

GAMBIT

Secrets of Grandmaster Chess



John Nunn

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Symbols

+	Check
#	Mate
!	Good move
!!	Excellent move
?	Bad move
??	Blunder
!?	Interesting move
?!	Dubious move
1-0	White wins
0-1	Black wins
½-½	Draw

Introduction

This book is a completely new edition of the 1987 publication *Secrets of Grandmaster Play*, which I co-authored with Peter Griffiths. The original book was a success, winning the British Chess Federation Book of the Year prize, so why a new edition? There are several reasons. First of all, since the original book was a co-operative effort, there were inevitably some compromises regarding its style and composition. Peter, as an experienced chess teacher, wanted to emphasise the educational content, while I hoped to convey something of the life of a chess player. In the end there was no biographical material in the book, and I was only able to fulfil my original concept when I wrote *John Nunn's Best Games* in 1994. This also won the BCF Book of the Year prize, so both approaches seemed to meet with independent approval.

This was the first motivation behind the new edition: to rewrite the original in keeping with the style of *John Nunn's Best Games*. A considerable quantity of biographical material, anecdotes, etc. has been added, together with an entirely new section on my career up to 1973. The new material includes 49 games or game fragments.

The second reason was provided by the chess school of Mark Dvoretsky. To my astonishment, he used some of the games and analysis from *Secrets of Grandmaster Play* for training purposes, both purely analytical and in the form of practice games starting from specified positions. Not surprisingly, letting players such as Yusupov, Dolmatov and Zviagintsev loose on these positions led to a rash of new analytical discoveries, many of which were included in the well-known series of books by Dvoretsky and Yusupov. These new discoveries are included here, in some cases with further commentary by myself. Moreover, I am grateful to Mark Dvoretsky for providing some further, hitherto unpublished, analysis for inclusion in this book.

The third reason has to do with technology. The analysis in *Secrets of Grandmaster Play* was produced without any computer assistance, but in the interim the strength of chess-playing programs has increased enormously. Such programs are at their best in sharp, tactical positions – precisely the type of position which predominated in *Secrets of Grandmaster Play*. I checked

every move in the original book with *Fritz4*. Needless to say, a fair number of errors were uncovered, although fewer than I feared. Even where *Fritz* verified the original assessment of the position, it sometimes suggested an interesting alternative which I had simply failed to consider.

The new *Fritz* analysis, together with the Dvoretsky and Yusupov contributions, have resulted in significant analytical changes and enhancements throughout the book. Together with the new biographical material, this has led to the book expanding by roughly 50%.

I would like to end with a few words of advice to readers intending to use the book for their own study and training. One method is simply to play over the games, but in this case don't play over every move of the analysis in the sequence they appear in the book. There is an immense quantity of material, and it's easy to lose sight of the wood for the trees. First of all go through the moves of the game itself and read the general commentary. Note the key themes of the game, and the critical turning points which decided the struggle. With these in mind, go back and look at the analysis in more detail – it will make much more sense if you already have a mental picture of what the players are trying to achieve.

A second method is to emulate Dvoretsky's training technique. Choose a position which is followed by a nice, chunky piece of analysis. Cover up the analysis and then set up the position on a board. Give yourself half-an-hour to analyse the position (without touching the pieces). Try to discover as much as you can, and in particular evaluate the position and decide what you would play next. Then compare your analysis with that in the book. As an example, suitable positions for this method would be after White's 24th in game 1, Black's 17th in game 2 and White's 15th in game 3.

Special thanks must go to my wife, who played over every move in the book looking for errors, and to Graham Burgess, who performed a similar function with the words.

John Nunn
Chertsey, 1997

Introduction to the Electronic Edition

Secrets of Grandmaster Chess went out of print several years ago and anyone wanting a copy was forced to turn to the secondhand market. However, these days there are alternatives. I reclaimed the copyright from the former publishers and, with the help of Gambit Publications, I was able to make the book available in this electronic-only edition for app and Amazon Kindle. While converting the book to the new format, I took the opportunity to add a considerable number of extra diagrams and improve the layout. I hope that a new generation of readers will enjoy this book and the games in it.

John Nunn
Chertsey, 2014

1 Early Years (1955-73)

The most opportunist response to my birth on 25th April 1955 came from my brother David who, on being told of the new arrival, promptly asked if he could have an ice-cream. Skipping ahead a few years, it was partly due to David that I became interested in chess. My father was attempting to teach him the game. I was aged four and curious about this strange activity. I asked what they were doing. My father explained that this was called ‘chess’ and showed me how to move a couple of the pieces. To his surprise, I picked up the moves very quickly and, much to David’s relief, I became the focus of chess schooling in the Nunn household.

I admit to not remembering any of the above; so far as my personal memory is concerned, I could always read, write, play chess and multiply small numbers together in my head. My father was an average club player, although at the time he taught me to play chess he did not play seriously and did not belong to a chess club. I quickly became fascinated by the game and enjoyed playing against myself. Falling ill during the winter was always a mixed blessing for me, the misery of catching a cold being balanced by the extra hours I could spend at home with my chessboard. My father borrowed chess books from the London County Council (forerunner of the Greater London Council, which was later abolished by Margaret Thatcher) staff library. When a new chess book appeared in the house, I would usually play over every game in the book. During part of the year there was a weekly chess programme on BBC radio; I eagerly awaited each transmission and followed the games on my pocket set. Chess on radio may sound clumsy, and it did require some concentration on the part of the listener, but the programmes were very popular and continued until the summer of 1964. There were also chess programmes on television, albeit rather short, called ‘Chess Masterpieces’. These were quite advanced for the time and consisted of famous games played over on a genuine chess set using stop-frame animation. Arrows appeared on the board indicating important features of the position. Very similar methods have been used to show chess on television ever since, albeit with the effects being generated electronically. At the end of the game, the defeated king was carried off the board by the remnants of his army, and the pieces leapt back into the box. Of course, I enjoyed these programmes enormously.

In a couple of years I started beating my father, and his thoughts turned to the local chess congresses. My first competitive outing was to the nearby Richmond Easter Congress when I was seven, but the opposition was just too strong for me. My father decided to wait some time before trying again, and it was in May 1964, when I was just nine, that my tournament career really started, at the Ilford Whitsun Congress. The Swiss system was far from universal in those days, and the junior section at Ilford consisted of several round-robin groups of six players each. In view of my youth I was put in Junior 'G', the lowest group.

In these days when 12-year-old IMs and 14-year-old GMs have become an accepted part of the chess scene, it is hard to imagine how exceptional it was for a nine-year-old to take part in a chess tournament of any kind. Certainly my first-round opponent, S. Pierce, looked a bit surprised by the small boy sitting opposite – he asked my mother if I knew how to castle. Of course it would be nice to report that I beat him, but in fact I lost a long ending with a bishop against three pawns (funnily enough, neither player castled). However, it turned out that Pierce was the strongest player in the group and won all his games. I won the remaining four games to finish in second place – my first tournament prize! My performance was reported in the June 1964 issue of the *British Chess Magazine* – the first mention of my name in this august magazine.

The chess scene in 1964 was in some ways very different from that today, especially as regards junior chess, yet the physical conditions were much the same then as now. The great surge of chess popularity in Britain which came in the late 1970s and 1980s, when a major weekend tournament would attract several hundred participants, passed by and the current (1997) chess scene bears an uncanny resemblance to that in the late 1960s. Chess tournaments still take place in schools and church halls; chess clubs meet in pubs and yes, you guessed it, church halls. It is hard to judge how the overall level of chess activity compares with that today; there was probably less tournament chess but more club and county chess. Having said that, the *British Chess Magazine* lists the names of roughly 160 participants at Ilford 1964; today this would be regarded as a very good turn-out for a weekend congress. There were no quickplay events, but you could play in a blitz tournament (five-minute chess) any Sunday at the *En Passant Chess Centre* in The Strand (all entry fees returned as prize money!).

British tournament chess in 1964 centred around the traditional Bank

Holiday tournaments, together with Hastings and the British Championship. By international standards, the level of British chess was fairly low, although there were isolated individual successes, such as Norman Littlewood's 5½/9 at Hastings in January. However, the leading players were much more active in home events than today. Penrose convincingly won the top section at Ilford with 4½/5, although he was later to fail in his attempt to win the British Championship for the seventh successive time (Haygarth won).

Internationally, there were important tournaments, but you wouldn't find out about most of them from the *BCM* of the time, which was resolutely insular in outlook.

English language chess books were very few by today's standards. The 'New Books in Brief' section of the June 1964 *BCM* mentions 13 publications; only two of these are described as being in English, and in these two cases it hardly seems to matter as they were just tournament bulletins consisting of unannotated games. The first Batsford chess book was still a few years in the future. Elo ratings were not to appear for another six years.

The differences in junior chess were more marked – basically, the standard at any given age was far, far lower than it is today. That is not to say that today's generation of youngsters will necessarily be any stronger in adulthood than those of 30 years ago, but their development occurs at a much earlier age. I find it hard now to find an explanation as to why the standard of junior chess should have increased so much. The junior chess scene was very active in the 1960s and there were plenty of tournaments to play in. Of course, the philosophy of the time was that junior players belonged in junior events, and this did tend to limit the challenges available to talented young players. Moreover, the opportunities for attending chess clubs were fairly limited; many met in pubs, which effectively barred youngsters, and young players were often not very welcome even in those clubs where membership was possible. The coaching of young players was virtually unknown (in my whole life, I only received 12 hours of coaching). However, despite all this, the progress made does seem remarkable. If, when playing over some of the games below, readers find the standard comically poor, please bear in mind the different circumstances of the 1960s.

My next major event was the London under-12 Championship, which started on 31st December 1964. It was a nine-round Swiss with 53 competitors and was held in the St Bride Institute, which was one of London's main chess centres at the time (and for many years thereafter). To

my own surprise, I scored 8 points to win outright. Paul Levy and Russell Rose, who were my main rivals during this period, finished joint second with 7½ points. In addition, I won a prize for the best game, although the game concerned doesn't really bear reproduction. As a reward for this achievement, my father took me to the offices of the *British Chess Magazine* in West Norwood, which I remember mainly for its narrow, winding staircase and stygian interior, and bought me a very fine wooden chess set, which is still my main full-size chess set. The *Wandsworth Borough News* reported that 'John has astonished the experts by winning London's under-12 Championship' and that 'When not playing chess, or reading about it, John enjoys studying meteorology, astronomy and national history.' National history? Either my memory is failing, or this is a misprint for natural history.

During 1965 I played several games for Huntingfield Primary School in what was a thriving local primary school league. Sadly, Huntingfield was demolished in 1995, and a housing development now stands on the site of my first school. Over Easter, I took part in the Southern Counties under-12 Championship which was part of the annual Bognor Regis International Congress (held at Butlin's Holiday Camp!). The result was a permutation of the standings from the London Championships: Paul Levy won with 6½/7, and I finished joint second with Russell Rose on 5½. Only a couple of days later, I took part in the London Primary Schools Championship, which I won with 8½/9. Showing admirable professionalism, I agreed a six-move draw in the last round to secure the title.

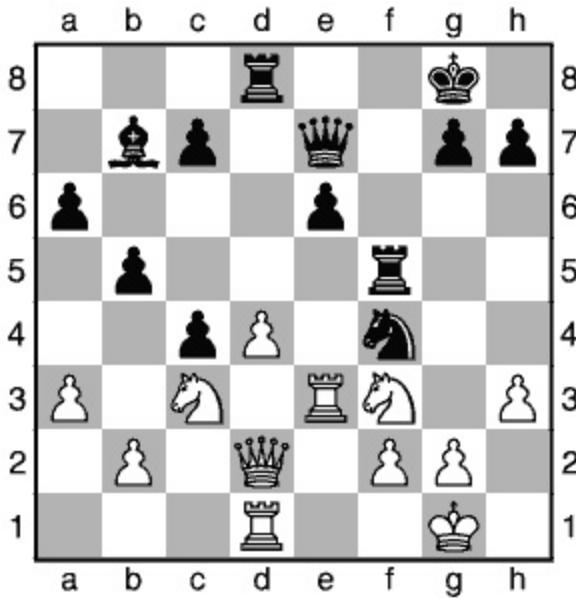
Soon it was Whitsun again, and time for the traditional Congress. Although I was the youngest player in the Congress, I had been promoted to the Junior 'B' group and finished joint first with M. Frankel on 4/5. The chess column in the *Ilford Recorder* of 8th July 1965 (written by T.H. George) was very complimentary: 'He has a very quick sight of the board and sums up a situation speedily and with uncanny accuracy. A natural attacker, he can also defend dourly when necessary. Time and experience will equip him with the finer technical points of the game ... Yes, definitely a young man who could one day be heard of in British chess.' A remarkably accurate summary, except possibly for the dour defence. Mr George then went on to give my first published game:

L. Klein – J. Nunn

Ilford Junior 1965

Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 Bb4+ 4 Bd2 Bxd2+ 5 Qxd2 Nf6 6 Nc3 0-0 7 e3 Nc6 8 a3 Na5 9 Qc2 Nxc4 10 Bxc4 dxc4 11 0-0 b6 12 Nb5 a6 13 Nc3 Bb7 14 Qe2 Qd6 15 h3 Rad8 16 e4 Qe7 17 Rad1 b5 18 Rfe1 Nh5 19 Qd2 f5 20 exf5 Rxf5 21 Re3 Nf4



White to move

22 Ne2 Nxh3+ 23 Kf1 Bxf3 24 Rxf3 Rxf3 25 gxf3 Qh4 26 Ng3 Rf8 27 Qe1 Nf4 28 Qe3 Qh3+ 29 Ke1 Ng2+ 0-1

The hint that my technique was not all it could be was certainly justified. Round about this time I played a game in which (as White) I had an extra outside passed pawn on a4 in a rook ending. I could have played Rd1-a1, putting my rook behind the pawn, but then I saw that Black could blockade the pawn by ...Rc5-a5. I therefore chose Rd8+ and Ra8, as I saw that I could safely push the pawn all the way to a7. Of course, such an elementary mistake seems quite humorous now, but it was really the result of lack of coaching. Looking at my early games reveals that I repeatedly made the same basic mistake: not putting my rook behind a passed pawn in a rook ending. I simply didn't know this fundamental principle; there was nobody to explain it to me and I didn't discover it myself for at least a year. The chess books I had read were mainly games collections and I had not picked up much endgame knowledge from them. It is certainly true that the things you discover for

yourself tend to stick in the memory better, and there are some who hold that ‘learning by discovery’ is the best teaching technique. Perhaps in a limited way this is true, but the simple fact is that life is too short to acquire an effective education by this method. The best years for learning are over all too quickly, and I cannot see the point in struggling to work something out for yourself, when the answers are already known and someone just has to explain them to you.

In September I moved from Huntingfield School to Elliott School. Perhaps I should explain that in the English educational system, the switch from ‘primary’ to ‘secondary’ school usually takes place at age 11, but I changed one year early.

Over the new year I defended my London under-12 title with great success, as this time I scored 9/9 and won by a margin of two points. I was rather lucky in one game against R. Loveridge. Two pawns down in a king and pawn ending, I had a pawn on b5 against pawns on a7 and b6. My opponent decided to promote his ‘passed’ pawn with ...a5, and was stunned when I took it *en passant*. I suppose it wouldn’t happen these days. This was the first tournament in which I adopted 1 e4, having been a 1 d4 player hitherto. After 1...e5 I followed up with the King’s Gambit.

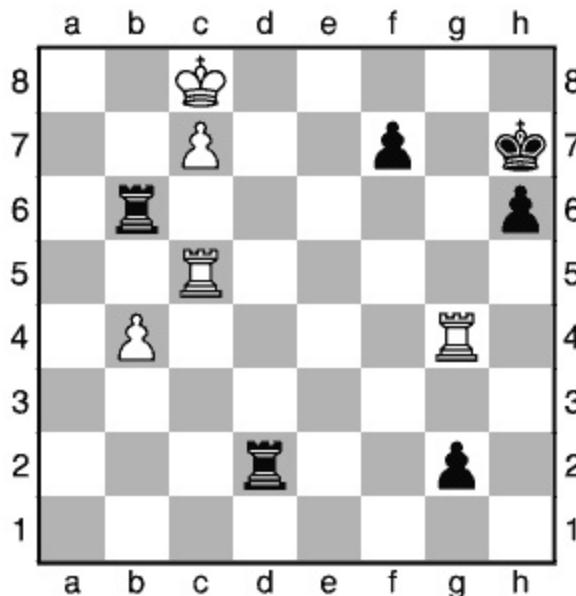
During this event I overheard a teacher give an excellent piece of chess advice. He asked some of the youngsters in his charge how they were getting on, but the replies were not very encouraging: ‘1½ out of 6’, ‘2 out of 6’, and so on. He then gave them some tips for the remaining games: ‘Don’t play impulsively ... use all your time ... look to see if the opponent is threatening anything’ and ended with the best advice of all: ‘... and don’t make any mistakes.’

January 1966 also saw my first appearance on television, but it had nothing to do with chess. There was a children’s TV programme called *Crackerjack* and six pupils from Elliott School were chosen to appear in a competition held on *Crackerjack*. I reached the final of this competition, and faced a series of general knowledge questions. However, I lost out by one point and so received the runners-up prize. However, after the programme several viewers phoned to say that one of my answers which had been declared wrong was in fact correct. The key question was ‘When a cow gets up, does it use its hind legs or front legs first.’ Since Roehampton, where I lived, was not noted for its cow population, my answer was a random guess. The next week I returned to ‘Crackerjack’ to receive the first prize, but I

couldn't hand the runners-up prize back – I had already eaten it. Readers will probably have deduced from the vague nature of the above description that I still have no idea of the correct answer.

I took part in the Richmond Easter Congress this year, scoring 3/4. I got a shock in one game, because after 1 e4 my opponent, S. Perkins, played 1...c5. This was the first time I had met this peculiar move, and I had no idea what to do, never having even looked in an opening book. In the end I played 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 d6 4 0-0 g6 5 Nc3 Bg7 6 d3 and, before you all laugh, let me point out that Adams-Gelfand, Linares 1997 started 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 d3 Nc6 5 Bb3. White went on to win both games! After this event my photograph appeared in the *Putney and Roehampton Herald*, where my name was incorrectly given as 'Jimmy' Nunn (a correction appeared the week after). My opinion of the accuracy of journalists took a nose-dive and has been going down ever since.

A week later I played again in the Southern Counties under-12 Championship at Bognor Regis. This year I was more successful, and won with 7/7. I was less successful the Ilford Whitsun event, scoring 2½/5. However, I was delighted with the finish of one game:



White to move

J. Nunn – R. Loveridge

Ilford Junior 1966

Earlier I had been completely lost, but by now White has the advantage.

52 b5 Kh8

Black was rather short of possibilities. If the d2-rook moves it must do so along the rank, to guard the g2-pawn, but then White plays Kd7 and hides his king from checks at f8. The only reasonable move with the b6-rook is 52...Rg6, but then 53 Rxg6 fxg6 54 Rc1 wins. 52...f6 loses as in the game; the only other move is the one played.

53 Rf5?

Objectively not very good. White could win by 53 Rc6! Rxc6 54 bxc6 h5 (54...Kh7 55 Kb7 and hides on f8) 55 Kb7 Rb2+ 56 Ka6 Ra2+ 57 Kb6 Rb2+ 58 Kc5 Rc2+ 59 Kd6 Rd2+ 60 Ke7 Re2+ 61 Kf8! hxg4 62 c8Q and Black cannot promote as White forces mate by 62...g1Q 63 Kxf7+.

53...f6?

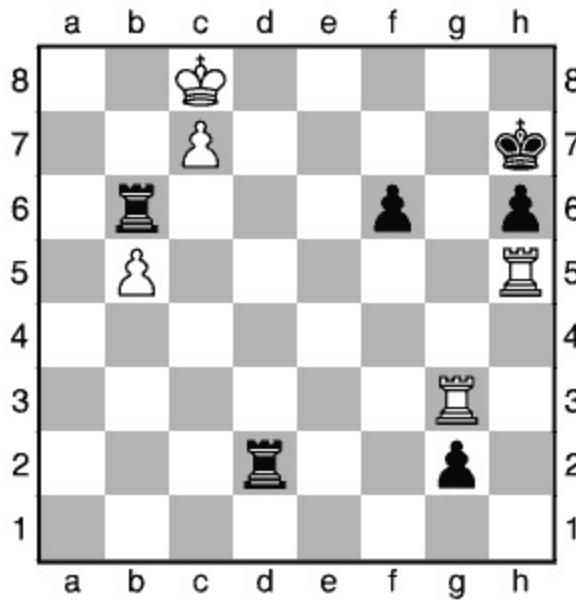
After 53...Rg6 the position would have been totally unclear. 54 Rxg6 fxg6 is no longer possible as White's rook cannot reach the first rank.

54 Rh5!

At first I could only see a draw by 54 Rd5 Rxd5 55 Rg8+, but then I found the win.

54...Kh7

55 Rg3!



Black to move

Black is in complete zugzwang (I even knew the word) and must either abandon a pawn or allow White's king out of the box.

55...Rc2 56 Rd5 Re6 57 Kd7 Re1 58 Rxg2

and White won. I was always lucky against Loveridge.

I was fortunate to be able to play so much chess during these early years. This was mainly due to the fact that I had very supportive parents. While my family was not poor, we also did not have much cash to spare, so the expense of travelling to all these events was a burden. I can also understand the rest of the family getting a bit fed up taking most of their holidays at chess tournaments. The situation is no different whatever talent a son or daughter possesses; in order for the talent to be given the chance to develop, the rest of the family has to make sacrifices.

At the end of 1966 I again successfully defended my London under-12 title; this time I scored 8½/9. The regular cycle of events continued; at the 1967 Richmond Congress I finished second in Junior ‘D’ with 3/5 (unfortunately losing my last two games) and defended my Southern Counties under-12 title at Bognor, scoring 100% for the second year running. While my King’s Gambit was cutting swaths through the opposition, I was still having trouble against the Sicilian. My game versus I.W. Cordon started 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 d6 6 f4 Qa5 7 Nxc6 bxc6 8 Bd2 Qc7 9 Bc4 Bg4 10 Be2 Bxe2 11 Qxe2 e6. I won in the end through a cheapo, after having been outplayed for 90% of the game. Round about this time a book about the openings would really have helped me!

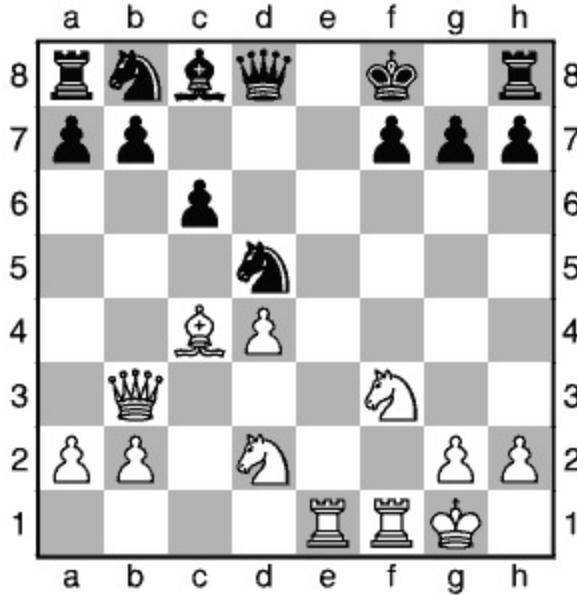
At last I scored a convincing success at Ilford, winning Junior ‘B’ with 5/5. By this time Elliott School had built up quite an active chess team. While not terribly successful, it was one of the few comprehensive schools in south-west London to field a chess team. In July, Elliott took part in an inter-schools event in which I scored 4/5 on board one. During this event I defeated the reigning London under-18 champion.

G. Speed – J. Nunn

Elliott vs Hillcroft, London Inter-Schools 1967

King’s Gambit

**1 e4 e5 2 f4 Bc5 3 Nf3 d6 4 c3 Nf6 5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4 Bb4+ 7 Bd2
Bxd2+ 8 Nbx d2 Nh5 9 Bc4 Nxf4 10 0-0 d5 11 exd5 Nxd5 12 Qb3 c6 13
Rae1+ Kf8**



White to move

As usual, my opening play has left quite a lot to be desired and by now the situation is distinctly dodgy.

14 Re5?

A couple of years after I played this game, I read that top players often analysed their games and wrote down their conclusions in secret notebooks, so I decided to do the same.

In my notes to this game, I remarked that ‘he would probably have won quite easily had he played 14 Ne5 f6 15 Ne4 Na6 (15...Kg8 16 Nc3) 16 Bxa6 bxa6 17 Nxc6 Qd7 18 Qa3+ Kg8 19 Nd6!.’ To this I can only add the line 15...Qb6 16 Qa3+ Qb4 17 Nd6, with the deadly threat of 18 Ng6+.

14...Nd7

15 Qa3+ Kg8

16 Bxd5?

An unsound combination. I wrote ‘Probably best was 16 Qd6 Qf8 17 Qxf8+ Nxf8 18 Bxd5 cxd5 19 Re8 b6 20 Ne5 Bb7 21 Rxa8 Bxa8 22 Nxf7 and wins the exchange. Superior is 17...Kxf8! 18 Bxd5 Nxe5 19 Nxe5 cxd5 20 Nxf7 Be6 21 Nxh8+ Ke7 giving White only a minute advantage.’ If, in the first line, one replaces 20 Ne5 (which allows 20...f6) by 20 Rc1 Bb7 21 Re7 Bc8 22 Rcc7, then there is nothing to disagree with here.

16...Nxe5 17 Nxe5 Qxd5 18 Nxf7 Be6 19 Nxh8 Qxd4+ 20 Kh1 Qxd2 21 Qe7 Qe2 22 Rg1 Kxh8 23 Qxb7 Rd8 24 Qe7 Rg8 25 Qxa7 Bd5 26 a4 Rf8 27 h3 Rd8 28 Qc5 Qxb2 29 a5 Qe5 30 Qf2 h6 31 a6 Ra8 32 Re1 Qg5 33 Ra1 Qf6 34 Qe1 Qb2 0-1

My next event was also my greatest success during this period. At the age of 12, I took part in the under-14 section of the 1967 British Championships, which were held in the Examination Schools of the University of Oxford. There is something of a family connection here. My mother, who attended Milham Ford school in Oxford, took some of her school examinations in this same building, before the Second World War interrupted her education. I hardly suspected that within three years of the 1967 event I would be about to go to the University myself, and in 1973 I took the Final Examination for my mathematics degree in the hall just opposite the one in which I had played chess six years before. I scored 9/11 (seven wins and four draws) to take first place outright, half a point ahead of L. Marks. The following game was crucial:

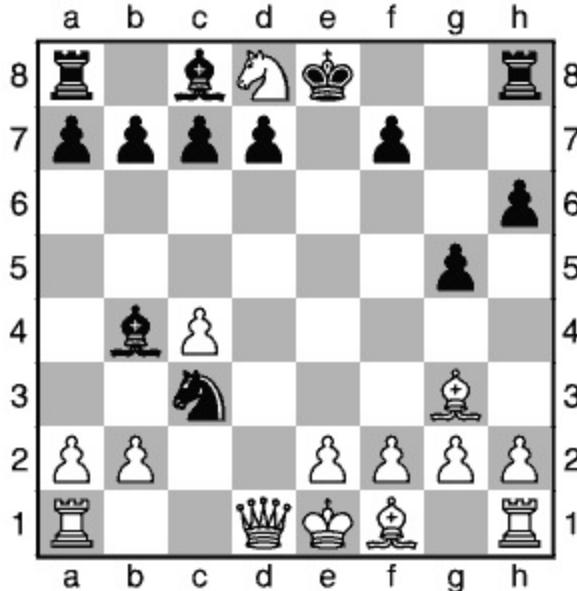
L. Marks – J. Nunn
British under-14 Championship 1967
English Opening

1 c4 e5 2 Nc3 Nf6 3 Nf3 Nc6 4 d4 exd4 5 Nxd4 Bb4 6 Bg5 h6 7 Bh4 g5 8 Bg3 Ne4

On this occasion my ignorance of opening theory had a positive effect. The best line is probably 7...Bxc3+ 8 bxc3 d6.

9 Nxc6 Nxc3 10 Nxd8??

10 Qd2 dxc6 11 bxc3 Qxd2+ 12 Kxd2 Bd6 13 Bxd6 cxd6 was approximately equal in Villeneuve-Ligoure, Cannes Open 1989. The best continuation is probably 10 Qb3 dxc6 11 Qxb4 Ne4 12 Rd1 Qf6 13 e3, with some advantage for White as Black's king cannot easily find a safe refuge.



Black to move

10...Ne4+! 11 Qd2 Bxd2+ 12 Kd1 Kxd8 13 Be5 Re8 14 Bxc7+? Kxc7

0-1

In the last round I won against Tony Miles who, being just two days older than myself, was to become a regular opponent in junior events. The *Putney and Roehampton Herald* devoted almost a whole column to this success; there were also short mentions in the *Wandsworth Borough News* and the *Evening News*.

After this event I joined Kingston Chess Club. Ferrying me to and from the club became another duty for my parents, but I think the experience I gained there was very helpful.

Up to this point (August 1967) my chess career seemed to consist only of one triumph after another. I had won virtually every junior tournament in my own age group and had never experienced a real setback. However, over the next year I had very little success. It is perfectly normal for young players to advance in sudden jumps, interspersed with possibly quite long plateaux in which no progress is apparent. In addition, chess was not my only enthusiasm. At times I was more interested in mathematics and chess took second place. However, I think that a more fundamental reason for my lack of progress was that it is only possible to go so far without really studying the game. I loved playing over the games of famous players, which is certainly very instructive, but at some point it is necessary to study the game in a more systematic way. Building up an opening repertoire is a priority, and it is

important to study all phases of the game to avoid throwing away half-points by mishandling simple endings. I had never done this and did not understand the necessity for it. It was over a year before I started to adopt a more methodical approach.

The usual end-of-year London Junior Championships came around again, but now I was in the under-14 section. I lost in the fifth round to a newcomer by the name of M. Stean, who went on to win the championship with 9/11. I ended up in joint second place (with J. Nicholson and J. Sommerville) on 8/11. I finished in joint second place in the 1968 Surrey under-14 Championship with 5/6. This year the Easter congress held by the Thames Valley Chess League, which had hitherto been in Richmond, moved to an excellent venue in Hammersmith Town Hall. I took part in the Junior ‘B’ group and finished joint first with J. Nicholson on 4½/5. Three of my four wins consisted of long endgames – I was developing a reputation as a boring, technical player.

The Ilford Whitsun congress saw a notable first – it was the first time I took part in an adult tournament. The difference in strength was a shock: I scored 2/5 in Open ‘A’. My attempt to defend my British under-14 title was also unsuccessful. I lost a game to L. Marks, but also drew three times when playing the Slav Defence with Black. In the end I finished joint third (with J. Nicholson) on 8½/11, behind the winner Miles and runner-up Marks. I did have the consolation of defeating the winner in a game which later received the Best Game Prize (of 1 guinea – £1.05 in today’s money).

A. J. Miles – J. Nunn

British under-14 Championship 1968

King’s Gambit

1 f4 e5 2 e4 exf4 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 Nc3 Bb4 5 Nd5 Nxd5 6 Bxd5 c6 7 Bb3 d5 8 exd5 cxd5 9 c3 Ba5 10 Qe2+ Be6 11 Qb5+ Nd7 12 Bxd5 Qh4+ 13 Kf1 Bb6 14 Qe2 0-0 15 Nf3 Qf6 16 Bxb7 Rab8 17 Ba6 Rfe8 18 Qd1 Nc5 19 Be2 Bg4 20 d4 Ne4 21 Ne5



Black to move

21...Rxe5 22 Bxg4

22 dx_e5 loses to 22...Qh4 23 Qe1 Ng3+.

22...Qh4 23 g3 Nxg3+ 24 Kg2 Nxh1 25 Qf3 Rg5 26 h3 h5 27 Qxf4

Re8 28 Bd2 hxg4 29 Qxg5 Qg3+ 30 Kxh1 Re2 0-1

The Thames Valley Chess League were very active at this time and, in addition to their Easter Congress, which is still going strong today, they organised an August Bank Holiday Congress in another very good venue – St Mary’s College in Twickenham. I won the First Class ‘D’ section with 4½/5.

Towards the end of 1968 I started to take chess more seriously. After my failure in the British under-14, I asked for a book on openings. My father bought me *Modern Chess Openings*, which was a revelation. I hadn’t realised there was so much analysis about the openings. I applied myself to learning as much as possible and these efforts were easily visible in my subsequent games.

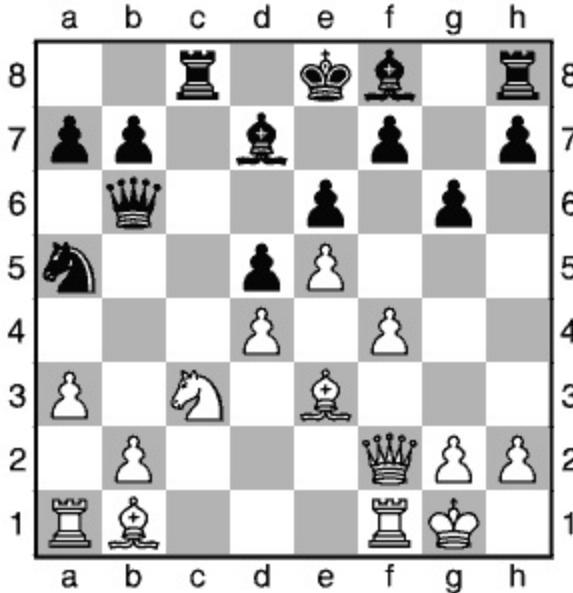
The following was played in a local school match at the end of September, Elliott vs Tiffin. The master in charge of chess at Tiffin was John Rice, a famous problem composer who was later my captain in the world team championship for problem solving. My style was becoming sharper as my increased confidence in the openings led me to adopt more challenging lines.

J. Nunn – Wederell

Elliott vs Tiffin school match 1968

French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 Nf6 4 e5 Nfd7 5 Bd3 c5 6 c3 Nc6 7 Ne2 cxd4 8 cxd4 Nb4 9 Bb1 Nb6 10 0-0 Bd7 11 Nc3 Rc8 12 f4 Nc4 13 Nb3 g6 14 Qf3 Na5 15 Nxa5 Qxa5 16 a3 Nc6 17 Be3 Qb6 18 Qf2 Na5



White to move

19 f5!?

Not at all clear, but relatively best, since White's queenside is crumbling in any case.

19...gxf5 20 Bxf5 exf5

20...Rxc3 is also unclear.

21 Nxd5 Qe6

21...Qb5 22 Nf6+ Kd8 23 a4 Qd3 is another obscure line.

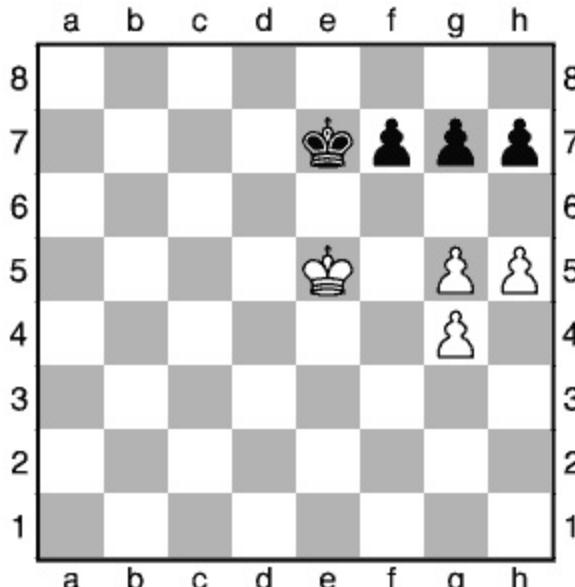
22 Nf6+ Kd8 23 d5 Qxe5 24 Bd4 Qd6??

Neither player noticed 24...Qxd4 25 Qxd4 Bc5 26 Qxc5 Rxc5 27 b4 Ke7 28 Nxd7 Rxd5 29 bxa5 Kxd7 30 Rad1 Rxd1 31 Rxd1+ Ke6 32 Rb1, with a draw in prospect.

25 Nxd7 Rg8 26 Nxf8 Nb3 27 Qh4+ Ke8 28 Nxh7 Rxg2+ 29 Kxg2 Qxd5+ 30 Kh3 Rc6 31 Rae1+ Kd7 32 Qe7+ Kc8 33 Qf8+ 1-0

My last event of 1968 was the Islington Open, which took place during late November. Here I was quite successful, scoring 4/6. Two odd endings

arose in my games, the first attracting quite a crowd of spectators:



Black to move

J. Adams – J. Nunn

Islington Open 1968

It certainly doesn't look as if Black is going to win, but just watch what happens...

53...g6 54 h6 Ke8 55 Kd6

The simplest draw was by 55 Ke4, maintaining the opposition.

55...Kd8 56 Kd5 Kd7 57 Ke5 Ke7 58 Kf4 Kd6 59 Ke4 Ke6 60 Kd4 f5

Black has done his best, but the position is still drawn.

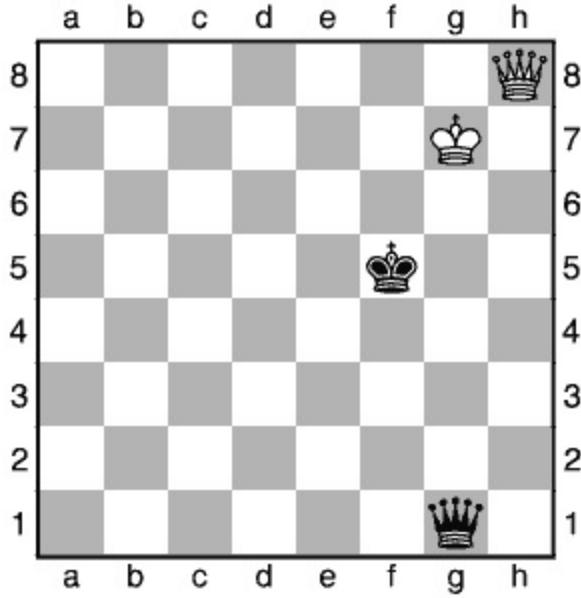
61 gxf6 Kxf6 62 Ke4 Kg5 63 Ke5 Kxg4

After 63...Kxh6 64 Kf6 g5 65 Kf7 Black is stalemated.

64 Kf6 g5 65 Kg7 Kf5 66 Kxh7 g4 67 Kg7?!

White makes like difficult for himself. After 67 Kg8 White would be able to interpose his queen at move 70, with a clear-cut draw.

67...g3 68 h7 g2 69 h8Q g1Q+



White to move

This position is a draw, but White must play a few accurate moves.

70 Kf8!

The only move. 70 Kf7 Qa7+! wins by gradually approaching with the queen, and then winning as in the game.

70...Qc5+ 71 Kg8!

Once again the only move. 71 Kg7 Qe7+ transposes to the game.

71...Qc4+ 72 Kf8?

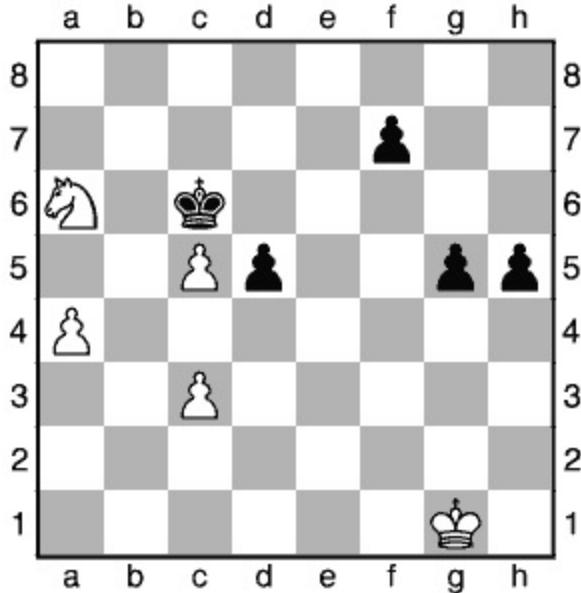
White finally chooses the wrong square for his king and Black wins.

After 72 Kh7! (again the only move) 72...Qh4+ 73 Kg8 Qd8+ 74 Kh7 Black cannot make progress.

72...Qc8+! 73 Kg7 Qd7+ 74 Kf8

Or 74 Kh6 Qd6+ 75 Kg7 Qe7+.

74...Qd8+ 75 Kg7 Qe7+ 76 Kg8 Kg6 77 Qg7+ Qxg7#



White to move

J. Nunn – I. Friedlander

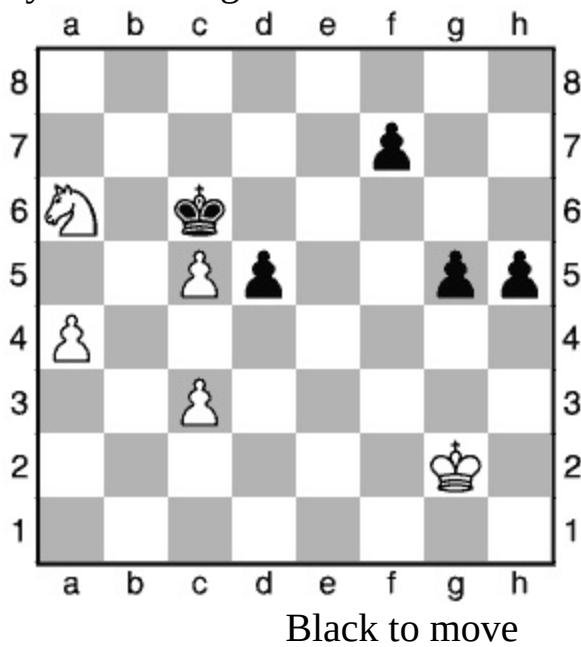
Islington Open 1968

The situation on the queenside is one of reciprocal zugzwang. If at any stage Black has to move his king, then White replies with Nb4, followed by a5 and Nxd5, winning easily since his remaining queenside pawns cannot be captured by the enemy king. On the other hand, if White has to make the first move on the queenside, then the position is a draw. Moving the knight loses the c-pawn, when Black has little trouble reducing the queenside to a position which White cannot win without the aid of his king. A similar situation arises if White plays a5 and Black replies ...Kb5. It follows that the position will be decided by the situation on the kingside. If White's king can blockade the three enemy pawns, then Black will eventually have to move his king, and so lose. Otherwise White will have to move his knight to halt Black's kingside pawns, resulting in a draw. The problem of blockading three connected passed pawns using a lone king is one which is often discussed in theory, but it does not often arise in practice. I was aware that it should be possible, but I had no idea how to do it.

41 Kf2?

After this it is impossible to blockade the pawns. Either 41 Kg2 or 41 Kh2 would have won. The most reliable way to solve this position is by exhaustive analysis, but it is also possible to argue in general terms. Black's

main asset is the fact that he can choose whether to advance his f-pawn one square or two squares. While this option remains it is very difficult for White to stop the pawns, because Black can always lose a tempo with his f-pawn if necessary. It follows that White's objective must be to force Black to move his f-pawn as soon as possible. Black, of course, will attempt to keep the pawn on f7 as long as possible. In order to force the f-pawn to move, White must be ready to meet ...g4 by Kg3 and ...h4 by Kh3. In order to have both these options available, White must start with either Kg2 or Kh2. An exhaustive analysis of 41 Kg2 runs:



1) 41...g4 42 Kg3 f5 (42...f6 43 Kf4 f5 44 Kg3) 43 Kg2 f4 (43...h4 44 Kh2 is symmetrical) 44 Kf2 h4 (44...g3+ 45 Kf3 h4 46 Kg2; 44...f3 45 Kg3 h4+ 46 Kf2 h3 47 Kg3) 45 Kg1 f3 46 Kf2 h3 47 Kg3.

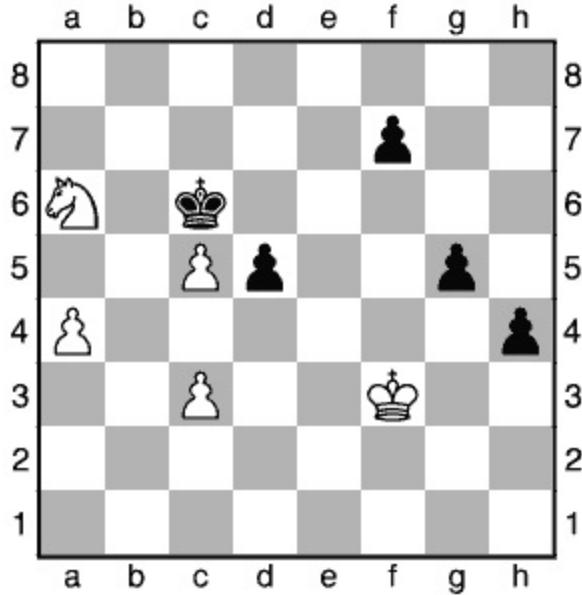
2) 41...h4 42 Kh3 f5 (42...f6 43 Kg4 f5+ 44 Kh3 f4 45 Kg4) 43 Kh2 g4 (43...f4 44 Kg2 g4 45 Kg1 is line '1') 44 Kg2 h3+ 45 Kg3 f4+ 46 Kh2 f3 47 Kg3.

3) 41...f5 42 Kg3 g4 43 Kg2 is line '2'.

4) 41...f6 42 Kf3 f5 43 Kg3.

41...h4 42 Kf3

Or 42 Kg2 g4, again not touching the f-pawn.



Black to move

42...h3 43 Kg3 g4 44 a5

44 Kh2 f6! is no better.

44...f5 45 Nb4+ Kxc5 46 a6 Kb6 47 Nxd5+ Kxa6 48 c4 Kb7 ½-½

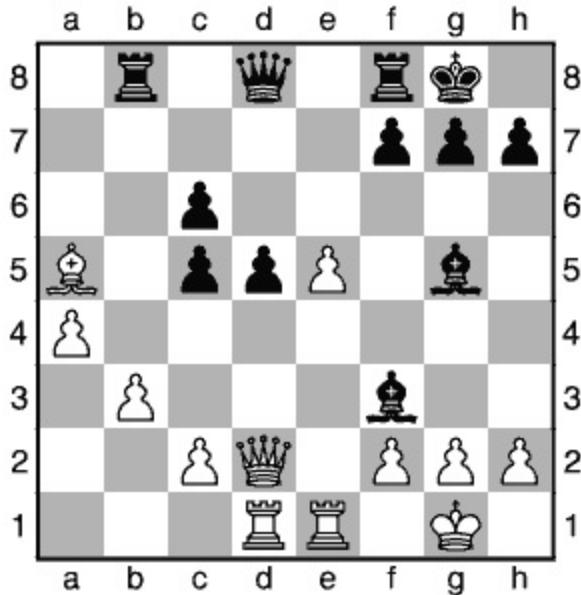
My second attempt at the London under-14 Championship went better. I scored 10/11 and won by a margin of 1½ points, although this was perhaps a little flattering as in round 10 M. Reisz stalemated me while a rook and a knight up. I won the Best Game Prize for an ending against J. Bloomfield, but perhaps the following game has greater significance:

J. Nunn – J. Speelman

London under-14 Championship 1969

Ruy Lopez

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 d6 6 Bxc6+ bxc6 7 d4
Nxe4 8 dxе5 d5 9 Nbd2 Nxd2 10 Bxd2 Bg4 11 Re1 Be7 12 Bc3 0-0 13 Qd3
c5 14 Rad1 c6 15 b3 a5 16 a4 Rb8 17 Qd2 Bxf3 18 Bxa5 Bg5**



White to move

19 Bxd8 Bxd2 20 Rxd2 Rfxd8 21 gxf3 c4 22 bxc4 dxc4 23 Rxd8+ Rxd8 24 Ra1 Kf8 25 Kf1 Ke7 26 Ke2 Rd5 27 f4 Kd7 28 Rd1 g6 29 Rxd5+ cxd5 30 Ke3 Kc6 31 Kd4 c3 32 Kxc3 Kc5 33 a5 Kb5 34 Kd4 Kxa5 35 Kxd5 1-0

At least I had learnt to put my rooks behind passed pawns by now! I played a great deal of chess in 1969, for my school, my club and in tournaments. The local newspapers reported proudly on the state of chess at Elliott School, since another Elliott player, Michael Aldred, had just won the London under-12 Championship. This was, in fact, the high point for Elliott chess.

Just before Easter I won the Surrey under-14 Championship with 5½/6. Over Easter I played in the Open section of the Thames Valley Congress at Hammersmith. This was a great success. I scored 5½ from my first six games, before losing to R. Keene in the last round. Nevertheless, this score was enough for a share of second prize. I won £23, my earliest prize in an Open tournament. Leonard Barden was even moved to write of me in *The Guardian* as a potential grandmaster.

J. Nunn – D. Mabbs
Hammersmith Open 1969

Centre Counter Gambit

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 d5 3 exd5 e4 4 Qe2 Nf6 5 Nc3 Be7 6 Nxe4 Nxd5 7 d3 0-

0



White to move

8 Qd1!

I was very happy to find this move. Now White can develop his kingside without running into problems along the e-file.

8...Nc6 9 Be2 f5 10 Nc3 Be6 11 Nxd5 Qxd5 12 c4 Qd6 13 d4 Rad8 14 d5 Qc5 15 Be3 Qa5+ 16 Bd2 Bb4 17 a3 Bxd2+ 18 Nxd2?!

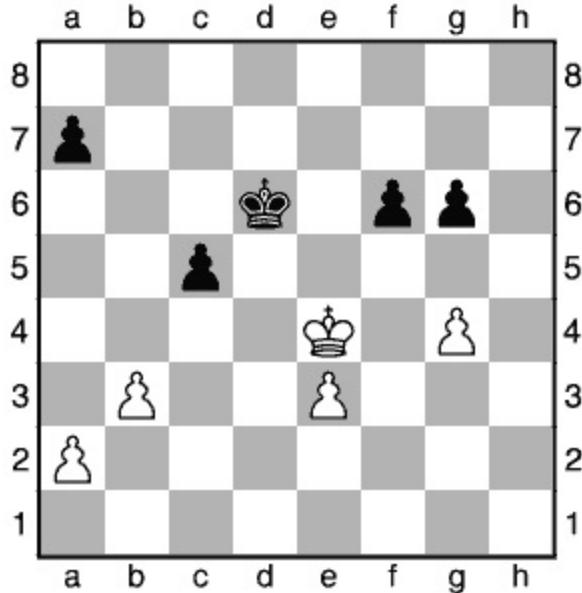
18 Qxd2 Qxd2+ 19 Kxd2 would give White a clear extra pawn in an ending.

18...Nd4 19 dxe6 Rfe8 20 0-0 Nxe2+ 21 Qxe2 Rxd2??

A blunder losing a rook. After 21...Qxd2 22 Qf3! (not 22 Rfe1 Rd6 with a likely draw) White retains a clear advantage although the win might not be easy.

22 Qe1 1-0

Here is a selection of interesting positions from 1969:



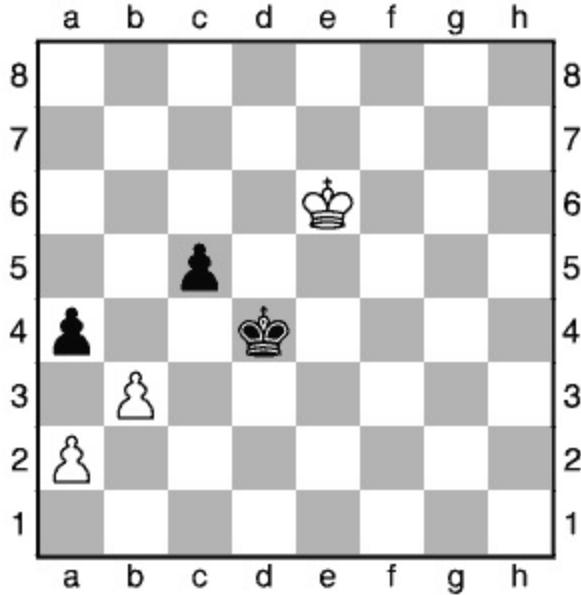
White to move

W. Waterton – J. Nunn

Kingston Club Championship 1969

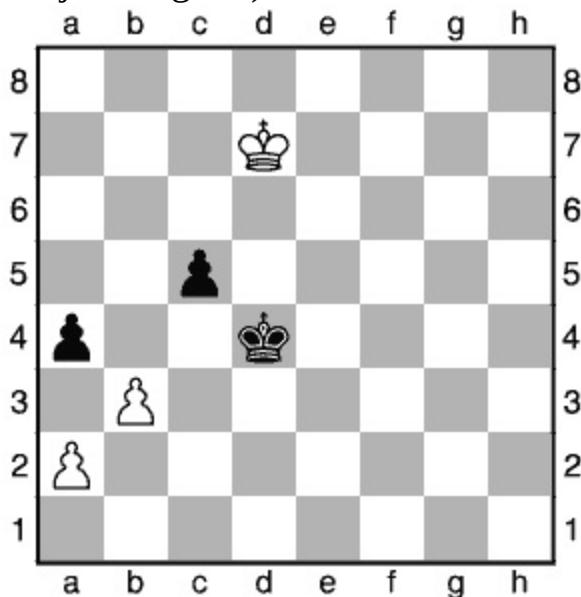
The game actually finished rather mundanely: **40 a3?** (weakening the queenside pawns) **40...a5 41 a4 Ke6 42 Kf4** (or 42 Kd3 f5 43 g5 {43 gxf5+ Kxf5 and the outside passed pawn wins easily} 43...Kd5 44 Kc3 Ke4 45 Kd2 f4 46 exf4 Kxf4 47 Kd3 Kxg5 48 Kc4 Kf4 49 Kxc5 g5 50 b4 g4) **42...Kd5 43 e4+ Kd4 44 Kf3 g5 0-1**

However, the interesting question is whether Black can win in the line 40 Kf4 Kd5 41 e4+ Kd4 42 g5 fxg5+ 43 Kxg5 Kxe4 44 Kxg6 Kd4 45 Kf5. After the game I wrote that Black could win by 45...a5 46 Ke6 (46 Kf4 a4 47 bxa4 c4 48 Kf3 {or else Black's pawn promotes with check} 48...Kd3 49 a5 c3 50 a6 c2 51 a7 c1Q 52 a8Q Qh1+) 46...a4



White to move

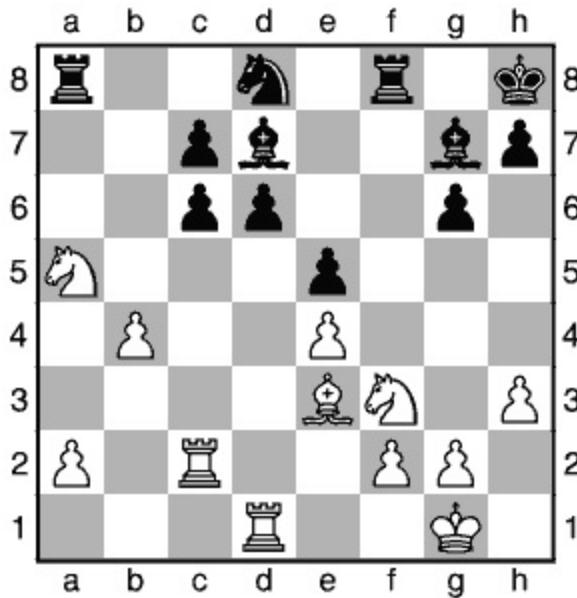
47 Kd6 (47 bxa4 c4 48 a5 Kc5 wins) 47...a3 48 Kc6 (48 Ke6 Kc3) 48...c4 49 bxc4 Kxc4. However, a few years later I corrected the analysis in my notebook. I had not observed that the position after 47 Kd6 a3 is reciprocal zugzwang, and therefore White has to reach this position with Black to move. It follows that White can draw by the remarkable move 47 Kd7! (47 Ke7! is just as good) and now:



Black to move

1) 47...a3 48 Kd6! c4 49 bxc4 Kxc4 50 Ke5 and White is in time to reach c2.

2) 47...Kd5 (a tricky move) 48 Ke7! (the only drawing move) 48...a3 49 Kf6 Kd4 50 Kf5 (once the pawn is on a3, White's king can move to the f-file, because there is no danger of Black playing ...axb3) 50...Kc3 51 Ke4 Kb2 52 Kd3 Kxa2 53 Kc2 and draws.



Black to move

J. Nunn – J. Harris *Kingston vs Ealing 1969*

With my last move (20 Re2-c2) I set a trap which Black falls into.

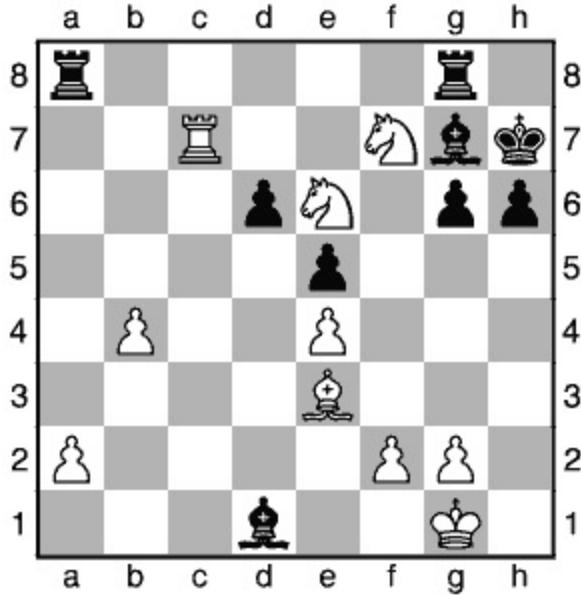
21...Bxh3 22 Nxc6 Bd7 23 Nxd8 Ba4

This does indeed win the exchange, but in return White develops an enormous attack against Black's poorly defended king.

24 Rxc7 Bxd1 25 Ne6 Rg8

25...Rfc8 26 Rxg7 Bxf3 also loses after 27 Rf7 (27 gxf3? Re8 is less clear) 27...Bxe4 28 Bg5 h6 29 Bf6+ Kg8 30 Rg7+ Kh8 31 Rxg6+ Kh7 32 Rg7+ Kh8 33 Rg4+.

26 Nfg5 h6 27 Nf7+ Kh7



White to move

28 Bxh6 Bxh6

Or 28...Rgc8 29 Nfg5+ Kxh6 30 Rxg7 Kh5 31 Rh7+ Kg4 32 f3+ followed by mate.

29 Nfg5+ Kh8 30 Rh7#

At Whitsun I again competed at Ilford, in the Premier Reserve section, scoring 3/6. In July I played in the Athenaeum Open, scoring 4/6. At this time weekend Swiss events were starting to appear. Although few in number at this stage, they were later to become a major part of the British chess scene.

In August, the British Championships rolled around again, and this year I decided to take part in the under-18 section. As I was still only 14, I could have participated in the under-14 age-group, and indeed this was the first time I had played outside my own age-group. It was a successful experiment. I scored 8/11 and finished in joint 2nd-5th places. The list of participants in the Junior events at Rhyl 1969 is quite impressive. Speelman won the under-14 section, Stean the under-16, while in the under-18, Miles also finished on 8 points. The odd one out was the winner of the under-18, C. Cubitt from Great Yarmouth, who did not pursue a career in chess.

By this time I had become quite a dangerous attacking player, especially with White.

J. Nunn – S. Everson

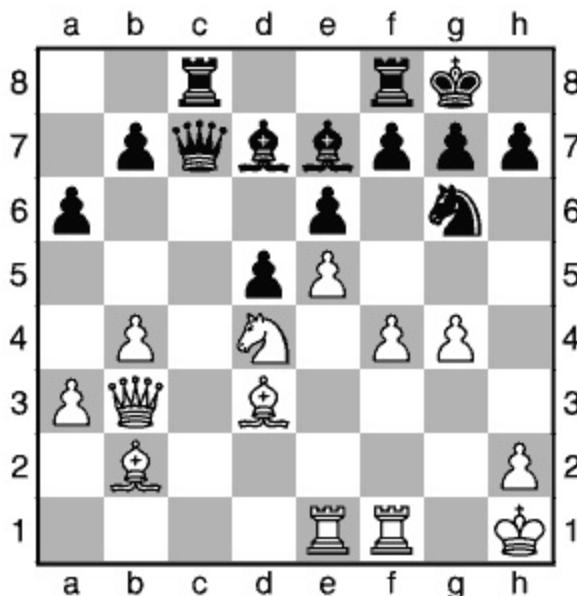
British under-18 Championship 1969

French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 Nf6 4 e5 Nfd7 5 Bd3 c5 6 c3 Nc6 7 Ngf3 Qb6 8 0-0 cxd4 9 cxd4 Nxd4 10 Nxd4 Qxd4

It is interesting to note the opening, because nine years later I used this same gambit to win an important game in the tournament where I gained my grandmaster title. In moments of crisis, there is always a tendency to return to the security of old favourites.

11 Nf3 Qb6 12 a3 Be7 13 b4 Qd8 14 Qc2 Nf8 15 Nd4 Bd7 16 f4 Ng6 17 Bb2 Rc8 18 Qb3 Qb6 19 Kh1 0-0 20 Rae1 a6 21 g4 Qc7



White to move

22 f5! Nxe5 23 Rxe5 Qxe5 24 Nc6 Qd6 25 Nxe7+ Qxe7 26 f6 Qd6 27 fxg7

As I remarked in my notebook, I could have won more convincingly by 27 Bxh7+ Kxh7 28 Qh3+ Kg8 29 fxg7 f5 30 gxf8Q+ Rxf8 31 gxf5 exf5 32 Qh5! (I overlooked this during the game), for example 32...Rf6 33 Rg1+ Kf8 34 Qh8+ Ke7 35 Bxf6+ Qxf6 36 Rg7+ Ke6 37 Qg8+.

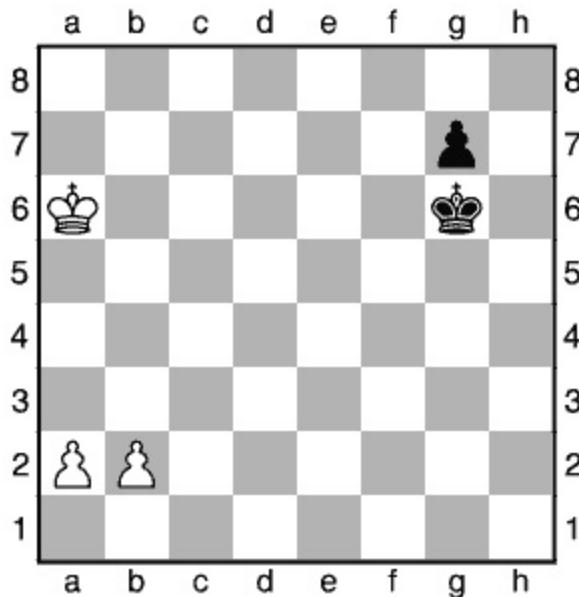
27...e5 28 gxf8Q+ Rxf8

and White eventually won with his extra material.

In late August, the *Wandsworth Borough News* had something to say

about me that had nothing to do with chess. I had passed two Maths A-levels (grade A in Pure Maths and a miserable grade B in Applied Maths – my worst ever maths result).

I again competed in the Thames Valley August Bank Holiday Congress. This time I was playing in the Open event and finished joint second with 5/6. It was during this event that I overheard one competitor who, on seeing the pairings, exclaimed ‘Oh, no – I’m playing Nunn!’. I was quite lucky to draw a lost ending in the last round, although the winning variation was not so easy to find (my opponent pointed it out a week later):



Black to move

R. Emerson – J. Nunn Thames Valley Open 1969

49...Kf5

Compulsory, otherwise White can force an immediate exchange of queens after both sides promote.

50 b4?

White could win by 50 Kb5! g5 (50...Kf4 51 Kc4 transposes, while 50...Ke4 loses to 51 a4) 51 Kc4 Ke4 (or 51...g4 52 Kd3 Kf4 53 a4 Kf3 54 a5 g3 55 a6 g2 56 a7 g1Q 57 a8Q+ Kf4 58 Qe4+ exchanging queens; 51...Kf4 52 Kd3 is also hopeless) 52 a4 g4 53 a5 g3 54 a6 g2 55 a7 g1Q 56 a8Q+ (surprisingly, White can force the exchange of queens) 56...Kf4 (56...Kf5 57 Qd5+) 57 Qf8+ Ke4 58 Qe7+ Kf3 (58...Kf4 59 Qf7+ transposes) 59 Qb7+

Kf4 (59...Ke2 60 Qe4+) 60 Qf7+ Ke5 61 Qd5+, followed by 62 Qd4+.

50...g5 51 b5 g4 52 b6 g3 53 b7 g2 54 b8Q g1Q 55 Qb5+ Kf4 56 a4

and the position was adjudicated drawn (a verdict vindicated by the database!). I should comment that quickplay finishes were practically unknown at the time, and adjournment or (worst of all!) adjudication were commonplace.

Looking back at the games I played, this was the first period when I can say that I was playing consistently good chess. My study of the openings had been very beneficial and there were no particular weaknesses in that department. The only really major flaws were my handling of quiet positions and my tendency to be overawed by strong opponents.

I scored only 3/6 in the Athenaeum Open in October, and 3/5 in a pre-Christmas junior training tournament. Moving on to 1970, at the London Junior Championships I again jumped an age group and took part in the under-18 event. This again proved the correct strategy and I won outright with 8½/11. I also won the Surrey under-18 Championship, initially tying for first with D. Sewell and then winning the play-off game. I again took part in the Hammersmith Easter Congress; my score of 4½/7 was not bad, but not up to the standard of the previous year.

At Whitsun, I broke with tradition by not attending the Ilford Congress. Instead, I competed in the Bournemouth Congress. My family were getting a bit fed up with Ilford and felt like a holiday in the New Forest. I finished in second place with 4/5 and two games featured attractive touches:

B. O'Sullivan – J. Nunn

Bournemouth Open 1970

King's Gambit

1 e4 e5 2 f4 exf4 3 Nf3 d5 4 exd5 Nf6 5 c4 c6 6 d4 cxd5 7 c5 b6?!

Condemned by ECO, which recommends 7...Nc6.

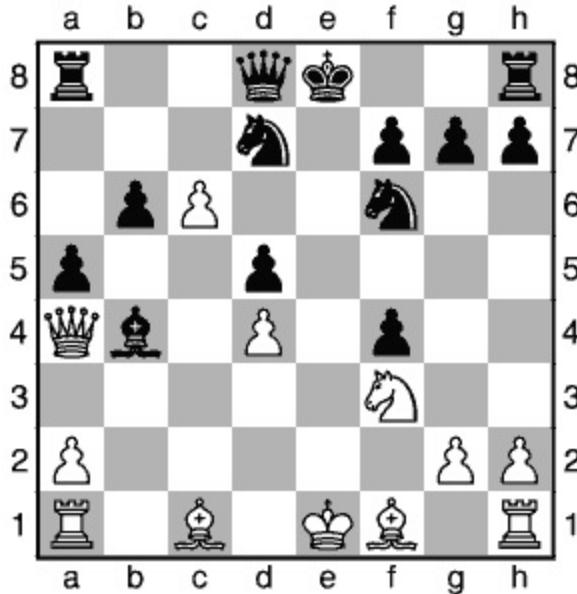
8 b4 Bd7

8...a5 is dubious after 9 Ne5!.

9 Nc3 a5 10 Na4 Bxa4 11 Qxa4+ Nbd7 12 c6?!

The critical line, but it is satisfactory for Black. The modest 12 Qc2 gives White an edge.

12...Bxb4+



White to move

13 Kf2?

In my notebook, I analysed 13 Bd2? Qe7+, which does indeed win for Black after 14 Kd1 0-0! 15 cxd7 Ne4 or 14 Be2 Bxd2+ 15 Nxd2 Nb8. 13 Kd1! was best, when an unclear position arises after 13...0-0 14 cxd7 Ne4 15 Qc6 Nf2+ 16 Kc2 Ra7 17 Bxf4 Nxh1.

13...Nc5!

This attractive move wins by force.

14 dxc5 Ne4+ 15 Kg1 Bxc5+ 16 Nd4 Nc3 0-1

Because 17 c7+ Nxa4 18 cxd8Q+ Kxd8 costs White too much material.

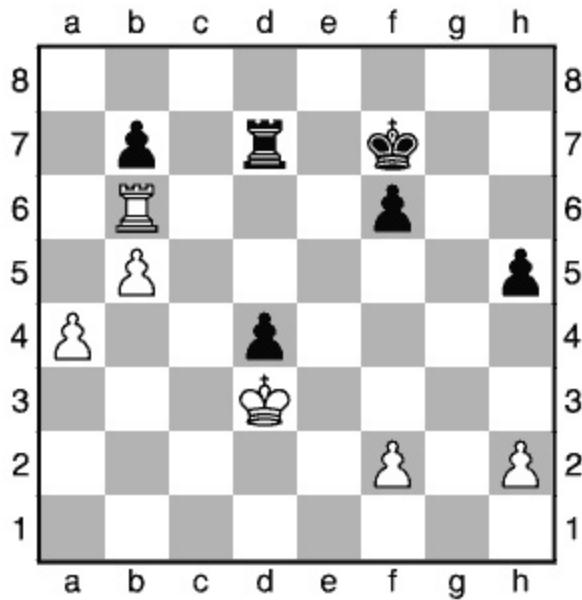
J. Nunn – M. Pitt
Bournemouth Open 1970

Sicilian, Taimanov

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 e6 5 Nc3 a6 6 g3 Bb4 7 Ne2 Nf6
8 Bg2 d5 9 a3 Bxc3+ 10 Nxc3 Nxe4 11 Nxe4 dxe4 12 Qxd8+ Nxd8 13 Bxe4
Bd7 14 Bf4 Bc6 15 Bxc6+ Nxc6 16 0-0-0 Rd8 17 Bd6 Ne7 18 Rhe1 Nf5 19
Bb4 Rd7 20 b3 Kd8 21 g4 Ne7 22 Rxd7+ Kxd7 23 Rd1+ Ke8 24 c4 Nc6 25
Bc5 f6 26 Rd6 e5 27 b4 h5 28 b5 axb5 29 cxb5 Nd4 30 Bxd4 exd4 31 g5!
Ke7**

Perhaps 31...fxg5 was a better chance. The position then becomes very double-edged, although White still seems to have the better chances after 32 Rb6 Rf8 33 Rxb7 Rxf2 34 b6 Kd8 35 a4 Ra2 (or 35...Kc8 36 Ra7 Rxh2 37 a5 d3 38 a6) 36 Ra7 Kc8 37 Kb1 Rxh2 38 a5 d3 39 Rc7+ Kd8 40 Rc3, for example.

32 Rb6 Rc8+ 33 Kd2 Rc7 34 gxf6+ gxf6 35 a4 Rd7 36 Kd3 Kf7



White to move

37 a5 Kg6

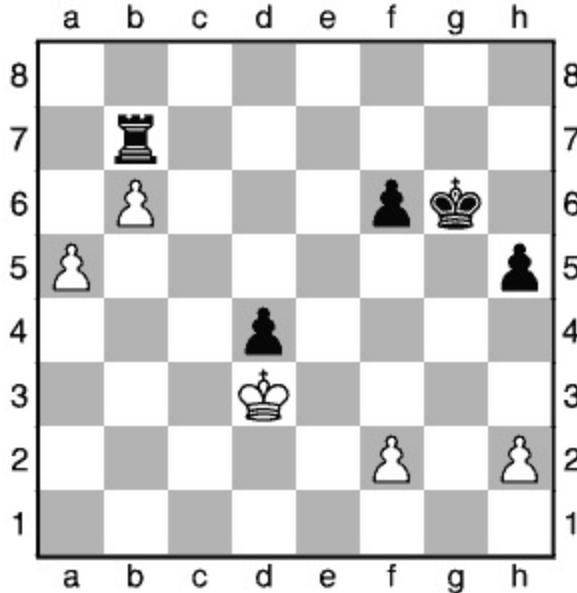
Black's desire to activate his king is understandable, but this move meets with a surprising refutation. If Black stays passive, then White wins by 37...Ke7 38 f3 (losing a tempo so that the black king is on f7 at the critical moment) 38...Kf7 39 f4 Ke7 40 f5 (confining the enemy king) 40...Kf7 41 a6 bxa6 42 bxa6 and the pawn promotes as Black's king is boxed in.

38 Rxb7!

This still strikes me as an unusual combination. The fact that two connected passed pawns on the sixth beat a rook is well-known, but the fact that a pawn on the fifth and an adjacent pawn on the sixth can paralyse a rook is less familiar. This is much stronger than 38 a6 bxa6 39 bxa6 Rd5 40 Kc4 Rf5 41 Kxd4 Rxf2, when it is not at all certain that White can win.

38...Rxb7

39 b6



Black to move

The rook is helpless. If it moves away from b7 or b8, the pawns run through even without the support of the king. Note that this paralysis only holds if the rook is badly placed in front of the pawns; if it were behind the pawns then it would be a different story. Black's only chance is to rush back with his king. This fails by just one tempo, which explains why White could not play this combination while Black's king was on f7.

39...Kf5

40 Kxd4 Rd7+

Desperation, but 40...Ke6 41 Kc5 Kd7 42 a6 Rb8 43 a7 is also lost.

41 Kc5 Rd2

42 b7 Rb2

43 a6 1-0

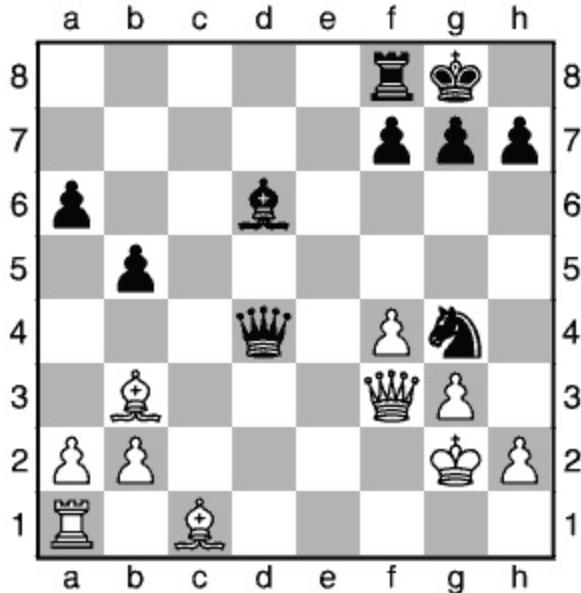
I again returned to the British under-18 Championship in the summer of 1970. I started well enough with 6/7, but then fell ill and added only one point to my score in the last four rounds, finishing in joint seventh place. The only consolation was an attractive king-hunt.

M. Brown – J. Nunn

British under-18 Championship 1970

Ruy Lopez

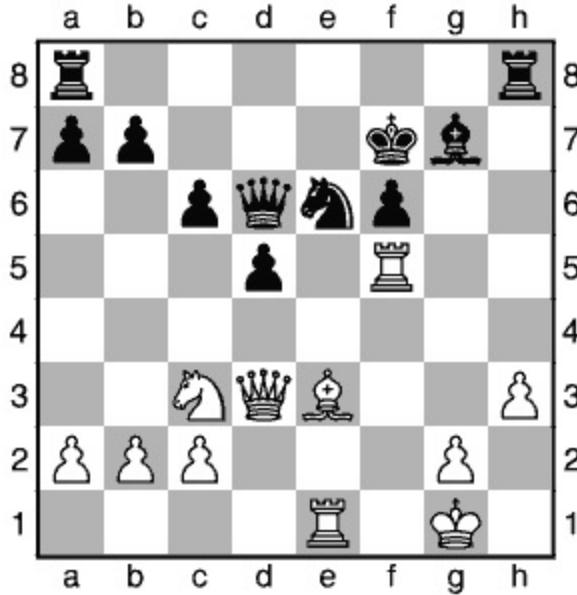
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 0-0 8
 c3 d5 9 exd5 Nxd5 10 Nxe5 Nxe5 11 Rxe5 Nf6 12 d4 Ng4 13 Re2 Bd6 14
 g3 Bb7 15 Qf1 Qf6 16 Nd2 Rae8 17 f4 c5 18 Nf3 cxd4 19 cxd4 Rxe2 20
 Qxe2 Bxf3 21 Qxf3 Qxd4+ 22 Kg2



Black to move

22...Bc5! 23 Qxg4 Qf2+ 24 Kh3 Qf1+ 25 Kh4 Be7+ 26 Kh5 g6+ 27
 Kh6 Qf2 28 Bxf7+ Rxf7 29 Qc8+ Bf8+ 30 Kg5 Rf5+ 31 Kg4 Qe2+ 0-1

At the autumn Thames Valley Congress (which had moved from Twickenham to Richmond, back to the old venue of the Easter Congress!) I scored 4½/6 and finished in joint 3rd place (along with L. Barden and J. Speelman). I would be proud of the following combination if I played it today.



White to move

J. Nunn – N. Hammond Thames Valley Open 1970

21 Nxd5!?

After this Black cannot achieve more than equality, even by precise defence. Since the position is approximately equal in any case, White risks little with this sacrifice and the chances of inducing an error are always increased by sharpening the game.

21...Qg3?

This is a very tempting, because White must apparently deal with the threatened rook, whereupon Black can take the knight under more favourable circumstances. However, it would have been better to accept the sacrifice immediately: after 21...cxd5 22 Rxd5 Black can play:

1) 22...**Qb4** 23 Rd7+ Kg8 24 Bf2 Nf4 25 Qg3 Rh7 (25...Nh5 26 Qg6 Qf8 27 Ree7 also wins) 26 Ree7 Kh8 (26...Nh5 27 Qg6 Rf8 28 Re8) 27 Rxg7 Ne2+ 28 Kh2 Nxg3 29 Rxh7+ Kg8 30 Rdg7+ Kf8 31 Bxg3 and Black is lost.

2) 22...**Qg3!** 23 Rd7+ Kg8 24 Bf2 Qxd3 25 cxd3 Nf4 26 Rxb7 Nxd3 27 Ree7 Bh6 28 Bd4 and White will end up with three pawns for a piece. In view of the reduced number of pawns, a draw is the most likely result.

22 Nxf6!!

White offers his rook with check. Black must accept.

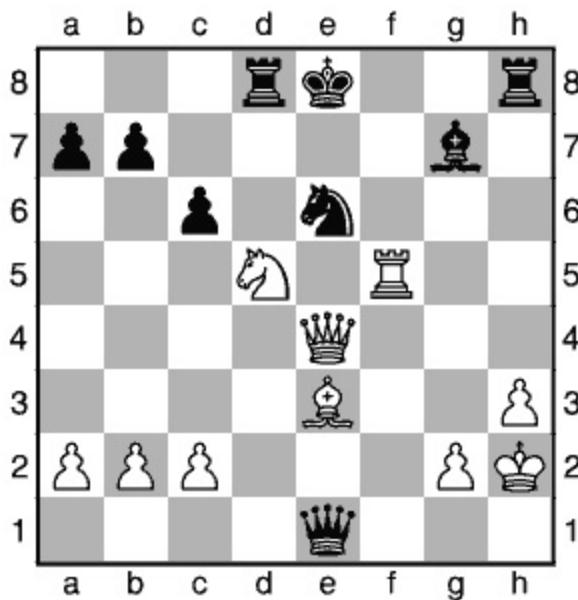
22...Qxe1+

23 Kh2 Rad8!

The toughest defence. White wins more easily after 23...Bxf6 24 Qd7+ Kg6 25 Qxe6 Qh4 26 Rf4 or 23...Raf8 24 Qd7+ Kg6 25 Qxe6 Rxf6 26 Rg5+ Kh7 27 Qe7 Rg8 28 Qe4+ Kh8 29 Rh5+ Bh6 30 Rxh6+ Rxh6 31 Bd4+.

24 Nd5+ Ke8

25 Qe4!



Black to move

This is the key move. Thanks to the line-up on the e-file, there are many variations in which Black loses his queen to a discovered attack, *e.g.* 25...Rxd5 26 Qxe6+ Kd8 27 Rxd5+ cxd5 28 Bg5+ or 25...Kd7 26 Rf7+ Kd6 27 Bf4+.

25...Rd6

The only other move.

26 Nc7+ Kd7

27 Nxe6 Rd1

Black has nothing better than this attempt at counterattack.

28 Nc5+ Kc8

29 Qe6+ Kb8

30 Qe7 Rxh3+

Or 30...Qh1+ 31 Kg3 Qe1+ 32 Rf2.

31 Kxh3 1-0

But not 31 gxh3?? Rd2+.

Shortly thereafter, I took part in my first invitation event – a junior international tournament held in Glasgow. I started well enough with 3/4, but lost my last two games to finish on 50%.

In October 1970 I went to Oxford University to study mathematics. I was 15, exceptionally young to go to Oxford. My age remained a secret for about a month, then the information leaked out to the newspapers. Some newspapers treated the news in sober fashion: ‘Boy aged 15 is student at Oxford’ stated *The Times*, factually, while the *Telegraph*’s ‘Quiet life for boy at Oxford’ and the *Guardian*’s ‘Boy of 15 takes maths at Oxford’ were equally subdued headlines. Some newspapers were less restrained: the *Evening News* came up with ‘JOHN NUNN: Comprehensive boy genius’, indeed the word ‘genius’ became rather overused. The *Daily Mirror* preferred ‘Boy Genius at Oxford’ and the *Daily Sketch* ‘Portrait of a Genius’. Even the *Sun* got in on the act: ‘John, 15, is new Varsity whizz-kid’. Fortunately, such stories are highly ephemeral, although once your name has found its way into the clippings services, you are never entirely free. Even today I am fairly regularly asked to appear on television or radio to comment on gifted children.

A common theme of such media coverage is the emphasis on ‘genius drop-out’ stories. Someone who has achieved a great deal at an early age and gone on to a happy and successful career is considered less interesting than someone whose early promise has developed only into tragic failure. The true significance of such young achievers is that they raise the question of whether the potentialities of children are often severely underestimated. Perhaps, with the right education, many children could achieve feats which are currently considered exceptional. Unfortunately, this aspect is usually totally overlooked in the *schadenfreude* enjoyed at stories of young talents who end up as losers.

My early entrance into Oxford proved very beneficial in that it set new challenges, both mathematically and in terms of chess. I was in the company of talented people in both areas, and, inevitably, my sights were raised. There was certainly a great deal of chess activity at Oxford: the University Championship, inter-college competitions, the local league, the National Club Championship and several other events. My appetite for chess was enormous and I played in every possible event. However, my first tournament after going to Oxford was not a great success: 4/6 at the Islington Open in December 1990. A couple of days afterwards, I took part in a 9-player round-

robin junior training event, scoring 4½ points. As usual, I started very well but lost my last two games.

J. Nunn – R. Smith

Islington Junior 'A' 1970

Caro-Kann

1 e4 c6 2 Nc3 d5 3 Qf3

An odd line with which I scored a few quick wins round about this time. Against accurate play it promises little, but it is not a bad surprise weapon.

3...e6 4 d4 Nf6 5 e5 Nfd7 6 Nh3 Be7 7 Bd3 b6 8 Nf4 g6 9 Qh3 Bg5?



White to move

10 Bxg6! Bxf4

The only move. 10...fxg6 11 Nxe6 Nxe5 12 Bxg5 Qxg5 13 Nxg5 Bxh3 14 dx5 Bxg2 15 Rg1 h6 16 Ne6 Kd7 17 Nd4 Bh3 18 Rxg6 gives White a winning ending.

11 Qxe6+ Qe7

12 Bxf7+ Kf8

13 Bxf4

Playing for a win in the middlegame. White could have secured an endgame advantage by 13 Nxd5 cxd5 (13...Qxf7 14 Nxf4 is also good for White) 14 Qxe7+ Kxe7 15 Bxd5 Bxc1 16 Rxc1 Nc6 17 Bxc6 Rb8, with five pawns for the piece.

13...Qxf7

14 Bh6+ Kg8

15 Qh3 Qe8

After 15...Qg6 16 0-0-0 Na6 17 Qh4 Nb4 18 Rd2, followed by a3 and Rd3, White develops a very strong attack.

16 Qh4 1-0

A somewhat premature resignation. After 16...Nf8 17 Bxf8 Qxf8 18 0-0-0, intending Rd3, White has three pawns and a strong attack for the piece, but there would still be some work to do.

After Christmas I again took part in the London Junior Championships, this time in the under-21 event. I scored 5½/7 to tie for first place with Andrew Law. A later two-game play-off match ended with one win each, so the title was shared. In March 1971, I defended my Surrey under-18 title. Curiously, the result was the same as the year before: a tie for first with D. Sewell (on 5/6). This time the play-off match was two games, both of which I won. I scored 5/7 in the Hammersmith Open, finishing in joint 9th place; it was proving hard to repeat my success from 1969.

After Easter I only played a limited amount of club chess, as I was concentrating on my mathematics examinations which were due in the summer. After I had taken these (gaining a First) I took part in an Oxford Open tournament, which was unusual for a Swiss event in that it lasted for a week, with one game a day. The idea that a Swiss tournament didn't have to be over a weekend hadn't yet caught on and this was one of the first such events. I finished joint second with 5½/7.

My international team debut took place in August, when I played for the English junior team in the Glorney Cup, an event contested between England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland (it was later expanded to include France and Holland). I scored 3/3 on board 4. Immediately after this I competed in the British under-21 Championship, finishing in joint second place with 8/11 (level with Speelman, and a point behind the winner Miles). Jon Speelman was quite an unnerving opponent to play. His favourite habit was to insert a pen into his mouth so that it all but disappeared; apparently he retained a grip on the very tip. This made me incredibly nervous, as I always had the fear that if the pen slipped out of his grasp, I would need to respond instantly to the resulting medical emergency. Jon's habits are entirely unconscious, and he would never intend to distract his opponents, but distracted they

sometimes are.

My relatively good result depended on the following chaotic win in the last round. I wrote enormously long annotations to this game (some things never change!) which are unpublished, so far as I am aware. I will not use this as an excuse to inflict them on readers.

P. Hershman – J. Nunn

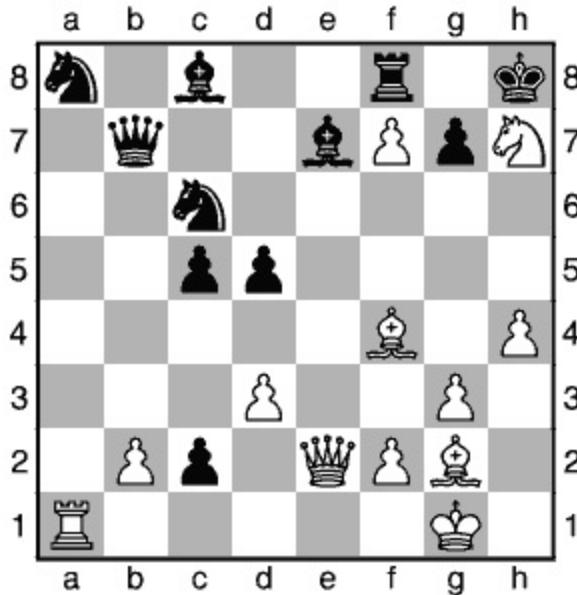
British under-21 Championship 1971

King's Indian Attack

1 Nf3 d5 2 g3 c5 3 Bg2 Nc6 4 0-0 Nf6 5 d3 e6 6 Nbd2 Be7 7 e4 0-0 8 Re1 Qc7 9 Qe2 b5 10 e5 Nd7 11 Nf1 b4 12 Bf4 a5 13 h4 a4? 14 Ne3 Nb6 15 Ng5 b3 16 axb3 axb3 17 Rxa8 Nxa8 18 Ra1?

A distraction. Black's handling of the opening has not been very skilful and here White could have launched a dangerous attack by 18 Qh5. One attractive line runs 18...Bxg5 19 hxg5 bxc2 20 Ng4 Kh8 21 Nf6! gxf6 22 gxf6 Ba6 23 Be4! dxe4 24 Kg2 Bxd3 25 Qh6 Rg8 26 Qxh7+! Kxh7 27 Rh1+ Kg6 28 g4 and Black cannot prevent mate.

18...bxc2 19 Nxd5 exd5 20 e6 Qb7 21 exf7+ Kh8 22 Nxh7



Black to move

22...Rxf7

One of the less accurate variations I gave in my notes was 22...Qxb2 23 Qh5 (23 Rc1 Rxf7 24 Rxc2 is a better chance) 23...Qxa1+ 24 Kh2 Bg4 25

Qg6 and now I only analysed the murky 25...c1Q 26 Bxc1 Qxc1 27 Nxf8 Bxf8 28 Qxc6 Qa3 29 Bxd5. However, 25...Ne5! 26 Nxf8 Bxf8 27 Qg5 Nf3+ 28 Bxf3 Bxf3 looks like a forced win for Black.

23 Bxd5 Qxb2 24 Ra2 Rxf4 25 Rxb2 c1Q+ 26 Kg2 Bg4 27 Rb8+ Kxh7 28 Be4+ g6 29 Qa2 Nxb8 30 gxf4 Qxf4 31 Qxa8 Bxh4 32 Qa7+ Nd7 0-1

My next tournament was the Thames Valley Open. I started with 2½/3, and then lost to A. Szyszko-Bohusz, from Poland. S-B had the irritating habit of staring directly across the board during the entire time his clock was not running. Many players give the odd cross-board stare, particularly if they have played a move which they suspect you have not seen and want to gauge its impact, but S-B was truly extreme. In one game from this event he obtained a winning position against Michael Stean. Michael, who was always extremely well-behaved at the board, was so annoyed by S-B's behaviour that he limped on until the time control and then left the tournament hall, leaving S-B to wait until Michael's time had run out for the second time control. In my game against S-B, he evidently felt that a single hypnotic stare was not enough, for he enlisted the help of a friend who sat directly adjacent to S-B and fixed me with a second mesmeric gaze. It was really quite outrageous and these days I would have complained to the arbiter straight away. One thing I have learned is that if your opponent is doing something you feel violates the rules, then you have to make an issue of it immediately. If you wait and continue the game, then either you will gain an advantage, in which case the irresistible temptation is just to win the game and not make a fuss, or you will drift into a bad position, in which case any complaint has the appearance of sour grapes. S-B started with 1 g4, obtained a completely lost position, swindled me horribly and told me after the game that I showed some promise. However, S-B's nemesis was fast approaching in the formidable shape of Jon Speelman. The events on the board in S-B vs Speelman seemed to be a minor side-show compared to the real struggle: Jon did his thing with the pen and shook the table with quiet ferocity; S-B and Co. waged hypnotic warfare above the board. Speelman won, which I suppose proves that the pen is mightier than the Szyszko-Bohusz. I ended up on 3½/6.

My next significant event was the 1971 Islington Open. I lost in the first round to A. Philips, but won my next three games.

Then, in round 5, I faced the Yugoslav IM (later to be GM) Bojan Kurajica. He was a fairly regular visitor to the UK, having discovered the generally easy pickings to be had in open tournaments here. On this occasion, though, things did not go according to his plans:

B. Kurajica – J. Nunn

Islington Open 1971

Ruy Lopez

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 Bb7
8 c3 d5 9 exd5 Nxd5 10 Nxe5 Nxe5 11 Rxe5 Nf4**

A sort of ‘Pseudo-Marshall’, with ...Bb7 substituted for ...0-0. It is unquestionably less sound than the usual Marshall (which I took up later), but, as with so many of my openings at the time, it is an effective surprise weapon.

12 Rf5

Although this wins more material, it allows Black a dangerous initiative. 12 Bxf7+ Kxf7 13 Rf5+ Bf6 14 Rxf4 is another greedy but not very effective line, as after 14...Qd3! White’s development cannot easily be continued. One line runs 15 Qh5+ g6 16 Qg5 Rhe8! 17 Qxf6+ Kg8 18 Qf7+ Kh8 and White has nothing better than the perpetual, since 19 h3? Re1+ 20 Kh2 Rh1+! is fatal, while after 19 f3 Re1+ 20 Kf2 Qf1+ 21 Kg3 Re2 it is White’s last chance to give perpetual check.

The strongest line is 12 d4 Nxg2 13 Qe2!, when although Black has various ways to wriggle, his position is not very good: note that 13...Nh4? fails to 14 Rxe7+ Qxe7 15 Qxe7+ Kxe7 16 Bg5+.

12...Qd6

13 Qg4

13 Bxf7+ Kd8 14 Qg4 Nxg2 transposes to the game.

13...Nxg2

14 Bxf7+

14 Qxg7 0-0-0 is even more dangerous.

14...Kd8

15 Qxg7 Rf8

White faces major problems. His cluster of pieces in Black’s half of the board proves a weakness rather than a strength, and his king will come under attack before he can bring the queenside forces into play.

16 d4



Black to move

16...Nh4!

17 Rf4

Or 17 Bg5 Nxf5 18 Qxf8+ Kd7 and Black wins after 19 Be8+ Rxe8 20 Qxf5+ Kd8 21 Nd2 Rg8 22 h4 h6 23 Ne4 Qd5 or 19 Bxe7 Qf4! 20 Be6+ Kxe6 21 Qf6+ Kd7.

17...Ng6 18 Rf5

18 Bxg6 Rxf4 19 Bxf4 Qxf4 is no better.

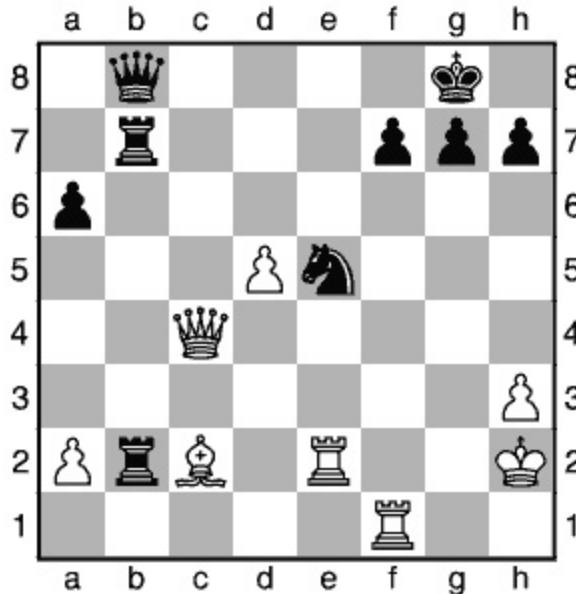
18...Be4 19 Rh5 Bf6 20 Bg5

20 Qxh7 fails to 20...Qd7.

20...Bxg5 21 Rxg5 Qf4 0-1

In the last round I faced Brian Eley. After play had been in progress for a short time, there was an announcement from the control desk, preceded by a request to stop the clocks. The announcement over, the instruction to restart the clocks was given. At that moment I was away from the board, and I continued to wander around for several minutes, occasionally passing by my game to see if Eley had moved. Suddenly, I noticed that Eley's clock was not running. I leaned forward, murmured 'You must have forgotten to restart your clock', and pressed the button. Eley instantly flashed out his move and banged the clock, while giving me a satisfied smirk. He wanted to be completely sure that I realised his failure to start his clock was deliberate, and

that he was simply gaining the maximum possible thinking time while his clock was stopped. I soon blundered away a pawn, and as Eley's position became better and better, the clock-thumping grew thunderous.



White to move

J. Nunn – B. Eley *Islington Open 1971*

Black's position appears overwhelming, but in fact Eley had already gone wrong by this stage. The pressure along the second rank and the b8-h2 diagonal is indeed awkward, but the passed d-pawn and Black's weak back rank are also relevant. White cannot yet claim an advantage, but he has some play for the pawn.

39 Qf4 f6

39...Rc7 40 Qxe5 Rbxc2 41 Rff2 Rxe2 42 Rxe2 is also unclear, as the d-pawn is a real threat.

40 Kh1

Moving off the lines controlled by Black's pieces, and threatening 41 Qf5.

40...Qc8?

This allows White to transfer his bishop to e6 with gain of tempo, after which Black cannot claim any advantage.

41 Bf5 Nd7?

After 41...Qc4 42 Be6+ Kh8 43 Qxc4 (better than 43 Rxe5 Qxf4 44

$Rxf4 Rb1+$ 45 $Kh2 R7b2+$ 46 $Kg3 Rg1+$ 47 $Kf3 Rf1+$ 48 $Kg3 Rxf4$ 49 $Kxf4$ $fxe5+$ 50 $Kxe5$, although even here the dangerous d-pawn should ensure the draw) 43... $Nxc4$ 44 $Rxb2 Rxb2$ 45 $Rc1 Nb6$ 46 $d6$ and Black will have to give up his knight for the d-pawn. Owing to White's reduced pawns, the result should be a draw.

42 Rc1

Suddenly White a decisive attack.

42...Qa8

Or 42... $Qd8$ 43 $Rxb2 Rxb2$ 44 $Qd6 Rb7$ 45 $Be6+ Kh8$ 46 $Qc6 Ra7$ 47 $Qc8$.

43 Rxb2 Rxb2

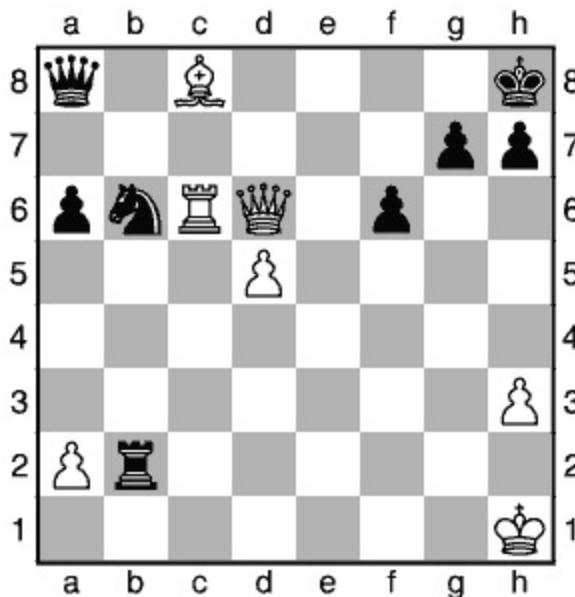
44 Qd6 Nb6

45 Rc6?

Missing 45 $Be6+ Kh8$ 46 $Rc8+$, but the text-move also wins.

45...Kh8

46 Bc8



Black to move

46...h5

47 Qf8+ Kh7

48 Bf5+ Kh6

49 Rxf6+ 1-0

After 49... $Kg5$, one winning line is 50 $Qxg7+ Kh4$ 51 $Re6$.

Many years later, Brian Eley achieved notoriety by absconding while on police bail relating to an investigation into paedophile activities. The upshot was that he became the only British Chess Champion to date to appear on the television programme *Crimewatch*. At the time of writing his whereabouts are still a complete mystery.

Soon after Islington, I ventured outside Britain for the first time. I had been selected as the English representative in an international junior tournament at Hallsberg, Sweden. The journey by ferry took two days, most of which I spent feeling ill. Spending Christmas being seasick is not much fun and I resolved to fly to tournaments abroad as soon as I could afford it. However, the trip was definitely worthwhile. The Swedish hosts were very friendly and the event was efficiently organised with good playing conditions.

Perhaps the key game was the following which, unusually, saw me playing the part of the defender.

T. Wedberg – J. Nunn

Hallsberg Junior International 1972

Scotch Gambit

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 c3 Nf6 5 e5 Ne4 6 cxd4 Bb4+ 7 Bd2 Nxd2 8 Nbxd2 d5 9 a3 Bxd2+ 10 Qxd2 0-0 11 Bd3 f6 12 Qc2 h6



White to move

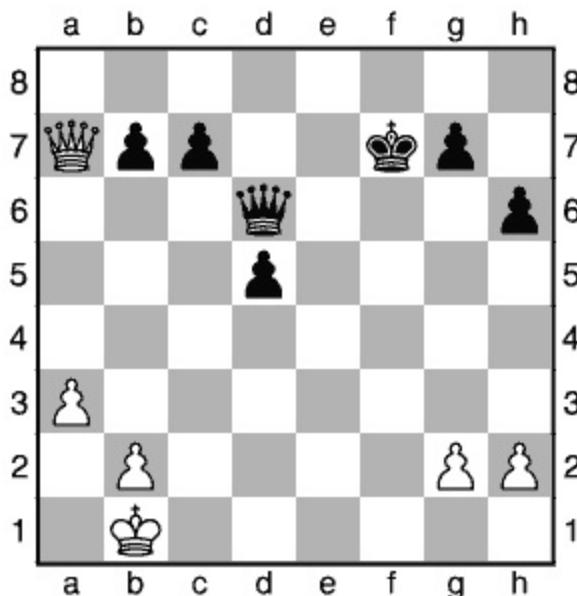
13 0-0-0

Sacrificing a pawn for the attack. More direct attacking lines rebound on White, for example 13 Nh4 fxe5 14 Bh7+ Kh8 15 Ng6+ Kxh7 16 Nxf8+ Kg8 17 Ng6 Nxd4 or 13 0-0 Bg4 14 Nh4 Nxd4 15 Bh7+ Kh8 16 Ng6+ Kxh7 17 Nxf8+ Kg8 18 Qh7+ Kxf8 19 exf6 Qxf6! 20 Qh8+ Kf7 21 Qxa8 Nf3+ 22 Kh1 Qe5 23 g3 Qh5 24 h4 Nxh4 and Black forces mate.

13...fxe5 14 dxe5 Nxe5!

White does not obtain enough compensation for this pawn.

**15 Nxe5 Qg5+ 16 Kb1 Qxe5 17 f4 Qxf4 18 Rhf1 Qd6 19 Rxf8+ Kxf8
20 Bh7 Be6 21 Re1 Re8 22 Bg6 Bf7 23 Rxe8+ Kxe8 24 Qa4+ Kf8 25 Bxf7
Kxf7 26 Qxa7**



Black to move

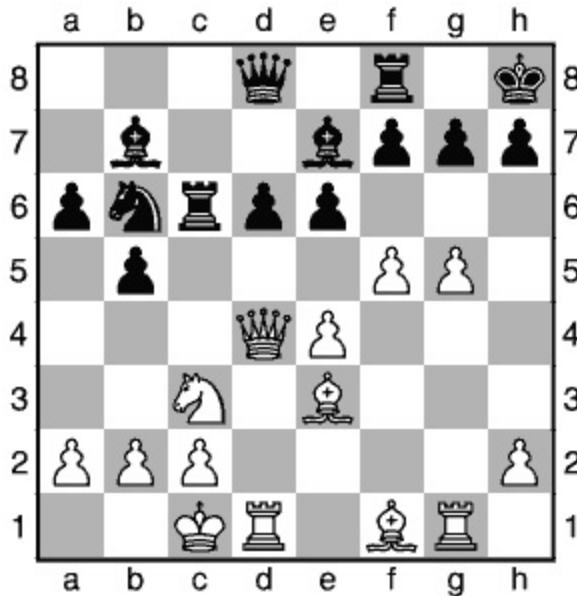
The technical phase is quite simple thanks to Black's central passed pawn.

**26...b6 27 Qa4 d4 28 Qc4+ Kf8 29 g3 Qe5 30 Qd3 Kg8 31 b4 c5 32
bxc5 bxc5 33 Qc4+ Kh8 34 Qd3 Qd5 35 Qg6 Qb3+ 36 Kc1 Qxa3+ 37 Kd1
Qf3+ 38 Kc1 Qe3+ 0-1**

I was in excellent form at Hallsberg and won outright with 8/9, a point ahead of the Swedish player Ivarsson – a promising start to 1972.

I was not completely free to play whenever I liked, as my tournaments had to fit in with the University vacations; fortunately these were quite long. I also remained active during term; the following neat combination was played

in a club match.



White to move

J. Nunn – A. Crombleholme

Oxford University vs Oxford City 1972

17 f6! gxf6 18 gxf6 Bxf6 19 e5! Bxe5

This loses material after White's surprising reply. The other lines are 19...dxe5 20 Qe4 Rxc3 21 Rxd8 Rxd8 22 Qxb7 Rxe3 23 Bxb5 axb5 24 Qxb6 and White should win, and 19...Bg7 20 Rxg7 Kxg7 21 Bxb5 Rxc3 (21...axb5 22 Rg1+ Kh8 23 Bh6 Rg8 24 Rxg8+ Qxg8 25 exd6+ leads to mate) 22 exd6+ f6 23 bxc3 axb5 24 Qxb6 with a large advantage for White.

20 Qxe5+ dxe5 21 Rxd8 Rxd8 22 Bg5 Nd7 23 Bxd8 Rc8 24 Bh4 Rg8 25 Rxg8+ Kxg8 26 a4 b4 27 Na2 a5 28 Bd8 b3 29 cxb3 Nc5 30 Bc4 Bd5 31 Kc2 Be4+ 32 Kc3

Of course, 32 Kd2 also wins, but sometimes the easiest method is to fall into your opponent's 'trap'.

32...Bb1

The threat of mate regains the piece.

33 Bxa5 Bxa2 34 Bb4 Nd7 35 Kc2 1-0

Black's bishop is permanently imprisoned so he has no chance of stopping the a-pawn.

After the Hallsberg success, I was invited to participate in a junior event held in Norwich during April. This was a massive 16-player round-robin and, according to the *British Chess Magazine*, was the strongest junior tournament to have been held in Britain since the 1951 World Junior Championship. I finished in sixth place with a respectable 9/15. Harry Golombek wrote ‘Nunn did well but had luck and to some extent his score flatters him.’ Looking at the games now, it is true that I had good luck in some games, but I suffered bad luck in others. On the whole I think my score was justified.

Anyhow, there was certainly no luck involved in my game from the last round, which decided the tournament since Sax managed to overhaul Tarjan as a result of this rapid defeat.

J. Nunn – J. Tarjan

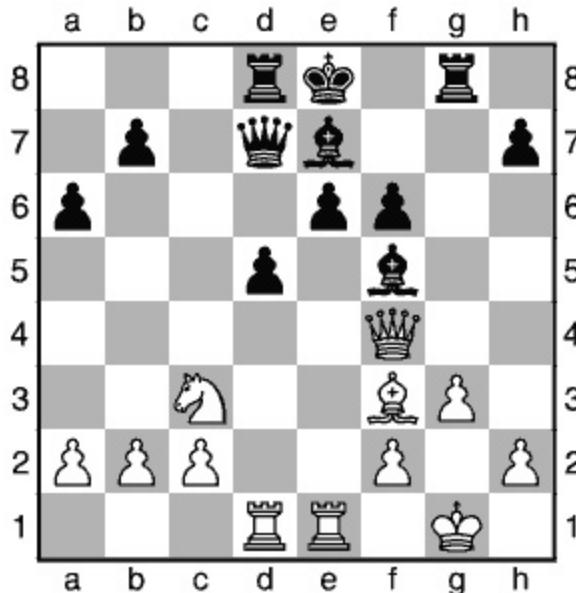
Norwich Junior International 1972

Sicilian, Najdorf

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bg5 Nc6 7 Bxf6 gxf6 8 Qd2 Bd7 9 Be2 Rg8 10 g3 Nxd4 11 Qxd4 f5?

It is too dangerous to open the position when White is ahead in development and Black’s king is stuck in the centre.

**12 exf5 Bxf5 13 0-0 e6 14 Bf3 d5 15 Rfe1 Be7 16 Qe5 f6 17 Qf4 Qd7
18 Rad1 Rd8**



White to move

This allows a straightforward sacrifice, but Black's position was very bad in any case.

19 Nxd5 exd5 20 Rxd5 Qc8 21 Rxf5 1-0

In August, I played on top board for the English Glorney Cup team. Although England won the event, my personal score of 2½/5 was not very good.

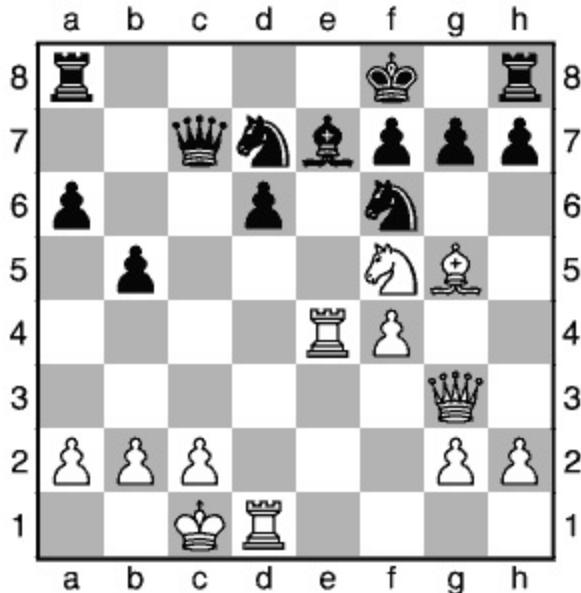
Some of the players, including myself and the entire Irish team, were staying in a large house a short distance away from the playing hall. The night before the England vs Ireland match, I got up at about 3 a.m. to visit the bathroom. While I was inside, there was a furious hammering at the door. When I opened it, I was astonished to see the Irish board 1, Bernard Kernan, looking very much the worse for drink, being supported by two of his compatriots. They promptly dragged him inside, whereupon he vomited at great length. I was not at all surprised when, at the start of the game, Kernan still had not appeared and I already had the point firmly chalked up in my mind. After about 20 minutes, Kernan came in, looking as pale as a ghost. I was not unduly worried. Alas, I was crushed in 27 moves; I never again underestimated an Irish player, at least when it came to drinking.

J. Nunn – J. Cooper

England vs Wales, Glorney Cup 1972

Sicilian, Najdorf

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bg5 e6 7 f4 Be7 8 Qf3 Qc7 9 0-0-0 Nbd7 10 Bd3 b5 11 Rhe1 Bb7 12 Nd5 exd5 13 Nf5 Kf8 14 Qg3 dxе4 15 Bxe4 Bxe4 16 Rxe4



Black to move

16...Ne5?

It is now known that 16...Qc5 17 Bh6 Nxe4 18 Qxg7+ Ke8 19 Qxh8+ Nf8 gives Black the advantage in this ultra-sharp line.

17 fxe5 dxe5 18 Bh6 Rg8 19 Nxg7 1-0

Immediately afterwards, I joined the English junior team competing in the ‘Junior Olympiad’ held in Munich to coincide with the Olympic Games. Peter Markland was the (non-playing) captain and got us all to Munich safely (when we were looking for the correct train to board at the Hook of Holland, he saw a carriage labelled ‘München’ and said ‘Ah, this must be the dining car’). Not surprisingly, accommodation was in short supply in Munich, and the players had to sleep on the floor of a school classroom. The round times were also slightly unusual, as the games started at 8.00 a.m. The idea was to finish the games in time for the players to visit the ‘real’ Olympics. It became quite normal for players to arrive half-an-hour (or more) late at the playing hall. One day, when I was playing White, I visited the playing hall at 8.00 exactly and played 1 e4. I then returned to have a leisurely breakfast. My opponent, spotting me sipping my coffee, also took his time. I ambled back to the playing hall at about 8.40, followed close behind by my opponent, who was none too pleased when he discovered my trick. I played very well in Munich and scored 5½/7, and enjoyed the first part of the event. However, both the Olympics and the chess were overshadowed by the tragic events which took place during the Games.

1972 drew to a close with little hint of the problems to come.

J. Nunn – J. Burnett

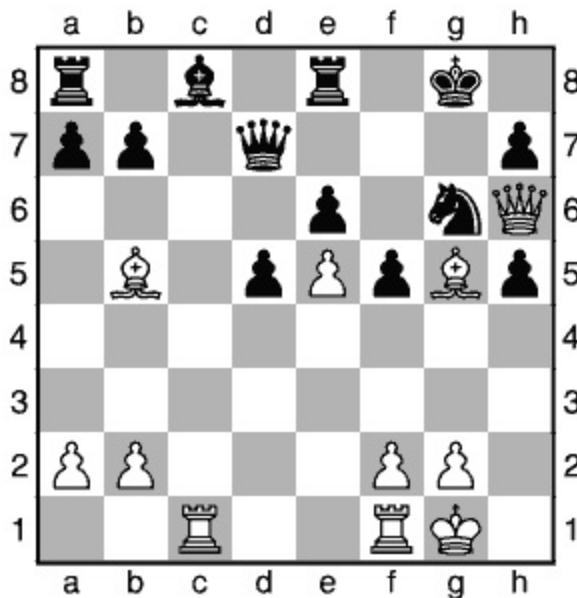
Oriel College vs University College 1972

French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 Nf6 4 e5 Nfd7 5 Bd3 c5 6 c3 Nc6 7 Ngf3 Qb6 8 0-0

The same pawn sacrifice as in Nunn-Everson given earlier.

8...cxd4 9 cxd4 Nxd4 10 Nxd4 Qxd4 11 Nf3 Qb6 12 Qc2 g6 13 Be3 Bc5 14 Bf4 0-0 15 h4 Re8 16 h5 Nf8 17 Rac1 Be7 18 Be3 Qd8 19 Qa4 f5 20 Qf4 gxh5 21 Qh6 Ng6 22 Ng5 Bxg5 23 Bxg5 Qd7 24 Bb5!!



Black to move

I like this sacrifice because it is based on judgement rather than pure calculation. There is no immediate win, but the long-term pressure is very awkward for Black.

24...Qxb5 25 Rc7 Bd7 26 Bf6 Re7 27 Bxe7 Nxe7 28 Rfc1



Black to move

28...Ng6?

Black collapses, but the position appears to be difficult for him:

1) 28...Rf8 29 R1c5 Qa4 30 b3 Qb4 31 Rc3 Be8 32 Qxe6+ Rf7 33 Rc8 Nxc8 34 Qxe8+ (34 Rxc8 Kg7 35 Qxe8 Qe1+ 36 Kh2 Qxf2 is only a draw) 34...Qf8 35 Rxc8 Qxe8 36 Rxe8+ Rf8 (after 36...Kg7 37 Rd8 White has a clear advantage in the rook ending) 37 Rxf8+ Kxf8 38 f4 (the protected passed pawn guarantees the win even though Black has a large number of reserve tempi on the kingside) 38...h4 39 Kf2 Ke7 40 Ke3 b6 41 Kd4 Ke6 42 b4 h6 (Black cannot touch his b-pawn, because once the white king gains access to c5 he can just play Kc5-d4-c5 until Black runs out of pawn moves) 43 a3 a6 (Black must touch a pawn because 43...h5 44 b5 wins) 44 a4 h5 45 a5 and White gains access to c5.

2) 28...d4 29 R1c5 Qb4 30 Rxd7 Qxc5 31 Qxe6+ Kf8 32 Kh2 (the immediate 32 Qf6+ Ke8 33 e6 allows perpetual check) 32...Ke8 33 Rxb7 a5 34 Qf6 Ra7 35 Rb6 with a decisive attack.

29 R1c5 Qxb2 30 Rxd7 Qa1+ 31 Rc1 1-0

Towards the end of 1972 I started devoting all my energies to my mathematical studies. My Final Examination was due the following June and I wanted to achieve the best possible result as I planned to stay at Oxford and work towards a D.Phil. My chess results had been almost uniformly successful ever since the previous bad patch in 1968. Now, however, they plummeted dramatically. In the Islington Open, I started with 1½/4. I was

quite embarrassed when, playing in round 5 on board 64, the competitor sitting next to me on board 63 asked me for my autograph. I won my last two games, but it was a miserable result. I decided to ‘recover’ by playing again in the London under-21 Championship, after having skipped the previous year due to the Hallsberg tournament. However, this also did not go smoothly. In a relatively weak tournament, I scored 5½/7 and finished second to Nigel Povah. A week later I played White against Andrew Law in a club match and lost in 18 moves.

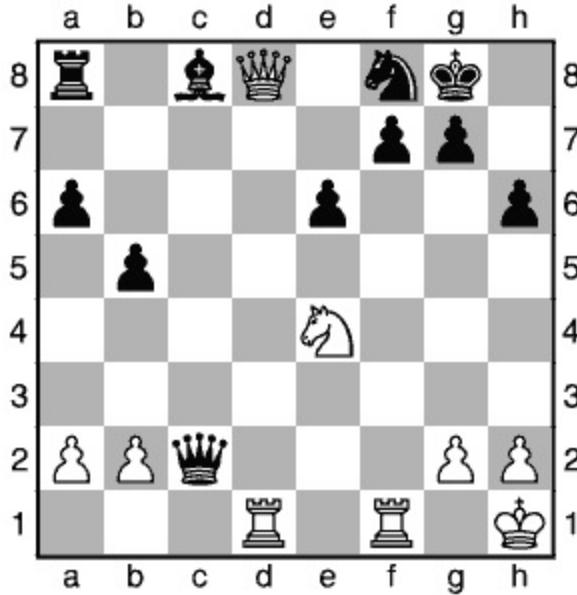
My chess had seemed so effortless it didn’t occur to me that if my mind was concentrating on mathematics, then my chess would inevitably suffer. My reaction to these bad results was also faulty. Now I appreciate that bad form is something that can only be cured by time; playing more chess only makes matters worse. The next few months did not produce a single noteworthy game.

I did win the Surrey under-18 Championship again in April, but yet another attempt to do well at the Hammersmith Congress ended in disappointment. I started strongly with 5/5, but my old disease struck again and I lost my last two games simply through poor play.

Fortunately the long-awaited examination arrived in June. Despite (because of?!) playing blitz every evening during these exams, I felt that I had done well. All at once the pressure of the previous six months dissipated, and it was in good spirits that I headed for an international junior tournament at St Jamme (near Le Mans) in France.

Here I played a number of good games and ended up in a tie for first on 5½/7 with the Russian player Mikhalkishin. The tie-break in the Swiss event was based on sum of opponents’ scores; my tie-break could not have been better as my seven opponents finished in positions 2-8 inclusive!

The first round put me in a good mood straight away.



White to move

J. Nunn – M. van der Linde

St Jamme Junior International 1973

28 Rxf7! Kxf7 29 Rf1+ Kg6 30 Qe8+ Kh7 31 Nf6+! gxf6 32 Qf7+ Kh8 33 Qxf8+ Kh7 34 Qf7+ Kh8 35 Qxf6+ Kh7 36 Qf7+ Kh8 37 Qf8+ Kh7 38 Rf7+ Kg6 39 Rg7+ Kh5 40 Qf3+ 1-0

The second round also helped boost my morale.

J. Nunn – P. Mack

St Jamme Junior International 1973

Alekhine Defence

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 Nb6 5 f4 Bf5 6 Nf3 dxe5 7 fxe5 e6 8 Nc3 Bb4

At the time there was a great fashion for playing ...Bb4 in various positions of the Four Pawns Attack. There are certain situations in which this idea is viable, but the current position isn't one of them. White can utilise the fact that he has not played Be3 to launch a vicious attack by sacrificing his d-pawn. This is one of the first examples of my opening investigations leading to an innovative idea.

9 Bd3! Bxd3 10 Qxd3 c5 11 0-0 h6

A year later, Ivkov-Timman, Amsterdam IBM 1974 went 11...cxd4 12 Ne4 N6d7 13 Nfg5 (another good line is 13 Bg5 Qc7 14 c5 0-0 15 Rac1 Nxe5 16 Nxe5 Qxe5 17 Bf6 Qh5 18 Bxg7 Kxg7 19 Qxd4+ e5 20 Qxb4 Nc6 21 Qxb7, Nunn-Pavlović, Oxford University vs Kidlington club match 1976) 13...Nxe5 14 Qg3 Nbd7 15 Bf4 Qb6 16 Bxe5 f6 17 Bd6 fxg5 18 Bxb4 Qxb4 19 Nd6+ Ke7 20 Rf7+ Kd8 21 Qxg5+ Kc7 22 Nb5+ Kc8 23 Raf1 b6 24 Rxd7 Kxd7 25 Qxg7+ 1-0.

12 Ne4 cxd4 13 c5 N6d7 14 Nd6+ Ke7 15 Nh4 Nxe5



White to move

16 Rxf7+! Nxf7 17 Ng6+ Kd7

Or 17...Kf6 18 Ne4+! Kxg6 19 Ng5+ Kf6 20 Qf3+ and mates.

18 Nxf7 1-0

C.H.O'D. Alexander gave this game in the *Sunday Times* and correctly remarked that it was of 'some theoretical interest'.

However, the high spot of the event was the following game:

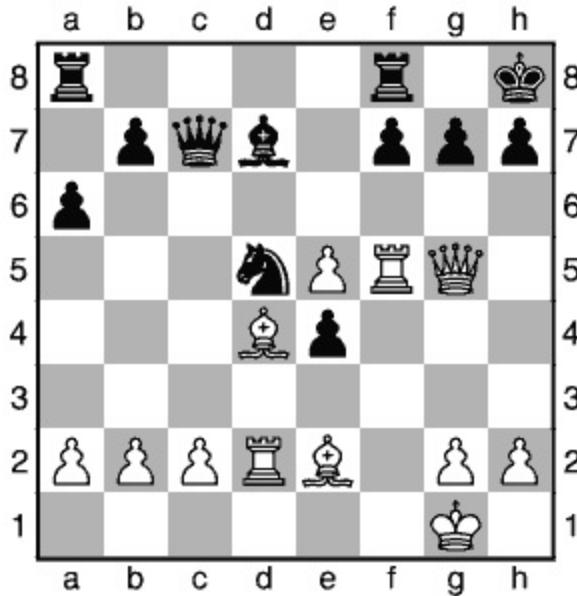
J. Nunn – E. Sindik

St Jamme Junior International 1973

Sicilian, Scheveningen

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Be3 e6 7 Be2 Be7 8

0-0 0-0 9 f4 Qc7 10 Qe1 Nc6 11 Qg3 Bd7 12 Rad1 Kh8 13 Nf3 Nb4 14 Rd2 d5 15 e5 Ne4 16 Nxe4 dxe4 17 Ng5 Bc6 18 f5 Nd5 19 Bd4 Bxg5 20 Qxg5 exf5 21 Rxf5 Bd7



White to move

The critical moment. If White retreats passively by 22 Rf1, then 22...Be6 23 c4 Ne7 24 b3 Rad8 is roughly equal. The only alternative is a rather speculative sacrifice of White's queen for two minor pieces. I thought for forty minutes, calculating many lines (including the one that actually occurred in the game) but I realised that a complete analysis would not be possible in the time available, and just played it.

22 e6!! f6

23 Rxd5

The alternative sacrifice 23 Qh5 g6 24 Qh4 gxf5 25 exd7 b5! is distinctly unconvincing; if Black can maintain his knight on d5 then White will find it hard to break through.

23...fxg5

24 Rxd7 Qf4

Forced, as 24...Qc6 loses to 25 Bxg7+ Kg8 26 Bc3 Rfe8 27 Rg7+ Kf8 28 Bc4.

25 Rd1

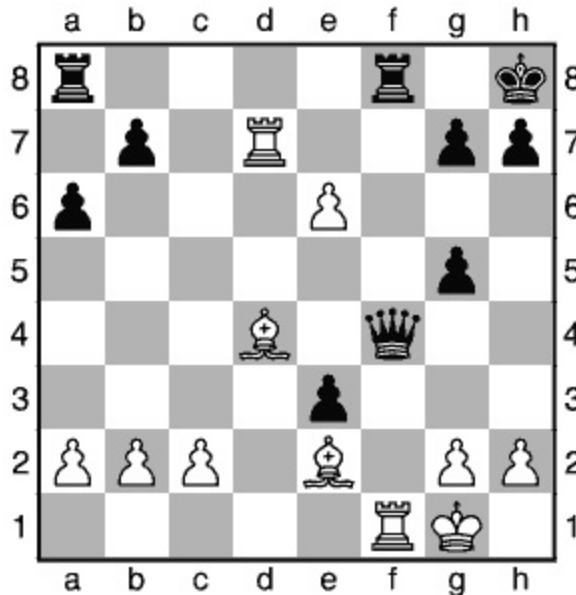
After 25 Rxg7 Qxd2 26 Rd7+ Kg8 White is obliged to take the draw.

25...e3

Or 25...Rg8 (25...Rad8 26 Bxg7+ Kg8 27 e7 loses immediately) 26 Rf1

`Qh4 (26...Qb8 27 Rff7 Qe8 28 Rxg7 Rxg7 29 Rxg7 Qa4 30 c4 and wins) 27 Rxg7 Rxg7 28 e7 h6 (both 28...Qf4 29 Rxf4 gxf4 30 Bh5 and 28...Rg8 29 Rf8 Qe1+ 30 Bf1 win for White) 29 g3 Qh3 30 Rf8+ Kh7 31 Bxg7 Qe6 32 Rxa8 Qxe7 33 Bd4 winning on material.`

26 Rf1



Black to move

26...Qe4

After this White can force a won king and pawn ending. 26...Qh4 was a tougher defence, and now:

1) 27 Bxg7+ Kg8 28 Bxf8 Rxf8 29 Rxf8+ Kxf8 30 e7+ Ke8 31 g3 Qh6 32 Rxb7 looks good, but is not so convincing after 32...Qg6!, intending ...g4, cutting the bishop off from the h5-square. Neither 33 h3 h5 nor 33 Bg4 e2 34 Bxe2 g4 is clearly good for White.

2) 27 Rdf7! Rg8 (27...Rxf7 28 exf7 Rf8 29 Bc5 wins) 28 c3 (28 Bc3 is also promising, with similar play) with an enormous attack, for example 28...Rad8 loses to 29 e7 Rxd4 30 e8Q, or 28...Qh6 29 e7 Qe6 30 Rxg7 Rxg7 31 Rf8+ Qg8 32 Rxg8+ Kxg8 33 Bxg7 Kxg7 34 Bh5 and wins.

27 Bxg7+ Kg8 28 Bxf8 Rxf8 29 Rxf8+ Kxf8 30 e7+ Ke8 31 Bh5+ Kxd7 32 e8Q+ Qxe8 33 Bxe8+ Kxe8 34 Kf1

The e3-pawn falls, and the rest is easy.

34...Ke7 35 Ke2 Ke6 36 Kxe3 Ke5 37 c4 g4 38 g3 h6 39 Kd3 b6 40 Ke3 a5 41 b3 a4 42 bxa4 h5 43 a3 Kd6 44 Kd4 Kc6 45 a5 bxa5 46 a4 1-0

On my return from France I found out that I had gained a First Class degree in mathematics.

My next event was the Glorney Cup; this time I was on board two, behind Jonathan Mestel. I scored 3/4, my loss being in 19 moves with White (vs Scheeren of Holland), but this game was only a minor upset in the middle of an extremely successful summer. In the British Championships, I had originally entered the under-21 Championship, but changed my mind and participated in the Major Open (a qualifying event for the Championship itself) instead. This turned out to be an excellent move; by now I was growing out of junior events. My score of 10/11 was said to be the highest since Alekhine (I have no idea whether this is true). A quick draw in round 10 guaranteed outright first place, but I was motivated to beat Bernard Kernan in the last round (too little alcohol?) to give a winning margin of 1½ points and a place in the following year's British Championship.

I competed in a very strong Swiss event held in London during September. I won my first three games, then drew with Black against Larsen in round 4. A win in the last round would have enabled me to tie with Larsen for first place, but although I came very close to a win (against the American player Strauss) I eventually had to settle for a draw and outright second place with 4/5. It was an excellent result in that I finished ahead of Keene, Miles, Mestel, Speelman and many other leading British players.

M. Basman – J. Nunn

London Invitation Swiss 1973

Modern Defence

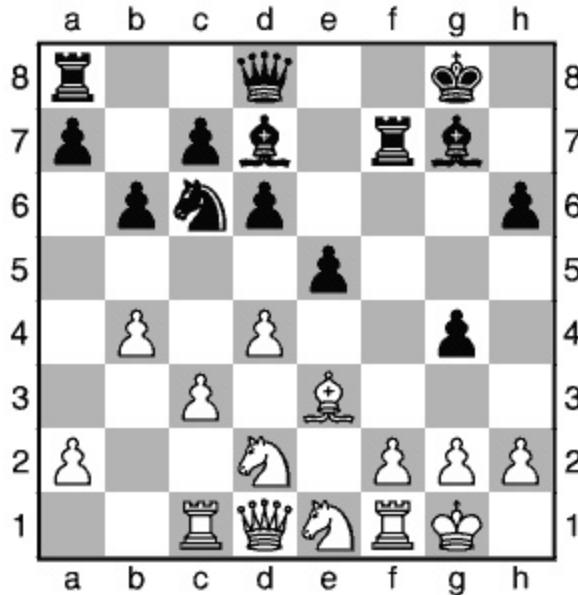
1 e4

This was before the days of 1 g4 and the later improved version 1 h3.

1...g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nf3 d6 4 Bc4 Nf6 5 Nc3 0-0 6 0-0 Nxe4 7 Bxf7+ Rxf7 8 Nxe4 h6

A line promising absolutely nothing for White. He cedes the two bishops and gives Black a central pawn majority; in return Black's kingside is very slightly weakened, but this is of little significance given White's lack of a light-squared bishop.

9 Be3 Bg4 10 Ned2 Nc6 11 c3 g5 12 Qb3 Na5 13 Qa4 b6 14 b4 Bd7 15 Qd1 Nc6 16 Rc1 g4 17 Ne1 e5!



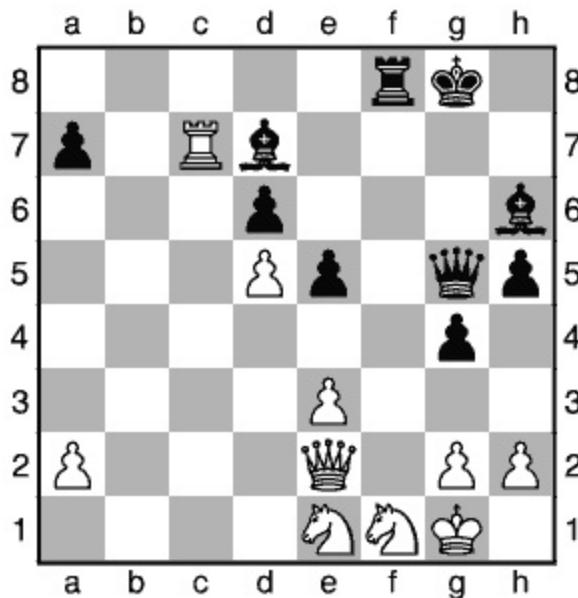
White to move

Now Black holds the initiative. White tries to keep the position closed in order to limit the scope of Black's bishops, but in the resulting King's Indian type of position, the knight on e1 is too badly placed to allow White to establish firm control of e4.

18 d5 Ne7 19 Ne4 Nf5 20 Ng3 Nxe3 21 fxe3 Rxf1+ 22 Nxf1 Qg5 23 Qe2 Rf8 24 c4 h5

The correct plan. In good King's Indian style, Black both gains space and prepares to activate his dark-squared bishop.

25 c5 bxc5 26 bxc5 Bh6 27 cxd6 cxd6 28 Rc7?



Black to move

A tactical oversight, but Black already had a clear positional advantage.

28...Qf6!

Threatening to win immediately by 29...Qxf1+.

29 Ng3

The only move to avoid immediate catastrophe was 29 Rc2, but then 29...Qxf1+ 30 Qxf1 Bxe3+ 31 Rf2 Bxf2+ 32 Qxf2 Rxf2 33 Kxf2 Bb5, followed by ...Bc4, gives Black a won ending.

29...Bb5 0-1

In September 1973, I finished joint first in the London Chess Club's Bloomsbury Open with 4½/5. The month after, playing for Oxford University against ICL in the National Club Championship, I had a most disconcerting experience. With both sides in considerable time-trouble, I played my move and went to press the clock, only for my hand to strike the table instead – the clock had simply disappeared! Looking wildly around, I noticed the clock somewhere up in the air. One of the members of the ICL team, frustrated that he could only see the back of the clock, had simply picked it up and turned it round to assess the time situation. I snatched it out of his hands, slammed it down on the table and punched the button. My opponent was so astonished by the sequence of events that he promptly blundered.

I had an interesting finish in the annual Oxford University vs London University match:

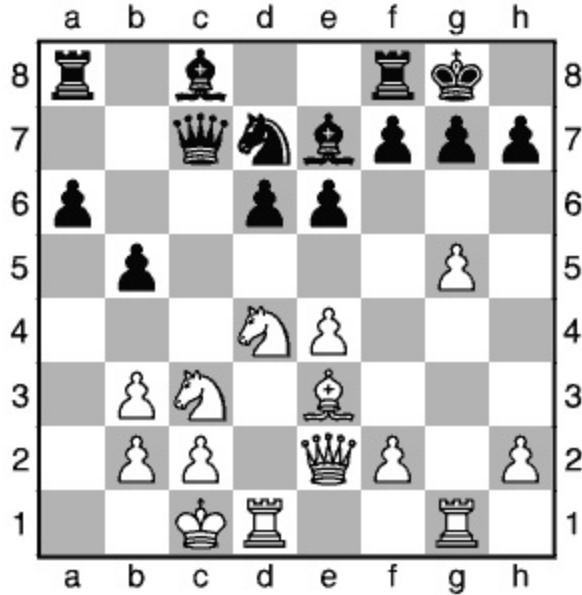
J. Nunn – A. Perkins

Oxford University vs London University 1973

Sicilian, Sozin

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 d6 6 Bc4 e6 7 Be3 Be7
8 Qe2 0-0 9 0-0-0 Qc7 10 Bb3 a6 11 Rhg1 Na5 12 g4 b5 13 g5 Nxh3+ 14
axb3 Nd7**

The Velimirović Attack is an opening which, I am slightly ashamed to admit, I still play occasionally almost a quarter of a century later.



White to move

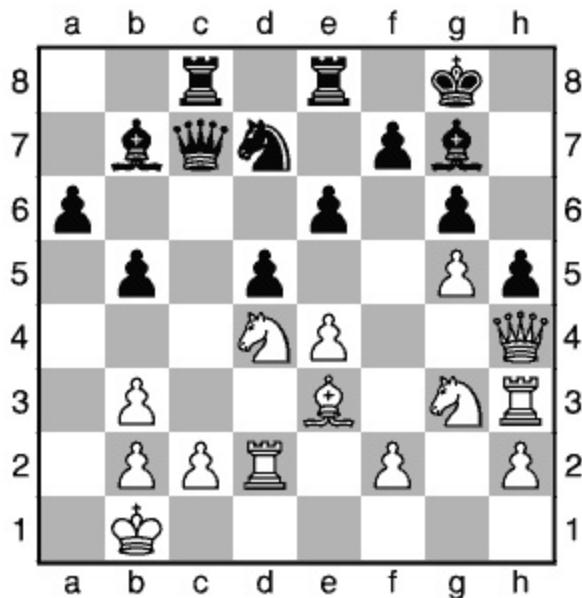
15 Rg3

As a result of the current game I analysed this position intensively, deciding that 15 f4 is the best move. In 1997 I used this analysis to beat Ketevan Arakhamia.

15...Re8 16 Qh5 g6 17 Qh4 Bb7 18 Rh3 h5

This blocks the immediate attack down the h-file, but there is still the possibility of a knight sacrifice at h5. Black's subsequent bishop manoeuvre is designed to counter this threat.

19 Nce2 Rac8 20 Rd2 Bf8 21 Ng3 Bg7 22 Kb1 d5



White to move

White's central position is starting to collapse, and he has no hope of defending with all his pieces stuck on the h-file, so I decided it was time for a sacrificial attack. It is much easier to decide on a piece sacrifice when you have no real choice.

23 f4! dxe4 24 f5 exf5 25 Ndxf5 gxf5 26 Nxh5

I was surprised myself at the unexpected venom in White's attack. Black's next move is forced.

26...Re6

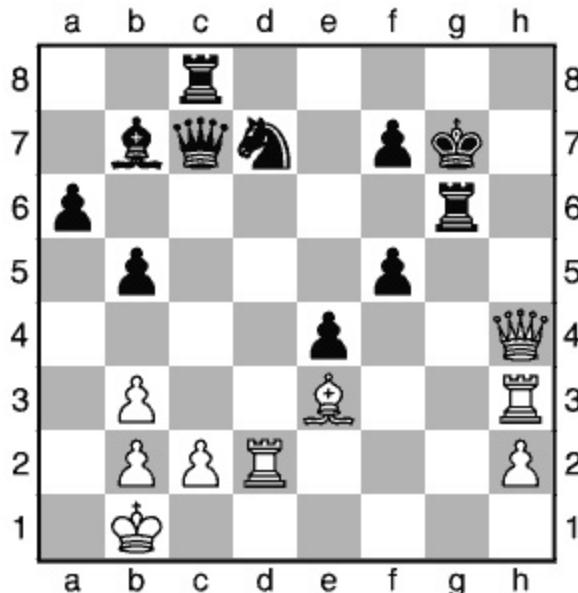
27 Nxg7 Kxg7

28 g6

Another route to victory was 28 Bd4+ Ne5 (or 28...Kf8 29 Bf6 Rxf6 30 gxf6 Ke8 31 Qh8+ Nf8 32 Qxf8+ Kxf8 33 Rh8#) 29 Qh7+ Kf8 30 Rc3! (I had overlooked this move) 30...Qb8 (there is no good square for the queen; 30...Bc6 loses to 31 Bc5+) 31 Rxc8+ Qxc8 32 Bc5+ Qxc5 33 Qh8+ Ke7 34 Qd8#.

28...Rxg6

Again forced. Not 28...Kf8? 29 g7+ Kxg7 30 Rg2+ Rg6 31 Rxg6+ fxg6 32 Qe7+ and mates.



White to move

29 Bh6+

29 Rg2!? is an interesting try. After 29...Kf8 (not 29...Qd6 30 Bg5 Ne5 31 Qh7+ Kf8 32 Qh8+ Rg8 33 Qxg8+ Kxg8 34 Bf6+ Ng6 35 Rh8#) 30 Rxg6

fxg6 31 Qh8+ Kf7 32 Rh7+ Ke6 33 Qg7 Qxc2+ 34 Ka2 Ne5 35 Qe7+ Kd5 36 Qxb7+ Qc6 37 Qa7 Black has two extra pawns but his king is perilously exposed. However, the move played is stronger if followed up correctly.

29...Kg8

30 Bg5 Kf8

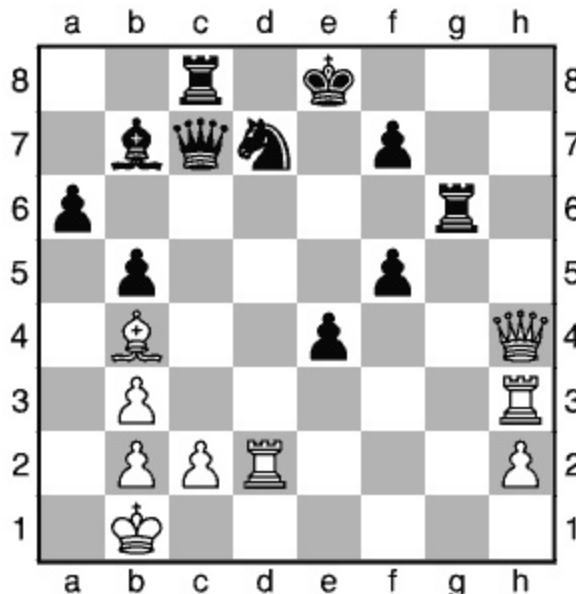
Now 30... Kg7 loses to 31 Rg2 .

31 Be7+?

Missing a really beautiful win by 31 Rxd7!! Qxd7 32 Qh8+ Rg8 33 Qxg8+ Kxg8 34 Bf6 with unavoidable mate.

31...Ke8

32 Bb4



Black to move

32...Nf6?

Black blunders while in severe time-trouble. After 32... Nc5! 33 Rc3 (after 33 Qh8+ Ke7 34 Qh4+ Rf6! I do not see even a draw for White) 33... Qe7 (33... Rc6 34 Rd5 Qe7 35 Qh7 Rh6 36 Qxf5 is very unclear, but it can hardly be worse for White) 34 Qh8+ Qf8 35 Qe5+ Re6 36 Qxf5 the position is razor-sharp. Personally, I would prefer to be White.

33 Qxf6! Qxc2+

34 Ka2 1-0

Just before Christmas, I played in the GRE (Guardian Royal Exchange, a large insurance company) Masters Tournament. This consisted of two

groups, each a 10-player round-robin; I was in the second group. I lost in the first round to Ed Formanek, but then scored 7/8 to finish clear first, a point ahead of Formanek. Along the way I defeated the US Champion, John Grefe. Alan Perkins remarked in the *British Chess Magazine* that ‘John Nunn ... is now a force to be reckoned with at the highest levels of British chess.’

J. Grefe – J. Nunn

Guardian Royal Exchange Masters ‘B’ 1973

Modern Defence

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 Bg5 c6 5 Qd2 b5 6 f4 Nd7 7 Nf3 b4 8 Nd1 Qb6 9 Ne3 Ngf6 10 Bd3 d5

A rather provocative idea which I employed a few times.

11 e5

The following year, Paul Littlewood found the correct reply: 11 Bxf6 Nxf6 12 e5 Ng4 (now 12...Ne4 is bad because g5 is free for the knight: 13 Bxe4 dxe4 14 Ng5 leaves the e4-pawn in trouble) 13 h3 Nxe3 14 Qxe3 with advantage to White, P. Littlewood-Nunn, Robert Silk Tournament, Paignton 1974.

11...Ne4

12 Bxe4

After 12 Qe2 f5 13 0-0 Nf8 14 c3 Ne6 15 Bxe4 fxe4 16 Nd2 Ba6 17 Qg4 Nxg5 18 fxg5 Bxf1 19 Rxf1 White had only barely sufficient compensation for the exchange in Raaste-Nunn, World Student Team Championship, Teesside 1974.

12...dxe4

Here, by contrast, the knight has to retreat to a very poor square.

13 Ng1 Ba6



White to move

14 0-0-0 Rd8

15 Bh4 f6

The pressure on White's centre mounts and there is no easy answer. White tries to find a tactical solution.

16 d5

After 16 e6 Nf8 17 f5 Bh6 18 Kb1 Bxe3 (not 18...gxf5?? 19 Nxf5 and wins) 19 Qxe3 gxf5 White's centre starts to crumble.

16...0-0

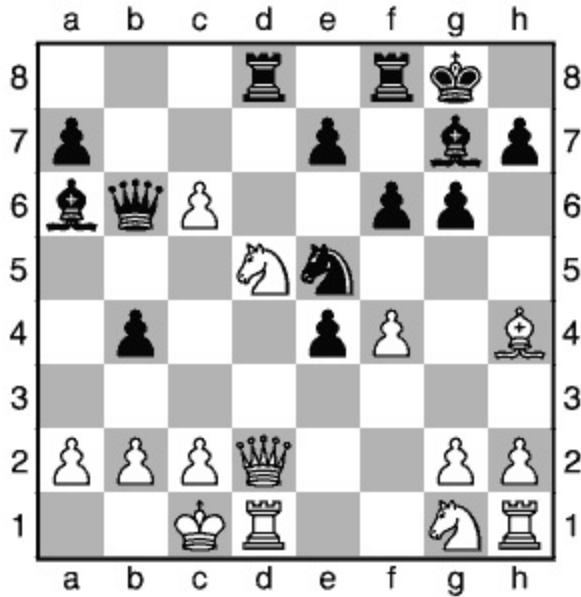
After 16...fxe5 17 d6 White would develop fair counterplay. Rapid development is more important than immediately winning a pawn.

17 dxc6

After 17 e6 Nc5 18 f5 Bh6 White would also be in dire straits.

17...Nxe5

18 Nd5



Black to move

18...Nd3+!

Forces a winning ending.

19 Qxd3 exd3

20 Nxb6 axb6

At the moment material is equal, but at the very least White will lose the pawn on c6. If one also takes into account Black's two bishops and lead in development, then his advantage must be decisive.

21 Nf3

After 21 cxd3 Rd6 White will lose the d3-and c6-pawns.

21...Bh6 22 cxd3 Bxd3 23 g3 Be4 24 Rhf1 Rxd1+ 25 Kxd1 Bxc6 0-1

The twin threats of 26...Bxf3+ 27 Rxf3 g5 and 26...Ra8 will cost White at least another pawn.

After Christmas, I played at Hastings for first time, competing in the Challengers' Tournament. My result was roughly par; I scored 7/10 and finished in joint second to eighth places.

At the end of 1973 my chess career could be summarised by saying that I achieved virtually everything possible at the junior level in Britain, but had yet to successfully make the transition to success at the senior level.

At age 17 my Elo was 2300, which appears modest by today's standards, but a direct comparison of Elo ratings over such a long time-scale is fraught with uncertainty. A more valid measure is that I was ranked 17th in

England.

2 International Master (1974-6)

1974 started without a great deal of chess activity. The following neat finish occurred in the Oxford University Championship, which I won on this occasion.



White to move

J. Nunn – J. Hart

Oxford University Championship 1974

16 Bxh6! Bxh6 17 Ng5+ Kg7 18 Rxf7+ Rxf7 19 Qxh6+ Kg8

After 19...Kxh6 20 Nxf7+ Kg7 21 Nxd8, the knight cannot be trapped, as any move by the c8-bishop leaves the b7-pawn *en prise*. Given time, White will extract the knight by Rf1.

20 Nxf7 Qxd4+ 21 Kh1 Bf5 22 Bxf5 gxf5 23 Ng5 1-0

In March I tied for first in a small weekend Swiss event in London with 4½/5. On 25th March my father died from heart problems exacerbated by high blood pressure. I felt very close to my father, and we had shared a fascination for chess throughout my life, so this came as a considerable shock.

My next event was the Birmingham International during April. It was my first round-robin adult international event and ended quite successfully. I

scored 6/9 and finished in joint third position (with M. Corden). In one game my IM opponent lost his three central pawns in three consecutive moves. It is easy to have a mental block about Black giving up his dark-squared bishop in the Benoni, but sometimes it is good!



White to move

L. Popov – J. Nunn

Birmingham International 1974

18 b3? Bxc3 19 Qxc3 Nxd5 20 Qd2 Nhxf4 21 Bd1 fxe4 22 Bc2 e3 23 Qe1 Qg4 24 Bg3 Ne2+ 25 Kh1 Rxf1+ 26 Qxf1 Nxg3+ 27 hxg3 e2 28 Qf2 Rf8 0-1

In another small weekend tournament in London I lost in the first round to D. Powell, although I did win my last four games.

When the annual Elo rating list appeared, my rating had increased substantially to 2395. In July I played on board 3 for England in the World Student Team Championship, held in Teesside. The event was divided into a set of preliminary groups, from which England qualified for the Championship Final group. Although I began the final with a disappointing ½/2, my next game made up for the poor start:

Game 1

J. Øst-Hansen – J. Nunn

World Student Team Championship, Teesside 1974

Vienna Game

1 e4 e5

2 Nc3

These moves took forty minutes to play, much to the bafflement of a spectator who peered curiously at the game. Despite all this thought, the game has ended up in an opening which neither player intended to adopt! The background is that I was expecting 1 g3, which my opponent had employed consistently in previous rounds. When he played 1 e4 I was temporarily baffled, then I realised that he intended to meet my Pirc, which I had played throughout the Teesside event, with a g3 system, transposing to his normal repertoire (he usually met 1 g3 g6 with a system involving e4). Feeling rather clever, I therefore played 1...e5, which I was also fairly familiar with.

Realising that his tactic had failed, White was then left with a tricky problem, since he knew nothing of the main lines after 1 e4 e5. Øst-Hansen headed for the only variation with which he happened to be acquainted, a very sharp line of the Vienna. Knowing nothing of his detailed knowledge, I was only too happy to enter such a sharp variation. Curiously, therefore, we were both satisfied with having scored a shrewd psychological coup, although in fact both players knew quite a lot about the line.

2...Nf6

3 Bc4 Nxe4

4 Qh5 Nd6

5 Bb3

Both players have the option of avoiding the very sharpest line, since White can play 5 Qxe5+ Qe7 6 Qxe7+ Bxe7 7 Bb3, while Black can try 5 Bb3 Be7 6 Nf3 0-0. However, since we were both convinced that the other player was in unfamiliar territory, we were both happy to go for the main line.

5...Nc6

6 Nb5 g6

7 Qf3 f5

8 Qd5 Qe7

9 Nxc7+ Kd8

10 Nxa8 b6



White to move

This variation amounts to an exchange sacrifice by Black, in return for which he gets a substantial lead in development and attacking chances against the uncastled king. Neither side had much choice during the previous few moves: White obviously had to keep making threats after his original pawn sacrifice, while Black could not play ...Qe7 any earlier because the aggressive central pawns which he now possesses are an essential component of his compensation.

The a8-knight is, of course, trapped and Black will round it up by ...Bb7, which will also force White to waste more time avoiding the threat to his queen by ...Nd4. However, Black will not normally take the knight straight away, since not only does ...Bxa8 spend a tempo eliminating a piece which is virtually doomed anyway, but, as the bishop is undefended at a8, the c6-knight would be pinned by the white queen.

It would take us too far afield to discuss the various 11th move alternatives available to White (11 a4, 11 Nf3, 11 Qf3, 11 Nxb6, 11 Qd3 and 11 Ne2, in addition to the 11 d3 played in this game). This variation is hardly the main focus of modern opening theory and theoretical advances occur very slowly. It is above all the domain of correspondence players, who will not be rushed into anything. Suffice it to say that 11 d3 has been the most highly regarded move from before 1974 right up to the present day.

11 d3 Bb7

In theory Black is reckoned to have approximate compensation for the material, but the whole variation is extremely complex and double-edged.

The sacrifice is unusual in that Black has few short-term threats, but his minor pieces are going to be superior to the white rooks for a long time and he has much better control of the centre. While White is trying to bring his pieces into the game, Black aims to turn his initiative into a concrete attack. The next five to seven moves will be critical; if Black's attack is not well under way by this time, then White's material preponderance will tip the balance in his favour in the long term.



White to move

12 h4

White must counter the threat of ...Nd4, but he can delay the queen's retreat by preparing his own pin by Bg5. In that way he provokes ...f4, so that the safe square g4 will be available for his queen. If Black replies 12...h6, then 13 Qf3 Nd4 14 Qg3 is a little awkward.

12...f4 13 Qf3 Bh6

In 1974, theory's last word was the game J.Nielsen-Altshuler, Final 5th World Correspondence Championship 1968, which went **13...Nd4 14 Qg4 Bh6** (14...e4 is premature due to 15 Bxf4 exd3+ 16 Kf1) 15 Nh3 **N6f5** (again 15...e4 16 Bxf4 exd3+ 17 Kf1 would leave Black unable to continue his attack) 16 Ng5 **Bxg5** 17 hxg5 f3 18 g3 e4 (in Etman-W.Schiller, correspondence 1989, Black played 18...Qb4+ 19 Kd1 Nxc2 20 Qxb4 Nxb4 21 Bc4 Bxa8 22 Bd2 Nd5 23 b4 d6 and eventually drew this ending, although he was worse for a long time) 19 Be3 Nxe3 20 fxe3 f2+ 21 Kf1 (21 Kxf2 Rf8+ is more risky) and White went on to win. I was surprised that my '1 g3'

opponent had shown such intimate knowledge of this obscure line and didn't want to repeat the whole of this game, so I deliberately deviated here with an over-the-board improvisation.

Since 1974, other attempts have been made to improve Black's play in Nielsen-Altshuler; for example the game Miller-Statham, correspondence 1979 went **16...d5** (instead of 16...Bxg5) 17 0-0? Bxg5 18 Qxg5 Qxg5 19 hxg5 Ne2+ 20 Kh2 h6 21 g3 hxg5+ 22 Kg2 d4+ 23 f3 Nxg3 0-1 in anticipation of 24 Rf2 g4 with a devastating attack for Black. However, the improvement 17 Nxb6 axb6 18 c3 Nxb3 19 axb3 favours White.

Another attempt for Black was **15...Rf8** (instead of 15...N6f5), when Wilhelm-Barreiss, correspondence 1969-70, continued 16 Ng5 Rf5 17 Ne4 Nxe4 18 dxe4 Bxe4 19 c3 Ne6 20 Bxe6 Qxe6 21 0-0 Bxa8 22 b3 Rg5! and Black wins. Once again, however, it is possible to find an improvement for White, *viz.* 16 Bd2. Then Tseitlin and Glazkov gave 16...Ne8 17 Ng5 Rf5 18 Nf3 (18 c3 Bxg5 19 hxg5 Rxg5 is unclear) 18...Nf6 19 Qh3 Nxb3 20 axb3 e4 'with dangerous threats'. However, 21 0-0! exf3 22 Rxa7 Bc6 23 Nxb6 fxg2 24 Re1 is dangerous only for Black.

The most promising of all these attempts to improve on the stem game was played in Ekebjærg-Timmerman, correspondence 1991. Here Black continued **14...Bg7!?** (instead of 14...Bh6) 15 Bd2 Bxa8 16 0-0-0 Bf6 17 Bb4 a5 18 Bxd6 Qxd6 19 Nh3 Qc6 with a very unclear position. The finish of the game was both unusual and spectacular, so here are the remaining moves: 20 Ng5 a4! 21 Bc4 b5! 22 Nf7+ Kc7 23 Nxh8 Bxh8 24 h5! g5! 25 c3 bxc4 26 cxd4 cxd3+ 27 Kb1 Qc2+ 28 Ka1 a3! 29 Rb1 Be4! 30 Qd1 exd4! 31 Qf1! d6! 32 f3 Bf5 33 Qc1 d2 34 Qxc2+ Bxc2 35 Rhd1 d3! 36 Rxd2 Kb6! 0-1.

We can sum all this up by saying that, if Black plays 13...Nd4 at all, then he should follow Ekebjærg-Timmerman above; otherwise, he should stick to 13...Bh6.



White to move

14 Qg4?

Confronted by a new move, White immediately makes a serious mistake. This was an example of a little knowledge being a dangerous thing. White was aware of Nielsen-Altshuler and intended to transpose into it by 14...Nd4 15 Nh3, but he overlooked that Black has a much stronger alternative in which the c6-knight goes to e5 rather than d4.

While later analysts have all agreed that White is in trouble after the text-move, they have offered different opinions about White's best alternative and the correct evaluation of the position.

There are three other reasonable options, 14 Bd5, 14 Ne2 and 14 Bd2, each of which appears to be quite playable. We will consider them in turn:

1) **14 Bd5** is a very natural attempt to exploit Black's omission of ...Nd4, and it was the move I was most worried about during the game. Black can try:

1a) **14...Nd4 15 Bxb7 Nxf3+ 16 Bxf3.** In this position White has a material advantage, but the knight on a8 is still trapped. The direct line **16...e4 17 dxe4 Nxe4 18 Ne2 Re8!** (suggested by Dolmatov; not 18...d5?, which wins the knight but leaves Black's king fatally exposed after 19 0-0 Qb7 20 Bxf4 Bxf4 21 Nxf4 Qxa8 22 Rad1) is quite playable, and if 19 0-0 then simply 19...Qxh4. It is also possible to play more slowly by **16...Nf5 17 c3 Qc5!** (also Dolmatov's idea; not 17...Nxh4 18 Be4 Bg5, then White holds the knight secure until he can mount a rescue operation, playing c4, if need be, to prevent ...d5) 18 Ne2 d5 and Black threatens ...Re8 followed by ...e4.

This line can also be assessed as unclear.

1b) 14...Bxa8 is the move I believed best during the game, even though detailed analysis suggests that it is inferior. Taking on a8 wastes a tempo, but now that the knight is pinned by the bishop instead of the queen, the threat of ...Nd4 is renewed. There are three defences:



1b1) 15 Ne2 Nf5 (threatening 16...Ncd4) 16 c3 (16 Qg4 Qc5 is unclear after 17 Bxc6 Qxc6 or 17 Bb3 Nb4) 16...Nxh4 17 Qh3 Bg5 18 g3 Nf5, with an unclear position.

1b2) 15 c3 Re8 and now it appears that White can block the file by 16 Be4, but then comes 16...Nd4! 17 cxd4 Nxe4 18 dxe4 exd4 19 Kd1 (19 Kf1 Bxe4 20 Qe2 Bd3 and wins) 19...Bxe4 20 Qa3 Qe6 21 Nf3 Bd5 22 Nxd4 (22 Qd3 Bc4 23 Nxd4 Qd5 24 Qd2 Re4 wins) 22...Qg4+ 23 Kc2 Be4+ 24 Kc3 Bxg2 25 Rg1 Bg7 26 Qxa7 Qf3+ 27 Kb4 Bxd4 28 Qb8+ Ke7 29 Re1+ Be3 30 Qxe8+ Kxe8 31 Bxe3 Kf7 with a strong initiative for Black. White has a more solid alternative in 16 Ne2, but after 16...e4 17 Bxe4 (or 17 dxe4 Ne5 18 Qh3 Bxd5 19 exd5 f3, with a lethal check on d3 to follow) 17...Ne5 18 Qh3 Nxe4 19 dxe4 Bxe4 20 0-0 Bf5 21 Qh1 Nf3+ 22 gxf3 Qxe2 (threatening ...Bd3) 23 b3 Qd3 the appalling position of White's queen gives Black at least sufficient compensation for the exchange. The best move is 16 Nh3 (Dolmatov); after 16...Nd4! (16...e4 17 dxe4 Nd4 18 cxd4 Bxd5 19 0-0 is good for White) 17 cxd4 Bxd5 (not 17...exd4+? 18 Be4 Nxe4 19 0-0!) 18 Qxd5 exd4+ 19 Be3 fxe3 20 0-0 e2 21 Rfe1 Bd2 22 Rxe2 (22 Ng5 Bxe1 23 Rxe1 Kc7 is also unclear) 22...Qxe2 23 Qxd6 Qe5 the position is about equal.

Black has a potentially bad bishop, but White's knight is poorly placed on h3.

1b3) **15 Qg4!** Rf8 (15...e4 is less effective because 16 Bxf4 exd3+ 17 Kf1 Bxf4 18 Qxf4 Rf8 would produce a position arising in the game, but with the extra moves Bd5 and ...Bxa8 added; thus Black would not have, after 19 Qg5, the combination 19...Rxf2+ 20 Kxf2 Ne4+) preparing to play 16...e4.



White to move

Now **16 f3** might seem plausible, but on general principles it is undesirable to shut out the queen and 16...Nf5 introduces a new possibility for Black: the immediate threat is 17...Ng3 followed by ...Qc5, and if 17 Ne2 Nb4 18 Bxa8 (18 Bb3 Qc5 is awkward for White) 18...Nxc2+ 19 Kd1 Nxa1 then the knight cannot easily be trapped on account of the ...Qc5 danger. If 17 Bxc6 Bxc6 18 Ne2, then still 18...Qc5 19 c3 (19 Nc3 Ng3 wins for Black) 19...Qd6 and White's position is crumbling. Therefore **16 Ne2!** is best, when Black replies 16...e4. Now 17 dxe4? is a pattern we have seen already: 17...Ne5 18 Qh3 Bxd5 19 exd5 f3 20 gxf3 Nxf3+ 21 Kf1 Bxc1 22 Rxc1 Nc4, with a winning attack. 17 Bxf4 is another possibility, but after 17...Bxf4 18 Nxf4 exd3+ 19 Kf1 dxc2 20 Kg1 Nd4! Black again has an enormous attack. However, White can play 17 Bxc6 Bxc6 18 0-0 and now Black is struggling for compensation, for example 18...exd3 19 Nxf4 or 18...e3 19 fxe3 fxe3 20 Rxf8+ Qxf8 21 Qg3!. It is this line, in which White successfully threads his way through a maelstrom of complications, which casts doubt on 14...Bxa8.

2) **14 Bd2** is a suggestion by Konstantinopolsky and Lepeshkin aiming to bring the white king into safety on the queenside. Black can try:



Black to move

2a) The tempting **14...e4** 15 dxe4 leaves Black with an awkward choice since he has to commit his knight to e5 or d4; the former allows the white queen to settle at e2, while the latter permits Qd3. Here are some specific lines:

2a1) **15...Nd4** 16 Qd3 Bxe4 (or 16...Nxe4 17 Qxd4 Bg7 18 Qb4! and wins) 17 Qxd4 Bg7 18 Qb4 Bxg2+ 19 Ne2 Bxh1 20 Bxf4 should win for White.

2a2) **15...Ne5** 16 Qe2 Nxe4 17 Nf3 Ng4 18 Ng5 (threatening 19 Nf7+) 18...Bxg5 19 hxg5 Ngxf2 20 0-0 and the Black attack collapses.

2a3) **15...Nxe4** 16 0-0-0 Nxd2 (16...Ne5 17 Qe2 Nxd2 18 Qxd2 is very good for White) 17 Rxd2 Nd4 18 Rxd4 Bxf3 19 Nxf3 with too much material for the queen.

2b) **14...Nd4** (best) 15 Qg4 e4 16 0-0-0 e3 (Tseitlin and Glazkov correctly point out that 16...exd3 17 cxd3 Rf8 18 Nh3 is good for White) 17 fxe3 Nxb3+ 18 axb3 fxe3 19 Be1 e2+ 20 Rd2 and now Black has three possible lines. The first, **20...Re8**, is bad after 21 Nf3 Bxa8 22 Ng5! Qe3 (22...Nf7 23 Qf4 or 22...Nf5 23 Bf2 and then Re1) 23 Rh3. The second idea is **20...Bxa8** 21 Nxe2 (21 Nf3 Bxf3 22 Qxf3 Kc7 favours Black) 21...Re8 22 Nf4 Qe3 23 Bg3 (not 23 Rf1 Bxf4 and Black wins) 23...Nf5 24 Bh2 Nd4, but then 25 Rf1! Rf8 26 Kd1 favours White. The best plan is undoubtedly **20...Bxd2+** 21 Kxd2 Re8 22 Nxe2 Qe3+ 23 Kd1 h5 24 Qg5+ Qxg5 25 hxg5 Bxg2 with a more or less level endgame.

