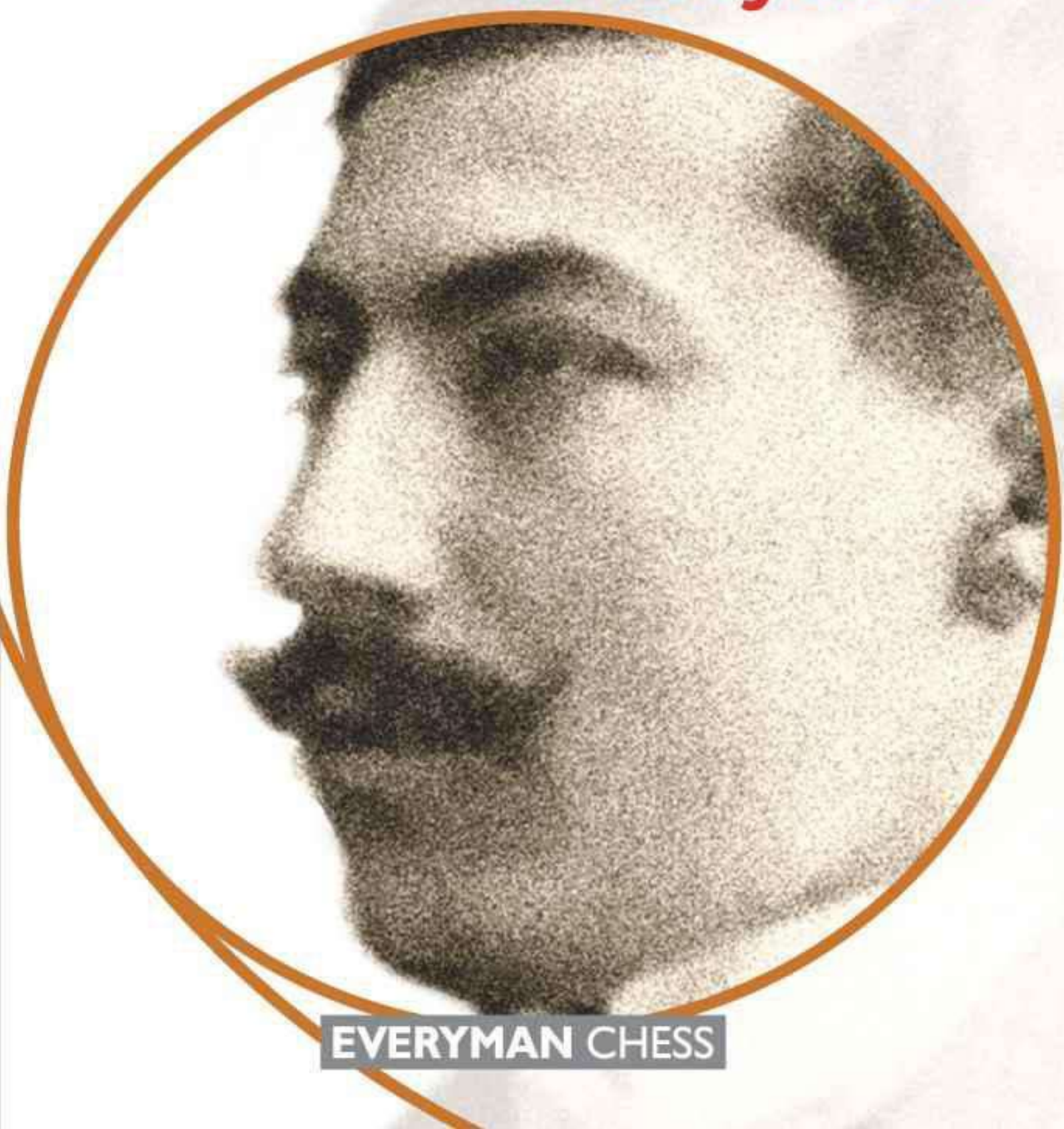


Zenón Franco

Rubinstein

move by move



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Zenón Franco is a Grandmaster from Paraguay, now living in Spain. He represented Paraguay, on top board, in seven Chess Olympiads, and won individual gold medals at Lucerne 1982 and Novi Sad 1990. He's an experienced trainer and has written numerous books on chess.

Also by the Author:

Test Your Chess

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Introduction

There are not many books about Akiba Rubinstein, despite his having been for several years one of the best players in the world – and, according to Chessmetrics.com, at various points between 1908 and 1914, even the very best. Rubinstein was certainly among the top five in the world from 1907-16, and even later, but his results then suffered a considerable decline as he had increasing health problems.

Rubinstein is perhaps the strongest player who never managed to become world champion. There are often considered to have been several outstanding players who came close to gaining the world championship, or who deserved to do so. David Bronstein, Paul Keres and Viktor Korchnoi are especially mentioned, and the claims on their behalf are beyond dispute. The difference with Rubinstein is that, while the others were at least able to compete for the world title – because a formal procedure for selecting the challenger had by then been established by the international body, FIDE – in Rubinstein's time this was not the case; he never had the opportunity to play for the title.

When I wrote my book on Boris Spassky, I noted that the tenth world champion's contribution to chess literature was remarkably slight. In Rubinstein's case this is even more extreme: he wrote almost nothing, and when he did write, his commentaries were relatively simple, although anything that someone of his strength might have to say is always interesting.

Yuri Razuvaev, the author of one of the few books about Rubinstein, put it this way: "Akiba Rubinstein did not write about himself and about his credo; he has left this opportunity to others, who may judge upon his creative work."

Some of Rubinstein's games are very well known, in particular his "Immortal Game" against Rtlewi at Lodz 1907, and his wins against Lasker at St Petersburg 1909 and Capablanca at San Sebastian 1911. For anyone not acquainted with these works of art, it will surely be a pleasure to view them for the first time; but even for those who have already seen them, it should still be interesting. These games will generally have been played through "long ago", and will not be recalled in detail, so looking at them again in greater depth should be a pleasant experience. We don't need to do quite what Boris Gelfand, one of Rubinstein's greatest admirers, did regarding Rubinstein-Salwe, Lodz 1908. He said: "This game made a deep impression on me; I played it over many times".

The task of writing this book, after studying Rubinstein games more deeply, was a very enjoyable one, and I can say that I now appreciate Rubinstein's marvellous play more fully. I hope I can convey what I felt on looking at his games. In many of them, both in the middlegame and the ending, I seemed to be witnessing a work of art, in which the various parts are united or connected and where, for most of the time, harmony reigns.

GM Zenón Franco Ocampos,

Ponteareas 2015

With special thanks to Jonathan Tait for his very useful suggestions and improvements.

The Structure of the Book

The book is organized around Rubinstein's playing style, in which we can distinguish three main characteristics:

1. His style was markedly positional.
2. He was possibly the first person to create systems of play in various openings, with plans linked to the middlegame.
3. He was an extraordinary endgame player, whose handling of rook endings in particular is among the best in the history of the game.

After an introductory chapter discussing Rubinstein's style, showing how he dealt with various positions – in the opening, positional middlegames, and the endgame – which to some extent exemplify his play, there follows five chapters of annotated games:

1. Positional play (11 games)
2. The initiative and the attack (4 games)
3. Endgame mastery (6 games)
4. Rook endings (6 games)
5. Linking the opening and the middlegame (7 games)

As well as the 34 main games, you will also find a few supplementary ones, annotated in less detail, which are intended to shed light on the associated games. At the end of the book is a short biographical chapter, outlining the most significant parts of Rubinstein's career.

Akiba Rubinstein's Playing Style

Emanuel Lasker (World Champion 1894-1921) described it in this way: "Rubinstein understood Steinitz. Rubinstein's style was developed, not in opposition to Steinitz, but in a passionate attempt to utilize his teachings correctly."

Using the teachings of Steinitz as a basis, Rubinstein investigated certain positions, seeking plans that would look forward to the middlegame and even at times to the possible endgames arising.

Max Euwe (World Champion 1935-37) commented: "The style of the Polish Grandmaster Rubinstein forms a bridge between Steinitz and the present day. He had a splendid grasp of the requirements of a position and was an exceptionally fine attacker when the occasion demanded. However, in the field of the endgame many consider that his achievements will never be equalled. In rook endings in particular his play was simply phenomenal. Yet his play also had its deficiencies. Tactically he was more fallible, as his games against the great tactician Spielmann showed."

Here Euwe puts his finger on one of Rubinstein's weak points; at times he made tactical errors, but of course this didn't happen often. There is a theory that it was because he learnt to play relatively late, between the ages of fourteen and eighteen.

Boris Gelfand pinpointed Rubinstein's great strength, his revolutionary treatment of the game: "Unlike his contemporaries, who aimed, in the opening, to find some clever tactical idea and then based their entire opening strategy on it, Rubinstein followed an entirely different approach, one which was rediscovered in the 1950s and '60s (...). It consisted of penetrating the hidden meaning of a position and devising a "long plan" (to quote Nimzowitsch). In many of his games one can trace a very close connection between the opening and the endgame; in other words, he played the opening with a favourable endgame in mind. He was unwilling to spoil his pawn structure in the opening, even for the sake of achieving some obvious advantages. Analysing Rubinstein's creative work we can discover that his weak points are a consequence of his virtues." In other words Gelfand considers that it is not possible to separate Rubinstein's huge strengths from his slight weaknesses, especially in the field of tactical play; "it's all part of the same package".

Regarding that main weakness, it is a curious fact that there is a tactical motif the Queen's Gambit Declined called the "Rubinstein Trap", which loses a pawn for Black. It bears his name because Rubinstein fell into it twice towards the end of his career, first against Euwe at Bad Kissingen 1928, and later against Alekhine at San Remo 1930.

Yuri Razuvaev described his style thus: "Rubinstein could sometimes procrastinate, but hurry – never!". Gelfand points out that that this could sometimes become a problem. For instance, "Alekhine's extremely concrete play, his tremendous effort to pose or solve problems with every move, often baffled Rubinstein. One should not forget that this happened many decades ago, when such a manner of play was not fashionable, as it has become now."

What no-one is in disagreement about is Rubinstein's skill in handling rook endings, in which regard he is right at the top. Savielly Tartakower confirmed this, saying, "Rubinstein is the rook ending of a chess game, begun by the gods a thousand years ago."

Giving a more global view, Richard Réti offered a description with which students of Rubinstein's play will agree: "In building up his game the position given to every piece is the necessary one. It is not a matter of a fight for him, but the working out of a victory, and so his games create the impression of a great structure, from which not one stone dare be shifted."

Kasparov wrote something similar: "For the purity and logicity of his style of play, this great chess artist was compared with an ancient sculptor, whose smooth and monumental work provokes admiration ... " While Yuri Razuvaev emphasized that "Rubinstein has a special ability to find the right square for each piece."

Prophylactic thinking, deciding which piece to exchange and which to keep, how to manoeuvre in order to improve the effectiveness of the pieces, constitutes an art that Rubinstein handled with absolute mastery; we shall see this over and over again.

One final testimony to Rubinstein's importance comes from Vladimir Kramnik: "We should not forget Rubinstein, an incredibly talented and fantastic chess player. It is a pity that with his extensive knowledge of chess, he was not a World Champion. Sometimes he created true masterpieces and was way ahead of his time. To understand this, you should just go through the collection of his best games."

Rubinstein's Contributions to Opening Theory

In the annotated main games we shall see this aspect more specifically. For now, let us look at a few examples to give us a foretaste.

The Rubinstein Variation against the Tarrasch Defence

First of all let's consider what is possibly one of Rubinstein's greatest contributions to theory, his line against the Tarrasch Defence to the Queen's Gambit.

Boris Gelfand remarked: "His favourite procedure was playing against an isolated pawn or against a pair of semi-hanging pawns. His treatment of positions where his opponent had an isolated pawn was especially fine. Curiously enough, his most famous opponent was Dr. Tarrasch, the inventor of the defensive system named after him, who had his own credo in chess and was a great player himself. Therefore their conflicts are so interesting to watch. In their encounters Rubinstein was more successful."

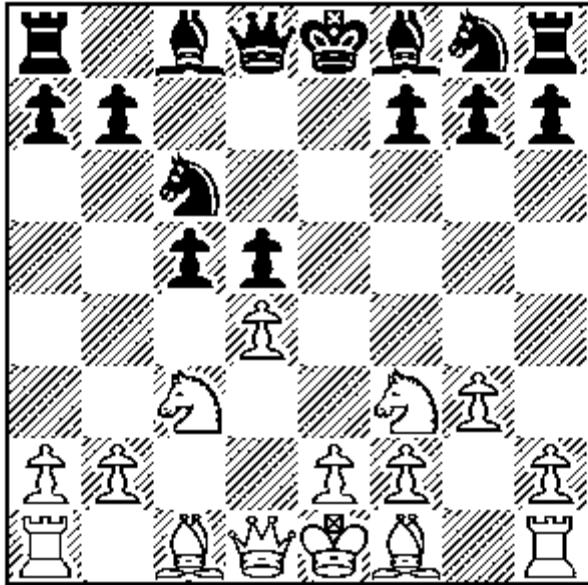
A.Rubinstein-S.Tarrasch

Teplitz-Schönau 1922

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5

This is the Tarrasch Defence, which usually results in an isolated queen's pawn (IQP); in return Black gains active piece play. Rubinstein's unprejudiced approach can be seen in the fact that he played this defence himself several times with Black.

4 cxd5 exd5 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 g3



After trying 6 Bf4 and 6 Bg5, Rubinstein opted for this idea and popularized it. Instead of committing the c1-bishop, or developing the f1-bishop along the f1-a6 diagonal, White prefers to deploy this bishop on g2, where it aims at the weakness on d5.

Rubinstein played it for the first time in 1908 against Salwe, and produced several model games with this line.

6 ... Nf6

Capablanca played 6 ... Be6 at San Sebastian 1911, which ended in an important victory for Rubinstein.

7 Bg2 Be7 8 0-0 0-0 9 a3

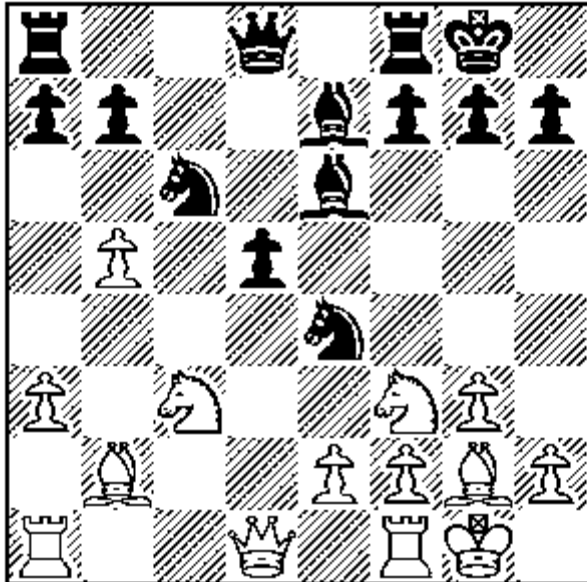
Deviating from Réti's continuation, 9 dxc5 Bxc5 10 Na4. Rubinstein opts to develop his queen's bishop on b2. At Carlsbad 1923 he played 9 Bg5 against Tarrasch (see Game 31).

9 ... Be6 10 dxc5 Bxc5 11 b4 Be7 12 Bb2 Ne4?

As Rubinstein will demonstrate, this move is premature; it is better to develop with 12 ... Rc8, as Teichmann had played previously.

13 b5!

The start of a strong sequence leading to a great advantage to White.



13 ... Na5 14 Nxe4! dxe4 15 Nd4 Qd5 16 Qc2! f5 17 Qc3! Nc4 18 Nxf5!
 White won in 53 moves.

The Rubinstein Attack in the Queen's Gambit

A.Rubinstein-R.Teichmann

Vienna (4th matchgame) 1908

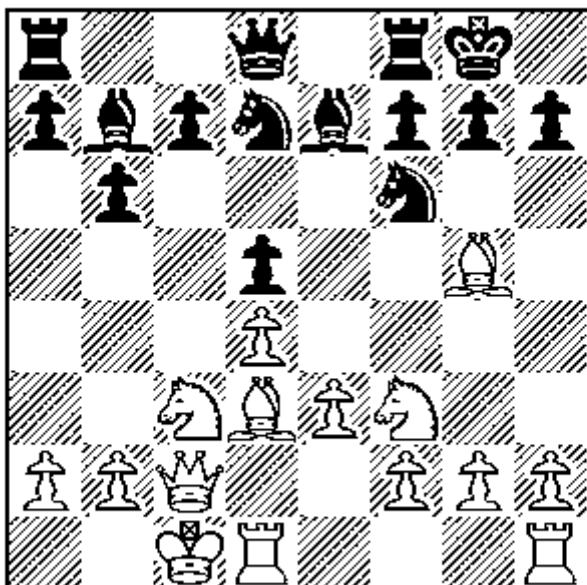
1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Nbd7 5 e3 Be7 6 Nf3 0-0 7 Qc2

Instead of the usual 7 Rc1, which frequently leads to a quiet positional struggle, this move introduces “the formidable Rubinstein Attack”, as Kasparov called it, which is much more aggressive.

7 ... b6

7 ... c5! is the most precise response.

8 cxd5 exd5 9 Bd3 Bb7 10 0-0-0



This is the idea, castling on the opposite side to the black monarch and starting an attacking race. We shall look at this later in Game 13.

The Rubinstein Variation against the Queen's Gambit Accepted

“He invented the system with a2-a4 which was used later by Botvinnik and which became the object of a theoretical debate in the match Botvinnik-Petrosian (1963)” – Gelfand.

This is another of Rubinstein's great contributions to opening theory, nearly all of which have survived the test of time.

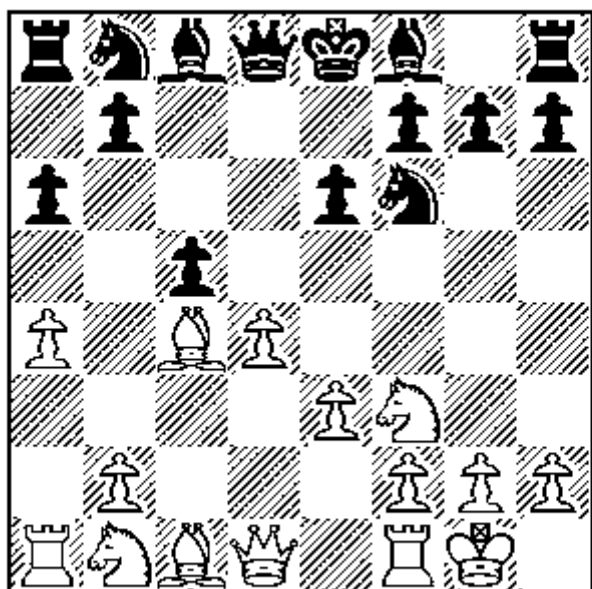
A.Rubinstein-S.Freiman

St Petersburg 1909

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 c4 dxc4 4 e3 e6 5 Bxc4 a6 6 0-0

Rubinstein later adopted the more precise move order with 6 a4, not allowing 6 ... b5 and ... Bb7.

6 ... c5 7 a4



Rubinstein played this line for the first time in this game. Annotating a later one, he wrote: “This move hampers Black and cramps his queenside, but at the same time it creates a weakness in White's position which will be felt throughout the game”. His objectivity can be seen in the following sentence: “The question of whether a2-a4 should be played in such positions, or should be abandoned, belongs to those chess problems which are still not solved.”

7 ... b6?!

It was better to play 7 ... Be7 and 8 ... 0-0.

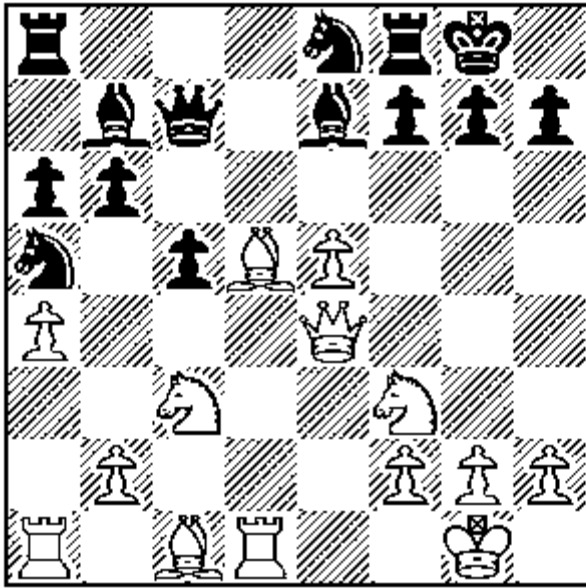
8 Qe2!

“White now brings a rook rapidly into play, attacking the little mobile queen (sic), and obtains forthwith a great superiority in the centre,” wrote Lasker in the tournament book.

8 ... Bb7 9 Nc3 Nc6 10 Rd1 Qc7 11 d5!

This typical opening of the game leads to a quick decision here.

11 ... exd5 12 Bxd5 Be7 13 e4 0-0 14 e5 Ne8 15 Qe4 Na5?



“White’s formation is overwhelming. But by the text move Black loses immediately.” – Lasker.

16 Bxb7 1-0

“After 16 Bxb7 Qxb7 (or 16 ... Nxb7 17 Nd5) 17 Qxb7 Nxb7 18 Rd7 would decide the game at once.” – Lasker.

Rubinstein subsequently faced sterner opposition:

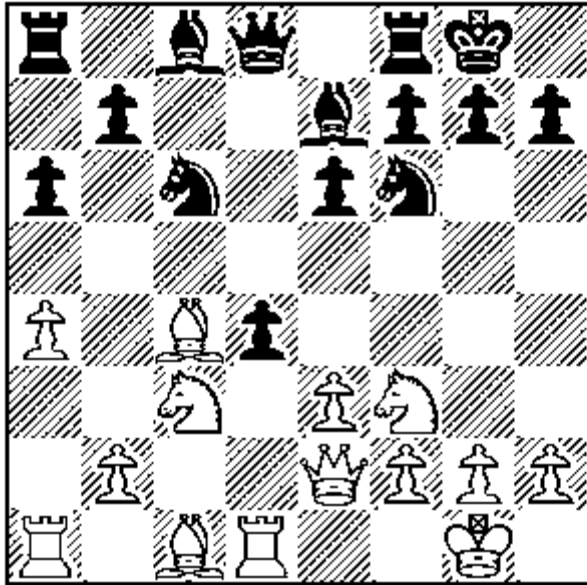
A.Rubinstein-S.Tartakower

Baden-Baden 1925

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 d4 d5 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 e3 c5 6 Bxc4 a6 7 a4 Nc6 8 0-0

Rubinstein now employs the same manoeuvre as in the previous game, one which is still used today.

9 Qe2 cxd4 10 Rd1 0-0



Here 11 exd4 is the most common move, after which Black can play 11 ... Nb4, restraining the devastating central pawn break that we saw in the game vs. Freiman; in response, White can continue with 12 Bg5, or else 12 Ne5, which was played in A.Rubinstein-H.Wolf, Carlsbad 1923.

11 Nxd4

Rubinstein: “As far as I know, this move is new and was played for the first time in this game. Though White’s play finally ended in failure, it cannot be a consequence of the innovation.”

11 ... Qc7 12 Nxc6 Qxc6 13 e4 b6 14 Bg5 h6 15 Bxf6 Bxf6 16 Nd5!

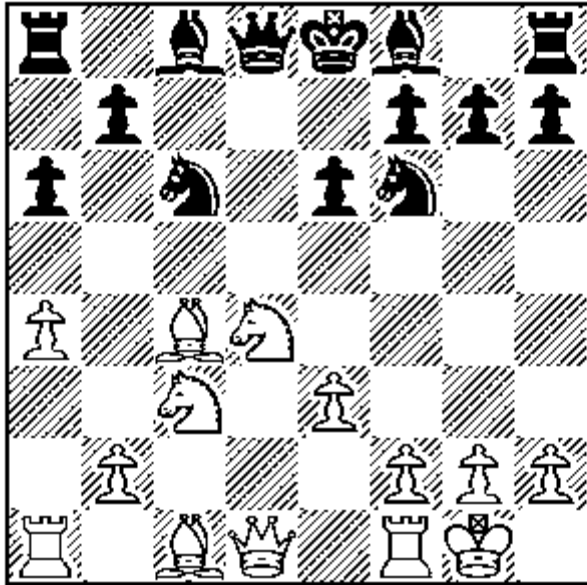
After 16 ... exd5? 17 Bxd5, Black would lose material; White has the advantage, although Rubinstein soon made a serious tactical error and went on to lose.

Let’s conclude by looking at another unusual idea, also played against Tartakower:

A.Rubinstein-S.Tartakower

Marienbad 1925

1 c4 e6 2 Nf3 d5 3 d4 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 e3 a6 6 a4 c5 7 Bxc4 Nc6 8 0-0 cxd4 9 Nxd4



Once again Rubinstein treats the position in a non-standard way; instead of recapturing with the pawn, reaching a typical isolated queen's pawn formation, he prefers to exchange a pair of knights. He explained it thus: "This capture with the knight is a new attempt to reinforce the possibilities of White's attack. Now the d4-pawn can advance in no time and, after its exchange, White achieves strong pressure against the b7-pawn."

9 ... Nxd4 10 exd4 Be7 11 d5 exd5 12 Nxd5 Nxd5 13 Bxd5 0-0 14 Qf3

Increasing the pressure on b7, which was part of the purpose of 9 Nxd4.

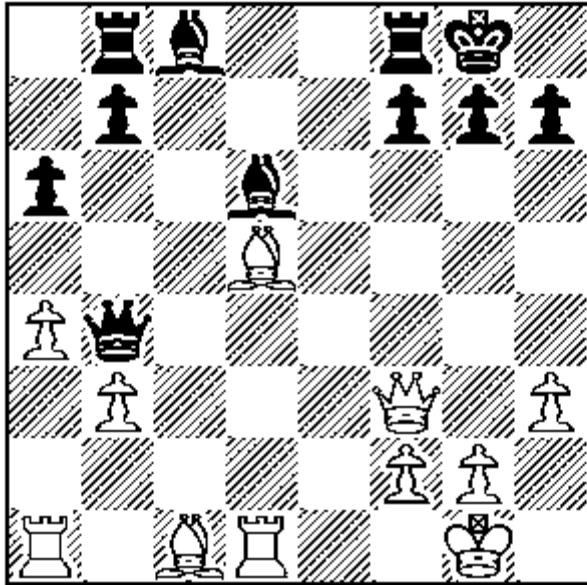
14 ... Bd6 15 Re1!

"A move which corresponds exactly to the position, though at this moment it is not evident why. The pressure which it initiates against Black's position will finally result, after fourteen moves, in a gain of material." – Rubinstein.

15 ... Qh4 16 h3 Qb4 17 Rd1

Instead of playing 17 Re4, which was also attractive, Rubinstein focuses on the weakness of the d6-bishop.

17 ... Rb8 18 b3!



Threatening 19 Ba3, as well as the positional 19 Bb2, increasing the pressure on the kingside. Black is induced to develop his c8-bishop to e6 as the lesser of the evils.

18 ... Be6 19 Bxe6

This decision is typical of Rubinstein's play: he declines to win a pawn with 19 Ba3 Qb6 20 a5 Qc7 21 Bxd6 Qxd6 22 Bxb7, preferring material equality but with a clear positional advantage based on his superior pawn structure. White won in 48 moves.

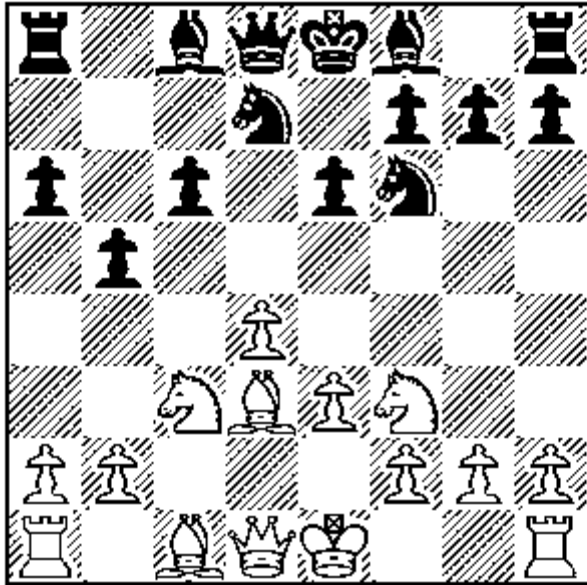
The Meran Variation of the Queen's Gambit

The Meran Variation achieved great popularity and has been played by some of the world's best players, such as Euwe, Botvinnik, Kasparov, Kramnik, Anand, Larsen, Gelfand and Shirov, to name just a few. But it was Rubinstein who first popularized this line by playing it in the city which lent it its name.

E.Grünfeld-A.Rubinstein

Merano 1924

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c6 4 Nf3 Nf6 5 e3 Nbd7 6 Bd3 dxc4 7 Bxc4 b5 8 Bd3 a6



With the plan of 9 ... c5. 8 ... Bb7 is the modern alternative.

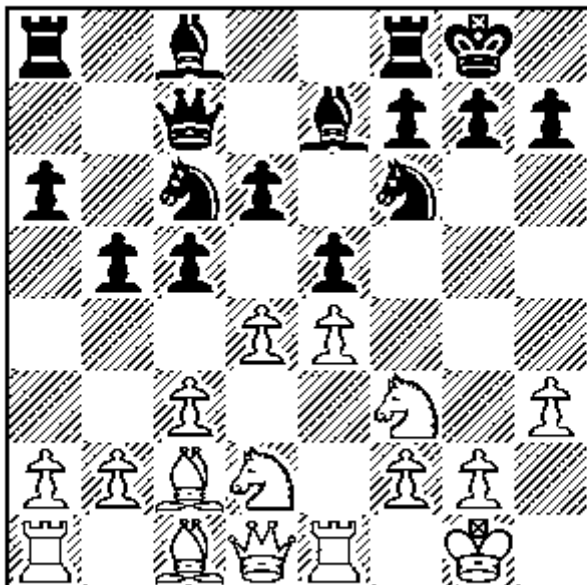
Rubinstein's manoeuvre in the Ruy Lopez

Another of Rubinstein's great contributions can be seen in the Chigorin Defence to the Ruy Lopez.

G.A.Thomas-A.Rubinstein

Baden-Baden 1925

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

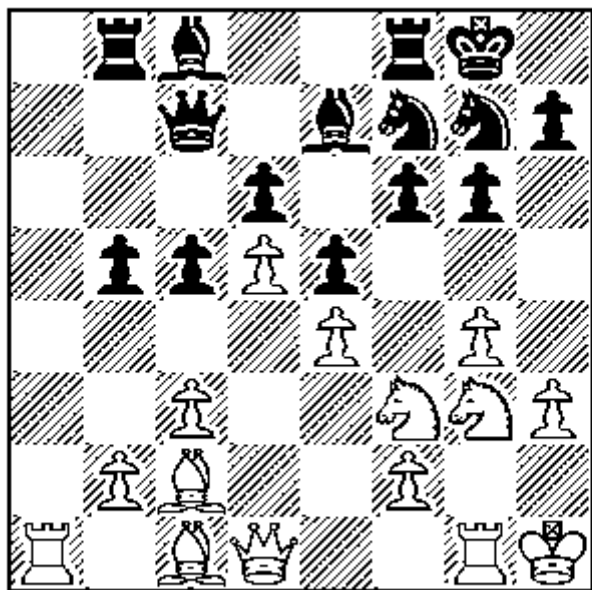


13 d5

Here, as Kasparov relates, Rubinstein "devised an elegant defensive plan with ... Nc6-d8, ... Nf6-e8, ... g7-g6 and ... Ng7, ... f7-f6, and ... Nf7, as in his games against Thomas and Bogoljubow (Baden-Baden 1925)." It is worth adding that the advance ... f6-f5 is to be

considered, once this manoeuvre has been completed.

13 ... Nd8 14 Nf1 Ne8 15 a4 Rb8 16 axb5 axb5 17 g4 g6 18 Ng3 Ng7 19 Kh1 f6 20 Rg1 Nf7



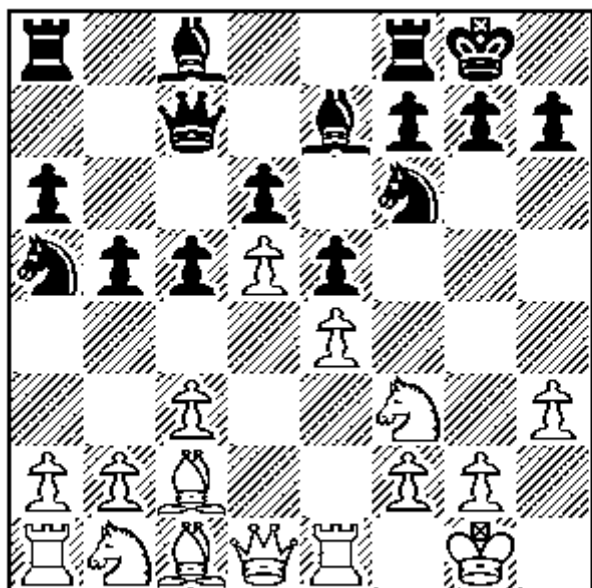
Black has completed the regrouping of his pieces and has a playable position. Rubinstein won the game in 63 moves, after a long manoeuvring struggle.

Let's now look at a modern example in which the same plan was adopted:

M.Sión Castro-A.Beliavsky

León 1994

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 b5 6 Bb3 Be7 7 Re1 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 Na5 10 Bc2 c5 11 d4 Qc7 12 d5



12 ... Ne8

Preparing to play ... g7-g6 and ... f7-f5 at an opportune moment.

13 b3 Nb7

Heading for d8 and f7, following Rubinstein's idea.

14 Nbd2 g6 15 a4 Rb8 16 axb5 axb5 17 Nf1 Ng7 18 Bh6

This move is not as good as it seems, since it obstructs Black's play less than might appear, and "forces" him to make moves that he was planning in any case – in fact the bishop is now in an insecure position.

Instead, 18 g4 was interesting, to restrain the eventual pawn break ... f7-f5.

18 ... Nd8

First the knight goes to f7 to "put the question" to the h6-bishop.

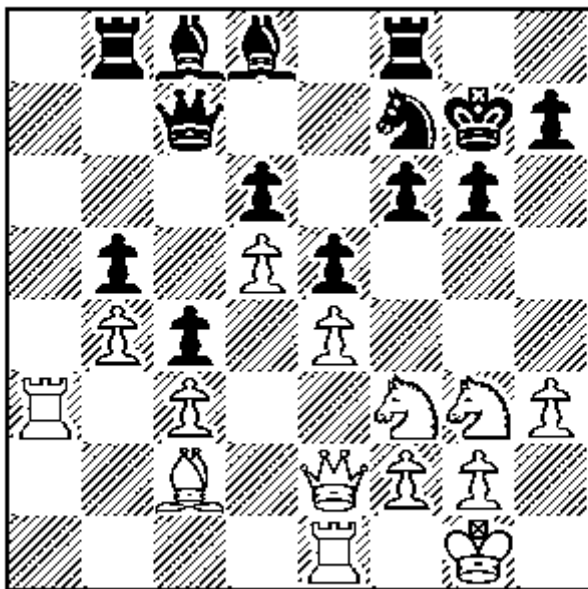
19 b4

This thematic move weakens White's position further, as will become apparent. It still seems preferable to play 19 g4.

19 ... f6 20 Ra3 Nf7 21 Bxg7?!

After 21 Be3, Black can play 21 ... f5, but this was better than conceding control of the dark squares.

21 ... Kxg7 22 Ng3 Bd8! 23 Qe2 c4!



This prepares ... Bb6, which will highlight the drawbacks of White playing 19 b4 and then giving up his dark-squared bishop. Black won in 57 moves.

The Rubinstein Variation of the Four Knights Game

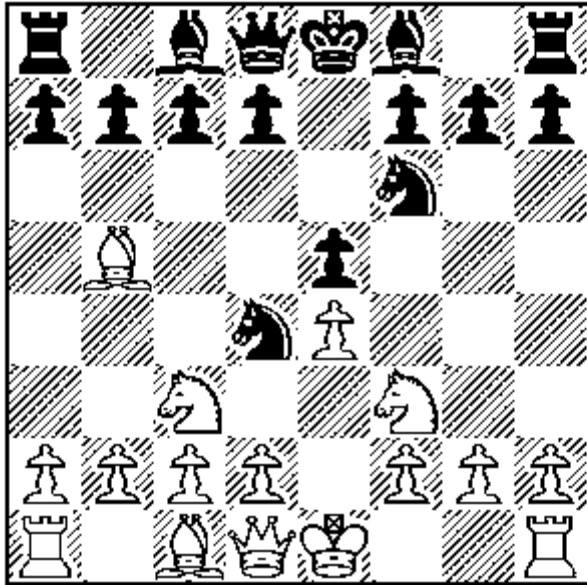
N.Bernstein-A.Rubinstein

Russian Championship, Vilnius 1912

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bb5

Here the main continuation for Black was to maintain the symmetry with 4 ... Bb4, a move which Rubinstein also played frequently, as we shall see later in Games 10 and 22.

4 ... Nd4



This is Rubinstein's contribution, involving a pawn sacrifice. It has received the approval of several generations of great players, such as Capablanca, Alekhine, Kramnik, Gelfand, Shirov, Timman, and many others.

5 Bc4 Bc5 6 Nxe5 Qe7 7 Nf3 d5

This is just one of the possible continuations; this position features in Supplementary Game 19.1 and is still seen in games even today.

The Rubinstein Variation of the French Defence

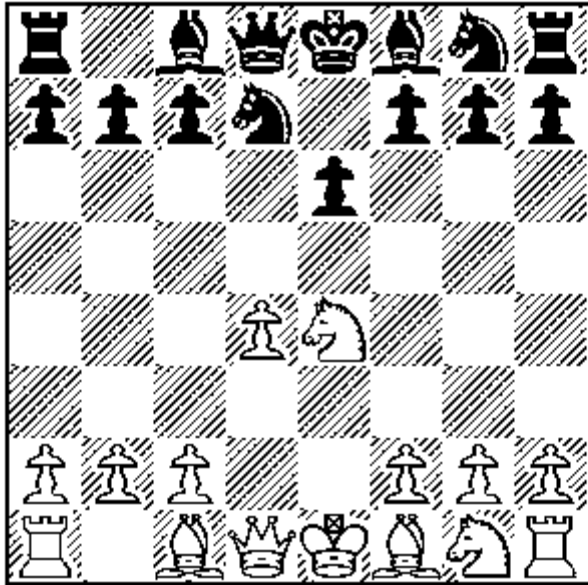
G.Maróczy-A.Rubinstein

Carlsbad 1907

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4

Another way to reach this structure is via 3 ... Nf6 4 Bg5 dxe4, which is known as the Burn Variation, although Rubinstein played this as well.

4 Nxe4 Nd7



Several moves are possible here, but Rubinstein preferred the text, preparing 5 ... Ngf6. See Supplementary Game 26.1 for the continuing moves to this game.

The Rubinstein Variation has been played by Alekhine, Petrosian, Korchnoi, Ivanchuk, Shirov, Short and Morozevich, among others.

The Rubinstein Variation against the Nimzo-Indian Defence

Rubinstein popularized the development of the g1-knight to e2, which has been played in several World Championship games. As we shall see, some of the ideas have even been adapted for use in other openings, such as the Queen's Gambit.

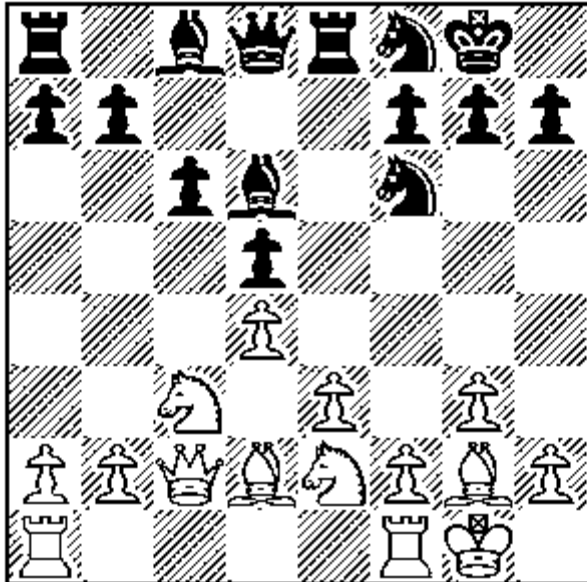
A.Rubinstein-R.Michell

Scarborough 1930

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 0-0 5 Ne2

This move can be played against both 4 ... c5 (see Game 34) and 4 ... b6, as Botvinnik did in his World Championship matches against Bronstein and Smyslov. White wants to be able to recapture on c3 with the knight, keeping his pawn structure intact, though as we shall see this is not the only virtue of developing the knight to e2.

5 ... d5 6 Qb3 Be7 7 g3 c6 8 Bg2 Nbd7 9 cxd5 exd5 10 0-0 Re8 11 Bd2 Bd6 12 Qc2 Nf8



“This game paved the way for White’s modern handling, with a transposition to the Carlsbad structure, to be followed by a breakthrough in the centre.” – Gelfand.

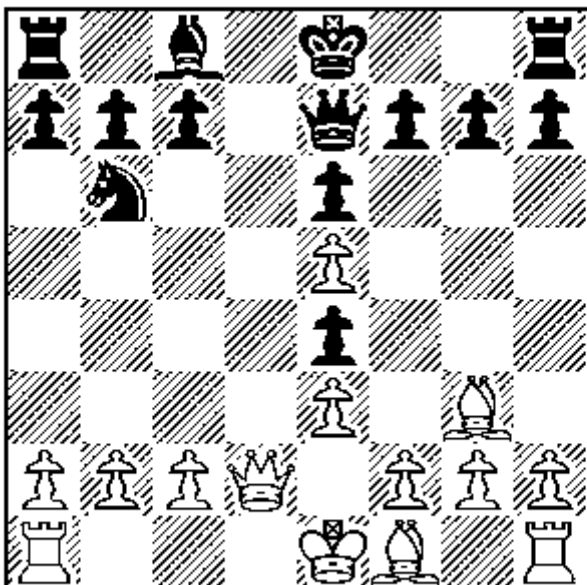
13 f3

This is the idea to which Gelfand refers. White plans e3-e4 at an appropriate moment (see Game 33). The same idea was adapted by Botvinnik and Kasparov in the Queen’s Gambit, as we’ll see in the games section.

Positional Play

A.Rubinstein-J.Perlis

Ostend 1906



White to play

White is slightly better because the e4-pawn is weak; whereas his bishop pair gives him no advantage because the one on g3 is not very active, aiming at its own pawns.

Rubinstein was hardly ever in a hurry to win a pawn if the opponent would gain active play in return. After 11 Qd4, for instance, a possible continuation is 11 ... Bd7 12 Qxe4 Bc6 13 Qd4 Rd8, followed by ... h7-h5, with good compensation; or if 13 Qf4, then Black can keep the balance with 13 ... g5 14 Qf6 Qb4+ 15 c3 Qxb2! 16 Qxh8+ Ke7 17 Qf6+ Ke8 and the white king cannot escape the perpetual check after 18 Rd1 Qxc3+ 19 Ke2 Qb2+ etc.

If instead 11 0-0-0, White appears to gain no advantage after 11 ... Bd7, planning ... Bc6.

Rubinstein found another way:

11 Bb5+!

“Such moves are either made by great masters or duffers! Here Rubinstein’s powerful positional idea is that Black must permit the entrance of the white pieces via the d6-square as well as restrict his queen bishop (i.e. if he plays 11 ... c6), or exchange the bishop, whose retention is necessary to guard the weak pawn on e4.” – Lasker in Lasker’s Chess Magazine 1906.

11 ... Bd7 12 Bxd7+ Nxd7 13 Qd4 f5 14 exf6 Nxf6 15 Qa4+!

“Again masterly.”

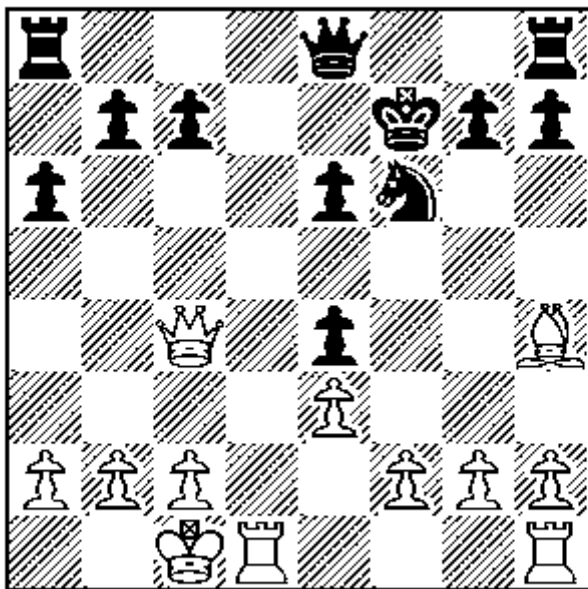
15 ... Kf7?!

If 15 ... Qd7 then 16 Qxd7+ Kxd7 17 0-0-0+ and 18 Rd4, but 16 ... Nxd7 is more tenacious.

16 0-0-0 a6 17 Bh4!

Increasing the pressure on the e4-pawn.

17 ... Qe8 18 Qc4



18 ... Nd5

Playing 18 ... Qc6 and leaving himself with five isolated pawns was very depressing, but giving up the pawn is no better.

19 Qxe4 Qc6 20 Qf3+ Kg8 21 e4 Nb4 22 Qb3 1-0

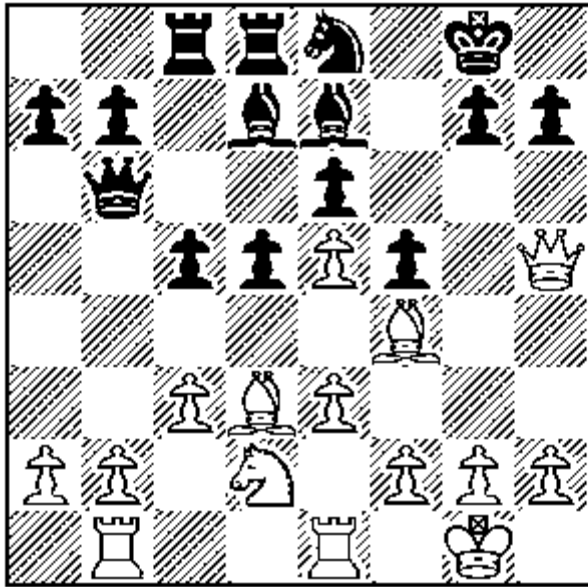
“The play of White was apparently simplicity itself. But there are several moves among

the twenty-two made that betoken the instinct of a real master.” – Lasker.

This was Rubinstein’s only win against Perlis in seven games.

F.Marshall-A.Rubinstein

Lodz (match tournament) 1908



Black to play

The position is balanced. Black’s kingside has been weakened, but White doesn’t have enough forces readily available to take advantage of this. One of White’s ideas to develop the initiative is Nf3, planning Bg5, postponing the advance g2-g4 until the attack is further advanced.

But it is Black to move; his task is to prevent these plans from coming to fruition.

15 ... Bb5!

After an exchange of bishops White would lose control of several important squares.

16 Bc2 Qa6!

Black pursues his idea with gain of tempo.

17 Ra1 Bd3 18 Bd1?

This is a typical case of “the cure is worse than the disease”; now the black bishop on d3 has no need to be envious of the white one on d1.

White needed to play 18 Bxd3 Qxd3 19 Nf3, intending Bg5, and although he has few chances of activity, his position is not bad.

18 ... Qb6!

The moment has come to exploit the poor coordination of the white pieces, and the right piece to accomplish this is the queen, taking advantage of the absence of its white counterpart.

The attack on b2 is unpleasant; White can’t play 19 Rb1, while if 19 b3 then 19 ... Qa5!

19 Nb3 a5!

“Never rush”; the immediate capture 19 ... c4 20 Nd4 Qxb2 would not suit Rubinstein. It is objectively good, but after 21 Be2 Bxe2 22 Nxe2, intending Reb1, followed by returning the knight to d4 at an opportune moment, there is nothing decisive.

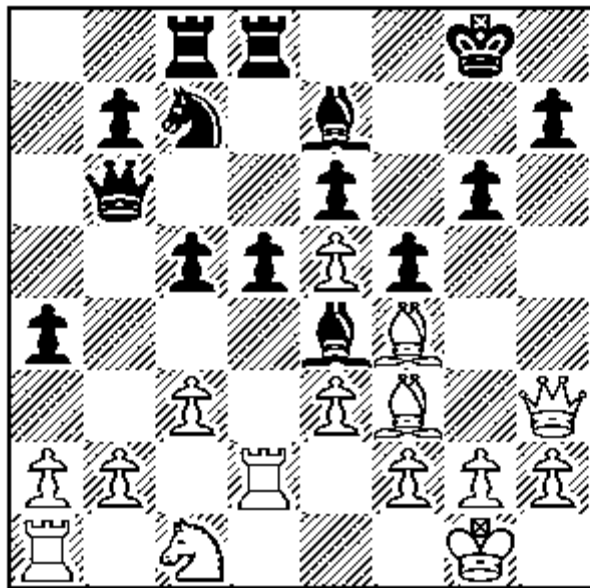
Rubinstein explained his move 19 ... a5! thus: “With the same effects as 19 ... c4 but without

surrendering the square d4.”

20 Bf3 Be4 21 Re2

Now the f3-bishop can't retreat, in view of 21 ... a4, followed by 22 ... Qxb2.

21 ... Nc7 22 Rd2 a4 23 Nc1 g6 24 Qh3



The lack of coordination among the white pieces is obvious, whereas Black has all his pieces active. This is the right moment to sharpen the struggle – how?

24 ... Kh8!

Not in the most obvious manner – another example of the validity of the saying “make haste slowly”. Rubinstein wants to expand with ... g7-g5, but the immediate 24 ... g5?! fails to 25 Qg3!.

The alternative was 24 ... d4!, which looks very good. Even though this can lead to exchanges, Black's position is excellent after, for example, 25 exd4 cxd4 26 cxd4 Nd5! (better than 26 ... Rxd4?! 27 Be3).

25 Qh6?

Marshall is unable to tolerate the slow, persistent pressure of Rubinstein's “quiet” moves. It was better to play 25 Bh6 in order to answer 25 ... g5?! with 26 Qh5.

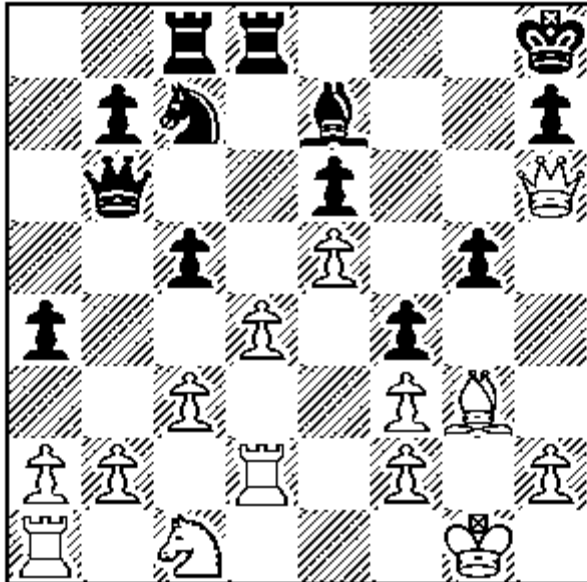
25 ... Bxf3 26 gxf3 g5! 27 Bg3

Of course 27 Bxg5? Bxg5 28 Qxg5 Rg8 would justify 24 ... Kh8.

27 ... d4!

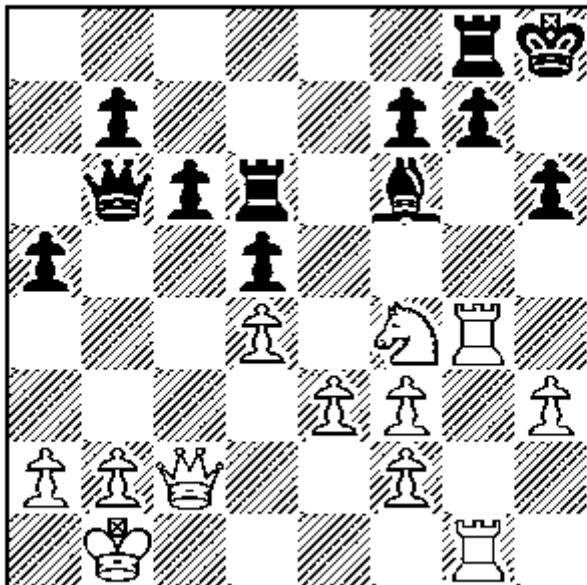
Now he plays it, threatening 28 ... dxe3 (or 28 ... dxc3) 29 Rxd8+ Rxd8, followed by 30 ... Qxb2.

28 exd4 f4



Winning material; Marshall continued the struggle but lost in 43 moves.

P.Johner-A.Rubinstein
Teplitz-Schönau 1922



Black to play

At first sight White seems to be better; he has doubled his rooks on the half-open g-file and the only question seems to be how he can increase his activity against the black monarch; meanwhile Black can't boast of anything specific.

With his next move Rubinstein shows that this first impression is deceptive.

21 ... Qc7!

Black prepares his own offensive, using his pawns. As for White's activity, it looks more dangerous than it really is, because there is no clear way to increase the pressure; the

weakness at g7 can be covered easily, without tying too many black pieces to defensive duties.

22 Nd3

White tries to impede the ... c6-c5 advance.

23 ... b6 23 f4 c5! 24 dxc5?

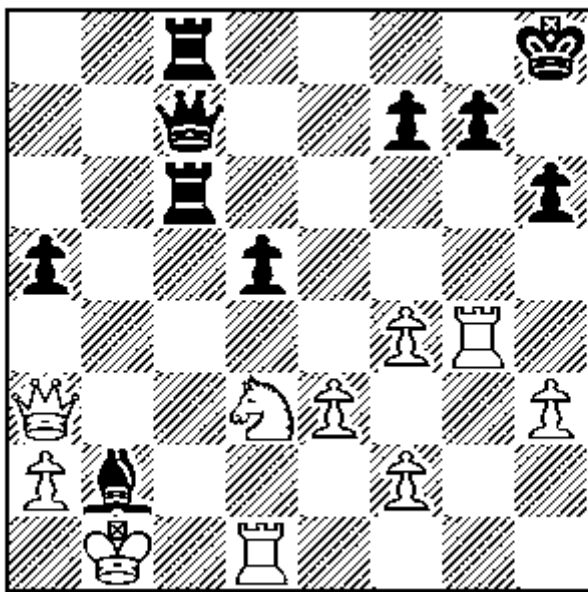
The opening of lines against the white monarch and the awakening of what now looks just like a “King’s Indian bishop” on the long diagonal leads to a rapid collapse.

“The correct continuation was 24 Ne5!” (Rubinstein), with equal chances.

24 ... bxc5 25 Qxc5 Rc6 26 Qa3 Rc8!

Black brings his only inactive piece into the attack; this was “much better than 26 ... Rb8” according to Rubinstein. The ‘computer move’ 26 ... Rc2, which is also winning according to the analysis engines, is unlikely to have attracted Rubinstein’s attention.

27 Rd1 Bxb2!



There are a few other options here, such as 27 ... Rb6, but Rubinstein chooses the most crushing move, which is also the most attractive; once the b2-pawn is removed the white king falls under a sudden attack.

28 Kxb2

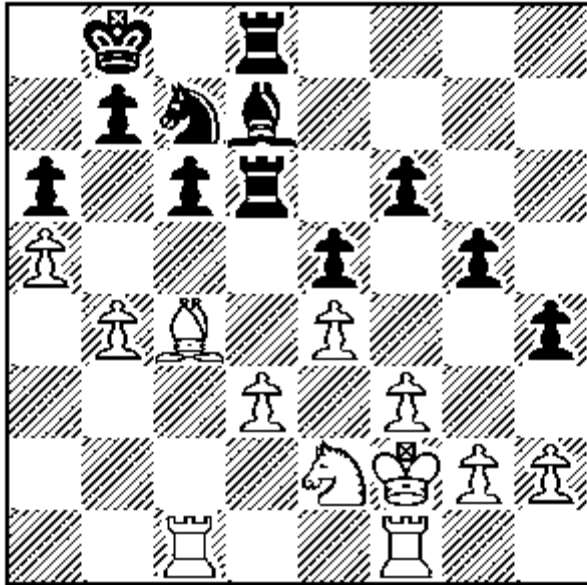
If 28 Nxb2 then 28 ... Rc1+ mates, or 28 Qxb2 Rb6 and wins.

28 ... Rc3! 29 Qa4 Rc2+ 0-1

Rubinstein in the Endgame

G.Salwe-A.Rubinstein

Carlsbad 1907



Black to play

Black is a little better; White has a weak square at d4 and a weak pawn at d3. However, there is nothing to be gained with 37 ... Ne6 37 g3 Nd4?! 38 Nxd4 Rxd4. Merely controlling d4 is not enough; some other element is needed.

37 ... Be6!

Black exchanges the “good” black bishop for White’s passive one in a typical case of transformation of advantages. The justification for trading bishops is that the c4-bishop defends the pawn on d3 and restricts the activity of the black rooks. Rubinstein always knew which piece to exchange and which to keep.

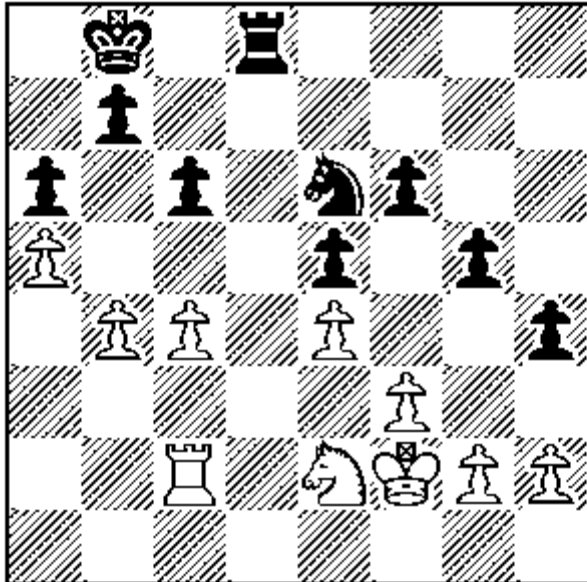
38 Rc2 Bxc4 39 dxc4

“Although White has shed his pawn weakness at d3, the opening of the file is of greater importance. Black gains the entry squares d1, d2 and d3.” – Uhlmann.

39 ... Ne6 40 Rb1 Rd2!

Another precise exchange; White will have problems defending his advanced pawns on the queenside with just a single pair of rooks on the board.

41 Rbb2 Rxc2 42 Rxc2



42 ... Rd3!

Threatening 43 ... Rb3, which forces the white rook to remain passive.

43 Rb2 Kc7 44 c5 Kd7 45 g3?

This opening of the game hastens the defeat; 45 h3 was preferable.

45 ... hxg3+ 46 hxg3 g4!

A crushing pawn break; White's pawn structure is left irremediably weakened.

47 Ng1

If 47 f4 then 47 ... exf4 48 gxf4 Nxf4! 49 Nxf4 Rf3+ and ... Rxf4, winning.

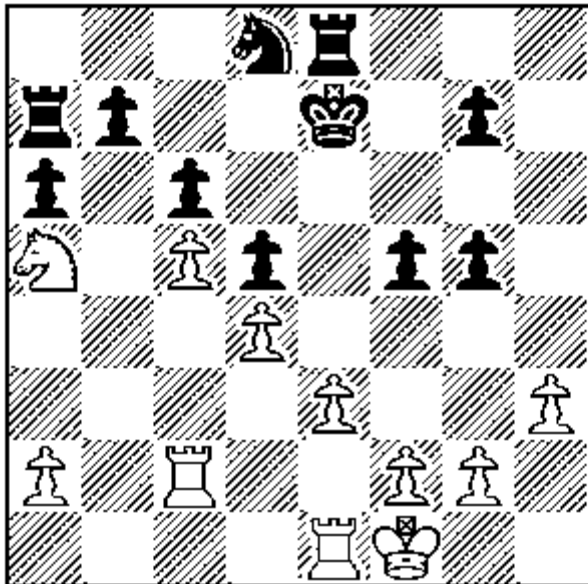
47 ... Ng5!

The gain of material is inevitable.

48 Ke2 Ra3 49 f4 Nxe4 50 fxe5 fxe5 51 Kf1 Nxc3+ 52 Kg2 Nh5 53 Rf2 Nf4+ 54 Kh1 Ra1 55 Rd2+ Ke7 0-1

A.Rubinstein-A.Takacs

Budapest 1926



White to play

Black has an obvious weakness on b7 and the a7-rook is badly placed. White is better, but there is nothing immediate.

“It is possible that Takacs went into this position thinking that he could hold it, as b7 is not difficult to defend. But then he did not have the advantage of studying Rubinstein’s collected games! It was only years later they were available in book form.” – Gelfand.

Rubinstein uses a typical procedure, gradually making progress.

31 Rb2!

First White increases the pressure on b7 to the maximum, to tie down the black pieces.

31 ... Kd7 32 Reb1 Kc8 33 Ke2

According to the “principle of two weaknesses”, it is not possible to win if the opponent has only one weakness; it is necessary create a second one, to be able to alternate the attacks and break through.

White first improves the position of his king and clears the first rank.

33 ... Re7 34 Kf3 Re4

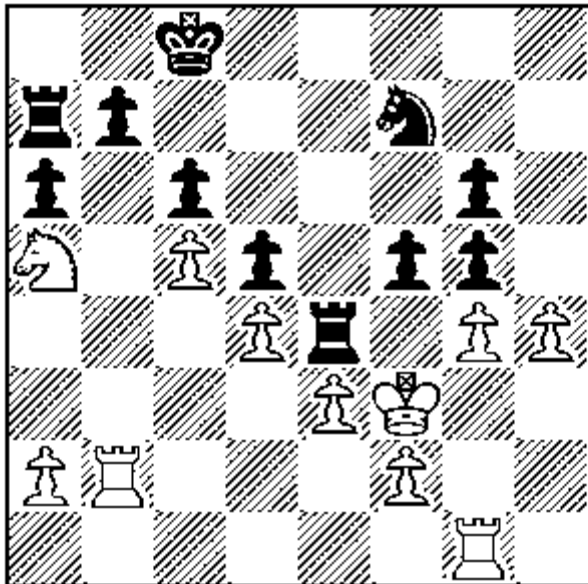
The moment has arrived to create the second weakness.

35 g4!

This “second weakness” will consist of open files on the kingside, to be able to infiltrate with a rook and attack Black’s weak points.

35 ... g6 36 Rg1 Nf7 37 h4!

White increases the pressure, so that the opening of a file is unavoidable. Gelfand believes that Rubinstein would normally manoeuvre his pieces into better positions before opening the game, but “it is possible that Rubinstein was concerned about the consequences of ... Re4-e8-h8, when Black in turn improved his defence a little, and that is why he hurried here.”



37 ... gxf4

Novikov suggested 37 ... Nh6, but White still breaks through after 38 hxf5 fxf4+ 39 Kg2 Nf5 40 Rh1 Re7 41 Rh8+ Kc7 42 Rf8 and White's progress is clear. At an opportune moment the b2-rook will go to the h-file, and of course the exchange of the f8-rook for the one on e7 would be losing for Black.

As indicated in *The Life & Games of Akiva Rubinstein*, if 42 ... g3 then 43 Rb3 and Black's activity evaporates, while the rook on a7 remains paralysed.

A curious variation is 42 ... Rd7 43 Re8!, restricting the black rook, and if 43 ... Rh7? or 43 ... Rf7? (43 ... Rg7 is forced) then 44 Ra8! wins.

38 gxf5 gxf5

If 38 ... g5, one winning line is 39 Nc4, planning Nb6, followed by the eventual pawn break e3-e4 after Rg4.

39 Rg7 Nd8 40 Rg8 f4? 41 Rh8

There is a tactical resource in 41 Nc4!, which Rubinstein could have used at various points, but the text move wins without any complications; soon White will have an extra rook in play.

41 ... fxe3 42 fxe3 Kd7 43 Rg2 Re8 44 Rxh4 Re7 45 Rh8 Kc7 46 Rgg8 Rd7 47 Nb3!

The pawn break 47 e4! is in the air; but once again, in his unhurried fashion, Rubinstein prefers to improve the position of his knight before taking any other decisions.

47 ... a5 48 Nc1 Ra8 49 Nd3 b5

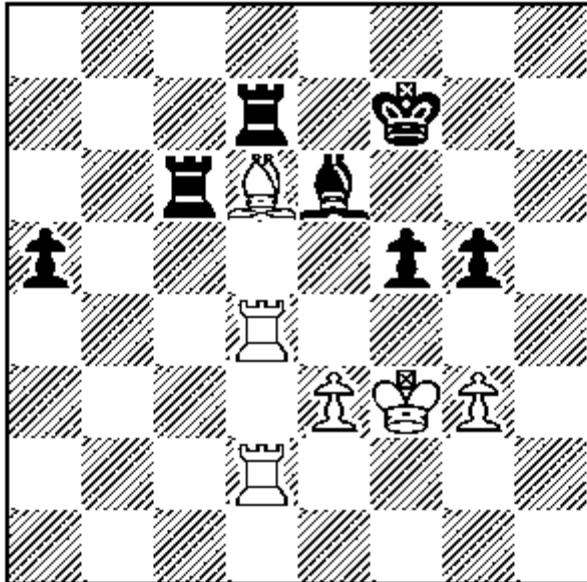
Takacs doesn't want to wait for the coup de grâce, but this merely hastens the end.

50 cxb6+ Kxb6 51 Nc5 Rd6 52 a4 Rc8 53 Kg4! Ra8 54 Kf5 Kc7 55 Rh7+ 1-0

If 55 ... Kb6 then 56 Rxd8 wins, while after 55 ... Kb8 or 55 ... Kc8, then (among other things) 56 Ke5 is decisive.

A. Rubinstein-S. Tartakower

Vienna 1922



White to play:

White is in a delicate situation. The opponent's extra pawn is passed and exchanging rooks will not help, so it seems that he is faced with a long and unpleasant defensive task.

Rubinstein thought for 45 minutes here before coming up with a magnificent resource.

36 e4!

With each exchange of pawns the draw comes closer, but before making this move Rubinstein had to work out accurately an endgame the exchange down that Black can now bring about by force.

36 ... Rc3+ 37 R2d3

Not 37 R4d3? Rxd6 and wins.

37 ... Rxd3+ 38 Rxd3 a4 39 Ke3!

The black a-pawn would continue its advance after 39 exf5? Bxf5 40 Rd4 a3 41 Be5 Re7! or 41 Bc5 Rc7! and the pawn will cost White his bishop.

39 ... fxe4 40 Kxe4 a3 41 Bxa3!

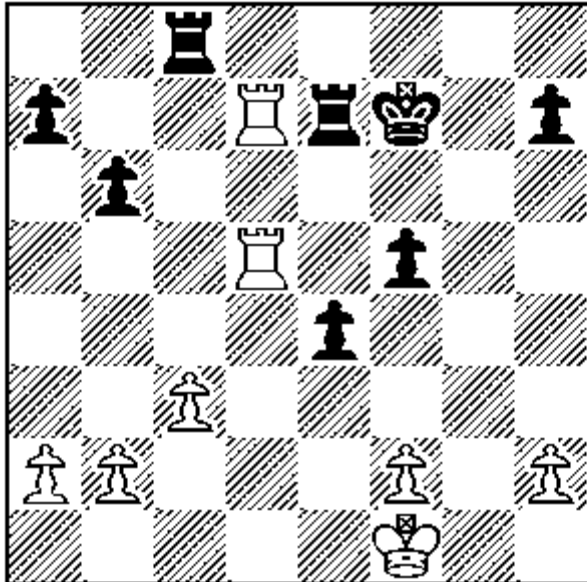
This sacrifice was part of Rubinstein's plan.

41 ... Bf5+ 42 Kxf5 Rxd3 43 Bc1 Rd5+ 44 Ke4!

Not 44 Kg4? Kg6 and White is unable to reach the defensive position achieved in the game after, for example, 45 Be3 Ra5 46 Bd2 Ra4+ 47 Kf3 Kf5.

44 ... Ke6 45 g4!

S.Tarrasch-A.Rubinstein



Black to play

Black's position looks difficult, as there is no obvious way to prevent the loss of a pawn. Rubinstein demonstrates a resource which is typical of rook endings: prioritize the activity of the rook, even at the cost of material, rather than retain material equality but with a passive position.

30 ... Rxd7!

With the same idea, 30 ... Rc5 31 Rxc5 Rxd7 32 Rxf5+ Kg6 33 Re5 Rd2 is also possible.

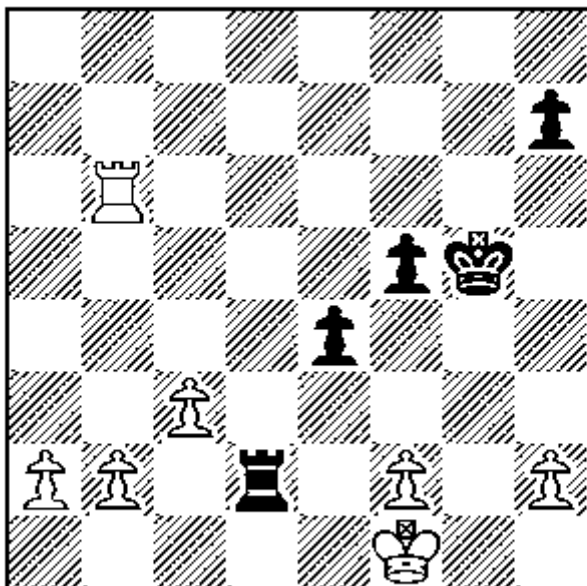
31 Rxd7+ Kg6 32 Rxa7 Rd8 33 Ra6

This appears almost decisive, but in fact 33 Ke2 offered more winning chances.

33 ... Rd2!

Once again activating the rook. Black should avoid the passive 33 ... Rd6?, which would allow 34 a4, followed by a4-a5.

34 Rxb6+ Kg5



“Black’s active pieces and pawns compensate him for the two missing pawns!” – Gelfand.

35 Ke1

A simple pawn race doesn’t win: 35 a4 f4 36 a5 f3 37 Ke1 Re2+ leads to a draw by repetition, as Smyslov & Levenfish pointed out; i.e. 38 Kf1 Rc2 39 Ke1 Re2+, since 38 Kd1? Rxf2 39 a6 e3 40 a7 Rd2+ 41 Kc1 f2 leads to defeat.

White can try other ways, such as inserting 36 Ke1, as in the game; but after 36 ... Rc2, with the ideas of ... f4-f3 or ... Kg4-f3, the evaluation is no different; the black rook is very active and the white monarch is not participating in the struggle.

35 ... Rc2! 36 Rb5

Preventing ... f5-f4. Instead, 36 a4! deserved attention, when a possible continuation is 36 ... Rc1+ 37 Kd2 Ra1 38 Rb4 Kf4 39 Ke2, still with the better chances for White, though steering the game to victory would remain difficult.

36 ... Kg4! 37 h3+!

Against the threat of 37 ... f4, followed by 38 ... Kf3, when only Black can win.

37 ... Kxh3 38 Rxf5 Rxb2 39 Rf4

Nothing is achieved after 39 a4 Ra2 40 a5 Kg4 41 Re5 Kf3 (Smyslov & Levenfish).

39 ... Rxa2 40 Rxe4 h5 41 c4 Kg2 42 Rf4 Rc2 43 Rh4 Kf3

But not 43 ... Rxf2?? 44 Rh2+! Kxh2 45 Kxf2 h4 46 c5 and after both pawns queen, the black king gets mated; i.e. 46 ... Kh1 47 c6 h3 48 c7 h2 49 Kg3! etc.

44 Kd1 Rxf2 45 c5 Ke3 46 Rxh5 Kd4 ½-½

Chapter One

Positional Play

“A positional tour de force”

... is how this model positional game is described in the magnificent book by Donaldson & Minev. Against Georg Salwe, his great opponent at the start of his career, Rubinstein gains a slight advantage against the typical isolated queen's pawn arising from the Tarrasch Defence, an advantage which on its own is insufficient to provide winning chances.

Subsequently, the isolated pawn disappears as Rubinstein, always “without hurrying”, continually transforms his advantages, combining his own activity with restriction of the enemy pieces, and concluding with a mating attack.

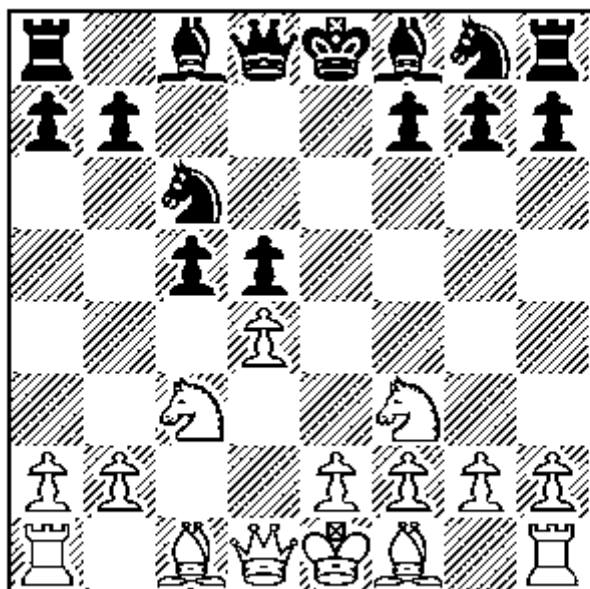
Game 1

A.Rubinstein-G.Salwe

Lodz (match) 1907

Tarrasch Defence [D32]

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Nf3 Nc6



6 Bg5

Between 1903 and 1907 Rubinstein alternated this move with 6 Bf4, but from 1908 onwards he employed exclusively one of his greatest contributions to opening theory, the system based on 6 g3.

6 ... Be7 7 Bxe7 Ngxe7 8 e3 0-0

Rubinstein also played the Tarrasch Defence himself on a few occasions between 1907 and 1911. Both times he reached this position he played 8 ... cxd4, which has been the most frequent choice over the years; we shall look at this briefly in Supplementary Game 1.1.

9 dxc5

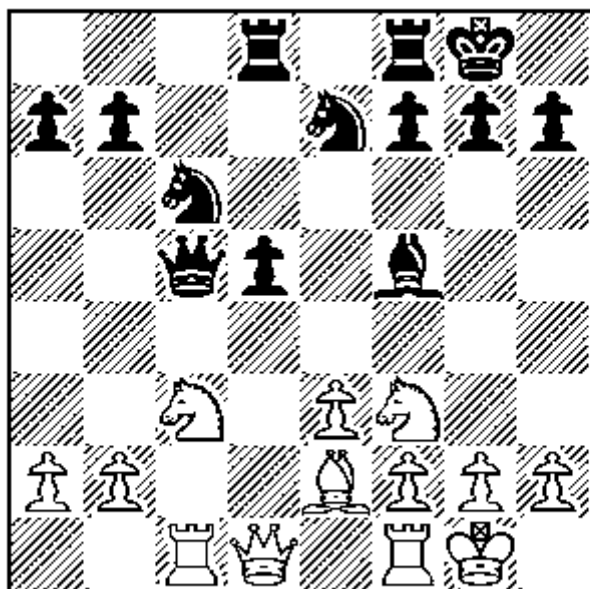
Question: I'm not very keen on the way Black has played. If we compare it with the "normal" Tarrasch, I now have the usual IQP, but I don't like the fact that the dark-squared bishops have been exchanged. How can Black's play be justified?

Answer: You're not wrong, the position is indeed slightly better for White, but this is something that you can expect in almost any opening. Although Black's chosen defence is not one of the most ambitious, neither is it one of the most risky.

There is a weakness on d5, but this is not enough on its own as it is easily defended. White's "problem" is how to convert this slight advantage into something more tangible, otherwise it will remain merely theoretical.

8 ... Qa5 10 Be2 Qxc5 11 0-0 Bf5 12 Rc1 Rad8

In T.V.Petrosian-P.Keres, Voronovo 1952, which reached this position by a different move order, Black chose the other rook to support the d5-pawn. After 12 ... Rfd8 13 Qb3 Qa5 14 Rfd1 Rac8 15 h3 h6 16 Nd4, White also achieved a slight advantage and managed to win a pawn, but he was unable to realize it and the game was drawn in 42 moves.



Exercise: What did Rubinstein play in this position?

Answer:

13 Nb5!

"First things first"; Black was already threatening to rid himself of his only weakness with ... d5-d4. This could be prevented by 13 Nd4 as well, but after 13 ... Nxd4 etc, instead of a single black isolated pawn on an open file there would be two isolated pawns, one for each side, reducing White's advantage.

13 ... Qb6 14 Qd2 Be4 15 Nbd4 Rd6

Exercise: Accepting that White's advantage is minimal, how do you think Rubinstein continued?

Answer:

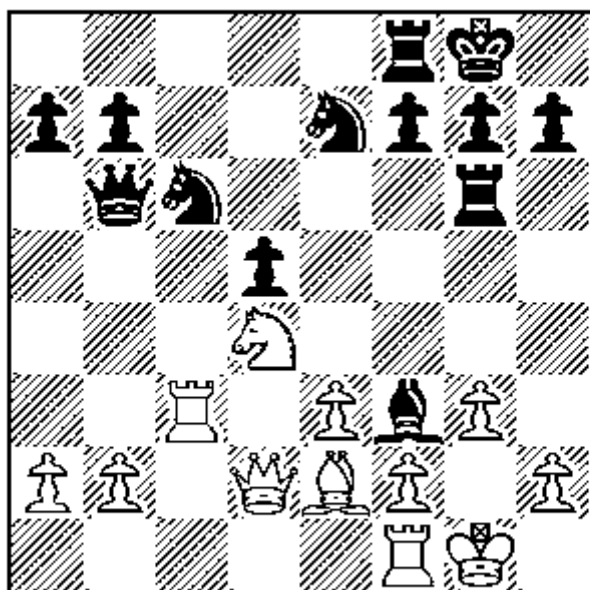
16 Rc3

The moment has arrived to find the best locations for the rooks. Rubinstein is planning to build up on the c-file. The d-file doesn't promise anything special, because the d5-pawn is so solidly defended.

Black must also reckon with the threat of Rb3, which prevents the natural 16 ... Rfd8? on account of 17 Rb3, winning the b7-pawn, since 17 ... Qc7? fails to 18 Nb5.

16 ... Rg6 17 g3 Bxf3?!

This exchange will prove unjustified. It was better to play 17 ... Rd8, which White would answer with 18 Rfc1.



Exercise: How should White recapture on f3?

Answer:

18 Bxf3!

It seems more logical to play 18 Nxf3, but after 18 ... Rd8, followed by ... Rgd6, White would always have to reckon with the advance ... d5-d4, which would limit his activity and perhaps persuade him to return the knight to d4 after all.

18 ... Nxd4 19 exd4

Question: A few moves ago (move 13) you said that, with the creation of two isolated pawns on the d-file, White's advantage would be reduced. Is that also true here?

Answer: In the earlier case the pieces exchanged would have been the knights, but here Black has given up a bishop, and this difference favours White. The bishop is more active, putting pressure on d5; we can say that White's advantage has not so much been reduced as transformed.

19 ... Rc6

If 19 ... Rd8, White would have played 20 Rc5, so first of all Black prevents this.

Exercise (easy): What do you think Rubinstein played here?

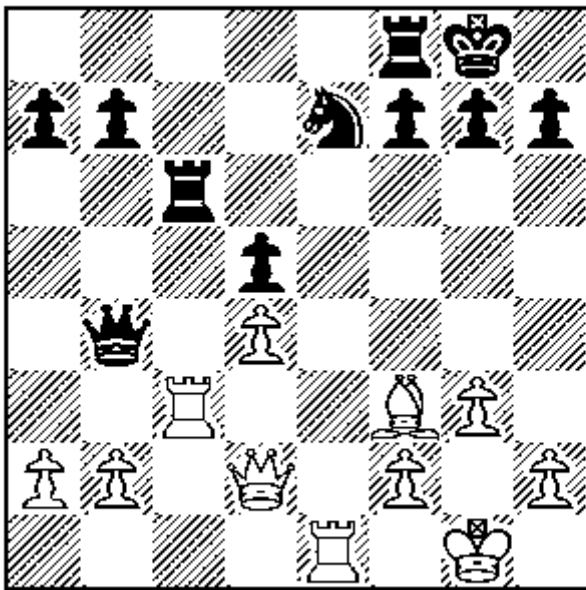
Answer:

20 Re1

Naturally – the pawn structure has altered and the e-file has been opened; it is essential to take advantage of these changes. Black's pieces are rather disorganized, but let's not forget that this might only be temporary.

20 ... Qb4

Trying to stay active. If 20 ... Qd8, White could reply 21 Rce3 Rc7 22 Re5, keeping up the pressure; and 21 ... Ng6 would be no better in view of 22 h4!, not fearing 22 ... f5 because of 23 Qe2 f4 24 Re8 and Black has difficulties in maintaining material equality.



Exercise (easy): How should White proceed in this position?

Answer:

21 Re5!

Maintaining the pressure. Black must not be given a chance to draw breath; the threat against the d5-pawn is unpleasant.

Another attractive continuation was 21 a3 Qd6 22 Rce3, with Qa5 on the agenda, but ... you have to make a choice.

21 ... Re6!

The most tenacious. 21 ... Rd8 22 Qe3 Kf8 23 Rb3 and 21 ... Qd6 22 Qe2 are both worse, with White winning a pawn both times; the same applies to 21 ... Rxc3 22 Qxc3 Qd6 23 Qe3.

Exercise: How did Rubinstein continue here?

Answer:

22 Bxd5!

With move 25 in mind. This is another transformation of advantage. White will win a pawn; but the main thing is that, after the following forced exchanges, he will end up with his pieces much more active than Black's.

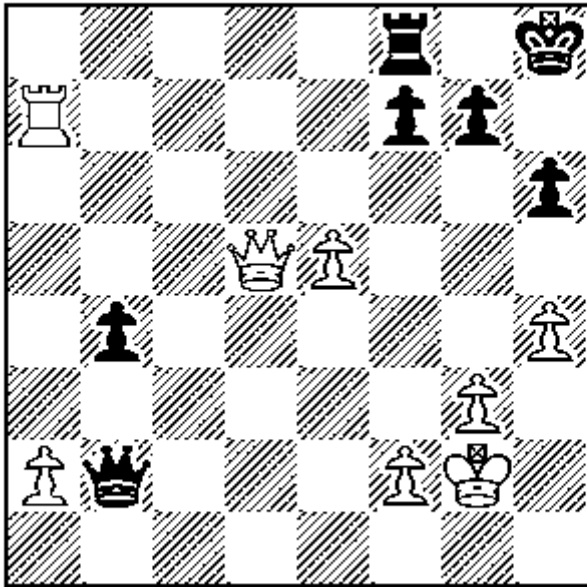
22 ... Rxe5

The alternative was 22 ... Nxd5 23 Rxd5, but Black's position remains unpleasant, and he wants to activate his queen.

23 dxe5 Nxd5 24 Qxd5 Qxb2 25 Rc7!

This is the key move.

25 ... b5 26 Rxa7 h6 27 h4 b4 28 Kg2 Kh8



Black has kept his losses to a minimum and now hurries to activate his major pieces. It is important that the white queen is forced to defend the vital pawn on e5.

Exercise: What did Rubinstein play in this position?

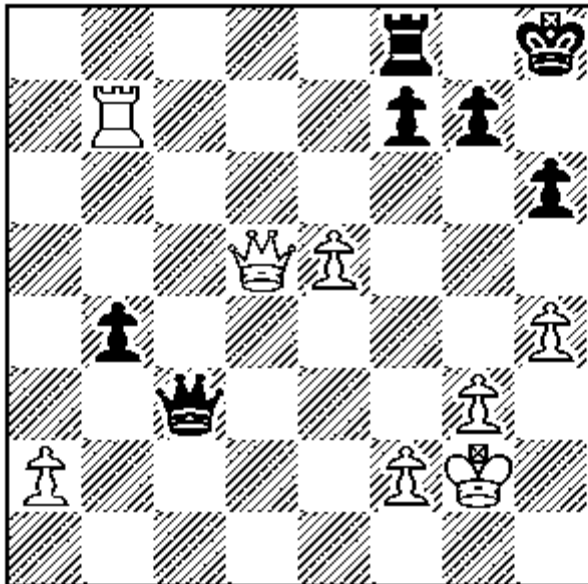
Answer:

29 Rb7!

In a similar fashion to 21 Re5! – by attacking the b4-pawn White prevents the black queen from becoming slightly more active with 29 ... Qe2, when 30 Rb7 could be answered by 30 ... Qe1, maintaining pressure on e5.

29 ... Qc3!

Black continues to defend tenaciously; he finds a way to activate his queen, hoping to be able to do the same for his rook.



White's advantage is indisputable, but there is still nothing decisive. In addition to combining defence of his a2- and e5-pawns with pressure on the black pawns at b4 and f7, White needs to prevent Black from becoming active and must try to discover some other advantage.

Exercise: What do you think is the best move here?

Answer:

30 h5

This is a useful move in many endgames and it's a good one here, but there was also the prophylactic move 30 Qe4!, preventing Black's next move. Then 30 ... Re8 would fail to 31 Rxf7 Qxe5 32 Rf8+!.

30 ... Qe1!

Once again threatening to become active with 31 ... Re8, which White prevents.

31 Re7! Qe2

A tempting move, attacking a2 and e5. Instead, 31 ... Kg8 deserved consideration, though the position would remain difficult.

Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein continued now?

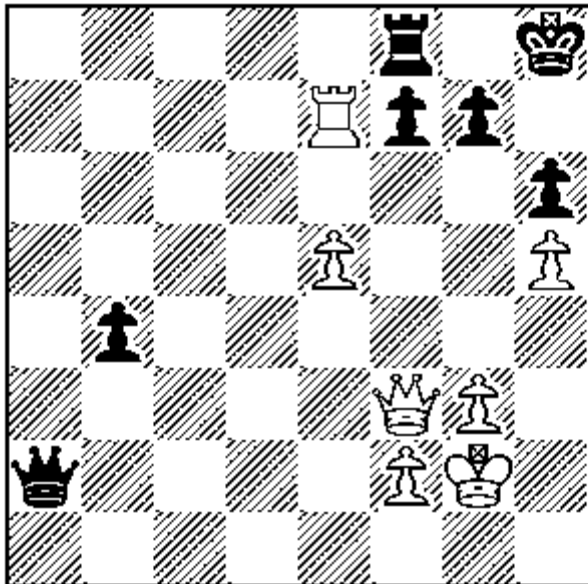
Answer:

32 Qf3!

Not 32 Rxf7? Rxf7 33 Qxf7 Qxe5 34 Qf8+ Kh7 35 Qxb4 on account of 35 ... Qd5+!, followed by ... Qxa2, with a likely draw.

32 ... Qxa2

The endgame after 32 ... Qxf3+ 33 Kxf3 Kg8 34 Rb7 Ra8 35 Rxb4 Rxa2 36 Rb8+ Kh7 37 Rf8 would be unpleasant, possibly losing.



Exercise: What was the point of 32 Qf3 - ?

Answer:

33 e6!

Exploiting the fact that the f8-rook is undefended, White creates a passed pawn with decisive effect.

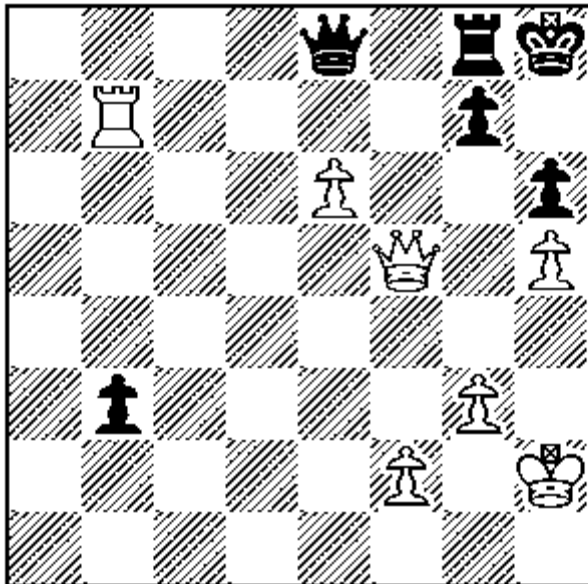
33 ... b3

Also losing is 33 ... f6 34 Qe4 Qa8 (or 34 ... b3 35 Rf7 Rg8 36 e7 b2 37 Rxg7! and wins) 35 Qxa8 Rxa8 36 Rb7 Re8 37 Rb6! b3 and White can defend his e6-pawn before dealing with the b-pawn; i.e. 38 f4 f5 39 g4 fxg4 40 Kg3 b2 41 f5 etc, or similarly 37 ... g5 38 Kf3 f5 39 g4 fxg4 40 Ke4! Kg7 41 Ke5 etc.

34 Qxf7

The most attractive way, even if 34 exf7 and 34 Rxf7 were more effective; for example, 34 exf7 (threatening 35 Re8) 34 ... Qa4 35 Re6!, threatening mate in four moves with 36 Rxh6+ etc, against which there is no defence.

34 ... Qa8+ 35 Kh2 Rg8 36 Rb7 Qe8 37 Qf5



The rest is easy. 37 Rxb3 was also good.

37 ... Qa4 38 Qf3 Re8 39 e7 Kh7 40 Qf8 Qc6 41 Rb8 Rxb8 42 Qxb8 b2 43 Qxb2 Qe4 44 Qa3 Qe2 45 Qc5 g6 46 Qe3 Qxh5+ 47 Kg2 Qd5+ 48 Qf3 Qg8 49 Qc6 1-0

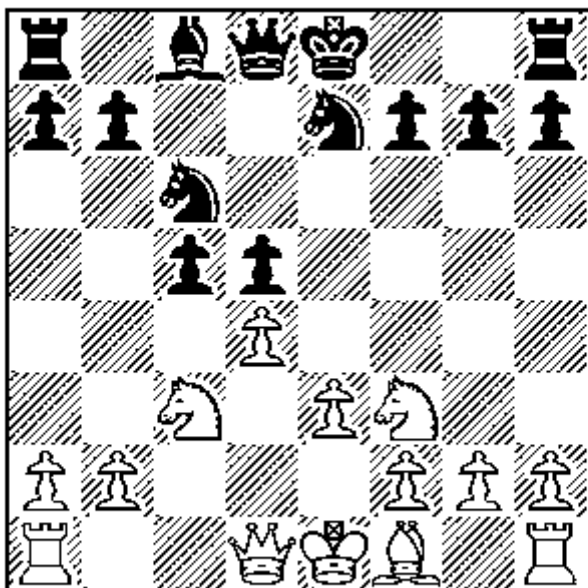
Supplementary Game 1.1

F.Marshall-A.Rubinstein

Carlsbad 1907

Tarrasch Defence [D32]

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 Bg5 Be7 7 Bxe7 Ngxe7 8 e3



8 ... cxd4

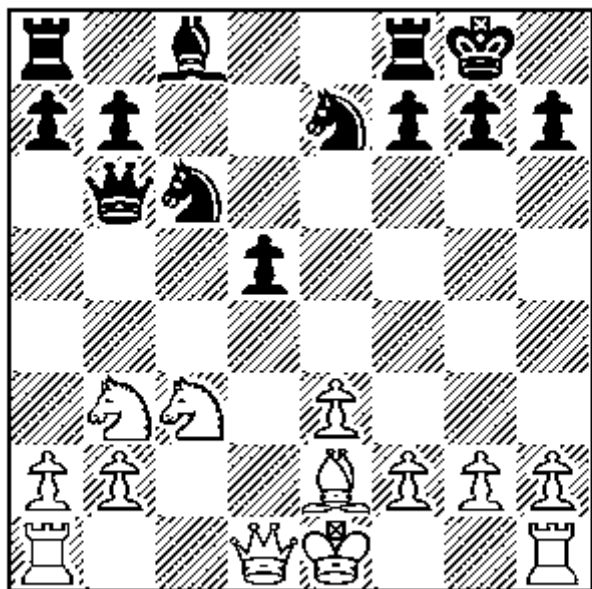
Instead of 8 ... 0-0 9 dxc5 as in the main game, Black avoids losing time regaining the pawn.

9 Nxd4 0-0

Rubinstein later preferred 9 ... Be6. F.Marshall-A.Rubinstein, San Sebastian 1911, continued 10 Nxe6?! (a transaction which gives White no advantage since Black's pawn structure is improved) 10 ... fxe6 11 Qg4 Nf5 12 e4 d4 13 0-0-0 Qh4 14 Qxh4 Nxh4 15 Nb5 0-0-0 16 e5 Rhf8 17 Nd6+ Kb8 18 f4 g5 with a good position for Black, though the game was drawn in 66 moves.

10 Be2 Qb6 11 Nb3?!

11 Qb3 is better.



Exercise: What do you think Rubinstein played here?

Answer:

11 ... d4!

Black is able to solve the main problem of his position immediately, thanks to his slightly more active pieces. 11 ... Rd8 was also good.

12 exd4 Rd8 13 d5?!

After this, the black pieces become even more active; 13 0-0 was preferable.

13 ... Nb4 14 Bf3 Nbx d5 15 Bxd5 Be6 16 0-0 Nxd5

It is to Black's advantage to be left with a bishop in this position.

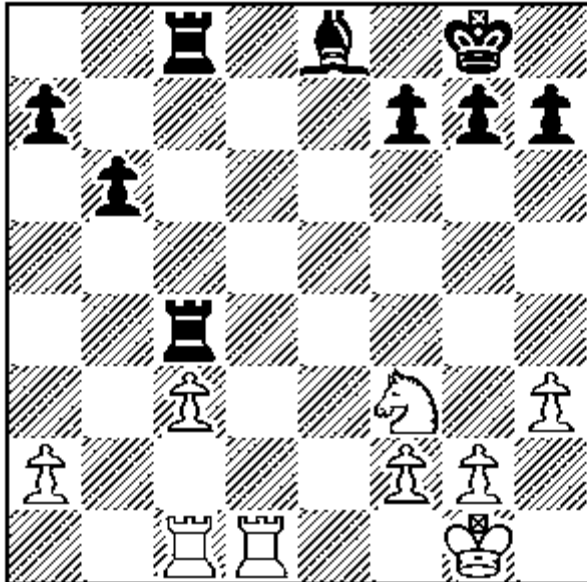
17 Na4 Qb4 18 Qd4 b6!

Restricting both white knights.

19 h3 Qxd4 20 Nxd4 Bd7 21 Nc3

A sad necessity. The rest of the game will be torture for White, with two isolated pawns and passive pieces.

21 ... Nxc3 22 bxc3 Rdc8 23 Rac1 Rc4 24 Rfd1 Rac8 25 Nf3 Be8



26 Rd4?!

Giving up the pawn doesn't help the situation. He should have played 26 Rd3, though after 26 ... Ra4 27 Rd2 Ra3 28 c4 Ra4 29 Rdc2 f6!, planning ... Bg6 or ... Bf7, White's position remains difficult.

26 ... Rxc3 27 Rxc3 Rxc3 28 Rd8 Kf8 29 Nd4 Ke7 30 Ra8 Ra3

The result is no longer in doubt. In positions like this, annotators used to write "the rest is a matter of technique"; Black won in 52 moves.

"One of Rubinstein's best games"

... was Yuri Razuvaev's opinion of this win by Rubinstein against the Czech grandmaster Oldrich Duras. In a Deferred Steinitz Defence, Duras plays the variation named after him. After a few moves, the pawn structure looks more like a King's Indian Defence than a Ruy Lopez. By means of accurate exchanges, Rubinstein reaches a major-piece endgame with a slight edge. He continues to accumulate advantages, seizing the most important files and diagonals until he reaches a winning rook ending.

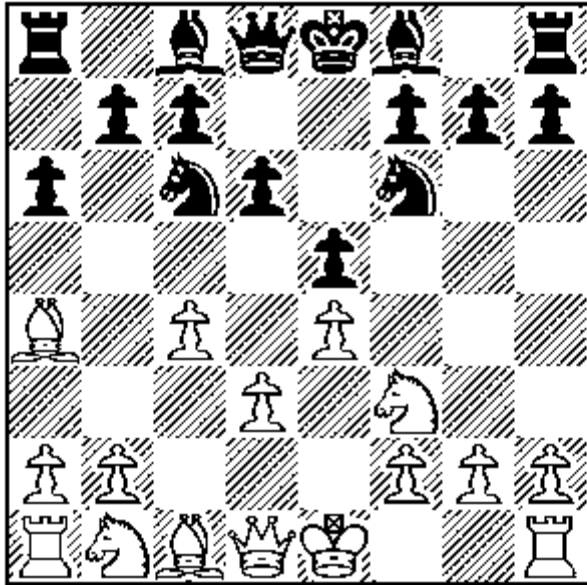
Game 2

O.Duras-A.Rubinstein

St Petersburg 1909

Ruy Lopez [C77]

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 d3 d6 6 c4



Duras was fond of this pawn structure, with which he gained many victories.

6 ... g6

The alternatives are 6 ... Be7 and 6 ... Bg4.

7 d4

Now what we have on the board is a sort of King's Indian, with White's bishop placed on a4 instead of e2, which gives an original twist to the position.

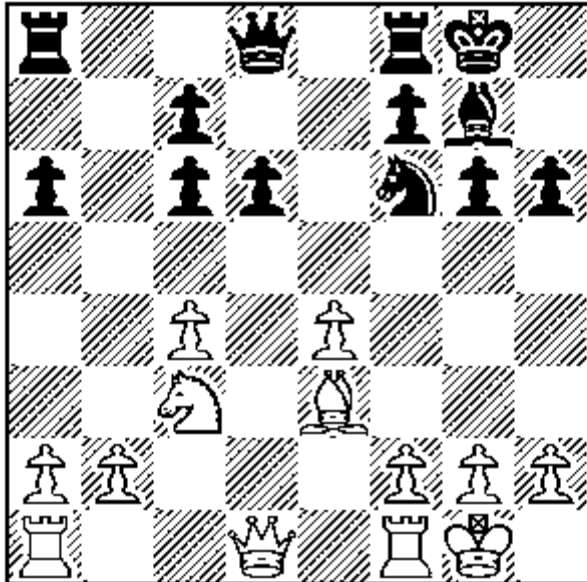
Another possibility, also tried by Duras, is 7 Nc3 without opening the centre. He used to play this with the idea of castling queenside if appropriate and then attacking Black's kingside. In that case it suits White to keep the g7-bishop quiet, given the weakness created by playing c2-c4.

7 ... exd4 8 Nxd4 Bd7 9 Nxc6 Bxc6

The alternative was 9 ... bxc6, when Duras played 10 0-0 Bg7 11 c5!?. Although he eventually won twice with this advance, the pressure on Black's centre doesn't look serious. For instance, O.Duras-E.Cohn, Carlsbad 1911, continued 11 ... 0-0 12 Nc3 Qe7 13 cxd6 cxd6 14 f3 d5! and Black's superior development gave him a perfectly acceptable game.

10 0-0 Bg7 11 Nc3 0-0 12 f3

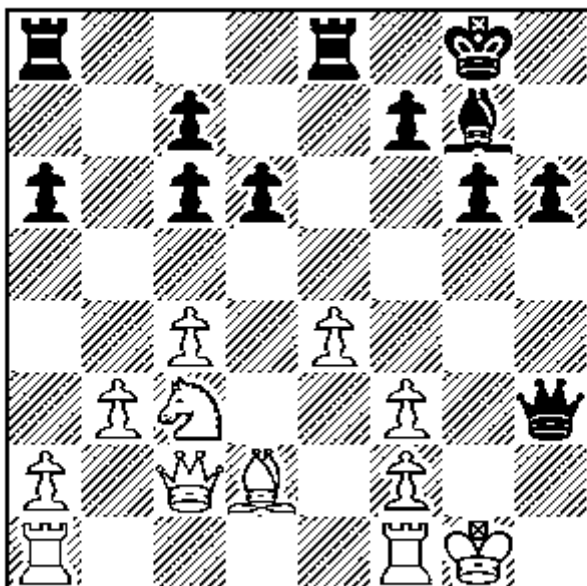
Lasker criticized this decision, suggesting instead 12 Bxc6 bxc6 13 Bg5 h6 14 Be3, planning to gain a tempo with Qd2.



Exercise: However, Black seems to be okay here – how should he continue?

Answer: With Razuvaev's suggestion, the natural 14 ... Re8, and if 15 f3 Black can play the pawn break that we've already seen: 15 ... d5! with good play.

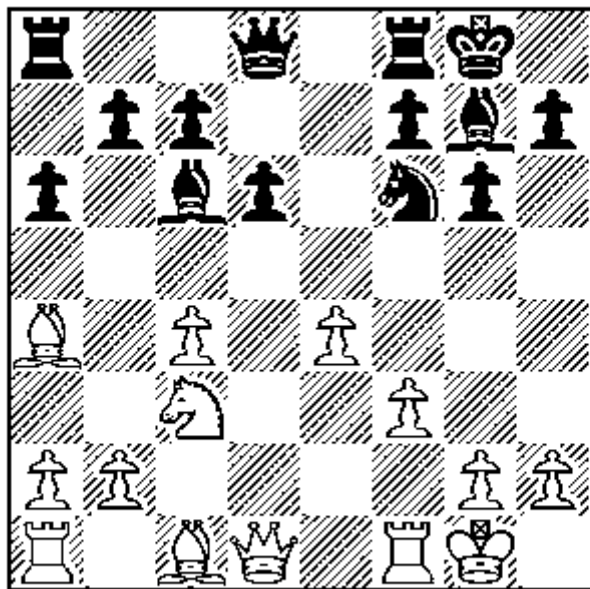
Surprisingly it is even more dangerous for White to defend the pawn with 15 Qc2 because of 15 ... Ng4!, when Black seizes the initiative. If White isn't careful, the absence of defensive pieces on the kingside will be make itself felt; for example, after 16 Bd2 Qh4 17 h3 Ne5 18 b3?!, Black has 18 ... Nf3+! 19 gxf3 (if 19 Kh1, then 19 ... Nxd2 20 Qxd2 Bxc3 and the e4-pawn falls) 19 ... Qxh3 20 Rfd1 Qxf3 with a strong attack, threatening ... Re5-h5.



Exercise: Instead, 20 f4? is worse for White – why?

Answer: Because of 20 ... Re5! 21 fxe5 Bxe5 22 Bf4 (forced; if 22 Rfe1. Black has the typical sequence 22 ... Bh2+ 23 Kh1 Bg3+ with mate in two moves) 22 ... Bxf4 23 Rfd1, when instead of forcing a draw Black can play 23 ... Re8! and, despite his extra rook, White has problems defending his king against the threat of 24 ... Re5 again; for example, 24 Rd3 Qh2+ 25 Kf1 Rxe4! (but not 25 ... Qh1+ 26 Ke2 Qxa1? on account of 27 Rd1 and White wins) 26 Nxe4 Qh1+ 27 Ke2 Qxe4+! 28 Kf1 Qh1+ 29 Ke2 Qxa1 with three pawns for the exchange and the better position.

Let's return to the game with 12 f3.



Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein continued?

Answer:

12 ... Nd7!

After 12 f3, the knight was deprived of the possibility of ... Ng4, but it can be just as troublesome from d7.

13 Be3 Ne5

Other options are 13 ... Re8 and 13 ... Bxc3!?, but the latter move is one that Rubinstein would be reluctant to play as long as there were reasonable, less radical alternatives available.

14 Bb3

Question: What a passive move! Was there nothing better?

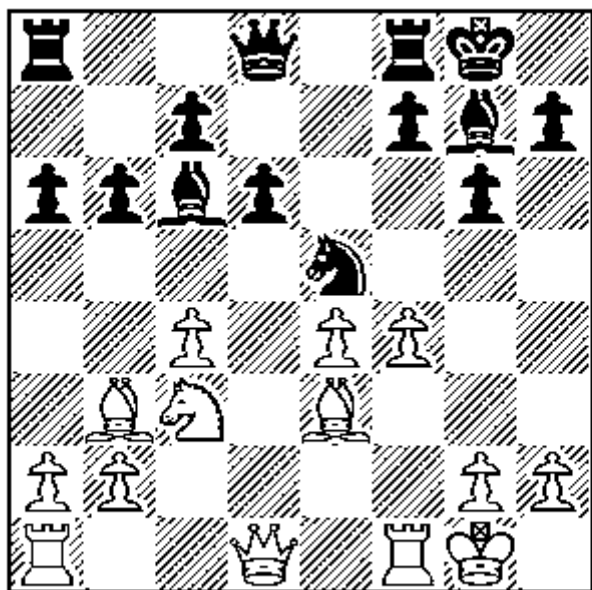
Answer: Yes, this is a move that one would not make voluntarily, although it isn't actually bad, and there is nothing clearly better; 14 Bxc6? fails to the zwischenzug 14 ... Nxc4!.

Lasker pointed out that, after 14 c5? Nc4 15 Qe2? Nxe3 16 Qxe3, Black can win with (among other things) 16 ... Bxc3 17 Bxc6 Bb4!.

As for 14 Bd4, this allows Black to expand on the queenside with 14 ... Bxa4 15 Nxa4 b5 16 cxb5 axb5 17 Nc3 and now, at the cost of allowing White a strong knight on d5, Black gains strong pressure with his no-less-powerful bishop and half-open a-file after 17 ... b4! 18

Nd5 c5 (18 ... c6 19 Nxb4 c5 20 Bxe5 Bxe5 is less promising on account of 21 Nc6) 19 Bxe5 (otherwise 19 ... Nc4) 19 ... Bxe5 20 Qe2 Ra5, followed by ... Qa8.

14 ... b6 15 f4



A positionally risky move; the idea is to exchange the dark-squared bishops, but it has the obvious drawback of weakening the e4-pawn. White could have kept the balance with 15 Nd5.

15 ... Nd7 16 Bd4 Nc5 17 Bxg7 Kxg7 18 Bc2 a5

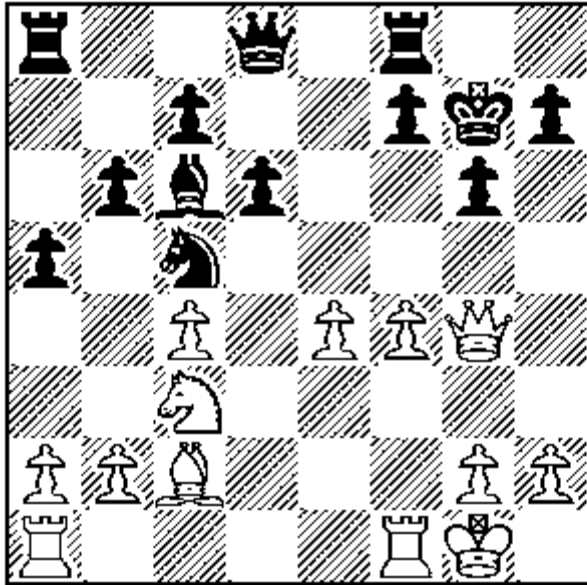
A typical “King’s Indian” move to secure the position of the c5-knight by preventing b2-b4.

Question: Isn’t it better to control the dark squares with 18 ... Qf6, preventing Qd4+, and planning to play ... a7-a5 only after, for instance, 19 Qd2 - ?

Answer: 18 ... Qf6 is playable, but Rubinstein prefers not to obstruct his f-pawn, retaining the option of an eventual ... f7-f5 if the situation warrants it.

19 Qg4

Duras rejects 19 Qd4+, seeking instead to exploit the fact that the black king is less secure following the exchange of bishops. He plans to bring the queen’s rook into play with Rae1 and, at an opportune moment, perhaps play e4-e5 and/or f4-f5, and/or “lift” the rook to the third rank with Re3, but of course “the opponent also gets to play”.



Exercise: Black can either continue to strengthen his position or else take concrete measures. What do you think Rubinstein did here?

Answer:

19 ... Nxe4!

In a way, this is a surprise. Rubinstein doesn't see a way to improve his position and extract more from the pressure on e4 after, for example, 19 ... Qf6 20 Rad1. So he decides to simplify, after which the open lines might favour him, since White's pawns are rather weak and by threatening them Black will be able to seize the open e-file with his rooks.

20 Nxe4 f5 21 Qf3 fxe4 22 Bxe4 Bxe4 23 Qxe4

Exercise (easy): What do you think Rubinstein played after these exchanges?

Answer:

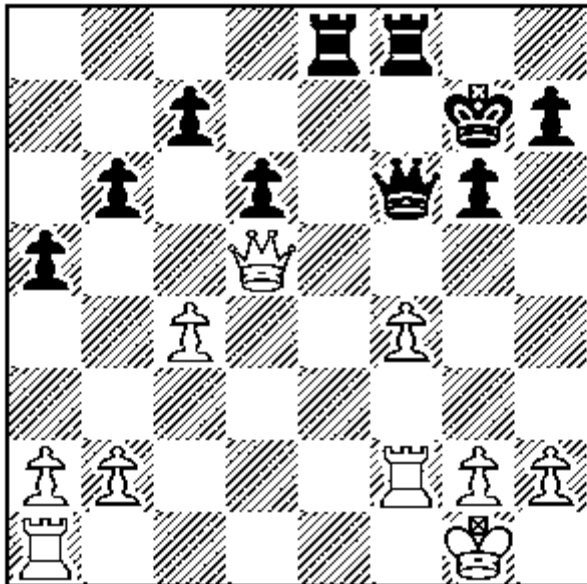
23 ... Qf6!

This was the idea: to attack b2, intending to continue with ... Rae8.

24 Rf2?!

A rather "cooperative" defence. According to Razuvaev, Yusupov suggested counter-attacking with 24 Qc6!?, hindering Black from controlling the e-file. After 24 ... Qd4+! 25 Kh1 Qc5 and if 26 Qxc5?! bxc5 27 Rae1 Rae8 28 g3 g5! 29 fxe5 Rxf1+ 30 Rxf1 Re2, Black is still slightly better; but instead of exchanging queens, the active 26 Qd7+ Rf7 27 Qe6 would pose Black more problems.

24 ... Rae8 25 Qd5



Exercise: Despite White's inaccuracy, Black's advantage remains small and he can only make progress in tiny steps. What do you think Rubinstein played in this position?

Answer:

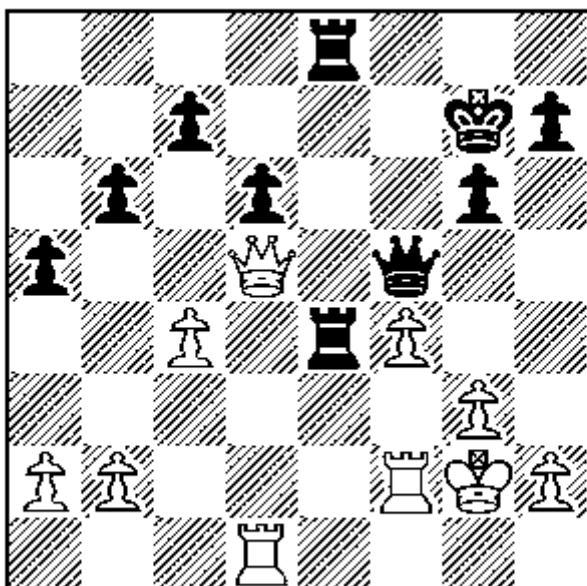
25 ... Qf5!

He offers an exchange of queens. As indicated earlier, the white queen is an effective defender.

26 Rd1

It is too late for 26 Qc6, as after 26 ... Qc5 27 Qd7+ Kg8, Black would be threatening ... Re2 or ... Re4, now that he has occupied the e-file.

26 ... Re4 27 g3 Rfe8 28 Kg2



Black's progress is obvious; he has seized complete control of the central file. Nevertheless, the white position remains solid, so Black must look for some other

advantages.

Exercise: What do you think Rubinstein played here?

Answer:

28 ... h5!

“Excellent! This threatens to eventually play ... h5-h4 and ... Re3.” – Lasker.

29 b3 Re3

Both here and later, advancing with ... h5-h4 deserved consideration. This will almost always be a good move, though there is no problem with strengthening the position first.

30 Rd4

Instead, 30 Rdd2 was worth considering, when Black might well play 30 ... h4; for example, 31 Qxf5 gxf5 32 gxh4 Kg6 33 Rf3 Re2+ 34 Rf2 (exchanging all the rooks with 34 Rxe2? Rxe2+ 35 Rf2 Rxf2+ 36 Kxf2 Kh5 is losing for White, as Black creates a distant passed pawn with ... c7-c6 and ... d6-d5 and wins easily) 34 ... Rxd2 35 Rxd2 Re3 36 Kf2 Rh3 37 Kg2 Rc3 and Black continues to press with ... Kh5 and ... a5-a4 on the agenda.

Exercise: How can Black make further progress after 30 Rd4 - ?

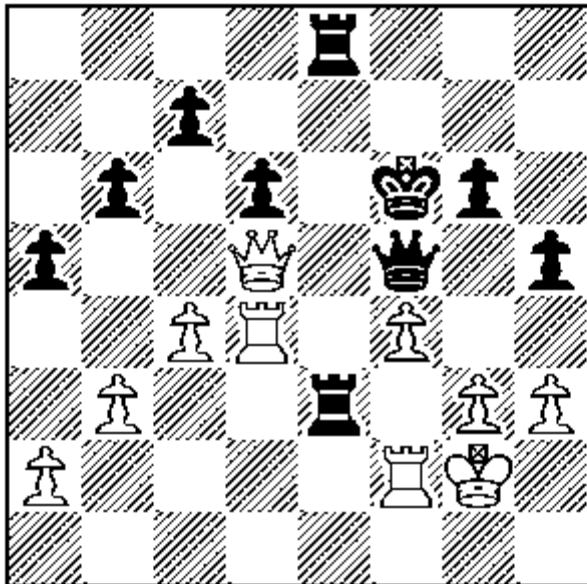
Answer:

30 ... Kf6!

Another small step forward; the black monarch centralizes in anticipation of the exchange of rooks, and at the same time clears the g-file which, as we will see later, can prove beneficial.

31 h3?

A serious error, creating a fatal weakness at g3. But White's position was difficult to defend in any case: after the better move 31 Rdd2, Lasker gave 31 ... h4 32 Qxf5+ gxf5 33 gxh4 (or 33 Rf3 hxg3 34 hxg3 Re2+ 35 Rf2 Rxd2 36 Rxd2 Re3, intending ... Rc3, followed by ... a4-a3, preparing ... Rc1-b1-b2 etc) 33 ... Rg8+ 34 Kf1 Rg4 with a big advantage to Black, who regains the pawn with all his pieces in superior positions.



Exercise: How did Rubinstein make a great step forward here?

Answer:

31 ... h4!

This method is familiar to us by now. The alternative was 31 ... Rc3!, threatening simply ... Ree3, and White has no satisfactory reply.

32 Qxf5+

If 32 g4, Black wins with 32 ... Rg3+ 33 Kh2 Qxd5 34 cxd5 Ree3.

32 ... gxf5 33 gxh4

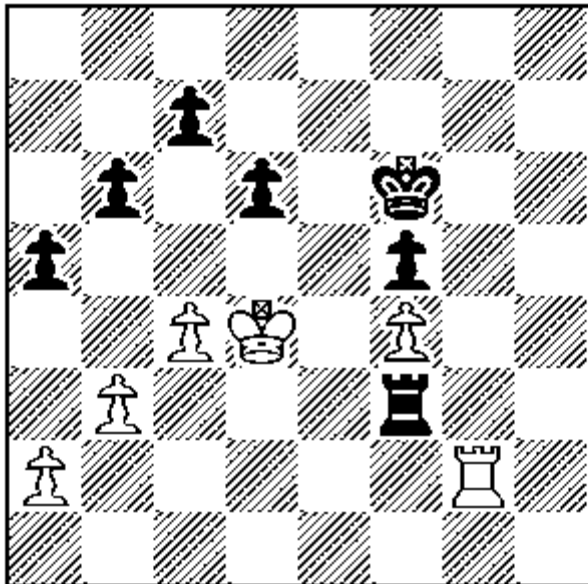
Exercise (easy): What is Black's best move now?

Answer:

33 ... Rg8+!

The simplest and also the strongest move, regaining the pawn with a dominating position. Now 34 Kh2 is answered by 34 ... Rgg3.

34 Kf1 Rxe3 35 Ke2 Re8+ 36 Kd2 Rxe4 37 Rg2 Reh8! 38 Kc3 Rh3+ 39 Rd3 Rxd3+ 40 Kxd3 Rh3+ 41 Kd4 Rf3



Winning another pawn. “The rest is a matter of technique” and Rubinstein’s is more than good enough to win.

42 Kd5 Rxf4 43 Kc6

Exercise (easy): Demonstrate your own technique – what is the best move?

Answer:

43 ... Rg4!

Naturally. This move enables Black to defend the base of his pawn chain.

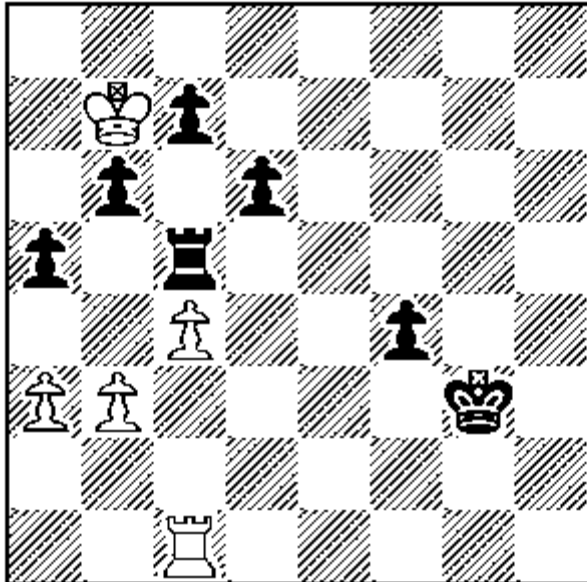
44 Rf2 Rg7 45 Kd5 Re7 46 Rf1 Kg5

With the white monarch’s threats neutralized, it is left a long way from the defence, while the black king now supports the advance of his passed pawn.

47 Rg1+ Kf4 48 a3 Kf3 49 Rf1+ Kg4 50 Rg1+ Kh3 51 Rf1 Re5+ 52 Kc6 Kg2 53 Rf4 Kg3 54 Rf1 Rc5+

The direct 54 ... f4 also wins, but that would require calculation; there is no need to sacrifice the c7-pawn.

55 Kb7 f4 56 Rc1



Exercise (easy): There are several good ways to answer the threat of b3-b4. Once again you are asked to demonstrate

your technique – what is the simplest way to win?

Answer:

56 ... d5!

56 ... f3 is also good, but the chosen move again avoids having to calculate.

