

White would love to recapture with his d-pawn, but then c4 hangs.

Question: Can he sac anyway with 11 dxe4!? Bxc4 12 0-0-0?

Answer: White's compensation after 12 ... Ne8 13 h4 looks fishy at best.

11 ... Nxe4 12 Bxe4

White must waste time with his bishop now.

12 ... d5 13 cxd5 cxd5 14 Bg2 Nc6

Advantage Black, who controls the centre and also the more active army. However, I actually prefer 14 ... d4! 15 Bg5 Qd7, depriving White of both castling and a d4 break.

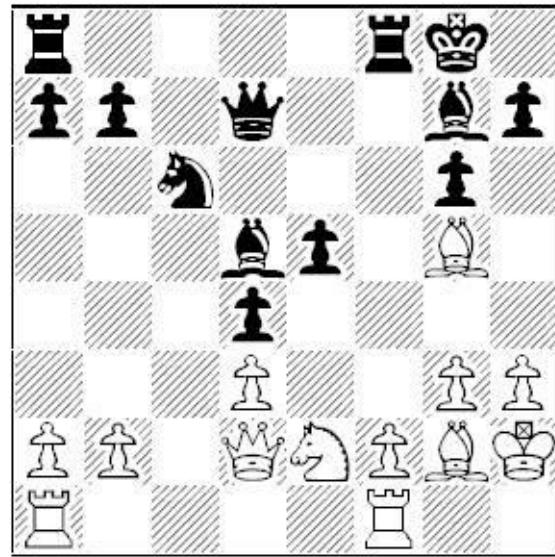
15 0-0

Perhaps White should try the risky 15 d4!? exd4! (principle: open the game when leading in development) 16 Nxd4 Nxd4 17 Bxd4 Bxd4 18 Qxd4 Qa5+ 19 b4 Qa6 20 Bf1 Qa4 21 Bg2 and hope he has time to escape the centre without dropping a pawn.

15 ... Qd7 16 Kh2 d4

No more d4 break to worry about.

17 Bg5 Bd5!



Question: Willingly swapping off his good bishop?

Answer: Excellent strategic judgement. The unencumbered bishop enjoys his new-found freedom and peeks out of his hiding place. Kasparov offers a swap of his good bishop in exchange for the weakening of the light squares around White's king.

18 Be4 Rf7 19 Kg2 Qe6

Threatening a2 and inducing White's next move. Kasparov appears as the professor who hopes to nudge an answer from a gifted but petulant student.

20 Bxd5 Qxd5+ 21 f3 a5!

Black makes space gains on the queenside as well as centre.

22 h4 a4 23 Ng1

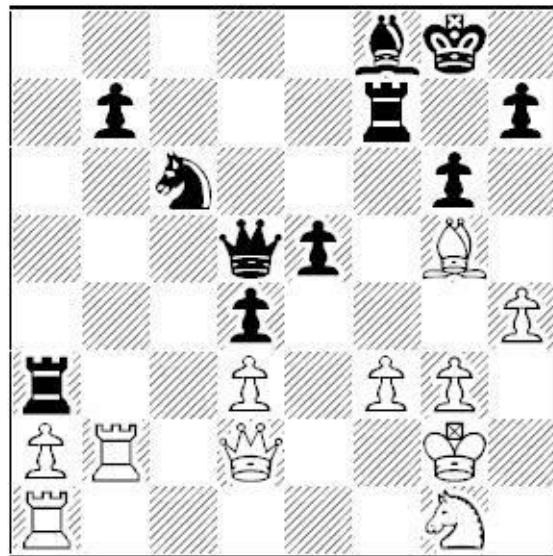
Question: Why not attack with 23 h5?

Answer: Who is doing the attacking after 23 ... gxh5? White's pieces are tied down to f3.

23 ... a3 24 Rfb1

24 b3 leaves a grievous gash on c3. Black might continue 24 ... Na7!.

24 ... Bf8 25 bxa3 Rxa3 26 Rb2



White's passive pieces are tied down to his numerous weaknesses: a2, d3, and f3.

26 ... b5! 27 Rab1 b4

Relentlessly precise positional play. The squeeze continues as he locks down a2, a permanent target along the open file.