3) The third alternative, **14 Ne2** (Harding), concentrates on blocking the

e-file, but Black has an effective reply in 14...Nd4 15 Qh3 Nxe2 16 Kxe2 f3+ (16...Bxa8 17 Bd2 Rf8 18 f3 Nf5 19 Rae1 Ng3+ 20 Qxg3 fxg3 21 Bxh6 Kc7! is roughly equal according to Konstantinopolsky and Lepeshkin) 17 gxf3 Bxc1 18 Raxc1 (18 Rhxc1 Rf8 19 Qg3 Nf5 20 Qg5 Nd4+ 21 Kf1 Rf6 is also promising for Black) 18...Rf8 19 Kf1 Rxf3 20 Qg4 (20 Qg2 Nf5! creates several threats and is very good for Black) 20...Rf4! (not 20...Bxa8 21 Qg5 Rf6 22 Rh3 when White can defend) 21 Qh3 Bxa8 with very good compensation for the material.

The conclusion is that despite the wide range of defensive plans available to him, White does not appear to have any clear-cut way of gaining an advantage after 13...Bh6. However, it must be admitted that Black is reduced to just one move in many of these lines; this is often a suspicious sign, but perhaps it is not unexpected that if you sacrifice a rook then you have to follow it up precisely.

14...e4!



White to move

15 Bxf4

The fact that White's queen has moved to g4 voluntarily often costs White a move, and in such a position the lack of one development tempo can be disastrous. 15 dxе4 is met by 15...Qxe4+ 16 Ne2 Nd4 17 Kd1 (17 Be3 fxe3 18 Qxe4 exf2+ 19 Kf1 Nxe4 20 Nxd4 Be3 wins for Black) 17...Nxe2 18 Re1 (not 18 Qxe2 Qxg2) 18...Qd4+ 19 Kxe2 (19 Bd2 Qxb2 20 Kxe2 Ba6+ 21 Kf3 Nf5 with a crushing attack) 19...Ba6+ 20 Kf3 Ne4! and now White is

helpless, since 21 Rxe4 loses to 21...Qd1+. Nor can he repair the damage by 15 Ne2, since 15...exd3 16 cxd3 Ne5 17 Qh3 f3 18 gxf3 Bxc1 19 Rxc1 Nxd3+ 20 Kd2 Nxf2! 21 Qg2 Nxh1 22 Nxb6 Re8! leaves White in serious trouble.

15...exd3+

16 Kf1

It turns out that Black has a winning attack, but that does not mean that the correct moves are obvious. After the alternative 16 Kd1, for example, Black has to act quickly; both 16...Bxf4 17 Qxf4 Rf8 18 Qg5 and 16...dxc2+ 17 Bxc2 are far too slow. During the game I intended to play 16...Ne5, based on the following lines:



1) 17 Qg3 Nf5.

2) 17 Bg5 Nxg4 winning a piece.

3) 17 Bxh6 Nxg4 18 Bg5 Nf6.

4) 17 Bxe5 Qxe5 18 c3 (White can't allow 18...Qxb2) 18...Re8 19 Nh3 Bxg2 and White's position collapses.

However, there is a fifth line:

5) 17 Qg5!, a surprising move which turns the tables in White's favour.

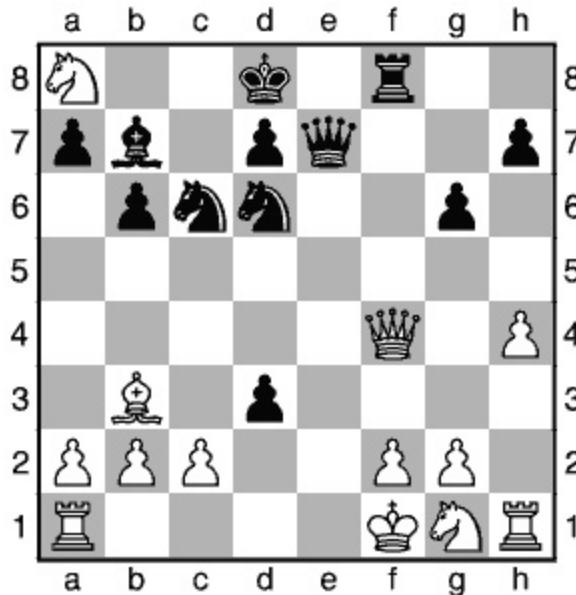
Such moves are not really difficult, of course (this one is only two moves deep); the problem in seeing them is psychological. I was analysing all sorts of aggressive and sacrificial ideas for Black and it simply didn't occur to me that White could also sacrifice something, even if only very temporarily.

The right plan against 16 Kd1 is to use both knights: 16...Ne4! 17 Nh3

(or 17 Bg3 Ne5 18 Qh3 dxc2+ 19 Bxc2 Qb4! and wins) and only now 17...Ne5 18 Bxe5 Qxe5 19 c3 (still forced) 19...Nxf2+ 20 Nxf2 Qe3, winning the queen or mating.

16...Bxf4

17 Qxf4 Rf8



White to move

Of course, with the king at f1 this is much stronger. White's misfortune is that he has no decent square for his queen, for example:

1) **18 Qg5** (18 Qd2 Ne4 leads to a similar position) 18...Rxf2+ 19 Kxf2 Ne4+ 20 Kf1 Nxg5 21 hxg5 dxc2 22 Bxc2 Ba6+ 23 Kf2 Qc5+ 24 Kg3 Qxg5+ 25 Kf2 Qc5+ wins for Black.

2) **18 Qc1 d2!** 19 Qd1 (19 Qxd2 Ne4 20 Qe3 Nxf2 21 Qxf2 Rxf2+ 22 Kxf2 Qc5+ 23 Kf1 Nd4 is also lost) 19...Ba6+ 20 Ne2 Qe3 21 Kg1 Rxf2 and now White's position collapses.

3) **18 Qh6** Nf5 19 Qf4 Ne3+ 20 fxe3 Rxf4+ 21 exf4 dxc2 22 Bxc2 Ba6+ 23 Kf2 Qc5+ 24 Kg3 Qxc2 with a large advantage for Black.

4) **18 Qh2 Ne4** will transpose to the game.

5) **18 Qg4** Ne4 19 Nf3 Ne5 20 Nxe5 (or 20 Qh3 Nxf3 21 gxf3 Nd2+) 20...Qxe5 21 Kg1 Rf4 22 Qd1 Nxf2 23 Qe1 Qc5 24 Qc3 Nxh1+ 25 Qxc5 bxc5 26 Kxh1 Rxh4+ 27 Kg1 Rg4 and wins.

6) **18 Qa4** b5! 19 Qa3 b4 20 Qa4 Rxf2+ 21 Kxf2 Ne4+ 22 Ke3 Qc5+! 23 Kxe4 Qd4+ 24 Kf3 Ne7+ followed by mate.

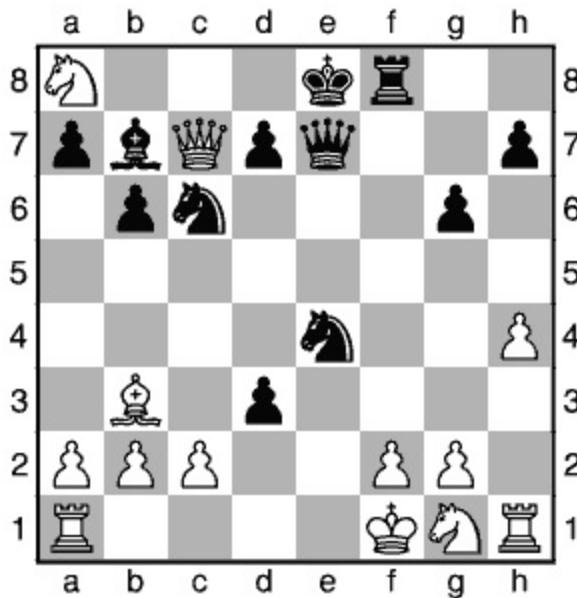
By a process of elimination, we arrive at the move White played in the

game:

18 Qg3 Ne4

Fortunately for Black, his minor pieces on the queenside are so placed as to limit White's 'counterplay' to one check. Nevertheless, this check drives Black's king onto the same file as his queen, a potential source of danger.

19 Qc7+ Ke8



White to move

20 Nh3

After 20 f3 Qc5! 21 Nh3 Nd2+ 22 Ke1 Qe3+ 23 Kd1 Qe2+ 24 Kc1 Nxb3+ Black forces mate, so the only real alternative is 20 Nf3, when Black continues 20...Qc5 21 Kg1 Rxf3!. In my 1974 notes I had assessed this position as better for Black. Undeterred by this, the 1986 correspondence game Wibe-Bryson continued: 22 Kh2 (22 cxd3 Qxf2+ 23 Kh2 Rf4! also wins for Black) 22...Qh5 23 Rhf1 Nd4 24 Rae1 (24 Be6 Qxh4+ 25 Bh3 Rxh3+ 26 gxh3 Nf3+ 27 Kg2 Qg5+ 28 Kh1 Nh4 wins) 24...d2 0-1.

It is worth noting that Black even has a second winning line in 21...Qxf2+ 22 Kh2 Rxf3 (Dolmatov) and now 23 Rhf1 Qxh4+ 24 Kg1 Rxf1+ 25 Rxf1 Ng3 26 Rf7 (there is nothing better) 26...Ne2+ 27 Kf1 Qh1+ 28 Kf2 Qg1+ 29 Kf3 Ne5#.

20...Nxf2

21 Nxf2



Black to move

There is no choice, since 21 Kg1 Qe3 forces White to capture and thus transpose.

21...Qe2+?

Here I missed a chance to win more quickly by 21...Qe3! (Basman) 22 Kg1 Rx_f2! (threatening 23...Rf4+ 24 Kh2 Rxh4#) 23 Re1 (23 Rh3 Rf3+ 24 Kh2 Rxh3+ 25 gxh3 Qf2+ 26 Kh1 Na5+ or 23 Rh2 Re2+ 24 Kh1 Re1+ and mates) 23...Re2+ 24 Kh2 Ne5 25 Qb8+ Ke7 and White cannot defend against the mating threats. The reason for overlooking 21...Qe3 is purely psychological; given the chance to take various white pieces with check, it is hard to imagine that there might be a stronger continuation which doesn't involve checking at all.

22 Kg1 Qxf2+

23 Kh2 Qxh4+

24 Kg1

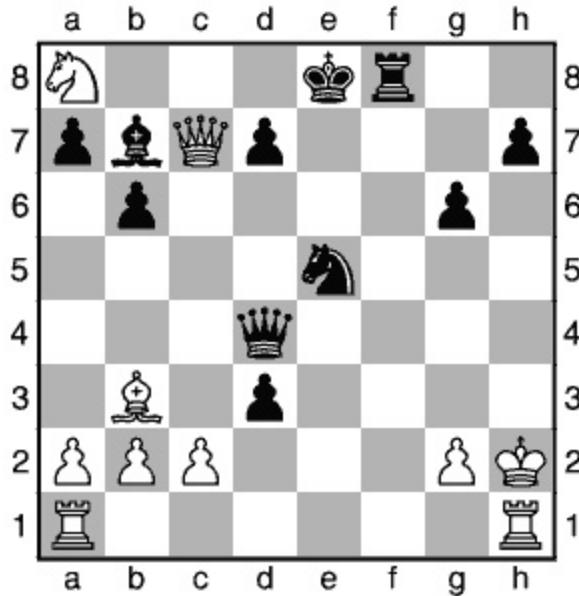
This is the point at which Black has to decide whether to take the draw or play for a win (it may have been because of this safety-net that I was instinctively attracted to the move 21...Qe2+). Black's options are fairly limited if he going to avoid the draw, as White threatens a deadly check on e1. Fortunately, the strength of Black's attack makes it fairly obvious that Black risks nothing in playing for a win, so I was able to resist the siren call of perpetual check without much difficulty.

24...Qd4+

Black has a second promising continuation in 24...Qf2+ 25 Kh2 Rf5, for

example 26 Rae1+ Kf8 27 Qd6+ Kg7 28 Qxd7+ Kh6 29 Qxf5 Qxf5 30 Nc7 Nd4! 31 Kg1+ Kg5, but this is less clear-cut than the text-move.

25 Kh2 Ne5!



White to move

To continue the attack, the knight and bishop must somehow be brought into play. Black's move threatens mate in three (by 26...Qh4+ 27 Kg1 Qf2+ 28 Kh2 Qxg2#) and cuts out any checks on the e-file, so White's defensive options are limited. Noting that any combinations based on Qxe5+ and Rae1 fail because Black takes on e5 with check, White can try, in addition to the game continuation: 1) **26 Qxb7 Ng4+ 27 Kh3** (27 Kg3 Qf4+ is quicker) 27...Nf2+ 28 Kh2 Qh4+ 29 Kg1 Qxh1#.

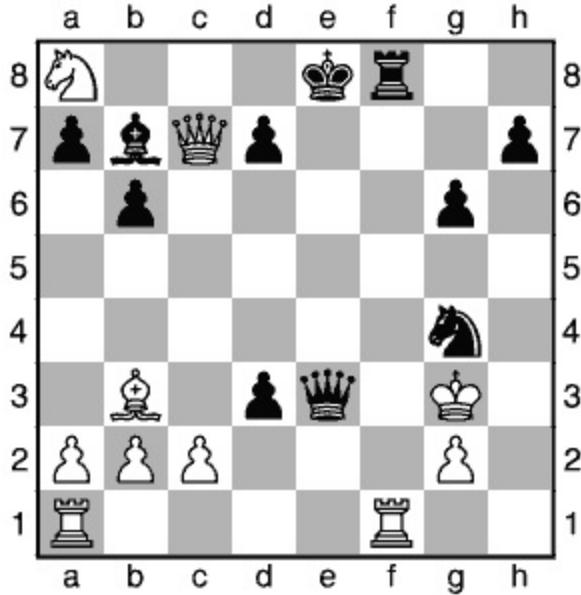
2) **26 Raf1** (covering f2 is the only hope) 26...Qh4+ 27 Kg1 Rxf1+.

26 Rhf1 Ng4+

27 Kg3

Or 27 Kh3 (27 Kh1 Bxg2+ is the same) 27...Bxg2+ 28 Kxg2 (28 Kg3 Bxf1 29 Re1+ Be2 wins) 28...Ne3+ and mate in three more moves.

27...Qe3+



White to move

Now 28 Rf3 loses most simply to 28...Bxf3, so the king has to come out. The position of White's king may look desperate in the extreme, but Black experiences curious difficulty in mating it. There are several reasons for this; first and foremost, there is actually no simple way to force mate; secondly, White's pieces control a number of useful squares and it would be quite easy, in the heat of battle, to forget that Black cannot check on g8 or h2, for example; thirdly, the sheer number of alternative checks at each move is confusing, and finally both players were running short of time.

28 Kxg4

After 28 Kh4, Black forces mate by 28...Qh6+ 29 Kxg4 (29 Kg3 Qh2+ 30 Kxg4 Qh5+ is the same) 29...Qh5+ 30 Kg3 Qg5+ 31 Kh3 Qxg2+ 32 Kh4 g5+ 33 Kh5 Qh3+ 34 Kxg5 h6+ 35 Kg6 Be4+ 36 Kg7 Qg4+ 37 Kxh6 Qg6#.

28...h5+

29 Kh4 g5+

Here I missed a shorter route: 29...Qe4+ 30 Kg5 Qe7+ 31 Kh6 (31 Kxg6 Be4+ 32 Kxh5 Rh8+ 33 Kg4 Qh4#) 31...Rh8+ 32 Kxg6 Be4+ 33 Rf5 Qh7+ and mate in two more moves. One quite often sees readers' letters in chess magazines pointing out missed quicker wins by famous players, often accompanied by a comment such as 'How could ... have missed a mate in three?' This rather misses the point. You don't get extra marks for winning quickly and, having found a forced win, it is better to spend the time available checking it rather than hunting around for a faster win which may or may not exist.

30 Kxh5 Rh8+

31 Kg6

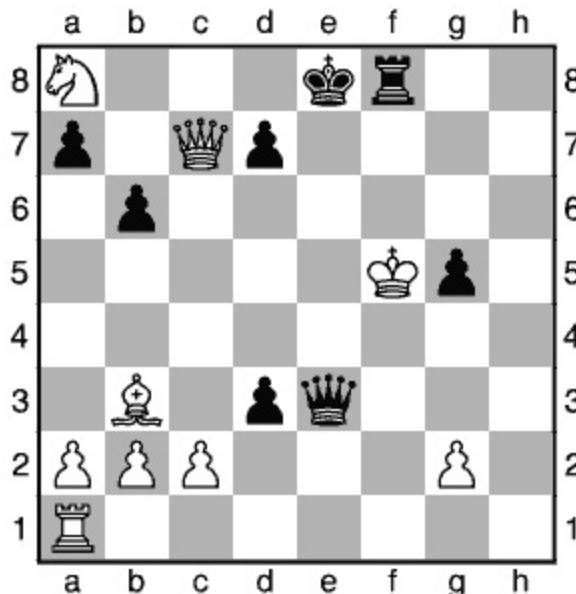
If 31 Kg4, then 31...Rh4+ 32 Kf5 Qe4+ and now either 33 Kf6 Rh6+ 34 Kxg5 Rg6+ 35 Kh5 Qg4# or 33 Kxg5 Rg4+ and mate next move.

31...Be4+

The entry of Black's third piece is the decisive factor. 32 Kf6 Rf8+ 33 Kg7 Qd4+ mates, or if 32 Kg7 Qd4+ 33 Rf6 Rh7+ 34 Kg8 Qxf6 (Black's only non-checking move in this whole phase of the game) then Black mates after White's single harmless check.

32 Rf5 Bxf5+

33 Kxf5 Rf8+



White to move

34 Kg6

34 Kg4 Qd4+ 35 Kh5 Qh8+ transposes into the game.

34...Qe4+

35 Kg7

35 Kxg5 Rf5+, 35 Kh6 Rf6+ and 35 Kh5 Qh7+ are all quicker.

Capturing the pawn always leaves the king wide open to checks on the g-and h-files.

35...Qe7+

36 Kg6 Qf6+

37 Kh5 Qh8+

38 Kg4

Black also mates after 38 Kxg5 Qg7+ or 38 Kg6 Rf6+.

38...Qh4#

This game was widely published, and not only in Britain. *Le Figaro* gave it with very detailed annotations and many exclamation marks.

My next three games netted 2½ points, and in the subsequent round there was again a nice finish.



White to move

J. Nunn – E. Meyer

World Student Team Championship, Teesside 1974

White's queen is attacked, and in addition Black threatens a dangerous discovered check on the long diagonal.

28 Ra7! Qb8

29 Rxf7?

While this attractive move gives White the advantage, there was an immediate win by the queen sacrifice 29 Rda1! Rxc4 30 Nxc4, and Black is helpless against the back-rank threats.

29...Ne5

The best defence. Both 29...Rxc4 30 Rxg7+ Kh8 31 Rb7+ Rc3 32 Rxb8+ Rxb8 33 Nxe6 and 29...Kxf7 30 Qxe6+ Kf8 31 Qf5+ Kg8 32 Qd5+ Kh8 33 Qxf3 win for White.

30 Rxg7+!

The rook single-handedly demolishes Black's entire kingside.

30...Kxg7



White to move

31 Nxe6+?

Missing an immediate win by 31 Qxe6 or 31 Bxe5+ dxe5 32 Rd7+ Kg8 33 Qe4.

31...Kf6?

After this White wins by force. 31...Kg8 was the only way to continue the game. It is strange that in the diagram position Black has an impotent queen and knight battery, but now it is White's turn to have the same formation. White could continue 32 Qe2 Bxe3 33 fxe3 Qb7+ 34 e4 with advantage, but the fight would not be over.

32 Bxe5+ dxe5 33 Nd5+! Kxe6 34 Qg4+

A surprise for Black. Once again, one player eschews the various discovered and double checks available.

34...Kf7 35 Nxb6 Rd8 36 Qf5+ Ke8 37 Qe6+ Be7 38 Rxd8+ Qxd8 39 Nd5 1-0

My performance at Teesside was marred by a last-round loss to Sax, but I was happy with my personal score of 8/11. Stean played extremely well, and these individual results helped England to fourth place.

As described earlier, I qualified for the 1974 British Championship, but I

started in the worst possible way with two consecutive losses. I scored 6 points from my next 8 games, only to unexpectedly lose on time in a drawn position in the last round. 6/11 was not a total disaster, but I was disappointed not to have made more of an impact. Then came the Robert Silk Young Masters tournament held in Paignton. This was an annual event for promising young British players, the first prize being a trip to the USSR. This may not sound like much of a prize, but more of that later.

I shared a room with Jonathan Mestel, who was in the habit of a pre-breakfast wake-up crossword. Early morning conversation:

Jonathan: 'What's another word for pariah?'

Me, sleepily, 'outcast'.

'Yes, that's it.'

My luck at Paignton extended beyond guessing crossword solutions, since in the last round I had been forced to jettison my queen for a rook, bishop and pawn against Howard Williams. It was the sort of position you might expect to draw after a long and patient defence, but Howard overpressed and his king was suddenly trapped in a mating net – I had won the tournament outright!

The *British Chess Magazine* published a photograph of the sponsor presenting me with a model racing car – no, I don't know what this has to do with a trip to the USSR, either.

In 1974 there was a repeat of the London Invitation Swiss which had been such a success the previous year. This time I was less successful, scoring 3/5, but I did win the Best Game Prize for the following game, which featured an unusual example of a queenside advance followed by a sacrificial kingside attack.

J. Nunn – S. Hutchings

London Invitation Swiss 1974

Sicilian, Scheveningen

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 d6 6 Be2 Be7 7 0-0 Nc6
8 Be3 Bd7 9 f4 a6 10 a4 Nxd4 11 Qxd4 Bc6 12 b4 0-0 13 b5 axb5 14 axb5
Be8?**

An error, allowing White to deflect Black's queen away from the centre. After 14...Rxa1 15 Rxa1 Bd7 16 e5 (16 Ra7 Qb8 is also fine for Black) Black can exploit the line-up of pieces on the f6-a1 diagonal: 16...Qc7! 17 b6 Qc8

and Black has no problems after either 18 exd6 Bxd6 19 Qxd6 Qxc3 or 18 Bf3 Bc6.

15 Rxa8 Qxa8

16 e5

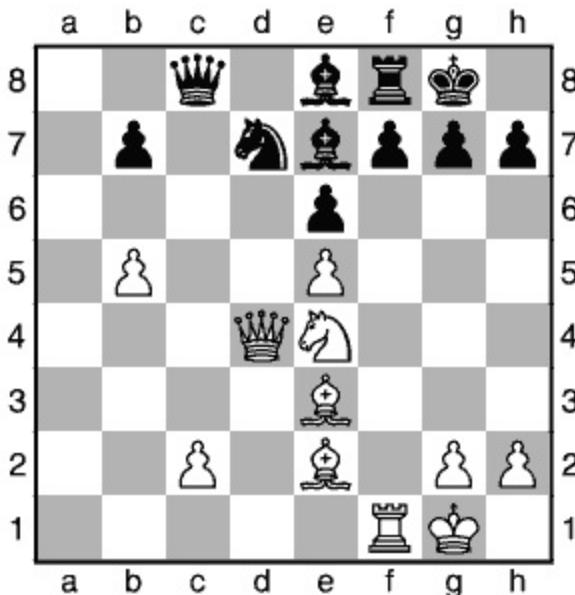
The offside queen gives White the chance to start a direct attack.

16...dxe5

Now 16...Qc8 fails to 17 exf6 Bxf6 18 Qxd6 Bxc3 19 Bc5.

17 fxe5 Nd7

18 Ne4 Qc8



White to move

19 Nf6+! Kh8

After 19...gxf6 20 exf6 Nxf6 21 Rxf6 Black has no defence:

1) 21...Bxf6 22 Qxf6 Qxc2 23 Bd4.

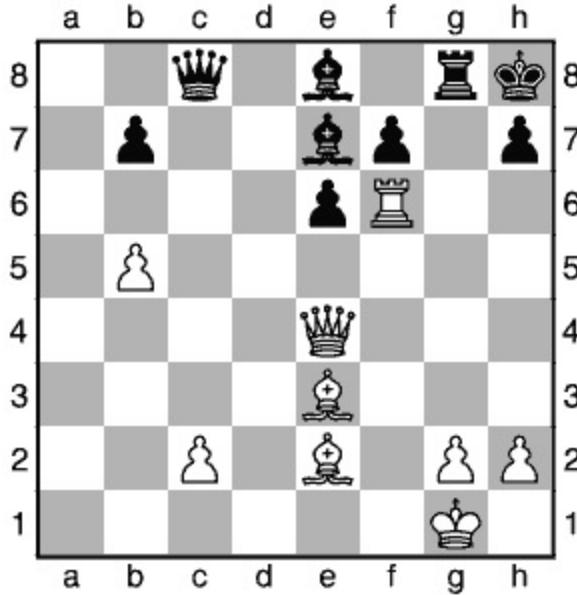
2) 21...Bd7 22 Qg4+ (superior to 22 Bd3 Bxf6 23 Qxf6 Qd8) 22...Kh8 23 Bd3 Bc5 (or 23...Bxb5 24 Bd4 e5 25 Qh5 Bxd3 26 Qxe5) 24 Bd4 e5 25 Qh4 Bxd4+ 26 Kh1.

3) 21...e5 22 Qe4 Bc5 23 Bd3 Bxe3+ 24 Kh1 Kg7 25 Qxe5 Kg8 26 Qxe3.

20 Qe4 Nxf6

20...gxf6 21 exf6 Bc5 (21...Nxf6 22 Rxf6 is the game) 22 Bd3 Bxe3+ 23 Kh1 Nxf6 24 Rxf6 Kg7 25 Qe5 Kg8 26 Qxe3 with a decisive attack.

21 exf6 gxf6 22 Rxf6 Rg8



White to move

23 Bd4 Rg7 24 Qe5 Bf8 25 Bd3 Kg8 26 Rh6 f6 27 Qxf6 1-0

Weekend Swiss tournaments were starting to become extremely popular, and the Cutty Sark Grand Prix (later to become the Leigh Grand Prix) was well under way. I didn't play systematically in weekend events until later in the 1970s, but I did compete occasionally during University term time, in order to keep in practice. In November, for example, I finished joint first with 5/6 in the Lambeth Weekend Open (known as LARA, for Lambeth Arts and Recreation Association).

At the end of the year I received an unexpected opportunity. There was tough competition for the right to represent England in major junior events – I was the same age as Miles, and Mestel was also very successful. I have always regretted never having had the chance to play in the World Junior Championship, but I was fortunate to be able to participate in the 1974/5 European Junior Championship at Groningen – Mestel was originally selected to compete, but then received an invitation to play in the Hastings Premier and decided to switch. I was chosen to replace Mestel, but Speelman was also sent on the off-chance that there might be an odd number of participants in which case, to make it up to an even number, he might be allowed to play. This plan did not come off, so I ended up sharing a room with the non-participating Speelman.

The system for this tournament was a little complicated, although normal at the time. There was a preliminary 7-round Swiss, after which the

top ten would play a round-robin for the Championship, the next ten would compete in Group ‘B’, and so on. The fun started at the drawing of lots, which was unusually elaborate. The players took turns to choose a tile with a letter on. The reverse of the tile specified a position in a crossword-style grid containing a second set of tiles with numbers on. You had to replace the number tile in the specified position with your letter tile; that was then your number in the draw. After a few tiles had gone up it was obvious that when the whole process was complete, the full crossword grid would spell the name of the tournament and the sponsor – all that practice with Mestel’s crosswords was coming in useful now. My turn came fairly near the end, and by quickly working the various possibilities backwards, I was able to select my first-round opponent. I chose Stephen Swanson of Scotland. Swanson had obviously made the same calculation, because when I reached for the critical tile he called out ‘Not that one!’.

My 18-move win in the first round was a good start to the preliminary Swiss. The prevailing opinion was that $4\frac{1}{2}/7$ would suffice to qualify for the Championship group, but I had noticed that if the Championship ended in a tie, the primary tie-break would be based on the score in the preliminary Swiss. In round 6 I was White against E. Rayner of Wales. Here I saw the chance to improve my tie-break situation and I decided to play for a win. All the boards around my game were quickly deserted, as the players on ‘+2’ drew quickly with each other. My plan ended successfully; I beat Rayner, and finished joint first with Paul van der Sterren in the Swiss event. Something curious happened to Rayner. He also lost in round 7, with Black, to D. Barlov of Yugoslavia. This left them both in group ‘B’. When the draw for this group was made, he faced Barlov in the first round, again with Black. This is the answer to the Chess Trivial Pursuit question: ‘In which tournament did the same two players meet in two consecutive rounds, with the same colours, and with the same result?’ The opening was different, however.

Sharing a room with a bored Jon Speelman did cause a few problems, not only because our sleeping hours were incompatible. I had made the mistake of taking the book *Domination in 2,545 Endgame Studies* by G. Kasparian with me for some light reading. Jon took quite a liking to this book, and his bedtime reading (while I was trying to sleep) consisted of solving these studies one by one, *out loud*. I think he had reached approximately number 200 when he decided it was too frustrating to watch a tournament in which he had hoped to play, and left Groningen.

I won my first two games in the final group, then lost to Szekely of Hungary, who turned out to be my main rival. I also lost in round 4, but then came an important victory against Van der Sterren. I already had a tie-break advantage against all the players except Van der Sterren (based on results in the Preliminary); as the secondary tie-break criterion was the result of the individual game in the Final, this meant that I was guaranteed to win in any tie-break situation, thus effectively giving me a half-point advantage. The following game was played in round 6 of the Final:

Game 2

F. Borkowski – J. Nunn

European Junior Championship, Groningen 1974/5

Pirc Defence

- 1 e4 g6**
- 2 d4 Bg7**
- 3 Nc3 d6**
- 4 f4 Nf6**
- 5 Nf3 0-0**
- 6 Bd3 Na6**

The point of this move is to prepare ...c5, the immediate 6...c5 being bad because of 7 dx_c5 dx_c5 8 e5 Nd5 9 Nx_d5 Qx_d5 10 Qe2 when White has preserved the e5-pawn which shuts Black's g7-bishop out of the game. After 6...Na6 followed by ...c5, on the other hand, Black will be able to recapture on c5 with a piece. At the time this game was played, 6...Na6 was considered doubtful due to the variation 7 e5 Ne8 8 Be3 c5 9 dx_c5 Nx_c5 10 Bx_c5 dx_c5 11 Qe2 and again the e5-pawn constricts Black's pieces. Instead, the main theoretical line was 6...Nc6, preparing ...e5. Before the European Junior Championship I had the idea of playing 6...Na6 7 e5 and then 7...Nd7, so as to be able to exert more pressure on e5. Obviously there are dangers associated with shutting in the c8-bishop, but a quick check revealed no obvious flaw, and I played it twice during the tournament. Since 7 e5 was regarded as the 'refutation' of 6...Na6, it is hardly surprising that both my opponents chose this reply. As a result of these and other games, 6...Na6 became much more popular and by now a substantial amount of theory has built up. Currently the more solid 7 0-0 is considered the best line for White, but in 1974 this was all unknown territory.

7 e5

Of course 7 Bxa6 bxa6 would be an unprofitable exchange because Black would put his bishop pair and open b-file to good use long before the theoretical weakness of his a-pawns could be exploited.

7...Nd7



White to move

8 h4

8 Be3 is nowadays reckoned to be the best move, and **8 Ne4** is also interesting, but lack of space unfortunately forbids any treatment of them here. Of course, 8 h4 is very dangerous in practice, even though it is not quite sound. In an earlier round of this tournament (against Bichsel) I had faced another aggressive line: **8 Ng5 Nb6** (8...h6?! 9 Nxf7 Rxf7 10 e6 Rf6 11 exd7 Bxd7 12 Ne4 appears promising for White because Black's kingside pawns are slightly weak) 9 Be3, but after 9...Nb4 White faced an awkward choice. In the game White allowed his important d3-bishop to be exchanged, but after 10 0-0 Nxd3 11 Qxd3 Bf5 12 Qe2 f6 13 Nge4 Qd7 Black had a perfectly satisfactory position with pressure on White's centre and a potentially strong bishop pair. However, White had little choice as 10 Be2 Bf5 11 Rc1 dx5, followed by 12...N6d5, would have been awkward, or if 10 Be4, then Black could happily choose between 10...Nc4 and 10...d5 11 Bf3 Bf5. Bichsel could also have tried the delayed 9 h4, but again 9...Nb4 10 h5 (10 Be2 dx5 11 fxe5 Qxd4!) 10...Nxd3+ 11 Qxd3 Bf5 12 Qe2 Qd7 gives Black a grip on the light squares to offset the danger of a kingside attack.



Black to move

Borkowski had the advantage of having seen the earlier game and had obviously prepared 8 h4, since he flashed both it and his next couple of moves out at high speed.

8...c5

Borkowski was evidently not satisfied that he had made the most of his chances in this game because he adopted the same line five years later (Borkowski-Balcerowski, Poland 1979). Alas, he met with an even worse fate! That game continued 8...dxe5 (in one sense better than 8...c5 because Black will shortly be in a position to take on e5 with a piece instead of a pawn; on the other hand, White's c1-bishop is now released) 9 fxe5 (9 dxe5 Ndc5 is fine for Black) 9...c5 10 h5 (10 e6 fxe6 11 h5 looks more promising, but Black has 11...Qc7, threatening ...Qg3+, and White has nothing clear, for example 12 Ne4 c4 13 Be2 Nf6 with a satisfactory game for Black) 10...cxd4 11 hxg6 hxg6 (11...dxc3 is too dangerous on account of 12 Ng5! and now 12...Qa5 13 Qh5! cxb2+ 14 Kd1 bxc1Q+ 15 Rxc1 h6 16 gxf7+ Kh8 17 Qg6, 12...hxg6 13 Bxg6, or 12...h6 13 gxf7+ Kh8 14 Ne6) 12 e6 dxc3! (12...fxe6? 13 Bxg6 dxc3 14 Bh7+ Kh8 15 Bf5+ Kg8 16 Bxe6+ Rf7 17 Ng5 wins) 13 exf7+ (13 Ng5 can safely be met by 13...Ne5 14 exf7+ Nxf7) 13...Rxf7 14 Bxg6 (14 Bc4 e6 15 Bxe6 Qe7 is not good enough) 14...Rxf3 (not 14...cxb2 15 Bxf7+ Kxf7 16 Ng5+ Kf8 17 Ne6+ Kg8 18 Nxd8 and Black cannot regain his material since White threatens mate with Qd5+) 15 Qd5+ (15 Qxf3 Nf6 and 15 gxf3 Qb6 also favour Black) 15...e6! (to break the pin on the knight) 16 Qxe6+ Kf8 17 gxf3 Ne5 (as so often happens, once one player's attack

collapses the counterattack is deadly) 18 Rh8+ Bxh8 19 Bh6+ Bg7 20 Qxe5 Qd2+ 21 Bxd2 cxd2+ 22 Kxd2 0-1.

The lesson of this example is that once White commits himself to 8 h4 his centre is bound to collapse, and he simply must keep the attack going full blast. Any quick attack uses up resources (whether of material, time, pawn structure, king security or whatever) and if the attack fails you are left flat on your back, lacking the strength to meet the counterattack in the centre which will inevitably hit you.

The defender, for his part, must take great care not to lose any time (obviously one tempo can make all the difference in such a sharp position), be on the lookout for a chance to gain the initiative by returning any sacrificed material and above all keep cool and calmly assess the opponent's possibilities. It is very easy to lower your guard for a moment and miss a tactical point. A prolonged battering, requiring accurate defensive play at every move, can wear down even very strong players and cause them to miss their way.

9 h5

This time 9 e6 fxe6 10 h5 cxd4 11 hxg6 h6 yields White very little on the kingside, and his centre has collapsed completely.

9...cxd4



10 hxg6

Retracing our steps a bit, it is worth comparing the current position with

that arising in another theoretical line, namely 6 e5 Nfd7 7 h4 c5 8 h5 cxd4 9 hxg6 (after 9 Qxd4 dxe5 10 Qf2 e4! 11 Nxe4 Nf6 12 Nxf6+ exf6 13 hxg6 Re8+ 14 Be3 Black gets a good game with either recapture) when we have the game position, but without the moves Bd3 and ...Na6. This difference proves very significant. In the 6 e5 line Black can and should take the knight on c3, as if he plays 9...hxg6 White gets a very dangerous attack by 10 Qxd4 Nc6 (or 10...dxe5 11 fxe5 Nxe5 12 Qh4) 11 Qf2 (for example, 11...Re8 12 Qh4 Nf8 13 f5 Bxf5 14 Bh6). However, after 9...dxc3 the only real question is whether or not White can make a draw. Readers should refer to a book on the Pirc Defence if they are interested in the details.

In Borkowski-Nunn (as in Borkowski-Balcerowski) the added moves cause the situation to be reversed; the position of the bishop at d3 makes 10...dxc3 too dangerous (see the next note), while 10...hxg6 is more favourable for Black because the queen cannot now reach h4 via d4 and f2!

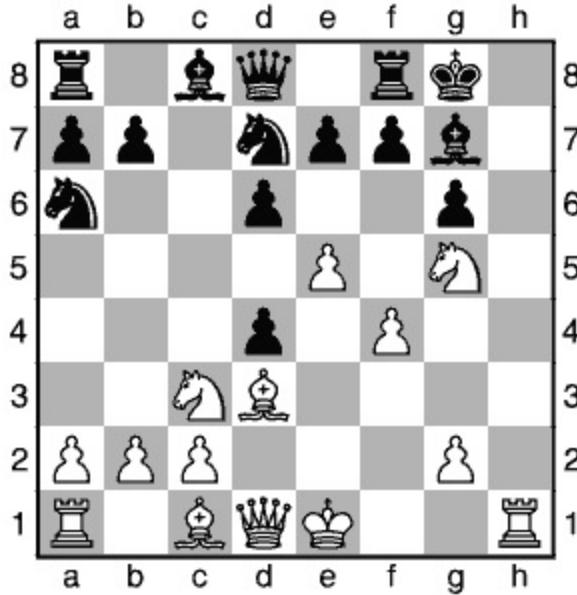
On general principles one might expect Bd3 to be more useful than ...Na6, but precise analysis shows that Black has a good game in any case. It follows that 8 h4 is objectively bad, but I find it hard to dole out a question mark since such moves have to be played once (or twice, in Borkowski's case).

10...hxg6

10...fxg6 is still bad, as you might expect: 11 Bc4+ Kh8 12 Ng5 h6 13 Qd3! Qe8 14 Rxh6+! Bxh6 15 Qh3 Kg7 16 Ne6+ Kh7 17 f5 and wins. Also after 10...dxc3 White has a clear-cut win by 11 Ng5 hxg6 (or 11...h6 12 gxf7+ Kh8 {12...Rxf7 13 Bh7+} 13 Rxh6+ Bxh6 14 Qh5) 12 Bxg6 Nf6 (12...fxg6 13 Qd5+ and 12...cxb2 13 Qh5 are hopeless) 13 exf6 fxg6 14 fxg7 Kxg7 15 Qd4+ e5 (or 15...Rf6 16 Rh7+ Kg8 17 Rh8+) 16 Rh7+ Kf6 17 fxe5+ dxe5 18 Qxd8+ Rxd8 19 Rf7#.

11 Ng5

11 Qe2 dxc3 12 Qf2 would be unsound on account of 12...dxe5 13 Qh4 (13 fxe5 Nxe5 14 Qh4 Nxd3+ 15 cxd3 f6 refutes the attack) 13...Nf6 14 fxe5 Re8 15 exf6 exf6+ 16 Kf1 Be6 17 Qh7+ Kf8 18 Bh6 Bxh6 19 Qxh6+ Ke7, etc.



Black to move

The text move stops 11...dxc3 because of 12 Bxg6, with the same variations as given above. At the same time Qg4-h4, Qf3-h3 and e6 are all in the air.

11...dxe5

It is so natural to eliminate an important central pawn and give the knight access to f6 that I didn't consider any other moves, but it turns out that there are two alternatives, 11...Ndc5 and 11...Nxe5:

1) **11...Ndc5** (this is better than 11...Nac5 because it releases the c8-bishop, thereby nullifying the manoeuvres Qf3-h3 and Qg4-h4) aims to eliminate the dangerous d3-bishop. If it can be exchanged, the light squares (chiefly the diagonal h3-c8) will fall under Black's control and the attack will be correspondingly weakened. White can reply:



White to move

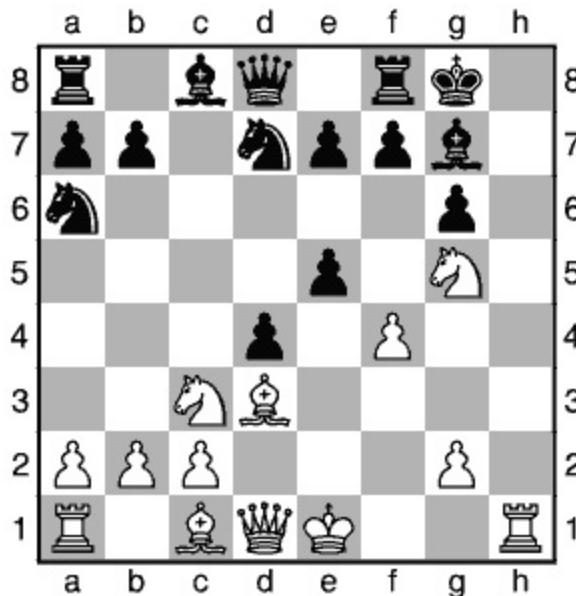
1a) **12 Nce4** Nxe4 13 Bxe4 Nc5 14 Nxf7!? (White must do something quickly) 14...Rxf7 15 Bxg6 Be6 16 Bxf7+ Bxf7 17 Qxd4 Qd7, with ...Qg4 to come, trapping White's king in the centre and taking over the initiative.

1b) **12 f5** Nxd3+ 13 Qxd3 Bxf5 (still not 13...dxc3? 14 Rh8+! Bxh8 15 Qh3 followed by mate) 14 Qxd4 Qa5 (but not 14...Bxe5? 15 Qh4, when 15...Re8 is unplayable, nor 14...dxe5?! 15 Qh4 Re8 16 Qh7+ Kf8 17 Ne6+ fxe6 18 Bh6 Bxh6 19 Rxh6 g5 20 Qh8+ Kf7 21 Rh7+ Bxh7 22 Qxh7+ Kf8 23 Ke2 Qd4 24 Rf1+ Qf4 25 Ne4 with dangerous threats) 15 Qh4 Qxe5+ 16 Nce4 Rfc8, and if 17 Bf4, then 17...Qxb2 18 Qh7+ Kf8 and the attack is exhausted. Notice how the centralised position of the black queen almost effortlessly frustrates the attack based on Qh7+, Ne6+ and Bh6. In the subsequent analysis we will often see how the black queen saves the day, either by harassing the white king or by defending some vital spot.

1c) **12 Kf2!** is best, with the powerful threat of 13 Rh8+ Bxh8 14 Qh1 forcing mate. It would be very easy to overlook a sneaky move like Kf2, but the Rh8+ idea is entirely typical for this sort of position, so it is worth thinking about whether White can set it up. Black's best reply is 12...Nxd3+ 13 cxd3 Re8, when White has two possible means of continuing his attack. The immediate 14 Rh8+ Bxh8 15 Qh1 Bg7 16 Qh7+ Kf8 17 f5 seems to lead to a draw after 17...Bxf5 18 Ne6+ fxe6 19 Bh6 Bxh6+ 20 Qxh6+ Kf7 (20...Kg8 21 Rh1), but 14 Nce4 may be good for White, swinging another piece over to the kingside while reserving Rh8+ for a more favourable moment.

2) 11...Nxe5 is based on the idea of breaking up White's pawn centre with gain of tempo. After 12 fxe5 dxc3 White's most dangerous move is still 13 Kf2!. Then the game de Firmian-Van der Wiel, Wijk aan Zee 1986 continued 13...dxe5 14 Be3 (14 Rh8+ Bxh8 15 Qh1 Kg7 16 Qh7+ Kf6 17 Nxf7 Qd4+! 18 Be3 Qg4 defends) 14...Qd6 (again the queen comes to the rescue, this time preparing to support the long diagonal with gain of tempo by ...Qf6+) 15 Rh4 (15 Rh8+ Bxh8 16 Qh1 Qf6+ and 17...Qg7 defends) 15...cxb2 16 Rb1 Rd8 17 Qh1 Qf6+ 18 Kg1 Rxd3 19 cxd3 Bf5 20 Nh7 Qd6 21 Ng5 Qf6 22 Nh7 Qd6 23 Ng5 with a draw by repetition. However, the move 13...Bxe5 would have been more dangerous for White. The sacrifice 14 Rh8+ fails to 14...Bxh8 15 Qh1 Kg7 16 Qh7+ Kf6 17 Nxf7 Ke6! 18 Qxg6+ Kd7 19 Bf5+ Kc7 20 Nxd8 Bxf5 with far too much for the queen, so there would be nothing better than to play 14 Be3. Then 14...e6 again prepares a possible ...Qf6+, so White would have to continue 15 Ke2, with some attacking chances to compensate for the three-pawn deficit. Although this may well favour Black, 11...dxe5 is also promising, so 11...Nxe5 is not clearly better than the move played. It is worth noting that after 11...dxe5, 12 Kf2 is completely ineffective because of 12...Nf6.

Returning to the position after 11...dxe5:



White to move

12 f5!

This imaginative move is much the best chance, but it cost White well over an hour on the clock. The alternatives fail dismally, as follows:

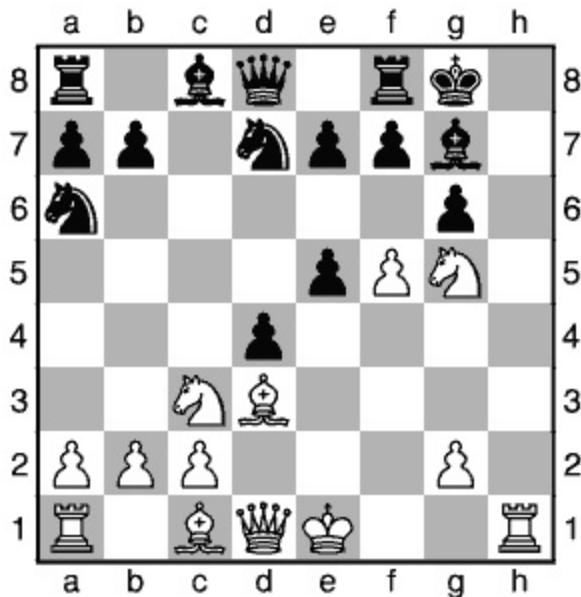
1) 12 fxe5 Nxe5 and White is simply two pawns down for nothing.

2) 12 Qf3 Nf6 13 Bxa6 (or 13 fxe5 dxc3 14 exf6 exf6 and wins)

13...dxc3 14 fxe5 Bg4 and wins.

3) 12 Qg4 Nf6 13 Qh4 dxc3 14 fxe5 (if 14 Ne4 or 14 Nh7, then 14...Re8 15 Nxf6+ exf6 16 Qh7+ Kf8 and White has nothing) 14...Nh5 15 g4 Qd4! 16 gxh5 Qxh4+ 17 Rxh4 Bxe5 with the decisive threats of 18...cxb2 and 18...Bg3+. In this line we can again see the typical defensive move by the black queen.

The strength of 12 f5 lies in its threat against g6, combined with the release of the c1-bishop. White now has several pieces participating in the kingside attack, and Black's defence has to be extremely precise. It was now my turn to think for more than an hour, and in the end I came up with a plan involving the return of the sacrificed material. With the benefit of a couple of decades' analysis (!), it seems that this decision was correct.



Black to move

12...Nf6!

First of all, 12...dxc3 does not come into consideration because of 13 fxg6 Nf6 (forced, because the threats are 14 gxf7+ and 14 Qh5; 13...f6, 13...f5 and 13...fxg6 are all met by 14 Bc4+) 14 gxf7+ Rxf7 15 Bh7+ winning the queen.

12...Ndc5 is only slightly better. White should reply 13 fxg6 Nxd3+ 14 cxd3! (after 14 Qxd3 fxg6 15 Qc4+ e6 16 Nxe6 Bxe6 17 Qxe6+ Rf7 18 Ne4 Nb4! Black has the advantage) 14...fxg6 (14...f5 15 Qb3+ wins) 15 Qb3+ e6

16 Nxe6 Bxe6 17 Qxe6+ Rf7 18 Ne4 Nb4 19 Nd6 Qd7 20 Qxf7+ Qxf7 21 Nxf7 Nc2+ 22 Kd1 Nxa1 and now it is clear that Black's knight is in serious trouble.

However, most of the hour was spent deciding between 12...Nf6 and 12...gxf5. In the end I decided on purely intuitive grounds. Although I couldn't see a concrete refutation of 12...gxf5, I felt that grabbing another pawn was just too greedy and that White ought to 'have something'. The 'something' was only discovered after a combined analytical effort by myself, Dolmatov and Dvoretsky spread over several years! It is quite pleasant to have an intuitive decision vindicated, especially as for over 10 years I felt sure that the move played was a mistake.

Here, then, is the analysis of 12...gxf5. White's choice lies between the obvious moves 13 Bxf5 and 13 Qh5 and the far from obvious 13 Nce4:



White to move

1) **13 Bxf5** can be disposed of readily enough; after 13...Nf6 (still not 13...dxc3? 14 Bh7+ Kh8 15 Bg6+ Kg8 16 Qh5) 14 Bxc8 (or 14 Bh7+ Nxh7 15 Rxh7 Bf5 16 Qh5 Qd6, followed by ...Qg6) 14...Qxc8 15 Nce4 Nxe4 16 Nxe4 Qf5 the arrival of the black queen again signals the collapse of the attack.

2) **13 Qh5** is the most natural move. After 13...Nf6 White can play:

2a) **14 Qh2** is weak simply because a later ...Ng4 hits the queen:

14...dxc3 15 Ne4 (15 Nh7 Ng4) 15...fxe4 16 Bxe4 Re8 17 Bh7+ Kf8 18 Bh6 Ng4, for example.

2b) **14 Qh3** has the flaw of placing the queen on the c8-h3 diagonal. Black wins after 14...dxc3 15 Nh7 Ng4 16 Nf6+ (16 Ng5 Nh6 17 Ne6 cxb2! 18 Nxe7 bxa1Q 19 Qxh6 Qxc1+ 20 Qxc1 f4 21 Qd1 Qa5+ 22 Kf1 e4 23 Bxe4 Kxg7 and wins) 16...Nxf6 17 Bh6 f4 18 Qh4 cxb2 19 Rd1 (19 Rb1 amounts to the same thing, 19 Bxg7 loses to 19...bxa1Q+ and ...Qxh1, and 19 Qg5 bxa1Q+ either mates or wins the queen) 19...Qa5+ 20 Kf1 e4! 21 Bxg7 Qh5 22 Qxh5 Nxh5 and Black emerges from the complications a piece and several pawns up.

2c) **14 Qh4** (the most dangerous move) 14...dxc3 and now the black knight has to be driven from f6, whatever the cost, but both reasonable attempts just fail:



White to move

2c1) **15 Nh7 Ng4 16 Ng5** (16 Nf6+ Nxf6 17 Bh6 looks powerful, but after 17...Qd4! 18 Qg5 Qg4 the attack disintegrates) 16...Nh6 17 Nh7 (17 Ne6 fxe6 18 Bxh6 Qd4 and 17 Ne4 Qb6 are also winning for Black) 17...Qd4 18 Qxd4 exd4 19 Nxf8 cxb2 and Black wins.

2c2) **15 Ne4 fxe4** and now **16 Bxe4** fails to 16...Re8 17 Bh7+ (17 Bh6? Qd4) 17...Kf8 18 Bh6 Qd2+! (nothing else will do because the king cannot escape via e7 or e8, but, as so often, the counter-sacrifice turns the tables completely) 19 Bxd2 cxd2+ 20 Kxd2 Rd8+ and Black is winning, with both a material and a positional advantage. With the disappearance of one vital piece White's attack has dried up altogether, and his own king will soon be coming under fire.

The other attacking idea is **16 Bh6**, but this fails to 16...cxb2 17 Rd1 Bf5! 18 Qg5 (or 18 Bxg7 Nh7 19 Qg3 Qb6 20 Bf6+ Bg6 and wins) 18...Bg6 19 Bxg7 Nh7 20 Rxh7 (anything else would be too slow) 20...exd3 21 Bxe5 (the king escapes after 21 Rh8+ Kxg7 22 Qh6+ Kf6) 21...Qa5+ 22 Kf1 Qxe5 23 Qxe5 Bxh7 and Black wins. 20...Bxh7 is a playable alternative to 20...exd3 because 21 Bf6+ Bg6 22 Bc4 (threatening Qxg6+) can be answered by 22...Qxd1+ 23 Kxd1 b1Q+ 24 Kd2 Rad8+ 25 Ke2 Qxc2+ and ...Qxc4. However, 20...Qa5+ 21 Kf1 Bxh7 would be a blunder, permitting 22 Bc4! Qd2 (22...e6 23 Bf6+ Bg6 24 Qh6) 23 Rxd2 b1Q+ 24 Ke2 and White wins.. The point of this peculiar idea is to keep the black knight out of f6, even at the cost of a piece. Black can reply: 3) **13 Nce4!**



Black to move

3a) **13...fxe4** 14 Nxe4 and now:

3a1) **14...Nf6** 15 Nxf6+ exf6 16 Bh7+ Kh8 17 Qh5 and wins.

3a2) **14...Qb6** 15 Qh5 Qg6 (or 15...Rd8 16 Qh7+ Kf8 17 Bh6 winning)

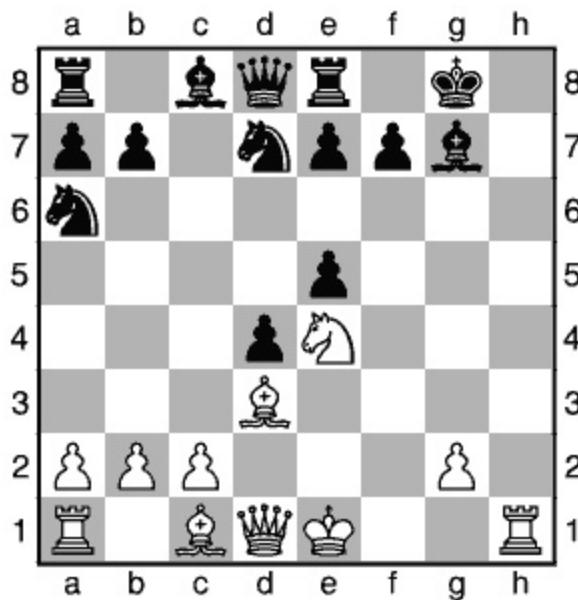
16 Qxg6 fxg6 17 Bc4+ Rf7 18 Ng5 with a clear advantage for White.

3a3) **14...e6** (if 14...f6 or 14...f5 at once, then 15 Bc4+ is decisive) 15 Qh5 f5 (15...Re8 16 Qh7+ Kf8 17 Bh6! is again decisive) 16 Qh7+ Kf7 17 Bg5 (clearer than 17 Ng5+ Ke7 18 Qxg7+ Kd6) 17...Qb6 (17...fxe4 18 0-0+ Nf6 19 Bxf6 wins, while 17...Qa5+ 18 Ke2 only helps White to use his other rook) 18 Qh5+ Kg8 19 Qg6 (there are various threats, chiefly 20 Rh7 Rf7 21 Bh6, and Black has few defences) 19...Rf7 (19...fxe4 fails against 20 Qh7+ Kf7 21 Rf1+ Ke8 22 Qg6+, or if 19...Qxb2 then 20 Qh7+ Kf7 21 Nd6#) 20

Rh8+ Kxh8 21 Qxf7 Qxb2 22 Rd1 and Black cannot prevent the rook reaching the h-file.

3a4) 14...Nb4 15 Qh5 (15 Bh6 Nxd3+ 16 Qxd3 Qb6 is less dangerous) 15...Nxd3+ 16 cxd3 f6 17 Qh7+ Kf7 18 0-0 gives White a very dangerous attack. Black cannot save the g7-bishop from the various threats of Bh6 and Ng5+, and then he will only have the consolation of two extra pawns to compensate for his extremely exposed king.

3a5) 14...Re8 (Yusupov) should not be met by 15 Rh8+ Kxh8 16 Qh5+ Kg8 17 Ng5 Nf6 18 Bh7+ Nxh7 19 Qxf7+ Kh8 20 Qh5 Bf5 21 Nf7+ Kg8 22 Nxd8 Rf8, which wins Black's queen but loses the game.



White to move

Instead White has at least two promising lines.

The first is the simple 15 Qh5 Nf6 16 Nxf6+ exf6 17 Bh6 Kf8 18 Bxg7+ Ke7 19 0-0, which gives White a colossal initiative. The other variation is 15 Bh6, when Dvoretsky gives the variations 15...Bxh6 16 Rxh6 Nf6 17 Qd2 Nxe4 18 Bxe4 f6 19 Rh7, 15...Nf6 16 Bxg7 Qa5+ 17 Kf1 Kxg7 18 Qc1 and 15...Qb6 16 Bxg7 Kxg7 17 Rh7+ Kg8 18 Qh5 Qg6 19 Rh8+ Kg7 20 Qxg6+ fxg6 21 Rxe8, all of which win for White.

3b) 13...Qb6. For a long time I thought that this move enabled Black to defend, but Dolmatov found the excellent reply 14 Bc4!, the main point being that 14...Qb4+ fails to 15 Bd2 Qxc4 16 Rh8+! Bxh8 17 Qh5 with unavoidable mate. Nor does 14...Qg6 (14...fxe4 15 Qh5) help, as 15 Nxf7 e6 (15...Rxf7 16 Ng5) 16 Nh6+ Bxh6 17 Rxh6 is very good for White.

Returning to the game, the move played aims to regain the initiative at the cost of some material. The complete removal of the black king's pawn cover makes it especially important that White's pieces are kept relatively passive, because if they become active there will be no saving the king.

13 fxg6

Not 13 Nce4? Bxf5 14 Nxf6+ exf6 15 Bxf5 fxg5, when Black just has three extra pawns.

13...Bg4

The intention behind Black's previous move. Both 13...dxc3? 14 gxf7+ Rxf7 15 Bh7+ and 13...fxg6? 14 Bc4+ e6 15 Nxe6 are still unplayable.

14 gxf7+ Rxf7



White to move

15 Ne2

White's choice is limited because his knight is under attack, but this is undoubtedly the best move. Most of the other options involve the exchange of queens, but in each case the resulting endgame position is unattractive:

1) **15 Bg6** Bxd1 16 Bxf7+ Kf8 17 Ne6+ (17 Nxd1 Nc7) 17...Kxf7 18 Nxd8+ Rxd8 19 Nxd1 Nb4 20 0-0 (20 Kd2? Ne4+ costs a rook) 20...Nxc2 21 Rb1 e4 and Black's central passed pawns and active pieces give him a decisive advantage.

2) **15 Qxg4** Nxg4 16 Bh7+ Kf8 17 Ne6+ Ke8 18 Nxd8 Rxd8 19 Ne4 Nb4 20 Ng5 Rf6, and Black's extra pawn, together with the possibility of playing ...Nd5-e3, slightly outweighs his bad bishop and White's blockade on

e4.

3) 15 Nxf7 Kxf7 (15...Qa5 16 Be2 dxc3 17 b4! Bxe2 18 Qxe2 Nxb4 19 Nh6+ is unclear) 16 Be2 (16 Ne2 Qd5 transposes into the note to White's 16th) 16...Bxe2 17 Nxe2 Qd5 18 Rh2 Qe4 19 Qd3 (otherwise ...Nb4) 19...Qxd3 20 cxd3 Nb4 21 Kd2 Ng4 22 Rh3 Rc8 and Black's initiative is worth far more than his slight material disadvantage.

These three lines are a good illustration of the principle of 'active defence'. Black does not try to hang on to his material advantage, but is even prepared to go material down himself to regain the initiative. In the current game Black's main asset is his central pawn mass; the main defect of his position is his exposed king. Once queens are exchanged the danger to his king is eliminated, and the pawns become a potent force. Therefore it is worth giving up, say, the exchange for a pawn in order to swap queens.



15...Qd5?!

This move, which threatens g2 and prevents Bc4, appeared so natural that I thought little about it. I was not at all tempted by 15...Rf8 16 Bc4+ Nd5, if only because 17 Bd3 virtually forces the knight to return to f6 (17...Bf5 18 Ng3 is far too dangerous). In fact, it is not clear if White has any more than a draw, for example 17 Nc3!? Bxd1 18 Bxd5+ Qxd5 19 Nxd5 (threatens mate) 19...Rfe8 20 Kxd1 Rad8 traps the knight. Then, after 21 Ne3 dxe3+ 22 Ke2 Nb4!, or 21 Nxe7+ Rxe7 22 Ne4 Rc8, Black's lead in development is at least as significant as White's superior bishop.

However, the text-move is inaccurate and should lead to a draw (albeit only after very imaginative play by both sides). Black could have played more forcefully by **15...Nc5!**. This consistently follows the ‘active defence’ plan by bringing all Black’s pieces into play, even at the cost of material sacrifice. This move was tried in a Dvoretsky-Dolmatov training game, which continued 16 Bc4 (note that the knight on c5 prevents White playing Bg6 and Qd3, as in the game) 16...e6 17 Nxf7 Kxf7 18 0-0 Qh8 19 Qe1 (19 Bg5 Qh5 is also unpleasant) 19...Qh7 20 Bg5 (20 Qg3 Bxe2 21 Bxe2 Rh8 favours Black) 20...Rh8 21 Ng3 Qh2+ 22 Kf2 e4 0-1 (as 23 Rh1 fails to 23...e3+ 24 Bxe3 Nfe4+). However, despite this crushing success for Black, I am by no means certain that 15...Nc5 gives Black more than an edge. Instead of the suicidal kingside castling, White should have played 18 Bg5!, which leaves open the option of eventually castling queenside. Neither 18...Nce4 19 Bxf6 Bxf6 20 Qd3 Qa5+ 21 c3 nor 18...b5 19 Bb3 d3 20 cxd3 Nxd3+ 21 Kf1 appears promising for Black, so he should probably play 18...Qb6!. In this case the continuation 19 b3 (19 Bxf6 Qb4+! 20 c3 Qxc4 is good for Black) 19...Nce4 20 Bxf6 d3! 21 Rf1 d2+ 22 Qxd2 Nxd2 23 Bd8+ Nxf1 24 Bxb6 e4! 25 Rd1 axb6 26 Rd7+ Kf8 27 Kxf1 Rxa2 28 Nf4 almost certainly leads to a draw. In any event, 15...Nc5 gives Black a dangerous initiative and was surely the best chance, even if White may still be able to thread his way towards a draw.

16 Bg6

16 Nxf7 Kxf7 is scarcely worth a second look: Black would have a huge lead in development, a mighty pawn centre and threats of ...Qxg2, ...e4 and ...Nb4.

16...Rff8



White to move

17 Qd3

Threatening 18 Bh7+ Kh8 19 Be4+. This is the only way to continue the attack, as against anything slower Black plays ...Qxg2 or ...Nc5 and White may as well give up.

However, the text-move pinpoints the defect of 15...Qd5 - it does nothing to prevent White's queen joining in the attack; indeed, White's threats along the d3-h7 diagonal are so dangerous that Black is virtually forced to jettison a central pawn purely in order to block the diagonal. This in turn has its repercussions. The dissolution of Black's central pawn-mass causes an odd reversal of the earlier state of affairs, in that in some variations White has the long-term advantages. Indeed, in many lines the struggle reduces to Black's lead in development against White's superior structure.

17...e4

This too is forced, and the game has reached its crisis.

18 Qxd4?!

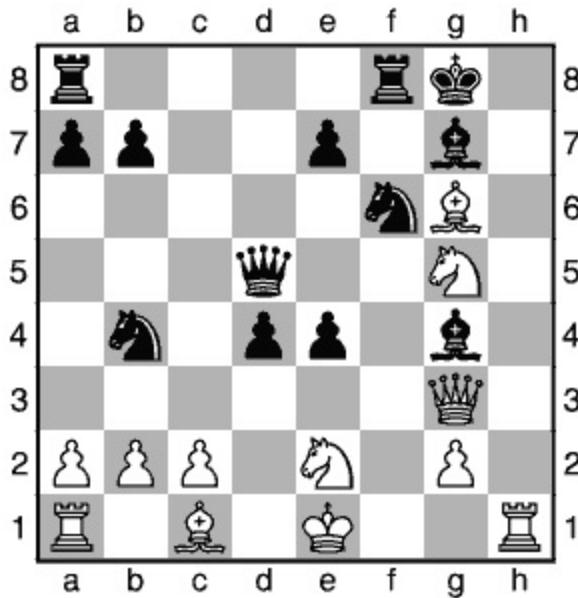
White was under no illusions about the resulting ending when he played this move, but he simply couldn't see anything better. Indeed, the obvious alternatives are bad:

1) **18 Nxe4 Nb4 19 Nxf6+ Rxf6 20 Bh7+ (or 20 Qe4 Rxe4! 21 Qxg6 Bf5) 20...Kf8 21 Qe4 (21 Qg3 Qe6 22 Bd3 Bxe2 23 Bxe2 Nxc2+ wins for Black) 21...Qxe4 22 Bxe4 Bf5 23 Bxf5 Rxf5 24 Kd1 Rf2 with a clear advantage for Black.**

2) **18 Bxe4 Nxe4 19 Nc3 (after 19 Qxe4 Qxe4 20 Nxe4 Nb4 Black wins**

at least a pawn while maintaining the attack) 19...Qa5! 20 Qxe4 Qf5! 21 Qxf5 (21 Qd5+ e6 is similar) 21...Rxf5 22 Nb1 Nb4 23 Na3 Raf8 with an enormous initiative for Black.

3) 18 Qg3 Nb4 and now:



White to move

3a) 19 Qh4 Nxc2+ 20 Kd2 (20 Kd1 Ne3+ is worse) 20...e3+ 21 Kxc2 (21 Kd1 Bxe2+) 21...Bf5+ 22 Bxf5 Qxf5+ 23 Kd1 Ng4, with two pawns and a strong attack for the piece.

3b) 19 Qxg4 Nxc2+ 20 Kd1 Ne3+ wins, since Black only needs to give a queen check on a dark square to be able to play ...Nxg4.

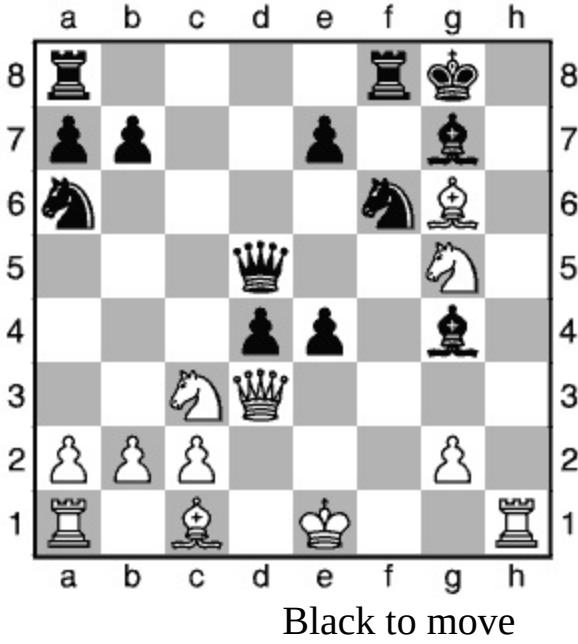
3c) 19 Nf4 Nxc2+ (19...Qxg5 20 Qb3+ e6 21 Qxb4 e3 is also good) 20 Kd2 (20 Kf2 Qxg5) 20...e3+ 21 Kxc2 Rac8+ 22 Kb1 Bf5+ wins.

3d) 19 Bxe4 Nxe4 20 Qxg4 Nxc2+ 21 Kd1 Nf2+.

3e) 19 Nxe4 Nxc2+ 20 Kd1 Ne3+ 21 Bxe3 dxе3+ 22 Ke1 Bxe2 23 Kxe2 Qb5+ wins.

However, the next day Borkowski triumphantly showed me that there is another, spectacular, possibility:

4) 18 Nc3!!.. White, with his queen attacked, puts his knight *en prise* as well. Once I had recovered from the shock (because I hadn't seen this move at all) I searched for a good defence, but couldn't find one:



4a) 18...dxc3? 19 Bh7+ wins the queen.

4b) 18...exd3 19 Nxd5 and now:

4b1) 19...Nxd5 20 Bh7+ Kh8 21 Bxd3+ Bh6 (21...Kg8 22 Bh7+ Kh8 23 Be4+ Kg8 24 Bxd5+ e6 25 Bxb7) 22 Rxh6+ Kg7 23 Rh4 is very good for White.

4b2) 19...Rfd8 20 Bf7+! Kf8 21 Nf4 Bf5 22 Be6, and Black is in trouble, for example 22...Bxe6 23 Ngxe6+ Kg8 24 Nxd8 Nb4 25 cxd3 Nc2+ 26 Kd1 Nxa1 27 Nfe6 Rc8 28 Rh3 and 22...Be4 23 cxd3 Bc6 24 Bf7 are lost, while after 22...Nb4 23 Bxf5 Nxc2+ 24 Kd1 Nxa1 25 Bxd3 White has a strong attack and Black a trapped knight on a1.

4b3) 19...Rae8 (relatively the best defence) 20 cxd3 Nxd5 21 Bh7+ Kh8 22 Bf5+ Kg8 23 Bxg4 Nc5 24 Ke2 and White retains some advantage because of Black's weakness on the light squares.

It follows that Black has to move his queen:

4c) 18...Qa5 19 Qc4+ e6 20 Nxe6 Qb4 21 Qxb4 Nxb4 22 Nxd4 Rfd8 (better than 22...Rad8 23 a3 Rxd4 24 axb4 a6 25 Be3! Rxb4 26 Bc5) 23 a3 Rxd4 24 axb4 Rxb4 25 Ra5 with a slight advantage for White.

4d) 18...Qe5 19 Ncxe4 Nc5 and now White has at least two promising lines. 20 Qc4+ Ne6 21 Nf3! Bxf3 (after 21...Qa5+ 22 Bd2 Qb6 23 0-0-0 Black has no compensation for White's attack) 22 gxf3 Nxe4 23 Bh7+ Kf7 24 Bxe4 Rh8 (24...Qg3+ 25 Kd1 only makes matters worse) 25 Rg1 Rh2 26 Bd2 and once White's king slips away, Black again has nothing to show for his exposed king and weak light squares. The other promising line is 20 Qg3

$\text{Qxg3+ } 21 \text{ Nxg3}$ and it is now White who has time on his side. Some of his pressure against the castled position persists, and he has possibilities such as Nf5 , obliging Black to exchange, or Bf4 , $0-0$ and Rae1 , bringing the weak e-pawn under fire. About the best Black can manage is $21\ldots\text{e5}$ ($21\ldots\text{Ne6 } 22 \text{ Rh4!}$ is very awkward for Black) $22 \text{ Nf5 Bxf5 } 23 \text{ Bxf5}$, but the two bishops are certain to cause him problems in the endgame.

Thus, when I started work on this book, I believed that 18 Nc3!! gave White some advantage in every line. However, it turns out that Black has an equally brilliant reply which enables him to hold the balance:

4e) **18...Qxa2!!.** A truly stunning move, even though the idea behind it is not really very deep. White can try:



White to move

4e1) **19 Nxa2?** $\text{exd3 } 20 \text{ Bxd3 Nc5 } 21 \text{ Bc4+ e6}$ and Black keeps his extra pawn, for example $22 \text{ b4 Ncd7 } 23 \text{ Bb2 Rac8 } 24 \text{ Bb3 Nd5}$.

4e2) **19 Rxa2** $\text{exd3 } 20 \text{ Nd5}$ (more or less the same position as in line '4b' above, but with White's a-pawn missing) $20\ldots\text{Rae8!}$ (the most accurate move; $20\ldots\text{Nxd5 } 21 \text{ Bh7+ Kh8 } 22 \text{ Bxd3+ Bh6 } 23 \text{ Rxh6+ Kg7 } 24 \text{ Rg6+}$ gives White a strong attack, $20\ldots\text{Rfd8 } 21 \text{ Bf7+ Kf8 } 22 \text{ Nf4 Bf5 } 23 \text{ Ra5!}$ shows that the removal of the a-pawn can sometimes help White, and $20\ldots\text{Rfe8 } 21 \text{ Bf7+ Kf8 } 22 \text{ Nf4}$ wins material) 21 Bxd3 ($21 \text{ Bxe8 Rxe8 } 22 \text{ c4 Nxd5 } 23 \text{ cxd5 Rc8}$ is very dangerous for White, while $21 \text{ cxd3 Nxd5 } 22 \text{ Bh7+ Kh8 } 23 \text{ Be4+ Kg8}$ is a draw, since $24 \text{ Bxd5+ e6 } 25 \text{ Bxb7? Nb4}$ wins for Black) $21\ldots\text{Nxd5 } 22 \text{ Bh7+ Kh8 } 23 \text{ Be4+ Kg8 } 24 \text{ Bxd5+ e6 } 25 \text{ Bxb7 Nb4 } 26 \text{ Rxa7 Re7}$ and it is

about time for White to head for the draw by 27 Be4.

Therefore ‘normal moves’ do not give White the advantage after 18...Qxa2!!.. This leaves attempts to sacrifice the a1-rook and break though on the kingside. These ideas are certainly very dangerous, but I see no more than a draw for White:

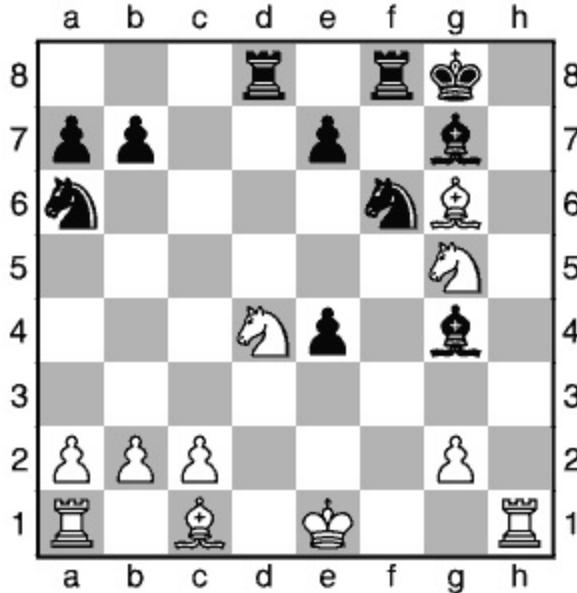
4e3) **19 Ncxe4** Qxa1 20 Nxf6+ Rxf6 21 Bh7+ Kf8 just loses for White.

4e4) **19 Bxe4** Qxa1 20 Bh7+ Kh8 21 Bg6+ (Black can meet other discovered checks by ...Bh5) and now Black can take the draw or play for a win by 21...Bh6 22 Rxh6+ Kg7 23 Bf7 Qxc1+ 24 Nd1 Qxd1+ 25 Qxd1 Kxh6 26 Qd2 Kg7 27 Be6 Bh5.

4e5) **19 Qxe4** (this move is sufficient for a draw) 19...Qxa1 20 Bh7+ Kh8 21 Bf5+!? (after 21 Bg6+ Black has nothing better than to return with 21...Kg8) 21...Bh5 22 Ne2 and despite Black’s extra rook, he may have to acquiesce to a draw by 22...Nxe4, for example 22...Nc5 23 Qf3 Kg8 24 Rxh5 Nxh5 25 Bh7+ Kh8 26 Qxh5 wins, while after 22...Bh6 23 Qe5 Black cannot improve over simply returning the bishop to g7. Perhaps 22...d3!? is the most realistic winning attempt, for example 23 cxd3 (23 Qxd3 Rad8 24 Rxh5+ Nxh5 25 Bd7 Qa5+ 26 Bd2 Qf5 and 23 Qf3 Bh6 24 Rxh5 Nxh5 25 Qxh5 Qa5+ 26 Nc3 Qxf5 allow Black to defend) 23...Nc5 24 Qf3 Bh6 25 Rxh5 Nxh5 26 Qxh5 Rf6 27 Nf7+ Kg7 28 Nxh6 Rh8 29 Qg4+ Kf8 and in this very complex position Black does not appear to be worse. Since both sides have the chance to force a draw in this line, it follows that this must be the correct result.

18...Qxd4

19 Nxd4 Rad8



White to move

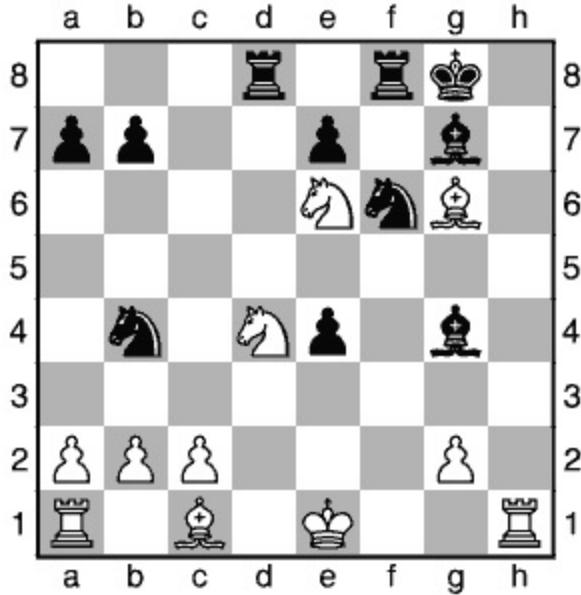
The difference between 18 Nc3 and 18 Qxd4 boils down to the fact that here White cannot quickly challenge the knight on f6, and so Black has less to fear from Bh7+. Of course, the capture on d4 has damaged Black's pawn structure, but on the other hand the queens have been exchanged and Black's rook is operating aggressively along the d-file. However, even as things stand Black has to move fast before White consolidates and reaches a favourable ending.

20 Be3

A difficult decision for White, but this move is not a mistake. The alternative is **20 Nge6** (20 c3 e5 21 Ne2 Nc5 gives Black the powerful threat of 22...Nd3+, while 20 Ne2 Nb4 loses on the spot); during the game I intended to continue **20...Rd6** 21 Nxf8 Rxd4 22 Be3 (or else ...Rd1+) 22...Rd6 23 Bf4 (or 23 Nh7 Nd5 and Black emerges with two pieces for a rook) 23...Rb6 24 Be3 Rxb2 25 Nh7 (25 Bd4 Rxc2 26 Nh7 Nd5 27 Bxg7 Ne3 with a mating attack) 25...Nd5 26 Bxa7 (26 Bd2 e3 wins) 26...Nf4! 27 Bxe4 Rb4 with a decisive advantage.

However, there is a huge flaw in this analysis. White can play 21 Bf5! and now Black cannot even equalise, for example 21...Bxf5 22 Nxe7 Rxd4 (22...Bg4 23 Ngf5) 23 Nxf5 Rd7 24 Bd2 is slightly better for White, while 21...Nb4 22 Bd2 Nxc2+ 23 Nxc2 Rxe6 24 Bxe6+ Bxe6 gives Black inadequate compensation.

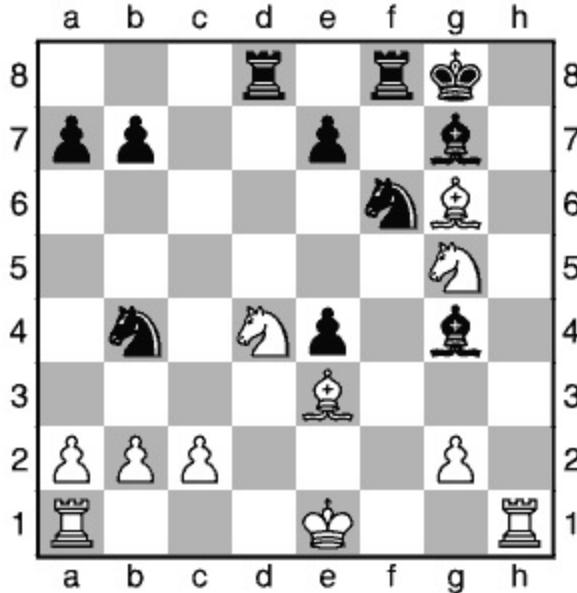
Therefore Black should meet 20 Nge6 by **20...Nb4!**.



White to move

Now White's best move is 21 Be3, which transposes into the note to White's 21st move. The only other possibility is 21 0-0, which leads to a fascinating position after 21...Nxc2 22 Nxd8 Nxd4 23 Nxb7 Ne2+ 24 Kf2 (24 Kh1? Ng3+ 25 Kg1 Nxf1 26 Kxf1 Nh5+ and 24 Kh2? Bc8! win for Black) 24...e3+! 25 Ke1 (either capture is met by 25...Nd5+). Now Black can win a piece by 25...Rb8, since 26 Nc5 Nxc1 27 Rxc1 Rxb2 is too dangerous for White, but surprisingly it isn't the best move. White replies 26 Bxe3! Rxb7 27 Rd1, with a rough material balance, but White has completed his development and has the immediate threat of 28 Rd8+, so White is at least equal. Instead Black should play for the attack with 25...Ng3! rather than worry too much about material. The resulting position favours Black, for example 26 Rg1 (26 Rf4 e5 27 Rf3 Bxf3 28 gxf3 Ng4 29 Be4 Nxe4 30 fxe4 Rf2 wins for Black) 26...Nfe4 27 Bxe3 Bxb2 28 Rc1 Bxc1 29 Bxc1 Rf2 30 Bxe4 Re2+ 31 Kd1 Nxe4 winning.

20...Nb4



White to move

Black's pieces are beginning to co-ordinate menacingly. The white king is caught most unhappily between the d-and f-files, and he has to deal with the immediate threat of 21...Rxd4. Despite this, his position is still holding together, and it is only his next move that wrecks everything.

21 Rc1?

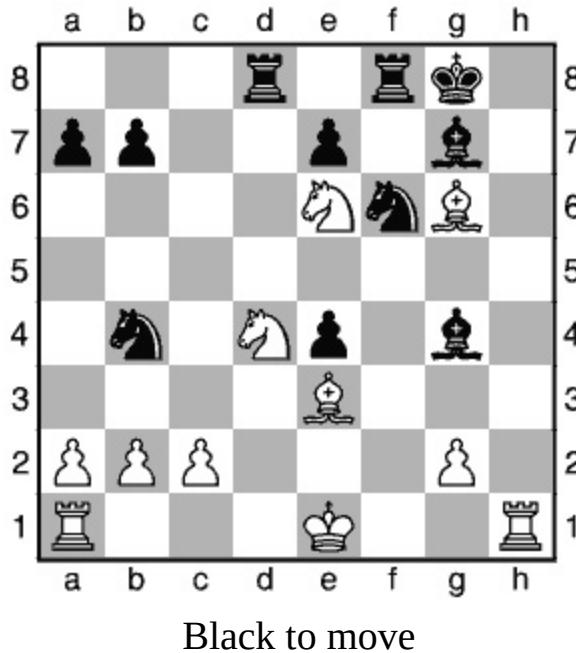
White collapses. This may look like a very bad move, especially taking into account White's creative play earlier, but mistakes are much more likely after a complex struggle involving lengthy calculations, particularly if there has been a dramatic shift in the situation on the board. Earlier on, White was thinking about a sacrificial attack, but now he has to find accurate defensive moves in a rather uncomfortable position. Moreover, this re-orientation to a novel situation has become necessary just when White is running short of time. Under these circumstances, the probability of an error increase dramatically.

The alternatives were:

- 1) **21 c3 Nd3+ 22 Kf1** (22 Kd2 Nxb2 is also very good for Black)
22...Ne5! wins material.
- 2) **21 Nxe4 Rxd4 22 Nxf6+ Bxf6 23 Bxd4 Bxd4** and wins.
- 3) **21 0-0 Nfd5!** (using this knight is possible because White has abandoned the h-file) and White must lose material – 22 Bf7+ (22 Rxf8+ first is no improvement) 22...Rxf7 (definitely not 22...Kh8? 23 Kf2) 23 Nxf7 Nxe3 24 Nxd8 Bxd4 25 c3 Bb6 26 cxb4 Nxf1+ 27 Kxf1 Bxd8 and wins.
- 4) **21 a3** (good enough for a draw) 21...Rxd4 (21...Nbd5 forces 22 Bc1!,

but surprisingly Black has no follow-up) 22 axb4 Rxb4 23 b3 Nh5 (23...a6 24 Bd2 Rb5 25 Ra4 and White will regain the pawn) 24 Bxh5 Bxh5 25 Rxa7 Bc3+ 26 Bd2 Rd4 27 Rxh5 Rxd2 28 Nxe4 Rd5+ 29 Nxc3 Rxh5 30 Rxb7 with an inevitable draw.

5) 21 Nge6 (also an adequate defence) and now:



5a) 21...Nxc2+ 22 Nxc2 Bxe6 23 Bxa7 Ra8 (23...Rd5 threatening 24...Rg5 is safely met by 24 Be3) 24 Bd4 (24 Bc5 Rfc8 25 Nd4 Rxc5 26 Nxe6 is also drawish) 24...Rxa2 25 Rxa2 Bxa2, and Black's extra pawn is too weak to be of any real value.

5b) 21...Bxe6 22 Nxe6 Nxc2+ 23 Ke2 Nxa1 (23...Nxe3 24 Nxd8 Rxd8 25 Kxe3 Rd3+ 26 Kf4 and Black may be in some danger of overpressing by sacrificing the exchange) 24 Nxd8 Rxd8 (24...Nc2 25 Ne6) 25 Rxa1 and Black's extra pawn has no practical significance.

21...Nbd5

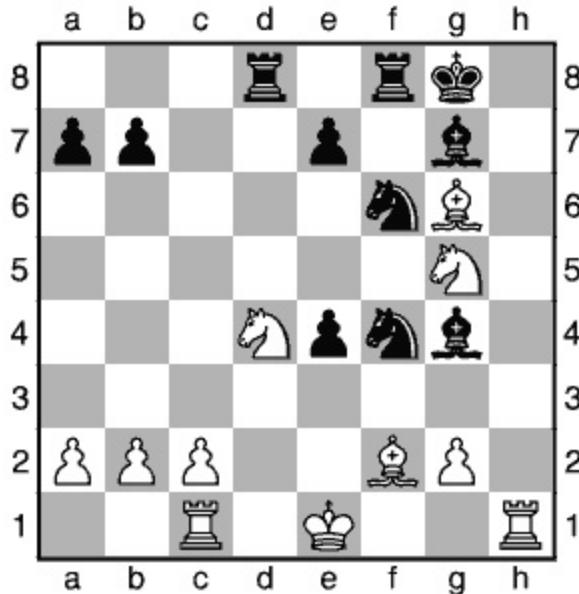
Black now wins material by force. If 21...Nxa2 22 Ra1 Nb4 then White would have an opportunity to correct his error by 23 Nge6. Although he would have a pawn less, he would certainly stand a much better chance than in the game continuation.

22 Bf2

The only real alternative is 22 Bd2 (22 Kd2 Nxe3 23 Kxe3 Nd5+ wins a piece), but after 22...e3 23 Ba5 b6 24 Bc3 Nf4 25 Bd3 (25 Bf5 Rxd4) 25...Nxg2+ 26 Kf1 Ne4+ Black wins against any defence, for example 27

Kxg2 Rf2+ 28 Kg1 Nxg5, 27 Kg1 Nxg5, 27 Ngf3 Bxd4 28 Bxe4 Bxf3 29 Bxf3 Bxc3 30 Kxg2 Rd2+ or finally 27 Ndf3 Nxg5.

22...Nf4



White to move

The g6-bishop, which had been menacing Black's king for virtually the whole game, is suddenly trapped and Black wins material.

23 Bf5

Or 23 Bh7+ Nxh7, attacking the knight at d4.

23...Rxd4

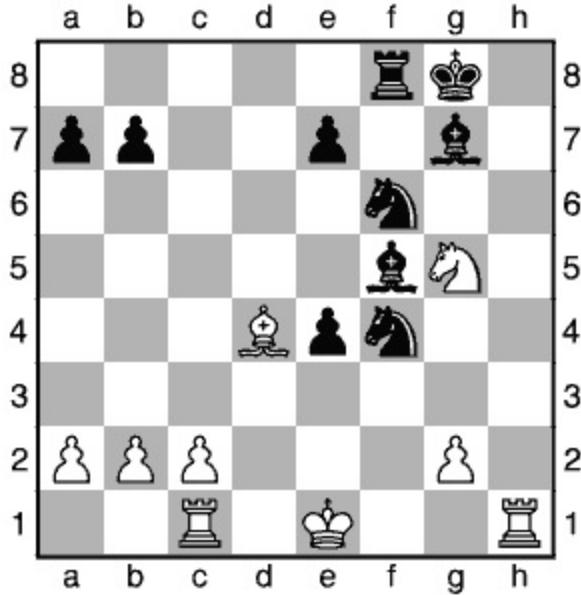
Winning two pieces for a rook, but in fact Black could have won a whole piece by 23...e3! 24 Bxe3 (24 Bg3 Nxg2+ 25 Kf1 Rxd4) 24...Nxg2+ 25 Kf2 Nxh3 26 Kxe3 Bxf5 27 Nxf5 Ng4+ 28 Kf4 (28 Kf3 Nh6) 28...Rd4+.

However, as pointed out in game 1, if you have found a forced win you don't start looking for another one, especially in time-trouble.

24 Bxd4

Or 24 Bxg4 Nxg4, covering the rook.

24...Bxf5



White to move

Black's material advantage is certainly enough for victory, especially if one takes into account that Black's minor pieces are far more active than White's rooks.

25 g3 Ne6

26 Nxe6 Bxe6

27 Bxa7 Ng4

28 Bc5

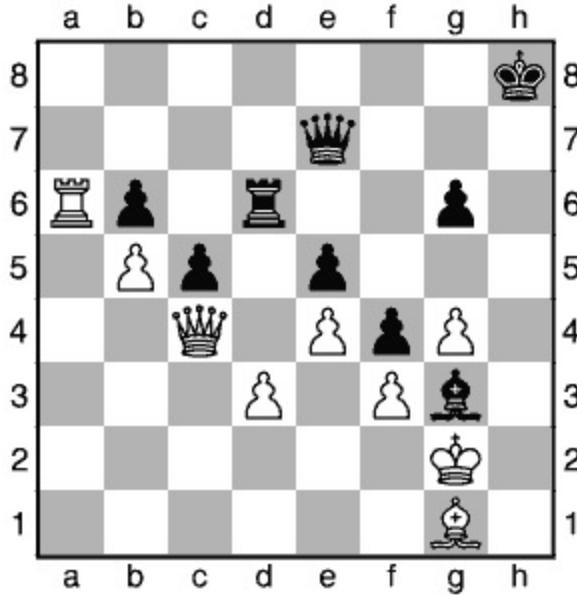
Black has a decisive attack in addition to his extra material. If 28 c3, then 28...Be5 29 Rg1 Rf3 and wins.

28...Bxb2

0-1

White's resignation came as a surprise to me, since I had assumed White was playing for the trap 29 Bxe7 (29 Rb1 Bc3+ 30 Kd1 e3 is hopeless) 29...Bxc1? 30 Bxf8 Kxf8 31 0-0+! when he can continue the fight. However, Black can improve by 29...Bc3+ 30 Kd1 Nf2+ 31 Ke2 Bc4+ 32 Ke3 Rf3#.

I won again in round 7, my third win in a row, but disaster struck in round 8 when I lost in 18 moves to L.-Å. Schneider. With one round to go, I was half-a-point behind Peter Szekely. Szekely is a notoriously nervous player, so I was not surprised when he agreed a quick draw in the last round. This gave me the chance to win the tournament if I could defeat Yehuda Grünfeld of Israel.



White to move

J. Nunn – Y. Grünfeld

European Junior Championship, Groningen 1974/5

Black has played the erroneous 40...Rd8-d6?, giving White his big chance.

41 Bxc5! bxc5

After 41...Qh4 42 Ra8+ Rd8 43 Rxd8+ Qxd8 44 Bg1 White wins easily.

42 Qxc5 Qh4

After 42...Rd7 43 Qxe7 Rxe7 44 b6 Black has no way to stop the passed pawn, thanks to the poor position of his king: 44...Be1 45 Ra8+ Kh7 46 Ra7 Bb4 47 b7 Bd6 48 b8Q.

43 Qxe5+ Kh7 44 Ra7+ Kh6 45 g5+ 1-0

It is mate next move.

Junior events always left behind a fair share of odd memories: the extremely shy player who hardly said a word throughout the tournament, but accidentally left his collection of soft-porn magazines behind when he left; the attempt to smuggle a crate of beer into the hotel via a balcony, which left a glass door broken; my incomprehensible failure to win a bet that I could eat a straight litre of ice cream (perhaps it was the warm-up Poire Belle Hélène which was to blame).

I had become European Junior Champion and thereby automatically

gained the International Master title. Indeed, at the age of 19 I was the world's youngest IM.

My next tournament was not until Easter, when I again took part in the Birmingham International. This was a complete disaster; I started with 1½/7, and the only bright spot in the tournament came in round 9.

Game 3
M. Corden – J. Nunn
Birmingham 1975
Two Knights Defence

1 e4 e5

2 Nf3 Nc6

3 d4 exd4

4 Bc4 Nf6

5 e5

When Corden was an active player he specialised in unusual lines after 1 e4 e5; indeed, he once beat Smyslov using 5 0-0, but for this game he adopted the alternative line, 5 e5. This is a real backwater of modern opening theory, but that does not imply that White's opening is harmless. Such long-forgotten lines can be very dangerous against an unprepared opponent, but they are rarely employed at the top level today. In these days of computer databases the surprise element lasts for precisely one game, and whether it is worth preparing a whole opening just for a single game is very doubtful.

5...d5

Fashion has a profound influence on opening theory. In practice Black almost invariably plays 5...d5, yet there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that 5...Ne4 is a simple and effective equaliser.

6 Bb5 Ne4

7 Nxd4



Black to move

7...Bc5

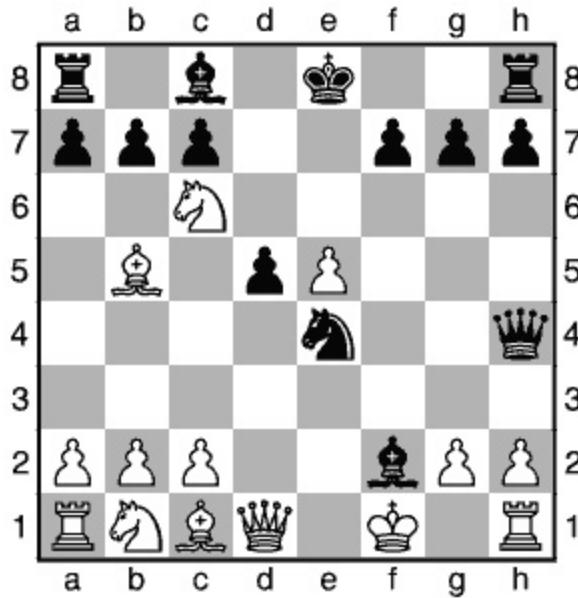
The standard move is 7...Bd7, but 7...Bc5 has much to be said for it, in that Black may be able to gain time by omitting ...Bd7 altogether. However, after White's most common response Black has to play ...Bd7 in any case, when the text-move amounts to no more than an alternative move-order.

8 0-0

Discovering innovations in fashionable openings is a frustrating business. Lines which are currently popular are subjected to regular examination by some of the world's leading players, and their analysis is frequently tested in over-the-board play. It isn't easy to discover something which they have all missed. For the most part, such discoveries are limited to small finesse or new permutations of familiar ideas. Even when one discovers a blockbuster novelty, the next tournament will probably show that someone else has found the same idea independently and put it into effect first. So it is quite pleasant occasionally to look at an antiquated opening variation. One often finds pieces of analysis that have remained unchanged for several decades, and are simply repeated in each new generation of opening books. Often these lines have never been tested in top-class play, either in over-the-board or correspondence play. Then the chances of finding really substantial improvements are quite good. Some of the analysis given below falls into this category, and it is interesting to see how relatively easy it is to upset some of the evaluations.

One critical test of 7...Bc5 is the greedy line 8 Nxc6 Bxf2+ 9 Kf1. Black

replies 9...Qh4! and now:



White to move

1) 10 Qxd5. Here the original *Secrets of Grandmaster Play* gave the line **10...Be6** 11 Nd4+ (or 11 Qd3 0-0 12 Nb4 {12 Na5 Bb6 and 12 Nd4 Bxd4 are no better} 12...Bc5, regaining the piece with a decisive advantage) 11...Ke7 12 Nxe6 fxe6 13 Qb3 Bc5 and the attack is winning. However, 13 Qd7+! Kf8 14 Nd2 is an obvious improvement; after 14...Rd8 15 Qxe6 Qf4 16 Nxe4 Be3+ 17 Ke1 Qxe4 18 Rf1+ Bf4+ 19 Be2 White wins easily. However, Black can improve earlier with **10...Bb6!**. Then 11 Nd4+ c6 12 Bxc6+ (12 g3 Qh3+ 13 Ke1 Qg2 14 Bxc6+ bxc6 15 Qxc6+ Kf8 is very good for Black as 16 Rf1 Bxd4 17 Qxa8 Bf2+ 18 Ke2 Nxg3+ wins White's queen) 12...bxc6 13 Qxc6+ Ke7 14 g3 Nxg3+ 15 hxg3 Qxd4 leads to a position in which White has nothing better than 16 Qd6+, but the endgame is very good for Black owing to his two active bishops.

2) The line **10 Nd4+ c6 11 Nf3** (11 Nxc6 0-0) 11...Ng3+ 12 Kxf2 Ne4+ 13 Ke2 Qf2+ 14 Kd3 Bf5 is given in many opening books (and in *Secrets of Grandmaster Play!*) as leading to a decisive attack for Black. Certainly he has dangerous threats, for example 15...Nd2+! 16 Kc3 Qe3+ 17 Bd3 Ne4+ 18 Kb3 Qb6+ followed by mate in a few moves, or simply 15...cxb5 regaining one piece while maintaining all the threats. Most moves fail to meet these two threats. Others lose quite simply, for example **15 Be3** Nd6+, **15 Bf4** cxb5 or **15 Qe1** Nd6+ 16 Kc3 Nxb5+, which leads to mate since c2 is now undefended. However, there is one hidden line which seems to defend for

White, viz. **15 Nd4!** Bg6 (15...Nd6+ 16 Nxf5 Qxf5+ 17 Ke2 Nxb5 18 Qd3! is favourable for White) 16 Rf1!. Now 16...cxb5 17 Rxf2 Nxf2+ 18 Ke2 gives White a very good ending, so Black is forced to play 16...Nd2+ 17 Kc3 Qe3+ 18 Bd3 Ne4+ 19 Kb3 (this no longer allows a mate as the knight on d4 prevents ...Qb6+) and now:



2a) **19...Qxd4** 20 a3 Nc5+ 21 Ka2 Nxd3 (21...Bxd3 22 cxd3 Nxd3 23 Nd2 0-0 24 Nf3 favours White) 22 cxd3 Bxd3 23 b3. Black's attack is at an end and he has only two pawns for the piece.

2b) **19...Nc5+!** and now 20 Ka3 is met by 20...Qxd4 21 Bb5 (21 Nc3 a5! and 21 Rf4 Be4 win for Black) 21...Qxd1 22 Rxd1 cxb5 23 Rxd5 Rc8 when Black has regained all his material and retains a lead in development. Thus White should play 20 Kc3, when 20...Ne4+ leads to a draw (20...Na4+ 21 Kb3 Qxd4 is a misguided winning attempt, as 22 a3 leads to line '2a').

I cannot see any way for Black to avoid this draw. There are alternatives, but they all seem to favour White, e.g. 9...bxc6 10 Bxc6+ Kf8 11 Qd3! (11 Na3 Ba6+ 12 c4 Bc5 13 Bxa8 Qxa8 gives Black fair compensation) 11...Qh4 12 Bxa8 Bd4 13 Be3 Bxb2 14 Bxd5! Ng3+ 15 hxg3 Qxh1+ 16 Kf2 Bxa1 17 Bc5+ Kg8 18 Qf3 with a crushing attack. Incidentally, this line is a good example of meeting a sacrificial attack by counter-sacrificing to regain the initiative.

The conclusion is that 8 Nxc6 should result in a draw, which again supports the observation that very sharp opening lines often lead to a draw.

Moving on to other moves, 8 Be3 has the best reputation because it

obliges Black to transpose back into normal lines by 8...Bd7 9 Bxc6 bxc6 10 0-0, etc. If Black tries a sacrifice by 8...0-0 9 Nxc6 bxc6 10 Bxc5 Nxc5 11 Bxc6 Ba6, then 12 Nc3 (rather than the dangerous 12 Bxa8 Qxa8) favours White: he has won a pawn, threatens the d-pawn and can organise castling by Bb5 or Ne2.

The text-move had been considered inferior, but it was precisely in this line that Corden had prepared his innovation.

8...0-0

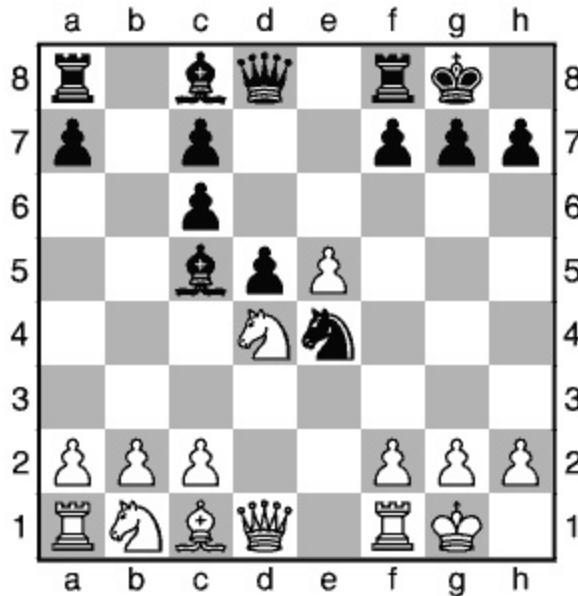


White to move

9 Bxc6

9 Nxc6 bxc6 10 Bxc6 Ba6 exposes White's lack of development: **11 Bxa8 Bxf1 12 Be3** (12 Bxd5? Bc4, 12 Qxd5? Bc4 13 Qxd8 Rxd8 and 12 Qxf1? Bxf2+ 13 Kh1 Qh4 all win for Black, while 12 Kxf1 Qh4 13 Qf3 Rxa8 gives Black a dangerous initiative) 12...Bxe3 13 fxe3 Bxg2 14 Qg4 (he can't allow ...Qg5, either with or without check) 14...Bh3! 15 Qxh3 (or 15 Qh5 g6 16 Qh6 Qd7 and wins) 15...Qg5+ 16 Kf1 Rxa8, with a winning advantage for Black, Hermann-Keres, correspondence 1936. In this line **11 Qxd5** is a better try, but after 11...Bxf1 12 Qxe4 (forced) 12...Bb5 13 Nc3 Bxc6 14 Qxc6 Bd4 15 Bf4 Rb8 16 Rb1 (or 16 Rd1 Rxb2! and White cannot exploit the pin because of his weak back rank, for example 17 Be3? Bxc3) 16...Qe8 White still falls short of equality. If he swaps queens his e-pawn will be fatally weak, while after 17 Qxc7 Bxc3 18 Qxc3 Qa4 Black will quickly regain at least one pawn, when his very active rooks will ensure some advantage.

9...bxc6



White to move

At the time this game was played, the current position was considered to be comfortable for Black.

First of all, **10 f3** is a bad move because of **10...f6!**. Then **11 fxe4 fxe5 12 Rxf8+ Qxf8 13 Be3 exd4 14 Bxd4 Bg4!** gives Black a clear plus, while **11 e6 Ng5 12 Bxg5 fxg5** soon loses the e-pawn for nothing. Finally, **11 exf6 Qxf6 12 Be3 Ba6 13 Re1** gives Black a very strong initiative, for example **13...Rae8 14 c3 Bd6 15 g3 (15 fxe4 Qh4 wins) 15...Nyg3 16 hxg3 Bxg3 17 Na3 Bxe1 18 Qxe1 c5 19 Ndc2 d4 20 cxd4 Qg6+ 21 Kf2 Qg4 22 Qh1 cxd4 0-1 Chiburdanidze-Tseitlin, Moscow 1989** or, even more directly, **13...Qh4 14 fxe4 Bd6 15 g3 Bxg3 16 hxg3 Qxg3+ 17 Kh1 Rf6 18 Qd2 Qh4+ 19 Qh2 Qxe1+ 20 Qg1 0-1 Levi-Hirschhorn, Australian Championship, Melbourne 1991.**

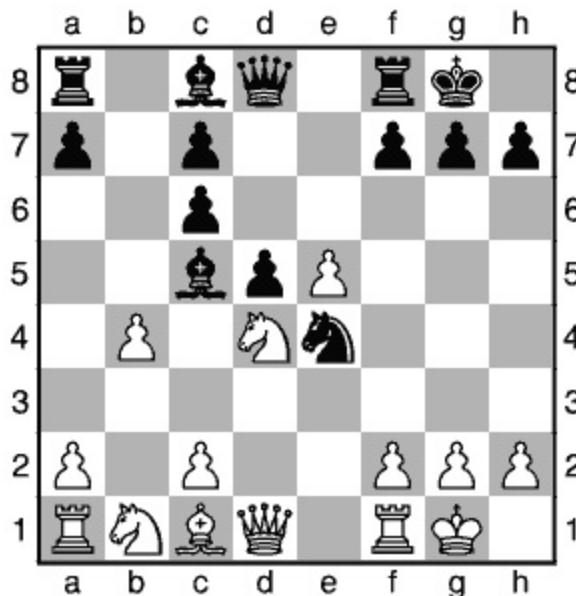
Secondly, **10 Be3** is playable, but Black has no problems after, for example, **10...Qe8** (this is the advantage of missing out ...Bd7; the queen both defends c6 and attacks e5, while the c8-bishop can be developed to a6) **11 c3 (11 f3 Nd6, or 11 f4 f6) 11...f6 12 exf6 Rxf6 13 Nd2 Rg6.**

So **10 Nxc6** is reckoned to be the critical move, but then Black can preserve an advantage by **10...Qd7 11 Nd4 Qe7! (11...Ba6 12 Re1 Rae8 is also playable) 12 Bf4 f6**, for example **13 Nb3 Bxf2+! 14 Rxf2 Nxf2 15 Qxd5+ Be6 16 Qc5 Qxc5 17 Nxc5 Rae8 18 Nc3 fxe5 19 Bxe5 Bf5 20 Bd4 Ng4** with a material advantage for Black, Neuvonen-Timmerman,

correspondence 1991.

However, 10 Nxc6 should not be met by **10...Qh4** because of the reply 11 Be3!. After **11...Bxe3** 12 fxe3 White seizes the initiative by virtue of his two open files and threat to the d-pawn. Moreover, the weakness of his own pawns is something of an illusion: if 12...Qg5, then 13 Rf4 Bb7 14 Qxd5 suits him very well (14...Rad8 15 Qxe4 Rd1+ 16 Kf2 Bxc6 17 Qxc6 Qxe5 18 Qf3 Rc1 19 Rd4 is insufficient). This variation was given in *Secrets of Grandmaster Play*, and astonishingly the whole line occurred in the game Rogers-Wahls, Groningen 1990, except that Rogers finished off with the more accurate 18 Qc3 Qb5 19 Na3 1-0. If exchanging bishops is bad, Black has to keep things moving by **11...Ba6**, but then comes 12 Bxc5 Bxf1 13 g3 (obviously White can't play 13 Bxf8, and recapturing at f1 would give insufficient compensation for the exchange; finally, 13 Qd4 runs into trouble after 13...Qg5! 14 Kxf1 Qc1+ 15 Ke2 Qxc2+) 13...Qh3 14 Qxf1 Qxf1+ 15 Kxf1 Nxc5 16 Nc3, and gradually it becomes apparent that White has made a very good positional sacrifice. The knight on c6 single-handedly prevents both black rooks becoming active, and after 16...d4 (16...f6 17 Nxd5 fxe5 18 Nxc7 regains the exchange) 17 Nd5 (not 17 Nxd4 Rad8 letting the rook out) 17...Ne6 18 f4 g6 19 g4 Black is in serious trouble. The reason we have devoted so much time to the inferior 10...Qh4 will become apparent as the game proceeds.

10 b4?!



Black to move

I was momentarily stunned when this innovation appeared on the board. Clearly Black cannot play 10...Bxb4, because then 11 Nxc6 wins a piece, but I couldn't immediately understand what was wrong with 10...Bb6, when White has severely weakened his queenside pawns with the random stab b2-b4. Then I suddenly saw Corden's idea: if Black plays 10...Bb6 11 Nxc6 Qd7, analogous to the previous note, then 12 Qxd5 picks up a second pawn because e7 is no longer covered. Then Black cannot obtain sufficient compensation, for example 12...Qxd5 13 Ne7+ Kh8 14 Nxd5 Bd4 15 c3 Bxe5 16 Re1 is a very promising ending for White. By a process of elimination, I then started looking at 10...Bxd4 11 Qxd4 f6, but I didn't like this idea much. White's dark-squared bishop could become very dangerous on the long diagonal, and in any case the opposite-coloured bishops mean that Black's winning chances would be very small.

When faced by an unexpected move in the opening, the most important thing is to heed the advice of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*: DON'T PANIC. Experience shows that most opening innovations are not objectively stronger than the moves they replace, but they are effective for a limited time until the other side comes up with an antidote. Of course, finding that antidote over-the-board may not be an easy task, but it is made immeasurably harder if you start to lose your mental self-control. Easier said than done, of course. It is perhaps worth reminding yourself that most innovations are not the result of weeks of careful analysis, which your opponent just has to reel off to notch up the full point. On the contrary, most innovations are the result of 15 minutes of hasty analysis before the game, (nowadays) a quick check with Fritz, a shrug of the shoulders and a 'Well, I'll give it a whirl' attitude.

On this occasion finding the correct reply was made easier because of Black's limited options. At least I had the safety net of 10...Bxd4 which, while a disappointment, would at least be a way to escape with minimal damage. In fact 10...Bb6 is the only other possibility, so I concentrated my attention on the position after 11 Nxc6. I suddenly recalled the inferior line with ...Qh4 mentioned in the previous note; could the interpolation of b4 and ...Bb6 make a difference here? As a first check, I made the assumption that play would proceed along similar lines: 10...Bb6 11 Nxc6 Qh4 12 Be3 Ba6 13 g3 Qh3 14 Bxb6 Bxf1. Here it is obvious that Black is doing much better than in the corresponding position from the previous note (i.e. with White's bishop on c5 and pawn on b2). After 15 Qxf1 Qxf1+ 16 Kxf1 axb6 Black's problems with his rooks are much reduced, since one rook is already

operating effectively on the open a-file. Secondly, Black's queenside pawn structure is better with the a7-pawn transferred to b6. Finally, the black knight is on e4 rather than c5, so White has to play 17 f3 before he can develop the b1-knight. All these factors combine to make life far more awkward for White, for example the natural continuation 17 f3 Ng5 18 Kg2 Rfe8 19 Nc3 fails to 19...Nxf3! 20 Kxf3 Ra3, while after other 19th moves Black can complete the manoeuvre ...Ne6-d8 to dislodge the knight from c6. Note that 17 Ne7+ Kh8 18 Nxd5 doesn't come into consideration because 18...Rad8 19 c4 c6 activates the rooks while White is still undeveloped. Of course, the position after 16...axb6 is far from winning for Black, as it takes him a long time to get rid of the c6-knight, but at any rate White can claim no advantage in this line. In retrospect, I suppose an assessment of 'slightly better for Black' seems fairest.

This initial calculation seemed quite promising, and I looked at alternatives for White without finding anything that looked more promising for him. In fact, it seems that this slightly inferior ending is the best White can do once he has ventured on 10 b4, so Corden's innovation must be considered unsound. However, it might well have succeeded in its first outing had I not invested the time necessary to find the best reply.

10...Bb6

11 Nxc6

It is too late to back out now: 11 f3 f6 is very good for Black, *e.g.* 12 e6 Ng5 13 Kh1 Bxd4 14 Qxd4 Nxe6 15 Qc3 Qd6, Minasian-Yakovich, Belgorod 1989 or 12 fxe4 fxe5 13 Rxf8+ Qxf8 14 Be3 exd4 15 Bxd4 Bg4 16 Qd2 Qf6, Greger-G.Welling, Lyngby 1990.

11...Qh4



White to move

12 Be3

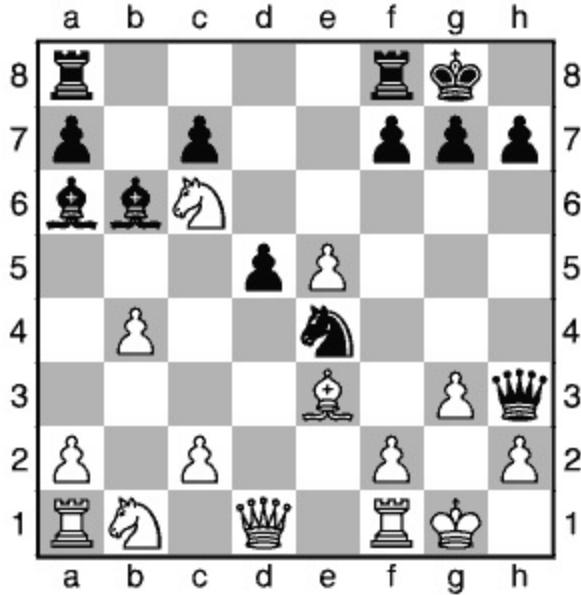
There is certainly no choice at this point. After any other move Black, with his huge advantage in development, develops irresistible threats, for example 12 g3 Nxg3 13 hxg3 Qxg3+ 14 Kh1 Qh3+ 15 Kg1 Bg4, 12 Nd4 Nxf2, 12 Qf3 Bg4! 13 Qf4 g5 14 Ne7+ Kh8 15 Nf5 Qh5 or 12 Qe2 Ba6! 13 Bg5 (the only move) 13...Qxg5 14 Qxa6 Nxf2! 15 Rxf2 Qc1+ 16 Qf1 Bxf2+ 17 Kxf2 Qxc2+.

12...Ba6

13 g3

Again virtually forced. The only alternative is 13 Bxb6 (13 Re1 Nxf2), but then 13...Bxf1 14 g3 Qh6! (better than 14...Qh3, which leads to the slightly better ending given in the note to White's 10th move) 15 Ne7+ (15 Qxd5 axb6 16 Qxe4 Qc1 is even worse) 15...Kh8 16 Be3 Qe6 17 Qxd5 (after 17 Kxf1 Qxe7 18 Qxd5 Qxb4 White has nothing like enough for the exchange) 17...Qg4! 18 Kxf1 Rad8 19 Qc6 Qh3+ 20 Ke1 Qxh2 gives Black an enormous attack.

13...Qh3



White to move

14 Re1?

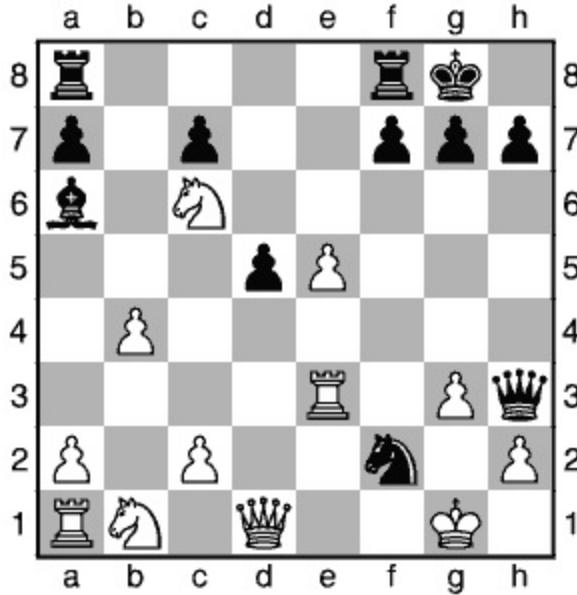
This is already the decisive error. Probably White recoiled from the idea of accepting a somewhat doubtful ending (by 14 Bxb6 – see the note to White’s 10th) so soon after his innovation, but that was objectively his best chance. With the text-move White aims to hang on to his extra pawn, but this is bound to involve some risk given his poor development.

14...Bxe3

15 Rxe3

Once again White has no choice. After 15 fxe3 Nxg3! 16 hxg3 (after 16 Ne7+ Kh8 17 Nxd5 Rad8 White’s position collapses) 16...Qxg3+ 17 Kh1 Qh4+ 18 Kg2 Qg5+ 19 Kf2 (to avoid a check on h6) 19...Qf5+ the next check comes on g6 or (after 20 Qf3) on c2 and in either case the knight on c6 falls.

15...Nxf2!



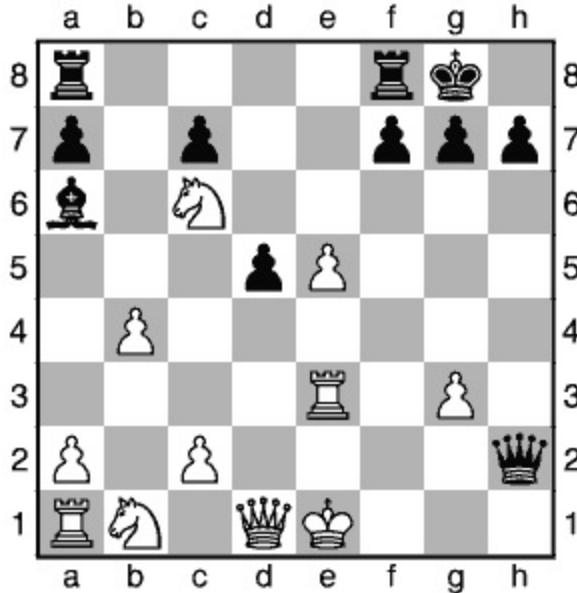
White to move

This sacrifice is completely sound and leads to a forced win. Perhaps it is a little surprising that it proves so effective, given that the immediate attacking force consists of only a queen and a bishop, but there are a number of factors operating in Black's favour. The two most important are the excellent position of the bishop on a6 and the undefended knight on c6. In several lines White loses because a queen check picks up the stray knight. The third factor is that in some lines Black can bring his f8-rook into the attack by a timely ...f5. It is even relevant that White has weakened his queenside by playing b4, as the rook on a1 is vulnerable along the f6-a1 diagonal. Sometimes tactics only work because of chance elements in the position, but one cannot really say that the above factors are the result of a lucky coincidence for Black. White went out of his way to win a pawn, and in order to do this he was obliged to make positional concessions: the weakening move b4, the exchange of his light-squared bishop and the time-consuming knight capture on c6. In other words the weaknesses that now prove fatal for White are an inevitable consequence of the high-risk strategy he adopted.

16 Kxf2 Qxh2+

17 Kf3

White's best chance is to keep his king on the f-file although, as we shall see, it can eventually be forced away. After 17 Ke1 Black has a choice of two winning lines:



Black to move

1) 17...d4 18 Ne7+ (18 Qxd4 Qh1+ and 18 Rf3 Qh1+ 19 Kd2 Qh6+ win the knight, while 18 Nxd4 Rad8 19 c3 Qg1+ 20 Kd2 Qf2+ 21 Re2 Bxe2 22 Qxe2 Rxd4+ exploits White's weak queenside) 18...Kh8 19 Ra3 (19 Rf3 Rae8) 19...Qh1+ 20 Kd2 Qh6+ 21 Ke1 Rae8 and Black regains his piece, which in this position is equivalent to winning the game.

2) 17...Qg1+ 18 Kd2 Qf2+ 19 Re2 Qb6! (19...Qxg3 20 Kc1 is less clear) 20 Ne7+ Kh8 and White cannot meet the many threats, for example:

2a) 21 Nf5 Qxb4+ 22 Kc1 Bxe2 23 Qxe2 Rae8 and now Black will win the e5-pawn (e.g. 24 Nd2 Qc3), when he has a considerable material advantage and a continuing attack.

2b) 21 Rh2 Qxb4+ 22 Nc3 Qxe7 23 Rxh7+ (23 Qh5 h6) 23...Kxh7 24 Qh5+ Kg8 25 Rh1 f5 26 Qh7+ Kf7 27 Qxf5+ Ke8 28 Qg6+ Kd8 29 Qxa6 Qxe5 is winning for Black.

2c) 21 b5 Qxb5 22 Nc3 Qc5 23 Nf5 d4 24 Ne4 Qxe5 and White is simply losing too much material.

17...Qh5+

Forcing the pawn to g4 for a definite purpose.

18 g4 Qh3+

19 Kf2 Qh2+

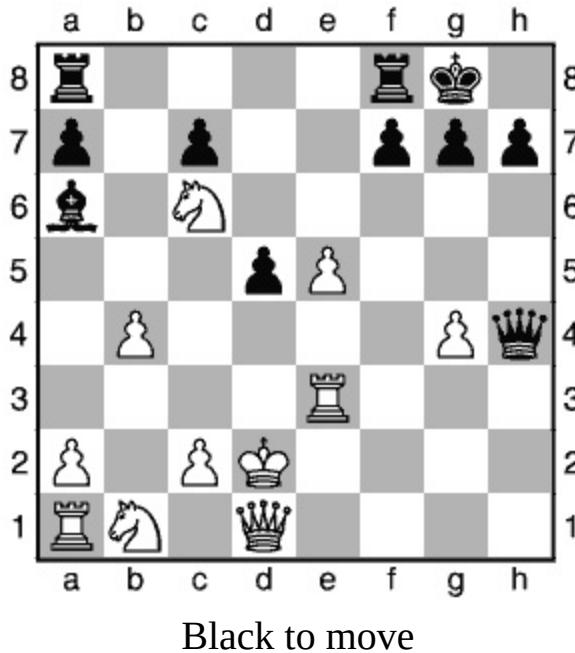
20 Ke1

Now there is no choice but to run away, since 20 Kf3 f5 would open either the f-file or the h5-d1 diagonal, with catastrophic results (21 Ne7+ Kh8 22 Nxf5 Rxf5+ 23 gxf5 Qh5+).

20...Qh4+

The position of the pawn on g4 does change some lines slightly, but line ‘1’ in the note to White’s 17th move is unaffected, so 20...d4 would have won here. However, the move played is just as good.

21 Kd2



21...d4?!

However, here Black could have won more easily by 21...Qf2+ 22 Re2 Qf4+ (this was not possible in the note to White’s 17th; note that the line 22...Qb6, which would be analogous to line ‘2’ in the earlier note, is less effective because after 23 Ne7+ Kh8 24 Kc1 Bxe2 25 Qxe2 Black cannot trap the knight by 25...Qe6) 23 Ke1 Qxg4. Now White loses his stray knight, *e.g.* 24 Re3 Qg1+ 25 Kd2 Qf2+ 26 Re2 Qf4+ 27 Ke1 Qh4+ 28 Kd2 Qh6+, 24 Nc3 Qh4+ 25 Rf2 Qh1+ 26 Kd2 Qh6+, 24 Na5 Qh4+ 25 Kd2 Qxb4+ or 24 Nd4 Qg1+. Checking on e7 only makes the knight vulnerable to a fork on h4.

During the game I felt that Black could not win using just the queen and bishop, and so it would be necessary to bring the rooks into the attack somehow. The most natural way to achieve this is to play ...d4 at a moment when White is forced to reply Nxd4, allowing a rook to move to d8 with gain of tempo. Normally, when conducting such an attack, bringing the reserve forces into action is often the deciding factor; as Yasser Seirawan puts it, ‘You must invite everybody to the party.’ This is an important general principle which can help to find the right path even in a very complex

situation. Nevertheless, it is important to remain flexible; if there happens to be a forced win in the position then general principles don't matter at all.

In practice, of course, it is important to be pragmatic. I found the winning line in the game fairly quickly, precisely because it was based on familiar general principles. It would not necessarily be wise to spend time looking for another, quicker, win with no assurance that any such line exists. Personally I find it quite surprising that White cannot save his knight after 23...Qxg4 in the above variation and so I consider this win to be slightly counter-intuitive. As I have already remarked, points are awarded for a win – you don't get extra for the quickest or most beautiful win – and it is important to keep the fundamental objective in mind.

22 Nxd4

Forced, as if the rook moves then 22...Qh6+ wins the knight.

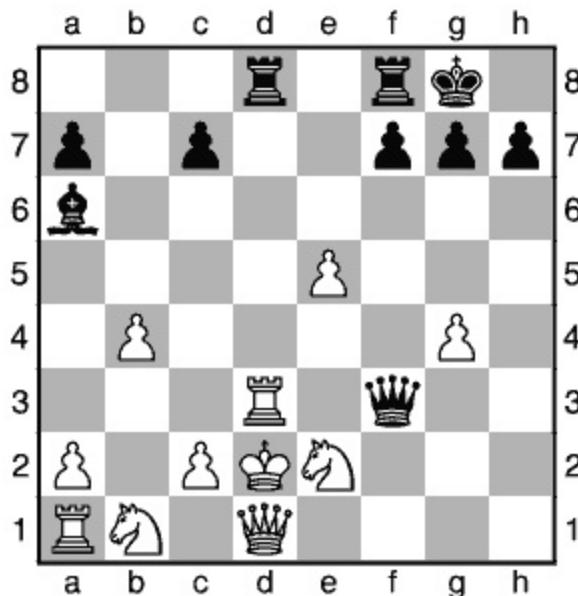
22...Qf2+

Just at the moment when White cannot interpose with the rook.

23 Ne2 Rad8+

24 Rd3 Qf3!

This is the most conclusive move. Black could also have continued 24...Bxd3 25 cxd3 Rxd3+ 26 Kxd3 Rd8+ 27 Kc2 Rxd1 28 Kxd1 Qf1+ 29 Kd2, when White is very tangled up, but it takes several moves to promote a pawn on the kingside. This should also be a win, but it is perhaps less clear-cut than the text-move.



White to move

25 Kc3

If 25 Nc1, then 25...Qf4+ 26 Kc3 Qxe5+ 27 Rd4 c5 and wins, while after 25 Nec3 Qf4+ 26 Ke1 Bxd3 27 cxd3 Qg3+ 28 Ke2 Qg2+ 29 Ke1 Qb2 the a1-rook falls.

25...Bxd3

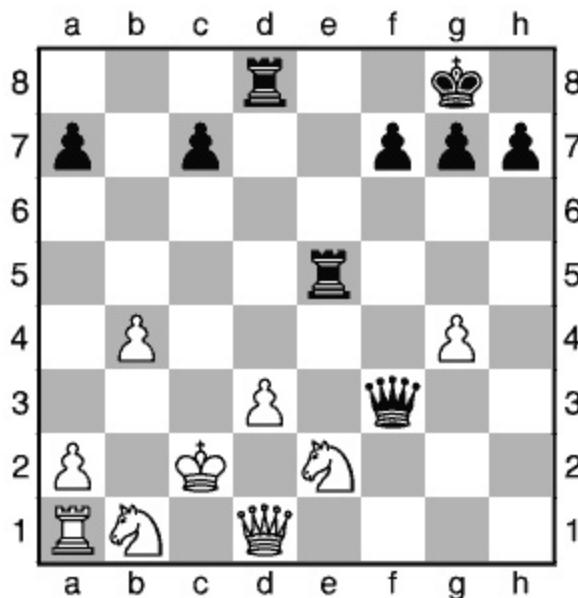
26 cxd3 Rfe8

Although White is still slightly ahead on material, the game is effectively over. White has several weak pawns and of these the pawn on e5 falls immediately. At the same time his king is exposed and his queenside pieces are still on their original squares. Even if they could be developed, the knights have no good squares, while Black's rooks are terrifyingly active along the central files. If the d-pawn drops, the rooks will get to grips with the white king along the ranks, while the loss of the g4-pawn will give Black three connected passed pawns on the kingside.

27 Kc2

White is trying to develop his knight to c3. He could offer slightly more resistance by 27 Na3, but even here Black wins by 27...Rxe5 28 Ng1 (28 Nd4 Qf6 29 Nac2 c5 30 bxc5 Rxc5+ and wins) 28...Qf6! 29 Kc2 Re3 30 Qf1 (there is no other way to meet the threat of taking on d3, *e.g.* 30 Rc1 Qa6 or 30 Rb1 Rxd3 31 Qxd3 Rxd3 32 Kxd3 Qa6+ 33 Nc4 Qg6+) 30...Qc6+ 31 Nc4 (31 Kb2 Rxd3 32 Rc1 Rd2+ 33 Rc2 Rxa3) 31...Rxd3 32 Qxd3 Rxd3 33 Kxd3 Qg6+ 34 Kd2 Qxg4 35 Rc1 h5 and the kingside pawn-mass ensures an easy win.

27...Rxe5



White to move

28 Nec3

After 28 Nbc3 (28 Nc1 Qxd1+ 29 Kxd1 Rd4 picks up the g4-pawn with an easy win in view of the position of White's pieces) 28...Qxg4 29 d4 Re3 30 Qd2 Rde8 31 Re1 h5 White is completely paralysed and Black can just push his h-pawn.

28...Qg3

Now the d-pawn cannot be saved.

29 Na3 Re3

30 Qg1 Rdxh3

0-1

My game against Matulović in this event set a record; it was the longest game I had ever played and remains my longest to this very day. After Matulović had missed an easy win just before the first time control, the game reduced to a queen and pawn ending in which I was a pawn down. After 150 moves and 18½ hours play I finally managed to hold the draw, but the effect on my other games was rather negative. I was staying far from the tournament venue and the repeated journeys by bus to Portland School to be tortured for another 16 moves by Matulović proved too taxing. In the end I scored 6/15 to finish the tournament in joint 11th position.

Shortly afterwards I took part in an event which was to become an institution: the BBC Master Game tournament. The format varied over the years, but the basic principle was the same: a tournament was played behind closed doors and after the games the players recorded their thoughts as if the game was actually taking place. The game was then re-enacted in a TV studio while the 'voice-overs' were played back. The players could then ham it up, producing suitable facial expressions in synchronisation with the 'voice-over'. My experience was that a glass of wine beforehand helped, although there were a couple of hilarious occasions when a player took this principle too far. In this inaugural event I lost in the first round to George Botterill.

In July, I took part in the 'B' group of one of the leading Dutch events, the IBM tournament in Amsterdam. This invitation was one of the 'prizes' for winning the European Junior Championship. Thanks to Birmingham, my Elo rating had now slipped to 2375. Only three of my eleven opponents at Amsterdam had lower ratings and when I lost in the first round to Schiffer of Germany, I feared that my Birmingham result might be repeated. However, I

did not lose another game and ended up in a tie for first place with Farago on 7½/11. Apart from the Schiffer game, I played quite convincingly and was very satisfied with the result. Unfortunately, Farago had a slightly better tie-break, and so gained the coveted invitation to the following year's grandmaster group (where in fact he justified the promotion by playing very well).

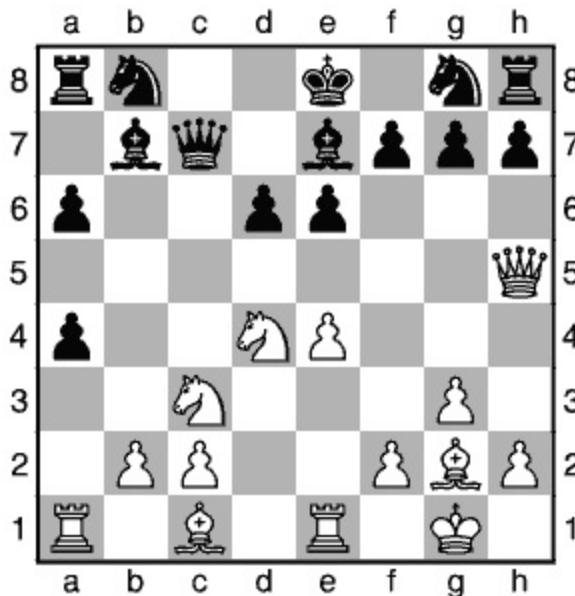
The following month I took part in a major international event held at the West Centre Hotel in Fulham, London, which was part of a successful 'London Chess Fortnight'. This was the strongest event I had ever taken part in, and I was quite satisfied with my 50% score. In the first round I scored my first-ever win against a grandmaster:

J. Nunn – G. Sigurjonsson

London, 1975

Sicilian, Kan

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 a6 5 Nc3 Qc7 6 g3 b5 7 Bg2 Bb7 8 0-0 d6 9 Re1 Be7 10 a4 bxa4 11 Qh5!



Black to move

A cheeky but strong move; if Black plays 11...Nf6, then 12 Nxe6, so he has to weaken his kingside.

11...g6 12 Qe2 Nc6 13 Rxa4 Nxd4 14 Rxd4 Rc8 15 Bd2 Nf6 16 Bh6
(the weakness created by ...g6 proves very awkward) **16...Qb6 17 Rd3 Rc7**

18 e5 dxe5 19 Bxb7 Rxb7 20 Qxe5 Qc7 21 Qxc7 Rxc7 22 Bg7 Rg8 23 Bxf6 Bxf6 24 Nd5 Bd8 25 Nxc7+ Bxc7 26 Red1 1-0

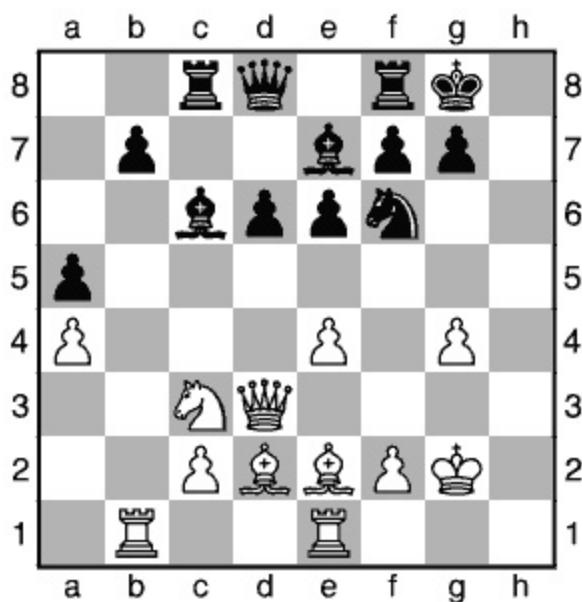
At the time Miles was enjoying great success and won this tournament with 7½/11, scoring his first grandmaster norm. A curious feature of my result was that I drew only one game, against Miles, and had ten decisive results.

In September I played in the first ‘EEC Team Championship’, held in Ostend. Being part of a British team was a novel experience, since England, Scotland and Wales have always fielded separate chess teams. Another novel experience was falling ill with gastro-enteritis and missing the early rounds of the event. A Belgian doctor treated me by prescribing two liquids in bottles mysteriously labelled ‘A’ and ‘B’. One spoonful of ‘A’, he told me, should be followed *immediately* by one spoonful of ‘B’. Darkly suspicious, I tried mixing these liquids together in a glass, expecting to produce a green frothing mixture suitable for consumption by Dr Jekyll. However, there was only some mild effervescence, so I duly took my alphabet soup. I scored a satisfactory 4/5 after my recovery. The Chief Arbiter at this event, Mr Heynen, was the archetypal chess arbiter, filled with a remarkable self-importance and concern for minutiae. At every moment when he wasn’t popping up in the line of sight of the tournament photographer, he could be seen tapping away on his pocket calculator compiling all sorts of abstruse statistics ready for his speech at the closing ceremony. There we learnt about the percentages scored by White and Black in each round, the longest and shortest games of the tournament (the longest being Buchal-Nunn), and every other numerical feature of the event. Mr Heynen ended by telling us how many words there had been in his speech – it must be the Belgian sense of humour.

The year ended with another step upwards. I had been invited to the Hastings Premier and was very happy to take part in such a famous event. This was during the years when the Premier was played in the basement of the White Rock Pavilion, a spacious venue with the major defect that a pantomime took place directly overhead. Everybody had a song they particularly hated; George Botterill’s was ‘Old Macdonald had a farm’ because he quickly started to analyse in time with the music: ‘... and a take, take there, here a check, there a check, ...’. The National Anthem, signalling the end of the performance, was always greeted with a sigh of relief

downstairs. I scored 6/15, which was about par. Although I only won one game, I drew with players such as Korchnoi, Uhlmann and Taimanov. I must have learnt something at Hastings, because I promptly won 15 games in a row, the longest sequence of consecutive wins in my career. Some of these were games from the Oxford Evening League, but not all the games were easy: the unlucky 15 included Speelman and Welsh international John Cooper.

April rolled around and again I tried my luck at Birmingham. At the time I was looking for opportunities to score a GM norm, but these were few and far between. There were as yet no international Swiss events, and I was still restricted to University vacations, so any chances had to be taken with both hands. Unfortunately, it was not unusual for tournament organisers to attract IMs by holding out the promise of a GM norm opportunity, only for it to mysteriously evaporate when it was too late to play somewhere else. Birmingham 1976 was one such. One curious episode occurred when Gašić adjourned his game against Mestel in a somewhat inferior position. Gašić struck up a conversation with me about his game. After a while he happened, as if by accident, to mention his sealed move. When the game was resumed, I was quite surprised to see that Gašić's sealed move was not the one he had told me earlier. Evidently he had assumed that I would pass on his confidence to Mestel. As I had not in fact done so, Mestel had analysed the real sealed move and won convincingly – it must have been the Yugoslavian sense of humour. The only notable moment in my games was the following:



Black to move

J. Nunn – B. Gašić

Birmingham 1976

Earlier I had sacrificed my b-pawn in order to gain time for my kingside attack. The danger of an h-file mate evidently convinced Black that drastic action was necessary: 24...Nxe4?! (this turns out to be unsound) 25 Nxe4 f5 26 gxf5 exf5 27 Qb3+ Rf7 28 Bh5 Qf8 29 Qe6 Re8 30 Rb6! (a good move, guaranteeing that White will be able to sacrifice a rook for the light-squared bishop) 30...fxe4 (30...Bxe4+ 31 Rxe4 fxe4 32 Rxb7 also leads to a situation of paralysis) 31 Rxc6 bxc6 32 Rxe4 d5 33 Re5 (Black can hardly move; White intends to seal him up completely by Bg6) 33...g6 34 Bxg6 Qg7 35 Bh6! Qf6 36 Bxf7+ Qxf7 37 Qg4+ Kh7 38 Rh5 Rg8 39 Bg5+ Kg7 40 Bxe7+ 1-0

I ended in next to last place with 3/10 – a dismal result. There is nothing like a couple of weekend Swiss events for rebuilding one's confidence. Outright first at Basingstoke with 6/7 was followed by the Surrey Congress, held in Wimbledon.

Game 4

J. Nunn – J. Cooper

Surrey Weekend Open 1976

Hungarian Defence

1 e4 e5

2 Nf3 Nc6

3 Bc4 Be7

This is the unusual Hungarian Defence, in which Black accepts a solid, passive position, hoping to develop counterplay later. In that respect it is similar to Philidor's Defence (2...d6). In reply, an immediate 4 d4 is the only critical line, since a slow development with d3 will just transpose to a quiet line against the Two Knights.

4 d4 d6

It is also possible to play 4...exd4 5 Nxd4 d6, but that allows White to develop his pieces easily with the type of slight advantage one often finds in

the Steinitz Variation of the Ruy Lopez. The text-move seems to me more logical; Black intends to support the e5-square.

5 d5

White has three options here, all of about equal merit, the choice depending on personal preference. The first of the two alternatives involves simple development, aiming to keep a space advantage, for example 5 Nc3 Nf6 6 h3 (the consistent move here because it helps to restrict Black and because ...Bg4 would force White to switch plans by d5 or dxe5) 6...0-0 7 0-0 exd4 8 Nxd4 Nxd4 9 Qxd4 c6 10 a4 (Spassky-Hort, Reykjavik Candidates match (1) 1977), with a slight plus to White. The other is liquidation to an endgame by 5 dxe5 dxe5 6 Qxd8+ Bxd8 7 Nc3, but I suspect that most grandmasters would not think much of White's winning chances here.

The text-move gains space and creates a blocked centre, a comparatively rare occurrence in openings beginning 1 e4 e5. Only in the Closed Variation of the Ruy Lopez is it likely to happen, and there it arises much later because White normally delays d4 and d5 for a long time. In the Philidor Black's knight goes to d7, not c6, so d4-d5 is less attractive and White usually prefers to maintain his pressure against the e-pawn.

5...Na5?



White to move

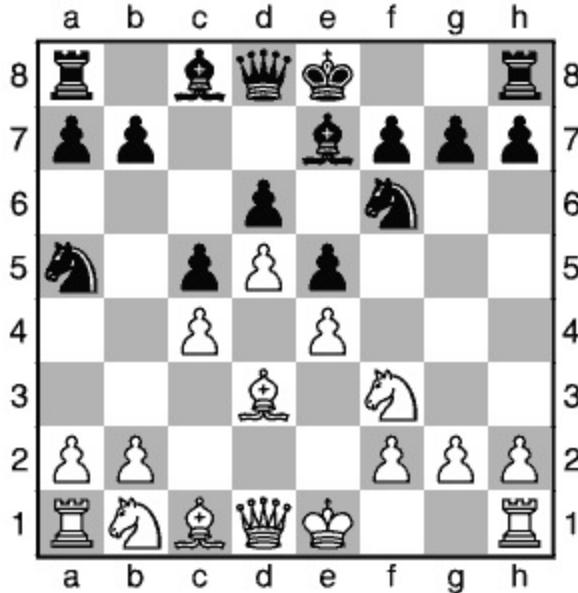
With the centre blocked it is becoming more appropriate to compare this position with the King's Indian and Czech Benoni Defences, rather than with the Philidor or any king's pawn opening. The book line is 5...Nb8 6 Bd3 Nf6

7 c4 (it is a good idea to play this before Nc3, both to prevent the centre being undermined by ...c6 and because White will expand on the queenside himself later on) 7...0-0 8 h3 Nbd7 9 Nc3 Ne8 10 0-0 g6 11 Bh6 Ng7 12 Qd2, with a small advantage for White (Fuchs-Kholmov, Leningrad 1967). This position (and the strategy for both sides) resembles a Czech Benoni, except that Black's pawn is on c7 instead of c5.

5...Na5, on the other hand, appears not to be considered by any theoretical books, and indeed the knight turns out to be badly placed on the edge of the board. Black was aware of the danger, of course, but was no doubt anticipating White's c4 and thinking in terms of certain King's Indian variations where the knight exerts useful pressure on White's c-pawn (for example, 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 Nf3 d6 5 g3 0-0 6 Bg2 c5 7 0-0 Nc6 8 d5 Na5). Even there, though, it is far from easy for Black to justify ...Na5, and in the present game the c-pawn is going to be more solidly defended than it would be after a kingside fianchetto by White. It is remarkable how far-reaching the effects of this move are. The reason is that in Black's cramped position, once a knight is on a particular 'circuit' it is very hard for it to be transferred to another. Had the knight retreated to b8, then after a later ...Nbd7, the knight would be on the circuit b8-d7-f8-g6. It might stay on d7 to support e5, or it might drop back to f8 to defend the kingside. The knight on a5 is on another circuit, a5-b7-d8-f7, which doesn't intersect the first one at all. Even theoretically, the only way to switch circuits is to play ...Na5-b7-d8-f7-h8-g6-f8-d7. In practice, of course, any number of things could interfere with such a lengthy manoeuvre. The moral is that you have to be exceptionally careful with knight moves in cramped positions, because it may not be possible to rescue a misplaced knight.

6 Bd3 c5

7 c4 Nf6



White to move

8 Nc3 0-0

The opening has settled down into something like a Czech Benoni, except that the black knight should be on d7; from a5 it can only return to civilisation via b7 and d8, and even then further active play is difficult to find. Eventually the black knights might be relocated to reasonable squares via the manoeuvre ...Ne8, ...g6, ...f6, ...Ng7 and ...Nb7-d8-f7. Of course this also requires Black to play ...b6 and to move his queen, adding up to a total of nine moves. As we shall see, Black is unable to carry out this plan because of the time element; White is ready to break open the centre with f4 long before the black knights have wended their way to the kingside. Just such a plan can be effective in the Chigorin Variation of the Ruy Lopez, for example the game Lobron-Smejkal, Zagreb 1985 went 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 Na5 10 Bc2 c5 11 d4 Qc7 12 Nbd2 Nc6 13 d5 Nd8 14 Nf1 Ne8 15 g4 f6 16 Ng3 g6 17 Kh1 Nf7 18 Rg1 Kh8 19 Nh2 Ng7 20 Be3 Bd7 ½-½. However, there are a number of differences between the two situations. In Lobron-Smejkal, the d8-square was free for the knight so that d5 could be met by ...Nd8 straight away, rather than the detour ...Na5-b7-d8. Moreover, Black had already gained some space on the queenside, whereas in Nunn-Cooper Black is not even able to force through ...b5. Despite White's long-term advantage, the blocked nature of the position means that he can only exploit it gradually.

After 8...0-0, White has played all the obvious routine developing moves and must now arrive at a long-term plan. My first step was to consider

White's possible plans against a Czech Benoni, imagining that the knight is on d7:

- 1) A kingside attack beginning with h3 and g4; then 0-0-0, Rdg1 Ne2-g3-f5, etc. (or Nd1-e3-f5).
- 2) The same attack, but castling on the kingside, so that any enemy queenside counterplay will be much less significant. However, the attack will develop more slowly because the king is likely to get in the way.
- 3) Kingside castling and a queenside advance by a3 and b4.

There is another plan which is not appropriate immediately, but it has a large part to play in restricting Black's options. This is the plan of 0-0 and a central attack based on f4. While Black's knight is on f6 or d7 this is not a good idea, because Black can gain control of e5 by ...Nd7 (if the knight is not already on d7) and ...Bf6. This control is more important than any pressure White might mount along the half-open f-file. However, as we mentioned above, in many lines Black would like to reorganise his kingside by ...Ne8, ...g6 and ...Ng7. Once the knight goes to e8 the plan with f4 gains enormously in strength, because neither black knight is well-placed to contest the e5-square.

A choice such as this can only be made on general considerations, but here I had a clear principle to guide me: in which line is the position of the knight on a5 of least value to Black? I wasn't attracted by plan 3, because Black may meet a3 and b4 by ...b6 and ...Nb7 with a solid defence (in some ways the knight is better on b7 than d7 for defensive purposes, as on d7 it obstructs the other pieces). I considered plan 1 for some time, but I was a little worried that the presence of the king on the queenside might justify the position of the a5-knight. For example, if Black plays ...b5 as a pawn sacrifice, and then follows it up with ...c4, the knight might turn out to be useful after all. I therefore decided that plan 2 appeared the most promising, but I wanted to keep the option of plan 1 open for the moment in order to see how Black intended developing his pieces.

9 h3



Black to move

Almost any move White makes will reduce his options to some extent, but for the moment White keeps as many possibilities open as he can, waiting to see what plan Black adopts. The move h3 prepares g4, which is useful in any strategy involving a kingside attack.

9...a6

We have already mentioned that Black normally plays ...Ne8, ...g6 and ...Ng7, which is useful both for defensive purposes and for eventual counterplay by ...f5. Had Black done this immediately, White could have adopted plan 1, for example 9...Ne8 10 g4 g6 11 Bh6 Ng7 12 Qe2, and if 12...f5, then 13 gxf5 gxf5 14 0-0-0, followed by Rdg1. If he avoids an early ...f5, the voluntary weakness created by ...g6 will nevertheless argue in favour of White's attack breaking through first, possibly by a Nf5 sacrifice. Therefore, Black plays a couple of moves on the queenside to dissuade White from 0-0-0.

10 Qe2

Finally abandoning any idea of a3 and b4, which would now be met by ...Nb3-d4, but developing another piece and hinting that his intention may still be to castle long, which is indeed possible after 10...Ne8 11 g4 g6, etc. Black's next move is again designed to discourage this.

10...Rb8

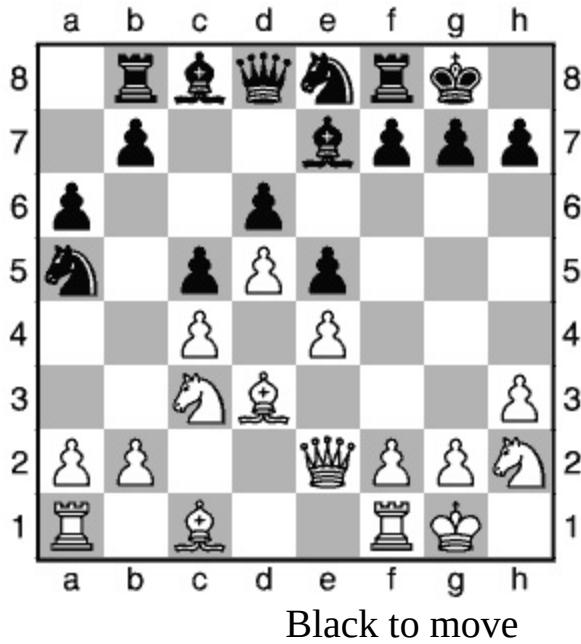
Note that ...Nh5 is never possible due to Nxe5 (although if the a5-knight were on d7 it would be possible).

11 0-0

Since Black's moves have been specifically aimed against plan 1, this decision was easy.

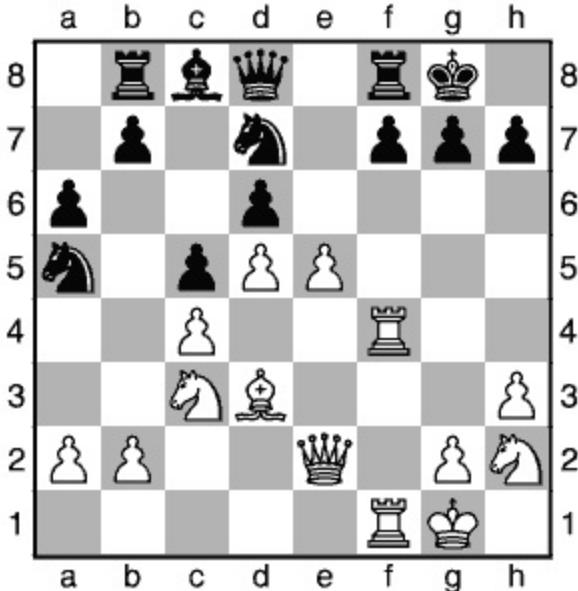
11...Nd7

One might imagine that now White has committed his king to the kingside, Black could revert to his ...Ne8 plan, but it turns out that, thanks to the time Black has spent on ...a6 and ...Rb8, after 11...Ne8 the plan of f4 is suddenly very effective. The analysis runs 11...Ne8 12 Nh2 and now:



1) 12...g6 (or 12...f5 13 f4, opening everything up) 13 f4 exf4 (after 13...f6 14 f5 g5 15 h4, or 15 Ng4 first, White is attacking on a narrow front, but Black's chronic lack of space is the decisive factor; White will continue Kf2, Bd2, and then double rooks on the h-file, and Black is most unlikely to be able to find an adequate defence) 14 Bxf4 Bf6 15 Nf3, followed by e5, and the white pieces come pouring in long before Black completes his development.

2) 12...Bg5 13 f4 Bxf4 14 Bxf4 exf4 15 Rxf4, and now Black faces a dilemma: 15...f6 stops e5, but blocks his pieces and is very passive. After 16 Raf1 White is already threatening a breakthrough by 17 e5. On the other hand, 15...Nf6 (or 15...Qe7 16 Re1 and the opening of the centre will still favour White, even if the queens disappear) is met by 16 Raf1 (16 e5 Re8 is less clear) 16...Nd7 17 e5 with a winning attack, thus:



Black to move

2a) **17...dxe5** 18 Bxh7+ Kxh7 19 Qh5+ Kg8 20 Rxf7 (threatening 21 Qg6, among other things) 20...Rxf7 (20...Nf6 21 R1xf6) 21 Qxf7+ Kh8 22 Qh5+ Kg8 23 Ne4 Qe7 (threatening 24 Ng5 and 24 Qf7+ Kh8 25 Rf5) 24 d6 wins.

2b) **17...Nxe5** 18 Bxh7+ Kxh7 19 Qh5+ Kg8 20 Rh4 and now:

2b1) **20...f6** 21 Ne4 with Ng5 to follow.

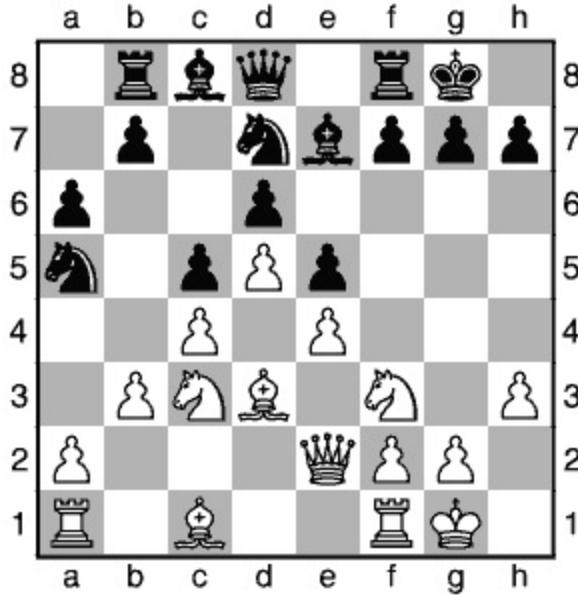
2b2) **20...f5** 21 Ne4! Qxh4 (otherwise 22 Ng5, or if 21...Qe8 then 22 Nf6+) 22 Qxh4 fxe4 23 Rxf8+ Kxf8 24 Qd8+ Kf7 25 Qc7+ Nd7 26 Qxa5 and wins.

2b3) **20...Qxh4** 21 Qxh4 Naxc4 22 Ne4 (threatening Ng5) 22...f6 23 Qg3 with a continuing dangerous attack.

Finally, 16...Re8 prevents e5, but the f6-knight remains permanently pinned against f7 and Black faces a long and unpleasant defence with the constant threat of an exchange sacrifice on f6 hanging over him.

The move played supports e5 to prevent f4 by White, but now White can build up his attack slowly without having to worry about Black's counterplay. It is worth mentioning that Black could have played 11...Bd7 followed by ...Qe8 and ...b5, but what's the point? White just replies b3 and Black has achieved nothing since any penetration squares on the b-file are easily covered by White.

12 b3



Black to move

A semi-waiting move which is quite useful if Black lashes out with ...b5 as a pawn sacrifice. Whether the bishop should go to b2 is not yet clear.

12...b6

Black gives up any idea of active play by ...b5 and concentrates on transferring the a5-knight to a better square. With the knight on d7, blocking in the c8-bishop, Black is in no position to think about playing ...f5.

13 Nd1

Now that White need not be concerned about ...b5, the knight heads for a nice aggressive post at f5. Black can prevent this by ...g6, but it weakens his kingside.

13...Kh8

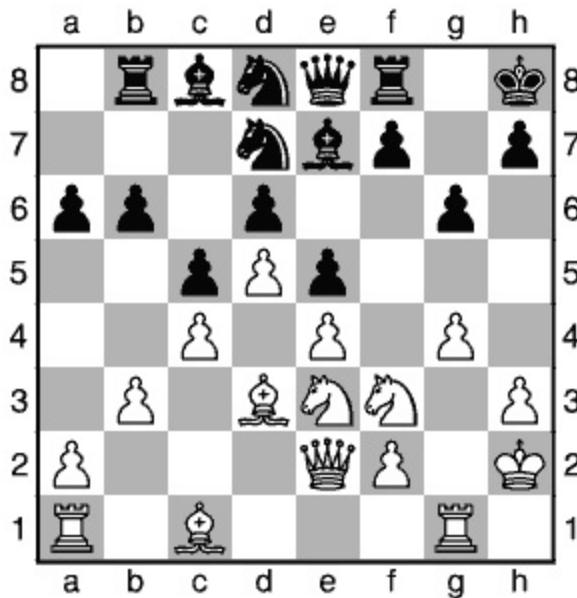
Although White has to make some hard choices, Black's task is even more difficult. He doesn't have any active plan and must content himself with trying to neutralise White's ideas. The trouble is that White can vary his plan according to circumstances, so that Black may play a move in anticipation of White adopting one particular plan, but on seeing Black's move White can do something else against which the black move may be positively harmful. This is the fate of Black's ...Kh8. He anticipates White doubling rooks on the g-file and playing a Nf5 sacrifice (after ...g6 by Black), but now the king runs into trouble on the long diagonal instead.

14 Ne3 g6

15 g4 Qe8

16 Kh2 Nb7

17 Rg1 Nd8



White to move

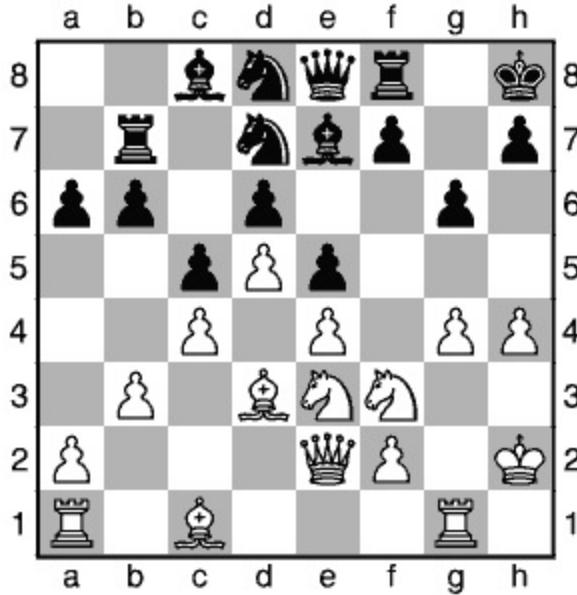
18 h4

When the opponent has no counterplay, patience is the attacker's greatest asset. It is quite wrong to rush in with a premature attack, which may give the opponent counterplay where none existed before. There is no reason not to take care with the build-up; indeed, a leisurely accumulation of force may well cause the opponent to despair and make the task even easier by a desperate attempt to break out.

The move played shows the impetuosity of youth. These days I would definitely prefer to prepare White's attack thoroughly before changing the pawn structure, for example by Bb2 (or Bd2), Rg3 and Rag1. Only then would I consider playing h4. After 18 h4 a weakness is created at g4, which Black can try to exploit by a combination of ...Nf6 and ...h5. If White replies g5 either before or after ...h5, the black knight will go to h5 or g4 respectively; then the advancing pawns are blocked and Black may prepare the counterattack ...f6 at his leisure. If White answers ...h5 by gxh5, then ...Nxh5 and the f4-square is a serious weakness.

It happens that White can forestall this danger by tactical means, as we shall see, and he is still guaranteed a very good position. Nevertheless, the premature h4 has complicated his task. Whatever may happen in the sequel, the extra preparatory moves could only have improved his chances.

18...Rb7



White to move

This move may appear a strange reaction to White's aggressive h4, but there is a logical reason behind it. Had Black played 18...Nf6, White would reply 19 Bb2, refuting 19...h5 by 20 Nxe5 dxe5 21 Bxe5, with threats of Bxb8, g5, Qb2 and even d6. Obviously Black could not allow that, so he would play 19...Rb7, which makes the combination unsound: 20 Nxe5? dxe5 21 Bxe5 Kg8 22 d6 (or 22 Qb2 Nd7) 22...Nc6 23 dxe7 Qxe7, and Black suddenly has a very dangerous counterattack in return for a pawn (the pawns on e4, g4 and h4 are all vulnerable, and White's king is exposed).

However, White can continue 20 Qd2!, which again prevents 20...h5 on account of 21 gxh5 Nxh5 22 Nf5!, and the queen penetrates to h6 (note that ...Nf4 is impossible thanks to the bishop on b2). This effectively kills any possible counterplay by ...h5, and White can resume his build-up by doubling rooks on the g-file.

In fact Black decides to play the rook move first, which makes no real difference. It is the placing of White's dark-squared bishop that is the significant point.

19 Bd2?

This turns out to be a surprisingly serious error. I was still not certain which diagonal is best for the bishop, and this move was based on the assumption that I could just double rooks and then decide whether to play Bc3. However, it turns out that, thanks to the impetuous h4, White can no longer go on manoeuvring quietly without taking any notice of possible counterplay.

The previous note shows that b2 is the correct square, because then White can nullify the ...Nf6 and ...h5 plan without any particular difficulty. However, after the text-move White finds himself impelled to make the Nf5 sacrifice before all his preparations are complete.

The reason why I chose d2 rather than b2 was that Black has an alternative defence, the passive 19...f6. By opening the second rank Black more or less rules out a sacrificial breakthrough, but of course the move takes away even more squares from Black's minor pieces. In this case I intended to play Rg3-h3, Rg1 and h5. Then ...g5 will be forced, in the face of the terrible threat of breaking through by hxg6 and g5. With the kingside permanently closed, White will switch his rooks back to the other flank and play for a3 and b4. This is a typical King's Indian plan (it often occurs in the Averbakh Variation). Apart from his big space advantage, White can increase the pressure considerably by occupying f5 with his knight, a manoeuvre impossible for Black to imitate. If the knight is captured, the e4-square opens for the other knight. Whether these advantages would suffice for a win is not completely certain, since White would be conducting his attack over a very narrow front. However, experience from similar King's Indian positions shows that defending in such a situation is extremely difficult. My logic was that for this plan it is better to have the bishop on d2, where it can operate on both flanks. However, this wasn't a very good decision. In the line with ...f6, White can take all the time he likes, and there is no problem transferring the bishop back from b2 to d2. On the other hand, in the game continuation White would definitely prefer to have the bishop on the long diagonal.

19...Nf6!

Definitely the best move against 19 Bd2, though Black fails to find his way through the jungle of complications at move 21.



