

A detailed illustration of a chessboard with various pieces. In the foreground, a large orange circle highlights a group of white pieces, including a king, queen, and several pawns. Within this orange circle, a smaller red circle highlights a specific white pawn. The background shows other chess pieces, including dark ones, on a checkered board.

Neil McDonald

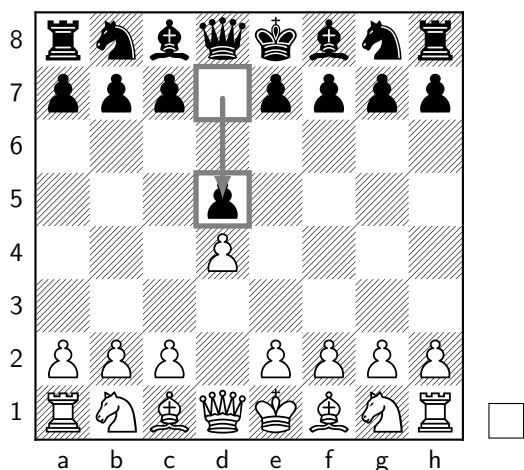
The Catalan

move by move

EVERYMAN CHESS

Introduction

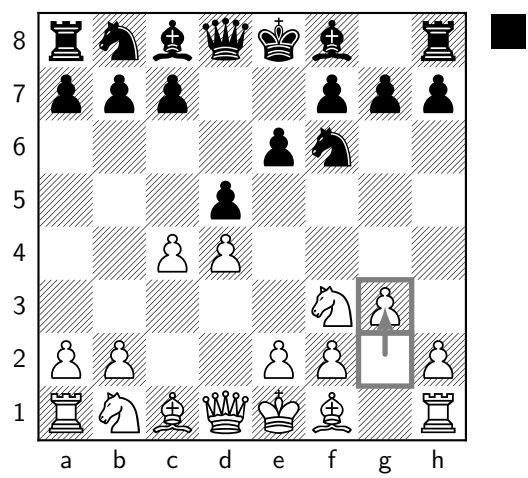
1 d4 d5



1... ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♗f3 d5 4 g3

2 c4 e6 3 ♗f3 ♗f6 4 g3 A kingside fianchetto by White is its defining feature. In contrast to the Queen's Gambit Declined, where Bd3 or Be2 is usually played, White will develop the bishop to g2. — There are a lot of beautiful positional ideas in the Catalan. You can only admire the way Kramnik and Giri and So and Caruana use the bishop on g2 like a magician's wand. The spells they cast mean that their opponents play a series of natural, half decent moves and find themselves in a lost position with no idea why. — The good thing for White in most lines of the Catalan Opening is that if he plays precisely, Black never quite equalizes - he is almost completely equal, but White's tiny advantage usually lingers on a long time, right until the endgame. It is a rather unpleasant affair for Black to be always a bit worse, and if he is careless his fears about his position can grow from slight anxiety to serious alarm. — Sometimes White can do everything right in the Catalan, but his advantage turns out to be of a symbolic rather than real nature. For

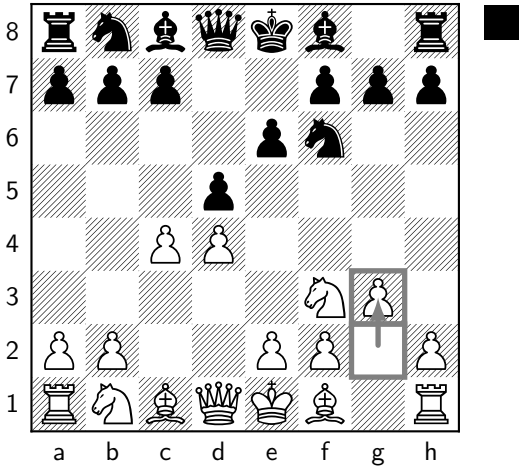
example, he obtains an endgame with a better pawn structure or a superior bishop, but a few vigilant moves by Black and it is time to agree a draw. Never mind: you can't win at chess unless your opponent gives you some help. There's always the next game. — Is there any drawback to the Catalan? Yes: abandon hope all ye who want to smash your opponents in 20 moves with a kingside attack! It can be done - there are some nice sacrificial attacks in this book - but, well, it requires Black to stir up trouble for himself by responding in risky style. — The bishop on g2 is pointing the wrong way if you want to get at your opponent's king. Some players are consummate positional players, but are easily bowled over by direct attacks. You aren't giving yourself the chance to exploit this weakness in the Catalan. Instead you are planning a rook invasion on c7 in 10 moves' time. — It is, of course, a question of style and what you are looking for from the opening. If you want a safe game with few losing chances and a small plus, then the Catalan is for you. If you like grinding out wins in rook and pawn endgames it will suit you fine. — Despite the rather gloomy prognosis for Black above, I have examined some interesting counter measures for him. Almost all of the world elite are prepared to defend against the Catalan and have introduced many weapons against it. — This book aims to cover all the important ideas in every variation of the Catalan. Inevitably there will be gaps as it is such a wide, strategically complex and ever developing opening. I can only apologise in advance for any omissions.



*

Move Orders & Transpositions

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 g3



1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 g3 d5 3 ♗g2 e6 4 O-O ♗e7 5 c4
O-O 6 d4 dxc4 7 ♘e5

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 g3

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♗g2 dxc4 5 ♖a4+
♘bd7 6 ♖xc4 a6 7 ♖c2! b5

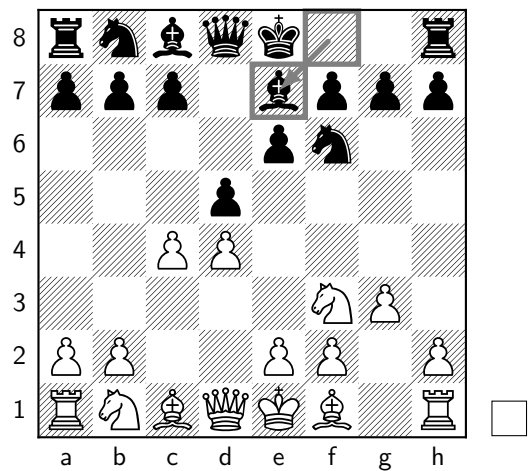
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♗g2 ♗b4+ 5 ♗d2
♗e7

*

1: The Closed Centre

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 g3 when Black chooses between:

4... ♞e7



4... ♞b4+ 5 ♞d2 ♞e7

*

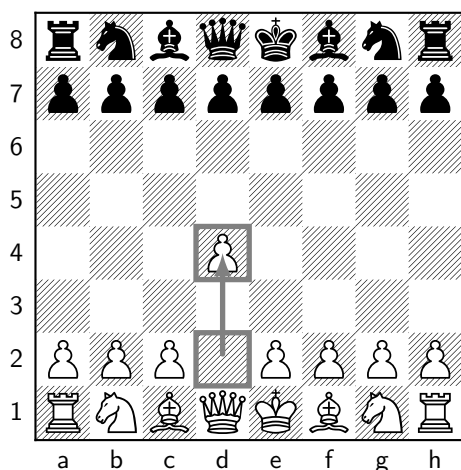
White: Naiditsch, A.
 Black: Kopylov, M.
 Opening ECO: A14
 Result: 1-0

1: Basel

2016

1 d4

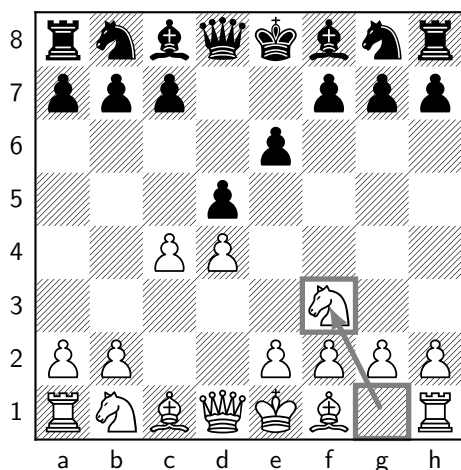
The Catalan can be reached through various move orders.



1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♗f3 d5 4 g3

1 c4 e6 2 g3 d5 3 ♖g2 ♘f6 4 ♗f3 ♗e7 5 O-O O-O 6 d4 c6

1...d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♗f3



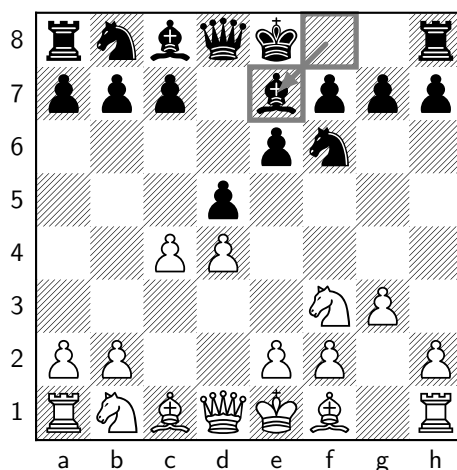
3 g3

3...♘f6 4 g3

The Catalan differs from the Queen's Gambit in that the bishop is developed to g2.

4...♗e7

Many top players are happy to defend Black's position after this modest move.



4...♗b4+ 5 ♗d2 ♗e7

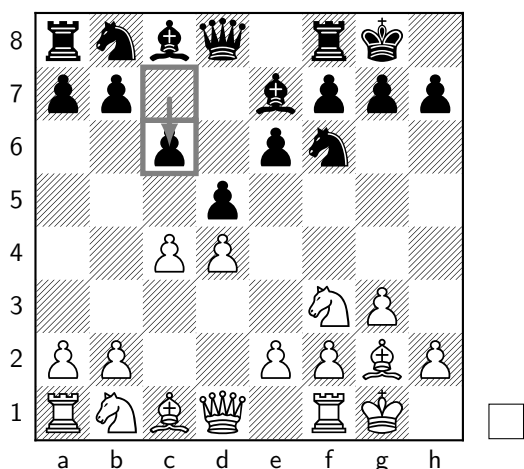
4...c5

5 ♗g2 O-O 6 O-O 6 ♗bd2

6 ♖c2

6...c6

Black has achieved a lot after only six moves. His king is safe and he has a solid centre with no weaknesses.



6...b6 7 cxd5 exd5 8 ♖c3 ♙b7 9 ♗e5 ♘a6
10 ♙f4 c5 11 ♚c1

7 ♙c2

QUESTION: Is this a strong and sensible move? — ANSWER: Yes! On c2 the white queen defends the c4-pawn, ruling out any pawn snatch with ...d5xc4 followed by ...b7-b5 clinging on to the material. Also thinking about the c-file, in this type of structure Black's so-called freeing move is ...c7-c5. If he can carry out this pawn break without incurring any immediate disadvantage he has good chances to equalize. The queen's presence on c2 deters the advance. Speaking more generally, the white queen vacates the d1-square for a rook, probably the one on f1, to support the d4-pawn. And, finally, she also aims at the e4-square in support of White's plan which is discussed below.

7...b6

With this reply Black continues his logical scheme of development: his queen's bishop will go to b7, then the knight on b8 will be developed to d7 (jumping ahead I should say this looks like a mistake see the note to Black's 9th, below), and the rook from a8 will be shifted to c8. Finally he will be ready to strike out with the aforementioned ...c7-c5, which will be all the more effective in view of the white queen's somewhat exposed position on c2.

8 ♘bd2!

One of the trademarks of the Catalan is that White avoids a quick development of his queen's knight. He waits to see what is the best square for it. In this example Naiditsch plans to use the horse to support the pawn advance e2-e4, but doesn't want to allow ...d5xc4 without the chance to recapture. Therefore he puts the knight on d2 rather than c3, which would interfere with his queen's defence of the c4-pawn. — We shall see that in certain variations White chooses to play Nc3 rather than Nbd2. However, these tend to be less popular, more speculative tries for advantage. Or perhaps White was denied the chance to be flexible as he chose c3 for the knight before he knew for sure it was going to be a Catalan. — A delayed development of the queen's knight, which probably goes to d2 in the end, is far more characteristic of the Catalan.

8...♙b7 9 e4

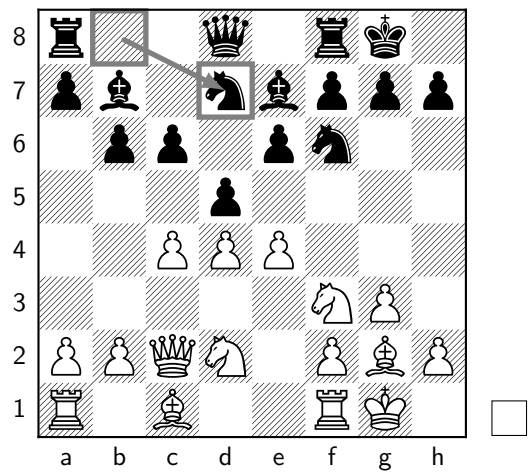
QUESTION: I'm still slightly confused why 4...Bb4+ 5 Bd2 Be7 is recommended instead as the correct procedure for Black. After all, he 'gifts' White the developing move Bd2. How big a difference would it make to the game a slight or big change? — ANSWER: We can debate whether the white bishop is better on d2 than c1 White might find a way to justify its placing on d2, or find a use for the vacated c1-square. However, the main point is that White's smooth build-up with Nbd2 and e2-e4 would have been obstructed because his knight is denied the d2-square. This seems to significantly outweigh any benefits for White in having shifted his bishop to d2 'for free'. — As a rule, if White can achieve the e2-e4 advance before Black can respond ...d5xc4 and ...c7-c5 in a safe way he will have a good game. — EXERCISE: What do you now think is the best move for Black out of the following choice: 9...dxe4, 9...Na6 and 9...Nbd7 - ?

9...♘bd7?!

The game move 9. ...Nbd7 proves one rou-

tine move too many.

Naturally Black would love to exchange queens to escape the danger of an attack on his king, but this and his next move prove an utter waste of time.



9...dxe4 10 ♖xe4 ♗bd7 11 ♜d1 c5? 12 ♗xf6+ ♕xf6 13 ♗g5! ♕xg5 14 ♕xb7 ♜b8 15 dxc5! ♜xb7 16 c6 ♜c7 17 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 18 ♕xg5 ♖xg5 19 cxd7

9...♗a6! 10 a3! c5! 11 exd5 exd5 12 ♜d1 ♜c8 13 dxc5 ♗xc5 14 b4 ♗e6 15 ♕b2 dxc4 16 ♗xc4 ♖c7 17 ♜ac1 ♖b8 18 ♖e2 ♖a8 19 ♗e3

10 e5

Thanks to Black's passive ninth move, White is able to establish a stable wedge in the centre whilst keeping Black's bishop on b7 shut in.

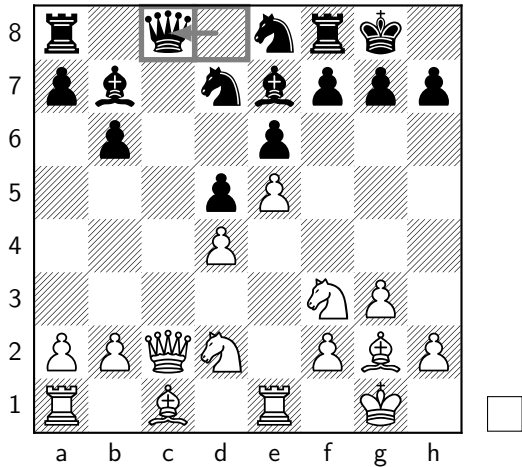
10...♗e8 11 cxd5 cxd5

The black knights are deprived of the f6-square, making the idea of a direct kingside assault attractive to White.

12 ♜e1

White's so-called mysterious rook move had two purposes. Firstly, the rook deters any challenge to White's pawn dominance in the centre with ...f7-f6 by putting indirect pressure on e6. And, secondly, it vacates the f1-square for the knight on d2, allowing White to build up pressure on the kingside and restrain Black's activity along the c-file.

12...♖c8?



12...♜c8 13 ♖d1 ♖c7 14 ♗f1 ♖c2 15 ♖xc2 ♜xc2 16 ♗e3 ♜c8 17 ♕d2

13 ♖d1

The queen doesn't mind being pushed back home as the space advantage on e5 is permanent. Besides if the knight on f3 moves out of the way she has a direct route into attack on the kingside via the g4- or h5-squares.

13...♖c6 14 ♗f1 ♜c8

EXERCISE: What move thwarts Black's plans and adds vigour to White's own? — ANSWER:

15 ♗e3!

The knight not only prevents 15...Qc2, forcing the unwelcome exchange of queens after all, but also prepares to charge to g4 to lead a kingside assault. — It's obvious Black lost a tempo with ...Qc8, ...Qc6 and ...Rc8 when he could have gone ...Rc8 and ...Qc7 in two moves, In that case White's knight wouldn't have been in time getting to e3 to stop Qc2.

15...b5 16 h4

A move in the style of the King's Indian Attack. White's h-pawn could be used as a battering ram to break up the black king-

side with h5-h6, or remain on h4 and support the attacking move Ng5.

16... ♖b6

QUESTION: It seems Black is ready to eliminate White's knight with 17...Nc4 and 18...Nxe3, when the idea of ...Qc2 reappears. What measures should White take against this?

17 b3!

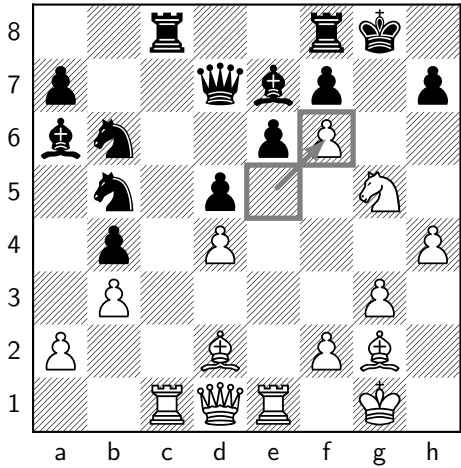
ANSWER: After this simple precautionary move Black's queenside counterplay is hamstrung.

17... b4 18 ♖d2 ♗c7 19 ♖c1 ♔d7 20 ♗g5

White is justified in starting an attack against the black king with potential sacrifices as Naiditsch is rewarded for his careful strategic play. Black is deprived of activity, which means he has a queen, three minor pieces and a rook sitting on the left side of the board, cut off from going to the aid of their king by the blocked centre, and unable to distract the white pieces from going all in against the underdefended black king.

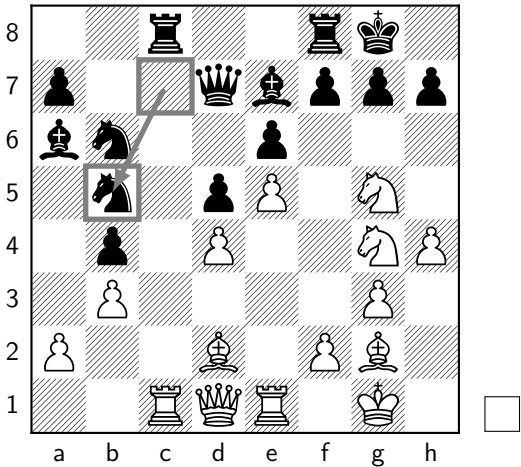
20... ♖a6 21 ♗g4 ♗b5

QUESTION: can you see White's winning move?



23 e×f6 ♖×f6 24 ♔h5 h6 25 ♔×h6 ♖×g5 26 ♔×g5+ ♗h7 27 ♖×c8 ♖×c8 28 ♔h5+ ♗g8 29 ♖h6 f5 30 ♔g6+ ♗h8 31 ♖×f8

1-0



21... ♖d3

22 ♗f6+!

ANSWER!

White: Giri, A.

2: Saint Louis

Black: Grischuk, A.

Opening ECO: D02

2015

Result: 1-0

1 ♖f3

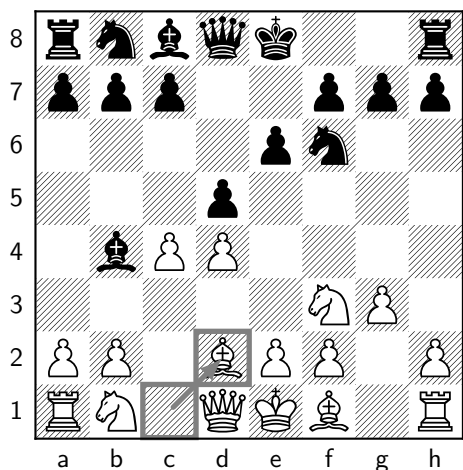
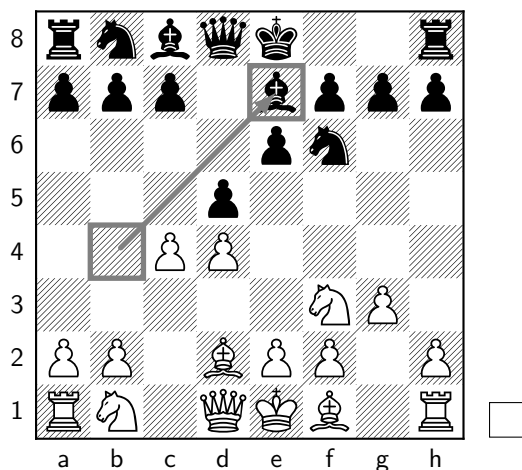
Giri's move order in this game is discussed in the Introduction to the book.

1...d5 2 d4 ♘f6 3 c4 e6 4 g3 ♕b4+!

Black intends to keep a pawn on d5, but before putting his bishop on e7 he gives a check.

5 ♗d2

This is by far the most popular response to Black's check.



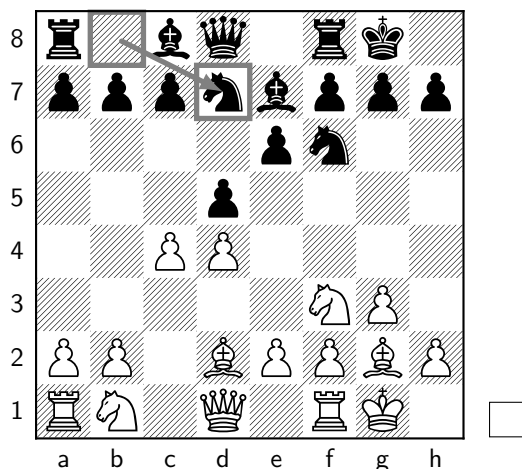
5 ♘c3

5 ♘bd2

5... ♗e7

5... ♗d6 6 ♗g2 O-O 7 O-O c6 8 b3 ♘bd7 9 ♘c3 ♖e8 10 ♖c2 dxc4 11 bxc4 e5 12 e3 exd4 13 exd4

6 ♗g2 O-O 7 O-O ♘bd7



7...c6 8 ♖c2 b6 9 ♖d1 ♗a6 10 b3 ♘bd7 11 ♗f4

7...dxc4? 8 ♖c2 a6 9 ♖xc4 b5 10 ♖c2 ♗b7 11 ♖c1

8 ♔c2 c6

With his previous move White defends c4, positions the queen to support a possible e2-e4 central advance, and clears the d1-square for use by a rook to bolster the centre. Black strengthens his centre in response and gets his c-pawn off a potentially vulnerable square on c7. He has two basic aims: to develop his queen's bishop, and thereafter to achieve the freeing advance ...c6-c5. He hopes to carry out both operations without incurring any serious weaknesses in his pawn structure. In the Catalan, this is easier said than done.

9 ♖d1

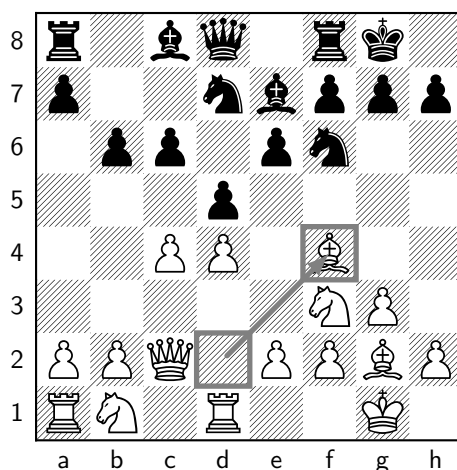
QUESTION: What exactly is the point of this move? — ANSWER: White's move is an example of what Nimzowitsch termed a 'Mysterious Rook Move': the rook goes to a blocked line because White anticipates that Black will try to free himself with ...c6-c5 or with ..d5xc4 when lines will open up. Paradoxically in the game the rook only becomes useful on d1 thanks to Black's help. Though if Black played passively White could always aim to lever the centre open with a well-planned e2-e4 advance. — The move 9 Rd1 might also be described as a useful waiting move. White knows that Black needs to develop his queen's bishop: therefore he makes a good centralizing move in anticipation of Black loosening himself on the c-file.

9... b6

Of course, the bishop can't sit on c8 forever, but now White has a target on the c-file. At first glance this might seem a very simple position: White will exert some queen-side pressure with straightforward attacking moves, while Black will respond with solid defensive moves. Common sense will prevail with both players making decisions according to classical precepts. — However, the deeper we look, the more we realize this is actually an extremely difficult position. There are many subtle points which have been tested in top level games. For example, Black must consider: in what scenarios should the bishop

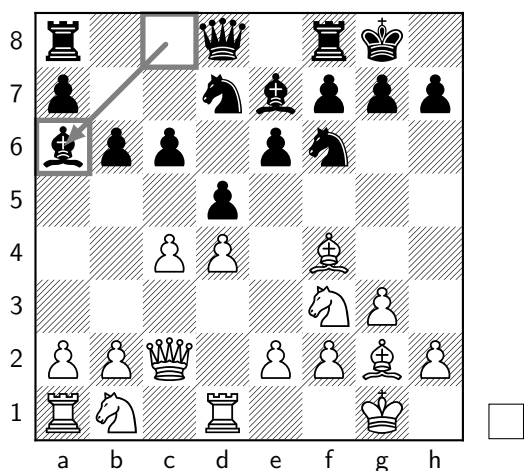
go to a6 rather than b7? Should I play ...a7-a5 - ? When should I concede the centre with ...d5xc4 - ? And if White plays Bf4, should I drive the bishop back with ...Nh5 - ? — And for White there are questions such as: should I put the dark-squared bishop on c3 or f4? When is it preferable to develop the knight from b1 to c3 rather than to d2? Should I play Ne5 - ? In what cases is it feasible to play a2-a4 to ram the black queenside with a4-a5 - ? — Any of these decisions will have an enormous effect on the rest of the game. White will lose his advantage with a couple of imprecise moves; Black might end up being tortured for another 50 moves because he makes a passive move with his bishop. Hopefully the discussion which follows will answer these questions.

10 ♖f4



10 b3

10... ♗a6



10...a5 11 ♖e5! ♜b7 12 ♘c3

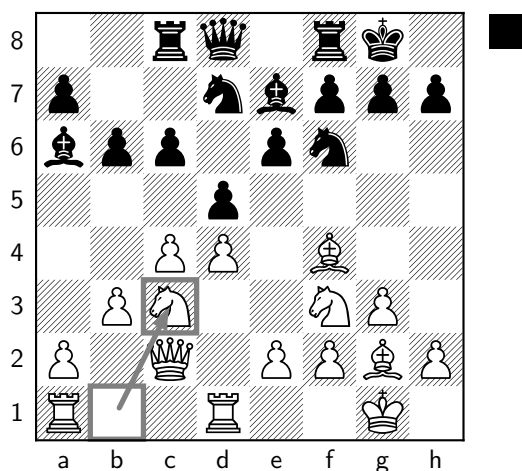
10...♜b7 11 ♘e5 ♘h5 12 ♜d2 ♘hf6 13 cxd5 cxd5 14 ♘c6 ♜xc6 15 ♖xc6 ♜c8 16 ♖b5 ♘e8 17 ♖d3 ♘d6 18 b3 ♘f6 19 ♘c3 ♖d7 20 f3 ♘f5 21 e3 h5! 22 ♘e2 ♜fd8 23 ♜ac1 g5!? 24 e4 dxe4 25 fxe4 ♜xc1 26 ♜xc1 ♘xd4! 27 ♘xd4 ♜c5 28 ♜xg5 ♖xd4+ 29 ♖xd4 ♜xd4 30 ♜xd4 ♜xd4+

11 b3 ♜c8

Strategically speaking the position is very tense. Black is ready to advance ...c6-c5 and achieve at least equality if White plays with insufficient energy.

12 ♘c3!

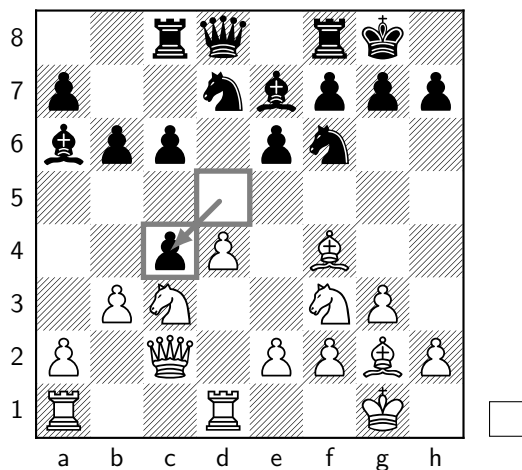
Gambiting the c4-pawn to keep Black under lock and key. Natural moves are not sufficient.



12 ♘bd2 c5! 13 dxc5 ♜xc5

12...dxc4

Jumping ahead, White plans to build up his centre with e2-e4 and then answer ...Nh5 with Be3.



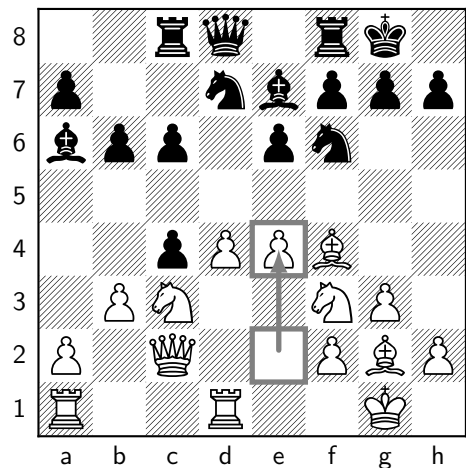
12...♘h5 13 ♜c1! f5 14 e3

12...c5? 13 e4!? cxd4 14 exd5! exd5 15 ♘xd4 ♜c5 16 cxd5 ♘g4 17 h3 ♖f6 18 ♘e4 ♖g6 19 ♘xc5 ♖xc2 20 ♘xc2 ♜xc5 21 ♘b4

13 e4!

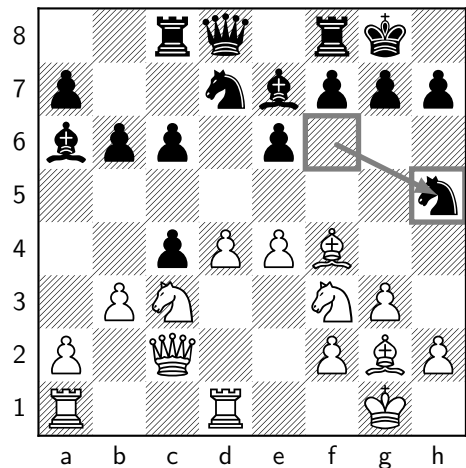
White builds up his initiative in the centre. If you have looked at the analysis given after 10...Ba6 above you'll be aware of the importance of the d5-square as a pivot point

for the black knight once it has been vacated on f4.
by ...d5xc4. Therefore it is important for White to rule out ...Nd5.



13 e4 c5? 14 d5 exd5 15 e5 Nh5 16 Nxf4
Nxf4 17 gxf4 Ke8 18 Sh3!

13...Nh5



13...cxb3? 14 axb3 Sb7 15 Rxa7

13...Sb4 14 Nd2!

13...b5 14 bxc4 bxc4

14 Se3

Naturally White doesn't want to be deprived of his dark-squared bishop by an exchange

14...Nhf6

QUESTION: Why does Black make the bishop go back to e3 and then return the knight to f6? — ANSWER: We have already seen that forcing moves such as 13...c5 or 13...cxb3 don't work for Black. There aren't any useful developing moves for him either. And so believing that his pieces are on optimum squares already, Grischuk stands his ground, giving up as tempo to force back White's bishop to e3 which is a worse square for it than f4. The move ...Ng4 might be handy for Black in the future, and so Giri replies by defending this square with a pawn. The fact that this is the best move White can come up with in reply to 13...Nh5 and 14...Nhf6 shows that Black hasn't really lost anything by giving up a tempo.

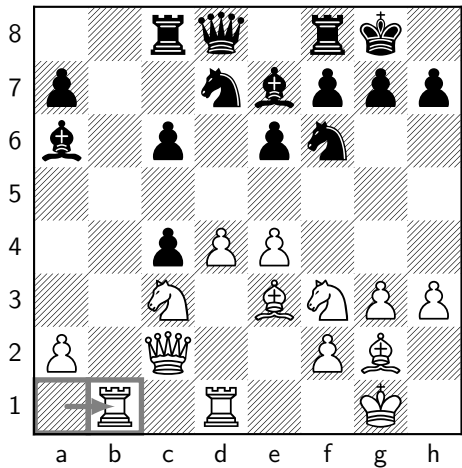
15 h3 b5

Black bites the bullet and defends his c4-pawn. If he 'passes' White could force his hand with 16 Nd2.

16 bxc4 bxc4

The obvious plan for White is to try to pick up the c4-pawn at some point and leave Black with a broken queenside pawn structure. However, it is not at all clear how this can be done without letting Black break out with a well-timed ...c6-c5 move.

17 Rab1



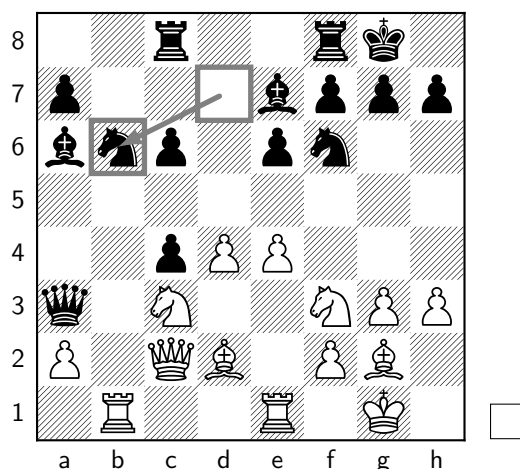
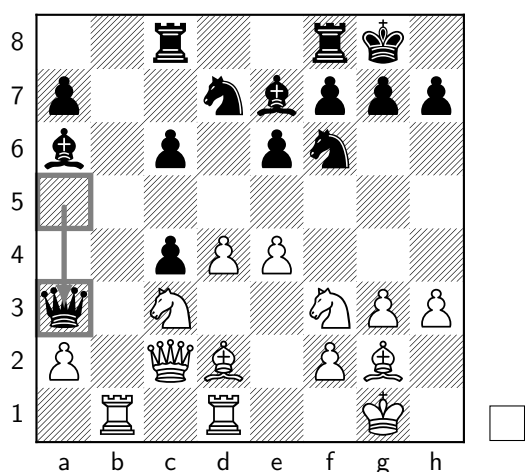
17 ♖a4?! ♜b5! 18 ♖x a7 ♜a8 19 ♖b7 ♖a5

17... ♖a5

Quite a good idea as it makes White's bishop retreat a further square to d2.

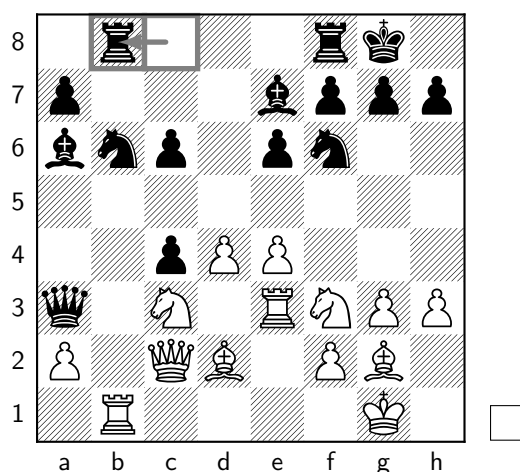
18 ♜d2 ♖a3?

This, however, is a serious mistake.



19... ♜b8 20 ♜e3 ♖a5 21 e5 ♜d5? 22 ♜x d5
♖x d5 23 ♜g5

20 ♜e3 ♜b8?



18... ♖c7 19 ♜f4 ♖a5 20 ♜d2 ♖c7

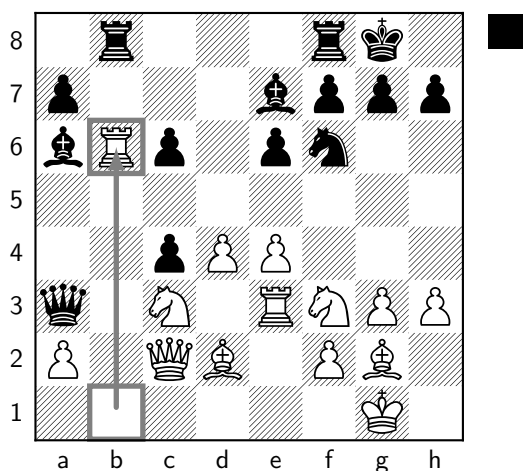
19 ♜e1!

Grischuk had been playing very slowly and was unfamiliar with all the subtle points of this variation. He must have underestimated this quiet rook move which will bring the rook to the third rank to terrorize the black queen.

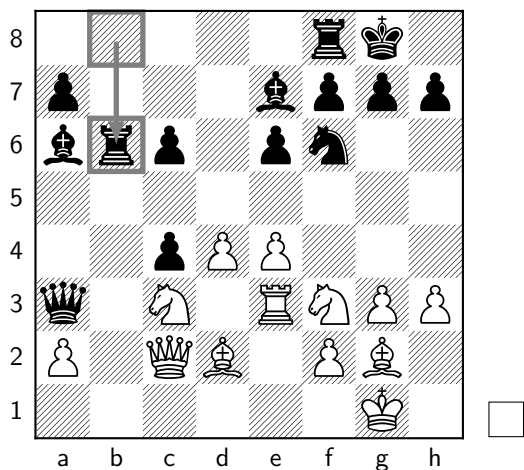
19... ♜b6

20... ♜fd7 21 ♜d5 ♖d6 22 ♜x e7+ ♖x e7 23
♜c1! ♜fd8 24 ♜a3 ♜b5 25 ♜a5! h6 26 a4

21 ♜x b6!



21 ♖d5 ♔d6 22 ♖xb6 ♜xb6 23 e5
21... ♜xb6

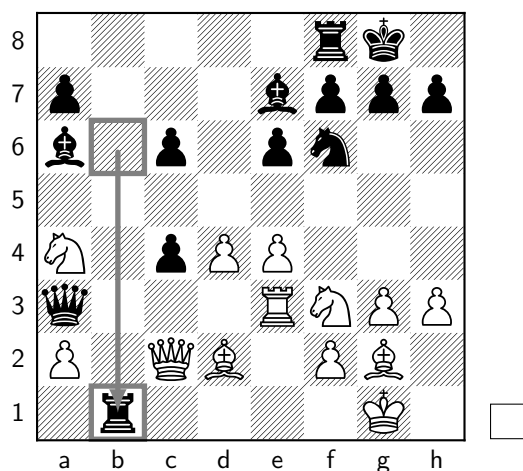


21... axb6 22 e5 ♘d7 23 ♘b1!

22 ♘a4

Finally uncovering an attack on the black queen.

22... ♜b1+



22... ♔d6 23 e5

23 ♔h2 c3

Grischuk uses all his resources to extricate himself from immediate disaster.

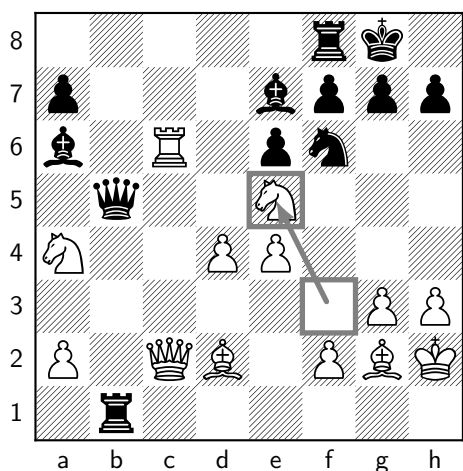
24 ♜xc3 ♔b4 25 ♜xc6 ♔b5

Now the Russian Grandmaster is actually the exchange up for a pawn, but his pieces remain awkwardly placed. In particular the rook is stranded on b1 and the queen is in grave danger of being overloaded as she has to keep both the bishop on a6 and the rook on b1 defended. — QUESTION: What is Black's counter threat? Can White ignore it and win material at once? If not, how does he safeguard his position and increase the pressure?

— ANSWER:

26 ♘e5!

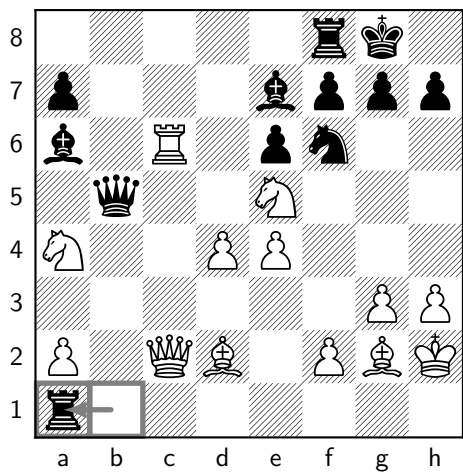
Black's threat was 26...Bb7 when if the rook retreats, 27...Bxe4 causes chaos in the white camp. The game move is excellent as it improves the coordination of the white forces and adds the defence of the bishop on g2 to e4, so ruling out any future ...Nxe4 tricks.



26 ♖c3

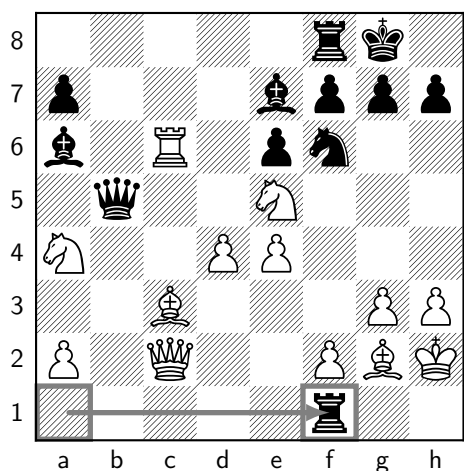
26 ♜x a6? ♙x a6 27 ♙x b1 ♙x a4

26... ♜a1



26... ♙b7 27 ♖c3 ♜b2 28 ♖x b5 ♜x c2 29 ♜x c2

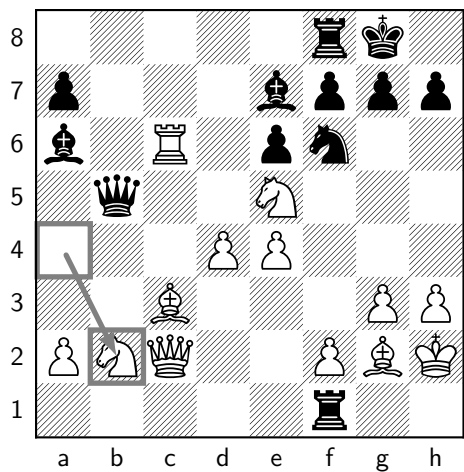
27 ♙c3 ♜f1



27... ♜b1 28 ♖b2 ♜a1 29 ♖bc4

28 ♖b2!

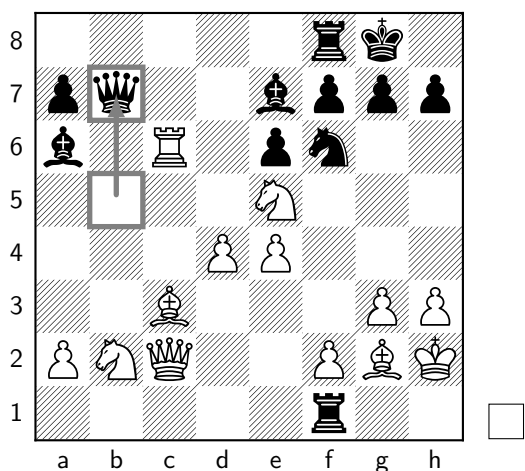
A quiet move that was very hard for Grischuk to meet in his habitual time trouble. It threatens 29 Nbc4 when Black's queen can no longer keep both a6 and f1 defended.



28 ♙x f1? ♙x f1

28... ♙b7

EXERCISE: How does White close the trap on the black rook on f1?



28... ♕e2 29 ♖×e2 ♗×e2 30 ♗×f1 ♗×f1 31 f3

29 ♖×a6!

ANSWER!

29... ♖×a6 30 ♘bc4 ♘×e4 31 ♗×e4

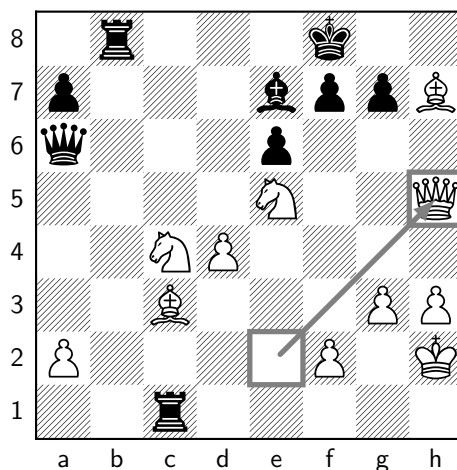
The game is most easily decided by a direct assault on the kingside,

33 ♕e2! ♖c1

Grischuk must have been heartily sick of shunting his rook along the eighth rank.

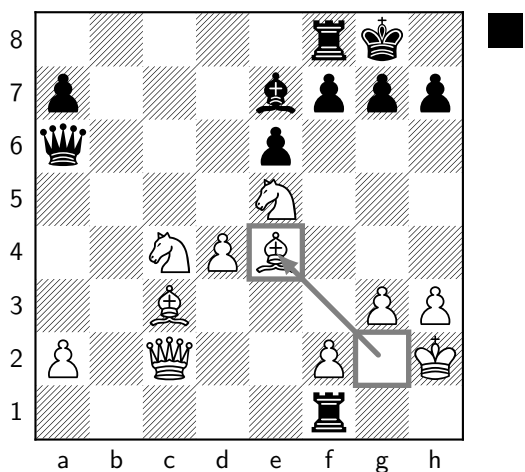
34 ♕h5

The attack on f7 is decisive.



34 ♕h5 g6 35 ♕h6+

1-0



31 ♗×f1 ♘×c3 32 ♕×c3

31... ♖b8 32 ♗×h7+ ♔f8

Three minor pieces are stronger than two rooks, and here White also has a decisive attack. To finish the game off Giri just has to get his queen on to a square where she leads the onslaught against the black king.

3: Stavanger

Opening ECO: E11

2015

Result: 1-0

**♔c8 14 ♖ac1 ♙c6 15 dxc5 bxc5 16 cxd5 exd5
17 ♘h4 ♜e8 18 ♘f5 ♙f8 19 ♙f4**

11 ♖c3 ♗b7

QUESTION: Since Black puts his bishop on b7, has 10...a5 proved irrelevant?



10...a5



10... ♖a6 11 a4! c5 12 ♘a3!? ♙b7 13 ♚b2



12 **bd2**

ANSWER: Not at all! Topalov's feint to play ...Ba6 means that Giri has been dissuaded from 11 Nc3 and opted for 11 Bc3, so his knight will be developed to the inferior d2-square. — Intending 13 e4 to gain space and so provoking Black's reply.

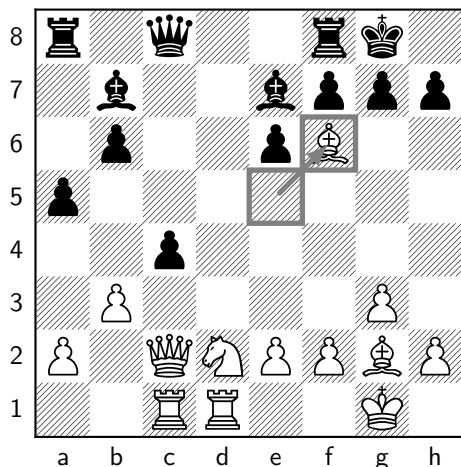
12...c5 13 e5

Giri clears away the centre pawns, after which Black is almost equal but not quite equal – and we know all the suffering that means for him in the Catalan.

13...cxd4 14 ♙xd4 ♜xe5 15 ♙xe5 ♚c8

The queen moves away from a potential pin on the d-file and dissolves a real pin on d5 by guarding the bishop on b7.

16 ♜ac1 dxc4 17 ♙xf6



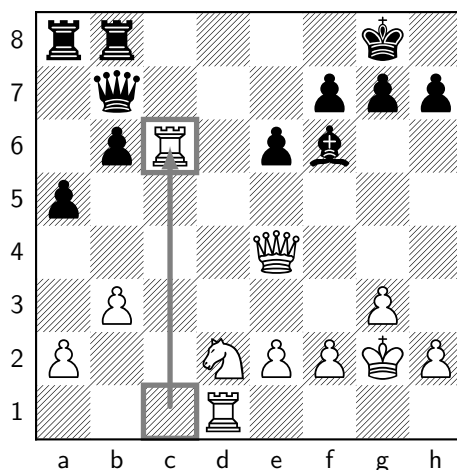
17 ♙xc4 ♙xg2 18 ♙xg2 ♚b7+

17... ♙xf6 18 ♙xc4 ♙xg2 19 ♙xg2 ♚b7+ 20 ♙e4 ♜fb8

EXERCISE: Take the chance to examine this position and try to list the factors that favour White. Which of these is White's best plan? (a) Play Rc6 to double up rooks on the c-file. (b) Exchange queens and then bring the knight into the attack with Ne4. (c) Fix Black's pawns on dark squares with a2-a4 followed by exchanging queens then Nc4. — ANSWER: White is slightly better. First we notice that he has control of the c-file. Less obvious is the fact that the white knight is stronger here than the black bishop. — Everything else being equal, it is usually better to have a bishop in an endgame, but here White's pawns are solid and compact. There is nothing for Black's bishop to attack as White's queenside pawns are safely on light squares. — Meanwhile Black's pawns on a5 and b6 are slightly fragile. Despite the knight's superiority, Giri would be more than happy to exchange his knight for the bishop if in doing so he ties down Black's rooks to the defence of their queenside pawns. — If you

put Black's pawn back on a7 then it is difficult to see any advantage for White. If you put the pawns on a6 and b5 it also looks equal. However, with the pawns on a5 and b6 as in the game, the b6-pawn is slightly vulnerable. It can be attacked in the long term with Rc6 or Nc4. If Black advances it to b5 then it remains open to attack with Rc5. Then the further advance b3-b4 would leave Black with a weak pawn on a5 that could be attacked with Rc5 and Nc4. — It might seem a tiny, almost nebulous advantage for White in the diagram position and, indeed, Topalov is very close to equality, but as you will see the former world number one rated player was unable to defend it. If you play the Catalan you have to believe in small advantages. It is a question of having patience and self-belief.

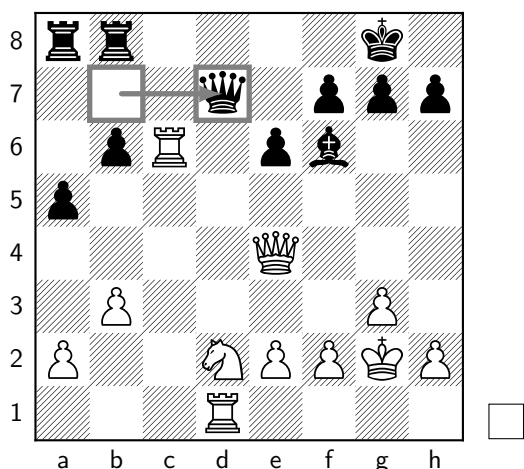
21 ♜c6



21 a4 b5 22 axb5 ♙xb5

21... ♙d7

An excellent riposte.



21... ♔d7 22 ♖×b6? ♜d8 23 ♖c6 ♜ac8 24 ♜×c8 ♜×c8 25 ♜b1 ♜d7

22 ♖cc1

Most players hate to lose face by admitting they have made a mistake or been outfoxed by the opponent. They press on regardless with a plan, even when it leads them into disaster or, as here, the loss of advantage. In fact this is one of the main ways that strong players lose games. There is a proverb that Russian authors love to quote: 'Once you've said A, you have to say B'. It is the equivalent of the English expression 'In for a penny, in for a pound'. However, having said 'A' with 21 Rc6, Giri has the strength of mind not to say 'B' with 22 Rxb6.

22... ♖b7 23 ♖×b7

Correcting his imprecise 21st move. This finally confirms that in the exercise at move 20, the right answer was 'b'. Though don't worry too much if you didn't choose this plan as it took Giri two goes to find it!

23...♖×b7 24 ♘e4

A paradox. The best square for the white knight is c4. Therefore White moves it to e4! The point is the knight can take a scenic route to c4, disrupting the Black pieces in the process.

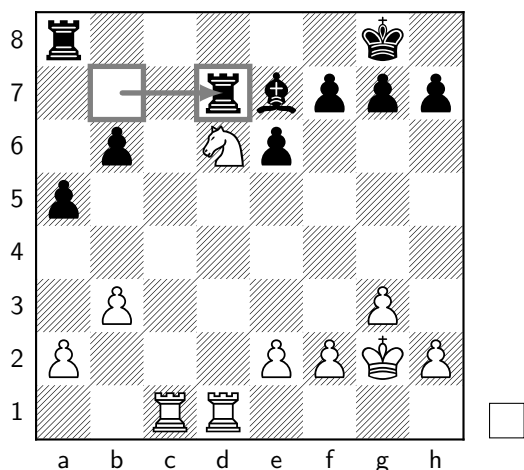
24... ♖e7

Otherwise, White can break up Black's kingside with Nxf6+ gxf6, then put his rook on

c6, leaving Black with a gloomy defence.

25 **d6** **d7**

Likewise Black faces a miserable defence after Bxd6 Rxb6. Capablanca said you should make your opponent use his rooks to defend pawns in endgames .



25... ♖×d6 26 ♜×d6

26  **c4**

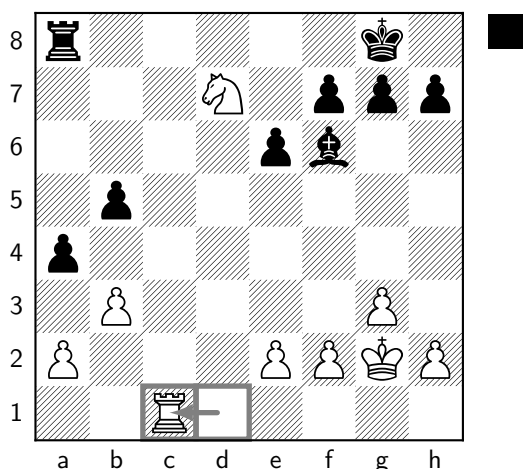
The knight arrives at c4 having cajoled the black rook into moving away from the defence of b6.

**26...♖×d1 27 ♖×d1 b5 28 ♘e5 ♙f6 29 ♘d7
a4**

It looks like Topalov has made a lot of progress. There isn't much to fear in the endgame after 30 Nxf6+ gxf6: Black would exchange with ...a4xb3 and then after a2xb3 attack b3 with ...Ra3 before White can organize an attack on the b5-pawn with Rd7 and Rb7.

30 ♖c1

A simple but vital move.



30 ♖c1 a×b3 31 a×b3 ♖a3 32 ♖c8+

30...a×b3 31 a×b3 ♗e7 32 ♖c7 ♖d8 33 ♖b7 ♗d6

If Black were obliged to play ...b5-b4, the white knight could retreat via b6 and c4, with the plan of Na5 and Nc6, picking up the pawn. Alternatively, the white king might join the attack on the pawn, eventually reaching c4. But as things stand, attack and defence have reached an equilibrium on the queenside: the b5-pawn can't be directly defended. On the other hand, the white rook has to stay guarding the knight. If the horse is moved to b6 it blocks the attack on b4. And besides, how can the knight escape as the squares a4, c4 and d5 are all guarded by Black's pawns? — EXERCISE: It looks as if Topalov has set up an unbreakable defensive formation, but he has reckoned without Giri's plan. What can White do to improve his position? — ANSWER:

34 g4

It turns out that Black's set-up is impregnable to White's pieces, but not to White's pawns. Club players are often in too much of a hurry. In looking for ways to land blows with their pieces, they miss the chance to wear down their opponent slowly with their pawns. And yet how often do you see a strategy that doesn't require the use of pawns at some point? — Giri plans to push his king-

side pawns forward with moves like e2-e3, f2-f4, h2-h4-h5 and g4-g5, etc. The pawns can be supported by the king. If holes appear in the black kingside structure, such as if h5-h6 eliminates or displaces the g7-pawn, then the white knight can escape via f6, when b5 drops or is forced to advance to b4, after which it becomes a prey to the white knight and rook. Alternatively, once he has a pawn on f4 and his king on e4, White has the option of Ne5, again rescuing his knight and leaving the b5-pawn in grave danger.

34...h5

It is very unpleasant to just sit and wait for White's attack. Therefore Topalov lashes out. With the game move he wants to reduce the pawn front on the kingside everything else being equal this will increase his drawing chances. He also clears the h7-square for his king.

35 g×h5

Black probably underestimated this capture.

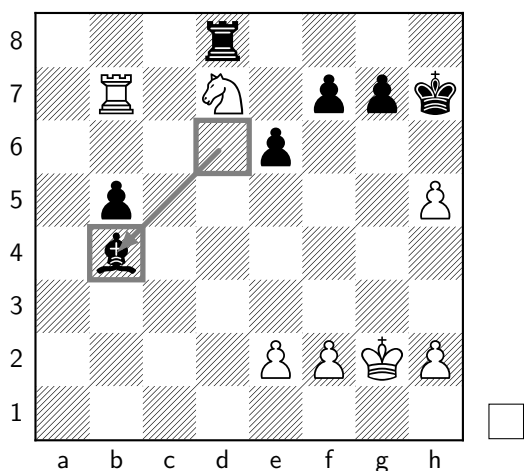
35...♔h7

If nothing happens Black will play ...Kh6 and ...f7-f5, and then ...Kxh5 (he plays ...f7-f5 so that Rxb5+ doesn't come with check). Black would then have a good game. White therefore needs a way to get his knight from d7 so that Rxb5 becomes possible.

36 b4!

A brilliant move. It looks totally counter-intuitive to put a pawn on a dark square. The point is White is creating an escape square on c5 for his knight.

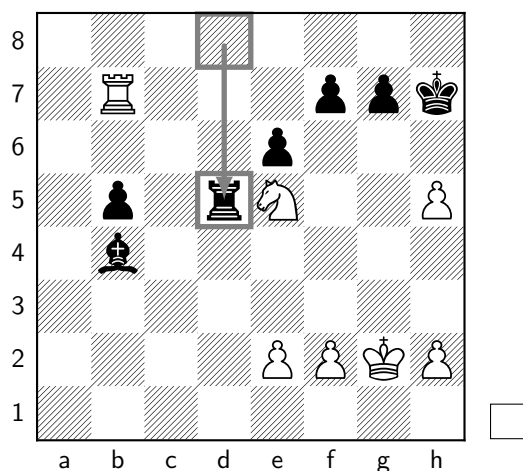
36...♗×b4



36... ♖h6 37 ♞c5 ♟×c5 38 b×c5

37 ♞e5

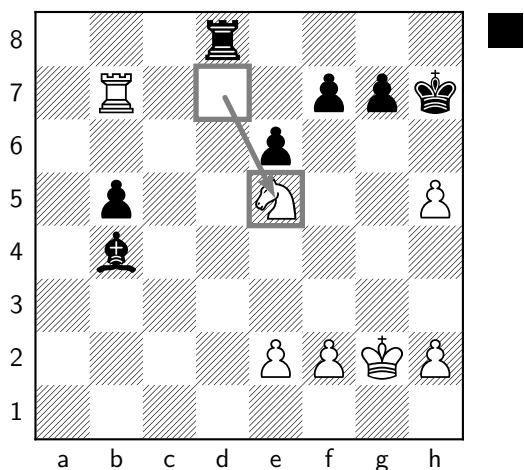
Now the threat of 38 Nc6 with a lethal fork obliges Black to give up his f7-pawn.



37... f6 38 ♞c6

38 ♞×f7 ♜×h5

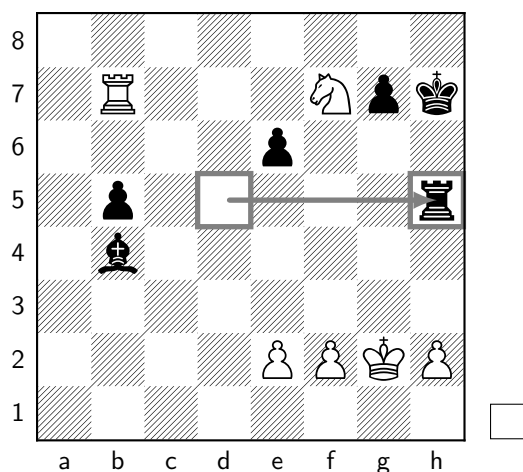
Black now has three isolated pawns and his rook is tied down to the defence of b5. — EXERCISE: Still on the theme of pawns, how can White energize his knight?



37 ♜×b5 ♜×d7 38 ♜×b4 ♚h6

37... ♜d5

If Black could jettison the b5-pawn, but keep his pawns on e6, f7 and g7 intact he would have drawing chances.

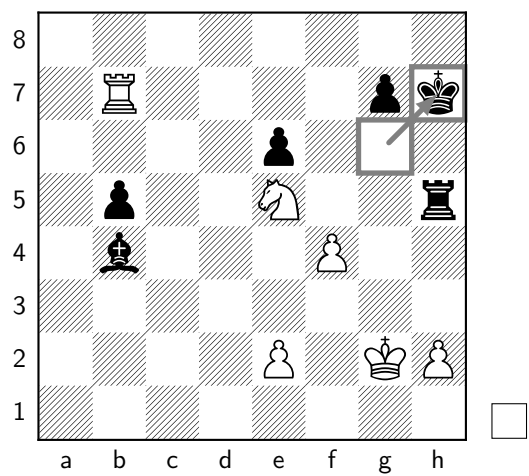


38... ♟c3!

39 f4

ANSWER: Giri makes brilliant use of his limited material resources. With this new pawn thrust he creates a new base for the knight on e5 or on g5 from where it attacks e6 and cuts off the rook on h5 from the defence of b5.

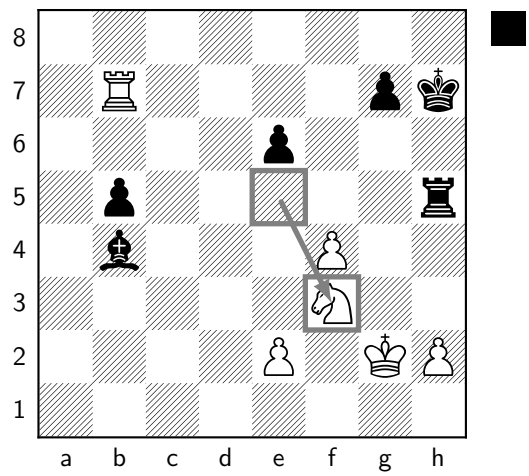
39...♔g6 40 ♖e5+ ♔h7



40...♔f5 41 ♖x♗b5 ♔x♗f4 42 ♖d3+

41 ♖f7 ♔g6 42 ♖e5+ ♔h7 43 ♖f3

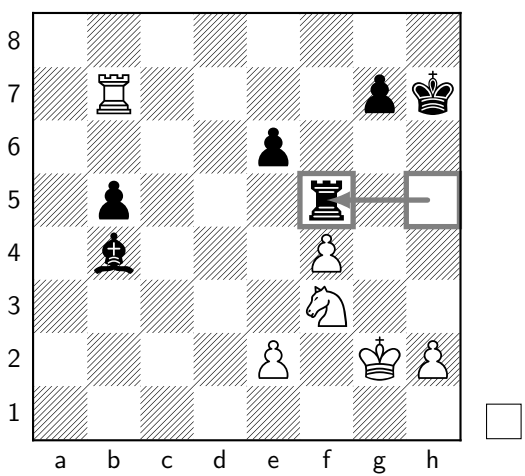
White is not satisfied with 43.Rxb5 Bd2



43 ♖x♗b5 ♗d2

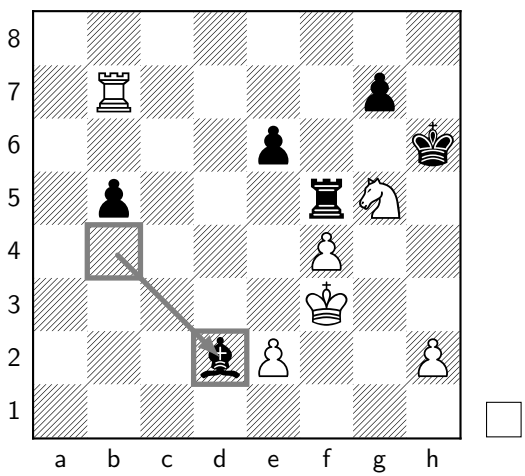
43...♖f5

This leads to the loss of the e-pawn when it is hopeless for Black,



43...♔g6 44 ♔g3 ♗c3 45 ♔g4 b4 46 ♖b6
♖d5 47 ♖g5 ♗f6 48 ♖x♗e6

44 ♖g5+ ♔h6 45 ♔f3 ♗d2

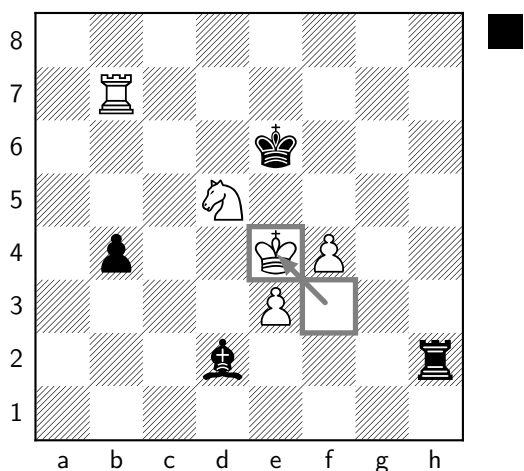


45...e5 46 ♖f7+ ♔h7 47 ♖x♗e5

46 e3 b4 47 ♖x♗e6 ♖h5 48 ♖x♗g7 ♖xh2

With a little care the connected passed pawns will decide the day for White.

49 ♖f5+ ♔g6 50 ♖e7+ ♔f6 51 ♖d5+ ♔e6
52 ♔e4



52 ♖×b4 ♜h3+

52... ♜h3 53 ♜b6+ ♔d7 54 ♔d3 ♙c1 55 ♜×b4
 ♙d6 56 ♔d4

. A hard positional struggle in which Giri showed how to carry a small opening advantage over into the endgame.

1-0

White: Li Chao

4: Huai'an (rapid)

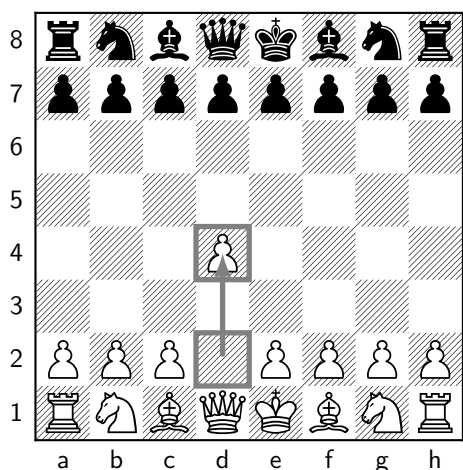
Black: Fressinet, L.

Opening ECO: E01

2016

Result: 1-0

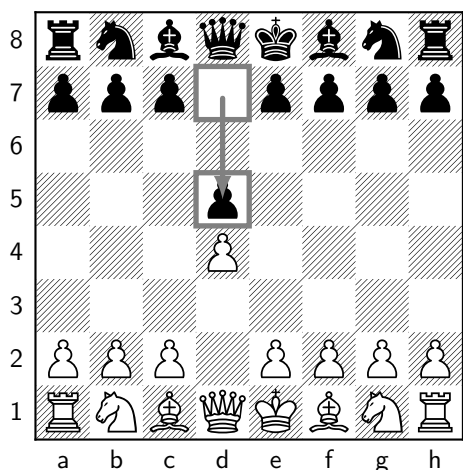
1 d4



1 c4 e6 2 g3 d5 3 ♗g2 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 ♙e7 5 O-O
O-O 6 d4 ♗bd7 7 ♙c2 c6 8 ♙f4 ♘e4 9 ♘c3
g5 10 ♙c1 f5

1 d4 f5 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♗g2 e6 4 ♘f3 ♙e7 5 O-O
O-O 6 c4 d5 7 ♘c3 c6 8 ♙c2 ♘e4 9 ♙f4 ♘d7
10 ♙ad1 g5 11 ♙c1

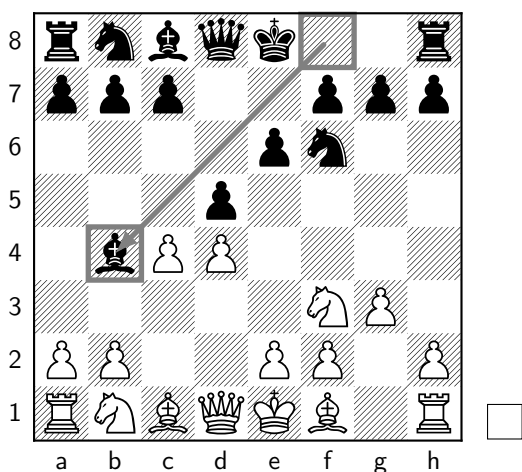
1...d5



1... ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♗g2 ♙b4+ 5 ♙d2
♙e7 6 ♘f3 O-O

2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 g3 ♙b4+

QUESTION: If I adopt the Catalan move order as Black intending to reach a Dutch set-up, should I begin with ...Bb4+ to make White go Bd2, or play ...Be7 straightaway? — ANSWER: Well, in the main game Li Chao makes White's position look good answering ...Bb4+ with Bd2 and then after the retreat ...Be7 playing Bf4. So there's no real difference here: the white bishop could have gone straight from c1 to f4, or via d2, while the black bishop on e7 could have gone straight from f8 or via b4. The only difference shows up in the number of moves. — Overall I would say don't play 4...Bb4+. White probably won't gain anything from having his bishop on d2 rather than c1, but there's no reason to give him extra possibilities.

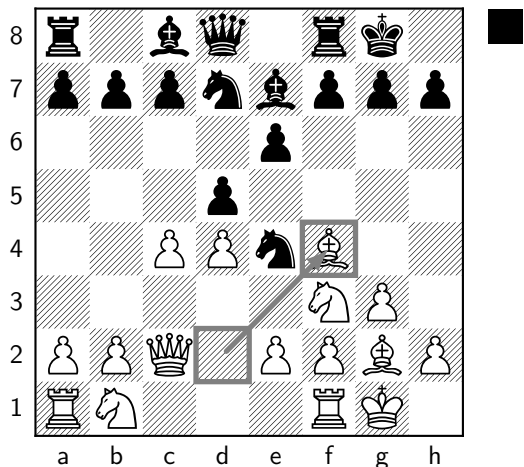


4... ♙e7 5 ♗g2 ♘e4 6 O-O f5 7 ♘c3 c6 8 ♘e5
♘d7 9 ♘xd7 ♙xd7 10 ♘xe4 fxe4 11 ♙f4 O-O
12 e3

5 ♖d2 ♖e7 6 ♖g2 O-O 7 O-O ♜bd7 8 ♚c2 square?
 ♜e4

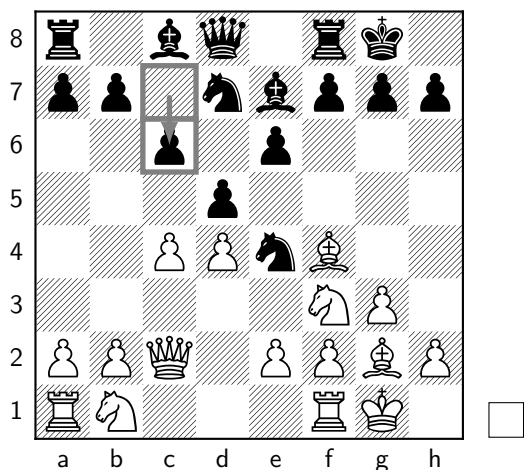
Rather than play solidly with 8...c6 Black decides on a Stonewall Dutch approach.

9 ♖f4



9 ♜c3 ♜xd2 10 ♜xd2 c6

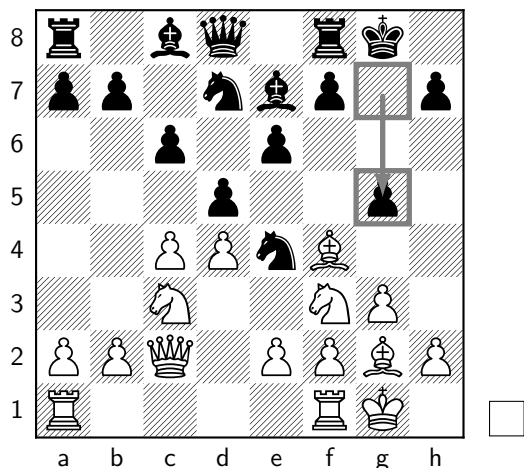
9...c6



9...g5 10 cxd5! gxf4 11 ♚xe4

10 ♜c3 g5!?

Here, however, this move is tactically wa-
 tertight. The first thing to note is that 11
 Nxe4?? now loses a piece after 11...dxe4. —
 EXERCISE: Can you guess which one, and
 what the idea is behind putting it on that



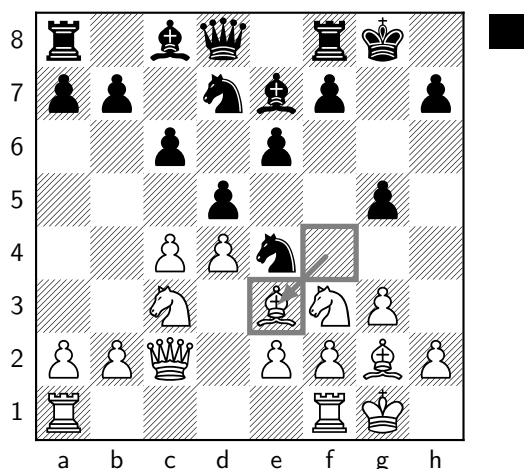
10... ♜df6?! 11 ♜e5

10... ♜xc3?! 11 ♚xc3

10...f5 11 ♚ad1 g5 12 ♖c1 ♜d6 13 cxd5 cxd5
 14 ♜e5 ♜b6 15 g4! ♜e4 16 ♜xe4 fxe4 17 f3
 exf3 18 exf3 ♜d7 19 ♜g6! h×g6 20 ♚×g6+
 ♜h8 21 f4 ♚e8 22 ♚h6+ ♜g8 23 f5 ♚f6 24
 ♚×g5+ ♜h8 25 ♚f3

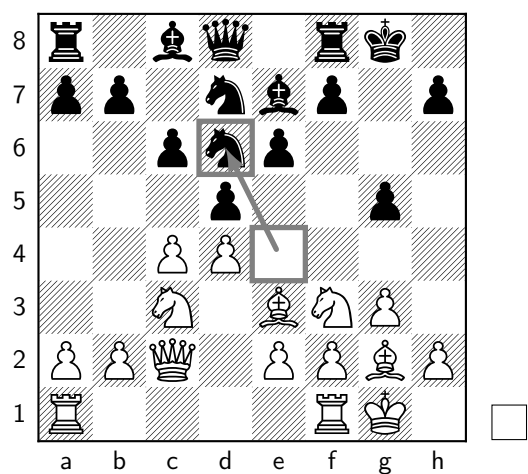
11 ♖e3

An active retreat.



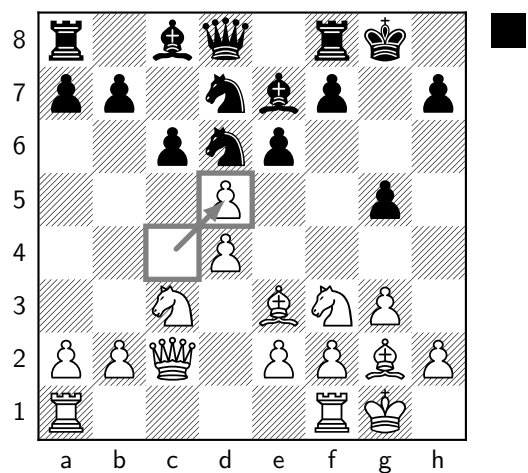
11 ♖c1 f5 12 b3 ♜d6 13 ♜e5 ♜xe5 14 dxe5
 ♜f7

11...Nd6



11...f5

12 cxd5

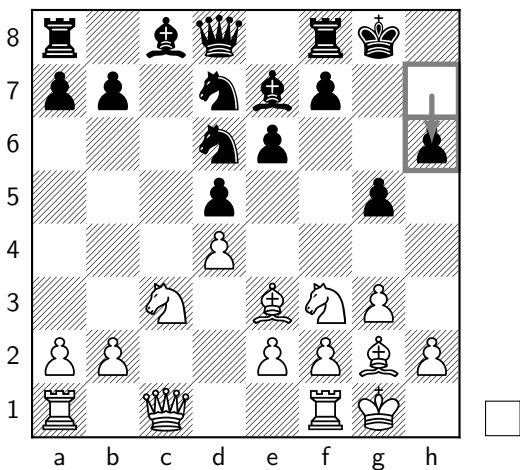


12 b3 Nf5 13 g4 Nxex3 14 fxe3 b5!

12...cxd5 13 Qc1!

A sly retreat of the queen. When he was world champion Karpov could dominate his opponents by making little queen moves on the first rank, and it seems some of the magic has rubbed off on Li Chao. Rather than an attacking weapon, the pawn on g5 is exposed as a liability.

13...h6



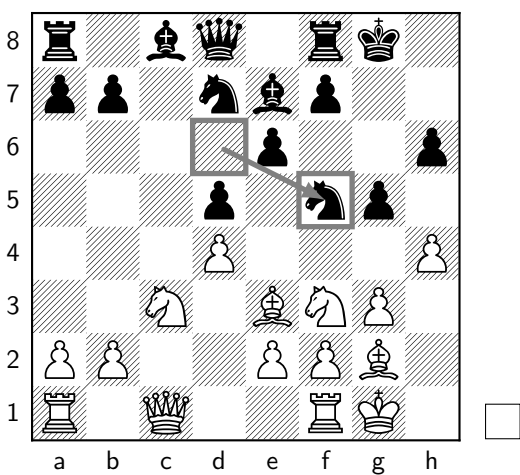
13...f6

13...g4 14 Ne5

14 h4!

White will break open the h-file in order to start a direct attack against the black king.

14...Nf5



14...gxh4 15 Qxh6

15 hxg5 Nxex3

Completing the plan begun with 11...Nd6, but White has the better chances.

16 Qxex3

Another good feature of 12 cxd5 cxd5 13 Qc1, compared to 12 b3 in the Eljanov game mentioned above, is that White is able to

keep his pawn structure tidy and centralize his queen on e3. Here she is unassailable and can support an attack on the kingside.

16...h×g5 17 ♖h3

Step by step White's plan unfolds on the kingside: all barriers are removed to get a rook to h1.

17...♔g7 18 ♔g2 ♖b6 19 b3

A quiet move to stop Nc4. — QUESTION: Does this slow White's build-up? — ANSWER: Maybe, but he is pleased to see the black knight head away from the kingside.

19...♖h8 20 ♖h1

White finally gets his rook to the open file. He is intending 21 Bg4, followed by wresting the h-file from Black with Rxh8 and then Rh1.

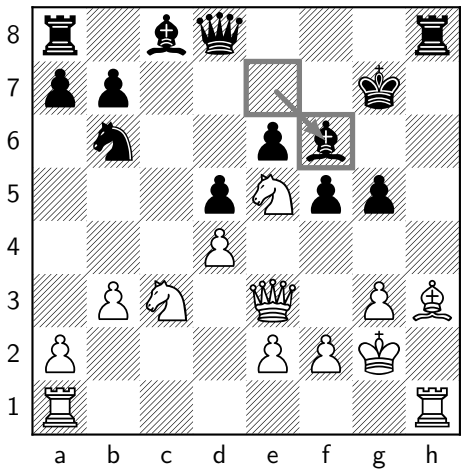
20...f5

This looks like a strong move as a fork with 21...g4 is on the cards, and White's bishop would be blocked in on h3 after 21 g4 f4. Instead Li Chao offered a piece.

21 ♖e5!

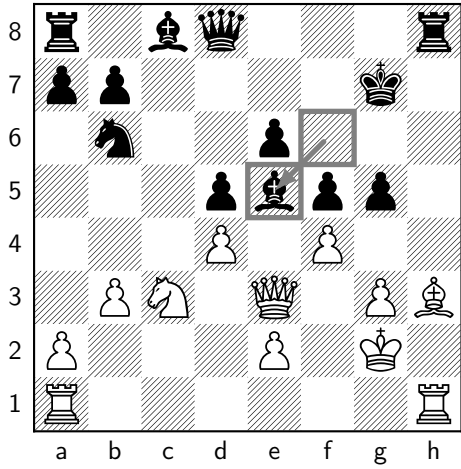
I don't imagine the Chinese Grandmaster calculated this sacrifice too much, though he had to plan it a long way in advance or else his strategy would have failed.

21...♗f6



21...g4 22 ♗×g4 f×g4 23 ♔d3!

22 f4 ♗×e5



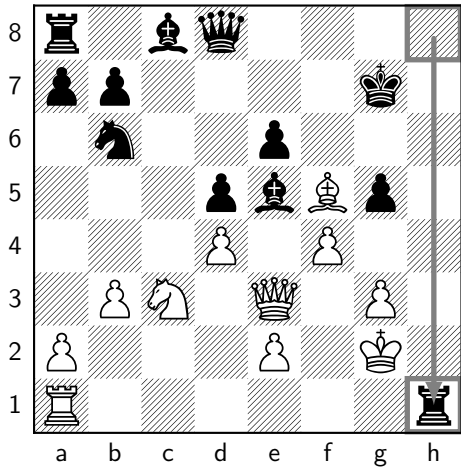
22...g4 23 ♗×g4

22...♗×e5 23 ♔×e5+ ♔f6

23 ♗×f5!

Rather than recapture a piece, White sacrifices one to clear the h-file.

23...♖×h1

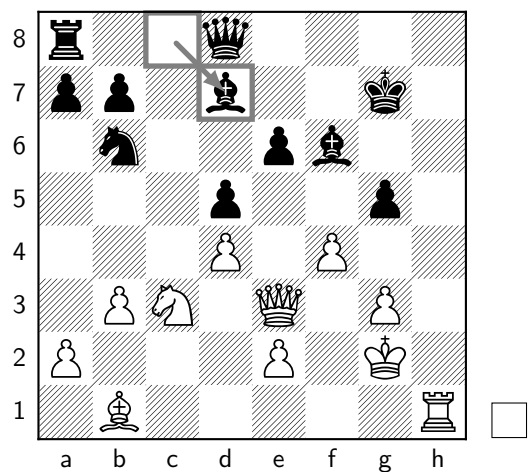


23...e×f5 24 ♔×e5+ ♔f6 25 ♔×f6+ ♔×f6 26 ♖×h8

24 ♖×h1 ♗f6 25 ♗b1!