57 Rg1+ Kf2 58 Rb1 d4 59 Rc1 d3 60 b4 axb4 61 axb4 d2 62 Rc2 Ke3 63 bxc5 d1Q 64 Rc3+ Kd4 65 cxb6 Kxc3 0-1

First encounter with, and victory against, Capablanca

This is one of Rubinstein's most famous games, played in the San Sebastian tournament of 1911. Capablanca made his European debut in this event, which he won, demonstrating his great playing strength.

Rubinstein inflicted the winner's only defeat. Scarcely out of the opening, he outplayed Capablanca in tactical complications, thanks to two magnificent moves (the 15th and 16th), and gained an advantageous endgame. Capablanca fought tenaciously, posing many problems,

and he had some drawing chances – but he couldn't prevent defeat, despite his stubborn resistance.

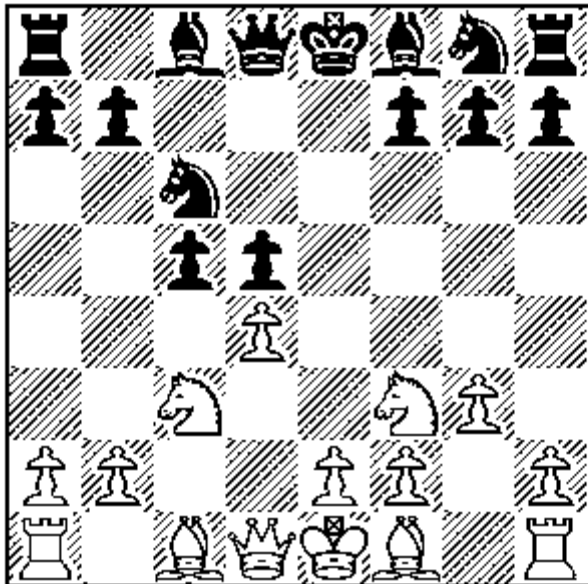
Game 3

A.Rubinstein-J.R.Capablanca

San Sebastian 1911

Tarrasch Defence [D33]

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 c5 3 c4 e6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 g3



6 ... Be6

Question: Why did Capablanca make this strange move rather than the logical 6 ... Nf6 - ?

Answer: Of course he was familiar with previous games in the line, but possibly, taking into consideration that “White’s development was first introduced by Schlechter and elaborated later on by Rubinstein – it aims at the isolation of Black’s d-pawn, against which the white pieces are gradually concentrated”, Capablanca wanted to avoid the main lines and so abstained from the normal 6 ... Nf6.

7 Bg2 Be7

This wasn’t in fact the first time that Capablanca had this line with Black; in the first game of the Marshall-Capablanca match, New York 1909, he opted for 7 ... Nf6, reaching a reasonable position after 8 Bg5 h6 9 Bxf6 Qxf6 10 0-0 cxd4 11 Nb5 Rc8 12 Nfxd4 Nxd4 13 Nxd4 Bc5 14 Nxe6 fxe6 15 Qa4+ Kf7 16 Rac1 Rhf8 with a draw in 30 moves.

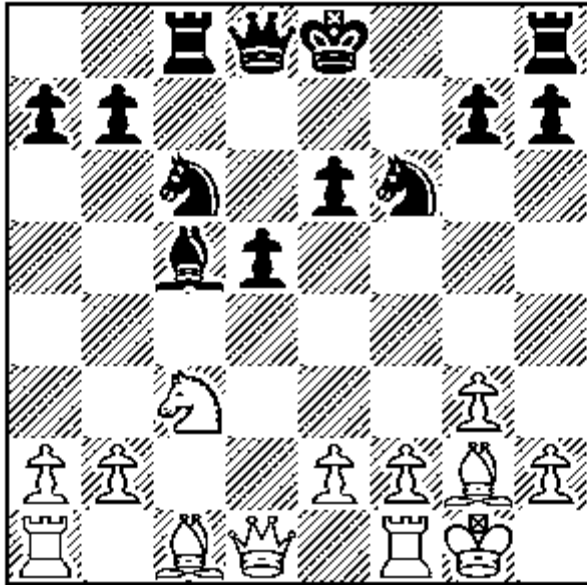
8 0-0 Rc8

Once again 8 ... Nf6 is the most prudent move. Both Capablanca and Lasker also suggested 8 ... h6, controlling g5.

9 dxc5 Bxc5 10 Ng5

Here another attempt to exploit the delay in the g8-knight’s development has been suggested: 10 Na4 Be7 11 Be3, when 11 ... b6 looks correct.

10 ... Nf6 11 Nxe6 fxe6



Capablanca admitted that he was unfamiliar with the plan adopted by Rubinstein; although it doesn't guarantee White an advantage, it puts the black position under pressure.

Exercise: What do you think Rubinstein played here?

Answer:

12 Bh3!

This is the complement to 10 Ng5. It is to avoid this idea that Black usually plays ... Bg4 and only after h2-h3 does the bishop returns to e6, when Bh3 has been ruled out.

Since White has the bishop pair, trying to open lines with 12 e4 is also natural. Instead of acquiescing to this with 12 ... dxe4 13 Qb3 Qe7 14 Nxe4, Kasparov considers that it is better to play 12 ... d4!, and after 13 Na4 Be7 14 Qb3 Qd7! 15 Bd2 0-0, "the situation is completely unclear", according to him.

12 ... Qe7 13 Bg5 0-0

For many years castling was considered to be inaccurate here, based on a calculation error, admittedly not an obvious one.

Question: Really? I don't understand; you're saying that this natural-looking move is not correct? Please explain, and show me what Black should have played instead.

Answer: If the move is taken in isolation, and judged only according to basic principles, it cannot possibly be considered a bad one, yet it can still be bad for tactical reasons.

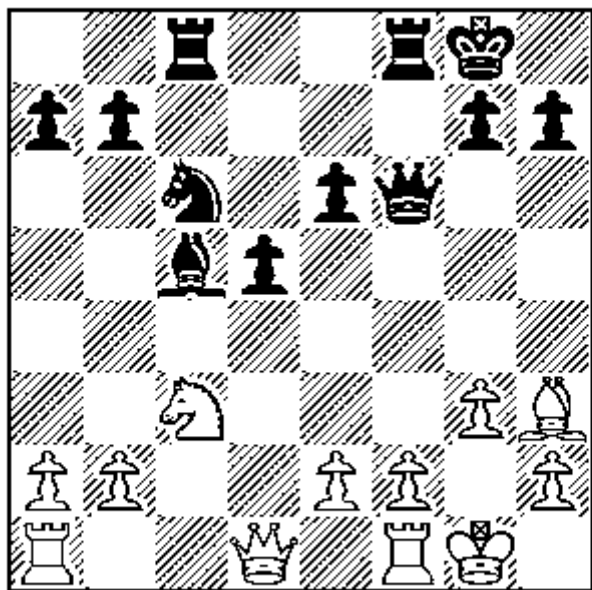
If it is an error, though, it is certainly not an obvious one, and it will require very deep calculation to prove it.

Capablanca later suggested 13 ... Rd8, "in order to get the rook away from the line of the bishop at h3 and at the same time to support the d-pawn. Against the text move White makes a very fine combination, which I had seen but which I thought could be defeated."

14 Bxf6 Qxf6

The future World Champion continues to have faith in his calculations. Instead, 14 ... gxf6 was interesting, and Capablanca judged it playable. Kasparov agrees with Capablanca,

stating that this would be preferable, “although after 15 Nxd5! exd5 16 Bxc8 Rxc8 17 Qxd5+ Kh8 18 e3 Rd8 19 Qf5 White has an obvious advantage, it is not so easy to convert it.”



Exercise: What is the continuation that Rubinstein had planned?

Answer:

15 Nxd5!

This is the beginning of the combination; obviously this simple move was not what Capablanca had overlooked.

According to numerous annotations, reiterated until only a few years ago, Black cannot reply with either 15 ... exd5? 16 Qxd5+ Kh8 17 Bxc8, or 15 ... Bxf2+? 16 Kg2 Qf7 17 Nf4 and White wins. These variations have been repeated for almost a century, but they contain a hole – the annotators relied more on Capablanca’s self-criticism than on his intuition.

Exercise (difficult): How can Black’s play be improved in one of these two lines?

Answer: In the second line, after 15 ... Bxf2+ 16 Kg2, rather than 16 ... Qf7? (which is indeed refuted by 17 Nf4), the correct move is 16 ... Qe5!, when the black queen is no longer a tactical weakness on the a2-g8 diagonal and also attacks b2. One of the key points is that after 17 Rxf2 Rxf2+ 18 Kxf2 Rd8!, Black regains the piece and is fine. Although White can win a pawn with, for example, 19 Ne7+ Kh8! 20 Qb3 (not 20 Nxc6? Qf6+) 20 ... Nxe7 21 Qxe6, Black’s compensation is clear after 21 ... Qd4+ 22 Kg2 Nd5.

With the queen on e5, 17 Nf4 is not to be feared either on account of 17 ... Rcd8! and Black has very active play after, for instance, 18 Qa4 Be3 19 Bxe6+ Kh8 or 19 Nxe6?! Qd5+ 20 Rf3 Rxf3 21 exf3 Qd2+, followed by 22 ... Qxb2.

So we can now say with certainty that Capablanca’s intuition was correct in allowing 15 Nxd5, and therefore 13 ... 0-0 was not an error, as commentators have thought, including Capablanca himself.

15 ... Qh6?

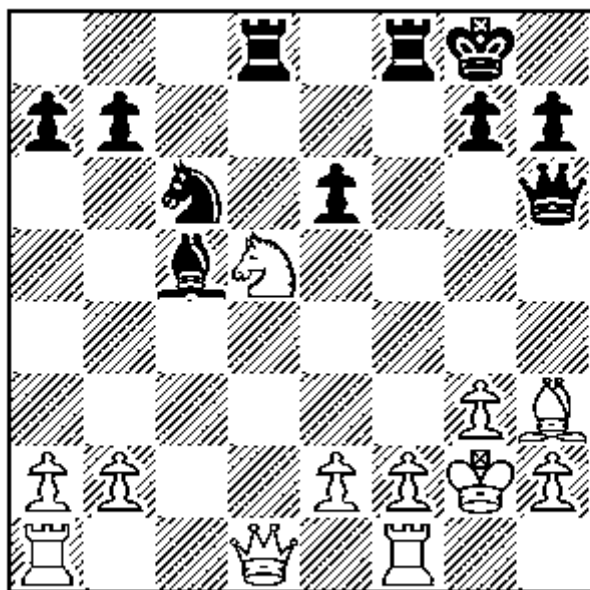
Exercise: Black was relying on this move. What has he overlooked?

Answer:

16 Kg2!

Capablanca had only considered the retreat 16 Bg2?, against which he had prepared 16 ... Ne5!, and White is in difficulties, since 17 Nf4? loses to 17 ... Ng4 18 h3 (or 18 Nh3? Bxf2+) 18 ... Nxf2 19 Rxf2 Bxf2+ 20 Kxf2 g5, while 17 Rc1? fails to 17 ... Qxc1! 18 Qxc1 Bxf2+ etc.

16 ... Rcd8



Exercise: We're about to see the final point of the combination initiated with 15 Nxd5! – what is it?

Answer:

17 Qc1!!

This is the real key to the whole tactical duel.

“A brilliant stroke, envisaged beforehand, which replicates in amazing fashion the game with Lasker [see 18 Qc1!! in Game 23]. Rubinstein defeated the two champions using practically one and the same device!” – Kasparov.

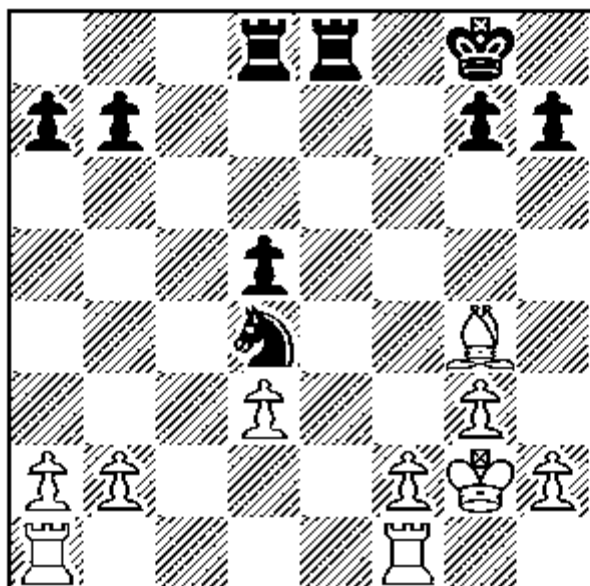
It's likely that if Capablanca had seen this move after 15 Nxd5!, he would have recalculated and would surely have found 16 ... Qe5!.

17 ... exd5

There is nothing better. Black loses without a struggle after both 17 ... Rxd5? 18 Qxh6 gxh6 19 Bxe6+, followed by 20 Bxd5, and 17 ... Qxc1? 18 Bxe6+ Kh8 19 Raxc1.

18 Qxc5 Qd2 19 Qb5 Nd4 20 Qd3 Qxd3 21 exd3 Rfe8

White has won a pawn, but it will still be a long task to realize it, since Black's pieces are active.



Capablanca criticized this move, which prevents 22 ... Re2 in the simplest way. Rubinstein plays the next phase of the game in accordance with his style, without hurrying, perhaps not always choosing the strongest moves, but without endangering his advantage.

A more concrete solution was 22 Rfe1, and after 22 ... Nc2 23 Rxe8+ Rxe8, the most accurate seems to be 24 Rd1, preparing 25 Kf1. By exchanging one (or both) rooks, Black's activity shrinks and White's advantage grows.

Exercise: Black remains worse, but there is still fight in the position. How can he seek counterplay?

Answer:

22 ... Rd6!

The rook becomes active in an unusual way, along the third rank.

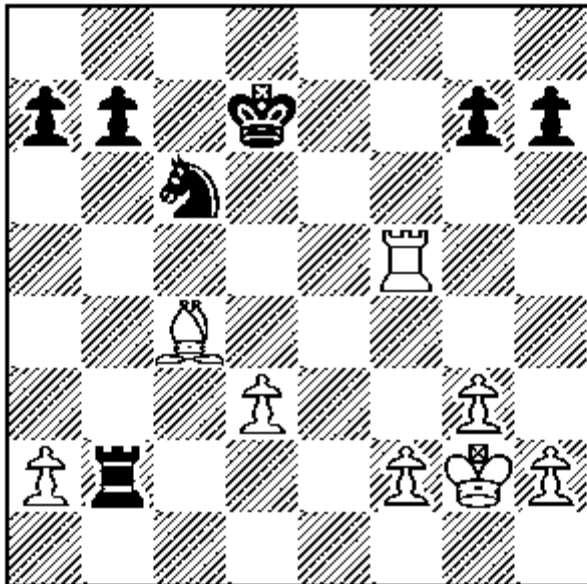
23 Rfe1 Rxe1 24 Rxe1 Rb6! 25 Re5

“To overcome Capablanca's stubborn resistance, very fine endgame technique is required.” – Kasparov.

25 ... Rxb2 26 Rxd5 Nc6 27 Be6+ Kf8 28 Rf5+

It is essential to restrict the knight's movements. It would be inaccurate to play 28 Rd7?! Ne5 29 Rc7 Nxd3 30 Rf7+ Ke8 31 Rxg7 h6, as each exchange of pawns is a mini-triumph for Black.

28 ... Ke8 29 Bf7+ Kd7 30 Bc4



30 ... a6?!

Mobilizing the queenside pawns and preventing Rb5 is logical, but Capablanca himself criticized this move: “A bad move, which gives away any legitimate chance Black had to draw. It loses a very important move. The proper way was to play 30 ... Kd6.”

Then 31 Rb5? would be a mistake because the queenside pawns would advance very quickly after 31 ... Rxb5 32 Bxb5 Nd4, followed by ... b7-b5, emphasizing “the dominating position of the knight at d4 in conjunction with the extra pawn on the queenside and the awkward position of White’s king.”

Kasparov agrees that 30 ... Kd6! was better, but says that with 31 Rf7! “impassive computer analysis nevertheless promises White a win”, and he gives as an example continuation 31 ... b5 32 Bb3 Nd4 33 Rxa7 Nxb3 34 axb3 Rxb3 35 Rxg7 Rxd3 36 Rxh7 Kc6 37 Rh8 Kc7 38 Rh4 Kd6 39 Rb4 Kc5 40 Rb1 b4 41 h4 and wins.

Naturally, there are many other possible lines, but the basic idea is that Black could play ... b7-b5 followed by ... a7-a5 in one move, achieving better chances than in the game.

31 Rf7+ Kd6 32 Rxg7 b5 33 Bg8 a5

Here it is clear that, by playing 30 ... a6, Black in fact lost a tempo.

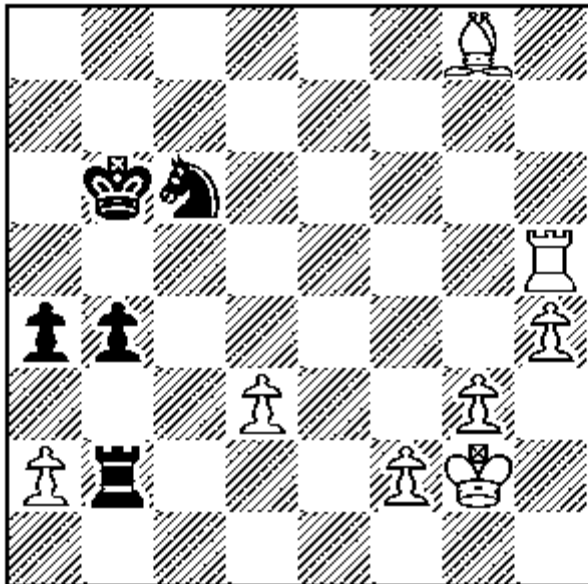
34 Rxh7

White’s position is winning: his three connected passed pawns (not even counting the one on d3) mean that the win should be beyond doubt. This is quite true, though in fact it is not as simple as it looks.

34 ... a4 35 h4 b4 36 Rh6+

Another possibility was the immediate 36 h5!?, intending 36 ... b3 37 h6! bxa2 38 Bxa2 Rxa2 39 Rg7 and the h-pawn promotes.

36 ... Kc5 37 Rh5+ Kb6



White's advantage is still a decisive one, but now tiredness begins to affect both players.

Exercise: Rubinstein blunders here. Can you do better?

38 Bd5?

“With these three last moves White again gives Black a chance. The text move is a downright blunder.” – Capablanca.

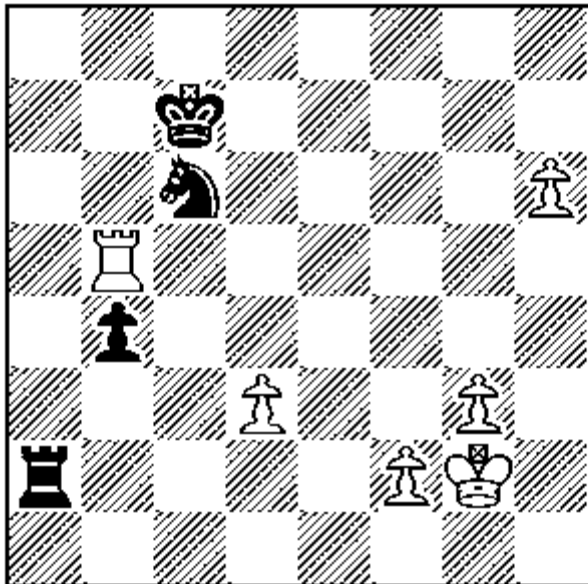
Answer: One way to win was 38 Bc4!, planning to answer 38 ... b3 with 39 axb3 a3 40 Rb5+ Kc7 41 b4 a2 42 Bxa2 Rxa2 43 h5, and the five pawns for the knight are more than sufficient.

Exercise: Capablanca failed to exploit the surprising resource that was available to him after 38 Bd5. What was it?

38 ... b3?

Answer: The spectacular defensive resource was 38 ... Rxa2!!, when 39 Bxa2? b3 even loses for White, as the knight supported by the king prevents the white rook from stopping the black pawn(s). (Note that if White had played 38 Bc4, then 38 ... Rxa2 would fail to 39 Rb5+! Ka6 40 h5 or 40 Rxb4+ Ka7 41 Bxa2 Nxb4 42 h5, since the h-pawn is too strong.)

The best continuation, pointed out by Capablanca, is 39 Bc4 Rc2 40 Rb5+ Kc7 41 Bg8 a3 42 h5 a2 43 Bxa2 Rxa2 (“if there is a win, it is very difficult find it” – Capablanca) 44 h6 and now:



44 ... Ra6! (not 44 ... Ra8?, when White has 45 g4! under better conditions, as we shall see) with “excellent chances for a draw” – Capablanca.

More than 100 years later, the computer confirms that Capablanca was right. Kasparov gives several lines here: 45 g4 Ne7 46 g5 (or 46 h7 Ra8) 46 ... Rb6! 47 Rxb6 Kxb6 48 f4 b3 49 h7 Ng6 50 f5 b2 51 fxg6 b1Q 52 h8Q Qc2+ 53 Kf3 Qxd3+ 54 Kf4 Qd2+ 55 Kf5 Qc2+ with a draw. Whereas if Black plays 44 ... Ra8? and then continues as above (but with 46 ... Rb8 47 Rxb8 Kxb8), White has 52 h8Q with check, remaining three pawns up in a queen ending.

Razuvaev also analysed 39 Rh6 Rc2 40 h5, when Black equalizes with 40 ... b3! 41 Re6 Rc5!, as Kasparov pointed out (rather than 41 ... b2? 42 Ba2 Rc1 43 h6 Ra1 44 h7 Rxa2 45 h8Q b1Q, which allows 46 Qb8+ and wins); for example, 42 Bxc6 Rxc6 43 Rxc6+ Kxc6 44 h6 b2 45 h7 b1Q 46 h8Q Qxd3, and now if 47 Qe8+ then 47 ... Qd7!.

39 axb3 a3

Or 39 ... axb3 40 Rh6! Kc5 41 Bxc6 Re2, and now 42 d4+ Kxd4 43 Ba4 b2 44 Rb6 is one solution.

comprises the moves Nf3, e2-e3, c2-c3, Nbd2 etc.

It actually has quite a following in the former Yugoslav republics, with GMs Nikola Sedlak, Igor Miladinovic, Dragan Kotic, Vlatko Kovacevic, Vladimir Georgiev and, especially, IM Slobodan Kovacevic all playing 2 Bf4 frequently. Furthermore, many players rated over 2700 employ it in official blitz events.

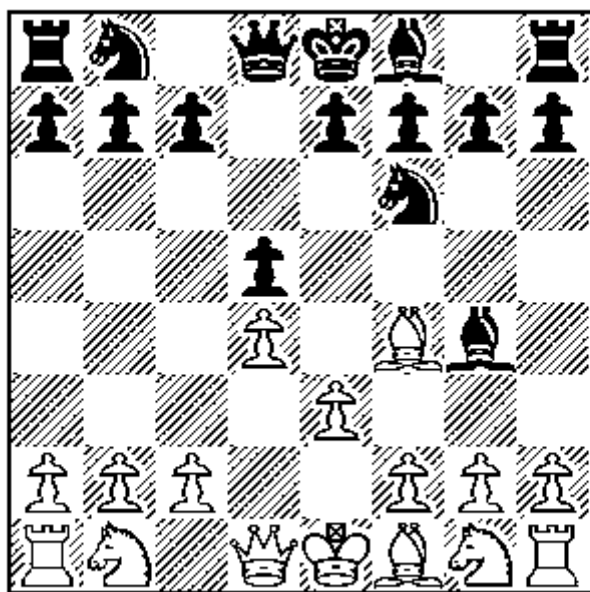
As White, Rubinstein himself played nearly a dozen games with this line.

2 ... Nf6

On other occasions Rubinstein answered with 2 ... c5, which contains the idea of following up with ... Qb6, trying to exploit the early development of the c1-bishop.

3 e3 Bg4

More usual are 3 ... e6, 3 ... c5, and 3 ... Bf5 (also developing the bishop outside the pawn chain before playing ... e7-e6), but Rubinstein had faced 3 ... Bg4 himself three rounds earlier and it seemed to him to be a sound move.



4 Be2

The above-mentioned game was A. Rubinstein - C. Schlechter, Carlsbad 1911, which continued 4 Nf3 e6 5 c3 Nbd7 6 Nbd2 Be7 7 h3 Bh5 8 Qb3, trying in turn to exploit the absence of c8-bishop, but in this position Black had no problems after 8 ... Qc8 9 Be2 a6, with balanced play and an eventual draw in 39 moves.

Neither 4 Be2 nor 4 Nf3 seeks to punish Black for bringing out his bishop, but Rubinstein probably found it hard to believe that 4 f3 was a worthwhile try – with the idea of answering 4 ... Bf5 with either 5 c4 or the more radical 5 g4 – and it is clear that he didn't fear this move as Black either.

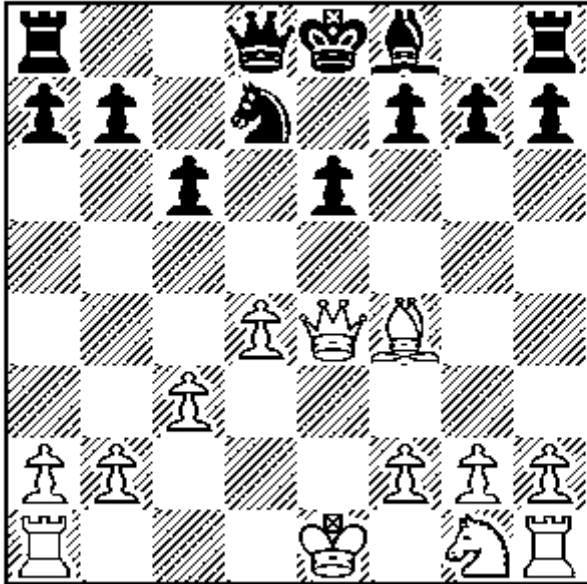
Curiously, this same position has been reached many times by a different move order: 1 d4 Nf6 2 Bg5 Ne4 3 Bf4 d5 4 e3 Bf5 5 f3 Nf6 and now the most popular moves are precisely 6 c4 and 6 g4, both played by Michael Adams and other strong masters.

4 ... Bxe2 5 Qxe2 c6 6 Nd2 e6 7 c3 Nbd7

Question: Black's position looks quite acceptable, doesn't it?

Answer: Yes, you're right; Rubinstein was understandably satisfied with the result of the opening. "The black position is solid and the problem of the development of the queen's bishop has been solved satisfactorily," he wrote. To dispel any doubt regarding Rubinstein's evaluation, it is sufficient to compare the equivalent position with a black bishop added at c8 and a white one at d3.

8 e4 Nxe4 9 Nxe4 dxe4 10 Qxe4



The structure now resembles a Classical Caro-Kann, beginning 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bf5, which generally leads to the exchange of the light-squared bishops; one of the differences is that in the present game there is no white pawn on h5 fixing the black kingside.

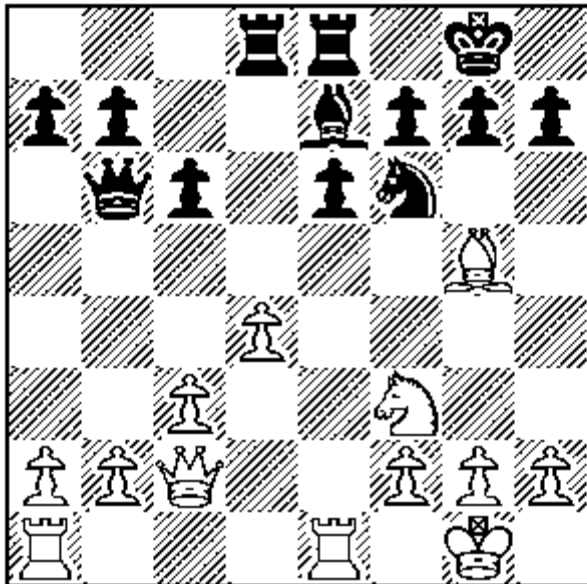
10 ... Be7 11 Nf3 0-0

"A balanced position. White has not gained any initiative advantage," commented Rubinstein, but that's all – Black is not better either.

12 0-0 Nf6 13 Qc2 Qb6

The queen vacates d8 for a rook, in order to prepare to break in the centre at an opportune moment, most likely with ... c6-c5.

14 Rfe1 Rad8 15 Bg5 Rfe8



16 Bxf6?!

This is unnecessary and not at all advantageous to White, because the bishop is by no means inferior to the knight and White gains no other type of advantage by exchanging in this way.

Rubinstein, usually rather diffident, was in no doubt here: “This exchange is unfavourable to White.”

16 ... Bxf6 17 Rad1 Rd5

Question: It seems to me that Black can already advance 17 ... c5 here with a reasonable game. Why didn't he play it?

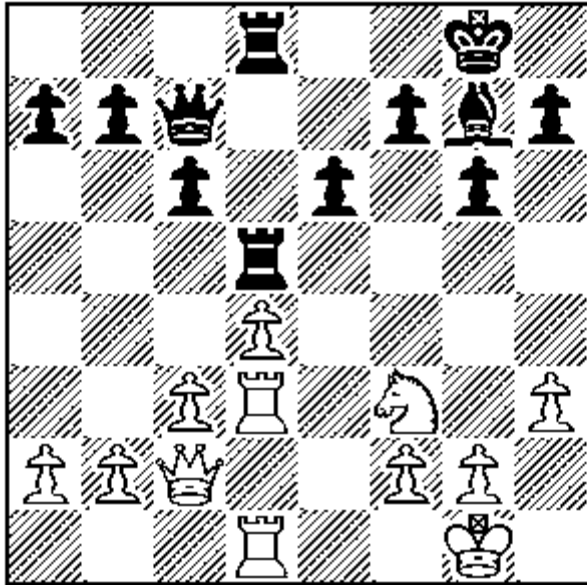
Answer: Objectively, it is doubtless a good move, but then the d-file would soon be open, leading to mass exchanges, which would achieve no more than equality. Although this would not be bad in itself, from a competitive viewpoint it might not satisfy Black.

It's possible that Rubinstein was already playing for a win; hence (and faithful to his style) he postpones this, seemingly the most appropriate, pawn break, waiting for the moment that he considers best.

18 h3 Red8 19 Rd2 g6

Each side strengthens his position, making useful moves before the game sharpens. Soon they will run out of moves that are “unquestionably” useful.

20 Red1 Bg7 21 Rd3 Qc7



22 Nh2?

White takes a step in the wrong direction; his idea is to improve the position of the knight, but it will not stand better on g3 than f3. “The knight will be misplaced, so that its power will remain practically unused,” wrote Rubinstein.

But note that it can no longer head for e4 by the shortest route, since 22 Nd2? runs into 22 ... c5!.

22 ... b5 23 Nf1 h5 24 Ng3

White has completed his mistaken plan of bringing the knight to g3, while Black has been strengthening his position with ... b7-b5 and ... h7-h5.

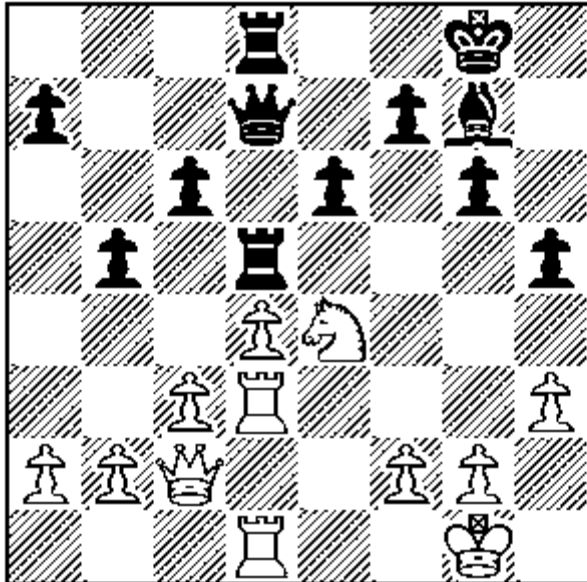
Exercise: There are many attractive moves here. What do you think Rubinstein played?

Answer:

24 ... Qd7

Several pawn breaks were possible: 24 ... b4, 24 ... c5 and 24 ... e5. They are all interesting and slightly advantageous for Black, but Rubinstein preferred to increase the pressure on the central file by tripling his major pieces, before breaking with either ... e6-e5 or ... c6-c5.

25 Ne4



Exercise: What now? Do you think this is the right moment to take active measures?

Answer:

25 ... e5!

Yes, the moment has come. “This advance marks the start of the counter-attack.” – Rubinstein.

26 Nc5 Qe7 27 Qe2 Qf8

Renewing the threat to the d4-pawn.

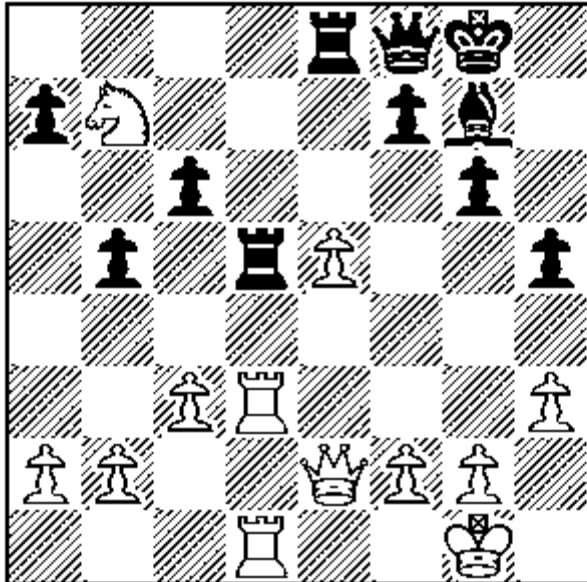
28 Nb7?!

There needs to be a concrete reason for decentralizing a knight like this. Since such justification doesn't appear, the correct move was the sad-looking 28 Nb3, defending the d4-pawn, something the knight would accomplished much better from f3.

28 ... Re8!

It's possible that White's last move was a (somewhat optimistic) invitation to repeat moves with 28 ... R8d7 29 Nc5 Rd8 and so on.

29 dxe5



Exercise: Which rook should Black take back with?

Answer:

29 ... Rxe5!

It is appropriate to exchange a pair of rooks to prevent White from becoming active. After 29 ... Rdx5, White could play 30 Qf3, putting pressure on c6, with Rd8 on the agenda, as well as b2-b4 and Nc5.

30 Qf3

Exercise: Positional considerations start to recede into the background, and tactics become more and more important. How do you think Rubinstein continued here?

Answer:

30 ... Qe7!

Precisely with the help of tactics, Rubinstein finds a way to avoid having to play 30 ... Rxd3, which would ease White's task.

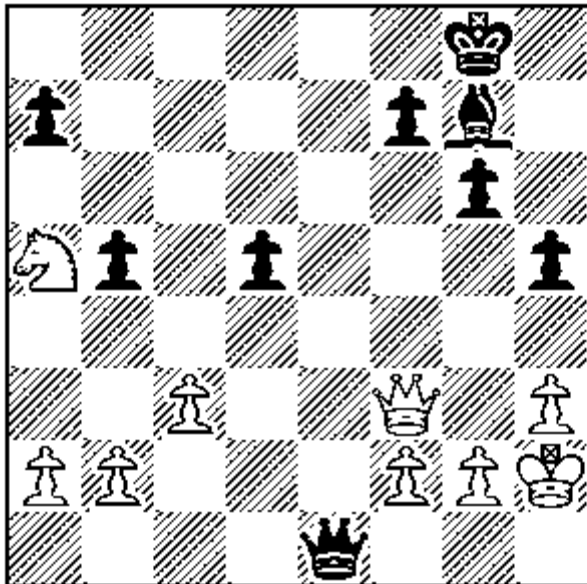
31 Rxd5 cxd5 32 Na5

Rubinstein explains the justification of 30 ... Qe7! thus: "It would be bad to play 32 Rxd5 Rxd5 33 Qxd5 winning a pawn, because Black would reply with 33 ... Qe1+ followed by 34 ... Be5+, winning."

32 ... Re1+!

If it was previously important not to remove all the rooks, to avoid the game becoming drawish, now it is convenient to exchange them, because White will be vulnerable on his first and second ranks – not forgetting that an unprotected piece (the knight on a5) is a tactical weakness, as can be seen by the fact that 33 Kh2? loses to 33 ... Rxd1 34 Qxd1 Qc7+.

33 Rxe1 Qxe1+ 34 Kh2



Exercise: What idea complements the exchange of rooks?

Answer:

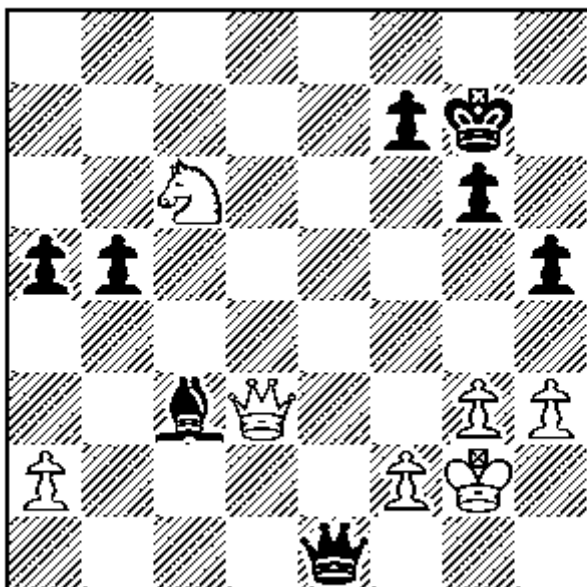
34 ... d4!

Of course; the bishop notably increases its activity, while the white queenside is left more exposed to attack. 34 ... b4 was also good, but the text is better.

35 Nc6 dxc3 36 bxc3 Bxc3 37 g3

If 37 Nxa7?, Black has 37 ... Bd4! 38 g3 (or 38 Nxb5 Bxf2) 38 ... Bxf2! 39 Qg2 h4! 40 gxh4 Qe5+ 41 Kh1 Bxa7 42 Qa8+ Qb8 and wins, as Rubinstein pointed out.

37 ... a5 38 Kg2 Kg7 39 Qd3



Exercise: Black has won a pawn, but still needs to play accurately. How did Rubinstein break through?

Answer:

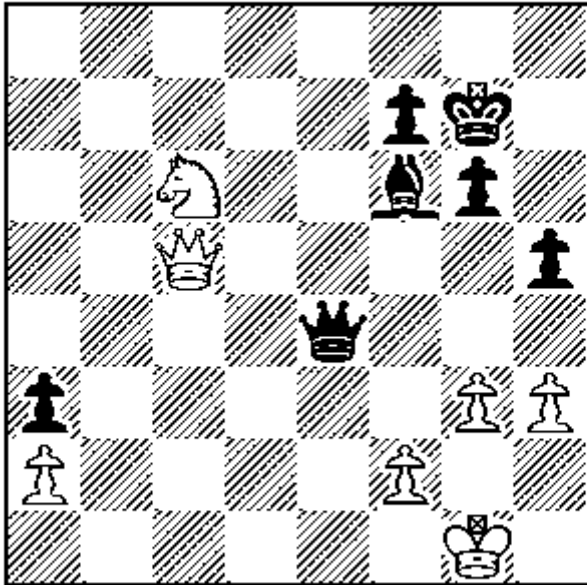
39 ... a4!

“This pawn sacrifice is necessary to overcome White’s tenacious resistance. Thanks to the decentralization of the white queen, the black pieces can operate freely.” – Rubinstein.

40 Qxb5 Qe4+ 41 Kg1

Here 41 Kh2 was slightly better, although there is no doubting Black’s superiority after, for instance 41 ... Bf6, threatening 42 ... Qc2, with ideas such as ... h5-h4, ... a4-a3 etc. White’s two pieces on the queenside are very clumsy in comparison.

41 ... a3 42 Qc5 Bf6!



After this retreat, which restricts the white knight, White is almost in zugzwang.

43 Nb4

“The threat was 43 ... Qb1+ and 44 ... Qxa2. If 43 Kh2 Qe2 44 Nb4 Qb2. And if 43 Qc1 then 43 ... Bb2.” – Rubinstein.

Exercise (easy): What is the strongest way to make progress?

Answer:

43 ... Bd4!

With a lightning attack on f2 and g3.

44 Qc1 Qf3

“This stroke proves devastating, because White cannot parry at the same time the two threats of 45 ... Bxf2+ and 45 ... Qxg3+.” – Rubinstein.

Actually, 44 ... Qe2! was even stronger, but Rubinstein’s move is enough.

45 Qf4 Bxf2+ 46 Kh2?

46 Kf1! would prolong the suffering.

46 ... Qe2 0-1

So, this was indeed “a logical game!”

Defence and counter-attack

Tarrasch deserts his eponymous defence on this occasion, adopting a very aggressive set-up instead. With a few precise moves, Rubinstein repels the first wave and goes over to the counter-attack, at the same time accumulating various small advantages. He displaces the opponent's forces and begins to put pressure on the weak points in Black's position. When Tarrasch refuses to fall back and instead tries to press his attack, Rubinstein wins the struggle, thanks to his better placed pieces. He succeeds in gaining a decisive advantage in material and at the same time defends his position effectively.

Game 5

A.Rubinstein-S.Tarrasch

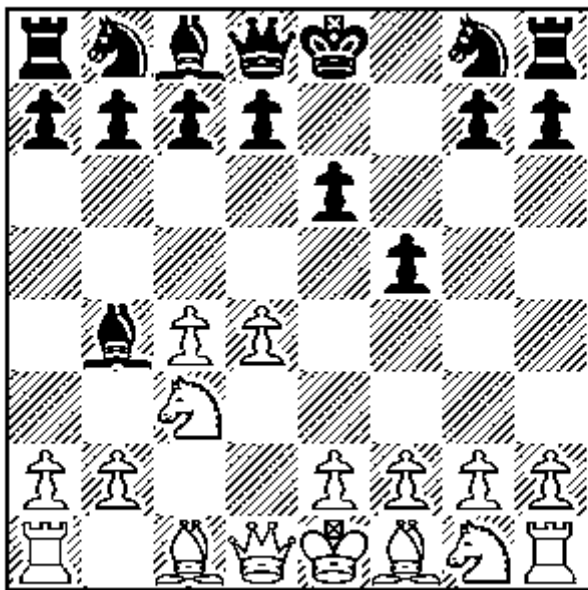
Gothenburg 1920

Dutch Defence [A84]

1 d4 e6 2 c4 f5 3 Nc3

White allows the position to become a hybrid of the Dutch and Nimzo-Indian Defences. This could be avoided by 3 a3, but on the fifteen occasions that Rubinstein faced this idea he never played this move, instead choosing between 3 e3, 3 Nf3, and 3 g3, opting for the latter move in another game against Tarrasch, and on other occasions.

3 ... Bb4



Exercise: There are several reasonable moves; the choice depends on one's style of play and even one's mood on the day. What do you think Rubinstein chose here?

Answer:

4 Bd2

As one might have predicted, Rubinstein prefers to retain a healthy pawn structure. He had already played this against Spielmann in San Sebastian 1912. In the future he plans to gain the two bishops with a2-a3, while keeping his pawn structure intact.

Question: Right, then tell me something about the other options.

Answer: With the same idea of discouraging the exchange on c3, it is possible to play 4 Qb3, which is a normal move here. 4 e3 allows 4 ... Bxc3+ 5 bxc3 c5, leaving the beaten track, when Black has the idea of placing his centre pawns on dark squares.

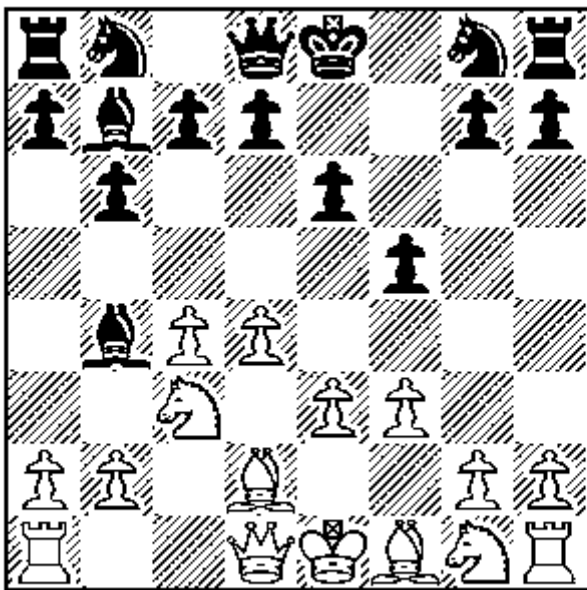
Instead, at Podebrady 1936 Alekhine played 4 g3 against V.Petrovs; and when he was young, in A.Alekhine-B.Hallegua, Paris 1914, he opted for something more violent: 4 e4 fxe4 5 Qg4. He also once played the line successfully as Black: S.Landau-A.Alekhine, Kemer 1937, saw 4 Qb3 Qe7.

4 ... b6

A move approved by Tartakower: “very much in the spirit of the opening: pressure on the point e4, and furthermore it solves satisfactorily the “problem of the black queen’s bishop”.

He criticized his own try to solve that “problem” by developing the bishop on the h3-c8 diagonal. M.Vidmar-S.Tartakower, London 1922, continued 4 ... Nf6 5 e3 0-0 6 Nf3 (Tartakower commented that 6 Bd3 was better, presumably because it keeps the options of f2-f3 and Nge2; Réti actually played this two rounds later, when Tartakower reverted to Tarrasch’s plan with 6 ... b6) 6 ... Qe7 7 Bd3 d6 8 Qc2 g6 (defending f5, so as to be able to play ... e6-e5) 9 a3 Bxc3 10 Bxc3 Nbd7 11 0-0-0 e5 12 dxe5 Nxe5?! (12 ... dxe5 is better) 13 Nxe5 dxe5 14 f4 with advantage to White, who won in 36 moves.

5 e3 Bb7 6 f3



Question: Hmm, what an ugly move, don't you agree?

The knight should go to that square! Isn't 6 Nf3 preferable?

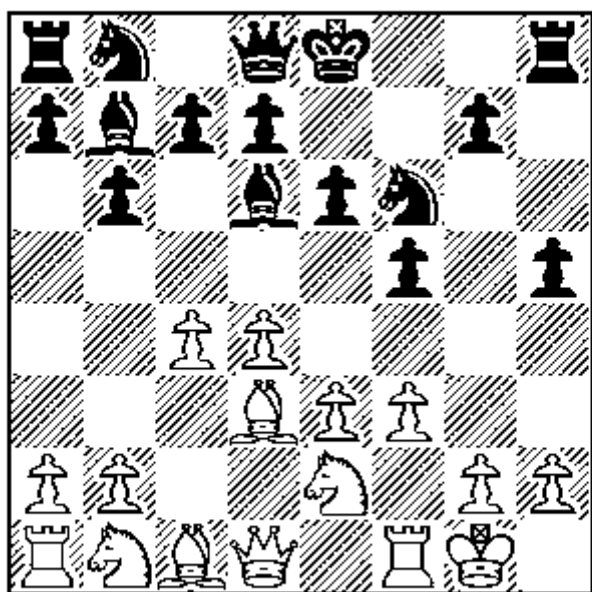
Answer: A bit ugly, yes, perhaps. On the other hand, it regains control of the e4-square, which Tartakower talked about, and nullifies the b7-bishop to a great extent; whereas, in the event of 6 Nf3 Nf6, Black can later play ... Bxc3 (for example, in answer to White's asking the question with a2-a3), followed by ... Ne4.

6 ... Bd6?!

Question: What a surprising move! It's hardly a developing move. Isn't it better to play 6 ... Nf6 - ?

Answer: Yes, 6 ... Nf6 is more natural and possibly better, to which White would have replied 7 Bd3 and 8 Nge2, planning eventually to break with e3-e4 – playing “à la Steinitz”, according to Tartakower, alluding to the game W.Steinitz-S.Tarrasch, Hastings 1895, which went 1 d4 f5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 Nf6 5 Bd3 b6 6 Ne2 Bb7 7 0-0 0-0 8 f3 Nc6 9 e4.

Kmoch mentions a game of Rubinstein's in which ... Bd6 was successful, although there Black played it straight away without losing a tempo. A.Rubinstein-M.Lowcki, Breslau 1912, saw 3 e3 Nf6 4 Bd3 b6 5 Ne2 Bb7 6 f3 Bd6 7 0-0, and now Black chose the primitive 7 ... h5, which prepares the typical sacrifice ... Bxh2+, followed by ... Ng4+.

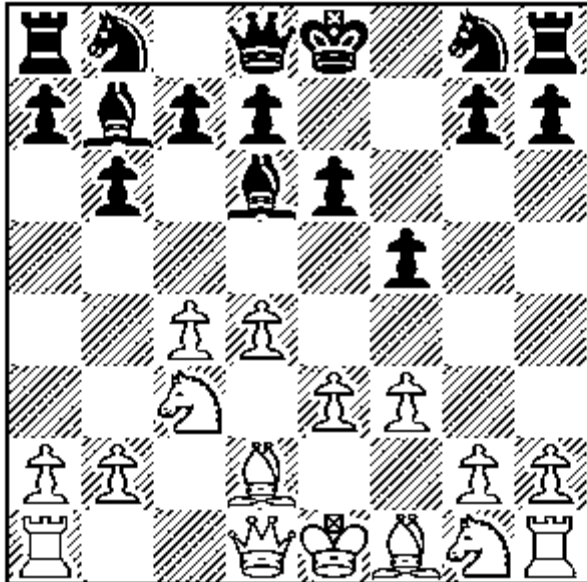


Exercise: Is this really a threat that has to be defended against, or is it possible for White to continue with development by playing 8 Nbc3 - ?

Answer: Rubinstein opted to prevent the “threat” with 8 Qe1, but this was unnecessary. In fact, the black attack was surprisingly rapid and effective after 8 ... c5 9 Nbc3 Nc6 10 Nb5 Bb8 11 b3 a6 12 Nbc3 h4! 13 dxc5? h3! 14 g3 Ne5! with advantage, and 0-1 in 30 moves.

It was possible and preferable to play 8 Nbc3!, not fearing 8 ... Bxh2+? 9 Kxh2 Ng4+, as after 10 fxe4! hxe4+ 11 Kg1 Qh4 12 e4! g3 13 Nxe3 Qxe3 14 Bf4, Black does not have enough compensation for the piece.

Let's return to the game.



Exercise: How should White reply to 6 ... Bd6 - ?

Answer:

7 Nh3

Answering the threatened nasty check on h4, which would be the response to 7 Bd3. Then after 7 ... Qh4+, White would have to play 8 Kf1 (of course not 8 g3? on account of 8 ... Bxg3+).

7 ... Nf6

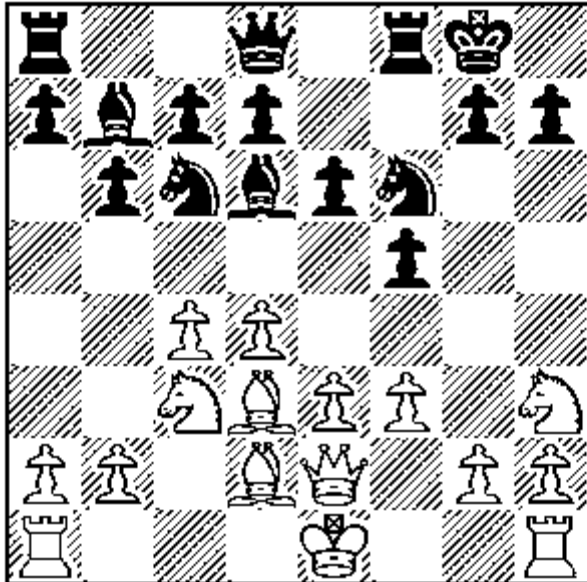
Now in the event of 7 ... Qh4+ it is possible to play 8 g3 Bxg3+ 9 hxg3 Qxg3+ 10 Nf2, and although Black gains three pawns for the piece after 10 ... Bxf3, the compensation is insufficient owing to his lag in development. A possible continuation is 11 Ne2 Qd6 (or 11 ... Qg6?! 12 Nf4 Qg3 13 Rg1!) 12 Rh3 Bb7 13 Nc3 with the unpleasant threats of 14 Nb5 and 14 Qh5+ on the agenda.

8 Bd3 Nc6 9 Qe2

Question: What about this move? How is this better than 9 0-0 - ?

Answer: It's not better, but neither is it worse. There is still no necessity to castle; in any case it will probably just result in a transposition.

9 ... 0-0



Exercise: What was Rubinstein's idea in playing 9 Qe2 - ?

Answer:

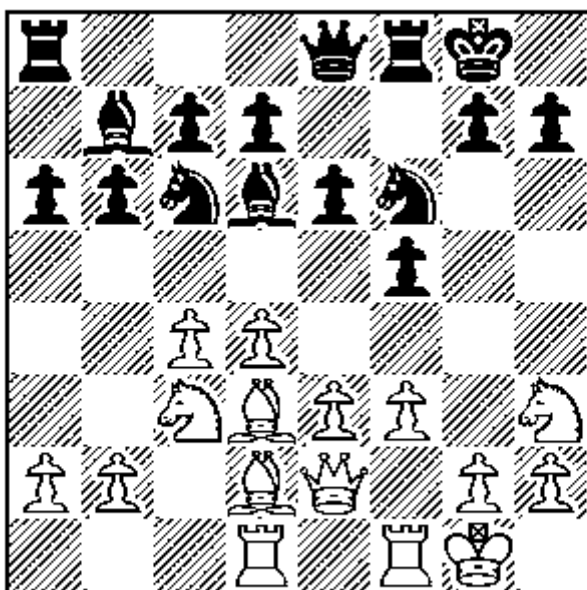
10 Rd1

"A further strengthening of the centre," commented Tartakower; further on we shall see why this is useful. Of course 10 0-0 was also possible, as well as 10 Nb5, forcing the retreat 10 ... Be7, but Rubinstein prefers to keep Nb5 as a threat.

9 ... a6

A small triumph from White's point of view, while Black could argue that it's a useful move which consolidates the position of the bishop that threatens White's kingside.

11 0-0 Qe8



Exercise: Black has made his intentions clear; he's aiming everything at the kingside. How do you think Rubinstein responded?

Answer:

12 a3!

By expanding on the queenside, seeking to make this flank the focus of the struggle.

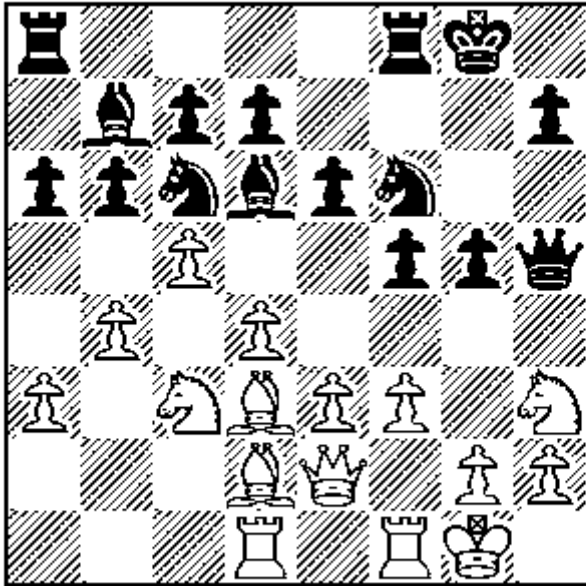
12 ... Qh5 13 b4

White is now ready to force the annoying bishop away from d6.

13 ... g5

Black is unwilling to slow the pace of his attack and seeks to open lines, with all the risk to his own king's safety that this entails.

14 c5



14 ... Be7

Tartakower suggested the sacrifice 14 ... Bxh2+ 15 Kxh2 g4 16 fxg4 fxg4 “with incalculable complications, unless White prefers a more or less equal endgame by playing 17 Kg1 gxf3 18 Qxf3 Nxf3 19 gxf3 etc.”

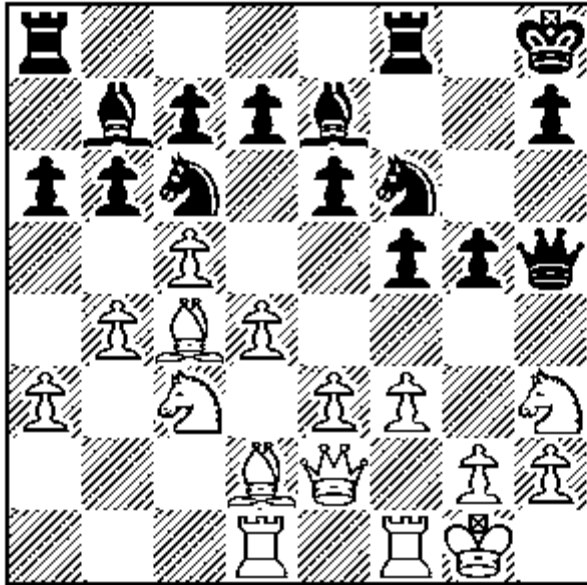
Exercise: This variation has a serious hole in it, as Kmoch pointed out. What is the error that means that the bishop sacrifice is losing?

Answer: Instead of 18 Qxf3?, White can play 18 Rxf6! Qxe2 19 Rxf8+, winning a piece.

15 Bc4!

The most unpleasant continuation, reminding Black that his king's position has been weakened. As we shall see, in a way this move continues down the path begun with 10 Rd1.

15 ... Kh8



Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein pursued his plan?

Answer:

16 Bc1!

Now the d4-pawn is defended and White is ready to strike back in the centre with 17 e4 (among other ideas). The same aim could be achieved with 16 Be1, which is favoured by the analysis engines, but White wants have the move Bb2 available in the future.

16 ... bxc5

Tarrasch starts a manoeuvre designed to bring his b7-bishop to bear on the kingside. The direct 16 ... g4 17 Nf4 gxf3 18 Rxf3 is uncomfortable for Black; for example, after 18 ... Qg4 19 Bb2 bxc5 20 dxc5 Ne5, White can play 21 Rg3 Qxe2 22 Bxe2, when Black's position is very weak and his attack lies in ruins.

17 bxc5

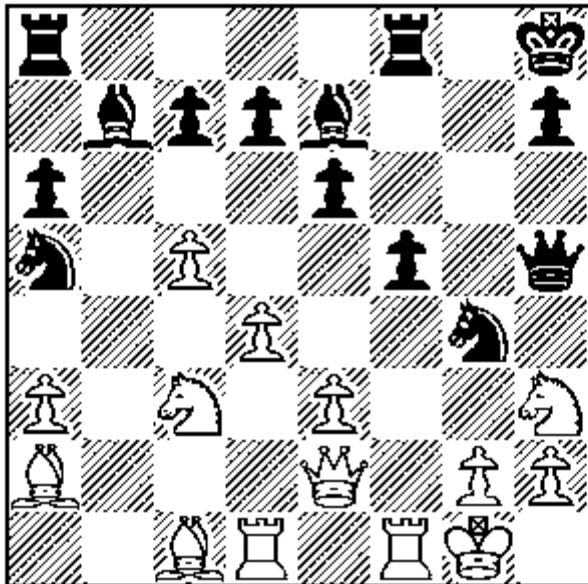
Not 17 dxc5? Ne5 18 Bb3 g4 19 fxg4 (here 19 Nf4? gxf3 is very strong) 19 ... Nexg4 and the black pieces are magnificently placed.

17 ... Na5

The price that Black has to pay is that this knight is now decentralized.

18 Ba2 g4 19 fxg4 Nxg4?!

Consistent; Tarrasch wants to keep his attack alive and is unwilling to settle for a slightly inferior ending after 19 ... Qxg4 20 Qxg4 and 21 Nf4; but with the queens on the board it is the black king that will be in greater danger.



Exercise: Which move is most consistent with Rubinstein's previous play?

Answer:

20 e4!

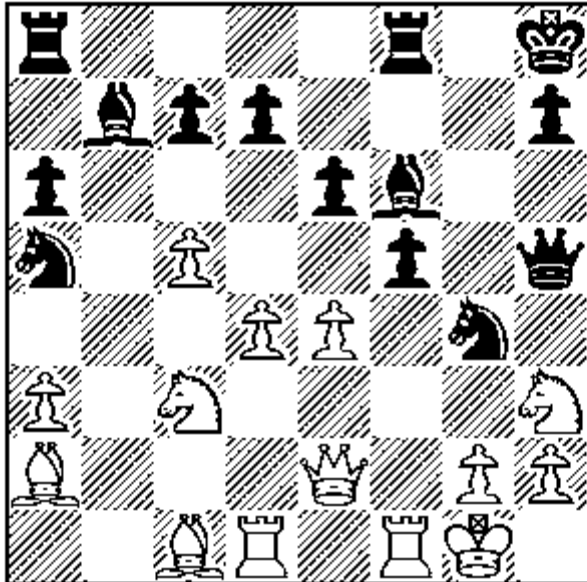
"Here this advance, which is characteristic of the whole system, comes better late than never. From now on White gains more terrain with every move, and wins in fine style," wrote Tartakower.

The great Polish grandmaster and writer was not wrong, although breaking with 20 d5! was also appropriate; for example, 20 ... Bxc5 21 Na4 Be7 (in the event of 21 ... Bd6 22 Bb2+ e5 23 Bc3, it's the black "knight on the rim" that suffers) 22 dxe6 and all White's pieces are active and harmoniously placed, whereas the same cannot be said of the black forces. Neither is 20 ... Bf6 at all satisfactory, in view of 21 Qe1! (once again exploiting the tactical weakness of the loose a5-knight, and better than 21 Bb2 which allows 21 ... Qh6, attacking e3, followed by ... Rab8) 21 ... Be5 22 Ne2! Bxh2+ 23 Kh1, when Black has nothing better than 23 ... Nc6.

20 ... Bf6

Question: Given all Black's problems with the knight on a5, was it not better for him to retreat it with 20 ... Nc6 - ?

Answer: Possibly, in which case Rubinstein might have played 21 d5!, sacrificing the pawn to further expose the black king. After 21 ... Bxc5+ 22 Kh1 exd5 23 Nxd5 Nce5, White has excellent compensation with a choice of several attractive moves, such as 24 Ndf4, 24 exf5 and 24 Qc2.



Exercise: How should White continue after 20 ... Bf6 - ?

Answer:

21 exf5

Of course – opening lines for the white pieces. Admittedly, this opens the long a8-h1 diagonal as well as the e-file where White's queen is currently situated, but Rubinstein has accurately assessed that Black won't have time to take advantage of these factors.

21 ... exf5

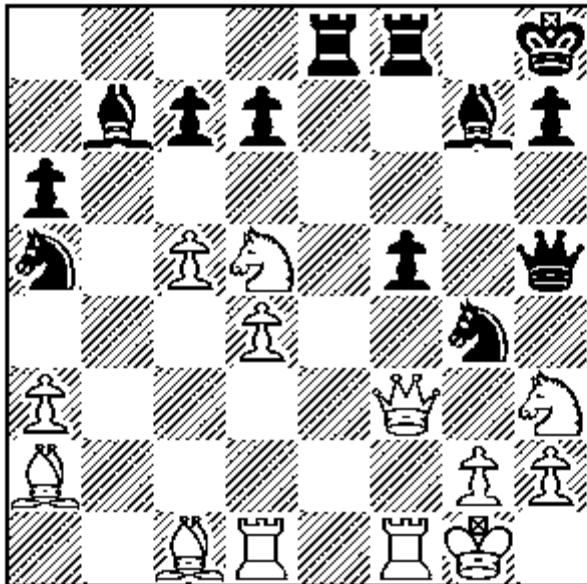
Exercise: What has Rubinstein prepared here?

Answer:

22 Nd5

Once again crystal clear, exploiting the d5-square. Now the knight is exerting pressure everywhere.

22 ... Rae8 23 Qf3 Bg7



Exercise: What is the final touch to the manoeuvre initiated with 20 e4 - ?

Answer:

24 Qg3!

Strengthening the kingside defences, and threatening to win with 25 Ndf4 Qh6 26 Ne6 as well as 25 Nxc7.

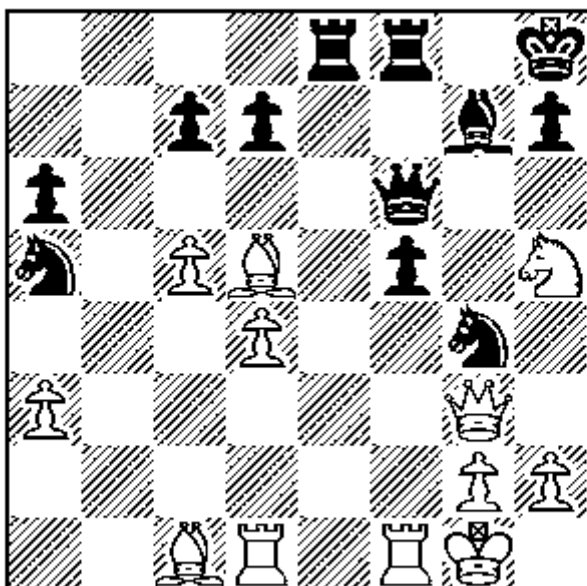
24 ... Bxd5

“A sad necessity” – Tartakower.

25 Bxd5 Qg6

Forced, on account of the same threat: 26 Nf4 Qh6 27 Ne6.

26 Nf4 Qf6 27 Nh5!



From many options, Rubinstein chooses the clearest one, based on weakening the black monarch even more, although it needed justifying tactically (which is simple in this case).

27 ... Qg6

Question: Justified tactically? How?

Answer: The key line was 27 ... Qxd4+ 28 Rxd4 Bxd4+ 29 Kh1 Nf2+ (hoping to draw with 30 Kg1 Ng4+ etc), which is refuted by 30 Qxf2! Bxf2 31 Bb2+ and mates.

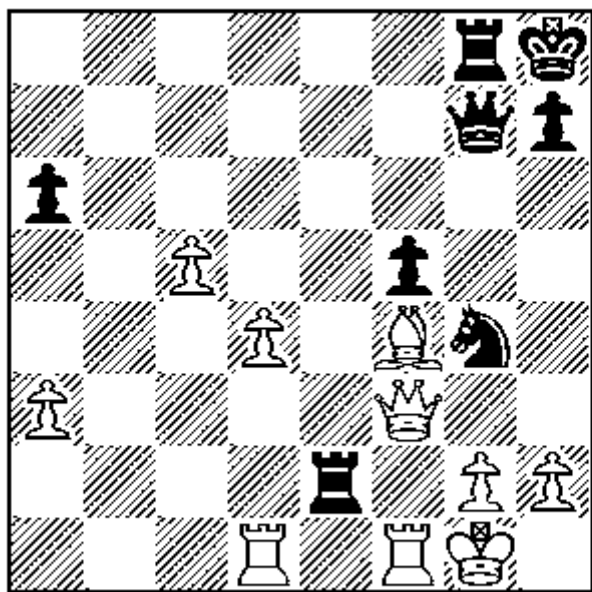
28 Nxb7 Qxg7 29 Qxc7

Gathering the first fruits and attacking Black's worst placed piece. White has a winning position; he only has to exercise some care to parry the threats against his king.

29 ... Nc6

If 29 ... Nf6, White can play 30 Rxf5 Nxd5 31 Rxf8+ Rxf8 32 Qxa5, when he is two pawns up and in no danger.

30 Bxc6 dxc6 31 Qxc6 Re2 32 Bf4 Rg8 33 Qf3!



Once again, out of several options, Rubinstein chooses the simplest, strengthening his defences by regrouping to neutralize the threats.

33 ... Qe7 34 Bd6 Qe6

This makes it easy for White, but by now all resistance was futile.

35 d5 Qe8 36 Bg3 Re3 37 Rfe1 1-0

“A typical Rubinstein game, conducted with clarity and power”

... was how Tartakower characterized the game that we shall view now. After a quiet opening, Rubinstein gradually improves the position of his pieces with subtle moves, while at the same time forcing the opponent's pieces to occupy worse posts. After decisively seizing the important central squares, Rubinstein uses his greater piece activity to finish off the game with a tremendous mating attack.

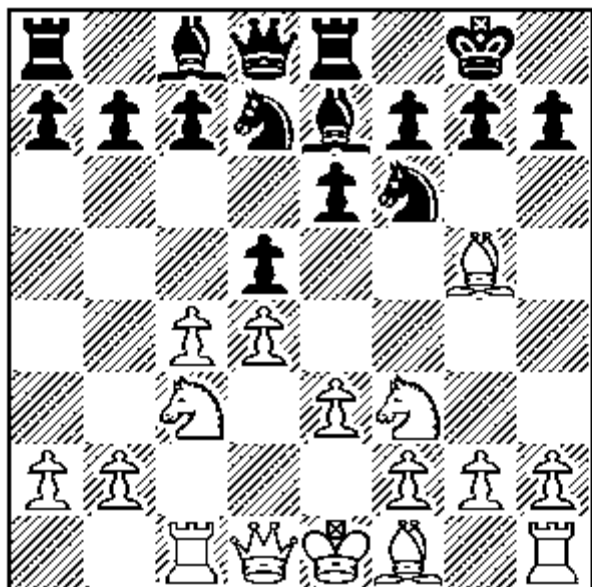
Game 6

A.Rubinstein-G.Maróczy

Gothenburg 1920

Queen's Gambit Declined [D63]

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 d5 3 c4 e6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 e3 Nbd7 6 Nc3 0-0 7 Rc1 Re8



Question: This move doesn't look the most flexible, does it?

Answer: It's true that the most common continuation here is 7 ... c6, one of the main ideas being "Capablanca's freeing manoeuvre" based on ... d5xc4, followed by ... Nd5. There are several other popular moves, such as 7 ... a6, or putting the question to the g5-bishop first with 7 ... h6.

Nevertheless, the central pawn structure is not yet fixed; 7 ... Re8 might be useful if White opts for c4xd5, for example. It was also played by Capablanca (against Rubinstein) and Emanuel Lasker (against Capablanca), and even Rubinstein himself (on numerous occasions). It is in accordance with the so-called "fight for tempo"; i.e. Black wants to keep making useful moves, while waiting for White to play Bd3, after which he will take on c4, "gaining a tempo". For his part, White can make moves that might come in useful too, waiting for Black to run out, so that White can recapture on c4 at a moment when the bishop is still on f1.

8 Qc2

Here 8 Bd3 would justify Black's last move, since he could play 8 ... dxc4 9 Bxc4 and then, say, 9 ... a6, intending ... b7-b5.

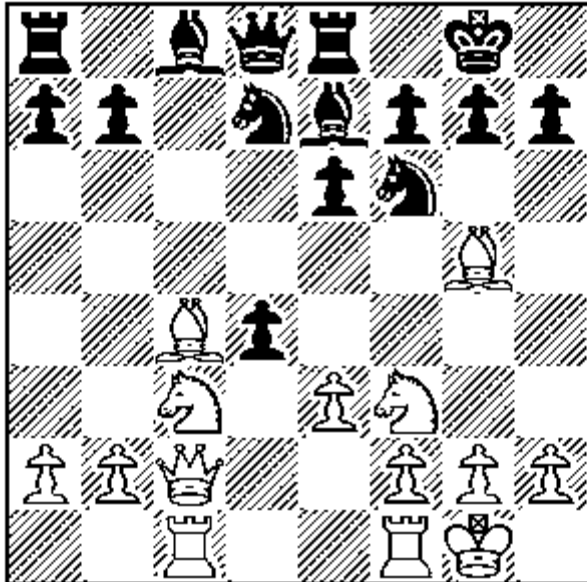
Question: Okay, but how important is this "fight for tempo" really? Can the position be viewed in a different light altogether?

Answer: It is certainly not the last word. For example, 8 Bd3 has been played many times, as has 7 ... dxc4, with the idea of ... c7-c5 and then reaching an isolated queen's pawn structure with ... c5xd4 (if White recaptures with the e3-pawn), among other possibilities.

8 ... dxc4

Black abandons his original idea, which he could have perpetuated with 8 ... a6 or 8 ... c6. Now his plan is to play ... c7-c5.

9 Bxc4 c5 10 0-0 cxd4



Exercise: White must decide how to recapture on d4, depending on whether he wants to reach a typical IQP structure or not. What do you think Rubinstein chose?

Answer:

11 Nxd4!

Opting for a standard IQP position was of course perfectly playable, but Rubinstein relies on extracting greater benefit from the “fight for tempo”, where he can claim to have emerged victorious, if only slightly, since his pieces are more active.

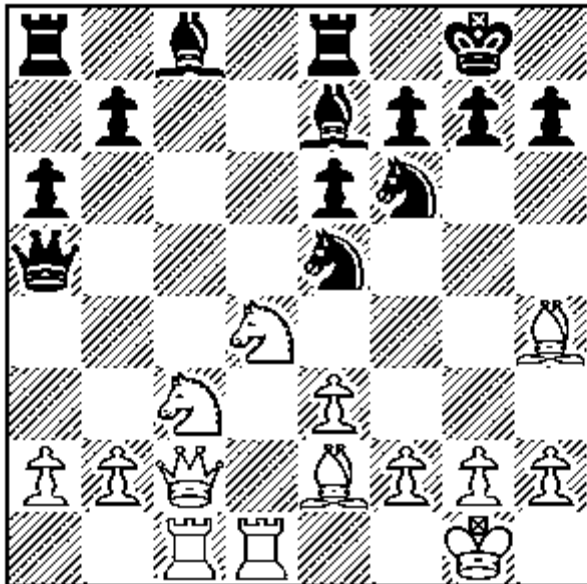
11 ... a6?!

It's not clear that controlling b5 is a priority, and playing ... b7-b5 is for now a very distant possibility, so Bogoljubow's suggestion of 11 ... Ne5 12 Be2 Bd7 13 Rfd1 Qb6 seems a reasonable alternative.

12 Rfd1

The white pieces are fully developed, whereas Black has still to solve the problem of his c8-bishop. However, there are no immediate threats; White's advantage is still not a significant one.

12 ... Qa5 13 Bh4 Ne5 14 Be2



14 ... Ng6

Black plays ambitiously. He would like to solve the problem of his queen's bishop by playing ... e6-e5, but this plan will not be successful, because the knight is straying a long way from the queenside, where its presence would be most beneficial.

Completing development with 14 ... Bd7 has been suggested, and after 15 Nb3 Qc7, Tartakower wrote that 16 Qb1 Bc6 would allow Black to consolidate his position somewhat, while the endgame after 16 Bxf6 Bxf6 17 Nd5 Qxc2 18 Nf6+ gxf6 19 Rxc2 Bc6 would bring about welcome simplification.

However, White need not take on f6 to go into the endgame. It looks better to play 16 Nd5 immediately; after 16 ... Qxc2 17 Nxe7+ Rxe7 18 Rxc2, or 16 ... Nxd5 17 Qxc7 Nxc7 18 Bxe7 Bb5 19 Rxc7 Bxe2 20 Rdc1, Black's problems are rather greater than in the line given by Tartakower.

In addition, there is the possibility of simply increasing the pressure in the middlegame by playing 16 Bg3, as suggested by Razuvaev.

15 Bg3 e5

It's not possible to eliminate the g3-bishop with 15 ... Nh5?, as Black's lack of development would be felt after 16 Nb3 Qg5 17 Ne4 Qh6 (a sad necessity; if 17 ... Qf5 then 18 Nd4) 18 Nd6 and his position is unpleasant.

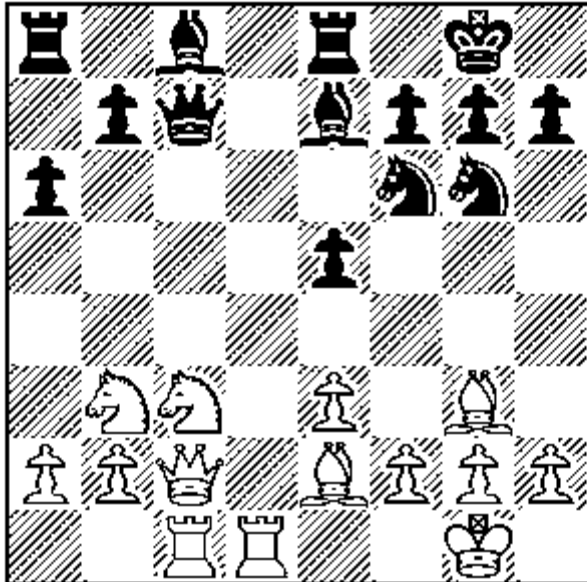
The text move has the virtue of allowing the c8-bishop to develop at some point, at the cost of weakening Black's control of d5 and f5.

16 Nb3

White aims for more than forcing Black to give up a bishop with 16 Nf5.

16 ... Qc7

On 16 ... Qb6, White could play 17 h4!, threatening h4-h5, followed by taking on e5. If Black responds with 17 ... h5, White has 18 Bc4, when 18 ... Be6 19 Na4 is unpleasant for Black.



Exercise: White has several options here. What do you think Rubinstein played?

Answer:

17 Qb1!

Creating the concrete threat of Nd5-c7. It was possibly even better to preface this with 17 h4!, although with the queen on c7 the e5-pawn is defended.

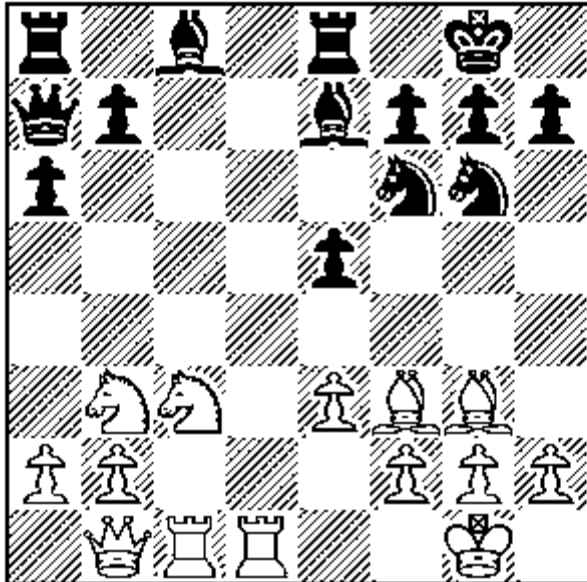
On the other hand, heading for the endgame by capturing the e7-bishop with 17 Nd5 Qxc2 18 Nxe7+ Rxe7 19 Rxc2 would be inferior, as after 19 ... Bf5 and 20 ... Ne4, Black's greatest difficulties would be behind him.

Question: After the text, the white queen is now decentralized.

Won't this make itself felt over the next few moves.

Answer: It's true that the white queen is slightly out of position, but this is not important because it can quickly recentralize. In contrast, the black queen's forced retreat is more damaging, since it hinders his development.

17 ... Qb8 18 Bf3 Qa7



Exercise: How did Rubinstein further increase the pressure?

Answer:

19 Na5!

As Tartakower pointed out, Black was planning to play ... Rb8 and ... b7-b5, finally completing his development. That's now impossible because of Nc6; furthermore the knight can go to c4 at an opportune moment, with pressure on e5 and d6.

It was also strong to insert 19 h4!, since the black queen no longer defends the e5-pawn.

19 ... Bb4

Preventing White from playing b2-b4, which would further cramp the black pieces.

20 Nc4 Bd7

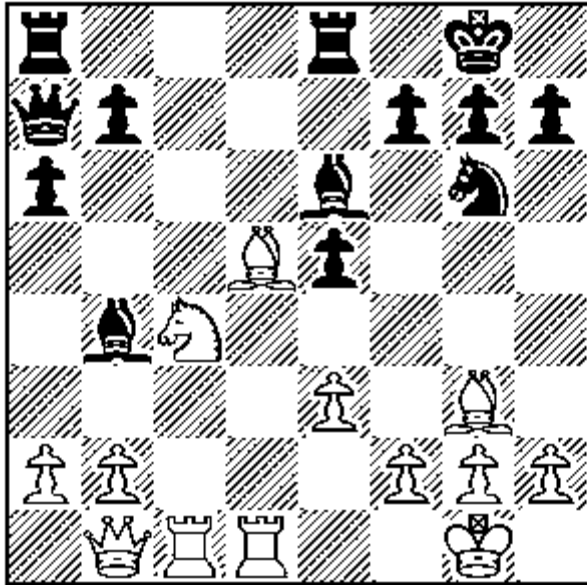
The bishop is finally developed; 20 ... Be6? fails to 21 Nxe5.

21 Nd5

White seeks more than he might gain from 21 a3 Bxc3 22 Rxc3, when Black could respond 22 ... e4 23 Be2 Bb5 24 Qc2 Red8 with only a slight advantage to White.

If Rubinstein previously aimed to exploit the absence of the g6-knight from the queenside, now he wants to switch the focus of the struggle to the kingside, while the black queen is out of play.

21 ... Nxd5 22 Bxd5 Be6?!



Black must lose another tempo with the bishop; 22 ... Rad8?! allows 23 Qe4!, attacking b7 and e5. Razuvaev suggested inserting 22 ... Bg4!?, and only after 23 f3 then 23 ... Be6.

Question: I suppose that by provoking f2-f3, the idea is to weaken the e3-square. How can 22 ... Be6 be punished, if it is indeed a weak move?

Answer: Let me answer that by setting you an exercise.

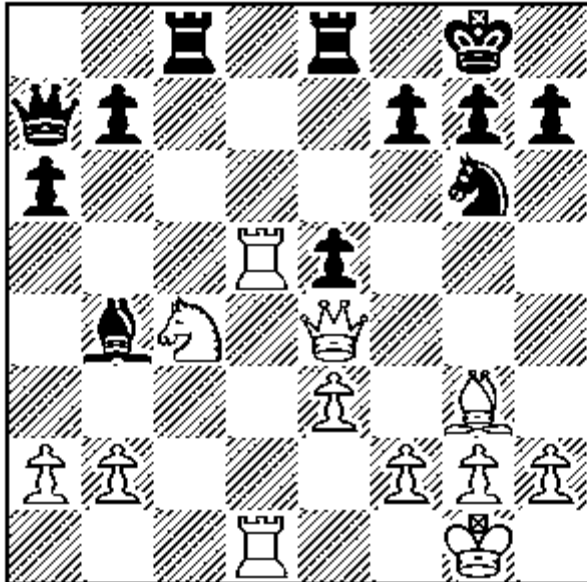
Exercise: What continuation does White have at his disposal after 22 ... Be6 - ?

23 Qe4

Answer: Centralization; Rubinstein's move is sufficient to maintain the advantage. Otherwise, White could exploit his greater activity with 23 Nxe5!, as after 23 ... Nxe5 24 Bxe5 Bg4, he has 25 Bd4, among other things.

23 ... Bxd5 24 Rxd5 Rac8 25 Rcd1

With the threat of 26 Nxe5.



25 ... Bf8

Exercise: What is the clearest refutation of 25 ... f5 - ?

Answer: White is not forced to capture the pawn – he can play 26 Qd3, if there's nothing stronger, but in fact there is: 26 Qxf5! Rxc4 27 Rd7 (threatening mate with Qf7+, as well as winning the rook on c4) 27 ... Nh8 and now 28 Rd8! is the clearest continuation.

26 b3

Now 26 ... f5 was indeed a threat, since 27 Qxf5 Rxc4 28 Rd7 Rcc8 defends, while after 27 Qd3, Black can play 27 ... f4.

The immediate 26 Nd6 was possible, but Rubinstein prefers to strengthen his position.

Question: Hmm, isn't overprotecting the c4-knight rather passive?

Wasn't it stronger to occupy the seventh rank with 26 Rd7 - ?

Answer: In principle this would indeed be a very strong move, but we mustn't forget about tactics. Black can solve all his problems with the counter-attack 26 ... Qc5!, and if 27 b3 then 27 ... b5!, when the black pieces are suddenly well placed and the c-file becomes important. Whereas now 27 Rd7 is a real threat.

26 ... b5!

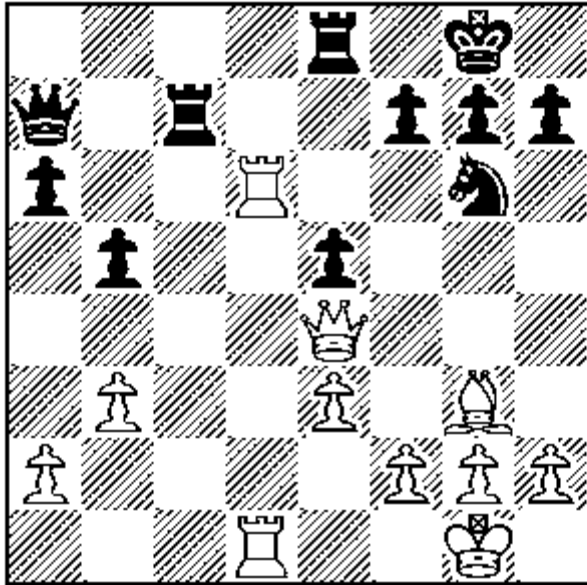
Repairing his position somewhat; 27 Nxe5? fails to 27 ... f6.

27 Nd6 Bxd6 28 Rxd6

White's advantage persists: he dominates the central open file and his bishop is stronger than the knight, but there is still play in the position.

28 ... Rc7?

This controls d7, but allows White an important tempo. Bogoljubow recommended 28 ... Qa8! 29 Qf5 (not 29 R6d5?? due to 29 ... f5! 30 Qxf5 Qxd5 31 Rxd5 Rc1+ or 30 Qd3 f4 and wins) 29 ... f6, restricting the bishop and strengthening Black's position, with ... Nf8 to follow.



Exercise: How did Rubinstein make progress?

Answer:

29 h4!

“The winning stratagem” (Tartakower), providing the white king with beneficial luft (the usefulness of which we have already seen) while intending to use the pawn as a battering ram against Black’s castled position.

29 ... f6 30 Qd5+!

This presents Black with a difficult decision: pin himself with ... Rf7, or else move his king – and if so, where?

30 ... Kh8?

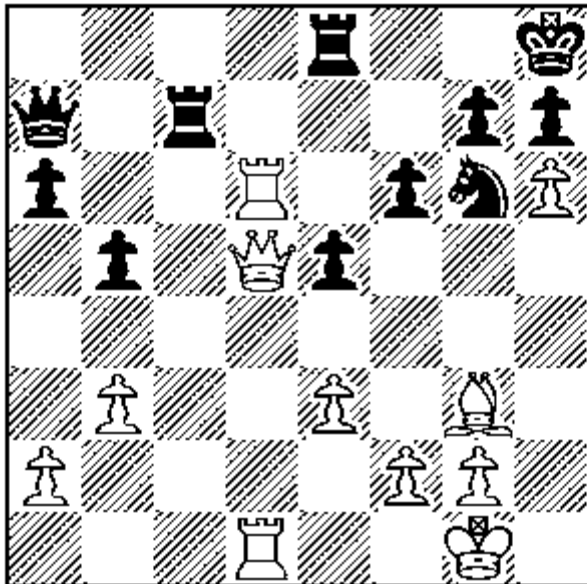
After this Black’s back rank is more vulnerable, though none of his options was pleasant. 30 ... Rf7 would have been answered by 31 h5 Nf8 32 h6, weakening the black king.

Instead, “centralizing” with 30 ... Kf8 was not an easy decision to take, but looks the toughest defence. The idea is that after 31 h5 Nh8, the knight will defend the kingside better from f7, though White would still have the advantage.

31 h5

The consistent move. 31 Rd8! was even stronger, and if 31 ... Re7 then 32 Qc6! wins.

31 ... Nf8 32 h6 Ng6



Exercise: There are several attractive continuations here. What do you think Rubinstein played?

Answer:

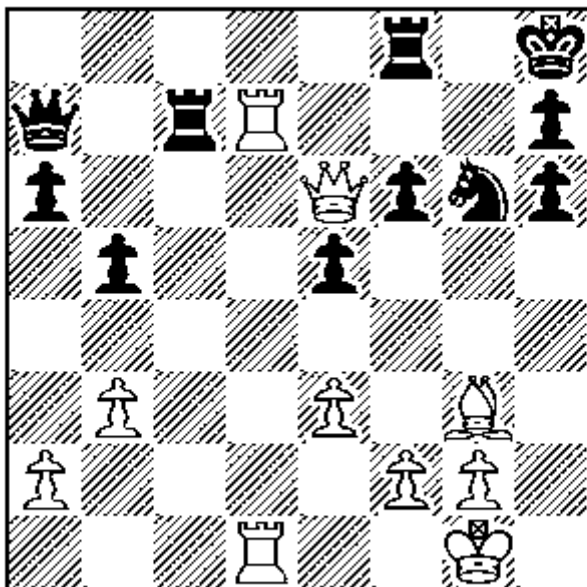
33 Qe6!

The most elegant and the quickest.

33 ... Rf8

If 33 ... Rce7, then 34 hxc7+ Kxc7 35 Rd7! Qc5 36 R1d6! wins.

34 Rd7 gxc6



Exercise: What key move had Rubinstein calculated?

Answer:

35 Bh4! 1-0

The threat is 36 Bxf6+, and if 35 ... Nxb4 then 36 Qe7 wins.

First Brilliancy Prize

Rubinstein style wasn't the most conducive to winning brilliancy prizes. Although he was awarded quite a few, not all of them were first prizes, as in this case.

The Vienna 1922 tournament was an extraordinary success for Rubinstein. He scored 11½ points out of 14, without loss, 1½ points ahead of second-placed Tartakower, and well ahead of Alekhine.

The brilliance of this game lies less in its final combination than in the gradual conquest of all the important strategic points, while preventing the opponent's activity. After little more than twenty moves, the advantage Rubinstein obtains is overwhelming; and he even provides us with another example of his "don't rush" style of play with his 22nd move.

Game 7

A.Rubinstein-E.Bogoljubow

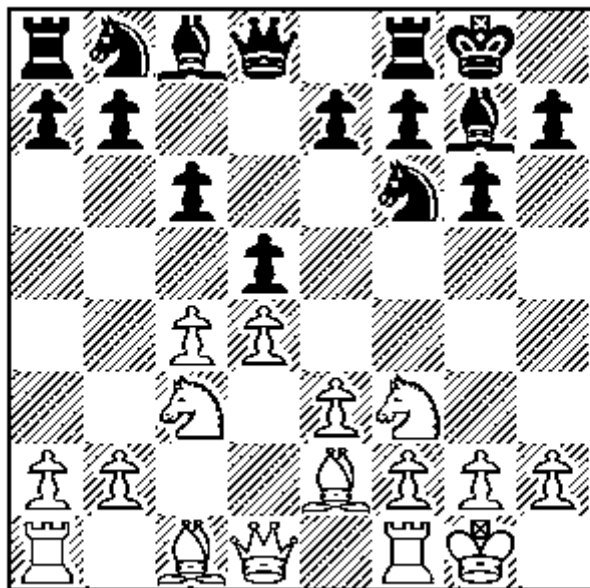
Vienna 1922

Slav Defence [D94]

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 e3 Nf6 4 Nc3 g6 5 Nf3 Bg7

The Schlechter Variation of the Slav Defence began to be very popular again towards the end of the last century, owing to a large extent to its adoption by some of the leading Chinese players, as well as by Gata Kamsky and various other top grandmasters from time to time.

6 Be2 0-0 7 0-0



7 ... Nbd7

There are several playable moves in this position, such as 7 ... a6, 7 ... e6, 7 ... Be6, 7 ... Bg4, and 7 ... dxc4, which was Rubinstein's own suggestion.

Exercise: How can White try to punish Black for his last move?

Answer:

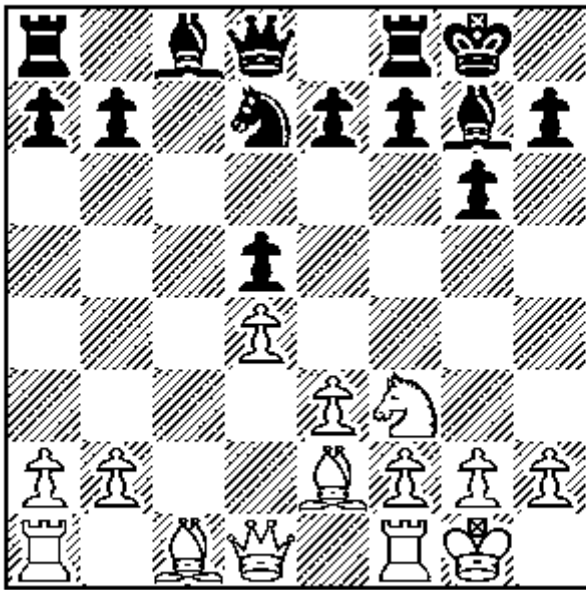
8 cxd5

Question: Is this best? It releases the tension ...

Answer: It's not clear whether this is the best move or not, but despite releasing the tension (as you correctly pointed out), this exchange is well timed since: (i) Black is unable to recapture with his e-pawn, reaching a typical Carlsbad pawn structure: and (ii) Black's queen's knight has already moved to d7 and is thus unable to occupy its natural square (after ... c6xd5) on c6.

Other popular moves here are 8 b3 (to be able to recapture on c4 with a pawn), the developing 8 Qc2 or 8 Bd2, and the space-gaining 8 b4 or 8 a4.

8 ... Nxd5 9 Nxd5 cxd5



Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein continued?

Answer:

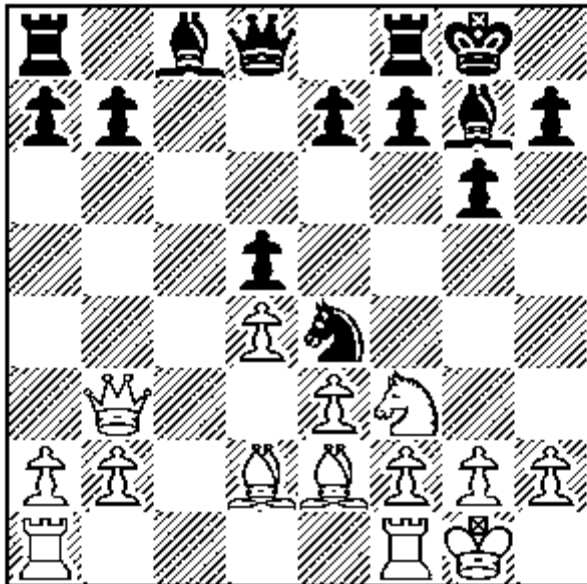
10 Qb3

Putting pressure on b7, and preparing to occupy the c-file with the rooks, which is something Black cannot match quickly.

10 ... Nf6

The knight raid that Bogoljubow now starts came in for criticism, but his position is slightly worse in any case. For instance, after 10 ... Nb6, White could reply with 11 a4 or 11 Bd2 (to have Ba5 available). Redeploying the knight to c6 with 10 ... Nb8 was suggested, though the loss of two tempi naturally means White would have the advantage, despite the position being a closed one.

11 Bd2 Ne4

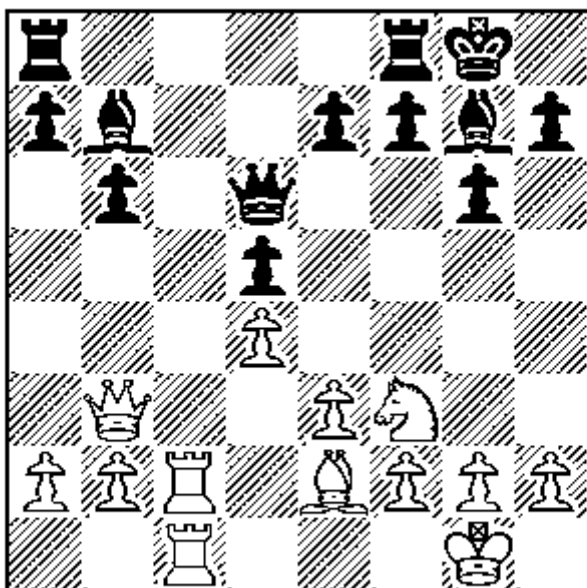


12 Rfd1

Question: Why did Rubinstein acquiesce to the loss of the bishop pair? Wasn't it better to play 12 Bb4 - ?

Answer: The loss of the bishop is not serious, since the position is not open and there is little prospect of it becoming open in the near future. Rubinstein prefers to give priority to the occupation of the c-file. After the exchange on d2, White will have gained time to double his rooks there. However, there is no doubt that 12 Bb4 was a reasonable move too; either continuation should give White a slight edge.

12 ... Nxd2 13 Rxd2 Qd6 14 Rc1 b6 15 Rdc2 Bb7



Exercise: Now that White's rooks occupy the open file, how should he proceed?

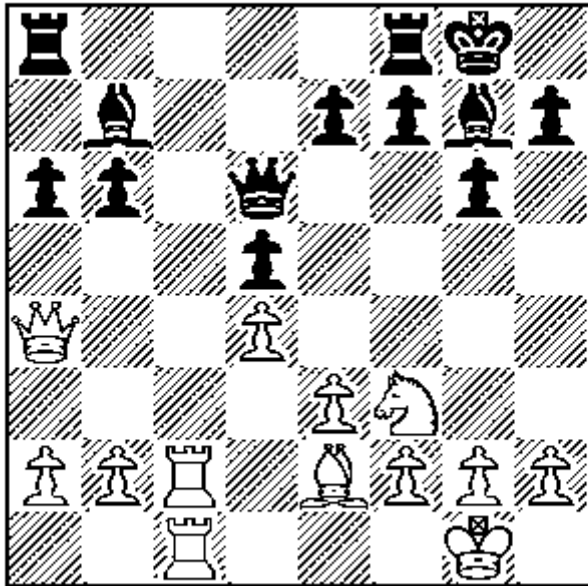
Answer:

16 Qa4!

“Prophylactic thinking”. Black was threatening to equalize with 16 ... Rfc8, aiming to exchange all the rooks. This is now prevented due to the attack on the a7-pawn. Furthermore, White has the possibility of playing Ba6 to exchange Black’s “bad bishop” on b7, which in reality is fulfilling an important defensive role by covering c6 and c8.

16 ... a6?!

Here 16 ... a5 would be more tenacious.



Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein continued?

Answer:

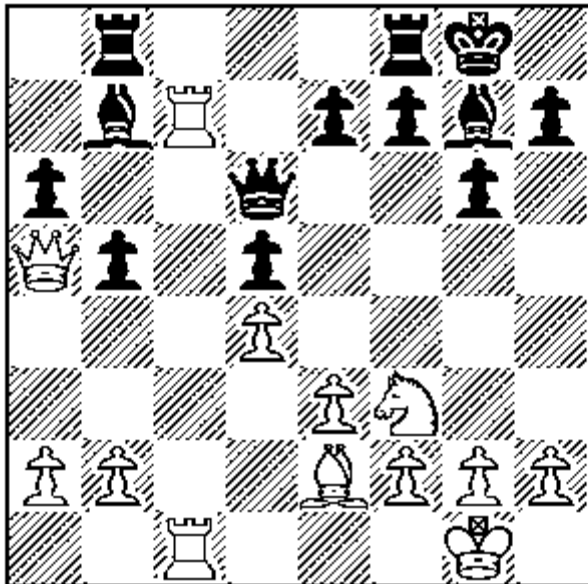
17 Rc7

Of course. Black still wasn’t threatening 17 ... Rac8, in view of 18 Rxc8 Bxc8 (not 18 ... Rxc8? 19 Rxc8+ Bxc8 20 Qe8+ and wins) 19 Bxa6.

17 ... b5 18 Qa5 Rab8

Question: But now if Black played a rook to c8, White would not have Qe8+ at the end of the exchanges, so was this not a better move?

Answer: It’s difficult to know if it was better. What is clear is that, after 18 ... Rac8, the black position would remain uncomfortable, since White could play 19 R1c5 (threatening Rxb7) and if 19 ... Rxc7 20 Rxc7 Ba8?!, as well as increasing his control of the c-file with 21 Qc3 (Tartakower), the direct 21 Ra7 Rc8 22 Rxa6 is tactically justified, since 22 ... Rc1+?! 23 Bf1 Bc6 24 Qd2 wins for White.



Exercise (easy): What should White play here?

Answer:

19 R1c5

In a similar fashion to the previous note; White intends to follow with 20 Qc3, gaining total control of the c-file.

19 ... Rfd8

If Black tries to repel the white pieces with 19 ... e6 20 Qc3 Bf6?! (intending ... Bd8; but this isn't feasible, so 20 ... f6 would be better) then 21 Ne5! Bxe5 (or 21 ... Bd8 22 Rd7 Qb6 23 b4 and Black is paralysed) 22 dxe5 Qb6 leaves White in control of the queenside and a completely free hand; it looks attractive to start operations on the other wing with 23 h4.

Exercise (easy): What is the strongest continuation now?

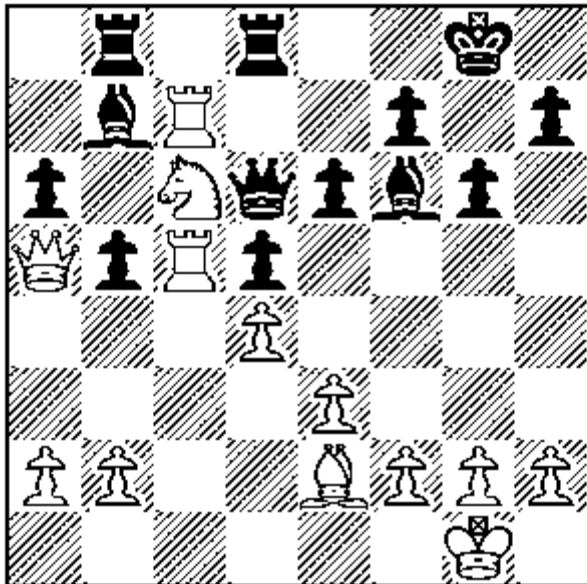
Answer:

20 Ne5!

Heading for c6, which cannot be prevented, since 20 ... Bxe5 21 dxe5 Qxe5 (or 21 ... Qe6) 22 Rxb7 wins for White.

20 ... Bf6 21 Nc6! e6

The knight is immune from capture, since 21 ... Bxc6 22 R5xc6 traps the queen.



Exercise: There is more than one good move here, since White's domination is absolute. What do you think Rubinstein played?

Answer:

22 g3!

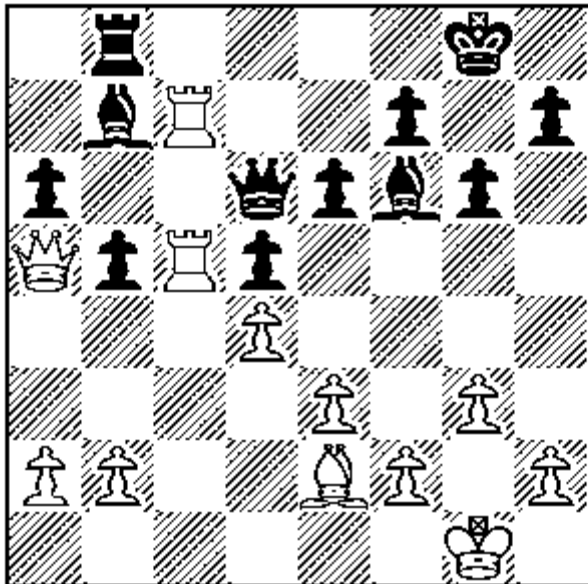
"This preventative move, which opens an escape door for the king, is necessary in most cases when a combination is being contemplated. Choosing the best moment for it is perhaps one of the most difficult decisions in the game, because it requires calm calculation," commented Rubinstein.

As we know, "don't hurry!" was one of Rubinstein's characteristics. This luft is undoubtedly of great benefit to White and makes all future calculations easier.

Admittedly, 22 Nxd8 Bxd8 would not have achieved much; but 22 Nxb8! Rxb8 was advantageous to White, who can make good use of the tempo at his disposal by playing 23 Bxb5! Bd8 (23 ... axb5? 24 Qxb5 just wins) 24 Bd3, remaining with a healthy extra pawn.

On the other hand, after the text, Black is practically in zugzwang; he lacks any good way to prevent the threat of Nxb8 as above (if he takes on c6, he loses the a6-pawn), when White has gained the useful extra move 22 g3.

22 ... Rdc8 23 Nxb8 Rxb8



Exercise (easy): What did Rubinstein play now?

Answer:

24 Bxb5!

Of course; a case of déjà vu.

24 ... Bd8

As before, 24 ... axb5 loses to 25 Qxb5, or indeed 25 Qa7.

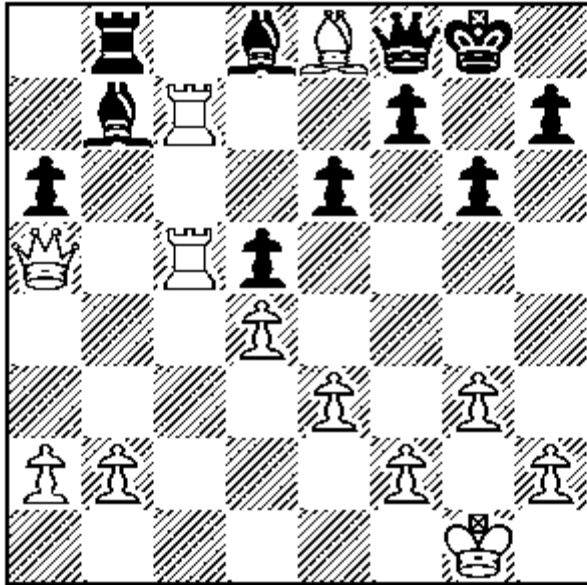
25 Be8!

Question: This is strange, isn't it? Rubinstein declines to win quietly by retreating the bishop, either to d3 or f1.

Answer: Well, this time he wanted more, which is a correct decision. Black is unlikely to relish the long agony of the endgame after 25 ... Bxc7 26 Qxc7 Qxc7 27 Rxc7 Rxe8 28 Rxb7, since he would have no realistic chances of saving the game against Rubinstein.

25 ... Qf8?!

Objectively, this is no better than the depressing endgame above.



Exercise: What had Rubinstein planned here?

Answer:

26 Rxb7!

“This is not really a sacrifice but an exchange of the queen for a mass of material that exceeds the value of that piece,” commented Rubinstein. Another solution was 26 Bxf7+ Qxf7 27 Rxf7 Bxa5 28 Rxb7 Rxb7 29 Rxa5, this time with two extra pawns in the rook ending.

26 ... Bxa5 27 Rxb8

With the threat of 28 Bxf7+ etc.

27 ... Qd6 28 Rb7

Black’s queen is no match for the white rooks, given the vulnerability of his king. The decisive material advantage mentioned by Rubinstein is almost superfluous.

28 ... Bb6 29 Rc6 Qb4 30 Bxf7+ 1-0

The black king cannot be defended; for example, 30 ... Kf8 31 Bxe6 Qe1+ 32 Kg2 Bd8 33 Rc8 Qa5 34 b4 and wins.

“One of my favourite games”

... is what Rubinstein himself said about this game, which features many artistic touches.

He was not alone in prizing it:

“A pearl of attacking chess.” – Tartakower.

“Rubinstein’s style in finishing this game is truly artistic.” – Alekhine.

These are proofs of the admiration shown towards this magnificent game, in which Rubinstein overcomes his opponent only after an intense struggle and finishes with an artistic attack, in which the pawns play a major role.

Game 8

G.A.Thomas-A.Rubinstein

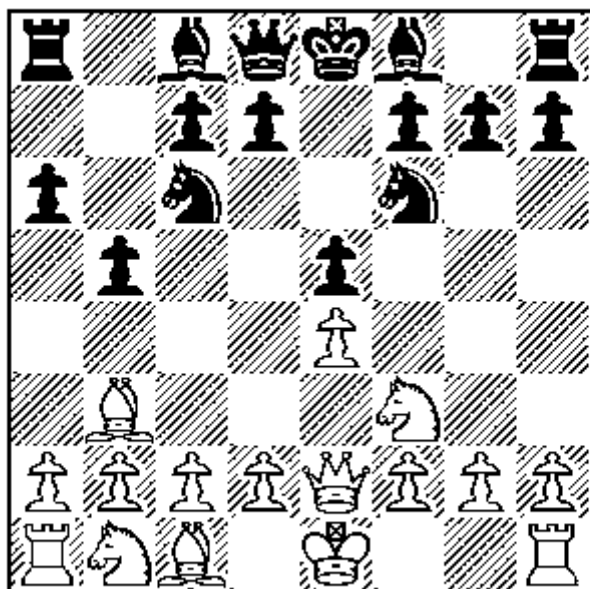
Hastings 1922

Ruy Lopez [C77]

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 Qe2

The so-called Worrall Attack; White defends e4 and prevents the Open Variation of the Ruy Lopez (5 0-0 Nxe4). One of the ideas is to take advantage of the fact that the d1-square is free and prepare d2-d4 with c2-c3 and Rd1.

5 ... b5 6 Bb3



Exercise: How should Black complete his development?

Answer:

6 ... Bc5

The main question is how to develop the f8-bishop, whether inside the pawn chain or outside. It is impossible to know which is better. Rubinstein explained his decision thus: “this manoeuvre is a good method to equalize the game, according to Alekhine. On the other hand, Grünfeld says that it is safer to play 6 ... Be7. For my part, I prefer to risk something.”

One might add that another great expert in the Ruy Lopez, Paul Keres, also preferred to put the bishop on e7, after 6 ... d6.

In any case, Rubinstein’s comment appears to provide confirmation for Reuben Fine’s remark that the First World War altered Rubinstein’s personality, and in respect of his chess he wrote: “Curiously, this was paralleled by an increasing aggressiveness in his chess style ...”

7 c3

The alternative is 7 a4 which, according to Rubinstein, practically forces 7 ... Rb8, when White gains control of the a-file after 8 axb5 axb5.

Curiously, this was both what Rubinstein recommended in his notes to the present game, and precisely the continuation of a later game between the same two players: 9 Nc3 (Alekhine preferred not to commit the knight yet, opting for 9 d3 and 10 Be3 in a game against Duras at St Petersburg 1914) 9 ... 0-0 10 0-0 (10 Nxb5 is weak, because of 10 ... d5!) 10 ...

b4 11 Nd5 d6 12 h3 Nxd5 13 Bxd5 and here Rubinstein, instead of contenting himself with equality after 13 ... Nd4, started activity on the kingside with 13 ... Ne7 14 Bc4 Ng6 15 d3 Qf6! 16 Nh2 (16 Bg5 is also answered by 16 ... Nf4) 16 ... Nf4 17 Qf3 g5 18 Be3 and now he grasped the chance to launch an attack with the unclear pawn sacrifice 18 ... h5!? 19 Bxf4 gxf4 20 Qxh5 Kg7 21 Nf3 Rh8 22 Qg5+ Qg6, reaching an endgame in which the g-file and the bishop pair provided some compensation for the pawn, G.A.Thomas-A.Rubinstein, Carlsbad 1923; Black won in 51 moves.

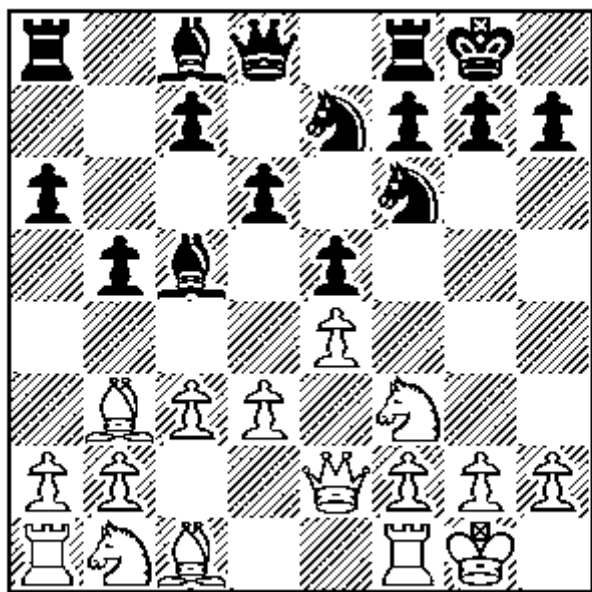
7 ... 0-0 8 0-0 d6 9 d3

After 9 ... Bg4 10 Be3 Qe7 11 Nbd2 Nd8?! (“indicating a certain nervousness on Black’s part,” commented Tartakower) 12 h3 Bh5 13 Bxc5 dxc5 14 Qe3 Qd6 15 Nh4, White seized the initiative and went on to win, G.A.Thomas-R.Spielmann, Carlsbad 1923.

Rubinstein had several alternatives here. He could, for example, play the prophylactic 9 ... Bb6, anticipating an eventual d3-d4; or 9 ... Qe7, preparing 10 ... Be6; or even the immediate 9 ... Be6. But in line with his statement “I prefer to risk something”, he opted for a more aggressive continuation.

9 ... Ne7

“Making the kingside the battle front,” wrote Rubinstein, and he awarded this move an exclamation mark.



Exercise: Can you show why the exclamation mark is perhaps overoptimistic?

Answer:

10 Bg5

Here Rubinstein recommended 10 Be3, followed by 11 Nbd2. Instead, 10 d4! looks rather better, exploiting the fact that the retreat of the knight to e7 has handed over control of both the d4- and e5-squares to White, so that Black is now forced to give up the centre with 10 ... exd4.

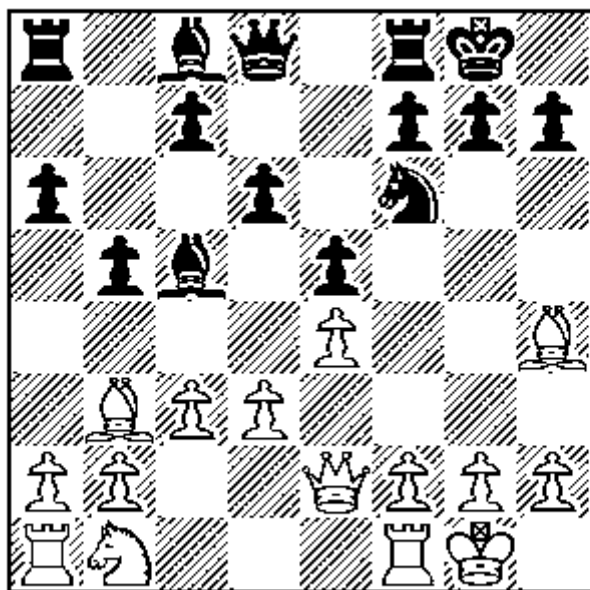
10 ... Ng6 11 Nh4

Now, with e5 defended again, 11 d4 can be answered by 11 ... Bb6.

11 ... Nxd4

Rubinstein plays with a definite plan. 11 ... Nf4 was also interesting, not fearing the loss of a pawn after 12 Bxf4 exf4 13 Qf3?!, since Black could then sharpen the game and exploit the poor coordination of the white pieces with 13 ... d5!; for example, 14 e5?! (not 14 exd5? g5) 14 ... Ng4 15 g3 c6.

12 Bxh4



Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein continued?

Answer:

12 ... h6!

“The signal for the attack” – Tartakower. Black is planning to play ... g7-g5, pushing the h4-bishop out of play for the moment, while hindering White from breaking with f2-f4.

13 Kh1 g5 14 Bg3 Kg7 15 Nd2 Qe7 16 Bc2

The point of this retreat appears to be to enable White to play Nb3, followed by d3-d4, perhaps with b2-b4 first.

Alternatively, 16 Rfe1 deserved consideration, planning Nf1-e3, since this appears to be a better deployment of the knight than on b3; while 16 f3 also looks reasonable, to be followed by Bf2, but is less convincing on account of 16 ... Nh5.

16 ... Bd7

For his part, Rubinstein continues with the development of his inactive pieces. Naturally, the bishop is better placed on d7 than b7, where it would be “biting on granite”.

17 Rfe1

A change of plan; 17 Nb3 Bb6 18 d4 was more consistent, though this would not worry Black, since there is no pressure on his centre and he could continue, for example, 18 ... Rfe8 19 Rfe1 c5 with good play.

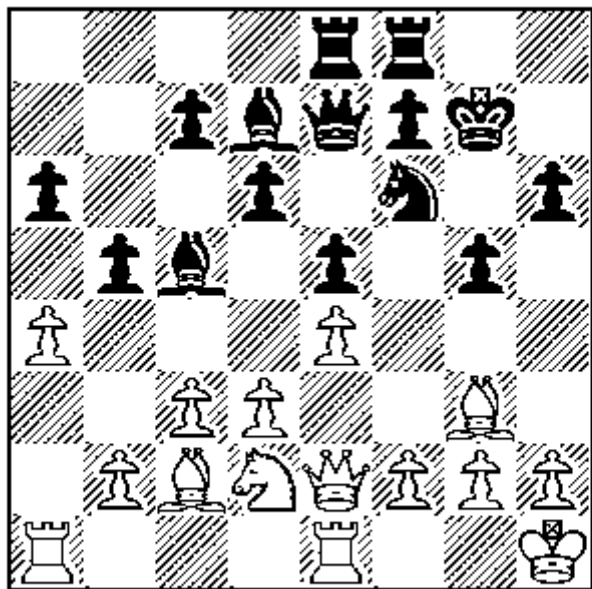
17 ... Rae8 18 a4

This move was criticized by almost all commentators.

Question: Oh yes? Why is that? It looks very logical to me for White to try

to open the a-file, once Black has abandoned it, and try to distract Black from the attack that he's been preparing. So why is this a bad move?

Answer: Perhaps the move is not so bad, but it's not clear whether opening the a-file will be of any benefit to White. As you can see, there are no entry squares, and it's also necessary to assess whether it might in fact be Black who can benefit most from the opening of lines.



Exercise: Black has been clearly preparing his attack on the kingside. How should he continue?

Answer:

18 ... Rh8!

This is better than the hasty 18 ... h5?!, which allows 19 h4! and the h-pawn advance boomerangs after 19 ... Ng4 20 Nf3.

19 axb5 axb5 20 Nf1?!

The idea is good – to go to f5 or d5 – but it comes too late. 20 Nb3 Bb6 21 d4 would offer more counterplay.

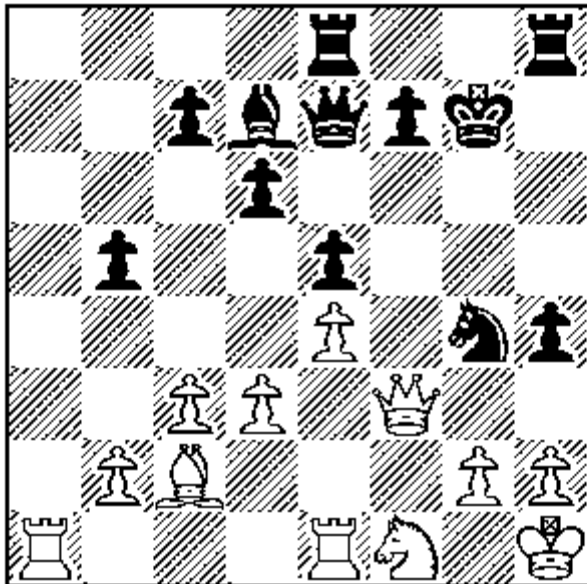
20 ... h5 21 f3

Now, with Nf3 ruled out, 21 h4? Ng4 is uncomfortable for White.

21 ... h4 22 Bf2 Bxf2 23 Qxf2 g4 24 fxg4?!

This facilitates Black's activity. Rubinstein thought it was better to prevent the threat of ... g4-g3 by playing 24 Kg1.