White to move

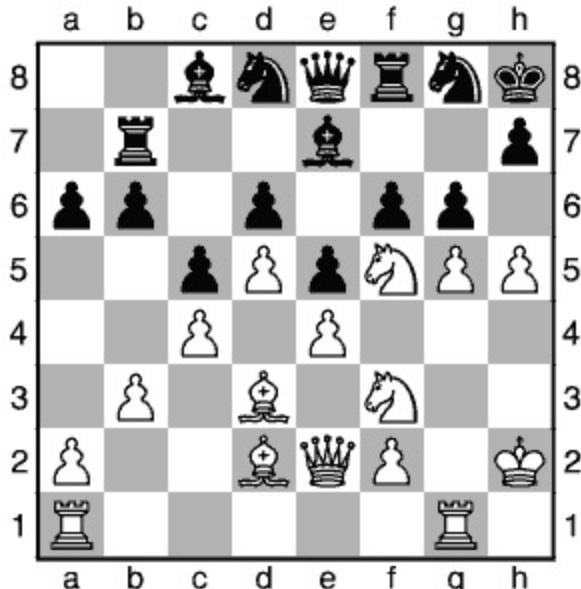
20 Nf5

White is being pushed into this piece sacrifice, as otherwise Black plays 20...h5 and the kingside pawn structure will change in Black's favour. Had White had been able to prepare this sacrifice more thoroughly, then its soundness would not be in doubt, but here it is far from clear. In fact, analysis shows that very accurate defence would have beaten off White's attack, but refuting such sacrifices is harder over-the-board than in 'armchair analysis'.

This sacrifice is not in itself unusual – indeed it is thematic with this type of pawn structure. It is based on Black's constricted position. His pieces are exhibiting an unfortunate tendency to get in each other's way, especially since all eight of them remain on the board; any attempt to transfer one of them to the kingside is like trying to solve a sliding-block puzzle!

20...gxf5

Although 20 Nf5 doesn't threaten anything directly (21 Nxe7 Qxe7 22 Bg5? could be met by 22...h6! 23 Bxh6 Nxg4+ 24 Rxg4 Bxg4 25 Bxf8 Qxf8, to Black's considerable advantage), Black cannot leave the knight on f5 indefinitely as White would slowly reinforce his attack. However, Black can play 20...Ng8, trying to take the knight later under more favourable circumstances. It seems that continuing to offer the knight by 21 g5 f6 22 h5 is not correct:

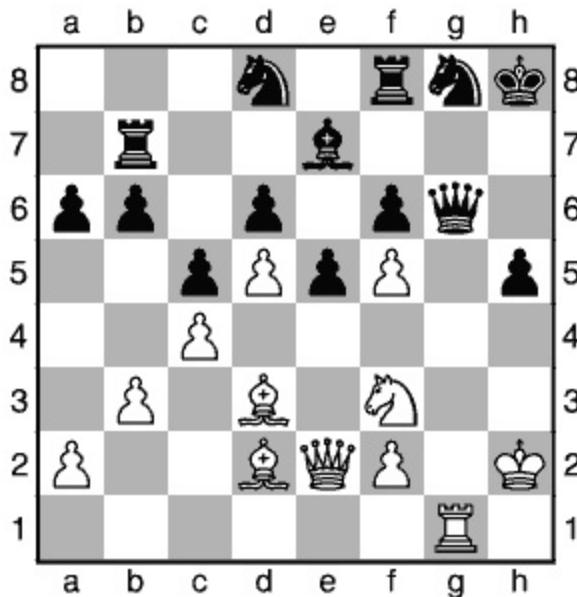


Black to move

1) 22...gxf5? 23 g6 hxg6 (23...Rf7 24 exf5 and White wins material) 24 hxg6 Kg7 25 exf5 (25 Nh4 f4!) 25...Nh6 26 Bxh6+ Kxh6 27 Kg2 Rh8 28 Rh1+ Kg7 29 Rxh8 Qxh8 30 Rh1 Qf8 31 Rh7+ Kg8 32 Nh2 wins.

2) 22...fxg5? 23 hxg6 hxg6 24 Nxe7 Rxe7 25 Nxg5 and White has opened up the kingside without any sacrifice; moreover, the dark-squared bishop is bound to become very dangerous over the next few moves.

3) 22...gxh5! 23 g6 hxg6 24 Rxg6 Qxg6 25 Rg1 Bxf5 26 exf5 and now:



Black to move

3a) 26...Qf7? 27 Nh4 Kh7 28 Ng6 Nh6 29 Qxh5 Qg7 30 Nxf8+ Qxf8 31

Qg6+ winning.

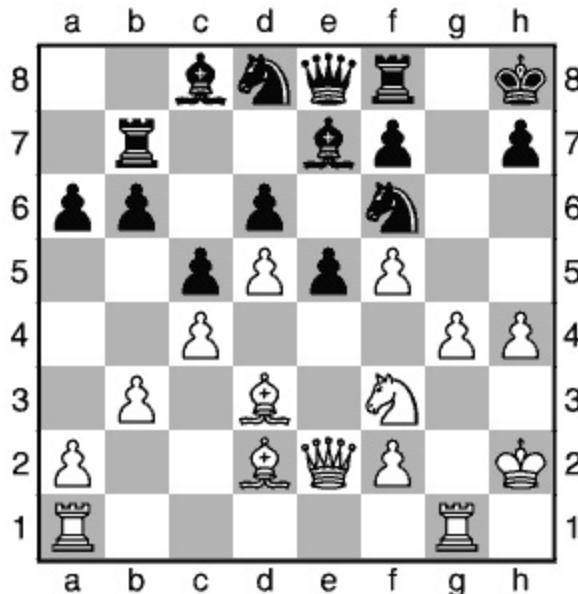
3b) 26...Qxg1+ 27 Kxg1 Rf7 28 Nh4 Rh7 29 f4 (threatening 30 Qg2 and 31 Ng6+) 29...Kg7 30 Qg2+ Kf8 31 fxe5 dxe5 (31...fxe5 32 Ng6+ wins after either 32...Kf7 33 Nxe7 or 32...Ke8 33 Nxe7 Nxe7 34 f6) 32 Ng6+ Ke8 33 Nxe5! with a clear advantage for White.

3c) 26...Qh7! 27 Nh4 Nh6! (not 27...Nf7 28 Ng6+ Kg7 29 Nxe7+ Ng5 30 Bxg5 fxg5 31 f6+ and wins) 28 Qxh5 (28 Ng6+ Kg7 leads to nothing) 28...Rg8 29 Bxh6 Rxg1 30 Kxg1 Nf7 and White's attack is refuted.

It follows that after 20...Ng8, White should probably play 21 Nh6, but the exchange of one pair of knights will ease Black's defensive task.

Accepting the sacrifice is objectively the best move, but it does require very accurate defence by Black.

21 exf5



Black to move

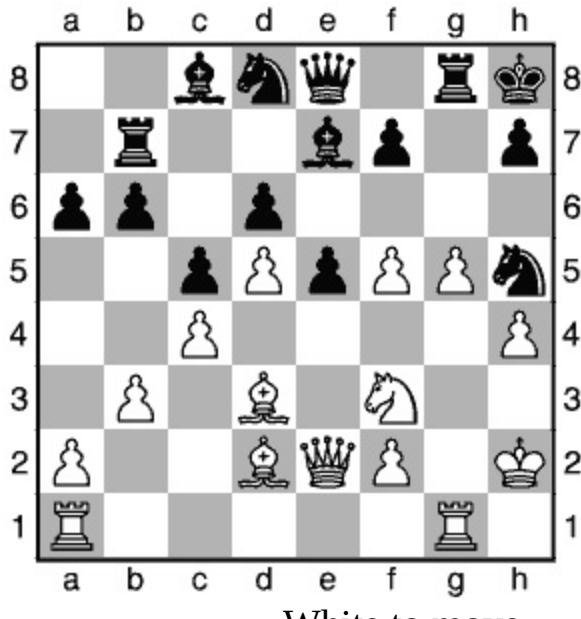
Not 21 gxf5. In this type of attack it is usually the momentum of the pawn-roller which justifies the sacrifice, rather than the open g-file. White also extends the range of his light-squared bishop by this recapture, and his threats to sacrifice on e5 are intensified. Meanwhile, the immediate danger is g5 followed by f6.

21...e4?

Black slips up at the critical moment. This move is certainly tempting, because it either wins a piece or liquidates to Black's advantage. However, the opening of the long diagonal proves to be more than his position can

stand. Black has a range of possible defences to the basic threat of g5 and f6:
 1) 21...Ng8? 22 g5 f6 (otherwise the bishop goes; 22...Qd7 23 Rg3 does not help, though White has to watch out for this nasty little counterattack in some lines) 23 g6 hxg6 (if 23...Kg7, 24 gxh7+ Kxh7 25 Rg6 and the threat of Ng5+ is decisive) 24 fxg6 Kg7 25 Nd4! f5 (otherwise Qh5 wins at once) 26 Qh5 Nf6 (the only reasonable way to stop 27 Qh7+ Kf6 28 Qh8#) 27 Qh6+ Kg8 28 g7 and wins.

2) 21...Rg8 (this should probably lead to a draw) 22 g5 (22 Bc3 Nxg4+ 23 Rxg4 Rxg4 24 Nxe5 Rxh4+ 25 Kg3 dxe5 26 Bxe5+ Kg8 wins for Black) 22...Nh5 (22...Nd7 23 f6 Bxf6 {23...Nxf6 24 gxf6 Bxf6 25 Qe4 Rg6 26 h5 Qd7 27 Rg3 wins for White} 24 gxf6 Nxf6 25 Rxg8+ Nxg8 26 Rg1 Qd7 27 Rg3 gives White just about enough for the pawn) and now:



White to move

2a) 23 Bc3 Nf4 24 Nxe5 (24 Bxe5+ dxe5 25 Qxe5+ f6 26 Qxf4 gains three pawns for the piece, but gives away both the initiative and the dark squares) 24...f6! 25 Ng6+ hxg6 26 Qf3 (or 26 Qe3 Nh5, so that 27 gxf6 can be met by 27...Bxf6, stopping the mate at h6) 26...Nxd3 27 gxf6 Ne5 28 Bxe5 dxe5 29 fxg6 Bxf6, and White's attack is insufficient.

2b) 23 f6? Qd7.

2c) 23 Ne1!? f6 24 g6 Ng7 (or 24...Nf4 25 Bxf4 exf4 26 Ng2, followed by Nxf4 and Rae1, when White has sufficient compensation for the piece) 25 gxh7 Kxh7 26 Rg6 Nf7 27 Nc2, followed by Rag1, with an unclear position.

2d) 23 Nxe5 with the lines:



Black to move

2d1) 23...**dxe5** 24 Qxh5 f6 25 g6 Bf8 (25...Bd6 26 Be4 is similar) and now *Secrets of Grandmaster Play* gave 26 gxh7, overlooking 26...Rg2+! and Black wins. However, after 26 Be4! White has two pawns and a dangerous attack for the knight, with every chance of winning. He can build up by doubling rooks on the g-file; meanwhile, there seems no hope at all of ever disentangling the black minor pieces.

2d2) 23...**f6** 24 Ng4 Nf7 25 f4 when Black is virtually paralysed.

2d3) 23...**Ng7** 24 Ng4! (threatening Bc3, etc., in addition to f6)

24...Bxf5 (24...Nxf5 25 Bxf5 Bxf5 26 Bc3+ Rg7 27 Bxg7+ Kxg7 28 Qb2+ Kg6 29 Nf6 Qh8 30 h5+ Kg7 31 Ng4+ and wins) 25 Bc3 with a very strong attack, for example 25...Qd7 26 Bxf5 Qxf5 27 Nh6 Qf4+ 28 Kh3 f5 29 Rae1 Bf8 30 Qh5 with decisive threats.

2d4) 23...**Nf6** 24 Nf3 Nh5 25 f6 Qd7 (25...Nxf6 26 Bc3) 26 Kh1! Bf8 27 Nh2 Qh3 28 Bxh7! with advantage to White.

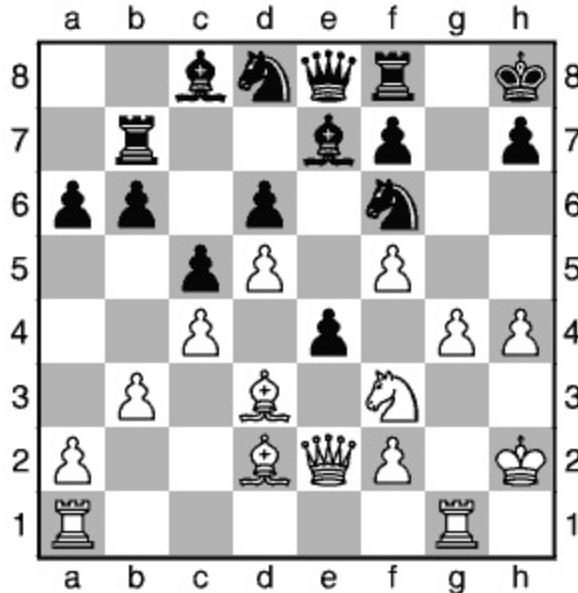
2d5) 23...**Bxg5** 24 Rxg5 Qxe5+ (24...Rxg5? 25 Ng6+) 25 Qxe5+ dxe5 26 Rxh5 f6 27 Rh6 Rf7 28 f4! and Black cannot keep the rook imprisoned on h6.

2d6) 23...**Bf6!** 24 gxf6 Qxe5+ 25 Qxe5 (after 25 Kh1? Nxf6 26 Rxg8+ Nxg8 or 25 f4? Nxf4 26 Rxg8+ Kxg8 27 Rg1+ Kf8 White has no good continuation) 25...dxe5 26 Rxg8+ Kxg8 27 Bh6, and the game suddenly fizzles out into perpetual check; for example 27...Rd7 28 Rg1+ Kh8 29 Be2 Nf4 30 Bg7+, etc.

3) 21...**Qd7!** (curiously, I overlooked this move when writing *Secrets of*

Grandmaster Play, even though I mentioned the same idea in several other variations; the possible mate on h3 holds up White's pawns) 22 g5 Ne8 23 Rg3 Rg8 (once again preventing 24 f6, this time because of 24...Nxf6) 24 Rag1 (now f6 is a threat) 24...f6 and White lacks a promising continuation. After 25 gxf6 (25 Bc3 Ng7, 25 Qe3 Bf8 and 25 g6 Bf8 26 h5 h6 are also unconvincing) 25...Rxe3 (not 25...Nxf6 26 Nxe5 dxe5 27 Rxg8+ Nxg8 28 Qg4 Bg5 29 Qxg5 Qe8 30 Bc3, followed by f4, and Black's position collapses) 26 fxe7 (after 26 Rxe3 Bxf6 27 Ng5 Bxg5 28 Bxg5 Nf7 White still has some threats against the king, but not enough to compensate for the missing piece) 26...Rxe3 27 exd8Q Qxd8 28 Kxg1 Rg7+ Black gains the advantage.

It is apparent that a sacrifice on e5 plays a key role in many lines, which emphasises that the bishop should have gone to b2 and not d2 at move 19.



White to move

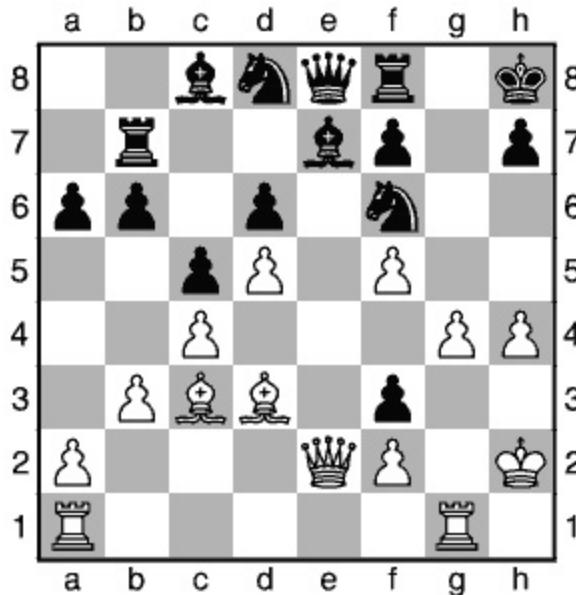
22 Bc3!

Not 22 Bxe4? Nxe4 23 Qxe4 Bf6 and Black wins. The unexpected text-move presents Black with serious, if not insuperable, defensive problems. If he now refuses to take a second piece, the threats of 23 g5 and 23 Bxe4 will be unanswered, for example 22...Kg8 23 Bxe4 Nxe4 24 Qxe4 and Black still cannot move the e7-bishop. If he takes the bishop, we have 22...exd3 23 Qe3 (threatening Qh6) and now: 1) 23...Rg8 24 g5 Bd7 25 gxf6 Bf8 26 Rxg8+ Kxg8 27 Qg5+ Kh8 28 Rg1 wins.

2) 23...Kg8 24 Qg5+ Kh8 25 Rae1 wins.

3) 23...Ne6 (the best chance, trying to get some air) 24 Qh6! Nd4 25 Nxd4 cxd4 26 Bxd4 d2 (clutching at straws to stop Rae1 and Rxe7!) 27 g5 Rg8 28 gxf6 Bd8 (28...Bf8 29 Rxg8+ as before) 29 Rg7 Bxf5 30 Rag1 Bg6 (otherwise Rxg8+) 31 R1xg6 and mates.

22...exf3



White to move

Black is in serious trouble, despite his two extra pieces, because his whole position is paralysed by the pin on the long diagonal.

23 Qe3!

Black had missed this move when he decided on 21...e4. He reckoned only on 23 Qb2, which is insufficient after 23...Kg8 24 g5 (or 24 Bxf6 Bxf6 25 Qxf6 Qe5+) 24...Nh5. Then after 25 g6 fxg6 (not 25...f6 26 Qd2! hxg6 27 Qh6 Rf7 28 Qxh5 Rh7 29 Rxg6+ Kh8 30 Qg5 and wins) 26 fxg6 h6 Black is safe, or if 25 f6, then 25...Qd7 pops up again.

I have to admit that I, too, had not seen this move when I sacrificed the knight on f5, which might form the starting point for a discussion about luck in chess.

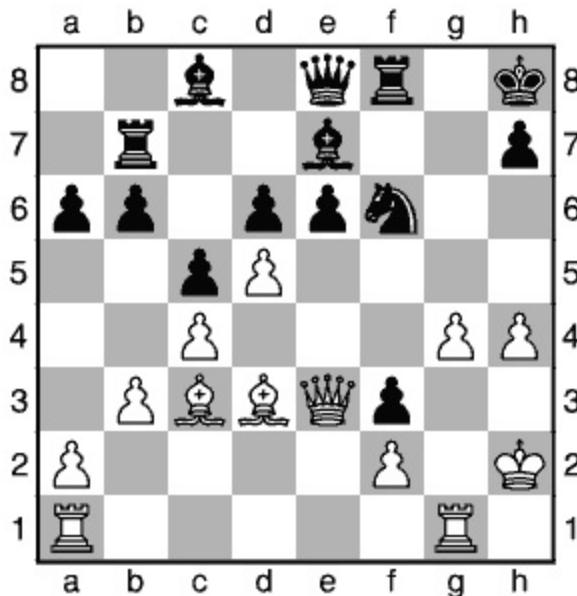
23...Ne6

This is relatively the best chance. Other lines lose quickly:

1) 23...Kg8 24 Qg5+ Kh8 25 Bxf6+ Bxf6 26 Qxf6+ Kg8 27 Rae1 Qd7 28 Qg5+ Kh8 29 f6 Rg8 30 Qh6 Rg6 31 Bxg6 fxg6 32 Qf8#.

2) 23...Rg8 24 g5 Bd7 (preparing ...Bf8) 25 gxf6 Bf8 26 Rxg8+ Kxg8 27 Rg1+ Kh8 28 Qg5 and wins.

24 fxe6 fxe6



White to move

25 dxe6

White must be careful not to allow Black to return the second piece in favourable circumstances (e.g. 25 g5? e5! wins for Black). Although returning one piece has given Black some breathing space, it has also opened the diagonal d3-h7 for White's other bishop. White must hold the pawn on e6, at least for a few moves, and concentrate on exploiting the power of the two bishops.

25...Bd8

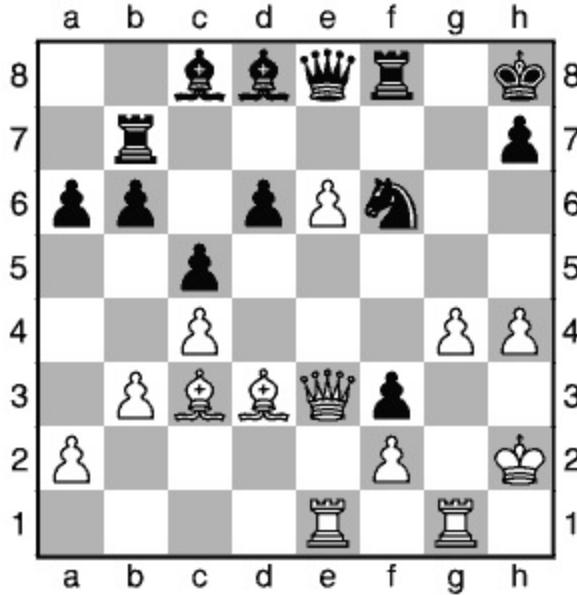
Other tries are:

1) 25...Kg8 26 g5 Nh5 27 g6 Bf6 28 gxh7+ Kh8 29 Rg8+ Rxg8 30 hxg8Q+ Kxg8 31 Bxf6 Nxf6 32 Rg1+ Rg7 33 Rxg7+ Kxg7 34 Qg5+ and wins.

2) 25...Rg8 26 Qxf3 only makes matters worse.

3) 25...d5 26 cxd5 Bd6+ 27 Kh1 (not 27 Be5 Qd8 28 g5 Rg7! 29 gxf6 Qxf6 and Black wins) 27...Kg8 28 Qh6 (not 28 g5 Nxd5 29 g6 Nxc3, but now 28...Nxd5 is met by 29 Qg5+) 28...Qe7 29 g5! Nxd5 30 g6 Nxc3 31 g7 Qxg7 32 Qxh7#.

26 Rae1



Black to move

White must win the piece back without losing the important e6-pawn. Thus 26 g5? Qxe6 allows Black to escape, whereas after the move played White renews the threat of g5.

26...Kg8

Breaking the pin. The counter-sacrifice at e6 does not help, because the force of the attack is undiminished: 26...Bxe6 (26...Re7 27 Qh6 and 26...Rg7 27 g5 Nh5 28 Qe4 Qg6 29 Qxg6 hxg6 30 e7 are also hopeless) 27 Qxe6 Qxe6 28 Rxe6 Kg8 29 g5 Nh5 30 g6 h6 31 Be4, followed by Bd5, and wins. The cunning 26...Bc7 can be met either by 27 Kh1, or 27 e7 d5+ 28 Kh1 d4 29 exf8Q+ Qxf8 30 Bxd4 cxd4 31 Qxd4 and White should win in either case.

27 g5

The threats along the diagonals and the g-file are overwhelming.

27...Nd7

Black does not survive for long by returning the second piece, but he has nothing better; if 27...Nh5, then 28 g6 h6 29 Qxh6 Bf6 (or 29...Nf6 30 g7) 30 g7 and mates.

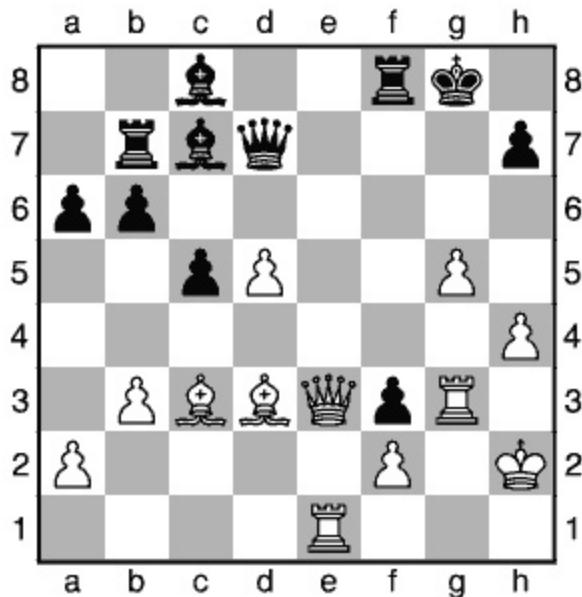
28 exd7 Qxd7

Threatens mate. If 28...Qxe3, 29 Rxe3 Rxd7 (29...Bxd7 30 g6 is the same) 30 g6 h6 31 g7 and wins.

29 Rg3 d5

Otherwise White plays g6, but now more diagonals open up for the white pieces.

30 cxd5 Bc7



White to move

31 d6 Bxd6

32 Bc4+ Rf7

33 Qe8+ Bf8

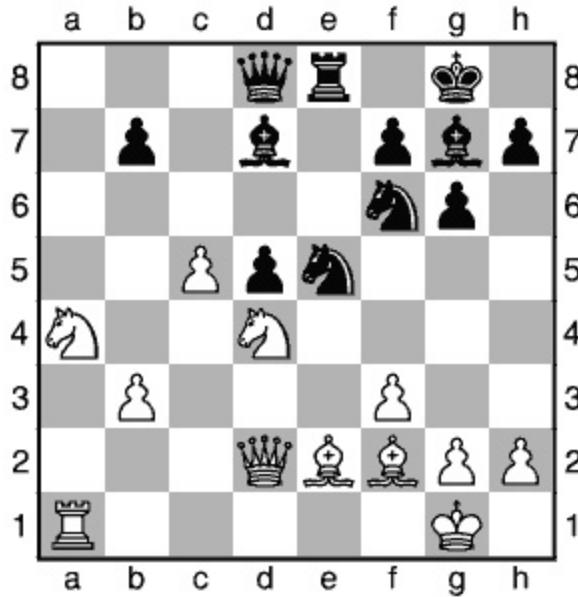
34 Bxf7+

White could have forced mate by 34 Qe5, but an extra rook is enough.

34...Qxf7

35 Qxc8 1-0

Oddly, although I scored 5/5 I did not win outright; my co-winner was Karaklaić. I was also successful in the 1976 Master Game, reaching the final before losing to Bill Hartston. The following neat combination occurred along the way, in a quickplay tie-break:



Black to move

A.J. Miles – J. Nunn

BBC Master Game, 1976

19...Neg4! 20 Bh4

Or:

1) **20 fxg4 Ne4 21 Qf4** (21 Qb2 Nxf2 22 Kxf2 Re4 23 Rd1 Bxd4+ 24 Rxd4 Qf6+ is winning for Black) 21...Nxf2 22 Qxf2 Rxe2 23 Nxe2 Bxa1 and Black should win.

2) **20 Rd1 Bh6 21 Qc2 Nxf2 22 Kxf2 Be3+** 23 Kf1 Nh5 24 Bb5 Bxb5+ 25 Nxb5 Qh4 with a winning attack.

3) **20 Bg3** (White's relatively best chance) 20...Nh5 21 fxg4 Nxg3 22 hxg3 Rxe2 23 Nxe2 Bxa1 24 Qxd5 Qe8 and Black has a clear advantage.

The move played meets with a surprising refutation in which Black 'forks' his own knights.

20...Ne4!



White to move

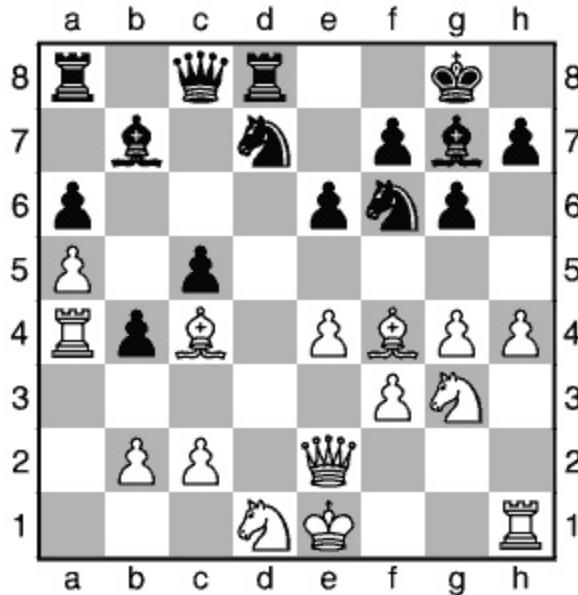
21 fxe4 Qxh4 22 Bxg4 Qxg4 23 Nc3 dxe4

White is a pawn down with an inferior position.

24 Qe3 Qh5 25 Nde2 Bg4 26 Re1 Qe5 27 b4 Bxe2 28 Nxe2 Qb2 29 Kh1 Qxb4 30 Rc1 Rd8 31 h3 Be5 32 Qg5 f6 33 Qe3 Qd2 34 Qb3+ Kh8 35 Qc4 Rd3 0-1

In the summer of 1976, I had not completed my D. Phil thesis and my grant was coming to an end, so I had to get a job. I took a teaching position at Maidstone Grammar School. In the end I was only there for one year – I can only hope that I did not do too much harm to my students. By a curious turn of fate, one of them is now my captain in the 4NCL (the British National League). He doesn't give me Black all the time, so I suppose there are no hard feelings.

Having a full-time job allowed even less time for chess, and the only significant event I took part in during the second half of 1976 was the Haifa Olympiad. My first Olympiad! Although Haifa was weakened by an East European boycott, it was nevertheless a momentous event for me. My play was rather erratic; in round 2 I found a way through to my opponent's king:



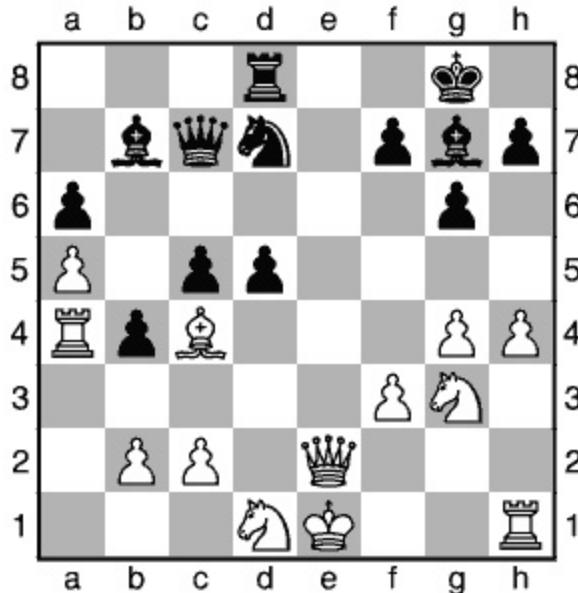
Black to move

J. Letzelter – J. Nunn

Haifa Olympiad 1976

White had launched a kingside attack with his king still in the centre and one rook horribly misplaced on a4. The retribution:

18...Nd5! 19 Bg5 Qc7! 20 Bxd8 Rxd8 21 exd5 exd5



White to move

At this point Mestel, entered the tournament hall, looked at my game

and thought ‘John is winning: a pawn up with a good position.’ Then, suspicious, he decided to count the minor pieces. Equal. Then, very suspicious, he decided to count the rooks ...

22 Ne4 dxe4 23 fxe4 Qg3+ 24 Nf2 Bd4 25 c3 bxc3 26 bxc3 Bxf2+ 27 Qxf2 Qxc3+ 28 Qd2 Qxd2+ 29 Kxd2 Nb6+

The white rook gets exactly what it deserves.

30 Bd5 Nxa4 31 Kc2 Bxd5 32 exd5 Rxd5 33 Ra1 Rd4 34 Rb1 Rxg4 35 Rb8+ Kg7 36 Ra8 c4 37 Rxa6 Rg2+ 38 Kc1 Nc5 39 Rc6 Nb3+ 0-1

A few rounds later I fell ill with a repeat of my stomach problems from Ostend and was out of action for some rounds. A diet of peach melbas helped me recover in time to play Chile in the penultimate round. There was an odd episode in this round. My opponent, who was very short of time, played his 40th move and pressed his clock, but after a couple of seconds’ hesitation his flag fell anyway. I claimed a win on time. My opponent, D. Godoy, and his captain disagreed. The arbiter on the spot did not care to make a decision himself and ordered the game to be immediately adjourned. A committee of arbiters was convened and presented with the facts. However, making a clear-cut decision proved beyond them and they ordered that the game be concluded *before* they decided whether my opponent had lost on time. The possibility of losing the game whatever the result on the board evidently had an effect on my opponent, as he quite unnecessarily lost after only five more moves. Needless to say, the arbiters breathed a collective sigh of relief.

Thanks to the East Europeans’ absence, England gained the bronze medals behind the USA and Holland, although as a result of a mix-up we were given the silver medals at the closing ceremony. The mistake was discovered immediately after the ceremony. All the members of the team exchanged medals with our Dutch counterparts at Haifa, except for Ray Keene, who returned his medal many months later.

3 Grandmaster (1977-81)

As I was still working in Maidstone, 1977 started very quietly on the chess front. My Elo rating had recovered slightly from the earlier dip and now stood at 2410. In April, the English team, having qualified for the final of the European Team Championship, set out for Moscow. My result of 3½/7 was quite good, given the strength of the opposition. The following game even earned some applause from the audience.

Game 5

J. Augustin – J. Nunn

European Team Championship Final, Moscow 1977

Vienna Opening

1 e4 e5

2 Nc3 Nf6

3 g3

A variation favoured by Spassky, who adopted it in his Candidates' Final match with Korchnoi in 1977. The intention is partly to strengthen White's control of d5 and partly to prepare f4 after Bg2 and Nge2. In reply, the immediate opening of the centre (3...d5), as played by Korchnoi, is considered the most reliable defence. However, simple piece development, as used here, is also playable.

3...Bc5

4 Bg2 d6

Over the next couple of moves, both sides have to make a key decision. Should Black prevent White from forcing the exchange of the c5-bishop by Na4 and, if Black allows it, should White accept the offer? Now I think that both players misassessed this exchange. I wasn't too worried by the possibility of Na4, because I was aware of the example Larsen-Portisch (Candidates' match 1968), in which a similar position arose with colours reversed. That game had begun 1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 d3 Na5 5 Nge2 Nxc4 6 dxc4 Be7 7 0-0 d6. White later gained the advantage based on his outpost at d5 and because Black could not readily prepare ...f5 (the only plausible plan) to open up the game for his bishop pair. Moreover, White still retained the option of Ng3, making ...f5 even harder to achieve. Accordingly,

I intended simply to allow Na4 and Nxc5. However, the situation in the present game is somewhat different because White has not yet committed his knight to f3 and so he could have played Ne2 and d3, preparing a quick f4. The opening of the game for White's bishops would have counted for more than Black's control of d4.

After 5 Na4 Black's best scheme of development would be ...h6, ...Be6, ...Nc6 and ...Qd7, reserving the option of ...0-0-0 to move the king to safer spot in case White aims for f4. However, even in this case White could count on an edge.

It follows that 4...Nc6 is more accurate, with the idea 5 d3 a6, preserving the bishop from exchange.

5 Nge2 Nc6

6 0-0?!

One of those rare occasions when early castling in inadvisable, since it gives Black a clear target to aim at. The pawn on g3 and the knight on e2 (rather than f3) encourage Black's following pawn thrust, and Black can safely leave his king in the centre for a while, to concentrate on this attack, because quick counterplay in the centre (by c3 and d4) will not be readily available.

The best move would still be 6 Na4, when White could count on a slight advantage.

6...h5!



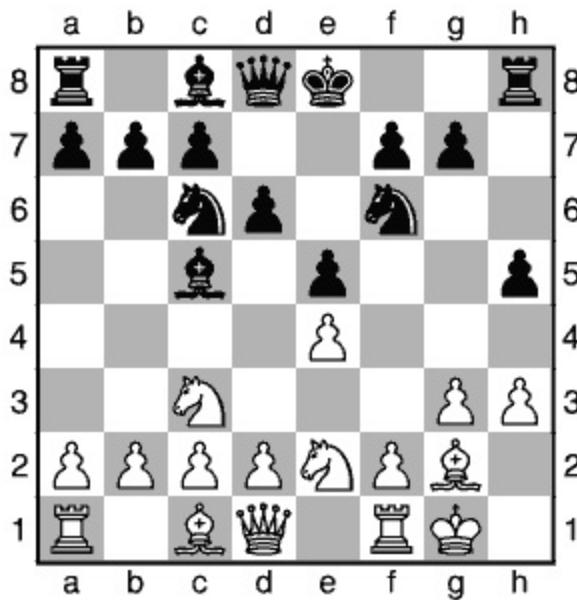
White to move

The theory of 1977 recommended the insipid 6...Nd4. Fortunately, my knowledge of theory was already exhausted by this point. In more recent games, Black has also tried 6...Bg4 and 6...Be6, although without any notable success.

There are normally three methods of meeting such an early thrust by the h-pawn:

1) Block the further advance of the pawn by **7 h4**. Here this cannot be recommended; it weakens the g4-square and means that White will not seriously be able to contemplate playing f4 in the near future, which is his main plan in this variation. Meanwhile, Black will play 7...a6, followed by ...Bg4 and ...Qd7, with eventual queenside castling in view.

2) Play **7 h3**, in order to meet 7...h4 by 8 g4. Then Black may try:



Black to move

2a) **7...h4** 8 g4 Nxg4 (tempting, but incorrect) 9 hxg4 h3 (Black fared no better with 9...Bxg4 in Motwani-McKay, Edinburgh Open 1988, since 10 Kh2 g5 11 Nd5 Be6 12 f3 h3 13 Bh1 f5 14 b4! favoured White) 10 Bf3 Qh4 11 Kh1 Bxf2 (11...Bxg4 12 Bxg4 Qxg4 13 Ng3 stops the attack stone dead) 12 d3 Bb6 (12...Nd4 13 Nxd4 exd4 14 Nd5 wins for White because 14...Qg3, threatening ...Bg4, is countered by 15 Bf4) 13 g5, followed by Nd5, and Black doesn't have enough for the piece.

2b) **7...Be6** 8 d3 (8 Nd5 Bxd5 9 exd5 Ne7 10 Nc3 Qd7 is fine for Black; 8 Na4 Qd7 9 Nxc5 dxc5 10 Kh2 h4 11 g4 0-0-0 12 b3 Nh7 13 f4 exf4 14 Nxf4 Ng5 15 d3 f6 16 Be3 Qd6 17 Kh1 Ne5 18 a3 Qc6 19 Nd5? Rxd5!

favoured Black in Van Mil-I.Timmermans, Belgian interteam Championship 1997) 8...Qd7 9 Kh2 0-0-0 and Black has completed his development with a comfortable position. Moreover, any attempt at immediate action by White would lead to trouble, for example 10 f4? Ng4+ or 10 Bg5 Rdg8, followed by ...Nh7 and ...g5.

3) Ignore the advance of the h-pawn. One line is **7 Na4** (this doesn't have the same effect as if played earlier) 7...h4 (7...Bb6 8 Nxb6 axb6 9 d4 is good for White) 8 Nxc5 dxc5 9 d3 hxg3 and each recapture has its own drawback:



White to move

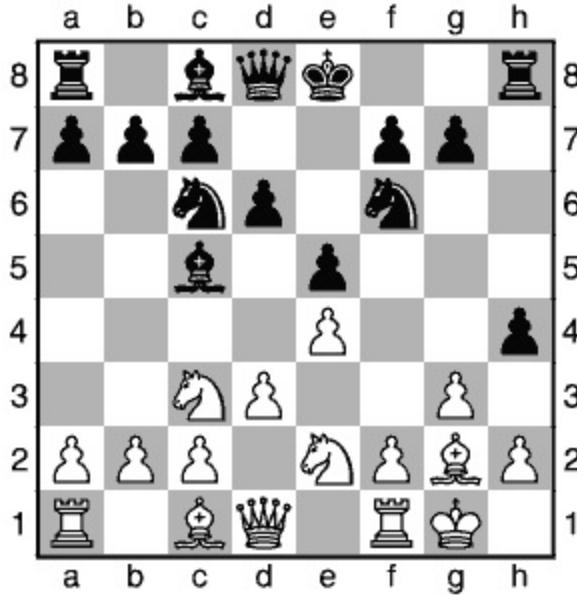
3a) **10 hxg3** Be6, followed by ...Qd7 and ...0-0-0, and Black will soon put the h-file to good use, Rasowsky-Pokorny, Bad Piestany 1922.

3b) **10 fxg3** Bg4 11 Be3 Nd4 12 Bxd4 cxd4 favours Black because his bishop is superior (Majerić-Velimirović, Yugoslav Championship 1980).

3c) **10 Nxg3** Ng4 11 h3 Qh4 with adequate play, for example 12 Nf5 Bxf5 13 exf5 Nh6 (but not 13...Nd4? 14 c3!) 14 Bxc6+ bxc6 15 Qf3 0-0-0! with an unclear position, in which a draw by 16 Qxc6 Qxh3 17 Qa8+, etc., is the most likely outcome.

In the game White also ignores the h-pawn, and simply continues his development. It is far from certain which line White should adopt, but 6...h5 would at any rate appear to be fully justified.

7 d3 h4



White to move

8 Bg5

This position had been reached before (Smyslov-Kots, USSR Championship 1961), with the continuation 8...Bg4 9 Qd2 (9 Bxh4 Nd4 is dangerous, for example 10 h3 Nf3+ 11 Bxf3 Bxf3 12 Qd2 Qd7 13 Kh2 Ng4+! and wins) 9...hxg3 10 Nxg3 Qd7 11 Bxf6 gxf6 12 Nd5 0-0-0 13 Nxf6 Qe7 14 Nxg4 Qh4 15 Qd1 Rdg8 16 Nf5 Qxg4 17 Qxg4 Rxg4 18 c3 and White had an extra pawn in the ending. This is universally given as good for White (even in *Secrets of Grandmaster Play!*), but Black has a massive improvement in 13...Qe6! 14 Qg5 Bh3, for example 15 Bf3 Nd4 16 Bg4 Bxg4 17 Qxg4 Qxg4 18 Nxg4 Rh4!, 15 Nf5 Nd4! or 15 Bxh3 Rxh3 16 Qf5 Rdh8. Thus Black has two fully adequate continuations, and so this whole line is a complete non-starter for White.

My idea in exchanging immediately on g3 was to see which way White intends to recapture and adapt my reply accordingly. It is hard to fault this logic.

8...hxg3

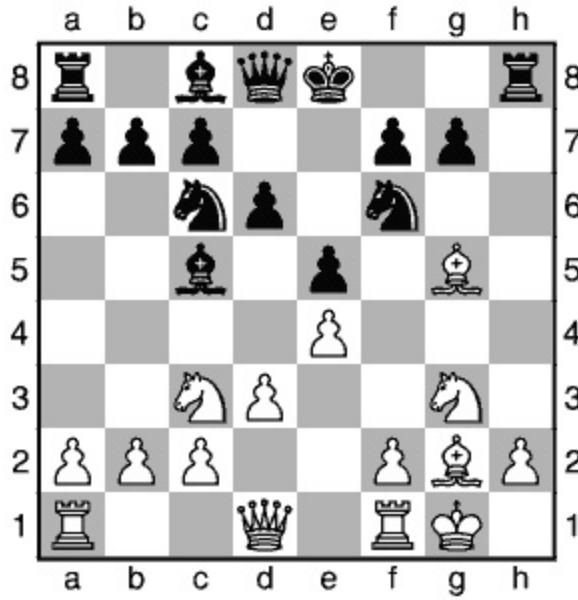
9 Nxg3

9 hxg3 is obviously risky, since it presents Black with an automatic attack after 9...Bg4 10 Qd2 Qd7, and now:

1) **11 Bxf6** gxf6 12 Nd5 0-0-0 13 Nxf6 Qe6 14 Nxg4 (14 Qg5 is not available this time) 14...Qxg4 with a strong attack, for example 15 c3 Qh5 16 Rfe1 f5 17 d4 f4! and White is in trouble.

2) **11 Na4** Bh3 (not, however, 11...Bf3?, hoping for 12 Nxc5? Qh3,

which fails against 12 Bxf3 Qh3 13 Bh4 Rxh4 14 gxh4 Qxf3 15 Nxc5 Ng4 16 Ng3 and the attack fizzles out) 12 Nxc5 dxc5 13 f3 Bxg2 14 Kxg2 Qh3+ 15 Kf2 Qh2+ 16 Ke1 Nd4 and Black is slightly better.



Black to move

9...Nd4!

This is a precise response to the knight recapture on g3. By threatening to seize control of the weak point at f4 by ...Ne6, Black forces his opponent to take some immediate action before the grip tightens.

10 Nh5

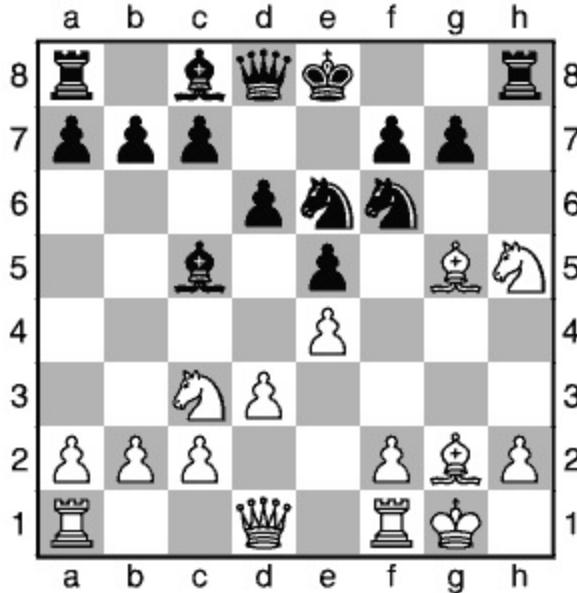
No doubt having the ensuing combination in mind, but he is stirring up a hornet's nest. White has a range of alternatives:

1) **10 Nd5** (the soundest move) 10...c6 (10...Ne6 11 Nxf6+ gxf6 12 Be3 is also roughly equal) 11 Nxf6+ gxf6 12 Be3. Here Black cannot transfer his queen with any effect to the h-file, for example 12...f5 (the alternative 12...Rh4, intending ...Bg4, is also level) 13 exf5 Qh4 14 h3 Nxf5 15 Bxc5 dxc5 16 Qe2 f6 17 Qe4 Nd6 18 Qxh4 Rxh4 19 Rae1 Bxh3 20 f4 is equal.

2) Tseitlin and Glazkov suggest the strange move **10 h4**, but it is impossible to imagine what they intend to play if Black just executes his threat of 10...Ne6.

3) **10 b4** is another oddity from Tseitlin and Glazkov. After 10...Bxb4 11 Nd5 Nxd5! 12 Bxd8 Nc3 13 Qe1 Nce2+ 14 Nxe2 Bxe1 15 Nxd4 Kxd8 Black is just a pawn up in the ending.

10...Ne6



White to move

11 Nxg7+

When my opponent played this move I was completely stunned, because I hadn't noticed it at all. Readers may be feeling that this comment is a recurrent theme in the book, and may have concluded that I am gifted with extraordinary luck. However, I feel that there is more to it than that. If one's position has been constructed on a sound basis, then the chances that it will be demolished by a random tactic are rather small – it can happen, of course, and ideally one should check all such possibilities. However, it can be very time-consuming to look for tactical lines every single move, and at some point one has to trust one's intuition that there won't be an unexpected knock-out blow. Don't believe that grandmasters look at everything!

It is much easier to spot tactics that are thematic and associated with the general structure of the position than it is to spot combinations which 'just happen to work'. Anyone who has played against strong computers will testify that they occasionally come up with quite unexpected combinations precisely because they do not focus on ideas which fit into the general pattern of the position, but instead consider every possibility.

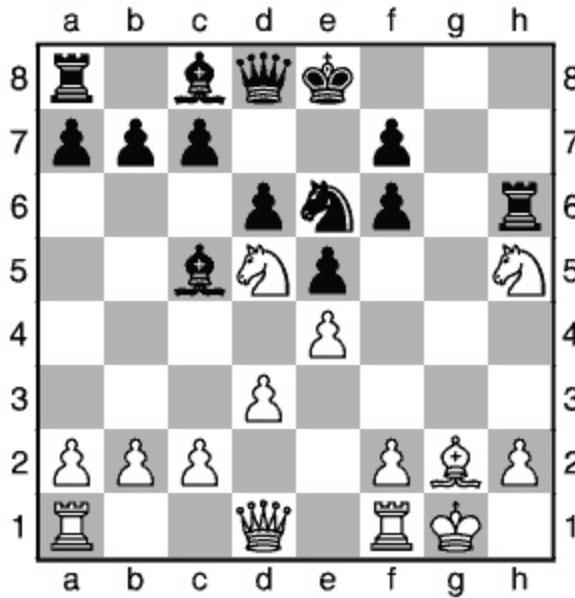
In this case, my oversight was doubtless due to the fact that I was concentrating on lines involving pressure on f6, and the blow on g7 was somehow 'non-thematic' and hard to see.

White's alternatives are:

- 1) **11 Nxf6+ gxf6 12 Be3 f5** (favourable this time as White's knight is out of play instead of helping with the defence at g3) 13 exf5 (13 Bxc5 Qh4!

14 h3 Nf4 is no better) 13...Qh4 14 h3 Rg8 15 Qf3 (15 Kh1 Nd4, followed by ...Bxf5, with a tremendous attack) 15...Ng5 16 Bxg5 Rxg5 17 Ne4 Rxf5 18 Qg4 Qh8! and White's king remains exposed, *e.g.* 19 Nxc5 dxc5 20 Bxb7 Rf4 21 Bc6+ Kf8 22 Qg3 Rb8, followed by ...Rb6, with a very strong attack.

2) **11 Bxf6 gxf6 12 Nd5 Rh6**, and now White has three options:



White to move

2a) **13 Qf3**, which fails after some delightful twists: 13...Nd4! and White must retreat because 14 Nhxf6+ (or the other knight) loses to 14...Kf8 15 Qe3 Rxf6 16 Qg5 Nf3+! 17 Bxf3 Rg6.

2b) **13 b4 Bb6 14 Qg4** (if 14 Nxb6 axb6 15 f4 then 15...Ke7, followed by 16...Qh8, is fine for Black) was suggested by Konstantinopolsky and Lepeshkin. However, Black can reply 14...Kf8 15 Nxb6 axb6 16 f4 Ke7! with a promising position, for example 17 f5 Nd4 or 17 fxe5 dxe5, with ...Qh8 to come in both cases.

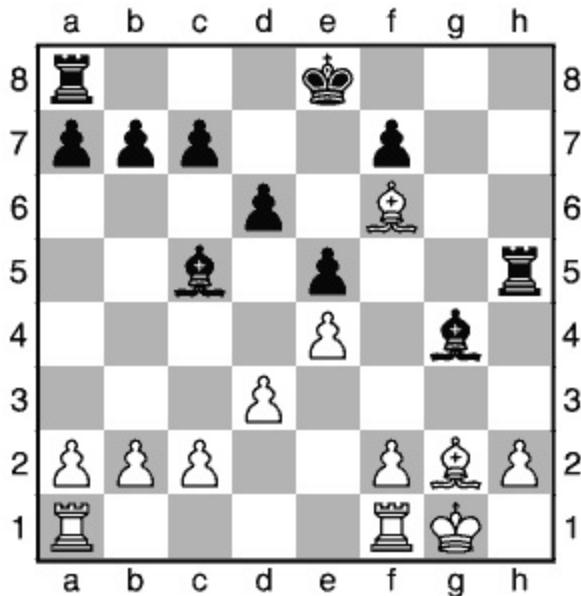
2c) **13 Ne3** (trying to control f5; 13 c3 c6 14 Ne3 amounts to the same thing) 13...Bxe3! (at first sight it is crazy to open the f-file and improve White's pawn structure, but this gains time for Black to develop his kingside initiative) 14 fxe3 Ke7! 15 Ng3 Ng5 and White cannot use the f-file in any effective way, yet Black can use the g-and h-files. Furthermore, Black's king is quite secure at e7, while White's is not. If White continues 16 Nf5+ Bxf5 17 Rxf5, then after 17...Qh8 White loses his h-pawn, while against other moves Black just develops his initiative by the natural moves ...Qh8, ...Be6 and ...Rg8.

The conclusion is that the alternatives are no better than the move played, since in none of the above lines does White have clear equality.

11...N_xg7

12 N_d5

Regaining the piece, because after the obvious 12...N_gh5 White can play 13 N_xf6+ N_xf6 14 Qf3. Then the critical line is 14...B_g4 15 Q_xf6 Q_xf6 16 B_xf6 R_h5, when White has to act quickly to rescue his bishop from the threat of ...Kd7-e6:



White to move

1) **17 K_h1** (not 17 c3 Be2) and now:

1a) **17...K_d7 18 f3!** Be6 (the line 18...B_h3 19 B_xh3+ R_xh3 20 f4 K_e6 21 fxe5 dxe5 22 R_f5 suits White very well) 19 f4 and White maintains his bishop in a strong position.

1b) **17...Be2 18 R_fe1 B_g4 19 f3** (19 R_f1 Be2 is a draw by repetition) 19...Be6 (threatening ...B_f2-g3) 20 Re2 (20 R_f1 Be3 is awkward for White) 20...K_d7 21 c3 Rh6 22 B_g5 Rh5 23 Bd2 (23 B_f6 is a draw) 23...Rah8 24 B_f1 R_g8 and White has nothing better than to play 25 B_g2, since 25 R_g2 loses attractively after 25...R_xh2+!.

2) **17 h4!** (at first sight this looks ridiculous, but it appears to give White the advantage) 17...K_d7 18 Kh2 Ke6 (18...R_g8 19 f3 Be6 20 f4 exf4 21 R_xf4 Be3 22 R_f3 B_g5 23 B_xg5 R_gxg5 24 R_f4 favours White) 19 f3 Bh3 (this odd move is the best chance) 20 K_xh3 K_xf6 21 f4 Rah8 22 fxe5+ and White emerges with an extra pawn after 22...K_xe5 23 R_xf7 or 22...Ke7 23 R_f5.

It follows that the move played is definitely best, as after it White has no clear route even to a draw.



Black to move

12...Nxd5!

This combination is completely sound.

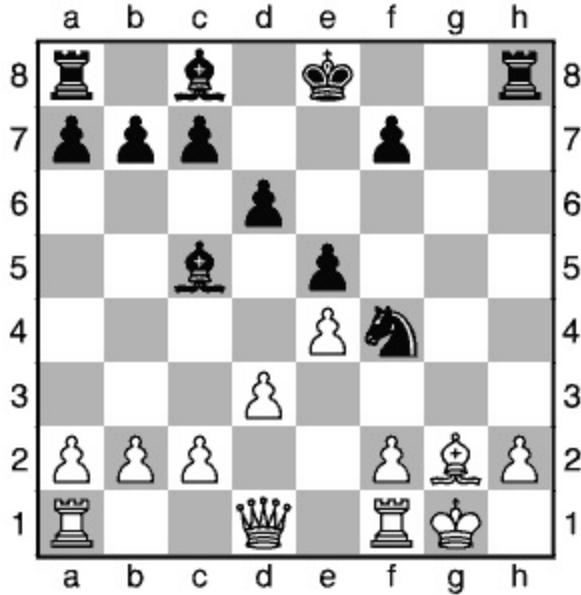
13 Bxd8 Nf4

14 Bg5

After this move Black only obtains two minor pieces in return for the queen, but in conjunction with his positional advantage this turns out to be fully adequate compensation. After other moves Black collects a third minor piece, and this would be hopeless for White, for example 14 Bf6? (or 14 Bxc7? Nge6) 14...Rg8 15 Kh1 (15 Bh4 Nge5 16 Bg3 Nxg3 17 hxg3 Rxg3) 15...Ngh5.

14...Nge6

15 Bxf4 Nxf4



White to move

A bishop and a knight is not a great deal to compensate for a queen and a pawn, but there are several factors operating in Black's favour. The two open files leading to White's king and the tremendous outpost at f4 are the most obvious, but it also important that none of White's pieces are likely to display activity in the near future. Open files for White's rooks are hard to come by and his bishop is particularly useless. White's queen is relatively ineffective because there are no real targets in Black's position, and White's other pieces are unable to co-operate with the queen. White's only real chance for activity is to play c3 and d4, which will both shut out the bishop on c5 and offer White the possibility of opening the game up, which will benefit the queen. Whether or not this succeeds depends on the time element: can Black swing his a8-rook into the attack before White manages to advance in the centre? Every tempo is crucially important.

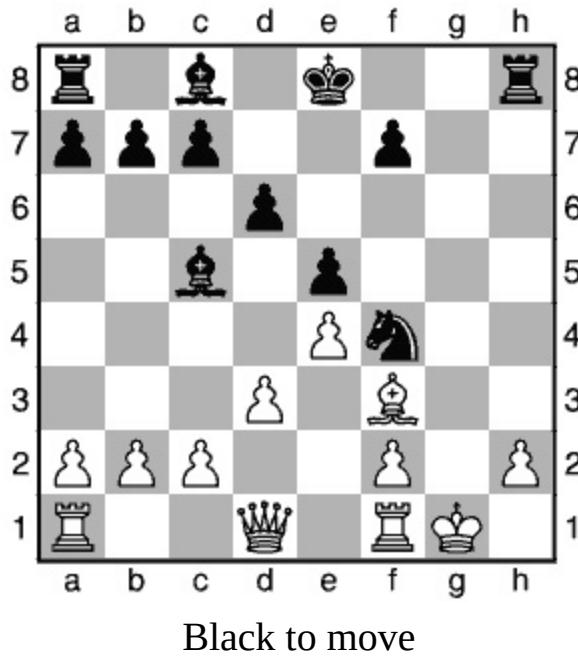
Without the help of c3 and d4 White would have no chance at all, but even taking this possibility into account White is still in difficulties. The immediate threat is 16...Rg8, and White has two reasonable defences: 16 Bf3 and 16 Kh1.

16 Kh1

It seems that neither defence is really adequate, so there is no reason to criticise this move. The problem with this voluntary king move is that in some lines it costs White a tempo. One of Black's main attacking plans is to double rooks on the h-file and take on h2. If White leaves his king on g1, then Black throws in ...Rg8+ before doubling rooks, in order that the capture

on h2 is with check. However, this means that Black has to play three rook moves before he is doubled. If White plays Kh1 voluntarily, then Black can omit ...Rg8+ and double his rooks in only two moves.

The alternative 16 Bf3 has the defect that it prevents the white queen from joining the defence, for example by Qf3-g3 to cover the weak h2-pawn. The result is that White still faces a very difficult defensive task, as the analysis of 16 Bf3 demonstrates:



1) 16...Nh3+? 17 Kh1 Nxf2+ 18 Rxf2 Bxf2 19 Bg4 is very good for White.

2) 16...Bh3 and now:

2a) 17 Kh1? Bxf1 18 Qxf1 Nh3 is good for Black.

2b) 17 Re1 Ke7 18 Qd2 (18 Kh1 Rh4 19 c3 Rah8 20 Rg1 Bxf2 and wins) 18...Rh4 19 Kh1 Rah8 20 Rg1 Bf1! 21 Rgxf1 Rxh2+ 22 Kg1 R2h3 23 Qxf4 (the only move) 23...exf4 24 Kg2 Rh2+ 25 Kg1 R2h6 26 Rfd1 Rh3! with a clear advantage for Black.

2c) 17 c3 (White must prepare d4 at once) 17...Ke7 18 Kh1 (this is now forced since Black was threatening 18...Rag8+ 19 Kh1 Bg2+ 20 Bxg2 Rxg2) 18...Rh4 (unfortunately the bishop on h3 is obstructing the rooks on the h-file; 18...Rag8 19 Rg1 is no use, while 18...Bxf1 19 Qxf1 Nh3 20 d4 exd4 21 Bg4 is clearly better for White) 19 d4 Rah8 (threatening 20...Bg2+; note that 19...Bb6 is ineffective here as 20 Rg1 Rah8 21 Rg3 enables White to construct a defence) 20 Rg1 Bf1! (after 20...Be6 21 Rg3 Rxh2+ 22 Kg1 exd4

23 cxd4 Bxd4 24 Qxd4 Rh1+ 25 Bxh1 Ne2+ 26 Kg2 Nxd4 White is slightly better) 21 Rxf1 (21 Rg3? Rxh2+ 22 Kg1 Be2 23 dxc5 dxc5! favours Black) 21...Rxh2+ 22 Kg1 R2h4 23 dxc5 (or 23 Re1 Rg8+ 24 Kf1 Rgh8, again with a draw) 23...Nh3+ 24 Kh2 Nf4+ and perpetual check (25 Kg3? Rh3+ 26 Kg4 Kf6! forces mate).

3) 16...Be6! (Black avoids blocking the h-file) 17 c3 Ke7 18 d4 and now:



Black to move

3a) 18...Rh4 (this direct attempt only leads to a draw) 19 dxc5 Rg8+ (three moves instead of two to get doubled; 19...Rah8 would be even slower because the capture on h2 would not be check) 20 Kh1 Rgh8 21 cxd6+ cxd6 22 Re1! (the only move) 22...Rxh2+ 23 Kg1 R2h4 24 Re3, and with e1 and d2 vacant for the king, and the rook ready to interpose at g3 in some lines, Black cannot win: 24...Bh3 (24...Bc4 25 Bg2 transposes to '3a' below) 25 Bh1! (every move must be precise) and now: 3a1) 25...Bf1!? 26 Bf3 Bc4 27 Bg2 and now Black has nothing better than to force a draw by means of 27...Nyg2 28 Kxg2 Rh2+, etc.

3a2) 25...Bg4 26 Bf3 and now White is oddly paralysed; indeed he can only move his a1-rook or a pawn. However, there is no way to improve Black's position, and White can save himself by returning the queen: 26...R8h6 (26...Rh3 carries no threat) 27 Rc1 Bh3 28 Bh1 Bf1 29 Bf3 Bc4 30 Bg2 Rg6 (30...Nyg2 also draws) 31 Rg3 Ne2+ 32 Qxe2 Bxe2 33 Rxg6 fxg6, and White slips away into an equal ending.

3b) **18...Bb6!**. I did not analyse this obvious move in *Secrets of Grandmaster Play*, as I thought that if White could open the position up with dxe5, then he would be able to use his queen to harass Black's king with annoying checks. In fact, I cannot see any way for White to achieve this. White must react immediately, because Black threatens to play as in line '3a', only with an extra piece. However, constructive moves are hard to come by. After 19 dxe5 dxe5 20 Qa4 Rh3, queen checks are met by ...c5, whereupon Black wins material on the kingside. I cannot see anything better than 19 Kh1, but then 19...Rh4 20 Rg1 Rah8 21 Rg2 Nxg2 22 Bxg2 (22 Kxg2 Rxh2+ 23 Kg1 R2h4 wins) 22...Rxh2+ 23 Kg1 R2h4 24 Rc1 Rg8 25 f3 exd4 26 cxd4 c5! favours Black, as he activates his dark-squared bishop after all.

16...Be6

Not 16...Bh3 17 Bxh3 Rxh3 18 Qg4 and White wins.



White to move

Black's correct plan is simply to round up the h-pawn, thereby completely exposing the white king.

17 Bf3?

Last move, as we saw, this would have been a reasonable defence, but now it loses quickly since White gets the worst of both worlds: he has played Kh1 voluntarily, and now he blocks f3 for the queen. White wants to use his rook along the g-file, but there is simply no time for this plan.

However, none of the alternatives proves adequate to maintain the balance, although line '2c' below is perhaps not absolutely lost:

1) **17 c3** (preparing d4) 17...0-0-0 (in most cases ...Ke7 is better, to avoid a check at g4, but here it makes no difference) 18 d4 Rh4! 19 dxc5 Rdh8 20 Bf3 (20 Qf3 Rxh2+ 21 Kg1 Rg2+ 22 Qxg2 Ne2#) 20...Rxh2+ 21 Kg1 R2h4 22 Re1 Rg8+ 23 Kf1 Bh3+ and Black wins.

2) **17 Qf3** (White's best defence, bringing the queen into play; the danger is that, with so little room to manoeuvre, it may get trapped) 17...Ke7 18 Rg1 Rh6 (18...Rxh2+ forces a draw, but Black can play for more) 19 Bf1 Rah8 20 Qg3 (20 Rg2 Bh3! wins at once, for example 21 Qg3 Bxg2+ 22 Bxg2 Rg6) 20...Bg4! (this would be impossible had Black played 17...0-0-0) 21 Rg2 (the only defence to the terrible threat of 21...Bxf2 22 Qxf2 Bf3+ and mate) 21...Nxg2 and now:



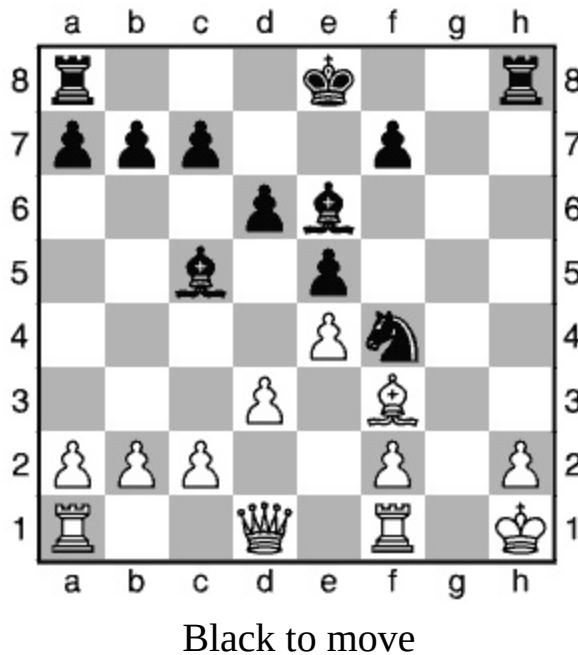
2a) **22 Kxg2 Rg8!** 23 Kh1 (23 Kg1 Rhg6 and 23 h4 Rf6 24 Kh2 Rf3 are hopeless) 23...Rf6 24 Be2 Bxe2! 25 Qxg8 Rg6 wins.

2b) **22 Bxg2 Rg6** (threatening 23...Be2) 23 Re1 (23 f3 Be6 24 Qe1 Rhg8 gives Black a decisive attack; 23 f4 Be6 24 Qf3 exf4 25 Qxf4 Rhg8 favours Black; 23 d4 Bxd4 only delays but does not stop Black's attack) 23...Be6 24 Qf3 Rf6 25 Qd1 Rfh6 (threatening 26...Bxf2) 26 Kg1 (or 26 Rf1 Rxh2+ 27 Kg1 R2h6 28 Re1 Rg6 29 Kf1 Rh2 and Black wins) 26...Rg6 27 Kh1 Bxf2 28 Rf1 Bg3 29 h3 Bxh3 30 Bxh3 Rxh3+ 31 Kg2 Rh2+ 32 Kf3 Bh4 and Black wins.

2c) **22 Qxg2** (relatively best, but still insufficient in the long run) 22...Rg6 (threatening 23...Bh5 24 Qh3 Be2! 25 Qxh8 {25 Qf5 Bg4} 25...Bf3+ 26 Bg2 Rxg2 and wins, or simply 23...Rhg8) 23 Qg3 (23 f3 Bxf3)

23...Bh5 24 Qh4+ (24 Qh3 Be2) 24...f6 25 Qh3 Bxf2 (25...Be2 26 Qf5 is not so clear now that the g6-rook is undefended) 26 Bg2 Rgh6 27 Rf1 Bf7 28 Qxh6 Rxh6 29 Rxf2 Bxa2 30 b3 Bb1!, with advantage to Black.

The text-move threatens Bg4, but this can be met by a move which Black wants to play in any case.



Black to move

17...Rh4!

Now 18 c3 0-0-0 19 d4 Rdh8 20 dxc5 transposes to line '1' above, which was winning for Black, so White sacrifices the exchange, as in line '2', but this time his queen is out of play. The rest of the game consists of White trying to stay afloat by jettisoning material every few moves, but without any particular success.

18 Rg1 Ke7

19 Rg2

19 Rg3 Bxf2 only makes matters worse, because the white king will be trapped at h1.

19...Nyg2

20 Bxg2 Rah8



White to move

With the queen on d1, White cannot effectively defend his h2-pawn.

21 Qd2

If 21 Qg1 then 21...Rf4 22 Rf1 Bg4, followed by 23...Be2, and the f2-pawn falls.

21...Rxh2+

22 Kg1 R2h4

Having digested the exchange and the h-pawn, Black prepares to line up against the next target: the bishop on g2.

23 Re1

Abandoning even more material, but there was no defence. 23 Kf1 loses to 23...Rg8 (even better than 23...Rh1+) 24 Bf3 Rh2, followed by ...Bh3+. If 23 Qg5+, then 23...f6 24 Qg7+ Bf7 (threatening 25...Rg8) 25 Qg3 R4h7! 26 Kf1 Rg8 27 Qf3 Rh2 28 Bh3 Bh5!, mating or picking up the queen.

23...Rg8

24 Re3

Or 24 Kf1 Rh2 25 Bf3 Bh3+.

24...Bxe3

25 Qxe3 Bh3



White to move

Black wins a piece while retaining his attack; the game is over.

26 Kf1 Bxg2+

27 Ke2 c5

28 Qd2 b6

29 Qc3 Rf4

30 Qa3 a5

31 Qb3 Bh3

32 f3 Rg2+

33 Ke3 Bg4!

Mating after 34 fxg4 Rgf2 followed by ...R4f3.

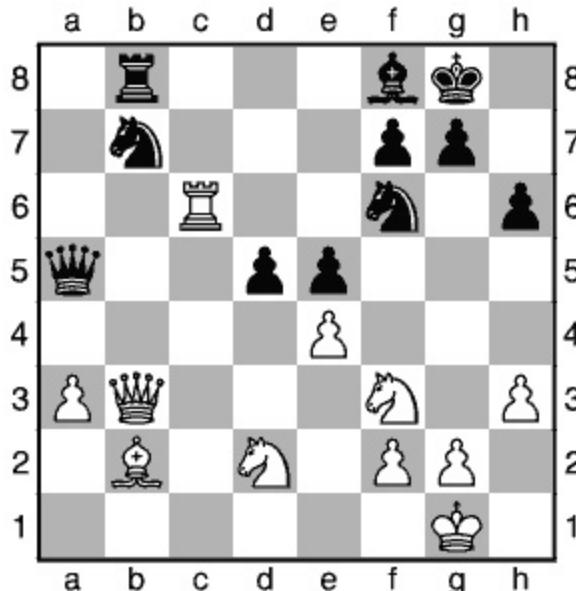
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By late spring I had secured my return to Oxford as a Junior Research Fellow at Oriel College and celebrated with an intensive summer of chess. This started with the World Student Team Championship held in Mexico City. I was both captain and top board, which proved a burden as there were many administrative difficulties to overcome. My stomach failed to behave itself again, and there was an unpleasant episode when I took a taxi to my adjournment against Romanishin (the tournament venue was far away from the hotel). Instead of going to the intended destination, the driver took me to a remote spot outside the city and threatened to leave me there unless I handed over a large ‘tip’. The upshot was that I arrived 45 minutes late for my game and not surprisingly lost quickly. My personal score was a

miserable 5/11, but the team performed well and took the bronze medals.

My next event was the inaugural Lloyds Bank tournament. This was a Swiss system event organised by a team headed by Stewart Reuben which aimed, amongst other things, to provide far more opportunities to gain a rating or title norm than had been available with the severely limited number of round-robin events. Now that such tournaments are commonplace, it is hard to appreciate what an innovative step this was. There had been international Swiss events before, such as Lone Pine in America, but these were not really designed for title norm generation. The Lloyds Bank model was rapidly copied elsewhere and led, ultimately, to a vast increase in the numbers of rated and titled players. No longer did players have to struggle to obtain invitations to round-robin events, getting at most two or three norm chances per year; instead they could go from one event to another until ability or the laws of chance gave them the needed norms. FIDE did retain a rule that one norm had to come from a round-robin event, but the difficulty had been dramatically reduced.

I played my first round game in advance because the flight back from Mexico was due to arrive after the first round. It had a nice finish:



J. Nunn – Jon Benjamin

Lloyds Bank Masters, London 1977

30...dxe4? (30...Nd8! 31 Qxb8 Nxc6 would have maintained the

balance) **31 Nxe5! Qxd2 32 Qxf7+ Kh7 33 Rxf6 Nd6 34 Qg6+ Kg8** (after 34...Kh8, the move 35 Nc4 is even more effective) **35 Nc4! Nxc4** (or 35...Qe1+ 36 Kh2 Nxc4 37 Rxf8+ Kxf8 38 Qxg7+ Ke8 39 Bf6) **36 Rxf8+ Kxf8 37 Bxg7+ Ke7 38 Qxe4+ Kd7** (38...Kf7 39 Qxc4+ Kxg7 40 Qc7+) **39 Qxc4 Rb1+ 40 Kh2 Qd6+ 41 f4 1-0**

Unfortunately, the above-mentioned flight was delayed by ten hours as a result of industrial action by British air-traffic controllers, so that I had to travel from the airport to my round two game with only a very short break. I won this, and indeed had an excellent start of 4½/5. Then I drew three games in a row before winning against Formanek. This left me in joint first place with Quinteros with one round left to play. My last-round game against Quinteros is of the type which might lead one to write ‘in this game I made all the errors which I had avoided in the first nine rounds’. However, I cannot really claim this as 18 moves doesn’t allow sufficient space for all those errors!

Four days later the Lord John Cup started in London, a 10-player round-robin event designed to provide British players with the opportunity to make a GM norm. For this event the organisers had invited every overrated player they could lay their hands on, and it provided a golden opportunity for the norm candidates. The chance was not wasted: Stean, Mestel and I all made GM norms! This low-profile and relatively cheap event had advanced British chess enormously.

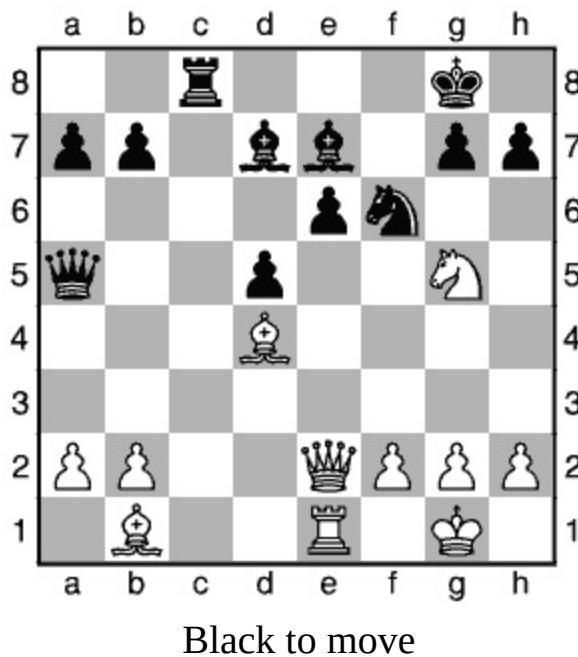
I started with good wins against two of the highest-rated players, Torre and Quinteros, and the rest was little more than coasting home. The men’s fashion group ‘Lord John’, who sponsored the event, also donated one of the most inappropriate prizes ever awarded at a chess tournament, for the ‘Best-Dressed Player’. The representative who came to judge this took one glance and retreated with the look of someone needing a stiff drink (Quinteros won the prize, probably because he was the only one wearing a jacket and tie).

Having made one GM norm, I was only interested in events providing norm opportunities. I had high hopes for Hastings, especially as just before Christmas I won the Islington Open outright with 5½/6. Unfortunately, the icy Yelton Hotel got the better of me and I fell ill after the first few rounds, which led to three consecutive losses. A finishing burst of 3½/5 restored my score to a vaguely respectable 6½/15, but of course the GM norm was far above. I took home £35 from my participation at Hastings, somewhat less

than the demonstration board operators received.

I was unable to find any GM norm events in the first half of 1978, and so played in the Aaronson Masters over Easter, another international Swiss tournament although without any grandmaster participants. A poor start of 1½/4 left me way down the table, but 5 out of my last 6 left me in joint 6th place, which was not unreasonable. A last-round win against a young player by the name of Nigel Short was captured on camera, although I do not know if the footage was ever used.

An outright win in the Basingstoke Open with 6/7 included a nice combination.



J. Nunn – D. Bell

Basingstoke Open 1977

22...Bb4? 23 Bxf6! gxf6

Or 23...Bxe1 24 Bxh7+ Kf8 (the line 24...Kh8 25 Bxg7+ Kxg7 26 Qe5+ transposes to the following bracket) 25 Bxg7+ Ke7 (25...Kxg7 26 Qe5+ mates after 26...Kf8 27 Qf6+ Ke8 28 Bg6# or 26...Kh6 27 Qf6+ Kh5 28 Bg6+, etc.) 26 Qe5! Bb4 27 Qf4 and White has a winning attack.

24 Bxh7+ Kf8

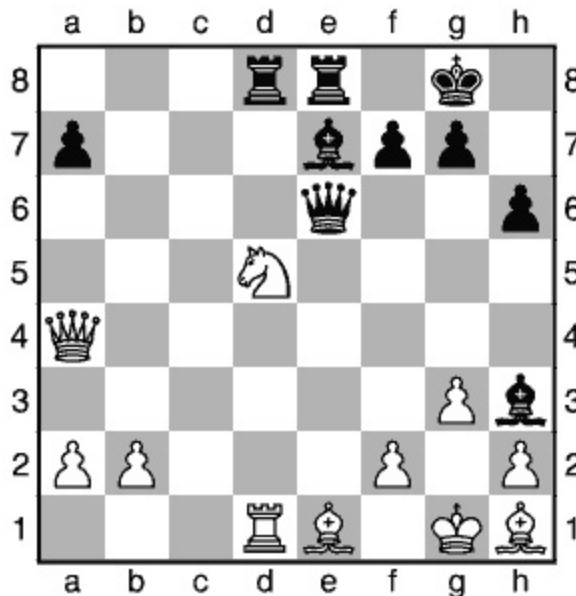
24...Kh8 25 Qh5 is also hopeless, but the really attractive variation is 24...Kg7 25 Qh5 fxg5 26 Qg6+ Kh8 27 Bg8 and mate next move.

25 Nxe6+ Bxe6 26 Qxe6 Bxe1 27 Qxf6+ Ke8 28 Qe6+ Kf8 29 Qxc8+

Ke7 30 Qxb7+ Kd6 31 Qb8+ Kc6 32 Qe8+ Kd6 33 Qe2 1-0

Another outright win with 5/5 in the Surrey Weekend Open augured well for my summer programme, which began with a tournament held near Lublin in Poland. This turned out to be another of the mysterious disappearing GM norm tournaments. It also had the worst living conditions and food of any tournament I have ever played in. My score of 7½/15 left me in joint 10th place in this relatively weak tournament.

My next event was the Tungsram tournament in Budapest. This really did have a GM norm of 10/15, and my play was transformed. I lost in the first round, but then made steady progress with six points from my next eight games. This extract is from round 3:



White to move

L. Vadász – J. Nunn

Budapest 1978

With one pawn for the exchange and a well-centralised knight, it looks as if White should be able to put up stiff resistance, but after his over-ambitious next move Black is able to exploit the weak back rank.

24 Ba5? Bc5!

Threatening both 25...Qe2 and 25...Bxf2+ 26 Kxf2 Rxd5 followed by mate on e3.

25 Qc2 Bb6

26 Nxb6

After 26 Bc3 the most convincing win is by 26...Bd4! and White's knight on d5 is doomed, because 27 Nf4 fails to 27...Bxf2+. If 26 Bd2, then 26...Qe2 27 Ne3 Rxe3 wins.

26...Qf5!

27 Rxd8

Forced, as 27 Qc1 Rxd1+ 28 Qxd1 Qxa5 loses straight away.

27...Rxd8

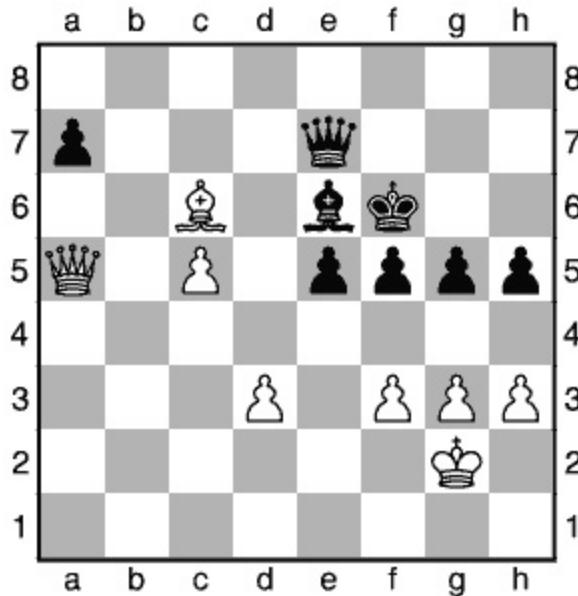
0-1

28 Qe2 loses to 28...Qxa5 29 Nd5 Rxd5 since after 30 Qe8+ Kh7 31 Qe4+ f5 White cannot take on d5. Therefore White has to play 28 Qc1, when the strongest line is 28...Qg5! 29 Qb1 (29 Qe1 Qxa5 is fatal, so White's queen has to move to b1 or a1, where it can be attacked later from a2!) 29...Qxa5 30 Nc4 Qxa2 and wins. This last line is vaguely reminiscent of the famous (and possibly spurious) Adams-Torre encounter, but aesthetically it is marred by the fact that Black has alternative, slower wins (e.g. by 28...Qxa5 29 Nc4 Qxa2).

In round 7 I used the gambit from the [Everson game](#) to defeat Mednis and after nine rounds I needed 4/6 to gain the GM norm and title. I then made things harder for myself by losing to Barczay but, seeing that I had White three times in the last five games, I resolved to win the white games and draw the two games with Black. Lukacs fell to the Evans Gambit in round 11 after missing a tricky stalemate idea in a rook ending, and in round 12 I scraped a lucky draw against Csom. My round 13 opponent, F. Portisch, ventured the Sveshnikov so without hesitation I played the Bxb5 piece sacrifice and won a nice game. A quick draw against Jansa in round 14 meant that 80% of my plan had gone as intended. In the last round I needed to win with White against Hardicsay, the lowest-rated player in the event, to become a grandmaster.

Although the game started well, I then made a series of errors and by move 34 was a pawn down with an inferior position. My only hope was that Hardicsay had only seconds left to reach move 40. During this time he not only gave the pawn back but even gave me a slight positional advantage. After the adjournment, Hardicsay defended well but started to run short of time again.

The critical moment arrived at move 48:



White to move

J. Nunn – P. Hardicsay

Budapest 1978

48 Kf2

A good move, not only from the purely chess point of view. Hardicsay puzzled over the purpose of this mysterious king move until he had used up most of his remaining time, and then decided simply to await events.

48...Qf8?

Black should have taken some action on the kingside, perhaps 48...h4.

49 f4! gxf4

50 gxf4

Now the point of Kf2 is revealed; Black has no annoying check on the g-file.

50...exf4

51 Qc3+ Kf7

52 Qe5

The two connected passed pawns coupled with White's powerfully centralised queen should be enough to win, provided only that White can avoid perpetual check.

52...Qc8

In *Informator*, Hardicsay recommended 52...Qg7, but he failed to

consider the reply 53 Be8+! when White wins easily: 53...Kf8 54 Qxe6 Qg3+ 55 Ke2 f3+ 56 Kd2 Qf2+ 57 Kc3 Qxc5+ 58 Kb3 and Black has to swap queens, thereby losing the h5-pawn.

53 Bf3 Ke7

54 d4 Kd8

55 c6 Bf7

56 Qf6+ Kc7

57 Qxf7+ 1-0

The two spectators who had stuck it out to the end dashed up to congratulate me: ‘Grossmeister, grossmeister’. Hardicsay just looked at me sourly and said ‘Grossmeister? Huh!’. My score of 10/15 was also sufficient for outright first place. Thanks to the help of the late Tibor Florian, I even received my prize money in Western currency. This success also earned me one of the £2,500 Slater prizes for the first five British players to gain the grandmaster title, so all in all it was a good day’s work. A few months after this, FIDE raised the GM norm from an Elo performance of 2550 to one of 2600. This temporarily reduced the flood of new GMs to a trickle, but soon the new level was being achieved with regularity. There is no single reason for this; the inflation of ratings, more opportunities in Swiss events and changes in the GM norm regulations probably all had an influence. I later calculated that if I had failed to beat Hardicsay, I would not have become a grandmaster until 1980 (at the Baden tournament – see games 9 and 10).

1978 was a big year since I also gained my D. Phil from Oxford University. When I proudly showed off my thesis to a non-mathematician friend, he remarked that it was the first thesis he had ever seen in which he couldn’t understand the first sentence: Sections 1-3 of this thesis deal with Finite H-spaces, that is topological spaces X with the homotopy type of a Finite CW-complex together with a point e in X and a continuous map m: $X^{**}X \times X$ such that $x^{**}m(e,x)$ and $x^{**}m(x,e)$ are both homotopic to the identity map $X^{**}X$. A bit like my opening books, really; the reader is expected to jump straight in with no messing around.

My next major event was the Buenos Aires Olympiad, which started in October. Unlike Haifa, where the playing conditions had been excellent, here they were appalling. The venue was a football stadium next to a motorway, opposite a firing range and just under the main landing path for the airport. The hotel managed to give food poisoning to a large proportion of the players

but I was lucky in missing this, perhaps because my earlier bad experiences led me to reject anything that looked a bit dodgy. Lack of space precludes a detailed coverage of Jonathan Mestel's near-arrest and how the secret police ended up developing a film containing pictures of captain David Anderton in bed.

I played very well and scored 8½/12; England finished in 12th position. These results sent my Elo rating up from 2440 to 2500.

I ended the year with a return visit to the Islington Open. I again scored 5½/6, this time tying for first place with Jonathan Mestel.

Game 6

R. Britton – J. Nunn

Islington Open 1978

Modern Defence

Weekend tournaments present special problems, since the likely winning score will be high, typically 5½ points in a six-round event, so one is obliged to play for a win in every game. In a normal international tournament, one can be satisfied with an ‘aim for a draw with Black and a win with White’ strategy, but if one also needs to win with Black then it is sometimes necessary to take extra risks.

- 1 e4 g6**
- 2 d4 Bg7**
- 3 Nc3 d6**
- 4 Nf3 a6**



White to move

The intention of this somewhat eccentric move is to expand immediately on the queenside (by ...b5, ...Bb7, ...Nd7 and ...c5) at the expense of more conventional kingside development. Although this is a double-edged procedure, it is not easy to play for a win against the solid Classical set-up of Nf3, Be2 and 0-0, so a few risks are acceptable. Moreover, this move has the advantage of taking the game out of theory at a very early stage and forcing White to think for himself. Despite the obvious element of danger, I have played it several times in situations where a win with Black was important, with quite reasonable results.

If Black's plan succeeds, he will eliminate White's d-pawn by ...c5. That will permit the development of his knight at f6 (without worrying about the e5 thrust) and he should end up with a type of Sicilian Dragon formation.

There are two main worries for Black: one is that Black's king will have to remain in the centre for some time; the other is that White may strike at the advanced b-pawn by a4 and obtain a positional advantage by breaking up or fixing the queenside pawn structure.

5 Be2

An obvious and popular alternative is to restrain the queenside advance by **5 a4**, but then Black can comfortably switch plans by 5...Bg4 6 Be3 Nc6, exerting pressure on the square d4. If this is played a move earlier (4...Bg4 5 Be3 Nc6) then White can strongly reply 6 Bb5, which nullifies the pressure on d4 while developing a piece. However, in the current situation Bb5 is impossible, so White would have to be content with 7 Be2 e5, and Black

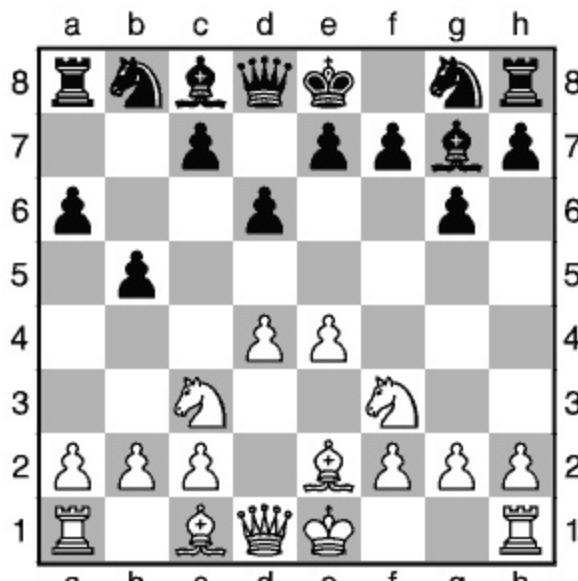
should equalise.

A more aggressive alternative is **5 Bc4**, which interferes with Black's plan, as 5...Nd7? would be met by 6 Bxf7+ Kxf7 7 Ng5+, and 5...Bg4? also loses to 6 Bxf7+. The best reply is probably 5...b5 6 Bb3 and now:

1) **6...Bb7** 7 0-0 (7 Bxf7+ Kxf7 8 Ng5+ Ke8 9 Ne6 Qd7 10 Nxg7+ Kf8 doesn't work straight away as the knight is trapped) is rather awkward for Black, since 7...Nd7 again allows 8 Bxf7+.

2) **6...Nc6** (best) 7 0-0 Na5 8 h3 (of course, other moves are possible) 8...Nxb3 9 axb3 and now Black can probably get away with 9...Bb7. After 10 Qe2 he can reply 10...Nf6, because Nxb5 is not yet a threat. White has a substantial lead in development and a solid centre, but Black has the latent advantage of the two bishops. Whatever the objective merits of the position (probably White is slightly better), this is just the sort of unbalanced situation Black's opening was aiming for.

5...b5



White to move

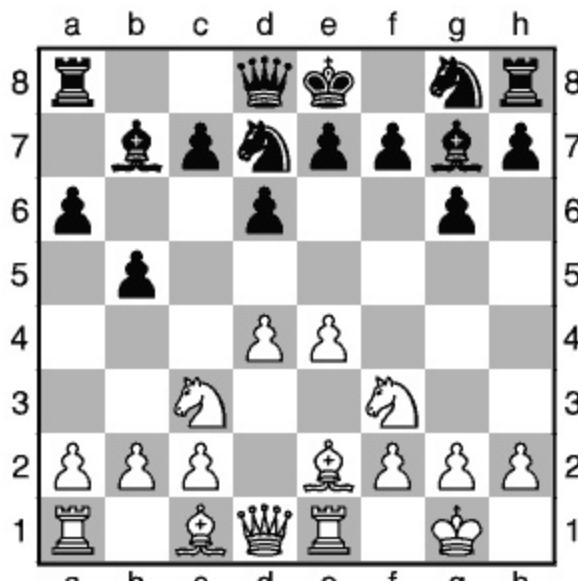
6 0-0 Nd7

Black has played enough pawn moves and must now develop some pieces. Note that it is usually a mistake to play ...b4 unless it either wins the e4-pawn or White has forced it by playing a4. A voluntary ...b4 not only costs Black a tempo, but gives White a ready means of prising open the queenside with a later a3.

The choice really lies between 6...Bb7 and 6...Nd7. These may transpose

or they may lead to very different situations. For example, after 6...Bb7 the e-pawn is under fire and ...b4 becomes a serious possibility, while after 6...Nd7 Black may postpone ...Bb7 (as in the game) and hit the centre at once by an early ...c5. White's plan is less obvious; an early ...Nf6 by Black will be met by a devastating e5, but if Black does not allow this, then White probably has nothing better than simple development by some combination of Re1, Bf1 and Bg5. When ...c5 finally arrives, White has the choice between allowing ...cxd4 and reaching a kind of Sicilian, or of playing d5 to reach a type of Schmid Benoni. However, in this latter case Black has a head start on the queenside because he has already played ...b5, whereas in a normal Schmid Benoni White meets ...a6 by a4 and prevents further queenside expansion by Black. In view of this I am doubtful that meeting ...c5 by d5 can give White any advantage.

Suppose Black plays the alternative 6...Bb7 (or 6...Nd7 7 Re1 Bb7) 7 Re1 Nd7. We then have:



White to move

1) 8 Bg5 and now:

1a) 8...Ngf6? is strongly met by 9 e5.

1b) 8...h6 9 Bh4 Nb6?! (a very artificial plan; the knight is needed to defend the squares e5 and c5) 10 a3 (otherwise ...b4, since Nd5 now costs a pawn) 10...c5 11 e5 cxd4 (11...dxe5 12 dxc5 favours White) 12 Qxd4 dxe5 13 Qe3 Qc7 14 Bg3 f6 15 Nh4, leading to a decisive attack for White (Grünfeld-Soltis, Lone Pine 1979).

1c) 8...c5 (sensible) 9 d5 (9 Bf1 cxd4 10 Nxd4 Ngf6 11 Qd2 h6 12 Bh4 0-0, with perhaps a very slight advantage to White, Bennett-Nunn, Islington Open 1975) 9...Ngf6 10 Bf1 0-0 11 Qd2 (this position is similar to the main game) 11...Qc7 12 Rad1 Rfe8 13 Bh6 Rad8 with equality, Dončević-Nunn, Bundesliga 1984.

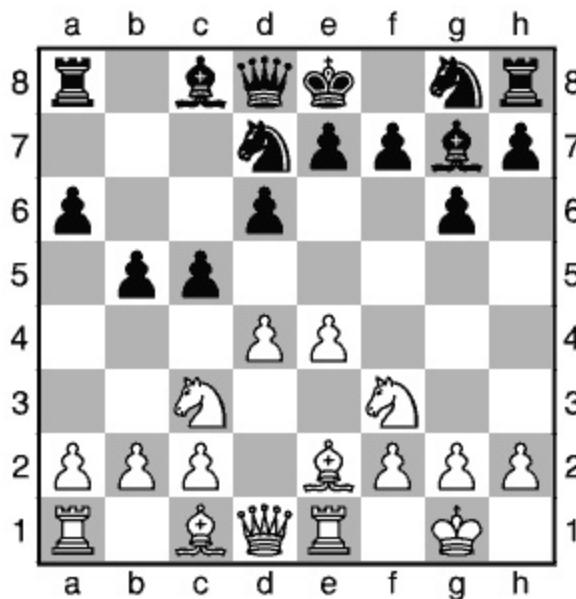
2) 8 Bf1 c5 9 a4 b4 10 Nd5 Ngf6 (10...e6 is too risky: 11 Bf4 e5 {11...exd5 12 exd5+ Ne7 13 Bxd6 Bf6 14 Bxe7 Bxe7 15 d6 wins} 12 dxe5 dxe5 13 Bg5 f6, Honfi-Vadasz, Kecskemet 1975, and Black's position is riddled with weaknesses) 11 Nxf6+ Nxf6 12 d5 0-0 13 Bc4 a5 14 Qd3 Nd7 with equality (Geller-Hort, Linares 1983).

Thus 6...Bb7 is also playable.

Note that it is very risky for Black to play 6...Bb7 7 Re1 b4, for example 8 Nd5 (8 Na4 Bxe4 is unsound, for example 9 Bc4 d5 or 9 Ng5 Bc6 10 Bc4 d5, with little or no compensation for the lost pawn) 8...a5 (8...e6 9 Nxb4 Bxe4 10 d5! favours White) 9 Bc4 e6 10 Nf4 (10 Bg5!? f6 11 Nf4 is a dangerous piece sacrifice, but White does not need to take such a risk) 10...Nf6 11 a3 and Black's queenside pawn structure looks very shaky. This reinforces the earlier comment that Black should avoid a voluntary ...b4.

In the game I preferred to play for ...c5 without bothering with ...Bb7. This now seems to me the most logical, in that the most pressing need is to eliminate the pawn on d4, so that Black can play ...Ngf6 without being hit by e5.

7 Re1 c5



White to move

8 d5

As explained above, this is unlikely to yield any advantage. 8 Bf1 or 8 Bg5 would offer a more serious test of Black's unusual opening, with play similar to the Bennett-Nunn example given earlier.

8...Ngf6

9 Bf1 0-0

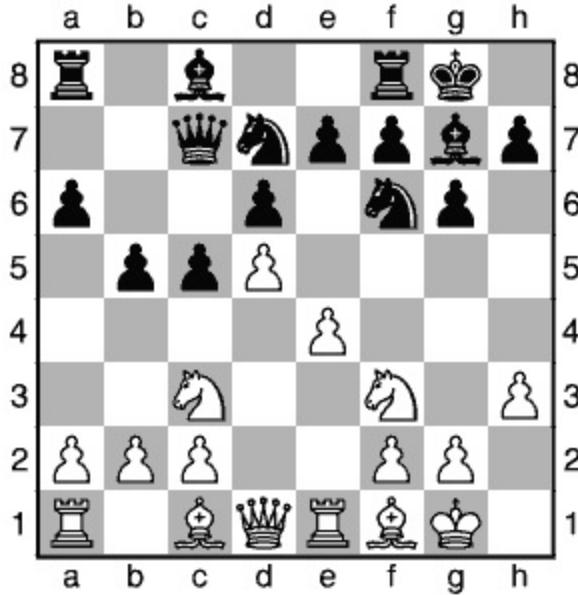
10 h3

Black must now decide on his plan. The most desirable objective is to break up White's centre by ...e6, but the main problem with this is the weak pawn on d6. Black's first step is to defend this pawn by ...Qc7, but White can again delay ...e6 by playing Bf4 (the text-move is designed to prepare a retreat square for the bishop if Black meets Bf4 by ...Nh5). The d6-square is an important factor over the next few moves, as Black tries to support it sufficiently to play ...e6, while White tries to restrain Black's central break.

The c4-square is also important. Black must never be tempted into playing ...b4 without a good reason, because it allows Nd2-c4, or Nb1-d2-c4, reaching a superb outpost from which the knight attacks the crucial d6-square. White may, of course, force the advance at any moment by playing a4, but that would cost him a tempo. If he plays it immediately, then after 10 a4 b4 11 Nb1 Qc7 12 Nbd2 e6 13 Nc4 (13 dxе6 fxе6 14 Nc4 d5 gives Black a strong centre) 13...exd5 14 exd5 Re8 (14...Bb7 15 Bf4 is awkward) 15 Bf4 Rxе1 16 Nxе1 Bf8 (16...Bb7!? 17 Bxd6 Qd8 is also roughly equal), followed by ...Bb7 and ...Re8, Black can complete his development and equalise.

Even though it doesn't work in the present position, the possibility of a4, seizing control of c4, remains a point of supreme importance for the next dozen moves.

10...Qc7



White to move

11 a3?!

This move was very welcome for Black, because it made it much less likely that White would play the undermining a4. White was undoubtedly concerned that ...b4 would push his knight to the edge of the board, but the c4-square balances the misplaced knight. It follows that the text move is unnecessary and amounts to a loss of time.

The correct line is 11 Bf4 b4 12 Na4 (12 Nb1? Nh5) and now Black can try:

- 1) 12...Qa5 13 c3 favours White because the queen will soon be expelled by Nd2-c4.
- 2) 12...c4 is too weakening; after 13 Nd4 Bb7 14 c3 White opens lines on the queenside, and Black must keep watch on the c6-square to prevent White's knight paying an unwelcome visit.
- 3) 12...Bb7! (this natural developing move is best) 13 a3 (13 Qd2 is bad after 13...Qa5 14 b3 Nxe4 15 Rxe4 Bxa1 16 Rxe7 Rad8 17 Bxd6 Rfe8 with inadequate play for the exchange) 13...a5 14 Bc4 with a roughly equal position. White has occupied c4 and has restrained Black in the centre, but it will be very hard to bring the a4-knight back into play.

11...Bb7

12 Bf4 Rad8

13 Qd2?!

This further inaccuracy is more significant. White is planning to step up the pressure on d6 by Rad1, but because of the tempo loss at move 11 he

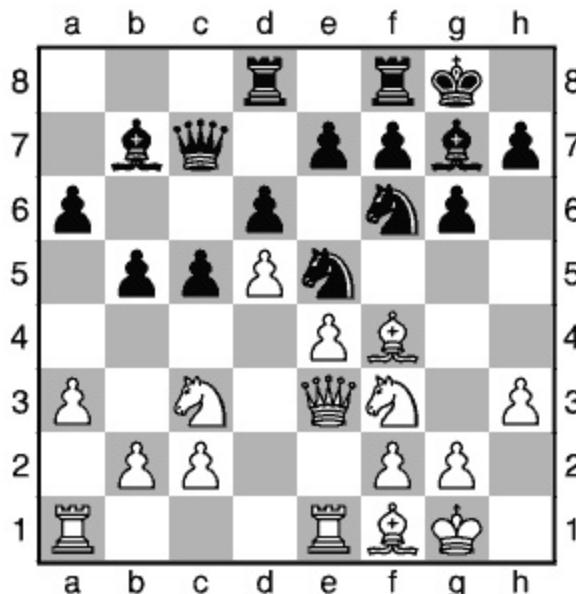
never gets a chance to play it. Black can force through ...e6 and then White's queen is badly placed. The queen should leave the dangerous d-file at once: 13 Qc1 Ne5 14 Nxe5 dxe5 15 Bh6, when Black keeps only a tiny advantage after 15...e6. One continuation might be 16 Bg5 (16 dxe6 fxe6 is similar to the game) 16...exd5 17 Nxd5 Bxd5 18 exd5 c4! when Black is more comfortable.

13...Ne5!

White cannot ignore this move because the f3-knight is attacked, but any exchange on e5 opens the d-file and sets White up for an unpleasant ...e6.

14 Qe3

What else? 14 Bxe5 dxe5 will transpose into the game, since the queen will have to leave the d-file anyway. If 14 Nxe5 dxe5 15 Bh2, then 15...e6 (here is where the tempo loss comes into the picture: with the white rook at d1 instead of the pawn at a3 White would have the strong reply 16 d6) 16 Qg5 (the only way to avoid losing a pawn) 16...Nh5 17 dxe6 fxe6 and Black has the same type of advantage as in the game. If 14 Be2, then 14...b4 15 axb4 cxb4 16 Nd1 Nxe4 17 Qxb4 Bxd5 and the position has opened up in Black's favour, since he has much greater central control.



Black to move

14...e6

15 Bxe5

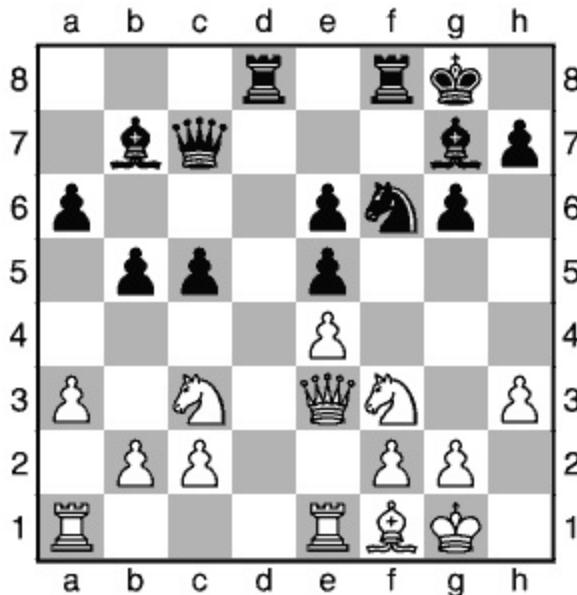
Exchanging his important dark-squared bishop is clearly a major concession for White, but everything else was worse, for example:

1) **15 Rad1** exd5 16 exd5 (16 Nxd5 Nxd5 17 exd5 Nxf3+ 18 Qxf3 Bxb2 wins a pawn) 16...b4 17 Nxe5 bxc3 18 Nc6 Nxd5! and Black wins material.

2) **15 dxe6** Nxf3+ 16 Qxf3 fxe6 and White's pieces are in a sorry state on the f-file. In addition Black has pressure against e4 and greater central control.

15...dxe5

16 dxe6 fxe6



White to move

The aggressive appearance of Black's pieces, especially his rooks, presents a striking contrast with the situation of three or four moves ago. Moreover, his pawns are controlling some important squares, both keeping the white knight out of d5 and forming outposts at d4 and f4.

The doubled and isolated e-pawns are not a handicap in this position, since they do not stand on an open file and White's pieces are not active enough to exert any pressure on them. On the other hand, White's poor control of the dark squares and weak e4-pawn are serious handicaps, so we may assess the position as better for Black. The immediate threat is ...b4, so White has to take immediate defensive measures.

17 Nd2

After 17 Bd3 (17 Qg5 would be met by 17...b4) 17...Rd4 Black renews the threat to the e4-pawn.

A crucial target of Black's play for the next few moves will be to emphasise his domination of the dark squares, which has resulted from the

disappearance of White's bishop. Thus ...Nh5, ...Nf4 and ...Bh6 will be coming shortly. The only real danger is that White might play a4, dislodging the b-pawn and permitting Bc4 with pressure against e6. Black must ensure that while he is furthering his own plans, he does not allow White to break out with a4.

17...Rd4!

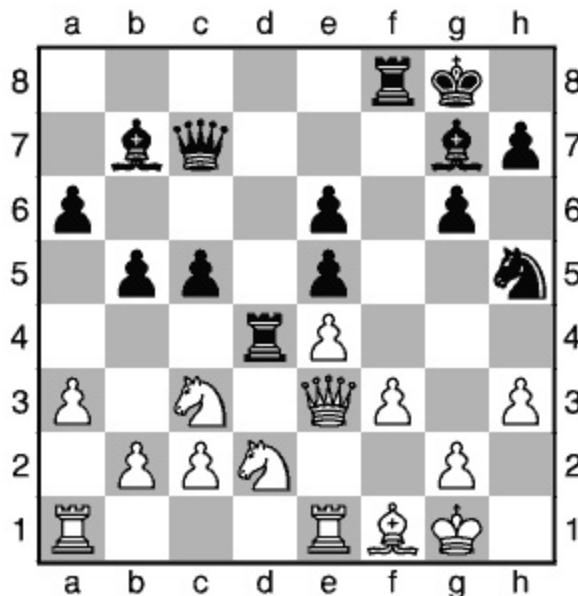
18 f3?!

Another concession, further weakening White's dark squares. The most active try was 18 a4, but after 18...b4 19 Ne2 Nxe4 20 Nxd4 exd4 21 Qd3 (or 21 Qe2 Rxf2) 21...Nxf2 22 Qb3 Bd5 23 Bc4 Bxc4 24 Qxc4 (or 24 Nxc4 d3 25 cxd3 Nxh3+ 26 Kh1 Nf2+ 27 Kg1 Bd4 28 Ne3 Qe5) 24...Nxh3+ 25 gxh3 (25 Kh1 Nf4) 25...Qg3+ 26 Kh1 Qxh3+ 27 Kg1 Rf5! 28 Qxe6+ Kh8 White has to give up his queen to avoid mate, whereupon Black wins easily.

The best chance was 18 Nb3, when 18...Nxe4 19 Nxe4 Rxe4 fails to 20 Qxc5. Black's most accurate reply is 18...Rc8, covering c5 and thereby threatening the e-pawn. White would then have to play 19 f3 in any case, but at least Black's rook would have been deflected from its active position on the half-open f-file.

After the move played, the accumulated weaknesses in White's position add up to a clear advantage for Black. However, precise and active play is necessary to exploit these weaknesses.

18...Nh5



White to move

19 Ne2

White loses this game not because of any serious error, but as a result of a series of small inaccuracies. In particular, he turns down chances to complicate the game and allows Black to execute his plans with little interference.

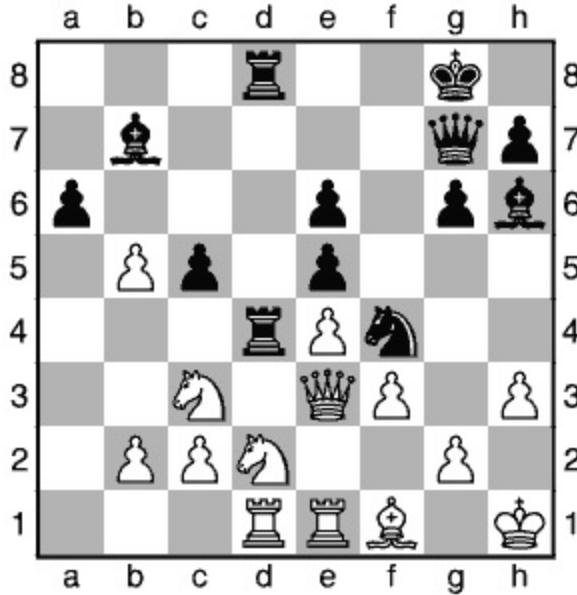
Perhaps White had underestimated Black's next move, but if he had fully appreciated the consequences he would surely have taken his last chance to play actively by 19 a4. Black can retain a clear advantage, but very accurate play is required in a complex situation. Thus while the theoretical verdict might not be changed by this move, it would certainly have been a much better practical chance.

After 19 a4 Rfd8 20 Rad1 (20 Nb3 c4) 20...Nf4 21 axb5 (21 g3 Bh6) 21...Bh6 22 Kh1 Black may try:

1) **22...Nxe2** 23 Qxh6 Nxe1 24 Rxe1 (24 bxa6 Nxf3 25 Nb5 Qd7 favours Black) 24...Rxd2 25 bxa6 Qf7 26 Qe3! (26 Re2 Rxe2 27 Bxe2 Bxa6 28 Bxa6 Qxf3+ 29 Kh2 Qf2+ 30 Kh1 Qe1+ 31 Kh2 Rf8 wins for Black) 26...Bc6 27 Bd3 Qf4 28 Qxf4 exf4 and the advanced a-pawn offers significant compensation for the exchange.

2) **22...Kg7** 23 bxa6 Nxe2 24 Nb5! Qb6 25 Qb3 Rxd2 26 Rxd2 Rxd2 (26...Bxd2 27 Ra1 Bxa6 28 Kxg2 is unclear) 27 Re2! (after 27 Bxg2 Bxa6 28 c4 Bf4 Black's dark-square pressure gives him the advantage) 27...Rxe2 (27...Rd1 28 Nc3! Rxf1+ 29 Kxg2 is safe for White) 28 Bxe2 is unclear because 28...Nf4 only leads to a draw after 29 axb7 Nxe2 30 Nc3! Qa6 31 Nxe2 Qxe2 32 Qd3! Qe1+ 33 Kg2 Be3 34 Qxe3 Qxe3 35 b8Q.

3) **22...Qg7!** with two possibilities:



White to move

3a) 23 Qf2 Nxh3 24 gxh3 Bxd2 25 bxa6 Bxe1 (surprisingly, the line 25...Bxc3 26 Rxd4 Bxd4 27 Qh4 g5 28 Qg3 is unclear, because White threatens both 29 axb7 and 29 c3) 26 Qxe1 Bc6 27 Bc4 Qf6 and Black has a clear advantage because his material advantage and White's exposed king count for more than the passed a-pawn.

3b) 23 Nb3 Nxg2 24 Qf2 Nxe1 25 Nxd4 exd4 26 bxa6 Rf8 27 axb7 dxc3 28 Qxe1 cxb2 29 Bc4 (29 Ba6 Qf7!, with ...Bc1 to come, is very awkward) 29...Qxb7 30 Bxe6+ Kh8 and the advanced pawn on b2 gives Black a near-decisive advantage.

These lines emphasise the importance of the initiative. White was happy to give up the exchange to relieve the pressure against his position and acquire some counterplay in the form of a dangerous a-pawn. In the game, on the other hand, it is Black who surrenders the exchange in return for a decisive initiative.

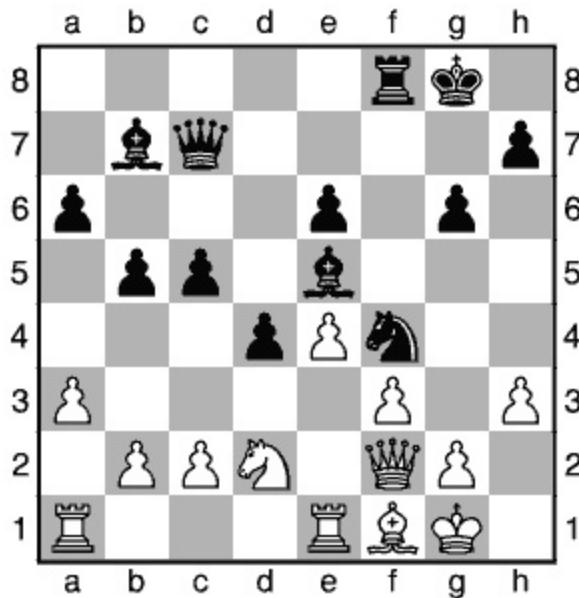
19...Nf4!

The natural consequence of the preceding play. There is no point in playing the rook to d4 if Black is just going to retreat it meekly when attacked. The sacrifice not only gains time for Black, but greatly increases his dark-square control by transferring a pawn to d4 and opening the c7-h2 diagonal. This new diagonal allows Black to capitalise on his positional grip to create direct threats against the white king.

White might as well accept, or else ...Bh6 follows in any case.

20 Nxd4 exd4

21 Qf2 Be5



White to move

In return for the exchange Black has total control of the dark squares and has also improved his pawn structure by the capture at d4. Moreover, his newly-acquired queenside pawn majority is capable of forming a passed pawn quite quickly.

In fact Black had a second promising continuation in 21...d3. After the forced reply 22 c3 he can continue 22...c4, followed by ...Be5 and as in the game, but with the extra asset of a protected passed pawn. However, this continuation would cost a tempo and thereby affect the momentum of the attack, so I preferred an immediate build-up against White's king.

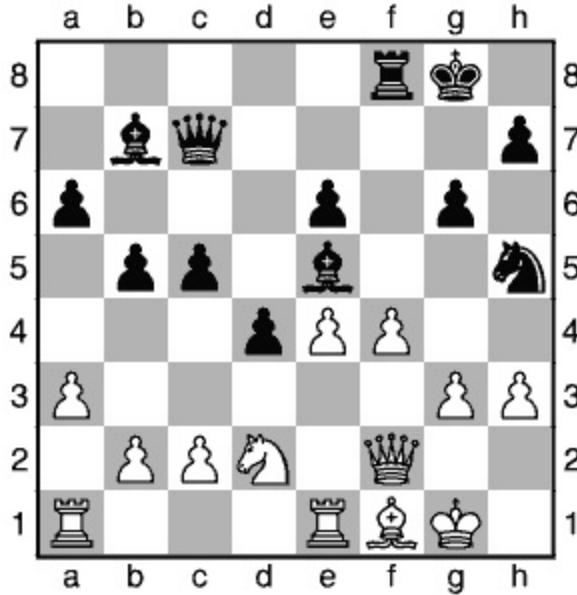
After the text-move, there is an immediate threat of 22...Nh5. The knight move would threaten both 23...Bg3 and 23...Bh2+ followed by ...Ng3+ winning the queen. At this point White has three options: he can return the exchange (the game continuation), move his rook away from e1, or try to fight back by 22 g3 followed by f4.

22 a4?!

The alternatives are:

1) **22 Rec1** (22 Red1 is much the same) 22...Nh5 23 Qe1 (23 g4 Bf4! 24 Qe1 Be3+ 25 Kh1 Qf4 wins) 23...Bh2+ 24 Kh1 Bf4 25 g4 Bxd2 26 Qxd2 Rxf3 and Black wins.

2) **22 g3 Nh5 23 f4** and now:



Black to move

2a) 23...N_xg3 24 Qxg3 Bxf4 with a final branch:

2a1) 25 Qg2 Be3+ 26 Rxe3 dxe3 27 Nf3 Bxe4 28 Be2 Bxc2 gives Black four pawns for the piece. While there is still a long way to go, Black has a distinct advantage.

2a2) 25 Qd3! c4 26 Nxc4 (26 Qxd4 Rd8 27 Qf6 Rxd2 is very good for Black since 28 Qxe6+ Kg7 loses in a curious fashion: however White meets the threat of 29...Be3+, his queen is trapped by 29...Bc8 30 Qe8 Rd8) 26...bxc4 27 Qxd4 (not 27 Qxc4 Qe5 28 Bg2 Be3+ 29 Kh1 Bxe4 30 Re2 Rf3! and wins) 27...Bg3 28 Re2 (28 Qxc4 Bf2+ 29 Kh1 Qg3 wins) 28...Be5 29 Qe3 and the position is unclear.

2b) 23...g5! 24 Qf3 (24 Qg2 gxf4 25 gxf4+ Bg7 wins the f-pawn under highly favourable circumstances) 24...Ng7 25 Qg2 gxf4 26 g4, when, at the cost of a pawn, White has driven back the enemy knight and managed to find a good defensive square for his own knight at f3. Nevertheless, Black has a clear advantage as the white rooks are almost useless and the e-pawn is a permanent target. This is in addition to his extra space and dangerous queenside majority.

White's chosen move leads to a dismal position in which he does not even have some extra material to compensate for his crippling dark-square weaknesses.

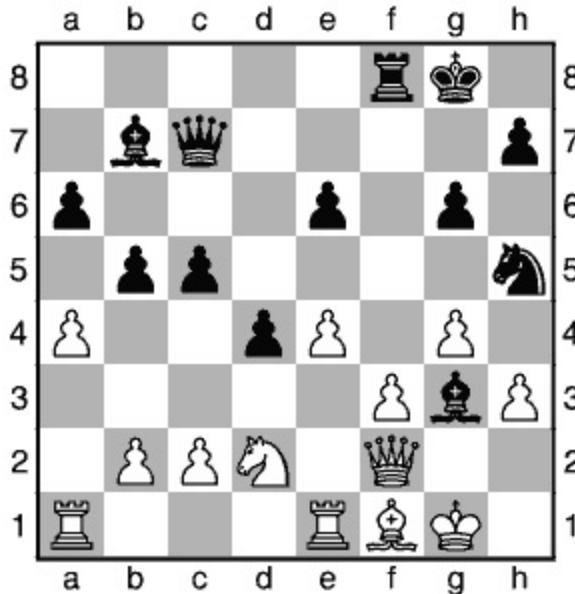
22...Nh5

Threatens the enemy queen in two ways: 23...Bg3 24 Qe2 Bh2+ and 23...Bh2+ 24 Kh1 Ng3+.

23 g4

23 Kh1 Bg3 24 Qe2 Nf4 25 Qd1 c4 is similar to the game.

23...Bg3



White to move

24 Qe2

Or 24 Qg2 Nf4, forcing the ‘visual’ 25 Qh1.

24...Nf4

25 Qd1 c4

There is no need to take on e1 immediately, as the rook cannot escape.

With this move Black meets the attack on b5 without yielding the c4-square.

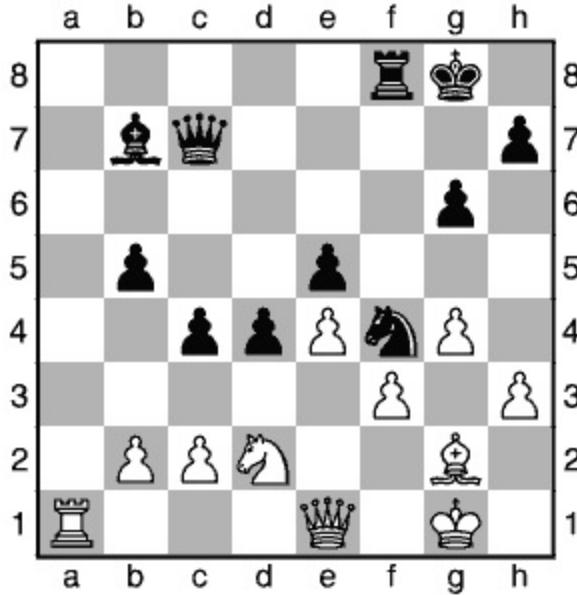
26 axb5 axb5

27 Bg2

After this the attacked rook threatens to slip away to f1, so Black hacks it off.

27...Bxe1

28 Qxe1 e5



White to move

Now that the dark-squared bishop has gone, a pawn on e5 will not prove an obstruction. The resulting position is a dream for Black. Every piece is far more active than its white counterpart; the contrast is especially dramatic in the case of the minor pieces. On top of all this, Black has an advanced queenside pawn majority.

The normal plan would be to create a passed pawn as White's poorly placed pieces would hardly be able to hold it up for long. However, there is no particular rush since Black's positional advantages will not run away. First, the queen's position is improved, incidentally keeping the white rook out of a7.

29 Nf1 Qc5

30 Kh2

After 30 Qf2 the simplest win is the neat 30...Bxe4! 31 fxe4 Ne2+ 32 Qxe2 d3+.

30...d3

31 cxd3

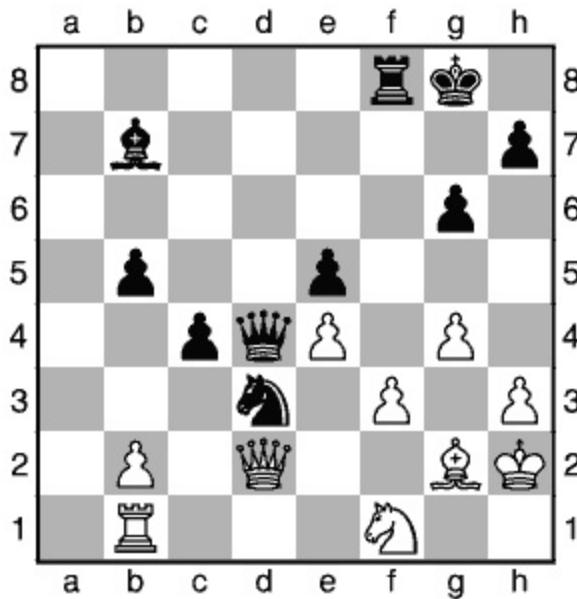
After 31 Qe3, the reply 31...Qb4 is very strong.

31...Nxd3

31...cxd3 is possible, but Black plays consistently for piece activity. The knight is even stronger at d3 than f4, the queen will be immensely powerful at d4, and White's queen and rook will be tied to the defence of the b-pawn.

32 Qd2 Qd4

33 Rb1



Black to move

33...Bxe4!

There is nothing wrong with the systematic 33...b4, but if one has a chance to finish the game at a stroke, it is usually better to take it and avoid possible later errors. However, a tactical finish of this kind is only appropriate if it is completely clear-cut. If there were any doubt about the outcome, the slower method would be preferable.

34 fxe4 Rf2

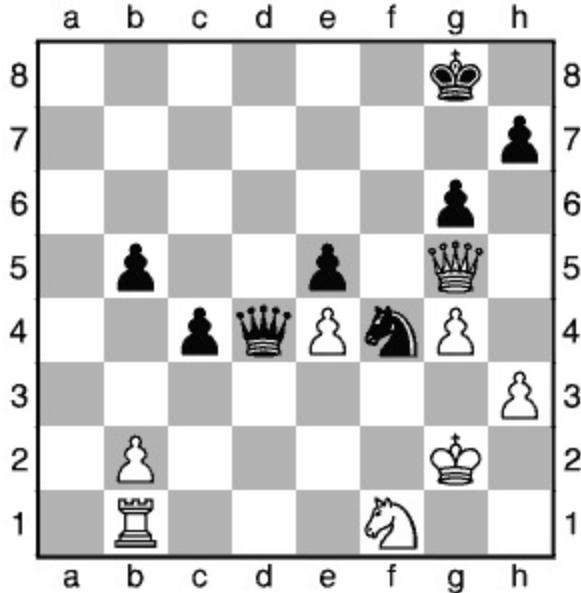
35 Qg5

Any move apart from 35 Qg5 and 35 Qa5 loses straight away, for example 35 Qd1 Qxe4, 35 Qc3 Qxe4 or 35 Qe3 Nf4.

35...Rxf2+

Black could also win by 35...Nf4 36 Ne3 Qd2!, but the text-move is even more effective. It is curious how often positions suffering from a severe weakness on one colour are finally demolished by action on the squares of the other colour. Here the squares e4 and g2 play the crucial role; the logic is that it is White's bad bishop which holds his position together, so it is the piece that has to be removed by violent means.

36 Kxg2 Nf4+



White to move

0-1

The finish would be 37 Kf3 (37 Kg3 Qg1+ 38 Kh4 is one move shorter) 37...Qd3+ 38 Kf2 Qe2+ 39 Kg3 Qg2+ 40 Kh4 Qf2+ 41 Ng3 Ng2#, quite an unusual mate. Had White played 35 Qa5 one more move would be needed: 42 Kg5 Qf4#.

I was still restricted in my chess activities by my University duties and, apart from events such as Olympiads, I could only play in weekend tournaments during term-time. The Cutty Sark Grand Prix had now been going for a number of years. The first prize of £2000 was well worth winning, so I decided to make a determined bid for it in 1979. This was the reason for my appearance at Nottingham (outright first with 5½/6) and Exeter (outright first with 4½/5).

My new GM title had led to a few international invitations coming my way, and I was happy to take part at Dortmund in April 1979. This proved to be a success. I went through the event without a loss, and my score of 7½/11 would normally have been good enough for higher than third place, but Georgadze managed 8½ and Nikolac 8. The players in joint fourth position were no less than 1½ points behind me.

Game 7

J. Nikolac – J. Nunn

Dortmund 1979

Tarrasch Defence

It is worth mentioning the circumstances under which this game was played. Nikolac needed three points from his last four games to become a grandmaster. He faced Jansa and Miles with Black, myself and Böhmfeldt (a relatively weak local player) with White. Playing to win the two white games and draw the two black ones was his most obvious strategy and this probably influenced the course of the game, since at various stages he turned down drawing opportunities.

1 Nf3 d5

2 c4 e6

3 g3 c5

4 Bg2 Nc6

5 0-0 Nf6

6 cxd5 exd5

7 d4 Be7

8 Nc3

The fact that White has delayed playing Nc3 makes a difference in some lines, but in this game Nikolac decided to transpose into standard positions.

8...0-0

9 Bg5 cxd4

10 Nxd4 h6

11 Be3 Re8

These eleven moves are nowadays regarded as the main line of the Tarrasch, a defence which has always been considered an uphill struggle for Black, but which becomes fashionable for short periods when some great player attempts to revive and improve it. Spassky used it for a while in the 1960s, and more recently Kasparov adopted it twice in his first match with Karpov. Unfortunately, he lost on both occasions and then largely abandoned it. I played it occasionally in the seventies, but after some poor results I gave it up. My experience indicated that Black's winning chances were slim since White could usually draw even if he played badly, while strong opponents would generally win! Today only a few players are willing to adopt it, Murray Chandler being one of this vanishing breed.

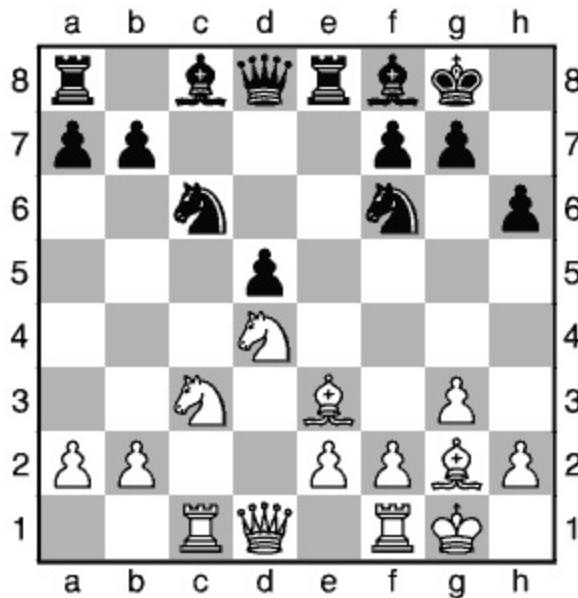
Technically, we have a standard type of IQP position in which Black

will look for kingside counterplay by occupying the half-open e-file and perhaps the outpost at e4. White for his part has a choice of two plans: he may continue to blockade d4 and build up pressure on the weak pawn, or he may exchange knights on c6 and transfer his attack to the backward c-pawn and the blockade point c5. In the present game White makes this exchange almost at once, so we are concerned here exclusively with the second plan.

12 Rc1

The usual move at the time this game was played. Karpov continued 12 Qb3 in his two wins against Kasparov.

12...Bf8



White to move

13 Nxc6 bxc6

White players have experimented with many different 13th moves to try to keep the initiative; 13 Nb3, 13 Na4, 13 Ncb5, 13 Qc2, 13 Qb3 and 13 Qa4 have all been tested. However, this is not an openings book so we will have to restrict our comments to the exchange of knights and the fundamentally different pawn structure which it brings about.

Hitherto Black was worried about defending the d5-pawn, but now his fears have been transferred to the weakling at c6. White's first task is to maintain a firm grip on c5, in order to prevent Black advancing his pawns; then, with the target fixed at c6, he can think about tying Black down to its defence. If Black gets driven into a completely passive position (imagine all the minor pieces off, white rooks on c5 and d4, queen on c3, and pawn on e3

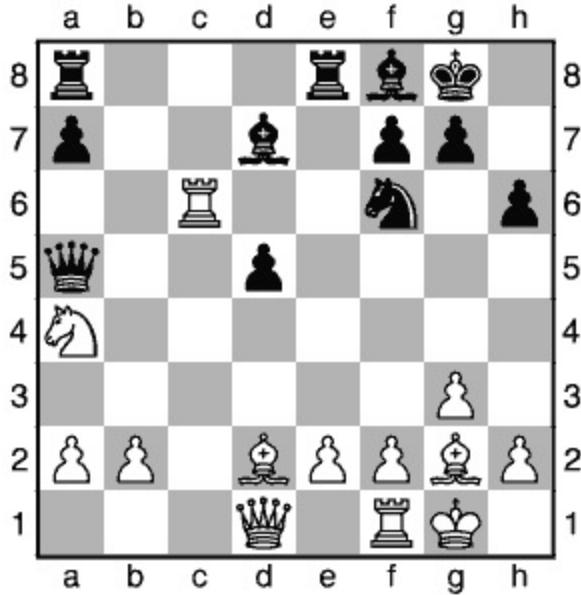
– this is Black's nightmare) then his chances of survival will be slim. Therefore Black must concentrate on developing counterplay. The open e-file is one hope; note that the b-file is not so relevant as the a8-rook will generally have to stay defending a7, and in any case White can meet pressure against b2 very simply by playing b3. The exchange of light-squared bishops is another hope, since the g2-bishop is very useful, defending the kingside and effectively pinning down the pawns at d5 and c6. Black should also aim to challenge White's control of d4 and c5.

14 Bd4

One reason why the Tarrasch Defence is under a cloud is that White is thought to have a more accurate move than Bd4 at this point, and it is hard to see how to equalise against it. **14 Na4** is the direct and obvious attempt both to blockade c5 and to exchange Black's better bishop (by Bc5), but in 1979 its strength was not appreciated because the reply **14...Qa5** was considered good.

The queen move is based on the tactical point that 15 Rxc6 can be met by 15...Bd7, and Black therefore seems to have time to settle his queen on the nice active square b5, hitting e2 and conveniently covering c6. One example is 14 Na4 Qa5 **15 b3** Qb5 16 Qc2 Bd7 17 Nc3 (White can't occupy c5 because e2 is weak) 17...Qb4 18 Rcd1 Qg4 19 Bd4 (19 h3 Qh5, or 19 Bf3 Qh3, or 19 Rd4 Qe6, threatening ...c5) 19...Bf5 20 Qc1 Qg6 21 Rfe1 Ne4 22 Nxe4 Bxe4 23 Bxe4 Rxe4 24 Bc5 ½-½ (Timman-Gligorić, Buenos Aires Olympiad 1978). By keeping his pieces active and by playing this difficult kind of manoeuvring game, Black manages to hold the balance. In the final position he could continue 24...a5 25 Bxf8 Rxf8, intending ...a4 (or if 26 a4, then 26...Rb4, etc.) and instead of Black having two weak pawns to defend, the players will have one each.

However, all this is invalidated by the fact that White can, after all, play **15 Rxc6!**, meeting 15...Bd7 by 16 Bd2, and now:



Black to move

1) 16...Qb5 17 Rxf6 gxf6 (or 17...Qxa4 18 Qxa4 Bxa4 19 Rf4! Bc6 20 Be3 Bd6 21 Rg4, and White keeps both his extra pawn and his positional advantage, Sosonko-Salazar, Lugano 1985) 18 Nc3 Qxb2 19 Nxd5, with a winning attack, for example 19...Rac8 20 Bc3 Rxc3 21 Nxf6+ Kh8 22 Qxd7 (22 Qd4 Rxe2 23 Nxd7+ Kg8 24 Nf6+ Kh8 25 Ne4+ Bg7 26 Qd8+ Kh7 27 Nxc3 was also winning in Volzhin-Grosar, Ljubljana 1992) 22...Re7 23 Qf5 Kg7 24 Nh5+ Kg8 (24...Kh8 25 Be4 Rxe4 26 Qxe4 wins) 25 Qg4+ Kh8 26 Nf6 Bg7 1-0 (27 Qf5 wins a rook) Strauss-King, British Championship 1984.

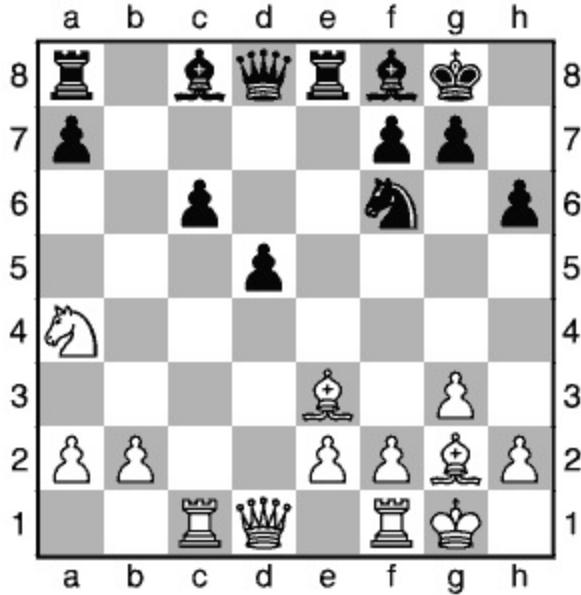
2) 16...Bb4 17 Rc5, and Black gets the worse of it in every line, finishing up either a pawn down or with a bad ending:

2a) 17...Bb5 18 Qb3.

2b) 17...Bxa4 18 Rxa5 Bxd1 19 Bxb4 Bxe2 20 Rc1.

2c) 17...Qxa4 (the best hope) 18 Qxa4 Bxa4 19 Bxb4 Rxe2 20 b3 Bd7 21 Ra1 Rc8 22 Rxc8+ Bxc8 23 Bf1 (Black's rook can eventually be forced off the seventh, when he will be left with weak pawns and facing the two bishops) 23...Rb2 24 Ba3 Rd2 25 Bc5 a6 26 Be3 Rb2 (Ribli-Barle, Portorož-Ljubljana 1985) 27 h3!, followed by Bd3 and Bc1, and White is much better.

If 14...Qa5 is bad, what should Black do against 14 Na4?



Black to move

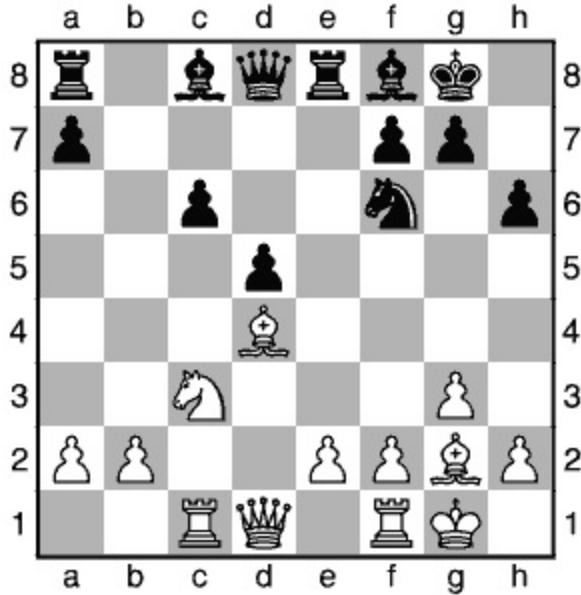
On the whole his outlook is rather gloomy because his f8-bishop is bound to be exchanged. Here are a few examples:

1) **14...Bd7 15 Bc5 Bxc5** (or 15...Ne4 16 Bxf8 Kxf8 17 Re1, Tukmakov-Balashov, USSR 1972) 16 Nxc5 Bg4 (16...Bf5 has also been played several times without real success) 17 Re1 Qa5 (17...Qb6 18 Qc2 Rad8 19 h3 Bc8 20 b3 Qb8 21 e3 Re7 22 Red1 was also slightly better for White in Ljubojević-Gligorić, Bugojno 1978) 18 h3 Bf5 19 Qd4! Rab8 20 a3 Qb5 21 b3 and White retained a positional advantage in Kasparov-Illescas, Linares 1994. It is interesting to see Kasparov, who was responsible for one of the revivals of the Tarrasch, being so effective when playing against it.

2) **14...Ng4 15 Bc5 Bxc5 16 Nxc5 Qf6 17 h3 Ne5 18 e4 Rb8 19 b3 Rb5 20 exd5 cxd5 21 Re1** (not 21 Qxd5? Bb7), Timman-Gligorić, Nikšić 1978.

In every case Black gets a passive position or (usually after e4 by White) an unpleasant pawn weakness.

The point of 14 Bd4 is to tie the queen down to the defence of f6, but as we have seen, the queen cannot go to a5 in any case, so White loses a tempo.



Black to move

14...Nh7

This is an ambitious move. Black plans to play ...Ng5, aiming for ...Bh3 (or ...Nh3+ in some lines) and the exchange of bishops, or possibly ...Ne6 to fight for control of c5. Black isn't threatening 14...c5 yet (because of 15 Be3), but White will have to bear it in mind. One of the main advantages of the knight move is that Black can play ...Bg4 followed by ...Qd7, which both defends the c6-pawn and helps prepare ...Bh3. This is a far more effective arrangement than defending the c6-pawn with ...Bd7, when the queen finds it hard to settle on a good square. On the other hand it does take time to move the knight around and I suspect that White can keep some advantage.

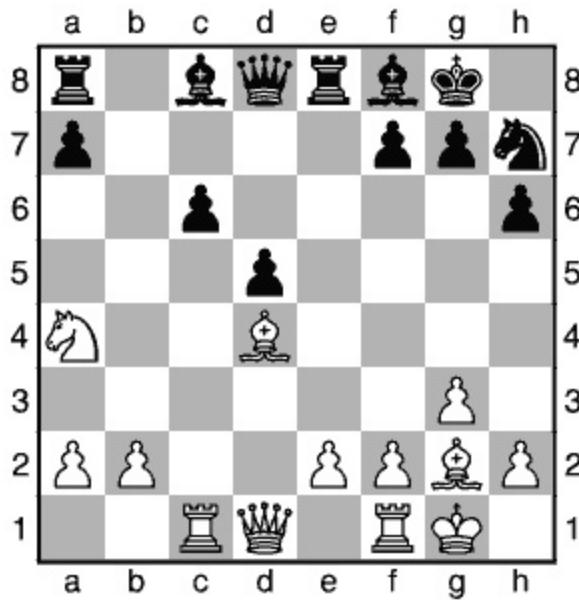
In the alternatives Black must take care not to fall into a miserably passive position:

1) After the immediate **14...Bg4**, White replies 15 Qa4 (15 h3 Bh5 16 g4 Bg6 does not help White), which threatens Bxf6 as well as the c-pawn. After 15...Bd7 16 Qc2 White has the advantage because e4 can follow (16...Qe7 17 e4 dxе4 18 Rfe1 Bf5 19 Bxf6, etc.). Incidentally, 16 Bxf6 Qxf6 17 Bxd5 would be a premature liquidation, allowing Black some counter-chances by 17...cxsd5 18 Qxd7 Rad8 (Stein-Damjanović, Vrnjačka Banja 1971, which ended in a draw).

2) **14...Bd7** 15 Re1 Nh7 16 Na4 Ng5 (this plan is less effective here because of the passive position of the d7-bishop) 17 Bc5 Ne6 18 Bxf8 Rxf8 19 e4 (Stein-Tarve, Pärnu 1971). Here Black's pawns are beginning to come under fire and he has no counterplay to speak of.

3) 14...Bf5 is a sound and sensible continuation, possibly the best, controlling e4 and keeping the queen out of c2. The game Adorjan-Gligorić, Vršac 1983 concluded 15 Qd2 Qd6 16 Rfe1 ½-½, which doesn't tell us much. There have been few later games with this line because of the evident strength of 14 Na4.

15 Na4



Black to move

15...Bg4

Two other moves have been tried here. 15...Ng5 is just bad, since after 16 Rxc6 Bd7 17 Rc1 Bxa4 18 Qxa4 Rxe2 19 Rfd1 Black has no compensation for the weak d-pawn and White's two bishops (Buckley-Poulton, Sheffield 1996). However, 15...Qa5 may now be possible, since White no longer has a possible exchange sacrifice on f6. Thus, after 16 Rxc6 Bd7 17 Bc3 Qb5 18 Qxd5 Bxc6 19 Qxc6 Qxe2 20 Re1 Qxe1+ the position is level. The game Karason-Johannesson, Reykjavik 1990 continued instead 16 a3 Bg4 17 f3 Bf5 18 Nc5 Ng5 19 g4 Bc8 20 f4 Ne4 with a roughly equal position.

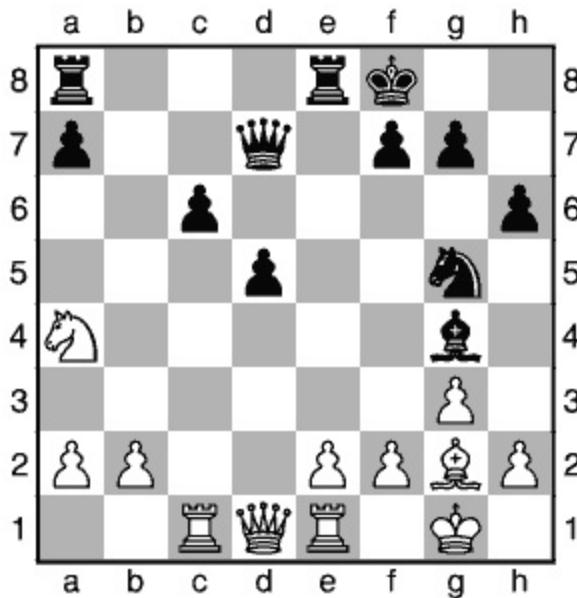
16 Re1 Qd7

17 Bc5

A knight will be more useful than a bishop on c5, so White avoids 17 Nc5 Bxc5 18 Bxc5 Ng5; then a continuation such as 19 Qd2 Bh3 20 Bh1 Ne4 would be quite satisfactory for Black.

17...Ng5

18 Bxf8 Kxf8



White to move

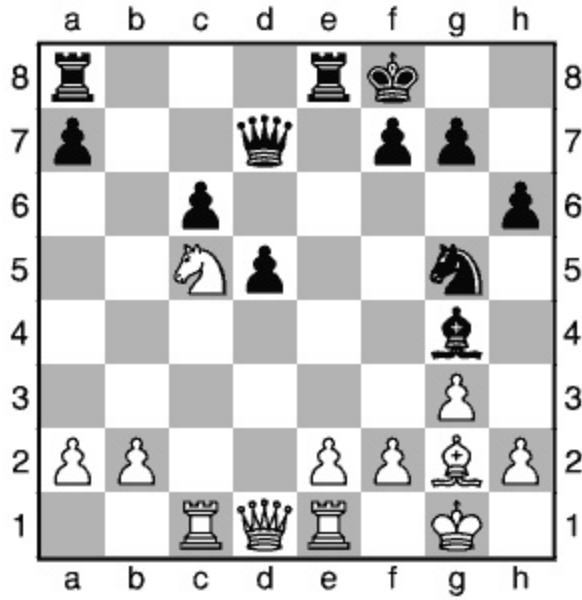
One would normally prefer to retake with a piece other than the king, in order to avoid later checks and to prevent the queen from gaining a tempo by threatening to penetrate to h7, but here it is more flexible to take with the king. While ...Rxf8 would have to be followed by a more or less immediate ...Rfe8, it may be that Black can get away with keeping his king on f8 for several moves.

19 Nc5?!

A later game, Adorjan-Lobron, Indonesia 1983, was also interesting. That continued 19 Qc2 Kg8 (19...Rac8 20 Nc5 Qd6 21 h4 Ne6 22 Nxe6+ followed by Qh7 would be dangerous; Black could also play 20...Qf5 here, but the exchange of queens is not in his interests as his kingside play would be reduced to nothing and he would face a long and difficult endgame) 20 Nc5 (20 Qxc6 Qxc6 21 Rxc6 Bxe2 is fine for Black, as 22 Bxd5 fails to 22...Bb5) 20...Qe7 21 Nd3 Bf5 (Black has equalised) 22 Qc5 Bxd3 23 Qxe7 Rxe7 24 exd3 Rxe1+ 25 Rxe1 Rb8 26 Rc1 Rb6 (better than opening the position for the bishop's benefit by 26...Rxb2, etc.) 27 b3 Ne6 28 Rc2 Nd4, with a very slight plus for Black, although the game was eventually drawn.

However, there is a massive improvement for White in all this. He may grab the c6-pawn by 20 h4 Nh3+ 21 Bxh3 Bxh3 22 Qxc6 Qxc6 23 Rxc6, since 23...Bd7 24 Ra6 Bb5 25 Ra5 Bxe2 26 Rxd5 Bf3 does not regain the pawn, for example 27 Rde5 Rxe5 28 Rxe5 Rd8 29 Nc3 Rd2 30 Re3 Bc6

(30...Bg4 31 b4) 31 Re2. In view of this, 19 Qc2 would seem to ensure White at least a slight advantage, and is therefore more accurate than the move played.



Black to move

19...Qf5

More aggressive than 19...Qe7, which carries no threat to the e-pawn, *e.g.* 20 Qa4 Bxe2? 21 h4 Ne6 (21...Ne4 22 Bxe4 Bb5 23 Qb4 dxe4 24 Rxe4 and wins) 22 Nxe6+ Qxe6 23 Bf3 Bxf3 24 Rxe6 Rxe6 25 Qa3+ winning.

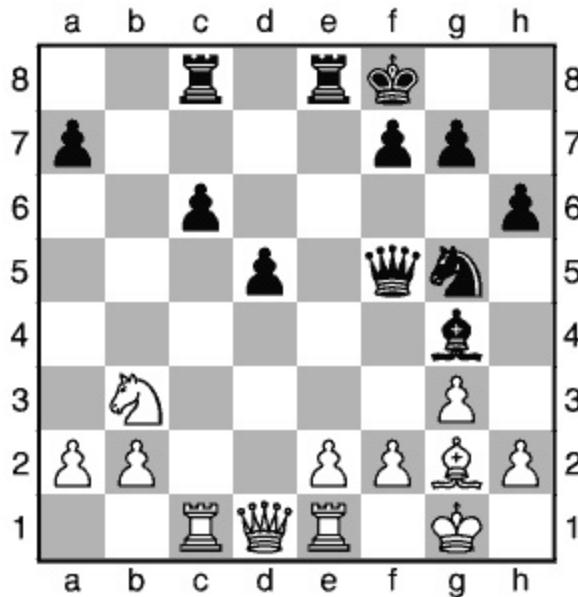
20 Nb3

White will hardly be able to avoid the move f3 for much longer. If he does refuse to play it, his own forces will remain too much tied down to the defence of e2 to be able to attack the queenside. If he plays f3, then Black will seize his chance to hit the new weaknesses at e2 and e3. In an endgame the white king could sit at f2 and Black's play against these squares would not amount to much, but in the middlegame it will provide a genuine counterweight to his own pawn weaknesses.

The text-move is an interesting idea. White is now satisfied with his grip on c5 and he intends to carry the attack directly to the c6-pawn. Thanks to the absence of Black's light-squared bishop from the queenside, this is quite a dangerous plan. The less precise 20 Qc2 Qf6 (naturally Black will avoid the exchange of queens if at all possible, since this would condemn him to a long passive defence) 21 f3 (21 Nb3 Nh3+ 22 Bxh3 Bxh3 23 Qxc6 Qxb2 is roughly equal) runs into 21...Nh3+ and 22 Bxh3 is forced as 22 Kf1 Qd4 23

e3 Rxe3 wins for Black.

20...Rac8



White to move

21 f3

White can hardly hope to make progress any other way. After 21 Nd4? Qf6 Black threatens ...c5, and if 22 b4 then 22...Re4! 23 Bxe4 Nh3+ 24 Kg2 Qxf2+ 25 Kh1 Qe3 with advantage to Black.

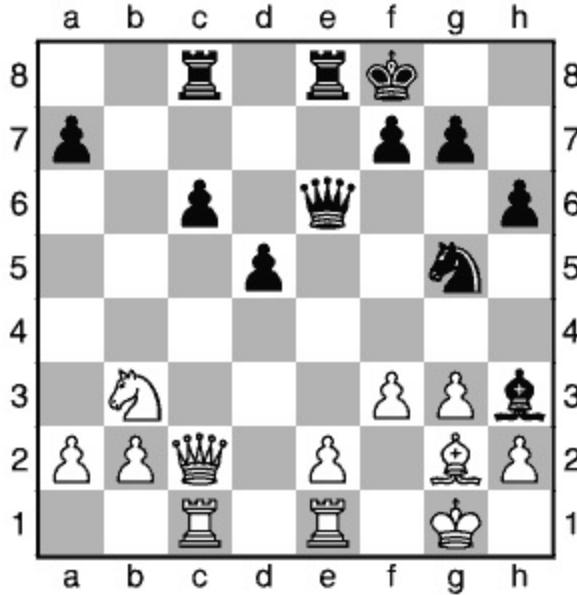
21...Bh3

Now Black cannot get away with 21...Nh3+? because after 22 Kf1 his pieces get in a tangle:

1) 22...Bh5 23 Qd4! (threatening 24 g4) 23...Re4 24 Qc5+ Kg8 25 Nd4 and wins.

2) 22...Re3 23 Qd4 Rxf3+ (the line 23...Bxf3 24 Qxe3 Bxe2+ 25 Kxe2 Re8 26 Qxe8+ also fails) 24 exf3 Bxf3 25 Re5 Qf6 (the double checks are useless) 26 Bxh3 and wins.

22 Qc2 Qe6



White to move

23 Bxh3

23 Nc5 is inconsistent, because White played his knight back from c5 at move 20 with the idea of exerting direct pressure against c6 by a later Nd4. After 23...Qe3+ 24 Kf1 (24 Kh1 allows the additional line 24...Qf2 25 Bxh3 Nxf3 26 e4 Qxc2 27 Rxc2 Nxe1 28 Rc1 Rcd8 29 Rxe1 dxе4 with a likely draw) 24...Bxg2+ 25 Kxg2 Kg8, followed by ...Ne6 the position is balanced as both sides have a backward pawn.

23 Qc5+ Kg8 24 Qxa7 is met by 24...Ra8, as in several subsequent lines, and the exchange of a-pawns favours Black. Against quiet moves Black plays 23...Kg8.

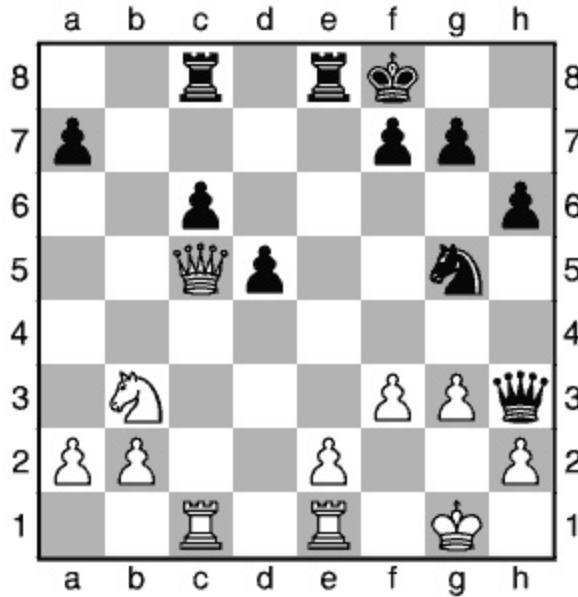
23...Qxh3

Black is taking a slight risk in moving his queen away to the kingside, but it turns out that White cannot take advantage of this because of his slightly shaky king position.

In fact, 23...Nxh3+ is also satisfactory, for example: 24 Kg2 (hitting the knight; if 24 Kh1 then 24...Kg8) 24...Ng5 (now 24...Kg8? loses to 25 Nc5) 25 Qc5+ Kg8 26 Nd4 (26 Qxa7 Ra8 27 Qc5 Rxa2 and White has no real advantage) 26...Qh3+ 27 Kg1 Ne6 28 Nxe6 (28 Qxa7? Ra8 29 Qb6 Reb8) 28...Qxe6 with a balanced position (29 Qxa7 is again met by 29...Ra8).

24 Nd4

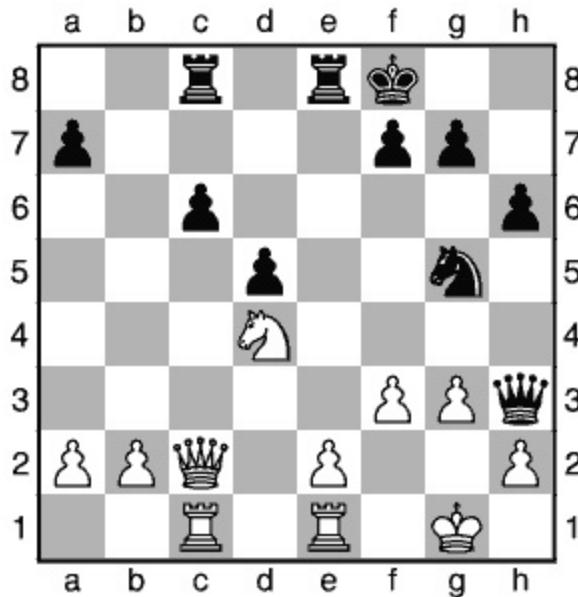
The main alternative is 24 Qc5+ and now:



Black to move

1) 24...Re7 25 Nd4 (25 Na5 Qd7! 26 Nxc6 {or else ...Ne6} 26...Nxf3+ 27 exf3 Rxc6 28 Qxc6 Qxc6 29 Rxc6 Rxe1+ 30 Kf2 Rh1 31 Kg2 Rb1 32 Rc2 Ke7 is drawn) 25...Ne6 26 Nxe6+ Qxe6 27 e4 Kg8 is perhaps slightly better for White. Note that there is no immediate knock-out by 28 exd5 Qxe1+ 29 Rxe1 Rxe1+ 30 Kg2 (30 Kf2 Rce8) because of 30...Re5.

2) 24...Kg8 (this is even sounder) 25 Qxa7 (25 Nd4 Ne6 is the note to Black's 23rd) 25...Ra8 26 Qc5 Rxa2 holds the balance because 27 Qxc6 fails to 27...Nxf3+! 28 exf3 Rxe1+ 29 Rxe1 Rxb2.



Black to move

Nikolac chooses instead a more adventurous tactical line, but this also fails to gain any advantage. The truth of the matter is that Black is no longer worse, so White has to take care in his efforts to play for a win.

24...c5

With the d5-c6 pawn structure, achieving this thrust is very often a sign that Black has equalised. The two pawns stand abreast of each other, denying White's pieces any outposts in the centre.

25 Nf5

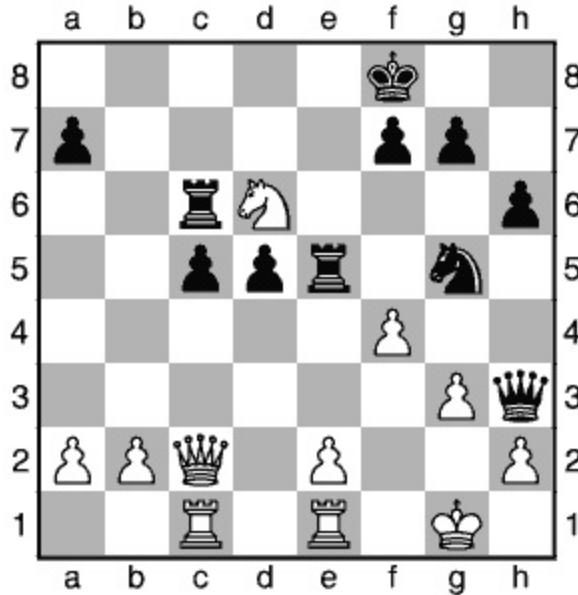
The idea behind this knight manoeuvre is to stir up some trouble in Black's camp while the queen is absent on the kingside. However, it should not cause Black any special problems.

25...Re5

This represents the most forcing continuation, but 25...Rc6 was also possible, meeting 26 b4 by 26...c4 when the c6-rook is freed to swing over to the kingside. In that event White probably has nothing better than 26 Nd4 with a likely draw.

26 Nd6 Rc6

27 f4



Playing 27 Nb5 or Nb7 would be pointless and would only encourage Black's attack, for example 27 Nb7 Ne6, threatening ...Nd4 and ...Rh5 (the latter move is the reply to 28 Qh7).

27...Re6!?

Both sides are playing for the win! Black could have forced a draw himself by 27...Re3 (threatening perpetual check by 28...Rxe3+) 28 Nf5 Re4! 29 Nd6 (there is nothing better) 29...Re3 (29...Rxd6 30 Qxc5 Qd7 31 fxg5 hxg5 32 Red1 is also roughly equal).

The text-move was a surprise for White, because he assumed that Black could not allow the queen into h7. However, the queen cannot, by itself, do any real damage to Black's position.

28 fxg5

Forced; after 28 Nb7 Ne4 Black's attack is too strong (29 Nd8 Rg6).

28...Rxd6

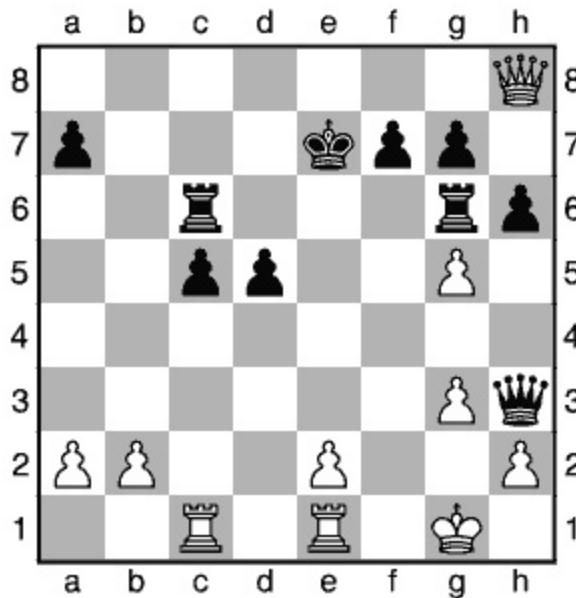
29 Qh7

Persisting with his idea. After 29 gxh6 Rxh6 30 e4 the position would be more or less equal.

29...Rg6

Obviously Black must cover his g-pawn against the danger of Qh8+ and Qxg7. White in turn must now abandon his g-pawn (30 gxh6? Rxh6) and regain the material on the other wing; more than that the queen cannot accomplish on its own.

30 Qh8+ Ke7



White to move

31 Qb8 Rxg5

31...Qd7 would be too passive, permitting 32 e4 d4 33 gxh6 Rxh6 34 Qe5+ and White wins a pawn.

32 Qxa7+ Kf8

32...Qd7 is a perfectly good alternative. Exchanging queens would seem to yield Black a favourable ending: slightly stronger pawns (three pawn islands against two), a useful pawn centre backed up by the king and a tendency for the white king to be harassed by the rooks if it tried to become active. However, if White liquidates at once by 33 Qxd7+ Kxd7 34 e4 d4 35 Rc4 Rb6 36 b4! Rxb4 37 Rxb4 cxb4 38 Rd1, etc., the game would peter out to a draw.

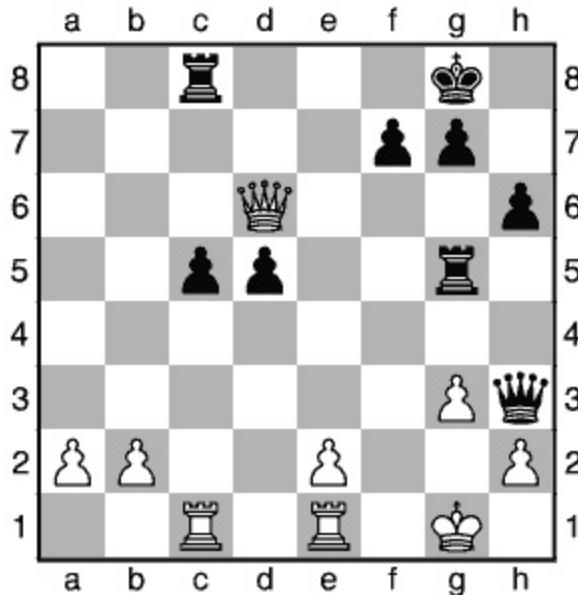
After 32...Kf8 the game should also be drawn, and the choice is to some extent a question of personal taste.

33 Qb8+

Not 33 Rxc5? Rxg3+ 34 hxg3 Qxg3+ 35 Kh1 Qh3+ and mates.