The bishop retreats a long way back as White wants to set up a battery with the queen in front along the diagonal aiming at g6 and h7.

25...♙d7?



25...g4 26 ♖h7+ ♔f8 27 ♕d3 ♙g7

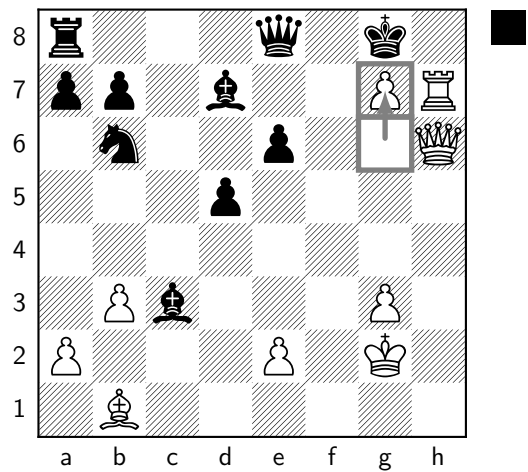
26 ♕d3 ♔f8 27 f×g5 ♙g7 28 ♕g6

With the threat of 29 Rf1+ when 29...Kg8 allows mate in one, while 29...Ke7 drops g7.

28...♙×d4 29 ♖h7 ♕e8 30 ♕h6+ ♔g8 31 g6!

White doesn't have to worry about his hanging knight. His queen, rook, bishop and the pawn on g6 combine their powers against the defenceless black king.

31...♙×c3 32 g7



32 g7 ZZ- 33 ♙g6 ♕×g6 34 ♕×g6

1-0

White: Tomashevsky, E.

5: Yaroslavl (rapid)

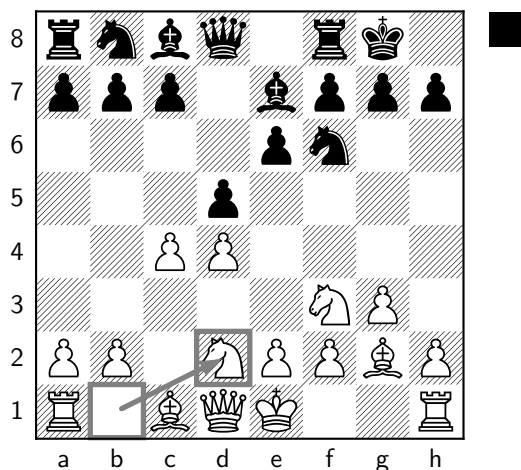
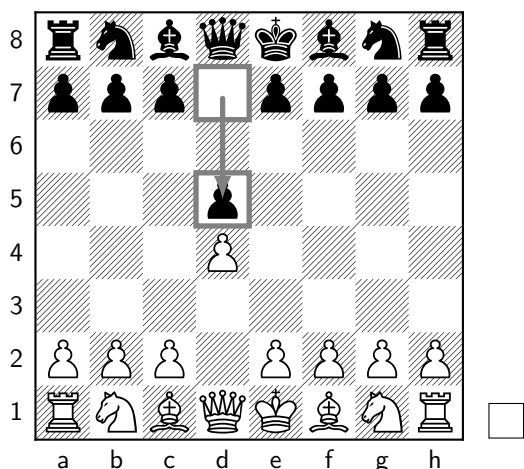
Black: Jakovenko, D.

Opening ECO: E06

2014

Result: 1/2-1/2

1 d4 d5



1... ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♘f3 ♙e7 5 ♙g2 O-O 6 O-O c6 7 ♘bd2 b6 8 ♙c2 ♙b7 9 e4 ♘a6 10 e5 ♘d7 11 cxd5 ♘b4 12 ♙b3 ♘xd5 13 ♘e4 h6 14 ♙d2 c5 15 dxc5 ♘xc5 16 ♘xc5 ♙xc5 17 ♙a4 ♙e7 18 a3 a5

2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 g3 ♙e7 5 ♙g2 O-O 6 ♘bd2

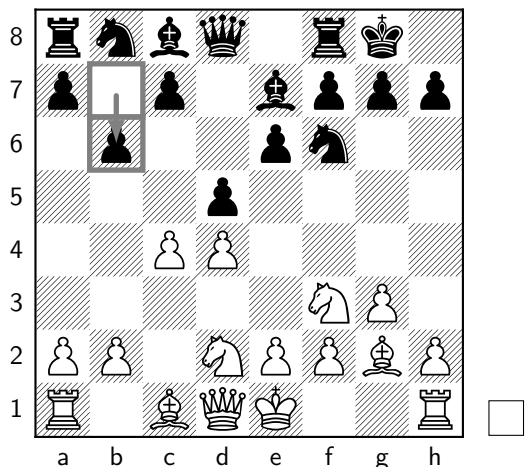
At first sight 6 Nbd2 seems a useful and logical move. It develops and defends the pawn on c4 in a way that seems as efficient as 6 Qc2. Indeed, it can be combined with Qc2 to gain space in the centre with e2-e4. — EXERCISE: Can you see the potential drawbacks to the knight move which mean it is far less popular than 6 Qc2 as a way to defend c4?

6 ♙f4!? dxc4 7 ♙c2 c6 8 ♙xc4 b5 9 ♙c2 ♙b7 10 O-O ♘bd7 11 ♘c3 ♙c8 12 ♘e5 ♘xe5 13 ♙xe5 ♙b6 14 ♙b3 ♙fd8

6... b6!

ANSWER: I recall Nimzowitsch describing White's Nbd2 move in a similar situation as 'decentralizing'. This seems paradoxical as the knight on d2 is definitely centralized, right? And yet it's easy to see what the great Danish master was getting at. The white knight sits on d2 with a circumscribed view of the world as it has access to neither of the central squares c4 or e4. Its enemy in this respect is the pawn on d5: if that can be removed then the white knight will have increased scope, but even then it will probably be doing less work than on the post on c3 it spurned. We might say that Nbd2 decentralized the knight as it denied it the influence over the d5-square it would have gained with Nc3. — And as David Bronstein suggested, we might also ask the opinion of the other pieces. What does the bishop on c1 think about being shut in by the knight? Is

the rook on a1 grumbling that it will take even longer to see daylight? Is the white queen pleased about having her view of the d4-square blocked? Not much, probably. — In defence of 6 Nbd2, it might be said that if Black only knows the 6 Qc2 dxc4 lines, or is making up the opening as he goes along, he is likely to be taken aback by the quiet knight move.



6...dxc4 7 Nxc4

6...c6 7 O-O Nbd7 8 Qc2 b6 9 e4 Bb7 10 e5

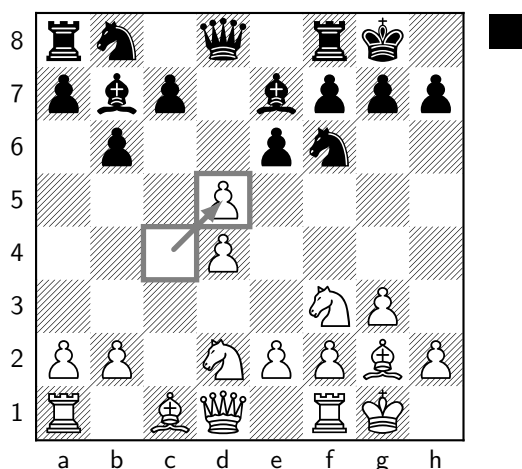
6...c5 7 cxd5 exd5 8 dxc5 Bxc5 9 O-O Nc6 10 Nb3

7 O-O?

I don't like this move as it gives Black the chance to recapture on d5 with his bishop see move eight.

7 cxd5 exd5 8 O-O Bb7 9 Ne5 a5 10 Qc2 c5 11 dxc5 bxc5 12 Nb3 Na6! 13 Bd2 Nb4 14 Qf5 g6 15 Qh3 Qc7 16 Ng4 h5 17 Nh6+ Kg7 18 Nf5+ gxf5 19 Qxf5 Kh8

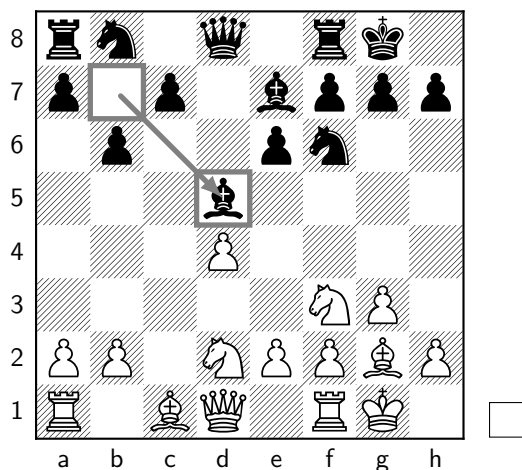
7...Bb7 8 cxd5



8 b3 Bbd7 9 Bb2 c5 10 Qc1 Qc8 11 cxd5

8...Bxd5!

Here and in the Bauer game mentioned above, the bishop recapture looks totally correct.



8...exd5

9 Qc2 Nbd7 10 e4 Bb7

Black has all his minor pieces in play and can't be prevented from breaking out with ...c7-c5. The crux of the matter is whether White can land a blow on the kingside.

11 e5 Nd5

The black knight is very pleased with this central post from which he can never be evicted

by a pawn, though he might have some misgivings about leaving his defensive role on f6.

12 ♖e4

EXERCISE: What is the best way to defuse White's kingside initiative? — ANSWER:

12...h6!

A key preventive move in this type of pawn centre. It takes away g5 from the white minor pieces, after which they can no longer launch threats against the black king.

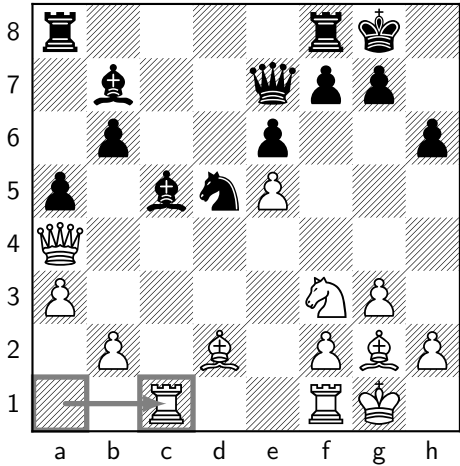
13 ♙d2 c5

Jakovenko achieves his freeing move. The opening has ended in fiasco for White.

14 dxc5 ♖xc5 15 ♖xc5 ♙xc5

Now Tomashevsky has to tread carefully as all his opponent's minor pieces are on excellent squares.

16 ♙a4 ♙e7 17 a3 a5 18 ♖ac1



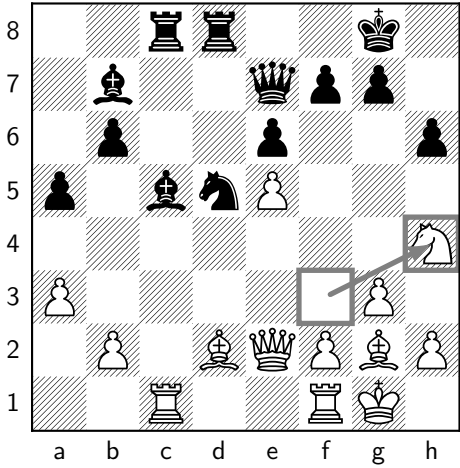
18 ♖fe1? f5! 19 ♖h4 f4! 20 ♖g6?! ♙xf2+!
21 ♙h1 ♙f7 22 ♖xf8 f3! 23 ♙h3 ♙xe1! 24
♙xe1 f2 25 ♙xf2 ♖f4+ 26 ♙g2 ♖xg2 27 ♙g1
♖xf8 28 ♙xb6 ♖e3 29 ♙xe3 ♙f3

18...♖ad8 19 ♙c4

No longer fearing a ...Ba6 riposte after Black's last move the white queen returns to e2 where she solidifies the white centre.

19...♖c8 20 ♙e2 ♖fd8 21 ♖h4?

Deciding to probe the kingside to persuade his opponent into weakening his pawn structure. As we shall see White is playing with fire.



21 ♖fd1

21...♙e8 22 ♙g4?! f5! 23 exf6 ♖xf6

Now the white queen and bishop on d2 are both hanging.

24 ♙e2

Back again, with Black's kingside undermined. — EXERCISE: Can you see the strong reply that Jakovenko had prepared? — ANSWER:

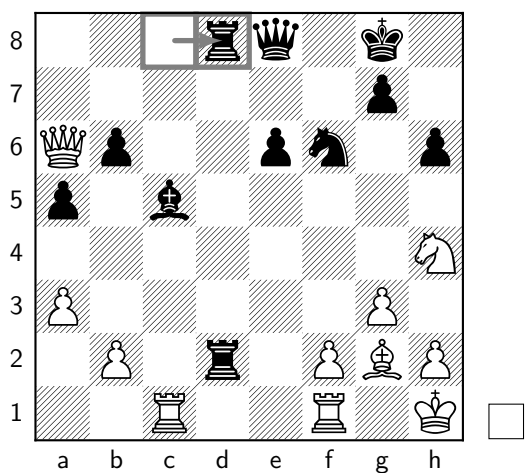
24...♙a6!

The impossible move happens (see the comment to move 19). Black gets a rook to the seventh rank.

25 ♙xa6 ♖xd2 26 ♙h1

The king retires as Black had tactics against the f2-pawn: either 26...Bxf2+! or 26...Rxf2! when in either case the rook on c1 would drop if White captured on f2.

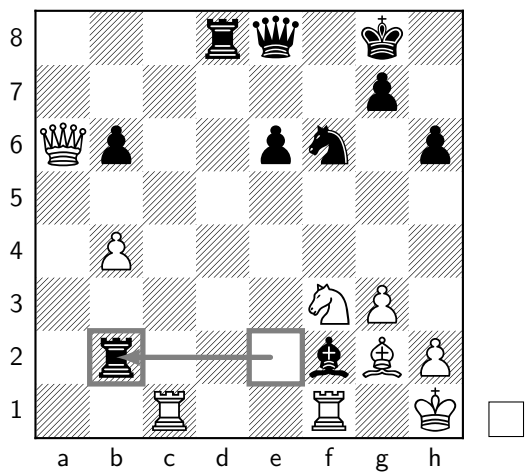
26...♖cd8



26...♙xf2?? 27 ♖xc8

26...♖xb2!

27 b4 a×b4 28 a×b4 ♙xf2 29 ♘f3 ♖b2 30
 ♙a1 ♖e2 31 ♙a6 ♖b2



31...b5

32 ♙a1 ♖e2 33 ♙a6

. White had a lucky escape in this game.

1/2-1/2

White: So, W.

6: Wijk aan Zee

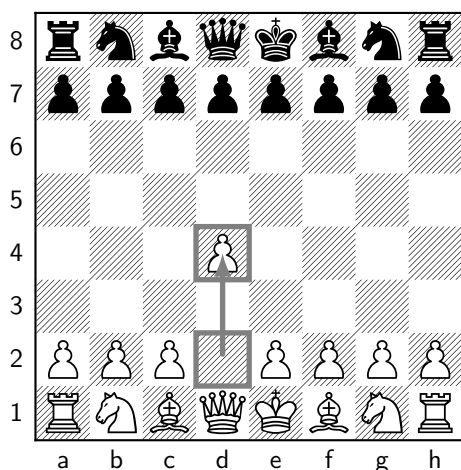
Black: Wojtaszek, R.

Opening ECO: E06

2017

Result: 1-0

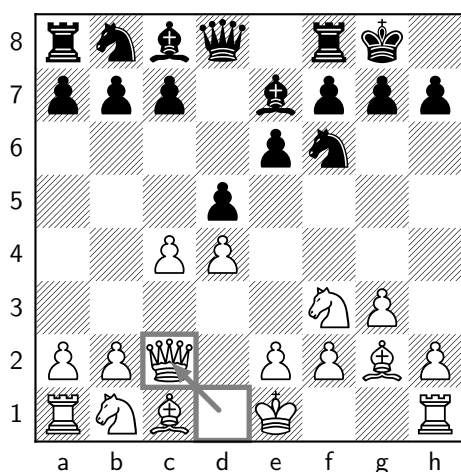
1 d4



1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 g3 d5 4 d4 ♙e7 5 ♙g2 O-O 6 ♙c2

1...d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 g3 ♙e7 5 ♙g2 O-O 6 ♙c2

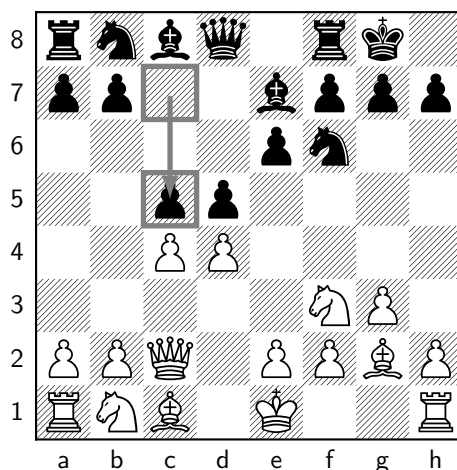
Quite a popular move. White defends c4 at once;



6 O-O dxc4 7 ♙c2

6...c5

Played in the style of the Queen's Gambit Tarrasch Defence. This ambitious thrust is justified as White has weakened his support of d4 and slowed down his development by putting his queen on c2.



6...c6 7 O-O b6

6...dxc4 7 ♙xc4 a6 8 ♙f4!? ♙d6 9 ♘e5 b5?! 10 ♙c2 ♘d5 11 ♘c3 ♙b7 12 ♘xd5 ♙xd5 13 e4 ♙b4+ 14 ♙e2 ♙b7 15 ♖hd1

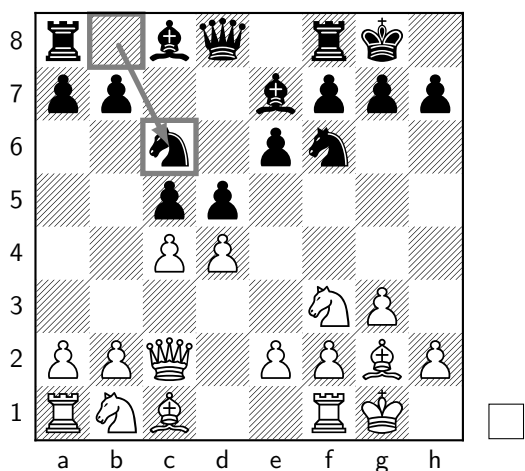
7 O-O

A sensible developing move.

7 cxd5 cxd4! 8 ♘xd4 ♘xd5 9 O-O ♘b4 10 ♙c3 e5

7 dxc5 d4 8 O-O ♘c6 9 a3

7...♘c6



9... ♖xc5? 10 b4 ♜b6 11 b5 ♞a5 12 ♜f4

10 ♜d1

Preparing his next move by pinning the d4-pawn.

10... e5 11 ♞c3

The most active development for the knight.

11... ♖xc5 12 ♞d5!

The knight intrudes into Black's half of the board. — EXERCISE: Can you see the trap that So has prepared if Black plays the natural 12...a4, for example?

12... h6

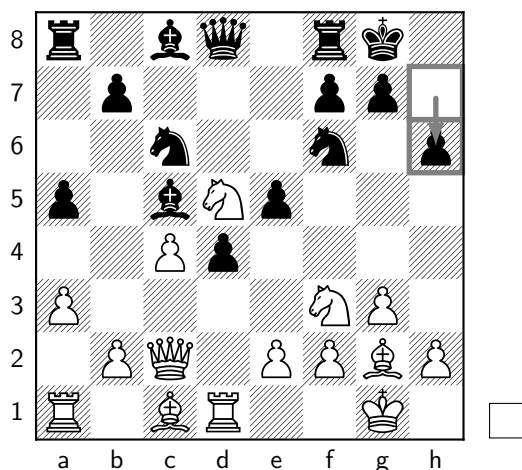
7... cxd4 8 ♞xd4 e5 9 ♞f5 d4 10 ♞xe7+ ♔xe7
11 b4 ♜e6 12 ♞d2 ♜c8 13 ♔d3 ♞c6 14 a3!?

8 dxc5 d4

Black establishes a big pawn centre. This is a source of dynamism if the advanced pawns remain strong as his pieces have a lot of squares to manoeuvre behind them. On the other hand, it becomes a liability if the pawns or the pieces supporting them are successfully undermined.

9 a3 a5!

The standard response in this type of position is to restrain the pawns from advancing.



12... ♞xd5?? 13 cxd5 ♔xd5 14 ♞g5 e4 15 ♞xe4

12... a4? 13 ♞g5! g6 14 ♞xf6+ ♔xf6 15 ♞e4 ♔e7 16 ♜h6! ♜e8 17 ♜g5

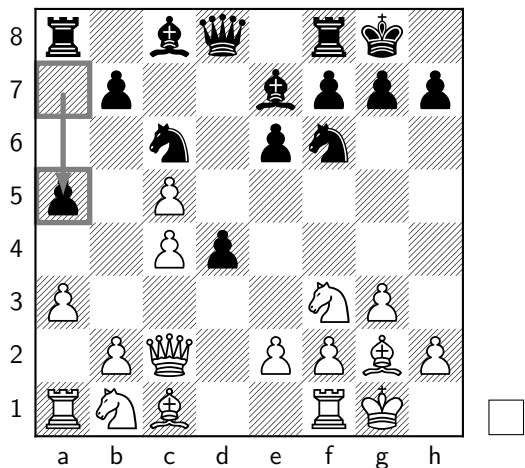
13 ♜d2

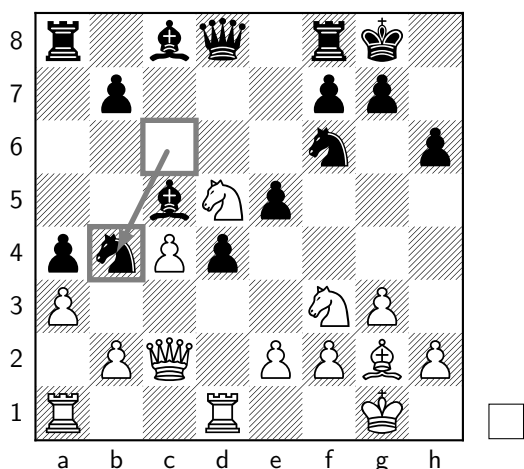
A modest move, but with big dreams of gaining a lot of space on the queenside with 14 b4.

13... a4

Black stops the 14 b4 advance, but White can reenergize his queenside play.

14 ♜b4! ♞xb4





14...b6 15 ♖xc5 bxc5 16 ♘xe5! ♘xe5 17 ♗xf6+ ♔xf6 18 ♕xa8

14... d6 15 x d6 x d6 16 ac1

15 a×b4 ♖×d5 16 b×c5 ♖b4 17 ♔d2 ♖c6 18 b4!

I assume Black missed or underestimated the power of this move when he played 14...Nxb4. Exploiting the pin on the a-file, this thrust changes the nature of the queenside pawn structure. In one fell swoop the white pawns are transformed from a random heap into a juggernaut which has the mobility to create a passed pawn. Of course, Black is being granted an immediate passed pawn, but it is isolated and sickly compared to White's compact mass of pawns.

18... ♖e7 19 ♖b2!

The queen vacates the d2-square for the knight. From there the horse will defend c4 and given the chance will take part in more aggressive ventures on the queenside or possibly in the centre with Ne4 and Nd6. At the same time moving the knight to d2 will open the diagonal for the bishop on g2.

19... ♖g4

Played to deter the plan of Nd2 as e2 will drop. So finds a simple solution.

20 ♖e1!

Defending e2 to make his knight mobile again.

20... ♖fd8 21 ♞d2 ♙e6 22 b5

Having rearranged the pieces to his satisfaction, White now pushes forward on the queenside. It took a lot of calculation and judgement to confirm that he isn't over extending his position as the c5-pawn becomes a target.

22... ♞b8 23 ♔b4

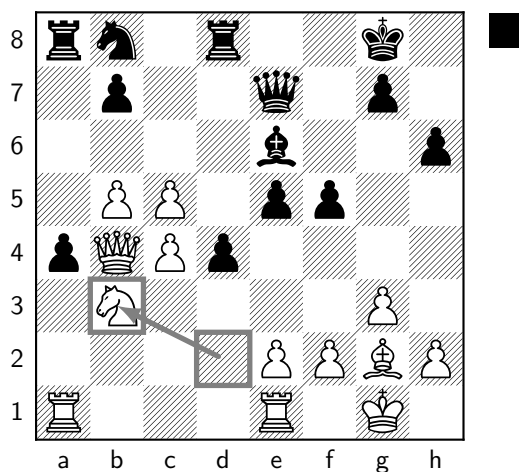
Guarding c5 and attacking a4, but it takes self-belief to walk into a pin. Now one idea for White is 24 Ne4 and 25 Nd6, which partly explains Black's next move.

23...f5

It seems as if Wojtaszek is about to take control. He only needs to play 24...e4, shutting out the Catalan bishop, and then he is ready for 25...Nd7 without allowing Bxb7. After that he would pick up the c5-pawn in exchange for the a4-pawn with an excellent game thanks to his own mobile centre pawns. — EXERCISE: How can White stop this plan? — ANSWER:

24 ♖b3!

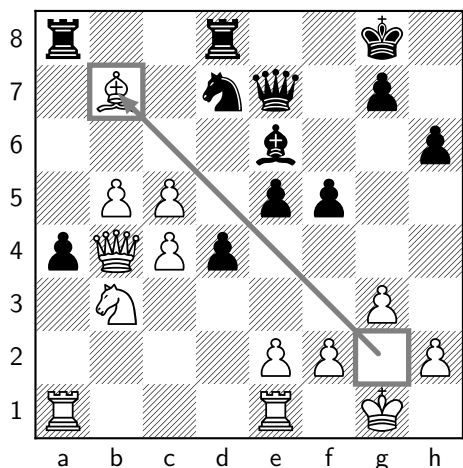
Again So utilizes the pin on the a-file at a crucial moment in the game (see too move 18). He defends c5 a second time and threatens 25 Rxa4 without having to give up the strong c5-pawn.



24 ♖×a4 ♖×a4 25 ♔×a4 ♔×c5 26 ♘×b7 e4

24... ♖d7 25 ♙×b7!

This capture had to be worked out precisely.



25 ♙×a4 ♙×a4 26 ♙×a4 ♖×c5 27 ♖×c5 ♙×c5
28 ♙×b7 e4

25... ♙ab8

A tense situation as Black is attacking two pieces.

26 ♙×a4

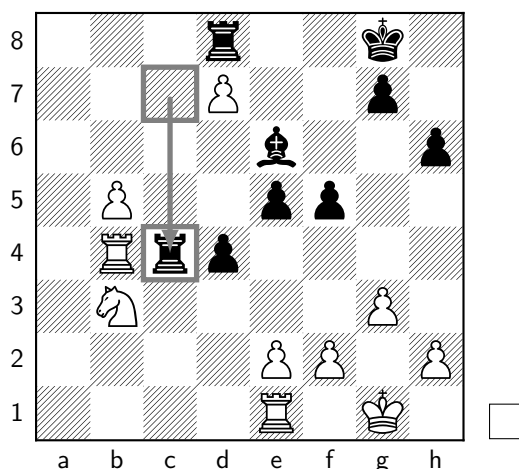
Not only activating the rook and saving the knight from capture, but also defending the white queen which makes the queen-side pawns mobile again by removing the pin on c5.

26... ♙×b7 27 c6

The fork comes to White's rescue allowing him to regain the piece.

27... ♙×b4 28 ♙×b4 ♙c7 29 c×d7 ♙×c4

This is the move Black was relying on. He breaks up White's queenside phalanx leaving him with apparently weak pawns on b5 and d7. — EXERCISE: What is the winning sequence that Wesley So must have calculated way ahead of reaching this position?



29... ♙d×d7 30 c5! ♙×b3 31 c6 ♙d8 32 ♙×b3

30 ♙×c4

ANSWER!

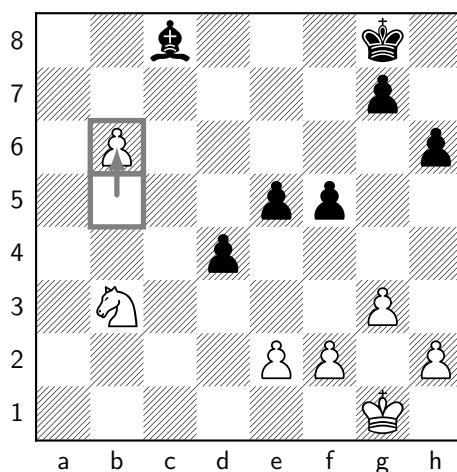
30... ♙×c4 31 ♙c1!

Without this resource White's unsupported pawn on d7 would tumble. Now, however, it wins the game after 31...Bxb3 (or equally 31...Bxb5 32 Rc8) 32 Rc8.

31... ♙e6 32 ♙c8!

Anyway. There are other moves that win, but this forces a simple position where White will have an extra piece.

32... ♙×c8 33 d×c8 ♙+ ♙×c8 34 b6



34 b6 ♙f7 35 ♙c5

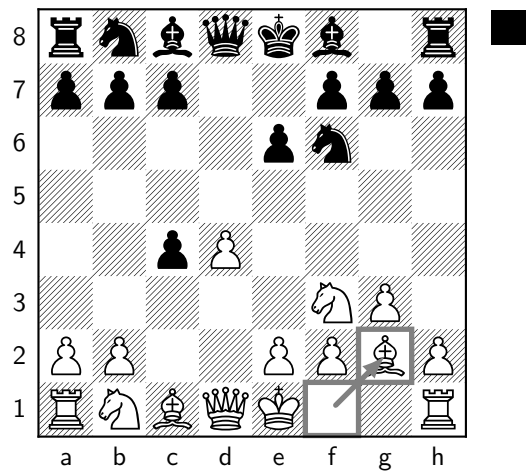
White: 2: Regaining the Pawn

Black: ?

Opening ECO: E01

Result: *

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 g3
, Black's capture with
4...dxc4
and the reply
5 ♖g2
lead to wide-ranging and complex variations which are examined from Chapters Three to Six in this book.



5 ♔a4+ ♙d7

*

White: Korchnoi, V.

7: 8th matchgame, London

Black: Kasparov, G.

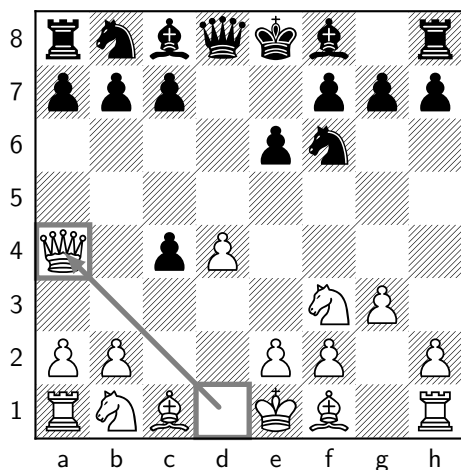
Opening ECO: E04

1983

Result: 1/2-1/2

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 g3 dxc4 5 6 ♙xc4 c5!

♙a4+



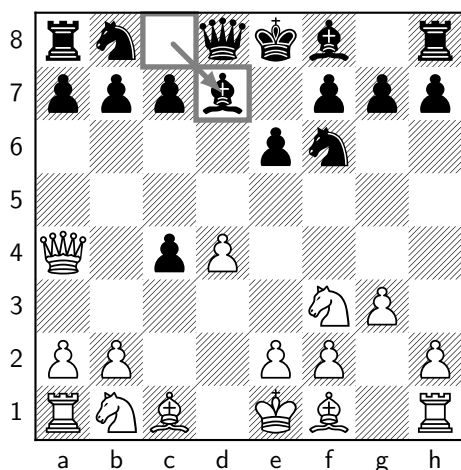
Black liquidates the white centre and gets his 'bad' bishop to an active post on c6, thereby achieving two of his main aims in the opening without much effort. It is no wonder that world champions such as Karpov, Kasparov and Anand have been happy to defend this line as Black. — QUESTION: But hold on, isn't Black giving up a pawn? — ANSWER: As we shall see, it is only a temporary offer. White won't be able to defend the c5-pawn in the face of pressure from the Black's bishop on f8, a knight on d7 (after ...Bc6 vacates the square), and a black rook on c8.

7 ♘g2

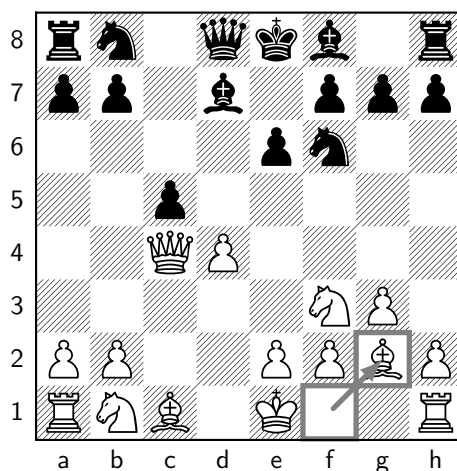
5 ♘g2 c5 6 ♙a4+ ♘d7 7 ♙xc4 ♘c6

5... ♘d7!?

This is not at all bad for Black;

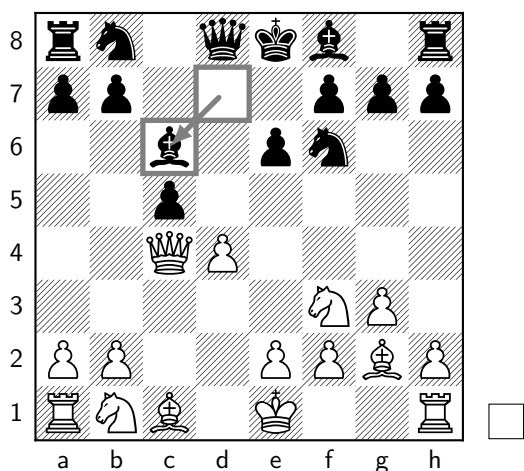


5... ♘bd7!



7 dxc5 ♘c6 8 ♘c3 ♘bd7 9 ♘e3 ♙c8 10 ♘g2 ♘xc5! 11 ♘xc5 ♘xf3 12 ♘xf3 ♙xc5 13 ♙b3 b6 14 O-O O-O 15 ♙fd1 ♙b8

7... ♘c6

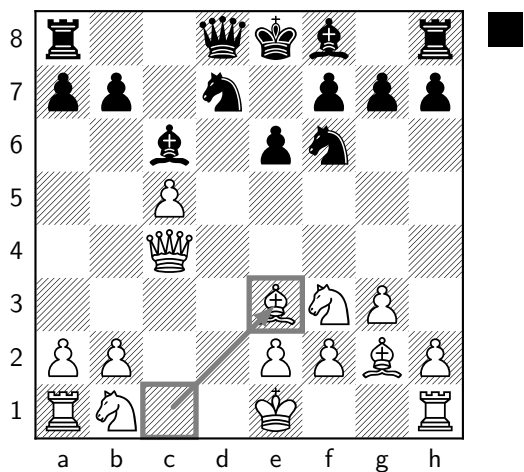


7...cxd4 8 Nxd4 Bb6 9 O-O

8 dxc5 Bbd7

EXERCISE: White has to try to hold on to the pawn for a while as 9 Nc3 Bxc5 is already fine for Black. Out of 9 Be3 or 9 b4, which would you choose? — ANSWER:

9 Be3

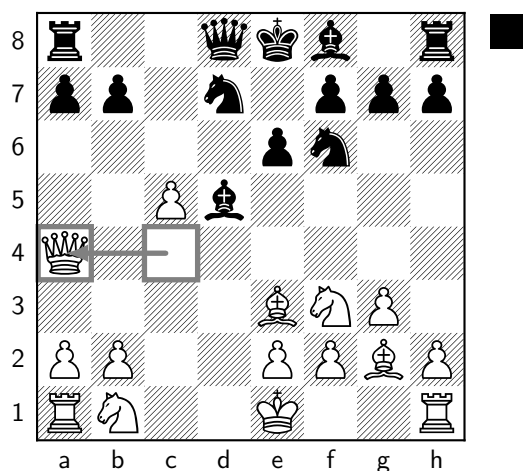


9 b4 a5! 10 b5 Be5

9...Be5

Black harasses the white queen and drives her away from the defence of the c5-pawn.

10 Bb4

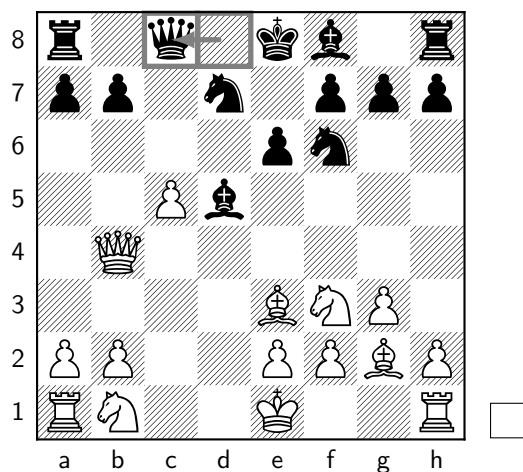


10 Bb4 a5 11 Bf4 Be5 12 Be5 Nc5 13 Bc3 O-O 14 Nxd5 Nxd5 15 Bd4 Bb6 16 O-O Ac8 17 Acl

10...Be5 11 Bc4 Be5

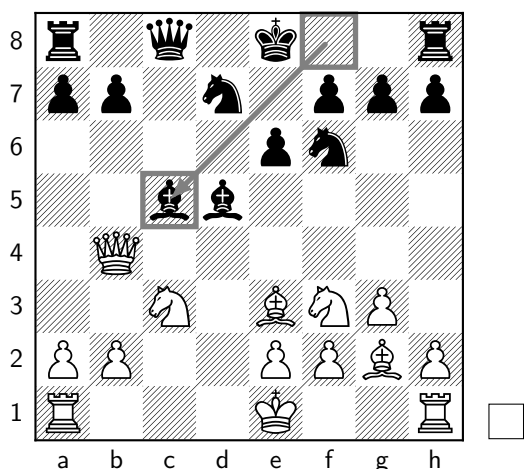
Offering Korchnoi the chance of a repetition. Naturally a legendary fighter doesn't deal in 12 move draws with White.

12 Bb4 Bc8



12...a5

13 Bc3 Be5



13... ♖xc5 14 ♔f4!

14 ♕xc5 ♖xc5 15 ♖xd5! ♖xd5 16 ♔d2!

After his astute exchange on d5 White has the advantage of the Catalan bishop versus a knight. It's not a great deal, but it can be built upon. Korchnoi found a way to avoid the obvious 15 Qxc5 Nxc5 when Black's knight is activated. Furthermore, after the exchange of queens the black king could have stayed in the centre with ...Ke7 rather than castled. — Korchnoi is shrewd enough to wait until Black plays 17...0-0 before contemplating a queen exchange.

16... ♖c8 17 0-0 0-0 18 ♖ac1 ♖b6

According to Keene and Lawson in their book of the Kasparov-Korchnoi match, "Kasparov started to look worried" after White's next move.

19 ♖d4!

The offer to exchange queens is unpleasant for Black. It opens the way for White's knight to inveigle itself into the queenside. At the same time the black knight on d5 comes under pressure from the bishop on g2, and further down the diagonal the b7-pawn has lost its defender. It is one of those positions where Black is about equal, but not quite dead equal.

19... ♖fd8 20 ♖fd1 ♖xd4 21 ♖xd4 ♖7b6

EXERCISE: What is the most vulnerable point in Black's queenside and how can White

target it? — ANSWER:

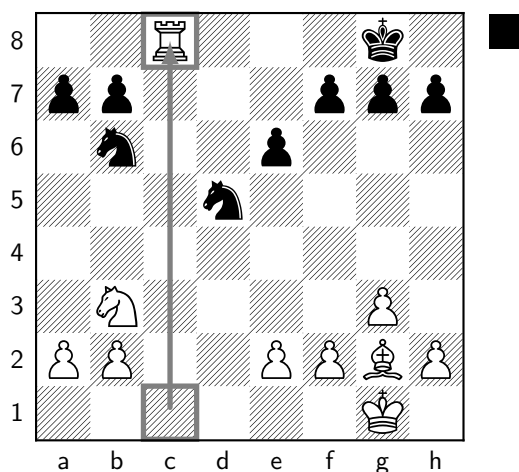
22 ♖b3!

The knight retreats in order to go to c5 or a5 to attack the b7-pawn.

22... ♖xc1

Kasparov seeks salvation in simplification. He doesn't want to risk his rooks being deflected from the fight for the c-file by the need to defend b7. He is willing to pay the price of an isolated pawn.

23 ♖xc1 ♖c8 24 ♖xc8+?



24 ♖c5! ZZ- 25 ♖a5 a6 26 ♖c5

24... ♖xc8 25 ♕xd5 exd5

Black has an isolated pawn, but his king can be rushed to its defence. In Catalan endgames it's important to be able to distinguish between a symbolic advantage and one that can be built upon. Black's vulnerable queenside offered White a 'real' advantage, whereas the isolated pawn is more symbolic. Of course, a symbolic advantage between world-class players in a Candidates match might constitute a real advantage on a rainy night at a match between Wood Green and the Kings Head pub in the London Chess League.

26 ♖c5 ♖d6 27 ♖g2 ♖f8 28 ♖f3 ♖e7 29 ♖f4 f6!

A vital move to keep White's king out of e5. Black has no problems in holding the

draw.

30 h4 g6 31 g4 b6 32 ♖a6 ♖e4 33 f3 ♖c5
34 ♖c7 d4 35 ♖d5+ ♔e6 36 ♖b4 a5 37 ♖d3
♔d5 38 g5 f5 39 ♔g3 ♖x d3
1/2-1/2

White: Kasimdzhanov, R.

8: European Club Cup, Eilat

Black: Dizdarevic, E.

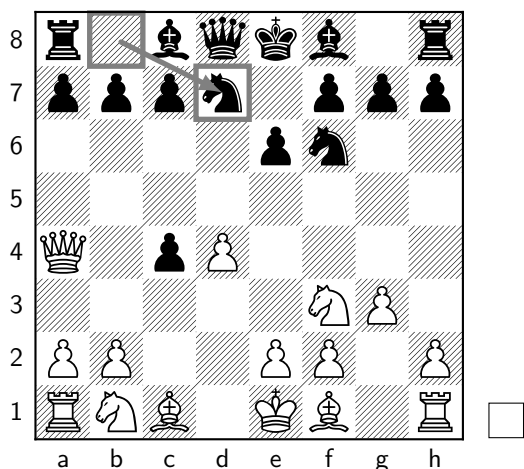
Opening ECO: A13

2012

Result: 1-0

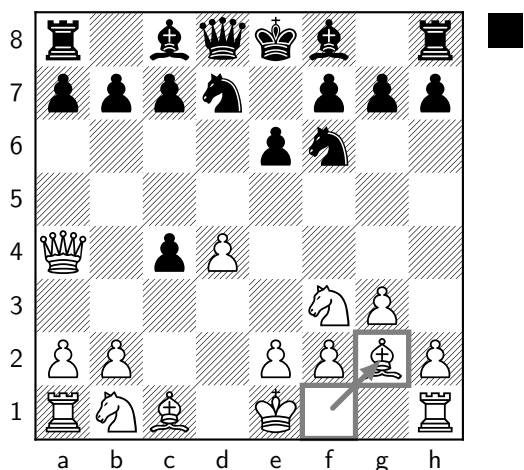
1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 g3 dxc4 5 ♔a4+ ♘bd7!

Black's best reply after which after which it is difficult to prove any advantage for White.



5... ♔a4+ ♘bd7! 6 ♔a4 ♘bd7! 7 ♔a4 ♘bd7! 8 ♔a4 ♘bd7! 9 ♔a4 ♘bd7! 10 ♔a4 ♘bd7!

6 ♔a4



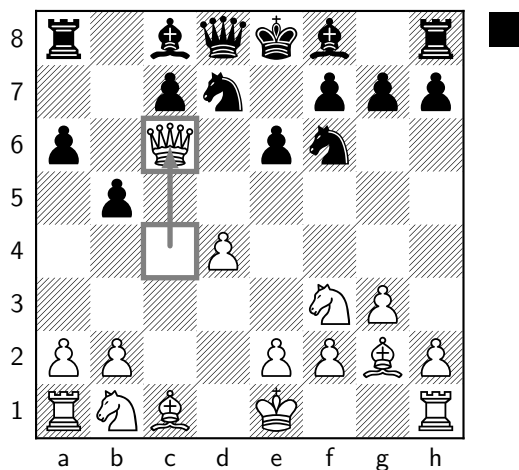
6... a6!

A common motif which we'll also see in the Catalan Mainline with 7 Qc2 in Chapters Nine and Ten. Black wastes no time in arranging ...b7-b5 to clear the way for his bishop to get to b7.

7 ♔a4 b5

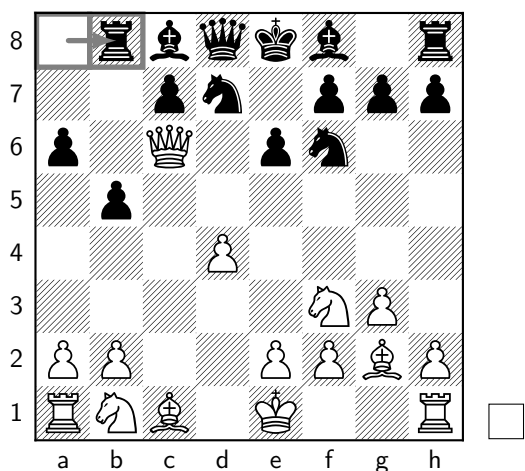
EXERCISE: Before reading on, how would you assess the position after 8 Qc2 equal or a tiny edge for White or for Black? What are the factors that influence your verdict?

8 ♔a4!?



8 ♔a4 ♘bd7! 9 ♔a4 ♘bd7! 10 ♔a4 ♘bd7! 11 ♔a4 ♘bd7! 12 ♔a4 ♘bd7! 13 ♔a4 ♘bd7!

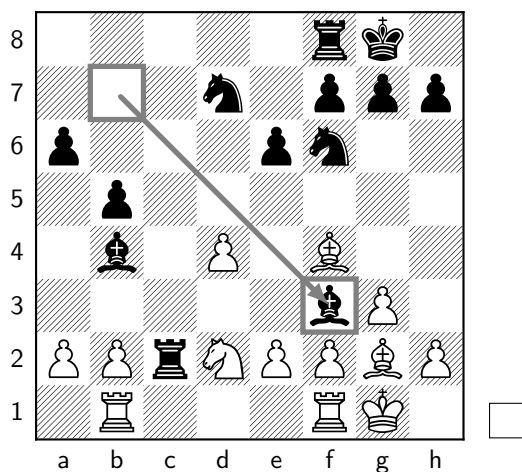
8... ♔b8



8...Ra7 9 Qc2!? Bb7 10 O-O

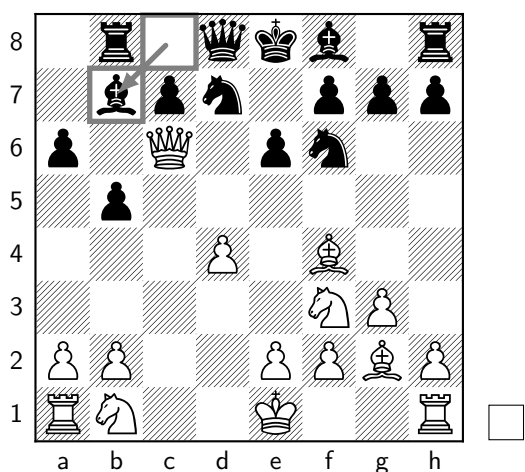
9 Bf4 Bb7!

Gambiting the c7-pawn for a strong initiative.



15...Nd5 16 Rfc1 Rfc8 17 Bb3 Nxf4 18 gxf4 Bd5

16 Nxf3 Rxe2



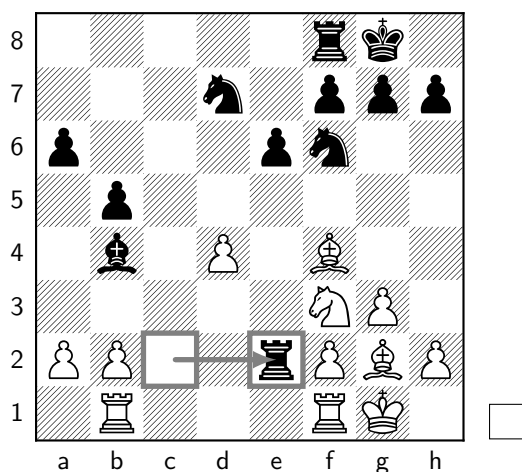
9...Nd5? 10 Bg5! Bxe7 11 Bxe7 Qxe7 12 Qc3 Bb4 13 Qxc7! Qc2+ 14 Qd1 Qxa1 15 Qe5!! O-O? 16 Qc6 Qe8 17 Qxb8

10 Qxc7 Bb4+ 11 Bbd2 Qxc7 12 Bxc7 Rxc8 13 Bf4 Rc2

Kasimdzhanov has handed Black a strong initiative for his pawn.

14 Rb1 O-O 15 O-O Bxf3?

This, however, is very serious mistake. Dizdarevic is in a rush to get his pawn back, but



16...Nd5

17 a3 Be7 18 Rfc1

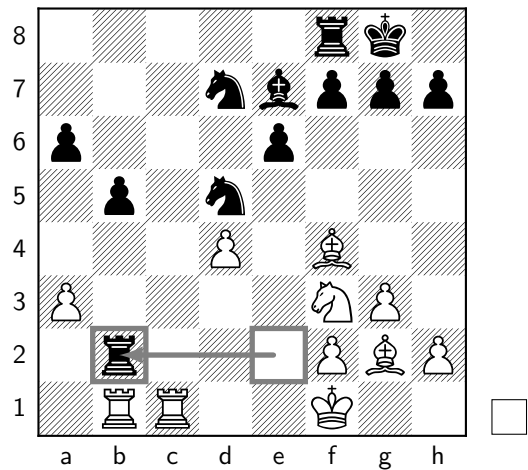
Now Black has no defence against White's next move.

18...Nd5 19 Bf1

The hunter hunted. White's king has been terrorised by the black rook, but now it has trapped it.

19...Rxb2

After this it won't be difficult for a former FIDE World Champion to exploit his extra piece.



19... ♖xf4 20 gxf4 ♜e4 21 ♜c7! ♜d8 22 ♖e5
 ♜xd4 23 ♖c6 ♜d6 24 ♜a7 ♜c5 25 ♖xd4 ♜xa7
 26 ♖c6 ♜a8 27 ♜d1! ♖f6 28 ♖xa7

20 ♜xb2 ♜xa3 21 ♜a2 ♜xc1 22 ♜xc1 ♜c8
 23 ♜d2 b4 24 ♖e1 ♖7b6 25 ♜xa6 b3 26 ♜xd5
 ♖xd5 27 ♜a1 ♖b6 28 ♖e2 b2 29 ♜b1 ♖a4
 30 ♖d3 h5 31 ♖c5

. The game above wasn't very impressive for White from a theoretical viewpoint. We might conclude that after Qa4+ and the response ...Nbd7 Black has at least an equal game if he gets in the moves ... a6, ...b5 and ...Bb7 without being immediately punished. His bishop on b7 will be just as good as White's Catalan bishop on g2. I shall call this rapid deployment of the bishop an ultrafast ...Bb7. — What might stop the ultrafast ...Bb7 from happening? Well Black might spoil it himself if he throws in the natural ...c7-c5-pawn advance before completing it. This gives White a vital tempo to obstruct the plan. — Alternatively, a witty move order by White might trick Black out of an ultrafast ...Bb7. This could involve delaying d2-d4 so that White has got in Nf3 and Bg2 and is ready to answer ...b7-b5 with Ne5, stopping ...Bb7. Notice that in these lines White might avoid

d2-d4 altogether in favour of d2-d3. — White could also play d2-d4 as normal, but delay Nf3 in favour of Bg2 so that the bishop on g2 prevents an easy ...b7-b5. — Another subtlety is that having played Qa4+ and Qxc4, White will probably be keen to get his queen out of the way of the ...b7-b5 move - otherwise with the queen hanging on c4 there would be no time to stop ...Bb7 next move. This can be done by voluntarily withdrawing the queen with Qc2 or Qb3 before ...b7-b5 is played. This retreat might be played in preference to a move like d2-d4 or Nf3 or 0-0 depending on the state of play. — This discussion might seem abstract, but it will help you understand the ideas in the games that follow. White might not get an objective advantage by obstructing an ultrafast ...Bb7, but he gets an interesting position and doesn't give Black straightforward development and a comfortable game.

1-0

White: Artemiev, V.

9: Tashkent

Black: Safarli, E.

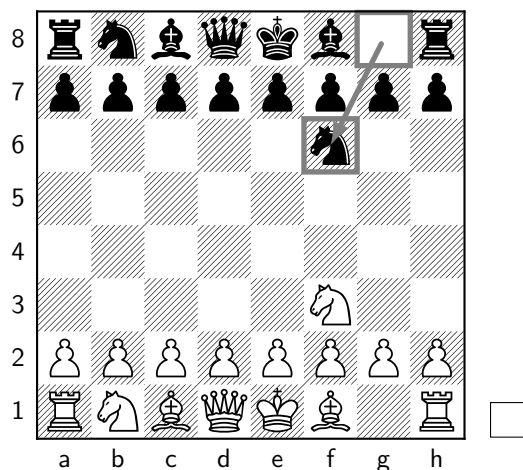
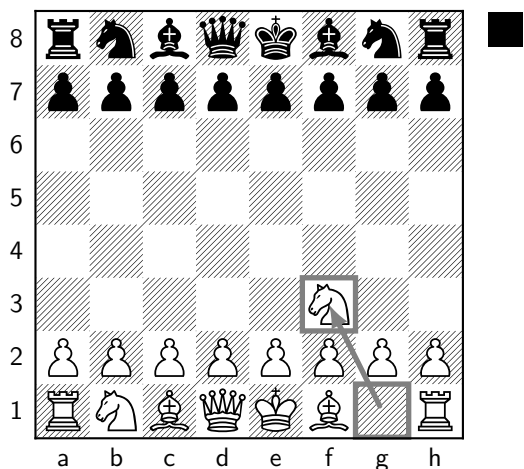
Opening ECO: A13

2015

Result: 1/2-1/2

1 ♖f3

An example of a delayed d2-d4. White will use the tempo to deter an ultrafast ...Bb7. If you adopt this move order, remember that Black has options which are out of the scope of this book.



1... c5

2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♗g2 dxc4 5 ♔a4+

Having mobilized his kingside pieces quickly to oppose a future ...b7-b5, White regains his pawn.

5... ♖bd7 6 ♔xc4 a6

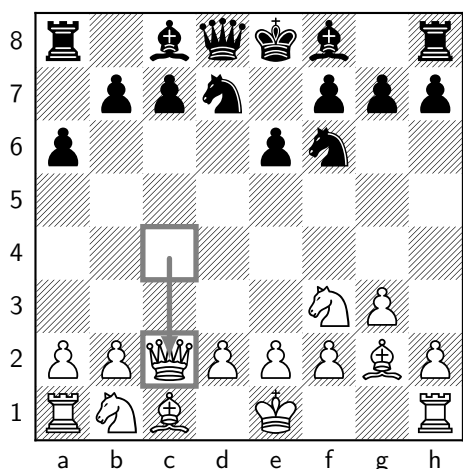
EXERCISE: Having read the discussion above can you guess White's high-class positional move? — ANSWER:

7 ♔c2!

Exactly.

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♗g2 dxc4 5 ♔a4+
♖bd7 6 ♔xc4 a6 7 ♔c2 b5

1... ♖f6



QUESTION: I understand Black wants his bishop on b7, but what are the merits and drawbacks of pushing the b-pawn one or two squares to clear the way? — ANSWER: In general, advancing ...b7-b5 is almost always better than ...b7-b6 if it gains time by hitting the white queen. In this case she is evacuated to c2 so it loses most of its sting. Nonetheless on b5 the pawn keeps the b6-square vacant for the black queen (she might also use the a5-square in an emergency). On the other hand, on b5 the pawn is exposed to attack by a2-a4 and doesn't protect the potentially fragile c5-pawn.

7 ♖b3!

7 O-O b5 8 ♖c2 ♙b7

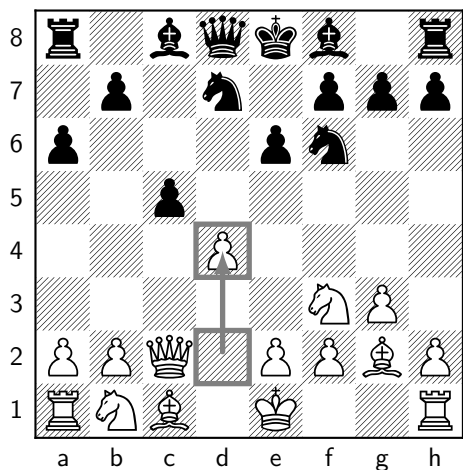
7 ♖c2 b5? 8 ♘e5 ♘d5 9 ♘c6 ♖f6 10 O-O

7...c5

White's astute move order has cajoled Black into what is very much Plan B for him in this set-up.

8 d4

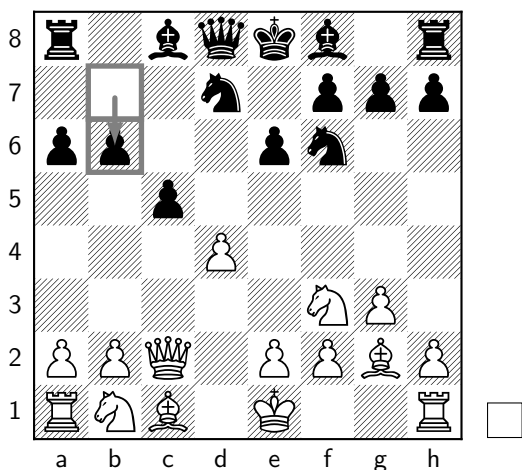
Finally we are in Catalan territory.



8 O-O b5 9 a4 ♙b7

8 ♘c3 ♖c7!? 9 d4 b5 10 ♙f4 ♖a7

8...b6



8...b5 9 ♘e5 ♘d5 10 ♘c3 ♙×e5 11 ♘×d5
exd5 12 d×e5 ♙b7 13 O-O ♙e7 14 ♖d1 ♖d7
15 ♙×d5? ♙×d5 16 e4 ♙×e4!

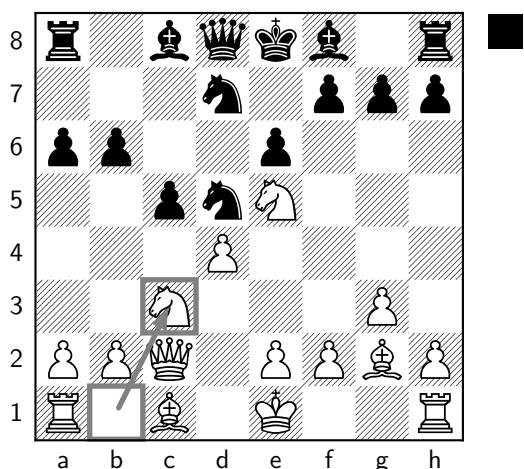
9 ♘e5

This attacking move is necessary as otherwise ...Bb7 would equalize at once for Black.

9...♘d5

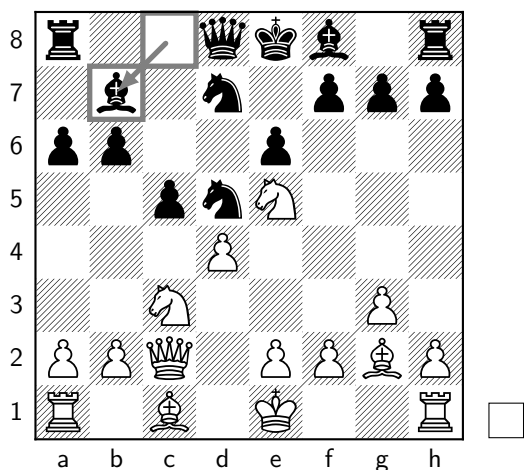
Black is obliged to block the diagonal with his knight.

10 ♘c3



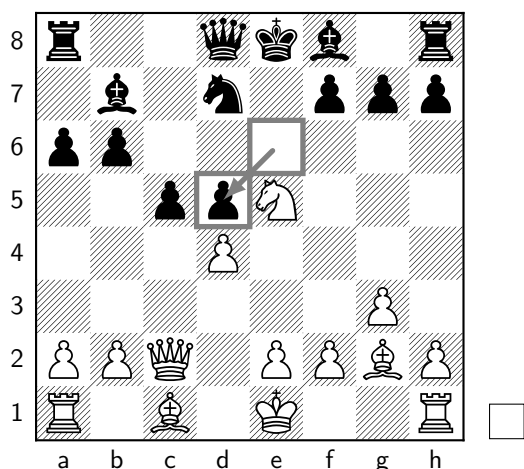
10 ♖c6 ♔c7 11 e4 ♘5f6! 12 d5 ♙b7 13 O-O ♙d6 14 ♘d2 O-O 15 ♘c4 exd5 16 exd5 ♘xd5 17 ♙xd5 ♙xc6 18 ♚d1 ♙xd5 19 ♚xd5 ♙e7 20 ♚xd7 ♔xd7 21 ♘xb6 ♔e6 22 ♘xa8 ♚xa8 23 ♙e3 ♚c8 24 a3

10... ♙b7



10... ♘b4 11 ♔d1 ♘xe5 12 dxe5 ♔xd1+ 13 ♔xd1 ♚a7 14 a3 ♚d7+ 15 ♙d2 ♘d5 16 ♘xd5 exd5 17 b4 ♚d8 18 ♙g5

11 ♘xd5 exd5



11... ♙xd5 12 ♙xd5 exd5 13 ♙f4 ♘xe5 14 ♙xe5

12 O-O ♘xe5 13 dxe5

A familiar type of pawn structure for this variation. For example, it occurred in the Tkachiev game mentioned in the notes after 8...b6 above. Here Black adopts the same queen manoeuvre.

13... ♔d7

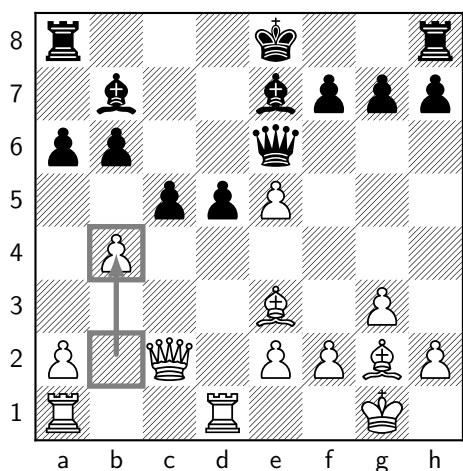
The queen heads to e6 where she attacks e5, helps defend b6 and d5, and is away from any pin on the d-file.

14 ♚d1 ♔e6 15 ♙e3 ♙e7

EXERCISE: Our e5-pawn is hanging. We should do something to undermine Black's pawn structure, but what? — ANSWER:

16 b4!?

A very logical 'human' move to weaken the black pawn front.



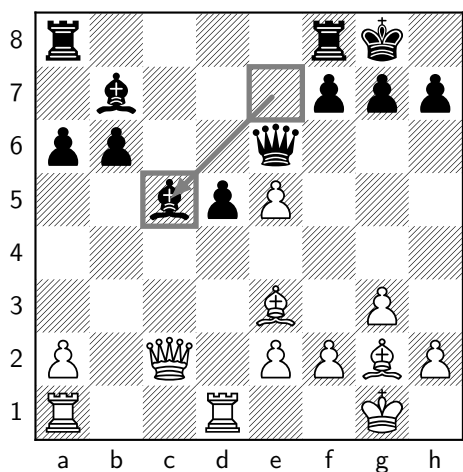
16 ♖a4+! b5 17 ♖a3 c4 18 ♖a5 ♕×e5? 19 ♘d4 ♖g5? 20 ♖c7!

16...O-O 16...c4 17 ♖d2 b5 18 a3 ♖d8 19 ♘d4 O-O

17 b×c5

White finds it easier to attack Black's hanging pawns because he avoided 16...c4.

17...♙×c5

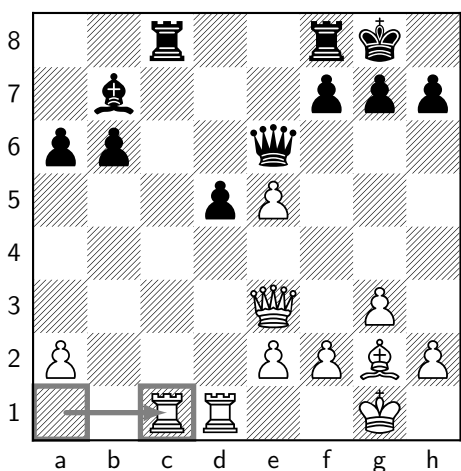


17...b×c5? 18 ♖ab1! ♖ab8 19 ♖×b7! ♖×b7 20 ♙×d5

17...♙×c5 18 ♙×c5 ♖fc8 19 ♖b2 ♖×c5 20 ♖ab1 b5 21 ♖bc1

18 ♖b3?! ♙×e3 19 ♖×e3 ♖ac8 20 ♖ac1?

A little too routine.

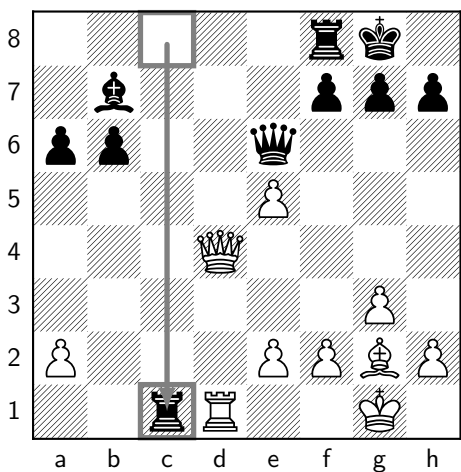


20 ♖ab1 ♖c5 21 ♖d4

20...d4!

Getting rid of the isolated pawn and the bad bishop in one stroke.




21 ♖×d4 ♖×c1



21...♖×c1 22 ♖×c1 ♙×g2 23 ♙×g2 ♖×a2 24 e4! b5 25 ♖c7 a5 26 ♖a7 a4 27 ♖d5 ♖e2 28 ♖a8

1/2-1/2

White: 3: Black Holds on to c4
Black: ?
Opening ECO: E04
Result: *

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 f3 f6 4 g3 dxc4 5 g2

. In this chapter Black snatches the pawn on c4 and then prepares to defend it in Slav-style with ...b7-b5. The resulting complications are one of the reasons that players of White often choose a move order that avoids the possibility. Perhaps they fear their opponent's preparation or just want a quieter life. However, as we shall see it is a risky approach for Black. If White is prepared to enter the maelstrom he has good chances.

*

White: Kantor, G.

10: Budapest

Black: Rydstrom, T.

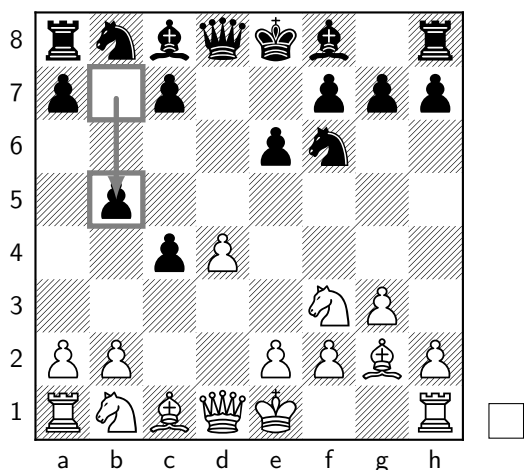
Opening ECO: E04

2016

Result: 1-0

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♘f3 dxc4 5 ♗g2 b5?!

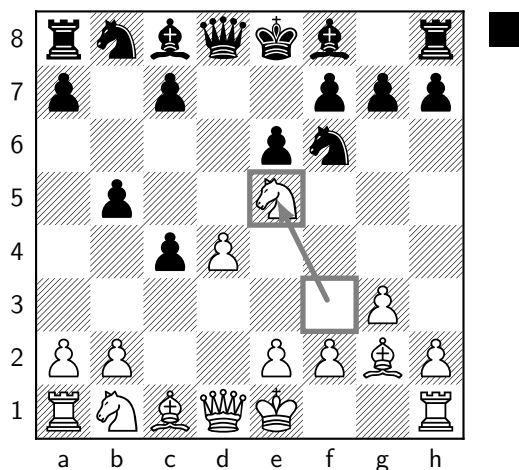
EXERCISE: Can you work out why ...Nd5 is an undesirable move for Black and how can White force Black into playing it?



5...a6 6 O-O b5

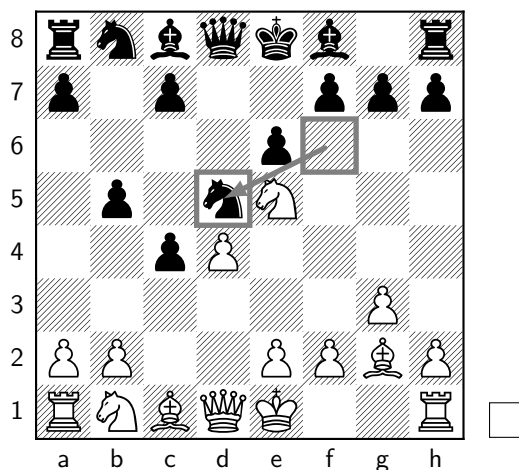
6 ♘e5!

ANSWER: Exactly. The threat to a8 virtually obliges Black to block with the knight on d5.



6 a4! c6 7 ♘e5 ♘d5

6... ♘d5



6...c6 7 ♘xc6 ♖b6 8 ♘a5! ♘d5 9 ♗d2 ♘c6 10 ♘xc6 ♖xc6 11 O-O ♗b7 12 e4 ♘f6 13 d5! exd5 14 exd5 ♘xd5 15 ♖e1+ ♗e7 16 ♗b4

7 a4

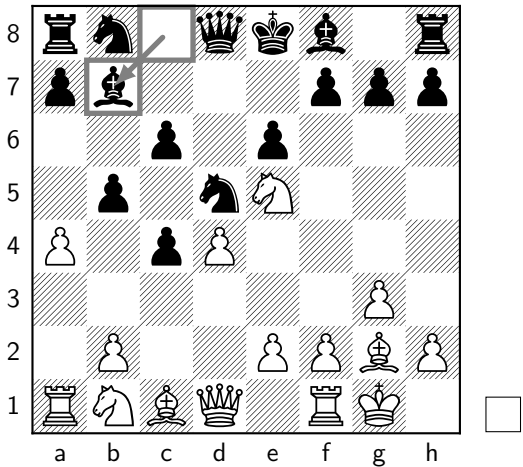
This quick pawn stab doesn't give Black time to develop with ...Bb7 and ...a7-a6, as

after 7...a6? 8 axb5 the rook on a8 isn't yet defended by the bishop on b7. We begin to see why 5...b5 has led to a struggle on the queenside that Black isn't ready for.

7...c6

White has extracted the moves ...c7-c6 and ...Nd5 from Black. With the pawn on c6, the bishop won't enjoy an open diagonal on b7, and the knight on b8 is denied its optimum square. Well, you expect that in a Slav set-up: it's a price you have to pay for having an extra pawn. Of much more significance is that the king's knight has been more or less forced to d5. Not only has it cost Black a tempo to put it there, but it is a target for an e2-e4 advance. This bolsters White's chances of a central breakthrough with the follow up move d4-d5, as occurs in the game. — As a general rule, the knight being on d5 without White having gone Nc3 is usually bad news for Black. With Nc3 played, he can always meet e2-e4 with ...Nxc3, not losing time and reducing the pressure on his queenside.

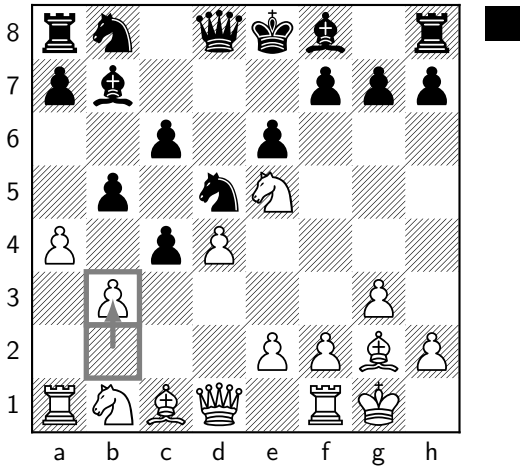
8 O-O ♖b7



8...a6 9 a×b5 c×b5 10 b3 c×b3 11 ♖×b3 ♖b7

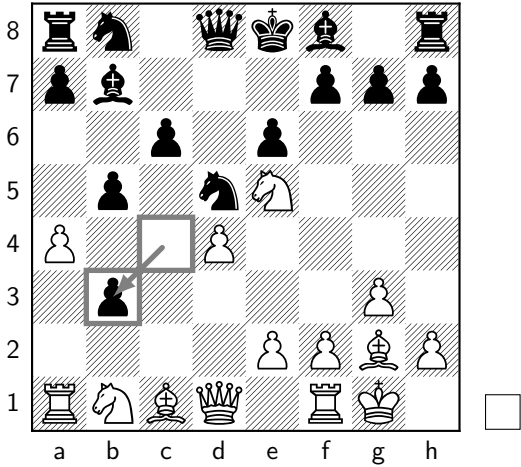
9 b3!?

QUESTION: What is the point of this move? — ANSWER: All will become clear after move 11 below.



9 e4 ♖f6 10 ♖c3 a6 11 d5 ♖e7

9...c×b3



9...♖d7 10 a×b5 ♖×e5 11 d×e5 c×b5 12 b×c4 b×c4 13 ♖a4+ ♖d7 14 ♖×d7+ ♖×d7 15 ♖d1 ♖c7 16 ♖d4! ♖b6 17 ♖f4 ♖×g2 18 ♖×g2

10 a×b5

This increases the scope of Black's bishop on b7, but it is positionally correct as it makes way for the central advance d4-d5 by removing Black's pawn from c6.

10...c×b5 11 ♖×b3

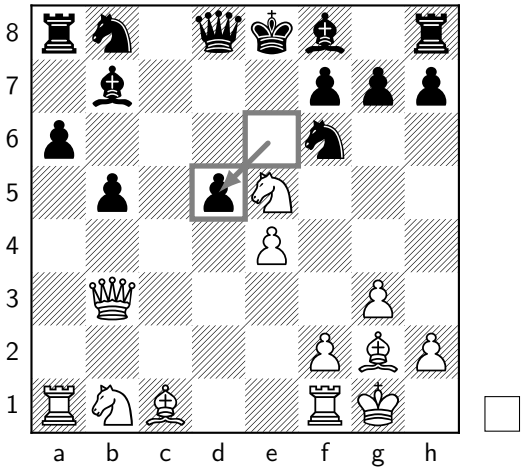
We can now see that with 9 b3 White has secured the b3-square for his queen. Here she attacks the b5-pawn and exerts pressure along the a2-g8 in support of a d4-d5 advance in the centre. Another good point of

9 b3 is that the rook on f1 can in some cases be deployed to d1 in support of the central break now that the square has been vacated.

11...a6 12 e4 ♖f6 13 d5!

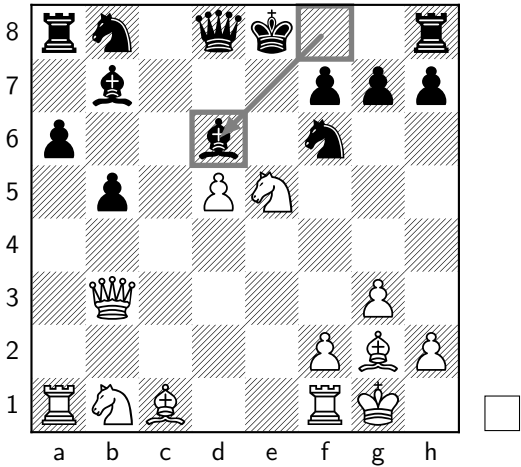
White powers forward in the centre. Note that the move ...Bb7 has weakened the e6- and f7-pawns by denying them the support of the bishop on c8. This will become of significance due to Black's lagging kingside development.

13...e×d5



13...♙d6 14 ♘×f7! ♚×f7 15 d×e6+ ♚e8 16 ♙b2

14 e×d5 ♙d6

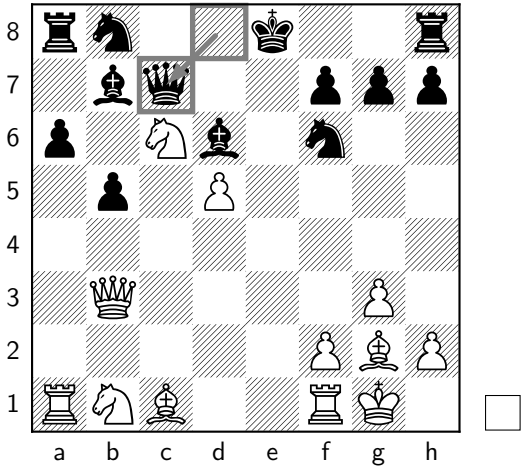


14...♙e7 15 d6!

14...♘×d5 15 ♖d1

14...♙×d5 15 ♚e3! ♚e7 16 ♖d1! ♙×g2 17 ♚×g2 ♚b7+ 18 ♘c6+ ♙e7 19 ♖d8#

15 ♘c6 ♚c7



15...♙×c6 16 d×c6 O-O 17 c7

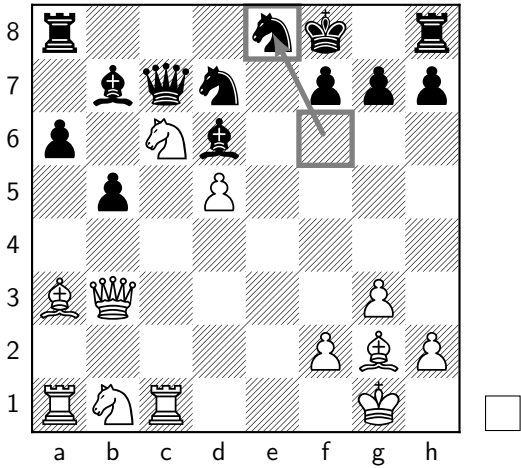
16 ♖e1+ ♚f8 17 ♙a3!

The black king and queen will be targeted.

17...♘bd7 18 ♖c1!

An unexpected change of front which is immediately decisive. It shows the strength of White's pieces that he is able to establish a winning position despite having a rook on a1 and a knight on b1 doing very little.

18...♘e8

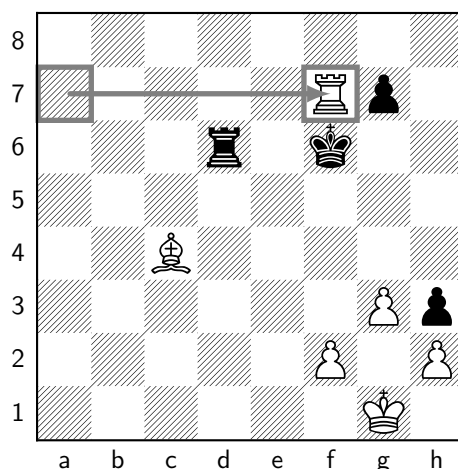
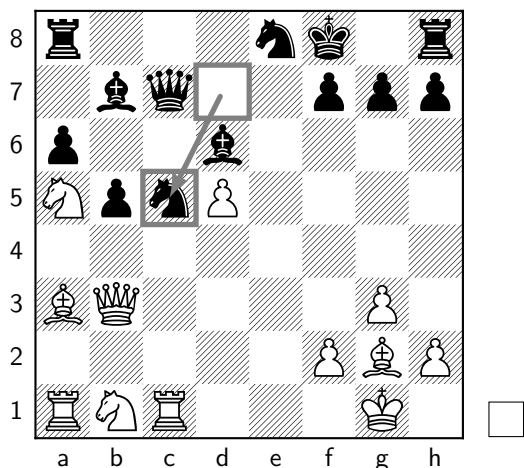


18...ZZ- 19 ♖a5! ♜b6 20 ♙x d6+ ♜x d6 21 ♜x b7

18... ♙x c6 19 ♜x c6

18... ♙g8 19 ♜e7+

19 ♜a5! ♜c5



37 ♙x f7??

37... ♙g6 38 ♜e7

1-0

19... ♜b6 20 ♜x b7 ♜x b7 21 ♙x d6+ ♜x d6 22 ♜b4 ♜b8 23 ♜c6

20 ♜c3 ♜c8

EXERCISE: What is the winning move? —
ANSWER:

21 ♙h3!

The Catalan bishop breaks the deadlock on the c-file. The black rook has to save itself, but then c5 drops, leaving White with an extra piece.

21... ♜d8 22 ♜x b7 ♜x b7 23 ♙x c5 ♜x d5 24 ♙x d6+ ♜x d6 25 ♜a3

The win is very simple. Black's bad development means that he loses the a6-pawn as well.

25... h5 26 ♜x a6 h4 27 ♜x d6+ ♜x d6 28 ♙f1 ♜h5 29 ♜d1 ♙e7 30 ♜c3 ♜c5 31 ♜a7+ ♙e6 32 ♜e4 ♜c6 33 ♜x d6+ ♜cxd6 34 ♜x d6 ♜x d6 35 ♙x b5 h3 36 ♙c4+ ♙f6 37 ♜x f7+

White: Eljanov, P.

11: Israeli League

Black: Novikov, I.

Opening ECO: E04

2011

Result: 1-0

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 g3 dxc4 5 ♙g2 7... ♘d5

a6

This pawn move might indicate that Black is preparing to defend c4 with 6...b5 on the next move, as is the case here. Or, alternatively, he might be planning to put his knight on c6.