24 ... Nxg4 25 Qf3



Exercise: How does Black continue now?

Answer:

25 ... h3!

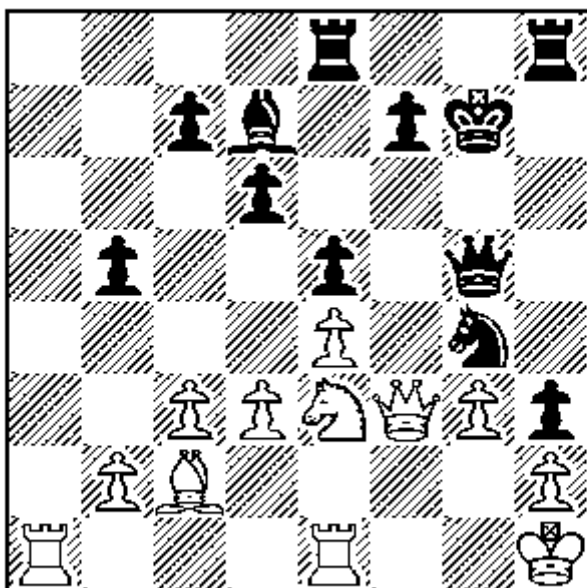
“This pawn creates great pressure against White’s king position.” – Rubinstein.

26 g3

The threat was 26 ... hxg2+ 27 Qxg2 Qh4.

With 26 g3, White acquiesces to the annoying pressure exerted by the h3-pawn, but at least the lines remain closed; 26 gxh3? Rxh3! was clearly worse, in view of 27 Qxh3 Nf2+ etc.

26 ... Qg5 27 Ne3



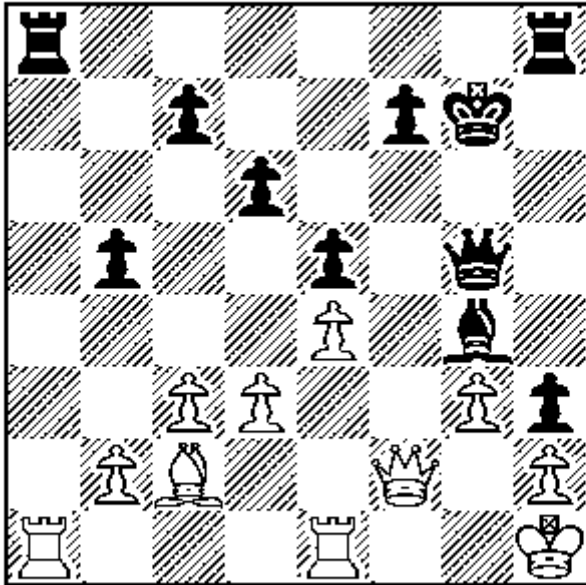
Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein made progress in this position?

Answer:

27 ... Ra8!

Making White regret having played a2-a4 and especially a4xb5; now he has another front to defend.

28 Nxg4 Bxg4 29 Qf2



Exercise: How should Black proceed?

29 ... Rxa1

This was played with a concrete idea in mind, that of eliminating a defender, complicating the defence of White's back rank and kingside.

Answer: However, 29 ... Rh6!! was much stronger, when there is no good defence against 30 ... Rf6, followed by ... Bf3+. If 30 Rf1, Black plays 30 ... Rf6! anyway, while after 30 Rxa8 Rf6 31 Qxf6+ Qxf6, there is no way to defend the white monarch. Note that the black queen also has the d2-square as an invasion point, which rules out 31 Kg1 or 31 Qf1. Black would win by capturing the queen and playing 32 ... Qd2.

30 Rxa1

Exercise: What was Rubinstein's idea?

Answer:

30 ... Ra8

The exchange of a pair of rooks has left White's back rank vulnerable, enabling Rubinstein to seize control of the a-file, since 31 Rxa8 loses to 31 ... Qc1+ and mates, while 31 Qe1 can be met by 31 ... Qe3!, among other things.

However, since the control of the a-file on its own is not a great asset in this position, it might have been better to play the less aesthetic but perhaps more effective 30 ... Rf8, preparing ... f7-f5; Rubinstein prefers to postpone this pawn break, in the hope of carrying it out under more favourable conditions.

31 Rb1?!

There is no need to protect b2. The immediate 31 Rf1 was preferable.

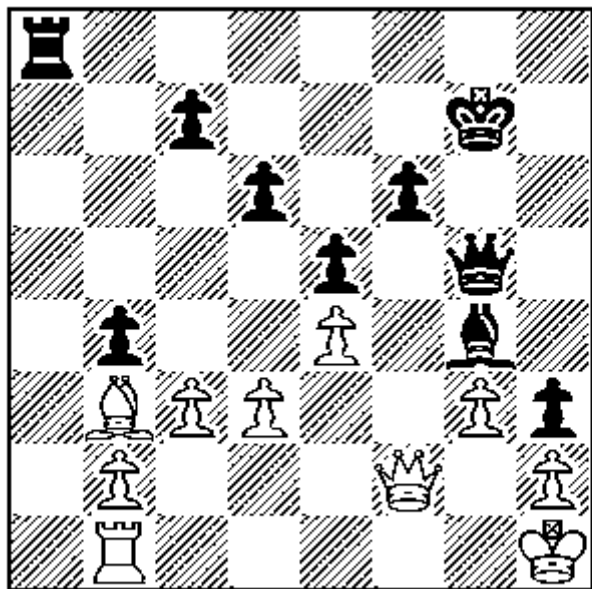
31 ... b4

Once again, before making the f-pawn break, Rubinstein prefers to create more targets on the queenside. 31 ... f5 was the obvious alternative.

32 Bb3

If 32 cxb4, Black would have played 32 ... Rb8, regaining the pawn and leaving the white pawn structure more damaged.

32 ... f6



33 c4?!

With this ugly move, which severely restricts his own bishop, White prepares to play 34 Bd1, keeping the queenside closed – but Rubinstein will not allow it.

More tenacious was 33 cxb4 Rb8 34 Bc4 Rxb4 35 b3. Black would then look to break with ... f6-f5 after due preparation; for example, ... Rb8, ... c7-c5, and perhaps ... Rf8 etc.

Exercise: Why didn't White play the more active 33 Bd5 - ?

Answer: Because this would allow 33 ... bxc3!! 34 Bxa8 (or 34 bxc3 Ra3) 34 ... c2 35 Qxc2 Qe3 with forced mate; for example 36 Rf1 Bf3+ 37 Rxf3 Qe1+ etc.

Exercise: How should Black proceed after 33 c4 - ?

Answer:

33 ... f5

Black finally plays this move, since there is no longer any other way to make progress. “After (with his last few moves) probing the possibilities of invasion on the queenside, Black now breaks decisively in the centre.” – Tartakower.

34 Kg1

A passive move, albeit one that reduces the danger of mate on the back rank. White might have tried 34 c5, but Black retains the advantage after, for example, 34 ... fxe4 35 Qf7+ Kh8 36 dxe4 Qh6! 37 Rf1 Be2! 38 Re1 Rf8 39 Qe7 Bf3+ 40 Kg1 Bxe4. Here we can in fact see how much White's freedom is restricted by the weakness of his back rank.

34 ... fxe4 35 Rf1

White's counterplay will be insufficient, but there is nothing better. If 35 dxe4, Black wins with 35 ... Rf8 36 Qe1 Rf3 (attacking the bishop; another way is 36 ... Bf3 37 Bc2 Bg2 38 Qe2 Rf3 39 Re1 Rxd3! 40 gxf3 Qxf3, leading to mate, as pointed out by Tartakower) 37 Bd1 Re3 38 Qf2 Rxe4 and so on.

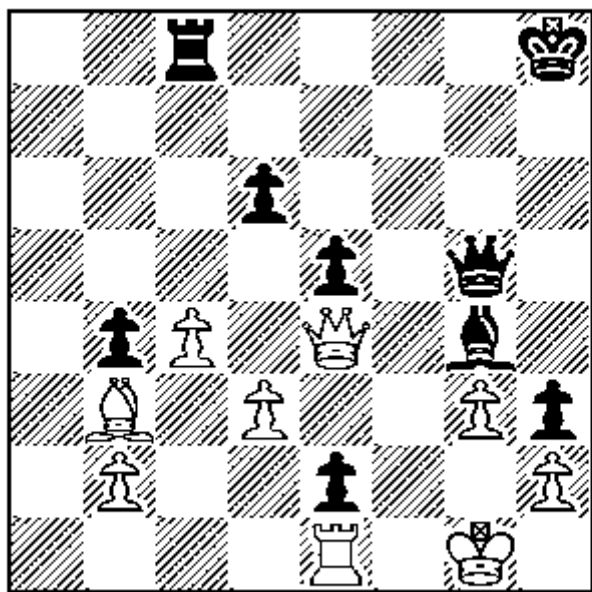
35 ... e3

Of course, since "White's dangerous-looking attack consists of ... one single check." – Tartakower.

36 Qf7+ Kh8 37 Qd5 c6!

There are several roads to victory now – almost any rook move wins, but Rubinstein seeks the most energetic and the most artistic way.

38 Qxc6 Rc8 39 Qe4 e2 40 Re1



40 ... d5!

This either opens the c-file for the black rook or else deflects the white queen from guarding e3. Once again it was a question of taste; 40 ... Qd2 also wins, as does 40 ... Rf8 41 Rxe2 Qf6 etc.

41 cxd5

Or 41 Qxd5 Qe3+ 43 Kh1 Bf3+ and wins.

41 ... Rc1 0-1

A typical, very strong retreat by Rubinstein

Tarrasch treats the opening optimistically, postponing the development of his queenside. His set-up is not clearly a bad one, but it reduces his margin for error and it only requires a single inaccuracy on Tarrasch's part for Rubinstein to seize the initiative, and with a few precise moves he sets in motion a devastating attack.

Note the 21st move, which is one of Rubinstein's typical retreats to his back rank and has a decisive effect on the struggle.

Game 9

A.Rubinstein-S.Tarrasch

Hastings 1922

Dutch Defence [A84]

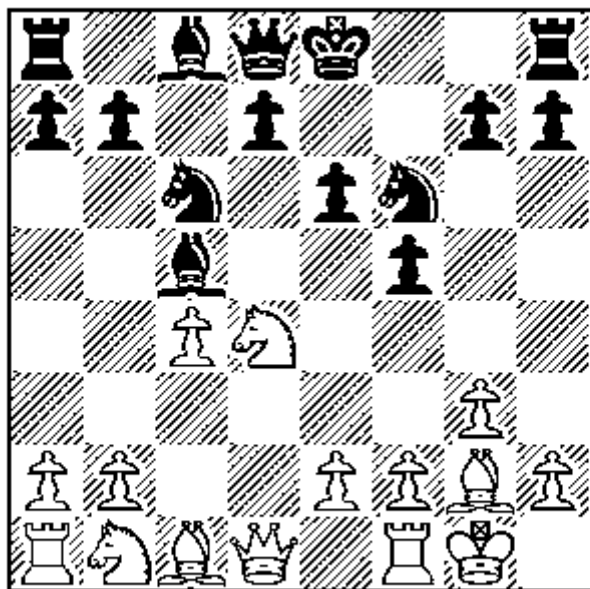
1 d4 e6 2 c4 f5 3 g3 c5

Tarrasch is trying to avoid standard positions, but this is rather risky as Black. The play becomes open and the previous advance of his f-pawn has left holes in this position.

4 Nf3

White is happy to allow ... c5xd4. Instead, 4 d5 would lead to a closed game, where Black's weaknesses would be less exposed.

4 ... cxd4 5 Nxd4 Nf6 6 Bg2 Nc6 7 0-0 Bc5



Exercise: What should White do about the attacked knight?

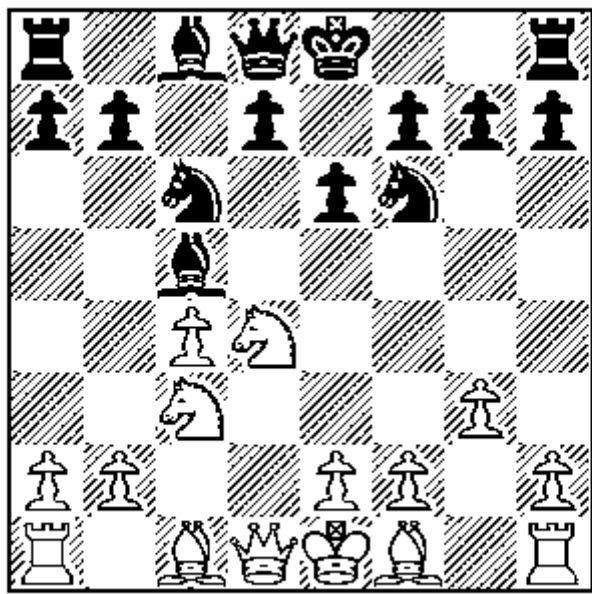
Answer:

8 e3!

Question: Hmm, in the English Opening the typical response in similar positions is to retreat the knight with tempo by playing 8 Nb3. Is that not best here as well?

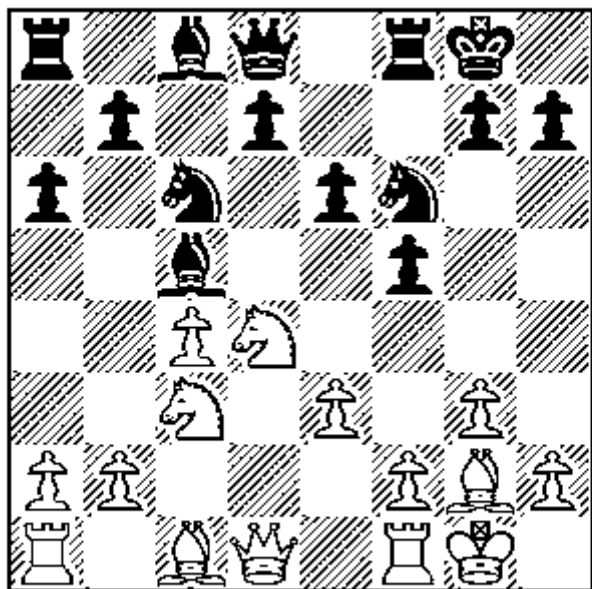
Answer: The knight can of course retreat; it's a reasonable option. But Rubinstein considers that in this position, with Black having played ... f7-f5, there is no need to retreat the knight from the centre.

Let's take a quick look at an example of the sort of English position you were referring to: W.Browne-L.Ljubojevic, Milan 1975, went 1 c4 Nf6 2 Nc3 c5 3 Nf3 e6 4 d4 cxd4 5 Nxd4 Nc6 6 g3 Bc5.



Here 7 Nb3 is indeed considered best; whereas 7 e3 0-0 8 Bg2 d5! gave Black a good Tarrasch Defence position. After 9 cxd5 exd5 10 0-0, we can see another difference from our main game, since Ljubojevic now played 10 ... Bg4 and stood well after 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 Qc2 Qc8 13 Bd2 Bh3. In the subsequent struggle Black even gained the advantage, though the result was a draw in 57 moves.

8 ... 0-0 9 Nc3 a6



Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein continued his development?

Answer:

10 a3

Seeking to develop the c1-bishop, with a greater gain of space than the natural 10 b3.

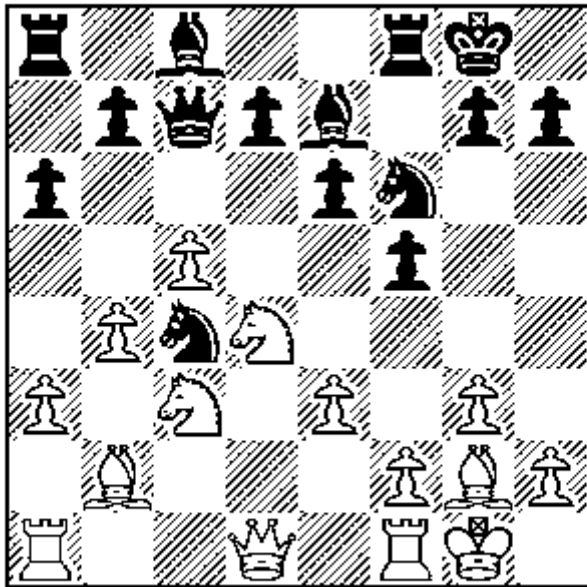
10 ... Qc7

Reminding White that playing b2-b4, instead of b2-b3, leaves the c4-pawn more vulnerable.

11 b4 Be7 12 Bb2 Ne5

Black tries to exploit the weakness of the c4-square, although it should not be forgotten that his development is lagging. In view of that, it would have been more cautious to play 12 ... d6, when White should choose between 13 Rc1, setting up the positional threat of Nd5, and the more concrete 13 e4 as the main options.

13 c5 Nc4



Exercise: Black has carried out his plan. What did Rubinstein have in mind?

Answer:

14 Nxf5!

“Very pretty and rather deep, for Black temporarily wins a pawn, but at the expense of jeopardizing his king.” – Alekhine.

Black’s idea would be justified after, for example, 14 Bc1?! Kh8 15 Qe2 d5!.

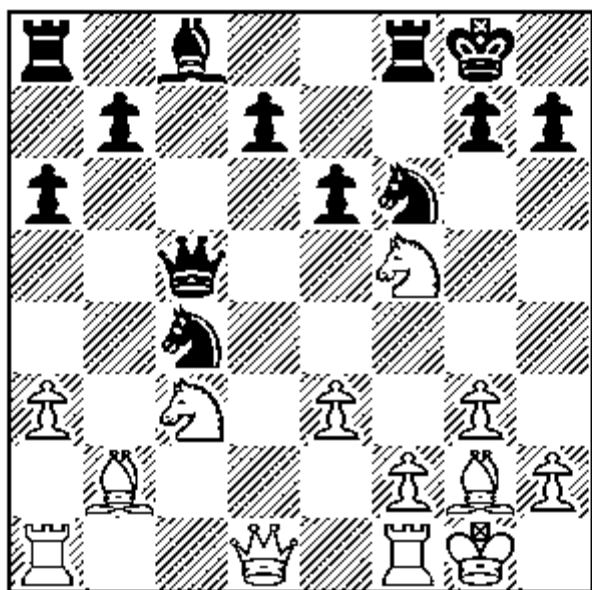
14 ... Bxc5

So Black wins a pawn, as Alekhine said. It would be worse to play 14 ... exf5 15 Qb3 d5 16 Nxd5 Nxd5 17 Bxd5+ or 14 ... Nxb2 15 Nxe7+ Kf7 16 Qe2, and White has a decisive material advantage in both cases.

15 bxc5 Qxc5

Not 15 ... exf5? 16 Bd5+ and wins; while if 15 ... Nxb2, White might play, among other

things, 16 Qd6 Qxd6 17 Nxd6, when the “Catalan bishop” rakes Black’s queenside, which is riddled with weaknesses, and 17 ... Ne8 (or 17 ... Nd3 18 Na4) 18 Nxe8 Rxe8 19 Ne4 would bring no relief.



Exercise: Which of his two attacked pieces should White retain?

Answer:

16 Nh6+

Rubinstein keeps the bishop, and does so in a way that weakens Black’s kingside.

The alternative was 16 Ne4 Qxf5 17 Nxf6+ gxf6 18 Bc3, keeping the bishop active; in that case Black would remain behind in development, but at least his king would be somewhat better protected than in the game.

16 ... gxh6 17 Bc1

Question: This looks as if it allows Black some relief. The strong knight on c4 has forced the bishop to retreat and impedes the mobilization of the white pieces. Are you sure that this line was better than 16 Ne4 - ?

Answer: Yes; White’s compensation for the pawn is not decisive, but we shouldn’t forget that the black position is weak, both on the kingside and the queenside, which is still undeveloped. Naturally, White has plans to improve his potentially very strong unopposed bishop; we should note that from its seemingly passive position, the bishop can become active on the c1-h6 diagonal.

17 ... Qe5?

Too optimistic; 17 ... d6 was necessary, to which White could have responded with 18 e4.

18 Qd3 Qc5

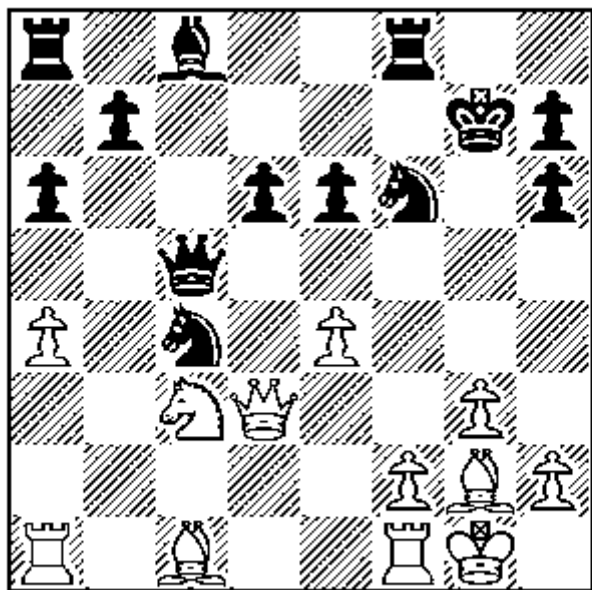
A sad retreat, but 18 ... d5? wasn’t appropriate on account of 19 e4!. Now White slowly improves his position.

19 a4

In no hurry; White’s compensation is not the sort that requires immediate action, such as

by 19 Na4 Qc7 20 e4, which was also interesting. As we shall see, Rubinstein has other plans; he doesn't want to exchange his knight by playing Ne4, or banish it to the edge of the board with Na4.

19 ... d6 20 e4 Kg7



Exercise: After increasing the scope of his pieces with a3-a4 and e3-e4, Rubinstein decides that the moment has come to take more concrete measures. What do you think he played?

Answer:

21 Nd1!

A magnificent retreat.

Question: What? Another passive move and yet you applaud it?

Answer: It's not as passive as it looks, as we shall see.

21 ... Bd7

Exercise: What did Rubinstein have planned?

Answer:

22 Ne3!

This was the key. "The entire white manoeuvre has been aimed at eliminating the black knight, the only enemy piece that is causing White any trouble," wrote Rubinstein.

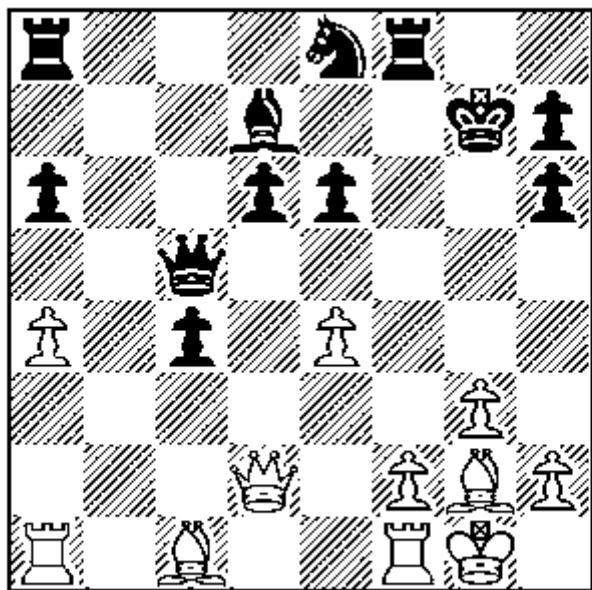
22 ... b5 23 Nxc4 bxc4 24 Qd2

Threatening both 25 Ba3 and 25 Qxh6+. It is truly remarkable how the situation has changed, following the exchange of the c4-knight; suddenly all the weaknesses in Black's position are obvious.

24 ... Ne8?!

Trying to support d6. Black had only a choice between various evils; 24 ... Rac8 offered

the best chance of resistance, when 25 Ba3 could be answered by 25 ... c3; White might just have played 25 Qxh6+ Kg8 26 Ba3, with material equality and a clear advantage.



Exercise: There are several tempting continuations.
What do you think Rubinstein played?

Answer:

25 e5!

Bringing the g2-bishop to life; Black can't close the long diagonal with 25 ... d5 because of 26 Qxh6+ Kg8 27 Ba3 and wins. 25 Qxh6+ Kg8 26 e5! was equally strong.

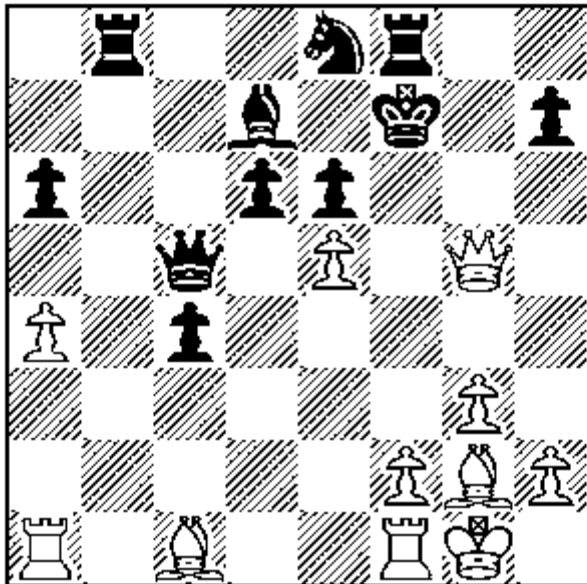
22 ... Rb8

Of course not 25 ... Qxe5, on account of 26 Bb2.

26 Qxh6+ Kg8 27 Qg5+!

Even better than 27 exd6. The check is very unpleasant: if 27 ... Kh8 then 28 Qe7 wins, while 27 ... Ng7 loses to 28 Ba3.

27 ... Kf7



Exercise: With the black king now exposed on f7, White has numerous interesting options. What do you think Rubinstein played?

Answer:

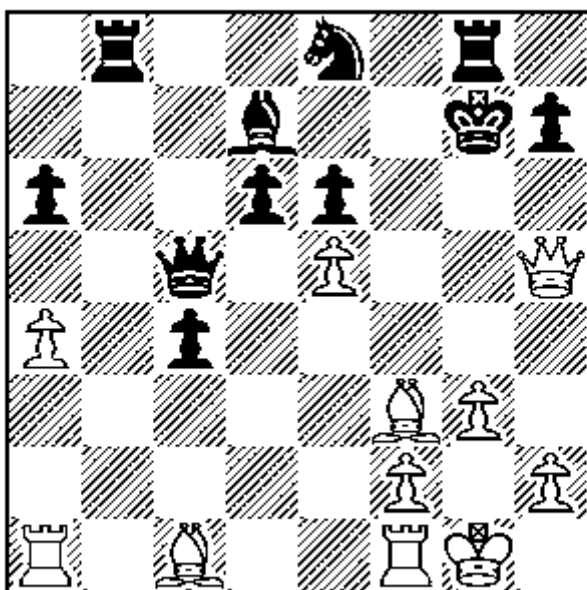
28 Bf3!

With the threat of 29 Bh5 mate; White could play other moves first with the same idea, but this is the most direct.

28 ... Rg8

Instead, 28 ... Ng7 29 Ba3 Qxe5 30 Qxe5 dxe5 31 Bxf8+ Kxf8 32 Rfc1 was hopeless, as the c4-pawn is doomed.

29 Qh5+ Kg7



Exercise: There are several winning moves here; once again, which is most direct?

Answer:

30 Be4!

One of the benefits of playing 25 e5!.

30 ... Qxe5

Defending h7 with 30 ... Rh8 is futile: White mates after 31 Bh6+ Kg8 32 Qg5+ Kf7 33 Qf4+ etc.

31 Qxh7+ Kf8

No better is 31 ... Kf6 due to 32 Qxg8 Qxe4 33 Bg5+ Kf5 34 Qh7+, winning the queen.

32 Qxd7 Qxe4 33 Bh6+ 1-0

If 33 ... Ng7, then 34 Bxg7+ Rxd7 35 Qxd6+, followed by Qxb8, is one way to win.

“A game played with 100 horse-power, mentally speaking!”

This was not the only praise that Tartakower lavished on Black's play in this game. Rubinstein conducts all its phases with great energy. After a positional stage in which he neutralizes the opponent's pair of bishops, he quickly moves on to the offensive and, in Tartakower's words, “lands some tremendous blows on the adversary”, before switching the attack to the white monarch and concluding the struggle with powerful shots.

Game 10

S.Tarrasch-A.Rubinstein

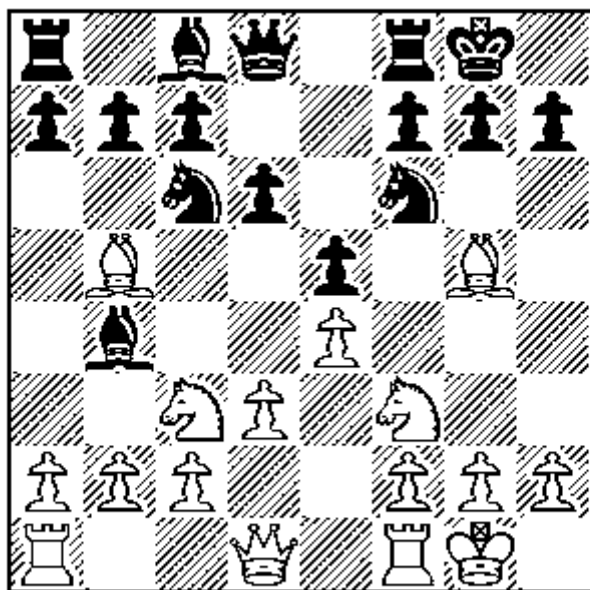
Mährisch Ostrau 1923

Four Knights Game [C49]

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bb5 Bb4

Throughout his career Rubinstein alternated between 4 ... Nd4, his own great contribution to the theory of the Four Knights, and the main line with 4 ... Bb4.

5 0-0 0-0 6 d3 d6 7 Bg5



7 ... Bxc3

These days 7 ... Ne7 is more popular, not fearing the exchange on f6.

Question: We're in a symmetrical variation and I know that it's often risky for Black to keep "copying" White's moves, but wasn't it possible to maintain the symmetry a bit longer with 7 ... Bg4 - ?

Answer: Copying is even riskier when there are pins involved. Black's results have been depressing after 8 Nd5 Nd4 9 Nxb4 Nxb5 10 Nd5 Nd4. Here 11 Qd2 is playable, when 11 ... Qd7?, as played by one of Capablanca's opponents in a 1918 New York simultaneous display, lost after 12 Bxf6 Bxf3 13 Ne7+ Kh8 14 Bxg7+ Kxg7 15 Qg5+ Kh8 16 Qf6 mate.

It's better to play 11 ... Nxf3+ and if 12 gxf3 Bxf3 13 h3! then 13 ... Nxe4 (instead, 13 ... c6? 14 Nxf6+ gxf6 15 Bh4 Kh8 16 Kh2 Rg8 17 Rg1 Rg6 18 Qe3 Bh5 19 f4 is difficult for Black, according to analysis by Euwe, as there is no good defence against f4-f5) 14 dxe4 f6, when Black obtains three pawns for the piece, although White has the advantage anyway.

8 bxc3 Qe7

The most popular move, preparing to dislodge the g5-bishop. 8 ... Ne7 is also played here, while 8 ... h6 9 Bh4 Bg4 is another possibility.

9 Re1 Nd8 10 d4 Bg4

Rubinstein abandoned the immediate 10 ... Ne6 after losing to Spielmann at Carlsbad 1911. However, when annotating his win against Wolf (which we shall see later), Rubinstein wrote that "the strongest move is the original idea 10 ... Ne6."

The text move comes from Capablanca, the point being to play ... Ne6 without leaving the bishop passive on c8. Nevertheless, 10 ... Ne6 remains the main line.

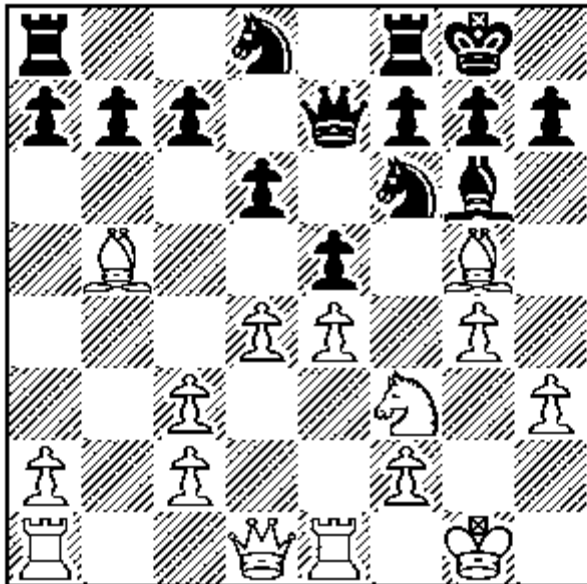
11 h3!

Forcing the bishop to come to a decision. White's play was less incisive in J.Bernstein-J.R.Capablanca, New York 1916, which continued 11 Bf1 Ne6 12 Bc1?! (12 Bh4 is better, not fearing 12 ... Bxf3?!, since after 13 Qxf3! exd4 14 e5! dxe5 15 Rxe5, the game opens up to White's benefit; 12 ... c5 is preferable) 12 ... Bxf3! 13 gxf3?! (with the bishop on c1, 13 Qxf3 is not as strong, but it still offered greater resistance, since the knights now prove superior to the bishops, largely owing to the weaknesses in White's pawn structure) 13 ... Nh5 14 Bh3 Nh4! 15 Bg4 h5 16 Bxe6 fxe6! 17 Kh1 Nh3 18 Be3 Qh4 19 Qe2 Rf7 and Black had a decisive advantage.

11 ... Bh5

Although 11 ... Bxf3 wasn't Capablanca's intention, it seems playable; for example, 12 Qxf3 Ne6, with ... c7-c5 on the agenda if White plays 13 Be3.

12 g4 Bg6

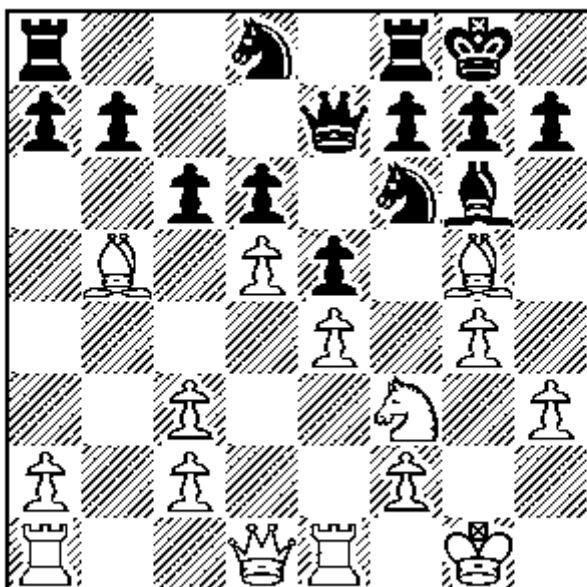


13 d5

We'll look at 13 Nh4 h6 14 Nxg6 in Supplementary Game 10.1. In Tartakower's opinion, 14 Bc4 was more dangerous, as played in J.Drewitt-A.Rubinstein, Hastings 1922/23. Although Rubinstein lost this game, it was not because of the opening: 14 ... Ne6! (it seems there is no need to retreat with 14 ... Bh7) 15 Nxg6 fxg6 16 f4 Kh8 (here Keres suggested an elegant way to relieve the pressure: 16 ... hxg5 17 f5 gxf5 18 gxf5 g6! 19 Bxe6+ Kg7 with an excellent position) 17 Bxf6 Qxf6 18 Bxe6 Qxe6 19 d5 Qf6 20 f5 Qh4 21 Qf3 and here Black could have taken the initiative with 21 ... gxf5!, followed by 22 ... g6.

13 Bh4 is another possibility; in that case Black can solve his problems with a temporary pawn sacrifice: 13 ... Ne6 14 dxe5 dxe5 15 Nxe5 Qc5 16 Nxg6 hxg6.

13 ... c6



14 Bc4?

White would like to recapture on d5 with a piece, but this idea will prove unsuccessful. 14 Bd3 is better, intending c3-c4 next; then it's a mistake to play 14 ... cxd5?! 15 exd5, since this opens the e-file and allows White to play Nd4, followed by f2-f4. B.Spasky-S.Gligoric,

Sarajevo 1986, continued 15 ... e4?! 16 Bxe4! Bxe4 17 Qd4 Ne6 18 Qxe4, regaining the piece with advantage.

In this game it was clear that the knight on d8 is very badly placed and takes no part in the struggle. It's better not to open the game until the knight's position is improved, so ... b7-b6 is preferable, intending ... Nb7-c5, preceded by ... Rc8 and perhaps ... h7-h6.

Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein responded to 14 Bc4 - ?

Answer:

14 ... Rc8!

Threatening 15 ... cxd5 16 Bxd5 Rxc3.

15 dxc6

A concession; but defending c3 with 15 Qd2 is not an improvement, since after 15 ... cxd5 16 Bxd5 Ne6, the white position is full of weaknesses.

Equally unconvincing is 15 Qe2 b5!? (or 15 ... h6 first) 16 Bb3 cxd5 17 exd5 (or 17 Bxd5 Rxc3) 17 ... h6! (instead of 17 ... Rxc3 18 Bd2, followed by 19 Qxb5) 18 Bxf6 (if 18 Bh4 then 18 ... Rxc3, while 18 Bd2 allows 18 ... Ne4) 18 ... Qxf6 and once again the white position is over-extended with many weak points.

15 ... bxc6

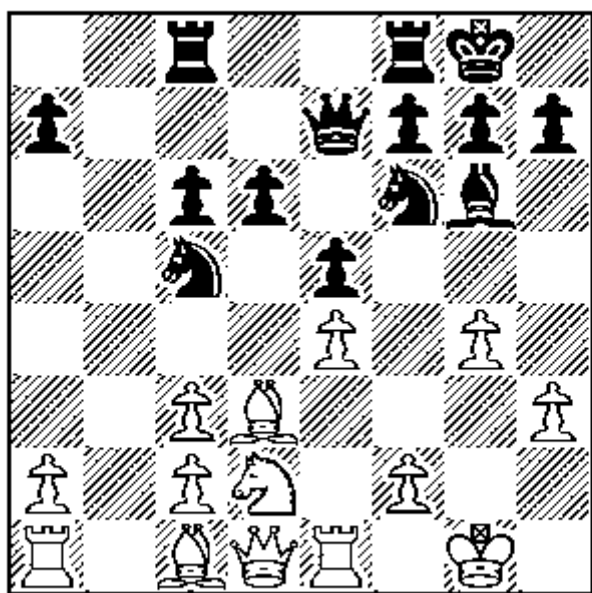
Controlling d5, although 15 ... Rxc6 followed by ... Ne6 also deserved consideration, similar to the line in the previous note.

16 Bd3 Ne6 17 Bc1

The bishop must keep control of f4.

17 ... Nc5 18 Nd2

Defending the attacked pawn; this is passive, but the tactics don't work for White after 18 Ba3? Nfxe4 19 Bxe4 Nxe4 20 Rxe4 Bxe4 21 Bxd6 Qd8 22 Bxf8 Qxd1+ 23 Rxd1 Bxf3 24 Rd3 e4, as Kmoch pointed out.



Exercise: How did Rubinstein proceed in this position?

Answer:

18 ... h5!

The white bishops are passive, but Black won't be able to make progress without opening the game, so he has to do this in such a way that the white bishops don't become active at the same time. The text move is in accordance with this premise and is successful in weakening White's kingside further.

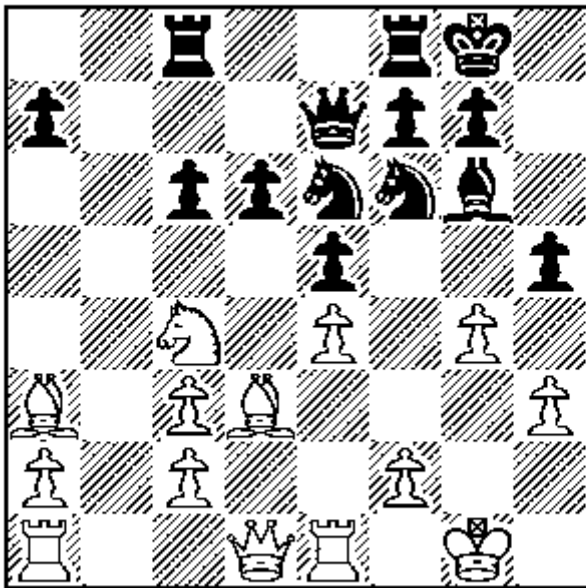
Tartakower explained it as follows: "The bases for the attack – a bishop with a brilliant future, two knights able to manoeuvre and three weak points in the enemy pawn formation – are all in place. Rubinstein skilfully exploits all these factors. In the following stage of the game Black strikes with resounding hammer-blows."

This continuation is more concrete than 18 ... Na4, which would allow 19 c4 or 19 Qf3. Black would still stand well, but not clearly better than in the game continuation.

19 Ba3

Seeking counterplay in the centre; the attempt to keep the kingside closed with 19 g5 fails to 19 ... Nh7 20 Nf3 (or 20 h4 f6 21 Nf3 Qe6) 20 ... Qe6 21 Kg2 f5.

19 ... Ne6 20 Nc4



Exercise: How should Black restrain White's activity?

Answer:

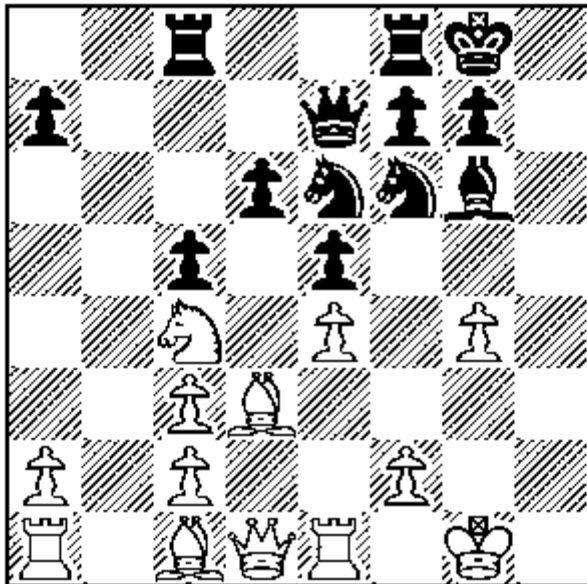
20 ... c5

Closing the a3-f8 diagonal. "Now both white bishops are biting on granite" – Tartakower. Of course not 20 ... Rfd8? 21 Nxe5.

21 Bc1

The f4-square once more requires defence.

21 ... hxg4 22 hxg4



Exercise: How did Rubinstein pursue the idea he began with 18 ... h5 - ?

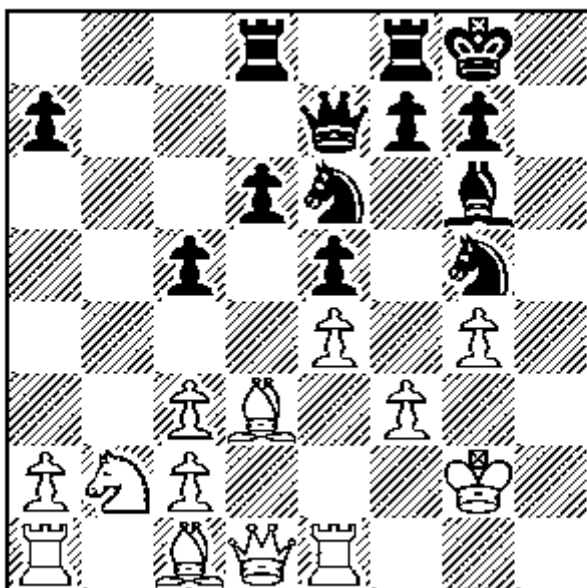
Answer:

22 ... Nh7!

Black may lack a dark-squared bishop, but his queen and knights can exploit the weaknesses on h4, f4 and g5.

23 Kg2 Nhg5 24 f3 Rcd8 25 Nb2?

Seeking to revive his light-squared bishop with Bc4 next. White would have preferred not to make this “ugly” move, decentralizing the knight, but he didn’t want to give up control of f4, and 25 Ne3 would be answered by 25 ... Nf4+.



Exercise: How can Black demonstrate that the text move is worse?

Answer:

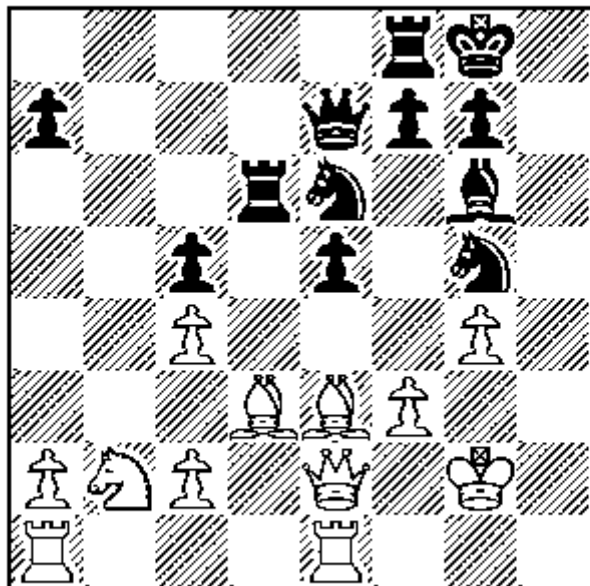
25 ... d5!

Another well-calculated opening of the game.

26 exd5 Rxd5 27 c4 Rd4! 28 Be3

The key point was that 28 Rxe5 was not to be feared, on account of 28 ... Qf6 29 Re1 Nf4+ 30 Bxf4 Rxf4 and the white position collapses.

28 ... Rd6 29 Qe2



Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein continued?

Answer:

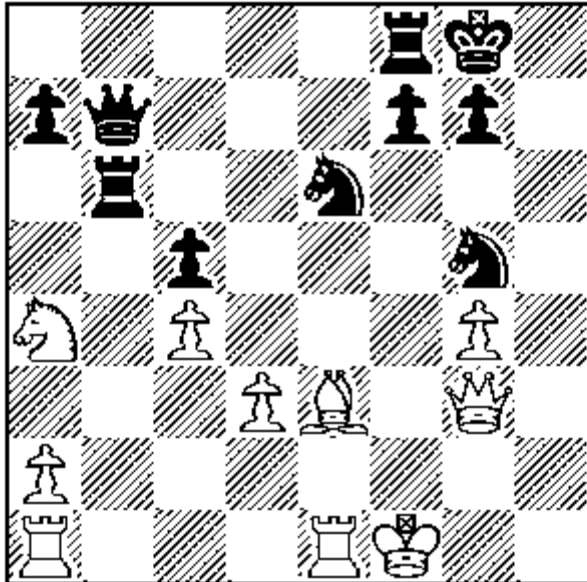
29 ... e4!

Opening up the white king's defences even further. "Some pawns have great destructive power. The collapse of the white position is imminent and total." was Tartakower's graphic description.

30 fxe4 Nxe4 31 Qf3 N4g5 32 Qg3 Qb7+

Taking good advantage of the now open long diagonal.

33 Kf1 Rb6 34 Na4 Bxd3+ 35 cxd3



Exercise: How did Rubinstein administer the “coup de grâce”?

Answer:

35 ... f5!

The rook on f8 joins in the attack and eliminates the last remaining infantryman defending the white king.

36 Bxg5

If 36 Nxb6 then 36 ... f4! wins.

36 ... fxg4+ 37 Kg1

After 37 Ke2, the quickest way to win is 37 ... Nd4+ 38 Kd2 (or 38 Kd1 Rb1+) 38 ... Rb2+! 39 Kc1 Qb4!.

37 ... Nxd4 38 Kd2 Nf3+ 39 Kf2 Nxe1+ 0-1

White resigns; 40 Ke2 (or 40 Kxe1 Qh1+ and ... Qxa1) 40 ... Re8+ 41 Kd2 (or 41 Kf2 Qf7+) 41 ... Nf3+ would be one way to win.

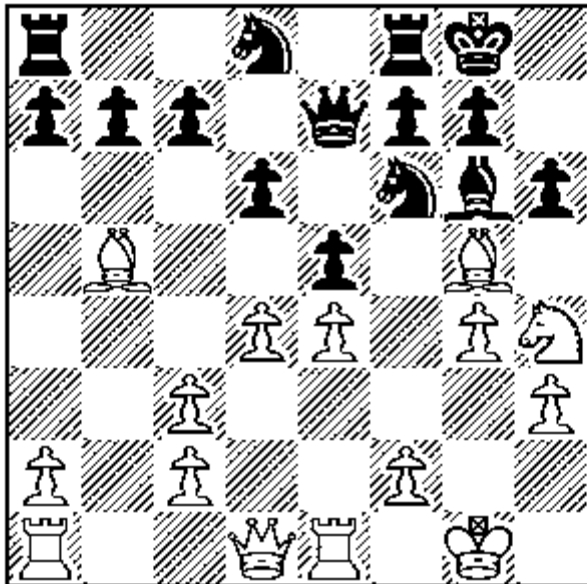
Supplementary Game 10.1

H.Wolf-A.Rubinstein

Teplitz-Schönau 1922

Four Knights Game [C49]

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bb5 Bb4 5 0-0 0-0 6 d3 d6 7 Bg5 Bxc3 8 bxc3 Qe7 9 Re1 Nd8 10 d4 Bg4 11 h3 Bh5 12 g4 Bg6 13 Nh4 13 Nh4 h6



14 Nxg6?!

White succeeds in weakening Black's pawn structure, but the opening of the f-file more than makes up for this, owing to the weaknesses created on the kingside with 12 g4.

Instead, 14 Nf5 Bxf5 15 Bxf6 maintains the balance; and we looked at 14 Bc4 (from Drewitt-Rubinstein) in the notes to the main game.

14 ... fxg6 15 Bc4+ Kh7 16 Bh4

After 16 Bd2, Black can't play 16 ... exd4 17 cxd4 Nxe4? on account of 18 Bd5 Qh4 19 Bxe4 Rxf2 20 Re3!, as indicated by Tarrasch. Instead of opening the position prematurely, Black can proceed in similar fashion to the game with 16 ... g5, or else try to benefit from the unpinning with 16 ... Nd7, intending 17 ... Qh4.

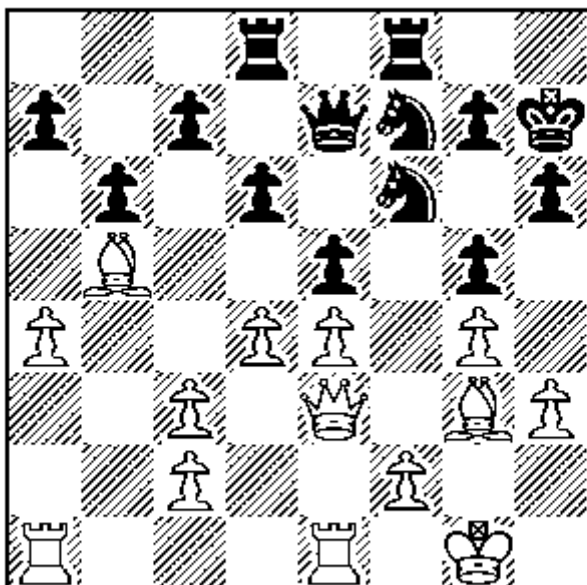
16 ... g5 17 Bg3 Nf7 18 Qf3?!

White is oblivious to the dangers of the position, as will soon become apparent.

18 ... Rae8?! 19 Qe3 b6 20 Bb5?

The previous note applies here too. White's situation will soon be beyond repair.

20 ... Rd8 21 a4



Exercise: How did Rubinstein expose the faults in White's play?

Answer:

21 ... Nh8!

The knight has a promising future from g6.

White didn't want to lose his bishop pair, but in retrospect we can see that it was preferable for him to play 18 Bxf7 Rxf7 19 f3, as suggested by Bogoljubow, or else 20 Bxf7!. For his part, Black might well have played 18 ... Nh8! to retain his knight.

Just as in the main game, Rubinstein will show that his knights are superior to the enemy bishops.

22 a5 Ng6 23 f3 Nf4?!

Another idea, which looks better, was 23 ... Kh8, intending 24 ... Nh7 and only then ... Nf4, enabling Black to recapture on f4 with his rook.

24 Bf1 Kh8 25 Bxf4

Preventing Black from playing 25 ... Nh7, with the plan of 26 ... Rf6, followed by ... Nf8-g6, as pointed out by Razuvaev.

25 ... gxf4 26 Qf2 g5 27 d5?

"This is a horrible mistake." – Gelfand. Here 27 h4! should be played, trying to close the kingside before turning to the centre and the queenside.

27 ... h5!

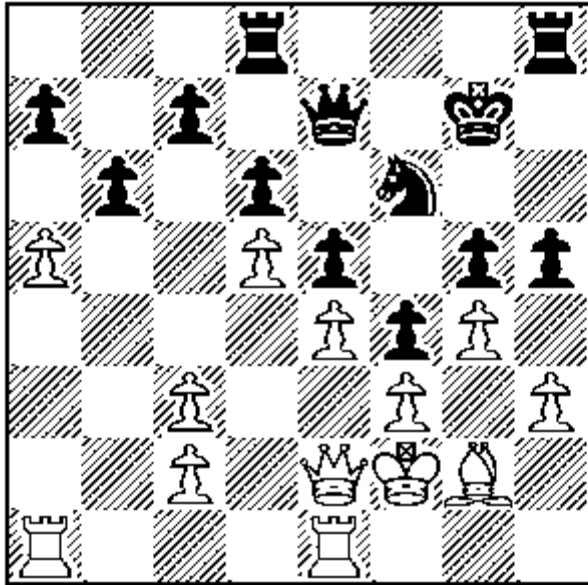
We now have a sort of King's Indian, and one in which Black can be very satisfied with the minor pieces left on the board.

28 Bg2?!

Gelfand prefers 28 Bb5, followed by Kf1-e2, putting the rooks on g2 and g1, and then just waiting; White's position is not easy to crack.

28 ... Kg7 29 Qe2 Rh8 30 Kf2

After 30 Qa6, simply 30 ... Ra8 is one acceptable reply, although Qxa7 is not even a threat yet, owing to 31 Qxa7 Ra8 32 Qb7 Rhb8 33 Qc6 and now either 33 ... bxa5 or 33 ... Rxa5.



Exercise: How did Rubinstein try to make progress in this position?

Answer:

30 ... Ra8!!

“A simultaneous attack on both wings, the most attractive feature of this game,” commented Rubinstein. Black’s initiative on the kingside will not be sufficient to increase his advantage, so he prepares to become active on the queenside too.

31 Reb1 Nd7!

Another unit is transferred to the queenside.

32 Qb5 hxg4 33 hxg4 Nc5 34 Rh1 Rh4

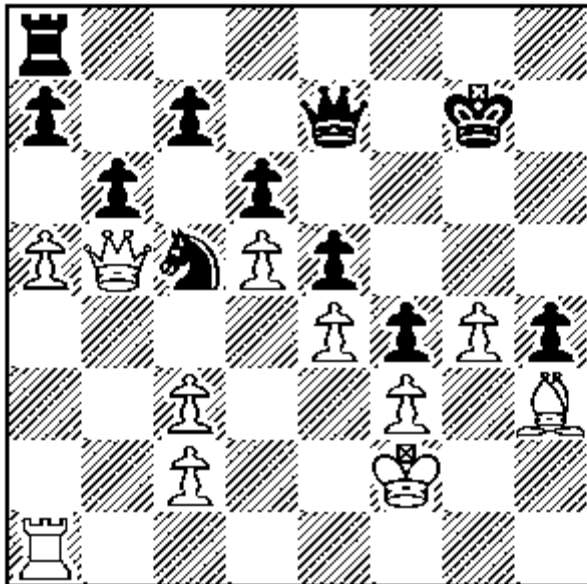
Gelfand criticizes this move, suggesting 34 ... a6 35 Qb4 bxa5 36 Qxa5 Rab8, “when White would have a lot of problems to deal with: the open b- and h-files, the knight’s superiority over the bishop, and the passed a-pawn. It seems likely that Black would win in the long run.”

35 Rxh4 gxh4

Threatening 36 ... h3!, followed by a queen invasion via h4.

36 Bh3?!

Inserting 36 axb6 cxb6 before 37 Bh3 was a better try.



Exercise: And now what? How did Rubinstein make progress here?

Answer:

36 ... bxa5!

Reminding us that, thanks to his superior pawn structure, Black has virtually an extra pawn – and now it's a passed pawn too.

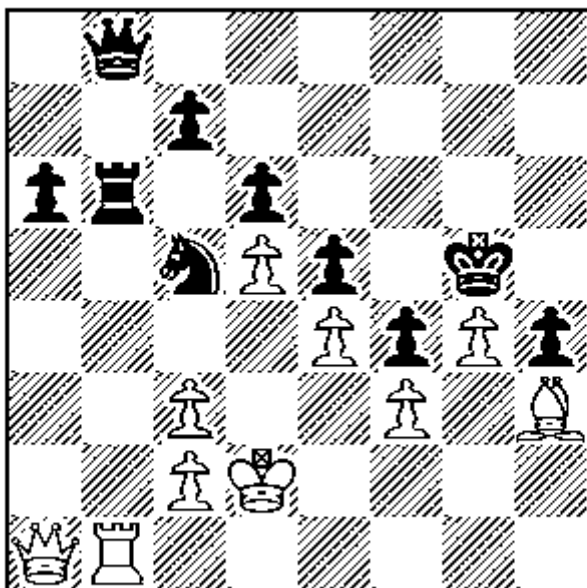
37 Qxa5 Qd8 38 Rb1?

This is probably the losing move, according to Gelfand, who suggests 38 g5 instead.

38 ... Rb8 39 Rb4 a6 40 Ke2 Rb6 41 Qa1 Kg6

The king heads for g5, preventing the white bishop from becoming active after g4-g5 at an opportune moment.

42 Kd2 Kg5 43 Rb1 Qb8



44 Rh1

Conceding the open file is almost equivalent to resigning, but there is no good way to resist. The ending of knight vs. bishop arising after 44 Kc1 Rxb1+ 45 Qxb1 Qxb1+ 46 Kxb1 is lost; for instance, 46 ... Nxe4! (46 ... Na4 also wins) 47 fxe4 f3 48 Kb2 Kf4 49 Kb3 f2 50 Ka4 Kg3 51 Bf1 h3 etc.

44 ... a5

Another way was 44 ... Rb2 45 Kc1 Na4! and wins, as there is no perpetual check after 46 Qa4 Rb1+ 47 Kd2 Rxb1 48 Qd7 Qf8.

45 Bg2

If 45 Qxa5 then 45 ... Rb2! wins.

45 ... a4

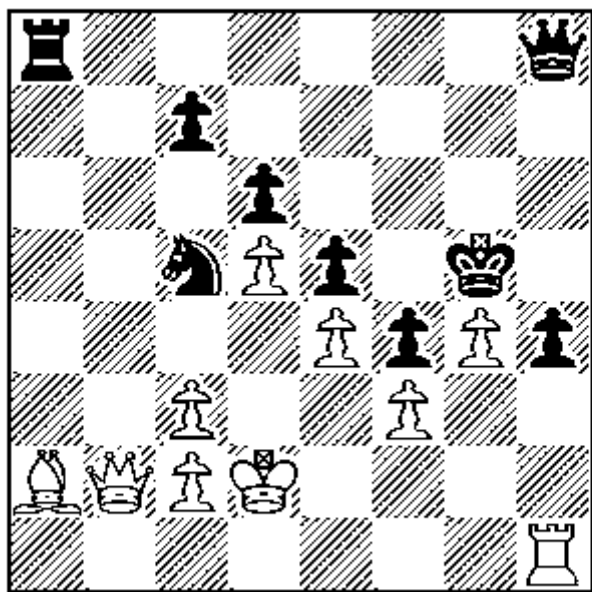
Consistent, although 45 ... Rb2 again was much stronger.

There now follows a phase of 'trial and error' until Rubinstein finds an elegant way to infiltrate the white position. "The struggle is favourable to Black, on account of the constant pressure of the passed a- and h-pawns, which require special attention on White's part," wrote Rubinstein.

46 Qe1 Qh8 47 Qc1 Ra6 48 Bf1 Ra8 49 Bc4 a3 50 Ba2 Qh7 51 Rh3 Nd7 52 Qf1 Qh8 53 Rh1 Nc5 54 Qc1 Rb8!

Threatening ... Rb2 once more.

55 Qxa3 Ra8 56 Qb2



Exercise: By sacrificing his a-pawn, Black has succeeded in tying up the white pieces. How do you think Rubinstein followed up his idea?

Answer:

56 ... h3!

Turning his attention to the kingside again.

57 Bc4 Qh4! 58 Be2 Qf2!

"Two elegant pawn sacrifices, one on each side of board, have allowed the infiltration of the black pieces." – Czerniak.

59 Rxh3 Qe3+ 60 Ke1 Na4 0-1

After 61 Qb5 Nxc3 62 Rh5+ Kg6, there is no defence.

This game received one of the tournament's brilliancy prizes, it is indeed "a brilliant game, despite the handful of blemishes." – Gelfand.

Lessons in Manoeuvring and Exchanging

This could also be classed as a lesson in creating harmony between the pieces, but that is something you almost always find in Rubinstein's games anyway.

After slowly bringing his pieces to their best positions, Rubinstein advances on the kingside. Helped by a timely exchange, his attack accelerates and ends with a devastating mating attack.

Game 11

A. Rubinstein-A. Nimzowitsch

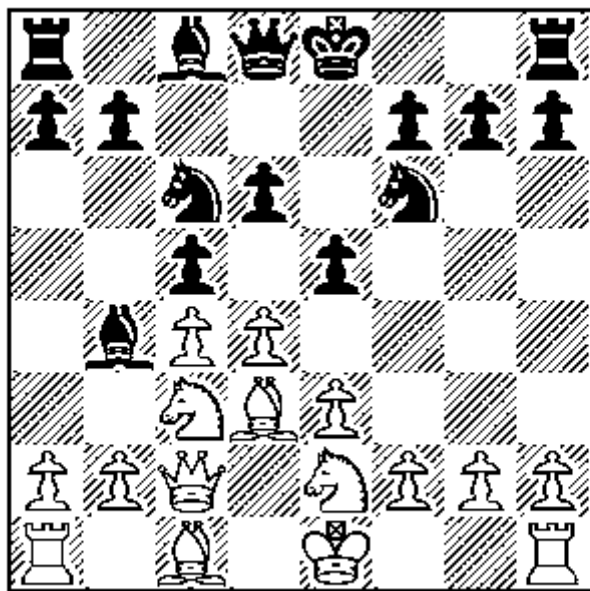
Berlin Tageblatt 1928

Nimzo-Indian Defence [E32]

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 d6 5 e3

After first selecting the Classical Variation, Rubinstein switches back to his own idea: e2-e3. The main alternatives are 5 Bg5 and 5 Nf3.

5 ... c5 6 Bd3 Nc6 7 Ne2 e5



Rubinstein was critical of this move; the plan is to place Black's pawns on squares of the same colour as the bishop that is about to be exchanged.

8 d5

Question: It seems clear that Black is going to exchange his b4-bishop, leaving himself with two knights. So, is it favourable to White to close the centre?

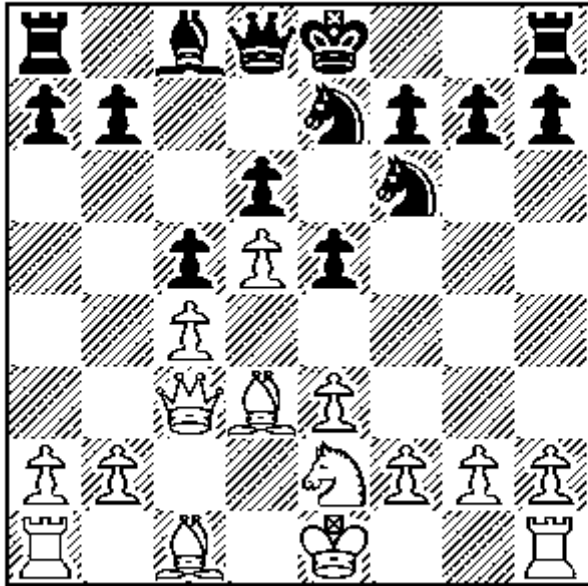
Answer: Let's hand over to Rubinstein, who explains his objections to 7 ... e5: "A closed

centre, which many players often provoke in similar situations, is a strategic error here, because Black proves to be very constricted.”

In other words, Rubinstein considers that the advantage in space is more important than the closed character of the position, since he believes that his bishops will eventually be able to become active.

8 ... Bxc3+ 9 Qxc3 Ne7

The zwischenzug 9 ... e4? fails to 10 Bxe4! Nxe4 11 Qxg7 and Black loses a pawn without compensation.



The position is reminiscent of the Hübner Variation, usually reached via 4 e3 c5 5 Bd3 Nc6 6 Nf3 Bxc3+ 7 bxc3 d6, followed by 8 ... e5, but with the substantial difference that in our game, as you will have noticed, White doesn't have doubled c-pawns.

Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein continued after 9 ... Ne7 - ?

Answer:

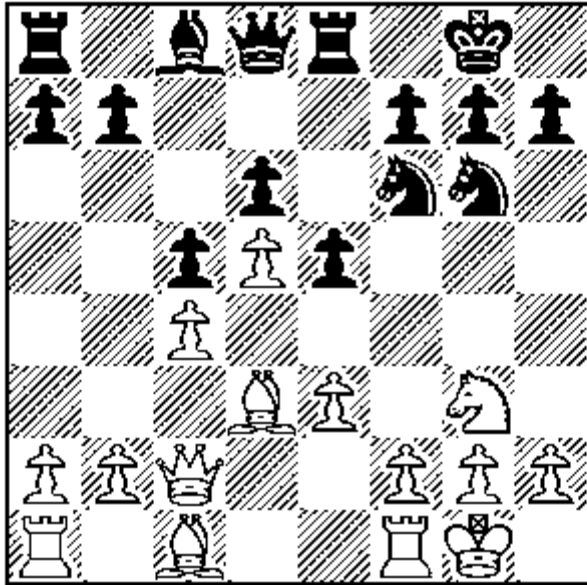
10 Qc2

“It's of capital importance to maintain control of the squares e4 and f5,” wrote Rubinstein. He preferred not to play 10 e4 yet, a move which has been seen in some more recent games, because as we already know, “Rubinstein could sometimes procrastinate, but hurry – never!” – Razuvaev.

10 ... 0-0 11 0-0 Ng6

Rubinstein pointed out that in similar positions Black's counterplay is based on ... f7-f5, whereas here White would be well placed to respond favourably with f2-f4 and e3-e4.

12 Ng3 Re8



13 f3

Question: This is very slow isn't it? I suppose that at some point White wants to play f3-f4, but wasn't f2-f4 playable here, or after 13 Bd2 - ?

Answer: By now the apparent "slowness" of Rubinstein's play should come as no surprise. Of course 13 Bd2 was playable, but he intends to advance the f-pawn further only after suitable preparation.

It's important to point out that this approach is especially advisable in this type of position, where there is no need to hurry, because Black is not threatening anything, in part owing to the space advantage that Rubinstein mentioned.

In response to the immediate 13 f4, Rubinstein gave 13 ... exf4 14 exf4 Ng4, with ideas of ... Ne3, as well as the immediate threat of 15 ... Nxh2.

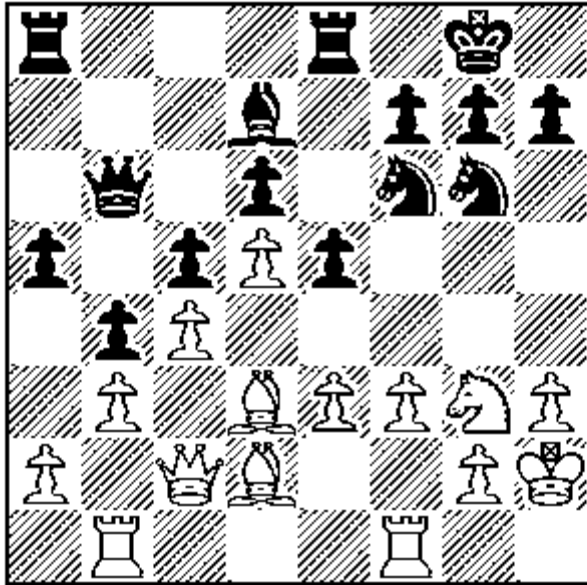
13 ... Bd7 14 Bd2 a6

Black seeks counterplay by expanding on the queenside, to try to offset the inevitable white offensive on the kingside.

15 h3 b5 16 b3 Qb6 17 Kh2

Further preparation; White continues to wait for the most favourable moment to push his f-pawn.

17 ... a5 18 Rab1 b4



Exercise: What do you think Rubinstein played in this position?

Answer:

19 f4!

The moment has arrived!

Question: Why now? What's changed?

Answer: Rubinstein waited for the queenside to become stabilized. Even though Black is planning to play ... a5-a4 and then occupy the a-file, Rubinstein considers that this is nothing to fear.

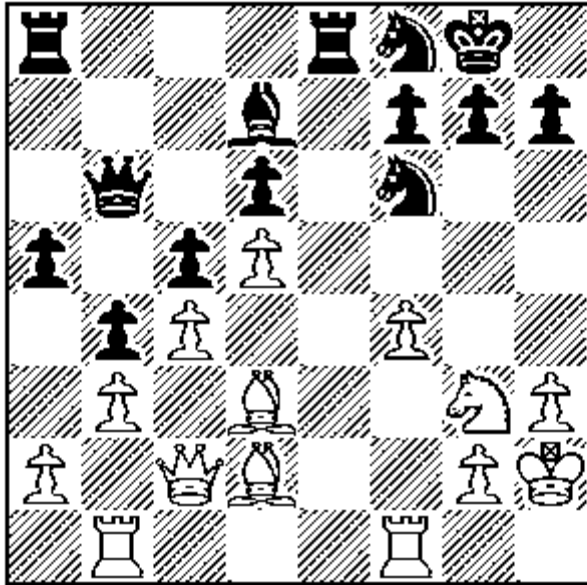
19 ... exf4

After 19 ... a4, Gelfand suggests 20 fxe5, and if 20 ... Nxe5 then the thematic exchange sacrifice 21 Rxf6! follows with very good compensation.

20 exf4 Nf8

Question: Why this precaution? Wasn't it better to play 20 ... a4 immediately?

Answer: White had a positional threat. On 20 ... a4, Rubinstein pointed out that White could play 21 f5; for example, 21 ... Ne5 22 Bg5! leaves the black pieces awkwardly placed and after 22 ... Nxd3 23 Qxd3 Qd8, White has the strong continuation 24 Ne4 Rxe4 25 Bxf6 Qe8 26 Qg3, when a serious weakness has appeared at d6. Continuing this line further: 26 ... Qf8 27 Rbe1 Rae8 28 Rxe4 Rxe4 29 Bg5!, and White threatens f5-f6 as well as Bf4.



Exercise: How does White regroup his forces?

Answer:

21 Bc1!

“The bishop discovers its full potential.” First White improves the position of this bishop, which is heading for b2 – this what probably planned by Rubinstein when he chose 19 f4!.

21 ... Qd8

Exercise: And now?

Answer:

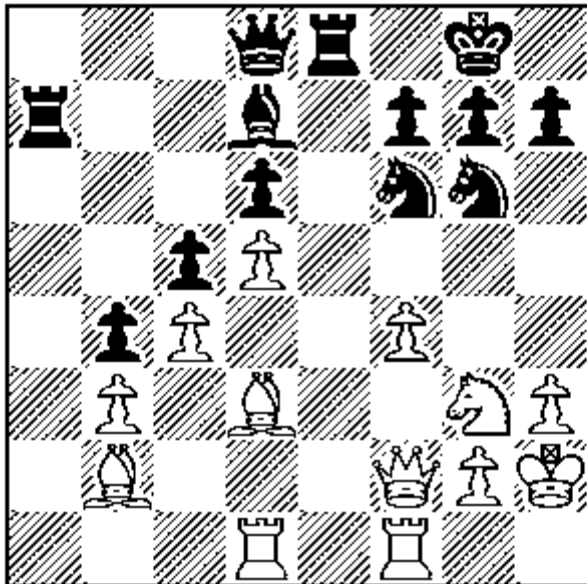
22 Qf2!

You always need to check for tactics. The careless 22 Bb2? would run into 22 ... Ng4+ 23 hxd4 Qh4+ 24 Kg1 Qxg3.

22 ... a4 23 Bb2

Now there really is a need to hurry. The bishop must go to b2 before Black plays ... a4-a3, preventing it from reaching the long diagonal.

23 ... Ng6 24 Rbd1 axb3 25 axb3 Ra7



Exercise: Black can only wait. Is the moment ripe for concrete measures, or is it advisable to keep strengthening the position?

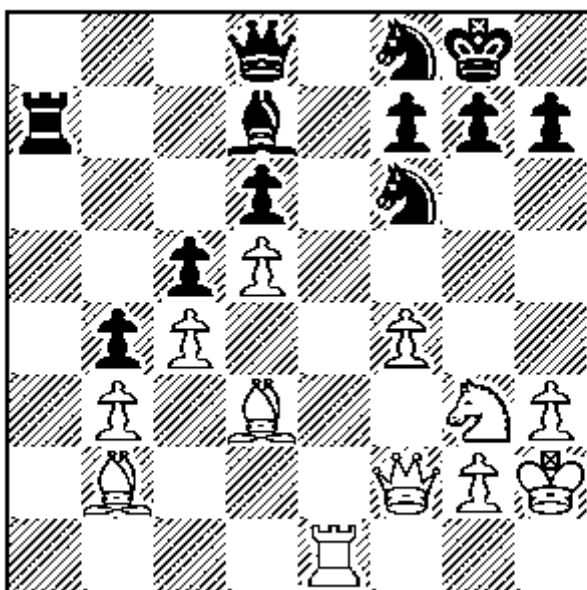
Answer:

26 Rde1!

Rubinstein continues to increase his possibilities. With this move he prepares to play f4-f5 without Black being able to occupy the centre with ... Ne5. It's worth noting that Rubinstein has no plans to contest the open a-file, because his attention remains focused on the kingside.

26 ... Rxe1 27 Rxe1 Nf8

Another passive move; but it wasn't possible bring the a7-rook into play with 27 ... Bc8? on account of 28 Bxf6 gxf6 29 Nh5.



Exercise: Let's ask the same question again. Is the moment ripe for concrete measures, or is it advisable to keep strengthening the position?

Answer:

28 Bxf6!!

It's time to take a decision, even if this one seems very surprising; White exchanges his powerful b2-bishop.

Question: What's the idea?

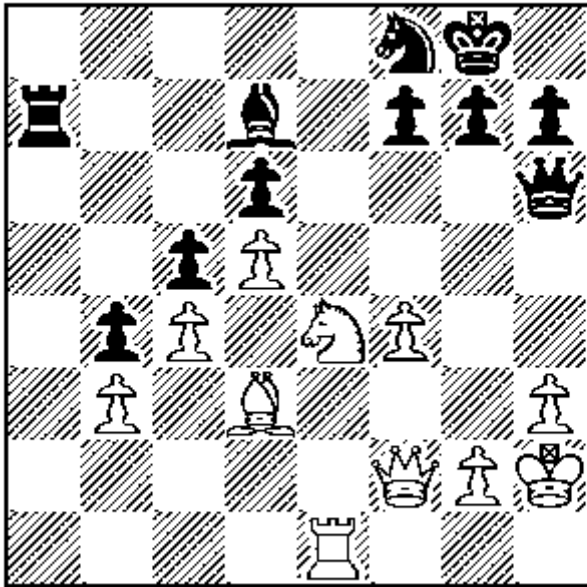
Answer: It's for tactical reasons. "White exchanges his excellently situated bishop to force Black's queen to a bad square and to create a threat against the d6-pawn," wrote Rubinstein.

28 ... Qxf6

It's not possible to play 28 ... gxf6? because of 29 Nh5, when there is no good defence against 30 Qg3+.

29 Ne4 Qh6

Forced, to defend the d6-pawn; 29 ... Qe7 is answered by 30 Nxc5.



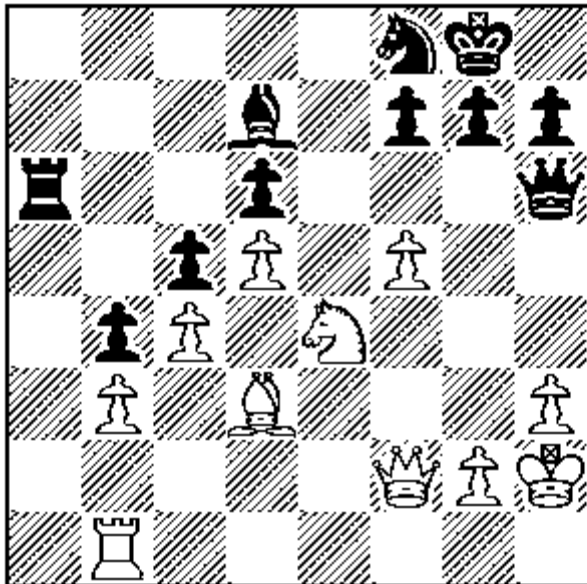
Exercise: Rubinstein also commented that the key point of 28 Bxf6 is revealed on move 30. What do you think he played?

Answer:

30 f5!

This opens the h2-b8 diagonal, among other benefits.

30 ... Ra3 31 Rb1 Ra6



Exercise: How do you think White proceeded now?

Answer:

32 g4!

With the threat of 33 g5 Qh5 34 Be2, winning the queen, highlighting another of the benefits of 28 Bxf6 mentioned by Rubinstein: the bad position of the black queen.

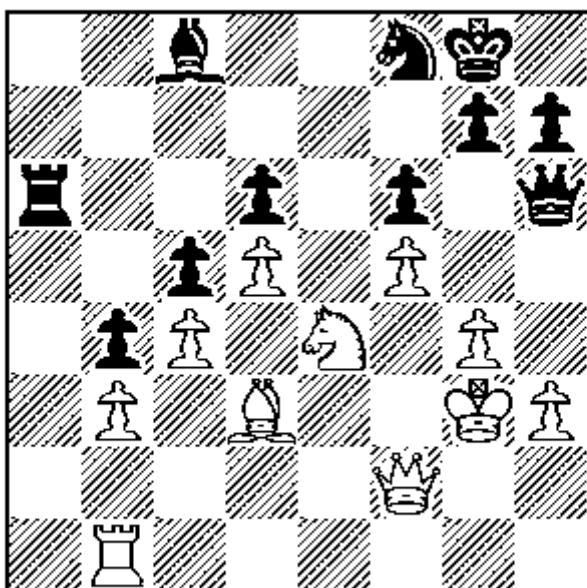
32 ... f6

Forced, but now “all the black pieces are left disconnected and blockaded” – Rubinstein.

33 Kg3

White’s advantage in mobility is so great that even his king helps to restrict the enemy queen.

33 ... Bc8



Exercise: Black is planning to improve his position. How can we hinder that?

Answer:

34 Re1!

Preventing 34 ... Nd7 (with the idea of going to e5) due to the reply 35 Nxd6 Rxd6 36 Re8+.

There were other options, such as sticking with the plan of h3-h4 and g4-g5 by playing, for instance, 34 Rf1! (to rule out the defence ... g7-g6) 34 ... Nd7 35 Qe2; but the move in the game is simpler, requires no calculation, and still keeps the option of pushing the pawns.

34 ... Bb7

Exercise: Black persists with the idea of centralizing his knight. How did Rubinstein counter this?

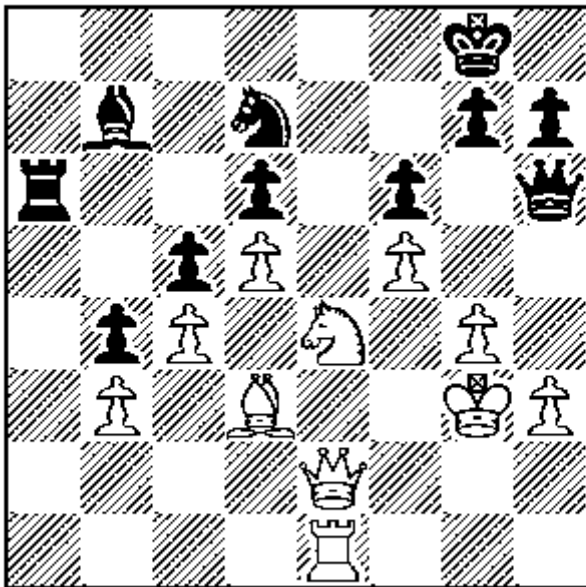
Answer:

35 Qe2!

“A strong move with two aims: it stops once again ... Nd7 and threatens to win the queen with the moves h4 and g5,” wrote Rubinstein.

35 ... Nd7

Black fails to spot White's idea, though his position was already untenable.



Exercise: How did Rubinstein refute this move?

Answer:

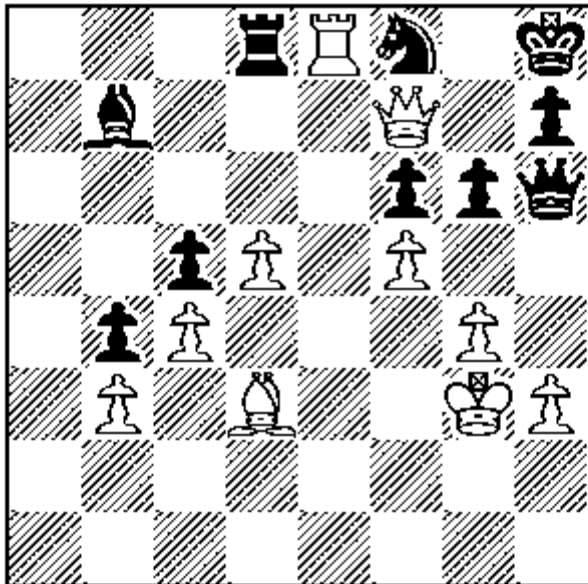
36 Nxd6!

There were other strong moves available, but this is the fastest and prettiest way to win. With his discoordinated pieces, Black is unable to prevent the following infiltration.

36 ... Rxd6 37 Qe8+ Nf8 38 Re7

Threatening to take the bishop as well as 39 Qf7+, followed by mate.

38 ... g6 39 Qf7+ Kh8 40 Re8 Rd8



Exercise (easy): Black uses his last available resource. How does White respond?

Answer:

41 Qxf6+

Maintaining control of the e-file. Not the immediate 41 Rxd8?? on account of 41 ... Qe3+ 42 Kg2 Qd2+ 43 Kg1 Qe3+ with a draw.

41 ... Kg8 42 Qe6+ Kg7 43 f6+ 1-0

Chapter Two

Playing for the Initiative and the Attack

“Rubinstein’s Immortal”

1907 was a very successful year for Rubinstein; he won the tournaments in Ostend and Carlsbad as well as the Fifth All-Russian tournament of 1907/08, held in his adopted city of Lodz.

Lodz was the scene of this stunning creation: “Rubinstein’s Immortal”, which is possibly the best known of all his games. After a quiet opening White wastes some tempi and stands slightly worse. Seeking to keep the position closed, he weakens his position too much and allows one of the most beautiful finishes in the history of our game.

The marvellous final combination received lavish praise, while the modest Rubinstein commented: “The combination which now begins has been considered to be one of the most brilliant and the game itself a jewel; in reality the secret consisted of eliminating or deflecting the defending piece.”

Game 12

G.Rotlewski-A.Rubinstein

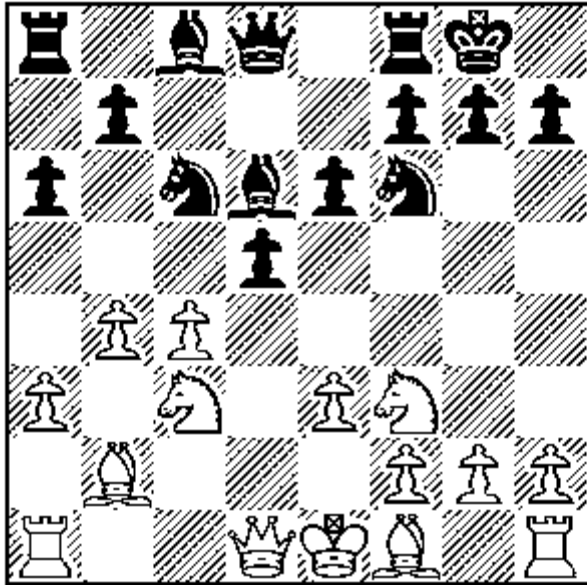
Lodz 1907

Semi-Tarrasch Defence [D40]

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 e6 3 e3 c5 4 c4 Nc6 5 Nc3 Nf6 6 dxc5

The main alternative is 6 a3, after which 6 ... a6 might follow with a possible transposition to the game. More than a hundred years ago now, Rubinstein himself recommended 6 ... Ne4, which was used by Fischer to beat Petrosian in the eighth game of the Candidates Final in Buenos Aires 1971; this is still considered to be a valid option.

6 ... Bxc5 7 a3 a6 8 b4 Bd6 9 Bb2 0-0



10 Qd2?!

Question: This is a strange move, isn't it?

Answer: White doesn't want to develop his bishop yet, since he would like to recapture on c4 without losing a tempo, but while this is a developing move, it will not prove useful, as Rubinstein will demonstrate. With the same idea, 10 Qc2, as suggested by Tartakower, was more appropriate, and years later this became the main line.

Alternatively, 10 cxd5 exd5 11 Be2 reaches a typical IQP structure; this continuation was considered the best by Schlechter.

Exercise: What did Rubinstein play in this position to call 10 Qd2 into question?

Answer:

10 ... Qe7!

A pawn sacrifice for the sake of accelerating Black's development – the imminent arrival of a black rook on d8 will be uncomfortable for the white queen.

11 Bd3?!

Inconsistent with his previous move. Almost the only virtue of 10 Qd2 was to put pressure on the d5-pawn, and while winning the pawn was risky, with the aid of a computer it can be verified that White's best course was 11 cxd5 exd5 12 Nxd5!? Nxd5 13 Qxd5, when Black has compensation for the pawn after 13 ... Rd8 or 13 ... Be6, but no more than that.

And if that was a difficult decision to take over the board, rather than 11 Bd3?!, White might have opted for 11 cxd5 exd5 12 Be2; of course this would be in worse circumstances than after 10 cxd5, given that he has spent a tempo on Qd2, which is of doubtful usefulness.

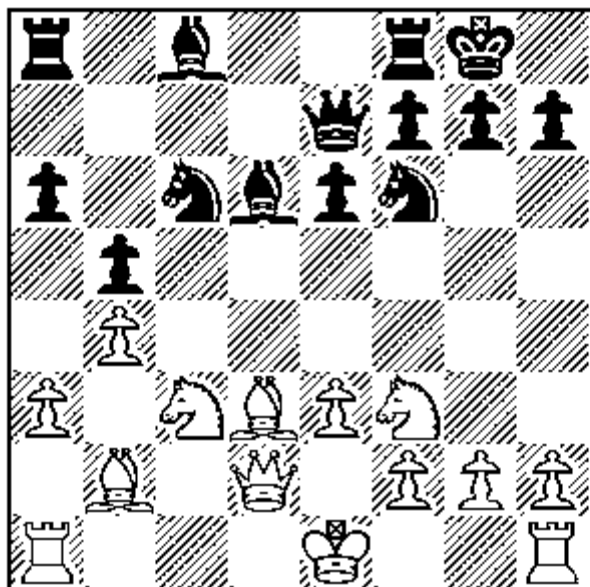
Exercise (easy): What's the snag with 11 Bd3 - ?

Answer:

11 ... dxc4!

Unlike Black's king's bishop, White's will have spent two tempi recapturing the c-pawn, with the further snag, as will become apparent, that the queen is badly placed on d2.

12 Bxc4 b5 13 Bd3



Exercise (easy): How should Black continue?

Answer:

13 ... Rd8

Of course; the white queen is under X-ray pressure from the d8-rook and sooner or later will be forced to lose another tempo.

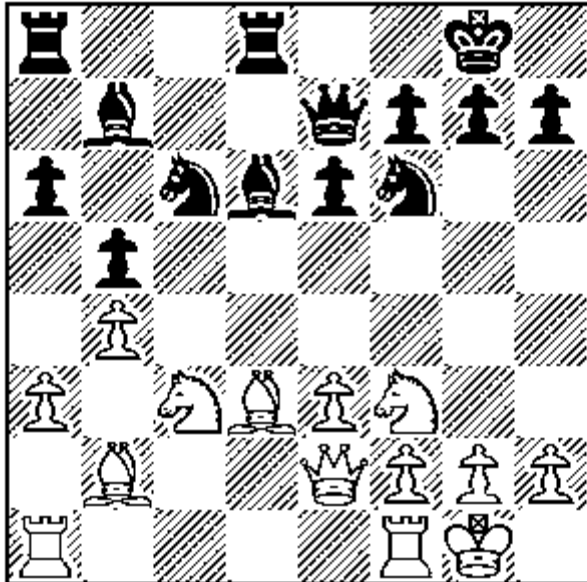
14 Qe2

Question: White was already “playing with Black” – in a symmetrical position with

Black to move – but now he will be two tempi down. Was 14 0-0 better?

Answer: White rejected 14 0-0 in view of 14 ... Bxh2+! 15 Nxh2 (or 15 Kxh2? Qd6+) 15 ... Ne5, when 16 Bxh7+ Nxh7 17 Qc2 Nc4 is advantageous to Black.

14 ... Bb7 15 0-0



Exercise: How can Black exploit his slight advantage in development?

Answer:

15 ... Ne5!

With the exchange of knights White's castled position loses an important defender, and the two black bishops will be aimed menacingly at his kingside.

16 Nxe5 Bxe5

With the familiar threat of 17 ... Bxh2+.

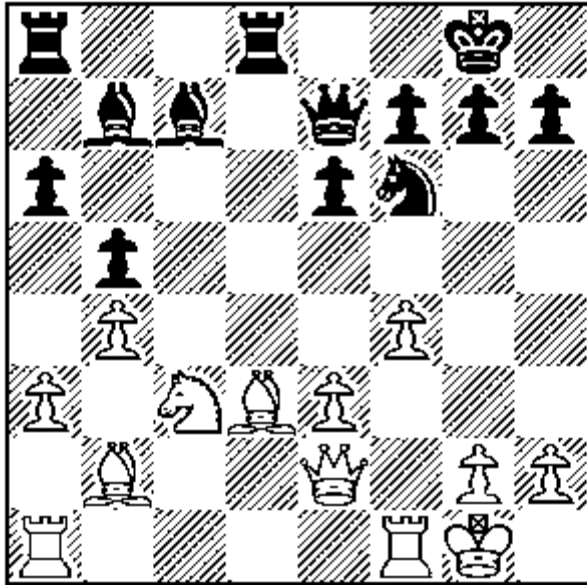
17 f4

Closing the h2-b8 diagonal, at the cost of weakening his kingside.

If 17 h3 then 17 ... Qd6! is strong, when 18 Rfd1? allows 18 ... Qc6! with a double attack, winning material after 19 e4 Bxc3 20 Rac1 Nxe4!; so White has to play the sad 18 Nd1, with advantage to Black after the simple 18 ... Rac8.

The best defence was the calm 17 Rfd1, when 17 ... Rac8 keeps a slight advantage for Black but nothing clear. Instead, 17 ... Qc7 can be met by 18 Rac1! (not 18 f4? on account of 18 ... Bxc3 19 Rac1 Nd5 and wins) 18 ... Bxh2+ 19 Kh1 Qb8 20 Bxh7+ Nxh7 21 Rxd8+ Qxd8 22 Kxh2 and the position is about equal.

17 ... Bc7



With the idea of opening the game with 18 ... e5.

18 e4

To answer 18 ... e5 with 19 f5.

After 18 Rfd1, the planned 18 ... e5 activates Black's position advantageously; for example, 19 Rac1 (here 19 f5 can be met by 19 ... e4! 20 Bc2, when Black has 20 ... Qe5 21 g3 Qxf5, among other things) 19 ... exf4 20 exf4 and Black can benefit from the opening of lines with 20 ... Bb6+ 21 Kh1 Qe3! and if 22 f5, there are various strong moves available, such as 22 ... Qg5 (with the threat of ... Ng4) or 22 ... Qh6 (intending 23 ... Bc7 etc) with a winning initiative.

18 ... Rac8

Question: How significant is Black's advantage?

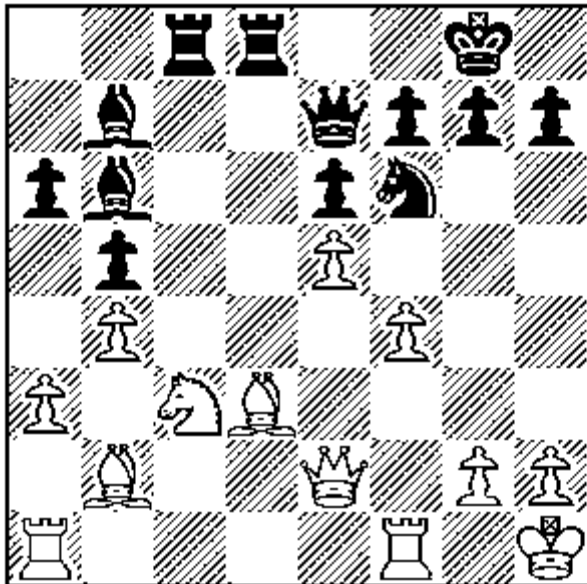
Answer: Black has just developed his last inactive piece and both his rooks occupy active posts. In contrast, the white rooks are still passive. This is not a decisive advantage, but any tactical complications arising are likely to benefit the side whose pieces are more active, so White is clearly at risk.

19 e5?

Seeking to simplify after either 19 ... Nd5 or 19 ... Nd7 20 Be4, but this weakening of the long diagonal allows a marvellous sequence of tactical blows.

It was preferable to play 19 Rad1, though White's position remains difficult in any case after 19 ... Bb6+ 20 Kh1 Bd4, followed by 21 ... e5.

19 ... Bb6+ 20 Kh1



Exercise: How did Rubinstein continue here?

Answer:

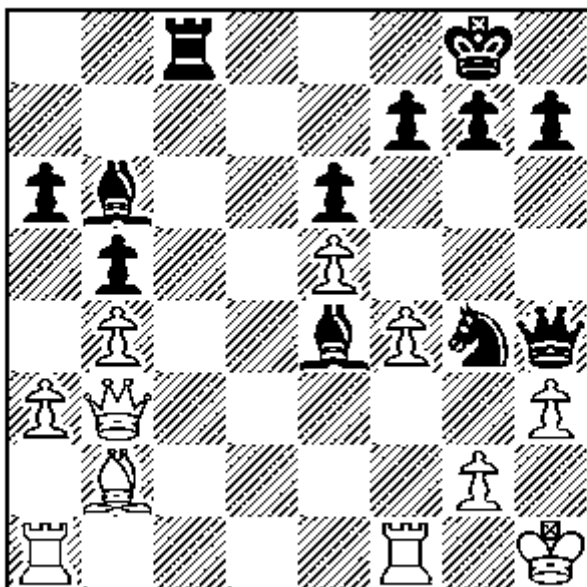
20 ... Ng4!

“In playing 19 e5? Bb6+ 20 Kh1 White clearly underestimated this reply.” – Kasparov. Rubinstein exploits the fact that the white queen is overworked; the threat is now 21 ... Qh4.

21 Be4

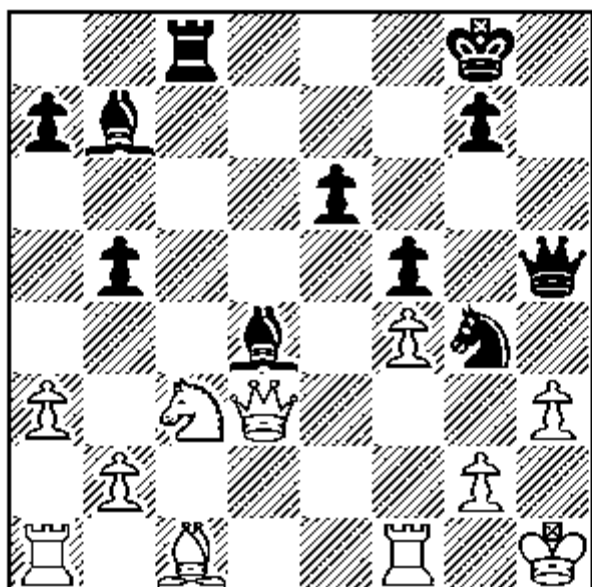
After 21 Qxg4 Rxd3, threatening ... Rxc3, Black’s initiative triumphs; for example, 22 Ne2 Rc2 23 Bc1 (23 Rab1 loses to the same move) 23 ... h5! 24 Qxh5 Bxg2+ 25 Kxg2 Qb7+ and mates; 21 Bxh7+ Kxh7 22 Qxg4 is no better, because of 22 ... Rd2.

If 21 Ne4, the simplest continuation is 21 ... Qh4 22 h3 Rxd3! 23 Qxd3 Bxe4 24 Qxe4 Qg3! and mates. In this line Kavalek pointed out that in the event of 24 Qb3,



Black has several winning continuations, including 24 ... Be3!, which occurred in a

remarkably similar modern game:



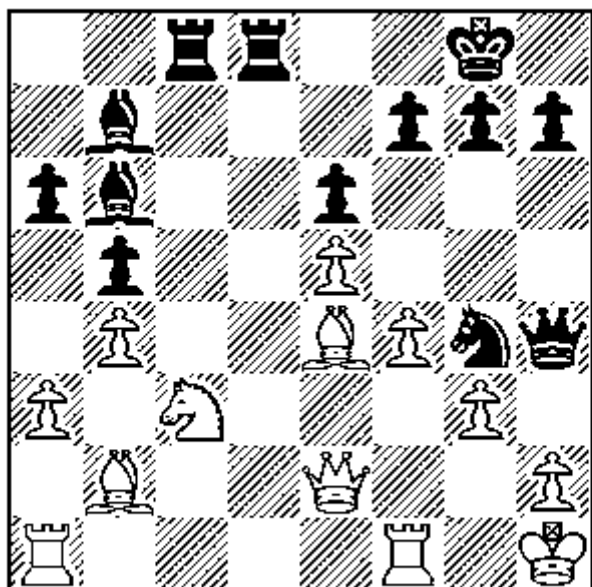
In L.Aronian-V.Anand, Wijk aan Zee 2013, Black forced resignation with 23 ... Be3!. Anand himself stated that, during play, he was aware of the similarity between the two games, two works of art played more than 100 years apart.

21 ... Qh4

Although it takes nothing away from the following brilliancy, there was actually an immediate win with 21 ... Nxh2!; for example, 22 Rfe1 (or 22 Qh5 Bxe4 23 Kxh2 Bxg2! 24 Kxg2 Rd2+ etc) 22 ... Rxc3! 23 Bxc3 (or 23 Qh5 g6 24 Qxh2 Rb3) 23 ... Qh4 24 g3 Qxg3 25 Qxh2 Bxe4+ 26 Rxe4 Qxc3 27 Rae1 (or 27 Ree1 Rd2) 27 ... Rd1!, winning in all cases.

22 g3

If 22 h3 then 22 ... Rxc3! wins; for example, 23 Bxc3 (23 Bxb7 allows mate with 23 ... Rxh3+; the white king is also blown away after 23 Qxg4 Rxh3+! 24 Qxh3 Qxh3+ 25 gxh3 Bxe4+ 26 Kh2 Rd2+ with rapid mate, such as 27 Kg3 Rg2+ 28 Kh4 Bd8+ 29 Kh5 Bg6 mate) 23 ... Bxe4 24 Qxg4 (if 24 Qxe4 we already know that 24 ... Qg3 wins) 24 ... Qxg4 25 hxg4 Rd3!, when the threat of 26 ... Rh3 mate allows Black to win the bishop on c3.



Exercise: How did “Rubinstein’s Immortal” continue?

Answer:

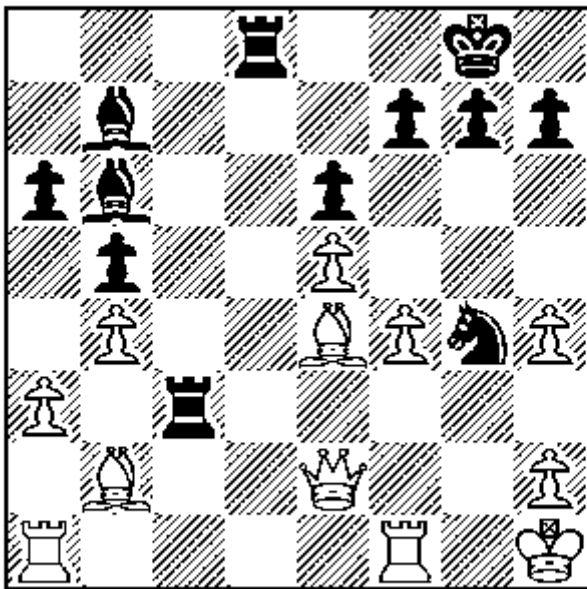
22 ... Rxc3!!

“An astonishing queen sacrifice, combining pins and deflections. White can’t stop the attacking fury.” – Kavalek.

“One of the best combinations ever made. Black’s next, uncommonly spectacular move reveals the depth of Rubinstein’s combinative idea.” – Romanovsky.

23 gxf4

Here 23 Bxc3 allows 23 ... Bxe4+ and mate; while on 23 Bxb7, Kmoch pointed out the following finish: 23 ... Rxc3 24 Rf3 (or 24 Bf3 Nxe2 25 Qxe2 Rh3) 24 ... Rxf3 25 Bxf3 Nf2+ 26 Kg1 (or 26 Kg2 Qh3+ 27 Kg1 Ne4+ with mate in three) 26 ... Ne4+ (the engines indicate that the “inhuman” 26 ... Qh3! mates more quickly, but this changes nothing) 27 Kf1 Nd2+ 28 Kg2 Nxf3 29 Qxf3 (or 29 Kxf3 Qh5+) 29 ... Rd2+ etc.



Exercise: What is the spectacular key to the combination?

Answer:

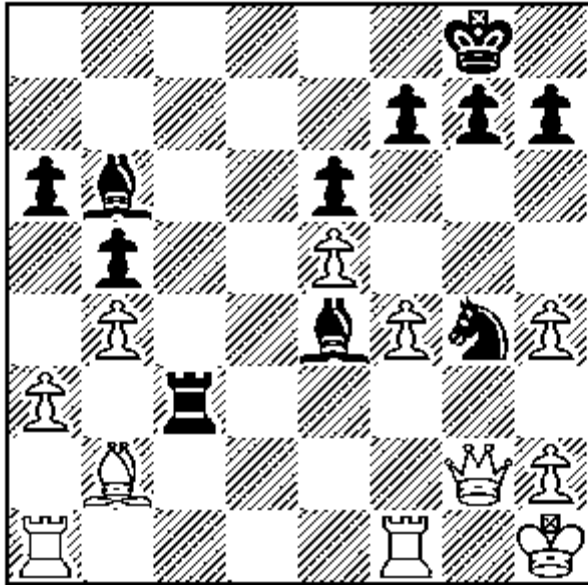
23 ... Rd2!!

“Such moves bear the stamp of eternity! Black is a queen down, and nearly all his pieces are en prise.” – Razuvaev & Murakhveri.

24 Qxd2

There is mate in five moves after 24 Qxg4 Bxe4+ 25 Rf3 Rxf3, and mate in three after 24 Bxc3 Bxe4+; finally, 24 Bxb7 Rxe2 25 Bg2 allows the same decisive finish we shall see in the game.

24 ... Bxe4+ 25 Qg2



Exercise: How did Rubinstein force resignation?

Answer:

25 ... Rh3! 0-1

“A clincher! Black uses a pin to deliver a pretty mate.” – Kavalek.

Rotlewski resigned, in view of 26 Rf2 (or 26 Rf3 Bxf3) 26 ... Bxf2 27 Qxe4 Rxh2 mate.

“The Rubinstein Attack”

This is another of the Rubinstein’s great contributions to the opening, linked to a middlegame plan. It could have been placed in Chapter Five but is included here because it is also a magnificent attacking game. I have added three supplementary games to help readers improve their understanding of the type of position arising.

After an opening featuring Rubinstein’s own original ideas, a middlegame with castling on opposite sides is reached, which is finally rounded off with a brilliant attack.

This is a model game, a true work of art, about which Rubinstein commented simply, with his usual modesty: “Castling on opposite sides is always more spectacular on account of the complexity of the attacks”.

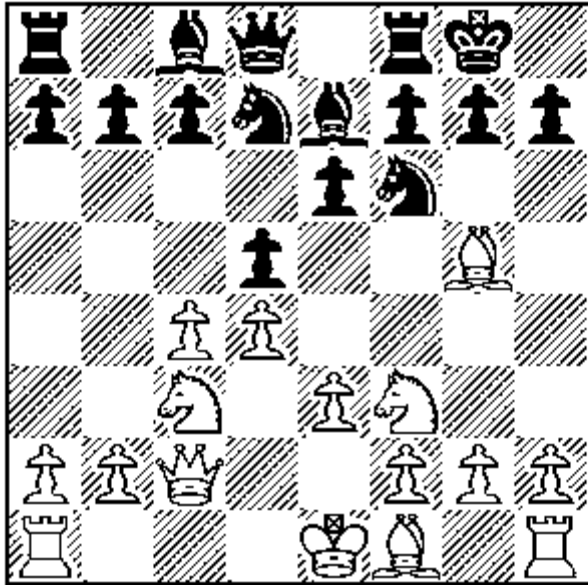
Game 13

A. Rubinstein-R. Teichmann

Vienna (4th matchgame) 1908

Queen’s Gambit Declined [D55]

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Nbd7 5 e3 Be7 6 Nf3 0-0 7 Qc2



Rubinstein plays the variation that bears his name, the “Rubinstein Attack”, which he employed almost exclusively until 1912. This line (“formidable” was how Kasparov described it) is one of his many contributions to opening theory and, as always with Rubinstein, it is an idea linked to the middlegame.

From 1914 onwards (Rubinstein was inactive in 1913), he turned to the more popular move 7 Rc1.

Question: What are the differences between 7 Qc2 and 7 Rc1 - ?

Answer: Both moves can be categorized as “the struggle for tempo”. White delays the development of his king’s bishop, hoping for a quick ... d5xc4 so that he can play Bxc4 without losing a tempo. The main difference with 7 Qc2 is that White keeps open the possibility of castling on the queenside.

7 ... b6

The main objection to 7 Qc2 is the counterblow 7 ... c5!, played in the World Championship matches between Lasker and Capablanca (1921) and Capablanca and Alekhine (1927), with good results for Black. One of the ideas is that after 8 0-0-0 (or 8 Rd1), it is possible to play 8 ... Qa5 with good counterplay.

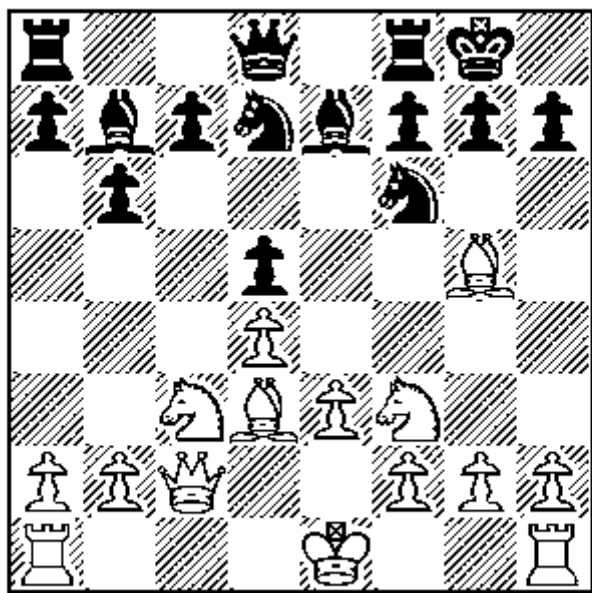
The young Kasparov, keen to attack, played this line against D.Marovic at Banja Luka 1979; after 8 0-0-0 Qa5 9 Kb1 h6, he opted for the sharp 10 h4!?, maintaining the tension. The game continued 10 ... dxc4 11 Bxc4, and now Kasparov recommends 11 ... cxd4 12 exd4 Nb6 13 Bb3 Bd7 14 Ne5 Rac8 15 Rh3! “with chances for both sides”.

Many years after the Teichmann game, Rubinstein himself, as Black against Kashdan at Prague 1931 – with the insertion of 7 ... h6 8 Bf4 (in the event of 8 Bh4, White no longer has the option of Kasparov’s h2-h4 idea) – played 8 ... c5 9 cxd5 cxd4 (refusing to be left with an isolated d-pawn, which would be the case after 9 ... exd5) 10 exd4 Nxd5 11 Nxd5 exd5 and eventually won in a complex struggle.

Instead of the double-edged 8 0-0-0, White can also choose the quiet 8 cxd5 Nxd5 9 Bxe7

Qxe7 10 Nxd5 exd5 11 Bd3 with a minimal advantage in view of Black's IQP, but nothing significant.

8 cxd5 exd5 9 Bd3 Bb7



10 0-0-0

Two years later, Alekhine preferred 10 h4 in Supplementary Game 13.1.

Question: It looks more natural to castle queenside and only then decide what to do with the pawns.

Answer: There's a specific reason: 10 h4 prevents 10 ... Ne4, which might not be serious, but Alekhine did not want to allow it. Besides, h2-h4 is not a wasted move – as we shall see, it is useful in the attack.

10 ... c5

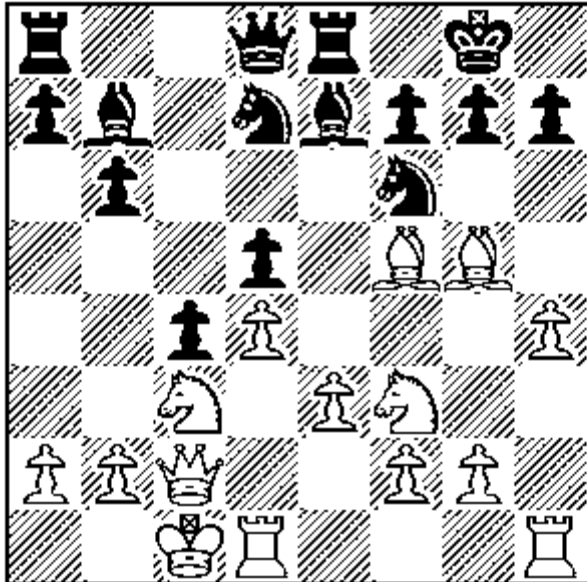
Znosko-Borovsky indeed played 10 ... Ne4 in Supplementary Game 13.2.

11 h4! c4?!

Although Black gains a tempo by attacking the bishop, the race between the competing pawn storms will prove unfavourable to him. 11 ... Rc8 is better, as played earlier by Teichmann in Supplementary Game 13.3.

12 Bf5 Re8

Since we are in an attacking race with the kings castled on opposite wings, a logical move here would have been 12 ... a6, planning ... b6-b5. In response, 13 Ne5 is reasonable, after which F.Marshall-J.Te Kolste, Scheveningen 1905, continued 13 ... g6 14 Bxd7 Nxd7 15 Bh6 Re8 16 h5. White could also play 13 g4, analogous to what we will see in this game.



Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein continued his offensive?

Answer:

13 Bxf6!

With two ideas: firstly it prevents Black from bolstering his kingside defences with 13 ... Nf8 (which was his intention in playing 12 ... Re8); secondly, as we shall see, it is consistent with White's plan of attack against the black monarch.

13 ... Nxf6

Exercise: How does White demonstrate that 13 Bxf6 was consistent with his attacking plans?

Answer:

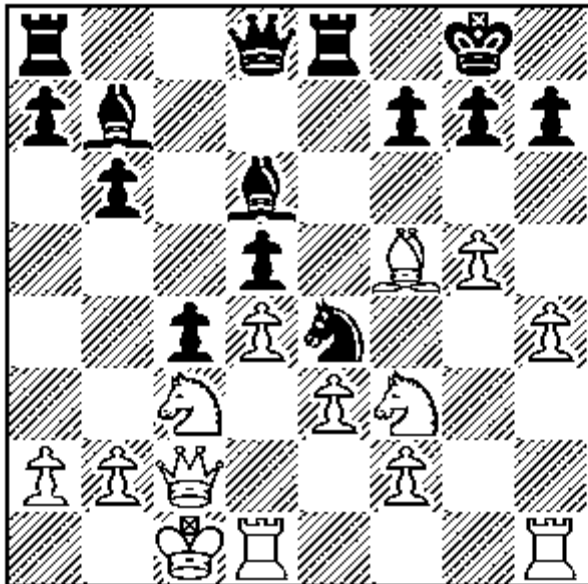
14 g4!

Of course; White continues with the infantry attack initiated with 11 h4, Now 14 ... g6 would be answered by 15 g5.

14 ... Bd6

Black prepares a square for his knight on e4.

15 g5 Ne4



Exercise: How did Rubinstein respond to Black's last move, which closes the attacking b1-h7 diagonal?

Answer:

16 h5!

Rubinstein continues playing with iron consistency, not caring about the loss of the pawn, since this would open lines against the black king. Or in other words, "Rubinstein's play, as always, is consistent and logical: in the given instance he is thinking only of attack!" – Kasparov.

In the event of 16 Nxe4 dxe4 17 Nd2, as well as the line 17 ... c3! 18 Nxe4 cxb2+ 19 Kxb2 (or 19 Kb1 Ba3) 19 ... Bb4 20 f3 Qd5 21 Bxh7+ Kh8 (which is "unclear and unnecessary for White", according to Kasparov), there is the simple 17 ... Qe7, intending ... b6-b5, when Black's attack starts to make itself felt.

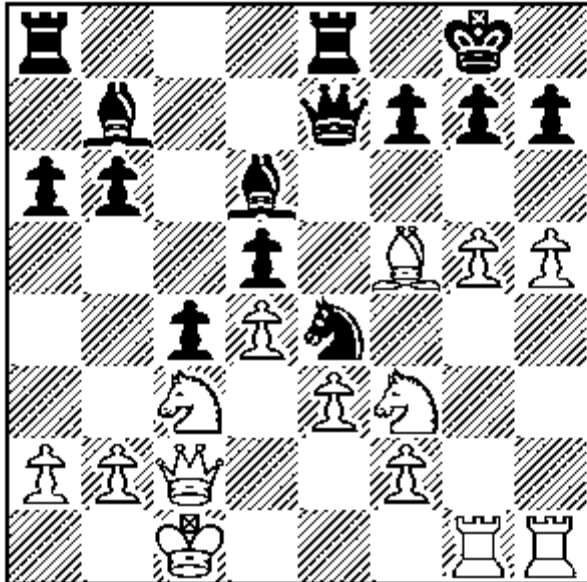
16 ... Qe7

Taking the g5-pawn would be virtually suicidal: after 16 ... Nxg5? 17 Nxg5 Qxg5, Tarrasch analysed 18 Bxh7+ Kf8 19 h6! gxh6 (or 19 ... g6 20 Rdg1 Qf6 21 Bxg6!) 20 Rdg1; for example, 20 ... Qf6 (or 20 ... Qd8 21 Qf5) 21 Rh5 Qe6 22 Rf5, threatening 23 Rg6 with a decisive attack.

17 Rdg1 a6?

This attempt at counter-attack comes too late, as Rubinstein will demonstrate.

Having seen the course of the game it is clear that 17 ... g6 was essential, although after 18 hxg6 hxg6, there are several promising-looking continuations: such as 19 Bxe4 dxe4 20 Nd2, or the sacrifice 19 Bxg6 hxg6 20 Rh6 etc. The strongest seems to be 19 Rh6! Kg7 (or 19 ... gxf5 20 Rgh1 and Black is defenceless) 20 Nxe4 dxe4 21 Nh4, when there is no good defence against 22 Bxg6; for example, 21 ... Rg8 22 Bxg6 fxg6 23 Rxg6+ Kf8 24 Qxc4! and wins.



Exercise: How did Rubinstein proceed with his attack on the black king?

Answer:

18 Bxh7+!!

“Now the black position is ripped open with a Morphy-like assault.” – Kmoch.

“Like lightning from a clear sky! Such a combination cannot be calculated to the end, and

this is the main difficulty in taking a decision in similar situations.” – Razuvaev.

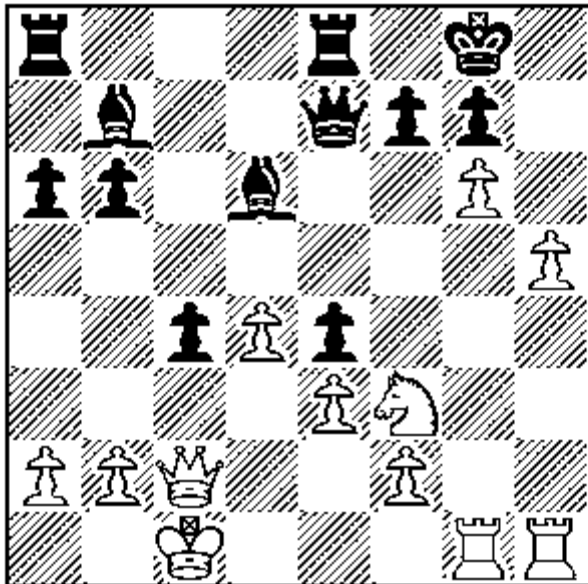
Rubinstein (who awarded this move only one exclamation mark) commented, with his usual lack of self-praise: “This sacrifice serves to enhance the offensive action of the attacking pawns on the kingside.”

The alternative was 18 g6, good but not as strong,

18 ... Kxh7 19 g6+ Kg8

In the event of 19 ... fxg6, White concludes the attack with 20 Nxe4 dxe4 21 Ng5+ Kh6 (or 21 ... Kg8 22 Qxc4+) 22 Nf7+! and mates.

20 Nxe4 dxe4



Exercise: What did Rubinstein have in mind when he sacrificed the bishop?

Answer:

21 h6!!

“The crux of White’s attack! Black cannot prevent the opening of both the g- and h-files, after which the white rooks quickly decide matters. 22 gxf7+ and Rxf7+ is now threatened.”

– Euwe.

“This impressive picture is the culmination of the entire game.” – Kasparov.

This lavish praise contrasts sharply with Rubinstein’s own comment; with his customary modesty he wrote: “Completely demolishing Black’s kingside. The connected sacrifices are of merely visual interest.”

21 ... f6

As Euwe indicated, 21 ... exf3 loses simply: 22 gxf7+ Qxf7 (or 22 ... Kxf7 23 Qg6+ Kg8 24 hxf7) 23 hxf7!, with the double threat of 24 Rh8 mate and 24 Qh7 mate.

Instead, 21 ... fxf6 is more complicated; Kmoeh pointed out one of the most accurate ways to cut through the complications: 22 Nh4 or prefacing this with 22 h7+. The direct 22 Rxf6? is less clear, as after 22 ... exf3 23 Qxc4+ (or 23 Rxf7+ Qxf7 24 hxf7 Be4! is not decisive either) 23 ... Kh7! 24 Rxf7+ Kh8 25 Rxe7 Rxe7, Black has enough material to fight on.