33...Rc8

34 Qd6+ Kg8



White to move

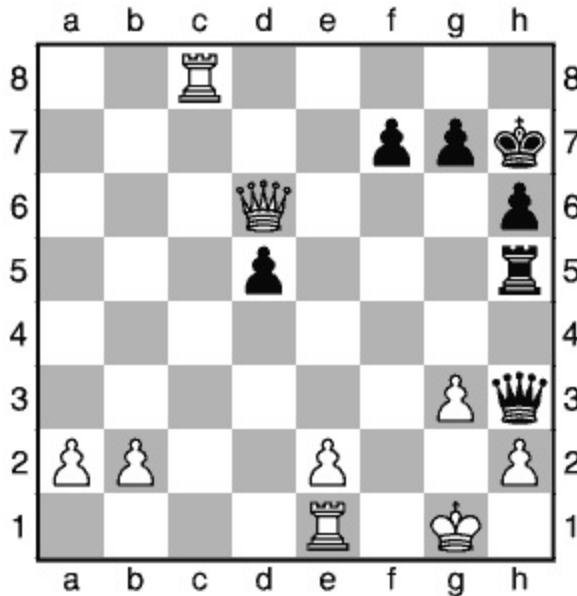
Curiously, after a quite lengthy detour, the black king ends up on g8 in any case!

35 e4

It is understandable that, short of time, White rejected 35 Rxc5, because first of all Black can force an immediate draw by 35...Rxc5 36 Qxc5 Rxg3+ 37 hxg3 Qxg3+ 38 Kf1 Qh3+, and one side or the other will give perpetual check (39 Kf2 Qh4+ 40 Ke3 Qxe1 41 Qc8+ Kh7 42 Qf5+ for example).

However, there is an even more telling reason why White should avoid

playing 35 Rxc5: the sacrificial 35...Rh5 36 Rxc8+ Kh7 and now:



White to move

1) 37 g4 Qxg4+, followed by ...Qxc8, and White stands worse because his king is more exposed.

2) 37 Qf4 Qxh2+ 38 Kf1 Qh3+ and ...Qxc8 with the same result.

3) 37 Rcc1 Qxh2+ 38 Kf1 Rf5+ (had the c8-rook moved anywhere except c1, Black could do even better with 38...Qh1+ 39 Kf2 Rh2+) 39 Qf4 Rxf4+ 40 gxf4 h5!, with advantage to Black because the rooks are passive and it is very awkward to stop ...h4-h3 without losing too many pawns.

4) 37 Rec1 Qxh2+ 38 Kf1 Qh1+ 39 Kf2 Rh2+ 40 Ke3 Qe4+ 41 Kd2 Rxe2+ 42 Kc3 Re3+ 43 Kd2 Qd3#.

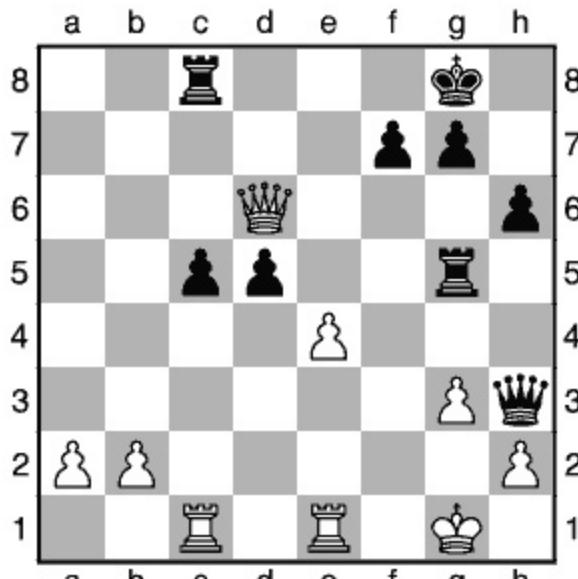
5) 37 Kf2! (this is the only reasonable move) 37...Qxc8 (37...Rf5+ 38 Ke3 and 37...Qxh2+ 38 Ke3 are useless) 38 h4. During the game (and when writing *Secrets of Grandmaster Play*) I felt that Black's attack was over and White was simply a pawn up. However, it now seems to me that 38...Rf5+ 39 Kg2 Qc4! gives Black excellent compensation for the pawn and, indeed, it is White who has to be careful. After 40 Qa3, for example, 40...Qe4+ 41 Kg1 Qd4+ 42 Kh1 (42 e3? Qg4 43 Kg2 Qe4+! 44 Kg1 Qf3 is winning for Black) 42...Qf2 43 Rd1 Qxe2 44 Qd3 Qf2, followed by ...g6, can only be good for Black.

The text-move opens the second rank, enabling White to defend h2, and avoids the blockade of the e2-pawn (otherwise Black might play ...d4, ...Re8 and ...Rge5, for example). On the other hand he concedes Black a dangerous

passed pawn.

In the subsequent play Black should especially try to avoid an exchange of queens. There are two reasons for this. The first relates to king safety, here important since a queen and two rooks constitute a formidable attacking force. At the moment Black's king is safer, so he has an advantage which would disappear if the queens came off. The second factor is that White's outside passed pawn will be more relevant if queens are exchanged. Even without rooks, the passed d-pawn is a powerful weapon because the queen is always so effective in supporting one strong passed pawn. In the face of that even two united passed pawns, if they are far back, may not provide an adequate counter.

In some lines Black's c-pawn is exchanged for White's e-pawn. This only emphasises the above points. In an ending without queens, the two connected passed pawns on the queenside will tip the balance against Black, but if all the pieces stay on, White may never get time to advance the pawns.



Black to move

At the moment chances are still roughly balanced, but the position is very double-edged and could easily swing in either direction.

35...d4

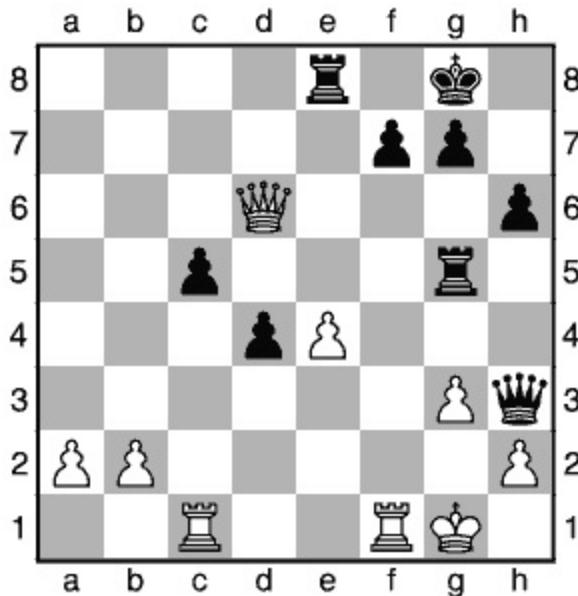
36 Rf1

Objectively speaking, 36 e5 is probably the soundest move, introducing the possibility of liquidating the weak e-pawn by e6. White probably rejected this because it allows an immediate draw by 36...Rxg3+, but while a

determination to continue the struggle is commendable, one must take great care not to play inferior moves solely in order to avoid a draw.

The text-move aims to create play against f7.

36...Re8



White to move

37 Qc7?!

Up to now White was quite justified in seeking complications, but here he overdoes it and gets into trouble. With ...Re8 Black is preparing to consolidate and put the e-pawn under pressure (by ...f6, ...Rge5 and possibly ...Qe6) and once he achieves that he holds the initiative, since the loss of the e-pawn would put the white king in further danger. White should therefore have taken his last chance for a comfortable draw by playing 37 Rxc5 Rxc5 38 Qxc5 Rxe4 39 Qd5 (if 39 Qc4 then 39...Qd7, supporting the d-pawn and preparing ...h5-h4) 39...Re2 (39...Qe6 can only favour White) 40 Qxf7+ Kh7 41 Qf5+ Qxf5 42 Rxf5 d3 43 Kf1 (forced) 43...Rxb2 44 Rd5 Rxh2 45 Rxd3 Rxa2 46 Rd6 and this ending is a straightforward draw.

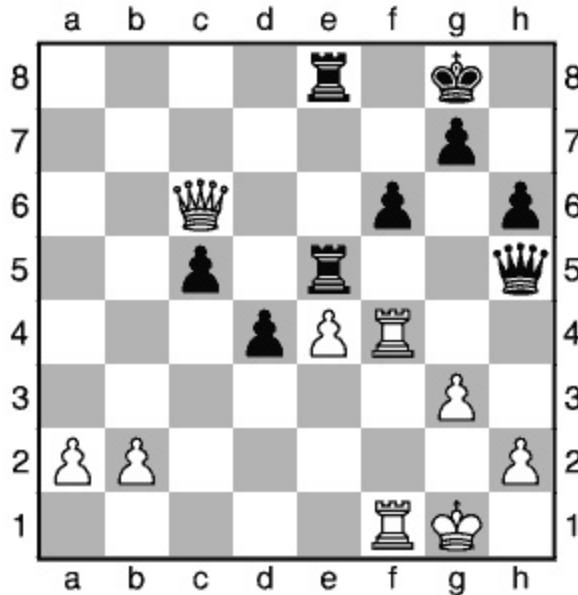
37...Qh5

Defending f7 and c5, and attacking e4.

38 Rf4 Rge5

39 Rcf1 f6

40 Qc6



Black to move

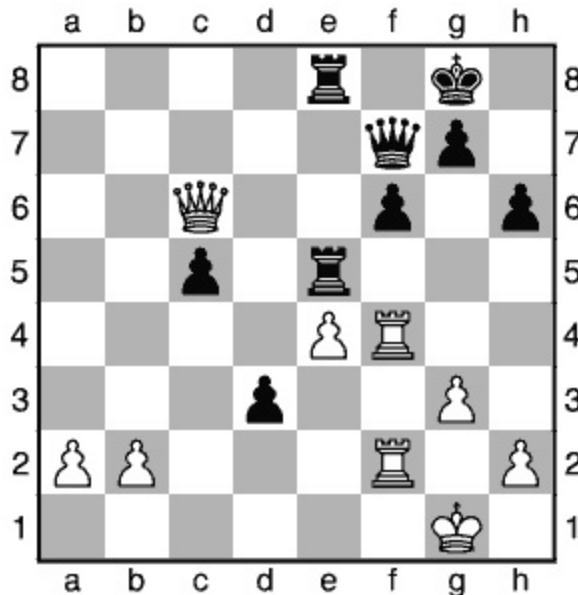
40...Qe2

Black's overall plan is simple enough: to combine attacks on the e-pawn with the advance of the d-pawn. Another way to execute this plan is by

40...d3 and now:

1) **41 Qd7 Qe2 42 R1f2 Qe1+ 43 Kg2** (43 Rf1 Qe3+ helps Black, if anything) 43...c4, transposing into the game position at move 43, which favours Black.

2) **41 R1f2 Qf7!** and now:



White to move

2a) **42 Qd6 c4 43 Qd4** (the e-pawn needs protection) 43...Qc7, followed by ...Rd8, and the placing of his rook behind the passed pawn guarantees Black a big advantage.

2b) **42 Rd2** allows Black to reply 42...Qxa2.

2c) **42 b3 Rd8 43 Rd2 Qa7** prepares to penetrate on the queenside, for example 44 Kg2 (not 44 Qb5? c4+, while after 44 Rf3 Qa5 the d-pawn cannot be taken) 44...Qa5 45 Rff2 Qb4, with a very awkward threat against the e-pawn.

The ...Qf7-a7 plan would be quite hard to find over the board, but it is logical. The d-pawn acts as a wedge and cuts White's position in two. Black finds it much easier to switch his forces from one side to the other, because he doesn't have to go through a bottleneck on the d-file.

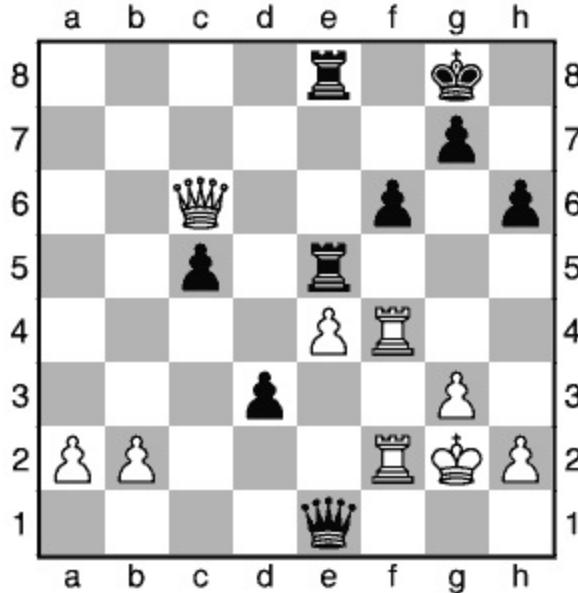
The ...Qf7 plan is also very effective if played immediately, for example **40...Qf7 41 b3** (41 Rxf6? gxf6 42 Rxf6 loses to 42...R5e6!) 41...Qa7 (41...Rd8 is also possible, since 42 Rxf6 gxf6 43 Rxf6 Qh5! 44 Rxh6 Qd1+ 45 Kg2 Qe2+ soon forces an exchange of rooks or queens) 42 R1f2 (42 Rxf6 gxf6 43 Rxf6 is unsound after 43...Qe7 44 Rg6+ Kf7 45 Rxh6 Qg5!) 42...Rd8, and Black gets the same advantageous type of position as before.

Thus Black had several promising continuations, but the move played is probably most effective.

41 R1f2 Qe1+

42 Kg2 d3

After 42...Rxe4 43 Qxc5 Rxf4 44 Qd5+ Kh8 45 gxf4 Black has much less advantage. Although White's king is still exposed, now that one pair of rooks have been exchanged it is quite difficult either to exploit this or to advance the d-pawn. Moreover, Black has to waste time avoiding an exchange of queens. Thus 45...Qe3, for instance, could be countered by 46 Qf3.

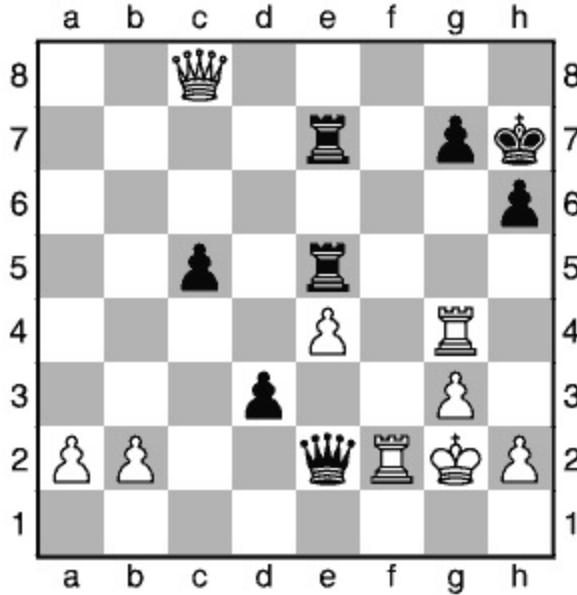


White to move

43 Qd7

43 Rg4 threatens to force a draw by Rxg7+, when Black needs an accurate reply:

- 1) **43...f5** 44 exf5 Re2 45 Rxg7+ is again a draw.
- 2) **43...d2** 44 Rxg7+ (44 Qxf6? Qg1+ 45 Kh3 Rh5+) 44...Kxg7 (44...Kh8? even loses after 45 Rd7!) 45 Qxf6+ is the same draw.
- 3) **43...R5e7?** 44 Qd5+ swaps the dangerous d-pawn for the weak e-pawn.
- 4) **43...R8e7!** (the only good continuation) 44 Qc8+ (44 Qxf6 loses to 44...d2) and then:
 - 4a) **44...Kf7** (this is too risky) 45 Qh8 Rg5 46 Rgf4 (threatening Rxf6+) 46...Re6 (46...Rxe4 47 Rxf6+ leads to mate) 47 Qd8 c4 (47...Rxe4 48 Rxf6+ again mates) 48 b3 with adequate counterplay.
 - 4b) **44...Kh7!** 45 Rxf6 and now:
 - 4b1) **45...Qe2+?** (not 45...d2? 46 Rxh6+ and mate) 46 Rf2 (forced; Black wins in the event of 46 Kh3 Rh5+, 46 Kh1 Rh5 or 46 Kg1 Rh5 47 h4 d2) reaches a fascinating position.



Black to move

At first sight Black can continue **46...Rf7** **47 Rxe2 dx_e2**, but this is refuted by **48 Rxg7+!** **Rxg7** (or **48...Kxg7** **49 Qg4+**) **49 Kf2** with advantage to White. However, Black has a combination which is stunning and very hard to see: **46...d2!** **47 Rxe2 d1Q** and now **48 Kf2** loses to **48...g5** (threatening **49...Rf7+**) **49 Qf8 Qd7**, while **48 Qa6 g5** (threatening **49...Rf5!**) **49 Qc4 h5** traps the rook. At first sight that seems to wrap matters up, but in fact White can still save the game by an equally remarkable defensive combination: **48 Rf2 Re8 49 Rf7!! Qd2+** (**49...Rxc8** **50 Rxg7+** is perpetual check, while **49...Qe2+** is met by **50 Kg1!**) **50 Kf3!** (or else Black wins the b-pawn with check, after which the a-pawn falls too and then the f7-rook is hanging) and, remarkably, there is no sequence of checks which helps Black either to take the b-pawn or to attack f7.

4b2) 45...Rg5! (wins by force) **46 Rxg5 Qxe4+ 47 Kh3** (**47 Rf3 d2** **47...hxg5** **48 Qf5+ Qxf5** **49 Rxf5 Re4!** **50 Rxc5** (or **50 Rf1 g4+** **51 Kg2 Re2+** followed by ...d2) **50...g4+** **51 Kh4** (**51 Kg2 d2** **52 Rd5 Re2+** **53 Kf1 Re1+** wins) **51...Rd4** **52 Rc1 d2** **53 Rd1 Kh6** followed by ...g5 mate. It's unusual to see a mating attack in a single rook endgame.

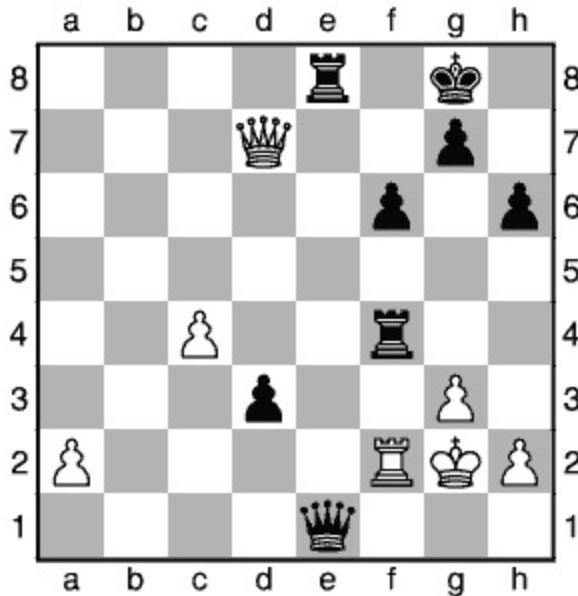
43...c4

44 b3

The only thing he can do is try to break up the pawns. With the d-pawn covered it is too late for **44 Rg4 R5e7** **45 Qd5+ Kh8**, when there is no further danger to Black's solidly defended kingside and White's e-pawn is in trouble.

44...Rxe4

45 bxc4 Rxf4



White to move

46 Qd5+

A natural enough check, supporting the advance of the c-pawn and preventing ...Qe4+, but it also has a negative side, as we shall see. The alternative defence 46 gxf4 also gives White drawing chances, for example 46...Qe4+ (46...Qe3 47 Rf3 is safe enough because g4 is covered, so Black does not have the ...Qe2+ and ...Qg4+ manoeuvre which is available in the game) and now: 1) **47 Kg3** Qg6+ 48 Qg4 (48 Kh3 Re3+ 49 Kh4 f5 or 48 Kf3 f5 49 h3 Qh5+ 50 Kg2 Re3 and Black wins) 48...Re3+ 49 Kh4 Qe4 50 f5 Qe5 and White's king is hopelessly exposed.

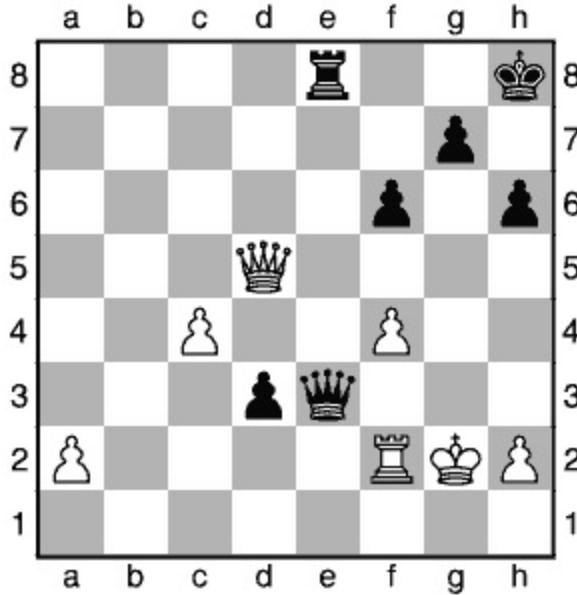
2) **47 Kh3** Qg6 (this threatens 48...Re3+ 49 Kh4 f5) 48 Qd5+ Kh8 49 Rg2 Re3+ 50 Rg3 f5 is enough to win.

3) **47 Kg1** Qg6+ 48 Kf1 Rb8 with decisive threats.

4) **47 Rf3** (the only move; here the rook is more effective, attacking the d-pawn and standing ready to interpose at g3 against a check) 47...d2 (there is nothing better; neither 47...Qe2+ 48 Rf2 nor 47...Qg6+ 48 Rg3 leads to anything) 48 Qxd2 Qxc4. Here Black undoubtedly retains some advantage, since White's king will be permanently exposed. However, in view of the reduced material White has fair drawing prospects.

46...Kh8

47 gxf4 Qe3



White to move

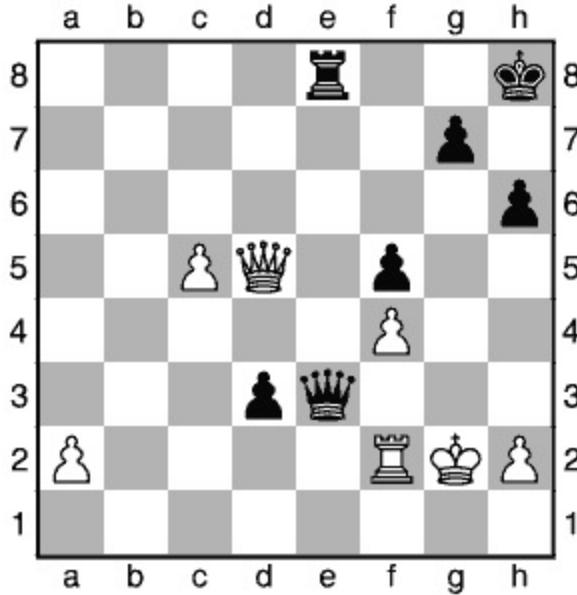
This centralising move secures the passed pawn in preparation for fresh manoeuvres against the white king.

The difference between this position and the one referred to in the note to Black's 42nd move (42...Rxe4, etc.) is that the passed pawn is one square further forward and that limits White's defensive scope considerably.

48 c5

White cannot improve the position of his pieces, so he tries to generate counterplay using his own c-pawn. 48 Rf3 Qe2+ 49 Rf2 (49 Kg3 d2 50 Rd3 d1Q leads to mate) 49...Qg4+ 50 Kf1 Qd1+ 51 Kg2 Re2 wins easily, for example 52 Qf5 Rxf2+ 53 Kxf2 Qe2+ 54 Kg3 h5!, threatening ...Qg4+ and preventing a long sequence of annoying checks by making h6 available to the king. White has no defence.

48...f5



White to move

Not so much intending ...Qe4+, because the two connected passed pawns are not as strong as they look, but more to prepare ...Re6-g6+.

49 Qf3?

Also not 49 Qxf5? Rd8 50 c6 d2 51 c7 d1Q 52 c8Q, due to 52...Rxc8 53 Qxc8+ Kh7 54 Qf5+ Kg8 55 Qc8+ Kf7 and the checks run out.

The correct defence was the natural 49 c6!. The critical position arises after 49...Qe4+ (49...Rc8 50 Qxf5 Rxc6 51 Rb2! forces an immediate draw) 50 Qxe4 fxe4 51 Rb2! and now:

1) 51...e3 only weakens the pawns, for example 52 Kf1 Rc8 (52...Re6 53 c7 is pointless, as the rook has to return to e8) 53 Rb3 Rd8 54 Rb1 and Black is not making progress.

2) 51...Rc8 52 Rb4 with a likely draw.

3) 51...Kh7! (the best chance) 52 c7 (52 Kf2 e3+ 53 Ke1 Re6 54 Rb3 d2+ 55 Ke2 Rd6 56 Rb1 Rxc6 57 Rd1 Rc3 58 a4 Kg6 59 a5 Kf5 60 a6 Ke4 should win for Black) 52...Rc8 and Black will end up with an extra pawn. However, after 53 Kf2 Rxc7 54 Ke3 or 53 Rb4 Rxc7 54 Rxe4 Rd7 55 Re1 the odds must be on a draw.

The text-move is a serious error. White voluntarily surrenders his queen's active central position and, indeed, he presents the enemy queen with its own dominating central square. Taken together with Black's other advantages of a safer king and more advanced passed pawn, his advantage is now decisive.

49...Qd4

50 c6

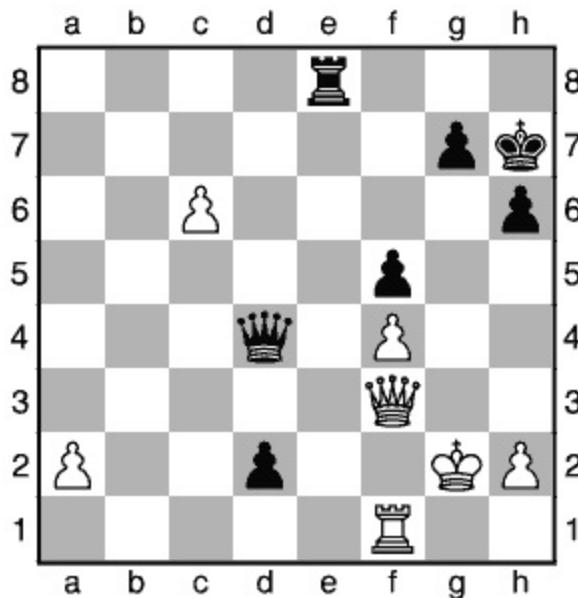
If 50 Rd2, 50...Re3 51 Qf2 (51 Qc6 Qxf4 is no better) 51...Qe4+ and wins.

50...d2

Not now 50...Re3? because of 51 c7.

51 Rf1 Kh7?!

Black could have won instantly by 51...Re1! 52 c7 Qc4, but the systematic text-move is also sufficient for the full point.



White to move

Black threatens the decisive 52...Re3 because the c-pawn will not now queen with check. White is therefore obliged to advance it again, but it is too weak to survive.

52 c7 Rc8

53 Qb7 Qd7

54 Rd1 Rx_c7

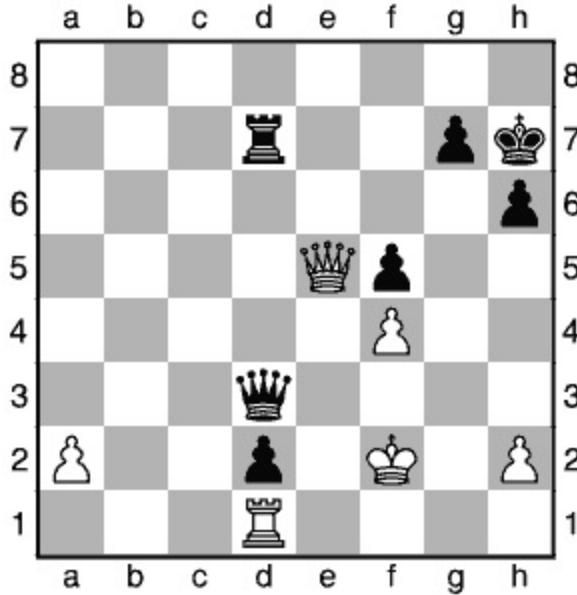
55 Qb2

Black has rounded up the dangerous c-pawn without making the slightest concession. He now brings his pieces back to the centre, secures the d-pawn and resumes his plan of attacking the white king.

55...Qd5+

56 Kf2 Rd7

57 Qe5 Qd3



White to move

Threatening 58...Qh3 59 Kg1 Qg4+.

58 Qe3 Qc2

59 Qb3

Or 59 Ke2 Qc4+ and ...Qxa2.

59...Qc5+

0-1

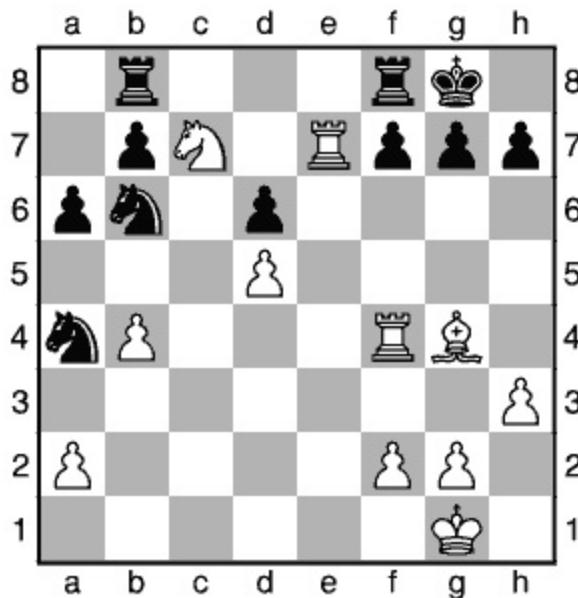
White cannot long resist the attacking power of Black's major pieces, e.g. 60 Qe3 Rd4 61 Kf3 Qc2 62 Qe2 Qc6+ 63 Kg3 Qg6+, or 60 Kg2 Rd4 61 Qf3 Qc2 62 Qb3 Qc1 63 Qf3 Re4, followed by ...Re1.

This left Nikolac needing 3/3 to gain his title, and it says much for his strength of character that he achieved this, despite having to beat Miles and Jansa with Black. Actually, he came closest to missing his norm against Böhmfeldt, but this had nothing to do with chess. On the day of the Nikolac-Böhmfeldt game, the round started an hour earlier than usual. A few minutes after the start of the round all the players had turned up except for Böhmfeldt. After half an hour Nikolac started to look worried. A win by default would not count towards his norm, and the norm would be mathematically impossible if Böhmfeldt were automatically defaulted for being more than an hour late. Nikolac waited nervously outside the tournament hall, and when he spotted Böhmfeldt in the distance he practically dragged the astonished German into the tournament hall. He was just in time – five minutes more

and it would have been too late. Nikolac won the game easily.

A score of 7/7 at the Basingstoke Open in May helped my Cutty Sark ambitions. An international weekend event in Geneva at the beginning of June also turned out well: I scored 6/7 and tied for first with Nigel Short, whom I beat in our individual encounter.

In 1979 I was captain of the Oxford University National Club Championship team and this was one of the rare occasions when Oxford took the title. My game from the Final reached a remarkable position:



White to move

J. Nunn – N. Holloway

National Club Championship Final, 1979

31 Rxf7 Rxf7

32 Be6 Rf8

33 Ne8 Nc4

Forced, in order to defend d6.

34 Rxb7 a5

Desperation, but after the natural 34...Nab2 35 Rc7 Black is curiously paralysed. Despite his extra rook, not a single one of his five pieces can move without heavy material loss, for example 35...Rxe8 36 Bxf7+ Kf8 37 Bxe8 Kxe8 38 Rxg7 is an easy win. After Black runs out of kingside pawn moves he will fall into a fatal zugzwang. One line is 35...g6 36 a3 h6 37 Kh2 h5 38 h4 Ne5 39 Nxd6 Kg7 40 Nxf7 Nxf7 41 Bxf7 Rxf7 42 d6 and wins. The

unusual feature of this position is that thanks to the knight on e8, Black cannot free himself by playing ...Kg7 at some stage.

35 Rc7 Nab2

36 bxa5 1-0

After this I gave up the captaincy of the National Club Championship team. More and more the eligibility rules seemed designed simply to exclude strong players, and many teams exploited these rules to try to have Oxford players disqualified (sometimes successfully, as in the case of Adrian Hollis, even though he had not been a member of any other club for at least 20 years). When the time spent on these wrangles exceeded the time spent playing chess in the event, I decided to call it a day. In the mid-1990s, the 4NCL (a league organised independently of the chess federation) evolved with practically no restrictions on the composition of teams. It has proved immensely popular and has severely reduced interest in the ‘official’ National Club Championship.

Next I took part in the Clare Benedict team tournament (a European Team Event) held in Teesside. This was memorable for the fact that when I beat Robatsch in 20 moves, he hit the table with his fists and announced in a loud voice (while most other games were still in progress) that in 30 years of tournament play, he had never competed in an event with such miserable conditions. To be fair, there were good reasons for this opinion.

This was immediately followed by the 1979 British Championship held in Chester. There was a disconcerting episode when I was looking at a position with Mestel and Speelman in the analysis room. A man came in with his young son: ‘Look over there,’ he declared, ‘those are good chess players. I don’t want you to grow up like them.’

The Championship ended in a triple tie for first between Bellin, Short and myself on 8/11. In previous years there had always been a play-off in the event of a tie, but this had been scrapped in favour of a numerical tie-break, which favoured Bellin. Press reports focused on Bellin (because he had won) and Short (because of his youth). Some even failed to mention my name at all. Somewhat put out by this, I pressed for the re-introduction of a play-off. More about this later!

My successes in weekend events continued: joint first with Cuartas at LARA (Lambeth in London) with 5½/6 and joint first at the Civil Service Open with 4½/5. This put me in a strong position before the final pre-

Christmas event at Islington. When my nearest rival, Murray Chandler, slipped up, I was guaranteed first place. My score of 186½/200 looks pretty feeble by today's standards, but it was considered high at the time.

I saw in the New Year at Hastings. This was a great success, as I scored 10/15 to share first place with Ulf Andersson, and became the first British player to win Hastings since Alexander tied with Bronstein in the 1953/4 event. Most of my best results depended on avoiding defeat as far as possible. This was no exception; thanks to some judiciously chosen quick draws, I was able to concentrate my efforts on the really critical games, with the result that I won five and drew ten of my games. Of course, if this strategy does not work then one can expect some bad press comments, but so be it – the idea is to win and not to live up to the expectations of chess journalists who are often players retired so long they have forgotten what tournament chess is all about.

Shortly after Hastings, the English team set out for the final of the European Team Championships in Skara, Sweden. As usual at such events, on arrival we discovered that there were insufficient hotel rooms. Our captain, David Anderton, was always at his best in such situations. When the organisers explained that, owing to the dearth of hotel rooms, we would have to double up, David declared 'I can't have grandmasters sleeping together!' The organisers' position was further undermined when Tony Miles discovered that the hotel next door had plenty of spare rooms, demolishing their story that there just weren't any more hotel rooms to be had in Skara.

Fortunately the Swedish team had already been persuaded to move out of the hotel to alternative accommodation. To short-circuit further argument, David just grabbed a bunch of spare-looking keys at the hotel reception and handed them out. I went to 'my' room, which did indeed appear to be vacant, and started unpacking my suitcase. Suddenly Campomanes strode into the room, looked surprised and asked what I was doing in 'his' room.

'Your room?', I queried, 'it looks empty.'

'I'll prove it. Look...' and with that Campo went to the bed, lifted up the mattress and pulled out a thick wad of cash. I was convinced.

We faced the Soviet Union in the first round and achieved the excellent result of 4-4. Thanks to Tony Miles's win against Karpov (with 1...a6!) and the following game, we even won 3-1 on the top four boards.

Game 8

L. Polugaevsky – J. Nunn
European Team Championship Final, Skara 1980
Modern Benoni

1 d4 Nf6

2 Nf3 c5

3 d5 e6

4 c4 exd5

5 cxd5 d6

6 Nc3 g6

7 e4 Bg7

8 Be2 0-0

9 0-0 Re8

10 Nd2



Black to move

A typical move in the Modern Benoni because the ideal place for White's king's knight is c4. Black normally cannot force through ...b5, so the knight is secure on c4, and from this square it exerts annoying pressure on the d6-pawn, which may be augmented by Bf4. Moreover, the move Nd2 frees the f-pawn, which can either advance to f3 to provide solid support to the e4-pawn, or to f4 for an eventual central breakthrough by e5.

Black in turn must try to restrain White's pawn centre, or dissolve it if it

advances too quickly. Meanwhile, he will be seeking counterplay, either by advancing his queenside pawn majority (...a6 and ...b5) or, as in this game, by creating threats on the other wing.

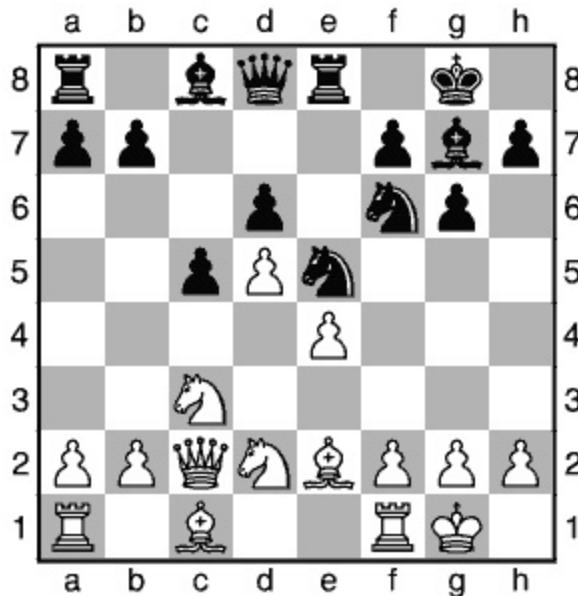
10...Nbd7

The development of this knight represents an important decision for Black. If he plays 10...Na6, then he intends to play mainly on the queenside, eventually forcing through ...b5 by means of ...Nc7, ...a6 and ...Rb8. If, on the other hand, the knight goes to d7 and then e5, Black will play mainly on the kingside, using ...g5 to secure the position of the knight on e5.

11 Qc2

The most popular move is 11 a4, but 11 Qc2 frequently transposes (e.g. after 11 Qc2 Ne5 White can play 12 a4).

11...Ne5



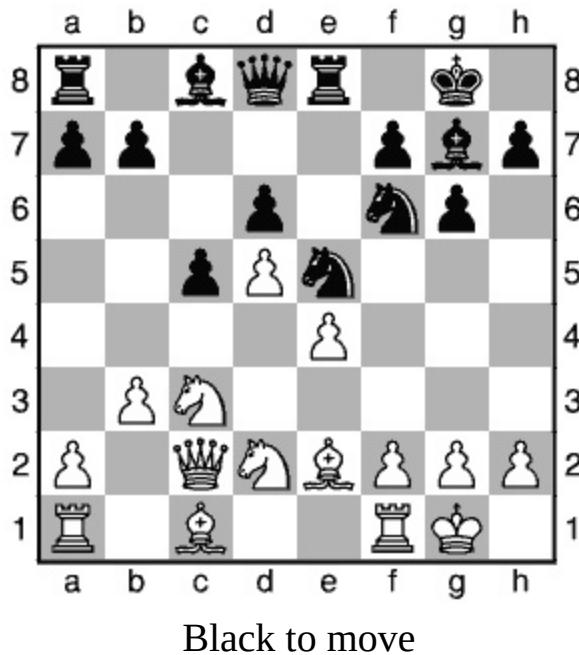
White to move

Fischer played 11...Nh5 in the famous third game of his 1972 World Championship match against Spassky, which continued 12 Bxh5 gxh5 13 Nc4? Ne5 14 Ne3 Qh4 15 Bd2 Ng4 16 Nxg4 hxg4 17 Bf4 Qf6 and Black had a comfortable position. As a result of this game everybody started playing ...Nh5 in the Benoni. However, it quickly became apparent that 13 a4! is much better, for example 13...Ne5 14 Nd1 b6 (14...Qh4 15 Ne3 Ng4 16 Nxg4 hxg4 17 Nc4 was also good for White in Gligorić-Kavalek, Skopje 1972) 15 Ra3 Ba6 16 Rh3 Bxf1 17 Nxf1 b5 18 Nde3! and White won beautifully in the game Petrosian-Rashkovsky, USSR Championship 1976. In these lines the

key points are the operation of White's rook on the third rank, which serves to nullify Black's kingside threats, and the manoeuvre Nd1-e3 aiming at the weakened f5-square. These ideas put the immediate 11...Nh5 out of business.

12 b3

This was Polugaevsky's pet line (as mentioned above, 12 a4 transposes to standard variations). In the ...Nbd7 line of the Benoni, everything depends on whether Black can maintain his knight at e5. White cannot drive it away immediately, for example 12 f4? Neg4 13 Nf3 Nh5 (13...Nxe4 14 Nxe4 Bf5 15 Bd3 c4 16 Qxc4 Rc8 17 Qb4 Bxe4 18 Bxe4 a5 19 Qa4 b5 20 Qxb5 Rxe4 is also quite good, as Black's active pieces provide ample compensation for the pawn) 14 h3 Nh6 15 Kh2 f5! with a dangerous initiative for Black, Toynt-Shamkovich, USA 1976. However, Black cannot rely on such tactics to maintain his knight on e5 for very long, and he will usually be obliged to play ...g5 to stop White's f4. One of the problems of ...Nh5 is that the transfer of the g-pawn to h5 deprives Black of this resource.



12...Nh5?

Although aware of the deficiencies of ...Nh5, it seemed to me that with the bishop committed to b2, Black will have access to squares such as g5 and f4 and this factor might tip the balance in Black's favour. However, analysis shows that even in these relatively favourable circumstances it is still bad to play ...Nh5. The alternative lines are better: 1) 12...g5 13 Bb2 g4 (getting the best of both worlds; this way Black uses the g-pawn and gets in ...Nh5) 14 a4

Nh5, and now either 15 g3 Rf8, intending ...f5 with a double-edged position, or the simpler line 15 Nc4 Nxc4 16 Bxc4 Nf4 17 Nd1 Be5 18 Bxe5 Rxe5 19 Ne3 Qe7, which led to a quick draw in Gligorić-Tatai, Venice 1971. Here Black's active pieces compensate for the theoretical weakness in his pawn structure.

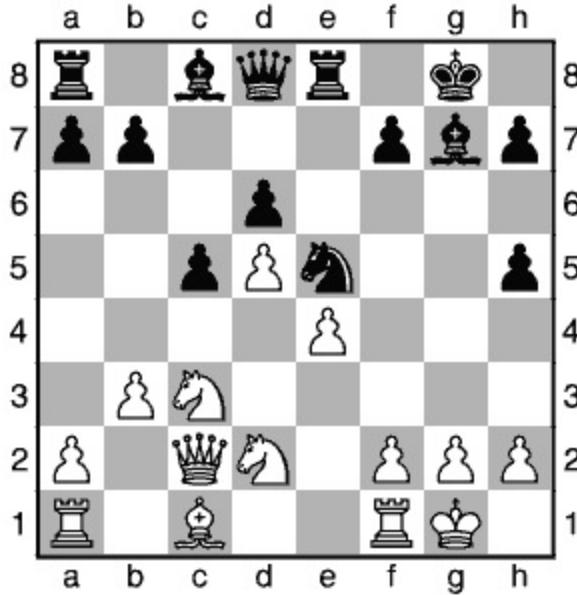
It is worth noting that Black can play ...a6 at some stage in this variation, thereby transposing to the following line.

2) 12...**a6** 13 a4 (13 Bb2 b5 14 a4 b4 15 Nd1 g5 16 Ne3 Ra7 17 Rae1 Rae7 18 f3 Nh5 19 Ndc4 Ng6 20 Bxg7 Nxg7 led to an equal position in Polugaevsky-Lobron, Manila 1982, although poor Polugaevsky lost this one too) 13...g5 (13...Nh5 comes into consideration here, since with ...a6 and a4 interposed Black doesn't have to waste time preventing Nb5 as in the current game) 14 Bb2 Rb8 (14...Ng6 15 g3 Bh3 16 Rfe1 Rb8 17 a5 Nd7 18 Nd1 Bd4 was unclear in Gligorić-Sax, Nikšić 1983) 15 Kh1 Ng6 16 Rae1 Ng4 17 g3 h5! with good counterplay for Black, Dydylshko-Dolmatov, Minsk 1982.

3) 12...**Nfg4** (a very sharp idea) 13 h3 Nh6 14 f4 (otherwise Black plays ...f5) 14...Neg4 and White cannot capture with the pawn. The continuation 15 Nf3 Qa5 16 e5 Bf5 led to unfathomable complications in Panczyk-Kindermann, Polanica Zdroj 1984.

Although 12 b3 was still popular in the early 1980s, there are very few recent examples. The whole Benoni went into a serious decline in the late 1980s, and in any case by this time it was clear that it was more flexible to play 11 a4 rather than 11 Qc2, and the focus of attention shifted away from Polugaevsky's idea.

13 Bxh5 gxh5



White to move

14 Bb2 Bd7

Black has to play this rather useless bishop move because 14...Qh4 is met by 15 Nb5 and if Black then meets the threats to d6 and c7 by 15...Rd8, White replies 16 f4 Ng4 17 Nf3 Ne3 (otherwise Black's pieces retreat in confusion) 18 Nxh4 (18 Qe2 Qxf4 is less clear) 18...Nxc2 19 Bxg7 Kxg7 20 Rac1 and Black has a lost ending.

15 Rae1

White would like to play 15 f4 Ng4 16 Nd1, exchanging Black's best minor piece, but 16...Bd4+! 17 Bxd4 (17 Kh1 Nxh2!) 17...cxd4 would provoke unwelcome complications, for example, 18 Nc4 b5! 19 Nxd6? Qb6 wins for Black. The rook move covers e3 in preparation for 16 f4 Ng4 17 Nf3, followed by h3, forcing the knight to retreat.

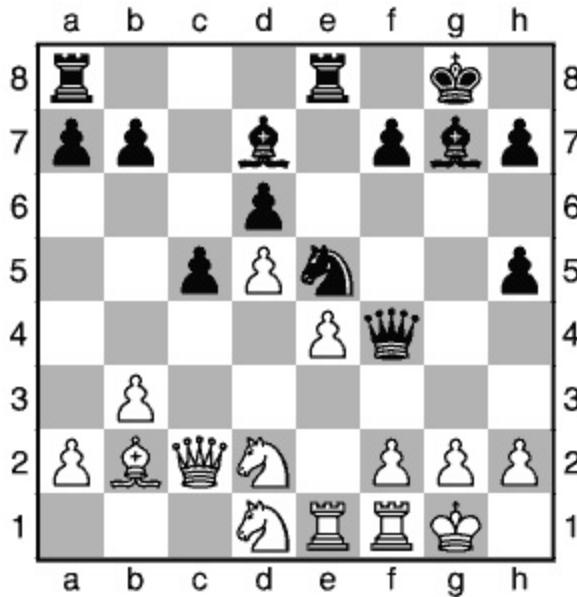
15...Qh4

16 f4?

White has a number of superior alternatives:

1) **16 Re3** (the third-rank theme again, but the rook is vulnerable on e3) 16...Ng4 17 Rh3 Qg5 (threatening 18...Nxf2) 18 f4 Bd4+ 19 Kh1 Qh6 (19...Qg7 20 Nc4 is slightly better for White) and Black's active pieces compensate for the pawn weaknesses, for example 20 Nc4 b5 or 20 Nd1 Bb5.

2) **16 Nd1** (heading for e3, but also preparing 17 f4 Ng4 18 Nf3, as now Black cannot play ...Bd4+) 16...Qf4 (16...Bb5 17 Nc4 Ng4 18 h3 Bxb2 19 Ndxb2 Nf6 20 Nxd6 Bxf1 21 Kxf1 is a typical exchange sacrifice favouring White) and now:



White to move

2a) **17 g3?** Qxd2 wins for Black.

2b) **17 Kh1 h4** (17...Bb5 18 Nc4 Ng4 19 g3 Qf3+ 20 Kg1 Bxb2 21 Ndxb2 is again good for White) 18 g3 (18 Bc1 is a better try) 18...Qh6, and 19 f4 is still impossible because of 19...hxg3.

2c) **17 Bc1** (Dvoretsky) is more awkward. After 17...Bh6 18 Nb2 Black cannot prevent the knight on d2 moving, expelling the queen from f4 and forcing through f2-f4, driving Black's pieces away.

2d) **17 Nc4** (Dvoretsky) is likely to lead to the exchange of various minor pieces, which reduces Black's active possibilities. Once again White is clearly better.

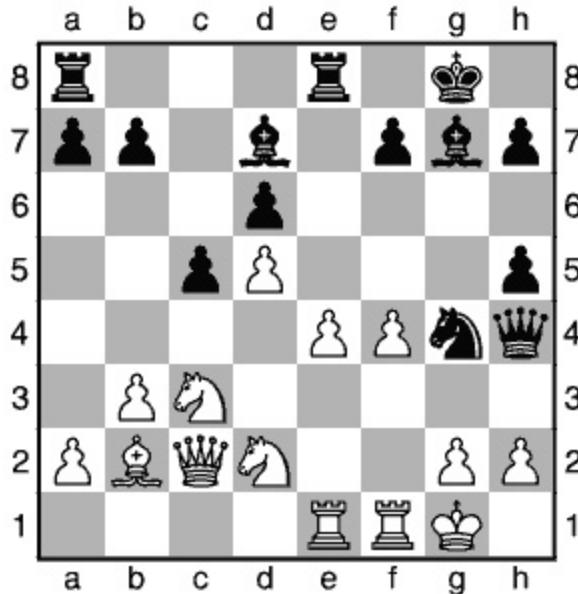
3) **16 Kh1** prepares 17 f4 by cutting out ...Bd4+. This also gives White a clear advantage since Black cannot maintain his pieces in their active positions. The threat is 17 f4 Ng4 18 Nf3, expelling the queen, and 16...Ng4 17 Nf3 Qe7 18 h3 also starts driving Black's pieces back. Once Black is forced to sound the retreat, his static weaknesses become the most significant feature of the position.

I played my previous move under the impression that it prevented 16 f4, so I was shocked when my opponent played f4 all the same, and after just a few minutes' thought at that. Polugaevsky believed, wrongly, that Black dare not win the exchange.

The remainder of this game is a veritable witches' cauldron of tactics, quite impossible to explain in general terms. Only after some years of efforts

by myself, Dvoretsky, Yusupov, Dolmatov, Zaitsev and, last but not least, Fritz4, can a reasonably accurate picture be given.

16...Ng4



White to move

Black has to accept the challenge.

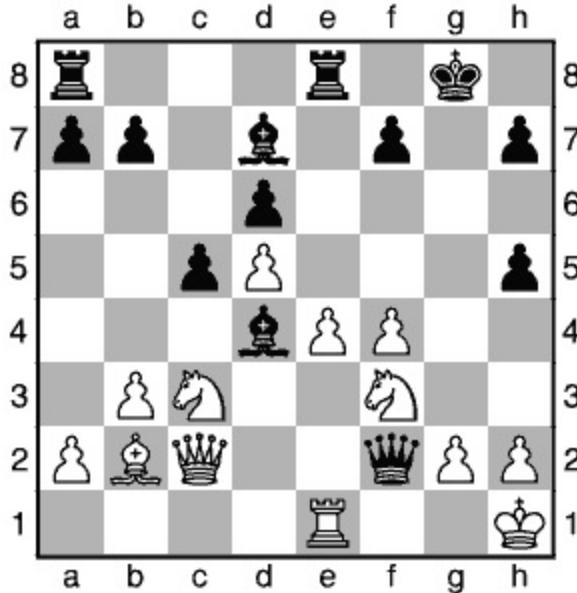
17 Nf3 Bd4+

18 Kh1 Nf2+

19 Rxf2

It is too late for White to back out: 19 Kg1 is bad after 19...Nd3+ 20 Nxd4 Nxe1 21 Qd2 cxd4 22 Rxe1 Rac8 (22...dxc3 23 Qxc3 f6 24 g3 Qg4 25 Qxf6 Qg6 {Zaitsev} is also good for Black) 23 Nd1 (23 g3 dxc3) 23...Rc2 24 Qb4 Bg4 and Black wins.

19...Qxf2



White to move

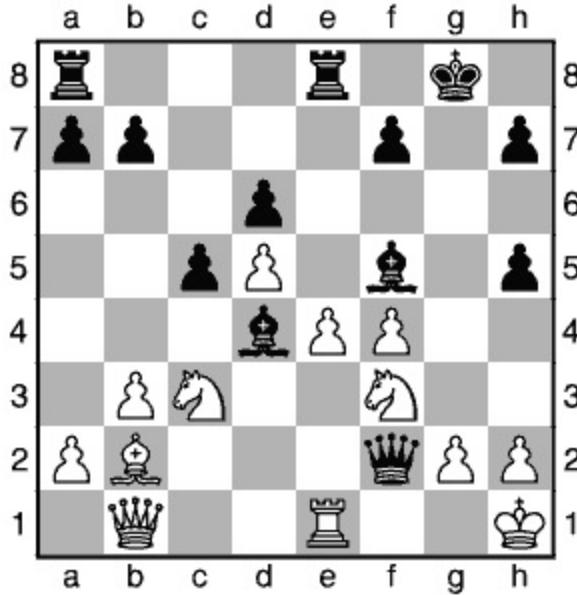
20 Qc1

White must retreat, either here or to b1, so as to prepare Re2 trapping Black's queen. The choice of square turns out to have enormous significance and the ensuing play is quite different after these two moves. Once again, I was surprised at the speed with which Polugaevsky made this decision – probably he decided on general grounds without undertaking too much detailed analysis.

It is very hard to judge which line is better, since in both cases Black is assured of at least equality, with some possibilities to play for a win. The analysis of 20 Qb1 runs:

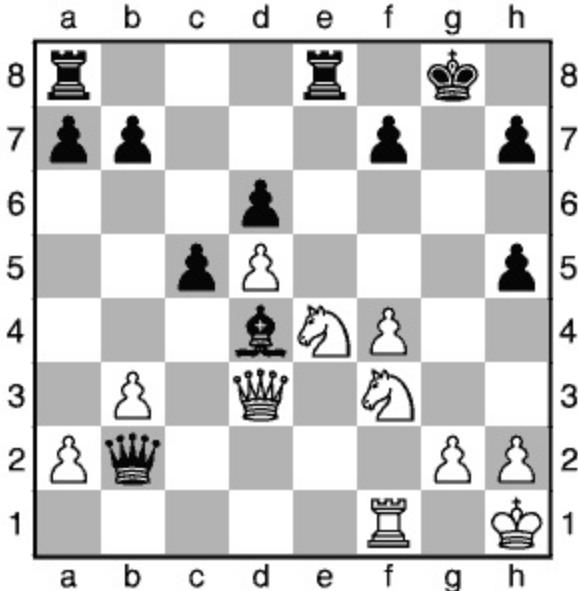
1) **20...Bxc3** 21 Bxc3 Bh3 22 Rg1 Bg4 is a 'safety-net' variation Black can fall back on if nothing else works. However, White has fair compensation for the exchange in the form of the long dark diagonal, his pawn centre and the weak black pawns. On the other hand he has no immediate threats (23 Ng5 is safely met by 23...Qxf4) and all danger to the queen is gone. The game would continue with chances for both sides.

2) **20...Bf5!?** (this was my intention during the game, threatening 21...Bxe4 22 Rxe4 Rxe4; Polugaevsky admitted after the game that he had not seen it at all) and now:



White to move

- 2a) **21 exf5 Rxe1+ 22 Qxe1 Qxb2** wins for Black.
- 2b) **21 Nd1 Bxe4 22 Nxf2** (or 22 Qxe4 Rxe4 23 Nxf2 Rxe1+ 24 Nxe1 Bxf2) 22...Bxb1 and White remains at least the exchange down.
- 2c) **21 Re2 Bxe4! 22 Qc1** (22 Nxd4 Bxg2#, 22 Rxe4 Rxe4 or 22 Rxf2 Bxb1 and Black wins in all cases) 22...Bxf3 23 Rxf2 Bxf2 also wins for Black.
- 2d) **21 Ba1.** During the game itself I had overlooked both this defence and line ‘2e’ below and so concluded, wrongly, that 20...Bf5!? was winning for Black. The bishop retreat genuinely attacks the bishop on f5 and Black cannot capture on e4, even if he exchanges first at c3, because after the final ...Qf1+ the knight can interpose at g1. In fact 21 Ba1 is best answered by 21...Bh3 22 Rg1 Bg4, which is the same as line ‘3’ below except that the bishop is on a1 instead of b2. It is hard to say if this makes any difference.
- 2e) **21 Rf1!** (the best move, which maintains the balance) 21...Bxe4 22 Nxe4! (22 Rxf2 Bxb1 is winning for Black) 22...Qxb2 23 Qd3 (23 Nxd4 Qxb1 24 Nf6+ Kg7 25 Nxe8+ Rxe8 26 Rxb1 cxd4 gives Black a large advantage in the rook ending) is Zaitsev’s suggestion (it was 23 Qd3 which I had overlooked during the game). Black may continue:



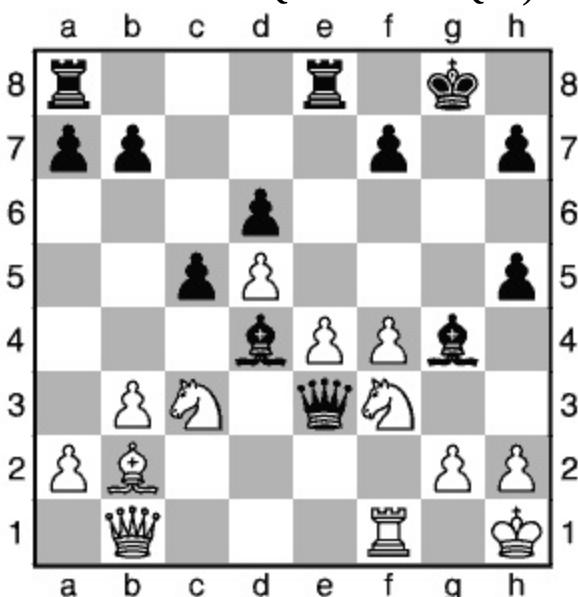
Black to move

2e1) 23...Rad8 24 Neg5 (not 24 Rb1 Qxa2 25 Nxd4 Rxe4 26 Nf5 Qxb1+ 27 Qxb1 Rde8 and Black wins) 24...Re7 25 Qxh7+ Kf8 26 Ne5! wins for White.

2e2) 23...Bg7 24 Nxd6 Re2 (the line 24...Qe2 25 Qb1 is also adequate for White) 25 Ng5 Qc2 26 Qf3 and White has enough for the exchange.

2e3) 23...Re7 24 Nxd6 Qe2 25 Qb1 is also satisfactory for White.

3) 20...Bh3! (this is better than line '1' as Black avoids conceding the dark squares by exchanging on c3) 21 Rg1 Bg4 (note that 21...Kf8 22 Nxd4 cxd4 23 Nb5 favours White because the e4-pawn is defended – this is one crucial difference between 20 Qb1 and 20 Qc1) 22 Rf1 Qe3 and now:



White to move

3a) 23 Nxd4 cxd4 24 Nb5 fails to 24...Qxe4, for example 25 Nc7 Qxb1 26 Rxb1 Re2! 27 Nxa8 Bf5 or 25 Nxd6 Qxb1 26 Rxb1 Re2 27 h3 Rd8! 28 Nxb7 Rxd5 29 hxg4 hxg4, with advantage to Black in both cases.

3b) 23 e5!? and now:

3b1) 23...Bxc3? 24 Ng5 wins for White.

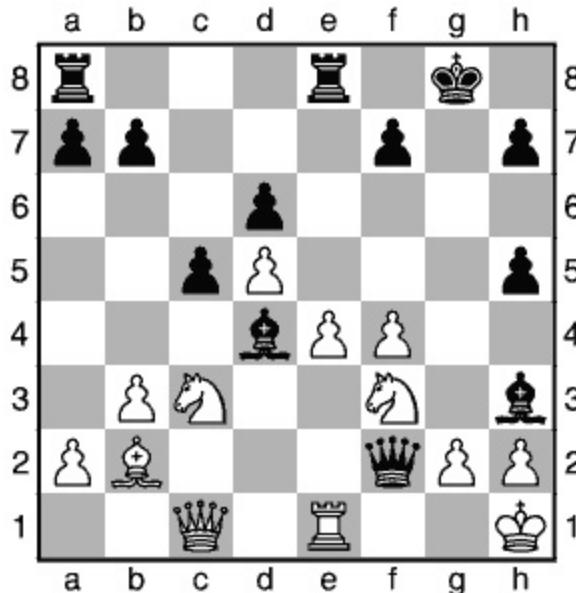
3b2) 23...f5 24 Nb5 (or 24 Nxd4 cxd4 25 Nb5 {Dolmatov} 25...Be2 26 Nxd6 Bxf1 27 Qxf1 d3 28 Nxf5 Qe2 and now White should try to force perpetual check by 29 Nh6+ Kg7 30 Nf5+) 24...Bxb2 25 Nxd6 (25 Qxb2? Qd3) 25...Bc3 26 h3 is very unclear. White is a whole rook down but has dangerous connected passed pawns and attacking chances.

3b3) 23...dxe5! 24 Ne4 exf4 (returning material in order to demolish White's pawn centre) 25 Re1 (both 25 Neg5 and 25 Nfg5 are met by 25...f5, while 25 Bxd4 runs into 25...Qxe4) 25...Bxb2 26 Rxe3 (or 26 Qxb2 Qxe1+ 27 Nxe1 Rxe4) 26...fxe3 and White's only hope is somehow to arrange a perpetual check. However, I do not see any way to achieve this and after, for example, 27 Nd6 Bxf3 28 gxf3 e2 29 Nxe8 Rxe8, Black wins easily.

The conclusion of all this is that Black is certainly not worse after 20 Qb1, and has the chance to play for a win in line '3b3' above.

20...Bh3

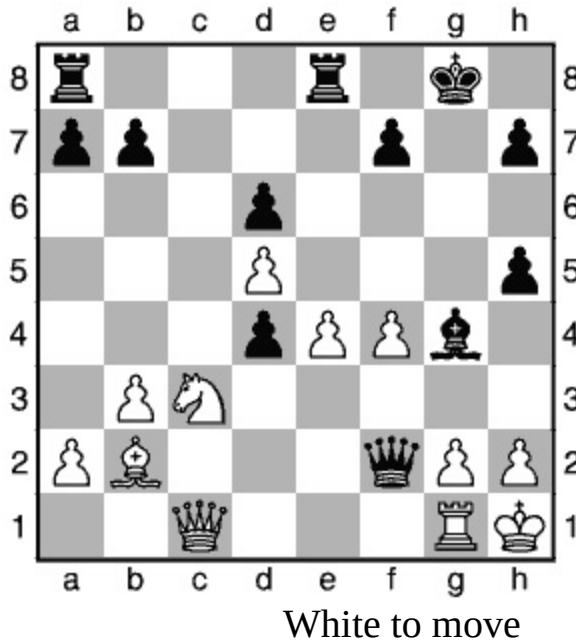
The only defence against 21 Re2; 20...Bf5 is now useless, and after 20...Bxc3 21 Qxc3 the mating threat is decisive.



White to move

21 Rg1 Kf8

This was a critical decision for Black, since it is very hard to decide between this move and the tempting alternative 21...Bg4; both offer Black winning chances, and even after home analysis it is hard to say which is stronger. After 21...Bg4 (threatening 22...Bxf3 23 gxf3+ Qxg1+) 22 Nxd4 (forced; 22 Rf1 Qe3 allows Black to consolidate at once, because thanks to the position of the queen on c1 Black gains a tempo) 22...cxd4 (not 22...Qxd4 23 Nb5 Qxe4 24 Qc3 and Black loses) White may try:



White to move

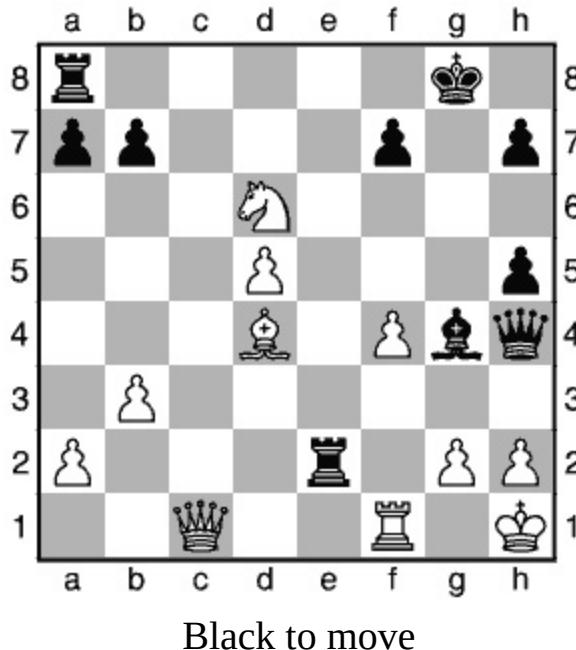
1) 23 f5 and now a training game Ivanchuk-Dreev (from 1984) continued 23...dxc3? 24 Qg5+ (24 Qxc3 is met by 24...Re5) 24...Kf8 25 Bxc3 Re5 26 Qf6? (26 h3! Be2 27 Qf6 wins) 26...Bh3! 27 Qxd6+ Re7 28 f6 Bxg2+ ½-½. The correct reply to 23 f5 is 23...f6!, when Black consolidates his extra material.

2) 23 Rf1 Qh4 (after 23...Qe3 24 Qxe3 dxe3 25 h3 Bd7 26 Re1 Black has a most unattractive ending in spite of his material superiority, due to his wrecked pawn structure, exposed king and lack of useful files for his rooks) 24 Nb5 and now:

2a) 24...Be2 25 Nxd6 Bxf1 26 Qxf1 Qf6! (Dvoretsky's suggestion is better than 26...Red8 27 Nf5 Qf6 28 Bxd4 Qa6 29 Qe1 and Black is in trouble) 27 Nxe8 Rxe8 is fine for Black. 28 Qf3? Qf5 and 28 Qd3? Qxf4 are bad for White, while Dvoretsky's 28 e5 is best answered by 28...Rxe5 29 Bxd4 Qa6! 30 Qc1 Re8, followed by ...f6. In this last line Black certainly has the advantage, although in view of his exposed king it might be hard to make

progress.

2b) 24...Rxe4 25 Nxd6 Re2 26 Bxd4 leads to a complex position in which White's threats against the enemy king to a certain extent compensate for his material disadvantage. Nevertheless, with accurate play Black should gain the advantage:



Black to move

2b1) 26...Rxa2? 27 Qc7 Rf8 28 Ne4 f6 is very good for White after either 29 d6 or 29 Bf2!.

2b2) 26...Bf3 (spectacular, but it only leads to a draw) 27 Nf5 Qh3 (27...Bxg2+? 28 Kg1 Qh3 29 Nh6+ Kf8 30 Qc5+ wins for White after 30...Ke8 31 Qb5+ or 30...Re7 31 Re1) 28 Nh6+ Kf8 29 Qc5+ Ke8 30 Qb5+ Kf8, and White should take the draw, since the liquidation 31 Qxe2 would leave White with a draw at best.

2b3) 26...Rd8 (a safe and solid move) 27 Qc7 Rd7! 28 Qc8+ Qd8 gives Black the advantage without any risk.

2b4) 26...Qe7 was played in a training game Dvoretsky-Yusupov, and this too is good for Black. That game continued 27 Bc5 (if the knight moves, Black plays ...Qe4; after 27 f5 Qxd6! there is no draw) 27...Rd8 28 f5 f6 (not 28...Rxd6 29 f6 Qe4 30 Qg5+ Qg6 with a likely draw) 29 Qf4 (or 29 h3 Qe5 30 hxg4 Qg3 31 Bf2 Rxf2 {31...Qxd6 is also good} 32 Rxf2 Qxf2 33 Ne4 {33 Qc7 Qe1+ 34 Kh2 Qe5+} 33...Qd4 34 Qc4 Qa1+ 35 Kh2 Qe5+ 36 Kg1 b5 and Black wins) 29...Qe5 30 Qxe5 (30 h3 Qxd5) 30...Rxe5 31 h3 Be2 32 Re1 Rxd5 33 Nxb7 Rd1 (33...R8d7 is also very good) 34 Nxd8 Rxe1+ 35

Kh2 Bd3 and Black has a decisive advantage as White's pieces are poorly placed to counter Black's assault on g2.

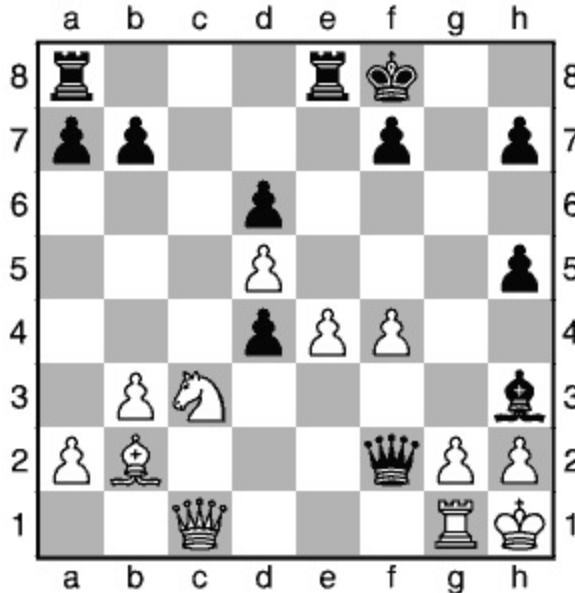
Note that $21\ldots\text{Kh8}$ is bad because of 22 Ng5! (Dvoretsky mentions the line $22\text{ Nxd4 Rg8 23 Qc2}$, but Black can then mate in three!) $22\ldots\text{Qxg1+ 23 Qxg1 Bxg1 24 Kxg1}$, as given by Dolmatov. White wins the pawns on f7 and d6, when the three connected passed pawns are more valuable than Black's two extra exchanges.

The text-move creates the concrete threat of $22\ldots\text{Bxg2+ 23 Rxg2 Qxf3}$, but White's compensation is on no account to be underestimated.

22 Nxd4

Forced. The knight cannot move because of $\ldots\text{Qxg1+}$, and the queen is tied to the defence of b2.

22...cxd4



White to move

Black's threat is not so much $23\ldots\text{dxc3}$ (when Qxc3 brings the queen to a dangerous position) as $23\ldots\text{Rac8}$, winning another piece for nothing.

23 f5?

Another critical moment, at which there are total of five possibilities, including the text-move. However, three of them fail fairly simply:

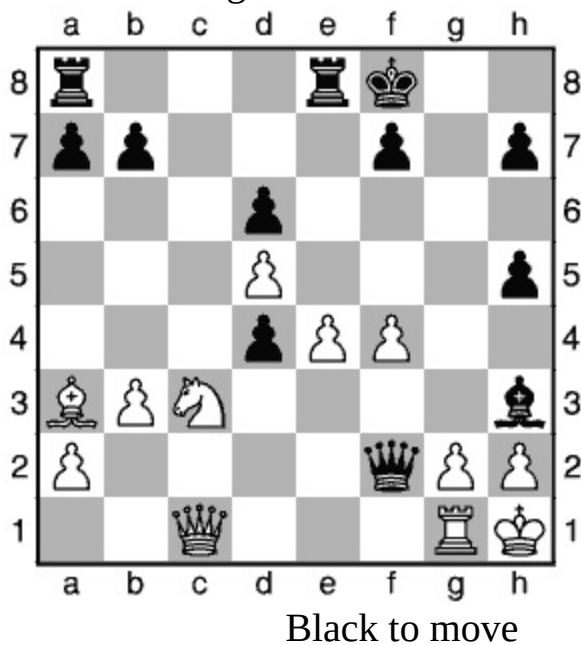
1) **23 Nd1** $\text{Bxg2+ 24 Rxg2 Qe1+ 25 Rg1 Qxe4+ 26 Rg2 Qe1+ 27 Rg1 Qe2!}$, with the unanswerable threat of $28\ldots\text{Qf3+ 29 Rg2 Re1+}$. The defender is curiously helpless here.

2) **23 Nb5** Rxe4 (the threat is $24\ldots\text{Bxg2+ 25 Rxg2 Re1+}$) 24 gxh3 Re2

and wins. Notice that against 20 Qb1 this variation would not have worked: with the queen guarding the e-pawn, 23 Nb5 would be a very good line for White. That is why Black had to change his plan after 20 Qb1.

3) **23 gxh3 Qf3+ 24 Rg2 dxc3 25 Bxc3 Rxe4**, winning comfortably as White cannot create threats quickly enough.

4) **23 Ba3** (this possibility, which gives rise to some astounding tactical points, is White's best chance) and Black has at least six reasonable moves. As we shall see, the first two favour White, the next three lead to a draw and only the sixth and final line gives Black the advantage:



Black to move

4a) **23...Ke7?**. This continuation was played in a training game Dvoretsky-Dolmatov, but it allows White an immediate win by 24 Nb5 Rac8 25 Qf1! and Black sheds material. The game continued 24 Bxd6+? Kd7 25 Na4 Rac8 (25...Kxd6 26 e5+ Kd7 27 Nc5+ Ke7 28 Ne4! is very good for White) 26 Nc5+ Rxc5! (26...Kxd6 allows White to draw by 27 e5+ Ke7 28 d6+ Kd8 29 d7 Rxc5 30 dxe8Q+ Kxe8 31 Qxc5 Bxg2+) 27 Qxc5 Bxg2+ 28 Rxg2 Qe1+ 29 Rg1 Qxe4+ 30 Rg2 Rc8 0-1.

4b) **23...f5** (this prevents White opening the c1-h6 diagonal by playing f5 himself, but it creates a huge empty space around Black's king) 24 e5! (Yusupov) 24...Rec8 (24...dxc3 25 Qxc3 Bg4 26 e6 Kg8 27 Bb2 and wins) 25 Bxd6+ Ke8 26 Qd1 Bg4 27 Qd3 a6 (27...dxc3 28 Qb5+ Kf7 29 Qd7+ Kg6 30 Qe6+ Kg7 31 Qf6+ Kg8 32 Qg5+ Kh8 33 e6 also wins) 28 Nb5! with a very strong attack.

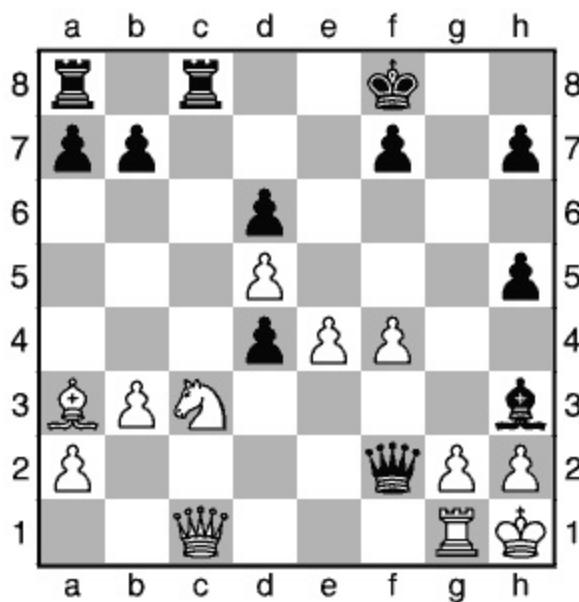
4c) **23...dxc3 24 Bxd6+ Re7 25 gxh3 Qf3+ 26 Rg2 Qxe4** and White can,

at any rate, force Black to take perpetual check by 27 Qxc3.

4d) 23...Rad8 (this was the reply I had planned during the game, not surprisingly overlooking the following amazing resource, later pointed out by Jonathan Mestel) 24 Nb5 Rxe4 (with the seemingly devastating threat of 25...Bxg2+) 25 Nxd6!! Bxg2+ 26 Rxg2 Re1+ 27 Qxe1 Qxe1+ 28 Rg1, after which the queen can only escape the discovered check by 28...Qe2. Unfortunately, Black then gets mated by 29 Ne4+ Rd6 (or 29...Ke8 30 Nf6#) 30 Bxd6+ Ke8 31 Nf6+ Kd8 32 Rg8+ Qe8 33 Rxe8#. If 28...Qxg1+ then Black will lose the endgame.

4e) 23...f6 (Zaitsev) 24 f5 (after 24 Nb5 Rxe4 25 Nxd6 {25 Bxd6+ Ke8} 25...Bxg2+ 26 Rxg2 Re1+ 27 Qxe1 Qxe1+ 28 Rg1 Qe2 the f7-square is free for Black's king, and White cannot even force perpetual check) 24...dxc3 25 Qh6+ Ke7 26 Qg7+ Kd8 27 Qxf6+ Kd7 28 Qxd6+ Kc8 29 gxh3 and one side or the other will deliver perpetual check.

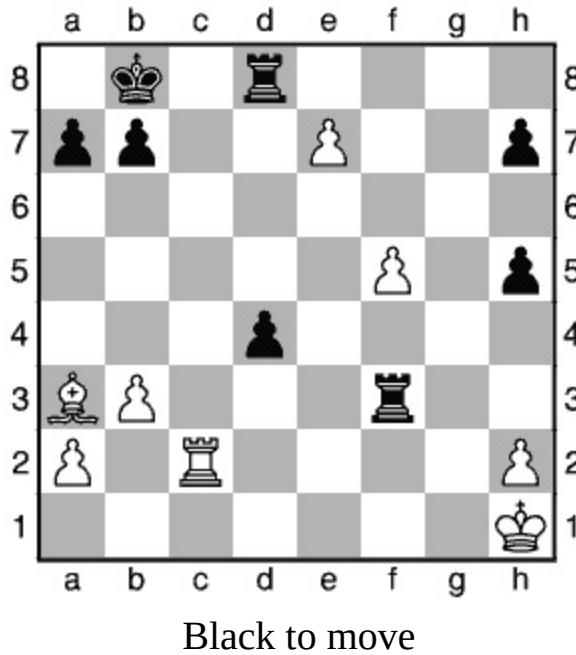
4f) 23...Rec8!.



White to move

This is the key move, giving the king some air. In *Secrets of Grandmaster Play* I gave the naïve line 24 Bxd6+ Ke8 25 Qa3 Rxc3 26 Qa4+ Kd8 and Black wins. The attempted improvement 25 f5 comes to nothing after 25...Rxc3 26 Qg5 Bxg2+ 27 Rxg2 Qe1+ 28 Rg1 Qxe4+ 29 Rg2 Rf3 and again Black wins. However, Dvoretsky and Yusupov found White's strongest continuation, 24 f5!, and considered that Black was obliged to take a draw by 24...Rxc3 25 Qh6+ (25 Qg5 Bxg2+ 26 Rxg2 Qe1+ 27 Rg1 Qxe4+

28 Rg2 Qxd5! wins for Black by covering the pawns on b7 and f7, for example 29 Qg8+ Ke7 30 Qxa8 Rd3 31 Bxd6+ Kd7 and White is helpless) 25...Ke8 26 Qxd6 Bxg2+ 27 Rxg2 Qe1+ 28 Rg1 Qxe4+ 29 Rg2, etc. In their view 29...Rd8 would be too risky after 30 Qf8+ Kd7 31 Qxf7+ Kc8 32 Qe6+ Qxe6 33 dxe6 Rf3 34 Rc2+ Kb8 35 e7



Black to move

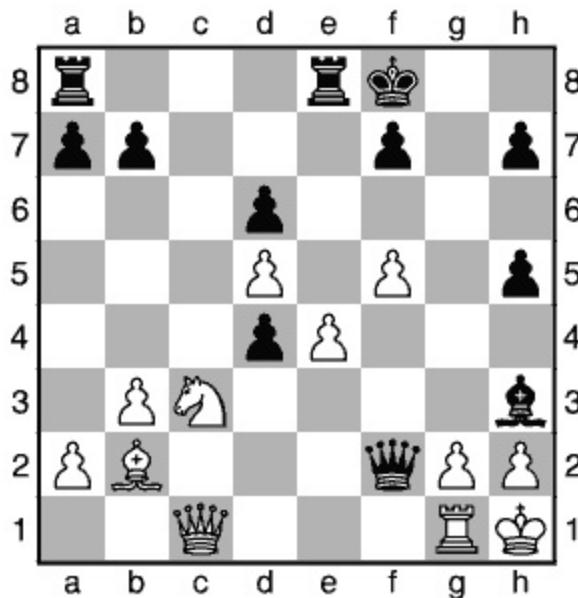
35...Re8 36 Bd6+ Ka8 37 Rc7 followed by Rd7, ‘and White wins’.

It isn’t particularly clear if White is really winning at the end of this line, because Black may continue 37...Rxf5 38 Rd7 Rf1+ 39 Kg2 Rc1, but a more important point to note is that Black has a major improvement in 35...Rg8!. This gains a vital tempo by threatening mate on f1. After 36 Bd6+ Ka8 37 h4 Rxf5 38 Rd2 b6 39 Rxd4 White retains his powerful e-pawn, but Black has fair winning chances because of the poor position of White’s king. Play might continue 39...Rf1+ 40 Kh2 Rf2+ 41 Kh3 (41 Kh1 Kb7 42 Ba3 Rc8! 43 Rd7+ Ka6 44 Rd8 Rcc2 45 Kg1 Rg2+ 46 Kh1 {46 Kf1 Rh2 47 Kg1 is the same} 46...Rh2+ 47 Kg1 Rcg2+ 48 Kf1 Rxa2 49 Kg1 Rhc2 and Black wins) 41...Kb7 42 Ba3 Rfg2 43 Rd3 Rg1+ 44 Kh2 R8g2+ 45 Kh3 Re2 46 Rd7+ Ka6 47 Rd8 Re3+ 48 Kh2 Rge1 and Black has firmly restrained White’s e-pawn. He can then advance his king and queenside pawns, looking for a chance to play ...Rxe7, or to harass White’s king further.

The move played allows Black a comparatively easy win, since opening the c1-h6 diagonal is not dangerous unless the bishop is on a3.

It may seem surprising that a player of Polugaevsky’s strength could go

under without more of a fight, but this was not his favourite type of position. The vast majority of players have certain chess strengths which they display at an early age and which come naturally to them. In other areas they are much weaker. In order to reach the top it is necessary to play every type of position reasonably well, so it is necessary for these gaps to be filled, usually by study and appropriate training. However, it is noticeable that skills which come naturally are unlikely to desert a player at critical moments, whereas those acquired by learning tend to be far more erratic. Analysing with Polugaevsky, I was always impressed by his grasp of positional nuances. His extraordinary home-analysis is well-known, and he found many surprising tactical ideas in those openings which he had carefully studied. However, his over-the-board tactical ability was not his strongest point and when unexpected tactics occurred he was often thrown off his stride. Near the end of his life when, sadly, he was afflicted with a brain tumour, he told me that although he could still assess a position accurately and find the right plan, he could no longer analyse even simple tactical lines. ‘Polu’, as he was universally known, dedicated his life to chess and enriched it enormously – I shall always remember with pleasure my games against him.



Black to move

23...dxc3

White is still kicking, but on the squares d7 and e8 the black king will be safe, and this is the theme which dominates the last phase of the game.

24 Qxc3

24 Qh6+ is no good: 24...Ke7 25 Bxc3 Bxg2+ 26 Rxg2 Qf1+ 27 Rg1 Qf3+ 28 Rg2 Qxc3 and the danger is over.

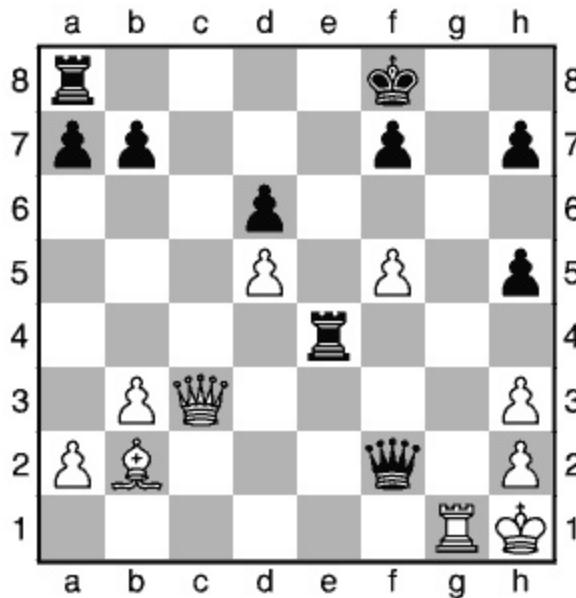
The text-move threatens 25 Qg7+ Ke7 26 Bf6+ Kd7 27 Qxf7+, etc., and also covers f3, which in a moment will enable White to capture the bishop.

24...Rxe4

Threatening 25...Bxg2+ and making space for the king.

25 gxh3

Other lines are no better, *e.g.* 25 Qh8+ (or 25 Qg7+) 25...Ke7 26 Qf6+ Ke8 27 Qh8+ Kd7 and the king is safe, or 25 Qxh3? Re1, when mate is unavoidable.



The text-move threatens mate in two by 26 Rg8+.

25...Ke8!

This seals White's fate: the king simply walks away! The trouble is that White's forces are geared to an attack down the g-file and the long diagonal and, in view of the active position of Black's queen and rook, they are unable to reposition themselves to attack the king on d7.

26 Qd3

After 26 Qh8+ or 26 Rg8+ Black plays 26...Kd7 and White must go back again to cover f3 and e1. Meanwhile, Black is planning 26...Kd7 and 27...Rae8 in any case.

26...Re1

This counters the threat of 27 Qb5+ and removes the last danger to

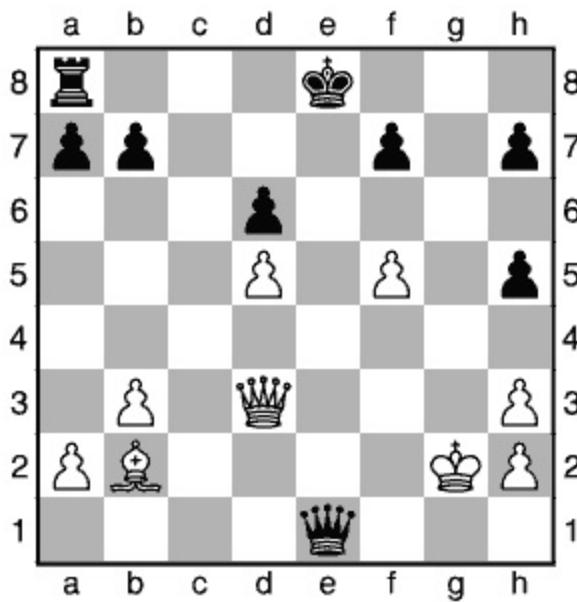
Black's king.

27 Rx e1

Equivalent to resigning, but the curious line 27 Qb5+ Kf8 28 Bg7+ Kg8!, in which the black king retraces its steps to g8, loses more material.

27...Qxe1+

28 Kg2



Black to move

28...Rc8

Black will now go straight for a mating attack with his rook operating on the g-file. The point of 28...Rc8 is to meet White's checks by playing the king to c7 and b8 without blocking in the rook.

29 f6 Kd7

30 Qxh7 Qd2+

31 Kg3 Qxd5

32 Kh4 Re8

0-1

My score of 5/7 was a great success. England performed well as a whole, finishing third, a huge improvement over our last place three years earlier at Moscow. These were the years in which the English team was growing into a really powerful force, building up to the successes of the mid-1980s.

There was to be a major grandmaster tournament in London during

April, the Philips and Drew/GLC tournament held in County Hall, the headquarters of the now-defunct Greater London Council. My father spent most of his life working for the GLC and its forerunner, the LCC, and it was strange to re-enter the building containing the library where I had borrowed my early chess books. My result was quite poor, 4½/13. I had problems against the leading players; both my style and openings were insufficiently solid for this strength of opposition, and poor opening preparation cost me a number of points. The simple fact is that maintaining an opening repertoire for top-level chess is a very time-consuming business, and probably cannot be achieved by someone with a non-chess job.

I was once again pursuing the Cutty Sark Grand Prix, so I took part in a few weekend events over the summer. Although I wasn't to realise this until much later, my loss to Gary Lane at the Stroud Open in May was to be my last loss until the following February – a remarkable run of 85 consecutive games without defeat!

My next significant tournament was the British Championship in Brighton. The playing conditions were excellent. Once again, the judicious short draw approach proved effective and a last-round win against Basman enabled me to tie for first place with Bill Hartston. The Basman game started 1 e4 g5 2 d4 h6 and after the game I went out for a celebratory dinner. When I returned a couple of hours later, I found Basman still sitting at the board analysing the game.

'What are you doing, Mike?', I asked.

'Trying to work out where I went wrong ...'

Under the previous year's tie-break rules I would have been declared champion, but thanks partly to my own efforts to change the system, I now faced a six-game play-off match.

This was still in the future. For the moment, I went to Manchester for the Bénédicte International. The result was another triumph: I scored 7/9 and ended joint first with Sax, winning on tie-break.

Evidently I could succeed in events below the top level, but in order to correct the deficiencies I had noted at the Philips and Drew event, I needed to gain experience in higher-category tournaments. For this reason in October I set out for Baden in Austria to take part in a strong grandmaster tournament. It proved a turning point.

Game 9

J. Nunn – R. Vaganian

Baden 1980

French Defence

1 e4 e6

2 d4 d5

3 Nd2 c5

4 Ngf3 a6

The intention behind this slightly unusual move is partly to avoid White's Bb5(+) lines, and partly to have the option of retreating the bishop to a7 after an exchange of pawns at c5. There are other points also, to which I refer later.

5 exd5 exd5



White to move

The opening of this game is quite interesting and conceals some subtle points. The position closely resembles that arising from the standard variation 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 c5 4 exd5 (White often plays 4 Ngf3 first, but this usually amounts to a transposition after 4...Nc6 5 exd5 exd5) 4...exd5 5 Ngf3 Nc6 6 Bb5 Bd6. Here White's best move is to play 7 dxc5 and after 7...Bxc5 White can play either 8 Nb3 or 8 0-0. 7 0-0 is inaccurate due to the reply 7...cxd4 8 Nb3 Ne7. White has nothing better than to take on d4, but a comparison with the variation 7 dxc5 Bxc5 8 0-0 Ne7 9 Nb3 Bd6 reveals that

White could have had the same position, but without the black pawn at d4. It is possible to argue that it doesn't matter, because White can simply take the pawn on d4, but this misses the point. If there is no pawn at d4, White wouldn't waste a tempo on Nbd4 when he could be playing a more constructive move (like Re1 or Bg5), but with the pawn present he is obliged to take it. The difference between dx5 and ...cxd4 is an important one, and it is also relevant in the present game. Apparently this point is sometimes misunderstood, as even the second edition of *ECO* gives the move-order 7 0-0 Ne7 8 dx5 as its main line.

Black, of course, may also make the capture ...cxd4 at move six, to try to reach the more favourable line, but he runs into other problems after 6...cxd4 7 Qe2+ Qe7 (this time 7...Ne7 is not available as it blocks in the bishop, while after 7...Be7 8 0-0 Nf6 9 Re1 Black's piece development is very awkward) 8 Nxd4 Qxe2+ 9 Kxe2 Bd7 10 N2f3 Nxd4+ 11 Nxd4 Bc5 12 Rd1 Ne7 13 Be3 Bxd4 14 Bxd7+ Kxd7 15 Rxd4 and White has a definite pull (Hübner-Korchnoi, Meran Candidates match (9) 1981).

6 Be2 cxd4

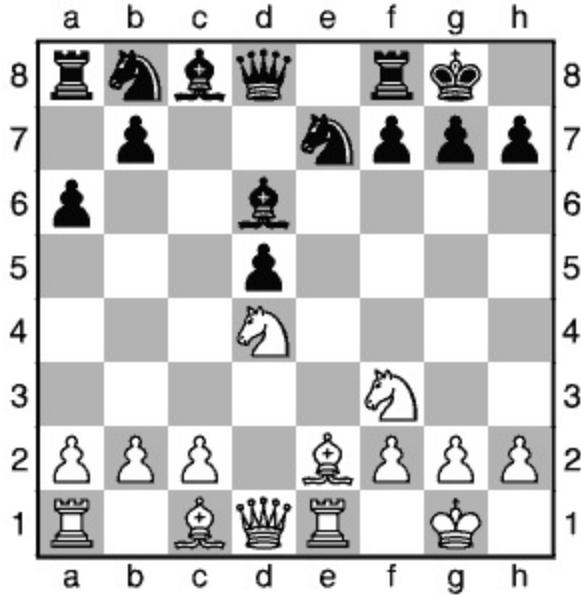
Black employs the same method of trying to avoid the loss of a tempo by taking on d4 rather than playing ...Bd6, but this situation is different. Black's other possibility is the intriguing continuation 6...c4, but a discussion of this is beyond the scope of this book.

7 0-0 Bd6

8 Re1 Ne7

9 Nb3 0-0

10 Nbx4



Black to move

Who has gained time as a result of the unusual sequence of moves? In the variation with Bb5 given in the note to Black's 5th move, Black quite often plays ...a6 at some point, whereupon White retreats his bishop to e2. White has therefore gained a move with his bishop by missing out Bb5. On the other hand, Black has the advantage of having been able to play ...cxd4 rather than ...Bd6. A comparison of the two lines shows that the move White has been given 'for free' is Nb3-d4. I said earlier that White would prefer not to make this move if he has to expend a tempo over it, but it must be an advantage to be given it for nothing. One may therefore summarise by saying that White has been given 'half-a-tempo', *i.e.* a tempo but not an especially useful one.

10...Nbc6

11 Be3

With the knight on b3, it would be standard practice to develop the bishop to g5, but here 11 Bg5 could be met by the awkward 11...Qb6, attacking b2. Therefore White has to settle for the more modest development to e3.

While this position is a little different from the normal lines arising in the 3...c5 Tarrasch French, the general structure is the same and many of the normal considerations apply. Black is banking on his active piece play to offset the potential long-term weakness of his isolated pawn. If White can steadily exchange minor pieces, then he will guarantee himself a small but permanent advantage. Should any minor pieces be left on the board, White's

dream would be to have a knight against Black's light-squared bishop. Black's best minor piece is his dark-squared bishop, which not only exerts pressure against White's kingside, but is also capable of fighting for control of the blockading square d4. In many of the standard lines White is quite willing to undertake the lengthy manoeuvre Bg5-h4-g3, solely in order to swap off this bishop. Here, of course, this manoeuvre is not possible.

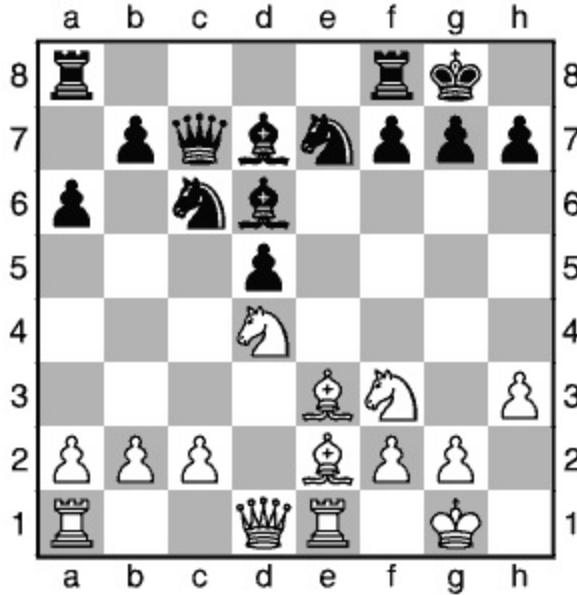
In general, such positions often lead to a draw. It is very difficult for White to make progress unless he can force a second weakness in Black's position, but this is normally impossible. Black's strategy is basically to play a waiting game, so if White avoids extreme risks then it is also hard for him to achieve anything. It is interesting to note that even such a positional master as Anatoly Karpov was not able to make any impact on Black's position in his 1974 Candidates match against Korchnoi. For my own part, I have played the white side of such positions a number of times against Vaganian, but this was the only game which ended decisively! In the other encounters, Vaganian adopted the standard 4...Nc6 rather than the 4...a6 of this game.

11...Qc7

Revealing a further useful aspect of 4...a6, in that Nb5 is prevented. Although there are quite a few practical examples of this position, they are mostly uninformative. A typical example is 11...Re8 12 Bd3 Nb4 13 Bf1 Nbc6 14 Bd3 Nb4 15 Bf1 Nbc6 16 Bd3 Nb4 ½-½ Serper-Dreev, Frunze 1988.

12 h3 Bd7

12...Nf5 is more accurate, challenging White's control of d4. If White exchanges then Black develops his bishop without wasting time; in Geller-Forintos, Moscow 1975 he equalised after 13 Nxf5 Bxf5 14 Qxd5 (14 c3 Rad8 is also about equal) 14...Bxc2 15 Rac1 Rad8 16 Qc4 Bf5 17 Qb3 Be6.



White to move

13 Qd2

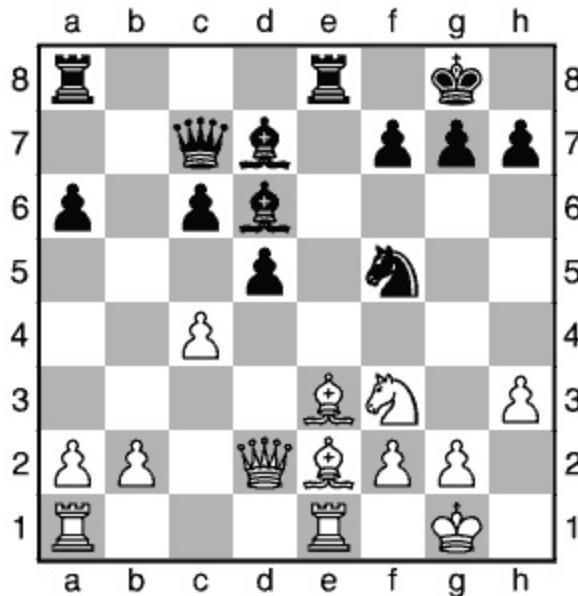
White would like to start exchanging minor pieces, but this is not easy to accomplish, since Nxc6 bxc6 will improve Black's pawn structure and provide him with an open b-file. (Note that when this same exchange is made in the Tarrasch Defence to the Queen's Gambit – see [Game 7](#) – the resulting c-pawn is exposed on a half-open file, which is much more favourable for White than the present situation). However, there are circumstances in which this exchange is a good idea. If White can follow it up with a quick $c4$, Black will once again be left with an isolated pawn; the success, or otherwise, of this operation depends upon the piece placement.

Black's plan is to avoid exchanges, keep his pieces flexible to counter anything White does, and if the opportunity arises to play for a kingside attack. Although White may be able to obtain a slight theoretical advantage, converting this into a win is an extremely difficult matter.

13...Ng6?!

This is the first significant inaccuracy. With an isolated d-pawn, the position of the knight at e7 is unfortunate in that it cannot easily occupy the natural outpost at e4. Black therefore finds another square for the knight, from which it might move to f4, or to e5 and c4. However, it is too casual because it permits $c4$ under favourable circumstances, as we shall see. $13...f6$ is another common idea, intending ... Nc6-e5-c4 without allowing White to exchange comfortably at e5, but here $13...f6$ 14 Nxc6 bxc6 $15 c4$ would open the position and reveal weaknesses at e6 and on the c4-g8 diagonal.

On the whole, Black would do best to complete his development by the simple move 13...Rfe8. Then, if White continues as in the game by 14 Nxc6 bxc6 15 c4, Black would have a more active continuation in 15...Nf5 and now:

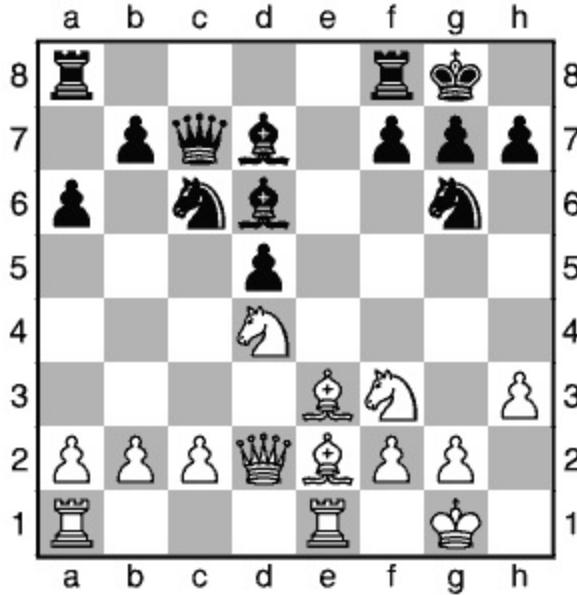


White to move

1) **16 cxd5 Nxe3 17 fxe3** (17 dxc6 Bxc6 18 fxe3 Rad8 19 Nd4 Qb7 is also fine for Black) 17...cxd5 18 Qxd5 Bc6 (18...Bc5 19 Nd4 is less clear) and Black's very active bishops, coupled with the weak e-pawn, give Black full compensation for the pawn.

2) **16 c5 Bf8** (16...Bg3 17 Bg5 is slightly better for White) 17 Bf4 Qa7 with uncomfortable pressure on c5 (18 b4 a5).

It follows that after 13...Rfe8 White would have to adopt a different plan, such as 14 c3 or 14 Rad1, with the minute advantage typical for this structure.



White to move

14 Nxc6! bxc6

14...Bxc6 is possible, but after 15 Nd4 Black's pieces at c6 and g6 are misplaced (and if 15...Ne5, then 16 Nf5 is embarrassing) and White has moved in the right direction by exchanging a pair of pieces.

15 c4

Thanks to Black's inaccurate knight move, his d-pawn is under immediate fire.

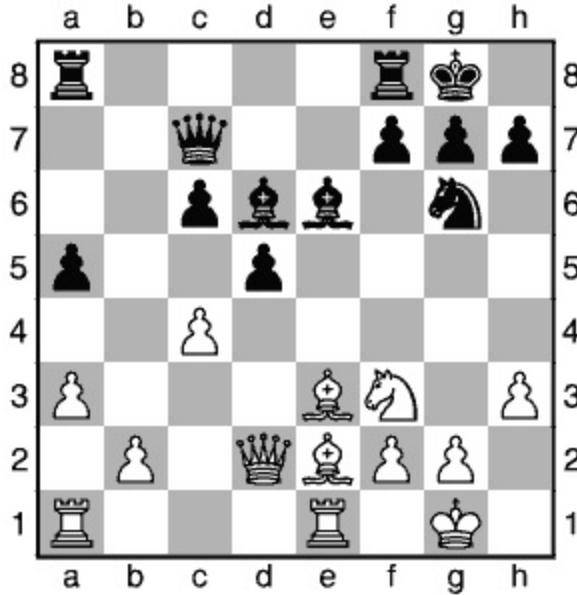
15...a5

16 a3

The intermezzo with the a-pawns was of little importance. I preferred 16 a3 to 16 c5 because White gains a tempo by threatening to take the pawn on d5.

16...Be6

There is little choice. 16...dxc4? loses a piece to 17 Rad1, while 16...Nf4 can be met by 17 c5 (17 Bf1 is also very good) 17...Nxe2+ 18 Rxe2 Be7 (18...Be5 19 Bd4 Bf4 20 Be5! and White is heading for a dream position with a knight on d4 against a light-squared bishop) 19 Bf4 Qd8 20 Rc1, leaving Black with a very poor bishop at d7. Finally, 16...Ne7 loses material after 17 c5 Be5 18 Nxe5 Qxe5 19 Bf4.



White to move

ECO assesses the position after 16...Be6 as equal, but I cannot agree. White has a slight but perceptible advantage.

17 c5

17 Nd4 may look attractive, but Black has 17...a4; then capturing on e6 would only strengthen his pawn centre and open a file for his rook on f8.

Now that Black has spent a tempo on ...Be6, playing c5 becomes much more tempting; indeed, if White later plays Nd4 then Black will have to move the bishop again, and White will be two tempi ahead. White now plans a blockade at d4, followed by the advance of his queenside pawn majority.

By contrast, 17 cxd5 Bxd5 is far less attractive, since the black bishops would be admirably centralised and ready to threaten White's kingside.

17...Be7

17...Bf4, leaving himself with only the inferior light-squared bishop, would be a major concession, so the bishop must retreat.

18 b4

Forced, or else Black plays ...a4.

18...Rfb8

This move was clearly designed to put White off 19 Nd4; in the game I 'believed' my opponent and didn't play it. However, it would have been much stronger than the move I actually chose. I was worried about 19...Qb7 20 b5 cxb5 21 Nxb5 Rc8, when the c-pawn can be easily blockaded (e.g. by ...Ne5), but 20 Rab1 is a big improvement in this variation. White can prepare b5 by Qc2 and Rec1 while Black has no corresponding way to

improve his own position.

19 Bd4?

A more ambitious (and risky) move than 19 Nd4. If White is allowed to follow up with Bd3, Black's bishops will be prevented from becoming active (at f6 and f5), while White will have the chance to make progress by Ne5. Black's reply is therefore compulsory.



Black to move

19...Bf5

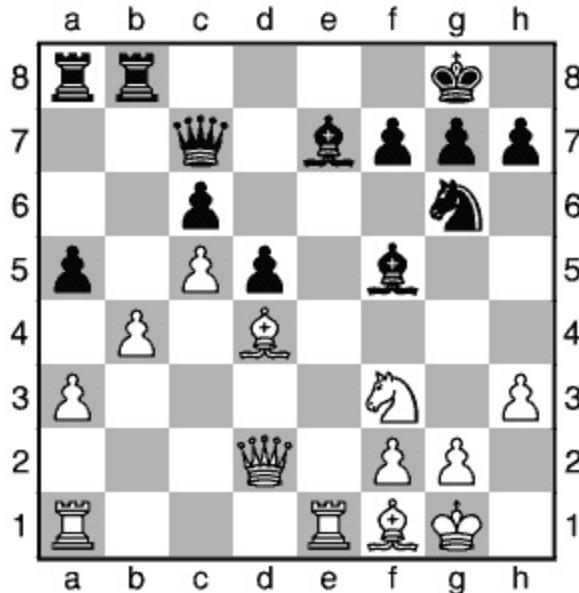
Psychologically this is a critical moment, as with the queenside pawn structure clearly defined and White in possession of the long-term strategic assets (more active pieces; mobile queenside majority vs firmly blockaded d-pawn), Black must look for counterplay – and quickly!

20 Bf1?!

Once you have started along a faulty path it is sometimes hard to turn back. The desire to be consistent blinds one to potential flaws. This move had been my intention when I decided on 19 Bd4, but it was based on a tactical oversight.

White would like to play Bc3, securely defending the pawn on b4, followed by Nd4 driving away the bishop. However, I didn't like this because of 20 Bc3 Be4 21 Nd4 Nf4! 22 Bf1 (22 f3? Nxh3+ and Black wins) 22...Bg5 and Black is starting to generate counterplay, for example 23 Qd1 axb4 24 axb4 Rxa1 25 Qxa1 Qc8 (not 25...Nd3? 26 Bxd3 Bxd3 27 Qa4, with advantage to White), and Black's active pieces more or less balance White's

strategic assets. I therefore decided on the text-move, which anticipates Black's ...Nf4.



Black to move

After the move played, Black does not have much margin of error; his position will become intolerably passive if the white knight is allowed to reach d4 without a fight.

20...f6?

A very weak move. Black is worried about Ne5, but moving the f-pawn has a whole string of negative features: it blocks in the e7-bishop, weakens e6 and, perhaps most seriously of all, does nothing to obstruct White's plan.

The correct move was the obvious 20...Be4, so as to drive the knight away at a moment when the d4-square is inaccessible. Both players suffered from the hallucination that White could continue **21 Ng5** and now:



Black to move

1) **21...Bxg5** 22 Qxg5 axb4 23 axb4 Rxa1 24 Bxa1 Rxb4 loses to 25 f3 (if the bishop moves then Re8+ mates) 25...f6 26 Qd2.

2) **21...Bf5** 22 Bc3 and the knight can return to f3 next move, on its way to d4.

The flaw in this is that Black can play 25...Rb1! in line '1', keeping his extra pawn. It is curious how often double oversights such as this occur. Some might see this as evidence for telepathy, but it seems more likely that some ideas are just hard to see. In the above line the e-file pin seems such a simple tactic that nothing could really go wrong with it, but this is the one time in a hundred when it doesn't work.

There is probably also a psychological element involved. If your opponent plays a move and then immediately plunges into thought, then you might get the idea that he is worried about something (of course, it may be a bluff, but this is very much the exception). On the other hand, if his body language suggests quiet confidence, then you are less likely to look for an outright refutation. Speaking personally, I find it much easier to exude confidence if I genuinely haven't seen the refutation.

After 20...Be4, White would have to play **21 Qc3** Bxf3 22 Qxf3 axb4 23 axb4 Rxa1 24 Rxa1 Rxb4 25 Qc3 Rb8 26 Bxg7 Bxc5 27 Qxc5 Kxg7. Black has an extra pawn, but after 28 Rc1 the weak enemy pawns and exposed black king provide reasonable compensation. A draw is the most likely result.

21 Bc3



Black to move

Now the d4-square is free for the knight, and White's plan is well on its way to success.

21...Be4?!

One move too late! 21...Bf8 22 Nd4 Bd7 would have been a more resilient defence, but 23 Ne6 Bxe6 24 Rxe6 is fairly unpleasant for Black. Trying to trap the rook fails, *e.g.* 24...Ne5 25 Re1 Qf7 26 Bxe5 or 24...axb4 25 axb4 Rxa1 26 Bxa1 Ne5 27 b5! (if 27...Qd7, then 28 Bxe5), so Black has no compensation for White's two bishops and his own passive bishop on f8. After the move played, however, White's advantage is sufficient to decide the game by tactical means.

22 Nd4 axb4

23 axb4

Now 24 f3 is threatened, so the knight must move.

23...Ne5

If Black exchanges first we have 23...Rxa1 24 Bxa1 Ne5 (24...Nf8 is much the same) 25 f3 Bg6 26 f4 Nc4 27 Bxc4 dxc4 28 Rxe7, winning a pawn for nothing. If 23...Nf8, then 24 f3 Bg6 25 Rxe7 leads to the same thing.

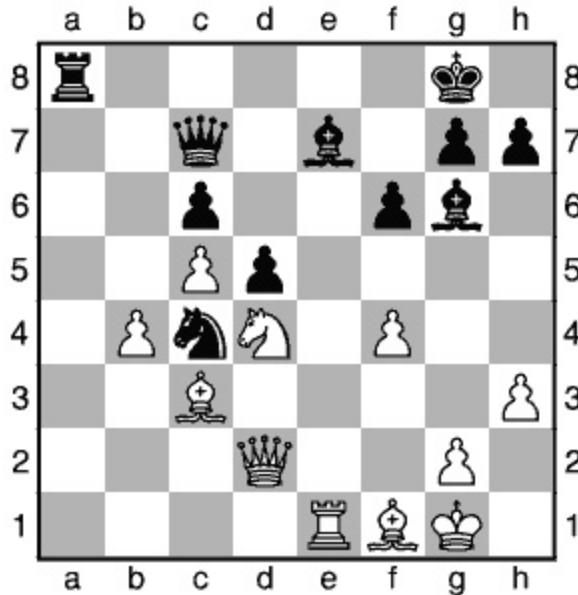
24 Rxa8 Rxa8

White exchanges rooks because he has seen a way to win which is even more conclusive than 24 f3, etc., and which requires the black rook to be undefended at a8.

25 f3 Bg6

26 f4 Nc4

If 26...Nf7, then 27 f5 Bh5 28 g4 Qg3+ 29 Bg2. After 26...Nc4 Black's pieces seem to be reasonably placed, but ...



White to move

27 Qe2!

... and the game is over. In addition to the attacked bishop on e7, White threatens 28 Qe6+ and Qxc6.

27...Be4

Alternatively:

1) 27...Re8 28 Qe6+ Bf7 (White wins after 28...Kh8 29 Qxc6 Qxf4 30 Bxc4 dxc4 31 Qd7; 28...Kf8 29 Qxc6 is hopeless as 29...Qxf4 cannot be played) 29 Qxc6 Qxf4 30 Bxc4 dxc4 31 Qd7 Kf8 32 Nf5, winning material.

2) 27...Qxf4 28 Qe6+ (clearer than 28 Qxe7 Re8 29 Qxe8+, etc.)

28...Bf7 (28...Kh8 29 Qxe7!) 29 Qxc6 and now:

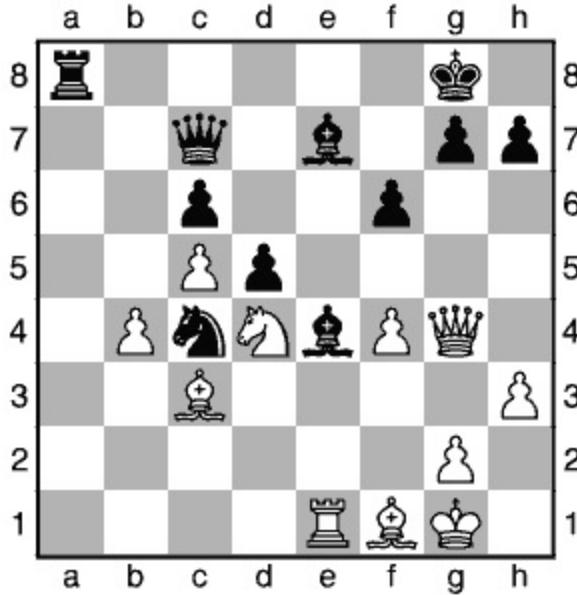
2a) 29...Re8 30 Bxc4 transposes to line '1'.

2b) 29...Ra7 30 Qc8+ Bf8 31 Ne6 Bxe6 32 Qxe6+, followed by Qxd5, with a simple win.

2c) 29...Ra2 30 Qc8+ Bf8 31 Ne6 Qf2+ 32 Kh1 Bxe6 33 Qxe6+ Kh8 34 Qf7 Ra8 35 Qxd5, winning a piece.

Black settles for his only other option, but the second hammer-blow creates four more threats!

28 Qg4!



Black to move

Now he faces 29 Rxe4, 29 Bxc4, 29 Ne6 and 29 Qe6+; heavy material loss is inevitable.

28...Bf8

If 28...Bg6, then 29 Ne6 followed by 30 f5. After the text-move, White can win two pawns by 29 Bxc4 f5 30 Nxf5 Bxf5 31 Bxd5+ cxd5 32 Qxf5, but he chooses the alternative.

29 Rxe4 1-0

Since 29...dxe4 30 Bxc4+ Kh8 31 Qe6 Be7 32 Qxe4 is terminal.

Game 10

J. Nunn – A.J. Miles

Baden 1980

Sicilian, Dragon

1 e4 c5

2 Nf3 d6

3 d4 cxd4

4 Nxd4 Nf6

5 Nc3 g6

6 g3

This method of meeting the Dragon has a sound positional basis. Once Black has played ...g6 and ...Bg7, he will be reluctant also to play ...e6,

because then his d-pawn would become weak. This means that d5 is a useful square for White to control, because it may not be so easy for Black to expel a white piece which arrives there. The main drawback of this system is that it is very slow and presents Black with few early problems.

After experiencing some popularity in the late 1970s and early 1980s, this system is now rather out of fashion. However, as we shall see below, it does occasionally surface as a surprise weapon.

6...Nc6

7 Nde2



Black to move

It is also possible to allow the exchange on d4, but there are merits to the text-move. First of all, White's plan is based on establishing a positional bind, and this will be less effective if Black is allowed to free himself with exchanges. Secondly, if White allows ...Nxd4, he will soon have to waste time moving the queen.

7...Bg7

7...Bd7 8 Bg2 Qc8 9 h3 is the main alternative, whereby Black plays to prevent White castling. On the other hand, the queen on c8 gets in Black's way, and if it is later moved to c7, White castles and gains a tempo.

8 Bg2 Rb8

At the time this was a new idea; Black intends to develop queenside counterplay as fast as possible. It has been played several times since and it appears to be a perfectly reasonable plan.

9 a4

This has been the usual response, but in Topalov-Shirov, Las Palmas 1994 White continued 9 b3!? b5 10 Bb2 0-0 11 Qd2 Ne5 12 f4 Ned7 13 0-0-0!? Bb7 14 Nd5 a5 15 Rhe1 with some advantage, winning in 26 moves. This example is unusual in that White castled queenside, which is common in sharp anti-Dragon systems such as the Yugoslav Attack, but not in the positional lines with g3.

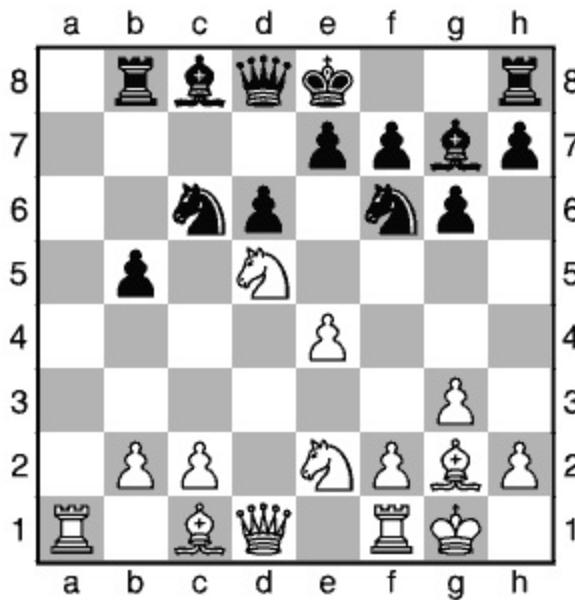
9...a6

Another idea is 9...b6, followed by ...Ba6.

10 0-0 b5

11 axb5 axb5

12 Nd5



Black to move

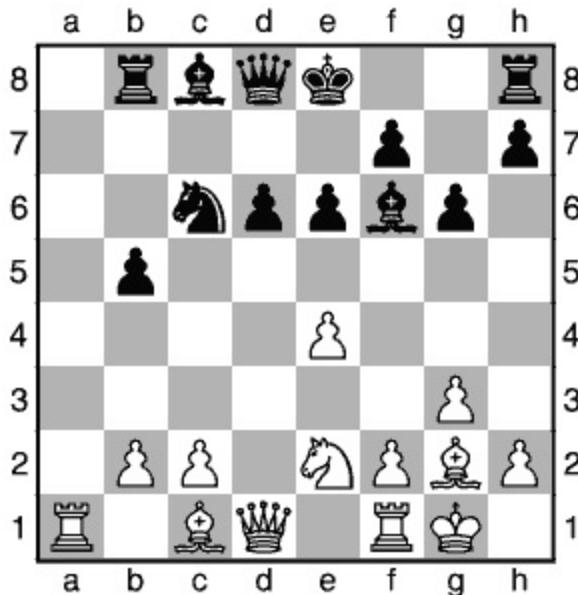
Amazingly, this knight is still in position fifteen moves later, with the battle raging all around! The text-move appears the most appropriate for two reasons. First of all, White's whole strategy is based on occupation of d5, so this fits in with his plan. Secondly, a developing move with the c1-bishop would be too mechanical, because the right square for the bishop is not yet clear (12 Be3 Ng4, or 12 Bg5 h6). In the end White will probably try to exchange dark-squared bishops, but this can wait.

12...0-0

It is clearly incorrect to play **12...Nxd5** 13 exd5 Ne5 14 Nd4 in view of the weak c6-square and open a-file. After 14...Bd7 (not 14...Qb6? 15 Nc6

$Nxc6$ 16 $dxc6$ 0-0 17 $Be3$ and White wins) 15 $f4!$ (15 $Nc6 Bxc6$ 16 $dxc6 Qc7$ 17 $Ra6 Qc8!$ is unclear) 15... $Bg4$ 16 $Qd2 Nc4$ 17 $Qf2$, White is ready to jump in to c6.

However, 12...**e6** 13 $Nxf6+$ $Bxf6$ is certainly critical. If Black can get away with this idea then he is doing well, because White's whole plan of controlling d5 has been nullified; therefore White must act immediately. He may try:



White to move

1) **14 c3** (as explained above, moves such as this are insufficiently challenging) 14...0-0 15 $Bh6 Re8$ 16 $Qd2 Na5$ and Black has a comfortable position.

2) **14 Bf4 Ne5** (14... $Bxb2$ 15 $Bxd6 Bxa1$ 16 $Qxa1$ wins for White) 15 $Bh6 Ng4$ is unclear.

3) **14 f4** is simply met by 14...0-0, when 15 $e5$ is impossible because of 15... $Qb6+$ 16 $Kh1 dx5$.

4) **14 Bh6!** (this is the critical line) 14... $Bxb2$ (Black must accept or he has no compensation for his inability to castle) and now:

4a) **15 e5**, trying to trap the bishop, was recommended in *Secrets of Grandmaster Play*, but actually there were several things wrong with the analysis of this move. After 15... $Nxe5$ 16 $Ra2 Ng4$ (16... $Nc4$ 17 $Rxb2 Nxb2$ 18 $Qd4$ favours White) 17 $Nd4$ there is a final branch:



Black to move

4a1) 17...Bxd4 18 Qxd4 e5 19 Bc6+ Bd7 (19...Ke7 20 Bg5+ f6 21 Qa7+ Bd7 22 Bd2 favours White) 20 Qxd6 Bxc6 21 Qxc6+ Qd7 and now I gave 22 Qe4 in *Secrets of Grandmaster Play*, overlooking that 22...f5 23 Qe2 Nxh6 wins a piece, because 24 Qxe5+ can be met by 24...Kf7. Thus White has to play 22 Qxd7+, but he has at best a draw in the resulting ending.

4a2) 17...Nxh6 18 Nc6 Qc7 19 Nxb8 Bg7 20 Nc6 d5 (Dolmatov; 20...Nf5 is weaker due to 21 Ra7 Qb6 22 g4, when both 22...d5 23 Bxd5 exd5 24 Re1+ Kf8 25 Qxd5 and 22...Nd4 23 Ra8 Nxc6 24 Qxd6 win for White) and White has no promising continuation, for example 21 Bxd5 exd5 22 Re1+ Kf8 23 Qxd5 Bf6 leads to nothing concrete.

However, it was Yusupov who put the final nail into 15 e5, by pointing out that 15...d5! is very strong. After 16 Bg7 Bxa1 17 Qxa1 Rg8 White does not have compensation for the sacrificed material.

4b) 15 Rb1 (Yusupov; White aims to build up slowly, confident that Black's inability to castle gives him enough for the pawn) 15...Bf6 16 Rb3 (16 f4 Ne7!?, intending 17...Ng8, is possible; after 17 e5 dx5! 18 Qxd8+ Kxd8 19 fxe5 Bxe5 20 Rxf7 Ke8 Black has the better ending) 16...e5 (16...Qe7 17 f4 and 16...Ne5 17 Nd4 also give White enough for the pawn) 17 Rd3 Qe7 18 Nc3 Be6 19 Nd5 Bxd5 20 Rxd5 and White has strong pressure.

13 Bg5

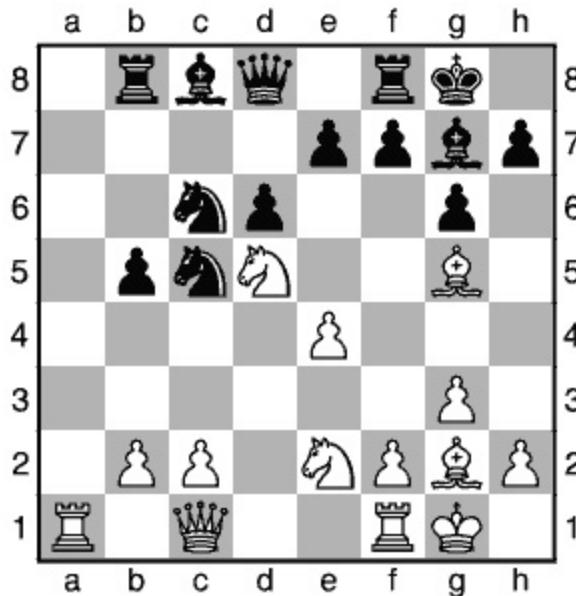
Virtually a tempo gain; Black cannot permit the splitting of his pawns by a capture on f6, because the d-pawn would become fatally weak.

13...Nd7

14 Qc1

Both defending the b-pawn and preparing Bh6.

14...Nc5



White to move

15 b4?!

This is a bold attempt to maintain the initiative at the cost of the exchange. The point is that Black would like to develop his queenside play by ...b4 and even ...b3; 15 b4 stops this advance and fixes the b-pawn as a potential target. However, the sacrifice is not really correct, in the sense that if Black accepts it then White can probably draw by very precise play. However, this, by itself, does not mean the move deserves criticism – sometimes you have to take risks to win games. The basic reason why this move is not best is that the risks involved in playing it are quite unnecessary, since White could have maintained a slight positional advantage by 15 Rd1. During the game I did not play this move because of 15...Bg4, but then 16 f3 Bd7 17 Bh6 b4 18 Bxg7 Kxg7 19 b3, followed by Qb2+, maintains an edge for White.

15...Ne6?!

The critical line runs 15...Bxa1 16 Qxa1 Ne6 17 Bh6 (not 17 Bxe7 Nxe7 18 Nf6+ Kh8 19 Nd7+ f6 20 Nxb8 Qb6 and Black wins a piece) 17...Re8 18 f4 (other moves are also met by 18...f6) 18...f6 19 f5.

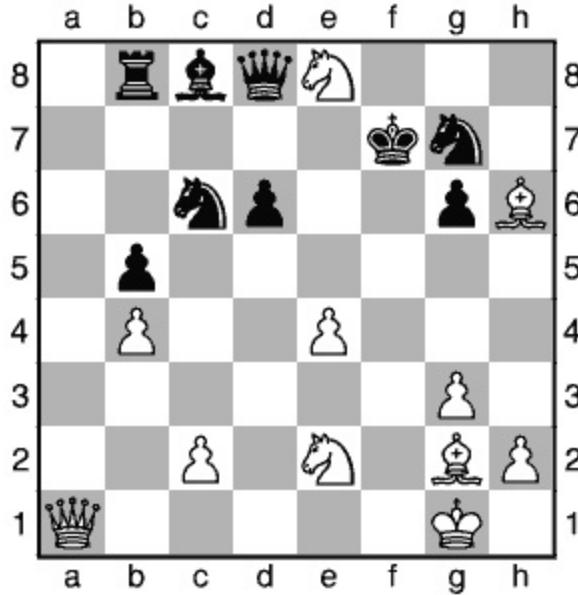


Black to move

At this point Black may choose between 19...Nc7 and 19...Ng7. It seemed to me that 19...Nc7 is more logical, because the threat to swap the knight on d5 means that White has to react straight away. Dvoretsky also analysed 19...Ng7, but concluded that it is inferior. Both I (in *Secrets of Grandmaster Play*) and Dvoretsky believed that White does not even have a draw against accurate defence. However, as we shall see, this conclusion needs to be modified as neither analyst took into account White's strongest continuation. Here is the analysis: 1) **19...Ng7** (Dvoretsky) and now:

1a) **20 Qa2 Kh8 21 fxg6 hxg6 22 Ndf4 Ne5 23 Nxg6+ Kh7!** (not 23...Nxg6 24 Qf7 Rg8 25 Qxg6 Bd7 26 Be3 and White has more than enough for the exchange) 24 Nxe5 Be6!, and White's compensation is inadequate.

1b) **20 fxg6 hxg6** (after 20...Ne5 21 gxh7+ Kxh7 22 Qc1 White has sufficient compensation) 21 Rxf6 exf6 22 Nxf6+ Kf7 23 Nxe8 (23 Bxg7? Re5) and now:



Black to move

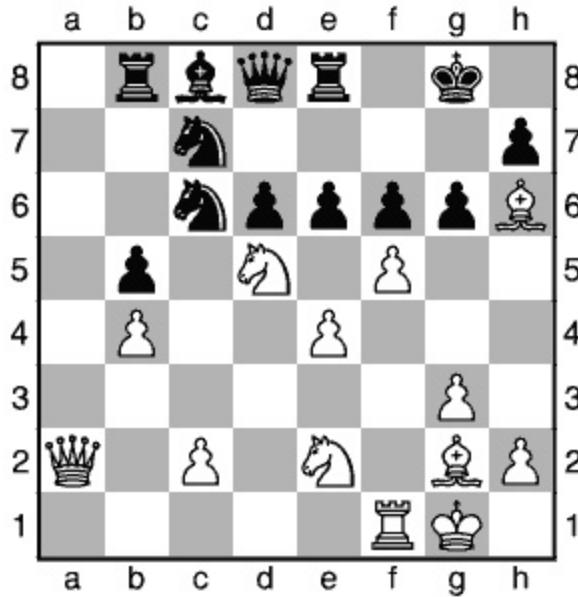
1b1) 23...Nxe8 (as we shall see, this position can also arise after 19...Nc7) 24 Qh8! (now Black is defenceless) 24...Nf6 (24...Qf6 25 Qf8+ and 24...Bg4 25 Qh7+ Ke6 {25...Kf6 26 Bg5+} 26 Nf4+ Ke5 27 Qf7 win) 25 Qg7+ Ke8 26 Qxg6+ (26 Bg5? Rb7! allows Black to hang on) 26...Ke7 (26...Kd7 27 Bg5 wins) 27 Qg7+ Ke8 28 Bg5 Rb7 29 Qxf6 Qxf6 30 Bxf6 Nxb4 31 Nd4 with good winning chances for White.

1b2) 23...Ne6 24 Qh8! (24 Ng7 Qh8 25 Qf1+ Kg8 26 Nxe6 Bxe6 27 Bf4 is roughly equal) 24...Qxe8 25 Qh7+ Kf6 26 Nf4 Rb7 (26...Nxf4 27 Qg7+ Ke6 28 Bxf4) 27 Nd5+ Ke5 28 Bf4+ Kd4 29 Be3+ Ke5 30 Qh3! (threatening 31 Bf4+ Kd4 32 g4) and Black can only avoid an immediate disaster by 30...Nxb4, but then White's advantage is both large and clear-cut.

1b3) 23...Nh5 24 Ng7! (this time 24 Qh8 proves less effective after 24...Qxe8 25 Qh7+ Ke6!, for example 26 Nf4+ Nxf4 27 gxf4 Qf7) and after 24...Qf6 25 e5 or 24...Ne5 25 Qa2+ White is clearly better.

2) 19...Nc7 and now:

2a) 20 Qa2 (inadequate) 20...e6! (not 20...Kh8 21 Nxc7 Qxc7 22 fxg6 hxg6 23 Qf7 Rg8 24 Rf4 {threatening 25 Bg7+ as well as 25 Rh4} 24...g5 25 Bxg5! fxg5 26 Qh5+ and mates) and now:



White to move

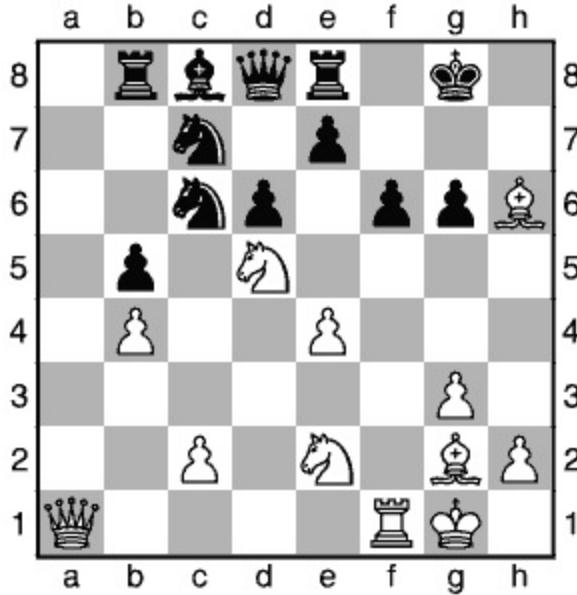
2a1) **21 Nxc7** Qxc7 22 fxg6 hxg6 23 Rxf6 Kh7, followed by ...Ne5 and the well-placed knight stops the attack.

2a2) **21 fxe6** Bxe6 22 Nef4 Bf7 defends.

2a3) **21 Ndf4** Kh8 (21...Ne5 22 Nd4 is less clear) 22 fxg6 hxg6 23 Nxg6+ Kh7 24 e5 (the only chance) 24...Nxe5 25 Nxe5 dxe5 and White is struggling for compensation.

2a4) **21 e5** is ingenious, and can lead to some entertaining lines after 21...Nxd5 22 Bxd5 Nxb4 23 fxe6, but unfortunately 21...Nxe5! kills it stone dead.

2b) **20 fxg6** hxg6 and now White can try:



White to move

2b1) **21 Rxf6** exf6 22 Nxf6+ Kf7 23 Nxe8 Kxe8! (Dvoretsky; in *Secrets of Grandmaster Play* I gave 23...Nxe8 as winning for Black, but as Dvoretsky showed, 24 Qh8 is then almost winning for White – see line ‘1b’ above) 24 Qh8+ (24 Qg7 Be6 25 Qxg6+ Kd7 is no better) 24...Kd7 25 Bh3+ Ne6 26 Qg7+ Qe7 27 Bxe6+ Kxe6 28 Qxg6+ Kd7 29 Bg5 Ne5 and the attack is repulsed.

2b2) **21 Nxf6+!** (this move was not considered in previous analyses) 21...exf6 22 Rxf6 Ne5 (22...Re5 23 Rxg6+ Kh7 24 Bg5 Qe8 25 Nf4, threatening 26 Qd1, is at least equal for White since Black will soon have to give up his queen on g6) 23 Rxg6+ Kh7 (23...Kh8 24 Bg5 Qd7 25 Bf6+ Kh7 26 Rg7+ Qxg7 27 Bxg7 Kxg7 28 Qd4 is roughly equal) 24 Bg5 and now 24...Qd7 is bad after 25 Rh6+ Kg7 (25...Kg8 26 Bf6 Qg4 27 Nf4 Kf8 28 Rh4 gives White a crushing attack) 26 Nf4 Rg8 27 Qd4! Ne8 28 Bh3 Kf8 29 Qf2 Qf7 30 Bxc8 Rxg5 31 Be6 and White wins. It follows that Black must give up his queen somehow, for example by 24...Kxg6 (24...Nxg6 25 Bxd8 Rxd8 is worse, as it allows the queen to penetrate by 26 Qf6) 25 Bxd8 Rxd8. The unusual material balance of Q+3P vs 2R+N makes this position very hard to assess. The most likely outcome, bearing in mind the power of the queen and Black’s exposed king, is perpetual check.

The conclusion is that accepting the exchange sacrifice leads to an unclear position.

We return to the game position after 15...Ne6:



White to move

16 Bh6 Ned4

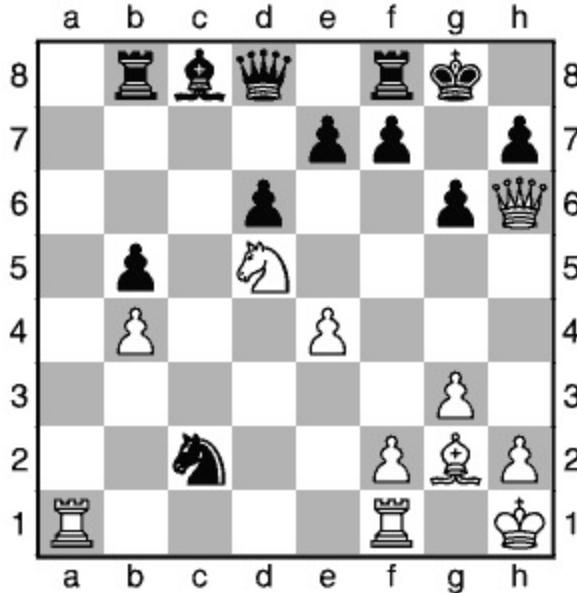
Once again Black could have played 16...Bxa1, when 17 Qxa1 transposes to the previous note. However, having turned it down last move I didn't expect Miles suddenly to take it now, especially as 16...Bxa1 gives White the extra option of 17 Bxf8 Bh8 18 Bh6 Ra8 (18...Ned4 19 Nxd4 Nxd4 20 Qg5 is awkward) 19 c3, followed by f4, with roughly level chances.

The text-move wins a pawn, but under very dangerous circumstances.

17 Nxd4 Nxd4

18 Kh1 Bxh6

19 Qxh6 Nxc2



White to move

White was obliged to sacrifice the pawn, but now he has plenty of compensation in the form of aggressive pieces. However, Black's position is solid; there is scarcely anything that could be called a serious weakness. Thus White cannot take his time; any delay would allow Black to start exchanging pieces. Above all, the knight is White's key attacking piece and he must play to prevent Black from exchanging his bishop for it. The choice of moves is obvious: 20 Ra7 or 20 Rac1 are the only two options, but 20 Ra7 Bb7 21 Qd2 Bxd5 22 exd5 Qb6! 23 Rxe7 Na3, followed by ...Nc4, would enable Black to defend comfortably, and White would face the danger of being left with a poor bishop. Note that the exchange on d5 is much better for Black now than on move 12, the reason being that White has no second knight to exploit the weakness of c6.

20 Rac1

This is a better way to reach the seventh rank because the rook arrives on the opposite side of the b7-square so Black cannot block the rook off with ...Bb7.

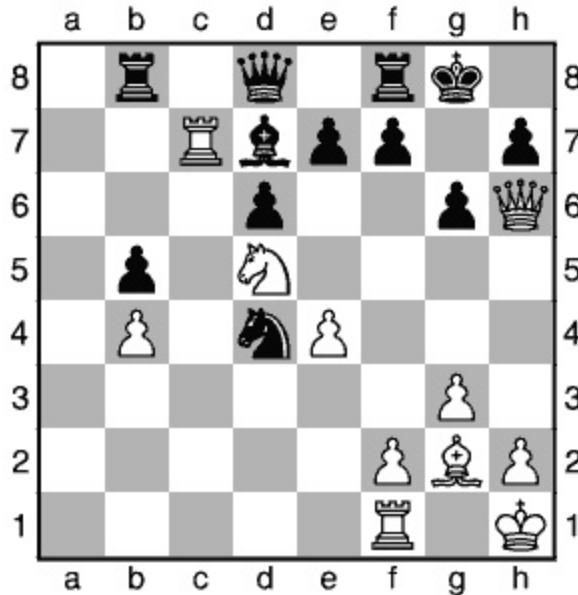
20...Nd4

21 Rc7

White must make a direct threat; otherwise Black plays 21...e6 or 21...Bb7; and if 21 Rfd1, the reply 21...Ne6 prevents 22 Rc7. Then after, for example, 22 e5 Bb7! 23 Qh4 Bxd5 24 Rxd5 Nc7, Black is no worse and may even have an advantage.

21...Bd7

Forced; if 21...Re8 or 21...Rb7 then 22 Rxe7! wins, while 21...e6 fails to 22 Ne7+ and Nxg6+.

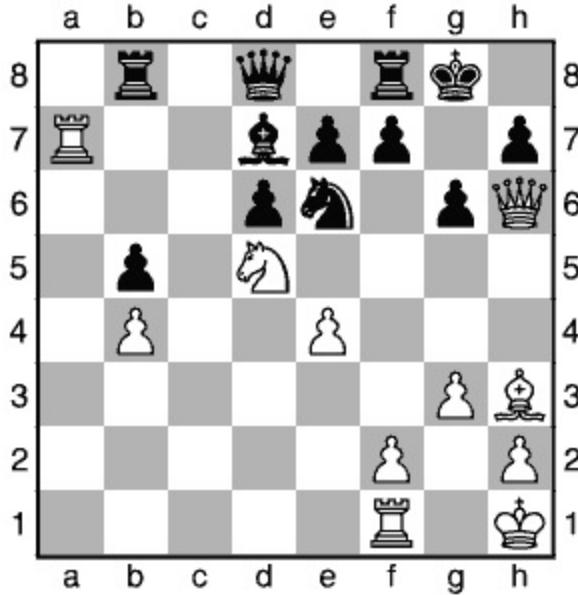


White to move

22 f4?!

This was a difficult decision. White's active pieces exert considerable pressure on Black's position, but there is no clearly preferable continuation. I considered, in addition to the text-move, 22 Bh3 and 22 Rd1 as the likely contenders, but even after considerable thought I found it hard to decide between them. Black could have equalised in the game continuation, so would one of the other moves have been better? The analysis runs: 1) 22 **Bh3** and now:

- 1a) 22...**Bxh3?** 23 Rxe7 and wins, but not 23 Nxe7+? Qxe7 24 Rxe7 Bxf1, which is very good for Black.
- 1b) 22...**e6?** 23 Rxd7 and wins.
- 1c) 22...**Ne6** 23 Ra7 (Black is badly tied up now) and now:



Black to move

1c1) 23...Ra8 24 Rxa8 Qxa8 25 Nxe7+ Kh8 26 Nd5 is positionally very good for White.

1c2) 23...f5 24 exf5 gxf5 25 Re1!, threatening both 26 Rxd7 and 26 Rxe6, wins for White.

1c3) 23...Rc8 24 f4 Nc7 25 f5 with decisive threats.

1c4) 23...Re8 24 f4 Bc6 25 f5 (not 25 Rxe7 Bxd5 with a comfortable defence) 25...Bxd5 26 exd5 Nc7 (or 26...Nf8 27 Rxe7! and wins) 27 fxg6 hxg6 28 Rxc7 Qxc7 29 Be6 fxe6 30 Qxg6+ Kh8 31 Rf7 and White mates after a couple of spite checks.

1d) 22...f5! (the only move, but adequate) and now neither 23 Rd1 e6! nor 23 exf5 Nxf5 offers anything clear to White.

2) 22 **Rd1** Nc6 (22...Ne6 23 Ra7, followed by f4, gives White a dangerous attack as in line '1c' above) 23 Bh3 (23 Rc1 Ne5 is unclear) 23...f5! (23...Bxh3 24 Rxe7! and 23...Ne5 24 f4 Bxh3 25 fxe5 Bd7 26 exd6 exd6 27 Rxd7 both win for White) 24 exf5 gxf5 25 Rc1! Ne5 (after 25...Qe8 26 Bg2, Black has to play 26...Ne5 in any case) 26 Qg5+ Kh8 (26...Ng6 27 Nxe7+ favours White) 27 Qxe7 Qxe7 28 Nxe7 Rbe8 (28...Nd3 29 R1c2! Ra8 {29...Nxb4 30 Rb2 Nd3 31 Rd2} 30 Rxd7 Ra1+ 31 Bf1 Rxf1+ 32 Kg2 and White has a definite advantage in the ending) 29 Nd5 Nd3 30 R1c3 Nxf2+ 31 Kg2 Nxh3 32 Rxd7 Ng5 and the most likely result is a draw.

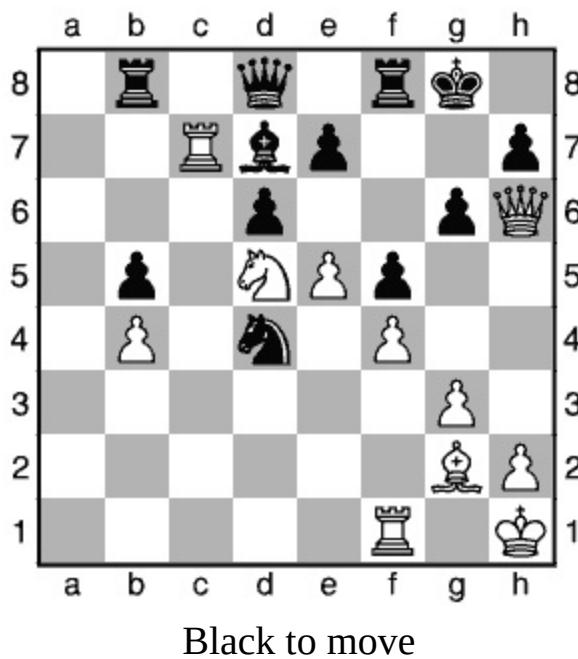
The conclusion is that the alternatives are not clearly better than the text-move.

22...f5

An absolutely necessary precaution; against 22...Ne6 White is preparing another thunderbolt – 23 f5 Nxc7 24 f6 and now 24...Ne6 25 fxe7 wins for White, so Black has to give up his queen with 24...exf6 25 Nxf6+ Qxf6, although White then has the advantage. 22...Rc8 leads to a similar position after 23 f5 Rxc7 24 f6 exf6 25 Nxf6+ Qxf6 26 Rxf6, again with the better game for White.

23 e5

Once again 23 Rd1 e6! would ruin everything; White must be ready to meet ...e6 by Nf6+.



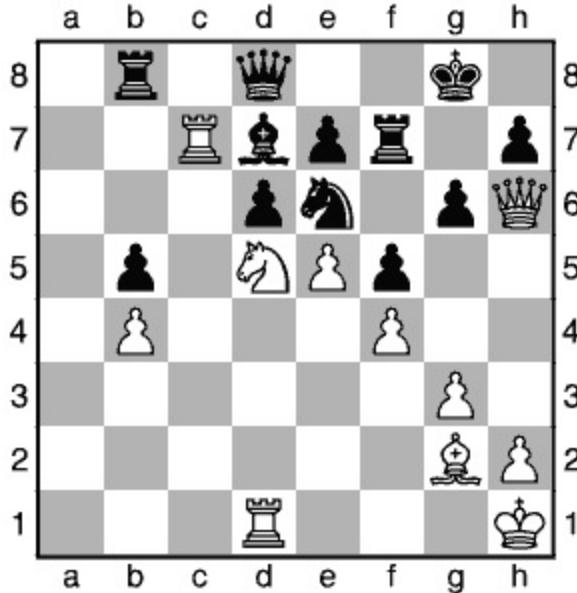
23...Rf7

The alternative was 23...Rc8, but after 24 Rxc8 (24 Rb7!? is another possibility, since 24...Nc6 loses to 25 exd6 exd6 26 Nb6!) 24...Bxc8 25 Rd1 Black still does not have an absolutely clear-cut route to the draw:

1) 25...dxe5 26 fxe5 Ne6 27 Nf6+ exf6 28 Rxd8 Rxd8 29 Bc6 leads to a murky position in which, however, only White has winning chances.

2) 25...Ne6 26 Qh4 Rf7 27 exd6 exd6 28 Qxd8+ Nxd8 29 Kg1! (29 Nb6 Rc7 30 Nxc8 Rxc8 31 Bf1 Nf7 32 Bxb5 Rb8 33 Bc4 Rxb4 34 Bxf7+ Kxf7 35 Rxd6 is just a draw) and White retains some pressure, for example 29...Ba6 30 Nc3 Rc7 31 Rxd6 Rxc3 32 Rxd8+ Kf7 33 Rd7+ Kg8 34 Ra7 and Black has still not escaped.

24 Rd1 Ne6



White to move

25 Ra7

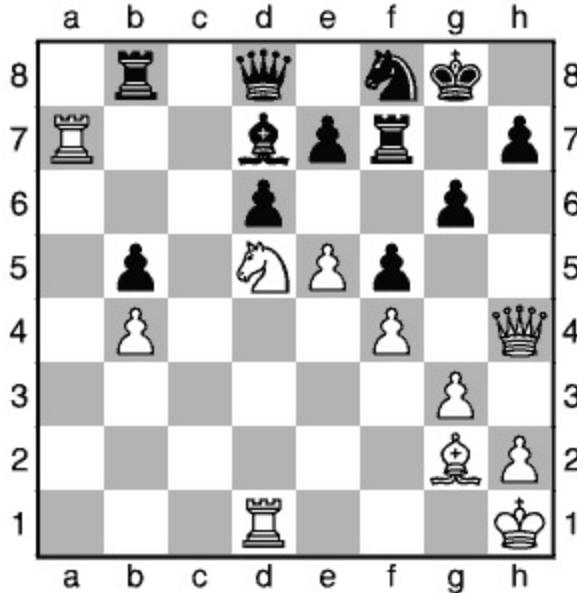
White exerts considerable pressure on Black's position, but for the moment there are no serious threats so Black has one tempo with which to try to free himself.

25...Nf8?

This is too passive. Black should have taken the opportunity to activate his rook with 25...Rc8. Then 26 Rxd7 Qxd7 27 Nb6 Qc7 28 Nxc8 Qxc8 29 exd6 exd6 30 Bd5 looks awkward, but Black is saved by 30...Qc3!, exploiting the exposed position of White's king. Nor is 26 Nb6 Qxb6 27 Rxd7 especially effective, for example 27...Nf8 28 Bd5 Kh8! 29 Bxf7 Qf2! 30 Ra1 Qf3+ with perpetual check. If White plays more quietly, then Black can further improve his position by ...Rc2.

Having missed this chance, Black starts to run into difficulties.

26 Qh4!



Black to move

Now Black is almost paralysed by the pressure from every side, even though White has no immediate threat. His next move eliminates various tactical possibilities, such as Nxe7+ or Bd5, which crop up in several variations.

26...Kg7

After **26...Rc8** 27 exd6 (27 Rxd7 Qxd7 28 Nb6 Qc7 29 Nxc8 Qxc8 30 exd6 is met by 30...e6! and White's queen is trapped out of play; Black will continue with ...Qc2, gaining counterplay) 27...exd6 28 Qxd8 Rxd8 29 Nc7 Be6 (29...Kg7 transposes to the game) 30 Nxb5 Rxa7 31 Nxa7 White has a slight endgame advantage because of his outside passed pawn and more active bishop.

Nor does **26...dxe5** 27 fxe5 Qe8 relieve the pressure, for example 28 Nc7 Qc8 29 Qh6 e6 30 Na6 Rb6 31 Nc5 Bc6 32 Rxf7 Kxf7 33 Qg5 Bxg2+ 34 Kxg2 Qa8+ 35 Kh3 Qf3 36 Rd8 and Black has no choice but to liquidate into a lost ending by 36...Qg4+. Obviously this line is not forced, but it indicates that White's pressure provides ample compensation for the pawn.

27 Nc7

This opens the d-file and thus threatens a liquidation starting with exd6, which regains the pawn while keeping considerable pressure. Black decides that there is little he can do about this, so he forces White to undertake the liquidation immediately, lest White improve his position with further preparatory moves, *e.g.* Kg1.

27...Rc8

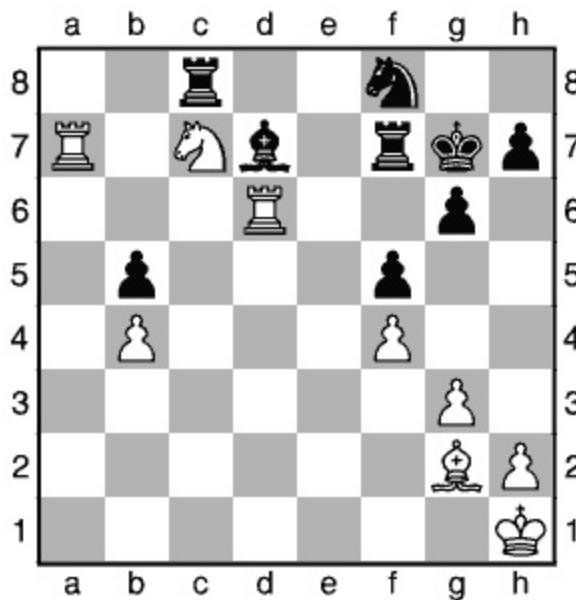
Indeed, the alternatives are also bad: 27...Ne6 28 exd6 exd6 29 Qxd8 Nxd8 (29...Rxd8 30 Bd5) 30 Rxd6 is even worse than the game, or 27...dxe5 28 fxe5 Qc8 29 Qd4 Be6 30 Na6 and White wins material.

28 exd6 exd6

29 Qxd8 Rxd8

30 Rxd6 Rc8

The line 30...Rb8 (30...Re7 31 Bf1 Rb8 32 Na6 Rd8 33 Bxb5 just loses a pawn) 31 Bd5 Re7 (31...Rf6 32 Ne6+ loses material immediately) 32 Ne6+ Nxe6 33 Rxd7 Rxd7 34 Rxd7+ Kf6 35 Rd6 Re8 leads to an amusing position in which Black is utterly paralysed. White can advance his king to e3 and then time the liquidation on e6 to give a winning king and pawn ending.



White to move

Even a glance at the position is enough to show the difference between White's aggressive and Black's defensive pieces. The best Black can really hope for is to get away with 'only' losing his b-pawn; in many lines the consequences are even worse.

31 Kg1!

Avoiding a cunning trap set by Black. If White had attempted to play as in the previous note, by 31 Bd5 Re7 32 Ne6+ Kh6 (32...Nxe6? 33 Rxd7 34 Rxd7+ Kf6 35 Rd6 Rc1+ {35...Re8 transposes to the previous note} 36 Kg2 Re1 37 Kf2 Ke7 38 Rb6 wins) 33 Nxf8, then Black could have drawn: 33...Rc1+ 34 Kg2 Rc2+ 35 Kf3 (35 Kh3? even loses) 35...Rc3+, etc.

However, the black pieces are terribly restricted, so White can take the

time to improve his position before cashing in by winning the b-pawn.

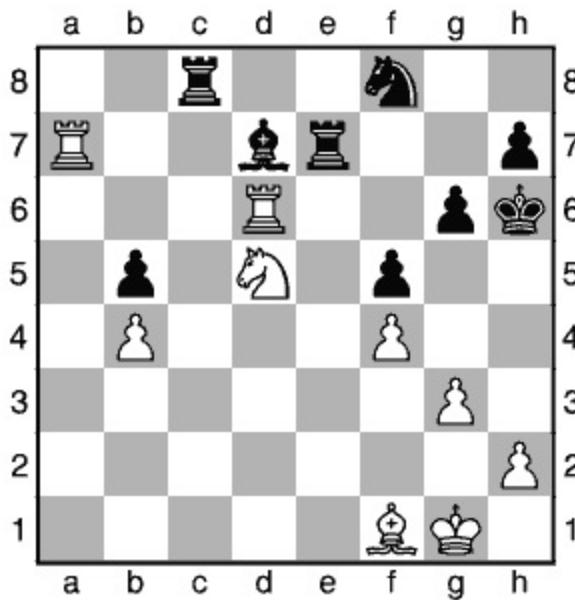
31...Kh6

Trying to get his king away from the knight check at e6. The other freeing attempts are 31...Rf6, met by 32 Nxb5 Rc1+ 33 Bf1 (this line makes use of Kg1), and 31...Re7 32 Bf1, which will transpose into the game after 32...Kh6. Black has nothing better than this transposition, since 32...Kf7 loses to 33 Nd5 Re1 34 Rxd7+ Nxd7 35 Rxd7+ Kf8 36 Kf2.

32 Bf1 Re7

32...Be8 33 Nxb5 Rxa7 34 Nxa7 would have lasted longer, but the position is winning for White since Black's pieces are still very passively placed.

33 Nd5!



Black to move

Suddenly there is a more attractive and convincing win than continuing to torment the b-pawn. White simply resumes his attack.

33...Re1

34 Nb6 Rc6

If 34...Rcc1, 35 Nxd7 Rxf1+ 36 Kg2 Rg1+ 37 Kh3 and White's attack hits h7 one tempo before Black's reaches h2!

35 Nxd7 Rxd6

36 Nxf8 Kh5

37 Rxh7+ Kg4

38 Kf2 Rxf1+

39 Kxf1 Kf3

40 Rd7 Rc6

41 Rd3+ Ke4

42 Ke2 1-0

I consciously adopted a more solid style at Baden and followed my favoured strategy of taking the odd quick draw. The reward was 10/15 without loss, an excellent score. Spassky and Beliavsky played extremely well to make 10½ points, but I was more than satisfied with my third place, especially taking into account that my rating of 2515 was only the 11th highest in the tournament. For the first time I had the feeling that I didn't have to lose to the leading players. This tournament was also notable because I lent £600 to Florin Gheorghiu ('you're going to win such a nice prize, you can afford to ...'), an action which was generally regarded as ill-considered. However, Florin did return it!

Next was the Malta Olympiad. Mestel lost his ticket and passport on the way to the airport, and David Anderton was again impressive as he ushered Mestel through the various bureaucratic obstacles.

The Malta Olympiad had a remarkable playing hall. The organisers had separated the spectators from the players by a rope strung between plaster bollards. Unfortunately, the rope was quite heavy while the bollards were not. As soon as a spectator leant against the rope, one bollard would topple over, more often than not triggering a chain reaction. About every half-hour you heard a 'Crash – crash – crash -...' as a succession of bollards toppled over, smashing into pieces when they hit the ground. By the end of the first round, the floor was covered with plaster chips, which made a nice crunching sound as you walked over them.

A further problem was revealed later in the event when the weather turned nasty – the roof of the tournament hall had hundreds of leaks. At the start of the round the four boards of each match would be lined up in a neat row. However, these neat rows would gradually dissolve as the players repeatedly shifted their board in an effort to find a chessboard-sized area free from drips.

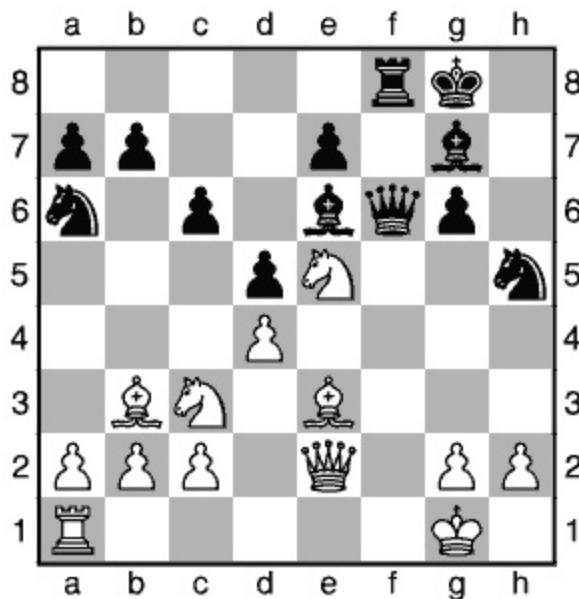
During the match against Hungary, Miles adjourned in a very dubious position against Portisch. We started analysing the position in Miles's absence. Suddenly Miles joined us, saw what we were doing and advised us not to waste our time as he had sealed 'Resigns'. On resumption, David

Anderton did his best to avoid a diplomatic incident by congratulating Portisch on his victory with one hand while attempting to confiscate Miles's score sheet with his other. However, Portisch was not to be denied: he insisted on seeing the sealed move. When the 'Resigns' became visible, he just grunted as if he had expected nothing else. This was one of David's few failures as captain.

I scored 7½/11 at Malta, and the English team finished joint sixth, quite good considering we were effectively a man short: Keene scored 0/2 and then declared himself out of sorts. He played no further games in Malta.

My successes at Hastings, the British Championship and Manchester led to a second successive win in the Cutty Sark Grand Prix. Once again Murray Chandler finished in second place.

I did not improve my score with my 5/6 at Islington, but there was a nice combination:



White to move

M. Surtees – J. Nunn

Islington Open 1980

White could have gone for a comfortable ending by 18 Rf1, but instead he decided to grab a pawn.

18 Nxc6 bxc6

19 Qxa6 Qxd4!!

20 Qxa7

This is forced: 20 Bxd4 Bxd4+ 21 Kh1 Ng3+ 22 hxg3 Kg7 leads to mate, while 20 Nxd5 Bxd5 doesn't alter the situation and only costs White a piece.

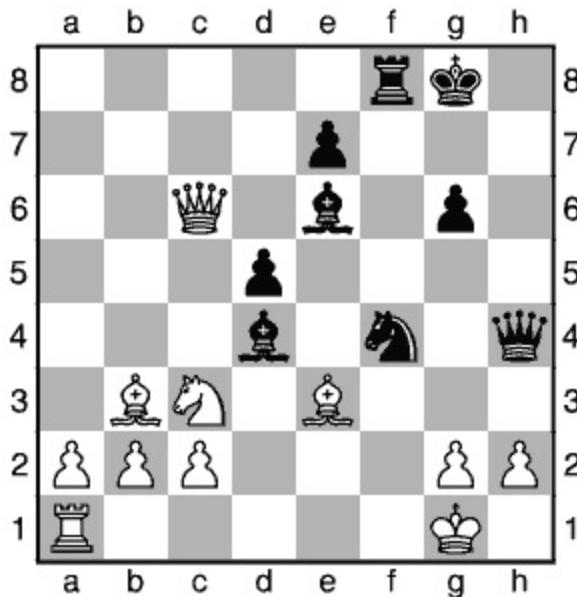
20...Qh4

21 Qa4 Nf4

22 Qxc6

Best, since 22 g3 Nh3+ 23 Kg2 Qh5 and 22 Bxf4 Rxf4 23 g3 Bd4+ 24 Qxd4 Rf1+ 25 Kxf1 Qxd4 are lost for White.

22...Bd4!



White to move

The second unexpected offer on d4.

23 Bxd4?

Losing immediately. 23 Nxd5 was the critical move, when Black's only continuation to gain the advantage is 23...Kh7!! (avoiding checks) 24 Kh1 (not 24 Bxd4 Ne2+ 25 Kh1 Ng3+ 26 Kg1 Qxd4+ forcing mate) 24...Bxd5 25 Bxd5 Bxe3 and the piece is worth more than the three pawns as Black still has a dangerous attack (26 g3 can be met by 26...Qh3).

23...Qg4 24 Qxe6+ Qxe6 25 Bf2 Qg4 26 Bg3 e6 27 Re1 Nh5 28 Be5 Qf5 29 Nd1 Nf4 30 Bxf4 Qxf4 31 c3 Rf6 32 a4 Kg7 33 h3 Qd2 34 Rf1 Rxf1+ 35 Kxf1 e5 36 a5 e4 37 a6 e3 38 Nxe3 Qxe3 39 Bd1 Qc1 40 Ke1 Qxb2 0-1

After this the Cutty Sark Grand Prix became the Leigh Grand Prix, but I

only occasionally made a serious effort in it. The score needed to win became higher and higher, and could no longer be achieved by part-time participation in weekend events.

