Modern Chess: Move by Move

a step-by-step guide to brilliant chess

Colin Crouch

EVERYMAN CHESS
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Preface

This is by far the most ambitious of the various chess books and articles I have written. To have analysed in detail a win by 33 different 2700+ grandmasters against 2600+ strength opposition is a big effort. It is fair to say that no writer could even have considered such a task fifteen years ago. One reason is that only Kasparov and Karpov had reached this chess stratospheric level, although a few others were pressing hard. Chess has changed considerably during the age of the computer, and players have had the opportunity of improving their play and understanding considerably.

Without the computer, I myself would only be able to scratch the surface in analysing the games, and would not be able to say with confidence whether such a move is good or a mistake. It is good not to have to guess. Of course, in some positions the play is so complicated, or so subtle, or both, that even the computers and the strongest players would find it beyond themselves to understand everything. Quite often it is a major task of the top players to try to understand what is going on in such difficult lines, on the basis that if the top player has been able to analyse the position in depth at home, and is capable of outplaying the opponent over the board, there is an excellent chance to win. A 2600 grandmaster is still a very strong grandmaster, but a 2700+ grandmaster will take his opponent out of their comfort zone. We must not forget that ultra-sophisticated positional play can also work.

The main dedication I give is to the players who have dedicated themselves to such high levels of chess. Without them, there would have been no book.

The games themselves were at the time completely fresh to me. After a serious brain seizure in 2004, I was fortunate that I was able to play chess, or even see the board. I feel grateful in having the opportunity, with this book, to catch up with so many marvellous games, and even participate in discussing them.

It turned out that it has taken almost a whole year to write up such an effort. The world outside has changed considerably in terms of chess, and the world in general. At some stage, I will no doubt want to catch up with the world of chess from Easter 2008 onwards. Outside chess, there has been a year of financial and economic crisis. It seems a long, long time since I wrote a PhD on the economics of recession and unemployment in Britain in the early 1980s, and I would like to think that the argument I made at the time still has merit. The question was always not whether there would be another serious recession, but when. Naturally there has always been the dominant opposite argument, among politicians, economists, journalists and others, that the economy is stable, that there is no such thing as unemployment, that the banks have stabilized growth, and that poli-
ticians have ended the problems of boom and bust. It will be of interest to see how
the orthodox thinkers will now empirically justify such a point of view.

Colin Crouch
Harrow
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Introduction

This book is based on games by contemporary players at the very highest level. The idea is based around a move-by-move approach to annotation, with the hope that players from all levels will be able to appreciate something of top-level chess.

Do not be excessively deterred at what might seem a long-winded approach, a dozen or more detailed pages over a single game. Chess is complicated. While writing up this book, I played through Sergey Shipov’s annotations of Shirov-Aronian, Moscow 2006 (Game 16), in *New in Chess Magazine* (2006, vol. 8, pp. 23-35). Shipov went through the first 22 moves at great speed, and commented that the players have reached ‘another deep-water tabiya. The best analysts in the world began their analysis in positions which simple chess amateurs are not even capable of reaching.’ Which is, of course, absolutely believable. The problem for the reader is that Shipov gives no analysis. This is understandable enough, since space is precious, and there is no room to go through moves which are already established and analysed. Where does this leave the reader, though? Half the content of the game has been dropped in the annotations, and the simple chess amateur has no chance of trying to understand what is going on. One of the main aims in this book is to try to bridge the gap in understanding between the amateur and the top players, which I suppose means I must regard myself as somewhere midpoint in this gap. It is up to the reader to decide how deeply, or how briefly, he or she would want to explore the opening. There is no obligation to try to plough through every variation.

There is also another reason, beyond the opening part of the game, why the analysis might seem long-winded. The point is that a top-level grandmaster when writing up games will tend to concentrate only on the most difficult positions, and will tend to ignore writing down what is seen as ‘obvious’. The obvious points are, though, absolutely fundamental to good chess, and no top grandmaster will ignore them while playing a competitive game. A player may note that there is a simple back-row checkmate if he snatches a piece, and he will avoid this. It would seem hardly worthwhile to mention this elementary tactic while annotating, but the tactic is central to the game, and needs if possible to be mentioned.

Inevitably there will need to be some juggling when trying to annotate games which will be satisfactory both for stronger players and for the less-experienced player. My hope is that everyone will be able to gain something.

As time goes on in chess, analysis tends to become more complicated. The use of the computer means that an author is these days expected to cover long strings of analysis. There is no longer any excuse. Nowadays it will be easy enough for the reader to check, with the help of the computer, whether the author might be dodg-
ing critical lines. In the old days an author might give a one-move line in a complicated position, saying that ‘White is better’ or ‘Black has compensation for the pawn’, or whatever, and not much is gained. Perhaps before the computer, it would have taken a whole afternoon for the writer to try to work out what is going on, in even a relatively uncomplicated position, and it is often better to be more economical with the time. With the help of the computer, it is now possible to delve into any position or variation. This makes things both easier and more complicated. One can jump much higher, but the bar is also much higher. There is also the standard warning that the computer can make mistakes in interpreting a position. The best analysis is through the combination of the computer and human assessment. If pushed, I would argue that a conscientious human analyst without the use of the computer would still be preferable to the routine use of the computer.

It would be flattering if 2700+ players were to be interested in this book, but no doubt they will be able to show that I have misinterpreted parts of the game. Such is life. As the reader will be able to verify, there are 33 games in this book in which a 2600+ player has done something wrong, and lost. I cannot pretend that I too will not have made some extra errors, maybe serious. The hope of the annotator is always that new and good ideas will outweigh the introduction of extra errors. Of course, the audience would be extremely small if I were trying to write for the top 33 players. What guidance might there be for the much wider chess public?

Good and interesting chess games are always complicated. There is no way of avoiding this. The most complicated positions may take up two pages of analysis, to decide whether the grandmaster has in fact found the best move, or whether a mistake has been made. The cardinal rule of scientific chess theory is that if a player loses a game, he must have made a mistake somewhere. The conscientious chess writer is always extremely interested in trying to untangle where the decisive mistake has been made, and will also be worried about the possibility that a question mark is given, maybe by the author himself, maybe by other commentators, when the supposed error is in fact sound.

Much of the analysis in a game will concentrate on the technical point of whether any move is correct, or a mistake. This might seem boring and technical, but it is not. There is only such a small gap between a mistake and a brilliant move that it is a wonder that so few mistakes are made at higher levels. In a really complicated position, two amateur players may make half a dozen slips each, and one of them eventually wins, and the other player loses. It will still be a good and entertaining game, but a really top grandmaster will be able to guide his way through even the most mind-blowing positions, and will often be able to find a win after even the slightest of the opponent’s mistakes. This is great chess, and vastly entertaining chess, at the highest level.

When playing though these games, it is probably best to skim through the games first time around. Gain the general features of the game, and then look at the position more closely next time. Take note of the careful thought behind the
modern opening in chess, take note of the mistakes of the loser in each game, and also enjoy the creativity of chess.

Some Points on the Chess Rating System
We start with the final official tournament event of Garry Kasparov, Linares 2005. It is, of course, quite possible that he may decide that he will try a tournament or match at some subsequent event, but on the other hand, why bother? He has already made his mark in history, and this will never be forgotten for as long as chess is played. He now has other interests.

If we go back to the match when Kasparov beat Karpov to become World Champion in 1985, Kasparov’s rating was 2700, and Karpov’s 2720. These days, there are now more than 30 players who have reached 2700. There has been considerable speculation as to whether the ratings have been inflated to some extent. Certainly from playing through the current games, one feels the 2700 player is not quite as strong as Kasparov in 1985. This, however, is a relatively small gap. A guesstimate would be that Kasparov’s 2700 at the beginning of the match would equate to about 2725 these days, and Karpov’s 2720 would have been the equivalent to 2745 nowadays. Going through other players, Timman would probably have been equivalent of around 2700 at that time, but no-one else. We provide this merely as a base-mark.

Kasparov continued to improve considerably since 1985, and it was clear at the time that he was not yet at his peak. In Belgrade 1989 he won, three points ahead of Timman and Ehvest, and rather more points ahead of other 2600+ opposition. His reward was to reach 2800 for the first time, for himself or for anyone.

Kasparov’s rating dropped slightly, at various times during the 1990s, but then between 1997 and his retirement in 2005, his play was consistently over 2800. Other players, such as Anand, Kramnik and Topalov, have reached 2800, but have since dropped down again at some point. In early 2004, for example, both Anand and Kramnik had a frustrating 2799 rating score, while Topalov was 2780, although the Bulgarian is now back over 2800.

No player as yet has emulated Kasparov’s achievement in keeping his rating over 2800 for a consistent length of time. We have many players now who would like to aspire to this challenge, but who will fully emulate it? Maybe one of the younger players? Who knows?

The Games
I wanted to write up games from 2004 onwards, for strong personal reasons. As a result of a stroke, a ‘brain attack’, and a loss of much of my eyesight, I had missed seeing many top-level encounters. It was time to rectify this gap, and to try to study the game properly.

How could I decide which games to use in this book? There soon turned out to be an obvious and natural answer. Garry Kasparov retired at the beginning of 2005. My aim was to select a game from Linares 2005, and then to give a win by
any players who were over 2700 at any stage since the beginning of that Linares. What I had not appreciated at the time was that this involved 33 players. This involved roughly twice as many players to study, and twice as many games, than I had originally anticipated.

**A Summary of the Outcome of the Game**

In each of these 33 games, one of the players wins, and consequently the opposing player must have made a mistake. It is quite possible that both players may have made a mistake. If neither player makes a mistake, the game necessarily ends up as a draw.

In only one game, the Jakovenko one, have I deliberately chosen in advance a game in which the winner made a serious mistake, but then recovered. In many other games, when I made my selection, I felt that in many lines the win seems so paradoxical that this must immediately be chosen as of great interest. Sometimes such a game will, under closer examination, prove to be a flawless brilliancy. More often alas, it will prove to be interesting but almost certainly unsound.

It is hoped that none of the chosen games is boring, too one-sided, or contains too many amateur mistakes.

After having attempted to analyse in detail over thirty games, it is of some interest to give an assessment of how many of these wins prove to be flawless, or perhaps only with minor flaws (for example, a slight hesitancy on move 39), and how many of these wins prove, on closer examination, to contain mistakes made on both sides. It often is the case that the ultimate winner tried too hard to win early on, and overpressed, but that the opponent felt under pressure, and also made mistakes.

We can jot up the preliminary results.

1) **Clean wins**

Dreev, Game 2; Adams, Game 3; Bacrot, Game 5; Anand, Game 6; Svidler, Game 7; Nisipeanu, Game 8; Leko, Game 9; Ivanchuk, Game 10; Bareev, Game 12; Kramnik, Game 13; Navara, Game 14; Aronian, Game 16; Grischuk, Game 18; Radjabov, Game 19; Eljanov, Game 21; Carlsen, Game 23; Wang Yue, Game 26; Ponomariov, Game 28; Bu Xiangzhi, Game 29; Gelfand, Game 30; Mamedyarov, Game 31; and Karjakin, Game 33.

Thus two-thirds of the games may be regarded as clean games, which does not necessarily imply that the winner played a ‘textbook’ win, clearly refuting the opponent’s play in classic style, although some such games are included. This seems an impressively high proportion. In my previous book, *Great Attackers*, based on games by the young Kasparov, Tal and Stein, there is a far fewer proportion of clean wins, certainly so if one excludes textbook games when the loser makes an unnecessary mistake early on, and the winner makes an attractive exhibition. Play seems to have tightened up since a generation ago. One obvious tendency is that with the help of the computer, strong players have been able to analyse much
deeper, and cut out so many plausible slips. In many of the most complicated lines in this book, both players will have been able to examine the position at home, and will have avoided mistakes in the first twenty moves, even in the most complicated lines. Yet wins still happen!

2) Not so clean wins

Kasparov*, Game 1; Topalov*, Game 4; Akopian, Game 11; Polgar, Game 15; Shirov, Game 17; Jakovenko, Game 20; Alekseev, Game 21; Kamsky*, Game 24; Morozevich, Game 25; Cheparinov, Game 27*; and Ni Hua, Game 32.

An asterisk indicates that the doubt is according to whether the opening is completely accurate, and that the rest of the game seems clean. In most of the other games, the problem is one of over-exuberance.

A simple list of statistics is useful, but also only the start of our analysis. We need to move further.

Many of the doubly-flawed games given above are of such extreme complexity that even the strongest of strongest grandmasters, such as Topalov, Anand and Shirov will make serious mistakes, but usually through excessive imagination, rather than lack of understanding.

One of the most interesting encounters is Game 17, Shirov-Iglesias. This illustrates the great dilemma in attacking chess. On the one hand, the choice is to go for the imaginative and dangerous attack, with the full knowledge that he will be unable to calculate everything through to the end, and that he could easily miss a vital resource. On the other hand, he could play solidly. Illescas’s resource would have been extremely difficult to find over the board, and indeed he later missed it, and lost. Shirov could have played objectively quieter, still with good results. But what a game!

An even more extravagant encounter is Game 4, Topalov-Anand, where Topalov sacrificed a knight in the opening, almost out of thin air. Anand’s king was slightly exposed, but could it really work? It turned out that Black’s light-squared weaknesses were just about serious enough to give White interesting attacking chances, so long as White did not mind sacrificing the exchange as well. This was amazing play, but Anand had a couple of good opportunities to improve his play, and rather less complicated than Illescas’s slip. Topalov too made a slip later.

A third flawed win is Game 20, Ni Hua-Jakovenko. Here Jakovenko was caught by his opponent’s opening preparation, and was soon in deep trouble with his king, fastened down by his opponent’s queen and bishop. It was startling for the author to find that he was able to win. There was indeed a win, but Ni Hua missed a tactic. Under the microscope, there were other slips by either side beforehand, so it was not quite the perfect defence after a serious mistake.

The wins by Polgar, Alekseev and Morozevich all demonstrated considerable enterprise, but perhaps excessively so. In Game 21, Alekseev-Tkachiev, White’s idea, of $\text{c1-g5-c1}$, just to provoke an ...$f6$ pawn push, is wonderfully original; a new idea in a recently explored opening, but sadly one cannot fully believe it.
As so often in battles between attack and defence, Game 15, Sokolov-Polgar, saw the eventual winner play more consistently aggressive chess than her opponent, and won, but objectively the win seems to be not quite convincing. In the end, Polgar reached victory with a string of sacrifices in front of the opposing king.

This previous game was relatively finely balanced. Morozevich’s win, Game 25, was, it has to be admitted, much more of a sophisticated hack, but with an excellent tactical finish. See the comments on the discussion on symmetrical openings.

Game 27, Cheparinov-Nepomniachtchi led to an extremely sharp sacrificial gambit from the opening. Many of the other games in this collection are just as sharp, but in the end seem to be sound. In the Cheparinov game, momentarily Black had the chance of a serious edge, but Nepomniachtchi recaptured a pawn at the wrong time. It was to Nepomniachtchi’s credit that he found probably the best line in the opening battle, when many players would have folded much earlier. Sometimes, when tactical play dominates, there is only a small gap between safety and a quick loss.

Game 32, Inarkiev-Ni Hua, was another gambit line, this time, one suspects, the product of improvisation rather than close analysis. Black had positional pressure, and there were plenty of tactical opportunities throughout, making it difficult for the defender. Ni Hua won, but the gambit was unnecessary, as he could easily have gained equality without risk.

**Attack on the King**

We have noted the slightly suspect attacking wins, and we have already suggested that there is often a strong degree of risk when playing for an attack. It is more remarkable, perhaps, quite how many of these attacks prove to be sound, in often incredibly sharp games. The ultimate winner not only senses that the apparently risky attack proves to be sound, but also avoids making any serious mistakes in the subsequent play. This is quite an achievement.

If neither attacker nor defender avoids mistakes, the end result should be a draw, however wild the position is. An extremely sharp sacrifice could end up as a draw by perpetual check. This is not accidental, but absolutely central to the theory of positional chess. The attacker cannot force checkmate, as he has not got enough pieces. The defender’s king cannot reach complete safety, however, and he cannot take full advantage with the extra material. Play through many of the sidelines in these games, and you will find many examples of perpetual checks.

The impression still remains, though, that in practical terms it is more likely for the attacker to win than the defender in a tense position.

**Winning Opening Innovations**

A new idea in the opening can often be just as devastating in the era of the computer, as under the chess of old. Consider Game 31, Mamedyarov-Nepomniachtchi. Quite clearly, Mamedyarov has thought long and hard about the Semi-Slav, and has found something sharp and original, even from an early stage. This is quite an
achievement. Nepomniachtchi found himself off-balance, and had to improvise. He found a plausible way of counter-attacking by threatening a knight with a check, but Mamedyarov simply carried on his pawn storm, with the help of tactics based on discovered checks.

This game was played in April 2008. As a matter of policy, I have made a cut-off point of analysis in all games in this book, not considering any games played after then. There are probably some extremely relevant games in the year beyond. I do not as yet know. All I have is my own thoughts, which might be good or not so good. Others will no doubt take the chance of analysing these new ideas.

Strangely enough, the other great quick theoretical win, Game 6, Karjakin-Anand is now very much a side-line, not so much because the line of the loser was abandoned, but rather because the line of the winner was abandoned. What happened is that both players were studying a newly fashionable position, and both players were considering a particular position, which at first sight looked good for White, and Karjakin played it, having analysed it. Anand anticipated this, playing effectively a second-string option in order allow his opponent to fall for a brilliant double-piece attack.

In contrast, in Game 28, Eljanov-Ponomariov, Eljanov decided to try some off-beat theory, and quickly lost. The idea was far from senseless, and indeed there may well have been an improvement for White, with chances of a slight edge. Eljanov developed his pieces actively, but his king was slightly exposed, if somehow Ponomariov could get at the king. A well-reasoned pawn sacrifice, to open up lines against the king, cut back Eljanov’s attempts, and he soon made a tactical oversight, losing quickly.

More Attacking Games...
Not all attacking games are won so quickly, of course.

Sometimes games may become remarkably intense, bolstered by the possibility that both White and Black have studied the opening in great detail, perhaps twenty moves or so deep. There will still be unexplored complications over the next twenty moves, and quite often some extremely complicated lines may arise. Game 19, Van Wely-Radjabov, was a sequel to a long theoretical battle between the two participants. Not even such players of the positional resourcefulness as Radjabov and Van Wely could have played such intensive and accurate chess without the help of home analysis. This must surely be regarded as a great tactical game, with both players having to find great ingenuity. Even the apparent slight slips around move 27, by both players, while writing up their games for publication, will have their reason. Sometimes if you have to play the same opening again, it is best not to give away all one’s secrets.

For this writer, the ideal game of chess would involve sharp theoretical thinking, good and accurate play by both sides, outstandingly wild tactics, plenty of paradox on both sides, and if at all possible, interesting endgame play. In the Van Wely-Radjabov game, we did not have the endgame battle, but with 27 ¿b3?! that
would have followed. White’s queen and two bishops would have been strangely ineffective in an endgame against queen, knight and pawn.

Advocates of the King’s Indian will often argue that this opening is the most interesting of all openings. We have just discussed a win by Black, but White too may come on top. Our next example, Game 29, Bu Xiangzhi-Zvjaginsev, is a complete all-out attack in a Sämiscb, White rushing through the g- and h-pawns, and being prepared to abandon a few pawns, and giving up pieces as well. All depends on forcing the black king into the open, by chopping off a few black pawns, and eliminating the dark-squared bishop in front of Black’s king. My initial assumption was that White’s attack was probably unsound. I am pleased to say that Bu Xiangzhi’s play seems to hold water. If so, this is an excellent result for the attack.

In a different opening, the Ruy Lopez, Game 14, Navara-Socko, caused considerable theoretical interest. Navara sacrificed a knight on g5 for two pawns, to pin Black’s knight against the queen. The main motif in the game was the struggle against the knight. Nevertheless, the slightest lapse by Black on the kingside would soon lead to a mating attack.

Game 2, Dreev-Dominguez, was an entertaining attacking game, with sacrifices in front of the black king. White had previously given up both f- and g-pawns to open up lines for the rook, and Black’s knight was stuck on the edge on h3, unable to return to help defend. Dreev’s initial pawn sacrifice seemed sound, but there is the possibility that he overpressed later on. Dominguez, however, did not find the best move, and lost.

Winning the Endgame
So ends the theme of tactics against the king. This is an important part of chess, but by no means the whole of chess. If Black defends fully accurately, White cannot force a win by a direct mating attack.

One might argue that any other type of win could be regarded as a ‘positional’, unless there is a gross attack by the loser. Sometimes the last part of a win is through tactics, although throughout the preliminaries the battle has been mainly positional. Jumping ahead, Game 30, Gelfand’s win in this book is very much of this kind.

Before this, we consider endgame wins.

Pure Endgame Strategy
It is a remarkable achievement in chess to create a pure endgame win, where the player keeps a microscopic edge, and holds it, keeping a slight advantage through to the endgame without any distraction of tactical complications. Then at the end of the game, one wonders how on earth the loser made a mistake, all his moves ending up so natural, and yet leading to a zero.

There are also games in which it is clearly level at the start of the endgame, and yet one of the players makes a microscopic slip, and his position deteriorates, and continues to deteriorate. Endgames win games.
Kramnik is perhaps the greatest exponent of the microscopic edge in current chess. Our next example, Game 13, Kramnik-Leko, is already a modern classic. There is a flurry of tactics in the opening, but this is a very well-known line, where the queens soon get exchanged, and many games at high level soon end up as quick draws. Kramnik wonders, though, whether he can still play for a win, with the comfortable option of taking the draw at any time. It works. The pawn structure is almost symmetrical, but Kramnik has slightly the better bishop in an opposite-coloured bishop ending, and his knight is more forceful than Black’s. Kramnik scored the full point.

Then there is another bishop and opposite-coloured endgame, this time with a couple of extra rooks on either side. Game 23, Carlsen-Tiviakov, looked as though it had been heading for a draw for a long time, but Carlsen fixed on a slight opportunity for his bishops, with his own bishop on d4 being protected by a pawn on e3, while Black’s bishop had no coverage to protect the pawn on d5. Before too long, Tiviakov was close to zugzwang.

In Game 22, Stellwagen-Eljanov, Black puts in a lot of hard work in a Berlin Variation, Ruy Lopez, but it is difficult to try for an edge, his c-pawns being doubled, and White having an extra kingside pawn. Eljanov sets up a thematic pawn sacrifice to double his opponent’s pawns, but even here this does not seem to force a win. Stellwagen blunders, presumably short of time, exchanging his bishop for knight, with a losing pawn endgame. Remarkably, it would seem that the knight could have been left on the board, allowing the loss of a couple of pawns, but with a likely draw.

**Clear-cut Positional Chess**

There are many more examples on the endgame to be considered, but these tend to lead to complicated mixtures of middlegame and endgame themes. We will consider these later. For the time being, we concentrate on clear-cut positional chess in the middlegame. The attack on the king in such games is only a subsidiary feature. If, furthermore, the player with an edge cannot force an extra pawn, or another material edge, then what happens next? The answer is to try to take control of weak squares. There is no point in playing for a quick attack, but maybe twenty moves later, the player on top starts to think about playing for checkmate.

Perhaps my favourite example is Game 3, Adams-Yusupov. It is pure positional chess, and Adams plays the middlegame very accurately. He also plays it highly imaginatively. The \( \text{Wh1} \) idea, hiding behind the king and pawns, does not actually get played, but as so often the most interesting moves are found in the analysis, rather than in the game. Yusupov accepts an isolated d-pawn, quite a common strategy in the French and various other openings. The pawn is slightly weak, and there is a slight weakness in front of the pawn, but this will hardly be enough to win the game. Adams needs to find some extra little weakness, and his queen rushes around with great agility, trying to attack several of the opponent’s pieces, prodding the occasional pawn to advance, and then buzzing away, maybe to at-
tack something else. The queen is the star piece here, both in the early stages, and in mopping up later.

Black also suffers a slight weakness on the d-file in the Pelikan/Sveshnikov Variation. Black’s pawn on d6 is backward, and there is a hole on d5. The games of Sveshnikov and others suggest that while the pawn structure looks ugly, Black also has serious compensation on the other files. Leko has been a strong advocate of Black in this opening, but on the other side of the board in Game 9, Leko-Radjabov, he shows great understanding of the problems he can set up as White. The star idea in this game is 19 \(\text{Qe}3\)-f5! g6 20 \(\text{Qe}3\), giving away a couple of tempo to provoke Black into advancing a pawn. This pawn advance later led to serious weaknesses.

In this context, there is also the extraordinarily extravagant line White chose in Game 21, Alekseev-Tkachiev. Alekseev has already gambited a pawn in a recently fashionable line, and then he ‘gambits’ a couple of tempi with 10 \(\text{Qc}1\)-g5 h6 11 \(\text{Qc}1\). All he has is that Black’s pawn structure is slightly weakened, and during the rest of the game he prods the kingside pawns just a little further, and in the end breaks through against the king. It would have been the positional game of the century if it not only worked, but was fully sound. Sadly Tkachiev had several possible improvements, which he avoided, and so the game is merely interesting.

**Symmetrical Pawn Structures**

We have already noted the outstanding win by Kramnik against Leko. Game 33, Karjakin-Inarkiev, leads to a broadly similar pawn structure, but with queens remaining on the board, rather than Kramnik’s earlier queen exchange. Karjakin knew exactly what he was doing, and set up the better bishop-pair in the symmetrical pawn structure. A good positional win.

**Game 24, Kamsky-Carlsen leads to another symmetrical pawn structure**, with the player with the more active pieces improving his position, and later winning. Kamsky was able to force his opponent on to the defensive when he was starting to press for a weak pawn. In the earlier part of the game, however, Kamsky’s play was inaccurate, and Carlsen could have taken his chances.

There was an attempt for White to blast through with a kingside attack in a symmetrical opening, in Game 25, Morozovich-Sakaev. He succeeded, but it should not really have worked. Sakaev himself overpressed, when the position started to favour him, and Morozovich in reply set up some sacrificial pawn breaks. The tactics were memorable, but the positional play was not at its highest level.

**More Space in the Centre**

Strong players will take care with the centre, and will not give way there unnecessarily. There are relatively few examples in this collection of players playing much too quietly, and just waiting for the opponent to take a big advantage. Books of this type a few decades ago might well have given illustrative games, analysed in depth, of masters beating amateurs, but such games are now relatively rare in top
grandmaster encounters. There might occasionally be games in which a player is slow on the uptake in a sharp tactical opening, the Mamedyarov win (Game 31) being an obvious example, but usually the top grandmasters will not play passively and make unnecessary moves.

The only real example, perhaps, is Game 8, Sargissian-Nisipeanu, after an early ...b5 thrust in the Benoni, here a Blumenfeld Counter-Gambit rather than a Benko or one of the lines of the King's Indian. Black's ...b5 worked, and he was able to break open his opponent's queenside pawns, and create a central piece advantage for himself. These days, players need to be aware of these ...b5 thrusts.

Black was able to keep an advantage in the centre in Game 11, Karpov-Akopian, but this was against the run of earlier play. Karpov developed well, and kept a slight edge, but somehow he found himself tied up with an unnecessary and wasteful knight manoeuvre. Then Akopian started to take over the initiative.

Not really covering the basic theme, but still well worth noting is Game 5, Bacrot-Rublevsky, where White kept slightly the better pawn structure. The unusual feature was that as White, Bacrot was able to stick his bishop on h6, preventing Black from castling kingside, and keeping a slight edge through to the endgame.

Pressure in the centre often coincides with countervailing pressure on other parts of the board. Game 30, Gelfand-Aleksseev, allowed White pawn control in the centre, with pawns on d4 and e4, while Black kept an extra pawn battalion on the queenside. Black castled queenside, and his pawns looked sturdy. Gradually, however, Gelfand was able to exchange a couple of queenside pawns, and then a central break allowed him to set up an attack against the king.

Unusual Piece and Pawn Battles
Finally we have a few unusual battles with an imbalance of pieces and pawns. My instincts would not regard these games as gambit lines. In none of the games is the player speculating any material in return for the possibility of a strong attack against the king. Rather, both players are trying to calculate what degree of compensation there is, in positional terms, for any slight degree of material imbalance.

There are two outstanding games of this type, both ending up in an endgame, so neither winner was aiming for mate. By coincidence both games end up as a rook sacrifice in the endgame.

Game 16, Shirov-Aronian, is classified as the Marshall Gambit, and hence a gambit. It is now almost a century since Frank Marshall introduced his big idea, and the line has now been highly analysed, and the immediate shock effect has gone. There are lines where White can go wrong quickly, falling for a mating attack, but by now the Marshall Gambit is a highly respectable 'positional gambit', or perhaps, if one prefers, a positional sacrifice. In fact, it is Shirov as White who gives up rook for bishop, to neutralize Black's kingside pressure. Shirov also keeps a couple of extra pawns, so material is arithmetically level (3+1+1=5). Both players will need to consider what impact an extra rook would have for Black, and what im-
pact each of the bishop and two pawns would have for White. In addition, there are clear weak squares on either side, but what impact would each of these pawns give to the game? We are dealing with immense positional complexity, and it is far from surprising that both players make slight slips at some stages. Shirov finds himself close to zugzwang before the time control, but he counterattacks with sudden tactics. The finish is memorable.

Game 7, Svidler-Topalov, is another titanic struggle, the more so in that Topalov, like Shirov in the game before, was keeping an eye of the possibility of aiming for a win. In a queenless middlegame, Svidler bravely gave away a central pawn, and indeed gave away a central square in order to press forward with a pawn on the kingside. He was not aiming for checkmate, nor even to create a passed pawn, but rather to make it difficult for Black to coordinate his pieces. Svidler was taking note that Black's extra pawn on the queenside was doubled, and so Topalov could not take any real active advantage of the extra pawn. White had the better kingside pressure with his pawns, but with no extra pawn on that side. It was a long, hard struggle, and eventually Svidler, like Aronian, found a spectacular endgame finish.

Game 10, Ivanchuk-Aronian, is one of the most interesting material imbalances of all, with Ivanchuk accepting three minor pieces in return for a queen. Games with rook, minor piece and pawn against queen are relatively common, with perhaps a piece dropping along the way. Three pieces against the queen is unlikely to happen unless there has already been a sharp sacrificial attack against the king, and the exposure of the king is likely to dominate the questions of strategy. In the Ivanchuk-Aronian game, both kings are relatively secure, with an unusual struggle. The usual rule of thumb in lines with queen versus assorted material is that if the various lesser pieces are secure, without serious pawn weaknesses, the player with the lesser pieces will tend to dominate. The queen cannot make much impact against the opponent, if the opponent's pieces are firmly defending all attacks. In Ivanchuk's game, it looks at first as though his position is insecure, but with original and accurate play, he gradually takes control.

Another much more common imbalance is the exchange sacrifice. In Game 1, Kasimdzhanov-Kasparov, Black's exchange sacrifice is delicately balanced, and the suspicion is that at one stage after the exchange sacrifice, Kasparov may have been slightly worse. This though would need practical testing. Kasimdzhanov would undoubtedly have been under considerable psychological pressure, and was unable to find the best lines. Kasparov, throughout his very early days, and up to his final top grandmaster tournament, excelled in taking his play very close to the edge, giving the opponent the chance to play for an edge if he were to play with 100% accuracy, but giving himself the opportunity of playing for a win after the slightest inaccuracy by his opponent.

Game 26, Wang Yue-Movesian, is another exchange sacrifice from the opening, based on an idea by Topalov. In Kasparov's win, he obtains more active pieces and pawns for himself, without directly attacking anything. Here, Wang Yue is aiming to keep his opponent's pieces behind in development for as long as possi-
ble. The position remained unbalanced, until Movsesian made a strange and unexplained piece sacrifice leading to a clear loss.

Now for some battles of the minor pieces. There are plenty of examples of the 'minor exchange sacrifice', accepting bishop and knight or, less commonly, the two knights, against the bishop-pair. There are several examples of this theme, which is highly relevant to the Berlin Variation of the Ruy Lopez, the Nimzo-Indian, and various other openings. For another example, in the Scotch, consider Game 18, Rublevsky-Grischuk. White finds no advantage with the bishop-pair, and Black has the more active bishop, and as time goes on, his knight becomes even more dominating. We have not catalogued all the bishop and knight struggles in this book, but the reader is recommended to pay considerable attention to this strategic battle.

The bishop-pair takes its revenge though in Game 12, Bareev-Efimenko, a Nimzo-Indian. Bareev has carefully worked out that while Black's queen and bishop on the long diagonal look threatening, White can cover the attack against his king, and his bishop-pair work better than the bishop and knight. The main basic difference between this game and the Grischuk win for the bishop and knight is that in Bareev's game his pawn structure is far more fluid, with the bishops being able to attack, and the opposing knight is unable to be firmly established.

The Best of the Best
This last classification gives us a useful opportunity to give a few suggestions of the best of the great games in the early post-Kasparov years. It needs to be emphasized that this selection of 33 games was a personal selection, and that I had not analysed in depth in advance any of the other candidate games. I have given, for example, only one win by Topalov, but there are genuine doubts as to whether his win was sound. It would seem more than likely that there are several Topalov startling wins which are totally sound and brilliant, and may well be very high up in a top five list.

Of the imperfect sieving from the best games since Kasparov's retirement in early 2005 to April 2008, we have several excellent and outstanding games to consider. Which is the best of the best? Everyone would have different points of view. My short-list would perhaps be the wins by Svidler, Aronian, Adams, and Radjabov among the longer games, and among the opening shock wins, Mamedyarov, Anand and Bu Xiangzhi. These all come quickly to my mind, but there are many other possibilities.

Out of this suggested short-list, I leave it to the reader to decide which he or she thinks of as best. Quite possibly players of different strengths would give different values over the idea of which game is best, and everyone will have different opinions.

Other Players in the Hall of Fame
We have given wins by all those players who passed 2700 level between the time of Kasparov's retirement, and April 2008. Quite a few players have since reached
2700. Quite a few other players have passed 2700, and then dropped down again. Also, there was no international Elo rating system before the 1970s. Retrospective calculations have suggested that many World Champions will have reached something between 2670 and 2690, with Fischer going beyond 2700. There has been, as noted earlier, a degree of inflation since these calculations have been made, and it is reasonable enough to suggest that all modern World Champions can be regarded as 2700 level. This would include Lasker, a superb exponent of the middlegame. Had he somehow been transported into 21st Century play, he would undoubtedly have been able to catch up with opening ideas, and would have done well. With Steinitz, the assessment is not so clear. He was a great thinker of his time, but to modern players, there are many obvious weaknesses in his play.

We include in the Hall of Fame:

1) World Champions from Lasker to just before Kasparov’s reign
Emanuel Lasker, Jose Capablanca, Alexander Alekhine, Max Euwe, Mikhail Botvinnik, Vassily Smyslov, Mikhail Tal, Tigran Petrosian, Boris Spassky, Bobby Fischer, and Anatoly Karpov. Also David Bronstein, and Viktor Korchnoi.

2) Players who have passed 2700, but have since dropped down again
Valery Salov, Alexander Beliavsky, Loeck Van Wely, Rustam Kasimdzhanov, Alexander Khalifman, Zurab Azmaiparashvili, Nigel Short (he has very recently passed 2700 again), Michal Krasenkow, Ivan Sokolov, and Illia Smirin.

3) The 33 current players given in this book
There has been a minor technicality in this book, in that players of exactly 2700 are not included, and that only players of 2701 or more are included. There is a practical reason. Three players in the period covered in this book have reached exactly 2700, but not gone beyond. This would make the book several pages longer. We add these three players to the Hall of Honour, though: Viktor Bologan, Krishnan Sasikiran, and Sergei Tiviakov. Also Vladimir Malakhov, who reached 2700 at the start of 2004, but a few months later dropped back.

4) The players who have passed 2700 since April 2008.

We may feel reasonably confident of assessing the players up to the 1960s. During the Fischer era, it was clear that so many strong grandmasters were so far behind Fischer that they could not be regarded as 2700+ players. There were too many 6-0 results during this era.

There are many statistical problems to encounter between the ratings of the 1970s and 1980s, and the current rating performances. We may feel reasonably confident that in their best years, Jan Timman and Leonid Stein would have
reached 'hall of fame' level. Are we to say definitely that Timman is a lesser player than both Euwe and Van Wely? Presumably not. Stein's record, with three USSR Championship wins, and his consistent plus score results against world champions, must surely be regarded on the highest level.

Such highly conscientious analysts as Lev Polugaevsky and Lajos Portisch achieved ratings well over 2600 in the 1970s, before the most recent slight inflation. It is possible to argue that they could be regarded as scoring very slightly less than the 2700 level much of the time, but that had they had the access of computer technology, they would have passed the current 2700 level.

But before we get too enthralled with the statistics, it is the chess that matters.
Game 1  
R.Kasimdzhanov-G.Kasparov  
Linares 2005  
Semi-Slav Defence D48

1 d4 d5  
Solid symmetrical play to start with. The positional imbalances start off later.

2 c4  
The Queen’s Gambit.

2...c6  
Black usually strongpoints the pawn on d5 with this or 2...e6. He wants to ensure that he is firm on at least one of the four central squares.

2...dxс4 is possible. Usually White recaptures the pawn without too much difficulty with e3 (or e4) and ¤xc4, so it is not really a proper gambit. If, for example, 3 ¤f3 ¤f6 4 e3 b5?! (better 4...б4 or 4...e6) 5 a4 c6 6 axb5 cxb5 7 b3, and White keeps a pleasant slight advantage. One of the points of the Slav Defence with 2...c6 is that Black could seriously consider...dxс4, either trying to keep the pawn or, as in the game, to set up counterplay with...b5 after a ¤xc4 recapture.

3 ¤xe6  
The one slight practical defect of the Slav Defence for Black, particularly if White is much lower rated (much lower rated that is than the gap between Kasimdzhanov and Kasparov) is that White could simply play for drawish chess with 3 cxd5 cxd5, hoping for a steady equality. Usually this doesn’t happen between strong players. It is generally better to play one’s normal game as White, hoping for a continued slight advantage and forcing Black to work out how to equalize and hold the position.

3...fxe6

Black could accept the gambit offer with 3...dxс4 4 e4 b5 (or even 4...е6). Then it is best to take immediate action to regain the pawn with 5 a4 b4 (5...а6? 6 axb5 cxb5 7 ¤xb5, and the pawn is pinned) 6 d2. In G.Kasparov-P.Svidler, Russian Championship, Moscow 2004, White eventually won the queenless middlegame, and later endgame, after 6...f6 7 e5 d5 8 dxс4 e6 9 f3 e7 10 d2 a5 11 c2 b5 12 d7 a6 13 h6 0-0 b6 14 e2 а6 15 fс1 0-0 16 аxа6 аxа6 17 wxa6 аxa6 18 f1. Here Black has not quite equalized, his
queenside pawns being open to attack. 4 e3

Kasimdzhanov moves from the more traditional Slav, with 4 Qf3 dxc4 5 a4, later recapturing the pawn with e3, into a Semi-Slav.

For the Exchange Variation with 4 cxd5, see Game 25, Morozevich-Sakaev. 4...e6

And Kasparov agrees to the Semi-Slav.

4...a6! is a credible option, and is now common. A basic idea is that even after Black plays ...b5, White’s edge is only slight in an exchange variation, such as 5 e3 b5 6 cxd5 cxd5. Naturally either side could play more adventurously; see, for example, Game 32, Inarkiev-Ni Hua, where White tried 6 c5. 5 Qf3

A good and natural move. The classic plan of development in chess is to bring a couple of pawns out into the centre, maybe also the c-pawn, and then bring the knights into play early, moving each knight just once at the beginning. Later, each player decides the best way to bring the bishops into play, and where to castle. The queen and the other rook usually wait until it is clearer where these pieces are best placed. The first thought in opening strategy is to start to bring a few pieces into play, and this includes finding open lines for the bishops. The second consideration is to try to develop flexibly, for attack with White and for defence with Black. It is usually a bad idea to attack in the first half dozen moves. One must develop first.

Opening theory these days can be incredibly deep and complicated; as we shall see Kasparov has prepared an un-

expected exchange sacrifice well in advance. Even so, the top players, however deeply they analyse, still concentrate on the basic ideas of opening strategy, and can usually find their way even when they have not previously studied a particular position in advance.

5...Qbd7

To the uninitiated, the initial impression would be that Black’s pieces seem unnecessarily cramped, his lightsquared bishop in particular being stuck behind a closed fortress of pawns, and the knight on a passive square adding to further cramping. This would be deceptive. Black has a plan of attack, with the idea of ...dxc4; Qxc4 b5 followed by ...b7, and then it is only a matter of time before a pawn break with ...c5. Then the smothered bishop escapes on to a good open diagonal. We will see this plan emerging during the next few moves.

6 Qd3

This is the most direct line, but it also gives up a tempo when compared with, say, 6 Wc2 dxc4?! 7 Qxc4.

The ‘battle of the tempo’ is quite a common theme in several Queen’s Gambit lines, in which White is delay-
ing \( \text{d3} \) for as long as feasible, and Black is delaying \( \text{dxc4} \), again for as long as he can. Dao Thien Hai, for example, tried \( 6 \text{wc2} \text{d6} 7 \text{a3} 0-0 8 \text{b4 wc7} \) several times in the early 1990s, but without any special success. Indeed, quite often one of the players decides that there is no good way for any further quiet moves, and instead simply plays the natural move.

\( 6 \text{wc2 d6} 7 \text{g4!} ? \) is an extremely sharp alternative, aiming for a direct attack against the king – see Game 2, Dreev-L.Dominguez. We slightly alter the chronological order of this book (the Dreev game was played a day before the Kasparov game), in honour of the retiring outstanding former World Champion. Garry Kasparov remains the only player who has consistently reached 2800+ chess levels.

\( 6...\text{dxc4} \)

\( 6...\text{d6} \) is a simple enough reply. If then \( 7 0-0 0-0 8 \text{e4} \text{dxe4} 9 \text{axe4} \text{axe4} 10 \text{axe4}, \)

the safest reply is probably \( 10...\text{wc7} 11 \text{e1} \text{c5} \) with only a small edge for White. Instead \( 10...\text{e5?!} 11 \text{dxe5} \text{axe5} 12 \text{axe5} \text{axe5} 13 \text{h7+} \text{h7} 14 \text{h5+} \text{g8} 15 \text{xe5} \) gives White an extra pawn. There was a time when occasionally players with Black would deliberately steer through this line, on the basis that bishops of opposite colour should lead to a draw, even a pawn down. These days players with the extra pawn are happy to grind for as long as it takes to try to prove the win. Here the natural \( 10...\text{xf6?!} \) is in fact a positional slip-up, and after \( 11 \text{c2} \) the databases show clear plus scores for White. Unfortunately Black’s knight move, apparently gaining time, ends up weakening his squares on \( c5 \) and \( e5 \), making it difficult to achieve counterplay.

\( 7 \text{xc4 b5} \)

It is this move that makes the line interesting for Black. After \( ...\text{b7} \), the bishop soon becomes a very active piece once Black has made a \( ...\text{c5} \) pawn push.

Black now has active play, but this does not necessarily mean that Black is better or fully equal. If White plays accurately, then he will still be better or equal. Black cannot be better unless White has made a mistake. If though Black plays actively and aggressively, he is making every chance of inducing his opponent to make an error. Kasparov
was always superb at exploiting such opportunities, and plays for a win with Black from move 1. He is, of course, even more dangerous with the extra move as White.

8 \textit{d}d3

The most active retreat.

8 \textit{e}e2 is safe enough, and indeed on a couple of occasions Kramnik played this against the sharp tactician Topalov in his 2006 World Championship match. Most high-level games have ended up as steady draws, but in the Kramnik-Topalov games there were wins for both sides.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_board.png}
\end{center}

8...\textit{b}b7

‘Of course!’ one might think, since the bishop is aiming for the long diagonal, but there are a couple of alternatives:

a) 8...\textit{b}4 (the Wade Defence) 9 \textit{d}e4 \textit{x}xe4 10 \textit{xe}4 \textit{b}7 is certainly playable, and keeps up the tempo on Black’s development, but also slightly loosens the queenside pawn structure. A slower build-up on the queenside, before aiming to break open lines there, is more dangerous.

b) 8...a6! is the more traditional main line of the Meran Defence, over-

10 d5 c4 11 \textit{c}c2 \textit{c}7 12 dxe6 fxe6, with a possible transposition to Kasimdzhanov-Kasparov. White can also try 10 e5!? cxd4 (10...\textit{d}d5?! 11 \textit{xd}5 exd5 12 0-0 strongly favours White, it being difficult for Black to castle kingside safely) 11 \textit{e}e4 \textit{d}5 12 0-0 h6 (the g5-square is dangerous) 13 a4!? b4 14 \textit{c}c4 with unclear play. With a slightly different move order in this line, starting with 8...\textit{b}7 9 0-0, the e4-e5 idea is much less effective for White, Black’s bishop adding protection to the knight on d5. See the note to White’s 11th.

We are covering in this book only brief summaries of complicated theory. There is little attempt to cover the latest details in critical side-variations from the game actually played. It is up to the reader to study for himself or herself and to examine alternatives. There are, of course, plenty of books or articles on opening theory to consider.

9 0-0

For 9 e4, see Game 31, Mamedyarov-Nepomniachtchi.

9...a6
Modern Chess: Move by Move

Black will soon play ...c5, opening the long diagonal for the bishop, and setting up an active queenside pawn majority. This sounds good, but White can still keep active play in the centre.

9...b4 10 c4 is possible, but loses some of the queenside flexibility and so White has chances of a slight edge.

10 e4

10 a4 b4 11 d1 (or 11 De4, likely to transpose) 11...c5 12 d4 has been tried a few times at top levels, but seems only to be equal.

10...c5

The counterattack begins.

11 d5

This has superseded 11 e5 d5 when Black has good control of the light squares, and should equalize.

11...Wc7

11...exd5 12 exd5 is deeply unfashionable for Black, his king being wide open on the kingside.

After 12...e7 13 d5 axb5 axb5 14 d6 d5 15 dxe5 Wxd6 16 Wxd6 Axd6 17 e5 in I.Farago-E.Sveshnikov, Sochi 1980, the renowned theorist Sveshnikov found himself a pawn down, and eventually lost. Any takers in this line for 14...b4 15 dxe7 Wxb6 16 Axb1 Ag8 (he has to take the passed pawn somehow)? Entertaining, but it is unlikely that Black will have many supporters.

11...e5 is the old-fashioned way of handling this line of the Meran. Black accepts that White has a strong passed pawn, but is arguing that everything else is solid. White generally tries 12 b3.

12 dxe6

Isolating Black’s pawn, but 12 Wxe2!? is worth considering.

12...f6 13 Ac2

13 A95 is premature. Black defends with 13...Wc6, and it is not quite clear what White is doing with the knight.

13 Wxe2 c4 14 Ac2 is natural play for White, but with the text White tries to squeeze alternative play with Ac2 first.

13...c4

13 b4 14 e5 dxe5 15 dxe5 Wxe5 16 Wf5 Wc7 17 Wxe6+ appears yet to have been tried. Black faces carnage after 17...Af7? 18 Axf6+ gxf6 19 Wh5+ c7 20 c4 Wh4 21 d5+ Axd5 22 Wxd5 Wxe5 23 Wxa8. Thus 17...e7 is better, but White remains ahead after 18 Axd4 0-0 19 Axf6+ Axf6 20 Wd3. Such lines explain why players have tried 13 Ac2, instead of keeping the e-pawn protected with 13 Wxe2.
We now reach the classic pawn structure of the modern Meran. Black has an excellent queenside pawn majority, well advanced, and he has good diagonals for the bishops and queen. There is no doubt that Black has excellent attacking chances.

White too has his options, otherwise this variation would have become obsolete a long time ago. The main point is that in compensation for Black’s pawn advantage on the queenside, White has a good extra pawn on the kingside, with slight damage to Black’s kingside pawns. White is not so much trying to create a passed pawn, but rather to put pressure on Black’s isolated e-pawn, and thereby on the squares around it.

This is a popular opening for both sides, with the thought that both sides will have to play with great accuracy, and who plays better, wins.

14 ©d4

This is not a bad move in itself. It centralizes, puts pressure on Black’s e-pawn, and helps open up lines for his kingside. Even so, White’s next few moves look far too elaborate, taking three knight moves instead of one in bringing the knight from f3 to g5. White may well be happy in inducing the ...e5 response, but is it all worth the effort?

14 ©e2 and 14 ©g5 are more traditional approaches, but maybe fashion will swing?

14...©e5

The knight too aims for an active square.

15 ©e3

Kasparov as White tried, several years ago, 15 ©e2, but he had to work hard to keep equality after 15...©d6 16 f4 e5 17 ©f5 0-0 18 ©xd6 (a recent attempt at improvement, H.Konuru-D.Stellwagen, Wijk aan Zee 2008, varied with 18 ©d1?!, ending up with equality after 18...©d3 19 ©xd6 ©xd6 20 ©xd3 ©xd3 21 ©xd3 ©c7 22 f5 b4 23 ©d5 ©xd5 24 ©xd5 ©xf5, and later a draw) 18...©d6 19 ©xe5 ©xe5 20 ©f5 ©c7 21 ©g5 ©xe4 22 ©xf8+ ©xf8 23 ©xe4 ©e5 24 ©f6+ ©xf6 25 ©xh7+ ©xh7 26 ©h5+ ©g8 27 ©g6+, and a draw by perpetual, G.Kasparov-V.Akopian, Yerevan Olympiad 1996.

15...e5

15...0-0-0 has also been tried, by Akopian and others. Bringing the rook to the d-file is aggressive, but castling queenside is not as safe for the king as castling kingside. After 16 ©e2, White has achieved a plus score.

16 ©f3

After 16 ©f5 Black can snatch the e-pawn with 16...©xe4 17 ©xe4 ©xe4, and White has shown various ways of achieving some compensation, nothing decisive but still workable. More recently Anand has tried 16...g6!? Then Marin annotating for ChessBase gives 17 ©g5? ©xe4 18 ©xe4 ©xe4 19 ©xe4 ©xe4 20 ©f6 gxf5 21 ©xh8 ©d3, and
Black can be happy with this. He has a pawn in return for the exchange sacrifice, two good bishops, and White's bishop will need some work in disentangling. The stem game saw, however, 17...\(\text{\texttt{Q}}\text{h6}\), which may well be better, and after 17...\(\text{\texttt{Q}}\text{g7}\) 18 \(\text{\texttt{W}}\text{f3} \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{e6}\) 19 \(\text{\texttt{W}}\text{h3} \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{c8}\) 20 \(\text{\texttt{W}}\text{h4}\) (Marin prefers 20 \(\text{\texttt{W}}\text{g3}\)) 20...\(\text{\texttt{W}}\text{e7}\) 21 \(\text{\texttt{W}}\text{f1} \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{d5}\) 22 \(\text{\texttt{W}}\text{xe7+} \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{xe7}\) 23 \(\text{\texttt{Q}}\text{d5} \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{b7}\) Black was already slightly better in A.Morozevich-V.Anand, Mexico City World Championship 2007.

16...\(\text{\texttt{Q}}\text{e7}\)

16...\(\text{\texttt{Q}}\text{xe4}\) 17 \(\text{\texttt{Q}}\text{xe4} \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{xe4}\) 18 \(\text{\texttt{W}}\text{e1} \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{d6}\) 19 \(\text{\texttt{Q}}\text{xe4} \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{xe4}\) 20 \(\text{\texttt{Q}}\text{g5} \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{d3}\) 21 \(\text{\texttt{W}}\text{f3}\) led to a slight advantage for White in B.Gelfand-E.Bareev, Novgorod 1997. Once White's pawn on e4 had vanished, he was able to compensate by making use of both the long diagonal through the e4-square, and the e-file with the rook. He even had the possibility of using the knight on e4 as well, although in the end this did not quite happen.

17 \(\text{\texttt{Q}}\text{g5}\)

17...0-0!?

Kasparov, like Tal, was always ready to sacrifice, if appropriate, given a reasonable opportunity. Another former World Champion, Tigran V. Petrosian (there is now a strong young namesake, hence the middle initial) was also famed for his positional sacrifices, but with a particular speciality. Petrosian scored many boa-like wins by sacrificing the exchange, giving up a rook for bishop or knight, and showing that in the right type of position he could squeeze all counterplay. Here Kasparov's sacrifice was probably more in the mould of Petrosian, rather than of Tal.

There is also an additional point, which Petrosian would not have had the opportunity to deal with, namely that Kasparov had experience of playing high-level computer opposition. As anyone who has tried using computer help will be aware, computer engines are not necessarily secure of their assessments when sacrifices as concerned. They are far more secure in their evaluation when material is level. In Lutz's commentary for ChessBase, he noted that Kasparov had already considered the diagram position, when preparing for his 2003 match against the computer, Deep Junior. The exchange sacrifice would have been 'psychologically' excellent against computer opposition, but would it necessarily have been so good against human opposition?

Alternatively, 17...\(\text{\texttt{h6}}\)? is unclear, but without sacrifices, so perhaps would not have been so effective against a computer. In Y.Kruppa-D.Collas, Cappelle la Grande 2001, play continued 18 \(\text{\texttt{Q}}\text{xh5} \text{\texttt{hxg5}}\) 19 \(\text{\texttt{Q}}\text{e3} \text{\texttt{g4}}\) 20 \(\text{\texttt{W}}\text{e2} 0-0-0\) 21 \(\text{\texttt{a4}} \text{\texttt{b4}}\) 22 \(\text{\texttt{Q}}\text{d5} \text{\texttt{exd5}}\) 23 \(\text{\texttt{exd5}} \text{\texttt{Qxd5}}\) 24 \(\text{\texttt{W}}\text{xd4+},\) and was possibly about level. There are, of course, several deviations from this line. An attractive alternative
for Black would seem to be 22...\text{\textit{xf5}} 23 \text{\textit{exd5 e4}} 24 \text{\textit{g3 }}\text{\textit{xd5}} with apparently strong pressure. The computer engine likes this for a little, and then quickly notes that 25 \text{\textit{b3! xd5}} 26 \text{\textit{h4 gxh3}} (26...\text{\textit{xd5}} 27 \text{\textit{g1}}} \text{\textit{h4}} 28 \text{\textit{xc4 stops the sacrificial attack}}) 27 \text{\textit{xc4 h2+}} 28 \text{\textit{h1 proves to be strong for White, Black's king being by now the more exposed of the two.}}

With many hidden reefs like this, it is understandable that Kasparov chose 17...0-0. He did not have the opportunity of making this particular sacrifice against the computer, and so in the end it was Kasimdzhanov who was the 'victim'.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_board.png}
\caption{The end of the sacrificial phase. Now Kasparov will have to prove that his minor pieces create a positional impact.}
\end{figure}

18 \text{\textit{xc5}}

If White does not want to accept the challenge of the exchange sacrifice, Kasparov notes that 18 \text{\textit{b4}} is acceptable: for example, 18...\text{\textit{xb4}} (or 18...h6 19 \text{\textit{xc5 hxg5}} 20 \text{\textit{xe7 xe7}} 21 a3, also unclear, maybe level) 19 \text{\textit{xb4}} 20 \text{\textit{xc4+ xc4}} 21 \text{\textit{xc4+ bx4}} 22 \text{\textit{ab1 xc6}}, which is unclear, but maybe level.

18...\text{\textit{xc5}}

The bishop takes over an excellent diagonal.

19 \text{\textit{xe6}}

With a knight fork.

19...\text{\textit{wb6}}

So that bishop and queen create pressure on the f2-pawn, and then, Black hopes, on the king.

20 \text{\textit{xf8}}

There is no sensible way back 20 \text{\textit{xc5 xc5}} still gives pressure on White's kingside, but without involving material sacrifice.

20...\text{\textit{xf8}}

This has been criticized by Lutz and others, but it would seem that it is valid. White's mistake comes later.

The intention for White is to simplify by a minor piece exchange, so keeping the rook versus bishop advantage without giving away excessive attacking chances. The exchange on d5 also opens up the b1-h7 diagonal, although this may be obscured by Black's...e4 pawn push. Kasimdzhanov's move is not minimal defence, though, as it gives away material. The maximalist defensive idea, giving away absolutely
nothing, is 21 \( \text{We2!} \), which covers, at least temporarily, the e4- and f2-weaksnesses. Then Kasparov suggests in *Informator* 21...\( \text{We6} \), with the idea of adding pressure with \( ..\text{Qg4} \). However, 22 \( \text{Qd1!} \), not given in Kasparov's notes, seems an improvement for White, quietly restructuring:

a) If 22...\( \text{Qd4} \) then 23 \( \text{Qb1} \), again cementing the barricades, and a possible idea for counterplay would be a later b3 c3; b4!, using the long diagonal from a2 to g8.

b) Black could try 22...\( \text{Wf7} \) 23 a4 b4, but again the tight position holds after 24 \( \text{Cc1} \) \( \text{Qd4} \) 25 \( \text{Qb1} \) \( \text{Cc8} \) 26 \( \text{Qa2} \) b3 27 \( \text{Qb1} \).

In either case, White is not relying on permanent passive defence, but is aiming for pawn counterplay on the queenside to allow the pieces back into play. Thus the suspicion is that Black has not reached full equality after this exchange sacrifice.

21...\( \text{Qxd5!} \)

Black needs the knight, rather than the light-squared bishop, to attack the dark squares. Indeed, 21...\( \text{Qxd5} \) 22 \( \text{exd5} \) \( \text{Qxf2} \) 23 \( \text{Qxf2} \) \( \text{Qxf2+} \) 24 \( \text{Qh1} \) \( \text{Qd4} \) 25 \( \text{Qf3} \) leaves White better; a good indication of what Kasimdzhanov was hoping for with his exchange on d5.

22 \( \text{exd5} \) \( \text{Qxf2+} \)

Kasparov has reasonable compensation for the exchange sacrifice. He has four active pieces, pushing at the king, and a central passed pawn, more effective than White’s. What holds for White, or rather what should have held, is that White has good control of the light-coloured squares.

23 \( \text{Qh1} \)

23 \( \text{Qxf2??} \) \( \text{Qg4} \) loses quickly.

23...\( \text{e4} \)

Black’s passed pawn is likely to be more troublesome than White’s. In attacking terms, it is not quite as effective as it looks, though, since Black is relying heavily on defending with the pawn on the b1-h7 diagonal, and if the pawn moves for an attack, then White may resume play on the light-coloured squares.

24 \( \text{We2} \)

This is criticized by Kasparov and by others, but it seems okay. Trying to consolidate on the dark squares usually helps defend on the light squares as well. It is the next move which is questionable.
Kasparov suggests 24 d6 e3 25 \( \text{Qf5} \) g6 26 \( \text{Qh3} \) Qg7 27 d7 when White has coordinated his queen and bishop to a certain extent, and his pawn is safe on the seventh, but Black is in a better situation to improve his pieces further. White’s bishop, for example, protects the passed pawn, but cannot attack anything, while Black’s bishop and knight have good attacking chances. Kasparov suggests 27...Qe4 28 Wd5 Qxd2 29 Wfd1 Wf6 30 Qg4 h5 31 Qe2 Qd8 32 a4 Wxb2 33 axb5 Wxb5 34 Wd4+ Qh7 35 Wf6 with advantage to Black, but even this is less than clear after 35...Qxd7 36 Qxa6 Qg7 37 Qa8. However, 27...Qh5, a suggested alternative by Kasparov, looks promising for Black, with ideas of ...Qf4 and ...Qd3.

Instead 24 a4! looks good, and Kasparov analyses play to a perpetual after 24...Qd4 25 axb5 axb5 26 We2 Qxb2 27 Qad1 Qd4 28 Qxe4 Qe8 29 Qxf6 Wxf6 30 Qxh7+ Qf8 31 Qe4 We5 32 Wf3+ Qg8 33 Qf1 Wxe4 34 Wf7+.

24...e3

Even the slightest inaccuracy by either side would turn the position to being worse, and any further inaccuracy would slide the position to a clear loss. The author’s own assumption in his earlier assessment was that Kasimdzhanov was slightly better at this point, but further consideration suggests that Kasparov’s position, as Black, was already slightly better.