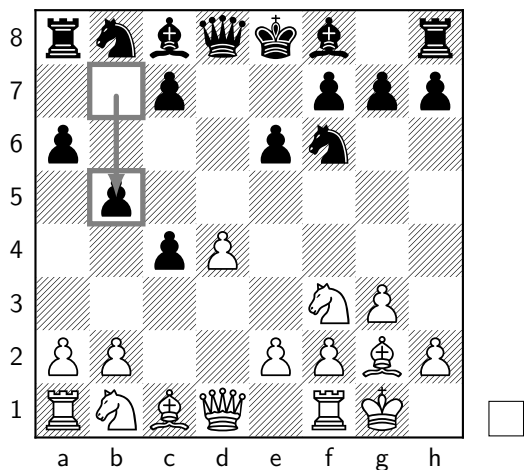
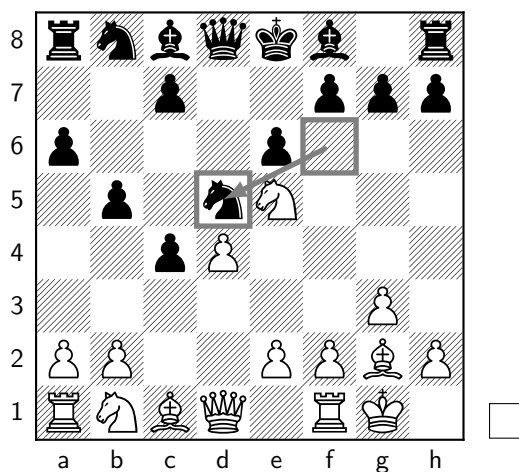
As in the Kantor game, Black's problem is that he is more or less obliged to put his knight on d5, wasting a tempo and leaving it as a target for an e2-e4 advance.

6 O-O 6 ♘e5

6 ♙a4+? b5

6...b5?!

Black has delayed this pawn advance for a move compared to 5...b5 in the game above. This means he has gained a tempo to fortify his queenside. Nonetheless this line is still fraught with danger for him. — EXERCISE: What now is White's best attacking move?



7...c6 8 b3! cxb3 9 ♘xc6 ♙b6 10 ♘a5! ♙a7
11 ♘xb3 ♙d7 12 a4 bxa4? 13 ♘c5! ♙xc5 14
dxc5 ♙xc5 15 ♙xa4 O-O 16 ♙a3

8 a4

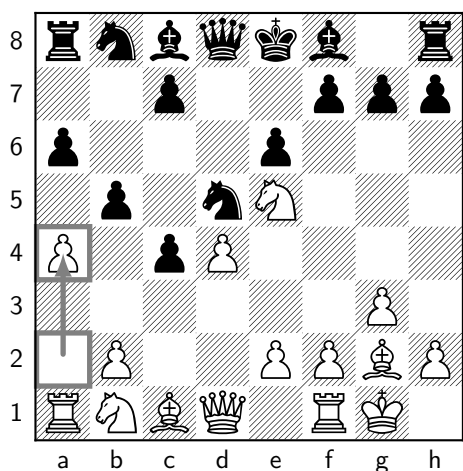
Beginning the process of undermining Black's queenside.

6... ♘c6

6...c5? 7 dxc5 ♙xd1 8 ♙xd1 ♙xc5 9 ♘e5

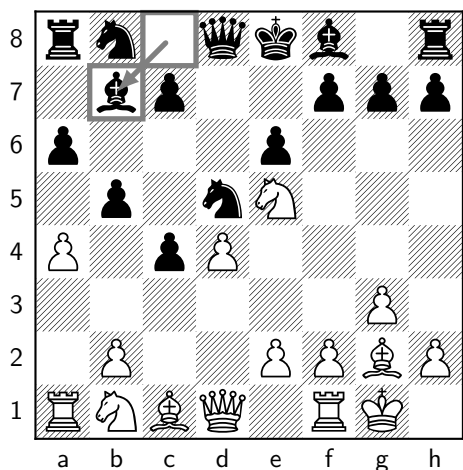
7 ♘e5!

ANSWER!



8 e4

8... ♖b7

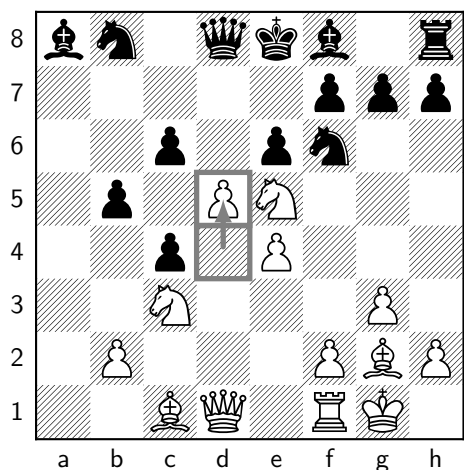


8... c6

9 a×b5 a×b5 10 ♖×a8 ♗×a8 11 e4

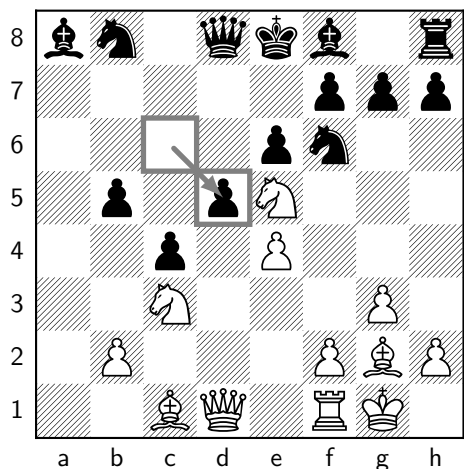
QUESTION: If White's plan is to attack in the centre, why did he first open lines on the queenside? — ANSWER: In fact Eljanov's preliminary campaign on the queenside abets his coming attack in the centre. For example, White will be able to exploit the fact that the knight on b8 is no longer defended by a rook on a8 in a key variation given in the notes to 14...Bxd5. Loose, undefended enemy pieces and pawns tend to help an attack in unexpected ways, even if they are far from the apparent scene of action.

11... ♖f6 12 ♖c3 c6 13 d5!



13 ♗g5

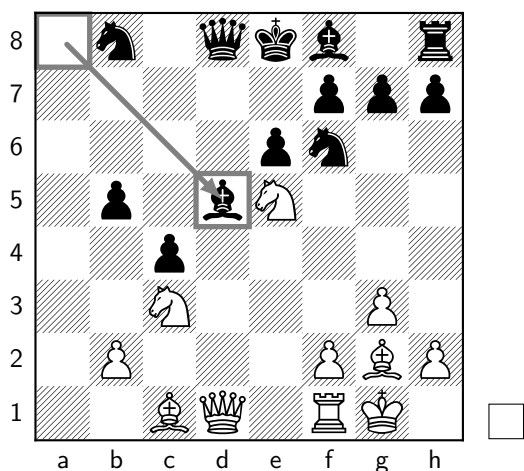
13... c×d5



13... ♗d6 14 ♖g4 O-O 15 d×e6 f×e6 16 ♖×f6+ g×f6 17 ♗h6

13... ♗e7 14 ♖×f7! ♖×f7 15 d×e6+ ♖×e6 16 ♗f3 ♖bd7 17 ♗h3+ ♖f7 18 ♖d1 ♖e8 19 ♗f5 b4 20 e5! ♖d5 21 ♖e4

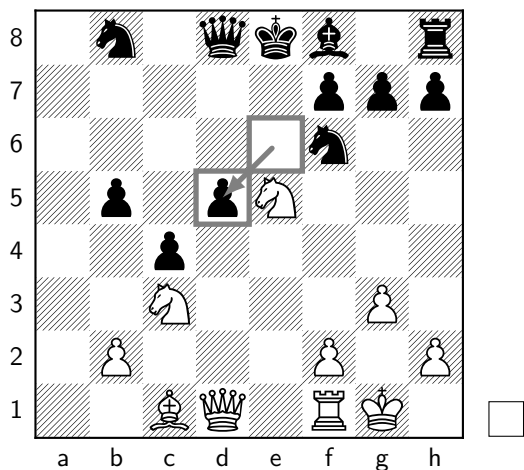
14 e×d5 ♗×d5



14... ♖×d5 15 ♔h5 g6 16 ♖×g6! f×g6 17 ♔e5 ♖×c3 18 ♔×a8

15 ♔×d5 e×d5

EXERCISE: How do we catch the black king before he has the chance to castle?



15... ♖×d5 16 ♔h5 g6 17 ♖×g6 f×g6 18 ♔e5 ♖f6 19 ♔×e6+ ♔e7 20 ♔d1 ♔a5 21 ♔e1 ♔d8 22 ♔g5

16 ♖g4!

ANSWER: Undermining the defence of d5 and clearing the way for a rook check before Black has time for 16...Be7 and 17...0-0.

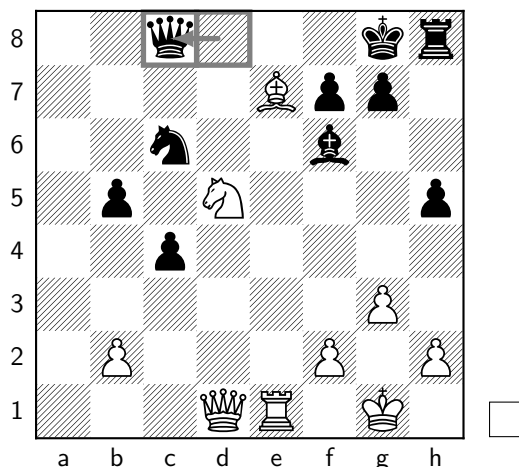
16... ♔e7 17 ♖×f6+ ♔×f6 18 ♔e1+ ♔f8 19 ♖×d5 ♖c6 20 ♔e3

The awkward position of the rook on h8 means that White can develop a winning attack on the black king.

20...h5 21 ♔c5+ ♔g8 22 ♔e7!

A neat tactic to force a breach in Black's kingside fortress.

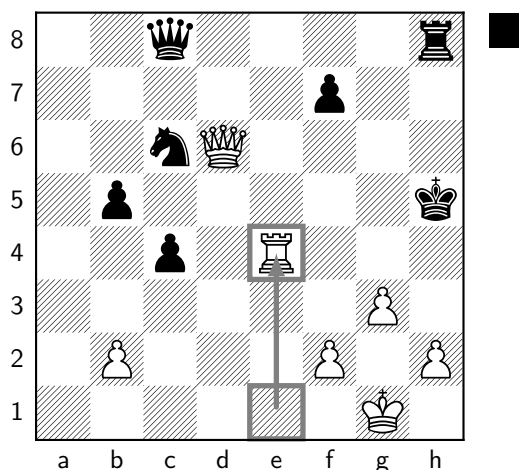
22... ♔c8



22... ♔×e7 23 ♖×e7+ ♔f8 24 ♖×c6

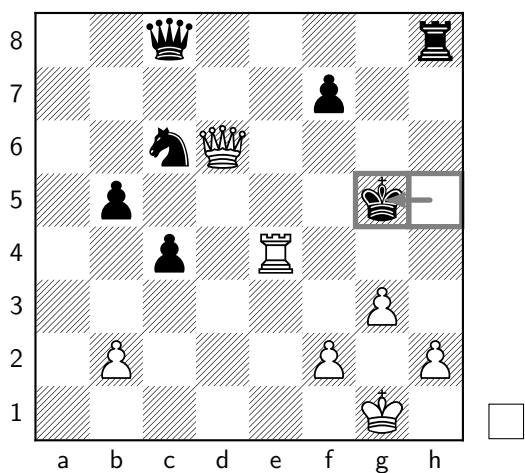
22... ♖×e7 23 ♖×f6+

23 ♔×f6 g×f6 24 ♖×f6+ ♔g7 25 ♖×h5+ ♔h6 26 ♔d6+ ♔×h5 27 ♔e4

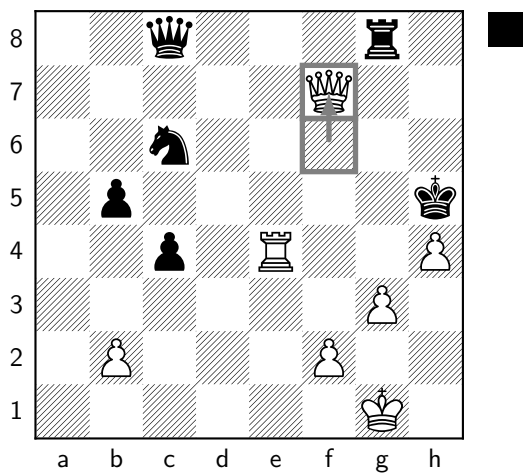


27 ♔f6! ♔g8 28 ♔e4 ♔g4 29 ♔×f7+ ♔h6 30 ♔e8 ♔c7 31 ♔e6+ ♔g5 32 ♔g6#

27... ♔g5



27... ♕d8 28 ♖h4+ ♕xh4 29 g×h4 ♖g8+ 30
 ♔f1 ♘d8 31 ♕e5+ ♔h6 32 ♕xh5
 28 h4+ ♔h5 29 ♕f6 ♖g8 30 ♕xh7+



30 ♕xh7+ ♖g6 31 g4+ ♔h6 32 g5+ ♔h5 33
 ♕h7+

1-0

White: Grischuk, A.

12: Villarrobledo (rapid)

Black: Potkin, V.

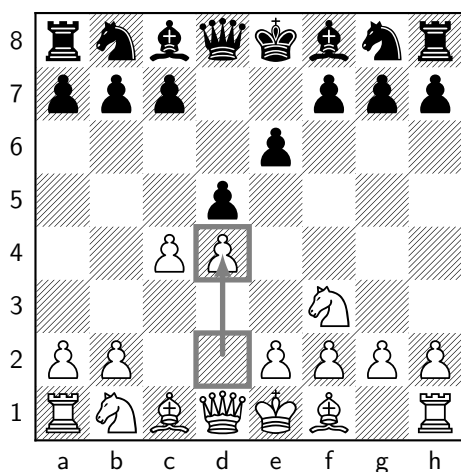
Opening ECO: E04

2009

Result: 1-0

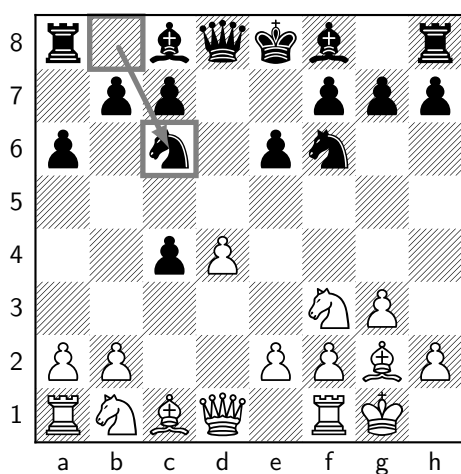
1 ♖f3 d5 2 c4 e6 3 d4

A somewhat curious choice of move order.



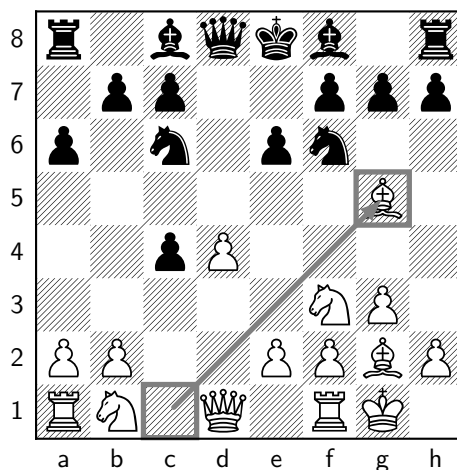
3 g3 ♗f6 4 ♘g2 ♙e7 5 d4

3... ♗f6 4 g3 dxc4 5 ♘g2 a6 6 O-O ♖c6



6... b5

7 ♘g5



7 ♗c3

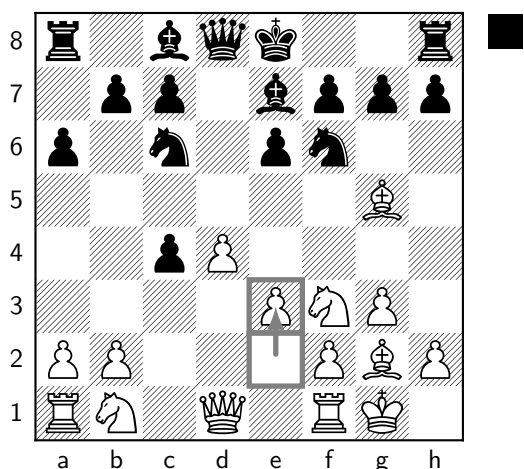
7 e3

7... ♙e7

White has a lead in development. After the deflection of the important black pawn from d5 he has looming pressure along the h1-a8 diagonal. This will increase further once Black plays ...b7-b5 to hold on to the c4-pawn. He also has more space in the centre and potentially mobile pawns there. In return Black has an extra pawn. He has the chance to build up on the queenside with moves like ...b7-b5 and Rb8.

8 e3!

An example of a concrete handling of the problems of the opening. It seems strange that Grischuk would want to defend the d4-pawn again instead of, say, developing his queen's knight. In fact the modest looking-pawn move is a clever prophylactic stroke.



8 e3 b5 9 ♖e5 ♗×e5 10 ♗×a8

8 ♗c3 ♜b8 9 ♗d2! b5

8... ♗d7

With the game move Potkin defends c6 at once, making ...b7-b5 possible. This, however, is a little victory for White as Black would rather have left the bishop on c8 for the time being or else played it to b7 after ...b7-b5. On d7 it is passively placed and blocks the queen's influence on the d-file.

9 ♗c3

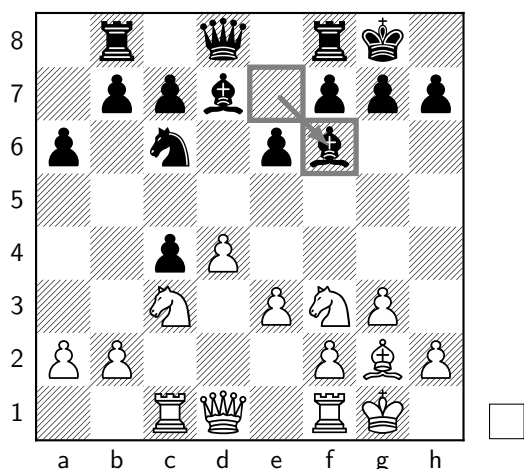
Only now, after White has extracted the move ...Bd7 from Black.

9... O-O 10 ♜c1 ♜b8

At first glance it looks like Black is doing well as he is ready to support his extra pawn with ...b7-b5. Meanwhile nothing is happening in the centre to scare him. The way Grischuk gains control of the position will therefore come as a surprise to those not acquainted with this type of pawn structure.

11 ♗×f6 ♗×f6

A difficult decision. — EXERCISE: After the bishop recapture can you work out White's strategy? Where is he going to attack - on the queenside, in the centre or on the kingside?



11... gxf6 12 ♗d2!? b5 13 ♜h5 f5

12 ♗e4

The knight enters the fray and uncovers an attack on c4.

12... b5

Black holds on to his pawn, but now Grischuk's plan is revealed.

13 b3!

ANSWER: This is it! In answer to the question above about where White is going to attack, the answer is everywhere: on the queenside, in the centre and on the kingside. However, first of all he undermines Black's queenside pawns. Imagine if Black now plays 13...cxb3. After 14 axb3 in reply we have the diagram position below. — It's important to grasp the nature of White's strategic pawn sacrifice, as it will occur in various lines where Black has played an early ...d5xc4 and held on to the pawn. — Black is still a pawn up. However, his queenside structure has lost almost all its dynamism with the disappearance of the c4-pawn. Instead of threatening to roll forwards en masse, the pawns are a liability and will need defending by the pieces. Things are particularly awkward as White has a rook bearing down along the c-file at the vulnerable knight and beyond it the backward pawn on c7. — There is also a nasty hole on the c5-square which is inviting for White's knight. However, Black can play 14...Be7

and be ready to exchange off the knight for his bishop when it sets foot on c5. So we could refine White's play after 13...cxb3 with the interpolation 14 Nxf6+ Qxf6 and only then 15 axb3. Then Black's defences along the c-file have been weakened as the black queen has been deflected from d8 where it defended c7. — A case could also be made for 14 Nxf6+ Qxf6 15 Qxb3. White could then follow up with Rc5 and double rooks along the c-file, with the white queen perhaps going to a3 to attack a6. A possible drawback to retaking on b3 with the queen is that the c4-square isn't defended, so White would have to watch out for ...Na5 and ...Nc4 by Black. — Whether White recaptures with the queen or pawn, or interposes 14 Nxf6+ Qxf6 or not, he has full compensation for the pawn deficit. In fact his game is preferable, or at least easier to play, as sooner or later he is likely to regain his pawn whilst keeping the initiative.

13... ♖e7

Rather than assume a defensive attitude Potkin decides to return the pawn. He hopes that the activity of his rook on b8 and minor pieces will compensate for the inferiority of his pawn structure.

14 bxc4 bxc4 15 ♖xc4 ♘b4

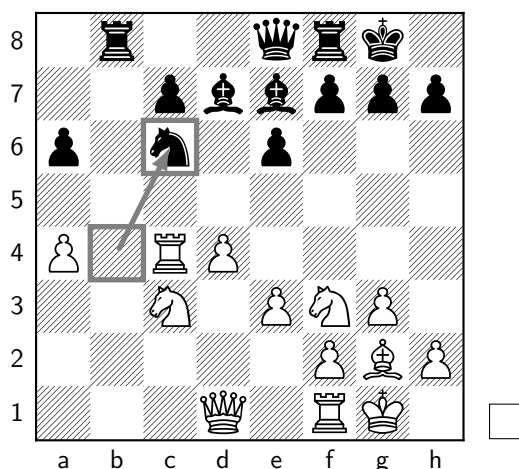
EXERCISE: How can White meet the double threat of 15...Nxa2 and 16...Bb5, winning the exchange? — ANSWER:

16 a4!

Killing two birds with one stone. But Black persists in attacking a4.

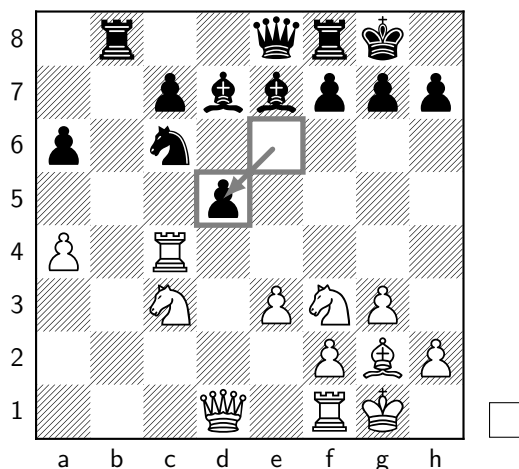
16... ♖e8 17 ♘c3 ♘c6?

Black goes passive at the wrong moment.



17... ♖d5! 18 ♘xd5! exd5 19 ♖xc7 ♘d6
20 ♖a7 ♘xa4 21 ♖a1 ♖b6 22 ♘e5 ♘b5 23
♘xf7! ♖e6! 24 ♘xd6 ♘xf1 25 ♘xf1 ♖xd6
26 ♖a2 ♖f7 27 ♖a8+ ♖f8 28 ♖a7 ♖f7

18 d5! exd5



18... ♘b4 19 ♘e5!

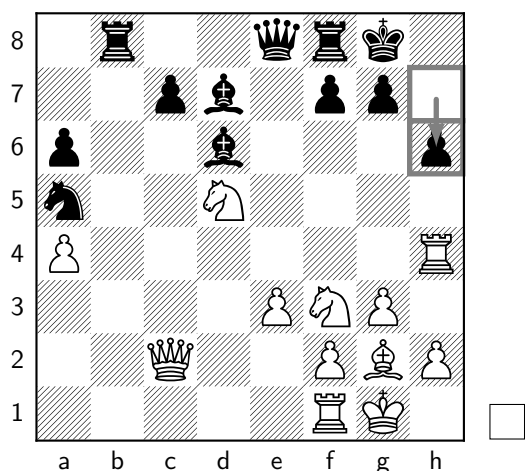
19 ♘xd5 ♘d6 20 ♖c2 ♘a5

EXERCISE: How should White pursue his attack? — ANSWER:

21 ♖h4!

Exactly. It seems that Potkin was so focused on the queenside and how to gain counterplay to offset the weakness of c7, he forgot he had a king. It is very logical for White to switch to a direct kingside attack, as Black's

21...h6



21...g6

**21...f5 22 ♔c3! ♘c6 23 ♘g5 h6 24 ♘×c7!
♙×c7 25 ♙d5+ ♚h8 26 ♖×h6#**

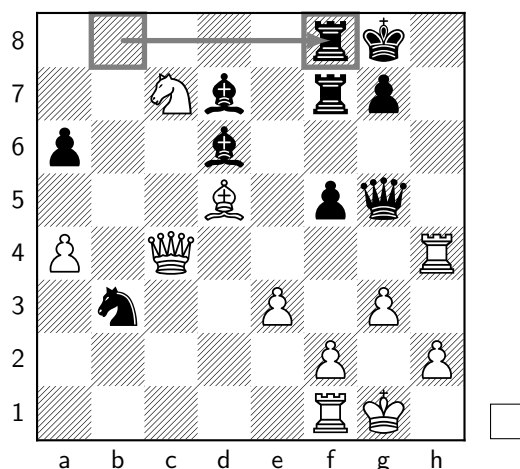
22 ♖xh6

Exploiting the potential fork on f6. Black's position is falling apart all over the board. His king's defences are full of holes and his pawns and pieces are mostly hanging.

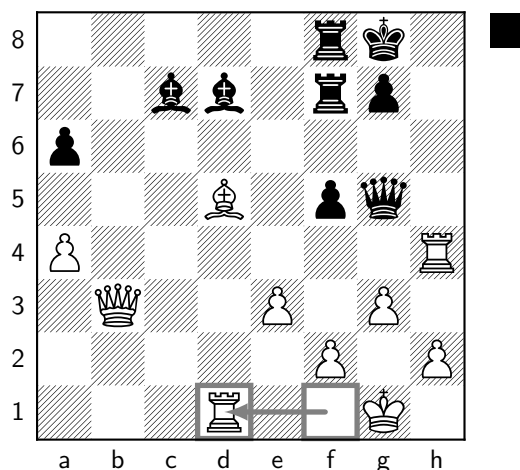
22...f5 23 ♖h4 ♘b3 24 ♘xc7 ♔e7 25 ♘g5!

The most energetic way to finish the game is to clear the way for the Catalan bishop to join in the attack.

25... ♔×g5 26 ♖d5+ ♜f7 27 ♔c4 ♜f8

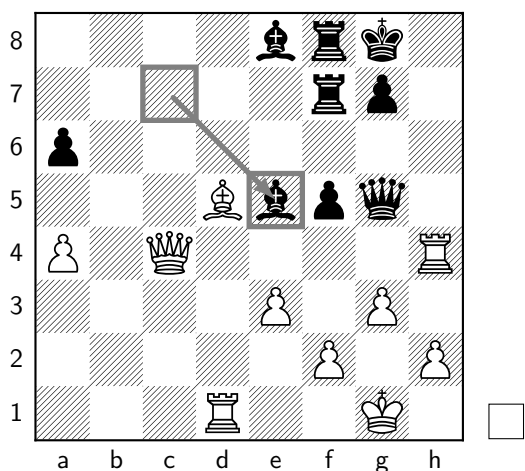


27... ♔f6 28 ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 29 ♖h8+
28 ♔xb3 ♖xc7 29 ♖d1



29 ♖xf7+ ♜xf7 30 ♜h8+ ♔xh8 31 ♚xf7 ♚d8
32 ♜d1

29...♙e8 30 ♔c4 ♙e5

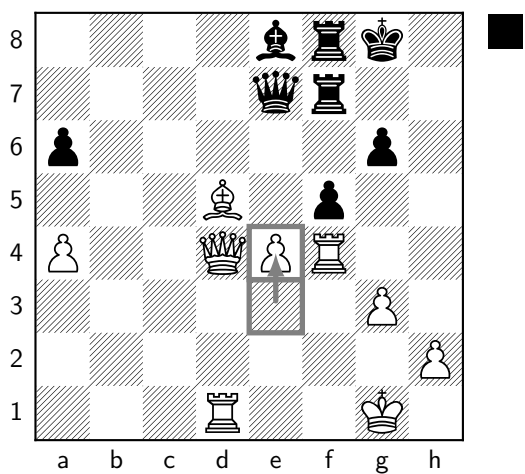


30...♞d8 31 ♖×a6

31 f4 ♜e7 32 f×e5 ♜×e5 33 ♜d4

Grischuk can take it easy as he will be the exchange and a pawn up.

33...♜e7 34 ♞f4 g6 35 e4



35 ♞h4

1-0

White: Smirnov, P.

13: Chelyabinsk (rapid)

Black: Kosyrev, V.

Opening ECO: E04

2016

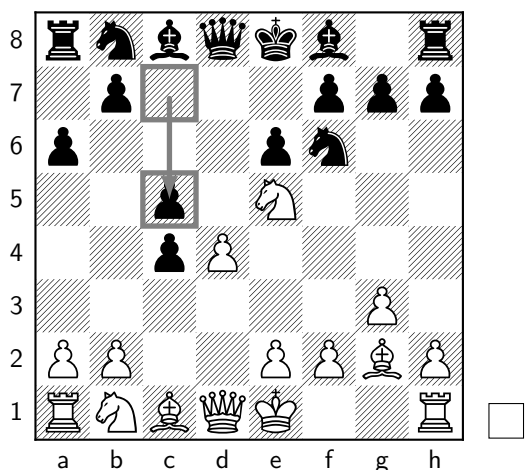
Result: 1-0

1 d4 e6 2 c4 ♘f6 3 g3 d5 4 ♙g2 dxc4 5 ♘f3 a6 6 ♘e5

Since 6 Ne5 gets an exclamation mark in games in this chapter versus 5...b5 and 5...c6, it certainly deserves to be considered here. The obvious good point is that it stops both 6...b5 and 6...Nc6.

6...c5!?

However, this is a somewhat annoying reply. Black renounces the plan of holding on to the c4-pawn with ...b7-b5 in order to counterattack against the white centre. It is all the more effective as White's previous move has delayed his development and removed a defender from d4.

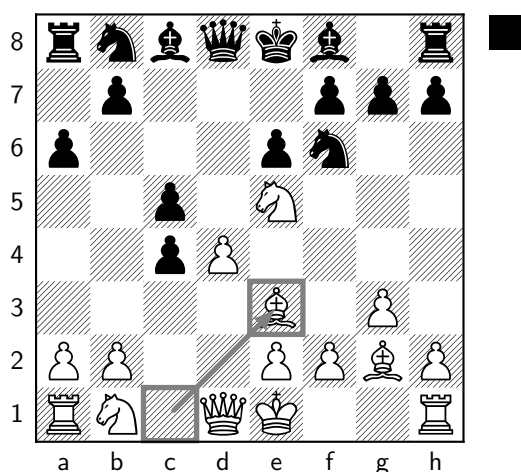


6... ♙b4+ 7 ♘c3 ♘d5 8 ♙d2 b5 9 O-O ♙xc3 10 bxc3 O-O 11 a4 f6 12 ♘g4 ♙b7 13 ♙b1! ♙e8 14 e4 ♘b6 15 ♘e3 ♙c6 16 d5

7 ♙e3!?

An awkward-looking, but effective move. Again and again in the Catalan we see White

lavish time and care on his favourite light-squared bishop, while leaving the dirty jobs to his dark-squared bishop. Here it guards the d4-pawn and shows a willingness to exchange for a knight.

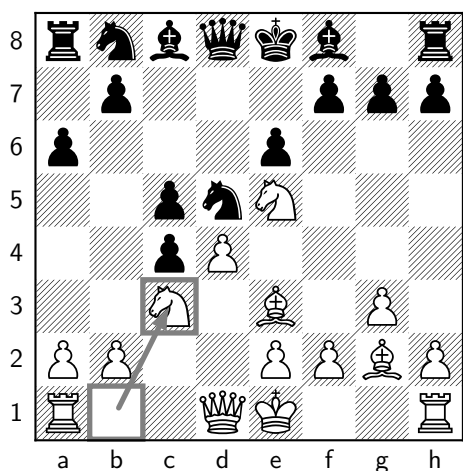


7 ♘a3!? cxd4 8 ♘axc4 ♙c5 9 O-O O-O 10 ♙d2 ♘d5 11 ♙c1 ♘d7 12 ♘d3 ♙a7 13 ♙a5 ♙e7 14 ♙b3 ♙b8 15 ♙a3 ♙xa3 16 bxa3 ♘c5! 17 ♘d6 b6

7... ♘d5!

Black has to go hunting the bishop on e3. If he develops quietly White will recapture on c4 at some point and have all the benefits of unrestrained pressure on b7 in the Catalan.

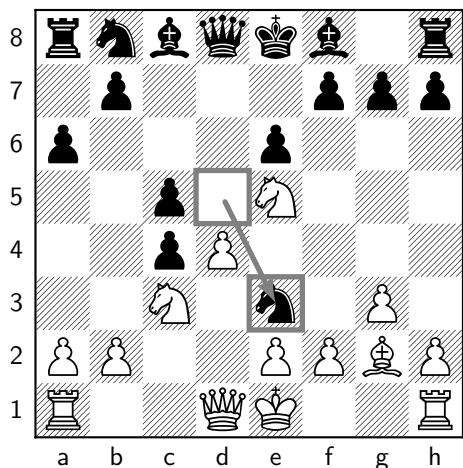
8 ♘c3



open diagonal and his knight on e5 is well centralized. It will be difficult for Black to shake off White's grip in the centre. — The drawbacks for White of the exchange are that everything else being equal it is normally unwelcome to have to exchange a bishop for an enemy knight. Though compared to most opening lines White is more willing than usual to swap his dark-squared bishop for a knight in the Catalan. — Of more concern for White is that the e3-pawn looks vulnerable. It can't be defended by another pawn unless it can advance to e5, which is unlikely. Meanwhile it can be targeted by Bg5. Finally, White is likely to spend a move regaining his pawn on c4, which could dissipate his initiative.

8 dxc5!? ♖d7

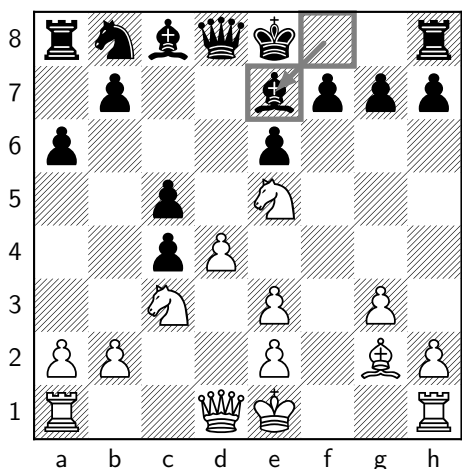
8... ♗xe3



8... b5 9 ♗xd5 exd5 10 dxc5

9 fxe3 ♕e7

EXERCISE: Assess the position and decide what benefits White has gained through the exchange on e3. And what possible disadvantages? — ANSWER: Firstly, we see that White has gained the open f-file for his rook. In conjunction with the knight on e5 this gives him attacking chances against f7. He has also strengthened his hold on the d4 point by transferring his f-pawn to e3. Furthermore, the sequence ...Nf6, ...Nd5 and ...Nxe3 has taken three moves, giving White a lead in development. His bishop on g2 enjoys an

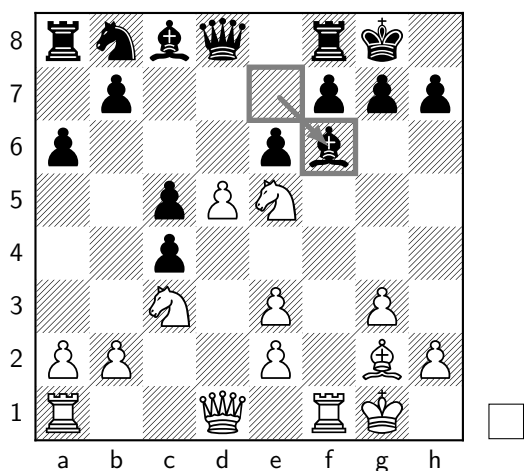


9... ♗d7 10 ♗xc4 ♕e7 11 dxc5 ♕xc5 12 ♗d6+ ♕xd6 13 ♖xd6 ♖e7 14 ♖d4 O-O 15 O-O

10 O-O O-O 11 d5!

Maintaining White's initiative is more important than keeping a compact pawn centre.

11... ♕f6

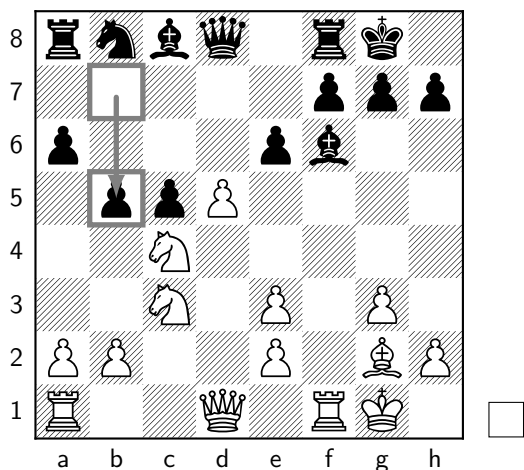


11...exd5? 12 Qxf7! Rxf7 13 Bxd5

11...Bg5 12 Qxc4 Ra7 13 a4

12 Qxc4 b5?

Black collapses under the pressure. Or perhaps he had underestimated White's initiative and thought the dark-squared bishop gave him good counterplay?



12...Bxc3 13 bxc3 exd5 14 Qxd5 Qxd5 15 Bxd5

12...Ra7 13 a4!

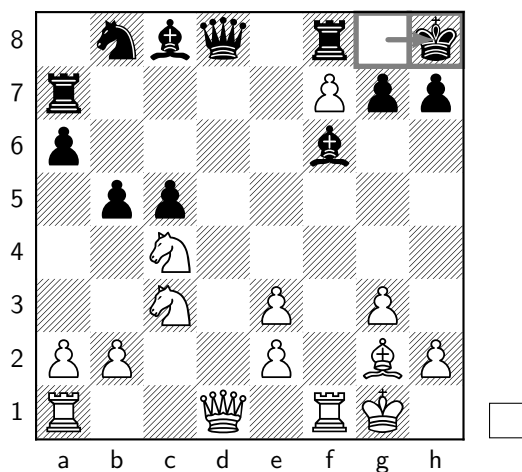
13 dxe6

Not only uncovering an attack on a8, but gaining access for White's knights to the d6-

and d5-squares.

13...Ra7 14 exf7+ Kh8?

EXERCISE: Can you see White's winning idea after 14...Kh8 - ?



14...Ra7 15 Qd6 Rc7 16 Qxc8 Rxc8 17 Qe4 Qe7 18 a4

15 Qxd8

ANSWER!

15...Rxd8 16 Qd6!

Exploiting Black's weak back rank to launch a deadly invasion.

16...Be6 17 Bd5

The white minor pieces swarm into Black's half of the board.

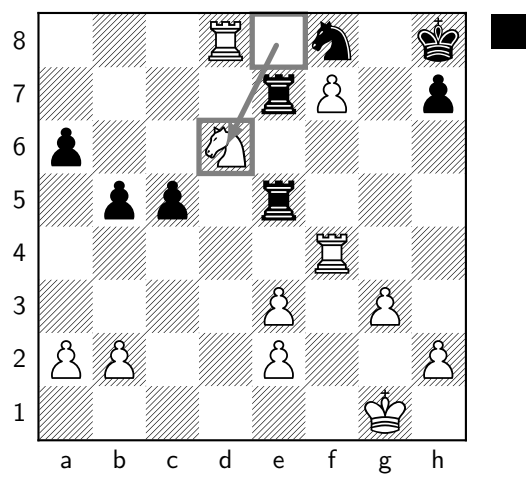
17...Bxd5 18 Qxd5 Qd7 19 Qe8 Qf8 20 Qdxf6 gxf6 21 Rxf6

With the f7-pawn defended and Black's king cut off from approaching it, all that remains is for White to bring his queen's rook to the g-file to threaten Rg8 mate.

21...Rd2 22 Rf1 Rd5 23 Rf4 Rg5

Preventing an entrance to the g-file, but now the d-file becomes an avenue for the other white rook.

24 Rd6 Re7 25 Rd8 Rge5 26 Qd6



26 ♘d6 ♔g7 27 ♖g4+

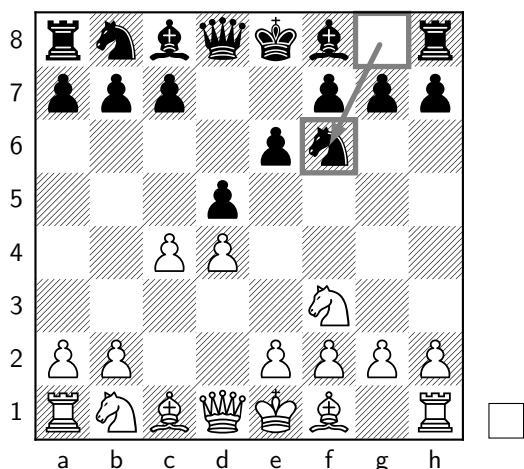
1-0

White: Perez Ponsa, F.
 Black: Quintiliano Pinto, R.
 Opening ECO: D30
 Result: 1-0

14: Cappelle la Grande

2016

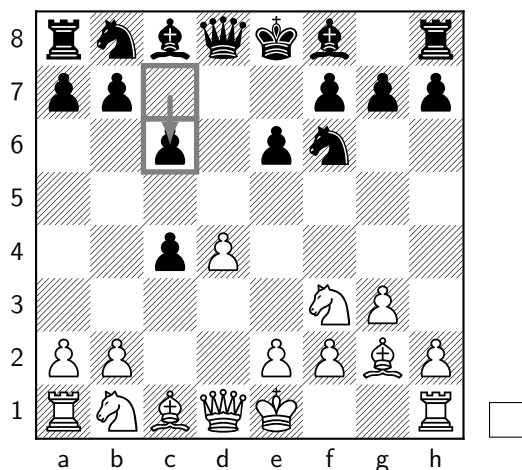
1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6



3...c6 4 g3 ♘f6 5 ♙g2 dxc4

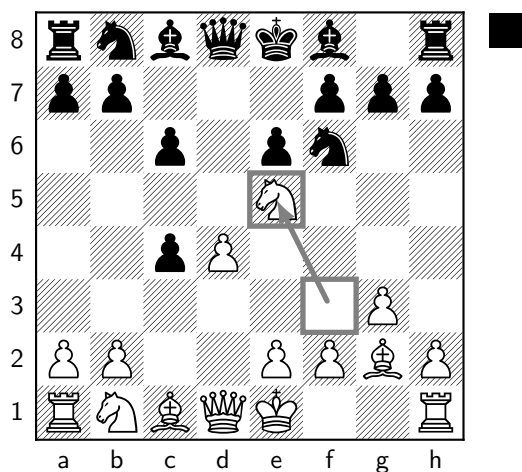
4 g3 dxc4 5 ♙g2 c6

Here Black begins his possible queenside expansion with his c-pawn rather than the b-pawn or a-pawn which were used in the games above. A drawback to the move is that the pawn on c6 takes away the best square from the black knight on b8.



5...♙e7 6 O-O O-O 7 ♙c2 a6 8 ♙xc4 b5 9 ♙c2 ♙b7

6 ♘e5!



6 O-O b5 7 a4 ♙b7 8 ♘e5

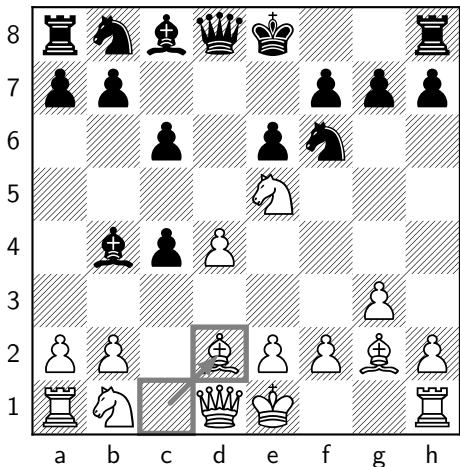
6 a4 c5 7 O-O ♘c6 8 dxc5 ♙xd1 9 ♙xd1 ♙xc5 10 ♘bd2 c3 11 bxc3 O-O 12 ♘b3 ♙e7 13 ♘fd4 ♙d7 14 ♙a3 ♙xa3 15 ♙xa3

6...♙b4+

Black seeks to disrupt White's build-up with a bishop check in the style of Chapter Four.

7 ♖d2

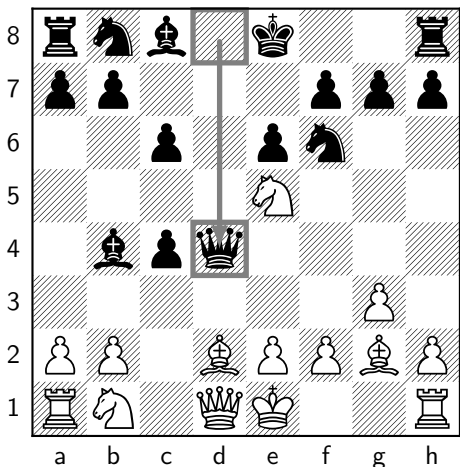
Showing a readiness to sacrifice a couple of pawns for an attack. I think White's chances are excellent.



7 ♘c3 ♘d5 8 ♖d2

7... ♖×d4

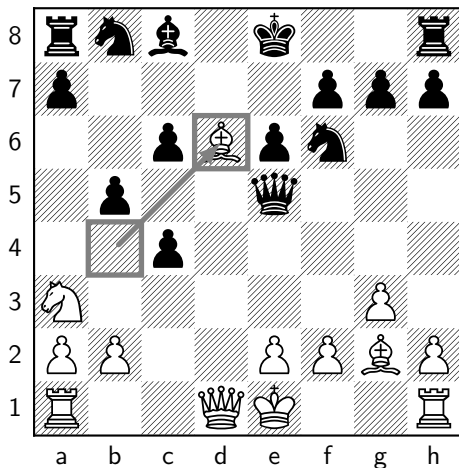
The consistent move.



7... ♖×d2+ 8 ♖×d2

8 ♖×b4 ♖×e5 9 ♘a3 b5 10 ♖d6!

QUESTION: Could you use this drawing method versus Kramnik!? — ANSWER: No. Better to play a full length game and savour the chance to play a former world champion even if you lose.



10 f4!? ♖c7 11 ♘×b5 c×b5 12 ♖×a8 ♖b7 13 ♖×b7 ♖×b7 14 O-O ♖b6+ 15 ♖h1 ♘e4!?

10 ♖c3 ♖c5 11 ♖d4 ♖b4+ 12 ♖c3 ♖c5 13 ♖d4

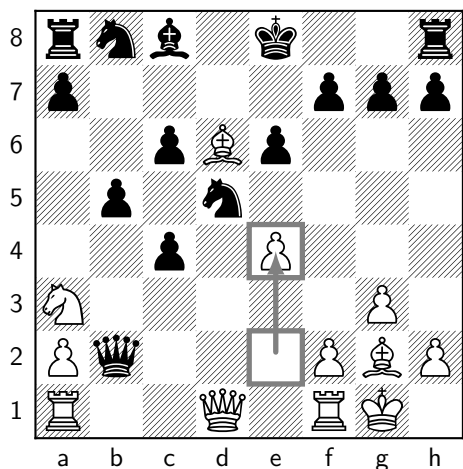
10... ♖×b2 11 O-O

EXERCISE: Assess the size of White's compensation for the three pawns. What are his threats? — ANSWER: White has a sizeable lead in development. His king is safely castled whilst its opposite number is stuck in the centre. This wouldn't matter too much if lines were closed, but here the d-file is open. Already Black has to contend with ideas such as Bxb8, removing the defender of c6 and clearing the way for both Bxc6+ and Qd6; not that White would hurry to exchange off his fabulous bishop which keeps the black king stranded on e8. The black queen is also an attractive target, with ideas of Rb1 and then Nxb5 afoot. — Hence Black blocks the d-file and the long diagonal towards c6 and a8 with his knight. This is the only way he can hope to survive.

11... ♘d5! 12 e4

Driving away the knight.

It's no surprise that Black collapses in such an unpleasant position.



12 ♖c2!? ♜b7 13 e4 ♘c3 14 ♔d2 c5 15 ♔g5
♘c6 16 e5 ♘e2+ 17 ♔h1 ♔xc2 18 ♜xc6+!!
♜xc6+ 19 f3

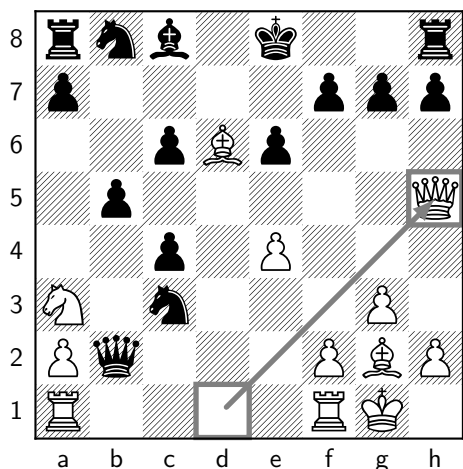
12... ♘c3 13 ♔h5

17... ♔g8 18 ♔b1 ♔c3 19 ♔fc1 ♔a5 20 ♘c2
18 ♔xg7 O-O-O

Perhaps Black thought he had escaped the worst here, but:

19 ♘xc4!

I feel a cliché coming on: a knight on the rim isn't always dim.



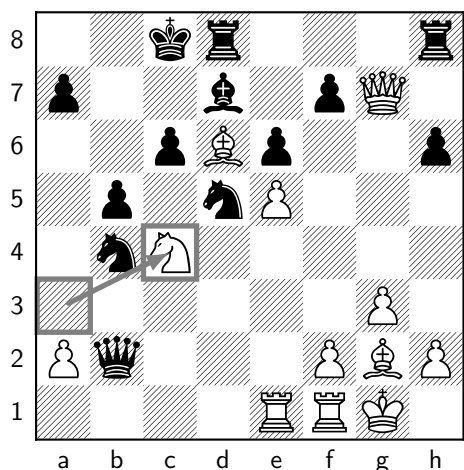
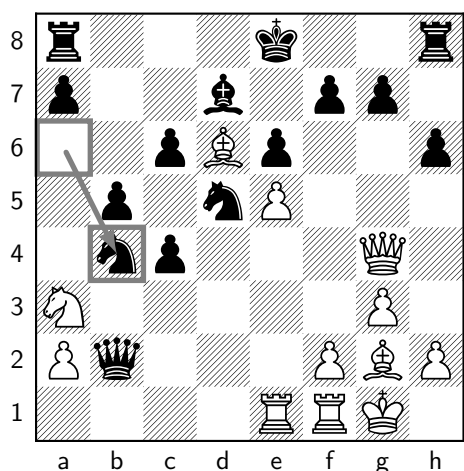
13 ♔g4

13 ♔d4??

13... h6 14 e5 ♜d7 15 ♔ae1

White has no need to hurry. The black king won't find a safe refuge in the centre or on either wing.

15... ♘a6 16 ♔f3 ♘d5 17 ♔g4 ♘ab4?



19 ♘xc4 bxc4 20 ♔b1 ♔c3 21 ♜xd5 exd5
22 ♔xb4 ♜e6 23 ♔b8+ ♘d7 24 ♔f6! ♔xb8
25 ♔e7+ ♘c8 26 ♔c7#

19... ♔×a2 20 ♖e3

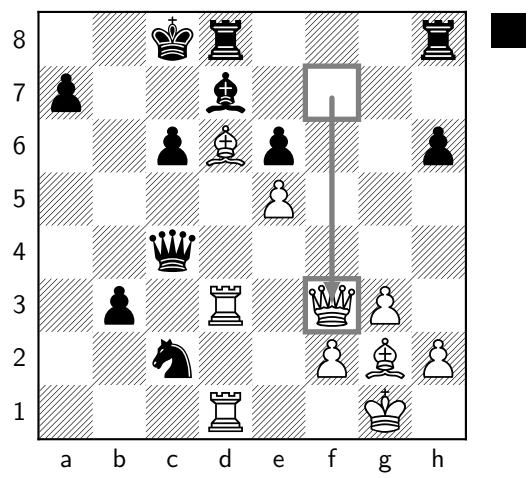
With ideas of 21 Ra1 and 22 Rxa7. The fact that White's 'bad' knight is now fully involved in the struggle tilts the game decisively in his favour.

20... ♗×e3 21 ♕×e3 ♖c2 22 ♖d3

Planning 23 Rfd1 combined with Qxf7 and Be7 to put fatal pressure on d7.

22... b4 23 ♔×f7 ♔c4 24 ♖fd1 b3 25 ♔f3

Going after the indefensible b3-pawn.



25 ♗e7 b2 26 ♗×d8? ♔×d3!

25... ♗b4 26 ♖d4

. Winning the knight followed by a quick mate. An example of the extreme dangers Black faces in this line.

1-0

White: Kramnik, V.

15: Doha

Black: Giri, A.

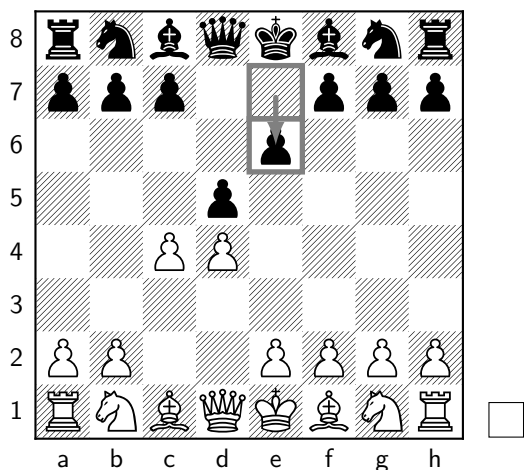
Opening ECO: D43

2014

Result: 1-0

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6

I should point out that I have changed the move order for the first ten (!) moves.



2...c6 3 f3 f6 4 g3 dxc4 5 g2 b5 6 b3 cxb3 7 axb3 e6 8 O-O f7 9 e5 b7 10 c3

2...c6 3 f3 f6 4 c3 e6 5 g3 dxc4 6 g2 b5 7 e5 a6 8 O-O b7 9 b3 cxb3 10 axb3 e7

3 f3 c6 4 g3 dxc4 5 g2 b5

Black begins the game with a series of pawn moves. By delaying ...Nf6 he gets in ...dxc4 and ...b7-b5 before White has the chance to play Ne5. This means that he isn't obliged to put his knight on d5 to block the long diagonal, as was the case in the Kantor and Eljanov games. This is of great significance since not only did the knight's move use up a precious tempo, on d5 it became a target for White's e2-e4 centre push.

6 e5

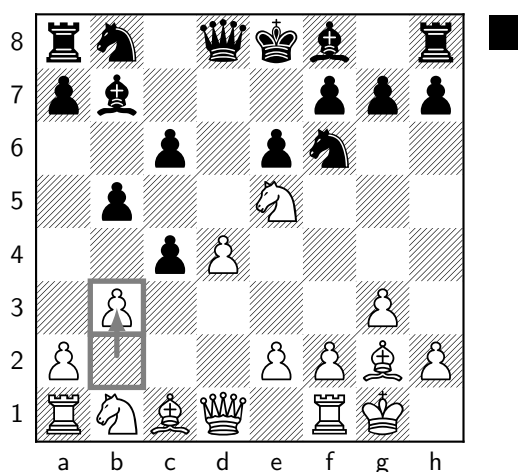
Our familiar knight move to begin an assault on c6.

6... f7 7 O-O f6

Black finally develops the knight having used the delay to bolster his queenside defences. Nonetheless he still has an uncomfortable position after White's next move.

8 b3

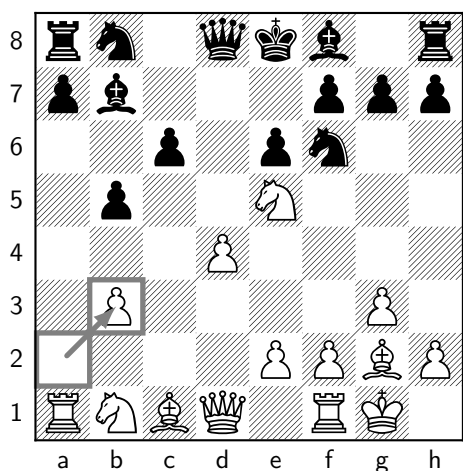
A typical motif in this variation: White prises open the a-file and c-file so that he can put pressure on the fragile black queenside structure. He has good compensation for his pawn. In fact when Kramnik is White it feels like a forced loss for Black. Such is the power of the former World Champion's technique.



8 a4 a6! 9 b3!? cxb3 10 f2 f7 11 fxb3 fxe5 12 dxe5 d5 13 d1 b6 14 d2

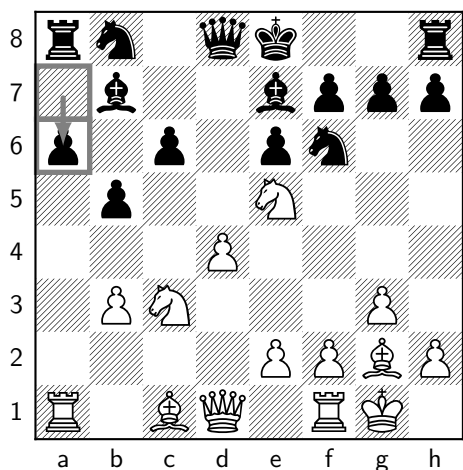
8...cxb3 9 axb3

Simple and good as it guarantees long-term pressure on the queenside.



9 ♖×b3? ♗×d4 10 ♘b2 ♖b6

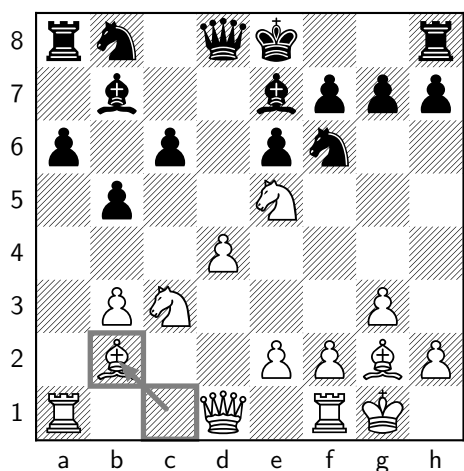
9... ♘e7 10 ♘c3 a6



10... O-O 11 ♘×b5 ♘d5 12 ♘a3 c5 13 ♘b2
♘d7 14 ♘ac4 c×d4 15 ♘×d4 ♘×e5 16 ♘×e5

11 ♘b2

A natural move.



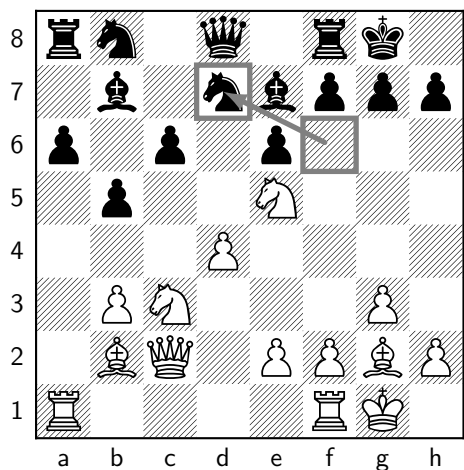
11 ♘g5

11... O-O 12 ♖c2

Kramnik begins his campaign of exerting piece pressure on the backward pawn on c6 and the vulnerable square in front of it.

12... ♘fd7

Giri challenges the white knight. — EXERCISE: Which square does White want to dominate and how can this be achieved?



12... ♖×d4 13 ♘d5 ♖c5 14 ♘×f6+ g×f6 15
♖×c5 ♘×c5 16 ♘g4 ♘e7 17 ♘×f6+ ♘×f6 18
♘×f6 ♘d7 19 ♘c3

12... ♘bd7 13 ♘×c6 ♘×c6 14 ♘×c6 ♖c8 15
♘×d7 ♖×d7 16 ♖d3 ♖b7

13 ♖d3!

ANSWER: Kramnik doesn't want to ease his opponent's game by exchanges. Instead he retreats his knight in order to gain control over c5. The square in front of a backward pawn is always very attractive for a knight if it can be established safely there, as no enemy pawn can drive it away.

13... ♖b6 14 ♘e4 a5 15 ♘dc5

Mission accomplished.

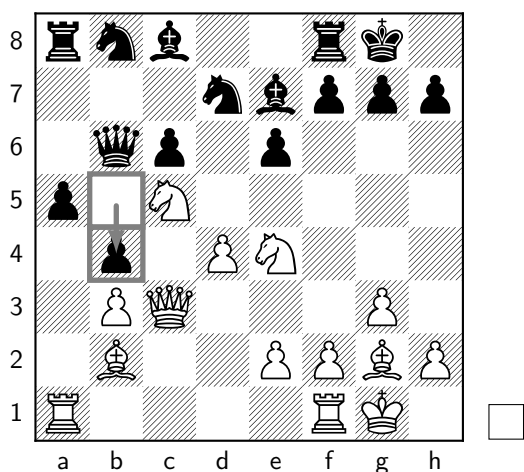
15... ♙c8

QUESTION: Can we make Black weaken his queenside pawns? ANSWER:

16 ♖c3!

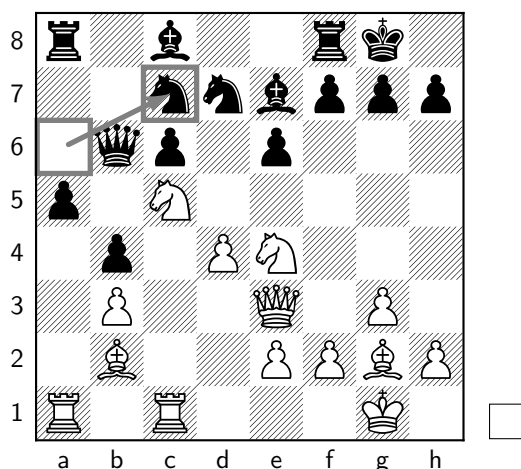
Remember Bobby Fischer's maxim 'Look at the whole board!'. This threatens 17 d5 when mate looms on g7.

16... b4



16... ♘f6 17 ♘×f6+ ♙×f6 18 ♘e4! ♙e7 19 d5 f6 20 d6

17 ♖e3 ♘a6 18 ♖fc1 ♘c7



18... ♘a6 19 d×c5 ♖c7 20 ♘d6! ♙×d6? 21 c×d6 ♖×d6 22 ♙×c6 ♖a6 23 ♙b5 ♖a8 24 ♖d1 ♖e7 25 ♙×d7 ♙×d7 26 ♖d4 f6 27 ♖×d7

19 ♘×d7 ♙×d7 20 ♘c5 ♙e8 21 ♖a2

A useful move with no definite plan in mind. Perhaps White will double up rooks along the a-file, or drop his bishop back to a1 and then switch his rook from a2 to c2 to add to the pressure on c6. In any case it keeps Black guessing about where the attack is going to come from. — There is no need to hurry when your opponent's pieces are tied up defending pawns. If you wait a while he might become reckless and do your work for you by staging an unsuccessful break out.

21... ♖b5 22 ♖d3!

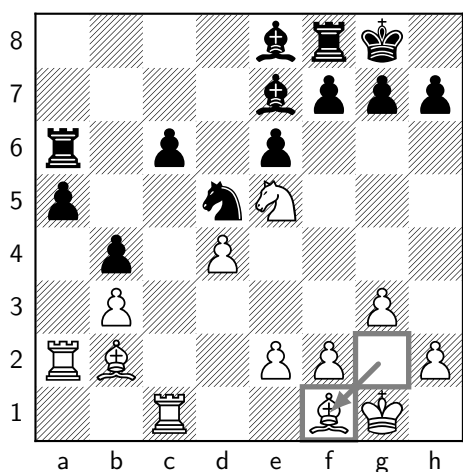
An excellent stroke which combines a fine positional sense with remarkable patience. Kramnik sees that his opponent's queen is holding together his queenside and so offers its exchange. He is confident that in the endgame he can not only regain his pawn, but retain enough pressure to cause Giri serious problems.

22... ♖×d3 23 ♘×d3 ♘d5 24 ♘e5 ♖a6

EXERCISE: Study this position and see if you can find Kramnik's clever way of increasing the pressure. — ANSWER:

25 ♙f1!

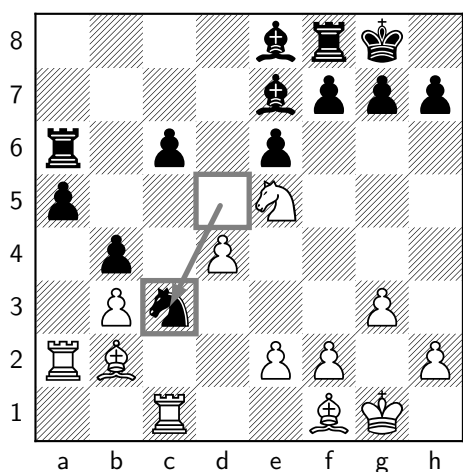
A precise move.



25 e4 ♖c7 26 ♖ca1 ♜b5 27 ♖xa5 ♖xa5 28 ♖xa5 f6 29 ♜d3 ♙f7

25... ♜c3

Giri despairs of a successful defence and so gives up a couple of pawns in search of activity for his bishops.



25... ♖a8 26 e4 ♜c3 27 ♙xc3 bxc3 28 ♖xc3

26 ♙xc3 bxc3 27 ♖xc3 c5 28 dxc5 ♙f6 29 f4 ♙b5

Black intends to complete his piece deployment with 30...Rc8 to oppose the advance of the c-pawn and even win it, but Kramnik

defeats this plan.

30 ♙g2!

The e2-pawn is irrelevant. By returning the bishop to the Catalan square White forces the advance of the c-pawn. If 30...Rc8 then the fork 31 Bb7 wins at once.

30... ♖a7 31 c6

Here the pawn is defended three times and can also be supported by Rac2. There is no talk about it being a target now.

31... ♙e7 32 ♙e4 f6 33 ♜f3 ♖d8

EXERCISE: How does White get his knight into the attack again? — ANSWER:

34 e3!

A simple move, but easily overlooked. White creates a post on d4 for his knight.

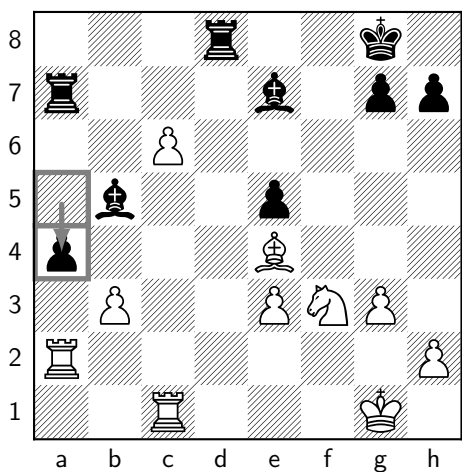
34... e5

Keeping out the white horse, but creating another weakness on e5.

35 fxe5 fxe5 36 ♖c1

The rook retreats to threaten 37 Nxe5 without any pin with Bf6.

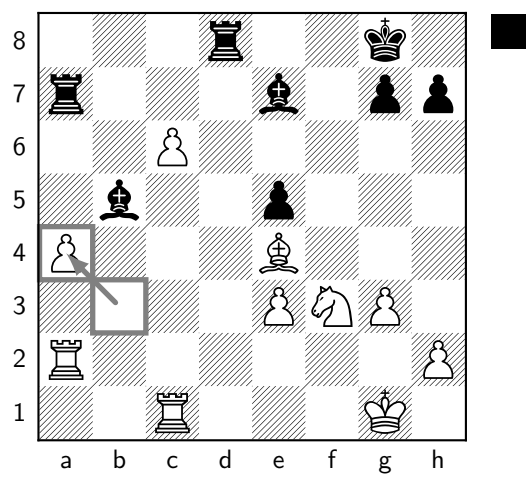
36... a4



36... ♙f6 37 ♖c5 ♙a6 38 ♖cxa5

36... ♙d6 37 ♜g5 h6 38 ♙d5+

37 bxa4



37 bxa4 ♖xa4 38 ♖xa4 ♙xa4 39 c7 ♖c8 40 ♙f5

1-0





White: 4: 5..Bb4+ or 5..Nc6 6 Qa4 Bb

?

Black: ?

Opening ECO: E04

Result: *

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 f3 f6 4 g3 dxc4 5 g2 b4+

. Here we investigate Black's bishop check on b4. The aim is to drain the energy from White's position by making him work hard to regain the pawn on c4, or in some cases hold on to his material in Slav-style with ...b7-b5. However, as we shall see White has some promising resources.

*

White: Wagner, D.

16: Biel

Black: Brkic, A.

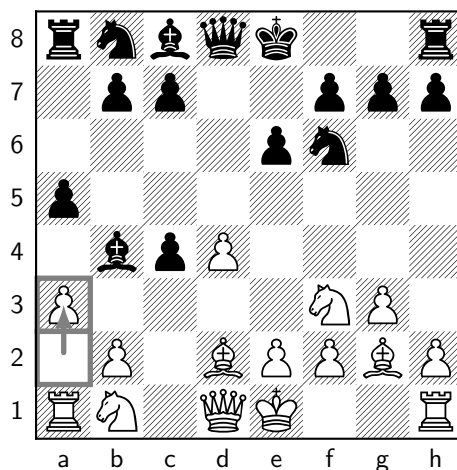
Opening ECO: E04

2015

Result: 1-0

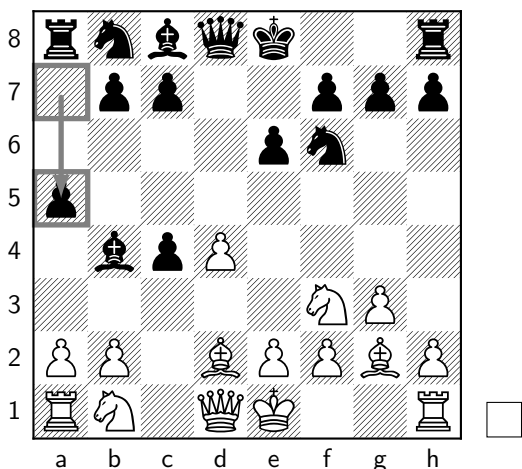
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 g3 dxc4 5 ♙g2
♙b4+ 6 ♙d2 a5

QUESTION: What are the good features of 6...a5 as played in the game? — ANSWER: The obvious point of this move is to defend the bishop rather than smooth White's development by capturing on d2. However, it has another more subtle value once Black plays ...b7-b5 to defend his c4-pawn and get the queenside pawns rolling. Thanks to the addition of ...a7-a5, if White responds with Ne5, uncovering an attack on a8, Black isn't obliged to answer ...Nd5 to block the diagonal as his rook could go to a7 or a6.



7 ♙c2 ♙xd2+ 8 ♙xd2 c6 9 a4 ♘e4 10 ♙c2
♘d6 11 ♘bd2 ♘a6 12 ♘xc4 ♘b4 13 ♘xd6+
♙xd6 14 ♙d2 O-O 15 O-O ♖d8 16 ♖fd1 b6
17 ♙c3 ♙a6 18 ♖d2 ♖ac8 19 ♖ad1 ♙e7 20
h4 c5 21 dxc5 ♖d5 22 ♖xd5 ♘xd5 23 ♙e5
♙xc5

7... ♙xd2+

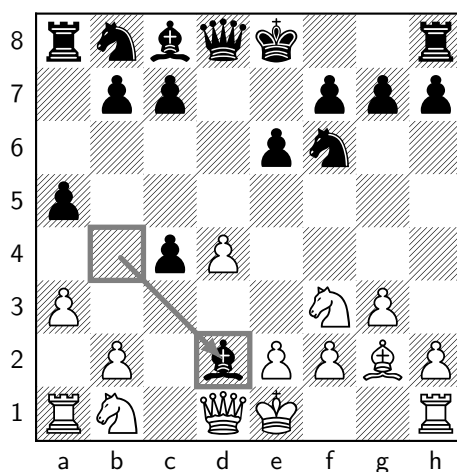


6... ♙e7 7 ♙a4+

6... ♙xd2+ 7 ♘bxd2 b5!? 8 a4 c6

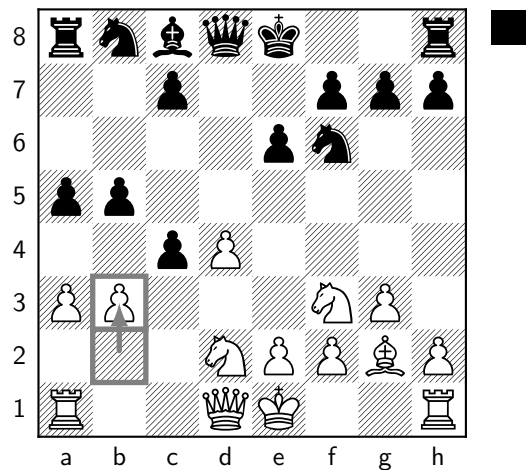
7 a3

Nimzowitsch used to call such a move 'putting the question to the bishop' as it has to choose which diagonal it wants.

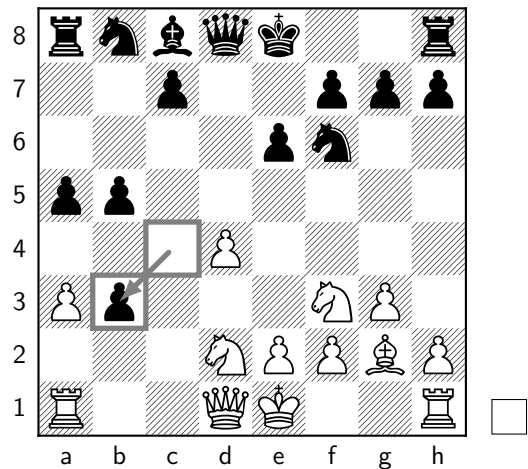


7... ♙e7 8 ♙a4+ ♙d7 9 ♙xc4 ♙c6 10 ♘c3
8 ♘bxd2 b5 9 b3!?

White makes his pawn sacrifice of a permanent nature.

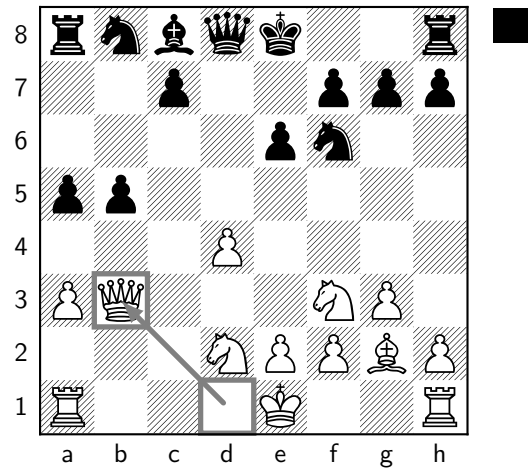


9 ♖e5 ♘d5? 10 O-O
9...cxb3



9...c3 10 ♖b1 b4 11 axb4
10 ♙xb3!

A cruel decision for the white knight as it is denied a sight of the c5-square. On the other hand, by attacking b5 the white queen provokes Black's next move, after which his bishop on c8 will be shut in;



10 ♖xb3 ♗b7
10...c6

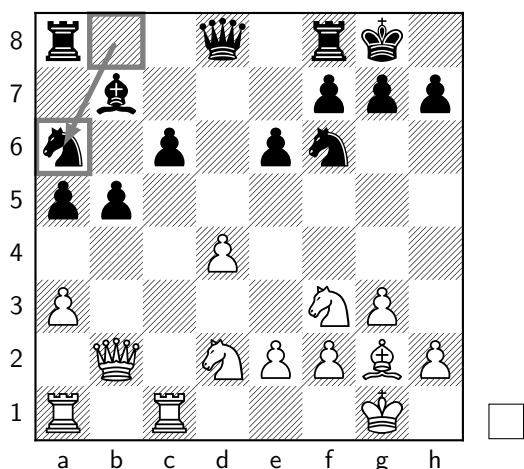
White's compensation for his material will depend on his pressure against the c6-pawn which is backward and on an open file. It can be assailed by the bishop on g2, a rook or doubled rooks on the c-file, and in some cases Ne5. The c5-square would be an excellent outpost for a white knight if White gained stable control over it. If the c6-pawn falls, then White will not only restore numerical equality, but leave Black with a vulnerable pawn on b5.

11 O-O O-O 12 ♖fc1 ♗b7 13 ♙b2!

The queen retreats to defend the d4-pawn so that the knight on f3 is free to manoeuvre. She also vacates the b3-square to allow the other knight to utilize it.

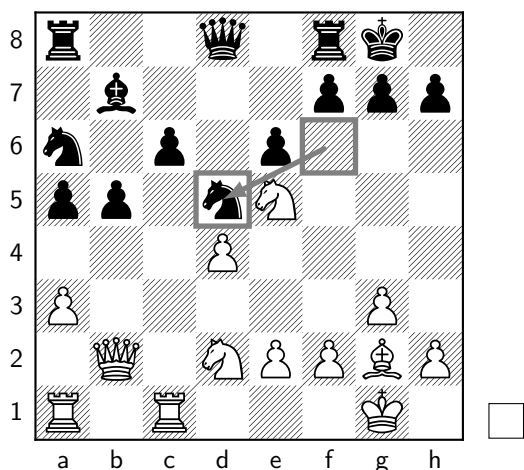
13...♗a6?

A typical example of loss of patience under long-term Catalan pressure.



13... Nbd7 14 e1! Bb6! 15 d3 Rac8 16

14 e5 d5?

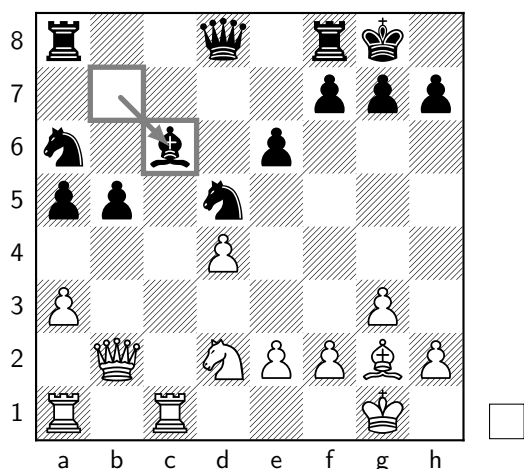


14... Bb8 15 b3 fd7 16 d3!

15 dxc6

The c6 point collapses in a very favourable way for White.

15... Bxc6

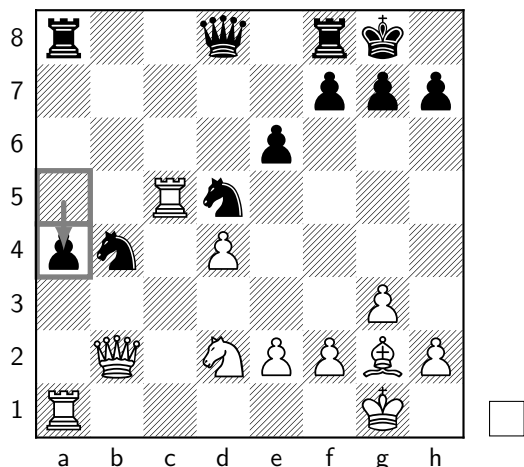


15... Bb6 16 e5! ZZ- 17 ec4 Ba7 18 Bxb5

16 Bxc6 b4 17 axb4 Bxb4 18 Bc5

Black's position is highly unpleasant as the a5-pawn can be attacked a third time with Nc4 when appropriate and the knight on d5 can be undermined by a future e2-e4.

18... a4?!



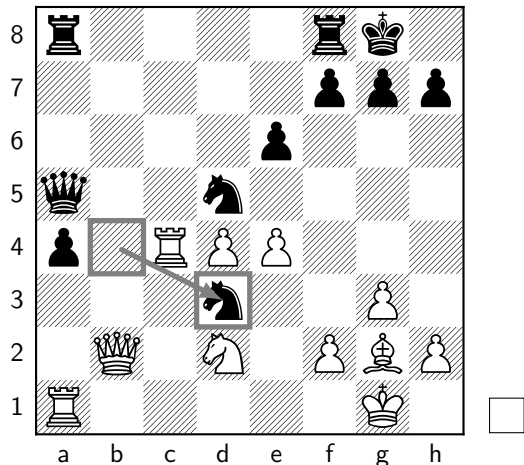
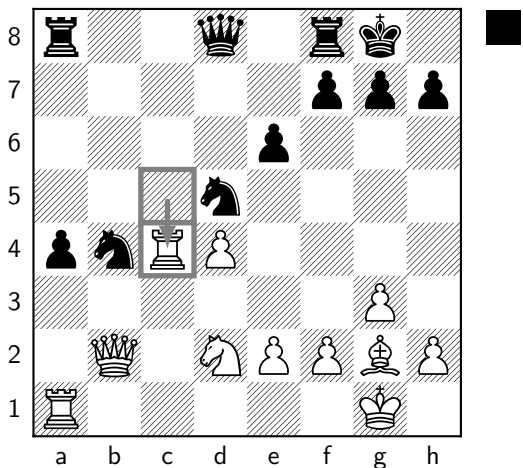
18... g6

19 Bc4!

'Passed pawns should be pushed' is a venerable adage, but not when (a) the pawn is deprived of one of its defenders and becomes a weakling, and (b) the pawn relinquishes a vital role in defending a piece. — After Wagner's simple retreat of the rook one square,

20 Rxb4 or 20 e4 are suddenly deadly threats. At the same time the rook on c4 indirectly attacks the a4-pawn.

20... ♖d3



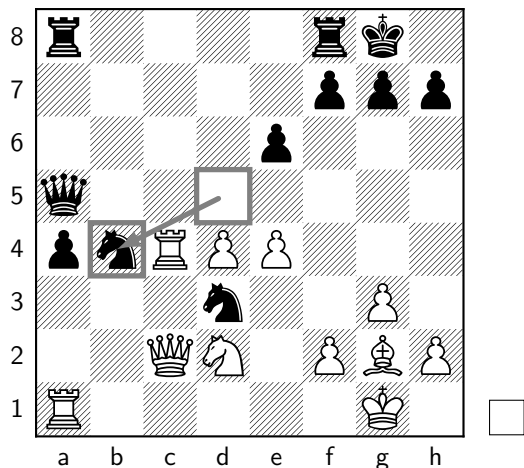
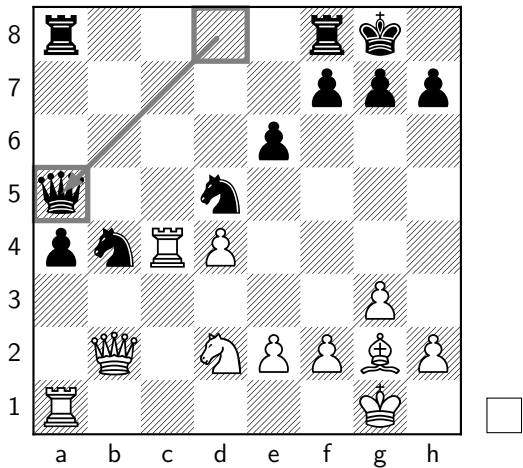
19 e4? ♖d3

19... ♖a5

Still trying to play actively, but the black knights get into a fatal tangle.