The winning line is 22 h7+! Kf7 (not 22 ... Kh8? 23 Nh4) 23 Nh4! g5 24 Nf5 Qf6 (or 24 ... Qe6 25 Rxf5 g6 26 Rh6!) 25 Rxf5 Qxf5 26 Nxd6+ Ke7 27 Nxe8 Rxe8 28 Qxc4! Kd6 and now 29 Qg8 is one way.

Alternatively, 22 Nh4! g5 23 h7+ Kf7 24 Nf5 transposes; via this move order, 23 Ng6 looks less strong: 23 ... Qf6 24 h7+ Kf7 25 h8Q Rxf8 26 Nxf8+ Ke6 and Black is still playing.

22 hxf7!

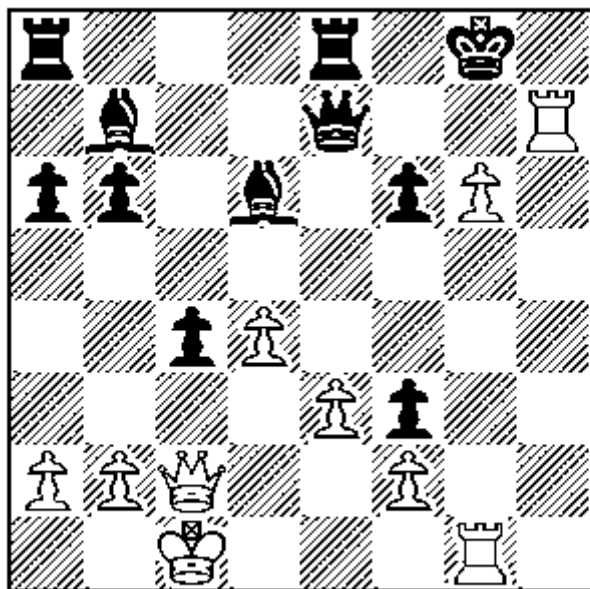
Threatening 23 Rh8+ Kxf7 24 Rh7+ etc.

22 ... exf3

In the event of 22 ... Qe6, White has 23 Rh8+ Kxg7 24 Rh7+ Kf8 25 Rxb7 exf3 26 g7+ Kg8 27 Qh7+ with mate in two moves, according to Euwe.

If Black tries 24 ... Kg8, the strongest continuation is 25 Rgh1!, threatening 26 Rh8+ Kg7 27 R1h7+ Kxg6 28 Nh4+ Kg5 29 Rg7 mate; for example, 25 ... f5 (25 ... Kf8? loses to the simple 26 Rxb7) 26 Ng5! Qd5 and here there are several winning lines, the quickest being 27 Qe2! (or 27 Qd1!), followed by 28 Qh5 or else 28 Rf7, threatening mate with 29 Rh8+ and 30 Qh5+ etc.

23 Rh8+ Kxg7 24 Rh7+ Kg8



Exercise: What is the strongest move now?

Answer:

25 Qf5!

With various threats, such as 26 Qh5, 26 g7, and 26 Rxe7. Naturally, 25 Rxe7 was also winning.

25 ... c3 26 Rxe7 1-0

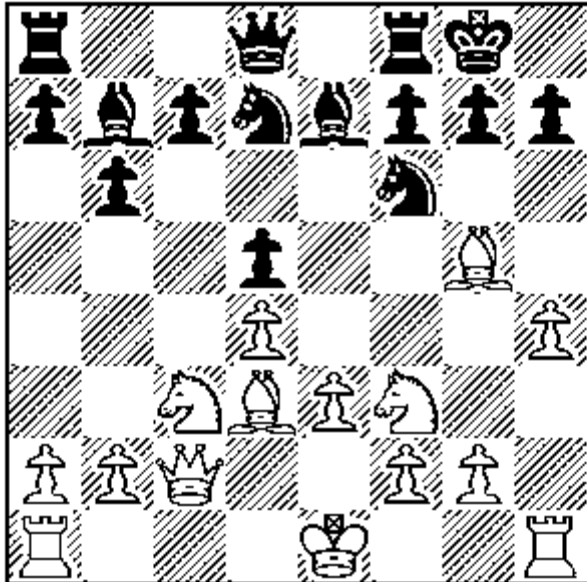
Supplementary Game 13.1

A.Alekhine-F.Yates

Hamburg 1910

Queen's Gambit Declined [D55]

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 e3 Nbd7 6 Nc3 0-0 7 Qc2 b6 8 cxd5 exd5 9 Bd3 Bb7



10 h4

As already mentioned, with this move order White prevents 10 ... Ne4, and h2-h4 is useful in the event of the sort of attacking race that we saw in the main game, to which we now quickly transpose.

10 ... c5 11 0-0-0 cxd4

This move is preferable to Teichmann's 11 ... c4?!, when White has a clear lead in the attacking race.

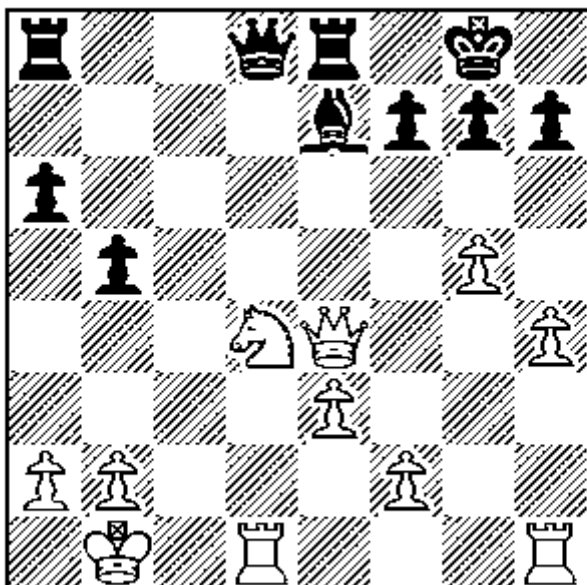
12 Nxd4 Re8?!

Alekhine thought that 12 ... a6 was better, with the idea of ... b6-b5, launching the queenside counter-attack without delay. One could add that 12 ... Rc8 would have been more consistent with Black's previous move.

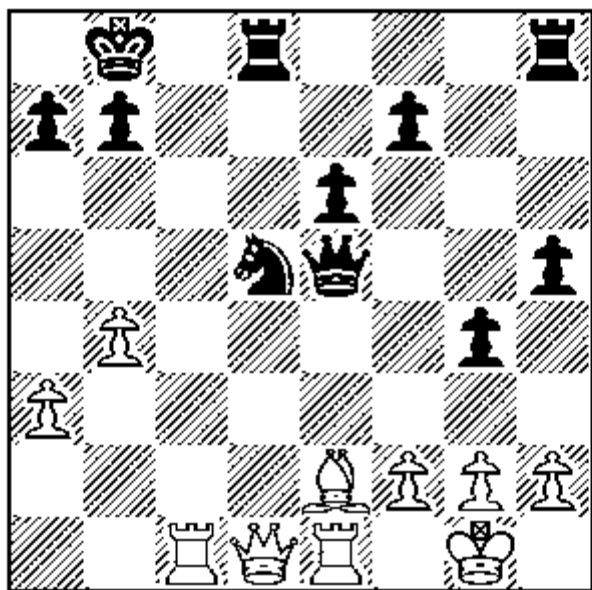
13 Kb1 a6 14 g4 b5

Hübner commented that 14 ... Rc8 was still worth considering. The text move prepares a temporary pawn sacrifice, but the tactics are not in Black's favour.

15 Bxf6! Nxf6 16 g5 Ne4 17 Nxe4 dxe4 18 Bxe4 Bxe4 19 Qxe4



Kasparov mentions the following position which arose in the game F.Dus Chotimirsky-A.Rubinstein, Lodz 1907: 1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 c5 3 e3 Nc6 4 Bd3 Bg4 5 Be2 e6 6 0-0 Nf6 7 Nbd2 Qc7 8 b3 cxd4 9 exd4 Bd6 10 Bb2 0-0-0 11 c4 h5 12 Rc1 Kb8 13 a3 g5! 14 b4 Bxf3 15 Nxf3 g4 16 Ne5 Nxe5 17 dxe5 Bxe5 18 cxd5 Qd6 19 Bxe5 Qxe5 20 Re1 Nxd5.



Question: What does this have to do with what we are studying?

Answer: A surprising amount; with the colours reversed and the rook on c1 (c8) rather than a1 (a8), it is actually the same position!

The game continued (reversing the colours and putting the a8-rook on c8) 19 ... Qb6 20 Qg4 Bf8 21 Rc1 Rc4 22 h5 g6! 23 hxg6 hxg6 24 Qf3 and Rubinstein realized his extra pawn in the end, although it could well have ended in a draw.

19 ... Bxg5

Exercise: This was Black's idea, but a surprise awaits him; what is it?

Answer:

20 Ne6!

Better than 20 Qg4 Bf6 21 Nf5 Qc8! with a good position (but not 21 ... Qc7? 22 Rd7!).

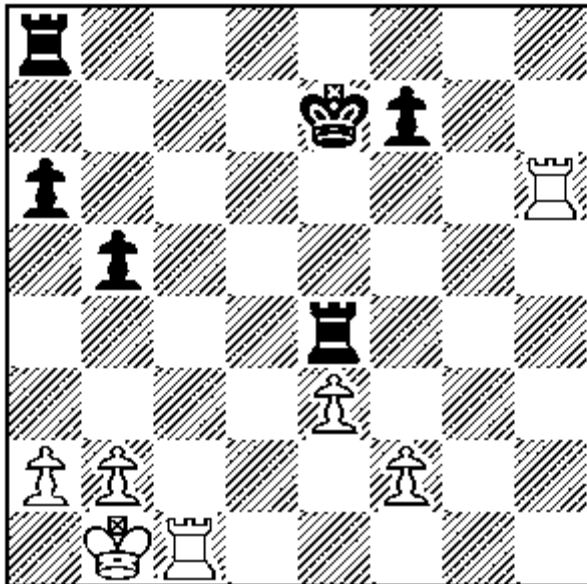
20 ... Qe7?!

Hübner says that 20 ... Rxe6 was preferable, giving up the queen, since after 21 Rxd8+ Rxd8 22 Qc2 Bf6 23 h5 Red6, Black gains counterplay with the threat of ... Rd2. Therefore 22 Qg4 Bf6 23 Rc1 Red6 24 a3 seems better, although White faces a long struggle to realize his advantage.

21 hxg5 h6

Not 21 ... g6 because of 22 Rxh7! and White wins; for example, 22 ... Kxh7 23 Qh4+ Kg8 24 Rh1 and there is no defence, while 22 ... Qxe6 loses to 23 Qh4 Qe4+ 24 Qxe4 Rxe4 25 Rdh1, as given by Alekhine.

22 gxh6 Qxe6 23 Qd4 Qe4+ 24 Qxe4 Rxe4 25 hxg7 Kxg7 26 Rdg1+ Kf6 27 Rh6+ Ke7 28 Rc1



White has emerged with an extra pawn, and the black pawns at f7 and a6 are weak. Combined with the activity of his rooks, this allows White good winning chances, despite the reduction in material. Alekhine was soon able to force the exchange of a pair of rooks and won an instructive endgame in 46 moves.

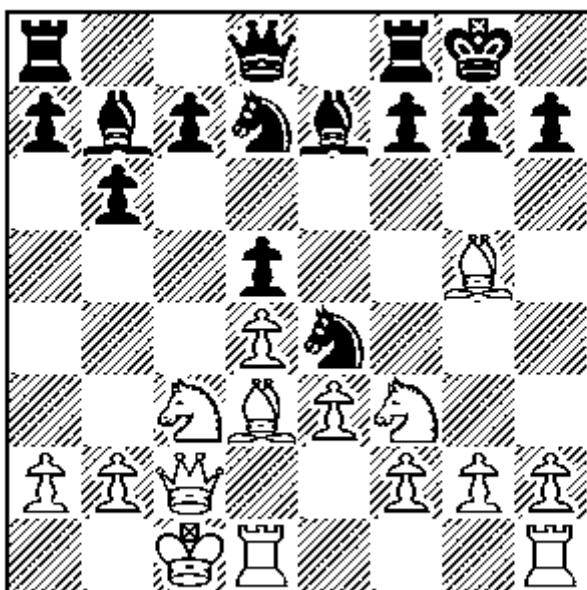
Supplementary Game 13.2

A.Rubinstein-E.Znosko-Borovsky

St Petersburg 1909

Queen's Gambit Declined [D55]

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 e3 Nbd7 6 Nf3 0-0 7 Qc2 b6 8 cxd5 exd5 9 Bd3 Bb7 10 0-0-0 Ne4



This is the “snag” with this move order.

Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein responded?

Answer:

11 h4

Of course, there is no need for White to capture on e7, while an exchange on g5 would open the h-file. Now White is threatening to capture on e4, and 11 ... Re8 would be answered by 12 Ne5.

11 ... f5 12 Kb1

Rubinstein had previous experience of this position from the other side in D.Daniszewski-A.Rubinstein, Lodz 1907. Here White played the violent 12 g4, gained the advantage after 12 ... c5 13 gxf5 Nd6 14 f6!, and won the game.

Question: Why did Rubinstein not repeat this idea?

Answer: Because he would have discovered that Black can play more strongly: 12 ... fxg4! and then, for example, 13 Nxe4 dxe4 14 Bxe4 Bxe4 15 Qxe4 Rxf3 16 Bxe7 Qe8 (threatening ... Rf7) 17 Qxg4 Rxf2 with good prospects.

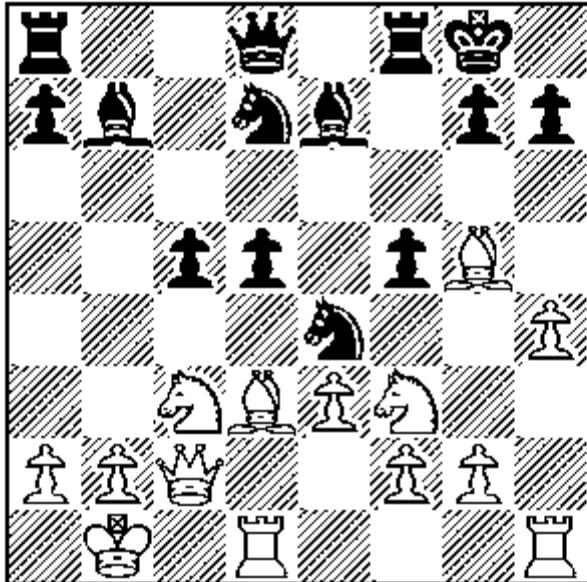
12 ... c5?!

This is the right idea, but it is inaccurate here for tactical reasons. Lasker suggested preparing it with 12 ... Rc8!. "Then 13 Qb3 would be met simply by 13 ... Nxc3+ and ... c7-c5."

13 dxc5! bxc5

After 13 ... Ndxc5, White plays 14 Nxd5! Bxd5 (or 14 ... Bxg5 15 Bc4!) 15 Bc4, as Lasker indicated: "In this variation Black must not be able to take the bishop at d3 with a check, hence White's 12th move."

The same combination works after 13 ... Rc8; i.e. 14 Nxd5 (instead of 14 cxb6, given by Kasparov) 14 ... Bxd5 15 Bc4 Bxc4 16 Qc4+ Kh8 (16 ... Rf7 is no better) 17 c6 and White seems to emerge from the complications on top. For instance, 17 ... Bxg5 (freeing the queen at the cost of opening the h-file; but not 17 ... Qe8? 18 cxd7 Rxc4 19 dxe8Q Rxe8 20 Bxe7 and wins) 18 hxg5 Qe8 (18 ... Qc7 is worse on account of 19 Rxh7+! Kxh7 20 Rh1+ Kg6 21 Qe6+ Ndf6 22 Nh4+ and so on) 19 cxd7 Rxc4 20 dxe8Q Rxe8, and now White has several attractive continuations, including 21 g6 h6 22 Rd7 Nxf2 23 Ne5 Nxe1 24 Nxc4 with a clear advantage in the ending.



Exercise: How did Rubinstein demonstrate that Black's central pawn structure is not as solid as it appears?

Answer:

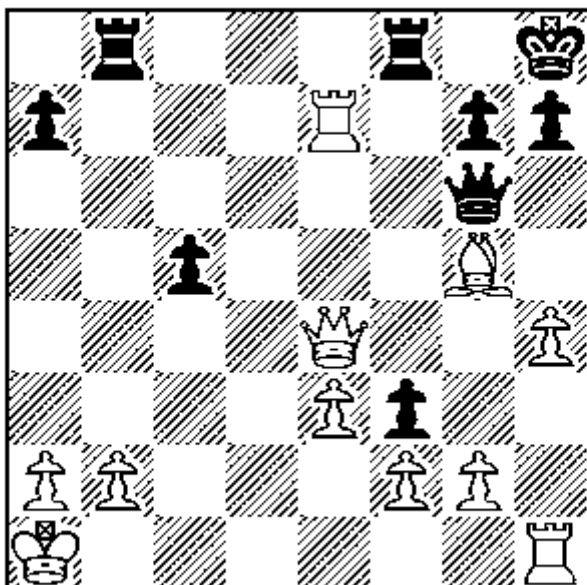
14 Nxe4!

Kasparov notes that the position is similar to one that arose in another game: W.Steinitz-A.Anderssen, Vienna 1873.

14 ... fxe4 15 Bxe4 dxe4 16 Qb3+ Kh8 17 Qxb7 exf3 18 Rxd7 Qe8 19 Rxe7 Qg6+ 20 Ka1

The "inhuman" moves 20 Kc1 and 20 e4 were both stronger, but you have to be a computer to consider such moves in the first place.

20 ... Rab8 21 Qe4



Nimzowitsch suggested that 21 Qd5 was even better, but it is understandable that White is seeking an endgame with his extra piece.

21 ... Qxe4

The pretty refutation of 21 ... fxg2 22 Qxg2 Qc2 is 23 Bf6!.

22 Rxe4 fxg2 23 Rg1 Rxf2 24 Rf4 Rc2?

Here 24 ... Rbxb2 25 Rf8+ Rxf8 26 Kxb2 Rf2+ was more tenacious.

25 b3 h6 26 Be7 Re8 27 Kb1 Re2 28 Bxc5 Rd8 29 Bd4 Rc8 30 Rg4 1-0

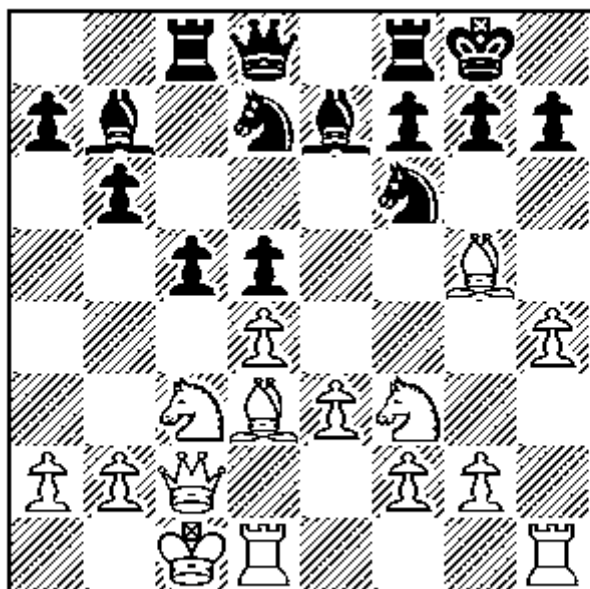
Supplementary Game 13.3

A.Rubinstein-R.Teichmann

Carlsbad 1907

Queen's Gambit Declined [D55]

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 e6 3 c4 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 Nc3 Nbd7 6 e3 0-0 7 Qc2 b6 8 cxd5 exd5 9 Bd3 Bb7 10 0-0-0 c5 11 h4 Rc8



“To exchange the pawns and attack along the open file”, according to Rubinstein. We have already seen that this is a perfectly reasonable idea.

12 Kb1

Here, too, Rubinstein had experience of playing with the black pieces. In F.Benima-A.Rubinstein, Barmen 1905, White continued superficially with 12 Bf5?!, and after 12 ... cxd4 13 Nxd4 g6 14 Bd3? Nc5 15 Kb1 Nfe4 16 Bxe7 Qxe7, Black stood better and won quite easily.

12 ... Re8

As we saw earlier, 12 ... cxd4 13 Nxd4 a6 is again worth considering.

13 dxc5!? Rxc5

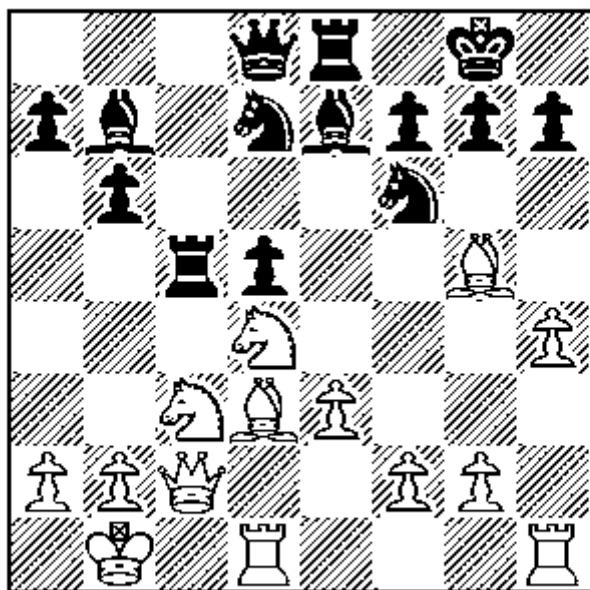
Here 13 ... Nxc5? is weak, in view of 14 Bxf6 and 15 Bxh7+.

Kasparov wrote that 13 ... bxc5! is clearly superior, since here there are none of the tactical problems that we saw in Supplementary Game 13.2, and he is unconvinced by Razuvaev's suggestion of 14 Bxf6 Nxf6 15 Ng5. It is more interesting to insert 14 Bf5!?; then Razuvaev logically suggests 14 ... g6 15 Bh3 Rb8, but 16 Bf4 is awkward, planning to meet 16 ... Rc8 (or 16 ... Ra8) with 17 h5! Nxh5 18 Nxd5 and White is better.

By recapturing with the rook, Black loses control of d4 but keeps the c-file open; 13 ...

Rxc5 does not deserve criticism – the serious error came on the following move.

14 Nd4



Exercise: Take Black here; in the light of everything we have seen so far, what would you play?

Answer:

14 ... Ne4?!

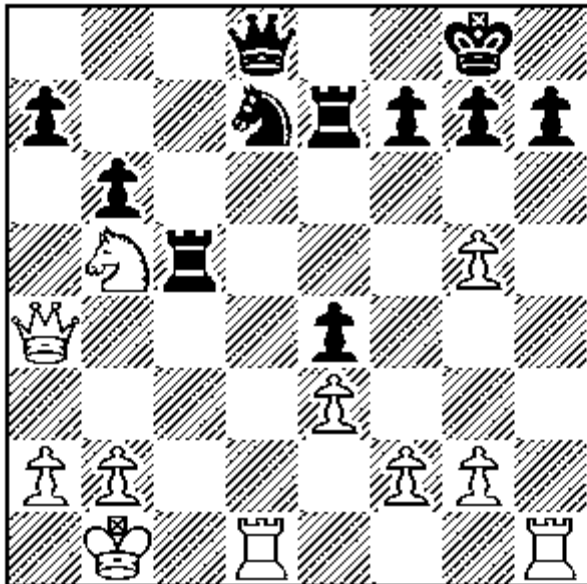
This is definitely inferior, since the opening of the d-file will be favourable to White. Our familiar idea 14 ... a6!, as given by Lasker and endorsed by Kasparov, was the best option here.

15 Bxe4 dxe4 16 Ndb5!

Threatening 17 Nd6.

16 ... Ba6 17 Qa4 Bxb5 18 Nxb5 Bxg5 19 hxg5 Re7

Taking the g-pawn is also unfavourable, since 19 ... Qxg5 20 Nd6 Re7 21 Qxa7 Qxg2? loses to 22 b4!, followed by either 23 Nf5 or 23 Nc8.



20 Rd4

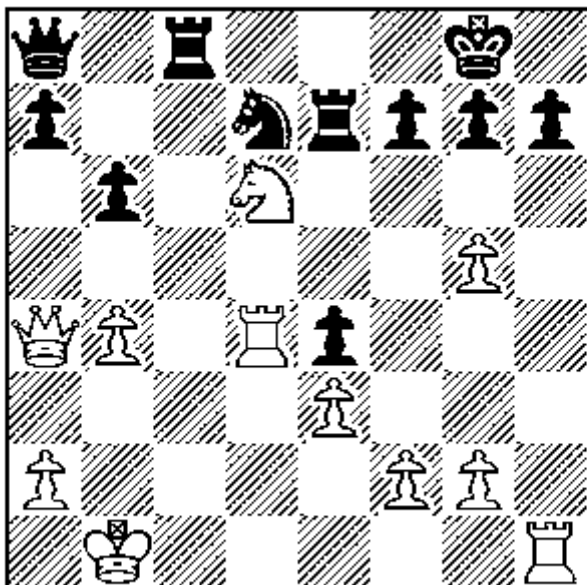
Consistent with White's previous play, utilizing the open file; now 20 ... Rxd1 is answered by 21 Rhd1.

Instead, 20 Nxa7 is preferred by Kasparov, when 20 ... Qc7 21 Nb5 Qc6 loses to 22 Rd6! Qxb5 23 Qa8+ Nf8 24 Rd8 etc. The solid reinforcement 20 f4 is also strong, since 20 ... exf3 would allow 21 Qh4 and wins.

20 ... Qa8 21 b4! Rc8?!

If 21 ... Rxd1 then 22 Rc1!, threatening 23 Nxa7 or 23 Nd6.

22 Nd6



22 ... b5?

Here 22 ... Rd8 was necessary, when White has several interesting continuations, such as 23 Rhd1, or 23 Qd1, or 23 Nf5 Re5 24 g4 Nf8 25 Rc1, all of which give him some advantage. It also looks good to open the h-file first with 23 g6!, as after 23 ... hxg6 24 Qd1 Nf6, White has the beautiful tactical resource 25 Rh8+! Kxh8 26 Nxf7+ Rxf7 27 Rxd8+ Qxd8 28 Qxd8+ Kh7 and can now create a passed pawn with 29 f3.

23 Nxc8! 1-0

White gains a decisive material advantage.

“An elegant win over a future world champion”

Reuben Fine commented that, after the First World War, Rubinstein's character became more repressed but his style of play became bolder, and he quotes this game as an example.

Rubinstein conceives the idea of sacrificing a piece for two pawns and an attack. One could argue that, before the war, in the same position Rubinstein might well have come to the same decision, though of course this cannot be proved.

Be that as it may, it is easier to agree with Fine's description of the game as “an elegant win”, and it is not difficult to share another of his conclusions, that in many games Rubinstein's play approaches perfection.

Game 14

M.Euwe-A.Rubinstein

The Hague 1921

Sicilian Defence [B29]

1 e4 c5

Question: Rubinstein playing the Sicilian! This seems strange for the time, and also at odds with his classical style. Did he often play this defence?

Answer: In fact the Sicilian wasn't a defence that Rubinstein used very often; nevertheless, he had good results with it: seven wins, two losses, and several draws. Four of those wins (and only one defeat) were with the Nimzowitsch Variation, as in this game.

2 Nf3 Nf6 3 e5 Nd5 4 d4

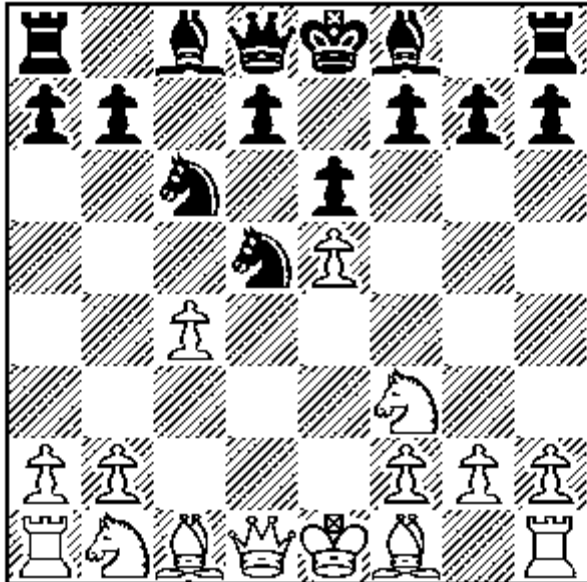
Here 4 Nc3 is considered to be the strongest move, which Rubinstein also faced.

4 ... cxd4 5 Qxd4 e6 6 c4?!

Too optimistic. 6 Bc4 Nc6 7 Qe4 is preferable, as has been played many times.

6 ... Nc6 7 Qd1?!

A strange decision and an inaccuracy; there is no need for such a passive move. White could have played 7 Qe4, keeping the queen centralized and active.



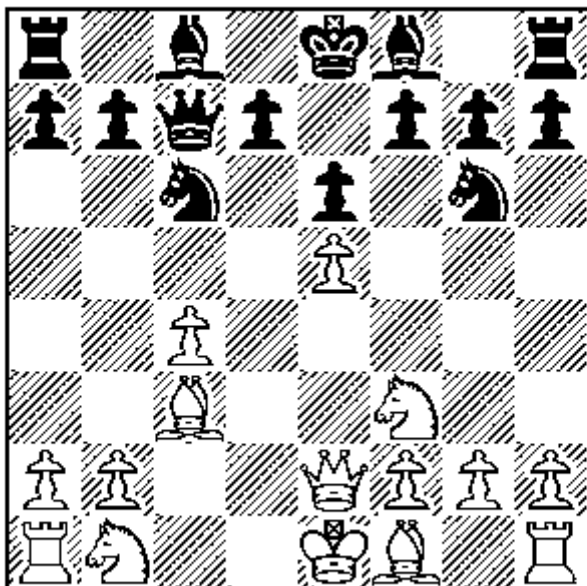
Exercise: What is the best square for the black knight?

Answer:

7 ... Nde7!

The e5-pawn is the target, so the knight is heading for g6. There is also an immediate threat of 8 ... Nxe5 9 Nxe5 Qa5+ etc.

8 Bd2 Ng6 9 Qe2 Qc7 10 Bc3



White manages to organize the defence of the e5-pawn, at the cost of becoming slightly disorganized and behind in development. In particular the bishop on f1 will require more time to mobilize.

Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein continued his own development?

Answer:

10 ... b6!

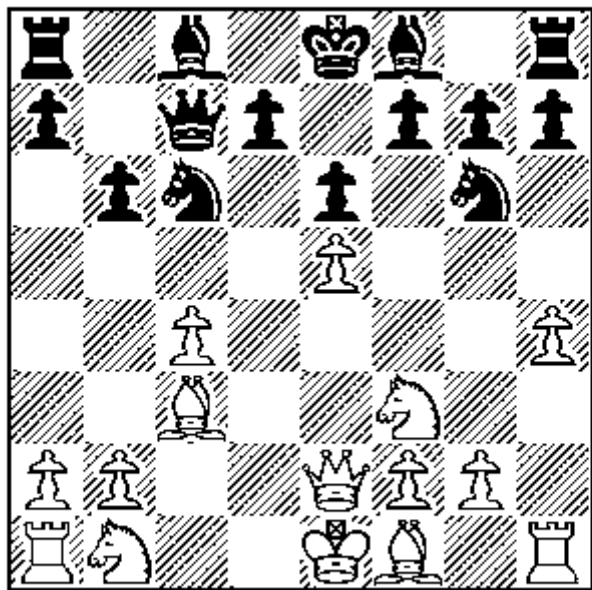
This is aimed precisely at hindering White from playing g2-g3 and Bg2.

Instead, 10 ... Be7 would have been inaccurate, presenting White with no difficulties; he could proceed with 11 g3 (or insert 11 h4 h5 first) and then has time for 12 Bg2 and 13 0-0.

The immediate attack with 10 ... Bb4?! is also ineffective. White can just play 11 Bxb4 Nxb4 12 Nc3 and there is no time to capture the e5-pawn in view of the weakness created on d6; i.e. 12 ... Nc6?! 13 0-0-0 Ngxe5?? 14 Nb5 and wins.

11 h4

Now 11 g3 Bb7 12 Bg2 would run into 12 ... Ncxe5!; while 11 Nbd2 was also unsatisfactory on account of 11 ... Bb4! and the problems with the e5-pawn reappear.



Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein responded to this impetuous advance by the future World Champion?

Answer:

11 ... d6!

Question: Hmm, right ... is this really the best? Doesn't it just help White to get rid of his weakness on e5? Wasn't it better to maintain the tension with 11 ... h5 - ?

Answer: Black could maintain the tension as you say, yes, but he can't make progress just by putting pressure on the e5-pawn. In the absence of any threats, after 11 ... h5, White could play 12 a3 (preventing ... Bb4), followed by Nbd2 and 0-0-0.

The pawn is securely defended and it obstructs Black's development, so he needs a different approach. It's true that the weakness disappears, but Rubinstein will show that his gain in activity is an important factor.

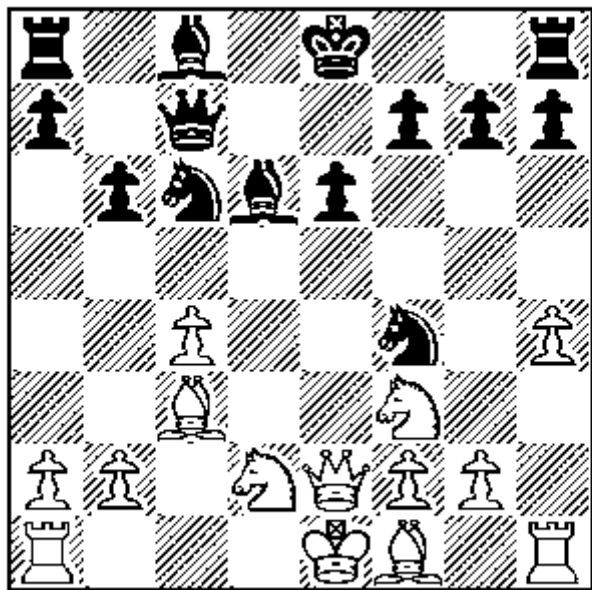
Since the diagonal of the c3-bishop is now opening up, it is essential for Black's central counterplay to be justified tactically; in other words, that after 12 exd6 Bxd6, Black has a good answer to 13 Bxg7.

12 exd6 Bxd6 13 Nbd2

After 13 Bxg7 Rg8 14 Bh6 (14 Bc3 allows the strong reply 14 ... Nf4, regaining the pawn with greater activity), Black can simply continue developing with 14 ... Bb7; for example, 15 Nc3 0-0-0 16 0-0-0 (16 Nb5 is answered by 16 ... Bb4+) 16 ... Nf4 17 Qd2 (17 Bxf4 concedes control of the dark squares, giving Black good compensation after 17 ... Bxf4+ 18 Kb1 Ne5) 17 ... a6!, followed by 18 ... Nxe2, which it is not possible to prevent satisfactorily (not yet 17 ... Nxe2?! on account of 18 Nb5!).

In the event of 13 g3, Black can again just continue with 13 ... Bb7, as after 14 Bxg7 Rg8 15 Bc3 0-0-0, his compensation is more than obvious, with ideas such as ... Nb4, ... Bb4, and ... Nce5, as appropriate.

13 ... Nf4



14 Qe3

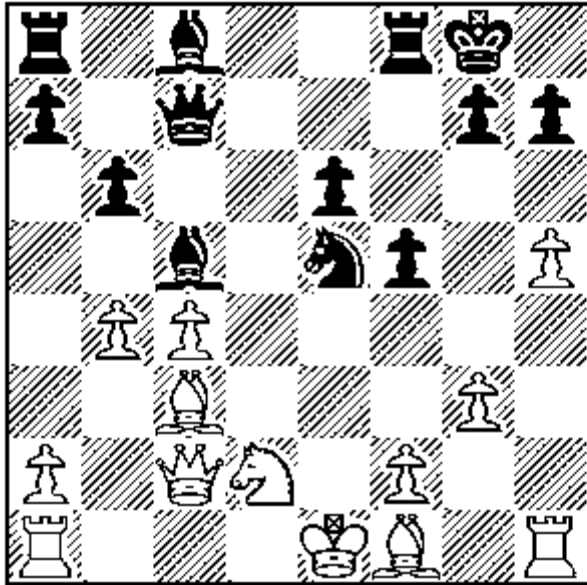
Euwe doesn't want to retreat his queen to d1 once more, and considers the attacks to which his queen is now exposed to be the lesser evil. Instead, 14 Qe4 would be answered by 14 ... Bb7, when White would have to be constantly on guard against a discovered attack after a move of the c6-knight.

13 ... Bc5 15 Qe4 f5

Black gains space "for free".

16 Qc2 0-0 17 g3 Ng6 18 h5 Nge5 19 Nxe5 Nxe5 20 b4

On 20 Bg2, Black would have played 20 ... Bb7, when 21 Bxb7 Qxb7 22 0-0-0? is not possible owing to 22 ... Ng4!, winning material.



Exercise: How did Rubinstein react to this attack on his bishop?

Answer:

20 ... Bxf2+!

“A very strong positional sacrifice of a bishop for two pawns; impressive testimony to the combinative ability of the Polish grandmaster.” – Tartakower.

The timid retreat 20 ... Be7? (or 20 ... Bd6) was inferior, as after 21 Bg2 Bb7 22 Bxb7 Qxb7 23 0-0, White would have overcome his greatest difficulties.

However, there was a good alternative in 20 ... Bb7 21 Rg1 Bd6 (or 21 ... Be7) and the white king has no safe haven (not now 21 ... Bxf2+? 22 Kxf2 Ng4+ 23 Ke1, because the g3-pawn is defended); for example, after 22 0-0-0, Black has the strong move 22 ... a5!, since 23 b5?! Bc5 is rather bleak for White.

21 Kxf2 Ng4+ 22 Ke2

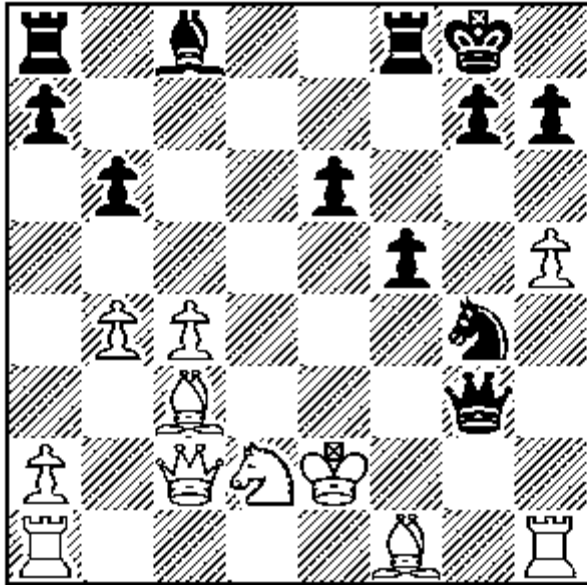
The only move to avoid immediate loss.

22 ... Qxg3?!

This was the idea, and it looks good, but surprisingly it is not the best.

It was stronger to play with just one pawn for the piece, in order to speed up the attack: 22 ... Bb7! 23 Rg1 f4!, and now the immediate threat is ... f4-f3+, while after 24 gxf4 Qxf4, the white king will be unable to survive in the centre, given so many open lines.

The text move allows White some chances.



Exercise: Nearly all of us prefer attacking to defending, but sometimes there is no alternative. How would you defend in this unpleasant position?

23 Bd4?

Now White's position becomes more difficult.

Answer: The check on f2 was not really to be feared, so 23 Qd3! was much better, when 23 ... Qf2+ 24 Kd1 Bb7 (or 24 ... Ne3+ 25 Kc1) 25 Rh3 Rad8 26 Qe2 is not particularly worrying. Rubinstein might simply have played 23 ... Qc7 again, since 23 ... Qxd3+ 24 Kxd3 Nf2+ 25 Kc2 Nxb1 26 Bg2 is not convincing either.

23 ... Bb7 24 Rh3 Qd6 25 Qc3 e5

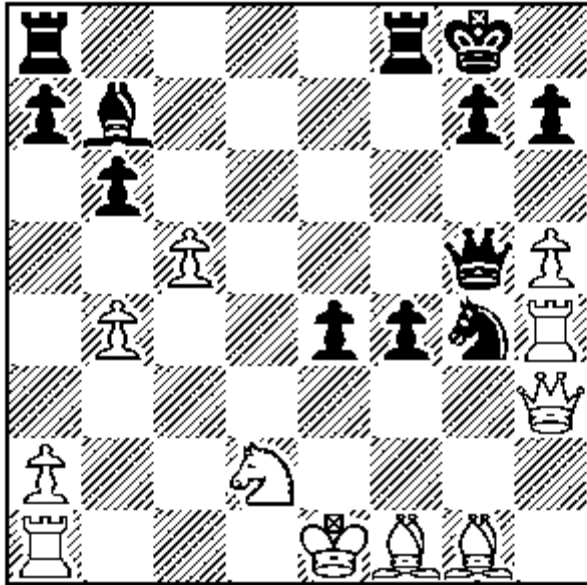
This highlights one of the snags of playing 23 Bd4. Another possibility was 25 ... Rad8, to be followed by ... f5-f4-f3, but this requires calculation. Instead, faithful to his style of play, Rubinstein prefers to advance his pawns harmoniously.

"The direct attack against the white king has been parried, but now the black pawns will decide the game." – Tartakower.

26 Bg1 f4 27 c5 Qh6 28 Ke1 e4 29 Rh4?!

This helps Black by bringing his queen to a better square without gaining anything in return.

29 ... Qg5 30 Qh3



Exercise: There are several attractive ways to exploit the bad situation of the white king. What do you think Rubinstein played here?

Answer:

30 ... Ne3!

“The coup de grâce” – Tartakower.

Rubinstein does not hesitate to spoil his neat pawn formation in exchange for opening more lines. 30 ... Ne5, followed by ... e4-e3, ... f4-f3 etc, was also strong, or even the immediate 30 ... e3.

31 Bxe3 fxe3

“A curious circumstance: when these pawns become doubled, the pressure on the enemy king is also doubled.” – Rubinstein.

32 Bc4+

After 32 Nxe4, the quickest win is 32 ... Rxf1+! 33 Kxf1 Ba6+, soon forcing mate.

32 ... Kh8 33 Nf1 Qf6 0-1

Threatening mate in four, starting with 34 ... Qc3+, and also attacking the rook on a1. White can defend against both threats with 34 Rc1, but then Black delivers mate in another way with 34 ... Qf2+ 35 Kd1 Rad8+ etc.

Another First Brilliancy Prize

The 1923 Mährisch Ostrau tournament was a disaster for Rubinstein. From 13 games he scored “-4”, only winning two, but both of these were extraordinary productions. We have already seen his triumph over Tarrasch (Game 10), while the beautiful creation below was awarded the First Brilliancy Prize.

Tartakower described it thus: “The brilliant tactics in the following impressive game are reminiscent of Morphy. But on closer examination we can also enjoy the high strategy of the

moderns – the firm, profound and multilateral – adapted to the exigencies of the open game.”

Game 15

A.Rubinstein-K.Hromadka

Mährisch Ostrau 1923

King's Gambit [C30]

1 e4

Rubinstein preferred to begin the game with 1 d4, but he did occasionally play 1 e4.

1 ... e5 2 f4

Question: The King's Gambit! Isn't it rather shocking that a predominantly positional player such as Rubinstein should play this opening quite frequently?

Answer: To some extent, yes. The King's Gambit was his preferred option against 1 ... e5, (although he played other lines too), but he did not deviate from his style at all; he played it in his own way, avoiding any dubious lines or sacrifices.

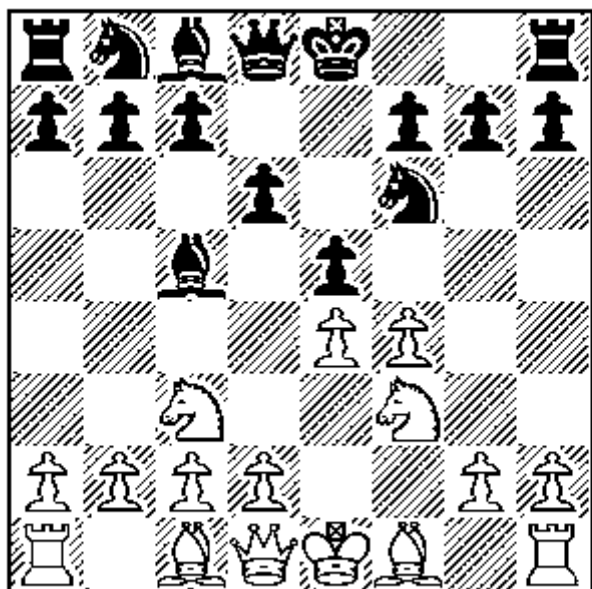
Rubinstein himself commented: “Although gambit play is employed less and less, it always proves interesting for the violent attacks it provides and the combinative chances it offers.”

2 ... Bc5 3 Nf3 d6 4 Nc3

Before the First World War Rubinstein played the main alternative 4 c3 four times, gaining four victories after 4 ... Nc6 5 Bb5 (three against Georg Salwe), but he later switched to the text move.

4 ... Nf6

A.Rubinstein-D.Przepiorka, Warsaw 1919, brought the first of Rubinstein's only two defeats with the King's Gambit (set against ten wins and two draws). It came after 4 ... Nc6 5 Bb5 Bd7 6 d3 Nd4 7 Bxd7+ Qxd7 8 fxe5 Nxf3+ 9 Qxf3 dxe5 10 Rf1 f6 11 Bd2 0-0-0 12 0-0-0 Ne7, but was clearly not the result of the opening.



5 Bc4

Question: Am I right in assuming that it is not appropriate to capture the e5-pawn with 5 fxe5 dxe5 6 Nxe5 - ?

Answer: Definitely. In general, the King's Gambit offers the sacrifice of a pawn in the opening and does not seek to win material at the cost of consuming tempi, since although 2 f4 is an aggressive move it also weakens the position. In this case Black would gain more than enough compensation simply by completing his development, for example with 6 ... 0-0 (threatening 7 ... Re8) and after 7 Nf3 Nc6, there is already a threat of 8 ... Ng4.

5 ... Nc6

The course of Rubinstein-Marco, The Hague 1921, was quite striking: 5 ... 0-0 6 d3 Nbd7 7 f5; we shall examine it with light notes in Supplementary Game 15.1.

6 d3 Bg4

Seeking to exploit the absence of the king's bishop on c4. Another idea is to try to neutralize it with 6 ... Be6, against which 7 Bb5 is the most popular reply. On the other hand, 6 ... 0-0 allows our now familiar advance 7 f5, preparing to attack the black kingside with g2-g4.

7 h3

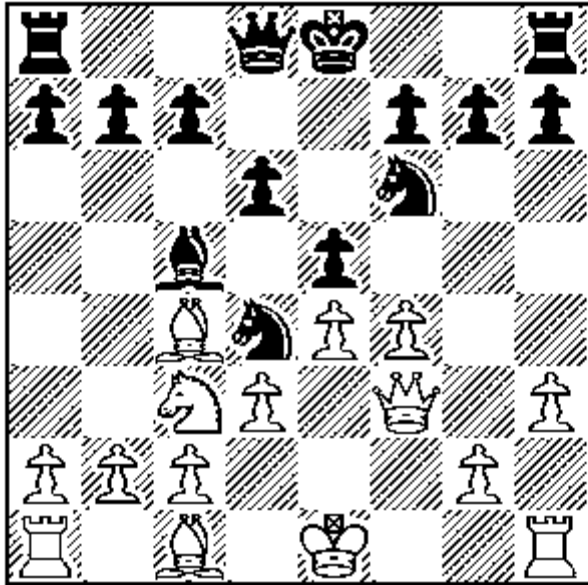
The alternative main line is 7 Na4, which both Alekhine and Spielmann preferred.

7 ... Bxf3 8 Qxf3 Nd4

Consistent; although 8 ... exf4 is also interesting, based on the fact that 9 Qxf4?! Ne5 10 Bb3? Nh5! reveals the defects of White's open position, especially the e1-h4 diagonal. White also gains little from 9 Bxf4 Nd4 10 Qd1 (the sacrifice 10 Qg3? is unsound: 10 ... Nh5 11 Qg4 Nxf4 12 Qxf4 Nxc2+ 13 Kd1 Ne3+ and ... Nxc4) 10 ... c6, when Black plans ... b7-b5 or ... d6-d5, depending on what White does.

Rubinstein suggested that 9 Bb5 was best, eliminating the annoying knight, and he played this against S. Rosselli del Turco at Merano 1924, which continued 9 ... Nd7 (9 ... 0-0 would be answered the same way) 10 Bxc6 bxc6 11 Bxf4 0-0 12 g4 Qh4+ 13 Qg3 Qxg3+ 14 Bxg3 Bb4 15 Kd2 and White had a slight endgame advantage; Rubinstein eventually won after an eventful rook ending.

Tartakower commented: "However, to us the safest move appears to be 8 ... Qe7". In that case it is possible to apply the same recipe of Rubinstein's, which had already been played by Chigorin and was later employed by Fischer (in simultaneous exhibitions), namely 9 Bb5!.



Exercise: What do you think Rubinstein played in this position?

Answer:

9 Qg3!

Even in those days this was “old theory”; whereas 9 Qd1?! would leave White behind in development, with his king in the centre for several moves. Black could play ... c7-c6 and prepare a rapid offensive on the queenside, or a central pawn break.

9 ... Qe7

Preparing queenside castling.

Question: Hmm, White’s idea is naturally based on the fact that 9 ... Nxc2+ is not to be feared in view of 10 Kd1 Nxa1 11 Qxg7. But is this so clear?

Answer: Correct. “Seeing is believing”, or “Trust but verify”; no less a player than Pillsbury considered that Black could accept the sacrifice, and he defended his opinion against Chigorin at Hastings 1895, albeit without success. After 11 Qxg7, he played what is considered to be the strongest move, 11 ... Kd7, and the game continued 12 fxe5 dxe5 13 Rf1 Be7 14 Qxf7 Kc8 with a decent position for Black. However, 14 Bg5! improves for White, as Rubinstein pointed out, regaining the piece with an attack and the later capture of the knight on a1 in prospect.

In simul Rubinstein faced 11 ... Rf8 12 fxe5 d5 (12 ... dxe5 13 Bg5 Be7 14 Rf1 is worse) 13 exd5 Rg8 14 Qxf6 Qxf6 15 exf6 Rxd2, when the best move seems to be 16 d4!, forcing the bishop to choose between abandoning the g1-a7 diagonal or losing control of e7; for example, 16 ... Bxd4?! 17 Nb5 Bb6 18 Re1+ Kd8 (or 18 ... Kf8 19 d6!, followed by Re7) 19 Re7 and Black has problems.

According to both Euwe and Keres, Black’s best course is to play 9 ... exf4 10 Qxg7 Rf8 11 Kd1 Qe7 12 Rf1 Rg8 13 Qh6 Rxd2 with an unclear position. After 14 Bxf4, White is threatening 15 Bg5 or 15 e5, but his king in the centre looks very insecure; 14 ... d5!? is one of several playable continuations for Black.

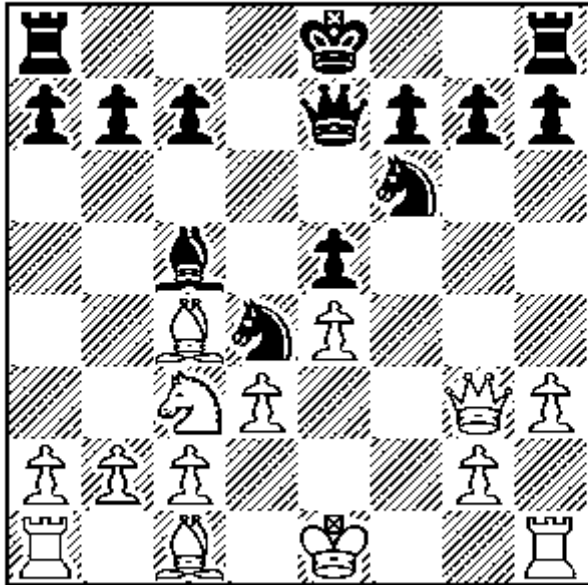
10 fxe5

Not now 10 Qxg7? due to 10 ... Rg8 11 Qh6 Nxc2+ etc.

10 ... dxe5

Rubinstein's opponent later had this line as White and was confronted with 10 ... Nh5. He played 11 Qg4 Qxe5 12 Rf1 0-0 13 Bg5, continuing in the spirit of the gambit. K.Hromadka-A.Pokorny, Rakovnik 1940, continued 13 ... g6 (after 13 ... Nxc2+ 14 Kd2 Nxa1 15 Qxh5, White has compensation for the exchange, and it is not clear whether the knight on a1 can be saved) 14 0-0-0 c6 15 Bh6 Ng7?! 16 Qd7! and White was on top.

Another option is 11 Qf2, intending Nd5 or Be3, while 11 ... Nb3? can be answered by 12 Qxf7+!, winning a pawn.



Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein continued here?

Answer:

11 Kd1!

“Although willingly renouncing the right to castle, White is better, in Rubinstein's opinion, because in the open f-file he has an excellent base for future operations.” – Tartakower.

Rubinstein commented that: “In this way the white forces remain available to attack at the opportune moment.”

We can add that, since the position has a closed character, White can rely on eventually improving the strange situation of his king and coordinating his pieces effectively, thanks to the f-file and the pressure on g7, e5 etc.

Alternatively, 11 Bb3 is possible, but less ambitious.

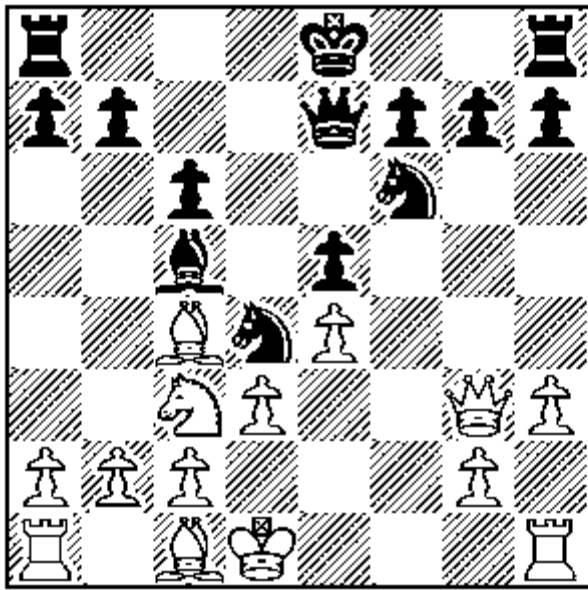
11 ... c6

Controlling d5 and creating the possibility of expansion with ... b7-b5, followed by ... a7-a5.

If Black opts instead to castle long, 11 ... 0-0-0, Rubinstein suggested occupying the f-file with 12 Rf1!, threatening to take on g7; after 12 ... Rhg8 13 Nd5, White prepares c2-c3 and

Kc2, maintaining the initiative.

Castling on the other wing with 11 ... 0-0 is a reasonable alternative and fully playable; 12 Bg5 can be answered by 12 ... Qd6.



Exercise: How did Rubinstein complement his idea?

Answer:

12 a4!

By using the sort of “prophylactic thinking” that Dvoretsky mentions in many of his books. The priority here is to suppress Black’s potential counterplay based on ... b7-b5, but prophylactic thinking should do more than just passively prevent the opponent’s plans; ideally it should do so with a useful move.

Question: Hmm, I don’t really see the usefulness of playing a2-a4 just now.

Answer: Agreed, it is not obvious, and it will depend on what Black does.

Question: Right; in that case I await further enlightenment.

Another question though; would it not be worthwhile to exchange the strong black knight on d4 with 12 Ne2 - ?

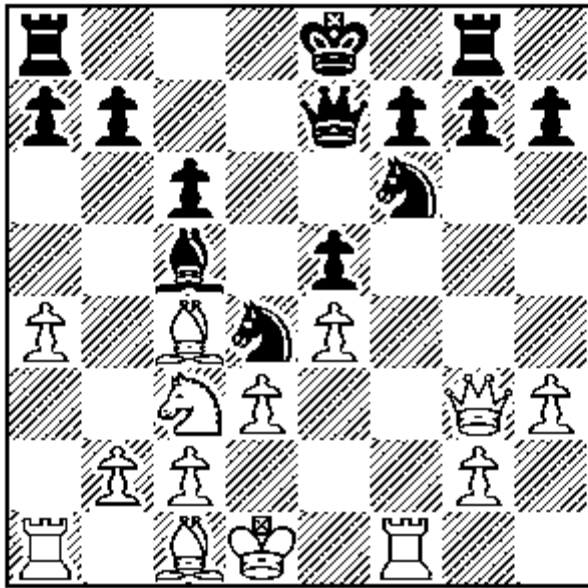
Answer: The idea is not a bad one, but the timing is important. The problem here is that 12 Ne2 Nxe2 13 Kxe2 leaves the white king without a safe haven; for example, after 12 ... b5 14 Bb3 0-0. This is particularly noticeable in a line such as 15 Bh6 Nh5 16 Qg4 Nf4+! 17 Bxf4 exf4 18 Qxf4 Kh8, planning ... f7-f5 with very good compensation. This is not forced by any means, but it serves as an example. Rubinstein himself disapproved of 12 Ne2 after the game.

12 ... Rg8

It was still not essential to defend the pawn; 12 ... 0-0-0 was playable, as after 13 Qxg7? Rhg8 14 Qxf7 Qd6!, the white queen is trapped (even better than 14 ... Qxf7 15 Bxf7 Rxd7);

instead, White would have played 13 Rf1 again.

13 Rf1



White occupies the f-file, as Rubinstein indicated, and prepares the possibility of pinning the knight with Bg5, which induces his opponent to make an error.

13 ... h6

Unnecessary; Black could play 13 ... 0-0-0 without fear, since 14 Bg5 h6! 15 Bxf6?! gxf6 only serves to increase Black's activity; the doubled pawns are unimportant.

The loser of this game also had this position with White, and demonstrated that he had learned a great deal from the current game. K.Hromadka-L.Prokes, Prague 1927, continued 14 Ne2 Kb8 (or similarly 14 ... Nxe2 15 Kxe2 and White is better, according to Keres) 15 Nxd4 Bxd4 16 c3 Bb6 17 Kc2 h6 18 Rf5 Bc7 19 Qf2 Bb6 20 Qf3 Bc7 21 Be3 Rh8 22 Qf2 with advantage.

14 Ne2

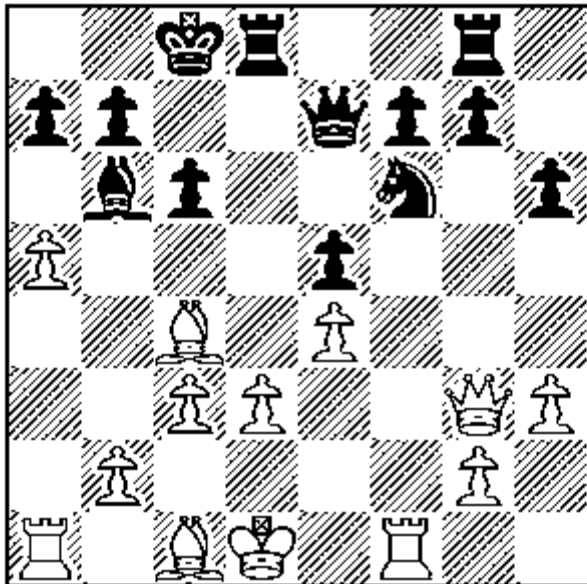
Question: So now this is good?

Answer: Yes, the situation is different. The black king now has no good refuge on the kingside; nor does he have ... b7-b5 available; added to which, the knight on d4 is very strong, as you pointed out, so it is appropriate to exchange it in order to be able to regroup. Finally, there is now no better plan available.

14 ... 0-0-0

White would also be slightly better after 14 ... Nxe2 15 Kxe2 0-0-0 16 Rf5 Rde8 17 Bd2 etc.

15 Nxd4 Bxd4 16 c3 Bb6 17 a5!



“This move will prove to be a surprisingly effective blow. From now on all White’s moves appear as though they were carved in stone!” – Tartakower.

We begin to see the extra usefulness of 12 a4; by dislodging the bishop White gains another tempo for attacking the a7-pawn.

17 ... Bc7 18 Be3 Kb8

Of course not 18 ... Nxe4? due to 19 Qg4+.

19 Kc2

And the disadvantages of 12 Kd1 are in the past; White’s king is safe and all his pieces are harmoniously placed.

19 ... Ka8

Black prefers to defend against the coming attack on a7 with ... Bb8, avoiding for now having to weaken himself with ... a7-a6.

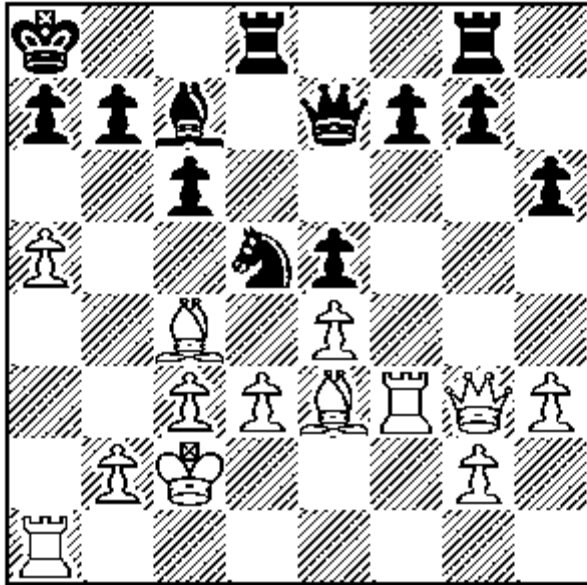
20 Rf3

Maintaining the ‘X-ray’ pressure on f7 before playing Qf2. Rubinstein explained that “the white pieces have been strategically placed so that the bishop pair can make its presence felt in the course of the offensive”, emphasizing that, furthermore, “White has been able to grant complete freedom of movement to the rooks, and the king has remained well protected.”

20 ... Nd5!?

“Black feels in an uncomfortable position and plays riskily, based on tactics, to try to create counterchances. But his ingenious combination, as beautiful as it is unfortunate, is subject to the law of reaction and will arouse renewed spiritual forces in the opponent,” was Tartakower solemn comment, and he suggested playing 20 ... Bb8 21 Qf2 Rd7 instead, “still retaining some hopes of counter-attack along the d-file”, although the black position would then have been passive and White would be free to expand on both wings with g2-g4 or b2-b4. The tactical shot Bxh6 would also be available, either immediately or prepared by 22 g4.

Rubinstein did not approve of this knight move either, since it “makes it easier for White to intensify his pressure.”



Exercise: So, how did Rubinstein intensify the pressure?

Answer:

21 Bg1!

There are several possibilities here, which are objectively good for White, such as 21 Bxa7!? Kxa7 22 exd5 and if 22 ... e4 then 23 Qf2+. Taking on d5 at once was possible too, though that would require deeper calculation; for example, 21 exd5 cxd5 (21 ... e4 is inferior, in view of 22 Bf4 exf3 23 Bxc7 Qe2+ 24 Kb3 with a material advantage) and now White has a choice of 22 a6!, 22 Bxd5 or 22 Bb5, and “it looks as though White can maintain his advantage, which would not have been easy however, since the play would be rather unclear

and there would be little time for reflection.” – Tartakower.

Thus from the practical point of view, as well as being objectively good, Tartakower concludes that “the text move is the best, since it increases the pressure and does not allow the opponent any possibility of counter-attack.”

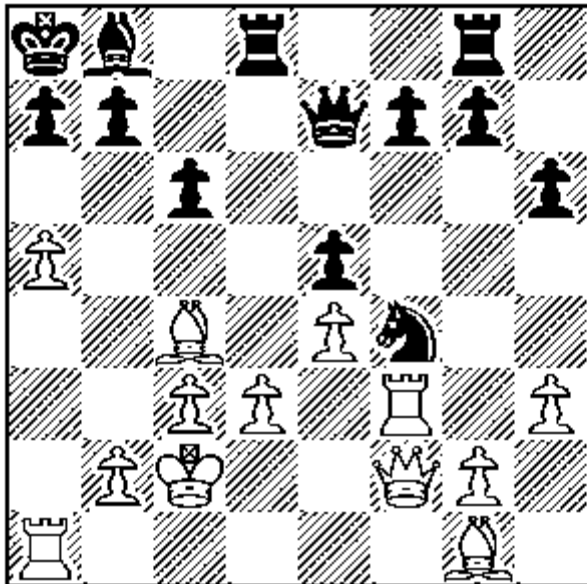
21 ... Nf4

Question: But was it really a good idea to allow the knight to settle on f4? It looks very strong.

Answer: Yes, the knight looks strong, but in fact it is less stable here than on f6, and if it should have to move, the f-file will become open and the f7-pawn will pay the price. It is a question that can only be resolved by tactics. White’s greater activity makes one feel optimistic about his chances, but of course it also requires good calculation.

With a marvellous sequence of moves, Rubinstein now demonstrates that the knight is not in fact well placed on f4.

22 Qf2! Bb8



Exercise: What is the key to Rubinstein's idea?

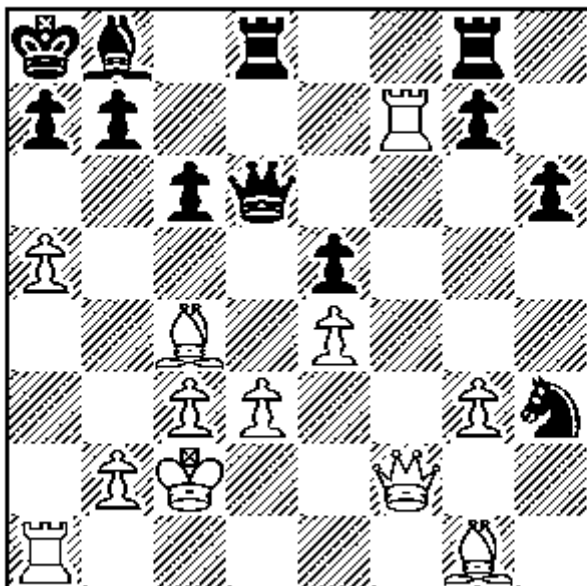
Answer:

23 g3!

White exchanges the h3-pawn for the one on f7, but this is only the first step.

23 ... Nxh3 24 Rxf7 Qd6

The endgame after 24 ... Nxh3 25 Rxe7 Rg8 26 Rf1 is hopeless for Black.



Exercise: What was Rubinstein's plan when he played 21 Bg1 - ?

Answer:

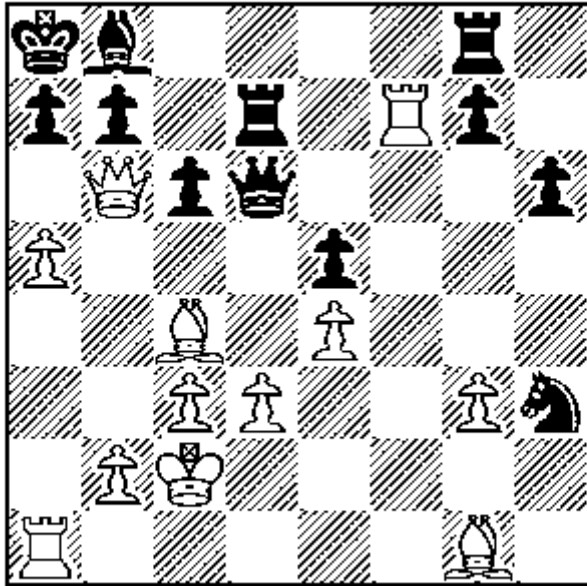
25 Qb6!!

"We are reaching the last days of Pompeii." – Tartakower.

It is clear that Rubinstein had no intention of allowing 25 ... Nxb1. Nor can Black take the queen, since 25 ... axb6 26 axb6+ Ba7 27 Rxa7+ Kb8 28 Rxb7+ Kc8 29 Ba6 leads to mate (even 29 ... Qxd3+ 30 Bxd3 Rxd3 doesn't save him after 31 Rf7 Kb8 32 b7 etc).

This brilliant move is stronger than 25 Ba6, which would be answered by 25 ... Rd7 26 Qf5 Rgd8.

25 ... Rd7



Exercise: We still have to see the “magnificent complement to the problem composed by Rubinstein”, as Tartakower expressed it. What is it?

Answer:

26 Bc5!!

The decisive blow. Now 26 ... Qc7 would allow the simple 27 Qxc7 Rxc7 28 Rxc7 Bxc7 29 Bxg8.

26 ... Rxf7 27 Bxd6 Rf2+ 28 Qxf2!

The simplest, winning a piece.

28 ... Nxf2 29 Bc5! 1-0

“A game which, in a most agreeable way, shows the power of combination and the logical method of the play of the Polish grandmaster.” – Stahlberg.

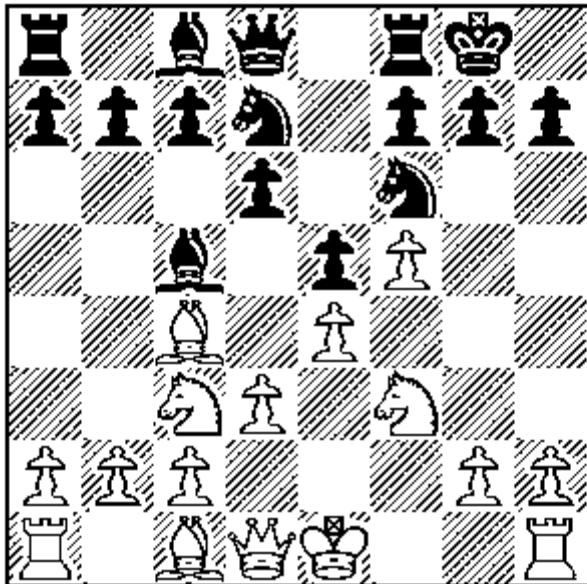
Supplementary Game 15.1

A.Rubinstein-G.Marco

The Hague 1921

King's Gambit [C30]

1 e4 e5 2 f4 Bc5 3 Nf3 d6 4 Bc4 Nf6 5 Nc3 0-0 6 d3 Nbd7 7 f5



This advance, when the black king has castled short, and with the black pieces passively placed, is very promising, since White can initiate his offensive without granting the opponent any clear counterplay.

Nevertheless, Bogoljubow suggested 7 Na4 as “simple and better”, intending to exchange the bishop on c5, followed by kingside castling. Today’s chess analysis engines are in agreement; they dislike f4-f5 and even prefer Black’s position, although on this occasion it is difficult to agree with them.

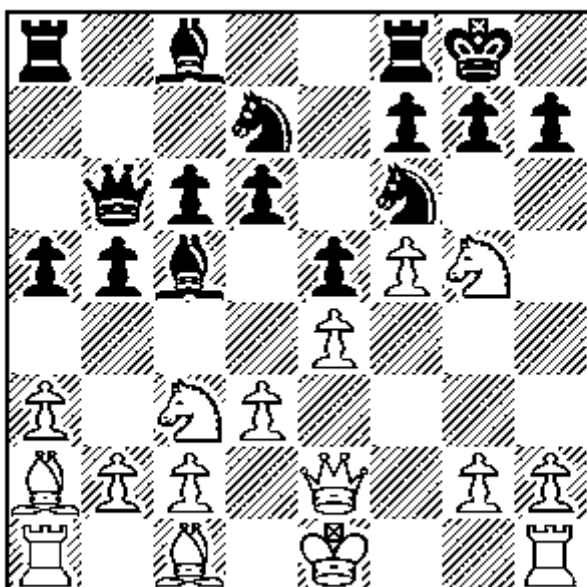
7 ... c6

This idea of expanding on the queenside with ... b7-b5 and perhaps ... a7-a5, has been attributed to Anderssen, although he actually played it earlier (on the fifth move, instead of castling) and without much success.

8 a3 b5 9 Ba2 a5 10 Qe2

Preparing to retreat the c3-knight to d1 when it is attacked.

10 ... Qb6 11 Ng5!



Putting pressure on f7 and preparing g2-g4; 11 ... h6 can be answered by 12 h4.

11 ... a4 12 Nd1

Question: Another “backwards” move – can this be good?

Answer: It's not easy to evaluate this position, which is deceptive. Black is expanding on the queenside and developing pieces, but if the game fails to open up in a satisfactory way for him, he will not find it easy to exploit these advantages.

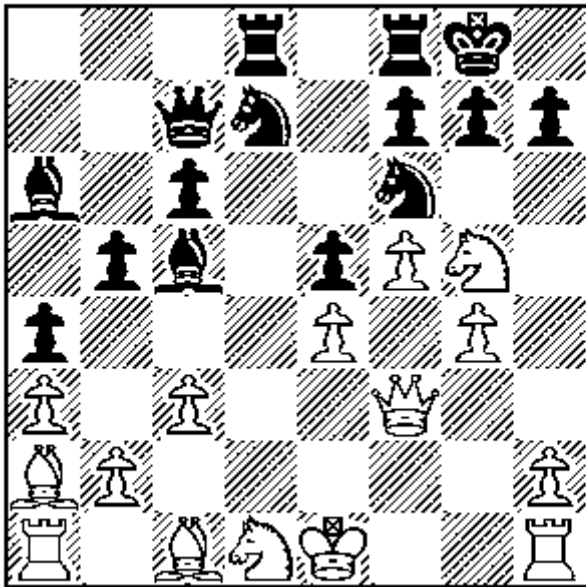
12 ... d5 13 c3 Ba6 14 Qf3

Evading the ‘X-ray’ pressure exerted by the a6-bishop.

14 ... dxe4

Although this opens the position, it also revives the dormant bishop on a2. In any case, the d5-pawn was not really under attack, since 15 exd5? cxd5 16 Bxd5? Nxd5 17 Qxd5 Bb7 just wins for Black, so it was possible to play something like 14 ... Rad8, to which White could reply 15 g4.

15 dxe4 Rad8 16 g4 Qc7



The engines are no longer quite so enthusiastic about Black's position, but he is still okay.

17 Nxf7!

A curious situation; the closed centre (or, more precisely, with only the d-file open, which has no influence on the struggle), combined with a single mistake by Black, allows White to launch a successful kingside attack, despite having almost all his pieces on the back row.

17 ... Rxf7 18 g5 Nd5 19 exd5 Nb6?

This is the losing move. Black had to play 19 ... e4!, when the white king loses its safety after, for example, 20 Qxe4 cxd5 21 Bxd5 Ne5!; while 20 Qh5 Ne5! 21 g6 b4!! (allowing the a6-bishop to join the attack) 22 gxf7+ Kf8 is even more promising for Black.

20 d6

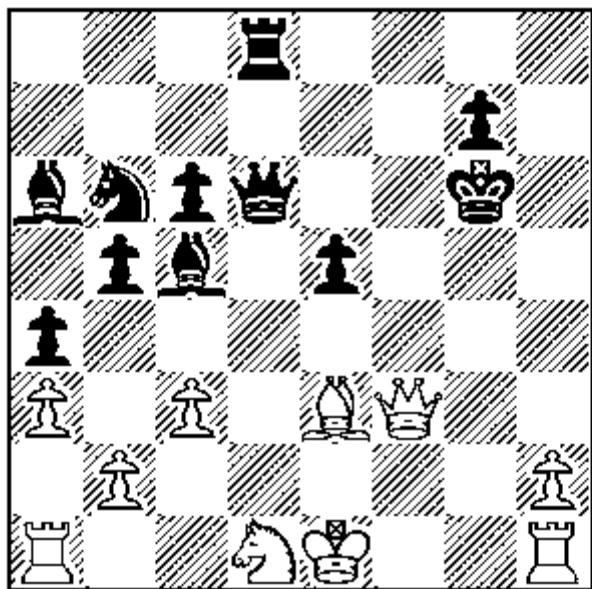
White gains the advantage with this move, which exploits the bad position of the black queen on c7, although 20 Qh5! was stronger, when there is no good defence against 21 g6.

20 ... Qxd6 21 g6!

Both kings are very exposed, but the black monarch will be in the greater danger, since

White can use the f- and g-files as avenues of attack.

21 ... hxg6 22 Bxf7+ Kxf7 23 fxg6+ Kxg6 24 Be3



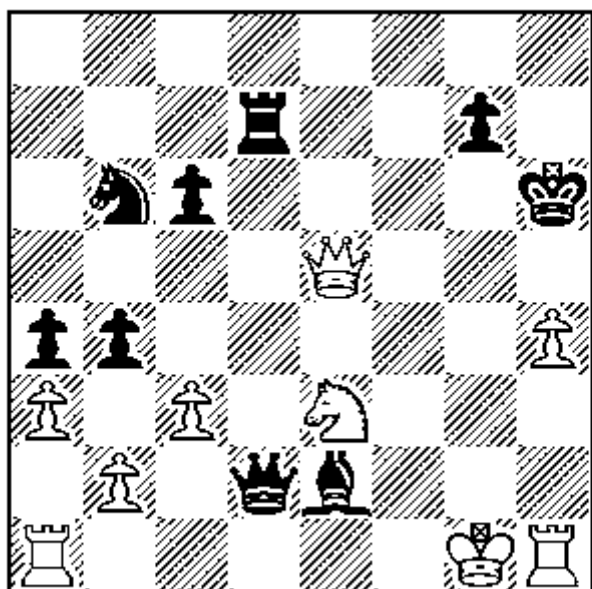
24 ... Bxe3

After 24 ... b4, suggested by Mieses, White wins with 25 Rg1+! Kh7 26 Qf7!, as Black must give up his c5-bishop by playing 26 ... Qf6.

25 Nxe3 Qd2+ 26 Kf1 b4+ 27 Kg1

White now threatens 28 Qf5+ Kh6 29 Ng4 mate, as well as 28 Rd1.

27 ... Be2 28 Qf5+ Kh6 29 Qh3+ Kg6 30 Qf5+ Kh6 31 Qxe5 Rd7 32 h4!



Preparing the decisive entrance of the h1-rook into the game. “The chief threat is 33 Rh2”

– Knoch. Equally strong was 32 h3, with the same idea of Rh2, and preparing Ng4+ in some lines.

32 ... Qxb2

After 32 ... Nd5, White can either play 33 Rh3 as planned, or else 33 Qg5+ Kh7 34 Nxd5, simplifying to an easy win.

33 Re1 Bd3? 34 Ng4+ Kg6 35 Qg5+ 1-0

Chapter Three

Endgame Mastery

The art of simplification

At the 1909 tournament in St Petersburg, Rubinstein achieved one of his greatest successes, producing masterpieces in every aspect of the game. In this book we have included five games from this event.

In the following game an endgame is reached very quickly and Rubinstein “conducted the endgame with monumental mastery”, according to the then World Champion, Emanuel Lasker.

Kmoch wrote that it was “an elegant example of the power of centralization, by virtue of which White obtains an irresistible attack even in the ending.”

This game is particularly notable for Rubinstein’s original solution (criticized by Lasker) to the problems of the position arising after Black’s 16th move.

Game 16

A.Rubinstein-J.Mieses

St Petersburg 1909

Queen’s Gambit [D06]

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 c5 3 c4 Nf6 4 cxd5 cxd4 5 Nxd4

The alternative is 5 Qxd4, which leads to an endgame after 5 ... Qxd5; White has the move which implies that he enjoys a slight advantage, but Black’s position is perfectly healthy, so the game is very close to equality.

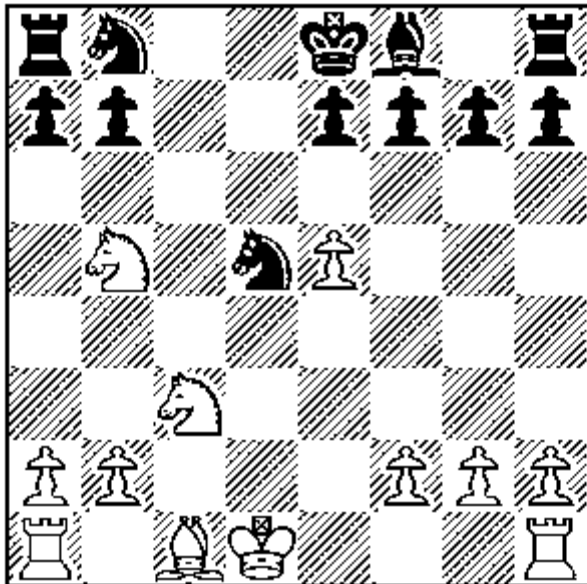
5 ... Nxd5 6 e4 Nf6

6 ... Nc7 and 6 ... Nb4 have also been played here.

7 Nc3

Since 7 e5 entails the sacrifice of a pawn after 7 ... Qa5+ and ... Qxe5, Alekhine tried 7 Bb5+ on two occasions. A.Alekhine-L.Rellstab, Bad Nauheim 1936, saw 7 ... Nfd7?! 8 0-0 a6 9 Ba4 g6 10 e5 and Black had to play the depressing 10 ... e6, to prevent the advance 11 e6. Instead, 7 ... Bd7 is more common; A.Alekhine-M.Blum, Bern (simul) 1922, continued 8 Bxd7+ Nbx7 9 Nc3 e5, when the point of exchanging the light-squared bishops becomes apparent, since White can now play 10 Nf5.

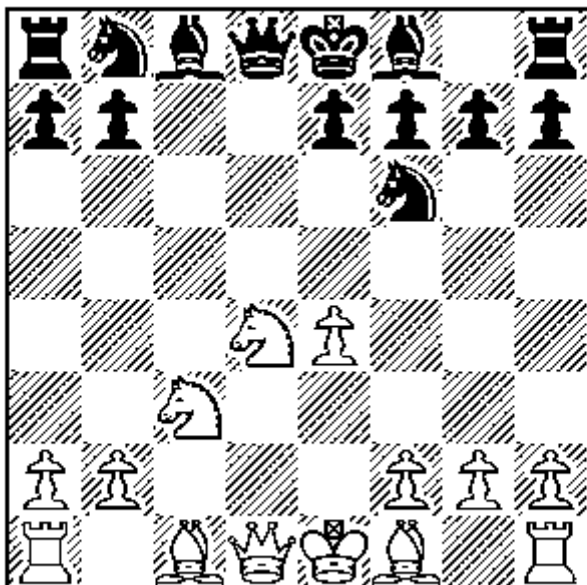
Alternatively, 8 e5 is interesting, since after 8 ... Bxb5 9 Nxb5 Qxd1+ 10 Kxd1 Nd5 11 N1c3, White’s extra tempo is noticeable and the black position looks uncomfortable.



Exercise: Nevertheless, Black has a satisfactory solution; can you find it?

Answer: 11 ... Nxc3+ is not advisable,, as after 12 bxc3, followed by 13 Kc2, the presence of the white knight on b5 and White's rapid development creates problems for Black; for example, 12 ... Kd7 13 Kc2 Nc6 14 Rd1+ Kc8 15 e6! fxe6 18 Nd4 gives White a strong initiative.

It's better to play 11 ... Nc6! 12 Nxd5 0-0-0 13 Nc3 e6, when Black develops smoothly and equalizes easily.



7 ... e5

There is no time to prepare ... e7-e5 with 7 ... a6?! because White can play 8 e5 Nd5 9 e6!; for example, 9 ... fxe6 10 Qh5+ g6 11 Qe5 Nf6 12 Bc4 with advantage.

Instead, 7 ... Nbd7 would be very passive; after 8 Be3 a6 9 Be2 e6 10 Qa4 (threatening 11 e5) 10 ... Qc7 11 f4, the black position is unpleasant. A.Rubinstein-S.Levitsky, Russian Championship, Vilnius 1912, continued 11 ... e5 12 fxe5 Qxe5 13 Nf3! Qb8 14 e5 and the

game lasted only eight more moves.

Lasker suggested 7 ... e6, which does not weaken d5 and f5.

8 Bb5+

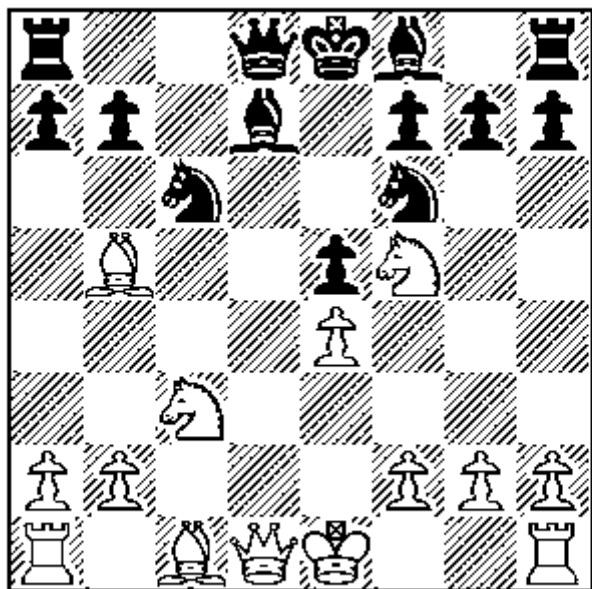
Curiously, almost twenty years later, Rubinstein preferred 8 Ndb5 and gained some advantage after 8 ... Qxd1+ 9 Kxd1 Na6, as the knight on b5 is annoying. A.Rubinstein-S.Tarrasch, Berlin 1928, continued 10 f3 Bc5 11 Na4 Be7 12 Be3 Bd7 13 Rc1 0-0 14 a3 Rfd8 15 Ke1 Ne8 16 Be2 Nd6 17 Nac3 Nxb5 18 Nxb5 b6 19 b4!, when Black was unable to solve his problems and lost in 37 moves.

But already in 1909, in his annotations to the present game, Lasker had pointed out that the correct move was 8 ... a6!, which practice has confirmed; for instance, 9 Qxd8+ Kxd8 10 Na3 Be6 11 f3 Bc5 and Black was fine, I.Nepomniachtchi-P.Svidler, Russian Championship, Nizhny Novgorod 2013.

8 ... Bd7 9 Nf5

The knight goes to the most active square, putting pressure on g7, albeit at the potential cost of a pawn. In contrast, 9 Nf3 would allow 9 ... Bb4.

9 ... Nc6?!



Black does not choose the most critical response, instead accepting a slightly inferior position. 9 ... Bxb5!? poses more problems; after 10 Qxd8+ Kxd8 11 Nxb5 Nxe4 12 Be3, Black is fine if he returns the pawn with 12 ... Nd7, but 10 Nxb5 Qa5+ 11 Nc3 Nxe4 12 0-0 Nxc3 13 bxc3 Nc6 14 Rb1 is less clear.

10 Nd6+

Rubinstein secures control of the dark squares. The alternatives were 10 0-0 and 10 Bg5, allowing 10 ... Bxf5, which would damage White's pawn structure but open the game in his favour, in view of his bishop pair and superior development, even after the exchange of queens.

10 ... Bxd6 11 Qxd6 Qe7 12 Qxe7+ Nxe7

Question: With the knight? Was it not better to recapture with the king?

Answer: Ideally, yes; but after 12 ... Kxe7, as Razuvaev pointed out, 13 Bg5 (threatening

Nd5+) is awkward, since 13 ... Be6?! runs into 14 f4!, threatening 15 Bxc6 and 16 fxe5.

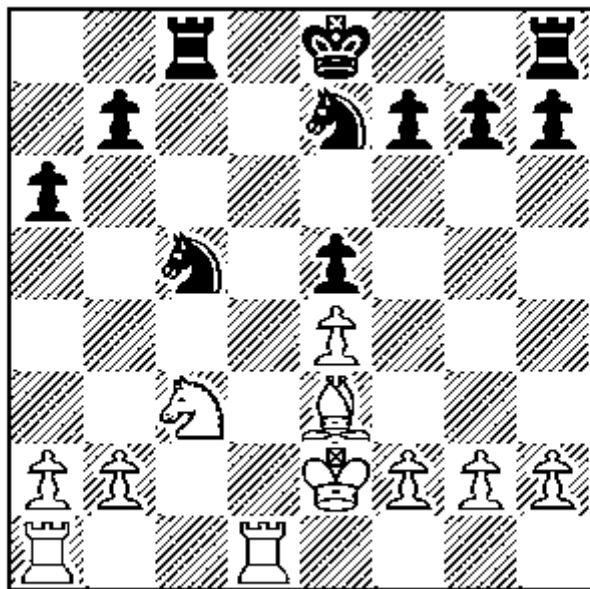
13 Be3

“This bishop is now master of the situation.” – Lasker.

13 ... a6 14 Bxd7+ Nxd7 15 Ke2

As we have seen earlier, even in an endgame a king in the centre is not always totally secure; but here the white king is quite safe.

15 ... Rc8 16 Rhd1 Nc5



Exercise: What do you think Rubinstein played in this position?

Answer:

17 Bxc5!

A surprising decision, which Lasker did not like.

Question: Me neither! Exchanging the bishop that is

the “master of the situation” – what’s the explanation?

Answer: Lasker commented: “It is, no doubt, advantageous for the development of White’s king that this square should be cleared, but, nevertheless, White should have preserved this bishop. Instead 17 Rac1 would, at least, have done no harm, for after 17 ... Ne6 18 Nd5 the strong position of Black’s knight at e6 would be compensated for by that of White’s knight at d5.”

Naturally Lasker is right in what he says, but it is not clear that Rubinstein’s surprising decision is not equally good. It hinges on White’s 19th move, which is the key to his idea.

We should also not forget Tarrasch’s dictum: “It’s not the pieces that leave the board that are important, but the ones that remain.”

Rubinstein considers that his pieces are better placed after this exchange, which is something that must be, and is, justified tactically. Curiously, 17 Bxc5 is the first choice of the

Rybka 4 engine (but not of Houdini 4).

17 ... Rxc5

Exercise (easy): How should White's idea be followed up?

Answer:

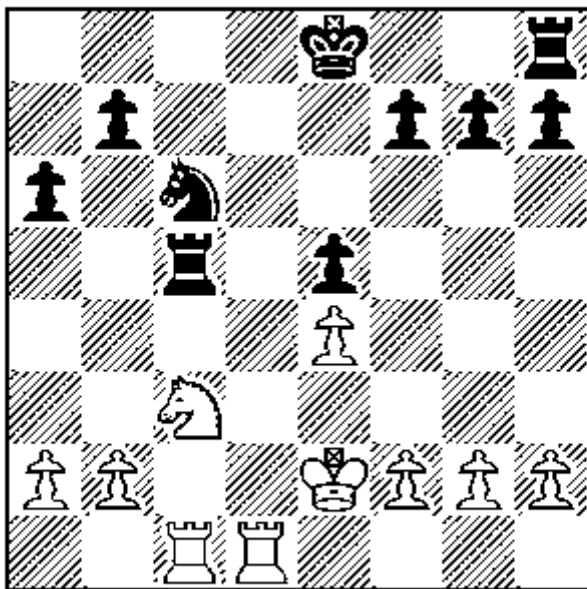
18 Rac1

The first decision is an easy one – to bring the inactive rook into the game and, if possible, exchange Black's only active piece, the rook on c5. At the same time White prevents 18 ... 0-0?, in view of 19 Nd5, winning material.

18 ... Nc6

Black continues with his own plan, which is to place his knight on d4 at an opportune moment. Rubinstein was expecting this move.

Lasker commented that Black should prefer 18 ... Rc7, followed by 19 ... 0-0, which is better. Even so White would have some advantage after 19 Na4!; for example, 19 ... Nc6 20 Ke3 0-0 21 Nc5 Nd4 22 Nd3, as given by Kmoch.



Exercise: What is the move that Rubinstein had planned to play here?

Answer:

19 Rd5!

Played with the same idea as with 18 Rac1 – exchanging Black's active rook and remaining with the better placed pieces.

19 ... Rxd5

If Black avoids the exchange with 19 ... Rc4, Lasker gave the possible continuation 20 b3 Rd4 21 Ke3! (defending the e4-pawn and liberating the knight from its defence, with the threat of 22 Rxe5+) 21 ... f6 22 Na4 Ke7 23 Nc5 Rxd5 (not 23 ... Rb8? 24 Nxb7) 24 exd5 Nb4, when in addition to his suggestion 25 d6+, which Lasker considers to be advantageous

for White, there is also the interesting idea 25 Ke4; for example: 25 ... b6 (another possibility is 25 ... Rd8 26 a3 Nxd5 27 Nxb7 Rd7 28 Nc5 Rd6, when 29 Nxa6 looks favourable to White) 26 Ne6 g6 27 Rc4! Nxa2 28 g4 with excellent compensation for the pawn, since the black knight is out of play, whereas all White's pieces are active.

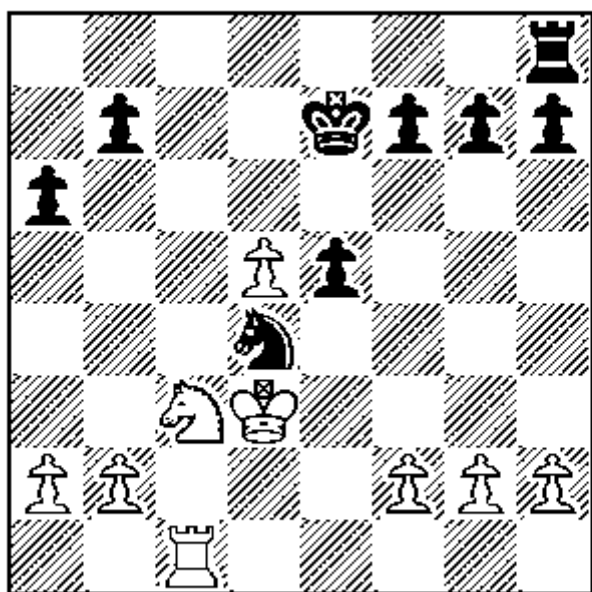
20 exd5

Question: Is it really so good for White to be left with this passed pawn?

It doesn't look to be well enough supported – or am I wrong?

Answer: This is precisely the key to the whole game; Rubinstein assessed that the pawn could be adequately supported. Within a few moves we shall see that his analysis was correct.

20 ... Nd4+ 21 Kd3 Ke7



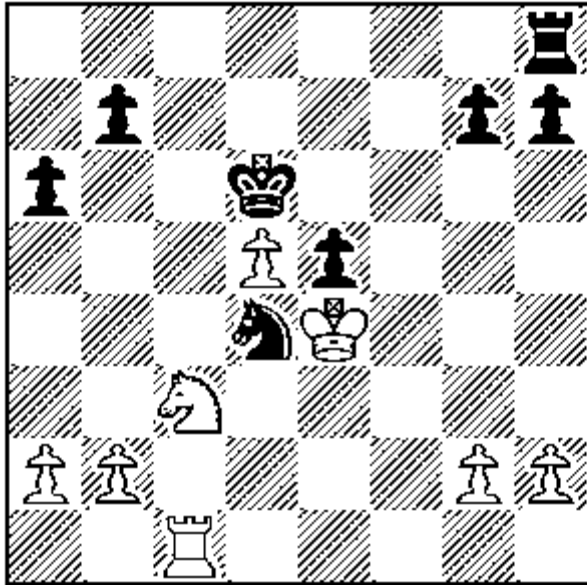
Exercise: One further very important move is needed to fully justify White's play. What is it?

Answer:

22 f4!

"The isolation of the e-pawn is of great importance, as White has afterwards an unassailable post for his pieces at e4," wrote Lasker. We can add that this is not the only advantage that White obtains, as we shall see.

22 ... f6 23 fxe5 fxe5 24 Ke4 Kd6



Exercise (easy): What is the other advantage mentioned?

Answer:

25 Rf1!

White occupies the vital f-file; the rook is heading for f7.

21 ... Rc8!

Activating his own rook in the most effective way. Black wants to dislodge the white king from its dominating position.

26 Rf7 Rc4 27 Kd3

Of course not 27 Rxb7?? Ne6+; while after 27 Rxb7 Nb5+ 28 Kd3 Rd4+ 29 Ke3 Nxc3 30 bxc3 Ra4 31 Rxb7 h5, the rook ending is unclear, despite White's temporary material advantage: Black will capture the pawns on a2 and d5, thus acquiring two passed pawns.

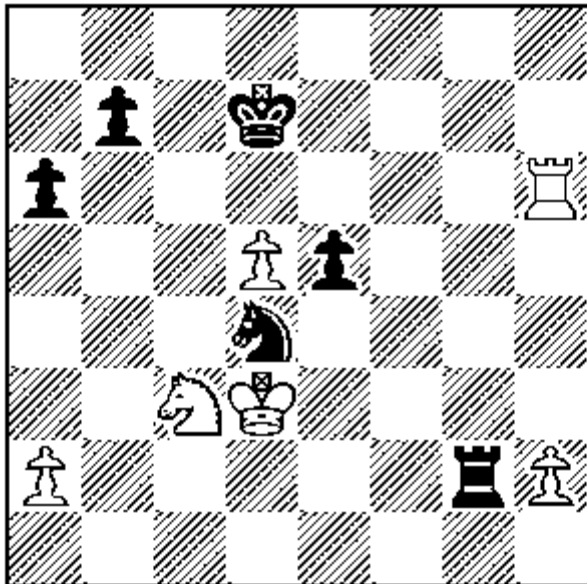
27 ... Rb4 28 Rxb7

Lasker commented that "28 b3 would likewise have been strong, for White would at least have won a pawn, e.g. 28 ... Nb5 29 Nxb5+ Rxb5 30 Rxb7 h5 31 Rh7 Rxd5+ 32 Ke3"; but in this case Black can equalize with 32 ... Ra5!, answering 33 a4 with 33 ... b5. Or if 29 Rxb7 then 29 ... Rd4+ 30 Kc2 Rg4 31 Rb6+ Kc7 with counterplay.

28 ... Rxb2 29 Rxb7 Rxb2 30 Rh6+ Kd7

30 ... Kc5 runs into 31 Ne4+, when 31 ... Kxd5?? 32 Rd6 is mate.

31 Rh7+ Kd6 32 Rh6+ Kd7



Exercise: Black seems to have solved his problems quite well. The material is equal and two of his three pieces are active. How did Rubinstein make progress here?

Answer:

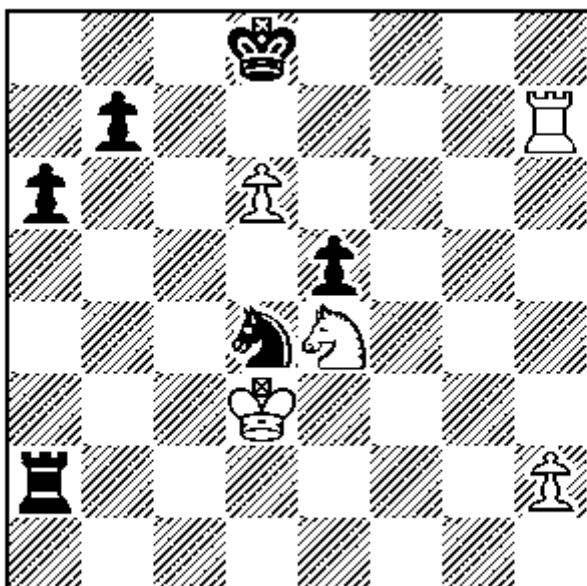
33 Ne4!

At the cost of a pawn White highlights the fact that he has a passed pawn on d5, which is now supported by his pieces.

33 ... Rxa2?!

33 ... Kc7!? would have prevented Black's king from being cut off on the back rank. Although moving away from the passed pawn is not a very attractive idea, it would have created more practical difficulties for White.

34 Rh7+ Kd8 35 d6



With the threat 36 Nf6, followed by mate, and preparing to invade with the king.

35 ... Nb5?!

This restores some mobility to the knight and puts in contact with the passed d-pawn, but now White's king invasion will be decisive. 35 ... Ne6 was more tenacious; although this would not have prevented the advance of the white king, the knight would be on a more useful square. Nevertheless, White retains some advantage after, for example, 36 Nf6 Kc8 37 h4.

36 Kc4 Ra5

This hinders 37 Kd5 on account of 37 ... Nc7+, but of course placing the rook passively on this square is insufficient.

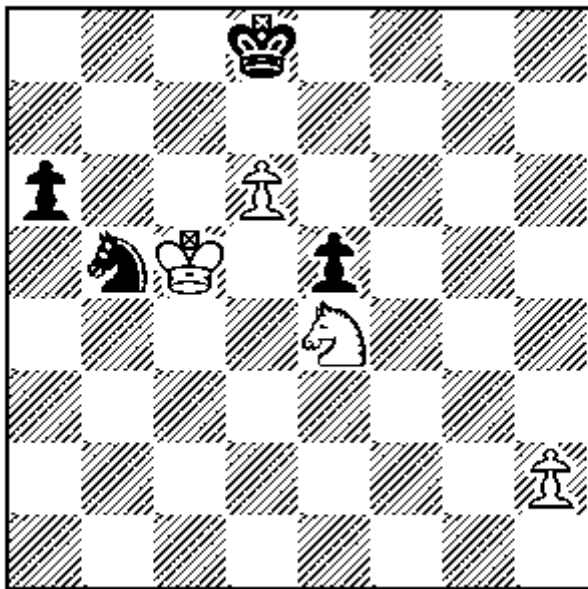
37 Rxb7

Now there is indeed a threat of 38 Kd5, since 38 ... Nc7+ can be answered by 39 Kc6.

37 ... Na3+ 38 Kb4

After the forced exchange of rooks, the king is left in a dominating position.

38 ... Rb5+ 39 Rxb5 Nxb5 40 Kc5



The material is equal, but in view of White's better-placed king, supported by the knight, the white pawns will win the game. The rest is easy.

40 ... Kd7 41 Kd5 a5 42 Nc5+ Ke8 43 Kxe5 Kf7 44 Nb7 1-0

“Rubinstein's conduct of this endgame is most pleasing.” – Lasker.

When exchanging all the pieces does not guarantee a draw

White seems to play this game with the assumption that each exchange brings it closer to a draw. Rubinstein demonstrates that this is not always the case.

The magnificent pawn ending that results has been called the most famous of this type. Rubinstein's exemplary conduct of the ending has been analysed in many different publications, and a knowledge of it has surely proved of practical use in many subsequent games.

Game 17

E.Cohn-A.Rubinstein

St Petersburg 1909

Queen's Gambit [D21]

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 c5 3 c4 dxc4 4 dxc5

Question: This move is not very aggressive, is it?

Answer: You are right. White is playing for a draw and seeks to exchange as many pieces as possible. This might work against an only slightly superior opponent, but against Rubinstein it was perhaps not such a good idea. Either 4 e3 or 4 e4 is more ambitious.

4 ... Qxd1+ 5 Kxd1 Nc6 6 e3 Bg4

Black does not miss the opportunity to develop his bishop outside the pawn chain before playing ... e7-e6.

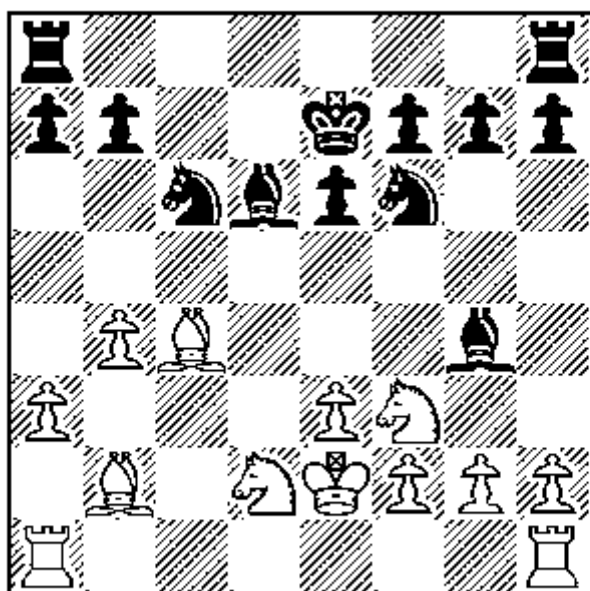
7 Bxc4 e6 8 a3

White wants to develop his queen's bishop with a gain of tempo by playing b2-b4, which is not an insignificant decision, as we shall see.

8 ... Bxc5 9 b4

This was the idea. 9 b3 was less committal, though it is not very important.

9 ... Bd6 10 Bb2 Nf6 11 Nbd2 Ke7 12 Ke2



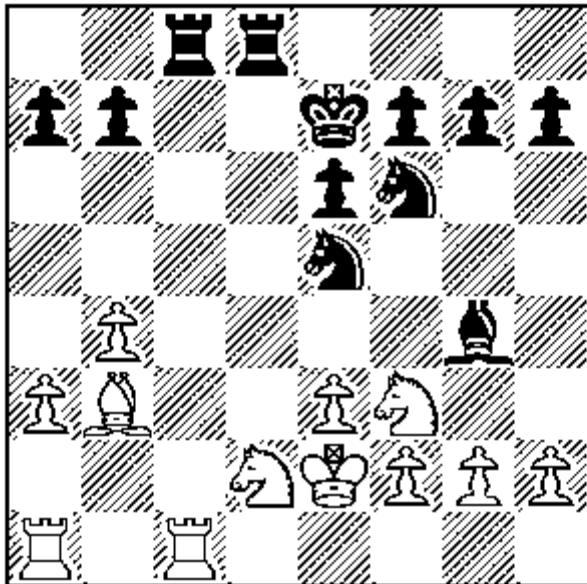
Exercise: There doesn't seem to be much imbalance in this position, but that does not mean that it is completely sterile. How did Rubinstein keep the position "alive"?

Answer:

12 ... Be5!

"By exchanging White's queen's bishop, the advance of the a- and b-pawns is now deprived of its motive; the result is that the two pawns are now more in want of support than before," commented Lasker.

13 Bxe5 Nxe5 14 Rhc1 Rac8 15 Bb3 Rhd8



After the exchange of bishops the white position has a few weak points – nothing serious, but White needs to play carefully.

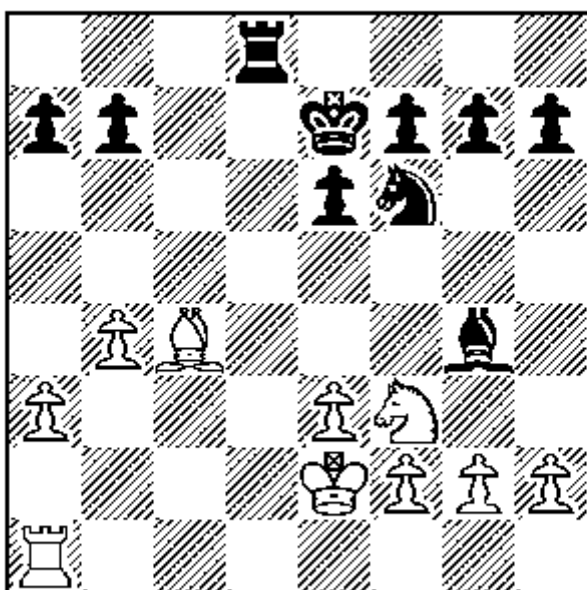
16 Nc4

Cohn continues to simplify, which objectively brings the game a little closer to a draw. Lasker demonstrated White's difficulties in the event of 16 h3; after 16 ... Bxf3+ 17 Nxf3 Nxf3 18 Kxf3 Rxc1 19 Rxc1, Black invades the white camp with 19 ... Rd3, while 17 gxf3 g5! leaves White in a rather uncomfortable position.

16 ... Nxc4

Here 16 ... Nxf3 and 16 ... Nd3 were attractive options, both slightly unpleasant for White, though neither offers a big advantage in Gelfand's opinion.

17 Rxc4 Rxc4 18 Bxc4



Exercise (easy): White keeps exchanging pieces, but his slight weaknesses persist, especially on the dark squares. How did Rubinstein highlight these?

Answer:

18 ... Ne4

Of course, threatening ... Rd2+ and exploiting the fact that 19 Rd1?? loses to 19 ... Nc3+.

19 Ke1

White allows his pawn structure to be damaged, but at the cost of another exchange and without it being anything serious. On 19 Bd3, Black would have played 19 ... f5, maintaining the tension, because after 19 ... Bxf3+ 20 gxf3 Nxf2 21 Bxh7!, “White is doing okay” according to Gelfand.

19 ... Bxf3 20 gxf3 Nd6 21 Be2

Lasker suggested 21 Bd3, “hampering the movements of Black’s knight”, since on e2 the bishop limits his king’s mobility without obtaining any advantage in return; defending f3 is not important.

21 ... Rc8 22 Kd2 Nc4+

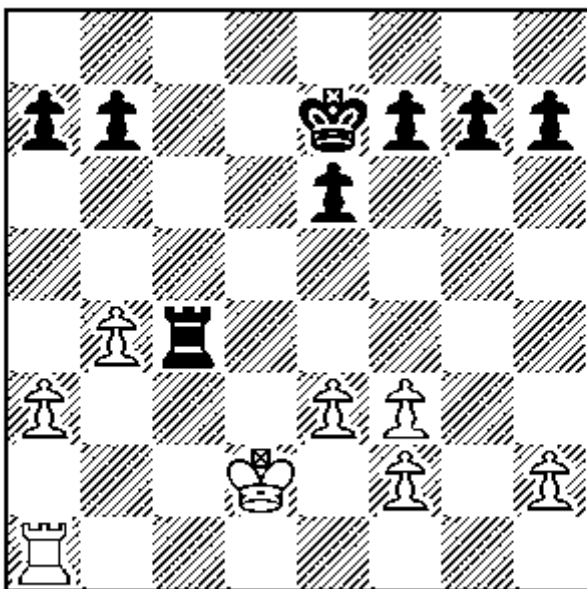
Question: Why is Black falling in with White’s plans?

Doesn’t each exchange bring the game closer to a draw?

Answer: Rubinstein had an idea in mind, so he offered the exchange of another piece. It is not clear whether he would have had any better chances playing differently, since the position would remain drawish, despite White’s slight inaccuracies.

All the same, you might be right, and Emanuel Lasker at least is on your side. He preferred retaining the minor pieces, for example, with 22 ... e5, although the position would still have remained equal.

23 Bxc4 Rxc4



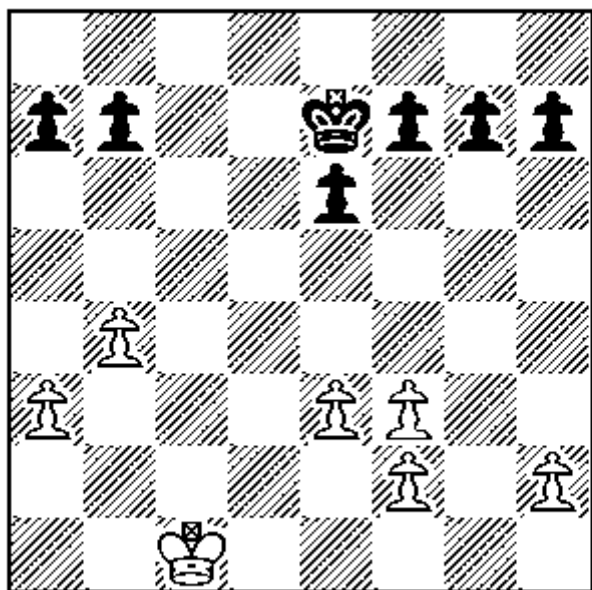
Exercise: The draw that White seeks is now within reach. How should he attain it?

Answer:

24 Rc1?

White has lost all sense of danger; this further exchange leads to a lost endgame. With 24 f4!, preventing 24 ... Rh4, the draw would really be very close.

24 ... Rxc1 25 Kxc1



Exercise: Why did Rubinstein not object to the exchange of rooks?

Answer:

25 ... Kf6!

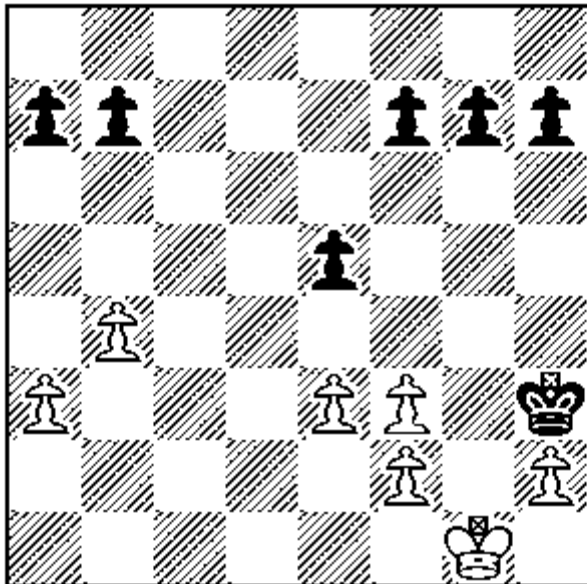
“An attack finely carried through with the smallest means.” – Lasker.

“Rubinstein, an outstanding master of the endgame, begins an attack on the h2-pawn, which proves decisive.” – Levenfish & Smyslov.

26 Kd2 Kg5 27 Ke2

The only chance of resistance lies in defending the h2-pawn. White loses the queening race if he tries 27 Kd3 Kh4 28 Kc4 Kh3 and the black h-pawn promotes well ahead. Black does not even need to answer Kc7 with ... b7-b5, as has been suggested in some sources; i.e. 29 Kc5 Kxh2 30 Kd6 h5 31 Kc7 (White could play b4-b5 first, preventing ... b7-b5) 31 ... h4 (or 31 ... b5 as mentioned above) 32 Kxb7 h3 33 Kxa7 Kg2 34 b5 h2 35 b6 h1Q 36 b7 Qa1! 37 b8Q Qxa3+, followed by the exchange of queens and an easy win.

27 ... Kh4 28 Kf1 Kh3 29 Kg1 e5!



“The white king is tied to the defence of the h-pawn. He is powerless against the impending black pawn offensive on the kingside.” – Levenfish & Smyslov.

It is important to choose the order of advance of the pawns. The text move discourages 30 f4, which would give White more space; now 30 f4? would be met by 30 ... exf4 31 exf4 Kg4 etc.

30 Kh1

Playing 30 e4 is no better, as the pawn is exposed after, for example, 30 ... g5 31 Kh1 h5 32 Kg1 h4! (to be able to evict the white king from g2, although there are also other ways to win) 33 Kh1 g4! 34 fxg4 Kxg4 35 Kg2 h3+ 36 Kf1 Kf3.

Averbakh & Maizelis suggested 30 a4!? b6 31 b5, although Black can then win in similar fashion to the game: 31 ... f5! 32 Kh1 g5 33 Kg1 h5 34 Kh1 h4 (with the same idea as in the previous paragraph) 35 Kg1 e4 36 fxe4 fxe4 37 Kh1 (or 37 f3 exf3 38 e4 Kg4 etc, though 38 ... g4 39 e5 g3 is even faster) 37 ... Kg4 38 Kg2 h3+ 39 Kg1 Kf3 40 Kf1 g4 etc.

Exercise (easy): What is the most accurate move now?

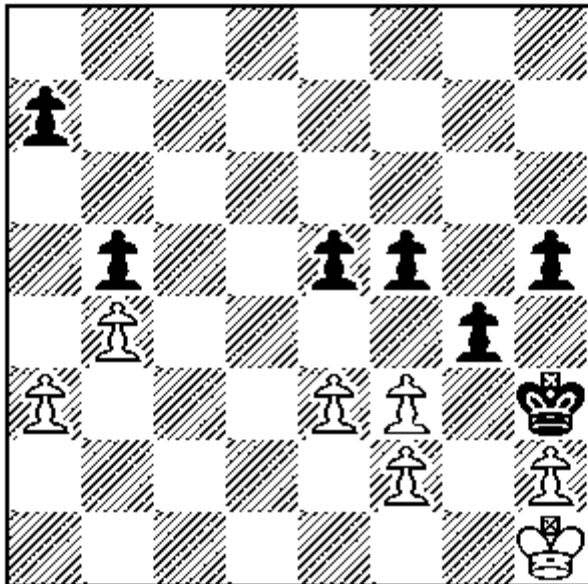
Answer:

30 ... b5!

Of course; this is why 30 a4 was suggested. “Now Black also has an extra tempo (... a7-a6), which may prove useful.” – Averbakh & Maizelis. Having a free move at your disposal can be decisive in pawn endings, since it safeguards against zugzwang.

31 Kg1 f5 32 Kh1 g5 33 Kg1 h5 34 Kh1 g4

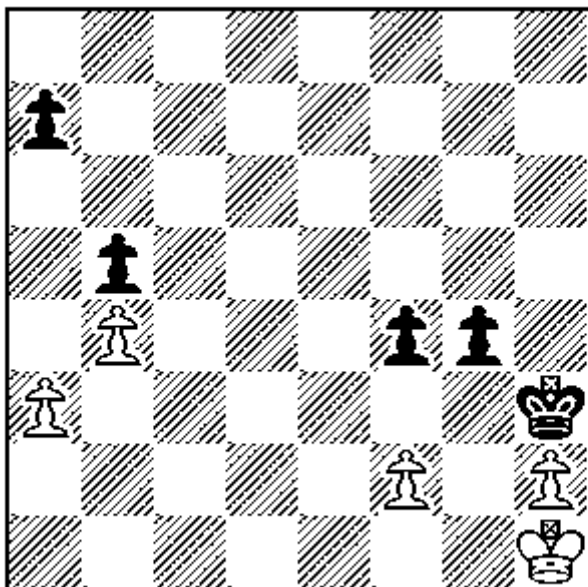
Another way to win was 34 ... e4, reaching similar lines to those we have already seen. Rubinstein had another idea.



35 e4

The main line was 35 fxg4, when the simplest way, according to Averbakh, is 35 ... fxg4! 36 Kg1 (or 36 e4 h4 37 Kg1 g3!, which transposes to the game; the black king captures the e4-pawn in a few moves) 36 ... e4, followed by 37 ... h4 and 38 ... g3!, which also ends with the black king capturing the white pawns.

The alternative capture 35 ... hxg4 wins as well, although some care is required here. After 36 Kg1 f4 37 exf4 exf4 38 Kh1



Maizelis recommended an idea we have already seen, and which wins with pawns on e4 and e5, namely 38 ... g3, intending 39 hxg3 fxg3 40 f3 g2+ 41 Kg1 Kg3 42 f4 Kxf4 43 Kxg2 Ke3 and wins.

Exercise: The idea is a good one, but here it fails tactically.

Can you demonstrate how to draw this ending after 38 ... g3 - ?