25 Qfd1?

This is generally recognized by the commentators as a mistake, weakening the kingside. They, including Kasparov himself, have suggested 25 Qad1 as an improvement, keeping open the return exchange sacrifice on f2. If, for example, 25 Qad1 Wd6 26 Qf5 Qh8 27 Qxf2 exf2 28 Wxf2 Qe8, and White has stopped the direct attack against the king with level material. Look more closely though, and White cannot improve his pieces, while his d-pawn is well covered by the defender. Black keeps a slight edge.

Can White improve on this? The obvious thought is to open up a different file for the rook, with 25 a4 and then:

a) 25...Qxd5 26 Qxh7+ Qxh7 (26...Qh8 27 Qe4 Qf4 28 Wf3 is good for White) 27 Wh5+ Qg8 28 Wxd5+ Qf7 29 axb5 e2 30 Qc1 Wxb5 (30...Qe3? 31 bxa6 e1W+ 32 Qxe1 Qxe1 33 a7 wins for White; Black’s rook is pinned!) 31 Wf6 e1W+ 32 Qxe1 Qxe1 33 a1, and we end up with a queen and rook each, but Black having the more scattered pawns. White is better.

b) It is not immediately clear how Black can improve his pieces. If, for example, 25...Qd8 26 axb5 axb5 27 b3 c5 28 Qfd1, then White has found two good files for his two rooks. He seems
better after 29 \( \text{Qf5} \), and then \( \text{Qe6+} \), although play is still unclear.

c) The less than obvious 25...\text{g6} improves. Play might continue with 26 \text{axb4 axb4} when 27 \text{Rfd1} \text{Wd6} transposes into game, in which White quickly faced great tactical dangers. However, the rook move is unnecessary, and wastes time. Instead 27 \text{b3!} sets up queenside counterplay just in time:

\[ \text{C1) 27...c3 28 d6 \text{Wxd6} 29 \text{Wxb5}, and White has freed his position. Note that 29...\text{Qg4?? 30 Wxc4+ would merely lose a piece.} } \]

\[ \text{C2) 27...\text{Wd6 28 bxc4 Qh5 (28...bxc4 29 \text{Wxc4 is good for White) 29 cxb5 Qg3+ 30 hxg3 Wxg3 31 Aa4l opens up the rank and file for White, and keeps the win.} } \]

\[ \text{C3) 27...\text{Qxd5 is the best and most natural reply: 28 bxc4 Qc3 (probably slightly more accurate than 28...Qf4 29 Wf3) 29 Wd3 e2 30 Wxc3 exf1W+ 31 Axe1, and we are heading for a draw.} \]

\[ \text{25...Wd6} \]

White's passed pawn is now securely blockaded, and Black can think about attacking the king. Observe how Black's queen is very difficult to attack, while White will have problems on h2 and g3.

Also, as we shall soon see, there is a knight threat to f4.

\[ \text{Of course, the story is of pawns as well as bishops. Black's passed pawn is much more dangerous than his opponent's, not least because it is much closer to promotion. If White's queen were somehow to abandon the e2-square, Black would quickly play ...e2, threatening to take the rook with check, and presumably winning. However if Black's queen were to move away, perhaps with the idea of a quick mating attack, White's d-pawn would require three advances before queening.} \]

\[ \text{26 a4} \]

Slightly delayed, and also White has mishandled his rooks. However, on 26 \text{b3} Kasparov gives a strong attack for Black after 26...c3 27 \text{Qf5 g6 28 Qe6+ Qg7 29 Ac1 Qe4.} \]

\[ \text{26...g6!} \]

Not immediately obvious, but strong. Black covers both the h5- and f5-squares with the pawn, and prevents White's bishop or queen cutting out these squares. The next stage will be ...\text{Qh5}, and if White does nothing to respond, there will be a threat of ...\text{Qg3+; hxg3 Wxg3} and a winning ...\text{Wh4 mate.} \]
27 axb5

Continuing his plan of opening up lines for the rooks, but again, this should have been tried earlier.

27...axb5 28 g3

28 b3 is too late to equalize: 28...Qh5
29 bxc4 Qf4 (29...Qg3+? 30 hxg3 Qxg3
31 Qd4l) 30 Qf3 e2 31 Qdc1 (31 Qxf2 exd1Q+ 32 Qxd1 Qh3l winning)
31...e1Q+ 32 Qxe1 Qxe1 33 Qxe1 bxc4 will lead to the fall of the d-pawn, since if 34 Qd1? Qd3l, and Black wins the exchange. A better defensive plan is 34 Qc3 Qxd5 35 Qe4 Qf7 when it will take a long grinding struggle for Black to take full advantage of the extra pawn, but one suspects that he would succeed.

28...Qh5l

Kasparov still needs to play with great accuracy, and he intends to sacrifice a piece, remaining a rook down, in order to force White's king to be exposed to the elements. There will be ways for White to avoid any quick checkmate, through return sacrifices, but even in any endgame, Black will be on top.

Kasparov notes the alternative try, 28...Qe5l?, so that if for some reason, either tactical or positional, White moves his queen, Black has ...e2. Play might continue with 29 d6 Qh5 30 d7 Qxg3+ 31 hxg3 Qxg3, with, one might assume, a quick checkmate. Except that the players will have noted a saving tactical response with 32 Qf5l. If then 32...gxfs? Black's queen is pinned, and after 33 Qg1 White wins, but with
32...Qh4+ 33 Qg2 Qg3+ there is a perpetual.

29 Qg4

Otherwise 29...Qxg3+ 30 hxg3 Qxg3 crashes through, and there was little chance of salvation with 29 Qxg1 Qxg1
30 Qxg1 Qe5.

29...Qxg3l?

Kasparov looks for the clincher.
29...\( \text{e}8 \) is the alternative: 30 \( \text{g}2 \) e2 31 \( \text{xf}2 \) exd1\# 32 \( \text{xd}1 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 33 \( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 34 \( \text{g}1 \) \( \text{xd}5 \) 35 \( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{xd}5 \) 36 \( \text{e}4 \) leaves Black a pawn up in an endgame, but there will be a lot of hard work before he can force a win.

30 h\( \text{x}g3 \)

This loses quickly, probably under time pressure, and misses one of the points of Black’s tactics.

Instead 30 \( \text{we}6+ \) \( \text{xe}6 \) 31 dxe6 keeps play alive for a while. Kasparov gives 30...e2 32 h\( \text{x}g3 \) \( \text{xf}3+ \) 33 \( \text{g}2 \) exd1\# 34 \( \text{xd}1 \) \( \text{h}5 \) as a clear win for Black, who has two extra pawns. Kasparov also gives 30 \( \text{g}1 \) \( \text{f}2+ \) 31 \( \text{wh}5 \) \( \text{xf}1 \) 32 \( \text{xf}1 \), which at first looks fine for White, but Black has a winning resource in 32...\( \text{xf}1 \). Play might continue 33 \( \text{wg}4 \) \( \text{f}2 \) 34 \( \text{g}2 \) e2, soon queening a pawn.

30...\( \text{xf}3+ \)

Aiming for mate.

31 \( \text{g}2 \)

Or 31 \( \text{g}1 \) e2 32 \( \text{xe}1 \) \( \text{c}5+ \) 33 \( \text{h}2 \) \( \text{f}2+ \) 34 \( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{h}5 \) 35 \( \text{we}6+ \) \( \text{g}7 \), winning for Black.

31...\( \text{f}2 \)

Queen, rook, knight and pawn, working together, against king, queen

and sundry other defenders, make a formidable attacking combination, and even a quick glance will suggest that Black should be winning. He has to be careful though, as he is still a rook down.

32 \( \text{h}3 \)

32 \( \text{g}1? \) \( \text{e}2+ \) allows Black to checkmate next move.

32...\( \text{f}5! \)

Sometimes a quiet move, admittedly with the help of a direct threat, may be more effective than a loud check. Black is now threatening mate on h2.

32...\( \text{h}2+? \), which Kasimdzhanov was no doubt hoping for in time trouble, does not work. After 33 \( \text{hxh}2 \) \( \text{f}1+ \) 34 \( \text{g}2! \) (the only move; anything else loses) 34...\( \text{h}2+ \) 35 \( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{f}2+ \) 36 \( \text{e}4 \) White is two rooks up, and his king is about to escape: 36...e2 37 \( \text{we}6+ \) \( \text{g}7 \) 38 \( \text{we}5+ \) \( \text{h}6 \) 39 \( \text{f}4+ \) soon wraps things up.

33 \( \text{h}1 \)

33 \( \text{a}8+ \) \( \text{g}7 \) 34 \( \text{a}7+ \) \( \text{f}6! \) makes no real difference. Black still wins after 35 \( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{h}5! \).

33...\( \text{h}5! \)

An attractive finish as White’s kingside pieces are surrounded.
34 \( \text{Wxg6+} \)

A nice try, but White is now material down. Instead 34 \( \text{Wg1} \) \( \text{f3+} \) 35 \( \text{g2} \) \( \text{Wg3} \) mate is a memorable final position. White’s rook on h1 obstructs the king, but it needed to go there to defend the earlier mate threat on h2.

34..\( \text{Wxg6} \) 35 \( \text{Hg1} \) \( \text{Wxg1} \)

It is time for simple play. 35..\( \text{f3+?} \) 36 \( \text{h2} \) \( \text{g3} \) 37 \( \text{xf5} \) \( \text{xf5} \) 38 \( \text{Xg3+} \) would force Black to start all over again.

36 \( \text{Xg1+} \) \( \text{f7} \) 0-1

White’s position is hopeless.

Kasparov’s tournament chess career is over, as far as we can see, but who is next in line? There is no obvious answer. Some players have reached 2800 occasionally, but only Kasparov has reached that level for any length of time. Kramnik, Anand and Topalov are all great players, but could it be that some of the younger players, such as Karjakin or Carlsen, could reach that level, and maybe go beyond? Or what about various other super-grandmasters?
1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Qc3 Qf6 4 e3 e6 5 Qf3 Qbd7 6 Qc2

For 6 Qd3, see both Game 1, Kasimdzhanov-Kasparov, and Game 30, Mamedyarov-Nepomniachtchi.
6...Qd6

6...dxc4 7 Qxc4 is a loss of tempo in comparison with the 6 Qd3 dxc4 7 Qxc4, and White should have an edge. 7 g4!? One is reminded of a much earlier gambit, giving up the b-pawn. This was the Evans Gambit, 1 e4 e5 2 Qf3 Qc6 3 Qc4 Qc5 4 b4!? Qxb4 5 c3 followed by d4, which dates from the 1820s, and has still occasionally been tried by Kasparov, including a win against Anand.

What plans might follow over the next few moves in the Shabalov Gambit? White is unlikely to castle on the kingside, and so will castle queenside with ideas of attacking on the kingside if Black castles on that side. But, of course, Black has not castled yet, which makes the g-pawn thrust all the more surprising. Does it work? This remains to be seen.

There are several non-sacrificial alternatives. 7 b3 or 7 Qd2 are possibilities, as are 7 Qe2 and 7 Qd3, met by 7...dxec4. Finally, 7 e4 dxec4 8 Qxe4 Qxe4 9 Wxe4 e5!? 10 dxec5 0-0 11 exd6 Qe8 12 Wxe8+ Wxe8+ 13 Qe3, with rook, bishop and passed pawn for the queen, is unclear. This was explored a lot in the early 1980s, but interest died down somewhat when it was apparent that White could not establish a clear edge. 7...Qxc4

Black could consider snatching the g-pawn with 7...Qxg4 8 Qg1. After 8...Qxh2 9 Qxh2 Qxh2 10 Qxg7 experience favours White. If instead 8...h5 9 h3 Qh6, White treats this as a gambit line: 10 e4 (rather than 10 Qxg7?!)
dxe4 11 Qxe4 Bb4+ 12 Qd2 Qxd2+ 13 Wxd2 with pressure, such as after 13...Qf6 14 Qc3 Qf5 15 0-0-0 Qf8 16 A.d3 A.d7 17 A.e5, White later winning the game in A.Shirov-V.Akopian, Oakham 1992. This was one of the very early examples of this line.

After the earlier attempts at refuting the pawn sacrifice by snatching it, many have played more quietly, arguing that opening up a kingside pawn creates weaknesses for White, rather than Black, on the kingside. 7...h6 and 7...Bb4 have therefore been tried.

8 Axc4

8 g5 A.d5 9 Axc4 is also to be considered, but White is not required to push the pawn, and he can keep more options without pushing it immediately.

8...e5

8...A.xg4 9 A.g1 is even more dangerous now.

9 A.d2

A recent innovation. Older games concentrating on 9 g5 A.d5, and now 10 A.e4 or 10 A.d2. White has not tried 10 Axd5 cxd5 11 Axd5, snatching a pawn. It is worth considering, at least in analysis, but too many of White's pieces seem too open.

9...0-0-0?

It is very brave to castle in front of White's pawns. Still, we should not hastily give a question mark just yet. Dominguez has clearly examined this position in advance, and decided that it is interesting and playable. Now Dreev has to take up the challenge.

Dominguez has also tried 9...exd4 10 Axd4 A.e5 11 A.e2 A.f3 12 A.e4 A.e7 13 0-0-0 0-0 14 A.c3 (Lutz prefers 14 f4 in his analysis) 14...A.c7 15 A.dg1 f5 16 h3 with complicated play, favouring Black, in B.Gelfand-L.Dominguez, Calvia Olympiad 2004. It ended up in perpetual check, although Black was at one stage winning.

Evidently Dominguez must have decided that this was not fully satisfactory for Black. White has a few promising attacking ideas after 14 f4 A.g6 15 f5 A.f6e5, such as starting off with Lutz's suggestion of 16 A.xg4 A.xg4 17 A.hg1 c5 18 A.c6 bxc6 19 A.c3, with unclear play.

There are other possibilities to be considered too, and it is noticeable that since 2004 after 9 A.d2, Shirov has won both as White and as Black against strong opposition. This variation is complicated; there are few options of a quick draw.

10 0-0-0-0?

Dreev has played this line on both sides, and is therefore fully aware of what the most dangerous lines are, and also what the safest lines are. As White here he aims for a wild kingside attack, castling queenside first.

In V.Dobrov-A.Dreev, Internet 2004, White played more quietly with 10 g5 Axd5 (actually reached by transposition
after 9 g5 \( \text{d}5 \) 10 \( \text{d}2 \) 0-0), and after 11 0-0-0 (11 \( \text{d}4 \) or 11 \( \text{d}x5 \) are to be considered) 11...\( \text{d}x4 \) 12 \( \text{d}x4 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 13 \( \text{w}e4 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 14 \( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{w}e8 \) Black was comfortable, and later won.

11...\( \text{d}e5 \)

11...\( \text{b}6 \) seems dangerously decentralizing. Maybe then 12 \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{x}g4 \) 13 \( \text{f}3 \).

10...\( \text{d}x4 \)

10...\( \text{b}6 \)? is a possibility, White replying with 11 \( \text{d}xe5 \):

a) After 11...\( \text{d}xc4 \)? 12 \( \text{e}f6 \) \( \text{w}xf6 \) 13 \( \text{d}e4 \) \( \text{w}xf3 \) 14 \( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{f}5 \) (the only move) 15 \( \text{g}x5 \) White is clearly better.

b) 11...\( \text{g}4 \)? is better, with unclear play after 12 \( \text{e}f6 \) \( \text{d}xf3 \) 13 \( \text{x}g7 \) \( \text{e}8 \) 14 \( \text{w}f5 \) \( \text{d}xc4 \) 15 \( \text{w}xf3 \) \( \text{w}b6 \) 16 \( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{d}ad8 \) 17 \( \text{d}e4 \) \( \text{d}e5 \).

11 \( \text{d}x4 \)

Much more active than 11 \( \text{d}x4 \).

12 \( \text{d}e2 \)

Offering a pawn.

12 \( g5 \) \( \text{d}xc4 \) 13 \( \text{g}xf6 \) \( \text{w}xf6 \) 14 \( \text{d}e4 \) \( \text{w}e7 \) 15 \( \text{d}xc6 \) \( \text{bxc6} \) 16 \( \text{w}xc4 \) \( \text{a}6 \) 17 \( \text{w}xa6 \) \( \text{w}xe4 \) 18 \( \text{d}c3 \) \( \text{f}d8 \) 19 \( \text{hd}1 \) \( \text{f}8 \) ends up level.

12...\( \text{d}xg4 \)

Otherwise, 12...\( \text{d}xf4 \)? 13 \( \text{d}e4 \) gives White a strong attack, and 12...\( \text{d}xg4 \) 13 \( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{d}xe2 \) 14 \( \text{d}xe2 \) \( \text{d}g6 \) 15 \( \text{e}4 \), as given by Dreev, offers excellent compensation for the sacrificed pawn. White has the better pawn structure, and the abandoned g-pawn allows him to attack on the g-file. Here Dreev also gives 13...\( \text{x}g6 \) 14 \( \text{d}xg4 \) \( \text{d}xg4 \) 15 \( \text{f}5 \) without comment, but implying that White is doing well. After 15...\( \text{d}f2 \) 16 \( \text{d}e4 \) \( \text{d}xd1 \) 17 \( \text{d}xd1 \) \( \text{d}e7 \) 18 \( \text{d}c3 \) \( \text{w}c8 \) 19 \( \text{d}xe7+ \) (not 19 \( \text{x}g7? \) \( \text{w}xh3 \)) 19...\( \text{d}xe7 \) 20 \( \text{d}g1 \) \( \text{d}g6 \) 21 \( \text{f}5 \) White wins the knight. The computer gives this as equal, but queen, rook, bishop and knight versus queen and two rooks gives the attacker a good variety of attack: 21...\( \text{w}c7 \) 22 \( \text{f}xg6 \) \( \text{fxg6} \) 23 \( \text{d}g5 \) \( \text{w}e7 \) 24 \( \text{b}1 \) is prom-
ising for White.

13...\textit{h}g1

By now he is obliged to give up both pawns, otherwise the initiative will fade.

13...\textit{xf}2

A difficult decision to make. Black takes the second pawn, but his opponent will have a dangerous attack. Is the attack sound, or not? Or should Black quietly defend, relying on a single extra pawn? Ultimately, no player over the board will be able to calculate to the end which plan is better, and it will end up as a matter of judgement. A player who has previously analysed the position at home will have a significant advantage, not necessarily because he has a better position, but rather because his opponent has to make a critical decision without assistance.

The move that Dominguez played, taking the f-pawn, is quite clearly better than taking the h-pawn, which gives White a clear attack on the g- and h-files. In practical terms, there is no need to analyse further.

What is more interesting is whether Black should develop quietly with 13...\textit{e}81?:

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess-board.png}
\end{figure}

a) The natural line is 14 \textit{g}2 \textit{e}5 15 \textit{f}4 \textit{g}6 16 \textit{d}b1, but then Black has 16...\textit{h}3! with some tactics.

If then 17 \textit{f}2, Black has an unexpected bishop pin with 17...\textit{xf}4! 18 \textit{exf}4 \textit{c}5. Thus play might continue instead with 17 \textit{g}3 \textit{d}7 18 \textit{f}5 \textit{hxg}3 19 \textit{hxg}3, apparently trapping the bishop, but Black again has 19...\textit{xf}4! 20 \textit{exf}4 (20 \textit{c}4 \textit{g}4) 20...\textit{xd}4 21 \textit{hxh}3 \textit{ad}8 with advantage. He has set up considerable pressure on the d- and e-files, and White's minor pieces are ineffective.

b) This leaves 14 \textit{d}f5!? \textit{xf}5 15 \textit{xf}5 with standard gambit play. It is always difficult to establish whether the active pieces have more impact than the extra pawn. Here White might have the edge. He has pressure on the g-file, and if he can set up advancing pawns on the e- and f-files, his bishops become dangerous. A computer suggestion is 15...\textit{e}5 16 \textit{wf}3 \textit{g}5 17 \textit{e}4 \textit{hxh}2 18 \textit{wh}3 \textit{hxg}1 19 \textit{hxg}1, but Black is under pressure.

Overall, Black has to work hard to equalize, and this is the purpose of the opponent's gambit play.

14 \textit{df}1

The only move, but good. Two rooks
on half-open files against the king will provide excellent attacking chances.

otherwise it is a weakness, especially if the light-squared bishop is going to be exchanged.

14...\(\mathcal{B}h3\)

Black could go the full monty with 14...\(\mathcal{A}xh2\) 15 \(\mathcal{A}g2\) \(\mathcal{A}g4\) 16 \(\mathcal{A}h1\). Again, the computer prefers the three pawns, but human players will tend to want the pieces. Black's pawns are only of decisive significance if he can force the exchange of queens, or if he is able to try to promote.

It may well be that Black's position is playable after 16...h5 17 \(\mathcal{A}gxh2\) \(\mathcal{A}xh2\) 18 \(\mathcal{A}xh2\) \(\mathcal{A}d6\) 19 \(\mathcal{A}h1\), but who is better? This is the usual difficult question of gambit play. Possibly at some stage someone will analyse this over the board.

15 \(\mathcal{A}g2\)

The only move. White has no other safe moves on the g-file.

This would seem to be a highly acceptable gambit line. White's pieces are more active, and he has particular pressure on the f- and g-files, and on the various diagonals leading to the king's fortress. There is also the problem for Black that his knight on h3 is out on a limb. Certainly it stops White from doubling rooks on the f- or g-files, but

15...\(\mathcal{A}e5\)

Regarded by Dreev as a mistake at the time, although the question mark was dropped by the time he wrote up this game in Informator. There Dreev gave as his main line 15...g6 16 \(\mathcal{A}c4\) \(\mathcal{A}h8\) 17 \(\mathcal{A}e4!\) \(\mathcal{A}xe4\) 18 \(\mathcal{W}xe4\) \(\mathcal{W}e7\) 19 \(\mathcal{W}xe7\) \(\mathcal{A}xe7\) 20 \(\mathcal{A}c3\) \(\mathcal{A}g8\) 21 \(\mathcal{A}f5\) \(\mathcal{A}xf5\) 22 \(\mathcal{A}xf5\) b5 23 \(\mathcal{A}b3\) \(\mathcal{A}ae8\) 24 \(\mathcal{W}d2\) c5 25 a3! c4 26 \(\mathcal{A}c2\) \(\mathcal{H}b8\) 27 \(\mathcal{A}h5\) \(\mathcal{A}f2\) 28 \(\mathcal{A}e5\)

(28 \(\mathcal{A}xf2?\) \(\mathcal{A}fd8+\), and then ...gxh5) 28...\(\mathcal{A}h4\) 29 \(\mathcal{H}h5\) \(\mathcal{A}e7\) with a draw by perpetual.

This is, of course, just one line in a whole string of variations. Black forces the exchange of queens, not really what White wants, but White's rooks and bishops are so powerful that Black only just finds a way for equality. One cannot help feeling that the trend of play favours White, in the sense that any slight improvements are more likely from White, rather than from Black. One possibility is 16 \(\mathcal{A}d3!?\), with ideas of a sacrifice on g6, and also adding pressure with \(\mathcal{O}f5:\)

a) If then 16...\(\mathcal{A}e5\) 17 \(\mathcal{O}f3\) \(\mathcal{W}e7\), and
we have transposed into Dreev-Dominguez, which is fully satisfactory for White.

b) 16...\textit{We8} 17 \textit{\texttt{Qf5}?! \textit{Qf8}} 18 \textit{\texttt{Qf3}} \textit{\texttt{Qh8}}
19 \textit{\texttt{Qxh3}} \textit{\texttt{gxv5}} 20 \textit{\texttt{Qxf5}} gives White ample pressure for the pawn; Black’s king is in danger.

c) 16...\textit{\texttt{Qd5}} 17 \textit{\texttt{Qxd5 cxd5}}

16...\textit{We7}

Or simply 16...\textit{\texttt{Qc7}}. There are so many different possibilities for White to try to prove an edge, but everything seems inconclusive:

a) Dreev himself gives 17 \textit{\texttt{Qd3}} \textit{\texttt{Qh8}} 18 \textit{\texttt{Qf5}} h6 as ‘unclear’. The computer suggests that Black is winning, but usually the human player will be sceptical about such pronouncements. Nevertheless, there is an onus for White to prove he can show equality at least.

b) The author prefers 17 \textit{\texttt{Qh4}?!}, which at least gives no winning for Black score on the computer. The program gives Black two extra pawns, while White has at least a pawns-worth of piece activity, and the human might feel rather more. It will take many pages to analyse in detail, and there are many complicated lines that remain to be given in this game, so we leave it to the reader to decide what is going on. A starting point for analysis might well be 17...\textit{\texttt{Qh8}}:

b1) Then 18 e4 \textit{\texttt{We7}} 19 \textit{\texttt{Qf5}} \textit{\texttt{Qxf5}} 20 \textit{\texttt{exf5}} (now Black’s knight is in trouble) 20...h6 21 \textit{\texttt{Qf3}} \textit{\texttt{Qg5}} 22 \textit{\texttt{Qxg5}} \textit{\texttt{hxg5}} 23 \textit{\texttt{Qxg5}} \textit{\texttt{Qb4}!} keeps sufficient defensive possibilities for Black.

b2) Possibly 18 \textit{\texttt{Qf5}}, and if 18...g6 19 \textit{\texttt{Qh6}} when the unusual symmetry of the knights prevents Black’s knight on h3 escaping into active play. Here 18...h6, giving an escape square, would be provocative. White would seem to have good prospects for the exchange sacrifice after 19 \textit{\texttt{Qxg7}?!} \textit{\texttt{Qxf5}} 20 \textit{\texttt{Qxf5}} \textit{\texttt{Qxg7}} 21 \textit{\texttt{Qxf3}} followed by e4, for example: 21...\textit{\texttt{Qh7}} 22 e4 \textit{\texttt{Qg5}} 23 \textit{\texttt{Wh5}} \textit{\texttt{Qd6}} (threatening ...\textit{\texttt{Qxh2}}) 24 h4 \textit{\texttt{Qh7}} 25 \textit{\texttt{Qg1}+} \textit{\texttt{Qh8}} 26 \textit{\texttt{Qxh6}} \textit{\texttt{Qg8}} 27 \textit{\texttt{Qf1}} \textit{\texttt{Qg6}} 28 \textit{\texttt{Qg5}}. Here Black can hold out with a
draw by perpetual after 28...\textit{We}6! 29 \textit{g}4 \textit{We}c4 30 \textit{e}2 \textit{We}6.

\textbf{17 \textit{d}3}

White delays taking the bishop. There is no need to hurry, as the bishop won’t run away. If 17 \textit{exe}5 \textit{exe}5 18 \textit{d}3, Dreev gives 18...\textit{d}8! 19 \textit{f}5 h6 (adding an escape square on g5 for the knight) 20 e4 \textit{f}8, and Black is consolidating.

\textbf{17...g6}

If 17...\textit{c}7 Dreev’s plan is to swallow up Black’s exposed knight on h3 with 18 \textit{f}5 followed by exchanging the bishops, and then \textit{f}5.

\textbf{18 \textit{c}4?}

White makes a change of approach, and perhaps most importantly sets up threats of \textit{xe}xg6+.

Dreev was clearly already tempted by 18 \textit{exe}5 \textit{exe}5 19 \textit{xe}xg6 hxg6 20 \textit{xe}xg6+, but it is only a draw after 20...hxg6 21 \textit{xe}xg6+ \textit{h}8 21 \textit{xe}xg6+ \textit{h}8 22 \textit{wh}6+ \textit{g}8. Black could even play more ambitiously with 20...\textit{h}8, but Dreev notes another draw after 21 \textit{h}6 \textit{g}5 (21...\textit{we}7 22 \textit{d}1! followed by \textit{c}3 is painful) 22 \textit{g}6 \textit{g}4 23 \textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 24 \textit{xf}6+.

This could in fact be the correct finish, with best play on both sides. Dreev is starting to overpress, despite his subsequent quick win.

\textbf{18...\textit{g}4?}

Black underestimates how quickly the f6-square will collapse. There may be three pieces covering that square, but in three moves time it is White who controls this critical square.

Dreev suggests that Black should play 18...\textit{c}7 when there are several options for White. One possibility is the rook sacrifice with 19 \textit{xe}xg6+ \textit{h}xg6 20 \textit{xe}xg6+ \textit{h}8 21 \textit{h}6+ \textit{h}7 22 \textit{d}3 \textit{f}6 23 \textit{h}4 (23 \textit{xe}xh7 \textit{g}7!) 23...\textit{g}7 24 \textit{g}6+ \textit{g}8 25 \textit{c}4+ \textit{f}7 26 \textit{e}7+ \textit{f}8 27 \textit{g}6+ \textit{e}81? (27...\textit{g}8 leads to perpetual) 28 \textit{h}5 \textit{g}3 \textit{g}5 29 \textit{f}4,

which is given as unclear by Dreev. White is a rook down, but he can regain the exchange without problem, and attacking with \textit{h}4 will threaten the remaining piece. But is White’s position encouraging? Probably not. Black can, for example, try 29...\textit{b}5, and wait to see whether White can show sufficient compensation.

White does not have to sacrifice the rook, but quieter moves would not be as threatening as he would like. If 19
e4?! (instead of the violent sacrifice on g6), then 19...\textit{\textsc{e}}6, and if 19 \textit{\textsc{e}}e2, then 19...\textit{\textsc{h}}8. White is not making any progress. Instead White could consider 19 \textit{\textsc{d}}d4!?; and if 19...\textit{\textsc{e}}e5, then 20 \textit{\textsc{f}}3, repeating. Quite often this is a fair enough response after sharp play.

Could Black try for more, though? 19...\textit{\textsc{h}}8 is possible, and if 20 \textit{\textsc{f}}3 \textit{\textsc{g}}4! 21 \textit{\textsc{x}}h3 \textit{\textsc{e}}5 with advantage to Black. Here 20 e4 gives reasonable, if slightly vague compensation for the extra sacrificed pawns, but one must beware counterplay. Black can, for example, try 20...\textit{\textsc{d}}d8 21 \textit{\textsc{e}}3 \textit{\textsc{f}}4! with advantage.

The general impression is that White is struggling after 18...\textit{\textsc{c}}7!, and that objectively White's 18 \textit{\textsc{c}}4 was an error. Sometimes, though, a slight error, followed by a bigger error from the opponent, turns out much better than totally accurate play often ending up in a draw.

\textbf{19 \textit{\textsc{x}}e5}

The bishop must not escape this time.

\textbf{19...\textit{\textsc{d}}xe5}

Dominguez must have relied a lot on this centralizing move, but White too can take up the middle squares.

\textbf{20 \textit{\textsc{e}}4!}

The knight is about to arrive on f6 without Black having the chance of playing ...f5.

\textbf{20...\textit{\textsc{h}}8}

There are other moves, but in each of these cases White will reply with \textit{\textsc{f}}6+, and Black replies with ...\textit{\textsc{h}}8 anyway.

\textbf{21 \textit{\textsc{f}}6!}

The impossible square for the knight! Compare this diagram with that after 17...\textit{\textsc{g}}6, and one can see how much progress Dreev has made over the last few moves.

Both players have entrenched their knights on the sixth rank, but what a difference of prospects they have! White's knight is on an extremely dangerous attacking square, with ideas of checkmate, while Black's knight does little. Indeed, the worry for Black is how to recover the horse into play. Covering the squares on g1 and f2 from the knight is useful for Black, but in the broader context of play, it doesn't do all that much.

\textbf{21...\textit{\textsc{b}}5}

If 21...\textit{\textsc{c}}5, White even allows the exchange of queens with 22 \textit{\textsc{e}}2 \textit{\textsc{xc}}2+ 23 \textit{\textsc{xc}}2 \textit{\textsc{d}}7 24 \textit{\textsc{e}}4, which
Dreev gives as a win for White. There is no immediate checkmating attack when the queens are off, but Black’s h3-knight is likely to fold: for example, 24...f6 25 c3 g7 26 d6 e5 27 xe5 xe5 28 xf8+ xf8 29 xc8 xc8 30 g4, and the horse end up in the knackers’ yard.

A decisive scissors attack.

23...xe3+

Gaining a pawn with tempo, but not altering the basics. Black is about to lose.

24 b1

To a safe square, and keeping the queen and bishop on strong attacking squares.

24...xf6

After this White sacrifices and checkmates, but if 24...e5 25 e4 xe4 26 xe4 e8 27 d6 e7 28 xe5+ then White wins too.

25 xf6

With an enormous threat of discovered attack.

25...g8

Which Black avoids.

22 e2

Thinking about hitting the knight, rather than trying to keep up much less effective pressure on f7.

22...d7

On quiet moves, such as 22...b4, White continues with 23 e4 followed by h4.

23 c3

26 g6+

The usual reason for a sacrifice in front of the opponent’s king – to destroy the pawn cover, and thereby to bring the king into the open.

Here 26 fxg6+ also works.

26...fxg6

26...hxg6 loses immediately after 27 xg6+ h7 (or 27...fxg6 28 xg6 mate)

28 g7+

27 xg6+
27 \( \text{b3} \)? \( \text{e6} \)!
28 \( \text{xex6} \) \( \text{g1} \) +
29 \( \text{c2} \) \( \text{f7} \)!

One would be careless.

27... \( \text{f7} \)

Obviously, 27... \( \text{hxg6} \)? 28 \( \text{wxg6} \) is mate.

28 \( \text{g7} \) +

Forcing the king further out.

28... \( \text{e6} \)

28... \( \text{e8} \) 29 \( \text{h5} \) + wins.

30 \( \text{d1} \) +

Back to square one.

30... \( \text{e4} \)

30... \( \text{c5} \) 31 \( \text{b4} \) + isn’t quite check-mating for White, but he picks up the queen with a winning position after 31... \( \text{b6} \) 32 \( \text{d4} \) + \( \text{xd4} \) 33 \( \text{xd4} \), or 31... \( \text{c4} \) 32 \( \text{b3} \) + \( \text{d3} \) 33 \( \text{c2} \) + \( \text{c4} \) 34 \( \text{d2} \).

31 \( \text{e7} \) +

This too wins the queen.

31... \( \text{f4} \) 32 \( \text{xe3} \) \( \text{g4} \)

Since if 32... \( \text{xe3} \) 33 \( \text{d4} \) mate.

No further comment is needed now.

It is just a case of check, check, check, then checkmate, with queen and rook slicing open the king. There must have been a massive time scramble here, otherwise Black would have resigned.

33 \( \text{wd4} \) + \( \text{g5} \) 34 \( \text{g7} \) + \( \text{h5} \) 35 \( \text{hxh7} \) + \( \text{g5} \) 36 \( \text{e5} \) + \( \text{f5} \) 37 \( \text{d2} \) + 1-0
Game 3
M. Adams - A. Yusupov
French League 2005
French Defence C09

1 e4

The first example in this book of the initial e4-pawn advance. Naturally White would like to be able to play both e4 and d4 without opposition, but Black has counter-plans against the double pawn advance.

1...e6

The French Defence, and by coincidence this game was played in France. Black allows White to play both e4 and d4, but immediately sets up counter-play with ...d5. 1...c6 has similar ideas, again with ...d5, but without blocking the light-squared bishop.

2 d4

The obvious reply. Two advanced d- and e-pawns together are useful.

2...d5

The Tarrasch Variation of the French Defence. To the uninitiated, this might look strange, blocking the knight from the bishop, but it allows White to play c3 if required to bolster d4. Otherwise:

a) 3 ∆c3 is common, but allows complicated play in the Winawer Variation with 3...∆b4.

b) 3 ∆d3 is ineffective, since 3...dxe4 4 ∆xe4 f6 forces White to lose time or to give up bishop for knight.

c) 3 e5 is strategically direct, but in the end does not give White so many chances of an edge after good defence.

d) Then there is the Exchange Variation with 3 exd5 exd5. Boring? Or still with chances of an edge?

3...c5

Black offers, in the main line, to allow an isolated d-pawn.

3...f6 4 e5 ∆fd7 is the alternative, with two different types of play after 5 f4 c5 6 c3 ∆c6 7 ∆f3, and 5 ∆d3 c5 6 c3 ∆c6 7 ∆e2 cxd4 8 cxd4 f6?! 9 exf6 ∆xf6.

Black could also exchange with 3...dxe4 4 ∆xe4, and this would also be effective after 3 ∆c3 instead. After the central exchange, Black can try 4...∆d7 or even 4...∆d7 followed by ...∆c6, and an exchange on e4. In either case, pawn structures are similar to the Caro-Kann (1...c6) or the Scandinavian (1...d5). Not, however, the immediate 4...f6?!, since 5 ∆xf6+! ∆xf6 6 ∆f3 allows White to
gain time by threatening the queen with $\text{g}5$.

4 exd5

Adams has also played 4 $\text{g}f3$ with success. Then 4...cxd4 5 exd5 $\text{xd5}$ inter-transposes usually into the next variation.

4...exd5

4...$\text{xd5}$ leads to sharper, more tactical play, after, for example, 5 $\text{g}f3$ cxd4 6 $\text{c}4$ $\text{d}6$ 7 0-0 $\text{f}6$ 8 $\text{b}3$, winning back the pawn on d4.

5 $\text{g}f3$

Developing.

5...$\text{c}6$

Black develops too.

6 $\text{b}5$

Using the pin to add to the pressure on the centre.

6 dxc5 $\text{xc5}$ is possible, but White usually prefers to wait until Black has played ....$\text{d}6$, thereby losing a tempo.

H.Nakamura-D.Sadvakasov, Miami 2007, continued 7 $\text{d}3$ $\text{e}7+$ 8 $\text{e}2$ $\text{f}6$ 9 $\text{xe7+}$ $\text{xe7}$ 10 0-0 with White attempting to make an edge from Black’s isolated d-pawn. Nakamura kept a slight edge after 10...h6 11 a3 followed by b4, but the game was later drawn. The obvious reply would have been 10...$\text{b}4$ 11 $\text{b}3$ $\text{xd}3$ 12 cxd3, but sometimes knights can be better than bishops even in an open position.

6...$\text{d}6$

Standard play, certainly at top level. Instead 6...$\text{e}7+$ 7 $\text{e}2$ helps White, Black’s pawn structure having been weakened.

6...a6 7 $\text{xc6+}$ bxc6 is possible, but usually regarded as a slight loss of tempo.

7 dxc5

Forcing Black to take on an isolated d-pawn. This is a slight technical weakness, but if Black can keep his pieces active, he has good chances of holding. Certainly White would have to play extremely accurately to take an edge against strong opposition.

7...$\text{xc5}$ 8 0-0

8 $\text{b}3$ $\text{d}6$ might well transpose.

8...$\text{g}7$

A flexible square for the knight, avoiding, for example, later pins with $\text{g}5$.

9 $\text{b}3$

The knight aims for d4.

9...$\text{d}6$

The best move for the bishop. 9...$\text{b}6$ has been tried many times, but White
has the choice of making use of the h2-b8 diagonal or offering an exchange of bishops with $\mathcal{E}e3$, normally after $\mathcal{E}e1$.

10 $\mathcal{E}e1$

This natural developing move, bringing the rook to an open file, has usually been associated with $\mathcal{G}g5$, but as we shall soon see, White has a newer idea with $\mathcal{D}d3$.

At some stage, it needs to be noted that 10 c3 leads to well-known play. This is likely to be reached via the 2 c3 Sicilian, after 1...c5 2 c3 e6 3 d4 d5 4 exd5 exd5 5 $\mathcal{D}f3$, and returning to the French. Via the French move order, however, c3 is not necessary, and White has extra options. It is better to develop White's pieces, such as with the text or one of 10 $\mathcal{G}g5$, 10 $\mathcal{D}bd2$ and 10 $\mathcal{E}e3$.

10...$\mathcal{O}0$

Black breaks the two pins, again all very natural.

10...$\mathcal{G}g4$ is also possible, and is relatively unexplored. Black adds to the pinning himself. In Zhang Pengxiang-S.Lputian, Fuegen 2006, Black gradually equalized after 11 h3 $\mathcal{H}h5$ 12 $\mathcal{E}e2$ 0-0 13 $\mathcal{D}fd4$ $\mathcal{G}g6$ 14 $\mathcal{D}d3$ $\mathcal{E}e5$ 15 $\mathcal{G}xg6$ $\mathcal{D}xg6$ 16 $\mathcal{D}b5$ $\mathcal{E}e8$ 17 $\mathcal{D}xd6$ $\mathcal{W}xd6$. Here 11 $\mathcal{W}xd5??$ $\mathcal{D}xh2+$ is, of course, a blunder, and 11 $\mathcal{W}d4?!$ $\mathcal{D}xf3$ 12 $\mathcal{W}xg7+$ is a slightly more sophisticated slip-up. After 12...$\mathcal{D}d7$! White would lose the queen on 13 gxh3? $\mathcal{E}g8$, but 13 $\mathcal{W}xf7$ $\mathcal{E}e4$ gives White no real attacking chances in return for the piece sacrifice. Maybe 11 $\mathcal{G}g5$ is best with a likely slight edge.

11 $\mathcal{D}d3$?

This is a relatively new idea. White gives up a tempo, in return for adding pressure on Black's kingside.

11 $\mathcal{G}g5$ is the more traditional line.

11...$\mathcal{H}h6$

The first impression might well be that this is unnecessary, but in practice piece moves have favoured White, making use either of the bishop or the knight on g5. If, for example, 11...$\mathcal{G}g6$?, Psakhis for ChessBase quotes a line with 12 $\mathcal{G}g5!$ $\mathcal{W}d7$ 13 c3 $\mathcal{D}f4$ 14 $\mathcal{D}f1$ $\mathcal{W}f5$ 15 $\mathcal{H}h4$ $\mathcal{W}h5$ 16 $\mathcal{G}g3$ $\mathcal{G}g4$ 17 $\mathcal{W}d2$ $\mathcal{W}h6$ 18 $\mathcal{D}fd4$, and White is better, V.Akopian-E.Vladimirov, Moscow 1990; the manoeuvre of White's dark-squared bishop has proved to be useful.

12 $\mathcal{H}h3$

White in turn prevents the pressure with ...$\mathcal{G}g4$.

12...$\mathcal{D}f5$
The natural and most popular move. Black’s pieces start to move into play. some sort of slight edge to make the opponent’s position difficult.

13 c3

It is difficult to find any good piece moves, so White provides coverage of d4.

There are many openings in which White may be slightly better, but with no realistic possibilities of immediate attack, while Black cannot claim clear equality either. Both players have to tack around, maybe little pawn moves (h3 or ...h6 for Black), or maybe aiming for any tiny weaknesses after the opponent has moved a piece to a new square from its original square. In terms of bishop manoeuvres, for example, here White’s bishop has already moved to b5, and then halfway through the diagonal to d3, without any direct provocation. There are many more strange little manoeuvres by either side, and White’s queen shifting over the next few moves is deeply impressive.

In the end, the strategic point in such a position is not to find a clear way that White can attack a defined weakness, but rather it is a case of finding a way, move by move, of keeping

13...\textit{w}f6!? The natural developing move, and the most popular.

13...\textit{c}c7 14 \textit{c}c2 \textit{w}d6 15 \textit{w}d3 (threatening g4) 15...g6 has also been tried. Then a few years ago, Motylev tried a reverse tack with 16 \textit{w}d1!? threatening to exchange the bishop for knight on f5, then taking on h6. If Black tries 16...\textit{g}g7, there is another quiet queen move with 17 \textit{w}d2! \textit{d}d8 18 \textit{d}d1, and with every move that Black makes, his king is further out of position. In the stem game, A.Motylev-A.Roghani, Yerevan 2001, play continued with 16...h5 17 \textit{g}g5 \textit{d}d7 18 \textit{w}d2 \textit{a}ae8 19 \textit{d}ad1 \textit{exe}+ (19...f6!? also, according to Psakhis, gives White a slight edge) 20 \textit{exe}1 f6 21 \textit{xf}5 \textit{exe}5 22 \textit{h}h4, and White had provoked Black’s three castled kingside pawns into being weaker than White’s. Motylev later won.

So the underlying positional idea with the queen over Adams’s next few moves has been seen before, but with a slightly different setting. The most impressive idea by Adams is yet to come.

14 \textit{c}c2
White, as before, aims for $\text{Wd3}$ followed by $\text{g4}$.

14...$\text{Ed8}$

White keeps a slight edge after 14...$\text{Ce6}$ 15 $\text{Wd3}$ $\text{g6}$ 16 $\text{Cd2}$.

15 $\text{Wd3}$

So far the attention in the four central squares has been concentrating, directly or indirectly, on the $\text{d4}$-square. If White has unambiguous control of $\text{d4}$, and has no worries about any active counterplay from Black, then he can expect to be at least slightly better.

15 $\text{Cb4}$ is premature, unless of course your sole ambition as White is to aim for an equal endgame with level and symmetrical play after 15...$\text{Dxf4}$ 16 $\text{Dxd4}$ $\text{Dxd4}$ 17 $\text{Wxd4}$ $\text{Wxd4}$ 18 $\text{Cxd4}$. The records on ChessBase show that a young player achieved this draw as White with a highly-experienced Grandmaster. He gained several Elo points, and later became a GM himself.

White is clearly not able to take full control with a piece on $\text{d4}$. He needs to think about other squares, and lines. Here Adams focuses on the $\text{b1-h7}$ diagonal as a possible weak spot. Clearly there is a direct threat of $\text{g4}$, as a result of White’s manoeuvring on the diagonal, and as soon as Black covers this threat, White immediately starts setting up a weakness on another square. Then, who knows, a second weakness may turn into a third weakness.

15...$\text{g6}$

Black is understandably concerned about the diagonal.

15...$\text{f8}$? has also been tried, but is unconvincing. Black’s idea is that after 16 $\text{g4}$ $\text{Wg6}$ his position holds. White can improve with 16 $\text{Cf4}$, and Black had to try 16...$\text{g6}$ anyway, losing coordination after 17 $\text{Cc7}$? $\text{Dd7}$ 18 $\text{Cf2}$ $\text{Ee8}$ 19 $\text{Dad1}$ $\text{Ne6}$ 20 $\text{Dxe5}$ in S.Zagrebelsky-W.Uhlmann, Schwerin 1999. It would seem better for Black to keep some control of the $\text{b8-h2}$ diagonal.

16 $\text{Wd2}$!

Backwards and forwards with the queen, and there is more to follow! White’s main aim is to poke Black’s h-pawn, with the threat of $\text{Dxf5}$.

16 $\text{Dd2}$ a5 17 $\text{Ce3}$ $\text{Dxe3}$ 18 $\text{Dxe3}$ was equal in M.Carlsen-A.Yusupov, Amsterdam 2006. This, of course, has the implication that Yusupov had sorted out his opening since his game against Adams in 2005.

16...$\text{f8}$
16...h5?! seriously weakens the h4-d8 and c1-h6 diagonals. Any reasonable queen move would give an edge.

17 wF4l

Notice the way in which the queen immediately takes over the square of which the opponent relinquished its defensive cover. The queen manoeuvring continues, not just for attack (ideas of g4), but also for getting the bishop into play. At some stage White would like to develop the queenside rook, given the chance.

White has to be careful not to be over-elaborate with his play. After 17 Qh2 (if 17 wE2, Psakhis gives 17...Qd6 as a good reply, presumably about equal) 17...Qg7 18 Qg4 d4! 19 wE2 (Psakhis gives 19 xF5 gxF5 20 Qxh6+ Qh7 as winning for Black, but this needs to be proven; 21 wG5 wG6 22 wXg6+ wXg6 23 wG8 Qd6 24 Qh6 Qf8 ends up only as a perpetual) 19...h5 20 xF5 hxg4 21 xG4 dxc3 22 bxc3 wxc3 23 wG5 xG4 24 wXg4 play is about equal, with chances for both sides, J.Ivanov-J.Ulko, Moscow 1998.

17...Qg7

17...Qd6 18 wA4l still allows the queen to run around, and Black is not making any progress with his pieces or pawns:

a) 18...Qd7 19 Qxf5! with advantage. Then, for example, continuing the theme of the queen wandering, if 19...wXf5 20 wH4l? h5 21 Qbd2, and White is in control, or 19...gxf5 20 wH4.

b) if 18...g5 19 wB5 (yes, another queen move!) 19...a6 20 wD3, and the traveller returns. In comparison with White’s 15th move, White has moved his queen from d3-d2-f4-a4-b5-d3. Black meanwhile has moved the bishop from d6 to f8 and back to d6, while his a-pawn has moved to a6, which is genuinely useful, and his g-pawn has moved twice to get from g7 to g5, which is a weakening. Black now has kingside difficulties.

Such complicated positional manoeuvring is characteristic usually of the endgame rather than the middlegame, and is rare indeed to see this in the late opening phase. In the endgame, such play can be complicated with maybe two or three pieces (including king) on either side, and every pawn push has to be handled with great care. Here we have such themes with almost a full board of pieces and pawns. Enjoy it!
Modern Chess: Move by Move

18 \( \text{Nd}2! \)

Adams plays a star move, and an improvement on previous play. At first, this is only a routine developing move, and anyone could play it. Look more closely, however, and the bishop is covering the queen’s best escape square, and horrors, the queen may even get stuck on the nightmare square of \( \text{h1} \). Most strong players who have reached this would presumably have rejected the text move, just on this basis. Adams has seen further, and seen that the queen will return.

Adams had in fact reached this position before with 18 \( \text{h4} \) (18 \( \text{wc7} \) led to a loss after 18...\( \text{Nd6} \) 19 \( \text{c5} \) \( \text{Nh3} \) 20 \( \text{gxh3} \) \( \text{wxh3} \) 21 \( \text{Ne3} \) \( \text{Wh5} \) in K.Asrian-S.Lputian, Yerevan 1995; the queen is allowed a few lives, but should not take things too far) 18...\( \text{wd6} \) 19 \( \text{Nd2} \) \( \text{e6} \) 20 \( \text{ad1} \) \( \text{wxh4} \) 21 \( \text{xf4} \) \( \text{d4} \) 22 \( \text{xf5} \) \( \text{xb3} \) 23 \( \text{axb3} \) \( \text{gxh4} \) 24 \( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 25 \( \text{cxd4} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 26 \( \text{ixh6} \) \( \text{bxh3} \) 27 \( \text{xd8+} \) \( \text{xd8} \) 28 \( \text{Ne7} \) \( \text{xd1+} \) 29 \( \text{Dh2} \) \( \text{d4} \), uncomfortable for Black, but leading to a draw before too long in M.Adams-S.Lputian, Moscow 2004. He clearly wanted to find improvements.

Otherwise White is safe, and better.

19 \( \text{Wh2} \)

The queen finds another square. Note that 19 \( \text{wa4?} \) \( \text{Nd6} \), threatening ...\( \text{Nh3} \), leaves White’s queen under pressure, for example, 20 \( \text{bd4} \) \( \text{d7} \) 21,\( \text{xc6} \) \( \text{bxc6} \).

19...\( \text{b6?} \)

Psakhis notes that this move looks a little strange, as the bishop is unable to find any good squares on the a6-f1 diagonal. He suggests that 19...\( \text{f8?} \) would have been better. It is difficult to know what Adams would have intended here, there being no single clearly best move, and a few possible ideas for maybe a slight edge.

The most visually paradoxical suggestion, though, is 20 \( \text{ad1}! \), good standard development, and then 20...\( \text{d6} \) 21 \( \text{Wh1} \)!, the only move, but wow! This is well worth a diagram.

The game A.Nimzowitsch-A.Rubinstein, Dresden 1926, and Nimzowitsch’s famed 18 \( \text{h1}! \) is, in comparison, just so early 20th Century. The knight goes back to \( \text{h1} \), but then it manoeuvres to \( \text{f2} \) and \( \text{h3} \), so what is the problem? These days we need greater entertainment. Adams’s queen is stuck like a

18...\( \text{g5} \)
horror story, king and pawns, plus the opposing dark-squared bishop, burying any escape, but if White keeps the option of g4, the queen has breathing space, with chances of attack on the long diagonal.

Here 21...\(\text{N}h4!\) is a sensible reply, with the idea that if 22 \(\text{N}xh4 \text{gxh4}\) there are en passant problems after 23 g4? hxg3. White could still continue with the exchange of knights with 23 \(\text{N}e3 \text{N}e6\) 24 \(\text{N}d2\), with Fritz suggesting a substantial edge, but the human eye being worried about the lack of space for White's queen. Or, simpler, White could, and probably would, try 22 \(\text{N}fd4\) \(\text{N}xd4\) 23 \(\text{N}xd4\), and if 23...\(\text{N}xf5\) 24 \(\text{N}xf5\) \(\text{N}xf5\) 25 \(\text{N}xf5\) \(\text{N}xf5\) 26 g4! with stabilization and a positional edge for White.

The line actually played by Yusupov is, of course, worth studying, but one cannot help feeling that it was a loss that we did not see the \(\text{N}h1\) idea in genuine match-play.

20 \(\text{N}ad1\)

Adams can now enjoy the luxury of a simple and straightforward developing move. His position is comfortable.

20...\(\text{Na6}\)

Black is at least being consistent, but his bishop is not that well placed here.

Psakhis gives 20...\(\text{N}f8\) 21 \(\text{N}e5\) \(\text{N}d6\) 22 f4 with advantage to White; Black's ...b6 in this line is of course a loss of tempo.

21 \(\text{N}xf5!\)

The end of the shadowboxing. Adams now uses the standard idea against the Tarrasch Defence of exchanging the knight that covers the outpost on d4.

21...\(\text{N}xf5\) 22 \(\text{N}e3\)

Now with two knights, a bishop, a rook and a pawn all covering d4, White keeps an edge. He can use d4 as a transit station for attacks against other pieces and squares. So often in Isolated Queen's Pawn positions, the critical square is not so much the isolated pawn itself, but rather the square in front of it.

22...\(\text{N}c4\)

22...\(\text{N}ac8\) 23 \(\text{Nd4}\) \(\text{N}g6\) 24 \(\text{Nxc6}\) \(\text{N}xc6\) 25 \(\text{N}d4\), for example, gives White an advantage.

23 \(\text{Nd4}\)

Consistent play.

23...\(\text{N}xd4\)

Just about playable, but with queens and rooks onboard, it is often best for
the defender with a few weaknesses to avoid the bishops of opposite colour.

Psakhis suggests that Black should have tried 23...\( \text{\texttt{cxd4!}} \) 24 \( \text{\texttt{\texttt{x}}d4} \) f6, and White will have to work hard to try to force a win.

24 \( \text{\texttt{\texttt{x}}d4} \) \( \text{\texttt{x}}d4 \) 25 \( \text{\texttt{x}}d4 \)

On the light squares, Black can attack the pawn on a2, but this is hardly of significance. Much more importantly White is pressing hard on the dark squares, making piece outposts maybe on e5 or e7, and setting up pawn attacks, supported by the bishop, on g5 and h6.

25...\( \text{\texttt{e}}e8 \)

There are several ways of handling 25...\( \text{\texttt{x}}a2 \). Maybe the simplest is to double on the e-file with 26 \( \text{\texttt{e}}e5 \) \( \text{\texttt{w}}g6 \) 27 \( \text{\texttt{d}}e1 \). He has no need to hurry, and Black can do nothing with the extra pawn. White can set up a pawn-spike with f4 or h4 at the right time.

26 \( \text{\texttt{w}}c7?! \)

White even finds weak squares on the queenside. It's an attractive move, but 26 \( \text{\texttt{w}}d6! \) seems even better. Then 26...\( \text{\texttt{e}}e6 \) 27 \( \text{\texttt{x}}e6 \) \( \text{\texttt{w}}xe6 \) 28 \( \text{\texttt{x}}e6 \) \( \text{\texttt{f}}xe6 \) 29 \( \text{\texttt{b}}3 \) \( \text{\texttt{a}}6 \) 30 f3 leaves White better in the endgame, but it is going to be a long struggle. White has the better pawn structure, with two islands of three pawns against three islands of two pawns, and there are definite weaknesses on each of Black's pawn islands. White could, most obviously, try to break up Black's g- and h-pawns with a well timed h4, or he could try to drill open the queenside pawns with a4 and a5, or, of course, he could combine both options.

If 26 h4 instead, then 26...\( \text{\texttt{e}}e2! \) 27 \( \text{\texttt{c}}c1 \) \( \text{\texttt{e}}e6 \) could easily lead to deadlock. Black will need to double the rooks, and keep the bishop on e2, otherwise his position will start to fold, but it is not so clear that White can play for an advantage.

26...\( \text{\texttt{x}}a2? \)

Missing the one real chance of trying to hold the position.

26...\( \text{\texttt{e}}e2! \) 27 \( \text{\texttt{c}}c1 \) \( \text{\texttt{w}}c8 \) 28 \( \text{\texttt{w}}g3 \) \( \text{\texttt{w}}b8! \) traps the queen, forcing an endgame with only slight chances.

White can try 28 \( \text{\texttt{w}}d6 \) \( \text{\texttt{w}}e6 \) 29 \( \text{\texttt{w}}g3 \) in this line, but he must be careful of counterplay after 29...\( \text{\texttt{e}}e4 \).

27 \( \text{\texttt{w}}c6 \)

White is on target again.

27...\( \text{\texttt{f}}8 \)
If 27...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}}}}e1+ 28 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}}}}e1 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}}}}}}}}f8 29 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}}}}}}e8 (threatening \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{w}}}}}}xh6) 29...f6 30 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}}}}}}xf8+ \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{g}}}}}}}xf8 31 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{w}}}}}}a8+, and White wins a piece. 28 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{w}}}}}}xh6

Now it is simple mopping up. 28...f6

Otherwise there is checkmate on the dark squares, and 28...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{w}}}}}}}h7 29 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{w}}}}}}}xg5+ \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{g}}}}}}}g6 30 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{w}}}}}}h4 is miserable.

29 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}}}}}}e7

The rook joins in on the seventh rank, now that Black's pawn has moved out of the way. 29...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}}}}}}f7

The only way to delay checkmate. Remember that Black's pawns and pieces are level, so it is not yet time for Black to give up. 30 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}}}}}}d1

This however gives a very clear message. White is threatening checkmate with 31 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}}}}}}e8+, and if Black tries to exchange with 30...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}}}}}}xe7 31 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}}}}}}xe7, the other rook checkmates on the seventh. There are other moves, but this is the quickest and cleanest. 30...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{a}}}}}}af8

Trying to set up some barriers. 31 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}}}}}}xf7

Again, quickest and simplest. 31...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}}}}}}xf7

And 31...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}}}}}}xf7? 32 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}}}}}}e8+ is quicker. 32 g4!

We have seen this pawn move before, though previously White's queen may have started off from the extremely unlikely square of h1 or h2. Here the queen is out in the open, and quickly wins.

Black's queen has no good square, in view of White's pressure on f6 and h7. If 32...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{g}}}}}}g6, White wins material with 33 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}}}}}}e7+ \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}}}}}}xe7 34 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{w}}}}}}xg6. So:

1-0

One of the most interesting games in this book. The only real regret, from the point of view of the reader, is that Yusupov did not find the way to force Adams into a rook and opposite-coloured bishop endgame.
Game 4
V. Topalov-V. Anand
Sofia 2005
Queen’s Indian Defence E15

1 d4 d6

Initiating the Indian Openings. Why ‘Indian’? The basic point would seem to be that after 1...d6, Black makes only one-pawn advances in such openings (for example ...b6, ...e6 and ...g6), instead of the ‘European’ double pawn-advance with ...d5. Chess has evolved over the many centuries, with different innovations in the structure of the game in both east and west. But that is another story.

Black’s 1...d6 prevents White from setting two central passed pawns on d4 and e4, a good start.

For 1...d5, see Game 1, Kasimdzhanov-Kasparov 2005, and comments thereafter.

2 c4

White wants to make it difficult for Black to play ...d5. 2 Qc3 d5 is possible, but White cannot quickly put pressure on the d5-pawn with c4.

2 Qf3 is more mainstream, and usually transposes (as in Game 8, Sargissian-Nisipeanu) into one of the Indian Systems, or perhaps the Queen’s Gambit. There are extra independent possibilities if White tries 3 g5 after 2...e6 or 2...g6.

2...e6

2...d5?! would be mistimed. After 3 cxd5 Qxd5 4 e4 (or maybe 4 Qf3 followed by e4), the knight will have to wander. Better ...d5 on move 1, or move 3 or beyond.