The long-awaited British Championship play-off match against Bill Hartston took place in February 1981. The playing conditions at the RAC Club were excellent. I had the advantage that a 3-3 tie would give me the title on tie-break from the original event. Having draw odds is a significant advantage in a short match and in the end I won by 3½-2½. Only one game was decisive.

I travelled to Helsinki in March, and ended up joint first with Matulović on 8/11 – a very satisfactory result, but I was still not getting the top-level experience that I needed for a further step forwards.

In the summer I had visions of winning the Grand Prix for the third time, hence my trips to Nottingham (1st with 5½/6), Harrogate (4½/6) and Borehamwood (1st equal with 4½/5). However, it was at Bristol in June that I played my one of my most interesting games of the year:

Game 11

J. Nunn – G. Anthony

Bristol Weekend Open 1981

Sicilian, Löwenthal

- 1 e4 c5**
- 2 Nf3 Nc6**
- 3 d4 cxd4**
- 4 Nxd4 e5**
- 5 Nb5 Nf6**



White to move

At the time this game was played, 4...e5 usually indicated an intention to play the Löwenthal Variation, 5...a6 6 Nd6+ Bxd6 7 Qxd6 Qf6, one of the very oldest Sicilian lines. Later on, the so-called Kalashnikov Variation (5...d6) was invented, but in 1981 this had not been conceived as a coherent system.

5...Nf6 is an unusual move, which invites White to transpose into the Pelikan by 6 N1c3 (the usual move-order is 4...Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5). It is quite hard to see what the advantage is in playing 4...e5 first, since the only lines which are avoided are the harmless alternative knight moves after 4...Nf6 5 Nc3 e5. However, I began to wonder if I could take advantage of the unusual move-order in some way. My opponent was a specialist in the Pelikan, so there was a particular incentive to find a viable alternative to the transposition.

6 Nc3?!

The continuation which I eventually came up with is certainly not objectively best. The idea was to avoid having the b5-knight stuck out of play on a3, a common occurrence in the Pelikan, but this move is just too passive to cause Black any trouble. First of all, the voluntary knight retreat saves Black a tempo, because he does not now have to play ...a6; moreover, there is no threat of Nd6+ so Black need not play ...d6, which enables him to develop his f8-bishop more actively to c5 or b4.

ECO recommends the move 6 Bg5, which I did consider but rejected because of 6...Bc5 (6...a6 7 Bxf6 Qa5+ 8 N5c3 gxf6 9 Bc4 b5 10 Bb3 Nd4 11

0-0 Bb7 12 Nd5 favoured White in Dgebuadze-Khamdanov, Ashkhabad 1990). Then ECO gives two lines as leading to a clear advantage for White:



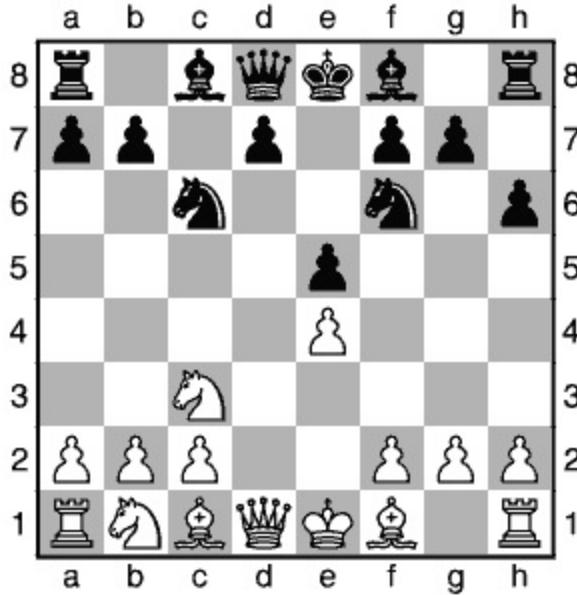
White to move

1) The first is 7 **Bxf6** Qxf6 8 Qd2 0-0 9 Nc7 Rb8 10 Nd5 Qg6 11 Nbc3. However, White has wasted a great deal of time bringing his knight to d5 and Black can exploit this by 11...b5! (if White is given a chance to consolidate then he will stand very well) 12 Bxb5 (the threat was 12...b4 winning the e-pawn, and 12 f3 weakens the dark squares) 12...Nd4 13 Bd3 Rxb2 (13...Qxg2 14 0-0-0 is good for White) 14 Na4 and it seems that Black is losing material, but now comes a surprising combination: 14...Rxa2! (14...Qxg2? 15 0-0-0 still wins) 15 Rxa2 Qxg2 and Black wins. It seems to me that Black's tactical chances more than compensate for White's grip on d5.

2) 7 **Nd6+** is ECO's other suggestion, leading to the continuation 7...Ke7 8 Nf5+ Kf8 9 Nc3 d6 10 Ne3 h6 11 Bxf6 Qxf6 12 Ncd5. White stands very well; his knights occupy fine squares at e3 and d5, while Black must waste time playing ...g6 and ...Kg7. This is not the whole story, however, as after 7 Nd6+ Black can win a pawn by 7...Bxd6 8 Qxd6 Nxe4 9 Bxd8 Nxd6. The two bishops provide White with some compensation, but after 10 Bc7 Nf5 11 Nc3 d6 12 Bd3 Ncd4 White still has to prove that he has enough for the pawn.

The conclusion is that White has nothing better than 6 N1c3.

6...h6



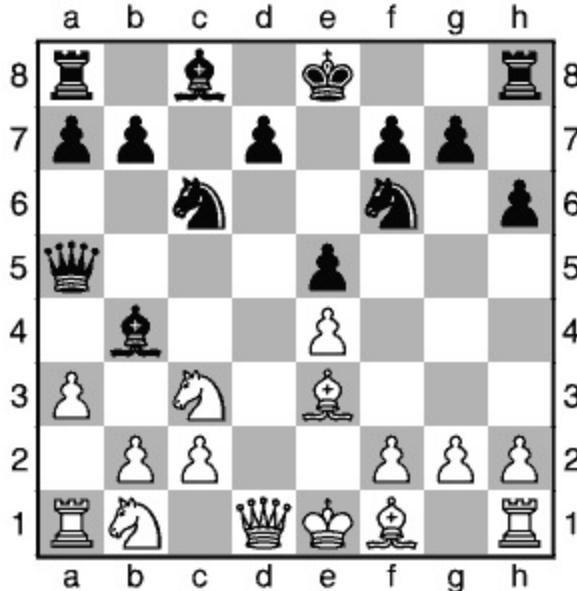
White to move

Black spends a tempo preventing $Bg5$, but $6\dots Bc5$ would have served the same purpose ($7 Bg5? Qb6$) while at the same time excluding the white bishop from its natural square on $e3$. Another reasonable system of development, fully sufficient for equality, would be $6\dots Be7 7 Bc4 d6$, followed by $\dots Be6$.

7 Be3 Bb4

The plan of $\dots Be7$, $\dots d6$ and $\dots Be6$ would still offer comfortable equality because White has a problem organising his knights, for example $Nd5$ and $N1c3$ cannot be played without first defending the e -pawn. Instead, Black initiates a very different kind of game by developing his bishop outside the pawn chain. While this is an acceptable idea, Black must take care, because prematurely exchanging this bishop could expose serious dark-square weaknesses if he is still undeveloped.

8 a3 Qa5!



White to move

The most accurate move, since after 8...Ba5 9 Bc4 Black is in danger of suffering from weak dark squares:

1) **9...0-0** 10 Bc5 (10 0-0 is equal) 10...d6 (10...Re8 11 Bd6 is favourable for White) 11 Bxd6 Nxe4 12 Bxf8 Qxd1+ 13 Kxd1 Nxf2+ 14 Ke2 Nxh1 15 Bc5 and it is hard to see how Black is going to rescue his knight.

2) **9...Nxe4** 10 Qd5 Ng5 11 Bxg5 Qxg5 12 Qxf7+ Kd8 13 0-0 is to White's advantage. Note that without a3 and ...Ba5, Black could meet Qd5 by ...Nd6 in this line.

3) **9...Bb6** 10 Bxb6 Qxb6 11 Nd2 0-0 (11...Qxb2? loses after 12 Nb5) 12 Bb3, followed by Nc4, and White has an edge thanks to his excellent control of d5.

9 axb4

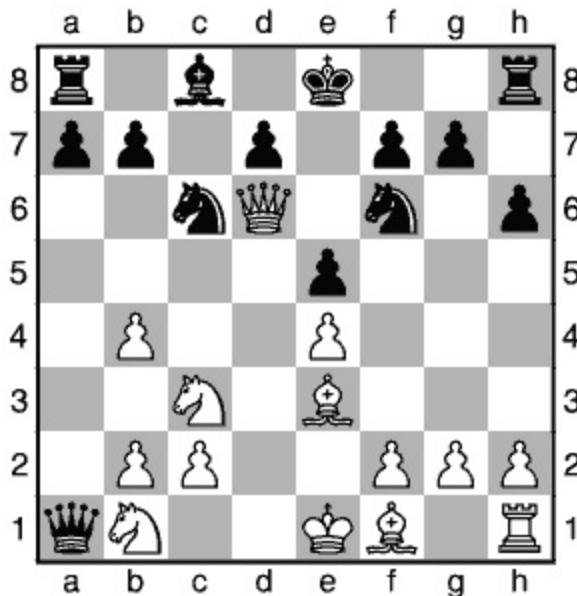
The most combative move, and the only one to present Black with any real problems. The alternatives lead to approximate equality:

1) **9 Bd3** d5 10 exd5 Bxc3+ 11 Nxc3 Nxd5 12 Bd2 Nxc3 13 Bxc3 Qc7 and here the two bishops are not of any great significance, as Black has no problems completing his development.

2) **9 Bd2** Bc5! (since the bishop is of no further use at b4, and because 10 Nd5? and 10 Bc4? are both answered by 10...Bxf2+) 10 Bd3 (10 Nb5 Qb6 achieves nothing) 10...Qc7 (10...Qb6 11 0-0! is less accurate, since 11...Qxb2? loses to 12 Ra2 Qb6 13 Na4, and 11...Bd4 12 Na4, followed by c3, is good for White), followed by ...0-0, with equal chances.

9...Qxa1

10 Qd6



Black to move

In compensation for the exchange, the black king is trapped in the middle, his queen cannot easily come back into play and the mobilisation of his other forces can only proceed slowly. Although analysis indicates that perfect defence should lead to perpetual check, the difficulties facing Black over-the-board are quite sufficient to justify the sacrifice.

Were Black restricted to passive play, the sacrifice would no doubt be correct, but Black has two aggressive replies, namely 10...Nxe4 and 10...Qxb2. Other moves are definitely inferior, for example:

1) 10...Ng4? 11 Bc1 imprisons the queen and threatens, among other things, to win the e-pawn by a combination of b5 and Be2. One line runs 11...Nd4 (after 11...a6 12 Bc4 White's initiative only increases) 12 h3 Nxc2+ 13 Kd1 Nxf2+ 14 Kxc2 Nxh1 15 Nd5 forcing mate.

2) 10...b6 (against slow play White has a basic attacking plan of Bb5, Bxc6 and Bc5; the early development of the light-squared bishop also allows White to castle, when White has good positional compensation for the exchange even without an immediate attack) 11 Bb5 Bb7 12 0-0 Qxb2 13 Bxc6 Bxc6 (13...dxc6 14 Qc7 Ba6 15 Bc1 Qa1 16 Qxc6+ Ke7 17 Qc7+, followed by 18 b5, and White wins) 14 b5 Bxe4 (14...Bb7 15 Qc7 Bc8 16 Qxe5+ Kf8 17 Qd6+ Kg8 18 Bd4 with a very dangerous attack) 15 Qxe5+ Kf8 16 Bd4 and again White's initiative is menacing.

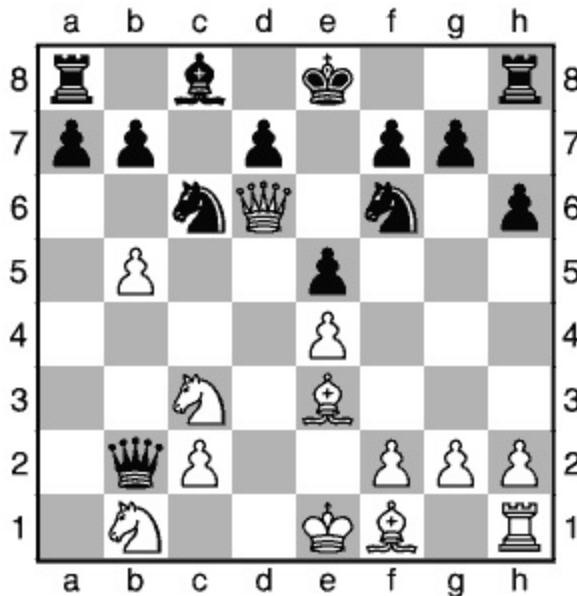
In short, Black's only respectable moves are the ones which attempt an

immediate disruption of White's position.

10...Nxe4

The alternative is 10...Qxb2 and now:

1) **11 b5!** (this appears strongest) and now Black can reply:



Black to move

1a) **11...Nxe4** 12 Nxe4 Qxb1+ 13 Kd2 and now:

1a1) **13...Qb4+** 14 Qxb4 Nxb4 15 Bc5 Nd5 16 Nd6+ Ke7 17 Nxc8+ Ke6 18 Nd6, which gives White a very good ending because his pieces are active and the black rooks cannot easily come into play.

1a2) **13...Nb4?** 14 Bd3 Qxh1 15 Bc5 Nd5 (15...Kd8 16 Qe7+ Kc7 17 Qxe5+ and mates) 16 Qxd5 and Black cannot organise any defence.

1a3) **13...Ne7** 14 Bc5 Ng6 15 Bd3! Qxh1 (15...Qa2 16 Qc7) 16 Nf6+ gxf6 17 Bxg6 Kd8 18 Qxf6+, with the familiar mating pattern appearing again.

1b) **11...Nb4?** also fails after 12 Bc5 Nxc2+ (12...Qc1+ 13 Ke2 Qxc2+ 14 Kf3 Nfd5 15 Qxe5+ Kd8 16 Qxg7 Re8 17 exd5 wins) 13 Kd1 Ne3+ (13...Kd8 14 Qe7+ is again mate) 14 fxe3 Qb3+ 15 Kc1 Qe6 16 Bc4 Qxd6 17 Bxd6 and wins.

1c) **11...Nd4** (the best chance) with the lines:

1c1) **12 Qxe5+?** Ne6 and now White has to play 13 Qd6 to prevent Black from castling. The upshot is that White has spent two tempi capturing a not especially important pawn. After 13...b6!, Black again stops Bc5 and threatens to mobilise by ...Bb7 and ...Rc8. That would mark the end of

White's attack, and indeed he seems to have nothing better than 14 e5 Ne4 15 Nxe4 Qxb1+ 16 Kd2 Bb7, with insufficient compensation for the exchange (17 Nf6+ gxf6 18 exf6 0-0-0!).

1c2) **12 Bd3!**. White intends to castle and bring his remaining forces into play before proceeding with the attack, possibly by means of f4. Now Black has many reasonable moves, so an exhaustive analysis is not possible, but it seems to me that it is practically impossible for Black to free his position and bring his king into safety.

2) **11 Bb5** (probably only enough for a draw) and now:



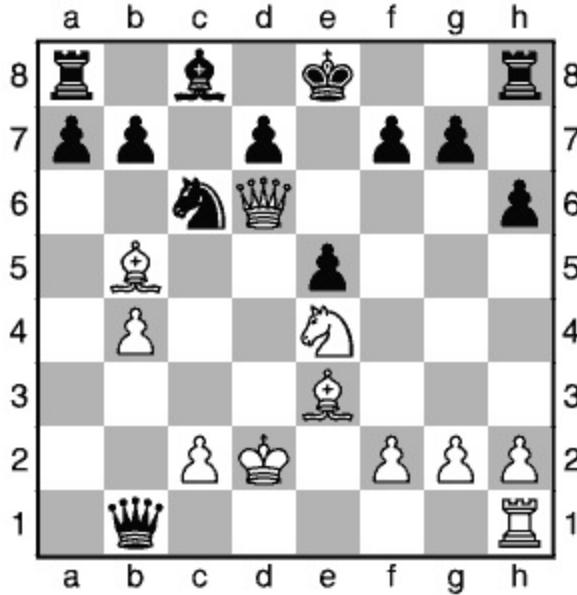
Black to move

2a) **11...Qxb4** 12 Bc5 Nxe4 (the only move) 13 Bxb4 Nxd6 14 Bxd6 and White's bind provides ample compensation for Black's material advantage.

2b) **11...Nxb4** 12 Bc5 Nxc2+ 13 Kf1 Qc1+ 14 Nd1 Nd5 15 Qxd5 with dangerous threats.

2c) **11...Nd4** 12 0-0! (after 12 Qxe5+ Ne6 13 Qd6 Nxe4 {or else White can simply castle} 14 Nxe4 Qxb1+ 15 Kd2 Qxh1 16 Nc5 Nf8! it is hard to see how White can break through) and again Black's position appears very awkward.

2d) **11...Nxe4** 12 Nxe4 Qxb1+ 13 Kd2 and now:



Black to move

2d1) **13...Qxh1** 14 Bc5 and the white attack is sufficient for a draw, but it is doubtful if he can play for a win. One line runs 14...Kd8 15 Bxc6 Re8! (15...bxc6 16 Qe7+ Kc7 17 Qxe5+ leads to mate after 17...d6 18 Bxd6+ Kb7 19 Nc5+ Kb6 20 Bc7+ or 17...Kb7 18 Nd6+ Kb8 19 Nc4+) 16 Bxd7 Bxd7 17 Bb6+ axb6 18 Qxb6+ leads to perpetual check. 14...b6 15 Bxc6 bxc5 16 Bxa8 Qxh2 is another possibility and now after either 17 Qxc5 Qf4+ 18 Kd1 Kd8, or 17 g3, White's attack provides enough compensation but no more.

2d2) **13...Qxb4+** 14 Qxb4 Nxb4 15 Bc5, and the same peculiar, unbalanced ending crops up again. Although Black has an extra pawn this time, it would seem that White's aggressive minor pieces assure him at least equal chances, for example: 15...Na6 16 Bxa6 bxa6 17 Nd6+ Ke7 18 Nxc8+ Ke6 19 Nd6, and White controls all the useful squares down the b-file and can support his knight by c4, Ba3 and c5 if need be; also the a-pawns are very weak. If 15...Nc6 then 16 Nd6+ Ke7 17 Nxc8+ Kf6 18 Nd6 b6 19 Ba3 a6 20 Bd3 (not 20 Bc4 b5) and 20...b5 can be met by 21 Bc5. Again the rooks will have great difficulty coming into play.



White to move

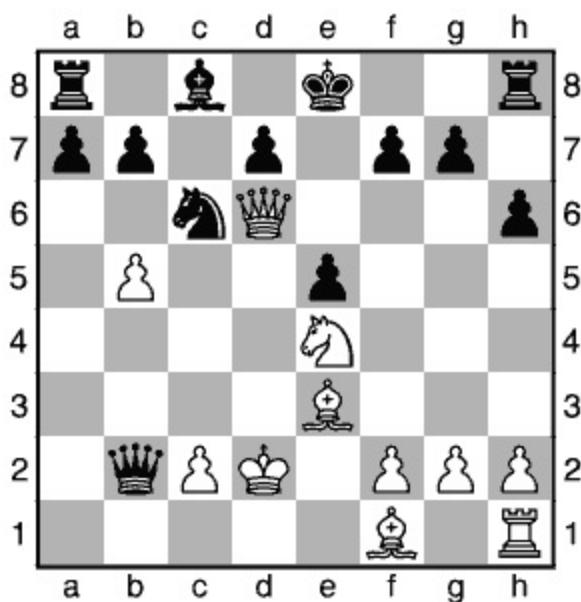
In the event Black decides to take the e-pawn at once, a decision which is undoubtedly correct in that the result should now be a draw.

11 Nxe4 Qxb1+

12 Kd2 Qxb2

13 b5

Better than 13 Bb5, when Black does not have to transpose to [line '2d2'](#) above by 13...Qxb4+, but can play instead 13...Nxb4 14 Ba4 Na6! (14...b6 15 Nc3!, followed by Rb1, is very awkward for Black) when White has no obvious continuation.



Black to move

13...Nb4

The most obvious (and best) move. Others:

1) **13...Na5** (preventing 14 Bc5 because of 14...Nb3+) 14 Be2 a6!? (14...Nb3+ 15 Kd3 does not help Black) 15 b6 with a very complex position in which Black's considerable material advantage is offset by White's total grip on the dark squares. I would prefer to be White.

2) **13...Ne7** 14 Bc5 Nf5 (the alternative 14...Ng6 is very good for White after 15 Bc4 b6 16 Ba3 Qd4+ 17 Qxd4 exd4 18 Nd6+ or simply 15 Qc7!) 15 Qd5, and Black, very short of moves anyway, is faced with the threats of g4 and Bc4. His position appears most uncomfortable.

3) **13...Qb4+** transposes into the inferior form of the ending discussed above in line '1a' of the previous note.

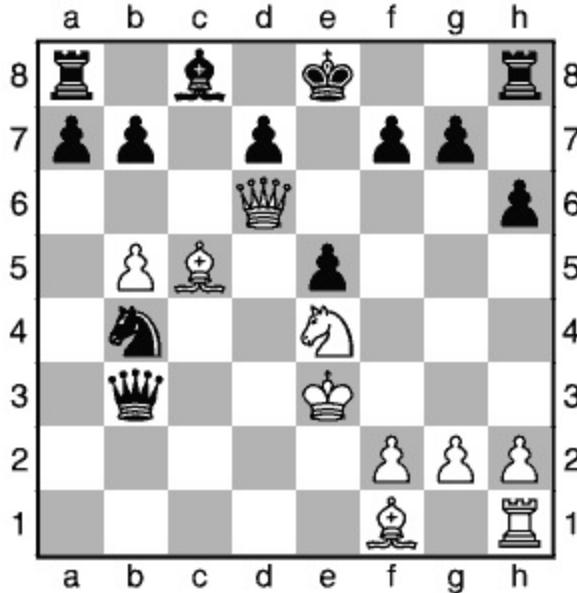
13...Nb4 does not transpose into [line '1a2'](#) above because the black queen is now on b2 instead of b1. With the queen not exposed to the rook at h1, it follows that 14 Bd3 is now useless.

14 Bc5!

Definitely the best chance. After 14 Qc5 (covering c2 and threatening Nd6+) 14...b6 (14...d5 is less clear after 15 Nd6+ Kd7 16 Nxf7 b6 17 Qd6+ Ke8 18 Qg6!) 15 Nd6+ Kf8 16 Qc4 Qxc2+ 17 Qxc2 Nxc2 18 Kxc2 Ke7 White is unable to maintain his blockade on d6, when Black's material advantage tips the balance in his favour.

14...Qxc2+

15 Ke3 Qb3+



White to move

16 Ke2

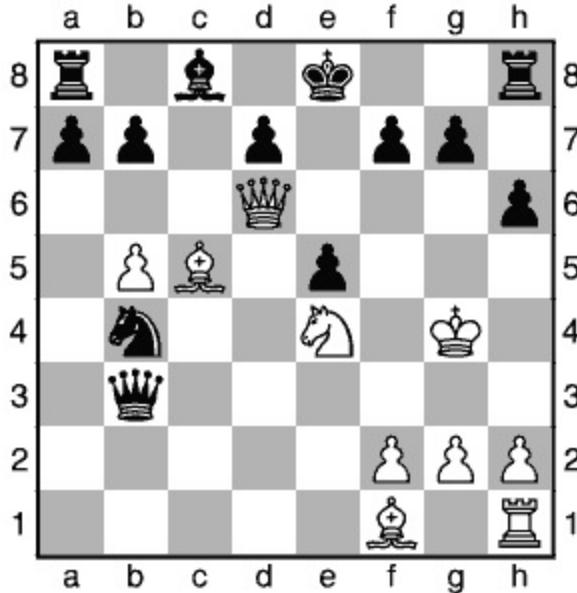
This is the game's crisis. White has no more than a draw and he could allow immediate perpetual check by 16 Kd2 Qc2+, etc. Black cannot do better either; if he tries 16...Nd5 he loses to 17 Qxe5+ Kd8 18 Nd6, and when Black covers the mate on f7 White continues Bc4, with a decisive attack; 18...Qa2+ 19 Kc1 only makes things worse. The text-move stops the perpetual (16...Qc2+ 17 Kf3 Qb3+ transposes to the game), but this winning attempt is clearly risky because White's king obstructs the bishop on f1. However, even with best play Black cannot secure an advantage, so White's play is fully justified.

16...Qc4+?!

Black has his mind set on forcing perpetual check and, believing that White cannot escape from the checks, he continues the bombardment. Had he appreciated that there is no perpetual check, he would surely have realised that now was the moment for 16...Nd5!. It threatens 17...b6, so White has to keep going: 17 Qxe5+ Kd8 18 Nd6, with a roughly equal position after 18...Rf8 19 Kd2 f6 20 Bc4! or 18...Nc7 19 Kd2. In this line it is likely that the game would end in perpetual check in any case.

17 Kf3 Qb3+

18 Kg4



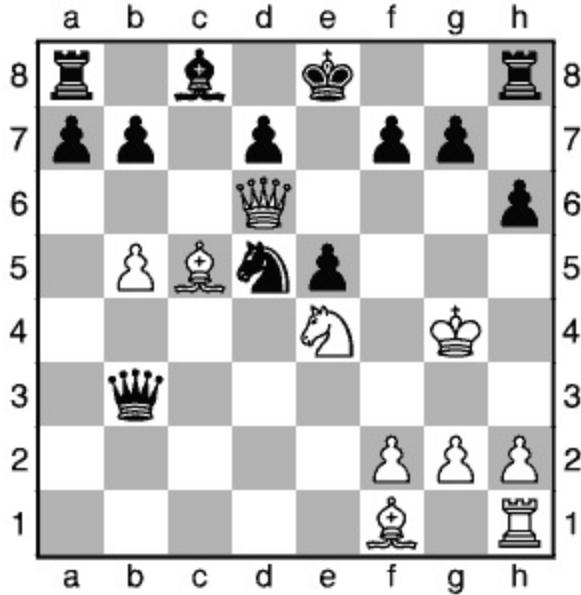
Black to move

A truly incredible venture so early in the game. It is only possible because most of Black's pieces are still on their original squares, but even under these relatively favourable circumstances it is still a tremendous risk. The analysis which follows is very complex, but even so it is far from exhaustive. My feeling is that the critical lines rather favour White. In most lines White has the option of a draw and the only real question is whether he can also try for a win.

18...f5+?

This turns out to be a serious error, after which Black is certainly worse. 18...Qe6+ is also bad after 19 Qxe6+ dxe6 20 Nd6+ Kd7 21 Bxb4, with the same bad ending we have seen before. This leaves only 18...h5+ and 18...Nd5. We can dismiss the former fairly easily: 18...h5+ 19 Kh4 Nd5 (19...g5+ 20 Nxg5 is useless, but after the move played Black has an inferior version of 18...Nd5 in which White's king is on the much safer square h4) 20 Qxe5+ Kd8 21 Ng5 Qa4+ (the only defence against mate) 22 f4 Qxf4+ 23 Qxf4 Nxf4 24 Nxf7+ Ke8 25 Nxh8 and Black has only two pawns for the piece. The knight on h8 can be rescued easily (the immediate threat is 26 Bd6), for example 25...g5+ 26 Kg3 h4+ 27 Kf3 b6 28 Bd6, with a technical win for White.

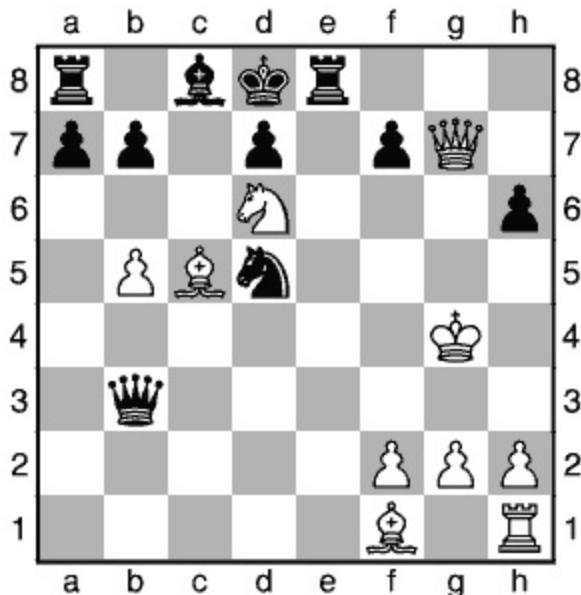
That leaves 18...Nd5, Black's only defence. This position offers such a feast of unusual tactical play that I will go into more detail than would normally be appropriate for one move.



White to move

I will consider two possible continuations for White, 19 Qxe5+ and 19 Be2:

1) **19 Qxe5+** (this is a relatively safe line, which at any rate shows that White is not worse) 19...Kd8 20 Qxg7 (20 Nd6 is not possible owing to 20...Nf6+ 21 Kf4 {21 Kf5 Qe6+ wins} 21...g5+ 22 Kf5 Qc2+ 23 Kxf6 Qg6#) 20...Re8 21 Nd6 and now:



Black to move

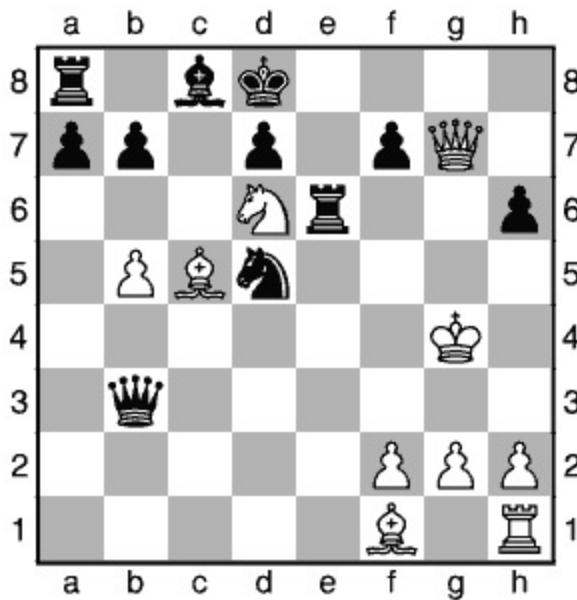
1a) **21...f5+** (in general it is a bad idea to chase the king away from g4, because on that square it is exposed to more checks, especially discovered)

checks along the c8-g4 diagonal) 22 Kh4 Qc3 23 Qxc3 Nxc3 24 Nxe8 Kxe8 25 Bd3 and White very active pieces and dangerous bishops are worth far more than Black's extra pawn.

1b) 21...Qc3 22 Qxc3 Nxc3 (or 22...Rg8+ 23 Kf3 Nxc3 24 Bd3 Kc7 25 Rc1 Na4 26 Ba3+ Kd8 27 Nxf7+ Ke8 28 Nxh6 and White wins) 23 Bd3 Re6 24 Rc1 favours White, for example 24...b6 25 Nxf7+ Ke8 26 Nd6+ Kd8 27 Ba3 Nd5 28 f4 and Black is no nearer developing his queenside pieces.

1c) 21...Qd1+ 22 Kh4 Re6 23 Nxf7+ Kc7 24 Qg3+ d6 25 Nxd6 and White is at least equal. After 25...Qd2 26 Nxc8+ Kxc8 27 Bd3 Qg5+ 28 Qxg5 hxg5+ 29 Kg4, for example, White's active bishops and kingside pawn-mass give him the advantage.

1d) 21...Re6! and now:



White to move

1d1) 22 Qf8+ Kc7 23 b6+ Kc6 24 Bb5+ Kxc5 25 Ne4+! (25 Rc1+ Kb4 leads to nothing for White) 25...Kd4 26 Qc5+ Ke5 27 Bc4 f5+ 28 Kh4 Qxc4 29 Qxc4 fxe4 30 Re1 is unclear, but it is hard to imagine that White cannot force perpetual check if he so wishes.

1d2) 22 Bc4 Qxc4+! 23 Nxc4 Rg6+ 24 Qxg6 fxg6 25 Nd6 b6 and now White can force a draw by 26 Nf7+ Ke8 27 Nd6+, since 27...Kf8 28 Ba3 Kg7 29 Bb2+ Kh7 30 Rd1 is very good for White. However, it is hard to see a genuine winning attempt for White. Black's kingside pawn structure is much better than in the lines given above, and after 26 Ba3 a6, for example, Black's queenside pieces are showing signs of life.

1d3) 22 **Kh4** Qc3 23 Qxc3 Nxc3 24 Bc4 Rf6 25 Rc1 Rf4+ 26 Kh5 Rxc4 27 Nxc4 Nxb5 28 Kxh6 and White certainly has compensation for the pawn – his pieces are more active and his king is well-placed to support the advance of the h-pawn.

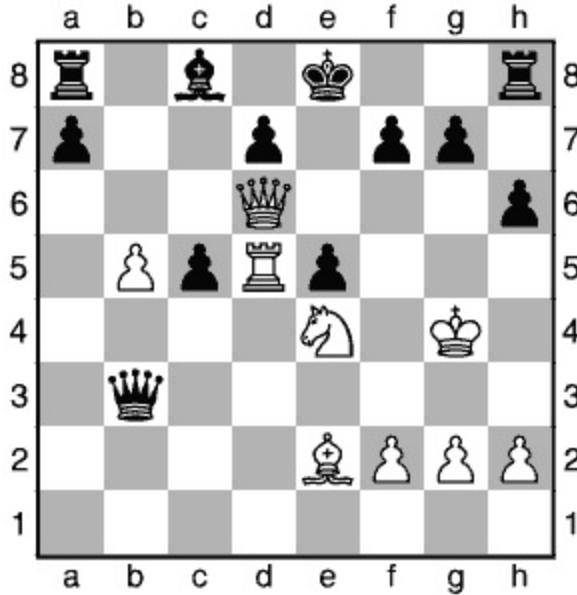
1d4) 22 **Qd4!** (the best winning chance) 22...Nf6+ 23 Kh4 Qd5 24 Qxd5 Nxd5 25 Bc4 Kc7 26 Bxd5 Rxd6 27 Bxd6+ Kxd6 28 Bxf7 with the better ending for White.

What is remarkable about all these lines is that White, despite being material down, benefits from the exchange of queens. One reason is that Black's main handicap, the immobilised queenside pieces, becomes more significant as his few active pieces are swapped off. The other reason is that in an endgame the advanced position of White's king becomes an asset rather than a liability, and the king can often make mincemeat of Black's remaining kingside pawns.

2) 19 **Be2** (this line aims to play for an attack in the middlegame, but Black's counterplay against White's exposed king is an important factor) and now:

2a) 19...**f6** 20 Rd1 (20 Kf5 g6+ 21 Kxg6 Nf4+ 22 Kxf6 Qf7+ 23 Kxe5 Nxe2 24 Nf6+ Kd8 25 Bb6+ axb6 26 Qxb6+ Ke7 27 Qd6+ is a draw)
20...h5+ 21 Kf5 g6+ 22 Kxg6 Nf4+ 23 Kf5 Qe6+ 24 Qxe6+ dxe6+ 25 Kxf6 Rh6+ (25...Nxe2 26 Kg7 Nd4 27 Nf6+ Kd8 28 Kxh8 Bd7 29 f4 is unclear) 26 Kxe5 Nxe2 27 Nd6+, followed by Nf5+ and Nxh6, when White is at least equal.

2b) 19...**b6** 20 Rd1 (20 Ba3 is too slow: 20...Bb7 21 Rd1 Kd8! and the attack grinds to a halt after 22 Rxd5 Qxd5 23 Qe7+ Kc7 24 Bd6+ Kc8)
20...bx_c5 21 Rxd5 (threatening 22 Rxe5+ Kd8 23 Qe7+ Kc7 24 Rxc5+ Kb7 25 Bf3) with the branch:



Black to move

2b1) **21...Kd8?** 22 Nxc5 threatens Nb7+ as well as the queen; if 22...f5+, then 23 Kh5 avoids a queen check and wins.

2b2) **21...f5+?** 22 Kxf5 Rf8+ 23 Kg6 Rf7 24 Rxe5+ Kd8 25 Rxc5 and wins by the two threats of 26 Qc7+ and 26 Bc4 (if 25...Re7, then 26 Qc7+ Ke8 27 Qxc8+).

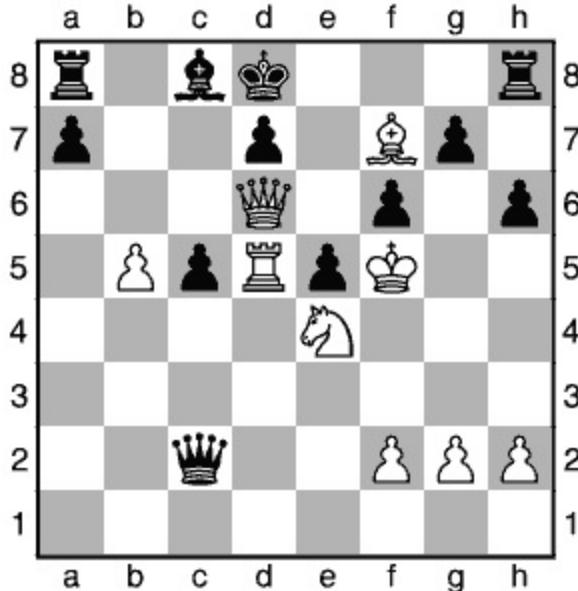
2b3) **21...h5+** (this option is playable) 22 Kg5 Rh6 23 Rxe5+ Re6 24 Bxh5 Rxe5+ 25 Qxe5+ Qe6 26 Qxg7 Qe7+ is very unclear. One possible line runs 27 Nf6+ Kd8 28 Qg8+ Kc7 29 Qxf7 Qxf7 30 Bxf7 Bb7, but this does nothing to clarify the situation. Black still has a slight material advantage, but the five passed pawns in the position are a more important factor.

2b4) **21...f6** 22 Kf5 (with two ideas: Bh5+ and Kg6) with another branch:

2b41) **22...Rf8?** 23 Bh5+ Rf7 24 Nxf6+ gxf6 25 Bxf7+ Kxf7 26 Qxf6+ Kg8 27 Qg6+ Kf8 28 Kf6 and White wins.

2b42) **22...h5** 23 Kg6 Rf8 (or 23...Rb8 24 Kxg7 Rb6 25 Nxf6+ Kd8 26 Qxe5 and wins) 24 Kxg7 Rf7+ 25 Kg8 Re7 26 Bxh5+ Kd8 27 Kf8 is a curious line in which White wins thanks to the direct attacking power of his king.

2b43) **22...Qc2** 23 Bh5+ Kd8 24 Bf7! (White can force a draw by 24 Rxc5 Qa2 25 Qc7+, but this move is a good winning attempt; the threat is 25 Be6) with a final branch:



Black to move

2b431) **24...Qc1** (the alternative queen moves 24...Qa2, 24...Qb3 and 24...Qb2 are met the same way) 25 Kg6 and wins.

2b432) **24...Qb1** 25 Rxc5 (threatening 26 Bd5) 25...Bb7 26 Bd5 Bxd5 27 Rxd5 Ke8 28 Qxd7+ Kf8 29 Rc5 Kg8 30 Rc7 with a decisive attack for White.

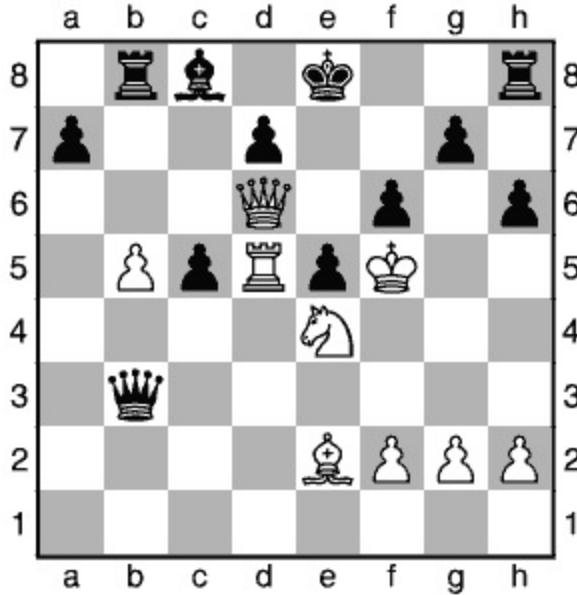
2b433) **24...Qa4** 25 Rxc5 Bb7 26 Bd5 Bxd5 27 Rxd5 Ke8 28 Qxd7+ Kf8 29 Qd6+ (not 29 Rc5 Qd4!) 29...Kg8 30 Qe6+ Kf8 31 Rd7 and mates.

2b434) **24...Qc4** 25 f3! (defending the knight and threatening 26 Kg6) 25...Qxb5 (25...h5 26 Kg6 Qc1 27 Rd2 f5 28 Kxg7 fxe4 29 Kxh8 and Black is helpless against the threat of 30 Rd5) 26 Nxc5 Qb1+ 27 Rd3 Re8 28 Bxe8 Kxe8 29 Nxd7 and Black has to give up his queen by 29...Qxd3+, but then White is clearly better.

2b435) **24...Qe2** 25 Rd2! Qxb5 (if 25...Qf1 or 25...Qe1, then 26 Nxc5 Qb1+ 27 Rd3, and White wins) 26 Kg6! Qb6 (26...Qb4 27 Kxg7 Qxe4 28 Kxh8 Qb4 {the only move} 29 Rd5 and Black cannot defend) 27 Kxg7 f5 28 Kxh8 fxe4 29 Qxe5 Rb8 (so as to meet 30 Rd5 or 30 Rd6 by 30...Qb2) 30 Kg8!, renewing the threats of Rd5 and Rd6. Black is lost.

2b436) **24...h5** 25 Rd2 Qb1 (or 25...Qc1 26 Nxc5 Qb1+ 27 Rd3 and wins; 25...Qa4 26 Bd5 Qxb5 27 Bxa8 and the piece is worth far more than four feeble pawns) 26 Bd5 Qg1 27 Nxc5 (rather than the awkward 27 Bxa8 Qxg2) and wins.

2b44) **22...Rb8** and now:



White to move

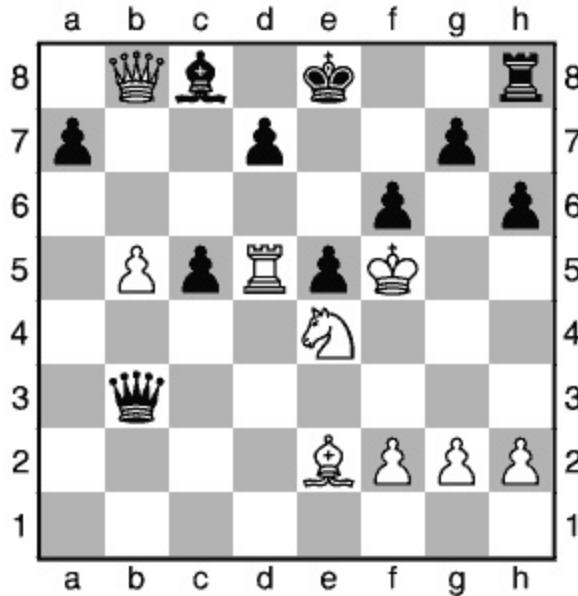
2b441) 23 **Kg6** Rb6 24 Qxc5 Bb7! (not 24...Kd8 25 Kxg7, nor 24...f5+ 25 Nd6+) 25 Bc4 (or 25 Nd6+ Rxd6 26 Rxd6 Qf7+, etc.) 25...Qc2 and White is struggling badly.

2b442) 23 **Nxf6+** gxf6 24 Bh5+ (not 24 Qxb8 0-0 and Black wins) 24...Kd8 25 Qxf6+ Kc7 26 Qd6+ (not 26 Rxc5+? Kb7 27 Bf3+ d5+ 28 Kg6 Qd3+, and certainly not 26 Qxe5+?? d6+) 26...Kd8 (26...Kb7 27 Bf3 is too dangerous) with perpetual check.

2b443) 23 **Bh5+** Kd8 24 Nxc5 Qc2+ 25 Kg4 Re8 (the only defence; further checks don't help, since there is no perpetual, and 25...g6 26 Qxf6+ Kc7 27 Qd6+ Kd8 28 Bxg6 gives White a decisive attack) 26 Bxe8 (not 26 Nxd7? Rb6) 26...Kxe8 27 Qxb8 (27 Nxd7? Qe4+ 28 Kh3 Qf5+ 29 Kg3 Qxd7 and White cannot take on b8 because of ...Qg4#) 27...Qc4+ 28 Kh3 (28 Kf5? Kf7 leads to mate; 28 Kh5? Kf7 wins for Black; 28 Kg3 Qf4+ 29 Kh3 Qf5+ is perpetual check as 30 g4? loses to 30...Qf3+ 31 Kh4 g5+ 32 Kh5 Kf7) 28...Qxd5 29 Qxc8+ Ke7. Now White has a piece for two pawns, but his exposed king and poor co-ordination severely curtail his winning chances. The best he can do is 30 f3 (after 30 Qc7 e4! Black threatens a perpetual check which cannot be prevented by 31 g3, or if 31 g4 then 31...h5), but then Black can make use of his pawn majority: 30...f5 31 Nb7! (31 Qc7 g5 32 Qxa7 Qd4! 33 g3 g4+ 34 fxg4 Qxg4+ is again perpetual) 31...g5! (not 31...Qxb5? 32 Qd8+ Ke6 33 Qg8+ Kf6 34 Nd6 and White has a winning attack) 32 Qc5+ Qxc5 33 Nxc5 d5. This ending is hard to assess because White has a slight material advantage, but Black has some positional trumps:

strong pawns, weak b5-pawn and white king misplaced. Probably White is slightly better.

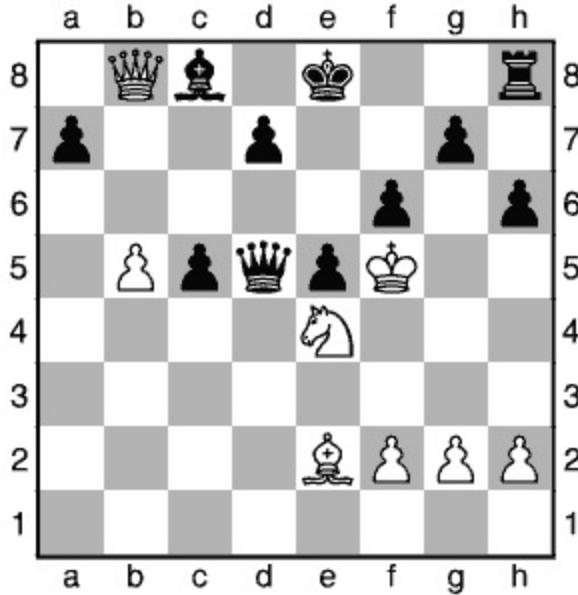
2b444) 23 Qxb8 is the best winning chance.



Black to move

Now 23...0-0 appears, at first sight, to be crushing, but White has a surprising defence: 24 Rd6 (forced, or else 24...d6+) 24...g6+ 25 Kg4 (25 Kxg6? Qf7+ 26 Kf5 Qh7+ wins for Black) 25...f5+ (25...Qb4 26 f3 f5+ 27 Kh3 is no better) 26 Kh4 fxe4 27 Rxg6+ Kh7 28 Qd6! (28 Bh5 Rf4+ 29 Rg4 Qg8! 30 Qxe5 Rxg4+ 31 Bxg4 Qxg4+ 32 Kxg4 d6+ gives Black a winning king and pawn ending) and suddenly Black's king also comes under attack in its new abode. After, for example, 28...Qf7 29 Rxh6+ Kg7 30 Kh3! White has a clear advantage.

It follows that 23 Qxb8 must be met by 23...Qxd5.

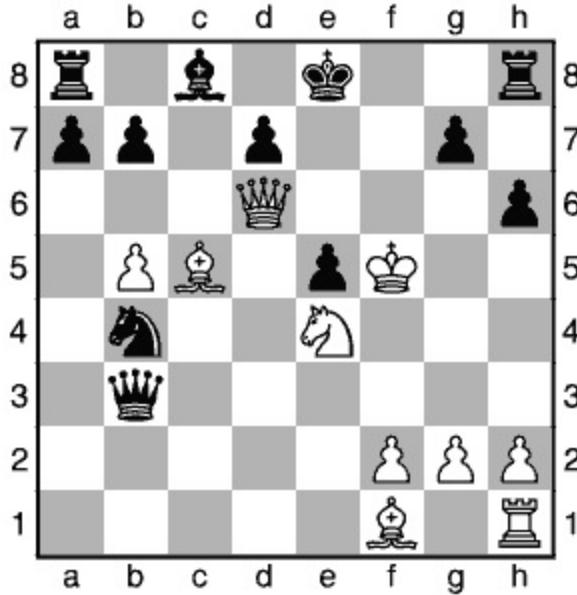


White to move

Then White has three possible lines, which we consider in ascending order of merit. Firstly, 24 Nd6+ Ke7 25 Nxc8+ Rxc8 26 Qxc8 fails to 26...Kf7! 27 Bh5+ g6+ 28 Bxg6+ Kg7 and Black wins after 29 Be8 Qe6+ 30 Ke4 d5+ picking up the queen. The second line, 24 Nxf6+ gxf6 25 Qxc8+ Kf7 26 Qxh8, leads to a draw after 26...Qe6+ 27 Ke4 f5+ 28 Ke3 Qb3+ 29 Bd3 e4 30 Qh7+ Ke8 31 Qh8+, etc. Finally, White best continuation is 24 Qxc8+ Kf7 25 Nd6+! (the only move; 25 Bh5+ g6+ 26 Bxg6+ Kg7 27 Qa6 Qe6+ wins for Black, while 25 Ng5+ hxg5 26 Qxh8 g6+ 27 Kg4 Qxg2# is the end) 25...Ke7 (25...Qxd6 26 Bc4+ Ke7 27 Qxh8 wins for White) 26 Qxh8 with a clear advantage to White. Black has no perpetual check, and his kingside pawns are very vulnerable to the attack of White's pieces.

The conclusion of all this (in case anyone has lost track) is that 19 Qxe5+ gives White a somewhat better ending (the critical variations being '[1d3](#)' and '[1d4](#)'). After 19 Be2 White also has good chances. The deep analysis in line '[2b4](#)' eventually resolves itself in White's favour, so Black should probably go for the unclear line '[2b3](#)'.

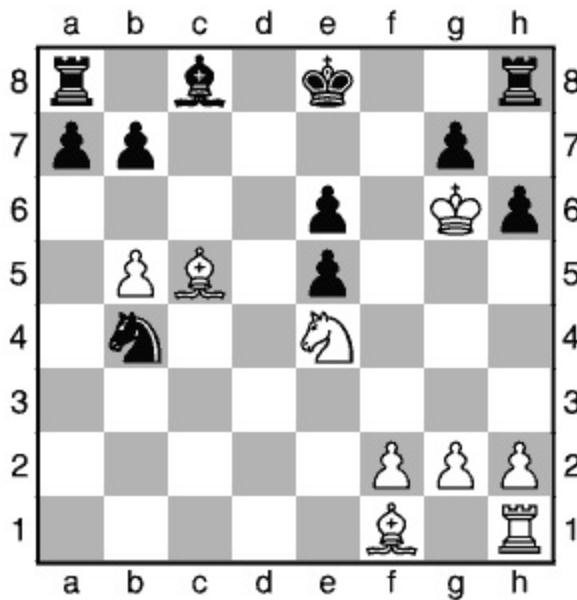
19 Kxf5



Black to move

19...Qf7+?

Only at this stage did Black realise the error in his calculations. He had intended 19...Qe6+ 20 Qxe6+ dxe6+ 21 Kxe5 Nd5, when he consolidates his material advantage, but had overlooked the strong move 21 Kg6!, threatening to win the rook as well as the knight!

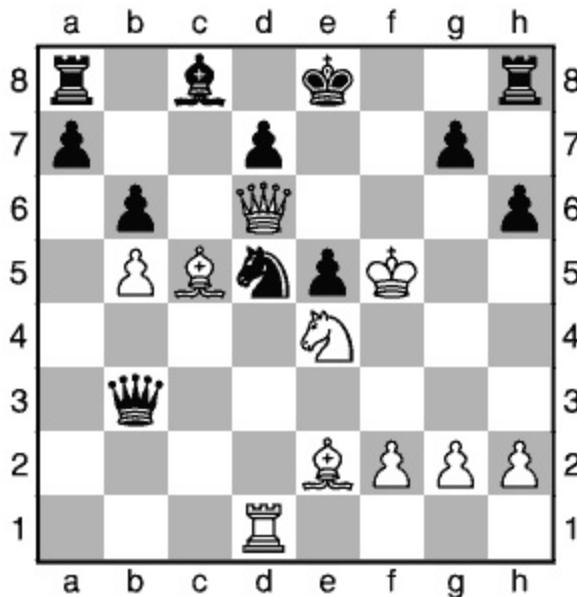


Black to move

For a king to win the game by trapping an enemy rook on its original square at move 22 must be unique. Black cannot exploit the king's advanced position: 21...Nd5 (letting the knight go by 21...Rf8 would certainly lose) 22

$Kxg7$ b6 (22...Bd7 23 Nd6+ wins after 23...Kd8 24 Kxh8 or 23...Ke7 24 Nxb7+ Ke8 25 Nd6+ Ke7 26 Nf7+ Ke8 27 Nxh8) 23 Ba3 Bb7 24 Kxh8 Kf7+ 25 Kh7 Ne7 (25...Nf6+ 26 Nxf6 Kxf6 27 Bd3 e4 28 Bb1 consolidates the extra piece) 26 Nd6+ Kf6 27 Bd3 Rg8 28 Nxb7 Rg7+ 29 Kxh6 and White wins.

The best chance was still 19...Nd5, although White can gain the advantage by 20 Be2 b6 (20...Kd8 21 Rd1 g6+ {21...b6 transposes to line '1' below} 22 Kg4 b6 23 Rxd5 bxc5 24 Qf6+ Kc7 25 Rxc5+ and mates) 21 Rd1 and now:



Black to move

- 1) 21...**Kd8** 22 Rxd5 bxc5 23 Kg6 and wins, e.g. 23...Qc2 24 Bd3.
- 2) 21...**bxc5** 22 Rxd5 Rb8 (after 22...Kd8 we are in line '1') 23 Rxe5+ Kd8 24 Qe7+ Kc7 25 Rxc5+ Kb7 26 Bc4 and wins.
- 3) 21...**Bb7** 22 Rd3! (22 Rxd5 0-0-0! favours Black) and now:
 - 3a) 22...**Qb1** 23 Bh5+ Kd8 24 Rxd5 Bxd5 25 Qxd5 Rc8 26 Bd6 Rc2 27 Kg6 Re8 28 Bg4 is winning for White.
 - 3b) 22...**Qb2** 23 Bh5+ Kd8 24 Rxd5 Bxd5 25 Qxd5! (better than 25 Bxb6+ axb6 26 Qxb6+ Ke7 with a draw) 25...Rc8 26 Bd6 Qd4 27 Qf7 with advantage to White, for example 27...Rc2 28 Be7+ Kc7 29 Qxg7 Rc8 30 Bd6+ Kb7 31 Bf3 Qd3 32 Kf6 with a winning attack.
 - 3c) 22...**Qc2** 23 Bh5+ Kd8 24 Rxd5 Bxd5 25 Qxd5 Rc8 26 Bd6 Qc4 27 Qxe5 Qe6+ 28 Qxe6 dxe6+ 29 Kxe6 and White is much better thanks to his fantastically active pieces, which keep the h8-rook totally imprisoned.

3d) 22...Qa4 23 Bh5+ Kd8 24 Rxd5 Bxd5 25 Qxd5 Rc8 26 Bd6 will transpose to '3b' after 26...Qd4 or '3c' after 26...Qc4.

3e) 22...Ne3+ (relatively best) 23 Bxe3 (23 Kxe5!? is also possible, with very unclear complications after 23...Qb2+ 24 Kf4 0-0-0! {24...Nxg2+ 25 Kg3 0-0-0 26 Bd4 wins for White} and now 25 Bd4 or 25 Bxb6!?) 23...Bxe4+ 24 Kxe4 Qc4+ 25 Kxe5 Qxb5+ 26 Kf4 Rf8+ 27 Kg3 Rf6 28 Qd4 Qf5 (28...Rg6+ 29 Kh4 and wins) 29 h3, after which White's king can hide on h2, and Black's exposed king will be subjected to the attack of White's active pieces.

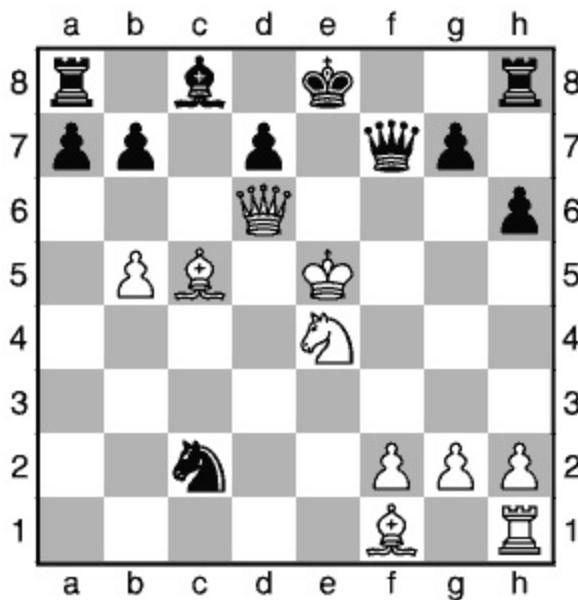
The text-move covers the mate on e7 with gain of tempo, giving Black time to save the knight, but White's initiative is now too strong.

20 Kxe5

There are bound to be a few pitfalls with the king out in the open, 20 Kg4? h5+, for instance, and Black mates. However, on e5 the king is safe enough and White's position is a picture of centralisation.

20...Nc2

The most logical knight move, denying the king a safe retreat to d4 and preventing the white rook from occupying e1. Of course, 20...Qh5+ 21 Kd4 Qd1+ (21...Nc2+ 22 Kc3 also wins) 22 Kc4 would defeat the object of covering e7.



White to move

21 Bc4

Forcing Black to waste more time maintaining control of e7.

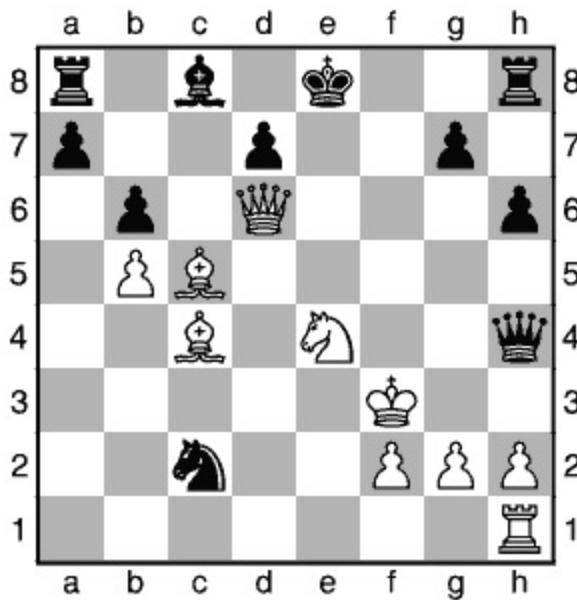
21...Qh5+

22 Kf4 Qh4+

After 22...g5+ 23 Kf5 g4+ 24 Kf4 White wins immediately.

23 Kf3 b6

If 23...Qh5+ 24 Kg3 Kd8 then White wins by 25 Qe7+ Kc7 26 b6+ axb6 27 Qd6+ Kd8 28 Qxb6+ Ke8 29 Nd6+ and mate in two more moves; or if 23...Kd8, then 24 b6!, and the threat of Qc7+ and Nd6+ is equally catastrophic.



White to move

Therefore Black creates threats of his own (24...Bb7 as well as 24...bxc5).

24 Qg6+

This position is a good example of how easy it is to go wrong, even when one is on the brink of victory. My original intention was 24 Qe5+ Kd8 25 g3, but this has two(!) refutations: 25...Re8 26 Qxe8+ Kxe8 27 gxh4 bxc5 28 Nxc5 and, even more convincingly, 25...Qg4+! 26 Kxg4 d6+, both of which lead to an unclear position.

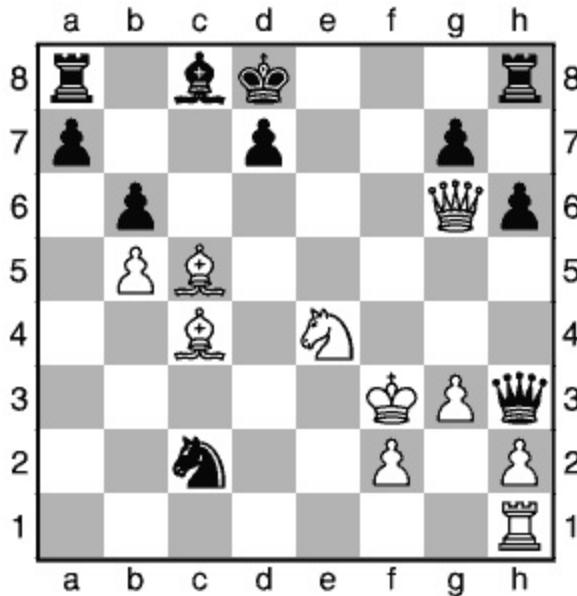
Fortunately, White's position is so strong that this oversight did not affect the result of the game.

24...Kd8

25 g3

This is the correct method; White again drives the enemy queen away from control of e7, but this time with his own queen on a safe square.

25...Qh3



White to move

Now White finishes attractively.

26 Be7+! Kxe7

27 Qxg7+ Kd8

28 Qxh8+ Kc7

29 Qe5+ Kd8

30 Nd6 1-0

However, I lost to Murray Chandler in round 4 and could only finish third equal with 4/5.

The summer of 1981 was a critical point in my career, as it was at this time that I decided to play chess full-time.

4 Professional Player (1981-5)

My post at Oxford University was due to finish in September 1981 and by now it was clear that my academic life was coming to an end. I had always enjoyed the teaching side of my job and, looking back, I believe that this was a success. I was never too keen on the research and consequently this had not prospered. Getting an academic job depends largely on your research record and not on teaching ability, and in the very difficult climate of 1981 competition for the very few academic posts was intense. Many of my friends found themselves hopping from one temporary position to another until well into their thirties, with no real career path in front of them. Consequently, the decision to become a full-time player was quite easy. I had been feeling more and more that further progress in chess was impossible without devoting far greater time to it, and that wasn't really possible while carrying on a job, albeit not a full-time one.

Of course, readers will have noticed that, despite my work at Oxford, I had found time for a fair number of tournaments. It is true that if I had spent this time on mathematical research then I might have secured a job in 1981 and continued with my academic career. It is equally true that if I had thrown in the mathematical towel earlier then I might have had more success at chess. I enjoyed both my life at Oxford and playing chess, and I do not regret combining them for as long as possible. My personality is such that I cannot maintain an overriding interest in one thing for very long. However much I try to focus on one activity, my curiosity gets the better of me and I start taking an interest in other areas. More by accident than design, I appear to have had 11-year 'careers' in different areas: 1970-81 mathematics, 1981-92 chess, 1992-? publishing. In 2002 or 2003 I will perhaps be ready for the next career move. Another way of looking at it is that I am happy in one area so long as there is progress or the prospect of progress. However, at some point I reach my natural limit in that area: further progress is only possible by totally excluding all other activities, and this I am never prepared to do. At this point, when the situation becomes static, my attention starts to wander, and I feel the urge to switch to another area where I can start the ascent of the ladder again.

In the summer of 1982, with the decision about my future settled, I turned to chess with a new determination to take part in as many grandmaster

events as possible. The first of these was at Wiesbaden in Germany, which I won with 7½/9, a full 1½ points ahead of Kindermann. I travelled immediately to Johannesburg for by far my toughest tournament yet – a quadruple-round event with Korchnoi, Hübner, Andersson and myself. It was the first time I had played day after day against some of the world's leading players. Even though it was at times painful, I learnt a great deal from this event. My worst score was ½/4 against Hübner, and I wasn't too happy with the 1/4 against Andersson. By way of consolation, I beat Korchnoi by 2½-1½.

Game 12

V. Korchnoi – J. Nunn

Johannesburg 1981

King's Indian

1 c4 Nf6

2 Nc3 g6

3 e4 d6

4 d4 Bg7

5 Be2 0-0

6 Nf3 Nbd7

The only reason for playing this rather than 6...e5 is to avoid the liquidating continuation 6...e5 7 dxе5 dxе5 8 Qxd8, not that there was much danger of Korchnoi playing such a timid line against the King's Indian!

7 0-0

White can try to exploit Black's unusual move-order by 7 e5 dxе5 8 dxе5 Ng4 9 e6 fxe6 but after, for example, 10 0-0 Nde5 11 Bg5 Nxf3+ 12 Bxf3 Ne5 13 Be2 Nc6, followed by ...Nd4, he has no more than equality. After the text-move the game returns into normal lines.

7...e5

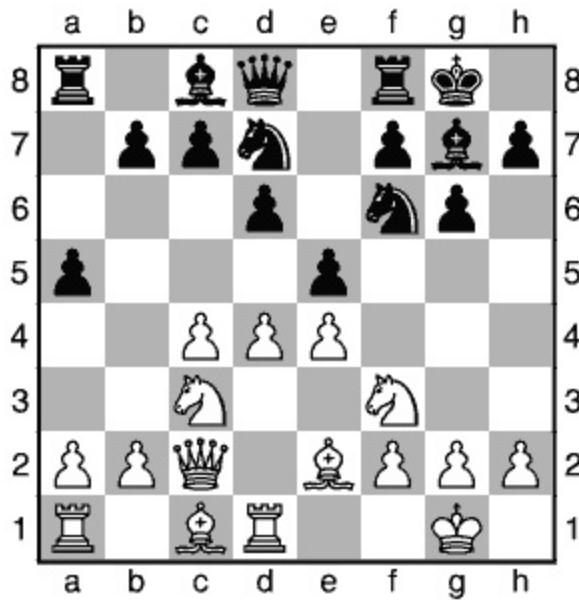
8 Qc2

At the time this was a slightly unusual alternative to the more common moves 8 Re1, 8 d5 and 8 Be3 (it became more popular later). In 1981 I had only just started playing the King's Indian Defence so my theoretical knowledge was limited. Korchnoi's move was new to me and although I reacted badly, my experience in this game proved valuable later: see game No. 20 (vs Ftačník).

8...a5?!

In the Ftačnik game I played the more accurate line 8...c6 9 Rd1 exd4 10 Nxd4 Qe7. Playing ...a5 so early is rather committal, since Black can often manage without it. Not only does it cost Black a valuable tempo, the resulting weakness of b5 and b6 can prove a handicap.

9 Rd1



Black to move

The most natural reply, threatening to take on e5 and thereby preventing ...c6.

9...exd4

This is almost forced since otherwise Black's development cannot be completed. 9...Qe7 is the only other move worthy of consideration, but White can gain the advantage by 10 dxe5 (10 Nd5 Nxd5 11 cxd5 is not so clear as Black can reply 11...exd4) 10...Nxe5 (10...dxe5 11 Nd5 Nxd5 12 cxd5 is even worse as Black has no good way to defend c7, for example 12...Nf6 13 Be3 and Black must waste more time meeting the threat of Bc5) 11 Nxe5 dxe5 (11...Qxe5 merely exposes the queen to a later f4 or Bd4) 12 Nd5 (12 Bg5 c6 13 Na4 tries to exploit the weakness of b6, but 13...Be6 14 Be3 Nd7 at least enables Black to bring his pieces out) 12...Nxd5 13 cxd5 f5 (for the moment Black can't move the c8-bishop) 14 Be3 b6 15 f3 and Black cannot easily solve the problem of his weak c-pawn. Two possible lines of play run 15...Ra7 16 d6 cxd6 17 Bxb6 Ra8 18 Bc7 winning a pawn and 15...Bb7 16 Rac1 Rac8 17 Bb5, when White maintains his grip.

10 Nxd4 Nc5?

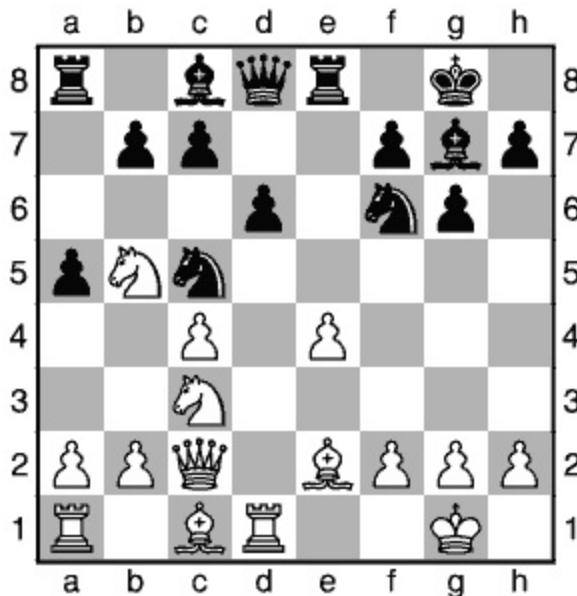
This is a real mistake, overlooking White's reply. 10...c6 was the best move, and after 11 Be3, for example, 11...Qe7 (certainly not 11...Nc5? 12 Nxc6!, nor 11...Ne5? 12 h3 threatening f4 or c5) a position similar to Ftačník-Nunn arises, except that Black has been prematurely committed to ...a5.

11 Ndb5!

Korchnoi, with his great experience of playing against the King's Indian, immediately puts his finger on Black's mistake.

By attacking d6 White prevents ...c6 and, thanks to Black's ...a5, secures an invulnerable outpost for his knight at b5. Black will be reminded many times that c7 is under threat, a factor which makes it hard for him to start any active operations. White intends to complete his development, whereupon his space advantage will give him an excellent position. With the pawn structure c4, e4 vs c6, d6 Black can counterbalance this by creating active piece play, for example by ...Qb6, or ...a4 and ...Qa5, but here the knight on b5 restricts Black too much. Since Black is unable to arrange ...c6, his only chance to break out is to prepare ...f5, but this is much less satisfactory as it weakens the kingside. Moreover, if Black has to recapture on f5 with his g-pawn he will have isolated pawns on the kingside.

11...Re8



White to move

12 Bg5

This move is based on a neat tactical point, but the more mundane 12 f3

would probably have gained a tempo after 12...Nh5 and now:

1) **13 g4?** Be5 14 gxh5 Bxh2+ and White should settle for a draw, since 15 Kh1 Qh4 16 Bf1 Bg3+ 17 Kg1 Re5 18 Nxc7 (18 Qg2 Rxh5 is even worse) 18...Rxh5 19 Bg2 Qh2+ 20 Kf1 Bh3 21 Be3 Qh1+ 22 Bg1 Bh2 23 Qf2 Rc8 gives Black a very dangerous attack.

2) **13 Be3!** Be5 (13...Ne6 is similar to the game, but with an extra tempo for White) 14 g3! (14 Bxc5 Qh4 gives Black a dangerous attack if White does not return the piece at once, *e.g.* 15 Be3 Bxh2+ 16 Kf1 Ng3+ winning, or 15 Bf2 Qxh2+ 16 Kf1 Nf4 and Black wins after 17 g3 Qh1+ 18 Bg1 Qg2+ or 17 Be3 Nxg2), stopping the attack and threatening both 15 f4 and 15 Bxc5. Black would thus be driven back with loss of time.

12 Bg5 sets a cunning trap but in the end it amounts to a tempo loss because White has to retire his bishop to e3 and still play f3.

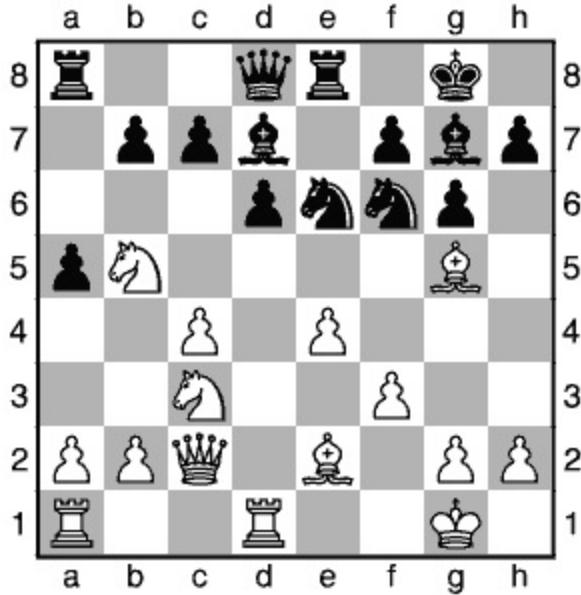
12...Bd7

The trap lies in the variation 12...h6? 13 Bxf6 Bxf6 14 Nd5 Ne6 15 Ndxc7! Nxc7 16 Rxd6 Qe7 (if 16...Bd7, then still 17 Nxc7) 17 Nxc7 and White wins material.

After the text-move, however, 13...h6 is a genuine threat as White would either have to exchange unprofitably at f6 or lose his e-pawn. Hence White's reply.

13 f3 Ne6

The other way of breaking the pin would be less satisfactory: 13...h6 14 Be3 Nh5 15 Qd2!, threatening both 16 Bxh6 and 16 Bxc5. The text-move covers the weak c7-pawn, but has the drawback that the bishop's path to f5 is obstructed.



White to move

14 Be3

Permitting the black knight to settle on f4 would be unwise, for example 14 Bh4 g5 15 Bf2 Nf4 and the outpost is secure, at least for the time being. If 15 Bg3, then 15...Nh5 again heading for f4.

14...Nh5

Clearing a path for ...f5. Curiously, a later game I.Sokolov-Kovalevskaya, Oviedo rapid 1992, arrived at the same position. On that occasion Black continued 14...Bxb5 15 cxb5 Nd7 16 Bc4 Ne5 17 Bb3 b6 18 Bd5 Rc8 19 a3 with advantage to White because of the weak light squares in Black's position.

15 Bf1

Anticipating a later ...Nf4.

15...f5

Although this looks hazardous, Black has to take the plunge. The longer he delays, the more White will build up and strengthen his position, for example by Qf2, Rd2 and Rad1. Nor can Black achieve anything by piece play alone: 15...Nhf4 and 15...Be5 are both answered by 16 g3, and 15...Nef4 by 16 g4 Qg5 17 Kh1. Black would prefer to play ...f5 at a moment when he can recapture with a piece on f5, but this isn't feasible – playing 15...Rf8 does not help because recapturing with the rook at f5 would cost a piece to g4.

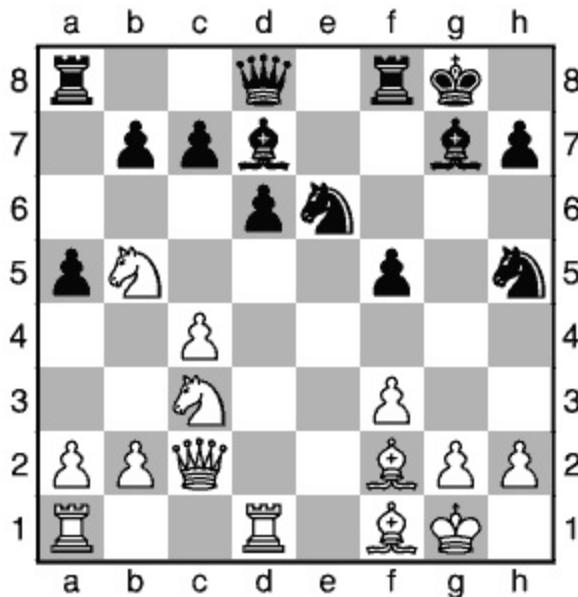
16 exf5 gxf5

17 Bf2

The tactical justification for the move 15...f5 is simple enough: if 17 Qxf5? then 17...Nef4 and wins. Positionally there is a bright side to the pawn recapture in that the opposing pieces are denied the use of e4, but that is just about the only positive aspect of the move. The dislocation of Black's pawns renders his kingside permanently weak; White only has to keep Black's tactical possibilities under control to guarantee himself a clear positional advantage.

17...Rf8

This is forced because the f-pawn is now genuinely *en prise*, and neither 17...f4 18 Bd3 nor 17...Qg5 18 c5 can be seriously considered. In the first case Black would be reduced to a passive move such as 18...Nf8, or be overrun by 18...Nf6 19 Bh4 h6 20 Bg6; and in the second case the only reasonable try 18...Bxb5 19 Bxb5 dxc5 favours White after 20 Bc4 Nf4 21 Bxc5 b6 22 Bd4.



White to move

18 g3

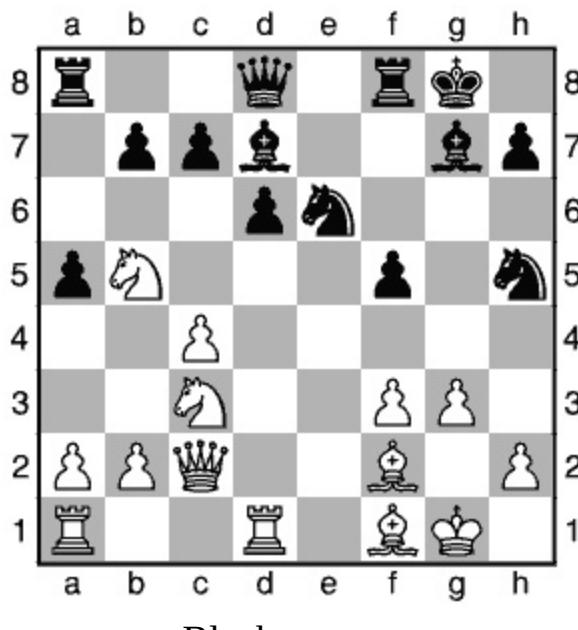
White correctly avoids the tempting 18 c5 Nxc5 (not 18...dxc5? 19 Bc4 Qc8 20 Nd5 and wins, nor 18...Bxb5 19 Nxb5 d5 20 c6 b6 21 Bc4) 19 Bxc5 dxc5 20 Bc4+ Kh8 21 Be6 Bxe6 (this is much better than 21...Nf6 22 Qxf5 Bxe6 23 Qxe6 Qc8 24 Qe5 c6 25 Nd6, etc.) 22 Rxd8 Raxd8 (in return for a small material investment Black has conspicuously increased his control of the centre and has excellent play for all his pieces) and now: 1) 23 Nxc7 Bd4+ 24 Kh1 Ng3+ 25 hxg3 Rf6 26 Qc1 f4 27 Qxf4 Rxf4 28 gxf4 Bc4 and

Black's aggressive bishops compensate for the pawn.

- 2) 23 Re1 Bc4, with a similar attack looming.
- 3) 23 Ne2 c6 24 Nbc3 b5 with good counterplay.

These lines are not at all clear-cut but to convert a miserable defensive position into a seething mass of tactics is definitely a triumph from Black's point of view.

In general, White should not play to convert his positional advantage into a material one too soon, or Black's pieces may suddenly burst into life. The correct plan is gradually to exchange Black's best minor pieces, since this can only enhance White's positional assets. The text-move keeps the enemy knights out and prepares Bg2 and f4 when appropriate.



Black to move

18...Nf6

Better than further aggression by means of 18...f4, which would react against Black after 19 g4 Nf6 20 Nd4, setting about the gradual liquidation of minor pieces.

Since the knight is no longer doing any good at h5, I decided to recentralise it, at the same time setting a sort of trap.

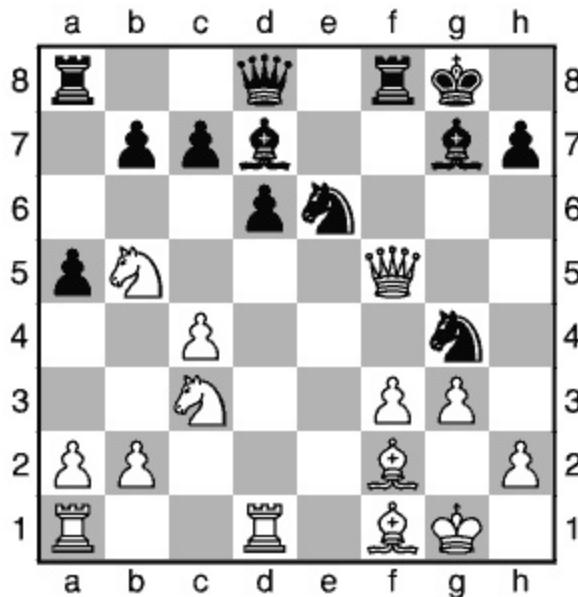
19 Qxf5?

White falls into the trap. This move is typical Korchnoi, who will always grab material unless he can see a concrete reason for not doing so. It looks dangerous to put the queen in the firing line of two batteries and this would have been sufficient to deter many players, but Korchnoi can't see any

way for Black to exploit this so he takes the pawn. This attitude has won him many fine games, but here he has missed something. Moreover, the pawn grab was unnecessary, since by 19 Nd4 White could have kept a clear advantage with no risk. After the exchange of knights White could occupy the ideal blockading square by Ne2-f4, then play Bd4 and Bd3, bringing tremendous pressure to bear against Black's fragile kingside. Nor could Black oppose this plan to seize f4: 19...Nxd4 20 Bxd4 Nh5 would play into White's hands by allowing the exchange of Black's best minor piece, while 20...Bh6 21 Ne2 Qe7 22 Nf4 Bxf4 23 gxf4 would leave him desperately weak on the long dark diagonal and the g-file.

Curiously enough, even though the text-move costs White his queen within a few moves, Black appears to have no advantage in the resulting position!

19...Ng4!



White to move

This combination is very unusual and surprising. For all Korchnoi's vast experience, it seems that this move never crossed his mind. After 20 Qxg4 Black can trap the queen, but in the end White correctly decides that this is the best option.

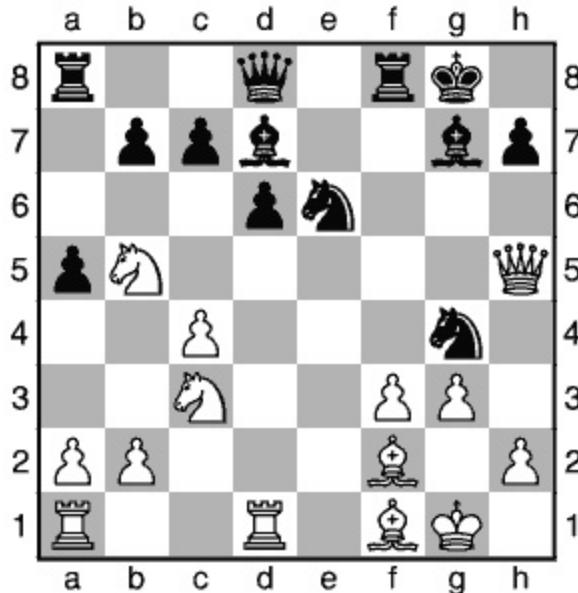
20 Qxg4!

The alternatives are:

- 1) 20 Qc2 Rxf3, to be followed by ...Qf6 and ...Rf8, favours Black.
- 2) 20 Qd3 Ne5 with advantage to Black.

3) 20 Qe4 Ng5 likewise.

4) 20 Qh5 and now:



Black to move

4a) 20...Ng5 21 f4 Nf3+ 22 Kg2 Nfe5 (not 22...Nfxh2? 23 Bd3) 23 Bd3! Nxd3 24 Qd5+ is fine for White.

4b) 20...Rxf3 21 Qxg4 Ng5 22 Qh5 (or 22 Qh4 at once, but White wishes to inconvenience Black as much as possible) 22...Be8 23 Qg4 h5 24 Qh4 Rxc3 25 Bg2 Nf3+ 26 Bxf3 Rxf3 27 Qxd8 Rxd8 28 Nxc7 and, if anything, White is better.

4c) 20...Nxf2 21 Kxf2 Nf4!? 22 Qh4 (22 gxf4 Rf5, followed by ...Rxb5, is clearly better for Black) 22...Qxh4 23 gxh4 is unclear – here White's grip on the queenside returns to haunt Black.

4d) 20...Ne5! wins the f3-pawn, since 21 f4 loses to 21...Nxf4 22 gxf4 Bg4 and 21 Bg2 Be8 is disastrous. Thus White has nothing better than 21 Bd3, but after 21...Nxf3+ 22 Kg2 Neg5, threatening 23...Be8, Black has the advantage.

5) 20 Qd5 (the only viable alternative to the text-move) 20...Nxf2 21 Kxf2 c6 22 Qxd6 Rf7 (not 22...cb5 23 Qxd7 Bd4+ 24 Rxd4 Rxf3+ 25 Kg2! Nxd4 26 Qg4+ Kh8 27 Rd1 and White wins) 23 Bh3 (23 Na3 Qb6+ followed by taking on b2) 23...Qf6 24 Bxe6 Qxf3+ 25 Kg1 Qe3+ 26 Kh1 Bxe6 (of course Black can take the perpetual) 27 Rd3 (not 27 Nd4? Bg4 and Black wins) 27...Qe5 28 Qxe5 Bxe5 29 Nd6 Bxd6 30 Rxd6 Bxc4 with a likely draw.

20...Ng5

21 Qh5 Be8

22 Qxg5

An interesting moment. 22 Qg4 is the alternative, when Black either has to repeat moves by 22...Bd7 or win the queen by 22...h5 23 Qxg5. However, in this latter line the presence of the pawn on h5 makes an important difference because, as we shall see, in the game continuation the move ...Bh5 is a vital resource for Black. As the game continuation is roughly equal, this inferior version should clearly favour White, so Black should take the repetition.

I suspect that Korchnoi avoided 22 Qg4 because it allowed a repetition and he was still playing for a win, despite the unexpected turn of events! This is a typical example of Korchnoi's fighting spirit, which has brought him many successes but also a few disasters.

22...Qxg5

23 Nxc7



Black to move

White already has two knights and two pawns for the queen, which means he is a pawn down on the usual scale of material values, but he has an exchange coming to him in a moment (both Nxa8 and Ne6 are threatened). However, this doesn't tell the full story. Positions with a material imbalance tend to depend heavily on the initiative. This applies particularly in the case of a queen against odds and ends. The queen likes an open game with the

material scattered far and wide, in which its mobility and forking power may be exercised to the full. A queen also co-operates well with other pieces, but is less effective on its own. The odds and ends prefer everything to be anchored down, securely protected from the queen's roving eye. Once their position is consolidated they can begin to take the initiative, combining against some weak pawn, for instance, and in the process they may well find that they are gaining many tempi harassing the queen.

Of course, control of the centre is as crucial a factor as ever; therefore White's plan, after taking the exchange, will be to consolidate by Bg2 and f4, then occupy the key square d5 as soon as possible.

23...Rxf3!?

In order to understand the motivation for this sacrifice, we have to look at the alternatives:

1) **23...Bc6?!** (obvious, but rather feeble) 24 Nxa8 Rxa8 25 Bg2 Rf8 26 f4 Qg4 27 Nd5 Bxb2 28 Rab1 Bg7 29 Ne7+ Kh8 30 Nxc6 bxc6 31 Rxd6 with advantage to White. Material is now slightly in White's favour and in addition all his pieces are active.

2) **23...Qf5** 24 Nxa8 (24 f4 Bxc3! 25 bxc3 Bc6 26 Nd5 {26 Nxa8 Qe4} 26...Rae8 and here White does not have enough for the queen) 24...Qxf3 25 Rd2 Bc6 (if 25...Bxc3, hoping to follow up with ...Bc6, White has 26 Bg2 Qxg2+ 27 Kxg2 Bxd2 28 Rd1 and Black does not have enough for a pawn) 26 Nd5 Bxd5 (Black must neutralise d5; 26...Rxa8 27 Bg2 Qf7 28 Rf1 would be more dangerous for him) 27 cxd5 Rxa8 28 Bg2 Qf7 29 Re1, followed by Re6 and although Black now has a slight material plus, White's pieces are working well and there are no good targets for the queen. The most likely result would be a 'fortress' draw.

On the basis of these lines it seemed to me that Black could not seriously hope to win by normal means. White's positional compensation, in the form of active pieces and control of d5, is enough to counterbalance whatever slight material superiority Black might eventually emerge with. Having just won the great Korchnoi's queen, I wasn't satisfied with a mere draw, and decided to throw caution to the winds. The text-move reverses the material balance so that White ends up substantially ahead. In compensation, White's king will be exposed, he will be vulnerable on the dark squares (after the further ...Rxf2) and the queen will get the sort of position in which it excels above all – attacking in co-operation with one or two smaller pieces. Objectively, the text-move does not disturb the balance of the position –

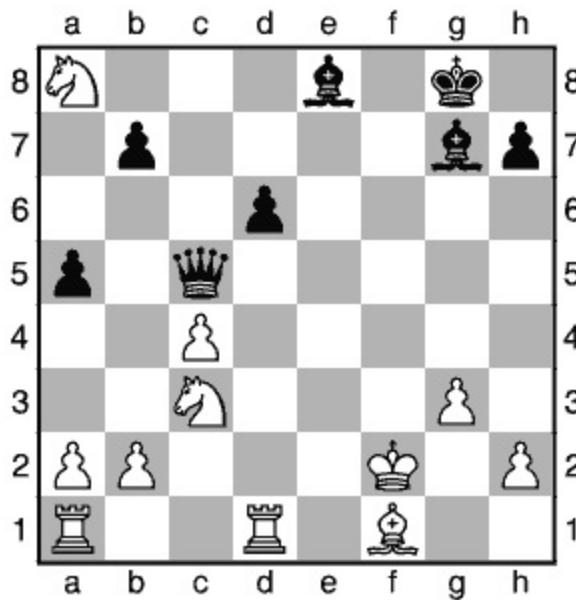
indeed many lines now lead to perpetual check – but the fact that White now has to solve difficult tactical problems with limited time means that it is by far the best practical chance.

24 Nxa8

Another try is 24 Ne4, but that only encourages the queen: 24...Qe7 25 Nxa8 Qxe4 (threatening 26...Rxf2 27 Kxf2 Bd4+) 26 Re1 (or 26 Bg2 Bc6 27 Re1 {not 27 Nc7? Rxe3! and wins} 27...Qf5 with advantage to Black) 26...Qg6 27 Nc7 (27 Bg2 Rxf2 28 Bd5+ Bf7 29 Kxf2 Bxd5 30 cxd5 Qf7+ 31 Kg1 b5 and Black wins the knight) 27...Bc6 28 Nd5 Bxd5 29 cxd5 Bxb2, followed by ...Qc2, and Black is winning.

24...Rxf2

25 Kxf2 Qc5+



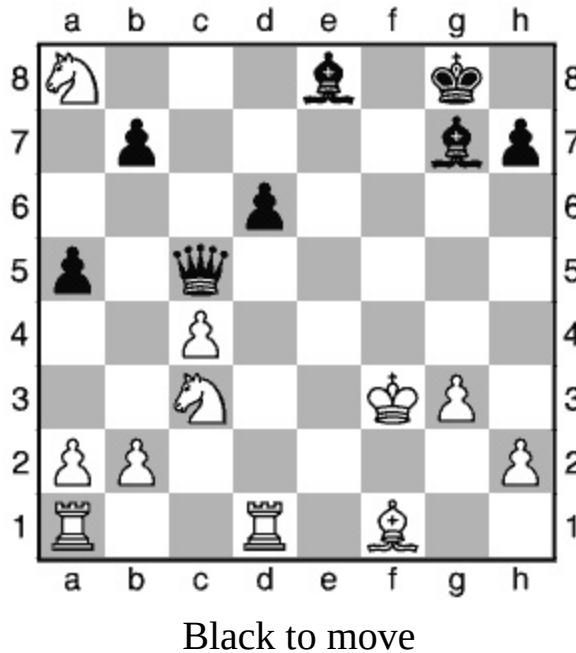
White to move

26 Kg2?

Short of time, Korchnoi chooses the wrong square for the king and falls victim to Black's attack. We can also dismiss 26 Ke1? Bxc3+ 27 bxc3 Qe3+ 28 Be2 Bh5 29 Rd2 Bxe2 30 Rxe2 Qxc3+ winning and 26 Ke2? Bxc3 27 bxc3 Bh5+ 28 Kd3 (28 Kd2 Qf2+ 29 Kc1 Bxd1 also wins for Black) 28...Qf5+ (making use of a recurring pattern is a valuable aid to analysing quickly; Black already knows that d2 is off limits to the king) 29 Ke3 (29 Kd4 Qf2+ is one move shorter) 29...Qf3+ 30 Kd4 Qf2+ 31 Ke4 (31 Kd5 Bxd1 32 Rxd1 Qf3+) 31...Bg6+ 32 Kd5 Qc5+ 33 Ke6 Bf5+ 34 Ke7 (or 34 Kf6 Qe5+ 35 Kg5 Bg6+ and mate in two) 34...Qe5+ 35 Kd8 d5 and mate in

two more moves, by either ...Qb8+ or ...Qd6+. In this second line we see the crucial importance of having h5 available for the bishop, a point mentioned in the note to White's 22nd move.

Curiously, White's only viable move is the one which, at first glance, looks least likely to succeed: **26 Kf3**.



Black to move

During the game, with little time on the clock, neither player took this move very seriously, but it is correct because the king can retreat either towards the queenside or to g2 and h1, depending on where the black bishop decides to check (h5 or c6). In reply to 26 Kf3 Black would have to choose between 26...Bh5+ and 26...Qf5+ (if 26...Bc6+ then 27 Nd5, and 26...Bxc3 would not do because the king slips safely away after 27 bxc3 Bc6+ 28 Ke2). The analysis runs: 1) **26...Bh5+** (this alone may have deterred Korchnoi from making the correct move; he would have had to realise that the unlikely-looking 27 g4, allowing ...Qf5+, successfully defends) and now:

1a) **27 Kg2?** Qe3 (threatening 28...Bf3+ 29 Kh3 Qh6#) 28 Be2 (28 Kh3 Bf3 and wins, while 28 h4 Bf3+ 29 Kh2 Qf2+ 30 Kh3 Qg1 31 Rd2 h5 leads to mate next move) 28...Bxe2 29 Nxe2 Qxe2+ 30 Kh3 Qxc4 31 Nb6 (31 Rac1 Qe6+ 32 Kg2 Bxb2) 31...Qe6+ 32 Kg2 Qe2+ 33 Kh3 Bxb2 34 Rab1 Qe6+ 35 Kg2 Qxa2 and wins.

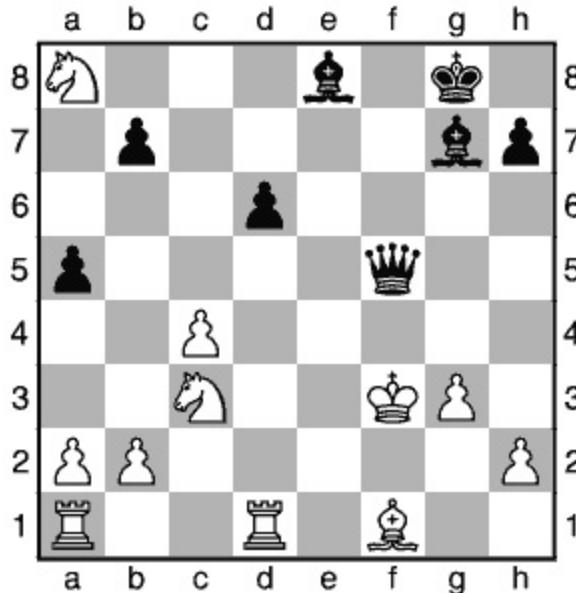
1b) **27 g4** (this is the only move) 27...Qf5+ 28 Kg2 (now the light-squared bishop is pointing in the wrong direction) with the further branch:

1b1) **28...Qxg4+** 29 Kh1 Be5 (29...Qf4 30 Nd5 defends) 30 Be2 (but not

30 Nd5? Qh4 31 Rd2 Bf3+ 32 Kg1 Bd4+ mating) 30...Qh4 (30...Qf4 31 Rg1+ Kh8 32 Rg2 is even more effective) 31 Rg1+ Kh8 32 Rg2 Bxe2 33 Nxe2 Qd8 34 Rf1 with a clear advantage to White, even though Black now wins the knight on a8.

1b2) **28...Bxg4!** 29 Rd3 Bd4 30 Rxd4 (30 Rg3 Kh8! 31 Kh1 Be5 leads to equality) 30...Qf3+ 31 Kg1 Qe3+ 32 Kh1 Bf3+ 33 Bg2 Bxg2+ 34 Kxg2 Qxd4 35 Rg1 Kh8! and although Black is down on material, the exposed white king and offside a8-knight give Black enough counterplay to draw. White's pieces are not sufficiently co-ordinated both to save the knight and avoid perpetual check.

2) **26...Qf5+** and now:

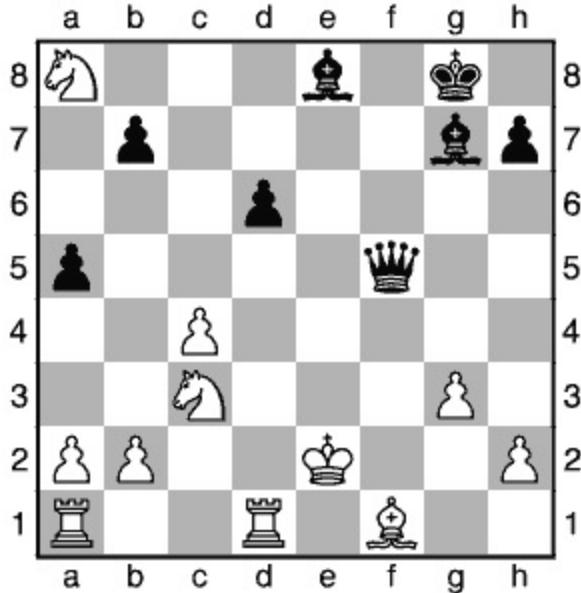


White to move

2a) **27 Kg2?** Bc6+ 28 Nd5 Qe4+ 29 Kg1 (29 Kf2 Bd4+ is much the same) 29...Bd4+ 30 Rxd4 Qxd4+ 31 Kh1 Bxd5+ 32 cxd5 Qxb2 33 Rd1 Qxa2, and Black is slightly better because the white pieces are badly out of position and will have great difficulty co-ordinating their efforts to stop the a-pawn. Apart from anything else there is a grave danger of forks (34 Nb6 Qb3, for example).

2b) **27 Ke3** Bh6+ 28 Ke2 Bh5+ 29 Ke1 Be3! (29...Bxd1 30 Rxd1 Be3 31 Ke2! is very good for White) 30 Rd2 Bxd2+ 31 Kxd2 Qg5+ 32 Kc2 Qd8 with a likely draw.

2c) **27 Ke2** with yet another branch:



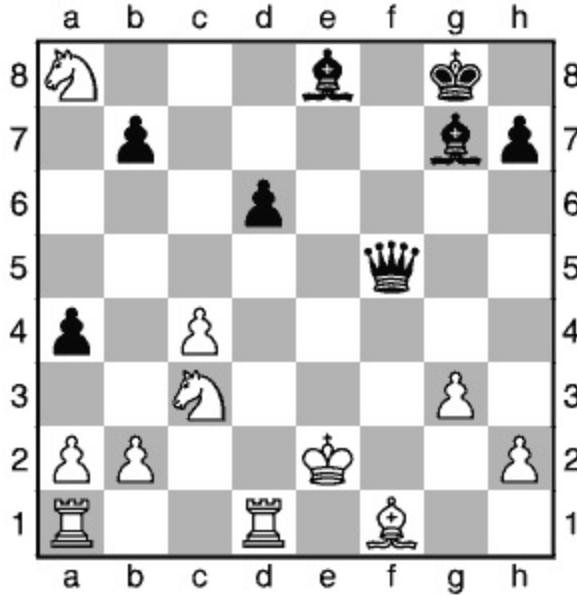
Black to move

2c1) 27...**Bh5+** 28 Ke1 Bxc3+ (28...Qf3 29 Rd3 wins for White) 29 bxc3 Qe5+ (Black will soon run out of checks; his only hope is to pick up the knight as well as the exchange) 30 Kd2 Qg5+ 31 Kc2 Bxd1+ 32 Rxd1 Qd8 33 c5 Qxa8 34 cxd6 and White should win.

2c2) 27...**Bh6** 28 Rd3 Bh5+ 29 Ke1 Qe5+ 30 Be2 is winning for White.

2c3) 27...**Qc2+!** (this leads to a safe draw) 28 Rd2 (28 Kf3 Qf5+ repeats, while 28 Ke3 Qxb2 is dangerous for White) 28...Bh5+ 29 Ke1 Bxc3 30 bxc3 Qe4+! (30...Qxc3 31 Rd1 Bxd1 32 Kxd1 with advantage; a typical line is 32...Qa1+ 33 Ke2 Qe5+ 34 Kf2 Qf6+ 35 Kg2 Qd8 36 c5 Qxa8 37 cxd6 and White should win) 31 Re2 (31 Kf2 Qf3+ 32 Kg1 Qxc3 33 Rd5 {the only move; 33 Rad1 Qe3+ 34 Kh1 Bxd1 35 Rxd1 Qf3+ wins for Black} 33...Qxa1 34 Rxh5 Qd4+ 35 Kg2 Qe4+ 36 Kh3 Qe6+ is perpetual check) 31...Bxe2 32 Bxe2 Qh1+ 33 Bf1 Qxh2 and Black should have no difficulty drawing in view of the miserable position of all White's pieces.

2c4) 27...**a4!?** (a double-edged attempt to continue the game; it threatens both ...Qa5, trapping the a8-knight, and to undermine its colleague by ...a3) and now:



White to move

2c41) **28 Rac1** (28 a3 is met the same way) 28...Bh5+ 29 Ke1 Bxc3+ 30 bxc3 Bxd1 31 Rxd1 Qa5, with a likely draw.

2c42) **28 Rd3** a3 29 bxa3 (but not 29 Nc7? axb2 30 Rb1 Bg6!) 29...Bh5+ 30 Ke1 (30 Kd2 Qf2+) 30...Qa5, followed by 31...Qxa8, and the powerful bishop at g7 provides plenty of attacking chances to compensate for Black's slight material deficit.

2c43) **28 Kd2** a3 29 bxa3 Qa5 is similar to the previous line.

2c44) **28 Nb6** a3 29 Nbd5 Qc2+ 30 Rd2 Bh5+ 31 Ke1 axb2! favours Black.

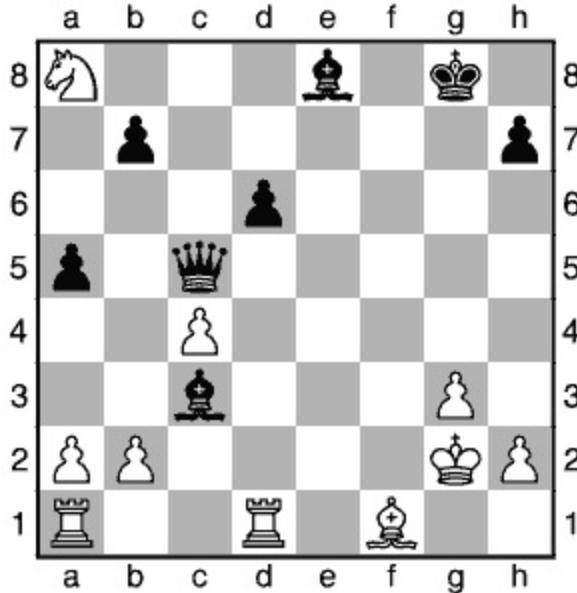
2c45) **28 Rd5** Qc2+ 29 Rd2 is just line '2c3', but with Black having an extra tempo with his a-pawn.

2c46) **28 Ke1** a3 29 Rab1 (29 Nd5 Qe4+ 30 Kd2 Bh6+ 31 Nf4 Bxf4+ 32 gxf4 Qd4+ wins for Black) 29...axb2 30 Nd5 Qe4+ 31 Kd2 Bg6 is dangerous for White.

2c47) **28 Nc7** Bh5+ 29 Ke1 Bxd1 30 Rxd1 (30 Nxd1? Qa5+; 30 N7d5 Qc2 31 Rxd1 a3 transposes) 30...a3 31 N7d5 Qc2 (better than 31...Qe5+ 32 Be2 axb2 33 Rb1 Qg5 34 Kd1) 32 Bd3 (after 32 Rd2 Qc1+ 33 Rd1 Black can, at any rate, repeat the position) 32...Qxb2 33 Ne4 Qxa2 with an unclear position.

The conclusion is that Black has no trouble forcing a draw after 26 Kf3, but it is very doubtful if he can play for a win.

26...Bxc3



White to move

White must have overlooked that the recapture costs him a rook as well as the exchange: 27 bxc3 Bc6+ 28 Rd5 Bxd5+ 29 cxd5 Qxc3 30 Rb1 Qc2+. The loss of the knight on c3 not only costs material, but it also reduces White's ability to block the c6-h1 diagonal.

27 Nc7

27 Kh1 is no better after 27...Bc6+ 28 Bg2 Bxg2+ 29 Kxg2 Be5 and there is no defence against the threat of 30...Qc6+ and ...b6 winning the knight, for example 30 Rd5 Qxc4 31 Rad1 (31 Rxa5? Qb4 wins a rook) 31...Qc6 and ...b6 follows in any case.

White therefore utilises his only other chance, intending to answer 27...Qxc7 by 28 bxc3, or 27...Bc6+ by 28 Nd5.

27...Bg6

Black solves the problem by going to the other side of the blockading square d5. His threat of mate in two provides the necessary tempo to trap the rook at a1.

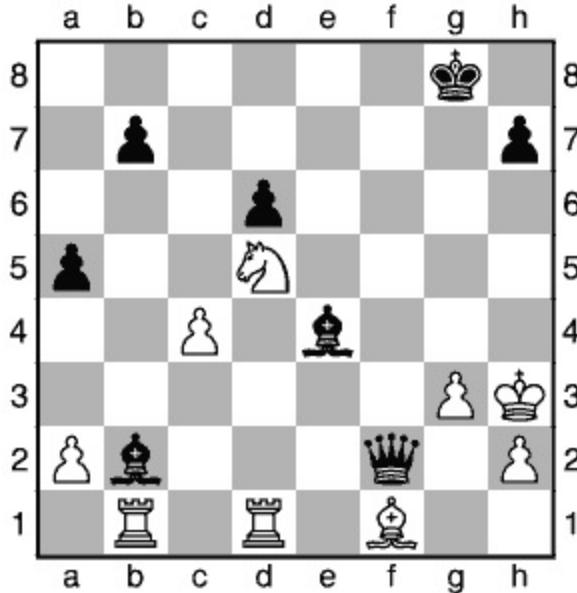
28 Nd5

Or 28 Bd3 Bxb2 29 Rab1 Bxd3 30 Rxd3 (or 30 Rxb2 Be4+ and ...Qxc7) 30...Qxc4 31 Rdd1 (the rook at b1 must be defended against ...Qe4+ and ...Qc2+) 31...Qxa2, threatening 32...Bc1+ and winning with the a-pawn.

28...Be4+

29 Kh3 Bxb2

30 Rab1 Qf2!



White to move

Black's light-squared bishop happens to be the more useful attacking piece at present; thus, by threatening both 31...Bf5+ and 31...Bxb1 32 Rxb1 Qf5+, he forces White to surrender his rook for the other bishop. If 31 Nf4, then 31...Bf5+ 32 Kh4 Qf3 mates.

31 Rxb2 Qxb2

32 Nf4 Bf5+

33 g4 Qf2

0-1

My last place with 4/12 was not really a surprise, and the games revealed my weaknesses with great clarity. Curiously, now that I was 'officially' working full-time at chess, I didn't play a game for three months! I was far from idle, since I was working and studying hard to improve my play. I prepared the openings in my repertoire far more thoroughly than before, and tried to rectify my poor positional play in the middlegame.

My next tournament was an international Swiss held at Ramsgate in December, in which I finished joint second with 6½/9. I started with 2/4, an inevitable consequence of being out of practice, but a finishing burst of 4½/5 took me up to a respectable place.

In January 1982, I took part in the famous tournament at Wijk aan Zee. This was my first visit to the windswept Dutch town, and it has since become one of my favourite events. At once I noticed a new side to my game; while still preferring tactical struggles, I could also play (slightly) more

positionally. The following game is one of the most positional struggles in the book. So far as I can remember, I hardly calculated a single variation more than a couple of moves deep during the entire course of the game.

Game 13

J. Nunn – M. Tal

Wijk aan Zee 1982

Sicilian, Taimanov

- 1 e4 c5**
- 2 Nf3 e6**
- 3 d4 cxd4**
- 4 Nxd4 Nc6**
- 5 Nc3 a6**
- 6 g3**

The fianchetto has the advantages of controlling d5, protecting the e-pawn and in some lines generating tactical chances on the long diagonal.

- 6...Qc7**
- 7 Bg2 Nf6**
- 8 0-0 h6**

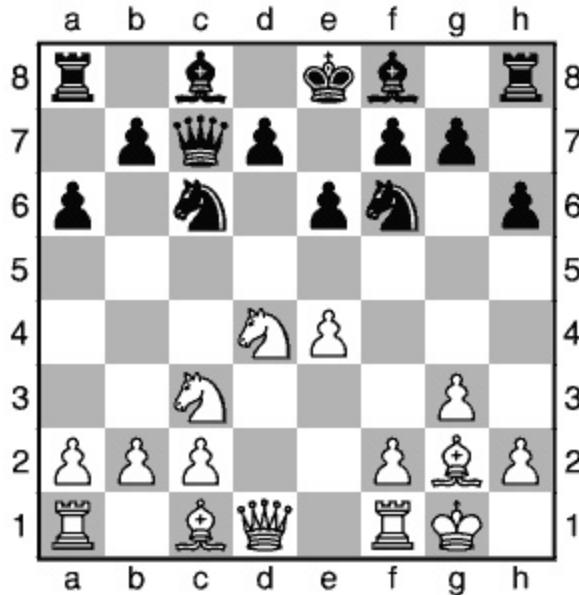
Taimanov's idea, which has hidden points despite its strange appearance. The main point is revealed by a comparison with two similar variations:

1) **8...Nxd4** 9 Qxd4 Bc5 10 Bf4! d6 11 Qd3 Nd7 12 Na4 e5 13 Bd2 b5 14 Nxc5 Nxc5 15 Qa3 with a slight advantage to White.

2) **8...Be7** 9 Re1 Nxd4 (this is a more refined version of line '1'; it looks odd to play ...Be7 and then ...Bc5, but it turns out that the move Re1 weakens the f2-square) 10 Qxd4 Bc5 (the point is that the positionally desirable 11 Bf4 allows 11...Qb6 12 Qd2 e5! 13 Bxe5 Bxf2+! and Black equalises) 11 Qd1 d6 12 Be3 e5 13 Qd2 Be6 14 Rad1 with a slight plus for White. Black often plays ...h6 later, either to prevent Bg5 by White or in reply to g4.

Line '2' was played occasionally in the 1970s, but never achieved any great heights of popularity. It is true that later on another reason for not playing this variation emerged: after 8...Be7 9 Re1 Nxd4, White need not recapture but can instead play 10 e5!?, which leads to amazing complications. However, this was not known when Nunn-Tal was played, in 1982. The point of 8...h6 is that after 9 Re1 Nxd4 10 Qxd4 (10 e5!? is still possible here)

10...Bc5, Black has gained the useful move ...h6 over line '2'. Thus there is an incentive for White to change plans and avoid the natural 9 Re1.



White to move

9 Nb3

White has tried almost every reasonable move here in an attempt to find one which exposes 8...h6 as a waste of time. In addition to 9 Re1 and 9 Nb3, the alternatives 9 Nxc6, 9 Bf4, 9 h3, 9 a4, 9 Be3, 9 Nce2 and 9 b3 have also been tried. One recent example of this last move was Ivanchuk-Hübner, Wijk aan Zee 1996, which continued very sharply: 9 b3 Be7 10 Na4 b5 11 e5 bxa4 12 Nxc6 dxc6 13 exf6 Bxf6 14 Ba3 Bxa1 15 Qxa1 f6 with unclear complications. The game later ended in a draw. The popularity of 8...h6 waned abruptly in the late 1980s, and this example was one of the few recent occasions in which 8...h6 was played in a top-level game.

However, back in 1982 many of these moves had not been tried and the main alternative to 9 Nb3 was thought to be 9 Nxc6 (9 Bf4 e5! 10 Nd5 Qd8! 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 Nxf6+ Qxf6 was totally level in Sigurjonsson-Taimanov, Hastings 1975/6, and in fact the players agreed to a draw here) 9...dxc6 (9...bxc6 10 Re1 d6 11 e5 dxe5 12 Rxe5 may give White an edge) 10 Be3 e5 11 Na4 Nd7 12 Bh3! and White was slightly better in Popović-Cebalo, Yugoslav Championship 1980. Oddly, the move 9 Nxc6 seems to have disappeared totally after this one outing.

The text-move crosses Black's plan by the simple expedient of preventing the exchange at d4. The defect is that White spends a tempo

withdrawing his knight to a less active square.

9...Be7

Wisely settling for development and a transposition into Scheveningen channels. To pursue queenside play while still undeveloped would be asking for trouble: 9...b5? 10 a4 b4 11 Nd5! exd5 12 exd5 Na7 (otherwise the coming d6 will hit him even harder; 12...Be7 13 dxc6 dxc6 runs into 14 Bf4 Qb6 15 Re1 with a crushing attack) 13 d6 Qb8 14 Re1+ Kd8 15 Bxa8 Qxa8 16 Qd4 Qb8 17 Be3 and White wins.



White to move

Over the next couple of moves the battle revolves around Black's attempts to develop his c8-bishop. He would like to bring it out to b7, while White would like to prevent this and force Black to play ...Bd7, a less active move.

10 a4

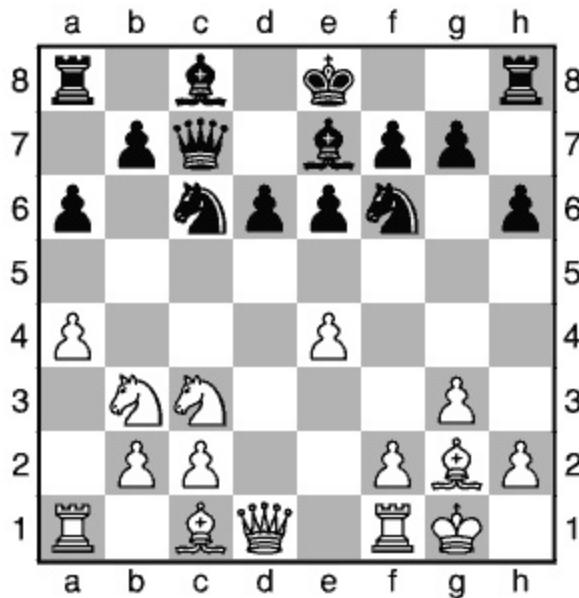
Black is probably still not threatening ...b5, but this move is necessary sooner or later, so White keeps his other options open by playing it straight away.

The later game Van der Wiel-Lobron, Wijk aan Zee 1985 continued in rather similar style to Nunn-Tal: 10 f4 0-0 11 Be3 d6 12 a4 b6 13 Qe2 Rb8 14 g4 Nh7 15 Rad1 Re8 16 Nd2 with a slight advantage to White, who went on to win.

10...d6

10...b6 would still be met by the same attack – 11 Nd5, etc., which

explains the text-move.



11 f4

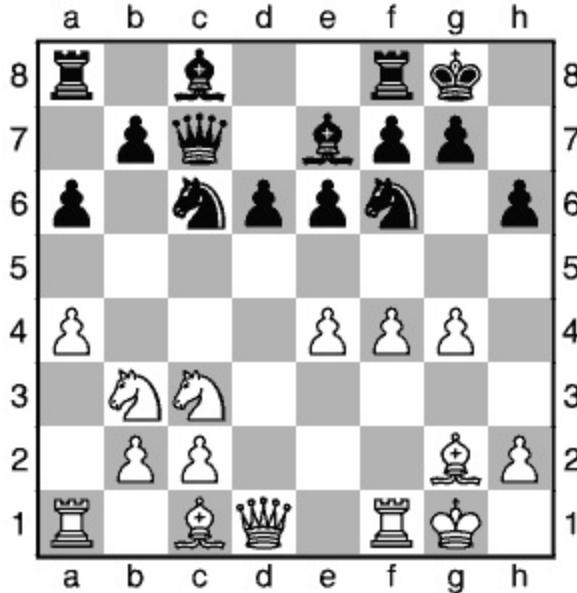
Once again White uses tactics to prevent the deployment of Black's bishop at b7. The alternative plan was 11 a5, e.g. 11...0-0 (11...b6 12 axb6 Qxb6 13 Be3 is very good for White) 12 Be3 Ne5 13 Bb6 Qb8 14 Qe2 Nfd7 15 Na4 Nxb6 16 Nxb6 Ra7, as in Popović-Rajković, Kladovo 1980, and now Popović considers that 17 Nd4 would have been good for White. In this example White adopted a purely positional plan on the queenside, seeking only to prove that Black's ...h6 represents a loss of time. My eye, on the other hand, was drawn to the fact that ...h6 slightly weakens the kingside. It is hard to say which method is best; like many decisions in chess, personal style was probably the main influence.

11...0-0

Originally I thought that this move was a mistake, but in fact the error only occurs on the next move.

11...b6 was risky on account of 12 e5 dx5 (12...Nd7 13 exd6 Bxd6 14 f5 e5 15 Nd5 is worse) 13 fxe5 Nd7 14 Qg4 g6 15 Qf4, when Black cannot take on e5. However, 11...Bd7 was perfectly playable. In this case it doesn't make too much sense to play 12 g4 since Black's king has not been committed to the kingside, but White could play 12 Be3, when it is hard to see how Black can improve on the obvious 12...0-0.

12 g4



Black to move

This goes against many of the accepted principles of chess in that White seems to be launching an attack when he has not completed his development. However, there are special circumstances involved here. Firstly, the best response to a flank attack is usually a central break, but this isn't easy for Black to arrange as White is effectively restraining both ...d5 and the other pawn break ...b5. Secondly, White is not playing immediately for mate, but to gain space and drive away the knight from f6, which increases White's central control. It just isn't possible for White to generate any real threats to Black's king while his knights are stuck on the other side of the board and only his queen is able to participate rapidly in an attack. On the other hand, if White succeeds in playing h4 and g5 Black may come to regret ...h6, which makes it much easier for White to prise open a kingside file. Even if White cannot attack at once, there will always be the lurking threat of gxh6 followed by a g-file invasion, a threat which will grow in power as White completes his development.

Another objection to g4 is that White has wasted a tempo by playing g3 and only then g4, but this is a simplistic argument. In some lines of the Scheveningen White plays g4 (in one move), but then finds it necessary to play Be2-f3 (to prevent ...d5), and then Bf3-g2 (to make room for attacking moves such as Qh5 and Rf3-h3). Rather than being a tempo down, White is actually a tempo up over this plan!

12...Bd7?!

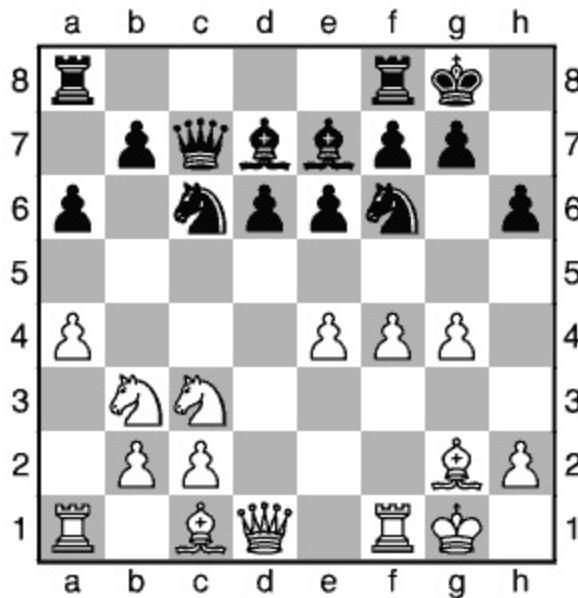
This move is too casual. Modern chess theory tends to turn its nose up at

primitive flank attacks, and in almost every book on chess strategy you will find such an attack being demolished by a well-timed counterblow in the centre. Moreover, in this game we have a Scheveningen pawn structure in the centre, and this variation is notorious for the solidity of Black's kingside in the face of a white pawn-storm. Indeed, the difficulty of proceeding with the attack while keeping all Black's sources of counterplay under restraint can hardly be overstated – it even proved too much for Anatoly Karpov in the famous final game of the 1985 World Championship match.

However, this position differs in one small but very significant respect from a normal Scheveningen. The move ...h6 weakens Black's kingside and greatly increases White's long-term attacking chances there. Accordingly, Black should not continue with his usual *laissez-faire* policy, but instead take measures to prevent h4 and g5.

The best method is 12...Nd7!. This prophylactic move stops any pawn advance on the kingside, since White cannot allow e5 to fall into Black's hands, so White would just have to develop, for example by 13 Be3 b6 14 Qe2 Bb7. Black would continue with ...Nc5 and a double-edged middlegame with balanced chances would arise.

12...Nh7 is also possible, but the knight cannot easily come back into the game from h7 – see the Van der Wiel-Lobron example mentioned above.



White to move

13 h4!

13 g5 would be a positional blunder, ruining everything for White,

because 13...hxg5 14 fxg5 Nh7, followed by ...Ne5, would give Black a solid position on the kingside based on his excellent e5-knight.

When I pushed the h-pawn, the picturesque nature of the position caused some of the watching grandmasters to smile (and others to grimace). Now, after g5 by White, ...hxg5 can be met by hxg5, and White retains control of e5. In fact it would be most unwise for Black to exchange pawns since with the opening of the h-file his king really would be in trouble.

Now Black cannot prevent g5, when he has the choice between the knight retreat to e8, interfering with his rooks and leaving the kingside exposed, or moving to h7, defending the kingside but leaving the knight permanently marooned. Tal decides that ...Nh7 is the lesser evil. Note that Black's last move prevents the knight retreating to the natural square d7.

13...b5

Black cannot break out in the centre yet, since 13...e5? 14 f5 (or even 14 g5 at once) followed by g5 and Nd5 leaves Black hopelessly weak and cramped, while 13...d5 14 exd5 Nxd5 (or 14...exd5 15 g5) 15 Bxd5 exd5 16 Nxd5 wins a pawn safely.

Therefore Black aims to kick the knight away from c3, weakening White's central control and improving the conditions for the ...d5 push.

14 g5

Of course not 14 axb5 axb5 15 Rxa8 Rxa8 16 Nxb5? Qb6+ 17 N5d4 e5 winning a piece.

14...Nh7



White to move

15 Be3

White's kingside advance has scored a notable success in driving Black's knight offside, and I decided that it was not necessary to try my luck with 15 gxh6 gxh6 16 Qh5. After 16...Kh8 17 Qxh6 b4 18 Ne2 Rg8 (threatening 19...Rg6 20 Qh5 Rag8 with dangerous counterplay) 19 f5 exf5 20 exf5 Ne5, with ...Bc6 to come, Black has significant counterplay in return for the pawn. Not the type of position to have against Tal, certainly!

The move played is based on the well-known saying that the threat is stronger than its execution. White completes his development and holds gxh6 in reserve, while keeping his other options open.

15...b4

15...bxa4 16 Rxa4 Rfb8 is an attempt to get some play, but after 17 Rc4 Qd8 the opening of another line favours White, if anything – the rook is not badly placed at c4.

16 Ne2 d5?!

Tal decides that desperate measures are necessary and, true to his style, resolves to sacrifice a pawn. It is clear that Black must do something quickly or White simply improves his position by means of Ng3 and Qg4, while Black lacks counterplay. However, it would have been better to choose the alternative central break 16...e5. After 17 gxh6 Bxh4 (17...exf4 18 hxg7, followed by Nxf4 and the knight is heading for d5 or h5, or 17...gxh6 18 fxe5 Nxe5 19 Bxh6, with a similar result, are both very good for White) White can maintain some advantage by 18 Qd2 (18 hxg7 Kxg7 19 Qd2 Rg8 20 Rad1 is less clear after 20...Bg4!) 18...gxh6 19 fxe5 Nxe5 20 Bxh6 Rfc8 21 Nbd4, followed by Nf4, but Black has successfully randomised the position and is not without counterplay.

In many variations of the Sicilian, Black can counter an early kingside pawn-storm by a ...d5 pawn offer, but here it fails for three reasons:

- 1) White's development is not inferior to Black's.
- 2) The bishop at g2 is useful both along the long diagonal and for shielding White's king.
- 3) The knight at h7 cannot participate so Black is playing a piece down in the main battle area.

17 exd5

Blocking the centre usually enhances the power of a flank attack, but not here. 17 e5? would be answered by 17...h5! followed by ...g6, bringing White

to a dead stop. In any case there is no reason not to accept the pawn.

17...exd5

18 Qxd5



Black to move

White undoubtedly has a large advantage; he has won a pawn, and his pieces are well-placed in the centre of the board. Once he has played Ned4 and Rae1, he will deny Black's pieces any active squares from which to launch a counterattack. Nevertheless, this is the type of position in which it is all too easy to go wrong. Once things have taken a turn for the worse, all kinds of problems can arise. Black might start to gain tempi by harassing White's queen, or expose White's king by swapping off the light-squared bishops. Then the advanced kingside pawns, far from being a strength, may suddenly turn out to have accomplished nothing more than to leave a huge vacuum behind them.

The secret of keeping control in such positions is twofold. Firstly, great accuracy is required to prevent the counterplay from getting off the ground. Positions like this don't just 'win themselves'; good moves are still necessary to overcome the opponent's resistance. The second important point is to avoid thinking passively. If White starts retreating his pieces, hoping just to consolidate his extra material, then he will find a hard task in front of him. On the contrary, White should still be thinking actively, trying to use the kingside pawns to keep Black off-balance and prevent him from co-ordinating his pieces for counterplay. White has spent several tempi pushing

the pawns to their present positions; he should try to capitalise on the kingside threats they can help to generate. If White has to return the pawn in order to maintain the attack, then he should not hesitate to do this.

18...Rac8

Not the square Black really wants to put the rook on, but if he continues 18...Rad8 19 a5 Black still cannot play 19...Bg4 because the c6-knight is undefended, while White threatens 20 Bb6.

19 a5

This move is still good. First of all White prevents a rook moving to d8, and secondly White improves his chances in any ending which might arise. If Black were allowed to play ...a5 he would have a solid queenside pawn structure and White would have difficulty exploiting his extra, backward pawn on c2. After a5 by White, however, the pawns at b4 and a6 are both fixed and subject to attack.

19...Nb8

An admission that Black has nothing for the pawn, but 19...Be6 20 Qxc6 Qxc6 21 Bxc6 Rxc6 22 Ned4 should win with correct play.

20 Ned4



Black to move

More centralising, at the same time defending c2 and restricting the movement of Black's light squared-bishop. White's plan now is to threaten action on the kingside; Black will have to scramble to exchange pieces in order to avoid a worse fate.

20...Bg4

21 Rae1 Rfd8

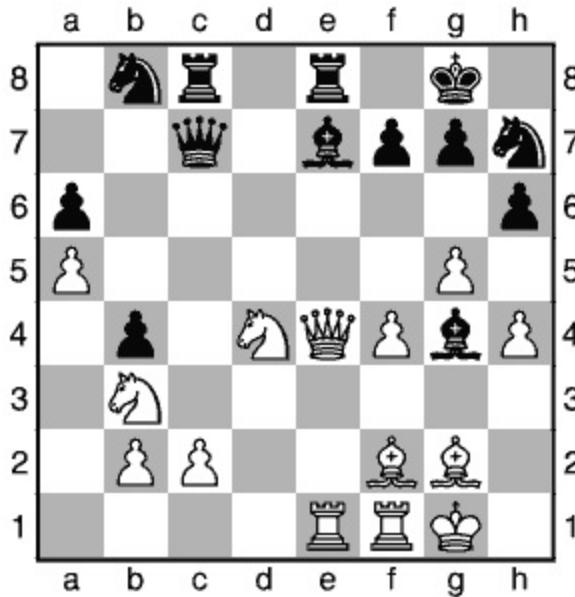
Not 21...Rfe8? 22 g6 and wins.

22 Qe4

Those kingside pawns could soon be on the move again. White threatens 23 f5, burying the bishop at h5, with worse to follow. Black avoids the danger by himself threatening 23...Bxg5.

22...Re8

23 Bf2



Black to move

The simplest. By pinning the e7-bishop White renews the threat of f5 and forces Black to retreat.

23...Bd7

The only other line worth considering is 23...hxg5 (23...g6 and 23...h5 are both strongly met by 24 f5) 24 hxg5 Bd7 25 g6 and now:

1) 25...fxg6 26 Qxg6 (threatening 27 Bd5+) 26...Qxf4 27 Bd5+ Kh8 28 Bg3 and White wins material after 28...Qg4 29 Qxg4 Bxg4 30 Bf7 or 28...Qg5 29 Be4.

2) 25...Nf6 26 gxf7+ Kxf7 27 Qd3 and White is planning f5 or Nf5 according to circumstances. If Black now grabs the hot f-pawn, White wins by 27...Qxf4 28 Bg3 Qg4 (or 28...Qh6 29 Bxb8 Rxb8 30 Qc4+ Kf8 31 Qc7 Bg4 32 Rxe7) 29 Bd5+ Kf8 30 Ne6+ Bxe6 31 Bxe6. If Black declines the bait, he simply remains a pawn down with an exposed king.

24 Qd5

White can quite safely use his pawns as a battering-ram. 25 g6 is the main threat, and if 24...Nf8, then 25 gxh6 gxh6 26 Qh5 and Black's kingside crumbles. Black's only defence is to exchange queens, but a pawn to the bad and with the h7-knight still out of play the situation is hopeless.

24...Qd6

25 Nf5!

Making the most out of the position; White obtains the bishop pair whether Black exchanges on f5 or swaps queens. This move does allow Black to regain the pawn, but with White's enormous piece activity it is no surprise that he obtains an overwhelming attack.

25...Qxd5

26 Nxe7+ Rxe7

27 Bxd5 Rxe1

28 Rxe1 Rxc2

29 Re7



Black to move

White threatens 30 g6, 30 Ba7 and, worst of all, 30 Rxf7. Since Black cannot defend the f-pawn, he at least forces White to take it with the bishop.

29...Bc6

30 Bxf7+ Kf8

After 30...Kh8 31 gxh6 gxh6 32 Bd4+ the bishops triumph.

31 Rc7

Threatening 32 Bc5+ and 32 g6.

31...hxg5

32 Bc5+ 1-0

The next game was played in the penultimate round of the tournament when both players were in a very tense situation. I needed a win to have a chance of first prize while John van der Wiel needed a draw to make his first grandmaster norm. In view of this, Black's choice of opening is rather surprising, but Van der Wiel has a sharp style and he evidently decided to play true to his own preferences rather than adopt a more solid opening.

Game 14

J. Nunn – J. van der Wiel

Wijk aan Zee 1982

Sicilian, Sozin

1 e4 c5

2 Nf3 Nc6

3 d4 cxd4

4 Nxd4 Nf6

5 Nc3 d6

6 Bc4 e6

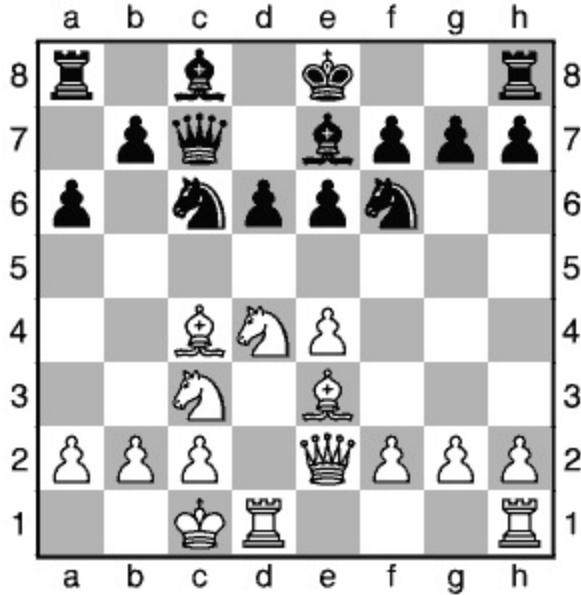
7 Be3 Be7

8 Qe2

This system, known as the Velimirović Attack, is based on a quick 0-0-0 followed by a kingside pawn storm; from e2 the queen keeps an eye on Black's outpost square at c4 and continues to support the pawn thrust g4.

8...a6

9 0-0-0 Qc7



White to move

10 Bb3 Na5

One of the most highly regarded responses to the Velimirović Attack. Black delays (and sometimes omits entirely) kingside castling in order to avoid giving White a clear target for his kingside pawn advance. The main alternative is 10...0-0, when White can continue with 11 g4 or 11 Rhg1.

11 g4 b5

The main point behind this is to threaten White's e-pawn by ...b4. If White can be induced to play f3, then his attack is slowed down.

12 g5 Nxb3+

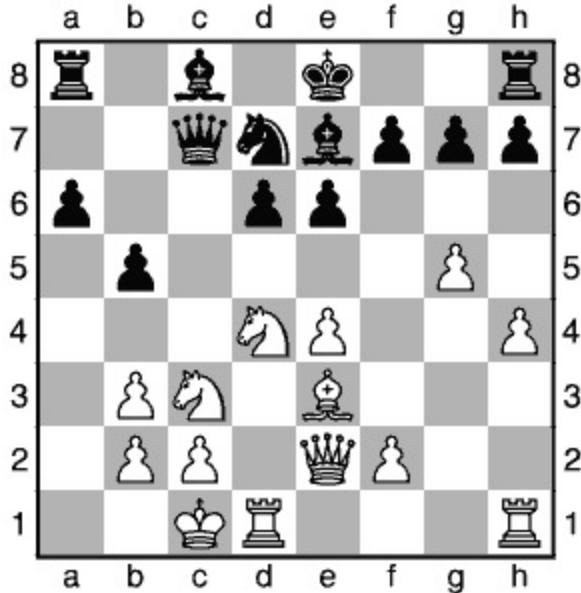
This is forced as 12...Nd7? would be refuted by 13 Bxe6, etc.

13 axb3

Not 13 Nxb3 as the doubling of the pawns is insignificant and White does better to keep his knight on the aggressive square d4.

13...Nd7

14 h4



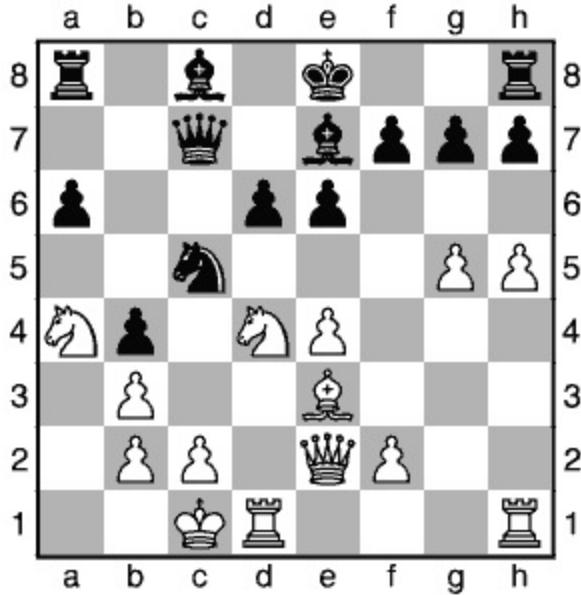
Black to move

Throughout this book I have tried to avoid getting embroiled in the details of opening theory, but in this case a good deal of theoretical background is necessary since the first twenty moves had all been played before. This game underlines the importance of learning typical ideas in each opening. The point of 14 h4 is to undermine the e6-pawn by means of h5 and g6. If the bishop stays at c8 Black's king will be stuck in the centre, while if it shifts to b7 Black will have problems defending e6. The move 14 h4 has superseded earlier attempts, such as the violent 14 Nf5 (now thought to be about level) and passive moves like 14 Kb1 and 14 b4. Apart from this basic plan, there are some other ideas which recur in many different positions: 1) If Black does not make a capture after h5 and g6 White may continue h6, opening lines for his pieces or obtaining a passed pawn. Alternatively he may play gxf7+ Kxf7, and, if the bishop has gone to b7, sacrifice a knight at e6 to draw the black king into the open.

2) Black can often win a pawn, either at e4 or a4, but as a rule the capture is likely to be fraught with danger.

14...Bb7

Bearing the above points in mind, we can now analyse 14...b4, the main alternative to the game continuation, 15 Na4 Nc5 16 h5 and now:

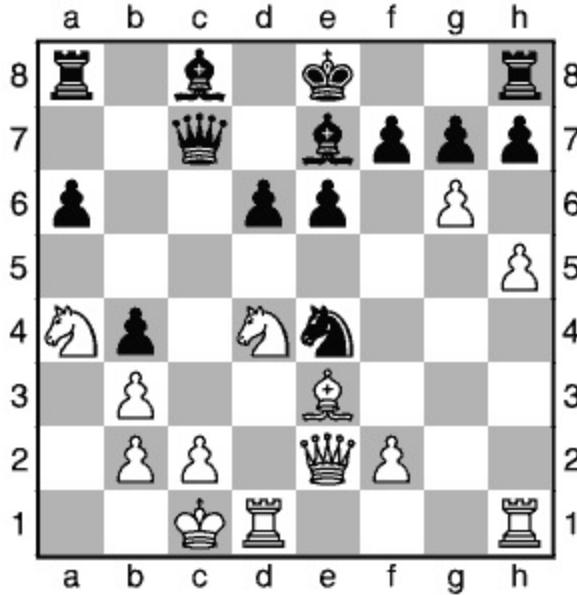


Black to move

1) **16...Nxa4** (the win of the a-pawn, leaving the queen offside, is simply not worth the trouble) 17 bxa4 Qa5 18 g6 Qxa4 19 Kb1 Bd7 (or 19...fxg6 20 hxg6 h6 21 Qc4! and the e6-pawn falls, as 21...Qd7 22 Nxe6 Qxe6 loses to 23 Qc6+) 20 gxf7+ Kxf7 21 Qf3+ Bf6 (21...Ke8 22 e5 d5 23 Qg4 is also dangerous for Black) 22 h6 Rhg8 23 hxg7 Qa5 24 Rh6 Qe5 25 Rh5 1-0 Hartston-Mestel, British Championship 1973.

2) **16...e5** (after this Black will suffer from weak light squares) 17 Nf5 Bxf5 18 exf5 Nxa4 (18...Nxb3+ 19 Kb1 Nc5 20 Nxc5 dxc5 21 Qc4, with a light-square bind which will be intensified by Rd5 and Rhd1 – more than enough for a pawn) 19 bxa4 Qc6 20 Kb1 (White wishes to answer 20...d5 by 21 Bc1, and if 21...f6 then 22 h6) 20...Qxa4 21 Rh4 Rb8 22 Rd5 Qd7 23 Qd3, again with a strong bind, this time to be reinforced by such moves as b3, Rc4, Ra5, g6, etc., Nunn-Murshed, Commonwealth Championship 1985.

3) **16...Nxe4** (it is more reasonable to take the central e-pawn) 17 g6 and now:



Black to move

3a) **17...fxg6 18 hxg6 h6 19 Qf3** is good for White.

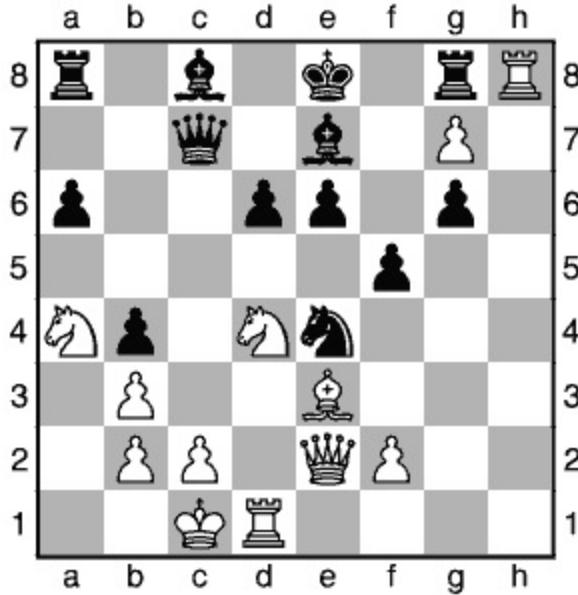
3b) **17...Nf6 18 h6!** (if possible, White should increase the kingside tension rather than capture immediately on f7) and now:

3b1) **18...hxg6 19 hxg7 Rg8 20 Rh8 Bb7 21 Bg5 Kd7** (21...0-0-0 22 Bxf6 Bxf6 23 Nxe6 wins) 22 Nb5! axb5 23 Qxb5+ Qc6 (23...Bc6 24 Nb6+ Qxb6 25 Qxb6 Ne4 26 Kb1 Bxg5 27 Rxg8 Rxg8 28 Qa7+ Ke8 29 f3 wins) 24 Nb6+ Kd8 25 Qxc6, followed by Bxf6, and White wins.

3b2) **18...gxh6 19 gxf7+ Kxf7 20 Rxh6**, favours White because the g- and h-files have been opened up.

3b3) **18...fxg6 19 hxg7 Rg8 20 Bg5** with a dangerous attack, for example 20...e5 21 Bxf6 Bxf6 22 Qf3 Bg5+ 23 Kb1 Qb7 (23...Bb7 24 Qf8+!) 24 Nc6 wins.

3c) **17...f5 18 h6! hxg6** (18...Bf6 19 hxg7 Qxg7 20 f3 Ng3 {20...Nc5 21 Nxf5} 21 Qc4 is good for White) 19 hxg7 Rg8 20 Rh8 and now:



Black to move

3c1) 20...Nf6 21 Nb6 Rb8 (or 21...Qxb6 22 Nxf5 Qd8 23 Nh6 Kd7 24 Qf3 Rb8 25 Nf7 Qe8 26 Nxd6 Bxd6 27 Bc5 Nd5 28 Bxd6 and wins) 22 Nxf5! exf5 (22...gxf5 23 Rxg8+ Nxg8 24 Qh5+ Kd8 25 Qh8 wins) 23 Rxg8+ Nxg8 24 Nd5 Qb7 25 Bg5 Kf7 26 Bxe7 Nxe7 27 Nxe7 and White wins, Zaitsev-Utemov, USSR 1983.

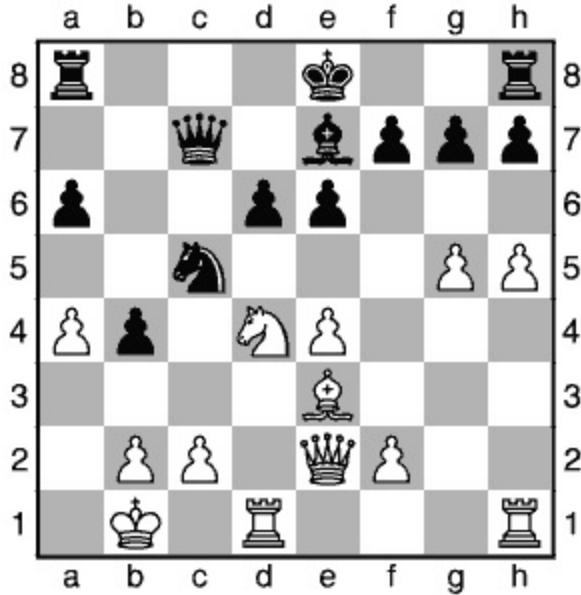
3c2) 20...Kf7 21 Rxg8 Kxg8 22 f3 Nf6 (22...Ng5 23 Qg2, or 22...Nc5 23 Qh2) 23 Qh2! Nh5 (23...Kxg7 24 Qh6+ Kf7 25 Rg1, or 23...e5 24 Nb6! Qxb6 25 Nxf5 Qd8 26 Qh8+ Kf7 27 Nxd6+ Qxd6 28 Rxd6 Bxd6 29 Qd8 wins) 24 Rg1 Nxg7 25 Rxg6 and White has dangerous threats.

3d) 17...Bf6! (occupying the long diagonal often saves Black in this variation) 18 gxf7+ Kxf7 19 Rhg1 e5 20 Nf3 Bf5 and White had little to show for his pawn in Emms-Hennigan, British Championship 1993. However, 18 Bf4 e5 19 Qxe4 Bb7 20 gxf7+ Kxf7 21 Qf5 is a more critical test of Black's idea.

4) 16...Bd7 (this is currently reckoned to be Black's best option) and now:

4a) 17 g6 Nxb3+ 18 Nxb3 Bxa4 19 h6 is a very complicated line on which there is a considerable amount of theory, which lies beyond the scope of this book.

4b) 17 Kb1 Bxa4 18 bxa4 and now:



Black to move

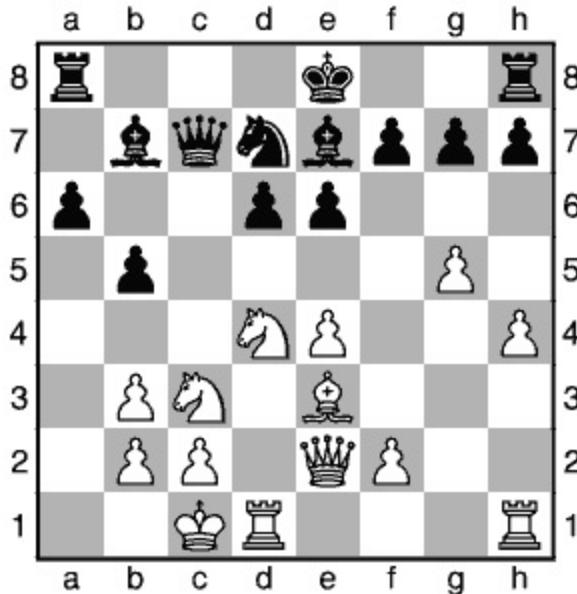
4b1) 18...Nxa4 19 g6 Bf6 (Black loses after 19...Nc5 20 e5 fxg6 21 hxg6 0-0-0 22 gxh7 dxe5 23 Nxe6, as in Cela-Carmilleri, Zouperi Zonal 1993) 20 gxf7+ (not 20 h6 first this time, owing to 20...hxg6) 20...Qxf7 (20...Kxf7 21 h6 g6 22 Qf3 Rhf8 23 e5 dxe5 24 Nxe6! and White won easily, Planinc-Beliavsky, Hastings 1974/5) 21 Qc4 (White can also throw in 21 h6 g6 before playing this) 21...0-0 22 Qxe6 Qxe6 23 Nxe6 Rf7 24 Bd4? (24 Bc1 is roughly equal) 24...Re8 and Black had the better ending in the game Wang Pin-Chiburdanidze, Shanghai Women's Candidates' 1992.

4b2) 18...Qb7 (ignoring the a-pawn and concentrating on central pressure) 19 g6 Bf6 20 gxf7+ (the immediate 20 f3 has also been played several times; after 20...Nxa4 21 gxf7+ Qxf7 22 Qc4 0-0 23 Qxe6 the same ending as in line '4b' arises, except that White's pawn is on f3 instead of f2) 20...Kxf7 21 f3 (after 21 e5 dxe5 22 Nb3 Nxa4 23 Qg4 Rac8 24 h6 Qc6 White was simply two pawns down for nothing in Quinteros-Popović, Novi Sad 1982) 21...Rac8 22 b3 Rhd8 23 Bf2 Rd7 24 Rhe1 Kg8 with a roughly equal position, Kuczynski-Am.Rodriguez, Camaguey 1987.

My opinion is that 14...b4 is more logical than 14...Bb7, because leaving the bishop on c8 helps to support the weak square e6. Evidently most players agree with this, since almost all the recent developments have been in the 14...b4 lines. Variations '1' and '2' above are definitely bad for Black, but lines '3' and '4' are both playable. The basic principle is that taking the pawn on a4 with the queen is too risky for Black, because the absence of his most powerful piece leaves his king too exposed. However, it is perfectly justified

to take the a4-pawn with the knight, and it is also reasonable to take on e4 provided, of course, that no immediate disaster results.

Returning to the position after 14...Bb7:



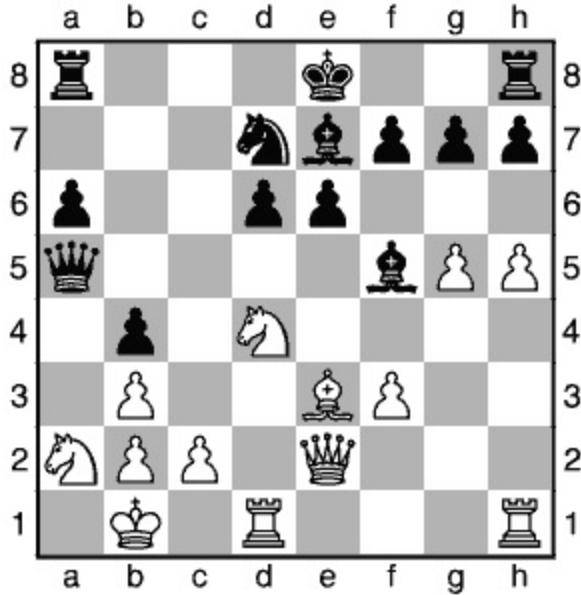
White to move

15 f3

The choice between this and the sharper move 15 h5 is largely a matter of taste. My own feeling is that once Black has weakened e6 by playing ...Bb7, it shouldn't be necessary to sacrifice the e4-pawn in order to obtain a dangerous attack.

After 15 h5 b4 we have two variations:

- 1) 16 Na2 Qa5 17 Kb1 Bxe4 18 f3 Bf5 (18...Bd5 has never been tried; at least it prevents the irritating Nc6 while still defending e6) and now:



White to move

1a) **19 Rh4** h6! 20 Nxb4 Bxg5 21 Nbc6 Qd5 22 Bxg5 hxg5 23 Rhh1 Nb8 enabled Black to hang on in Ljubojević-Beliavsky, Las Palmas 1974.

1b) Šahovic's suggestion of **19 Nc6** Qc7 20 Naxb4 is interesting as 20...a5 loses to 21 Nxe7 Kxe7 22 Nd5+ exd5 23 Bb6+. However, 19...Qb5 appears better.

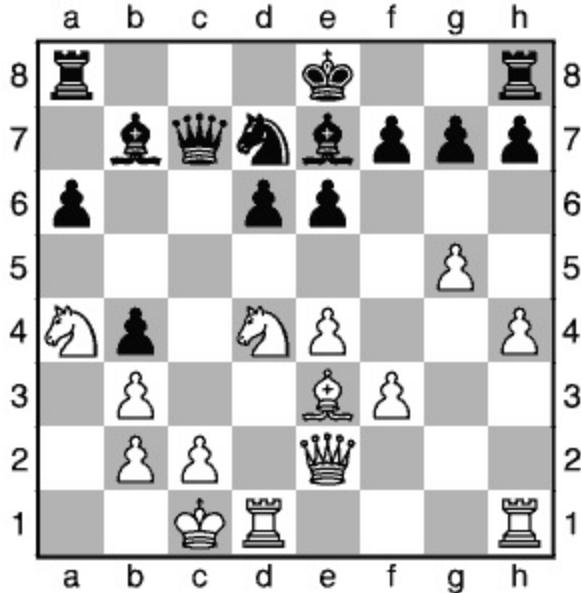
1c) **19 Nxb4!?** Qxb4 20 Nxf5 exf5 21 Bd4 Nc5 22 h6 Ne6 23 hxg7 Rg8 24 Bf6 with sufficient compensation for the piece, Ljubojević-Hamann, Amsterdam 1975. The game ended in a draw.

2) **16 Na4** Bxe4 17 f3 Bb7?! (here again, 17...Bd5 looks like the crucial test) 18 g6 hxg6 19 hxg6 Rxh1 20 Rxh1 Nc5 (20...Bf6 loses to 21 Nxe6! fxe6 22 Bb6!, Gurevich-Ehlvest, USSR 1978, emphasising the point that e6 needs all the protection it can get) 21 Nxc5 dxc5 22 gxf7+ Kxf7 23 Nxe6 Qc6 24 Nxg7 Kxg7 25 Bd4+ 1-0 Podgaets-Butnoris, USSR 1975.

15...b4

Black may decide to castle queenside hereabouts, or he may leave his king in the centre for a while. The difference is not especially significant; what matters is that he must play ...b4 first, otherwise (after a later 15...0-0-0, say) White could play b4 himself, keeping the knight out of its best square, or even sacrifice a knight for two pawns at b5.

16 Na4



Black to move

16...Nc5

Black cannot permit h5 and g6 without a fight, but the method he chooses to combat White's attack is very risky. Black's two alternatives are:

1) **16...d5** (dangerous with the king still in the centre) 17 exd5 Bxd5 and now the simple 18 h5 looks uncomfortable for Black, as he cannot really castle on either side. The tactical 18 Nf5!? Bxb3 19 Rxd7 Qxd7 20 Nb6 Qc6 21 Nxg7+ Kf8 22 Nxa8 is perhaps less convincing after 22...Kxg7 23 Bd4+ f6 24 Nb6 (24 gxf6+ Bxf6 25 Qg2+ Kf7 26 Bxf6 Rg8 is also unclear) 24...e5 with a double-edged position.

2) **16...g6** (a logical move, restraining White's kingside play and preparing to castle queenside; the problem is that the pawn on b4 is weak, so Black does not fully equalise) 17 Qd2 (17 Qh2 0-0-0 18 h5 Rhf8 19 hxg6 hxg6 20 Qd2 Qa5 21 Ne2 Bc6 22 Kb1 was also slightly better for White in Torre-Cuellar, Leningrad Interzonal 1973) 17...Qa5 18 h5 0-0-0 19 Kb1 d5! (19...Kb8? ran into a nasty trick in Nunn-Nokes, Ramsgate 1981: 20 hxg6 hxg6 21 Rxh8 Rxh8 22 Nc6+! Bxc6 23 Qd4 and White had a decisive attack) 20 e5!? Nxe5 21 Qh2 Bd6 (if 21...Nd7, just 22 hxg6 hxg6 23 Qxh8, etc.) 22 Bf4 Qc7 23 Nc5! Bxc5 24 Bxe5 Bd6 25 f4 and White's dark-squared grip provides enough compensation for the pawn.

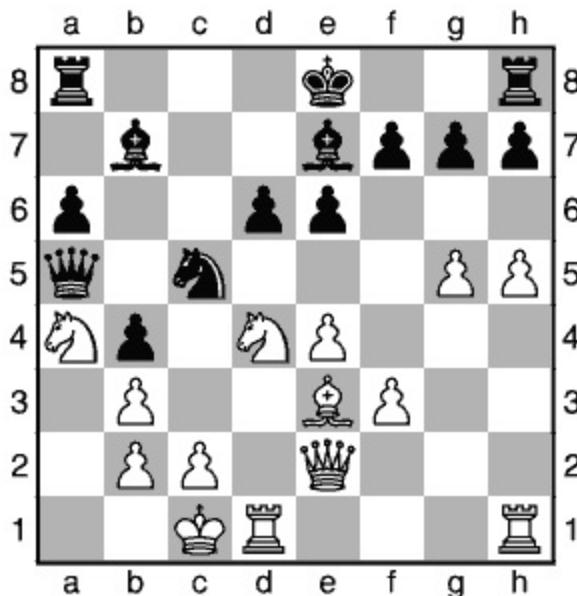
17 h5

It might have been slightly more accurate to play 17 Kb1 first. If Black continues as in the game then there would be a transposition, but after the alternative 17...Nxa4 18 bxa4 Rc8 19 Bc1! White would be able to play b3

and Bb2 more easily. After this Black would be left without a clear plan. Castling kingside in the face of the advancing pawns and the b2-bishop would be very hazardous, but the blocked queenside limits Black's possibilities for active play on that side of the board.

17...Qa5?

This is simply too greedy. As we observed earlier, taking the queen to the edge of the board solely in order to capture the relatively unimportant a-pawn is playing with fire. Although the queen ends up near the white king, there is no genuine counterattack because the other black pieces cannot help the queen. Black should have tried 17...Nxa4 18 bxa4 Rc8. The plan outlined in the previous note is slightly harder to execute now that White has played h5, because the bishop is needed on the c1-g5 diagonal to defend the g5-pawn.



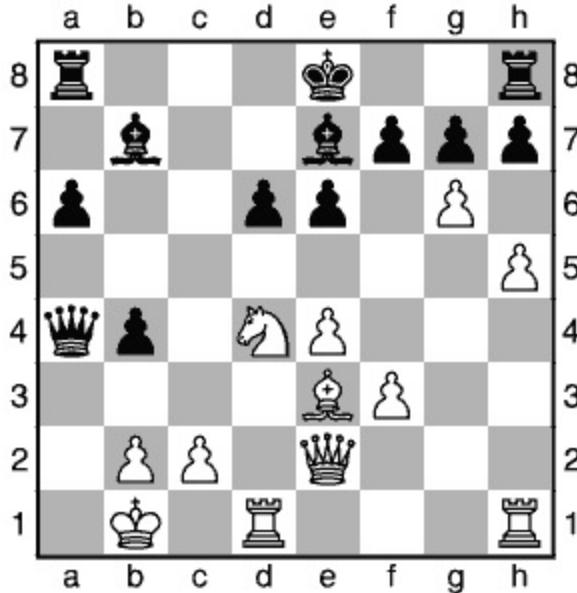
White to move

18 Kb1 Nxa4

19 bxa4 Qxa4

After 19...Bxg5 20 Nb3 Qd8 (20...Qe5 21 Bd4 Qf4 22 Na5 Bc8 23 Nc4! 0-0 24 Rdg1 gives White a crushing attack) 21 e5 (21 Bxg5 Qxg5 22 Rxd6 0-0 23 Rb6 Rab8 24 a5 also favoured White in Nagy-Csaba, Hungarian Team Championship 1994) 21...Bxe3 22 Qxe3 d5 23 Rhg1 (23...0-0? 24 Qh6) White has very strong pressure in return for the pawn.

20 g6



Black to move

20...Rc8

Whatever he plays here, Black is in real trouble:

1) **20...hxg6** 21 hxg6 Rxh1 (after 21...Rg8 22 Qh2! White has a very strong attack) 22 Rxh1 Rc8 23 Rh8+ Bf8 24 Qh2 and Black is helpless against the many threats, for example 24...Qd7 25 Rxf8+ Kxf8 26 Qh8+ Ke7 27 Bg5+, etc.

2) **20...h6** 21 gxf7+ Kxf7 22 Qg2 Bf6 23 e5! dxе5 24 Qg6+ Kg8 25 Rhg1 gives White a winning attack.

3) **20...Bf6** 21 gxf7+ Kxf7 22 h6 (usefully loosening up f6 before the intended knight sacrifice) 22...g6 23 Nxe6! b3 (23...Kxe6 loses to 24 Qc4+ d5 {24...Ke7 25 Rxd6 Kxd6 26 Rd1+} 25 Rxd5 Rac8 26 Bc5) 24 cxb3 Bxe4+ 25 fxe4 Qxe4+ 26 Ka2 Qxe6 (after 26...Kxe6 27 Rhe1 Be5 28 Qd2 White's attack is worth far more than a pawn, e.g. 28...Qc6 29 Bf4 Rae8 30 Bxe5 dxе5 31 Rxe5+ Kxe5 32 Qd4+ wins) 27 Rhf1 Rhe8 (or 27...Ke7 28 Rxf6 anyway), and Black lost after 28 Rxf6+ Kxf6 29 Qf3+ Qf5 30 Bd4+ Kf7 31 Qb7+ in Čabrilo-Sindik, Kecskemet 1979. This game once again illustrates the theme of the sacrifice at e6. It's quite amazing how many players have let this happen!

21 h6!

Although technically this move was an innovation, I can hardly claim great credit for it. Anyone who has played through the above lines will recognise this as an absolutely standard idea in the whole variation. The fact that I was the first to play it in this particular position is more or less

coincidental – any number of players would doubtless have found this move had the same position occurred on the board in front of them.

An earlier game Platonov-Polugaevsky, Kharkov 1967 had continued with the much less potent move 21 Qg2. In defending c4, Black's 20th move has largely cut out the possibility of the knight sacrifice, and if he can get in ...Bf6 as well he will be covered against the threat of h6 (meeting it by ...hxg6). It follows that White has to act at once if he wants to keep the initiative. After 21 Qg2 Bf6! 22 Bg5 Be5 (provoking a weakness at e4 before taking the knight; 22...Bxg5 23 Qxg5 would leave him exposed, the knight being the more dangerous piece here) 23 f4 Bxd4 24 gxf7+ Kxf7 25 Rxd4 Qb5 the players agreed to a draw in a still very murky position.

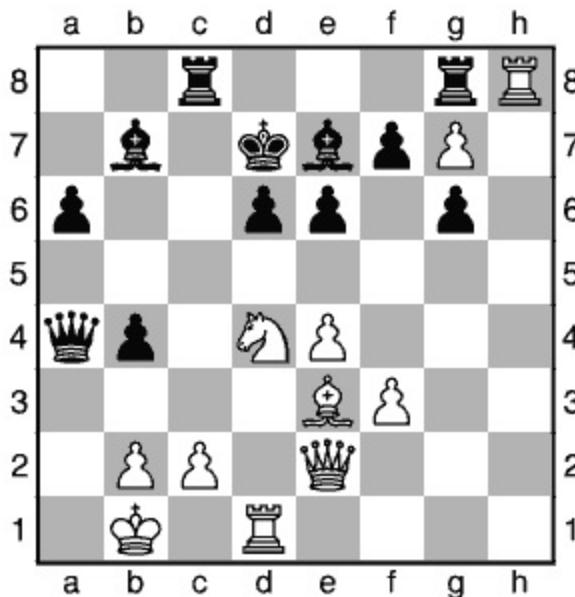
21 h6 gives Black no such defensive chance. White's plan is to create threats on both sides of the board by making a strong passed pawn at g7 and then harassing Black's king.