Answer: After 39 hxg3 fxg3 and now 40 fxg3 Kxg3 41 Kg1! Kf3 42 Kf1 Ke3 43 Ke1 Kd3

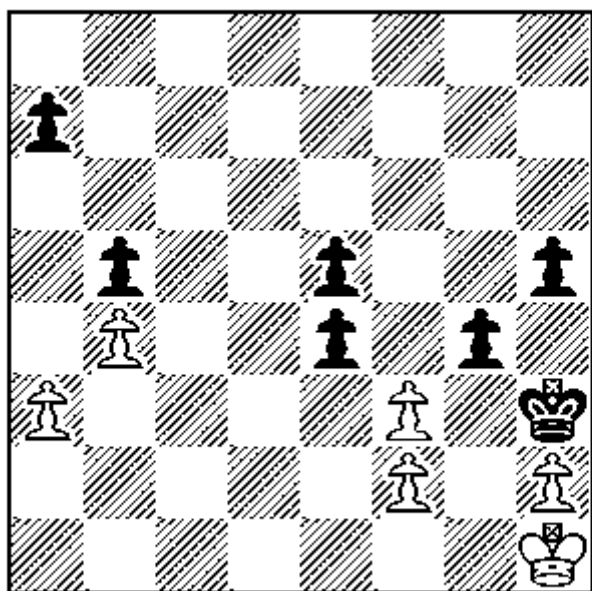
44 Kd1 Kc3, White has the move 45 a4! and Black is left with one or two useless pawns on the a-file (45 ... bxa4 46 Kc1), or else there is a draw with the pawn on the b-file with White gaining the opposition after 45 ... a6 46 axb5 axb5 47 Kc1 Kxb4 48 Kb2. Remember this variation; in Supplementary Position 17.2 we will see an amazing finish.

In his book *Analysing the Endgame*, Speelman showed that White even has another way to draw: 40 Kg1 g2 (or 40 ... Kg4 41 Kg2) 41 f4 Kg4 42 Kxg2 Kxf4 43 Kf2.

However, Speelman also showed that, instead of 38 ... g3?, Black wins (thanks to his “spare move” ... a7-a6) with 38 ... f3! 39 Kg1 Kh4; for instance, 40 Kh1 Kg5 41 h3 gxh3 42 Kh2 Kg4 43 Kg1 Kf4 44 Kh2 Ke4 45 Kxh3 (or 45 Kg3 h2!) 45 ... Kd3 46 Kg4 Ke2 47 Kg3 a6!. It is worth noting that, were it not for this tempo move, Black would have to give way and lose the f3-pawn, and so would have to repeat moves earlier with 44 ... Kg4.

Note that it doesn't help White to send his king the other way: 40 Kf1 Kh5! 41 Ke1 Kg5 42 Kf1 (42 Kd2 Kh4 and the pawn on h2 falls) 42 ... Kf4 43 Ke1 Ke4 44 Kd2 Kd4 45 Kc2 Kc4 46 Kd2 Kb3 47 Ke3 Kxa3 48 Kf4 Kxb4 49 Kxg4 a5 and Black queens first.

35 ... fxe4!



36 fxe4

Or 36 fxg4 hxg4 37 Kg1 e3 38 fxe3 e4 39 Kh1 g3 etc.

36 ... h4 37 Kg1 g3! 38 hxg3 hxg3 0-1

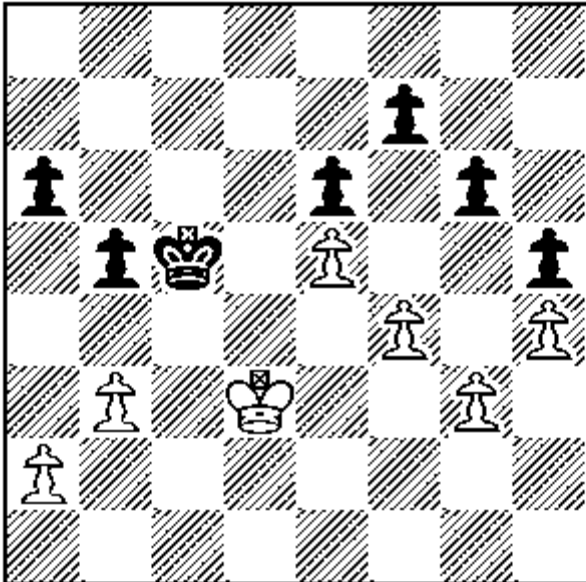
And the black king once again triumphs after 39 fxg3 Kxg3, followed by 40 ... Kf3 and 41 ... Kxe4.

“The impressive thing about this pawn ending is that every well-educated chess player today understands automatically that Black is winning and would find 25 ... Kf6! in a heartbeat. (...) With so many things, Rubinstein was first and showed the way.” – Gelfand.

Supplementary Position 17.1

E.Sveshnikov-G.Kasparov

USSR Championship, Minsk 1979



Black to play

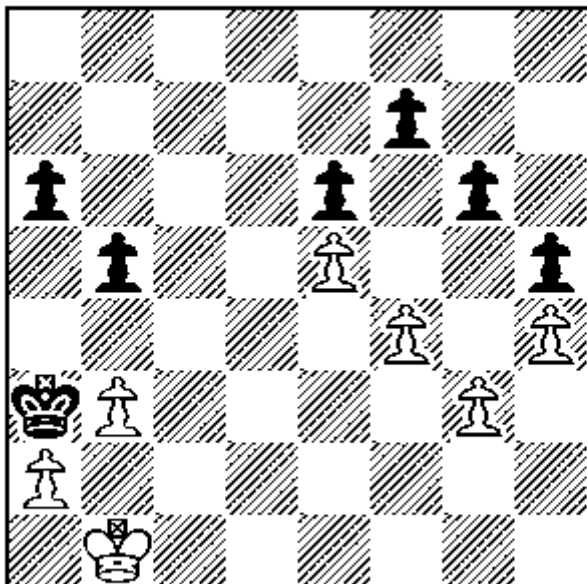
Exercise: A young Garry Kasparov showed that he had learned from Rubinstein. How did Black win here?

Answer:

36 ... Kb4!

The black king heads for a3, just as Rubinstein's went to h3.

37 Kc2 Ka3 38 Kb1



Once the white king is tied down to defence, Black needs to find a way to liquidate all the queenside pawns so that his king can cross to the other wing to attack the g3-pawn.

We have already seen that it is not enough just to have the right idea; care is required in ensuring that the tactics work and the move order is correct.

Exercise: How should Black proceed?

Answer:

38 ... a5!

Intending to exchange pawns with ... a5-a4 and then play ... b4-b3 at the opportune moment.

Instead, 38 ... b4? does not win: 39 Ka1 a5 40 Kb1 a4 41 bxa4 Kxa4 42 Kb2 Kb5 43 Kb3 Kc5, when White can simply mark time with the king, shuffling between b2 and c2. The black king cannot head for g3, since White would even win after Kb3 and Kxb4.

39 Ka1 a4 40 bxa4 Kxa4! 41 Kb1

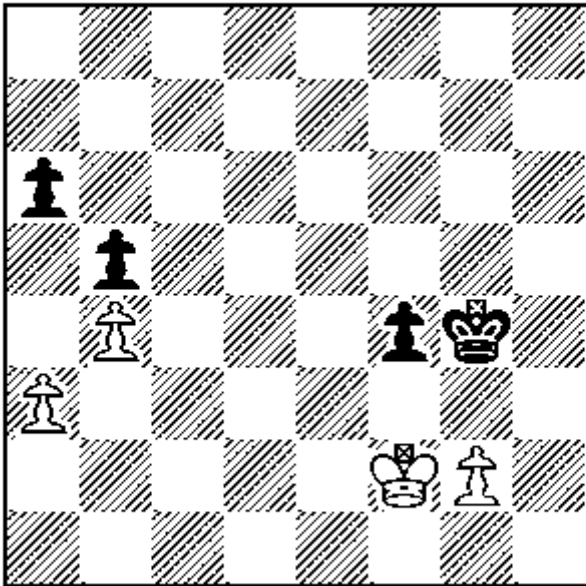
Or 41 Kb2 b4 42 Ka1 Ka3!, transposing.

41 ... Ka3 42 Ka1 b4 43 Kb1 b3 0-1

Supplementary Position 17.2

T.Hillarp Persson-M.Ragger

Politiken Cup, Helsingor 2015



White to play

The position is a draw. We looked at a very similar position in the main game (see the Exercise at move 35). White can play 45 Ke2 Kg3 46 Kf1, when 46 ... f3 is the only winning attempt, but after 47 gxf3 Kxf3 48 Ke1 Ke3 49 Kd1 Kd3 50 Kc1 (or 50 a4! immediately) 50 ... Kc3 51 a4!, White gets a draw. Most probably this resource is what Hillarp Persson missed, and he resigned ... !

“A monument of magnificent precision”

... was Capablanca’s description of the game that we shall see now.

In this game Rubinstein made some at first sight surprising decisions, such as exchanging queens on move 11, which was considered inappropriate in the light of the particular pawn structure that had arisen, and “losing a tempo” on the 13th move, which aroused such comments as “an exceptionally deep move!” (Kmoch), and “an astonishingly deep decision”

(Razuvaev).

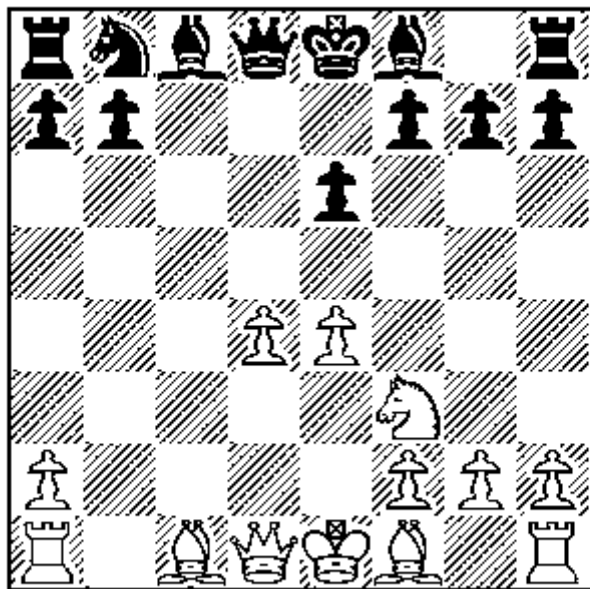
Game 18

A.Rubinstein-C.Schlechter

San Sebastian 1912

Semi-Tarrasch Defence [D41]

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 c4 e6 4 Nc3 c5 5 cxd5 Nxd5 6 e4 Nxc3 7 bxc3 cxd4 8 cxd4



8 ... Bb4+

Annotating his win against Reuben Fine at Ostend 1937, Keres commented: “It suits Black to exchange as many pieces as possible, firstly because it reduces White’s possibilities of launching an attack against the enemy king, and secondly it brings Black closer to his goal, which is the endgame. Practice has demonstrated that the queenside pawn majority ensures him of good prospects in that case.”

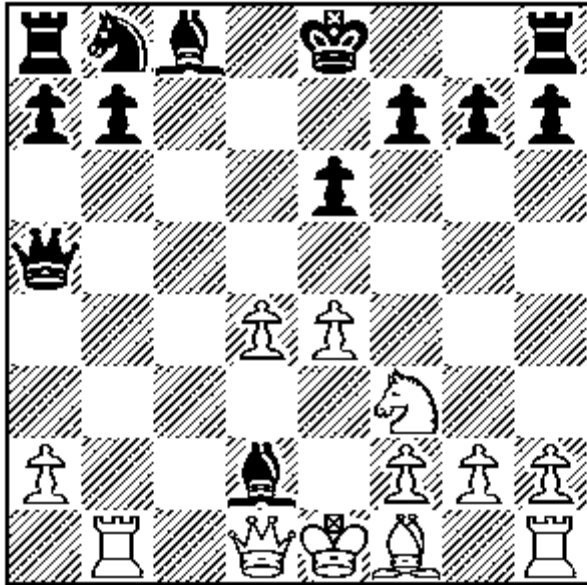
9 Bd2 Qa5?

Very natural, and fully in accord with Keres’s comments, but it is in fact “a mistake, but before this game it was not known!” – Razuvaev.

The main line here is 9 ... Bxd2+ 10 Qxd2 0-0, when the scenario would be much as Keres outlined it.

10 Rb1! Bxd2+

Instead, 10 ... Nc6? loses to 11 Rxb4 Nxb4 12 Qb1 Qxa2 13 Bb5+! Bd7 14 Qxb4, followed by 15 0-0, leaving the black queen offside and playing against the king; and if 14 ... Qa1+ 15 Ke2 Qxh1, then 16 Bxd7+ Kxd7 17 Qxb7+ and wins.



11 Qxd2!

Question: I don't understand. Why is it bad for Black to exchange here? Keres said that the ending was good for Black, didn't he?

Answer: Keres's opinion was a generalization, and we now know that it is not universally true. Let's allow Euwe to qualify Keres's statement: "As the opening comes to an end and the middlegame phase begins, one often has to decide whether or not to initiate exchanges. The familiar rule that the side with less freedom of movement does well to seek exchanges is not infallible. In the present case White has a great superiority in terrain and by the above-mentioned rule Black should have welcomed the exchange of queens; but as we shall see, this is the very exchange which favours White."

In a previous game Schlechter had faced precisely the same general concept, with White preventing the exchange of queens, which is an error here: after 11 Nxd2? 0-0 12 Bc4 Nc6, Black quickly achieved very good play, since White's centre is not strong and even somewhat exposed. N.Bernstein-C.Schlechter, Stockholm 1906, continued 13 d5 exd5 14 Bxd5 Ne7 15 Bc4 a6 16 0-0 b5 17 Bb3 Bb7 and Black was fine.

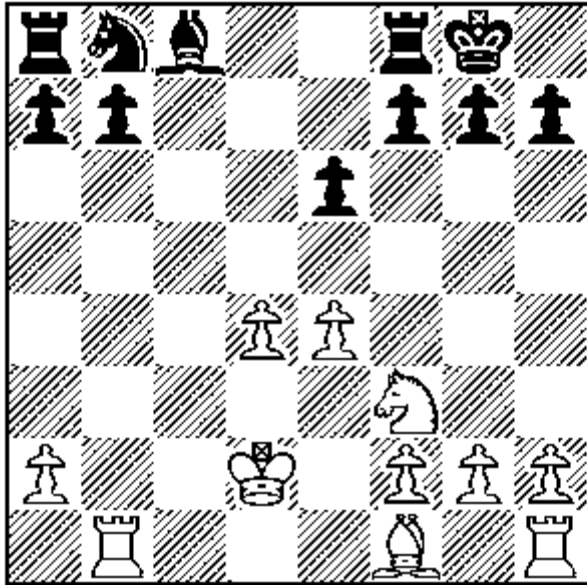
11 ... Qxd2+ 12 Kxd2!

"Black's object has been obtained, but it is White who is left with the advantage in development, sufficient to give him a powerful initiative." – Euwe.

12 ... 0-0

Question: That's a strange decision. isn't it? We are in an endgame, so isn't it better to leave the king in the centre?

Answer: Yes, you're right, this move is inaccurate. It was better to play 12 ... Ke7, although Black's position would have still been uncomfortable after, for example, 13 Bd3 Nc6 14 Rhc1 Rd8 15 Ke3, as he has problems completing his development, while the white pieces have great freedom of movement.



Exercise: What do you think is the best continuation for White?

Answer:

13 Bb5!!

A surprising move, and a very strong one. Keres himself commented that White now obtains “strong positional pressure, which would not allow Black to even think about his queenside pawn majority.”

Question: Hmm, but doesn't it give Black a development tempo with ... a7-a6, and perhaps ... b7-b5 - ? Why is this better than the natural 13 Bd3 - ?

Answer: 13 Bd3 was advantageous too, but less so than the text move.

The bishop is in an unusual position on b5. Normally, as you say, it would simply constitute a loss of time, but here the tempo gained by ... a7-a6 is not exactly a “gift” since the b6-square is left without defence.

On the other hand, the bishop on b5 practically forces Black to weaken himself. Neither is it clear that playing ... b7-b5 is to Black's advantage, since he must then reckon with White's a2-a4 strike, especially if ... Bb7 is played.

13 ... a6

Question: So if, as you say, it was better to develop without creating a weakness, was it not better to play 13 ... b6 - ?

Answer: The problem is that Black runs out of useful moves after, for example, 14 Rhc1 Bb7 (if 14 ... Ba6, both 15 a4 and 15 Ba4 are possible) 15 Ke3 and White can keep improving his position; indeed, there is the immediate threat of 16 Rc7.

14 Bd3 Rd8 15 Rhc1 b5

Question: Was it not more tenacious to play 15 ... Nc6, preventing the invasion on c7?

Answer: Black was faced with a choice between two evils; 15 ... Nc6 would be answered by 16 Ke3, intending Rb6, which paralyses the queenside once again. Perhaps White would then have continued with the same offensive as we shall see in the game.

16 Rc7 Nd7 17 Ke3!

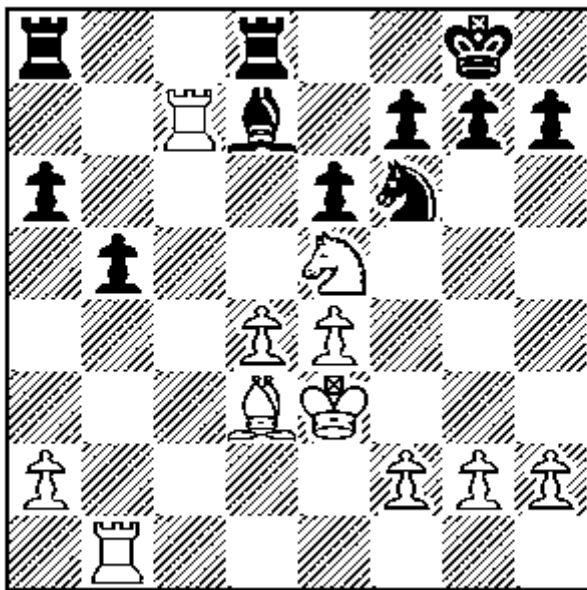
Question: I would have doubled rooks with 17 Rbc1. Is the text move better?

Answer: Your move is very logical and also a good one; instead, Rubinstein overprotects d4 in anticipation of ... Nf6.

17 ... Nf6 18 Ne5

That's why it was necessary to have d4 defended.

18 ... Bd7



Exercise: How did Rubinstein proceed in this position?

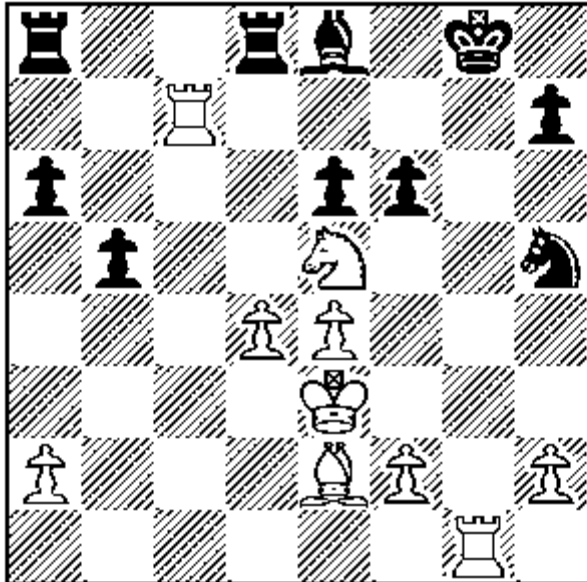
Answer:

19 g4!

Gaining space on the kingside and threatening to win at once with g4-g5. After Black's reply, White will be able at an opportune moment to open lines in his favour on the kingside.

19 ... h6

To some extent this facilitates the opening of lines, but allowing 20 g5 is not pleasant either; for example, 19 ... Be8 20 g5 Nh5 (not 20 ... Nd7? 21 Nc6) 21 Be2 f6 22 gxf6 Nxf6 23 Rg1 g6 24 Bg4! Nxg4+ 25 Nxg4 and the black position collapses. If Black tries 22 ... gxf6?! instead, White's strongest response is 23 Rg1+! (better than 23 Bxh5 fxe5 24 Rg1+, when 24 ... Kh8! allows Black to resist further)



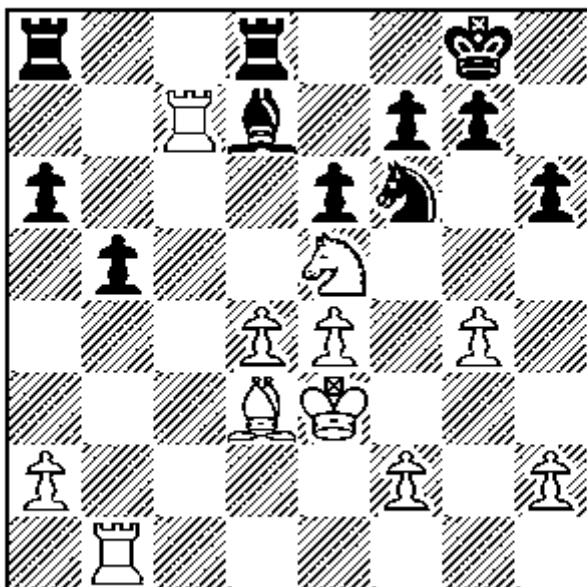
23 ... Kf8 24 Nd3, and once again it is impossible for Black to defend all his weaknesses.

Exercise: Why can't Black play 23 ... Kh8 here?

Answer: Because White has the elegant winning blow 24 Rf7!!.

Instead, 19 ... g5 has been suggested as an improvement, but it fails to change the situation much; White can still open lines after 20 h4 h6 20 f4.

Let's return to the game:



Exercise: How should White continue after 19 ... h6 - ?

Answer:

20 f4!

Renewing the threat of g4-g5.

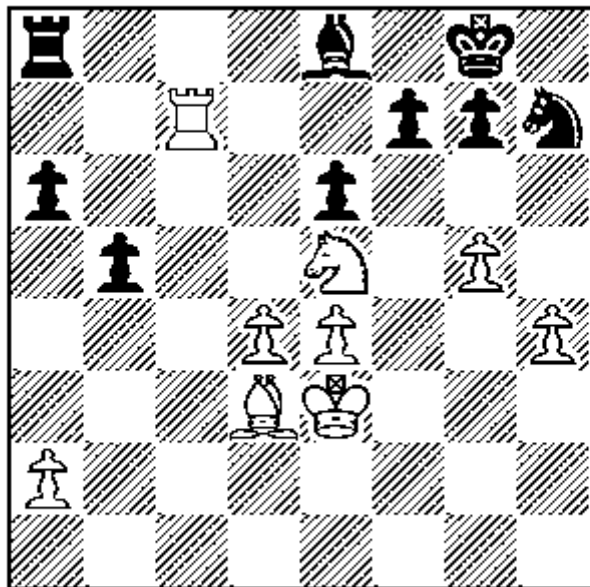
Question: I would have expected 20 h4, to be able to capture “towards the centre” after 21 g5 hxg5.

Answer: Your move is also good, preparing g4-g5, and probably transposing to the previous note after 20 ... g5 etc; but 20 f4 is even more precise, since 20 ... g5? would then allow White to open the f-file and win material after 21 fxg5 hxg5 22 Rf1.

20 ... Be8 21 g5 hxg5 22 fxg5 Nh7

Not 22 ... Nd7? on account of 23 Nc6 and wins, while 22 ... Nh5 would put the knight out of the game and White could continue with 23 Rbc1.

23 h4 Rdc8 24 Rbc1 Rxc7 25 Rxc7



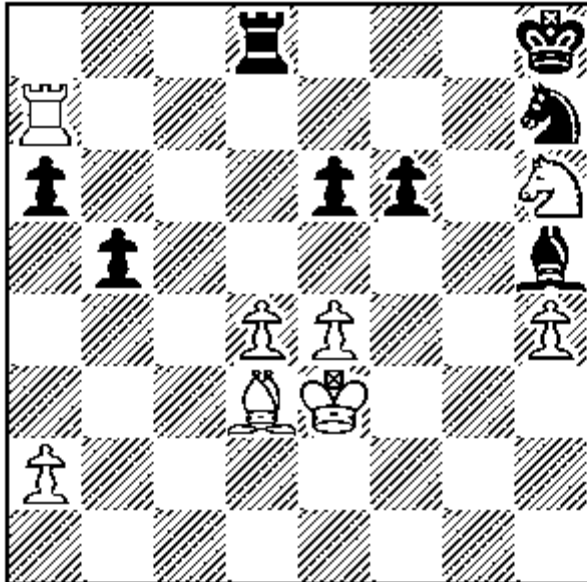
25 ... Rd8

Here 25 ... f6 has been recommended, but it's no better. White is winning after 26 gxf6 gxf6 (or 26 ... Nxf6 27 Re7) 27 Ng4; for example, 27 ... Bh5 (or 27 ... Bg6 28 Re7 Re8 29 Rxh7!) 28 Nh6+ Kh8 29 e5 f5 30 d5 Nf8 31 d6.

26 Ra7 f6

Black cannot defend the a6-pawn with 26 ... Rd6, because of 27 Ra8 Kf8 28 Nxf7! Kxf7 and now either 29 e5 or 29 g6+ wins.

27 gxf6 gxf6 28 Ng4 Bh5 29 Nh6+ Kh8



Exercise: How does White increase his advantage?

Answer:

30 Be2!

The immediate 30 Rxa6?! was not strongest here on account of 30 ... Kg7. With the text move White secures the escape square g4 for the knight, since 30 ... Bxe2? loses to 31 Nf7+.

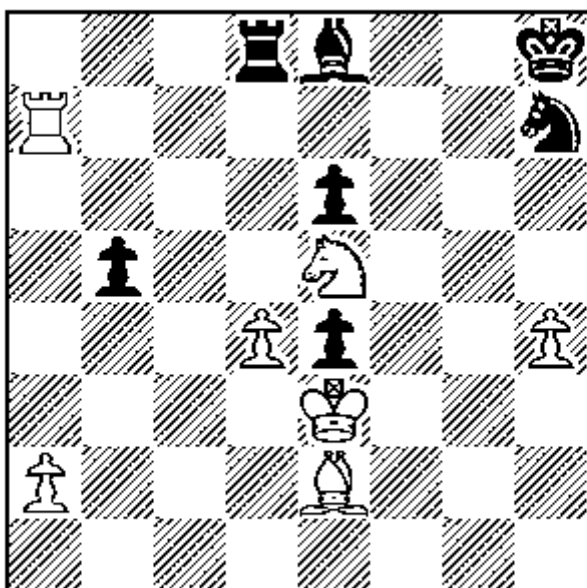
30 ... Be8 31 Rxa6

Now White has an extra pawn and the more active pieces.

31 ... Kg7 32 Ng4 f5 33 Ra7+! Kh8

The king is forced back; if 33 ... Kg6, one way to win is 34 h5+! Kg5 35 Rg7+ Kh4 36 exf5 exf5 37 Nh6 Nf8 38 Nxf5+ with a material advantage and a mating attack against the foolhardy black king.

34 Ne5 fxe4



Exercise (easy): What is the strongest move here?

Answer:

35 Bxb5

Once again exploiting the fact that the black bishop has to guard f7.

35 ... Nf6 36 Bxe8 Rxe8 37 Kf4

The quickest way; instead of exploiting his passed pawns Rubinstein decides the struggle with a mating attack.

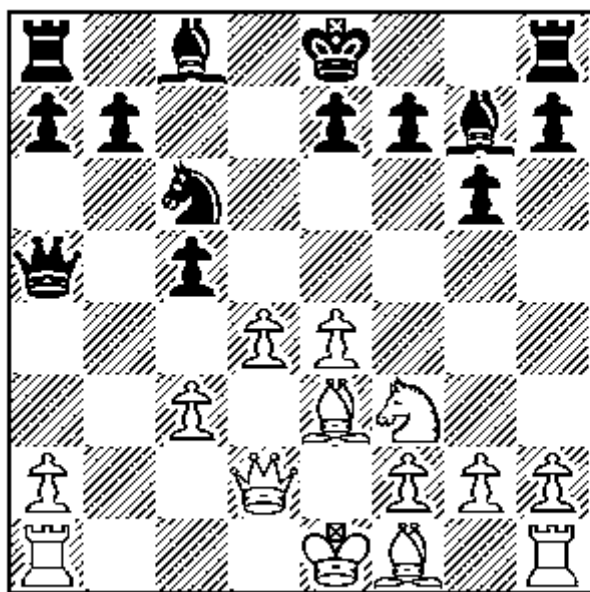
37 ... Kg8 38 Kg5 Rf8 39 Kg6 1-0

With the unstoppable threat of 40 Rg7+ Kh8 41 Nf7+ etc.

“A game marked by wonderful depth of conception and sureness of execution.” – Kmoch.

Boris Gelfand wrote: “13 Bb5!! is one of the greatest moves in chess history. It still has great influence on the way chess is played in the 21st century. Take this popular variation of the Grünfeld Defence.

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Be3 c5 8 Qd2 Qa5 9 Nf3 Nc6



10 Rb1!? a6 11 Rc1

It is still an active debate to this day whether it is an advantage for White to give Black this ... a6 move for free or not. There are lots of recent games in my database.”

The advantage of the bishop pair

In this game Rubinstein employed the variation against the Four Knights that bears his name, and there are two supplementary games to facilitate understanding of the type of position reached.

Having said that, Réti commented: “This game is most notable for the way in which Rubinstein conducted the endgame, than for its opening. The endgame hinges on the struggle of the bishop pair against a knight and bishop, seen in many of Steinitz’s games.”

Réti rates the game even more highly in that it is a win against Tarrasch, who was

himself highly skilled in exploiting the advantage of the bishop pair, and presents serious resistance. “However, he was unable to avoid defeat against the almost miraculous precision with which Rubinstein conducted his pieces to victory,” concludes Réti.

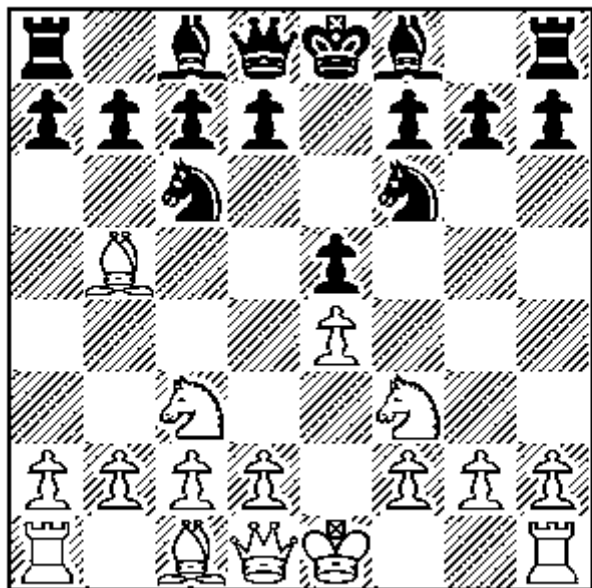
Game 19

S.Tarrasch-A.Rubinstein

San Sebastian 1912

Four Knights Game [C48]

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bb5



4 ... Bc5

This is the so-called Marshall Variation. Five rounds later, against Spielmann, Rubinstein used this pawn sacrifice in the 4 ... Nd4 variation which bears his name; play continued 5 Bc4 Bc5 6 Nxe5 Qe7, as we shall see in Supplementary Game 19.1.

5 Nxe5 Nd4

Continuing with his idea; current theory considers that the line 5 ... Nxe5 6 d4 Bd6 is playable for Black.

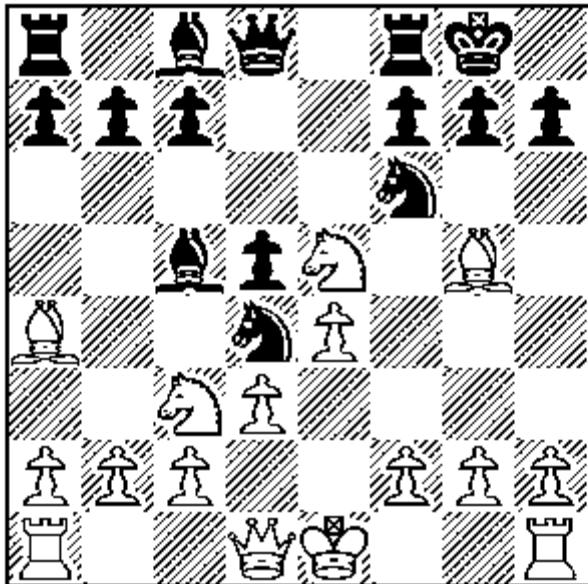
6 Ba4 0-0 7 d3

Question: I know that we are in the early stages of the theory here, but is it not better to use this square as a retreat for the e5-knight, gaining a tempo?

Answer: You may well be right; in fact the main line runs 7 Nd3 Bb6 8 e5 Ne8 9 Nd5, as played in many important games. Black seeks compensation for the pawn with ... d7-d6 and/or ... f7-f6, trying to highlight the poor coordination of the white pieces.

Fairly recently Black discovered the move 8 ... c6!?, with the idea that 9 exf6 Re8+ 10 Kf1 Qxf6 gives him good compensation. It is understandable therefore that White has mostly preferred 9 0-0; then after 9 ... Ne8, Black can boast that he has prevented Nd5, but the position remains complicated.

7 ... d5 8 Bg5?!



Question: How can this be dubious? It's a developing move and it looks to me as if the pin is quite unpleasant for Black.

Answer: The move does have its positive sides; the problem is that it delays White's kingside development. It's a case of assessing whether the nuisance created by the pin compensates for the situation of White's king. In the end tactics, rather than general considerations, will resolve the issue, and it will soon become clear that this is not the best move.

It was better to play 8 O-O Qe7 9 Nf3, when Black can pin with 9 ... Bg4, but is not clear that this a serious problem after 10 e5!; for example, 10 ... Nxf3+ 11 gxf3 Bh3 12 Re1 (or 12 d4 at once) 12 ... Nh5 13 d4.

Exercise: What do you think Rubinstein played after 8 Bg5 - ?

Answer:

8 ... c6!

Preparing ... Re8 and as well as shutting the a4-bishop out of the game.

9 Qd2

Now on 9 O-O, the first thing to check is 9 ... Re8 10 Nf3 Bg4, which is unpleasant for White. Tarrasch therefore prepares queenside castling.

9 ... Re8 10 f4

White cannot play 10 Nf3 dxe4 11 dxe4? owing to 11 ... Nxe4! and Black wins.

10 ... b5 11 Bb3 h6

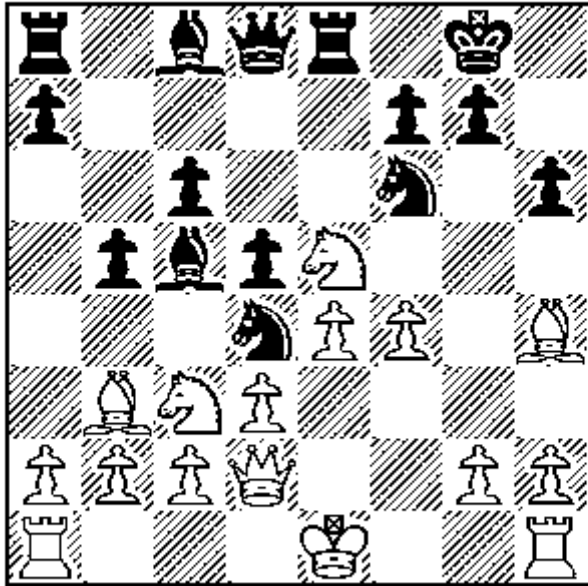
Black regains the pawn under favourable conditions. 11 ... Qb6 was also good, preventing 12 O-O-O??, since this would run into 12 ... Nxb3+ 13 axb3 Be3 and wins. Nor is 12 Bxf6? gxf6 a problem for Black, since the weakness of his castled position cannot be exploited here; indeed, after 13 Nf3 dxe4 14 dxe4 Bg4, the white position is collapsing.

12 Bh4

In the event of 12 Bxf6, it is again possible to play 12 ... gxf6, since after 13 Nf3 dxe4 14

dxe4 b4, Black regains the pawn and the white king remains in the centre.

But keeping the pawn structure intact with 12 ... Qxf6 is interesting too. After 13 0-0-0 a5!, Black's position is preferable; for example, 14 exd5 a4 15 Ne4 Qxf4! (after 15 ... Qe7, White's best chance seems to be to sacrifice the piece with 16 Bc4, since 16 d6? allows 16 ... axb3! 17 dxe7 bxa2 with a bigger advantage) 16 Qxf4 Ne2+ 17 Kb1 Nxf4, and now 18 g3 Rxe5 19 gxf4 Rxe4 20 dxe4 axb3 is almost forced.



Exercise: Black has several promising options here, both complicated and simple. What do you think Rubinstein played?

Answer:

12 ... Nxe4!

There were several moves leading to more complicated positions, such as 12 ... a5, 12 ... Qb6, or 12 ... Qd6, all of which are good. But so is Rubinstein's move; he opts for the clearest path, regaining the pawn and guaranteeing himself the advantage of two bishops in the ending.

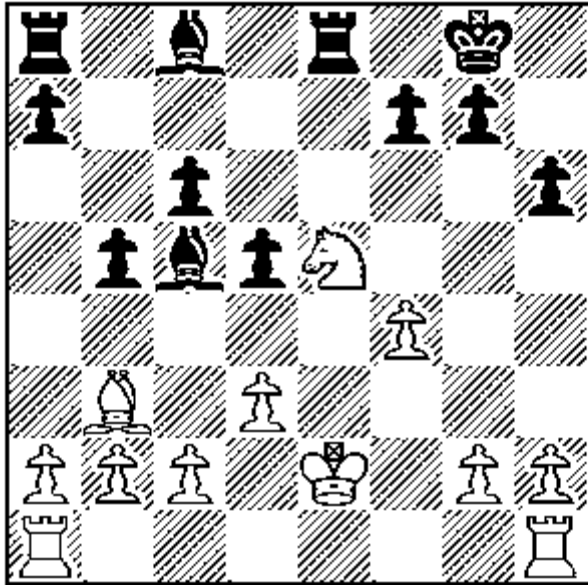
13 Bxd8 Nxd2 14 Kxd2 Rxd8 15 Ne2

The annoying knight must be eliminated. There is no time to bring the queen's rook into the game first, since 15 Rae1?! can be met by 15 ... Bb4! (the strongest move), threatening 16 ... Nxb3+, followed by ... d5-d4. Instead, 15 ... Bb7 16 Ne2 Nf5 is a solid alternative; whereas 15 ... a5 leads to rather unclear complications after 16 Ne2! Nxe2 17 Rxe2 a4 18 Nxc6, and 15 ... f6 16 Nxc6! is even less clear.

15 ... Nxe2

Obviously it is better for Black to capture the knight, rather than the passive bishop on b3.

16 Kxe2 Re8



Exercise: There is no sign of an end to White's troubles.
How should he defend himself against the threat of 17 ... f6 - ?

Answer:

17 Kf1?!

White chooses one of several bad replies; this leaves the king's rook incarcerated on h1.

Naturally a player of Tarrasch's strength does this only because he has doubts about the more natural 17 Kd2. Perhaps he feared 17 ... f6, with the possible continuation 18 Nxc6 Be3+ 19 Kc3? a5!, when the white king is weak; for example, after 20 Bxd5+ Be6 21 Bxe6+ Rxe6 22 Nxa5 Rxa5, the three pawns that White has for the piece are insufficient. The three black pieces are very active; 23 g3 can be answered by 23 ... b4+! 24 Kxb4 (or 24 Kb3 Bf2) 24 ... Rc5!. However, White can improve on all this with 19 Ke2!, inviting a discovered check, since it turns out that none of the possible discoveries are particularly strong. Rubinstein would probably have played simply 17 ... Bb7!, defending the c6-pawn.

Going forward with 17 Kf3 was also better than the move in the game.

17 ... Bb7!

Again Rubinstein chooses the clearest way. The alternative was to insert 17 ... a5, and answer 18 a4 with 18 ... Bb7. White should not play 18 Nxc6? Bb7 19 Bxd5, as after 19 ... Rac8 20 Nb4 Bxb4 21 Bxb7 Rxc2, Black's advantage is clear.

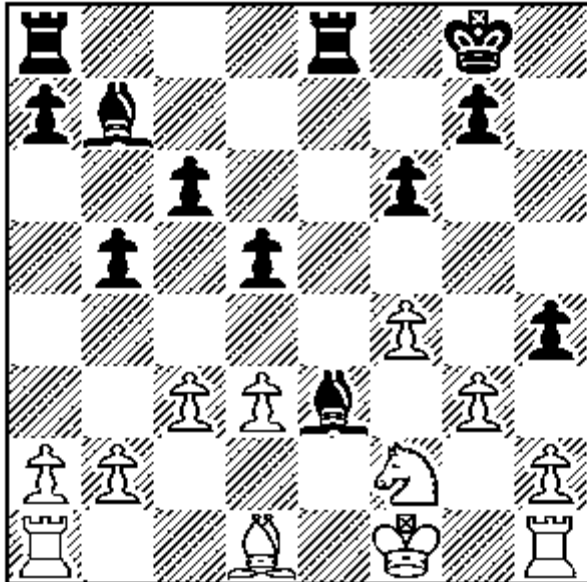
18 c3 f6

"With this move and the next, Black forces the knight to occupy a modest position, a manoeuvre known from the games of Steinitz." – Réti.

19 Ng4 h5 20 Nf2 Be3 21 Bd1

The bishop rushes to cover White's weaknesses on the kingside light squares.

21 ... h4 22 g3



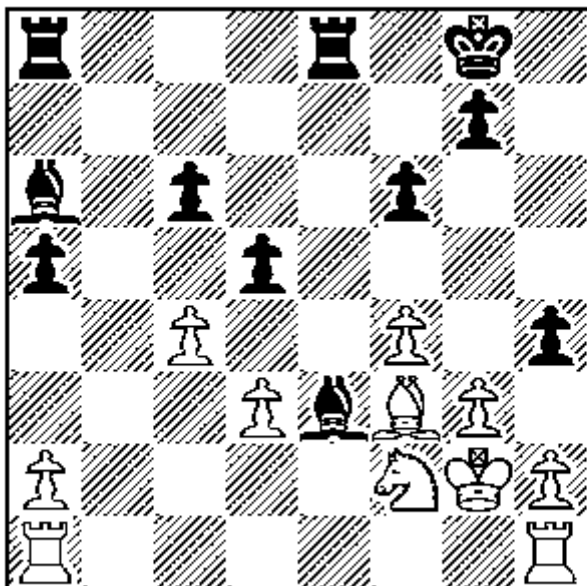
Exercise: After restricting the mobility of the knight, we reach a new phase of the game. How do you think Rubinstein made progress here?

Answer:

22 ... a5!

The bishops require space; Black is preparing to open the game with ... b5-b4.

23 Bf3 b4 24 Kg2 bxc3 25 bxc3 Ba6 26 c4



This move was praised by Réti, since it seeks to activate the white bishop.

Question: But doesn't it open the position further, in favour of Black's bishops?

Answer: That's possible, but "you can't have everything". Let's not forget that the piece most restricted by Black's pawn chain is the passive knight on f2. By changing the pawn structure White seeks a strong square for his knight, as Réti pointed out at another point: "if

the knight could occupy a dominating position, then the superiority of the bishop pair would be debatable.”

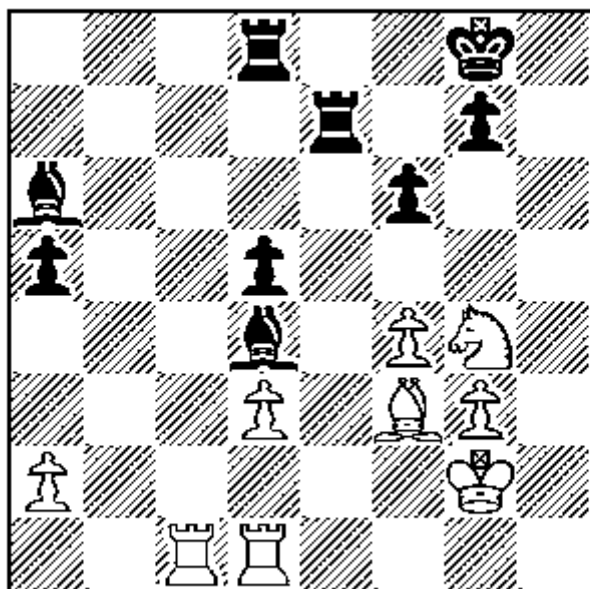
26 ... Rad8

Black has no problems in defending the pawn passively, since this will not be a permanent arrangement. Later, he will look for a clearly favourable way to open the game.

27 cxd5 cxd5 28 Rhd1 Re7

With idea of going to c7, seeking to invade at c2.

29 Ng4 hxg3 30 hxg3 Bd4 31 Rac1



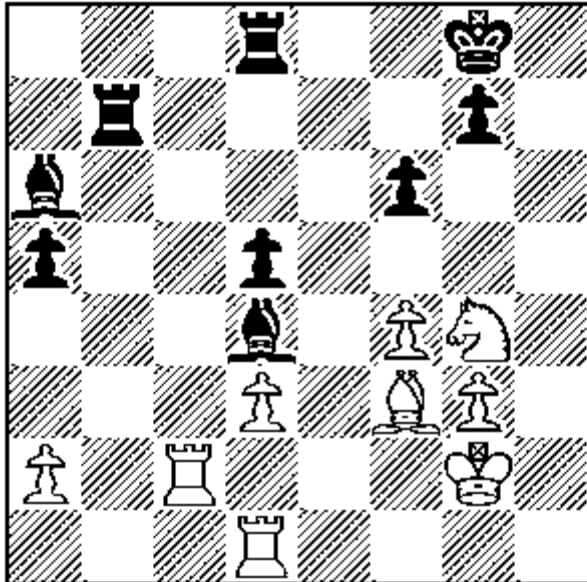
Exercise: White has prevented infiltration along the c-file, so how should Black proceed?

Answer:

31 ... Rb7!

Threatening to invade the seventh rank via the b-file instead; White will prevent this, but the text move also prepares a timely exchange of rooks, facilitating an invasion by the other black pieces.

32 Rc2



Exercise: How did Rubinstein highlight the advantage that the bishop pair gives him?

Answer:

32 ... Kf7

As Réti also pointed out, when you have a strong pair of bishops, they generally prevent the enemy king from becoming active. In contrast, one's own king generally acquires greater mobility. In this case, Rubinstein's king will go to support the d5-pawn, freeing the d8-rook for active duties.

33 Nf2

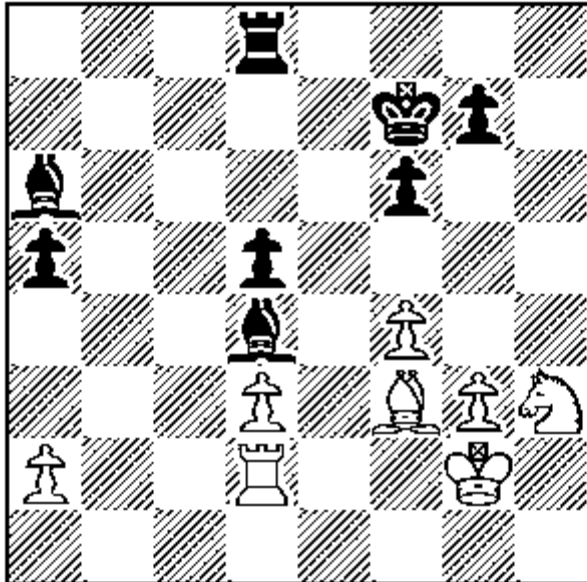
Exercise: What is the next step?

Answer:

33 ... Rb2!

Here 33 ... Ke6? would run into 34 Rc6+, so it looks like the right time to exchange White's only active piece, which is also doing a good defensive job.

34 Rxb2 Bxb2 35 Rd2 Bd4 36 Nh3



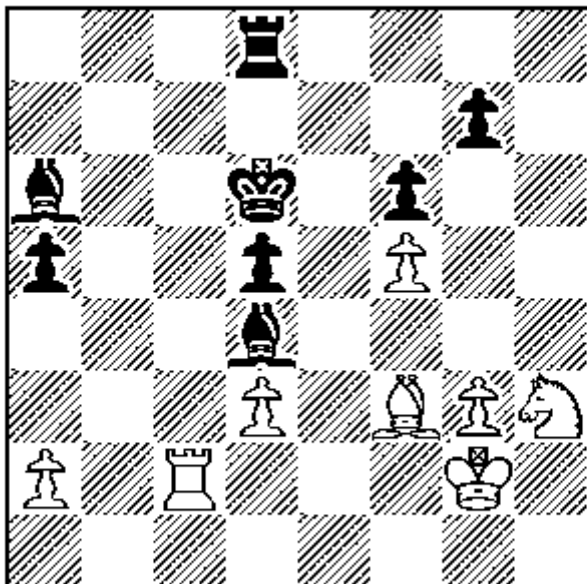
Exercise: How can Black make further progress?

Answer:

36 ... Ke6

Consistent with his previous play, and killing two birds with one stone. The king defends the d5-pawn and also prevents, for the time being, Tarrasch's plan of improving his knight's position with f4-f5, followed by Nf4-e6.

37 Rc2 Kd6 38 f5



Exercise: White is about to carry out his plan; how did Rubinstein frustrate it?

Answer:

38 ... Rc8!

Of course 38 ... Bxd3? loses to 39 Rd2, but after an exchange of rooks, the d3-pawn will become weak once again and, most importantly, the f-pawn will come under attack, preventing White from playing Nf4.

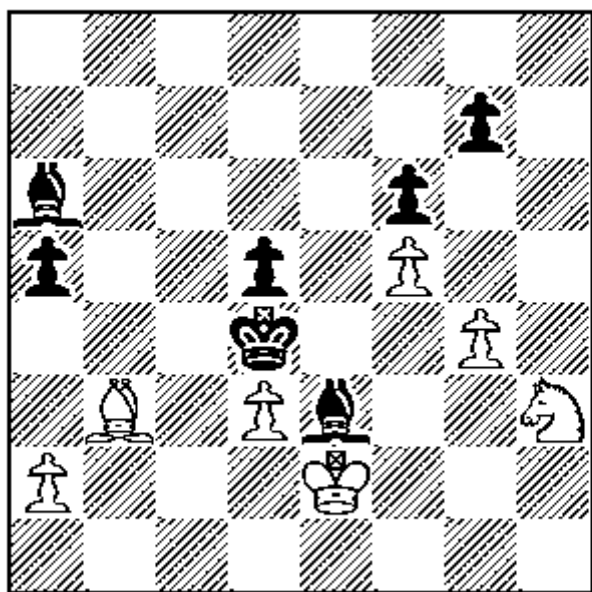
39 Bd1 Rxc2+ 40 Bxc2 Ke5! 41 g4

Rubinstein acquires another trump: the white position is now more open, so Black's bishops have more scope and his king can quickly invade the white camp.

41 ... Be3 42 Kf3 Kd4

Black's three pieces are stronger than White's; furthermore White has three serious weaknesses: d3, a2 and g4. Rubinstein's task is a simple one. Now "chess is easy again", as a compatriot of Rubinstein's, Miguel Najdorf, used to say.

43 Bb3 Bb7 44 Ke2 Ba6



45 Bc2

If 45 Kf3, repeating moves, Rubinstein would have played 45 ... Bxd3, winning after 46 Bxd5 Bf1 47 Nf2 Bxf2 48 Kxf2 Kxd5 49 Kxf1 Kc4 and the capture the a2-pawn.

45 ... Bb5 46 a4 Bd7 47 Kf3 Kc3 48 Kxe3 d4+ 49 Ke2 Kxc2 50 Nf4 Bxa4 51 Ne6 Bb3! 52 Nxd4+ Kb2 53 Nb5 a4 54 Ke3 a3 55 Nxa3 Kxa3 56 Kd4 Kb4 0-1

"One of Rubinstein's great endings" – Kmochn.

Supplementary Game 19.1

R.Spielmann-A.Rubinstein

San Sebastian 1912

Four Knights Game [C48]

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bb5 Nd4 5 Bc4 Bc5 6 Nxe5 Qe7

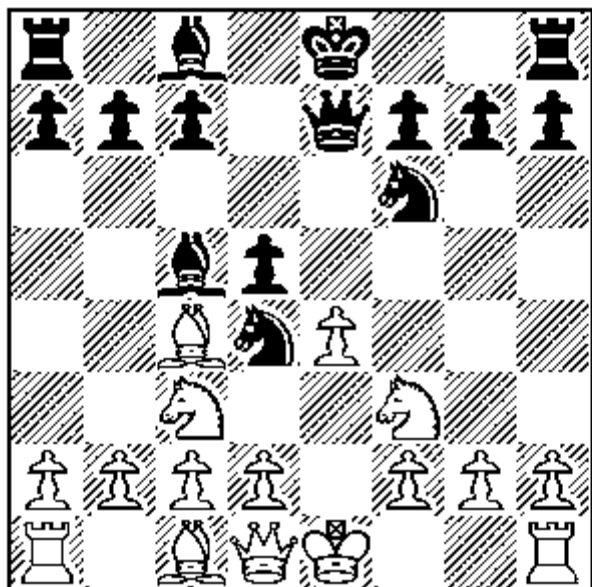
At the end of the 20th century this variation came back into style for a while with a refinement in the move order: 6 ... d5, which was even played by Kramnik, but it soon went out of fashion again.

7 Nf3

In Supplementary Game 19.2 we shall see that 7 Nd3 d5 8 Nxd5 is not promising for

White either.

7 ... d5



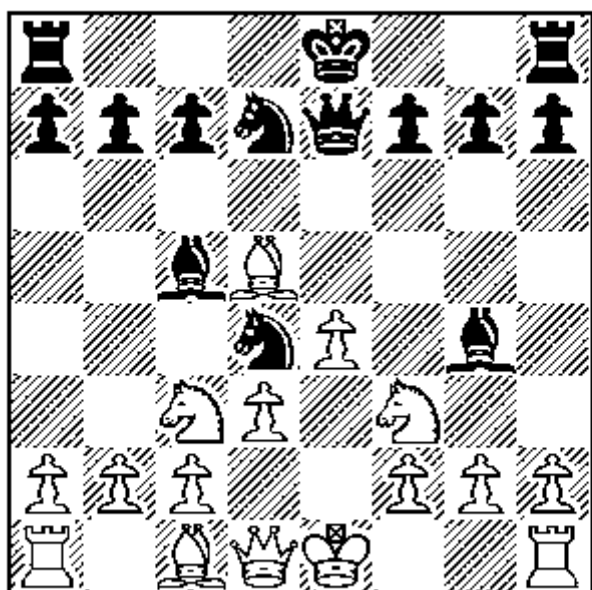
8 Nxd4?!

A weak move that allows Black a comfortable game.

In N.Bernstein-A.Rubinstein, Russian Championship, Vilnius 1912, White played what is considered to be the best move, 8 Bxd5, and the game ended in a draw quite quickly after 8 ... Bg4 9 d3 c6 10 Bb3 Nd7 11 Bg5 Qd6 12 Nb1 Qg6 13 Be3 Bxf3 14 gxf3 Qg2 15 Kd2 Nxf3+ 16 Kc1 Rd8 17 h3 Bxe3+ 18 fxe3 Nde5 19 Qf1 Qg5 20 Qe2 Nd4 21 Qd2 Ndf3 22 Qe2 Nd4 1/2-1/2.

A.Motylev-A.Shirov, Bastia (rapid) 2004, saw an improvement on Bernstein's play: 11 Be3!, and after 11 ... Ne5 12 Nxd4 Bxd1 13 Nf5 Qf8 14 Bxc5 Qxc5 15 d4 Qb4 16 Rxd1, White stood better with three pieces for the queen.

Shirov in turn refined the move order: instead of 9 ... c6, he played the immediate 9 ... Nd7!?

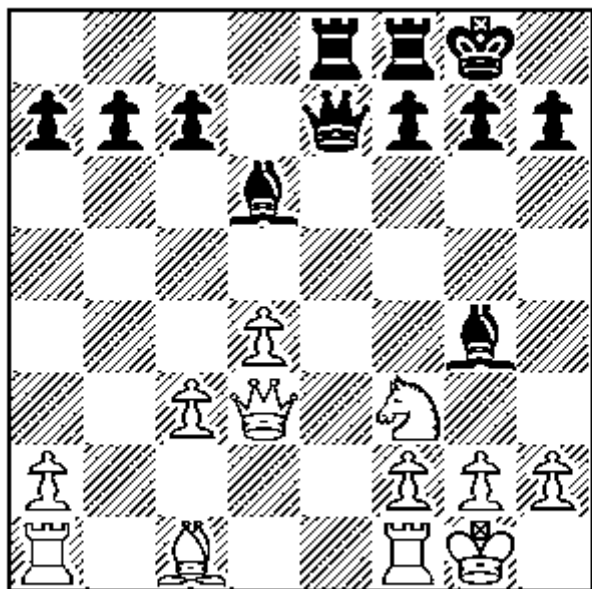


É.Naier-A.Shirov, Poikovsky 2006, continued in similar fashion with 10 Be3?! (10 Bxb7

and 10 Bg5 are more critical) 10 ... Ne5 11 Nxd4 Bxd1 12 Rxd1 (the difference with leaving the white bishop on d5 can be seen after 12 Nf5 Qf6! 13 Bxc5 Bxc2) 12 ... Qf6 13 Nf5 Bxe3 14 Nxe3 0-0-0, when Shirov achieved a much improved version of his game with Motylev and went on to win.

Let's return to Spielmann-Rubinstein:

8 ... dxc4 9 Nf3 Nxe4 10 0-0 0-0 11 d4 cxd3 12 cxd3 Nxc3 13 bxc3 Bg4 14 d4 Bd6 15 Qd3 Rae8



Evaluating the results of the opening indicates failure on White's part. Black has the superior pawn structure, with two "pawn islands" to White's three, and furthermore has the bishop pair and control of the e-file.

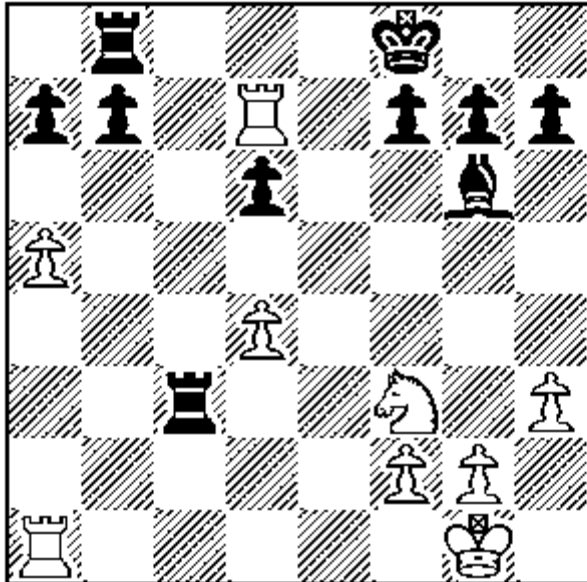
16 h3 Bh5 17 a4 Bg6 18 Qc4 Qe2!

White's weaknesses will become more obvious after the exchange of queens.

19 Qxe2 Rxe2 20 Ba3 Rc2 21 Bxd6 cxd6 22 Rfe1

Spielmann didn't want to resign himself to a depressing defensive struggle after 22 Rfc1 Rc8 23 Rxc2 Bxc2 24 Ra3.

22 ... Rxc3 23 Re7 Rb8 24 a5 Kf8 25 Rd7



Exercise: White's position was already difficult, but this seemingly active move has a snag. What is it?

Answer:

25 ... Bf5! 26 Rxd6 Be6

The intrusive rook now remains trapped. All the same, it is not clear that this move is better than 26 ... Bxh3!.

27 Rb1 Rc7 28 Ra6?

The only chance of resistance consisted in 28 Re1, so as to answer 28 ... Ke7 with 29 Rd5, though White would still stand worse.

28 ... Ra8 29 Rxe6 fxe6 30 Ng5 Ke7 31 Re1 Kf6 32 f4 Rc6 33 Nxh7+ Ke7 34 Ng5 Kd7 35 Re5 Rf8 36 d5 exd5 37 Rxd5+ Rd6 38 Rb5 Kc6 39 Rb4 Rf5 40 Rc4+ Kd7 41 Ne4 Rc6 42 Ra4 Ra6 43 g4 Rfxa5 44 Rd4+ Kc7 45 Nc3 Rd6 0-1

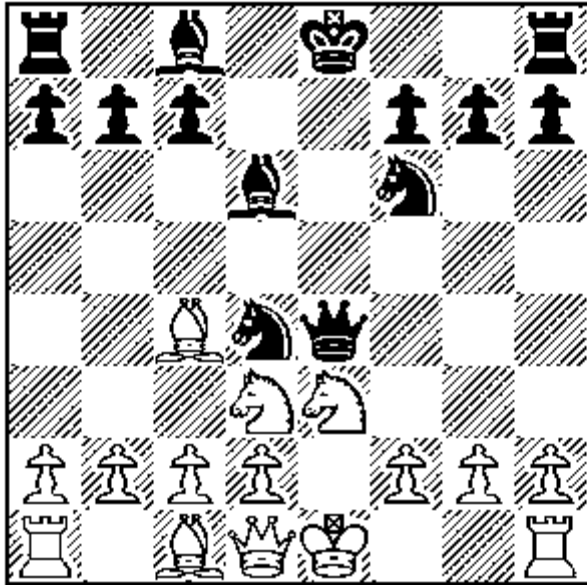
Supplementary Game 19.2

Z.Belsitzman-A.Rubinstein

Warsaw 1917

Four Knights Game [C48]

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bb5 Nd4 5 Bc4 Bc5 6 Nxe5 Qe7 7 Nd3 d5 8 Nxd5 Qxe4+ 9 Ne3 Bd6



10 0-0

White wants “to have it all” – an extra pawn and an impeccable pawn structure; an understandable aspiration, but we shall soon see that this is not possible. It was better to play 10 f3, intending 10 ... Qh4+ 11 Nf2, with the idea of expelling the knight from d4 with c2-c3, followed by g2-g3 etc.

Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein continued?

Answer:

10 ... b5!

Of course; bringing the c8-bishop into play with a gain of time.

11 Bb3

The zwischenzug 11 Re1? would simply be answered by 11 ... 0-0.

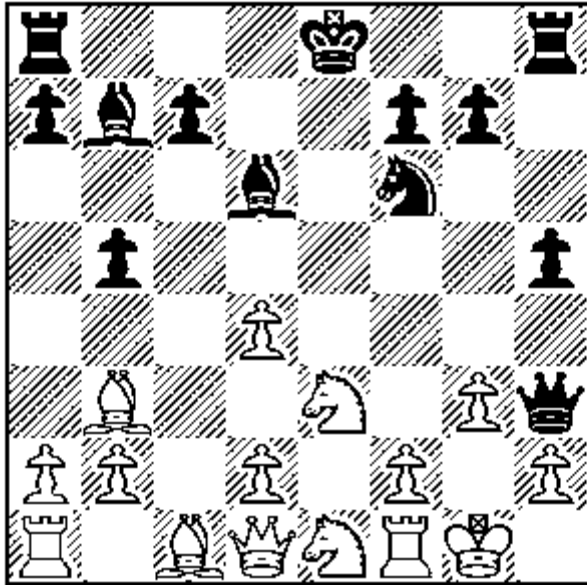
Question: In view of what happens in the game, would this not be a major improvement on White’s part?

Answer: He could indeed have prevented Black’s plan in this way, but White would not have appreciably improved his position. His queenside remains dormant and his king is still under a lot of pressure.

11 ... Bb7 12 Ne1 Qh4 13 g3 Qh3 14 c3 h5

This leads to a quick conclusion (and would have been decisive in reply to 14 d3), but in fact it is not winning. Instead, Black would have good compensation for the pawn after 14 ... Nxb3, followed by ... 0-0.

15 cxd4



15 ... h4

After 15 ... Ng4 16 Nxf4 hxf4 17 Qe2+ Kd7 18 f4!, Black must force a draw with the beautiful continuation 18 ... Rae8 19 Qf2 g5!; e.g. 20 fxg5 Bxf3! 21 Qxf3 Qxf3+ 22 hxf3 Rh1+ 23 Kf2 Rh2+ 24 Kg1 etc.

16 Qe2??

White overlooks the following finish. He needed to play 16 Nf3! and can then defend after, for instance, 16 ... hxf3 17 fxg3 Bxf3 18 Rxf3 Qxh2+ 19 Kf1 Bxf3 20 Rxf6! gxf6 21 Qf3.

16 ... Qxh2+!

According to some sources the game ended here.

17 Kxh2 hxf3+ 18 Kg1 Rh1 mate

“Instructive conversion of a positional advantage”

Discussing the chess of Rubinstein’s time, Kasparov wrote that “by a process of experimentation the leading masters of that era discovered the positions that became theoretical and ended up in all the endgame books.”

Concerning Rubinstein’s contribution to this process, Kasparov wrote: “In the collection of the great Akiba there are masses of such endings, each more subtle and prettier than the last!” and he went on to say: “For example, bishop against knight – the instructive conversion of a positional advantage in his game with Réti (Gothenburg 1920).”

That is the game that we shall look at now.

Game 20

R. Réti-A. Rubinstein

Gothenburg 1920

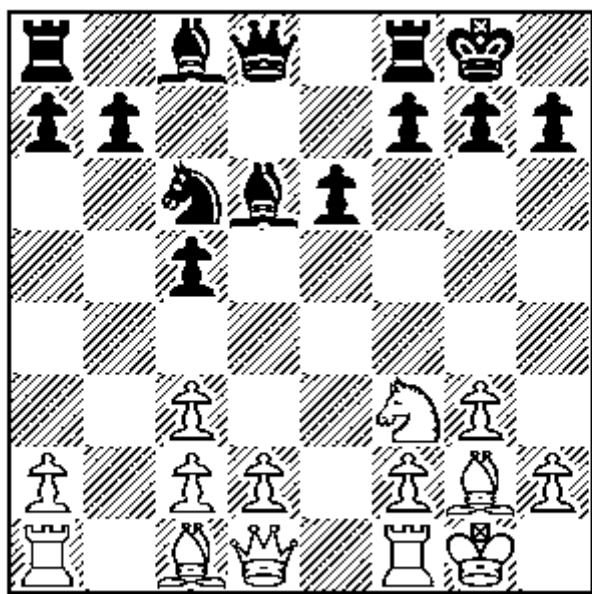
Sicilian Defence [B29]

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 e5 Nd5 4 Nc3 e6 5 g3

Question: The main line today is 5 Nxd5 exd5 6 d4. What can you tell me about Réti's move?

Answer: Yes, the main line is as you say, but let's remember that this game was played in the early days of the 2 ... Nf6 variation, and while it does not have a good reputation, it is certainly playable. The bishop on g2 and the b-file (which will probably be opened after ... Nxc3) often combine well in similar positions, although admittedly it requires precise play by White, in view of the fact that his pawn structure will be damaged.

5 ... Nc6 6 Bg2 Nxc3 7 bxc3 d6 8 exd6 Bxd6 9 0-0 0-0



10 d3

Rubinstein also faced the more incisive move 10 d4. F.Yates-A.Rubinstein, The Hague 1921, continued 10 ... Be7 (controlling g5 with 10 ... h6 was another possibility) 11 Qd3 Bd7?! (11 ... Qa5, followed by ... Rd8, is interesting) 12 Rb1! Na5 13 Ne5 Be8 14 Be4 h6 15 Rd1 Qc7 16 Bf4 (here 16 Nc4! is rather unpleasant for Black) 16 ... Bd6 17 Qe2 cxd4 18 cxd4 Rc8 19 Bd3 Nc6 with equal chances, although Rubinstein outplayed his opponent in a major-piece ending after 20 Qe4 f5 21 Qe3 Nxe5 22 Bxe5 Bxe5 23 dxe5 b5 24 Bxb5 Bxb5 25 Rxb5 Qxc2, and won in 59 moves.

10 ... Be7

This move is now more attractive, in view of the possibility of ... Bf6.

11 Be3 Bd7 12 Qd2

A strange decision; the d2-square is needed for the knight, on its way to c4, so the queen will soon need to move again.

It was more natural to play 12 Rb1, as Yates did, supporting the efforts of the g2-bishop, although here Black can fearlessly reply 12 ... b6!, since 13 d4 can be answered by 13 ... cxd4 14 Nxd4 (14 cxd4 Rc8 leads to a position where White will need to justify his hanging pawns) 14 ... Nxd4! 15 Bxa8 Bb5!, regaining the exchange (if 16 Re1 then 16 ... Ne2+!). Possibly it would be better to play 13 Nd2 instead.

12 ... Qc7

Question: Wasn't 12 ... Qa5 more active?

Answer: The more modest text move defends b7 in advance. White's idea in playing 12 Qd2 would become clearer after your suggestion of 12 ... Qa5; he could then play 13 Rfb1, answering 13 ... b6 with 14 d4 in better circumstances than on the previous move.

13 Rfe1 Rad8 14 Bf4

Question: Hmm, with a weakened pawn structure, is it such a good idea to exchange pieces?

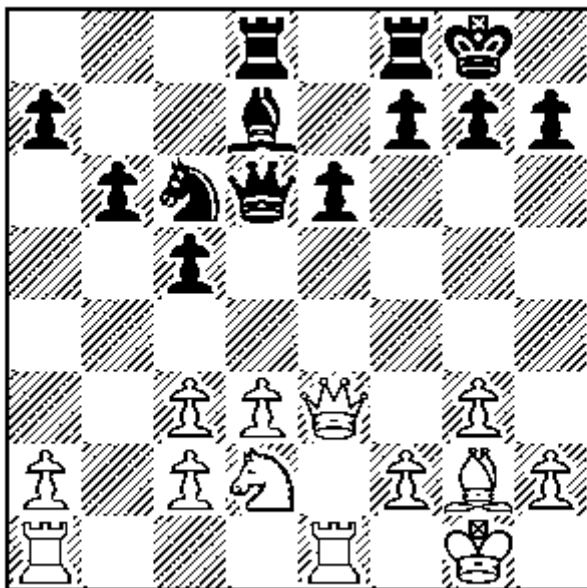
Answer: It's true that one always has to choose carefully which piece to exchange and which to keep, especially if, as you pointed out, White has doubled pawns.

In this particular case White probably chose the text move because he had gained nothing from the opening and could see that Black was planning to seize more of the centre with 14 ... e5, after which the white pieces would lack coordination.

14 ... Bd6 15 Bxd6 Qxd6 16 Qe3

White clears the d2-square for his knight. Razuvaev suggested another idea, occupying the centre with 16 c4, something that could also be played later in the game. But Réti wanted to post his knight there, which is a typical idea if followed by a4-a5.

16 ... b6 17 Nd2



Exercise: White is seeking to improve the position of his pieces. Which piece do you think Rubinstein in turn chose to improve?

Answer:

17 ... Ne7!

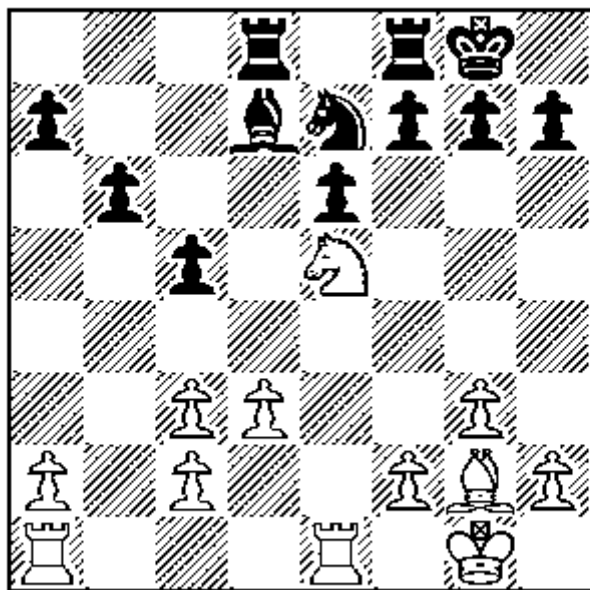
Since Black no longer needs to control the e5-square, he sends his knight in search of better prospects on d5 or f5. If White opts for c3-c4, Black can now respond with ... Bc6, when an exchange of bishops would leave more weaknesses in the white position.

18 Nc4 Qc7 19 Qe5?

A surprising decision; White decides voluntarily to enter an endgame which will

definitely not be a pleasant one for him. Instead, the most logical continuation was 19 a4, planning to advance to a5 at an opportune moment; nevertheless, Black would have a good position after 19 ... Bc6.

19 ... Qxe5 20 Nxe5



Exercise (easy): Black has a slightly better endgame.
What do you think he played in this position?

Answer:

20 ... Ba4!

A good strategy, and not only in the endgame, is to restrict the mobility of the enemy pieces, in this case by putting pressure on his weaknesses.

21 Re2 Nd5 22 Bxd5

Question: Why? Is this a good exchange? Or did White simply have nothing better?

Answer: You're right; this is not a pleasant exchange for White to make, as Black is left with the superior minor piece. The problem is that it is not easy defend the c3-pawn. If 22 c4?! then 22 ... Nb4 23 Rc1 f6! 24 Nf3 and now, instead of 24 ... Kf7 with just a slight advantage, Black has the much stronger 24 ... Bxc2! 25 Rxc2 Nxc2 26 Rxc2 Rxd3 with a rook and two pawns for the two minor pieces, and the d-file opened in his favour.

Perhaps the best practical chances lay in entering tactical complications after 22 Re4!?. Black can accept the challenge with 22 ... Bxc2 23 Rc1 Nxc3 24 Ree1 Nxa2 25 Rxc2 Nb4, when he has the more pleasant position with three pawns (two of them passed) for the piece, and there is a weakness at d3. However, this line is neither forced nor completely clear, so possibly Rubinstein would have maintained the tension with 22 ... Be8.

22 ... exd5

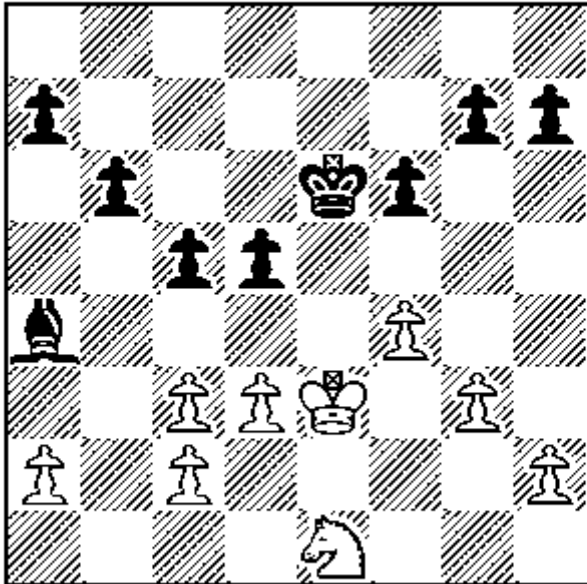
Question: With the pawn, closing the d-file? Why?

Answer: Because it opens the e-file instead, and Rubinstein is seeking to simplify the position down to the bare bones of his advantage. With the e-file open it should be easier for him to exchange the rooks, in order to reach a favourable endgame of bishop against knight.

23 Rae1 Rfe8 24 f4 f6 25 Nf3 Kf7 26 Kf2 Rxe2+ 27 Rxe2 Re8 28 Rxe8 Kxe8 29 Ne1

Black has made progress; White is passive, tied to the defence of the c2-pawn. As we know, on its own this is unlikely to be sufficient for Black to win; at least two weaknesses are required, or some other sort of advantage ...

29 ... Ke7 30 Ke3 Ke6



And the advantage that Rubinstein seeks is to infiltrate with his king on the kingside.

31 g4?

This prevents infiltration via f5 and g4, but at the cost of weakening his pawn structure. Black now has important extra options for probing the white kingside, with either ... h7-h5 or ... g7-g5, and White will be unable to maintain his pawn chain.

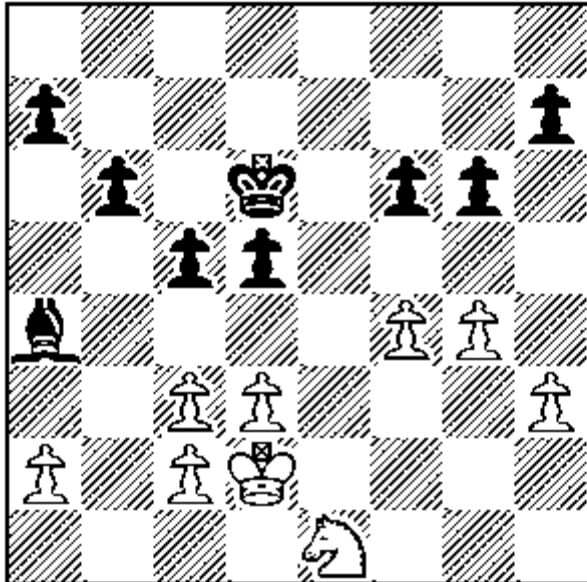
Instead, 31 d4! has been suggested, and this would indeed increase White's chances of a draw; 31 ... Kf5 can be answered with 32 Kf3, planning Ng2-e3+, and White would also have the possibility of playing d4xc5, followed by Nd3.

Euwe examined 31 ... Kd6 32 Kd2 Kc6, but then White can continue with the main idea behind 31 d4, which is to improve the position of his knight, by playing 33 Ng2 and Ne3, where it would be ideally situated, defending the weakness on c2 and controlling the entry points of the black king on both wings: c4, f5 and g4.

31 ... Kd6 32 h3

If immediately 32 Kd2, Black can play 32 ... Bd7 33 h3 h5! and the white position collapses; for example, 34 f5 Ke5 35 Ke3 d4+ 36 cxd4+ cxd4+ 37 Kf3 Bc6+ 38 Kg3 b5 and White is lost, since after 39 Nf3+ (or 39 gxh5 Kxf5 40 Nf3+ Bxf3 41 Kxf3 b4!) 39 ... Bxf3 40 Kxf3 h4, he is in zugzwang.

32 ... g6 33 Kd2



Exercise: How did Rubinstein proceed in this position?

Answer:

33 ... Bd7!

Seeking to open lines with ... h7-h5.

34 Nf3 Ke7

There is no hurry; although the immediate 34 ... h5 was playable, as after 35 g5!? fxg5 36 Nxc5 Ke7, followed by ... Kf6-f5, it is not possible for White to defend his pawns, and he now has two definite weaknesses, f4 and c2. If, for example, 37 h4 Kf6 38 Nf3 (or 38 Ke3 Ba4) 38 ... Kf5 39 Ne5 Be8 40 Ke3 Ba4 41 Kd2 d4, White can no longer protect the f4-pawn with Ke3, so Black wins after ... Be8 (to guard g6) and ... Kxf4.

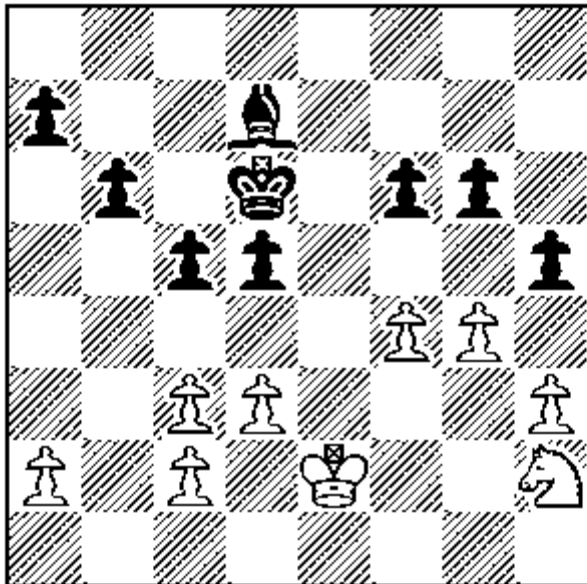
35 Ke3 h5 36 Nh2

In the event of 36 gxh5 gxh5 37 h4, Black gains access to the g4-square and wins after ... Ke6-f5 etc, always with the resource of ... Ba4 to deflect the white king if necessary.

36 ... Kd6!

White has prevented the black king from breaking into the kingside, but at the cost of becoming very passive, so Rubinstein now probes for an entry on the other wing, via c6-b5.

37 Ke2



Exercise: How did Rubinstein proceed?

Answer:

37 ... d4!

Opening the long diagonal to the bishop's advantage, while giving greater force to a future ... g6-g5.

38 cxd4?!

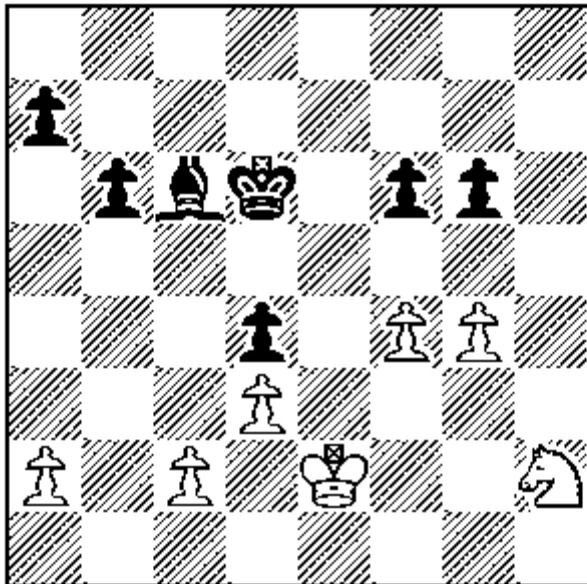
It was more tenacious to keep the position closed with 38 c4 hxg4 39 hxg4 (not 39 Nxg4 Ke6 40 Nh6? f5 and the knight is trapped). After 39 ... g5! 40 fxg5 fxg5, White would have to defend the weaknesses at g4 and c2, in addition to preventing ... Ke5-f4; but in that case Black's win would not be trivial, and a great deal of manoeuvring would still be required; for example, after 41 Kf2 (forced) 41 ... Ba4 42 Nf3 Bxc2 43 Ke2 Ba4 44 Nxg5 Ke7 and so on.

38 ... cxd4 39 Kd2 hxg4 40 hxg4

In the event of 40 Nxg4, the simplest way is 40 ... Bxg4! 41 hxg4 g5, as the pawn endgame is won for Black; for example, 42 fxg5 fxg5 43 Ke2 Kc5 44 Kf3, and now 44 ... Kb4 45 Ke4 Kc3 46 Kf5 Kxc2 47 Kxg5 Kxd3 leads to a winning queen ending after 48 Kf4 Kc3 49 g5 d3 50 g6 d2 51 g7 d1Q 52 g8Q a5, since the white a-pawn will soon drop off. However, 44 ... Kd5! is much easier, followed by ... b7-b5, ... a7-a5-a4, and only then ... Kc5-b4-c3xc2, after which ... b5-b4-b3 etc promotes the b-pawn much faster.

40 ... Bc6 41 Ke2

If White tries 41 c3, Bogoljubow pointed out a way to win: 41 ... dxc3+ 42 Kxc3 Bg2!, when White will soon be in zugzwang and will have to allow the black king to advance to support his outside pawn majority on the queenside; for example, 43 Kd4 b5 44 Ke3 a5 45 a3 (or 45 Kf2 Bd5 46 a3 b4) 45 ... Kc5 46 Kf2 Bd5 47 Nf1 b4 and so on.



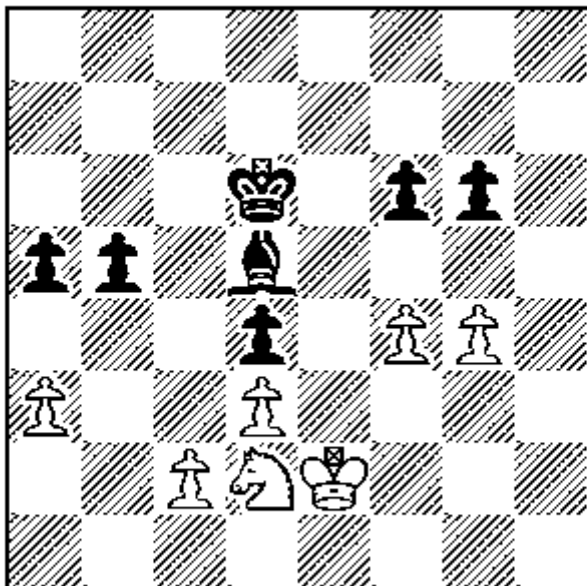
Exercise: How can Black extract maximum benefit from the pawn structure?

Answer:

41 ... Bd5!

Once the a2-pawn is forced to advance, Black can easily create a passed pawn.

42 a3 b5 43 Nf1 a5 44 Nd2



Exercise: How can Black show that provoking 42 a3 is decisive?

Answer:

44 ... a4!

So that, after ... b5-b4, a passed pawn will inevitably result.

45 Ne4+

If 45 Kd1, Black can throw in 45 ... g5!, returning to the plan of infiltrating with the king at f4.

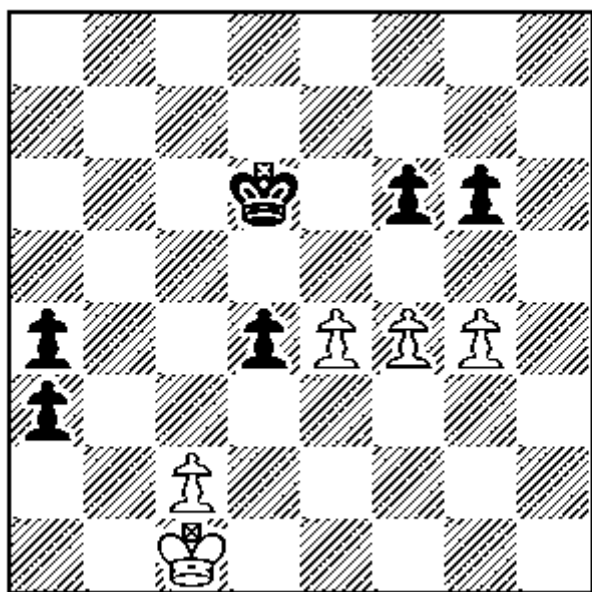
Exercise (easy): What is the quickest way to win now?

Answer:

45 ... Bxe4!

This exchange concludes the plan started with 44 ... a4.

46 dxe4 b4 47 Kd2 bxa3 48 Kc1



Exercise (easy): How does the black monarch force a way in?

Answer:

48 ... g5! 0-1

Surprising Decisions

Boris Gelfand highlighted two decisions taken by Rubinstein in the following game that looked strange at first sight: one was to give himself an isolated pawn in the ending; the other was to exchange a powerful-looking knight for a passive bishop.

These paradoxical decisions ended “in a breakthrough into the opponent’s camp which brought him the deserved victory.” Gelfand compared the second of these to Fischer’s famous exchange of strong knight for bad bishop against Petrosian in the seventh game of their 1971 Candidates match.

Game 21

S.Rosselli del Turco-A.Rubinstein

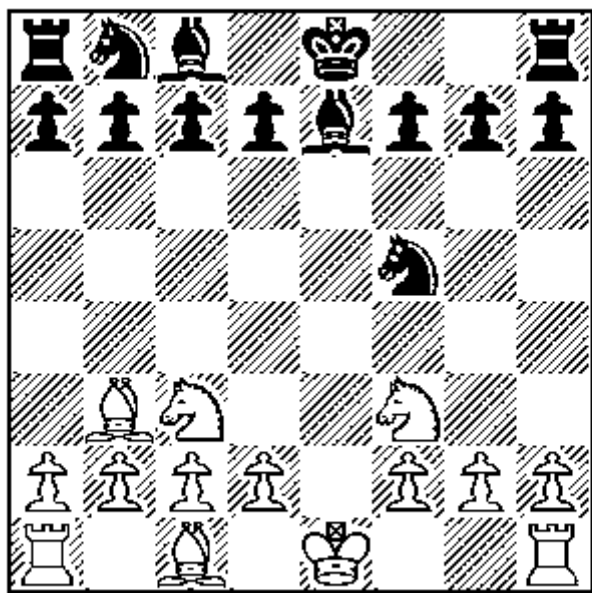
Baden-Baden 1925

Vienna Game [C27]

1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nf6 3 Bc4 Nxe4 4 Qh5 Nd6 5 Qxe5+

White rejects the fearsomely complicated line 5 Bb3 Nc6 6 Nb5 g6 7 Qf3 and opts for an endgame instead.

5 ... Qe7 6 Qxe7+ Bxe7 7 Bb3 Nf5 8 Nf3



8 ... c6

Question: Doesn't this take away the natural square of the b8-knight?

Answer: Yes, that's true, but the knight has other acceptable development options. With the text move Black not only seeks to develop his own pieces, he also tries to neutralize the opponent's pieces, especially the b3-bishop and the c3-knight, at least for the moment.

9 0-0 d5 10 Re1 Na6 11 d4 h5!

Question: I don't understand this move at all. I suppose it does no harm to Black, but what good does it do?

Answer: The exclamation mark is not really for the move in isolation. Black is beginning a concrete plan to improve his pieces, while continuing to restrict the opponent's activity, as we shall see. For the moment he gains some space on the kingside, where he is planning to expand further at an opportune moment.

12 Ne2

White also seeks to improve the activity of his pieces, starting with the two most affected by Black's solid c6/d5 pawn structure; i.e. the b3-bishop and the c3-knight mentioned earlier.

12 ... Nc7

Question: I suppose that Black has a particular reason for choosing this move order. Wasn't it better to play 12 ... f6 immediately?

Answer: In a quiet position like this one, you might think that move order is not that important, but in fact it is. With 12 ... Nc7, Black brings his knight closer to the centre and overprotects his d5-pawn. This is significant, as after 12 ... f6 13 Nf4, Black would have to

play 13 ... g5, allowing 14 Ng6, since 13 ... Kf7? can be answered forcefully by 14 c4!.

It's true that 14 Ng6 is not really a problem after 14 ... Rh7!. (Whereas after 14 ... Rg8?! 15 Nxe7 Nxe7, because the knight no longer controls d4 or h4, White can play 16 h4! advantageously; for example, 16 ... g4 17 Nh2, followed by Bf4 and Nf1-g3, when Black seems too late to set up his ideal formation of ... Bf5, ... Ne6, ... Kf7 etc.) It's not serious, but there is no reason to allow it either.

13 c3 f6

Question: Am I right in supposing that this move is still part of the plan?

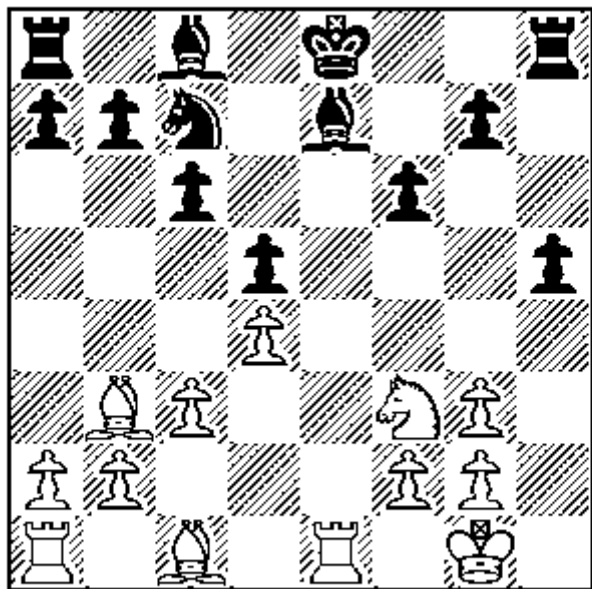
Answer: Correct; having embarked on his plan, Black now has nothing better. With ... f7-f6 he controls e5, restricting the mobility of White's f3-knight and dark-squared bishop and prepares to seize more space with, if possible, ... g7-g5, ... h5-h4 etc, not forgetting the prophylactic moves ... Kf7 or ... Kd7.

14 Ng3?!

A deterioration in the pawn structure is a concession and must be justified. Here there was neither need nor benefit for White in doing so.

It was still better to play 14 Nf4!. Then 14 ... Kf7?! 15 c4! would again be uncomfortable for Black, but 14 ... g5 15 Ng6 fails now to create any difficulties after 15 ... Rg8! 16 Nxe7 Nxe7; for example, 17 h4 g4 18 Nh2 Bf5 19 Nf1 Kd7 20 Ng3 Bg6 with a harmonious position.

14 ... Nxg3 15 hxg3



As we have already seen, sometimes one of the problems is selecting the best move order in which to carry out a plan. That's the case here, despite the absence of the queens.

Exercise: What move do you think Rubinstein chose?

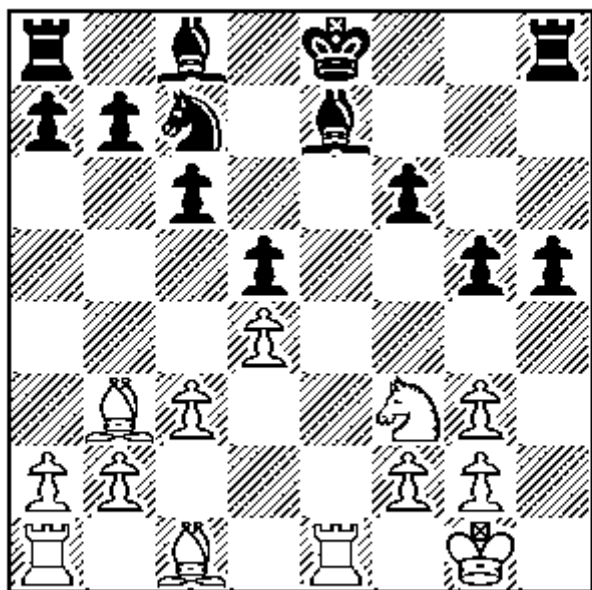
Answer:

15 ... g5!

There were three reasonable moves for Black to consider. One was 15 ... Kf7, but then 16

Nh4 (threatening Rxe7+ and Ng6+) would need to be considered, followed by 17 Bc2.

The other two moves were 15 ... g5 (to prevent Bf4) and 15 ... Bf5 (restricting the other white bishop). But 15 ... Bf5?! would allow 16 Bf4!, when Black is a tempo short for keeping everything under control; 16 ... Ne6 (or 16 ... Rc8) could be met by 17 Nh4! Be4 18 f3 and Black has problems.



16 Bd2?!

Despite continuing development, this move is not the best.

Exercise (easy): How did Rubinstein demonstrate that White's move order is imprecise?

Answer:

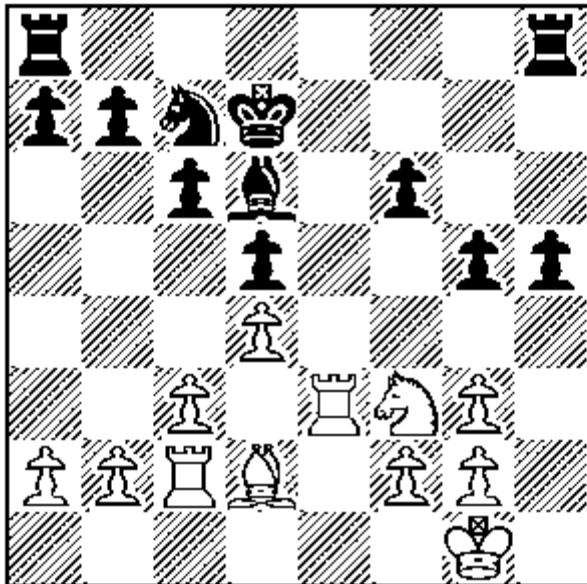
16 ... Bf5!

Of course, showing that the correct choice for White was 16 Bc2!.

17 Re3 Kd7 18 Rc1

Rosselli plans to exchange the annoying bishop on f5, but this represents another small concession, since Black's remaining bishop is better than White's.

18 ... Bd6 19 Bc2 Bxc2 20 Rxc2



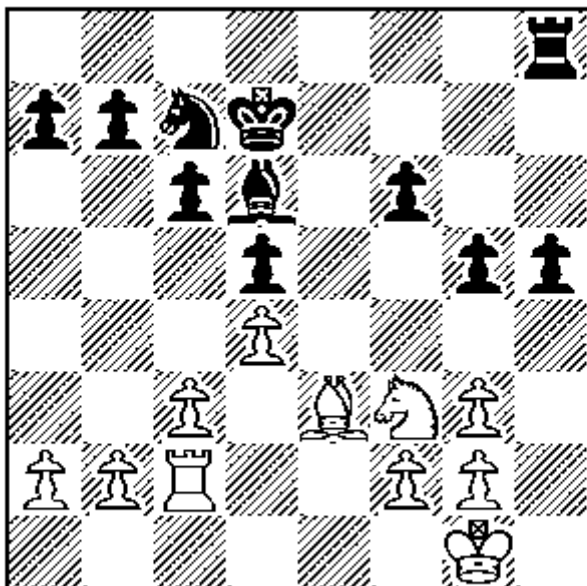
Exercise: There are many possible moves here. What idea did Rubinstein opt for?

Answer:

20 ... Rae8!

Deciding which piece to exchange and which to keep is almost always important. In this case the exchange of a pair of rooks (one pair only) reduces White's defensive possibilities.

21 Bc1 Rxe3 22 Bxe3



Exercise: Once the appropriate exchange has been accomplished, it is time to improve the position of the remaining pieces. What do you think Rubinstein played here?

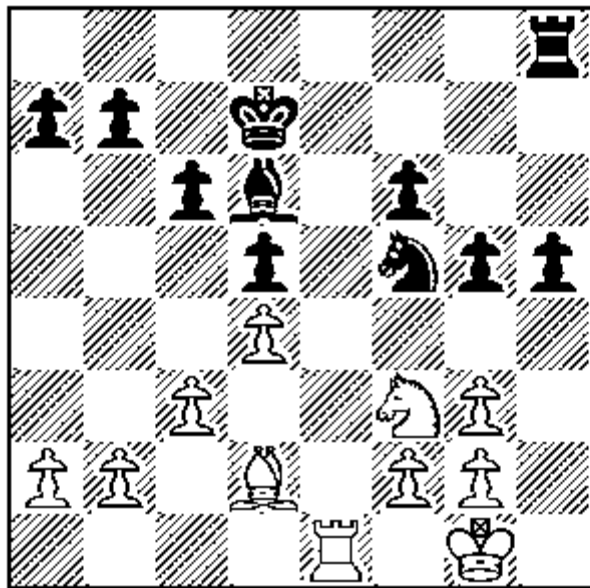
Answer:

22 ... Ne8!

Heading for f5; 22 ... Ne6 was equally strong.

23 Re2 Ng7 24 Bd2 Nf5 25 Re1

White is simply waiting; 25 Ne1 looks better, intending Nc2-e3.



Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein made progress in this position?

Answer:

25 ... c5!!

A surprising move at first sight; Black voluntarily accepts an isolated queen's pawn in an endgame with very few pieces remaining.

If we look at Rubinstein's idea more carefully, however, it becomes apparent that the d-pawn is not a weakness, since it cannot easily be attacked; furthermore, it threatens to advance with ... d5-d4 at any moment. The other important change is that Black's bishop will gain considerably in activity.

26 dxc5

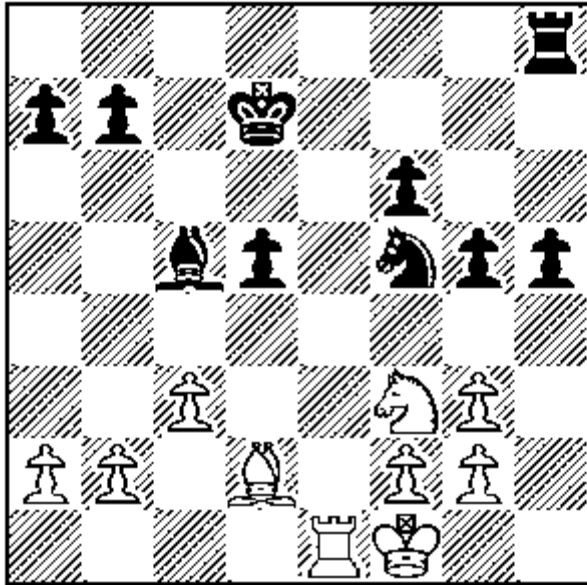
Question: If, as you say, White fails to benefit from giving Black an IQP, why not abstain from playing d4xc5 - ?

Answer: That would allow Black to gain space on the queenside with ... c5-c4, followed by ... b7-b5, ... a7-a5 etc.

26 ... Bxc5

Threatening 27 ... Nxg3.

27 Kf1



Exercise: How did Rubinstein proceed?

Answer:

27 ... h4!

Opening the h-file; it is not possible keep it closed with 28 g4 in view of 28 ... Nh6 29 Nh2 Bd6, winning a pawn.

28 gxh4 g4 29 Nd4 Bxd4!

The most favourable exchange; Black gives up a “good” bishop but leaves himself with a good knight against a bishop restricted by its own d-pawn.

30 cxd4 Rxh4 31 Bc3 Rh1+ 32 Ke2 Rh2 33 Rg1 Nh4 34 g3

Another small triumph; Black has succeeded in reducing the mobility of the white pawns, fixing them on dark squares.

34 ... Nf5 35 b3 Ke6 36 Bb2 a6 37 Bc3 Nd6

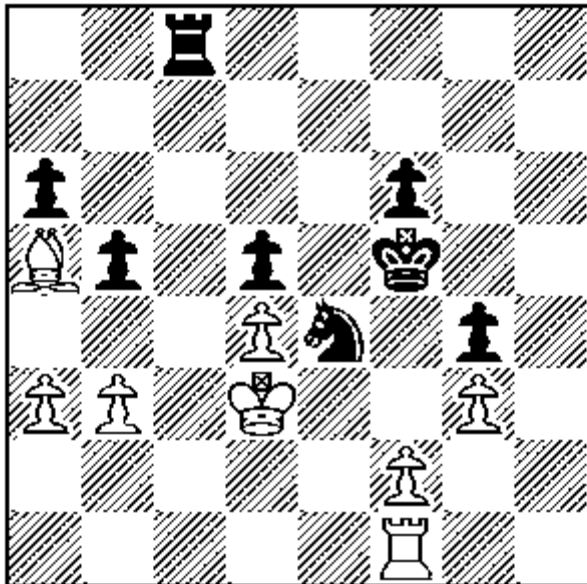
Another small step forward; the knight is heading for e4, where it will exert maximum pressure on the white position.

38 Ke3 Ne4 39 Be1 Kf5 40 Rf1 Rh8 41 Kd3 b5 42 a3 Rh7 43 Ba5

Question: Why does White not get rid of his weakness on f2, for example by playing 43 f3 here?

Answer: The problem is that, in return for this slight relief, the black rook would gain more possibilities of infiltrating White’s position via the first and second ranks.

43 ... Rh8 44 Bb4 Rc8 45 Ba5 Ng5 46 Bd2 Ne4 47 Ba5



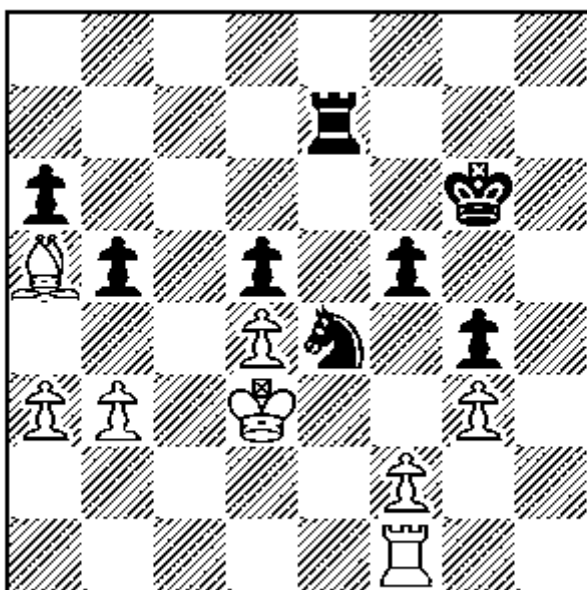
Exercise: Both sides have been shuffling their pieces without altering the position much; but now Rubinstein found a way to make progress. What move did he start with?

Answer:

47 ... Kg6!

Making way for the f-pawn, aiming to break with f5-f4 at the opportune moment.

48 Bb4 f5 49 Ba5 Rh8 50 Ke3 Re8 51 Kd3 Rc8 52 Bb4 Rc7 53 Ba5 Rh7 54 Ke3 Re7 55 Kd3



Exercise: How should Black proceed now?

Answer:

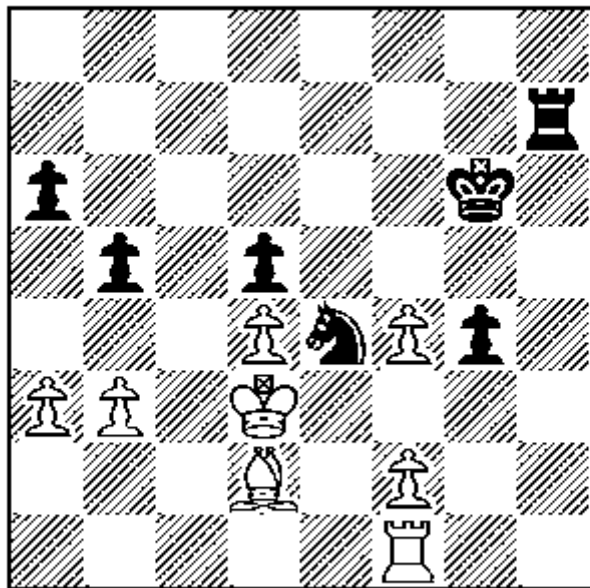
55 ... f4!

The moment has arrived for opening a breach in White's defences. This is a logical decision, but it is also justified by a mass of tactical details, as we shall see.

56 gxf4 Rh7!

Of course not 56 ... Kf5? at once, as that would allow 57 f3!, forcing an exchange of pawns which considerably eases White's defence; whereas if 57 f3? now, Black wins with 57 ... Rh3! 58 Ke3 Nd6 and ... Nf5+.

57 Bd2



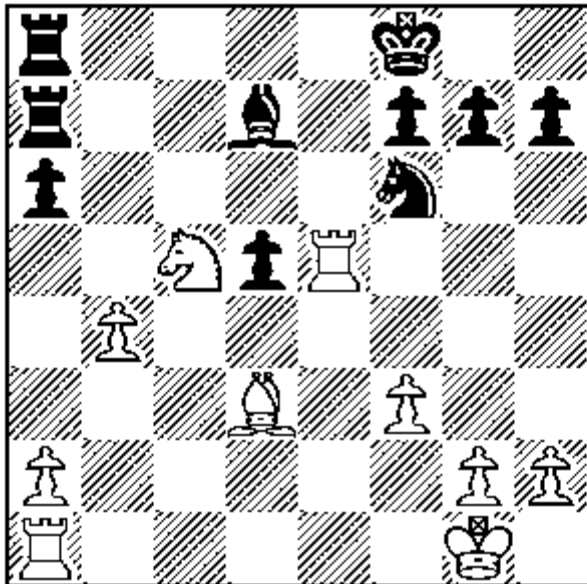
Exercise: What do you think Rubinstein played here?

Answer:

57 ... Nxd2!

At first sight, a most surprising exchange; Black gives up his wonderful knight for a passive bishop. The justification is that the bishop was fulfilling an effective defensive role and Black will now benefit from its disappearance. As Tarrasch put it: "It's not the pieces that leave the board that are important, but the ones that remain." (All the same, this decision could be postponed and 57 ... Kf5 played first.)

Perhaps the most well-known example of a "strong" piece being exchanged for a "weak" one arose in R.J.Fischer-T.V.Petrosian, Buenos Aires (7th matchgame) 1971.

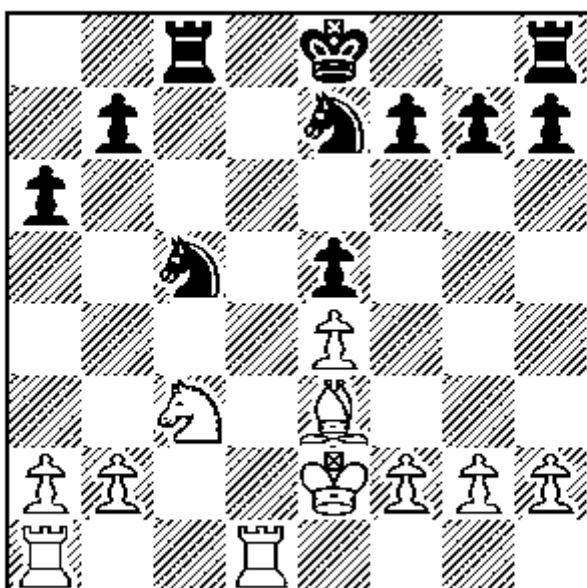


White to play

22 Nxd7+! - “A brilliant decision, masterfully transforming one type of advantage into another. It should be borne in mind that at that time such exchanges of a powerful knight for a passive bishop were most unusual,” commented Kasparov. After 22 ... Rxd7, Fischer exploited the disappearance of the defending bishop with 23 Rc1, decisively infiltrating the black position.

Boris Gelfand wrote that this solution was surely familiar to Fischer because he would have been aware of the game that we are studying.

It should also be remembered that this wasn't the first time Rubinstein made an exchange which was not obviously justified.



White to play

Here Rubinstein opted for the surprising 17 Bxc5!, as we saw in Game 16.

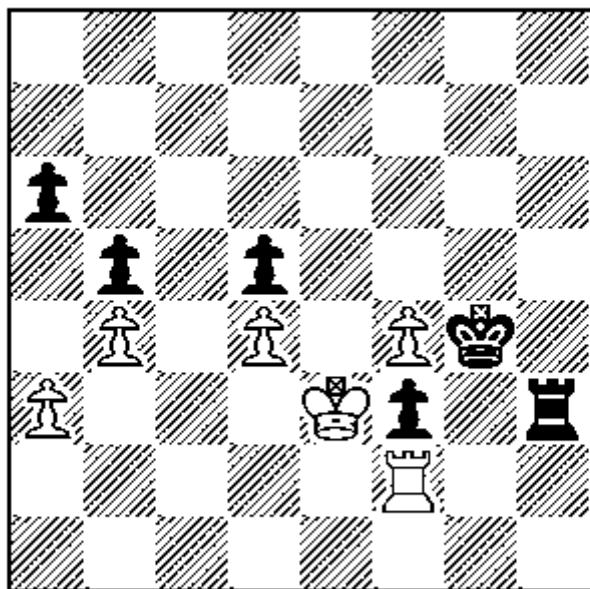
Let's return to the current game:

58 Kxd2 Rh3 59 f3 gxf3 60 Rf2

If 60 Ke3 at once, Black plays 60 ... f2+ 61 Kxf2 Rxb3, winning easily.

60 ... Kf5 61 Ke3 Kg4 62 b4

62 f5 Kxf5 63 Rxf3+ Rxf3 64 Kxf3, then 64 ... a5 wins, as the white king has to give way.



Exercise: How did Rubinstein bring the game to a conclusion?

Answer:

62 ... Rh1!

Gaining decisive space for rook and king. Now if 63 Rxf3, Black wins with 63 ... Ra1.

63 f5 Re1+ 64 Kd3 Re4 0-1

Chapter Four

Rook Endgames

The arts of manoeuvring and exchanging

As we have already noted, Rubinstein was, among his other qualities, a master of the art of manoeuvring, of constantly improving the position of his pieces; he also displayed great skill in choosing the most appropriate exchange of pieces, even though these might appear surprising at first sight.

This game is especially renowned for moves 29 and 30, which were possibly the inspiration for similar manoeuvres in other openings. No less noteworthy is the manoeuvre begun on move 24, with the idea of seeking a favourable exchange.

The game eventually drifts into a rook ending, in which Rubinstein gradually increases his advantage.

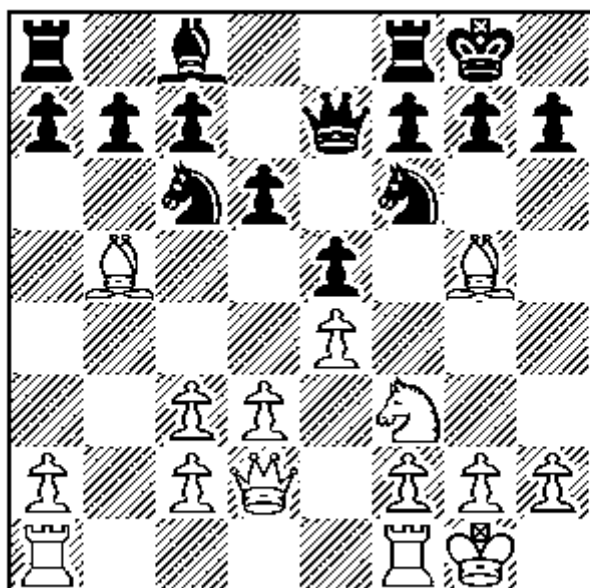
Game 22

D.Janowski-A.Rubinstein

Carlsbad 1907

Four Knights Game [C49]

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bb5 Bb4 5 0-0 0-0 6 d3 Bxc3 7 bxc3 d6 8 Bg5 Qe7 9 Qd2?!



Question: Why the question mark? This looks like a useful move, developing the queen and connecting the rooks, so why is it dubious?

Answer: It's not a serious error, but it is an inaccuracy. The problem is that there is no

clear idea behind it, and this is a position that lends itself to moves with concrete ideas, such as the most common move, 9 Re1, with the idea of advancing with d3-d4.

Exercise: What is Black's most logical response now?

Answer:

9 ... Nd8

This is one of the ideas behind 8 ... Qe7, bringing the knight to e6 and combating the pin from the g5-bishop.

10 Bc4 Be6!

“White is not allowed to keep the bishop pair. Rubinstein is indeed slowly neutralizing White's advantages.” – Gelfand.

11 Bb3 Bxb3 12 axb3 Ne6 13 Bh4 h6

This means that Black will now have the advance ... g7-g5 available.

14 Rfe1 a6

Another pawn move which, just like the previous one, increases Black's options; this one frees the a8-rook from defensive duties.

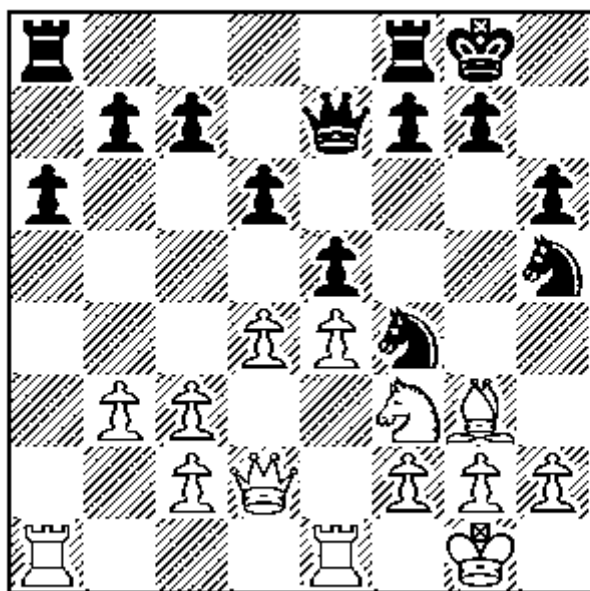
15 Bg3

Almost copying the style of his opponent, playing in an unhurried manner. This move lends more force to an eventual advance with d3-d4, but it also grants Black possibilities which did not exist before, so the immediate 15 d4 was to be considered.

15 ... Nh5

The disappearance of the pin gives Black this fresh possibility.

16 d4 Nef4



Question: What's happening? Please explain.

Answer: With 15 Bg3, White increased the pressure on e5, trying to force Black to exchange on d4 or else deploy his pieces passively in defence. But Rubinstein has

manoeuvred in such a way that he does not need either to give up his strongpoint or retreat.

17 Bxf4?!

It is notable that the strongest analysis engines (at the time of writing) agree with this decision – it is the first choice of three of them: Houdini 4, Stockfish 5 and Komodo 8.

Gelfand suggested a more “human” manoeuvre, retaining the bishop: namely 17 Qe3, with the plan of Rad1-d2 and Red1.

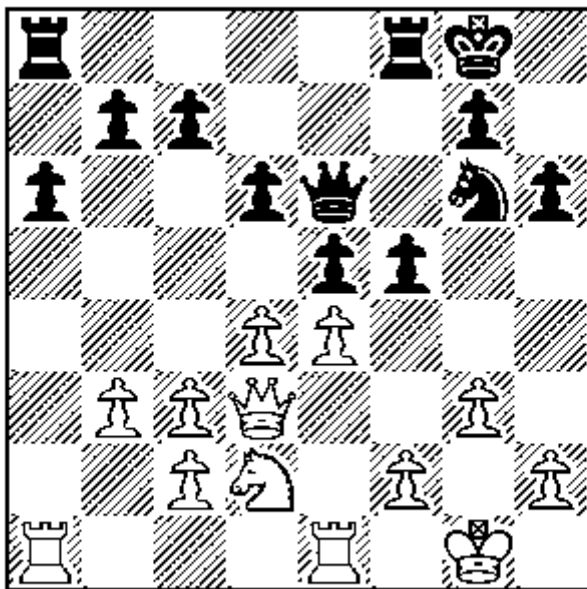
17 ... Nxf4 18 g3

This is what motivated White to exchange his bishop; he is now able to force the remaining black knight to retreat to a passive position.

18 ... Ng6 19 Qd3

Black’s plan naturally includes the advance ... f7-f5, so White removes his queen from d2, clearing that square for the knight. Now when Black pushes his pawn, White can take on f5 and deploy his knight to its ideal square, e4, as in the King’s Indian.

19 ... Qe6 20 Nd2 f5



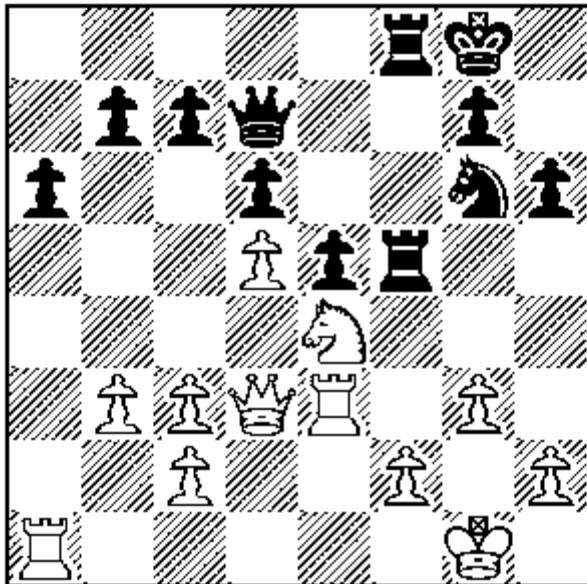
21 d5 Qd7 22 exf5 Rxf5 23 Ne4

Question: In similar positions in the King’s Indian, having a knight on e4, neutralizing the pressure of Black’s rooks on the f-file by protecting f2 and supporting a pawn advance on the queenside is advantageous for White. Is that also the case here?

Answer: There are a few differences which mean that Black’s position is playable, the main one being that the white king is weak, since its natural defender in this kingside structure, a bishop on g2, is missing.

You are quite right about the strength of such a knight in most cases, but not in this one because, as Gelfand points out, “the knight on e4 is pretty, but ineffective. It will eventually be exchanged and White will be left an inferior structure, where Black is able to apply some pressure down the f-file, which of course has been weakened with 18 g3.”

23 ... Raf8 24 Re3



Exercise: White is preparing his c3-c4 advance, possibly followed by b3-b4 and c4-c5. How do you think Rubinstein responded?

Answer:

24 ... Ne7!!