2...g6 is the King’s Indian Defence. Black castles as quickly as possible, without attempting to gain pawn space in the centre, and waits to hit back if and when White tries to set up a large pawn centre. Play can become highly complicated. Kasparov favoured this opening, and earlier Tal and Fischer. See the comments to Game 19, Van Wely-Radjabov; an example of how unbelievably complicated such lines may become.

3 Qf3

3 Qc3 will tend to end up into the Nimzo-Indian with 3...c4, although 3...d5 would lead into a main line Queen’s Gambit. For further comments on the Nimzo-Indian, see Game 12, Bareev-Efimenko.
3...b6

Instead 3...d5 would be an Orthodox Queen’s Gambit.

Anand here played the Queen’s Indian Defence. In many countries, the King’s Indian would be described as the East Indian, while the Queen’s Indian would be called the West Indian. Back in the 1980s, when the Caribbean countries were dominant in the game of cricket, a booklet gave the intriguing possibility of an idea of the fianchetto system versus the West Indians! It remains unclear whether the fianchetto is a weapon for batsmen or bowlers.

4 g3

And here we have the anti-West-Indian fianchetto, in chess at least.

A standard opening plan, fianchettoing the bishop, quietly castling kingside, and settling down perhaps for a slight positional edge, or steady equality. That would be the normal course of events, but it so happens that White does not manage to complete the fianchetto.

4 c3, 4 a3, 4 e3 and 4 g5 are possible too, but not necessarily dangerous after good play.

4...a6

Black disrupts, but only slightly, the natural development plans, forcing White to protect the c4-pawn.

For the standard alternative 4...b7, see Game 23, Carlsen-Tiviakov.

5 b3

For 5 wc2, see Game 21, Alekseev-Tkachiev.

5...b4+

Black ensures that White cannot create simple and harmonious development with c3 and b2.

6 d2

White would already be under pressure after 6 ddb2? c3 7 d1 b7, with threats of ...xd4 and ...e4.

6...e7

This is maybe a difficult point to understand for the less-experienced player. After all, we are taught about developing as quickly and efficiently as possible, in order to bring the pieces into play without delay, and ...b4+ followed by ...e7 would seem to be a loss of time. Try to look through things from White’s point of view, though. His dark-squared bishop ideally belongs on the long diagonal, there is not all that much to be done on g5, f4, or indeed even d2. If the bishop arrives on c3, that
is on a useful diagonal, but the bishop also gets in the way of the knight. If White were to set up the natural queenside diagonal – with \( \text{Qc3, Qc1} \) and \( \text{b}4 \); or \( \text{Qc3, Qc2, Qc3} \) – he would be losing a tempo as a result of Black’s bishop check, rather than gaining it. In consequence, White will need to find a different approach.

6...\text{We7} 7 \text{Qg2} is possible, but White should have a slight edge. Black’s pieces are not fully coordinated.

7 \text{Qc3}

7 \text{Qg2} is, of course, also possible with 7...d5 or 7...\text{b}7 being the main responses. As we shall soon see, Topalov has in mind something more ambitious.

7...c6

Black wants to add the security of a recapture with the c-pawn on d5, after ...d5; cxd5. If immediately 7...d5 8 cxd5 exd5 9 \text{Qg2}, the ‘minority pawn attack’ on the queenside tends here to be in favour of White. He attacks hard against the pawn on d5, and eventually forces Black to play ...c6. Then White puts pressure on the half-open c-file, and eventually tries to attack the c6-pawn with b4-b5. Any exchange of Black’s c-pawn will then leave Black with an isolated pawn on d5, and White will eventually try to win that pawn. This is a well-established plan of attack, and usually Black will want to avoid it. The problem is often even worse with ...b6 than with the pawn still on b7, since Black has further weakened the light-squared pawn chain.

8 e4

Three good central pawns, and indeed why not? Black needs to start central counterplay immediately.

8 \text{Qg2} d5 9 \text{cxd5} \text{cxd5} is, of course, possible, but is realistically only a drawing attempt.

8...d5

Finally, the clash of centres opens up after much hedging around. Neither side is fully developed yet, but there is an immediate pawn clash. This often means a particularly violent sequence of play, as the attacker wants to take advantage of the opponent’s lack of development. This sometimes means sacrifices, to break through before his opponent develops. On the other hand, everything might well fizzle out as equality, if both players complete their development, and the pawn structures
could end up as level. With Topalov playing as White, what do you think will happen?

9 \text{\textit{\textbf{Wc2}}}

White keeps the balance in the centre, for the time being. 9 e5 \textit{\textbf{Qe4}} has been tried several times, but it is only about equal.

9...\textit{\textbf{dxe4}}

Nothing out of the ordinary, one might think. The only peculiarity about this opening is that White’s g3 has weakened the long diagonal, and this if anything might be in favour of Black.

10 \textit{\textbf{Qxe4 Bb7?}}

As a result of the outcome of this game, Anand gives this as a question mark. It was certainly dangerous, but maybe it was not objectively wrong.

So what else? Since this game, most top-level encounters have continued with 10...\textit{\textbf{c5}}, and only then ...\textit{\textbf{Bb7}}, with good equalizing chances. If, for example, 11 \textit{\textbf{dxc5?! Bb7}}, taking advantage of the exposed long diagonal. After 12 \textit{\textbf{d3 bxc5? 13 Bc3 Wb6 14 0-0-0 White has a slight edge, and later won in B.Gelfand-A.Grischuk, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005; Black never getting the chance to castle after further inaccuracies. How-}}

ever, Gelfand suggests that Black could have improved with 12...\textit{\textbf{Qb7}}, so that if 13 \textit{\textbf{cxb6? Qc5 14 Qxc5 Qxf3}}, and Black wins material.

11 \textit{\textbf{Qg5?!}}

This is marvellous chess, absolutely brilliant, but if Black has an advantage at a later stage, then White must have made a mistake. In the end, the exchange sacrifice was not quite sound, but if it was good enough to beat Anand, then it would have been good enough to beat anyone.

11...\textit{\textbf{c5}}

Topalov would, of course, have analysed this position in depth at home. There will inevitably be hidden depths, including sacrifices and unexpected manoeuvres, making it extremely difficult for Anand to steer a way through to safety over the board.

Black’s move is certainly logical and natural, opening up the long diagonal, and continuing his earlier development plan. Is it good or not? We wait and see. However, could Black have tried to refute or undermine White’s attacking plans?

11...\textit{\textbf{h6?!}} looks rather too drastic. White is clearly intending to sacrifice,
so we try 12 $\textit{Qxf7!}$ (better than 12 $\textit{Qxe6})$ 12...$\textit{Qxf7}$ 13 $\textit{Qxe5+}$:

a) if then 13...$\textit{Qf8}$, Anand gives 14 $\textit{Qh3 Wxd4}$ 15 $\textit{Qg6+ Qe8}$ 16 0-0 $\textit{We4}$ (any tame rook move would give White excellent compensation for the piece) 17 $\textit{Wxe4 Qxe4}$.

Now White has to continue the attack, and has no time to snatch a rook with 18 $\textit{Qxh8? Qxd2}$.

Therefore 18 $\textit{Qf1}$, and if 18...$\textit{Qxd2}$ 19 $\textit{Qxe6}$, and White will clearly win back the bishop on e7, and will win even more material, ending up ahead. Anand continues the analysis with 18...c5 19 $\textit{Qg2 Qf6}$ 20 $\textit{Qxe4!!}$. Material is level now, and all four rooks are under attack, directly or indirectly, by minor pieces; an unusual situation. After 20...$\textit{Qxe4}$ 21 $\textit{Qxe4 Qxa1}$ 22 $\textit{Qxh8 g5}$ 23 $\textit{h4 Qxh8}$ 25 $\textit{hxg5 hxg5}$ 26 $\textit{Qxg5}$, White will end up a pawn ahead in a minor piece endgame. Anand gives too 20...$\textit{Qd7}$, and then demonstrates that White can set up another desperado sacrifice with 21 $\textit{Qxe6 Qxg2}$ 22 $\textit{Qxf6 gxf6}$ 23 $\textit{Qxh8}$, and eventually win, a pawn ahead.

b) Alternatively, Anand analyses 13...$\textit{Qg8}$ 14 $\textit{Qh3 Wxd4}$ 15 $\textit{Qxe6+ Qf8}$ 16 $\textit{Qg6+ Qe8}$ 17 0-0-0 $\textit{Wb1}$ 18 $\textit{Qa3}$ 19 $\textit{Qc2 Wxb1}$ 20 $\textit{Qxb1}$, with advantage to White. Here Tyomkin suggests 14...$\textit{Qc8}$ 15 0-0, with pressure and excellent compensation for the sacrificed knight. Carrying on with possible moves by Black, play could continue with 15...$\textit{Qd6}$ 16 $\textit{Qg6 Qh7}$ (Black needs his extra compensation) 17 $\textit{Qe1 Qa6}$ 18 $\textit{Qxe6 Qxe6}$ 19 $\textit{Qxe6}$.

White now has a second pawn in compensation for his knight, and still can put on the pressure. Here 19...$\textit{Qc7}$ 20 $\textit{Qe3 Wd7}$ 21 $\textit{Qae1 Qd8}$ 22 $\textit{Qe7+ Qf8}$ (better than 22...$\textit{Qh8}$ 23 $\textit{Wg6}$) gives White a perpetual, but it is not so clear that he has more: 23 $\textit{Qf3 Qxe7}$ 24 $\textit{Wxh7}$ 25 $\textit{Qe3?!}$ (25 $\textit{Qxh6 gxh6}$ 26 $\textit{Wxh6+ draws}$) 25...$\textit{Qxd4}$ 26 $\textit{Qxd4 Wxd4}$ 27 $\textit{Qh8+ Qg7}$ 28 $\textit{Qxe7 Qxe7}$ 29 $\textit{Qxg7+ Qe6}$ 30 $\textit{Qe3+ Qf5}$ 31 $\textit{h3}$ 32 $\textit{Qf3+ Qe3}$ 33 $\textit{Qe3+}$ is a perpetual. Naturally, this is only one line of several possibilities, but it provides a useful indicator that first, Black’s position is not about to collapse, and, second, that White’s sacrifice on f7 seems sound.

Black should also consider 11...0-0, but White could start attacking with 12 0-0-0 h6 13 h4, and if 13...c5 14 d5 exd5...
15 cxd5 with ideas of attack, as in the game, but without forcing White to sacrifice the knight.

Black might just as well try for extra material.

12 d5!
The d4-d5 pawn push, famed by Kasparov in his youthful years, and with several new twists by Topalov and by others. It is a specialty of the Queen's Indian, but there are also similar d5-pawn pushes in the Grünfeld.

On any other move, Black is better.

12...exd5
And Black must take up the challenge.

13 cxd5

The sacrifice is familiar and dangerous, but there is an unusual peculiarity following White's opening set-up, with his pawn being on g3 rather than the more natural g2, and his other pawn being on b3 rather than b2. One might expect that Black could set up counterplay on either of the long diagonals, and certainly there are threats along these lines, but White, maybe unexpectedly, can parry these threats and set up his own. This is the sort of position where no player could try such a gambit purely by instinct over the board. Topalov would clearly have looked at this at home, and decided it was good, or at the very least promising.

13...h6
And Black has to make another extremely difficult decision. He has three different ways to take the pawn on d5, could attack the knight (13...h6), or could castle. Five tempting moves, and even if further analysis suggests that, say, two of these moves may be rejected quickly as unsound, it is possible that only one of the remaining moves might prove to be good, or at least clearly better than anything else.

On such assumptions, there may only be a 30 to 40 percent chance of finding a good move. Then after that the defender has to find a string of further correct moves to defend against the attack. Over several moves, the chances of playing ten accurate moves against a strong attacking player may end up to be very slight. All great attackers rely on this arithmetic.

Let us try to whittle down some of the weaker moves just here:

a) 13...خذd5? 14 چc4 leaves Black with no good moves. After 14...پc6 15 گxf7+ گf8 16 چc4 White is clearly better. In this line, take notice of the way in which the queen and four minor pieces cover so many squares. Coordination is an important part of attack.

b) 13...خذd5 14 0-0-0 leaves Black's pieces looking rather fraayed on the d-file. Anand gives 14...h6 15 چc3 hxg5 16 گxf6 gxf6 17 چc4 with a big plus for White. Play this on for a few moves, and it becomes decisive after 17...گxf3 18 خذd8+ خذd8 19 گe1+ گf8 20 گd3 گa6 21 گd7.
sort of ease. Technically, Anand’s 13...h6 is almost certainly best. Sometimes the
defender has to ride the storm.

14 əxf7?!

The art of sacrifice is still alive! Often sacrificial play has been enhanced,
rather than diminished, by modern opening theory.

Topalov does not allow Anand the luxury of a quiet equal endgame after
14 əb5+ əbd7 15 əe6 fxe6 16 əg6+ (16 dxe6? 0-0 wins for Black) 16...əf8 17
dxe6 əe8 18 əxe8+ əe8 19 exd7 əxf3 20 dxe8+ əxe8 21 əxe8 əxh1.
Rather he forces his opponent to work harder.

14...əxf7

![Chess Diagram]

15 0-0-0!

Sacrifices can sometimes be almost routine. Not so much, though, when a
player is not ahead in development, and castles quietly without a direct at-
tack. White is relying not so much on his own pieces’ strength, but rather
Black’s weaknesses in front of the king.

15 əe5+ əg8 16 d6 is the obvious attacking idea. Black can then take the
rook: 16...əxh1 17 əc4+ əd5 18 əxd5+ əxd5 19 əg6 əxd6 20 əf7+ əh7 21
əf5+ əg8 (not 21...g6?? 22 əf7 mate)
with a perpetual. In this line, 17...\textit{f}8 18 \textit{g}6+ \textit{e}8 19 \textit{x}h8 \textit{xd}6 20 \textit{g}6+ \textit{d}7 21 0-0-0 would be extremely risky for Black. 21...\textit{e}4 seems the best way of keeping the position under control, with 22 \textit{x}g7+ \textit{e}7 23 \textit{x}h6 \textit{x}g7 24 \textit{x}g7 \textit{e}8 25 \textit{c}3 leading to complicated endgame play, with three connected passed pawns versus knight and another pawn.

After the text, the attack is strong, and very few people would be able to find a way to safety for Black.

\textbf{15...\textit{d}6!!?}

Anand displays tough defensive chess, manoeuvring his bishops to the b8-h2 and c8-h3 diagonals. It is fair to say that the vast majority of players would have fallen quickly against Topalov’s onslaught. As we shall see later, even Anand gave way at a critical moment.

The simple pawn capture, 15...\textit{xd}5?, has to be regarded with suspicion. Black may have the long diagonal for the bishop, but he has also weakened the d-file and the c4-g8 diagonal, and the pins will soon intensify. After 16 \textit{c}3 \textit{bd}7 (16...\textit{c}6 17 \textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 18 \textit{xd}5 quickly regains all the material, and the attack continues) 17 \textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 18 \textit{f}5+ \textit{f}6 19 \textit{e}5+ \textit{f}8 20 \textit{g}6+ \textit{g}8 21 \textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 22 \textit{c}4, sure enough, White wins by the pin.

A more interesting battle emerges after the line 15...\textit{bd}7 16 \textit{h}4 \textit{f}8 17 \textit{d}6:

![Diagram](image)

a) After 17...\textit{xd}6 18 \textit{c}4+ \textit{e}6 19 \textit{g}6+ \textit{f}8 20 \textit{he}1 \textit{d}4 21 \textit{xe}6 \textit{a}1+ 22 \textit{b}1 \textit{xb}1+ 23 \textit{xb}1 Black has succeeded in exchanging the queens, but not much else. Material is equal, but White has clearly a winning piece advantage.

b) 17...\textit{xd}6 similarly does not slow down the attack much: 18 \textit{c}4+ \textit{d}5 19 \textit{xb}6? \textit{xb}6 20 \textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 (20...\textit{e}6 21 \textit{dd}1 gives White massive compensation for the knight) 21 \textit{xd}5+ \textit{e}6 22 \textit{f}5+ \textit{f}6 23 \textit{xd}6+ with a winning attack.

c) Black might just as well take the rook, 17...\textit{xb}1, and hope for the best. Tyomkin, no doubt pressed by deadlines, suggests only that after 18 \textit{dxe}7 \textit{xe}7 19 \textit{f}3 the bad bishop on h1 drops, White is only the exchange down, and still has an attack. If, however, one of the players is still a whole rook down, it is useful to look further.
c1) 19...\textbf{W}e5 is a possibility, and White must be careful not to allow ...\textbf{W}a1+. Maybe then 20 \textbf{c}3 \textbf{W}e3+ 21 \textbf{b}2 \textbf{d}e6 22 \textbf{x}f6! \textbf{g}x\textbf{f}6 (22...\textbf{g}8 23 \textbf{g}6 \textbf{d}d7 24 \textbf{d}3 wins, as does 22...\textbf{x}f6 23 \textbf{g}6+ \textbf{e}7 24 \textbf{f}5+) 23 \textbf{g}6+ \textbf{f}8 24 \textbf{d}d7 with a mating attack.

c2) 19...\textbf{d}e6 looks reasonably solid at first, but Black still has problems with developing his pieces. After 20 \textbf{g}6+ \textbf{g}8 21 \textbf{c}4 \textbf{f}7 22 \textbf{x}h1 \textbf{e}8 23 \textbf{e}1 Black cannot unravel his pieces, and White should win. Here 20...\textbf{f}8 escapes the dangerous diagonal. There is complicated play after 21 \textbf{f}5 \textbf{d}4 22 \textbf{g}6+ \textbf{e}8 23 \textbf{b}5+ \textbf{d}8 24 \textbf{f}4!, but White's queen and bishop pair remain dominant: for example, 24...\textbf{w}b7 25 \textbf{x}h8 \textbf{x}f3 26 \textbf{w}e6 \textbf{h}5 27 \textbf{w}d6+ \textbf{d}7 28 \textbf{e}1, and White wins, or 24...\textbf{w}d6 25 \textbf{x}h8 \textbf{x}f5 26 \textbf{f}7+ \textbf{c}8 27 \textbf{x}d6+ \textbf{x}d6 28 \textbf{xd}8, which does not provide real safety.

c3) 19...\textbf{x}f3!? 20 \textbf{x}f3 g5 returns the bishop quickly, but diverts the knight from covering g6. However, White retains excellent compensation for the exchange and pawn sacrifice, his minor pieces being formidable, while Black's knights have no good

squares. Play would continue with 21 \textbf{e}1 followed by \textbf{c}4+.

So it seems that Anand's assessment is absolutely correct in preferring 19...\textbf{d}6.

16 \textbf{h}4!

On the edge, but hitting hard on the light squares, with ideas of \textbf{g}6+ and \textbf{f}5.

16...\textbf{c}8!

Steady defence. Alternatively:

a) 16...\textbf{x}d5? opens up the position too quickly. After 17 \textbf{c}3 \textbf{x}h1 18 \textbf{c}4+ White is, of course, winning, and Tyomkin signs off here. The stubborn computer gives 18...\textbf{e}7 19 \textbf{f}5+ \textbf{w}f8 20 \textbf{x}d6 \textbf{b}d7 21 \textbf{h}4 \textbf{e}4, but then a queen sacrifice 22 \textbf{w}e4 \textbf{d}xe4 23 \textbf{g}6+ \textbf{e}8 23 \textbf{e}6+ \textbf{f}7 24 \textbf{f}6+ wins.

b) 16...\textbf{e}8 17 \textbf{g}6+ \textbf{g}8 18 \textbf{f}5 is highly threatening, and helps explain why Anand chose 16...\textbf{c}8 instead. Tyomkin gives 18...\textbf{w}c7 19 \textbf{x}h6 \textbf{f}8 20 \textbf{x}g7! \textbf{x}g7 21 \textbf{b}5! with far too many threats.

c) Anand himself gives 16...\textbf{d}a6 17 \textbf{h}3 in Informator, but probably without much expectation that Black would survive. At least though Black is starting to develop his queenside. One possibil-

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ity is 17...\texttt{\texttildelow}xd5 18 \texttt{\texttildelow}h1 \texttt{\texttildelow}c7 19 \texttt{\texttildelow}c3. The practical player over the board would not have to analyse hard to conclude that White, although a knight down, is almost certainly winning. He has excellent diagonals for his queen and bishops, and strong open lines for his rooks, while Black has several weaknesses. Play might continue 19...\texttt{\texttildelow}g8 20 \texttt{\texttildelow}xf6 \texttt{\texttildelow}xf6 21 \texttt{\texttildelow}xd5 \texttt{\texttildelow}a1+ 22 \texttt{\texttildelow}d2 \texttt{\texttildelow}xe1+ 23 \texttt{\texttildelow}xe1 \texttt{\texttildelow}e8+ 24 \texttt{\texttildelow}d1 \texttt{\texttildelow}xd5 25 \texttt{\texttildelow}c4 \texttt{\texttildelow}e5 26 \texttt{\texttildelow}g2, winning material.

17 \texttt{\texttildelow}e1!

Just as White’s attack appears to be slowing down, Topalov throws a log on to the fire with \texttt{\texttildelow}e6, sacrificing the exchange to regain control with \texttt{\texttildelow}f5.

17 \texttt{\texttildelow}g6+ \texttt{\texttildelow}g8 18 \texttt{\texttildelow}c3 a5!? would have given nothing.

17...\texttt{\texttildelow}a6

To develop the minor pieces, or to contest the open file – which is better?

After 17...\texttt{\texttildelow}e8 18 \texttt{\texttildelow}b5 \texttt{\texttildelow}e7 Anand, looking from the defender’s point of view, recommends 19 \texttt{\texttildelow}c3! Clearly the idea is to eliminate the f6-knight. The sort of line that Anand would have been thinking of is presumably something like 19...a6 (trying to gain a tempo, and helping to defend with \texttt{\texttildelow}a7) 20 \texttt{\texttildelow}g6+ \texttt{\texttildelow}g8 21 \texttt{\texttildelow}xf6 \texttt{\texttildelow}xe1+ 22 \texttt{\texttildelow}xe1 \texttt{\texttildelow}xf6 23 \texttt{\texttildelow}e8+ \texttt{\texttildelow}f8 24 \texttt{\texttildelow}d3 \texttt{\texttildelow}a1+ 25 \texttt{\texttildelow}d2 \texttt{\texttildelow}b2+ 26 \texttt{\texttildelow}e1 \texttt{\texttildelow}a1+ 27 \texttt{\texttildelow}e2 \texttt{\texttildelow}b4+ 25 \texttt{\texttildelow}f3, and Black is running out of checks, while White continues his powerful attack. Here too 19...\texttt{\texttildelow}xh6 would have been a possibility, demolishing a pawn, and if 19...\texttt{\texttildelow}xe1+? 20 \texttt{\texttildelow}xe1 \texttt{\texttildelow}xh6 21 \texttt{\texttildelow}xg6+ \texttt{\texttildelow}g8 22 \texttt{\texttildelow}xh6+ \texttt{\texttildelow}g8 23 \texttt{\texttildelow}g5+ \texttt{\texttildelow}f7 (or 23...\texttt{\texttildelow}f8 24 \texttt{\texttildelow}e8+) 24 \texttt{\texttildelow}e8+, making attractive use of the pin. However, Black could decline the sacrifice, and 19...\texttt{\texttildelow}g8! is probably playable for White, but not better for him.

18 \texttt{\texttildelow}e6!

The promised sacrifice. Or at least a breakthrough on the light squares, rather than a genuine sacrifice.

18...\texttt{\texttildelow}b4?

Of course, Black cannot take, as if 18...\texttt{\texttildelow}xe6? then 19 fxe6+ \texttt{\texttildelow}g8 20 \texttt{\texttildelow}xa6, so really it is a pseudo-sacrifice, for the moment at least.

With the move played, Anand forces Topalov to exchange his dark-squared bishop for the knight, but as play moves on, it becomes increasingly clear that it is the pressure on the light squares that becomes more important.

Instead 18...\texttt{\texttildelow}c7! is critical. The knight stays on a good square, attacking and/or defending the e6-, d5- and e8-squares. Inevitably play will be sharp.

a) The most direct reply is 19 \texttt{\texttildelow}g6+ \texttt{\texttildelow}g8:

a1) Then 20 \texttt{\texttildelow}xd6 \texttt{\texttildelow}xd6 21 \texttt{\texttildelow}f4 \texttt{\texttildelow}d7 22 \texttt{\texttildelow}xc7 \texttt{\texttildelow}xc7 23 \texttt{\texttildelow}d6 \texttt{\texttildelow}f7 24 \texttt{\texttildelow}c4 \texttt{\texttildelow}e6 25 \texttt{\texttildelow}xe6 \texttt{\texttildelow}xe6 26 \texttt{\texttildelow}f5 \texttt{\texttildelow}h7 does not quite work for White.

a2) Therefore the critical line is 20 \texttt{\texttildelow}f5 \texttt{\texttildelow}f8 21 \texttt{\texttildelow}c4 with counterplay with
21...b5. Now 22 a3 dxe6 23 dxe6 bxc4 24 e7 g8 holds fine for Black. Tyomkin therefore recommends 22 e7+ a6! 23 axe7 with a further divide:

a21) 23... Rh7 24 a3 w8f8 25 ahe1 leads to obvious zugzwang potential. Carrying on with this, White wins after 25...bxc4 26 wxf6 dxe5 27 w7 wxf7 28 a8+ w8f8 29 wxf8+ w8xf8 30 a6.

a22) Black therefore has to jettison material with 23... wxe7! 24 d6+ bxc4 25 dxe7 a6 26 bxc4 a6c4 27 a6 a5.

Having reached this position in his analysis, Tyomkin comments that ‘the outcome here is completely unclear’. This is no cop-out. The position is genuinely difficult. White has queen and two pawns for the rook and two minor pieces, about level according to positional theory, but of course such a position is likely to be unbalanced. One of White’s extra pawns is passed on the seventh, which is useful, but it cannot win material, and merely ties down Black’s pieces. If Black can gradually bring his pieces into better squares, he will be on top. Probably the position favours Black: for example, 28 wfs a6d5 29 a6 d6 g6? (there are several alternatives, but this seems among the most direct) 30 w5 e8 31 d1 aac8 32 h4 d7 33 wb2 w8e8, and while Black’s pawn structure has been slightly compromised by his...g6 pawn push, his pieces have been quickly activated, and are strong.

b) Anand himself, who after all has tried over the board to defend this position as Black, concentrated on a different line, 19 a4 b5 20 a3 (20 w6+ g8 21 d5 a8 transposes to variation ‘a2’) seeing this as a dangerous:

b1) If 20...bxc4?, Black’s position collapses after 21 w6+ a8f8 22 a6f6.

b2) Black’s position also folds after 20...dxe6? 21 dxe6+ a6e6 22 w6+ a8f8 23 a6e6 w7c7 24 w5 threatening a6+.

b3) 20...d6e8f8, avoiding the capture on f6, is the most secure.

If then 21 a6g7?? w6+ with a quick win. The same resource is found after 21 w6+ g8 22 a6g7?? w6+ 23 wxg5 hXg5, and White, already a piece down, has four more pieces under attack. Instead the superior 22 a6e8+ a6e8 23 w6b5 w6+1 is highly thematic, and gives Black a substantial edge after 24 wxg5 hXg5 25 d6 a6c7 27 a6 a6h6.

There is also plenty of entertainment value in 18...g8f8? 19 a3 a6d5 20
\[ \text{Wg6 Wg5+ 21 Wxg5+ hxg5 22 \text{\textit{Qd6 Qxc3}} 23 \text{\textit{Qc4+ Wh7}} 24 \text{\textit{Qd3+ g6}}, which probably ends up as a draw. The author looked at this in depth, but there seems to be little reason to publish the line when 18...Qc7! is almost certainly better, with advantage to Black.} \]

Should we say that objectively Topalov’s play was unsound? Or should we congratulate him on winning? There is no clear answer, and there are two opposing views on this point. Broadly, the tactical player will tend to argue that he will win by playing better than his opponent, and if there is a mistake on the way, then so be it, no player will be expected to play absolutely perfect chess in a genuinely complicated game. The positional player, in contrast, will want to keep the position under control, arguing that if he makes no mistakes, then he will not lose, and if his opponent makes a mistake, he will lose. Topalov is clearly one of the tacticians.

19 \text{\textit{Qxb4}}

19 \text{\textit{Wg6+ Wh8}} 20 \text{\textit{Qf5 Qf8}} does not achieve much: 21 \text{\textit{Qxh6+ Qxh6}} 22 \text{\textit{Qxh6 Qxe6}} 23 \text{\textit{dxe6 Wd4}} and Black takes over.

19...cxb4 20 \text{\textit{Cc4}}

Ultimately, however great the complications may be, the positional strategy is consistent and clear. White must control as many light squares as possible of those covering Black’s king. The only justification of White’s early sacrifices was to fracture Black’s light squares, making the king open to attack. White needs to be consistent, making further sacrifices if necessary. Strangely the bishop has not been needed just yet, but now needs to pile in. The e6-square is critical, whether for rook or pawn, and that square needs to be bolstered.

20...b5!

And Black needs to divert the bishop. Anand gives 20...\text{\textit{Qg8}} 21 \text{\textit{Qf5 Qxe6}} (21...\text{\textit{Qf8}} 22 \text{\textit{d6}}) 22 \text{\textit{dxe6 Qe7}} 23 \text{\textit{Qd1 Wf8}} (or 23...\text{\textit{Wc7}} 24 \text{\textit{Qd7}} 24 \text{\textit{Qd7 Qe8}} 25 \text{\textit{Qh4 Qh7}} 26 \text{\textit{Wg6 Qg5}} 27 \text{\textit{f4 b5}} 28 \text{\textit{Qxb5}} as winning for White. Indeed, it is positional strangulation.

21 \text{\textit{Qxb5}}

There’s not much else. If 21 \text{\textit{Qf5 Qf8}}, and Black is safe and solid.

21...\text{\textit{Qe7}}?

Even Anand slips after Topalov’s fierce attack.

21...\text{\textit{Qxe6}}? loses quickly after 22
dxe6+ Qg8 23 e7! Qxe7 24 Rc4+ Qd5 25 Ad1 Qxh4 26 Axd5. Grandmaster commentators such as Anand and Tyomkin may have regarded this too elementary to be worth publishing, but of course the players would need to have analysed this during the game.

The view given at the time was 21...Qg8! with 22 Ac4 regarded as the best reply, and if 22...Ab8 (22...Axe6 23 dxe6 is still too dangerous) 23 Qf5 Ab6 'and Black manages to survive' (Tyomkin). However, it is not so clear that White should continue to concentrate on the diagonal. 22 We2!, based on active play on the central files, looks more effective. Of course, if 22...Axe6?? 23 Axe6+ White immediately wins. This ensures that for the moment at least White controls the light squares. If, though, 22...Ab7, White should not try the same trick: 23 Ae8+, hoping for 23...Axe8?? 24 We6+, as Black instead gives up the queen with fully adequate compensation after 23...Qxe8! 24 Axc8 Ae8, and White runs out of attack. Here 23 Ad1 is better, with good centralization:

a) 23...Wc7?? 24 Ac4 Ad8 25 Qf5 ch7 26 Qd6 Ad6 27 Ae7 is inadequate for Black.

b) 23...Ac8+ looks best. Then 24 Ac4 is a self-pin, and White makes no progress after, for example, 24...Ac5. However, 24 Ab2! is better. Then if 24...Wc7, White invades a further light square with 25 Ac6, obtaining a clear advantage after 25...Axc6??! 26 dxc6 Wxc6 27 Aexd6. Better is 25...Af8 when there would be no more than equality after the obvious exchange sacrifice 26 Axf6? gxf6 27 We6+ ch7, but 26 Ab7! Wxb7 27 Qg6 wins the battle of the light squares, most convincingly after 27...Ad7!! 28 Ae7 Wb6 (28...Axe7 29 Wc6 mate) 29 d6.

It is, of course, more than possible that somewhere along the many variations Black could avoid being close to losing, but the general run of play would suggest that White is still better. The judgement is that after Anand’s mistake, Black is worse, not ‘unclear’ as in early assessments.

22 Qg6

![Chess Diagram](image)

Now Black has too many pieces under attack.

It is quite possible that Anand had missed that after 22...Axe6 23 dxe6+ Qg8 24 Ad1 a queen move was no longer defending the bishop. Or, more likely, that after 24...Qd5 25 Axd5 Qg5+, he overlooked the winning 26 f4!, instead of the drawing line 26 Axc5? Wxc5+ 27 f4 Wxb5 28 Ae7+ Qf8 29 Qg6+ Qg8.

To put this in context, Anand’s ‘elementary’ blunder is about seven moves deep, much deeper than most club players would be able to calculate.

22...Qd5

Anand changes tack, and hopes for the best.
23 \( \text{\texttt{Hxe7}} + ?! \)

Now Topalov makes a much simpler mistake himself, but one which did not change the end result. One would assume that under the great complexity of the game, both players must already have been in deep time trouble.

There was a simpler win after 23 \( \text{\texttt{Hxe5}} \) \( \text{\texttt{Hb7}} \) 24 \( \text{\texttt{Wf5+}} \) (24 \( \text{\texttt{Hxh8+}} \) also wins) 24...\( \text{\texttt{Hg8}} \) 25 \( \text{\texttt{Hc4}} \) with a highly thematic pin against the knight on d5.

23...\( \text{\texttt{Hxe7}} \)

Black does not have to resign yet.

24 \( \text{\texttt{Hc4+}} \)

And White continues the attack.

24...\( \text{\texttt{Hf6!}} \)

Maybe Topalov had thought that this was hopeless, the king being well out in the open. Instead 24...\( \text{\texttt{Hxe6}} \) 25 \( \text{\texttt{Hxe6+}} \) \( \text{\texttt{Hxe6}} \) 26 \( \text{\texttt{He1+}} \) \( \text{\texttt{Hf6}} \) 27 \( \text{\texttt{Hxe7}} \) \( \text{\texttt{Hc8}} \) 28 \( \text{\texttt{Hxc8}} \) \( \text{\texttt{Hxc8}} \) 29 \( \text{\texttt{He4}} \) leads to a winning rook and pawn ending for White.

25 \( \text{\texttt{Hxh8}} \)

Now White is a pawn up.

25...\( \text{\texttt{Wd4!}} \)

his king is stuck on f6, and so many of White's pieces are hovering.

25...\( \text{\texttt{Wxh8?}} \) would have won a piece, but lost the king: for instance, 26 \( \text{\texttt{Hd1}} \) \( \text{\texttt{Hf5}} \) 27 \( \text{\texttt{We4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{Hb8}} \) 28 \( \text{\texttt{Hc6+}} \) \( \text{\texttt{Hg5}} \) 29 \( \text{\texttt{f4+}} \), and mate in a few moves.

26 \( \text{\texttt{Hd1}} \)

The king slips round to the other side of the rook. It is the only winning attempt, indeed the only way for White to get out of trouble.

26...\( \text{\texttt{Wa1+}} \)

The only way to keep the initiative.

27 \( \text{\texttt{Hd2}} \)

27...\( \text{\texttt{Wb1??}} \) \( \text{\texttt{Wxb1+}} \) 28 \( \text{\texttt{Hxb1}} \) \( \text{\texttt{Hf5+}} \) is, of course, a blunder.

27...\( \text{\texttt{Wd4}} \)

27...\( \text{\texttt{Wc3+}} \) 28 \( \text{\texttt{Wxc3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{bxc3+}} \) 29 \( \text{\texttt{Hxc3}} \) keeps White two pawns up in a safe position. The knight cannot be trapped: for example, 29...\( \text{\texttt{Hxe6}} \) 30 \( \text{\texttt{Hd6}} \), winning easily.

28 \( \text{\texttt{He1}} \)

He goes for a win, whereas 28 \( \text{\texttt{Hc1?!}} \) repeats.

28...\( \text{\texttt{We5+}} \)

There have been slip-ups in the game, understandably given the complexity of play. Anand has shown great presence of mind, however. He is able to keep the position alive, even when

The checks must continue.

29 \( \text{\texttt{Wf2!}} \)

The only good move:

a) 29 \( \text{\texttt{Ef1?}} \) \( \text{\texttt{Hh3+}} \) loses a piece in-
stantly.

b) 29 $\text{d}2?$ is too late to offer a draw; 29...$\text{e}6$ again wins a piece.

c) 29 $\text{e}2?!$ sets a vicious trap. After 29...$\text{g}4$? 30 $f4$ $\text{w}xe2+$ 31 $\text{w}xe2$ $\text{xe}2$ 32 $\text{d}6+$ $\text{f}5$ 33 $\text{xe}2$ if Black finally takes the knight with 33...$\text{x}h8$, he gets mated. White plays 34 $\text{f}3!$ $h5$ 35 $h3$, and mates with $g4$. An attractive finish, and many players would fall for it, but Black improves with 29...$\text{e}6!$ 30 $f4$ $\text{w}c3+$, and this time he can win the knight safely.

29...$\text{w}xe2+$ 30 $\text{xe}2$

After all the complications, we have now reached a semi-endgame with Topalov a pawn up. A good result, but presumably he would have liked to have done better.

31 $\text{d}8!?$ was a possibility, and after 31...$\text{x}g3+$ 32 $\text{e}1$ (32 $\text{hxg3??} \text{g}4+$) 32...$\text{f}5$ 33 $\text{f}8+$ $\text{g}5$ 34 $\text{f}7+$ $\text{h}4$ 35 $\text{d}5$ $\text{b}8$ 36 $\text{e}4$ Black is seriously tied up. It would take time to calculate and verify all this, though, and when time is short, it is usually best when the position is already favourable to play simply.

31...a5?!

This makes life easier for White, allowing the chance to coordinate his pieces.

After 31...$\text{e}6$, the straightforward 32 $\text{d}6$ would have been good to reach the time control, and 32 $\text{xe}6$ $\text{xe}6$ 33 $\text{d}8+$ also seems good.

32 $g4$

Pushing away the knight from a strong square.

32...$\text{h}4$

Forced to the edge.

33 $h3$

Keeping the g-pawn.

33...$\text{a}7$

Somehow he needs to bring the rook into play.

34 $\text{d}6+$

Forcing the king to a worse square.

34...$\text{e}7$ 35 $\text{b}6$
Now White’s pieces are working together, and he has an extra pawn. ‘The rest is a matter of technique’, as they say.

35...Cc7

Still looking to develop the rook.

36 Qe5

But even the knight is on a safe square.

26...Qg2

The knight was not doing anything on h4. Anand makes a last-ditch try, giving up two pieces for a rook, and hoping to pick up the pawn on a2, which may eventually allow Black to set up a passed pawn.

37 Qg6+

Blocking Black’s knight.

37...Qd8 38 Qf1 Qb7 39 Qxb7

This still seems best and the most direct, and makes it to move 40 without White having to think.

39...Qxb7 40 Qxg2 Qd7

41 Qf8

White plays with the knight actively.

41...Qd2

Black too must get moving. There is no point in holding on to the g-pawn with 41...Qa7 42 Qe6+, which would leave several alternative winning plans for White.

42 Qe6+

Continuing his plan.

42 a4?? bxa3, taking en passant, is a common type of blunder for less experienced players. See further comments to the ending of Game 16, Shirov-Aronian.

42...Qe7

The king needs to rush to the kingside in view of White’s 3-1 pawn majority, and 42...Qd7 43 Qxg7 Qxa2 44 Qf5 a4 45 bxa4 Qxa4?? 46 Qb5+ does not help.

43 Qxg7

Now just a few pawns go, mostly Black’s.

43...Qxa2 44 Qf5+ Qf6 45 Qxh6 Qc2

A last-ditch attempt to create a passed pawn, supported by the rook, and to force White to sacrifice the bishop.

45...a4 46 bxa4 Qxa4 47 f4 is ineffective for Black: 47...b3 48 g5+ Qg6 29
White will want to push his three passed pawns as quickly as possible, aiming for ultimate promotion, but also taking up a few squares for the minor pieces.

47...a4
The only try.
48 bxax4 b3 49 g5+
The pawns push through.
49...g7
This will end up in checkmate, but if instead 49...e7 50 f5 b2 51 f6+ d7 52 g6 b1 53 f5+ d8, then using White's two passed pawns, with the help of the piece, wins: 54 g6 b1 55 xxb1 bxb1 56 g7.
50 f5 b2
He can queen, but he cannot save the king.
51 f6+
Connected passed pawns must be pushed.
51...h7
He is also checkmated after 51...f8 52 g6 b2Q 53 g7.
52 f5 1-0
52...b1 53 g6+ h8 54 g7 g7 55 g8 is mate, while Black runs out of checks after 52...c2+ 53 f3 c3+ 54 g2 c4+ 55 h5 (but not 55 xc4? b1).
1 e4 c5

The first example of a Sicilian. Black covers the d4-square with a pawn away from the centre. The idea that if White later plays d4, then an exchange of pawns will give Black theoretically the better pawn structure, with an extra pawn in the centre. White in return has quicker development with his pieces, and more squares for his pieces.

Play can often become extremely complicated, as we shall see in later games. The usual rule of thumb is that White scores well in short games, with the help of rapid attacking chances, while Black tends to do well in the long positional games, once he has covered White’s attack, then making use of his better pawn structure. There are, of course, many exceptions.

2 d4

White generally plays for an Open Sicilian, with d4 followed by dxd4, at least at top levels. The problem for White, at anything below professional level, is that Black has so many different possibilities, often ending up in vastly different, yet still complicated opening structures, that it takes enormous time and effort for White to understand in detail what is going on in the Sicilian.

A quieter way of playing the Sicilian is 2 c3, keeping a pawn in the centre with d4. At the moment, Tiviakov is the main advocate of this at top level. Play tends to end up with a high proportion of draws, which can be frustrating for Black if he is aiming for a win.

2...e6

There are various possibilities, often involving inter-transpositions later on.

2...d6 can lead to the late Bobby Fischer’s favourite, the Najdorf Sicilian after 3 d4 cxd4 4 dxd4 d6 f6 5 c3 a6. See Game 6, Karjakin-Anand, an outstanding win for Anand. Depending on how White plays, Black may consider either ...e5, as in Anand’s game, or ...e6. Here 5...g6, with a bishop fianchetto, is a popular line, although not included in this book. This is the Dragon Variation. Black has a splendid diagonal for his bishop, but he has lost some pawn control in the centre.

2...c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 dxd4 d6 f6 5 c3 e5 6 ddb5 d6 would have looked ex-
tremely anti-positional a couple of generations earlier, leaving the hole on d5, a weakness, and also the backward pawn on d6. The Pelikan Variation is popular, though, and Black argues that if White’s knight reaches b5, then no problem, Black can force it away with ...a6. Difficult play follows for both sides, as in Game 9, Leko-Radjabov.

2...e6 has the merit of avoiding the most complicated attacking lines, while still keeping positional tension.

3 d4

3 c3 would still return to the quiet 2 c3 line, and indeed this is Rublevsky’s favoured line for White, including a good win against Topalov in 2004.

3...cxd4 4 cxd4

The natural replies on each side.

4...Cc6

4...a6 could easily transpose into the game after 5 Cc3 Cc6, but Black could also consider 5...b5, or 5...Cc7, and White could consider, a move earlier, 5 Cd3 or 5 c4.

4...Cc6 5 c3 d6 leads to the Scheveningen, a trusted defensive measure by Kasparov over many years.

5 Cc3

5 Db5 d6 6 c4 (or maybe 6 Cf4 e5 7 Ce3) is also possible, but tends to be drawish.

5 Cxc6 is too early. White should at least wait until Black has lost a move with ...a6.

Similarly, White would want to delay c4 until Black has played either ...a6 or ...d6. Just here, it is not worth playing cat-and-mouse. Simple development has its virtues.

5...a6

With designs of a Paulsen Variation, with an early ...Cc7, or perhaps a Scheveningen, setting up the barricades with ...e6 and ...d6.

Black does not activate his development with ...a6, but it is a good waiting move, forcing White to decide what he is going to do next. In most lines, the ...a6 move is in any case useful.

For 5...Cc7, see Game 20, Ni Hua-Jakovenko, which leads to a more classic Paulsen/Scheveningen structure.

6 Cxc6?

White deviates, and so finds the one way in which ...a6 is something of an irrelevance. White is hoping for a slight plus, but the exchange of knights suggests that he has no real ambitions of a forcing attack.
6 \text{e}2, as in Game 17, Shirov-Illiescas, leads to a Scheveningen structure, with the twist that Black then delays ...\text{e}7, and unusual complications result.

6 \text{e}3 and 6 \text{g}3 are alternatives.

6...\text{bxc6}

6...\text{dxc6}?! 7 \text{xd}8+ \text{x}d8 8 \text{e}3 gives White an edge. Black’s problem is not so much that the king has been moved, usually only a slight irritation when the queens have been exchanged, but rather that he has weakened his dark squares, as a result of his early ...\text{a}6.

7 \text{d}3

Quiet development.

7 \text{e}5 \text{c}7 8 \text{f}4 is playable, but is perhaps premature. After 8...\text{d}5 9 \text{exd}6 \text{xd}6, White has induced a slight structural weakness on Black’s isolated a- and c- pawns, but White also has weaknesses on the kingside and in the centre.

7...\text{d}5

Black could also set up a more defensive formation with 7...\text{d}6 8 0-0 \text{f}6. 8 0-0

8 \text{exd}5?! \text{cxd}5 allows Black too easy equality. White’s pawn on e4 is more effective in the centre than Black’s pawn on c6, so why should White exchange?

8...\text{f}6

Natural development.

Black has occasionally experimented with 8...\text{d}6 9 \text{e}1 \text{e}7, but White has chances of an edge, and good kingside freedom, after 10 \text{h}5.

9 \text{e}1

Still keeping the light-square tension in the centre.

9 \text{e}2 \text{e}7, and then maybe 10 \text{b}3, is an alternative.

9...\text{e}7

9...\text{d}4 10 \text{b}1! \text{e}5 11 \text{d}2 weakens any chance of influence by Black on c4.

9...\text{b}7 is also possible, with the point being that if 10 \text{e}5 \text{d}7, Black still has the g7-square guarded by the bishop, so that 11 \text{g}4?! is pointless. The strongest grandmasters tend to prefer instead 11 \text{f}4.

10 \text{e}5

Now it is time for White to take over the initiative.

10...\text{d}7

The only sensible square.

11 \text{g}4

11 \text{a}4 \text{b}6 12 \text{xb}6 \text{xb}6 13 \text{c}4 has been tried a couple of times re-
cently, and arguably White's queen might be better centralized than on g4. However, Black can play more directly with 11...0-0 12 c4 a5 (aiming for ...\textit{\textbf{a}}6) 13 \textit{\textbf{wc}2} g6 14 \textit{\textbf{a}h}6 \textit{\textbf{e}e}8, and in comparison with the Bacrot-Rublevsky game, the king and the rook are at least the right way round. In V.Bologan-S.Rublevsky, Poikovsky 2006, Black set up a favourable bishop exchange after 15 \textit{\textbf{cxd}5} \textit{\textbf{cxd}5} 16 \textit{\textbf{b}b}5 \textit{\textbf{b}b}8 17 \textit{\textbf{we}2} \textit{\textbf{g}5}! 18 \textit{\textbf{a}xg}5 \textit{\textbf{wxg}5}, which was equal, with Black later winning.

11...\textit{\textbf{g}6}

Black cannot castle safely, as if 11...0-0? 12 \textit{\textbf{a}h}6 g6 13 \textit{\textbf{xf}8}, and White wins the exchange.

This is of course an elementary tactic, but sometimes such small points may influence the positional outcome of a whole game.

12 \textit{\textbf{e}4}

At the moment, as a result of Bacrot's win in this game, this knight move has become the centre of attention among top-level players. At first sight, it looks strange. The knight is stuck on the edge, and cannot attack anything. It covers defensive squares on b6 and c5 though, and arguably Black would like to use those squares himself. Perhaps more importantly, White is opening up a nibble with c4, starting to undermine Black's central pawn structure.

In slightly earlier games, White tried 12 \textit{\textbf{a}h}6. J.Polgar-V.Anand, Sofia 2005, continued 12...\textit{\textbf{b}b}8 13 \textit{\textbf{wh}3} \textit{\textbf{b}4} 14 \textit{\textbf{g}g}7 \textit{\textbf{e}g}8!? (sacrificing the exchange; 14...\textit{\textbf{h}4} has previously been tried) 15 \textit{\textbf{wxh}7} \textit{\textbf{xg}7} 17 \textit{\textbf{wxg}7} \textit{\textbf{xf}8} 18 \textit{\textbf{wg}8} \textit{\textbf{gs}5}, leaving White's queen in great peril. Polgar bailed out, trying for a draw with 18 \textit{\textbf{g}3} \textit{\textbf{xe}5} 19 \textit{\textbf{f}4} \textit{\textbf{f}3}+ 20 \textit{\textbf{f}2} \textit{\textbf{h}5} 21 \textit{\textbf{a}xg}6 \textit{\textbf{fxg}6} 22 \textit{\textbf{xe}6}+ \textit{\textbf{xe}6} 23 \textit{\textbf{xe}6}+ \textit{\textbf{e}7} 24 \textit{\textbf{xc}6}+ \textit{\textbf{f}8} 25 \textit{\textbf{wa}8}+ \textit{\textbf{g}7} 26 \textit{\textbf{xd}5} \textit{\textbf{xh}2} 27 \textit{\textbf{wh}5} gxh5. Black maybe had an edge, but it was later drawn. Some sharp tactics.

12...\textit{\textbf{a}5}

12...c5 is possible, but weakens his pawn structure. 13 c4 0-0 (or 13...\textit{\textbf{wa}5} 14 \textit{\textbf{wd}1}! and Black too will have to retreat his queen before long) 14 \textit{\textbf{h}6} \textit{\textbf{e}e}8 15 \textit{\textbf{aad}1} \textit{\textbf{b}b}8 16 b3 \textit{\textbf{d}4} 17 \textit{\textbf{f}4} \textit{\textbf{c}7} 18 \textit{\textbf{h}4}, and White has good chances on the kingside. White later won in G.Sax-G.Franzoni, Thessaloniki 1984. Black has a visually impressive passed pawn on d4, but he has not got much purchase on the other dark squares.

13 \textit{\textbf{h}6}

![Diagram 1](image1.png)

Obviously the bishop was going to have to move, as White's rook on e1 was under attack. Clearly the bishop is also an irritation on Black's kingside, stopping Black from castling that side. What is slightly unusual is that more than 20 moves later, Black's rook found itself unable to enter into open play, and his king unable to castle. The bishop proved to be more than an irri-
tation, it strategically dominated the whole game.

In an earlier game, Black soon equalized and later drew after 13 c3 c5 14 a2 b7 15 h6 c6, A.Eismont-O.Romanishin, Biel 1995.

13...Wb4

Clearly Eismont wanted to avoid this queen exchange, but Bacrot was able to show that White is able to attack Black’s various slight weaknesses without needing the queens.

13...Nxc3 14 b3 b6? 15 Wf2 went seriously wrong for Black in J.Benjamin-L.Piasetsky, Thessaloniki 1988. It is as if he had forgotten the white bishop can return to d2. Black sacrificed the exchange with 15...Nxa4 16 bxa4 b4 17 ced1 c3, but it was clear this would be insufficient after 18 d2.

13...c5?! is an attempt at counterattack, rather than merely holding the position. After 14 b3 c4 15 a1 b7, it would seem that White is under pressure. In M.Carlsen-S.Mamedyarov, Moscow 2006, Carlsen had to throw everything into his attack on f7 with 16 Ne3 c6 17 Wf4 Nxa4 18 Nf3.

Here there are plenty of dangerous tactics, mainly favouring White, after 18...f6 (or 18...f5 19 exf6, transposing) 19 exf6 gxf6 20 Wd6:

a) 20...0-0-0 21 Wxf6 Wxf6 22 Wxe6+ will give excellent compensation, and an attack, for the exchange.

b) After 20...Nxa1 21 g5 Black cannot castle kingside, but then 21...f6 22 Wxf6? would allow Black to castle safely after 22...0-0-0!

c) Another option for Black is 20...e5 21 Wxe6+ d8 22 bxa4 Nxa1 23 g5+, and while it is easy to see that White, a rook down, has perpetual, the question is whether he can play for more:

c1) 23...c7 24 f4+ e8 25 Wc6! proves to be impossible for Black to hold. After 25...c8 26 g5+ f6 27 Wxf6+ Wxf6 28 Wxf6+ c7 29 We5+ White wins.

c2) 23...c8 24 Wc6+ b8 25 Wxd7 e5 26 f7 e7 27 f4 a7 28 g3? leads to good zugzwang possibilities for White.

Mamedyarov avoided these extremely dangerous tactics, showing that sharp attackers are also sharp defenders. Play was still on the edge after 18...0-0-0-0 19 Wxf7 He8 20 bxa4 c5 (20...f8 21 Wxh7 He7 22 f7l, and White is pressing) 21 b1 Wxa4 22 g5 Wc6 23 xdx8 Qxe5 24 fb8+! xb8 25 c7+ Wxc7 26 Wxe8+ Wc8 27 Wxc8+ Wxc8 28 Wb3 Qg4 29 fb3 Hg5 30 Qh3 Qg4 31 f3, and drawn. All very complicated, and one can be sure that there are hidden resources for both sides.

14 Wxb4

The simplest. There is no need to allow doubled pawns with 14 h3 Wxg4 15 hXg4.

14...Nxb4 15 c3

Again the simplest, with gain of
tempo, although possibly White might be worried that the knight is unable to run away if it were to be attacked (rather than exchanged). Black cannot get there though, and White's pieces and pawns are safe.

15...a5
Black aims to keep some pressure on the pawn on e5.

Black has also tried simplifying, aiming to get rid of the annoying bishop with 15...xf8 16 xf8 xf8 in M.Carlsen-G.Vescovi, Wijk aan Zee 2006, but remains under pressure. After 17 c4 e7 18 cxd5 cxd5 19 a1 a7 20 b4 White's pieces are clearly more active. In terms of pawns, Black has a passed d-pawn, certainly, but this is no serious advantage, especially if White can blockade with king or, as happened, knight on d4. In compensation for the passed d-pawn, White has an extra outside pawn on the queenside, and Black is stuck in the game with a weakened isolated pawn. Also, White was able to create pressure on the kingside. Carlsen duly won.

15...e7 does not quite seem to equalize. After 16 b4! a5 17 a3 a6 18 c2 White keeps pressure with his pieces.

16 b4
Mainly to prevent Black from gaining space with ...c5.

16...c7 17 f4
Covering the advanced pawn.

17 c2? is also to be considered, so that if 17...xe5? 18 xe5 xe5 19 g7 White gains material. The tactic is obvious, but the positional point is that if White can avoid or delay the f4 push, he keeps the option of swinging the bishop from h6 to the queenside. Here 17...a5 18 a3 b6 gives White a slight edge, but nothing special.

17...a5
Somehow Black must loosen his pieces.

18 b5
18 a3 is still possible, but White is aiming for a more active breakthrough.

18...b6?!
This was at one stage seen as a drawing line, but Bacrot can play for an edge.

18...c5! seems better. Then after 19 ab1 c4 20 ac2 b8 White has a good passed pawn. It is, however, difficult to see how White could improve the rest
of his pieces or pawns, with the three minor pieces remaining ineffective. After 21...\textit{xd}8 and a few quiet moves, Black should be able to consolidate for equality quite comfortably.

\textbf{19 \textit{xd}b6!}

An innovation, strangely enough. Sometimes a new move is played in a blaze of glory, but sometimes, as here, it is just the obvious follow-up, but a new interpretation to the follow-up.

In L.Hazai-O.Romanishin, Sochi 1982, the players agreed a draw by repetition after 19 \textit{xc}5 \textit{xd}7. Unexciting, but as David Bronstein used to say, twenty years later players will find improvements. Or five years, or ten years, or a day.

\textbf{19...\textit{xb}6+ 20 \textit{f}1}

White has lost a tempo as a result of the check, but does that really matter? The king is moving towards a more centralized square, which is going to be a help for the endgame. In the meantime, Black has to prove that he genuinely has equality. In the subsequent games that resulted, it was clear that there were unexpected difficulties.

\textbf{20...\textit{xb}5?!}

Black is hoping for some simplifica-

tion, but it does not quite work out. White gains some time.

\textbf{Ftcniki suggested 20...c5 21 c4 \textit{xb}7 22 \textit{ad}1 a4 23 a3 \textit{d}8 24 \textit{b}5 \textit{d}7 25 \textit{e}2 with a slight edge for White. This has not resolved Black's basic problem, that he has not been able to castle kingside, and his rooks therefore remain unconnected. Here the obvious solution is to castle queenside with 22...0-0-0!?. Black keeps the tension of whether to exchange pawns on c4, whether to create a passed pawn with ...d4, or whether to delay until the time is right. In view of this, maybe White could put the other rook on the d-file with 22 \textit{ed}1!?, placing rooks on the c-file and the d-file, keeping some tension himself. 21 \textit{xb}5+ \textit{d}7 22...\textit{d}8 23 c4 keeps an edge for White. 22 \textit{ab}1}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_board.png}
\end{center}

Is this really the sort of position that a player would want to try as Black a second time? Rublevsky wanted to prove that his defence was sound.

\textbf{22...\textit{b}8}

Rublevsky questioned this move in his annotations in \textit{Informator}, and sug-
gasted that 22...\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}xb5+\) 23 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}xb5 \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}c7!\) led to equality. Unfortunately, his analysis was not quite watertight, and Ponomariov, an excellent grinder in the endgame, was able to show that White still had chances of playing for an advantage.

Rublevsky’s analysis continued with 24 c4 (he gives 24 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{B}}}d1 \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}d7\) 25 c4 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}c6\) 26 a4 dxc4 27 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}d4 \text{\texttt{\textbf{B}}}hb8\) 28 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}xc4+ \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}d7\) as equal) 24...dxc4 25 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}c5\) 0-0-0 26 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}xc4 \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}d7\) 27 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}g5 \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}b7\), and now 28 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}f6 \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}b8\) with level play. It is not so clear what White has gained with his \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}f6\) move, which merely forces the rook to a better defensive square. Ponomariov doubt had the opportunity in his preparation to sort out weaknesses in his opponent’s analysis, even as late as move 28, and found a possible improvement. In R.Ponomariov-S.Rublevsky, Poikovsky 2006, play went on with 28 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{B}}}b1+ \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}b6\) 29 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{F}}}f5?!\) (Ftcnznk suggests that the quieter 29 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}e2!\) was even better) 29...\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}a7?\) 30 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}c6!\) and White was winning material with a decisive attack, only three moves away from Rublevsky’s analysis.

Ftcnznk points out that Black has good chances of holding after 29...\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}c7!\) 30 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}d4 \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}b6\) 31 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}d6 \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}c6\) 32 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}e3 \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}c7\) 33 fxe6 fxe6 34 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}e2 \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}a7\), the point for the defence being that after 35 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}xc6+ \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}xc6\) 36 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}c1+ \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}b7\) 37 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}xa7 \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}xa7\) 38 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}c7+ \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}b7\) 39 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}xb7+ \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}xb7\) the king and pawn endgame is only a draw. Black oscillates with the king between b6 and c6, and the h-pawn can play ...h6 to cover any kingside weaknesses.

Unfortunately, not Rublevsky’s finest day.

23 c4

Aiming to exchange White’s isolated pawn for Black’s best pawn.

23...\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}a7\)

If 23...dxc4 24 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}xc4\) Black is close to zugzwang:

a) His position does not fold immediately, but after, for example, 24...\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}c7\) 25 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}xb8+ \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}xb8\) 26 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{B}}}b1 \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}c7\) 27 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}g7\) \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}g8\) 28 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}f6\) White has a long and leisurely squeeze.

b) Rublevsky gives 24...\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}a4\) 25 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}e4!\) as a possibility, with the idea that if 25...\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}c2\) 26 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{B}}}d4 \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}xb1\) 27 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}b5+,\) and checkmate after 27...\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}e7\) 28 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{B}}}d7+ \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}e8\) 29 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}a7+ \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}d8\) 30 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}g5+ \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}c8\) 31 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}d7\). Here Black would be able to force the opponent to work much harder with 25...\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}d7\) 26 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}xe6+ \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}xe6\) 27 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}xa4\) \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}hc8\) when White has won a pawn, but Black’s pieces are by now the more active.