20... a3 21 ♖b3

21 ♖c2 ♖5b4



19... ♖b8 20 ♖a3 ♖a6 21 ♖x a4 ♖ac7 22 ♖e4

20 e4

White should always carefully consider whether to play e2-e4 in the Catalan as it gains space,

21... ♖b6 22 ♖x d3 ♖x c4 23 ♖x c4

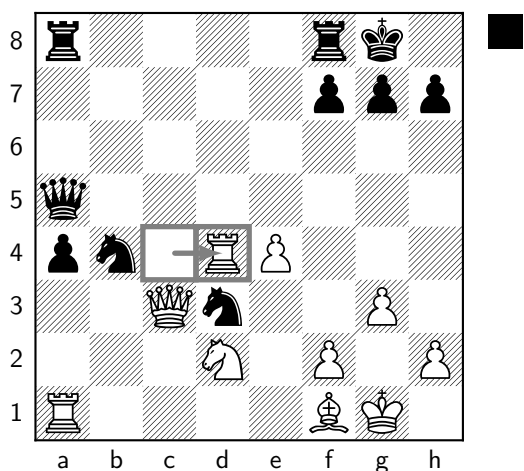
22 ♖c3

EXERCISE: Can you see White's unstoppable threat? — ANSWER:

22... e5 23 ♖f1!

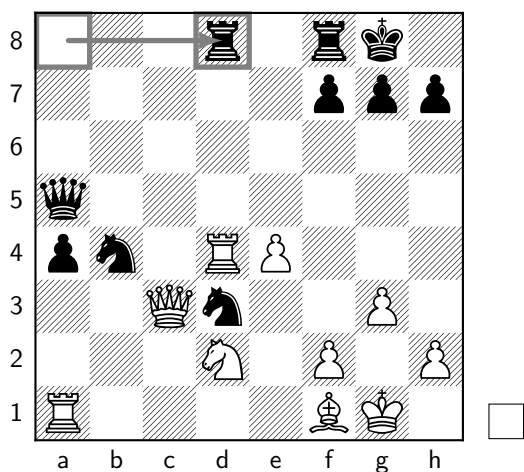
The bishop changes diagonal to gobble up a black knight.

23... e x d4 24 ♖x d4



24 ♔a3 ♞×f2 25 ♖×b4

24...♖ad8



24...♖fd8 25 ♜×d3 ♖×d4 26 ♔×d4 ♖d8 27 ♖×a4! ♖×d4 28 ♖×a5 g6 29 ♜c4 ♖×d2 30 ♖a8+ ♞g7 31 ♖a7

25 ♖×d3

. The pin on b4 means Black stays a whole piece down.

1-0

White: Ragger, M.

17: Austrian League

Black: Haba, P.

Opening ECO: E04

2016

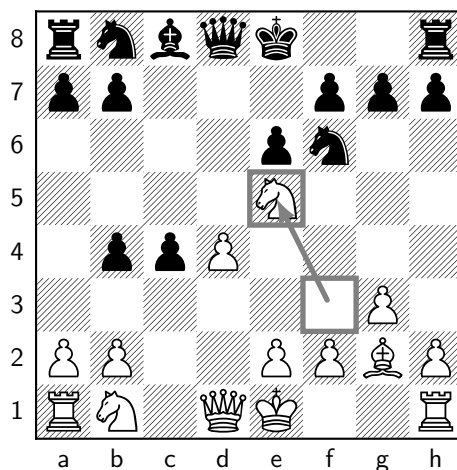
Result: 1-0

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 g3 dxc4 5 ♗g2
♙b4+ 6 ♗d2 c5

QUESTION: What's the point of this move?
— ANSWER: Without wasting time Black defends his bishop and attacks the d4-pawn. After White exchanges bishops the black pawn on b4 will stop the natural development of White's knight to c3. On the other hand, we all know about the importance of the ...c7-c5-pawn stab in challenging the white centre, and after the exchange on b4 this resource is no longer available. Furthermore, Black's queenside pawns may look imposing, but they are actually vulnerable.

7 ♗xb4 cxb4 8 ♘e5!

Nowadays chess has moved a long way from old precepts such as 'Don't move a piece twice in the opening before developing all your other pieces'. In fact even when Emanuel Lasker and Capablanca were espousing such rules to beginners, they were quick to point out there were lots of cases when you should break them. For example, positional play is about preventing your opponent playing good moves, as well as making good moves yourself, and sometimes you have to move a piece twice to deny your opponent's pieces options. — If Black is left in peace for only one move he could develop with 8...Nc6, with at least an equal position. Therefore White unleashes his king's bishop and knight straight-away to deter ...Nc6 and make the development of the bishop on c8 more awkward. — This position has been reached 66 times on my database. White has tried 8 Ne5 56 times;



8 ♙a4+

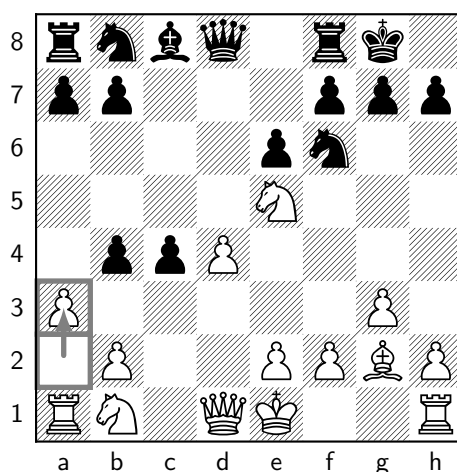
8 ♘bd2

8 a3

8 O-O

8...O-O 9 a3!?

In order to break up Black's queenside pawns and open lines for the white pieces.

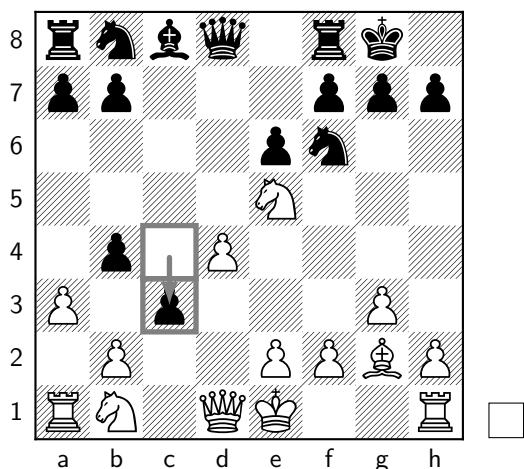
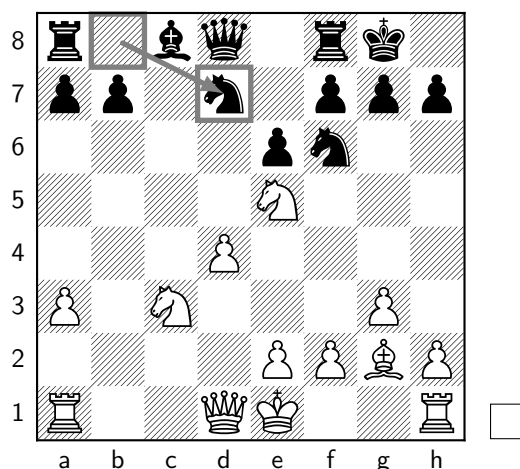


9 a3 bxa3 10 ♖xa3 ♔a5+? 11 ♔d2 ♕xd2+ 12 ♕xd2

9 ♖xc4 ♖c6 10 e3 e5 11 dxe5 ♕xd1+ 12 ♕xd1 ♖g4 13 ♖e2 ♖gxe5 14 ♖bd2 ♕g4+ 15 f3 ♕f5 16 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 17 f4 ♕d3+ 18 ♖f2 ♖g4+ 19 ♖f3 ♖f6 20 ♖ac1

9...c3?

A poor reaction as it gives back the pawn without causing any disruption to White's build-up.



9...♖c6 10 ♕xc6 bxc6 11 axb4 ♕b6 12 O-O ♕xb4 13 ♕d2 c5 14 ♕xb4 cxb4 15 ♖c1 ♕d7 16 ♖d2 c3 17 bxc3 bxc3 18 ♖xc3

10 bxc3 bxc3 11 ♖xc3

EXERCISE: How big do you think is White's advantage - small, large, or decisive? — **ANSWER:** Among strong human players of a similar level I would expect White to win this position maybe seven times out of ten. After all, he has everything he hopes for in the Catalan: pressure on b7 that keeps the enemy bishop on c8 tied down, control of the c6-square preventing ...Nc6, an open c-file that his rooks will get to first and no weaknesses in his own camp. He also has the advantage of an extra centre pawn which is not typical of the Catalan.

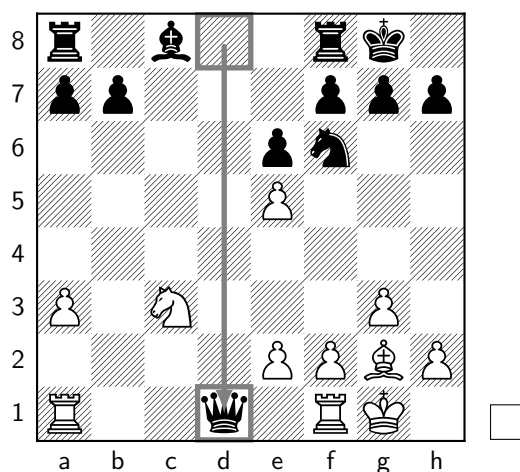
11...♖bd7

11...♕a5 12 ♕d2 ♖d8

12 O-O!

White isn't afraid of simplification. One thing we learn in the Catalan is that exchanges often clarify White's advantage rather than dissipate it. Of course, the bishop on g2 tends to be an exception to this rule. As we shall see, White guards its life carefully in this game.

12...♖xe5 13 dxe5 ♕xd1



13...♖g4 14 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 15 ♖fd1 ♕d7 16 ♖ab1

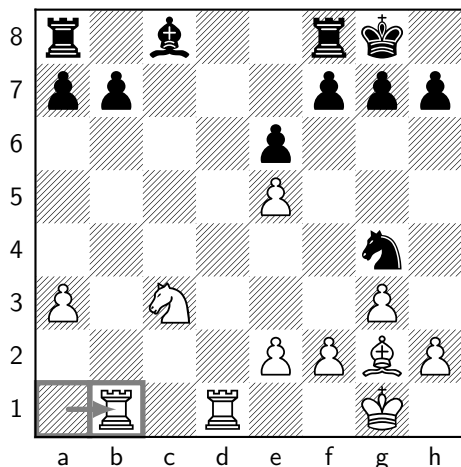
14 ♖fxd1

Black is rid of White's dominant knight, but at the cost of conceding the d-file to White's rook.

14... ♖g4

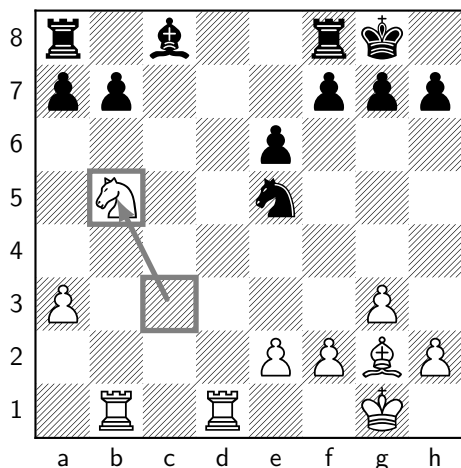
QUESTION: What should White do about the attack on e5? — ANSWER: Counterattack against b7!

15 ♖ab1!



15 f4 ♖e3 16 ♖d6 ♖xg2 17 ♔xg2 b6

15... ♖xg2 16 ♖b5



16 ♖xg2 ♖xg2 17 ♖xg2 a5

16... a6 17 ♖d6 g6 18 f4

Ragger is still in no hurry to get back the pawn. Instead he dislodges the one active black piece from its central post.

18... ♖g4 19 ♖dc1

The rook gets out of the range of 19...Ne3, which would otherwise force the exchange of his strong bishop, and intends to seize the seventh rank.

19... ♖d8 20 ♖b6!

White is still in no hurry to regain his pawn.

20... ♖f6

EXERCISE: How do we keep Black under restraint? — ANSWER:

21 e4!

White prevents 21...Nd5 which would force him into the unwelcome exchange 22 Bxd5 exd5 as the rook needs to stay on b6 to defend d6. White might expand with e4-e5 at some point to increase his dark-squared control and support the knight, though this would have to be carefully judged as it allows ...Nd5 again. More likely White would play 22 Rc7. Instead, the game came to an abrupt end.

21... e5?

A good positional move as it stops White's further central expansion and shuts in the bishop on g2. If now 22 fxe5 Ng4 and the e5-pawn is very weak. But as Réti remarked, tactics always come before strategy in chess.

22 ♖xg2

. The knight on f6 is hanging so Black loses a piece. A drastic finish, but don't expect any gifts like this from strong opponents unless you keep them under lock and key with a series of accurate pressing moves.

1-0

White: Tari, A.

18: Vasteras

Black: Sjodahl, P.

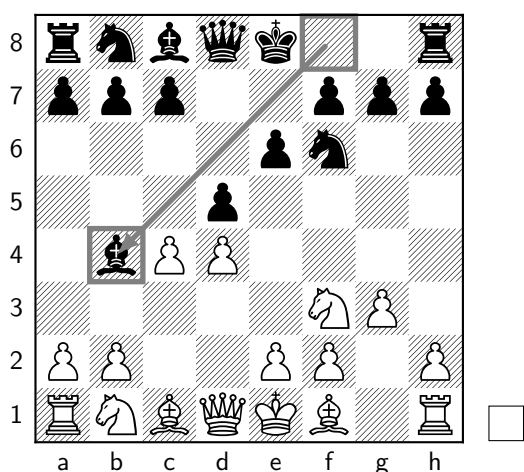
Opening ECO: E10

2015

Result: 1-0

1 d4 e6 2 c4 ♘f6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 g3 ♙b4+

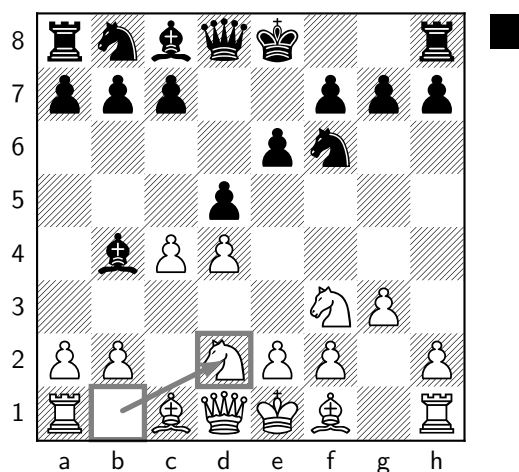
Black keeps the option of answering 5 Bd2 with 5...Be7, maintaining the pawn on d5 as in Chapter One.



4...dxc4 5 ♙g2 ♙b4+

5 ♘bd2

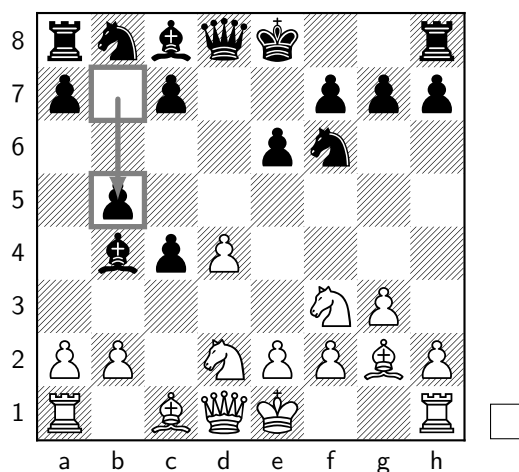
It is somewhat against the spirit of the Catalan to put the knight on d2 as White shuts in the bishop on c1 and loses the flexibility inherent in delaying the development of the horse.



5 ♘c3 dxc4! 6 ♙g2 ♙c6 7 O-O O-O 8 a3 ♙e7
9 e4 ♘a5 10 ♙e3 ♙b8 11 ♙e2 b5

5...dxc4 6 ♙g2 b5!

Bold and best. With his knight committed to the passive d2-square White isn't able to exert enough energy to make the black queenside pawns tumble.



6...c3 7 bxc3 ♙xc3 8 ♖b1 ♘c6 9 ♚c2! ♙xd4
10 ♙a3!

7 O-O

EXERCISE: Now 7...Bb7 looks very natural. Can you see why it is actually a mistake?

7 O-O ♙b7? 8 ♘xc4! bxc4 9 ♚a4+ ♘c6 10
♘e5 ♘d5 11 ♘xc6 ♚d7 12 ♙xd5 exd5 13
♚xb4 ♚xc6 14 b3

7...O-O

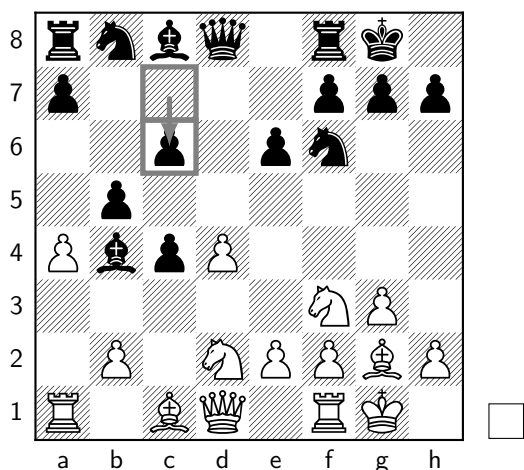
The game move also looks like an impression.

7...a5! 8 a3!? ♙e7 9 b3 cxb3 10 ♚xb3 O-O
11 ♚xb5 c5! 12 dxc5 ♙a6 13 ♚b2 ♘c6 14
♚c3 ♙xe2 15 ♖e1

8 a4

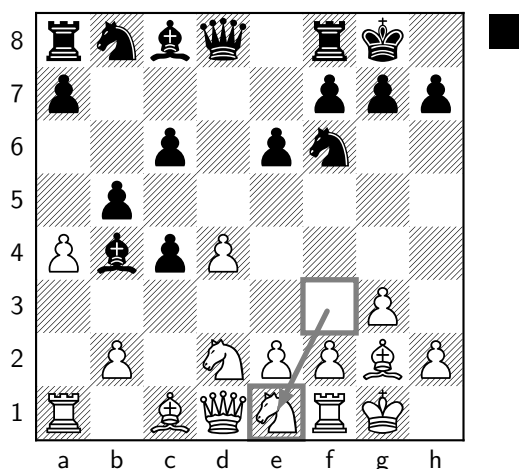
Our standard move to put pressure on the queenside pawns.

8...c6



8...c3 9 ♘b3 cxb2 10 ♙xb2 bxa4 11 ♘e5
♘d5 12 ♘c5 ♙xc5 13 dxc5 f6 14 ♘d3 c6 15
♚xa4

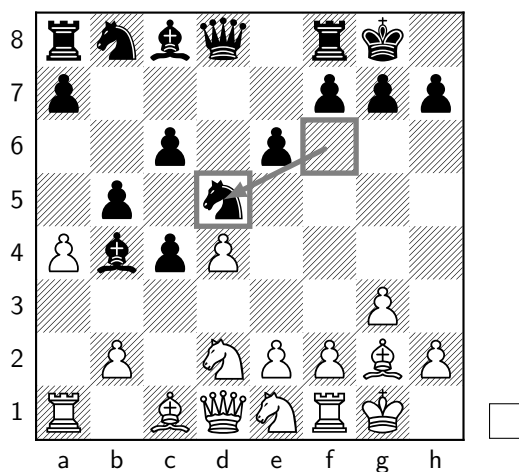
9 ♘e1



9 axb5 cxb5 10 ♘g5 ♘d5 11 e4 ♚xg5 12
exd5 exd5 13 ♘xc4 ♚d8 14 ♘e3 ♙e6 15
♙d2! ♙xd2 16 ♚xd2 ♘c6 17 ♖a6 ♖c8 18
f4

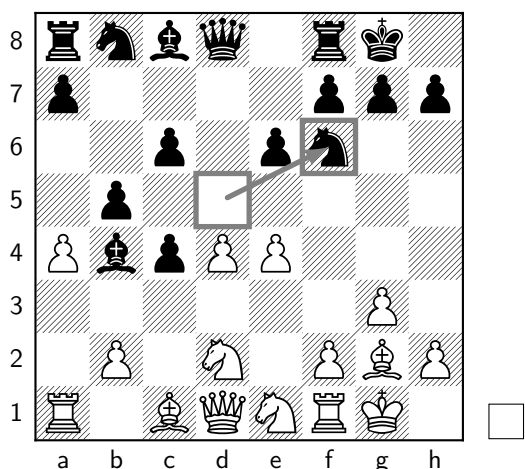
9...♘d5

Blocking the long diagonal and so meeting the threat of 10 axb5;



9... ♚xd4 10 ♘c2 ♚c5 11 axb5 ♚xb5 12
♘xb4 ♚xb4 13 b3! ♖d8 14 bxc4

10 e4 ♘f6



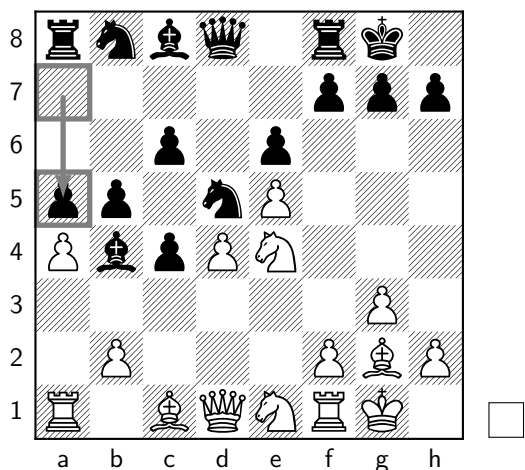
10... ♖e7 11 ♘c2! ♙xd2 12 ♙xd2

10... ♘c7 11 e5! ♘d5

11 e5

If White had played 9 Ne5 then the chance to gain space with 11 e5, driving the enemy knight from f6 and clearing the e4-square for his other knight, would have been unavailable. The e4-square is actually a superior post for a white horse in the centre, as on e5 it can more readily be dislodged by the pawn move ...f7-f6. Furthermore, from e4 the knight can swing to g5 to aid a kingside attack.

11... ♘d5 12 ♘e4 a5



12... ♙e7 13 ♙g4 ♙h8 14 ♘f3

13 ♙h5

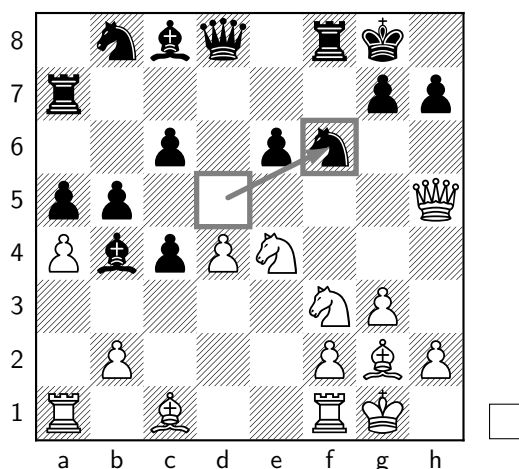
Here we can conclude that Tari has reasonable practical chances. Even if the computer programs like Black's extra pawn, you aren't likely to get a perfect defence on the kingside from a human player.

13... ♙a7 14 ♘f3 f5

Understandably Sjudahl wants to challenge White in the centre before the attack gets any nearer to his king.

15 e×f6 ♘×f6?

In effect the decisive mistake as Black's defence now becomes very difficult.



15... g×f6!

16 ♘×f6+ ♙×f6 17 ♘e5 ♙f5

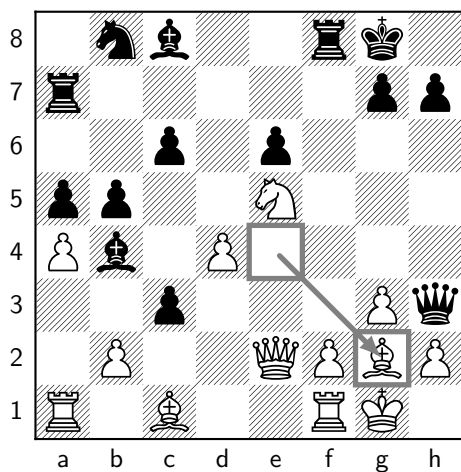
EXERCISE: What is White's best response to the offer to exchange queens? — ANSWER:

18 ♙e2!

Of course, he is having none of it! You can see the damage done to Black's game by 15...Nx f6? - White's knight is sitting pretty on e5 and the c6-pawn is a target. White intends to build up with Bf4. How Black misses the knight on d5!

18... c3 19 ♙e4 ♙h3 20 ♙g2

Since his opponent collapses in short order Tari was justified in focussing on a kingside attack.

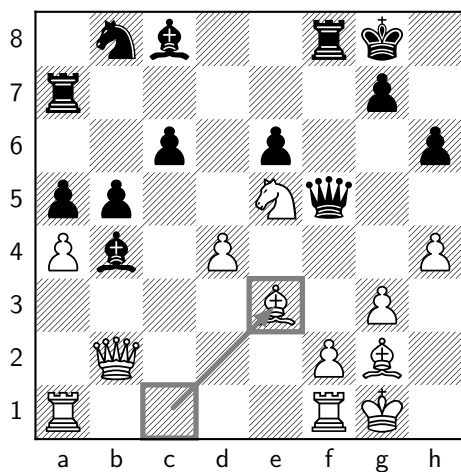


20 a×b5 c×b5 21 ♘d3! c×b2 22 ♖×b2 ♙d6
23 ♖×b5

20... ♖f5 21 h4

After a little repetition White threatens to win the queen with 22 Be4 Qf6 23 Bg5.

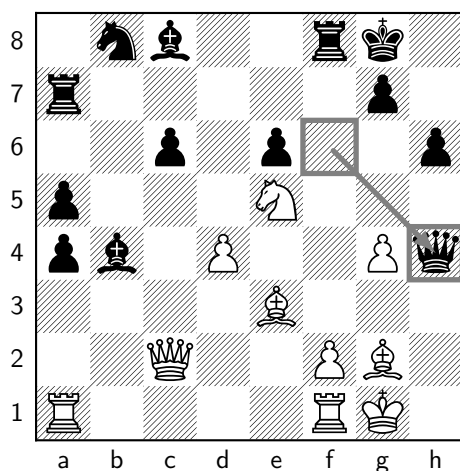
21... c×b2 22 ♖×b2 h6 23 ♙e3



23 g4 ♖f6 24 g5

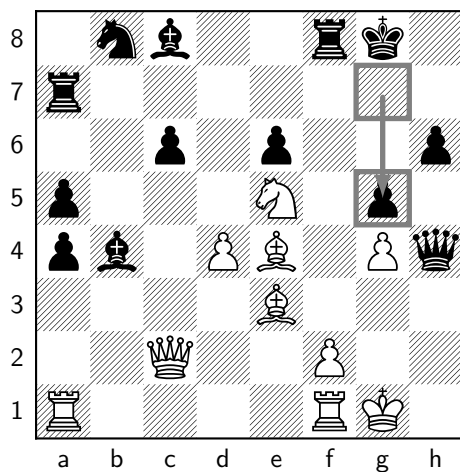
23... b×a4 24 g4 ♖f6 25 ♖c2 ♖×h4

Now it's simple for White;



25... ♙a6 26 ♙e4 g5 27 h×g5 h×g5 28 ♖g2
♙×f1+ 29 ♖×f1 ♙d6 30 ♖h1

26 ♙e4 g5

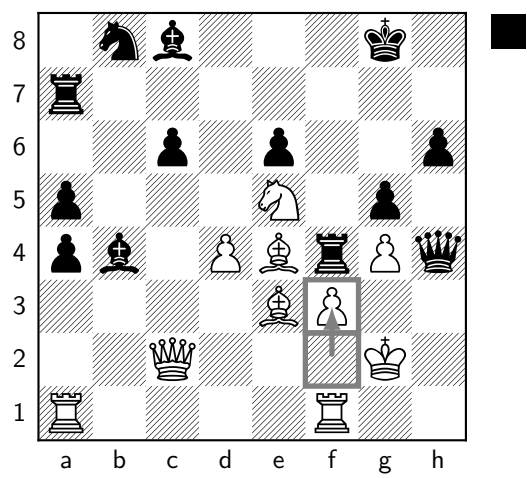


26... ♖f6 27 f4

27 ♖g2

There's no good way to stop 28 Rh1 winning the queen.

27... ♖f4 28 f3



28 ♖h1 ♜xg4+ 29 ♔f3 ♜f4+ 30 ♔e2 ♝a6+
31 ♔d1

1-0

White: Evdokimov, A.

19: Moscow

Black: Harutyunian, T.

Opening ECO: E04

2016

Result: 1/2-1/2

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 g3 dxc4 5 ♗g2
♘c6

EXERCISE: You might like to stop and have a think about the good and bad points of this move, which are? — ANSWER: It is certainly a fighting move. Black rapidly mobilizes his queenside pieces with the aim of holding on to the c4-pawn. This involves delaying the development of the bishop on f8 to see if it can be deployed more actively on b4 rather than its usual e7-square. — The drawback to Black's set-up is that the typical attack on White's centre with ...c7-c5 is blocked, and also the bishop on c8 remains boxed in for the time being.

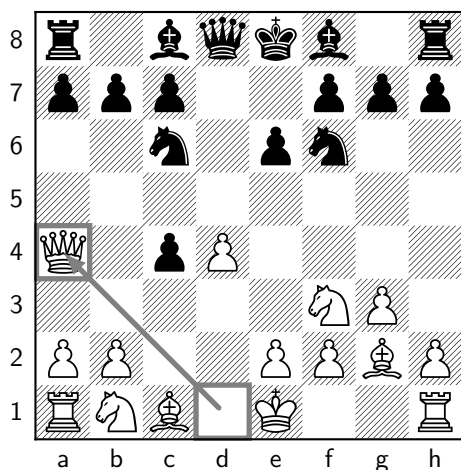
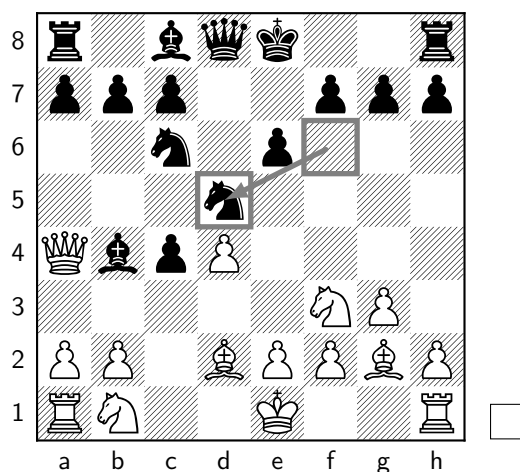
6 ♖a4

I believe this is the best approach for White: he plays to regain the pawn at once;

Obstructing the white queen's attack on c4 whilst developing the bishop with check.

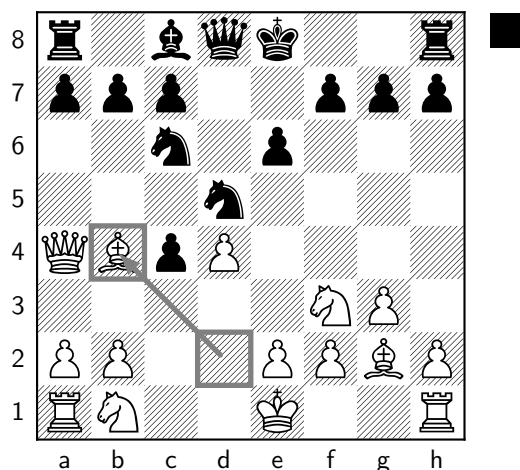
7 ♗d2 ♘d5!

QUESTION: What is the purpose of this move?



7... ♗d2+? 8 ♘bxd2

8 ♗x b4



6 O-O ♗b8 7 ♘c3 b5

6 ♘c3 ♗b8 7 O-O a6

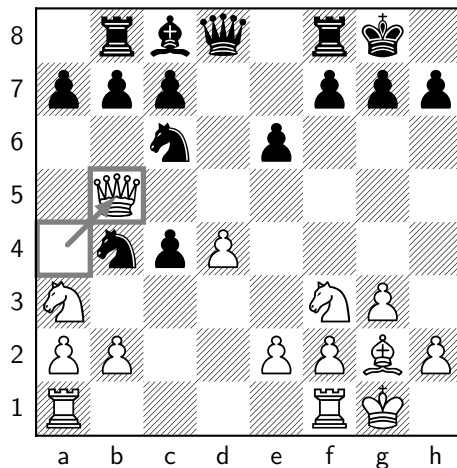
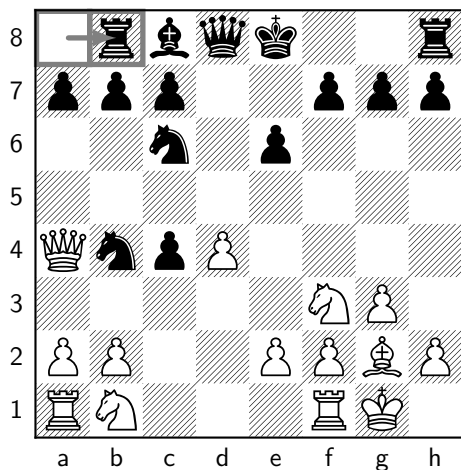
6... ♗b4+!

8 ♖b5 ♙×d2+ 9 ♘b×d2 c3 10 b×c3 ♘×c3 16 ♖fd1!?

11 ♖b2 ♘a4 12 ♖c2 ♘b6 13 e3 O-O 14 O-O ♖e7 15 ♖ac1

8... ♘×b4 9 O-O 9 a3 b5! 10 ♖×b5 ♘c2+

9... ♖b8



11 ♘×c4? b5

11... b6!

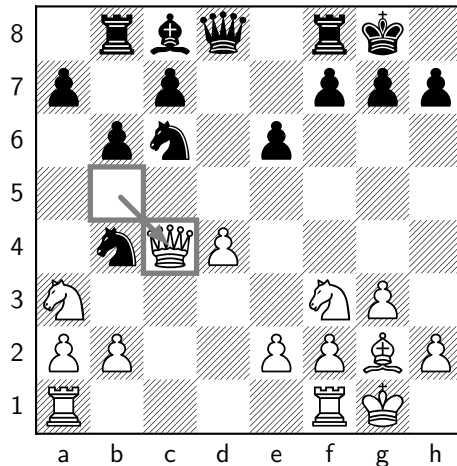
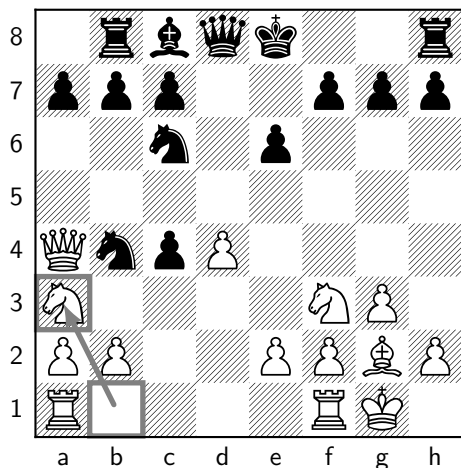
White will be forced into a pin.

12 ♖×c4

9... ♖b8 10 a3 b5 11 ♖d1 ♘d5

10 ♘a3

Stopping 10...b5 and developing the knight.



12 ♘×c4? ♙a6

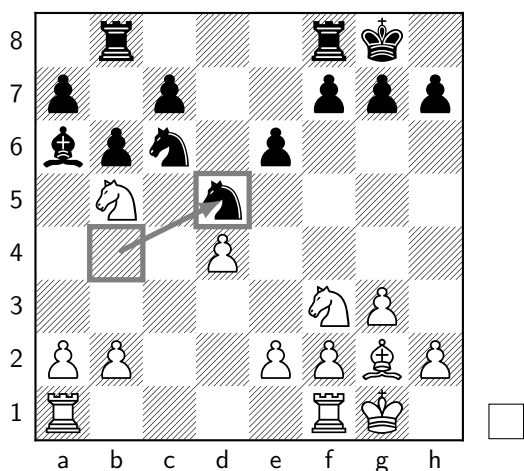
12... ♙a6 13 ♘b5

Things look awkward for White, but if he is allowed to play 14 Rfc1 followed by 15 a3 it will be the black pieces in trouble. Black therefore has to continue actively.

10 ♘c3 a6 11 ♘e5 O-O 12 ♘×c6 ♘×c6 13 ♙×c6 b×c6 14 ♖×c4 ♖d6

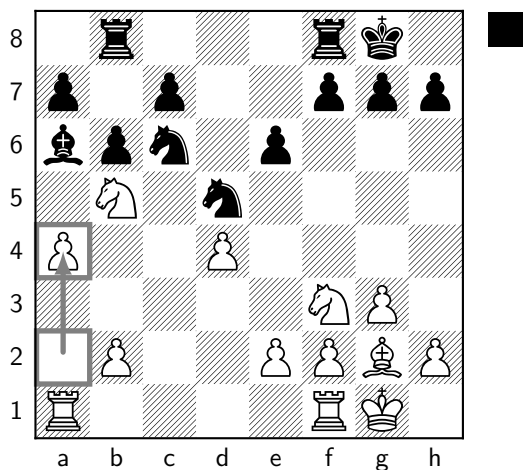
10... O-O 10... a6 11 ♘e5 O-O 12 ♘×c6 ♘×c6

13 ♖×c4 ♖×d4 14 ♙×c6 ♖×c4 15 ♘×c4 b×c6 13... ♖d5! 14 ♖×d5 ♘×d5



14...exd5? 15 c3

15 a4



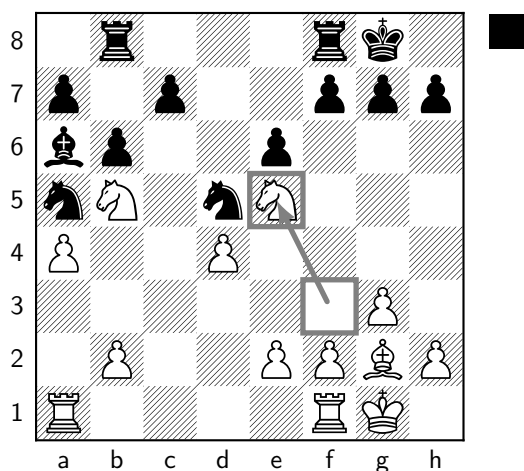
15 c3 cxc3 16 bxc3 e2

15...a5!

Once again, Black has to strive for tactical counterplay. He can't afford to play slowly or else 16 Rfc1 will leave him in trouble along the c-file. At the same time Black has cleared the way for 16...c6, driving the knight from b5 when the e2-pawn is lost.

16 e5!

The best riposte. White threatens 17 Nd7.

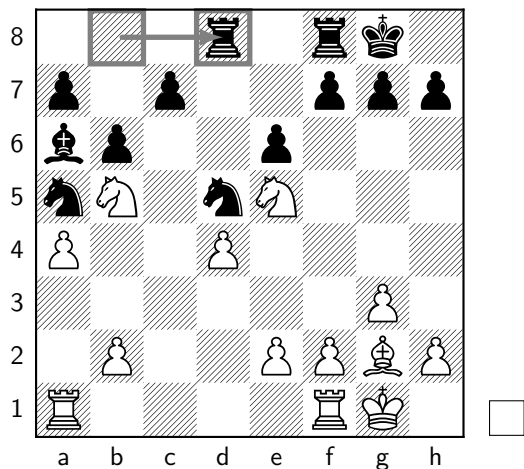


16 xa7?! e2

16 ffc1? b3

16...bd8

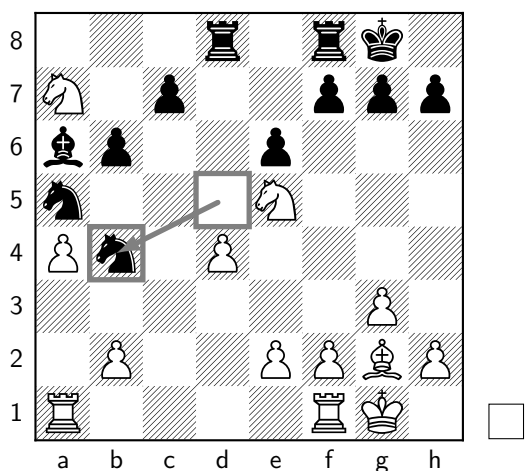
Dealing with White's threat.



16...c6 17 xa7 e2 18 ffe1

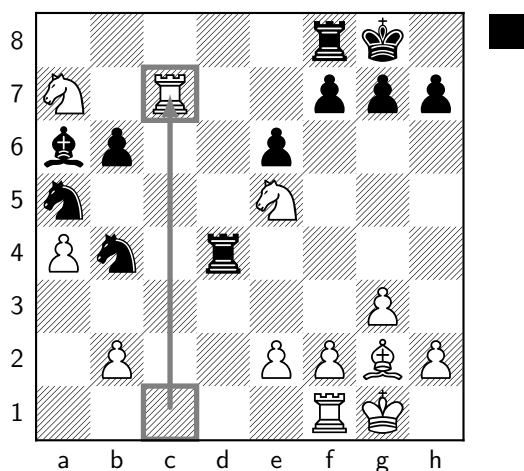
17 xa7 b4!

Once again Black has to avoid falling into a positional bind.

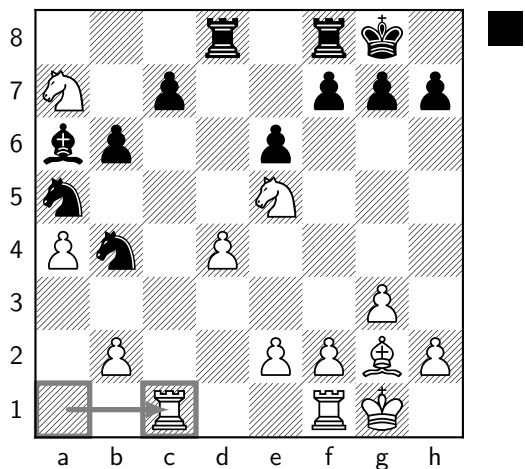


17... ♕xe2 18 ♖fe1 ♕a6 19 ♘ac6 ♖xc6 20 19 ♖b5 ♕xb5 20 axb5 f6 21 e3 ♜dd8 22 ♖f3
 ♖xc6 ♜d6 21 ♜ac1 h6 22 ♕xd5 exd5 23 ♖e7+ ♜f7 23 ♕h3 ♜e7 24 ♜c3 ♖f7 25 ♜a1 ♜d3! 26
 ♖h7 24 ♜xc7

18 ♜ac1

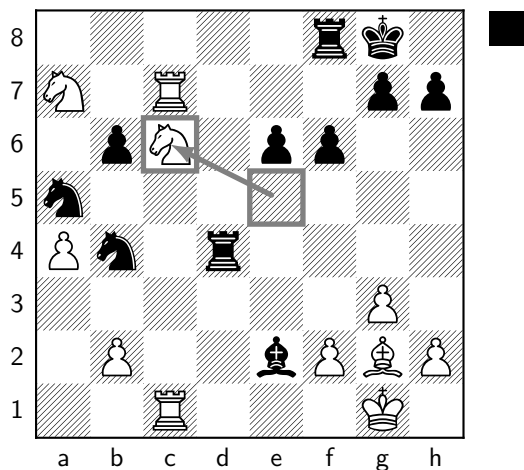


19... ♕xe2 20 ♜fc1 f6! 21 ♖ec6



18 ♜fc1? ♖b3

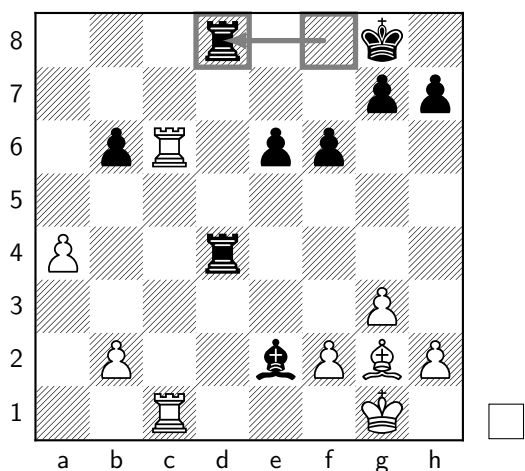
18... ♜xc7 19 ♜xc7



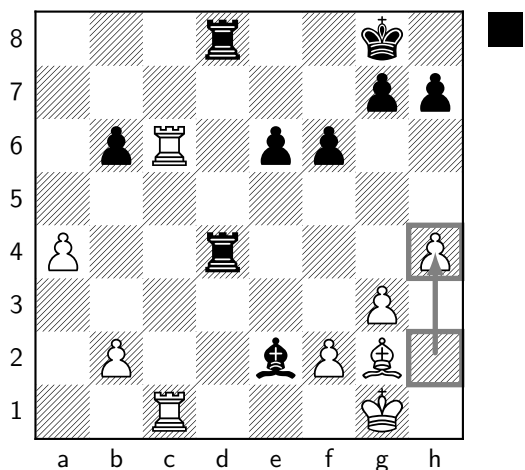
21 ♖d7? ♜d8 22 ♖xb6 ♜d1+

21... ♖bxc6 22 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 23 ♜7xc6 ♜fd8!

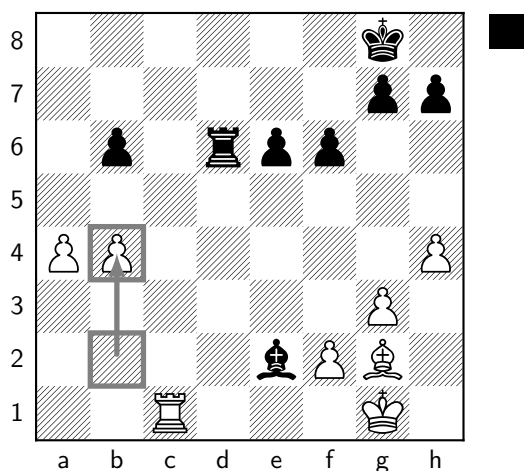
Winning time to coordinate the rooks as if 24 Rxb6 Rd1+ wins a piece. — EXERCISE: White needs to make a hole for his king on h2. Should he play 24 h4 or 24 h3 to achieve this? (Warning: the answer is very deep!)



23... ♖xa4 24 ♜xe6 ♗h5 25 ♜xb6
24 h4



24 h3 ♜8d6 25 ♜xd6 ♜xd6 26 b4 e5! 27 b5
♔f8 28 ♜c8+ ♔e7 29 ♗c6 f5 30 f3!
24... ♜8d6 25 ♜xd6 ♜xd6 26 b4



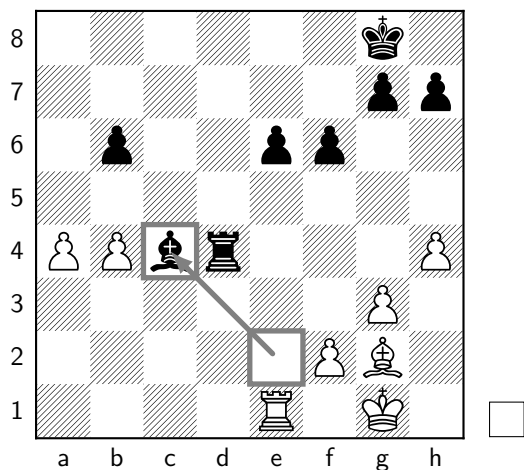
26 ♜c6 ♜xc6 27 ♗xc6 ♔f7 28 b4 ♔e7 29 f4
♔d6 30 ♔f2 ♗c4 31 ♗e4 h6 32 ♗c2

26... ♜d4 27 ♜e1

EXERCISE: Try now to decide if Black's bishop should run away to c4 or g4. How big is the difference?

27... ♗c4?

ANSWER: A serious mistake. Black plans to exchange bishops with ...Bd5 (after the preparatory move ...Kf7), based on the principle that all rook and pawn endgames are drawn. Well, getting rid of the white bishop which controls key squares on the queen-side is by no means a bad idea.



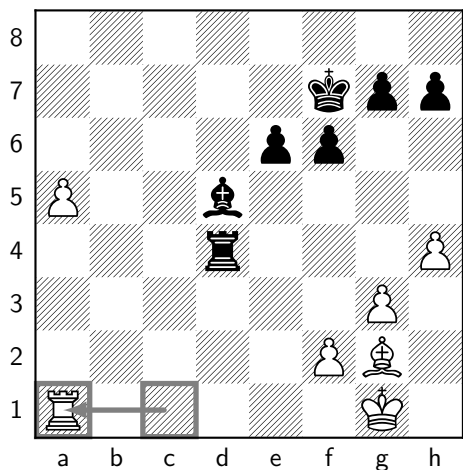
27...♖d1?? 28 ♖×d1 ♘×d1 29 a5 b×a5 30 b×a5 ♘e2 31 ♘b7

27...♘g4 28 ♖e4 ♖d1+ 29 ♔h2 h5

28 a5 b×a5 29 b×a5 ♔f7 30 ♖c1

White cajoles Black into an exchange of bishops as he sees that the rook endgame offers offers him good prospects of victory.

30...♘d5 31 ♖a1



31 ♘×d5

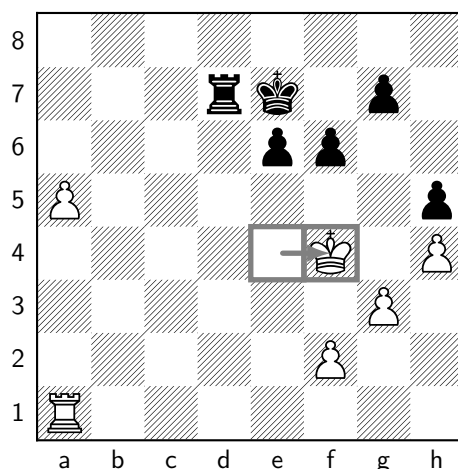
31 ♖c7+

31 a6

31...♘×g2 32 ♔×g2 ♖d7 33 ♔f3

We won't look at the rook endgame in exhaustive detail. Suffice to say that the outside passed pawn imperils Black's survival.

33...♔e7 34 ♔e4 h5 35 ♔f4?

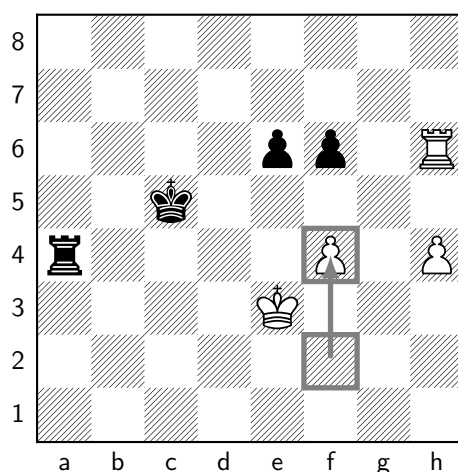


35 f4! ♖a7 36 ♔d4 ♔d7 37 a6 ♔c6 38 ♔c4 ♔b6 39 ♔b4 ♖×a6 40 ♖×a6+ ♔×a6 41 ♔c5

35...♖a7 36 a6 ♔d6 37 g4 g6 38 g×h5 g×h5 39 ♖a5 ♔d7 40 ♔e4 ♔c6 41 ♔d4 ♔b6

White has played according to the winning plan outlined in the note to 35 Kf4, but he hasn't created the right disposition of pawns on the kingside. The fact that he has a rook's pawn allows Black to escape by the skin of his teeth.

42 ♖×h5 ♖×a6 43 ♖h6 ♖a4+ 44 ♔e3 ♔c5 45 f4



45 ♖×f6 ♖×h4 46 ♖×e6 ♔d5

45...e5!

Correctly calculating that the black king will be close enough to stop the h-pawn after simplification.

46 ♖×f6 ♖×f4 47 ♖×f4 e×f4+ 48 ♔×f4 ♔d6
49 ♔f5 ♔e7 50 ♔g6 ♔f8
1/2-1/2

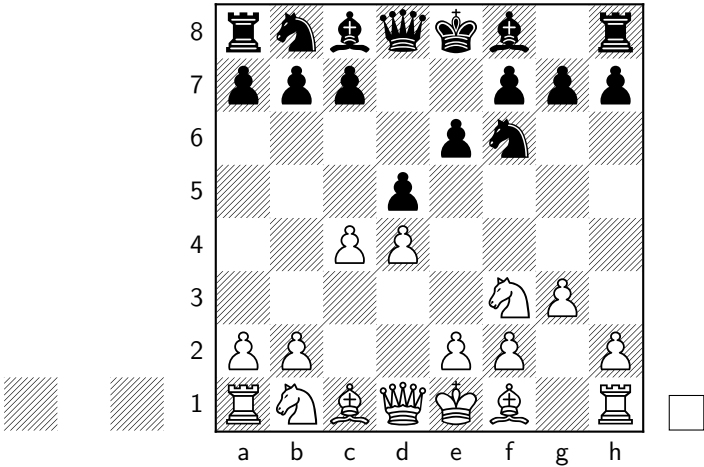
White: 5: Black Plays in the Centre

Black: ?

Opening ECO: E01

Result: *

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 g3 ZZ-



4...c5

4...dxc4 5 ♗g2 c5

*

White: Korobov, A.

20: Gjakova

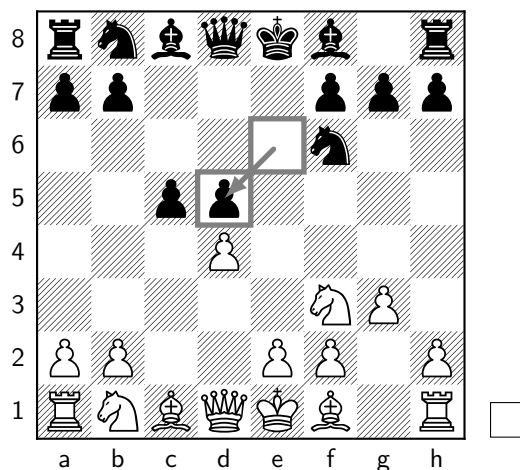
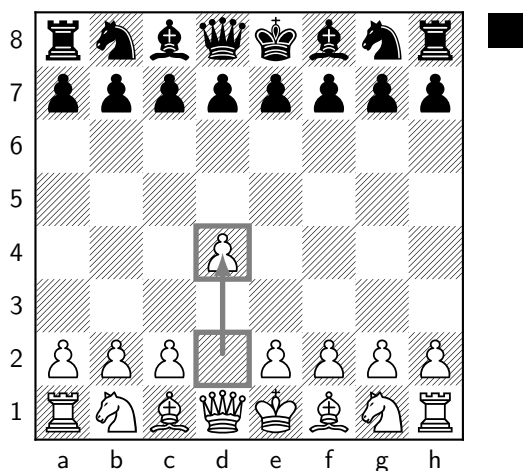
Black: Ermeni, A.

Opening ECO: D34

2016

Result: 1-0

1 d4



1 ♠f3 d5 2 d4 e6 3 c4 c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♠c3
♠c6 6 g3 ♠f6 7 ♠g2

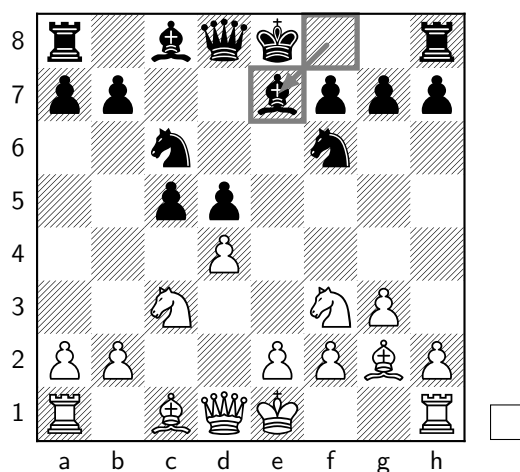
1 d4 d5 2 ♠f3 ♠f6 3 g3 e6 4 ♠g2 c5 5 O-O
♠c6 6 c4 dxc4 7 ♠a4

1...d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♠f3 ♠f6 4 g3 c5

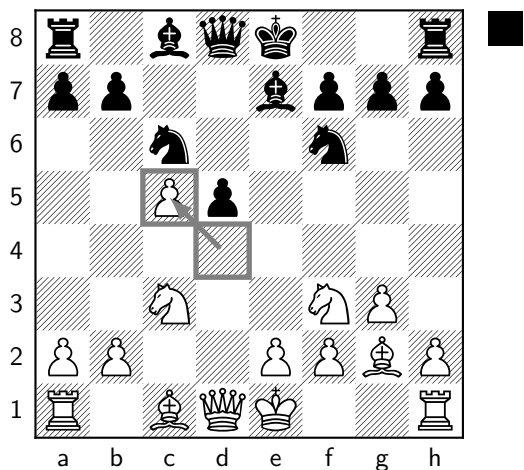
Black immediately challenges the d4-pawn. White's opening build-up is very natural, but have a close look at the previous note as it discusses transpositions/the effect of Black playing a later ...c7-c5.

5 cxd5 exd5

5...cxd4 6 dxe6 ♠xe6 7 ♠xd4 ♠c6 8
♠xd8+ ♠xd8 9 ♠g2 ♠b4 10 ♠a3 ♠xa2 11
O-O a6 12 ♠e3 ♠d5 13 ♠fc1 ♠e7 14 ♠b6
♠b8 15 ♠h3! O-O 16 ♠d4
6 ♠g2 ♠c6 7 ♠c3 ♠e7



White exchanges on c5 to clear a way for an attack on d5.



8 O-O cxd4 9 Nxd4 O-O 10 b3!?

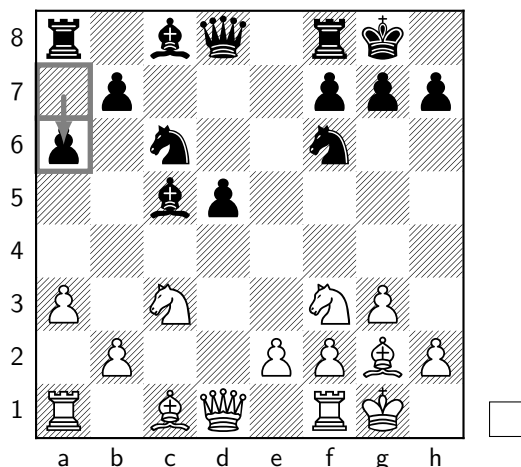
8... Bxc5 9 O-O O-O 10 a3!?

QUESTION: What are the reasons for this little pawn move? — ANSWER: In a position with an isolated pawn, control of the square in front of the pawn is of serious strategic value. In this specific case the d4-square would be a great outpost for a white knight as it would be immovable by an enemy pawn and have important influence over the centre. However, at the moment Black's bishop on c5 and knight on c6 are keeping out the white knights. — With 10 a3 the fight begins to wrest the square from Black. White intends to play 11 b4 to discomfort Black's bishop. It would like to stay on the a7-g1 diagonal where it watches over d4, but then it loses the option of retreating to e7 to defuse the move Bg5, which would otherwise pin the knight which defends the d5-pawn.

Furthermore, White might go the whole hog and advance b4-b5, to force the black knight away from c6, when it also loses contact with the d4-square. This would have to be carefully judged as White doesn't want to loosen his queenside pawns too much. — At the same time 11 b4 will give

White's dark-squared bishop the chance to go to b2 where it enjoys an open diagonal, aiming at Black's kingside and adding its weight to the battle for d4.

10... a6

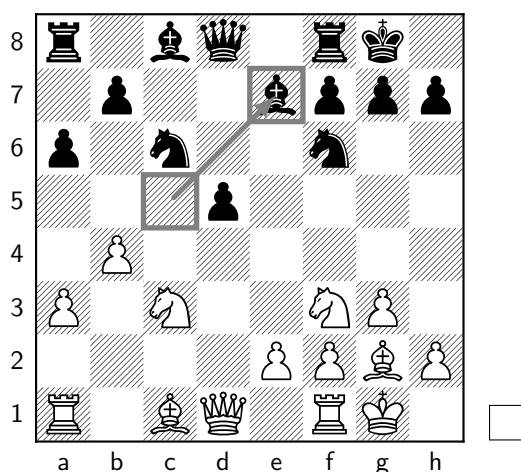


10... Re8 11 b4 Bb6 12 Bb2 Bg4 13 Rc1 h6 14 Ba4 Bc7? 15 Bxf6 gxf6

10... Ne4 11 Bc2 Nxc3 12 Bxc3 Be7 13 Nd4 Bg4 14 Nxc6 bxc6 15 Bxc6 Bxe2 16 Re1 Bc4 17 Bf4 Bf6 18 Rad1

10... a5 11 Bg5 d4 12 Bxf6 Bxf6 13 Ne4 Be7 14 Nxc5 Bxc5 15 b4! Bb6 16 b5 Bxb5 17 Nxd4 Nxd4 18 Bxd4 Bxe2 19 Rfe1 Ba6 20 Rab1

11 b4 Be7



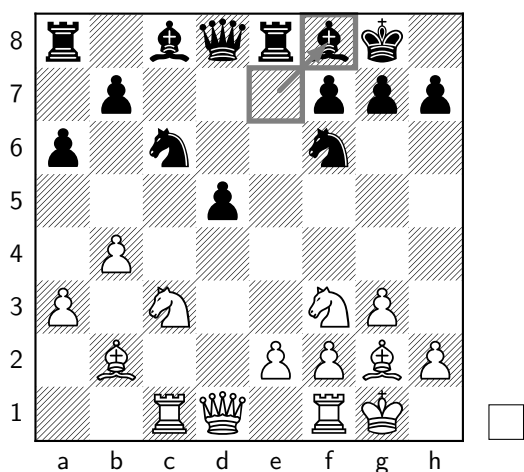
11... ♖a7 12 ♖g5 d4 13 ♘e4

12 ♖b2 ♜e8

At some point over the next few moves Black should play ...Bg4 to activate his bishop and gain counterplay. His overly passive approach lets White build up pressure in peace.

13 ♜c1 ♖f8

EXERCISE: Can you see a good plan for White to increase the pressure on the d5-pawn? Clue: think of a way to redeploy the knight from c3.



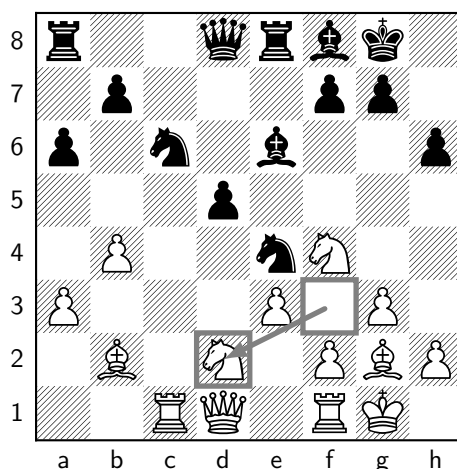
13... ♖g4

14 e3!

ANSWER: White fixes the d5-pawn by increasing his grip on the d4-square. At the same time he clears the way for a brilliant knight manoeuvre via e2 to f4. On its new kingside post the horse will attack d5 just as it did on c3, but with more potency as the bishop on b2 has an open diagonal and so there is a threat of Bxf6 followed by Nxd5. On f4 the knight will also be able to join in a direct kingside attack if that becomes the best strategy.

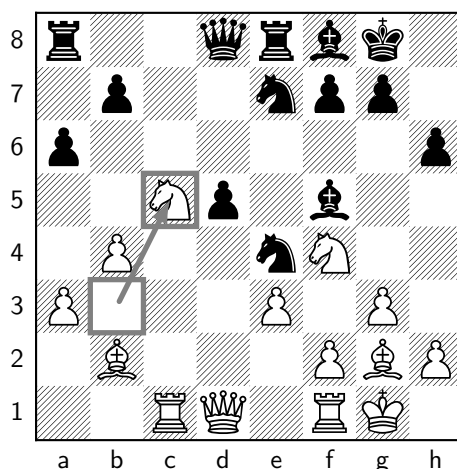
14... h6 15 ♘e2 ♘e4 16 ♘f4 ♖e6 17 ♘d2!

QUESTION: Why does White avoid 17 Nd4 which looks very natural and seems to be tactically sound?



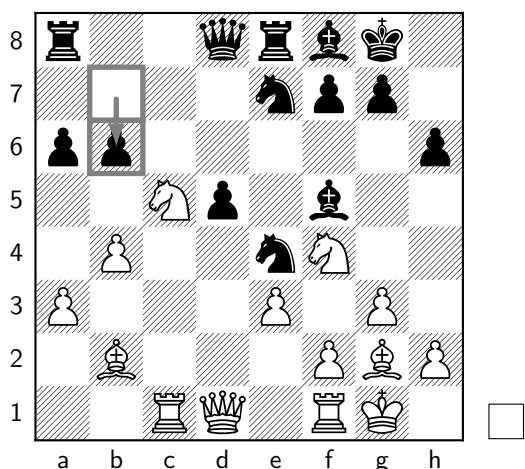
17 ♘d4! ♘x d4 18 ♜x d4

17... ♖f5 18 ♘b3 ♘e7 19 ♘c5!



19 ♘d4 ♖h7

19... b6



19... ♖xc5 20 ♖xc5

20 ♖b3!

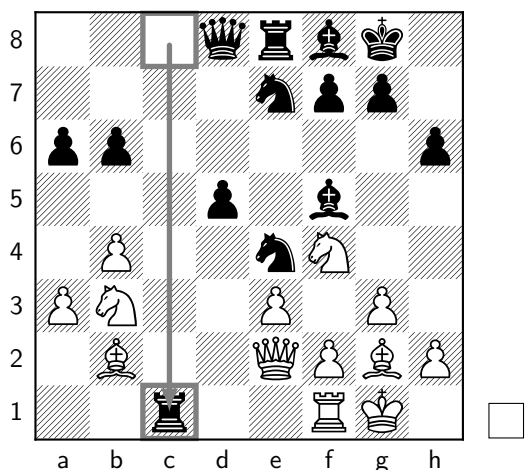
If you want to play the Catalan well you have to play manoeuvres of this type to weaken the opponent's pawns. The knight goes forward; a pawn attacks it; then it retreats. The quiet nature of the position

makes the loss of time in White's manoeuvre of little importance. On the other hand, the fact the pawn can't return to b7 means that the a6-pawn and the c6-square have both permanently lost a defender.

20... ♖c8 21 ♖e2

Already the a6-pawn has become a target.

21... ♖xc1



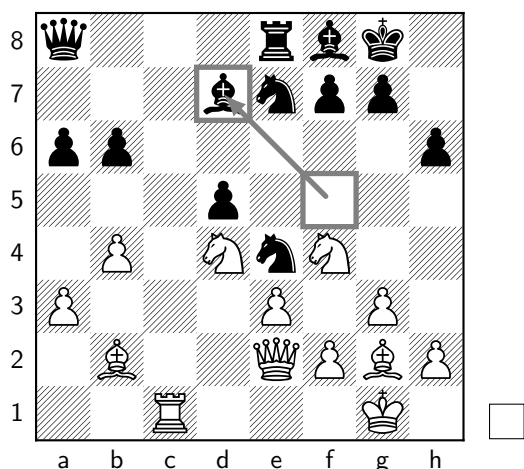
21... b5

21... a5 22 ♖d4

22 ♖xc1 ♖a8

Casting our minds back to the 17th move, we can see that Korobov has been vindicated in his decision to avoid the simplifying 17 Nd4 Nxd4 18 Qxd4. By keeping the play complex he has allowed his lower-rated opponent the opportunity to make some doubtful decisions.

23 ♖d4 ♖d7



23... b5 24 ♖xf5 ♖xf5 25 ♖d3 ♖e7 26

♖xd5 ♖xd5 27 ♖xe4

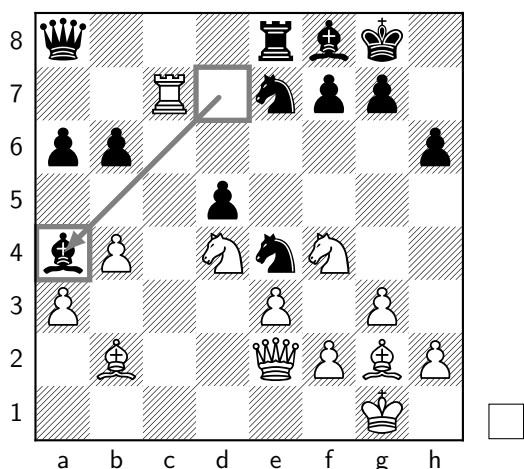
23... ♖h7

24 ♖c7!

Korobov sends his rook to the seventh rank not to capture pawns, but to break the coordination of the black pieces and thus facilitate an attack on the kingside. Black's next move is helpful to say the least.

24... ♖a4

The bishop abandons the fight.



24...♖d8

25 h4

QUESTION: What is the purpose of this move? — ANSWER: When carrying out an attack you shouldn't just move the big pieces. By putting the pawn on h4 White rules out any defence of the black king based on ...Ng5.

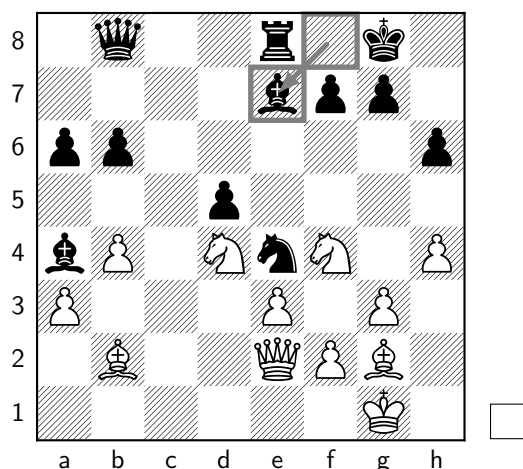
25...♔b8

EXERCISE: Now it looks as if the rook must retreat back to c1. Can you do better? — ANSWER:

26 ♖x e7!

Having to respond to White's play on the queenside and against d5 has caused a disharmony in Black's position that makes a kingside attack decisive. The first blow is to remove the knight on e7 from the defensive equation.

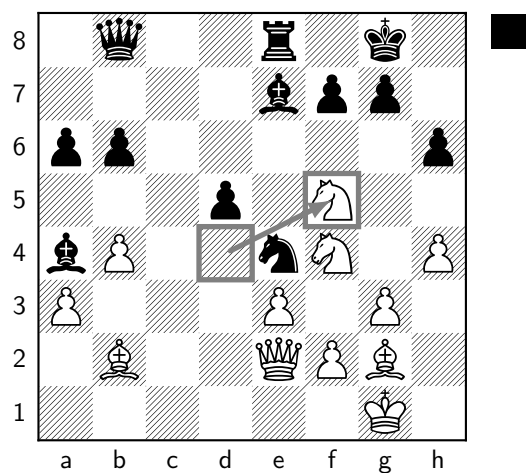
26...♘x e7



26...♘x e7 27 ♘f5 ♖d7 28 ♔g4

27 ♘f5

QUESTION: Why did Black resign? — ANSWER: At first glance White's advantage in firepower on the kingside might not look decisive. However, he has three minor pieces (two knights and the bishop on b2) all aiming at the black king, and his queen is ready to join in the action with Qg4. — Meanwhile Black's queen and bishop on a4 are out of things, while the knight on e4 can be exchanged off with Bxe4, removing a key defensive piece. The rook on e8 doesn't do much to protect its king, so that leaves only the bishop on e7 and the pawns on f7, g7, and h6 to resist an attack by the white queen and three minor pieces. It's hopeless odds. White can always give up a minor piece to fragment the black kingside pawns and still have more than enough material to force a mate.



27 ♞f5 f6 28 ♚g4

1-0

White: Caruana, F.
 Black: Naiditsch, A.
 Opening ECO: E04
 Result: 1-0

21: Dortmund

2015

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♙g2 dxc4 5 ♘f3
 c5

A natural counterattack against d4, but of course any loosening of the black queenside is welcomed by the white bishop on g2. Even if Black succeeds in completing his development, it will be difficult for him to shake off the pressure against b7. — Before making this type of pawn thrust in one of your own games, try to decide in which of the following categories it belongs: a) It is a freeing move that disposes of the enemy centre - a good thing. — b) It opens lines for the better developed enemy pieces - a bad thing. — Of course the value of a positional decision is usually debatable. In a lot of cases it is the superior precision, knowledge and imagination of one player during the rest of the game that will retrospectively assign the idea to 'a' or 'b'.

6 O-O

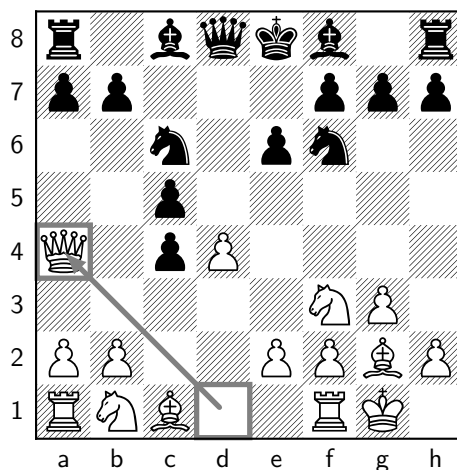
White gets his king out of the centre before deciding on his plan.

6 ♔a4+ ♙d7 7 ♔xc4 ♙c6

6 ♘c3 ♘c6 7 ♔a4 ♙d7 8 ♔xc4 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 ♖c8 10 O-O ♘xd4 11 ♔xc4 ♙c5 12 ♔h4 O-O 13 ♙xb7 ♖b8 14 ♙f3 ♖b4 15 ♔g5 ♙d4 16 ♔d2

6... ♘c6 7 ♔a4

Caruana aims to regain the pawn on c4 whilst forcing Black to confront the threat of 8 Ne5 when the pinned knight on c6 will be attacked three times.

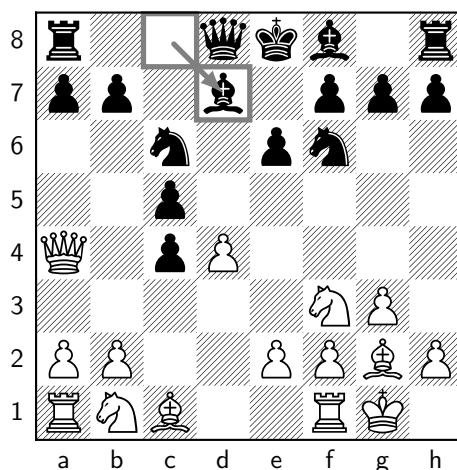


7 ♘e5!?

7 dxc5 ♔xd1 8 ♖xd1 ♙xc5 9 ♘bd2 c3 10 bxc3

7... ♙d7

Meeting the threat to the knight whilst preparing a discovered attack on the white queen with 8...Nxd4.



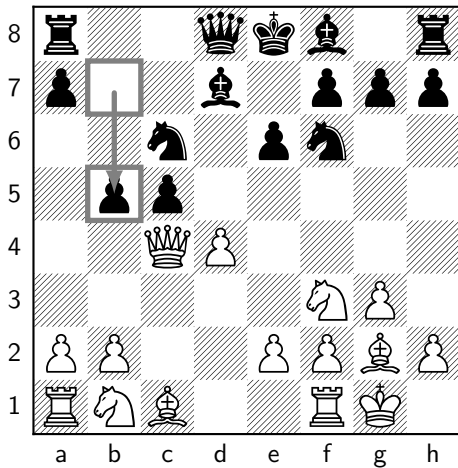
7...cxd4 8 ♖xd4 ♔xd4 9 ♙xc6+ ♕d7 10
 ♖d1 ♔xd1+ 11 ♔xd1 ♙xc6 12 ♖d2 b5 13
 a4 bxa4 14 ♖xc4

8 ♔xc4

Regaining the pawn and attacking c5.

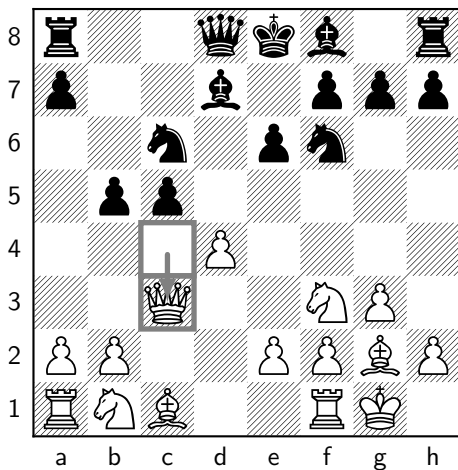
8...b5

QUESTION: Why does Black play this seemingly loosening pawn move?



8...cxd4 9 ♖xd4

9 ♔xc3

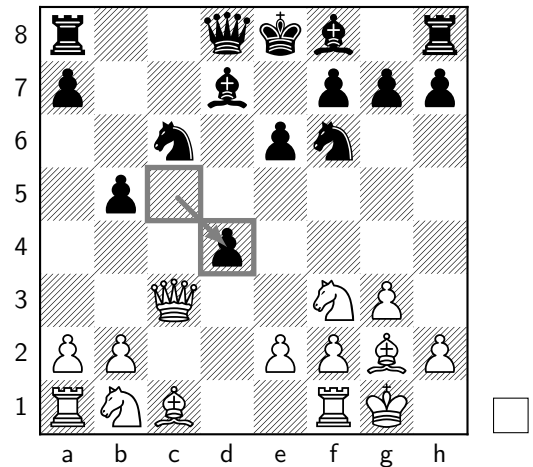


9 ♔d3

9 ♔xb5? ♖xd4 10 ♔d3 ♙b5

9...cxd4

Black has a choice of moves here.



9...♖c8 10 dxc5 ♖d5 11 ♔d2 ♙xc5 12 ♖c3
 ♙b4 13 ♔d3 ♙xc3 14 bxc3

9...♔b6 10 ♙e3 c4 11 ♖e5!

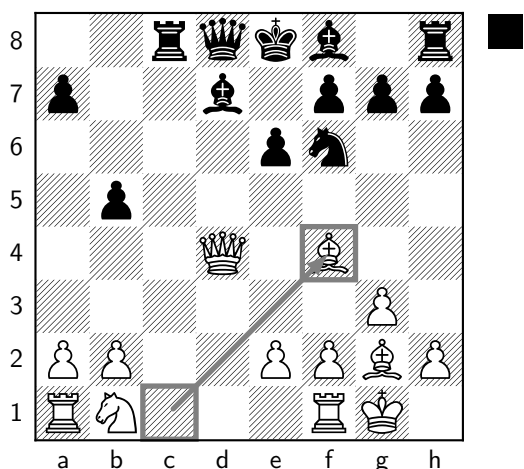
9...b4 10 ♔d3 ♖c8 11 dxc5 ♙xc5 12 ♙g5
 O-O 13 ♖bd2 ♙e7 14 ♔fd1

10 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 11 ♔xd4 ♖c8

QUESTION: How would you assess the position? — ANSWER: Black has evacuated all his pieces from the h1-a8 diagonal. He would have preferred to have exchanged off light-squared bishops rather than have his bishop sitting on d7, so he hasn't yet equalized. Nonetheless, White's advantage is minimal.

12 ♙f4

QUESTION: But can't White grab the pawn on a7 now?



12 ♙×a7 ♜c5 13 ♙a6 ♞d5 14 ♞×d5 exd5
15 ♞d2 O-O

12... ♜c5

A very natural reply. Black develops with gain of time and deals with the attack on a7.

13 ♙d3

Notice how White's unobtrusive 12th move gained power after Black's reply, because 14 Bb7 now threatens to win the exchange. The bishop didn't threaten anything at the time it went to f4, as Black had the option of ...Rc4. But that is the way it sometimes happens in chess: a move gains strength after the opponent's best reply. In reality White exchanged one threat (13 Qxa7) for another (14 Bb7). And after Black's next move - which is again 'best' - we see another chance for White to increase the pressure suddenly appear.

13... ♙b6

Black meets the threat of 14 Bb7 and puts the queen on an active square where she ties down the rook on f1 to the defence of f2. She also solidifies the queenside in general. On the other hand, the bishop on d7 is left somewhat hanging and Black's kingside is short of defenders. —

QUESTION: But the bishop on d7 is defended twice! How is it somewhat hanging? And where are the white pieces to

attack the supposedly under-defended black kingside? — ANSWER: Patience! As after 12 Bf4 we have to look beyond the present position to see White's chances.

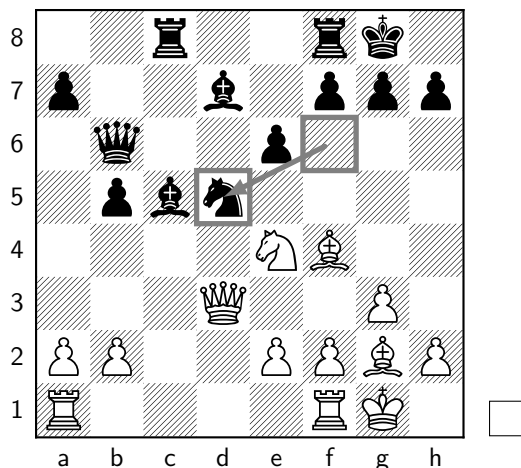
Black is going to castle, after which the bishop on d7 loses one defender, and then White will challenge its other defender.

This will lead to the black kingside becoming depleted of defenders. Let's see how the game unfolded.

14 ♞d2 O-O 15 ♞e4

Here we are: White threatens to win a piece by capturing on f6.

15... ♞d5

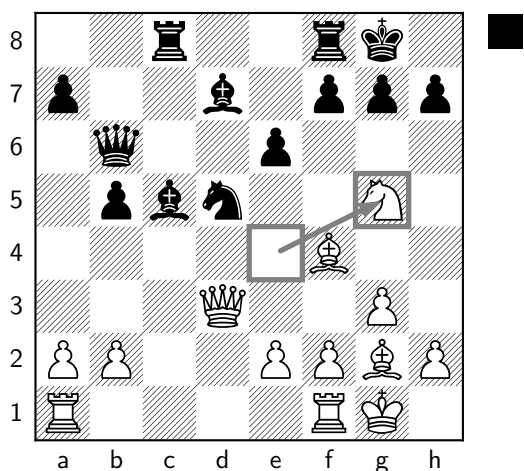


15... ♞×e4 16 ♞×e4

15... ♞fd8 16 ♞×f6+ g×f6 17 ♙f3

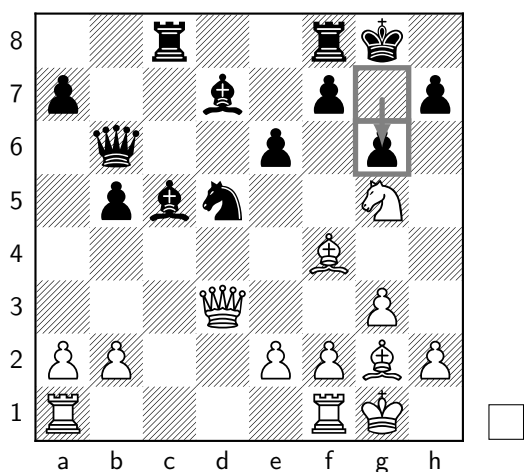
16 ♞g5!?

Caruana aims to exploit his advantage in firepower on the kingside.