21...hxg6

This is forced; after 21...gxh6 22 gxf7+ Kxf7 23 Rxh6 Bf6 24 Qh2 White has a crushing attack, with threats of 25 Rxf6+ and 25 Nxe6 as well as the more obvious ones at h7 and d6. After 24...Qd7 White finishes off by 25 Qh5+ Ke7 26 Rxf6 Kxf6 27 Bg5+, etc.

22 hxg7 Rg8

23 Rh8 Kd7



White to move

These moves were forced, but now White has to decide how to continue

his attack. The advanced pawn on g7 is a thorn in Black's flesh, and in many variations we shall see how this pawn forms the basis of a decisive combination. White must keep the threats going for the moment, as otherwise Black will take on h8.

24 Nb3!

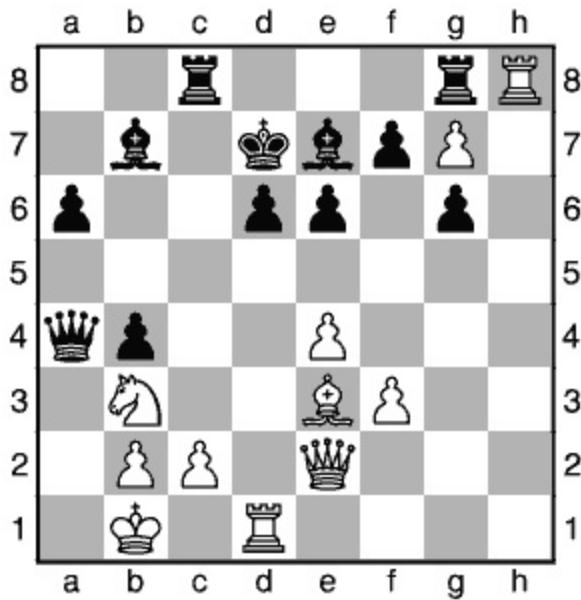
This is probably the strongest continuation of the attack, although 24 Qh2 (threatening 25 Qh7) would also give White the advantage, for example:

1) 24...Rxg7? would be refuted simply by 25 Rxc8 Bxc8 26 Qh8 Bf6 27 Bh6.

2) 24...Bf6? 25 Nxe6 would be catastrophic.

3) 24...Kc7 (preparing for ...Qe8) 25 Bg5 Qd7 (25...Bxg5 26 Nxe6+ wins; 25...Rxh8 26 gxh8Q Rxh8 27 Qxh8 Bxg5 28 Rh1, with a quick attack against f7, is good for White) 26 Qh7 Rxh8 (26...Rxg7 27 Qxg7 Bxg5 28 Rh7 is very good for White) 27 gxh8Q Rxh8 28 Qxf7 Bxg5 29 Nxe6+ Kc6 30 Nxg5 Qxf7 31 Nxf7 Rf8 32 Rxd6+ Kc7 33 Rf6 and White has an extra pawn in the ending.

4) 24...Qa5 25 Nb3 Qd8 (the line 25...Qc7 26 Bc5 Qb8 27 Rxg8 Rxg8 28 Qh7 also gives White strong pressure) 26 Bc5 d5 27 Rxg8 Qxg8 28 Bxe7 Kxe7 29 Qd2 Ba8 30 exd5 Bxd5 31 Qxb4+ and White regains the pawn, while retaining the menace on g7.



Black to move

With the text-move White threatens 25 Nc5+.

24...Kc7

Other moves do not appear to be any better:

1) **24...Rxg7** 25 Qh2! (neither 25 Nc5+ Rxc5 26 Bxc5 b3 27 cxb3 Qxb3 nor 25 Bh6 Rxh8 26 Nc5+ Kc8 is conclusive) and now there are only two moves which meet the threat of 26 Rxc8 Bxc8 27 Qh8, namely:

1a) **25...Qc6** 26 Nc5+ Kc7 27 Rxc8+ Bxc8 28 Qh8 Bf6 (28...dxc5 29 Qxg7 Qe8 30 Rh1 is very good for White) 29 Bh6 dxc5 30 Bxg7 Bxg7 31 Qxg7 Qe8 32 Qe5+ and White wins.

1b) **25...Qb5** 26 Rxc8 Bxc8 27 Qh8 Qe2 (27...Bf6 28 Bc5 d5 29 Bf8) 28 Rd3 Bf6 29 Bb6! and Black cannot meet the threat of 30 Nc5+.

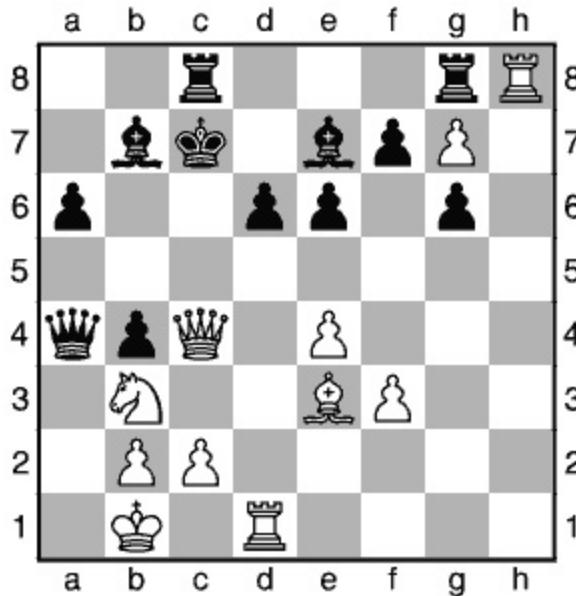
2) **24...d5** 25 Qh2, and nothing can stop Qh7 (if 25...Rxg7, then 26 Rxc8, etc.).

3) **24...Qb5** 25 Qh2 Kc7 (after 25...Rxg7 we transpose to line '1b') 26 Bc5 e5 27 Bxb4 Qxb4 (there is nothing better, for example 27...Rxg7 28 Rxc8+ Bxc8 29 Qh8) 28 Rxg8 Rxg8 29 Qh7 Rc8 30 g8Q Rxg8 31 Qxg8 and White wins.

4) **24...Qc6** is refuted by 25 Na5 Qc7 26 Nc4!.

A striking feature of this whole phase of the game is how the activity on the queenside is intimately linked to the passed g-pawn.

25 Qc4+



Black to move

25...Bc6

There is no choice; if 25...Kb8, then 26 Qxc8+, while 25...Qc6 is met by 26 Qxb4 and now Black loses in the two similar lines 26...Rxh8 27 gxh8Q

Rxh8 28 Na5, followed by 29 Qc3+, and 26...Rxf7 27 Rxc8+ Kxc8 28 Na5 Qc7 29 Nxb7 Qxb7 30 Qc3+.

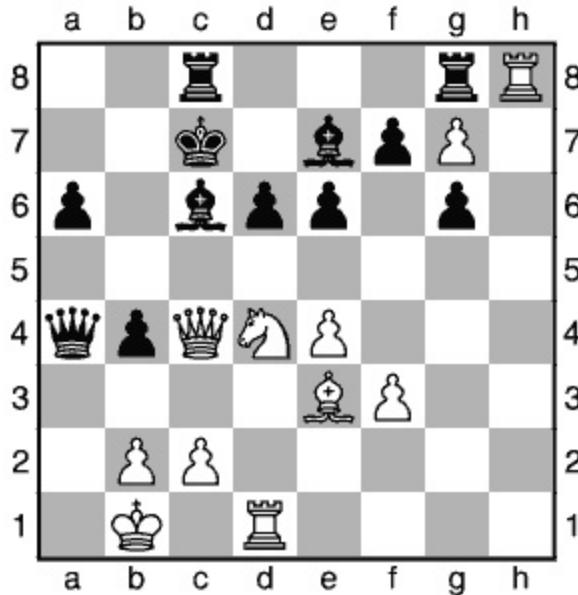
Up until this point White has played powerfully and well, capitalising on his opening innovation to reach a winning position. However, the next half-dozen moves are a sorry tale of one missed win after another. None of the missed wins are really straightforward, but some of them are also not very difficult. How can one explain this sudden change? I think the main reason was that I underestimated the strength of my position. In the end I was satisfied with a line that ensured some endgame advantage because I wasn't convinced that I could win in the middlegame. When you are presented with a 'Winning Combinations' page in a chess magazine, you have a huge head-start, because you know that there is something to find, but the situation is very different over-the-board. There is nobody to whisper in your ear 'this is the moment when you should stop to find the forced win'. You simply don't know when a winning line is available or, indeed, if one exists at all. In the end, most players are guided by their intuition. If this says 'your position is so strong that there must be a winning combination' then they will take the time to look hard for one. If not, they may look to see if there is a straightforward opportunity, but if they find nothing then they will continue with a quieter move.

During this game I thought that I had found a forced win, but it turned out that Black had a defence which I overlooked. This undermined my confidence, and I began to doubt that my position was really winning; thus, at the critical moments, I just didn't spend enough time to find the various wins which were on the board.

26 Qd4?!

Not yet a serious mistake, but 26 Nd4 is the quickest way to decide the game. Probably the naturalness of Qd4, looking towards a7 and g7, together with the fact that the knight has just come from d4, contributed to the error.

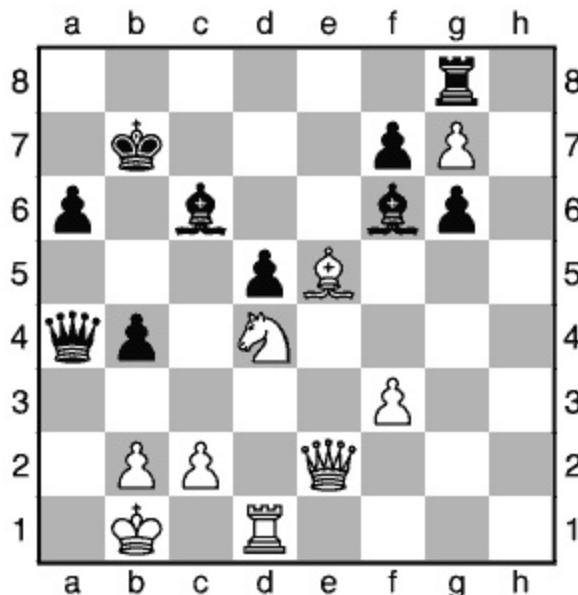
The strength of 26 Nd4 lies in Black's inability to use his rooks for the defence of the bishop; thus the threat of 27 b3 can only be fended off by a fatal loosening of his central position.



Black to move

The analysis runs:

- 1) **26...Rxh8** 27 gxh8Q Rxh8 28 b3 d5 29 exd5 exd5 30 Bf4+ Kd7 (or else 31 Qe2 wins) 31 Nxc6 Qxc6 32 Rxd5+ and wins.
- 2) **26...b3** 27 Qxa4 Bxa4 28 cxb3, followed by Rc1+, when Black loses because of the inevitable rook exchange.
- 3) **26...d5** 27 exd5 exd5 28 Bf4+ Kb7 (28...Kd7 29 Nxc6, or 28...Bd6 29 Bxd6+ Kxd6 30 Nxc6 Qxc6 31 Qf4+ and wins in both cases) 29 Qe2 Bf6 (29...Bc5 fails to 30 Nb3) 30 Rxg8 Rxg8 31 Be5 and Black is helpless:



Black to move

3a) 31...**Bxg7** yields the delightful variation 32 Bxg7 Rxg7 33 b3 Qa5 34 Nxc6 Kxc6 35 Qe8+ Kb7 36 Qh8 and the rook is trapped.

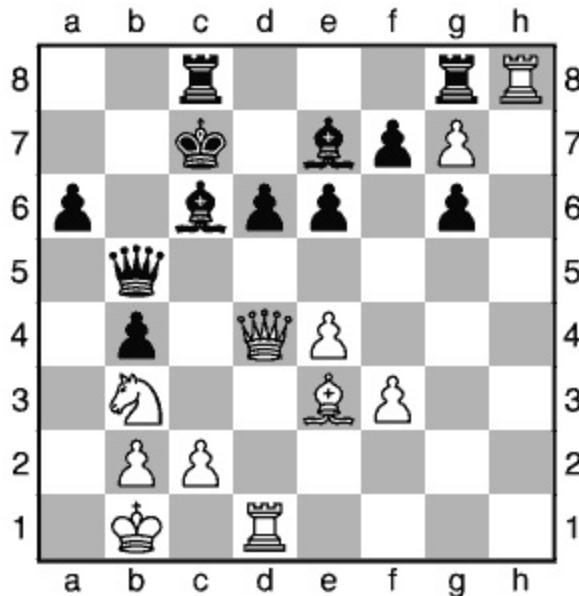
3b) 31...**Bd8** 32 Qh2 and 33 Qh7.

3c) 31...**Bh4** 32 Qh2 g5 33 f4 wins.

3d) 31...**Bxe5** 32 Qxe5 with an overwhelming game for White.

After the text-move, Black's reply is absolutely forced since he must prevent Qb6+.

26...Qb5



White to move

27 Qa7+

During the game I was convinced that this led to a forced win, so I didn't look closely at alternatives. In fact, White could have won by 27 Rdh1, threatening 28 Rxg8 Rxg8 29 Rh8 Qb8 30 Qb6+ and now:

1) 27...**Qb8** 28 Rxg8 Rxg8 29 Rh8 Qe8 (Black must defend against Qb6+) 30 Qa7+ Kc8 31 Na5.

2) 27...**Bb7** 28 Rxg8 Rxg8 29 Rh8 Qe8 30 Qb6+, again followed by Na5.

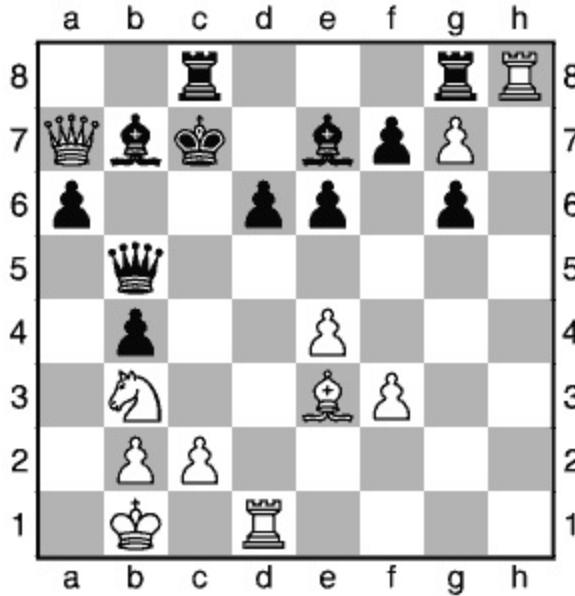
3) 27...**e5** 28 Qa7+ Qb7 (28...Bb7 29 Rxg8 Rxg8 30 Rh8 Rxg7 31 Qb8+ Kd7 32 Bh6) 29 Qxb7+ Bxb7 (29...Kxb7 is much the same) 30 Rxg8 Rxg8 31 Rh8 Rxg7 32 Bh6 Bf6 33 Bxg7 Bxg7 34 Rh7 and wins.

4) 27...**f6** (looks like a defence, threatening the g-pawn and vacating f7 for the rook, but e6 is exposed) 28 R1h7 (threatens 29 Bh6, followed by Rxg8 and Rh8) 28...e5 (28...Qb8 29 Qc4, with Nd4 to follow) 29 Qa7+ Qb7

(29...Bb7 30 Rxg8 Rxg8 31 Rh8 Rxg7 32 Qb8+ Kd7 33 Bh6 Rf7 34 Na5 Qxa5 35 Qxb7+ Qc7 36 Qd5) 30 Qxb7+ Kxb7 (to keep ...Be8 and ...Bf7 available) 31 Na5+ Kc7 32 Nxc6 Kxc6 33 Bh6 and wins.

27...Bb7

27...Qb7 allows mate after 28 Bb6+ Kd7 29 Nc5+.

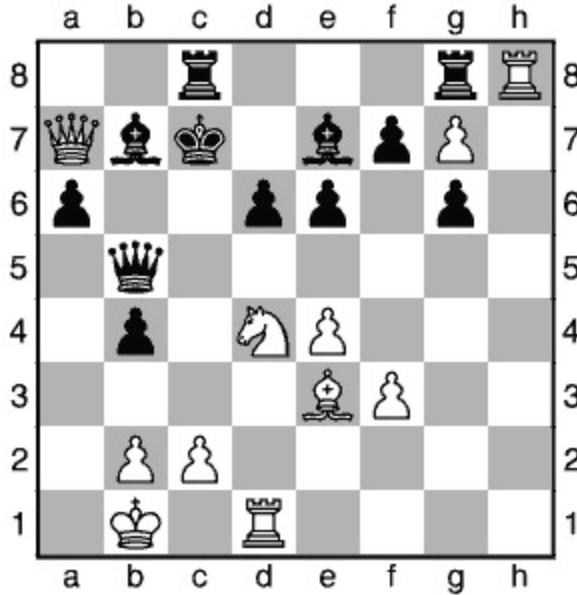


White to move

28 Nd4

Here Sergei Movsesian suggested the line 28 Rxg8 Rxg8 29 e5. Black may continue:

- 1) 29...Qxe5 30 Bb6+ Kc8 31 Na5 wins.
- 2) 29...Rxg7 30 exd6+ Bxd6 31 Qd4 Qe5 32 Qb6+ picks up a bishop.
- 3) 29...f6 30 exd6+ Bxd6 31 Nd4 Qd7 32 Nxe6+ Qxe6 33 Qb6+ and White wins.
- 4) 29...d5 30 Rh1 (Kramnik's move is simpler than Movsesian's 30 c4!?) 30...Rxg7 31 Rh8 Bd8 32 Rxd8 Kxd8 33 Qb8+ and wins.
- 5) 29...dxe5! 30 Bb6+ Qxb6 31 Rd7+ Kxd7 (31...Kc6 32 Na5+ Kxd7 33 Qxb6 Bd5 is also possible, but not 32...Qxa5 33 Qxb7+) 32 Qxb6 Bd5 and the position does not appear especially clear to me. Certainly White's advantage is less than after the move played.



Black to move

28...Qa4!

I simply didn't notice that this square was available, probably because the queen had only just come from a4. Other moves lose by force:

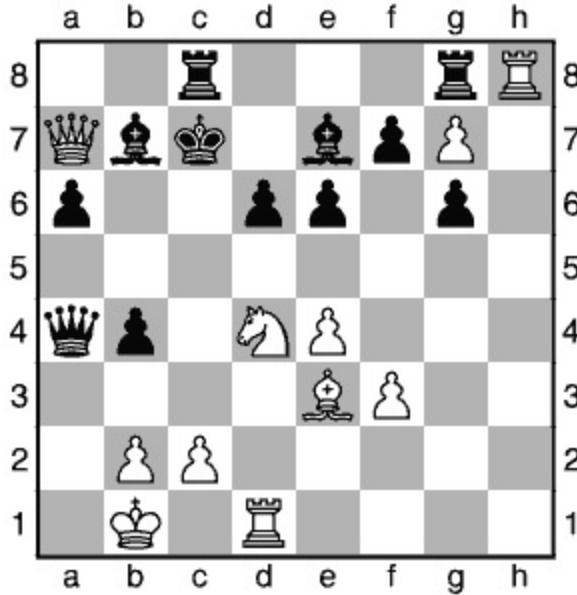
1) **28...Qe5** 29 Nc6 Kxc6 30 Qb6+ Kd7 31 Qxb7+ Rc7 32 Qxc7+ Kxc7 33 Rxg8 and wins.

2) **28...Qd7** 29 Nf5 (threatening Qb6+, so Black must take) 29...exf5 (29...gxf5 is the same) 30 Bb6+ Kc6 31 Ba5 Bd8 (an ingenious defence which almost works) 32 Rxg8 Bxa5 33 Rf8 Bb6 34 Rxc8+ Qxc8 35 Rxd6+ Kxd6 36 Qxb6+ and White will promote his g-pawn, for example 36...Kd7 37 Qxb4, followed by Qf8.

3) **28...Qa5** 29 c4 (threatens 30 Nb3 Qa4 31 Bb6+) 29...b3 (29...bxc3 30 Rxg8 Rxg8 31 Rc1, and Black cannot meet the check on the c-file, or 29...Qa4 30 Rc1, followed by 31 Nb5+) 30 Nxb3 Qb4 31 c5! Qxb3 (or 31...Rxh8 32 cxd6+ Bxd6 33 gxh8Q Rxh8 34 Bb6+ Qxb6 35 Rc1+) 32 cxd6+ Kd7 (32...Bxd6 33 Rc1+ and Rxc8) 33 Rd2 Bf6 (33...Bxd6 34 e5) 34 Rxg8 Rxg8 35 Bb6 Kc6 36 Rc2+ wins.

4) **28...Qe8** 29 Rxg8 Qxg8 30 Nb3 Ra8 31 Qb6+ Kc8 32 Na5 and wins.

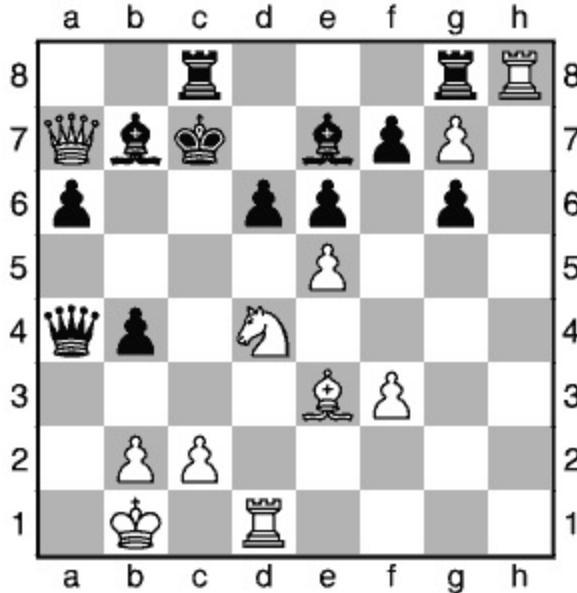
5) **28...Qc4** 29 b3 Qc3 30 Nb5+! axb5 31 Bb6+ Kc6 32 Rxg8 Rxg8 33 Bd4 wins the queen.



White to move

29 e5?

White at last earns his question mark, because with this move he throws away his best chance for a win in the middlegame. In fact White can still win after this move, but only with a truly incredible combination (see next move). Here White could have scored a really clear-cut victory: 29 Rdh1 (intending either 30 Rxg8 Rxg8 31 Rh8 Qe8 32 Nc6!, or 30 Nb3 Qb5 31 Rxg8 Rxg8 32 Rh8) 29...Bf6 30 Nxe6+! (30 Rxg8 Rxg8 31 Nxe6+ fxe6 32 Qb6+ doesn't work because c8 is now free and after 32...Kc8 33 Qxd6 Qd7 Black can defend) 30...fxe6 31 Qb6+ Kb8 32 Qxd6+ Ka8 33 Qc5!! (this decisive move was found by Zviagintsev and Boguslavsky; during the game I only saw that 33 Rxg8 will not do because Black has a mate at c2 and b2) 33...Rxc5 (33...Kb8 34 Rxg8 Rxg8 35 Rh8 Rxh8 36 gxh8Q+ Bxh8 37 Qd6+ Kc8 38 Bb6 and wins) 34 Rxg8+ Bc8 35 Bxc5 Kb7 36 Rxc8 Bxg7 37 Rg8 and White wins, since in addition to his material advantage he still has a very strong attack.



Black to move

The text-move is designed first of all to prevent ...Bf6, and secondly to disturb Black's position slightly. Black is only hanging on by his fingernails against White's many attacking possibilities, and almost any small change in the position will allow one or other combination to succeed.

29...Rxh8

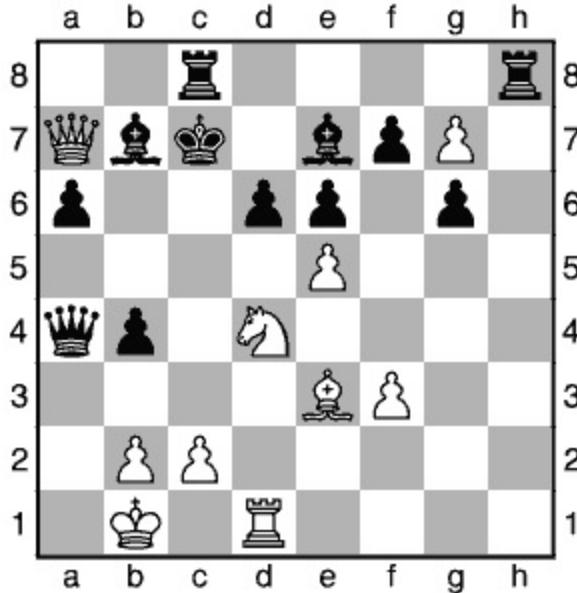
The only defensive chance, although it should have been insufficient. Other moves also fail:

1) **29...dxe5** 30 Nxe6+! fxe6 31 Bb6+ Kc6 32 Rd7! (White utilises the open d-file) 32...Kxd7 (the line 32...Qxc2+ 33 Kxc2 Kxd7+ 34 Kb3 Kc6 35 Be3 is also hopeless) 33 Qxb7+ Kd6 34 Qxc8 Rxc8 35 Rxc8 and White will obtain a new queen.

2) **29...d5** 30 Rdh1 wins, for example 30...Rhg7 31 Rxc8+ Kxc8 32 Rh8+, or 30...Qe8 31 Rxg8 Qxg8 32 Nb3 with 33 Bb6+ to follow.

3) **29...Qa5** 30 Nb3 Qb5 31 Rdh1 is similar, for example 31...dxe5 32 Rxg8 Rxg8 33 Rh8 Rxg7 34 Qb8+ Kd7 35 Qe8+ Kd6 36 Bc5+.

4) **29...Rhg7** 30 Nxe6+ fxe6 31 Bb6+ Kc6 32 Rxc8+ Bxc8 33 Qc7+ Kb5 34 exd6 wins.

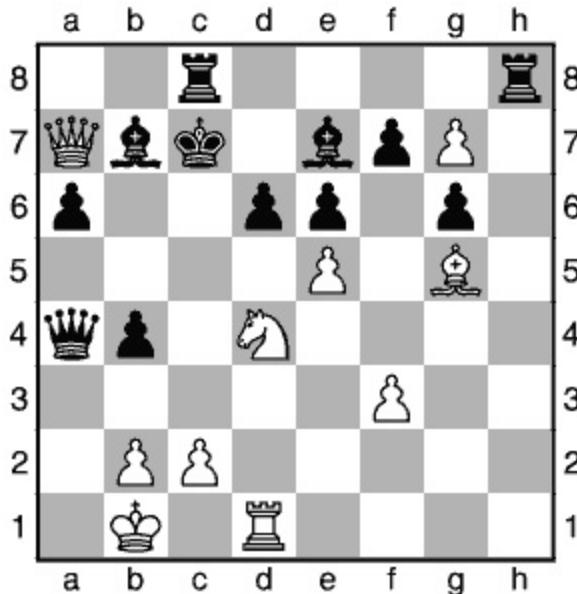


White to move

There remains only the text-move, after which I followed a forced line 11 moves long which leads to a favourable ending for White. However, along the way I missed a couple more wins...

30 exd6+

It is hard to believe that White has a move apart from 30 exd6+ and 30 gxh8Q (or rook, I suppose!), but there is an alternative. It even wins: 30 Bg5! (Kiriakov and Baklan found this incredible idea) and now:



Black to move

- 1) 30...Rhe8 31 Bxe7 Rxe7 32 exd6+ Kxd6 33 Nb5+ Ke5 34 Qd4+ Kf5

35 Nd6+ Kg5 36 Rg1+ Kh6 37 Rh1+ Kg5 38 Qh4#.

2) 30...Rhg8 31 Bxe7 dxe5 32 Nb3 Qb5 (32...Qc6 comes to the same thing) 33 Nc5 Ra8 34 Rd7+ Kc8 35 Qxb7+ Qxb7 36 Rxb7 Rxg7 37 Bd6 and Black is amusingly paralysed. After 38 Rc7+, followed by Nxe6, he will lose material.

3) 30...dxe5 31 Bxe7 exd4 (after 31...Rhg8 we transpose to line '2') 32 gxh8Q Rxh8 33 Qxd4 Re8 34 Bd6+ Kd7 35 Be5+ Bd5 36 Qa7+ Kc6 37 Qc7+ Kb5 38 Rxd5+ exd5 39 Qd7+ wins.

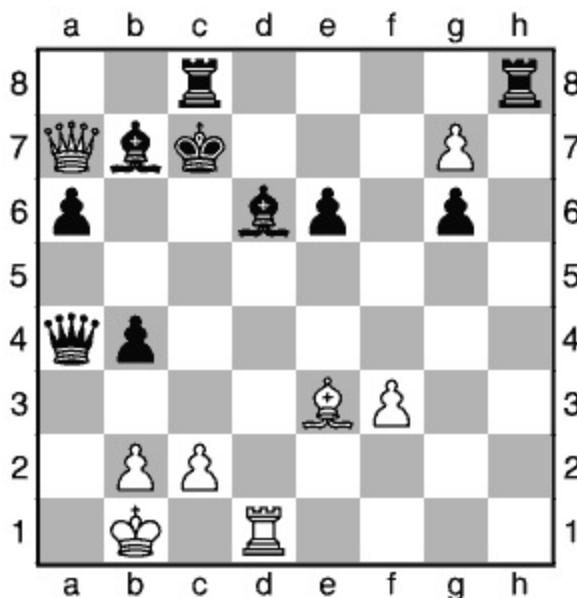
Despite the missed win, I really cannot bring myself to award another question mark: this combination would be incredibly hard to see over-the-board.

30...Bxd6

Now the simple line 31 Nxe6+ fxe6 32 Qb6+ Kb8 33 Qxd6+ Ka8 34 gxh8Q fails for the same reason as before – Black has 34...Qxc2+ and perpetual check. I therefore thought that White must take on h8 first, even though this leaves c8 free for the enemy king.

31 gxh8Q

The alternative is 31 Nxe6+ fxe6 and now:



White to move

1) 32 Bb6+ Kc6 33 gxh8Q Rxh8 34 Bd4 is not clear. Firstly, Black may bail out into a possibly drawable ending with 34...Qb5 (but not 34...Rc8? 35 Qb6+ Kd7 36 Bc5!, however) 35 Bxh8 Qc5 36 Qxc5+ Bxc5. Secondly, he has the cunning idea 34...Rb8, when 35 Qb6+ Kd7 36 Bc5 Qa2+! 37 Kxa2

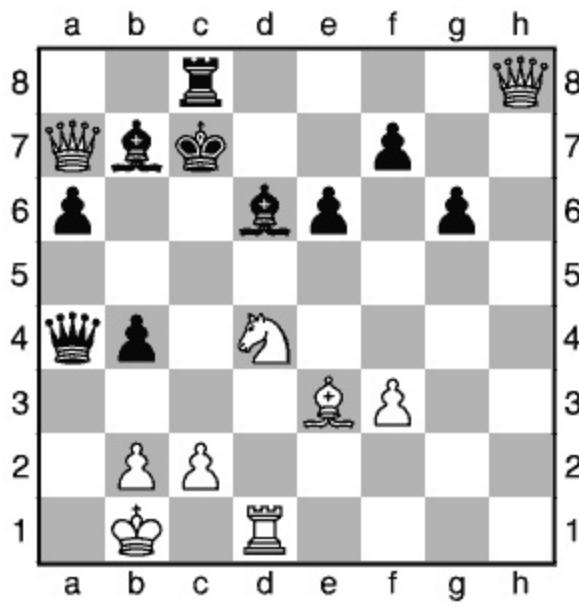
(not 37 Kc1? Qa1+ 38 Kd2 Bf4+ 39 Ke2+ Qxd1+ 40 Kxd1 Bxf3+, when Black wins) 37...Bd5+ 38 Rxd5 Rxb6 leads to a likely draw.

2) 32 Qd4 (Kiriakov and Baklan) and now:

2a) 32...Rhd8 33 g8Q wins at once.

2b) 32...Kb8 33 b3 Qc6 (33...Qe8 34 Qxd6+ Ka8 35 gxh8Q Qxh8 36 Qb6 wins) 34 gxh8Q Qxc2+ 35 Ka1 Rxh8 36 Qxh8+ Bc8 37 Rc1 and again White wins.

2c) 32...Bd5! (Dvoretsky didn't mention this defence) 33 gxh8Q Rxh8 and after 34 Qxh8 b3 or 34 Qg7+ Qd7 35 Qxh8 Bxf3 White retains an advantage, although I am doubtful as to whether it is any greater than that arising in the game itself.



Black to move

31...Rxh8

32 Nxe6+ fxe6

33 Qb6+ Kc8

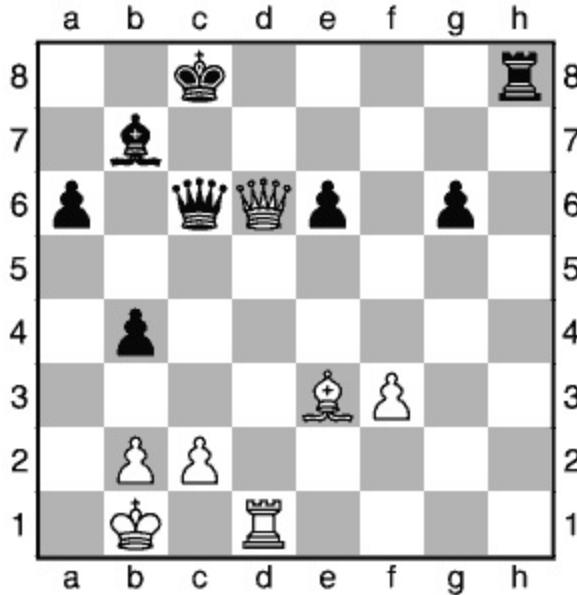
34 Qxd6

White is a pawn down but retains dangerous threats against Black's king. The opposite-coloured bishops favour White so long as he can keep the attack going, but on the other hand White needs to be two pawns up to have real winning chances if the queens come off. Winning three pawns is a tall order!

Now in the face of White's threats of Ba7, Bf4 and Bb6 the next move is compulsory.

34...Qc6

If 34...Bd5, then 35 Bf4 wins because the rook is in danger as well as the king: 35...Rh7 36 Qb8+ Kd7 37 Qc7+ or 35...Kb7 36 Qc7+ Ka8 37 Be3 Bb7 38 Rd8+.



White to move

35 Qe5!

This is the key move, which I foresaw when playing 29 e5. The line 35 Qd4 Re8 36 Bf4 looks promising because of the threat 37 Qe5, but 36...Qd5! defends. Alternatively, White can play 35 Qxb4 (threatening Rd3) virtually forcing 35...Rd8 36 Rxd8+ Kxd8 when White seems to have a similar position to that arising in the game, but having already captured at b4. The crucial difference is not the pawn, however, but the fact that owing to the inferior position of White's queen it is impossible to drive Black's king out into the open, *e.g.* 37 Bg5+ Kc7 38 Qa5+ Kb8 39 Qd8+ Bc8 and Black is in relatively good shape.

The text-move allows Black to exchange rooks, but thanks to the excellent centralised positions of the remaining white pieces he still retains a very strong attack.

35...Rd8

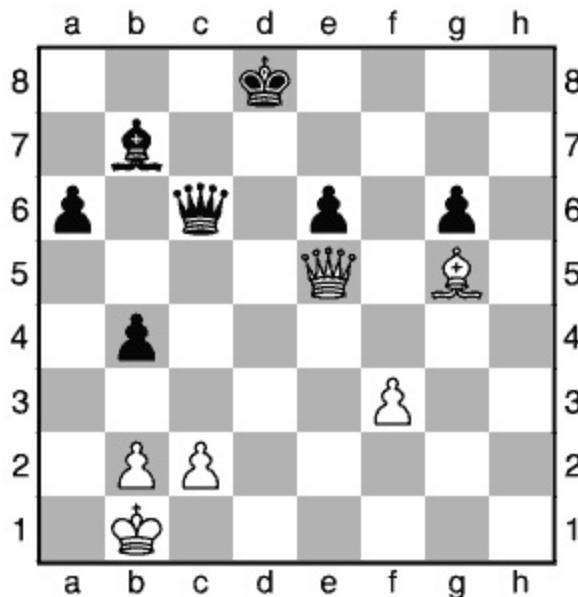
White was threatening 36 Bf4, and apart from the text-move the only possible defence was 35...Rh5 36 Bg5 Qb6 (36...Rh8 loses to 37 Bf4). However, in this case too White retains considerable pressure, for example 37 Qf6 Kb8 (37...Bd5 38 Rxd5 Qg1+ 39 Ka2 exd5 40 Qc6+ Kb8 41 Bf4+

mates) 38 Qf4+ Ka7 39 Qd2 Ka8 40 Be3 Qc7 41 Qxb4, regaining the pawn with a continuing attack.

After the text-move the rook exchange is forced, or Black will occupy the centre by ...Qd5 and it will be impossible to generate threats against his king.

36 Rxd8+ Kxd8

37 Bg5+



Black to move

Here is the first taste of what is to come. If 37...Kc8, then 38 Qh8+ wins, or if 37...Ke8 then 38 Qh8+ Kf7 39 Qh7+ Kf8 40 Qe7+ Kg8 41 Bf6 mating. Therefore the black king is driven into the centre.

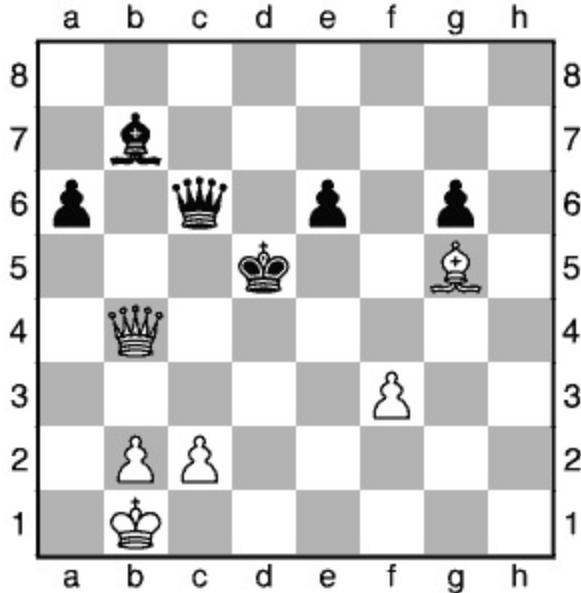
37...Kd7

38 Qg7+ Kd6

39 Qf8+ Kd5

39...Ke5 40 Bf4+ Kd5 41 Qxb4 would be better still for White as from f4 the bishop confines the king. The threat of 42 c4+ forces 41...e5, but after 42 Qe4+ White takes the e-pawn with check while continuing his attack.

40 Qxb4



Black to move

This is the end of the forcing continuation envisaged by White when he made his 29th move. Material is level, but White still has a very strong attack. The immediate threat is 41 c4+ Kd4 (41...Ke5 42 Qc3+ Kd6 43 Qd4+) 42 Qc3+ Kc5 43 b4+ Kb6 44 Qd4+ mating. Owing to the continuous threats against his king, Black is never able to co-ordinate his pieces. His bishop in particular remains a virtual spectator throughout. One other point is worth mentioning. Although queen and bishop form a strong attacking force, in general White cannot mate owing to a lack of light-square control. This is where White's pawns play a vital role – indeed, I was lucky that I had a pawn on f3 which takes away the e4-square! In the subsequent analysis White often plays the move b3. This not only serves to remove any danger of perpetual check, it also prepares a possible c4 controlling another central light square.

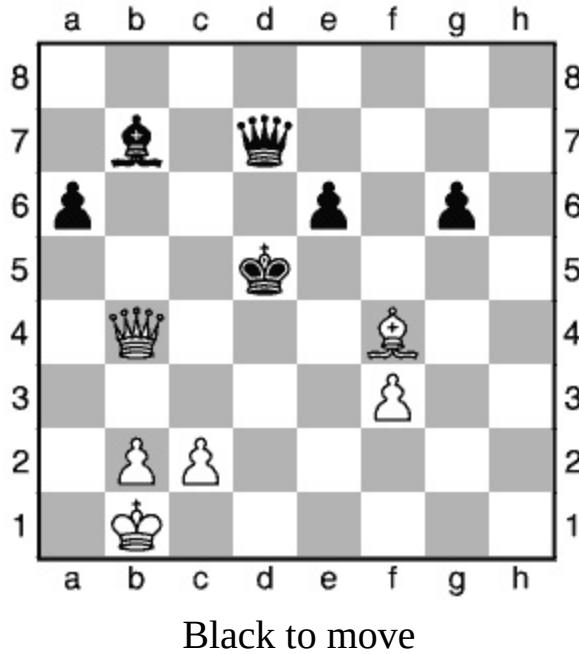
Even if this position is not in fact lost, I suspect that in practice Black's position is hopeless. Every move he must defend with great accuracy against White's threats, and this task is not temporary in nature because White's threats are not all short-term. The chances that Black will stumble eventually verge on certainty.

40...e5!

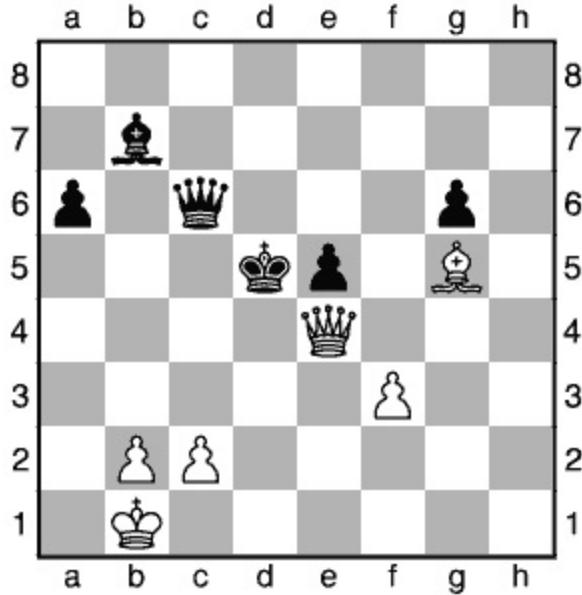
Very short of time, Black nevertheless finds the best defence, giving his king access to another light square. He might easily have blundered into 40...Ke5?, for there are some nasty mates lurking in the position: 41 Bf4+ Kf5 (41...Kd5 42 c4+, etc.) 42 Qf8#!

If he can't move his king, then the threat of 41 c4+ has to be met either

by the text-move or by 40...Qd7, when 41 Bf4! (confining the king and threatening 42 c4+ Kc6 43 Qa4+) leads to a forced win:



- 1) 41...Kc6 42 Qc4+ Kb6 43 Be3+ Ka5 44 Qc5+ Qb5 45 Bd2+ and mate.
 - 2) 41...Bc8 42 Qe4+ Kc5 43 Be3+ Kb5 (43...Kd6 44 Qb4+ Ke5 45 Qf4+ Kd5 46 Qd4+ Kc6 47 Qb6+ Kd5 48 Qc5#) 44 b3 Ka5 45 Qe5+ Qd5 46 Qc7+ Kb4 47 Qf4+ Kc3 48 Bd2+ Qxd2 49 Qc4#.
 - 3) 41...Bc6 42 c4+ Kd4 43 b3, and there is no defence to the threats of 44 c5+ and Qc4#, or 44 Qd2+ Kc5 45 Be3+.
 - 4) 41...Qc6 42 c4+ Kd4 43 Qc3+ Kc5 44 b4+ Kb6 45 Qd4+.
 - 5) 41...Qc8 42 Qd6+ Kc4 43 b3+ and wins.
 - 6) 41...e5 42 Qe4+ Kc5 43 Qxe5+ and now:
 - 6a) 43...Kb4 44 b3!, leaving no adequate reply to the threat of Kb2 and c3#, e.g. 44...Qd5 45 Qe1+ Kc5 46 Qa5+ and wins.
 - 6b) 43...Kc6 44 b3, preparing Qe4+ and/or c4. No matter how Black plays, he either loses the g-pawn with check or gets into a mating net.
 - 6c) 43...Qd5 44 Qc7+ Qc6 (or 44...Kb5 45 c4+) 45 Qa5+ Qb5 (45...Kd4 46 Qe5+) 46 Qc3+ Qc4 (46...Kd5 47 Qe5+) 47 Qe3+ Kc6 (47...Kb5 48 b3 Qf1+ 49 Kb2, then 50 c4+; 47...Kb4 48 Qb6+; 47...Qd4 48 Qe7+) 48 Qe8+ and White either wins the g-pawn with check or, after 48...Kc5 49 Be3+, picks up the bishop.
- 41 Qe4+**

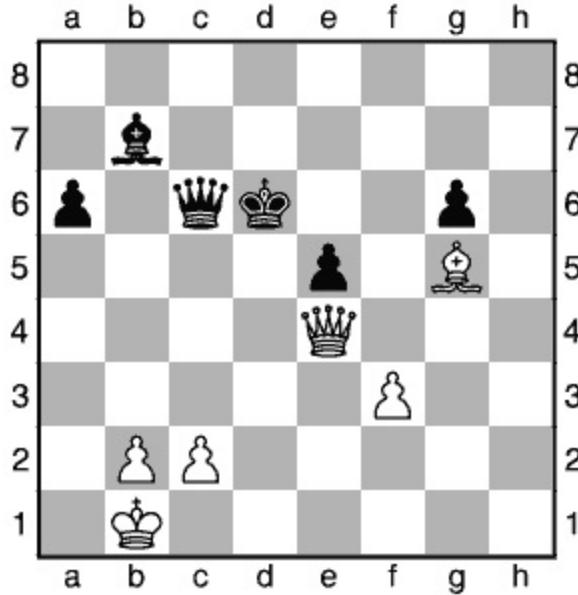


Black to move

My sealed move, easy enough to decide on as it wins a pawn with check. After the ups and downs of the first session, I was at least happy to adjourn in a position with good winning chances and zero losing chances. My pleasure increased as I analysed in the restaurant of the Hotel de Wijk, for it soon became clear that at the very least White wins a pawn and keeps his attack.

41...Kd6

Black decides to surrender the g-pawn rather than the e-pawn, in order to restrict the scope of the enemy bishop as far as possible. If 41...Kc5, then 42 Qxe5+ (better than 42 Be3+ Kd6 43 Qxg6+ Kd7 44 Qf7+ Kd6, transposing into line '3' of the note to Black's 42nd) 42...Qd5 43 Qc7+ Qc6 (43...Kb5 44 c4+, or 43...Bc6 44 Be3+ Kb4 {44...Kc4 45 Qf4+ Kb5 46 b4} 45 b3 Qxf3 {45...Kc3 46 Qg7+ Kb4 47 Kb2} 46 Qb6+ mates) 44 Qe7+ Kb5 (44...Kd5 45 Bf4 wins) 45 Be3!, followed by b3 and c4+. White's plan is simple enough to understand in principle, but getting the tactics right is far from easy. Here, for instance, 45 b3? might allow Black to escape with 45...Qxf3 46 c4+ Kc6.



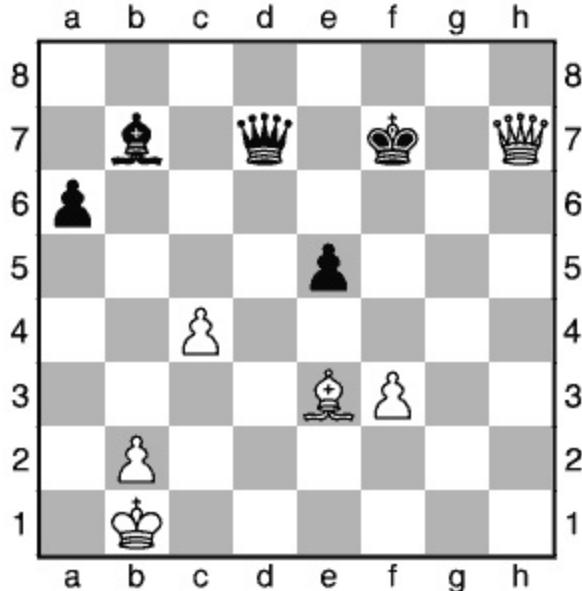
White to move

42 Qxg6+ Kd5?!

If **42...Kc7**, then **43 Qg7+ Kd6 44 Qe7+ Kd5 45 Bf6**, winning the e-pawn. However, Black could have put up more resistance by **42...Kc5**. The difference is that after **42...Kc5** White has to begin his attack by **Bc3+**, when he loses the option of playing **Qe7+** and **Bf6**. Even so White should probably win, though nothing is quite forced. Best play seems to be as follows: **43 Be3+** and now: 1) **43...Kb5?** **44 Qd3+ Qc4 45 Qd6 Qf1+ 46 Ka2 Qc4+ 47 b3 Qxc2+ 48 Ka3** mating.

2) **43...Kb4?** **44 Qd3 Qd5 45 Qc3+ Kb5 46 Qc7** and Black must abandon his e-pawn.

3) **43...Kd5 44 Qf7+ Kd6 45 c4! Qd7 (45...Qc7? 46 c5+ Kc6 47 Qe6+ Kb5 48 c6!) 46 Qf8+ Ke6 (46...Kc7 47 Qc5+ Kd8 48 Bg5+ and takes on e5 with check) 47 Qh6+ Kf7 (47...Ke7 48 Bg5+ wins at once) 48 Qh7+ and now:**



Black to move

3a) **48...Ke8** 49 Qg8+ Ke7, and here, oddly enough, there is no forced win. White therefore plays 50 Kc1!, cutting out ...Qd1+ and keeping open his options of Bc5+ or Bg5+. Black remains under enormous pressure.

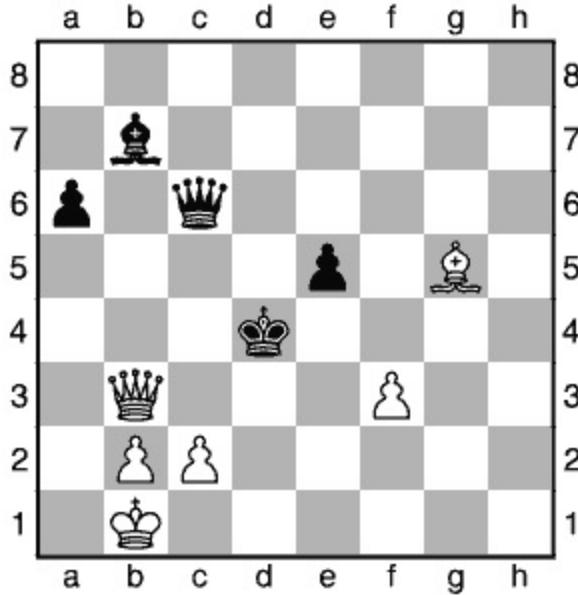
3b) **48...Ke6!**. By playing with extreme accuracy, Black has avoided a forced loss. White has a number of promising paths, but nothing really clear-cut.

43 Qf7+ Kd4

White wins after 43...Kc5 44 Qe7+, and now:

- 1) **44...Kc4** 45 Qxe5, and now 45...Qxf3 loses to 46 b3+.
- 2) **44...Kb6** 45 Be3+ Kb5 46 b3 tightens the net around the enemy king.
- 3) **44...Kd5** 45 Bf6.
- 4) **44...Kd4** 45 Qd8+ Kc5 (after 45...Qd5 46 Qb6+ Kc4 47 Kc1! Black loses immediately) 46 Be3+ Kb5 47 b3, with a decisive attack.

44 Qb3!



Black to move

Threatens 45 Be3#, to which Black has only one defence.

44...e4

44...Kc5 is refuted by 45 Be7+ and 44...Qxf3 by 45 Qb4+, so the only hope is to make more air for the king.

45 Be3+

White makes the practical decision to create a passed f-pawn, which is undoubtedly enough to win on purely positional grounds. We have already seen the mess Black is in regarding his king; the extra task of stopping the f-pawn will prove too much. Moreover, the e4-pawn, which is well blockaded by White's bishop, serves only to obstruct Black's own pieces. It is possible that White could also have won tactically, but after a few minutes of being confused by the many alternative checks in each position, I decided to keep it simple. In fact there may not be a straightforward win, *e.g.* 45 Bf6+ Kc5 46 Be7+ Kd4 or 45 Qe3+ Ke5 (45...Kc4 46 b3+ Kb5 47 c4+ wins) 46 Qf4+ Kd4 (46...Ke6 47 Qf6+ Kd5 48 fxe4+ Kxe4 49 Qf4+ Kd5 50 c4+! Qxc4 51 Qf7+ Kc5 {51...Kd4 52 Be3+ Kd3 53 Qf1+} 52 Be3+ and Qxb7+) 47 Bf6+ Kc5 (47...Kc4 48 b3+ Kb5 49 c4+ Kb4 50 Qd2+ Kxb3 51 Qc3+ Ka4 52 Ka2 wins) and White still lacks a killer blow. Clearly there are many lines which are very promising, but I couldn't see anything forced, so I chose a variation which I felt sure was a win with careful play.

45...Ke5

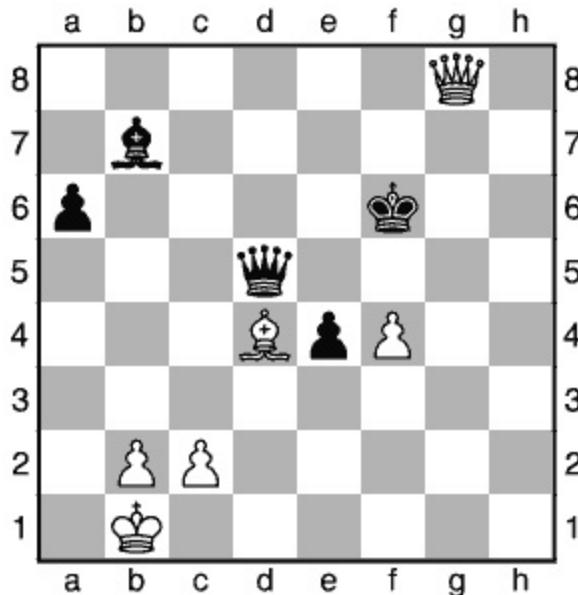
46 f4+ Kf6

This helps White a little; he could have put up more fight by going

behind the f-pawn and threatening the bishop. In the end, though, it makes no essential difference; for example 46...Kf5 47 Qf7+ Kg4 48 Qg7+ (not 48 f5 Kf3 with counterplay) 48...Kf3 (not 48...Kh3 49 Bf2!) 49 Qg1 Qd5 50 Qf2+ Kg4 51 Qg2+ Kh5 52 Qh3+ Kg6 53 Qg4+ Kf6 54 b3, with a position much like the game.

47 Qg8 Qd5

48 Bd4+



Black to move

White's plan is straightforward enough: secure the king by b3, and then use the queen and bishop to help push the f-pawn without, of course, permitting an exchange of queens or allowing the e-pawn to surge forward.

48...Ke7

49 Qg7+ Kd6

50 b3 Kc6

51 Be5

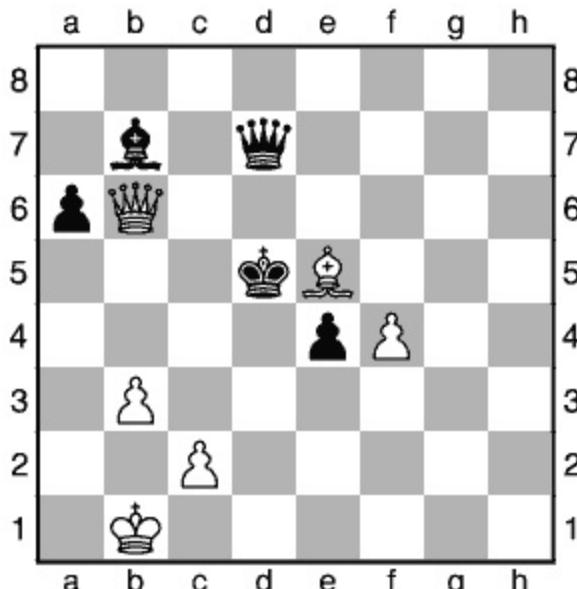
The advance of the passed pawn will be combined with new threats against the king, the current one being 52 Qc7+ Kb5 53 c4+.

51...Qd7

Black does not have the resources to make his own passed pawn dangerous; after 51...Kb6 52 f5 e3 53 Bd4+ Kc6 54 Qg6+ Qd6 White could even allow the exchange of queens with 55 Bxe3. Black will never be able to defend against two such widely separated passed pawns.

52 Qh6+ Kd5

53 Qb6!



Black to move

53...Qc6

54 Qd8+ Ke6

55 Qf6+ Kd7

If 55...Kd5 then 56 c4+ Kc5 57 Qe7+ Kb6 58 Bd4+ mates.

56 Qg7+ Ke6

Or 56...Kc8 57 f5 e3 58 f6 e2 59 Qg4+.

57 Qg4+ Kf7

58 f5 Qh6

59 f6 1-0

One possible finish would be 59...Bc6 (stopping Qd7+) 60 Qc8 Qh1+ 61 Kb2 e3 62 Qc7+ Kg6 63 Qg7+ Kf5 64 f7.

Although he lost this game, Van der Wiel gained the necessary half-point in the last round by drawing quickly against Hort. He was then obliged to fulfil a promise he had made before the tournament, that if he made the GM norm, he would go for a swim in the North Sea. Accompanied by two friends, he went ahead and plunged into the icy water. A first-aid vehicle equipped with oxygen stood nearby in case of mishap, but it all went swimmingly.

In February I played in the Zonal tournament at Marbella, the first tournament I had played as part of the World Championship cycle. This was

a mammoth affair, with two preliminary groups of 11 rounds, followed by a seven-round final. This system was extremely illogical: the enormously long preliminary groups were a complete waste of time for most players, as their qualification (or otherwise) was already clear. Thus the whole event would be decided by the extremely short final. Although FIDE rules specified a minimum prize fund for Zonal tournaments, prizes were totally absent from the event. Considering that the tournament lasted over three weeks, I was unhappy with the news of a guaranteed zero income. Having said all this, the hotel and food were very good, and the weather pleasant, so it could certainly have been far worse.

I did indeed qualify for the Final, but my play was very poor. My mind was wandering – I just wanted the Final to start. However, when, after two weeks, the real tournament began, I promptly lost to Rivas. Wins against Short and Van der Wiel were balanced by a further loss to Stean, so that I need to win both my last two games to have a chance of qualifying for the Interzonal. This game was from the penultimate round.

Game 15

G. Ligterink – J. Nunn

Marbella Zonal Tournament 1982

Modern Benoni

1 d4 Nf6

2 c4 c5

3 d5 e6

4 Nc3 exd5

5 cxd5 d6

6 Nf3 g6

7 g3

In [Game 8](#), Polugaevsky played 7 e4 and 8 Be2 here. A fianchetto might seem to make Black's thematic pawn advance ...b5 easier, but it also affords White certain tactical chances based on the sudden opening of the long diagonal.

7...Bg7

8 Bg2 0-0

9 0-0



Black to move

9...Nbd7

After **9...Na6** 10 Nd2 Nc7 11 Nc4, for example, the long-diagonal theme prevents Black from playing 11...b5? because of 12 Nxd6 Qxd6 13 Bf4, recovering the knight with advantage.

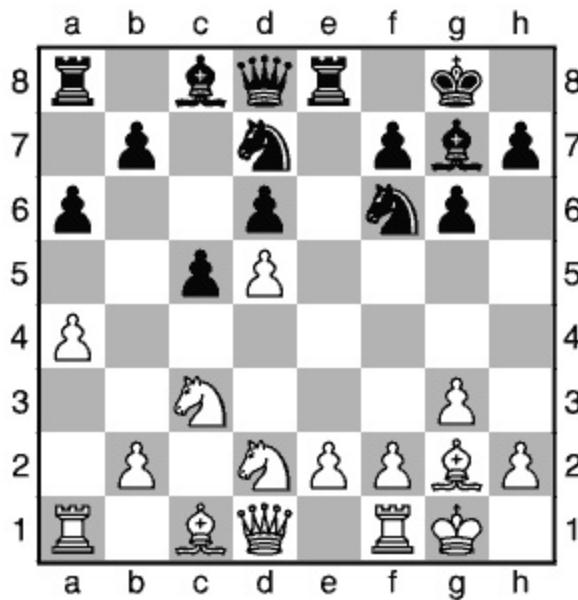
While I do not want to get bogged down in the theoretical details of this variation, the next few moves revolve around some difficult questions of move-order. At one time there were two generally accepted principles governing White's play in the Modern Benoni. The first is that ...a6 must be met by a4 in order to prevent Black's queenside expansion by ...b5. The second is that the best square for White's king's knight is c4. Thus the manoeuvre Nf3-d2-c4 was thought to be an integral part of White's strategy. From c4 the knight not only exerts pressure on the weak d6-pawn, it also both clears the way for and supports a central pawn advance by e4, f4 and e5. It has always seemed remarkable to me that in the very first top-class game with the Modern Benoni, viz. Nimzowitsch-Marshall, New York 1927, Nimzowitsch found this knight manoeuvre; his brilliant victory had a profound influence on the theory of this opening for over half a century.

However, both these principles were being called into question during the 1980s. It was recognised that White's preparations for e5 often did not involve the move f4, and so there was no reason to clear the way for the f-pawn. The knight is just as well placed to support e5 from the square f3 as it is from c4 and by omitting this manoeuvre White saves two tempi. Of course, the pressure on d6 is sacrificed, but whether this extra benefit is worth the

time expended is indeed open to question. Coupled with this plan of accelerating the preparations for e4-e5, White also started to experiment with saving another tempo by allowing ...b5. While Black's queenside majority is very useful in the long run, having played ...b5 is little consolation if in the meantime he gets crushed by White's central advance.

Both these ideas now have a recognised place in the current theory of the Modern Benoni. The idea of omitting Nd2-c4 is important both in the Fianchetto System lines discussed in this game, and in the currently popular system for White based on Nf3, e4, h3 and Bd3. The idea of omitting a4 is now a standard part of the system with f3, e4 and Bg5.

Returning now to the situation after 9 0-0 in the game, there is a 'standard position' which can arise after (for example) 9...a6 10 a4 Nbd7 11 Nd2 Re8.



White to move

Since this position is considered satisfactory for Black, his aim is to try to reach it while giving White the least opportunity to deviate favourably (perhaps I should add that today it is most unlikely that White will enter the standard position, so Black's move-order is determined more by the need to have the most favourable set-up against White's alternate systems). Which move should Black play first: ...a6, ...Re8 or ...Nbd7? Unfortunately there is no clear-cut answer to this question. No move-order completely eliminates the possibility of a deviation by White, so the choice is largely a matter of taste.

After 9...**a6** 10 **a4 Nbd7**, the most common idea today is 11 Bf4. The move 11 e4, which was played fairly often in the early 1980s, appears less accurate after 11...Rb8 12 Re1 b5 13 axb5 axb5 and Black's queenside play has got under way quickly.

Another idea is 9...**a6** 10 **a4 Re8**, by which Black aims to avoid having to waste time defending his e-pawn after Bf4. However, 11 Bf4 is still slightly awkward, because it prevents ...Nbd7. Then Black has a choice between 11...h6, 11...Ne4 and 11...Nh5.

If Black doesn't want to play an immediate ...a6, his main choice lies between ...Re8 and the text-move. In fact 9...**Re8** could be the most accurate. After 9...Re8 10 Bf4 Black has a choice between 10...a6, 10...Nh5 and 10...Ne4. For the details of all these moves, and how they are affected by the interpolation of ...a6 and a4, readers should refer to a specialist book on the Modern Benoni. However, readers should be warned that some opening books do not cover these intricacies of move-order very well, and sometimes they even omit whole lines, based on the assumption that a transposition to a standard line is inevitable.

Returning now to the position after 9...Nbd7:



White to move

10 e4

This plan is similar to the line 9...a6 10 a4 Nbd7 11 e4 mentioned above, but in some ways Black's omission of ...a6 works against him. White threatens to continue with Re1, Bf4 and Nb5, so Black is more or less forced

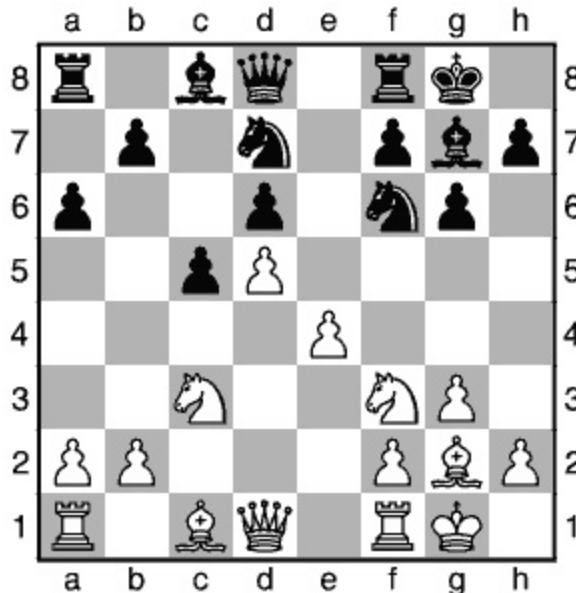
to play ...a6 in any case, but White can miss out a4 because ...b5 is not a threat when the centre is about to be broken open by e5. Thus White has an extra option here (to play for a quick e5) which he would not have had if Black had played 9...a6 10 a4 Nbd7. It is a moot point as to whether this new option is any better for White than the old one!

On the other hand the omission of ...a6 and a4 also gives Black an extra option, of which he does not avail himself in this game (see the following note).

Since 10 Re1 a6 11 a4 just leads to the earlier line, the main alternative is 10 Bf4, but then 10...Qe7 11 Re1 a6 12 e4 transposes to the game.

10...a6

A rather late attempt to insert ...a6 and a4, which White simply ignores. Black could have made use of the unmoved a-pawns by playing 10...b5!. This is one of those moves which must be good, only providing that no immediate disaster occurs. In the game Schulte-Sax, Lugano Open 1985, the position was unclear after 11 e5 dxe5 12 Nxb5 Ba6 13 a4 Qb6 14 Re1 Rfe8 15 Bf1 Rad8 16 Qb3 e4 17 Nd2 Qb8 18 d6 Ne5 19 Nxe4 Nxe4 20 Rxe4 Bb7 (Black eventually won).



White to move

11 Bf4

The main defect of lines with an early Bf4 is that Black can play ...Ng4-e5 and the bishop at f4 means that White has to waste time preparing f4 to expel the knight.

11...Qe7

After 11...Qc7, the sharp continuation 12 e5 dxe5 13 d6 Qb6 14 Nxe5 Qxb2 15 Na4 Qd4 16 Qxd4 cxd4 17 Nc4 Rb8 18 Nab6 Nh5 is unclear, so White does better to play 12 Rc1, when Black has to worry about b4.

12 Re1

12 e5 would be premature, for example 12...Nxe5 13 Nxe5 dxe5 14 d6 Qe6, and White gets an inferior endgame by 15 Bg5 (15 Re1 Ne8) 15...Rd8 16 Bxf6 Bxf6 17 Ne4 Bg7 18 Nxc5 Qxd6. He therefore prepares the pawn thrust.

After **12 a4 Ng4** White can either transpose to the next note by 13 Re1, or try 13 Bg5, although the continuation 13...f6 14 Bd2 Nde5 15 Nxe5 Nxe5 16 f4 Nc4 17 Bc1 f5 was fine for Black in Bönsch-Ehlvest, Tallinn 1983.

12...Ng4

We have already mentioned this move in the above discussion. Black must try to control e5, and with five pieces bearing down he seems to have succeeded.

13 Bg5

The last few moves have seen an interesting battle in progress; will White continue to find a way to play actively in the centre or will he finally admit that ...b5 is a threat and play a4?

If he adopts the latter course, play might continue 13 a4 Rb8 and now:

1) **14 Bf1** Nge5 15 Nd2 (avoiding an exchange) 15...Re8 (a convenient regrouping, leaving f8 free for the queen) 16 Be3 f5! 17 h3 Qf8 18 f4 Nf7, and the game is equal, Inkiov-Ermenkov, Bulgarian Championship 1977.

2) **14 Nd2** Nde5 15 Nf1 (or 15 h3 g5!) 15...Nc4 16 Qe2 b5 17 axb5 axb5 18 h3 Nge5 with equality, Smyslov-Portisch, Hungary 1978.

Ligterink is looking for something altogether sharper than that.



Black to move

13...Qe8

A provocative move. I played the whole game in uncompromising style because I needed to win to have a chance of qualifying for the Interzonal, but here this attitude led me slightly astray. Of the two possible alternatives, 13...Bf6 is definitely too passive: 14 Bxf6 Qxf6 (nor is 14...Ngxf6 any better: 15 e5 Nxe5 16 Nxe5 dxe5 17 d6 Qe6 {17...Qe8 18 Nd5} 18 f4, etc.) 15 h3 Nge5 16 Nxe5 Nxe5 17 f4 Nc4 18 e5 dxe5 19 b3 Nb6 (19...exf4 20 Ne4) 20 fxe5 with a tremendous position for White. However, 13...f6 14 Bc1 b5 is perfectly satisfactory. During the game I (and perhaps Ligterink too) felt that in this line the bishop would remain imprisoned for too long, with ...f5 being difficult to organise while the rook is opposite the queen. That is a needless worry, though: the bishop is far from being buried alive, and Black can generate plenty of queenside play after, for instance, 15 h3 (15 a4 b4 16 Nb1 a5 17 Nbd2 Ba6 is also fine for Black) 15...Nge5 16 Nxe5 and now the safest line is 16...fxe5, although 16...dxe5 may also be playable.



White to move

14 e5!?

A clever idea, which deserved a better fate, for if Black deviates at all from the game continuation he gets into trouble.

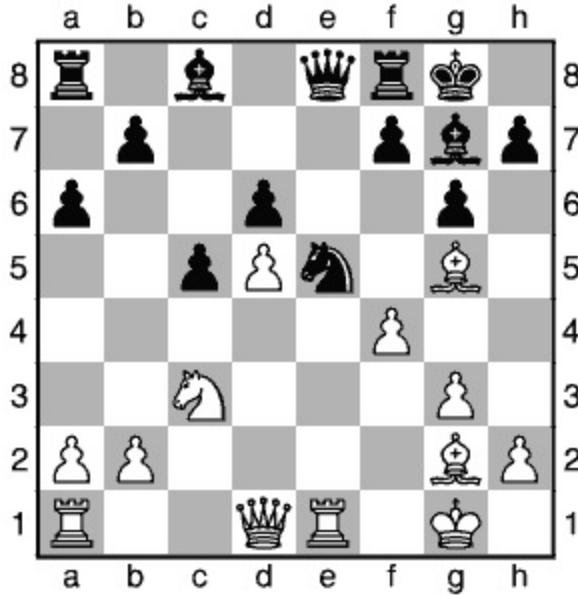
14...Ndxе5

Not 14...dxe5 15 d6 (threatening both Be7 and Nd5) 15...f6 16 Nd5, when White has a strong initiative and the knight on g4 is looking offside.

15 Nxe5 Nxe5

15...dxe5 is still bad after 16 d6 f6 17 Bc1 (17 Nd5 Nxе2! is unclear) 17...f5 18 Nd5 Rb8 19 h3, with a very strong position for White.

16 f4



Black to move

Now Black is virtually forced to sacrifice his queen – not that he has any objection, since he is guaranteed at least a draw.

16...Ng4!

There are three other moves that Black could consider:

1) **16...f6** is decidedly inferior. White can choose between 17 fxe5 fxg5 18 e6, with a powerful pawn wedge that could never be undermined, or 17 Bh4 g5 18 fxe5 dxe5 19 Bxg5 fxg5 20 d6, with a dangerous initiative for White.

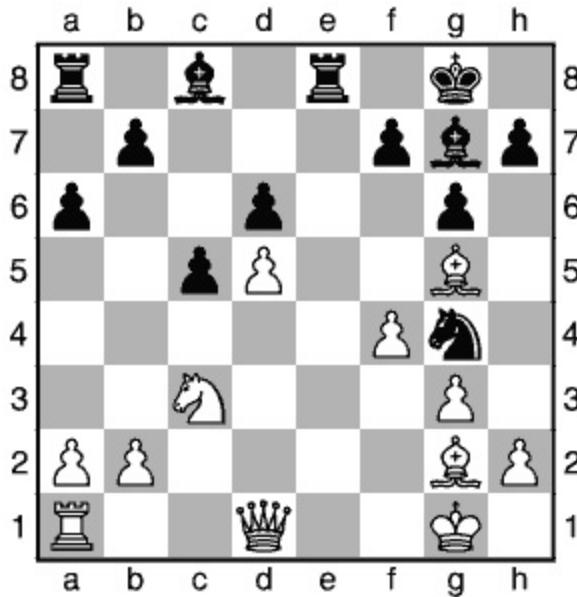
2) **16...h6** 17 Bh4 (not 17 fxe5 hxg5 18 e6 this time, on account of 18...Be5!, when White has to exchange his e-pawn) 17...g5 18 fxe5 (18 fxg5 hxg5 19 Bxg5 f5 is not so clear; Black's well-placed knight and control of e4 balances his exposed king) 18...gxh4 19 e6!, and now Black cannot cover up the e-file by 19...Be5 because his king is too open – 20 Qg4+ Kh8 21 Qxh4, for instance, would be very strong. Meanwhile 20 e7 is threatened and the e-pawn remains a terrible thorn in Black's side.

3) 16...Bg4 and now:

3a) **17 Rxe5** Qc8 18 Re2 c4 19 Qd2 Bxe2 20 Nxe2 Qc5+ 21 Kh1 f5 and suddenly the white bishops are quite badly restricted and Black's queenside majority is looking dangerous.

3b) **17 Qd2!** Nc4 18 Qd3 Nxb2 (18...Bd4+ 19 Kh1 Ne3 20 f5! Bxf5 21 Qd2 costs Black a piece) 19 Qc2 Bxc3 20 Qxc3 Na4 21 Qf6 with a crushing attack.

17 Rxe8 Rxe8



White to move

This queen sacrifice to some extent resembles that in [Game 5](#) (Augustin-Nunn). On that occasion the queen was ineffective because the whole pawn structure was against it. To open up the position and gain manoeuvring space for it was not possible within a reasonable time. Here it is not so much the weakness of the queen that is striking – before too long it manages to obtain some active play – but rather the enormous power of the black pieces, especially their control of the centre. They seem to sweep into White's position almost as they please, first on one side of the board, then on the other. The white minor pieces, on the other hand, are very poorly placed, particularly the g5-bishop, and none of them can get any kind of foothold in the centre.

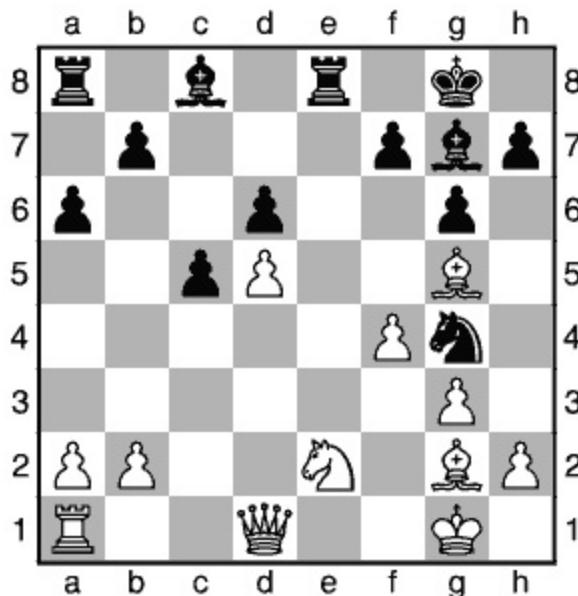
18 Ne2?!

White's options are limited by the need to defend against 18...Bd4+, but even so there are a number of plausible possibilities, making White's task none too easy. Ligterink decides simply to prevent ...Bd4+, but at the cost of allowing Black's minor pieces to develop frightening activity. The other possibilities were: 1) **18 Ne4** (immediately returning the queen) 18...Bd4+ 19 Qxd4 (19 Kh1? Rxe4 20 Qxg4 Bxg4 21 Bxe4 Re8 and Black will soon be two pawns up) 19...cxd4 20 Nxd6 Re2! (the white pieces have suddenly woken up and Black has to return the exchange without further ado; 20...Rf8 21 Be7 would be too passive, while 20...Re3 21 Nc4 Bf5 {Black cannot permit Nb6 combined with d6} 22 Nxe3 Nxe3 23 Bf6 Nxg2 would lead to a

draw) 21 Nxc8 (21 Bf3 Re3 22 Rf1 h6 23 Nxc8 Rxc8 24 Bxg4 f5 25 Bf6 Kf7 {not 25...fxg4 26 d6} 26 Bxd4 Rd3 favours Black) 21...Rxc2+ (but not 21...Rxc8? 22 Bf3 which is good for White as 22...Rcc2 loses to 23 d6!) 22 Kxg2 Rxc8 23 Kf3! (23 f5 f6 is slightly better for Black) 23...Nxh2+ 24 Ke4 f5+ leading to a near-certain draw.

2) **18 Qf1** or 18 Qd2 is the simplest way to force a draw as Black has nothing better than an immediate repetition by 18...Bd4+ 19 Kh1 Nf2+, etc. He could try for more, but it would be very risky.

3) **18 Qb3?** Bd4+ 19 Kh1 (or 19 Kf1 Nxh2#) 19...Nf2+ 20 Kg1 Nd1+ 21 Kf1 (21 Kh1 is answered by 21...Re1+) 21...Ne3+ 22 Kg1 Nc2+ 23 Kf1 Nxa1 24 Qd1 Bf5 and Black has a winning position. As a general rule, if Black regains even a minor piece, let alone a rook, he has at least material equality and should maintain enough positional advantage to win.



Black to move

White was perhaps reluctant to accede to a draw while in possession of such a large material advantage, but that was his best course. After the text-move the only real question is whether White can maintain the balance. Moreover, White's position is harder to handle than Black's, and so he is more likely to make a mistake.

18...Ne3

19 Qd2

This is forced; 19 Qe1? Nxg2 20 Kxg2 Bg4 would lose a piece, while 19 Qd3 would just encourage Black to gain time by 19...Bf5.

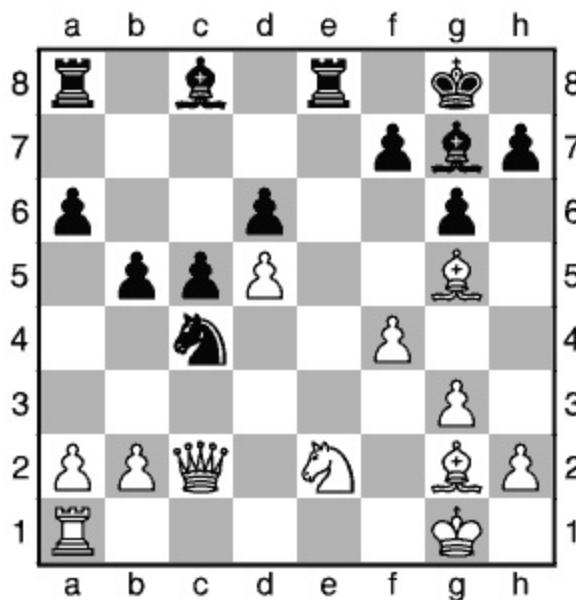
19...Nc4

20 Qc2

Again this is clearly best; against other moves Black plays ...Nxb2 with gain of tempo. In a way Black's plan is quite simple. He will win the b-pawn and then advance his 3 vs 1 queenside majority. Doubling rooks on the e-file will put pressure on White's position and make it harder for White to co-ordinate his forces. Despite White's large material advantage, the long-term chances lie with Black as his queenside pawns press forwards. White's only counter is to obtain some genuinely active play for his queen.

20...b5!

Black could force a draw by 20...Ne3, since White has nothing better than to return to d2, but in view of the tournament situation this was unacceptable. 20...Nxb2 is the obvious winning attempt, preparing ...Bf5, but 21 Be4 stops this and threatens 22 f5. Black can drive the bishop back to g2 with 21...f5, but this has the side-effect of blocking in Black's own light-squared bishop. Black could also try 21...Nd3 22 Rf1 Nb4 23 Qb1 Nxa2, but after 24 f5 gxf5 25 Bf3, followed by Nf4-h5, White has developed some active play on the kingside.



White to move

The text-move is more flexible. Black retains several options, for example ...Bxb2, ...Nxb2, ...Ne3 and ...Bf5, of which the last is such a serious threat that White is obliged to take action against it.

21 g4!

After long thought White finds the best chance. By offering a pawn, White can bring his knight to g3, thereby preventing ...Bf5. A secondary point is that White would like to generate some kingside counterplay in view of Black's queenside pawn majority. With the knight on g3, White may be able to play f5 himself and the half-open g-file gives further hope of an attack on the king.

White's alternative defences are:

1) **21 Bf3** (guarding the knight) 21...Bf5 22 Qd1 Bxb2 and Black wins at least the exchange, with ...Re3 and ...Rae8 to follow.

2) **21 Be4 Bg4** (Black's threat is 22...Bxe2 23 Qxe2 f5) 22 Re1 (22 Bd3 Nxb2 is catastrophic) 22...f5 23 Bg2 (23 Bd3 Nxb2 threatens 24...c4) 23...Bd4+ 24 Nxd4 (24 Kh1 Bf2) 24...Rxe1+ 25 Kf2 Rd1 26 Nf3 Bxf3 27 Kxf3 Rd2 28 Qc3 Re8 29 Bf1 Re3+ 30 Qxe3 Nxe3 31 Kxe3 Rxb2 32 Be7 Rxa2 33 Bxd6 c4 with advantage to Black. White's light-squared bishop is very hard to activate, and without it the d-pawn does not pose a serious danger.

3) **21 Nc3 Bf5 22 Be4** (22 Qb3 {22 Qc1 is the same} 22...Bd4+ 23 Kh1 Nxb2 24 Qxb2 b4 25 Rc1 bxc3 26 Qb6 c2 27 Qxd6 Bb2 28 Rg1 c1Q 29 Rxc1 Bxc1 30 h3 Re1+ 31 Kh2 Be3 32 g4 Bd3 with a double-edged position in which Black's prospects are certainly no worse) 22...b4 23 Bxf5 bxc3 24 bxc3 (24 Bd3 cxb2 25 Rf1 Ne3 26 Qd2 Nxf1 27 Kxf1 c4 28 Bb1 c3 with a tidal wave of pawns) 24...Ne3 25 Qd2 Nxf5 is one of White's better lines, but even here I would prefer to be Black. His pieces are more active and White has not solved the problem of the g5-bishop – indeed, Black is now threatening 26...h6.

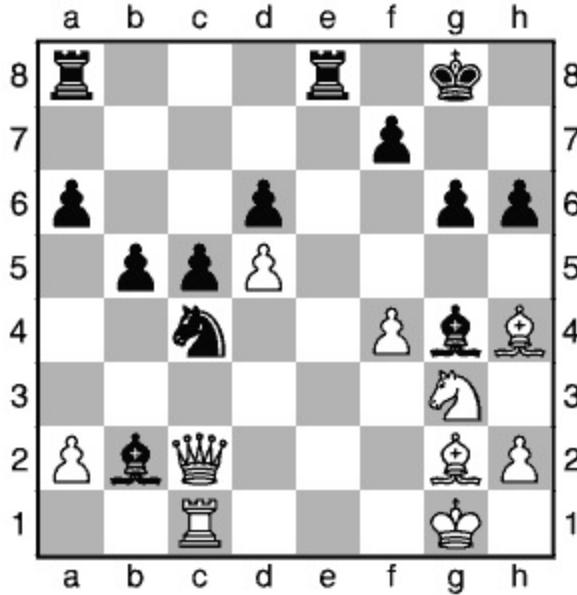
21...Bxg4

22 Ng3 h6

Driving the bishop to h4 helps restrain White's coming f5, because the reply ...g5 would win a piece. Moreover, White will be very reluctant to move the knight again, so the bishop cannot easily return into play via the h4-e1 diagonal.

23 Bh4 Bxb2

24 Rc1



Black to move

Curiously enough this is the only square for the rook. With rook and three pawns for the queen, Black's material disadvantage has almost disappeared and winning another exchange would even leave him ahead on paper. If only chess were so simple!

Black's most valuable piece is the dark-squared bishop, which is useful not only in attack but also for holding the kingside together (e.g. stopping Ne4-f6+), so Black won't want to give it up for a mere rook. On the other hand, Black would be quite happy to take the rook with his knight, clearing the path for the queenside pawns. Thus 24 Rb1 would be bad, as Black could reply 24...Bd4+ followed by 25...Ne3.

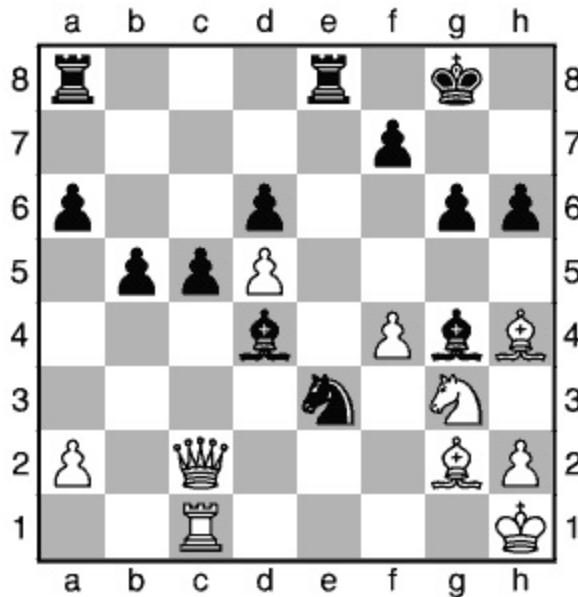
24...Bd4+

Black decides to exchange his knight for the bishop on g2. This might seem a strange decision as the agile knight is clearly more active than the relatively passive bishop. The point is that Black gains a lot of time by making this exchange. It is no good trying to exploit the queenside pawns slowly while allowing White a free hand elsewhere. White only needs a few moves to penetrate somewhere with his queen and Black will be in trouble long before the pawns have touched down. Black must try to keep White on the defensive by making threats; only if White gets completely tied up or Black gains some material and the position becomes simplified can Black contemplate relying only on the pawns.

24...Re3 was tempting, so as to threaten 25...Rae8 and 26...Bxc1, but 25 h3 Bd7 26 Nf1 is a good reply; 26...Rc3 can be met by 27 Qxc3, while

26...Bxc1 27 Qxc1 Re2 28 f5 g5 29 Bxg5 is awkward for Black.

25 Kh1 Ne3!



White to move

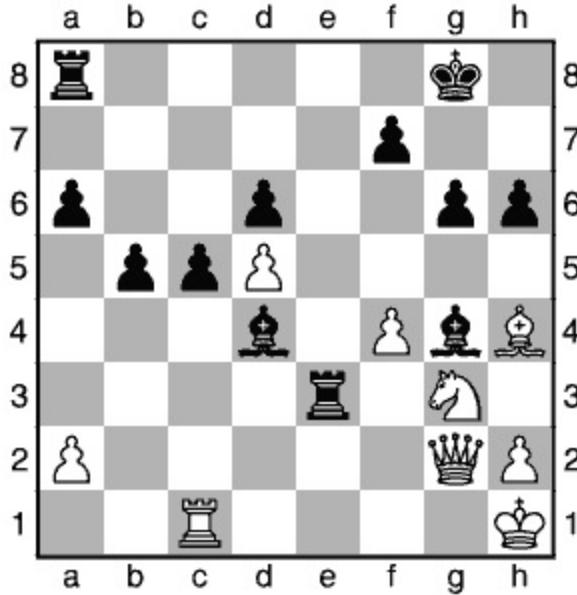
26 Qd2 Nxg2

I also considered playing more slowly by 26...Nf5 27 Nxf5 Bxf5 28 Bf2 Bg7, followed by the advance of the queenside pawns. This has the advantage that Black's kingside is far more secure than in the game, but the disadvantage is that Black surrenders much of his initiative. I rejected it because it is not easy to advance the queenside pawns: ...c4 can be met by Bd4 and if Black plays ...b4 then he will have to advance the a-pawn as well. Moreover, White has a clear-cut plan: exchange one pair of rooks and then penetrate with his queen via a5.

27 Qxg2

If 27 Kxg2, then 27...Be3 and ...Bxf4 would kill any hopes for White on the kingside, and his minor pieces would remain badly misplaced.

27...Re3



White to move

Doubling rooks with gain of time and highlighting another favourable aspect of Black's 26th move; White is going to miss his light-squared bishop, which although passive served a useful defensive function.

28 Rf1?!

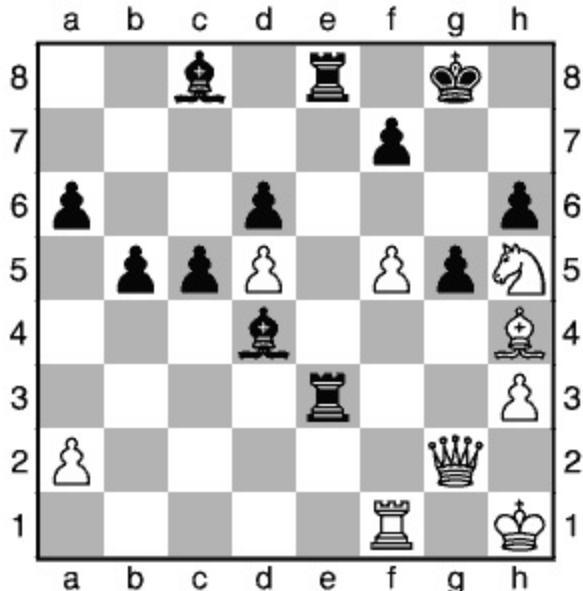
If White tries to bail out into an ending by 28 Nf1 Bf3 29 Nxe3 Bxg2+ 30 Nxg2 c4, then Black has a slight advantage because White's pawns are rather weak and he cannot transfer his pieces smoothly to the queenside. For example, 31 Ne1 Be3 wins a pawn, or 31 Be1 Bc5 (preventing Bb4), followed by ...Re8. However, this ending offers White fair drawing chances and is a better chance than the game continuation.

28...Rae8

This is the crisis of the game. Thanks to the exchange at g2 Black has gained time to double rooks and has created some threats with the light-squared bishop, but on the other hand White's pieces (especially the queen) are in a much better position to attack Black's king. White must act quickly or Black will just push his c-pawn. Obviously a kingside attack is the only option open to him; his pieces are too awkwardly placed to consider anything else.

29 f5?!

The wrong way to start the attack; White hopes to trap the g4-bishop but this proves impossible for tactical reasons. White should have played 29 h3 Bc8 30 f5 g5 31 Nh5 (threatening to sacrifice at g5 and also to play 32 Bf2) and now accurate play is required to clarify Black's advantage:

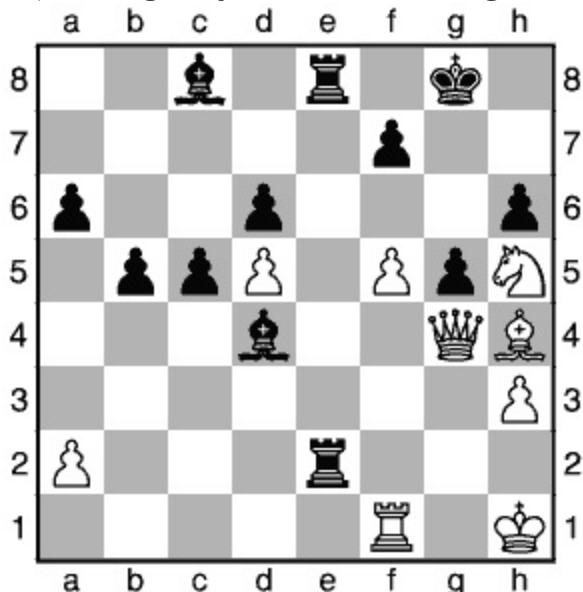


Black to move

1) 31...Bb7 32 Bf2 (32 Bxg5? Re2! 33 Qf3 hxg5 and Black wins)

32...Re2 (Black must avoid the exchange of his important dark-squared bishop) 33 h4 R8e4 (otherwise White opens up the kingside) 34 hxg5 Rxf2 35 Qxe4 Rxf1+ 36 Kg2 Rg1+ 37 Kh2 with advantage to White.

2) 31...Re2 32 Qg4 (the only useful square for White's queen; 32 Bf2 Bxf5 33 Bxd4 {33 Ng3 Be4 34 Nxe4 R8xe4 is good for Black} 33...Rxf2 34 Nf6+ Kf8 35 Kxg2 slightly favours Black) and here the position is balanced on a knife-edge. White's assault is based on the sacrifice Bxg5 or, if this is prevented, Nf4 (making way for Qh5, among other things). Black can try:



Black to move

2a) 32...f6 33 Nf4 R2e4 34 Qh5 gxf4 (34...gxh4 35 Qg6+ Kf8 36 Ne6+ also wins) 35 Qg6+ and White wins.

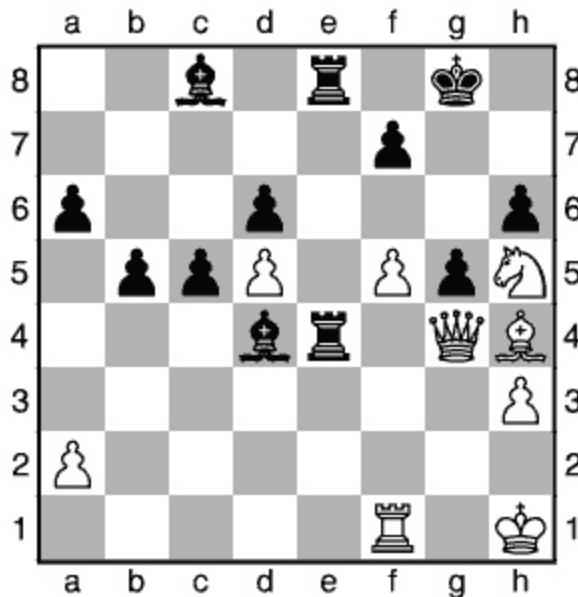
2b) 32...Bb7 33 Nf4 R2e4 34 Bxg5 hxg5 35 Qxg5+ Kf8 (35...Kh7 or 35...Kh8 36 Rg1) reaches an incredible position in which it appears that White must win, but actually finding a decisive continuation is another matter:

2b1) 36 f6 (at first sight Black can now resign, but...) 36...R8e5 37 Ng6+ (37 Qg7+ Ke8 38 Qg8+ Kd7 39 Qxf7+ Kc8 is also unconvincing) 37...fxg6 38 Qh6+ Ke8 39 f7+ Kd7 40 f8Q Bxd5 and despite White's two extra queens(!), he is actually worse.

2b2) 36 Ne6+ R8xe6 37 fxe6 Rxe6 and White has a slight plus.

2c) 32...R8e4 33 Nf4 (threatening 34 Nxe2 and 34 Bxg5) 33...Bg7 34 Bxg5 hxg5 35 Qxg5 f6 36 Qg6 with advantage to White.

2d) 32...R2e4! and now it is White who is in trouble:



White to move

2d1) 33 Rf4 Rxf4 34 Nxf4 Re5 with a final branch:

2d11) 35 Bxg5 Bxf5 36 Qg3 (36 Qh5 is the same) 36...Be4+ 37 Kh2 Rxf5 and wins.

2d12) 35 Nh5 Bxf5 36 Qg3 (inserting 36 Nf6+ Kg7 37 Nh5+ Kf8 makes no difference) 36...Re2! and White can resign.

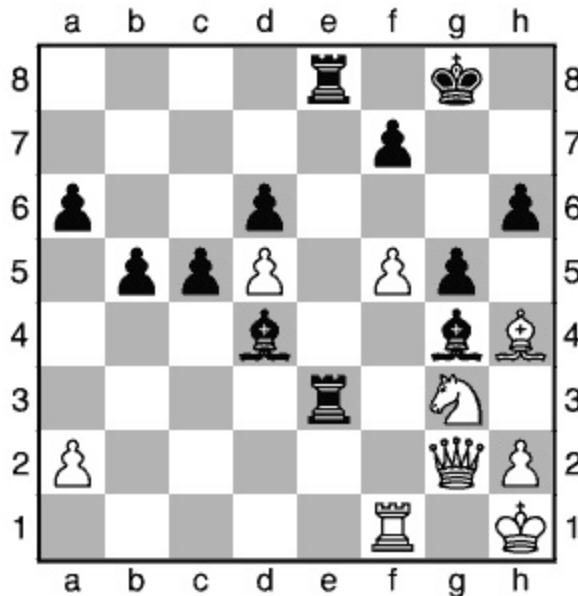
2d13) 35 Qh5 Bxf5 36 Qxh6 gxf4 37 Qxf4 (37 Bf6 Re1+ mates, 37 Qxd6 Re2 38 Qd8+ Kh7 wins for Black and 37 Qg5+ Bg6 is no improvement) 37...Be4+ 38 Kh2 Bg6 and White will not be able to cope both

with the threats to his king and with Black's queenside pawns, for example 39 Qf3 Re3 40 Qg2 b4, etc.

2d2) **33 Nf4** (keeping the rook is the best try) 33...R8e5 34 Bxg5 Bxf5 35 Qh4 hxg5 36 Qxg5+ Bg6 37 Qd8+ (37 Qg3 loses to 37...Rf5, with ...Be5 to follow; after 37 Qg2 Rxf4! 38 Rxf4 Re1+ 39 Rf1 Rxf1+ 40 Qxf1 c4 Black should win by advancing his pawns, because the queen will have no weaknesses to attack, nor any useful checks) 37...Re8 38 Qxd6 Re1! (not 38...Be5 39 Qd7) 39 Rxe1 Rxe1+ 40 Kg2 Be4+ 41 Kh2 Rh1+ 42 Kg3 Rg1+ 43 Kh2 (or 43 Kh4 Bf3 and Black wins) 43...Bf2! 44 Qd8+ Kh7 and White can only prevent mate at the cost of his queen.

After all these fascinating complications, the final moves of the game are something of an anti-climax.

29...g5



White to move

30 f6

White's intention was 30 Bxg5 hxg5 31 h3 regaining the piece, but he had overlooked 31...Be5!. In that event 32 hxg4 Rxg3 is the same hopeless ending as occurs in the game, while 32 Ne4 Rxh3+ 33 Kg1 Bd4+ 34 Rf2 (34 Nf2 Rh4) 34...Bxf2+ 35 Kxf2 Rf3+, etc., is even worse.

30...Kh8!

The win is a matter of personal taste – 30...R8e5! is also effective. Not, however, 30...gxh4 31 Nf5 with some counterplay.

31 Bxg5

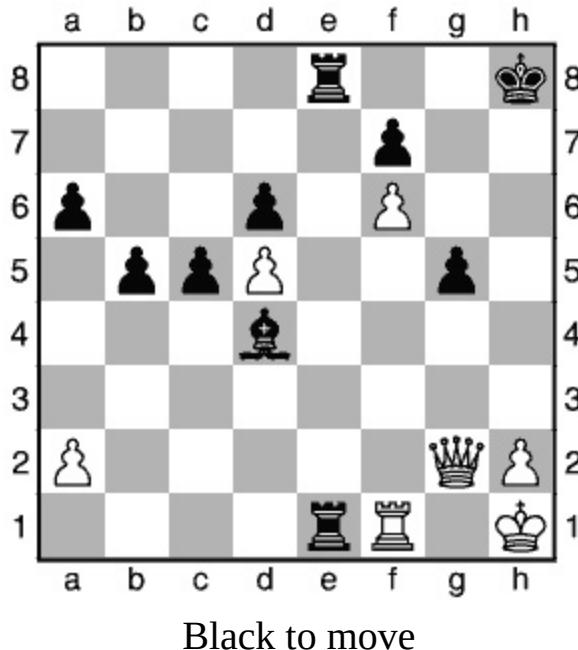
Or 31 Nf5 Bh3, and again White loses material.

31...hxg5

32 Nf5 Bxf5

33 Rxf5 Re1+

34 Rf1



34...Bxf6

Overlooking that 34...g4, followed by 35...R8e2, forces instant resignation, but the text-move is also good enough.

35 Qh3+ Kg7

36 Rxe1 Rxe1+

37 Kg2 c4

0-1

Black's king is perfectly safe from checks and the c-pawn cannot be stopped, for example: 38 Kf2 Rb1 39 Qd7 c3 40 Qc6 c2 or 38 Qd7 c3 39 Qc6 Re2+ 40 Kg3 c2, followed by ...Bb2.

In the last round I was White against Mestel. I needed to win to have a chance of qualifying for the Interzonal, while Mestel needed a draw for his grandmaster title – an awkward situation. I won in just 25 moves, which was very disappointing for Jonathan, but he did get the title in due course. The result was a quadruple tie for first place between Mestel, Stean, Van der Wiel and myself, but there were only three qualifying places. This meant that the

agony of the Zonal was not yet over, and there would have to be a play-off. Fortunately, this was put off until May.

International Swiss events were catching on all over Europe, and one of the most pleasant of these was at Lugano in Switzerland. In March 1982 I paid the first of several visits to this beautiful town, and finished outright second with 7/9, a point behind Korchnoi.

In April, there was a repeat of the 1980 Phillips and Drew/GLC tournament. I started the event well with 4½/8, but then collapsed, losing four consecutive games. Only in the last round did I recover any form, and beat Portisch in an interesting ending. While I could hardly be satisfied with 5½/13, there was some consolation in that both my wins were good games.

Game 16

J. Nunn – L. Christiansen

London (Phillips and Drew/GLC) 1982

Two Knights Defence

1 e4 e5

2 Bc4 Nf6

3 d3 Nc6

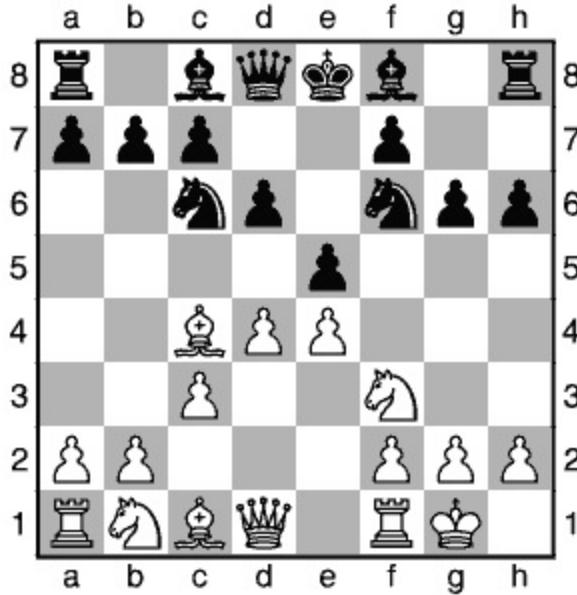
4 Nf3 h6

At first sight a beginner's move, but in fact quite logical. The most common variations against White's quiet d3 system are based on development by ...Bc5 or ...Be7, followed by ...0-0. In the latter case the position resembles a kind of Closed Ruy Lopez. Later, as in the Ruy Lopez, Black will often redeploy his pieces by ...Re8, ...h6 and ...Bf8, possibly followed by ...g6 and ...Bg7. The point of 4...h6 is to develop the bishop directly at g7 and reach the same type of position, but having saved two tempi by missing out ...Bf8-e7-f8. The only real risk involved in playing a slow move such as ...h6 is that White will open up the position to exploit Black's lack of development, but this could only be done by d4 which involves a loss of tempo itself. Black could not play 4...g6 or 4...d6 because of 5 Ng5 (for example 4...g6 5 Ng5 d5 6 exd5 and then 6...Nxd5 7 Qf3, or 6...Na5 7 Qe2), hence the preparatory ...h6.

5 0-0 d6

6 c3 g6

7 d4



Black to move

Probably the best plan, even though White moves his d-pawn again. Black still has to castle and in fact he must waste more time moving his queen, so to some extent White regains the time he has lost with the d-pawn.

7...Qe7

Black must be careful to keep the position closed, otherwise his backward development and the weaknesses created at f6 and h6 will be exposed. Some examples:

1) 7...Bg7? 8 dxe5 dxe5 9 Qxd8+ Nxd8 10 Nxe5 Nxe4 11 Re1 winning material.

2) 7...Nxe4 8 Bd5 Nf6 9 Bxc6+ bxc6 10 dxe5 Nd5 11 exd6 cxd6 12 Re1+ Be7 (12...Be6 13 Nd4) 13 c4, when Black has a weak d-pawn, is unpleasantly pinned on the e-file and cannot castle.

3) 7...exd4 8 cxd4 Nxe4 (8...d5 9 exd5 Nxd5 10 Re1+ Be7 11 Bxd5 Qxd5 12 Nc3, followed by d5 and Qe2, is also very bad) 9 Re1 d5 10 Bxd5 Qxd5 11 Nc3 with a tremendous initiative for White.

Clearly Black needs to retain a pawn at e5, hence the text-move. Although Black has started off rather slowly with his development, the time he gains playing his bishop to g7 directly soon makes up for it.

8 Nbd2 Bg7

9 Re1



Black to move

The same kind of position arises in [Nunn-F.Olafsson](#), and in both games the queen on e7 is bound to feel slightly uncomfortable opposite the white rook. Having accepted a restricted position in the centre, Black's most natural plan will be to liberate himself and at the same time counterattack by working for the move ...f5, but the timing will be critical since he is bound to suffer from weaknesses after White has exchanged pawns at e5 and f5. This is, of course, a very different situation from the typical King's Indian formation where White has blocked the centre by d4-d5, a move which he has no intention of making here, since this would give Black a free hand to play ...f5 at the earliest opportunity.

9...0-0

10 h3

A necessary precaution because 10 Nf1 would be met by 10...Bg4.

10...Bd7

The position after 10 h3 has been reached on a number of occasions, with Black experimenting in various ways to try to free his position:

1) **10...Kh7 11 Nf1 Nd8** (this puzzling move intends to forgo ...f5 for the moment and make use of the outpost at f4 by ...Ne6-f4) 12 Ng3 Ng8 13 Bd3 Qf6 14 d5 (just at the right moment White cuts across the plan by preventing ...Ne6; blocking the centre is quite in order now because Black has wasted time and will experience great difficulty in switching back to the ...f5 plan) 14...Qe7 15 Qc2, Psakhis-Nei, Tallinn 1983, and Black's game is unacceptably passive. He cannot force through ...f5 by 15...Qd7 16 c4 f5

because of 17 exf5 gxf5 18 Nxf5 Rxf5 19 Nh4 Ne7 20 g4 and White wins material.

2) 10...Qd8!? (an interesting idea, very reminiscent of the famous game Tarrasch-Alekhine, Baden-Baden 1925; the queen is removed from the e-file without further ado and after ...Re8 White's e-pawn will still be under some pressure) 11 Bb3 Re8 12 a3 a5 13 Bc2 Bd7 14 Nf1 a4 15 Ng3 b5 with a comfortable game for Black, Gavrikov-Eingorn, USSR 1981.

3) 10...Nh7 (the normal move, attacking the d-pawn, preparing ...f5 and aiming to relieve his position by exchanging knights with ...Ng5) 11 Nf1 Ng5 12 N1h2 Nxf3+ 13 Nxf3 and now:



Black to move

3a) 13...Na5 (not a very logical follow-up to Black's knight manoeuvre) 14 Bd3 c5 15 Be3 Kh7 16 Qa4 b6 17 b4 Bd7 18 Qa3 cxd4 19 cxd4 Nc6 20 d5 Nd4 21 Bxd4 exd4 22 Ba6 and White's control of the c-file gave him the advantage in Dolmatov-Beliavsky, USSR 1980.

3b) 13...Kh7 (the exchange of knights has cleared the path for Black's f-pawn, so this move is better) 14 a4 f5 15 dxe5 dxe5 16 a5 fxe4 (or 16...a6 17 Qb3, making Black's development difficult) 17 Nd2 e3 18 Rxe3 Bf5 19 a6 b6 20 Bd5? (neglecting the crucial square e4; 20 Ne4 was certainly the critical test of the ...f5 plan; although Black has active pieces, the isolated pawn may count against him in the long run) 20...Qd7 21 Bf3 Rad8 22 Qa4 e4! 23 Nxe4 Ne5 and Black's piece activity had reached alarming proportions in Ghinda-Beliavsky, Lvov 1981. Beliavsky went on to win.

In an earlier round of the same tournament Spassky had introduced the text-move against me and equalised easily. Christiansen decides to repeat the innovation.

11 Nf1 Rae8

12 Ng3 Kh8



White to move

Spassky's idea is to start counterplay by ...Nh7 and ...f5. All Black's pieces are nicely developed, and if he can open some lines quickly Black will develop a menacing kingside attack. In the Spassky game I reacted feebly by 13 Bd2 Nh7 14 dxе5 Nxе5 15 Nxе5 dxе5 16 Qb3 b6, when Black had fully equalised, but during the intervening days I had discovered a big improvement for White.

13 a4!

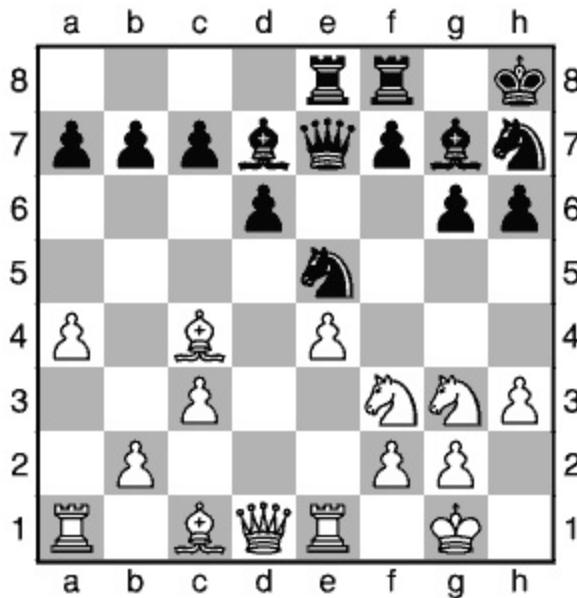
White intends to interfere with Black's plan by opening the a3-f8 diagonal with dxе5, followed by b3 and Ba3. The queen on e7 and rook on f8 can hardly move so Black will be in danger of simply losing the exchange. The threat was perhaps not so obvious, since Christiansen continued with the Spassky plan, apparently oblivious to the danger. 13...Rd8 was probably best, when White would not exchange at e5 immediately since this would expose his queen along the d-file. 14 Qe2 can be met by 14...Na5, since the natural reply 15 Bd3 allows the knight in to b3, so 14 a5! is the best multi-purpose move. White intends a6, Qb3 or Qe2 according to circumstances. The game might develop in various ways, but White would certainly maintain his

initiative.

13...Nh7?

14 dxe5 Nxe5

After 14...dxe5 15 b3 Na5 16 Ba3 c5 17 Bd5! (17 Bxc5 Qxc5 18 Qxd7 Re7 19 Qb5 Rc8 gives Black fair play for the pawn) Black is hard pressed to meet the immediate threat of 18 b4.



White to move

15 Nxe5 dxe5

After 15...Qxe5, the continuation 16 Qb3 Bc6 17 Bxf7? Qf6 is unplayable, but 16 Be3 genuinely threatens the a-pawn (meeting a subsequent ...b6 by a5). If then 16...a6, 17 Qb3 really does win a pawn.

16 b3 Rd8

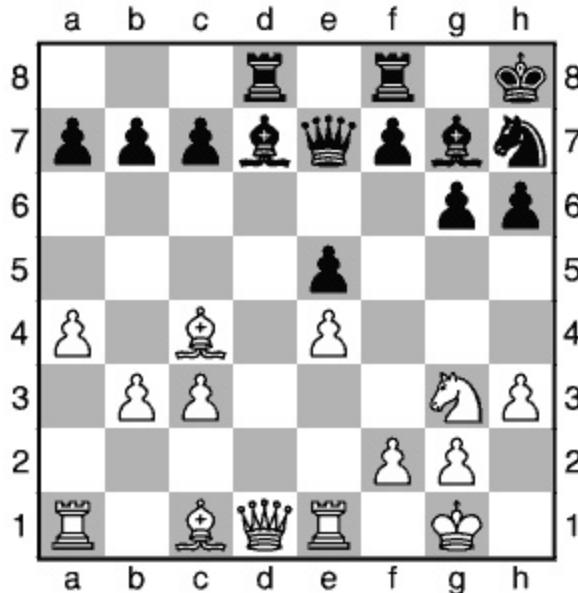
Faced with the threat of Ba3, Black now resigns himself to making the enormous positional concession of playing ...c5, leaving a hole at d5 which torments him for the rest of the game. However, his prospects were bleak anyway:

1) **16...Rg8** 17 Ba3 c5 18 Bxc5 wins a pawn.

2) **16...Nf6** 17 Ba3 c5 18 b4 Rd8 19 Qb3 b6 20 bxc5 bxc5 21 Qb7 with strong pressure against the weak queenside pawns.

3) **16...Be6** 17 Ba3 c5 18 Bxe6 forces 18...fxe6. Compared to [Game 6](#) (Britton-Nunn), this is not a position where the open files would compensate Black for his weakened pawns. Black's minor pieces are too passively placed to make any use of the outposts (his knight cannot reach f4, for example).

Moreover, the d4-square is already under White's control so it cannot be used as an outpost.



White to move

17 Ba3 c5

This is a dreadful move from a positional point of view, since the weak d5-square will provide White with a potential long-term outpost. Moreover, White's pawn structure is very solid, so Black will have great difficulty finding counterplay.

18 Qd5

Quiet lines would have given White a slight advantage, for example 18 Qe2 Rfe8 (18...Bc6 19 b4! Bxa4 {19...b6? 20 bxc5 bxc5 21 Qe3 wins} 20 b5 a6 21 bxa6 bxa6 22 Bxa6, threatening Qc4, with a clear advantage for White) 19 b4 cxb4 20 Bxb4 Qf6 21 Qe3. However, the text-move, which takes immediate advantage of the weakness at d5, is even better.

18...b6

Forced, or Black loses a pawn immediately.

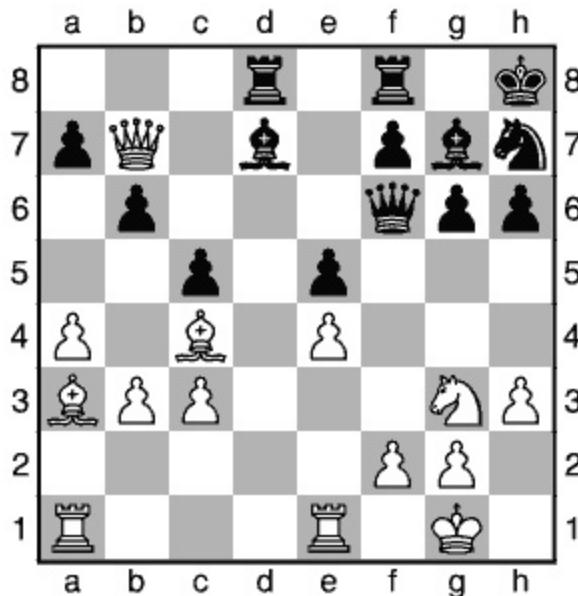
19 Qb7

The queen is in no personal danger here and White's decision to go plundering deep into enemy territory is quite acceptable, since Black has no immediate counterplay. However, Black is bound to generate some kingside threats during the queen's absence.

19...Qf6

If 19...Rb8, then 20 Qxa7 is safe enough, or if 19...Ra8, simply 20 Bd5

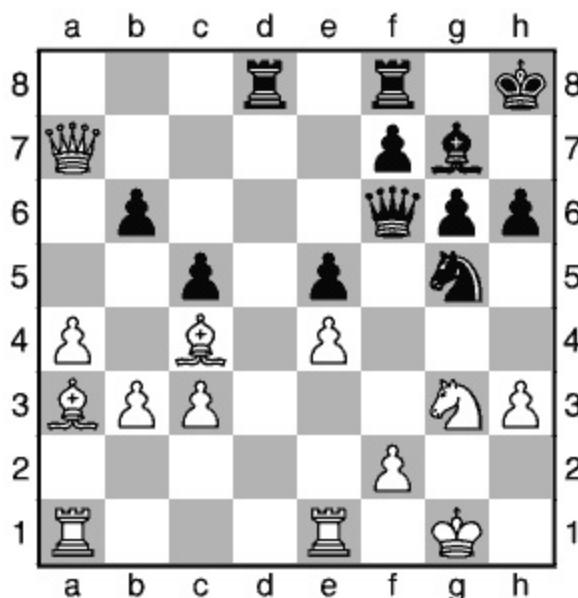
and 21 Qxa8.



White to move

20 Rad1

Rather concerned about Black's gathering attack and bearing in mind Christiansen's tactical skill, I decided to play safe and assure myself a modest endgame advantage. However, it seems that I could have played more directly by 20 Qxa7 Bxh3 (although this sacrifice is an obvious possibility, one feels at first that it must be unsound because the white bishop can quickly return to e2 or f1, but it is f2 that is hard to defend in the absence of the queen) and now: 1) 21 gxh3? Ng5 with the lines:



White to move

1a) 22 **Kg2** Qf3+ 23 Kf1 Nxh3 24 Re2 (24 Ra2 Nf4 mates) 24...Nf4 25 Re3 (the only move, since 25 Bd5 Nh5 is a disaster) 25...Qg2+ 26 Ke1 Qg1+ 27 Bf1 Rd6! with a decisive attack.

1b) 22 **Bf1** Nf3+ 23 Kg2 (or 23 Kh1 Nxe1 24 Rxe1 Qxf2 and Black wins) 23...Nh4+ with perpetual check since White dare not abandon f2.

1c) 22 **Re2** Nxh3+ 23 Kf1 h5!, with dangerous threats, for example 24 a5 h4 25 Qxb6 (25 Nh1 Qf3 also loses) 25...Qf3 and Black wins.

1d) 22 **Red1** Nxh3+ 23 Kg2 Nf4+ 24 Kh2 Qh4+ 25 Kg1 Nh3+ 26 Kg2 Nf4+ 27 Kf3 (the only way to avoid perpetual check) 27...f5 with a dangerous attack.

2) 21 **a5!** was the move I overlooked during the game. Now Black's queenside collapses so quickly that he has no time to generate any real threats. His only hope is to eliminate the g-pawn by the sacrifice ...Bxg2, but that brings the white king directly to g2 and the extra tempo makes the defence easy. Black can try:



2a) 21...**bxa5** 22 Bxc5 (the square f2 is covered, so this threatens to take the bishop as well as the rook) 22...Ra8 23 Qb6 Qxb6 24 Bxb6 with a won ending.

2b) 21...**Ng5** 22 Qxb6 Qf4 (or 22...Nf3+ 23 gxf3 Qxf3 24 Bf1) 23 Qxc5 Bxg2 (otherwise White plays Qe3) 24 Kxg2 Qf3+ 25 Kh2 and Black has nothing.

2c) 21...**Bxg2** 22 Kxg2 Ng5 23 Re3 Rd2 24 Rf1 and the attack is over.

This is an interesting piece of analysis in which achieving the strategic aim of breaking up Black's queenside pawn structure takes precedence over gaining material.

20...Bxh3!

Black seizes his only chance for counterplay.

21 Rxd8

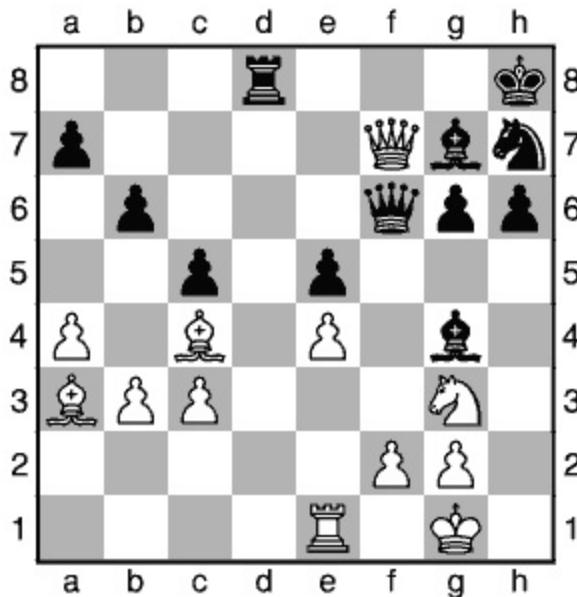
Again 21 gxh3 is bad because of 21...Ng5 22 Rxd8 (after 22 Bf1 Nf3+ 23 Kg2 Nh4+ Black forces perpetual check) 22...Rxd8 and White cannot hope for more than a draw since 23 Re2 actually loses after 23...Rd1+ 24 Kg2 (24 Kh2 Nf3+ 25 Kg2 Rg1#) 24...Qf3+ 25 Kh2 Rh1+! and mate.

21...Rxd8

21...Qxd8 22 gxh3 Ng5 23 Kg2 Qf6 24 Re3 wins a piece for nothing.

22 Qxf7 Bg4

Not, of course, 22...Qxf7 because his g-pawn would go.



White to move

23 Qxf6?

Once again White settles for a modest advantage when he could have been greedy with 23 Qxa7. On this occasion the question mark is deserved, since it is not hard to see that Black's counterplay amounts to nothing substantial:

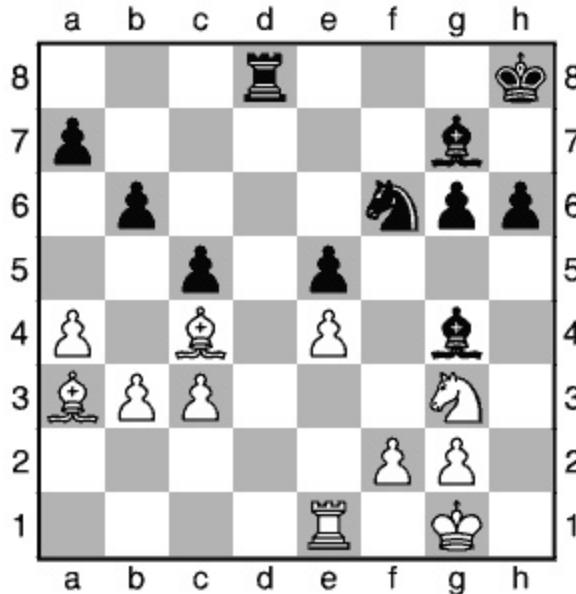
1) 23...Ng5 24 Bc1 and White is ready to eliminate the g5-knight, which kills Black's attack.

2) 23...Rf8 24 Nh1 Ng5 25 a5 is very good for White since neither

25...Nf3+ nor 25...Nh3+ is any good.

3) 23...Rd2 24 Qf7! and Black has little to show for the pawn.

23...Nxf6



White to move

This position is very depressing for Black. It is perhaps going too far to say that it is already lost, but there are no obvious improvements for Black during the remainder of the game. He is handicapped by his very bad bishop, his isolated pawn and above all the ruinously weak square d5 which White can seize and occupy. The fact that the corresponding square d4 is still controlled by a pawn is of crucial importance because it prevents Black from occupying a similar outpost.

These disadvantages need not be fatal in themselves; Black might well overcome his problems if only he had some counterplay. His crushing burden is that he has none. His control of the d-file is spurious because his rook has no entry points; he has no pawn breaks by which he might open another file or create some play and his minor pieces have no chance of occupying any good outposts. By contrast White has clear methods of making progress, for example he can take possession of d5 and then organise a break on the left flank by a5.

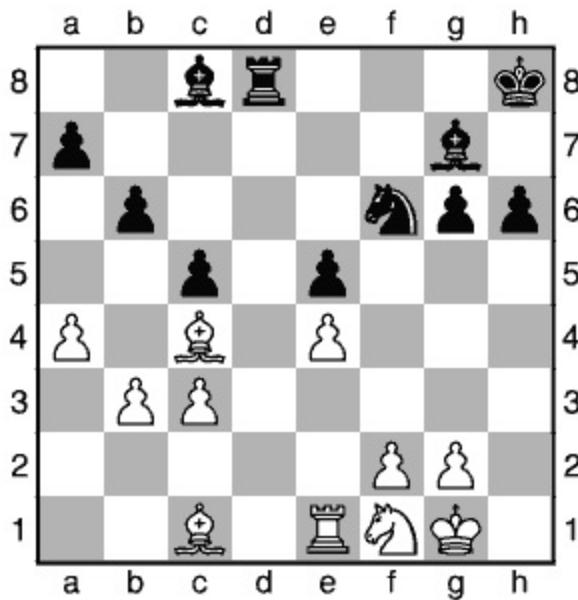
24 Nf1?!

In a moment White will centralise his king and free the other pieces from the duty of defending d2 and d3. Meanwhile, the knight covers d2 and takes a step towards d5. At the same time 24...Rd1 is forestalled because 25

Rxd1 Bxd1 26 f3 Bc2 27 Kf2 would leave the bishop in trouble. It is probable, though, that 24 f3 Bc8 25 Bc1 would have been a marginally more accurate move-order, leaving the knight at g3 a little longer to discourage any counterplay by ...g5 (see the note to Black's 25th move).

24...Bc8 25 Bc1

Not 25 b4; Black is helpless as things stand, and White has no wish to alter the pawn formation in any substantial way, other than to play a5 when he is good and ready.



Black to move

25...Bb7?!

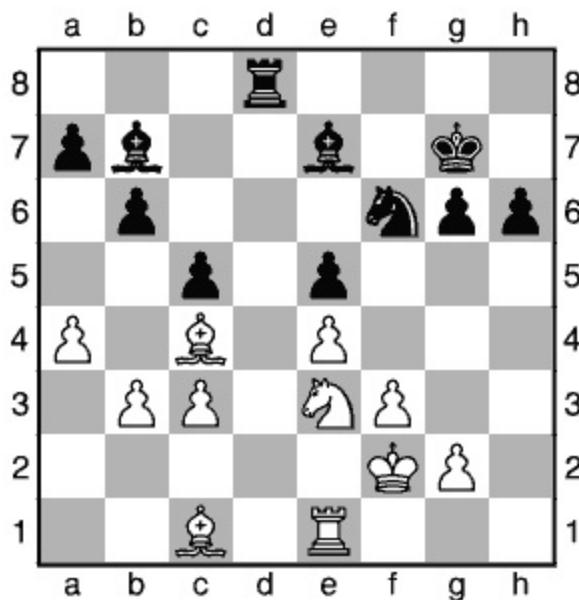
Black decides to defend passively by preventing the occupation of d5. In such positions the defender faces the decision as to whether to play passively, not creating any more weaknesses and hoping that the opponent won't be able to improve his position decisively, or whether to go for counterplay even at the cost of further structural weaknesses. The active plan was ...Kh7, ...g5, ...Kg6, ...g4, ...h5 and ...Bh6 trying to activate the dark-squared bishop and gaining some space on the kingside. If Black puts this plan into action by 25...Kh7 26 f3 g5, then after 27 g4! (thanks to White's 24th move, 27 Ng3 Kg6 isn't too bad for Black, but fortunately White has a good alternative) 27...Kg6 28 Ng3 Bf8 (28...h5 29 gxh5+ Nxh5 30 Nxh5 Kxh5 31 Kf2 Bf6 32 Bd5 is also very good for White) 29 Kf2 Black's counterplay is dead. White can aim for a5 or play his bishop round to g3, much as in the game. Moreover, Black must be on the lookout for a timely Nf5.

However, Black can play this plan in a different order to prevent White's g4; after 25...g5! 26 f3 g4 27 Ng3 Kh7 28 f4 exf4 29 Bxf4 White still has some advantage because of his more active pieces and passed e-pawn, but this would have been better for Black than the game. Note that this line was only possible because of White's inaccurate 24th move.

26 f3 Bf8

27 Ne3 Kg7

28 Kf2 Be7



White to move

29 Rh1!

White's advantages are permanent; therefore he should take his time and stamp out any hint of counterplay. On the previous move, 28...Nh5 was unplayable because of 29 Ng4, but if White innocently continues with the next part of his plan by 29 Ke2, there comes 29...Nh5, aiming at f4 and g3, with ...Bg5 or ...Bh4 also in the air. After the continuation 30 Ng4 Nf4+ 31 Kf2 Bf6 32 g3 Nh3+ (but not 32...Nd3+ 33 Bxd3 Rxd3 34 Bxh6+ Kf7 35 Re3 Rd2+ 36 Re2 Rd3 37 Rd2 and White keeps his extra pawn) 33 Kg2 Ng5 34 Bxg5 Bxg5 35 Nxe5 Bf6 36 f4 Re8 Black has activated his pieces and will soon regain the sacrificed pawn. This is just the kind of active chance Black is looking for.

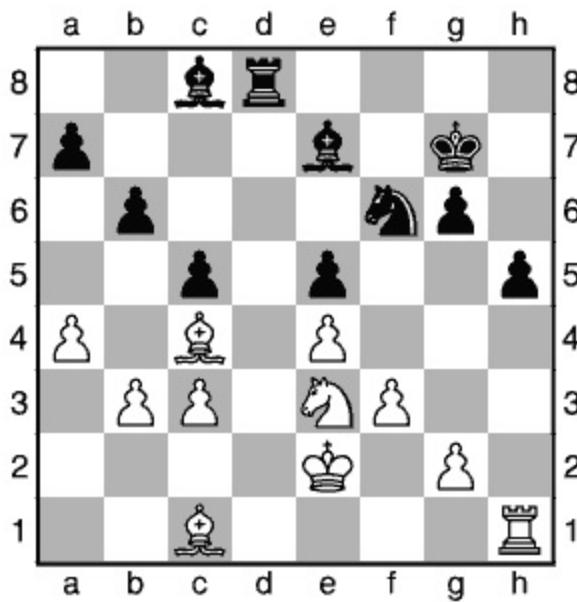
The point of the text-move is to force ...h5 (since the pressure against h6 cannot be tolerated for long) and thereby eliminate any counterplay based on ...Nh5. If Black now tries 29...Nh7, aiming for ...Bg5, the reply is 30 Rxh6

Kxh6 31 Nf5+ Kh5 32 g4#. Meanwhile 29...Nh5 is still refuted by 30 Ng4.

29...h5

30 Ke2 Bc8

Black can't do much except keep his pieces flexibly posted and wait to see what White intends. Trying to get three pawns for a piece by 30...Bxe4 31 fxe4 Nxe4 is refuted by 32 Ke1! Nxc3 33 Bb2.



White to move

31 Bd2

White's least effective piece is his dark-squared bishop, so the next part of the plan is to transfer it to g3, in order to tie Black down to the defence of the e-pawn. Meanwhile, Black cannot undertake anything constructive. One frustrating aspect of the situation is that he cannot benefit by exchanging off one or two minor pieces. In the resulting simplified position the helplessness of his dark-squared bishop (the one piece that White would not exchange) would be even more glaringly apparent. In fact the exchange of light-square bishops, to leave d5 wide open for his other pieces, is one of White's primary objectives over the next few moves. During this time White does not exchange knights by Nd5 because this would give Black access to f6, making it easier for him to defend the e-pawn.

31...Bb7

Black could stop a5 by playing ...a5 himself, but this not only creates a new target at b6 (after Nc4 or Nd5, for example), it means that an exchange of light-squared bishops would give White's king a clear path into Black's

position via c4 and b5.

32 Be1 Ne8

If 32...Bd6, then White can make further progress by 33 Bg3 and 34 Rd1.

33 Bg3 Bf6

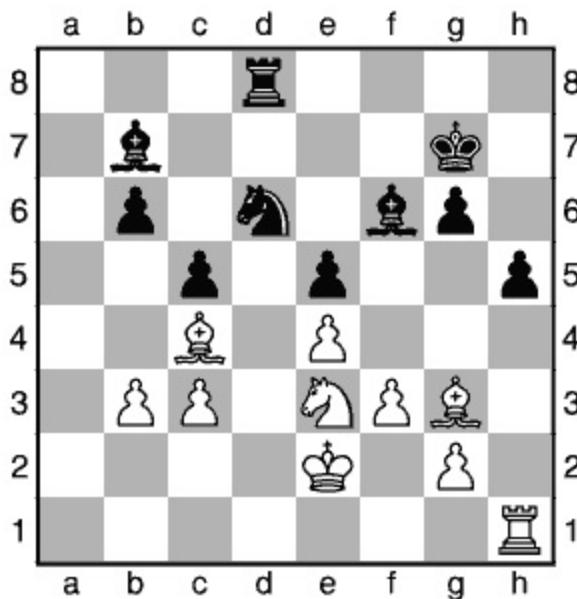
34 a5!

The breakthrough comes on the extreme flank, where the defender's resistance is bound to be lowest. The exchange of light-squared bishops would be greatly to White's advantage, but at the moment 34 Bd5 can be met by 34...Ba6+. Once the a-file is in White's hands Black will have to go back to c8 in reply to Bd5.

34...Nd6

34...bxa5 35 Ra1 would soon win a pawn at a7 or c5.

35 axb6 axb6



White to move

36 Ra1 Bc6

Black again decides to wait. The alternatives are:

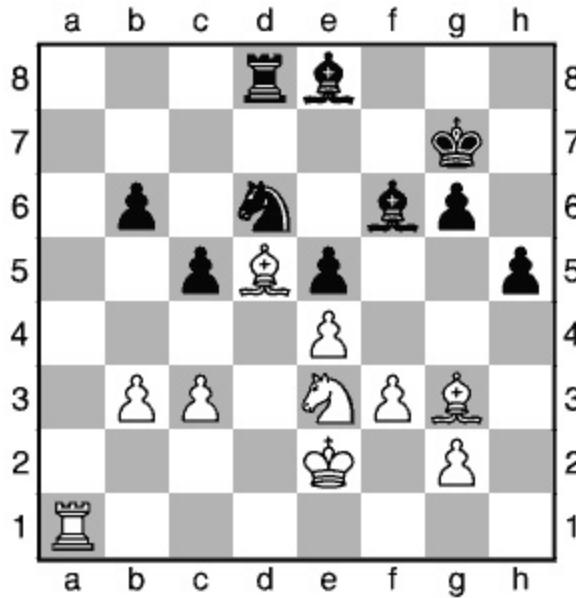
1) 36...Nxc4 37 Nxc4 b5, and now both 38 Nxe5 Bxe5 39 Bxe5+ Kf7 40 Ra7 and 38 Ra7 bxc4 39 Rxb7+ Kg8 40 bxc4 Ra8 41 Rd7 would be quite sufficient to win.

2) 36...Ra8 37 Rxa8 Bxa8 38 Bd5 Bxd5 39 Nxd5 and now:

2a) 39...Nc8 40 Kd3 Kf7 (or 40...b5 41 Bf2) 41 Nxf6 Kxf6 42 Kc4 Ke6 43 Kb5 Kd6 44 Ka6, followed by Kb7, and Black's pawns start to fall.

2b) 39...b5 40 Bf2 c4 (40...Nb7 41 Nc7 b4 {41...c4 42 b4 Nd6 43 Bc5} 42 Ne6+ Kf7 43 Nxc5 Nxc5 44 Bxc5 bxc3 45 Kd3, winning) 41 bxc4 bxc4 (41...Nxc4 42 Nc7 Nd6 43 Bc5) 42 Bc5 Nb5 (42...Nb7 is the same) 43 Bb4, followed Ne3 or Nb6, winning the c-pawn and the game.

37 Bd5 Be8



White to move

Black naturally avoids the exchange, but has to concede more space in so doing.

38 Ra7+ Kh6

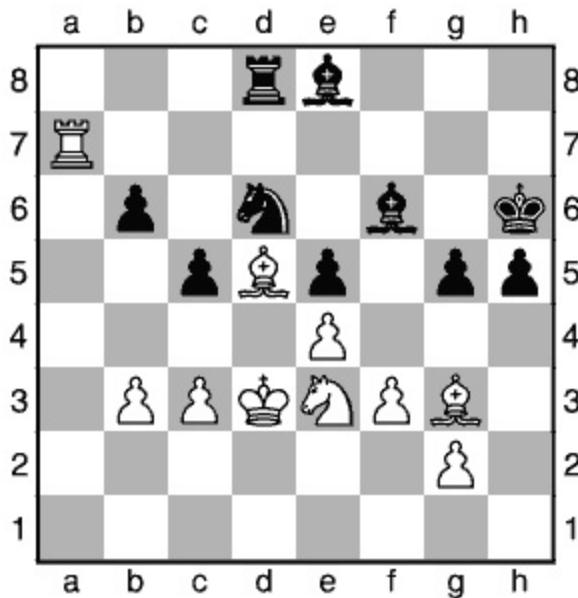
If 38...Rd7 there is 39 Ra6! b5 (39...Nc8 40 Ra8 Nd6 41 Bc6 Re7 42 Bxe8 Nxe8 43 Nd5 Re6 44 Rb8 picks up the b-pawn) 40 Bc6 Rd8 (or 40...Re7) 41 Bxe8 Nxe8 42 Nd5 and the e-pawn falls.

After the text-move Black has everything defended for the moment, so White must come up with a plan to increase his advantage. Moreover, he must deal with the threat of ...Nb5. 39 Kd3 defends the c-pawn so that ...Nb5 can be safely answered by Rb7. If Black remains passive, White intends to play Kc2, followed by Rc7 and Bc6. If Black allows an exchange, Rc6 and Nd5 will round up a queenside pawn, while if Black plays ...Bf7 White replies Nd5 and Black will have to exchange on d5. White takes back with the bishop and again plays Rc6, winning a pawn.

39 Kd3

The king manoeuvre must come first, defending c3 and so nullifying ...Nb5.

39...g5



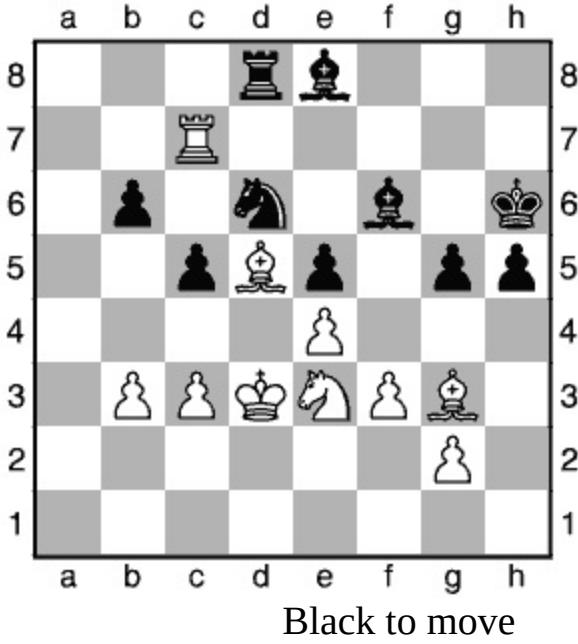
White to move

Black has no real way to counter White's plan, so he goes into panic mode. Now the bishop can come to g6, but f5 is seriously weakened.

40 Kc2?

Black's strategy meets with immediate success, and White commits an inaccuracy which quite unnecessarily allows some counterplay. When one sees a win by a top-class positional player such as Petrosian or Karpov, the whole game often looks very smooth and straightforward. However, under the surface there is a great deal of hidden complexity. The art of winning without allowing a shred of counterplay is one that even grandmasters find very hard to master. It involves constant vigilance and foresight to anticipate possible sources of counterplay and to take steps to counteract them at a very early stage. I was vaguely worried that my king was on the same file as the enemy rook, but in fact White's position is so solid that there is no genuine danger.

Earlier on, while Black was defending passively, White could afford to take his time, but Black's ...g5 indicates that he is making a last desperate bid for counterplay, and in this new situation White has no time for lethargic manoeuvring. 40 Rc7 is correct, leaving Black very short of viable moves:



1) 40...Bg6 41 Rc6.

2) 40...Nb5 41 Rb7.

3) 40...Rd7 41 Rc6.

4) 40...Bg7 41 Re7 Bf6 42 Re6 wins.

5) 40...Bb5+ 41 Kc2 is fine for White, because Black can no longer exert pressure on e4 by means of ...Bg6.

6) 40...g4 is the only try and White then has 41 fxg4 Bg6 42 Nf5+ and now:

6a) 42...Nxf5 43 gxf5 Bxf5 44 c4 h4 45 Bf2, followed by Rc6 or Rb7 as appropriate, and White wins the b-pawn.

6b) 42...Bxf5 43 gxf5 Nxf5 44 Rc6 Kg7 (44...Nxg3 45 Rxf6+ is hopeless, and 44...Rd6 loses to 45 exf5 Rxd5+ 46 Ke4) 45 Bf2 Ne7 (45...Rd6 46 Kc4 Rxc6 47 Bxc6, and the king penetrates) 46 Rxf6 Rxd5+ (46...Nxd5 47 exd5 Kxf6 48 Bh4+) 47 exd5 Kxf6 48 Bh4+ Kf7 49 d6 and White wins the knight.

40...Bg6

Black is aiming to play ...g4. With the king on d3, White could meet this by fxg4, but now the e4-pawn is too weak.

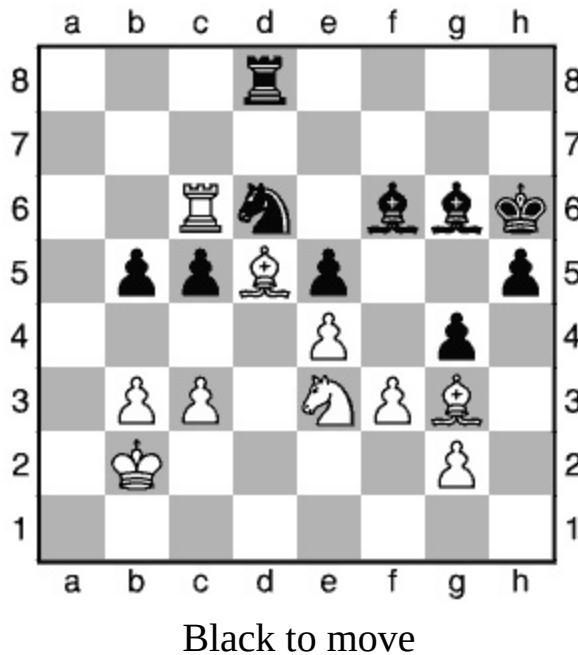
41 Rc7 g4

42 Rc6 b5

Part of Black's plan is to drive the knight away by ...Bg5 and perhaps follow up with ...Rf8, but here 42...Bg5 fails against 43 Bxe5.

43 Kb2

White avoids 43 Rxc5 because of the line 43...Bg5 44 Bf2? gxf3 45 gxf3 Rf8 with quite good play. In fact, both 44 Nf1 and 44 Kd3 would maintain White's advantage in this line, but I did not want my knight driven back to the first rank and the idea of returning to d3 with the king simply didn't occur to me!



Black to move

The text-move removes the king from the awkward c2-g6 diagonal.

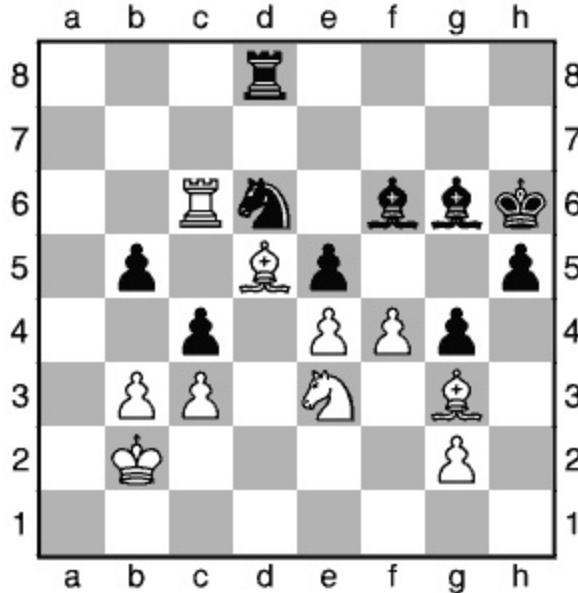
43...c4?

After this Black's game disintegrates completely; he has overlooked the threat behind White's last move. Black's only hope was to exchange pawns first; then, after 43...gxf3 44 gxf3 c4, White still has enough to win, but only with accurate play:

1) **45 f4** exf4 46 Bxf4+ Bg5 47 Bxd6 Bxe3 and the outcome is unclear. Apart from anything else the pawns are disappearing at an alarming rate.

2) **45 bxc4** bxc4 46 Bxc4! (again, 46 Nxc4 Nxc4+ 47 Bxc4 Rf8, followed by ...h4, only encourages counterplay) and there is no reason why White's extra pawn should not eventually win the game. In fact Black has to be very careful here: 46...Be8? 47 Rxd6, 46...Nxc4+ 47 Nxc4 and 46...h4 47 Ng4+ all lose at once. It follows that White can safely consolidate on the next move by 47 Bd5.

44 f4!



Black to move

Now Black has no hope of escape.

44...b4

Black makes a desperate piece sacrifice, trying to eliminate as many pawns as possible, but the situation is hopeless. After 44...exf4 45 Bxf4+ Bg5 46 Rxd6 Rxd6 White wins by 47 Nxg4+ hxg4 48 Bxd6. The desperado capture at move 47 explains why Black should have started with 43...gxf3.

45 fxe5 bxc3+

46 Kxc3 cxb3

Black could rescue the piece by 46...Nb5+ 47 Kxc4 Na3+ 48 Kd3 Bg5, but then comes 49 Nf5+ Kh7 50 Rc7+ Kh8 51 e6 Rxd5+ (or 51...Bxf5 52 Be5+ Kg8 53 Rg7+ Kf8 54 e7+ Bxe7 55 Rg8#) 52 exd5 Bxf5+ 53 Ke2 Kg8 54 Be5 Bh6 55 Rd7, followed by Rd8+ and e7.

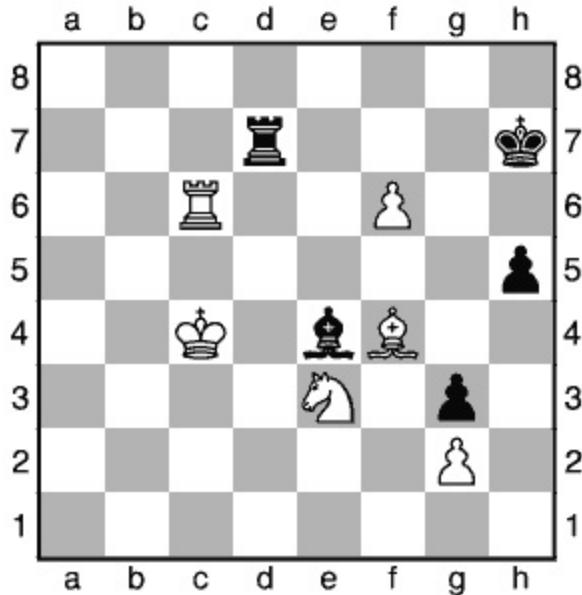
47 Bf4+ Kh7

48 exf6 Nxe4+

49 Kxb3 Rd7

50 Kc4 g3

51 Bxe4 Bxe4



White to move

52 Re6 Bg6

53 Re7+ 1-0

Game 17

L. Portisch – J. Nunn

London (Phillips and Drew/GLC) 1982

Modern Benoni

1 d4 Nf6

2 c4 c5

3 d5 e6

4 Nc3 exd5

5 cxd5 d6

6 e4 g6

7 Nf3 Bg7

8 Be2 0-0

9 0-0 Re8

10 Nd2



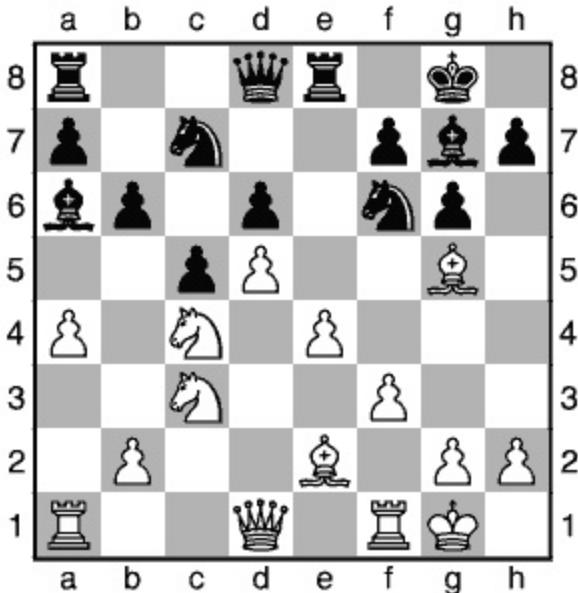
Black to move

So far the moves are the same as in [Game 8](#), and, as explained there, the modern method of treating the Benoni begins with 10...Nbd7. For this game I decided to switch back to the older ...Na6 system, partly in view of Portisch's impressive record of wins against 10...Nbd7 and partly for surprise value. The ...Na6 system was popular in the 1960s, but then fell out of favour without ever really being refuted. It is more solid than 10...Nbd7, but is less dynamic and offers Black fewer winning prospects.

10...Na6

The intention is ...Nc7, followed by ...a6, possibly ...Rb8 and ultimately ...b5. Of course there is more to it than this since White will try to prevent ...b5 or, if this proves impossible, try to block the queenside pawns. When White's pieces are committed to restraining ...b5, Black may then switch plans and take action on the kingside with ...f5. Play often develops on both wings simultaneously, and very complex positions can result.

It is worth examining the typical plans for both sides, as these have a bearing on the course of the game. The main line continues 11 f3 Nc7 12 a4 b6 (it is too early for ...a6; Black must be ready with ...Ba6 in order to capture the knight on c4; otherwise Bf4 will follow and he will be reduced to playing the unacceptably passive move ...Bf8) 13 Nc4 Ba6 14 Bg5 (there is no point in Bf4 now) and then:

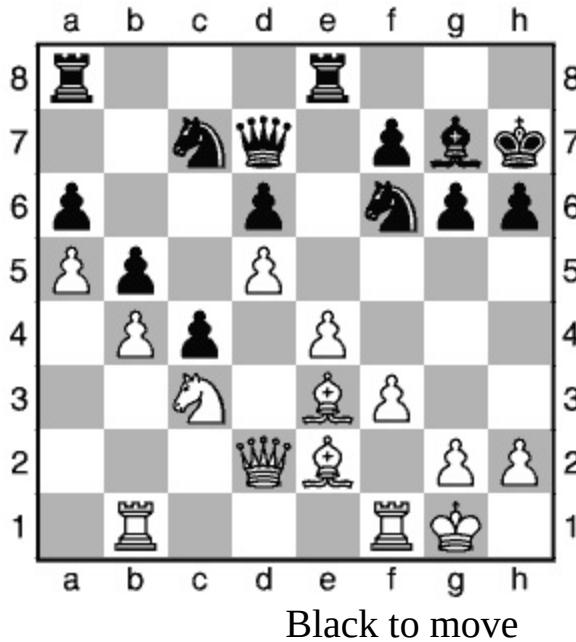


Black to move

1) **14...Qd7 15 Rb1** (this is a key idea for White; he intends to meet ...b5 by b4; if he can induce Black to close the queenside by ...c4, he will have a relatively free hand in the centre and can get on with his own aggressive plan of f4 and e5) 15...Bxc4 16 Bxc4 a6 17 b4 (17 Qd3 Reb8 is pointless) 17...b5 (17...cxb4 18 Rxb4 leaves the b-pawn weak; Black cannot take advantage of the loose knight at c3) 18 axb5 axb5 (18...Nxb5 would be desirable, either exchanging a passive piece or occupying d4, but White wins a pawn by 19 Bxb5 axb5 20 bxc5) 19 Bd3 c4 20 Bc2, and White has reached the kind of position he wants, with his bishop conveniently posted at c2 to support f4 and e5. Evans-Kane, US Championship 1973 continued 20...Ra3 21 Ne2 Ra2 22 Kh1 Na8 23 Bc1! (the bishop is more effective at b2 now) 23...Nb6 24 Nc3 Ra6 25 Bb2 Qb7 26 f4 and White won fairly quickly. Black's play was not particularly impressive, but this is a good example of how White's plans work out against minimal resistance. The two points that made this example especially favourable for White were that Black was unable to exchange knights on b5, and that White's light-squared bishop was able to quickly take up its optimal position on c2.

2) **14...h6** (hoping to show that squares other than g5 are inferior) 15 Be3 (space forbids any examination of alternatives; 15 Bh4 and 15 Bd2 are also possible, but Be3 is the most natural as White would like to play a later Qd2, covering c3 with gain of tempo) 15...Bxc4 16 Bxc4 a6 17 Qd2 Kh7 18 Rab1 Qd7 19 b4 b5 20 Be2 (one of the advantages of ...h6: this bishop has to occupy an inferior square because 20 Bd3 allows 20...Nfxd5 21 Nxd5 Nxd5

22 exd5 Rxe3, etc.) 20...c4 (not 20...cxb4 21 Rxb4 bxa4 22 Nxa4, when b6 is exposed and the a-pawn is fatally weak) 21 a5 (this denies Black use of the a-file, but on the other hand a4-a5 costs a tempo; however, the fact that White has to spend an extra tempo transferring his bishop to c2 operates in Black's favour in any case) reaches a critical position. Black has effectively gained a tempo over line '1' because Bd1-c2 still has to be played before White can advance in the centre. The question is to what extent Black can profit from that. Here are some examples of typical play from this position:



2a) 21...Qe7 22 Bd4 Qf8 23 Bd1 Nd7 24 Bxg7 Qxg7 25 Bc2 Re7 26 Rbe1 Ne8 27 f4, Reshevsky-Garcia, Buenos Aires 1970, and Black's game is too passive.

2b) 21...Ng8! (the best move, preparing ...f5 before the bishop reaches c2; note that this was impossible in line '1') 22 Bd4 (22 Bd1 f5 23 Bc2 fxe4 24 fxe4 Be5 25 Rf3 Qg7 26 Ne2 Nf6 was also level in Øgaard-Nunn, Gjøvik 1983) 22...Bxd4+ 23 Qxd4 f5 24 Bd1 Qg7 25 Qd2 fxe4 26 Nxe4 Re5 27 Nc3 Rae8, Ree-Evans, Amsterdam 1971, with rough equality. In these examples Black managed to break up White's central pawn-mass with a quick ...f5 (this is not possible once the bishop arrives on c2). The exchange of dark-squared bishops is not a problem for Black; indeed, owing to his rather cramped position he may be grateful for the extra breathing space this affords him. As pieces are swapped off and an endgame approaches, the protected passed c-pawn will start to become an important factor.

If we now return to the main game we shall observe the same type of

position emerging, but with one extra move on each side.



White to move

11 Kh1 Rb8

The king move is always useful, given the potential danger on the g1-a7 diagonal, while 11...Rb8 helps to prepare ...b5. Notice that if 11...Nc7 12 a4 b6 13 f3, Black could hardly do better than transpose into the game by 13...Rb8, since 13...a6? would permit 14 Nc4 without the necessary ...Ba6 being available.

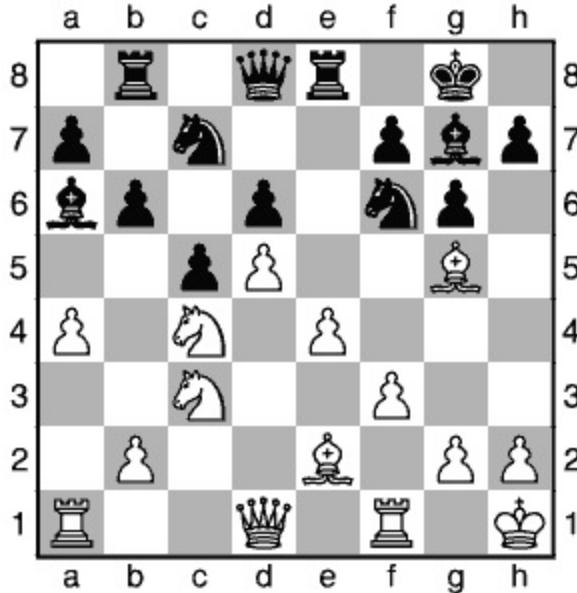
12 f3 Nc7

13 a4 b6

Black decides to stick to the main line. 13...a6 is actually possible here (with ...Rb8 having been played), since 14 Nc4 could be met by 14...b5. Then 15 axb5 axb5 16 Na5, aiming for c6, is the critical line, leading to a double-edged position after 16...Bd7 17 Bf4 b4 18 Na4 Nb5. A positional point worth noting is that 14 a5 is ineffective because it does not genuinely hamper ...b5, for example 14...Bd7 15 Nc4 Bb5 16 Bg5 Bxc4 17 Bxc4 h6 18 Be3 b5 19 axb6 Rxb6, Ree-Portisch, Amsterdam 1981, and the game is level because the b-pawn is as weak as the a-pawn.

14 Nc4 Ba6

15 Bg5



Black to move

This is the same position as in the note to White's 11th move, except that the moves Kh1 and ...Rb8 have been added. Kh1 is generally useful, given the open a7-g1 diagonal and in particular it rules out tricks (with the bishop on e3) based on ...Nfxd5 and ...Rxe3. However, ...Rb8 is perhaps more directly useful in that it helps prepare ...b5, while White's Rb1 and b4 plan has been set back. On his next move, therefore, Portisch adopts a different method, *i.e.* b3 instead of b4. More about that in a moment.

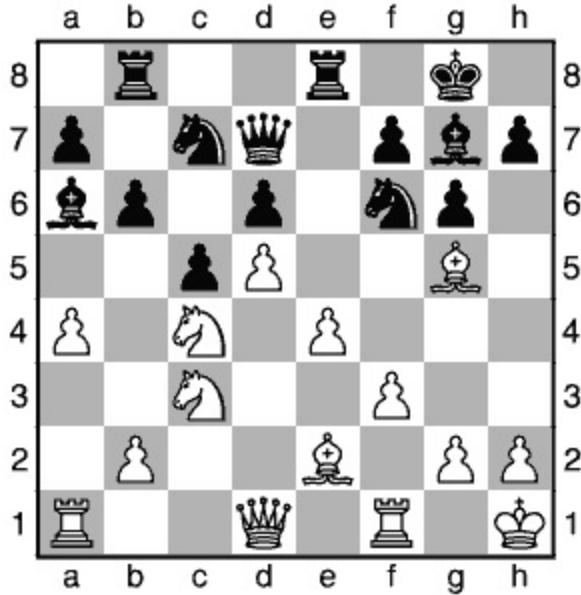
15...Qd7

The best move:

1) **15...Bxc4** 16 Bxc4 a6 is a mistake because of 17 Qd3!, which drives Black into a passive position and prevents ...b5 altogether; for example, 17...Qc8 18 Bf4 Bf8 19 Rab1 Nd7 (or 19...Qb7 20 b4 b5 21 axb5 axb5 22 Nxb5 Nxb5 23 bxc5 and wins) 20 b4, and White stands very well, Browne-Torre, Manila Interzonal 1976.

2) **15...h6** 16 Be3 Bxc4 17 Bxc4 a6 is also inferior, for similar reasons. After 18 Qd3 Qc8 19 Bf4 Rd8 20 Rab1 Bf8 21 b4, Polugaevsky-Bouaziz, Riga Interzonal 1979, Black is in the same miserable state.

15...Qd7 is much better because Black prepares ...a6 and ...b5 before exchanging at c4, thus denying White the Qd3 manoeuvre. Black also avoids 15...h6 16 Be3 Qd7 because a subsequent Qd2 would defend c3 with gain of tempo.



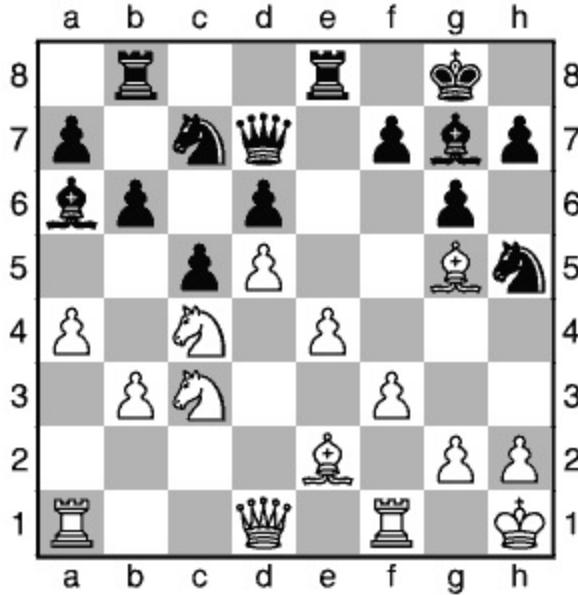
White to move

16 b3

If White had stuck to the Rb1 and b4 plan, play might have gone 16 Rb1 Bxc4 17 Bxc4 a6 18 b4 b5 19 Bd3 (an important point: if 19 axb5 then Black can now play 19...Nxb5 without losing a pawn, and the exchange of his passive knight against either White's bishop or knight equalises comfortably; if 20 Nxb5 axb5 21 Bd3 c4, the blockader of the passed pawn would also have disappeared) 19...c4 20 Bc2 bxa4! (based on the same idea, the exchange of the knight) 21 Bxa4 Nb5 with at least equality for Black, Kane-Enklaar, Skopje-Ohrid 1972.

This is why Portisch now prefers to adopt an alternative plan, intending to exploit Black's delay in playing ...Bxc4 by preparing to retake with the pawn. His centre will then be fortified and his grip on b5 will paralyse the opposing pawn majority. With the strategic balance tipped in White's favour, Black must strike back at once; any hesitation in activating his pieces is likely to lead him into a hopelessly passive position. With Black's queenside neutralised, his counterplay must come via the advance ...f5.