However, 23...d4? loses a pawn without compensation after 24 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}a6\) \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}c6\) 25 c5 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}a7\) 26 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}xb8+ \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}xb8\) 27 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{B}}}d1\).

24 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}a6\)

Quite a symmetry of the White bishops, on a6 and h6. Of course, they threaten nothing, but they cut out important defensive squares. Even now, Black cannot castle.

24 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}ec1?!\) allows Black to escape for equality with 24...\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}xb5\) 25 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}xb5 \text{\texttt{\textbf{A}}}d7\) 26
a4 (26...c6 8c8!) 26...\textit{hc8} 27 \textit{e2} \textit{c5}, as Rublevsky notes. An advanced passed pawn is useful, but if the pawn cannot queen, and the other forces give nothing, the end result is a likely draw.

\textit{24...\textit{c6}}

Rublevsky gives 24...dxc4? 25 \textit{xb8}+ \textit{xb8} 26 \textit{bb1} \textit{c7} 27 \textit{bb7} \textit{d8} 28 \textit{xc4} as a zugzwang for White. Perhaps this is not quite clear just yet, as after 28...\textit{c6} 29 \textit{bb8?!} \textit{d7} Black will be able to disintangle the back row. However, a quieter approach is 29 \textit{a7} a4 30 \textit{g3} \textit{e7} 31 \textit{c7} \textit{d7} 32 \textit{g7} \textit{g8} 33 \textit{f6} \textit{xf6} 34 \textit{exf6} \textit{d8} 35 \textit{a7} with a winning bind.

It is equally understandable that Bacrot would wish for more, and he finds an inspired pawn breakthrough. The trouble is that the breakthrough weakens his own pawn structure, as well as his opponent’s. Black has to play very carefully, avoiding a couple of traps, to hold the position.

Instead 25 f5 gxf5 26 \textit{e3} \textit{xb1} 27 \textit{xb1} \textit{d7} (27...\textit{xe3}? 28 \textit{bb8+} 28 \textit{xa7} \textit{a8} 29 cxd5 exd5 (29...\textit{xd5??} 30 \textit{b5+}) 30 \textit{d3} transposes into the notes to Black’s 27th, below, where Black has chances of holding.

\textit{25...exd5}

25...\textit{xd5?} 26 \textit{xb8}+ \textit{xb8} 27 \textit{c1} cuts through on the back rank. If 27...\textit{d7} 28 \textit{b5+}, the bishops help as well.

\textit{26 f5?}

Given an exclamation mark elsewhere, but while it seems good it is not the most accurate.

Instead 26 \textit{xb8}+ \textit{xb8} 27 \textit{c1} \textit{d7} 28 \textit{e2}!! is a highly subtle try, with zugzwang ideas.

\textbf{25 cxd5}

This is the sort of position where it is easy enough to say that White is slightly better, but very difficult to find a clear way of improving his position. Given the chance of ...\textit{d7}, Black would have excellent chances of consolidating for equality. After, for example, 25 \textit{xb8}+ \textit{xb8} 26 \textit{g7} \textit{g8} 27 \textit{f6} \textit{d7} 28 \textit{b1} \textit{c7} 29 cxd5 exd5 30 \textit{h4} \textit{b8} 31 \textit{xb8} \textit{xb8} 32 g4 White’s edge is slight. White can, of course, attempt to play for a win, as he has a slightly better pawn structure.

If 28...\textit{c7??} or 28...\textit{c8??}, then White has immediate wins with 29 \textit{g4+} (and, for beginners, don’t forget the en passant after 29...\textit{f5} 30 \textit{exf6+}).
Tactically this is elementary, but positionally this is significant, as it eliminates two of Black’s best chances of bringing his pieces into play.

28...\textit{a}a7 activates the bishop, but can no longer put pressure on the e5-pawn, so White has 29 f5!. If 29...\textit{e}e8, White has a pawn breakthrough close to the queening square with 30 e6+ exf6 31 f6, winning. Alternatively, Black has 29...gx\textit{f}5 30 \textit{d}d3, and we now reach the winning line in the game, but bypassing an improvement for Black on move 27.

Black could also have tried developing the rook with 28...\textit{e}e8, but even here the rook hits a mine. After 29 \textit{c}c5! a4 (29...\textit{c}c7? 30 \textit{g}g4+! 31 \textit{g}g4+ \textit{c}c7 32 \textit{d}d1 White wins at least a pawn, as if 32...\textit{b}b6 33 \textit{x}xc6+ \textit{xc}6 34 \textit{x}xa4+, skewering the rook.

A blemish for White, perhaps, but it is difficult to imagine how a player would be able to calculate over the board why 26 f5 is less accurate than 26 \textit{x}xb8+.

26...\textit{x}xb1

If 26...gx\textit{f}5 27 \textit{e}e3 \textit{d}d7! (28...\textit{e}e3? 29 \textit{b}b4+) 29 \textit{xa}7 \textit{a}8 30 \textit{d}d3 \textit{xa}7 31 \textit{xf}5+ \textit{e}e7 32 \textit{b}b6 (32 \textit{h}h7 \textit{e}e6 33 \textit{e}e1 \textit{b}b7 is level) 32...\textit{c}c7 33 \textit{e}e2 with an edge to White. However, Ribli gives it as a substantial edge. Black’s pawns are all isolated, and White’s pieces are active, with the king threatening to end up on d4.

Can we have any clear indication that White is winning, or is close to winning? Or can we show that Black’s position is tenable? Quieter moves for Black tend to lead to an uncomfortable defence, but 33...f6!? is more challenging:

\begin{center}(see following diagram)\end{center}

\begin{center}(see following diagram)\end{center}

a) If 34 exf6+ \textit{x}xf6 35 \textit{h}h7 \textit{h}h7 36 \textit{xc}6+ \textit{e}e5 37 h3 \textit{b}b7, and Black has excellent counterplay in return for White’s extra pawn. White will need to
cover Black's advanced passed d-pawn, and so he will not have any opportunity of pushing his g- and h-pawns. In rook and pawn endgames, active pieces make all the difference.

\[
\text{\textbullet} \text{ 34 e6 looks dangerous, but with accurate play by Black, it is difficult for White to set up a check on the seventh rank. Then 34...\text{\textbullet}d4l brings the bishop into play. If 35 \text{\textbullet}d3 \text{\textbullet}xg2 36 \text{\textbullet}xd4 \text{\textbullet}f1l, and Black can use the c4-square with rook or bishop (after 37 \text{\textbullet}xh7 \text{\textbullet}c4), just about holding the balance, and 35 g4 \text{\textbullet}d5 36 \text{\textbullet}d3 (36 a3? \text{\textbullet}c3 with strong counterplay) 36...\text{\textbullet}xa2 37 \text{\textbullet}xd4 a4 also holds the balance.}
\]

This is the deep defensive resource that White could have avoided by playing 26 \text{\textbullet}xb8+ \text{\textbullet}xb8 27 \text{\textbullet}c1l \text{\textbullet}d7 28 \text{\textbullet}e2l \text{\textbullet}a7 29 f5 earlier, instead of 26 f5.

\text{28 \text{\textbullet}c1l}

And this is an easily missed quiet rook move, the tactics shifting from the b-file to the c-file. White is now thinking of threatening e6+, and almost any active Black move makes things worse.

28 e6+ fxe6 29 f6 e5 30 f7 \text{\textbullet}c5 would have been more aggressive, but offers no clear way of taking advantage of the seventh rank pawn. 31 \text{\textbullet}b5 \text{\textbullet}xb5 32

\text{\textbullet}xb5 \text{\textbullet}f8 33 \text{\textbullet}xf8 (33 \text{\textbullet}b8? \text{\textbullet}e7) 33...\text{\textbullet}xf8 34 \text{\textbullet}xd5+ \text{\textbullet}e6 35 \text{\textbullet}xa5 \text{\textbullet}xf7+ is, for example, a draw.

\text{28...\text{\textbullet}f5}

Black makes the most straightforward reply.

28...\text{\textbullet}a4 29 \text{\textbullet}c8+! (29 e6+ fxe6 30 f6 \text{\textbullet}b8l) 29...\text{\textbullet}xc8 30 e6+ fxe6 31 fxe6+ \text{\textbullet}xe6 32 \text{\textbullet}xc8, as Rublevsky notes, favours White, possibly decisively.

\text{29 \text{\textbullet}d3}

We have seen this position before. See the notes to move 26.

Even without White's advanced f-pawn, he still has generated considerable attacking chances, with just rook and two bishops versus Black's more passive rook and two bishops. Black has not yet fully completed his development, even though we are at the early stages of the endgame. Had the rook been on a better square, he would have been able to equalize comfortably, but just at the moment he lacks the coordination of his pieces.

\text{29...\text{\textbullet}e8}

Alternatively:

\text{a) If 29...\text{\textbullet}a4?, White has a mating attack after 30 \text{\textbullet}xf5 \text{\textbullet}e7 31 \text{\textbullet}g5+ \text{\textbullet}f8 32 \text{\textbullet}c8+ \text{\textbullet}e8 33 \text{\textbullet}f6.}
b) If 29...\( \text{d4} \) 30 \( \text{g7!} \), then 31 e6+, and the underdevelopment of the rook again causes a problem.

c) 29...\( \text{b8} \) 30 \( \text{x}f5+ \text{c7} \) 31 e6! followed by \( \text{f4+} \) picks up the rook on another diagonal.

d) 29...\( \text{b6} \) avoids immediate trouble, but after 30 \( \text{f4} \text{b7} \) 31 \( \text{x}f5+ \text{e8} \), Black has still been unable to bring the rook into play.

Rublevsky decides to try to complete his development.

30 \( \text{f4} \)

30 \( \text{x}f5+ \text{c7} \) 31 \( \text{f4} \text{b7} \) 32 \( \text{b1+} \text{a8} \) 33 \( \text{x}h7 \) is no doubt also strong, but Bacrot prefers to keep a hit against the king in the centre.

30...\( \text{d4} \)

In their notes, Ribli and Rublevsky both suggest that 30...\( \text{e7} \) 31 \( \text{x}f5+ \text{c7} \) 32 e6+ \( \text{b7} \) 33 \( \text{b1+} \text{a8} \) 34 \( \text{d6} \text{x}e6 \) 35 \( \text{x}e6 \text{f}x\text{e}6 \) 36 \( \text{e}2 \) gives more resistance, but it is difficult to see any chances for Black to hold. White's 2-1 kingside pawn structure seems decisive, not least because of the danger that Black could lose his final h-pawn.

31 \( \text{x}f5+ \)

This wins even more comfortably.

31...\( \text{c7} \)

Otherwise he loses material.

32 e6+

The pawn is pushed. Had this not been close to the time scramble, when sometimes strange accidents happen, Black would probably have resigned shortly.

32...\( \text{b6} \) 33 \( \text{b1+} \)

Bacrot is unlikely to fall for 33 \text{exf7??} \( \text{b5+} \) when Black wins. Others might.

33...\( \text{c5} \)

33...\( \text{b5+} \) 34 \( \text{d3} \) wins for White. Black's bishop is pinned.

34 \text{exf7} \text{f8} 35 \text{c1+} \text{b6} 36 \text{e6}

He safely keeps the pawn on f7, and Black has no more than a couple of inconclusive checks.

36...\( \text{c5} \) 37 \( \text{h6} \text{b5+} \) 38 \( \text{e1} \text{b4+} \) 39 \( \text{f2} \text{d8} \) 40 \( \text{c8} \) 1-0
1 e4 c5 2 ∆f3 d6 3 d4

A possible disadvantage for Black, in attempting to keep play tense with 2...d6, would be the quiet 3 ∆b5+. Without attempting to provide detailed analysis of this line, Timofeev has made an impressive plus score as Black after 3...∆d7 4 ∆xd7+ ∆xd7! (instead of the standard 4...∆xd7) against 2600+ opposition.

3...cxd4 4 ∆xd4 ∆f6 5 ∆c3

Standard play on both sides. The only likely deviation on these moves is 4 ∆xd4, with Black choosing either 4...∆c6 5 ∆b5 ∆d7 or 4...a6.

5...a6

The Najdorf Variation. This pawn move is useful for Black anyway, and he might just as well play it early. He is waiting to see exactly what White plays next move, before deciding whether to try ...e5 or ...e6.

The approximate frequency of play in this position in high-level games would be, first, 5...a6, the Najdorf; then second, 5...∆c6, the Classical Variation; then third, 5...e6, the Scheveningen; then fourth, 5...g6, the Dragon. Thus Bobby Fischer's great favourite still retains its popularity.

6 ∆e3

There are many lines here, the most direct line being 6 ∆g5 e6 7 f4. Fischer in many games tried to grab the pawn with 7...∆b6 8 ∆d2 ∆xb2, while Polugaevsky concentrated instead on 7...b5 8 e5 dxe5 9 fxe5 ∆c7 with great complications. These two leading grandmasters were great pioneers during the sixties, seventies and beyond of detailed and sharp opening analysis. There are many later top grandmasters, including Kasparov, and later Anand, who have carried this process through. The use of computer analysis, predicted at an early stage by Polugaevsky, has led to a major jump in chess understanding at the top.

It has to be recognized that the computer does not automatically provide a detailed list of significant improvements, which players can copy and win. More it is a case of the computer setting up a framework of interesting ideas for the player to examine, and then finding out which moves are worth examining in much greater
depth. A recent theme in top-level chess is working out possible ways to find in advance attempted improvements by the opponent, and then trumping these improvements with deeper counter-improvements. This game gives an excellent and attractive example.

Without attempting any deep theoretical analysis of this position, the approximate order of popularity is 6 \( \text{Re}3 \), 6 \( \text{Re}2 \), 6 \( \text{Rg}5 \), then jointly 6 \( \text{Cc}4 \) and 6 \( \text{g}3 \) (two radically different approaches), and finally 6 \( \text{f}4 \). In the days of Fischer, 6 \( \text{Re}3 \) was still a rarity. It was later popularized by English grandmasters in the 1980s.

7 \( \text{Rb}3 \)

An advantage of the Najdorf, when compared with the Sveshnikov, is that White cannot create pressure with \( \text{Rdb}5 \).

7...\( \text{Re}6 \)

The main line, keeping the option of developing the knight to d7 quickly without obstructing the bishop. There are also questions as to whether Black can play ...d5 sensibly, not just yet but maybe later. Most of the time it doesn’t quite work, but both players need to be alert.

8 \( \text{f}3 \)

Keeping the pawn centre solid.

8 \( \text{Wd}2 \) \( \text{Re}7 \) 9 \( \text{f}3 \) is a harmless transposition. Not though 8...d5? 9 exd5 \( \text{Rxd}5 \) 10 0-0-0 and White wins a piece.

6...\( \text{e}5 \)

The obvious point is that 6...\( \text{Qg}4 \) hits the bishop, although it is not quite so clear that this is such an obvious advantage for Black after 7 \( \text{Rg}5 \). There is, of course, by now considerable theory after 7...\( \text{h}6 \) 8 \( \text{Rh}4 \) \( \text{g}5 \) 9 \( \text{Rg}3 \) \( \text{g}7 \) 10 \( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{Re}5 \). Black has gained some time, but has also weakened his kingside pawn structure.

6...\( \text{e}6 \) sets up a Scheveningen approach, and a direct transposition is of course possible. There are many possible alternatives by White.

8...\( \text{Re}7 \)

8...d5?! is too early. After 9 exd5 \( \text{Rxd}5 \) 10 \( \text{Rxd}5 \) \( \text{Wxd}5 \) 11 \( \text{Wxd}5 \) \( \text{Rxd}5 \) 12 0-0-0 White gains the bishop-pair with either 12...\( \text{Bxb}3 \) 13 axb3 or 12...\( \text{Re}6 \) 13 \( \text{Cc}5 \) \( \text{Bxc}5 \) 14 \( \text{Bxc}5 \). White has then made a healthy plus score.

9 \( \text{Wd}2 \)

9 \( g4?! \) for once allows the thematic breakthrough after 9...d5! 10 \( g5 \) d4 11 \( gxf6 \) \( Bxf6 \) with advantage to Black.
9 Qd5 Qxd5 10 exd5 Qf5 is equal.

9...0-0

9...d5?! 10 exd5 Qxd5 11 Qxd5 Wxd5 12 Wxd5 Qxd5 13 0-0-0 gains a tempo for Black, when compared with the 9...d5 line, but White is still clearly better.

9...Qbd7 is possible, and could transpose into the main line after 10 0-0-0 0-0, but White has the extra option of 10 g4! when 10...d5? is not playable.

10 0-0-0

White continues to keep pressure on the d5-square.

10 g4! d5 11 g5 d4 12 gxf6 Qxf6 is, as we have already seen, a good line for Black.

White, Topalov later winning.

b) 18...a3 19 b3 a5 20 a2 Qa6 21 h5 Wc3 22 Wxc3 Qxc3 was tried a couple of times by Maenhoet at Istanbul 2005, but White still looks slightly better.

11 g4

We are still on the highway of theory. White charges through with the pawns on the kingside, while Black pushes hard on the other side.

11...b5

Prioritizing the pawn push.

11...Wc7 is playable, although it is noticeable that in games between top grandmasters, White has a significant plus score.

12 g5

The most direct move, and the most popular.

12 Wg1!? has been tried, and indeed was introduced by Anand in a couple of Melody Amber events. The idea was that if Black pushed the pawn, 12...b4, White has 13 Qd5, and if 13...Qxd5?, the bishop gets trapped by 14 exd5. Here 13...Qxd5 is of course playable, probably equal, and also, a move earlier, 12...Qb6? Anand has experimented on both sides with these lines.

10...Qbd7

The usual move, developing.

10...b5, via a slight transposition, leads into V.Topalov-L.Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 2007. After 11 Qd5 Qxd5 12 exd5 Wc7 13 g4 Qc8 14 Qb1 b4 15 g5, Van Wely was able to show why he wanted to delay ...Qbd7. He was able to try 15...Qfd7. Play continued 16 h4 a5 17 Qh3 a4 18 Qc1 with unclear play:

a) Van Wely continued 18...Qa6 19 h5 Qc8 20 g6 Qf6 21 gxf7+ Qxf7 22 Qe6+ with perhaps a slight edge to
12...b4

Attack and counterattack. Black does not want to concede a tempo.

12...\( \triangle \)h5 has also been tried, occasionally after a slightly different move order, but it seems less effective. There has been a recent improvement for White in P.Svidler-R.Ponomariov, Sofia 2007. After 13 \( \triangle \)d5 \( \triangle \)xd5 14 exd5 f5 15 gxf6 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}xf6} \) 16 \( \triangle \)a5 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}f4} \) 17 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}c6} \) \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}c7} \) 18 c4!? (before Black can quietly play ...
...\( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}b6} \) 16...
...\( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}b8} \) (18...
...\( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}b6} \) 19 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}c8} \) (Ptacnik suggests 19...
...\( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}b7} \) 20 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}b1} \) bxc4 21
\( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}c7} \) \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}c7} \) 22 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}c4} \) \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}f8} \) 23 \( \triangle \)a5! Black fell into difficulties on the queenside, and lost.

13 \( \triangle \)e2

There have been no takers for 13 gxf6?! bxc3 14 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}c3} \) \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}f6} \), and if 15
\( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}g1} \), then maybe 15...
...\( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}h8} \). Black has two semi-open files against White’s king, and can add to the pressure with ...
...a6-a5-a4. White has only one semi-open file to attack against Black’s kingside, and no obvious pawn push. Black should be comfortable.

13...
...\( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}e8} \)

Black keeps the king out of the way, which is the most popular line.

After 13...
...\( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}h5} \), Topalov had a smooth win in his younger days in V.Topalov-N.De Firmian, Polanica Zdroj 1995. Play continued 14 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}g3} \) \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}f4} \) (14...
...\( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}xg3} \) 15 hxg3 and Black is in trouble on the h-file) 15 h4 a5 16 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}b1} \) a4 17 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}d4} \) exd4 18 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}xf4} \) \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}a5} \) 19 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}f5} \) \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}xf5} \) 20 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}xf5} \) \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}xf5} \) 21 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}xd4} \) b3 22 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}d3} \) bxa2+ 23 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}a1} \) \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}c5} \) (23...
...\( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}e6} \) 24 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}e1} \) \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}e5} \) 25 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}xe5} \) dxe5 26 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}xd5} \) would not have lasted much longer) 24 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}e4} \) g6 25
...\( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}e3} \) (Topalov decided against 25 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}xe7} \)
...a3) 25...
...\( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}e5} \) 26 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}d4} \) \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}xe4} \) 2 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}xe4} \) and

White had a dominating bishop-pair. Naturally there must be improvements for Black, maybe on move 18.

14 f4

After 14 h4, Anand has shown a significant innovation as Black in this line, again at Wijk aan Zee, but a year later. And yet again, the victim was Karjakin. The preliminaries went 14...
...a5 15 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}b1} \) \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}b6} \) 16 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}g3} \) a4 17 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}c1} \) d5 18 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}xb6} \) \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}xb6} \) 19 exd5 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}d8} \) 20 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}c4} \) \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}c7} \) 21 dxe6? (21 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}e2} \) was quickly drawn in Z.Almasi-K.Sakaev, German League 2004) 21...
...\( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}xd2} \) 22 exf7+
...\( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}h8} \) 23 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}xd2} \).

In P.Leko-S.Karjakin, Wijk aan Zee 2006, play continued 23...
...\( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}c6} \) 24 b3
...\( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}b5} \) 25 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}xb5} \) \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}xb5} \) 26 bxa4 \( \texttt{\textipa{\textasciitilde}a4} \) 27

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Hd1 xf7 28 d7 Kg8 29 Qe4, and a draw was agreed. This looks normal enough, if complicated, but there have been improvements for both sides. Morozevich found an improvement for White with 26 Qf5! (instead of the pawn exchange on a4) 26...xf7 27 Qxe7 xe7 28 d8+ e8 29Hd1 g6?! (Black could have exchanged on b3) 30 Hfd5 wc6 31 Hxh6 wb5, and now a tactic with 32 Hb6! wb6 33 Hxe8+ Kg7 34 bxa4, and White was eventually able to take advantage of the queenside pawns in A. Morozevich-A. Volokitin, Biel 2006.

Anand meanwhile made his own assessment, and found a way of gaining a tempo a few moves earlier with 23...Qb5! (instead of 23...wc6). After 24 Hb5 wb5 the position was much as in the earlier games, except that this time Black had not provoked the b3-pawn push. Play through the second Karjakin-Anand game, and we see that after 25 Qf5 xf7 26 Qxe7 xe7 27 Hxe8+ e8 28 Hhd1 Hg8, White found nothing more he could do than play 29 b3, as he was starting to be in sight zugzwang.

We could have reached this position in the Morozevich-Volokitin game at move 29, if Volokitin had tried 29...Hg8 instead of 29...g6, except for a small but critical distinction. In Anand’s game, it was Black’s move!

Anand avoided the exchange of pawns on a4, or indeed on b3, and gained space with 29...a3. After 30 H1d5 Hf1 31 Hxg8+ Hxg8 32 Hxe5 Hxf3 Anand had reached an endgame with queen versus rook, knight and pawn, level in material, but of course White’s knight was heavily constrained, and, even more important, the king in serious danger of being mated on b2. The remainder of S. Karjakin-V. Anand, Wijk aan Zee 2007, is of interest, and can easily be accessed by computer.

These Karjakin-Anand games form a spectacular double against an extremely strong opponent, and show why Anand is the most dangerous of all opening theorists. Also an indication of how extremely deeply Anand has analysed in his specialty lines. It is not just a single innovation in a critical line, it is a whole string of innovations against many of the World’s leading grandmasters.

14...a5

An obvious move, but there is also an obvious alternative in 14...exd4 15 Hxd4 Qc5. This has hardly been played though.

15 f5

White too makes the most direct and aggressive line.

The quieter 15 Hb1 is playable, making an escape square for the knight. Then 15...a4 16 Qbc1 exf4 17 Hxf4 Hxg5 18 Hxe6 Hxe3 19 Hxd8 Hxd2 20 Hxd2 Hxd8 21 Hd4 Hf6 22 Hxb4 Hc5 23 Hg2 Hfe8 24 Hd3 Hfxe4 25 Hxc5 Hxc5 26 Hc6 Hc6 ended up as perhaps
slightly the better of a draw in Z.Almasi-V.Anand, Turin Olympiad 2006.

15...a4
The most consequential.
15...bxb3 16 cxb3 a4 17 bxa4 bxa4 18 b3 should give an edge to White, who can look forward to taking over the a2-g8 diagonal.

16 b4

White's knight sacrifice is only temporary.
17 b3
If 17...bxa2?! 18 c6, and the more important bishop goes.

18 b1
Again, White must not allow a pawn promotion with ...bxa2.

18 cxb3 a3 c8+ 20 b1 c4 21 f6 cexf6 22 gxf6 cxf6 23 cxc4 cxc4 24 cxb3 dxe4 was clearly better for Black in M.Borriss-J.Gallagher, German League 2003.

18...bxc2+
The idea is to force White to take the bishop with a pawn on b3, thereby allowing Black to make a pawn recapture, and open up an attack on the a-file.

18...bxa2+ 19 a1 a3 20 b4 is worth considering, and the computer gives this as good for Black. This seems
slightly to overestimate Black’s doubled a-pawns, but maybe the debate will continue. Then, for example, 20...\textit{\textsf{\textbullet}}\textbullet f5 21 \textsf{\textbullet}xf5 \textsf{\textbullet}e5 22 \textsf{\textbullet}g1 \textsf{\textbullet}h8 23 \textsf{\textbullet}g3 leads to unclear play.

19 \textsf{\textbullet}xc2

19 \textsf{\textbullet}xc2 \textsf{\textbullet}xa2+ 20 \textsf{\textbullet}xa2 \textsf{\textbullet}xg5 21 \textsf{\textbullet}c6 \textsf{\textbullet}f6 22 \textsf{\textbullet}d4 \textsf{\textbullet}e5 is good for Black.

19...\textsf{\textbullet}b3

The desperado theme. The piece decides where it needs to be sacrificed, and not where the opponent wants to take it.

19...\textsf{\textbullet}xa2+ 20 \textsf{\textbullet}xa2 \textsf{\textbullet}e5 is also to be considered, and Black would seem to be at least equal. In A.Motylev-Bu Xiangzhi, Khanty-Mansiysk 2007, play continued 21 \textsf{\textbullet}b4 \textsf{\textbullet}b8 22 \textsf{\textbullet}c3 \textsf{\textbullet}c7 23 \textsf{\textbullet}f4 \textsf{\textbullet}c8 24 \textsf{\textbullet}xe5 \textsf{\textbullet}b5 (24...\textsf{\textbullet}xe5? 25 \textsf{\textbullet}c6 \textsf{\textbullet}b3+ 26 \textsf{\textbullet}xb3 \textsf{\textbullet}xb3+ 27 \textsf{\textbullet}xb3 \textsf{\textbullet}xg5 28 \textsf{\textbullet}c4 with a clear advantage to White) 25 \textsf{\textbullet}d3 \textsf{\textbullet}xe5 26 \textsf{\textbullet}xb5 \textsf{\textbullet}xb4 27 \textsf{\textbullet}xb8 \textsf{\textbullet}axb8, soon drawn.

20 axb3 axb3

The a-file has now been successfully opened.

21 \textsf{\textbullet}a3

And closed again.

21...\textsf{\textbullet}e5

A few months later, Karjakin with the black pieces did not follow the Karjakin-Anand encounter, but instead demonstrated a forced quick draw: 21...\textsf{\textbullet}d5? (unsound) 22 \textsf{\textbullet}xd5 \textsf{\textbullet}xa3 23 \textsf{\textbullet}xd7 \textsf{\textbullet}a5 24 \textsf{\textbullet}b5?! \textsf{\textbullet}c7 25 \textsf{\textbullet}c4 \textsf{\textbullet}a5 26 \textsf{\textbullet}b5 and the double-queen tango soon ended as a draw in P.Harikrishna-S.Karjakin, Foros 2006.

Harikrishna then did his homework, and found that 26 \textsf{\textbullet}xb3! keeps good winning chances for White:

a) In P.Harikrishna-A.Volokitin, Cap d’Agde (rapid) 2006, Volokitin was pressed for time (this was a quickplay), and could not find the best line. After 26...\textsf{\textbullet}xb2?! 27 \textsf{\textbullet}xb2 \textsf{\textbullet}c7 28 \textsf{\textbullet}b5 \textsf{\textbullet}b8 29 \textsf{\textbullet}d5 Harikrishna consolidated and won.

b) 26...\textsf{\textbullet}e5 27 \textsf{\textbullet}c1 \textsf{\textbullet}xe4+ 28 \textsf{\textbullet}d3 \textsf{\textbullet}b4 29 \textsf{\textbullet}c2 still keeps Black under severe pressure.

One gets the feeling that quite possibly Anand had seen all this in advance, such is his mastery, or super-grandmaster, of the opening in chess. Karjakin, himself a superb grandmaster, lost all three theoretical battles in this line, and was fortunate that he did not lose against Harikrishna, as well as twice against Anand.
22 h4

Unexpectedly this ends up as a fatal flaw several moves later, in that White needed a check on h4 with the queen, after sharp combinative play, but the pawn is in the way. In the text line, although the pawn is useful, it does not actually do anything. Could White improve with an incredibly subtle improvement following the Karjakin-Anand idea, but keeping the chance of a critical queen check? In the end, this is likely to end up as engaging fantasy. If White were to play slightly differently, all other intervening points, whether as White or Black, could also be amended.

22 ...c1!? looks a reasonable try, and if Black tries the tactic 22 ...e2xb5?, the knight would be trapped after 23 e5 c6 24 d3! g5 25 h4. There are, however, probably a few ways of equalizing: for example, 22 ...a4 23 g2 d5 24 xd5 wxd5 25 exd5 d6.

22 ...a5

The one very slight flaw in what might otherwise have been a perfect game of chess is that there is no totally logical reason why 22 ...a5 should be better than 22 ...a4. Indeed in later games Black has preferred 22 ...a4 instead of 22 ...a5.

What is happening here is an extraordinarily deep trap, which Karjakin fell into. Once this trap becomes known, other players will not fall into it, and there is no point for Black in trying this again if other moves provide fractionally better alternatives.

We should consider Black's possible theoretical improvement, 22 ...a4. This makes logical sense, threatening the pawn on e4, rather than the rook being awkwardly placed on a5. Then the most popular try has been 23 g2 wa8 24 f6 d8 25 d4 c7, which is sharp but maybe equal. An unusual plan of kingside defence was seen in A. Shirov-L. Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 2007 (yes, another Dutch encounter here!): 26 fxg7 xg7 27 h5 xg6 28 g6! (Ftcnik preferred an intervening 28 xg5 dxg5 29 g6 g5 with equality) 28 ...xd4! (again the rook was more active on a4 rather than on a5) 29 cd4 cd4 30 h6+ f6! 31 g7 e8 32 xg2+ f6, and Black had swamped the position with central defenders, later winning.

23 wc3?

23 we2 had been tried before. In P. Leko-F. Vallejo, Monaco (rapid) 2005,
Black broke open the centre with 23...d5 (23...\textit{wa8} might be better) 24 \textit{xd5} \textit{xd5} 25 \textit{exd5} \textit{xa3} 26 \textit{bx3} \textit{d6}. This ended up as a tense draw after 27 \textit{c5}, but possibly 27 \textit{f4} would have kept an edge.

The next stage of analysis is to try to set up improvements for White, and a natural idea would be to try to chew up the pawn on b3 with 23 \textit{c3}. It looks good, and no doubt Anand in his analysis was asking why this straightforward move is not good for White. The next stage is to set up the ideal trap, a move which looks to be good for the opponent, but falls into an unexpected reply. These days, ‘unexpected’ would mean ‘not seen by the computer’.

Another try would be 23 \textit{b4}?, covering White’s pawn on e4, as well as Black’s pawn on b3.

If 23...d5 24 \textit{xb3} (24 \textit{b6} \textit{xb4} 25 \textit{xd8} soon ends up as equal) 24...\textit{xa3} 25 \textit{bx3} \textit{a8} 26 \textit{a2} \textit{d6} 27 \textit{xd5} \textit{xe4} 28 \textit{xa5} \textit{xa5}, and the bishop-pair will outweigh the knight-pair. In E.Najer-V.Popov, Moscow 2006, Black tried instead 23...\textit{wa8} 24 \textit{xb6} \textit{a4} 25 \textit{xb3} \textit{xe4}+ 26 \textit{c2} \textit{a8} 27 \textit{d5} \textit{xd5} 28 \textit{xd5}. The white bishop-pair, plus an outside passed pawn, seems attractive, while the computer prefers Black, but the third result happened, a draw.

23...\textit{wa8}

Doubling the a-file. There may be the occasional threat on a3, but Karjakin was probably still feeling in control.

24 \textit{g2}

Otherwise the e4-pawn drops.

Anand gives 24 \textit{d4} d5 with advantage to Black. If, for example, 25 \textit{exd5} \textit{xa3} 26 \textit{bx3} \textit{xa3}, and it is difficult for White to cover his pieces before Black has time to play...\textit{d6} and...\textit{c8}, or other winning plans. One possibility is 27 \textit{c1} \textit{a4} 28 \textit{b2} \textit{xd4} 29 \textit{xd4} \textit{f3} 30 \textit{c5} \textit{d6} 30 \textit{wa3} \textit{xd2}+ 32 \textit{c1} \textit{c8}+ 33 \textit{xd2} \textit{xd5}, and the king is out in the open.

After the text, White looks safe enough, and his pieces are developed, while Black has yet to find a way to bring the knight and the castled rook into play.

\[ \text{Diagram:} \]

24...\textit{c7}!!

Anand has seen this idea.

24...\textit{a4} would have been level.

25 \textit{xc7}

The one good reason for White to have tried 23 \textit{c3} is to stop the knight playing to c7. So for better or worse, he might just as well take the knight,

25 \textit{b6} \textit{xa3} 26 \textit{bx3} \textit{db5} 27 \textit{xb3} \textit{xa3}+ wins for Black. All his pieces are suddenly on good squares.

25...\textit{c8}!

It is the second sacrifice which sets up the winning attack. 25...\textit{xa3} 26 \textit{bx3} \textit{wa7} easily covers Black’s mate threat.

Trying this idea on the computer, this is only about tenth in the line of
suggested ideas, each of these being apparently losing moves. It is human imagination which brings about the brilliancy here, and not the machine.

26 \text{\textit{Wxe7}}

He might just as well take the second piece.

The retreat with 26 \textit{Wb6} \textit{Qc4} 27 \textit{Wxb3} \textit{Qxa3+} 28 \textit{bxa3} \textit{Qxa3} 29 \textit{Wb2} \textit{Qb8} 30 \textit{Qb6} \textit{Ha6} 31 e5 \textit{Ha1+} 32 \textit{Wxa1} \textit{Qxb6+} 33 \textit{Qc2} \textit{Wxg2+} 34 \textit{Qc3} \textit{dxe5} gives a likely quick checkmate. This is the line given by Ftacnik, although there are undoubtedly good alternatives.

So what next? Black has successfully diverted the queen away from White’s defensive squares, but he has lost two pieces, and must make his attack work. 26...\textit{Qc4}!

It is only this move that justifies the combination. While the knight move is aggressive, it is not even a violent attacking move, in the sense that there is this no immediate threat of ‘take, check, then check and wins’. Black is instead ‘threatening to threaten’ with 27...\textit{Qxa3+} 28 \textit{bxa3} \textit{Qxa3}, and then threatening a check on a1. This gives White two tempi before he can be checkmated, and he is two pieces ahead. Normally such an attack for Black would not work. Here, amazingly, Black is just in time, even though with White’s first tempo he is able to attack against the black kingside.

The computer (at least my computer) suggests that Black’s position is losing, and after a trip to summer gardening and later return, the computer still says that White is winning. Quite clearly, the fact that Black wins is not the result of routine electronic suggestions, but instead the result of human endeavour. Anand is probably the greatest opening analyst of all.

Incidentally, 26...\textit{Qxa3??} 27 \textit{bxa3} \textit{Wxc3} 28 \textit{Wa7} refutes the immediate attack.

27 \textit{g6}

Karjakin aims for an immediate counterattack, with the hope that his own play arrives first. The problem for the white defender is that his queen cannot help defend the king, and so what else can he do?

27 \textit{Qxc4??} \textit{Ha1} mate is of course elementary, but on such elementary considerations deeper tactical ideas may be built. The knight on a3 cannot
be moved, and may be cracked open.

27 $\textit{a}x\textit{xd6?!}$ may also be regarded as elementary. After 27...$\textit{a}xxa3$ 28 bxa3 $\textit{a}xa3+$ 29 $\textit{b}b2$ $\textit{c}c4+$ 30 $\textit{c}c3$ $\textit{a}xd6+$ any experienced player will conclude immediately that Black is heading for a win. 31 $\textit{d}d4$ $\textit{w}a4+$ 32 $\textit{e}e5$ $\textit{h}e8$ 33 $\textit{w}xe8+$ $\textit{d}xe8$ may hold out for a while, but perhaps not for very long.

This leaves bishop moves:

a) 27 $\textit{c}c1$ $\textit{a}xa3+$ 28 bxa3 $\textit{x}xa3$ 29 $\textit{x}xa3$ $\textit{w}xa3$ 30 $\textit{d}d2$ $\textit{a}a8$ is not difficult to calculate, even though Black has now, in total, sacrificed a rook and bishop.

There is no way for White to avoid checkmate, except the temporary reprieve of a queen sacrifice with 31 $\textit{w}e8+$ $\textit{d}xe8$ 32 e5 (preventing ...$\textit{a}a8$), but Black is now material ahead after 32...$\textit{a}xe5$ 33 $\textit{c}c1$ h6 34 g6 fxg6 35 fxg6 $\textit{g}f8$. Earlier, 27...$\textit{w}c6!$ wins more cleanly, without allowing White the queen sacrifice.

b) If 27 $\textit{d}d4$, Anand gives 27...$\textit{a}xa3$ 28 bxa3 $\textit{a}xa3+$ 29 $\textit{b}b2$ $\textit{c}c4+$ 30 $\textit{c}c3$ $\textit{a}a2!$ 31 $\textit{c}c5$ $\textit{w}c2+$ 32 $\textit{d}d4$ dxc5+ 33 $\textit{d}d5$ $\textit{e}e3+$ 34 $\textit{d}d6$ $\textit{a}xd1$. At least White’s king and queen have been reunited, but now Black is material ahead, and is about to queen.

c) Finally, Anand gives 27 $\textit{c}c5!$. White’s idea is to slow down one of Black’s pieces by distracting them with the bishop:

   c1) If, for example, 27...$\textit{a}xc5?!$ 28 $\textit{a}xd6!$ 29 $\textit{a}xd6$ (29...$\textit{a}xa3$ 30 bxa3 $\textit{w}xc3??$ 31 $\textit{d}d8+$) 29 $\textit{w}xd6$ and White is better.

   c2) 27...$\textit{a}xc5?!$ 28 e5! again with ideas of a back-row mate.

   c3) 25...dxc5?! 26 $\textit{d}d7$, and White now has mating threats himself.

   c4) However, Anand shows there is still a winning attack with 27...$\textit{a}xa3!$. He is not to be distracted, and White has now used up one of his precious tempo moves. After 38 bxa3 $\textit{a}xc5$ 29 a4 $\textit{a}a3+$ 30 $\textit{b}b2$ $\textit{c}c2+$ 31 $\textit{a}xa3$ $\textit{w}b8!$ wins, since if 32 $\textit{a}a1$ b2 33 $\textit{a}a2$ $\textit{c}c3$ mate.

   Karjakin’s line looks the more natural. He tries to get in his retaliation in first.

27...hxg6

Anand needs to create an escape square for the king.

28 fxg6

And Karjakin needs to restore his threat. A glance at the computer might suggest that there are several ways for
White to set up an advantage, but these all turn out to be rejected choices from move 27.

28...\textcircled{a}xa3+

28...\textcircled{a}xa3 also wins, and if 29 gx\textcircled{f}7+ \textcircled{h}7 30 f8\textcircled{a}+, then 30...\textcircled{x}xf8, much as in the main line. If instead 30 bxa3, Black soon checkmates after 30...\textcircled{a}xa3+ 31 \textcircled{b}b2 \textcircled{x}xc2+ 32 \textcircled{d}xb3 \textcircled{w}b8+.

The one line in which Black needs to be careful, to avoid a trap, is 29 \textcircled{w}xf7+ \textcircled{h}8 30 bxa3 \textcircled{a}xa3+ 31 \textcircled{b}b2, and if now 31...\textcircled{a}xc2+?? 32 \textcircled{d}xb3 \textcircled{w}b8+ 33 \textcircled{a}xa3, and unexpectedly Black is running out of checks, while White is vastly ahead in material. The queen on f7 covers so many squares, particularly the hoped-for checking squares on a2, b3 and c4. If 33...\textcircled{c}c3+ 34 \textcircled{a}a4 \textcircled{w}a8+ 35 \textcircled{a}a7, covering another square with the help of the queen, and then 35...\textcircled{w}c6+ 36 \textcircled{b}b4, and Black runs out of checks. So Black has to be careful here with 31...\textcircled{a}c4+ 32 \textcircled{c}c3 (32 \textcircled{x}xc4 \textcircled{w}a2+) 32...\textcircled{e}e5+ 33 \textcircled{d}xb3 \textcircled{x}xf7, and he still wins.

29 bxa3 \textcircled{a}xa3

This is a highly delicate position, meaning not so much that the position is equal (it isn't), but rather that even the smallest nuance in the position could result either as a win for White, or a win for Black, or even a draw. The position itself is relatively straightforward for Black by now, but evaluating this position several moves in advance would be incredibly difficult over the board.

Look at that pawn on h4, apparently an insignificant pawn making up the numbers. Unfortunately the pawn is in the way. Had the pawn been on h2, White would be winning with 30 gx\textcircled{f}7+ \textcircled{h}7 31 \textcircled{w}h4+. An unpredictable outcome after White's confident pawn push on move 22, but if White had played something different just then, the whole outcome would have been different, for better or worse. Sometimes even the tiniest details have global significance.

30 gx\textcircled{f}7+

The only move. 30 \textcircled{w}xf7+? \textcircled{h}8 runs out of checks, and White will lose. Then 31 \textcircled{d}d4 does not help: 31...\textcircled{a}a1+ 32 \textcircled{a}xa1 \textcircled{w}a2 mate.

30...\textcircled{h}7

30...\textcircled{h}8?! 31 f8\textcircled{w}+ \textcircled{x}xf8 32 \textcircled{w}xf8+ \textcircled{w}xf8 33 \textcircled{d}d4 is far less clear.

31 f8\textcircled{a}+

It has to be with check. 31 f8\textcircled{w}? \textcircled{a}a1+ loses instantly.
31...\text{xf}8

Anand is interested in far more than perpetual check after 31...\text{sh}8?! 32 \text{g}6+ \text{h}7 33 \text{xf}8+.
32 \text{xf}8

If 32 \text{w}d6 \text{a}1+ (32...\text{c}8? 33 \text{w}e5! allows White to coordinate his pieces) 33 \text{b}2 \text{a}2+ 34 \text{b}1 \text{c}2!, and Anand notes that Black wins. The desperation sacrifice with 35 \text{wh}6+ \text{gxh}6 36 \text{d}7+ \text{g}8 37 \text{a}7 \text{c}6 38 \text{g}1 \text{c}3 does not quite work.
32...\text{a}1+

Anand is not interested in taking the queen with 32...\text{wxf}8? 33 \text{d}2. Maybe Black still has an edge after 33...\text{a}4!, but one of the first lessons we are taught in chess is that queen and rook in an open position can checkmate against king.
33 \text{b}2 \text{a}2+

Black must not overdo the mating ideas though. After 33...\text{w}a3+? 34 \text{c}3 the only safe way is a draw after 34...\text{w}a5+ 35 \text{b}2.
34 \text{c}3

If 34 \text{b}1, Black has gained a valuable tempo with his rook checks, and can win comfortably after 34...\text{wxf}8 35 \text{h}3 \text{w}a8 36 \text{f}5+ \text{h}8. If then 37 \text{c}1, Anand gives 37...\text{a}1+ 38 \text{b}2 \text{w}a3+ 39 \text{c}3 \text{b}2+.

34...\text{w}a5+

Check, check, check, and...checkmate.
35 \text{d}3

35 \text{xb}3 \text{a}3+ mates in a couple of moves.
35...\text{w}b5+ 36 \text{d}4 \text{a}4+ 37 \text{c}3 \text{c}4+ 0-1

38 \text{d}2 \text{a}2+ 39 \text{e}1 \text{w}e2 is mate.
A superb example of accurate combinational attacking play, and also a superb example of detailed opening innovative play.
Game 7
P. Svidler-V. Topalov
Morelia 2006
Ruy Lopez C67

1 e4 e5
The first example in this book of a symmetrical kingside opening.

2...d5
These days the King's Gambit with 2 f4!? exf4, and then 3 d5 or 3 c4, has long been highly unfashionable. White gives away a pawn and exposes his king, without even bringing his pieces into play. This does not sound so promising, but White keeps two pawns in the centre, on e4 and d4, with excellent attacking chances, and this line is dangerous. If Black falters, his position, even now, can end up in collapse.

Curiously a list of top-level games from 2004 to early 2008 shows that White has a big plus score, with no losses, with a 100% score in blitz games and quickplays. In standard play, V. Zvjaginsev-E. Tomashevsky, Serpukhov 2007, led to a win for White that 19th Century players would surely have appreciated. After 3 d5 d6 4 d4 g5 5 c3 c6 6 g3 g4 7 h4 f3 8 e3 Black had an impressive advanced passed pawn, but White has excellent piece development and good central pawns. Zvjaginsev later scored a miniature win (25 moves or fewer), with Black's king being fully exposed in the centre.

2...c6
For 2...d5, see Game 24, Kamsky-Carlsen.

2...d6, the Philidor Defence is playable, but has the disadvantage of blocking the dark-squared bishop.

3...b5
This has been played about three-quarters of the time here, putting pressure on the knight, and thereby putting pressure on the e5-pawn.

3 d4, the Scotch Opening, is examined in Game 18, Rublevsky-Grischuk. See the comments there for other third move alternatives.

The text reaches the Ruy Lopez, now even more fashionable in the 21st century than in the 16th. White does not aim for the natural attack on the f7-pawn with 3 c4, but pressurizes the e5-pawn by attacking the defending knight on c6.

3...d6
The Berlin Defence, but the main line remains 3...a6 4 a4 d5. See Game 10, Ivanchuk-Aronian.
4 0-0

4  \( \mathcal{Q}c3 \) leads to the 'boring' Four Knights, with Rubinstein's 4...\( \mathcal{Q}d4 \) removing much of the interest from White's point of view.

4 d3 is more flexible for White, without necessarily achieving much of an advantage. James Mortimer achieved his moment of fame in London 1883, with the trap he set with 4...\( \mathcal{Q}e7? \), with the idea that if 5 \( \mathcal{Q}xe5? \) c6! Black wins a piece after either 6 \( \mathcal{Q}c4 \) \( \mathcal{W}a5+ \) or 6 \( \mathcal{Q}c4 \) \( \mathcal{Q}g6! \) (but not 6...\( \mathcal{Q}xb5?? \) 7 \( \mathcal{Q}d6 \) mate) 7 \( \mathcal{A}a4 \) b5. Mortimer's three opponents in that tournament avoided the little trap, and were much stronger than Mortimer, and so won easily each time. The move itself is playable, and the idea of...c6 and ...\( \mathcal{Q}g6 \) is sensible.

4...\( \mathcal{Q}xe4 \)

4...\( \mathcal{Q}c5 \) has been described as the 'Berlin Classical', a mixture of the Berlin and Classical (3...\( \mathcal{Q}c5 \)) defences. The bishop move is playable, but less solid than the Berlin Defence proper. White can aim at a hit with d4 against an early...\( \mathcal{Q}c5 \).

5 d4

This has been tried many times in recent years and for the most part it has proven to be difficult for White to break down Black's position. The present game does not give White a clear or decisive edge, despite the final result.

The older 5 \( \mathcal{Q}e1 \) \( \mathcal{Q}d6 \) 6 \( \mathcal{Q}xe5 \) \( \mathcal{Q}e7 \) (or maybe immediately 6...\( \mathcal{Q}xe5 \)) was tried several times in the 1886 World Championship, with Steinitz as White against Zukertort. Steinitz achieved a good plus score, but these days it is seen basically as a drawing line with symmetrical pawn structures, and a gradual equalization by Black.

The knight on d6 gets in the way. Could Black have considered 5...\( \mathcal{Q}f6 \) instead? After 6 \( \mathcal{Q}xe5 \), White is slightly ahead in development, and it is not quite as easy as it looks to develop Black's pieces: 6...\( \mathcal{Q}e7 \) 7 d4 0-0 8 \( \mathcal{Q}c3 \) keeps a slight edge.

5...\( \mathcal{Q}d6 \)

5...\( \mathcal{Q}e7 \), the traditional way, keeps a slight edge for White after 6 \( \mathcal{W}e2 \) \( \mathcal{Q}d6 \) 7 \( \mathcal{Q}xc6 \) bxc6 8 exd5 \( \mathcal{Q}b7 \). A year previously, Black tried 7...dxc6, which is much sharper, and then 8 dxe5 \( \mathcal{Q}f5 \) 9 \( \mathcal{Q}d1 \) \( \mathcal{Q}d7 \) 10 e6 \( \mathcal{Q}xe6 \) 11 \( \mathcal{Q}e5 \) \( \mathcal{Q}d6 \) in P.Svidler-A.Morozevich, Wijk aan Zee 2005. Play continued 12 \( \mathcal{W}h5+ \) g6 13 \( \mathcal{Q}xg6 \) \( \mathcal{Q}g7 \) (the knight goes to the other fianchetto square) 14 \( \mathcal{W}h6 \) \( \mathcal{Q}f3 \) 15 \( \mathcal{W}h3 \) (declining the repetition) 15...\( \mathcal{Q}g6 \) 16 \( \mathcal{W}xh7 \) \( \mathcal{Q}g7 \) 17 \( \mathcal{W}h5 \) \( \mathcal{W}f6 \) 18 \( \mathcal{Q}e5+ \) \( \mathcal{Q}e7 \) 19 \( \mathcal{Q}g4 \).

This dates back over a century, and in Taubenhaus-Polloch, New York 1893, Black continued with 19...\( \mathcal{W}h4?! \) 20 \( \mathcal{W}xh4 \) \( \mathcal{Q}xh4 \) 21 h3 e5 22 f3, and White later consolidated with his extra pawn. Morozevich preferred keeping his pieces better centralized with 19...\( \mathcal{W}g6 \) 20 \( \mathcal{W}xg6 \) \( \mathcal{Q}xg6 \) 21 h3 e5 22 \( \mathcal{Q}d2 \) \( \mathcal{Q}d4 \) 23
c3 ²c2 24 ²b1 ²xg4 25 hxg4 ²xg4. Pawns are level, and Black has the more active pieces, except that the knight on c2 looks overextended. However, the knight is irritatingly difficult to attack, with, for example, b4 and ²b2 giving an escape square on a3, and a knight move followed by ²d2 giving an escape square on e1. Play eventually ended up in a typically tense late queenless middlegame, and a later draw.

There is also the question why Black has not really bothered with 5...xd4. After 6 ²e1 d5 7 ²xd4 ²d6 8 ²xc6 ²xh2+

9 ²h1 (to avoid perpetual) 9...²h4 10 ²xe4+ ²xe4 11 ²d8+ ²xd8 12 ²xd8+ ²xd8 13 ²xh2 we have reached a position which can also come about with ...a6 and ²a4 included. Here with White's bishop still on b5, Black has the more constructive pawn attack with ...c6.

This line has only occasionally been played, with a win for Black after unclear play in M.Djurdjevic-M. Trajkovic, Novi Sad 1989. Play continued with 13...h6 14 ²c3 c6 15 ²c4 f5 16 ²e3 ²e7 17 ²d1 b6 18 ²d4 ²e6 19 ²xe6 ²xe6 20 ²xg7 ²hd8. Although White had regained one of Black's pawns, Black by now had a dangerous d-file.

Another try for White is 7 ²xd4!? given by Fine, quoted in ECO, which might be a deterrent, with 7...²d7 8 ²xc6 ²xc6 9 c4 giving an edge for White. Computer analysis suggests the possibility of 7...²e6 8 ²a4 ²d6, with a possible perpetual after 9 ²f4 ²c5 10 ²e3 ²d6 11 ²f4. White can of course try for more with 11 ²e5 ²e7!? 12 ²xc6 bxc6 13 ²xc6+ ²d7 14 ²xd7+ ²xd7 15 ²xd7+ ²xd7, and White has slightly the better pawn structure as the endgame approaches, which might or might not prove significant.

We now return to 5...²d6:

6 ²xc6

Obvious? Maybe. The only sensible move? No.

6 dxe5 ²xb5 7 a4 traps the knight, and immediately recovers the minor piece. There is some sharp gambit play after 7...²d6 8 ²g5! f6 (8...²e7 9 ²xe7 ²xe7 10 fxd6 cxd6 11 ²c3 leaves Black's extra pawn a liability rather than an asset) 9 ²e1!. A simpler and safer option is 7...d6 8 axb5 ²xe5 9 ²e1 ²e7 10 ²xe5 dxe5 11 ²xd8+ ²xd8 12 ²xe5 ²d6 with equality. Yet again, we
reach the familiar pattern in open games of many tactics early on, subsiding to a queenless late middlegame.

6...dxc6

6...bxc6 7 dxe5 Qb7 is playable, but not enticing for Black. *Fritz* gives this as equal, after, for example, 8 Qg5 Qe7 9 Qxe7 Qxe7 10 Qc3 0-0 11 Qe1, but White, with his better development and centralized pieces, should have chances to play for more than that.

7 dxe5

7 Qxe5 has no realistic hope of an advantage. White is attacking nothing, and so Black can quietly complete his development, and eventually try to take advantage of the bishop-pair.

7...Qf5

7...Qe4 is playable, but the knight loses some flexibility. If Black wanted to manoeuvre his knight via c5 and e6, putting a little pressure on the d4-square, he would take three moves to cover the d4-square, whereas ...Qf5 does it in one.

8 Qxd8+

The only try for a win. If 8 We2 Qd4, Black is comfortably equal.

8...Qxd8

![Chessboard diagram]

After the preliminaries, the battle starts here. White has the better pawn structure, while Black’s set-up is solid, and he keeps the bishop-pair. There are no sharp attacks against the king, but the position is difficult for both sides.

The Berlin Defence is quite a significant challenge for the Ruy Lopez. If White cannot find an advantage in this position, then he might well decide that it is time to give up the Ruy. Kasparov, many years ago, found no effective way of breaking up the Berlin Defence against Kramnik. Since this 2000 match, players with White have tried hard to find something here. See too the comments to Game 22, Stellwagen-Elianov.

9 Qc3

As one can imagine, there is a wide choice of moves. Black is not making any direct threats, and there are various developing ideas, including the move played, and checks such as 9 Qg5+ and 9 Qd1+. Also 9 b3 and Qb2, providing back-up to White’s kingside pawn advantage.

9 Qc3 is the most popular, on the basis of the principle of ‘knights before bishops’. The player will generally have a good idea of where the knight should go, but it is less clear where the bishop wants to go, and it is useful to delay for a move, while developing the knight, to see what the opponent will try. Flexibility is an important part of modern chess.

9...Qe7!?  

For 9...Qd7, see Game 22.

The knight move is a relatively recent idea, pioneered by Zoltan Almasi in the late 1990s. Of course, all this is now a decade ago, but in the decades before Black did not think of trying it.
The reason for this neglect is presumably that Black has already taken four moves with his knight, ...\(\text{Qg}8\text{-f6xe4-d6-f5}\), to end up on a good square, and it seems extravagant for Black to make two extra knight moves when neither his bishops nor his rooks have moved. Why should Black spend another couple of tempi with ...\(\text{Qe}7\text{-g6}\)? The obvious answer is that Black is attacking something, the pawn on \(e5\), and this provides the possibility of a counterattack.

10 \(h3\)

The main line. White wants, at some stage, to stop ...\(\text{Qg}4\).

11...\(\text{Qe}8\)

Perhaps it is time to mention, much more specifically, the central strategic battle of the Berlin Defence. White has given up bishop for knight, in return for doubling Black's c-pawns. White now has much the better pawn structure. He has a good 4-3 pawn advantage on the kingside, and if there is quiet play on both sides, White will have excellent chances of setting up a kingside pawnroller. On the queenside, Black too has the extra 4-3 pawn majority, but the pawns block each other, and do not create the chance of setting up a passed pawn. The problem for Black is not so much that his doubled pawns are weak, as it is easy to defend them. The real problem is rather that Black's queenside pawns are less effective, in terms of active play, than White's kingside passed pawns.

Black has compensation, though, with his bishop being traditionally slightly stronger than the knight. Usually bishops work in pairs for maximum

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effect. In the Berlin Defence, it is important for Black's bishops to stay together for as long as possible to offset the negative impact of the doubled pawns.

11...\(\texttt{\&e7}\) is playable, but it makes concessions. 12 \(\texttt{\&ad1+ \&e8}\) 13 \(\texttt{\&xe7 \&xe7}\) 14 \(\texttt{\&d4?!}\) has been tried a few times. Black has avoided grabbing the hot pawn with 14...\(\texttt{\&xe5?!}\) 15 \(\texttt{\&fe1 \&f6}\), but there is no obvious refutation. Possibly White needs to play safely, but then any edge for White is minimal, the knight on \textit{g6} making it difficult for him to establish his pawn roller with \textit{f4}.

12 \(\texttt{\&ad1}\)

White wants to keep control of the d-file.

12...\(\texttt{\&d7}\)

Or 12...\(\texttt{\&e6}\) 13 \(\texttt{\&d4 \&c4}\) 14 \(\texttt{\&fe1 \&b4}\) 15 \(\texttt{\&f5 \&xc3}\) 16 \(\texttt{\&xc3 \&g8}\) 17 a3 \textit{h6} 18 \(\texttt{\&c1 \&e6}\), equal and later drawn in P.Leko-V.Kramnik, Dortmund 2004. Can White find a slight edge in this?

Topalov tries to leave the bishop less exposed.

13 \(\texttt{\&d4}\)

On 13 \(\texttt{\&d2}\), Kramnik has tried 13...\(\texttt{\&e6?!}\), on the basis presumably that White's rook is slightly more exposed on \textit{d2} rather than \textit{d1}, such as after ...\(\texttt{\&xe5-c4}\). In P.Svidler-V.Kramnik, Dortmund 2004, White was a pawn down, but was able to draw after 14 \(\texttt{\&fd1 \&e7}\) 15 \(\texttt{\&e2 \&xe5}\) 16 \(\texttt{\&xe5 \&xg5}\) 17 f4 \(\texttt{\&e7}\) 18 \(\texttt{\&d4}\). Maybe better is 14 \(\texttt{\&d4 h6}\) 15 \(\texttt{\&xe6 fxe6}\) 16 \(\texttt{\&e3 \&xe5}\) 17 \(\texttt{\&e1 \&c4}\) 18 \(\texttt{\&d4 \&xe3}\) 19 \(\texttt{\&xe3 \&c5}\) 20 \(\texttt{\&xe6+ \&f7}\) 21 \(\texttt{\&de4 \&he8}\) with a likely draw.

Another high-level try has been 13 a3 \textit{h6} 14 \(\texttt{\&c1 \&d8}\) 15 \(\texttt{\&fe1 \&e7}\) 16 \(\texttt{\&e4 \&e6}\) 17 \(\texttt{\&xd8+ \&xd8}\) 18 \(\texttt{\&d4 \&d7}\) 19 f4 \(\texttt{\&h4}\) 20 \(\texttt{\&f2 h5}\), ending up as drawn in V.Topalov-F.Vallejo Pons, Benidorm 2003.