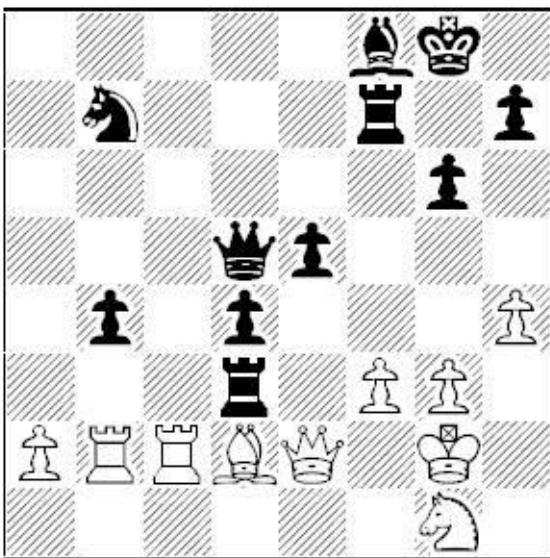
28 Rc2 Rc3 29 Rbb2 Na5!

Intending to transfer to c5, from where Black piles up on d3, the birthplace of White's future woes.

30 Qd1 Nb7 31 Bd2

Total desperation. Ljubo continues to resist with doomed bravery.

31 ... Rxd3 32 Qe2



Exercise (combination alert): Black has a sneaky shot in the position. Do you see it?

Answer: 32 ... Rdx f3!

Now ... d3 is next and there isn't a thing White can do about its approach.

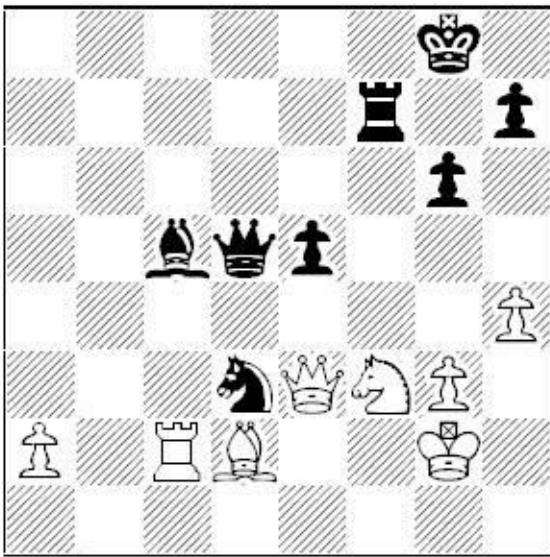
33 Nxf3 d3 34 Qe3 dxc2 35 Rxc2 Ne5! 36 Bxb4 Nd3!

The knight hums with energy as it radiates strands of force in eight waves.

37 Bd2

37 Bxf8?? walks into 37 ... Rxf3!.

37 ... Bc5!



White's position is a picture of sorrow, as rain blows down in staccato waves. It's unnerving to watch a strong GM playing the white pieces get manhandled with such effortless dominance, as Kasparov goes on to dismantle his opponent with breathtaking ease of motion.

38 Rxc5

No choice. White's defensive muscles stretch, grow ever more taut, and finally tear. 38 Qe2?? e4 39

Ne1 e3+ is curtains.

38 ... Nxc5 39 Bc3 Nd3

Returning to his seat of dominance.

40 a4 Rc7

Eyeing the entry point on c2. The rook patrols the open files thorough intimidation and menace.

41 Bd2 Nb2 42 Bc3 Nc4

42 ... e4 43 Nd2 Nd1 44 Qxe4 Nxc3 wins.

43 Qe2 Rf7

And back to the eternal pin. The rook returns with the languid ease of a cat's stretch.

44 a5 e4 45 Ne1 e3+ 46 Kg1 Nd2! 0-1

Kasparov easily punctures the thin, remaining defensive membrane. If 47 Ng2 Nf3+ 48 Kh1 Qe6! (threatening mate on h3) 49 Nf4 Rxf4! when White's king awakens in the throes of appalling, weltering pain, like a grievously wounded accident victim who regains consciousness in the hospital bed, only to stare into the terrible, endless absence of the infinite void ahead.