A response highly praised by all the annotators. Rubinstein realizes that the priority is to exchange the pride and joy of White's position – which is, as you pointed out, the e4-knight – and therefore plans ... Kh8, followed by ... Ng8-f6.

This is actually typical of the current handling of the King's Indian, with the purpose of reactivating the generally passive e7-knight, which goes to g8 and then f6. (In the King's Indian, the knight sometimes enables Black to exchange his “bad” g7-bishop with ... Bh6 as well.)

In this position there is also the latent possibility of attacking with ... Rh5, followed by ... Qh3, basically to restrict White's mobility rather than with any real hope of delivering mate.

As we are seeing once again: which piece to exchange and which to keep – this was an art of which Rubinstein was a great master.

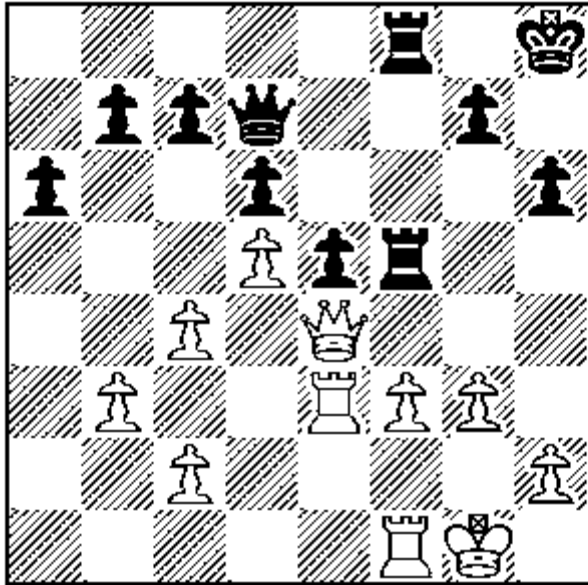
25 Rd1 Kh8

Black continues with his plan, seeing that 25 ... Rh5 brings no benefits after, for example, 26 Qe2 Qh3 27 f3. Note that White would be in no rush to play c3-c4 here, which would allow the manoeuvre ... Nf5-d4.

26 c4 Ng8 27 f3 Nf6 28 Rf1

It was possible to retain the knights by playing 28 Nc3, but obviously White's knight would be less active than on e4; Razuvaev suggested that Black could then make progress on the kingside by playing 28 ... g5, intending ... g5-g4.

28 ... Nxe4 29 Qxe4



Although White's position is a good one with his strong centralized queen, chances are equal, because there is no clear plan which would allow him to make progress. Nevertheless, in view of what happens in the game, 29 Rxe4 has been suggested, to be followed by Qe3 with equality. Black might have replied 29 ... a5, restraining White's possible queenside expansion.

Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein continued here?

Answer:

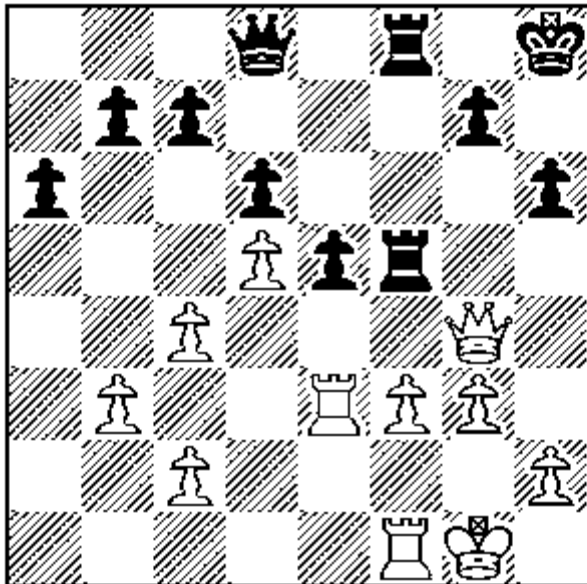
29 ... Qd8!!

Question: Two exclamation marks? Surely that's a bit over the top, isn't it? What's so special about this retreat?

Answer: Janowski, an attacker rather than a positional player, did not understand it either; but it was not so easy to understand, because: "This does not look like anything special. All that happens is that White will have to be a little careful in order to stay out of trouble. But when you know what is coming, you cannot help being mesmerized by Rubenstein's clarity of thought. The path the queen takes here still feels revolutionary a century on." – Gelfand.

30 Qg4

White prevents the black queen from becoming active with 30 ... Qg5, when Black's ideas might include ... Rf4-d4. Instead, Gelfand suggests 30 Reel1! Qb8 31 Qe3, and the position is equal.



Exercise: How did Rubinstein proceed with the plan begun on the previous move?

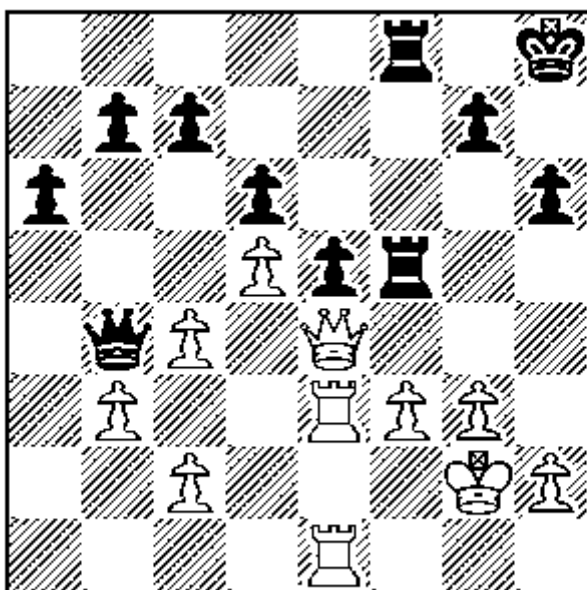
Answer:

30 ... Qb8!!

This second queen move was completely overlooked by Janowski. Let's remember that manoeuvring to improve the effectiveness of his pieces was another of the Rubinstein's fortes. Now the black queen cannot be hindered from becoming active on the queenside.

This queen manoeuvre created a whole "school" and was used in various similar positions, as we shall see later in three supplementary game extracts. The engines prefer 30 ... h5, evicting the white queen in order to continue with the plan of playing ... Qg5.

31 Kg2 Qa7 32 Rfe1 Qc5 33 Qe4 Qb4



The black queen has managed to become active and White must now reckon with the advance ... a5-a4. It can be said that Black has made some progress, even if objectively the position still remains balanced.

34 R1e2 R5f6 35 Qd3 Kg8

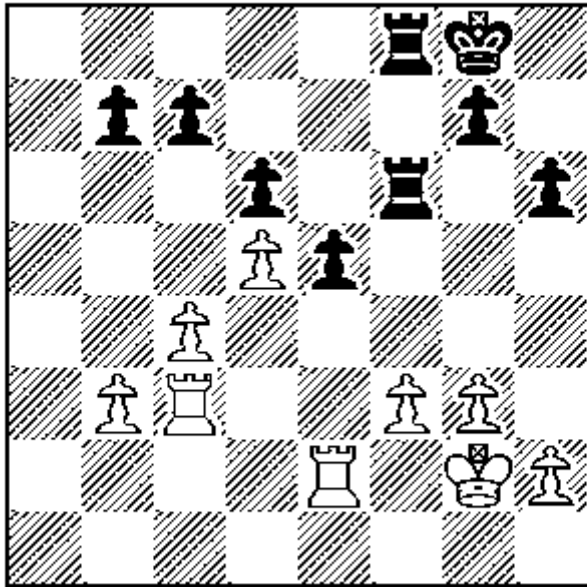
If 35 ... a5, White could respond with 36 Qc3, when Gelfand suggested 36 ... Qc5, keeping the queens on the board; but Rubinstein had something else in mind.

As Mihail Marin commented, Black's last two moves were characteristic of Rubinstein; once again he improved his pieces, this time in anticipation of the exchange of queens. The king starts to centralize and the rook defends d6 in advance, anticipating c4-c5xd6.

36 Qc3 a5 37 Qxb4 axb4 38 c3!

The queenside is finally set in motion.

38 ... bxc3 39 Rxc3



Exercise: How did Rubinstein proceed?

Answer:

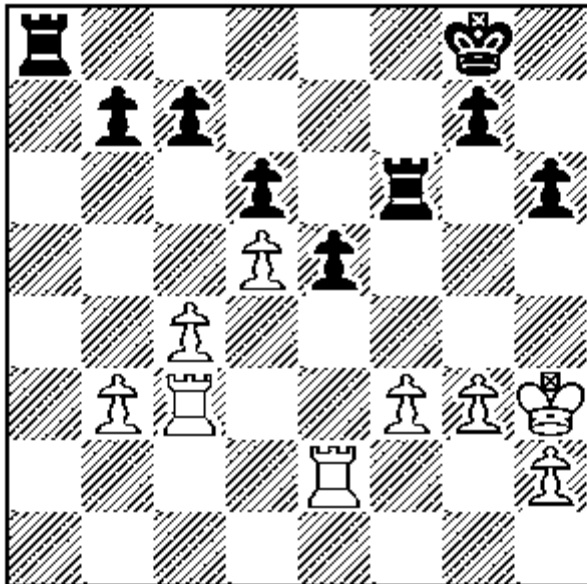
39 ... Ra8!

“First things first”; it is essential to occupy the open file. We should note that Rubinstein consented to the exchange of queens only after 34 R1e2; i.e. when White could no longer play Ra1.

40 Kh3?!

Unlike his opponent, Janowski has no clear idea of the priorities; in this case there was no reason to reject 40 c5!.

Although his move is still not a decisive error, it is a step in the wrong direction. White wants to activate his king, but Rubinstein will show that this is the wrong way.



Exercise: White did Rubinstein play now?

Answer:

40 ... b6!

Placing obstacles in the way of a future c4-c5 advance.

41 Kg4?!

41 b4 still deserved consideration, intending to answer 41 ... Ra1 (or 41 ... Ra4) with 42 Rb2.

41 ... Ra1 42 Rb2?

It is possible that one of White's ideas in playing Kh3-g4 was to block up the kingside with 42 h4 and 43 h5, but then decided against it.

After 42 h4 Rh1 43 h5 Kh7, White cannot occupy the open file with 44 Ra2? since his king becomes trapped in a mating net: 44 ... g6 45 hxg6+ Kxg6+ 46 f4 e4. Instead, he would have to play 44 f4!, which would perhaps not be all that bad, though White's position hardly arouses enthusiasm after 44 ... g6 45 hxg6+ Kxg6 46 Kf3 exf4.

42 ... Kh7!

Question: What this? Did he not play 35 ... Kg8 to centralize his king?

Answer: Yes, but circumstances have now changed. If it's any comfort, I can tell you that the "centralizing" 42 ... Kf7 was just as good!

In view of the risky manoeuvre by the white king, Rubinstein considers that the best square for his own king is g6, to create mating threats against the foolhardy white monarch.

43 b4 Kg6 44 Rbb3?

White is trying to seize control of the a-file, but Rubinstein will demonstrate that it was more important to attend to the safety of his king. The best move was 44 Kh3, when Black could play 44 ... Rg1!, preventing Kg2; alternatively, 44 ... Rf8 looks promising, planning to invade the white position after ... Rfa8.

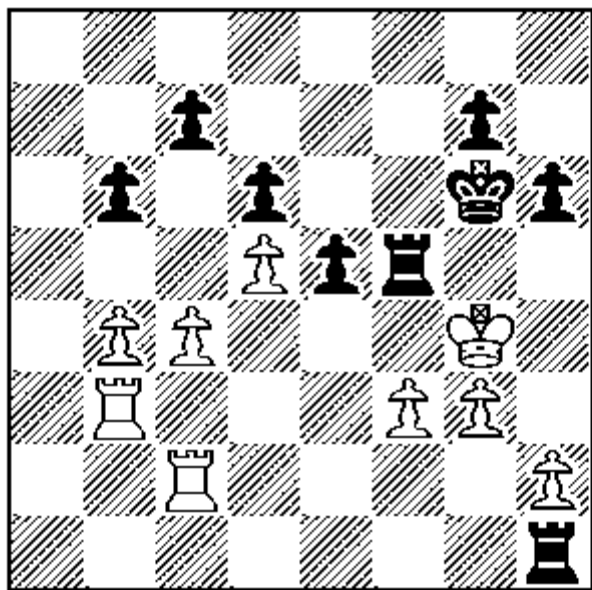
44 ... Rf5

Another possibility was 44 ... Ra2 45 Kh3 Rf5 46 g4 Rf4, followed by ... Rd4.

45 Rc2

Instead, 45 Ra3 would have been met the same way.

45 ... Rh1!



Threatening 46 ... Rg5+ 47 Kh3 Rh5+, to which there is no completely satisfactory defence.

46 f4

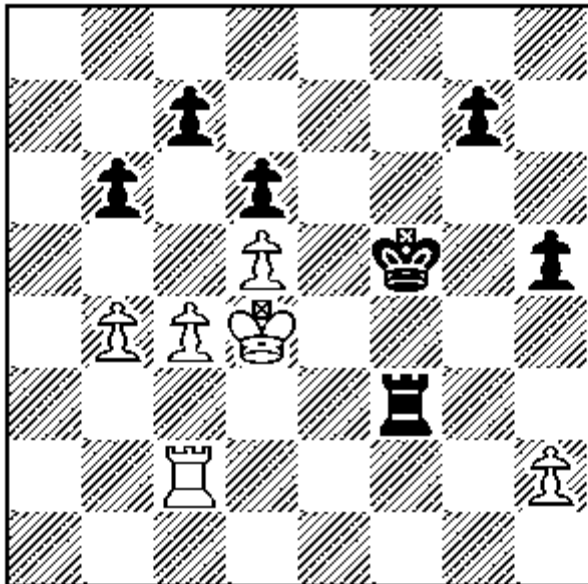
So White had to play f3-f4 anyway: “when he is passive and losses a pawn by force. This is the nature of the squeeze. When you are under pressure you will usually have to make a concession or an unpleasant decision a number of times, and it is so easy to miss the moment when you have to accept that things are going wrong. You then find yourself in a situation where everything has gone entirely wrong.” – Gelfand.

Here 46 Rbb2 would be answered by 46 ... h5+, winning the f3-pawn. Black wins a pawn after the text move too, but by now White had nothing better.

46 ... exf4 47 gxf4 h5+ 48 Kg3 Rg1+ 49 Kf2 Rg4 50 Rf3 Rgxf4

So Black has won a pawn. Although the rest could be described as “a matter of technique”, there are still serious difficulties to overcome.

51 Rxf4 Rxf4+ 52 Ke3 Kf5 53 Kd3 Rf3+ 54 Kd4



Exercise: There are several good moves here. What do you think Rubinstein played?

Answer:

54 ... Rb3!

First of all he decides to block the queenside; 54 ... g5! was the more direct alternative.

55 Rf2+ Kg6 56 Rg2+ Kh6 57 b5

If 57 Ra2, the most accurate reply is 57 ... b5! (better than 57 ... Rxb4 58 Kc3 Rb1 59 Ra7 b5!, although this is advantageous too) 58 Ra7 Rxb4, followed by ... Rxc4 and wins.

57 ... Rf3!

Question: Why is this rather slow move strong?

Answer: Let's see what Gelfand thinks: "The important thing is not that you win quickly, but that you win safely. This can mean that you spend many more moves winning a position that the computer or even someone else might, but as long as you win, this does not matter. And the way to ensure that win is to minimize the number of difficult decisions you will have to make in this conversion."

58 Ke4 Rf6 59 Ra2 g5 60 Ra7 Rf4+!?

Rubinstein anticipates White's idea (see move 62), and as a general rule it is advantageous to force the white king to retreat; it will be less active on the third rank. However, 60 ... Rf7 was also effective, keeping the check in reserve (see the note to Black's 62nd move).

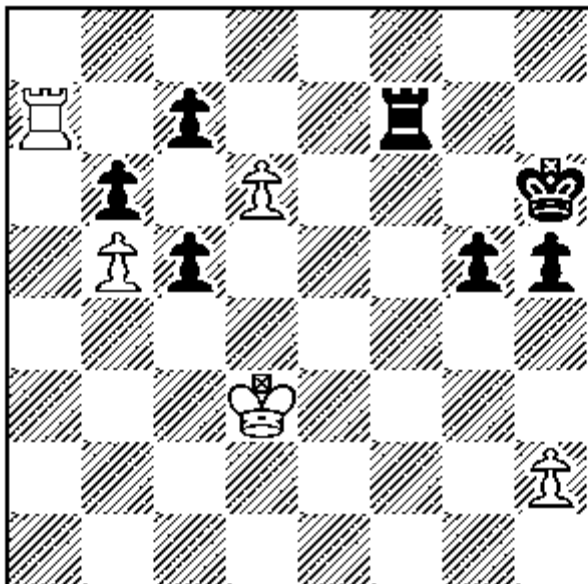
61 Kd3 Rf7 62 c5!?

The only way to complicate the game.

62 ... dxc5

If Black had not checked on f4 (so that the white king would still be on e4), he could have played 62 ... bxc5 here, when 63 b6? would fail to 63 ... Rf4+.

63 d6



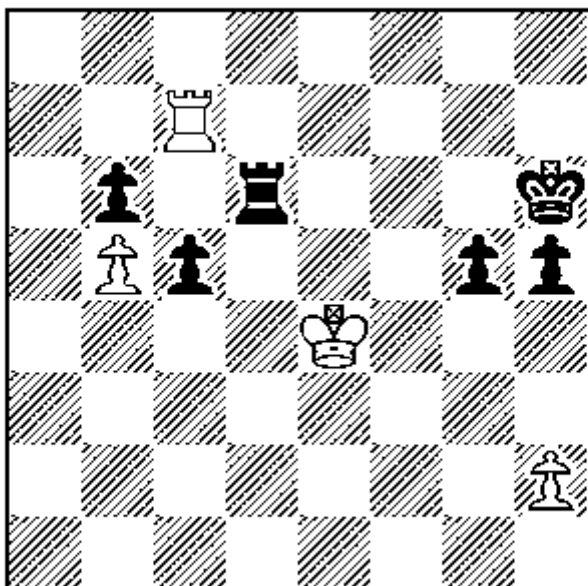
Exercise: So why did Rubinstein play 60 ... Rf4+ - ?

Answer:

63 ... Rd7!

To take advantage of this pin.

64 Rxc7 Rxd6+ 65 Ke4



Exercise: Although previously there were several moves of similar strength, here there is only one good move – what is it?

Answer:

65 ... Rd4+!

In contrast, the defensive 65 ... Rg6? would lose half a point after 66 Kf5! (starting with

66 Rc6 also works), when Black has to abandon the b6-pawn with 66 ... Rg7 or 66 ... Rg8 (66 ... g4?? would even lose to 67 Rc6), after which White can play 67 Rc6+ Kh7 68 Rxb6 and the result is a draw; for example, 68 ... g4 69 Rc6 h4 70 Rxc5 g3 71 hxg3 hg3 72 Rc1 g2 73 Rg1, followed by b5-b6 etc.

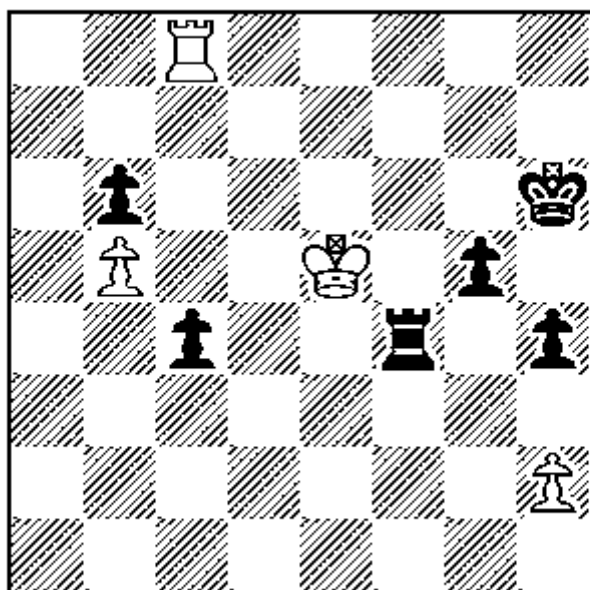
66 Kf5

This king advance fails to achieve much. Dropping back with 66 Ke3 (or 66 Kf3) was more tenacious, though the result would not change after 66 ... h4 67 Rc6+ Kh5 68 Rxb6 Rb4!, followed by ... Kg4.

66 ... h4 67 Rc8

It was no better to play 67 Rc6+ Kh5 68 Rxb6 Rf4+ 69 Ke5 Rf2.

67 ... Rf4+ 68 Ke5 c4



69 Rh8+

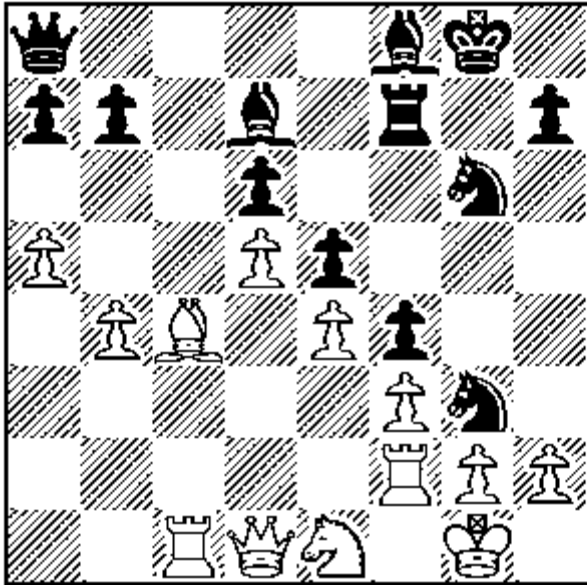
Or 69 Rc6+ Kh5 70 Rxb6 Rf2 again, winning easily; White cannot fight successfully against the three passed pawns.

69 ... Kg7 70 Rc8 Kg6 71 Rg8+ Kh5 72 h3 c3 73 Rh8+ Kg6 74 Rg8+ Kh6 75 Rh8+ Kg7 76 Rc8 Rf3 77 Rc6 Rxh3 78 Rxb6 Rf3 0-1

Let's now see a few examples inspired by Rubinstein's 29 ... Qd8!!, 30 ... Qb8!! manoeuvre.

J.Piket-G.Kasparov

Tilburg 1989



Black to play

25 ... a6!

“A very important link in Black’s winning plan: his queen comes into play with decisive effect along the a7-g1 diagonal.” – Kasparov.

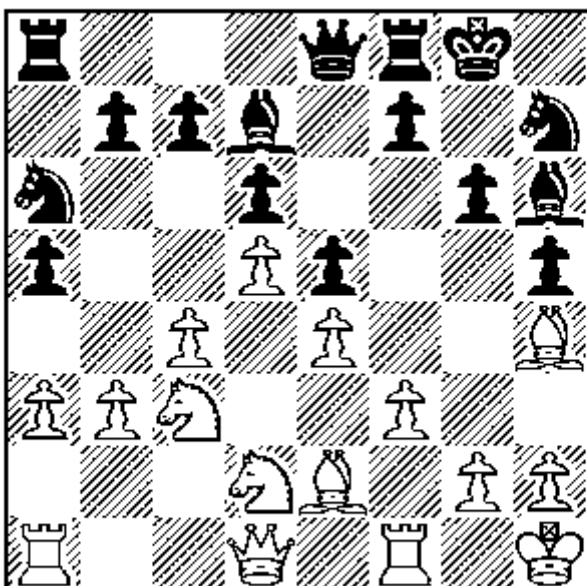
26 Qd3 Qa7 27 b5

This allows an elegant finish, but 27 Rcc2 would lose to 27 ... Be7! and ... Bh4, as indicated by Kasparov.

27 ... axb5 28 Bxb5 Nh1! 0-1

A.Shirov-J.Polgar

Madrid 1994



Black to play

15 ... Qb8!

Intending ... Qa7 again.

16 Qc2

If White prevents the queen manoeuvre with 16 Bf2, Black could play 16 ... Qd8, noticeably increasing her activity in comparison with the diagram position.

16 ... Be3 17 Bf2 Qa7 18 Bxe3 Qxe3 19 f4

After 19 Rae1, Black would have played 19 ... Qg5, and if 20 Qb2 (intending b3-b4) there comes the typical King's Indian manoeuvre 20 ... Nc5 21 b4 axb4 22 axb4 Na4.

19 ... exf4 20 Rae1 Qc5

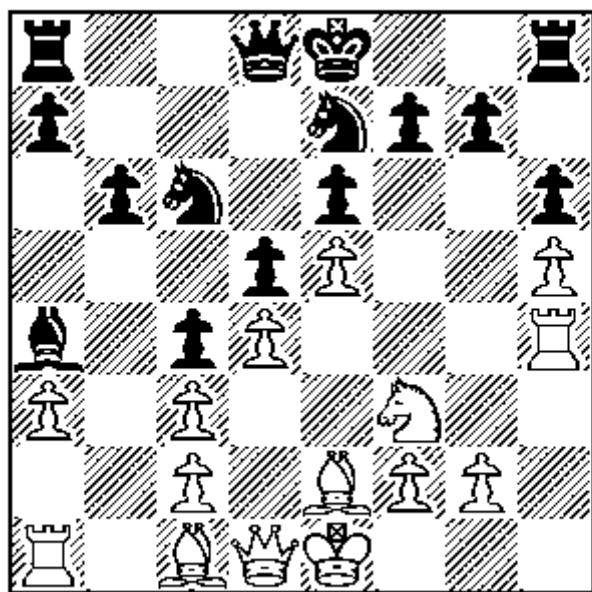
“Because the white queen is worse on b2 or c1 than on c2.” – Polgar.

21 Qc1 Qd4 22 Rxf4 Rae8 23 Rff1 Qg7

Black has a good position and won in 40 moves.

A.Sokolov-A.Yusupov

Candidates (1st matchgame), Riga 1986



Black to play

This time we have a position from the French Defence, but the same idea can be applied.

13 ... Kd7!

Preparing ... Qg8-h7. Although the queen is much less active here than in the examples from the King's Indian, the idea is that the pressure on c2 will allow Black to aim for a favourable pawn break.

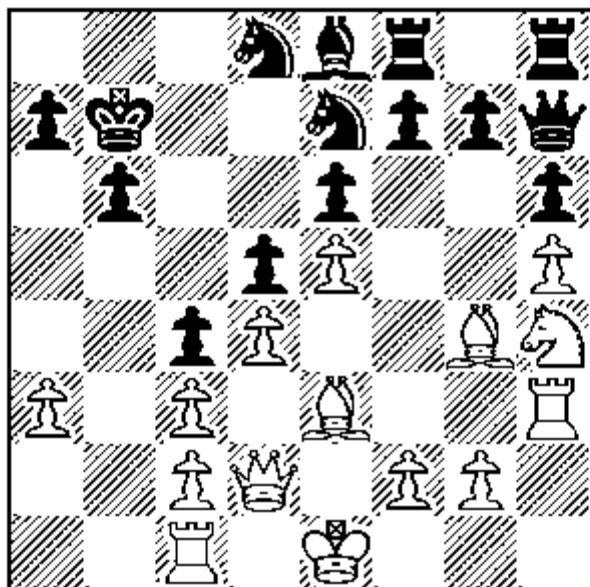
14 Be3 Qg8 15 Qd2 Qh7 16 Rc1 Kc7

Yusupov mentions that 16 ... f6 was already possible, but he prefers to keep preparing it.

17 Rf4 Raf8 18 Nh4 Nd8

Overprotecting e6.

19 Bg4 Kb7 20 Rf3 Be8 21 Rh3



21 ... g5!?

Having reached this point, Yusupov opted for a different pawn break. Sticking to his original idea of 21 ... f6 was equally possible; after either move Black is fine. He went on to win in a complicated struggle that lasted 72 moves.

“A textbook rook endgame”

This tremendous struggle between the two best players of 1909 is extraordinarily instructive. After some initial complications, in which Rubinstein outplayed the World Champion, there arose a rook ending which every chess player should know, and which is another part of his priceless legacy.

The decisions taken by Rubinstein on moves 25 and 28 have since become standard procedures.

Game 23

A.Rubinstein-Em.Lasker

St Petersburg 1909

Tarrasch Defence [D32]

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 c4 e6 4 Bg5 c5?!

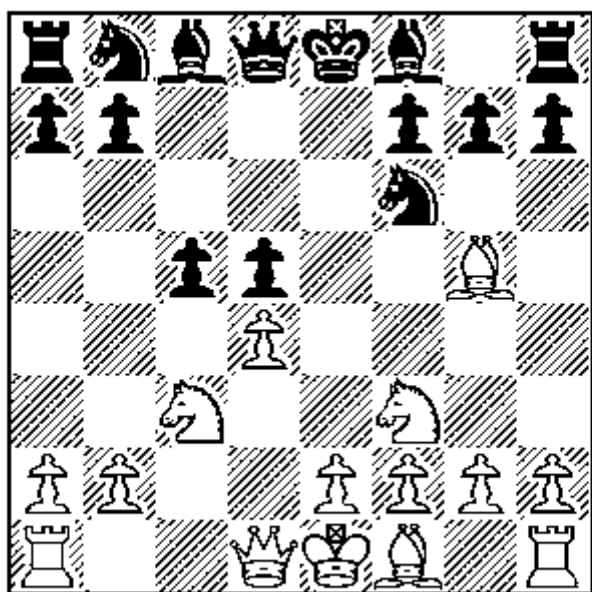
Lasker himself wrote of this move: “When this advance is made prematurely, the isolation of the d-pawn is the necessary consequence.”

Question: It would seem from this remark that the then World Champion considered an isolated queen’s pawn to be a weakness. Is that right?

Answer: Lasker wasn’t a great IQP fan; it certainly wasn’t his favourite pawn structure. Nevertheless, Tarrasch, who conceived the variation that bears his name, would be only partly in agreement with the idea of considering the isolated pawn as a weakness.

Furthermore, as we have already seen, Rubinstein himself, who created some real masterpieces when playing against the IQP, took the black side as well sometimes.

5 cxd5 exd5 6 Nc3



6 ... cxd4

Deviating from the line 6 ... Be7 7 dxc5 Be6, with which Salwe and Rubinstein each lost two games and drew one as Black in matches against Marshall in 1908.

Against 6 ... Be6, Lasker successfully used the violent 7 e4 three times (including against Mieses in 1900 and Marshall in 1923); he also played against the isolated queen's pawn with 7 e3, also winning on three occasions, including against Janowski in their 1910 world title match in Berlin.

7 Nxd4

On 7 Bxf6, Kasparov pointed out that Black could consider the pawn sacrifice 7 ... Qxf6!? (rather than 7 ... gxf6 8 Qxd4 Be6 9 e4 Nc6 10 Bb5 dxe4 11 Qxe4, which is dubious for Black) 8 Nxd5 Qd8 9 Qxd4 Nc6, followed by 10 ... Be6, with rapid development “in the spirit of the Schara-Hennig Gambit”, and here with the bishop pair as well. (The above-mentioned gambit arises from 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 cxd5 cxd4 5 Qxd4 Nc6 6 Qd1 exd5 7 Qxd5.)

7 ... Nc6?!

Universally criticized, including by Lasker himself.

Question: Why question such a natural developing move?

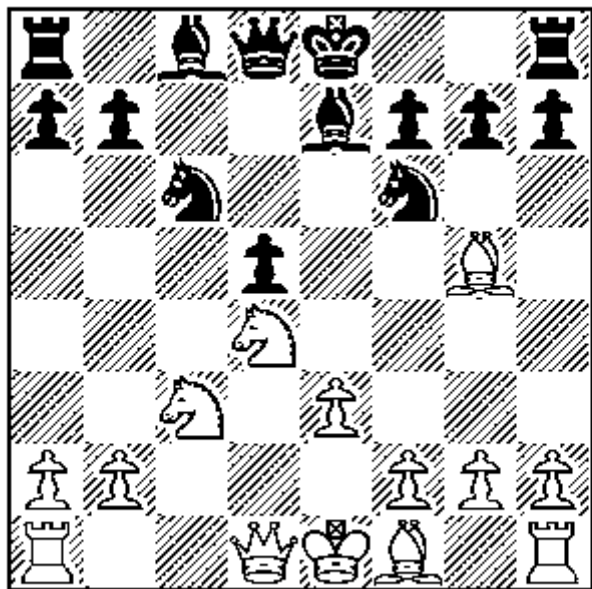
Answer: The problem is not with the actual move which, viewed in isolation obviously looks good, but with the opportunity that it offers the opponent, as we shall see.

Lasker himself commented: “Correct is 7 ... Be7 8 e3 0-0, when Black has no weak points.” Certainly, to Lasker the problems did not appear to be serious, but his opinion was not shared subsequently; for example, Kasparov wrote: “After 9 Be2 or 9 Bd3, he still has to fight for equality.” And even at the time of this game, Rubinstein opined that 8 g3 (instead of 8 e3) gave White the advantage.

8 e3

In the event of 8 Bxf6 Qxf6 9 Ndb5, Black would not play 9 ... Bb4?! in view of the simple line 10 Nc7+ Kf8 11 Nxd5, but 9 ... Bc5! with a good game; for example, 10 Nc7+ Kf8 11 e3 d4! 12 N3d5 (N.Dashkevich-L.Novikov, Minsk 1955) 12 ... Bb4+! 13 Nxb4 dxe3 14 fxe3 (or 14 Nd3 exf2+ 15 Nxf2 Qe5+) 14 ... Qh4+ 15 g3 Qxb4+ 16 Qd2 Qxd2+ 17 Kxd2 Rb8.

8 ... Be7



Exercise (easy): How can White demonstrate that the move order chosen by Lasker is not the best?

Answer:

9 Bb5!

“This move shows why Black’s 7th move was open to censure.” – Lasker. Thanks to the pin, White gains a tempo for his development.

9 ... Bd7

Forced, but now the d5-pawn loses protection.

Exercise: What do you think Rubinstein played in this position?

Answer:

10 Bxf6

To some extent this is surprising: to win a pawn White enters rather unclear complications. What happened to the Rubinstein who takes his time about things, as characterized by Razuvaev? Especially in the light of Lasker’s remark: “The pawn is won only temporarily. 10 0-0 was more solid, after which the d-pawn would all the same have been bound to fall.”

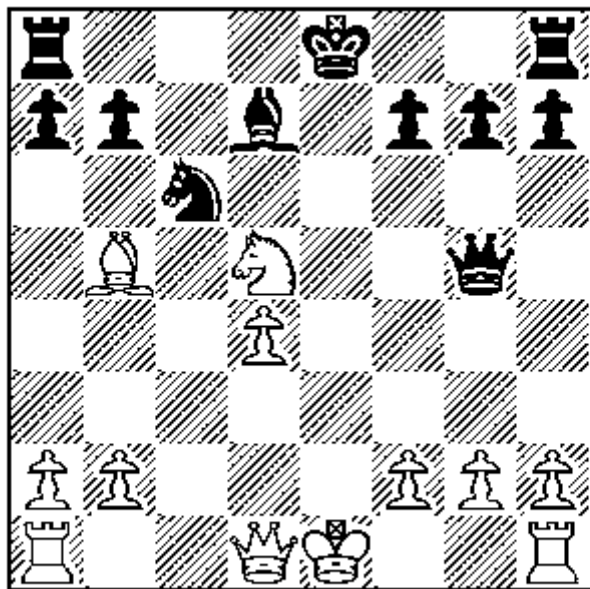
It is possible that Rubinstein could not clearly ascertain whether postponing the capture was better or not. After 10 0-0 a6!?, for example, Black saves the pawn; and would the position reached after something like 11 Bxc6 bxc6 12 Rc1 0-0 13 Na4 Rc8 offer better

chances against Lasker than the one that arose in the game? It would seem that Rubinstein did not think so.

10 ... Bxf6 11 Nxd5 Bxd4

Black needs to exchange this bishop in the interest of rapid development. Instead, 11 ... Be5?! does not provide sufficient compensation for the pawn after 12 0-0 0-0 13 Bxc6 bxc6 14 Nc3 Re8 15 Qd2 Qc7 16 Nf3 Bf6 17 Rac1 etc (Kasparov), even with the two bishops; but the text move is good.

12 exd4 Qg5!



“The black counter-attack, well conceived, appears very dangerous.” – Rubinstein.

Exercise: How should White continue?

Answer:

13 Bxc6

The danger is apparent in that 13 Nc7+? Kd8 14 Nxa8? loses to 14 ... Qxb5, followed by ... Re8+ with a winning attack.

13 ... Bxc6 14 Ne3

Once again 14 Nc7+? Kd7 15 Nxa8? is not possible, in view of 15 ... Re8+.

There is no benefit in inserting 14 Qe2+ Kf8 (Kasparov recommends 14 ... Kd7, which he considers satisfactory for Black, but it is worth noting that White could have prevented this by employing the move order 13 Qe2+ Kf8 14 Bxc6) 15 Ne3 Bxg2 (15 ... Re8 is also good) 16 Rg1 Qa5+ 17 Qd2 Qxd2+ 18 Kxd2 Be4 with equality.

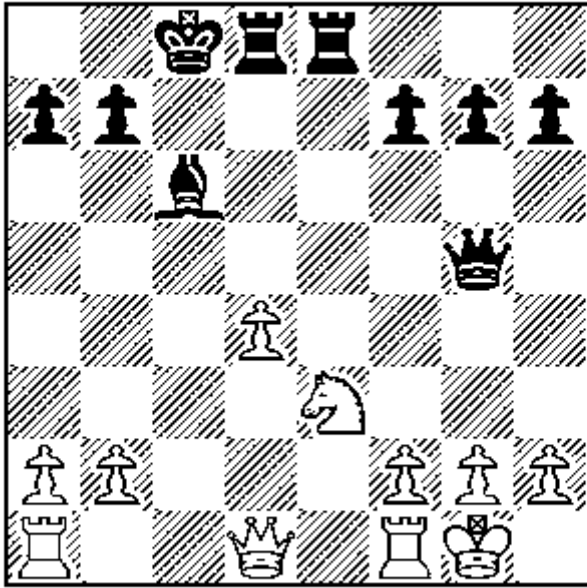
14 ... 0-0-0?!

“An extremely risky move, typical of the style of the world champion,” commented Rubinstein, who agreed with Lasker’s suggestion of regaining the pawn with 14 ... Bxg2 15 Rg1 (15 Nxg2?! Qxg2 16 Qe2+ Kd8 17 0-0-0 Re8 is worse, according to Rubinstein; the d4-pawn protects Black’s king, and his rooks can quickly become active on the e- and c-files) 15 ... Qa5+ 16 Qd2 Qxd2+ 17 Kxd2 Be4, when 18 Rg4 (18 Rxg7? Bg6 traps the rook) 18 ... Bg6 19 f4 does not offer White any great prospects; for example, after 19 ... 0-0-0 20 f5 (20 d5

Kb8 21 f5?! it is not advisable because of 21 ... Bxf5! 22 Nxf5 Rxd5+ 23 Nd4 f5) 20 ... Bh5 21 Rh4 Bf3 22 Rg1 g6.

Alternatively, Razuvaev recommended simply 14 ... 0-0 15 0-0 Rfe8 “with good counterplay for the pawn.”

15 0-0 Rhe8



Exercise: How did Rubinstein defend against the threat of 16 ... Rxe3 - ?

Answer:

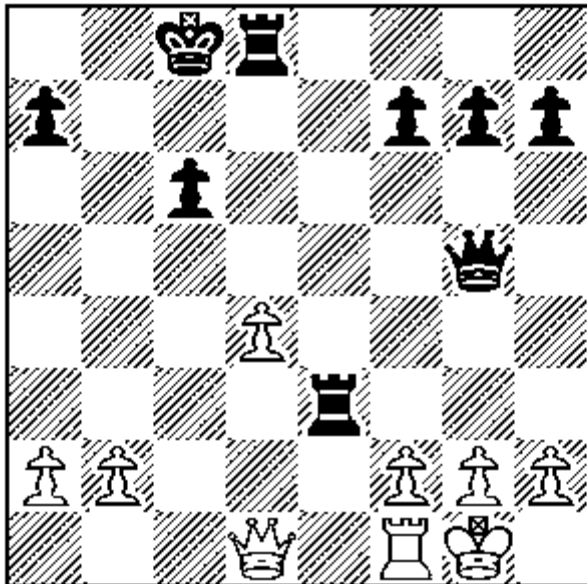
16 Rc1!!

Lasker: “A move of extraordinary subtlety. White now retains his advantages. He threatens Rc1-c5 and d4-d5, and Black’s obvious threat of 16 ... Rxe3 he meets as is shown by his 17th move.”

16 ... Rxe3 17 Rxc6+

Forced.

17 ... bxc6



Exercise: What was the key move conceived by Rubinstein when he played 16 Rc1 - ?

Answer:

18 Qc1!!

“This is the crux of the matter!” – Tarrasch.

Not 18 fxe3? Qxe3+ 19 Kh1 Rxd4, when Black overcomes his difficulties.

Tracking back, if Black had tried 16 ... Kb8 (instead of 16 ... Rxe3), then after 17 Rc5 Qf4 18 d5 Rxe3 and now the same tactical blow 19 Qc1! Re4 20 dxc6 bxc6 21 Qc3, “Black would have stood badly” – Lasker.

This move recalls 17 Qc1!!, as Rubinstein played against Capablanca in Game 3 of this book.

18 ... Rxd4

Lasker later thought that 18 ... Re5 was more tenacious, although after 19 Qxc6+ Kb8 20 dxe5 Qxe5 21 Rc1, the defence still would have been very difficult; Black is a pawn down and his king is the more exposed.

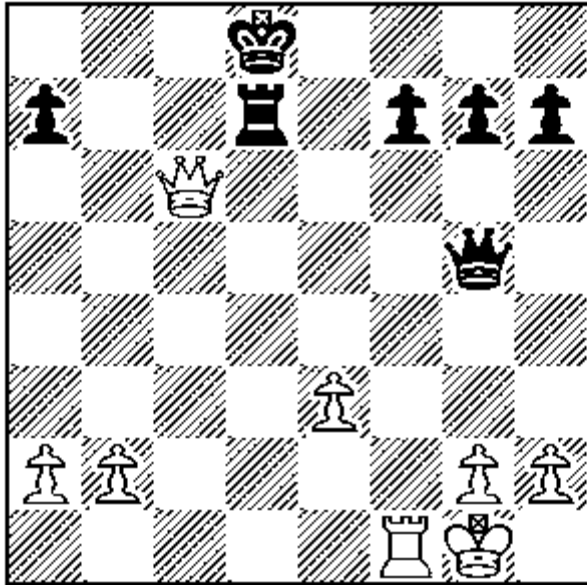
Exercise: Why is 19 f4 not better than 19 Qxc6+ - ?

Answer: Because of the beautiful counter-blow 19 ... Rc5!.

19 fxe3

Now Black must choose between defending f7 or c6.

19 ... Rd7 20 Qxc6+ Kd8



According to Kasparov, “If now White delays, his extra pawn will not play any role: after all, his king is also exposed.”

Exercise: How did Rubinstein defend the e3-pawn?

Answer:

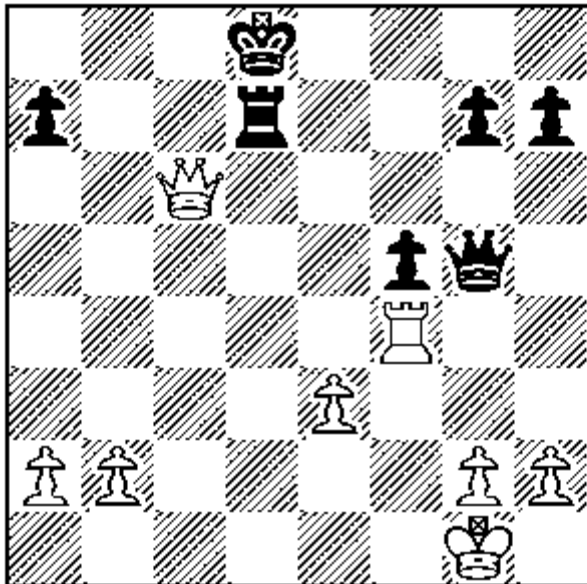
21 Rf4!!

“A splendid conception. With 21 Rf4 he threatens 22 Qa8+ followed by 22 ... Ke7 28 Re4+ or 22 ... Kc7 23 Rc4+, winning the game by the attack. Black’s only alternative is to exchange queens and lose the endgame.” – Lasker.

21 ... f5

This controls e4, at the cost of leaving the queen out of play for a moment.

However, if 21 ... Qa5, the black king is dragged into the open and perishes after 22 Qa8+ Ke7 (or 22 ... Kc7 23 Rc4+) 23 Re4+ Kf6 24 Qc6+ Kg5 25 h4+, as Lasker pointed out; while in the event of 21 ... Rd1+, Tarrasch analysed 22 Kf2 Rd2+ (22 ... Qa5 is better, according to Kasparov, but still insufficient) 23 Ke1 Qa5 (or 23 ... Qxg2 24 Rd4+ Ke7 25 Qd6+ and mate) 24 Ra4 (24 Qa8+ also wins) 24 ... Rd6+ 25 Rxa5 Rxc6 26 Rxa7 with a winning endgame.



Exercise: There are several attractive moves now.
How do you think Rubinstein proceeded?

Answer:

22 Qc5!

The engines prefer more tactical solutions here, whereas Rubinstein is aiming for an endgame with a decisive advantage. The threat is 23 Qf8+.

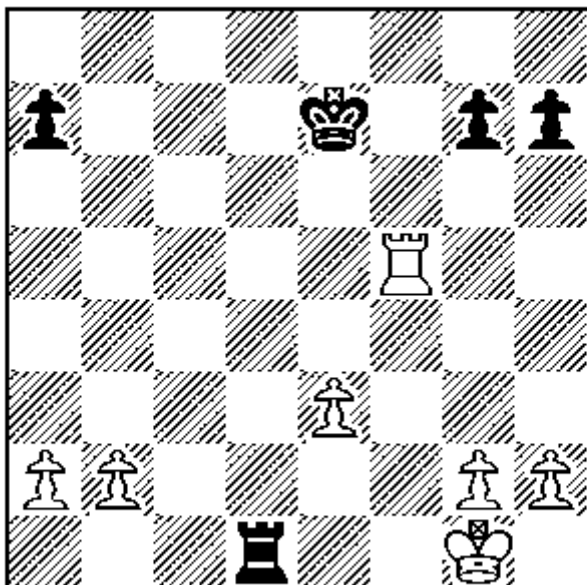
22 ... Qe7

Now 22 ... Rd1+ 23 Kf2 Rd2+ 24 Ke1 Qxg2 loses more simply: 25 Qa5+ and 26 Qxd2.

23 Qxe7+ Kxe7

Or 23 ... Rxe7 24 Rxf5 Rxe3 25 Rf8+ (or just 25 Rf7, as given by Rubinstein) and either 26 Ra8 or 26 Rf7+, depending on where the king goes.

24 Rxf5 Rd1+



Exercise: What had Rubinstein planned to play in this position?

Answer:

25 Kf2!

This move is one of the great lessons of this game. In rook endings (and the endgame generally) material is of course important, but no less so is the activity of the king and the rook. Here White immediately returns one of his two extra pawns, in order to optimize his two pieces.

In the event of 25 Rf1?! Rd2 26 Rb1 (or 26 Rc1?! Kd7) 26 ... Kd6 (threatening ... Re2; rather than 26 ... Re2 27 Kf1, when 27 ... Rxe3? loses to 28 Re1), Black would have gained some drawing chances, since both white pieces would be very passive.

25 ... Rd2+ 26 Kf3 Rxb2

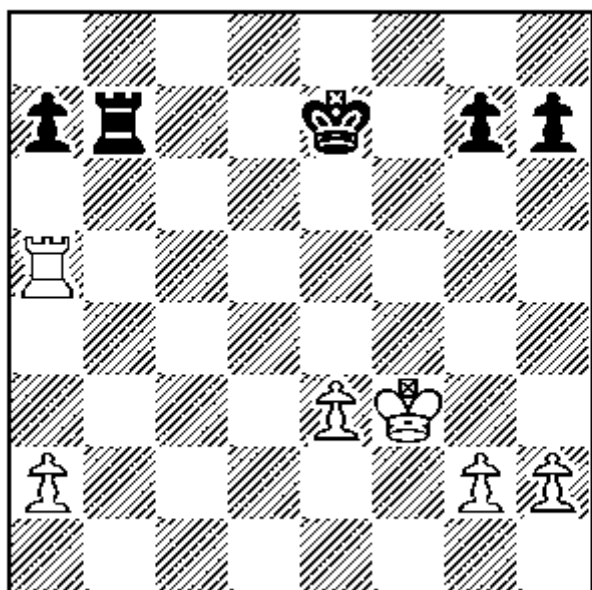
Exercise (easy): How should White deal with the attack on the a2-pawn?

Answer:

27 Ra5!

Played once again with activity in mind. White forces the black rook to return to the defence.

27 ... Rb7



Exercise: Now there comes another move by Rubinstein that deserves to be engraved on your memory. What is it?

Answer:

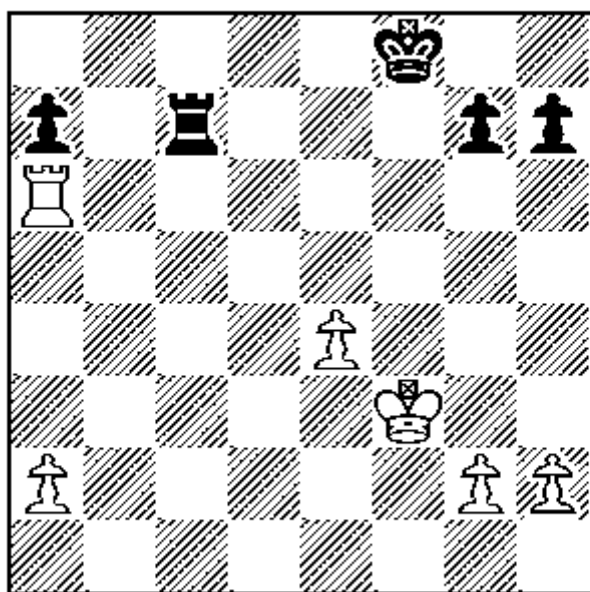
28 Ra6!

“In this sort of endgame it is highly effective to restrict the movements of the enemy king and rook,” wrote Rubinstein.

Kasparov commented: “An ideal place for the rook! White creates a textbook rook endgame, some of those wonderful endings that gave birth to Tartakower’s well-known

aphorism: ‘Rubinstein is the rook ending of a chess game, begun by the gods a thousand years ago.’”

28 ... Kf8 29 e4 Rc7



Black is forced to remain passive, which is an achievement in itself, but White also needs to make progress.

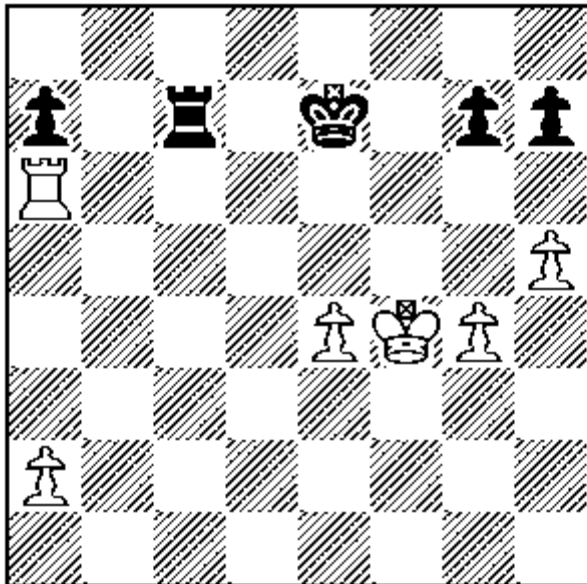
Exercise: What do you think Rubinstein played here?

Answer:

30 h4!

The instructive method of making progress employed by Rubinstein consists of advancing the king and the g- and h-pawns as far as he can. But the order of moves remains important – White needs to keep his tactical eye open at all times. 30 h4 is “not only a preparation for further activity, but also prophylaxis against ... Rc2”, according to Levenfish & Smyslov, as can be seen in the line 30 Kf4?! Rc2 31 Kf3 Rc3+.

30 ... Kf7 31 g4 Kf8 32 Kf4 Ke7 33 h5



33 ... h6

Question: While this move prevents the pawns from advancing further, it also creates an entry square for White's king at g6. Was it not better to keep waiting?

Answer: One would think so, but analysis shows that the black position is already beyond salvation; if 33 ... Rb7, for instance, White continues to advance his king and pawns: 34 g5 Rc7 35 e5 Rb7 36 Kf5 Rc7 37 g6! (creating a weakness on g7, which can be exploited with an opportune Rf7 or Rg8) 37 ... h6 38 a4 (once again the tactics help White, who makes a useful waiting move to induce the black rook to abandon the c-file) 38 ... Rb7 39 Re6+! Kd7 (after 39 ... Kf8, we can appreciate the reason for playing 38 a4; i.e. 40 Rc6 Ke7 41 Rc8 and the white rook reaches g7 by means of Rg8) 40 Rf6! Ke8 (or 40 ... gxf6 41 g7 Rb8 42 exf6 etc) 41 Rf7! Rxf7+ 42 gxf7+ Kxf7 43 e6+ Ke7 44 Ke5 and wins, as indicated by Lasker.

34 Kf5 Kf7 35 e5 Rb7 36 Rd6 Ke7

On 36 ... Rc7, White wins with 37 Rd7+! Rxd7 38 e6+ Ke7 39 exd7 Kxd7 40 Kg6.

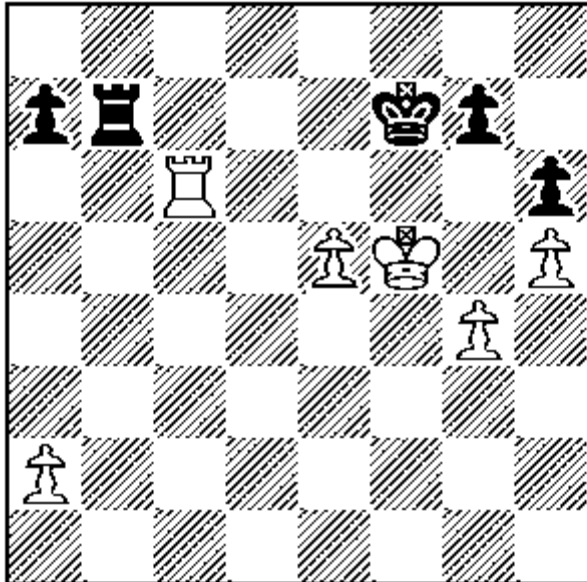
37 Ra6

This was the last move before the time control (which was 2½ hours for 37 moves, 1½ hours for the next 23 moves, and then one hour for every 15 moves), so there was no need to calculate the consequences of 37 Kg6, which also wins; for instance, 37 ... Rb4 38 Kxg7 Rxg4+ 39 Kxh6 Re4 40 Ra6 Rxe5 41 Kg6 is mate in 24 moves, according to the Lomonosov endgame tablebases.

37 ... Kf7 38 Rd6 Kf8 39 Rc6

Lasker gave another way to win, using the a-pawn: 39 Rd8+ Ke7 (or 39 ... Kf7 40 e6+ Ke7 41 Rd7+! etc) 40 Rg8 Kf7 41 Rc8 Ke7 42 a4, intending a4-a5-a6 and Rb7.

39 ... Kf7



40 a3! 1-0

There are many ways to win, but this is perhaps the neatest, taking b4 away from the black rook, in order to play Kg6 without fearing ... Rb4, and placing Black in zugzwang. White wins in all lines:

a) 40 ... Re7 41 e6+ Kg8 42 Kg6 Re8 and now 43 e7! Kh8 44 Rd6, followed by Rd8.

b) 40 ... Kf8 allows the king to enter with 41 Kg6, winning after 41 ... Rb3 42 Rc8+ Ke7 43 Rc7+ Ke6 44 Rxg7.

c) 40 ... Ke7 41 Kg6 Kd7 (or 41 ... Kf8 42 Rc8+) 42 Rd6+ Ke8 43 Kh7 Kf8 44 Rd8+ Kf7 45 Rg8 and wins.

“This ending should be included in every book on rook endings”

... is what Rudolf Spielmann wrote about the ending of the game we shall see now, in which Rubinstein, after a tremendous struggle, despite very little material remaining on the board, succeeded in exploiting his superior pawn structure by manoeuvring in amazing fashion with his last two pieces.

It is said that, at the end of the game, an admiring Spielmann said to his opponent: “Akiba, if you were living in the Middle Ages, you would have been burned at the stake! What you do with rook endgames cannot be called anything but witchcraft!”

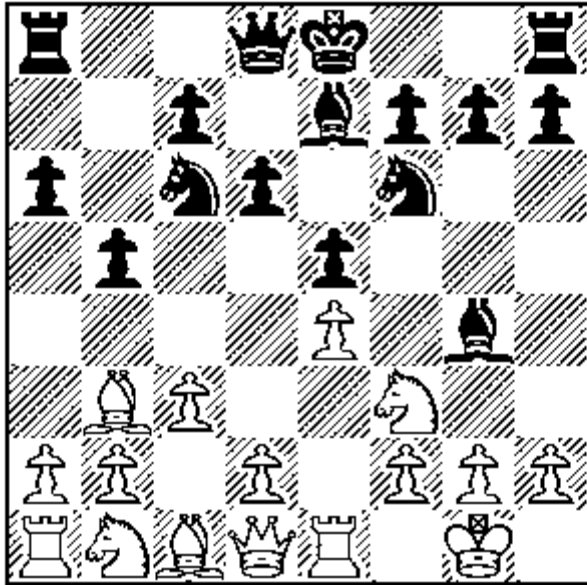
Game 24

R.Spielmann-A.Rubinstein

St Petersburg 1909

Ruy Lopez [C90]

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 Bg4



Question: This move is unusual, but it doesn't look bad, since it prevents d2-d4, doesn't it?

Answer: An obvious snag is that after h2-h3, if Black retreats with ... Bh5, rather than exchange on f3, the bishop can easily find itself out of play following a timely g2-g4; in this case White's play is based on d2-d3 (rather than d2-d4).

9 h3

Lasker considered that 9 d4 was possible, accepting doubled f-pawns, and he added an interesting nuance: "But then without h2-h3, because if 9 ... Bxf3 10 gxf3 a pawn on h3 is weak; on h2, however, a strong piece of defence." Although 9 d4 has been played, White has most often opted for 9 d3. The typical probe 9 a4 is also reasonable.

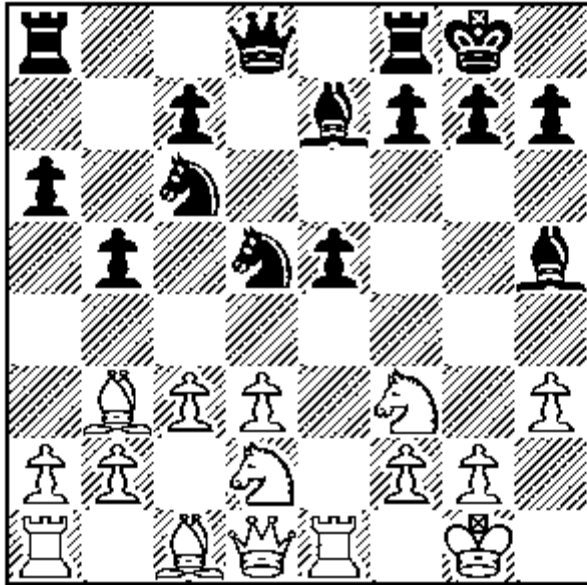
9 ... Bh5 10 d3 0-0 11 Nbd2 d5

Another ambitious move instead of the most common choice, 11 ... Na5, followed by 12 ... c5. Black is exposing his e-pawn, reckoning that its capture will involve risks for White.

12 exd5

White accepts the challenge, although this seems no better than 12 Qe2, followed by Nf1-g3 (avoiding the exchange of queens as occurs after 12 Nf1 dxe4).

12 ... Nxd5



13 Nf1

Question: This is inconsistent, isn't it? Why not capture the pawn after 13 g4 - ?

Answer: It wasn't clear; after 13 g4 Bg6 14 Nxe5 Nxe5 15 Rxe5 c6, we reach a position similar to the Marshall Gambit, one of the differences being that here White's kingside is weaker.

13 ... Bf6 14 g4

Question: But now he plays it!

Answer: You are justified in being rather sceptical about this move, as White will be unable to keep his extra pawn. Nevertheless, he considers that his position is attractive even with material equality, a decision that Lasker approved, commenting that "the reward for this bold advance, the gain, even if it is only temporary, of the e-pawn, is worth the risk."

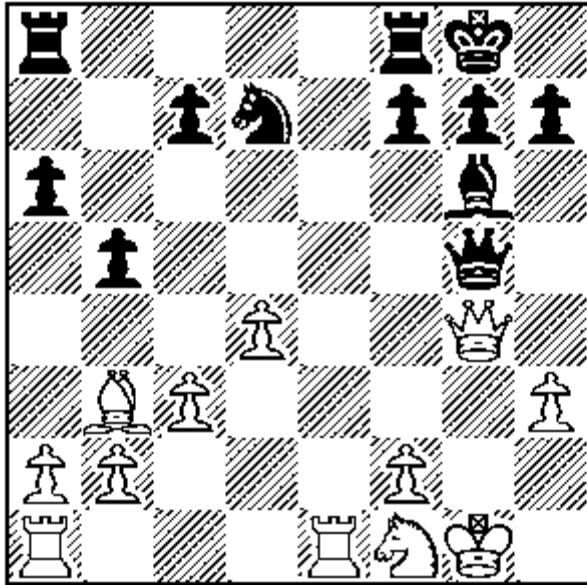
14 ... Bg6 15 g5 Be7 16 Nxe5 Nxe5 17 Rxe5 Nb6

It was still possible to play in the style of the Marshall with 17 ... c6, followed by ... Bd6.

18 d4 Nd7

Regaining the material. 18 ... Nc4!? was also playable, since holding on to the extra pawn with 19 Bxc4 bxc4 would be questionable, in view of Black's counterplay after ... Bd6, ... f7-f6 etc.

19 Re1 Bxg5 20 Bxg5 Qxg5+ 21 Qg4



This was what White wanted. In the event of 21 ... Qxg4+ 22 hxg4, his position would be more comfortable, even if Black appears to be in little danger after, for example, 22 ... c5. But the tournament situation (Lasker leading with 12½/16, Rubinstein in second place on 12, Spielmann in third on 10½ points) prompted Rubinstein to avoid the exchange of queens in order to retain winning chances.

21 ... Qd8

This retreat is a small triumph for White, albeit only a small one; he is unable to develop a significant initiative on either flank, since Black has no weak points.

22 Ng3 Nf6 23 Qf3 Qd7 24 Kh2 a5 25 a3 Rab8

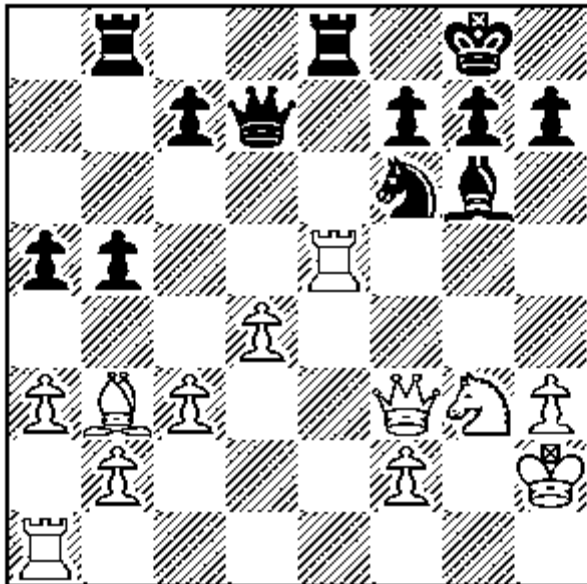
Rubinstein maintains the tension, and prepares the possibility of a timely ... b5-b4. Alternatively, 25 ... c5 was playable; in the event of 26 dxc5 Qc7 (attacking the c5-pawn and at the same time pinning the g3-knight) 27 c6 a4 28 Ba2 Rad8, Black would have good play, since 29 Rad1? fails to 29 ... Bh5.

26 Re5

This both rules out ... c7-c5 and supports an eventual Nf5.

26 ... Rfe8

It is better to contest the open file than play 26 ... b4 27 axb4 axb4, as after 28 Bc4, followed by Ra7 (or if 28 ... c6 then 29 Ra6), it is not apparent how Black has benefited from his ... b5-b4 advance.



27 Rg1

Since Black is not really threatening to take on e5, White has a free hand, but the usefulness of having this rook on g1 is debatable. Lasker suggested the natural 27 Rae1, when Black must look to the safety of his queenside pawns, which are rather weak.

27 ... b4

Rubinstein does not hesitate to sacrifice a pawn, now that the white rook has left the a-file. Lasker was unconvinced by the pawn sacrifice and preferred 27 ... Qd6, but it appears that Rubinstein's decision was a correct one.

28 Rxa5

Once again Spielmann accepts the challenge. Now that the white rook is on g1, Black would have no problems after 28 axb4 axb4 29 Bc4.

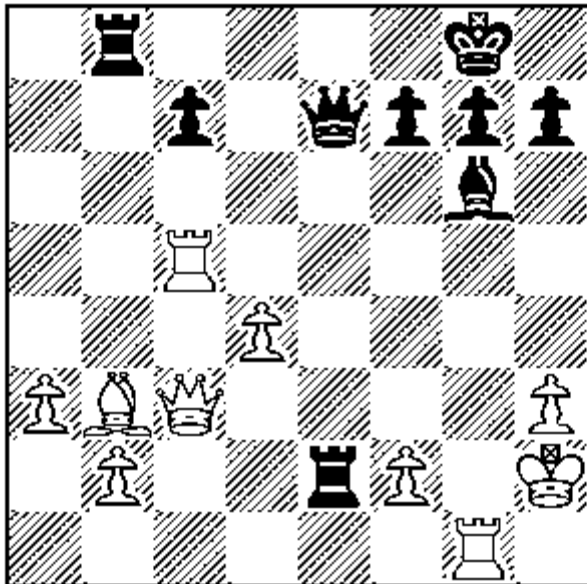
28 ... bxc3 29 Qxc3

Black's compensation for the pawn looks reasonable at first glance: he has pressure on the b-file, the d4-pawn is weak, and White's king is not entirely secure. But of course all this needs to be justified tactically, and White is now threatening 30 Ba4.

29 ... Ne4

This not only reduces the white king's defensive cover, it also eliminates the defender of the invasion point e2.

30 Nxe4 Rxe4 31 Rd5 Qe7 32 Rc5 Re2



33 Qg3

Lasker commented: “White could have played here 33 Rxc7 and if 33 ... Rxf2+ 34 Kg3 Qg5+ 35 Kxf2 Qf4+ 36 Ke1 Re8+ 37 Kd1 Bh5+ 38 Kc2, White escapes to b1 and a2 and has exceedingly strong pawns.” This statement by the great champion is undoubtedly true, but Black’s play in this line can be clearly improved.

Exercise (difficult): How should play Black after 33 Rxc7 - ?

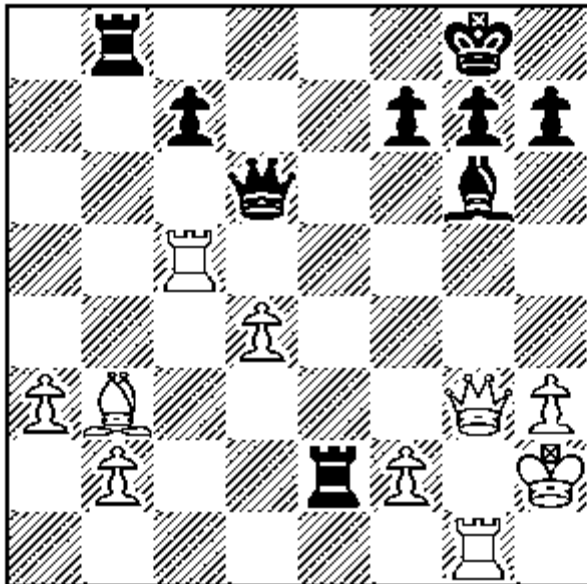
Answer: Black can achieve a balanced game with 33 ... Qd6+!, when it is White who must play carefully: 34 Kg2? allows 34 ... Rbe8 (threatening 35 ... Be4+ 36 Kf1 Rxf2+! 37 Kxf2 Qf4+ and mate in a few moves) 35 Qg3 (or 35 Rc8 Rxf2+! 36 Kxf2 Qf4+ 37 Qf3 Qxd4+ 38 Kg2 Rxc8, threatening 39 ... Qxb2+ as well as 39 ... Be4) 35 ... Rxf2+! 36 Kxf2 (or 36 Qxf2 Be4+!, displacing the king and preventing Re1, and then 37 Kf1 Qxc7 38 Qd2 Bf5! with a decisive attack) 36 ... Qf6+ 37 Qf3 Qxd4+ 38 Kf1 Bd3+! 39 Kg2 Be4, winning material.

Instead, 34 Rg3 is better, although Black’s initiative compensates for the two pawns after 34 ... h5! (even 34 ... Rxf2+ 35 Kg1 Rxb2 is sufficient to equalize). Then the natural 35 Kg2? fails to 35 ... Rxb3! 36 Rc8+ Kh7 37 Qxb3 Qxd4 38 Re3 (or 38 Rf3 Be4) 38 ... Rxb2 39 Qc3 Be4+, and once again Black’s attack is decisive; for example, 40 Kg1 (or 40 Kf1 Rb1+ 41 Re1 Qd3+!) 40 ... Rb1+ 41 Kh2 Qd6+ and mates.

The computer indicates the difficult path to salvation: 35 Rc6! Qf4 36 Rcxg6 h4 37 Rxc7+ Kh8 38 Kh1 hxc3+ (not 38 ... Qxf2? 39 Rg2!, winning material) 39 Qxc3 with three pawns for the exchange; the most probable result is a draw.

33 ... Qd6?

A tactical slip; 33 ... Rxb2! is fine for Black.



34 Qxd6?

This lands White in a very unpleasant endgame.

Exercise: Spielmann overlooked a surprising possibility here; what was it?

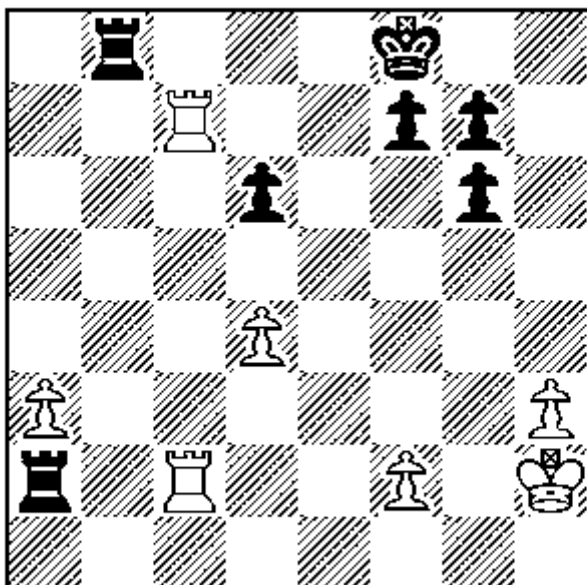
Answer: As Lasker pointed out, White could have played 34 Bxf7+! and the bishop cannot be taken, since 34 ... Bxf7 allows 35 Re5!, threatening mate and attacking the loose rook on e2, while if 34 ... Kxf7 then 35 Rxc7+ Ke6 36 d5+! Qxd5 37 Qg4+ Kf6 38 Qh4+ wins.

So Black would have to play 34 ... Kh8!, when his active pieces would still offer fighting chances.

34 ... cxd6 35 Rc7 Rxb2

Restoring material equality and leaving White with four isolated pawns to worry about in the endgame.

36 Rgc1 Kf8 37 Bc2 Ra2 38 Bxg6 hxg6 39 R1c2



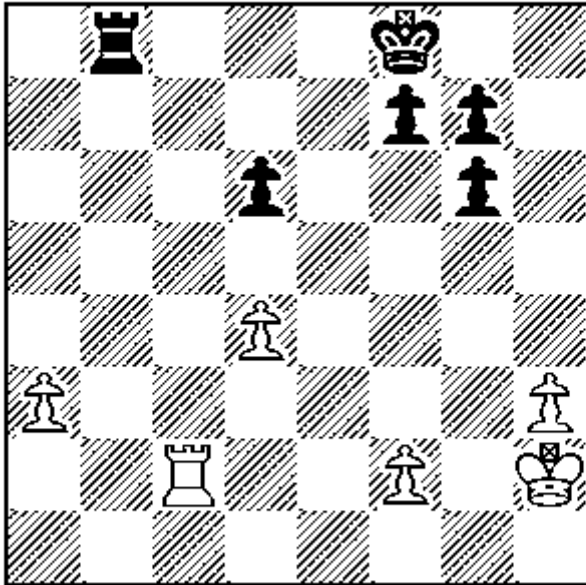
Exercise (easy): How should Black respond?

Answer:

39 ... Rxc2

Of course; “the threat is stronger than the execution”. White would have no problems after 39 ... Rxa3? 40 Rd7.

40 Rxc2



Black's pawn structure has deteriorated a little, but White's is extremely bad. Black's main difficulty in increasing his advantage is the paucity of material remaining on the board, or, as Kasparov commented: “For a draw it is sufficient for White to give up his weak a3- and d4-pawns for the d6-pawn. But, amazingly, he is not able to do this!”

Exercise: How did Rubinstein proceed?

Answer:

40 ... Ra8!

In rook endings, generally the two most important factors are piece activity and passed pawns supported by the rook. Here Black could win a pawn with 40 ... Rb3?! 41 Ra2 Rd3, but after 42 a4! Rxd4 43 a5 Rc4 44 a6 Rc8 45 a7 Ra8 46 Kg3 “and Kf3-e3-d4 there can be no question of Black winning. If he tries to capture the a7-pawn, he loses the pawn endgame.”

– Levenfish & Smyslov.

White is now faced with the dilemma of where to place his rook. Behind his passed pawn with 41 Ra2, or to the side with 41 Rc3 where it would be more active.

41 Rc3?!

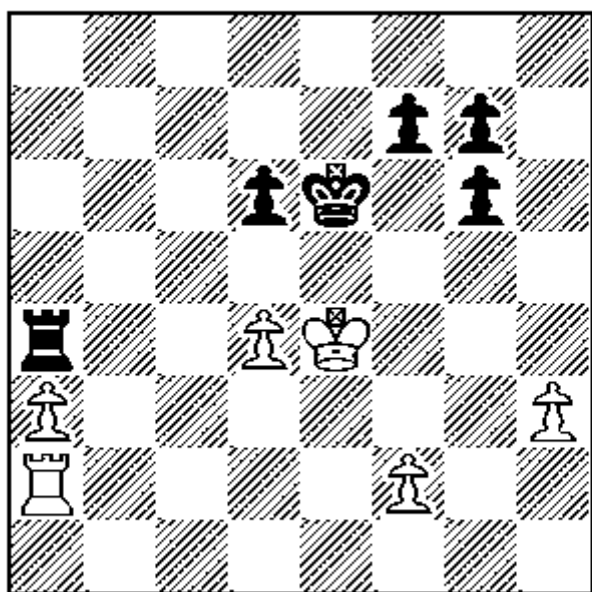
Question: Isn't it better to obey the rule of thumb that says that the rook should go behind the passed pawn?

Answer: Generally that's the case, but here 41 Ra2 would leave White paralysed, only praying that, after 41 ... Ra4!, Black would not be able to make enough progress to win. That's why he opted to keep his rook more active.

The choice is not an easy one, and requires a great deal of calculation. This is difficult enough after the game; over the board it would have been even more so. Seemingly both moves should suffice to hold the position, but the defence is very unpleasant in both cases.

The position was analysed deeply by Spielmann himself and later by, among others, Levenfish & Smyslov, as well as Kasparov, who refined the earlier analysis.

Let's examine the main line after 41 Ra2 Ra4!. White now centralizes his king to support his d4-pawn, and if possible it will travel to b3 to expel the black rook and enable the a-pawn to advance: 42 Kg3 Ke7! (the black king also centralizes; 42 ... Rxd4? is still inadvisable: 43 a4 Rc4 44 a5 Rc7 45 a6 Ra7 46 Kf4 Ke7 47 Ke4 Ke6 48 Kd4 and White should manage to draw, since his pieces are very active) 43 Kf3 Ke6 44 Ke4.



One try here is 44 ... d5+, when Levenfish & Smyslov gave 45 Kd3! (rather than 45 Ke3? Kf5) 45 ... Kd6 (if 45 ... Kf5, the white king heads for b3 with 46 Kc3, intending 47 Kb3 Rxd4 48 a4! Rd3+ 49 Kb4 Rxh3 50 a5 etc, and once again the advanced passed pawn enables White to draw) 46 Kc3 Kc6 47 Kd3 Kb5 48 Rb2+ and Black can make no progress.

Instead, 44 ... g5 looks more promising, forcing White to “hope and pray”, but analysis shows that his position cannot be breached; for example, 45 Ra1 f6 46 Ra2 f5+ 47 Kd3 Kd5 48 Kc3 Rc4+ 49 Kb3 Rxd4 50 a4 Rd3+ (or 50 ... Kc6 51 a5 Kb7 52 a6+ Ka7 53 Ra5 Rf4 54 Rd5 Rxf2 55 Rxd6 Rf3+ 56 Kc4 Rxh3 57 Rg6 g4 58 Kb5 Rb3+ 59 Ka5 and draws) 51 Kb4 Rxh3 52 a5 Rh8 53 a6 Ke4 54 a7 Ra8 55 Kb5 Kf3 56 Kb6 g4 57 Kb7 Rxa7+ 58 Kxa7 f4 59 Kb6 g3 60 fxg3 fxg3 61 Kc6 g2 62 Ra1 Kf2 63 Kxd6 and the white king arrives in time to capture the last pawn.

41 ... Ra4 42 Rd3 Ke7 43 Kg3

Lasker recommended 43 d5, to prevent ... Ke6-d5, while Black can make no progress after either 43 ... Kf6 44 Rf3+ or 43 ... f5 44 Re3+, followed by Re6.

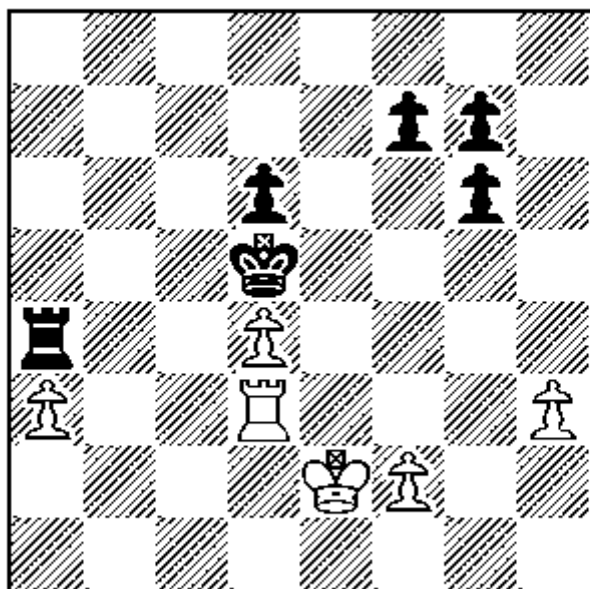
However, he has a slower but effective way forward: 43 ... g5!, as pointed out by Kmochn. Then after 44 Kg3 Kf6 45 Rf3+ Kg6, “White faces difficult problems: ... Rd4 is threatened,

and if 46 Rd3, then 46 ... f6 and ... Kf5-e5 is possible.” – Kasparov.

43 ... Ke6

“The manner in which Rubinstein treats the following endgame is beyond all praise.” – Lasker.

44 Kf3 Kd5 45 Ke2



Exercise: Black's progress is obvious. Is it now the right moment to gather the fruits by capturing on d4? What do you think Rubinstein played here?

Answer:

45 ... g5!

Not yet; 45 ... Rxd4? would be met by 46 Ke3! and after the exchange of rooks, the black king will have to deal with the outside passed pawn, allowing the white king to advance to capture the d6-pawn and then invade the kingside, when only White can win.

Since this resource (46 Ke3) also exists with the king on f3, instead of 45 Ke2, “It was worth considering 45 h4, which would have blocked the doubled g-pawns and restrained Black's activity on the other wing.” – Levenfish & Smyslov.

46 Rb3 f6

“Hurry – never!”; this move is useful, since it defends g5 and makes Black's second rank less vulnerable.

This time 46 ... Rxd4? would be answered by 47 Rb5+ and Rxd4. But 46 ... Kxd4 was interesting; Spielmann analysed 47 Rb7, when 47 ... Rxa3 48 Rxf7 Rxh3 49 Rxd7 gives no winning chances, but after 47 ... f6 48 Rxd7 Rxa3 49 h4 gxh4 50 Rg4+ Kc3 51 Rxh4, there is a difference of opinion: Spielmann dismisses this “with good drawing chances”, whereas Levenfish & Smyslov write that, after 51 ... Ra2+, “In our view, in this position too White's defence involves great difficulties.”

Black's play might be improved further by 49 ... Ra2+!, intending 50 Ke1 gxh4 51 Rg4+

Kd3! or 50 Kf3 gxh4 51 Rg4+ Kc3 52 Rxh4 d5, and the white king is badly placed in either case.

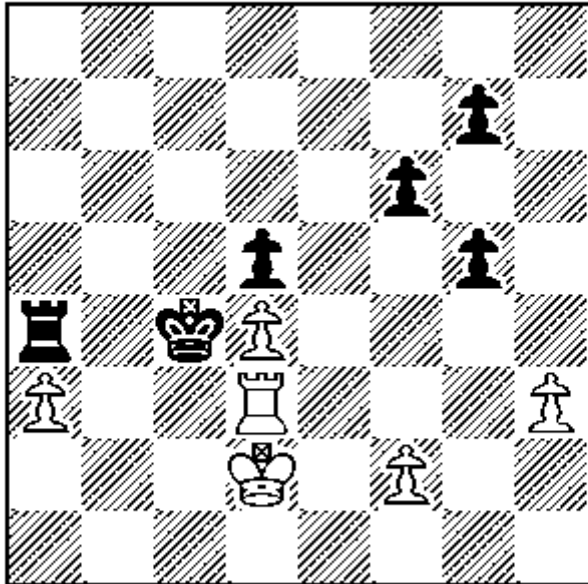
47 Ke3

Instead, 47 Rb7 Rxa3 48 Rxg7 Kxd4 transposes to the 46 ... Kxd4 47 Rb7 f6 line in the previous note.

47 ... Kc4!

Still not 47 ... Rxd4?!, when 48 Rb5+ just wins for White.

48 Rd3 d5 49 Kd2



Black's recent progress is clear; both his pieces have attained maximum activity, whereas White is very passive.

Exercise: How did Rubinstein take another step forward?

Answer:

49 ... Ra8!

The rook can achieve nothing further on a4 and therefore seeks greater activity, looking for another way to penetrate the white position.

50 Kc2

In the event of 50 Ke3?!, Black has the chance to invade on the b-file with 50 ... Rb8 51 Kd2 (51 a4 is better but not enough to save the game) 51 ... Rb2+ 52 Ke3 Rb3, winning. Or else just 50 ... Ra7, when White has nothing better than 51 Kd2, transposing to the game.

50 ... Ra7!

“Losing” a move, to force the white king to go to d2.

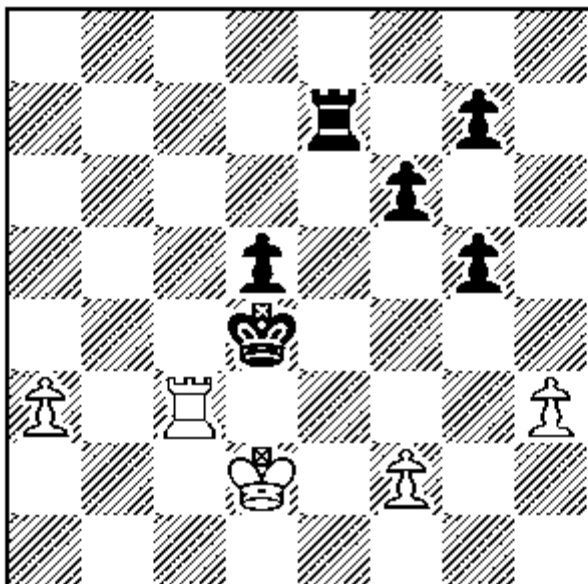
51 Kd2 Re7!

Now White is in zugzwang and must lose a pawn, although the struggle is not over yet.

52 Rc3+

After 52 Re3, Black wins with 52 ... Rxe3! 53 fxe3 (or 53 Kxe3 Kb3) 53 ... f5!; White's king is tied (he needs to stop ... g5-g4), so Black can just go and take the a-pawn. Similarly, as Spielmann noted, 52 Kc2 Re2+ 53 Rd2 Rxd2+ 54 Kxd2 and now 54 ... Kb3! also wins easily.

52 ... Kxd4



Exercise: Black has won a pawn, but the game is still not over. How can White best resist?

Answer:

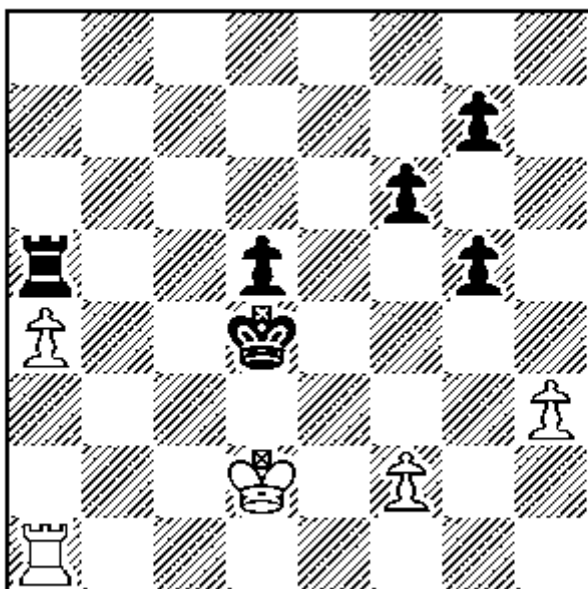
53 a4!

Utilizing his main resource, the passed pawn.

53 ... Ra7 54 Ra3 Ra5!

Black takes his time, combining attack with defence. We have already seen how important it is for White to push his a-pawn, so Black first of all prevents its further advance.

55 Ra1



And now? It is true that the position is still not won, but it is essential to keep creating problems for the opponent and/or improve one's own position.

Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein proceeded here?

Answer:

55 ... Kc4!

“A typical plan: Black takes his king to a5, freeing his rook to attack the opponent’s weak pawns.” – Averbakh.

White’s position remains unpleasant, but the fight is not over yet.

Exercise (difficult): This appears to be White’s

last opportunity to offer resistance – how?

Answer:

56 Ke3?!

This fails to prevent Black from making progress. The outcome would still be in doubt after the counter-attack 56 Rc1+ Kb4 57 Rb1+! Kxa4 (or 57 ... Ka3 58 Kd3, since taking the a-pawn then allows the exchange of rooks) 58 Kd3 Rc5 (58 ... Rb5?! 59 Ra1+ Kb4 60 Kd4 is certainly no better) 59 Kd4 Rc2 60 Rb7 Rxf2 61 Rxc7 “with drawing chances” (Levenfish & Smyslov).

Kasparov adds that “although the position after 61 ... Rd2+ 62 Kc5 Kb3 63 Rf7 Kc3 64 Rxf6 d4 looks dangerous for White, I have been unable to find a clear win for Black: 65 Ra6! d3 66 Ra3+ Kb2 67 Kb4 Rd1 68 Rc3 etc.”; for instance, after 68 ... d2, there is a curious perpetual check, starting with 69 Rb3+.

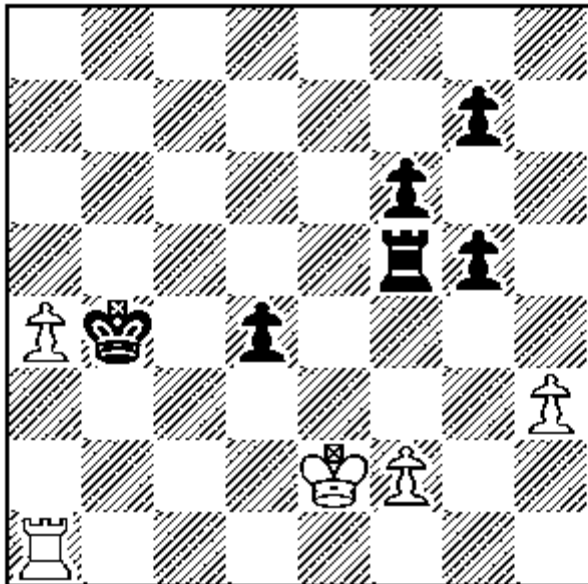
56 ... d4+! 57 Kd2 Rf5

This releases the blockade of the a-pawn so precise calculation was required.

58 Ke1

The advance 58 a5 can be answered by 58 ... Rxf2+, since the rook returns in time to halt the passed pawn and capture it: 59 Ke1 Rb2 (but not 59 ... Rh2? 60 Ra4+ Kb5 61 a6!, as pointed out by Kasparov) 60 a6 Rb8 61 a7 Ra8 62 Kd2 Kc5 63 Kd3 Kb6 64 Kxd4 Rxa7, winning.

58 ... Kb4! 59 Ke2



Exercise: How did Rubinstein implement his plan?

Answer:

59 ... Ka5!

The culmination of the idea begun with 55 ... Kc4!. “A standard role-reversal: now the king will blockade the pawn, while the rook goes after the weak enemy pawns.” – Dvoretsky.

Instead, 59 ... Ra5? would have failed to 60 Kd3 Rxa4 61 Rxa4+ Kxa4 62 Kxd4 and the white king heads across to capture the remaining black pawns with a draw.

60 Ra3 Rf4 61 Ra2

Black would win quickly after 61 Kf1 Kb4!; for example, 62 Ra1 Kc3 63 a5 d3 64 a6 d2 65 a7 Ra4! etc.

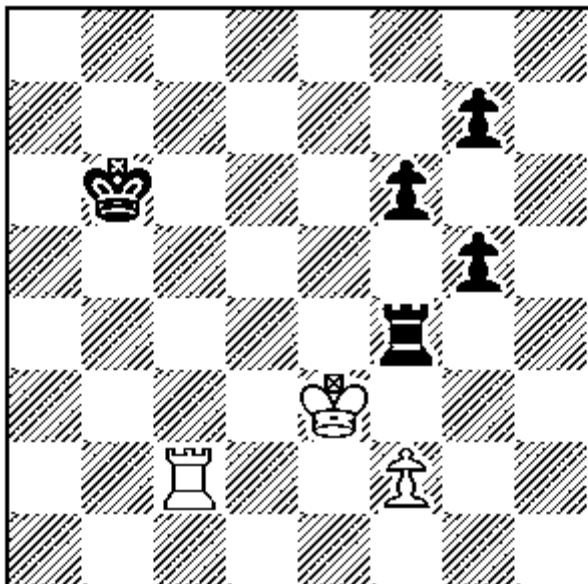
61 ... Rh4 62 Kd3

After 62 Ra3 Kb4! 63 Ra1 Rxh3 64 a5, the black rook again arrives in time to stop the passed pawn; for example, 64 ... Kb5 65 a6 Rh8 66 Kd3 Ra8 67 a7 Kb6 and so on.

62 ... Rxh3+ 63 Kxd4 Rh4+ 64 Kd3 Rxa4

The rest is easy.

65 Re2 Rf4 66 Ke3 Kb6 67 Rc2



67 ... Kb7!

“Exact to the end! Black prevents the manoeuvre Rc8-g8, and prepares to cross the c-file with his king, after Ra4-a6-c6.” – Dvoretsky.

68 Rc1 Ra4 69 Rh1 Kc6 70 Rh7 Ra7 71 Ke4 Kd6 72 Kf5 g6+! 73 Kxg6 Rxh7 74 Kxh7 Ke5 75 Kg6 g4 0-1

“This is an eternally living, classic rook endgame!” – Kasparov.

A Titanic Struggle

It has been said of some players, including Alekhine, that to beat them you have to win the game three times: in the opening, in the middlegame, and in the ending.

That is precisely what Rubinstein does in this game. After emerging from the opening with the better position, he gains the advantage in the middlegame, finally reaching a favourable ending, but with an advantage that is far from decisive. So once again Rubinstein has to conjure up the win, and this he finally achieves after a long and bitter struggle.

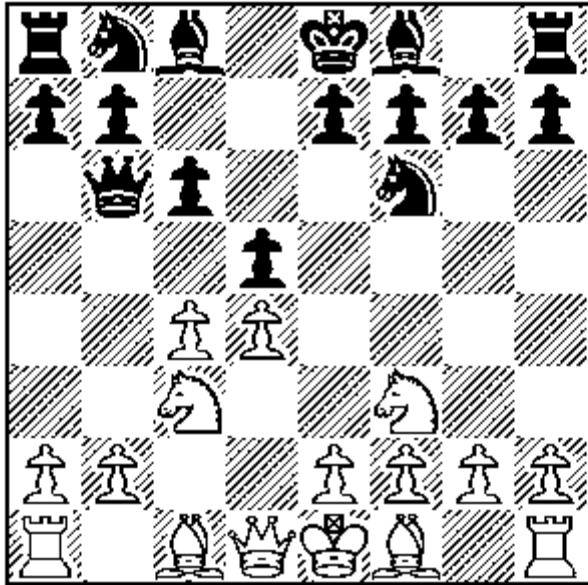
Game 25

A. Rubinstein-A. Alekhine

Carlsbad 1911

Slav Defence [D15]

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 c4 c6 4 Nc3 Qb6



This provocative move, designed to enable the development of the c8-bishop without having to play ... d5xc4 (as in the main line of the Slav), was briefly revived almost 100 years later by Gata Kamsky and others.

5 Qc2

One of the popular ways of tackling this line is 5 c5 Qc7 6 g3, followed by Bf4. The simple 5 e3 has also been played frequently, although this allows Black to pin the f3-knight with 5 ... Bg4.

5 ... Bg4 6 Bg5

In the same tournament, two rounds earlier, Rubinstein had opted for 6 c5 Qc7 7 Ne5 against Dus Chotimirsky, and Black gained reasonable play after 7 ... Nbd7 8 Nxc4 Nxc4 9 e3 e5 etc. That game ended in a draw; for this one Rubinstein had prepared a sacrifice of the d4-pawn.

6 ... Nbd7

Question: Is it very bad to accept the pawn by playing 6 ... Bxf3 and 7 ... Qxd4 - ?

Answer: No, it isn't clearly bad, but it leads to a type of position that perhaps wasn't to Alekhine's liking.

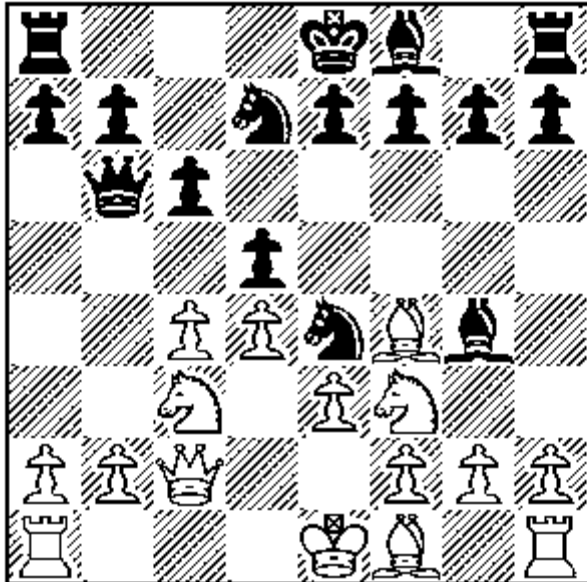
After 6 ... Bxf3, either capture is playable. Then 7 exf3 has been recommended, but the intended continuation 7 ... Qxd4 8 Bxf6 exf6 (not 8 ... gxf6? 9 cxd5 cxd5 10 Nxd5! Qxd5? 11 Qc8+ Qd8 12 Bb5+ and wins) 9 cxd5 is not clearly better for White; in fact Black seems fine after 9 ... Bb4! (but not 9 ... cxd5?! 10 Bb5+ Nc6 11 0-0, when White has a useful lead in development, and if 11 ... 0-0-0 then 12 Na4 with the initiative).

Instead, 8 Be3 Qe5 9 0-0-0 looks more promising, since Black still has development problems and faces the threat of 10 cxd5, aiming to penetrate with the queen at c8.

7 e3 Ne4?!

Alekhine tries to complicate the game; 7 ... e6 was the logical continuation.

8 Bf4



Although 8 Nxe4 is interesting, either now or on the next move, Rubinstein prefers to keep the position clear and avoid entering complications. He is also trying to prove, by natural development, that 7 ... Ne4 is a waste of time, which leads only to an exchange on c3.

8 ... e6 9 Bd3 Qa5 10 0-0 Nxc3 11 bxc3 Bxf3

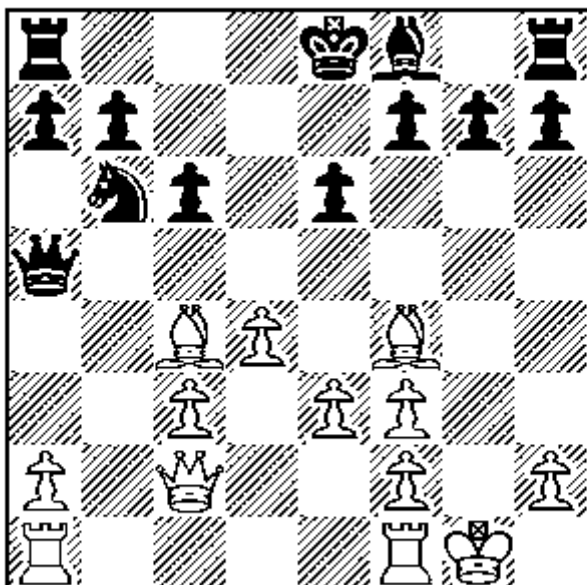
Question: I can see that this doubles White's pawns, but that doesn't look very important here. Was it not better to wait and develop with 11 ... Be7 instead?

Answer: 11 ... Be7 could be answered strongly by 12 Nd2, when White has pressure on h7 and b7 (after Rab1), while the bishop on g4 would be out of play, so it seems preferable to exchange it.

12 gxf3 dxc4

Now on 12 ... Be7, the continuation 13 cxd5 exd5 14 Rfb1 Nb6 15 Be5 is unpleasant, with White taking the initiative.

13 Bxc4 Nb6



Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein responded to the attack on his bishop?

Answer:

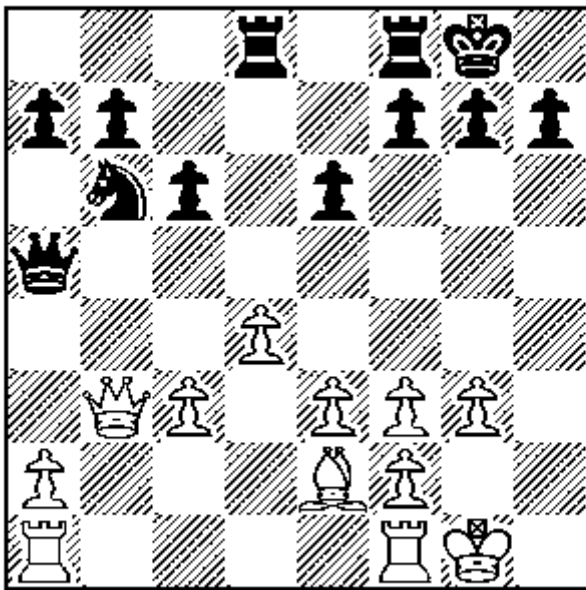
14 Qb3!

He surrendered his bishop pair to prevent Black from gaining activity. 14 Bd3 is less convincing on account of 14 ... Nd5!. If instead 14 Bb3, Black cannot play 14 ... Nd5?! immediately in view of 15 Bxd5! exd5 16 Rab1, when 16 ... 0-0-0?? loses to 17 Qf5+ Rd7 18 Rxb7 etc; but 14 ... Qh5! keeps control of the f5-square, enabling Black to reach an acceptable middlegame after 15 Qe2 Nd5 16 Bxd5 exd5, followed by ... 0-0-0, or else a balanced endgame after 15 Kg2 Qg6+.

14 ... Rd8

Alekhine abstains from 14 ... Nxc4. One might think that Rubinstein would have replied simply 15 Qxc4, when White has a slight advantage based on his central pawn majority; this looks more suited to his style than the violent 15 Qxb7, with the initiative and reasonable compensation after 15 ... Nb6 16 c4!. Nevertheless, the latter is what Rubinstein intended to play, according to his annotations.

15 Be2 Bd6 16 Bg3 Bxg3 17 hxg3 0-0



Exercise: Black has managed to keep White's advantage within acceptable bounds. How do you think Rubinstein continued?

Answer:

18 f4!

Improving the prospects of his bishop, which will go to f3.

18 ... c5?!

This advance helps White's plan; it is better to leave the pawn on c6.

19 Bf3 Rd7

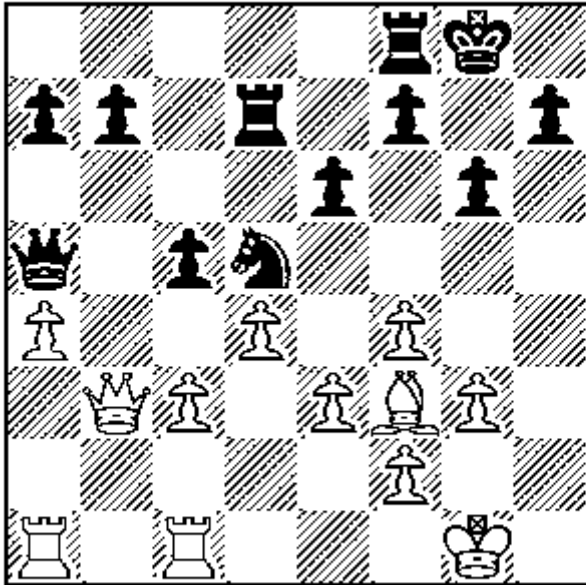
Exercise: What is the next step?

Answer:

20 a4!

White would like to exploit the position of the black queen to reach a favourable endgame, based on his strong bishop and the greater activity of his rooks.

20 ... Nd5 21 Rfc1 g6



Exercise (easy): How did Rubinstein proceed here?

Answer:

22 Qb5!

The culmination of his plan.

22 ... Qxb5?!

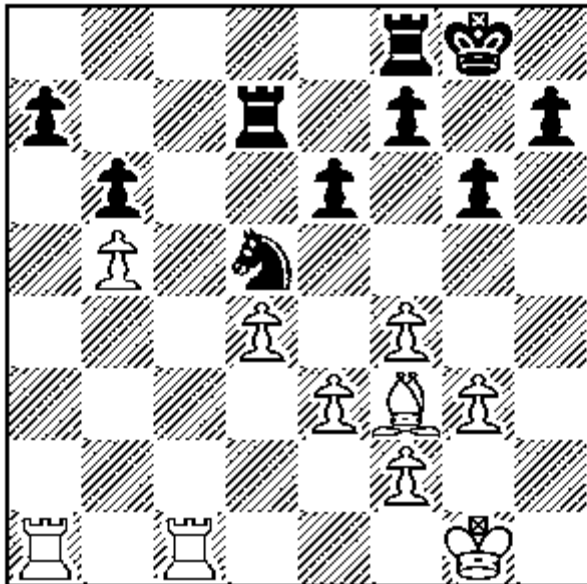
Alekhine prefers to defend an endgame in which he hopes only to be slightly worse, rather than the middlegame after 22 ... Qc7 23 Rab1 or 23 a5, followed by Rab1.

Marin pointed out that this was the fourth time in the game that Alekhine allowed Rubinstein to capture towards the centre with a pawn! (11 bxc3, 12 gxf3, 17 hxg3, and 22 axb5).

23 axb5 cxd4 24 cxd4?!

Iron logic, but missing a tactical chance. “Rubinstein was not very flexible and would rarely deviate from his strategic goals. He could have played: 24 c4! Nb6 (24 ... Ne7 25 Rxa7) 25 c5! [better than 25 Rxa7, when 25 ... d3! 26 c5 Rc8 is not so clear] 25 ... Nc8 26 exd4, with a technically winning position.” – Gelfand.

24 ... b6



Exercise (easy): White's advantage is clear, if small.
How do you think Rubinstein tried to make progress?

Answer:

25 Rc4

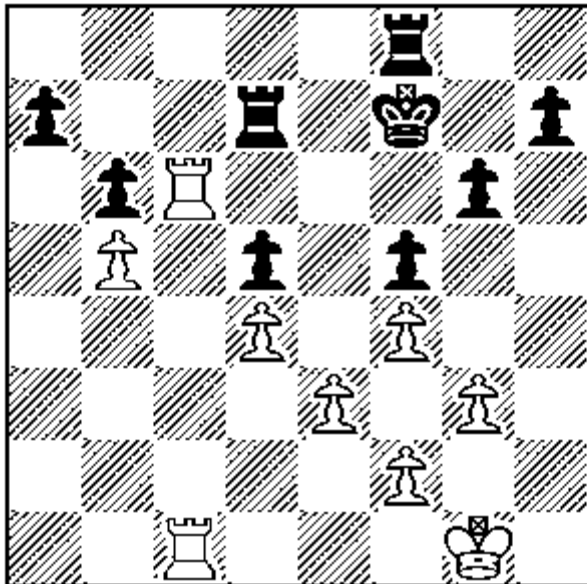
Of course, by doubling rooks on the open file.

25 ... f5 26 Rc6 Kf7 27 Bxd5!

Question: This looks like a concession; why exchange the strong bishop?

Answer: Yes, the bishop is strong, but it must be admitted that the knight is not bad either; and in isolation, White's control of the open file achieves nothing. Rubinstein tries to make progress by exchanging bishop for knight at a moment when Black must recapture with the pawn, creating an isolated queen's pawn.

27 ... exd5 28 Rac1



Question: Is really this ending so good? Why?

Answer: Let's let Gelfand tell you: "Black has weak pawns on a7, d5 and h7 to look after. Rubinstein loved to have this kind of permanent advantage where he could massage his opponent indefinitely. And then he was of course famous for his skills in rook endgames."

28 ... Rfd8 29 Kf1 Ke7 30 Ke2 Rd6 31 R6c3 R6d7 32 Kd3 Ra8 33 Rc6 Rd6

"Up to this point Rubinstein has played a great game, but from here his play is less impressive (...) he did not handle the endgame well in this occasion. This is not a judgement on his strength, as top grandmasters also play badly on occasion." – Gelfand.

34 Ke2

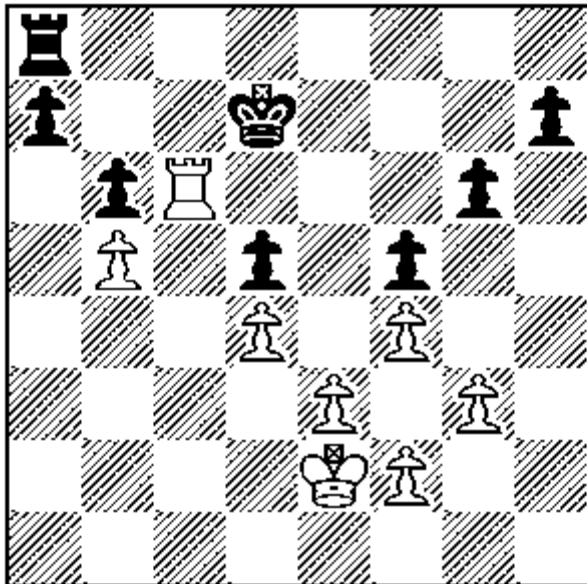
Exchanging one pair of rooks leaves greater possibilities of infiltrating with the remaining rook. Nevertheless, Gelfand thinks it is premature, and proposes 34 Rc7+ Rd7 35 R7c2; White could exchange the rooks later.

34 ... Rxc6 35 Rxc6 Kd7

White is a little better; he controls the open c-file and can mobilize his pawns with f2-f3, followed by e3-e4 and/or g3-g4 which, as we know, is something that Rubinstein is likely to do only after completing all necessary preparations.

One important detail is that the b5-pawn is the typical "pawn that holds two", which means that Black will hardly ever be able to consider an exchange of rooks, unless he is in time to play ... Kb7 and ... a7-a5 (or ... a7-a6).

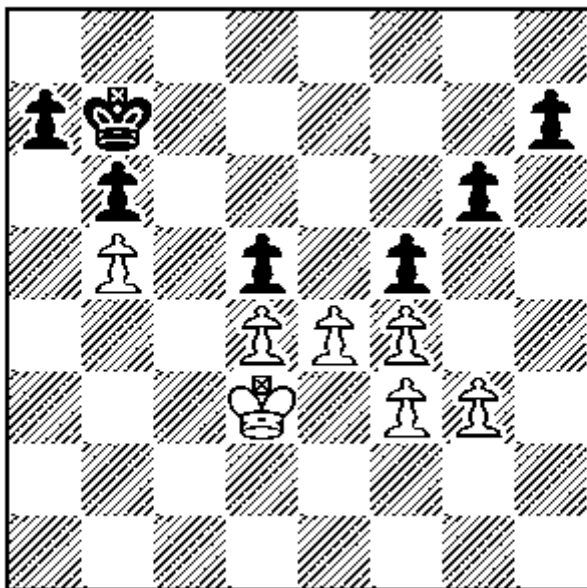
White's advantage in this ending should not be a serious one, but he can certainly try to keep increasing it, a bit at a time.



36 f3

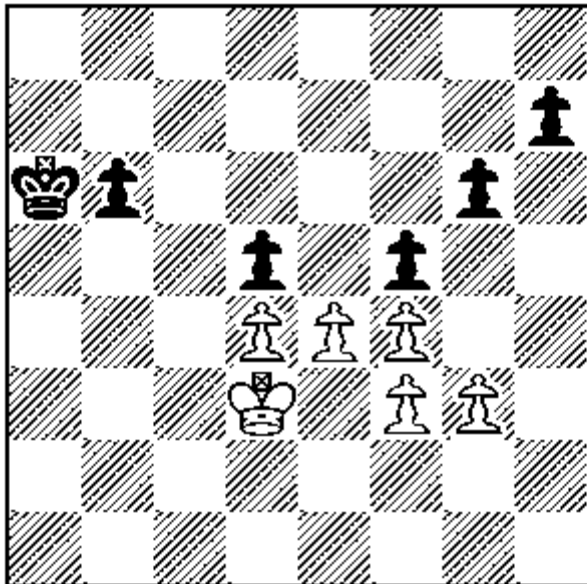
Mihail Marin analysed this ending deeply and criticized this move. He thought that 36 Kd3 was better, when 36 ... a5? fails to 37 Rxb6 Kc7 (or 37 ... a4 38 Kc3 a3 39 Ra6!) 38 Rc6+ (or 38 Rf6) 38 ... Kd7 39 Kc3.

Among many interesting lines, Marin considers that 36 ... Rc8 is not possible either, on account of 37 Rxc8 Kxc8 38 f3 Kb7 39 e4.



Here he analyses 39 ... fxe4+? 40 fxe4 dxe4+ 41 Kxe4 a5 42 bxa6+ Kxa6 43 g4, which gives White a decisive advantage; for example, 43 ... Kb7 44 d5 (or 44 f5 first) 44 ... Kc7 45 Ke5! b5 46 d6+ Kd7 47 f5 gxf5+ 48 gxf5 b4 49 f6 b3 50 f7 b2 51 f8Q b1Q 52 Qe7+, followed by Qc7+ and Qb8+, winning the black queen.

However, instead of taking on e4 and allowing White two passed pawns, it is better to play 39 ... a5! (or 39 ... a6!) 40 bxa6+ Kxa6, which appears sufficient to draw as Black now has a passed pawn of his own.



We can immediately rule out 41 exd5? Kb7 42 Kc4 Kc7 43 Kb5 Kd6 and White loses, since the black king mops up the white pawns too quickly.

There are therefore three main lines to consider: a) 41 e5, b) 41 g4, and c) 41 exf5 gxf5 42 g4. In all cases Black's b-pawn (which can advance when convenient) prevents the white king from supporting his pawns. Let's take a look at the main variations.

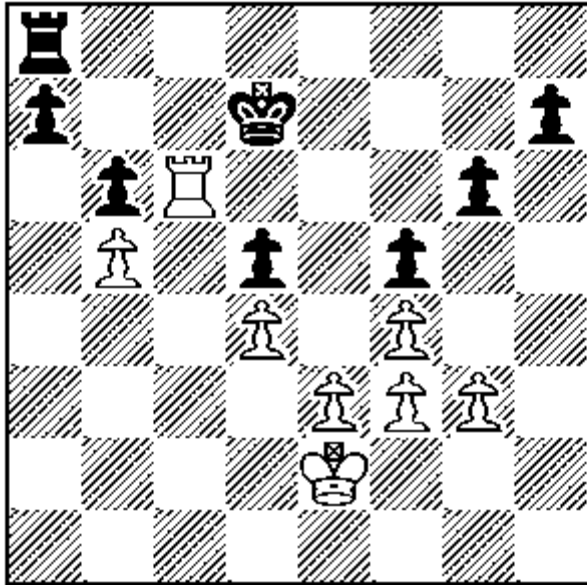
a) 41 e5 – White gains a protected passed pawn, which ties down the black king, but this is not enough to win because the white king's movements are also restricted; for instance, 41 ... Kb5 42 Kc3 Kc6 43 Kb4 (43 g4? loses to 43 ... h5! creating a second passed pawn) 43 ... h5 44 Ka4 Kd7 45 Kb5 Kc7 and White can make no progress, since 46 e6? loses after 46 ... Kd6 47 Kxb6 Kxe6 48 Kc6 g5! 49 fxg5 f4 50 gxf4 h4 etc.

b) 41 g4 – with this the most White can achieve is a queen ending with an extra pawn which is drawn. Let's look at one of the main lines: 41 ... dxe4+ 42 fxe4 Kb7 (threatening 43 ... fxg4, since the black king is now in the square of White's f-pawn) 43 gxf5 gxf5 44 exf5 Kc6 45 f6 Kd6 46 d5 b5! and Black's two distant passed pawns are enough to draw; for instance, 47 Kc3 h5 48 Kb4 h4 49 Kxb5 h3 50 f7 Ke7 50 d6+ Kxf7 51 Kb6 h2 53 d7 h1Q 54 d8Q Qh6+ and 55 ... Qxf4.

c) 41 exf5 gxf5 42 g4 Kb7 43 Kc3 Kc6 44 Kb4 Kd6 45 Kb5 Kc7, when the situation is similar to that after 41 e5. White cannot make progress, and 46 gxf5? just loses to 46 ... h5.

There are many more possible variations, but it appears that 36 Kd3 is no stronger than 46 f3.

Back to the game:



Exercise (difficult): Here Black has an excellent opportunity to fight for the draw. What is it?

Answer:

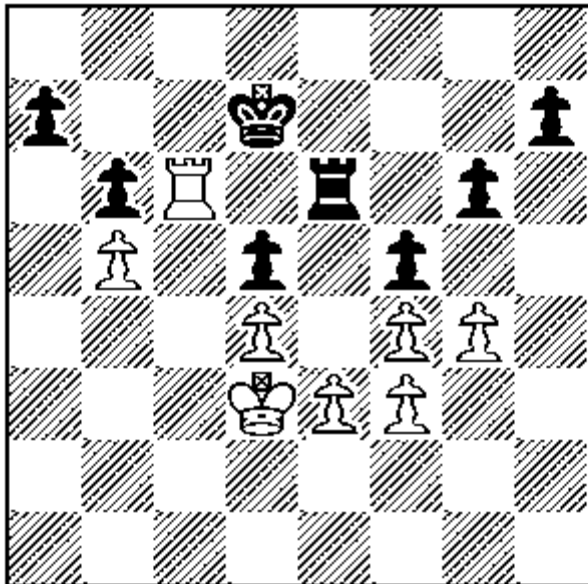
36 ... Re8?

Both Levenfish and Averbakh demonstrated that 36 ... Rc8? loses to 37 Rxc8 Kxc8 38 e4! fxe4 39 fxe4 dxe4 and now after, for example, 40 Ke3 (or 40 g4 first) 40 ... Kd7 41 Kxe4 Ke6 42 d5+ Kd6 43 g4, followed by f4-f5, Black has only one passed pawn, which is harmless. White just needs to deploy his two passed pawns a knight's jump away from each other, say on d5 and f6, to free his king to capture the black h-pawn and/or support the advance of his own pawns.

Marin analysed the most tenacious defence: 38 ... h6!?, when after 39 e5 g5 40 g4! fxe4 41 fxe4 hxe4, the routine recapture 42 fxe4? only leads to a draw since the white king cannot penetrate; but the elegant 42 Kf2! wins; e.g. 42 ... Kd7 43 Kg3 gxf3 44 Kxf3, followed by Kg4. (As Marin points out, this is reminiscent of the famous move 47 Ng2!! in the ninth game of the 1984 Karpov-Kasparov match.)

In response to the exercise posed above, the drawing chance was 36 ... a5! 37 Rxb6, and now not 37 ... a4? at once on account of 38 Ra6! Rxa6? (but 38 ... Rb8 39 Ra5 a3 40 e4 is still very promising) 39 bxa6 Kc6 40 Kd3 Kb6 41 Kc3 Kxa6 42 Kb4 and White wins; but instead 37 ... Kc7!! and after 38 Rc6+ Kb7 39 Kd2 a4 40 Kc2 Re8 41 Rc3 Kb6, Black regains the pawn and is not worse.

37 Kd3 Re7 38 g4 Re6



Exercise (difficult): Should White exchange the rooks or not?

Answer:

39 Rc1?!

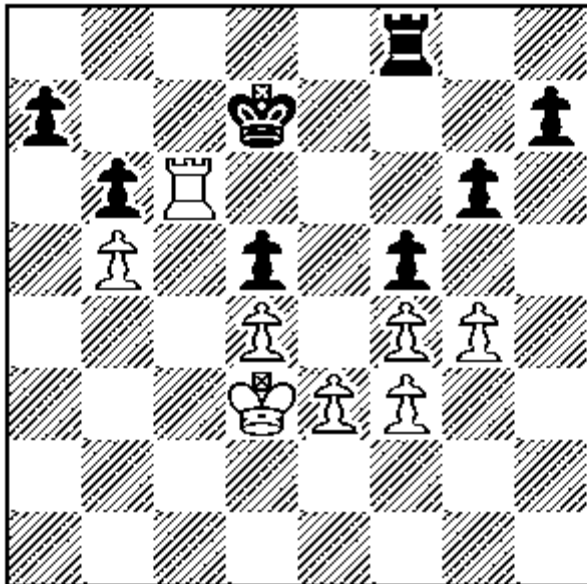
“Not hurrying”. Understandably, in time pressure neither player could properly calculate the consequences of 39 Rxe6!, which in fact wins: 39 ... Kxe6 40 gxf5+! (White should still abstain from 40 e4?, since after 40 ... dxe4+ 41 fxe4 fxg4, both sides gain two connected passed pawns, with no real chances for either player) 40 ... gxf5 (or 40 ... Kxf5 41 Ke2, when the king goes to g3 and Black is placed in zugzwang and has to allow the winning advance e3-e4) 41 e4 Kd6 42 Ke3 Ke6 43 e5 Kf7 44 Kf2 Kg6 45 Kg3 Kg7 46 Kh4 Kg6 47 e6! Kf6 48 Kh5! Kxe6 49 Kg5!, according to Levenfish & Smyslov.