One gains the feeling from the Berlin Defence that play is generally theoretically about equal, in a late queenless middlegame, but that either player could easily go seriously wrong positionally. Among top players, competitors are expected to handle all types of position, but many amateur players might find such openings uncomfortable to handle, especially against even slightly stronger opposition.

13...\(\texttt{\&e5?!}\)

13...\(\texttt{\&xe5}\) definitely favours White, with the more active pieces and the better pawn structure.
14 e3

14 c1!? is to be considered, keeping the bishop out of the way of the e-file. If 14...c5 15 de1 with maybe a slight edge. Here too 14...b4 15 d3 d8 16 fd1 e7 17 f4 led to a slight edge in V.Kotronias-P.Eljanov, German League 2008.

14...h5

A new move, with the idea of pushing the pawn further to h4, and trying to cramp White’s kingside pawn majority.

An earlier try was 14 b4 15 f4 xc3 16 bxc3 c5 17 e2 b6 18 g3 h5 19 f5 xe5 20 f4 f6 21 fe1 a4, agreed drawn in A.Shirov-Z.Almasi, Monaco (rapid) 2002. Here Svidler notes that if 15 e4 c5 16 e2 b5 17 dg3 xe5 18 c3 a5 19 xc5 f6 play is equal. He notes too that the exchange sacrifices after 16 f3 b5 17 c3 xf1 18 xf1 a5 and 16 db3 b5 17 c3 xf1 18 xf1 c4 are unconvincing.

15 f4

The most aggressive, although 15 g5 and 15 e1 also seem to give White chances of a slight plus.

15...h4

If 15...c5, White has several alter-

atives, including perhaps 16 d2 or 16 fe1. Svidler gives instead 16 de4 xd4 17 xd4 f5 18 g3 e7, which he feels is unclear, but maybe 19 d2 still keeps an edge.

16 f5!?

Postny gives this a double-exclamation mark, describing Svidler's pawn sacrifice as 'very deep and sound'. Svidler, he says, seizes the initiative. Svidler himself is more cautious. Neither player will have been able to calculate whether the pawn sacrifice is fully sound, although undoubtedly Svidler would have believed in his play. As further analysis shows, there are possible ways in which Black could have improved, and there are a few questions as to whether White was better throughout.

This is in effect gambit play, but also highly sophisticated gambit play. White is not charging through with an attack on the king, hoping that somewhere along the way, Black may make a tactical mistake, giving White a brilliancy and a point. It is more a case of setting the opponent a challenge. Black has an extra pawn, but has a few structural defects, and his pieces are under pres-
sure. Can Black hold the balance, or even take over the initiative? The only answer, for player and reader, is to wait and see.

Postny also gave as equal 16 \( \text{d}3 \text{c}5 \) 17 \( \text{f}d1 \text{xd}4 \) 18 \( \text{x}d4 \text{f}5 \). I doubt this interpretation. After 19 \( \text{d}d2 \) White has the more active pieces, keeps the open d-file, and still has the better pawn structure. White’s knight could also make its presence felt after \( \text{e}2 \) and \( \text{d}4 \).

There are many other ways for White to aim for a slight edge: for example, 16 \( \text{e}4 \text{c}5 \) 17 \( \text{e}2 \text{b}6 \) 18 \( \text{c}3 \text{f}5 \) 19 \( \text{f}2 \text{e}7 \) 20 \( \text{fd}2 \text{d}8 \) 21 \( \text{x}d8+ \text{xd}8 \) 22 \( \text{f}2 \). Probably any edge here is very slight.

White keeps a slight edge in most lines, and is in no danger of being worse, but does he feel he has realistic chances of playing for a win? Or has he got better chances by sacrificing?

In the end, this is as much a question of chess psychology as of analysis.

16...\( \text{xe}5 \)

Naturally he must take the pawn.

17 \( \text{f}6 \)

And White must go through with the sacrifice. 17 \( \text{f}4 \text{f}6 \) 18 \( \text{fe}1 \text{f}7 \) 19 \( \text{xe}5 \text{dx}e5 \) 19 \( \text{xe}5 \text{d}6 \) leaves Black with comfortable play.

\[\text{h}5\]

17...

Topalov, with his new 2800+ rating, is a formidably imaginative player, and he has the ability of playing for an attack out of seemingly nothing. One senses that Svidler was deliberately trying to provoke his opponent, and perhaps it worked, as he won the game.

Svidler’s notes in \textit{Informator} suggest a draw after 17...\( \text{gxf}6 \) 18 \( \text{e}4 \text{e}7 \) 19 \( \text{xf}6+ \text{xf}6 \) 20 \( \text{x}f6 \text{h}5 \) 21 \( \text{f}3 \text{xf}3+ \) 22 \( \text{xf}3 \text{e}6 \) 23 \( \text{f}4 \text{d}8 \) 24 \( \text{xd}8+ \text{xf}8 \) 25 a3. White will soon recapture the pawn, winning the one on h4, and Black should hold the draw.

A draw with a 2765-rated opponent will be more than satisfactory for most players, but Topalov, with a valuable but fragile 2801 rating, would not want to give away half an Elo point so readily. He would try to put his opponent under some pressure.

As for whether Topalov’s combative alternative is good, bad or equal, we need to analyse what happens later.

18 \( \text{e}4 \)

Now Black cannot take the pawn, which remains an irritation. Moreover,
White’s knights remain excellently centralized.

A reminder for the reader. Black’s position is not as good as it looks, as he cannot castle, and the king is therefore under pressure in the centre.

18...g6

Again one senses that Topalov is aiming for a win.

Svidler gives 18...c5!? 19 fxg7 hxg7 20 Qxc5 Qxc4 21 Qxd7 Qxe3 22 Rfe1 Qxd7 23 Bxe3 Rd5 24 Ned3 f6 25 c3, and White has slightly the better pawn structure, thanks to the exchange of Black’s g-pawn. Topalov prefers to keep the pawns united.

19 f4

White wants to keep the f-pawn as firmly protected as possible. 19 Rfe1 loosens, and after 19...d6! 20 f4 f8 21 Qxd6 cxd6 White has no advantage.

19...c5?! 19...d6 20 g4! hxg3 21 Qxg3 Bxh3 22 Be1 Qf8 23 Be5 Be5 24 Bxe5 with, according to Svidler, a clear advantage for White. Is this so clear? Black would want to defend the pawn on c7 with 24...Cc8, and either equality or a slight edge for White. This would have been an interesting struggle, one problem for White being that there is no cover with the pawns to set up any outposts for the knights on the kingside. This seems better than the move actually played.

20 Qf3?

This is a very difficult position to understand, even with the help of the computer, and plenty of leisure. In the constraints of tournament chess, all the players can do is to find moves, and hope for the best. Often what is remarkable in top-level chess is not so much that mistakes can be made, but rather that so often players find good or reasonable moves.

Maybe there is a positional argument to be made in that Black’s knight is vulnerable, and that White should not consider exchanging the knights with such ease. Svidler presumably not have wanted to slow the tempo of play with a knight retreat, and so forces the exchange of knights. But maybe he should have kept the knights.

White’s basic idea after 20 Be2! would be to play g4, kicking the rook away, and then kicking again with Qg3, and winning the knight on e5.
a) Black can try to get the knight out of the way with 20...\texttt{Qc}4, but White has a clear positional edge after 21 \texttt{Rfe1 Qd8} 22 \texttt{Qg5 Qc8} 23 b3.

b) Svidler gives as the main line 20...\texttt{Rf}5! 21 \texttt{Qd}e1! (improving on 21 g4 h\texttt{xg}3 22 \texttt{Q}x\texttt{g}3 \texttt{Rx}f4\texttt{!} 23 \texttt{Qxf4 Qh}6, regaining the exchange after 24 \texttt{Qf}1 \texttt{Qh}3) 21...\texttt{Qd}8 (avoiding the pins, semi-pins, and discovered attacks; in other lines, White plays g4 again) 22 g4! h\texttt{xg}4 23 \texttt{Q}x\texttt{g}3 \texttt{Rx}f4 24 \texttt{Qxf4 Qh}6 25 \texttt{Qf}2, and White is probably winning with the extra exchange. This g4 idea in such a setting is highly unusual, and can easily be missed.

20...\texttt{Qxf}3\texttt{!}

Half-forced, but a piece exchange would be something of a relief for Black anyway.

21 \texttt{Qxf}3

White’s advantage has now been considerably been trimmed down. He is a pawn down, but he still keeps his initiative.

21...\texttt{Qe}6

Topalov decides he must activate his pieces.

21...c4 22 \texttt{Qxc}7 leaves White clearly better.

21...\texttt{Rf}5? 22 \texttt{Qe}3! would please the spectators after 22...\texttt{Qxf}4 23 \texttt{Qd}6+ \texttt{Qd}8 24 \texttt{Qe}8+ \texttt{Qxe}8 25 \texttt{Qxf}7+ \texttt{Qc}8 26 \texttt{Qd}8 mate. Instead 22...\texttt{Qe}6 23 \texttt{Qxc}7 c4 24 \texttt{Qe}2! \texttt{Qc}8 25 \texttt{Qd}2 \texttt{Qd}5 26 \texttt{Qxd}5 \texttt{Qxd}5 27 \texttt{Qxd}5 \texttt{Qxc}7 28 \texttt{Qf}2 (Postny) leaves White better in the endgame. Black’s king is still caught in the middle, White’s pieces are better, and Black’s h-pawn is weak.

22 \texttt{Qfd}3?!

He wants to play for a win, and so cut out ...\texttt{Qd}8. This aim is commendable, and indeed Svidler scores the full point, but he is in danger of overpressing.

22 \texttt{Qg}5 \texttt{Qd}8 23 \texttt{Qe}1 c4 24 \texttt{Qxe}6 fxe6 25 \texttt{Qxe}6+ \texttt{Qf}7 26 \texttt{Qe}4 \texttt{Qc}5+ 27 \texttt{Qf}1 \texttt{Qd}4 is about level, with perhaps some minimal pressure in favour of Black.

22...c4

Gaining some space for the dark-squared bishop.

23 \texttt{Qd}3

The only sensible move.

23...c6

Black must put something on the d-file, quickly.

24 \texttt{Qg}5

And White squeezes out Black’s rook.
24...c5+

With gain of tempo, but it is going to be difficult for Black to coordinate his pieces further.

25 h2

Over the board it would be impossible to calculate whether this or 25 h1 would be better, given that 25...d5 or 25...c3 would have different ramifications according to whether the king is on h2 or h1. The best that one can say is that occasionally Black might have a useful checking resource on the b8-h2 diagonal, but that also in some lines the king is more active on h2 than on h1.

Trying to sort this one out is more like chess sudoku rather than normal chess. My instinct, for what it is worth, would probably be to prefer to avoid any checks on the dark squares with 25 h1, but Svidler sees a different approach, setting up ideas of g4, and if ...hxg3+ then hxg3.

Neither Postny nor Svidler makes any comment or analysis on this move. This could mean either that Svidler’s move is so obvious and hardly worth considering, or, more likely, that the position is so obscure that it is hardly worth dealing with.

25...d5?

But this is far less difficult to evaluate. There is here a choice between setting up some sharp tactical play, or, as Topalov ends up choosing, trying to keep the balance.

Postny gives this as the critical slip, suggesting 25...c3! 26 bxc3 axa2 when both sides have obvious problems and opportunities. He gives as the main line 27 d7 b6 28 b7 d5 29 e1+ f8 30 c4 (to divert the bishop; not immediately 30 e7? xe7 31 fxe7+ e8, and the bishop stops the knight from reaching e4) 30...xc4 31 e7 a5 32 xf7+ xf7 33 xf7+ e8 34 g7 a4 35 f7+ e7 36 f8+ exf8 37 e6+ e8 38 d7+ f8 39 e6+ e8, and a perpetual.

Just a steady draw? It turns out that White has indeed taken too many risks. Instead of 34...a4?, which is premature, Black improves with 34...f8! 35 b7 xg5 36 f7+ (36 g5 f8 37 f7+ transposes) 36...d8 37 g5 c8 38 xb6 d7 39 xh4 a4, and it is Black who has the more effective passed pawn. After 40 b1 a3 41 f1 g7 White is in trouble.

Can White even equalize? It is diffi-
cult. Postny gives an alternative for White, 29 c4!? \( \text{\textit{Qxc4 30 Qe4}} \ M5 \ 31 \text{He1} \ \text{Qf8} \ 32 \text{Qxc5 bxc5 33 He7} \ Hf5 \ 34 \text{Hxa7 Hxa7} \ 35 \text{Hh6+} \) (setting up a mate threat) 35...\( Qg8 \) 36 Me8+ Qh7 37 Qg7 Qxf6 (37...g5? 36 Hh8+ Qg6 37 Hh6 mate) 38 Hxf6 g5, and with care White should hold the draw after 39 He5 Hd5 40 Hxg5 Ma2 41 c3.

26 Me2+

To keep the pressure on the king.

\[ \text{Diagram:} \]

26...Qf8

Svidler gave this a question mark, while Postny passes it without comment.

Certainly there is a problem now that Black's kingside pieces are tied up, but Topalov is still hoping that Black has good compensatory activity on the queenside, with a powerful bishop-pair and an extra pawn on that side. The position is still finely balanced, but it is unclear as yet which way the balance will fall.

After 26...Qd7?! White has the obvious and natural 27 Qxf7, and then Svidler gives 27...Qf8 28 Qe5+ Qc8 29 Qg4 Hf5, which he gives as unclear. The likelihood is that at some stage Black will give up the exchange in return for the passed pawn, and keep the bishop pair as active and excellent defenders. So, for example, 30 Hh6 Hf7 31 He3 Qd6+ 32 Hh1 b5 33 Qh6 Hxf6 34 Qxf7 Hxf7 35 Hf2 Hd7, and Black's position is extremely difficult to break down. Here 27 Hde1 Hf8 28 He7+ Hxe7 29 Hxe7+ Qc8 30 Hc7+ Qd8 31 Hxb7 H8 32 Hb8+ Qd7 33 Hb7+ is a draw, since Svidler notes that 32 Hxf7+ Hxf7 33 Hxf7 Hf5 34 Hh6 He1 presses too hard. Earlier, 28 b4?! Hxb4 29 Hb1 a5 30 c3 Qd6 31 Hxb7+ Qc8 32 Hxd6 Hxb7 33 Hxf8 Hxg5 is over- elaborate, and White would need to press hard for a draw.

27 Hde1

\[ \text{Diagram:} \]

Certainly White is putting his opponent under pressure, but it is difficult to see how he can win material.

27...b5

If 27...c3, then simply 28 b3, and Black's advanced pawn is weak rather than strong.

28 c3

White wants to try to stabilize his queenside pawn structure.

28...a5

While Black wants to push his pawns further.
Modern Chess: Move by Move

29 a3
More consolidation.

29...Cc8

If 29...b4?! 30 a4!, and Black can make no real progress on the queenside, but has broken up his own pawns.

30 g4

A slight error, according to Svidler.

30 He5! is, remarkably, close to zugzwang, and if Black were to play quietly, with for example 30...a4 or 30...Ha8, White has gained a small tempo with 31 g4.

Of the bishop moves, 30...Cd6?? 31 Cd6+ is a blunder. We shall see this idea again.

However, 30...Cb6 is possible, and if 31 H5e2 Ac5, the position is repeated. There is tactical entertainment after 31 He8+ Hxe8 32 Cd6+ He7 (32...Gg8?? 33 He8+) 33 Hxe7 Gg5 34 He5+ Gg8 35 Hxg5 Ac3! 36 Kg4 Ac1 37 Hxh4 Ac2 38 Af8 G5! (38...Axg3?? 39 Gg7 and mate) 39 Hh5 Ac4 40 Ac7 Ac1, and remarkably it is White's rook, rather than Black's, which gets stuck in the blind corner on h5. White will have to return the exchange with 41 h4 Gg6 42 Hxg5 Hxg5 43 hxg5 b4 44 axb4 a4 45 b5 cxb5, leading to a draw.

30...hxg3+

The natural response, but White still has to demonstrate a win after 30...Hh8. He should be able to squeeze through after, for example, 31 He5 a4 32 H1e2 Ha8 33 Aa4 Ah4 34 H2e4 Ab6 35 Ac7 Ac8 36 Ad7 Ad8 37 Hxd8+ Hxd8 38 Ad6+ Ag8 39 G5 when White will win the h-pawn, then work out what to do next.

31 Hxg3

White has gained a little more space for the king after the pawn exchange.

31...He6

Postny poses the question of how White could be able to improve his position after 31...Ha8!? just waiting. There is no obvious answer. 32 h4, certainly, then 32...Ac8, with a deadlock of play. Black would have to be careful not to exchange the bishops, but White cannot force an exchange.

32 h4!
Squeezing the rook out of active play, and allowing his bishop to move freely.

32 Hxe6+ fxe6 33 Hxe6 Af7 seems safe for Black: for example, 34 Ad6 Ag5+! 35 Af3 Af5+ 36 Ag4 Hxd6 37 Hxd6 Ac7, suggested by Postny, and if
anything, Black seems better.

32...\textit{g8}

A divergence of opinion here, with Postny suggesting that this move was too eager, and changed the course of events, while Svidler implied it was just a normal move, and gave an exclamation mark for Black on the next move. On the whole, the current writer tends to agree with Postny’s interpretation, but this is on the basis of examination of what was happening after move 40, and whether, after close analysis, Black could have held the position. Black can try to make a ‘positional’ assessment on move 32, and this of course is what the player is forced to do over the board. Chess is complicated.

Or maybe it can be quite simple. After 32...\textit{d5}?, the commentators have suggested no clear edge for White. One continuation might be 33 \textit{e5} \textit{a8} (not 33...\textit{d6}?? 34 \textit{e8+}) 34 \textit{e1e2} \textit{c8} 35 \textit{e1}, and a draw.

Chess sporting psychology seems important here. Black is a pawn up, and he has a good bishop-pair. Topalov is also a 2800+ player, and he, more than anyone, has obligations to try to play for a win if given a chance. Why should he be trying for a draw?

The normal situation when reaching for an unbalanced position with chances for both sides is to play for a win for as long as possible, while trying to take care of an escape route, a draw option, if something is going wrong. Sometimes unfortunately the escape route is not there. This seems to be what happened to Topalov.

33 \textit{e5}

Emphasizing the way in which Black’s rook is being squeezed out.

33 \textit{xe6} \textit{fxe6} 34 \textit{xe6} is possible, and indeed the computer likes it, but after 34...\textit{f7}??, Black’s rooks are suddenly more active than White’s.

Svidler also considered the exchange sacrifice with 33 \textit{xe6} \textit{fxe6} 34 \textit{xe6}, but there is no breakthrough after the counter-sacrifice with 34...\textit{xg5}+! 35 \textit{hxg5} \textit{f7} 36 \textit{e1} \textit{e8} 37 \textit{h1} \textit{g8}!. The point is that after 38 \textit{h6}?! \textit{f8} 39 \textit{xg6}+? \textit{f7} the rook is trapped. Naturally, White could still carry on to try for a win in other ways, but the best chance has disappeared.

33...\textit{f8}

Svidler has been trying to lure the bishop to d6, but Topalov is not inter-
ested. After 33...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{d}6} 34 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{x}e6!} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{x}f4+} 35 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{x}f4} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{fxe}6} 36 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{g}4} White’s knight is clearly stronger than Black’s rook, and with no possibility of Black setting up defences by returning the exchange, it is difficult to equalize. Black’s best move is 36...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{f}8}, and now White has to play it accurately:

a) 37 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{x}e6} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{xc}7} 38 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{xd}6} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{e}8} 39 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{c}6} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{ch7}1} 40 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{g}7+} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{f}7} 41 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{x}h}5 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{x}h}5 42 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{xc}6} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{a}4}, for example, is only a draw, as Svidler notes.

b) 37 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{d}1} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{e}8} 38 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{d}6} is much better when none of Black’s pieces coordinate. Svidler gives 38...\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{e}5} (there is nothing much else to do) 39 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{e}6+} (39 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{f}7+} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{e}8} 40 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{x}g}6 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{x}g}5+! draws) 39...\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{d}7} 40 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{e}7+} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{d}6} 41 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{g}7}:

b1) Here he continues with 41...\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{ch}8} 42 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{f}7+} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{e}6} 43 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{x}h}8 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{x}h}8 44 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{g}5} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{h}5+} 45 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{x}g}6 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{x}h}4 46 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{e}7+} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{d}6} 47 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{e}8}, and a narrow but convincing line by White. It eventually depends on a zugzwang after 47...\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{g}4+} 48 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{h}6} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{f}4} 49 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{g}7} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{g}4+} 50 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{f}8} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{e}4} 51 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{f}7} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{d}7} 52 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{e}5} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{d}8} 53 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{e}7} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{a}4} 54 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{e}6} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{d}7} 55 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{e}8}. Black now has to give way. If the rook moves on the g-file, White takes the e-pawn, and then, depending how Black defends with the rook, White plays the rook to the g-file or checks on the d-file.

b2) Even so, it is not clear that White is winning after 41...\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{d}5!}, trying to activate his pieces and pawns. After 42 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{d}7+} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{c}5} 43 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{e}6+} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{b}6} 44 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{f}7} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{f}5} 45 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{e}7} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{h}8} 46 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{e}8} (or 46 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{h}5} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{f}6}! 47 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{g}5} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{x}f}7 48 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{x}f}7 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{x}f}5+ 49 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{x}g}6 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{h}2}, with level play) 46...\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{x}h}4+ 47 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{h}4} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{x}f}7, White is not winning. Neither though is he not pressing.

So possibly Black is still holding after 33...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{d}6}, but the position is extremely difficult.

\textcolor{red}{\texttt{x}e6}

Svidler notes that the exchange sacrifice is only a draw after 34 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{x}e6} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{fxe}6} 35 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{d}1} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{h}6} 36 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{f}7+} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{g}7} 37 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{e}5+} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{f}8} 38 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{d}6+} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{g}7} 39 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{f}1} (39 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{e}5+} is of course a perpetual) 39...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{x}g}5 40 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{f}8}\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{g}+} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{x}f}8 41 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{x}f}8+ \textcolor{red}{\texttt{g}8} 42 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{hx}g}5 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{hx}g}5+. The only way to escape perpetual on the g- and h-files is 43 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{g}4??}, but this is mined. After 43...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{f}5!} Black wins a piece, and keeps several extra pawns.

\textcolor{red}{\texttt{fxe}6}

The only way. 34...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{x}e}5 35 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{x}e}5 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{fxe}5} 36 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{d}d}1 breaks through.

35 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{d}1}!

Aiming for the d-file. 35 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{x}e}6 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{d}5} is only equal, or at best a very small edge for White.

\textcolor{red}{\texttt{Hh7}}

Given an exclamation mark by Svidler, without comment, and implied as best by Postny. This assessment seems slightly puzzling. After 35...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{f}7} 36 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{g}5} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{c}7} 37 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{a}4} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{b}7} the position is deadlocked. White can do nothing actively and can patrol with the rook between d5, d7 and d8, while Black can do nothing much. 38 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{d}2} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{Hh}7} 39 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{g}4} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{Hh}8} 40 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{d}8} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{Hh}5} 41 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{d}2}, and a draw is looming.
One suspects that the exclamation mark is given to the general idea, defending on the second rank, which is important for defence and counterplay, rather than the specific move. The way that Topalov plays it, his rook move is more 'active', but the loss of the e6-pawn is a defect.

36 $\text{Exe6}$

The pawn count is now level. Sometimes it has been easy to forget that White was a pawn down, given his strong passed pawn and active pieces.

36...$\text{Eb7}$

This was Topalov's idea, aiming to set up counterplay with both rooks. It remains to be seen whether this was better, worse, or about the same, as the passive defence on move 35. Postny commented on Topalov's strong preference for active defence rather than trying to hold the position. That was at an earlier stage of the game. Topalov is at least consistent here!

37 $\text{Ee4}$

A choice of moves with the rook. He wanted to prevent Black from playing ...$\text{b4}$.

37...$\text{Ef7}$

The king finally comes back into play.

38 $\text{Eg5}$

And White, of course, defends the pawn.

38...$\text{Exe8}$

Black does not want to allow White to control two open files for the rooks.

39 $\text{Ef3}$ or 39 $\text{Ef4}$ could also be considered.

39...$\text{Exe8}$ 40 $\text{Eg4}$

But he was thinking of the king to go this way. The main idea with $\text{h5}$ is not so much to exchange the pawns, but rather to enter with the king on f5.

40...$\text{Eh7?!}$

Move 40, and as so often in chess, this is the critical mistake after a tense and exhausting game. The rook finds itself out of position.

There is an even more painful blunder with 40...$\text{Ed7??}$ 41 $\text{Ef7+}$ $\text{Exf7}$ 42 $\text{Ed8}$ mate.

Svidler suggests, however, that 40...$\text{Ef7!}$ is the correct way of handling the position, and holds the draw. The king is the best piece to blockading an advanced passed pawn, and the rook can help guard the checks on the second rank. The rook is far less effective in guarding the pawn itself. The king covers all eight adjoining squares, while the rook covers only four, and is open to attack from the next-door diagonals.

After 41 $\text{Ed8}$ $\text{b4}$ 42 $\text{axb4}$ $\text{axb4}$ 43 $\text{Ed4}$ $\text{bxc3}$ 44 $\text{bxh3}$ $\text{Eh5}$, so far as given by Svidler, and if 45 $\text{Exc4?!}$ $\text{Eh5}$, Black escapes with a draw. White can try harder, though, through controlling the seventh rank, rather than trying to snatch a doubled isolated pawn, and 45 $\text{Ed7+}$ causes trouble:

a) After 45...$\text{gg8}$ 46 $\text{h5}$ $\text{gxh5+}$ 47
\( \text{b) Therefore he has to try } 45...\text{e}6, \text{ but is in serious trouble after } 46 \text{c}7: \text{ for example, } 46...\text{b}6 47 \text{f}3 \text{b}3 48 \text{xc}6+ \text{d}5 49 \text{c}8 \text{xc}3+ 50 \text{e}2 \text{a}3 51 \text{f}7, \text{ or } 46...\text{c}5 47 \text{f}7 \text{d}6 48 \text{h}6 \text{f}5 49 \text{xc}6 \text{xf}7 50 \text{xc}4, \text{ and the onus is very much on Black to prove he can hold the position. Once the best blocking piece, the king, has been pushed away, life becomes much easier for the player with the passed pawn.}

Black, it seems, made two identifiable errors over the last few moves, and presumably in time trouble. On move 35, his position went from tenable to worse, and then at move 40 it went from worse to losing.

White’s play is still far from straightforward, and Svidler has to show some imaginative and well thought-out ideas to secure the win.

41 \text{c}e1+

Aiming to forcing Black to block the rook.

41...\text{d}7

If 41...\text{f}7, Svidler gives 42 a4! \text{d}6 43 a1 \text{c}7 44 d1 \text{e}6 45 c1+ \text{d}7 (45...\text{f}7 46 c7+ \text{g}8 47 c6, and the rook breaks through) 46 c1!, and the king joins the passed pawn with \text{g}5 and \text{xg}6. Some agile manoeuvring from the rook, and Black’s pieces lose their balance.

Svidler does not give 41...\text{d}8 in his notes, implying that there are several strong alternatives.

The natural 42 f7+ \text{d}7 43 \text{f}1 appears at first to be a dead end, but there are zugzwang possibilities with \text{f}6 and king manoeuvres. This seems overcomplicated.

The pawn on f6 is a strong asset, and the pawn on f7 is potentially weak. Maybe Svidler would have tried something like 42 \text{f}4, followed by \text{g}5. If Black tries 42...\text{h}5, only then 43 f7 \text{h}8 (43...\text{f}5? 44 \text{e}8+) 44 \text{e}8+.

42 a4!

It is generally best to attack two weaknesses, rather than one. This pawn push starts to attack on the queenside. If Black ignores the pawns, White will exchange on b5, and then attack the pawns with \text{e}5.

42...\text{b}xa4

After 42...\text{d}6, to cover \text{e}5, Svidler gives 43 \text{a}1 \text{c}7 44 \text{d}1+ \text{e}6 45 c1+ \text{d}7 46 c1, transposing into the winning line he gives with 41...\text{f}7. Again, note the way in which the switching around with the rook, adding pressure on several different files, makes it difficult for Black to defend.

42...b4? 43 \text{e}4 wins a pawn for White without difficulty.

43 \text{c}5

When picking up pawns, he needs to keep the rook behind Black’s pawns. 43 \text{e}4? a3 is only equal.

43...a3

43...a3? 44 bxa3 \text{xa}3? 45 \text{xa}5 \text{d}6 46 \text{a}7+ \text{c}7 47 \text{f}4 is a White win.
44 \( \text{xf4} \)

Svidler is setting up a zugzwang.

44...\( \text{Nh8} \)

The bishop cannot move. If 44...\( \text{d6??} \) 45 \( \text{d5} \), while if 44...\( \text{h6} \) 45 \( \text{hxh6} \) \( \text{xh6} \) 46 \( \text{xc5} \), and White chews up all Black's queenside pawns. Otherwise:

a) 44...\( \text{d8} \) (other king moves allow \( \text{e8} \)) 45 \( \text{g5} \) \( \text{h6+] 46 \text{xg6} \) \( \text{xf4} \) 47 \( \text{xh7} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 48 \( \text{f7} \) \( \text{d6} \) 49 \( \text{g8} \), and the h-pawn eventually decides.

b) 44...\( \text{f7} \) 45 \( \text{g5} \), winning the g-pawn, and again promoting his h-pawn.

c) 44...\( \text{h5} \) 45 \( \text{xh5} \) \( \text{gxh5} \) 46 \( \text{hxh5} \) \( \text{e6} \) 47 \( \text{g6} \), again winning.

d) 44...\( \text{a3} \) 45 \( \text{bxa3} \) drops a pawn for nothing, so the text move is the only way to try to hold.

45 \( \text{g3} \)

Again keeping the zugzwang squeeze, since 45 \( \text{g5?} \) \( \text{h6+] \) is too early.

45...\( \text{h6} \)

If 45...\( \text{h7} \), then White takes a more direct approach with 46 \( \text{g5} \) \( \text{d6} \) 47 \( \text{f7} \) \( \text{xf7} \) and White has a simple king and pawn win after 48 \( \text{d5} \) \( \text{f5+} \) 49 \( \text{xf5} \) \( \text{gx5} \) 50 \( \text{xd6} \) \( \text{xd6} \) 51 \( \text{xf5} \).

Or 47...\( \text{xe5} \) 48 \( \text{f8} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 49 \( \text{g6} \) \( \text{hxh4} \) 50 \( \text{f5+} \), and Black will lose the rook or bishop; for example, 50...\( \text{d6} \) 51 \( \text{g5} \) \( \text{e1} \) 52 \( \text{d8+} \) \( \text{c6} \) 53 \( \text{e8} \).

46 \( \text{h7} \)

46 \( \text{xc5} \) also looks good, the tactical idea being that after 46...\( \text{c1} \) 47 \( \text{c7+} \) \( \text{e6} \) 48 \( \text{e7+} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 49 \( \text{e1} \) \( \text{d2} \) 50 \( \text{e5+} \) \( \text{e6} \) 51 \( \text{e2} \) White wins a piece. There are, however, a few loose ends after 46...\( \text{f8} \), and Svidler, after much calculation, finds a clearer win.

46...\( \text{c6} \)

46...\( \text{d8} \) 47 \( \text{c7+} \) \( \text{c8} \) 48 \( \text{xa5} \) continues the winning squeeze.

47 \( \text{xf4} \)

With a study-like win. While enjoying the finish, do not overlook the way in which White has made a reverse manoeuvre with \( \text{g5-f4-g3} \), just before the next bishop return.

This move involves a rook sacrifice by White. The more natural alternative, with 47 \( \text{f7?} \), forces the win of Black's rook, but this turns out to be only a draw. Svidler gives 47...\( \text{f8} \) 48 \( \text{e5} \) \( \text{d5} \) 49 \( \text{h5} \) \( \text{gxh5+} \) 50 \( \text{hxh5} \) \( \text{c1} \) 51 \( \text{g7} \) \( \text{xf7} \) 52 \( \text{xf7} \) \( \text{xb2} \) 53 \( \text{a7} \) a3 54 \( \text{xa5} \) \( \text{e4} \). Black can hold this, White's king being so far away from the battle on the
queenside. Then if 55 \( \text{f}8 \text{f}3 56 \text{xc}5 \text{xf}3 57 \text{xa}3 \) (otherwise \( \text{b}3 \))
57...\text{xa}3 58 \text{xa}3 \text{b}2, and Black is in ample time to hold the draw, or 55 \( \text{g}4 \text{d}3 56 \text{f}3 \text{c}2 57 \text{e}4 \text{b}3 58 \text{d}5 \text{a}2 58 \text{xa}2 \text{xa}2 59 \text{xc}4, and again it is a draw.

47...\text{xf}4

47...\text{f}8 48 \text{e}8 \text{d}7 49 \text{f}7 wins for White.

48 \text{xf}4 \text{h}5

The sharpest defence. After 48...\text{xh}4+ Svidler gives 49 \text{e}5 (49 \text{g}5 is also good) 49...\text{h}5+ 50 \text{e}6 \text{h}2 51 \text{f}7 \text{e}2+ (51...\text{xb}2 52 \text{c}7+! \text{xc}7 53 \text{f}8) 52 \text{f}6 \text{xb}2 53 \text{g}7 \text{b}8 (53...\text{f}2
54 \text{xe}6+ followed by \text{f}6 wins a queen) 54 \text{g}xg6 \text{f}8 55 \text{xe}2!:

a) If 55...a3, White wins after 56 \text{a}2 \text{d}6 57 \text{xa}3 \text{e}6 58 \text{xa}5 \text{xf}7 59 \text{a}6+.

b) If 55...\text{b}5 56 \text{a}2, and Black's king and pawns advance no further.

49 \text{e}5!!

The star move, whereas 49 \text{f}7?! \text{xf}5+ only draws.

49...\text{ex}h4+

49...\text{xe}5 50 \text{xe}5 \text{d}7 51 \text{d}5 wins for White.

50 \text{g}5

Of course, this is an old winning idea, but it is attractive to see it in new and realistic settings.

50...\text{h}5+

He might just as well.

51 \text{g}xg6!

Giving up the rook, but Black cannot prevent the pawn from queening.

51...\text{exe}5 52 \text{f}7

Black has covered both the \text{f}5 and \text{e}8 defending squares.

52...\text{e}6+

Starting the Saavedra manoeuvre. The Spanish priest has been remembered for only one thing in chess, a long time ago, but it was a classic:

He gave 1 c7 \text{d}5+ 2 \text{b}4! \text{d}4+ 3
53 \( \text{g5} \)

He needs to cover the f6-square. Not 53 \( \text{g7?? e6} \), pinning the pawn when Black wins the king and pawn ending.

53...\( \text{e5+} \)

He must give checks.

54 \( \text{g4} \)

54 \( \text{g6?! e6+} \) repeats.

Not though 54 \( \text{f6?? f2} \) 55 \( \text{f8\text{f2}} \). The f-file has been mined.

54...\( \text{e4+} \)

Again, the check.

55 \( \text{g3} \)

More accurate than 55 \( \text{f3??} \), when White still has to prove he can win after 55...\( \text{e1} \) 56 \( \text{f2 b1} \) 57 \( \text{f8\text{xb2+}} \) and...a3!

55...\( \text{e3+} \)

He gives another check.

55...a3 56 \( \text{f8\text{axb2?}} \) is the right idea, but the tactics are wrong. White wins instantly with 57 \( \text{a8+} \). Here 56...a2l sets up a crafty drawing trap, as Svidler points out, with 57 \( \text{a8+? b5} \) 58 \( \text{b7+ a4} \) 59 \( \text{xe4} \), a queen up, and now not 59...\( \text{a1??} \) 60 \( \text{xf4 mate} \), but rather 59...\( \text{b3!!} \) 60 \( \text{e1 xb2} \), and it's only a draw.

So how is White going to win? He needs to be able to manoeuvre the queen to a4, and the only way of doing this is to check with the queen on d7. That being established, Svidler's idea is 57 \( \text{c8! b6} \) 58 \( \text{d8+ b5} \) (58...\( \text{a6} \) 59 \( \text{d6+ followed by d7+} \) 59 \( \text{d7+ b6} \) 60 \( \text{a4} \), job done.

56 \( \text{f2} \)

Time for the king to enter the f-file.

56...a3!

Black's last chance.

57 \( \text{f8\text{d1}} \)

57 \( \text{bxa3? xxc3} \) 58 \( \text{f8\text{xa3}} \) allows Black to hold the draw.

57...\( \text{xb2} \)

If 57...a2, then 58 \( \text{c8+1} \) wins after 58...\( \text{b5} \) 59 \( \text{d7+ followed by a4} \), or the queen manœuvreing to a4, as in the notes to 55...a3. Here too there is a fiendish drawing trap that White could
fall into: 58 \( \texttt{Wh6+?} \) (or 58 \( \texttt{Wa8+?} \) transposing) 58...\( \texttt{b5} \) 59 \( \texttt{Wh1} \) \( \texttt{h3!} \) 60 \( \texttt{Wa1} \) a4 61 \( \texttt{Wxa2} \) \( \texttt{Wh1l} \), and the queen cannot enter active play. Therefore a draw.

58 \( \texttt{Wc8+} \)

58 \( \texttt{Wa8+} \) \( \texttt{c7} \) is not as quick.

58...\( \texttt{b5} \)

Topalov sets up a final stalemate trap.

59 \( \texttt{Wb7+} \)

59 \( \texttt{xe3} \) \( \texttt{a4} \) 60 \( \texttt{wb8} \) \( \texttt{a3} \) transposes.

59...\( \texttt{a4} \) 60 \( \texttt{xe3} \)

60 \( \texttt{xb2??} \) \( \texttt{f3+} \), with an instant draw, is not difficult to see.

60...\( \texttt{a3} \)

61 \( \texttt{Wb5!} \)

61 \( \texttt{wb6l} \), hitting the c5-pawn, also works, but not 61 \( \texttt{d2??} \) a4! 62 \( \texttt{c2} \) b1\( \texttt{w} \) with stalemate.

61...\( \texttt{a4} \)

If 61...\( \texttt{a2} \) 62 \( \texttt{wa4+} \) \( \texttt{b1} \), White has the choice between immediate stalemate with 63 \( \texttt{d2??} \), or an almost immediate checkmate with 63 \( \texttt{e2} \) \( \texttt{c1} \) 64 \( \texttt{d1} \) mate. Here 62 \( \texttt{xa5} \) also wins, but there is another stalemate try in

62...\( \texttt{b3!?} \) 63 \( \texttt{xc5} \) b1\( \texttt{w} \) 64 \( \texttt{b5+??} \) \( \texttt{xc3!} \) 65 \( \texttt{xb1} \), draw. Instead the careful 64 \( \texttt{wb4+} \) \( \texttt{c2} \) 65 \( \texttt{xb1+} \) \( \texttt{xb1} \) 66 \( \texttt{d4} \) wins.

62 \( \texttt{Wxc5+} \)

It’s almost over now. If White has avoided the stalemate traps in the last few moves, he is unlikely to fall for any traps now, such as 62 \( \texttt{d2??} \) b1\( \texttt{w} \).

62...\( \texttt{b3} \) 63 \( \texttt{wb4+} \) \( \texttt{c2} \) 64 \( \texttt{xa4+} \)

64...\( \texttt{xc3} \)

If 64...\( \texttt{c1} \), then the simplest of many simple lines is 65 \( \texttt{xc4} \) b1\( \texttt{w} \) 66 \( \texttt{f1+} \).

65 \( \texttt{wa5+} \)

He makes a final check.

If 65 \( \texttt{d1??} \) b1\( \texttt{w} \) 66 \( \texttt{xb1} \), stalemate.

65...\( \texttt{c2} \)

65...\( \texttt{b3} \) 66 \( \texttt{b5+} \) \( \texttt{c3} \) 67 \( \texttt{e2} \) avoids the stalemate.

66 \( \texttt{f5+} \)

He must keep checking, otherwise the pawn queens.

66...\( \texttt{c1} \) 67 \( \texttt{f1+} \) 1-0

After 67...\( \texttt{c2} \) 38 \( \texttt{xc4+} \), it is time for Black to resign.
1 d4 ½f6 2 ½f3

Quite often, as here, this transposes into c4 lines, after 2...e6, 2...g6, 2...d5 or 2...b6. There are a few independent possibilities, however, with, for example, 2...g6 3 ½g5, or 2...e6 3 ½g5, or various possibilities with a quick g3.

Usually White prefers 2 c4, but with 2 ½f3 he can avoid the Benko Gambit, with 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5?, and if 4 cxb5 a6, a line which has often been tried by Magnus Carlsen.

2...e6

2...c5 is nevertheless still possible, and indeed can transpose into the Blumenfeld main line after 3 d5 e6 4 c4 b5. However, White could also try 4 ½c3, with the normal slight edge after 4...exd5 5 ½xd5 ½xd5 6 ½xe5 ½e7 7 e4. Earlier, 3...b5 is still a possibility, ending up with a Declined Benko Gambit after 4 c4, although White has also tried 4 ½g5.

There has been much exploration in the various Benoni systems, lines with an early ...c5 after d4, but there is still much to be uncovered.

3 c4

Keeping to the standard main lines. As noted earlier, 3 ½g5 or 3 g3 are good independent systems, but maybe they have less punch in aiming for an edge. Two pawns in the centre, d4 and c4, covering Black’s d5 and e5 squares, still constitutes very much traditional main line.

3...c5

So we have reached a Benoni System. Black prods the white pawn on d4, and plans to put pressure on the advanced pawn, if the pawn doesn’t advance.

Any exchange with Black’s c-pawn of White’s d-pawn gives Black a slightly better pawn structure, although of course the pieces need to be considered as well. Comparisons are to be made with the Sicilian, but in the Benoni without d5 White does not even have the pawn push with e4. White therefore usually pushes the d-pawn.

For other more standard lines, the Queen’s Indian, 3...b6, was introduced in Game 4, Topalov-Anand, 3...d5 will soon transpose into one of the main lines of the Queen’s Indian, and 3...b4+ is a Bogo-Indian.
4 d5

Natural enough, but now White has weakened his dark squares. In compensation, he has gained space on the light squares. There is every reason to believe that White keeps the first move advantage, but the position is unbalanced, and with any slight slip by White, Black has the chance to take over.

Otherwise:

a) 4 Qc3 cxd4 5 Qxd4 Ab4 6 g3 Qe4!? transposes into, and from, a line from the Nimzo-Indian. Black’s play is satisfactory.

b) 4 e3 is solid enough, but not particularly aggressive. Two obvious transpositional replies would be 4...d5, the Semi-Tarrasch Queen’s Gambit, or 4...b6, a line of the Queen’s Indian. Also, 4...cxd4 5 exd4 Bb4+, and if 6 Qc3, then another Nimzo-Indian.

4...b5

Benko Gambit (1 d4 Qf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5), but there are also clear differences in the basic strategy of the pawn sacrifice. In the Benko, Black in most lines after the pawn sacrifice does not attempt any hand-to-hand pawn attack in the centre, but instead fianchettoes with ...g6 ...g7, and, after a pawn exchange with ...axb5 or bxa6, Black adds pressure with rooks on the a- and b-files. White’s a- and b-pawns, far away from the centre, are under severe attack, and if the extra pawn drops, White is under severe pressure.

5 Qg5

Quite often White does not even bother to accept the Blumenfeld Gambit, Black’s attacking chances having been reckoned as being quite strong. The classic example is S.Tarrasch-A. Alekhine, Bad Pistyan 1922: 1 d4 Qf6 2 c4 e6 3 Qf3 c5 4 d5 b5 5 dxex6 fxe6 6 cxb5 d5 7 e3 Qd6 8 Qc3 0-0 9 Le2 Ab7 10 b3 Qbd7 11 Qb2 We7 12 0-0 Mad8 13 Wc2 e5 14 Qf1 f3 15 Qd2 Qd5 16 Qd1 Qg4 17 Afxg4 Qxg4 18 Qf1 Wg5, and Black ground through to victory, with the help of a passed d-pawn reaching the seventh, and an attack against the king.

Side-tracking from the Modern Benoni, or should one say that the Modern Benoni is side-tracking from this? Black is aggressively attacking both pawns in the centre, and intends to sacrifice a pawn in return for having extra pawns in the centre.

There are a few similarities with the
White's 7 e3 move was passive. 7 g3, making use of the fianchetto, makes it more difficult for Black, after ...d5, to press forward with either of the central pawns. A recent example is 7...a6 8 bxa6 8 d6 9 g2 0-0 10 0-0 c6 11 b3 a6 12 b2 e8 13 b2 d8 14 e1 g4!? (aiming for a second sacrifice) 15 h3 xf2 16 xf2 d4 17 g4 (naturally, there are complicated alternatives) 17...h5 18 g5 f7 19 e3? (Nisipeanu suggests that 19 g1! would have held) 19...xf3 20 xf3 h2!! , and White's king was now stuck in the open, and Black won with a king hunt in K.Georgiev-L.Nisipeanu, Fuegen 2006.

5...exd5

Not the only approach:

a) 5...bxc4? leads to relatively unexplored territory after, for example, 6 e4 wb6 7 we2.

b) 5...h6 6 xf6 xf6 7 c3 b4 8 db5 dd8 leads to unclear play. The computer suggestion, 9...dx6!? fx6 10 db1, and if 10...e5 11 wd5 c6 12 dd1, remains unexplored.

c) 5...b4 is another possibility: 6 a3 h6 7 dh4 a5 7 dh4 a5 8 axb4 cxb4 9 dd4 be7 10 db5 d6 11 c5 0-0 12 dxex6 dxex5 13 exf7+ exf7 14 dd2 dg8 15 e3 led to a heavily unbalanced pawn structure in V.Ivanchuk-L.Nisipeanu, Khanty-Mansiysk 2007. Quite probably Black should just continue developing with, for example, 15...c6. Instead Nisipeanu spent time offering the exchange of dark-squared bishops with 15...g4? 16 g3 h4, and Black soon lost his c-pawn after 17 de4.

One starts to develop the impression that the Blumenfeld is going to become more fashionable. It can easily be a win or lose battle.

6 cxd5

6 xf6? xf6 7 xd5 xb2 8 xa8?? c1 mate, and 6 xd5?? xd5 7 xd8 db4, winning a piece, have both surfaced in my database.

6...d6

In an earlier round of the same league season, Nisipeanu had tried 6...h6 7 xf6 xf6, hoping to take advantage of the bishop-pair, but after 8 c2 c4 9 a4 b4+ 10 c3 bxa4 11 xa4 a5 12 e3 0-0 13 xc4 White was slightly better in E.Postny-L.Nisipeanu, German League 2006.

7 e4

With a small detail. White wants to play a4, but he wants to induce Black to defend with ...a6 first. Therefore, he delays 7 a4 b4 8 e4.

7...a6

7...bd7? tactically does not work. White plays 8 xb5 wa5+ 9 c3 xe4 10 we2 f5 11 0-0 with a likely win for him.

8 a4?!

An obvious and natural move, breaking open Black's queenside pawn structure, but over the next few moves, Nisipeanu smoothly sets up good play for Black. The Blumenfeld Gambit is
commonly regarded as interesting but slightly suspect, but here it starts to seem very effective. Is the Blumenfeld so good? Or is there an improvement for White?

In a later game, Ivanchuk carefully delayed a4, concentrating first on piece development. He could still play a4 later. 8 Qbd2! Ne7 9 Qf4 0-0 10 a4 (avoiding Black’s tactic in Sargissian-Nisipeanu) 10...bxa4 11 d3 Ne7 12 0-0 Qb5 13 We2 Qbd7 14 Qxb5 Qxb5 15 Wxb5 Qb8 16 Wd3! Qb4 17 Qc4 gave White a slight advantage in V.Ivanchuk-L.Nisipeanu, Khanty-Mansiysk 2007. Nisipeanu was later able to hold a position a pawn down in a rook ending. Indeed, Nisipeanu eventually beat Ivanchuk in this knockout match at the FIDE World Cup, but later lost to Karjakin.

8...Ne7!

Setting up some tactics on the d8-h4 diagonal.

8...b4?! allows a big hole on c4, which Qbd2-c4 might exploit. Similarly 8...bxa4?!

9 Qbd2

9 axb5 Qxe4 10 Qf4!? (or 9 Qf4 Qxe4 10 axb5) is about equal. If 11 Qd3, then simply 11...Qf6.

9 Qxf6 Qxf6 10 axb5 Qxb2 11 Qa2 Qf6 is also comfortable for Black. The long dark-squared diagonal, plus the protected passed c-pawn, suggest that Black has good prospects.

So has White got any advantage whatsoever?

9...Qxd5!

With at least equality.

10 Qxe7

10 exd5?! Qxg5 leaves White with a weak pawn on d5.

10...Qxe7

10...Qxe7 is also fully playable.

11 axb5

White regains the pawn. His pawn structure is, however, not good.

11...0-0

There is no point in delaying this.

12 Qc4

12 Qe2?! Qf4 leaves White under pressure: for example, after 13 0-0 d5 14 Ne1 d4.

12...Qf4!? 

A theoretical novelty, apparently, although sometimes the only question to be asked is why this didn’t happen much earlier. The older moves, 12...Qb4 and 12...Qb6, direct Black’s pieces to the queenside. This is safe enough perhaps, but it is easier for Black to attack on the kingside. He has queen, knight and bishop already ready to attack, and other pieces are on their way.

13 0-0

13 g3 d5! 14 gxf4 dxc4 15 wc2 Qb7 may allow White to win a pawn, but his pieces will be open, leaving many open squares behind the pawns. It will be difficult for White to decide whether the king should be on the kingside, the queenside, or the middle. Play might continue 15 wc2 Qb7 16 bxa6 Qxa6 17
\( \text{Wxc4 Qb4 18 \text{Exa8 Exa8 19 0-0 Ed8}} \) (but not the hasty 19...\text{a6?! 20 Ea1}), with good attacking chances in return for the pawn.

13...\text{b7}

The most natural move, developing the bishop to a good long diagonal. There may perhaps be a temptation to keep the bishop at home, and so keep the option of ...\text{g4}, playing for example 13...\text{Ed8}, but this seems slightly slow and indirect.

14 \text{Ee1}

White does not want to give an extra tempo with 14 bxa6 \text{Qxa6} with Black being slightly better.

14...\text{axb5}

Black could delay this with, for example, 14...\text{Wf6} or 14...\text{Ed8}, but there is no real point just now. With the immediate exchange, he takes over the initiative, an improvement on quiet manoeuvring.

15 \text{Exa8}

15 \text{Exb5 Exa1 16 Wxa1 leaves the queen off-centre.}

15...\text{Exa8 16 Exb5 Qc6}

Now Black has more or less completed his development, his pieces have ended up on good squares, and he has the better pawn structure. White's isolated pawn on b2 is a real problem. The pawn is open to attack, and if the pawn fails, Black would have an excellent passed c-pawn. If White has to defend his b-pawn, his pieces will become severely constrained.

17 \text{Ef1}

White also has problems with his other knight's pawn, g2. 17 \text{Qc4} is visually more active, perhaps, but 17...\text{Ed8} is comfortable for Black. How does White retreat the bishop for defence?

17...\text{Wf6}

Developing, and attacking the weak pawn on b2. If that is not enough for White to deal with, Black is also thinking about an attack on the kingside.

18 \text{Qc4}

White has to set up some piece activity, otherwise his position is in danger of folding.

18...\text{Ed8}

A sturdy reply.

19 \text{Wd2?}

Black has done well, with good pawn control on the central dark squares, but White's position should not collapse. Sargissian seems to have misjudged the tactics here.
19 g3!, renewing the idea of a fianchetto, still holds the balance, just about. After 19...d5 20 exd5 Qxd5 21 We2? h6 22 Qg2 Qbd4 Black keeps a slight edge, all his minor pieces being more active than White’s. However, here 21 Qxd2! keeps the balance.

19...Qg6 or 19...Qe6 are sensible alternatives, again aiming for slight pressure. For example, 19...Qg6 20 Qg2 Qb4 21 We2 h6 22 Qd1 We6, and White cannot attack any weaknesses in Black’s position, but Black has chances to grind away.

19...Qh3+

Now Black is significantly better.

20 Qh1?!

20 gxh3 Qxf3 21 Qg2 may be ugly, but at least White keeps going. Then 21...Qd4?! 22 Qxd4 Qxg2+ 23 Qxg2 cxd4 24 Qb6 gives White good chances of holding, but 21...Qf6! keeps an edge. White will have permanent problems with his d4-square.

20...Qd4!

Had Sargissian underestimated this?

21 Qe3

21 Qxd4 Qxf2+ 22 Qf1 Qxe4 23 Axe4 Qxe4 is only a slight material edge for Black, but the d-pawn rolls through dangerously.

21...Qf5!

And the d-pawn again makes its presence, even if this is merely a pawn exchange. Black’s minor pieces soon work together very well.

22 exd5

22 e5 Qf4 23 Qb6 Qxf3 24 gxf3 d4 25 Qxa8 Qxf2+! 26 Qxf2 dxe3 is another way for Black to break through.

22...Qxd5

A slight pause in Black’s attack, but he is of course very much in control. White’s central pawns have disappeared, and Black has two excellent minor pieces occupying the four central squares. Black’s Benoni pawn on c5 is still there, the start of attacking options in the centre early on, and still guarding the knight on an advanced square. If one can add to all this the irritation caused by Black’s knight on h3, White has serious problems.

23 Qc5

Or 23 Qxd4 Qxf2+ 24 Qg1 cxd4, and Black wins a big pawn.

23...Qxf3

23...h5!, cutting out back-row checkmates, is also good, indeed sharper. 24 Qxd4 Qxd2+ 24 Qg1 cxd4 25 Qxd4
25 \textit{\texttt{Wxd4 Gg4} wins a piece.}

\textbf{24 gxf3?!}

Were we hitting a time scramble?

24 \textit{\texttt{Qxf3 Qxf3} 25 \textit{\texttt{We1}} (with a back rank check) 25...\textit{\texttt{C6} 26 Hxh3 Wxb2} leaves Black an extra passed pawn, but it is isolated. Probably Black should be able to win this, but there is much technical work to be done. How confident, for example, would Black be in reaching an extra isolated pawn in a bishop endgame just before the time control? Or could Black break through with queen, rook and bishop still on the board?

24...\textit{\texttt{Qf4}}

Not 24...\textit{\texttt{Qxf3+??} 25 \textit{\texttt{Qxf3}} with a back-row cheapo. Black sees that comfortably, and again the knight keeps control.

25 \textit{\texttt{We3}}

If 25 \textit{\texttt{We1}}, then maybe 25...\textit{\texttt{h6?!}}, opening up a hole. Black is in no great hurry, since White is close to zugzwang.

25...\textit{\texttt{Wh4}}

With a direct threat.

\textbf{26 \textit{\texttt{We1}}}

26 \textit{\texttt{Wxc5 Wxf2} 27 \textit{\texttt{Cc1 f6} is a Black win.}

26...\textit{\texttt{He8}}

Nearing zugzwang.

\textbf{27 \textit{\texttt{C4}}}

If 27 \textit{\texttt{Qg2 Qxg2} 28 \textit{\texttt{Qxg2 Hxe5} 29 Hxe5 Wg4+ 30 \textit{\texttt{Qf1 Hc4+ 31 Hxe2 Wxf3}, and Black ties White up and wins.}}

27...\textit{\texttt{Hxe5}}

Another sacrifice on e5.

\textbf{28 \textit{\texttt{Qxd5}}}

28 \textit{\texttt{Hxe5 Qxf3+} 29 \textit{\texttt{Qg1 Wg4+ and mate next move.}}

28...\textit{\texttt{Wg5}}

Also 28...\textit{\texttt{Wh3}} with another mate threat on g2.

\textbf{29 \textit{\texttt{Wg1 Wxg1+ 0-1}}}

Black wins a piece after 30 \textit{\texttt{Qxg1 Hxe3.}}

A good advertisement of why Benoni positions are well worth considering for Black, especially if wanting to play for a win. There is often only a small gap between White having an edge and Black having the upper hand.
Game 9
P.Leko-T.Radjabov
Morelia 2006
Sicilian Defence B33

1 e4 c5 2 d3 d6 3 d4
3...cxd4 is a quieter ‘more positional’ alternative, doubling the pawns after 3...g6 4 exd6 exd6 5 d3. It is noticeable that Leko, when playing as White against Van Wely, has chosen this line twice, with a draw at the Melody Amber Rapidplay 2005, and a powerful win at Dortmund 2005. Many other players have tried to avoid Van Wely’s deep theoretical analysis.

It is perhaps equally noteworthy that Leko has faced problems with Black in this line, in Shirov-Leko, Monaco (rapid) 2005, Svidler-Leko, Dortmund 2005, and Ivanchuk-Leko, Mukachevo (rapid) 2007; three straight wins against Leko. This suggests that the ‘Sicilian Lopez’ still provides significant dangers for Black.

4...d6

There are, of course, many different ways of handling this position. One of the older ideas is the Löwenthal Variation, 4...e5 5 d5 a6 6 d6+ cxd6 7 wxd6 f6, and then various possible queen retreats by White, which should keep a slight edge. This is very much a mid-19th Century rendering of the Sicilian, with no hedgehog style set-ups with ...d6 and ...e6, but instead moving the pawn quickly in the centre and bringing the pieces into play just as quickly. There is a slight loss of subtlety in Black’s play.

5 d3

The natural reply. 5 dx6 bxc6 is only equal.

5...e5

An improved Löwenthal Variation, the Pelikan. Jorge Pelikan was one of many European players (he was origi-
nally Czech) who played at the Buenos Aires Olympiad in 1939, and stayed in Argentina after the announcement of the War. He experimented with this line in the mid-1950s, but it was regarded as slightly suspicious in view of the weakness of the light squares. The line was revitalized in the mid-1970s by Evgeny Sveshnikov, who showed that there were considerable tactical and positional complexities, which force White to take care. An old idea becomes modern.

6 \( \text{Qd} \text{b5} \)

Alternatively:

a) 6 \( \text{Qc6} \text{bxc6} \) is only equal. Black keeps a solid pawn structure.

b) 6 \( \text{Qf} \text{s5?!} \) is worth considering, avoiding much of the complicated main line. White wants to try \( \text{Qd6+} \) and also \( \text{Qe3} \), covering rather more efficiently the pressure on d5. Black should probably try 6...d5 7 exd5 \( \text{Qxf5} \) 8 dxc6, when the queen exchange after 8...\( \text{Qxd1+} \) 9 \( \text{Qxd1} \text{bxc6} \) 10 \( \text{Qe3} \) gives White a slight edge in view of Black's isolated pawns. There are many who would very happily grind away for White in such an opening. Thus 8...bxc6 9 \( \text{Wf3} \) (9 \( \text{Wxd8+} \text{xd8} \) is less impressive this time, Black being ahead in development) 9...\( \text{Wd7} \) 10 \( \text{Qg5} \) has been tried, maybe with a slight edge for White, but seems under-researched. Something to be tried for the adventurous? Or even for the less adventurous?

6...d6

6...a6 7 \( \text{Qd6+} \text{xd6} \) 8 \( \text{Wxd6} \) is now far less effective than the Löwenthal Variation, as Black no longer has \( ...\text{Wf6:} \)

8...\( \text{We7} \) 9 \( \text{Wxe7+} \) followed by \( \text{Qg5} \) leaves White positionally better, the weaknesses on d6 and d5 again being a concern.

7 \( \text{Qg5} \)

The main line these days, although Pelikan's opponents in the 1950s did not like the idea of White being stuck with knights on a3 and c3, when Black can retaliate with ...b5. Therefore 7 a4 was a natural reply. Play might continue with 7...a6 8 \( \text{Qa3} \text{e6} \) 9 \( \text{Qg5} \text{c8} \), with strategies not too different from the main line, but it is not all that clear that a4 gains that much.

7 \( \text{Qd5} \) is very direct. After 7...\( \text{Qxd5} \) 8 \( \text{cx} \text{d5 e8} \), White has no more than the usual slight edge. The knight retreat looks paradoxical, but 8...\( \text{Qe7} \) gets in the way of the bishop, and would not give Black the opportunity of manoeuvring the knight to c5.