Summary

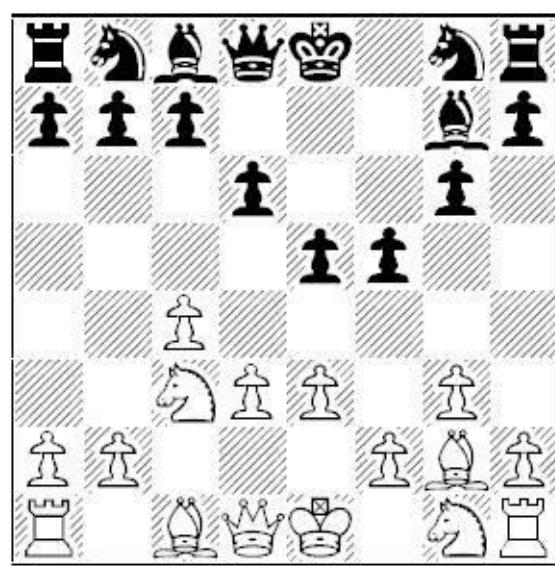
I like Kasparov's brute force plan of meeting the Botvinnik English with ... c6 and an eventual ... d5 if it can be achieved.

Game 54

M.Gurevich-G.Kasparov

Reggio Emilia 1992

1 c4 g6 2 Nc3 Bg7 3 g3 e5 4 Bg2 d6 5 d3 f5 6 e3



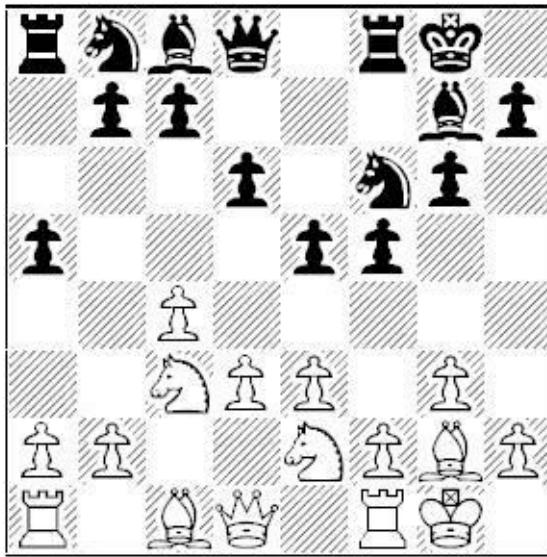
This set-up is also very popular in reverse, as Black against the Closed Sicilian. Once again Kasparov refuses to develop his knight to c6, thereby avoiding a pure reversed Closed Sicilian.

6 ... a5!?

Question: What is the point of Black's last move?

Answer: White usually tries to engineer b4 and expand on the queenside. Black ensures that when White does so, he owns the newly opened a-file.

7 Nge2 Nf6 8 0-0 0-0



9 b3

Solid but such a quiet set-up doesn't press Black in the opening.

Question: Didn't you just say White plays for b4?

Answer: I said White "usually" plays for b4. This is a very solid white option. If you think about it, White himself goes for a type of Hippopotamus formation, which as we all know by now is a universal formula against any system. After 9 Rb1 c6 10 a3 Be6 (once again, Black goes for the ... d5-at-all-costs strategy) 11 b4 axb4 12 axb4 d5 13 cxd5 cxd5 14 Na4 Bf7 15 Bd2 Nbd7 Black's powerful central influence compensates for White's gains on the queenside, C.Ward-K.Sasikiran, British Championship, Torquay 2002.

9 ... c6

A similar pattern to the previous game in the chapter.

10 Bb2 Na6

Question: Why develop to the corner?

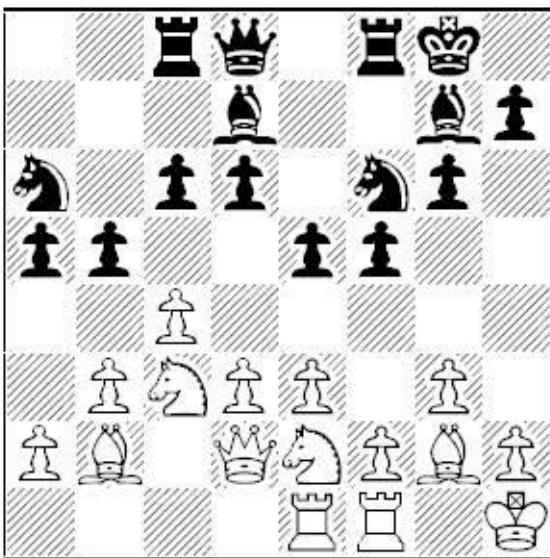
Answer: Kasparov borrows a manoeuvre from the Leningrad Dutch. Black plans ... Nc7, where he can play for both ... d5 and ... b5. I prefer Kasparov's plan to 10 ... Be6 11 d4 Qc7 12 Qd2 Nbd7 (better to back the bishop up to f7), as in I.Thompson-H.Haugsrud, Gibraltar 2003, when 13 Ba3! applies pressure on Black.