“It is easy to understand why Rubinstein played as he did. In the game he retains the advantage and allowed Black to make mistakes under pressure. Going for the pawn ending without the certainty provided by an engine is not an easy choice. Calculating these lines would be difficult, even for today’s top players.” – Gelfand.

39 ... Re7 40 Rh1 Ke6 41 Rc1 Kd7 42 Re1 Rf7 43 Ra1 Kd6 44 Rc1 Kd7

In the event of 44 ... Rc7? 45 Rxc7 Kxc7 46 gxf5! gxf5 47 e4, White reaches a winning endgame similar to that in the previous note.

45 Rc6 Rf8



Exercise: After a manoeuvring phase, based on the principle of “don’t hurry”, the time control has now been reached. How do you think Rubinstein made progress?

Answer:

46 Ke2!

The king heads for the kingside to try to penetrate via g5. Rubinstein considered that White now has a won game already (!).

46 ... Rf7 47 Kf2 Rf8 48 Kg3 Re8 49 Rc3 Re7 50 Kh4 h6

Question: Black has prevented infiltration at g5.

Does this not signify the failure of White’s king raid?

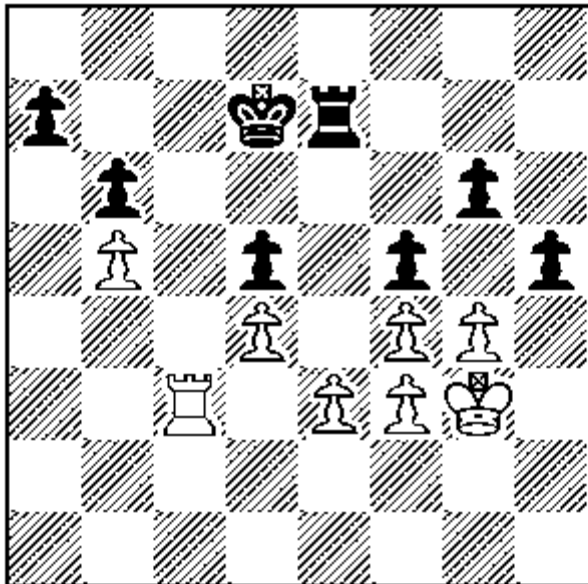
Answer: Playing 50 ... h6 was almost forced to prevent Kg5, but it is not a move that Black would have made willingly. The black rook will now be unable defend the pawns as comfortably as it could with the pawns on a7 and h7. And now there are three weaknesses, on a7, g6 and h6, so a timely Rc6 by White will come with greater force.

51 Kg3!

Still in no hurry. Now that White has succeeded in weakening Black’s pawn structure, he sends his king back to f2 to free the rook. It still seems too early for concrete action; e.g. 51 gxf5 gxf5 52 Kh5 Re6 53 Ra3 Kd6! 54 Rxa7 Rxe3.

51 ... h5

If Black continues to wait with 51 ... Re8, the white king will go to d3 to support a timely e3-e4 advance; for example, 52 Kf2 Re7 53 Ke2 Re8 54 Kd3 Re7, and now White wins with 55 Rc6 Re6 56 gxf5! gxf5 57 Rxe6 Kxe6 58 e4 etc. Once again the passed e-pawn (or the two passed pawns on the d- and f-files) easily defeat Black’s solitary h-pawn; while the pawn on b5 means that White is virtually a pawn up.



Exercise: How can White concede the fewest chances to the opponent?

Answer:

52 Kh4?!

Heading back towards the g6-pawn. The attractive alternative (“much stronger”, according to Gelfand) was 52 gxf5 gxf5 53 Kh4, when passive defence with 53 ... Rh7 fails as the passed h-pawn is not enough to enable Black to draw; e.g. 54 Kg5 h4 55 Kxf5 h3 56 Rc1 h2 57 Rh1, followed by e3-e4 and so on.

It is probable that Rubinstein rejected that line because of 53 ... Rg7 54 Kxh5 Rg1 (Marin suggested 54 ... Rg3 and analysed the position deeply), which leaves the white king out of play for the moment and aims to play ... Rb1; for instance, 55 Ra3 Ke6 56 Rxa7 Kf6! 57 Kh4 Rh1+ 58 Kg3 Rh1+ 59 Kf2 Rb1 with drawing chances.

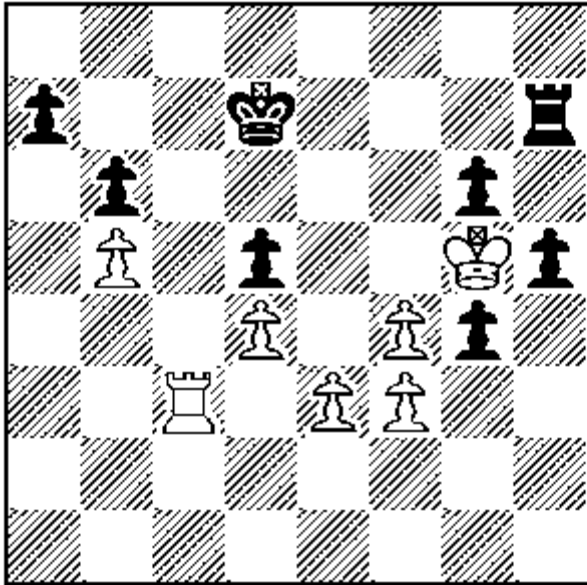
52 ... Rh7?!

It was better to play 52 ... hxf4 53 fxf4 Rh7+ 54 Kg5 fxf4, transposing to the game.

53 Kg5?

“White again could have won the game with 53 gxf5 gxf5 54 Kg5!” – Gelfand, who believes that “both players were mentally committed in a certain direction and probably made the moves rather quickly.”

53 ... fxf4



Exercise: Which pawn is it best to capture?

Answer:

54 fxg4

This is actually forced, since 54 Kxg6?? loses after 54 ... g3! 55 Kxh7 g2 56 Rc1 h4, followed by ... h4-h3-h2.

54 ... hxg4 55 Kxg4 Rh1 56 Kg5 Rb1 57 Ra3 Rxb5?

Gelfand claims that 57 ... Ke6! would hold; whereas now “the rook is entirely out of play on b5, taking far too long to come back into the game.”

58 Rxa7+ Kd6 59 Kxg6

White finally creates a passed pawn, and it is a winning trump; “White wins a pawn and manages to make something great out of his f-pawn.” – Gelfand.

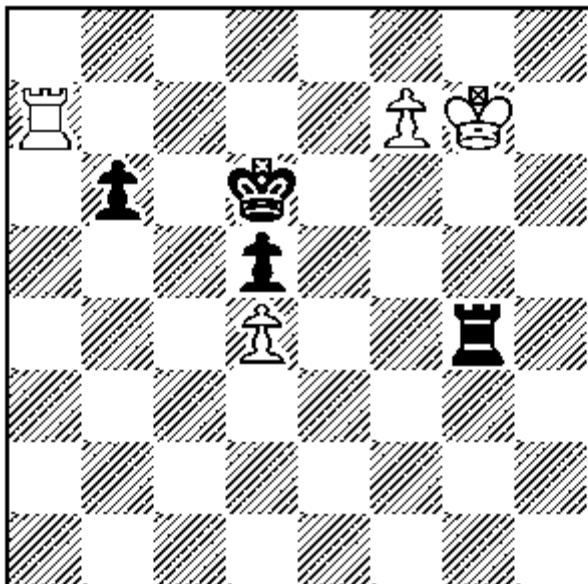
59 ... Rb3 60 f5 Rxe3

Although material is equal again, the difference between the passed pawns is decisive; White’s is further advanced and supported by his two pieces.

61 f6 Rg3+ 62 Kh7 Rf3

Or 62 ... Rh3+ 63 Kg8 Rg3+ 64 Rg7 and wins (Averbakh).

63 f7 Rf4 64 Kg7 Rg4+



Exercise: Where should the white king go now?

Answer:

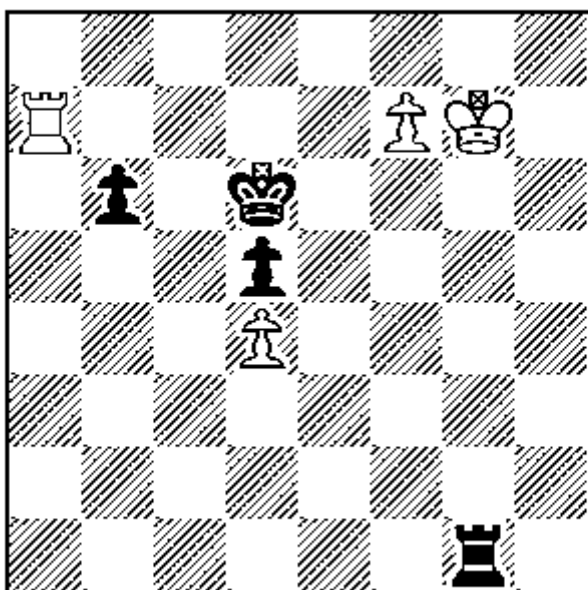
65 Kf6!

Sooner or later the white king will have to take shelter on f8 from the rook checks, but now is not the right moment: 65 Kf8? Rxd4 leads to a draw.

65 ... Rf4+ 66 Kg5 Rf1 67 Kg6

Threatening 68 Ra8, which forces Black to start checking.

67 ... Rg1+ 68 Kf6 Rf1+ 69 Kg7 Rg1+



70 Kf8!

Now this is correct; the big difference from the previous diagram is that the black rook is now on g1 and cannot immediately capture the d4-pawn.

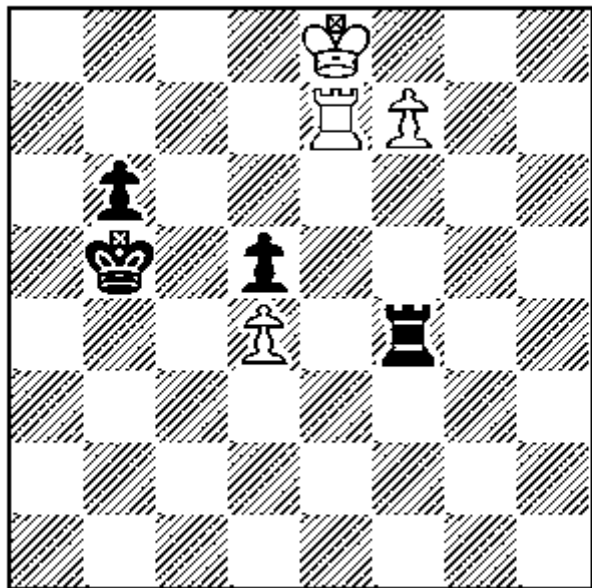
70 ... Rd1 71 Ke8 Re1+ 72 Kd8 Rf1 73 Rd7+

White needs to force the black king away from the e7-square, so that when he moves his own king to e8 he can answer ... Re1+ with Re7. Alternatively, 73 Re7 was also good, and if 73 ... Ra1!? then 74 Rd7+ Ke6 75 f8N+, winning.

73 ... Kc6

Of course 73 ... Ke6 71 Ke8 wins easily.

74 Ke8 Rf4 75 Re7 Kb5



Exercise: What move did Rubinstein play now, which persuaded Alekhine to resign?

Answer:

76 Rc7! 1-0

Preventing ... Kc4; and now after, for instance, 76 ... Re4+ 77 Kd7 Rf4 78 Ke7 Re4+ 79 Kd6 Rf4 80 Kxd5, White wins easily.

The direct 76 f8Q wins as well, though after 76 ... Rxf8+ 77 Kxf8 Kc4, the endgame database indicates that White would have to find some “only moves”: 78 Kf7! Kxd4 79 Ke6! b5 80 Rb7! Kc4 81 Ke5 b4 82 Kf4! d4 83 Kf3! Kc3 84 Ke2 b3 and now the simplest win is 85 Kd1 b2 86 Rb8, when Black will soon lose all his pawns due to zugzwang.

The Rubinstein Variation of the French Defence

Rubinstein's variation of the French Defence is another of his lines that is still relevant today.

Schlechter committed an inaccuracy in the opening, after which Rubinstein had no problems equalizing, but gained no advantage. Each exchange seemed to bring the draw closer, but we know that for Rubinstein an equal endgame was only the start of the struggle, Schlechter failed to appreciate the danger and, as in so many of his endgames, Rubinstein soon managed to tilt the balance in his favour.

Game 26

C.Schlechter-A.Rubinstein

San Sebastian 1912

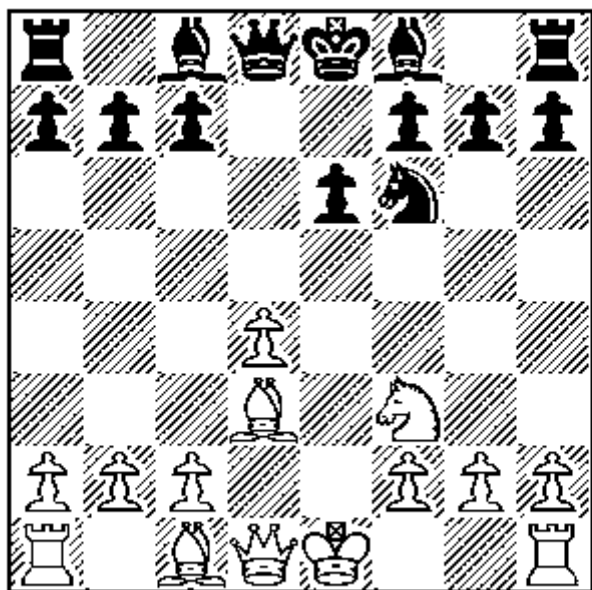
French Defence [C10]

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3

When Rubinstein had White this was his move of choice too. He does not seem ever to have played the Tarrasch's 3 Nd2.

3 ... Nf6

Rubinstein used to alternate this move with the variation that bears his name, 3 ... dxe4. Let's consider an example: P.Johner-A.Rubinstein, Bad Pistyan 1912, continued 4 Nxe4 Nd7 (Rubinstein was fond of this idea, to be able to play ... Ngf6 and recapture with the d7-knight) 5 Nf3 Ngf6 6 Nxf6+ (the main alternative is 6 Bd3, whereas Lasker considered it better to avoid the exchanges and play 6 Ng3 instead) 6 ... Nxf6 7 Bd3



and now 7 ... b6 was Rubinstein favourite idea, activating the bishop on b7.

The move order is important. In the event of 7 ... Be7 (which is fine) 8 Qe2 0-0 9 Bg5, Black cannot play 9 ... b6?? on account of 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11 Qe4 and wins. In Supplementary Game 26.1 we shall see the only example of Rubinstein playing 7 ... c5, which is the main move nowadays.

After 7 ... b6 8 0-0 Bb7 9 Qe2 Be7 10 b3 (Fischer also adopted this plan in a simultaneous game but he prefaced it with 10 Rd1, defending the d4-pawn indirectly, and 10 ... 0-0 11 c4, preventing ... Qd5, and only then b2-b3 and Bb2) 10 ... 0-0 11 Bb2 (there is no time to play 11 c4 here, in view of 11 ... Bxf3 and 12 ... Qxd4) 11 ... Qd5 12 Ba6 (12 c4 Qh5 fails to achieve much; for instance, 13 d5?! can be answered by 13 ... Bd6!) 12 ... Qe4 13 Qxe4 Bxe4 14 Ne5 Bxc2 15 Nc6 (seeking more than the equality that could be achieved after 15 Rac1 and Rxc7) 15 ... Bd6, Black had the superior pawn structure and no problems; Rubinstein went on to win, albeit with the aid of some inaccuracies by his opponent.

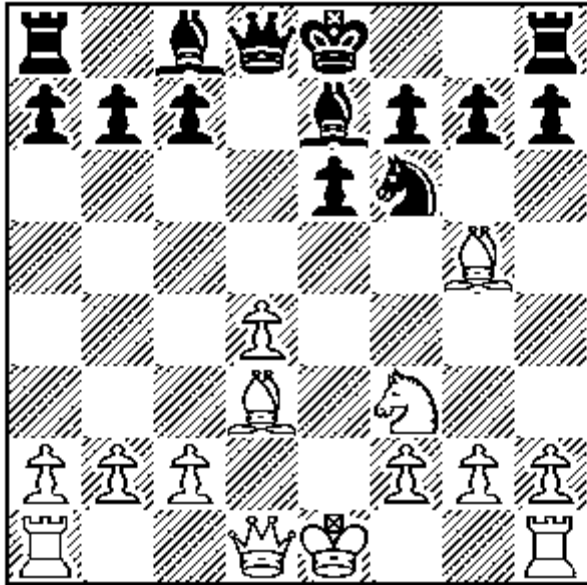
4 Bg5 dxe4

In this position Rubinstein always employed this capture, which we associate with his name, although via this move order it is generally known as the Burn Variation.

5 Nxe4 Nbd7

Once again preparing to recapture on f6 with the knight; Rubinstein played this more often than the alternative 5 ... Be7.

6 Nf3 Be7 7 Nxf6+ Nxf6 8 Bd3



Exercise: Knowing what you do now about Rubinstein's preferences, what do you think he played here?

Answer:

8 ... b6

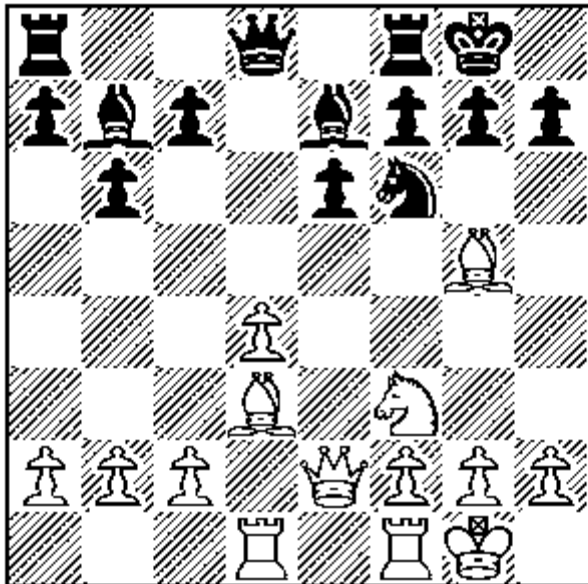
Correct. Rubinstein never adopted the alternative plan of 8 ... c5 or 8 ... 0-0, followed by ... c7-c5; instead, he hurried to place his bishop on b7.

At the start of his career, in E.Schiffers-A.Rubinstein, Russian Championship, Kiev 1903, he played 8 ... 0-0 and was able to complete his idea after 9 0-0 b6 10 Ne5 Bb7; but in that case, White can respond with 9 Qe2, preventing 9 ... b6, as we have already seen.

9 Ne5?!

It is tempting to try to exploit the diagonal a4-e8, but it is not justified tactically. White does not achieve anything after 9 Bb5+ Bd7 either. Instead, White can play 9 Qe2, retaining the possibility of queenside castling; and naturally there is the simple 9 0-0 as well.

In the fifth game of the Capablanca-Kostic match, Havana 1919, Capa played 9 Qe2 Bb7 10 0-0 0-0 11 Rad1.



The finish was very curious: 11 ... h6 12 Bf4 Qd5?! 13 c4! Qd8 (no better was 13 ... Qa5, played in S.Tarrasch-J.Mieses, 13th matchgame, Berlin 1916, which concluded 14 Bxc7 Bxf3 15 gxf3! Qxa2? 16 Ra1 Qb3 17 Bc2 Qb4 18 Ra4 and Black resigned) 14 Ne5 Nd7 15 Bb1, and here a depressed Kostic, who had no desire to defend with 15 ... Nf6, resigned and the match ended 5-0 to Capablanca.

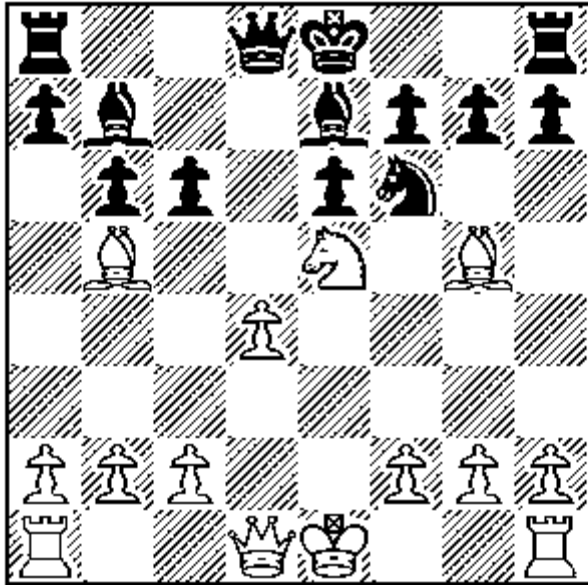
Even more curious was the course of A.Rubinstein-A.Conde, Hastings 1922/23, which reached the same position via a most surprising route: 1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 e6 3 e3 Nf6 4 Bd3 Bd6 5 0-0 Nbd7 6 Nbd2 0-0 7 e4 dxe4 8 Nxe4 Nxe4 9 Bxe4 Nf6 10 Bd3 b6 11 Bg5 Bb7 12 Qe2 Be7 13 Rad1. Here Black played 11 ... Re8 (technically 13 ... Re8) and White gained more space with 12 c4, planning Ne5 or else to retreat the light-squared bishop and set up a battery with Qd3 at an opportune moment; after 12 ... Nd7 13 Bc1 Bf6?!, Rubinstein kept gradually improving his position with 14 Ne5 Qe7 15 Bc2 Red8 16 Ng4! Nf8 17 Qe3 Rd7 18 Nxf6+ Qxf6 19 Qg3 Qe7 20 h4, when White had a big advantage: the bishop pair, greater central control and kingside attacking chances; Rubinstein won in 39 moves.

9 ... Bb7 10 Bb5+

Consistent and the complement to his previous move.

Instead, 10 0-0 0-0 would transpose to the aforementioned Schiffers-Rubinstein game, which continued 11 c3 (defending d4, in order to be able to play Qe2) 11 ... Rc8 (the immediate 11 ... c5 was also playable, as after 12 dxc5 Bxc5, White is unable to exploit the X-ray pressure exerted by his g5-bishop on the black queen) 12 Qe2 c5 13 Rad1 cxd4 14 cxd4 Qd5! with an excellent IQP position for Black, since White suffers from his lack of control over the d5-square. The result was 0-1 in 44 moves.

10 ... c6



11 Bxc6+

It's not possible to play 11 Nxc6? because of 11 ... Qd5! and White loses material after 12 Bxf6 (or 12 Nxa7+ Kf8) 12 ... Bxf6 13 Na5+ Qxb5 14 Nxb7 Qd7.

At the same tournament the previous year, Spielmann played 11 Qf3?!, after which 11 ... Qd5! gave Rubinstein the superior position already, since 12 Qxd5 is met by 12 ... Nxd5 13 Bxe7 cxb5! 14 Bh4 Nf4 with a clear advantage.

The game continued 12 Bxf6, and now the simplest reply was 12 ... Qxf3 13 Nxf3 Bxf6, followed soon by ... c6-c5, when the power of Black's bishop pair can already be felt; and 13 gxf3 Bxf6 14 Bxc6+ Bxc6 15 Nxc6 Rc8, followed by ... Rxc2, would be even worse.

Instead, Rubinstein played 12 ... cxb5 13 Bxg7?! (White prefers to create complications, rather than enter the depressing endgame arising from 13 Qxd5 Bxd5 14 Bxe7 Kxe7 15 f3 Rfc8, though that was the lesser evil) 13 ... Qxf3 14 gxf3 Rg8 15 Bh6 f6 16 Nd3 Bxf3 17 Rf1 Rg4 18 Bf4 Rd8 19 c3 e5 with an overwhelming advantage to Black, who is very active, while White's position is full of weaknesses. Miraculously, Spielmann managed to save the game.

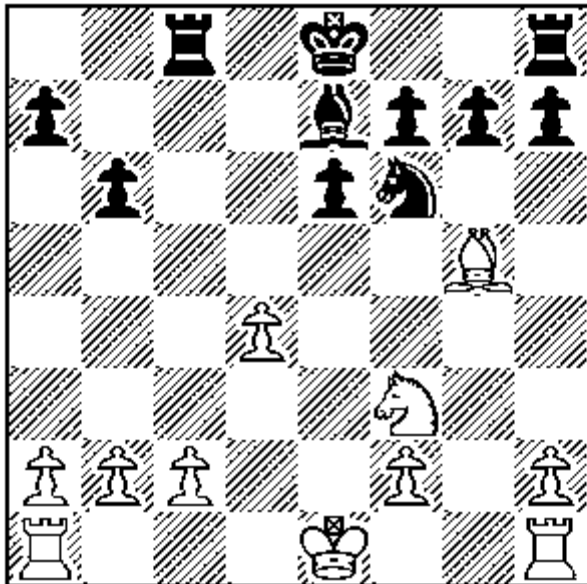
11 ... Bxc6 12 Nxc6 Qd5!

Black regains his material by attacking the two minor pieces and the g2-pawn.

13 Ne5

The only move.

13 ... Qxg2 14 Qf3 Qxf3 15 Nxf3 Rc8



Black has emerged from the opening in very good shape, with the superior pawn structure. White faces an uncomfortable defensive task; although he is not in serious danger yet, in these endings Rubinstein was often able to increase his advantage, slowly but surely.

16 0-0-0

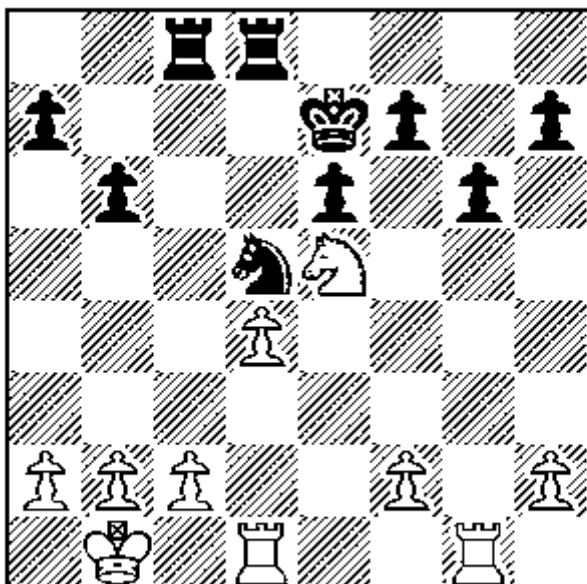
This move was criticized as too passive; instead, 16 c3 was suggested, with the idea of playing a4-a5 at an opportune moment. Nevertheless, it does not appear easy for White to create counterplay after, for example, 16 ... Nd5 17 Bxe7 Kxe7 18 a4 f6, controlling e5 and planning a timely ... g7-g5; then 19 a5?! would be answered by 19 ... b5, and it is hard to see what White has achieved. It would be better to play 19 Kd2 (or indeed 18 Kd2), though Black retains a slight advantage with his superior pawn structure.

Perhaps the main snag with 0-0-0 is not that it fails to create counterplay, which is almost impossible here, but that it removes the king from the centre.

16 ... Nd5 17 Bxe7 Kxe7 18 Kb1 Rhd8

Rubinstein brings his last piece into play before taking any definite action.

19 Rhg1 g6 20 Ne5



Black is slightly better owing to his superior structure, but this does not mean much on its own; he needs to add some new ingredient or create some change in the position. Here there are several possible moves for Black, none of them devastating.

Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein continued?

Answer:

20 ... Nb4!

Instead of altering his pawn structure – either to expel the annoying knight with 20 ... f6, or start a queenside offensive with 20 ... b5, followed by ... a7-a5 etc – Rubinstein prefers to offer the exchange of knights, keeping all his options open regarding the future placement of his pawns.

Is this clearly better than the alternatives available? It's difficult to be sure, but we can say with certainty that it accords with Rubinstein's style of play: if there are options, never rush things.

21 c3 Nc6 22 Nxc6+?

Question: Is this so bad? Doesn't each exchange bring the game closer to a draw?

Answer: What you say is true, but it's a generalization and not always valid. In this case the problem is that the exchange of knights benefits the black rooks, since the white knight, from e3, could defend vital squares such as d5, f5, or c4; hence it was clearly preferable to play 22 Ng4, intending Ne3.

22 ... Rxc6 23 Rd3 Rd5!

The greater activity of the black rooks is made more apparent by White's weak structure, with two isolated pawns on f2 and h2 requiring uncomfortable defence.

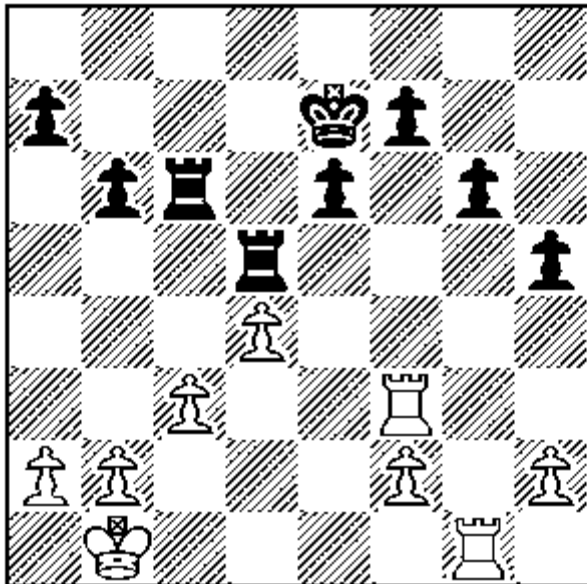
24 Rh3 h5

In contrast, any white attack on Black's pawn structure is easily parried.

25 Rf3?!

Question: Why is this dubious? It prevents the unpleasant 25 ... Rf5.

Answer: It is almost always essential to consider the opponent's possibilities, and in this slightly inferior position it is important to prevent the main threat, which this move fails to do, as we shall see.



Exercise: How did Rubinstein proceed in this position?

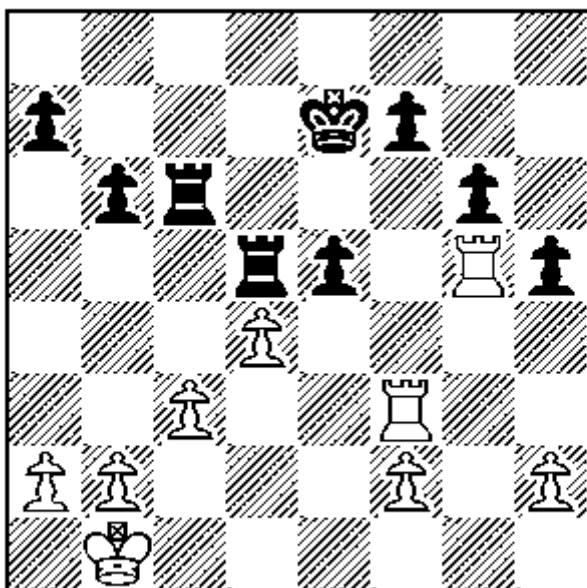
Answer:

25 ... e5!

The exchange of pawns will drastically increase the activity of Black's rooks. This is a good idea, though as always it needs to be justified tactically. White would have done better to prevent this advance, with 25 Re3, for example.

26 dxe5

The above-mentioned tactical justification would have been required in response to 26 Rg5.



Exercise: What do you think Rubinstein would have played then?

Answer: The point is that 26 Rg5 can be answered by 26 ... Rf6!, and if 27 Rxf6 Kxf6 28

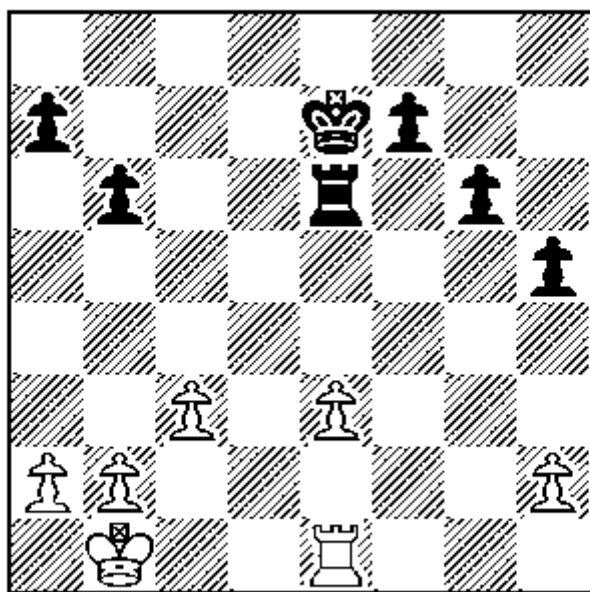
f4 then 28 ... exf4! 29 Rxd5 f3 (I.Zaitsev) and the pawn promotes.

Alternatively, in the pawn ending arising after 28 Rxe5 Rxe5 29 dxe5+ Kxe5 30 Kc2 Ke4, the dominant position of the black king enables him to win, since it can support his kingside pawn majority and at the same time keep an eye on White's queenside. If 31 c4, then 31 ... Kd4 32 b3 g5, followed by ... g5-g4, ... f7-f5-f4 etc and White is paralysed. Other moves also allow Black to push his kingside pawns, and once they are sufficiently advanced he can choose between creating an outside passed pawn, followed by invading White's queenside, or going to capture the pawn on h2, if the queening race is favourable to him.

26 ... Rxe5 27 Re3?

Not the most tenacious move; after the exchange on e3 the remaining black rook will be much more effective than its white counterpart. Although White is worse anyway, it was better for him to keep both his rooks.

27 ... Rxe3 28 fxe3 Re6 29 Re1



Exercise: After forcing the white rook to be deployed passively, how did Rubinstein continue?

Answer:

29 ... Rf6

There is more than one good move here; Rubinstein's choice is the most attractive one, activating the rook with the threat 30 ... Rf2.

30 Re2

Exercise: Once again there are several good moves; what do you think Rubinstein played?

Answer:

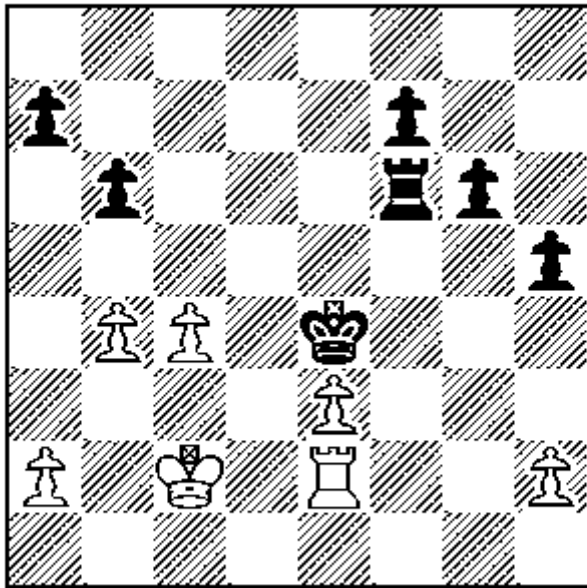
30 ... Ke6

Of course; the moment has come to active the monarch. The power of both pieces, combined with his pawn majority, is decisive.

31 Kc2 Ke5 32 c4

Here 32 Kd3 Rd6+ 33 Kc2 Ke4 changes nothing.

32 ... Ke4 33 b4



Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein continued?

Answer:

33 ... g5

Exactly; with both Black's pieces activated to the maximum, the moment has come to set the pawns in motion. They can advance quickly, thanks to the support of the king and the rook. In contrast, the white pawns lack support. The rest is very simple; it is a race on very unequal terms.

34 Kc3 g4 35 c5 h4 36 Rg2 Rg6 37 Kc4 g3 38 hxg3 hxg3 39 Kb5 bxc5 40 bxc5 Kf3 41 Rg1 a6+! 0-1

Several moves win here, but this one can be played even without calculation. White's c-pawn cannot advance, whereas Black's g-pawn will cost White his rook.

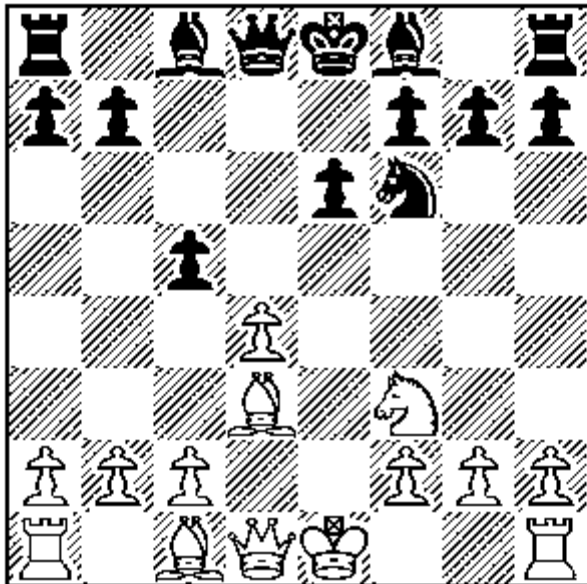
Supplementary Game 26.1

G.Maróczy-A.Rubinstein

Carlsbad 1907

French Defence [C10]

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nd7 5 Nf3 Ngf6 6 Nxf6+ Nxf6 7 Bd3 c5

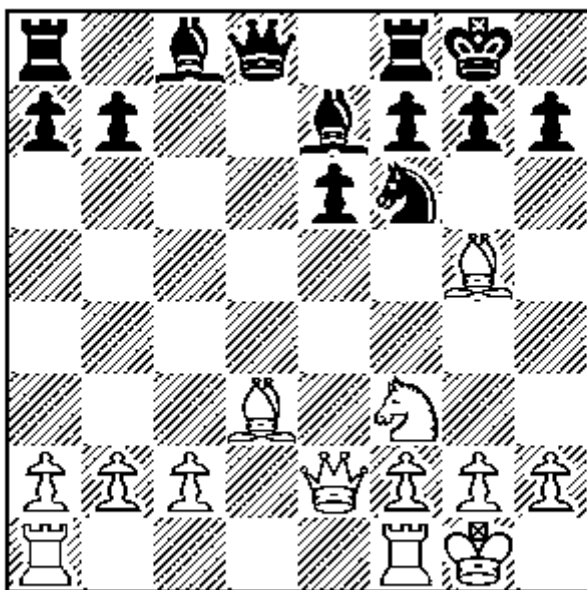


With this break Black exchanges White's central pawn for a flank pawn, which is generally a favourable transaction, even though opening the position in this way is slightly riskier than Rubinstein's favourite 7 ... b6. The disadvantage is minimal, however.

8 dxc5 Bxc5 9 0-0 0-0 10 Bg5

Lasker suggested 10 Bf4, but this move has had practically no followers.

10 ... Be7 11 Qe2



White has the better prospects; his superior development means that in the middlegame he has the initiative on the kingside, and in an endgame his queenside pawns will be a factor.

Question: In that case, why did Rubinstein opt for this variation?

Answer: He will have reckoned that he could keep White's advantage within tolerable limits and equalize the game.

At this point in the tournament (round 17 of 20) Rubinstein was in first place, followed by Maróczy himself, so a draw would be a satisfactory result for Rubinstein.

The situation in the tournament was relevant too. At this stage, Maróczy was leading on 11½/15, with Rubinstein in second on 11. Having the black pieces in this game, Rubinstein clearly felt his priority was not to fall further behind.

11 ... Qc7

As we have already seen, Black cannot develop his bishop to the long diagonal, since 11 ... b6?? runs into 12 Bxf6 Bxf6 13 Qe4.

12 Rad1

White opts to place his rooks on d1 and e1. Lasker suggested 12 Rfe1, leaving the queen's rook to support the advance of the queenside pawns.

12 ... Rd8

Another preparation for ... Bd7, although 12 ... Bd7 at once was playable, planning ... Rad8; there is no need to fear 13 Bxf6 Bxf6 14 Bxh7+ Kxh7 15 Qd3+ g6 16 Qxd7 Qxc2 with good play. Alternatively, 12 ... b6 was also possible, since now after 13 Bxf6 Bxf6 14 Qe4 g6 15 Qxa8 Bb7 16 Qxa7 Ra8, White has no advantage; his rooks are not stronger than the queen, and Black will regain the pawn and have very active minor pieces.

13 c4

“Not only beginning to mobilize the queenside majority but also depriving Black of his use of d5.” – Euwe.

Another typical move is 13 Ne5, when Black needs to play 13 ... h6 before developing the bishop; 13 ... Bd7? is bad here, because of the typical combination 14 Bxh7+! Kxh7 15 Bxf6, when 15 ... Bxf6?? loses to 16 Qh5+ Kg8 17 Qxf7+, followed by 18 Rd3.

13 ... Bd7 14 Bd2

Another of the ideas behind 13 c4; the bishop goes to c3 to put pressure on Black's kingside, but his position remains solid.

14 ... Rac8 15 Bc3 Be8 16 Qc2

White spends two tempi to try and force Black to weaken his kingside; 16 Ne5 was more natural.

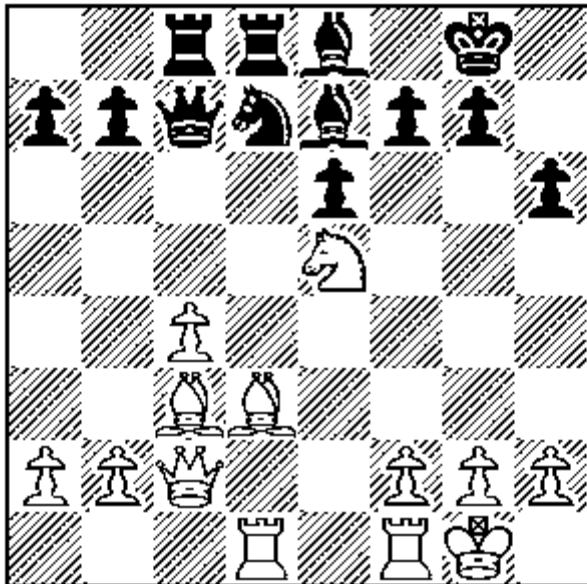
16 ... h6

Steering clear of complications. A more radical (and good) response was 16 ... b5!, but Rubinstein was not interested in complicating the game unnecessarily.

17 Ne5 Nd7!

“First things first”; Black needs to exchange the unpleasant intruder on e5. Admittedly, to do so he removes a defender from his kingside, but Rubinstein has evaluated correctly that Black's king can still be adequately defended.

Lasker remarked: “The position is remarkable. The black king is only protected by pawns, and White has considerable force bearing on it, yet nothing tangible can be done.”



18 Nxd7 Bxd7 19 Qe2

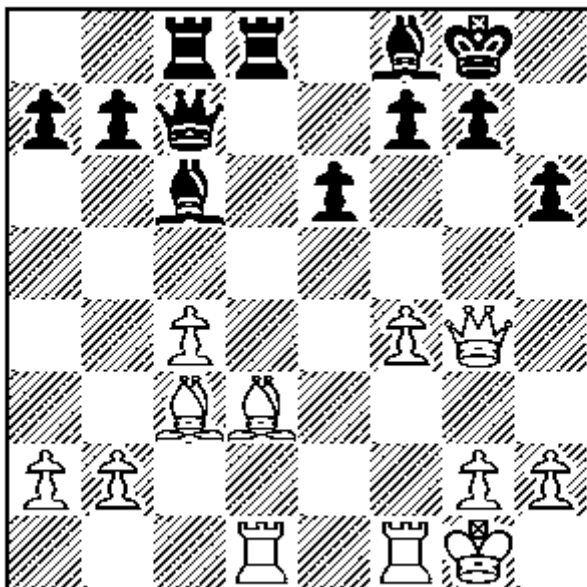
Exercise: The queen heads for the kingside, what defensive move did Rubinstein make?

Answer:

19 ... Bc6!

Controlling e4 and preventing the variation 20 Qg4 Bf8 21 Bf6! Re8 22 Rfe1, with Re3-g3 and Qe4 on the agenda.

20 Qg4 Bf8 21 f4



Exercise: How did Rubinstein defend against the threat of 22 f5 - ?

Answer:

21 ... Rxd3!

“For the sacrificed exchange he gets a pawn and retains the bishop pair, while at the same time one of White’s most dangerous attacking pieces is annihilated.” – Euwe.

Lasker pointed out that this sacrifice was not valid as a winning try but was appropriate, given the tournament situation described above.

22 Rxd3 Be4 23 Rd2

White must forget about attacking. After 23 Rg3 Qxc4, he cannot play 24 Bxg7? in view of 24 ... Bf5! 25 Qh5 Bxg7, followed by ... Bg6, which wins for Black.

23 ... Qxc4

“With the fall of the c-pawn, Black has the d5-square again available for his pieces.” – Euwe.

24 Rfd1 Bd5 25 h3 f5 26 Qg6 Qxf4

Not 26 ... Qxa2?? 27 Rxd5! exd5 28 Qe6+, winning.

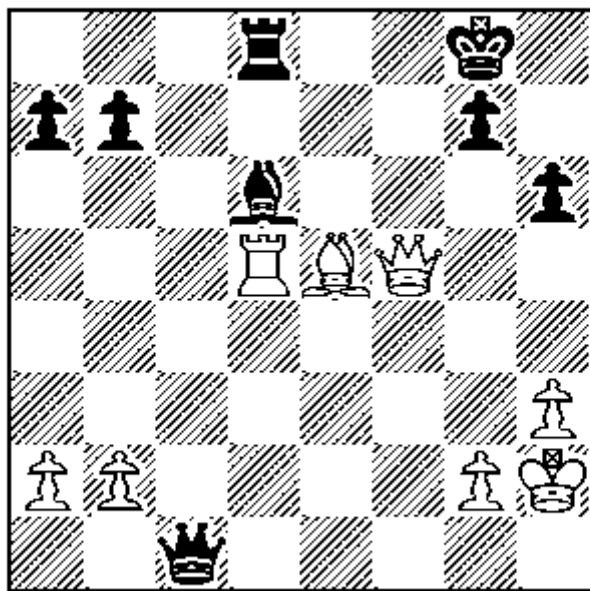
27 Rxd5!

Preventing the threat of 27 ... Rxc3! 28 bxc3? Bc5+ 29 Kh1 Bd6 and wins. “The bishop is too powerful, and White is glad enough to give back the exchange.” – Euwe.

27 ... Qe3+!

Black must control the e6-square.

28 Kh1 exd5 29 Qxf5 Rd8 30 Rxd5 Qc1+ 31 Kh2 Bd6+ 32 Be5



32 ... Bc7!

“The last defensive move in this game. Black’s troubles are now over.” – Euwe

33 Rxd8+ Bxd8 34 Qd7 Qg5 35 Bg3

Not 35 Bxg7?? Qf4+! 36 g3 Qf2+ 37 Kh1 Bb6 and Black wins.

35 ... Qe7 36 Qxe7 Bxe7 37 Be5 Kf7 38 Kg3 g6 39 Kf4 Ke6 40 Ke4 h5 41 b3 ½-½

An “instructive and thrilling” game

Hans Kmoch wrote that, even in the 1930s, playing for a win with the black pieces wasn’t

easy for a master. Some players, such as Spielmann, sought to complicate the game at all costs, avoiding exchanges, which could sometimes be risky.

Rubinstein's approach was the opposite; he would not shy away from exchanges if he thought the position demanded it, but not at all with any intention of submissively accepting a draw. In simplified positions he was capable of gradually taking over the initiative and even converting it into a clear advantage, as we have seen several times already. The game that we shall see now is another example.

It's true that Rubinstein wins largely due to his opponent's errors, but it is impossible to win without errors in any case, and Rubinstein's credit lies in inducing them. "Ample opportunity must be afforded for their occurrence! From this angle the following game is instructive and thrilling," concluded Kmochno.

Game 27

H. Matison - A. Rubinstein

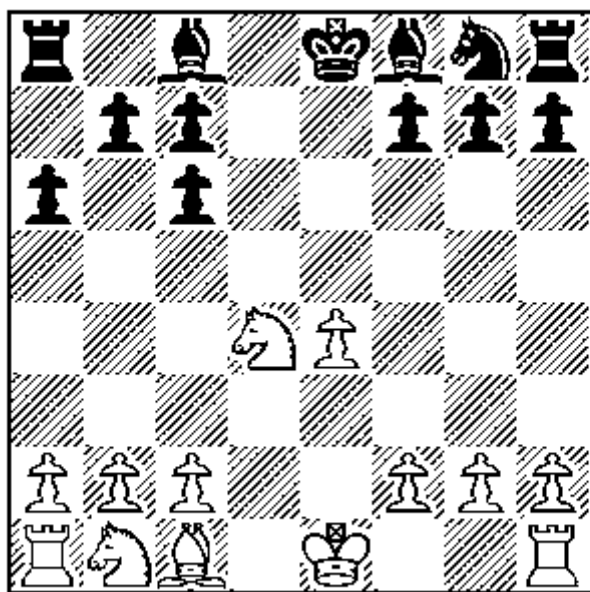
Carlsbad 1929

Ruy Lopez [C68]

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Bxc6 dxc6 5 d4

Several decades later Robert Fischer revitalized this old variation with 5 0-0, avoiding the early exchange of queens.

5 ... exd4 6 Qxd4 Qxd4 7 Nxd4



7 ... Bd6

This was also Capablanca's choice in his famous game against Lasker at St Petersburg 1914. The most common continuation is 7 ... Bd7, followed by 8 ... 0-0-0.

8 Be3

This was criticized by Rubinstein. Lasker opted for 8 Nc3; his motto of "knights before bishops" looks appropriate in this case, the reason being that, more often than not, the best square for the knight is clear, while the bishop generally has more options.

We shall see 8 f4 in Supplementary Game 27.1.

8 ... c5 9 Ne2 f6 10 Bf4

To deprive Black of the bishop pair, although moving this piece twice rather justifies Rubinstein's criticism of 8 Be3.

10 ... Be6 11 Bxd6

Question: Is this move a good one? It undoubles the pawns ...

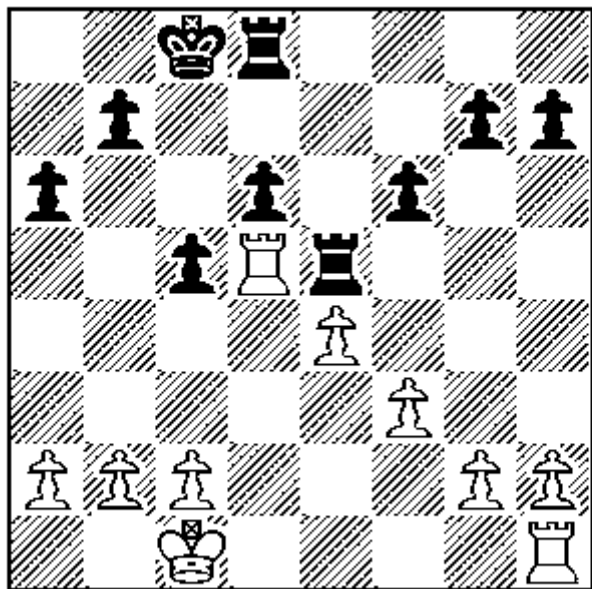
Answer: The position is equal and this exchange, with the intention of playing Nf4 next, does not change that evaluation. It is true that it undoubles the pawns, but in return it gives Black a backward pawn.

11 ... cxd6 12 Nf4 Bf7 13 Nc3 Ne7 14 0-0-0 0-0-0 15 Ncd5 Rhe8 16 f3 Nxd5 17 Nxd5 Bxd5

Question: Each exchange appears to be a step towards a draw. Why did Rubinstein play this?

Answer: The position offers nothing better; there is no "magic move" available. If White makes no mistakes, the game will be a draw. Rubinstein's task is to keep setting White problems, however small, to induce errors, while always making sound moves without weakening his own position.

18 Rxd5 Re5



19 Rhd1

If White was only concerned to make a draw, as his previous moves would lead one to believe, then this was his first mistake. The easiest way was to play 19 Rxe5 dxe5 20 Rd1.

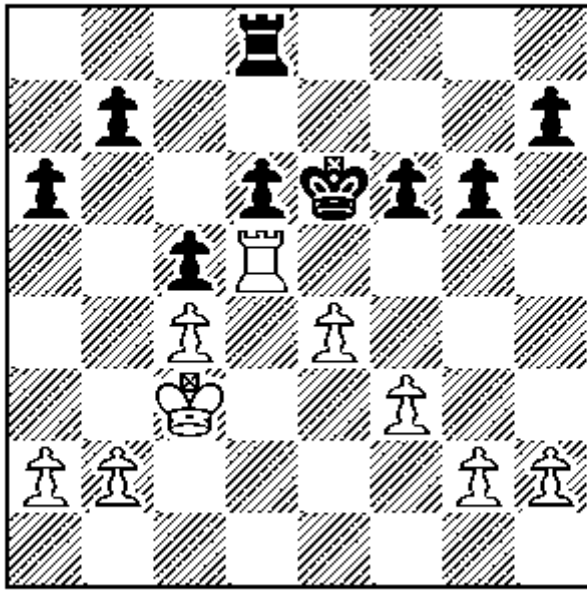
19 ... Rxd5 20 Rxd5

Question: If exchanging on e5 was an easy way to equalize, this doesn't seem to be any worse, does it? I fail to see how Black's position has been improved; he still has a backward pawn on d6.

Answer: Black still does not have much to work with, but let's hand over to Rubinstein:

“The white rook is not well placed on d5 and this circumstance is the only and hidden advantage for the black side.”

20 ... Kd7 21 c4 g6 22 Kc2 Ke6 23 Kc3



Exercise: We have discussed how Rubinstein had to accept exchanges, while waiting for opportunities to make progress, however small. What do you think he played here?

Answer:

23 ... f5!

“With this Black obtains an important open file, to the benefit of his rook, which has greater mobility.” – Rubinstein.

24 exf5+

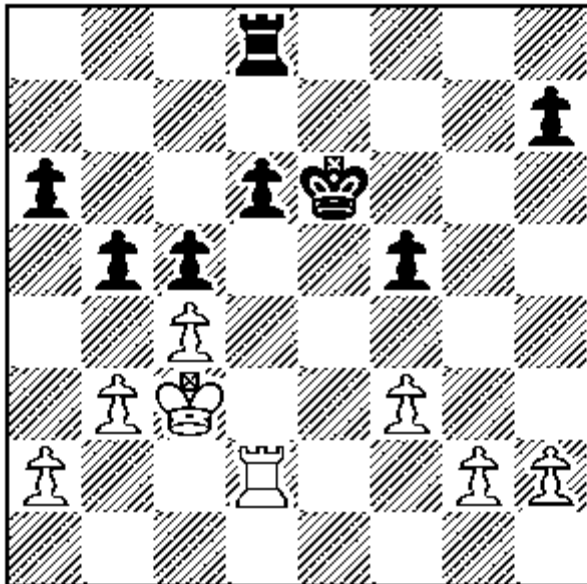
White was faced with the choice between opening the g-file like this and playing 24 Kd3 fxe4+ 25 Kxe4, when Black would try to achieve the pawn break ... b7-b5. Both continuations keep the game well within the margins of a draw.

24 ... gxf5 25 Rd2

White has many options; the “problem” is that none of them appear particularly problematic and this can lead him to remaining passive.

Here 25 g4 was a healthy move, seeking to exchange pawns, when 25 ... fxg4?! 26 fxg4 Rf8 would bring the draw closer after 27 Rh5!, so Rubinstein would probably have maintained the tension with 25 ... Rf8, while 26 Rxf5? Rxf5 27 gxf5 would lead to a losing pawn endgame for White after 27 ... Kxf5 28 Kd3 Kf4 29 Ke2 d5! 30 cxd5 Ke5.

25 ... b5 26 b3



There is nothing here that will give Black a clear advantage, so he simply keeps on making good moves, while preventing further simplification.

Exercise: What do you think Rubinstein played in this position?

Answer:

26 ... h5!

“The gain of space is of fundamental importance in this type of endgame, and thus this objective is being accomplished little by little.” – Rubinstein.

27 g3 f4!

Seeking to weaken the white pawn structure and/or open more lines.

28 Re2+

Maintaining the balance; whereas 28 g4?! hxc4 29 fxc4 would allow the black rook to become active after 29 ... Rh8! 30 Kd3 Rh4 31 Rg2 and now his king can be improved as well with 31 ... Ke5 32 Re2+ Kf6, followed by ... Kg5, and the white position is deteriorating, as indicated by Rubinstein.

28 ... Kf5 29 Re4 fxc3 30 hxc3 Rg8 31 Rf4+

In the event of 31 g4+ hxc4 32 Rxc4, Black must avoid 32 ... Rxc4?? 33 fxc4+ Kxc4 because White even wins after 34 cxb5 axb5 35 a4. Interpolating 32 ... b4+ 33 Kd3 does not help, since 33 ... Rxc4 34 fxc4+ Kxc4?? 35 Ke4! still loses for Black, though either 34 ... Kf4 or the more complex 34 ... Ke5 would still draw.

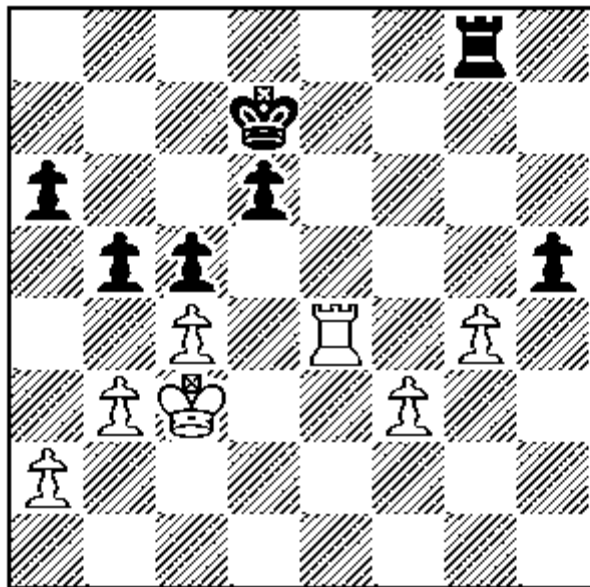
Instead, Rubinstein would have played 32 ... Rh8!, keeping a slight advantage. The text move is perhaps objectively better, but on every turn White faces more problems.

31 ... Ke6 32 Re4+?!

The white position is gradually worsening with every move. “It was necessary to try some more positive action, such as 32 g4 h4,” commented Rubinstein, although the problems would not end there; for instance, after 33 g5, Black could play 33 ... b4+, forcing the king to make a choice: 34 Kd3 allows 34 ... h3 35 Rh4 Rxc5 36 Rxh3 Rg2, while 34 Kc2 h3 35 Rh4 Rxc5 36 Rxh3 Rg2+ 37 Kb1 Rf2 condemns White to an uncomfortable defence, where the

difference in activity between the two monarchs could prove decisive.

32 ... Kd7 33 g4



Exercise: The moment has arrived when Black needs to take more concrete measures. What do you think Rubinstein played here?

Answer:

33 ... Rf8!

“The right move. If White continues with 34 gxh5 the reply would be 34 ... Rxf3+ 35 Kc2 Rh3, winning a pawn”, according to Rubinstein.

Here 33 ... h4 would be less favourable, because with the black king on d7, after 34 g5 b4+ 35 Kc2 h3 36 Rh4 Rxc5 37 Rxc5 Rg2+ 38 Kb1 Rf2, White has 39 Rh7+ Kc6 (or 39 ... Ke6 40 Ra7) 40 Ra7 Kb6 41 Rd7 with a draw.

34 Re3 h4!

The passed pawn and the remote position of the white king now add up to a considerable advantage to Black.

35 a4

It is no longer possible to resist with 35 g5, as Black now has several advantageous continuations, the clearest being 35 ... Re8! 36 Rd3 b4+ 37 Kc2 (or 37 Kd2 h3 38 f4 Rh8!) 37 ... Re2+ 38 Kd1 Rxa2 39 f4 Rf2 40 g6 Ke6 with a decisive advantage.

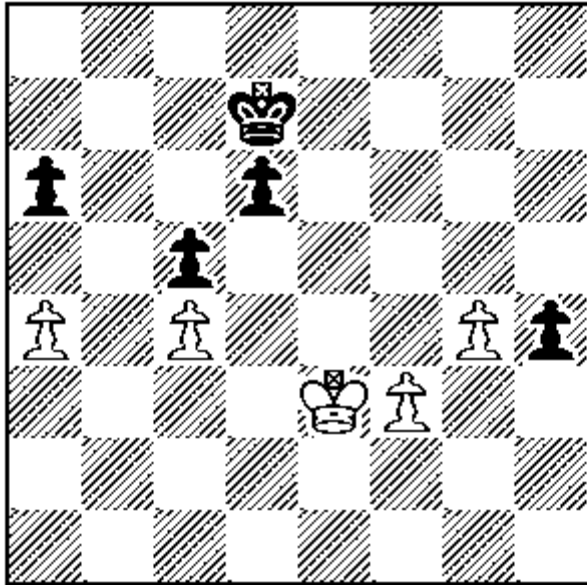
35 ... bxa4 36 bxa4 Re8!

36 ... Rf4 was another good possibility.

37 Kd2

There is no salvation with 37 Rd3 h3 38 f4, owing to 38 ... h2 39 Rd1 (or 39 Rh3 Re3+!) 39 ... Re3+ 40 Kd2 Re4 41 Rh1 Rxf4 42 Kd3 (or 42 Rxh2 Rxc4) 42 ... Rf3+ 43 Kd2 Ra3 and Black wins easily.

37 ... Rxe3 38 Kxe3



Exercise: Black has several ways to win. What do you think Rubinstein played?

Answer:

38 ... d5! 0-1

He opted to create two widely separated passed pawns. After 39 cxd5 (or 39 g5 dxc4) 39 ... h3 40 Kf2 h2 41 Kg2 c4 42 g5 c3 43 g6 c2 44 g7, Black wins with 44 ... c1Q (or 44 ... h1Q+) 45 g8Q Qg1+ and mates.

Question: An easy triumph against a weak opponent?

Answer: Not at all; the Latvian master Hermanis Matisons (1894-1932) was an active player for only seven years (1924-31) and fewer than a hundred of his games have been preserved, but as well as being a great composer of endgame studies, he was a strong player who died prematurely. Among others, he beat Alekhine, Grünfeld, Maróczy, Tartakower, Vidmar, and Yates – and Rubinstein as well in the other two games they played.

Supplementary Game 27.1

S.Factor-A.Rubinstein

Lodz 1916

Ruy Lopez [C68]

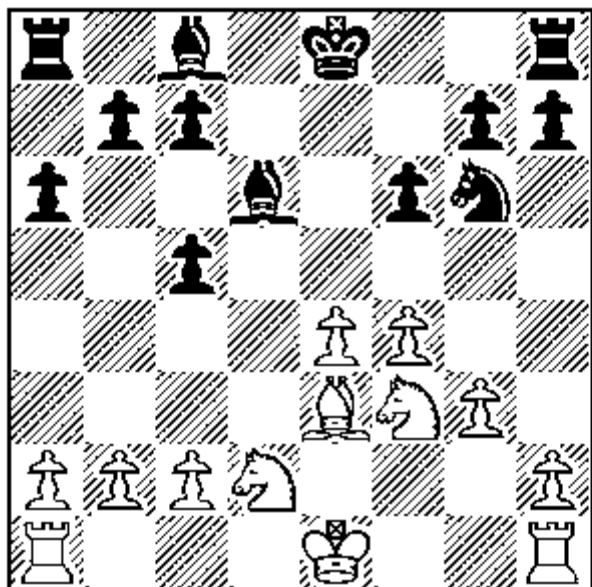
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Bxc6 dxc6 5 d4 exd4 6 Qxd4 Qxd4 7 Nxd4 Bd6 8 f4

Question: This move looks good, immediately mobilizing White's central pawn majority. Am I right?

Answer: Generally speaking, great care is needed in advancing pawns; although controlling central squares can be beneficial more often than not, in this case there might be a

problem if the pawns become pinned down and the e4-pawn turns into a weakness.

8 ... f6 9 Be3 Ne7 10 Nd2 Ng6 11 g3 c5 12 N4f3



Black has no problems; and he has a free hand regarding the development of his queen's bishop and the future residence of his king.

Exercise: What do you think Rubinstein played here?

Answer:

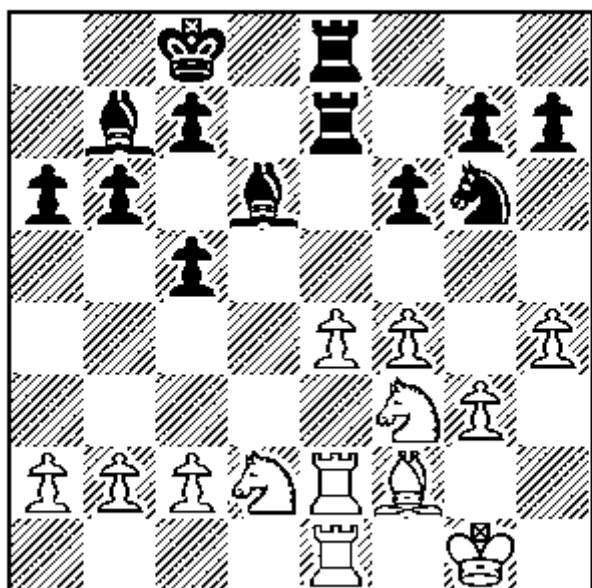
12 ... b6

Intending to target the e4-pawn with his light-squared bishop.

13 0-0 Bb7 14 Rfe1 0-0-0 15 Bf2 Rhe8

The e4-pawn is immobilized for now. Over the following moves, White tries to prepare its advance and Black prevents this.

16 Re2 Rd7 17 Rae1 Rde7 18 h4?!



Black stands well, with all his pieces well placed and both his bishops active. The

position appears to confirm Hans Kmoch's contention that the Exchange Variation wasn't the best choice against Rubinstein, since "Rubinstein, in addition to being an excellent player, is also an outstanding artist in the handling of the two bishops."

Exercise: How did Rubinstein demonstrate that 18 h4 is too optimistic?

Answer:

18 ... h5!

Fixing the weakness created on g4, which looks like the ideal square for Black's knight.

Question: Despite Black having a good position, White does not stand badly either, does he?

Answer: No, not yet; but White's problem is that he cannot appreciably improve his position, whereas his opponent can.

Black's general plan will be to keep restraining the advance of the e4-pawn, while manoeuvring to improve his pieces, using g4 as a base, and then open the game at an opportune moment, possibly with the advance ... g7-g5. Nevertheless, this will all take time and will not be easy to achieve.

19 c4?!

Another questionable advance. It was better to mark time, keeping this square available in case an opportunity arose to play Nc4. Black would not allow it, but its very possibility would restrict his options to some degree.

19 ... a5 20 a4 Kd7 21 Kf1 Bc6 22 b3

It's important to note that this pawn structure means that many endings will be unfavourable to White, if Black retains his light-squared bishop, because b3 is now too weak.

22 ... Kc8 23 Re3 Bd7

Question: The bishop releases its pressure on e4, thus liberating the d2-knight. What's happening?

Answer: On its own, the pressure on e4 offers Black no prospects of making progress. We are entering a manoeuvring phase, in which White cannot do much, despite being able to move his knight (as you've rightly pointed out), and must confine himself to waiting, while Black seeks to improve the position of his pieces, in line with the plan outlined above.

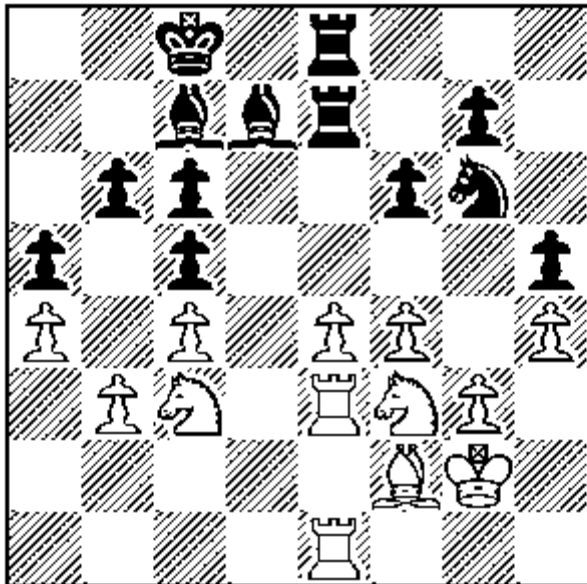
24 Kg2 c6

This will soon be necessary to prevent the white knight from settling on d5.

25 Nb1 Bc7

Black has realized that, in order to make progress, he will have to allow the e4-e5 advance soon; by retreating his bishop he at least ensures that this will not come with tempo.

26 Nc3



Exercise: What step did Rubinstein take here to make progress?

Answer:

26 ... Nh8

“Reculer pour mieux sauter”; first he improves the position of the knight, which is heading for g4.

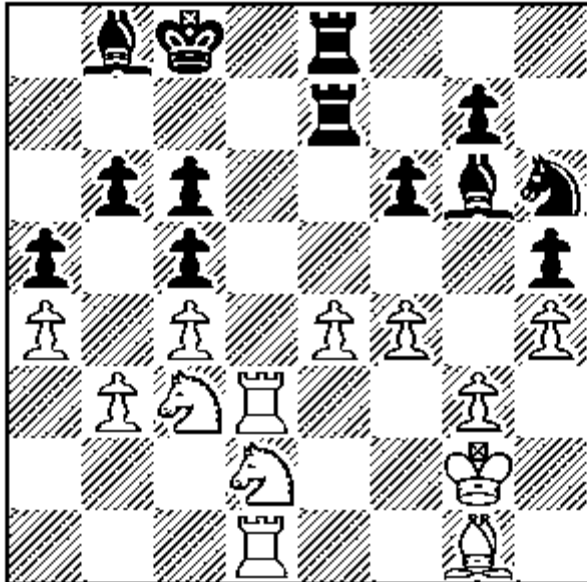
Question: But now White can finally play 27 e5; is this not good for him?

Answer: 27 e5 is not to be feared; for example, after 27 ... fxe5 28 Nxe5 Bxe5 29 fxe5 Nf7 30 Ne4 Bf5!, the weakness of the e5-pawn, added to that of the b3-pawn, would make White's defence difficult.

27 Rd3 Nf7 28 Red1 Bg4 29 R1d2 Nh6 30 Bg1 Bb8 31 Bf2 Be6!

The bishop clears the g4-square for the knight and heads for g6.

32 Rd1 Bf7 33 Bg1 Bg6 34 Nd2



34 ... Nf7

Question: Where is the knight going? Didn't we say it was needed at g4?

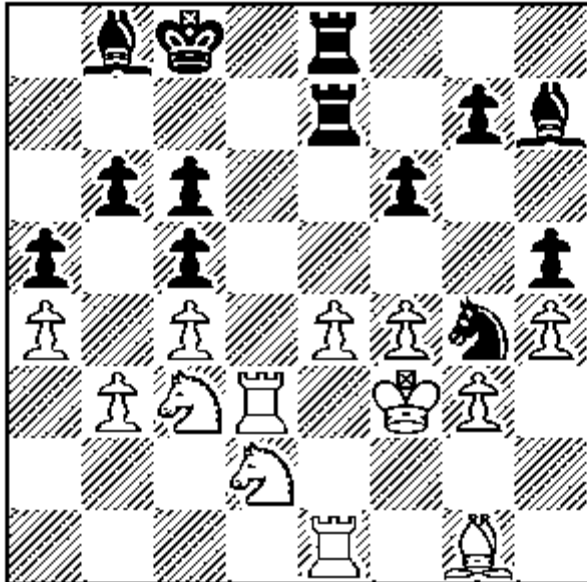
Answer: Alexander Kotov asked the very same question in his book *Play like a Grandmaster*, and he himself replied: "Yes, but this manoeuvring helps to mask his plans, so that the knight will reach g4 eventually with effect."

35 Re1 Bh7 36 Kf3 Nh6

Question: Why not ... g7-g5 at once?

Answer: Yes, this was a good move. Kotov's explanation is that: "Once again the motives are conspiratorial. Remember the classical phrase 'The threat is stronger than the execution'. The point is that carrying out the threat removes some of the tension that the opponent suffers from as we keep him in suspense. This uncertainty can often induce panic."

37 Bf2 Ng4 38 Bg1



Exercise: The moment has arrived to take concrete measures. How did Rubinstein proceed here?

Answer:

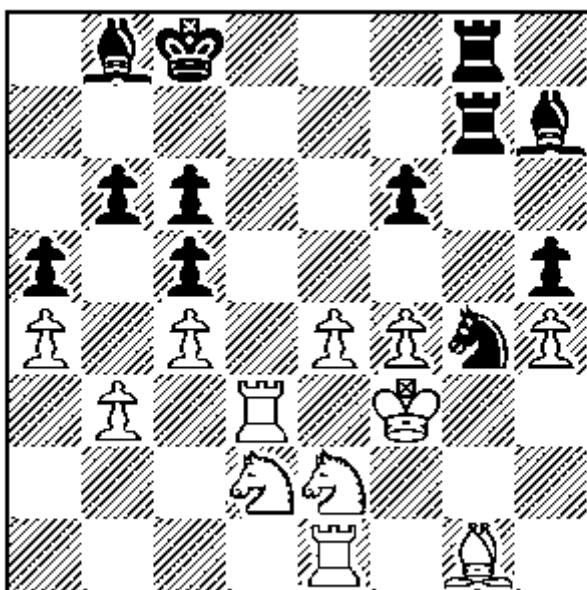
38 ... g5!

“After Black’s lengthy and slow preparation, the struggle now proceeds at an accelerated pace.” – Tartakower.

39 Re2 gxf4 40 gxf4 Rg8

Using the newly opened file.

41 Re1 Reg7 42 Ne2



Black’s progress is obvious; all his pieces are active, whereas White’s are passive and discoordinated.

Exercise: How did Rubinstein breach the enemy position?

Answer:

42 ... f5!

Opening the position further, which favours Black's active pieces, especially his pair of bishops, and exposes the white king to attack. The important tactical justification of Black's play is that 43 e5 would be met by 43 ... Bxe5!, intending 44 fxe5 Nxe5+ 45 Ke3 f4+ 46 Nxf4 Rg3+ and wins.

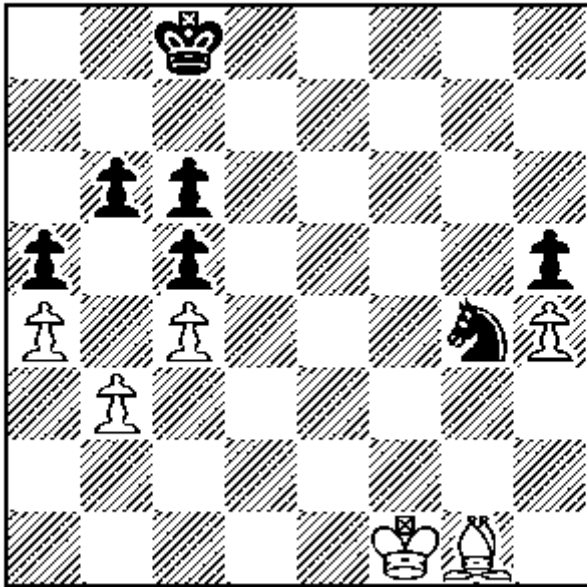
43 exf5 Bxf5 44 Ne4

44 Rc3 is no better; Black wins after 44 ... Re7 45 Rcc1 Rge8 (threatening ... Bd3) 46 Bf2 Rxe2! 47 Rxe2 Nh2+, followed by 48 ... Rxe2.

44 ... Bxe4+! 45 Kxe4 Re8+ 46 Kf3 Rf7

The white position is collapsing and Black has several ways to win, the quickest being 46 ... Bxf4! 47 Kxf4 Rf8+ 48 Kg3 (or 48 Ke4 Re7 mate) 48 ... Nf2+ etc. But as usual, Rubinstein is in no hurry.

47 Rdd1 Ref8 48 Rf1 Bxf4 49 Nxf4 Rxf4+ 50 Kg2 Rxf1 51 Rxf1 Rxf1 52 Kxf1



Black has liquidated to a minor piece endgame with an extra pawn, even if the fact that it is doubled reduces its value.

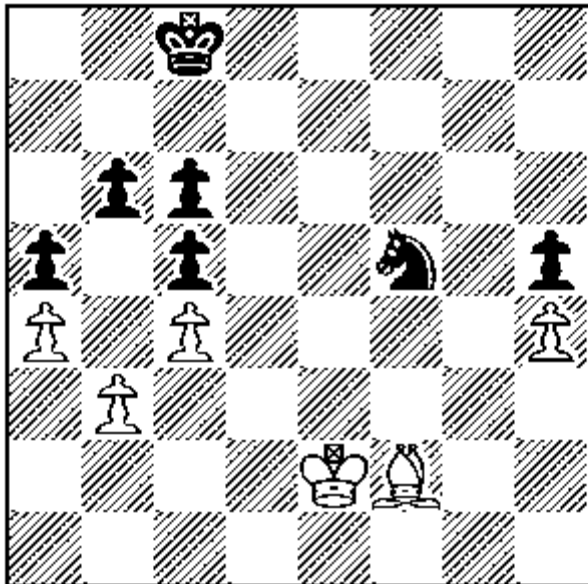
Exercise: Here Rubinstein chose the most accurate move; what is it?

Answer:

52 ... Nh6!

The knight heads for f5, from where it will attack h4 and can jump to d4. This is better than centralizing and activating the king here, since if the black monarch advances prematurely, the white bishop can attack b6.

53 Ke2 Nf5 54 Bf2



Exercise: Is now the right moment to centralize the king?

Answer:

54 ... Nd4+!

No; this check is the last important move. In contrast, 54 ... Kd7? fails to 55 Kd3 and 56 Ke4, when White can hold the position.

55 Kd3

After 55 Bxd4 cxd4 56 Kd3 c5, Black's protected passed pawn gives him an easy win.

55 ... Nxb3 56 Be3 Kd7 57 Kc3 Nd4

Black is forced to return one of the pawns, but the resulting pawn ending is a trivial win.

58 Bxd4 cxd4+ 59 Kxd4 Kd6 60 Kd3 Ke5 61 Kc3 c5 0-1

If 62 Kd3 then 62 ... Kf4 wins.

Chapter Five

Linking the Opening and the Middlegame

“An exemplary game”

From the opening, the game soon reaches a typical IQP position, which in turn is soon transformed into a structure sometimes known as “Hanging Pawns”, but which Nimzowitsch dubbed the “Isolated Pawn Couple”. And thus Rubinstein’s symphony begins: moves 14, 16, 19 etc, seem to come together to form one harmonious whole; the game is a model illustration of how to exploit the weaknesses of that particular pawn structure.

“This game made a deep impression on me; I played it over many times. The most astonishing is the economical manoeuvring by means of which Rubinstein executes his plan of blockading and expropriating the hanging pair.” – Gelfand.

Game 28

A.Rubinstein-G.Salwe

Lodz (triangular match) 1908

Tarrasch Defence [D33]

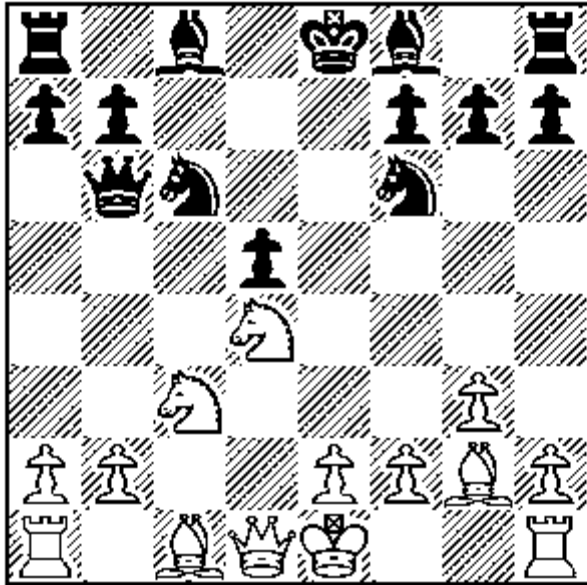
1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 c5 3 c4 e6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Nc3 Nf6 6 g3

It was in this game that Rubinstein introduced this idea, one his many inventions that has stood the test of time. The bishop creates ‘X-ray’ pressure on the isolated d5-pawn.

6 ... Nc6 7 Bg2 cxd4

At that time it was more common to play 7 ... Be6 or, especially, 7 ... Be7. With text move Black starts a manoeuvre which is intended to avoid being left with an isolated queen’s pawn, according to Rubinstein.

8 Nxd4 Qb6



Exercise: What to do about the attacked knight?

Answer:

9 Nxc6!

Best. Defending the knight by 9 Be3 allows 9 ... Bc5, not fearing 10 Na4 in view of 10 ... Qb4+ 11 Bd2 Qxd4 12 e3 Qe5 13 Nxc5 Qxb2; while 9 e3 is passive: Black can exchange on d4 any time he wants, though it is better develop first with, for example, 9 ... Bg4.

9 ... bxc6

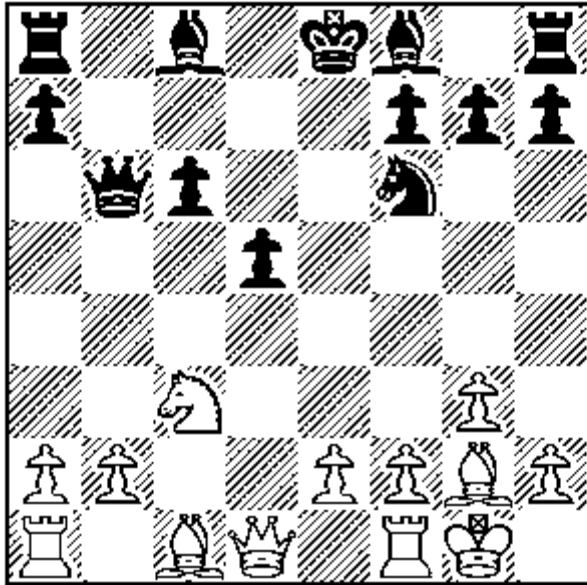
Rubinstein added to his previous remark: “There is no longer an isolated pawn, but instead there is a weakness in the form of the backward c-pawn.”

Question: With all due respect to Rubinstein, is Black’s pawn structure all that bad? Is Black really in trouble already?

Answer: No, Black does not stand badly. All that has happened is that the pawn structure has been changed. It is true that Black’s structure is theoretically weak (with three “pawn islands” vs. White’s two), but at the same time his influence in the centre has increased, his pieces have greater scope, he has two half-open files, etc. The struggle will be to see which side can exploit his trumps the more skilfully.

Regarding this game, Gelfand commented: “It is a well-known fact that positions with isolated pawns often lead to those with hanging or semi-hanging pawns. These positions are still considered unclear, but White’s play in the following game is still exemplary.”

10 0-0



10 ... Be7

After 10 ... Be6, as Tarrasch played against Rubinstein at San Sebastian 1912, the best response is Tarrasch's own recommendation of 11 e4, as played by Marshall against Forgacs in the seventh round of the same tournament.

With 10 ... Ba6?! Black can hinder the e2-e4 break, but the bishop is straying from the centre; A.Rubinstein-S.Freiman, Vilnius 1909, continued 11 Qa4 (threatening Nxd5; and 11 ... Be7 allows 12 Bxd5) 11 ... Bc4 12 b3! Bb5 13 Qf4 Be7 14 Be3 (Rubinstein gives his opponent no respite; he just keeps activating his pieces, while preventing the black king from fleeing to safety) 14 ... Qb7 15 Nxb5 Qxb5 16 Qc7! Ba3 17 Qe5+ Kf8 18 b4! (cutting off the bishop's retreat and threatening to win it with Bc5+ and Qc3 etc, so Black is almost forced to open lines, after which the situation of his king becomes more serious) 18 ... Qxb4 19 Rab1 Qd6 20 Qc3! 1-0. Resignation might seem premature, but Black's position is terrible; White is threatening Rb3, while after 20 ... a5 21 Rb6 Bb4 22 Qc2, he threatens to capture on c6 as well as to win the queen with 23 Rxb4 and 24 Bc5.

11 Na4

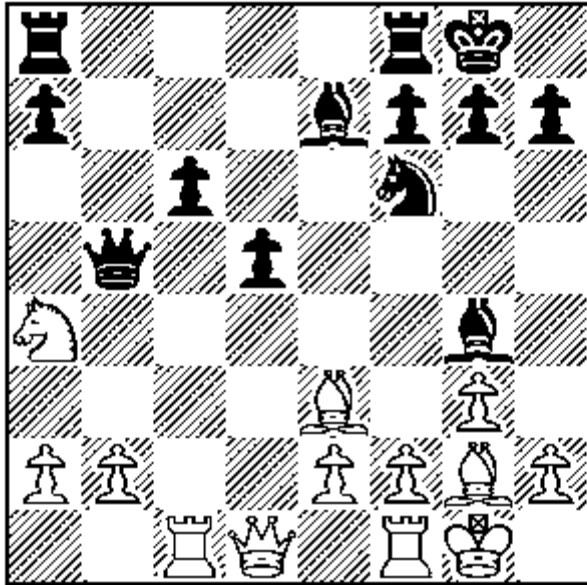
The following year, against the same opponent, Rubinstein opted for 11 e4, which is also appropriate. Regarding his choice in the present game, Rubinstein commented: "White's whole manoeuvre is devoted to blockading Black's d- and c-pawns."

11 ... Qb5 12 Be3 0-0 13 Rc1

White plays in tune with his idea. The black pawns are not yet blockaded, but their mobility has been impaired. The onus is on Black to seek a plan to improve his prospects.

13 ... Bg4?!

An attractive move, but dubious; Rubinstein will demonstrate that it was not the best.



Question: A dubious move? It looks quite nasty to me. At a glance, none of the ways to defend the e2-pawn look attractive.

Answer: It's true, that's the first impression one gains. But don't forget that one of the characteristics of Rubinstein's play was the harmony between his pieces, which he will now demonstrate. I invite you to discover Rubinstein's move, linked to a plan.

Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein responded to the attack on his e-pawn?

Answer:

14 f3!

Rubinstein seems to be damaging his own pawn structure, apparently contradicting Gelfand's statement that "He was very unwilling to spoil his pawn structure in the opening"; but soon we shall see that this move is in complete accord with another of Gelfand's comments about Rubinstein: "one can trace the deepest connection between the opening and the endgame", and in this case also with the middlegame.

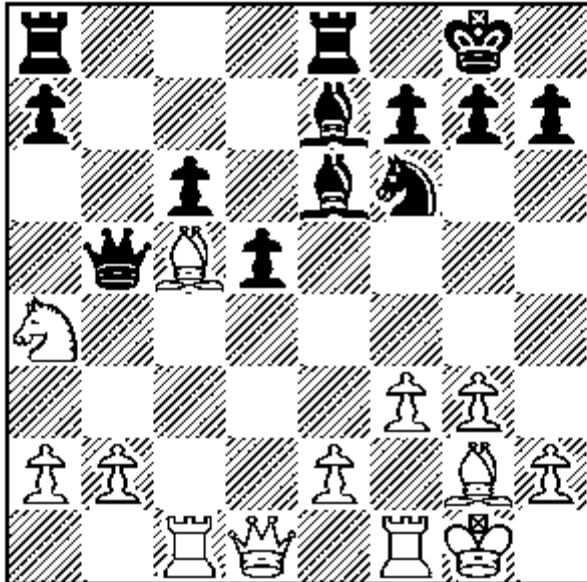
Jumping forward in time to the present day: the arrival of computers, or rather of very strong chess programs, has changed top-class chess considerably, making it more concrete. Peter Leko has said: "In modern times who cares if something looks ugly if it works! And in the past some ugly-looking moves were not even analysed."

Well, we can see that Rubinstein was perfectly capable of making "ugly" moves, if the position required ... and without any help from computers or chess programs.

14 ... Be6 15 Bc5

The blockading phase begins. In theory, the exchange of dark-squared bishops is something White welcomes, since it eliminates Black's "good" bishop. However, White's notionally "good" bishop is not very strong here; on g2 it is no longer attacking an isolated-pawn on d5 but instead confronts its own granite-like structure. As we shall see, Rubinstein is already planning how to deal with this problem ...

15 ... Rfe8



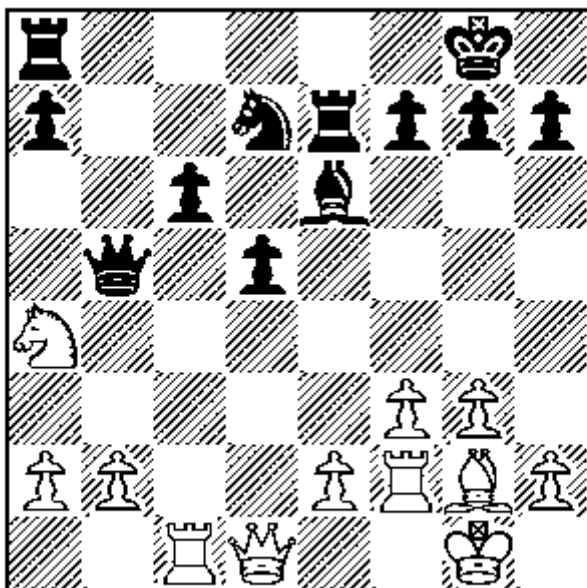
Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein continued?

Answer:

16 Rf2!!

Another strange-looking move, the purpose of which will become clear on later on, when harmony will reign once more in White's position. Of course, anyone can make this type of "strange" move, but not everyone can turn it into a good move, forming part of a preconceived plan; that's the beauty of it.

16 ... Nd7 17 Bxe7 Rxe7



Exercise: How can White pursue the idea initiated by 11 Na4 - ?

Answer:

18 Qd4

“The queen replaces the bishop in its blockading function,” commented Rubinstein.

18 ... Ree8

Question: Black might have tried 18 ... Rc8, seeking to play ... c6-c5. Was this better?

Answer: After 18 ... Rc8, given his style, it is unlikely that Rubinstein would have grabbed the a-pawn, in view of 19 Qxa7 Ree8 and ... c6-c5 is unstoppable because of the threat of ... Ra8. Most probably he would have opted for 19 Nc5!, maintaining the blockade.

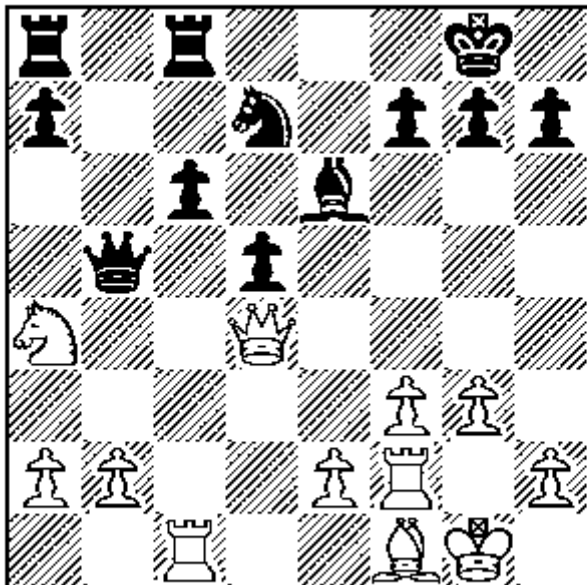
Exercise: How did Rubinstein continue to improve his position?

Answer:

19 Bf1!

The main drawback of playing 14 f3! becomes less relevant.

19 ... Rec8



Exercise: Black is now threatening to play 20 ... c5. How did Rubinstein complete the plan he began with 14 f3 - ?

Answer:

20 e3!

“Now the profundity of White’s 14th move is clear. Black is without counterplay, and all of White’s pieces are active and playing with wonderful coordination.” – Razuvaev.

20 ... Qb7

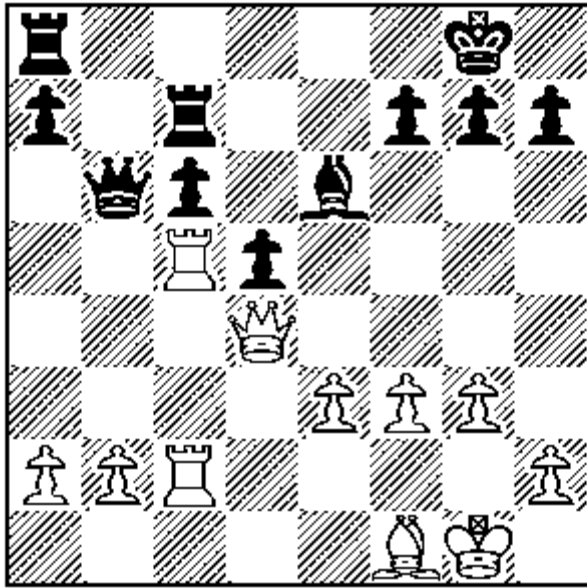
Of course 20 ... c5? was not playable, as White would just take it.

21 Nc5 Nxc5 22 Rxc5 Rc7

Here 22 ... a5 was worth considering.

23 Rfc2 Qb6?!

Now 23 ... a5 24 Qc3 would not have brought much relief. Black has two weaknesses, and White has the extra possibility of Bb5. But the text move fails to prevent White from making further progress.



Exercise: How did Rubinstein show that Black's move was inaccurate?

Answer:

24 b4!

The blockade of the black pawns is reaching a serious level.

24 ... a6 25 Ra5

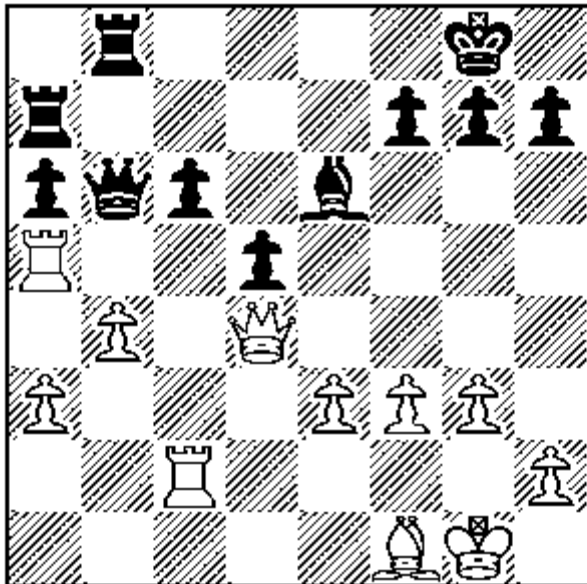
Question: The black queen is undefended; couldn't White exploit this with 25 Rxd5 - ?

Answer: Let's recall Razuvaev's comment: "Rubinstein could sometimes procrastinate, but hurry – never!" In fact the position would not be entirely clear after 25 ... cxd5! 26 Qxb6 Rxc2; for example, 27 Qb7 Rac8 28 Qxa6 d4 (or 28 ... h5) and although White is two pawns up, the black rooks are becoming dangerously active.

25 ... Rb8

After 25 ... Qxd4 26 exd4 Rb7 (not 26 ... Bc8? 27 Rxd5) 27 a3 Rb6, Black has everything defended but is completely paralysed. It is understandable that Salwe didn't want to play this way, though the text move fails to improve the situation.

26 a3 Ra7



Exercise (easy): How did Rubinstein “gather the first fruits”?

Answer:

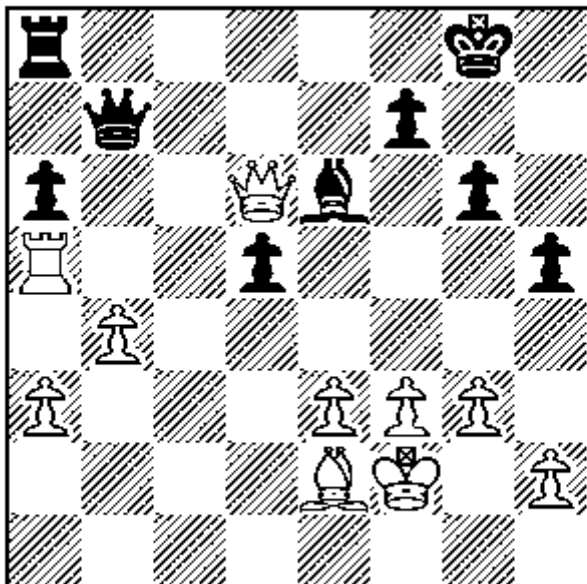
27 Rxc6!

This wins a pawn, but now without granting Black any counterplay.

27 ... Qxc6 28 Qxa7 Ra8 29 Qc5 Qb7 30 Kf2 h5

If 30 ... Rc8 (or on the next move), White can play 31 Bxa6!.

31 Be2 g6 32 Qd6



The a6-pawn is doomed. Curiously, Rubinstein abstains from capturing it, preferring to keep improving his pieces.

32 ... Qc8 33 Rc5

There was nothing wrong with 33 Rxa6, but Rubinstein prefers occupy the seventh rank; Black could resign here with a clear conscience.

33 ... Qb7 34 h4 a5 35 Rc7 Qb8 36 b5 a4 37 b6 Ra5 38 b7 1-0

“A Staggering Positional Move”

The variation of the English Opening played by Rubinstein in 1911 (!) became very popular in the 1970s. Its theory grew and grew and featured in the games of Botvinnik, Smyslov, Korchnoi, among others, and was even debated during the matches between Karpov and Kasparov.

Regarding the middlegame, Kasparov highlighted the fact that Rubinstein's games often feature moves which retreat a piece, even to the back rank, but which turn out to be extremely strong. That is the case with move 27 in this game.

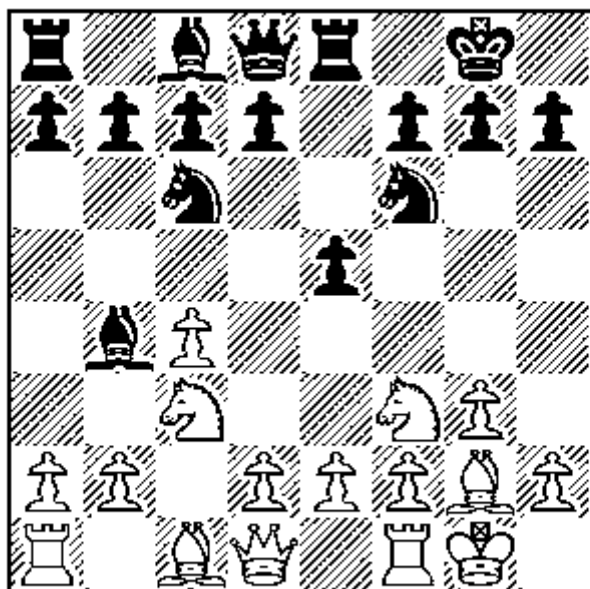
Game 29

A.Rubinstein-O.Duras

Carlsbad 1911

English Opening [A29]

1 c4 e5 2 Nc3 Nf6 3 g3 Bb4 4 Bg2 0-0 5 Nf3 Re8 6 0-0 Nc6



This move was criticized at the time, although the position has nowadays become standard (mostly arising from the Four Knights). Via the current move order 6 ... Nc6 is less common; the main moves are 6 ... e4 and 6 ... c6.

7 Nd5

Instead, 7 d3 is more popular, when one critical continuation is 7 ... Bxc3 8 bxc3 e4, as played, for example, in G.Kasparov-A.Karpov, World Championship (16th matchgame), Seville 1987.

7 ... Bf8

Question: Why did Kasparov not follow Rubinstein's example and play 7 Nd5 - ?

Answer: Kasparov said that he rejected it because of 7 ... Nxd5 8 cxd5 Nd4 9 Ne1 c6 10 e3 Nb5!, as in T.V.Petrosian-G.Kuzmin, Moscow 1974.

It's also possible to play 9 Nxd4 exd4 10 e3 (10 e4 c6 gives Black no problems), and now 10 ... Bc5 is best, keeping the bishop "alive". Instead, J.Timman-R.Hübner, Sarajevo (5th matchgame) 1991, saw 10 ... c5? 11 a3 Ba5 12 exd4 cxd4, when White ruined his opponent's coordination with 13 d6!; after some further inaccuracies by Black, White gained a decisive advantage.

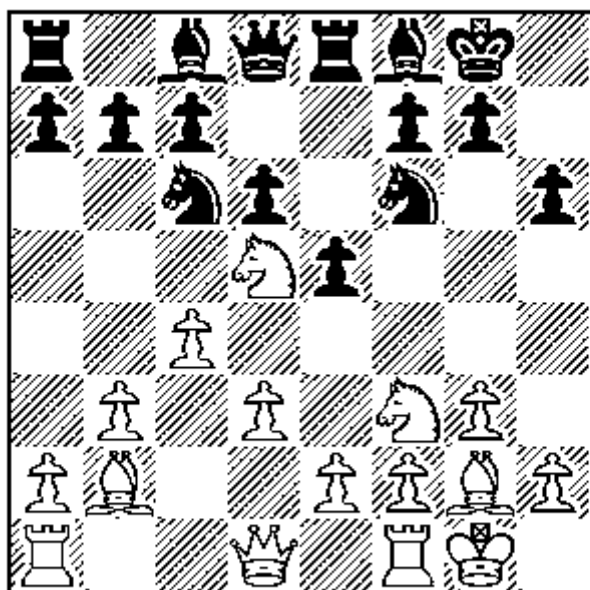
8 d3 h6

Preventing 9 Bg5.

9 b3

Another idea is 9 Nxf6+ Qxf6 10 Nd2 d6 11 Ne4 Qd8 12 Nc3, as in the model game T.V.Petrosian-F.Gheorghiu, Moscow 1967, when 12 ... Bd7 was answered by 13 b4!.

9 ... d6 10 Bb2



10 ... Nxd5?!

Criticized by both Kmoch and Razuvaev, who suggested reviving the f8-bishop with 10 ... g6.

Instead, it is amusing that one of the analysis engines suggests as its top option a move which would be almost unthinkable for a master: 10 ... Be7. Another engine prefers 10 ... a5, which looks more "human", controlling b4, and with the possibility of playing ... a5-a4 at an opportune moment.

11 cxd5 Ne7 12 e4 c5

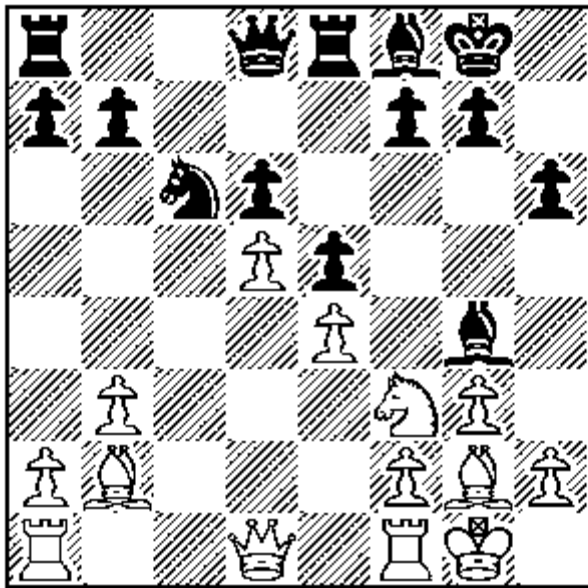
Question: Rather than this, is it not better to play the typical "King's Indian" pawn break on the other flank with 12 ... f5 - ?

Answer: 12 ... f5 is certainly playable; although after 13 Nd2, unlike in a "normal" King's Indian, Black's pieces are rather passively placed and he must be careful that the position doesn't open prematurely, when his lack of development would become important.

13 dxc6

Rubinstein is happy with the space advantage he gets in a soon-to-be King's Indian structure without a bishop on g7 as yet. Alternatively, Gelfand suggested 13 a4, followed by Nd2-c4.

13 ... Nxc6 14 d4 Bg4 15 d5



Exercise: Where should the knight go?

Answer:

15 ... Ne7?

This is possibly the only clear error that Black makes in the whole game. As often happens in the King's Indian, the knight is badly placed on e7, where it has no future.

Much better was 15 ... Nb8!, followed by ... Nd7, and Black has no grounds to complain about his position.

Besides which, as Gelfand writes: "A modern player would seriously consider 15 ... Nd4! 16 Bxd4 exd4 17 Qxd4 g6; Black has given up a pawn in return for dark-squared counterplay (potentially with opposite-coloured bishops) and will follow with moves such as ... Bg7, ... Rc8 and ... Qa5. I am sure that is enough. To me it looks pretty playable for Black."

Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein continued?

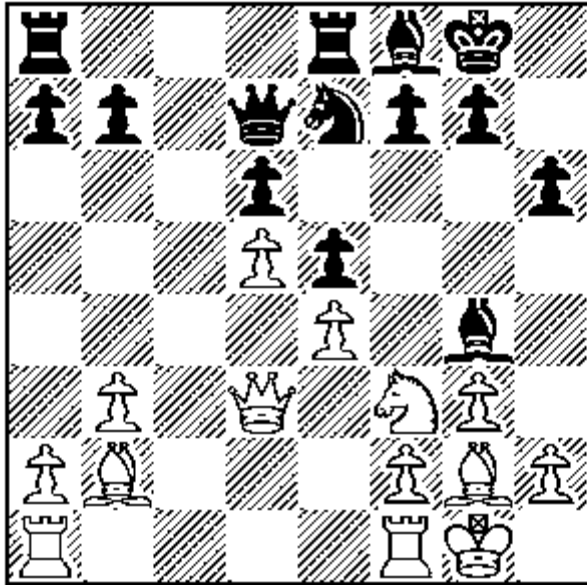
Answer:

16 Qd3!

The pawn structure is the same as if White had played c4-c5 and c5xd6. It is still not clear where most of his pieces should go. The only piece that can obviously be improved at the moment is the f3-knight, which has benefited most from the changes to the pawn structure; it can go to the queenside and has an ideal square on c4, from where it can put pressure on d6.

Now Gelfand suggests 16 ... Bd7!, followed by ... b7-b5; Duras played differently.

16 ... Qd7?!



Black is planning ... Bh3, to relieve his cramped position and exchange one of the white king's defenders.

Exercise: How should White respond?

Answer:

17 Nd2

White need not oppose the exchange. Although the bishop on g2 defends the kingside, its absence cannot be exploited by the passive black pieces.

17 ... Bh3

Exercise: How to continue?

Answer:

18 a4

Of course; White prevents ... b7-b5 in order to secure the c4-square for the knight.

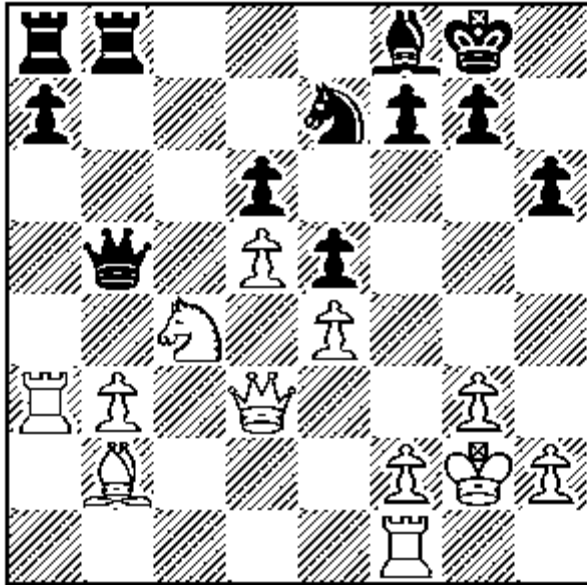
18 ... Bxg2 19 Kxg2 Reb8

The pawn break 19 ... f5 is inadvisable, since White can respond with 20 f4! and it will be Black's king that comes under pressure. So Duras seeks activity on the queenside instead.

20 Nc4 b5

This was the idea, but it is a questionable decision. Can exchanging these pawns really be in Black's favour?

21 axb5 Qxb5 22 Ra3



Question: You said that 20 ... b5 was questionable. Why?

Answer: With the opening of the b-file a weakness has appeared on b3 and the black rooks now have greater mobility. That's the positive side.

Yet the drawbacks could well be more important: a weakness on a7 has been exposed as well, and b3 can be defended more comfortably than a7, so the activity of the white pieces will not be restricted. Another factor to consider is that the c6-square is now a possible invasion point for White (the manoeuvre Na5-c6 comes especially into consideration), since the black knight surely cannot remain permanently on guard at e7.

That said, it is easier to criticize 20 ... b5 than to suggest a more attractive plan for Black.

22 ... Ng6 23 Rfa1 a6

Exercise: How did Rubinstein improve his position?

Answer:

24 Bc1!

First he improves the position of the bishop, which is inactive on b2; it is now heading for e3, from where it will add to the pressure on the queenside.

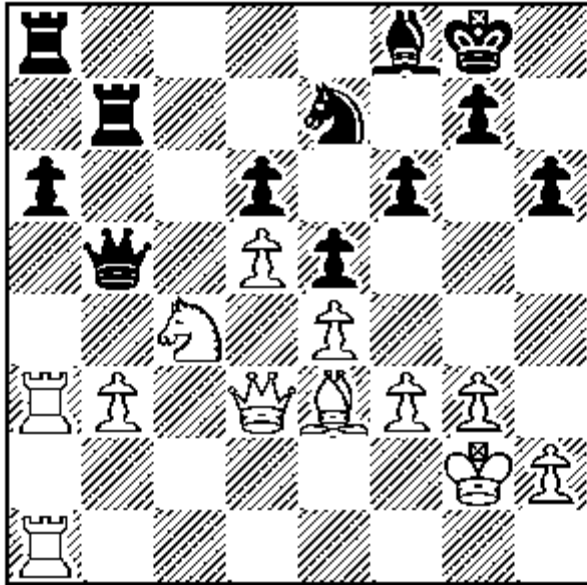
Here Razuvaev drew attention to something that should come as no surprise to us by now: "Rubinstein has a special ability to find the right square for each piece."

24 ... Rb7 25 Be3 f6 26 f3

Faithful to his style, Rubinstein is in no rush. Since Black cannot significantly improve his position, Rubinstein overprotects e4, even though ... f6-f5 will remain an impossible dream for Black.

26 ... Ne7

"We have arrived at the final impressive move." – Gelfand.



Exercise: How did Rubinstein make progress here?

Answer:

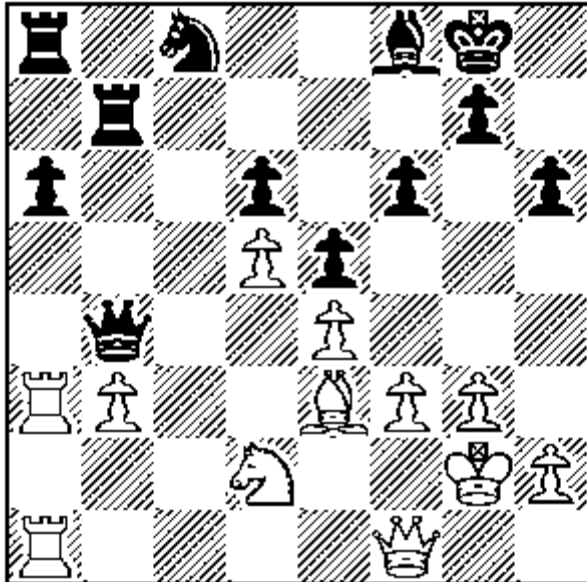
27 Qf1!

An original way to unpin the knight and therefore threaten 28 Nxd6. This retreat was highlighted and praised by Kasparov, who called it “a staggering positional move” and pointed out that this type of manoeuvre, along or on to the back rank, was frequent in Rubinstein’s practice. Kasparov mentioned 21 Nd1!! in Rubinstein’s game against Tarrasch at Hastings 1922; and one could also cite his 18 Qc1!! and 17 Qc1!!, which he used to defeat Lasker and Capablanca in turn (see Games 9, 23, and 3 respectively).

Question: I understand that it is a good move, because it has been highly praised, but what is so special about it?

Answer: Let’s hand over to Razuvaev: “The culmination of the preparation! White’s pieces are now ideally posted and it is time for decisive action. In such positions the road to victory lies in penetration into the opponent’s camp. Now Rubinstein finds a very deep and paradoxical solution. Black’s most active piece is the queen – therefore, it must be exchanged.”

27 ... Nc8 28 Nd2 Qb4



Exercise: Put yourself in Rubinstein's place. How do you think he proceeded?

Answer:

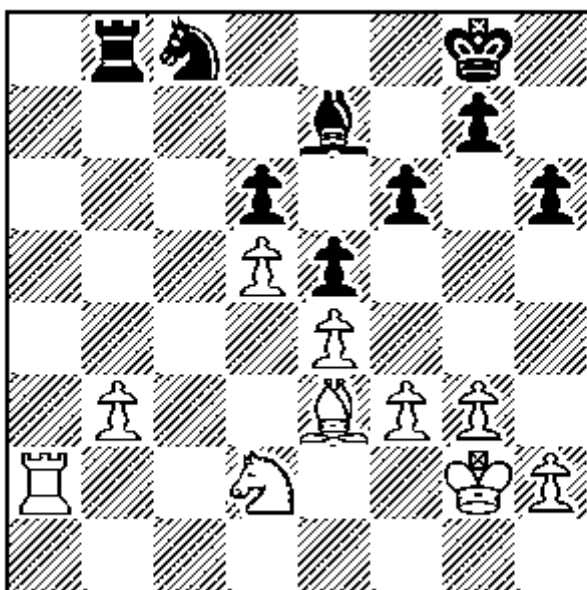
29 Qc4!

That's it; there's no hurry. 29 Rxa6! was also good, but the pawn will not escape. Rubinstein preferred to continue with the idea of 27 Qf1! and first exchange the queens, to prevent any complications.

29 ... Qxc4 30 Nxc4 Rab8 31 Nd2 Rc7 32 Rxa6

White is now a pawn up, so "the rest is matter of technique", something at which Rubinstein generally excelled.

32 ... Rc2 33 R6a2 Rxa2 34 Rxa2 Be7



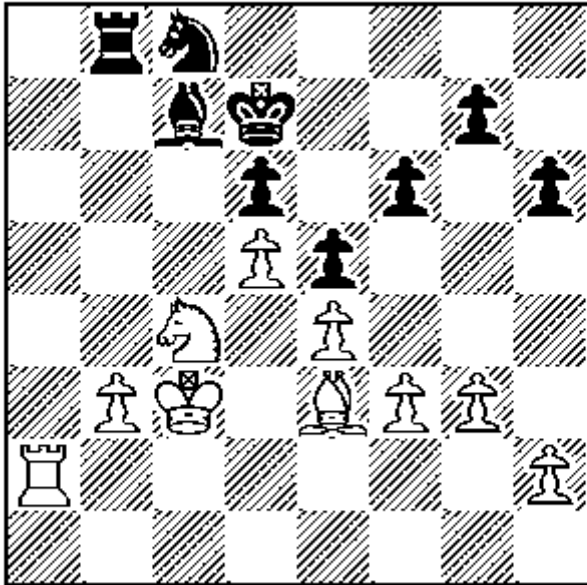
Exercise: What did Rubinstein's technique dictate here?

Answer:

35 Kf2

Of course; first of all the king is centralized and goes to support the advance of the passed pawn.

35 ... Kf7 36 Ke2 Ke8 37 Kd3 Kd7 38 Kc3 Bd8 39 Nc4 Bc7



Exercise: The b-pawn is now ready to move forward, but there is no risk in continuing to improve the position first. How did Rubinstein do this?

Answer:

40 g4!

First he arranges the kingside in ideal fashion, with all his pawns on light squares and all his opponent's fixed on dark squares.

"This is the final instructive moment of the game. White is completely winning. He has more space, better pieces and not least, an extra pawn. Still Rubinstein shows his excellent technical feeling by first improving the position on the kingside, even though it was probably already winning to simply push the b-pawn," says Gelfand, who adds that the "mantra" promoted by modern books on endgame technique, "Do not hurry", is attributed to Rubinstein.

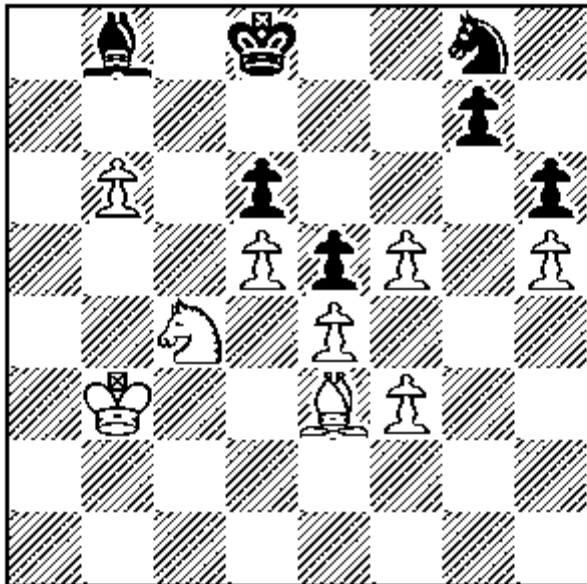
40 ... Bd8 41 Ra6 Bc7 42 h4 Bd8 43 h5 Bc7

Black can only wait helplessly for the b-pawn to advance, which will bring White the victory.

44 b4 Rb7 45 Ra8 Kd8 46 Kb3 Rb8 47 Rxb8 Bxb8 48 b5 Ne7 49 b6 f5

This attempt to capture the h5-pawn will end in failure, but the only alternative was to resign.

50 gxf5 Ng8



51 Bf2!

Rubinstein declines even to surrender his h-pawn; he can afford to postpone the decisive advance Ka4-b5.

51 ... Nf6 52 Bh4 1-0

“Going Against Established Dogmas”

The popularity of the Open Defence of the Ruy Lopez increased considerably from the 1950s onwards, following its adoption by Viktor Korchnoi, who even used it in his matches against Karpov for the world title in 1978 and 1981.

In Rubinstein’s time the main supporter of the Open Defence among grandmasters was Tarrasch, although the reputation of the defence was given a big boost by Schlechter, who drew four games with it as Black in his controversial match against Lasker in 1910. From the 1920s onwards the Open was an important part of the repertoire of the Dutch grandmaster and fifth World Champion, Max Euwe.

Rubinstein is generally associated with different forms of the Closed Defence, in which he made many important discoveries, but in the last few years before the First World War he played the Open a few times, most notably in an important loss against Lasker at St Petersburg 1914.

In the following quick win against a future World Champion, one of the most outstanding features is the decision on move 16, when “thanks to his chess genius, Rubinstein was capable of blazing completely new trails”, as Kasparov commented.

The idea is now commonplace but in those days “How hard it was to go against the established dogmas!” (Kasparov).