7...a6

Time to push the knight away, before White has the chance of playing \( \text{Qd} \text{5} \) followed by \( \text{Qbc3} \).

8 \( \text{Qa3} \)

8 \( \text{Qxf6} \text{gxf6} \) 9 \( \text{Qa3} \) used to be popular, but allows counterplay with 9...\( \text{f5} \).

8...b5

8...\( \text{Qe6} \) has been tried many times, but after 9 \( \text{Qc4} \text{d4} \) 10 \( \text{Qxf6} \text{xf6} \) 11 \( \text{Qd5} \) White's d5-knight is more secure than Black's corresponding d4-knight,
and White should have a slight edge. There are no recent examples in top-level games.

9 ∆d5

Varying from a game they played at Linares two years earlier. There have been many recent tries with 9 ∆xf6 gxf6 10 ∆d5 ∆g7 11 ∆d3 ∆e7 12 ∆xe7 ∆xe7 13 0-0 f5 14 c4 0-0 15 ∆f3, and now a startling pawn breakthrough with 15...d5!

Much of the theory of the Pelikan depends on whether or not Black can squush the light squares on d5 and f5, and here Black takes the radical suggestion of making pawn breakthroughs on both of these squares. White cannot hold the pawn on e4, and if Black can push with ...e4 himself, then he will have excellent attacking diagonals on the dark squares, h8-a1 and f8-a3.

The main line continues with 16 cxd5 fxe4 17 ∆xe4, and now 17...∆b8, escaping from White's h1-a8 diagonal. White has then tried various rook moves. We continue with the Leko line after 18 ∆ad1 ∆d6. Then 19 ∆d3 ∆d7 20 g3 f5 21 ∆g2 ∆h6 22 f4 exf4 23 gxf4, drawn before too long in P.Leko-T.Radjabov, Linares 2004. But surely, one might think, there is a simple pawn snatch earlier? After 20 ∆xh7+? ∆h8 21 ∆e3 ∆h6 22 ∆c3 ∆d6 White's position collapsed with remarkable speed on 23 g3 ∆h3 24 ∆f1 f5 25 f4? (speeding the crash) 25...exf4 26 ∆e7 ∆b6+ 0-1, P.Smirnov-T.Radjabov, FIDE World Championship, Tripoli 2004. One may feel reasonably certain that Radjabov had analysed this well in advance.

9...∆e7

9...∆a5+ 10 ∆d2 ∆d8 is an implicit draw offer, which White does not have to accept. Apart from 11 ∆g5, there is the complicated line with 11 c4 ∆xe4 12 cxb5, or the quieter 11 ∆xf6+ ∆xf6 12 ∆d3.

10 ∆xf6

This gives White a dominating d5-square for the knight, making Black's position look dubious, at least according to much earlier theory. That view existed until Sveshnikov, in the second half of the 1970s, showed that Black had compensation for the d5-gap. Black has, of course, gained the bishop-pair.

Otherwise:

a) 10 ∆xf6+ gxf6 1 followed by ...f5 is comfortable for Black.

b) 10 ∆xe7 ∆xe7 11 ∆d3 ∆b7 12
We2 Qxd7 13 c4 b4 14 Re2 c5 15 0-0 Qc5 16 f3 Rc7 with a small edge for White, later drawn, in A.Morozevich-T.Radjabov, Kemer 2007. Possibly better is 12...g6!? 13 c4 h6 14 d2 0-0 15 0-0 Bb8 16 Rfd1 Bxc4 17 Qxc4 d5 18 dxe5 Wxd5 19 f3 e4, equal, later drawn, in K.Georgiev-P.Elijanov, Sochi 2007.

10...Qxf6

10...gxf6 is possible, but usually Black prefers to bring the bishop back into play via g5.

11 c3

The knight has to re-emerge, and if it can arrive on e3, it can be strong.

11 c4 b4 12 Qf2 is a possibility, but the general preference is to keep the c4-square open, with the help of a later a4 push, rather than to block c4 with a pawn. Morozevich is the main current advocate of this line: for example, 12...Bb8 13 b3 Qg5 14 g3 0-0 15 h4 Aeh6 16 Ae3 Ae6 17 Wf1 a5 16 Wg2 with a slight edge for White, later drawn, in Morozevich-Leko, FIDE World Championship, San Luis 2005. There are some obvious similarities in development patterns with the Leko-Radjabov game, but also a substantial contrast. The Leko game as White leaves the light squares on the queenside open, and able for use by the pieces, whereas the Leko game as Black ends up with a closed queenside.

11...O-O

Here 11...f5 12 Oxc2 O-O often transposes, although Black could also experiment with delaying castling, with, for example, 12...Bb8.

Independently 11...Qe7 12 Qxf6+ gxf6 breaks off White's knight dominance on d5, but Black's pawns are still slightly weakened. White usually tries 13 Qd3 or 13 Wf3. Black has a slightly weakened pawn structure. If, for example, ...f5 followed by a pawn exchange on d4, Black has three pawn islands (a+b; c+d+e; h), whereas White has two bigger and safe islands (a+b+c; f+g+h).

12 Qc2

Preferring the knight-pair, rather than the bishop-pair. Also, White is planning to break up Black's queenside pawns with a4.

12 Qxf6+ Wxf6 is only equal. Then 13 Re2 or 13 Qd3 are rare. We shall see why on move 15, when White makes a bishop jump to c4 in one go, instead of using up a tempo with Qf1-e2-c4. Another example of the theme, 'knights
before bishops.

12...\textit{g5}

Black wants to keep his bishop-pair.

13 \textit{a4}

In the pre-Sveshnikov days of the Pelikan, White tried 13 h4 \textit{h6} 14 g4 \textit{f4} 15 \textit{f3}, but Black’s play was comfortable after 15...\textit{e6} 16 \textit{x}xf4 \textit{f6} 17 g5 \textit{x}f4 18 \textit{x}f4 exf4 19 \textit{h}h3 \textit{e}5 20 \textit{x}xe6 fxe6, eventually winning in D.Minic-K.Langeweg, Budva 1963. If White could split Black’s queenside first, then maybe the h4 idea would seem more promising, as in the Leko-Radjabov game.

13...\textit{xb4}

13...\textit{b8}? 14 h4 \textit{h6} 15 axb5 axb5 allows White a clear open a-file, and after 16 g4 \textit{f4} 17 \textit{f3} \textit{e6} 18 \textit{x}f4 \textit{f6} 19 \textit{a}6 White wins a pawn.

14 \textit{xa4}

The exchange has improved White’s pawn structure, two good queenside pawns versus one isolated pawn. It is not just a case of trying to win a pawn. White now has useful outpost squares on \textit{c4} and \textit{a4}. He is aiming for control of the light squares.

14...\textit{a5}

If 14...\textit{f5} 15 exf5 \textit{x}xf5, White happily plays 16 \textit{xa6}. Black instead wants to secure his pawn, and makes it more difficult for White to try \textit{cb4}.

15 \textit{c4}

Finally the bishop emerges, in just one go. 15 \textit{b4} \textit{b7} 16 b5 \textit{e}7 does not do that much for White.

15...\textit{b8}

Later Radjabov was to prefer 15...\textit{d7}?! For example, in V.Anand-T.Radjabov, Wijk aan Zee 2007, play carried on with 16 0-0 \textit{b8} 17 \textit{a}2 \textit{h}8 18 \textit{ce}3 \textit{g}6 19 \textit{wd}3 \textit{f5} 20 b3 \textit{h}6, and Black was far more active than in the Leko game. One main point is that Black does not want to allow the rook to stay on \textit{a4} when the position is opened.

16 \textit{b3}

White continues to build up his pawns.

16 \textit{a}2 \textit{h}8 17 \textit{ce}3 \textit{xe}3 18 \textit{xe}3 \textit{e}7 has been tried, and is equal. Leko prefers to keep the rook active a little longer.

16...\textit{h}8

16...\textit{e}6 was of considerable theoretical and historical interest in A.Karpov-E.Sveshnikov, USSR Championship, Moscow 1973. After 17 \textit{a}1 \textit{g}6 18 0-0 \textit{wd}7 19 \textit{d}1 \textit{f}5 20 e\textit{xf5} g\textit{xf5} 21
b4 axb4 22 cxb4 $\text{h}8$ 23 b5 $\text{x}d5$ 24 $\text{x}d5$ $\text{Qe}7$ 25 $\text{w}xe5+$ dxe5 26 $\text{x}d7$ $\text{Qc}8$, the knight threat on b6 led to equality.

This line, with 16...$\text{Qe}6$, quickly died out. Quite a few non-theoreticians tried 17 0-0, which at the very least cuts down the Leko-Radjabov line, but there is no reason at all for Black to avoid this.

So why has the Karpov-Sveshnikov line been abandoned? Maybe there is nothing seriously wrong with Sveshnikov’s move in the position; it is quite simply that 16...$\text{Qg}8$ is more flexible, allowing Black to think of...f5, and deciding later where the bishop should go.

Sveshnikov himself showed the way in E.Geller-E.Sveshnikov, USSR Championship, Tbilisi 1978, with 16...$\text{h}8$ 17 0-0 f5 18 exf5 $\text{xf}5$ 19 $\text{Wd}2$ $\text{Wd}7$ (19...$\text{Qg}6$ is nowadays more usual) 20 $\text{Qxe}3$ $\text{Qe}6$ 21 $\text{d}1$ $\text{d}8$, equal, but Sveshnikov later demonstrated a spectacular sacrificial kingside winning attack.

17 $\text{Qe}3$

17 $\text{We}2$ is the chief alternative at top level. Black has made various replies (17...$\text{d}7$!?, 17...f5!?), with reasonable chances of equality.

For 17 0-0, see the previous note on Geller-Sveshnikov.

17...$\text{Qe}6$

A natural developing move, but there is also an argument to be made that by this stage of the game, it is more important to concentrate on attack, defence, counterattack, and useful exchanges, rather than just bringing the bishop out.

Leko has reached this position both as White and as Black. A year earlier he tried 17...$\text{g}6$, the reply being 18 $\text{h}4!$ $\text{exh}4$ 19 $\text{g}3$ $\text{Qg}5$ 20 f4 exf4 21 gxf4 $\text{Qh}4$. This had been known before, but after 22 $\text{Qf}1$! f5 23 $\text{Ra}2$ fxe4 24 $\text{Ah}2$ g5 25 $\text{Qg}2$ $\text{b}7$ Black had covered his weaknesses, and White’s kingside had been opened up a little, in M.Stangas-Kindermann, Altenstieg 1987.

In V.Topalov-P.Leko, Linares 2005, White brought his king to the other side with 22 $\text{Qd}2$? $\text{Qe}7$ 23 $\text{Qc}1$ $\text{Qxd}5$ 24 $\text{Qxd}5$ $\text{Qe}6$ 25 $\text{Wd}4+$ $\text{Qg}8$ 26 $\text{Qa}2$ (there have also been experiments with 26 $\text{Qb}1$, avoiding any checks from c3) 26...$\text{Qxd}5$ 27 $\text{Wxd}5$ $\text{Wf}6$ 28 $\text{Wd}2$ $\text{Qg}3$ 29 $\text{Qf}1$ with complicated play. This ended up with a draw, but with queen, rook and opposite-coloured bishops, there

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were perhaps not surprisingly some slip-ups.

Radjabov, in a later encounter against Leko, tried to keep play simple with 17...\textit{\textalpha}xe3 18 \textit{\textalpha}xe3 \textit{\textalpha}e7 19 0-0 f5 20 exf5 \textit{\textalpha}xf5, P.Leko-T.Radjabov, Morelia/Linares 2008. Leko showed, yet again, his great understanding on both sides of the board in the Sveshnikov system, and found a way of setting up serious pressure on d6 after 21 \textit{\textalpha}a2 \textit{\textalpha}e4 22 \textit{\textalpha}d2 \textit{\textalpha}b6 23 \textit{\textalpha}e1 \textit{\textbeta}b8 24 \textit{\textalpha}a1 \textit{\textalpha}c7 25 \textit{\textalpha}ed1 h6 26 h3 \textit{\textalpha}b7 27 \textit{\textalpha}a3 \textit{\textalpha}d8 28 \textit{\textalpha}xe6! \textit{\textalpha}xc3 29 \textit{\textalpha}xd6, and Black's d-file soon collapsed.

Two wins by Leko in the same line against the same top-rated opponent. A result!

\textbf{18 h4!?}

Leko would, of course, have remembered his game as Black against Topalov with 17...g6 18 h4, and would have recognized this as being at least promising after 18...\textit{\textalpha}e6.

\textbf{18...\textit{\textalpha}f4?}

Missing an extremely deep idea. 18...\textit{\textalpha}h6? 19 \textit{\textalpha}g4 is also strong for White.

The simplest line, exchanging, is 18...\textit{\textalpha}xe3 19 \textit{\textalpha}xe3 \textit{\textalpha}e7! It is far from clear that White has an edge, his king not yet being safely developed. If, for example, 20 \textit{\textalpha}xe6?! (doubling the pawns, but opening up the f-file for Black) 20...\textit{\textalpha}xe6 21 \textit{\textalpha}c4 d5 22 exd5 exd5 23 \textit{\textalpha}xe5 \textit{\textalpha}c7 24 \textit{\textalpha}d4 \textit{\textalpha}xb3 and Black wins a pawn. There are of course safer options, such as 20 0-0 \textit{\textalpha}c8 21 \textit{\textalpha}xe6 fxe6 22 h5, but it remains to be proven that White has an edge.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_diagram.png}
\end{center}

\textbf{19 \textit{\textalpha}f5!}

A natural enough move, taking advantage of Black's dark-squared bishop not having been exchanged. White has two knights on light squares, and it is very difficult for Black to exchange the light-squared bishop for one of the knights, since then the other knight dominates.

Radjabov's idea had been that if White had played 19 g3 \textit{\textalpha}xe3 20 \textit{\textalpha}xe3 \textit{\textalpha}xc4 21 \textit{\textalpha}xc4 f5, Black is comfortable, White having weakened his kingside pawn structure. Also 19 \textit{\textalpha}xf4 exf4 20 \textit{\textalpha}d5 \textit{\textalpha}e5 21 \textit{\textalpha}xf4 \textit{\textalpha}xc4 22 bxc4 \textit{\textalpha}e8 is comfortable for Black.

Leko had foreseen his opponent's innovation, and found a bigger counter-innovation. Such things happen in top level chess.
19...g6

Radjabov was, of course, relying on this. Anything else, and White is comfortable, making full use of his light squares.

20 Qf3!

A sensational idea, giving away two tempi with the knight, just so that Black has to weaken his pawn structure, slightly but significantly.

Leko’s move makes a great impression, but sadly from the purely technical point of view, there is also an equally good alternative: 20 Qxf4! Qxf5 (20...exf4? 21 Qxd6) 21 exf5 exf4. Leko gives this as unclear, but after 22 Qd5!? (there are other promising moves), White has better control in the centre, despite initial appearances. Once Black has tried ...Qe5, he would of course have excellent use of the e5-square, but White would have the remaining three central squares. Play might continue with 22...Qe8+ (22...Qf6 23 Qh3! makes good use of the ranks, as well as the files) 23 Qf1 Qe5 23 fxg6 fxg6 25 Qxf4 Qc7 26 Qh3, and again White uses the files effectively.

Black quite simply has too many pawn weaknesses.

20...Qg7

It proves to be difficult for Black to equalize. The pawn weakness on g6 is a severe problem. Black could, of course, try 20...h5, to prevent White playing h5 himself, but extra pawn pushes to try to conceal other pawn weaknesses tend to have a tendency to create even further weaknesses.

20...Qxe3!? 21 Qxe3 Qxc4 22 Qxc4 Qe7 23 h5 g5, and if 24 0-0 f5, might keep White down to a slight edge, but Black is not yet equalizing. This seems a much smaller edge than in the lines starting with 20 Qxf4, so with regrets, the impression is that Leko’s line is not totally the best. It is still good, though, and refreshingly paradoxical.

21 g3

Or maybe 21 h5 immediately, also with active play.

![Chess Diagram](image)

21...Qh6?!

Radjabov wants to keep the tension with the bishop, but it soon turns out that it is White who is keeping the tension on the bishop, and in the end White can force the exchange for knight against bishop on a much more uncomfortable square.

21...Qxe3 22 Qxe3 looks better, but White has a definite slight edge. Black has weaknesses on the d-file, and has to pay attention to possible h5-pushes. Here 22...Qb6 keeps White down to a slight edge, as if 23 Qxd6?! Qfd8 24 Qa3 Qxc4 25 Qxc4 Qxb3, and Black is now slightly better.

22 Qg4!

Superb flexibility by the knight, before Black can cut out this knight option with ...f5.

Even if Black goes just slightly wrong in the Sveshnikov Variation, White can
have excellent opportunities of exploiting light-squared manoeuvring.

22...f5

Black finds a way of activating his pawns, but his king is soon stuck on h6, and Leko plays vigorously.

22...hxg4 23 hxg4 wxe8 24 wxc8 hxc8 cuts out any weaknesses against the king, but Black’s pawns and minor pieces are under severe pressure. After, for example, 25 g4 (squashing the idea of ...f5) 25...f4 26 e2, Black’s bishop can attack nothing on the dark squares, and of course has absolutely no influence on the light squares.

23 dxe6

The bishop-pair is worth getting rid of. One bishop gone means that the defender cannot cover the remaining squares.

23...dxe6

![Chessboard diagram]

Radjabov’s position would be comfortable had his king been on h8 or g7, rather than the unusual h6-square. Leko must move quickly before his opponent may consolidate.

24 h5

Leko notes that 24 e3 is also possible, with slight edges after either 24...dxc4 or 24...f4. The move that Leko chooses is more direct. If the opponent’s king is on a strange square, he might just as well take advantage of it.

24...g5

Ugly, but Radjabov is uncomfortable about the thought of opening the h-file:

24...g7 25 hxg6 hxg6 26 exf5 dxf5 27 e2 (or 27 f1? - Korotylev) 27...h8 28 h8 wxe8 29 h4 w8f8 30 e4c4 with advantage. White has successfully opened and closed the valve on the fourth rank, and with much more space, White’s second rook takes over the attack on the fourth rank, while Black’s second rook cannot defend so successfully.

25 exf5

Breaking open Black’s kingside pawns.

25...dxe5

25...dxf5? 26 e3 h6? 27 dxe6 dxe6 28 f5 mate is a quick finish.

26 e3

Another punchy move by the knight.

26...c8

26...e4? is more active, with perhaps the implication that it is not so good in defence. Black would ideally like to keep some control on the c8-h3 diagonal.
a) 27 \textit{f7?!} \textit{b4!} (or 27...\textit{xg7} 28 \textit{e8} with a slight edge for White) 28 \textit{w3?!} is spectacular, but not quite sound. Instead of 28...\textit{xf3??} 29 \textit{e5} mate, Black has 28...\textit{d2+} 29 \textit{d2} \textit{d5} 30 \textit{e8} \textit{d5}, and he is better.

b) 27 0-0 \textit{d3} 28 \textit{e2} \textit{e2} 29 \textit{wxe2} is Leko's suggestion as White's best, with a clear advantage. Rogozhenko puts this even stronger by suggesting that 'Black is strategically lost'. Fritz in contrast gives this as equal, but is the computer always to be trusted?

Further examination suggests that after 29...\textit{g7} 30 \textit{c4}, Black still has problems. He faces the standard pawn weaknesses with the a- and d-pawns in this opening, and his kingside light-coloured squares have been opened up rather more than is comfortable.

A line might be 30...\textit{c8} 31 \textit{w6} \textit{f6} 32 \textit{d7+} \textit{h8} 33 \textit{d5} \textit{h6} 34 \textit{c4} \textit{f8} 35 \textit{w7} \textit{g7} 36 \textit{w6}, and White continues to keep pressure on. Alternatively, 30...\textit{d7} 31 \textit{d1}, or 30...\textit{d7} 31 \textit{f1} \textit{d5} 32 \textit{g4} \textit{c6} 33 \textit{w6} \textit{f6} 34 \textit{wxf6}+ \textit{xf6} 35 \textit{xd5} \textit{xd5} 36 \textit{d3}, and White keeps the extra pawn. So White keeps an edge.

27 \textit{d2!}

We have already seen this rook retreat, in the other Leko-Radjabov game (note to Black's 17th). White is ready to defend on f2, and to attack from d2, while still keeping in touch with the attack on Black's a-pawn.

27...\textit{d7}

Leko in \textit{Informator} gives 27...\textit{g7} 28 \textit{d2} \textit{f6} 29 \textit{h6+} \textit{h8} 30 \textit{h5} as winning for White. It is comfortable for him, but after 30...\textit{f8}! there is no immediate winning plan. One wonders whether there might be a typo, or whatever the term is of a lazy hit on the mouse. It is possible he was intending 30 \textit{h5} \textit{g6} (29...\textit{f6}?) 30 \textit{xg5} \textit{xh6} 31 \textit{d8} mate) 31 \textit{d3} \textit{e6} 32 \textit{d4}, with a bind.

This would be yet another example of the rooks using the a- and h-files to their advantage, then maybe changing ranks and files (\textit{d4-a2-d2}; \textit{h5} threatening \textit{xg5}) to attack various weaknesses in Black's pawn structure. White's dominance of the minor pieces is significant, but something else needs to be added. What is unusual here is that there are no completely open files, and only two closed files (g- and h-files). There are six semi-open files, three on
either side. White’s a-, c- and f-pawns are safe enough, and cannot be attacked. Black’s e5-pawn is also safe, but his a5- and d6-pawns are weak. In addition, White’s push with the h-pawn to the sixth leaves White’s pawn being slightly weak, but Black’s g5-pawn is also slightly weak. It is possible that there might be an exchange of weaknesses. Even here, it is White who is likely to initiate the exchange of pawn weaknesses.

28 0-0

White keeps his flexibility. If Black’s king does not move, and does not allow White to push with h6, then the rook is more effective elsewhere, maybe on d1 or a1, again attacking pawns on half-open files.

28 hx a5?, intending 28...wx a5?? 29 wxd6+, is careless because 28...b7! 29 0-0 d5 gives Black counterplay.

28...xf6

Black concentrates on trying to defend his d-pawn, rather than immediately trying to extricate his king. If 28...g7 29 wd3 f5 30 xf5 xf5 31 xd1 xd6 32 we3 h6 33 ad2, Black is under pressure. White has, by this stage, complete centralization.

29 we2

His first chance to castle on move 28, then his first queen move on move 29. Soon it will be time to bring the rooks together. The completion of the opening phase may have been slow, but the late middlegame phase is quick.

29...wb6

29...we8 30 xa5 wxh5 is a pawn exchange that is likely to favour White, allowing him a good passed b-pawn. Leko gives 31 a7 b7 32 g4+ g7 33 xb7 (not 33 xf6?? wh1 mate) 33...xb7 34 we4 c7 35 xf6 xf6 36 a1 as favouring White, indeed, one would expect, a forced win.

30 a1

But now there is the danger of taking the a-pawn for nothing.

30...wc6

Black must find counterplay on the long diagonal.

31 xa5

There is no reason to delay.

31...b7

A threat!

32 d5!

It is the knight that needs to be retained, while the bishop may be exchanged.
32...\textbf{Qxd5} 33 \textbf{cx d5}
He wants to keep the knight on its best square, on e3, where it cannot be attacked, and where it is threatening checks and attacks on g4 and f5.
33...\textbf{Wxc3}
33...\textbf{Qg7} 34 \textbf{Ha7} \textbf{Qh8} 35 \textbf{Wb5} \textbf{Wc7} (35...\textbf{Wc8} 36 \textbf{Axd6}) 36 \textbf{Wb4} \textbf{Wc6} 37 c4 grinds slowly on.
34 \textbf{Qg4+}
Leko could have set up a trap with 34 \textbf{Ha7}? \textbf{Ac8} 35 \textbf{Wf3}, and if 35...\textbf{Wxf3} 36 \textbf{Axd6+} \textbf{Qh5} 37 \textbf{Ahd7} mate. Here 34...\textbf{Qg7} 35 \textbf{Qg4} would have transposed into the game, and 34...\textbf{Wxe3}? followed by ...\textbf{Qxd5}, may look slightly desperate, but such a sacrifice of queen versus rook and bishop can be difficult to break down.

Leko's immediate check cuts down the opponent's options.
34...\textbf{Qg7} 35 \textbf{Ha7}

The finish is enlivened by various pins and other tactics, all of which favour White.
35...\textbf{Qe6}
Leko notes the checkmate in midboard after 35...\textbf{Wc6} 36 \textbf{Qxf6} \textbf{Qxf6} 27 \textbf{Wf3+} \textbf{Qe6} 38 \textbf{Axb7} \textbf{Wxb7} 39 \textbf{Wg4+} \textbf{Qxd8} 40 \textbf{Wd4} mate. A battle on the long diagonal. This would have been an attractive finish.

By contrast, White wins slowly, probably on the dark squares, after 35...\textbf{Wc1+} 36 \textbf{Kh2} \textbf{Qf7} 37 \textbf{Axb7} \textbf{Wxb7} 38 \textbf{Qxd6}. Black's extra exchange does not have much impact when White's queen, rook and knight are drilling away at Black's kingside pawns and exposed king. After 38...\textbf{Wc3} 39 \textbf{h6+} \textbf{Qh8} 40 \textbf{Qxe5} \textbf{Wf8} 41 \textbf{Qd7}, even if there is objectively a win for White, he will have to work hard: 41...\textbf{Axd7} 42 \textbf{Axd7} \textbf{Wf6} 43 \textbf{Qg1} \textbf{Wxh6} 44 \textbf{We4} might at first look long and technical, but again Black's king is exposed, and his pieces cannot do anything other than defend. 44...\textbf{Ac8} 45 \textbf{Qg2}! is close to zugzwang. If Black does not lose immediately, the b-pawn will decide.
35...\textbf{Wf3} 36 \textbf{h6+} \textbf{Qf8} 37 \textbf{Wxf3} \textbf{Qxf3} 38 \textbf{b5} \textbf{Qf7} 39 \textbf{Qe3} is given by Leko as a win for White, Black being squeezed, but White still has to be careful. After 39...\textbf{Ac7} 40 \textbf{Qc4} \textbf{Qe7} White does not quite have the luxury of creating an escape square for the king after 41 \textbf{g4}?! \textbf{Qd7} 42 \textbf{Qb6}, as Black can jump out of prison with 42...\textbf{Ac6}!. Even if White were to find a winning try in the endgame, this would be long-winded. Once the problem is seen, the solution is easier: 41 \textbf{b6}! g4 42 \textbf{Qh2} places Black in zugzwang.
36 \textbf{Wc4!}
Forcing favourable simplification, or a mating attack.
36...\textbf{Wxe1+}
36...\textbf{Wxc4} 37 bxc4 \textbf{Qf8} 38 \textbf{b5} \textbf{Qe7} 39 \textbf{Qe3} will win for White.
37 \textbf{Qg2}
White is not scared of the long diagonal, as he is intending to sacrifice
the exchange to eliminate the bishop.

37...Rxe7

The only move.

38 Qxb7

The only move for White, as well. Even if this had not been forced, exchange sacrifices are an important part of the attacking repertoire.

38...Rxb7

38...Rxb7? 39 h6+ leaves the back row open.

39 Qxd6

We see a broadly similar set-up to Black’s alternative in the notes to Black’s 35th with 35...Qc1+. It is not difficult for a player to sacrifice the exchange in such a position.

39...Ef8

Black’s best chance is to set up counterplay on the f-file.

40 h6+

Now the king is forced to the back, and is liable to a back-rank checkmate.

40...Qh8 41 Qd5

White tightens the grip, slowly but surely. His queen and rook are fully centralized, and his knight is excellently placed for both attack and defence. His king is safer than Black’s. Indeed, he is heading for a win.

41 Qe6 Qe4+ 42 Qh2 also wins for White, as Qf6+ is threatened.

41...Qbb8

The only realistic chance. 41...Qbf7? loses immediately after 42 Qxf7. Naturally there are likely to be some other back-row ideas for White.

42 Qd3

And also the seventh rank, plus of course a few useful diagonals.

42 Qd7, with the same idea of attack on h7, allows Black to try to defend with 42...Qe2. Even here, as Leko notes, White still has a winning attack after 43 Qb7. If, for example, 43...Qxb7 44 Qxb7 Qg8 45 Qf6, and the knight joins in for checkmate. One of the biggest sins in chess is the flashy but unsound sacrifice when there is a clear win by normal play. Here 43 Qxh7+?? Qxh7 44 Qd7+ Qg6 would have been an example. The king escapes to h5.

42...Qb4

Not 42...e4 immediately, as White takes the long diagonal with 43 Qd4+.

43 Qd7

Still aiming for h7.

43...e4

The only move.

44 Qd5

But now White is threatening the long light-squared diagonal.

44...Qb5

Almost a saving resource.

45 Qf6l 1-0

Leko has a combination ready. Play would finish with a queen flourish after 45...Qxf6 46 Qd8+ Qf8 47 Qd4+ Qxd4 48 Qxf8 mate.
1 e4 e5 2 d3 c6 3 b5 a6

The 3...a6 move is effectively a gain of tempo, and is useful, but it is only a small tempo.

3...c6, the Berlin Defence, is discussed in Game 7, Svidler-Topalov.

4 a4

Also there is the Exchange Variation, 4 xc6 dxc6 5 0-0, with various similarities to the Berlin Defence. White has given up his bishop-pair, and Black now has doubled c-pawns. Black has not quite equalized yet, and at top level White has achieved a small plus score. At the moment, the most successful reply at top level seems to be 5...e7!, and a pawn gambit after 6 dxe5 Wd4 7 Wh5 g6 8 Wg5 Qg7 9 Dd3 f5 10 e5. There are also more traditional lines, such as 5...f6 or 5...Wd6, protecting the e5-pawn.

4...c6

The most direct line, perhaps, is 4...b5 5 b3 a5, which Morozevich has tried a few times in blitz events. The sacrifice, 6 xf7+ xf7 7 e5+ e7, is playable, but not wholly convincing. 6 0-0 d6 7 d4 exd4 remains possible, if never particularly fashionable. Black picks up the bishop-pair, and does not have to defend the doubled c-pawns, but is behind in development.

5 0-0

Very much the most common move.

White can instead defend the e4-pawn, but it is not necessary yet.

5...e7

5...dxe4 6 d4 is the Open Variation.

6 e1

Time now to defend the pawn. Other moves are possible, but not so common.

6...b5

Since White is now threatening to win the pawn on e5, after an exchange on c6, it is now time to start counterplay with ...b5.

7 b3

The bishop is now kicked off the a4-e8 diagonal, but is still on a good diagonal, aiming at f7. Compared with the old and very direct Giuoco Piano, with 3 c4, Black has gained two tempi with ...a6 and ...b5, and in many lines he can make use of this, but, as we shall soon see, the black pawns can be a
weakness, and White can hit with a4. The Ruy Lopez, the Spanish Game, is much more popular than the Giuoco Piano, the Italian Game, because it has two lines of attack (b5 and f7), rather than just a single line of attack, f7.

7...0-0

A small but highly significant difference in move order. Both 7...0-0 8 c3 d6, and 7...d6 8 c3 0-0 would transpose into the main line, if both players wish. Aronian is a noted advocate of the Marshall Gambit, and so avoids playing 7...d6.

8 a4

And Ivanchuk avoids the Marshall gambit, 8 c3 d5. See further commentary on this popular pawn sacrifice in Game 16, Shirov-Aronian.

There are various other anti-Marshall alternatives with, for example, 8 d3 or 8 d4. Possibly the simplest is 8 h3, when if Black chooses, he could transpose into the main, non-Marshall, line after 8...d6 9 c3. Black has also tried 8...b7, but 8...d5?! 9 exd5 Qxd5 10 Qxe5 Qxe5 11 Qxe5 c6 10 d4 is much easier to defend for White. He would have, in effect, an extra tempo.

8...b4

The most common reply. 8...b4 9 axb5 axb5 10 c3 d6 has tended to favour White slightly. White's control on the a-file is useful.

9 d4

9 d3, with the idea of Qb1-d2-c4, is a possibility. Here Ivanchuk tries sharper and more open play.

9...d6

Probably rather more stable than 9...Qxd4 10 Qxd4 exd4 11 e5 Qe8 12 Wxd4.

10 dxe5

Strangely, there has been little attention paid on the natural space gain with 10 d5. The first example with this move on the database has been in a game by Aronian, not totally surprising as he has long been a specialist on the Marshall Gambit. This, however, was Aronian with White, and his opponent was trying the Marshall. White demonstrated an edge in LAronian-A.Minasian, Yerevan 2001, with 10...Qa5 11 Qa2 Qb8 12 Qbd2 c6 13 dxc6 Qe6 (a more ambitious attempt at equalizing than the standard recapture) 14 Qxe6 fxe6 15 Wf2 Wb6 16 Qc4 Qxc4 17 Wxc4 d5 18 exd5 exd5 19 Wb3, although later the game ended up as a
draw with equal material in an endgame after complications. Maybe there is the opportunity for other players to explore further? 11...\textit{b}8 might well be slightly irrelevant if he is not going to try ...\textit{b}3. An alternative perhaps would be 11...\textit{b}7! followed by ...\textit{c}5.

Earlier, White has also tried various quieter pawn moves, such as 10 c3, 10 \textit{h}3, or occasionally 10 a5.

10...\textit{d}xe5

10...\textit{d}xe5 has also been tried, but usually Black prefers the knight exchange.

11 \textit{d}xe5

11 \textit{f}4 \textit{g}6 has been tried various times, but without making much of an impact on Black's position. White prefers to set up a clear weakness in Black's pawn structure, and attack it.

11...\textit{d}xe5

The pawn structure has now been fixed, and White can feel reasonably happy with the outcome. Black has three slight pawn weaknesses, leaving White something to work with. White's bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal is an irritation, putting pressure on the f7-pawn. As a consequence, it is difficult to provide full protection for the e5-pawn. Black's rook cannot simultaneously provide full cover for both the e-file and the f-file. As a result, he has to make compromises. On the queenside, Black's b-pawn has been encouraged to advance perhaps more quickly than he would have liked, and in consequence, Black's c-file is weakened. White can play, for example, \textit{d}2-c4 without much opposition.

Having said that, any advantage for White is still slight, provided Black can play actively. Black was careful earlier to exchange knights, giving up his purely defensive c6-knight in return for taking White's active f3-knight. Simplification usually helps the defender, but it cannot solve every problem.

12 \textit{w}f3

White sees his queen as an attacker, his opponent's queen as the defender.

12 \textit{w}e2 or 12 \textit{g}5 would be less forceful, and 12 \textit{d}2? would be even careless, in view of 12...\textit{g}4.

12...\textit{b}7

There are some other lines that have been played, but this seems the most direct. \textit{Fritz} gives lines such as 12...\textit{c}5 or 12...\textit{c}6 as equal, but what is Black trying to do next?

12...\textit{e}6 covers up White's light-squared diagonal towards \textit{f}7, but the central tension seems to favour White, for example, after 13 \textit{d}2 \textit{c}5 14 \textit{h}3!?

13 \textit{d}2

'Knights before bishops'.

The knight may, though, need some time to manoeuvre itself to the best square, and cannot move instantly from, for example, b1 to g3.

If 13 \textit{g}5 \textit{d}7 14 \textit{e}3 \textit{c}5, Black is equal. Here 13...\textit{h}6!? 14 \textit{d}1 \textit{hxg}5 15 \textit{xd}8 \textit{axd}8 is a provocative queen sac.
rifice. White will have to work out how to develop his knight and rook; his minor pieces do not work together well.

13...\textit{c5}

In J.Ehlvest-V.Kupreichik, Minsk 1989, Kupreichik provided perhaps a little too direct a hint of a threatened capture on e4 with 13...\textit{h8}. Ehlvest covered the f5-square with 14 g4!? \textit{c5} 15 \textit{xc4}, but Kupreichik persisted with 15...\textit{xe4}?! (Black was already slightly worse anyway) 16 \textit{xe4} f5 17 \textit{xf5} \textit{xf5} 18 \textit{xf5} \textit{wd1}+ 19 \textit{g2} \textit{f8}, but after 20 \textit{e3}!, Black’s attack was over. Could Black play with more finesse?

14 \textit{f1}

A standard Ruy Lopez manoeuvre, bringing the knight to g3, and then either defending the e4-pawn, or starting a \textit{d5} kingside attack. Additionally, White is thinking about \textit{g5}, and of course White no longer has any backrow problems. One senses that Black has not yet equalized.

14...\textit{w8}

After 14...\textit{wd7} 15 h3 White will have a later hit with \textit{ad1} (after the bishop move). So the queen shelters to a safer square.

15 h3

One of the less successful games in grandmaster chess continued with 15 \textit{g3}?! \textit{wg4} 16 \textit{wd3}?! \textit{ad8}, and White later retreated with 17 \textit{f3}. Ivanchuk naturally prefers to cover the g4-square.

With ideas of setting up the sacrifice on e4. Ivanchuk suggests, as a possible improvement, 15...\textit{as} 16 \textit{g5} \textit{a6}?! then possibly 17 \textit{xc4} \textit{d6} 18 \textit{g3} \textit{wa8}. 16 \textit{g3}

White wishes to consolidate the e4-pawn, or at least partially consolidate.

16 \textit{e3}?! \textit{xe4} would, of course, be a mistake.

Ivanchuk gives 16 \textit{h6} as inaccurate with good play for Black after 16...\textit{ad7} 17 \textit{e3} f5. This seems less than clear after 18 \textit{ad5}!, with chances for White for a slight edge. Maybe 16...\textit{e8} 17 \textit{e3} \textit{xe3} would be more flexible, about equal, after 18 \textit{xe3} \textit{ad6}, hitting e4 from another direction.

The \textit{h6} move is not a bad idea, but Ivanchuk has analysed something better and more direct. The next few moves are of themselves straightforward enough, but the resulting play is strategically complicated.
16...\textit{ex}e4!? 

Clearly the tactic has been in the air for quite a long time.

Ivanchuk gives 16...\textit{Wd}7 17 \textit{Qg}5 \textit{Wc}6 18 e3 \textit{bxc}3 19 \textit{bxc}3 \textit{Ba}b8 20 \textit{Ba}b1 as a slight edge for White, but this is hardly surprising given that Black’s ...\textit{Wd}8-c8-d7 has ended up as a loss of tempo.

To try to prove that his previous play was positionally justified, Aronian has to take up the challenge.

17 \textit{Qxe}4
17 \textit{Qxe}4? f5 loses the exchange.
17...f5

So Black recovers the knight, unless of course White doesn’t mind losing the queen for compensation.

18 \textit{Qxc}5!

Ivanchuk takes up the challenge. When writing this book, this was one of the first games to select. It is so rare to be able to find positions with queen versus three minor pieces, much rarer than queen versus rook, minor piece and pawn.

I suspect that in home preparation Aronian would have been happy with this position, seeing White’s kingside pawn structure as seriously weakened. However, as play goes on, White’s pieces start to work together, and Black’s play becomes increasingly difficult. Ivanchuk’s play is highly original and insightful.

Was dropping the queen forced? Ivanchuk gives as an alternative 18 \textit{Qe}6 \textit{Qxe}4 (18...\textit{Qxe}6? 19 \textit{Qxc}5 and White wins a piece) 19 \textit{Qxc}8 \textit{Qxf}3 20 \textit{Qxe}5 \textit{Qd}4 21 \textit{Qxf}5 \textit{Qaxc}8 22 \textit{Qxf}3 \textit{Qxf}3 23 \textit{gxf}3 \textit{Qf}8 24 \textit{Qg}2 \textit{Qe}8 25 \textit{f}1, and a possible draw by repetition.

Ivanchuk also gives 18 \textit{Qh}6, when the simplest reply is 18...\textit{fxe}4!? 19 \textit{Qxg}7+ \textit{Qxg}7 20 \textit{Qg}3+ \textit{Qh}6 (but not 20...\textit{Qh}8?? 21 \textit{Qxe}5+) 21 \textit{Qh}4+ \textit{Qg}6 with a perpetual. White has no room to manoeuvre for more, as Black is threatening ...\textit{Qxf}2+. Here 18...\textit{Qxe}4 19 \textit{Qxg}7+ \textit{Qxg}7 20 \textit{Qg}3+ \textit{Qf}6 21 \textit{Qh}4+ \textit{Qg}6 22 \textit{Qg}3+ is also a drawing line, while Ivanchuk also looks at 18...\textit{gxh}6 19 \textit{Qg}3 \textit{f}4 20 \textit{Wd}3, which he gives as unclear.

There are some interesting drawing options, but there is only one real chance of playing for a win.
18...\textit{Qxf}3 19 \textit{gxf}3

An unusual material balance. Enjoy it while you can in a game between two top grandmasters.
The material is in theory about equal (9 = 3+3+3), if we assume that Black's e-pawn will drop. If the e-pawn holds, then maybe Black has a slight edge in terms of material, but of course there are many other issues in the position.

Probably White ought to have the better piece structure, if his minor pieces are well guarded, but his bishop on c1 might well be poorly placed. Terms of pawns, Black's queenside pawns are ineffective, but White has weakened kingside pawns, and his king is isolated.

19...f4!? This is by far the most natural move, with ideas of attacking on h3, and also blocking the bishop on c1. Probably most strong players would want to play this, or at the very least consider it seriously. It may still not be the best. White soon has outposts on e4 and g4, thanks to Black's pawn push.

There are a few alternatives. Ivanchuk gives 19...e8 20 f4, and if 20...e4 21 e3 followed by h2 and g1, and White's pieces are rock solid. Black will have to defend weaknesses on the pawn on g7, adding sensitivity to the king, and also along the d-file, and against threats with either bishop or knight from e6. Similarly, if 20...exf4 21 xf4, and White's minor pieces are excellent.

19...e4!? is an attempt to open up lines for the queen and rooks, although White does not necessarily have to oblige, since 20 f4 closes play down again. Black could of course transpose to Ivanchuk's suggested line with 20...e8. There may be improvements, but these are probably not significant. White could also allow the centre to open with 20 fxe4 fxe4 21 e6 f6 22 xe4 w7 23 c5 w6 24 e3. Probably White has the better chances, with complicated play, but there are earlier chances to improve for Black.

Pawns may well have been 'the soul of chess', as Philidor may have suggested a quarter of a millennium ago, but the major pieces, the queen and the rooks, are surely the heart of attack. White's king is open, and one could argue that Black should be concentrating on queen and rook moves, rather than pawn play.

Thus 19...e8! looks better, and if 20 e6 wh5 21 xf8 (21 d5 c6 does not help White) 21...xf8 22 xe5 xf8. Now it is wisest for White to return the light-squared bishop to the kingside with 23 c4 wh3 24 e2 wh4 25 e6 (or maybe 25 f3) 25...a5, and difficult play continues, with Black having a queen and a pawn and a few threats against the white king, and White having rook and two bishops in reply. This is a delicate balance. The computer gives it as equal, but there is no clear perpetual, and the positional balance could easily fall either way after any inaccuracy.
20 \( \text{h2} \)

White needs to defend the exposed h-pawn, and to tuck his king behind the pawn.

20 \( \text{xe5? } \text{wh3} \) is much too risky, and after 21 \( \text{d5?} \) c6 22 \( \text{xc6} \text{xf6} \) Black is about to mate.

24...\( \text{wh6} \) 25 \( \text{c4} \) a5 26 \( \text{d3} \text{g6+} \) 27 \( \text{h2} \text{wh5} \) 28 \( \text{g2} \) with a repetition after 28...\( \text{g6+} \). Here 28...\( \text{e5?!} \) could be tried, the queen taking advantage of the vacant square of the pawn, but 29 \( \text{b2! } \text{e6} \) 30 \( \text{d2} \) starts a partial unravelling.

Ivanchuk suggests an alternative choice, 22 \( \text{d3!} \) (instead of 22 \( \text{e4} \)), which would seem to be more attractive. The knight puts pressure on the black pawn on f4, and also guards the weak square on f2. Also White keeps his good rook on e5, since if 22...\( \text{ae8?} \) 23 \( \text{xe8} \text{xe8} \), White simply has 24 \( \text{xf4} \). Ivanchuk gives the position as unclear after the preferable 22...\( \text{ad8} \) 23 \( \text{e2} \text{wh5} \) 24 \( \text{d2} \text{xf3} \) 25 \( \text{ae1} \) a5.

20...\( \text{wh5} \)

Black consolidates, and this is indeed natural, stopping White's rook taking control of the e-file, but is it the best? Ivanchuk suggests as an alternative 20...\( \text{wd8!?} \), aiming for counterplay after 21 \( \text{xe5 wh4} \). Black would there be arguing that the pawn on e5 is not so significant. The other pawns, f4 and b4, are more significant, as if Black can hold on to them, White's dark-squared bishop is out of active play.

Ivanchuk gives as his main line the slightly fragile 22 \( \text{e4} \text{ae8} \) 23 \( \text{xe8} \text{xe8} \), when it is difficult for White to develop his pieces. If, for example, 24 \( \text{d2?? } \text{xe4} \) 25 \( \text{fxe4 whxf2+} \), and Black wins material. White therefore tries instead 24 \( \text{g2} \). There are various ways of handling the position, and certainly 24...\( \text{e5} \) is natural, and worth considering, but Ivanchuk suggests, with thoughts of safety for both sides,

If White were to find a couple of clear tempi, and bring all his extra pieces into play, then he would be better. Unfortunately, just at the moment his pieces lack coordination, with, for example, his two rooks being immobile (26 \( \text{e7?? } \text{xd3} \)). White has to try something quickly, though, as Black's queen is flexible and mobile, and his pawns can try to open White's kingside with ...g5 and ...g4. One senses that there will be tactics.
a) There are, for example, some entreating checks, counterchecks and mate threats after 26 \( \text{e}6?! \text{c}6! 27 \text{xf}4 \text{xd}3 28 \text{exd}3 \text{xf}4 29 \text{d}7. \) Winning for White? Not quite. Black has 29...\( \text{d}6! 30 \text{e}8+ \text{f}8+, \) a vital countercheck. White’s king moves, and Black covers his mating threats with 31...\( \text{g}8, \) with a substantial advantage.

b) So let us try a more direct threat, 26 \( \text{e}5. \) There is only one good queen move, as 27 \( \text{f}7+ \) is a threat. He must play 26...\( \text{h}5 \) (and if 27 \( \text{f}7+? \text{xf}7 28 \text{e}8+ \text{f}8). \) Play continues with 27 \( \text{e}6, \) and if given the chance, White would be happy after \( \text{g}4 \) and \( \text{f}3. \) Again one senses tactics, and they soon arise with 27...f3? 28 \( \text{g}4 \text{fxe}2 29 \text{hx}5 \text{d}2 30 \text{g}2 \text{xc}2 31 \text{xe}2 \text{b}3! \) (otherwise White is better), and we have reached a much more normal material balance, with rook and pawn against two minor pieces. Probably the position is about equal after, for example, 32 \( \text{h}4 \) (preventing Black from thinking about...g5) 32...g6 33 \( \text{f}3 \text{g}7 34 \text{d}3 \text{d}8 35 \text{e}3, \) and the position has stabilized for both sides.

In *Informator*, Ivanchuk gives this line as ‘unclear’ after White’s 25th, and before the tactics come up. In terms of practical over-the-board chess, this seems about right. Neither player can show a clear advantage, while in the alternative line the position is also unclear.

Of course, it would have been beyond the event horizon for Aronian to have been able to decide over the board whether 19...\( \text{e}8 \) would have been better than 19...f4, bearing in mind the additional possibility that he could also have chosen between 20...f5 and 20...\( \text{d}8. \)

21 \( \text{d}2! \)

This is an extremely difficult position to interpret, not just in terms of pure chess, but also in terms of chess psychology. Ivanchuk gives this as an exclamation mark, and this is fully understandable in positional terms, developing his queening pieces, and waiting to see whether the knight should go to d3 or to e4, both good and logical squares, but cannot both be played.

Ivanchuk gives 21 \( \text{d}3 \text{a}8 22 \text{d}2 \text{wh}5, \) and this could easily transpose into 21 \( \text{d}2 \text{wh}5 22 \text{d}3 \text{a}8 \) (see the note to Black’s 21st), but as we shall soon see, Aronian does not enter the critical line.

Ivanchuk analyses 23 \( \text{e}4! \text{f}6 1 (23...\text{xf}3 24 \text{a}e1 \text{g}5 25 \text{x}e5 \text{x}e5 26 \text{x}e5 \text{g}4 27 \text{hx}4 \text{x}g4 28 \text{xb}4 with advantage to White; Black’s rook cannot add to the attack) 24 \text{a}e1 \text{wh}6 25 \text{xf}4 \text{f}5 26 \text{g}1 \text{g}5 with sharp play, including the possibility of good play by Black. Ivanchuk further gives 27 \( \text{e}2 \text{f}6 28 \text{g}4! \text{xf}3 29 \text{g}2 \text{xh}3 30 \text{d}3, \) citing this as unclear. One possibility is 30...\( \text{x}g4 31 \text{xe}5 \text{d}1+ 32 \text{f}1 \text{wh}5 33
With a perpetual.

One cannot help feeling that there are many variations that need to be considered in such an open position, and that Black has started at last to break up White’s kingside pawns. There are possible ideas for Black to try to improve, most naturally perhaps 27...hxh3?, and if 28 Qd3? Wf6 29 Qxb4 g4!, and White is suddenly in serious trouble, as if 30 hxg4 (diverting the rook from the e-file) 30...Wh6 31 Qf1 Wh1+ 32 Ke2 exd4+, and Black is winning. Probably White has to try 28 Qg3 Wxf3, but Black is better.

Both 21 Qd2 and 21 Qd3 could lead to these lines, which tend to be favourable to Black. There is, however, an important distinction. After 21 Qd2!, White can avoid all this. See the next note.

21...Qf6?!

If 21...Qae8?!, White does not transpose into the above lines with 22 Qd3, but tries something else: 22 Qg1.

After the text move, Ivanchuk again plays the rook to g1 and g4, and Aronian’s attacking play looks rather too direct.

21...Wh5 would be another attempt to enter the lines started with 21 Qd3, and if 22 Qd3? (not 22 Qd5? Qad8) 22...Rae8, with probably a slight edge to Black, as discussed earlier. 22 Qe4! is better when 22...Wxf3?! 23 Qe6 is an irrelevant pawn grab, as White is threatening to trap the queen with Qg4. After 23...Wh5 24 Qg4, White’s position is fully satisfactory. Thus 22...a5! seems best. Then 23 Qe6 Ha6 24 Qg4 follows, with tense play, probably less favourable for White than in the actual game, because ideally White would want the rook rather than the bishop on g4.

22 Qg1

 Safest. White intends to plug the diagonal with Qg4.

22 Qxb4? Wh6 23 Qe6 leaves Black too much free space after 23...Wxc2!, and if 23 Qf1 Qxe6 (among others) 24 Qxe6 Wc5.

The computer suggests early on that 22...Qxe6? 24 Qxe6 Qxe6 25 Qc3 Wc6 is winning, but 26 Qxe5 Wxc3 (or 26...Qg8 27 Qe7) 27 Qg5 allows White a strong attack with the two rooks and bishop.

22...Wh6

Black forces the opponent to play what he wants to play anyway.
Modern Chess: Move by Move

Ivanchuk gives 22...a5 23 Qg4 h8 24 De4 h6 25 xe1 as unclear. Despite Fritz, which suggests that Black is on top, play looks good for White. If, for example, 25...Wh5 26 h4 g6 (or 26...g5 27 Qxg5 Wxg4 28 Qf7+ Qg7 29 fxg4 Qxh4+ 30 Qg2 Qxd2 31 Qxe5, and White is doing very well) 27 Qf7 Qxg4 28 Qxh5 Qxh4+ 29 Qg2 Qxh5 30 c3, and the bishop and knight will be more active than the rook and two pawns.

The reader might well wonder why Black is trying to play so sharply. There is a simple reason. If Black does not do something quickly, White's pieces will continue to improve.

23 Qg4

Essential. The rook now blocks everything on the kingside, although it helps that Black cannot attack with any minor pieces. White will at some stage want to open up his position for the bishops with c3.

23...a5

A natural and strong move, not just to save the pawn on b4, but more generally to try to lock the dark-squared bishop into passive play.

24 Qe1

Some pressure on the pawn on e5 is bound to be useful, cutting down various defensive options for Black, but as we shall soon see, White's plan is not simply a big attack on e5.

24...Wh5

24...Wh5 25 h4 is not fully satisfactory either. Black cannot try ...g6 at various stages, in view of Qf7. Ivanchuk gives 25...Qd6 26 Qd3 xe8 27 Qc4 as unclear, but White can gradually consolidate his pieces with b3, xe4, and maybe manoeuvring his bishop to b2.

25 Qe4

The one obvious weakness for White at the end of the combinative phase was that his kingside pawns had been broken up into doubled and isolated pawns. Now with fully protected pieces, with the knight on e4 and the rook on g4, the fractured pawn structure is a positive advantage for White.

25 Qd3 Wh5 30 h4 Qf5 is also promising for White, but it seems simpler to aim for complete security on the kingside, before opening up the queenside.

25...Wh5

He might as well force the pawn to advance, but it is not up to much.

25...Qxh3+?? loses material after 26 Qxh3+ h5 27 Qg2, and if 27...hxg4? 28
H1+, winning.
26...h4
White’s rook on g4 is the hero of the defence.

26...hxg6
And this is the only way to get at the white rook.

27 hxg6
27 Hfg1 Hxg4 28 Hxg4 is also to be considered, and is good, but with the first set of rooks gone, Black finds it more difficult to attack with the second rook.

27...Hxg6
Again, not 27...Hxh4?? 28 Hg2 Hxg6 29 Hh1.

27...hxg6 28 Hg2 Hf5 29 c3 gives a clear edge for White. It is difficult for Black to attack any of White’s minor pieces.

28...c3

The dark-squared bishop is now back in play, finally completing, in the broadest sense, its full development. Soon White will be able to attack.

28...c5?
Effectively the losing mistake, and probably the result of a misjudgement. Ivanchuk suggests that White is better after 28...Hf5 29 Hg1 Wh6 30 cxb4

Wxh4+ 31 Hg2 Hh5 32 Hf1 axb4 33 He2. The king is safe, and he has an outside passed a-pawn.

28...Hb6 29 cxb4 axb4 30 Hc1 Hd8 is better, and Ivanchuk gives it, perhaps generously, as ‘unclear’. White cannot lose this, in the absence of a serious error, but he has chances of playing for a win. White’s rook and knight are both well placed, and he has the advantage of a passed pawn, but how can he make progress with the other pieces, more particularly the two bishops? The main problem is the dark-squared bishop, which requires some work. A possible idea would be something like 31 Hg2 g6 32 Ac4 Hg7 33 b3 Hf8 34 Ac2 He7 35 Ac1 followed by Ab2, and the bishop reaches fresh air. Black is certainly not yet safe.

Finally, 28...Wh5 seems almost too elementary for Ivanchuk to mention, even though Black has the chance of winning a kingside pawn. 29 cxb4 axb4 30 Hg2 gives White a big edge.

29 Ac1 Ac5!
Ivanchuk can quite simply snatch the pawn. Two bishops, a knight and a pawn, in return for the queen, will be enough for White.

29...Hd8
29...Wd6 30 Ae4 Wd3 31 Hg2 is solid for White. He will gradually consolidate. Ivanchuk gives 31...Hd8 32 Hc1 h6 33 Ac2 Wc2 34 Axd1 Whd3 35 cxb4 axb4 36 Axb4 as winning.

30 Ae4!
30 Ac1 Wb6 31 Aexe5 bxc3 32 bxc3 is genuinely unclear. White has surrendered most of his pawn support for the minor pieces.

30...Wb6
With threats of ...Hxd2.
It is always hazardous to guess exactly where a player has made a serious miscalculation, but here the likelihood would seem to be that when sacrificing with 28...c5, Aronian had assumed that his queen move to b6 would have been strong. However, Ivanchuk had calculated further.

Ivanchuk gives 30...\(\text{Wh6}\) 31 \(\text{cxb4}\) \(\text{axb4}\) 32 \(\text{Cc1}\) \(\text{Wh4+}\) 33 \(\text{Gg2}\) as a big advantage for White. Quite probably the edge is decisive.

31 \(\text{Ad1!}\)

This consolidates everything.

31...\(\text{Ed3?!}\)

If 31...\(\text{bxc3}\) 32 \(\text{Exc3!}\), with a backrank win after 32...\(\text{Wxb3??}\) 33 \(\text{Exd8+}\). Black loses more slowly after 32...\(\text{Exd1}\) 33 \(\text{Exd1}\) \(\text{Ed8}\) 33 \(\text{Ge2}\) \(\text{Wh4+}\) 34 \(\text{Gg2}\).

Ivanchuk suggests 31...\(\text{h6}\) as the best attempt to hold. There are clearly several possibilities for White, maybe starting with 32 \(\text{cxb4}\). Ivanchuk himself gives 32 \(\text{Gg2}\) \(\text{Ed3}\) 33 \(\text{Cc2}\) \(\text{Ed8}\) 34 \(\text{cxb4}\) \(\text{axb4}\) 35 a5! \(\text{Gb5}\) (35...\(\text{Wxa5}\) 36 \(\text{Exb4!}\)) 36 \(\text{b3}\) \(\text{Rxa8}\) 37 \(\text{Gd6}\) \(\text{Wxa5}\) 38 \(\text{Cc4}\) with advantage to White.

32 \(\text{Cc4!}\)

Simple and clear. Neither queen nor rook have any good moves.

32...\(\text{Exf3?!}\)

32...\(\text{Ed8}\) loses a tempo, but at least avoids the quick loss. Ivanchuk gives 33 \(\text{cxb4}\) \(\text{axb4}\) 34 a5 \(\text{Wxa5}\) 35 \(\text{Exb4}\), and White has a substantial edge.

33 \(\text{Ge1}\)

Black’s rook is trapped.

33...\(\text{g5}\)

Black must open up an escape square for the king, otherwise the queen will have no chance of active play.

34 \(\text{hxg5}\)

Avoiding 34 \(\text{Qxg5??}\) \(\text{Exf2+}\), when Black may even be better.

34...\(\text{g7}\)

Black’s queen cannot try anything. If 34...\(\text{Wg6}\) 35 \(\text{Ed8+}\) \(\text{Gg7}\) 36 \(\text{Gg8}\) mate.

35 \(\text{Ed7+}\)

No doubt White can also find ways to win the rook, but in time trouble there are simpler ways. Check, check, squeeze the queen out of the way, then everything is easy.

35...\(\text{f7}\) 36 \(\text{Af7+}\)

Still good, although naturally 36 \(\text{Gg2}\) is also effective.

36...\(\text{e8}\) 37 \(\text{f6}\) 1-0

It is time for Black to resign.
1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Qc3 Qf6 4 e3

Karpov avoids the main lines of the Slav (4 Qc3 dxc4 5 a4 Qf5), the Meran (4 Qf3 e6 5 e3 Qbd7 6 Qd3 – see Game 1, Kasimdzhanov-Kasparov), and the sharp gambit lines in the Botvinnik Variation (4 Qc3 e6 5 Qg5 – see Game 27, Cheparinov-Nepomniachtchi). He is relying instead on simple, natural chess, hoping for a slight technical edge, and to grind away. This has been a successful formula for him over several decades.

5 Qc3

5 cxd5!? cxd5 6 Qb3 Qc7 7 Qb5+ is one of the more tempting lines of the exchange systems of the Slav. Maybe Black’s bishop is slightly misplaced? Probably though it will gradually fade to equality after 7...Qc6 or 7...Qbd7.

Suppose, though, Black wanted to try to play for more with 5...Qxd5!? Before the war, many players preferred this as Black, rather than keeping the symmetrical pawn structure. There was, for example, a long and involved draw in the 6th game in the 1935 World Championship Match between Euwe and Alekhine, Euwe playing as White. Definitely worth playing through. Who knows, had Euwe lost this tense game, he might never have become World Champion? He was certainly under great pressure in the endgame.

5...e6

Akopian finds an extra pawn recapture on d5.