16 ♖xc5!? ♔xc5 17 ♕e5 ♖fd8 18 ♖fd1

16...g6



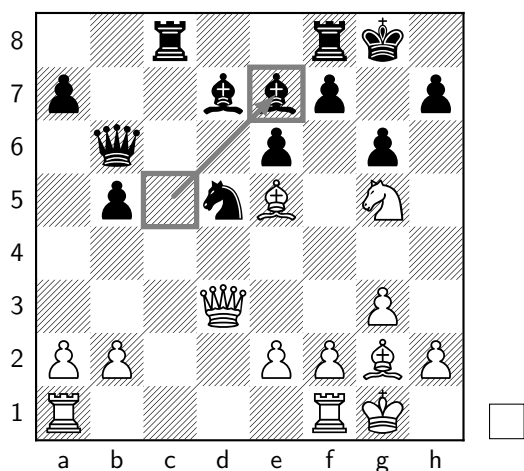
16...f5 17 ♕xd5

16...♖f6 17 ♖xh7! ♖xh7 18 ♔xd7

17 ♕e5

White continues his kingside build-up.

17...♕e7



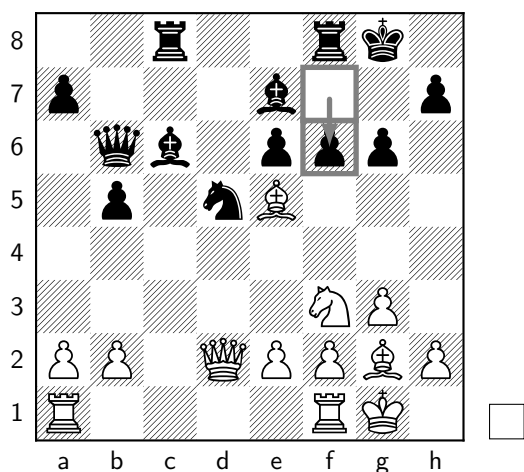
17...f6 18 ♕xd5 ♖xg5 19 ♕f3 ♕c6

18 ♖f3 ♕c6 19 ♔d2

EXERCISE: Can you see White's threat? And what happens if Black plays 19...Bf6 or 19...Rfd8 to meet it?

19...f6

Finally Caruana has extracted a long-term structural advantage through his positional (we might say tactical) pressure on the kingside.

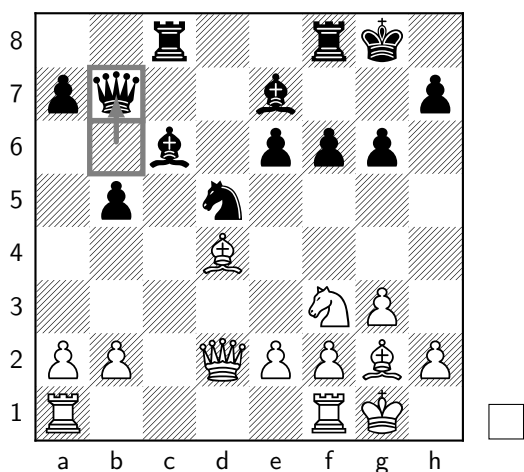


19...a6 20 ♔h6 f6 21 ♖g5! ♖f7 22 ♖xf7

19...♕f6 20 e4! ♕xe5 21 exd5

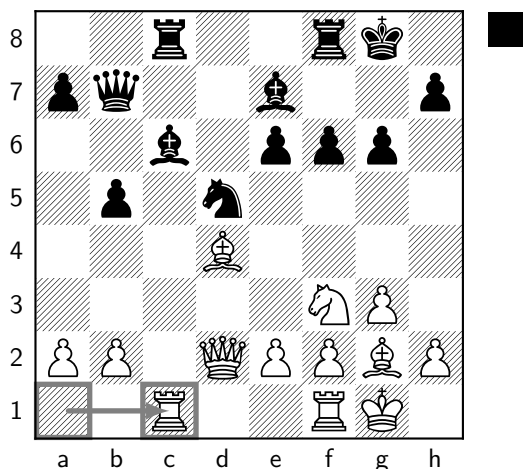
19...♖fd8 20 e4! ♖f6? 21 ♔g5! ♖d5 22 ♔h6 ♕f8 23 ♔h4 ♕e7 24 ♖g5 ♕xg5 25 ♔xg5 f6 26 ♕xf6 ♖xf6 27 ♔xf6

20 ♖d4 ♔b7



20... ♖c5 21 ♖ac1 ♖x d4 22 ♖x d4

21 ♖ac1

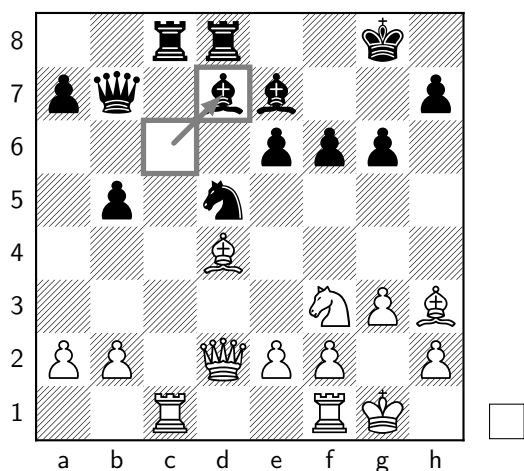


21 ♖h3 e5!? 22 ♖x c8 ♖x c8

21... ♖fd8 22 ♖h3

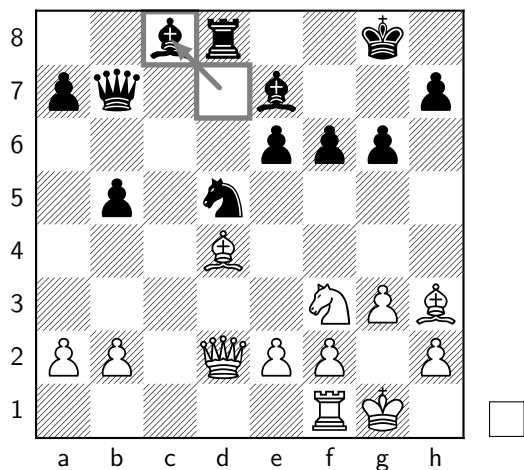
Aiming the bishop at the undefended pawn.

22... ♖d7



22... e5 23 ♖x c8 ♖x c8 24 ♖c5!

23 ♖x c8 ♖x c8



23... ♖x c8 24 e4

24 ♖c1 ♖d7 25 ♖c5!

Black's pawn structure is entrenched on the light squares, but not guarding central dark squares like c5 and d4. The exchange of bishops emphasizes Black's fragility whilst vacating d4 for White's knight or queen.

25... ♖x c5 26 ♖x c5 ♖c8

Black is aiming to draw through simplification, but there is a favourable way for White to exchange rooks.

27 b4!

So far Caruana has shown restraint in the use of his foot soldiers, but now is the moment for his pawns to get involved in the struggle. The exchange of rooks will yield him a passed pawn. If Black refuses then 28 Nd4 will increase the pressure.

27... ♖×c5 28 b×c5 ♔c7 29 e4!

The threat of this advance has hung over Black's knight for many moves. Now at last it is time to strike.

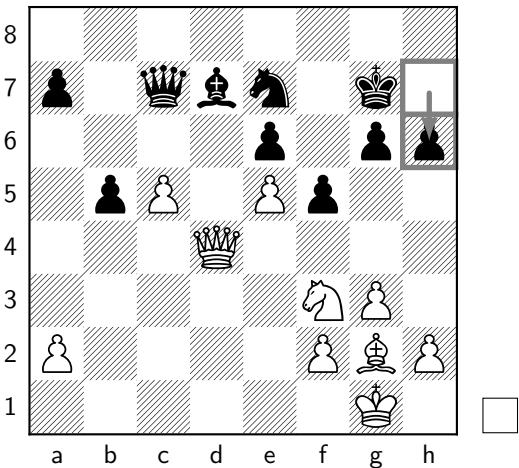
29... ♞e7 30 ♔d4!

Not only defending the c-pawn, but more importantly attacking f6. Black can't reply 30...e5 without dropping his bishop, and so he has to allow the further advance of White's e-pawn.

30... ♞g7 31 e5 f5 32 ♙g2!

The bishop has performed its role on h3 and now returns to g2 to fight for the crucial d5-square.

32... h6

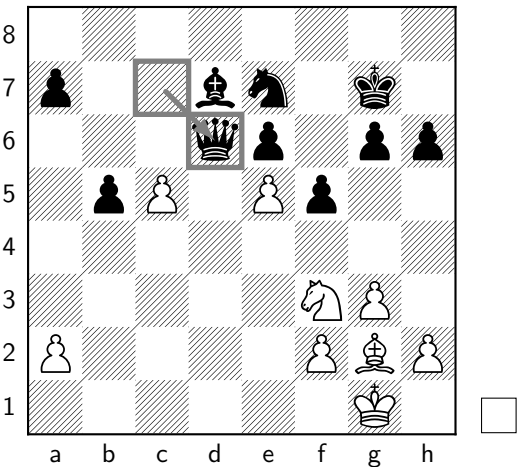


32... ♞d5 33 ♞g5! ♔c6 34 ♙f1! h6 35 ♙×d5 ♔×d5 36 ♔×d5 e×d5 37 ♞f3 ♙f7 38 ♞d4

33 ♔d6!

An offer to exchange Black can't refuse.

33... ♔×d6



33... ♞d5 34 ♞d4

33... ♔d8 34 ♞d4

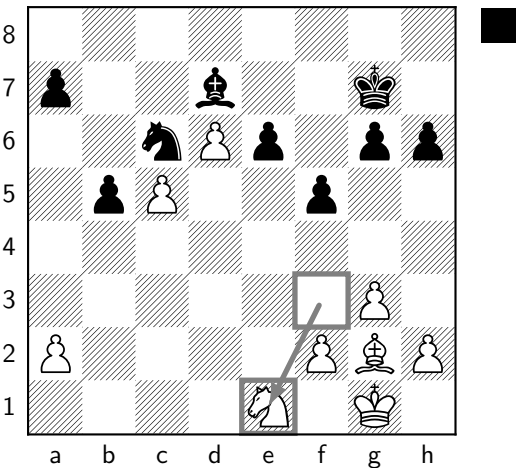
34 e×d6

Only this way: White wants two passed pawns and access to e5 for his knight.

34... ♞c6

Naiditsch's minor pieces are now blocking the pawns and his king is ready to join in the action. White has to act fast before Black plays moves like ...Kf6, ...e5-e4, ...Ke6 and ...Kd5 to attack the c5-pawn.

35 ♞e1!

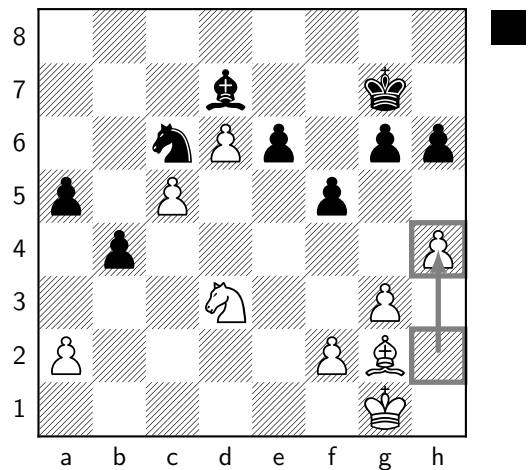


35 ♞d2!

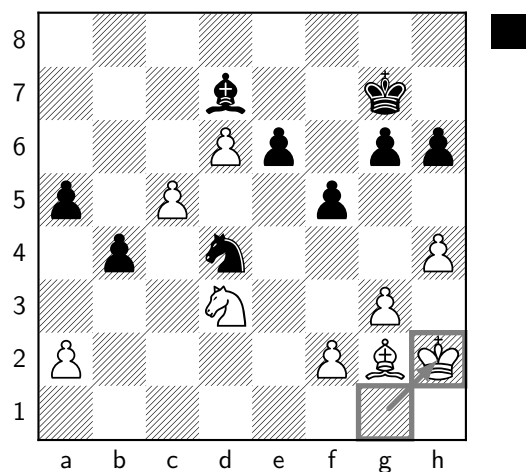
35... a5 36 ♞d3 b4

Black has guarded against Nb4, but an approach via e5 is still available to the white knight.

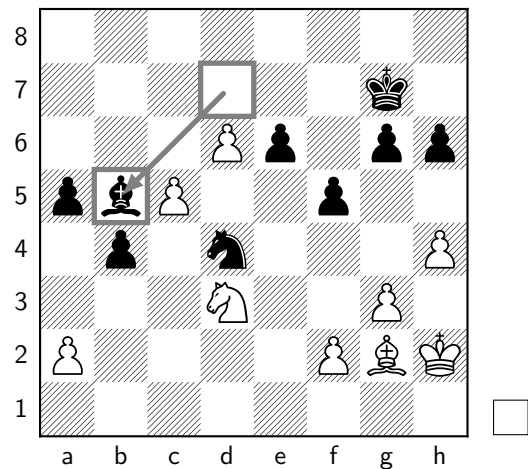
37 h4



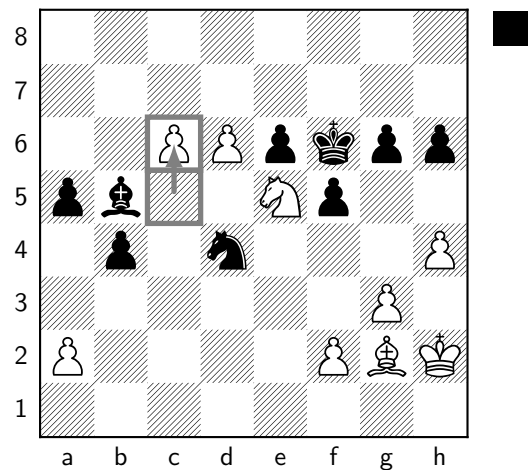
37 ♖xc6 ♗xc6 38 ♘e5 a4! 39 ♘xc6 b3 40 axb3 axb3 41 d7 b2 42 d8♔ b1♗+ 43 ♔g2 ♗e4+ 44 ♔f1 ♗xc6
37... ♞d4 38 ♔h2!



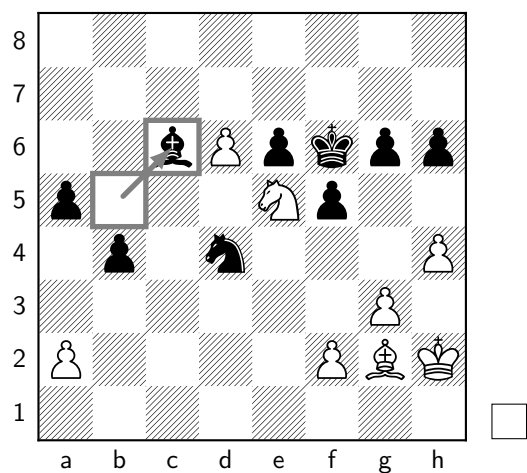
38 ♞e5? a4 39 ♞xd7 b3
38... ♜b5



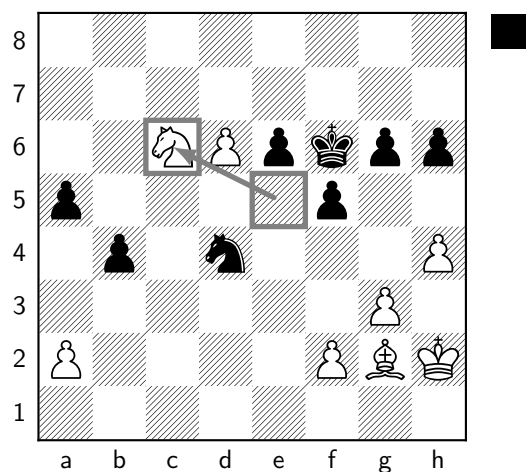
38... ♔f6 39 f4 ♜e8 40 ♞e5
39 ♞e5 ♔f6 40 c6!
A neat finish;



40 f4
40... ♜xc6



40...♔xe5 41 d7 ♞xc6 42 ♚xc6
41 ♞xc6



41 ♞xc6 ♞xc6 42 ♚xc6

1-0

White: Laznicka, V.

22: Jerusalem

Black: Kobo, O.

Opening ECO: A05

2015

Result: 1-0

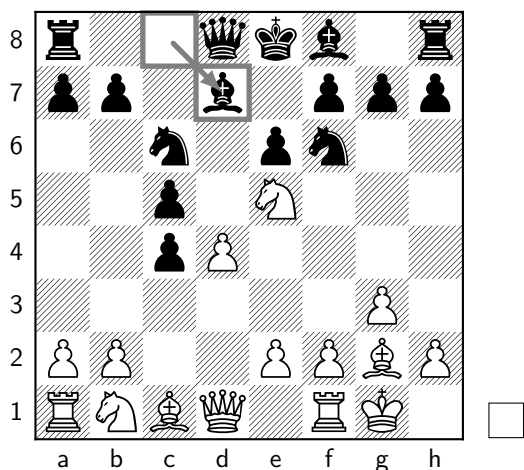
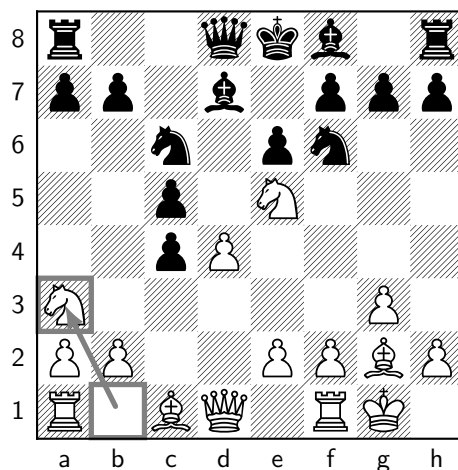
1 Nf3 Nf6 2 g3 c5 3 Bg2 Nc6 4 O-O d5 5 d4
 e6 6 c4 dxc4 7 Ne5

An aggressive and tricky move that is likely to upset an unprepared opponent.

However, if he defends well Black has more chances to equalize than after the more positional 7 Qa4 of the previous game.

7... Nd7 !

The best reply. Black develops a piece, meets the threat to c6 and deters White from trying Qa4 .



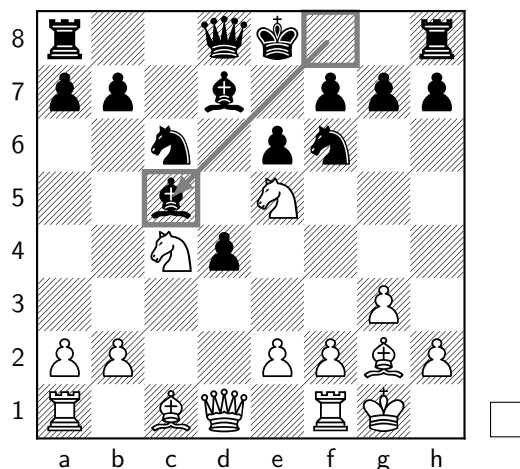
7... Nd7 ? 8 e3 Nc6 9 Bxc6+ bxc6 10
 Qxd8+ Qxd8 11 Nxf7+
8 Na3

8 Nxd7 Qxd7
8 Nxc6 Bxc6 9 Bxc6+ bxc6

8... cxd4

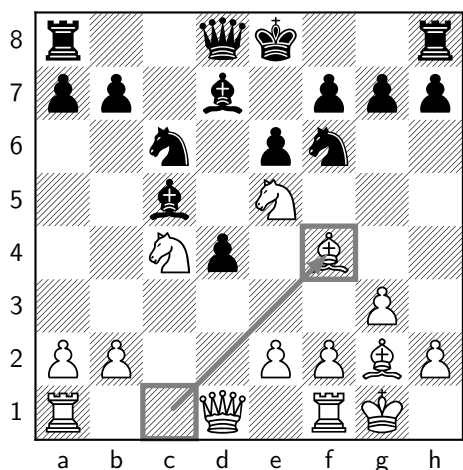
As former world champion Wilhelm Steinitz would say, 'A centre pawn is worth a little trouble.'

9 Naxc4 Bc5



9... Bc5 10 Bf4 O-O 11 Qb3 Qc8 12 Rac1

♖d5 13 ♜fd1 ♘×f4 14 g×f4 ♜d8 15 ♙e4
 ♚c7 16 ♚f3
 10 ♙f4



10 ♚b3 O-O 11 ♙f4 ♜c8 12 ♚×b7 ♘×e5 13
 ♘×e5 ♜b8 14 ♚f3 ♜×b2 15 ♜fc1 ♙d6 16
 ♘c4 ♙×f4 17 ♚×f4 ♜b4 18 ♚×d4 ♙b5 19
 ♚c5 ♜×c4 20 ♜×c4 ♙×c4 21 ♚×c4

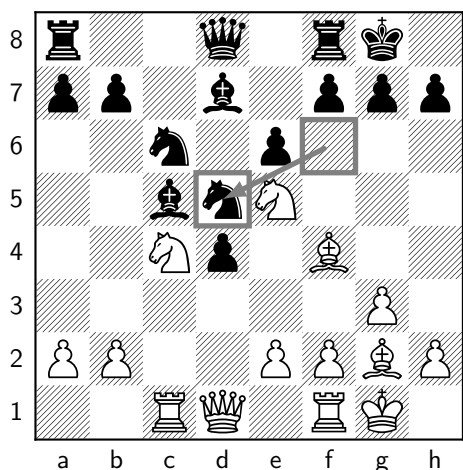
10... O-O 11 ♜c1

The rook not only makes the black bishop uneasy, but adds to the pressure on c6.

11... ♘d5

Blocking the attack on c6, as well as introducing the idea of ...Nxf4. —

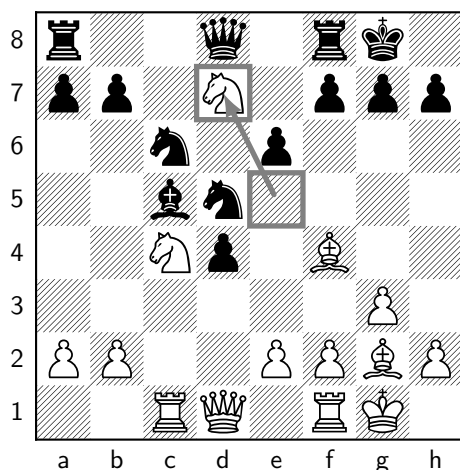
EXERCISE: How can White keep on setting Black problems?



11... ♘×e5? 12 ♘×e5 b6? 13 b4! ♙×b4 14
 ♙×a8 ♚×a8 15 ♘×d7 ♘×d7 16 ♚×d4
 11... ♜c8 12 ♘d3 ♙e7 13 ♘d6 ♜c7!?

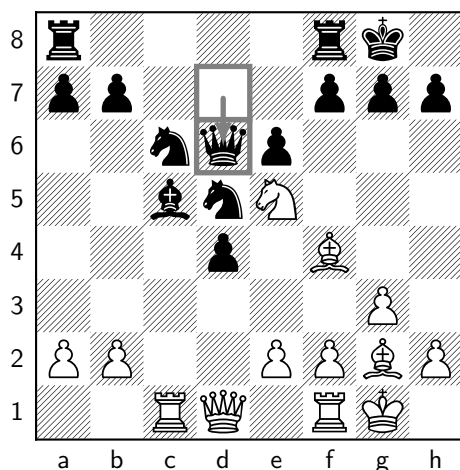
12 ♘×d7

ANSWER: In general White is reluctant to exchange his knight for Black's awkwardly placed bishop, but here he needs to clear a way for his bishop on f4 to the e5-square. This will involve the exchange of both white knights.



12 ♙×d5 e×d5 13 ♘a5 ♘×a5 14 ♜×c5 ♙h3
 15 ♜e1 b6 16 ♜c1 ♜c8 17 ♜×c8 ♚×c8 18
 ♚×d4 f6 19 ♘d3 ♚c4!

12... ♚×d7 13 ♘e5 ♚d6??
A serious mistake.

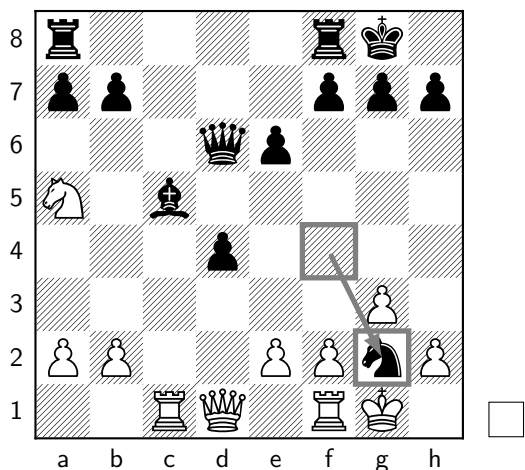


13... ♖×e5 14 ♗×e5 ♖b6 15 ♗×d4

16 ♗×c6 ♗×f4 17 ♗a5!

A decisive move. Because the black knight is hanging on f4 there is no time to deal with the threat of 16 Nx7.

15... ♗×g2



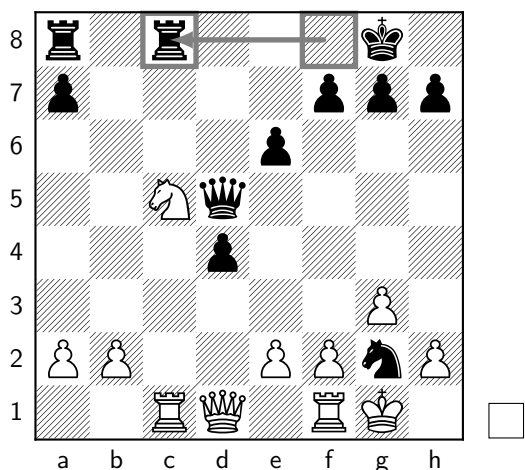
15... b6

15... ♖b6 16 ♗c4

16 ♗×b7 ♗d5 17 ♗×c5

Material is equal, but the black knight won't be getting out of g2. — EXERCISE: can you see the best way for White to go about winning the trapped horse?

17... ♖fc8

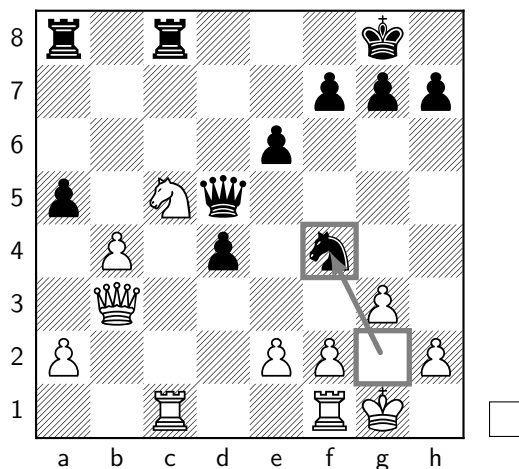


17... ZZ– 18 ♗b3

18 b4 a5 19 ♗b3!

This is now lethal.

19... ♗f4



19... ♗c6 20 b5 ♗d6 21 ♗e4 ♗e5 22 ♗f3

20 g×f4 ♗h5 21 f3 a×b4 22 ♗d3 h6 23 ♗×c8+ ♗×c8 24 ♗×b4 ♗c2 25 ♗e1 ♗g6+ 26 ♗h1

1-0

White: 6: Black Counterattacks

?

Black: ?

Opening ECO: E04

Result: *

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 g3 dxc4 5 ♗g2
♗d7**

. I would recommend this line to players of Black who are looking for a hard fight. If White plays in a slow, elaborate style he can find himself crushed by a kingside attack in about 30 moves. And how often does that happen to him in other lines of the Catalan? It is only in this variation that Black sends his king to the queenside, into the jaws of the bishop on g2. And remarkably he (or she) often lives to tell the tale. — The drawback to having 5...Bd7 as your repertoire move is that which afflicts most enterprising lines against the Catalan: with a crafty move order White can avoid it along with other lines that emanate from 4...dxc4.

*

White: Sharevich, A.

Black: Nemcova, K.

Opening ECO: E04

Result: 0-1

23: U.S. Women's Ch, Saint Louis

2015

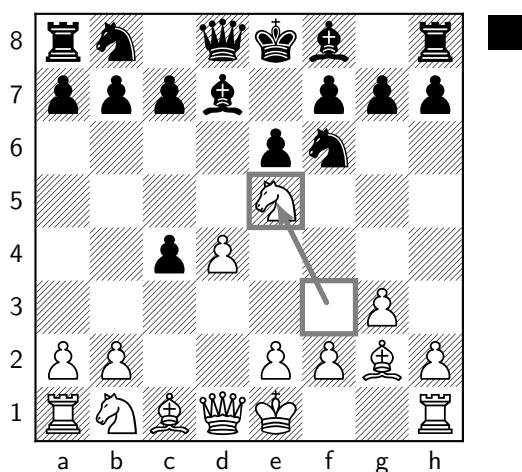
1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 c4 ♘f6 4 g3 dxc4 5 ♕g2
♕d7

The aforementioned provocation: the bishop heads for c6 to challenge White's control of the long diagonal. Black will forfeit the bishop pair, but achieve a powerful concentration of pieces in the centre. — Black's manoeuvre reminds me of the Fort Knox variation of the French Defence which begins 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bd7 5 Nf3 Bc6. In both cases Black gives priority over development to the problem of the bad bishop on c8.

However, the two lines are temperamentally unrelated: in the French Black is looking for a peaceful life through conceding some space, whereas here the aim is to start a hard fight.

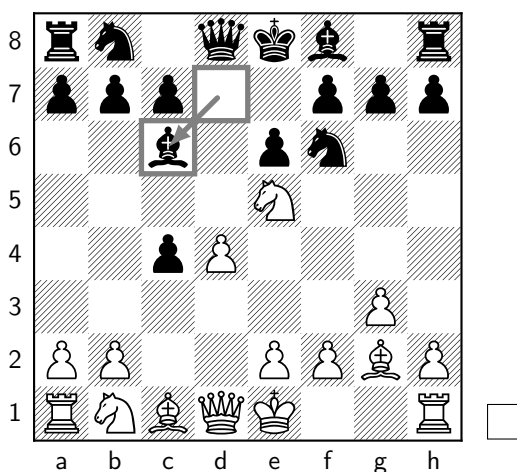
6 ♘e5

Sharevich unleashes the bishop and attacks b7, thereby ensuring she gains the bishop pair.



6 ♕c2 c5! 7 ♕xc4 ♕c6

6... ♕c6



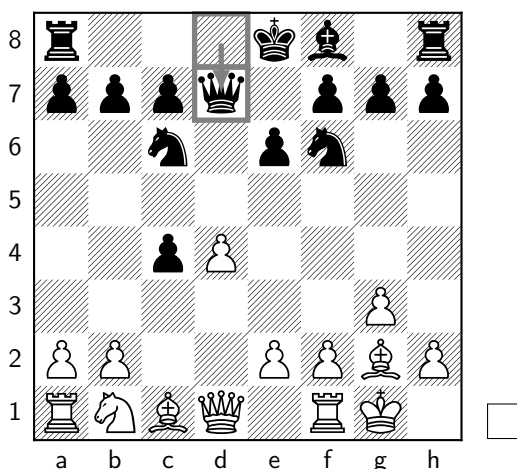
6... ♘c6 7 ♘xc4!

7 ♘xc6 ♘xc6 8 O-O 8 ♔a4?! ♔d7 9 ♔xc4
♘xd4 10 ♕xb7 ♖b8 11 ♕g2 ♕b4+ 12 ♕d2
O-O! 13 ♕xb4 ♖xb4 14 ♔xb4?? ♘c2+ 15
♔f1

8 e3 ♔d7 9 O-O O-O-O

8... ♔d7

Preparing to castle queenside.



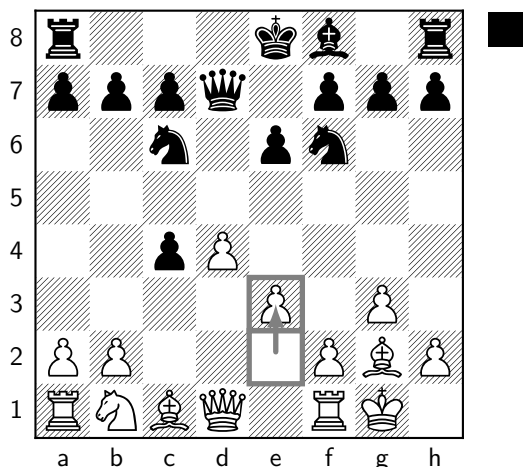
8... ♖×d4??

8... ♘×d4 9 ♙×b7

8... ♘d5 9 e3 a6 10 ♘c3 ♘×c3 11 b×c3 ♘a5
12 f4!

9 e3

Guarding the d4-pawn.



9 ♘c3!? ♘×d4 10 ♙×b7 ♖b8 11 ♙g2 ♙e7
12 e3 ♘b5 13 ♖c2 ♘×c3 14 ♖×c3 ♖b5 15
b3 O-O

9...O-O-O

Nemcova completes a plan that is astounding in the Catalan. Normally Black is trying to withstand pressure on his queenside pawns from the bishop on g2 - you would imagine the last thing she wants is her king sitting on b8. — EXERCISE:

What positional factors do you think justify Black's plan of castling queenside? You might like to make a list. — ANSWER: Firstly, Black is solidly centralized and actually has a lead in development.

Secondly, at the moment White's queenside pawns are passive on a2 and b2. They are a long way from being utilized as battering rams against the black king. This gives Black time to organize counterplay and fortify her defences. — The pressure from the bishop on g2 can be plugged with ...Nd5. Because Black has played ...d5xc4

the horse can't be driven back by c2-c4. Alternatively if White tries e3-e4 to evict the knight then d4 becomes weak and the bishop on g2 is shut in by its own pawn. Of course, the knight won't be entirely stable sitting on d5, but it is a serious obstacle to White's attack. — Aggressively speaking, Black has a source of counterattack on the kingside. It transpires that with 4 g3 White has created a hook for the pawn advance ...h5-h4. The disappearance of the knight on f3 facilitates this ramming move.

Furthermore, the situation in the centre isn't entirely fixed. If White tries a one-sided plan of attack on the queenside she has to watch out for an ...e6-e5 break-out by Black. — Nonetheless, this is a double-edged plan for Black full of danger as well as opportunity. Castling queenside into the fire of the bishop on g2 isn't asking for a quiet life.

10 ♖a4

The most aggressive approach. White not only aims to regain her pawn on c4, but also threatens to smash up Black's queenside with 11 Nxc6.

10... ♘d5

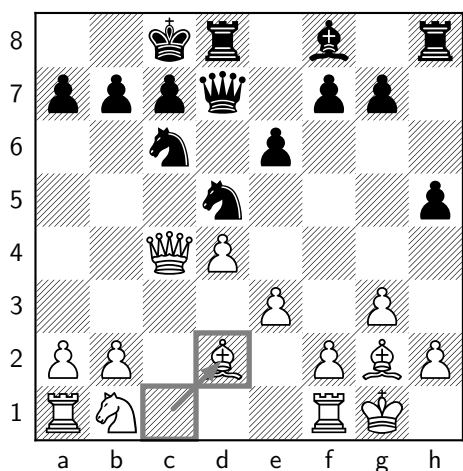
Nemcova blocks the attack on c6 and puts her knight on a central square which has the status of a 'pseudo outpost': if White tries to eject it with e3-e4 she undermines her centre.

11 ♖×c4 h5!

The advance of the h-pawn aims to make White regret she ever weakened herself by playing the Catalan move 4 g3.

12 ♙d2

White vacates the c1-square for the rook so it can exert pressure along the half open file. At the same time the bishop positions itself to support a counterattack on the queenside with b2-b4, etc.



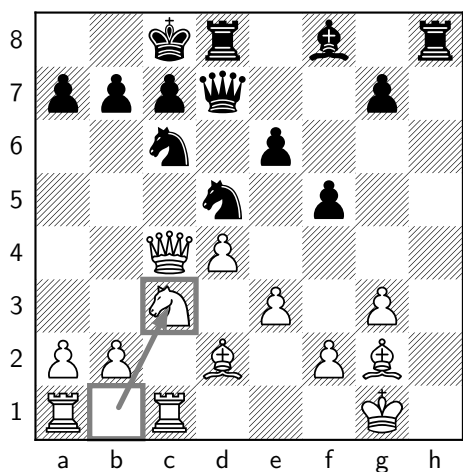
12 h4 g5! 13 h×g5 h4

12...h4 13 ♖c1 h×g3 14 h×g3 f5!

With the pawn thrust Black stabilizes the knight on d5 as now e3-e4 will no longer dislodge it. The pawn can support a second wave of attack against the g3-pawn with ...g7-g5 and ...f5-f4. And, finally, the pawns are being cleared out of the way of the black queen so that she can go to h7 to lead the assault on the white king.

15 ♘c3?

This feels too slow.



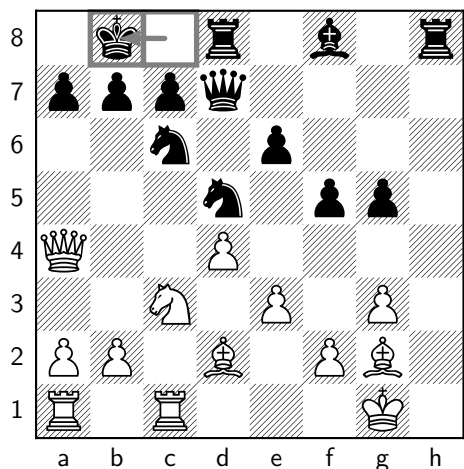
15 b4

15...g5! 16 ♖a4

EXERCISE: What is White's threat and how should Black prevent it? — ANSWER:

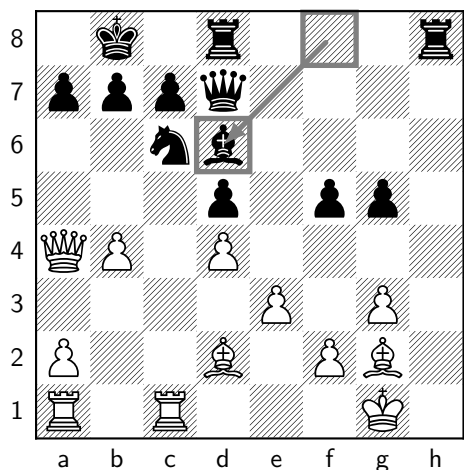
16...♖b8

Black guards the important a7-square.



16...ZZ- 17 ♘b5 a6 18 ♖×c6! ♔×c6 19 ♘a7+

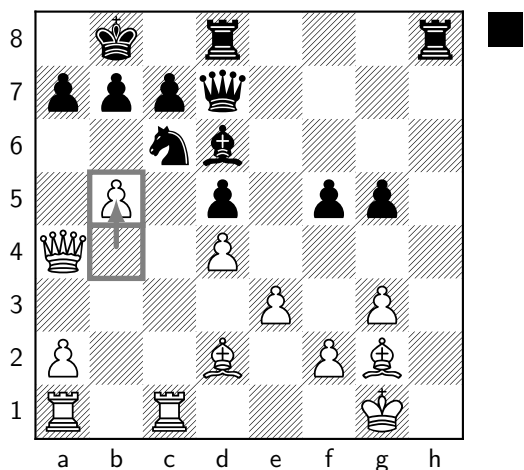
17 ♘×d5 exd5 18 b4 ♙d6



18...f4!? 19 b5? ♘×d4! 20 exd4 f×g3 21 ♖b3 g×f2+ 22 ♖f1 ♙h2! 23 ♖c3? ♙b4! 24 ♖d3 ♖×g2 25 ♖×g2 ♖g4+ 26 ♖g3 ♖e2 27 ♖f1 ♙×d2 28 ♖×f2 ♖e4+ 29 ♖f3 ♙f4 30 ♖×e4 d×e4 31 ♖c3 e3 32 ♖fc2 ♖×d4

19 b5?!

As so often this proves a naive attacking gesture because Black's initiative on the kingside carries a lot more punch.



19 ♕x d5 f4 20 ♕x c6 bxc6 21 exf4 gxf4 22 ♖xc6 fxg3 23 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 24 f4 ♖h2 25 ♕e3 ♖e7

19... ♖e7

Such is the power of Black's looming attack that she might already be adjudged to have a winning position.

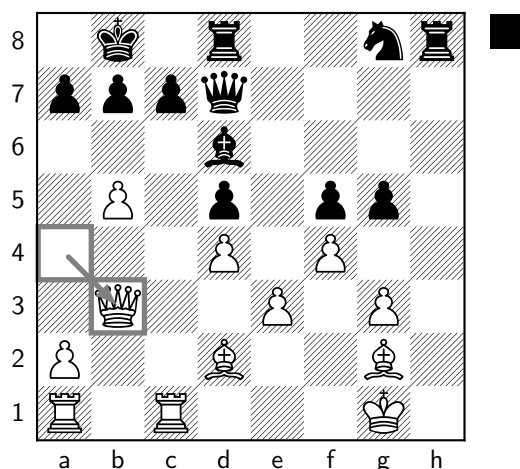
20 f4

A radical way to stop the ...f5-f4-pawn thrust.

20... ♖g8!

The knight moves out of the way of the queen to allow her to go to h7 to lead the attack down the h-file. At the same time the horse heads for e4, a marvellous outpost in the centre created by White's previous move.

21 ♖b3



21 ♕x d5 ♖f6 22 ♕g2 gxf4 23 exf4 ♖dg8 24 ♕e1 ♖e4

21... ♖f6 22 f xg5

Seeing no long-term answer to her opponent's build-up Sharevich tries to counterattack which leads to a speedy collapse.

22... ♖e4

The knight finds a commanding square after a journey from b8 via c6, e7, g8 and f6.

23 ♕e1 ♖h7 24 ♖xd5 ♕xg3 25 ♖e6 ♖xg5

Now the horse removes the last pawn barrier on the kingside.

26 ♖c4 ♕xe1 27 ♖xe1 ♖e4 28 ♖c2 ♖dg8

29 ♖ac1 ♖h1#

0-1

White: Veinberg, N.

24: Jerusalem

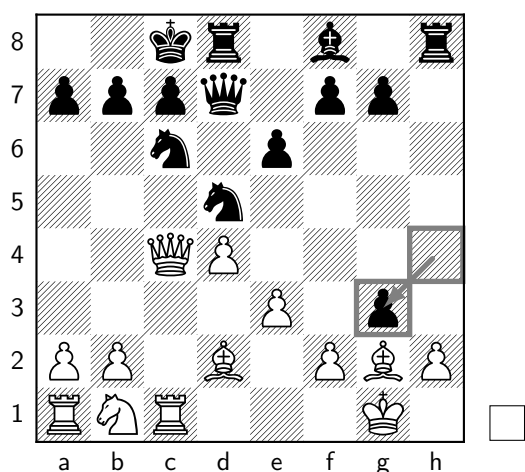
Black: Baron, T.

Opening ECO: E04

2016

Result: 0-1

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♗f6 4 g3 dxc4 5 ♕g2
♜d7 6 ♗e5 ♜c6 7 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 8 O-O ♖d7 9
e3 O-O-O 10 ♖a4 ♗d5 11 ♖xc4 h5 12 ♜d2
h4 13 ♖c1 hxg3

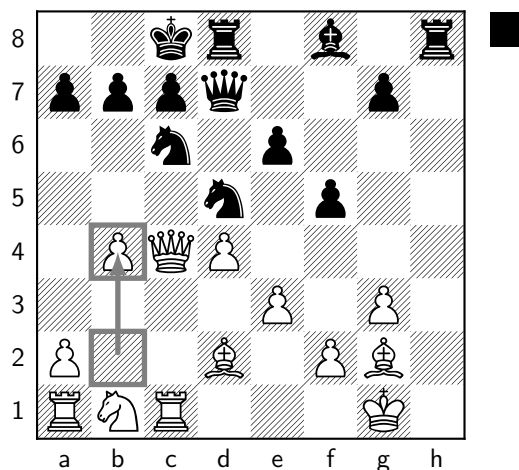


13...f5 14 b4 hxg3 15 hxg3

14 hxg3 f5 15 b4

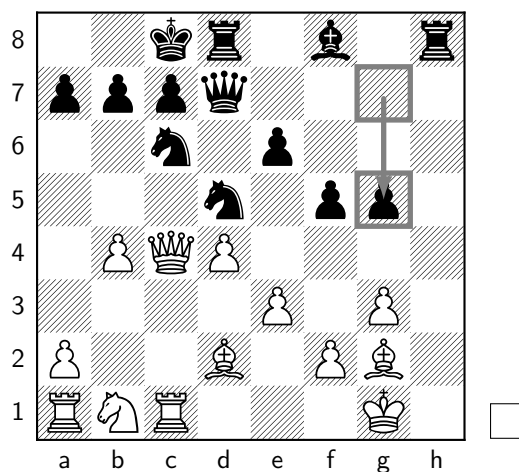
EXERCISE: Here Black has four ways of handling the position. What do you think is best? (a) Eliminate the pawn on b4 before it can advance further with 15...Ncxb4; (b)

Look for counterplay immediately with 15...g5; (c) Consolidate his queenside with 15...Kb8; (d) Develop with 15...Bd6.



15 ♗c3

15...g5!
ANSWER!



15... ♗cxb4 16 a3 ♗c6 17 ♖b3 ♗b8 18
♗c3 ♗ce7 19 ♖ab1 b6 20 a4

15... ♜d6 16 b5 ♗ce7 17 a4

15... ♗b8? 16 b5 ♗ce7 17 a4 ♗c8 18 ♖b3
♗d6 19 ♗c3 ♗xc3 20 ♜xc3 ♗e4 21 a5 ♖d5

22 ♖b2 ♕d6 23 b6 ♜h6 24 ♕b4 ♜dh8 25
 ♕x d6 ♜h2 26 ♕xc7+ ♖a8 27 ♖a2

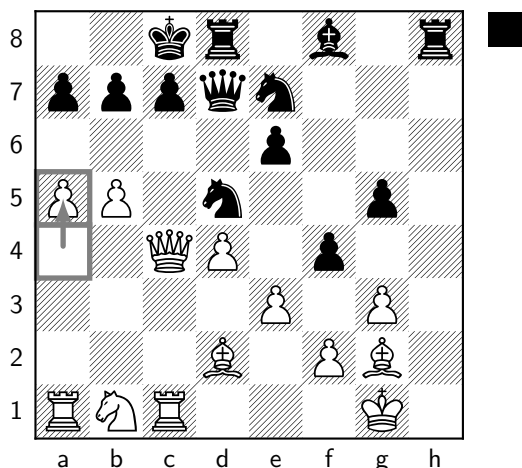
16 b5 ♘ce7 17 a4 f4!

In a battle between advancing pawn fronts every tempo is crucial. Baron strikes at e3 to deflect White from his queenside assault. If he had spent a move on 15...Kb8 he wouldn't have been in time to hit White with this counterstroke. — Whatever the verdict of the computer programs, Black is having the fun here in a game between humans. He gets to aim his pieces at a white king who is rapidly denuded of pawn cover, while his own monarch can seek sanctuary on d7 in key lines given below.

White will have a nominal material advantage, but his rook on a1 and knight on b1 don't contribute much to the struggle.

18 a5?

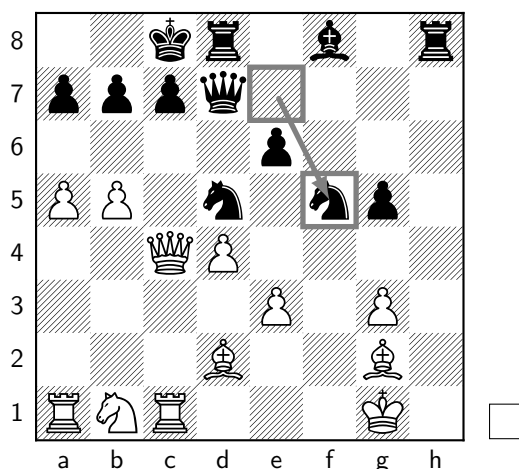
In a straight race between attacks White will prove second best.



18 e4?! f×g3! 19 e×d5 e×d5 20 ♖d3 g×f2+
 21 ♖f1 ♘f5

18 g×f4! g×f4 19 e4 ♜g8! 20 ♖f1! ♘b6 21
 ♖c2 ♜×g2!? 22 ♖×g2 e5 23 ♖c3 ♘g6 24
 a5? ♖g4+ 25 ♖f1 ♘a8

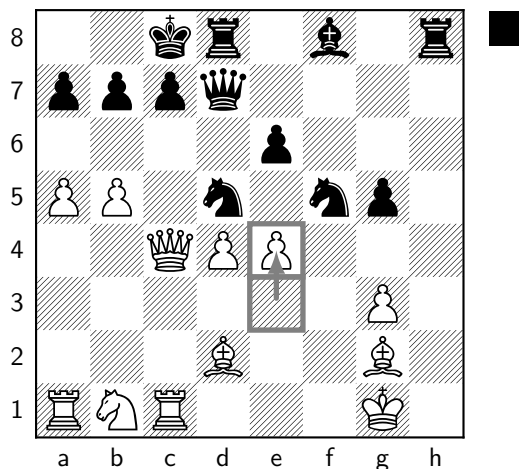
18...f×g3 19 f×g3 ♘f5!?



19... ♖d6! 20 b6 ♖×g3 21 b×a7 ♖d7!

20 e4?

It's no surprise White crumbles quickly.

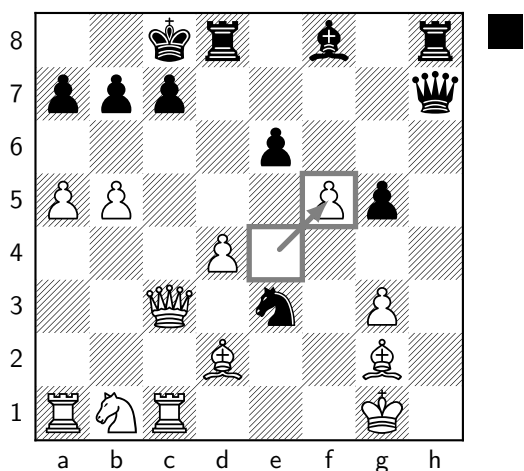


20 b6 ♖h7 21 ♖f2 ♕d6! 22 b×a7 ♖d7!

20... ♘de3 21 ♖c3 ♖h7!

The open lines are fatal to the white king.

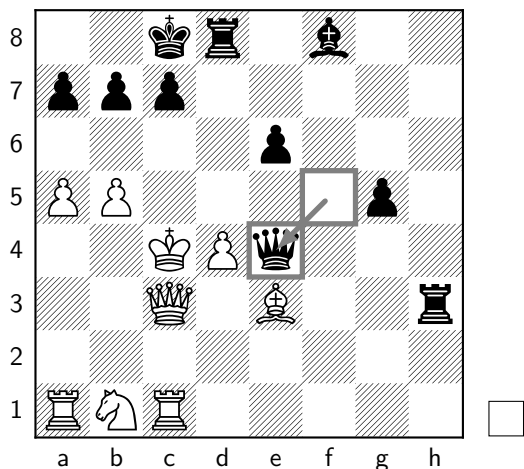
22 e×f5



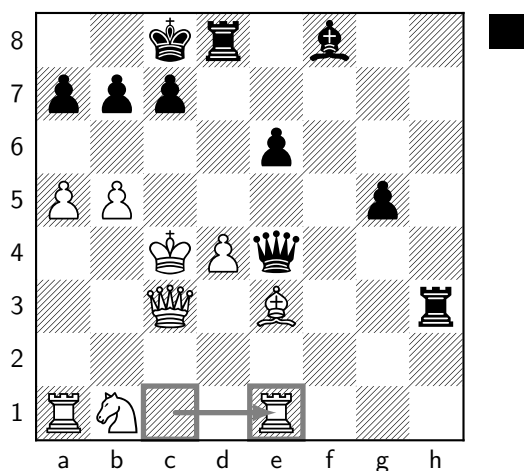
22 ♖×e3 ♖h2+ 23 ♔f1 ♖×g3+ 24 ♔e1
 ♖b4! 25 ♖×b4 ♖×g2
 22... ♖h2+

Frustratingly for Veinberg his king will be
 chased all the way to c4, without a
 moment's respite to carry out his threat of
 mate on c7.

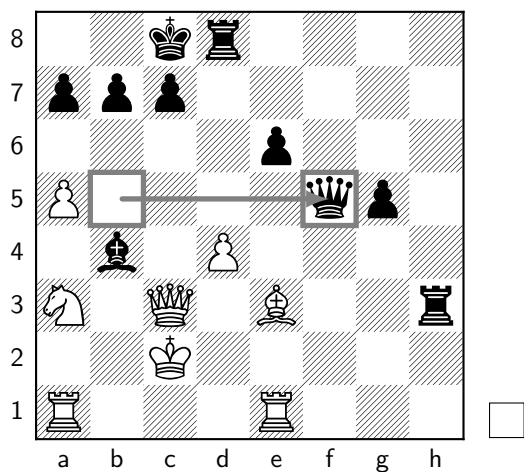
23 ♔f2 ♖×g2+ 24 ♔×e3 ♖×g3+ 25 ♔e2
 ♖g4+ 26 ♔d3 ♖×f5+ 27 ♔c4 ♖h3 28 ♖e3
 ♖e4



28... ♖e5! 29 ♔b3 ♖f7+ 30 ♖c4 ♖×e3+ 31
 ♔b2 ♖×c4 32 ♖×c4 exd4
 29 ♖e1



29 ♖d2 ♖×e3 30 ♖×e3 ♖×e3 31 ♖e1
 29... ♖d5+ 30 ♔d3 ♖×b5+ 31 ♔c2 ♖b4 32
 ♖a3 ♖f5+



32... ♖f5+ 33 ♖d3 ♖h2+
 0-1

White: Ulibin, M.

25: Biel

Black: Brkic, A.

Opening ECO: E04

2015

Result: 1/2-1/2

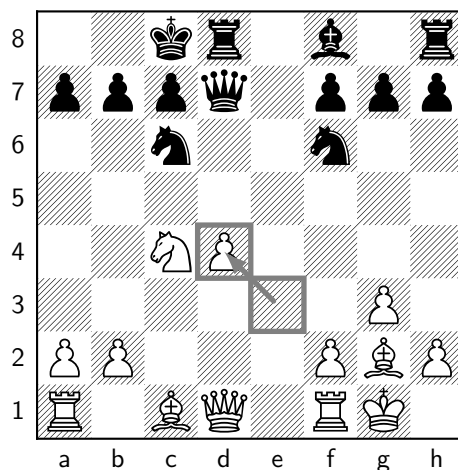
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♙g2 dxc4 5 ♘f3
♙d7 6 ♘e5 ♙c6 7 ♘xc6 ♘xc6 8 O-O ♙d7 9
e3 O-O-O 10 ♘d2!

An important alternative to 10 Qa4 in the
games above. The knight will be much
better posted on c4 than on c3. —

EXERCISE: Do you think Black should
persevere with the idea of attacking on the
kingside with 10...h5 in the style of the
games above, or should he try 10...e5 to
counterattack in the centre? — ANSWER:

10...e5!

This seems a necessary change of plan.

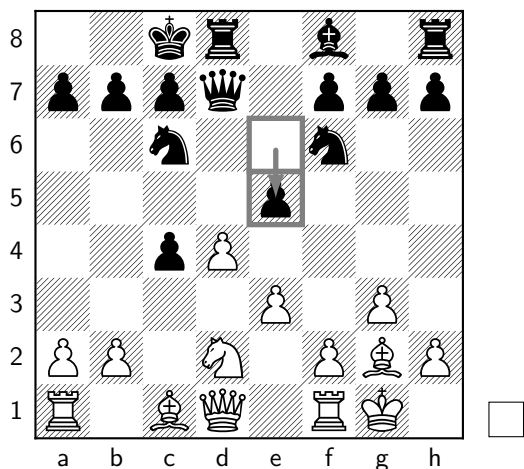


12 ♙a4

12 ♙b3

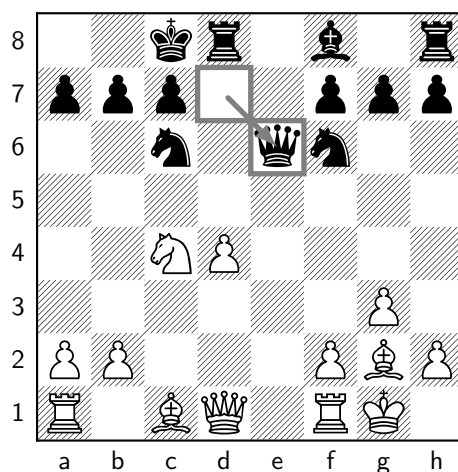
12... ♙e6!

QUESTION: Why is this a better move than
capturing the pawn on d4 straightaway?



**10...h5 11 ♘xc4 ♘d5 12 ♙d2 h4 13 b4!
h×g3 14 h×g3 ♙×b4 15 ♙×b4 ♘d×b4 16
♙b3 ♙h5 17 ♙ab1 ♙dh8 18 ♘e5! ♘×e5 19
♙×b4 ♘g4 20 ♙×b7+ ♙d8 21 ♙fc1 ♙d6
22 ♙c6 ♙d7 23 ♙bc1 e5 24 ♙×c7**

11 ♘xc4 exd4 12 exd4?!



12... ♘d4 13 ♙e3

12... ♙×d4 13 ♙a4

13 ♔a4

The white queen runs from danger on the d-file whilst defending her knight and putting pressure on the queenside.

13... ♖×d4

Black wins a pawn whilst pinning the white knight.

14 b3

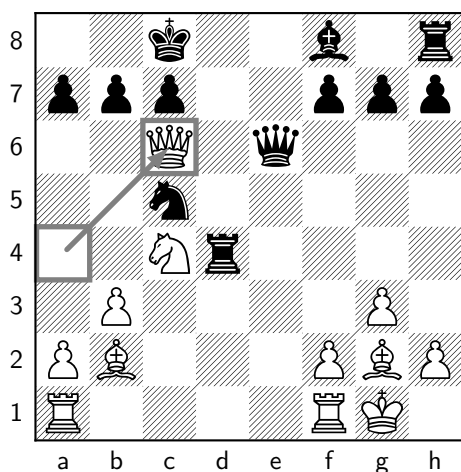
White threatens not only 15 Bxc6 followed by capturing on a7, but also the simple 15 Be3 when he drives back the black rook and coordinates his pieces. This would leave Black facing a massive attack on his king, but Brkic can seize the chance to play in the centre.

14... ♞e4!

EXERCISE: The knight blocks the attack on c6 and introduces a strong tactical threat.

Can you see it? — ANSWER: The threat was 15...Nc3 trapping the white queen. The game move stops it whilst hitting the black rook. Nonetheless the white queen is still short of squares.

15 ♖b2 ♞c5! 16 ♔×c6!



16 ♔a3 ♞d3 17 ♔a4 ♞×b2

16 ♔b5 a6 17 ♔×c6 b×c6

16... b×c6 17 ♖×d4 ♞e4

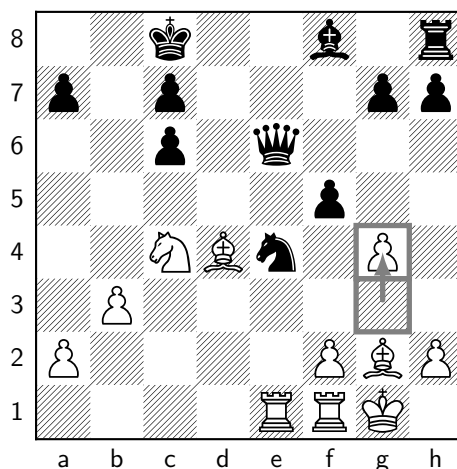
EXERCISE: Evaluate the position! What do you think of White's queen sacrifice? —

ANSWER: The knight has returned to e4 to block in the bishop on g2 and put a barrier against a white rook on e1 - not that it is a very secure barrier, as we shall see. — If a positional queen sacrifice for a rook and bishop is going to work then the giver needs a safe king and a solid pawn structure. Above all, the opponent mustn't have a strong passed pawn, which doesn't apply here. So on the whole White is looking at least okay. The problem will appear when in order to get rid of the knight on e4 he is obliged to compromise his kingside, after which his king becomes a strategic factor - not what you want when your opponent has an unopposed queen.

So the verdict seems to be White has sufficient compensation for the queen, but not more.

18 ♖ae1 f5 19 g4

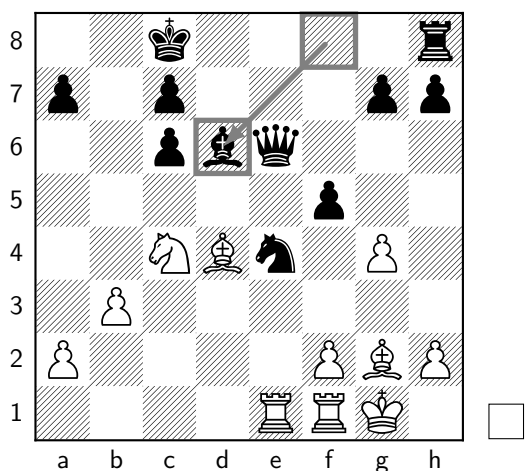
With the laudable aim of eliminating the defender of the knight, but White is taking liberties with his kingside.



19 f3 ♔d5! 20 f×e4 ♔×d4+ 21 ♔h1 ♖b4 22 ♖d1 ♔c3 23 ♖c1 ♔d4 24 ♖cd1 ♔c3 25 ♖c1 ♔d4 26 ♖cd1

19... ♖d6!?

Aiming straight at h2.



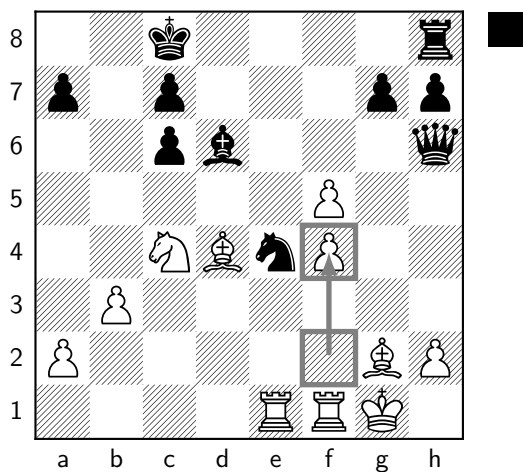
19... ♕d5

19... ♕d7

20 gxf5 ♖h6

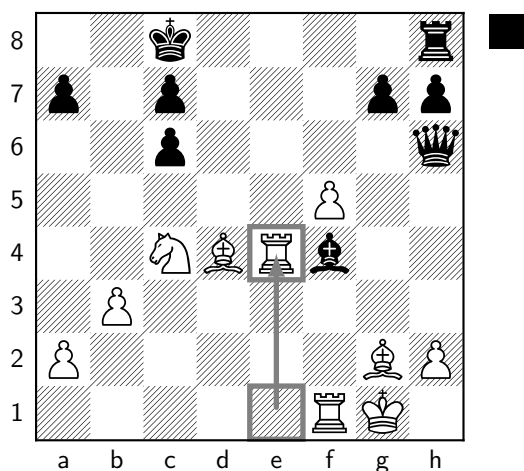
The threat of mate saves the black knight.

21 f4



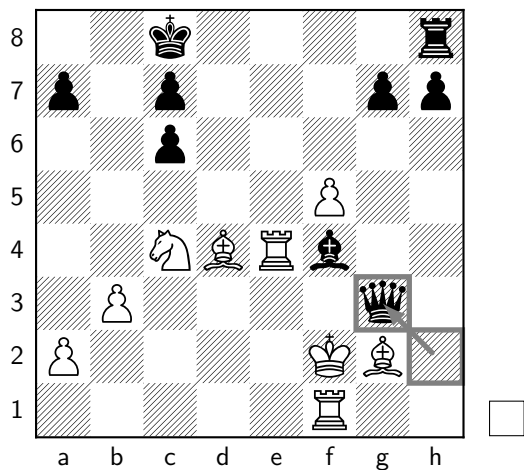
21 ♖xd6+ ♖xd6 22 ♖c1 ♖xf5 23 ♖xc6
 ♖f4 24 ♖xa7 ♖h4 25 ♖fc1 ♖xg2 26 ♖1c4
 ♖e5 27 ♖d4 ♖h5 28 ♖xc7+ ♖b8 29 ♖xg2
 ♖g4+ 30 ♖f1 ♖d1+ 31 ♖g2 ♖g4+

21... ♖xf4 22 ♖xe4



22 ♖xf4 ♖xf4 23 ♖xe4 ♖c1+ 24 ♖f2 ♖f8
 25 ♖e3 ♖f7

22... ♖xh2+ 23 ♖f2 ♖g3+
 Black calls it a draw too soon.



23... ♖f8! 24 ♖g1

24 ♖g1 ♖h2+ 25 ♖f2 ♖g3+
 1/2-1/2

White: Postny, E.

Black: Nakar, E.

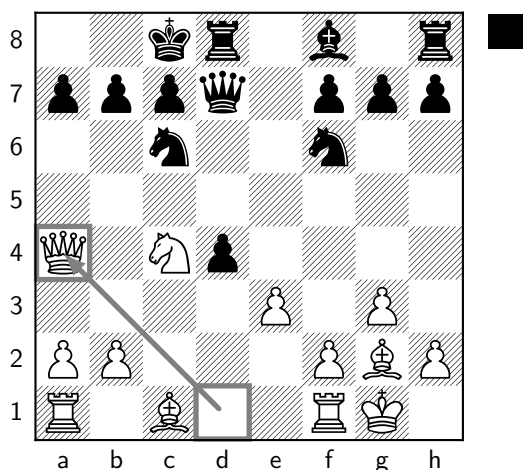
Opening ECO: E04

Result: 1/2-1/2

26: European Club Cup, Skopje

2015

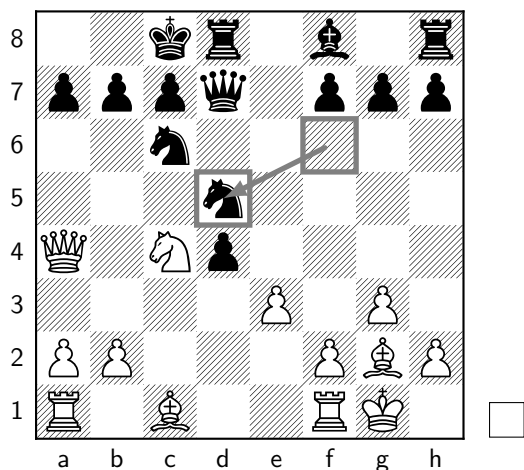
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♙g2 dxc4 5 ♘f3
♙d7 6 ♘e5 ♙c6 7 ♘xc6 ♘xc6 8 O-O ♙d7 9
e3 O-O-O 10 ♘d2 e5 11 ♘xc4 exd4 12 ♙a4



12 exd4 ♙e6!

12 ♙b3!? ♘d5! 13 ♙d2!? ♙c5!? 14 ♖ac1
dxe3!? 15 ♘xe3 ♙xe3 16 ♙xe3 ♙e6 17
♙xa7!? ♘xa7 18 ♖fe1 ♙f5 19 ♖c5 c6 20
♙xd5 ♖xd5 21 ♖e7 ♙b1+ 22 ♙g2 ♖d7 23
♖xd7 ♙e4+ 24 ♙h3 ♙xd7 25 ♙xb7+ ♙d6
26 ♙xa7 ♙e6+ 27 ♙g2 ♙e4+ 28 ♙h3

12... ♘d5



12...dxe3? 13 ♙xe3

12...h5 13 b4! ♙b8 14 b5 ♘b4 15 exd4 h4
16 ♘e5

12...d3 13 b4! ♘xb4 14 ♙xa7

13 exd4 ♙b8

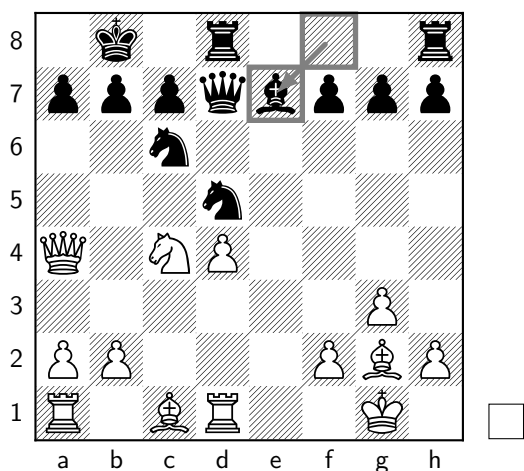
Of course, a7 drops after 13...Nxd4.

14 ♖d1

A simple move to consolidate the centre before the next wave of attack is launched on the queenside. Black has been unable to disrupt White's build-up by a counterattack along the d-file.

14... ♙e7?

A rather routine move. The bishop takes away the e7-square from the knight on c6, from which it could help defend the vital d5-square. — EXERCISE: How should White now set about removing the barrier to his attack on d5?

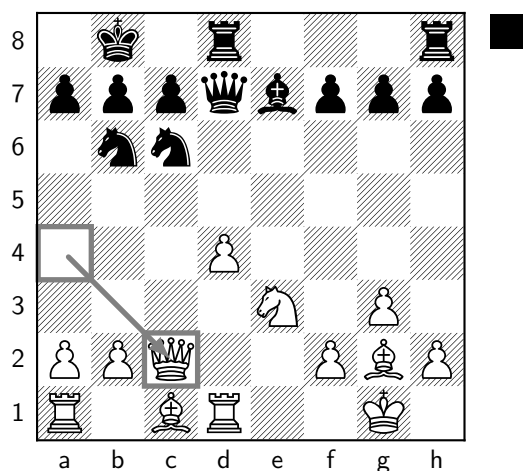


14...h5 15 h4

14...f6 15 ♖b3 ♘ce7 16 ♙d2 h5 17 h4 c6
18 ♜ac1 g6

15 ♘e3?

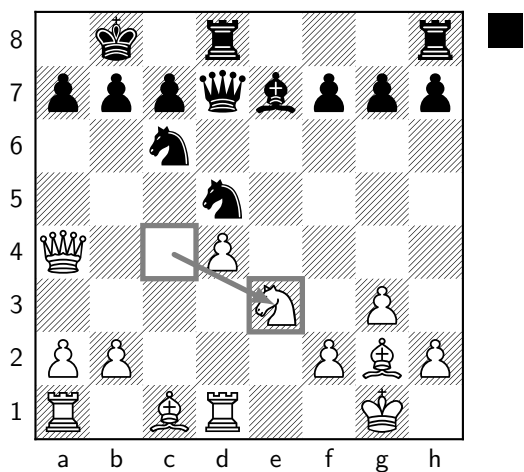
An obvious bid to evict the knight from d5,
but it lets Black gain counterplay in the
centre after all.



16 ♙xc6 ♘xa4 17 ♙xd7 ♜xd7

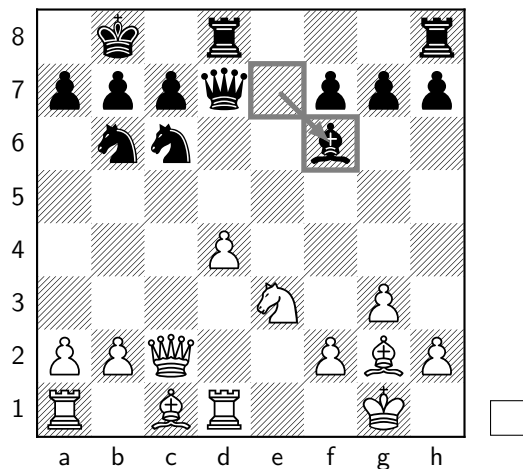
16...♙f6?

Black wants to put his knight on d4 and so
prepares to support it with the bishop. He
is happy to entice White's pawn to d5
where it blocks an attack on b7 by the
Catalan bishop.



15 ♖b3!

15...♘b6 16 ♖c2



16...♙xc6 ♘xa4 17 ♙xd7 ♜xd7
16...♙f6?

17 d5

As we shall see in the game, White's pawn
at d5 proves a powerful support of his
queenside attack rather than a hindrance.
It also takes away retreat squares from the
knight on d4.

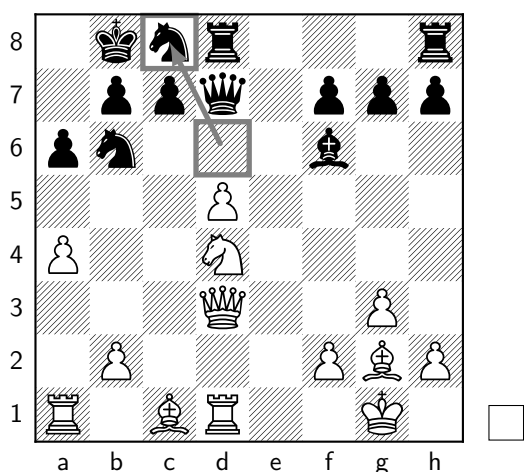
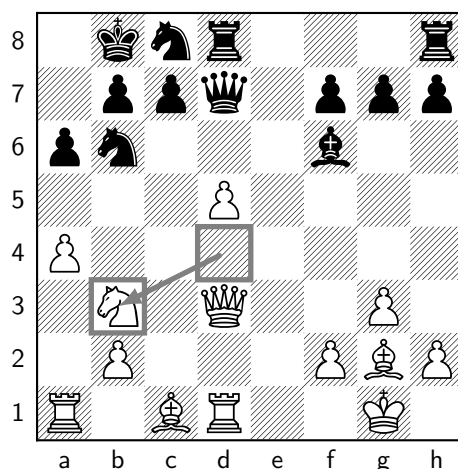
17... ♖d4 18 ♔d3 a6

Evidently Black was afraid of his knight on d4 being surrounded by a move like a2-a4 and then attacked with Bd2 and Bc3 without having a safe flight square. And so he prepares to retreat it to b5.

19 ♖c2 ♗b5 20 a4 ♖d6 21 ♖d4 ♖dc8?

It is baffling why Black would withdraw the horse from its excellent blockade square.

— EXERCISE: Can you see a way to immediately exploit Black's disastrous decision?



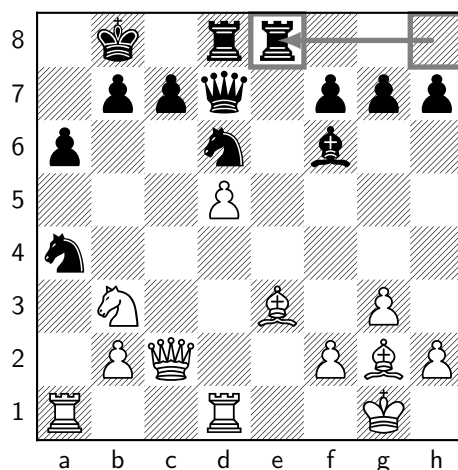
21... ♖he8 22 a5 ♖bc4

22 ♖b3?

Postny builds up his game confident that his initiative will eventually lead to a strong attack.

22 ♖c6+! bxc6 23 ♔xa6 ♖xd5 24 ♗xd5 cxd5 25 ♖d3 ♖b6 26 ♗f4

22... ♖xa4 23 ♔c2 ♖d6 24 ♗e3 ♖he8



24... ♖b6 25 ♖dc1

25 ♖a5 ♖b6 26 ♖c6+!

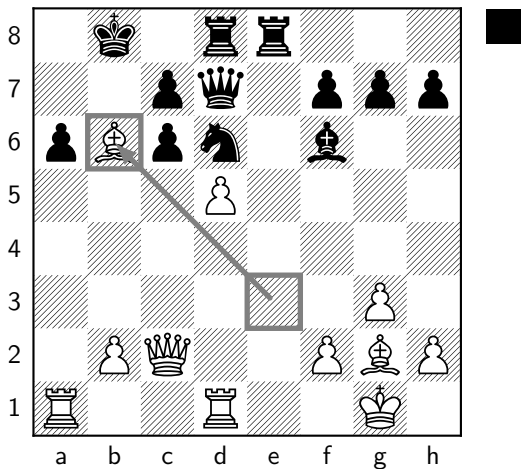
With all his pieces well placed for the attack, Postny decides it is time for a sacrifice to break up the black king's pawn wall. It involves a very neat piece of calculation.

26... bxc6

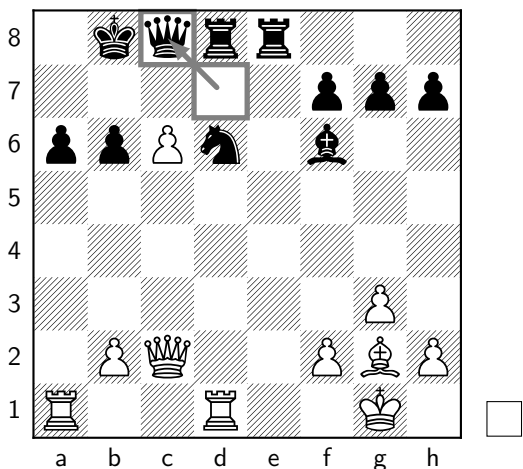
EXERCISE: As a test of your analytical powers, you might like to see if you can work your way through to a queen and

opposite-colour bishop endgame where White is winning despite equal material.

27 ♖xb6
The only move.



27 ♖xa6 ♖xe3!
27 dxc6 ♕f5!
27...cxb6 28 dxc6 ♕c8

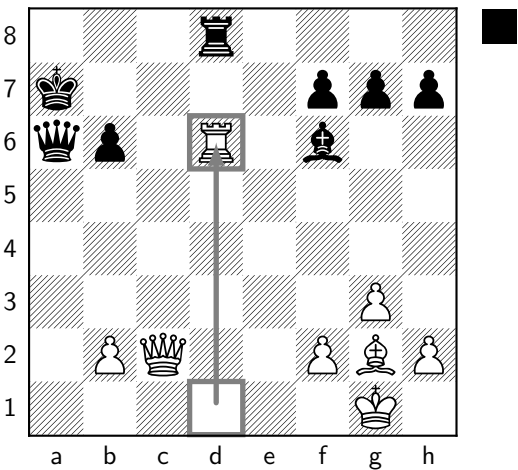


28... ♕a7
29 ♖xa6!

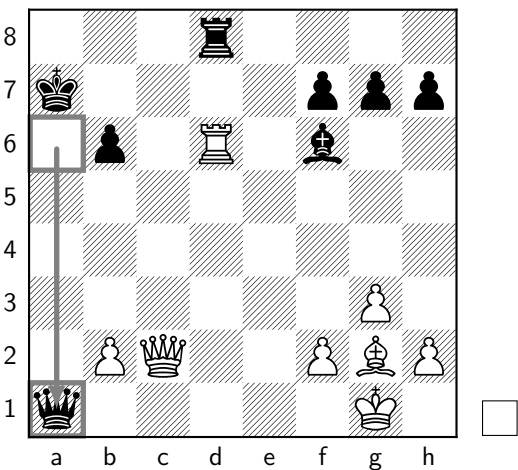
Again the only move for White. One of the many threats is 30 c7+ Qxc7 31 Ra8 mate.

29... ♕xa6 30 c7+ ♖a7 31 cxd8 ♕ ♖xd8 32 ♖xd6!

A crucial move that White had to see at the start of his combination.

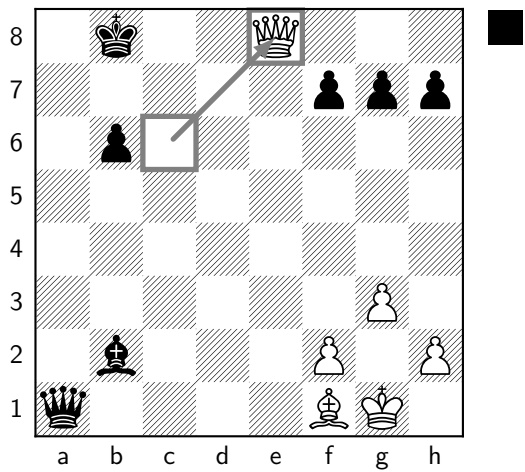


32 ♕c7+ ♖b7
32... ♕a1+



32... ♖xd6 33 ♕c7+
33 ♖f1 ♖xd6 34 ♕c7+ ♖a8 35 ♕xd6 ♖xb2
It might appear that Black has escaped the worst, but in fact his terrible king position leads to a loss of a couple of pawns.

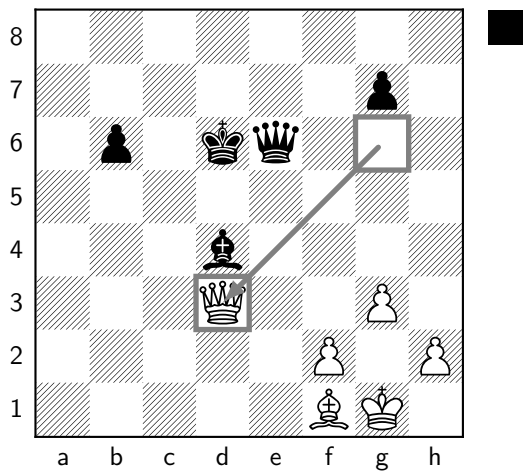
36 ♕c6+ ♖b8 37 ♕e8+



37 ♔×b6+

37... ♔c7 38 ♔×f7+ ♔d6 39 ♔f8+ ♔c7 40
 ♔e7+ ♔c8 41 ♔e6+ ♔c7 42 ♔c4+ ♔d6 43
 ♔d3+ ♔d4 44 ♔×h7 ♔e1 45 ♔g6+ ♔e6
 46 ♔d3

And draw agreed (j-j) according to the
 database.



46 ♔d3 ♔f6 47 ♔d2

1/2-1/2

White: 7: The Main Line: 7 Ne5

?

Black: ?

Opening ECO: E05

Result: *

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 g3 ♙e7 5 ♙g2
O-O 6 O-O dxc4 7 ♘e5

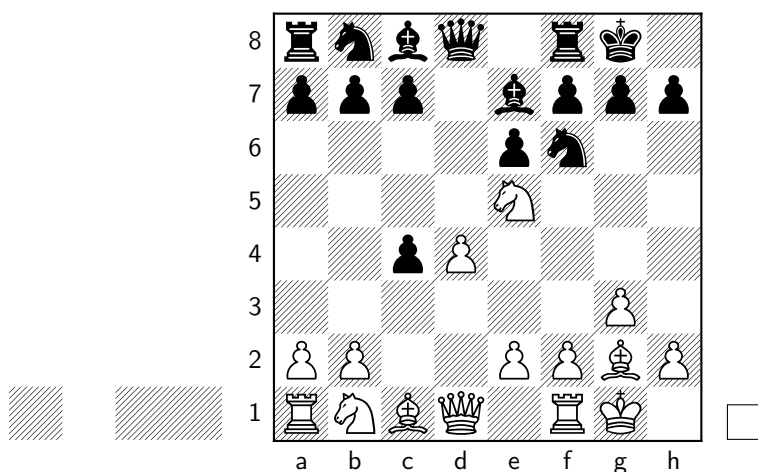
7... ♘c6! 8 ♙xc6

7...c5

*

. Instead of the usual 7 Qc2, White advances his knight. The shadow boxing is over: Black has to decide how to meet this intrusion into his half of the board. — In his book 'Common Sense In Chess', which was based on a series of lectures he gave in 1895, the great world champion Emanuel Lasker says there are three types of move: developing, which bring new forces into play; moves which increase the work rate of your own pieces; and, thirdly, moves which undo the work of the enemy pieces. — With 7 Ne5 White unleashes the bishop on g2 and puts the knight on a central square. But his main concern is with undoing the potential work of the enemy pieces by making it hard for Black to develop his bishop from c8. He also denies the black knight the chance to go to c6 except at the penalty of broken up pawns.