11 Qd2 Bd7 12 Kh1

Question: Why the mysterious king move?

Answer: White often plays f4 in such formations, so Gurevich wisely carts away his king from the g1-a7 diagonal.

12 ... Rc8 13 Rae1 b5



The Leningrad Dutch plan takes effect. Black grabs queenside space.

14 e4!?

White finally agrees to central contact.

14 ... Nc5 15 cxb5

Opening the c-file helps Black, but 15 exf5 bxc4! 16 dxc4 Bxf5 looks quite passive for White.

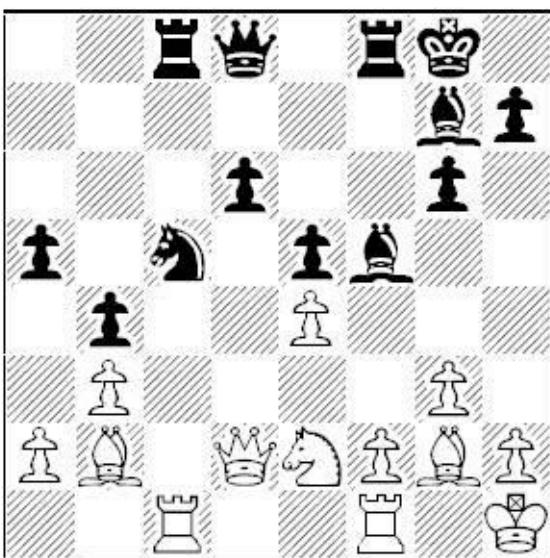
15 ... cxb5 16 exf5 Bxf5 17 Ne4 b4

Removing c3 as a home for White's e2-knight. Black already stands a shade better.

18 Rcl Nfxe4!

Understanding that his activity compensates the newly formed weakness on d6.

19 dxe4



19 ... Bd7!

World champions don't fall for traps like 19 ... Nxe4?? 20 Qd5+.

20 Rcd1

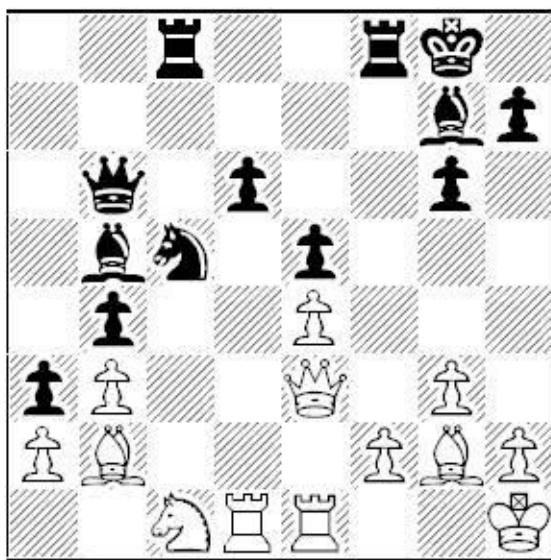
Question: What am I missing? Why didn't White chop d6?

Answer: The trouble: 20 Qxd6? Bb5! and Black wins material, no matter how White responds.

20 ... Bb5 21 Qe3 a4! 22 Rfe1

Black continues to apply pressure after 22 bxa4 Nxa4 23 Rd2 Bc4 24 Ba1 Rc6.

22 ... Qb6 23 Nc1 a3!



Timing it so that White's bishop finds himself scrunched into a1. The e5-pawn is the ill-fitting garment which binds White tightly. Also, the deeply embedded pawns on a3 and b4 tend to make big trouble if an ending arises, since b3 sac/promotion possibilities arise. Also, if a black rook ever gets to White's second rank, it will spell doom for Gurevich.

24 Ba1

With as much dignity as he can muster, the bishop seats himself on a1, as if many other squares around him are also available, but he chooses this particular one purposefully.

24 ... Bd7 25 Nd3 Be6 26 f4

White must free the prisoner on a1.

26 ... Rc6 27 Nf2

This marks the beginning of awkward negotiations, which in the end leave White feeling cheated. *Houdini* doesn't like this move and prefers 27 f5 which diffuses the pain somewhat, but fails to eliminate it entirely.