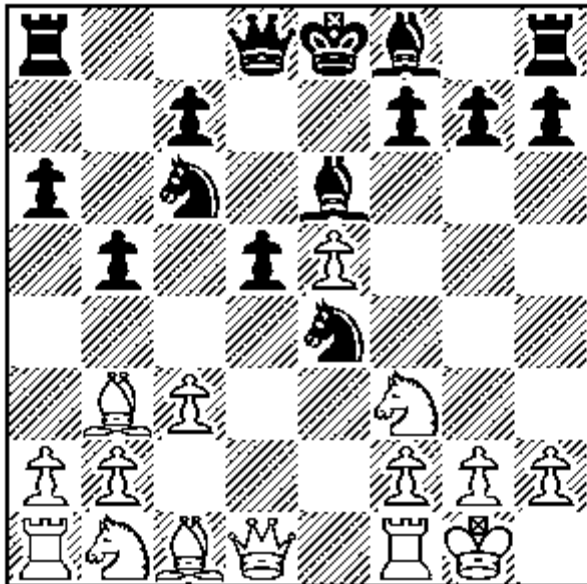
Game 30

A.Alekhine-A.Rubinstein

Russian Championship, Vilnius 1912

Ruy Lopez [C83]

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Nxe4 6 d4 b5 7 Bb3 d5 8 dxe5 Be6 9 c3



9 ... Be7

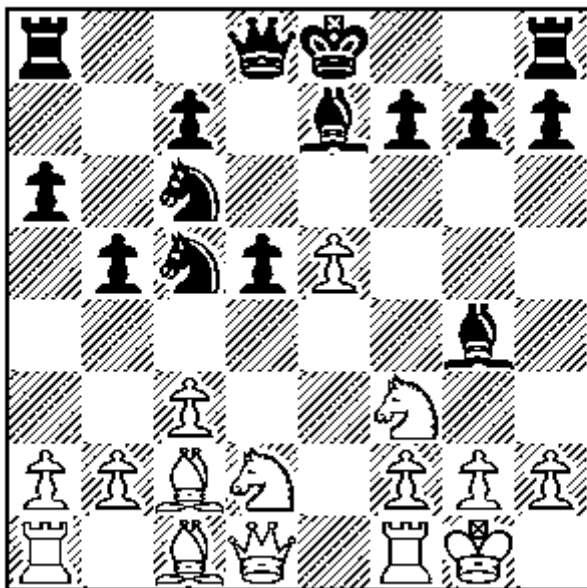
The main alternative is 9 ... Bc5, which was employed occasionally by Tarrasch. Many years later Bent Larsen used it to defeat Robert Fischer at Santa Monica 1966, but the player who really drove the theory of the line forward, towards the end of the twentieth century, was Viktor Korchnoi.

Kasparov commented that it was precisely to avoid the line 9 c3 Bc5 that many masters started to use the move order 9 Nbd2 Nc5 10 c3, although in this case, apart from 10 ... Be7 or 10 ... Bg4, Black can also try 10 ... d4!?

10 Nbd2 Nc5 11 Bc2 Bg4

Here 11 ... 0-0 and 11 ... d4 are the alternatives.

Nowadays this position more often arises via 9 Nbd2 Nc5 10 c3 Bg4 (or 10 ... Be7 first) 11 Bc2 Be7, as indicated above.



12 h3?!

The theory of this line was practically non-existent then, which explains this inaccuracy

from the young Alekhine (who was only twenty at the time).

Question: Why is this an inaccuracy? It looks normal to question the bishop as to its intentions, doesn't it?

Answer: In general, I agree that it's good to force the bishop to "make up its mind", but this is not the case here because there is no doubt where the bishop is headed; one of its aims is to go to g6, to neutralize the enemy light-squared bishop.

The immediate 12 Re1 is the main line, and after 12 ... Qd7, one plan starts with 13 Nb3, while another idea is 13 Nf1!? ("Bronstein's cunning manoeuvre" – Kasparov) 13 ... Bh5 (13 ... Rd8 is the main alternative) 14 Ng3 Bg6 and now White can try 15 h4!? 0-0 16 h5, "which demonstrates again that 12 h3 is unnecessary" (Kasparov).

12 ... Bh5 13 Qe1

Question: What a strange-looking move! I don't understand it.

Answer: 13 Re1 is better, I agree. Alekhine's method of unpinning is unnatural; White neglects his development and spoils his coordination etc. Then again, if it was played by Alekhine then it obviously had an idea behind it, and in fact it marks the beginning of an ambitious plan, albeit one which will be well countered by Rubinstein.

13 ... Ne6 14 Nh2?!

This was the idea; White wants to advance his f- and g-pawns.

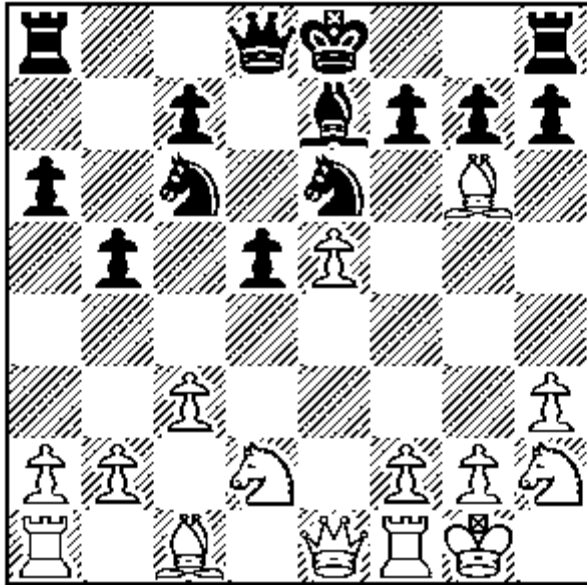
Exercise (easy): How did Rubinstein oppose this plan?

Answer:

14 ... Bg6

In the simplest way. He could also have played 14 ... 0-0 and answered 15 f4 with 15 ... f5, but then his position would become less flexible.

15 Bxg6



Exercise: With which pawn should Black take back?

Answer:

15 ... fxg6!!

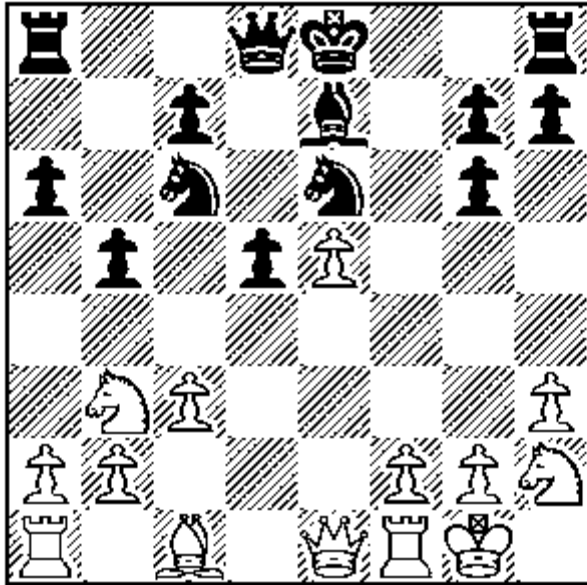
After this game, this type of capture, previously considered to be “anti-positional”, was no longer regarded as quite so outlandish. In the great majority of cases it is best to take towards the centre, but in this position the correct way is the one chosen by Rubinstein.

“A phenomenal move. (...) The game is important mainly because it clearly demonstrates that, thanks to his chess genius, Rubinstein was capable of blazing completely new trails.” – Kasparov.

Going back a little, let’s see a proof of his influence: Y.Grünfeld-M.Stean, European Team Championship, Skara 1980, went 14 Bf5 (instead of 14 Nh2) 14 ... Bg6 15 Bxg6 and now 15 ... fxg6! (just like Rubinstein!) 16 Nb3 0-0 17 Nfd4 Ncxd4 18 Nxd4 Qd7 19 Be3 c5 20 Nxe6 Qxe6 21 f4 g5! with good position for Black, who successfully exploited his queenside majority in a rook ending.

16 Nb3

In the event of 16 Ndf3, Black could make good use of the f-file with 16 ... 0-0 17 Be3 Rf5, followed by ... Qd7 and ... Raf8; while 16 f4 might be answered by 16 ... d4 with good play after 17 Qe4 Qd7, or else 16 ... 0-0 17 Nb3 d4, or even 17 ... a5, since 18 Be3 a4 19 Nd4 is met forcefully with 19 ... Ncxd4 20 cxd4 c5! 21 dxc5 d4.



Exercise: What move do you think Rubinstein chose now?

Answer:

16 ... g5!

Creating problems for White by hindering him from supporting the e5-pawn. Another idea was to play 16 ... 0-0 17 f4 a5, as in the previous note.

17 Be3 0-0

Maintaining the pressure on the e5-pawn; not yet 17 ... Nxe5?, in view of 18 Bd4!.

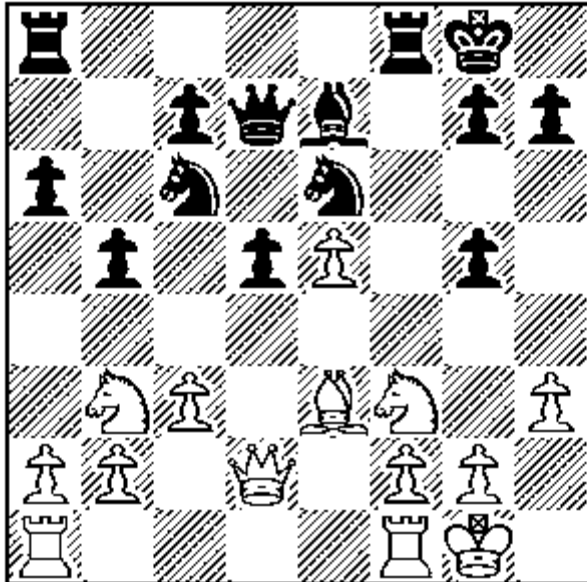
18 Nf3?

A mistake. After 18 Qe2 Nxe5 19 Bxg5 Nxg5 20 Qxe5 c6, followed by 21 ... Bd6, Black's position is somewhat more pleasant, but there is still no significant imbalance.

18 ... Qd7? 19 Qd2?

Question: Are you not going to explain why you've labelled these moves as mistakes?

Answer: Just wait a bit longer. Instead of the text move, it was better to play 19 Nbd4 or 19 Qe2 (suggested by Kasparov) and there is still nothing seriously wrong with White's position.



Exercise: How can Black demonstrate that Alekhine's move is bad?

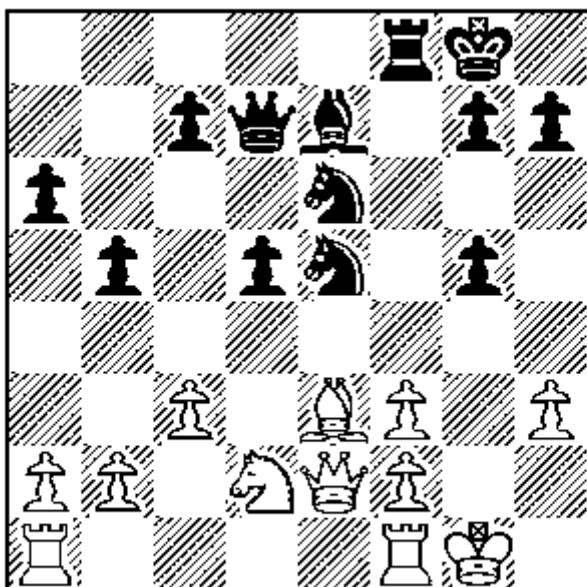
Answer:

19 ... Rxf3!

Precisely; the poorly protected white king will find no shelter from the coming storm.

So now we see why the previous moves were mistaken; after Alekhine's 18 Nf3?, it was already possible, and very advantageous, to make the same exchange sacrifice: 18 ... Rxf3! 19 gxf3 Nxe5 20 Qe2 Bd6 21 Nd4 Qd7 "with excellent compensation for the exchange. However, as Razuvaev & Murakhveri write, 'Rubinstein could sometimes procrastinate, but hurry - never!'" - Kasparov.

20 gxf3 Nxe5 21 Qe2 Rf8 22 Nd2



Exercise: There are several attractive moves here; what did Rubinstein choose?

Answer:

22 ... Ng6!

The clearest move once again; one of the knights will go to f4, helping to weave a mating net around the white king.

23 Rfe1 Bd6!

With the lethal threat of 24 ... Nef4. Note that the immediate 23 ... Nef4? 24 Bxf4 Nxf4? 25 Qxe7 Qxh3? would fail to 26 Qxg5.

24 f4

This is futile, but by now there is no defence.

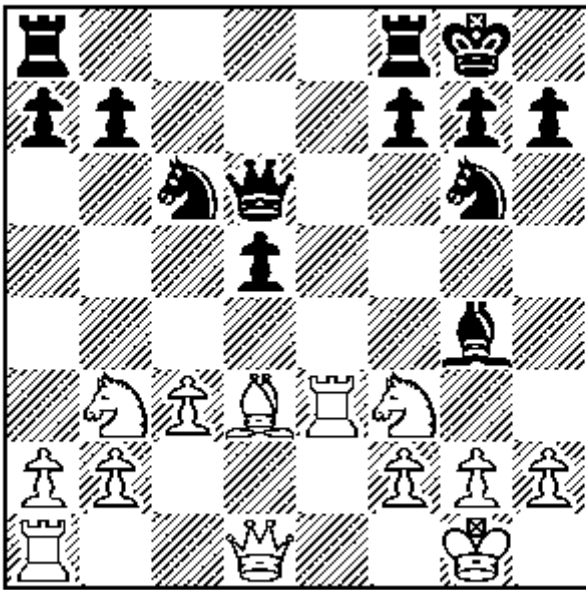
24 ... Nexf4 25 Qf1 Nxb3+ 26 Kh1 g4 27 Qe2 Qf5 0-1

With the plan of 28 ... Qh5, against which there is no good defence.

Let's now see briefly how good a pupil the fourth World Champion was:

R.Spielmann-A.Alekhine

New York 1927



White to play

In this position we can see that Black has an isolated queen's pawn and that the dark-squared bishops have already been exchanged, both factors in White's favour. White's advantage does not yet amount to much, but Black's task will be unpleasant in the long run, with each exchange of pieces.

14 Bxg6!

Kotov praised this exchange, considering it to be "very strong, and completely logical. White exchanges his bishop, which is not playing an important role in the blockade of the d5-pawn, for the black knight."

14 ... fxg6!

"This truly difficult decision [on account of the weakening of the e6-square and thereby

indirectly the entire e-file, which turns into a mighty base of operations for the white rooks] is justified because the apparently secure 14 ... hxc6 would have left absolutely no chance of even halfway promising counterplay for Black.” – Alekhine.

Kotov included this game in a discussion of the defensive instinct, in the chapter entitled “The Sense of Danger”, a concept which makes its appearance here. In the event of 14 ... hxc6 15 h3, White could have blockaded on d4 and/or attacked the d5-pawn without facing any great obstacles.

But not everything is negative for Black: “A small consolation remains for him in the open f-file” – Alekhine; and Kotov comments that blockading on d4 is now more difficult, since the f3-knight might be needed to shield the f2-pawn.

15 h3 Bf5

Avoiding further exchanges, so as not to end up in a purely passive position.

16 Nbd4 Rad8

Black needs to strengthen his centre, but he cannot retain his bishop with 16 ... Be4? owing to 17 Nxc6! Qxc6 (not 17 ... bxc6?? 18 Rxe4 and wins) 18 Nd4, followed by f2-f3, with advantage; while 17 ... Bxf3? 18 Ne7+ Qxe7 19 Rxe7 Bxd1 20 Rxd1 is even worse.

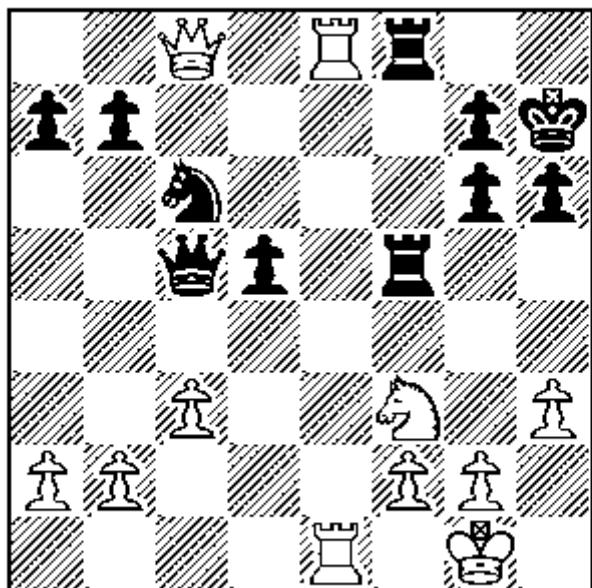
17 Nxf5 Rxf5 18 Qe2!

Spielmann occupies the e-file, noticing that the e6-, e7- and e8-squares are all weak.

18 ... Rdf8 19 Re1 Qc5

To be able to play ... h7-h6 and have the move ... Kh7 available; the immediate 19 ... h6? would run into 20 Re6.

20 Re8 h6 21 Qe6+ Kh7 22 Qc8!



White has made good use of the e-file and is now threatening 23 Qxb7. Not wanting to try and defend passively, Alekhine had prepared a pawn sacrifice to keep the position alive.

22 ... d4!? 23 cxd4 Qd6

Intending ... Nxd4, or if 24 Qxb7 then 24 ... Rxe8 25 Rxe8 Nxd4 with excellent counterplay.

24 Rxf8 Rxf8 25 Qe6

Similarly, 25 Qxb7 Nxd4 26 Nxd4 Qxd4 27 Rf1 Re8! gives Black full compensation for the pawn.

25 ... Qb4!

“Again the most promising” (Alekhine); this puts pressure on d4, b2 and even f3, due to the threat of 26 ... Rxf3 27 gxf3 Nxd4.

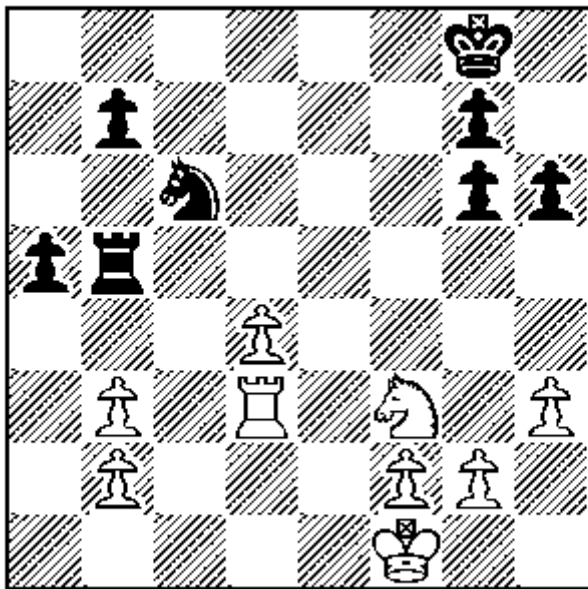
26 Qb3?!

Spielmann exchanges the queens and retains his extra pawn, but the damage to the white pawn structure and the activity of Black's pieces enables Alekhine to draw. Centralizing the queen with 26 Qe4! was better.

26 ... Qxb3 27 axb3 Rd8! 28 Re4 Rd5! 29 Kf1 Rb5 30 Re3 a5!

Preventing 31 Ke2 in view of 31 ... a4!.

31 Rd3 Kg8



The white rook went to d3 to try to support his passed pawn, but it allows the black king to come to the centre; now if 32 d5?, Black plays 32 ... Nb4.

White's advantage is minimal and the game was drawn in 41 moves.

“One should not block such a pawn, the pawn should be encircled”

Boris Gelfand believes that Bent Larsen drew this profound conclusion from the game we shall see now. It features another of the many ideas that Rubinstein conceived against the Tarrasch Defence to the Queen's Gambit.

In the competitive sense this game was one of the “consolation prizes” that Rubinstein received at the Carlsbad 1923 tournament, where he had one of the worst results of his career.

The positional struggle culminates in a mating attack, thanks to “a classical example of the fight between bishop and knight”, as Razuvaev described it.

Game 31

A.Rubinstein-S.Tarrasch

Carlsbad 1923

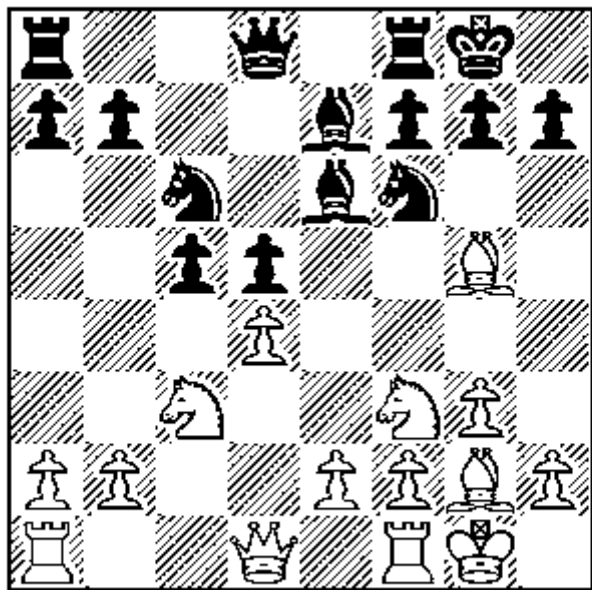
Tarrasch Defence [D34]

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 g3

The games between Rubinstein and the inventor of the Tarrasch Defence were very important in the development of the variation, regardless of Rubinstein's competitive success against it. What is of lasting value is that Rubinstein introduced ideas that retain their relevance today.

6 ... Nf6 7 Bg2 Be7 8 0-0 0-0 9 Bg5 Be6

The modern treatment is based on 9 ... cxd4 10 Nxd4 h6 11 Be3 Re8, developed by, among others, Kasparov, who played it with considerable success in the 1980s. 9 ... c4 is another popular idea.



10 dxc5

10 Rc1 was played in A.Rubinstein-G.Salwe, Lodz (triangular match) 1908, which continued 10 ... cxd4 11 Nxd4 Nxd4 (11 ... h6 is the most common move here) 12 Qxd4 Qd7?! 13 e4! dxe4 14 Qxd7 Bxd7 15 Nxe4 and White already had a clear advantage, based on his greater activity; to maintain material equality Salwe could find nothing better than 15 ... Bc6, allowing the deterioration of his pawn structure with 16 Nxf6+ gxf6 17 Bh6 Rfc8 18 Bxc6 Rxc6 19 Rxc6 bxc6, and after 20 Rc1, Rubinstein succeeded in winning the endgame.

Instead of 12 ... Qd7, Rubinstein himself opted for 12 ... Qa5 against Marshall in the same event and drew; while against Marshall again at Carlsbad 1911, he played 12 ... h6 (in reality this was 13 ... h6, because they used the move order mentioned in the next note) 13 Bxf6?! (giving up this bishop offers no advantage, so it was better retreat it) 13 ... Bxf6 14 Qd3 Qa5?! (14 ... d4! 15 Ne4 Be7, followed by ... Qb6, was satisfactory) 15 Nxd5 Bxb2 16 Rb1 Rad8 17 Rfd1 and the game ended abruptly when Rubinstein blundered a piece: 17 ... Qxa2?? (perhaps miscalculated when playing 14 ... Qa5) 18 Qd2! Bxd5 19 Bxd5 1-0.

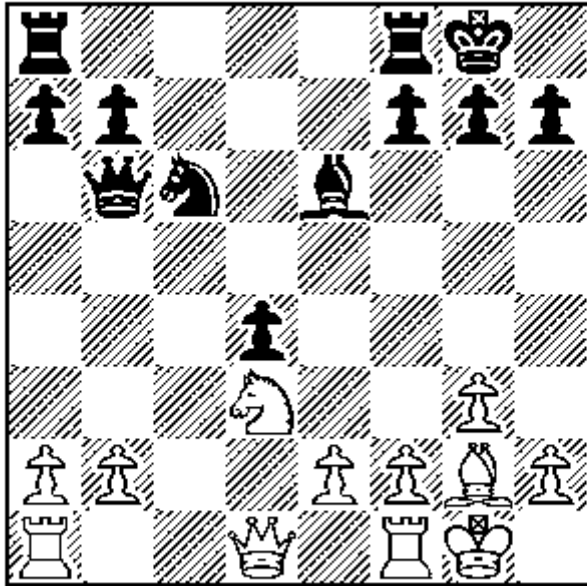
10 ... Bxc5 11 Ne1

A.Rubinstein-C.Schlechter, Prague 1908, saw 11 Bxf6 Qxf6 12 Nxd5 Qxb2 13 Nc7 Rad8 14 Qc1!, leading to an uncomfortable endgame for Black; though the game was quickly drawn after 14 ... Qxc1 15 Raxc1 Bb6 (other moves are 15 ... b6, as in T.V.Petrosian-B.Spasky, 16th matchgame, Moscow 1969; and 15 ... Be7 as in A.Yusupov-K.Spraggett, 3rd matchgame, Quebec 1989) 16 Nxe6 fxe6 17 Rfd1 Rxd1+ 18 Rxd1 Rd8 19 Rxd8+ Nxd8 ½-½.

Rubinstein did not select what came to be considered White's most precise plan: keeping the rooks on and playing Rc4, activating this rook along the fourth rank, putting pressure on e6 etc; this plan met with success in Yusupov-Spraggett.

Alternatively, 11 Rc1 Be7 12 Nd4 has been played in numerous games, transposing to the position arising from 10 Rc1 cxd4 11 Nxd4 above.

11 ... d4 12 Bxf6 Qxf6 13 Ne4 Qe7 14 Nxc5 Qxc5 15 Nd3 Qb6



Black has few grounds for complaint here: instead of a weak pawn on d5, he has a problem-free pawn on d4 (albeit blockaded); his pieces exert pressure on the queenside; he is ready to centralize his rooks, etc.

Exercise: How did Rubinstein try to create some discomfort in Black's apparently idyllic position?

Answer:
16 Nf4!

Question: What? Isn't this knight the best blockader of the d-pawn?

Answer: Yes, that's true, although the pawn cannot easily be advanced anyway. Let's see the reason for this surprising knight move, which offers a pawn sacrifice: in F.Dus Chotimirsky-P.Leonhardt, Carlsbad 1911, White played a "normal" move, 16 Qd2, but after 16 ... Rac8 17 Rfc1 Ne7 18 b3 Nd5, Black had no difficulties.

With text move Rubinstein is not really trying to gain a serious advantage in the immediate future; he merely wants to set Black new problems.

16 ... Qxb2?!

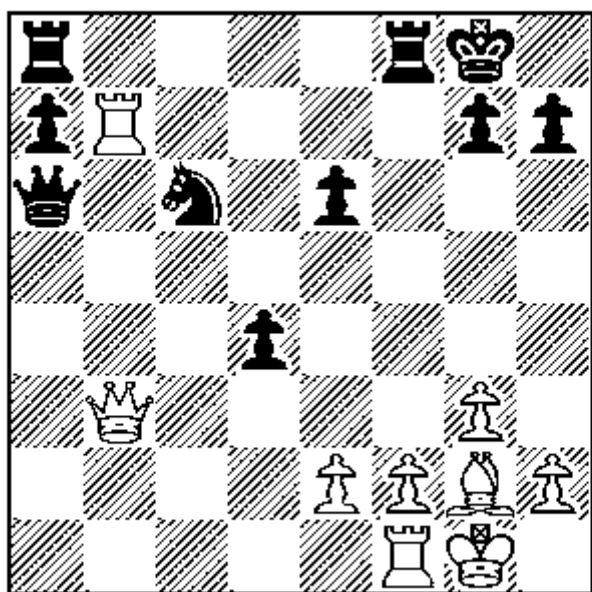
Black accepts the challenge, a bold but dubious decision. Stoltz and Euwe both chose the more prudent 16 ... Rfe8 against Flohr (in 1931 and 1932 respectively), when White's advantage remained minimal after 17 Qd2.

17 Nxe6 fxe6 18 Rb1 Qxa2 19 Rxb7 Qa6

Black has kept his extra pawn, but it has not come cost-free. White is generally more

active, the presence of his rook on the seventh rank is important, and Black's pawn structure has been further weakened, all of which more than compensate for the pawn.

20 Qb3!



Defending the rook and attacking e6. It is important that the fork 20 ... Na5? loses to 21 Qb5! (the “inhuman” move 21 Qa4 is even stronger, according to the engines).

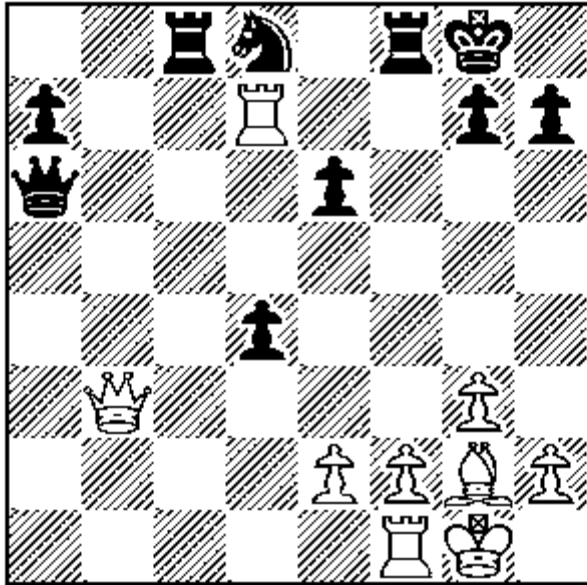
20 ... Nd8

M.Sutiman-T.Ghitescu, Rumanian Championship, Bucharest 1963, saw instead 20 ... Rae8 21 Bxc6 Qxc6 22 Rxa7 Qe4 and White failed to achieve anything.

Exercise: It is natural to suppose that Tarrasch had a good reason for rejecting 20 ... Rae8, which is such a logical defence (bringing a piece into play, evading the influence of the g2-bishop). What was it?

Answer: 21 Qb2!, threatening Ra1, is unpleasant; White will be able to regain the pawn without having to exchange his strong bishop.

21 Rd7 Rc8



Exercise (easy): Black has his pieces placed passively but has retained his extra pawn and is now attacking e2. How did Rubinstein defend his pawn?

Answer:

22 Qb2!

The idea mentioned in the previous exercise reappears; White threatens both 23 Rxd4 and 23 Ra1.

22 ... e5 23 Ra1

The simplest; White regains the pawn and retains the advantage. He could have tried for more with 23 f4! but, as Razuvaev indicated, entering complications by worsening his own pawn structure wasn't at all in accord with Rubinstein's style.

The "computer move" 23 Qb4!?, threatening 24 Bd5+ Nf7 25 Bb7 Qc4 26 Qxc4 Rxc4 27 Bd5, followed by Ra1 or Rb1, was perhaps objectively best, but was unlikely to have been Rubinstein's first choice.

23 ... Qf6

23 ... Qb6? merely amounts to a wasted move after 24 Rxa7!, as the white queen cannot be captured due to mate in three.

24 e3

Rubinstein prefers to defend f2 without committing one of his pieces. Although White now ends up with a weak pawn on e3, Black is in no position to exploit it.

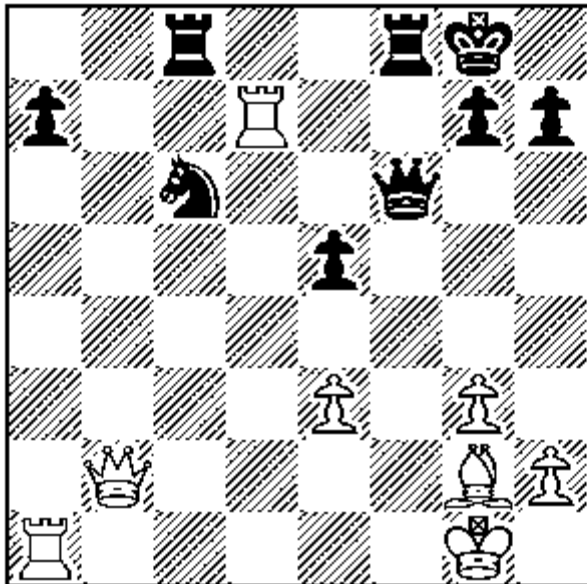
The only problem is that, after regaining the material, there are only a few pawns left on the board and they are all on the same wing, which means that many endgames will be drawn, unless some other advantage can be achieved.

24 ... dxe3?!

Rather unexpectedly, the opening of the f-file will become a very important factor.

25 fxe3 Nc6?

This seemingly logical move is a serious mistake.



Exercise (difficult): Here Rubinstein overlooked a very strong continuation. Can you find it?

Answer:

26 Qd2?!

This threatens both 27 Rd6 and 27 Rf1, but it is not the most incisive move.

Instead, 26 Rf1! was very strong: with a timely exchange of rooks White will be able to extract maximum benefit from the looseness of Black's pieces and the lack of luft for his king.

For example, after 26 ... Qg6 (or if 26 ... Qh6, attacking e3, White wins the e-pawn without conceding any counterplay by simply exchanging rooks with 27 Rxf8+ Rxf8 and then playing 28 Qc3!, guarding e3 and attacking c6 and e5) 27 Bd5+ Kh8, White has the surprisingly strong 28 Rdf7! Rxf7 29 Rxf7, threatening 30 Qb7 as well as 30 Qf2, when Black has no way to prevent the loss of material, since 29 ... Nb8 allows 30 Qxe5, regaining the pawn and threatening 31 Qe7 or 31 Qf4 etc. Checks on White's first rank bring little relief: after 30 ... Rc1+ 31 Kg2 Rc2+ 32 Kf3, Black must retreat again with 32 ... Rc8, when White can play 33 g4!, preparing 34 Qe7 without allowing ... Qh5+.

Avoiding the rook exchange does not help Black either: if 28 ... Rfd8, White can emphasize the weakness of Black's back rank with 29 Qf2!, threatening 30 Rf8+, which would also follow 29 ... h6; i.e. 30 Rf8+! Rxf8 31 Qxf8+ Rxf8 32 Rxf8+ Kh7 33 Bg8+ Kh8 34 Bf7+ and wins.

26 ... Nb8?

This is not the most tenacious defence, as it returns the pawn without reducing White's activity.

The threat of Rd6 could have been parried by 26 ... Kh8!, intending 27 Rd6 Rfd8! (with the king on g8, 28 Qa2+ would win here) 28 Rxf6 Rxd2 29 Rxc6 Rxc6 30 Kxg2 Rxc6 31 Rxa7 g5 and the ending is not very promising for White; after 32 Re7, Black plays 32 ... g4 33 Rxe5 Rc2+. Similarly, 37 Rf1 Qg6 now presents few problems to Black.

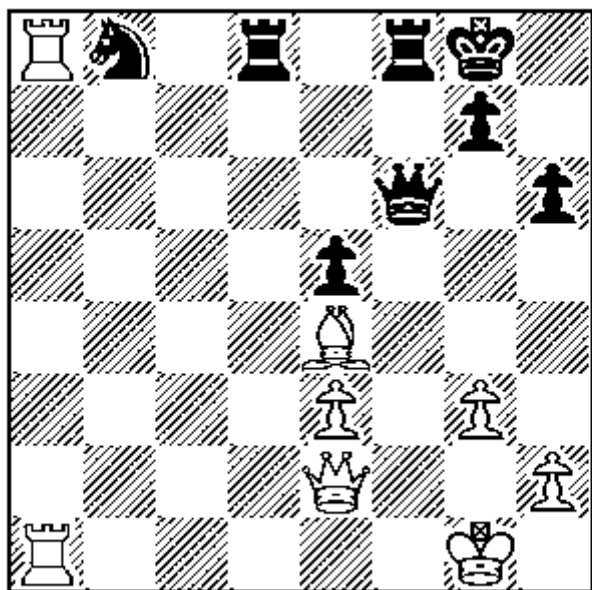
This line was also better than the other plausible defensive try 26 ... e4?!, which allows 27 Qd5+ Kh8 28 Rf1 Qc3 29 Qxe4, when White retains the better chances; the material is

equal and there is still life in the position.

27 Rdx a7 Rcd8 28 Qe2 h6 29 Be4!

Before deciding how to deploy his rooks (29 Rb7 was another idea), Rubinstein squeezes a little more activity out of his bishop; in contrast, the black pieces remain passive.

29 ... Rd7 30 Ra8 Rdd8



Exercise: The white pieces all seem ideally placed already.
How do you think Rubinstein tried to make progress?

Answer:

31 Rf1!

As we said, the white pieces have attained their maximum activity but have failed to breach Black's defences. To try to unbalance the game, Rubinstein now decides to reduce the number of pieces. The position after 31 ... Qxf1+ 32 Qxf1 Rxf1+ 33 Kxf1 would still be favourable to White, since his pieces are much more active; the white king could also join in the struggle.

31 ... Qd6?!

Although the ending would have been unpleasant for Black, it looks preferable to this continuation. With only a pair of rooks exchanged, the black king is likely to be the weaker of the two as long as the queens are still on the board.

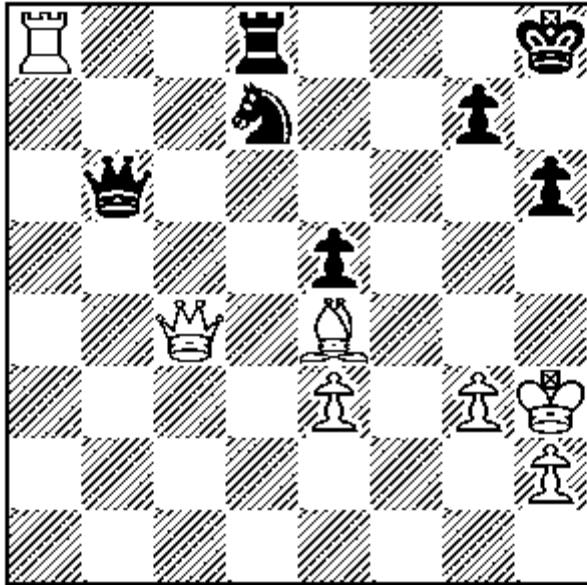
32 Rxf8+ Rxf8 33 Kg2 Qb4 34 Qd3 Kh8!

A good prophylactic move; if Black seeks counterplay with 34 ... Qe1?, White plays 35 Kh3! (threatening 36 Qd5+ Kh8 37 Qf7!), when the counter-attack 35 ... Qf2? loses to 36 Qb3+ Kh8 37 Rxb8 (or 37 Qxb8) 37 ... Qf1+ 38 Bg2 Qf5+ 39 g4.

35 Ra7 Qb2+ 36 Kh3 Qb6 37 Ra8

Avoiding the exchange of rooks for now. In principle, each exchange brings the draw closer, unless there is some other element present that changes the evaluation. The winning margin remains very slim, but for now it is better to maintain the tension.

37 ... Rd8 38 Qc4 Nd7?!



Exercise: It's understandable that Black seeks further simplification, but Rubinstein will demonstrate that this move is inaccurate. How?

Answer:

39 Qc6!

Question: I can see that 39 ... Qxc6?? loses to 40 Rxd8+, but is it not still true that “each exchange brings the draw closer”?

Answer: You're forgetting the second part of the phrase: “unless there is some other element present that changes the evaluation”, which is the case here. After the exchange of rooks the remaining black pieces will remain very badly placed, poorly coordinated, and a long way away from their king.

39 ... Rxa8 40 Qxa8+ Nb8

Opting for the ending was unattractive: after 40 ... Qb8 41 Qxb8+ Nxb8 42 Kg4 Nd7 43 Kf5, the e5-pawn falls.

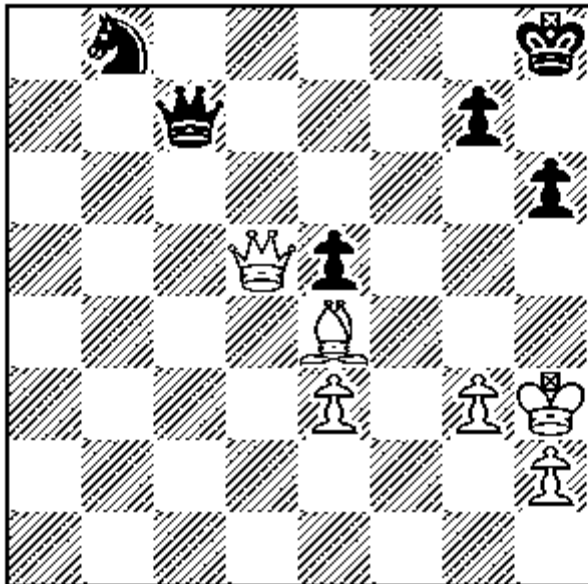
Exercise: How can White profit from the exchange of rooks?

Answer:

41 Qd5!

White quickly transfers his queen to the kingside, with gain of tempo due to the threat of Qxe5.

41 ... Qc7



Exercise: How did Rubinstein continue to make progress?

Answer:

42 Bf5!

Threatening Qe6-g6, while preventing both 42 ... Nd7 and 42 ... Qd7+. If Black managed to play 42 ... Qd7+, then after 43 Qxd7 Nxd7 44 Kg4, he could have drawn with 44 ... Nb6! 45 Bd3 (or 45 Kf5 Nc4) 45 ... Nd5 46 e4 Ne7.

42 ... Nc6

Exercise: What now?

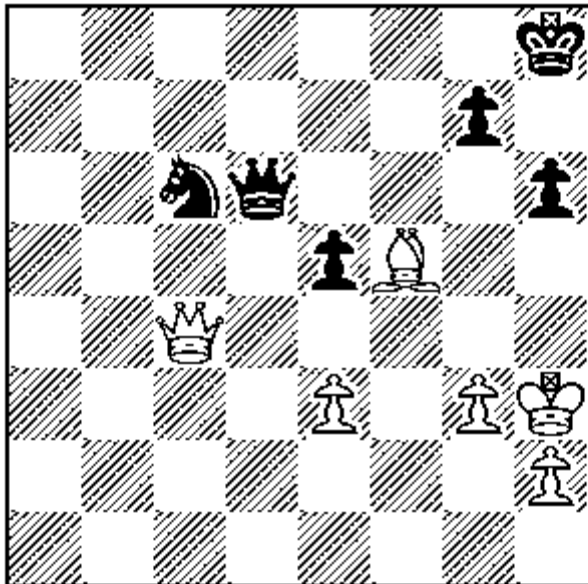
Answer:

43 Qc4!

It is essential for White to restrain the activity of the black knight; for instance, 43 Qe6? would allow 43 ... Ne7!, when the knight comes to the aid of the defence and everything is in order.

Now the plan is to play 44 Kg2, escaping a possible check on d7, followed by 45 Be4 and wins. Black tries to avoid this by unpinning the knight, but only succeeds in hastening the end.

43 ... Qd6?!



Exercise: The moment has arrived for White to land the decisive blow. What is it?

Answer:

44 Qf7!

The threat is 45 Qe8+, to which there is no good defence.

44 ... Qd8 45 Qg6 1-0

The Birth of a Variation

Although it was not the first time this opening was played, after this game the line attracted attention, gained popularity, and became known as the Meran Variation. It has been played by most of the world champions at once time or another, as well as other great grandmasters such as Bent Larsen, Boris Gelfand and Alexei Shirov.

From the competitive point of view, Rubinstein's magnificent win in this game failed, surprisingly, to prevent Grünfeld from winning the tournament, two points ahead of the field.

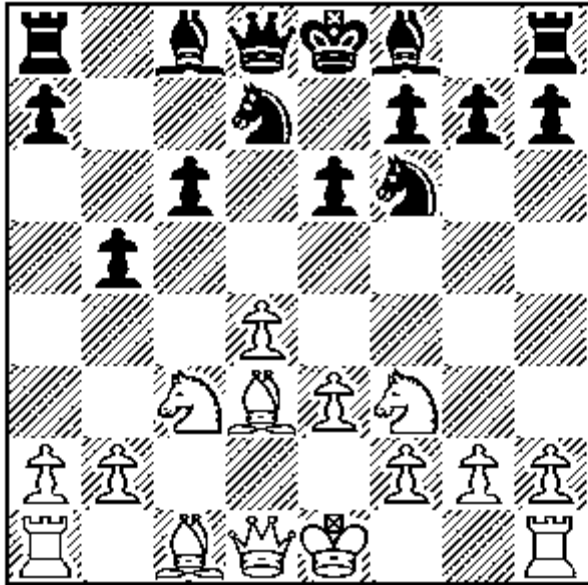
Game 32

E.Grünfeld-A.Rubinstein

Merano 1924

Semi-Slav Defence [D48]

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c6 4 Nf3 Nf6 5 e3 Nbd7 6 Bd3 dxc4 7 Bxc4 b5 8 Bd3



8 ... a6

This move defends the pawn on b5 in preparation for ... c6-c5. Years later, 8 ... Bb7 overtook it in popularity, initially as a result of its use in Candidates matches by Bent Larsen in the 1960s and '70s. Nowadays, both moves are seen with roughly equal frequency.

Question: I'm not familiar with this variation, so please explain something of it to me. I can understand that 8 ... a6 has the idea of responding to 9 e4 with 9 ... c5, as you say, but after 8 ... Bb7 that's not possible, so what's the main idea?

Answer: The whole variation is rich in atypical and complex positions, where the black king even loses the right to castle in several lines. Kasparov entitled one of the chapters of his book *My Great Predecessors*, Part IV "Lessons in the Meran", based on Larsen's games, which we shall review briefly when we look at Supplementary Game 32.1.

9 0-0

Later 9 e4 became the main line; then after the programmed move 9 ... c5, White can choose to advance with either 10 e5 or 10 d5.

9 ... c5 10 a4

A move without a great reputation, but one which has been employed by some very strong players, sometimes arising by transposition via 9 a4 b4 10 Ne4 c5.

Another idea is prepare e3-e4 with the sequence 10 Qe2 Bb7 11 Rd1.

10 ... b4 11 Ne4 Bb7

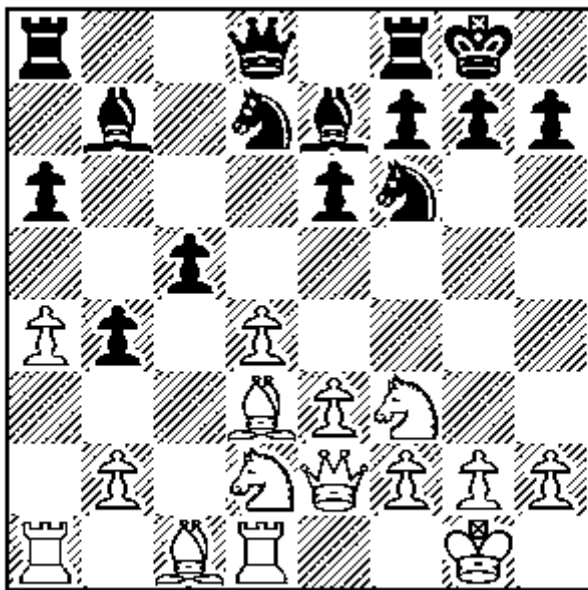
12 ... Be7

Another idea, recommended by Grünfeld himself, is 12 ... Bd6, intending to retreat along the promising h2-b8 diagonal after Nc4. B.Gelfand-V.Kramnik, Dortmund 2006, continued 13 Qe2 Qb8 14 Nc4 Bc7 15 h3 0-0 16 a5 (we should remember this move, which prevents Black from supporting the advanced b-pawn more solidly with ... a6-a5, and controls b6, though this is of less importance with the bishop on c7), when Kramnik was able to manoeuvre his pieces to good squares after 16 ... Ne4 17 Rd1 Rd8 18 Bd2 Bd5 19 Be1 Qb7. The game was in fact agreed drawn at this point, as Black's position is now very harmonious.

13 Qe2

White is planning to place his rook on d1, followed by Nc4, postponing a decision regarding the c1-bishop.

13 ... 0-0 14 Rd1



Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein continued?

Answer:

14 ... a5

A move universally praised; the pawn on b4 is now well supported and there is no longer any fear that White might play a4-a5, controlling b6 and artificially isolating the b-pawn. Thus White's previous move was considered an inaccuracy and 14 a5 was recommended.

However, the question is not so clear. Rubinstein reached the very same position two years later against Arpad Vajda, at Semmering 1926, and after 14 a5 Qc7 15 Rd1 Rfd8 16 Nc4, he highlighted the drawback of Nc4, which is that it abandons control of e4, by playing 16 ... Ne4. Rubinstein was able to keep improving his position and gained a decisive advantage, but then he blundered on move 40, losing a piece and the game.

15 Nc4 Qc7 16 Bd2

Question: This looks a bit passive, doesn't it? Was there nothing better?

Answer: Yes, there is something in what you say, but White's set-up is not the most

ambitious in any case.

Instead, 16 b3, planning Bb2, has the virtue of supporting the a4-pawn, but at the cost of weakening the c3-square. Alternatively, 16 e4 is possible, but after 16 ... cxd4 17 Nxd4, Black can play 17 ... Nc5, or else 17 ... Bxe4, which appears to give him a reasonable game after 18 Bxe4 Nxe4 19 Nxe6 fxe6 20 Qxe4 Nc5, as the pawn on a4 is a nuisance for White to defend, perhaps more so than Black's weak e6-pawn.

16 ... Rfd8

Natural centralization. In view of what happens in the game, Grünfeld recommended 16 ... Rfc8, but this is by no means forced.

17 Rac1

After Burn's recommendation, 17 b3, Black can play 17 ... Ne4, ready to exploit the weakness of the c3-square.

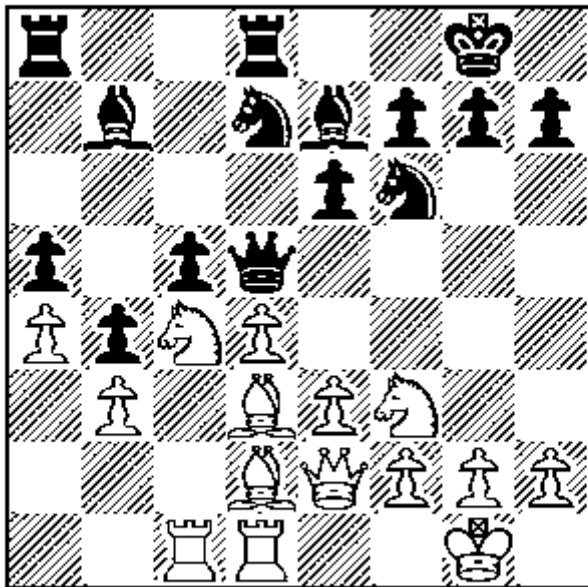
17 ... Qc6!

Question: This is very risky, isn't it? The queen remains on the c-file, subject to 'X-ray' pressure from the rook on c1.

Answer: Ambitious might be a more appropriate description. Black had quieter continuations available, such as 17 ... Bc6 (planning ... Qb7), but of course the queen is not planning to stay on the c-file for ever. For now it attacks the a4-pawn.

18 b3 Qd5!

Not 18 ... cxd4? 19 Nxa5.



Exercise: White's position is becoming uncomfortable but is still nothing to worry about. What would you play for White here?

Answer:

19 Be1?!

An inaccuracy; 19 Qf1! was preferable, as Rubinstein – and you, I hope – will

demonstrate.

Exercise: How can Black take advantage of White's inferior move?

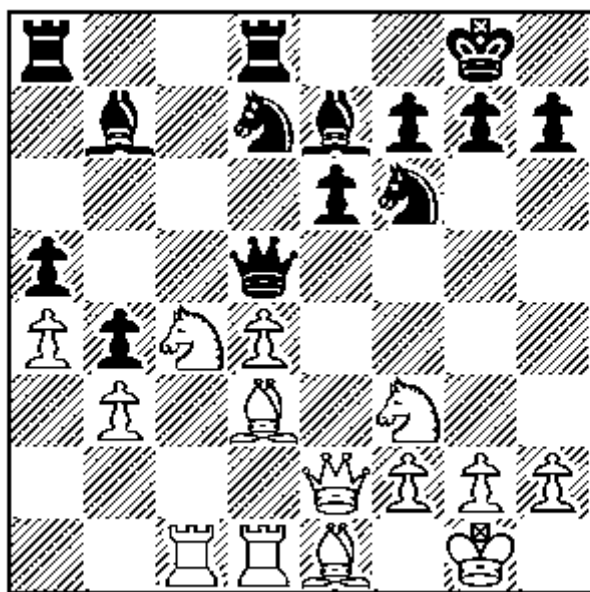
Answer:

19 ... cxd4!

Black wants to saddle White with an IQP under unfavourable conditions, since the white pieces are not occupying their usual active posts. This explains the suggested improvement 19 Qf1, which overprotects g2, thus allowing 19 ... cxd4 to be answered by 20 Nxd4.

20 exd4

It was possible to avoid having an isolated pawn by playing 20 Bc2 (or 20 Bb1), but after 20 ... Qh5 21 Rxd4 (or 21 Nxd4 Qxe2 22 Nxe2 Ba6) 21 ... Ng4 or 21 ... Nd5, White's troubles are not over.



Exercise: How did Rubinstein proceed in this position?

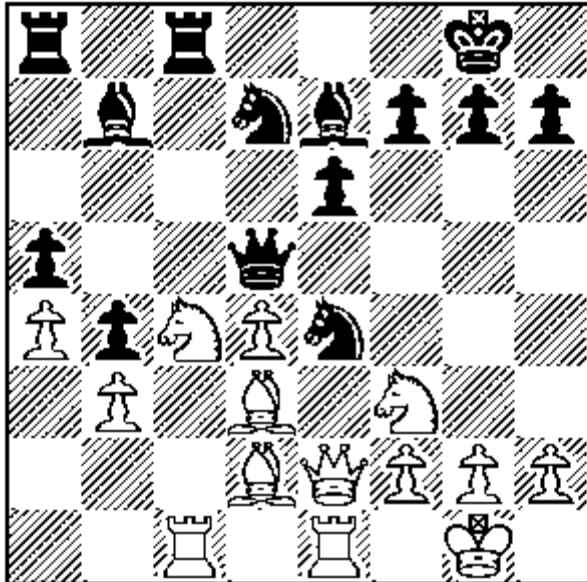
Answer:

20 ... Rdc8!

The opening of the c-file requires Black to adapt to the new situation. He wants to play ... Ne4, but the immediate 20 ... Ne4 could be met satisfactorily by 21 Ne3, and if 21 ... Qh5 then 22 Rc7, while 21 ... Qxb3? is bad due to 22 Bc2! Qa2 (or 22 ... Qb2 23 Nc4 Qa2 24 Ra1) 23 Ra1 Ba6 24 Qxa6 Qxa1 25 Qxa8, winning. 21 ... Qd6 is better, but this would allow 22 d5! and the isolated pawn redeems itself.

21 Bd2 Ne4 22 Re1

Now after 22 Ne3, Black can play 22 ... Qh5, because the white rook cannot invade at c7.



Exercise: What move do you think Rubinstein chose here?

Answer:

22 ... Nd6!

A remarkable decision; Black abstains from capturing the bishop on d2 (which would mean that the IQP was weaker) and instead wants to eliminate the annoying knight on c4.

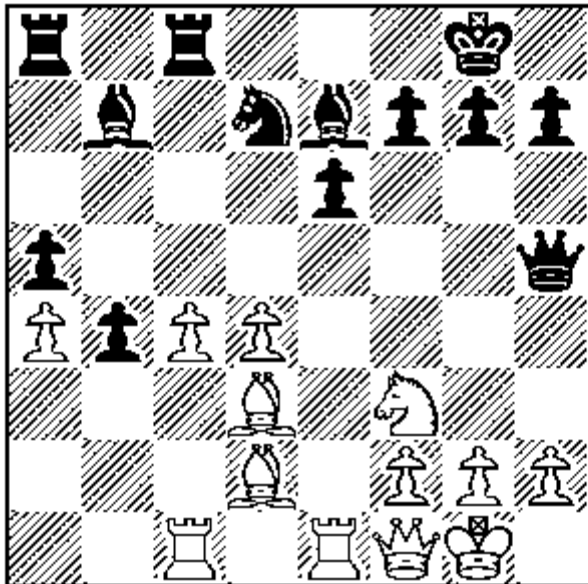
Although Black seems to be fine after 22 ... Nxd2 23 Qxd2 (threatening 24 Be4) and then, for example, 23 ... Qh5 24 Nfe5, the weakness of Black's a5-pawn more than compensates for White's isolated pawn, which is not under enough pressure.

23 Qf1 Nxc4 24 bxc4

Black achieves comfortable play after 24 Bxc4 Qd6, planning ... Nb6 or ... Nf6. Alternatively, Grünfeld analysed 24 ... Qh5 25 Ne5 Nxe5 26 dxe5 Rd8, when 27 Be3? fails to 27 ... Qxe5! 28 Bb6 Qf4 and if 29 Bxd8? then 29 ... Bd6 wins.

After the text, the pawn structure has changed radically. Black has the long-term trump of a protected passed b-pawn, while White now has an isolated pawn on a4 and hanging pawns in the centre, which control a lot of squares and have dynamic potential, but might prove to be weak, especially if they advance, as they would probably be securely blockaded.

24 ... Qh5



Exercise: White's position is rather uncomfortable.
How can he try to minimize his problems?

Answer:

25 Ne5?!

White wants to simplify, but this exchange, made in serious time pressure, weakens his kingside as well as his centre.

It was better to exchange the strong b7-bishop with 25 Be4!, even though Black has good play after 25 ... Bxe4 26 Rxe4 Nb6! 27 c5 Nd5, analysed by Grünfeld. In fact, 27 ... Nxa4!? is not bad either; for instance, after 28 Qd1 Qd5 29 Re5 Qd7 (or 29 ... Qc6, not fearing 30 d5? Qb5!, when the white pawn structure collapses), Black is prepared to sacrifice his knight with ... Nxc5, gaining three pawns for the piece, including two connected passed pawns on the queenside, and even more if White plays 30 Ra1?!, since Black can then follow up 30 ... Nxc5 with 31 ... Bf6, skewering the white rooks.

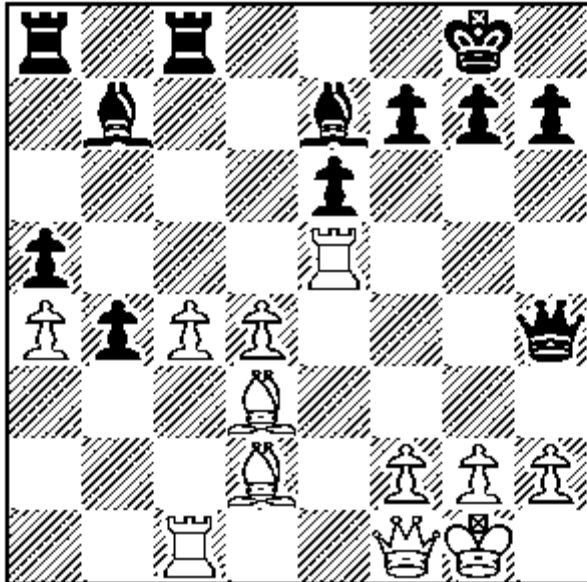
25 ... Nxe5?!

This is a natural move, but it gives a White a surprising saving resource on move 27, so 25 ... Bd6!? was possibly better, hoping to exploit the weaknesses of White's centre and a4-pawn after, for example, 26 f4 Bxe5 27 fxe5 Qg4! 28 Be3 Nb6, though the play would be far from clear.

26 Rxe5

If 26 dxe5 then 26 ... Bc5 would be strong, followed by 27 ... Rd8, when Black's activity will be soon become overwhelming.

26 ... Qh4



Exercise: What defensive resource does White have available here?

Answer:

27 f4?

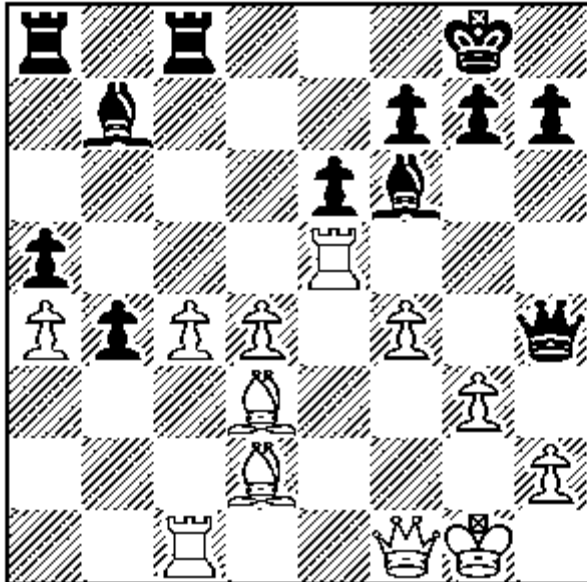
This loses quickly. It was also insufficient to defend the d4-pawn with 27 Be3, since after 27 ... Bd6 28 g3 Qf6 29 Rb5 Bc6, White loses the exchange.

However, 27 d5! would have kept the balance, as after 27 ... exd5 28 Qe2, White threatens 29 Rh5 as well as 29 Rxe7. Instead, 27 ... Qd4 can also be answered by 28 Qe2, when the white pieces are coming to life; and the same thing happens after 27 ... Bd6 28 Bg5 Qd4 29 Re4, while 28 ... Qh5 29 Be2 Qg6 30 Bd3 Qh5 is a draw.

27 ... Bf6

Winning material; after 28 Be3 Bxe5 29 fxe5 Be4, “the rest is a matter of technique” as they say.

28 g3



Exercise (easy): How did Rubinstein answer the threat to his queen?

Answer:

28 ... Bxe5!

Of course; after 29 gxf4 Bxd4+, White has to put his own queen in the way. The rest is easy.

29 dxe5 Qe7 30 Be3 Qd7 31 Be2 Qxa4 32 g4 b3 33 Kf2 Be4 34 Bd4 Rd8 35 Ke3 Bc2 36 Ra1 Qb4 0-1

Supplementary Game 32.1

W.Uhlmann-B.Larsen

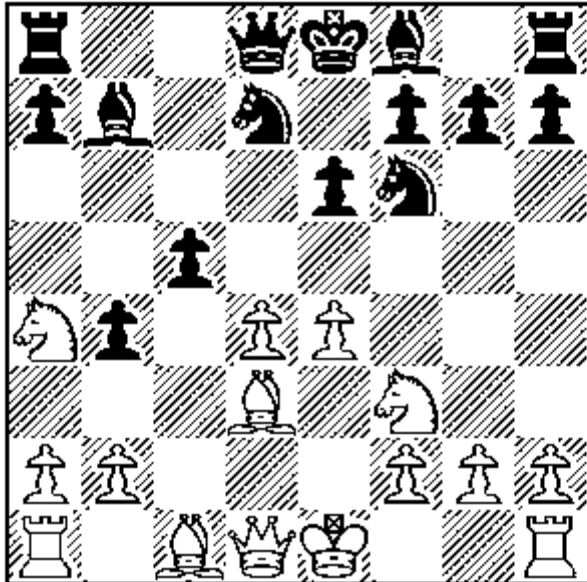
Las Palmas (6th matchgame) 1971

Semi-Slav Defence [D47]

1 c4 Nf6 2 Nc3 e6 3 Nf3 d5 4 d4 c6 5 e3 Nbd7 6 Bd3 dxc4 7 Bxc4 b5 8 Bd3 Bb7 9 e4

Black is not forced to defend the b5-pawn with ... a7-a6 in order to prepare the thematic counter-blow ... c6-c5. Instead, he can simply advance the b-pawn, attacking the c3-knight, followed by ... c6-c5 just the same.

9 ... b4 10 Na4 c5



Black is not afraid of his king being stuck in the centre after the following sequence.

11 e5 Nd5 12 Nxc5 Nxc5! 13 dxc5 Bxc5 14 Bb5+?!

Tempting, but it's not as good for White as it looks.

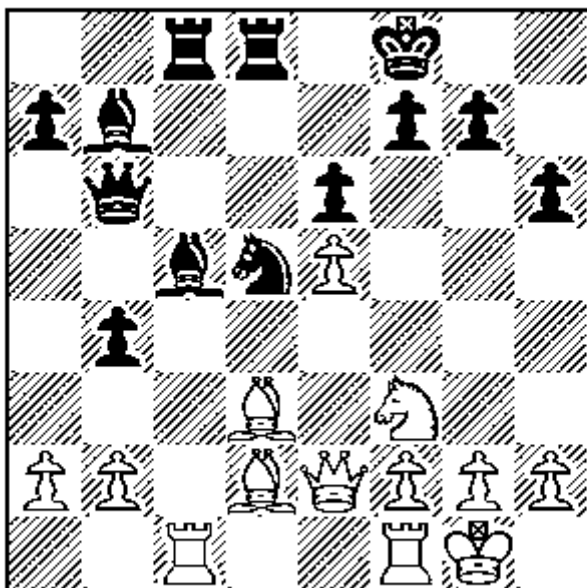
14 ... Ke7! 15 0-0

Here 15 Bg5+?! f6 only creates more problems for White after, for example, 16 exf6+ gxf6 17 Bh6 (or 17 Bh4 Nf4!) 17 ... Qb6 18 Qe2 Bxf2+! (Polugaevsky).

15 ... Qb6

This is the drawback of the check on b5; Black now gains a tempo by attacking the bishop and can regroup his pieces to good effect.

16 Bd3 h6 17 Qe2 Rhd8 18 Bd2 Kf8 19 Rac1 Rac8



Black's pieces are working in complete harmony. Let's hand over to Kasparov: "Here we can take stock of the opening skirmish. Black's pieces are ideally placed, whereas White's game is beginning to come to a standstill. Here Larsen's basic idea is clearly revealed – the optimal balance of dynamic and strategic factors. He correctly judged that the domination of

his pieces in the centre would be more enduring and therefore more weighty than the temporary problems with the completion of his development.”

Naturally this is just a small snapshot of the complexities of the position and of the theory. After almost half an hour's thought, Uhlmann played:

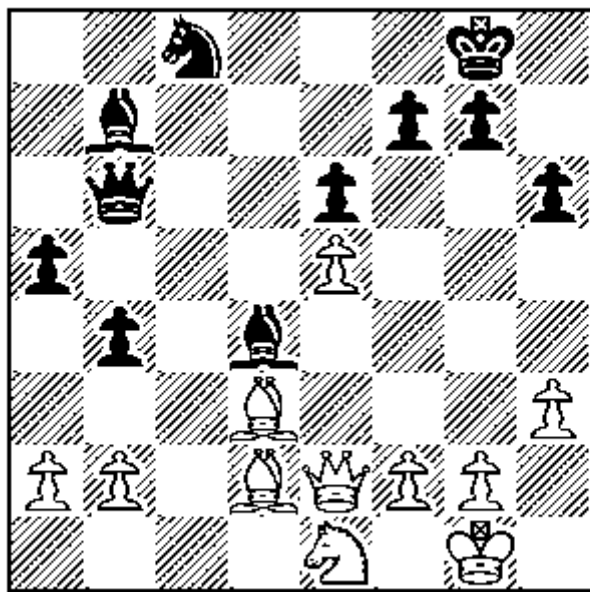
20 Rc2

Now Black continues to improve the position of his pieces.

20 ... a5 21 Rfc1 Kg8 22 h3 Ne7

Threatening 23 ... Bxf2+.

23 Ne1 Bd4 24 Rxc8 Rxc8 25 Rxc8+ Nxc8



And despite the simplification, as Kasparov said: “the exchange of rooks has not greatly eased White's position. The black bishops are still highly active.” Larsen won in 36 moves.

“Paving the way”

The importance of this game, played during the final stage of the Rubinstein's career, lies in the idea revealed on move 13. It was later realized that the same idea could be used in other positions, where the pawn structure is that of the Carlsbad (or Exchange) Variation of the Queen's Gambit, and it appeared in the games of Botvinnik, Kasparov, and many others.

“This game paved the way for White's modern treatment, with a transposition to the Carlsbad structure, followed by a breakthrough in the centre,” commented Gelfand.

Game 33

A.Rubinstein-R.Michell

Scarborough 1930

Nimzo-Indian Defence [E46]

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3

Rubinstein alternated this variation, which bears his name, with the Classical 4 Qc2.

4 ... 0-0 5 Ne2

This move, also associated with Rubinstein, was the one he used most often in this position.

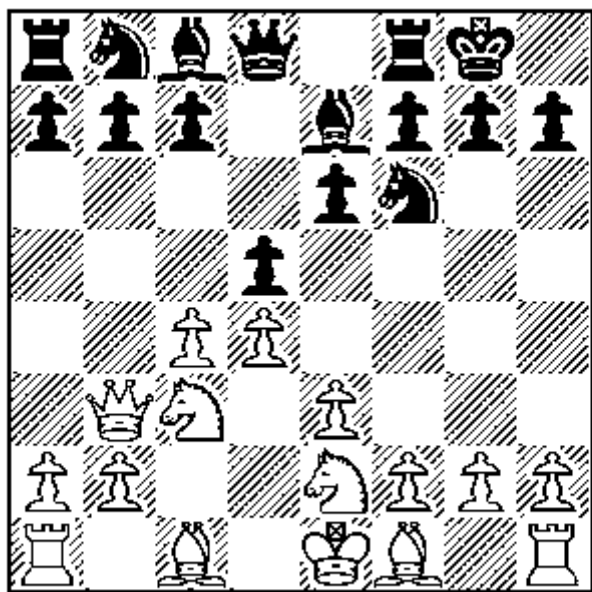
5 ... d5 6 Qb3

Question: This is an unusual move, isn't it? I thought the idea was to play a2-a3 and recapture on c3 with the knight?

Answer: It's not a very common move, that's true, As you say, the most usual move here is 6 a3.

6 ... Be7

Black acquiesces to play a Queen's Gambit a tempo down, but with the white queen's bishop on c1, rather than outside the pawn chain, and with the knight posted on e2, where it hinders the development of White's other bishop. Instead, 6 ... c5 would be an attempt to call White's last move into question.



Exercise: What do you think Rubinstein intends to do about his f1-bishop?

Answer:

7 g3!

Nowadays, this move appears perfectly normal, but at the time it was very revolutionary, and especially the idea behind it.

7 ... c6 8 Bg2 Nbd7 9 cxd5!

The second link in the plan. Of course White could just castle with 9 0-0, but then Black could play 9 ... dxc4 10 Qxc4, after which 10 ... e5 reaches a different type of position.

Going back to move six, 6 cxd5 exd5 7 g3 is another popular line for White, with the same idea as after 6 a3 Be7 and now 7 cxd5 exd5 8 g3. It is possible that the present game was the inspiration for these variations as well.

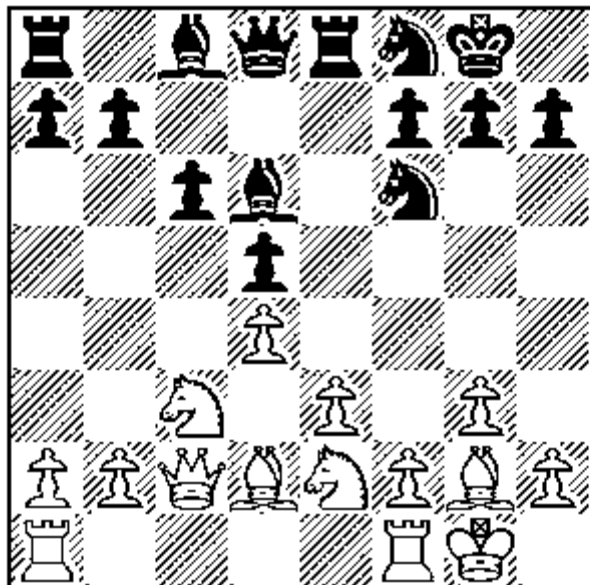
We can see that Rubinstein preferred to postpone the capture on d5 until the b8-knight had gone to d7, where it temporarily hinders the development of the c8-bishop and cannot develop to c6 after 9 ... cxd5.

9 ... exd5 10 0-0 Re8 11 Bd2 Bd6?!

This is the start of a dubious bishop manoeuvre. 11 ... Nb6 looks better, intending ... Nc4-

d6, perhaps followed by ... Bf5.

12 Qc2 Nf8



Exercise: What was Rubinstein's plan in choosing this set-up? How do you think he continued?

Answer:

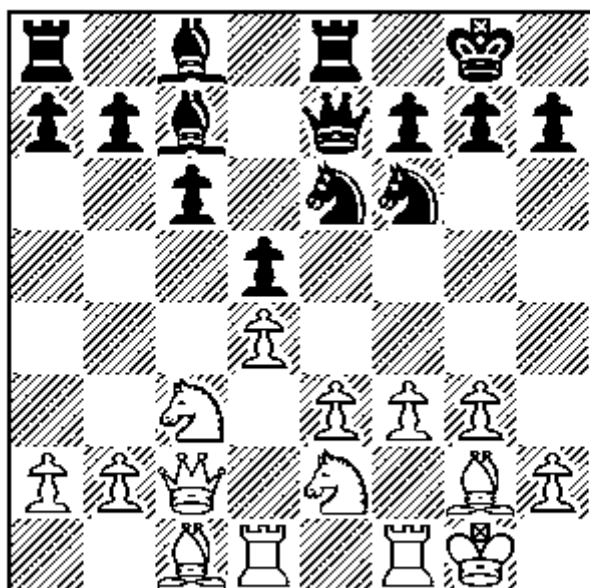
13 f3!

This is the idea, preparing the pawn break e3-e4. In Supplementary Games 33.1 and 33.2 we shall see the same idea in action in other openings, with examples from the praxis of Botvinnik and Kasparov.

13 ... Bc7 14 Rad1

Not hurrying; first White needs to deploy all his pieces to their correct positions.

14 ... Ne6 15 Bc1 Qe7



Exercise (easy): Are any further preparations required, or is better to implement the idea now?

Answer:

16 e4!

No; White has no more useful moves that he can make before breaking with e3-e4.

16 ... dxe4?!

Opening the f-file and making White's centre pawns mobile is not advisable, unless there is some immediate advantage to be gained or it is forced. It seems better to play 16 ... g6!?, so as to be able to answer 17 e5 with 17 ... Nh5.

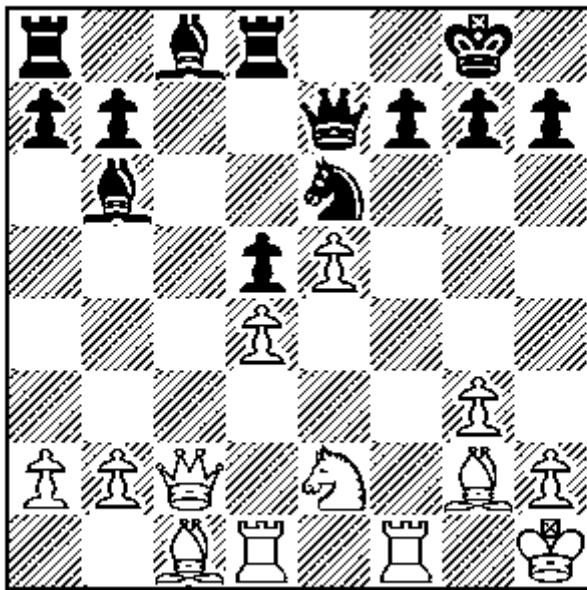
17 fxe4 Bb6 18 Kh1

Still not rushing. Rubinstein first takes account of the pressure from the b6-bishop and moves his king out of the pin, thus restoring mobility to the d4-pawn.

18 ... Rd8 19 e5!

White could keep strengthening his position with 19 Be3, but it is already possible to start the pawns rolling forward. The main alternative was 19 d5, with Bg5 to follow.

19 ... Nd5 20 Nxd5 cxd5



Black now has a weak pawn on d5 and is still behind in development.

21 Be3

White overprotects his own d-pawn as a prelude to an attack on the poorly protected black monarch.

21 ... Nc7 22 Qd2 h6

Defending against the threat of Bg5; this is another small gain for White, since the black kingside is now weaker.

23 h3

There is no reason to allow ... Bg4 either.

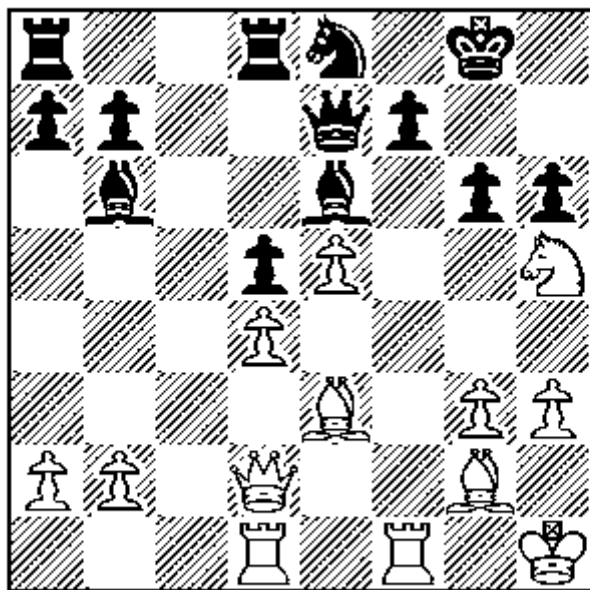
23 ... Be6 24 Nf4!

Heading for h5. Rubinstein sees no need to prepare his offensive further by doubling rooks on the f-file with Rf2, and decides to launch the attack immediately, since Black's kingside is very vulnerable.

24 ... Ne8 25 Nh5

Threatening 26 Bxh6 with a decisive attack.

25 ... g6



Exercise: How do you think Rubinstein continued the attack?

Answer:

26 Bxh6!

Of course; although this wasn't the only way. White could also play 26 Nf6+ Nxf6 27 exf6 first, followed by Bxh6 and Bg7.

26 ... Rdc8

If 26 ... gxh5 then 27 Rf6! is decisive, intending 28 Qg5+ Kh8 with a choice of different finishes, the simplest being 29 Qxh5, not forgetting the manoeuvre Bf1-d3.

27 Nf6+ Nxf6 28 exf6 Qd6 29 Bg7 1-0

There is no defence against 30 Qh6.

Supplementary Game 33.1

M.Botvinnik-P.Keres

USSR Championship, Moscow 1952

Queen's Gambit Declined [D36]

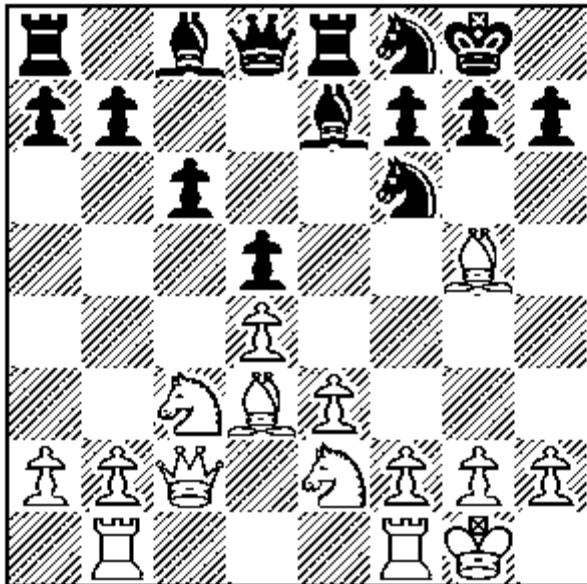
1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6

Black can prevent the set-up with the knight on e2 that White employs in this game by using the move order 3 ... Be7, waiting for 4 Nf3 before playing 4 ... Nf6.

4 Bg5 Nbd7 5 cxd5 exd5 6 e3 Be7 7 Bd3 0-0 8 Qc2 Re8 9 Nge2 Nf8 10 0-0

This move was fairly unusual at the time since, as Botvinnik pointed out, Ne2 was mostly associated with castling queenside.

10 ... c6 11 Rab1



One of the typical plans in the Carlsbad structure, preparing the “minority attack” with b2-b4, intending b4-b5 and b5xc6, to create a weakness on c6.

“Careful analysis shows that modern chess, proceeding from the Botvinnik era, is very strongly influenced by the games of Rubinstein, who was, essentially, one of the fathers of modern chess history.” – Kasparov.

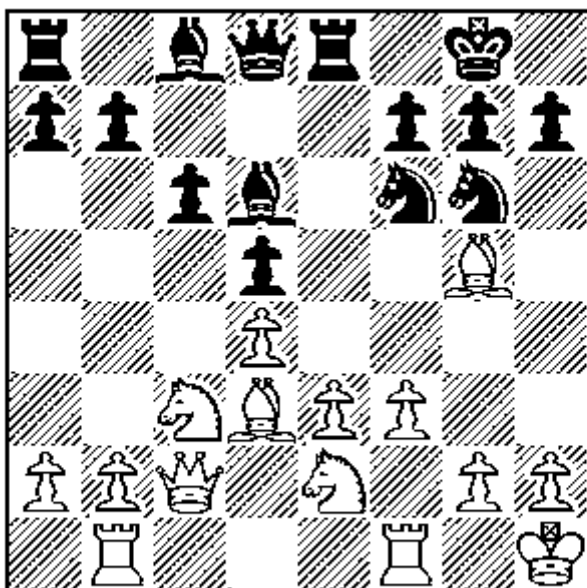
As we shall see in Supplementary Game 33.2, he also influenced the play of Kasparov himself, who refined the handling of this line.

11 ... Bd6?!

This threatens 12 ... Bxh2+, but after White’s useful response, it results in a loss of time. It is curious that Black committed the same inaccuracy (11 ... Bd6?!) as in our main game.

Several different moves have been tried here, such as 11 ... a5, or 11 ... Be6, followed by ... N6d7, while Kasparov suggests 11 ... Bg4.

12 Kh1! Ng6 13 f3!



A change of plan, using Rubinstein’s idea with the same pawn structure, albeit with some

of the pieces placed differently. Botvinnik commented that Black cannot prevent the advance e3-e4, since the counterblow ... c6-c5 is very difficult to achieve here, precisely owing to 11 ... Bd6.

13 ... Be7

13 ... h6 would have been answered by 14 Bxf6 Qxf6 15 e4 with advantage.

14 Rbe1

Taking his time; it is better bring more pieces into play before breaking in the centre. Here 14 e4 could be answered by 14 ... dxe4 15 fxe4 Ng4 16 Bxe7 Qxe7 with counterplay, since Black has threats of ... Ne3, ... Qh4 etc.

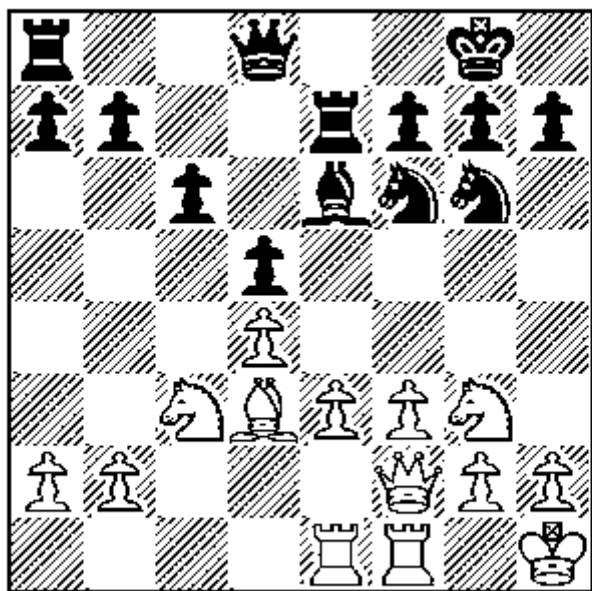
14 ... Nd7

14 ... Be6 would be similar to Supplementary Game 33.2 (after 13 Kh1), except that White has the move and can now play 15 e4!.

15 Bxe7 Rxe7 16 Ng3 Nf6 17 Qf2

Further preparation for e3-e4; from this square the queen defends d4.

17 ... Be6



18 Nf5

Still not 18 e4, because of 18 ... dxe4 19 fxe4 Ng4! 20 Qg1 Rd7.

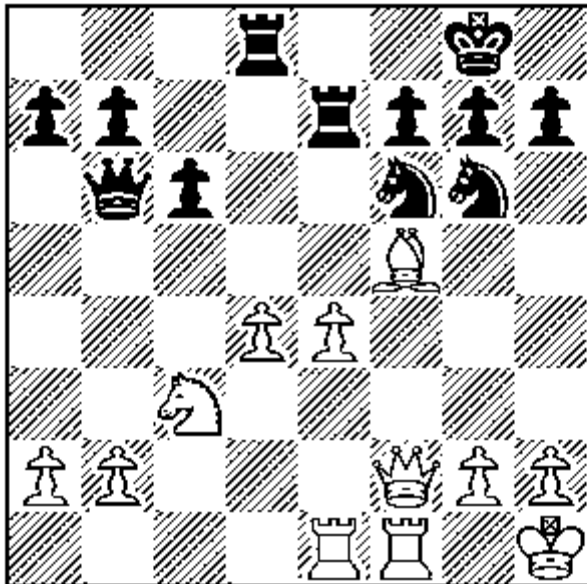
18 ... Bxf5

On 18 ... Re8, Botvinnik was planning to play 19 g4; then after an eventual ... Bxf5, White can recapture on f5 with the pawn, opening the g-file.

19 Bxf5 Qb6 20 e4! dxe4?!

Again Black's makes the same mistake as in our main game; it was better not to open the f-file.

21 fxe4 Rd8



22 e5!

There will be no weak black pawn on d5 this time. Instead, Black will have a piece there: a good knight, if it doesn't get exchanged. However, Botvinnik will succeed in posting his own knight on d6, which will give him the advantage.

22 ... Nd5 23 Ne4! Nf8 24 Nd6

Threatening 25 Nxf7 Rxf7 26 Be6 and wins.

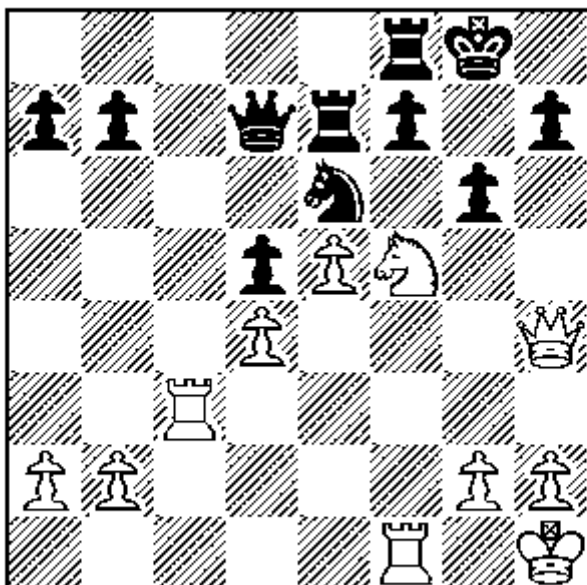
24 ... Qc7 25 Be4!

To exchange the centralized knight.

25 ... Ne6 26 Qh4 g6 27 Bxd5! cxd5 28 Rc1!

Using the recently opened file to speed up his attack.

28 ... Qd7 29 Rc3! Rf8 30 Nf5!



30 ... Rfe8

The alternatives were grim: 30 ... gxf5 31 Rg3+ Ng7 32 Qf6 mates next move; or 30 ... Ree8 31 Nh6+ Kh8 32 Qf6+ Ng7 33 Nxf7+ and wins.

31 Nh6+!

Rather than winning the exchange, White's forces concentrate on attacking f7.

31 ... Kf8 32 Qf6 Ng7 33 Rcf3

Threatening 34 Qxf7+! Rxf7 35 Rxf7+ Qxf7 36 Rxf7 mate.

33 ... Rc8 34 Nxf7 Re6 35 Qg5 Nf5 36 Nh6 Qg7 37 g4 1-0

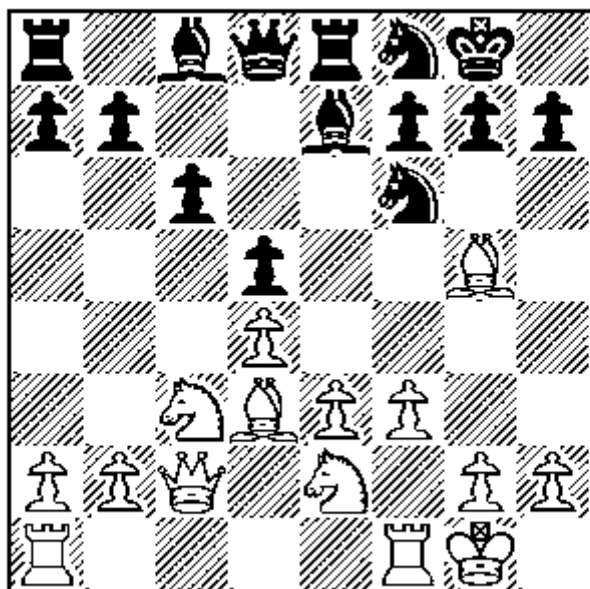
Supplementary Game 33.2

G.Kasparov-U.Andersson

World Cup, Belfort 1988

Queen's Gambit Declined [D36]

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5 c6 6 Qc2 Be7 7 e3 Nbd7 8 Bd3 0-0 9 Nge2 Re8 10 0-0 Nf8 11 f3!



Kasparov employs Botvinnik's plan immediately, preparing e3-e4 without spending time on 11 Rab1.

11 ... Be6

As mentioned in the previous game, Black would like to play ... c6-c5, but 11 ... c5?! is weak here on account of 12 Bxf6 Bxf6 13 dxc5, followed by Rad1. If instead 11 ... Ng6, there is once again no need to rush with 12 e4, since Black is fine after 12 ... dxe4 13 fxe4 Be6, according to Kasparov; 12 Rad1! is better.

12 Rae1 Rc8 13 Kh1

This prophylactic move is useful here too, preventing the d4-pawn falling with check, after a quick e3-e4 (which is not impossible).

13 ... N6d7

“Now if 13 ... c5 there would have followed 14 dxc5 and Nd4.” – Kasparov.

14 Bxe7 Rxe7 15 Nf4

Once again restraining ... c6-c5, while continuing with the preparations for e3-e4.

15 ... Rc7?!

Black embarks upon a plan to attack the white centre which will come to no good.

Instead, “15 ... Nf6 16 Qd2 Rd7 was more natural, although after 17 b4 White is ready to mount an offensive on all parts of the board.” – Kasparov.

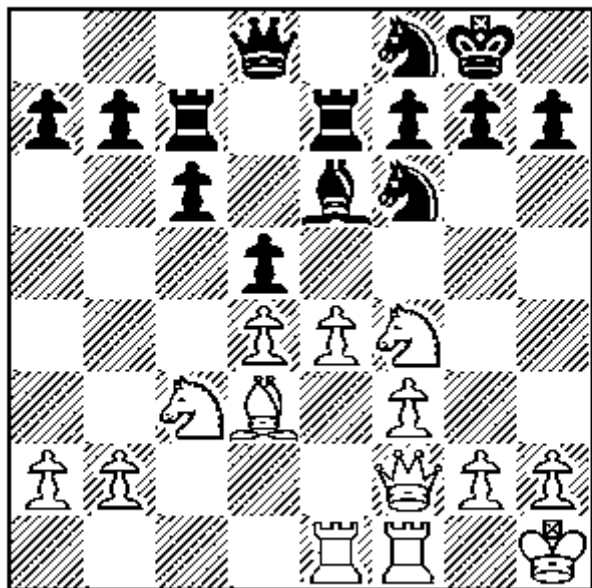
16 Qf2

Now 16 e4 is playable, but Kasparov prefers hold back this advance until he has improved the position of his pieces ... just like Rubinstein.

16 ... Nf6?!

Black continues with his plan of applying pressure on the white centre, but it will prove unsatisfactory.

17 e4!



At the ideal moment, with all White's pieces in their best positions.

17 ... dxe4 18 fxe4 Rcd7

This was the idea behind Black's manoeuvre. 18 ... Ng4 would have been met by 19 Qg1, “one benefit of the move Kh1. (...) But now White suddenly carries out a breakthrough at the most fortified point.” – Kasparov.

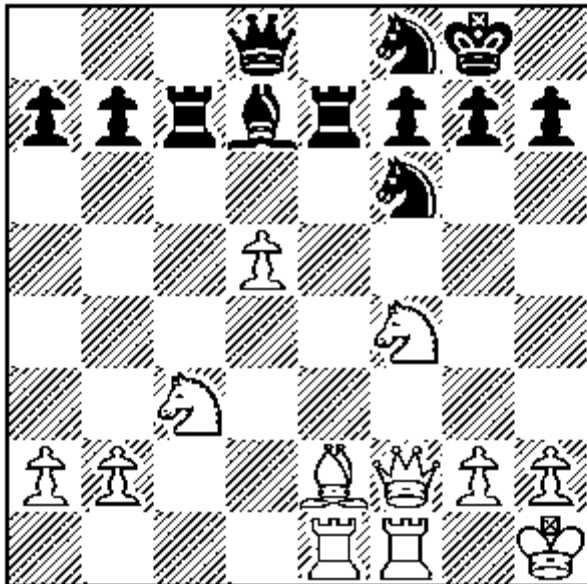
19 d5!

Kasparov calculated the following sequence very well; one of the key points comes on move 22.

19 ... cxd5 20 Bb5! Rc7

“Only practical saving chances were offered by the sacrifice of the exchange for a pawn”, according to Kasparov.

21 exd5 Bd7 22 Be2!



After worsening the arrangement of the opposing pieces, White now wins a pawn through the threats of 23 d6 and 23 Qxa7.

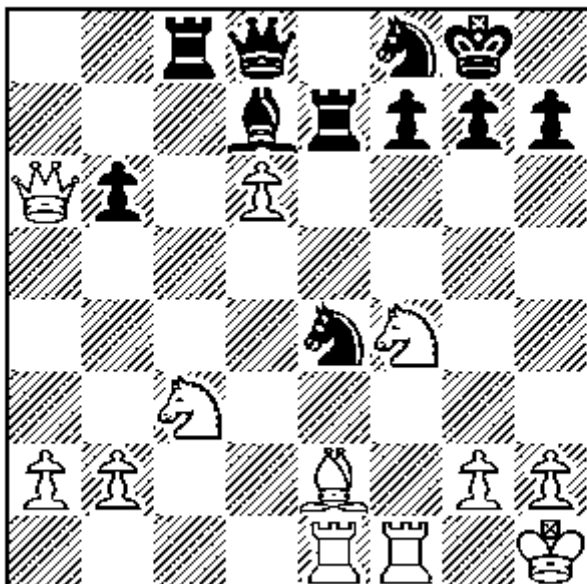
22 ... Rc8 23 Qxa7

Alternatively, “23 d6!? Re5 24 Qd4! and Nfd5 was also tempting, with powerful pressure.” – Kasparov.

23 ... b6 24 Qa6?!

The immediate 24 d6! was more accurate, according to Kasparov.

24 ... Ne4?! 25 d6!



“By sacrificing his passed pawn in the centre, in return White creates a pair of connected passed pawns on the queenside, and Black’s position becomes untenable.” – Kasparov.

25 ... Nxd6 26 Nfd5 Re5?!

It was better to play 26 ... Re6 27 Qxb6 Qg5, although after 28 Bf3! Nc4 29 Qf2, “the win

is merely a matter of time” – Kasparov.

27 Qxb6 Nf5 28 Qxd8 Rxd8 29 Bd3 Rxe1 30 Rxe1 Ng6 31 a4 Nd4 32 a5 Kf8 33 Bxg6 hxg6 34 Rd1 Ne6 35 Nb6 Bc6 36 Rxd8+ Nxd8 37 b4 Ne6 38 b5 1-0

It's very instructive, and highly recommended, to study this game with all Kasparov's annotations in Garry Kasparov on Garry Kasparov, Part II.

A game “important not so much for its opening as for its middlegame”

“The undermining of the pawn centre at the cost of weakening the kingside, White being well behind in development – all this required great courage and great understanding,” wrote Boris Gelfand, commenting on Rubinstein's 13th move in our next and final game.

This was played in the last great tournament of Rubinstein's career. He led the Polish team to triumph in the Hamburg Olympiad, scoring no less than 13 wins and 4 draws, without a single defeat.

Game 34

A.Rubinstein-G.Maróczy

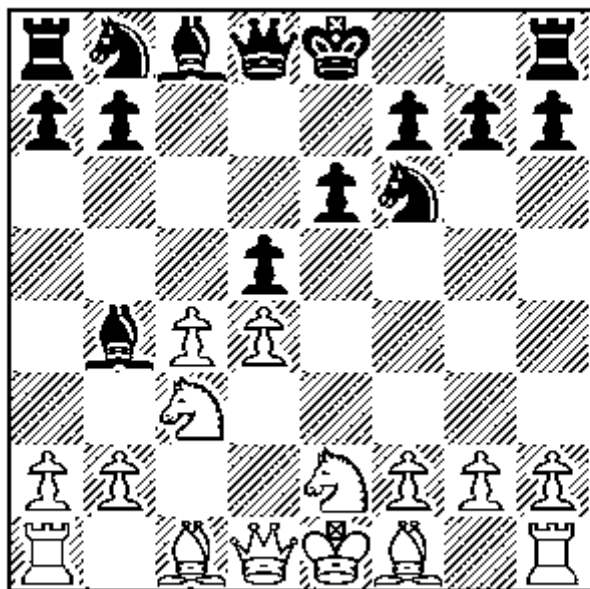
Hamburg Olympiad 1930

Nimzo-Indian Defence [E42]

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 c5 5 Ne2

This is one of Rubinstein ideas which was then “relatively new”, according to Rubinstein himself, who noted that it was played for the first time in his game with Sämisch at Moscow 1925. Rubinstein is referring to the idea of placing the knight on e2, since that game continued 4 e3 0-0 5 Ne2 d5 6 a3 Be7, which was also the course of A.Rubinstein-F.Yates, Bad Kissingen 1928.

5 ... cxd4 6 exd4 d5



Question: Has this idea of Rubinstein's been played in any important games since his time?

Answer: Yes, one of the high points of this line was in the 1978 World Championship match in Baguio, where Korchnoi employed it against Karpov. The continuation of the third game was 7 c5 Ne4 8 Bd2 Nxd2 9 Qxd2 a5 10 a3 Bxc3 11 Nxc3 Bd7 12 Bd3 a4 13 0-0 0-0 14 f4 with the initiative for White.

7 ... Be7

The alternative for Black is to play against an IQP. A.Rubinstein-C.Ahues, Liege 1930, went 7 ... Bxc3+ 8 Nxc3 dxc4 9 Bxc4 Nc6 10 Be3 0-0 11 0-0 b6 and here Rubinstein played 12 d5, without achieving very much after the exchanges.

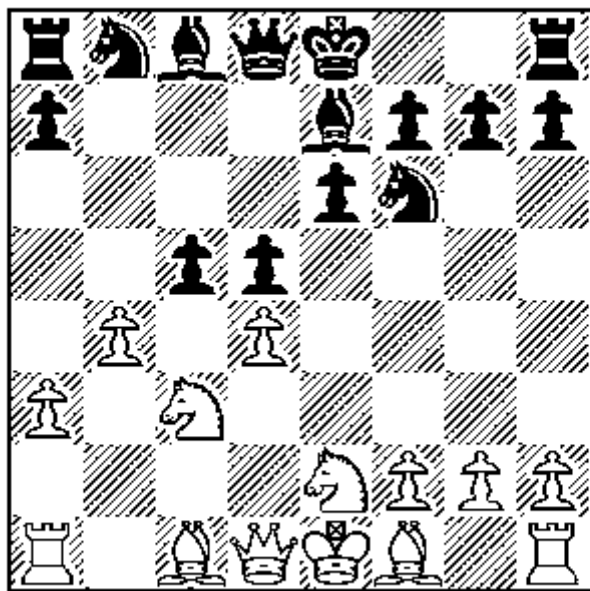
A more aggressive treatment was seen in the same Korchnoi-Karpov match; the fifth game continued 12 Qd3 Bb7 13 Rad1 h6, and here White introduced the original move 14 f3, answering 14 ... Ne7 with 15 Bf2, followed by Bh4. Korchnoi gained a strong initiative and eventually a great advantage, but he threw the win away in time pressure and the game ended in a draw after a long struggle lasting 124 moves.

8 c5

“The whole point of the variation. The c-pawn restricts Black's play.” – Rubinstein.

8 ... b6 9 b4 bxc5

Later Black preferred to wait with 9 ... 0-0, not clarifying the central pawn structure just yet.



Exercise: With which pawn do you think Rubinstein recaptured?

Answer:

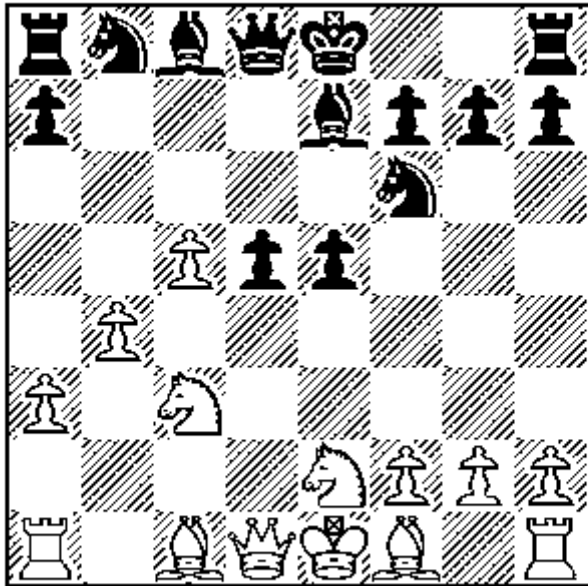
10 dxc5

“Brave and correct. White's pawns on the queenside prove to be stronger than Black's in the centre.” – Rubinstein.

Black would have no difficulties after 10 bxc5 and could play, for example, 10 ... Ba6, followed by ... Nc6; if he manages to break with ... e6-e5, the white pieces are not well developed to deal with it.

The text move is clearly risky; while White's queenside pawn majority might be very strong in the endgame, Black's central majority is likely to give him the advantage in the middlegame if it continues quietly.

10 ... e5



Black makes immediate use of his central pawns; this was what Rubinstein was expecting when he played 10 dxc5.

Exercise: How did he respond?

Answer:

11 f4!

This was what Rubinstein had planned; any another move would allow Black very comfortable play. The centre pawns would prevent the white pieces from occupying good squares.

“Again a good continuation. Now Black is forced to choose between giving up his strong formation in the centre or weakening his pawns.” – Rubinstein.

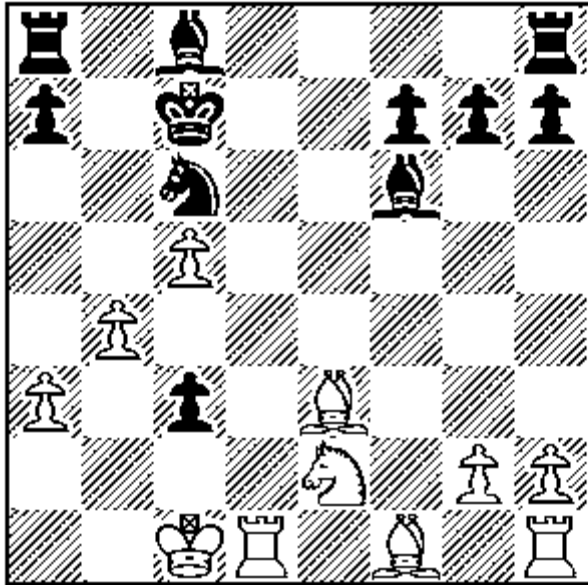
11 ... d4

In the event of 11 ... Nc6 12 fxe5 Nxe5, White would gain control of the d4-square and could obtain good play by occupying it with 13 Nd4, although it might be better to play 13 Bf4 first, to drive the black knight away from the centre.

12 fxe5 dxc3 13 Qxd8+ Kxd8

If instead 13 ... Bxd8, Rubinstein planned 14 exf6 Bxf6 15 Be3, intending to continue with 16 Bd4 or 16 Rc1, and even 16 0-0-0 comes into consideration.

14 exf6 Bxf6 15 Be3 Nc6 16 0-0-0+ Kc7



The results of 10 fxe5! and 11 f4! are more than satisfactory for White. His queenside majority is strong, whereas nothing remains of the Black's powerful centre. It only remains for White to complete his development somehow.

Exercise: There are several possible continuations that look attractive. What do you think Rubinstein played here?

Answer:

17 Bf4+

This move, forcing the black king to move onto the long diagonal, at the mercy of the pawn advances b4-b5 and c5-c6+, is very good, possibly even best, although Rubinstein later thought that 17 Nf4 was even stronger. They are possibly of similar strength, both with the main idea of pushing the queenside pawns.

Another possibility is to play 17 b5 at once, which both 17 Bf4+ and 17 Nf4 allow on the following move.

17 ... Kb7 18 g3

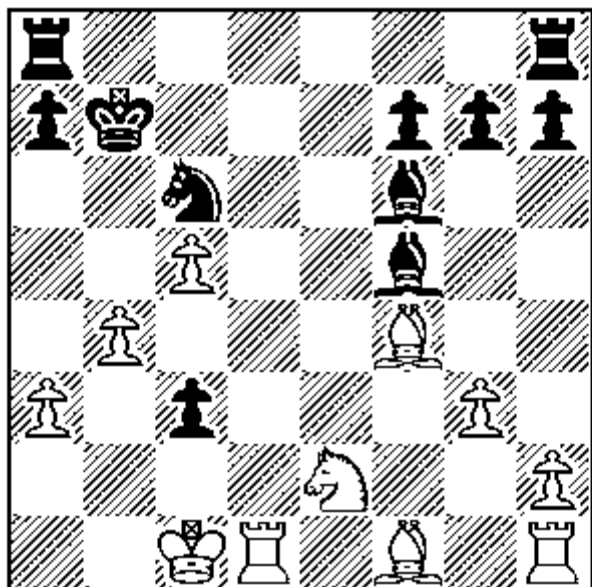
““Never rush”; faithful to his style, Rubinstein is unwilling to advance his queenside pawns further unless he can see that it brings decisive results. With this move, Rubinstein seeks to prove that the black king is very badly placed on the long diagonal, which there is no disputing. But in fact he could have exploited it in a more direct manner.

Here 18 b5! was objectively stronger; after 18 ... Na5 19 c6+ Kb6 20 Be3+, it turns out that White's pawns are not at all weak, since his pieces are subjecting the black king to a strong attack. Then 20 ... Kxb5?! is impossible, in view of 21 Nd4+ Ka4 (putting his head in the lion's mouth, but 21 ... Kb6 22 Nb3+ just wins a piece) 22 Bb5+ Kxa3 23 Kc2! and, with Black's king precariously placed and the a5-knight also in danger, it is not surprising to find that White is winning: after 23 ... Kb4 24 Rb1+ Kc5 25 Rhd1, the mating threats soon lead to a decisive gain of material.

It would be better (or at least less bad) to play 20 ... Kc7, but White's advantage is still overwhelming after 21 Nf4; for instance, 21 ... Bf5 22 Nd5+ Kc8 23 Bd3 and once again

White dominates the whole board.

18 ... Bf5!?



The most tenacious response; now after 19 b5 Na5, Black would be threatening mate on b3!

Exercise (difficult): This is one of the critical moments; what do you think is best for White here?

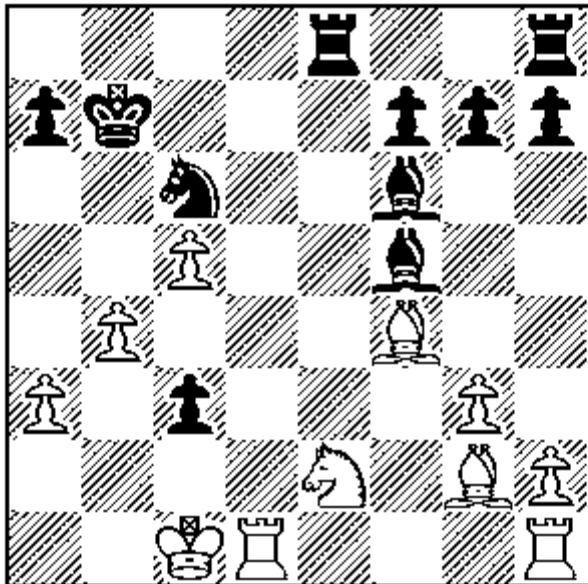
Answer:

19 Bg2

Consistent with his previous move, but once again Rubinstein slips up when it comes to concrete calculation.

Although the text move is certainly not bad, the immediate 19 b5! was again stronger. After 19 ... Na5 20 Bg2+ Kc8, the key move 21 Bd5! controls the b3-square and threatens Bxf7, with Nd4 also on the agenda. The lack of coordination among the black pieces is obvious.

19 ... Rae8!



After falling into a very bad position, Maróczy has started playing the most accurate moves. This rook no longer risks being incarcerated on a8, and Black now has the ideas of playing 20 ... Be4 or restraining the white pawns with 20 ... a6.

Exercise (difficult): Once again we are at a moment when there are several possibilities and calculation is important. What would you play here?

Answer:

20 b5?!

This mistimed advance loses the whole of White's advantage. The other candidate moves were 20 Nxc3 and 20 Rd6, both of which seem to be better than the text.

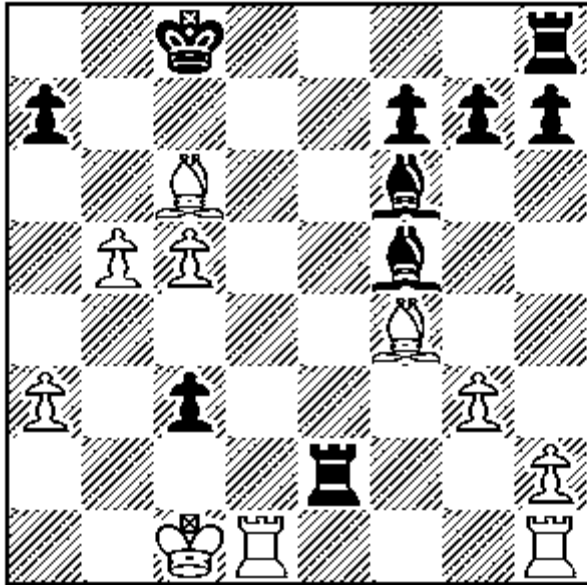
After 20 Nxc3! Bxc3 21 b5 Re2 22 Bxc6+ Kc8, rather than 23 Bd2 Rd8, the threat of ... Rc2+ can be parried by 23 Rd5!, vacating the d1-square, preparing b6-b7 and attacking the f5-bishop. This looks good enough for some advantage; for example, 23 ... Be4 24 b6! axb6 25 cxb6 Rb2 26 b7+ Rxb7 27 Bxb7+ Kxb7 28 Rd7+ and White will remain the exchange up, although there is still play in the position.

The quieter continuation 20 Rd6! looks good too, as after 20 ... Be4!, White can claim some advantage with 21 Rg1 or 21 Rd7+ Ka8 22 Rg1.

Exercise: Instead of 20 ... Be4, why can't Black take the knight on e2?

Answer: Because after 20 ... Rxe2? 21 Bxc6+ Kc8, White has the crushing move 22 Bb5!, followed by Ba6+. This resource is not possible with the game continuation, 20 b5, and that's a big difference in favour of playing 20 Rd6.

20 ... Rxe2 21 Bxc6+ Kc8



The situation has changed radically. Black has gained good counterplay against the opposing monarch and his pieces are just as active as White's.

Exercise: What do you think did Rubinstein played now?

Answer:

22 Rd5!

Rubinstein rises to the occasion and finds the only good move. There is no time to lose. This resource is necessary to defend against any of 22 ... Rc2+, 22 ... Rb2, or 22 ... Ra2.

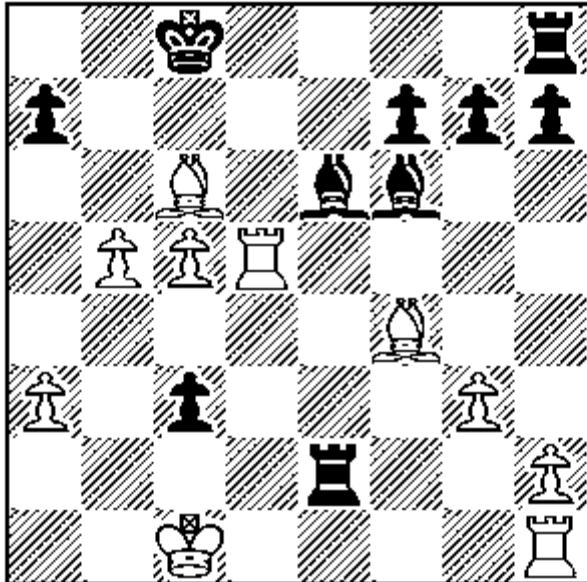
“This move creates tremendous offensive and defensive opportunities.” – Rubinstein.

22 ... Be6??

Exhausted from his excellent defensive efforts, Maróczy commits a single error and loses the game.

It was essential to play 22 ... Be4!, which might lead a drawish rook ending after various complications: 23 Rd7 Bxh1 24 Rxa7 Bxc6 25 bxc6 Be5 26 Bxe5 Rxe5 27 Ra8+ Kc7 27 Rxh8.

Alternatively, 23 b6 axb6 24 cxb6 Rb2 (or 24 ... Rc2+ first) 25 b7+ Rxb7 26 Bxb7+ Kxb7 27 Rd7+ reaches the same ending, where White is the exchange up, to that in the note to 20 Nxc3!, except that Black still has his c3-pawn, so White has no advantage.



Exercise (easy): How did Rubinstein now conclude the game?

Answer:

23 b6!

Of course; after everything we have seen, this advance is familiar to us. Here it takes place in far better circumstances than before, since here Black's light-squared bishop is missing from the b1-h7 diagonal.

23 ... axb6 24 cxb6 Rb2 25 Ra5! 1-0

With the black bishop on e6 instead of e4, where it would support ... Rb1 mate, White has time to bring this rook into the attack. Black has no defence.

Akiba Rubinstein's Best Results

Akiba (Akiva, Akiwa) Kiwelowicz Rubinstein (born Stawiski, Poland, December 1st 1880; died Antwerp, Belgium, March 15th 1961) learned to play chess relatively late, when he was somewhere between fourteen and eighteen years old, and before the age of twenty he decided devote himself professionally to the game. Rubinstein had the good fortune to move to Lodz (Poland), which at the time was an important centre for chess.

1903-08

Rubinstein drew 7-7 in his first match, in 1903, with Georg Salwe, a strong Lodz master whose career highlight was winning the 4th All-Russian Masters' Tournament.

He made his tournament debut in the 3rd All-Russian Championship, held in Kiev, September 1903, gaining a respectable fifth place; the event was won by Mikhail Chigorin.

Second match with Salwe, March-April 1904, won by Rubinstein 6-4 (?).

1st-2nd with Oldrich Duras in Barmen, August 1905.

Match with Jacques Mieses in October 1905, winning 3-0.

2nd-3rd with Benjamin Blumenfeld, behind Salwe, in the 4th All-Russian Championship in St Petersburg, January 1906.

1st in Lodz in April 1906 (ahead of Chigorin).

3rd in Ostend, June-July 1906, behind Karl Schlechter and Geza Maróczy.

In early 1907 (probably between January and April) Rubinstein won a sextangular double-round tournament held in Lodz, ahead of Dawid Daniuszewski (his contemporary Polish rival), Georg Rotlewi, Georg Salwe and others, scoring 8/10.

1st-2nd in Ostend, May-June 1907 with Ossip Bernstein, ahead of Mieses, Nimzowitsch, Teichmann, Duras etc.

His "crowning triumph", as Lasker called it: 1st place in Carlsbad, August-September 1907, ahead of Maróczy, Leonhardt, Nimzowitsch, Schlechter and many other strong masters.

Also in 1907, Rubinstein defeated Salwe 16-6 in their third match.

1st in the 5th All-Russian Championship, Lodz, 16th December 1907-19th January 1908, ahead of Simon Alapin, Salwe, Eugene Znosko-Borovsky etc. In this event he played the game now known as "Rubinstein's Immortal" against Rotlewi.

Match with Richard Teichmann in Vienna 1908; Rubinstein won 3½-2½.

Match with Marshall, October-November 1908; Rubinstein won 4½-3½.

1st in Lodz 1908, a triangular event of eight rounds, ahead of Marshall and Salwe.

1909-11: Candidate for the world title

In St Petersburg 1909, Rubinstein gained one of the greatest triumphs of his career, tied 1st-2nd with the World Champion Emanuel Lasker, whom he beat.

Match with Mieses in May 1909, Rubinstein winning 6-4.

1st in Vilnius 1909.

1st in Warsaw 1909.

2nd in the Warsaw Championship of 1910, behind Alexander Flamberg.

Match with Flamberg, Warsaw, May 1910, Rubinstein winning 4½-1½.

2nd in San Sebastian, February-March 1911, behind José Raúl Capablanca.

2nd in Carlsbad, August-September 1911, behind Teichmann.

1st in the Warsaw Championship, December 1911, three points ahead of Salwe and Flamberg.

1912: “Rubinstein’s Magical Year”

Between February and September 1912 Rubinstein took part in and won four strong tournaments and issued a challenge to the World Champion Emanuel Lasker in August 1912. Lasker accepted and negotiations began, but the match never materialized.

1st in San Sebastian, February-March 1912.

1st in Pistyan, May-June 1912.

1st-2nd with Duras in Breslau, July-August 1912.

1st in the All-Russian Championship in Vilnius, August-September 1912.

Rubinstein was absent from tournament play during the whole of 1913.

1914-19

Rubinstein scored only 50% in the preliminary phase of one of the strongest tournaments in history – St Petersburg, April-May 1914 – and failed to qualify for the final.

The First World War meant that Rubinstein played very little serious chess between 1914 and 1918.

His most outstanding success in that period was winning a match against Schlechter 3½-2½ in January 1918 in Berlin.

1920-31

In January-February 1920, Rubinstein won a match against Bogoljubow 6½-3½.

1st in Triberg, December 1921, ahead of Bogoljubow and Spielmann.

Rubinstein had no outstanding results in 1922-24.

2nd in Baden-Baden, April-May 1925, behind Alekhine, but ahead of Sämisch, Bogoljubow, Tartakower, Marshall, and many other strong masters.

1st-2nd with Nimzowitsch in Marienbad, May-June 1925, ahead of Marshall, Torre, Tartakower, Réti and other strong masters.

2nd in Berlin, November 1926, behind Bogoljubow, ahead of Grünfeld, Spielmann etc.

1st in Lodz, April-May 1927, ahead of Tartakower.

3rd/4th with Euwe in Bad Kissingen, August-September 1928, behind Bogoljubow and Capablanca, but ahead of Nimzowitsch, Réti, Tartakower, and other strong masters.

2nd in Budapest, August-September 1929, behind Capablanca, ahead of Tartakower.

1st in Rogaska Slatina, September-October 1929, ahead of Flohr, Maróczy etc.

3rd in San Remo 1930, behind Alekhine and Nimzowitsch, ahead of Bogoljubow, Yates, Ahues, Spielmann, Tartakower etc.

Rubinstein had his last great success on first board for Poland at the Hamburg Olympiad in July 1930, scoring +13 -0 =4 and helping Poland win the gold medal.

At the following Olympiad held in Prague in July 1931, Rubinstein once more played on board one for Poland, scoring + 3; this time Poland won the silver medal.

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