7...ZZ-



White: Wang Hao

27: Danzhou

Black: Hou Yifan

Opening ECO: E06

2016

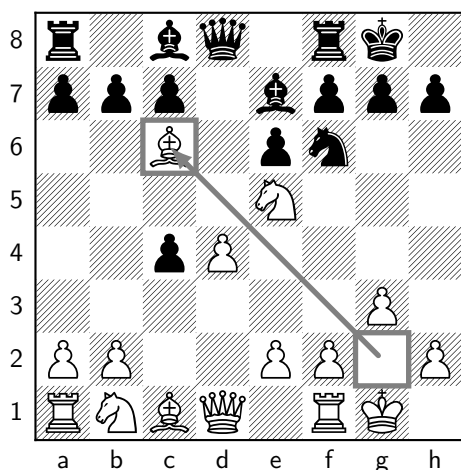
Result: 0-1

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♘f3 ♙e7 5 ♙g2
O-O 6 O-O dxc4 7 ♘e5 ♘c6!

Anyway. Black favours activity over a solid pawn structure. White has played a slow opening (g2-g3, Bg2, moving the knight twice) and so the women's number one player seeks to grab the initiative from him.

8 ♙xc6

White gets his pawn back and leaves his opponent with a broken queenside structure. Indeed, the weakness of the c4-pawn in what follows means that Black is virtually forced to gambit it, meaning that White is going to be a pawn up. On the other hand, giving up the 'Catalan' bishop is a serious concession. Black's light-squared bishop suddenly has no rival, which means that Hou Yifan will always have counterplay, despite the pawn deficit.



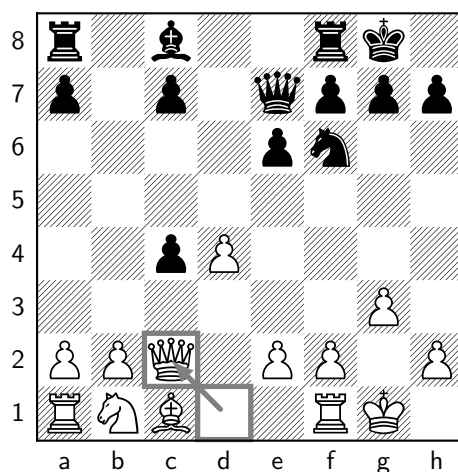
8 ♘xc6

8...bxc6 9 ♘xc6

Beginning a forcing sequence which will end with White picking up the c4-pawn.

9... ♙e8 10 ♘xe7+ ♙xe7 11 ♙c2

White puts the queen on a square where she attacks c4 and keeps e2 defended.

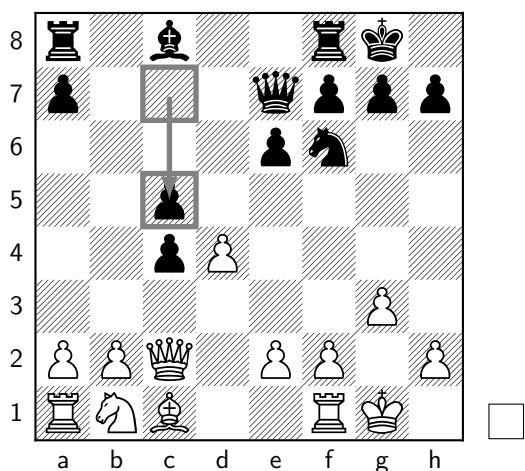


11 ♙a4

11 ♘a3 ♙d8 12 ♙c2! ♙a6! 13 ♘xc4 c5 14
dxc5 ♙xc5 15 b3 ♙xc4 16 ♙b2 ♙ac8 17
♙xf6 gxf6 18 ♙fc1 ♙e5 19 bxc4 ♙d4 20
♙ab1 ♙dxc4 21 ♙xc4 ♙xc4 22 ♙xc4 ♙xe2
23 ♙a4 a6 24 ♙g2 ♙e5 25 ♙d1 h5 26 ♙d3
♙b5 27 ♙aa3 ♙c6+ 28 ♙g1 ♙c1+ 29 ♙g2
♙c6+ 30 ♙g1 ♙c1+ 31 ♙g2

11...c5

Black jettisons c4 in order to be rid of the sickly pawn on c7 and break up White's centre.



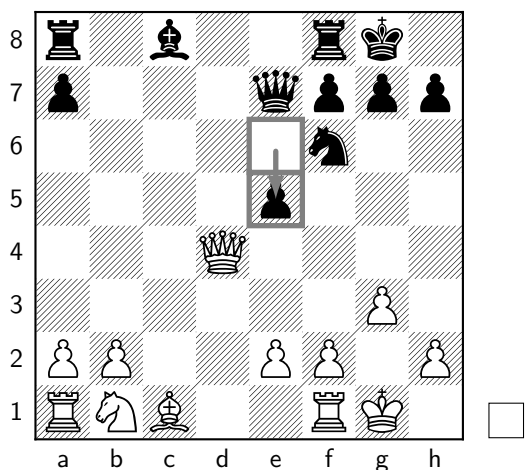
11...e5 12...d1!? 13...b7!? 14...c3 15...e6 16...dxe5 17...g4 18...f4 h6 19...e4 g5 20...h3 gxf4 21...hgxg4 f3 22...fxg3 23...f3 24...fxe5 25...g2 h5 26...gxh5?! 27...f5! 28...d5

12...xc4 cxd4 13...xd4

EXERCISE: Can you work out which of 13...Bb7, 13...Rb8 or 13...e5 is the best move for Black? — ANSWER:

13...e5!

Chess strategy is not only about putting your pieces on good squares - that is, making them work harder. You also need to think about how to undo the work of the opponent's pieces.



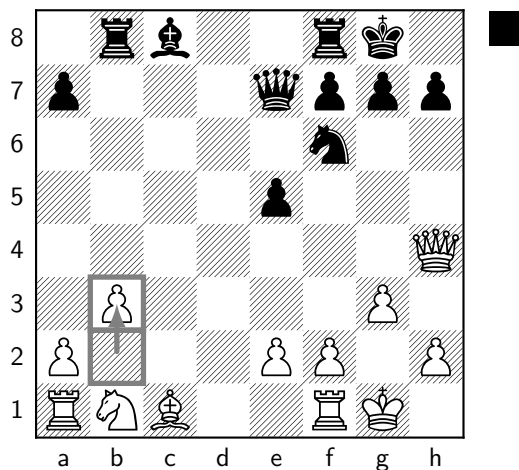
13...Bb8 14...e5! 15...b7 16...c3

13...Bb7 14...g5 15...fd8 16...h4

14...h4 Bb8

The white queen is dislodged and the black rook eyes the b2-pawn.

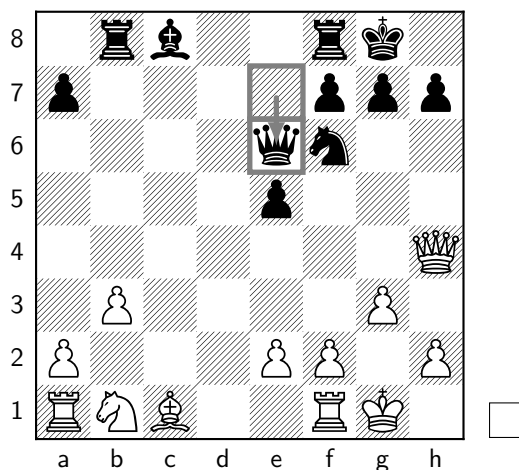
15 b3



15...c3 Bb4 16 e4 h6

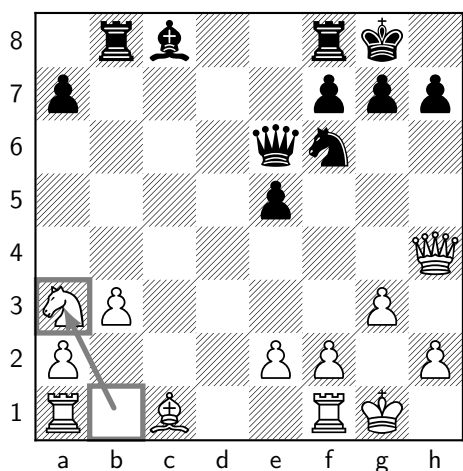
15...g5 16...xb2 17...c3 18...e6 19...e4

15...Qe6



15...Bb4 16...a3!

16...a3



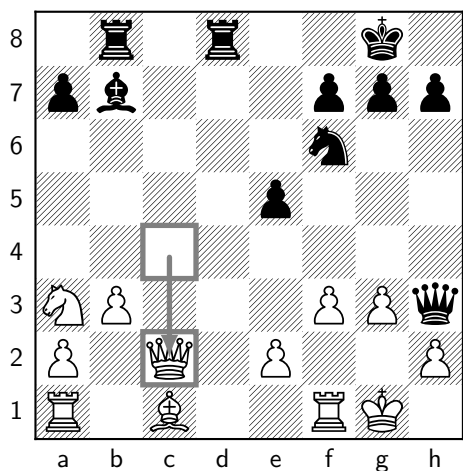
16 ♖g5 ♘d5

16...♖d8 17 ♔c4 ♔h3

The threat of 18...Ng4 forces White to weaken his king's defences.

18 f3 ♖b7 19 ♔c2?!

After this Black will get a fearsome initiative, even if objectively speaking White can still defend.



19 ♖g5

19 e4

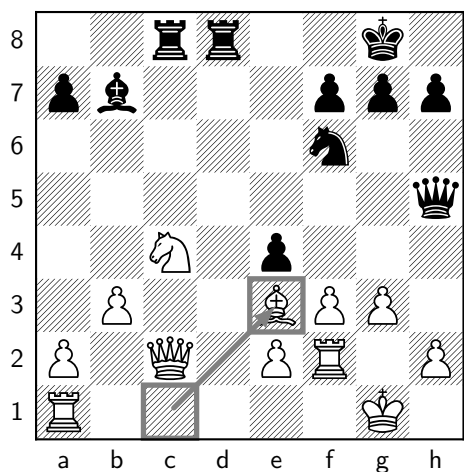
19...e4!

Using the f3-pawn as a lever for opening up the long diagonal. Black has bags of play for a mere pawn.

20 ♘c4 ♖bc8 21 ♖f2 ♔h5

EXERCISE: Try to work out if it is better for White to play 22 Bb2 or 22 Be3.

22 ♖e3?



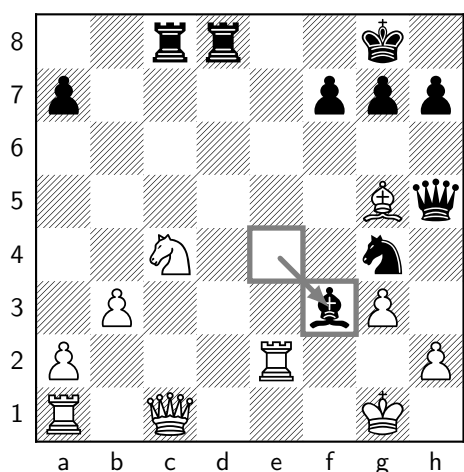
22 ♖b2! ♖a6!?

22...e×f3 23 e×f3 ♖×f3 24 ♖g5 ♖e4 25 ♔c1 ♘g4 26 ♖e2

The rook chooses e2 to stop 26...Ne5, planning 27...Nf3+, with a crushing attack.

26...♖f3

White's rook is hanging. It has to stay on the second rank to guard h2. If it goes to d2 the bishop is lost, while other safe squares allow 27...Rd1+ winning material.



26...♘f3! 27 ♘×d8 ♘×e2 28 ♘h4 ♔c5+ 29
♔g2 ♚f2+

0-1

White: Kramnik, V.
 Black: Nakamura, H.
 Opening ECO: A14
 Result: 0-1

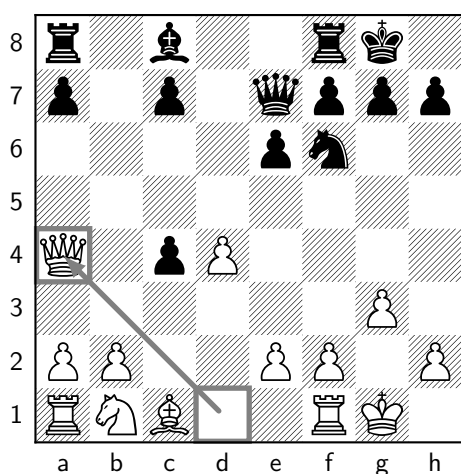
28: Paris (blitz)

2016

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 g3 d5 3 Bg2 e6 4 O-O Be7 5 c4
 O-O 6 d4 dxc4 7 Ne5

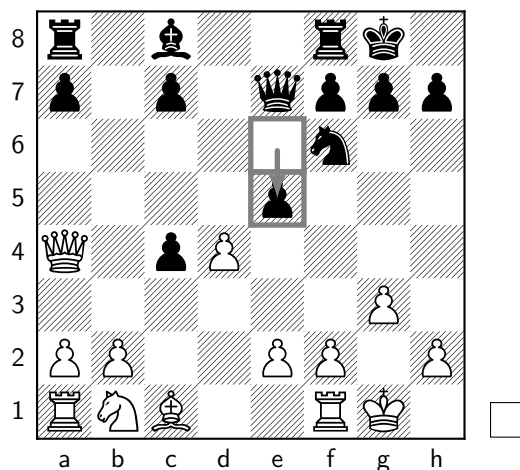
It's worth noting that if you play Kramnik's move order to get to the Catalan mainline and then choose 7 Ne5 as here, you cut out a lot of theory.

7... Nc6 8 Bxc6 bxc6 9 Nxc6 Qe8 10 Nxe7+ Qxe7 11 Qa4



11 Qc2

11...e5!

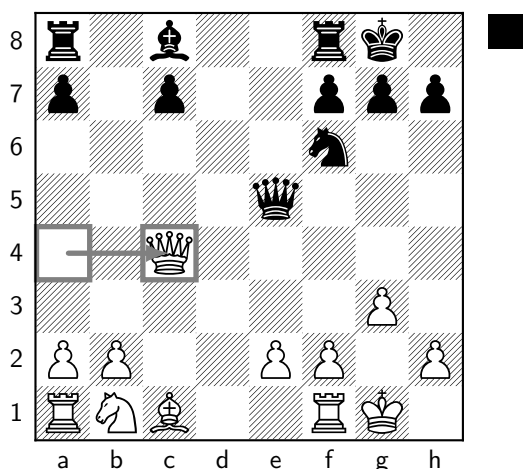


11...e5 12 Rd1? exd4

11...c5 12 Qc6 Bb7 13 Qxc5 Qxc5 14 dxc5 Rfc8 15 Be3 Ng4 16 Bd4 e5 17 Bc3 Rxc5 18 Rd1

12 dxe5 Qxe5 13 Qxc4

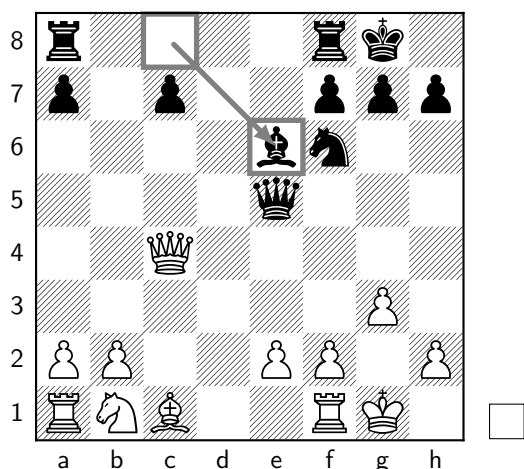
QUESTION: After the game move not only is Black down a pawn, he also has broken queenside pawns. If everything else were equal, this would surely be more than enough for an arch-strategist like Kramnik to bag the point as White. So what is Black's compensation?



13 ♖c3!? ♗e4!? 14 ♕xc4 ♘xc3 15 bxc3
 ♗e6 16 ♖d3 ♜ad8 17 ♗f4 ♕c5 18 ♕c2
 ♕c6 19 f3 ♗h3 20 ♜fd1? ♕c5+ 21 ♔h1
 ♕f2 22 ♜g1 ♜fe8 23 ♜ae1 ♗g2+! 24 ♜xg2
 ♕xe1+

13... ♗e6

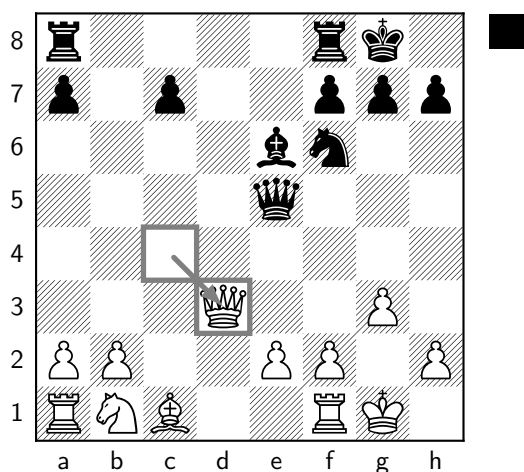
ANSWER: It is imperative for Black that he gains time by hitting the white queen. Not only the bishop, but also the black rooks can be mobilized with gain of time by harassing her. She is obliged to defend the e2-pawn and shouldn't wander too far from the kingside as her assistance is needed in thwarting any attack led by the black queen. This explains her tortuous manoeuvres. On the other hand, the prize is worth a lot of suffering. If White can escape the pressure then he has enough material advantage to win the game.



13... ♗b7 14 ♖c3

13... ♗h3 14 ♜e1

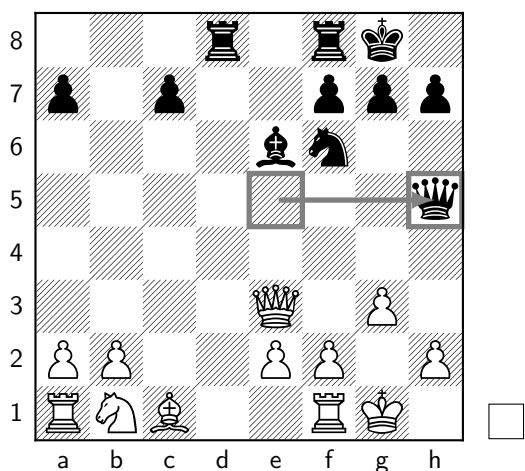
14 ♕d3



14 ♕c2 ♗f5 15 ♕d2 ♗h3 16 ♜e1 ♜ad8 17
 ♕e3 ♕d5 18 f3 ♘g4 19 ♕c3 ♜fe8 20 ♖a3
 ♕b7 21 ♗f4 ♕b6+ 22 e3 ♕b7 23 e4 ♕b6+
 24 ♗e3 ♘xe3 25 ♜xe3 ♗e6 26 ♔g2 ♜d4 27
 ♜e2 ♜ed8

14... ♜ad8 15 ♕e3 ♕h5

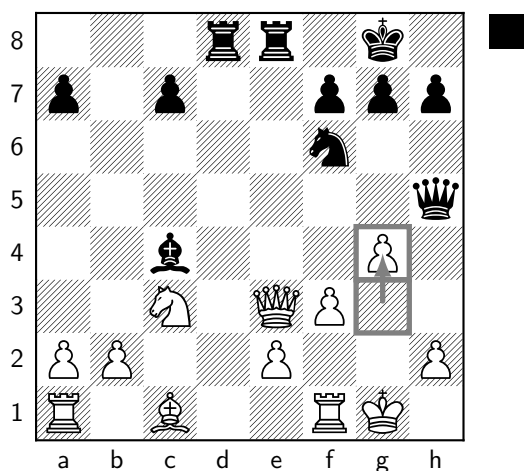
Of course, the exchange of queens is anathema for Black. Now White meets the threat of 16... ♗Ng4, which would win at once, and creates a hideaway for his queen on f2.



15... ♔a5 16 ♔a3 ♔h5 17 ♘c3

16 f3 ♘c4

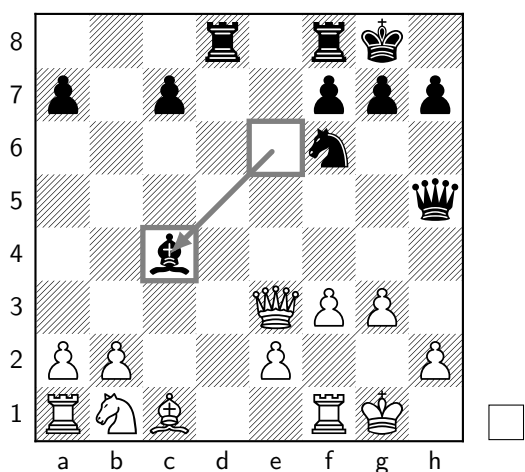
Black wastes no time in aiming at e2, the weakest square in White's centre.



18 ♔g5 ♔h3

18 ♔f2 ♘d5 19 ♔e1

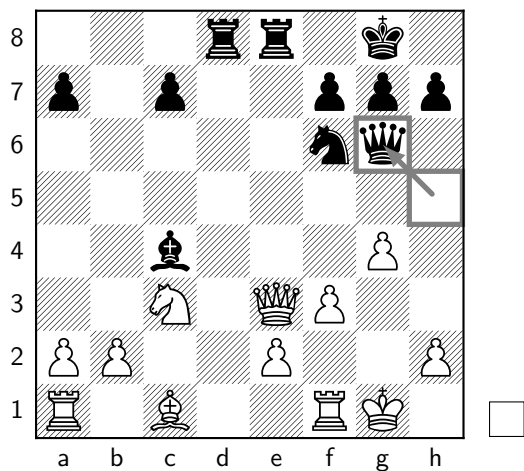
18... ♔g6!



16... ♔fe8 17 ♔g5 ♔h3 18 ♔c5 ♘d5 19 e4
♘xe4 20 fxe4 ♘xe4 21 ♔f2

17 ♘c3 ♔fe8 18 g4!

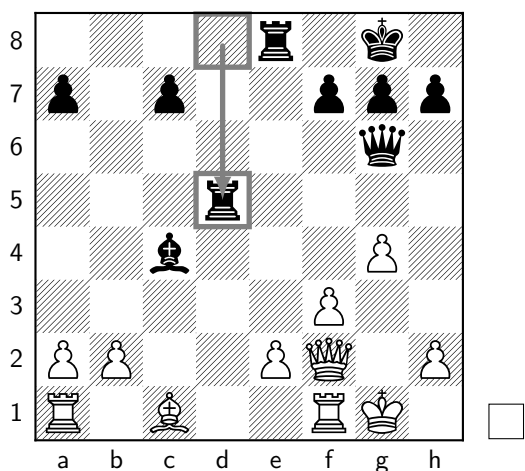
QUESTION: This seems subtle! Why did Kramnik prefer this to moving his queen to g5 or f2?



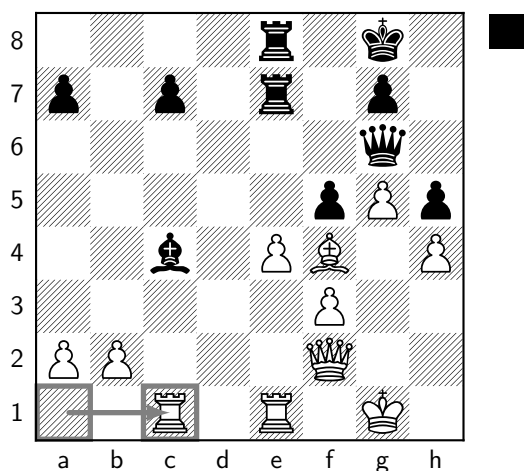
18... ♔h3 19 ♔f2 ♘d5 20 ♘e4! f5

18... ♔xe3 19 g×h5 ♔e6 20 ♔f2

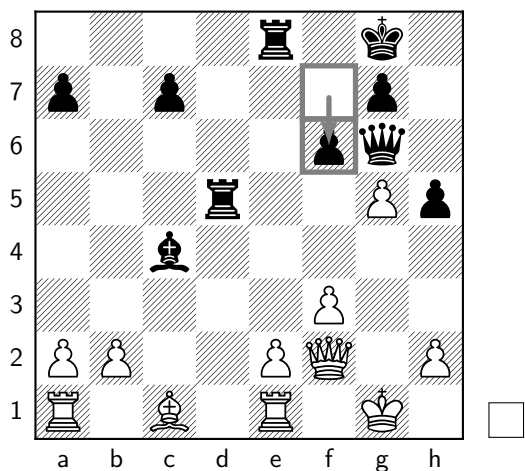
19 ♔f2 ♘d5 20 ♘×d5 ♔×d5



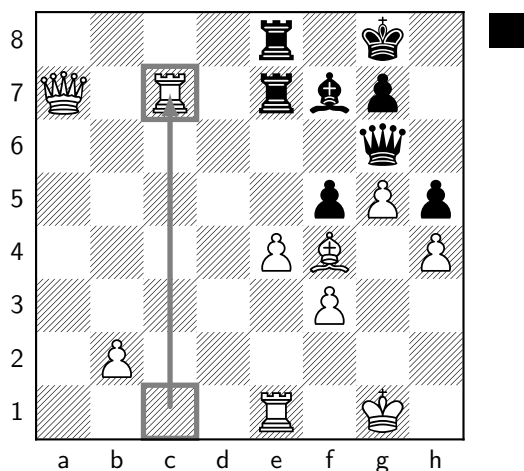
20... ♖xe2 21 ♔xe2! ♙xe2 22 ♘e7+
21 ♖e1 h5 22 g5 f6?



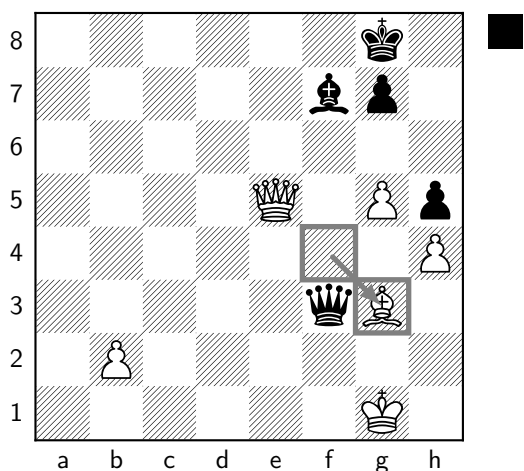
26 b3 ♙f7 27 e5
26... ♙xa2 27 ♔xa7 ♙f7 28 ♖xc7



22... ♙xe2! 23 ♖xe2 ♖d1+ 24 ♔g2 ♖xe2 25
♔xe2 ♖xc1! 26 ♖xc1 ♔xg5+
23 h4 ♖de5 24 e4 f5 25 ♙f4 ♖5e7 26 ♖ac1
A blitz game inaccuracy.



28 e5
28... ♖xc7 29 ♔xc7 fxe4 30 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 31
fxe4 ♔xe4
Black has broken out and has enough for a
draw due to the exposed white king.
32 ♔e5 ♔f3 33 ♙g3??
Don't judge Kramnik on this howler played
in a blitz game.



33 ♙e3

33... ♙d5

Suddenly there is no good way to stop mate on g2.

**34 ♙e8+ ♙h7 35 g6+ ♙h6 36 ♙h8+ ♙×g6
37 ♙e8+ ♙h7**

. White's attempt at a perpetual has fizzled out.

0-1

White: So, W.

29: Saint Louis

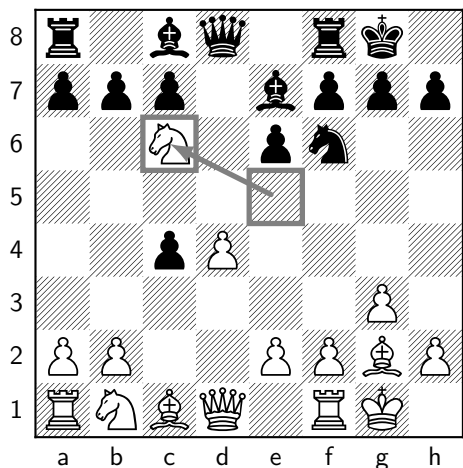
Black: Nakamura, H.

Opening ECO: E05

2016

Result: 1-0

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 g3 ♙e7 5 ♙g2
O-O 6 O-O dxc4 7 ♘e5 ♘c6 8 ♘xc6

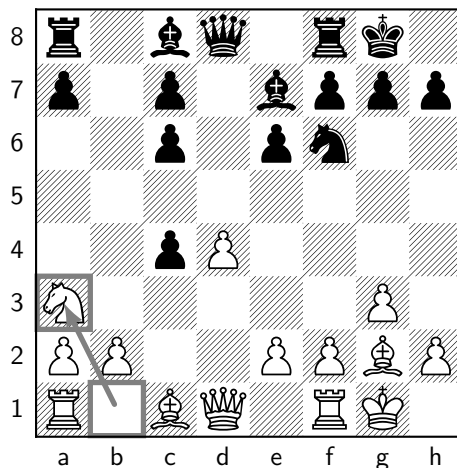


8 ♙xc6

8... bxc6

EXERCISE: Black's queenside pawn structure is now wrecked, with tripled pawns along the c-file. Assuming he hasn't gone mad, can you think of some reasons why Nakamura would let his opponent smash up his queenside?

9 ♘a3!?



9 ♙xc6 ♖b8 10 ♘c3 ♙b7 11 ♙xb7 ♖xb7 12
e4 c5 13 dxc5 ♕xd1 14 ♖xd1 ♙xc5 15 ♖g2
e5! 16 ♖d2 ♙d4 17 ♖c2 ♖fb8

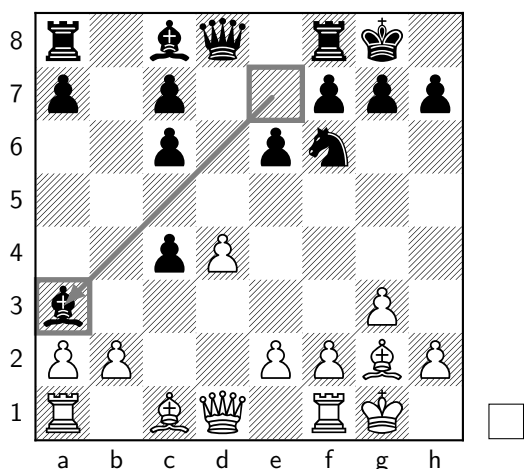
9 ♕a4 ♕xd4 10 ♖d1 ♕b6 11 ♙e3 ♕a6 12
♕xc6 ♕xc6 13 ♙xc6 ♖b8 14 ♙xa7 ♖xb2

9 e3 ♙a6 10 ♙xc6 ♖b8 11 ♘c3 ♘d5! 12
♘xd5 exd5 13 ♕f3 ♙b7 14 ♙xb7 ♖xb7 15
b3 c3!? 16 e4 dxe4 17 ♕xe4 c6! 18 ♕xc6
♖c7 19 ♕e4 ♙d6 20 ♙f4 ♖e8 21 ♕f3 c2

9... ♙xa3

QUESTION: Why does Black give up his excellent dark-squared bishop? —

ANSWER: In some positions even a powerful bishop has to be exchanged for a galloping horse. If White is allowed to play 10 Nxc4 unopposed the knight could then go to e5 or a5 to conquer c6. White would have a crushing game.

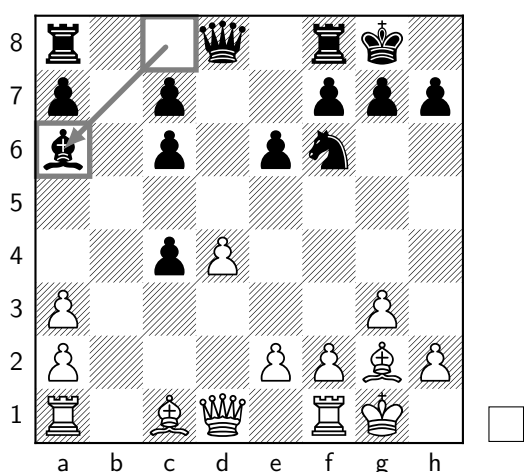


9... ♖b8 10 ♘xc4 c5 11 ♘a5 ♙d7 12 dxc5
 ♙xc5 13 ♘b7 ♚e7 14 ♘xc5 ♚xc5 15 ♙e3

9... ♙a6 10 ♚a4 ♚c8 11 ♘xc4

10 bxa3 ♙a6

Black develops his bishop to an active square and defends the pawn that matters - the passed pawn. He doesn't have to worry about jettisoning the c6-pawn as after 11 Bxc6 Rb8 he will generate a lot of play with ...Nd5, etc, in the style of the Seirawan and Kravtsiv extracts above. —
 EXERCISE: After 10...Ba6 what is White's best way to get his queen into the attack?



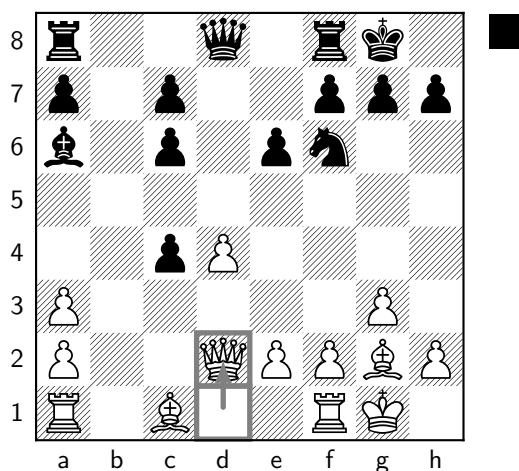
10... ♖b8 11 ♚a4 ♚xd4 12 ♙e3 ♚e5 13
 ♚xc4

10... ♘d5 11 ♚a4 ♘c3 12 ♚c2 ♘b5 13 e3
 ♘d6 14 a4!?

10... a5 11 ♙xc6 ♖b8 12 ♚c2 ♙a6 13 ♖d1
 ♘d5 14 e4 ♘e7 15 ♙a4 f5? 16 d5! exd5 17
 exd5 ♘xd5? 18 ♙c6

11 ♚d2!

ANSWER: With this move White intends to put his queen in the thick of the queenside attack on a5, whilst temporarily keeping d4 defended.



11 ♚a4 ♙b5 12 ♚a5 ♚xd4 13 ♙e3 ♚d6 14
 a4 ♚a3!

11 ♙xc6 ♖b8 12 ♚a4 ♖b6

11... ♖b8

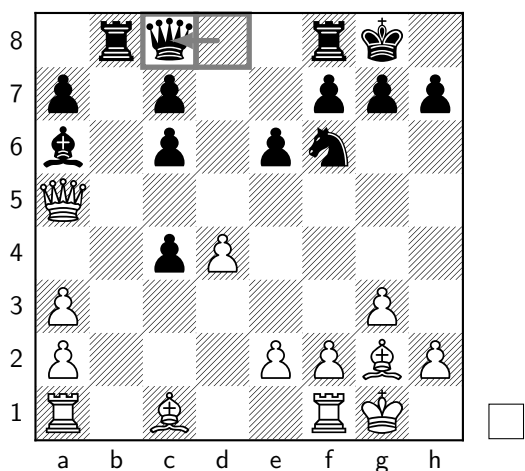
The rook gets off the danger diagonal, seizes the b-file and intends to bolster the queenside third rank with ...Rb6.

12 ♚a5

As planned.

12... ♚c8

Nakamura defends the bishop and moves his queen on to a light square, where she can't be harassed by White's dark-squared bishop in the future.



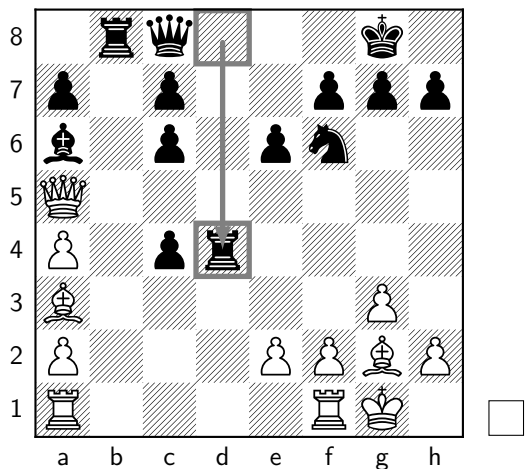
12... ♙×d4 13 ♗e3

12... ♖b6 13 a4 ♙d6!? 14 ♙c3 ♘d5 15
♘×d5 ♙×d5 16 ♗a3 ♖e8 17 ♗c5 ♖bb8 18
f3 e5 19 e4 exd4 20 ♗×d4 ♙g5

13 a4

Not only preparing to develop the bishop to a fine post on a3, but also denying the black pieces the b5-square, so that the queen can never be evicted by ...Rb5.

13... ♖d8 14 ♗a3 ♖×d4



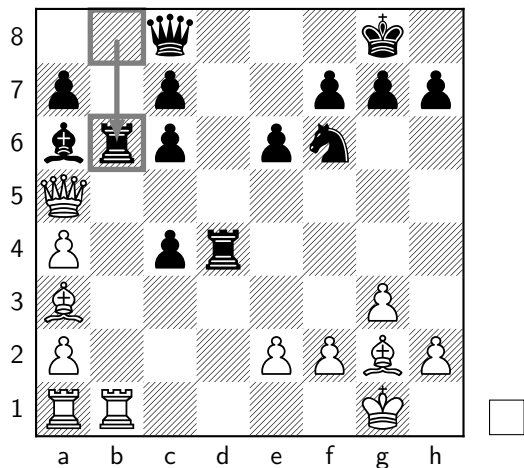
14... ♖b6 15 e3

15 ♖fb1!

This was Wesley So's improvement on theory at the time of this game. —
QUESTION: What is White's idea and why

did he chose 15 Rfb1 over 15 Rab1, which looks more natural? — ANSWER: All will be explained in the notes to Black's 17th, below.

15... ♖b6

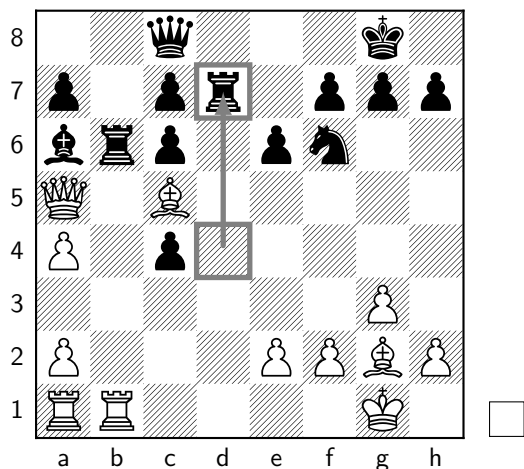


15... ♖b6 16 ♖×b8 ♙×b8 17 ♙×a6

15... ♖×b1+ 16 ♖×b1

15... ♘d5 16 ♙×a6!

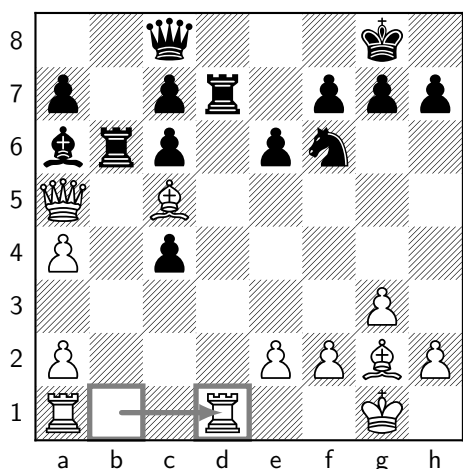
16 ♗c5 ♖d7



16... ♖d5 17 ♗×d5 c×d5 18 ♗×b6 a×b6 19
♙b4

17 ♖d1!

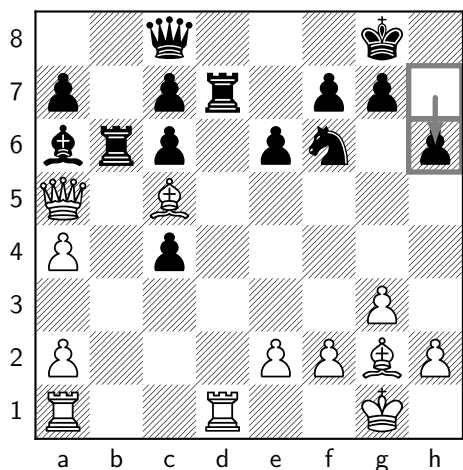
One of the golden rules of chess is: do not rush.



17 ♖xh6 cxb6 18 ♔e5 h6 19 ♖d1 ♘d5 20 e4? ♘b4

17...h6

Let's try and work out why So preferred 15 Rfb1, so that besides a rook on d1 he has a rook on a1 rather than f1 in the game position.



17...♖b2 18 ♖xh6 ♘xh6 19 ♖d1! ♖xe2 20 ♖f3 ♖c2 21 ♖e4 ♖e2? 22 ♖xh7+! ♖f8 23 ♖g5 f6 24 ♖c5+! ♘xc5 25 ♖xc5+ ♖f7 26 ♖h5+

17...♘d5 18 e4 ♘f6 19 ♖f1

18 ♖xh6 ♘xh6 19 ♖xh6

Finally it is time to cash in the exchange.

19...cxb6 20 ♖d2 c5 21 ♖d1

White has managed to coordinate his pieces along the d-file. Once he has forced the exchange of queens, his king will be able to rush over to the queenside and obstruct the onrush of Black's pawn mass. White is not only the exchange up, he is in effect a king up as well, as Black's king can only watch events from a distance.

21...♘f6 22 ♖f1!

A vital move in White's plans. Black can only mark time with his king, whereas the white monarch edges over to c1.

22...♖h7 23 ♖c2+ ♖g8 24 ♖d2 ♖h7 25 ♖d8 ♖xh7 26 ♖xh7 c3 27 ♖e1

Just in time to head off the c-pawn. There is a well-known rule that if you are the exchange up in an endgame, you should try to exchange off the opponent's remaining rook. Here we see that once the passed pawns are neutralized the black minor pieces are no match for the wide ranging white rook.

27...♖c4 28 ♖d1 ♖xa2 29 ♖c2 ♖c4 30 e3

The c3 pawn is doomed - there's no need to give Black the e2-pawn.

30...b5 31 ♖xc3 a6 32 ♖a8 ♘d5+ 33 ♖xd5 exd5 34 a5!

Fixing the a6-pawn as a target and maintaining a potential outside passed pawn.

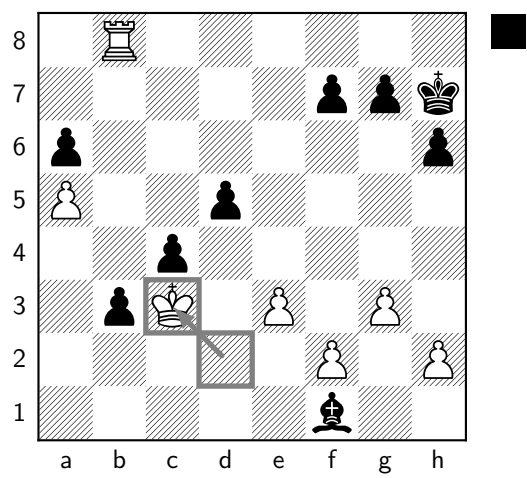
34...b4+ 35 ♖d2 ♖f1

EXERCISE: What is the correct technique to decide the game? — ANSWER:

36 ♖c8!

The passed pawns have to be forced on to light squares where they can be totally blocked by the white king.

36...c4 37 ♖b8 b3 38 ♖c3



38 ♔c3 ♙d3 39 ♖d8 ♜e4 40 ♖d6 ♜d3 41
♖×d5

1-0

White: Kelires, A.

30: Luxembourg

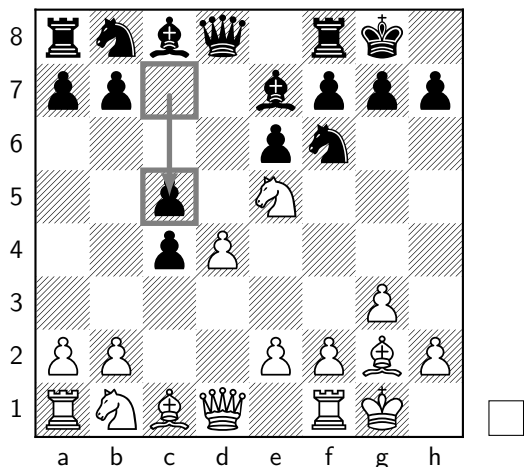
Black: Villegas, P.

Opening ECO: E06

2016

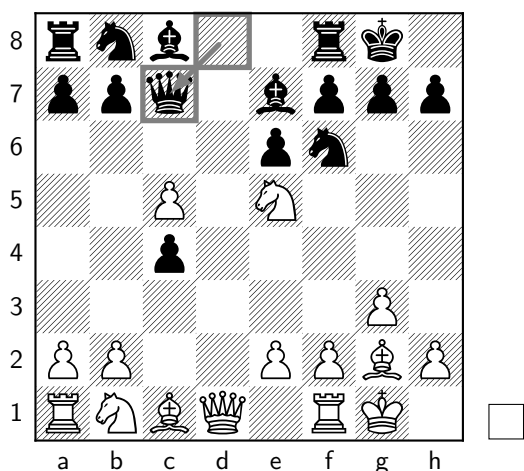
Result: 1-0

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♙g2 ♙e7 5 ♘f3
O-O 6 O-O dxc4 7 ♘e5 c5



7... ♘c6

7... ♘bd7 8 ♘xc4 c5 9 dxc5 ♙xc5 10 ♘c3
♘b6 11 ♘xb6 ♙xb6 12 ♙f4
8 dxc5 ♙c7



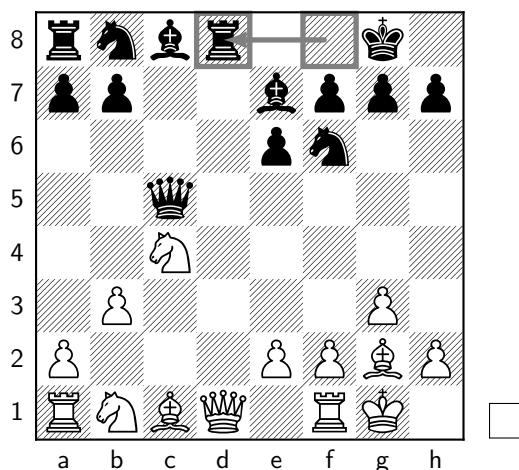
8... ♙xd1 9 ♙xd1 ♙xc5 10 ♘c3 ♘c6 11
♘xc4

8... ♙xc5 9 ♙xd8 ♙xd8 10 ♘c3 ♘c6 11
♘xc6 bxc6 12 ♙xc6 ♙b8 13 ♙f4 ♙b4 14
♙fd1 ♙f8 15 ♘a4

9 ♘xc4 ♙xc5

EXERCISE: How can White meet the threat
to the knight whilst also continuing to
build up the pressure? — ANSWER:

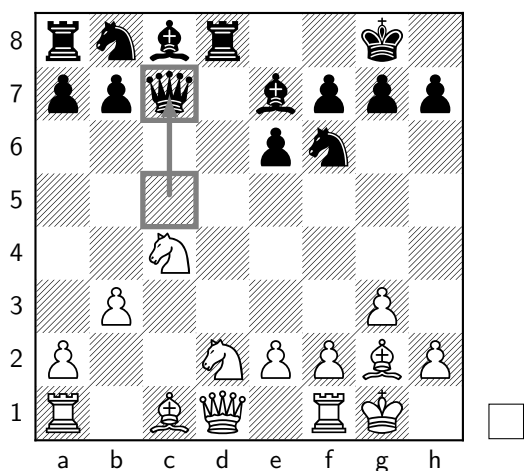
10 b3! ♙d8



10... ♘c6 11 ♙a3 ♙h5 12 ♙xe7 ♘xe7 13
♘c3

11 ♘bd2 ♙c7

The queen goes back to help defend the
queenside. Black is almost equal, but in the
Catalan there is a big difference between
'almost equal' and completely equal.

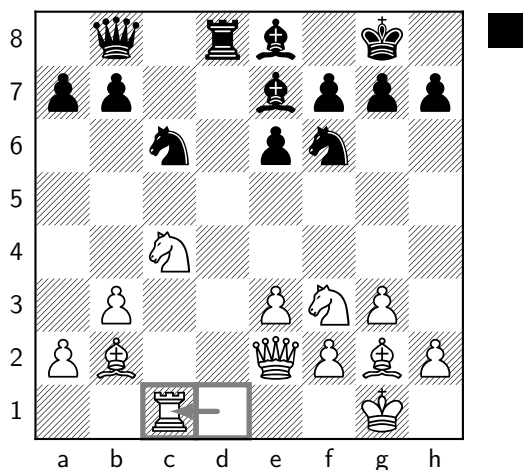


11... ♕h5?! 12 e3 ♕x d1 13 ♖x d1 ♘d5 14
♙b2 ♘c6 15 ♘f3 ♙d7 16 e4 ♘f6 17 ♘fe5
♘e5 18 ♙x e5 ♙b5 19 ♙d6! ♙f8 20 e5

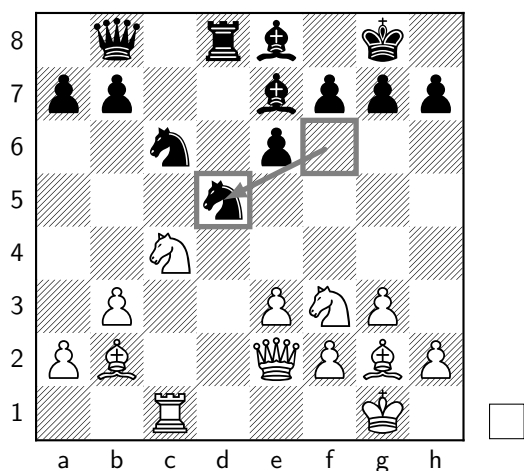
12 ♙b2 ♘c6 13 ♖c1 ♙d7 14 e3!

At the moment both queens are uncomfortable as they stand on the same file as an enemy rook, but White is able to create an excellent central post on e2 for his queen. Meanwhile his opposite number slinks away on to the back rank on the queenside.

14... ♖ac8 15 ♕e2 ♙e8 16 ♖fd1 ♕b8 17
♘f3 ♖x d1+ 18 ♖x d1 ♖d8 19 ♖c1?!



19 ♘fe5
19... ♘d5?!



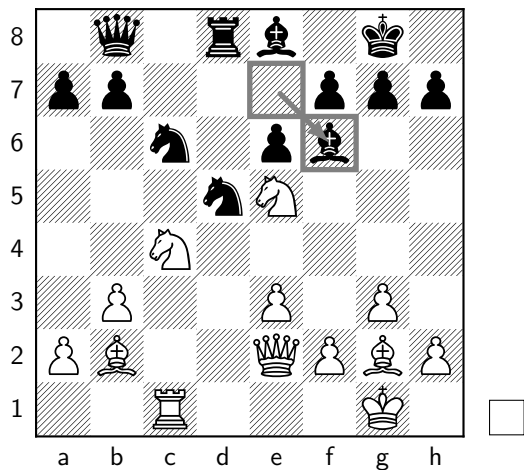
19... ♘b4 20 ♙e5 ♕a8

20 ♘fe5

The game reverts to its normal flow.

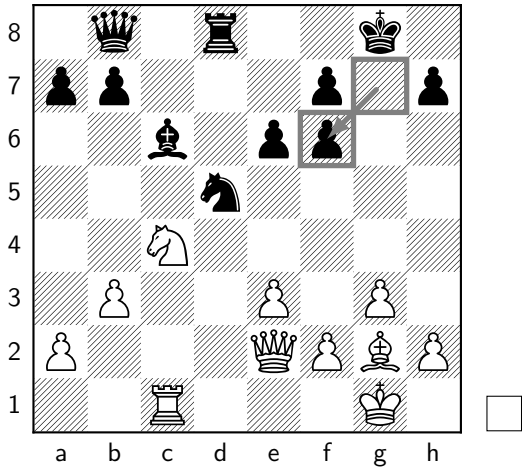
20... ♙f6?

These type of positions are very hard to defend for humans as they get restless and don't like to wait passively. We could make this comment about the Catalan as a whole. White's modest aim is to put a little pressure on his opponent, whilst depriving him of winning chances. This approach often works spectacularly well as Black loses patience and 'inexplicably' falls apart.



20... ♘e5 21 ♙x e5 ♕a8 22 ♕g4
21 ♘c6 ♙x c6 22 ♙x f6 gxf6

Black has the choice of losing on the kingside or the queenside.



22... ♖xf6 23 ♗xc6 bxc6 24 ♖a5 ♜b5 25 ♜xb5 cxb5 26 ♖c6 ♜d2 27 ♖xa7 g5 28 a3

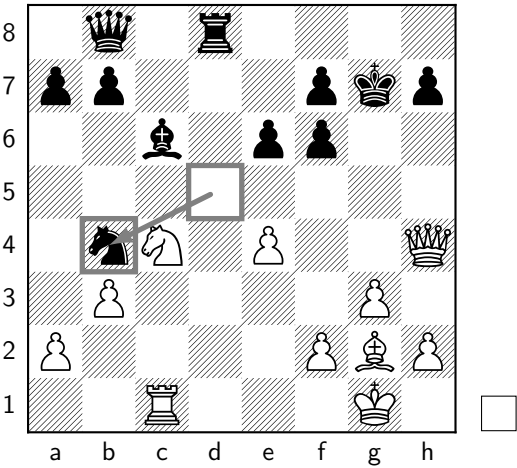
23 ♜g4+ ♔h8 24 ♜h4

If Black's queen were on a square where she had contact with the kingside, say e7, a successful defence might still be possible. However, as things stand the white queen is able to run amok with no restraint from her opposite number.

24... ♔g7 25 e4!

A golden rule of chess strategy is that you have to utilize your pawns at some point if you want your plan to be successful. Black's knight is evicted from its central post.

25... ♞b4

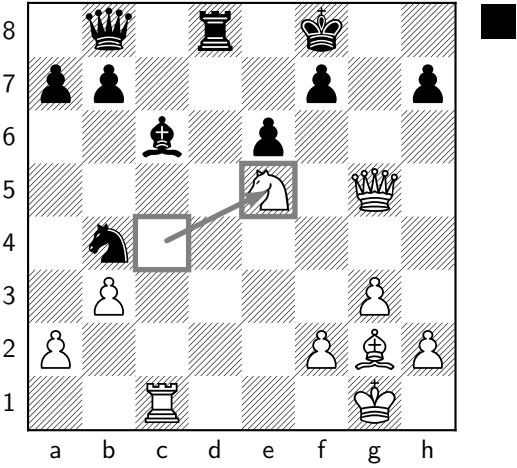


25... ♞e7 26 e5 ♞g8 27 exf6+ ♞xf6 28 ♜g5+

26 e5!

White wins the g5-square for his queen and e5 for his knight, which makes the rook on d8 and the pawn on f7 into tactical targets.

26... fxe5 27 ♜g5+ ♔f8 28 ♖xe5



28 ♖xe5 ♜c7 29 ♜f6 ♜d6 30 ♜h8+ ♔e7 31 ♜xh7

1-0

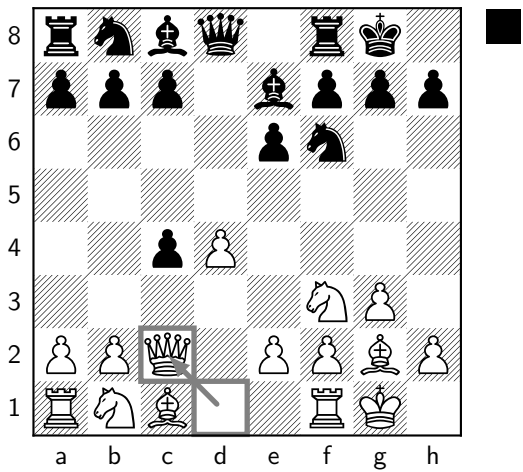
White: 8: Main Line: 7 Qc2 b6 & 7..b5

Black: ?

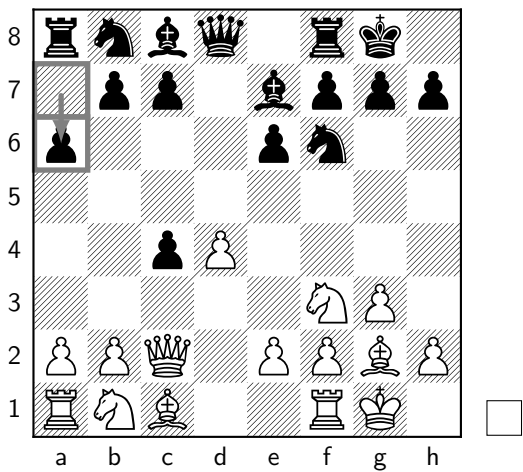
Opening ECO: E05

Result: *

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 g3 ♗e7 5 ♗g2
O-O 6 O-O dxc4 7 ♔c2



7 ♔a4!? a6 8 ♔xc4
7...a6
.



7...b6
7...b5
*






White: The Bukavshin Variation

?

Black: ?

Opening ECO: E05

Result: *

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 f3 f6 4 g3 e7 5 g2
O-O 6 O-O dxc4 7 c2**

. Ivan Bukavshin was an enormous chess talent from Russia. He died from a stroke in 2016 at the tragically young age of 20. His rating was already 2658, and his games were full of interesting concepts. One of these was

7...b6!?

in the Catalan, which he championed versus Artemiev and Leko and others without suffering any defeats. It is certainly an intriguing idea. — Trying for an outright refutation with

8 e5 xd4 9 xa8

doesn't seem to lead to more than a balanced position where Black has lots of activity for the exchange. More challenging for Black are lines where White is content for a small positional plus. On the other hand, these can hardly be called refutations of the system.

*

White: Michalik, P.

31: German League

Black: Hansen, SB.

Opening ECO: E06

2016

Result: 0-1

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♘f3 ♙e7 5 ♙g2
O-O 6 O-O dxc4 7 ♚c2 b6!?

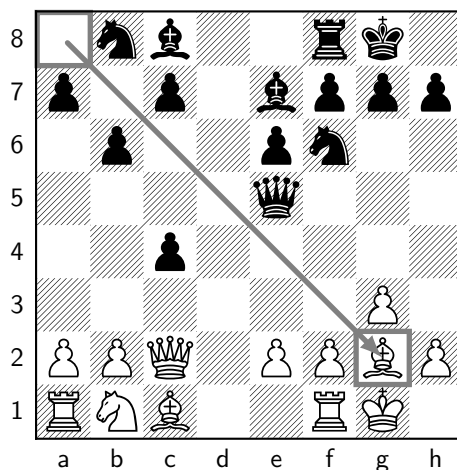
Here it is. Bukavshin's bold move leaves
Black open to attack down the long
diagonal, but can White exploit his
audacity?

8 ♘e5

The critical test of course. Other (quieter)
moves for White are examined in the next
game.

8... ♚xd4!

The consistent move; Black will obtain a
healthy pawn for the exchange and also
break up the white pawn centre.



10 ♘d2 ♚xe2 11 ♙f3 ♚d3 12 ♚xc4 ♙a6
13 ♚xd3 ♙xd3 14 ♚e1 ♘a6 15 a3 ♚d8

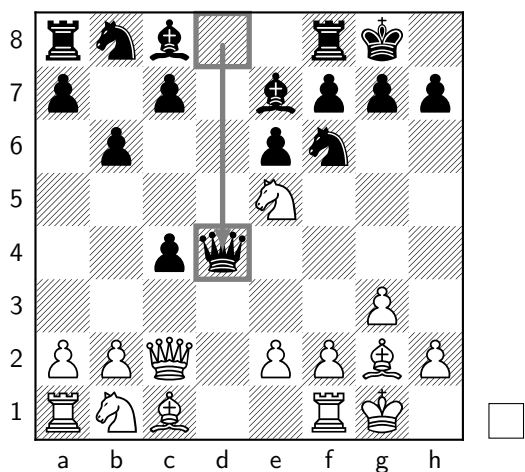
10 ♙f3 ♘d5 11 ♚xc4 ♙a6 12 ♚a4 c5 13
♚d1 ♙f6

10 ♙f4 ♚h5 11 ♙f3 ♘g4 12 ♙xg4 ♚xg4 13
♘d2 ♚xe2

10... ♘d5

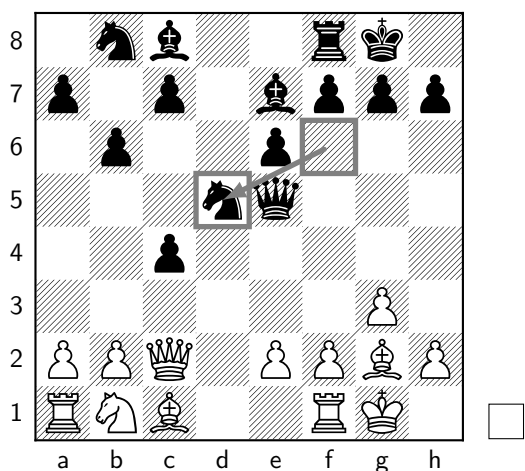
EXERCISE: Can you see some good
positional reasons for this move? —

ANSWER: Most importantly, the black
knight stops the strong developing move
11 Bf4 which would harass the queen. At
the same time it clears f6 for the bishop to
attack b2. The knight may in some cases go
to b4 to attack the white queen.



8... ♘d5 9 ♚xc4 ♙b7 10 ♚d1

9 ♙xa8 ♚xe5 10 ♙g2



10...d5 11 e4? b4 12 cxc4 a6

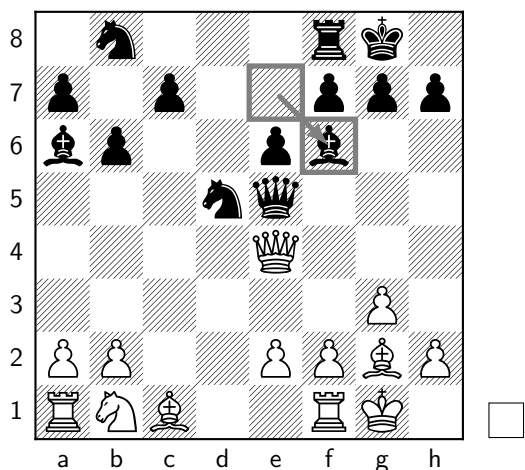
10...b5 11 a4

11 cxc4 a6

Black's bishop seizes an active diagonal and puts pressure on e2.

12 e4 f6?!

Black supports the queen and puts the bishop on a strong diagonal. Nonetheless this wasn't the best idea for him.



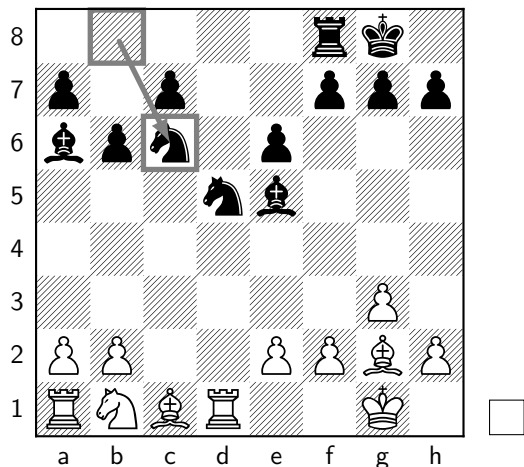
12...cxe4 13 fxe4 d8! 14 f3 d7

13 cxe5 fxe5 14 d1!

Remember what we said about keeping the white rooks passive? Thanks to Black's imprecise 12th move, White's rook seizes the d-file.

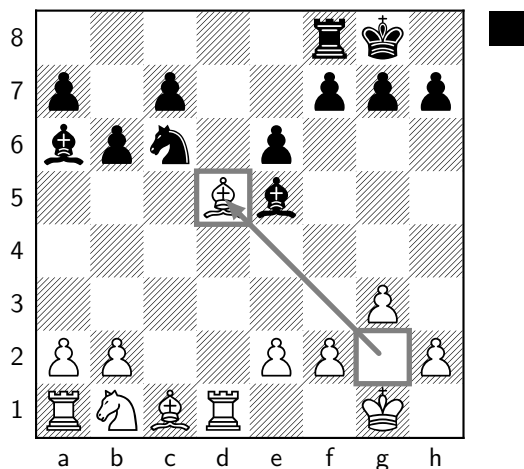
14...c6

EXERCISE: Black's minor pieces look imposing. How can White take away some of their energy and give it to his own pieces?



14...fxe2 15 e1

15 fxd5?

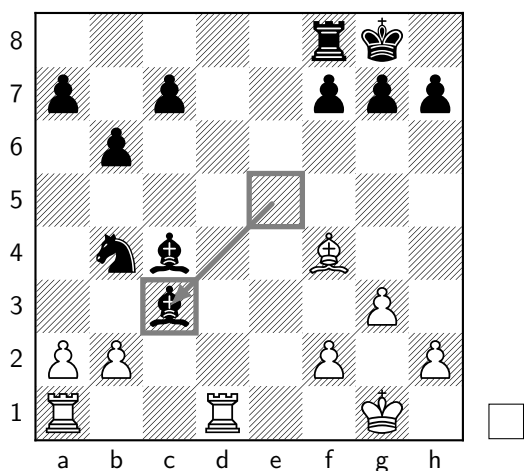


15 e4 db4 16 c3

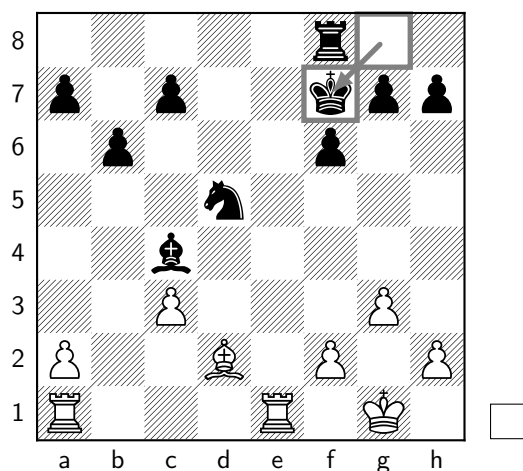
15...exd5 16 dxd5 fxe2

Black only has a pawn for the exchange, but his light-squared bishop has no rival.

17 c3 f4 18 d1 b4 19 f4 fxc3!

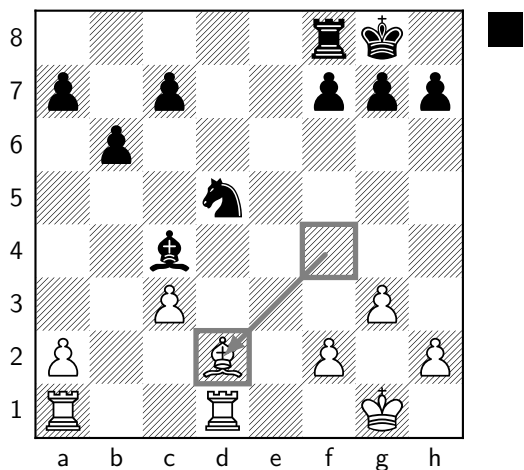


19... ♖xf4 20 gxf4 c5 21 ♖d7
20 bxc3 ♘d5 21 ♙d2



22...c5! 23 ♖e4 ♙d3 24 ♖e6 ♖d8! 25 ♖ae1
♙f7
23 ♖e4! b5

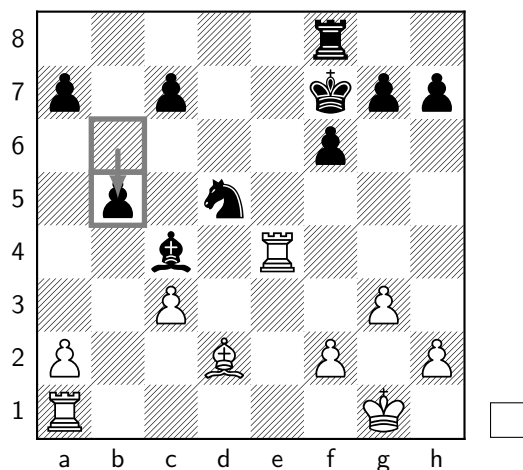
Now Black is obliged to weaken his pawns
after all,



21 ♖d4 b5 22 ♙d2

21...f6 22 ♖e1 ♙f7

Sometimes a natural move can jeopardize
the game.

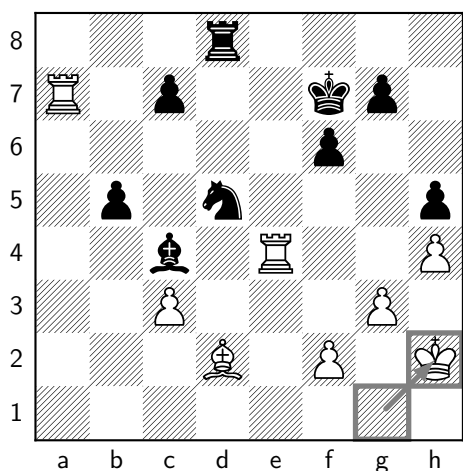


23... ♙d3 24 ♖d4

24 a4!

At last White activates his rook on a1.

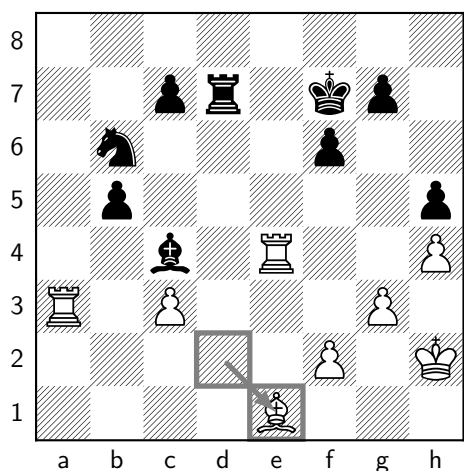
24...a6 25 axb5 axb5 26 ♖a7 ♖d8 27 h4 h5
28 ♙h2?



28 f3

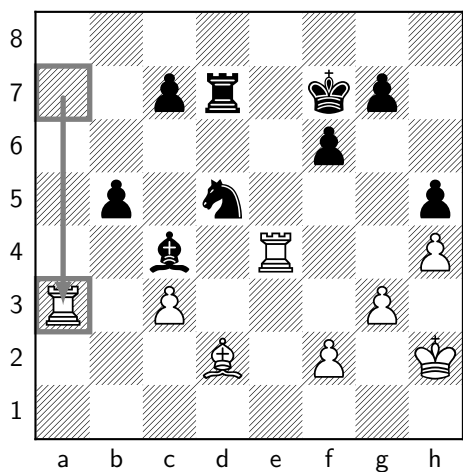
28...♖d7 29 ♖a3

White is drifting.



30 ♗e3

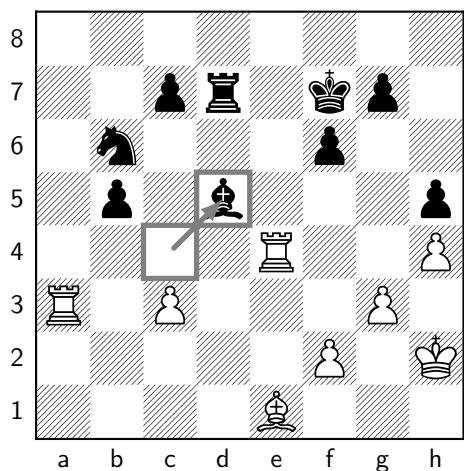
30...♗d5



29 f3

29...♞b6 30 ♗e1

For no good reason the white rook and now the bishop have retreated to passive squares.

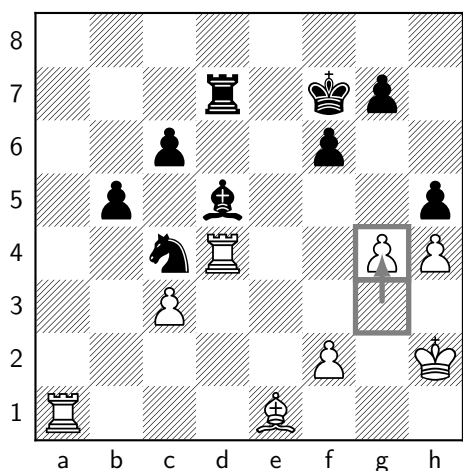


30...c5

31 ♖d4 c6 32 ♖a1 ♞c4

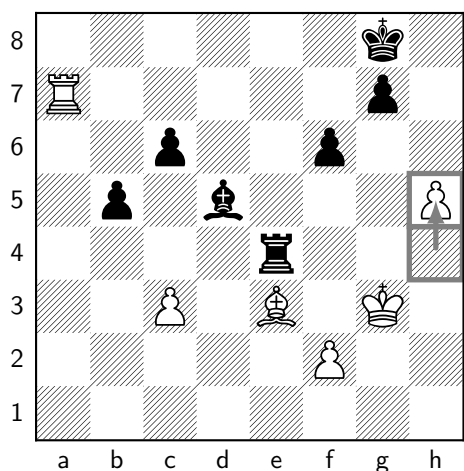
The light-square holes around the white king have become alarming. Already 33...Ne5 is looming. If White had kept his bishop on an active square he could have stopped this with Bf4.

33 g4?



33 ♖dd1

33...h×g4!
Good judgement.

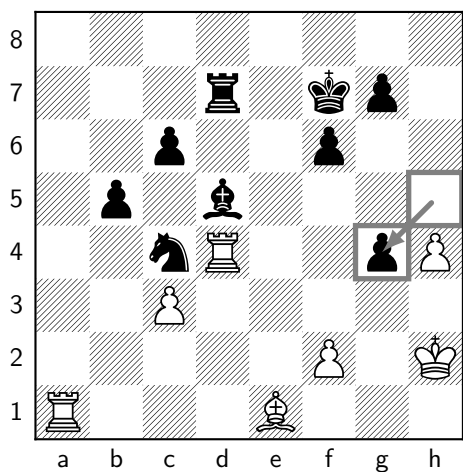


41 ♖c7 ♖c4 42 ♙d2

41...♖c4 42 ♙d2 ♙f7 43 ♖c7 ♙×h5 44 f4
♙g6

Two pawns up, Hansen's excellent technique now wraps up the game.

45 ♙f2 ♙e4 46 ♖d7 ♙d5 47 ♖c7 ♙h7 48
♖d7 ♙g6 49 ♖c7 ♖a4 50 ♙e2 ♖a8 51 ♙e3
♖g8 52 ♖e7 ♙f5 53 ♙f2 ♙g4 54 ♖d7 g5 55
f×g5 f×g5 56 ♙d4 ♖f8+ 57 ♙e2 ♖f7 58 ♖d6
♖h7
0-1



33...♙e5 34 g×h5 ♙f3+ 35 ♙g3 ♙×d4 36
c×d4

34 ♖×g4 ♙e5 35 ♖f4 ♖e7
Threatening a fork on d3.

36 ♙d2 ♙f3+ 37 ♖×f3 ♙×f3

So Black has won the exchange back after all, and in a manner more favourable than in the previous note: he is a pawn up to boot.

38 ♙g3 ♙d5 39 ♙e3 ♖e4 40 ♖a7+ ♙g8 41
h5

White: Maletin, P.
Black: Goganov, A.

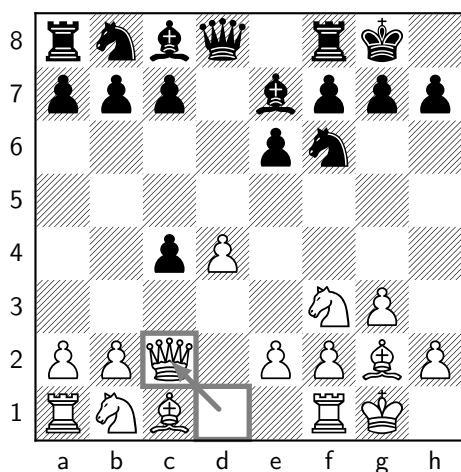
Opening ECO: E06

Result: 1/2-1/2

32: Khanty-Mansiysk

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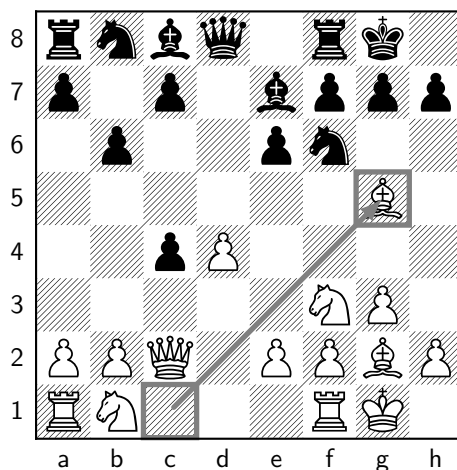
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 g3 ♙e7 5 ♙g2
O-O 6 O-O dxc4 7 ♙c2



7 ♙a4 b6 8 ♘e5 ♙xd4 9 ♙xa8 ♙xe5 10
♙xa7 ♘a6 11 ♘c3 ♘d5 12 ♙d2

7...b6 8 ♙g5

After many hours of consideration I finally decided I liked this move best for White. I checked on the database, and the first game with 8 Bg5 was played by a certain young boy called... Magnus Carlsen! He wasn't yet 12 years old when he tried it versus Arngrimsson in a junior event in Norway in 2002. Did Magnus know everything about chess even then?



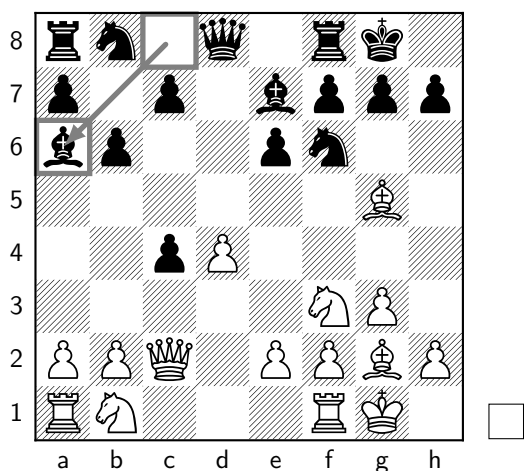
8 e4?! ♙b7 9 ♘bd2 b5 10 b3 cxb3 11 axb3
♘c6

8 ♘bd2 ♙b7 9 ♘xc4 ♙e4 10 ♙b3 ♘c6
8 ♙xc4 ♙b7 9 ♘c3 c5 10 dxc5 ♙xc5 11
♙f4 ♙e7 12 ♙ad1 ♙c8

8 ♙d1 ♙a6 9 ♘e5 ♘d5 10 a3! ♘d7 11 ♘c6
♙e8 12 e4 ♘5f6 13 ♘c3

8...♙a6

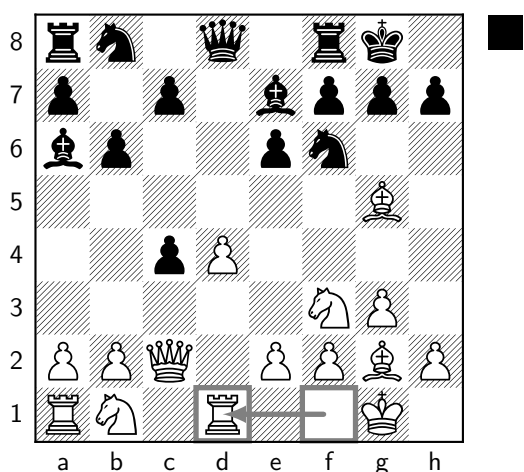
Black develops and defends c4. On the other hand, the bishop doesn't contest the h1-a8 diagonal which means that White can try for an initiative in the centre.



8... Nbd7 9 Nge5

8... Bb7? 9 Bxf6 Bxf6 10 Ng5! Bxg5 11 Bxb7 Nd7 12 Bxa8 Bxa8 13 Bxc4

9 Rfd1



9 Nbd2 Nd5 10 Bxe7 Bxe7 11 e4!? Bb4 12 Bc3 c5 13 a3 B4c6 14 d5 Ba5 15 Bfe1 Nd7

9 Nge5 Bxd4 10 Bxf7! c6 11 Be3 Bg4 12 Ng5

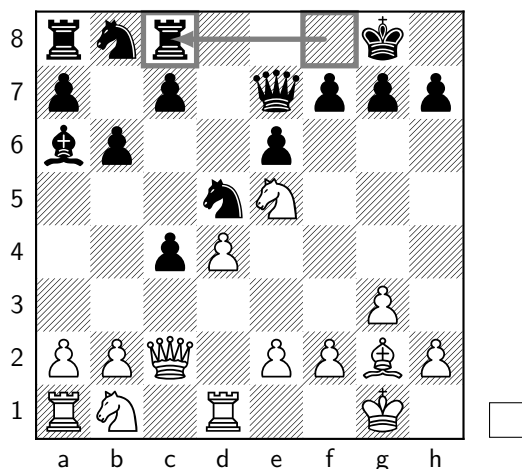
9... Nd5

QUESTION: Is this a good move? —
ANSWER: Black plugs the long diagonal to avoid the tactical threats, offers the exchange of bishops to ease his game, and

prepares to answer the centre expansion e2-e4 with ...Nb4.

10 Bxe7 Bxe7 11 Nge5 Bc8

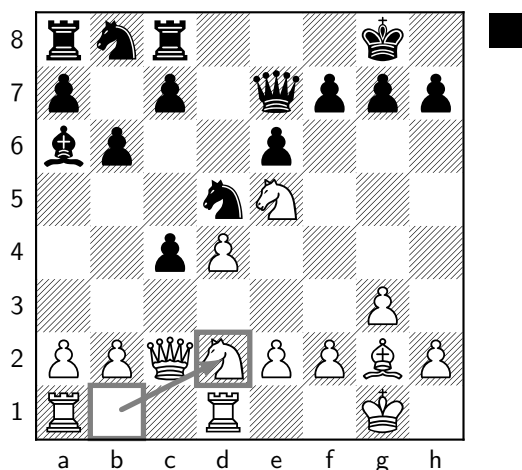
Black wants to free his game with ...c7-c5 which would break up the white centre.



11... c5 12 dxc5

12 Nd2

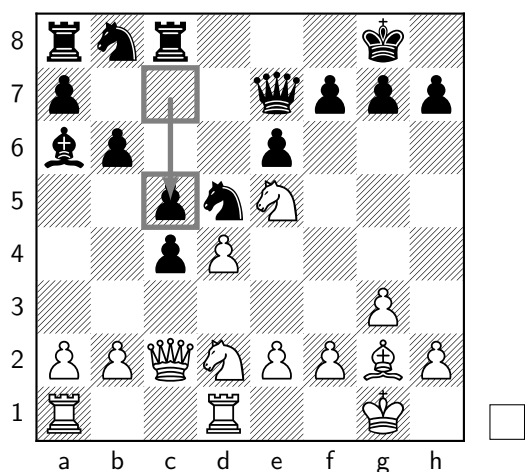
EXERCISE: What do you think is Black's best plan? Should he continue with ...c7-c5 or switch to ...b6-b5 to hold on to the c4-pawn?