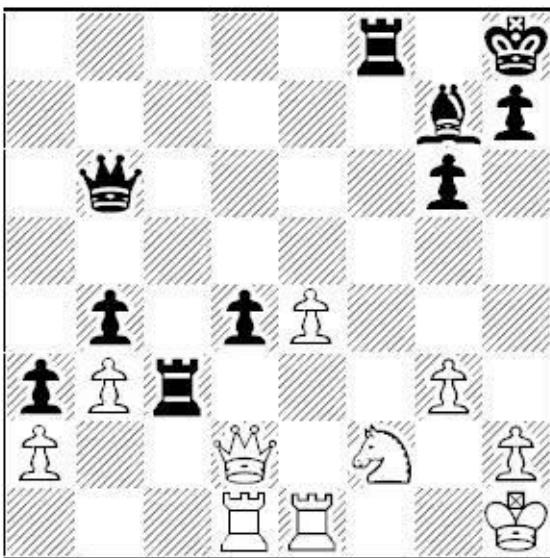
27 ... Nd7 28 Qd2 Nc5 29 Bh3 Bf7 30 fxe5 dxe5 31 Ng4 Be6 32 Nh6+ Kh8 33 Bxe6 Nxe6 34 Ng4 Nd4!

Kasparov breaks the uneasy truce as White's defences imperceptibly begin to sag at the edges.

35 Bxd4

White walks into a strategic trap if he plays the 'combination': 35 Nxe5? Bxe5 36 Bxd4 Bxd4 37 Qxd4+ Qxd4 38 Rxd4 Rc2 with dual threats to double on the seventh and also against a2.

35 ... exd4 36 Nf2 Rc3



Question: Hasn't Kasparov been outplayed?
I assess this as good knight versus bad bishop.

Answer: I strongly urge reassessment!

1. First, d3 isn't a stable square for the knight.
2. Black's bishop looks pretty healthy to me.
3. Black's passed d-pawn chokes White's pieces and forces him into passivity.
4. White's passed but isolated e-pawn represents a weakness more than a strength, since pushing it opens the h1-a8 diagonal and endangers White's king.
5. Black's pawn on a3 means big trouble for Gurevich. He must stand constant vigil over Black's attempts to infiltrate the seventh rank and pick off a2.

Conclusion: White is in big trouble.

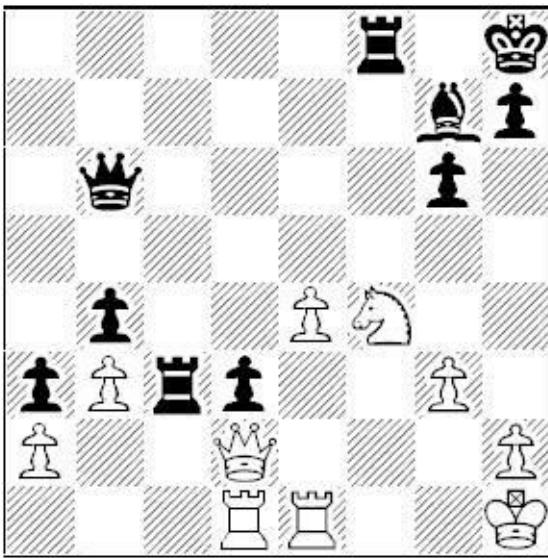
37 Nh3

The knight re-emerges more brazen than ever. Now White lands in huge trouble. *Houdini* hates White's last move, but to be fair, White gets busted after the comp's own suggestion: 37 Nd3 Rf3 38 Nf4 (threatening a fork on d5) 38 ... d3! (hey, I said "threatening a fork on d5!") 39 Nd5 Qe6! 40 Nxb4 (White gets swarmed by the passers after 40 Nxc3?? bxc3) 40 ... Bd4! and White can't survive the numerous infiltration threats.

37 ... d3

37 ... Qc6! eyeing c2, is also very strong.

38 Nf4



Exercise (planning): Come up with a plan to increase the pressure on White.

Answer: Swap d3 for a2, after which Black's passed a-pawn represents a grave danger to White. Now the ravenous rook goes foraging for food in the forest.

38 ... Rc2! 39 Qxd3 Rxa2 40 Rf1 Rf2

White is reduced to paralysis after 40 ... Qf6! (threat: ... Qb2) 41 Rb1 Rd8 42 Nd5 Qe6! (threat: ... Qh3) 43 Rfe1 Bc3! and if 44 Re2?? Rxd5! puts White away.