6 Qh4

6 Qd3 Qxd3 7 Qxd3 is of course level, often the prelude for a quick draw offer. The only real chance of an edge is to take the bishop-pair.

6...Qg6

There have been a few attempts to allow the knight to capture on f5, doubling Black’s f-pawns and weakening the d5-pawn, but hoping for Black to
add extra control over the e4-square.

6...\(\text{\textDia}g4\) has been tried several times, aiming to provoke White's kingside pawns. If 7 \text{f3}, then 7...\text{\textDia}h5 should be comfortable for Black. 7 \text{\textDia}b3 is the attempt for a slight edge for White.

Another bishop escape would be 6...\text{\textDia}e4. White then chooses between 7 \text{f3} and 7 \text{\textDia}b3.

It is simpler, though, for the bishop to return to g6, and allow White to open Black's h-file. As the game shows, the half-open file becomes useful.

7 \text{\textDia}xg6

It's simplest to get this exchange out of the way quickly.

7...\text{hxg6}

7...\text{fxg6} is just about playable, trying to make use of the f-file, but the centre is slightly weakened.

8 \text{h3}

8 \text{g3} has also been tried, not least by Karpov himself, and also Kramnik among others. This blunts the \text{b8-h2} pressure against the \text{h}-pawn, and allows White the chance of a kingside fianchetto. White is not, of course, aiming for a big attack, but he would like to think that perhaps he can try for a small edge.

There are, of course, a few other moves: for example, 8 \text{\textDia}d2 \text{\textDia}d6 9 \text{h3} \text{\textDia}bd7, transposing into the main line.

Topalov has tried 8 \text{a3} \text{\textDia}d7 9 \text{g3} \text{\textDia}e7, and then suddenly the more overtly aggressive 10 \text{f4}! in his World Championship match with Kramnik.

Topalov's seemingly quiet \text{a3} move was based on preventing Black from playing ...\text{\textDia}b4, and thereby stopping a ...\text{\textDia}xc3 exchange. Once this precaution has been made, White can play \text{f4} without losing control of the e4-square. Topalov later won after 10...\text{dxc4} 11 \text{\textDia}xc4 0-0 12 \text{e4}. His central pawn structure looks impressive but also fragile. Kramnik could not break open White's pawn centre, and after 12...\text{b5} 13 \text{\textDia}e2 \text{b4} 14 \text{axb4} \text{\textDia}xb4 15 \text{\textDia}f3 \text{\textDia}b6 (Marin has suggested 15...\text{c5} as an improvement) 16 0-0 \text{e5} 17 \text{\textDia}e3 \text{\textDia}ad8 18 \text{\textDia}a4! White kept his central pawn advantage.

From this game, and Game 4, Topalov-Anand, the impression given is that Topalov has closely studied the ways in which he can find a few apparently very quiet pawn moves on the edges, and then set up sudden violent attacking ideas.

8...\text{\textDia}d7
Knights before bishops – usually. He knows where the knight wants to go, but it is unclear as yet whether the bishop should play to b4, d6, or the quiet e7.

9 \( \text{\textbf{\textit{d2}}} \)

A quiet and modest move, but it is better to have the bishop on d2 rather than on c1, obstructing the rook.

If 9 \( \text{\textbf{\textit{d2}}} \) or 9 \( \text{\textbf{\textit{d3}}} \), Black could aim for the gain of tempo, with 9...dxc4, or equally he could ignore it.

9...\( \text{\textbf{\textit{d6}}} \)

9...\( \text{\textbf{\textit{b4}}} \) 10 \( \text{\textbf{\textit{wb3}}} \) seems to give White a slight edge, so he keeps the bishop more central.

Here the impression might be given that Karpov has done almost nothing with the white pieces, but look closely, and White has achieved a small but important advantage, a safe bishop-pair.

Karpov has also tried 10 \( \text{\textbf{\textit{wc2}}} \) \( \text{\textbf{\textit{we7}}} \) 11 \( \text{\textbf{\textit{e2}}} \) dxc4 12 \( \text{\textbf{\textit{xc4}}} \) e5 13 dxe5 \( \text{\textbf{\textit{xe5}}} \) 14 \( \text{\textbf{\textit{e2}}} \), with a slight edge for White, A.Karpov-R.Felgaer, Buenos Aires (simul) 2003, and duly kept a slight edge and won. He decides, though, that \( \text{\textbf{\textit{wc2}}} \) is unnecessary, and that he might as well keep the queen at home.

10...dxc4

Or possibly 10...\( \text{\textbf{\textit{we7}}} \). Would Karpov then return to his simultaneous win? Or maybe 11 \( \text{\textbf{\textit{c1l}}} \) instead.

11 \( \text{\textbf{\textit{xc4}}} \) 0-0

There are choices here. Castling is perhaps the quietest and safest, adding protection to the f7-square if Black were to try ...e5. Black loses the rook pressure on the h-file, but as the game shows, ...g6-g5-g4 is sometimes an effective attacking play for Black, even without the h8-rook.

12 0-0

Natural development.

12...\( \text{\textbf{\textit{e5}}} \)

Recovering space with the pawn structure, but there are now possible weaknesses on the light squares.

13 dxe5

13 \( \text{\textbf{\textit{wc2}}} \) exd4 14 exd4 \( \text{\textbf{\textit{b6}}} \) 15 \( \text{\textbf{\textit{b3}}} \) is also to be considered. White has weakened his pawns slightly, but has good piece prospects. Karpov prefers to give away nothing.

13...\( \text{\textbf{\textit{xe5}}} \)

A good square for the knight.

14 \( \text{\textbf{\textit{e2}}} \)

Aiming for security, and maintain-
Modern Chess: Move by Move

ing the bishop-pair.

14 \( \text{b3!} \) is possible, a tactical point being 14...\( \text{cxd3} \) 15 \( \text{wc2} \) \( \text{xbd4} \), and White wins a pawn with 16 \( \text{wxg6} \), but here 15...\( \text{c7} \) 16 \( \text{aad1} \) \( \text{wd6} \) is about level.

14...\( \text{g5} \)

Sometimes the doubled h-pawn is a positive advantage, rather than a slight weakness. The front pawn makes its presence felt against White’s kingside, while the rear pawn protects Black’s king.

Even so, White is still slightly better. Akopian is setting up counterplay rather than attacking just at the moment.

15 \( \text{e4} \)

A natural reaction, continuing White’s plan of development.

15...\( \text{h7} \)

Protecting the pawn. 15...\( \text{g4?} \) 16 \( \text{hxg4} \) \( \text{xfxg4} \) 17 \( \text{xdg4} \) \( \text{wh4} \) 18 \( \text{h3} \) doesn’t work.

16 \( \text{xe3!} \)

Sadly, Karpov by now was no longer at his extraordinary positional best. This bishop move is natural enough, and maybe still gives White a slight edge, but it lacks coordination with the other pieces. In particular, one thought is that it is the knight, rather than the bishop, that should reside on e3, covering several important light squares in the centre and on the kingside. Thus 16 \( \text{wc2!} \) \( \text{we7} \) 17 \( \text{d1} \), then maybe 17...\( \text{f8} \) 18 \( \text{d3} \), and the knight is at least as powerful as Black’s. Later White’s bishop could emerge on c3, with good play.

18...\( \text{g6?} \) will lead to tactics after, for example, 19 \( \text{xc4} \) \( \text{xc4} \) 20 \( \text{xc4} \) \( \text{g4!} \) 21 \( \text{hxg4} \) (but not 21 \( \text{e5?} \) \( \text{exe5} \) 22 \( \text{wxg6+??} \) \( \text{h8} \), and Black wins material). Then the most direct attack is 21...\( \text{wh4?} \), but White refutes Black’s play with 22 \( \text{e5!} \) \( \text{exe5} \) 23 \( \text{wxg6+} \) \( \text{h8} \) 24 \( \text{wh6} \) \( \text{wxg4} \) 25 \( \text{xf7} \) \( \text{g8} \) 26 \( \text{xdg8} \) \( \text{hgxg8} \) 27 \( \text{wh1!} \) (an echo of the Adams-Yusupov, Game 3), and Black runs out of attacking ideas.

So we try instead 21...\( \text{we5} \), and there is an echo from the other side after 22 \( \text{f4?} \) \( \text{wd4+} \) 23 \( \text{h1} \) \( \text{wh8!} \) 24 \( \text{h2} \) \( \text{g5} \) 25 \( \text{g3} \) \( \text{f6} \) 26 \( \text{h1} \) \( \text{wg7} \) 27 \( \text{xf3} \) \( \text{xf4} \) with unclear play. 22 \( \text{g3} \) is, of course, better, and after 22...\( \text{dg5} \) 23 \( \text{hxg5} \) \( \text{hxg5} \) White keeps a slight edge, with an extra doubled pawn in an opposite-coloured bishop middlegame.

Earlier, 16...\( \text{g4?!} \) is again premature: 17 \( \text{hxg4} \) \( \text{wh4} \) 18 \( \text{xf4!} \) blocks Black’s
critical diagonal. If, for example, 18...\(\text{Qg5}\) \(\text{19 Qg3 Qe5}\) \(\text{+ 20 Qxf3 Qxf3+ 21 Qxh3 Qxg3}\) 22 Qxg3 Qxg3 23 Wh2, and White pockets the piece.

All this should only be regarded as provisional. There are plenty of ideas to be considered.

16...We7

Akopian sets up a plan of bringing his king’s rook to d8, then his knight back to f8.

17 Wc2

A natural move. The computer suggests that there are a dozen ways in which White has an advantage. Quite probably the computer can overstate the bishop-pair. The human player might suggest that it is about equal, that Karpov has not proved any real advantage, and that Akopian has not yet taken control.

17...Rfd8

Continuing his plan.

Akopian’s knight move is far more relevant. The knight soon returns to e6, then maybe to d4 or f4.

19 Qc5

It is moving forward, but where to next?

19...b6

Akopian asks the question.

20 Qb3

20 Qd3 Qxd3 21 Qxd3 Qd7 is about equal, maybe fractionally better for Black. Again the bishop-pair is of little importance when the opponent has an active bishop and good squares for the knight, preferably with the help of pawns protecting outposts.

Not, of course, 22 Qxc6?? Qe5 23 Qxe3 Qxe3 24 Qxd3 Qh2 mate.

20...Qe6

20...c5 looks slightly more accurate, squeezing White’s knight into inactive play.

21 Qfd1

21 Qd4! Qxd4 22 Qxd4 is about equal.

21...c5

Akopian now has a well-balanced pawn and piece structure in the centre, but he cannot claim yet that Black is better. Karpov still has the bishop-pair,
and Black has to be careful to maintain the balance on the light squares.

22 a3?! 

An extremely difficult move to annotate. Probably the simplest answer is that Karpov was suffering from fatigue over the last few moves, his play having been discernibly listless. Alas, age drifts in. There are no players aged over 50 in the 2700+ list, and few aged over 40. It is difficult to maintain such intense concentration after the mid-30s.

Quite probably Karpov would have been drifting over the last few moves, not making any gross blunders, but relying a little too much on the assumption that the bishop-pair will keep an edge, and all he has to do is to keep playing steady moves. Akopian is making quite a few constructive moves in reply, and before too long he is able to take the initiative.

22 £d2 £c6 23 £ad1 £b4 24 £b1 gives White possibly a slight edge, but here 22...£f4!? is probably equal. If 23 £xf4 £xf4, the computer suggests that White is better, but after 24 £ad1 there is 24...£f3!, a standard pawn sacrifice doubling pawns in front of the king, which cannot even be regarded as controversial. Black should be at least equal.

22...£a5!?

Akopian makes active use of the queenside pawn majority. Also, he waits to see whether his knight should end up on d4 rather than on f4. Certainly 22...£f4 is possible and playable, but by waiting, and advancing a pawn actively, Black is adding to White’s tension. It is difficult to find a string of good moves for White to cover both knight moves.

23 £d2?!

It is as if Karpov senses that he should defend Akopian’s attack, and that the resulting position is a draw. Unfortunately, Akopian is not ready for a quick half-half, and finds ways of playing for a win.

But shouldn’t White be trying for a slight edge anyway? Sometimes it takes several minor inaccuracies to turn White from having a slight advantage to Black being equal or better. 23 £ac1 is natural, and if 23...£a4 24 £d2. White eventually has to play the knight to d2 anyway, but in comparison with the game, White’s £ac1 is far more effective than Black’s ...£a4. Indeed Black’s extra pawn move is a weakness, rather than a strength. If Black were, for example, to play an early ...£ac8, White simply takes the pawn on a4. Here we have:

![Chess Diagram]

a) After 24...£d4 25 £xd4 £xd4 26 £c4? £xc4 27 £xc4 White would have slightly the better chances.

b) 24...£c6 is to be considered, but after 25 £f3 White will have good control of the light squares, with, for example, £b5 or £c4.

Of course, it is quite possible that
Black would not want to play 23...a4 immediately. 23...\(\text{Q}g6!\) would keep the tension alive.

23...\(\text{Q}d4!\)

Black is now think of playing for an edge.

23...\(\text{Q}c6\) 24 \(\text{Q}f3\) \(\text{Q}c4\) 25 \(\text{Q}x\!d4\) \(\text{Q}x\!d4\) 26 \(\text{Q}x\!d4\) \(\text{c}x\!d4\) gives White slightly the better chances.

24 \(\text{Q}x\!d4\)

Obviously the only move, but now Karpov loses his bishop-pair.

24...\(\text{c}x\!d4\)

And Black now has a passed, if isolated, pawn. What can he do with the pawn, though?

25 \(\text{Q}f1\)

An indication perhaps that Karpov sees that there are now problems with his position. This retreat is not something that one would want to make.

25 \(\text{Q}c4\) allows Black to set up tactics with 25...\(\text{I}a\!c8\) 26 \(\text{W}b3\) d3 27 \(\text{Q}x\!d3\) \(\text{W}e6\) 28 \(\text{I}a\!c1\) \(\text{Q}e7\). White can just slip out, though, with 29 \(\text{Q}e2!\) \(\text{I}x\!d1+\) 30 \(\text{W}x\!d1\), the point being 30...\(\text{I}x\!c4?\) 31 \(\text{Q}g4!\) with a winning skewer. Instead the preferable 30...\(\text{I}x\!c4\) 31 \(\text{Q}x\!c4\) \(\text{I}x\!c4\) 32 \(\text{W}b3\) \(\text{Q}e5\) 33 \(\text{W}b5!\) leads to tense play, ending up about equal in an endgame.

26...\(\text{I}a\!c8\)

Thank you! A gain of tempo starts an attack.

26 \(\text{W}b1\)

26...\(d3!\)

This pawn sacrifice sets up the win, but on closer examination it is not as convincing as the final result might suggest. Black is by no means worse after his pawn sacrifice, but maybe is not much better.

26...\(\text{I}c5!\) is a secure slight edge, and White forever has to take account of the sword thrust with ...\(d3\). If 27 \(\text{Q}g3\) \(g6\), Black also has the possibility of ...\(\text{Q}g7\) followed by ...\(\text{I}h8\), and another thrust, ...\(g4\).

27 \(\text{I}x\!d3\)

Forced.

27...\(\text{I}c5\)

Black's passed pawn has vaporized, but the empty square on d4 allows Black excellent play on the d-pawn and on the b6-g1 diagonal.

A nightmare for the small hours would be 27...\(\text{I}x\!d3?\) 28 \(\text{I}x\!d3\) \(\text{W}x\!e4??\) 29 \(\text{I}x\!d6\) \(\text{W}x\!b1\) 30 \(\text{I}x\!d8+\) \(\text{I}x\!d8\) 31 \(\text{I}x\!b1\), and Black loses a piece.

28 \(\text{I}a6\)

This is more subtle than it looks. The
point is not just that the bishop is attacking the rook, but also, as we shall see later, that the bishop is covering a significant defensive square on c8 for the queen.

It is quite possible that Akopian in his analysis had concentrated more on the more natural defensive move, 28 \( \text{dxe2} \), when Black is doing well after 28...g4 29 hxg4 Wh4 30 \( \text{dxe3} \) \( \text{dxe3} \) 31 fxe3 Wh3. White is two pawns up, but with two sets of doubled isolated pawns, a first pawn will go quickly, and most likely soon the second pawn. If White were to try 30 g3, then there is kingside danger after 30...\( \text{Wh3} \) 31 b4 axb4 32 axb4 \( \text{dxe4} \) 33 \( \text{a2} \) c3 34 \( \text{ad2} \) xg3+. White holds the position better with 34 \( \text{xg4} \) \( \text{xg4} \) 35 Wh1 dxc4. A possible draw is 36 \( \text{dxc4} \) dxc4 37 \( \text{h2} \) f3+ 38 Wh3 dxc3 39 Wh2 dxc4 40 Wh3 dxc3+ 41 Wh3 Wh3+ 42 Wh1 Wh1+.

28...\( \text{c6} \)

Aiming for any of the kingside files.

29 \( \text{xd8} \)

Simplification is welcome.

29...\( \text{xd8} \)

30 \( \text{d1?} \)

'If in doubt, centralize.' A useful principle, but it does not always work.

30 b4!? not just hits the bishop, but allows defence on the kingside after \( \text{a2} \). After 30...\( \text{d4} \) 31 \( \text{a2} \) g4 32 \( \text{b3} \), White's play might still be uncomfortable, but at least he has gained a tempo with \( \text{b1-d1} \) instead of \( \text{b1-d3} \).

Black can, however, play more aggressively with 30...\( \text{xf2}+? \) 31 \( \text{xf2} \). Then it is not so clear whether Black is genuinely attacking after 31...\( \text{d4}+? \) 32 \( \text{e2} \), and if 32...\( \text{f6} \) 33 \( \text{e3} \). However, a simpler approach is 31...\( \text{b5} \), recovering the bishop, and keeping White's king slightly exposed. White's play is difficult, but he has chances of holding after, for example, 32 \( \text{xb5} \) \( \text{b6+} \) 33 \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{f6+} \) 34 \( \text{g1} \) \( \text{e3} \) 35 \( \text{h1} \) g4 (or 35...\( \text{g4} \) 36 \( \text{e1} \) \( \text{f2}+ \) 36 \( \text{h2} \) \( \text{g4}+ \), repeating) 36 \( \text{g1} \), fizzling out as equality.

30...\( \text{d6} \)

Of course, Black keeps the queens. He wants to play for checkmate.
A. Karpov–V. Akopian, Russian Team Championship 2006

31...<f6

31...<f6 or 31...g4 would both only hold the balance after 32 <g3. Black needs to find something spikier on f2.

32 <d5

32 <e3 <d2 33 <f1 (33 <c2 <xe3)
33...<xf2! 34 <xf2 <xe3 is a simple sacrificial attack.

32...<c7

It has become evident that Black is breaking through on the dark squares.

33 <b4

Hoping to reduce the damage.

33 <d1? <xf2 34 <d8+ <xd8 35 <xd8 <h7 leaves White facing problems with a discovered check. After 36 <b4 <d2+ 37 <xc5 <xd8 38 <xb6 <d7 39 <b7 <c5, Black is a clear exchange up.

33 <e3? <xe3 34 <xe3 <f3+! 35 <xf2 (35 <xf3 <g3+ leads to quick checkmate) 35...<h4+ 36 <g1 <g3, and Black has a winning attack: 37 <e5 <f3+ 38 <f1 <xe5+ 39 <g1 <f3+ 40 <f1 <e1+ 41 <g1 <g5 merely lasts a little longer.

33...<xf2+

If White is not being checkmated yet, then he still has hope.

34 <h1 <g4

Finally Black has the opportunity of setting up the thematic attack with the front pawn of the doubled g-pawns.

35 <d1

35 <a2 is possible, and there is no immediate winning attack after 35...gxh3 36 gxh3, but White’s lack of pawn structure in front of the king is a concern.

35...<h7

He doesn’t want a queen exchange to occur.

36 <d8 <c3 37 <c8

Some chasing after the queen.

37...<f3!

An attractive way of bringing the other pieces into play.

37...<xa3? 38 <d8 gxh3 39 <h8+
Modern Chess: Move by Move

\[ \text{g6 40} \text{ \texttt{ hx3} leaves Black's king in as much danger as White's.} \]

38 \texttt{ \texttt{ h2}}

Of course, White is checkmated after 38 \texttt{ \texttt{ gxf3?? \texttt{ wxf3+ 39 \texttt{ h2 \texttt{ wxf3. Similarly, 38 \texttt{ d8?? \texttt{ hxh3+ leads to mate.}}} \]

38 \texttt{ \texttt{ xc3 \texttt{ ecx3 39 \texttt{ d2 g3 is uncomfortable. White's king is stuck in the corner, and the other pieces are forced to defend passively.} \]

38...\texttt{ \texttt{ xc8 39 \texttt{ ecx8 \texttt{ ha3} \]

Both players have been forced to exchange queens, but Black has gained a vital tempo with his \texttt{ \texttt{ f3} push.\]

40 \texttt{ bx5} \]

White would not gain all that much in aiming for a rook and opposite-coloured bishop endgame after 40 \texttt{ \texttt{ xg4 \texttt{ xg4 41 \texttt{ xg4 axb4 42 \texttt{ b1 c5;}} \]

White's bishop is totally passive.

40...g3 41 \texttt{ \texttt{ f3}} \]

Black will eventually win after 41 \texttt{ axb6 gxf2 42 b7 \texttt{ b3 43 \texttt{ xh2 \texttt{ g3+}.}} \]

41...\texttt{ \texttt{ xf3 42 \texttt{ xf3 \texttt{ a2}} \]

Black has no need to bother taking the pawn. He is aiming for checkmate.

43 \texttt{ \texttt{ g2}} \]

If 43 \texttt{ axb6 \texttt{ \texttt{ bx6 followed by checkmate.}} \]

43...\texttt{ \texttt{ e1+}} \]

Again more accurate than taking the pawn.

44 \texttt{ \texttt{ f1 b4}} \]

Rather than taking the pawn. Black wants to use the c5-g1 diagonal.

45 \texttt{ \texttt{ d5 g2+ 46 \texttt{ g1 \texttt{ c5+ 0-1}} \]

White decides it is not worth giving up the exchange.
Game 12
E.Bareev-Z.Efimenko
Turin Olympiad 2006
Nimzo-Indian Defence E32

1 d4 .gf6 2 c4 e6 3 gc3
For 3 gf3, see Game 4, Anand-
Topalov, and subsequent games.
3...gb4
The Nimzo-Indian.
4 wc2
Alternatively, for 4 gf3, see Game
26, Wang Yue-Movsesian, and for 4 e3,
see Game 15, Sokolov-Polgar.
The wc2 idea was the original ‘clas-
sical’ variation. White does not want
doubled pawns on the c-file, and wants
to play a3, while recapturing with
the queen after the exchange on c3. It is all
very logical, as White gains the bishop-
pair, but it also slows down his de-
velopment. The queen spends two moves,
and will quite likely have to move again
in view of a possible hit with ...ge4.
4...0-0
Not the only move, but Black sorts
out the kingside quickly.

5 a3
Carrying on with the plan.
5 e4 is the most obvious move, and
indeed would not be tempted by this? There is, however, the danger that
with his aggressive pawn rush in the
centre, White is also creating weak-
nesses on d4 or e4.
One possibility for Black is the re-
strained 5 ...d6, and if 6 a3 xc3+ 7 bxc3
e5 followed by ...gb6, then perhaps ...
and ...gb6. If White were to try d5, his
central pawn structure would now be rigid, and one possibility for Black is to
set up a pawn break with ...c6, and with
due timing, to open up the half-open c-
file. White has to be careful to play ac-
tively. In I.Sokolov-V.Bologan, Sarajevo
2006, play continued 8 xd3 gc6 9 ge2
b6 10 0-0 gb6 11 f4 xd7 12 fb3? gb5
13 c5 xc3 14 xb3 with a likely edge
for White, who later won.
The alternative for Black is immedi-
ate counterplay with 5...d5?! An indica-
tion of the sharpness of play is given by
V.Ivanchuk-D.Navara, Antalya 2004: 6
e5 xe4 7 a3 xc3+ 8 bxc3 c5 9 xd3
cxd4 10 cxd4 gc6 11 ge2 xa5+ 12 fb1
xb4?! (12...f6 and 12...f5 have also been
tried) 13 axb4 xa1 14 f3 f5 15 wa1
wa4 (15...wb1 16 xb1 leaves the
knight trapped) 16 xe1 a5! 15 fxe4 fxe4
18 xc2 xb4+ 19 xb4 axb4, and after
20 cxd5 exd5 21 gb3 ye6, Ivanchuk
eventually had to struggle for a draw.
Golod suggests 20 \( \text{b3!} \) dxc4 21 \( \text{xc4} \), assessing this as favourable to White. Black has rook and two pawns versus two minor pieces, normally a slight material edge if Black’s pawns are well co-ordinated. Unfortunately Black also has two sets of isolated doubled pawns, which require careful guarding. Also, as Golod notes, White can make use of his own advanced pawns with 21...\( \text{a1} \) 22 \( \text{d5!} \). This is one of several complicated lines in this opening. Both players will need to be well prepared in the main line after 5 e4 d5.

5...\( \text{xc3+} \)

If you dislike giving away the bishop-pair, you should not play the Nimzol 6 \( \text{xc3 b6} \)

The main line. Black quickly fianchettoes on the remaining long diagonal.

6...b5?, popularized by Adorjan, looks like a complete finger-slip, but if White takes on the extra pawn, Black has annoying compensation with pressure on the light-coloured squares. A recent attempt to hold on to the extra pawn was A.Motylev-A.Naiditsch, German League 2006: 7 cxb5 c6 8 e3 cxb5 9 \( \text{xb5 e4} \) 10 \( \text{b3 a6} \) 11 \( \text{a4 g5} \) 12

\( \text{xf1 xf1} \) 13 \( \text{xf1 c6} \) 14 f3 \( \text{d6} \) 15 \( \text{e2 a8} \) 16 f2 \( \text{h4} \) 17 g3 \( \text{h3} \) 18 \( \text{d1} \), and White was able to consolidate, and later won.

6...d6 is fully playable.

7 \( \text{g5} \)

White in return sets up an awkward pin. One of the drastic ways for Black is to play ...h6 and ...g5, but there is the danger of weakening squares in front of his king.

7 e3 \( \text{b7} \) 8 \( \text{f3} \) is less aggressive. After 8...d5 White has forfeited his pressure with the bishop on the h4-d8 diagonal.

7...\( \text{b7} \)

For the moment he quietly develops.

The drastic 7...d5?! 8 \( \text{xg7} \) 9 \( \text{xc7} \) merely wins a pawn for White, but quite often both players need to watch this idea for several moves. If, for example, White plays an early \( \text{d1} \), Black can attack the rook after 8...\( \text{xc3} \) in this sequence.

8 e3

For 8 f3, see Game 13, Kramnik-Leko. 8 \( \text{f3} \) d6 9 \( \text{d2} \) is a possibility, but White has not made much impact with this variation.

8...d6
Black can flick in 8...h6 9 Æh4, but there is no particular reason to do so. If anything, there is more counterplay for Black if the bishop is on g5, rather than the less exposed square on h4.

9 Æe2

Bareev’s favoured line.

9 Æf3 is more common. The problem is that Black has good control of e4, and may even consider at some stage ...h6; Æh4 g5; Æg3 followed by ...Æe4. Sometimes White has played 8 Æf3 a move earlier, to give the chance of playing Æd2 quickly.

Bareev’s idea is to swing his knight to c3 instead, covering e4. It takes time, not least because the queen has to move yet again, but Bareev could argue that if his pieces can consolidate, without Black being able to create counterplay in time, he will have chances of being better.

9...Æbd7

Completing his piece development. Now he has to decide what to do with the pawns.

10 Æc2

The less than obvious 10 Æd3!? has been tried several times, the queen being on a more aggressive square, but also being more likely to be hit after a pawn exchange in the centre. Bareev played this a couple of times against Karpov, in both cases offering a pawn sacrifice on g2.

E.Bareev-A.Karpov, Wijk aan Zee 2003, continued 10...h6 11 Æh4 c5 12 Æc3 Æe7 13 Æd1 Æfd8 14 Æe2 cxd4 15 Æxd4 Æc5 16 Æxf6 Æxf6 17 Æxf6 gxf6 18 Æb5 d5 19 Æxd5 Æxd5 20 Æc7 Æb3 21 Æxa8 Æxd1 22 Æxd1 Æxa8 23 Æc2 with a slight edge for White in a rook and minor piece endgame, but Karpov successfully held the draw.

There were a couple of opportunities for Black to snatch the g-pawn, with some degree of risk. For example, 14...Æxg2?! 15 Æg1 Æb7 16 e4 allows White definite attacking chances on the kingside. A move later, 15...Æxg2?! (instead of 15...Æc5) 16 Æg1 Æb7 allows the previous gambit line with 17 e4, or White could simply recover the pawn with 17 Æxd6 with a slight edge.

Going back even earlier, in E.Bareev-A.Karpov, Cap d’Agde (rapid) 2002, White omitted Æd1, pressing on d6, and tried to sacrifice too early with 13 Æe2?! cxd4 14 Æxd4 e5! (no Æxd4 attack for White) 15 Æd1 Æxg2 16 Æg1 Æc6, and the pawn sacrifice was rather more speculative, although the game again finished as a draw. Quite clearly Bareev will have experimented at home with slightly different sacrifices on the g2-square, aiming for improvements.

10...c5

A natural reaction for Black, exchanging a bishop’s pawn against a central pawn with the likelihood of gaining an extra pawn in the centre. Indeed, with Black’s c-file being half-open, one can even wonder whether it
was wise for White to place his queen on c2. Bareev has, of course, evaluated such positions well in advance, and demonstrates his plan.

![Chess board diagram]

11 \( \text{c}d1 \)

Immediately creating pressure on the d-file, a sensible reaction.

In V.Ivanchuk-V.Topalov, Linares 1999, White was in trouble, Black winning the c-pawn, after 11 \( \text{d}c3? \) dxc4 12 exd4 \( \text{wc}7 \) 13 \( \text{d}d3 \) \( \text{ac}8 \) 14 0-0 \( \text{a}6 \). The game was eventually drawn, though, after long rearguard play.

11...\( \text{e}c8 \)

Continuing the main plan.

11...\( \text{we}7 \) is probably playable, but it is useful to place pressure on the opponent.

12 \( \text{c}c3 \)

A good square for the knight, but of course it is slow. White has gained the bishop-pair, but to set up the knight on c3, he has to make three moves with the queen (\( \text{wc}2 \), \( \text{wc}3 \) and another queen move), an a3 pawn push, and an extra move with the knight (\( \text{g}1-\text{e}2-\text{c}3 \)). Indeed, White has not even found time to castle, and soon has to take drastic measures.

12...\( \text{xd}4 \)

Not as automatic as it looks. Black has ideas with his queen, and so he disregards such moves as 12...\( \text{we}7 \).

13 \( \text{xd}4 \)

Improving on the older plan with 13 exd4 – compare with the Ivanchuk-Topalov game, above.

13...\( \text{e}c5 \)

A hit on the g5-bishop, and finally helping explain why Black did not particularly want to throw in an earlier...h6; \( \text{h}4 \) insertion.

14 \( \text{h}4 \)

White keeps his hard-won bishop.

14 \( \text{xf}6 \) \( \text{xf}6 \) 15 \( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{a}8 \) 16 \( \text{xd}6 \) \( \text{g}2 \) is possible, but only equal.

14...\( \text{a}8 \)

Famed as the 'Réti manoeuvre', startling almost a century ago, but standard now. What is White going to do on the long diagonal?

15 \( \text{e}2! \)

White is prepared to sacrifice a pawn on g2, and will even, as the game shows, allow the pawn to drop after he has castled. White has lost time with his slow and methodical manoeuvring, and he does not want to lose any more.

15 e4, setting up a Hedgehog structure, is the main alternative, but
15...d5! seems to equalize. After 16 b4 
Cc7! (more accurate than 16...Cc8 17 
xxd5 exd5 18 b5) 17 xf6 xf6 18 e5 
Cd7 19 b5 Cc6 20 f4 (20 d3 Cxe5!) 
20...f6 Black is at least equal. Here 17 
Gg3 e5 18 cxd5 cxd5 19 exd5 exd4 20 
Cxc7 Cc8 followed by ...Cxd5 is good 
for Black. Again, White’s lack of de-
velopment creates problems if the central 
squares are quickly opened.

15...d5

It is too early to snatch the pawn. Af-
ter 15...Gxg2?! 16 Gg1 it is Black’s king 
that is in danger. 16...b7 17 Cxd6 
gives White an edge.

16 b4

Pushing Black’s rook to a less effec-
tive square, but also weakening the 
squares on the c-file.

16 0-0 dxc4 is equal, but Dreev looked 
for an improvement with 16 Wd1!? e5 
17 Ad2 d4 18 exd4 exd4 19 Cxd4 Gxg2 
20 Gg1 Gh3 21 Ad6, A.Dreev-
D.Jakovenko, Russian Championship, 
Moscow 2007, and an advantage to 
White, who has the more active pieces. 
This may well be an improvement, al-
though Black may also consider 
16...Ge8!?.

Naturally Dreev will have played 
through this earlier game, seen the 
original idea as interesting, and looked 
for slight but significant modifications. 
This is how chess theory develops.

16...Cc8

The natural move, but other retreats 
could be considered.

17 0-0

The only good move, but he has to be 
prepared to allow his opponent to take 
the long diagonal.

17...e5

17...dxc4 is to be considered, and 
helps explains why Dreev later chose 
the 16 Wd1 idea instead. Dreev would 
have two major pieces to cover the 
knights on d7. 18 Ef1 attacks the 
knights, even so, and the position is per-
haps best regarded as level, but tense. A 
quiet way of playing would be 18...Ge5 
19 Gxf6 Gxf6. A more aggressive idea 
for Black is 18...Gxg2 19 e4 Gh3 20 
Cxd7 Cxd7 21 Cxd7 e5, and who plays 
better, wins. The computer suggests 
that Black is better, but this is probably 
usual the point that computers tend to 
overestimate a slight material advan-
tage.

White instead tried 18 f3!? in 
R.Kasimdzhanov-A.Grischuk, Moscow
2007, and Grischuk won after 18...\(\text{Qe5}\) 19 \(\text{Qxf6}\) \(\text{gxf6}\) 20 \(\text{Qb5}\) \(\text{Qb8}\) 21 \(\text{Qd6}\), but this was a blitz game, and one should not make too many conclusions from the result. White was slightly better before he later lost.

18 \(\text{Qd2}\)

The only sensible retreat. White needs to have both rooks on the d-file.

18...\(d4\)

Taking the long diagonal by force.

If 18...\(\text{dxc4}\) 19 \(\text{Qfd1?!}\), Black has gained a useful tempo after 19...\(\text{Qg2}\) 20 \(\text{Qxd7}\) \(\text{Qxd7}\) 21 \(\text{Qxd7}\) \(\text{h3}\), and the rook is already attacked. Black is better after 22 \(\text{Qd5}\) \(f6\). However, 19 \(f3\) would attempt to hold the balance after, for example, 19...\(\text{a6}\) 20 \(\text{Qfd1}\) \(\text{c6}\) 21 \(\text{Qf5}\) \(b5\) 22 \(\text{Qxf6}\) \(\text{Qxf6}\) 23 \(\text{Qxe5}\). Black’s passed pawn might look dangerous, but it is difficult to dislodge the knight from \(c3\).

19 \(\text{exd4}\)

The only move. If 19 \(\text{Qb5}\), then simply 19...\(\text{Qxg2}\).

19...\(\text{Qxg2}\)

This looks dangerous! Black has now taken the long diagonal, and is threatening to threaten checkmate. But, to adapt a comment by Tarrasch a century ago, if you are worried about a threat of checkmate, you might just as well give up chess.

20 \(\text{Qfd1}\)

The rooks will now have a dangerous open file.

20...\(\text{exd4}\)

Otherwise White will block the diagonal with 20...\(\text{h3}\) 21 \(d5\). White would have an advanced protected passed pawn, and Black’s minor pieces get in each others’ way.

21 \(\text{Qxd4}\)

The end of the tactical skirmishes, and the players must work out what is going on, positionally.

The most obvious point is that Black has taken the long diagonal, with
queen and bishop, and White’s king is exposed through the loss of the g-pawn. Black is not, however, in complete control, and White’s pieces are otherwise well placed.

Once it is clear that Black is not about to give checkmate, White has various plus points, which may tip the balance. White has excellent control with the rooks on the d-file, which, with the help of his bishop on h4, places a strain on Black’s knights. Indeed, despite the mate threat on g2, White’s minor pieces are overall much more imposing than Black’s.

And the pawns? We shall see. Imagine several pieces being exchanged, though, and it is easy to work out that White’s queenside pawns are much easier to convert for a passed pawn than Black’s kingside pawns, despite the pawn isolation of the f- and h-pawns.

White is, in total, slightly better.

21...\textit{\text{h3}}

If 21...\textit{\text{h1}}, then 22 \textit{\text{f1}} covers the g2-square, essential but also good. White has one weak square, but the rest of his piece structure is good. Here 22 f3 \textit{\text{xf3}} 23 \textit{\text{xf7}} \textit{\text{xf7}} 24 \textit{\text{xd7}} \textit{\text{xe2}} 25 \textit{\text{exe2}} is far less clear.

21...\textit{\text{e5}} 22 \textit{\text{xf6}} \textit{\text{gxf6}} 23 \textit{\text{f5}} \textit{\text{xf3+}} 24 \textit{\text{xf3}} \textit{\text{xf3??}} is a race for one of the players to check on the g-file, but White wins after 25 \textit{\text{xd3}}. 24...\textit{\text{xf3}} 25 \textit{\text{xf3}} \textit{\text{xf3}} 26 \textit{\text{xd3}} is better, but White still has a clear advantage, with the better pieces and a better pawn structure.

22 \textit{\text{e4}}

Simple chess. White does not have to worry about complicated lines, such as 22 f3 followed by \textit{\text{f2}} and \textit{\text{g1}}, when there are straightforward excellent winning chances by taking control of the centre, and aiming for a good endgame.

22...\textit{\text{xe4}}

Maybe Efimenko is a little too eager to acquiesce for simplification.

22...\textit{\text{h8??}} 23 \textit{\text{c3}} \textit{\text{e8}} 24 \textit{\text{xh3}} \textit{\text{xe4}} 25 \textit{\text{f3}} \textit{\text{xd4}} 26 \textit{\text{xd4}} \textit{\text{c8}} (with possible threats of ...\textit{\text{e5}}) is not so good for White as at first appears. If Black can play ...\textit{\text{e8}}, with thoughts of protecting his knights on the e-file, he can take advantage of the weaknesses of the isolated pawns on the kingside, with the absence of the g-file making it difficult to cover the f-file. 24 f3! instead is to be considered. After 24...\textit{\text{xe4}} 25 \textit{\text{fxe4}}, the isolated pawn is slightly uncomfortable, given that Black can place the knight on e5, but White’s overall piece structure is slightly better, and he has chances of making pressure with the extra queenside pawn.

23 \textit{\text{xe4}}

Endgame coming up.

23...\textit{\text{xe4}}

Simplest. 23...\textit{\text{e5??}} is too elaborate, and White gains time after 24 \textit{\text{xa8}} \textit{\text{xa8}} 25 f4.

24 \textit{\text{xe4}} \textit{\text{e8}}
Black does not want to give away control of both central files.

25 \( \text{Exe8} \+)

White may not be worse after various alternatives, but this again is the simplest and most direct. Black keeps the e-file, but White keeps the d-file, and with nurturing the bishop-pair will gradually slightly over-run the bishop and knight.

25...\( \text{Exe8} \)

26 \( \text{Dd2!} \)

Maybe Efimenko had underestimated this quiet move? White’s bishop remains on a good square, and although it is temporarily pinned, Black cannot attack the bishop. After \( f3 \), at an appropriate stage, White unravels his pieces with for example \( \text{Df2} \), and he will have the extra queenside passed pawn, well away from Black’s king, and a useful and effective bishop-pair.

28...\( \text{Dd4} \)

Black wants to stay active.

27 \( \text{Dg3} \)

White is still slightly better. Sooner or later, Black will experience pressure from the fragile queenside pawns.

27...\( \text{g5} \)

Playable, and indeed probably the best, but on his next move Efimenko seems to change his mind, and loses a tempo as a result.

27...\( f6 \) 28 \( a4 \) \( \text{Df7} \) 29 \( f3 \) \( \text{Dd3} \) 30 \( \text{Df2} \) \( \text{Dh3} \) 31 \( \text{Dd1} \) \( \text{Dd5} \) saves a tempo for Black, but even here White still has winning chances after, for example, 32 \( \text{Dxe5} \) \( \text{fxe5} \) 33 \( c5 \) \( \text{bxc5} \) 34 \( bxc5 \) \( \text{Dc3} \) 35 \( \text{Dc2} \) \( \text{Dxc2} \) 36 \( \text{Dxc2} \) \( \text{Df6} \) 37 \( \text{Dd4} \). White’s plan of attack would be \( \text{Dd3} \), then \( \text{Dd7} \). If Black were to try \( \text{Df5} \), then \( \text{Dd8+} \) would be a win for White. If \( \text{Df1} \), then White can push the king away from the critical square on \( e6 \) with \( \text{Dd4} \) followed by \( \text{Dd8+} \).

28 \( a4 \)

If 28 \( f3 \) \( \text{Dd3} \), and the rook can attack behind White’s queenside pawns.

28...\( f6? \)

Changing his mind.

28...\( g4! \) is better and more consistent. Black can no longer move his bishop again, unless White gives a hand, but White’s pieces are equally constrained. In the end, it is going to be more important for White, rather than Black, to unblock the kingside. 29 \( f3 \) \( \text{gx5} \) 30 \( \text{Dd3} \) \( \text{Dd8} \) 31 \( \text{Df2} \) will probably end up with White having very slightly the better of a draw.
a) $31...\text{g4?!}$ $32 \text{c5!} \text{bxc5} 33 \text{b5} \text{cxb4} 34 \text{xd7} \text{d8} 35 \text{d5} \text{xd7} 36 \text{b5}+$ leaves Black in trouble though.

b) $31...\text{e5}$ $32 \text{xe5} \text{xe5} 33 \text{xf3}$ still requires Black to take care. If the rooks get exchanged, for example, White will probably win. The safest defensive option would seem to be $33...\text{e6} 34 \text{e2} \text{h5} 35 \text{f3} \text{h4}$, then Black centralizes the king. Play should end up as a draw.

29 \text{c7}

Now the bishop is activated.

31 \text{f2}

King to the centre. If in doubt, this is often not a bad idea in the endgame.

31...\text{b3}

Black would like to force the b-pawn to advance.

31...\text{a3} 32 a5 \text{bxa5} 33 \text{a5} \text{c6} 34 \text{a6} \text{xa5} 35 \text{a6} gives White a substantial edge.

32 \text{b5}

The best chance of playing for a win.

32 \text{xe5} \text{fxe5} 33 \text{d8+} \text{g7} 34 \text{a8}

35 \text{b4} 36 \text{a5} \text{b5+} \text{f6} 37 \text{a6} \text{a6} 38 \text{c4} 39 \text{b6+} \text{e5} 40 \text{a5}

\text{e4} allows Black to hold, even though a pawn down. For example, 41 a6 \text{a2+} 42 \text{g3} \text{a3} 43 \text{h3} 44 \text{b5+} \text{f6} 45

\text{e4} \text{g4} \text{fxe4} 46 \text{f5+} \text{g5} 47 \text{f6+} \text{h6} 48 \text{g6} \text{exf6} 49 \text{f5+} \text{h5} 50 \text{e6}

\text{e6} 51 \text{e7} 52 \text{f6} 53 \text{a8} \text{a3+} 45 \text{e5} \text{a2+} 46

\text{e3} (otherwise, if Black wants to keep the pawn, he has to allow a perpetual) 46...\text{a4} 47 \text{a5} \text{a2} 48 \text{a7} \text{g4}, again with a draw.

32 \text{e4}

32...\text{a6} 33 \text{b8+} \text{e7} 34 \text{e5} \text{a5} 35 \text{a6} should win for White.

33 \text{e6+}

A necessary part of White's plan of attack.
33 a5?! ∆xc4 34 ∆d4 ∆e6 35 a6? (35 axb6 draws) 35...∆b2 36 ∆b8 ∆a3! turns out to be good for Black.

33...∆f7

Black prefers to bring the king to the centre. Maybe there is some argument for trying 33...∆g7, to avoid any bishop checks on the a2-g8 diagonal, but this is hardly of any great relevance, as the main checking line will be after a later ∆xa7+.

34 ∆a8

Behind the pawns.

34...∆xc4

This ends up as a win for White.

34...∆xa4!? leads to some interesting play, but does not quite seem to hold. The natural 35 ∆xb6 would lead to a quick win for White after 35...∆xc4? 36 ∆xa7+ ∆xa7 37 ∆xc4+, picking up a piece after a zwischenschlag. However, Black can try for startling cheapo sacrifices with 35...∆e6 36 c5 ∆xf3! 37 ∆xf3 (37 ∆xf3 ∆d5+) 37...∆a2+, which might occasionally work just before the time control. Then, not immediately obviously, 38 ∆g3! is best, keeping the extra piece. If 38...g4?! then simply 39 ∆xg4, and the king protects the bishop.

35 ∆xa7

With threats of discovered checks, cutting down Black’s defensive options.

35...∆e6

35...∆d7 36 ∆xc4+ ∆xc4 37 ∆xb6 will eventually win for White, maybe with a later b6 advance, ignoring the a4-pawn.

36 ∆xc4+

White is not too bothered about the supposed drawing effects of the bishops of opposite colours when he has a forced win by aiming to queen a pawn. Black’s bishop on h3 is out of place when compared with White’s a- and b-pawns.

36...∆xc4 37 a5

Aiming for a touchdown.

37 ∆xb6 is possible, but fiddly. Bareev wants to keep the pawn on the board, so he can threaten to attack with axb6.

37...∆c2+

37...bx a5 38 b6 ∆b4 39 b7 queens with the other pawn.

38 ∆e3

Maybe 38 ∆e1 is fractionally more accurate, but both moves win. Usually there is no time to think on move 38. If you see a reasonable move, play it.

38...∆f1
A more delicate mating threat is 39...d5!? (39...xb5 will transpose) 40 b7 xb5 (there are no good discovered checks after 40...e2+ 41 d3) 41 f4 (41 b8#?? e2 mate) 41...g4 42 f5!, and the king escapes and the pawn queens.

Winning, but there is one last trick to try.

40...f4+

A last-breath attempt. Naturally, 40 c7 41 b8# f4+ 42 d2 wins easily for White.

41 xf4

Avoiding 41 e4?? (or 41 d4??) 41...c4 mate.

41...xf4 42 xf4 1-0

White queens a pawn.
Game 13
V. Kramnik-P. Leko
Dortmund 2006
Nimzo-Indian Defence E32

1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♛c3 ♜b4 4 ♜c2 0-0 5 a3 ♜xc3+ 6 ♜xc3 b6 7 ♜g5 ♜b7 8 f3

The main line. White is thinking about playing e4, but this is only a subsidiary point. White is more interested in stopping Black from playing ...♛e4, and in blocking the long diagonal.

For 8 e3, see Game 12, Bareev-Efimenko 2006. Readers will note that Bareev had to give up the pawn on g2, both in the game against Efimenko, and against Karpov.

8...h6

Slightly loosening the bishop’s grip on the h4-d8 diagonal.

9 ♜h4

He would like to keep the pin, reckoning that a later ...g5 would open up too many kingside pawns.

9...d5

9...d5 is also possible, and if 10 e4 c5 (10...♛xe4? 11 ♜xd5 ♜xc3 12 ♜xc7 ♜d6) 11 ♜xd5 ♜xc3 12 ♜xc7 makes a break much too early) 11 d5 (11 e5 ♜xd4 12 ♜xd4 ♜xe5 is equal), Black must be careful this time to avoid 11...♛xd5? 12 ♜xd8 ♜xc3 13 ♜e7 ♜e8 14 ♜xd6 ♜a4 15 b3 ♜c3 16 e5. The knight has no escape. Instead 11...♕bd7 is about equal, but 11...♕e4? does not quite work either: 12 ♜xd8 ♜xc3 13 ♜c7 ♜a4 14 b3 ♜c2 15 ♜xd6 exd5 16 ♜xf8 ♜xf8 17 ♜d2 with an edge. It is troublesome for both sides to have to calculate the breakout from the pin every time.

10 e3

10 cxd5!? could be explored further:

a) The breakthrough this time fails after 10...♛xd5? 11 ♜xd8 ♜xc3 12 ♜xc7 ♜b5 13 ♜xb8 ♜axb8 14 e3, winning a pawn.

b) 10...g5?! 11 ♜f2 ♜xd5 12 ♜c1 leaves Black, unsurprisingly, too weakened.
c) This leaves 10...exd5:

c1) Then 11 ∆xf6 ♢xf6 12 ♢xc7 ∆a6 13 ♤e5 ♤c6 has been tried a few times, although tellingly not at very top level. White is a pawn up, but is a long way behind in development, and Black can create pressure on both the c- and e-files.

c2) There are various untried and slightly exotic ideas, starting, for example, with 11 g4 ♢e8 12 ♢h3 c5 13 ♢f2 followed by g5. In such a line, the idea is to avoid weakening the e-pawn with an early e3, and concentrating on attacking Black on the g-file. Whether this works remains to be proven.

c3) The quieter 11 e3 has been tried several times, with probable equality. After 11...♢e8, if White will need to cover the e3-pawn, with 12 ♢f2, this reduces any possibility of making use of the bishop-pair, but 12 ♢b5 c6 13 ♢a4 allows Black several ways to equalize, not least the thematic 13...♢e4 14 ♢xd5 ♢xc3 15 bxc3 ♢xd8 16 ♤e2 ♢a6 with equality, later drawn, in L.Van Wely-A.Grischuk, Biel 2007.

10...♢bd7

The natural developing move.

11 cxd5

There are, of course, reasonable alternatives, such as 11 ∆d3 or 11 ♢h3, but Kramnik had something he wanted to try.

11...♢xd5

Finally the breakout works! Or at least it is semi-successful, better than any of the alternatives for Black.

What often happens in such lines is that tension builds up, then there is a quick release of pressure, pieces get exchanged and the result is a semi-endgame, without any real middle-game. Kramnik has been the great specialist of such semi-endgames. It is enough to remember, for example, the way he avoided any loss as Black, and indeed as White, against Kasparov, with the Berlin Defence, and other lines, during his 2000 match in London.

Many writers, more general journalists rather than chessplayers, have commented, on the basis of such a match, that chess is about to dry up, with leading grandmasters being able to equalize at will, with the help of the growth of theory. This is an old theme, dating back until at least the 1920s, but it hardly seems convincing. There must be at least 50 years until chess will dry up because every good player knows everything. One of the central themes in this book is that chess creativity has greatly expanded in recent years, with more and more players reaching super-super-grandmaster level (2700+ level), and correspondingly an increasing number of players reaching higher levels of creativity and of technical accuracy.

11...exd5 12 ♢d3 ♢e8 13 ♤e2 has also been tried, the tactics not quite working for Black after 13...♢xe3? 14
\( \text{xf}6! \text{xf}6 \ 15 \text{h}7+ \text{h}xh7 \ 16 \text{xe}3, \) leaving White an exchange for a pawn up.

12 \text{xd}8 \text{xc}3

Naturally the exchanges are forced for both sides.

13 \text{h}4

But can White grab a pawn? This was tried quite a few times in the late 1980s and early 1990s, with the hope that the far-flung knight might become a weakness after 13 \text{xc}7 \text{d}5 14 \text{d}6 \text{xe}3 15 \text{f}2 \text{xc}2 16 \text{d}1 \text{f}6, but Black equalizes after 17 \text{b}5 \text{f}6 18 \text{e}2 a6 19 \text{d}3 \text{d}5 20 \text{c}1 \text{c}6. The knights are extraordinarily busy.

So White plays the opening quietly, but only the most determined player will try it for a win. Still, in this game, Kramnik shows just how difficult it can be for the defender to hold a minuscule disadvantage against a top technician.

13...\text{d}5

The only safe move. 13...\text{a}4?? 14 \text{b}5 wins a piece.

14 \text{f}2

14 e4 \text{e}3 leads to nothing. White will have to relinquish the bishop-pair, in view of the threat of the ...\text{c}2+ knight fork, and then he has no chances of playing for an edge.

14...\text{c}5

This at the time looked like a safe bet for a steady draw. The current game, however, opens up a couple of doubts.

14...f5 is a good alternative, making it difficult for White to expand in the central squares, but also slightly weakening his own light squares. Play is level after 15 \text{b}5 c6 16 \text{d}3 e5 17 \text{e}2 \text{ae}8, most games ending up in draws. Here in a blitz game, Kramnik experimented with 16...\text{c}5, but White probably has a slight advantage, helped by the bishop-pair, with 17 \text{e}2 \text{ac}8 18 0-0 \text{xd}4 19 \text{xd}4 \text{e}5 20 \text{e}2, G.Kasparov-V.Kramnik, Moscow 1998. Presumably the position was level at various stages in a rook and bishop ending with a symmetrical pawn structure, but Kasparov squeezed through.

15 e4

After 15 \text{b}5, there have been a couple of encounters between Kasparov and Kramnik, the colours reversed second time. Both games ended up as draws. There have, of course, also been encounters between other players. On 15...\text{fd}8 16 e4, Kasparov aimed to give up a pawn in return for active
play with 16...Cc7!? 17 Exd7 Exd7 18 dxc5 f5! 19 cxb6 axb6, and Kramnik returned the pawn in order to complete his development with 20 Qe2 fxe4 21 fxe4 Axe4, later drawn, V.Kramnik-G.Kasparov, World Championship (Game 8), London 2000.

Entertaining and imaginative defensive play by Kasparov, of course, but the computer suggests that Black might even have a slight edge after 16...d5f6!? If then 17 Qe2 a6, White’s bishop move would seem to be premature: 18 Exd7 (18 c4 Mac8!?)
18...Exd7 19 Axe5 Axe5 20 dxc5 bxc5 21 Mac1 Mac8 forces Black to cover a slight positional weakness, but with a well-timed...f5, opening up the diagonal, he should stay equal.

And the other Kasparov-Kramnik game? This was again in the aforementioned blitz match, Moscow 1998. Kramnik tried 16...Qe7, then 17 Qe2 Ac6. If 18 Ac6 Ac6 the position is broadly level, but Kasparov played for more with 18 Aa6. Then 18...b5? a useful move for blitz, but not especially accurate. A computer with a couple of seconds would give 19 Ah4 f6 20 Kg3 e5 21 a4!, with threats of trapping the bishop, with either d5 or axb5; White is much better. However, even the best humans cannot calculate so quickly at blitz speed, and it was Kramnik as Black who came out ahead after 19 a4 bxa4 20 dxc5. Now 20...Ab8! is good for Black, and the author naturally recognises the help of the computer in seeing this so quickly. Kramnik played the weaker 20...e5?, leaving the knight exposed, and after 21 Qd4 Ab8 22 Kg3!, so that if 22...Exd4? (Kramnik tried 22...f6 and later lost) 23 Axe5, un-

Expectedly there is a bishop fork in the middle of the board.

I am not sure what this proves in terms of technical and theoretical chess over the last few moves, but it seems like gold-dust in terms of the psychology of chess.

15...Qe7

Black is aiming to deploy his knight to c6, putting pressure on the d4-square.

Naturally other moves may be considered:

a) Postny, writing for ChessBase, suggests that 15...Qf4 16 Ae3 Qg6 allows the knight to be misplaced, but this seems ungenerous. Here the point is not that this knight should now be moved to a more active square, but rather that one knight is going to be protecting the other. After 17 Ad1 cxd4 18 Exd4 Qd5 19 Qh3 Mac8 20 Ac3 Xfd8 21 Ae2 Xd1+ 22 Xxd1 Ac4! Black threatens...Qe3+, and so White has no realistic option to keep the bishop-pair. Following 23 Ac4 Ac4 in V.Kramnik-A.Naiditsch, Dortmund 2003, the game eventually ended up as a draw, Kramnik pressing but not breaking through. There are clear simi-
larities with the Kramnik-Leko game a few years later at Dortmund, with both sides having rook, knight and opposite bishops, and a close resemblance in terms of pawn formations.

We are dealing with microscopic pawn differences. In the Kramnik-Leko game, Leko found his pawn ending up on e5, seemingly not so important if there were bishops of opposite colour, but he lost some degree of flexibility. Naiditsch was able to keep his three pawns united: e6, f6 and g6, and held the game.

16...\text{e}e2

16...\text{b}b5, and an exchange of bishops, led to a quick and level draw after 16...\text{c}c6 17 \text{x}xc6 \text{d}xc6 18 \text{e}e2 \text{cx}d4 19 \text{d}xd4 \text{d}xd4 20 \text{d}xd4 \text{ac}8 21 \text{d}d2 \text{c}c5 in V.Topalov-P.Leko, Cannes 2002. Here Leko had done his homework, since a couple of months previously, he had allowed White a slight edge after 18...\text{f}d8?! 19 0-0-0! \text{c}xd4 20 \text{d}xd4 21 \text{b}b1, still later ending as a draw, in B.Gelfand-P.Leko, Wijk aan Zee 2002.

16...\text{ac}8

The natural reply, avoiding the isolated pawn after, for example, 16...\text{a}6 17 \text{d}xc5 \text{d}xc5 18 \text{c}c5 \text{b}xc5 19 \text{c}c3 with a slight edge for White.

Maybe in view of the result of the game he could have tried to open the position before White could consolidate with 16...f5?! and if 17 \text{ex}f5 \text{x}f5 18 \text{dxc}5 \text{dxc}5 19 \text{xc}c5 \text{bxc}5, and although Black has conceded three isolated pawns, his pieces are the more active, and should probably hold the balance. Of course, it is only in retrospect that one might consider such a line as necessary. Beforehand, players might well have thought that the position was equal with quiet but direct play.

Here the attempt at refutation with 17 \text{f}d4?! does not work. After 17...\text{fxe}4 18 \text{d}xe6 \text{f}f6 19 \text{c}c4 \text{d}d5 20 \text{c}c7 \text{xc}c4 21 \text{d}xa8 \text{ex}f3 22 \text{g}xf3 \text{e}e6+! 23 \text{d}d1 (the king is forced into a skewer) 23...\text{d}d5 24 \text{c}c7 \text{xf}3+ 25 \text{c}c1 \text{e}e2 Black is better. Entertaining tactics, but one cannot be wholly surprised if there are threats if the opponent is spending time with the knight chasing after the far-off rook.

Leko himself later tried 16...f5!, with success. M.Gurevich-P.Leko, 4th matchgame, Elista 2007, continued 17 \text{g}3 \text{fxe}4 18 \text{fxe}4 \text{cx}d4 19 \text{d}xd4 \text{ac}8 20 \text{d}d1 \text{f}d8 21 \text{c}c3 \text{g}6 22 \text{b}b5 \text{c}c5 23 0-0 \text{a}6, probably about equal, but a few minor slips by White gave Leko a chance to play for a win.

17 \text{c}c3

After this, White is ready to complete his development, and make use of the bishop-pair. There is also the niggling threat of \text{b}b5, which continues to cause problems even into the endgame.

17...\text{cx}d4

Black simplifies, at the risk of losing a tempo. Normally he would want to wait until White exchanges with dxc5,
when the pawn disappears and Black gains time with the knight after ...\(\text{dxc5}\), but perhaps this is not so practical.

17...\(\text{fbd8}\) completes his development, but 18 \(\text{d6}\) is annoying. Black's idea is 18...\(\text{cxd4}\) 19 \(\text{d6}\) 20 \(\text{xb7}\) 21 \(\text{xd4}\) 22 \(\text{e3}\) when he is better developed, and has no pawn weaknesses, but White has the bishop-pair against two knights. The computer suggests that Black is fully equal, but good humans might well be suspicious of this. Indeed, it's probably a slight edge for White.

18 \(\text{xd4}\)

The computer is optimistic in suggesting that Black is a touch better. Two of the three suggested moves, 18...\(\text{a6}\) and 18...\(\text{c5}\), create weaknesses in the pawn structure, which are likely to cause problems later.