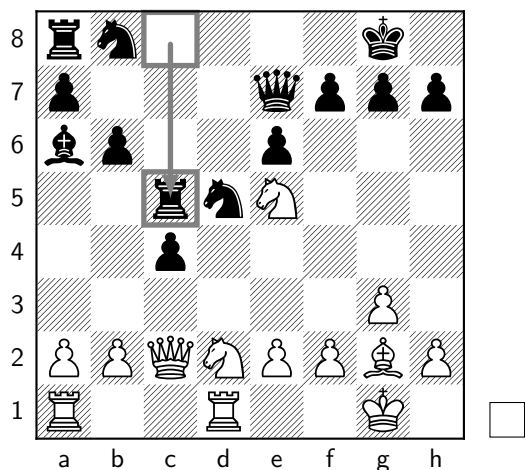
12 Bxc4? c5

12... c5?!

ANSWER: As stated this is a risky plan as White's pieces are well placed to exploit the opening of lines in the centre.

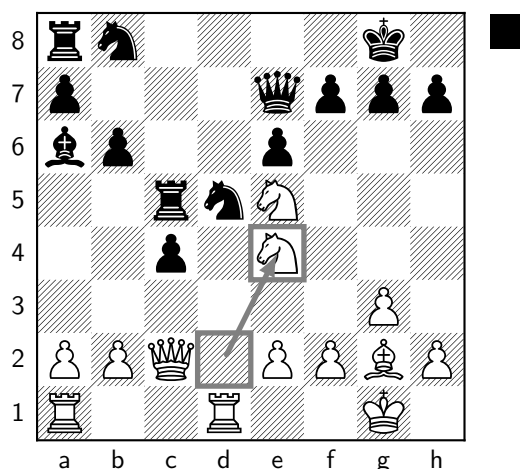


12...b5! 13 a4 c6 14 ♖e4 g6 15 ♖g2
13 dxc5 ♖xc5?!



13...♖c6! 14 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 15 ♖e4 ♖b8 16
♖d2 h6
14 ♖e4!

White drives back the black rook that defends d5 and prepares to attack the key central point with his next move.



14 e4? ♖e3 15 fxe3 ♖xe5
14 ♖e4 ♖e3 15 fxe3 ♖xe5 16 ♖c3 ♖b7 17
♖xb7 ♖xb7 18 ♖d8#

14...♖c8 15 ♖c3

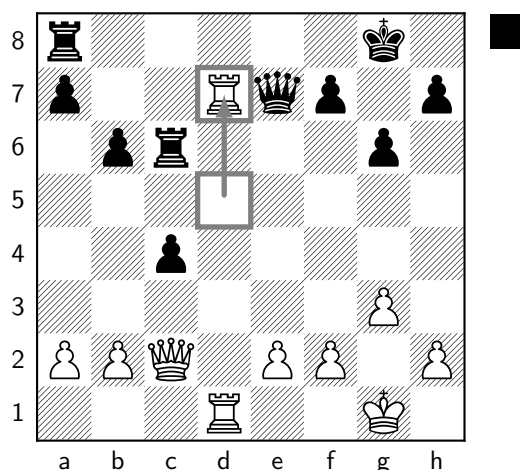
Now the d5 point falls and White gains control of the d-file.

15...♖b7 16 ♖xd5 exd5 17 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 18
♖xd5 ♖c6

At last Black completes his development.

19 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 20 ♖ad1 g6 21 ♖d7

The obvious move, but it lessens his grip somewhat.



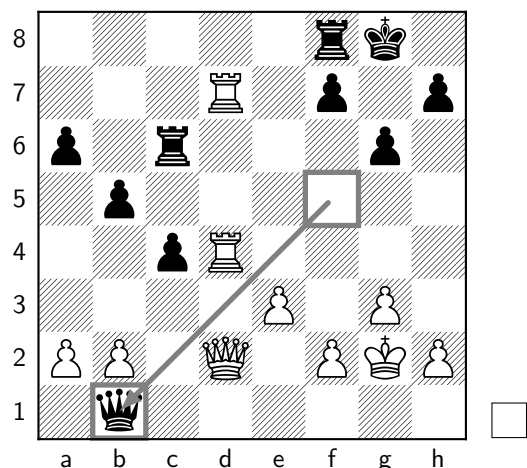
21 ♖1d4! ♖e6 22 ♖c3 ♖e8 23 e3 a6 24 a4!
21...♖e6 22 e3 b5

Compared to the line in the note above,
 Black is able to gain space with his
 queenside pawns and secure the defence
 of c4. Nonetheless the position remains
 difficult for him.

23 ♖c3 ♜f6

Guarding against the threat of 24 Rd8+.

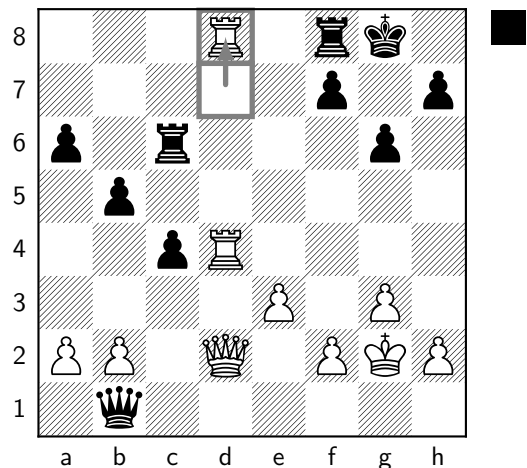
24 ♜b4 a6 25 ♖1d4 ♜f8 26 ♜d2 ♜f5 27
 ♔g2 ♜b1



27... ♜c5

28 ♜d8

Giving up his winning attempt.



28 ♜f4! ♜e6 29 ♜d4 ♜x a2 30 ♜d8 ♜ee8 31
 ♜x f7 ♔x f7 32 ♜d7+ ♜e7 33 ♜d5+ ♔g7 34
 ♜x e7+ ♔h6 35 ♜d4

28... ♜c8 29 ♜x c8 ♜x c8 30 ♜d8+
 Forcing a draw by perpetual or else Black
 might find a way to utilize his strong
 queenside pawns (pawns which just a few
 moves ago were weak because they were
 targets for white's rooks).

30... ♜x d8 31 ♜x d8+ ♔g7 32 ♜d4+ ♔g8
 33 ♜d8+ ♔g7 34 ♜d4+ ♔g8 35 ♜d8+
 1/2-1/2

White: Smith, A.

33: Kecskemet

Black: Munkhgal, G.

Opening ECO: A15

2015

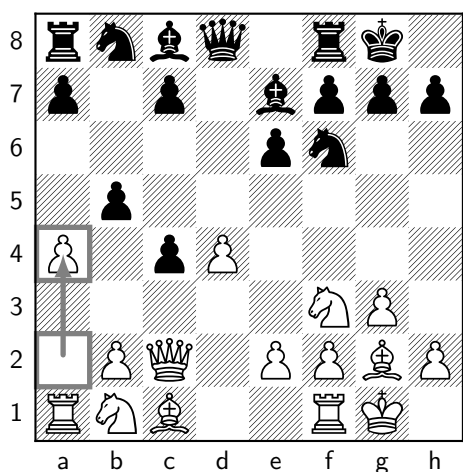
Result: 1-0

1 ♖f3 ♜f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 ♙e7 4 ♙g2 O-O 5 d4
d5 6 O-O dxc4 7 ♖c2 b5

Black holds on to the c4-pawn and threatens 8...Bb7, solving the problem of his 'bad' bishop and at the same time neutralizing the enemy bishop on g2.

White has to respond vigorously.

8 a4!



8 a4 c6 9 a×b5 c×b5?? 10 ♖g5! ♖d5

8...b4!

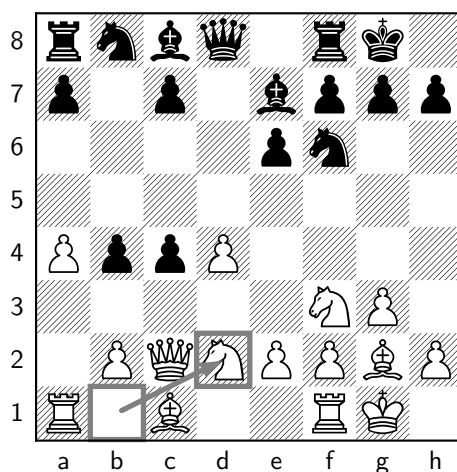
There is some positional justification for Black's two moves with his b-pawn even if he has to return the pawn. The pawn on b4 takes away the c3-square from the white knight on b1. It has cleared the way for ...Bb7 to deploy the bishop, or in the event of 9 Qxc4, 9...Ba6, developing with gain of time - though the bishop will probably retreat to b7 in short order. — White has less flexibility on the queenside as he is already committed to the pawn move a2-a4. For example, he can't undermine the b4-pawn or try to open the a-file as a2-a3 is

no longer available. Furthermore, in contrast to the structure in the mainline after 7...a6 8 Qxc4 b5 9 Qc2 Bb7, White can't try to exploit the dark squares with 10 Bd2 intending Ba5 in some cases - the b4-pawn is in the way. Meanwhile the b4-pawn is well defended and difficult to attack.

9 ♖bd2

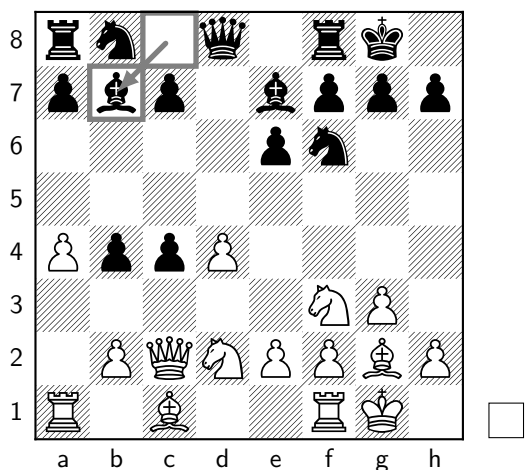
The appraisal above begs the question why 7...b5 isn't a more popular move. I guess the slight lack of appeal arises because of the modest but irritating approach adopted by White in the present game. —

With his queenside pawns dislocated, Black is slightly loose on the light squares: this means the white knight finds a good post on the c4-square, from which it can no longer be driven by a black pawn on the b-file or on the d-file. Nor has Black solved the perennial problem of the backward pawn on c7.



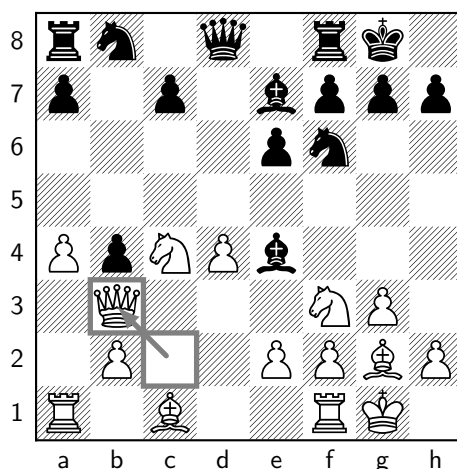
9 ♖c4 ♙a6 10 ♖c2 ♖bd7 11 ♖e5 ♖×e5
12 ♙×a8 ♖×d4 13 ♙g2 c5

9 ♖g5 ♗a6 10 ♘bd2 b3 11 ♔c1 ♘c6 12
 ♘×c4 ♚c8 13 ♚d1 ♘b4 14 ♗×f6 ♗×f6 15
 ♔c3 ♘c2 16 ♚ac1 c5 17 ♔×b3 ♘×d4
 9 ♘e5 ♔×d4! 10 ♘×c4 ♘d5 11 ♗e3 ♔f6 12
 ♘bd2
 9 ♘fd2 c6 10 ♘×c4 ♔×d4 11 ♚d1 ♔c5 12
 ♗e3 ♔h5 13 ♘bd2 ♘g4 14 ♘f3 ♘×e3 15
 ♘×e3 a5
 9... ♗b7

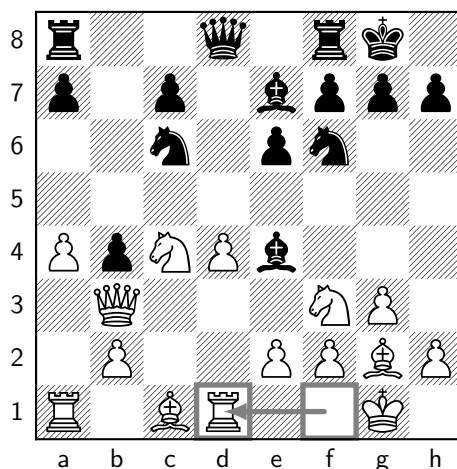


9... b3 10 ♔×c4 ♗a6 11 ♔×b3 ♗×e2 12
 ♚e1 ♗a6 13 ♘e5 ♘d5 14 ♘e4
 10 ♘×c4 ♗e4 11 ♔b3!

It takes both courage and calculation for
 White to walk into a potential pin and leave
 the d4-pawn precariously placed when the
 retreat 11 Qd1 was available, but you don't
 become a grandmaster by playing safe
 moves which allow your opponent to
 equalize without any trouble.



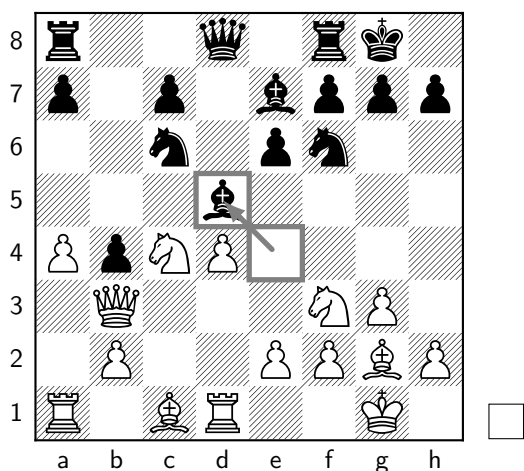
11 ♔d1 c5 12 d×c5 ♘bd7!
 11... ♘c6 12 ♚d1!



12 e3?!

12... ♗d5

EXERCISE: What is Black's threat with
 12...Bd5 and how should White meet it?



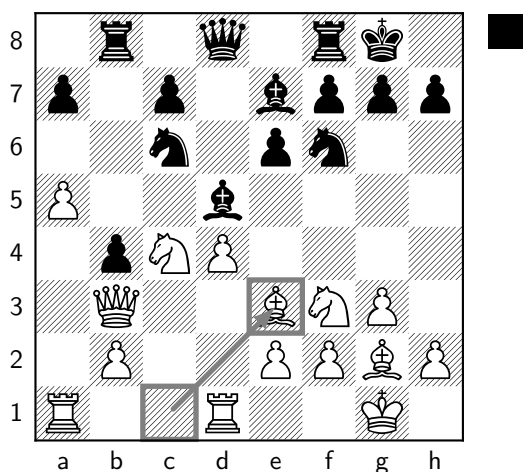
12... ♖×f3 13 ♔×f3 ♘×d4 14 ♔d3! ♞f5 15
 ♜×a8 ♔×a8 16 ♜f4
 12... ♔d5 13 ♜f4

13 a5!

ANSWER: Stopping 13...Na5 which would
 have won a piece.

13... ♖b8 14 ♜e3!

A calm move not afraid of ghosts. White
 wants to break the pin on c4 before Black
 has time to play 14...Rb5 reigniting the
 threat to the white horse with 15...Nxa5.



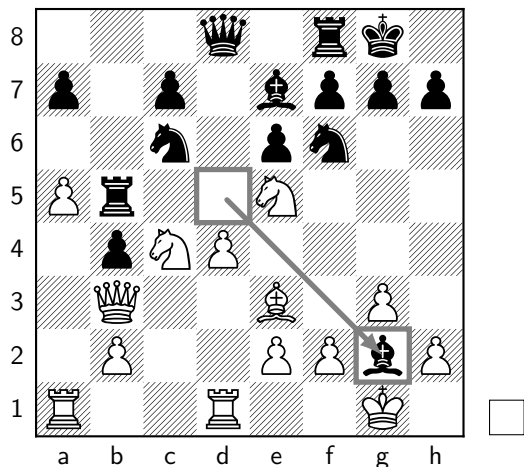
14 ♔c2?! b3 15 ♔c3 ♞b4

14 ♞fe5 ♜×g2

14... ♖b5

Black's initiative has reached its peak with
 the renewed threat of 15...Nxa5, but White
 is just in time with his counterattack in the
 centre.

15 ♞fe5! ♜×g2



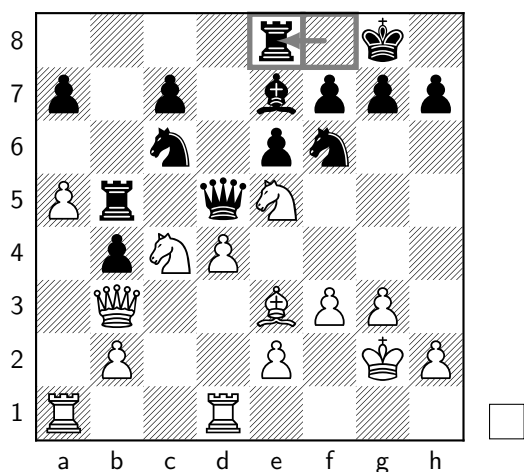
15... ♞×a5 16 ♔a4! ♜×c4 17 ♞×c4

15... ♔a8 16 ♞×c6 ♔×c6 17 ♞e5! ♜×b3?
 18 ♞×c6 ♜d6 19 ♖dc1

15... ♞×e5 16 ♜×d5! ♞×d5 17 ♞×e5 ♔e8

16 ♜×g2 ♔d5+ 17 f3 ♖e8

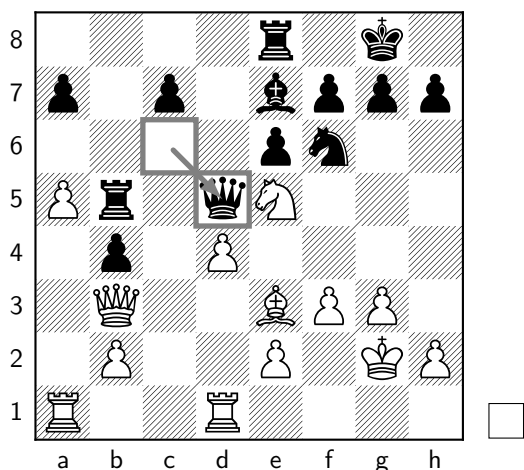
This inert rook move shows that Black's bag
 of tricks is finally empty.



17... ♞×a5 18 ♖×a5! ♖×a5 19 ♞×a5 ♔×a5
 20 ♞c6

18 ♖×c6 ♜×c6 19 ♖e5 ♜d5

After the exchange of queens it's easier for White to exploit the holes in Black's queenside.



19... ♜a8

20 ♜×d5 e×d5 21 ♖c6

This reminds me of Kramnik's knight sitting nonchalantly on c6 in a game at Dortmund 2007 - see the note to 14...Qd6 in Evdokimov-Abdyjapar in Chapter Ten. His young Norwegian opponent went on to become number one in the world, but he couldn't save Black's position either. Losing control over the square in front of the backward c7-pawn is often disastrous, and especially so if White can turn it into a comfortable stable for his horse.

21... a6 22 b3

Fixing the b4-pawn as a target, rather than allowing Black any chance of counterplay with ...b4-b3 and maybe ...Bb4 in the future.

22... ♗d6 23 ♖f2 ♖d7 24 ♜dc1 ♖f8

QUESTION: White has control, but how does he make progress? — ANSWER:

25 ♗f4!

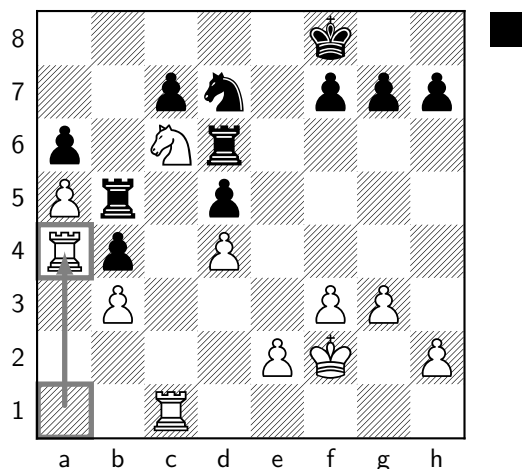
Sometimes a 'bad' bishop is performing an important defensive role. Smith exchanges off Black's dark-squared bishop so that the

b4- and c7-pawns become ripe for the harvest.

25... ♜e6 26 ♖d8 ♜e8 27 ♖c6

We're allowed a little fun in a winning position.

27... ♜e6 28 ♗×d6+ ♜×d6 29 ♜a4

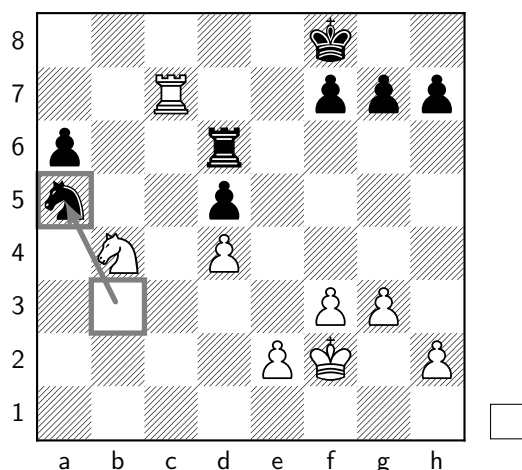


29 ♜c2

29... ♖c5!

A commendable attempt to break out from the bind.

30 ♜×b4 ♜×b4 31 ♖×b4 ♖×b3 32 ♜×c7 ♖×a5

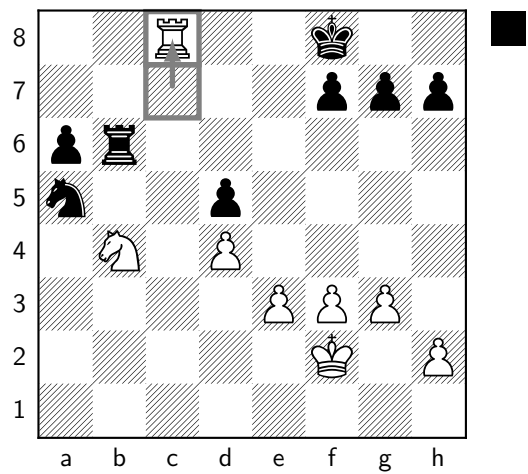


32... ♖×d4

33 e3 ♜b6

Blundering the rook, but the weak pawns on a6 and d5 seal Black's doom anyway.

34 ♖c8+



34 ♖c8+ ♔e7 35 ♘x d5+ ♔d7 36 ♘x b6+

1-0

White: 9: Main Line: 7 Qc2 a6 8 a4

?

Black: ?

Opening ECO: E05

Result: *

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 g3 ♙e7 5 ♙g2
O-O 6 O-O dxc4 7 ♚c2 a6 8 a4**

. We are now well into Catalan mainline territory. The move 8 a4 is popular among the world elite at the time of writing. It has a good track record, with former world champion Anand losing twice against it, and Adams and Nakamura among the other victims. Therefore we should investigate it carefully in this chapter.

*

White: Damljanovic, B.

34: Paracin

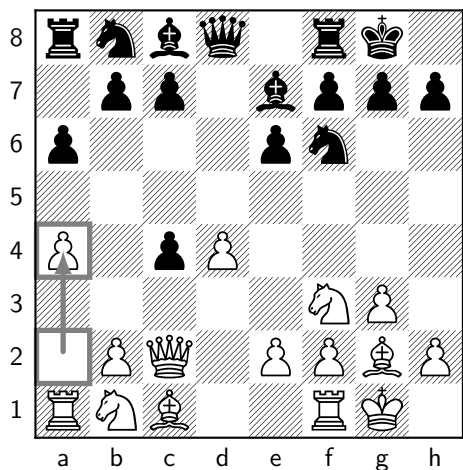
Black: Cvetkovic, N.

Opening ECO: E06

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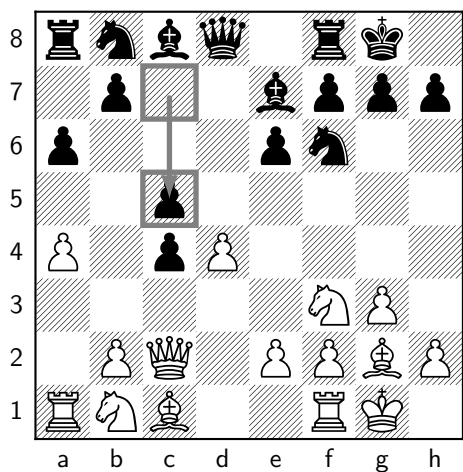
Result: 1-0

1 c4 e6 2 ♘f3 d5 3 d4 ♘f6 4 g3 ♙e7 5 ♙g2
O-O 6 O-O dxc4 7 ♙c2 a6 8 a4



8 ♙xc4 b5 9 ♙c2 ♙b7

8...c5

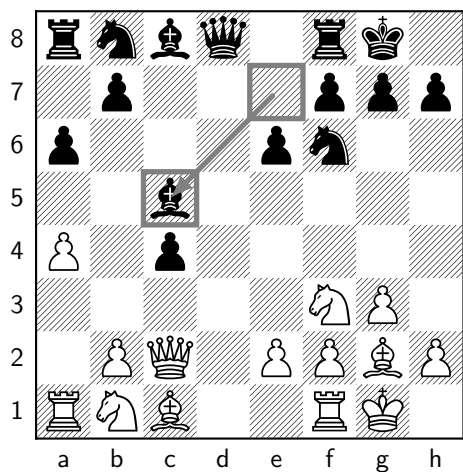


8...♙d7

8...♘bd7? 9 ♘bd2! c5 10 ♘xc4

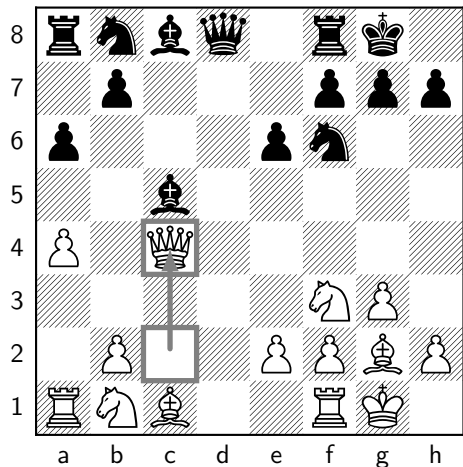
8...♘c6 9 ♙xc4 ♙d5 10 ♘bd2 ♙d8 11 e3
♙xc4 12 ♘xc4 ♙d7 13 ♙d2

9 dxc5 ♙xc5



9...♘bd7 10 c6! bxc6 11 ♙xc4

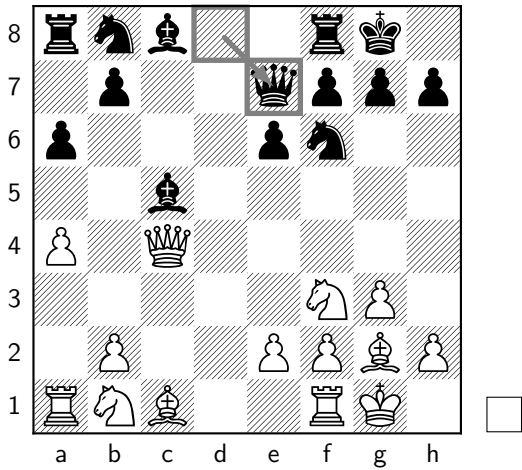
10 ♙xc4



10 ♘bd2 b5!? 11 axb5 ♙b7 12 bxa6 ♘xa6
13 ♙xc4 ♙d5 14 ♙h4 ♙e7 15 ♙f4 ♙d6 16
♙h4 ♙e7 17 ♙f4 ♙d6 18 ♙h4

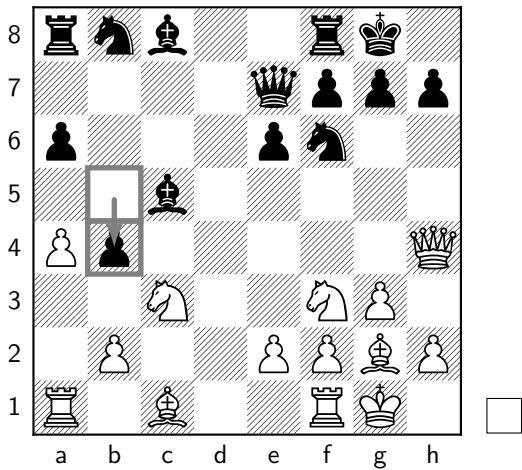
10...♙e7?!

Black defends the bishop and evacuates the queen from d8 where she might be a target for a future Rd1. He also keeps the option of using his b-pawn actively. Nonetheless the queen isn't entirely happy on e7 because of a possible Bg5 pin in the future.

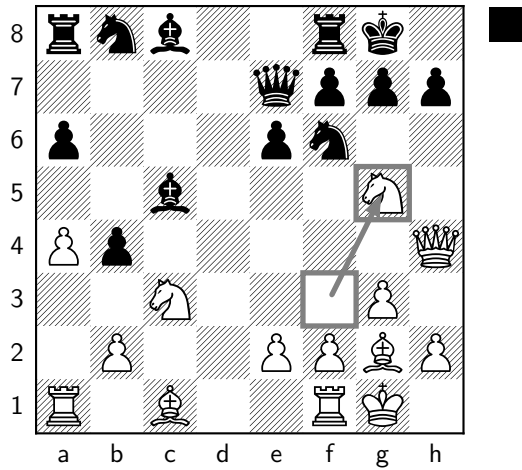


10...b6!? 11 c3 b7 12 g5 bd7 13 fd1 c8 14 f4
11 c3 b5 12 h4 b4?!

Helping White build up his initiative. —
 EXERCISE: We don't often get to attack the king in the Catalan, so let's try to get it right. What is the strongest attacking move?



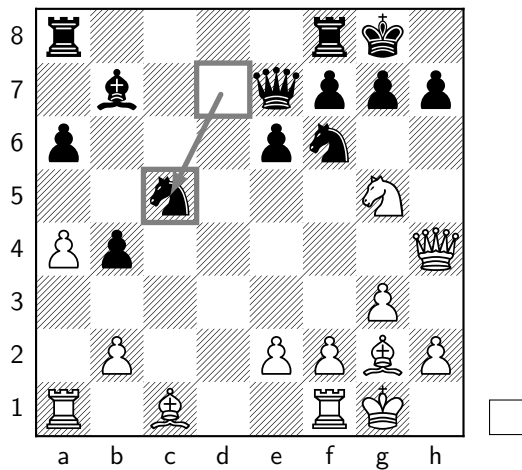
12... b7! 13 axb5 axb5 14 xxa8 xxa8 15
xxb5 bbd7 16 c3 b8
13 g5!
 ANSWER: Now the rook on a8 is en prise.



13 e4 xe4 14 xxe4 b7
13... b7 14 ce4

White has a fearsome attack with the threat of mate in two. Black dare not exchange on e4 as 14...Bxe4 15 Bxe4 leaves both a8 and h7 hanging. The upshot is that White is able to eliminate the defender of the black queen with his next move and so win a pawn.

14... bd7 15 xc5 xc5



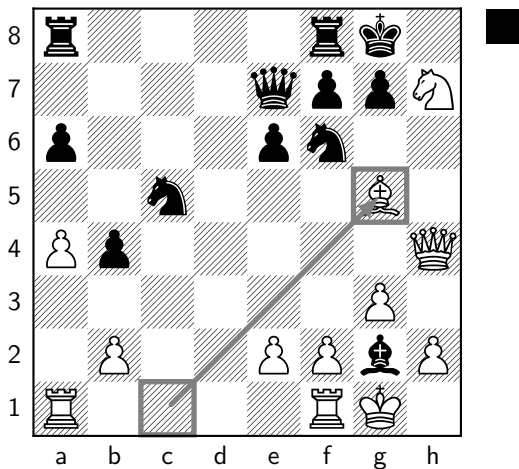
15... ♖×g2 16 ♜×d7

16 ♜×h7! ♖×g2

EXERCISE: Which of these options is the best way for White to continue? (a) Pin the black knight with 17 Bg5; (b) Recapture his piece with 17 Kxg2; (c) Exchange with 17 Nxf6+ then recapture on g2. — ANSWER:

17 ♖g5!

The correct approach is to keep up the attack on the kingside.



17 ♜×f6+ ♖×f6 18 ♖×f6 g×f6 19 ♜×g2 ♜b3 20 ♖b1 ♖fd8 21 ♖e3 ♖ac8

17 ♜×g2? ♖b7+

17 ♖g5 ZZ– 18 ♜×f6+ g×f6 19 ♖×f6

17... ♜ce4

The best way to defend f6 as it allows an exchange on g5 to ease the pressure.

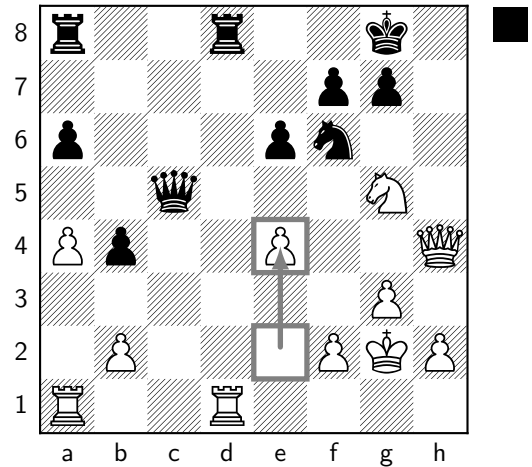
18 ♜×g2 ♜×g5 19 ♜×g5 ♖fd8 20 ♖fd1 ♖c5

It looks at first glance as if Black has avoided the worst. He is a pawn down, but the white queen and knight are 'offside' whereas his own queen can terrorize White's queenside with ...Qc2. However with his next couple of moves Damljanovic shows that his kingside attack is still alive and well.

21 e4!

All the better for being delayed for 21 moves. Hardly any attack can succeed without the help of pawns. It isn't enough to push the big pieces around and expect the opponent's defences to cave in: they have to be undermined by pawns. —

EXERCISE: Can you see a clever way for White to simplify the position if given the chance?

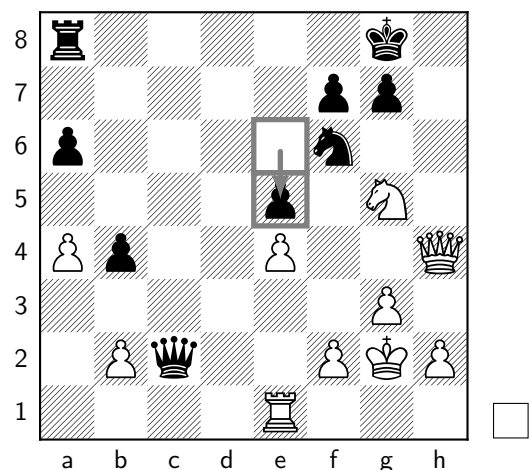


21 e4 ZZ– 22 e5 ♖×e5 23 ♖h8+! ♜×h8 24 ♜×f7+ ♜g8 25 ♜×e5

21... ♖×d1 22 ♖×d1 ♖c2

Still trying to distract White from his initiative by widening the struggle.

23 ♖e1! e5



23...ZZ- 24 e5 ♘d5 25 ♖e4!

24 ♖e3!

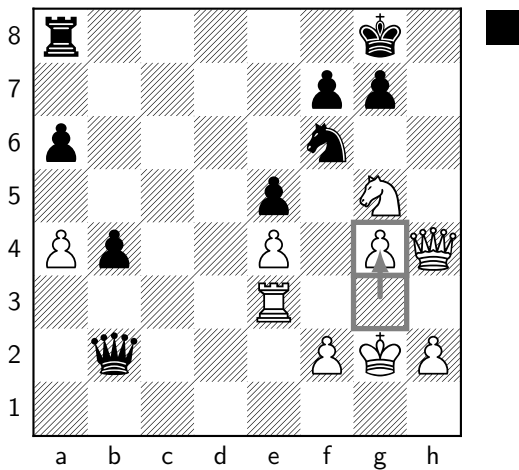
Gambiting the b2-pawn to gain a decisive attack.

24...♔×b2

QUESTION: It looks like Black has serious counterplay with his passed pawn, doesn't he? — ANSWER: There is a move that gives vital energy to White's attack. The b-pawn won't matter.

25 g4

The game move clears the way for the rook to combine its power with the queen on the h-file.



25 ♖f3 ZZ- 26 ♖×f6 g×f6 27 ♔h7+ ♕f8 28 ♔×f7#

25...♔c2 26 ♖h3 ♕f8 27 ♔h8+ ♘g8 28 ♖h7

Now there is no way to defend g7 as 28...g6 allows mate in two moves.

28...♔e7 29 ♔×g7

. With the f7- and e5-pawns both hanging, Black has no time to utilize the b-pawn before his king is butchered.

1-0

White: Nakamura, H.

35: Saint Louis

Black: Anand, V.

Opening ECO: E06

2015

Result: 1-0

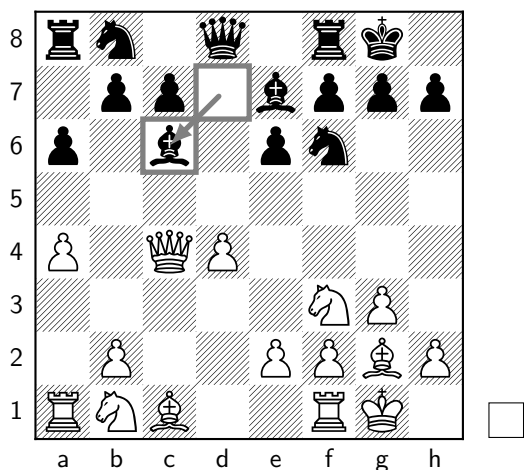
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 g3 ♙e7 5 ♙g2

O-O 6 O-O dxc4 7 ♙c2 a6 8 a4 ♙d7

The main move. The bishop heads for the long diagonal to challenge its counterpart on g2.

9 ♙xc4 ♙c6

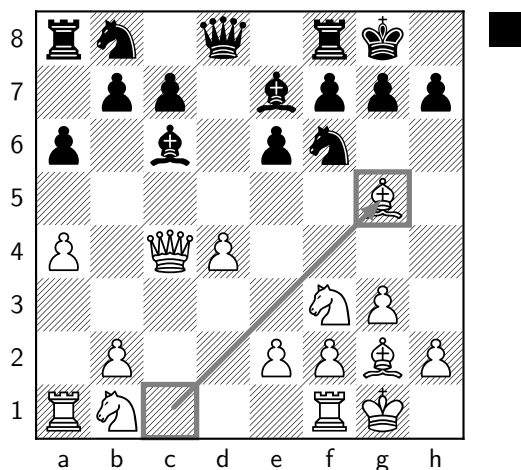
Mission accomplished. — EXERCISE:
Before reading further, can you see any drawbacks for Black to having his bishop on c6?



9...b5 10 ♙c2 bxa4?! 11 ♘e5 ♘d5 12 ♘c3

10 ♙g5

ANSWER: Here are some possible minus points to the bishop being on c6: a) It blocks the c7-pawn, thus ruling out a quick freeing ...c7-c5 advance. — b) The bishop takes away the c6-square from the knight on b8. — c) If White arranges e2-e4 then Ne5 could be strong for him as the exchange with ...Bxg2 won't be possible in reply.

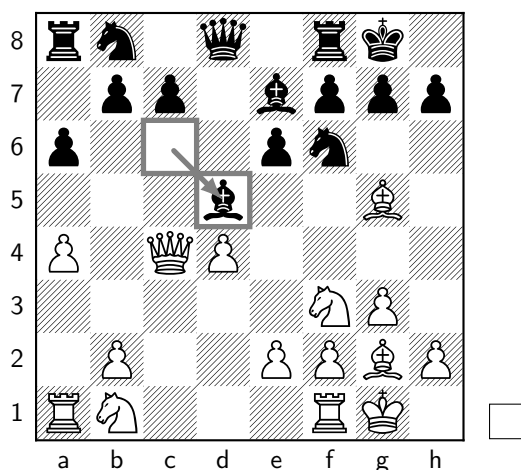


10 ♙f4

10 ♘c3 b5! 11 axb5?? axb5

10...♙d5

Black prepares his freeing move ...c7-c5 with gain of time by hitting the white queen.



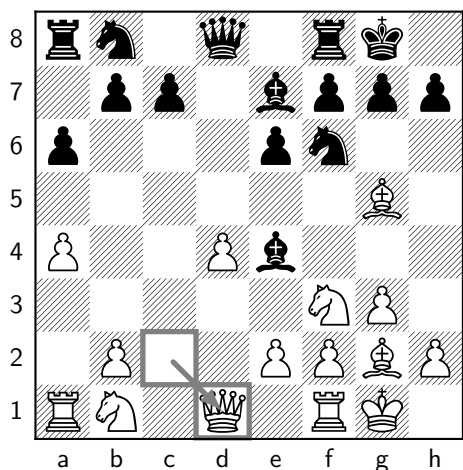
10...♘bd7 11 ♘c3 h6 12 ♙xf6 ♘xf6 13 ♙fe1

10...a5 11 b4 ♖a6 12 ♕×f6 ♕×f6 13 e4
 ♜×b4 14 ♖d1

11 ♖c2 ♕e4

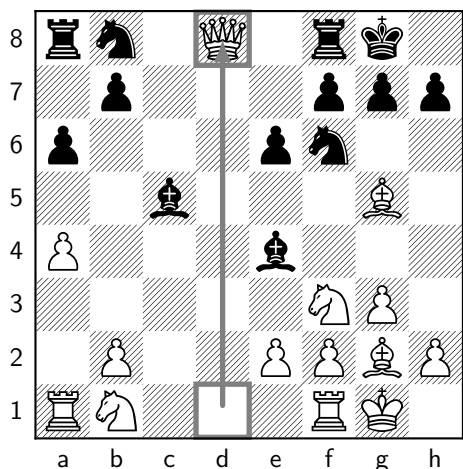
Driving the queen back even further.

12 ♖d1



12 ♖c1 h6 13 ♕×f6 ♕×f6 14 ♖d1 a5 15
 ♜bd2 ♕h7?! 16 ♜b3 c6 17 ♖c3 ♕e7 18
 ♜c5 ♖c7 19 ♜e5 ♜a6 20 ♜×b7! ♖×b7 21
 ♕×c6 ♖c7 22 ♕×a8 ♖×c3 23 b×c3 ♖×a8 24
 ♜c6!

12...c5 13 d×c5 ♕×c5 14 ♖×d8

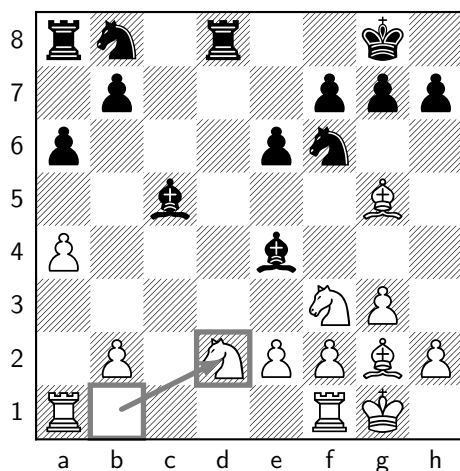


14 ♜bd2 ♕c6 15 ♜e5 ♕×g2 16 ♖×g2 ♕e7
 17 ♖c1 ♜bd7 18 ♜×d7 ♖×d7 19 ♜f3 ♖×d1
 20 ♖f×d1 ♖fc8 21 ♜e5

14...♖×d8

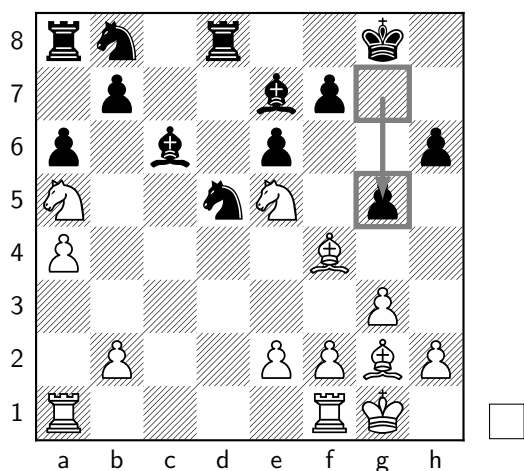
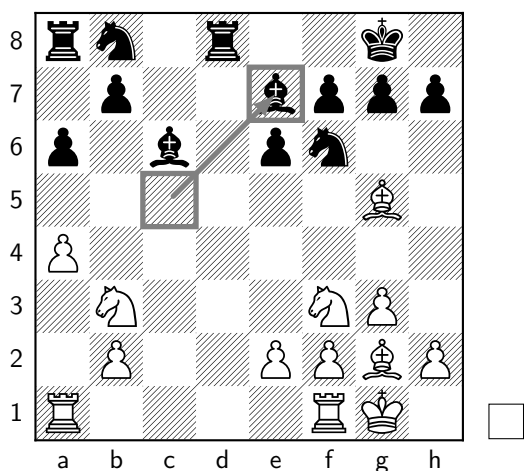
Black has liquidated White's pawn centre without incurring any obvious weaknesses in his own pawn structure. His pieces are on active squares and he has brought his 'problem' bishop to c6 to contest control of the long diagonal. — It feels like Black has solved most of his problems and yet Anand, a world champion at many time controls, won't be able to hold Black's position against Nakamura's probing. Such is the difficulty of defending very slightly worse positions in the Catalan endgame. — QUESTION: Should White continue with 15 Nbd2 or 15 Nc3 to develop his queenside?

15 ♜bd2



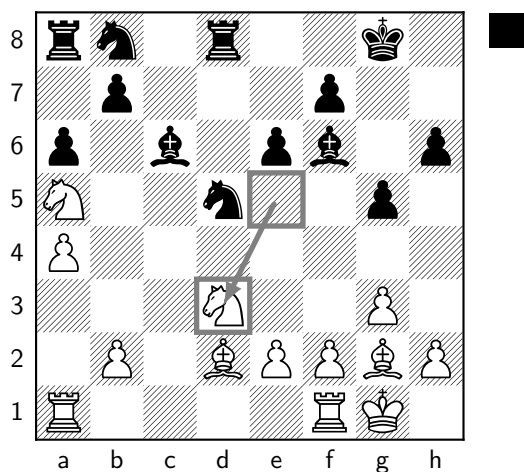
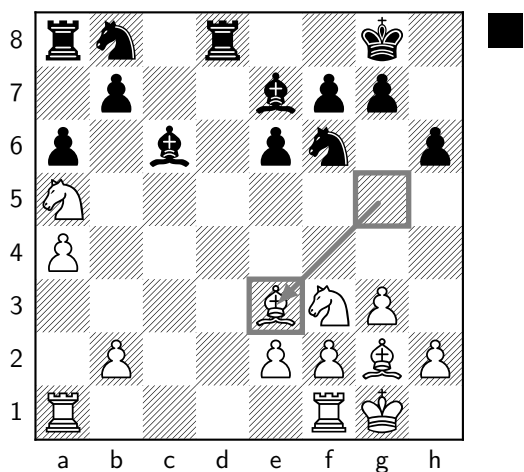
15 ♜c3 ♕c6

15...♕c6 16 ♜b3 ♕e7
 Breaking the pin on f6.



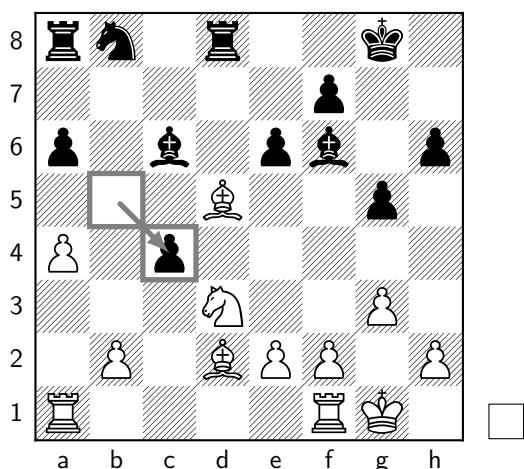
16... ♖b6 17 ♘e5 ♙xg2 18 ♔xg2 ♘bd7 19
 ♘d3 ♖ac8 20 ♖fc1
 17 ♘a5 h6 18 ♙e3

21... ♘xf4 22 gxf4 ♙xg2 23 ♔xg2 ♘d7 24
 ♘d3 ♖ab8 25 ♖fc1 ♙d6 26 ♖c3
 22 ♙d2 ♙f6 23 ♘d3



18 ♙d2? ♙xf3
 18... ♘d5 19 ♙d2 ♘b6 20 ♙f4
 White's bishop plays cat and mouse with
 the black knight.
 20... ♘d5 21 ♘e5
 At last the bishop stops running.
 21... g5
 One more kick at the cleric.

23 ♘exc6 ♘xc6 24 ♘xc6 bxc6 25 ♖ab1
 ♙e7 26 ♖fc1 ♘b4 27 ♙xb4 ♙xb4 28 ♖xc6
 a5
 23... b6 24 ♘c4
 White's knights are going backwards and
 forwards, not landing any strong blow, but
 not allowing Anand to kill off the game
 either and forcing him to be vigilant.
 24... b5 25 ♙xd5 bxc4



25... ♖xd5 26 ♞b6

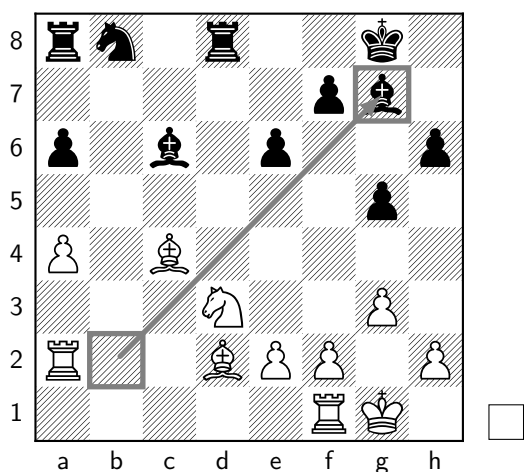
25... ♜xd5 26 ♞b6 ♜a7 27 axb5

25... exd5 26 ♞ce5 bxa4 27 ♞xc6 ♞xc6 28 ♜xa4 ♞d4

26 ♜xc4 ♜xb2

The idea is that Black gets his piece back after 27 Nxb2 Rxd2 with even chances. Nakamura finds a way to keep the tension.

27 ♜a2 ♜g7



27... ♜d4

28 ♜c1 ♜e8 29 ♞c5 ♜f8

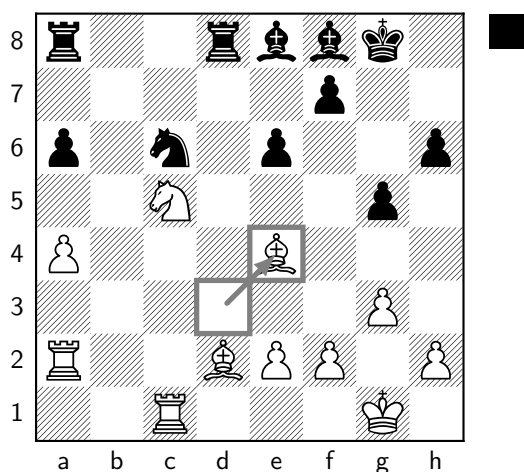
EXERCISE: What is the best way to meet the threat to c5? — ANSWER:

30 ♜d3!

White defends his own knight and regroupes his bishop to e4, where it will hassle the black knight on c6.

30... ♞c6 31 ♜e4

Prudent.



31 ♜xa6? ♜xc5

31 ♞xa6? ♜xd3!

31... ♜dc8 32 ♞f1

Nakamura edges his king nearer to the attack and prevents any ...Nd4 move coming with the threat of a fork on e2.

32... ♜a7 33 ♞b3

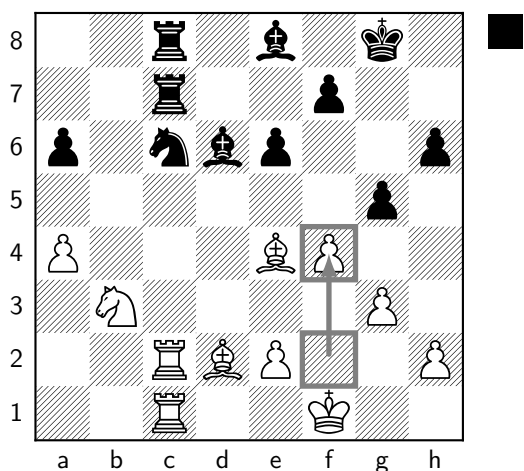
The knight retreats to facilitate a pin by White's rooks along the c-file.

33... ♜ac7 34 ♜ac2 ♜d6

EXERCISE: Nakamura has kept the game alive by avoiding exchanges, retreating when necessary and regrouping his pieces, but it seems that Black has successfully survived the 'interrogation' on the queenside. Can you see how the American Grandmaster added one more bit of pressure to finally make his renowned opponent buckle? — ANSWER:

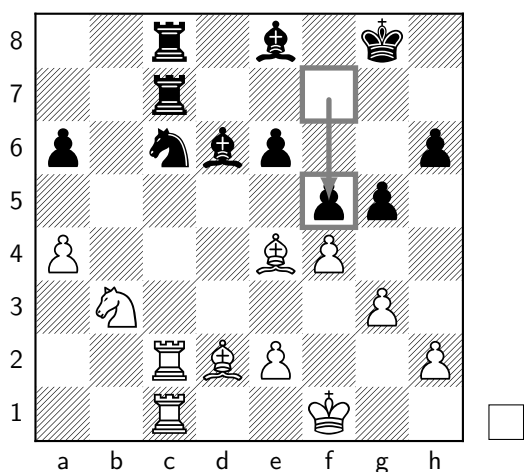
35 f4!

Opening a second front on the kingside.



35 f4 gxf4 36 Bxf4 e5 37 Bxh6

35...f5?!



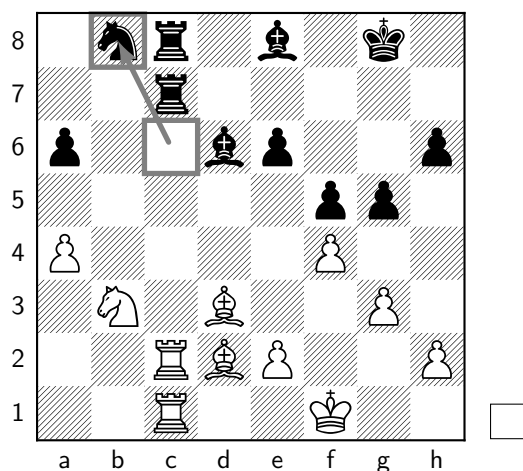
35...Bxa3 36 Rb1 Bxe7

36 Bd3

In an interview after the game Anand was disappointed with himself and said he had suffered "a one-move loss". He said he had forgotten that White's bishop could go to d3, thinking it could only retreat down the long diagonal.

36...Nb8?

Actually it is only here that Black loses the game.



36...Nb8! 37 Rc3 Bb4 38 Rxc4 Ba3

**37 Rxc7 Rxc7 38 Rxc7 Bxc7 39 fxg5 hxg5
40 Nc5**

White's persistence is rewarded with the win of a pawn.

40...Bd6 41 Nxe6 Bxa4 42 Nxg5 Bd7 43 Bc3

. White can advance his h-pawn up the board.

1-0

White: Giri, A.

36: Wijk aan Zee

Black: Aronian, L.

Opening ECO: E06

2014

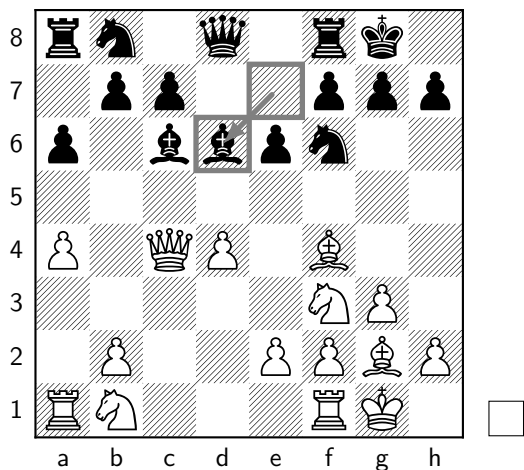
Result: 1/2-1/2

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 g3 ♙e7 5 ♙g2
O-O 6 O-O dxc4 7 ♙c2 a6 8 a4 ♙d7 9
♙xc4 ♙c6 10 ♙f4

QUESTION: Why does White put the bishop on f4? — ANSWER: Black wishes to arrange the freeing advance ...c7-c5. A possible plan for him is to play ...Bd5, getting the bishop out of the way of the pawn with gain of time by attacking the white queen. Putting the bishop on f4 prevents, or at least delays, this plan as ...Bd5 would allow Qxc7.

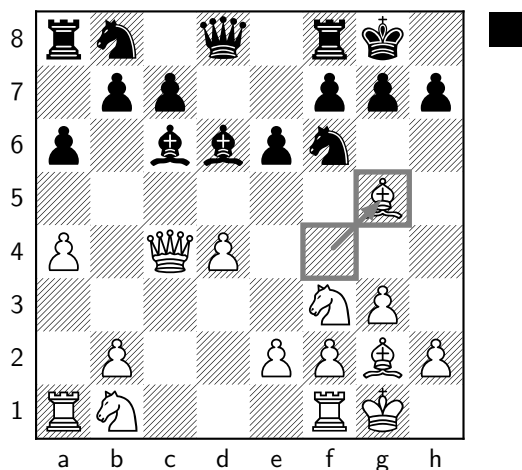
10... ♙d6

A natural response, guarding the c7-pawn and challenging White's bishop.



10... a5 11 ♘c3 ♘a6 12 ♘e5 ♙xg2 13 ♙xg2
♘d5 14 ♙ad1 ♘xf4+ 15 gxf4 ♙d6 16 e3

11 ♙g5



11 ♘c3 ♙xf4 12 gxf4

11 ♙c1!? ♙xf4 12 ♙xf4

11... ♘bd7 12 ♘c3

EXERCISE: What is White's positional threat? — ANSWER: White mustn't be allowed to play 13 e4 unchallenged. If he does then he denies Black's pieces any influence over the e4- and d5-squares, rendering Black's plan of ...Bd7 and ...Bc6 useless. There would also be a threat of 14 e5 winning a piece, or in some cases 14 d5 with the same effect. Black's pieces would be badly bunched together.

12... h6 13 ♙xf6 ♘xf6

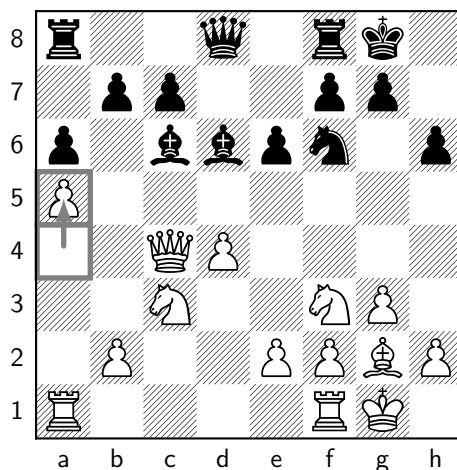
Black must recapture this way or White plays 14 e4 after all. White is often content to give up the fabled bishop pair in the Catalan, although first of all, we should be more precise: White is seldom happy to swap his light-squared bishop for a knight in the Catalan. His bishop on g2 is often key to his strategy, and in such an exchange, he would like to have an extra pawn to cheer himself up (see the 7 Ne5

Nc6 8 Bxc6 bxc6 9 Nxc6 line). We might add though that White is often happy to exchange it off in return for Black's light-squared bishop. — In contrast, it is often even desirable for White to swap his dark-squared bishop for a knight. This is because the light-squared bishop has a nice haven from the bustle of the centre on g2 and a clear strategic role. In contrast the bishop on c1 normally has no safe and useful square away from the centre - apart from in the 8 Qxc4 mainline, where it sometimes finds its nirvana through the manoeuvre Bd2 and Ba5. — White's pawn on d4 helps to clutter the dark squares, reducing the options for his bishop. And generally speaking the blocked nature of the struggle - there are still seven pawns on the board in both armies - reduces the value of the bishop over the knight. Furthermore, Bg5 and Bxf6 often has the good point of deflecting the other black knight from the build-up to a freeing ...c7-c5 or ...e6-e5 advance. In fact it not only slows down Black's preparation of ...c7-c5, but also clears the c1-square with gain of time, thereby facilitating a Rac1 move to obstruct ...c7-c5. — EXERCISE: White wants to advance on the queenside. Should he play 14 a5 or 14 b4? — ANSWER:

14 a5

A move needs to be judged on what it does for a player's strategic chances, and also on what it takes away from the opponent. Everything else being equal, being one square forwards makes a pawn more valuable in an endgame. The reason is simple: it is one step closer to being a queen. — Here the pawn physically blocks Black from advancing 14...a5 himself. This would equalize space on the queenside and make the b4-square a strong point for Black - or if you prefer a hole in White's pawn structure. White no longer has a dark-squared bishop to fight for the b4-square, and the b2-pawn remains

restrained. — By advancing 14 a5 White fixes a space advantage for himself on the queenside, rather than having his own b-pawn restrained by ...a6-a5.



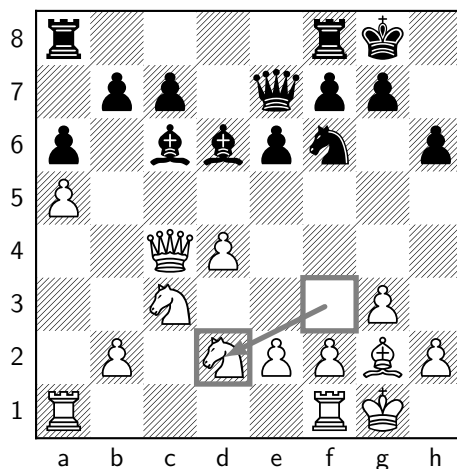
14 b4 ♖d5! 15 ♘×d5 e×d5 16 ♔b3 c6

14 a5 ♖d5 15 ♔d3

14... ♔e7

A useful prophylactic move.

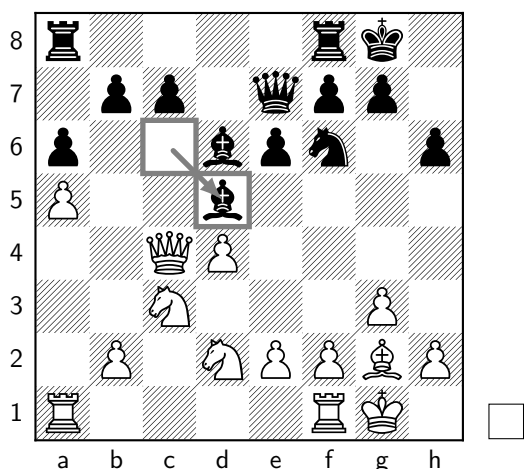
15 ♘d2



15 ♔fe1 ♖b4! 16 ♘e5 ♖×g2 17 ♔×g2 c5!

15... ♖d5

Trying to create some imbalance.



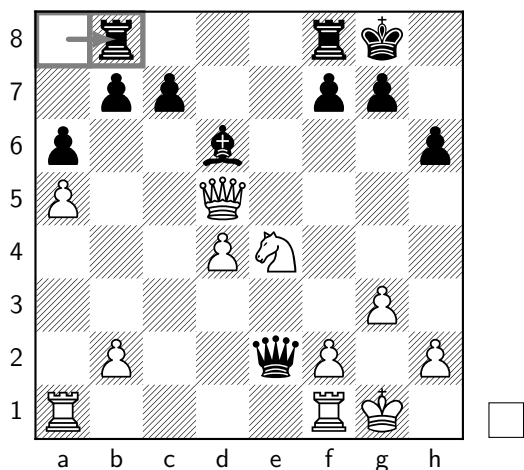
15... ♖xc2 16 ♔xc2 c5

**16 ♖xd5 exd5 17 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 18 ♙xd5
♙xe2 19 ♘e4**

Black looks very close to complete equality, but as so often in the Catalan, precision is required to remove White's lingering edge.

19... ♖ab8?

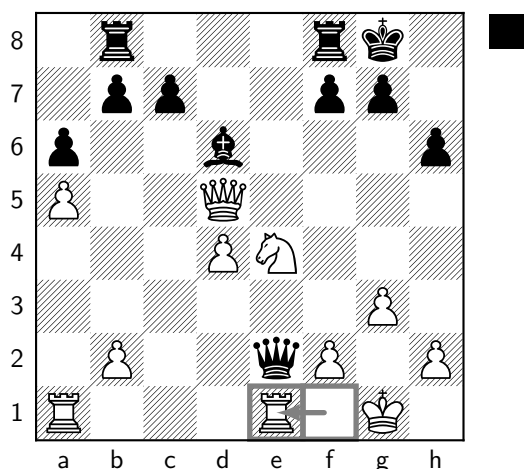
A routine passive move.



**19... ♖b4! 20 ♙xb7 ♖ab8 21 ♙c6 ♙xb2 22
♙xa6? ♙xd4 23 ♙c6 f5**

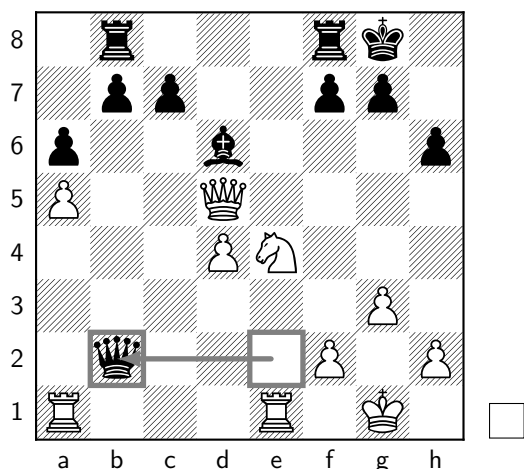
20 ♖fe1

White gains time to activate his rooks by harassing the black queen.



20 ♘xd6 cxd6 21 ♙xd6

20... ♙xb2

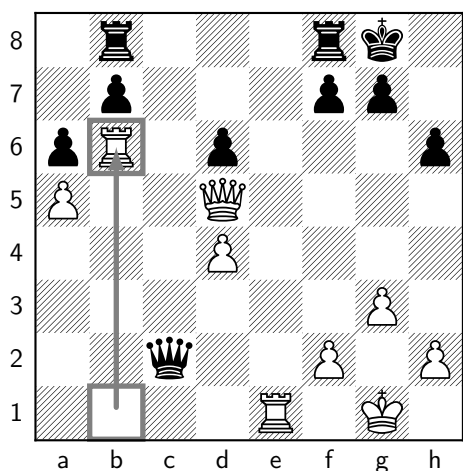


**20... ♙b5 21 ♙xb5 axb5 22 ♘xd6 cxd6 23
♖e7**

21 ♖ab1 ♙c2 22 ♖ec1 ♙e2 23 ♖e1 ♙c2
Giri now decides he wants his rooks on b1 and e1, and so...

24 ♘xd6 cxd6 25 ♖b6!

A classy move. Giri isn't afraid to be a pawn down as he sees that his winning chances depend on keeping the black pieces boxed up. — EXERCISE: Black wants to challenge White's control of the open file by putting a rook on e8. Well, which one would you choose?

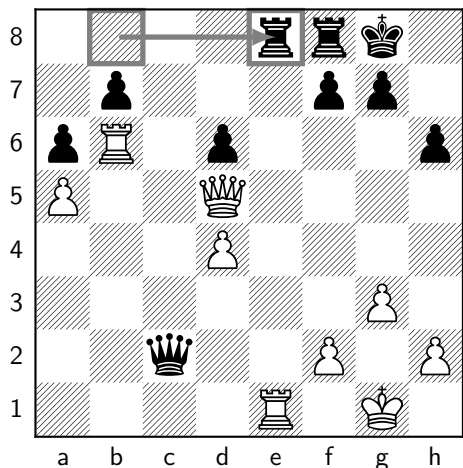


25 Rxb7 Rxb7 26 Qxb7 Qc3

25 Qxd6 Rfd8

25... Rbe8

Throughout chess history a lot has been written about players putting the wrong rook on an open file. As White's last move indicated he was going after the d6-pawn rather than the b7-pawn, Aronian decided to push the passive one on b8 to the open file. He might also have thought the rook on f8 was doing a good job defending f7 and in fact he probably assumed that White would exchange on e8 whichever rook he put there, so it didn't matter much...



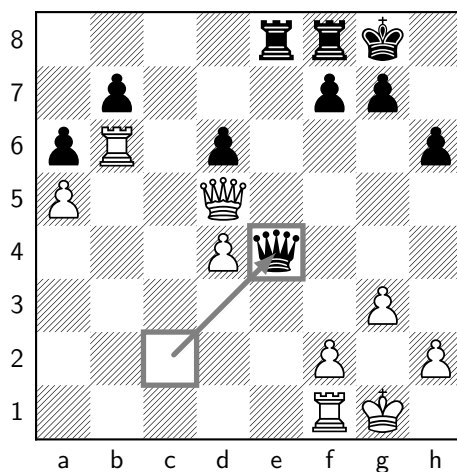
25... Rfe8! 26 Rxe8+ Rxe8 27 Rxb7 Re6!

26 Rf1!

After this quiet move Black is left with a hanging pawn on b7 and an inactive rook on f8.

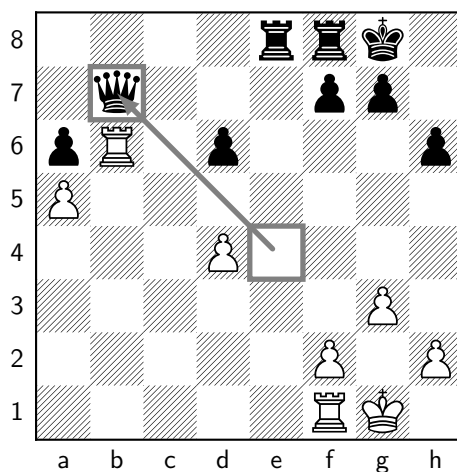
26... Qe4?

His inaccuracy on the previous move seems to have flustered Aronian.



26... Re7 27 Rxd6 Re8

27 Qxb7 Qxb7

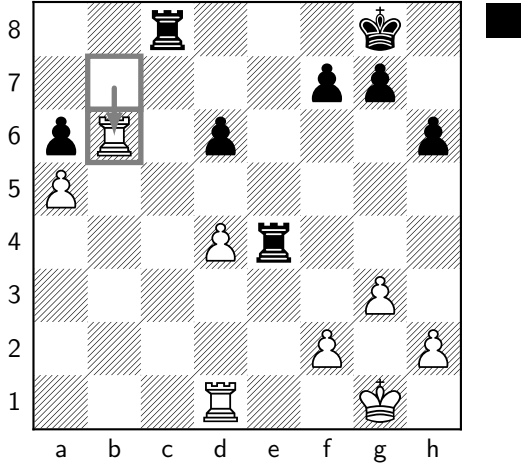


27... Qxd4 28 Rxa6

28 Rxb7 Re4 29 Rd1 Rc8 30 Rb6?

White's winning chances depend on undermining Black's kingside pawns whilst

at the same time ensuring that f2 is adequately defended if Black's rooks are doubled against it. This can be achieved by bringing the rook on d1 into an attack on f7.

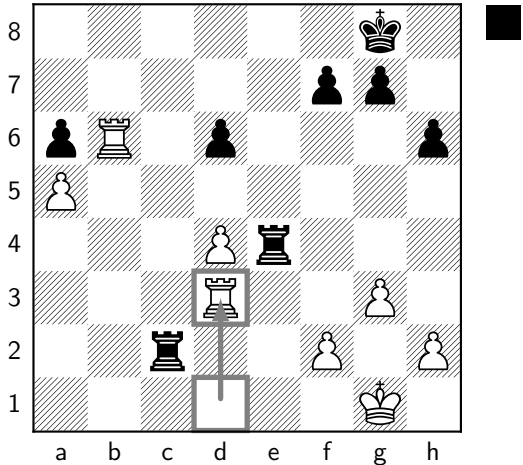


30 ♖a7! ♜c2 31 ♜b1! ♜a2 32 ♜b8+ ♔h7 33 ♜bb7 ♜x a5 34 ♜x f7 ♜g4 35 ♔g2 ♜a4 36 h4 h5 37 d5 a5 38 ♜ad7 ♜g6 39 ♜d8 ♜a2 40 ♜f5 ♜h6 41 ♜ff8 ♜f6 42 ♜x f6 gxf6 43 ♜xd6

30... ♜c2!

Now White won't have time to double his rooks on the seventh rank as Black would get in first against f2.

31 ♜d3

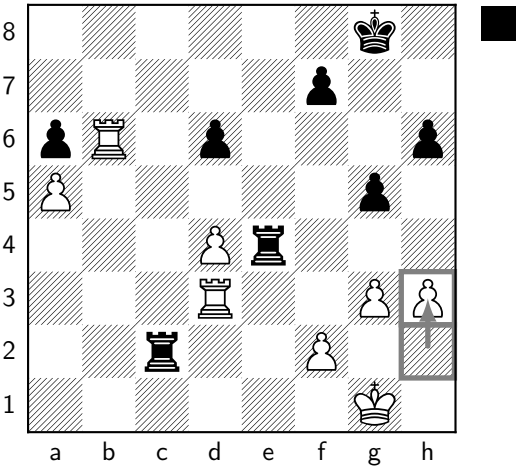


31 ♜xd6 ♜ee2 32 ♜f1 ♜a2 33 ♜xa6 ♜ed2 34 h4 g6 35 h5 gxf5 36 ♜xh6 ♜xa5

31... g5!

Thanks to White's imprecise play, Black's kingside pawns aren't victims, but rather stakes he wishes to drive through the heart of the white king.

32 h3



32 ♜xa6 ♜e1+ 33 ♔g2 g4 34 h3 h5!

32 ♜xd6 ♜e1+ 33 ♔g2 g4 34 h3 h5 35 hxg4 hxg4 36 ♜d5! ♔h7

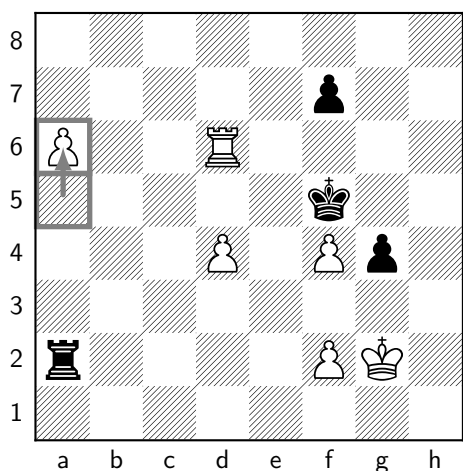
32... h5 33 ♜f3 g4 34 hxg4 hxg4 35 ♜f4

Giri is obliged to exchange rooks in order to keep f2 guarded and meet the threats to his back rank mentioned in the previous note. He wins a pawn or two, but now that there is only one white rook, the black king is able to be strongly activated.

35... ♜xf4 36 gxf4 ♜a2 37 ♜xa6 ♔g7 38 ♔g2 ♔g6!

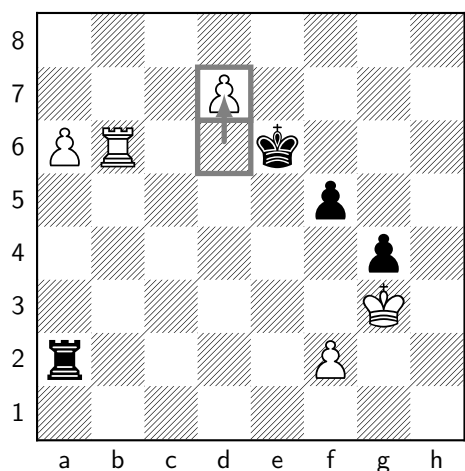
Giving up the d6-pawn with check is a small price to pay for getting the king to the f5-square.

39 ♜xd6+ ♔f5 40 a6



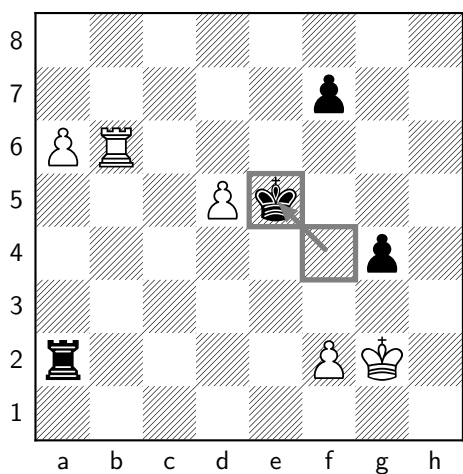
40 ♔g3 ♚a3+

40... ♔×f4 41 ♚f6+ ♔g5 42 ♚b6 ♔f4 43 d5
♔e5



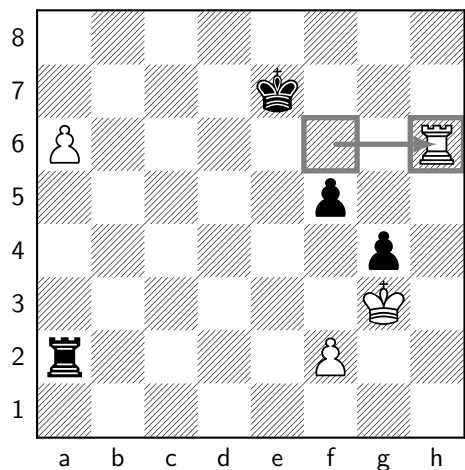
46 f3 ♚a3

46... ♔×d7 47 ♚f6 ♔e7 48 ♚h6



43... g3 44 d6 ♚×f2+ 45 ♔g1

44 d6 ♔e6 45 ♔g3 f5 46 d7+



48 ♚×f5 ♚×a6 49 ♔×g4 ♚a8

48... ♔f7

. If you want to play the Catalan you have to believe in small endgame advantages. It took some astute defence by Aronian and a couple of imprecisions by the Dutch Grandmaster to let Black off the hook.

1/2-1/2

White: Khamitskiy, S.

37: Chojnice

Black: Rawicz, K.

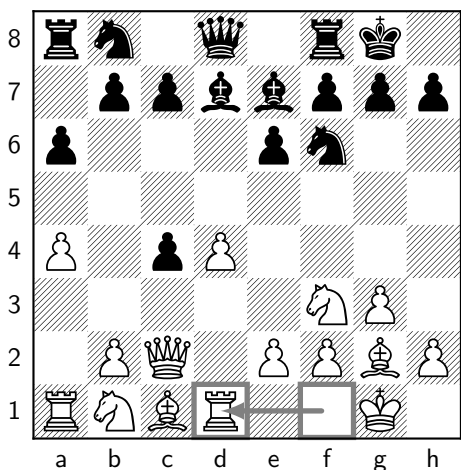
Opening ECO: E05

2010

Result: 1-0

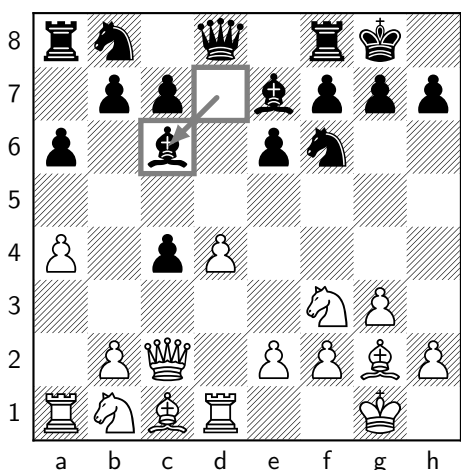
1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 g3 ♘f6 4 ♙g2 ♙e7 5 ♘f3
O-O 6 O-O dxc4 7 ♖c2 a6 8 a4 ♙d7 9 ♖d1

9...c5 10 dxc5 ♙xc5 11 ♘e5 ♖c8 12 ♖xc4
♙b5 13 ♖b3 ♙c6 14 ♘xc6 ♘xc6 15 ♘a3



9 ♖xc4

9... ♙c6



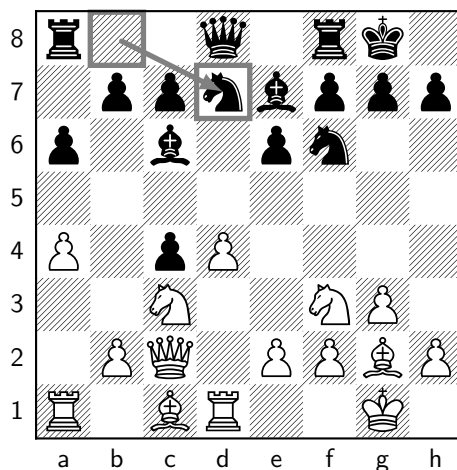
9... ♘c6 10 ♖xc4 b5 11 axb5 axb5 12
♙xa8 ♖xa8 13 ♖xb5 ♖a1 14 ♘c3 ♘xd4
15 ♖b7

10 ♘c3

This is a very dangerous line for Black to face. Routine developing moves will quickly lead to disaster.

10... ♘bd7?

Just what White was hoping for. Black innocently brings out his knight, not realizing that a cataclysm is going to hit his centre.



10... ♘d5 11 e4 ♘b4 12 ♖e2 ♘d3 13 ♙e3
♙b4 14 ♘e1 ♘xe1 15 ♖xe1 a5 16 ♖xc4
♖e7

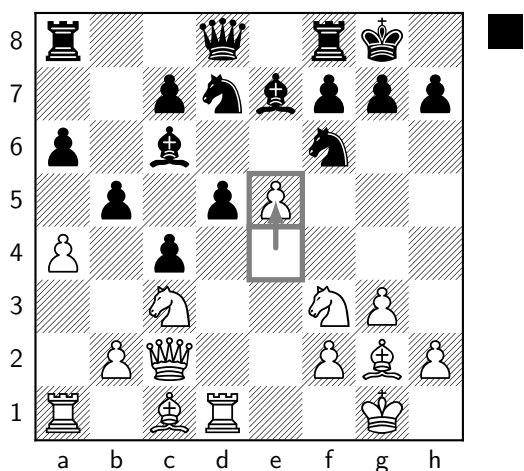
10... ♙xf3

11 e4 b5

EXERCISE: If you were playing White how would you handle the breakthrough in the centre? What would be your next two moves? — ANSWER:

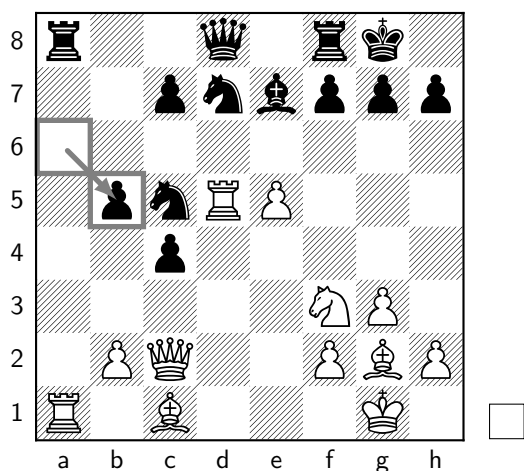
12 d5! exd5 13 e5!