41 Rxf2 Qxf2 42 Rd2 Qa7!

Threatening ... a2 and ... a1(Q).

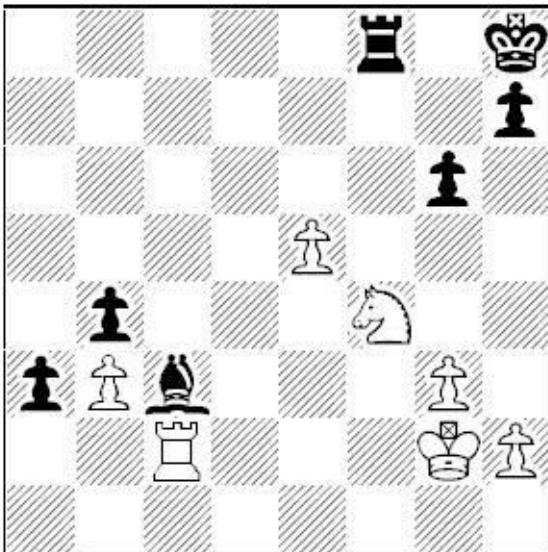
43 Qe2 Bc3 44 Rc2 Qf7!

Target: b3.

45 e5 Qb7+!

Even stronger than taking on b3.

46 Qg2 Qxg2+ 47 Kxg2



Exercise (combination alert): Black to play and win:

Answer: Interference. Enter stage left.

47 ... Bb2! 48 Rf2

A trap, hoping for Nxg6+.

48 ... a2!

The creature crawls out of the sewers into the starlight above. A trap is no longer a trap if it fails in the end. All arrows point to a1, the common denominator.

49 Nxg6+

Initiating his trap. White soon learns the golden rule of mercantile law: buyer beware!

49 ... hxg6 50 Rxf8+ Kg7 51 Rf1

White received shipment, but misjudged delivery costs. Have you ever experienced a time where all your deepest desires come to fruition, but then, aghast, you realize you just awakened from an intoxicatingly blissful dream only to be tossed casually back into drab reality?

51 ... Bxe5 52 Kf3 0-1

The a-pawn costs White a rook.

Summary

Be aware of the Leningrad Dutch manoeuvre, ... a5, ... c6, ... Na6, ... Nc7, ... Bd7, and eventually ... b5.

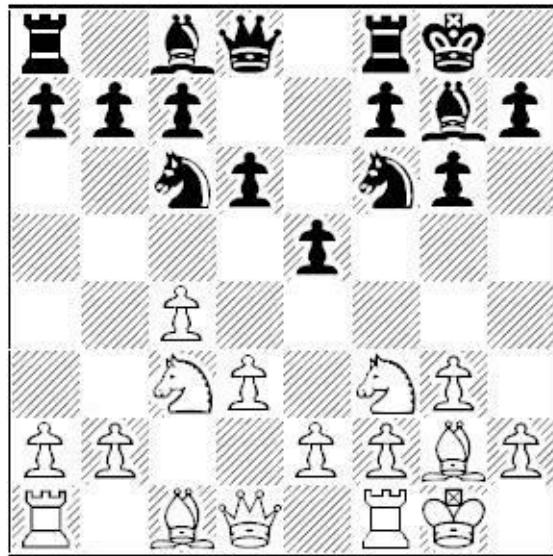
Game 55

L.Psakhis-G.Kasparov

5th matchgame, Murcia 1990

1 c4

I have had many games from White's position in the following line. Compare to what we get in the game continuation. 1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 g3 0-0 5 Bg2 d6 6 0-0 e5 7 d3 Nc6.



Question: What is the difference?

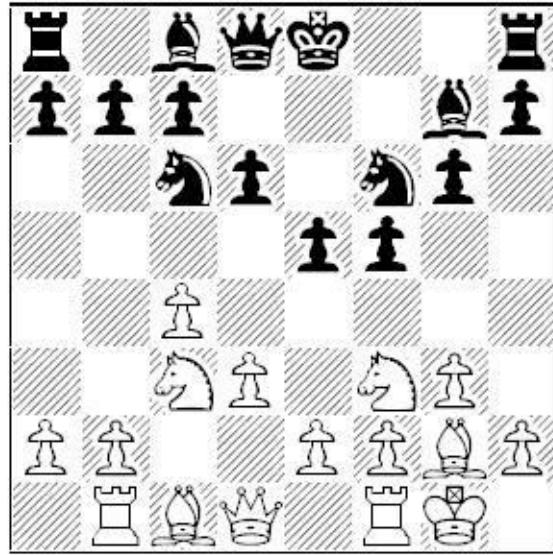
Answer: The difference: in this version Black's f6-knight blocks the ... f5 pawn push. Now if Black insists on an ... f5 plan, this in turn means he must move the knight, play ... f5 and then often move the

knight back to f6, at cost of tempi.