16...Nh5



White to move

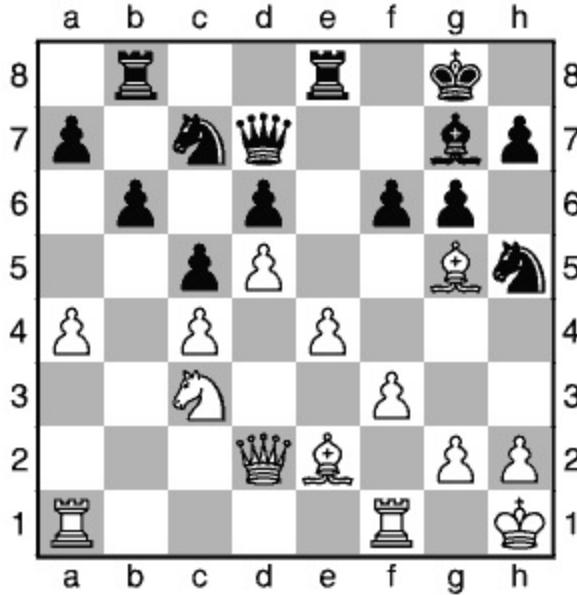
Freeing the f-pawn with gain of tempo.

17 Rc1

With best play on both sides 17 Rc1 and 17 Qd2 seem to be of equal merit; in fact they are likely to transpose. After 17 Qd2 Black can play:

1) 17...Bxc3 (accepting the pawn offer is risky) 18 Qxc3 Nxd5 19 Qd2 (not 19 exd5? Rxе2 20 Bh6 Qe7 21 Rfe1 Bxc4 22 bxc4 Qh4! and it is Black who has the attack) 19...Nc7 (there is no better square) 20 Rad1 Ne6 (both 20...d5 21 exd5 Qxd5 22 Qc1 and 20...Re6 21 Bh6 Rbe8 22 Qb2 are dangerous for Black) 21 Be3 Bxc4 22 Bxc4 Red8 23 f4 and White has strong pressure in return for the pawn.

2) 17...Bxc4 (it is a good idea to eliminate the knight before the complications start) 18 bxc4 f6 (first driving the bishop to what is likely to be an inferior square, whether h4 or e3) and now:



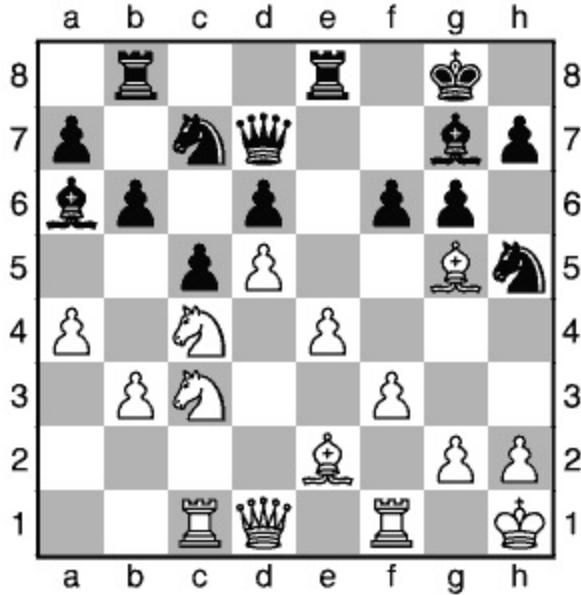
White to move

2a) **19 Bh4 f5** (threatening 20...f4 and ...Be5 with a dark-squared grip on the centre and kingside; White must stop that at any cost) 20 g4 (20 exf5? Bxc3) 20...fxg4 21 fxg4 Be5 (21...Bxc3 22 Qxc3 Rxe4 23 gxh5 Rxh4 24 hxg6 hxg6 25 Qg3 Rh6 26 Rf6 favours White) 22 Rf3 (22 gxh5 is met by 22...Qh3 23 Bf3 Qxh4, since after 24 Rg1? Qf6 Black wins a piece) 22...Ng7 23 Raf1 Rf8 with an unclear position. Black's bishop is very good, but his knights are poorly placed. On the other hand, if all four rooks disappear, as appears likely, White probably cannot achieve much while the knights get themselves organised.

2b) **19 Be3 f5** and now the quiet 20 Rac1 is best (meeting 20...Qe7 by 21 Bg5), transposing into what could have happened in the main game, had White played correctly at move 19. In this case White maintains a small advantage. Note that 20 exf5? is bad because of 20...Qe7 21 Bg1 Qh4! (not 21...Bxc3 22 Qxc3 Qxe2? 23 Rfe1, trapping the queen) 22 Bf2 Qf4! and White unexpectedly loses material.

17...f6

The position after 17 Rc1 arose in some later games. Ivanchuk-Manor, World Junior Championship, Adelaide 1988 continued 17...Bd4 (this appears to be too slow) 18 g4 Ng7 19 Bf4 Bxc4 20 bxc4 Re7 21 Bd3 Rbe8 22 Ne2 Be5 23 Bd2 f5 (now this is too late to give any effective counterplay) 24 exf5 gxf5 25 f4 Bf6 26 g5 Bd4 27 Ng3 Be3 28 Bxe3 Rxe3 29 Qc2 Rf8 30 Rce1 Rxe1 31 Rxe1 with a clear advantage for White.



White to move

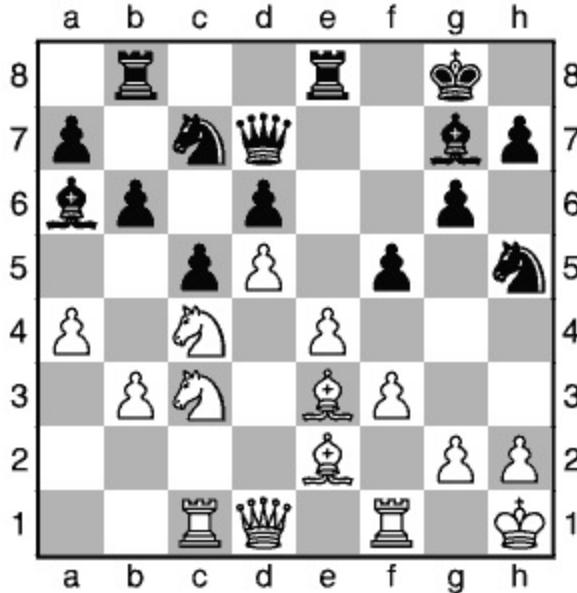
18 Be3

18 Bd2 (not 18 Bh4 because Black could play 18...Nf4) is a reasonable alternative. Although this blocks in the queen, the fact that the bishop is not exposed at e3 means that 18...f5 can be met by 19 exf5 gxf5 and now:

1) **20 f4** Nf6 21 Bf3 Bb7 (the plan of transferring this bishop to a8 looks very odd; instead Black should try to create some queenside play by 21...b5) 22 Be1 Ba8 23 Qd3 Rf8 24 Ne3 Nfe8 25 Ne2 Bb7 26 Bh4 Ba6 27 Qc2 with some advantage for White, Huss-Wahls, Lucerne 1989.

2) **20 Re1** f4 21 Bd3 Bd4 22 Rxe8+ Rxe8 23 Ne2 Bf2 24 Be4 Rf8 25 Be1 Bxe1 26 Qxe1 Qe7 27 Nc3 with a slight advantage to White, Ivanchuk-Wahls, World Junior Championship, Adelaide 1988.

18...f5



White to move

19 g4?!

It is often difficult to judge whether g4 is appropriate in this line.

Sometimes it can be extremely strong and lead to positions where the black knights are denied the use of any good squares. Here, however, it is a bit too optimistic; White's gain of time and space does not in the long run compensate for the weakness of his backward pawn and the blockade point e5. The soundest move is **19 Qd2**, with a typical Benoni position which may be assessed as a little better for White.

The tempting **19 f4** is perhaps also more aggressive than is justified by the position: Black can respond 19...Bxc4 20 bxc4 Nf6 21 e5 dx5 22 d6 (22 fxe5 Rxe5 23 Bf4 Ree8 24 Nb5 Nxb5 25 Bxb8 Nd4 wins for Black) 22...Na6 23 fxe5 Rxe5 24 Bf4 Ree8. Such pawn sacrifices are standard practice in the Benoni but this one is rather unfavourable for White; the enemy knights have good outposts at b4 and e4, and after ...Nb4 the important square d5 will be well covered.

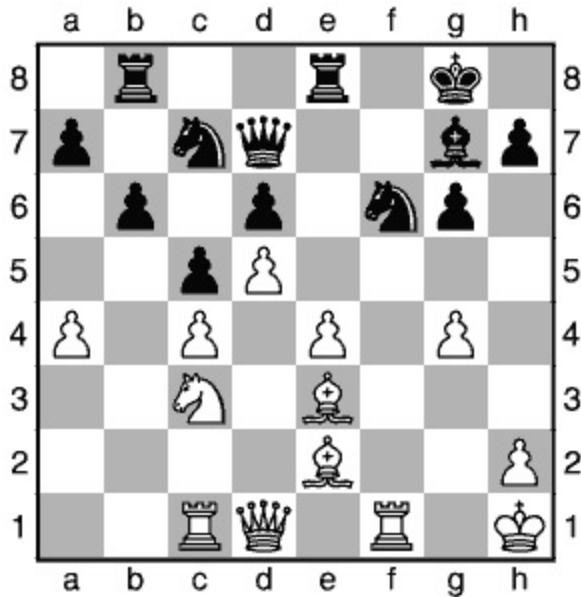
19...Bxc4

20 bxc4

20 Bxc4 fxg4 21 fxg4 Nf6 22 Rf4 (the only way to defend the attacked pawns) 22...Bh6 23 Rxf6 Bxe3 gives Black a large advantage based on his undisputed control of the dark squares. 20 gxh5 is also bad, since 20...Bxe2 21 Qxe2 Bxc3 22 Rxc3 fxe4 wins a pawn for inadequate compensation.

20...fxg4

21 fxg4 Nf6



White to move

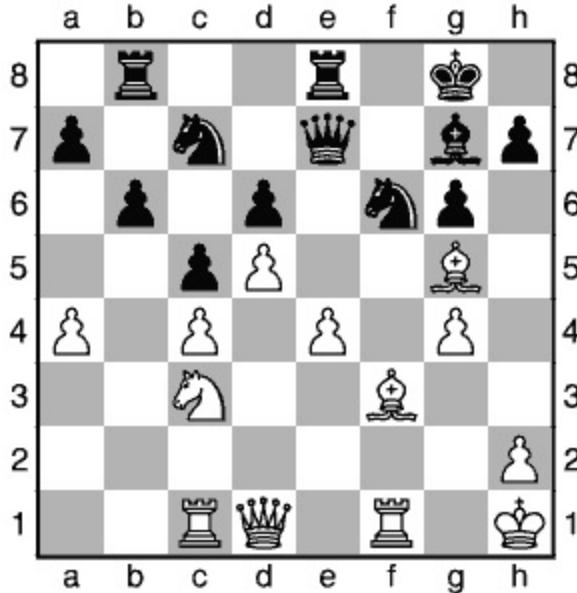
The game now enters a manoeuvring phase in which Black attempts to exploit his long-term positional advantages by occupying e5 with a knight and by finding useful squares for his other minor pieces. White opposes him by more dynamic means, trying to build up a compensating initiative based on his command of the f-file and greater control of space. The deciding factor is whether he can achieve this before Black's grip tightens.

22 Bf3 Qe7

The queen must move to free d7 for the knight, but 22...Qd8 allows 23 Bf4, not only preventing ...Nd7 but also renewing the threat of g5.

23 Bg5

Forestalling Black's manoeuvre ...Nd7-e5. Certainly Black can free his knight by ...h6 and ...g5, but at the cost of creating light-squared weaknesses.



Black to move

23...h6?!

A move typical of my style at the time. Black decides on the direct method of unpinning the knight, but the defect of ...h6 and ...g5 is that it creates a serious weakness at f5. Black no longer has a light-squared bishop to cover this weakness and his knights are also poorly placed to repel an intruder at f5. Thus Black will always have to worry about the possibility of Ne2-g3-f5, or (less seriously) Rf5. Black would have preferred to unpin his knight without creating a new weakness, but 23...Qf7 or 23...Qf8 just runs into a new pin after 24 Bg2. However, 23...Qe5 would have been better. After 24 Qd2 Nd7 Black's queen is short of squares, but White has no way to exploit this, *e.g.* 25 Ne2 (25 Bf4 Qe7 26 Bg5 is met by 26...Bf6, while after other moves Black will follow up with ...Rf8, aiming to exchange rooks and weaken c4) 25...Bf6 26 Bf4 Qe7 27 g5 Bg7 28 Ng3 Ne5 29 Bg2 Rf8 and Black is slightly better. It seems odd to put the queen on the square the knight wants to go to, but it works!

24 Bh4 g5

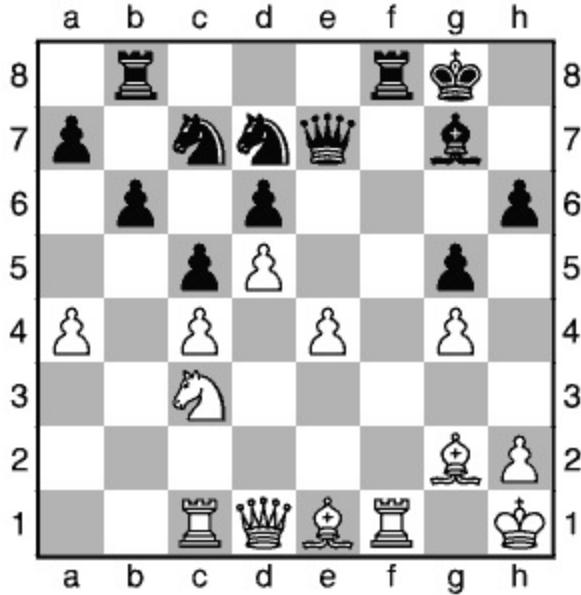
25 Be1

White avoids blocking g3 in anticipation of Ne2-g3-f5.

25...Rf8

By threatening ...Nxd4 Black holds up Ne2 for one more move.

26 Bg2 Nd7



White to move

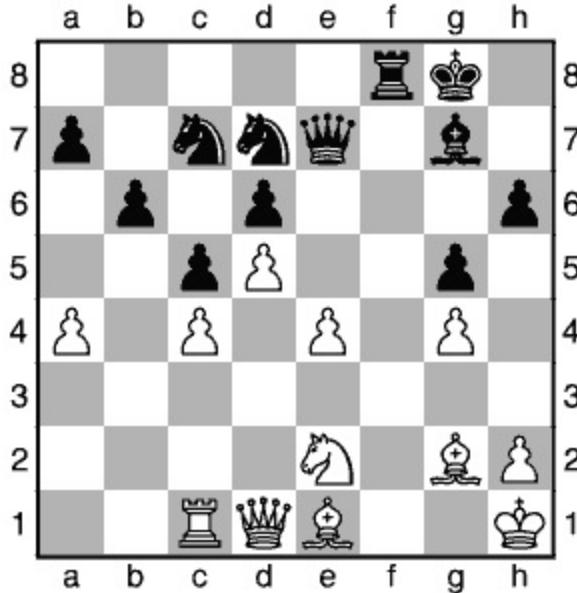
27 Rx_f8+?!

White wants to get his knight on the way to f5 as soon as possible, but it turns out to be not so easy to get there. After the game Portisch suggested that White should make immediate use of f5 by 27 Rf5. The idea is that if Black exchanges, White can recapture with the e-pawn and get rid of his backward pawn. However, after 27...Ne5 (preventing Ne2) the rook on f5 doesn't do very much and Black can just play round it, *e.g.* 28 Qe2 Ng6, with ...Be5 and ...Nf4 to come, or 28 Nb5 Ne8 intending ...Nf6, ...Ng6, ...a6 and eventual occupation of e5 and f4. However, in this line Black's advantage is probably less than in the game.

27...Rx_f8?!

Black reciprocates! This is the sort of natural move one plays without really thinking, but 27...Nx_f8 was better. The point is that although occupation of e5 is a very worthy objective, it doesn't have much effect by itself. It would be better if Black could occupy both e5 and f4, so the best place for a knight is g6, where it also inhibits possible counterplay by h4. After 27...Nx_f8, followed by ...Be5, ...Ng6 and ...Rf8, Black's pieces would be very harmoniously placed.

28 Ne2



Black to move

Threatening Ng3-f5, which Black must prevent at any cost.

28...Be5

Black is even willing to part with his dark-squared bishop in order to eliminate the white knight – after 29 Ng3 Bxg3 30 Bxg3 Ne5 followed by ...Ne8-f6 Black has some advantage. However, White need not be so obliging as to play Ng3 at once. Then the bishop must stay at e5 to be ready to take on g3, so the d7-knight is unable to move to a good square (e5 and f8 are both blocked). This emphasises how much better it would have been to play 27...Nxf8.

29 Qd3 Ne8

The knight on c7 is Black's worst minor piece, so he hastens to improve its position.

30 Bd2 Qg7

A solid choice. It isn't clear if h4 was a threat, but Black decides to put White off it in any case. A second point of this move is that Black may have to play ...Rf7 to prepare ...Nf8-g6 and it is useful to slide the queen across before the second rank is blocked.

31 Rf1

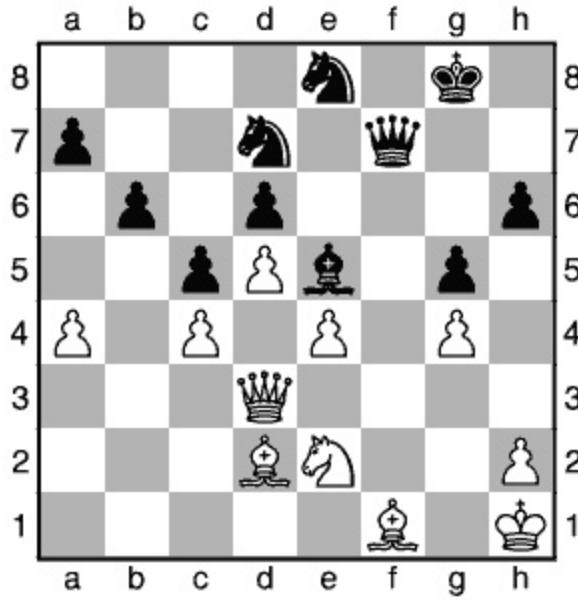
White decides not to wait for ...Rf7 and undertakes active measures himself.

31...Rxf1+

Avoiding Rf5 the second time around!

32 Bxf1 Qf7

Black wants to bring his knight to g6, but the immediate 32...Nf8 33 Qf3, followed by Qf5, gives White counterplay, so Black occupies the open file while leaving f6 clear for the knight at e8.



White to move

33 Kg2?

A serious error. Somewhat short of time White covers the penetration squares on the f-file, but he deprives the e4-pawn of possible support by Bg2 and this costs White a pawn within a few moves.

The best line was 33 Bg2 Qf2 34 Qf3 Qxf3 35 Bxf3, and then:

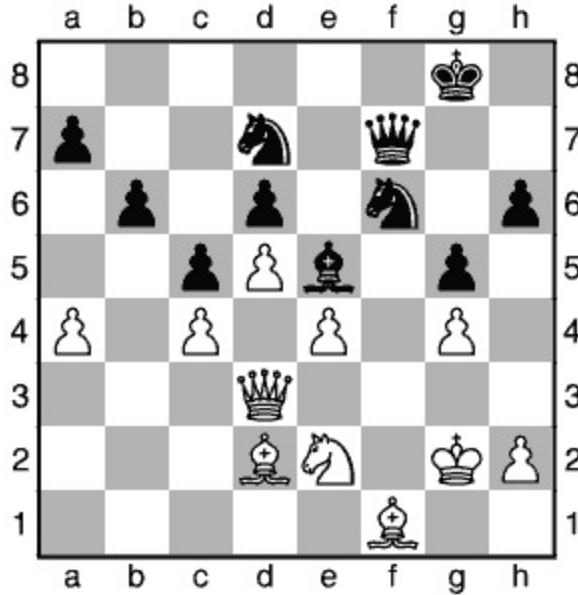
1) 35...Kg7 36 Kg2, followed by Ng3, forcing ...Bxg3, which resembles the game continuation except that White has not lost a pawn.

2) 35...Nef6 36 h3 (36 h4 is another playable line) 36...Bb2 (threatening ...Ne5) 37 Ng3 Ne5 38 Be2 and, with Black's weakness at f5 balancing White's at e5, Black can scarcely claim much advantage.

In either case White should have little difficulty holding the draw.

33...Nef6

Not 33...Bxh2? 34 Qh3 followed by Qxh6.



White to move

34 h3

White must lose either the e-pawn or the g-pawn. He decides to abandon the e-pawn, which is obstructing his pieces.

34...Qg6

35 Nc3

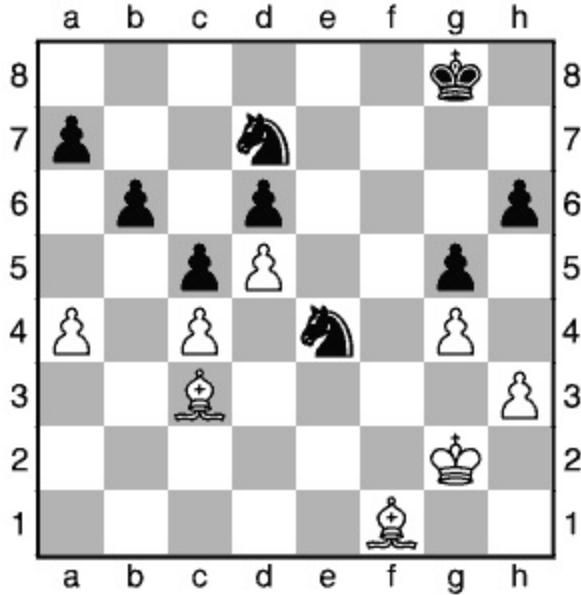
After 35 Kf3 Bd4 36 Qc2 (36 Kg2 transposes) 36...Ne5+ 37 Kg2 Qxe4+ 38 Qxe4 Nxe4 39 Nxd4 cxd4 (or 39...Nxd2) White has a worse ending than in the game.

35...Bxc3

Black cannot benefit by delaying the capture, hoping to make it under more favourable circumstances; if 35...Bd4, for example, intending ...Ne5, then 36 Qf3 threatens Qf5 and Black must take now or lose his chance.

36 Bxc3 Qxe4+

37 Qxe4 Nxe4



White to move

38 Be1

The knights are at least the equal of the bishops because the position remains largely blocked and they have convenient protected squares near the centre from which they can operate (e5, d4, f4). However, progress is by no means easy, for two reasons. Firstly, Black cannot easily create a passed pawn and, secondly, White can defend the narrow gap in the centre of the board and stop Black's king penetrating. Thus Black has to exchange pawns to create more space to manoeuvre, but this opens the position up for the bishops. It is not easy for Black to get the balance correct.

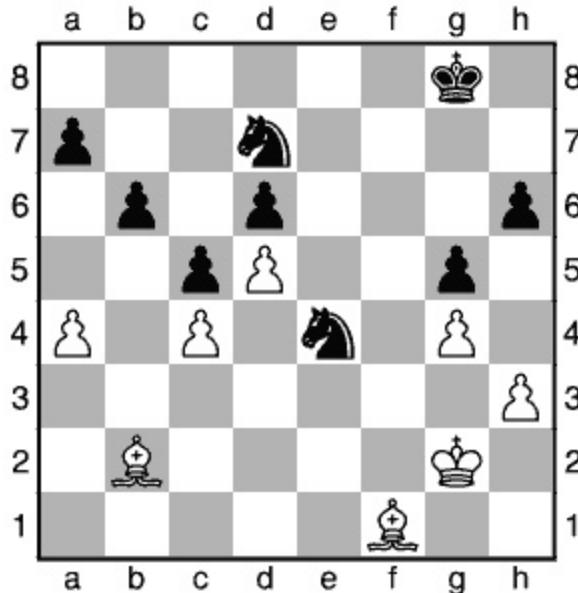
First a few general remarks:

- 1) If Black could exchange a knight for the dark-squared bishop he would win easily by invading the centre with his king via e5 and d4.
- 2) If the other bishop were exchanged for a knight the situation would be quite different: Black could not invade the centre and his own pawns would be highly vulnerable to attack. In that event the result might well be a draw.

3) If no piece exchanges occur for a while, and if Black cannot make progress by infiltrating with his knights, he will eventually have to initiate some kind of queenside action. An obvious plan is ...a6 and ...b5, but this advance must at the very least be thoroughly prepared, or the position will open prematurely and White will create a dangerous passed pawn by cxb5 followed by a5.

- 4) Certain pawn endings resulting from an exchange of all four minor pieces are drawn, even though Black is a pawn up.

Portisch's 38 Be1 is certainly the best and most obvious move. However, to illustrate some typical ideas here is the analysis of 38 Bb2:



Black to move

1) 38...Nd2 39 Bc3 Nxf1? 40 Kxf1 Ne5 41 Bxe5 dxe5 42 Ke2 Kf7 43 Ke3, and, as long as he is careful with his tempo moves, White's protected passed pawn will save him: 43...Ke7 (43...Kf6 44 Kd3 leads nowhere) 44 Kd3 (White waits for ...a6 and ...Kd6 before playing Ke4) 44...Kd6 45 Ke3 a6 46 Ke4 (White to move would now lose) 46...a5 47 Ke3. Now if 47...b5, then 48 cxb5 Kxd5 49 Kd2 draws since White can hold the two pawns and play b6 if the black king attempts to support them – the best Black can achieve is a drawn queen ending.

2) 38...Ne5! 39 Bc1 (otherwise ...Nd2) 39...Nc3 40 Bb2 (or 40 a5 bxa5 41 Bd2 Na4 42 Bxa5 Nb2 and wins) 40...Nxa4 41 Ba1 Kf7 42 Kf2 b5 43 cxb5 Nb6 44 Bg2 Nd3+ and ...Nf4, when Black stays two pawns up.

38...Ne5

39 Be2 Kf7

40 Bf3 Nf6!

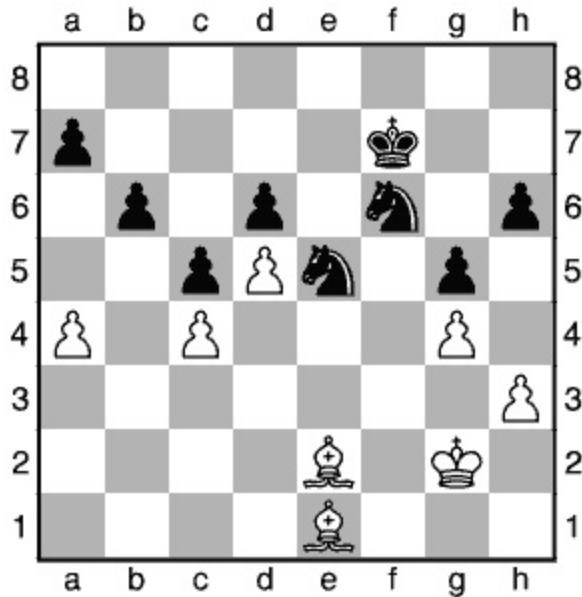
This is where Black must retreat, and not exchange the wrong bishop. After 40...Nxf3? 41 Kxf3 Nf6 42 Bc3 there is simply no suitable winning plan:

1) 42...Nd7 43 Ke4 Nf8 (heading for f4; even without the king on e4 we know that ...Ne5 only leads to a draw) 44 Ba1 Ng6 45 Bb2 Nf4 46 h4, and Black is getting nowhere.

2) 42...Ne8 (trying for ...a6 and ...b5, but this is too dangerous as White's king and bishop become very active and he gets a passed pawn) 43 Ke4 Kg6 44 Bb2 Nc7 45 Ba1 a6 46 Bc3 b5 47 cxb5 axb5 48 Ba5 Ne8 49 axb5 Nf6+ 50 Kd3 Nxd5 51 b6, and Black loses his knight.

Clearly one knight cannot hope to win this ending against the dark-squared bishop under the present circumstances, but if Black had one more tempo, so that his king were on f6, then he would win immediately by ...Nxf3 and ...Ke5.

41 Be2



Black to move

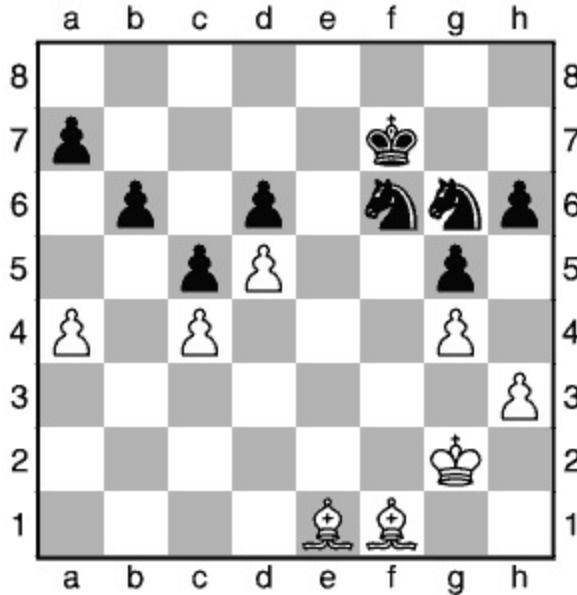
Black cannot make immediate progress so he has to formulate a plan. His main problem is that he is attacking on a very narrow front in the centre. White's pieces are able to cover this area without difficulty, so if Black wants to make progress he has to open things up a bit, but not too much. A massive opening would activate White's two bishops and the inevitable reduction of pawns would leave Black in danger of a 2N vs nothing draw. Ultimately Black wants to make use of his queenside majority, but it is hard to arrange ...a6 and ...b5 without allowing White to make a dangerous outside a-pawn. Black may have to try this in the end, but he should certainly do everything else possible to improve his position before he tries the last resort.

As a first step, I decided to play ...h5. If White ignores this Black can create a new weak pawn at g4, while if White takes on h5, the f5-square is freed for Black's king.

41...Ng6!

By threatening the h-pawn Black forces White to withdraw the bishop to f1, to avoid a worse fate, and that paves the way for the main idea, ...h5.

42 Bf1



Black to move

This is nevertheless the best defence. Other moves allow an invasion by the knights or the king:

- 1) **42 Bf3 Nf4+** 43 Kg3 Nd7 44 Bd1 Ne5 45 Bb3 Ne2+ 46 Kg2 Nd4 47 Ba2 Nc2, and wins by ...Ne3+ or ...Na3.
- 2) **42 Bd1 Nf4+** 43 Kh2 (43 Kg3 Nd3 wins) 43...Nd7 44 Bc3 Ne5 45 Bb3 Ne2 46 Bb2 Nd4 47 Ba2 Ndf3+ followed by 48...Nd2.
- 3) **42 Kf3 Nh4+** 43 Kf2 (if 43 Kg3, then 43...Ne4+ 44 Kh2 Kf6 and the king walks in, while 43 Bxh4 gxh4 44 Kf4 is met by 44...Nh7 45 Kf5 Ng5 46 Bf1 Nf3 and a check at d4 starts the long-winded but inescapable process of driving the king back) 43...Ne4+ 44 Ke3 Ng2+ 45 Kxe4 Nxe1, and wins because the knight slips out.
- 4) **42 Bd2 Ne4** 43 Bc1 (43 Be1 Kf6) 43...Nc3 wins a pawn.
- 5) **42 Bg3 Ne4** 43 Bh2 Ne5 and 44...Nd2.

42...h5

42...Nf4+ 43 Kf3 is pointless (43...Nd7 is met by 44 Ke4 or 44 h4).

43 gxh5

If White defends the pawn he loses rapidly: 43 Kg3 hxg4 (creating a new weakness at g4) 44 hxg4 Ne5 45 Be2 Ne4+ 46 Kg2 Kf6 47 Bf3

(otherwise there is nothing to be done about the threat of ...Ng6 and ...Ke5-d4, but we have now returned to the game position after 40 Bf3 minus the h-pawns and with Black's king one decisive square ahead) 47...Nxf3 48 Kxf3 Ke5 49 Ke3 a5, and White is in zugzwang, despite retaining his 'better' bishop!

White therefore exchanges pawns, and Black spends the next few moves establishing his king at f5.

43...Nxh5

44 Kf3 Ne5+

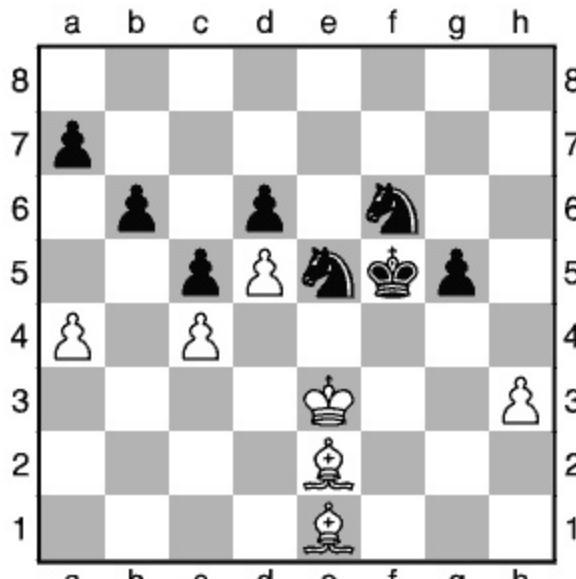
45 Ke4 Kg6

46 Be2

Or 46 h4 Nf6+ 47 Ke3 Kf5 48 hxg5 Nfg4+ 49 Kd2 Nf3+ and Black wins.

46...Nf6+

47 Ke3 Kf5



White to move

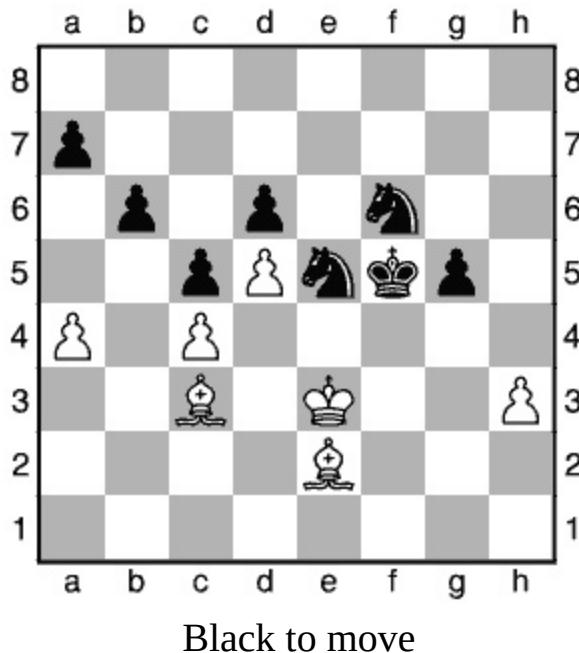
48 Bc3

48 Bd3+ Nxd3 49 Kxd3 Ne4 would produce the same zugzwang again; Black wins after 50 h4 g4 51 h5 g3. Once Black's king has penetrated into the opposing position he can afford to make the hitherto forbidden exchange of knight for light-squared bishop. One point which has to be borne in mind is that the elimination of the h-and g-pawns will not save White. This goes against the normal principle that the defender benefits from reducing the

pawns to one side of the board. This is because two knights against two bishops is something of a special case. In a confined space the knights are just too good; and as the sequel shows, it is well-nigh impossible to stop them gradually working their way in, if White is reduced to a purely defensive role.

After the text-move Black has achieved everything he can as a result of ...h5 and must now look around for a way to achieve further progress. He would like to make the exchange of kingside pawns immediately by 48...g4, hoping for 49 hxg4 Nfxg4+ 50 Kd2 (or 50 Bxg4+ Nxg4+ and wins by 51...Ne5) 50...Ke4, with a decisive penetration, as in the game. Unfortunately he is thwarted by a simple tactical point: 49 Bxe5 dxe5 50 hxg4+.

We can see that White loses under two circumstances: if Black penetrates with his king to e4, or if Black plays ...g4 (which again leads to the entry of Black's king). White can prevent either of these happening, but one small additional idea would be enough to stretch White's defence to the breaking point.



48...a6

The alternative idea is to manoeuvre the f6-knight round to a5. That would certainly be decisive if Black could achieve it, but tactically it is impossible because the bishops start to become active: 48...Ng8 49 Kf2! (to avoid a check on c4 in a moment) 49...Nh6 (if 49...Ke4, then 50 Bd2 is awkward) 50 Bd1 Nxc4 (50...Ke4 51 Bc2+, while after 50...Nhf7 51 Bc2+ Kf6 the white king would settle on e4 and progress would be extremely

difficult) 51 Bc2+ Kf4 52 Bd3 Na5 (not 52...Ne5?? 53 Bd2#) 53 Bd2+ Ke5 54 h4 and the passed pawn will be extremely dangerous in view of the offside knight at a5. Although the ...Ng8 idea doesn't work here, it has an important part to play in subsequent variations.

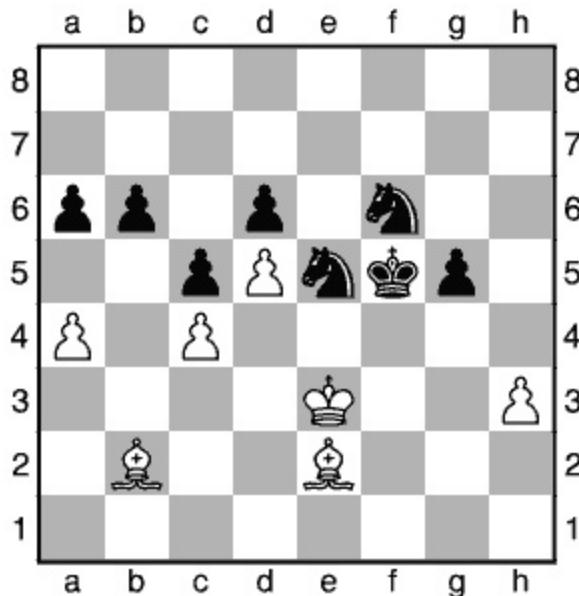
When I played the text-move, I wasn't convinced that ...b5 was really a threat, but it seemed a good idea to make White worry about it in any case! In fact White now made a serious mistake, allowing Black to win without introducing any new elements into the position.

49 Be1?

A tactical error which allows Black to win fairly comfortably because Bxe5 is no longer available in reply to ...g4.

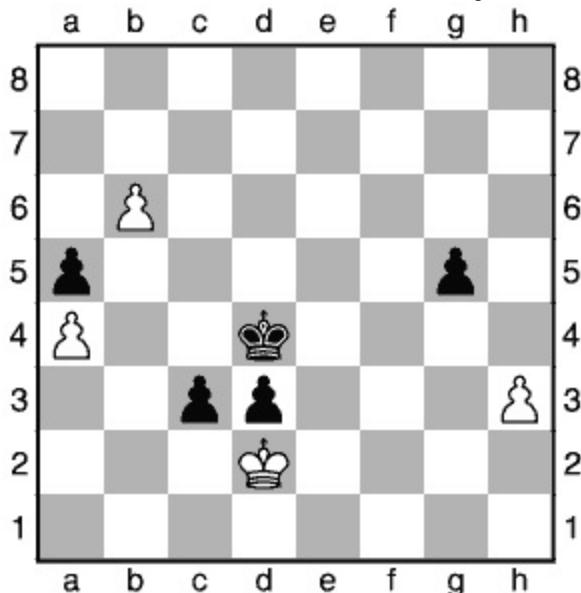
Looking for the most resilient defence, we find, firstly, that any move by the e2-bishop permits either ...Nxc4+ or ...g4 (or 49 Bd3+ Nxd3 50 Kxd3 Ne4 51 Be1 Kf4 and wins). Secondly, the counterattack 49 a5 fails to 49...bxa5 50 Bxa5 g4 51 hxg4+ (after 51 h4 g3 both 52 Bc7 and 52 Be1 lose to 52...Nfg4+ 53 Bxg4 Kxg4) 51...Nfxg4+ 52 Bxg4+ (52 Kd2 Ke4 53 Bc3 {53 Bc7 Kd4 wins at once} 53...Nh2, followed by ...Nhf3+, is similar to positions arising later in the game) 52...Nxg4+ 53 Kd3 Ne5+ 54 Kc3 Ke4 55 Bc7 Nf7 56 Bb8 Ke3 57 Kb3 (otherwise Black plays ...Ng5-e4+) 57...Kd4 58 Bc7 Kd3 and White is in zugzwang, for example 59 Bb8 a5 or 59 Ba5 Ne5. It may seem awkward to defend the d-pawn with the knight, but in the end there is no way in which Black's invasion can be repelled.

That leaves only the toughest defence, 49 Bb2, continuing to cover e5. Black can try:



Black to move

1) 49...**b5** 50 cxb5! (activating the light-squared bishop) 50...Nxd5+ 51 Kf2 (out of range of knight forks) 51...a5 (after 51...axb5 52 Bxb5 the a-pawn is very dangerous) 52 Bc1 (preventing 52...Ke4) 52...Nb6 (52...c4 53 Ke1 is also not very clear) 53 Bd2 Nbc4 (53...Nxa4 54 Bxa5, followed by b6, would be worse) 54 Bxc4 Nxc4 55 Ke2 d5 56 Kd3 runs into another drawn pawn ending if Black exchanges (again because of White's protected passed pawn), and if he keeps the pieces on he also faces insoluble problems, despite his united passed pawns, because of the weaknesses at a5 and g5. The analysis of the pawn ending runs 56...Nxd2 57 Kxd2 Ke5 58 Kd3 d4 59 Kc4 Kd6 60 Kd3 Kd5 61 Kd2 c4 62 Kc2 d3+ (62...c3 63 Kd3 Kc5 64 Kc2 Kc4 65 b6 would even lose, since Black dare not play his king to b3) 63 Kc3 Kc5 64 Kd2 Kd4 65 b6 c3+ and now White has only one drawing move:



White to move

1a) 66 **Ke1?** Ke3 67 Kd1 d2 and wins.

1b) 66 **Kc1?** Ke3 67 b7 d2+ 68 Kc2 Ke2 69 b8Q d1Q+ 70 Kxc3 Qc1+ 71 Kd4 Qf4+ forcing a won king and pawn ending.

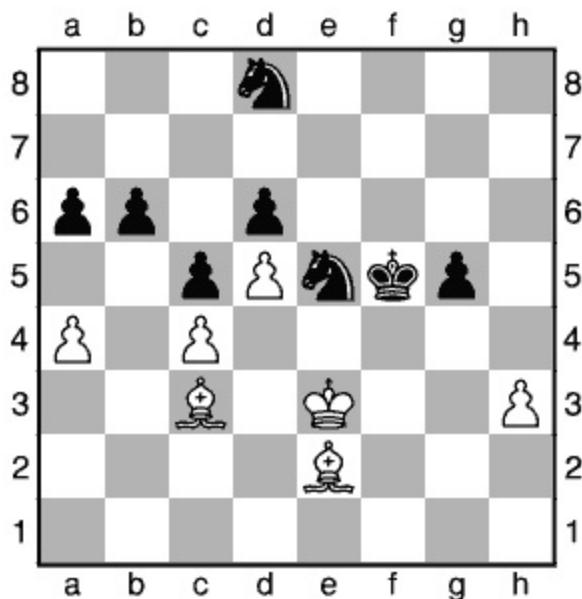
1c) 66 **Kd1!** Ke3 67 b7 c2+ 68 Kc1 Ke2 69 b8Q d2+ 70 Kxc2 d1Q+ 71 Kb2 and this time the queen ending is a draw.

2) 49...**Ng8** (now this is the correct idea; again the knight is heading for a5, but under more favourable circumstances owing to the slightly inferior position of the dark-squared bishop) and now:

2a) 50 **Kf2** (this is the defence which was effective against 48...Ng8) 50...Ke4 51 Bc1 (or 51 Bc3 Nh6 52 Bd2 Nh7 {threatening ...Kd4} 53 Bc3

Nd8 and the knight is well on its way to a5) 51...Nd3+ 52 Bxd3+ (the dark-squared bishop was on d2 before and so White did not have to take) 52...Kxd3 53 Bxg5 Kxc4 54 h4 b5 55 axb5 axb5 56 h5 b4 57 h6 Nxh6 58 Bxh6 Kd3 59 Ke1 b3 60 Bg7 Kc2 and Black wins.

2b) **50 Bc3** (continuing to play a waiting game) 50...Nh6 51 Bb2 (51 a5 bxa5 52 Bxa5 g4 wins as before; 51 Kf2 Ke4 52 Bd2 Nhf7 transposes to line ‘2a’) 51...Nhf7 52 Bc3 Nd8 and now:



White to move

2b1) **53 Bb2** (doing nothing to counter Black’s plan) 53...Nb7 54 Bc3 Na5 55 Bxa5 bxa5 56 Bf1 g4 57 hxg4+ (57 h4 g3 58 Be2 {58 h5 Kg5 59 Be2 Kh6 is zugzwang} 58...Nd7 59 Kf3 Nb6 60 Kxg3 Nxa4 and wins) 57...Nxc4+ 58 Kd3 Kf4 59 Be2 Ne5+ 60 Kc3 Ke3 61 Bh5 Nd7 62 Bg4 Nf6 63 Bc8 Ne4+ 64 Kc2 Kd4 65 Bxa6 Ng3 66 Bb5 Nf1 67 Ba6 Ne3+ 68 Kb3 Kd3 69 Bc8 Nf1 70 Ba6 Nd2+ 71 Kb2 Kd4 and White’s pawns fall one by one.

2b2) **53 a5** (obstructing Black’s plan, but giving him a passed a-pawn) 53...bxa5 54 Bxa5 Nb7, and now White has the choice between passive defence (55 Bc3) and sharper play (55 Bc7), which gives us:

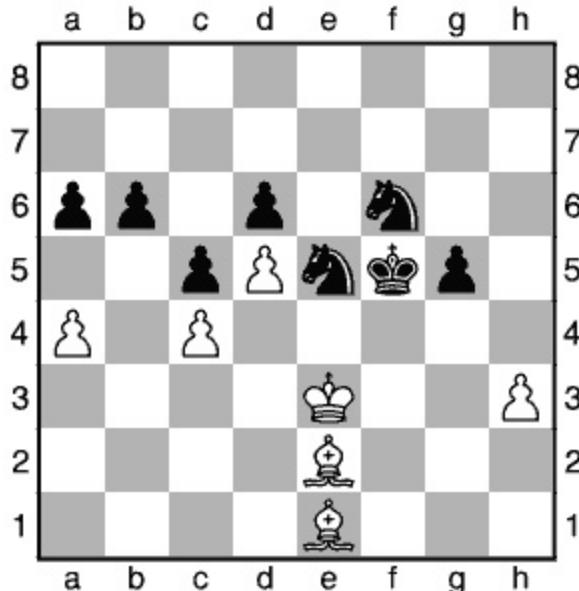
2b21) **55 Bc3** a5 56 Kd2 (the king has to stop the a-pawn; if 56 Bb2, then 56...a4 and ...Na5) 56...Ke4 57 Bf1 a4 58 Be2 Nf3+ 59 Kc2 Ke3 60 Bf1 (60 Bd1 Ne5, or 60 Bxf3 Kxf3 61 Bf6 g4 62 hxg4 Kxg4 63 Kb2 Kf5 64 Be7 Ke4 and Black wins in both cases) 60...Kf2 61 Bd3 Ne1+ 62 Kd2 Nxd3 63 Kxd3 a3 64 Kc2 Kg3 65 Bf6 Kxh3 66 Bxg5 Kg4 67 Be7 Kf4 68 Kb3 Ke5 69

Kxa3 Kd4 and Black wins both the white pawns.

2b22) 55 Bc7 (leads to a curious position in which the b7-knight and c7-bishop are mutually immobilised) 55...a5 56 Kd2 Ke4 57 Kc3 (otherwise ...Kd4) 57...a4 58 Bd1 a3 59 Bb3 (if 59 Ba4, heading for c6, then 59...Nxc4) 59...Ke3 60 Bb6 Nd3 61 Bc7 a2! (the point of this pawn sacrifice is to gain a tempo by making the light-squared bishop take three moves instead of two to attack the b7-knight) 62 Bxa2 Nf4 63 Bb1 Nxh3 64 Bf5 Nf2 65 Bc8 g4 66 Bxb7 g3 and wins.

This analysis is difficult and complicated, but the impression remains that against a perfect defence Black has just enough to win.

Now we return to the position after 49 Be1?:



Black to move

49...g4!

Now Black has a much easier time.

50 hxg4+

50 h4 is no better: 50...Nh5 51 Bf1 (aiming to meet 51...g3 by 52 Bh3+; Black wins after 51 Bc3 Nf4 52 Bxe5 {52 Bf1 g3} 52...Kxe5 53 Bxg4 Ng2+) 51...Nf3 52 Bd3+ Ke5 53 Bc3+ (53 Bf2 Nd4 and 54...g3) 53...Nd4 54 Bg6 Nf4 55 h5 g3 56 Bb2 Nxg6 57 hxg6 Kf6 and wins.

50...Nfxg4+

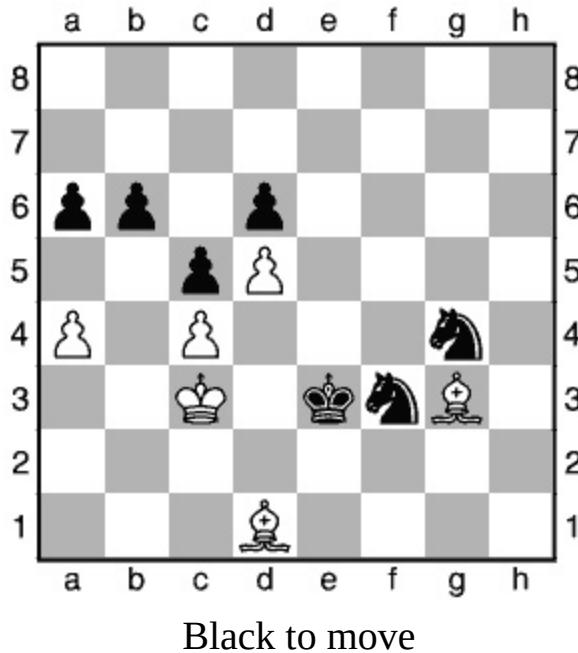
51 Kd2 Ke4

52 Kc3 Ke3

53 Bd1 Nf3

54 Bg3

Even the exchange of the light-squared bishop does not save White once Black's king has advanced so far: 54 Bxf3 Kxf3 55 Bh4 Ke2 56 Bd8 (56 Be7 Nf2) 56...Nf2 57 Bxb6 Ne4+ 58 Kc2 Ke3 59 Ba5 Kd4 60 Kb3 Kd3, followed by 61...Nd2+.



Black to move

54...Nf2

55 Bc2

Or 55 Bxf2+ Kxf2 56 Bxf3 Kxf3 57 Kd3 a5 and wins.

55...Ng5

56 Kb2 Nge4

57 Bh4 Kd4

58 Bb3 Nd3+

59 Ka3 Ne5

0-1

Then it was time for the Zonal play-off in Leiden, a double-round event between the four players mentioned earlier. I started in the worst possible way by losing to Mestel in the first round. Three draws followed, and when I fell into a lost position against Van der Wiel in the penultimate round, my chances appeared to be gone. However, he missed a number of forced wins, and then lost on time in a position which was probably still winning. This meant that I only needed a draw in the last round against Stean, a result

which I achieved without difficulty. A cross-table of this event is not necessary: there were three decisive games in which Mestel beat me, I beat Van der Wiel and Van der Wiel beat Mestel. Thus all the players ended on 50% and the situation was resolved by tie-break in the Final group of the Marbella Zonal. The effect of this was to eliminate Stean.

In July, England had to play Iceland in a qualification group for the Final of the European Team Championship. We had reached the previous two Finals, and were hoping to qualify again. This match was to take place in Teesside (in the north-east of England), the only problem being that British Rail were on strike. Murray Chandler offered to drive Michael Stean and myself from London to Teesside in his ‘new’ car. This turned out to be slightly misleading: the car was only new in terms of Murray’s ownership, otherwise one might have described it as ‘decrepit’. Moreover, Murray was not able to drive, so Hilary Thomas took the wheel. We were less than 30 miles from London when some odd noises and a fountain of steam from the radiator forced a halt. After waiting several hours for assistance, a representative of a motoring organisation declared the car a wreck and we abandoned it in a Milton Keynes car park. A hired car eventually brought us to Teesside a little before midnight, just when David Anderton was wondering if he would have to play himself.

The result of the double-round match was surprisingly close: 8½-7½ to England. Stean lost both his games to Petursson, while Chandler scored 1/2. I seemed least affected by the frustrating journey and beat Fridrik Olafsson 2-0. As an aside, this was the first time I had played on board one for England with anything like a full team (only Miles was missing).

The following game is from the second round.

Game 18

J. Nunn – F. Olafsson

England vs Iceland match, Teesside 1982

Bishop’s Opening

1 e4 e5

2 Bc4 Nf6

3 d3 Nc6

3...d5 is too dangerous, unless Black wishes to play a rather questionable gambit, because the e-pawn gets into trouble: 4 exd5 Nxd5 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 0-0

and the subsequent Re1 will be embarrassing.

4 Nf3

After 4 Nc3 White would still retain the option of f4 so Black would be well advised to play 4...Bb4, meeting 5 f4 by 5...d5.

4...Bc5

This position can arise via other move-orders, for example 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 d3 Bc5 or 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 d3 Nf6. The advantage of playing Bc4 at move two is that the Petroff Defence is prevented. At the time this game was played, the Petroff was proving an effective equalising weapon for Black. Later on Karpov and others found some new ideas for White against the Petroff and these days it is far less popular. Round about 1982 I played the system with d3 regularly and although I had a few successes with it, beating Korchnoi and Hort in addition to Olafsson, players soon found better lines for Black and after I lost to Korchnoi at Wijk aan Zee 1983 I virtually gave the line up. Black can also play 4...Be7, when the position begins to resemble a Ruy Lopez, but Korchnoi always preferred the more active development at c5, and drew twice against Karpov in their 1981 World Championship match using this plan. Olafsson follows suit.

5 0-0 d6

6 c3



Black to move

The outline of White's plan is revealed: he will continue with Re1 and

Nbd2-f1-g3, as in the Ruy Lopez, and eventually d4, which could prove all the more effective with his development completed.

6...Qe7?!

The placing of the black queen at e7 has many negative features: White will soon play Re1 and the opposition of queen and rook will prove awkward if the centre opens up. In particular it is virtually impossible for Black to play ...d5 in view of exd5 followed by d4 exploiting the e-file pin. Moreover, White intends Nbd2-f1-g3 (as in the Ruy Lopez) and a possible Nf5 would then hit the queen.

So what should Black do? 6...Bg4 would now be met by 7 Nbd2, followed by Re1 and Nf1, as in the game. Thereafter White's natural continuation of Ng3 and h3 would automatically break the pin. If Black plays for ...d5, say by 6...Bg4 7 Nbd2 0-0 8 h3 Bh5 9 Re1 d5, then White may continue 10 exd5 Nxd5 11 Ne4 Bb6 12 Ng3 winning the e-pawn or gaining the two bishops.

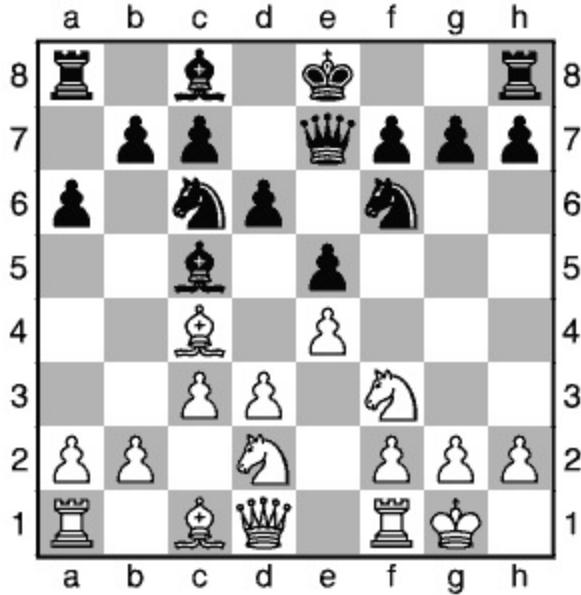
Korchnoi played 6...0-0 7 Nbd2 a6 8 Bb3 Ba7 and this is probably best. The bishop will probably have to retreat to a7 after White's d4 in any case, so Black gets it over with straight away and waits to see how White develops before deciding where his other pieces are going.

7 Nbd2

In previous games I had some success with the plan of combining White's other manoeuvres with a queenside pawn advance (by b4 and a4). However, such a flank advance must be dubious if it is unsupported by a strong position in the centre, and by 1982 I had abandoned this plan. One example is 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 c3 Nf6 5 d3 d6 6 b4 Bb6 7 a4 a6 8 0-0 0-0 9 Nbd2 Ne7 10 Bb3 Ng6 11 Nc4 Ba7 12 h3 h6 13 Re1 Bd7, Nunn-R.Byrne, Baden 1980, and Black has comfortable equality.

7...a6

Black would like to exchange his c6-knight for the c4-bishop, but at the moment 7...Na5? 8 Bb5+ c6 9 Ba4 b5 10 Bc2 Bb6 11 b4 Nb7 12 a4 gives White a clear advantage because Black's undefended rook at a8 prevents the natural sequence ...a6; axb5 axb5.



White to move

8 Bb3

8...Na5 was now a threat, so the bishop must retreat.

8...0-0

9 Re1 Be6

9...Ng4 10 Re2 has no point unless Black can immediately generate play by ...f5. If this is impossible White plays h3 and the knight must retreat with loss of time.

10 Nf1

White would like to play Bc2 and Nf1, when the threat of d4-d5 will cause Black to waste more time with his bishops, but which move should come first? I was nervous about playing 10 Bc2 because of the weakness of f2, and analysis shows that Black can indeed exploit this by 10...Ng4! 11 Re2 Bxf2+! 12 Rxf2 Ne3 13 Qe2 Nxc2 14 Rb1 Bxa2 15 b3 Bxb1 16 Nxb1 Na1 17 Qa2 Qe6 18 Nbd2 Nxb3 and Black has a significant material advantage. In fact I overlooked this combination both during the game and when writing *Secrets of Grandmaster Play* – this is a case in which intuition proved more accurate than calculation!

10...Ba7

Black does not equalise after 10...Bxb3 11 Qxb3 Rab8 (11...Qd7 12 Bg5 Ng4 13 Re2 followed by h3 also preserves an edge, as does 11...Bb6 12 Be3) 12 Be3 (threatening 13 d4) 12...Bxe3 13 Nxe3, e.g. 13...Qe6 14 Nd5 threatening both Nxc7 and Ng5, or 13...Nd8 (to play ...c6) 14 d4 exd4 15 Nd5 Nxd5 16 exd5 followed by Nxd4 and the d8-knight is immobilised.

11 Bc2



Black to move

In this position White can claim a slight advantage because it is much easier for him to organise d4 than for Black to arrange any corresponding pawn advance. The e-file line-up inhibits any idea of ...d5, and ...f5 will need to be extensively prepared. The lack of a clear-cut plan for Black not only gives White objectively the better chances, it also presents Black with greater practical problems.

11...Kh8

Black decides to aim for ...f5, and this move is part of his build-up; the idea is ...Ng8, ...g6 and ...f5. If he plays 11...h6 to stop 12 Bg5 then ...g6 and ...f5 would become more difficult to arrange.

12 Ng3

12 Bg5 would also have been a troublesome move to meet. Amongst other things it makes plain the drawback of having the bishop at a7 instead of e7 or g7. The advantage of a7 lies in its aggressive aspect, but that is only useful if Black can take the initiative. After 12 Bg5 Black can try: 1) **12...h6** 13 Bh4 g5 14 Bg3 Rg8 (14...Nh5? loses material after 15 Nxe5 Nxc3 16 Nxc6, while 14...Bg4 15 Ne3 exposes the weakness at f5) 15 d4 (White takes action before Black starts his kingside operation by ...h5) 15...g4 16 Nh4 (White could also win a pawn by 16 dx5 gxf3 17 exf6, although Black obtains some compensation) 16...exd4 17 Qd2 Qf8 18 Bf4 dxc3 19 bxc3 h5 20 Ng3 with a very dangerous attack for the sacrificed pawn.

2) 12...Qd7 13 Bxf6 gxf6 is bad because White has time to consolidate his grip on the kingside, for example 14 Ng3 Rg8 (14...f5 15 exf5 Bxf5 16 Nxf5 Qxf5 17 d4 is very good for White) 15 Nh4 and Black cannot contest f5 with 15...Ne7 because of 16 Nh5.

12...Qd7



White to move

This is designed to take the sting out of Bg5.

13 d4?

White finally throws away the advantage he was given at move six. His plan in playing an early d3 was to continue with d4 after having developed his pieces, but the correct timing of this move is often difficult. Here White plays it too soon. It was much more effective to play **13 h3**, so that a subsequent d4 will threaten not only a fork, but also to trap the e6-bishop. I decided against it for fear of 13...Bxh3 14 gxh3 Qxh3 but this sacrifice isn't correct: 15 Be3 (15 d4? exd4 16 cxd4 Ng4, threatening both 17...Nxd4 and 17...Nce5, is more awkward for White) 15...Bxe3 16 Rxe3 Ng4 17 Re2! (17 Qf1 Qxf1+ 18 Nxf1 Nxe3 19 Nxe3 Ne7 is not better for White; although there are no open files for the black rooks, equally there are no secure outposts for the white knights) with the threat of Qf1. Black can only prevent this by sacrificing more material, e.g. 17...f5 18 exf5 e4 19 dxe4 Nce5, but 20 Nxe5 Qh2+ 21 Kf1 dxe5 22 Rd2, followed by Qf3, defends.

The defect with the text-move is that Black pins the g4-knight and White is eventually obliged to play h3 in any case, but under less favourable

circumstances.

13...Bg4

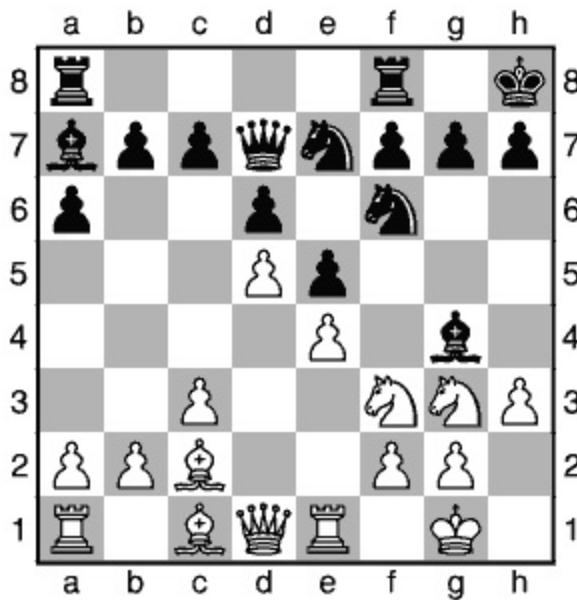
After 13...exd4 14 cxd4 Bg4 15 Be3 Bxf3 16 gxf3 White would quite happily accept the doubled pawn because he gains so many advantages in return: the two bishops, a strong and mobile centre, the g-file and the potentially open diagonal c2-h7. The simple plan of Kh1, Rg1 and Nf5 is already quite ominous for Black – note that Black will be reluctant to play ...g6 when his dark-squared bishop is far away on a7.

14 d5

An unfortunate necessity. The line 14 Be3 Bxf3 15 gxf3 is quite different from that given in the last note, because Black has not surrendered the centre by ...exd4. This means that the c2-h7 diagonal cannot be opened to help in the attack, and the closed nature of the position restricts White's bishops. After 15...Qh3, followed by ...Ne7-g6, Black would have a comfortable position.

14...Ne7

15 h3



Black to move

15...Bxf3

Black has a draw by sacrificing his bishop because this time he can use an extra piece in the attack (the knight at e7). The analysis runs as follows: 15...Bxh3 16 gxh3 Qxh3 17 Be3 (after 17 Nh1 Ng4 White cannot adequately cope with the two threats of ...Bxf2+ and ...Ng6-h4) 17...Bxe3 18 Rxe3 Ng4

19 Rd3 (19 Qf1 Qxf1+ 20 Nxf1 Nxe3 21 Nxe3 again promises no advantage) 19...Ng6 20 Qf1 Qh6, and White is in no position to avert the threat of ...Nf4 followed by ...Nh3+ and perpetual check. The only try is the ingenious 21 Nf5 Qh5 22 N3h4, hoping for 22...Nxh4? 23 Qh3 g5 24 Bd1, but Black has 22...Nf4! 23 f3 (if the rook moves, then 23...g6) 23...Nxd3 24 Bxd3 Nh6, and the exchange of a pair of knights leaves him, if anything, with the better of it in view of White's feeble bishop.

The text-move also leads to approximate equality with correct play.

16 Qxf3 Nfg8

White has the two bishops, but at present they don't count for much since neither shows any great signs of activity. Black's bishop at a7 is a major asset, since it is far better placed there than on e7 (Ruy Lopez) or g7 (King's Indian). Black's plan is to generate counterplay by ...f5, but he must take care with this move for two reasons: firstly, any opening of the position will tend to activate the two bishops and, secondly, the a7-bishop can't help if Black's king should become exposed. White, for his part, must make sure that if Black plays ...f5 he has enough minor pieces on that square to force Black to take back with the pawn (possibly after preliminary exchanges), as if Black can keep taking with pieces White will come unstuck at f2. White's ambition is to set up a formation with pawns on b4 and c4 and a bishop on b2 or c3. The pressure on e5 will make c4-c5 possible (Black can't play ...dxc5, because Bxe5 will murder Black's king) and there will be lurking tactics on the long dark diagonal. However, with correct play by Black it isn't possible for White to achieve this formation.

17 Bd2

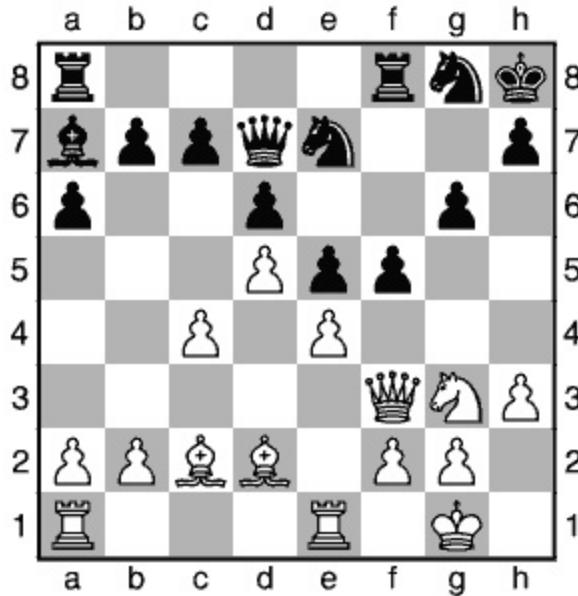
17 c4 is no better. 18 b4 is not a threat because of 18...a5, when 19 a3 is impossible due to 19...axb4 20 axb4 Bxf2+. Moreover, Black can play 17...Bd4.

17...g6

18 c4 f5?

This is the real mistake, which allows White to realise his ambitions. There is a natural tendency to rush forward with counterplay, but in this case Black would have done better to concentrate on interfering with White's queenside plans before undertaking anything on the kingside. 18...Bd4! was correct, and after 19 Rab1 (19 Be3 c5 20 dxc6 Nxc6 causes no problems) Black has a choice. 19...a5 is the conservative option, and if 20 Ne2 then 20...Bc5 and knight must think about returning because ...f5 is threatened.

The speculative line is 19...c5. After 20 Ne2 f5 21 Nxd4 cxd4 White has two bishops against two knights, but Black obtains a central pawn mass. In both cases the position is roughly level.



White to move

19 exf5 Nxf5

19...gxf5 is worse as the knights at e7 and g8 can hardly move without leaving f5 undefended.

20 Nxf5 gxf5

Black cannot arrange to take with a piece by playing 20...Ne7 because 21 Bh6 wins material (21...Rf7 22 Bg7+ or 21...Nxf5 22 Bxf8 Rxf8 23 g4).

21 Bc3

This is what White has been playing for: ...Bd4 is prevented, sacrifices on e5 are in the air and the a7-bishop can be buried by b4 and c5.

21...Rae8

22 b4 Ne7



White to move

23 h4!

Black's knight was heading for g6, to lend sufficient support to e5 and so to prevent White's c5 (because ...dxc5 would become possible). The h-pawn is ready to dislodge the knight and in many lines the pawn itself is a powerful attacking weapon. The one negative feature of playing h4 is that a black rook might turn up at g4 one day, but this factor never becomes important.

23...Rg8

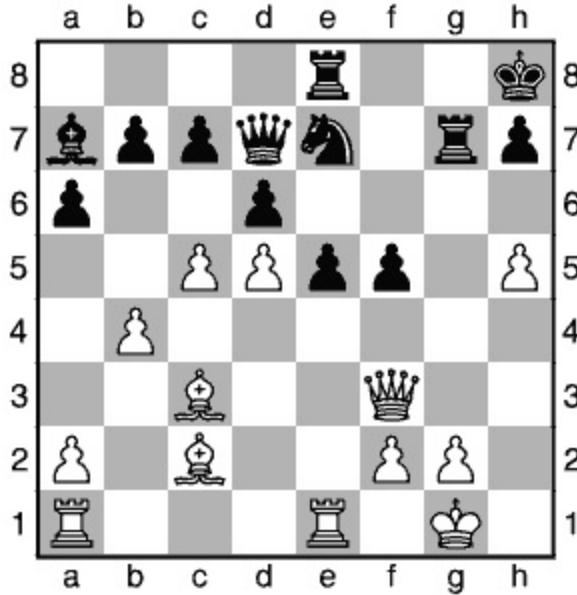
Black's only hope of any play is to occupy the g-file at once. If he does nothing, White can make progress in several ways, for instance by c5, a queen move and then f4.

24 h5 Rg7

The rooks must first be doubled at g7 and g8. The following variation is a foretaste of what is looming on the long diagonal: 24...Rg4? 25 c5 Reg8 26 Rxe5! Rxg2+ 27 Kh1 dxe5 28 Bxe5+ R2g7 29 h6 and wins.

25 c5

25 h6 Rg6 would be premature.



Black to move

25...Reg8

Black cannot afford to waste time; against slow play, such as 25...Kg8 or 25...Rf8, White has 26 Rad1, then Bb3, followed by either the sacrifice Rxe5 or a queen move preparing f4.

The alternative 25...f4 (threatening 26...Qg4) is met by 26 h6 Rf7 (26...Rg4? 27 Ba4! wins material) 27 Rad1 Ng6 28 Qh5 Rf6 (28...Nf8 29 Ba4), and although a clear win is not apparent, Black has a miserable, passive position and a very bad bishop. White's best plan would seem to be Be4; then c6 if an opportunity arises, but otherwise Rd3 and g3, working to open more lines on the kingside.

26 g3

Not yet 26 Rxe5? dx5 27 Bxe5 h6, nor can White permit exchanges at g2, because the black queen would rapidly infiltrate via g4 or b5 and take advantage of the exposed king and bishops.

26...h6

Black decides to counter the growing menace along the long diagonal by creating a flight square for his king.

The other idea is the active defence 26...f4, obliging White to sacrifice at once. In the analysis which follows the main point of interest is the crushing power that the bishops develop, once the central barricades are broken down. In addition, the newly-opened diagonal c2-h7 works against Black: 26...f4 27 Rxe5 (27 h6? Rxg3+) 27...dx5 28 Bxe5 (threatening 29 h6) 28...Qh3 (28...h6 29 Qd3, or 28...Nf5 29 Qxf4 Rf8 30 h6 and White wins in both

cases) 29 Re1! (29 Qxf4? Qxh5 is bad after 30 Kg2 Ng6 or 30 Re1 Nxd5 31 Qd4 c6 32 Kg2 Bb8!) and now:



Black to move

1) 29...Qh4 (countering the threat of 30 Qxf4) 30 Bc3! and Black has no answer to the many threats, such as 31 h6 Qxh6 32 Rxe7 or 31 Rxe7 Qxe7 32 Qd3.

2) 29...fxg3 30 fxg3 (threatening Bc3, as in line '1') with the branch:

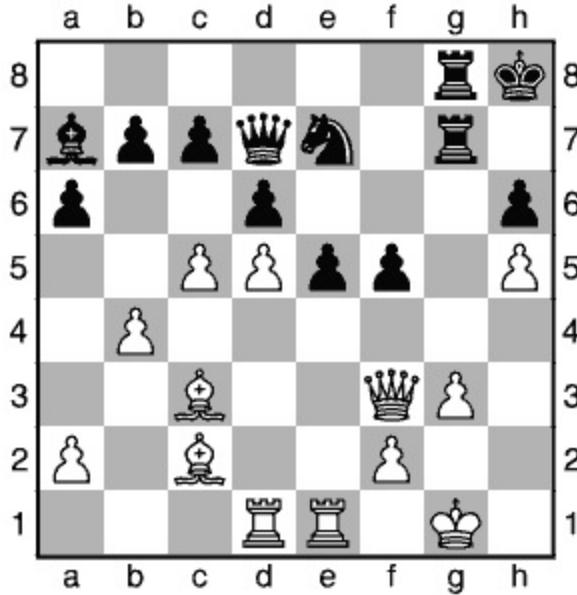
2a) 30...h6 31 Qd3 wins at once.

2b) 30...Re8 31 Bxg7+ Kxg7 32 Rf1 and Black has no defence.

2c) 30...b6 (30...a5 loses the same way) 31 Re2! bxc5 32 Rh2 cxb4+ 33 Kh1 Qd7 34 h6 wins.

2d) 30...c6 31 Bd4 Nxd5 (or else White wins by 32 h6 or 32 Rxe7) 32 Bf5 and the queen is trapped.

27 Rad1



Black to move

With the pawn on f5 the sacrifice is still not correct, but White, by supporting the further thrust d6, renews the threat. After the sacrifice White can follow up with d6, forcing ...cxd6 when the rook may recapture and bring the fragile h-pawn under fire, or White may retake with his pawn, dislodging the knight and leaving the f-pawn in trouble.

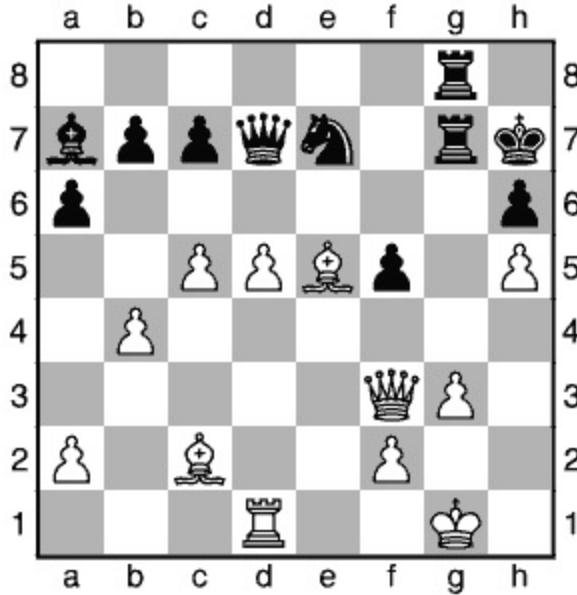
27...Qe8?!

After this the rook sacrifice on e5 proves decisive. The main alternatives are:

1) 27...f4 28 Rxe5 dxe5 29 Bxe5 Rf8 (29...fxg3 30 Qf4! gxf2+ 31 Kh2 wins) 30 Bxg7+ Kxg7 31 d6 Nc8 (31...Nc6 32 dxc7 Qxc7 {or 32...Qc8 33 Qe4} 33 Qg4+ Kh8 34 Rd7 Rg8 35 Qe6 wins) 32 dxc7 Qe7 33 Rd8 Rxd8 34 cxd8Q Qxd8 35 Qg4+ Kf8 (35...Kh8 36 Qg6) 36 Qf5+ Ke8 (36...Ke7 37 Qe5+ Kf8 38 Qh8+ Ke7 39 Qg7+) 37 Qe6+ wins.

2) 27...Kh7 (the most resilient defence) and now:

2a) 28 Rxe5 dxe5 29 Bxe5 (I gave 29 d6?? in *Secrets of Grandmaster Play*, but 29...cxd6 30 Rxd6 Rxg3+! 31 fxg3 Qxd6 is a good reply) and now:



Black to move

2a1) 29...Rf8 30 d6 Nc6 31 Bxg7 Kxg7 32 dxc7 Qxc7 33 Rd6 with a clear advantage for White.

2a2) 29...Rg5 30 d6 cxd6 (or 30...Qc6 31 Qb3 cxd6 32 Qf7+ R8g7 33 Bxg7 Rxg7 34 Bxf5+ Nxf5 35 Qxf5+ Kg8 36 Qe6+ Kh7 37 Rxd6 wins) 31 Rxd6 Qc8 (31...Qb5 32 Re6 Re8 33 Bf6 Qd7 34 Qe2 with a decisive attack for White) 32 Rf6 R8g7 (32...Rf8 33 Rxf8 Qxf8 34 Qxb7) 33 Bf4 Qd7 34 Rd6 Qc8 35 Bxg5 Rxg5 (35...hxg5 36 Rf6 Qd7 37 h6 Rg6 38 Rf7+ Kh8 39 Bxf5 wins) 36 Rf6 Qg8! 37 Qe3! (37 Qxb7 Rxg3+ is awkward) 37...Qg7 38 Qe6 and wins, since the sacrifice on g3 is now unsound.

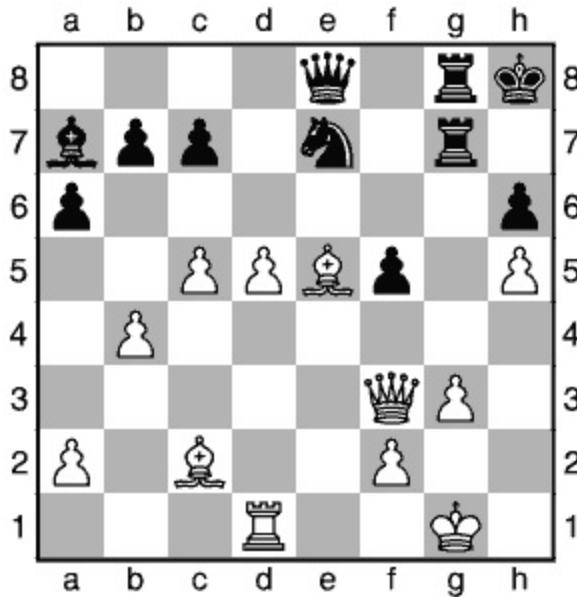
2a3) 29...Qc8 30 Bxg7 Rxg7 (or 30...Kxg7 31 Qe2 Re8 32 Qe5+ Kg8 33 Re1 with crushing threats) 31 Re1 Qd7 32 Bb3 b6 gives White strong pressure, but is not completely clear.

2a4) 29...Rf7! 30 Bb3 Nc8! and there is no convincing continuation.

2b) 28 Bxe5! (now that Black's king has moved off the long diagonal, the dark-squared bishop is less important and can be sacrificed) 28...dxe5 29 Rxe5 Rg5 (29...Kh8 30 Qf4 Rh7 31 d6 cxd6 32 Rxd6, followed by Qd4, and White wins; 29...Rf8 30 d6 cxd6 31 Rxd6 Qc7 32 Qf4 Ng8 33 Rxf5 Rxf5 34 Qxf5+ Kh8 35 Qf8 wins) 30 Rde1 R8g7 31 Rxe7 Rxe7 32 Bxf5+ Rxf5 (32...Qxf5 33 Rxe7+ Kg8 34 Qxf5 Rxf5 35 Rxc7 Rf7 36 d6 wins) 33 Rxe7+ Qxe7 34 Qxf5+ Kh8 35 Qc8+ Kg7 36 Qxb7 Qe1+ 37 Kg2 Qe4+ 38 Kh2 Qf5 39 Qxc7+ Kf6 40 Qf4 with an easy win.

28 Rxe5! dxe5

29 Bxe5



Black to move

29...b6

This is too slow, but the alternatives would not save the game:

- 1) **29...Qf8** (or 29...Qf7) 30 d6 Nc6 31 Bc3, threatening both 32 Bb3 and 32 dxc7, and Black has no defence.
- 2) **29...Bb8** (trying to reduce the force of d6) 30 Re1! (30 d6 cxd6 31 cxd6 Nc6 32 Bc3 Rf8 is less clear) 30...Qf7 (30...Qf8 31 Bd4, with Re6 and Qf4 to come) 31 Bb3 Qf8 32 Bb2 Kh7 33 Bc2! Rg5 (33...Kh8 34 Re6) 34 Rxe7+ Qxe7 35 Bxf5+ wins.

- 3) **29...Rf8** 30 d6 cxd6 (30...Nc6 31 Bxg7+ Kxg7 32 dxc7 gives White three pawns and a strong attack in return for the a7-bishop!) 31 Rxd6 Ng8 (31...Kh7 32 Qxb7 Bb8 33 Bxg7 Kxg7 34 Rd7 Rf7 35 Bb3 and 31...Kg8 32 Bb3+ Kh7 33 Bxg7 Kxg7 34 Qxb7 Bb8 35 Rd7 win for White) 32 Bxg7+ Kxg7 33 Rg6+ Kh7 34 Bxf5 Ne7 35 Re6+ Rxf5 36 Qxf5+ Nxf5 37 Rxe8, followed by Ra8, and wins.

30 d6 Nc6

31 Bf6

The black bishop is still trying to get back into the game; after 31 Bb2? bxc5 32 Qxf5? Nd4 the rook is unpinned.

31...Qe6

Both 31...Nxb4 32 d7 and 31...Rf8 32 Qxf5 Rxf6 33 Qxf6 are hopeless, so Black plays for a final trap.

32 Bxg7+ Rxg7

33 Qxc6 bxc5

Otherwise White wins with his extra material.

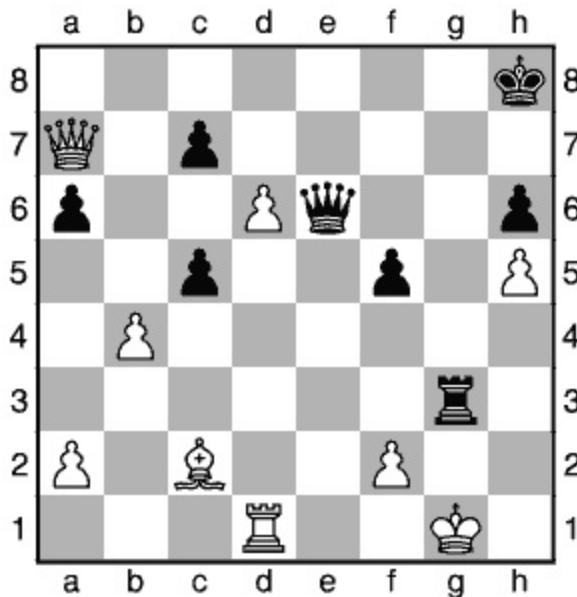
34 Qa8+

White has to go into this with his eyes open, because his queen will be temporarily out of action at a7 and the perpetual check can only be averted in one way.

34...Rg8

After 34...Kh7 the easiest win is 35 d7 Rxd7 36 Rxd7+ Qxd7 37 Qf8.

35 Qxa7 Rxg3+



White to move

36 Kh2!

Surprisingly 36 fxg3? Qe3+ is perpetual, or if 36 Kf1? then 36...Qc4+.

36...Qe5

37 Qxc5 1-0

In many ways the life of a full-time player is rather repetitive. One tournament follows another, some successful and some not. When you are young you improve, but at a certain point most players reach a plateau from which further progress becomes extremely difficult. They then play at more or less the same level for many years. Occasionally, the run of luck favours them and they achieve a spectacular result, but this is often just the inevitable mechanics of chance rather than any real breakthrough. Occasionally, there are special events such as Olympiads and World Championship cycles, but

there are very few players who can make a real challenge for the title, so for the rest a Zonal or Interzonal is just another tournament.

The next two years of my career fall very much into this pattern. At Biel 1982 I was successful, scoring 7½/11 and sharing first place with Gheorghiu. Then came the Toluca Interzonal in Mexico, the qualification for which had required such great efforts earlier in the year. The tournament was not actually in Toluca, but deep in the desert. Owing to a mix-up, the British Chess Federation had booked me on a flight that arrived at 3.30 a.m., with the first round to be played that same afternoon. I might have got more than three hours' sleep, except that at 10 a.m. I was woken by an irate organiser to ask why I wasn't at the opening ceremony.

The hotel had only just been built. Evidence of this came during round one, when a heavy slab of ceiling dropped down onto Adorjan's chair; fortunately, he was away from the board at the time. On his return he and his opponent hastily agreed a draw and left the room as quickly as possible. Standing on top of the hotel, the only visible sign of human life was a car factory a couple of miles down the road; otherwise there was no sign of humanity at all. It reminded me of a bizarre post-holocaust movie. After a couple of weeks I began to wonder if the rest of the world still existed. The hotel had apparently been built in conjunction with an adjacent housing estate. However, construction of the housing estate hadn't got very far. The roads and street lamps had been built, but that was all. Bizarrely, every evening the street lamps would switch on, shining futilely down on virgin housing plots. My score of 7/13 was well short of what was needed for qualification to the Candidates. Although I only lost one game, I was unable to win enough to make a genuine challenge.

At the end of September, I took part in one of the world's leading tournaments at Tilburg. Here all the conditions were just perfect. I scored 5/11, which more or less satisfied me as I had the second lowest rating in the tournament – I even beat Tigran Petrosian in 20 moves!

The Lucerne Olympiad was the next major event. I started well with 5/6, but my finish of 1½/5 was less commendable. My first loss came against Kasparov. Miles was ill and so I was on board one. I expected to face Karpov, but discovered only shortly before the game that Karpov had also been dropped. I had nothing prepared against Kasparov and was crushed. Of course, this result is entirely possible whatever the circumstances! Even worse was to occur in the Beliavsky-Stean game. Although Stean had

prepared the Caro-Kann with his colleagues earlier the same day, when he sat down at the board he decided to pit not only the Poisoned Pawn, but even a particularly dodgy version of it, against the formidable attacking powers of his opponent. Perhaps splitting his trousers just before the game had something to do with it. The result was a loss in 15 moves, after which Stean was ‘unfit to play’ and dropped for the rest of the Olympiad. The upshot was that, just as at Malta, we were effectively a man short. Two rounds later I fell ill in my turn. For some reason, Miles suddenly declared that if I were dropped, then he would refuse to play. In view of Stean’s absence, this forced me to play. I sniffled my way to the tournament hall to face Seirawan with Black and lost. Next round I played Smejkal, and adjourned in a distinctly worse rook ending. The position was very complicated and I spent many hours analysing it, occasionally aided by Mestel and Speelman. Smejkal evidently wanted more time to analyse, and as the position was one in which he could simply wait, he played out a couple of sessions without attempting to make progress. Since I was moving very quickly, I ended up more than 2½ hours ahead on the clock.

As England had, not one, but two, analysts present at Lucerne, and two days to analyse the position, one might have imagined that it would be possible to discover the secrets of this ending. The ‘official’ analyst was Ray Keene, but Nigel Short was also in Lucerne. Nigel had come at the behest of Ray for a journalistic assignment. When this mysteriously evaporated, Nigel was left stranded. David Anderton agreed to subsidise Nigel’s hotel bill if he helped with team preparation and adjournment analysis. Unfortunately, the only help I received from the English analytical team was a note stuck under my door from Nigel. I eagerly snatched it up, only to find one single line of analysis, which had been discovered by Mestel and Speelman in the bar the previous evening, ending with the words ‘... and you can work out the rest for yourself.’ I lost in 118 moves.

England finished 12th despite having our strongest Olympiad team up to this time.

I returned to Ramsgate in December, again scoring 7/9 and again finishing second. The Islington Open ended with a tie for first on 5½/6, and a return visit to Wijk aan Zee led to fifth place with 7½/13. I again scored 7/9 at Lugano, finishing in joint second place behind Seirawan. I took second place with 8/11 in Helsinki, but the conditions had deteriorated and I resolved not to go there again. I played poorly in a relatively weak Swiss event in

Paris during May, finishing joint third with 5½ points out of 9.

The Final of the European Team Championship took place in Plovdiv, Bulgaria during June. The hotel and playing conditions were very good, but the food was not. To me it seemed to consist entirely of cucumbers; meals would start with cucumber soup, continue with some variety of cucumber and end with cucumber soufflé (OK, the last is an exaggeration). I haven't been able to eat a cucumber since. After a week of this Jonathan Mestel declared that he would accept a one in a million chance of instant death in return for an avocado. Nobody took him up on this – he was playing well and we needed the points.

The English team discovered one useful trick. Butter was available at breakfast, but requesting it at any other meal was met with a firm negative. A small ledge under each table provided the solution; a suitable butter supply could be hidden there during breakfast, ready to be surreptitiously recovered at lunch or dinner. Of course, it was sometimes a bit soft by then. I scored a solid six draws and one win; England ended up fourth.

My next event was a return visit to Biel. I tied for first with Miles on 8/11, and along the way won the following game.

Game 19
J. Nunn – F. Gheorghiu
Biel 1983

Sicilian, Kan

- 1 e4 c5**
- 2 Nf3 e6**
- 3 d4 cxd4**
- 4 Nxd4 a6**

Gheorghiu is a player with great faith in his opening repertoire. He tends to play the same variations for many years and very rarely changes his openings. One of his favourite openings is the so-called 'hedgehog' formation. Although he has many wins to his credit with these lines, his inflexibility makes it easy for opponents to prepare for him. This game was played immediately after a rest day, so I was able subject a game Tringov-Gheorghiu played in the 1982 Lucerne Olympiad to thorough examination. I concluded that Tringov had missed a strong move which Gheorghiu failed to mention in his notes to the game. I expected that Gheorghiu would follow the

Tringov game if given the chance, but I played the opening rather slowly as if unsure of myself. I feared that a confident air might arouse his suspicions and cause him to vary.

5 Bd3 Nf6

6 0-0 d6

7 c4

Since Gheorghiu is one of the leading experts on such positions it is worthwhile examining his unusual move-order. In most games Black plays an early ...Nbd7, but in this case White can adopt a plan based on f4, Qe2 and Nf3, aiming for a quick e5. The d7-knight prevents the natural retreat ...Nfd7 in reply to e5, while if it attempts to move out of the way to c5, White drops his bishop back to c2 and threatens b4. Here is one example of Black's problems: 7...Be7 8 Nc3 0-0 9 Kh1 Nbd7 10 f4 Qc7 11 Qe2 b6 12 Bd2 (not to e3, which blocks the queen's support for e5) 12...Bb7 13 Rac1 (13 Rae1 Rfe8 14 Rf3 g6 15 Rg3 Kh8 16 Rh3 was also good for White in Ivanović-Peev, Balasiha 1977) 13...g6 14 b4 Rac8 15 a3 Qb8 16 Nf3 Rfe8 17 Rce1 Bf8 18 Ng5 h6 19 Nxf7! Kxf7 20 e5 and White won brilliantly in Commons-Peev, Plovdiv 1976. Therefore Gheorghiu reserves the option of playing ...Nbd7 or ...Nc6, holding the latter in reserve specifically to counter plans based on e5.

7...b6

8 Nc3 Bb7

9 f4



Black to move

9...Be7

This game may appear rather one-sided, but in hedgehog positions accurate play is required to make sure Black's counterplay never gets off the ground. Here is an example of what happens when White breaks with e5 too early: 9...Nc6 10 Be3 (10 Nxc6 immediately is better, so that the dark-squared bishop can be developed to b2) 10...Be7 11 Nxc6 Bxc6 12 e5 dxе5 13 fxe5 Nd7 14 Qg4 g6 15 Qg3 Qc7 (White is left with no attack and a weak pawn at e5) 16 Bd4 Nc5 17 Bc2 Rd8 18 Rad1 0-0 19 Qe3 Rxd4! 20 Qxd4 Nd7 21 Qf4 Nxe5 and Black had good compensation for the exchange in Kindermann-Gheorghiu, Zurich 1984. The sacrifice is justified by Black's domination of the dark squares and White's difficulty in obtaining any aggressive play for his pieces. After 22 Rde1 Bd6 23 Ne4 White loses his c-pawn at once by 23...Bxe4, while 22 b3 f5 23 Rde1 Bf6 leads to the white knight losing his only chance of activity. More generally, the black minor pieces will keep the rooks out of d7, the rooks cannot use the e-file because the black knight is unshakeable, and the bishop seems to be banging his head against a brick wall wherever he tries to settle; all this adds up to plenty of compensation for the material.

This example emphasises the key point that e5 should not be played unless a concrete attacking continuation is available; otherwise it creates a weak pawn, liberates the b7-bishop and obstructs its own dark-squared bishop. Although a quick e5 (or f5) is a feature of many Sicilian systems (especially the Najdorf), White's development advantage in the present game is nothing like as pronounced as in many of the sharper anti-Najdorf systems (6 Bg5 and 6 Bc4). He is playing here for a space gain and an eventual kingside attack, not an instant blitzkrieg.



White to move

10 Kh1

This is necessary because Black may still adopt a plan based on ...Nbd7. In that event White would wish to continue Qe2 and e5, but without leaving his undefended knight at d4 open to unpleasant tactical possibilities such as the pin ...Bc5.

10...0-0

11 Qe2 Nc6

White shows every intention of aiming for e5, so the knight goes to c6.

12 Nxc6

Although the normal rule is that the side with a space advantage should avoid exchanges, here White cannot profitably avoid the exchange of knights because Black has the manoeuvre ...Nd7-c5. For example, 12 Nf3 Nd7 13 Rd1 Qc7, and White has no significant play because he cannot organise either e5 or b4: 14 Bd2 (14 a3 Na5!) 14...Nc5 15 Bc2 Nb4 16 Bb1 Nc6 17 Bc2 is Oltean-Gheorghiu, Romanian Championship 1983, in which Black could have continued to repeat, but chose to vary with 17...Rad8 18 Rac1 Bf6 and eventually won.

12...Bxc6



White to move

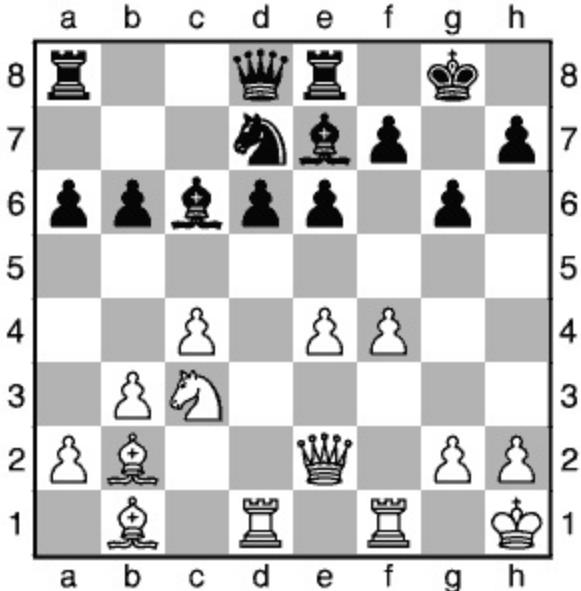
13 b3

The fianchetto gives rise to a host of attacking possibilities later on; at the same time the c-pawn receives useful support.

13...Qc7

Gheorghiu was apparently not satisfied with this queen move since in some later games he played 13...Nd7, in order to re-arrange his kingside defences one move sooner and to play ...Bf6 if permitted. It is not clear whether this was a good idea – certainly his plan misfired in the two instances quoted below – but it gives us a bird's eye view of the whole system by observing how White's plan has to be modified according to Black's exact moves.

After the continuation 13...Nd7 14 Bb2 g6 (...Bf6 is not so easy to achieve without running into other tactical problems: 14...Bf6 15 Rad1 Qc7 16 Bb1 Rfd8 17 Rd3 g6 18 Rfd1 Nc5 19 Nd5 exd5 20 Bxf6 Nxd3 21 exd5 Nxf4 22 Qf3 Nh5 23 Bxd8 Rxd8 24 dxc6 gave White a clear plus in Marjanović-Rajković, Yugoslav Championship 1983; if Black tries to avoid ...g6, then Rh3 will soon force it anyway) 15 Rad1 (discouraging ...Bf6, for example 15...Bf6 16 Bb1 Qc7 17 Qd2, attacking d6) 15...Re8 16 Bb1 and



now:

Black to move

1) Vogt-Gheorghiu, East Germany-Romania match 1984 continued

16...Bf8? 17 e5! dxe5 18 Be4 Qc7 (18...Bxe4 19 Nxe4 {threatening 20 Rxd7} 19...Bg7 20 Bxe5 Bxe5 21 fxe5 Kg7 22 Qf2 and White wins after either 22...Qe7 23 Qf6+! Kg8 24 Qxe7 Rx e7 25 Rxd7 or 22...Re7 23 Ng5 Qg8 24 Nxf7 Rf8 25 Rxd7!) 19 Qf3 Bxe4 (now there is no choice) 20 Nxe4 f5 (loosening, but 20...Bg7 21 fxe5 Nxe5 22 Nf6+ Kh8 23 Qf4 wins) 21 Rxd7 fxe4 22 Qd1 Qc6 23 Bxe5 Rac8 24 Qd4 Be7 (24...Re7 25 Rd6, 24...b5 25 Qa7 and 24...Bc5 25 Rg7+ Kf8 26 Bd6+ are all lost for Black) 25 f5 (the immediate 25 Bh8 Bf8 26 Rg7+ Kxh8 27 Rxg6+ fails to 27...e5) 25...Rcd8 (after 25...exf5 the above line fails; alternatively, 25...gxf5 26 Bh8 Bf8 27 Rxf5 exf5 28 Rg7+ also leads to mate) 26 Rxe7 exf5 (26...Rxd4 27 Rg7+ and mate) 27 Rxe8+ Qxe8 28 Qxb6 1-0. Here e5 was justified tactically; Vogt saw that he had a real attack because he could continue generating threats after 18 Be4.

2) In Nunn-Gheorghiu, Hamburg 1984 Gheorghiu avoided the above error and played **16...Qc7**. Then came the flexible move 17 Qd3, preparing Qd4 or Qh3 according to circumstances, and after 17...Bf8 (17...Nc5? 18 Qd4, threatening 19 Nd5) 18 Nb5! Bxb5 (the hidden tactical point is that 18...axb5 19 Qc3 e5 20 cxb5 Rac8 21 bxc6 Qxc6 22 Qf3, followed by f5, yields too much light-squared pressure) 19 cxb5 axb5 20 Qxb5 White still held the advantage due to his two bishops.

Curiously, in the main game White goes for an all-out kingside attack, in Vogt-Gheorghiu the attack is combined with a central breakthrough, while in

the second Nunn-Gheorghiu game most of the action takes place in the centre and queenside.

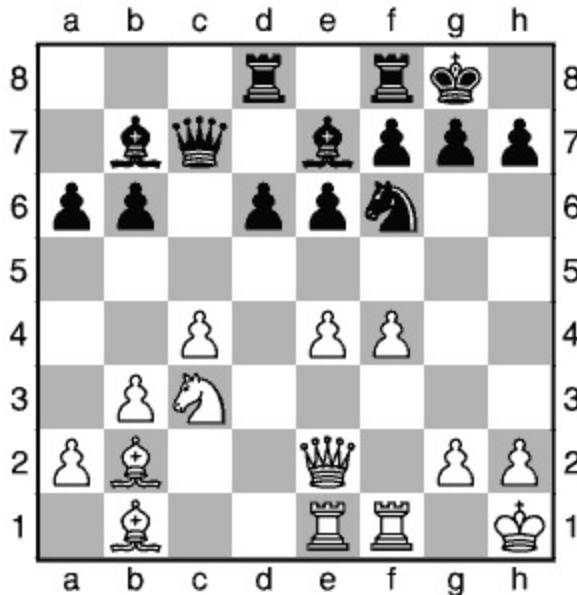
14 Bb2 Rad8

15 Rae1

In this position e1 is clearly the correct square for the rook; firstly, White gains a tempo by threatening Nd5 and secondly Black has securely defended d6 so there is no point playing the rook to d1.

15...Bb7

16 Bb1



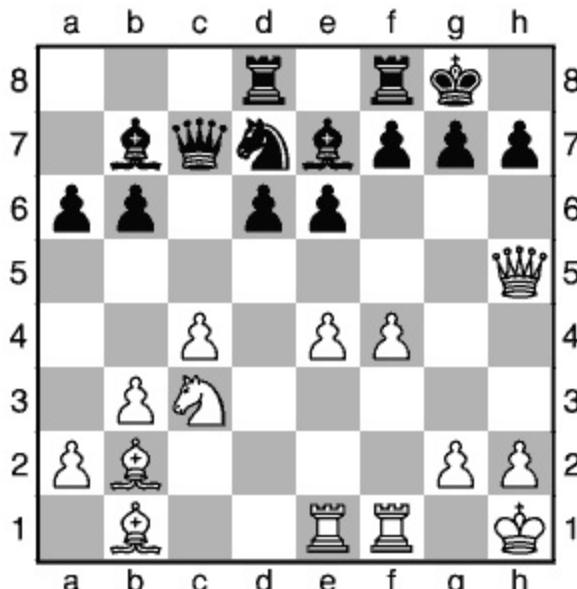
Black to move

16...Nd7

I felt a good deal of relief when he played this move since after it I felt sure that White could gain a clear advantage. Gheorghiu had given it an exclamation mark in *Informator*, and in this game he made the mistake of believing himself.

In *Secrets of Grandmaster Play*, I proposed 16...g6 as better, giving the line 17 f5 exf5 18 exf5 Rde8 19 fxg6 hxg6 20 Qf2 Qc6 as satisfactory for Black. However, 21 Nd5! gives White a crushing attack, e.g. 21...Nxd5 22 cxd5 Qc5 (22...Qxd5 23 Be4) 23 Qf4 with the decisive threat of Qh6. In fact 20 Qd2 is also very good for White, since 20...Qc6 loses to 21 Be4 Nxe4 22 Nxe4 Kh7 23 Qc3 f6 24 Qh3+ Kg8 25 Qh6. Thus the position already appears unsatisfactory for Black, which doubtless explains why Gheorghiu deviated earlier in subsequent games.

17 Qh5!



Black to move

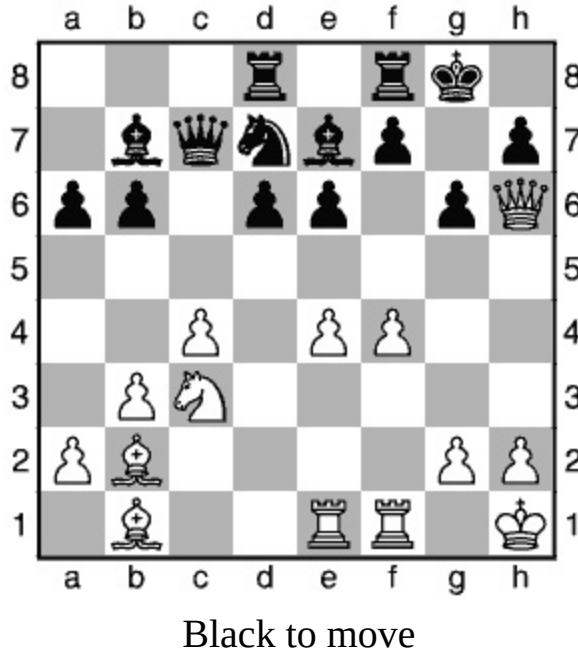
This is extremely strong because the queen's threats cannot be parried unless the knight returns to f6. The queen will then withdraw to h3 and while Black has been moving his knight backwards and forwards, White has transferred his queen to an excellent attacking square.

In the earlier game Tringov had played 17 e5? – once again premature because there is no clear attacking line to follow. Moreover, it releases one white bishop only to block the other. After 17...dxe5 18 fxe5 g6 he faced the same problem as Kindermann: a weak e-pawn and lack of central control. If 19 Ne4, Black could play 19...Bxe4 20 Qxe4 Nc5 with a comfortable position, or he could even take the pawn: 19...Nxe5 20 Nf6+ Bxf6 21 Rxf6 Nc6, followed as soon as possible by ...Rfe8 and ...e5, when White has very little compensation. Therefore Tringov tried 19 Qe3 Nc5 20 Qh6 and the sequel is an object lesson in the art of counterplay in the centre to defeat an unsound attack: 20...Qd7 (in order to meet Re3 by ...Qd2) 21 Re2 (21 Nd5 Bxd5 22 cxd5 Qxd5 and Black is still ready to play ...Qd2, or if 21 Rd1, then 21...Qc6 22 Nd5 exd5 23 cxd5 Rxd5 24 e6 Nxe6) 21...f5 (another fine move exploiting the back-rank weakness) 22 exf6 Rxf6 23 Rg1 Nd3 (Black has taken over the initiative) 24 Nd5 Nxb2 25 Nxe7+ Qxe7 26 Rxb2 Qc5 27 Rd2 Rdf8 (threatens 28...Qxg1+) 28 Bd3 e5 29 h3 e4 30 Be2 Bc6 and Black had a near-winning position.

17...Rfe8

An unpleasant move to make because the rook will be missed if White opens the f-file with f5, but apart from the immediate 17...Nf6 (after 18 Qh3 this will probably transpose into the game) there weren't very many possibilities:

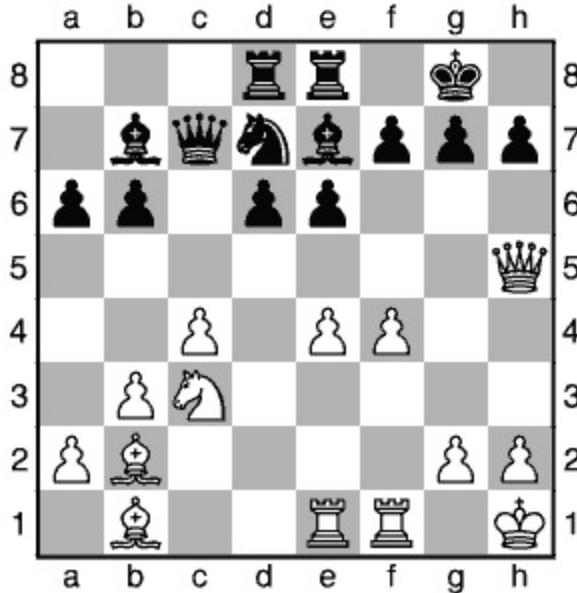
1) 17...g6 18 Qh6 (threatening 19 Nd5) and now:



1a) 18...Bf6 19 Re3 Bg7 (or 19...Rfe8 20 Rh3 Nf8 21 Nd5!) 20 Qxg7+ and wins.

1b) 18...Nf6 19 e5 (19 f5 is also very promising) 19...Ng4 (19...dxe5 20 fxe5 Ng4 {20...Nd7 21 Re3} 21 Qf4 h5 22 h3 g5 23 Qg3 Rd2 24 Re2 is very good for White; 19...Nd7 20 exd6 and 21 Nd5 wins) 20 Qh3 h5 21 Qg3, followed by h3, is awkward for Black.

2) 17...Bf6 18 Re3 Rfe8 19 Rg3! (19 e5 g6 and 19 Rh3 h6 20 Rg3 Kf8 are less effective) 19...g6 20 Qh6 with a growing attack; the threat is 21 Rh3 Nf8 22 Nd5 and 20...Bh8 loses to 21 Nd5 exd5 22 Qxh7+.



White to move

18 Re3 Nf6

This move is now the least evil: 18...Bf6 19 Rg3 transposes into the previous note, 18...g6 loses to 19 Nd5! exd5 20 Qxh7+, and 18...Nf8 19 Rg3 Ng6 loses to 20 f5 Ne5 21 fxe6 fxe6 22 Nd5! Rf8 (22...exd5 23 Rxg7+ Kxg7 24 Rf7+) 23 Re1 exd5 24 exd5 g6 (24...h6 25 Rxg7+ Kxg7 26 Qg6+ or 24...Ng6 25 Rxg6) 25 Bxg6.

19 Qh3

The immediate threat is 20 e5. White's only worry is that he will run into problems with his back rank (we already saw this in Tringov-Gheorghiu). This is especially the case when, as here, White needs g3 and h3 for his attacking pieces and so cannot create air for the king. It is worth commenting on the manoeuvre Re3-g3. When I was younger, I would often carry out attacks against the Sicilian by Qh5, Re3-h3, etc., only to lose horribly when my opponent broke through in the centre and I couldn't get all the pieces stuck on the h-file back in time. An attack involving moves such as Qh5-h3 and Re3-g3 should only be started if it is going to succeed. The time to think about this is before the pieces are committed, because if you decide half-way through that the attack won't break through, it will be too late to back out because of the investment in time. Time is just as much a concrete quantity as material and must not be wasted. In this game Black's loss of time by ...Nd7-f6 tips the balance heavily in White's favour.

19...g6

After this, the weakened dark squares prove too much of a handicap.

However, even after 19...h6 White could still break through by 20 e5 (20 Rg3 Kh8 is nothing special, but 20 f5 e5 21 Rg3 Kh8 22 Bc1 is a good positional continuation – if 22...Ng8?, then 23 f6 Bxf6 24 Bxh6 Nxh6 25 Rxf6 and wins) 20...dxe5 (20...Nd7 21 Rg3) 21 fxe5 and now: 1) **21...Nd7** 22 Rg3 with the lines:

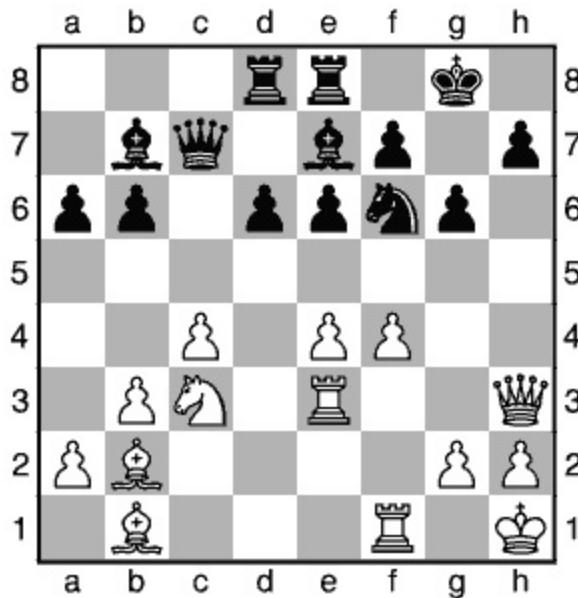
1a) 22...Qxe5 23 Nd1 wins the queen.

1b) 22...Nxe5 23 Qxh6 Ng6 24 Qxg7+ Kxg7 25 Nd5+ wins.

1c) 22...Kf8 23 Qxe6 Nxe5 24 Nb5 is winning.

1d) 22...Bg5 23 Rxg5 hxg5 24 Qh7+ Kf8 25 Rxf7+ forces mate.

2) **21...Rd2** (the most tricky move) 22 exf6! (only sharp play refutes Black's counterattack; 22 Re2 Rxe2 23 Nxe2 Nd7 is unclear) 22...Bxg2+ (22...Bxf6 23 Rg3 Be5 24 Bc1! Bxc3 25 Qxh6! wins; 22...Rxb2 23 Rg3 Qxg3 24 Qxg3 Bxg2+ 25 Qxg2 Rxe2 26 Kxg2 and White is a piece up) 23 Qxg2 Rxe2 24 Kxg2 Bxf6 25 Rxf6! gxf6 26 Nd5 exd5 (there is nothing better) 27 Rxe8+ Kg7 28 Re3 is very good for White.



White to move

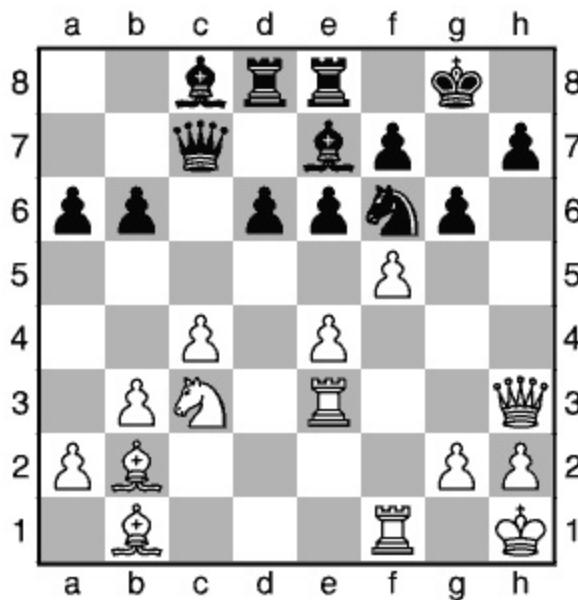
20 f5

White waited until his pieces were all ready for the attack before he committed a central pawn. Any pawn push by the duo on e4 and f4 will leave some weak squares and White must be ready with immediate threats to prevent Black taking advantage of them. Here the circumstances are very good for White: e6 is attacked, Black's rook is missing from f8 and he has no piece ready to jump to e5.

20...Bc8

...e5 is a move to be avoided if at all possible, because it yields d5 without a fight, locks the centre and gives White a completely free hand on the kingside. Even so, if White adopts the wrong attacking formation it could become a useful weapon, as the note to Black's 22nd move indicates.

If Black plays 20...exf5, then after 21 exf5 the d5-square is available and White's attack is correspondingly stronger than in the game, for example 21...Bc8 22 Nd5 Nxd5 23 Qxh7+ or 21...Nh5 22 fxg6 hxg6 23 Bxg6 fxg6 24 Qe6+. However, 21 Nd5 is inferior as after 21...Bxd5 (not 21...Nxd5 22 Qxh7+) 22 cxd5 fxe4! White's weak back rank causes problems.



White to move

21 Rg3

As a general guide, the player with the initiative will prefer to keep tension in the position. In this case, for instance, 21 fxg6 fxg6 22 Rg3 might improve Black's defensive resources by clearing the second rank and the f-file for his queen and rooks. Therefore, White moves his rook first, leaving the f-pawn to clog up the works for at least one more move.

The text-move threatens 22 e5! dx5 23 fxg6 fxg6 24 Bxg6, winning at once. Since 21...exf5 fails yet again to 22 Nd5, Black has no choice.

21...Kg7

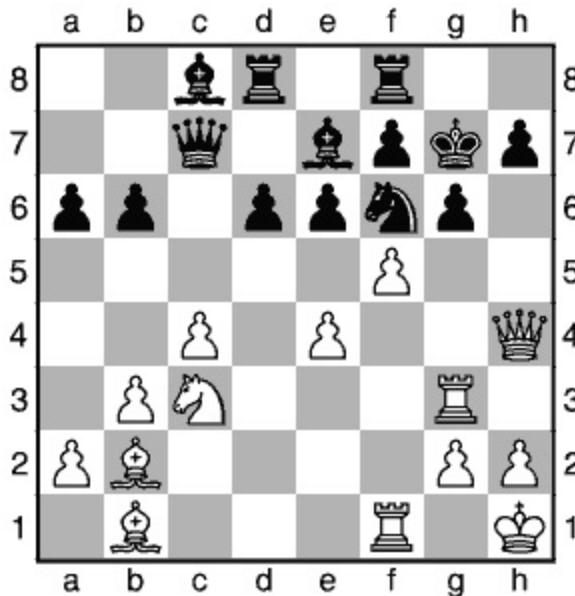
22 Qh4

Stepping up the pressure against f6 just when the knight cannot possibly move. The new threat is 23 fxg6 hxg6 (23...fxg6 24 Rxf6! Bxf6 {24...Rf8 25

$\text{Nd5} \} 25 \text{ Nd5 exd5 } 26 \text{ Qxf6+ Kg8 } 27 \text{ Qh8+ Kf7 } 28 \text{ Qg7+ Ke6 } 29 \text{ cxd5\#}$) 24 Nb5! axb5 25 Bxf6+ Bxf6 26 Qxf6+ followed by Rh3.

Black is still unable to defend by 22...exf5 because of 23 Nd5.

22...Rf8



White to move

Now what? The obvious ideas are to switch to the h-file by 23 Rh3 or to put more pressure on f6 by 23 Rgf3. However, neither is conclusive:

1) **23 Rh3?** h5! 24 fxg6 fxg6 25 Rg3 (threatening 26 e5!), and this once undesirable move activates Black's pieces. Black intends ...Ng4 or ...Bg4, and in fact White is now clearly worse.

2) **23 Rgf3 e5 24 fxg6?** (24 Bc1 would still be strong here) 24...fxg6 25 Rxf6 (hoping for an eventual knight fork on d5) 25...Bxf6 26 Rxf6 Qe7! 27 Nd5 Rxf6 and Black wins.

This once again shows how apparently one-sided games often conceal a great deal of care and accuracy under the surface. Black's lack of counterplay is not an automatic feature of the position, but a result of White's carefully chosen plan of attack.

23 Bc1!

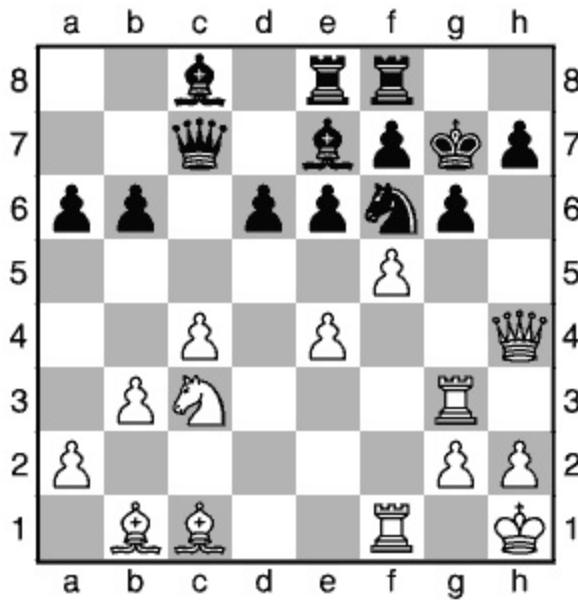
The move 23 Bc1 looks strange because the bishop seems well placed on the b2-g7 diagonal, but there is a good reason for the switch. When conducting an attack, it is important to mobilise as many pieces as possible (Yasser Seirawan's 'You have to invite everyone to the party' is again appropriate). White would like to bring his remaining pieces (the b1-bishop

and c3-knight) into the attack and the best way to do this is to play e5. Unfortunately the reply ...dxe5 blocks the long diagonal and leaves the b2-bishop ineffective. Hence the preparatory switch to the alternative diagonal c1-h6. Now White has threats based on various combinations of Bh6+, Qh6+ and Bg5.

23...Rde8

Another point of 23 Bc1 is revealed: 23...e5 loses to 24 Bg5 (again threatening a knight-fork combination) 24...Bb7 25 Qh6+ Kg8 26 Bxf6 Bxf6 27 Rh3.

Against 23...h5 White must take care for exactly the same reason as before: it is fatally easy to fall victim to the weak back rank. 24 fxg6? looks good, but runs into 24...Ng4! 25 Qxh5 fxg6 26 Bh6+ Kh7 and suddenly White can resign. The right way is 24 e5 dxe5 25 fxg6 and the whole thing collapses on Black.



White to move

The point of the text-move is to defend the bishop in case of a pin by Bg5, and to allow further defence of f6 by ...Qd8.

24 e5!

White can win the exchange by Bh6+ but he will still have to work a bit to win. Sometimes the attacker has to be satisfied with being ‘bought off’ by the defender, but here the attack is so strong that White does better to continue the attack. A nice point to 24 e5 is that the bishop on c8 becomes shut out of play; in particular, it cannot exchange a knight at e4.

24...dxe5

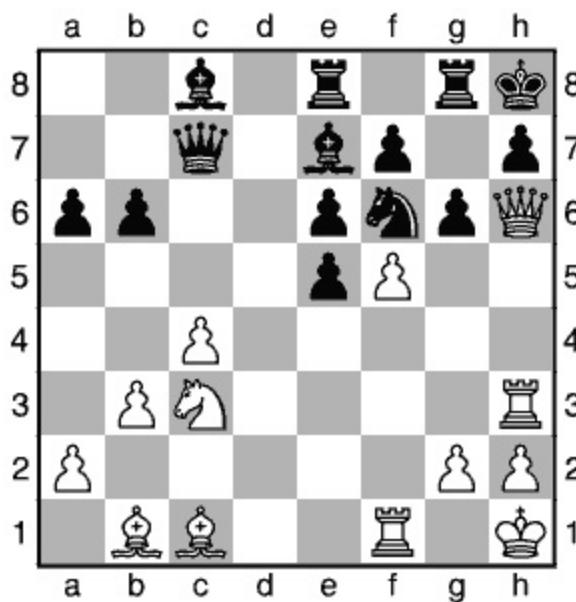
25 Qh6+ Kh8

25...Kg8 would lose at once to 26 fxg6 fxg6 27 Rxg6+ hxg6 28 Qxg6+ Kh8 29 Rf3 followed by mate, but with 25...Kh8 Black is setting another trap: if now 26 fxg6 fxg6 27 Bxg6 Rd8, he counters 28 Bxh7? by the winning move 28...Ng4!. In this line White can still win by 28 Bg5, but the move chosen is equally good.

26 Rh3

Black must go into further contortions to meet the threat of Bg5.

26...Rg8



White to move

27 Bg5 Rg7

If 27...Nh5 then 28 f6, followed by Qxh7+ and mate.

28 Bxf6

In a position like this it is not surprising that White has more than one way to win. The basic rule is to find one clear-cut method and play it, rather than worrying overmuch about finding something better. 28 fxg6 Qd8 29 gxf7 Rxf7 30 Qg6 forces mate in a few moves, but once again it is the win which counts and not the number of exclamation marks with which you can adorn your moves afterwards.

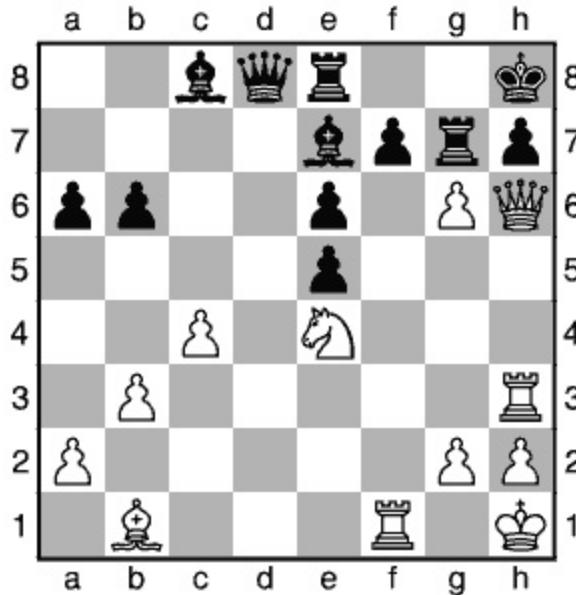
28...Bxf6

29 Ne4 Qd8

Even the sacrifice 29...exf5 is useless because 30 Nxf6 would force mate

at h7.

30 fxg6 Be7



White to move

31 Qxh7+!

White's last chance to go wrong was by 31 gxf7? Rxf7.

31...Rxh7

32 Rxh7+ Kg8

33 gxf7+ Kxh7

34 fxe8Q 1-0

Less than two weeks later I was playing in the charming Norwegian town of Gjøvik. This was another triumph. Adorjan had led the tournament virtually throughout, but I defeated him in the last round to give a triple tie on 6/9 between Adorjan, Browne and myself. Miles and Spassky finished lower down.

Game 20 L. Ftačník – J. Nunn

Gjøvik 1983

King's Indian

1 Nf3 g6

2 d4 Bg7

3 c4 Nf6

4 Nc3 0-0

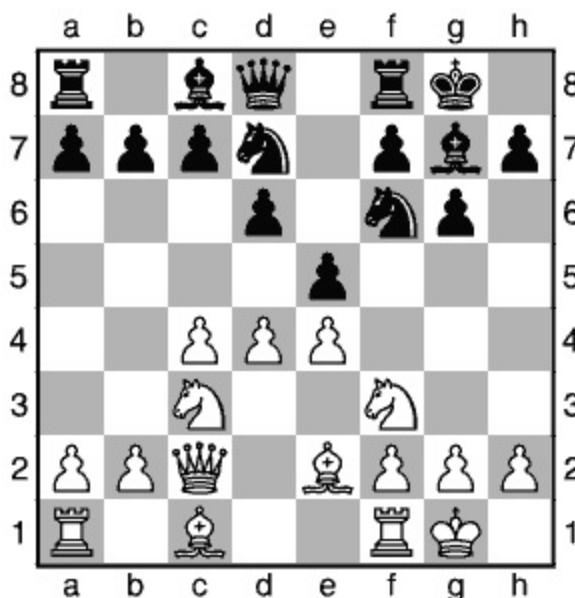
5 e4 d6

6 Be2 Nbd7

The alternative is 6...e5 7 0-0 Nc6 8 d5 Ne7, etc. In playing 6...Nbd7 Black exerts less pressure on d4 so White does not need to commit his d-pawn so soon. Black therefore needs to be ready to tackle either type of position – the blocked one arising if White plays d5 anyway, or the more fluid one occurring in this game.

7 0-0 e5

8 Qc2



Black to move

The same system, rather unusual at the time, which Korchnoi adopted in [Game 12](#). Thanks to the earlier game I was now aware of the correct move!

8...c6

With the rook coming to d1 Black is obviously going to need a comfortable developing square for his queen, and e7 is quite acceptable provided White cannot play Nd5.

9 Rd1 exd4

I preferred not to delay this capture, since after 9...Qe7 White has the option of playing 10 d5 under relatively favourable circumstances.

10 Nxd4 Qe7

11 Bg5 Nc5

12 f3 Re8



White to move

Up to this point I was repeating my game against F.Olafsson from the England-Iceland match in 1982 (my other game from this match is [Game 18](#)). Here Olafsson blundered by 13 Qd2? allowing 13...Nfxe4! 14 Nxe4 (14 fxe4 Bxd4+ is even worse) 14...Nxe4 15 fxe4 Bxd4+ 16 Kh1 (16 Qxd4 Qxg5 17 Qxd6 Qe3+) 16...Bf6 17 Bxf6 Qxf6 18 Qxd6 Qxd6 (a more materialistic player would prefer 18...Qxb2) 19 Rxd6 Kg7 (and not 19...Rxe4 20 Rd8+ Kg7 21 Bf3, when White has tremendous pressure) 20 Bf3 Be6 with a very good ending for Black: bad white bishop, isolated e-pawn, weaknesses on the dark squares, especially e5. Later Black's king went to e5 and, after b3 by White, Black broke open White's queenside pawn structure by ...a4. 13 Qd2? was a surprising error as this trick is quite well-known (I think it was Geller who first sprung it, in a very similar position, on two unsuspecting opponents in the 1968 Lugano Olympiad).

Naturally, I was somewhat nervous about the fact that Ftačnik was happily following this game, and I became worried that he might have prepared something special. As it turned out, he hadn't seen the Olafsson game and was merely following an earlier game of his own, Ftačnik-Mortensen, Esbjerg 1982, which had continued 12...Qc7 13 b4 Ne6 14 Nxe6 Bxe6 15 Bf4 Ne8 16 c5 Be5 17 Bxe5 dxe5 18 a4 with an edge for White.

In this type of position Black has to decide whether or not he is going to secure the position of his c5-knight by ...a5. When I first started playing the

King's Indian, I invariably continued with ...a5, but some bad experiences with the resulting weak b6-square gradually turned me away from this move, and I came to appreciate that it was often better to allow White to play b4, and then to play ...a5 later on when the b4-pawn is a target to bite on.

13 b4

In choosing the King's Indian Black is playing with fire to some extent. It is a double-edged opening in which he accepts theoretical weaknesses (here the d-pawn) and relies heavily on active piece play. Examples abound of games where the piece play has dried up and left Black with a miserable defensive position.

In addition to 13 b4 and 13 Qd2?, White can try:

1) **13 Kh1** (an interesting move preparing the Qd2 idea by nullifying the ...Nfxe4 combination) 13...Qf8 (a convenient square – it unpins the knight and supports both ...h6 and ...f5) 14 Qd2 Nfd7 and now:



White to move

1a) **15 b4** Ne6 16 Nxe6 Rxe6 17 Rac1 a5, when Black gains either the a-file (after a3) or the c5-square for his knight (after b5).

1b) **15 Nc2** f5 16 Qxd6 (after 16 exf5 Qxf5 the attacks on c2 and g5 will cut out his threat against d6 for a long time) 16...fxe4 17 Qxf8+ (17 fxe4? Qxd6 18 Rxd6 Bxc3 19 bxc3 Nxe4 wins for Black) 17...Nxf8 with equality.

1c) **15 Nb3** Nxb3 16 axb3 Nc5 17 Ra3 f5 with sufficient counterplay.

2) **13 Rd2** Qf8 14 b4 Ne6 15 Nxe6 Bxe6 16 Rad1 a5 17 b5 Rad8 18 bxc6 bxc6 19 Na4 is roughly equal. The game Åkesson-B.Andersson,

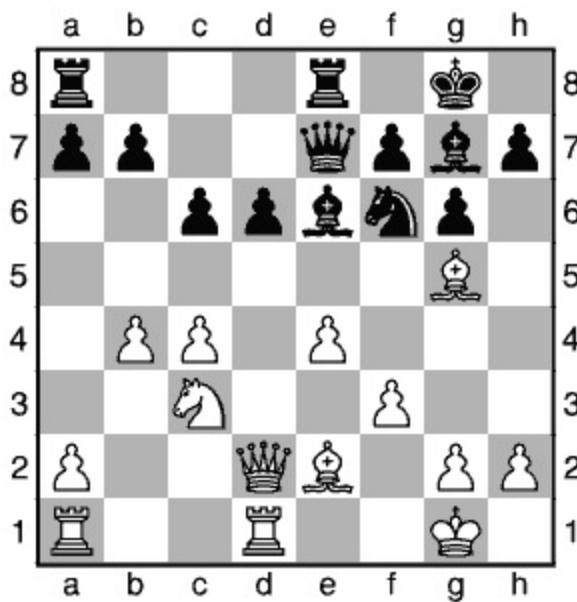
Swedish Championship 1988 continued 19...Bc8 20 Bf4 d5 21 cxd5 cxd5 22 Bc7 Rd7 23 Nb6 Bh6 24 Rd3 (24 Nxd5 Nxd5 25 Rxd5 Rxd5 26 Rxd5 Be6, followed by ...Rc8, gives Black reasonable play for the pawn) 24...Rxc7! 25 Qxc7 Ba6 26 f4 Bxd3 27 Bxd3 Qb4 with advantage to Black.

13...Ne6

14 Nxe6 Bxe6

The tactical justification of Black's 12...Re8 lies in the variation 15 c5 dxc5 16 e5 Bf5! and White loses material after 17 exf6 Bxf6 18 Bxf6 Qe3+!.

15 Qd2



Black to move

15...Qc7?!

In view of a strong 16th move for White, this cannot be considered satisfactory. The alternatives are:

1) **15...Rad8** 16 Qe3 (16 Qf4 Nh5 is less accurate) makes life difficult for Black, virtually forcing a weakness in his queenside pawn structure. With the white queen off the d-file, c5 and e5 would also become dangerous possibilities, and the f6-knight would be awkward to unpin.

2) **15...a5** 16 b5 is good for White because the b-file would open before Black's knight could get to c5, for example 16...Qf8 17 bxc6 bxc6 18 Rab1 Nd7 19 Bf4 Be5 20 Bxe5 dxe5 21 Qd6.

3) **15...Qf8** (probably best) and now:

3a) **16 Qxd6** Qxd6 17 Rxd6 Nxe4 18 Nxe4 Bxa1 19 Bf6 Bxf6 20 Nxf6+ with a draw.

3b) **16 Bf4 d5!** and Black captures at either e2 or a1 after a mass of exchanges on d5.

3c) **16 Rac1 Nd7 17 Qxd6 Qxd6 18 Rxd6 Bf8 19 c5** (if Black can take at b4 White will be slightly worse) and Black can either take on d6 at once or prepare it by 19...a5!? to get the a8-rook into the game without wasting time. The position would then be unclear.



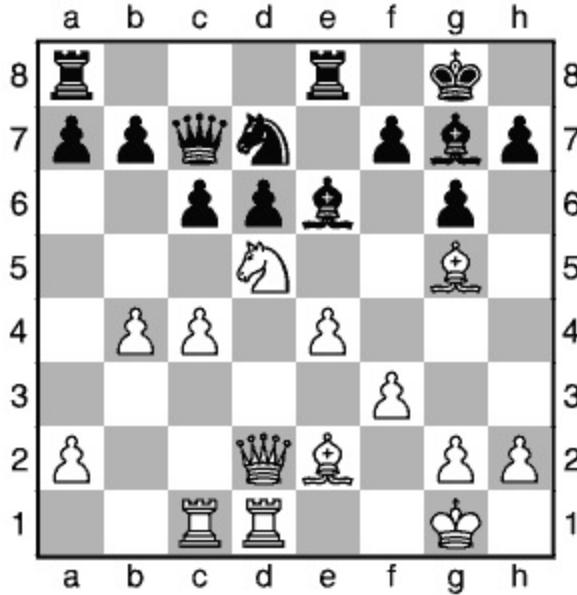
White to move

16 Rab1?

Ftačník loses this game because on two occasions (the other is at move 23) his play is not quite sharp enough. Here both sides were obsessed with the threat of 16...Qb6+ and neither noticed that White could ignore it. The correct line is 16 Rac1! (16 Qxd6 Qxd6 17 Rxd6 transposes into line ‘3a’ of the previous note) and now: 1) **16...Qb6+** 17 Kh1 d5 (if Black plays 17...Qxb4? White makes use of a familiar combinative theme: 18 Bxf6 Bxf6 19 Nd5 Qb2 20 Rc2 Qe5 21 f4 Qd4 22 Qb4 and White wins) 17...d5 18 Na4! and there is no good square for the queen: 18...Qa6 19 Nc5 Qb6 20 Be3 Qd8 21 Nxb7 Qe7 22 Na5 and White wins a pawn.

2) **16...a5** 17 b5 would favour White for the reasons given earlier.

3) **16...Nd7** (heading for the e5-square, Black’s main counterattacking motif at this point) 17 Nd5! and then:



Black to move

3a) **17...cxd5** 18 cxd5 Qb6+ 19 Be3 Bh6 (19...Qd8 20 dxe6 Rxe6 21 Bc4 is hopeless) 20 Bxb6 Bxd2 21 Rxd2 Nxb6 (21...Bxd5 22 Bf2 wins for White) 22 dxe6 Rxe6 23 Rc7 with a large advantage for White.

3b) **17...Bxd5** 18 cxd5 c5 19 Bb5! and Black is virtually forced to play the ugly move ...b6, weakening the c6-square. In addition it isn't easy to see a good way of unpinning the d7-knight.

3c) **17...Qb8** 18 Nf4 is unpleasantly passive for Black, but this is his best chance.

The effect of the text-move is to give Black an extra tempo: in a position where both sides have tactical chances this can make all the difference. Black is now able to seize the initiative.

16...Nd7

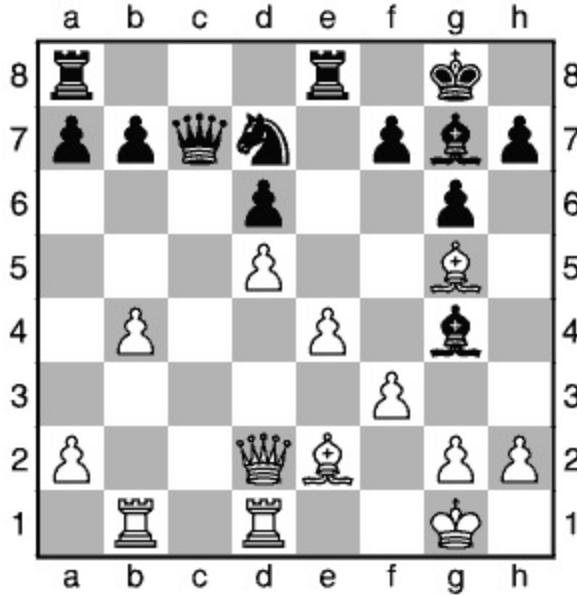
Threatening 17...Ne5.

17 Nd5

Suddenly White has problems meeting Black's threat. Both 17 Be3 Ne5 18 c5 dxc5 19 Bxc5 Rad8 and 17 f4 Nb6 18 c5 dxc5 19 bxc5 Nc4 would be fine for Black, so White is virtually forced to play his Nd5 trick, but it isn't very effective here.

17...cxd5

18 cxd5 Bg4!



White to move

With his queen safe, Black need not permit the capture at e6.

19 h3!

The best way to net the bishop. 19 fxg4 Rxe4 would leave White with weak pawns at g4 and b4; what is worse, the black pieces would come surging into the game by ...Qb6+, ...Ne5 and ...Rae8. 19 Rbc1 Qb6+ 20 Be3 is playable, but Black can maintain an edge by 20...Qd8 21 fxg4 Nf6 or 20...Bh6 21 Bxb6 Bxd2 22 Rxd2 Nxb6 23 fxg4 Rxe4 24 Rc7 Rae8 25 Bf3 R4e7.

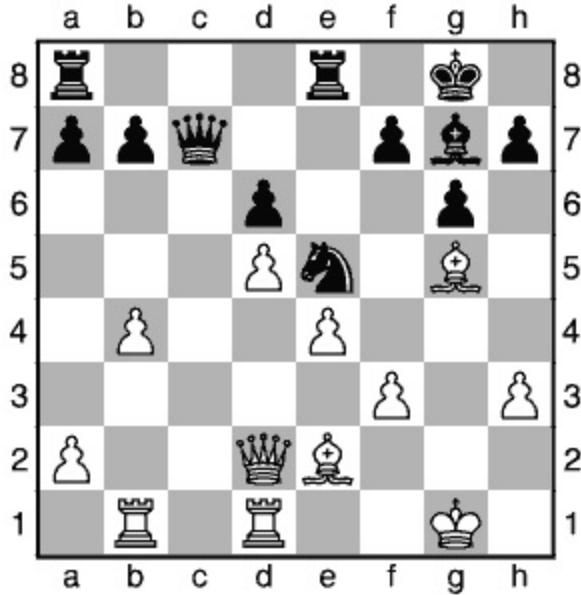
19...Bxf3

19...Bh5 would not be worth the trouble: White would continue 20 g4 and, after the capture at h5, Black would have to split up his own pawn formation or remain a pawn down.

20 gxf3

20 Bxf3 would leave White with a backward e-pawn and give Black an excellent outpost at e5. The recapture with the g-pawn gives White long-term chances of organising the push f4 and e5, suitably supported by the two bishops. Black must try to exploit White's temporary disorganisation and exposed king to break up the enemy pawn centre.

20...Ne5



White to move

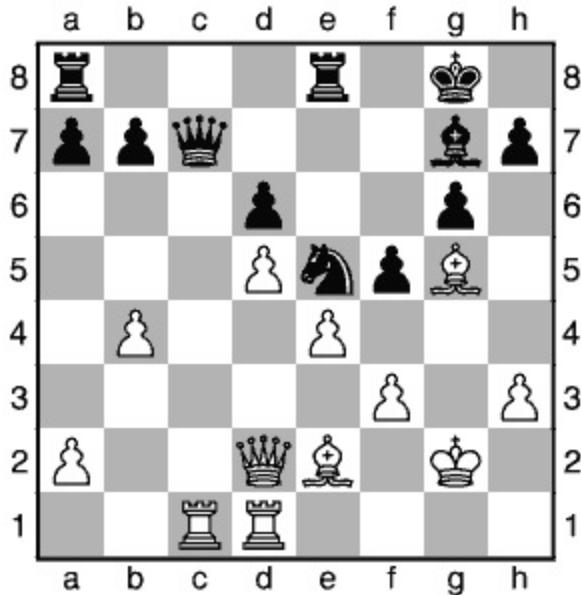
21 Kg2

White would like to take over the c-file with tempo gain by 21 Rbc1, but Black can continue 21...Qd7 (not 21...Qb6+ 22 Be3 Qd8, when White is a tempo up over the game) 22 f4 (22 Kg2 transposes into the game) 22...Qxh3 23 Rc3 (23 fxe5 Qg3+ followed by 24...Rxe5 gives Black a dangerous attack) 23...Qd7 24 fxe5 Rxe5. Here Black has two threats, 25...Rxf5+ and 25...Rxe4. The only move to meet both is 25 Rc4, but then 25...b5 26 Rc6 Rxe4 wins the e-pawn in any case. In the resulting position Black has three pawns for a piece, but taking into account that the three pawns are connected and passed, and that White's king remains exposed, the position may be assessed as slightly better for Black.

21...f5

This serves two purposes. It breaks up White's centre and it enables the queen to go to d7 in safety, as the knight can now retreat to f7.

22 Rbc1



Black to move

22...Qd7

It is curious how errors creep into chess literature and are then repeated again and again. *New In Chess Yearbook 1* (1984) published this game, but gave ‘22...Qf7 23 Be3? (23 f4 Nf7 24 ef5 Qf5 25 Bg4 Qe4 26 Bf3 =)’.

Obviously there is something wrong here, because Black cannot play ...Qf7 one move and ...Nf7 the move after. Of course, it was just a simple misprint of Black’s 22nd move. However, the 1992 book *The Complete King’s Indian*, by Keene and Jacobs, again gave ‘22...Qf7 23 Be3? Ftačnik had to try 23 f4 Nf7 24 exf5 Qxf5 25 Bg4, trying to get into e6.’ Other contemporary sources, such as the November 1983 issue of the *British Chess Magazine* and *Informator 36*, gave the score of the game correctly.

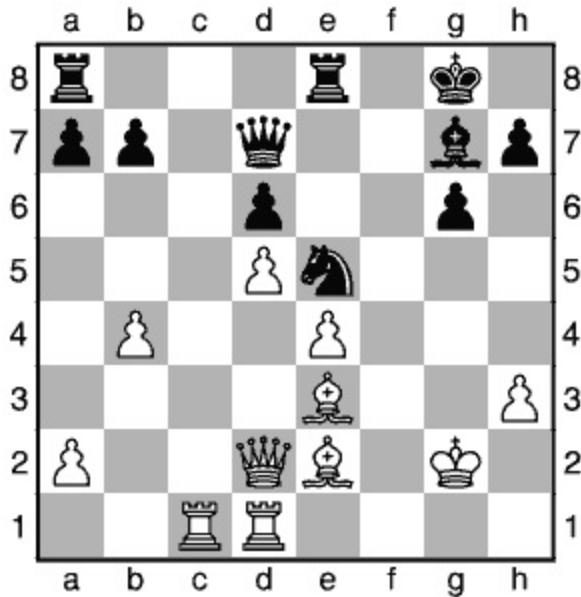
23 Be3?

The second and decisive mistake, which arose because White had already lost heart. However, he could still have put up a fight by 23 f4 Nf7 24 exf5 Nxg5 (24...Qxf5 25 Bg4 Qe4+ 26 Bf3 is just a draw) 25 fxg5 Qxf5 26 Bg4 Qe4+ 27 Kg1 (27 Bf3 Qh4 28 Bg4 Re5 is good for Black). Black can maintain a slight advantage by continuing 27...Re7 28 Be6+ Kh8, intending ...Rf8 and ...Be5, but he cannot achieve anything more.

This error is surprising in that Ftačnik’s chosen move brings about a totally passive position in which he can only wait to see how Black intends to make progress.

23...fxe4

24 fxe4



Black to move

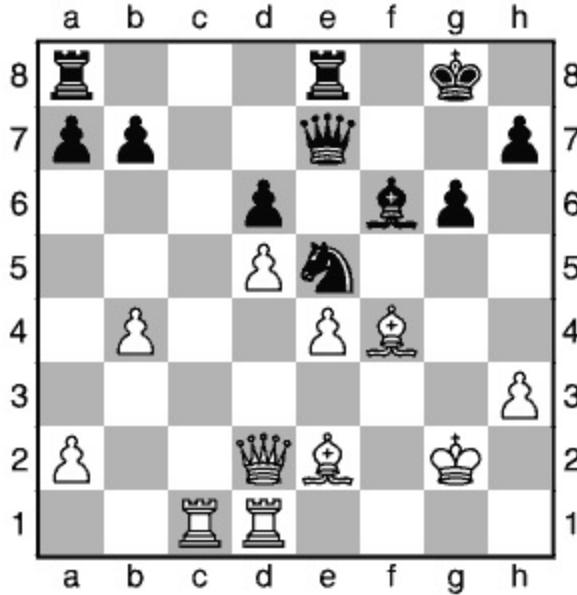
Suddenly the whole character of the game has changed and Black's advantage is permanent (backward e-pawn, command of e5, useless white light-squared bishop and more exposed white king). Therefore, he can take his time to improve his position.

24...Qe7

Threatening 25...Qh4, winning White's e-pawn, and also preparing the exchange of dark-square bishops. At the time I wrote 'His (i.e. Black's) problem is that he has two minor pieces which belong on e5, but there's only room for one on e5! It makes sense, therefore, to exchange dark-squared bishops, to leave Black's best minor piece against White's worst.' Later on Dvoretsky formulated a general rule which he called the 'principle of the superfluous piece': when you have a strong square which two pieces can profitably occupy, you should exchange off the superfluous piece. It is surprising how often this principle is applicable.

25 Bg5 Bf6

26 Bf4



Black to move

Avoids the exchange, but not for long.

26...Nf7!

Aiming for ...Bg5. Moving the knight from e5 seems to allow White to play Bg4-e6 at some point, but he never manages to achieve this, to begin with because the bishop has to cover the e4-pawn and later for tactical reasons.

27 Bd3 Bg5

28 Re1 Bxf4

29 Qxf4 Ne5

30 Be2 Rac8

Tactically everything is well in hand: 31 Bg4 is met by 31...Nd3.

Strategically a pure minor-piece ending would be the easiest to win: the black king would occupy e5 with the knight at f6; White would defend the pawn with king and bishop and Black would then win by creating a passed pawn on the kingside. Any pawn ending would also be hopeless for White, so Black can safely head for as many exchanges as possible.

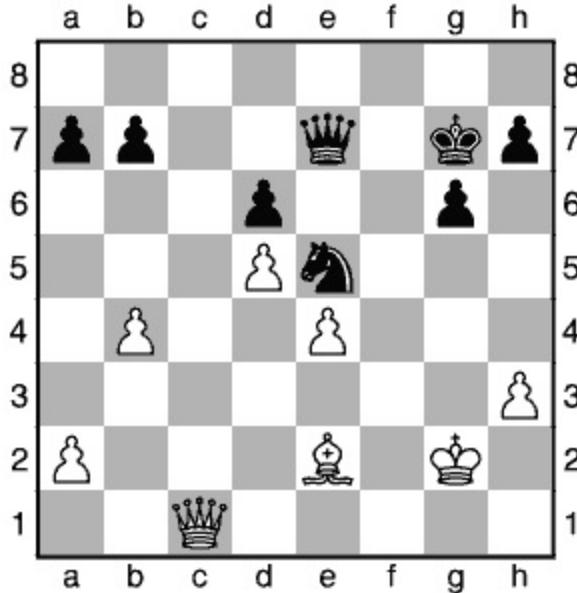
31 Rxc8 Rxc8

32 Rc1

Forced, or else ...Rc2 adds to White's problems. 32 Bg4 loses to 32...Nd3 as before.

32...Rxc1

33 Qxc1 Kg7



White to move

34 Qe3

This position is lost for White. Essentially Black is going to use his queen to penetrate on the dark squares, knowing that White dare not offer an exchange. Here are some typical variations:

1) **34 Qf4** Qf6 35 Qg3 Kh6 (threatening 36...Qg5) 36 h4 g5 37 Qe3 Qf4 exchanging queens.

2) **34 Qc3** Qg5+ 35 Kf1 (35 Kh1 Qf4 is worse) 35...Qf4+ 36 Ke1 Qxe4 37 Qc7+ Nf7 38 Qxb7 Qb1+ 39 Kf2 Qxa2, winning a pawn. Then the black queen recentralises, perhaps to d4 via a1, and the win is fairly straightforward because White has no counterplay.

3) **34 Qc2** Qg5+ 35 Kh2 (35 Kh1 Qg3; 35 Kf2 Qf4+ 36 Kg2 {36 Ke1 Qg3+ and ...Qxh3, dropping back to d7 if necessary} 36...Kh6, etc.) 35...Qe3 36 Kg2 (36 Bd1 Nd3) 36...Kh6 and the king advances to h4 or f4.

34...Qh4

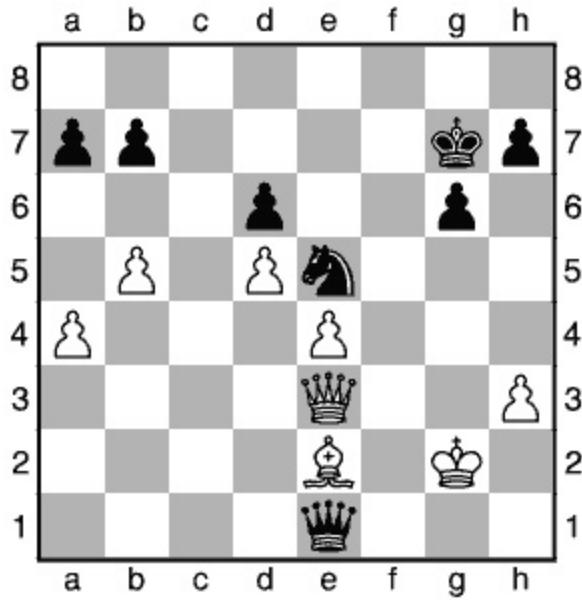
35 a4

White can also prevent ...Qe1 by 35 Bf1 (35 Qxa7 allows 35...Qxe4+ and ...Qxb4), but Black's invasion is irresistible: 35...Kf6 (threatening 36...Qg5+) 36 Qe2 (36 Kh1 g5 followed by ...Qf4) 36...Qf4. Then everybody joins in – ...h5-h4 followed by ...g5-g4 and Black will either win by direct attack or force the queens off.

35...Qe1

Now White can only move his king and pawns.

36 b5



Black to move

36...Kg8!

A ruthless move, denying White even the slightest hint of counterplay. Black would like to block the queenside by 36...b6, but then 37 a5 Qxa5 (37...bxa5 38 Qxa5 is check) 38 Qg5 leaves his queen out in the cold. After the further 38...Nf7 39 Qe7 White is threatening to get a passed pawn by 40 e5. This may amount to nothing against careful play, but there is no reason to allow White even the smallest chance of escaping.

37 Kh2 b6

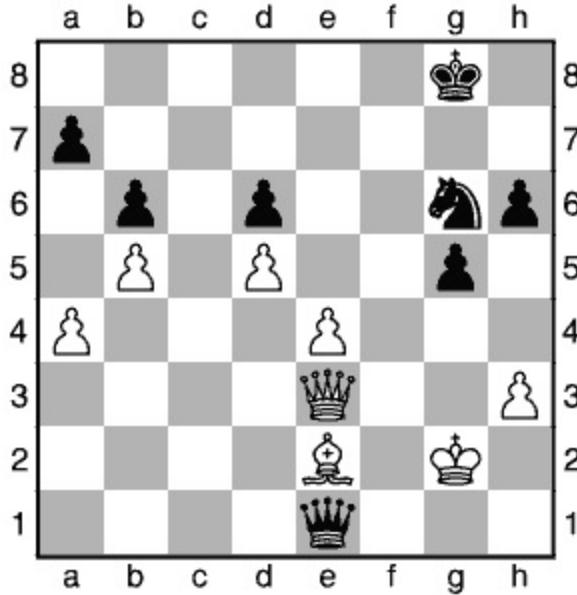
Now 38 a5 can be answered by 38...bxa5.

38 Kg2 h6

White is reduced to oscillating with his king between g2 and h2. The transfer of the knight to f4 is the simplest way to finish off.

39 Kh2 g5

40 Kg2 Ng6



White to move

41 e5 Nf4+

42 Kf3 Qxe2+

Alternatively, Black can go for a mating attack by 42...Qh1+ 43 Kf2 Nxh3+ 44 Kg3 Nf4.

43 Qxe2 Nxe2

44 exd6 Nd4+

0-1

Black starts rounding up pawns after 45 Ke4 Nb3 46 Ke5 Kf7, etc.

There was only a two-day break between the last round of Gjøvik and the first round of the Lloyds Bank tournament in London, so I had to hurry back. This ended in a tie for first between Razuvaev, Matanović, William Watson and myself on 7/9.

Game 21

J. Nunn – J. Levitt

Lloyds Bank Masters, London 1983

French Defence

1 e4 e6

2 d4 d5

3 Nd2 c5

4 Ngf3

The same slightly unusual move-order as in [Game 9](#) against Vaganian. We can understand the theory of this opening more easily if we begin with the more common move 4 exd5. In that event Black has a choice of two quite different systems:

1) 4...**exd5** 5 Ngf3 Nc6 (or 5...a6, leading into Nunn-Vaganian) 6 Bb5, the basic principles of which are explained in [Game 9](#). Black gets an isolated pawn, but free play for his pieces, and White has only an edge.

2) 4...**Qxd5** 5 Ngf3 cxd4 6 Bc4 Qd6 (or 6...Qd8, which is slightly passive but just about playable) 7 0-0 Nf6 8 Nb3 Nc6 9 Nbx d4 Nxd4 10 Nxd4, with attacking chances for White based on his lead in development, but an extra central pawn for Black, which may favour him in the long run.

Levitt wishes to play the ...Qxd5 system, but is led astray by White's move-order and soon goes wrong. He could have reached it by 4...cxd4 5 exd5 Qxd5 6 Bc4, etc. Instead, with his following knight move, he commits himself to the pawn recapture without realising it.

4...Nc6

5 exd5 Qxd5?

5...exd5 is just a transposition to line '1' above, but the text-move is a mistake which lands Black in an awkward position (incidentally, playing 5...Nxd4 6 Nxd4 cxd4 7 Bb5+ Bd7 8 dxe6! Bxb5 9 Qh5 would be even worse).

Surprisingly, I have found 25 examples of the text-move in my database – evidently it is a common slip. White's resulting score of 21/25 tells its own story.

6 Bc4



Black to move

Black's first misfortune is that he has to permit his opponent to exchange pawns at c5 instead of doing so himself at d4. However Black recaptures, White will play the important time-gaining move Ne4. For example, if now 6...Qd6 there comes 7 Ne4 Qd8 8 dxc5 Qxd1+ 9 Kxd1 f5 (otherwise White keeps the pawn more comfortably, e.g. 9...Nf6 10 Nxf6+ gxf6 11 Be3) 10 Nd6+ Bxd6 11 cxd6 Nf6 12 Bf4; one possible continuation is 12...Ng4 13 Rf1 Kd7 (13...e5 14 Nxe5 Ncxe5 15 Bxe5 Nxe5 16 Re1 is very good for White) 14 Bb5 Re8 15 Ne5+ Nxe5 16 Bxe5 a6 17 Bxc6+ and the extra pawn should certainly suffice to win.

Other queen moves also do not solve Black's underlying problems, e.g.: 6...Qh5 7 dxc5 Qxc5 (7...Bxc5 8 Ne4 is similar) 8 Qe2, with further gain of time by Ne4 to follow.

6...Qd8

7 dxc5

After 7 Nb3 Black could transpose to 6...Qd8 in line '2' of the note to White's 4th move. Although the text-move appears to develop Black's bishop for him, White regains the time with a subsequent Ne4.

7...Bxc5

8 0-0 Nf6

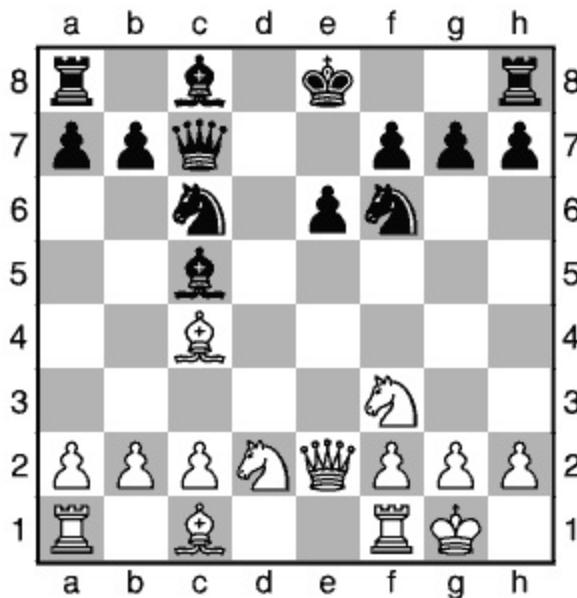
9 Qe2 Qc7?!

Black's position is already rather dubious, and this further voluntary loss of time does not help. After 9...0-0 10 Rd1 Qc7 11 Ne4 Be7 12 Bg5 Nxe4 13 Qxe4 White has a pleasant game, with rapid development and attacking

chances on the kingside, but Black is certainly not lost.

In all these lines, which spring directly from the error at move five, the exchange of the f6-knight is the significant point, because that piece is vital to the defence of the castled position. In the usual lines arising from the ...Qxd5 system, the white knight is exchanged for the c6-knight, which is a piece Black can manage without.

In view of the kingside danger, Black decides at least to delay ...0-0, and to keep open the option of castling queenside. One more possibility is 9...Nd4, to exchange off an attacking piece, but then Black falls badly behind in development: 10 Nxd4 Bxd4 (10...Qxd4 11 Nb3 Qd6 12 Rd1 Qc7 13 Bb5+ Bd7 14 Rxd7 Nxd7 15 Bxd7+ Kxd7 16 Qb5+ wins material) 11 Nf3 Bb6 12 Bb5+ Bd7 13 Rd1, and if 13...Qc7 then 14 Rxd7 Nxd7 15 Ne5 Rd8 16 Bg5, etc.



White to move

10 Ne4 Be7

After 10...Nxe4 11 Qxe4, White gains more time by a subsequent Bf4.

11 Re1!

This move may appear slightly odd since there is an open d-file beckoning to White's rook, but a number of considerations led me to favour Re1. First of all, Black's queen has moved to c7 voluntarily, so there is no need for White to play Rd1 to gain a tempo on the queen. Secondly, Black's main problem is what to do with the c8-bishop. The only genuine possibilities for bringing it into the game are to play ...e5 and develop the bishop along the

c8-g4 diagonal, or to play ...Bd7 and later (after moving the knight from c6) ...Bc6. Both plans can be prevented if White has a good hold on e5, for if the knight moves away from c6, White can simply reply Ne5. The more I looked at the position, the more it seemed to me that e5 was the crucial square, so I decided to overprotect it by Re1, b3 and Bb2. The long-diagonal pressure is useful if Black decides to castle kingside, while even after ...0-0-0 Black has problems because of a possible occupation of e5. White shouldn't play Rd1 without a good reason, because it might lead only to the exchange of all the rooks on the d-file. If it turns out that a rook on d1 would be useful later, the queen's rook can fulfil such a role, and both rooks would find useful employment.

11...Bd7

Black can also try to fianchetto his bishop: 11...b6 12 Bg5 Bb7 13 Rad1 0-0 (13...Nxe4 14 Qxe4 Na5 15 Bb5+ Bc6 16 Bxe7 Kxe7 17 Qb4+ Ke8 18 Ne5 wins) 14 Nxf6+ Bxf6 15 Bxf6 gxf6 16 c3, followed by Bd3, with attacking chances against Black's weakened kingside.

12 b3 0-0-0

Or 12...0-0 13 Bb2 Nxe4 14 Qxe4 Rad8 15 Qg4 e5 (15...g6 16 Rad1, and the long diagonal is ominously weak) 16 Qh5 g6 17 Qh6 Bf6 18 Ng5, gaining the two bishops. Without the necessary minor-piece support Black cannot hope to avoid a weakening of his kingside pawn cover.

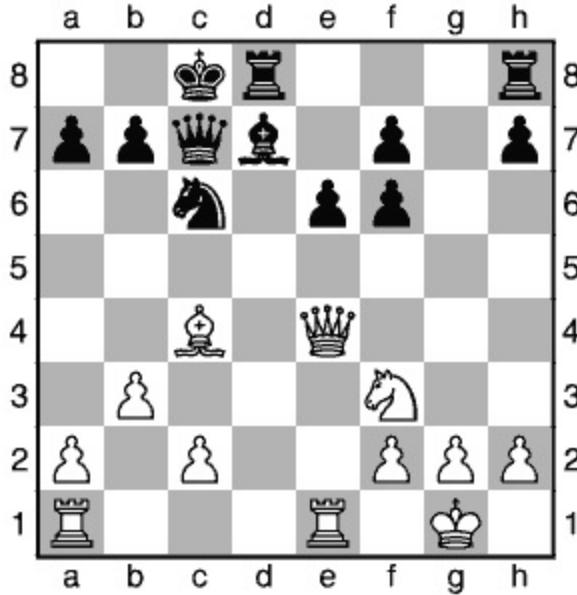
13 Bb2

White's active pieces leave Black with very few constructive moves. Black's next two moves aim to relieve the pressure by exchanges, albeit at the cost of weakened kingside pawns.