It isn't always right to recapture.



13 e×d5 ♖b7

13... ♘e4



16... ♙e8 17 ♘g5!

17 ♜×a8
ANSWER!

17... ♙×a8 18 ♜×d7!

Setting up a discovered attack on the black queen.

18... ♘×d7 19 ♘g5

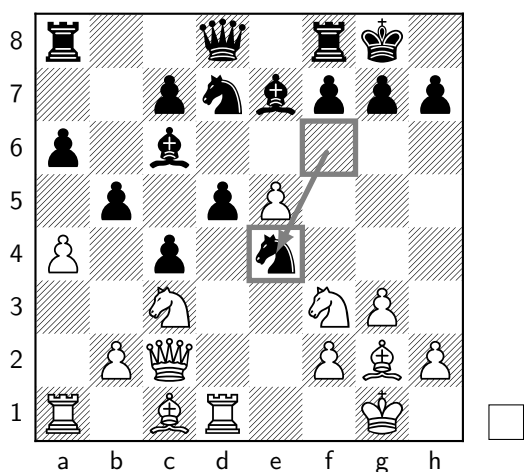
A hyped-up version of a familiar tactical motif in the Catalan and Queen's Indian set-ups. Normally it's a black rook that's the victim on a8, but here it's the queen.

19... g6

There's no way to stop mate on h7 and save the queen.

20 ♙×a8

1-0



13... ♘c5 14 ♘d4 ♙b7 15 e×f6 ♙×f6 16 a×b5 a×b5 17 ♜×a8 ♙×a8 18 ♘×d5! ♙×d5 19 ♘c6

14 ♘×d5 ♙×d5 15 ♜×d5 ♘ec5 16 a×b5 a×b5

EXERCISE: Can you see a winning combination for White?

White: Khenkin, I.

38: Belgian League

Black: Rozentalis, E.

Opening ECO: E06

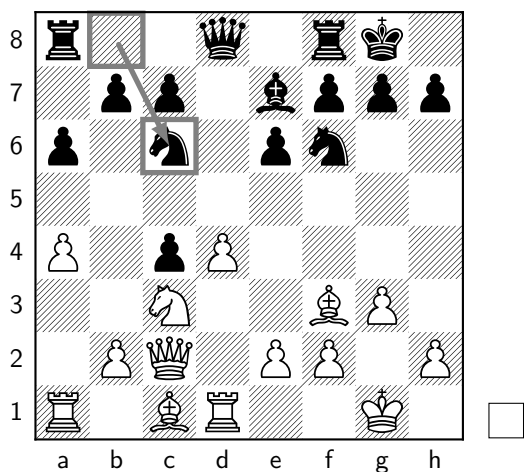
2014

Result: 1/2-1/2

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 g3 ♙e7 5 ♙g2
O-O 6 O-O dxc4 7 ♙c2 a6 8 a4 ♙d7 9 ♖d1
♙c6 10 ♘c3 ♙xf3

Black exchanges off the bishop before 11 e4 leaves him facing the d4-d5 advance that proved so powerful in the previous game. At the same time the c6-square is cleared for the black knight.

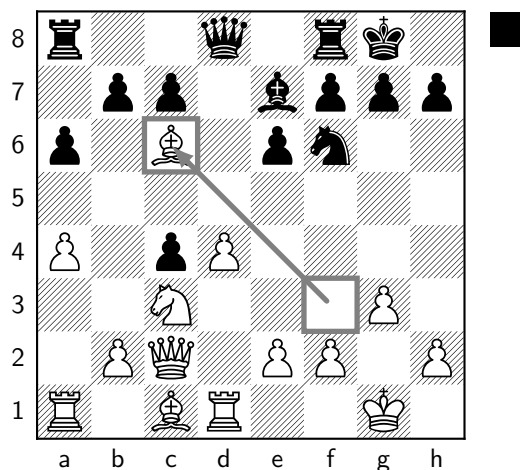
11 ♙xf3 ♘c6



11...c6 12 a5! ♘d5 13 ♙a4 ♘b4 14 ♘e4

12 ♙xc6

QUESTION: Why does White exchange off his bishop for the knight rather than attack it with 12 d5 or at least play 12 e3 to secure the d4-pawn?



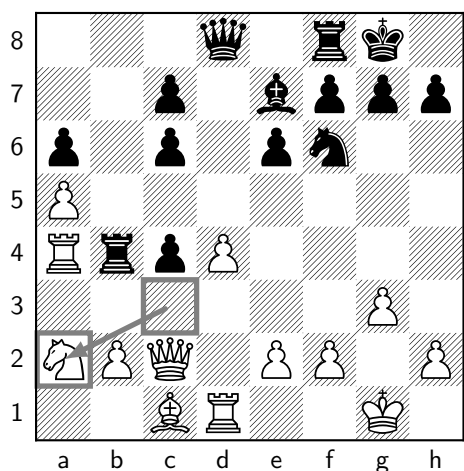
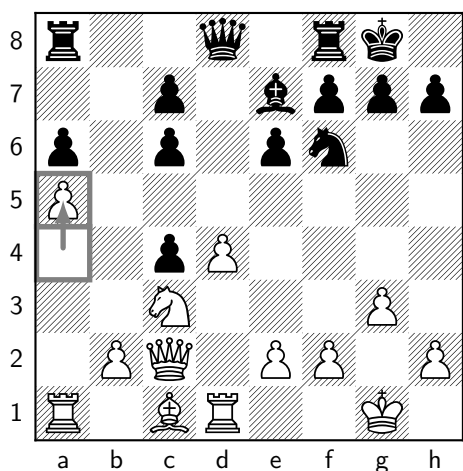
12 d5? ♘b4

12 e3 ♘a5!

12...bxc6 13 a5

Clearing the a4-square for White's rook or queen, after which the c4-pawn looks doomed. Nonetheless, the Lithuanian

Grandmaster Eduardas Rozentalis manages to survive the pressure, which no doubt encouraged him to try his luck again with this line versus Barnusz in the 2016 Austrian League. The trouble is that an opponent rated over 2600 is likely to have devised some fresh instruments of torture.



13 ♖g5 ♜b8 14 e3!? ♜b4 15 ♜ab1 a5 16
 ♜a2 ♜b6 17 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 18 ♜xc4 ♜d5 19
 ♜dc1 ♜f3? 20 ♜c2 ♜fb8 21 ♜c1 e5 22 dxe5
 ♜xe5 23 ♜d3 ♜d6 24 e4! ♜b3 25 ♜d2 g6 26
 ♜bd1 ♜g4 27 ♜xc6 h5 28 e5 ♜f8 29 ♜f4!
 ♜xb2 30 h3 ♜f5 31 ♜xb2 ♜xb2 32 h4 ♜b1
 33 ♜xb1 ♜xb1+ 34 ♜g2 ♜b6 35 ♜a8 ♜b4
 36 e6! ♜g7 37 exf7 ♜xf7 38 ♜d5+ ♜e8 39
 ♜xg6 ♜d6 40 ♜e6+ ♜d8 41 ♜h8! ♜e7 42
 ♜f7+ ♜e8 43 ♜e5 ♜d6 44 ♜f7+ ♜d8 45
 ♜g8+

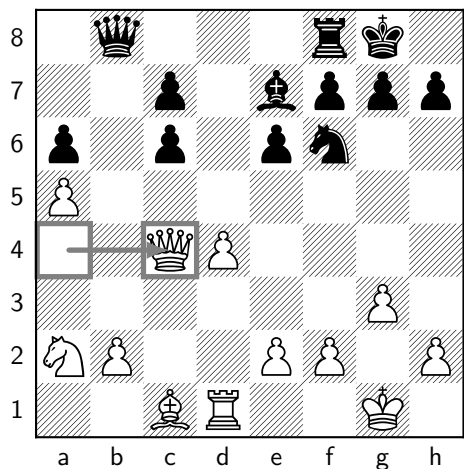
13... ♜b8

The best defensive move. Black prepares to challenge the white rook before it can begin chomping through the black pawns with Ra4 and Rxc4, when c6 would soon drop.

14 ♜a4 ♜b4 15 ♜a2!

15 ♜xb4 ♜xb4

15... ♜xa4 16 ♜xa4 ♜b8 17 ♜xc4



17 ♜xc6? ♜b3 18 ♜c3 ♜b4

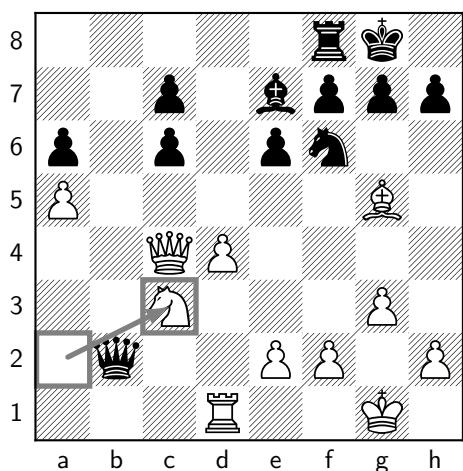
17... ♜b7

Rozentalis has managed to secure his flimsy queenside structure, albeit at the cost of the c4-pawn. His queen is active, eyeing the b2 pawn, and in the long term the white pawn on a5 might become a target of his bishop.

18 ♜g5

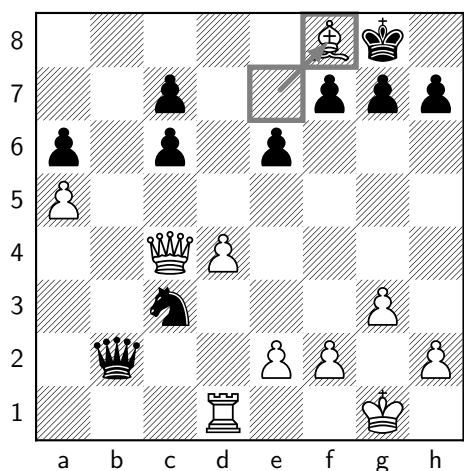
The bishop doesn't want to remain tied to b2. White therefore sacrifices a pawn for a second time in order to try for the initiative.

18... ♜xb2 19 ♜c3



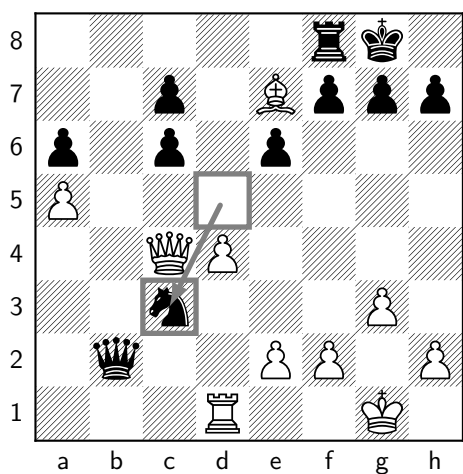
19 ♙×f6 g×f6! 20 ♘c3 ♖b4 21 ♙×c6 ♙×a5
22 ♖b1

19... ♘d5 20 ♙×e7 ♘×c3!



21 ♖e1 ♖b8 22 ♙×a6 h6 23 ♙d3 ♖a8

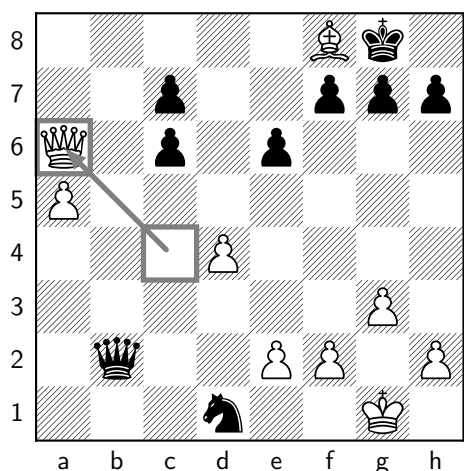
21... ♘d1 22 ♙×a6



20... ♘e7 21 ♖b1 ♙c2 22 e4

21 ♙×f8

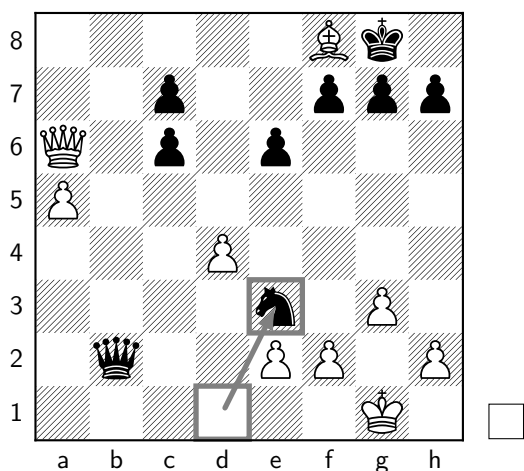
Acquiescing in a draw.



22 ♙b4 ♙b1

22... ♘e3!

A pretty move to force a draw.



22... ♔×f8 23 ♚c8+ ♕e7 24 ♚×c7+ ♕f6 25
 ♚f4+ ♕g6 26 ♚g4+ ♕h6 27 ♚h4+ ♕g6 28
 ♚g4+

23 f×e3

Mate was threatened.

23... ♚b1+

The players could shake hands here, but Khenkin wants to make sure his king can't escape. Or perhaps they are keen to play a few more moves to show some fighting spirit as it was a team competition? In fact the game had already been played before up until the first drawing sequence in P.Leko-L.Aronian, Istanbul Olympiad 2012.

24 ♕f2 ♚f5+ 25 ♕e1 ♚b1+ 26 ♕d2 ♚b2+
 27 ♕d3 ♚b3+ 28 ♕d2 ♚b2+ 29 ♕e1
 ♚b1+ 30 ♕f2 ♚f5+ 31 ♕g2 ♚e4+ 32 ♕h3
 ♚f5+ 33 g4 ♚f1+ 34 ♕g3 ♚g1+ 35 ♕f3
 ♚f1+ 36 ♕g3

1/2-1/2

White: 10: Main Line: 7 Qc2 a6 8 Qxc

?

Black: ?

Opening ECO: E05

Result: *

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 g3 ♗e7 5 ♗g2

O-O 6 O-O dxc4 7 ♖c2 a6

. After White recaptures the pawn with

8 ♖xc4

, Black is able to put his light-squared bishop on the long diagonal with

8...b5 9 ♖c2 ♗b7

. He is very close to equality, which is why the Catalan mainline is popular as Black among the world's best players. All that remains is to be rid of the weakness on c7 with a well-timed ...c7-c5 advance. — Of course, White must prevent or render ineffective the ...c7-c5 break if he wishes to keep an advantage. It was dissatisfaction with his chances of doing so after 10 Bf4 or 10 Bg5 that made attention focus on 10 Bd2. All three bishop moves are analyzed here. As we shall see, White maintains a slight plus after 10 Bd2, though Black has good chances of a successful defence.

*

White: Zaja, I.

39: Bosnjaci

Black: Blagojevic, M.

Opening ECO: E06

2015

Result: 1-0

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♘f3 ♙e7 5 ♙g2
O-O 6 O-O dxc4 7 ♚c2 a6 8 ♚xc4 b5

Now with his queen hanging White has no time to stop the black bishop reaching a delightful diagonal.

9 ♚c2

The most sensible reply. On c2 the queen

White keeps an eye on c7, the main weakness in Black's camp, and also has influence over the e4-square. Also on c2 the queen can be used with one of the rooks to exert pressure on c7 and help restrain ...c7-c5 after a future Rc1.

9... ♙b7

In old books Black's light-squared bishop is described as his problem child in the Queen's Gambit. In contrast, once it sits on b7 it is the pride of the Catalan family. It is in no whit inferior to White's bishop on g2. In fact, White frequently makes an effort to exchange off the bishops for each other, as

Black's is a source of counterplay and prevents White establishing a bind on the queenside. — QUESTION: But I've heard it said that that 'if Black manages to exchange off light-squared bishops he will ease the pressure on the queenside.' —

ANSWER: Well, let's hope your future opponents believe that is true as you'll win a lot of games! Though jumping ahead it must be admitted that in the present game

Black would have been delighted if his light-squared bishop wasn't on the board...

10 ♙d2!

Other moves are analyzed later in the chapter. — QUESTION: What is the point of this move and why has it got an exclamation mark? — ANSWER: In the

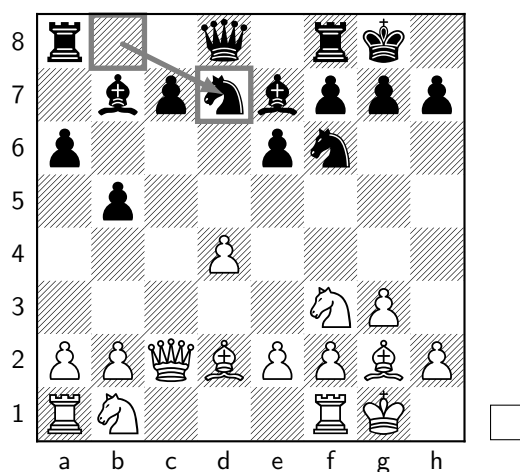
Catalan White's bishop on f1 has a lot of care lavished on it. Right at the beginning of the game two moves are spent on establishing it in a safe and comfortable residence on g2. Not so the bishop on c1. It finds its activity circumscribed by its own pawn on d4 and sometimes on e3 as well.

And so it is frequently sent off to f4 or g5 where White is somewhat relieved when it is exchanged off for a knight. — However, then another route for the bishop was discovered: it could go to d2 and shoot off to a5, where it has a key role in attacking

Black's backward pawn on c7. The circumstances have to be right for Ba5 to be a good idea, but even if they aren't, the latent threat of Ba5 is annoying for Black.

10... ♘bd7

Blagojevic develops and pointedly ignores the idea behind his opponent's last move.



10... ♙d6

10... ♘c6

11 ♖a5

Here attacking c7 is a good idea. Naturally if Black had played 10...Nc6 (as in Evdokimov-Abdyjapar below), the bishop's visit to a5 would be ruled out, at least temporarily. Though as we shall see ...Nc6 is a problematical move for Black: the knight is active, but it blocks the freeing advance of the c-pawn. — Instead, Black might have delayed ...Nbd7, say with 10...Bd6 (Caruana-Karjakin below). Then the bishop's foray 11 Ba5? could be rebuffed by 11...Nc6, gaining time to develop and forcing the cleric into shamefaced retreat. In fact as long as the black knight is on b8 playing Ba5 looks dubious, but of course the black knight can't remain forever on b8. A situation might arise where both players are looking around for useful waiting moves, White not wanting to play Ba5 and Black not wanting to play ...Nbd7 or ..Nc6. — If White is unable to land his bishop on a5, it still has a possible role on d2 in supporting the pawn advance b2-b4, to put a clamp on the c5-square. In this type of centre Black, of course, dreams of playing ...c7-c5 in a safe way. It would rid him of the only serious weakness in his camp, the backward pawn on c7.

11... ♜c8

Black defends his pawn and completes the development of his queenside.

12 ♞bd2

EXERCISE: Give some reasons why this is a better square for the knight than c3. —

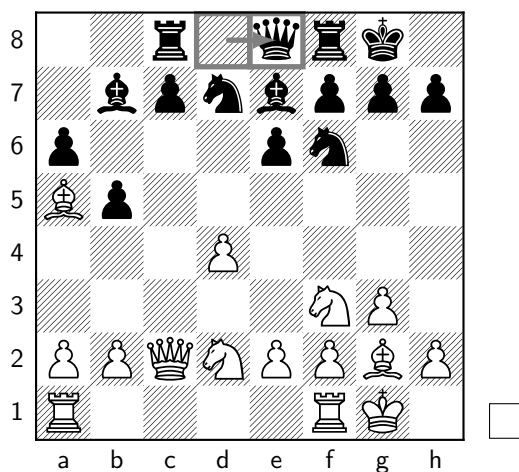
ANSWER: From d2 the knight has the option of going to b3 to add its weight to the fight for the c5-square. At the moment this square is a hole in Black's queenside pawn structure, but the defect would vanish should Black be able to advance ...c7-c5. Therefore it is critical that all the white pieces contribute to restraining this freeing move. — On c3 the knight wouldn't have access to any useful squares and

blocks the white queen's pressure on c7.

Even worse, it cuts off the retreat of the bishop on a5. Black could change his mind about developing his knight and respond 12...Nb8! with the threat of 13...Nc6, attacking both the bishop and the pawn on d4. White has no good way to meet this. If, for example, he plays 13 b4 then 13...Nc6 and 14...Nxa5 will smash up his queenside pawns.

12... ♚e8

Breaking the pin on c7 and so clearing the way for 13...c5.



12... ♞b8 13 a3!? ♞c6 14 ♖c3

13 b4!

Exactly. White must stop Black from freeing his game.

13... ♜d6

Black switches to the plan of 14...e5 followed by 15...exd4. This would weaken White's grip on the c5-square, whereupon 16...c5 becomes possible again.

14 e4! e5 15 ♜fe1!

Defeating Black's plan, or rather delaying it, as if 15...exd4 16 e5 wins material due to the fork.

15... ♚e7 16 a3

Not letting the b4-pawn be captured.

16... ♖fe8 17 ♜ad1

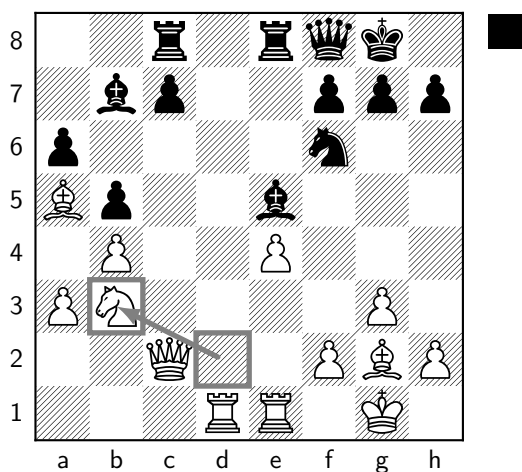
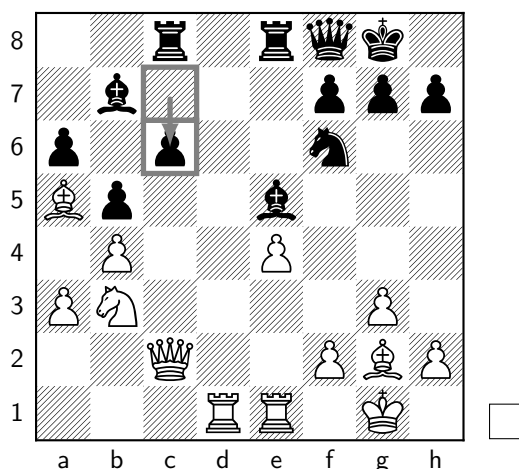
White has found time to bring up all his pieces into the battle.

17... ♔f8

EXERCISE: Having evacuated the queen from e7, Black is once again ready to play 17...exd4 and then 18...c5. How can White nip this plan in the bud? — ANSWER:

18 dxe5 ♘xe5 19 ♘xe5 ♙xe5 20 ♘b3!

At last the knight gets to b3 to prevent Black's freeing move. There is also the threat to win a piece with 21 f4 Bd6 22 e5.



20 f4 ♙d4+

20... c6?

A horrible-looking move that shuts in the bishop on b7. Black also makes the bishop on a5 a stronger piece by allowing it control of the d8-square.

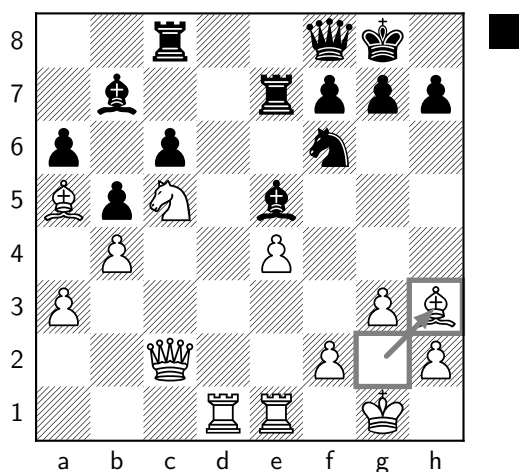
20... ♙d6

21 ♘c5

Winning the battle for the c5-square in decisive style.

21... ♖e7 22 ♙h3!

The Catalan bishop has the last word.



22 ♙h3 ♖ce8 23 ♘xb7 ♖xb7 24 ♙xc6

1-0

White: Caruana, F.

Black: Karjakin, S.

Opening ECO: E06

Result: 1-0

40: Wijk aan Zee

2014

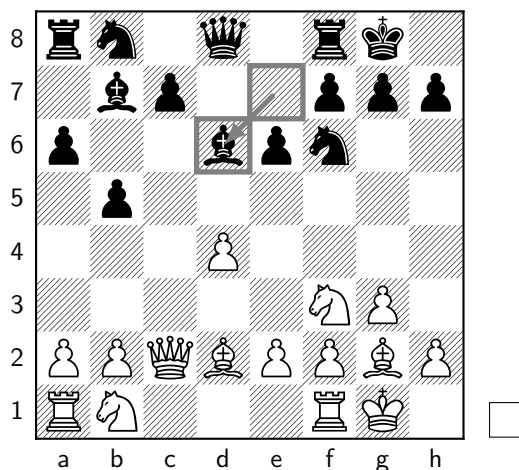
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♘f3 ♙e7 5 ♙g2
O-O 6 O-O dxc4 7 ♖a4 a6 8 ♖xc4 b5 9
♙c2 ♙b7 10 ♙d2 ♙d6

EXERCISE: Before reading on, would you like to suggest some reasons for putting the bishop on d6? — ANSWER: There are many reasons for Black playing 10...Bd6. Firstly, it adds a defender to c7. It positions the bishop ready to contest the e5-square should a white knight invade with Ne5. It clears the e7-square for the black queen.

The move ...c7-c5 isn't the only pawn break in town: Black could build up towards ...e6-e5 with ...Nbd7 and ...Qe7. — If White decides to play Bf4, he now has to reckon with doubled pawns after the exchange ...Bxf4 and recapture g3xf4. We could debate who profits the most from the exchange, and Black probably wouldn't play ...Bxf4; but in any case Bf4 is no longer a free ride for White in putting pressure on c7. — When you assess a move you also have to ask yourself what hasn't the player done in choosing the move? With 10...Bd6

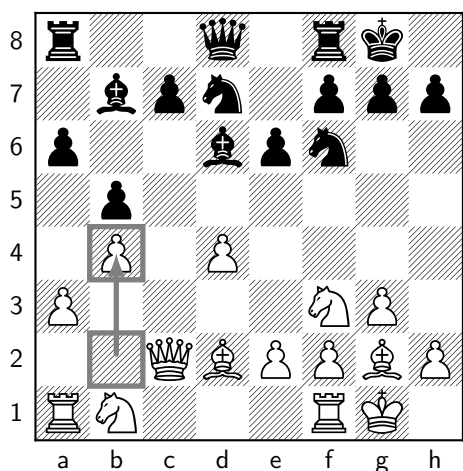
he has avoided committing the knight on b8. This means that the idea of Ba5 is unavailable for White as ...Nc6 chases the bishop away. Leaving the knight on b8 also means that the c6-square is better defended for now. — EXERCISE: So much for the good points of 10...Bd6. Can you see a drawback and how can White try to exploit it? — ANSWER: An obvious disadvantage to 10...Bd6 is that the bishop and the knight on f6 are now lined up for an e4-e5 fork. In other games White has tried to exploit this with ideas such as Nh4 or Ng5, exchanging the light-squared bishops, and then e2-e4; or Re1 and e2-e4;

or Nc3 and e2-e4: or by pinning the knight on f6 with Bg5 and then Bxf6 and e2-e4. Black, for his part, has defensive resources based on arranging ...e6-e5. — Instead Caruana settles for 'normal' queenside pressure, planning b2-b4 to bolster his control over the c4-square. Any e2-e4 advance will come later (jumping ahead it will come on move 40!).



10... ♙bd7

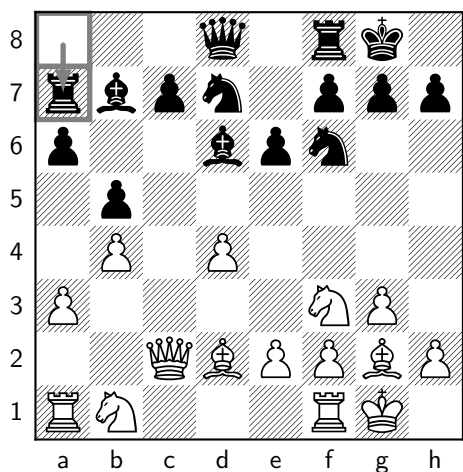
11 a3 ♙bd7 12 b4



12 ♖a5 ♜b8 13 b4 e5!

12...♖a7

QUESTION: What is the point of this distinctly non-classical move? — ANSWER: It defends b7 against a surprise attack;



12...♞e8 13 ♞g5!

12...e5 13 dxe5 ♞xe5 14 ♞xe5 ♞xg2 15 ♞xf7! ♜xf7 16 ♜xg2

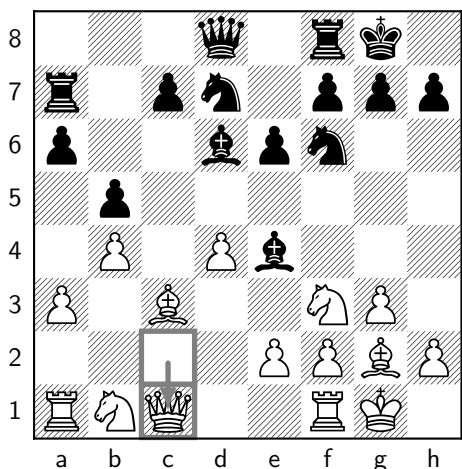
13 ♞c3

Caruana's plan unfolds. He deters ...e6-e5 and clears the way for Nbd2 followed by Nb3, aiming at a5 or c5, or perhaps e2-e4, gaining space.

13...♞e4

A common idea in the Catalan mainline. The bishop forces the white queen to an inferior square. — QUESTION: I can see that, but after the queen retreats isn't White going to play Nbd2, forcing the black bishop to go away, and then Qc2, recouping the time he has lost? So Black hasn't profited by the manoeuvre, except by gaining time on the clock? — ANSWER: Well, the bishop will go back to d5, where it is slightly better placed than on b7. So Black has achieved something.

14 ♜c1



14 ♜b3

14 ♜a2

14 ♜d2

14 ♜b2 ♞b6!

14...♜a8!

EXERCISE: Try to work out why Karjakin prefers a8 for his queen rather than e7. — ANSWER: The queen takes possession of the square vacated by 12...Ra7. Notice that in terms of influence she is just as centralized here as on e7, or even more so, as she looks down the long diagonal at some key light squares. She adds her weight to that of the bishop on e4 and knight on f6 in restraining a future e2-e4 space grab by White. Furthermore, she

pins the knight on f3 which reduces White's freedom of action and might facilitate a ...e6-e5-pawn break to liquidate the white centre. The black queen also adds a defender to the sensitive c6-square and in some cases will support an ...a6-a5 freeing advance.

15 ♖bd2 ♙d5 16 ♔c2

The queen returns to c2, clearing the c1-square for the rooks and lending a hand to a future e2-e4 advance.

16... ♜b6

Black rules out any chance of White nibbling at his queenside with a3-a4 and plans counterplay along the a-file himself if given the chance.

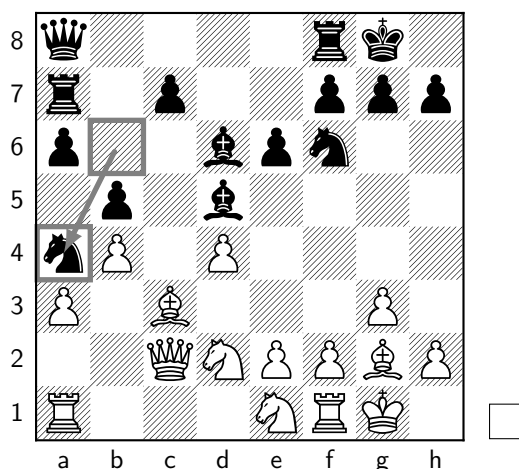
17 ♞e1!

QUESTION: What does White achieve with this knight retreat? — ANSWER: First of all, White escapes the pin on f3 in a way that defends his bishop. He threatens to gain space with 18 e4 - in fact this would win a piece in view of the potential 19 e5.

Meanwhile the white knight can re-emerge from e1 on d3 where it controls the c5- and e5-squares, or on g2 after an exchange of bishops there. — The exchange of light-squared bishops often facilitates White exploiting the weaknesses in Black's queenside structure. As a rule White doesn't need to be concerned about being mated in the Catalan mainline, whereas Black has to worry about losing the defender of c6.

17... ♞a4!

'The best answer to a threat is to ignore it'.



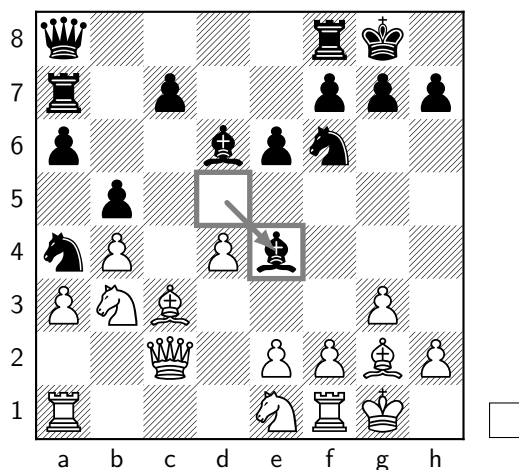
17... ♙xg2 18 ♞xg2

17... ♞a4 18 e4? ♞xc3 19 ♔xc3 ♞xe4

18 ♞b3

White deters the ...a6-a5 break. Notice that Caruana waited until it was necessary to play this move as it loosens his hold on the c4- and e4-squares.

18... ♙e4



18... ♙xg2 19 ♞xg2

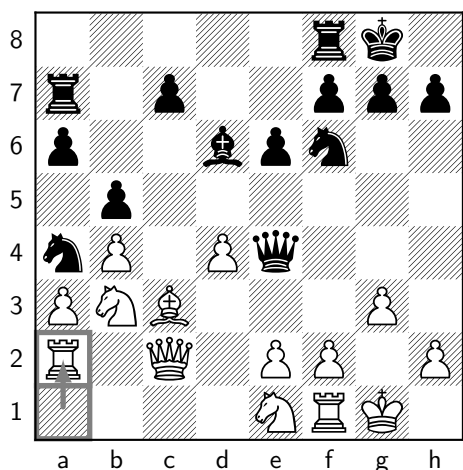
18... ♞e4 19 ♙b2

19 ♙xe4 ♔xe4

Threatening 20...Qxc2 21 Nxc2 Nxc3, winning a piece.

20 ♖a2!

The only good move.

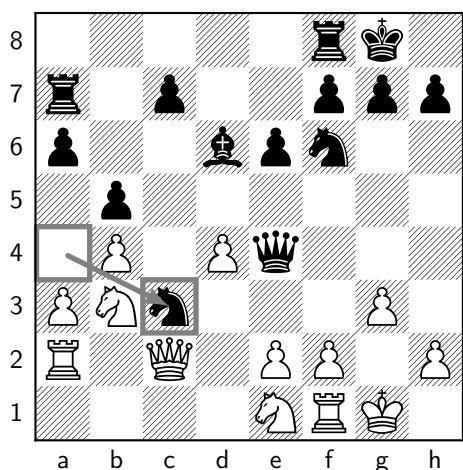


20 ♖c1 ♘xc3 21 ♙xc3 ♙xe2

20 ♙xe4? ♘xe4 21 ♘d2 a5! 22 bxa5 ♘xd2
23 ♘xd2 ♖xa5

20... ♘xc3?

Despite the expression 'a knight is grim on the rim', Karjakin should avoid this exchange in order to keep an imbalance in the position. He plans to free his game with ...e6-e5, but it backfires and he ends up in a bleak endgame.



20... ♖aa8

20... ♖e8

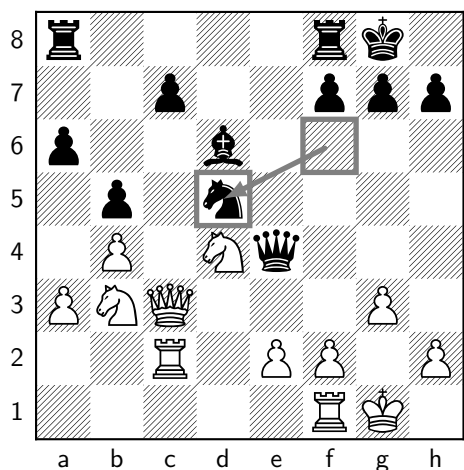
21 ♙xc3 e5 22 ♘f3! exd4 23 ♘fxd4

The only thing that has been freed by 21...e5 is White's knight, which has gone from obscurity on e1 to a starring role on d4.

23... ♖aa8 24 ♖c2

In the absence of any counterplay, the backward pawn and hole on c6 are looking ominous for Black.

24... ♘d5



24... ♙g6

25 ♙f3!

The art of exchanging wisely. Black's weaknesses on the c-file are fixed forever, so the exchange of queen's clarifies White's advantage. Most crucially, Caruana will be able to use his king to support an advance of his 4-3 kingside majority without any worries about his safety.

25... ♙xf3 26 ♘xf3 ♖fe8 27 ♖d1 ♘b6

EXERCISE: How do we stop Black's knight going to c4 and attacking a3? — ANSWER:

28 ♘a5!

It's the turn of the white knight to go to the edge of the board.

28... g6 29 e3

The first sign of life from White's kingside pawns. It is their advance combined with

the pressure on the queenside that will overwhelm the black defence.

29... ♖g7 30 ♖d3 ♖ac8 31 ♖c6

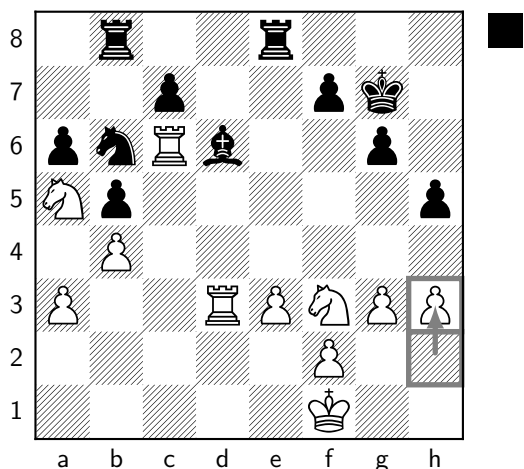
Crushing any hope of Black ever advancing ...c7-c5.

31... ♖b8

The threat was 32 Rdx d6 cxd6 33 Rxb6 winning a piece.

32 ♖f1 h5 33 h3

White wants to manoeuvre his knight from f3 to b3 to strengthen his queenside grip;



33 ♖d2 h4

33... ♖f6 34 ♖d2 ♖g7 35 ♖db3 ♖e6 36 ♖g2 ♖f8

EXERCISE: How should White increase his advantage? — ANSWER:

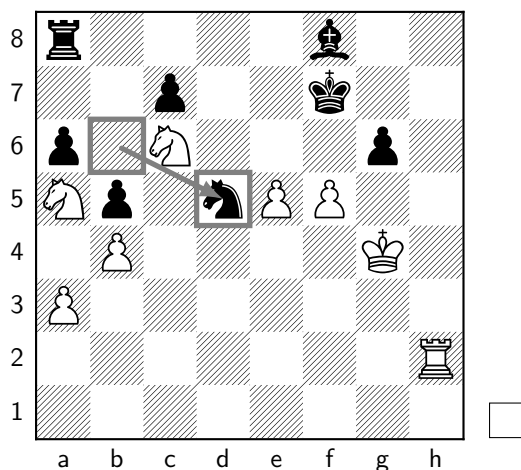
37 f4! ♖e8 38 ♖f3 ♖ed8 39 ♖c2 ♖d7 40 e4 ♖e8 41 e5 ♖e7 42 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 43 ♖d2+ ♖e8 44 ♖c6 ♖a8 45 ♖ba5

The white knights assume the role of blocking Black's queenside pawns, freeing the rook to support White's pawn advance on the kingside.

45... f5 46 g4 h×g4+ 47 h×g4 f×g4+ 48 ♖×g4 ♖f7 49 ♖h2 ♖f8 50 f5

It's all too easy. White's pawn majority plays a decisive role on the kingside, whereas Black's queenside pawns are paralyzed by the white knights.

50... ♖d5



50... g×f5+ 51 ♖×f5

51 f6

The black bishop is now as blocked in as his pawns.

51... ♖×f6+ 52 e×f6 ♖×f6

Black's knight sacrifice allows him to extend the game a long time. He 'only' has to exchange rooks and eliminate every pawn on the board, throwing in his bishop as a gift, when it is well known that two knights can't force checkmate against a lone king. Naturally there is more chance of you or me beating Magnus Carlsen than Caruana allowing that to happen. — The remaining moves were:

53 ♖f2+ ♖e6 54 ♖e2+ ♖d5 55 ♖d2+ ♖e4 56 ♖b7 ♖e3 57 ♖d7 ♖e8 58 ♖×c7 ♖h6 59 ♖c5 ♖f8 60 ♖e7+ ♖d2 61 ♖e6 ♖f1 62 ♖a7 ♖e3 63 ♖×a6 ♖e2 64 ♖×g6 ♖f4+ 65 ♖h3 ♖f3+ 66 ♖g3 ♖f7 67 ♖×b5 ♖f2 68 ♖b3 ♖f4 69 ♖c3+ ♖f1 70 ♖b1+ ♖e1 71 ♖×e1+

. There is a fork on d3 coming. A fine example of Caruana's relentless technique.

1-0

White: Evdokimov, A.

41: Moscow

Black: Abdyjapar, A.

Opening ECO: E05

2015

Result: 1-0

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♘f3 ♙e7 5 ♙g2
dxc4 6 O-O O-O 7 ♖c2 a6 8 ♖xc4 b5 9
♙c2 ♙b7 10 ♙d2 ♘c6

Black prevents any Ba5 ideas and attacks d4, but of course the knight is now in the way of the ...c7-c5 advance.

11 e3

EXERCISE: Can you suggest a good plan for White if Black plays passively? — ANSWER:

After White's modest pawn move defending d4, the black knight is awkwardly placed on c6. Given the chance White will play moves like Rc1 and a2-a3 (to stop ...Nb4) then Ne1, attacking c6 and with the plan of Nd3 aiming for control of the c5-square. If White can arrange Nc5 in this type of structure and oblige Black to respond with ...Bxc5 then after Qxc5 he will be close to winning from a positional viewpoint due to Black's weak dark squares and the continuing pressure along the c-file. However, if after Nc5 and ...Bxc5 White was obliged to recapture d4xc5, then most of his advantage vanishes: the attack along the c-file is blocked and Black is entrenched on the light squares. White might still have some edge, though, on account of exchanging a knight for Black's prize bishop. — In such situations White should almost always recapture with a piece, queen or rook, rather than pawn: and he shouldn't rush to occupy c5 with the knight if he ends up with a pawn on that square. — Returning to the game, to add to Black's problems if left unanswered there is 12 Ne5 winning the exchange. If you suggested that as White's best plan, well done - a threat is also a plan!

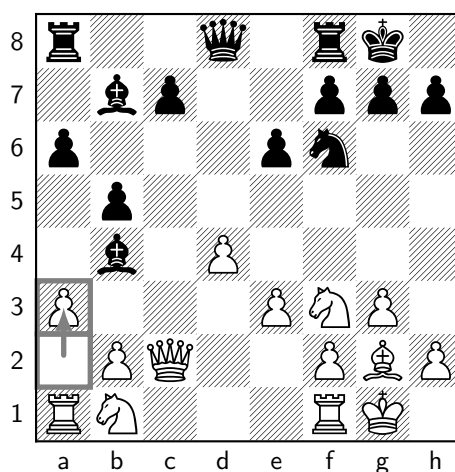
11... ♘b4

The horse therefore leaps forward again and attacks her Majesty.

12 ♙xb4

Since his centre pawns are on dark squares, White isn't adverse to exchanging his 'bad' bishop for a knight. The lack of pawn exchanges and White's firm structure means that Black's bishop pair doesn't have much to attack. Meanwhile the white knights can dream of exploiting the holes on a5, c5 and c6 in Black's queenside.

12... ♙xb4 13 a3!

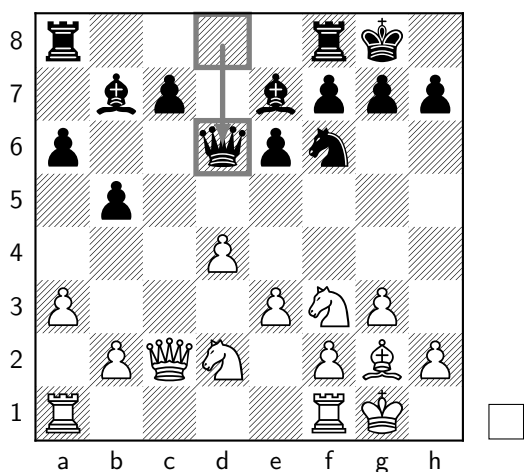


13 ♘bd2 c5! 14 dxc5 ♖c8 15 ♘b3 ♙e4! 16
♖c1 ♖e7

13... ♙e7 14 ♘bd2

Only now. The knight plans a journey to the c5-square where it will loom menacingly over the queenside, unless Black eliminates it with ...Bxc5, but then after the recapture Qxc5 White will dominate the dark square holes in Black's structure.

14... ♖d6



14... c5?

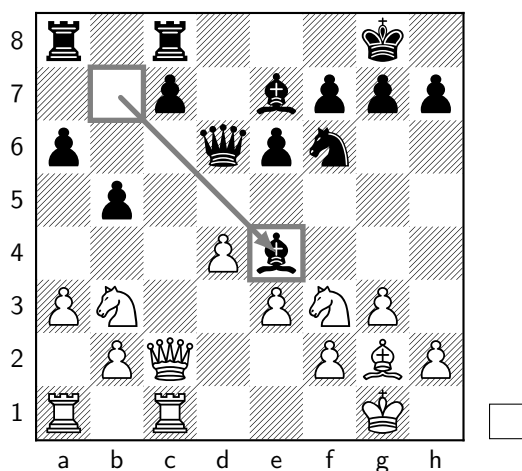
14... ♖c8 15 b4 a5 16 ♘e5 ♘d5 17 ♘b3!
a×b4 18 ♘a5! ♙a8 19 ♘ac6 ♙×c6 20 ♘×c6
♙d7 21 ♙×d5! e×d5 22 a×b4 ♖fe8 23 ♖a5
♙f8 24 ♘e5 ♙e6 25 ♖×b5 ♖b8 26 ♖×b8
♖×b8 27 ♙×c7 ♙d6 28 ♙a5 ♙×b4 29 ♖b1
♙d6 30 ♙a4

15 ♖fc1

It is possible that White will play b2-b4 in the future to increase his control of c5, when Black might try to undermine the pawn with ...a6-a5. Then the a-file becomes open after ...a5xb4 and the recapture a3xa4. Alternatively, White himself might open the a-file by playing a3-a4 to target b5. Therefore it is sensible to keep a rook on a1 and move the other one to c1. In the Catalan mainline Rfc1 seems White's default choice of rook to play to c1. There is normally a reason specific to a particular position when he prefers Rac1.

15... ♖fc8 16 ♘b3 ♙e4

Deflecting the white queen to a less active square.

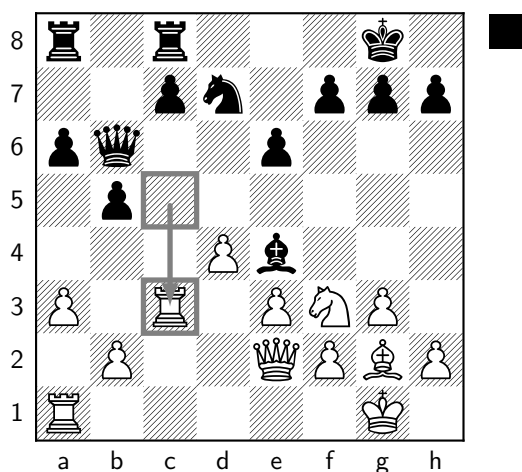


16... ♘d7 17 ♘g5! ♙×g5 18 ♙×b7

17 ♙e2 ♙b6 18 ♘c5 ♙×c5 19 ♖×c5

Black is far from lost, but the opening has clearly been a success for White. He has restrained Black from breaking out with ...c7-c5 and can double his rooks against c7. Abdyjapar disagrees with this verdict and soon gets into hot water.

19... ♘d7 20 ♖c3?



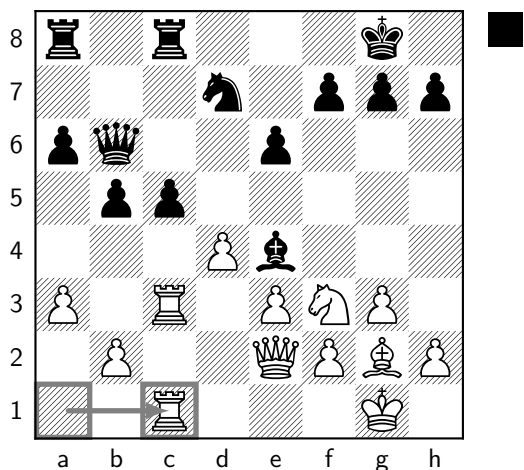
20 ♘g5! ♙g6 21 ♖c6 ♙b8 22 ♖ac1

20... c5?

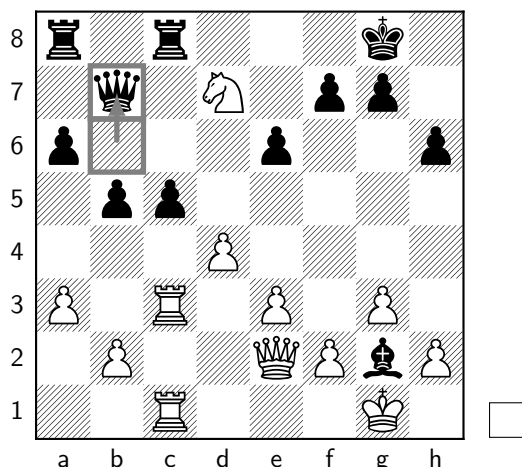
Black makes another positionally desirable move that is tactically unsound. If carried on too long this approach is bound to lead to disaster, if not in one game then in the

next one. As the renowned strategist Reti affirmed the foundation of positional play is control of tactics.

21 ♖ac1

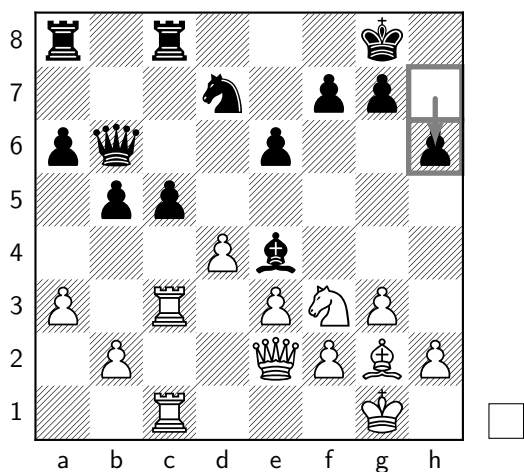


Black's attempt to gain counterplay by sacrificing the exchange is doomed if White plays steadily.



**21 ♘g5! ♙xg2 22 ♖h5 ♗c6 23 ♖xh7+ ♔f8
24 ♖h5! g6 25 ♖h7**

21...h6?



21...c4 22 b3 ♗d6!

21...♙b7 22 ♘g5! ♙xg2 23 ♖h5!

22 ♘e5!

Winning the c5-pawn with a simple combination.

22...♙xg2 23 ♘xg2 ♖b7

23...♗d6 24 ♔xg2 ♗xg2 25 ♖xg2

24 ♘xg2 ♖xg2 25 dxc5 ♗c6 26 ♖d3 ♙f3 27 ♗f1

Here the queen guards the g2-square and also protects the rook on c2, ruling out any back-rank tricks.

**27...♖c8 28 ♖d6 ♖b7 29 b4 ♗a8 30 ♗d3
♙e4 31 ♗d4 e5 32 ♗xe5 ♙h1 33 c6**

Giving back one of his extra pawns to kill off Black's activity.

33...♙xc6 34 ♗d4 ♖b7 35 ♖c5

1-0

White: Feller, S.

42: Cappelle la Grande

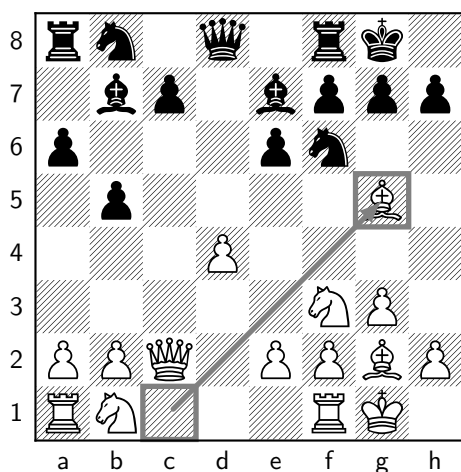
Black: Perez Ponsa, F.

Opening ECO: E06

2016

Result: 1/2-1/2

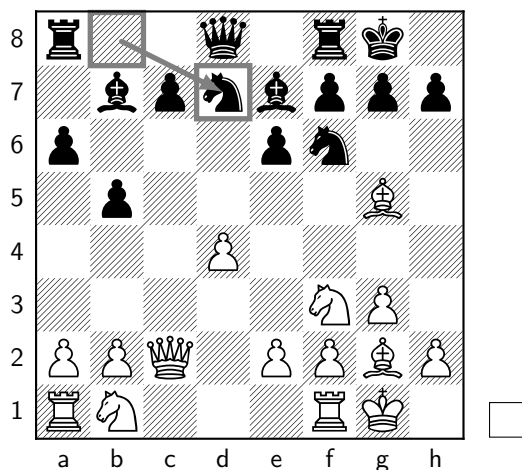
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 g3 ♙e7 5 ♙g2
O-O 6 O-O dxc4 7 ♖a4 a6 8 ♖xc4 b5 9
♙c2 ♙b7 10 ♙g5
A direct move;



10 ♙d2

10... ♘bd7

Black hopes to equalize with a quick ...c7-c5, ridding himself of the backward pawn on c7 and dissolving the white centre.

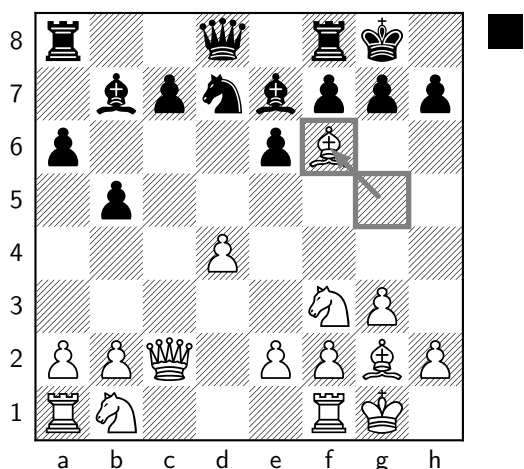


10... ♘c6 11 ♖d1 ♘b4 12 ♖c1 ♖c8 13 ♙xf6
♙xf6 14 ♘c3 c5 15 dxc5 ♖e7 16 a3 ♙xc3
17 ♖xc3 ♘d5 18 ♖d4 ♖xc5 19 ♖xc5
♖xc5 20 ♖ac1 ♖xc1 21 ♖xc1 ♖c8 22 ♖xc8+
♙xc8 23 ♘e5

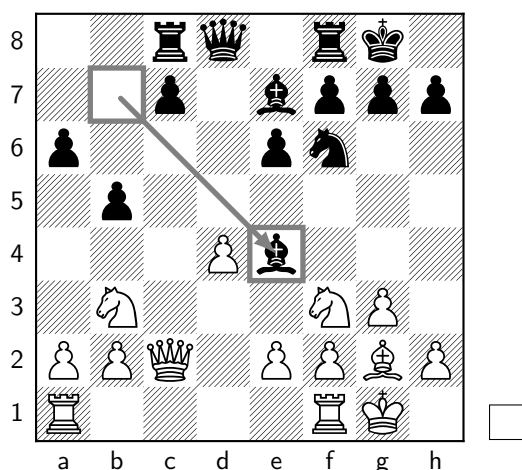
10... ♙e4!? 11 ♖c1 ♘bd7 12 ♘bd2 ♙d5 13
♘b3 ♖c8 14 ♘c5 ♘xc5 15 dxc5 c6 16 ♖d1
♘e4 17 ♙e3 ♖c7 18 b4 a5

11 ♙xf6

As we shall see, the key strategic theme in what follows is: can Black break out with ...c7-c5 without being punished? If he can then he should be equal, but there are some cases where even after achieving his aim he remains under irritating pressure.



utilizes the e4-square which is left undefended after White's last move, and also the d5-square with his knight.

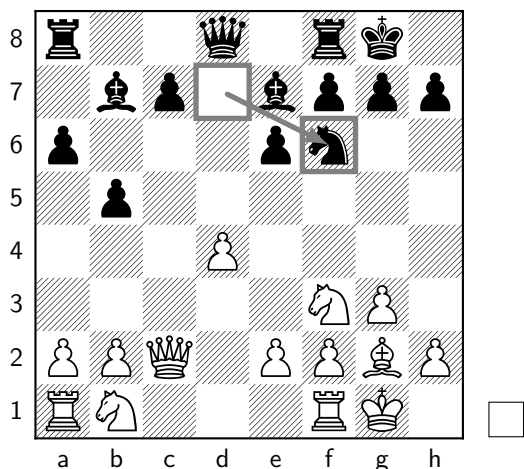


11 ♖bd2 c5 12 ♕xf6 ♕xf6 13 dxc5 ♖c8 14 ♖b3 ♕d5 15 ♖fd1 ♖e7 16 e4 ♕xb3 17 axb3 ♖xc5

11... ♕xf6

13... c5!? 14 dxc5 ♕e4 15 ♖c3 ♕d5 16 ♖fd1 ♖e4 17 ♖e1 ♕xc5 18 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 19 ♖e5 f5 20 f3 ♖d6 21 e4 fxe4 22 fxe4 ♕b7 23 ♖b4 ♖xe5 24 ♖xd6 ♖c7 25 ♖ad1 ♕c8

14 ♖c3 ♖d5



11... ♕xf6? 12 ♖g5! ♕xg5 13 ♕xb7

12 ♖bd2

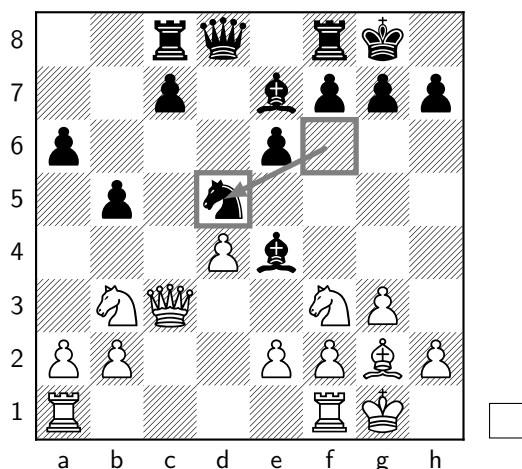
An arms race: White wants to get his knight to b3 before Black can arrange 12...Rc8 and 13...c5.

12... ♖c8 13 ♖b3

Just in time to stop ...c7-c5 - maybe not!

13... ♕e4

Black still hopes to drive the white queen from the c-file in order to facilitate the freeing move ...c7-c5. For this purpose he



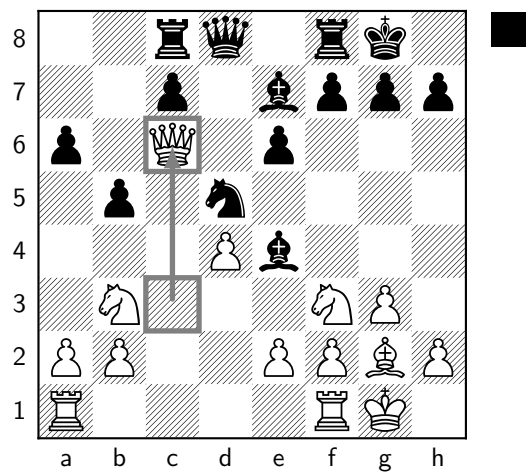
14... c5? 15 ♖xc5

14... ♖d5 15 ♖fc1 ♖fd8 16 ♖a5 ♖b7 17 ♖c5 ♕xc5 18 ♖xc5 ♖d7 19 ♖cc1

15 ♖c6

The c6-square looks like a risky place for the white pieces to have a picnic, but both

the queen and a rook will utilize it over the coming moves. The stakes are high. Black can unleash a dangerous discovered attack from the bishop on e4 (once it is guarded of course), but if this fails to give enough dynamism then he will be left with weak pawns and squares on the queenside.



15 ♖c1 ♘b4 16 ♘e1 ♙d5 17 ♙x d5 ♖x d5
18 ♖c3 c5

15 ♖d2 c5 16 dxc5 ♙xc5 17 ♘xc5 ♖xc5 18
♖ac1 ♖xc1 19 ♖xc1 ♖a8 20 ♖d4 ♘f6

15 ♖a5 ♙b4 16 ♖xa6 c6 17 ♘e5 ♙xg2 18
♙xg2 ♘e7 19 e4 f6 20 ♘d3 ♖a8 21 ♖b7

15... ♖d6

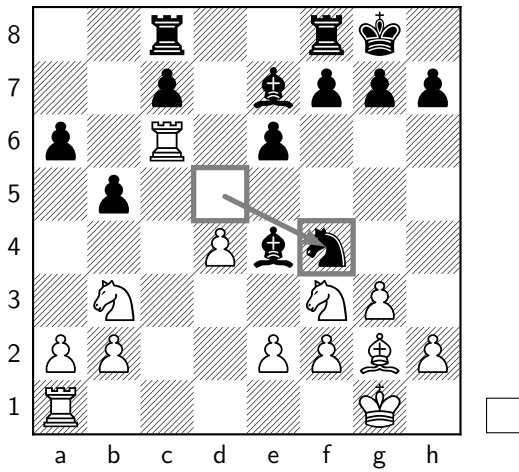
EXERCISE: What are the good points of this move? — ANSWER: With his last move

Black defended his a6-pawn and challenged the white queen. Now 16 Qxd6? cxd6 would be a miserable exchange for White - the weakling previously on c7 now defends the c5- and e5-squares, and the black rook on c8 is presented with an open file. Therefore in order to assert his control over the c-file White is obliged to allow the exchange of queens when he has a rook on the c6-square. This is worse than having the queen there, as Black is free to move his knight from d5.

16 ♖fc1 ♖xc6 17 ♖xc6

Beginning a long tactical sequence.

17... ♘f4



17... ZZ- 18 ♖xa6

17... ♘b6!? 18 ♖cc1 ♘a4 19 ♘fd2 ♙xg2 20
♙xg2 ♘xb2 21 ♖c6

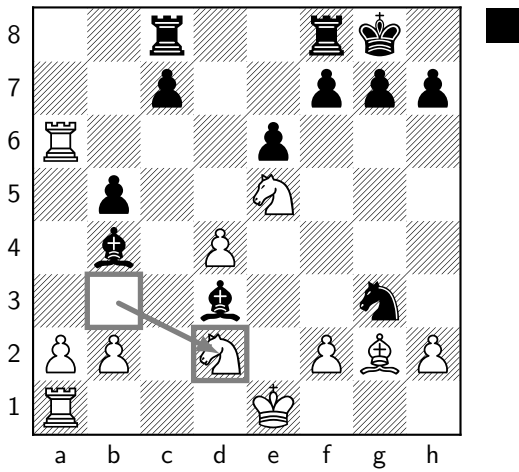
18 ♖xa6 ♘xe2+ 19 ♙f1 ♙d3

A series of precise moves will prevent White from exploiting the awkward position of the black knight and bishop on d3.

20 ♘e5 ♘xg3+ 21 ♙e1

It seems as if Black must lose a piece as he has two hanging, but...

21... ♙b4+ 22 ♘d2

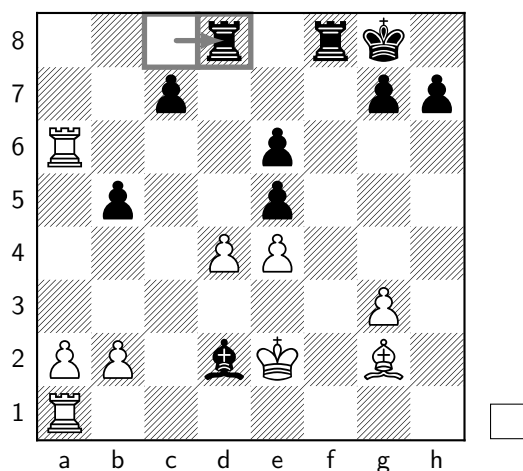
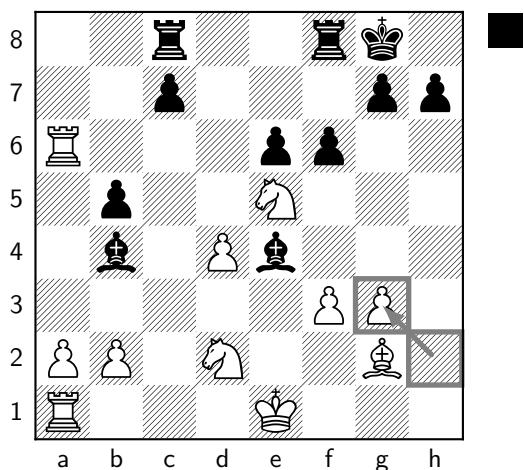


22 ♔d1 ♚e2+

22... ♚e4! 23 f3

Again two of Black's pieces are en prise, but there are more tactical blows to come.

23... f6! 24 h×g3

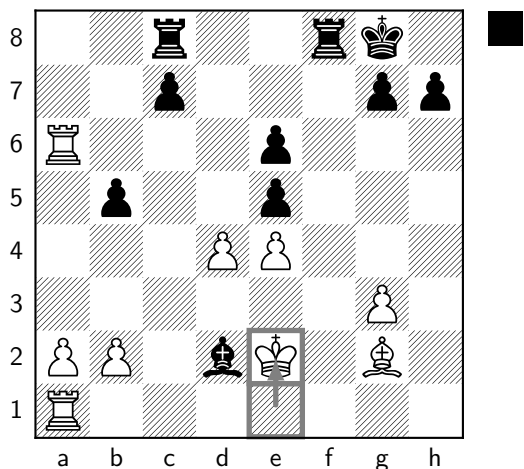


26... ♖cd8 27 ♚h3 ♜×d4 28 ♚×e6+ ♔h8 29
♜d1 ♜fd8 30 ♚d5 ♚e3 31 ♜a5 ♜×d1 32
♔×d1 b4 33 ♔e2 ♚b6 34 ♜b5 ♜f8 35 ♜×b4
h5 36 ♜b3

1/2-1/2

24 ♖g4 ♚b7! 25 ♜a7 ♖f5 26 ♜×b7 ♖d6 27
♜a7 ♖c4 28 ♜d1 ♖×b2 29 ♜b1 ♚c3 30 ♚f1
♜fd8

24... f×e5 25 f×e4 ♚×d2+ 26 ♔e2



26 ♔×d2? ♜f2+ 27 ♔e3 ♜×g2

26... ♖cd8

White: Anton, T.

43: Kazan

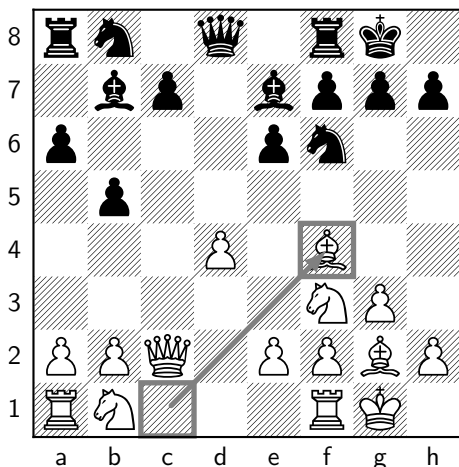
Black: Kravtsiv, M.

Opening ECO: E06

2013

Result: 0-1

1 ♖f3 ♜f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♗g2 ♘e7 5 d4
O-O 6 O-O dxc4 7 ♖c2 a6 8 ♖xc4 b5 9
♖c2 ♗b7 10 ♗f4

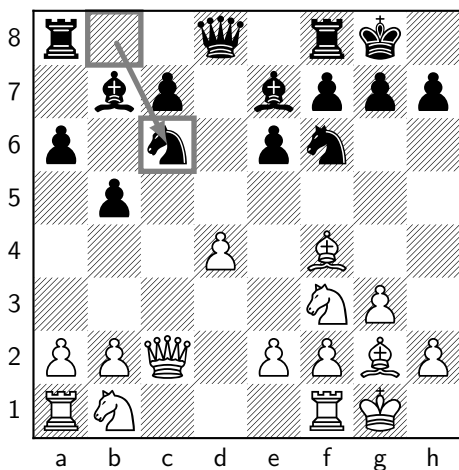


10 ♗d2

10 ♗bd2 ♗bd7 11 ♗b3 ♗e4 12 ♖d1 c5

10... ♗c6

Black meets the threat and counterattacks against the d4-pawn. This might be regarded as the 'modern' move.

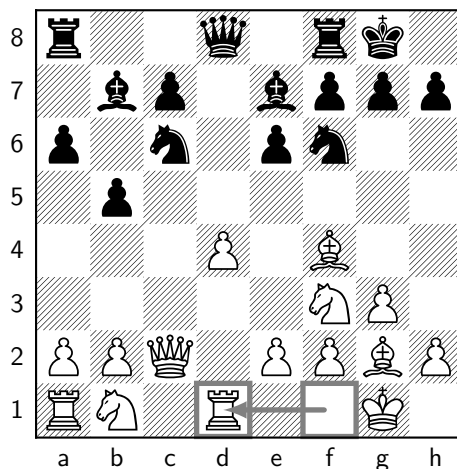


10... ♗d5 11 ♗c3 ♗xf4 12 gxf4 ♗d7 13
♖fd1

10... ♗d6 11 ♗g5 ♗bd7 12 ♗bd2 ♖c8! 13
♗xf6 ♗xf6 14 ♗b3 c5 15 dxc5 ♗e4 16
♖ad1 ♗xc5 17 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 18 ♖xc5 ♗xc5
19 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 20 ♗e5 ♗xg2 21 ♖xg2

11 ♖d1

Defending d4. — QUESTION: Is that because after 11 Nbd2 or 11 Nc3 can Black play 11...Nxd4 to nab a pawn?



11 ♗bd2 ♗xd4 12 ♗xd4 ♗xg2 13 ♗xe6
fxe6 14 ♖xg2 c5 15 ♗f3 ♖e8! 16 ♖ad1
♗d5 17 ♖e4 ♖c6 18 ♖h1 ♖ac8

11 ♗c3 ♗xd4? 12 ♗xd4 ♗xg2 13 ♖fd1!
♗d5 14 e4 b4 15 ♗xd5 exd5 16 ♗c6 ♖d7
17 e5 ♗h5 18 ♖xd5

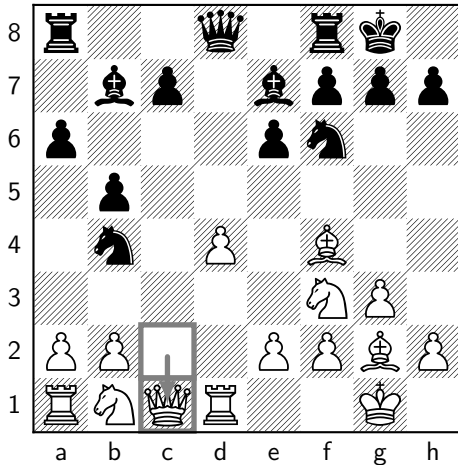
11... ♗b4

After White defends d4, Kravtsiv moves his knight to b4. Strategically speaking it is not comfortable for Black to have his knight in front of the backward pawn, as ...c7-c5 is his key freeing advance. That is why he is

in a hurry to move the horse again. He reroutes it to d5 before White has the chance to restrict it and fix it as a target on c6 with 12 a3.

12 ♖c1

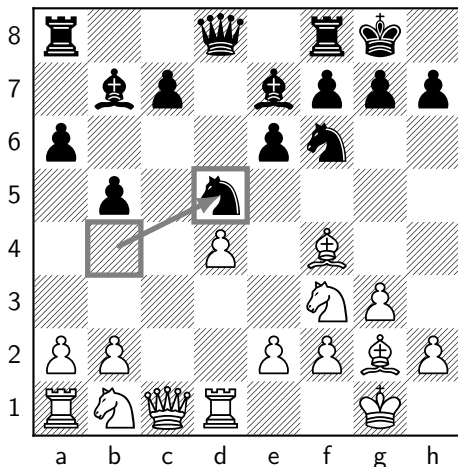
The queen retreats, keeping c7 under attack.



12 ♖c1? ♖c7 13 ♕c7 ♖c2

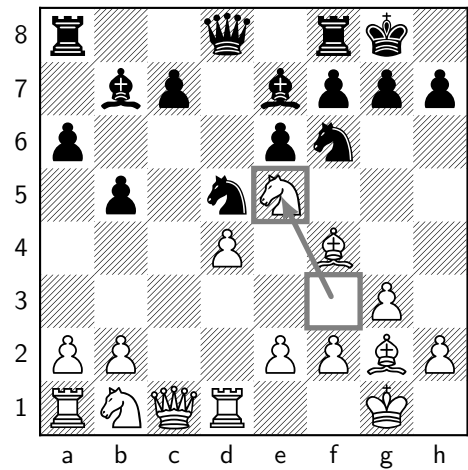
12... ♖bd5

The knight defends c7 and attacks the white bishop on f4.



12... ♖c8 13 ♖c3 ♖bd5 14 ♖xd5 ♕xd5 15 ♕e3 ♖g4 16 ♖e1 ♕xg2 17 ♖xg2 ♖d5 18 h3 ♖xe3 19 ♖xe3 c5

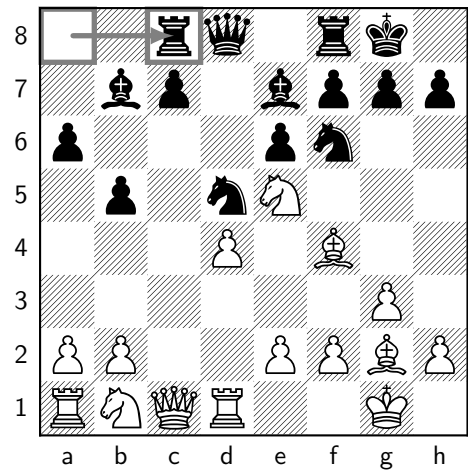
13 ♖e5?!



13 ♖bd2!? ♖xf4 14 gxf4 c5 15 dxc5 ♖c7 16 ♖b3 ♖ac8 17 ♖e5 ♕xg2 18 ♖xg2 g5!? 19 ♖d3

13... ♖c8

Continuing his provocative strategy.



13... ♖xf4 14 ♖xf4 ♕xg2 15 ♖xg2 c5 16 ♖c6 ♖d7 17 ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 18 ♖c3 cxd4 19 ♖xd4 ♖fd8

14 ♖c6

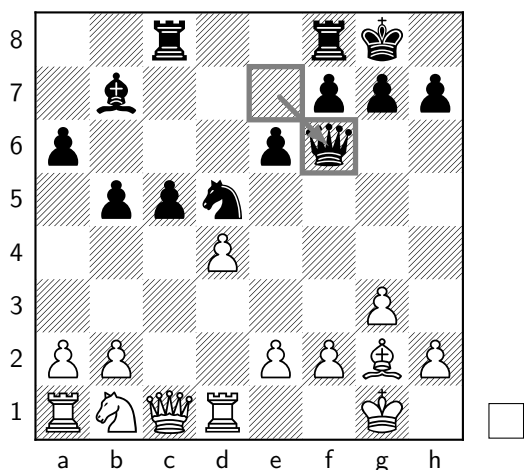
The knight would be brilliant on c6 if it could be maintained there. As this is not the case, the plan began with 13 Ne5 looks suspect.

14... ♖d7 15 ♘×e7+ ♜×e7 16 ♙g5
 EXERCISE: You might like to have a go at analyzing the freeing advance 16. ...c5 by working out the variations after 17 Bxf6.

16... c5!

This is the correct decision though you have to be ready to make a pawn sacrifice.

17 ♙×f6 ♜×f6



17... gxf6

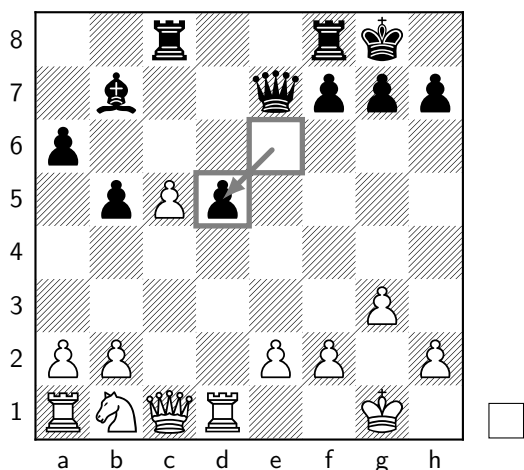
17... ♘×f6 18 ♙×b7 ♜×b7 19 d×c5

18 d×c5 ♜e7

Forcing White's hand by attacking c5.

19 ♙×d5 exd5!

Did you find this important recapture?

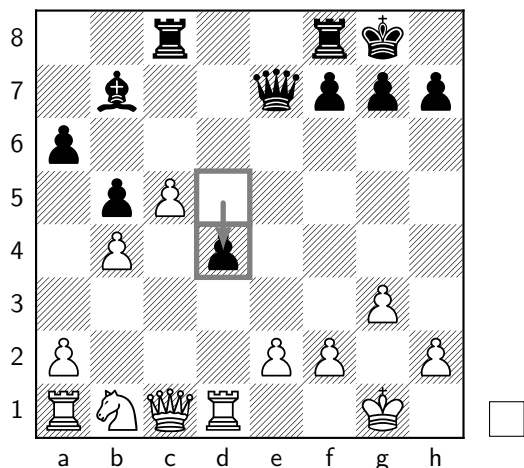


19... ♜×c5? 20 ♜×c5 ♜×c5 21 ♙×b7

19... ♙×d5 20 b4

20 b4 d4!

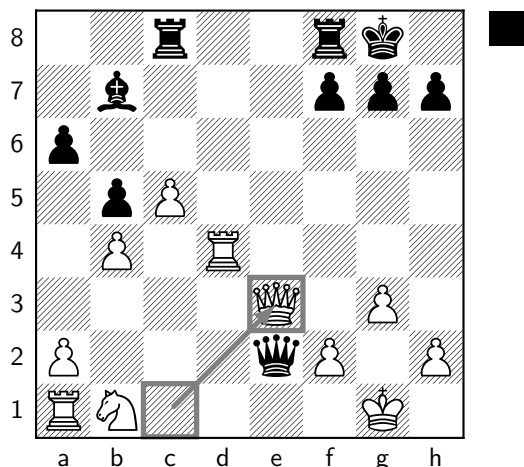
Clearing the way for the bishop and at the same time stopping White developing with 21 Nc3.



20... ♜×e2 21 ♘c3 ♜f3 22 ♜d4

21 ♜×d4 ♜×e2 22 ♜e3?

This leads to a forced loss.



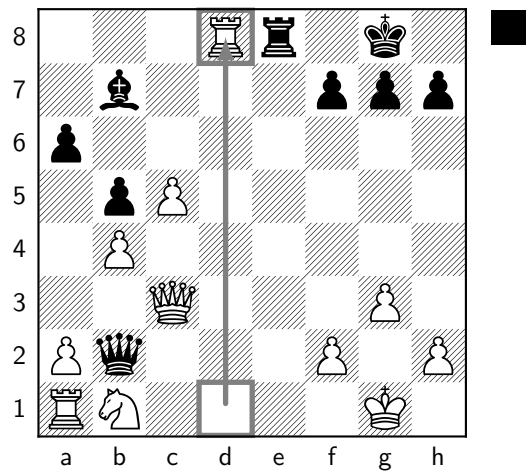
22 ♘d2 ♜fd8 23 ♜c3

22... ♜b2 23 ♜c3 ♜fe8!

Anton must have missed the strength of this developing move. White is mated on

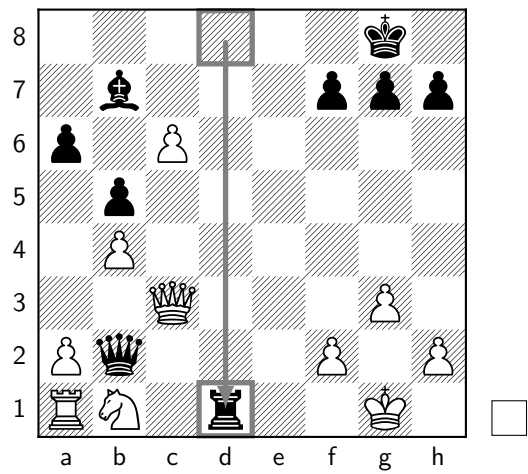
e1 if he takes the queen, which means he cannot get his queenside pieces into the game. The immediate threat is 24...Qxa1 which would still be the answer to 24 h4 as 25 Qxa1 then allows mate in two.

24 ♖d1 ♜cd8 25 ♖x d8



25 ♜f1 ♚e2 26 c6 ♜c8 27 ♞a3 ♜d3 28 ♚c1 ♜f3

25... ♜x d8 26 c6 ♜d1+



26... ♜d1+ 27 ♚g2 ♜x c3 28 ♞x c3 ♜x c6+

0-1

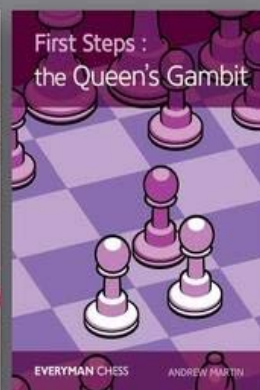
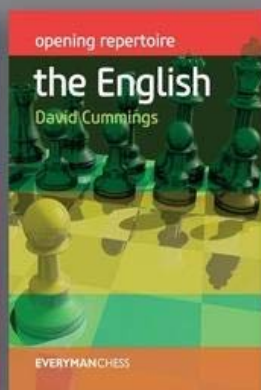
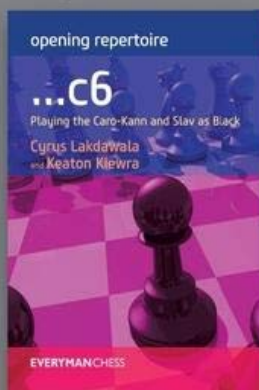
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