1 ... g6 2 Nc3 Bg7 3 g3 Nc6 4 Bg2 d6 5 Nf3 e5 6 d3 f5

This is the difference: No f6-knight blocking us from a quick ... f5.

7 0-0 Nf6 8 Rb1



8 ... h6

Question: Why this moment to toss in ... h6?

Answer: Of course castling, the main move, is also fine here. ... h6 is useful for Black for two reasons:

1. It prevents simplifying lines based on Bg5.
2. Black plans a pawn storm with ... g5 later on.

Question: Should Black toss in 8 ... a5?

Answer: It's hard to say if it helps White to open the a-file or helps Black eliminate pawns on his weak wing. In the end it's a matter of taste. 9 a3 0-0 10 b4 axb4 11 axb4 h6 12 b5 Ne7 13 Bb2 g5 14 Ra1 Rxal 15 Qxa1 Be6 16 Qa7 b6 seemed okay for Black in L.Van Wely-S.Movsesian, Wijk aan Zee 2009.

9 b4 0-0 10 b5 Ne7 11 a4

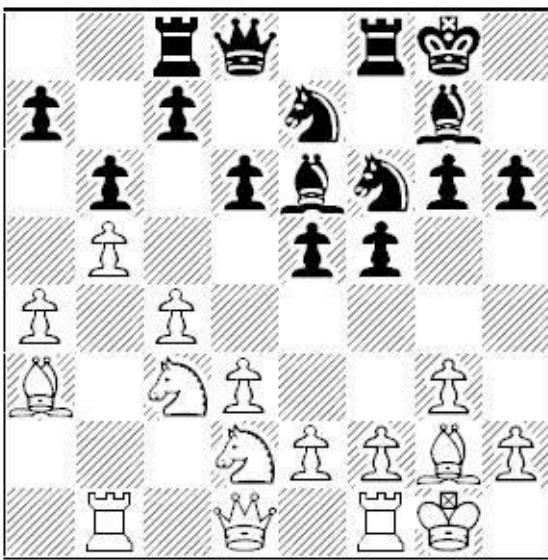
Question: Does 11 c5 prise open the queenside?

Answer: It opens the queenside somewhat, but Black is ready to challenge White on that wing after 11 ... Be6 12 Ba3 Rc8 13 Qa4 b6 14 cxd6 cxd6 15 Rfc1 Qd7 16 Bb4. Here Black looks hale and healthy, S.Savchenko-V.Mikhalevski, V Metz 2011.

11 ... Be6 12 Ba3

12 a5 Rc8 13 Nd2 b6 14 Bb2 g5 15 axb6 axb6 reaches a set-up similar to the Van Wely-Movsesian note above.

12 ... Rc8 13 Nd2 b6



This was Spassky's famous Closed Sicilian set-up which he used with colours reversed to clobber Geller with three straight blows to the head in their Candidates' match. Black curls up in a ball on the queenside, providing White with a single, amply defended target on c7. Meanwhile, Black attacks on the other wing.

Exercise (homework assignment): Study Spassky's three Closed Sicilian victories versus Geller from their 1968 match. You will get a great idea of how to handle Black in the Modern versus Nf3 English positions.

14 e3!

Dual purpose:

1. To discourage ... f4.

2. To enable White to play either f4 or d4, challenging Black's kingside roller. Those Spassky-Geller bloodbaths may have convinced White not to one-track-mindedly pursue his queenside dreams to the detriment of his king.

14 ... g5

Here he comes!

15 d4

Principle: counter in the centre when attacked on the wing.

15 ... exd4

15 ... e4 16 f3 is also possible.

16 exd4 f4! 17 Re1 Bg4 18 Nf3 Qd7 19 c5

White must distract Black from the attack or face annihilation.

19 ... Rce8 20 Rc1 Nf5!?

Black's attackers, spokes on a bent wheel, continue a wobbly convergence toward White's king, as the knight begins her leisurely dance, warming up for the pirouettes ahead.