13...Nxe4

14 Qxe4 Bf6

15 Bxf6 gxf6



White to move

Black has eased some of the pressure by exchanges and the pawn structure has changed, so the position requires a reassessment. White still has a clear advantage, but it is now of a rather different character. Black's problem is that he needs to defend on both sides of the board. On the queenside he has a rather poorly defended king facing a dangerous 3 vs 2 pawn majority, while on the kingside he has a damaged pawn structure. The weaknesses on the kingside, for example, prevent him simply aiming for rook exchanges along the d-file, as this would lead to the loss of the h-pawn. Black's potential counterplay lies in a combination of pressure down the g-file and a bishop on c6; White must prevent Black arriving at such a formation. Note that White's various assets depend on the presence of queens, as without queens White would have little pressure against the weak kingside pawns, nor would White have attacking prospects on the queenside.

16 Qh4 f5

Another unavoidable concession; if Black now moves his knight to play ...Bc6, he will have to reckon with the reply Ne5.

17 Rad1 Rdf8

If we analyse Black's alternatives we shall see the kind of problems he is up against, and understand why he resorts to this peculiar regrouping of his forces:

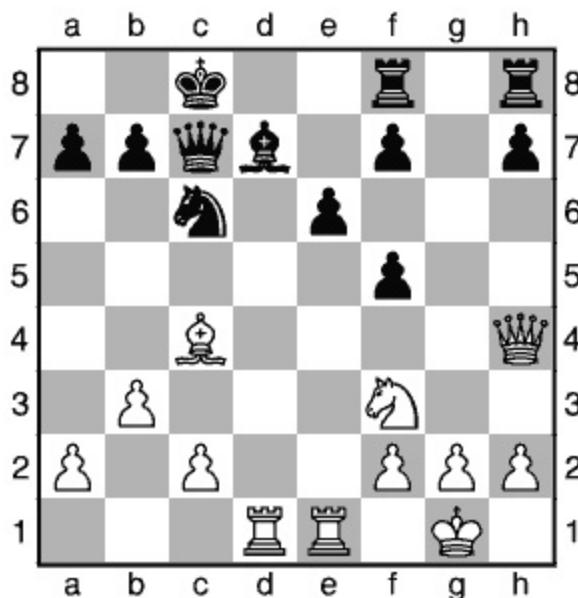
- 1) 17...Rhg8 18 Qxh7 Rh8 19 Qxf7 Rdf8 20 Qxd7+ Qxd7 21 Bxe6 wins three pawns.
- 2) 17...Rdg8 18 Qf6 (this forestalls counterplay based on ...Rg6

followed by doubling rooks) 18...Be8 (18...Qd8 19 Qxf7 wins material as in line '1') 19 Re2 Qe7 20 Qc3 Qb4 (or 20...Kb8 21 Red2 f6 22 Rd6) 21 Qb2 Ne7 22 Ne5 with an extremely strong position for White.

3) 17...Be8 18 Qf6 Rg8 (18...Rf8 19 Bxe6+) 19 Qh6 picks up the h-pawn (19...Rh8 20 Qg7).

4) 17...Kb8 (or any other waiting move) is met by 18 Qf6, and Black is no better off than in lines '1'-'3'.

The point of 17...Rdf8 is to bring the queen to the rescue by ...Qd8 and ...Qe7 while at the same time allowing the h8-rook to move to g8 in reply to Qf6. Note that Black cannot find a satisfactory solution to the problem of his bishop. After ...Rdf8 he can play ...Be8 without cutting the communication between his rooks as in line '3' above, but this involves the total abandonment of the d-file.



White to move

18 Rd2 Qd8

18...Be8 might have been a shade better, saving time by allowing the queen access to e7 in one move, but this is a fine point which would not have altered the essential nature of the position. As Black transfers his queen to e7 and commits his rooks to counterplay on the g-file, he must inevitably neglect his castled position by depriving it of piece protection. There is nothing accidental about the attack that now develops; in the nature of things Black must necessarily yield on one flank or the other.

19 Qh6

The queen will now drop back to e3 if and when Black eventually plays ...Rg6.

19...Qe7

20 c3!

The signal for the final attack, one result of which will be to drive the black knight to a very bad square and allow its opposite number to occupy e5. Moreover, the a7-pawn will be left undefended in the event of Qe3.

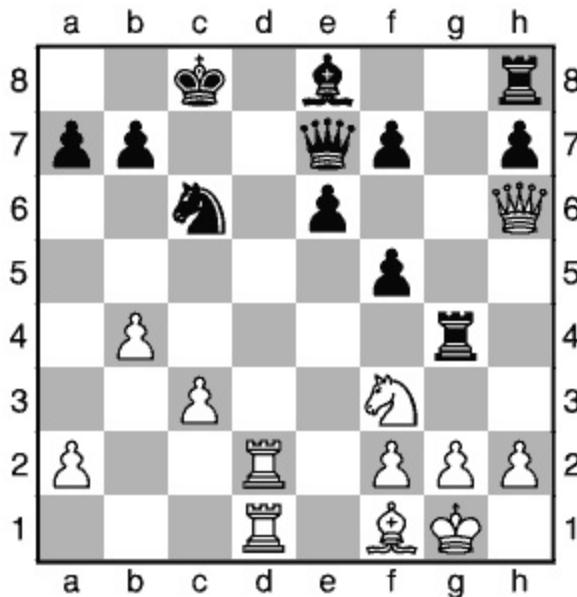
20...Rfg8

Or 20...Rd8 21 Red1 Be8 22 Rxd8+ Nxd8 23 Qg7 Qf8 24 Qf6 Bc6 (24...Nc6 25 Nd4) 25 Ne5 Rg8 26 g3 (threatening Nxf7 for the second time) 26...Kb8 27 Rd7!, with an overwhelming attack.

21 Red1 Be8

22 b4 Rg4

23 Bf1



Black to move

The bishop had to move in any case and this provides a secure defence of g2 without creating any pawn weaknesses on the kingside which might help Black's search for counterplay.

23...f6

Black has no real defence to the threat of b5; this is just an attempt to prevent White following up with Ne5, but it allows an attractive forced win. After 23...Rhg8 (23...a6 24 a4) 24 b5 Nb8 25 Ne5 R4g7 (25...Re4 26 Qxh7) 26 Qf4, followed by Qc4+, White also wins (26...Bxb5 27 Bxb5 Rxg2+ 28

Kh1 achieves nothing).

24 b5 Nb8

24... Ne5 loses to 25 Nxe5 fxe5 26 Rd8+ Kc7 27 Qe3 .

25 Rd8+ Kc7

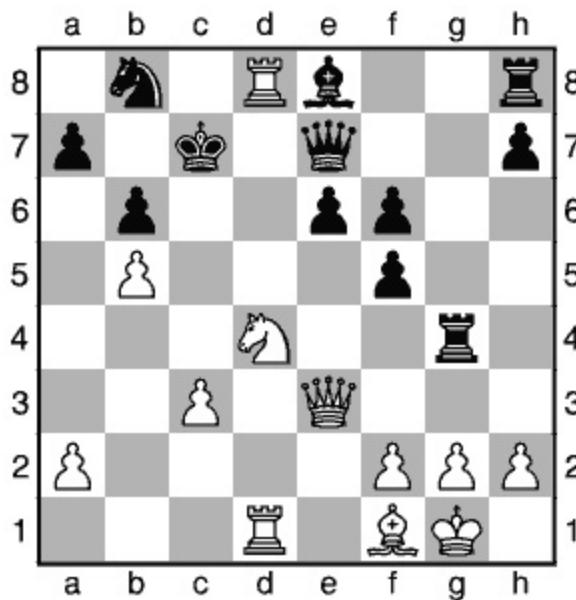
26 Qe3

Threatening 27 Qxa7 and refuting 26... Qxd8 by 27 Qc5+ .

26...b6

The only other conceivable defence is 26... Ra4 (26... Nd7 runs into 27 R1xd7+), but this loses to 27 Nd4 e5 28 Nxf5 Qxd8 29 Qc5+ .

27 Nd4!



27...Re4

The rook, of course, is still invulnerable, and e6 must be defended. If 27... e5 , there is 28 Nxf5 Qxd8 29 Rxd8 Kxd8 30 Qf3 Rf4 (30... Ra4 loses to 31 Qd1+ , while 30... Rg5 31 Qa8 transposes to the main variation) 31 Qa8 Rxf5 32 Qxb8+ and all the queenside pawns vanish.

28 Qg3+ f4

Or 28... e5 29 Nxf5 Qxd8 30 Rxd8 Kxd8 31 Qd3+ .

29 Qd3

Threatening 30 Qc4+ as well as the rook, and if 29... Qxd8 , then 30 Nxe6+ Rxe6 31 Qxd8+ Kb7 32 Qd5+ wins.

29...f5

29... Re5 is answered in the same way: 30 Qc4+ and 31 Nxe6+ .

30 Qc4+ 1-0

In October 1983 I started playing for Hamburg in the German Bundesliga. Murray Chandler had already been playing for Hamburg for a couple of years and assured me that it was fun; knowing him to be a good judge of such matters, I decided to join the club. In my first season I scored 6/9 without loss, solid but hardly spectacular. After playing at Lloyds Bank I had a three-month gap in my tournament schedule, the next event being a small international organised by Ray Keene in Brighton. I started with 5½/6 and then coasted home with three draws, finishing clear first by a point, ahead of Short and William Watson.

Then I travelled to Italy for the Christmas tournament in Reggio Emilia. At the time it was a modest grandmaster event and had not grown into the super-tournament that it became in later years. I was totally out of form and limped home in joint 5th-7th place with 6/11.

In March I again visited Lugano, repeating my performance of the previous two years: second place with 7/9. Part of the British chess press reacted in resolutely negative style. *The Financial Times* gave the result and two games from the event – my two losses! (This was not an isolated event; when Mestel scored 7/9 at Lloyds Bank 1985, the same correspondent gave two games – guess which ones?) I had never been successful at the Phillips and Drew/GLC events, but the 1984 tournament was the worst. I started with a catastrophic 2/9, then came the following game:

Game 22

J. Nunn – Y. Seirawan

London (Phillips and Drew/GLC) 1984

Caro-Kann

1 e4 c6

2 d4 d5

3 exd5 cxd5

4 c4 Nf6

5 Nc3 g6

This is a more adventurous continuation than 5...e6; Black develops his bishop to a better square, but at the cost of allowing White to win a pawn by 6 Qb3 Bg7 7 cxd5. In return Black gains time and hopes to pick up one of the

weak d-pawns later. This is undoubtedly the critical continuation, and there is a great deal of theory devoted to it, but I decided to follow less familiar paths. Although the variation I adopted gives White no advantage against accurate play, it does have surprise value and is not as innocuous as it appears.

6 cxd5 Nxd5



White to move

7 Nf3

Again a relatively quiet continuation. 7 Bb5+ Nc6 8 Qa4 Nxc3 9 bxc3 gives Black another opportunity for a pawn sacrifice: 9...Bg7 10 Bxc6+ (10 Nf3 0-0 11 0-0 is more or less equal) 10...bxc6 11 Qxc6+ Bd7, with good compensation in the form of light-square play and more active pieces.

Alternatively, White may play 7 Qb3, when Black should reply 7...Nb6 (7...Nxc3? 8 Bc4! favours White). Details may be found in opening theory books.

7...Bg7

8 Bc4 Nb6

The exchange of knights at c3 is very often made in isolated d-pawn positions, with the intention of transferring the weakness in White's position from d4 to the c-file, but that is only appropriate if Black is certain that he will obtain pressure along the file. In this case the exchange would be out of place because any such pressure would not materialise for a long time; meanwhile other, more important factors are arguing against it, chiefly that Black's fianchettoed bishop would be much less effective if the d-pawn were

strengthened, and White's bishop might develop aggressively at a3.

9 Bb3 Nc6

The idea of an early ...Bg4 is worth a mention: it threatens the d-pawn and guarantees Black an exchange to relieve his restricted position. However, after 9...0-0 10 0-0 Bg4 11 d5 N8d7 12 h3 Bxf3 13 Qxf3 Nc5 14 Rd1 White retains a space advantage. The position is similar to that arising later in the game.

10 0-0

White's central pawn is bound to come under such pressure that he has to think in terms of sacrificing it, and this is certainly more dynamic than the alternatives:

1) **10 Be3** 0-0 11 0-0 Na5 12 d5 Bg4 13 h3 Bxf3 14 Qxf3 Rc8 Keres-Tal, Tallinn 1971, offers White no advantage. Compared to the game, White's bishop is more passively placed (it should be on g5).

2) **10 d5** Na5 11 0-0 Bxc3 12 bxc3 Nxb3 13 axb3 Qxd5 is obviously inadequate since White can claim no significant lead in development.



Black to move

10...0-0

Understandably declining the offer, although taking the pawn isn't necessarily impossible:

1) **10...Bxd4?** 11 Nb5 Bg7 (the line 11...e5 12 Bg5 f6 13 Nfxd4 Nxd4 14 Re1 is worse) 12 Qxd8+ Kxd8 13 Rd1+ Bd7 14 Bxf7 is clearly unfavourable for Black.

2) 10...Nxd4 11 Nxd4 Qxd4 (11...Bxd4? 12 Qf3 is bad after 12...Bf6 13 Rd1 Bd7 14 Bh6 Qc8 15 Ne4 or 12...0-0 13 Rd1 Bf5 14 Bh6 Re8 15 g4 Be6 16 Be3) 12 Qxd4 Bxd4 13 Nb5 Be5 14 Re1 Bb8 (14...f6? 15 Rxe5 fxe5 16 Nc7+ Kd8 17 Nxa8 Nxa8 18 Bh6 regains the pawn with a large positional advantage) 15 Bg5 (15 Bh6 Bd7 doesn't lead anywhere) 15...e6 16 Rac1 0-0 17 Nc7 Bxc7 18 Rxc7 Nd5 19 Bxd5 exd5 20 Bh6 Rd8 21 Ree7 Be6 22 Rxb7 a5 23 Kf1 and White retains some advantage because Black's back rank is permanently weak.

The position after 10...0-0 can also arise via the Grünfeld Defence (1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 Nf3 Bg7 5 e3 0-0 6 cxd5 Nxd5 7 Bc4 Nb6 8 Bb3 c5 9 0-0 cxd4 10 exd4) and many of the quoted games started off that way.



White to move

11 d5 Na5

The best square for the knight; it stands ready to occupy c4 or take the bishop, according to circumstances. Other moves:

1) 11...Ne5?! 12 Nxe5 Bxe5 13 Bh6 Bg7 14 Bxg7 Kxg7 15 Qd4+ Kg8 16 Rfe1 shows how easily Black can slip into a passive position if he exchanges pieces too casually.

2) 11...Nb4 12 a3 Bxc3 13 axb4 (13 bxc3 N4xd5 14 Bh6 Re8 15 Qd4 Nf6 16 Ne5 Be6! favours Black) 13...Bg7 (13...Bxb4 14 Bh6 Re8 15 Qd4) 14 Re1 with a similar structure to the game.

12 Bg5

The choice is between this move and 12 Re1. The latter is probably

slightly more accurate because after the text-move Black has a clear-cut equalising line. However, I must admit that against accurate play this whole system does not pose any particular problems for Black.

After 12 Re1 Black may continue:



Black to move

1) **12...Nxb3** 13 axb3 (in this line White almost always takes back on b3 with the a-pawn rather than the queen, because if Black goes for the d-pawn with ...Bxc3 White must ensure that his queenside pawns are in good shape) 13...Bxc3 14 bxc3 Qxd5 (14...Nxd5 15 Bh6 Re8 16 c4 is similar) 15 Qxd5 Nxd5 16 c4 Nf6 (16...Nb4 17 Rxe7 Rd8 18 Bb2 Nc6 19 Rc7 is also very good for White, Zude-Schmitzer, Bruchköbel 1993) 17 Rxe7 and Black is clearly worse. His chief worry is that he cannot develop without losing his b-pawn, and the opposite-coloured bishops will offer no comfort while several other pieces remain on the board.

2) **12...Bg4** 13 h3 Bxf3 14 Qxf3 Qd7 (14...Nxb3 15 axb3 Bxc3 16 bxc3 Qxd5 17 Qxd5 Nxd5 18 c4 Nf6 19 Rxe7 is very good for White) 15 Bg5 Rfe8 16 Rad1 Nxb3 17 axb3 Nc8 18 Re3 Nd6 19 g4! Rac8 20 Rde1 with a slight advantage for White, Beliavsky-Peresypkin, USSR 1976 (this position closely resembles Nunn-Seirawan).

Playing 12 Bg5 is less accurate because it allows Black to play ...h6 with gain of tempo.



Black to move

12...Bg4

There is nothing wrong with this move, but the fact that some of the alternatives give Black more or less instant equality is enough to condemn 12 Bg5:

1) **12...Nxb3** 13 axb3 Bxc3 14 bxc3 Nxd5 (14...Qxd5 15 Qxd5 Nxd5 16 c4 Nf6 17 Rfe1 h6! 18 Bxh6 Re8 19 Bg5 Kg7 gives White only an infinitesimal edge) and White is hard pressed to show enough compensation for the pawn.

2) **12...h6** 13 Be3 (13 Bh4? g5 wins the pawn in safety; 13 Bf4 Bg4 14 h3 Bxf3 15 Qxf3 Nxb3 is also safe for Black) 13...Bg4 (Black cannot grab the d-pawn now as his own h-pawn is hanging) 14 h3 Bxf3 15 Qxf3 Nbc4 (15...Nxb3 16 axb3 Bxc3 is equal after 17 Bxb6 Qxb6 18 bxc3 e6 Pachman-Kavalek, Netanya 1973 or 17 bxc3 Qxd5 18 Qxd5 Nxd5 19 Bxh6 Rfd8 20 c4 Nb4 Kavalek-Hort, Las Palmas 1973) 16 Bc1 Nxb3 17 axb3 Nd6 18 Re1 Re8 19 Be3, Keres-D.Byrne, San Antonio 1972, and now 19...a5 would have been level. See *Paul Keres: The Quest for Perfection* for detailed notes to this brilliant game.

13 h3 Bxf3

14 Qxf3



Black to move

14...Nxb3

Black's timing is poor. He correctly plans ...Qd7, followed by ...Nc8-d6, but the capture on b3 should be delayed until White has played Rad1. Then Black will not lose a tempo (or weaken b6) by being obliged to play ...a6 before using his queen's rook. For this reason White resolutely avoided touching his queen's rook in the game Brunner-Mirallès, Zug 1987, but he still ended up slightly worse after 14...Qd7 15 Rfe1 Rfe8 16 Re2 h6 17 Bd2 Rad8 18 Be3 Nxb3 19 axb3 Nxd5 20 Rd2 e6 21 Rad1 Qc7 22 Nxd5 exd5 23 Rxd5 Rxd5 24 Qxd5 a6.

15 axb3 Qd7?!

Now Black cannot quite equalise by taking the d-pawn: 15...Bxc3 16 bxc3 Qxd5 17 Qxd5 Nxd5 18 c4 Nf6 (if White is allowed to take on e7 then he has a slight but permanent advantage) 19 Rfe1 Rfe8 (19...h6 20 Bxf6 exf6 21 Re7 Rfb8 22 Rd1 is slightly better for White) 20 Bxf6 exf6 21 Rxe8+ Rxe8 22 Rxa7 gives White a favourable ending.

As explained in the previous note, if Black wanted to adopt the ...Qd7 plan then he should have delayed the exchange on b3. Now, however, his best option is 15...h6, with a likely transposition to line '2' in the note to Black's 12th move.



White to move

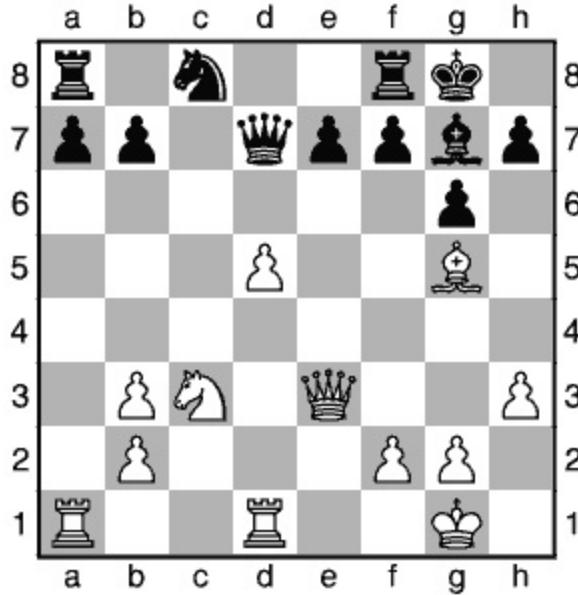
16 Rfd1!

With this move a new phase of the game opens. Black no longer has the option of taking the d-pawn, and the position must be assessed according to the long-term strength or weakness of that pawn. Obviously it restricts Black, but equally it would be a weakness in a simplified position. Therefore White's guiding principle will be to avoid premature exchanges. The same applies to the b-pawns: they keep the black pieces out of c3 and c4, but in a rook ending they would be catastrophic liabilities; meanwhile their doubling provides White with the use of the a-file. In short, White has all the dynamic advantages, while Black hopes that he will survive the intervening phase and emerge with a superior endgame. In the post-mortem it was discovered that both sides thought they had the advantage here. Objectively speaking, the further course of events indicates that with correct play the game is still about equal.

16 Rfe1 was also possible (the position would then be similar to Beliavsky-Peresypkin above), but after Black's premature exchange at b3 one rook should stay on the a-file; it seemed to me that the remaining rook was better placed at d1, freeing the knight for other duties, rather than exerting symbolic pressure against e7.

16...Nc8

17 Qe3!



Black to move

White has no immediate attacking prospects, so his first objective is to make the transfer of the knight to d6 as awkward as possible – more positive action will depend on Black's response. Later White may wish to exchange bishops, but not yet: his own bishop is too useful depriving the black queen of squares.

17...Re8

18 Bf4

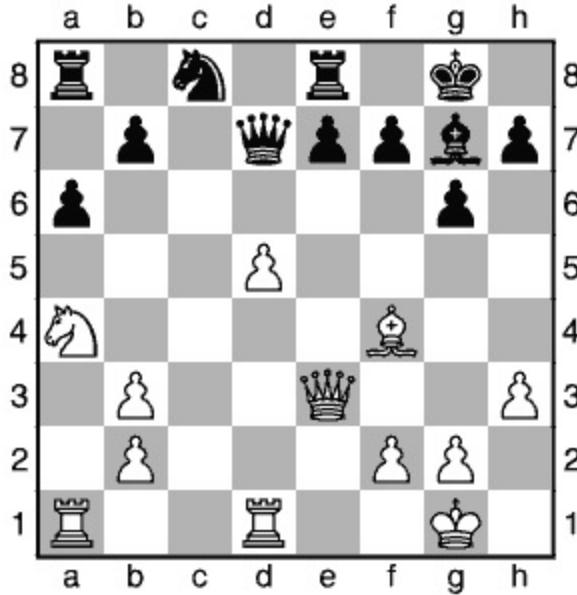
The bishop wasn't doing much at g5, so White points it at d6 and c7. In some lines White will offer the exchange of bishops by Be5.

18...a6

Black must have regretted the weakness of b6, but if he wants to play ...Nd6 it is unavoidable. If 18...e5, then 19 dxе6 Qxе6 20 Qxе6 fxе6 21 Rd7 and Black loses at least a pawn, for example 21...Re7 22 Rd8+ Kf7 23 Nb5 or 21...b6 22 Nb5 Rf8 23 Nc7.

19 Na4

This again prevents ...Nd6 and presages a shortage of squares for Black's queen after, for example, Nc5.



Black to move

19...Qf5?!

A slight inaccuracy. The queen should occupy b5, leaving f5 for the knight; Black's regrouping is less effective the other way round because the queen is not especially secure at f5. After 19...Qb5 White can try:

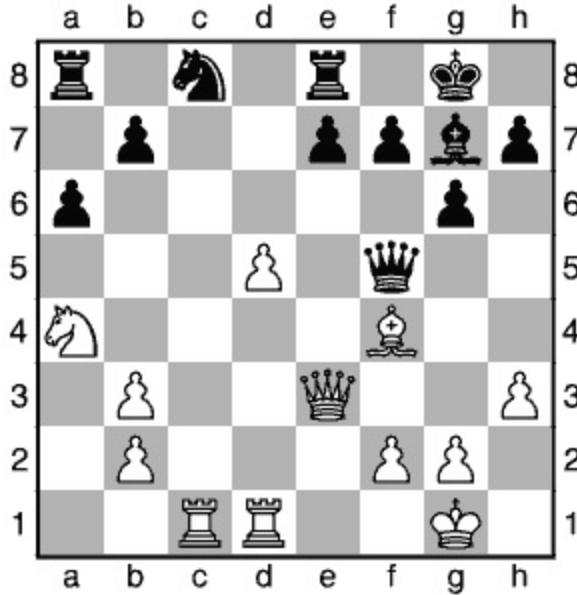
1) **20 Rac1** Nd6 21 Nb6 (21 Rc5 Qb4 does not trap the queen) 21...Nf5 22 Qc5 Qxc5 23 Rxc5 Bd4! favours Black.

2) **20 Bc7!** (best) and now:

2a) **20...Nd6** 21 Nb6 Ra7 (or 21...Nf5 22 Qd3 Qxd3 23 Rxd3 Ra7 24 Re1 Kf8 {there is nothing better} 25 d6 Nxd6 26 Bxd6 exd6 27 Nd7+ and wins) is very risky as there no obvious way to extract the rook from a7. However, White lacks an immediate knock-out, for example 22 g4 Bxb2 23 Ra2 Bf6 24 Re1 Rf8 25 Bxd6 exd6 26 Nd7 Qxd7 27 Qxa7 Qb5, with reasonable play for the exchange.

2b) **20...Qd7** and White dare not avoid the repetition by 21 Bf4 Qb5, etc. If 21 Qc5 or 21 Rac1, then 21...b5 is good, while after 21 Be5 Bxe5 22 Qxe5 Qb5, followed quickly by ...Nd6 and ...Rac8, White can scarcely claim sufficient attacking chances to offset his weak pawns.

20 Rac1



Black to move

20...b5?!

Black is trying to solve his problems by playing forcing moves, but the tactics soon rebound on him. 20...Nd6 would have been better, *e.g.* 21 Nb6 Rad8 22 Rd2 and now:

- 1) 22...Qe4 23 Qxe4 Nxe4 24 Re2 Nd6 25 Rc7 with pressure for White.
- 2) 22...Nc8 23 g4 Qf6 24 Rxc8 Rxc8 25 Nd7 Qh4 26 Bg5 winning.
- 3) 22...e5 23 dxе6 Rxе6 24 Rxе6 Rxе6 (or 24...Rxd6 25 Rc8+ Bf8 26 Bh6) 25 Bxе6 Rxе6 26 Nc8 wins material.
- 4) 22...Nb5! and White has nothing clear-cut, since 23 Bc7 Nxc7 24 Rxc7 fails to 24...Be5 followed by 25...Bf4. Perhaps 23 Re1 is best, with a double-edged position in which it is quite hard to find a constructive move for either side.

The text-move aims to induce the knight to return to c3, when ...Nd6 is feasible. The flaw in the logic is that White doesn't have to retreat the knight; instead he can play to exploit the newly-created weakness at c6.

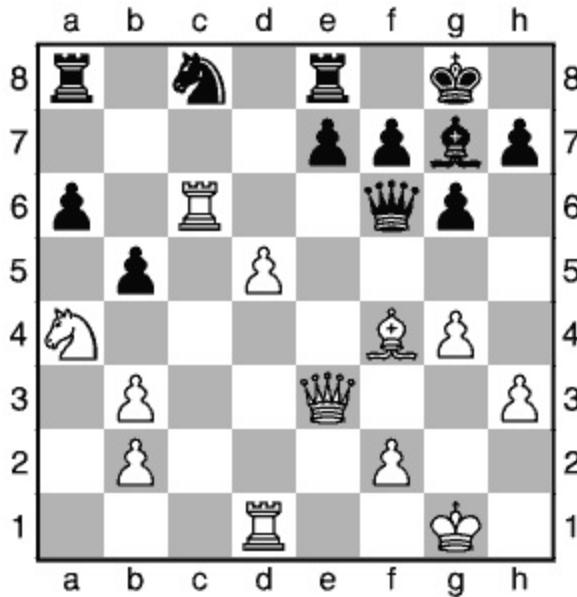
21 g4!

The knight not only refuses to go back, but hangs on grimly at a4 for another seven moves!

21...Qf6

The other possibility is 21...Qd7, but then 22 Rc7 Qd8 23 Nc5 Nd6 24 Rd7 Qb6 25 Bxе6 exd6 26 Qf4 Rf8 (26...f5 27 Ne6) 27 Qxd6 Qxd6 28 Rxе6 is very good for White owing to his passed d-pawn.

22 Rc6



Black to move

22...e6?

This mistake allows the d-pawn to run through and White wins by force. The only hope is 22...Nd6, after which I intended to paralyse Black by 23 Nb6 Rad8 24 Rd2. White then threatens Rc7, followed by Nd7 or Ra7, and Black has no decent moves at all, for example:

1) 24...e5 25 Bg5.

2) 24...a5 25 Rc7 Nc8 26 Nd7 Qa6 27 Nc5, followed by Nb7.

3) 24...h6 (trying to free himself a little by throwing away a pawn) 25 Bxh6 Bxh6 26 Qxh6 Qf3 27 Qe3 Qxe3 28 fxe3 is very promising for White: he would probably begin with Kf2-f3 and e4, then release his knight by Rc7 and Nd7.

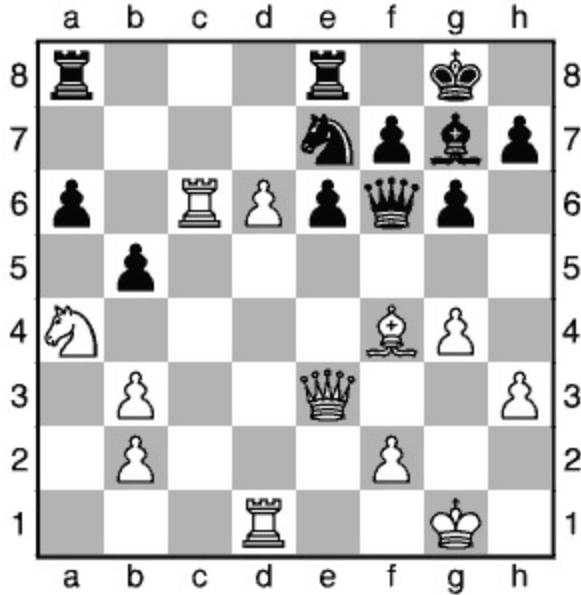
23 d6! Ne7

There is nothing better:

1) 23...bxa4 24 d7, followed by Bg5, loses at least the exchange.

2) 23...Na7 24 Rxa6 bxa4 25 d7 Rf8 26 Bg5 Qe5 27 Rxa7 is equally hopeless.

3) 23...Nxd6 24 Nb6 Nb7 (or 24...e5 25 Bg5) 25 Nxa8 Rxa8 26 Rc7 Na5 27 Rdd7 Rf8 28 Bd6 also wins easily for White.



White to move

The move played tries to neutralise the pawn by luring it to e7, but White liquidates into a won ending.

24 Bg5 Nd5

Or 24...Qe5 25 Bxe7 bxa4 26 d7 and wins.

25 Rxd5 exd5

26 Bxf6 Rxe3

27 fxe3 Bxf6

28 d7 Rd8

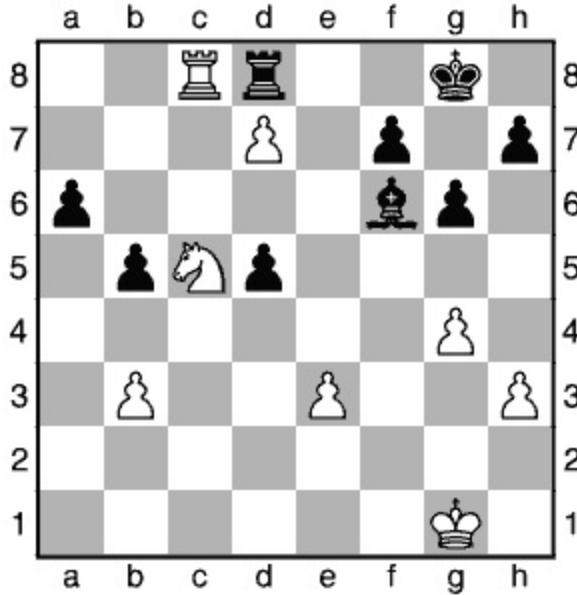
29 Nc5

Finally the attacked knight moves. Black must deal with his threatened bishop and this gives White time to win a piece by Rc8, for example 29...Kg7 30 Rc8 followed by 31 Rxd8 Bxd8 32 Nb7, or 29...Be7 30 Rc8 Kf8 31 Nb7.

29...Bxb2

Given that a piece is bound to be lost in any case, Black hopes to obtain two pawns in return for it.

30 Rc8 Bf6



White to move

31 Nb7!

This is the kind of finesse that turns a tricky win into a simple one. After 31 Rxd8+ Bxd8 32 Nb7 Bc7 33 d8Q+ Bxd8 34 Nxd8 a5 White should win the game, but Black has counterplay and operating with a knight against widely separated passed pawns is always awkward. At the very least the game would drag on and White would have to take a little care.

The text-move is much stronger because it drives the black rook to a useless square where it blocks its own king, and gives White the time to improve his position before cashing in the d-pawn.

31...Rf8

32 b4!

The second finesse cripples Black's pawn majority and ends his resistance. There is no hurry to round up the bishop; even after the desperate 32...a5 33 Nxa5 it cannot be saved.

32...Kg7

33 Kf2 Be7

34 Re8 Bh4+

35 Kf3 h6

36 Rxf8

White has improved his position as much as possible and now the liquidation wins without difficulty.

36...Kxf8

37 d8Q+ Bxd8

38 Nxd8 Ke7

39 Nb7 1-0

Black loses the a-pawn after 40 Nc5.

I finished with two more draws and a win against Torre to crawl up to joint last place with 5/13. In May I played in the second USSR v Rest of the World match, which was held in London, but without any great success. I scored a draw and loss against Tal, and a draw with Romanishin, before being dropped for the final round.

In July I went to play in an international Swiss event in Hamburg. I was not to know it at the time, but this was the start of a very successful run which lasted until well into 1985. After a slow start of 2½/4, I moved ahead with a burst of 5½/6. Two rounds before the end, the Romanian player Ghinda needed 1½/2 to reach the GM norm. I was bound to play him in the next round, but it was not clear who would be White. Ghinda offered me a draw the day before the game. I declined. Then, when I visited the shopping centre next to the hotel, Ghinda popped up and offered me a draw again, pointing out that he might be White, and I could not really expect to win with Black against him. I pointed out that I might be White, in which case my expectations might be increased. When the pairings were made, I was given White and the draw offers ceased. I won the game, which left me a point ahead of the field. Unfortunately, I lost in the last round to the French player Haïk, and so Haïk, Ernst and I finished joint first with 8/11.

Lloyds Bank also turned out well. I started with five consecutive wins, but could only draw my last four games, which allowed the pack to catch me. Chandler, Kudrin, Miles, Spassky and I all finished on 7/9, although I was given the title on tie-break. I then won the GLC/Chequers Weekend Open with 5½/6, thanks to a lucky win against Gutman in the last round (curiously, in the same event a year later I finished joint first with an even luckier last-round win against the same opponent!).

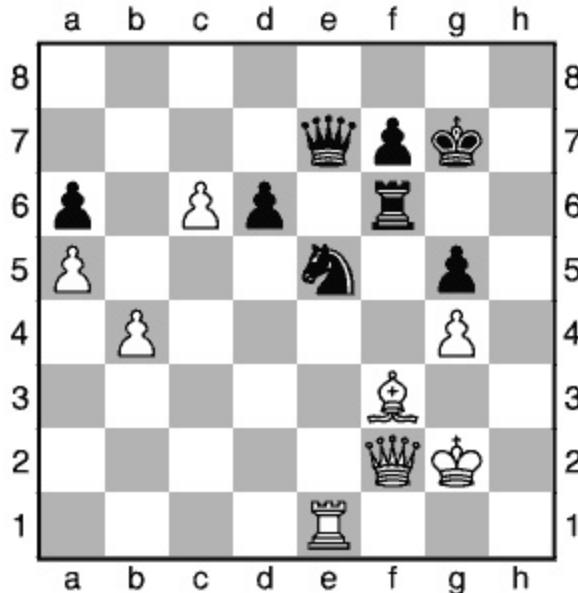
A few days afterwards I travelled to Zurich for a tournament to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the founding of the Zurich Chess Club. This tournament was one in a series held at 25-year intervals. Alekhine had won in 1934 and Tal in 1959, so there were illustrious predecessors.

The tournament was a 9-round, 22-player Swiss event. The names of my nine opponents indicate how strong this tournament was: Cramling, Kindermann, Hug, Seirawan, Bellon, Hort, Korchnoi, Gheorghiu and

Spassky. I went through the event without loss and scored 6/9. When the last round games were adjourned I was in the lead and, surprisingly, the only player who could catch me was the Spanish grandmaster Bellon. He had adjourned in a highly favourable position against Kindermann. I accompanied Kindermann to dinner and when he ordered a beer I suggested that this might not be wise in view of the fact that his unfinished game was due to be resumed soon. He commented that it made no difference as his position was completely lost. A quick look at the position proved the accuracy of his assessment, and I gave him permission to go ahead with his beer(s). When the game was resumed, however, Bellon started to play inaccurately and Kindermann soon had genuine drawing chances. I immediately ordered him a black coffee. The game did indeed end in a draw, giving me outright first place.

My next major event was the 1984 Olympiad. I started well enough with 2½/3, but the finish of my next game was remarkable.

This following diagram was the adjourned position, with Black sealing.



Black to move

J. Nunn – R. Dzindzihashvili

Thessaloniki Olympiad 1984

41...Qe6!

We had completely overlooked this move in adjournment analysis and had mistakenly thought the position to be good for White. The only

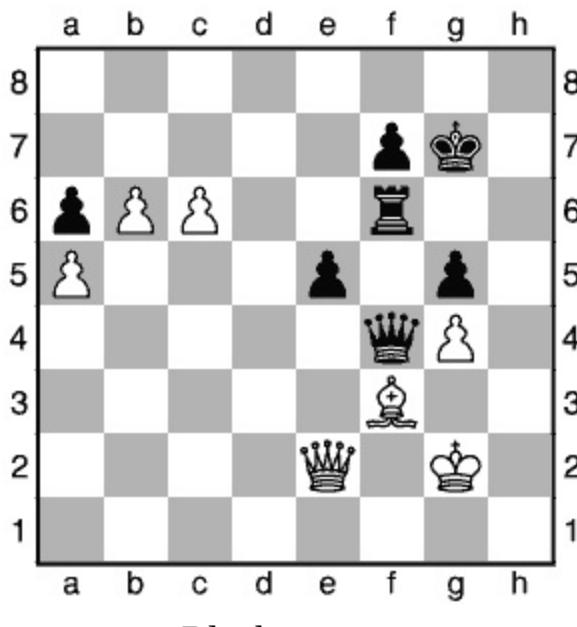
consolation was that Black had spent 35 minutes finding this move.

42 b5 Qc4 43 Rxe5 dxe5 44 Qe2!

The Americans had overlooked this, so now both players were on their own.

44...Qf4 45 b6

Not 45 c7 e4 and the c7-pawn falls.



Black to move

45...Rh6 46 Qe4 Qd2+

The game should certainly end in a draw with correct play. The simplest method is 46...Rh2+ 47 Kg1 Qg3+ 48 Bg2 Rxg2+ 49 Qxg2 Qe1+ with perpetual check, and, in view of his approaching time-trouble, this might have been Black's best option.

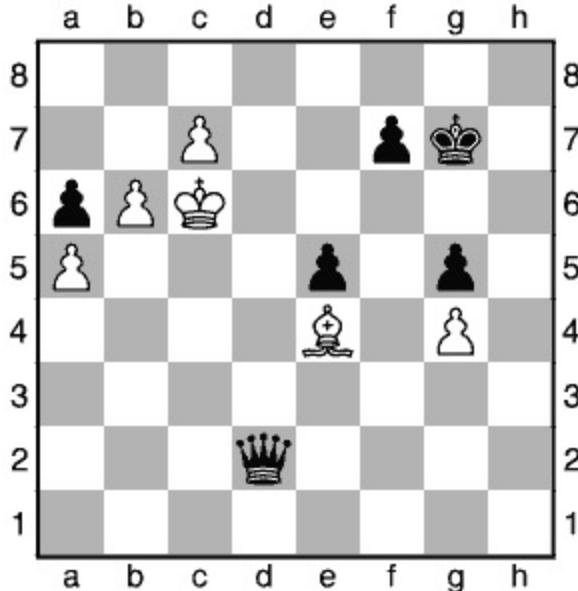
47 Be2 Qc3 48 c7 Qh3+ 49 Kf2 Rf6+?!

Black only risks losing with this move. 49...Qc3 was correct, and if 50 Bf3 then 50...Rh8 holding up the pawns, with an unclear position.

50 Bf3 Qh2+ 51 Kf1 Qh1+ 52 Ke2 Qh2+ 53 Kd3! Rd6+ 54 Kc4 Rd4+

In my notes at the time I thought that Black was already lost, but there is no win after 54...Qb2! 55 c8Q (55 Kc5 Rf6 is also drawn) 55...Rd2!! A remarkable position: despite White's huge material advantage, I cannot see more than a draw. It is curious that Black's best was (in effect) to sacrifice a queen. Instead he decides to win a queen, but this loses!

55 Kc5 Rxe4 56 Bxe4 Qd2 57 Kc6



Black to move

The time control has been reached, only to reveal that Black is dead lost. He cannot prevent Bd5 or Bf5, followed by the promotion of various white pawns.

57...Qf4 58 Bd5 1-0

I then drew with Ribli and won against Sosonko. An amusing episode occurred prior to the next game, in which I faced Gheorghiu. The Romanian grandmaster is very keen on agreeing draws before the game (a habit common in the early 1980s but which has almost disappeared today). When playing Gheorghiu in the past I had always accepted these before games in which I was Black and rejected them when I was White. This policy had turned out very well for me and I had a score of almost exactly 75% against Gheorghiu. On this occasion I was Black, so I knew perfectly well what would happen if I encountered Gheorghiu before the game. I cautiously poked my head around the door of the playing hall – no Gheorghiu in sight. I hastily made my way to the board, but Gheorghiu suddenly appeared from behind a pillar and intercepted me: ‘John, are we friends today?’

‘I’m afraid my captain has given me strict instructions not to be your friend today.’

‘You want to play!’ cried Gheorghiu, his voice becoming squeaky with astonishment.

In a very sharp position, Gheorghiu missed a complicated win and lost. The next round I won against Kovačević, and then I faced Ulf

Andersson:

Game 23

J. Nunn – U. Andersson

Thessaloniki Olympiad 1984

Sicilian, Taimanov

1 e4 c5

2 Nf3 e6

3 d4 cxd4

4 Nxd4 Nc6

5 Nc3 a6

6 f4

I had recommended this move in my book *Beating the Sicilian* (first edition), but apparently Andersson hadn't read it because he thought for twenty minutes about his reply! That may seem surprising because this is now quite a popular line, but 6 f4 was an unusual move in 1984.

6...Qc7

There are many other possibilities; readers should refer to a specialised opening book for coverage of the extensive theory on this line.

7 Be2 Nxd4

One of the ideas behind 6 f4 is that if Black plays 7...d6 and 8...Nf6 White can reach a Scheveningen in which Black is already committed to ...a6, ...Nc6 and ...Qc7. Since some of the lines considered critical involve the omission of one (or more) of these moves, Black's options are severely curtailed. Another interesting plan against 7...d6 is to play Be3, Qd2 and 0-0-0.

With the text-move Black avoids the possible capture at c6 and plans to drive the white queen back later.

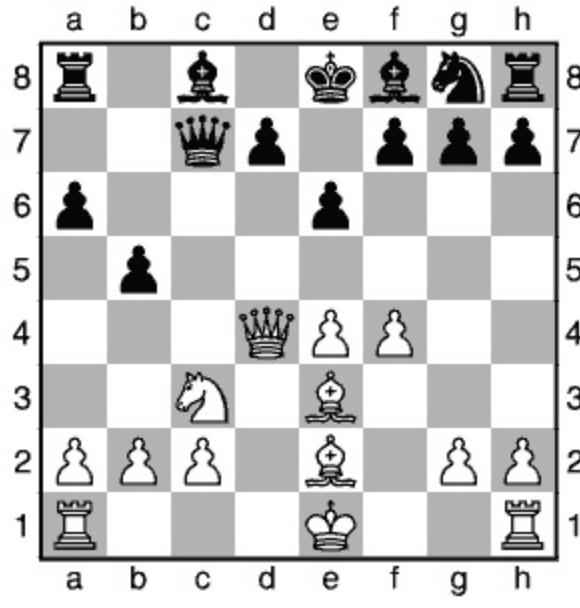
8 Qxd4 b5

The other obvious continuation is 8...Ne7, against which White has quite an elegant manoeuvre to seize control of the dark squares: 9 Qf2! Nc6 10 Be3 b5 11 0-0 Be7 12 e5, followed by Ne4 and Bc5. In *Beating the Sicilian* I did not consider the move 8...b5, so from this point on both players were on their own.

9 Be3

As Taimanov points out, 9 a4 b4 10 Na2 Qxc2 11 Nxb4 Qc5! is fine for

Black. In any case, White will sooner or later have to cover c5 to prevent ...Bc5 by Black, so Be3 is a natural move.



Black to move

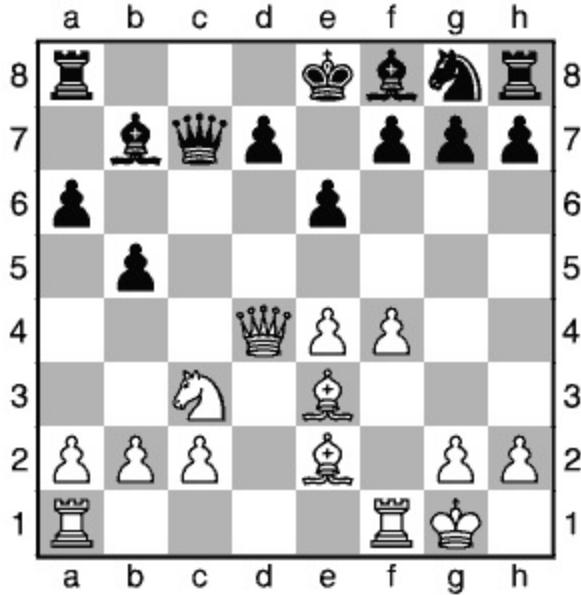
9...Bb7

9...b4 10 Na4 Qxc2 is bad because of 11 Nb6 Rb8 12 Rc1, trapping the queen, while 9...b4 without the capture at c2 merely exposes the b6-square, this being one occasion when a4 is a good square for a knight.

The only other move which suggests itself is 9...Ne7. That enables Black to complete his development more conveniently, but it depends on a tactical factor: 9...Ne7 10 Bxb5 axb5 11 Nxb5 is unplayable because of 11...Qa5+. Note that once White has castled this variation wins for him; therefore Black must play the ...Ne7 immediately or not at all. After 9...Ne7 one possible variation would be 10 0-0 Nc6 11 Qd2 (11 Qd3 Be7 12 e5 Bb7 13 Rad1 Rc8 14 a3 Na5 15 Kh1 Nc4 16 Bc1 Bc6 17 Ne4 0-0 18 Bf3 Rfd8 was unclear in Chandler-Zapata, Amsterdam OHRA 1987) 11...Bb7 12 Rad1 Be7 13 a4 b4 14 Nd5! exd5 15 exd5 Qd6 16 dxc6 Qxd2 17 Rxd2 Bxc6 18 Bf3 with a small advantage to White.

10 0-0

In *Secrets of Grandmaster Play*, I rather naïvely wrote ‘Not 10 0-0-0 because after 10...Rc8 the threat of 11...b4 is very hard to meet.’ Now, of course, 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Rd2 is a main line with masses of theory.



Black to move

10...Rc8

Again 10...b4 (now 10...Ne7? loses a pawn after 11 Bxb5) 11 Na4 Qxc2 is far too dangerous: 12 Nb6 Rd8 13 Bf3 Qc7 14 Rac1, followed by Rfd1, with a huge lead in development.

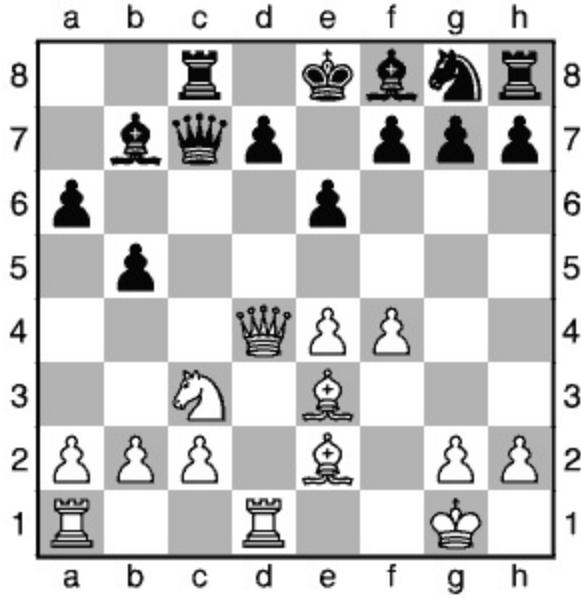
11 Rad1

Alternatively:

1) **11 a3** (too slow, and rather unnecessary as ...b4 is not a threat)

11...Nf6 12 Bf3 Be7 13 Rad1 (or 13 e5 Bxf3, as in the main line) 13...0-0 14 e5 (if 14 Rf2, to cover the c-pawn, then 14...Bxa3 15 Nxb5 Bxb2! is good for Black) 14...Bxf3 15 gxf3 (15 Rxf3 Ng4 16 Kh1 Nxe3 17 Qxe3 d6 is worse; White would miss his dark-squared bishop) 15...Nh5 16 Qxd7 (otherwise Black gets a positional plus by ...g6 and ...Ng7) 16...Bc5! 17 Rfe1 Nxf4 18 Qxc7 Rxc7 19 Bxc5 Rxc5, and White has several pawn weaknesses which eventually cost him the game in Ghizdavu-Matera, USA 1976.

2) **11 Rfd1** and now:

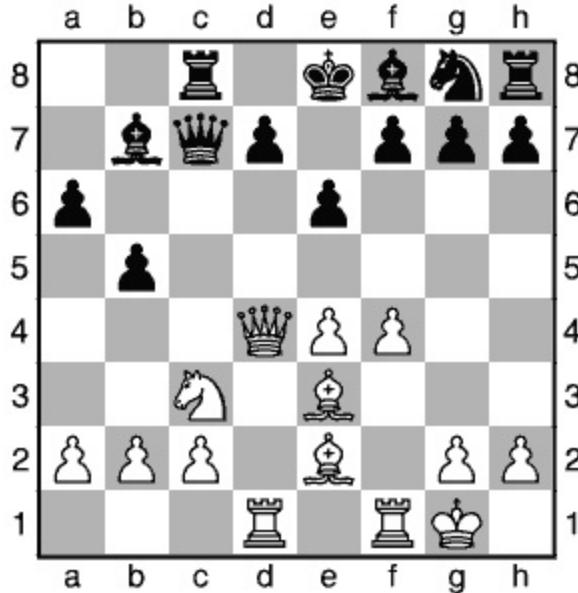


Black to move

2a) **11...Nf6** (the game continuation is bad with the rook on a1) 12 e5 Nd5 13 Nxd5 Bxd5 14 a4! (this is the point) 14...Qb7 (14...Bc4 15 Bf3 bxa4 16 Rxa4 Bb5 17 Raa1 Be7 18 c4 Bc6 19 Rxa6 Bxf3 20 gxf3 was almost winning for White in Bersoult-Letreguilly, French Team Championship 1991) 15 axb5 axb5 16 Ra7 Qb8 17 Qb6 with a clear advantage for White, Illescas-J.Polgar, Amsterdam 1989.

2b) **11...Bc5** 12 Qxc5 Qxc5 13 Bxc5 Rxc5 14 Rd4 Ne7 (14...Nf6 15 a4 bxa4 16 Rb4 Bc8 17 Rbxa4 Ke7 was promising for White in A.Rodriguez-Illescas, Amsterdam 1989, but 18 Bxa6?! Bxa6 19 Rxa6 Rxc3! 20 bxc3 Nxe4 21 Ra8 Rxa8 22 Rxa8 Nxc3 eventually let Black scrape a draw) 15 Rad1 and now: 2b1) **15...d5** 16 exd5 exd5 17 Re1 (17 Bg4 0-0 18 a4 Rd8 19 R1d2 Kf8 20 Bf3 Bc6 21 g4 bxa4 22 Nxa4 is also slightly better for White, Xie Jun-A.Marić, Borzhomi Women's Candidates' 1990) 17...0-0 18 Bg4 Rc7 19 a4 bxa4 20 Rxa4 Rd8 21 Rd1 with a small advantage for White, Kindermann-Lau, Munich 1988.

2b2) **15...Bc6** (a better move) 16 R1d3 a5 17 a3 e5 18 fxe5 Rxe5 19 Bf3?! (19 Bg4 is level) 19...0-0 20 h3 h5 21 Nd5 Bxd5 22 exd5 Nf5 23 Re4 Rxe4 24 Bxe4 Nd6 with advantage to Black, Xie Jun-A.Marić, Belgrade/Beijing Women's Candidates' play-off (2) 1991.



Black to move

11...Nf6

There is a possible exchange sacrifice here but, although it is complicated, White gains the advantage: 11...Bc5 12 Qxg7 Bxe3+ 13 Kh1 and now:

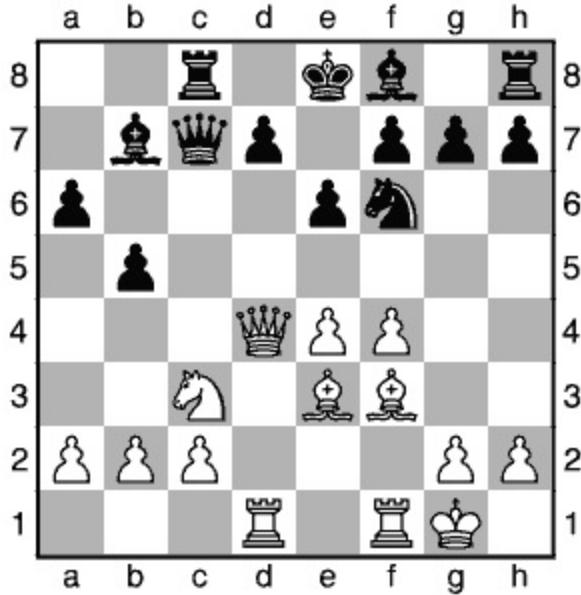
1) **13...Bxf4 14 Bh5!** (intending to take the rook with check) 14...Nh6 (there is nothing better) 15 Qxh8+ Ke7 16 Qxh7, threatening 17 Ne2, and leaving Black with no compensation for the material.

2) **13...b4 14 f5!** (14 Qxh8 is less clear after 14...Ke7 – see also line ‘3’) 14...bxc3 15 Bh5! with a decisive attack, for example 15...Nh6 16 Qxh8+ mates, or 15...Qc6 16 fxe6.

3) **13...Ke7!** (relatively best) 14 f5! (better than 14 Qxh8 Nf6 15 Qg7 Bxf4, for example 16 Bxb5 axb5 17 Nxb5 Qxc2 18 Nd6 Rf8 favours Black; 14 Bh5 Rf8 15 e5 b4 16 Ne2 Nh6 17 Qxh6 Rhg8 is unclear) 14...Bf4 15 fxe6 dxe6 16 Rxf4 (16 Bh5 Rf8 17 Qxh8 Nf6 18 Qg7 Nxh5 19 Qg4 Qe5 is fine for Black) 16...Qxf4 17 Rf1 Qxf1+ 18 Bxf1 Nf6 19 e5 Nd7 20 Qg5+ Kf8 21 Qf4 with some advantage to White.

12 e5

Since Black appears to have a forced draw after this move, White should consider the alternative 12 Bf3 and now:



Black to move

1) 12...Bc5 13 Qxc5 Qxc5 14 Bxc5 Rxc5 15 e5 Bxf3 16 Rxf3 b4 17 exf6 bxc3 18 fxg7 Rg8 19 b3 Rxg7 20 Rdd3 and White will be a pawn up in the ending, M.Schlosser-Pira, Cannes Open 1990.

2) 12...b4 13 Na4 (13 e5!? bxc3 14 exf6 Rg8 15 b3 Bxf3 16 Rxf3 gxf6 17 Qxf6 is unclear) 13...Qxc2 14 Qa7! (14 Nb6 Bc5 15 Nxc8 Bxd4 16 Nd6+ Ke7 17 Rxd4 is not adequate) 14...Bc6 15 Nb6 Bc5 16 Bxc5 Qxc5+ 17 Kh1 Rd8 18 Qc7 with good compensation for the pawn, *e.g.* 18...Qb5 19 e5 Bxf3 20 gxf3 Nd5 21 Nxd5 exd5 22 Qd6 favours White.

3) 12...h5! (Black's best option) and now:

3a) 13 Rd2!? is suggested by Taimanov.

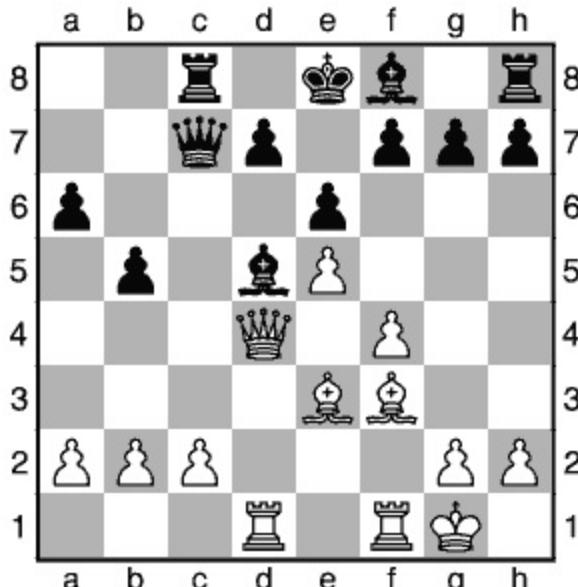
3b) 13 h3 h4 14 e5 Nh5 15 Bxb7 Qxb7 16 Qe4 (16 f5 Ng3 17 fxe6 dxe6 18 Bg5 Qc7 favoured Black in Velimirović-Andersson, Reggio Emilia 1986) 16...Qxe4 17 Nxe4 Rxc2 18 Rc1 Rc6! and Black may be slightly better.

3c) 13 Kh1!? Be7 14 Rd2 d6 15 a4 (15 f5 may be better) 15...b4! and now Nunn-Andersson, Szirak Interzonal 1987 continued 16 Nd1? 0-0 17 Nf2 e5 18 Qd3 Rfd8 19 Qe2 d5! with advantage to Black. The critical line is 16 Qxb4 d5 17 Qd4 dxe4 18 Bxe4 Rd8 19 Qa7 Nxe4 (19...Rxd2 20 Bxb7 Rxc2 21 Bb6 Qd6 22 Rd1 wins for White) 20 Nxe4 Rxd2 (not 20...Qc6?? 21 Rxd8+ and Black can resign) 21 Nxd2 0-0 when Black has fair compensation for the pawn in the form of two active bishops and some pressure against White's ragged queenside pawns.

12...Nd5

13 Nxd5 Bxd5

14 Bf3



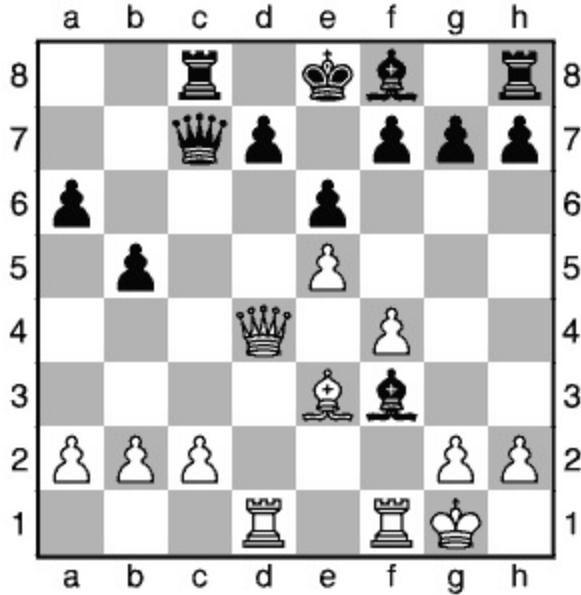
Black to move

14...Bxf3?

This apparently natural move turns out to be a serious error. The correct continuation is 14...Bc5! 15 Qxc5 Qxc5 16 Bxc5 Bxf3 17 Rxf3 Rxc5 18 c3 (18 Rfd3 Rxc2 19 Rxd7 0-0 led to a quick draw in Nunn-Andersson, Dortmund 1987) 18...Ke7 19 Rfd3 Rd8 and now Black can undermine the enemy pawn chain before White can consolidate his grip: 1) **20 Kf2** f6 21 exf6+ gxf6 22 Rd6 (22 g4 a5 23 h4 h6 24 Ke3 d5 25 Rg1 Rc4 26 Rd4 e5 27 Rxc4 bxc4 28 g5 hxg5 29 hxg5 exf4+ 30 Kxf4 fxg5+ 31 Rxg5 Kd6 should be a draw, Landa-Tunik, Russian Championship 1992) 22...a5 23 Kf3 b4 24 cxb4 axb4 25 Rb6 Rc4 26 g4 Rdc8 27 h4 h6 28 Rb7 R8c7 29 Rb8, Prandstetter-Pekarek, Prague 1989, and now 29...Rc8 is level.

2) **20 Rd6** g5 21 Rxa6 gxf4 22 Rf1 Rxe5 23 Rxf4 Rd5 24 h3 Rc8 25 a4 Rc4 26 Rxc4 bxc4 27 Rb6 Ra5 28 Rb4 d5 29 Kf2 Kf6 is good for Black, Brandner-Fogarasi, European Junior Championship, Arnhem 1989.

The conclusion is that White cannot gain the advantage in this ending and so 14...Bc5 is a clear equalising continuation.



White to move

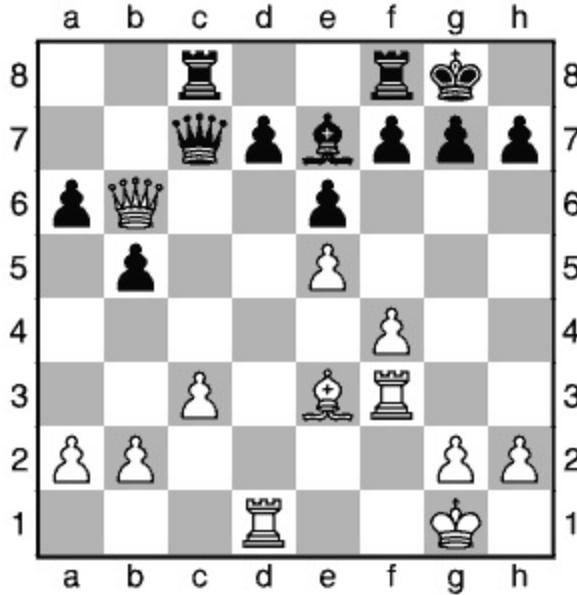
15 Rxf3 Be7

Black has no fully satisfactory move. After 15...Bc5 White can play 16 Qd2! (16 Qxc5 Qxc5 17 Bxc5 Rxc5 transposes into the previous note; the point of 14...Bc5 is that it cuts out the reply 15 Qd2 on account of 15...Bxe3+ 16 Qxe3 Bxf3, followed by 17...Qxc2) 16...0-0 (now White can meet 16...Bxe3+ by 17 Rxe3, and Black cannot take on c2) 17 c3 with some advantage, for example 17...Rfd8 (17...f6 allows 18 Qxd7 and the e-pawn is *en prise* with check) 18 Bxc5 Qxc5+ 19 Kh1, followed by Rd3, and ...d5 is prevented. Then Black would have no compensation for his backward d-pawn. Note that with queens on the board Black cannot contemplate the sequence ...f6; exf6 gxf6, since his king would become too exposed.

16 c3 0-0

Black must have been happy to castle at last, making use of the fact that White cannot take at d7 (17 Qxd7? Rfd8), but apparently Andersson had overlooked my next move.

17 Qb6!



Black to move

This is the only move to cause Black difficulties, as otherwise ...Rfd8 and ...d6 eliminates his only weakness.

17...b4

After long thought Black decides to give up a pawn. This may seem a drastic decision, but the position was uncomfortable in any case, for example 17...Qxb6 18 Bxb6 loses the d7-pawn after 18...Rc6 19 Rxd7 or 18...Bd8 19 Bf2 Rc7 20 Rfd3, and other moves do nothing about the a6-pawn. During the game I was worried that Black could mix things up by 17...f6, but after 18 exf6 Bxf6 19 Qxa6 Black doesn't have anything tangible for the pawn. Finally, 17...Qc6 18 Qxc6 dxc6 19 Rd7 Rfe8 (19...Bd8 20 Bc5 Re8 21 Ra7) 20 Rf1 Rcd8 21 Rfd1 Kf8 22 Kf2 puts Black in a kind of zugzwang. If he exchanges rooks he cannot prevent Ra7 or Rc7, while if 22...Rc8, then 23 Ra7 Ra8 24 Rdd7 and he is paralysed.

Andersson takes his only other chance; he sacrifices the d-pawn, opens the c-file for his pieces and tries to hold a rook ending.

18 cxb4 Qxb6

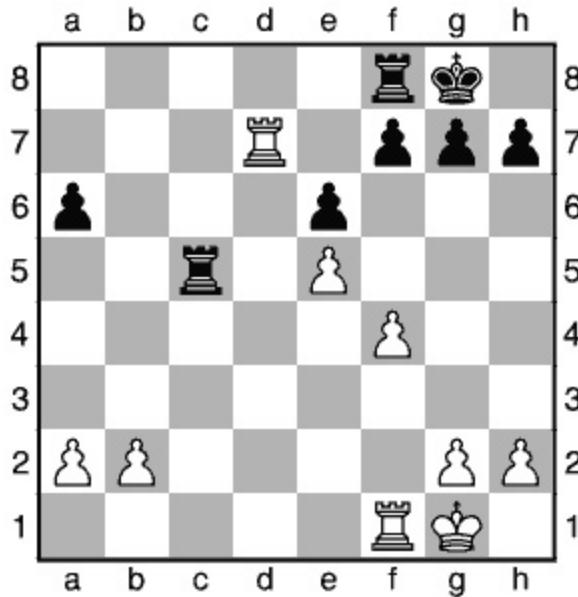
19 Bxb6 Bxb4

20 Rxd7 Rc1+

21 Rf1 Bc5+

Black is obliged to exchange his awkward bishop. 21...Rc2 22 a3 Bd2 23 b4 is unpleasant because the d2-bishop has no squares, while White's own bishop can settle on c5.

22 Bxc5 Rxc5



White to move

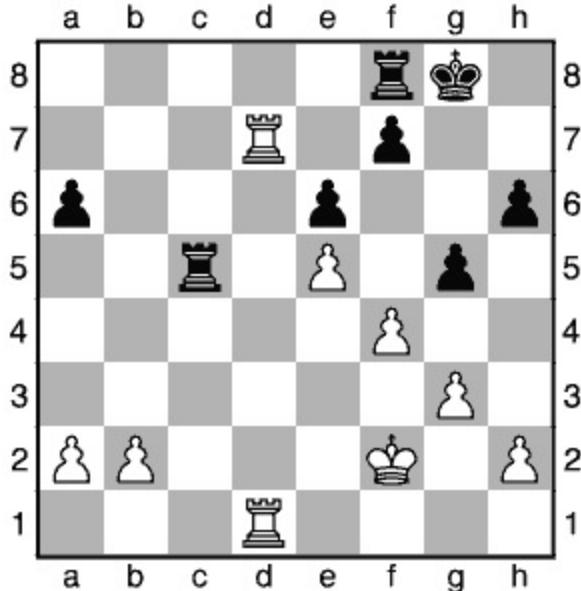
23 Rfd1 h6!

Andersson is a great endgame player, and until his slight error at move 42 he puts up the maximum resistance in trying circumstances.

Here he is preparing to attack the one weakness in White's position, the pawn chain f4-e5. The reason why this is a weakness is that after ...g5 White will either have to accept an isolated e-pawn or defend by g3. In the latter case an exchange at f4 will leave the f4-pawn weak and the h2-pawn isolated. The first could become a problem if Black's king could reach f5, while the latter might be exploited by a black rook penetrating to the rear of White's position. Of course this plan also isolates Black's h-pawn, but he has to risk that. His task is to stir things up, create as many loose pawns as possible and try to reduce the overall number of pawns to a minimum.

24 g3 g5

25 Kf2



Black to move

White would like to exchange a pair of rooks, but at moment he needs both rooks to be able to meet ...Rc4 by R7d4 and ...Rc2 by R1d2. Once the king is at e3, defending both f4 and d2, White will be in a position to swap rooks.

25...Kg7

25...f6 is an interesting alternative; quite a few pawns are likely to disappear and White has to find the most accurate response. On the other hand, Black is putting his own king in jeopardy.

White would continue 26 exf6 and then:

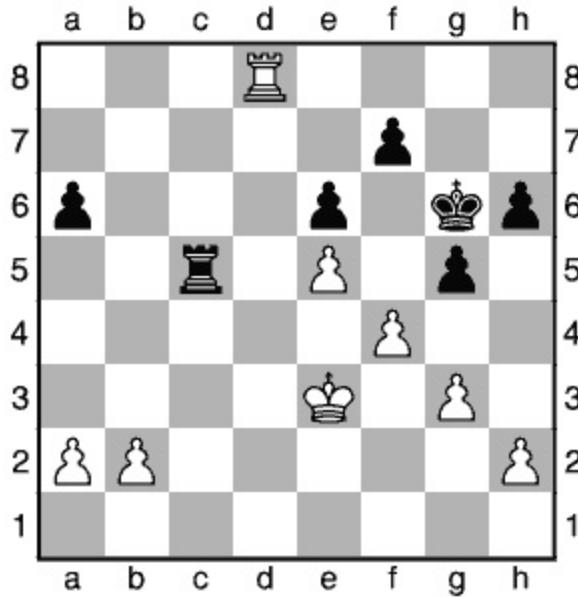
1) **26...Rxf6 27 Rb7!** (covering the b-pawn to avoid being left with only edge pawns after any subsequent pawn massacre, and also preparing mating threats) 27...Rc2+ (or 27...gxf4 28 Rd8+, leading to a similar ending to the game, but with Black's king confined to the back rank) 28 Ke3 (better than 28 Kf3 Rf7!) 28...Rxh2 29 Rd8+ Rf8 30 Rdd7 gxf4+ 31 Kf3! Rc8 32 gxf4 and Black's position remains very awkward.

2) **26...gxf4 27 Rg7+!** (this will gain a tempo by setting up a back-rank mate threat) 27...Kh8 28 gxf4 Rf5 (28...Rxf6 29 Ra7 Rxf4+ 30 Ke3 Rf8 31 Rdd7, threatening mate and the a-pawn, and obtaining two connected passed pawns; 28...Rc2+ 29 Ke3 Rxb2 30 Rdg1! gives White a decisive attack) 29 Rdd7 Rxf4+ 30 Ke3 R8xf6 31 Rge7 Rf3+ 32 Kd4 R3f4+ 33 Kc5 R4f5+ 34 Kb4 and White should win. He can choose the right moment to swap one pair of rooks, win Black's a-pawn and start his connected passed pawns rolling.

26 Ke3 Kg6

27 Rd8 Rxd8

28 Rxd8



Black to move

28...Rc2

If Black plays for a direct attack by 28...gxf4+ 29 gxf4 Kf5 (29...Rc1 30 Rg8+ Kf5 31 Rg7), then White replies 30 Rd7, and if 30...f6 then 31 Rf7.

29 Rd2 Rc1

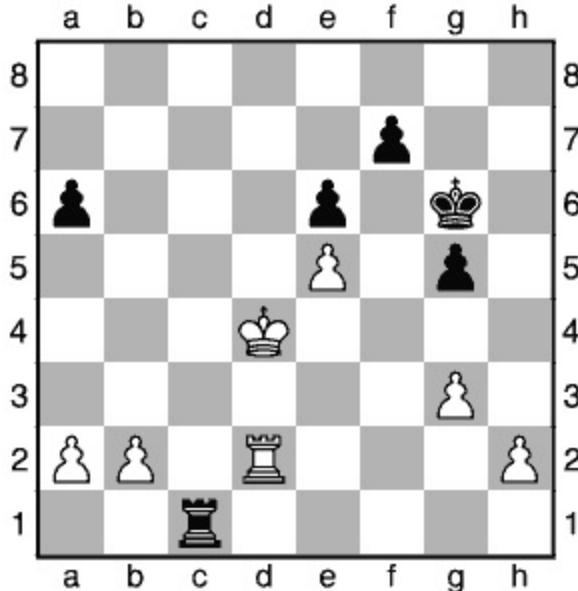
Or 29...gxf4+ 30 gxf4 Rc1 31 Rg2+ Kf5 32 Rg7 Re1+ 33 Kf2, as before.

So far so good; White has consolidated his position. However, to make progress he must use his king aggressively and that means the f-pawn must be liquidated otherwise, after 30 Kd4 gxf4 31 gxf4 Kf5, for example, it would be too much of a liability.

30 fxg5! hxg5

Although this gives White the chance to make a passed pawn by a (much) later h4, Black would be even worse off after 30...Kxg5 31 Rf2 tying the king to the defence of f7.

31 Kd4



Black to move

Rook and pawn endings with an extra pawn are often very difficult to win, even when (as here) the defender has no compensation for the pawn. As in all endings, the creation of a passed pawn is the key, but rook and pawn endings are peculiar in that the circumstances must be favourable for the passed pawn to be effective. If the defender's rook can immediately move behind the passed pawn, for example, White will find that the pawn is not only unable to advance but even becomes a liability which needs protection. Another important factor is the relative position of the kings when a passed pawn is created. If the defender's king is absent and White's rook is supporting the passed pawn from behind, then Black will have to block the pawn with his rook, reducing its mobility drastically. If, in addition, White's king is supporting the pawn, he often doesn't need the rook; the king can force the pawn through on its own.

Since White has the chance to make a passed pawn on either side of the board, he will aim to do one of the following things:

- 1) Force Black's king to one side of the board. Then White can make a passed pawn on the other side. It follows that Black's king should stay in the centre until White has shown his hand.
- 2) Try to get the kings on opposite sides of the board. If White's king is on the queenside and Black's is on the kingside, then a queenside pawn push will usually win easily.

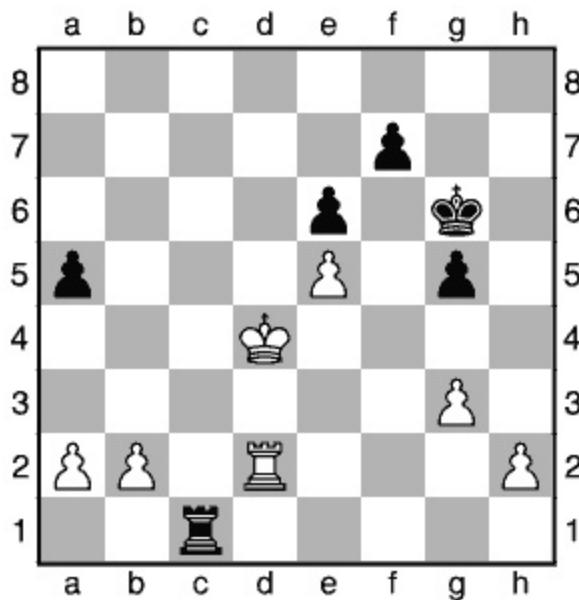
However, White's task is certainly not easy and although I think White should win with best play he has plenty of chances to go wrong. For the

moment Black keeps his rook actively placed on the back rank, ready to switch behind a passed pawn if necessary.

31...a5!

The first of two very good moves which make the winning task as difficult as possible. Against passive play White can make a passed b-pawn at once, because his king is on hand and its rival is far away. The process would run: 31...Kg7 32 b4 Kg6 33 Rb2 Kf5 (or 33...Rd1+ 34 Kc5 Re1 35 Kb6 and the queenside pawns will decide) 34 Rf2+ Kg6 35 Rf6+ Kg7 36 Rf3 (taking advantage of the fact that a3 is vacant to drive the black rook into a passive position) 36...Rc2 37 Ra3 Rc6 (again 37...Rxh2 38 Rxa6 would be hopeless) 38 Rc3 Rb6 39 Kc4 Rb5 (or 39...Rc6+ 40 Kb3) 40 Re3 Kg6 41 a4 Rd5 42 b5 and wins.

After 31...a5 the creation of a passed pawn is not so easy; White has to inch forward by b3, Rb2, a3 and b4 (not a3 at once on account of ...a4!), and during this procedure White cannot use a3 for his rook.



White to move

32 b3 f6!

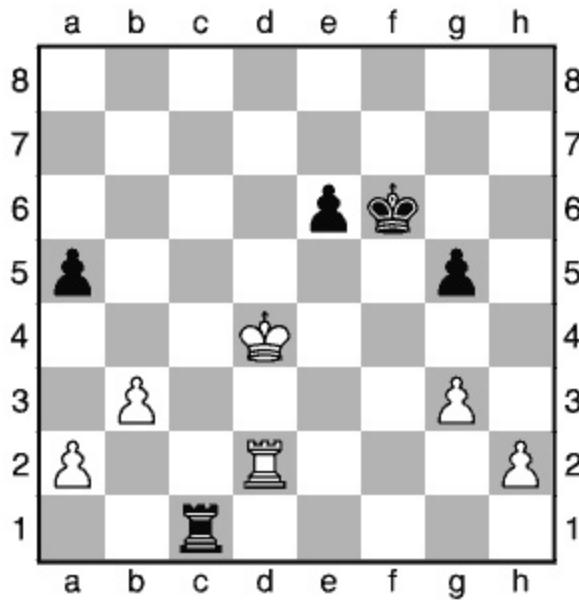
Again the best chance, bringing his king nearer to the b-pawn and making a passed pawn of his own. The passive defence would now lose as follows: 32...Kg7 (32...Kf5 33 Rf2+ is no improvement) 33 a3 (White has to sacrifice a pawn, since 33 Rb2 Rd1+ 34 Kc4 Re1 is awkward) and now:

1) 33...Rb1 34 Kc4 Re1 35 b4 axb4 36 axb4 Rxe5 37 b5 Re1 38 Rb2 Rc1+ 39 Kd4 Rc8 40 b6 Rb8 41 b7 Kf6 42 Kc5 Kf5 43 Kc6 e5 44 Kc7

Rxb7+ 45 Kxb7 Kg4 46 Kc6 e4 47 Kd5 and wins.

2) 33...Ra1 34 b4 Rxa3 35 b5 Rb3 36 Kc5 Kf8 (if necessary, White hides his king from checks on the a-file) 37 b6 Ke7 38 Kc6 a4 39 b7 a3 40 Ra2 g4 (or 40...Kd8 41 Rxa3) 41 Kc7 and wins (not 41 Rxa3?? Rxa3 42 b8Q Rc3+ and Black wins!).

33 exf6 Kxf6



White to move

34 Rf2+

Strictly speaking, this is not the best move because White can force a win by the immediate 34 a3: 34...Ra1 (34...e5+ 35 Kd5 Rc3 36 Rf2+ Ke7 37 Rb2 Re3 38 b4 is far worse) 35 b4 Rxa3 36 b5 Rb3 (this time 36...e5+ 37 Kd5 Rb3 38 Rf2+ Kg6 39 Kc6 e4 would simply transpose into the main line) 37 Rf2+! (this check is no optional extra – the king must be driven back; after 37 Kc5? e5 38 b6 e4 39 Kc6 e3, followed by ...Ke5, Black's pawn would be as good as White's) and now: 1) 37...Ke7 38 Kc5 Rc3+ (White wins after either 38...Kd7 39 Ra2 or 38...a4 39 Ra2 a3 40 Kc4 Rf3 41 Kb4) 39 Kb6 a4 40 Ka7 a3 41 Ra2! (not 41 b6 Rc4! 42 b7 Ra4+ 43 Kb6 a2!) and Black cannot stop the b-pawn.

2) 37...Kg6 (Black intends to support the e-pawn with his king) 38 Kc5 e5 39 b6 e4 40 Kc6 e3 41 Rf1! (41 Re2 Kf5 gives Black counterplay) 41...a4 (41...e2 42 Re1 Rb2 43 b7 a4 44 Rxe2) 42 b7 a3 43 Kc7 e2 44 Re1 a2 45 b8Q Rxb8 46 Kxb8 Kf5 47 h3 (forcing Black to sacrifice) 47...a1Q 48 Rxa1 Ke4 49 h4 and wins.

Clearly, the variations arising after 34 a3 are very complex and the slightest miscalculation would mean disaster. In fact, I didn't even bother to look at this line during the game. The reason was that the adjournment was approaching and I felt sure that my position was won if played correctly. Therefore the most reliable plan was to adjourn, gain the benefit of my colleagues' advice (this being a team tournament) and analyse as thoroughly as possible. Entering into a line such as that given above without sufficient time on the clock to analyse it carefully would have been reckless indeed. So from now until move 40 I was content to improve the position of my pieces, at the same time setting a few traps.

34...Ke7

35 Ke4

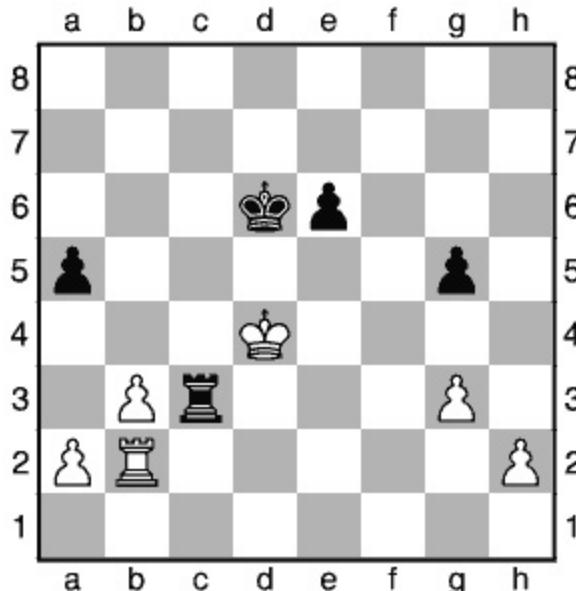
Threatening Kf3-g4.

35...Rc3

36 Rb2 Kd6

37 Kd4

Not 37 a3 because the black king is close enough to blockade the passed pawn which would arise after b4, Rxa3; b5.



Black to move

The text-move is an attempt to drive the black rook off the third rank.

37...Rf3

38 Ke4

38 Rd2 is tempting, but after 38...Rf1! 39 Kc4+ Kc6 40 Re2 Rc1+ the

black king returns to the d-file and White hasn't made progress.

38...Rc3

39 Rd2+ Ke7

40 Rd4!

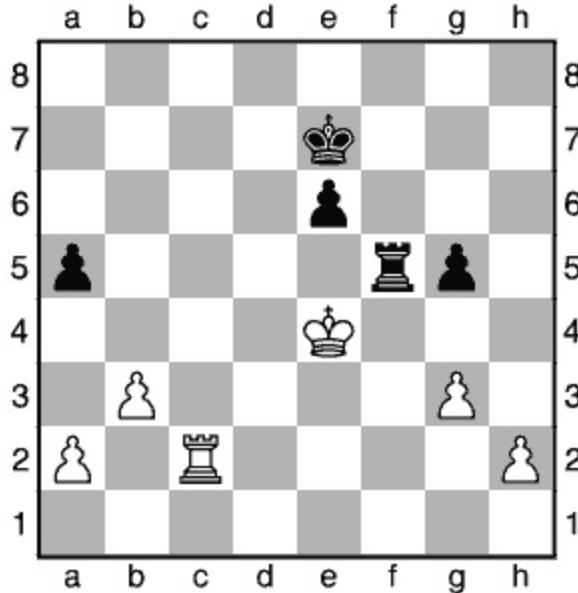
In an ending such as this, just as in a complex middlegame position, there are no 'best' moves. Different players would choose different moves, but I think that all strong players would adopt a similar type of strategy, namely gradually to improve the placing of White's king and rook, so that when some positive action starts White's chances will be maximised. The exact nature of the positive action must remain flexible to accommodate the many different defensive postures which Black can adopt. If, despite all this, White still fails to win then it is likely that the position wasn't won to begin with, but at least Black will have been forced to work hard. The point of 40 Rd4! is to drive Black's rook off the third rank, since White cannot make progress while Black is attacking the front (i.e. b3-and g3-) pawns (moreover, Kf3-g4 is impossible). As we have seen, White cannot achieve this with the king alone, so the rook has to come to c4 to drive the enemy rook away. The threat is 41 Rc4, so Black must move along the c-file. 40...Rc2 41 Ra4 would force 41...Rc5 as Black cannot allow White to make two connected passed pawns, so he decides to go to c5 immediately.

40...Rc5

41 Rc4 Rf5

It doesn't matter which square Black moves to; White's king controls d3 and f3, so the rook cannot return to the third rank. Black chose f5 to prevent a possible Kf3-g4.

42 Rc2



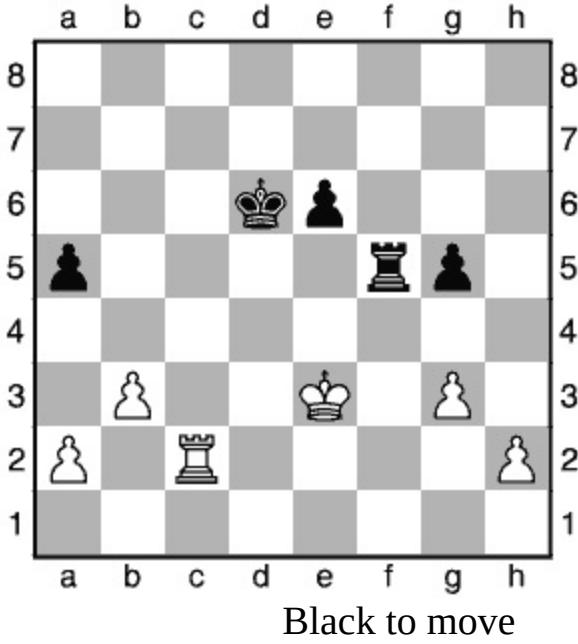
Black to move

The f3-square is out of bounds and 42...Rf1 is impossible because of 43 Rc5, so for the moment Black's rook cannot regain an active position.

42...Kf6?!

By defending the g5-pawn Black prepares ...Rf1, but the king moves a crucial step further away from the queenside, so White is able to revert to his plan of preparing b4 and win fairly comfortably.

The strongest defence is 42...Kd6!, which also prepares ...Rf1, but keeps the king flexibly posted in the centre of the board. Against this White has a wide choice of possible plans, but the best idea is probably to keep playing for a gradual improvement of piece position. After 42...Kd6 I think the most accurate move is 43 Ke3!. Apart from its more positive aspects of controlling f2 and opening the fourth rank for the rook (43...g4 44 Rc4, for instance), it puts Black practically in zugzwang. There are numerous possible replies:



Black to move

1) 43...Re5+ 44 Kf3 Ke7 (otherwise White has Kg4 and Rf2, cutting off the king, and only then h4) 45 Kg4 Kf6 46 Kh5! and Black is tied up because he dare not abandon his g-pawn and allow White two connected passed pawns. The continuation might be 46...Rf5 47 Rc3 (a little more convenient than 47 a3 Rf3 48 Rb2; White can take his time) 47...Rf2 48 h3 Rf5 (48...Rh2 49 Rf3+ and 50 g4) 49 a3 Rb5 (or 49...Rf1 50 b4, always relying on the fact that the black rook cannot leave the defence of the g-pawn) 50 Rf3+ Kg7 51 b4 axb4 52 axb4 Rd5 53 Rc3 Kf6 54 Rc5 Rd4 55 b5 and wins.

2) 43...Rb5 (43...Rd5? 44 Rd2) 44 Kf3 Rb4 45 Rc4, followed by Kg4.

3) 43...Rf1 44 Rf2 and since 44...Rd1 (heading for d4) is unplayable Black again cannot prevent Kf3-g4.

4) 43...Rf8 44 h4 (now quite appropriate because the black rook will have to go in front of the h-pawn, taking two moves to reach h5, and because 44...g4, looking for counterplay by ...Rf3+, is met by 45 Rf2 followed by 46 Rf4) 44...gxh4 45 gxh4 Rh8 46 Rh2 Rh5 (or 46...Ke5 47 h5 Kf5 48 h6 Rh7 49 a3, etc.) 47 Kf4, then 48 Kg4, and the pawn advances.

5) 43...g4 (43...e5? 44 Rf2) 44 Rc4 Rh5 45 Ra4 Rxh2 46 Rxa5 e5 47 Ke4 Rg2 48 Rd5+ Kc6 49 Rd3 Rxa2 50 Kxe5 Rf2 51 Rd4 Rf3 52 Rxg4 Rxb3 53 Rg7 with a comfortable win by cutting Black's king off along a rank.

6) 43...Kd5 44 Rf2 Re5+ 45 Kf3 Rf5+ 46 Kg2 Re5 47 Rd2+ Kc5 48 Kf3, then Kg4 and h4, with the black king now cut off along the d-file.

7) 43...Kd7 44 Rf2 Re5+ 45 Kf3 Rf5+ 46 Kg2 Rd5 (or 46...Re5 47 Rd2+ and 48 Kf3) 47 Kh3 Rd4 48 Rf7+ Kd6 49 Rg7 Rd2 50 a4 Rd5 51 Kg4

and wins.

8) 43...Ke7 (the most resilient defence) 44 Rc7+ and now:



8a) 44...Kd6 45 Rg7 (tying up the rook completely because Black must prevent Kf3, so Black can only move his king; if 45...e5?, then 46 g4) 45...Kc6 46 Ke4 Kd6 47 a4 (the last straw for Black; White introduces the idea of Rb7-b5) 47...Rc5 48 Rb7 Rc2 49 Rb5 Re2+ 50 Kf3 Rxh2 51 Rxa5 and wins.

8b) 44...Kf6 45 a4! (once again the seizure of b5 is the way to proceed) 45...g4 (or 45...Re5+ 46 Kd3 Rd5+ 47 Kc4 Rd2 48 Kb5 Rxh2 49 Kxa5, then 50 Rc3, and White wins; 45...Rf1 46 Rc5 Rb1 47 Rb5 Rb2 48 h4 gxh4 49 gxh4 e5 50 Ke4 Re2+ 51 Kd3 Rh2 52 Rxa5 Rh3+ 53 Kc2 Rxh4 54 Rc5 will also win) 46 Rb7 Rf3+ 47 Ke4 Rf2 48 Rb5 Rf3 (or 48...Rb2 49 Kf4) 49 Kd4! (not 49 Rxa5 Rxb3; White wants nothing less than two connected passed pawns) 49...Rf2 50 Rxa5 Rxh2 51 Ke4 (better than 51 Rb5 Rg2; by this finesse White gets one square nearer the g-pawn without spending a tempo) 51...Rf2 52 Rb5 Rf3 53 a5 Rxg3 54 a6 Rg1 55 b4 g3 56 Kf3 g2 57 Ra5 and wins.

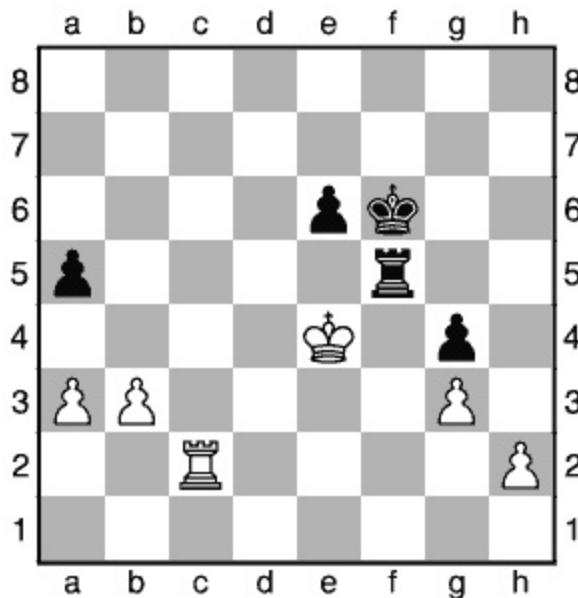
What is impressive about all this is the resistance which a top-class defensive player can put up, even in an apparently hopeless situation. Only by very careful and systematic play can White win. Fortunately for me, Ulf Andersson is only human and finally makes a small slip allowing a simpler win.

Now we return to the position after 42...Kf6?!:

43 a3 g4

If Black tries to correct his error by 43...Ke7, White continues 44 b4 axb4 45 axb4 Kd6 46 Kd4!, threatening to support the b-pawn with his king. After 46...Rd5+ (46...Rf1 47 Rb2 Kc6 48 b5+ Kb6 49 Ke5 Re1+ 50 Kf6 g4 51 Rb4 Re2 52 Rxg4 Rxh2 53 Kxe6 is another simple R+P vs R ending) 47 Kc4 Re5 48 Kb3, followed by 49 Ka4, Black's king is cut off and the b-pawn can advance.

Another defensive plan is to activate Black's e-pawn, but White answers 43...Rf1 by 44 Rb2 Re1+ (or 44...Ra1 45 b4, as in the game) 45 Kd4 e5+ 46 Kc4 e4 47 Kb5 e3 (or 47...Ra1 48 a4) 48 Kxa5 Ke5 49 b4 Ke4 50 b5 Rd1 51 b6 Rd2 52 Rb1 e2 53 b7 Rd1 54 b8Q e1Q+ 55 Qb4+ Qxb4+ 56 Rxb4+ Kf3 57 a4 Rd2 58 h4 and wins.



White to move

The text-move regains the f3-square for Black's rook, but this process has taken too long and the b-pawn speeds away.

44 b4 Rf3

Black hopes for 45 bxa5 Rxa3 and the rook is well placed behind the passed pawn.

45 Rb2 Rxa3

46 b5 Rc3

If Black's king were on e7 it could blockade the pawn, but thanks to 42...Kf6?! the rook has to go to b8 instead, wasting vital time.

47 b6 Rc8

48 Kd4 1-0

Black's king and pawns are too far back to stand a chance. The variations are:

1) 48...a4 49 b7 Rb8 50 Kc5 e5 (50...a3 51 Rf2+ Ke5 52 Re2+ Kf5 53 Kc6) 51 Kc6 e4 52 Kc7 Rxb7+ 53 Kxb7 Ke5 54 Kc6 e3 (54...Kd4 55 Rb4+) 55 Ra2, etc.

2) 48...e5+ 49 Kd5 Rd8+ 50 Kc6 e4 51 b7 e3 52 b8Q Rxb8 53 Rxb8 Ke5 54 Rb5+ and White will always win with his last pawns after giving up his rook at e1.

I also won my last two games to reach a score of 10/11. This gave me a performance rating of 2867 (91% against an average opposition of 2484), at the time one of the highest individual performance ratings ever achieved. This gave me two gold medals, for the highest rating performance and the best result on board 2. I gained a third individual gold medal for winning the problem-solving competition on a free day. My result was undoubtedly helped by having White nine times in eleven games, and I was lucky in a couple of games, but nevertheless it was a once-in-a-lifetime achievement. England had their best result in an Olympiad up to this time, and took the silver medals.

The following month I again returned to the friendly and well-organised tournament at Wijk aan Zee. In the first round I beat Korchnoi with White, and in round 2 I was Black against Beliavsky.

I consider the resulting game to be the best of my career to date (1997). It won the Brilliancy Prize at Wijk aan Zee, was voted best game of *Informator* 39, and was described as the best game of the 1980s by Yasser Seirawan in his book *Winning Chess Brilliancies* (the analysis attributed to Seirawan in the following notes is taken from this book). Finally, it was recently ranked fourth in a list of the best games ever published in *Informator*.

Game 24

A. Beliavsky – J. Nunn

Wijk aan Zee 1985

King's Indian

- 1 d4 Nf6**
- 2 c4 g6**
- 3 Nc3 Bg7**
- 4 e4 d6**
- 5 f3 0-0**
- 6 Be3**



Black to move

6...Nbd7

This move was the result of a desperate search for a decent line to play against the Sämisch Variation. I had obtained a number of poor positions with the usual systems, so I decided to have another look at some of the less common ideas. There was a considerable amount of material in theoretical works relating to 6...Nbd7, but the verdict given was that White can get an advantage without much difficulty. Six months before Wijk aan Zee I had spent about a week going through this material and I found some ideas which I thought might upset the pessimistic verdict.

Perhaps as a result of this game, 6...Nbd7 soon became far more popular. It even received the ultimate accolade of being played by Kasparov. While it is not one of the most common lines against the Sämisch (these are 6...c5, 6...e5 and 6...Nc6), it is seen fairly often in tournament play. Timman, for example, used it with some success in his 1993 FIDE World Championship match against Karpov.

Although initially I achieved good results with 6...Nbd7, I then lost

some important games with it. These losses weren't really due to the opening, but they engendered a certain reluctance to use the move. I still employ it occasionally, but have included other anti-Sämisch ideas in my repertoire.

7 Qd2

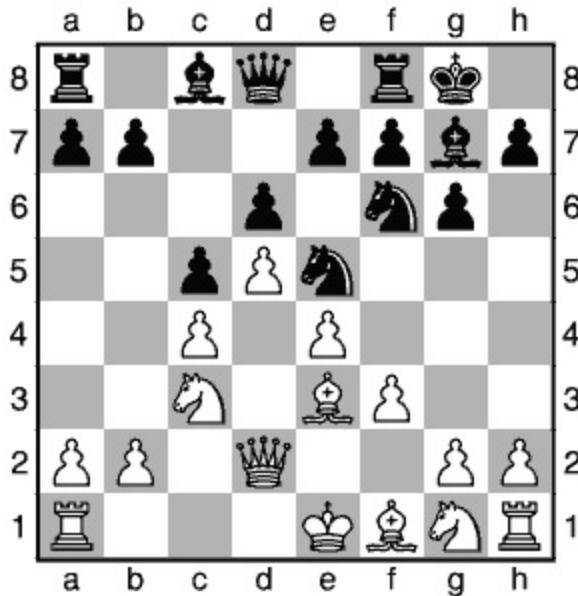
The theory of this variation is too extensive to survey here. Joe Gallagher gives an excellent coverage in his book *The Sämisch King's Indian*, and readers should look there for more details.

7...c5

8 d5

Black's problem now is that he cannot chip away at White's centre by an immediate ...e6, because the d7-knight blocks the queen's defence of the d6-pawn. An alternative idea is to look for some way of activating the knights, and that was the basis of my explorations: I was trying to make 8...Ne5 work without having the knight driven back at once.

8...Ne5



White to move

This was the main novelty I had prepared. Black prevents Nh3 and Nge2, so White cannot develop his kingside pieces straight away. Needless to say, it would be bad for White to play f4 allowing ...Neg4 exchanging off the important dark-squared bishop. ECO (first edition) suggested either queenside action by 8...a6 or preparation of ...e6 by 8...Re8, neither of which appears very attractive. 8...Ne5 was not mentioned at all. Barden, in *The King's Indian Defence* (second edition, 1973) comments that '8...Ne5 is met

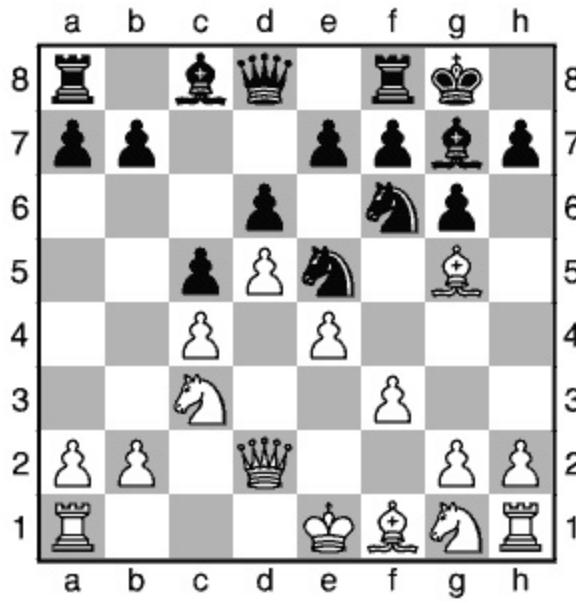
by 9 h3 and 10 f4'. Given that the g1-knight can't be moved this is indeed the most obvious idea. If the result of h3 and f4 is simply that the knight has to return to d7 then Black will have lost time – and in a sharp position like this a loss of time will guarantee White a big advantage. Beliavsky courageously decided to see what Black's big idea is.

9 h3?!

It turns out that Black has adequate resources against this direct attempt to drive the e5-knight away. The passive **9 Be2** a6 10 a4 e6 11 Kf2 exd5 12 exd5 also turned out badly in Gomez Esteban-Nunn, European Team Championship, Debrecen 1992: Black continued 12...Re8 13 g3 Qa5 14 h3 Qb4 15 a5 Nxc4 16 Bxc4 Qxc4 17 Ra4 Qb3 18 Nge2 Rxe3! 19 Kxe3 Bd7 with a very strong initiative.

The critical move was discovered soon after Beliavsky-Nunn. A few rounds later Timman played **9 Bg5** against me and reached a good position after 9...a6 10 f4 Ned7 11 Nf3 b5 12 cxb5 axb5 13 Bxb5 Qa5 14 0-0 Nxe4 15 Nxe4 Qxb5 16 Bxe7 Qxb2 17 Qxb2 Bxb2 18 Rae1 Ba6 19 Rf2 Rfe8 20 Nxd6 Reb8 21 Ne4 Bc4 22 Bd6 Rb7. Here Timman should have continued with 23 Be5 (23...Nxe5 24 fxe5, or 23...Bxe5 24 Nxe5), when Black would have been in big trouble; instead he played 23 Ne5 and only drew after 23...Bxe5 24 fxe5 Bxd5 25 Nxc5.

However, this was only the start of investigations into 9 Bg5. The following lines summarise the current state of theory:



1) **9...Nh5** 10 g4 (10 f4?! h6! 11 Bh4 Nxf4 12 Qxf4 g5 is unclear)
 10...Nf6 11 h3 a6 12 f4 Ned7 13 Nf3 b5 14 cxb5 Nb6 15 a4 axb5?! (15...Ne8
 intending ...Nc7 is better) 16 Bxb5 Ba6 17 0-0 with a slight advantage for
 White, Dlugy-Rohde, Philadelphia 1985.

2) **9...a6** 10 f4 Ned7 11 Nf3 b5 12 cxb5 Qa5 (better than 12...axb5, as
 played in Timman-Nunn) 13 e5 Re8!? (the latest twist; the older line is
 13...dxe5 14 fxe5 Ng4 with a very complicated position – see Gallagher's
 above-mentioned book for more details) 14 Be2 axb5 15 exf6 exf6 16 Bh4 b4
 17 Nd1 Ba6 18 Ne3 c4 19 Bf2 Nc5 20 0-0 Ne4 21 Qc1 Nxf2 22 Kxf2 with a
 very unclear position in Wallace-Kovalev, Moscow Olympiad 1994.

3) **9...e6** 10 f4 Neg4 11 dxe6 (11 h3 h6 12 Bh4 Nxe4 13 Bxd8 Nxd2 14
 Be7 Nxf1 15 Bxf8 Kxf8 16 Kxf1 Ne3+ 17 Kf2 Nxc4 and Black wins,
 Khenkin-Hillarp Persson, Rilton Cup 1993) 11...Bxe6 12 Nf3 b5 13 cxb5 d5
 14 e5 d4 15 exf6 Nxf6, Plaskett-W.Watson, British Championship,
 Eastbourne 1990. Black has some compensation for the piece but this idea
 doesn't really look sound to me.

4) **9...Nfd7?!** 10 Bh6 (10 h4!? is also interesting, but not 10 Bh4 a6 11
 f4?! Bh6 12 Qf2 f5! 13 fxe5 fxe4 14 Qe2 Nxe5 15 h3 Nd3+ 16 Kd1 Qb6! 17
 Rb1 Qb4 with a dangerous initiative for Black, Brenninkmeijer-W.Watson,
 Wijk aan Zee II 1987) 10...Bxh6 11 Qxh6 a6? (very passive; 11...f5! is much
 better) 12 h4! f6 13 Qd2 Qa5 14 f4 Nf7 15 Nf3 with a clear plus for White,
 Kramnik-Lanka, Manila Olympiad 1992.

9...Nh5



White to move

10 Bf2

Probably best. The alternatives are:

1) **10 f4** (allowing the knight into g3 is too dangerous) 10...Ng3 11 fxe5 (11 Rh2 Nxf1 12 Kxf1 Nxc4) 11...Nxh1 12 Nf3 (12 exd6 exd6; 12 Bf4 dxe5 13 Bh2 f5) 12...Ng3 13 Bd3 dxe5 14 Bxc5 b6 15 Ba3, Siegler-Schultz, Hessenliga 1994 and now 15...f5 should win for Black.

2) **10 Kf2** is unwise because of 10...e6, when ...Qh4+ is hard to stop, for example 11 g3 f5 or 11 Bg5 f6.

3) **10 Bd3** f5 11 Nge2 f4 12 Bf2 Bd7 13 Nc1 a6 14 a4 Qa5 15 Ra3 Rab8 16 Ke2 Qd8 17 Qc2 Qe8 18 Qb3 Ng3+ 19 Bxg3 fxg3 with a winning position for Black, Arribas-Nguyen, Novi Sad Women's Olympiad 1990.

4) **10 Qf2** and now Black has several playable options:



Black to move

4a) **10...f5** 11 exf5 (forced, since White must never allow a bind by ...f4) 11...gxf5 (11...Rxf5 12 g4 Nf4 13 Qd2 wins material, while after 11...Bxf5 12 g4 Bxg4 13 hxg4 Nxg4 14 Qd2 Black's compensation for the piece is inadequate, whether he exchanges at e3 or tries 14...Ng3 15 Rh3 Nxf1 16 Kxf1) 12 f4 Ng6 13 Nge2 was given as good for White in *Secrets of Grandmaster Play*. However, this is a misjudgement. White, it is true, has certain strategic advantages, but he has yet to develop his kingside, whereas Black can quickly open up the centre by ...e6 or ...e5. After 13...Qb6 14 b3 Qb4 (14...e5 is also possible) 15 Rc1 b5 16 cxb5 e6 17 Bd2 Bb7 18 Qf3 Nf6

19 Qd3 Ne4 20 Nxe4 fxe4 21 Qe3 Qxb5 22 dxe6 Qe8, for example, the position was totally unclear in Thorfinnsson-Wallace, Copenhagen 1996.

4b) 10...b5!? 11 g4 Nf6 12 cxb5 a6 13 f4 Ned7 14 g5 Nh5 15 b6 f5 16 gxf6 Rxf6 17 Qh4 Bh6 18 Nge2 Qf8 19 e5 Rf5 20 exd6 exd6 21 0-0-0 Nxf4 22 Nxf4 Bxf4 23 Bxf4 Rxf4 24 Qe1 Nxb6 and Black is a pawn up for no compensation, D.James-Cummings, Lloyds Bank Masters, London 1994.

4c) 10...Qa5 (an interesting switch to the queenside threatening ...Nxc4) and now:



White to move

4c1) 11 Bd2 f5 (proposed by Beliavsky; 11...Qb4 12 g4 Qxb2 13 Rb1 Qc2 14 Rc1!, followed by gxh5, is good for White) 12 exf5 (12 f4 fxe4 13 Nxe4 Qb6 with an edge for Black) 12...Rxf5! 13 g4 Nf4 14 Qg3 Ned3+ 15 Bxd3 Nxd3+ 16 Ke2 Nxb2 17 gxf5 and now Black has the advantage after either 17...Bxc3 or 17...Bxf5.

4c2) 11 Rc1 (bolstering c3) 11...f5 (11...b5!? is possible, but 11...Qb4 12 g4 looks good for White) 12 exf5 and now:

4c21) 12...Bxf5 (a sacrificial idea that just fails) 13 g4 Be4 14 gxh5 Nxf3+ 15 Nxf3 Rxf3 (15...Bxf3 16 Rh2 Bxh5 17 Qd2 is inadequate) 16 Qd2, and Black cannot do better than regain his piece by 16...Rxe3+ 17 Qxe3 Bxh1. The trouble then is 18 hxg6, when he dare not recapture (18...hxg6 19 Qe6+ and 20 Bd3, and White for once takes over the attack). His bishop must therefore remain out of play at h1, and he does not even hold a slight material advantage as compensation.

4c22) 12...gxf5 13 f4 Ng6 and once again Black has a lead in development to compensate for White's long-term assets. After 14 Be2, for example, 14...Nf6 heads for e4.

4c3) 11 g4 Nxf3+ (not 11...Nxc4 12 Bxc4 Bxc3+ 13 Kd1!) 12 Nxf3 (12 Qxf3? Bxc3+ and 13...Bxb2) 12...Bxc3+ 13 Kd1 (13 bxc3 Qxc3+ 14 Ke2 and now Black can either take perpetual check by 14...Qxc4+ 15 Kd1 Qa4+, or grab the rook on a1 with an unclear position) 13...Ng3! (Black keeps his bishop in preference to the knight, at the same time deflecting the queen from b2) 14 Qxg3 Bxb2 15 Rb1 (15 Rc1 Bd7 is no better) 15...Qa4+ 16 Ke1 (not to the second rank because of ...Qxa2) 16...Qc2 17 Rd1 (17 Nd2 Bc3 appears worse) 17...Bc3+, followed by ...Qxe4, with a very obscure position; chances for both sides is about all you can say.

4d) 10...e6! (the safest move, which enables Black to maintain the position of his knights) and now:



White to move

4d1) 11 f4 Bf6! and White curiously does not have a convenient move: 12 g3 Nxg3 13 fxe5 Bh4 14 Nf3 Nxf1 15 Nxh4 Nxe3, or 12 h4 Ng4, or finally 12 Nf3 Nxf3+ 13 Qxf3 Ng3.

4d2) 11 g4 exd5 12 cxd5 (12 gxh5 d4 and 12 Nxd5 Nf6 are both good for Black) 12...Bf6 13 h4 Bxg4 14 fxg4 Nxg4, and this time Black is quite favourably placed, with three pawns and domination of the dark squares in return for his piece.



Black to move

10...f5

Other moves are too slow, for example after 10...e6 11 f4 Black's knights are driven back.

11 exf5

Better than 11 f4 Bh6 12 g3 fxe4 13 Nxe4, when Black can gain the advantage in a variety of ways:

1) 13...Nxf4 14 Be3 (14 gxf4 Rxf4 15 0-0-0 Bf5 wins for Black), Karolyi-Weindl, London 1986, and now 14...Bf5! gives Black a clear advantage with no risk. 14...Ng2+ 15 Bxg2 Nxc4 16 Bxh6 Nxd2 17 Nxd2, as in the game, was also promising for Black but perhaps less clear-cut.

2) 13...Bf5 (Seirawan) 14 Ng5 Bxg5 15 fxg5 Be4 16 Rh2 Rf3 favours Black.

Seirawan also mentions the line 11 g4 fxg4 12 hxg4 Nf4 13 Bg3 g5 14 Qh2 h6 and Black has a massive strategic advantage.

11...Rxf5

11...Bxf5? 12 g4 simply loses a piece for nothing, while 11...gxf5 12 f4 Bh6 13 g3 does not provide the necessary activity: here the c8-bishop is shut in, and the threat of Qe2 forces an immediate knight retreat.

The text-move is one of the main ideas behind 8...Ne5: Black is offering a piece to keep the initiative.

12 g4



Black to move

If the offer is declined, then ...Nf4 and ...Bh6 can follow and Black gets an aggressive position all the same.

12...Rxf3

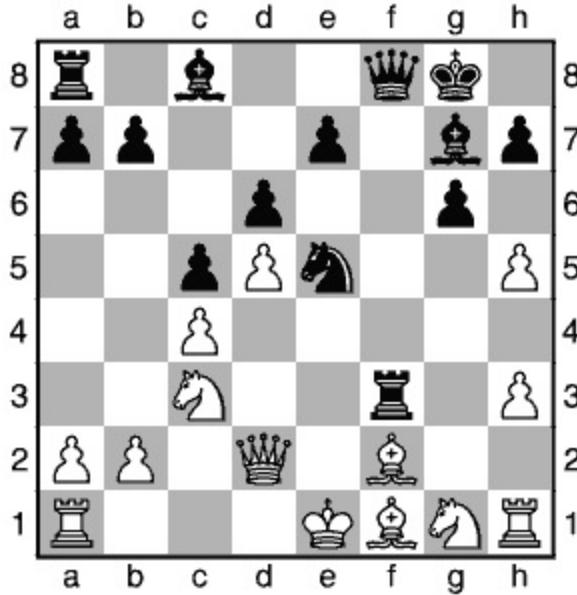
13 gxh5

Again White cannot do better. If 13 0-0-0, then 13...Rf7! 14 gxh5 Qf8 and Black always regains his piece favourably, for example 15 Ne4 Bh6 16 Be3 Bxe3 17 Qxe3 Rxf1.

If 13 Be2, then 13...Rxf2 14 Kxf2 Qf8+, followed by ...Nf4 and perhaps ...Bh6, with a pawn and a tremendous dark-square grip in return for the exchange.

13...Qf8

I had more or less stopped my home analysis at this point. It seemed to me that Black's powerful initiative and White's poor king position provided good compensation for the piece. After considerable thought Beliavsky found an excellent defensive plan which I had overlooked in my preparation.



White to move

14 Ne4!

White's alternatives are definitely inferior:

1) **14 Rh2 Bh6** and now:

1a) **15 Qe2 Nd3+** 16 Qxd3 Rxd3 17 Bxd3 Qf4, followed by ...Qd2+, wins at once.

1b) **15 Qc2 Qf4 16 Rg2 Bf5 17 Qd1 Rf8** (17...Rxf2! 18 Rxf2 Qe3+ is even more forcing) 18 Be2 Bc2 19 Bxf3 Bxd1 20 Bxd1 Nd3+ 21 Kf1 Qxf2+ 0-1 Posperov-Canfell, Kobanya 1991.

1c) **15 Qd1 Qf4 16 Rg2 Bf5** with a final branch:

1c1) **17 Be2 Rxf2 18 Rxf2 Qg3 19 Kf1** (19 Nf3 Be3 wins for Black)

19...Be3 20 Qe1 (20 Rg2 Bxh3 21 Nxh3 Rf8+) 20...Nd3 21 Bxd3 Bxd3+ 22 Nce2 Bxf2 23 Qxf2 Rf8 and wins.

1c2) **17 Nxf3 Nxf3+ 18 Ke2 Qe5+ 19 Kxf3 Be4+ 20 Ke2 Bc2+ 21 Kf3 Rf8+** and mates.

1c3) **17 Nge2 Qxc4** (17...Re3 18 Bg3 is unclear) 18 Ng1 (18 Nc1 Qb4 19 Qb3 Qf4 wins for Black) 18...Qf4 and losing the c-pawn has only made White's situation worse. For example, if he again plays 19 Nge2, then 19...Qb4 is very strong.

2) **14 Rd1 Bf5**, and the threat of ...Bh6 puts the queen in a tight spot.

After 15 b3 (15 Qe2 Bd3 also wins) 15...Nd3+ 16 Bxd3 Rxd3 17 Qxd3 Bxd3 18 Rxd3 Qf5, followed by ...Bxc3+ and ...Qe4+, White loses too much material.

3) **14 hxg6 Bf5** (14...hxg6 is less good because a little later the queen

comes to bear on g6 – see the note to Black's 18th move) 15 gxh7+ Bxh7! (Seirawan; 15...Kh8 16 Rh2! is unclear) and now:



White to move

3a) **16 Rh2 Bh6** (not 16...Nd3+ 17 Bxd3 Rxd3 18 Qg5 and White defends) 17 Qd1 Qf4! (17...Be3 18 Rg2+ Kh8 19 Nxf3 Nxf3+ 20 Ke2 Nd4+ 21 Ke1 and Black has nothing more than perpetual check) 18 Rg2+ (18 Be2 Rg3! 19 h4 {White is paralysed} 19...Rf8 20 Nf3 Nxf3+ 21 Bxf3 Rxf3 with a decisive attack) 18...Kh8 19 Be2 Rxf2 20 Rxf2 Qg3 21 Kf1 Rg8 22 Bg4 Be3 23 Qe1 Nd3 24 Nce2 Qxf2+ 25 Qxf2 Nxf2 26 Be6 Rf8 27 Kg2 Bd3 28 b3 Ne4 with an enormous advantage for Black.

3b) **16 Rd1 Bh6** 17 Qe2 Bd3 18 Qxe5 (18 Rxd3 Nxd3+ 19 Qxd3 Rxd3 20 Bxd3 Qf4 is very good for Black) 18...dxe5 19 Nxf3 Bxf1 20 Nxe5 Bg7 21 Ng6 Qf6 22 Rxf1 Qxg6 23 Rg1 offers White some drawing chances.

4) **14 Qe2 Nd3+** 15 Qxd3 Rxd3 16 Bxd3 Bf5 and now:



White to move

4a) 17 Be2 Bxc3+ 18 bxc3 Be4 19 Rh2 Qf4 and Black wins material.

4b) 17 Bxf5 Bxc3+ 18 bxc3 Qxf5 19 Ne2 Rf8 20 Bg3 Qe4 21 Rg1 Rf3 and White's pieces are too poorly co-ordinated to resist Black's attack.

4c) 17 Ne4 Bxb2 18 Rd1 (18 Rb1 is met the same way) 18...Bxe4 19 Bxe4 Qf4 20 Bd3 Rf8 and wins.

4d) 17 Rd1 Bxd3 18 Rxd3 Qf5 19 Rf3 Bxc3+ 20 bxc3 Qb1+ 21 Ke2 Qe4+! 22 Kd2 (after 22 Be3 Qxc4+ White's pawns start dropping) 22...Rf8 and Black wins.

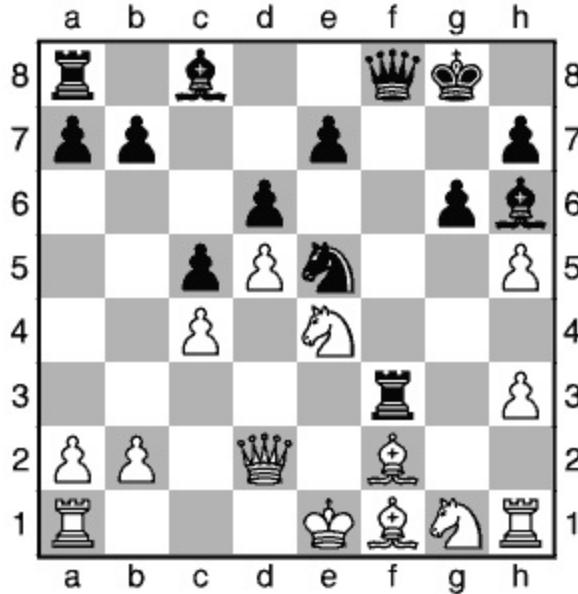
These lines indicate the problems facing White: he cannot develop properly because Black's extremely active pieces severely restrict the options available to him; he can never organise queenside castling because of ...Bh6 and the pressure down the f-file; he has no counterplay and must restrict himself to purely defensive moves, always a difficult situation in over-the-board play.

14...Bh6

14...Bf5 can now be met by 15 Ng5 Bh6 (15...Nd3+ 16 Bxd3 Rxd3 17 Qe2 also favours White) and White can gain the advantage by either 16 h4, taming one of the black bishops, or 16 N1xf3 (Seirawan) 16...Nxf3+ 17 Nxf3 Bxd2+ 18 Nxd2 when by returning some material White has snuffed out Black's attack.

Black may also attempt to dislodge the e4-knight by 14...Rf4: however, after 15 Qe2 (not 15 Ng5 h6 16 Ne6 Bxe6 17 dxe6 Qf5 18 Rh2 Rf8, which once again yields Black tremendous pressure; 15 Ng3 gxh5!, followed by

...h4, is also murky) 15...Bf5 16 Bg2 Nd3+! 17 Qxd3 Rxf2 18 Bf3 Rxb2 19 Ne2 White is ready to castle kingside and Black appears to be slightly struggling for compensation.



White to move

15 Qc2?!

White is the first to wander off the optimum path in the tactical labyrinth. The best continuation is 15 Qe2! (15 Qd1? Qf4) 15...Nd3+ (not 15...Qf4? 16 Nxf3 Nxf3+ 17 Kd1 Bf5 18 Ng3! {18 Bg3 Qxe4 is fine for Black – see line ‘3’ in the note to White’s 16th move} 18...Nd4 {it is hard to avoid exchanges} 19 Bxd4 Qxd4+ 20 Ke1 and the attack is inadequate) 16 Qxd3 Rxd3 17 Bxd3 Qf4 (threatening ...Bf5, but compared with the earlier variation {see 14 Qe2} White’s b-pawn is not now under fire and so he can just hold) 18 Rd1! (the only move as 18 Ne2 Qf3 loses) 18...Bf5 19 Ne2 Qf3 20 N2g3 (again forced) 20...Be3 21 Rf1 (the lines 21 Bxe3 Qxe3+ 22 Kf1 Bxe4 23 Nxe4 Qf3+ 24 Nf2 Rf8, 21 Nxf5 gxf5 22 Rg1+ Kh8 and 21 Rh2 Bxe4 22 Nxe4 Bf4! are all lost for White; however, 21 Rg1 is also possible) 21...Bxe4 (about the best Black can do; if 21...Bxh3, then 22 Be2 drives him back) 22 Nxe4 Bxf2+ 23 Rxf2 Qxh5, and the game is roughly level because White’s pawn position is not crumbling, as it has been in other similar variations.

15 Qc2 is inferior because ...Bf5 will now be a pin; therefore Black can leave his rook *en prise* for one more move.

15...Qf4!

Sacrificing another exchange. A whole rook may seem like a large investment, but it is justified by the extraordinary activity of Black's pieces and the fact that White's forces, which are mostly still in their original positions, are not able to cover important squares in White's own camp. This means that Black's knight can hop in and out of White's ranks with impunity, wreaking havoc at every jump.

It is also worth remarking that if Black can liquidate into an ending in which he has a pawn for the exchange, then he will normally have the advantage. White's rooks will still be languishing on a1 and h1, while Black's bishops will be immensely powerful. There are several such variations in the subsequent analysis.

16 Ne2

Other moves also offer scant defensive prospects:

- 1) **16 Be2** is easily refuted by 16...Bf5 17 Bxf3 (17 Nxf3 Bxe4) 17...Nxf3+ 18 Nxf3 Bxe4 winning.
- 2) **16 Ng3 Rxg3** 17 Bxg3 Qxg3+ 18 Qf2 Qg5 is hopeless; Black will follow up with either ...Bd7 and ...Rf8 and White is catastrophically exposed. The slight material difference is quite irrelevant.
- 3) **16 Nxf3 Nxf3+** 17 Kd1 (17 Ke2 Bf5 18 Bg3 Nd4+ loses at once) 17...Bf5 18 Bg3 (there is no alternative as the counter-sacrifice 18 Bd3 Nd4! 19 Bxd4 Qf3+ 20 Qe2 Qxh1+ 21 Kc2 Qxa1 leads to nothing) 18...Qe3 (in the endgame the bishop will be slightly worse at f2 than at g3) 19 Bf2 Qxe4 20 Qxe4 Bxe4 21 Bg2 (21 hxg6? Nd2! 22 Rg1 Rf8; 21 Be2 Bg7! 22 Kc1 Rf8 with a very strong initiative) 21...Rf8 and here Black already has one pawn for the exchange and the clumsy white rooks will be no match for his energetic bishops. The immediate threats are 22...Nd4 23 Bxe4 Rxf2, or simply 22...Bd3 sealing in the white king, and there is little active that White can do, *e.g.* 22 Ke2 (22 b3 is defeated by 22...Bg7 23 Rc1 Bb2) 22...Nd4+ 23 Kf1 (23 Bxd4 Bxg2 24 Rhg1 Bf3+) 23...Bd3+ 24 Kg1 Ne2+ 25 Kh2 (25 Kf1 Be3) 25...Bf4+.



Black to move

16...Rxf2

Black cannot go backwards now; after 16...Qf8 17 N2g3 White is ready to exchange on f5 if necessary, and the attack no longer appears formidable.

17 Nxf2 Nf3+

17...Qh4? 18 Qe4 and 17...Qe3? 18 Bg2 Bf5 19 Qc1 are both bad.

18 Kd1 Qh4!

Again not 18...Qe3? 19 Ng4 Bxg4 20 hxg4 Qf2 21 Bh3. Here we can see the relevance of the comment in line '3' of the note to White's 14th move: had 14 hxg6 hxg6 been interposed before Ne4, the black g-pawn would now be *en prise* with check!

19 Nd3

The only way to save the knight without allowing mate at e1, since if the e2-knight moves, for example 19 Nc3, then 19...Nd4 wins. The only other possibility is the counterattacking attempt 19 hxg6, but then 19...Qxf2 20 gxh7+ Kh8 21 Qg6 (21 Qd3 Bd7 22 Rb1 Rf8 wins) 21...Bd7 (threatening 22...Qe1+ 23 Kc2 Qd2+ 24 Kb3 Ba4+ 25 Kxa4 Qb4#) 22 Bg2 (22 Qxh6 Qe1+ 23 Kc2 Bf5+ 24 Kb3 Qb4#; 22 Rc1 Bxc1) 22...Nd4 23 Qd3 (23 Re1 Qe3) 23...Qxg2 24 Rg1 Qf2 wins easily.

19...Bf5



White to move

This time the threat is 20...Ne1 21 Nxe1 Bxc2+ 22 Nxc2 Qg5 and wins, because White's pieces are unable to defend d2.

20 Nec1

Since 20 Bg2 Ne5 costs a piece, White's choice is once more severely restricted. The text-move strengthens the knight at d3, but the black queen is allowed access to e4; moreover, White's knights end up passively placed, doing little more than defend each other. The other three possibilities are: 1) **20 Qb3 Nd2** (20...Rf8 is also promising) 21 Qxb7 (21 Qc3 Bxd3 22 Qxd3 Nxc4, threatening both 23...Ne3+ and 23...Nxb2+) 21...Rf8 and there is no defence to the threats of 22...Bxd3 and 22...Nxc4.

2) **20 Nc3 Nd4** and now:



White to move

2a) **21 Qg2** Qxh5+ 22 Be2 (22 Ke1 Rf8 and there is no defence to the threat of 23...Bxd3 24 Bxd3 Qh4+ 25 Kd1 Rf2, *e.g.* 23 h4 Bg4) 22...Nxe2 23 Qxe2 Bxd3 24 Qxh5 gxh5 (a miserable position for White; the a1-rook is out of play and Black's bishops rake the board) 25 b3 Rf8 26 Rg1+ Kh8 and Black's rook will penetrate to f2 or f3 with decisive effect.

2b) **21 Qf2** Qxh5+ (Seirawan) 22 Be2 (22 Ke1 Rf8 23 Qg2 Bxd3 24 Bxd3 Qh4+ 25 Kd1 Rf2 and wins) 22...Qg5 23 Bf1 (23 Qe1 Qe3) 23...Rf8 winning, for example 24 Qg2 Qxg2 25 Bxg2 Bxd3 or 24 Qh2 Bxd3 25 Bxd3 Qe3.

2c) **21 Qh2** Qxh5+ 22 Be2 Nxe2 is line '2a'.

3) **20 Qc3** (perhaps the best chance, as Black's winning line is by no means obvious) 20...Bg7 21 Qb3 Bxd3 22 Qxd3 Qe1+ 23 Kc2 Qxa1 24 Qxf3 Qxb2+ 25 Kd1 Qa1+ (25...Rf8 26 Qe3 Qxa2 27 Nc1 is unclear) 26 Nc1 (if the king moves, two more pawns go, leaving Black with four against a knight) 26...Bh6 27 Qa3 Rf8 (threatens 28...Rf3 and 28...Rf2) 28 Be2 (absolutely forced) 28...Rf2 29 Re1 b5! (with White's forces almost totally tied up, Black opens a new front) 30 cxb5 c4 31 Kc2 Qd4 32 Qb4 Qe4+ 33 Kd1 Qxd5+ 34 Kc2 Qf5+ 35 Kd1 Rf4! with a decisive attack.

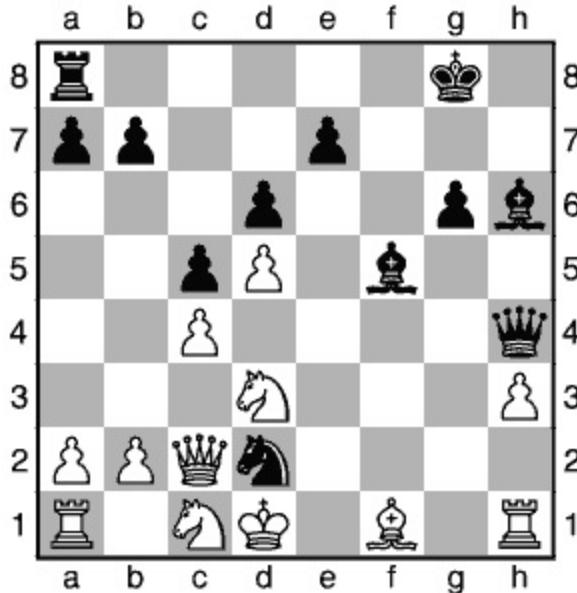
After the text-move Black's task is easier.

20...Nd2!

A strangely powerful move, which threatens above all 21...Qe4 22 Rg1 Qe3, and if 23 Rh1, then Black wins by 23...Qf3+.

21 hxg6 hgx6

Not 21...Qe4? because White gets counterplay by 22 gxh7+ Kh8 (22...Bxh7 23 Rg1+ and 22...Kxh7 23 Ne1! are also good for White) 23 Qc3+ Kxh7 24 Nf2! Qf4 25 Ncd3 and suddenly White's knights have become active.



White to move

The text-move renews the threat of 22...Qe4.

22 Bg2

Beliavsky struggled to find a defence until he had only a few minutes left to reach move 40, but all in vain, despite his extra rook. Alternatives also lose:

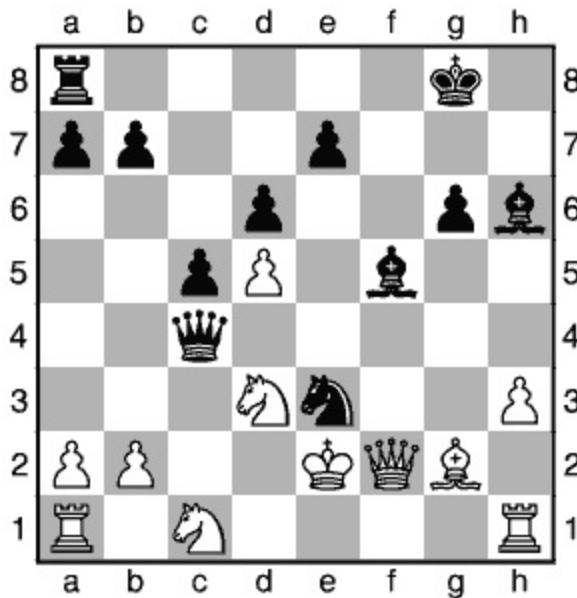
- 1) 22 Qxd2 Bxd2 23 Kxd2 Qxc4 (23...b5 is also good), and with no knight at c3 the d-pawn disappears at once, since attempting to hold it by 24 Bg2 loses to 24...Qd4 25 Ke2 c4.
 - 2) 22 Rg1 is refuted by 22...Qd4 23 Rh1 (23 Ne2 Qe3 24 Qc3 Ne4 wins) 23...Qe4 24 Rg1 Qe3.
 - 3) 22 Be2 Nxc4 23 Qb3 Ne3+ 24 Kd2 c4 25 Qxb7 Nxd5+ 26 Kc2 Ne3+, followed by 27...Be4, with total collapse.
 - 4) 22 Qc3 Be4 23 Rg1 Nxc4 24 Nf4 (24 Rg3 Qxg3 25 Qxc4 Qg5 26 Qc3 Rf8 27 Be2 c4 and wins) 24...Qf2 25 Qxc4 Qxg1 26 Ne6 Bg2 27 Ke1 Bxh3 28 Nb3 (White is paralysed) 28...Be3 winning for Black.
 - 5) 22 Ne2 and 22 Nb3 are decisively met by 22...Nxc4, heading for e3.
- 22...Nxc4**
- 23 Qf2**

The only other possible attempt, 23 Re1, is defeated immediately by 23...Qh5+ followed by ...Ne3+.

23...Ne3+

Black is justified in playing for more than just a favourable endgame by 23...Qxf2 24 Nxf2 Ne3+.

24 Ke2 Qc4!



White to move

There seems to be something slightly comical about this switch to the queenside, just when the white queen has managed to crawl painfully across to f2! The chief threat is 25...Bxd3+ 26 Nxd3 Qc2+ 27 Ke1 Qxd3, etc.

25 Bf3

25 Qxe3 is met by 25...Qc2+ 26 Kf3 Bxe3.

25...Rf8

There are now several routes to victory. 25...Bxd3+ 26 Nxd3 Qc2+ 27 Ke1 Qxd3 28 Bd1 Rf8 is equally effective.

26 Rg1 Nc2

Even stronger than 26...Bxd3+, as ...Nd4+ will win two pieces.

27 Kd1 Bxd3

0-1

Readers who are interested in the second part of my chess career should consult *John Nunn's Best Games*, also recently reissued by Gambit Publications in electronic format.

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[Chess Explained: The Taimanov Sicilian](#) – James Rizzitano

[Chess Explained: The Main-Line Slav](#) – David Vigorito

[Chess Explained: The English Opening](#) – Zenon Franco

FCO: Fundamental Chess Openings

Paul van der Sterren

This just has to be the perfect single-volume survival guide. All openings are covered, with detailed verbal explanations of plans for both sides. The strategies explained will remain valid as long as chess is played, and so the time spent studying this book will be rewarded many times over.

“The format of the book is very friendly, openings very clearly set out and identified, with the variations touched upon in short and sweet sections” – John Lee Shaw, CHESS CHECK (e-zine)

Fundamental Chess Endings

Karsten Müller and Frank Lamprecht

This is the first truly modern one-volume endgame encyclopaedia. It makes full use of endgame tablebases and analytical engines that access these tablebases; where previous authors could only make educated guesses, Müller and Lamprecht have often been able to state the definitive truth, or get much closer to it. Covers all major types of endgame, featuring rules of thumb, thinking methods, principles, practical advice, and much more.

Also available as a German-language Kindle edition.

“The authors love the endgame phase of the game and this shows in the writing. ... Anyone reading it will seriously improve their game.” – British Chess Federation Book of the Year Award press release

A Cunning Chess Opening Repertoire for White

Graham Burgess

A good opening repertoire need not require an enormous amount of study to be highly effective. A cunning choice of lines and move-orders can steer the game to positions that we like and deny the opponent his preferred strategies. The main cornerstones of this repertoire are carefully chosen Queen's Gambit lines, the Torre Attack (vs ...e6), and a variety of fianchetto options against the King's Indian and related set-ups. White's position is kept highly flexible, with many possible transpositions to a wide variety of systems that the reader can use to extend and vary the repertoire. The book features a wealth of new ideas and original analysis.

“This is the way opening books should be written. It is a training repertoire book which you can use to build a solid white repertoire for your career. It is not a ‘hope they make a mistake and fall for the trap’ book. Best value if you want to learn to play the opening like a grandmaster.” – Danny Woodall, Amazon.com review

Mastering the Chess Openings Volume 1

John Watson

In this major four-volume work, Watson explains not only the ideas and strategies behind specific openings, but also the interconnections of chess openings taken as a whole. By presenting the common threads that underlie opening play, he provides a permanent basis for playing openings of any type. Volume 1 offers both entertainment and challenging study material in king's pawn openings such as the Sicilian and Ruy Lopez.

“The publication of this series is a bellwether event in chess publishing, and all players should avail themselves of the opportunity to read these books.” – Mark Donlan, CHESS HORIZONS

Also available as a German-language Kindle edition.

“All of these epic Watson works have one thing in common. You walk away after reading with a deeper understanding of chess.” – Pete Tamburro, CHESS LIFE

Mastering the Chess Openings Volume 2

John Watson

Watson presents a wide-ranging view of the way in which top-class players really handle the opening, rather than an idealized and simplified model. This volume, focusing on queen's pawn openings, will make chess-players think hard about how they begin their games. It also offers both entertainment and challenging study material in openings such as the Nimzo-Indian, King's Indian and the entire Queen's Gambit complex.

Also available as a German-language Kindle edition.

“Watson has managed to present the most important openings after 1 d4 and analyses them in detail as well as explaining the backgrounds. ... you have the feeling you are holding a real classic in your hand. It may sound exaggerated, but I believe Watson is a sort of modern Aron Nimzowitsch. Absolutely recommended!” – Martin Rieger, WWW.FREECHESS.DE

Mastering the Chess Openings Volume 3

John Watson

In the third volume of his highly acclaimed series, Watson moves on to flank openings. He provides in-depth coverage of the English Opening, while drawing upon many themes from the first two books. Particularly in the context of reversed and analogous forms of standard structures, we understand why certain ideas work and others don't, and experience the concept of 'Cross-Pollination' at work in even more varied forms than seen in earlier volumes.

Also available as a German-language Kindle edition.

"This volume can be read separate from the other two in this series; however, I recommend reading all three books. They will truly take your game to the next level and help you understand the opening phase so much better, as well as help minimize the risk of starting the game out from an inferior position. Those who play the English Opening should buy this book without any hesitation. This book is a modern classic. It is genuinely instructive and provides numerous examples of original analysis and improvements over existing theory." – Carsten Hansen, CHESSCAFE.COM

Mastering the Chess Openings Volume 4

John Watson

This final volume draws together many themes in a wide-ranging discussion of general opening topics. In the process, Watson covers a variety of opening structures and variations not seen in the earlier volumes and presents a great wealth of original analysis. He also explains how players should best prepare and choose their openings for the level at which they play. The final topics are the future of chess openings and the skills that will be most important as chess evolves in the forthcoming decades.

Also available as a German-language Kindle edition.

“The section on gambit play is extremely well done and must reading for any player coming up through the ranks. So too is the following chapter ‘Choosing and Preparing Openings’ which is pure gold. Watson gives well-considered suggestions for appropriate openings for players from just beyond beginner to 2300 that will solve many amateurs’ perennial headache. Highly Recommended” – IM John Donaldson, US Team Captain

Chess Openings for Kids

John Watson and Graham Burgess

This book teaches the names and starting moves of all the main chess openings, and explains the basic ideas. Beginners will learn how to position their pieces for maximum impact. More experienced players will discover some remarkable tactical and strategic themes that are vital for chess mastery. “A very succinct overview of the main openings and the ideas behind them” – GM Luke McShane, NEW IN CHESS

“To be able to provide both enthusiasm, inspiration and basic knowledge is a praiseworthy effort.” – FARBRORTHEGURU.BLOGSPOT.COM

A Killer Chess Opening Repertoire (new enlarged edition)

Aaron Summerscale and Sverre Johnsen

Bored with the same old openings? Worried about having to learn too much theory? Then this book – a set of exceptionally dangerous opening weapons for White – will come as a godsend. The queen’s pawn repertoire is based on rapid piece development, and includes many lethal attacking ideas and traps. “Johnsen has chosen to build on the first edition, addressing the areas where theory has substantially changed or Summerscale’s original coverage needed expanding. Offers a nice mix for the player who doesn’t like to study theory too much but still wants a chance to come out of the opening with chances for an advantage” – IM John Donaldson, US Team Captain

How to Beat Your Dad at Chess

Murray Chandler

The enduring bestseller – explaining in simple terms all the basic checkmate patterns. Learn about the 50 Deadly Checkmates – attacking patterns that occur repeatedly in games between players of all standards.

Also available as a German-language Kindle edition.

“Fun to read for players of any age or any strength” – GM Lubosh Kavalek,
WASHINGTON POST

Chess Tactics for Kids

Murray Chandler

In an easy-to-understand format, this book explains how to bamboozle your chess opponents using commonly occurring tactical motifs. 50 different tactical motifs are covered, all leading to the win of material.

Also available as a German-language Kindle edition.

“As a teacher of scholastic/junior players, I have long wished for a comprehensive yet brief and inexpensive guide to chess tactics. Finally a work that fills the bill” – Bill Whited, CHESS COUNTRY

Attack with Black

Valery Aveskulov

Need a reliable way to fight for the initiative when White plays 1 d4? Grandmaster Aveskulov presents a sound but ultra-aggressive repertoire based on gambits that have proved their worth in grandmaster play over many years. The Benko Gambit offers Black very active piece-play and intense positional pressure. If White dodges the Benko, we hit him with the Blumenfeld, sacrificing a pawn to set up a strong pawn-centre. Aveskulov examines all of White's options and move-orders after 1 d4 Nf6.

“This isn’t like previous books on the Benko ... this book has the real strength of taking the total Black approach in hand. Anyone looking to fill out a full defense to 1 d4 would do well to pick this up.” – Bill McGahey,
WWW.CHESSVILLE.COM

The Gambit Book of Instructive Chess Puzzles

Graham Burgess

Solving chess puzzles is one of the most effective ways to improve your game. This convenient book provides 300 exercises, with instructive points highlighted in the solutions.

Also available as a German-language Kindle edition.

“There are several things a successful book on tactical puzzles should have. They include examples that are not well-known, material arranged not by theme but by degree of difficulty and perhaps most importantly solutions that are detailed enough to explain to the student why they went wrong. Burgess passes all these tests with flying colors.” – IM John Donaldson, US Team Captain

Chess Puzzles for Kids

Murray Chandler

This chess puzzle super-challenge contains 100 fun positions to solve, ranging from encouragingly easy to mind-numbingly hard. Using an innovative format, every puzzle is preceded by an instructive example, illustrating an important pattern. *Chess Puzzles for Kids* will quickly enable children to enjoy using their new-found skills to outwit friends and relatives. “Grandmaster Murray Chandler writes excellent books for kids who already know how to play. ... presents the mating and tactical patterns in such a clear and entertaining way that it is a joy to read it.” – GM Lubosh Kavalek, HUFFINGTON POST

Understanding Pawn Play in Chess

Dražen Marović

Chess owes its extraordinary depth to pawns. These humble pieces can take on many roles in the chess struggle. They can be blockers, battering-rams, self-sacrificing heroes, and can even be promoted to the ranks of royalty. Marović investigates high-quality games to provide the reader with an armoury of pawn-play concepts that will help him make the right judgements at the board.

“GM Marović utilizes all his experience as a GM and trainer to outline appropriate strategies associated with specific pawn-structures: isolated pawns (specifically IQP), isolated pawn couples, hanging pawns, passed, doubled and backward pawns, pawn-chains and pawn-islands. This approach ... has of course been attempted before, but not, that I have seen, with such clarity as in this book” – Jonathan Tait, BCCA

The Most Amazing Chess of All Time

John Emms

Very occasionally, a chess move is played that astonishes the whole world. It may be a move of astounding complexity, unearthly beauty, deep paradox... or all three. The move is discussed and analysed around the world as chess-players attempt to fathom both why the move works, and how on earth anyone thought of it in the first place. In this book John Emms has selected, from hundreds of candidates, the 200 most amazing chess moves of all time. In each case, the reader is given the chance to try to find the move for himself – making this one of the most challenging chess puzzle books ever published. “...you are getting double value for money – a wonderful games collection and a ‘find the continuation’ complication. A really enjoyable and instructive book.” – Alan Sutton, EN PASSANT

A Rock-Solid Chess Opening Repertoire for Black

Viacheslav Eingorn

Grandmaster Eingorn shows that it is possible both to play solidly, and to take White out of his comfort zone. The repertoire, based on playing 1...e6, is strikingly creative and will appeal to those who want a stress-free life as Black. You will get every chance to demonstrate your chess skills, and are very unlikely to be blown off the board by a sharp prepared line. Eingorn's subtle move-orders are particularly effective if White refuses to pick up the gauntlet, as Black can then use his delay in playing ...Nf6 to good effect and take the fight directly to his opponent.

“...shows depth of reading and balanced research. ... A pleasure to recommend this little gem of a book. ... Perhaps the best book of 2012 so far. A creative effort.” – James Pratt, BRITISH CHESS MAGAZINE

Understanding Chess Middlegames

John Nunn

The middlegame is the phase of the chess battle where most games are decided, yet is the one that has received the least systematic treatment from chess writers. With the outstanding clarity for which he is famous, Nunn breaks down complex problems into bite-sized pieces. Each of the 100 lessons features two inspiring examples from modern chess, with a clear focus on the key instructive points.

Also available as a German-language Kindle edition.

“I own several books on the Middlegame in chess written by esteemed Grandmasters but this one is probably my favourite. John Nunn knows his subject; he is three-times World Chess Solving Champion” – Carl Portman, CARLSPLANET.CO.UK

Understanding the Chess Openings

Sam Collins

A comprehensive guide to all important chess openings. There is coverage of all major variations, and helpful descriptions and explanation of the typical strategies for both sides.

“Anyone rated under 1700 should own this book and even higher rated players who are looking to fill in the blanks in their repertoire can benefit. It arms you with the knowledge of where to focus your resources when investing money on other opening books.” – Carsten Hansen, CHESSCAFE.COM

The Ultimate Chess Puzzle Book

John Emms

This book provides a wealth of puzzle positions to test just about every facet of your tactical skills. The book begins with 100 relatively easy positions suitable for novices, and ends with 100 extremely tough puzzles, which provide a mind-bending challenge even for top-class players. There are 1001 puzzles in all.

Also available as a German-language Kindle edition.

“The material is well chosen, and a marking system enables you to assess your performance relative to masters and grandmasters” – Leonard Barden,
EVENING STANDARD

Chess for Zebras

Jonathan Rowson

An insight into human idiosyncrasies, in all phases of the game. The reader will begin to appreciate chess at a more profound level, while enjoying a book overflowing with common sense and humour.

Also available as a German-language Kindle edition.

“I warmly recommend the book, especially to players frustrated by a long period of stagnation. Most chess books attempt to change what we think, but Rowson’s helps us to change how we think, and in the long run, that’s what will pay the biggest dividends” – Denis Monokroussos, CHESS TODAY

Understanding Chess Move by Move

John Nunn

Thirty modern games are examined in depth, to help the reader understand the most important aspects of chess and to illustrate modern chess principles in action. Virtually every move is explained using words that everyone can understand.

Also available as a German-language Kindle edition.

“This is a great book from one of the best chess writers in the world. He does a fine job explaining the plans ‘move by move’ so everybody can understand what it’s all about” – Søren Søgaard, SEAGAARD REVIEWS

365 Ways to Checkmate

Joe Gallagher

Tactics based on checkmate ideas against the enemy king decide a large proportion of chess games, so it is vital to be alert to these possibilities when they occur. Joe Gallagher provides 365 checkmate puzzles to help readers sharpen their skills. In each position, the task is to find a way to force a clear-cut win.

“One of the things that makes this a good book is Gallagher’s skill at selecting examples and placing them at the right level of difficulty. Another is offering detailed solutions which often cover plausible sidelines that might have attracted the reader.” – IM John Donaldson, JEREMYSILMAN.COM

1001 Deadly Checkmates

John Nunn

The ability to spot checkmates is a vital skill – and this easy-to-use book shows you how it is done. With the help of Grandmaster John Nunn, you will be ready to shock your next opponent with a deadly checkmate, whether in a school match, a club tournament – or even a championship game!

Also available as a German-language Kindle edition.

“A great book, which I think will be useful to a wide range of players, say from 1400 to 2400. Chess is largely a matter of pattern recognition, so exercises like these are useful to everyone.” – Frederick Rhine,
CHICAGOCHESS.BLOGSPOT.COM

Secrets of Modern Chess Strategy

John Watson

In a profound but thoroughly practical manner, this classic work explores how chess concepts have evolved over the past 70 years. Acclaimed double-winner of the British Chess Federation and United States Chess Federation ‘Book of the Year’ awards.

“can, without resorting to hyperbole, be considered a classic” – GM Nigel Short, THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

Chess Strategy in Action

John Watson

Here Watson fleshes out the theory presented to enormous acclaim in *Secrets of Modern Chess Strategy*. He illustrates the modern practice of chess with examples from imaginative players such as Kasparov, Kramnik, Anand and Ivanchuk, and tempestuous innovators like Shirov and Morozevich.

“...above all else Watson is excellent at explaining these mysterious grandmaster concepts to the club player” – IM Richard Palliser, CHESS MONTHLY

Learn Chess Tactics

John Nunn

This book teaches basic tactical ideas such as the fork, pin and discovered attack, and introduces general ideas like elimination, immobilization and compulsion. A basic knowledge of simple tactics will enable a novice to start winning games, by giving checkmate or capturing material.

Also available as a German-language Kindle edition.

“The quality of the material, the fine layout, and the enlightening comments make this book the ideal introduction to chess tactics for the inexperienced player.” – SCHACHMARKT

How to Build Your Chess Opening Repertoire

Steve Giddins

Whether a novice or a master, every player needs to select an opening repertoire. In this book, the first to focus on these issues, Steve Giddins provides common-sense guidance on one of the perennial problems facing chess-players. He tackles questions such as: whether to play main lines, offbeat openings or ‘universal’ systems; how to avoid being ‘move-ordered’ how to use computers; and if and when to depart from or change your repertoire.

Also available as a German-language Kindle edition.

“I can recommend this book unreservedly to anyone who is serious about improving” – Phil Adams, 3Cs website

Secrets of Practical Chess (new enlarged edition)

John Nunn

What is the best way to improve your chess results? Memorizing openings, learning endgames... there must be an easier way! How about making the most of your existing talent? Contains 45% more material than the first edition.

“With John Nunn as a guide the only way is up.” – IM Gary Lane, CHESS MOVES

The Road to Chess Improvement

Alex Yermolinsky

“How can I improve my game?” is a perennial question facing chess-players. Alex Yermolinsky is well-qualified to offer advice – having trained himself, slowly but surely raising his game to top-class grandmaster standard. In this award-winning book he passes on many of the insights he has gained over the years, steering the reader away from ‘quick-fix’ approaches and focusing on the critical areas of chess understanding and over-the-board decision-making.

“a magnificent achievement, by far the finest book I’ve ever seen on the subject of practical play” – GM Matthew Sadler, NEW IN CHESS

Understanding Chess Endgames

John Nunn

Assuming no specialized endgame knowledge, John Nunn presents 100 key endgame concepts, and explains how they are used to win games or save difficult positions. He covers all the main types of endgames and typical thinking methods, and so equips readers with all the skills needed to excel in this vital phase of the game up to good club level and beyond.

“A fantastic endgame primer ... Nunn has distilled a vast amount of detailed endgame research into clear and well-presented chunks. There are 100 short sections, each with four examples, each with a diagram, fitting neatly across two pages” – GM Daniel King, THE GUARDIAN

101 Chess Opening Traps

Steve Giddins

This timeless collection of deadly traps might win you games in just a handful of moves! The book focuses on established opening traps that club players are most likely to fall for.

“To my delight and amazement [my opponent] fell straight into the trap” – Alec Toll, OPEN FILE

Learn Chess

John Nunn

Starting with the very basics, this book tells you everything you need to know to become a successful chess-player. No prior knowledge is assumed. The reader learns step-by-step, with each new point illustrated by clear examples. By the end of the book, the reader will be fully ready to take on opponents across the board, or on the Internet, and start winning.

Also available as a German-language Kindle edition.

“an excellent primer. The prose is lucid and the presentation systematic; an adult reader with no prior knowledge of the game will be taught all he needs to know” – James Vigus, DRAGON

Chess for Children

Murray Chandler and Helen Milligan

With this charming book, children will delight in learning the basic moves of chess. All the rules are explained step by step, assuming no prior knowledge. The lessons are reinforced by the inventive tales that George is told by his pet alligator Kirsty, self-proclaimed Grand Alligator of chess.

Chess is widely recognized as a useful tool for developing creative thinking in children, yet the rules of the game are straightforward. With this book, even children as young as five can enjoy exciting games and will thoroughly enjoy outwitting friends and relatives.

Also available as a German-language Kindle edition.

“...the best book of its type ever published” – Peter Connor,
CHESSCOUNTRY.COM

“The highly professional design of this book commends it for use in chess lessons for beginners” – Dr W. Schweizer, ROCHADE

Grandmaster Secrets: The Caro-Kann

Peter Wells

The Caro-Kann is one of the most popular responses to 1 e4. Black stakes a claim to the central squares and seeks free development for all his pieces. While solid, it is by no means a drawing weapon – the resulting positions generally contain at least a degree of imbalance and the critical lines lead to sharp positions with chances for both sides. Many new approaches for both sides have been developed in recent years, and a good understanding of these ideas is vital for anyone looking to handle either side of the Caro with success.

“I would be quick to pick up this book as an e4 player or if I defended it with the Caro-Kann. Wells really focuses on how to play the opening by presenting a wide range of ideas for both sides. Explanations abound ... the analysis and coverage is outstanding.” – Lou Mercuri, CHESS HORIZONS

Play the Najdorf Sicilian

James Rizzitano

The Najdorf Sicilian has a unique place amongst chess openings: for several decades it has been regarded by the top grandmasters as the best way for Black to play soundly for a win against 1 e4. James Rizzitano, a battle-hardened Sicilian warrior, distils the most important ideas and themes from current practice to provide an ideal guide for those looking to succeed as White or Black in the Najdorf in the modern scientific era.

“A good book for those that want to start playing the Najdorf with Black and also recommendable for Najdorf players not the least because it is very much up to date and includes state of the art knowledge about the lines presented. Also quite useful for players that face the Najdorf with White, specially those that play Bg5 or Be3 since so many different lines for Black are analysed here.” – Hedinn Steingrimsson, WWW.SCHACH-WELT.DE

Play the Alekhine

Valentin Bogdanov

The Alekhine is arguably the most forcing and aggressive reply to 1 e4. Black immediately forces the pace and drags the game onto his own favoured territory. Those who specialize in the Alekhine find that the opening has a real practical sting and quick-strike potential. The coverage in this book is even-handed, and there are abundant ideas presented to both sides.

“This is Bogdanov’s third book for Gambit, showing that this quality publishing house trusts the author – and why wouldn’t they? The language is fluent and informative, and the sample games are well chosen and instructive.” – Marko Tauriainen, SUOMEN SHAKKI

Chess Explained: The Queen's Gambit Declined

James Rizzitano

The Queen's Gambit Declined is one of the most important and popular of chess openings. Both sides have ways to create imbalance and test their opponent's skills and knowledge in a full-blooded struggle. In addition to the traditional main lines with Bg5, White has at his disposal the Exchange Variation, and the Bf4 system, both of which can be handled in highly aggressive style if he wishes. Rizzitano covers all these lines and a plethora of other important options, focusing on the fundamental ideas on which they are based.

“I should also loudly call attention to Rizzitano’s new, well-written, and amazingly well-researched *Chess Explained: The Queen’s Gambit Declined...*” – John Watson, THE WEEK IN CHESS

Chess Explained: The French

Viacheslav Eingorn and Valentin Bogdanov

The French appeals to a wide range of chess temperaments: it is solid yet uncompromising, and with a variety of chaotic variations to appeal to the most bloodthirsty of players, but also offering more tranquil lines to those seeking a quieter existence. Chess Explained books provide an understanding of an opening and the middlegames to which it leads, enabling you to find the right moves and plans in your own games.

“...if you are considering utilizing the French as a weapon against 1 e4, then this book is a very good and inexpensive way of deciding if the opening is for you. It will give you a solid grounding in fundamental positional ideas and typical tactics in the French.” – Munroe Morrison, OPEN FILE

Chess Explained: The Classical Sicilian

Alex Yermolinsky

The Classical (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6) is one of the most popular and respected systems of the Sicilian. Black develops his pieces more quickly than in many Sicilian systems, and intricate piece-play often results. Yermolinsky covers lines that retain the independent significance of the Classical move-order, such as 6 Bc4 Qb6 – a line in which he is a leading specialist.

“Yermo’s book represents a good way to get to grips with this sound and interesting opening system.” – Phil Adams, 3Cs website

Chess Explained: The c3 Sicilian

Sam Collins

The c3 Sicilian is one of White's most popular and poisonous ways to avoid the main lines of the Sicilian. With the forcing line 1 e4 c5 2 c3, White denies his opponent the chance to demonstrate his preparation in some chaotic system. There are plenty of tricks and traps in the c3 Sicilian, and the open piece-play that often results can lead to quick attacks and means that careless play will rarely go unpunished.

“...the format is well suited to the average club player who wishes to start using this variation.” – David Mills, TIME TROUBLE

Chess Explained: The Grünfeld

Valentin Bogdanov

The Grünfeld creates immediate imbalance: Black strikes at White's centre with all available resources. In the main lines, White creates a large pawn-centre and launches an attack. While the theory of these lines has been extensively developed, there is a coherent logical thread that needs to be understood in order to get to grips with the theory and handle the resulting positions. This book features a special contribution from Viacheslav Eingorn on the key ideas of the Rb1 Exchange main line, which he was instrumental in developing.

“If you like aggression when you play Black then this book is for you. It creates immediate imbalance and again it is crucial to know how to handle this opening as White too.” – Carl Portman, DEFENCE FOCUS

Chess Explained: The Nimzo-Indian

Reinaldo Vera

The Nimzo-Indian is one of the most important of all chess openings, and popular at all levels of play. It provides winning chances for both sides as it leads to structures of great strategic variety and complexity. Key battlegrounds in the Nimzo include the blockade, IQP positions, the handling of unbalanced pawn-structures, and the struggle between bishop and knight. An understanding of these topics will prove valuable in a very broad context. “This is a very well-written book with enough analytical material to launch your Nimzo-Indian career, and more than enough explanation to justify the series title.” – John Watson, THE WEEK IN CHESS

Chess Explained: The Queen's Indian

Peter Wells

The Queen's Indian is an important and popular opening at all levels of play. Black's flexible stance allows him to choose between a range of solid and dynamic structures. In turn, White can play flexibly, opposing Black's fianchetto, or can try to force the pace in the centre and start a hand-to-hand fight. It is an opening rich in nuances, and many of the modern main lines involve moves that look extravagant, but are backed up by a deep underlying logic.

"The annotations in particular really impressed me, for the author actually did **explain** what was happening at every stage of the game. Everything appeared logical as I played through the games and read the annotations. Where alternatives are given, you are told **why** a certain move is good or bad, not just the fact that it is so. Peter Wells is to be congratulated on presenting everything so lucidly." – Alan Sutton, EN PASSANT

Chess Explained: The Modern Benoni

Zenon Franco

The Modern Benoni is one of the few openings where White has no easy way to force drawish simplifications or deny Black any dynamic counterplay. In this book Franco shows how Black can seek to create the kind of mayhem that has attracted champions such as Tal, Kasparov and Topalov to the Benoni, and also demonstrates how White can seek either to put a positional clamp on the game, or else to storm Black's position before his development is complete. A special section deals with the vital question of move-orders. "These books provide 25 well annotated, up to date model games which you can use to guide you when learning the openings. Excellent introduction to these openings for intermediate players." – Paul Dunn, AUSTRALIAN CHESS

Chess Explained: The Meran Semi-Slav

Reinaldo Vera

Belying its solid classical appearance, the Semi-Slav is one of Black's most aggressive responses when White opens with the queen's pawn. The Meran is its traditional main line, and often leads to chaotic positions of immense strategic and tactical richness. Vera draws upon decades of personal experience to explain the underlying logic of the Meran and related lines, and to pick out the key features of positions that to the untrained eye might appear random and unfathomable.

“What he offers is honesty! I like that. It means to me you can trust the rest of the book because he is honest about his own contribution.” – Bob Long,
WWW.CHESSCO.COM

Chess Explained: The Taimanov Sicilian

James Rizzitano

The Taimanov Sicilian is one of the most flexible options for Black in the Open Sicilian. It leads to a great variety of central structures, and the player with the better understanding of typical Sicilian themes will often emerge victorious – Taimanov positions need to be understood well in order to be played well. This book covers the Paulsen set-up with ...Qc7 in addition to the ‘pure’ Taimanov with ...Nge7.

“I’m really impressed with how thorough and helpful the explanations are. I’m quite sure that anyone interested in taking up the Taimanov would learn a lot from this book – in fact, the average club player would probably be able to make do with this as his or her one and only Taimanov book.” – S. Evan Kreider, WWW.CHESSVILLE.COM

Chess Explained: The Main-Line Slav

David Vigorito

The Main-Line Slav is one of the key battlegrounds of modern chess, with adherents among all levels of chess-players. This book discusses all major lines following the moves 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4. Vigorito dissects the most important themes and nuances, placing them firmly in the context of the practical struggle, making sure that readers will be familiar with the resources at their disposal, and understand when to employ them. “...a solid understanding of the pawn-structures and piece-play will be the main factor in the success of any player who takes on this opening. ... As an introductory work to the Main-Line Slav, this book is an excellent place to start” – Carsten Hansen, WWW.CHESSCAFE.COM

Chess Explained: The English Opening

Zenon Franco

The English Opening is a flexible and dynamic choice for White, which avoids a great deal of sharp and well-mapped opening theory. It is popular with all levels of chess-players, and has been used to good effect at world championship level by Kasparov, Korchnoi, Botvinnik and other greats of the game. The English gives rise to an immense variety of structures, ranging from reversed Sicilians to Hedgehogs and fluid or locked central structures.

“Altogether I found this book really helpful in both the white as well as the black side of this opening.” – Andy May, WWW.NSGCHESS.COM

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