21 Qd3 Kh8 22 cxd6 cxd6 23 Rxe8 Qxe8!

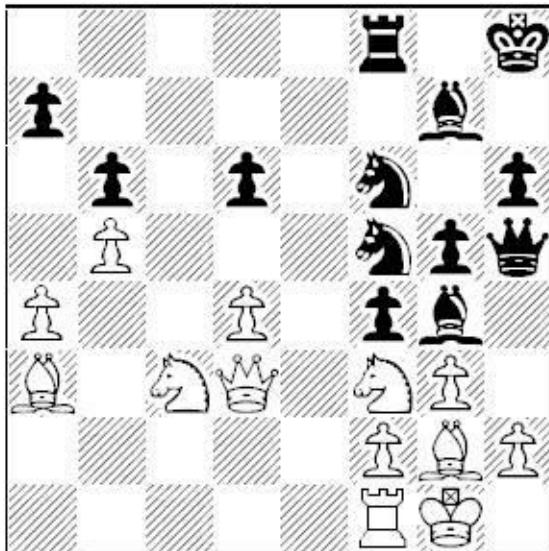
A piece offer. Some players relish the reputation of being a little more crazy than their opponents. Kasparov retreats into himself and produces a deep computation.

24 Rf1

Instead 24 h3!? fxg3! (into the belly of the beast!) 25 hxg4 gxf2+ 26 Kxf2 Nxg4+ 27 Kg1 Qh5 28 Ne2 Nge3 offers Black loads of compensation for the piece. The sharpened edges to Black's attack still cut.

24 ... Qh5

See how Kasparov extracts every ounce of attacking energy from the position by massing his pieces around White's king? Now the air grows heavy with the screams of battle, as White's king fails to find peace from the war cries all around him.



25 Ne4?

Defence is always harder than attack. *Houdini* offers 25 Ne5!? and helpfully assesses it as dead even.

25 ... Nxe4 26 Qxe4 Bh3!

Removing a key member of White's guard, the sole protector of the light squares, which take on an infection similar to bugs gnawing away at vegetables in the garden.

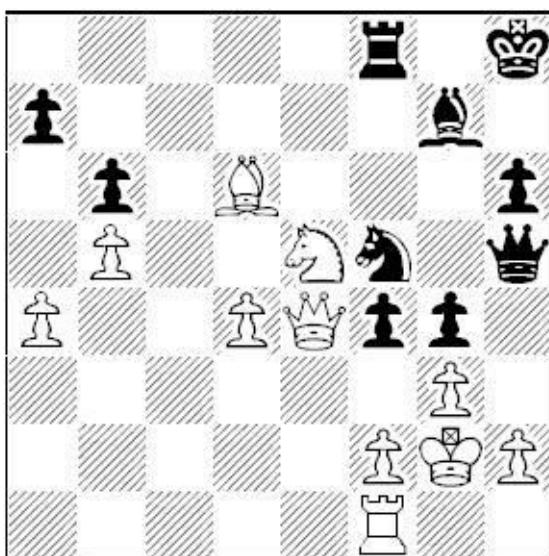
27 Ne5??

After 27 Bb4 Bxg2 28 Kxg2 g4 29 Nh4 (29 Ng1? d5! 30 Qd3 f3+ 31 Kh1 Rc8 is a slow death) 29 ... f3+ 30 Kh1 Nxh4 31 gxh4 d5 32 Qe6 Re8 33 Qd7 Bxd4 White should also lose in the end.

27 ... Bxg2 28 Kxg2

Despite the reduced force, Black has a winning attack.

28 ... g4! 29 Bxd6



Exercise (combination alerts): A terrible confluence of forces merge, as Black has two methods of finishing White off. But you can't kill an enemy twice. Just find one of them.

Answer: 29 ... Rf6!

Equally crushing is 29 ... fxg3! 30 hxg3 Qh3+ 31 Kg1 Qxf1+! which leaves Black up a piece in the ending.

30 Bb8 Qh3+! 0-1

The powerless white king hides from his enemies, a parasite under the skin. He closes his eyes and tries to remember the feeling of power he once possessed when he ruled. After 31 Kg1 f3 32 Nxf3 gxf3 33 Qxf3 Nh4! White's king, who gets peppered with shots and more shots, is stripped of power and compelled to begin his new life as a pauper.

Summary

If you study the three model Spassky-Geller Closed Sicilians from their 1968 match, you hone your mating attack down to a formula.

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