18...\(\text{c5}\)

With a threat of ...\(\text{b3}\), but the rook was planning to develop anyway, so Black does not gain a tempo.

19 \(\text{Ed1}\)

White should not allow the bishop for knight exchange. His dark-squared bishop is the best minor piece on the board.

19...\(\text{fbd8}\)

Except, of course, that White can think of an exchange with \(\text{xc5}\) followed by \(\text{d7}\).

20 \(\text{e3l}\)

White was only level after 20 \(\text{b5}\) 21 \(\text{e3}\) 22 \(\text{d1}\) 23 \(\text{xc6}\) 24 \(\text{c2}\) 25, later drawn, in LVan Wely-P.Leko, Wijk aan Zee 2005, and Leko was presumably happy enough to settle for a draw with Black against Kramnik as well.

There was only a peaceful draw too after 20 \(\text{xc5}\) 21 \(\text{d1}\) 22 \(\text{d2}\), play soon fizzling out in E.Bareev-A.Grischuk, Sochi 2004. Moreover, in another top-level game in 2005, the players agreed a draw before White even got round to playing on move 20.

Kramnik's innovation was not a brilliant move, but rather the view that because he keeps the bishop-pair, as opposed to bishop and knight, he still has a slight edge, and he is justified in seeing whether he can keep his edge, or whether his opponent can hold.

20...\(\text{xd1}\+)

If immediately 20...\(\text{e5}\), then White can damage Black's pawn structure with 21 \(\text{xd8+}\) 22 \(\text{xc5}\) 23 \(\text{bxc5}\). Black will have to suffer a long and often uncomfortable defence to try to draw.

21 \(\text{xd1}\)

There is no point in decentralizing with 21 \(\text{xd1}\)?! It is the king that needs to move.

21...\(\text{e5}\)

Black gains space, but also weakens his light squares.

21...\(\text{g6}\) is to be considered, avoiding any pawn gaps in the centre, and preparing for ...\(\text{e5}\), but White is better
after 22 b4!. The knight-hopping in the centre favours White after 22...\texttt{Qd3} 23 \texttt{Qb5 Qd8} 24 \texttt{Qc2 Qe1+} 25 \texttt{Qb3 a6} 26 \texttt{Qxb6}.

\textbf{22 b4!}

In view of the last comment, the idea of b4 is not quite as unexpected as it looks, but it is still good and imaginative, and typical of Kramnik’s extremely high technique.

After 22 \texttt{Qc2 Qa4} 23 \texttt{Qb5 Qxc3} 24 \texttt{bxc3 Qc6} 25 a4 f5 26 \texttt{Qxc6 Qxc6} 27 \texttt{Qd1 fxe4} 28 fxe4 Qc7, Z.Gyimesi-Z.Almasi, Szekesfehervar 2006, White has no serious chances of an edge in view of his isolated pawns, and the game ended as a draw.

In New in Chess, Kramnik related that Bareev had tried 22 \texttt{Qc2}, with another draw against Almasi, in Monaco 2006, and that Bareev afterwards suggested that 22 b4!? might have been an improvement. So big innovations do not automatically arise from deep computer work. A more traditional method can be through going through a post-mortem and learning from it.

\textbf{22...Qe6}

After 22...\texttt{Qb3} 23 \texttt{Qc2 Qd4+} 24 \texttt{Qb2} White keeps a small edge, one point being that he can threaten a bishop for knight exchange on d4 at an inconvenient time, while the knight cannot initiate a bishop exchange.

Leko decides that it is the other knight that should move to d4, via c6.

\textbf{23 Qc2!}

Running into a pin, but Kramnik has worked out, as Bareev previously noted, that he can bring the king to b2, unpinning, and that now he has chances of playing for an edge. The king is only there on c2 for one move, and can run on the next move.

\textbf{23...Qc6}

23...f5 24 Qb2 threatens little, and leaves the e5-pawn extremely weak.

\textbf{24 Qb2}

The king moves on.

Kramnik has moved straight from the opening into the endgame, bypassing the middlegame. He does this because he feels that he is better. Recent theory may suggest that this should be equal, with a symmetrical pawn structure, and that White’s bishop-pair does not achieve that much, given that Black’s knights are solid and active, but Kramnik wants to test the waters.

\textbf{24...Qf8!}
Kramnik himself gives this an exclamation mark, centralizing the king for the endgame. He notes that White is slightly better after 24...\texttt{Qd4} 25 \texttt{Qd3} \texttt{Qf4} 26 \texttt{Qxf4 exf4} 27 \texttt{Qd1}, and if at any stage the knight returns to c6, White has \texttt{Qd5}, attacking the weak pawn, and generally consolidating on an advanced square.

It is far easier to play 'bishop takes knight', rather than 'knight takes bishop', and the player with the two bishops has the leisure to decide whether to exchange one of his bishops for a knight, or whether to ignore it, or wait and keep up the tension. White is not so much aiming for the bishop-pair, but rather playing for the better bishop after a timely trade of bishop for knight.

Postny, writing before he had the chance of seeing Kramnik's own annotations, gave instead 25 \texttt{Qb5} (rather than 25 \texttt{Qd3}). White is no doubt slightly better after, for example, 25...\texttt{Qxb5} 26 \texttt{Qxb5 Qd4} 27 \texttt{Qxd4 exd4} 28 \texttt{Qd1 a6} 29 \texttt{Qf1 Qd8} 30 \texttt{Qc4 Qd7} (avoiding the \texttt{Qd5} threat), and again White can play hard for a win.

Leko's king move had a straightforward objective, to bring the king nearer to the centre in an endgame. He can wait to see what White does before deciding where he should move his other pieces.

25 \texttt{Qc4}

One senses, from Kramnik's exclamation mark, that he had considered as the main line 24...\texttt{Qd4}, and that he had to readjust his play.

25...\texttt{Qd4}

Not 25...\texttt{Qxb4?} 26 \texttt{Qxe6 Qd3+} 27 \texttt{Qc2}, and White wins a piece.

26 \texttt{Qxe6!}

A good player is always adaptable. The bishop-pair has been useful, but it is now time to give up the bishop-pair in order to break up Black's solid knight pair.

26...\texttt{Qxe6}

Not many players would seriously consider taking the isolated doubled pawns with 26...\texttt{fxe6?!}, even though \texttt{Qb5} is prevented. 27 \texttt{Qd1 Qc4} 28 \texttt{f4} is a good line for White.

27 \texttt{Qb5}

The knight finds itself on a good attacking square, thanks to the removal of Black's knight from d4.

27...\texttt{Qa8}

The only way to cover the pawn. If 27...a6? 28 \texttt{Qd6} White wins a pawn.

28 \texttt{a4!}

A good example of the principle that if you can't improve your pieces, you have to improve your pawns, here to add protection for the knight on b5. White's queenside pawns also start to put pressure on Black's.

Kramnik would have considered 28 \texttt{Qc1 Qa6} 29 \texttt{Qc7 Qxc7} 30 \texttt{Qxc7 Qf1}, heading for a draw, or, slightly more complicated, 28 \texttt{Qd6 Qa6} 29 b5 \texttt{Qd8} 30
Modern Chess: Move by Move

Qxf7 Qxf7 31 bxa6 Ad3 32 Ae1 Qc7, with a minimal edge for White, which
Kramnik regards as level in Informator.

28...Aa6

Postny regards this as the source of
Black’s troubles, preferring 28...Ac6!?
29 Ac3, and White has been unable to
try the Ab5-a3-c4 manœuvre. Even so,
Black would have to work hard to hold
the position after 29...Ad8 30 b5 Ae8 31
Ac1! (31 Ad5? f5 is premature) 31...f6
32 Ad5 followed by Ab4, and the
knight can find another route to attack.

29 Ac3

White would like to smother any ac-
tivity by the bishop.

Kramnik gives 29 Ac3 Ac4! as equal,
presumably in view of 30 Ad1 Ad8, and
an exchange of rooks.

29...Ac8?

This is the move that Kramnik pin-
points as the real weakness. Black
needs to keep the bishop in open play.
Being stuck with the bishop on b7, be-
hind White’s b5- and e4-pawns, is un-
pleasant.

Kramnik suggests 29...Aa3! 30 Ad1
Ad8 31 b5 Ae7 32 Ac3 Ae2 33 Ac8
Ac8. Black’s bishop is now on the far
side of the board, attacking pawns on
unprotected squares (a4 and g2), rather
than granite-protected squares such as
b5 and e4. In addition, there are so
many escape squares for the bishop
that White cannot round it up.

White is, of course, still better, hav-
ing gained extra space on the queens-
side, and setting up an attack on the
a7-pawn, or maybe prising open Black’s
pawns with a5. It is in the nature of
such lines that it is almost impossible
to establish clearly whether White
should win, or whether Black should be
able to hold the draw. ‘Plus over equals’
would be the standard comment when
writing up a game.

Kramnik gives here 34 Ac4 (maybe
34 a5? could be considered) 34...Af1 35
g3 f6 36 f4, with a slight edge for White,
but 35...Ag2! looks more accurate and
more active. If 36 Axe5 Ae6 37 Ad4 (37
Ac6? Axh6 38 bxc6 Ad6 favours Black)
37...f6 38 Ac6 Ac6+ 39 bxc6 Ad6 40 f4
Ac6 41 e5, and there are various ways
of reaching a level opposite-coloured
endgame.

Of course, all this is not forced. It
merely happens to be the line that
Kramnik suggested in his notes. Leko
with his last move indicated that he
was worried about White taking up the
c-file, which must surely imply that 30
Ac1!? is well worth considering, avoid-
ing the exchange of rooks. White keeps
a slight edge. Whether he has a win
with best play is not so clear.

It is often a feature of a well-played
technical win that it is far from clear
exactly when the loser made the deci-
sive mistake. White was able to keep a
slight edge from the opening, but this
is still a long way from a clear win. But
when did Black make the critical mis-
take? In most games, even at the highest level, the critical mistake can be isolated, and questioned. Not so in this Kramnik-Leko game. Postny questioned Black's 28th, while Kramnik himself questions Black's 29th instead, but in either case the alternative moves would still leave White with a slight advantage.

A possible thought might be that Kramnik was able to keep the opening edge from early on, and that he played superb chess throughout. Somewhere along the line, possibly in the late opening, Leko made a very slight slip, which Kramnik exploited. The obvious thought would be whether Leko made a mistake later on. We shall see.

30 b5

Kramnik now slams the door on Black's bishop.

30...\(\text{\textit{b7}}\)

And Black has even lost two tempi. Should we say 'tempi', borrowing from the Italian, or 'tempoes', as given by Postny for ChessBase? The pragmatic answer is that it doesn't really matter all that much, so long as the meaning is clear!

31 \(\text{\textit{c1}}\)

In chess terms, simplification is often the best way of clarity. The player with the positional advantage would often like to exchange off good defensive pieces.

31...\(\text{\textit{xc1}}\)

Or 31...\(\text{\textit{e7}}\), but Black would not want to surrender the c-file to the rook.

32 \(\text{\textit{xc1}}\)

White's bishop is better than Black's bishop, and is capable of picking up pawns.

32...\(\text{\textit{e7}}\)

Postny notes that 32...\(\text{\textit{f5}}\) 33 \(\text{\textit{exf5}}\) \(\text{\textit{gf4}}\) 34 \(\text{\textit{g3}}\) \(\text{\textit{gf2}}\) 35 \(\text{\textit{xf2}}\) \(\text{\textit{xf3}}\) 36 \(\text{\textit{c4}}\) \(\text{\textit{e4}}\) 37 \(\text{\textit{d2}}\) gives no counterplay. Black's knight on \(g2\) is stranded.

The immediate 32...\(\text{\textit{df4}}\) 33 \(\text{\textit{xf4}}\) \(\text{\textit{exf4}}\) 34 \(\text{\textit{c4}}\) gives White an advantage too. Black cannot prevent White's king from reaching \(d4\).

33 \(\text{\textit{a5}}\)

White prises open a passed pawn.

33...\(\text{\textit{bxax5}}\)

33...\(\text{\textit{c5?}}\) looks wrong, but proving this might sometimes require more thought. 34 \(\text{\textit{a6}}\) \(\text{\textit{c8}}\) 35 \(\text{\textit{xc5}}\) \(\text{\textit{bxc5}}\) 36 \(\text{\textit{c4}}\) wins only by a tempo. If the pawn were already on \(f6\) rather then \(f7\), he would draw:
Modern Chess: Move by Move

a) If Black were to try to cover the e5-pawn, with 36...f6, White wins after 37 a5! d6 38 b6!, queening on a8, an attractive finish.

b) If instead 36...d7 37 b6 axb6 38 xb6 c6 39 a7 d6 40 a8=\text{w} x a8 41 x a8 c6 42 c2 b7 43 c3 x a8 44 c4 b7 45 x c5 c7 46 d5, and if 46...f6?, White creeps in with 47 e6. The best practical chance for Black is to give away a pawn, with 46...d7 47 x e5 e7, except that Black would not have much chance of drawing, a pawn down in a king and pawn ending.

34 x a7

White's passed pawn is much better than Black's. White has extra cover on each square in front of the pawn, whether with the bishop (b6 and b8) or the knight (b7 after White's c4 and a5), whereas Black has no realistic chance of promoting his a-pawn. Also, Black's pieces, notably the king and bishop, are not very flexible. The king cannot reach c5, and the bishop is blocked in by the opposing pawns. Leko decides it is time to sort out this particular problem.

34...f5!

Running for freedom.

Postny gives 34...a4 35 c4 f6 36 b2 f4 37 g3 d3+ 38 a3 f5 39 d2 as winning for White.

35 exf5

Not much choice here, but now Leko has chances of attacking White's kingside pawns.

35...d4

Now three of White's kingside pawns are under threat.

36 g3

The doubled pawns are expendable in an emergency, but White needs to keep hold of the g- and h-pawns.

36 b8=\text{w} x g2 37 x e5 e3 is only a draw.

36...h3

Not perhaps the square that the knight would have preferred, but 36...d5 blocks his bishop, while 36...e2+ 37 d2 x f3 38 c3 h5 39 b6 will queen the pawn.

37 c4

Kramnik decides to aim for a direct attack, rather than cutting off the knight with 37 e3. In his notes, he suggests that the bishop retreat is not worse, and hints that it may well have been slightly the more accurate choice:

a) If 37...g5 38 x g5 hx g5 39 c4
\( \text{\textit{xf3} 40 \textit{xa5}}, \) and White should eventually win with the extra pawn. Black’s problem on the queenside is that once White has a pawn on b6 and a knight on a5, it is close to impossible to attack the b-pawn with the king.

b) On other lines, such as 37...\( \text{\textit{xf3}} \) 38 \( \textit{xc4} \) \( \textit{f6} \) 39 \( \textit{d6} \) a4 40 b6, Black can struggle on, but his knight on h3 is heavily constrained.

37...\( \textit{g5} \)

Leko is alert to the smallest possibility of escape. He needs to bring the knight back into active play.

After 37...\( \textit{xf3} \), Kramnik gives 38 \( \textit{xe5} \) \( d4 \) 39 \( \textit{xc4} \), and White should win.

38 \( \textit{xa5} \)

38 f4!? certainly seems well worth considering, especially given that after the alternative it is not totally clear that White is winning. Kramnik gives this as a possibility, without further analysis, while Postny suggests that Black is able to hold.

Postny gives 38...\( \textit{xf4} \) 39 \( \textit{gxf4} \) \( \textit{xf3} \) 40 \( \textit{xa5} \) \( d5 \) 41 b6 \( \textit{f6} \) 42 \( \textit{xc4} \) (42 b7 \( \textit{xb7} \) 43 \( \textit{xb7} \) \( \textit{xf5} \), equal) 42...\( \textit{e7} \) 43 h3 \( \textit{d7} \) ‘with good drawish chances’, but 44 \( \textit{e5} \) looks highly promising. One of the usual rules of thumb in a bishop of opposite colour and pawn endgame, with two passed pawns, is that three clear files between the pawns will be a clear win, as the king breaks through without difficulty, whereas only two clear files is often insufficient. Here 44...\( \textit{xe5} \)? 45 fxe5 followed by f6 is clearly enough to win. When the white king reaches e5, it is effectively all over, Black being unable to cover the b-pawn, the f-pawn, and the king threatening to invade on d6.

Black therefore has to try 44...\( \textit{c8} \), but then 45 \( \textit{g4} \) h5 (otherwise f6 by White, giving a second passed pawn; 45...\( \textit{g1} \)? and 45...\( \textit{d4} \)? would each lose a piece after 46 b7+) 46 \( \textit{e3} \), and White has excellent winning chances. If he has a chance to reach d6 with a knight, he will be winning material.

38...\( \textit{d5?!} \)

But this time he should take with the bishop, 38...\( \textit{xf3} \). The immediate tactical point is that after 39 b6 \( \textit{f6} \) 40 b7 \( \textit{xb7} \) 41 \( \textit{xb7} \) \( \textit{xf5} \) Black will be safe, White being unable, the king and knight being so far apart, to cover the two remaining pawns.

Kramnik gives 39 \( \textit{d2} \) \( d5 \) as best for both players, but then White’s king is not on an especially good square. Black threatens ...\( \textit{xf3} \), with check, and also, after 40 b6, there is another check with gain of tempo, with 40...\( \textit{e4} \) followed by ...\( \textit{d6} \). Kramnik suggests instead 40 \( \textit{e3} \) \( \textit{e4} \) 41 b8 \( \textit{f6} \) 42 \( \textit{c6} \) \( \textit{xf5} \) 43 \( \textit{xe5} \). White is a pawn up, and who knows, he might be winning, or maybe not. There seem to be genuine winning chances though. Black will at some stage need to bring the king to the centre or to the queenside, and that
being the case, White will be able to prod the kingside pawns, to set up weaknesses. Play could, for example, continue with 43...\(\text{Ke6} 44 \text{Qd3} \text{Kb7} 45 \text{Qd4} \text{Kd7} \) (otherwise \(\text{Qc5}+\) is strong) 46 \(\text{Ke5},\) keeping the squeezing options open.

Thus it is possible that Black was losing anyway, even with the best moves.

39 \(\text{b6}\)

'Passed pawns must be pushed.'

39...\(\text{Qxf3}\)

And for the defender, pawns must also be taken. Quite often the only hope for the defender is to exchange or capture the final pawns.

\[\text{Diagram}\]

The easy part for White is to win the bishop. How though is he going to keep at least one of his three pawns?

40 \(\text{h3!}\)

This was played on move 40, at the end of the time control. Normally one cannot analyse in great depth then, and it is a case of positional instinct rather than calculation. Here Kramnik considers that it is better to drop the pawn on \(\text{h3}\) rather than on \(\text{h2}.\) He wants to make it more difficult for Black to return his knight after taking on \(\text{h3}.\)

It would take a lot of calculation to decide where the pawn will best drop, and in practical terms it would be an irrelevance to analyse what is going on. You could easily lose on time before making a confident decision!

After 40 \(\text{b7?!} \text{Qxb7} 41 \text{Qxb7} \text{Qxh2}\) the knight covers good squares on \(\text{g4}, \text{f3},\) and \(\text{f1},\) holding the balance.

40...\(\text{Qg5}\)

40...\(\text{Qg1}\) is less accurate. After 41 \(\text{b7} \text{Qxb7} 42 \text{Qxg1}\) the win is straightforward. Black's bishop only covers light squares, and so cannot defend on the dark squares.

41 \(\text{b7}\)

There is no sense in delaying. White will need to bring the bishop into play.

41...\(\text{Qxb7} 42 \text{Qxb7} \text{Qxh3}\)

\[\text{Diagram}\]

After all the chopping of material, the position still looks unclear. White's king is further away from the critical pawns than Black's king, and there seems to be a significant danger of Black winning the f-pawn, and then exchanging the other pawn. White needs some remarkably delicate play from his bishop.

43 \(\text{Qb6!}\)

A quiet but highly effective move. Kramnik plans to manoeuvre his bishop.
to h4, guarding the g3-pawn, and covering the f6-square, if Black has not already advanced his king. Meanwhile Black cannot move his knight.

We begin to sense that Kramnik has gone beyond just winning a piece, and that he has found a clear winning plan. 43...d7?!

This loses a tempo, Black’s king no longer being able to play to f6 next move.

Black has a final chance to make mischief with 43...f6 44 d6 g5. Then the bishop zigzags with 45 d8+! g4 46 e7! xg3 47 f8 h5 48 xg7 g5 49 xe5+ g2 50 f6 h4 51 f5 h3 52 h4+ g1 53 f4 h2 54 xh2+ xh2 55 f3+ xf3 57 f7, queening the pawn.

44 e3!

Black’s king has now been lured away, and on his next move he has lost a tempo.

44...e7

His only hope is to win or exchange White’s f5-pawn, and then to win or exchange the g3-pawn. 44...c6 45 c5 d5 46 d2 e4 47 e6 g6 48 f4+ xf4+ 49 xf4 covers only the first half of the task, and not the second.

45 c5

With thoughts of stabilizing the centre with e4.

45...g6

The final attempt at keeping the game alive. Kramnik gives as an attempt 45...f6 46 g4 e4, but 47 xe4 e5 48 g3 df4 49 d2 wins.

46 fxg6

Obviously.

46...f6

Black recovers one pawn, but not the second.

47 xh6 xg6

47...f2 48 g7 f7 49 e6 consolidates the extra material.

48 e3 1-0

The knight cannot move, as if 48...g5 49 xg5 xg5 50 d2 g4 51 e4 f3 52 e3, and the king gets zugzwanged out. White uses the same idea after 48...f5 49 d2 g4 50 e4 f3 51 d3.
Game 14
D.Navara-B.Socko
Polish Team Championship 2006
Ruy Lopez C95

1 e4 e5 2 d4 c6 3 d5 a6 4 a4 d6 5 0-0 e7 6 Re1 b5 7 Ac3 d6

Black is not interested in the Marshall Gambit with 7...0-0 8 c3 d5, see Game 16, Shirov-Aronian, and also the anti-Marshall system with 8 a4, as in Game 10, Ivanchuk-Aronian.

8 c3

The main line.

8 a4 is possible, but perhaps slightly less effective for White than in the Anti-Marshall proper. 8...Ag4 is a reasonable reply.

8...Ag4 is just about playable, but after 9 h3 Ah5 10 d3! Black’s bishop loses cover on the light squares on the queenside. White’s basic development plan is to swing the knight from b1 to f1, then maybe gain space with the pawn with g4 and/or play the knight to e3 or g3, setting up a light-squared bind.

9 h3

Whereas here White decides to prevent ...Ag4.

The difference is that after 9 d4 Ag4, White’s central pawns are less solid than in the rock-hard d3 formation, and Black can set up counterplay after 10 d5 Aa5 11 Ac2 c6 or 11...Ac8. 9...Ab8!?}

Which was the most sensational new system of the Ruy Lopez in the early 20th century? The Marshall Gambit or this, the Breyer Variation?

If we can demonstrate that the Marshall Gambit is fully and completely equal, then it may be given the top slot. The Breyer Gambit is tough and extremely difficult to beat, but White still has chances of playing for a slight, maybe very slight, edge. There have been times, though, when players with
White, such as Stein have quite simply given up on 1 e4, because of the Breyer. White has found a few ways since then to improve his play.

Breyer’s knight retreat intends to redeploy the knight to d7, keeping the e5-pawn safe, and allowing Black the chance to advance his queenside pawns effectively, with ...c5, so that the pawns become strengths rather than weaknesses.

For 9...Qa5, see Game 33, Karjakin-Narkiev. There are many other alternatives for Black, not surprisingly when White’s last move was a quiet h3. One curiosity is 9...Qe8!? 10 Qg5!? (10 d4 Qb7 leads to sharp play) 10...Qf8 11 Qf3, offering a repetition. If Black wants to play on, he has to try something else, with 11...Qb8, 11...Qa5, 11...Qb7, 11...h6, or a few others.

10 d4

10 a4 Qb7 gives Black no great problems.

10...Qbd7

The continuation of the Breyer manoeuvre.

11 Qbd2

11 Qh4 used to be popular up to the early 1970s, with the idea that Black’s knight blocks the bishop’s defence of the f5-square. It soon became appreciated that 11...Qb6 and 11...exd4 12 cxd4 Qb6 gave Black full equality.

11 d5 Qb7, followed by ...c6, does not give White much either.

11 c4 c6 sets up Black’s barricades well. Black has good chances of equality.

11 Qg5 Qb7 12 Qbd2 h6 13 Qh4 Qe8 also seems comfortable for Black.

All of these lines were tried many times in the early 70s, and proved to be extremely solid for Black. Almost by a process of elimination, 11 Qbd2 survived as the only promising plan.

11...Qb7

Black has to develop.

11...Qe8?? would be careless, as White traps the queen after 12 Qxf7+ Qxf7 13 Qg5+ followed by Qe6.

12 Qc2

White needs to provide extra cover to the e4-pawn, before manoeuvring his knight to the king’s file.

If one is getting worried about Black spending three tempi to manoeuvre the knight from b8 to d7, remember that White has spent four tempi manoeuvring the bishop from f1 to c2.
These offset each other.

12...\textit{Re}8

Now that White's bishop is off the a2-g8 diagonal, the rook move is much better.

13 \textit{Qf}1

A standard Ruy Lopez development plan. White puts pressure with the pawns on the queenside, and sets up possible attacks on the kingside, while keeping his pawns intact in the centre. It is up to Black to set up some counterplay.

13...\textit{Kf}8

In 1983 when Spassky was content at being just a highly respected former World Champion, he made some quick draws with 13...d5!? Tal too was happy with a quick draw against both Spassky and Psakhis. The various pawn exchanges, and also 14 \textit{Qg}3, all seemed equal.

Then Kindermann showed, against Spassky in the 1984 Bundesliga, that 14 \textit{Qxe}5! \textit{Qxe}5 15 dx\textit{e}5 \textit{Qxe}4 16 f3! can still create problems. Spassky tried 16...\textit{Qc}5 17 b4 \textit{Qd}7, but after 18 f4!, White created pressure, and later won. Spassky then tried improving with 16...\textit{Qg}5 17 \textit{Qg}3 f6, but Chandler dem-

14...\textit{g}6

This looks like a simple re-fianchetto move, although in fact the bishop does not make it to g7. Black's other idea is more to prevent White from moving his knight to f5.

14...c6 is an alternative. Then 15 \textit{Qf}5 \textit{Wc}7 (15...\textit{g}6?! 16 \textit{Qh}6+ \textit{Qg}7? 17 \textit{Qg}5 is unplayable for Black) 16 dx\textit{e}5 dx\textit{e}5 17 \textit{Qh}2 c4 18 \textit{Wf}3 c4 19 \textit{Qg}5 has been played a couple of times:

a) Black's play soon collapsed after 19...\textit{Wc}6?! 20 \textit{Rad}1 h6 21 \textit{Qc}1 \textit{Qc}5? 22 \textit{Qxh}6! in A.Volokitin-E.Bacrot, German League 2007. The point is that if 22...gxh6 23 \textit{Bd}6! \textit{Qxd}6 24 \textit{Wg}3+, checkmate follows, so Bacrot struggled on with 22...\textit{Qxe}6 23 \textit{Qg}4, but White's
minor pieces were swarming alarmingly, and helped to win quickly.

b) Black avoided the immediate danger in Anand-Morozevich, Morelia/Linares 2007, playing instead 19...\texttt{f6}! 20 \texttt{a}d1 \texttt{c5}:

b1) Maybe White is slightly better after, for example, 21 \texttt{g}g4 \texttt{g}xg4 22 hxg4.

b2) Anand tried instead the tempting 21 \texttt{xf6}?! \texttt{xf6} 22 \texttt{g}g4 \texttt{e}6, but for much of the time he would have liked to have kept his dark-squared bishop. After 23 \texttt{g}ge3 (Marin suggests 23 b4!? as an improvement) 23...\texttt{a}5 24 a3 \texttt{g}6 25 \texttt{d}d5?! \texttt{x}d8!? (ignoring the sacrifice) 26 \texttt{g}g3 \texttt{d}d7 27 \texttt{f}e3 \texttt{d}d8 Morozevich looked to have a good position, but Anand found the better moves, and later won.

14...d5! is relatively unexplored, although Black usually delays it for the next move. There is no obvious refutation. White could perhaps try 15 \texttt{g}g5!? h6 16 \texttt{h}h4 \texttt{g}5 17 \texttt{x}xg5, the same sacrifice as in the main line, except that White has not played the extra b3 move. Is this relevant for either side? I leave it to the reader.

15 b3

White too aims at a fianchetto, except that again neither player completes the development of the long diagonal. Events intervene.

15 a4 is not quite as fashionable at higher levels, but has achieved good results for White, after either 15...c5 16 d5 c4 17 \texttt{g}g5 h6 18 \texttt{e}e3 or 15...\texttt{g}g7 16 \texttt{d}d3 c6 17 \texttt{g}g5 \texttt{g}f8 18 \texttt{d}d2 \texttt{e}e6 19 \texttt{e}e3.

In either case, the pawn structure is mainly blocked, quite a contrast with the current main line.

15...d5?!

A central pawn explosion!

Quite often in such positions, and also in such lines with white pawns on c4 and d4, and black pawns on c5 and d5, play can lead to extremely complicated positional calculations, as each player on the new move has to calculate two ‘pawn takes pawn’ captures, work out whether either of them is good, bad, level or premature, and then has to foresee whether the opponent has the chance of making a good response in reply. Sometimes there is no immediate pawn capture by either side, and the tension increases, no doubt leading to severe time pressure. Play through the next few moves in the game, and there is no central pawn exchange on either side, until Black’s 19th, four extra moves on either side. During this time, play has not been quiet, but White has made a violent piece sacrifice.

The aggressive central pawn thrust has only been a relatively recent try, with 15...\texttt{g}g7 having a much longer history, Tal and more especially Spassky having scored with good wins in this. Also, more recently, Socko has reverted to the more traditional lines, in re-

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sponse to his loss against Navara. For example, M.Carlsen-B.Socket, German League 2006, three months after the loss to Navara, continued 16 d5 We7 17 c4 Wf8 18 Axe3 Ah6 (Black is desperate to exchange the bad bishop) 19 Axe6 Wx6 20 c5 axb5 21 b4, but Black was under pressure, and later lost. There have been many tries for Black after 16 d5, and indeed many defensive attempts by Socko. Black is slightly worse, hence the reason to try 15...d5.

16 Kg5

He doesn’t take anything, but adds to the tension instead. Quite often an extra pin can make all the difference.

Are there any good ‘pawn takes pawn’ options immediately?

16 exd5 Qxd5 does not make much pressure against Black, as White’s c3-pawn is under threat. Play is level after 17 dxe5 Qxe3 18 Wd3 Qd5. This of course helps explain why Black did not try 14...d5 a move earlier, when White’s pawn was still on b2.

16 dxe5 dxe4 gives White nothing, and indeed forces him to play carefully:

- a) If, for example, 17 Axe4 Axe4 18 Axe4 Axe4 19 Axe4 Axe5 20 Wf4 Wxd1+ 21 Axe1 Qxf3+ 22 gxf3 c5. and Black has the better endgame pawn structure.

- b) Or 17 exf6 exf3 18 Axe4 Axe4 19 Axe4 fxg2 22 Axe2 Qc5 with good play for Black.

- c) 17 Qg5! appears to be the safest option, with a few small tactics ending up in a drawn opposite-coloured bishop endgame after 17...dxe5 18 Oxe5 dxe4 19 Oxe4 Oxe4 20 Oxe4 Od3 21 Ae2 Oxc1 22 Ad2 Qe2+ 23 Axe2 Wxd1+ 24 Axe2 Ad8.

The final central exchange capture looks equal after 16 Oxe5 Oxe5 17 dxe5 Oxe5 18 Tf4 Ae8.

16...h6

Now it is Black’s turn. Again, he must consider initiating pawn exchanges in the centre. The problem is that the pin on the knight on f6 is too painful for Black that he has to try to break it.

16...exd4? 17 e5 dxc3 18 exf6 Wxe1+ 19 Wxe1 h6 is too wild. Black is sacrificing his minor piece for a few pawns, but his opponent is now attacking, and Black’s pawns attack little. A return piece sacrifice with 20 Qh4! Qxf6 21 Wxc3 g5 22 Qxg5 hXg5 23 Qxg5 d4! 24 Wd2! Wd5 25 f3 keeps the initiative. Black suffers serious gaps in his kingside pawn structure.

16...dxe4? 17 Qxe5 puts intense pressure on both black knights. If 17...dxe5 18 dxe5 Wxd1 19 Axe1 Qd5 20 Qxe4, White wins a pawn.

17 Qh4

Of course, Navara will have prepared this piece sacrifice. Indeed, it has already been tried before, but here he adds a couple of extra details.

In any case, 17 dxe5 Nex5 18 Oxe5 Oxe5 19 Td4 Ae6 is only equal, as is 17
\( \text{xf6} \text{xf6} 18 \text{exd5 exd4 19} \text{xd4 xd4} \\
20 \text{xd4 xd5.} \)

with unclear play.

b) Polgar, then only a teenager, showed great flair for setting up a sacrificial attack with 19 \text{dxe5! } \text{xe4} 20 \\
\text{xe4 xe4 21 xe4 gxh4 22 hd4 e7} \\
23 e6 fxe6 24 e5. She had recovered her material, and Spassky’s pawn structure proved to be seriously damaged, resulting later in a loss.

On the other central pawn capture, White stands positionally better after 17...exd4 18 e5 g5 19 \text{xg5 hxg5} 20 \\
\text{xf6 xf6 21 wd3.} \\
18 \text{xg5} \\

He has to sacrifice, and he needs to keep the bishop.

18...hxg5 \\
18...exd4? 19 \text{f3} does not give any material compensation in return for the kingside pawn gash.

19 \text{xg5} \\

Two pawns for the knight, and good attacking chances against an exposed king. This seems like promising compensation.

19...exd4 \\
19...dxe4 is an attempt at simplification, but White still kept strong kingside pressure after 20 \text{xe4 xe4} 21 \\
\text{xe4 wc8 22 h4 exd4 23 cxd4 g7 24}
Modern Chess: Move by Move

\( \text{Qf5 in A. Sherzer-A. Lesiege, Biel 1993. After 24...Qf8 25 Wf3 Re6 26 d5 Re5 27 } \\
\text{Qh6+ Rxh6 28 Rxh6 Qg7 29 Qxe5 } \\
\text{Qxe5 30 Re1 Qg6 31 Qg4 White was winning.} \)

\text{20 e5} \\
\text{So that both bishops are on good attacking diagonals, and his other pieces are also in the attack.} \\
\text{20 cxd5 exd5 21 Qxe4 Qe7 is ineffective.} \)

\text{20...Qxe5} \\
\text{Black also faces problems after 20...Qxe5 21 Qh5 Qg7 22 exd4 Qed7} \\
\text{23 Wf3. The basic plan of attack is Qxg7 followed by Kg3.} \\
\text{21 Qxe5 Qxe5} \\
\text{22 cxd4!} \\
\text{A year earlier, Navara had got caught off-guard against the same opponent with 22 Wxd4?. He soon found out that he had no real compensation for his sacrificed pawn after 22...Wd6} \\
\text{23 Re1 Qe4 24 Qf4 Re8, and a later win for Black in D. Navara-B. Socko, Greek Team Championship 2005.} \\

\text{One can be sure that Navara had prepared this position in detail. White's pawn capture on d4 adds an important centralized pawn, and kicks Black's knight from another central square, e5. There is no deep tactic, rather just a natural positional attack, taking over some dark squares, and adding pressure on the light squares leading up to h7.} \)

\text{22...Qed7} \\
\text{A position which has interested the analysts. Where should the knight move? Socko's retreat, helping defend the other knight on f6, seems just about to hold, but requires great accuracy. In other games, Black chose 22...Qc6 instead. This was played by Inarkiev in April 2005, with a later win for Black, given below. This predates the earlier Navara-Socko encounter, which dates from July 2005. Therefore, neither Navara nor Socko covered entirely new ground, and a diligent player could be expected, especially in the days of the Internet, to have had chances of preparing in detail.} \\
\text{22...Qc6 is a more tactical line, putting pressure on the pawn on d4, rather than pure defence:} \\
\text{22...Qc6} \\
\text{23 Qf5} \\
\text{White suffered a quick collapse a month after the second Navara-Socko game in J. Polgar-S. Mamedyarov, Essent 2006. After 23 Qf5?! (an unfortunate}
novelty', according to Marin), Black fought back with 23...\textit{c8}\textdagger 24 \textit{c1} \textit{xf5} 25 \textit{xf5} \textit{d6} 26 \textit{h4} \textit{e7} 27 \textit{g3} \textit{wb4}, Black later consolidating and winning.

b) 23 \textit{d3}\textdagger? \textit{b4} 24 \textit{f3} has also been tried.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textit{a1} & \textit{b1} & \textit{c1} & \textit{d1} & \textit{e1} & \textit{f1} & \textit{g1} \\
\hline
\textit{a2} & \textit{b2} & \textit{c2} & \textit{d2} & \textit{e2} & \textit{f2} & \textit{g2} \\
\hline
\textit{a3} & \textit{b3} & \textit{c3} & \textit{d3} & \textit{e3} & \textit{f3} & \textit{g3} \\
\hline
\textit{a4} & \textit{b4} & \textit{c4} & \textit{d4} & \textit{e4} & \textit{f4} & \textit{g4} \\
\hline
\textit{a5} & \textit{b5} & \textit{c5} & \textit{d5} & \textit{e5} & \textit{f5} & \textit{g5} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

White lures the knight from the centre, but he will soon have to give a tempo with his bishop:

b1) If then 24...\textit{xc2}? 25 \textit{xf6} \textit{xf6} 26 \textit{xf6} \textit{xa1} 27 \textit{g5+} \textit{h8} 28 \textit{h5}, and White’s queen and knight are much more effective than Black’s scattered pieces.

b2) 24...\textit{e7} is far safer, and it could end up as another draw by repetition in a few moves time:

b21) Lukacs and Hazai give 25 \textit{f5} \textit{xc2} 26 \textit{xe7+} \textit{xe7} 27 \textit{xf6} \textit{e4} 28 \textit{g5+} \textit{g8} 28 \textit{h4} \textit{h7} 29 \textit{g5+} as a draw.

b22) Instead, A.Grischuk-S.Mamedyarov, Moscow 2006, continued with 25 \textit{b1} \textit{c8} 26 \textit{f4} \textit{e4} 27 \textit{xe7} \textit{xe7} \textit{c6} 29 \textit{xe4} \textit{dxe4} 30 \textit{h5} \textit{d6} 31 \textit{f6+} \textit{f8} 32 \textit{h6+} \textit{e7} 33 \textit{g8+} \textit{e8} 34 \textit{f6+} \textit{e7}, draw. Analysis for ChessBase, by Ftacnik and by Lukacs/Hazai, suggests possible improvements for both sides, with 26 \textit{f5}! looking promising for White. Black could instead try 25...\textit{e4}! a move earlier: 26 \textit{xe7} \textit{xe7} 27 a3 \textit{c6} 28 \textit{xe4} \textit{xd4} 29 \textit{g4+} \textit{f8} 30 \textit{h5} \textit{g7}. Clearly, there is now an obvious draw. The computer suggests that the unexpected 31 \textit{d6}! might well be an improvement for White, though. If 31...\textit{e2+} 32 \textit{h1} \textit{xd6} 33 \textit{xe2} \textit{f4} 34 \textit{d3} \textit{h8} 35 \textit{g1} d4 36 \textit{e1}, White, maybe contrary to initial appearances, is doing well. Black has the passed pawn in the centre, but White controls the other central file with queen and rook, and Black’s king is exposed.

There is clearly plenty of play to be analysed in this whole variation, but maybe the quiet positional grind, after the tactics and sacrifices, might be the most effective way of handling things.

c) There is another sharp line, though: 23 \textit{h5} \textit{e7} 24 \textit{xf6} \textit{xf6} 25 \textit{d3} \textit{xd4} 26 \textit{h7+} \textit{f8} 27 \textit{h6+} \textit{e8} 28 \textit{e1+}.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textit{a1} & \textit{b1} & \textit{c1} & \textit{d1} & \textit{e1} & \textit{f1} & \textit{g1} \\
\hline
\textit{a2} & \textit{b2} & \textit{c2} & \textit{d2} & \textit{e2} & \textit{f2} & \textit{g2} \\
\hline
\textit{a3} & \textit{b3} & \textit{c3} & \textit{d3} & \textit{e3} & \textit{f3} & \textit{g3} \\
\hline
\textit{a4} & \textit{b4} & \textit{c4} & \textit{d4} & \textit{e4} & \textit{f4} & \textit{g4} \\
\hline
\textit{a5} & \textit{b5} & \textit{c5} & \textit{d5} & \textit{e5} & \textit{f5} & \textit{g5} \\
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After some natural and logical play, some recent games diverged. Naturally Black must block the diagonal, with either 28...\textit{e7} or 28...\textit{e5}; 28...\textit{d7??} 29 \textit{f5} mate is not bright:

c1) The earlier game was A.Fedorov-
E.Inarkiev, Sochi 2005, where Black chose 28...\textit{D}e7:

c11) Play continued with 29 \textit{D}g7+ \textit{D}d7 (29...\textit{D}xg7 30 \textit{D}xg7 \textit{D}d7 31 \textit{D}xf7 \textit{D}e8 32 \textit{D}f5+ \textit{D}d8 33 \textit{D}xe7 \textit{D}xe7 34 \textit{D}g8+ \textit{D}e8 35 \textit{D}g5+ \textit{D}e7 is a perpetual, but Black will want to do more than that) 30 \textit{D}f5 \textit{D}c6 31 \textit{D}xd4 \textit{D}xd4 32 \textit{D}f4 \textit{D}xc2 33 \textit{D}f7+ \textit{D}c6 34 \textit{D}g6+ \textit{D}c5 35 \textit{D}xc2+ \textit{D}b6, and the king was safe, and Black kept an extra bishop.

c12) If White wanted to force a draw, 29 \textit{D}f5!? would sort this out quickly. Black cannot allow the bishop to stay there, so 29...\textit{D}c8 and a perpetual after 30 \textit{D}c6+ \textit{D}f8 31 \textit{D}h6+ \textit{D}e8. Therefore there is no realistic prospect of Black refuting White's play in this line.

c13) The most startling line is 29 \textit{D}g5 \textit{D}f8 30 \textit{D}h7 (avoiding the repetition with 30 \textit{D}h6+) 30...\textit{D}c3 31 \textit{D}h4 \textit{D}d6 32 \textit{D}xe7 \textit{D}xe8! (not 32...\textit{D}xe7?? 33 \textit{D}g8+), and a draw was agreed some moves later in K.Landa-V.Kosyrev, Internet 2005.

Black cannot even push the queen away with 33...\textit{D}f6?? in view of 34 \textit{D}g7 mate. So far, this all looks promising for White, except that he cannot make any further advance, with either rook or queen. There are many chances on either side to break though, but if the opponent is alert, the likely result is deadlock.

c2) In a game Mamedyarov-Shirov, Moscow 2006, play continued 28...\textit{D}e5 29 \textit{D}f5 \textit{D}d6 30 \textit{D}g5 c5 31 \textit{D}f6+ \textit{D}d8 32 \textit{D}xd5+ \textit{D}e8 34 \textit{D}d5+, and a draw by repetition. There are other possibilities here too: for example, 31 \textit{D}g4 (opening up the f5-square for the knight after \textit{D}g7+) 32...\textit{D}e7 32 \textit{D}g8+ \textit{D}f8 33 \textit{D}g5 \textit{D}e7, with another repetition. Instead Lukacs and Hazai suggest 31 \textit{D}f1!? as a possibility, with the idea of f4. Play is complicated, but there are many draws by repetition if White wants. There is a suspicion, though, that with best play, White could try for more. For example, after 31...\textit{D}f8 32 \textit{D}f6 \textit{D}c6 33 f4 b4 34 \textit{D}d3, White will capture the knight (as if 34...\textit{D}xd3?? 35 \textit{D}h6 mate), with chances of an edge.

We now return to 22...\textit{D}ed7:

$$23 \textit{D}f3$$

This is a wonderfully strange position. Black is not in fact threatening the rook on e7, since 33...\textit{D}xe7 would be illegal, and 33...\textit{D}xe7?? and 33...\textit{D}xe7?? would allow checkmate with 34 \textit{D}g8.
Back to 'normal' chess. We are at the end of the combinational phase, and now it is a case of positional pressure against the black pieces. All White's pieces, apart for the king, are already attacking, or just a move to attacking, while some Black's pieces are quiet defenders. Much depends on whether Black can uncover his pieces.

23...\textit{We7}

Probably the best defensive option.

An initial computer suggestion is 23...\textit{Ag7} 24 \textit{Ah5} \textit{Ah8}, keeping firm control of the pinned knight, but unfortunately Black has little support for the king. 25 \textit{Ah6} \textit{Ee4} 26 \textit{Ag4+ Ah7} 27 \textit{Ag7 We7}! (27...\textit{Wg8}?? 28 \textit{Wf5 mate}) 28 \textit{Ah8 f5} 29 \textit{Wg7+ Xg7} 30 \textit{Axg7 Bh6} 31 g4 keeps Black's alive, although a pawn down. White should eventually win.

If 23...\textit{We7} 24 \textit{Af5}, and Black's position cracks. Playing through the computer options for Black would give 24...\textit{Ah8} 25 \textit{Ee1 Eb4} 26 \textit{Ah6 Ag7} 27 \textit{He3 Ad2} 28 \textit{Af5+ Ah8} 29 \textit{Ee7 Ag7} 30 \textit{Wg3 Axh3} 21 \textit{Ah6+ Xh6} 32 \textit{Af5+ Ah5} 33 \textit{Ad1+} and mate next move.

If the bishop cannot help, the queen has to take on the burden.

White threatens \textit{Exe7}.

The alternative is 24 \textit{Ah5 Ag7} 25 \textit{Xg7} (25 \textit{Af5 Wf8}! holds) 25...\textit{Xg7} 26 \textit{Wg3 We6}! 27 \textit{Wxf6+ Xf6} 28 \textit{Wf4+ We7} 29 \textit{Af5 Wd6} 30 \textit{We1+ Ed8} 31 \textit{Wh4+ Wf6} 32 \textit{Wf4} 33 \textit{Wh8 Wd6} 34 \textit{Wxf7 Ec6} 35 \textit{He5}, and Black is still under pressure, but not as much as in the game.

24...\textit{Wd6}

Socko accepts that the best he can do is to allow a repetition. Navara's piece sacrifice has at least held the balance in this game, but can he try for more? One would expect so.

25 \textit{Af4}

The bishop is able to use another diagonal. Indeed both white bishops are very strong.

25...\textit{We7}?

Both players would have had the opportunity of analysing their previous encounter some months ago, but it is Socko whose game faltered. He tries to keep the extra minor piece, but his defence crumbles.

A more active way is to make a return sacrifice, with the view of active counterplay. The choice is between 25...\textit{Wb6} and 25...\textit{Wb4}. Either way,
White recovers the knight with 26 \( \text{Qxd7} \text{Qxd7} 27 \text{Wg4+} \), and then 27...\( \text{Kh8} \) 28 \( \text{Qxd7} \) (White can, of course, accept a draw with 28 \( \text{Wh4+} \) 28...\( \text{Qxd4} \) forks the rook and bishop.

The obvious continuation is 29 \( \text{Cc1} \), giving up bishop rather than rook. After 29...\( \text{Qxf4} \) 30 \( \text{Qxc7} \text{Qa7} 31 \text{Qf5} \) it looks at first as though White has a winning attack. But then there is a wonderful tactical resource with 31...\( \text{Cc6!!} \), threatening the queen, threatening the rook, and blocking the defence of the queen check on c1. White can just hold out for a draw with 32 \( \text{Wd8!} \text{C1+} 33 \text{Kh2} \text{Wf4+} \). Some superb tactics, but with the help of computer Navara could well have analysed this line in advance. If I can find it, so could he! Try to imagine how difficult it would be for the over-the-board player finding the draw from move 25. Difficult.

Here White also has a relatively quiet line, with 31 \( \text{Qxb7} \) (instead of 31 \( \text{Qf5} \)). After 31...\( \text{Cc5} \), there is a perpetual check on 32 \( \text{Qh1} \text{Qxf2}+ 33 \text{Qxf2} \text{Cc1+} 34 \text{Kh1} \text{Wf1+} \). Play is still equal after 35 \( \text{Qd1} \text{Qxd1+} 36 \text{Kh2} \text{Qxb7} 37 \text{Qxb7} \text{Wh5!} \). Alternatively here, White has 32 \( \text{Cc8+} \text{Kh7} 33 \text{Qxc5} \text{Qxb7} 34 \text{Qxd5} \text{Cc7} \). After all the wild complications, we reach a relatively stable early endgame with queens, and for White, knight and two pawns versus rook. White is better, and certainly should not lose this, but it would be a long endgame grind to play for a win.

These are the critical main lines, but it remains to be seen whether White can find good alternatives, after either 25...\( \text{Wb6} \) or 25...\( \text{Wb4} \).

The weaker 25...\( \text{Wb6?} \) 26 \( \text{Cc1} \text{Cc6} 27 \text{Qh5} \text{Qxh5} 28 \text{Qxh5} \text{Qf6} 29 \text{Wh4} \text{g7} 30 \text{e5} \) puts Black under pressure. Therefore he needs to consider the other queen move.

25...\( \text{Wb4!} \) places the queen on a livelier square.

Then White could, as suggested earlier, have tried 26 \( \text{Qxd7} \text{Qxd7} 27 \text{Wg4+} \), with an edge for him after complicated play.

Or he could try 26 \( \text{Cc1} \text{Cc8} 27 \text{e5} \text{Qxe5} 28 \text{dxe5} \text{Qxf5} 29 \text{Wxf5} \text{Qe4} \). Then 30 \( \text{Qxc7} \text{We1+} 31 \text{Qf1} \text{Wxf2+} 32 \text{Qxf2} \text{Qxf2} 33 \text{Qxf2} \text{Qe8} \) is level, or perhaps slightly better for Black in an endgame. White also has 30 \( \text{Wg4+} \text{Kh8} 31 \text{Wh5+} \text{Qg8} \), and then 32 \( \text{e6?} \), avoiding the repetition. The safest reply is then 32...\( \text{We7!} \), and then White should take a draw with 33 \( \text{Wg4+} \text{Qg8} 34 \text{Wh5+} \text{Qg7} 35 \text{Qxd5?} \) is unwise, as Black has 35...\( \text{Qxg3!} \), and if 36 \( \text{Qxa8} \text{Qe2+} \), forking king and rook.

Complicated, but it seems that 25...\( \text{Wb4!} \) keeps White down to a slight edge.

26 \( \text{Cc1} \)

Maybe Socko was hoping for a draw anyway with 26 \( \text{Qg5} \), repeating.

Navara shows that he can add to the pressure.
26...c6

Marin gives 26...c5 27 Qg5 wd6 as an improvement, but Black’s position is unconvincing. After 28 dxc5 wc6 29 Qh5 Qxh5 30 Wh5 Qg7 31 Wh7+ Qf8 32 Qxd7 Qxd7 33 Qh6 White has a winning attack. Alternatively, 29..Qe8 30 Qe3 Qe5 (30...Qxe3 is better, but unsatisfactory) 31 Qg3+ Wh8 32 Wh4 Qxh5 33 Wh5+ Qg7 34 Wh7+ Qf6 35 h4! Qg6 36 Qxg6 fxg6 37 Qd4+ leads to a win for White.

Black’s mistake was on move 25, not on move 26.

27 Qg5

Returning to the pin, and threatening the Qxd7 capture.

27...Wd6

And so the queen returns.

28 Qh5

He is not interested in a repetition with 28 Qf4.

White has only three minor pieces, but they have much greater impact than Black’s four.

28...Qg7

The queen breaks through after 28..Qxh5 29 Wh5 Qg7 30 Wh7+ Qf8 31 Qxd7 Qxd7 32 Qh6, and if 30..f6 31 Wh8+.

White also has a fairly standard attacking win after 28..Qxe8 29 Qf4 We7 30 Qg3+ Wh8 31 Wh4 Qg8 32 Qg5+ Qh8 33 Qxf6 Qxf6 34 Qe5 Qg7 35 Qc3.

So many attacking pieces for White, so few defenders for Black.

29 Qxg7

Forcing the king into the open.

29...Qxg7 30 Qf4

The bishop hits the queen yet again.

30...Qe7

Black’s queen is stuck on the a3-f8 diagonal, and from White’s point of view, it does not really matter where the queen should go. By now, White is winning.

31 Qg3+
Modern Chess: Move by Move

A strong check.

32...\(\text{Nh8}\)

If 32...\(\text{Qf8}\) 33 \(\text{Qd6}\), pins the queen.

32 \(\text{Wh4+}\)

Zigzagging through.

32...\(\text{Qg8}\)

32...\(\text{Qg7}\) 33 \(\text{h6+}\) wins more quickly.

33 \(\text{Qxd7}\)

The simplest, even though he is not giving immediate checkmate, or winning the queen.

There is always the possibility of a blunder, even from a winning position, and 33 \(\text{Cc3?}\) throws a rook after

33...\(\text{We1+}\) 34 \(\text{Qh2}\) \(\text{Wxc3}\). White's idea would probably have been 35 \(\text{Qh6!}\) \(\text{Qe8}\) 36 \(\text{Qh7+}\) \(\text{Qh8}\) 37 \(\text{Qf5}\) \(\text{Qg8}\), but it is only a perpetual. Unnecessary sacrifices are not good chess.

33 \(\text{Qh2?}\) is over-sophisticated, aiming to play \(\text{Cc3}\) without allowing a queen fork, but allowing a different checking idea. After 33...\(\text{Qf8}\) 34 \(\text{Qg5}\) \(\text{Wd6+!}\) 35 \(\text{Qf4}\) \(\text{Wf7}\) it is time now for a perpetual.

Navara plays it simply, and correctly.

33...\(\text{Wxd7}\)

Obviously not 33...\(\text{Qxd7??}\) 34 \(\text{We7}\).

34 \(\text{Wxf6}\)

Now White has recovered his piece, is a pawn ahead, and keeps the more active pieces.

34...\(\text{We6}\)

His one hope is to head for an endgame.

35 \(\text{Wg5+}\) 1-0

Here Black gave up on his position, or possibly lost on time. If 35...\(\text{Wg6}\), White does not bother with exchanging the queens, but instead continues the attack with 36 \(\text{Wd7}\).
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘b4 4 e3

Simple enough. White wants to bring his kingside pieces into play. There is a slight problem that the dark-squared bishop cannot develop, and this indeed was a significant factor later in this game.

4 ♗c2, keeping open a later ♘g5, is also popular. See Game 12, Bareev-Efimenko, and Game 13, Kramnik-Leko.

Among other possibilities, 4 ♗f3 d5 is seen in Game 26, Wang Yue-Movsesian.

4...0-0

One of many alternatives. 4...c5, and 4...b6 are both main lines, but not covered in this collection. If Black wants to try the Nimzowitsch plan of doubling the c-pawns, and playing against them, the best option would be 4...c5, aiming for 5 ♗d3 ♗c6 6 ♗f3 ♘xc3+ 7 bxc3 d6. 5 ♗d3

The most common, although 5 ♗ge2 is also popular, planning to recapture with the knight, rather than the pawn, on c3. The knight is slightly misplaced after 5...d5 6 a3 ♗e7, but in compensation Black has lost a tempo with the bishop. White usually tries 7 cxd5, and then either recapture is playable.

5...d5

Aiming for a Queen’s Gambit type of position. Black’s bishop is more aggressive on b4 than on e7, but he will often be forced to exchange, giving away the bishop-pair. However, White no longer has ♘g5 possibilities.

6 a3

Sokolov’s favoured approach, setting up a Sämiscn structure.

6 ♗f3, 6 cxd5 and, though less often played, 6 ♗ge2 are also good.

6...♗xc3+

The natural reply.

6...♗e7 is an alternative, and is playable but not very inspiring. Black argues that in comparison with the Queen’s Gambit (for example, 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♗f3 ♗f6 4 ♘g5), White does not have the ♘g5 development. Black has, however, lost a ‘semi-tempo’, and White’s a3 is often useful.

6...dxc4 allows extra transpositional possibilities, for example, 7 ♗xc4 ♗d6, but White too has an alternative, with 7 ♗xh7+ followed by axb4, with a slight but secure edge.
Modern Chess: Move by Move

7 bxc3

So Black has given up the bishop-pair. This is of course standard in the Nimzo-Indian. Black has free development with his, or her, pieces, and has every opportunity of gaining parity in the centre.

7...dxc4

7...e5!? has been tried a few times:

a) The tactical point is that after 8 dxe5 dxc4 9 axc4? (9 exf6 wxd3 10 wxd3 cxd3 is about equal) 9...wxd1+ 10 axd1 g4 Black is doing well, and has recovered the pawn. White's isolated queenside pawn pair will become something of a problem as we get closer to the endgame.

b) White usually prefers 8 de2 e4 9 a2, and after 9...dxc4 there are some similarities to the pawn structure in our main game.

7...c6, as played in I. Sokolov-S. Movsesian, Sarajevo 2007, is a quiet alternative, aiming for gradual equality after 8 df3 b6 9 cxd5 cxd5 10 we2 ab7 11 0-0 wc8, followed by ...la6. The game was later drawn.

8 axc4 c5

8...e5 is again playable, but no longer has the possibility of an ...e4 hit against the bishop. White could perhaps consider 9 df3 e4 10 de5 ab7 11 f4? exf3:

a) 12 wxf3? is natural, but a serious blunder. Black has a winning attack after 12...de5 13 dxe5 ag4! 14 wf4 wd1+ 15 af2 wc2+ 16 ag1 de4.

b) 12 df3! is better, and Black might well have a few problems over the f7-square (0-0, ag5 or de5, etc). Perhaps such thoughts help explain why Black does not try an early ...e5.

9 de2

9 df3 leads to mainline positions, often reached too via 6 df3.

Sokolov attempts what he hopes will become a more flexible development, covering any problems on the c3-square, and maybe even thinking about gaining pawn space with f3. The trouble is that he no longer keeps control of e5, and Polgar gains a second hit in the centre, with ...e5 as well as ...c5.

9...wc7

Gaining a minor tempo, with the threatened hit on the bishop after ...cxd4.

'The threat is greater than the execution', as the great chess thinker Aron Nimzowitsch noted. Here 9...cxd4?! 10
cx\textsuperscript{d}4 \textit{W}c\textsuperscript{7} 11 \textit{Q}a\textsuperscript{2} gives nothing for Black. It is better to keep the good pawn in play.

9...\textit{Q}c\textsuperscript{6} is a good alternative, keeping the tension. Black will usually play ...\textit{W}c\textsuperscript{7} at some stage, though.

10 \textit{Q}a\textsuperscript{2}

Keeping the bishop out of harm’s way, and reminding Black that if she tries a quick ...e\textsubscript{5}, White still has pressure against f\textsubscript{7}.

10 \textit{Q}d\textsuperscript{3} is the main alternative. Then 10...e\textsubscript{5} is well-timed, and should lead to equal play.

The next stage of the development plan. Black has to decide what to do with the queenside minor pieces.

10...b\textsubscript{6}

The bishop goes first, either to b\textsubscript{7} or a\textsubscript{6}.

10...e\textsubscript{5} has been tried several times. Then the simple 11 d\textsubscript{5} might be best. The passed pawn is not a big threat, especially so early in the game, but it demands some respect. Later White may try to bolster the pawn with c\textsubscript{4}, and possibly f\textsubscript{3} followed by e\textsubscript{4}.

Polgar’s move seems more logical, aiming to develop her pieces while giving away nothing.

110-0

Or maybe 11 \textit{Q}b\textsubscript{2}, but on the other hand, while we know that White has to castle kingside, we do not quite know whether the bishop is best on b\textsubscript{2}. It is better to keep flexibility, and to castle immediately.

11...\textit{Q}a\textsuperscript{6}

Did the reader assume that Black was going to fianchett\textsuperscript{o} immediately on the long diagonal?

Black is not really threatening to attack on g\textsubscript{2}, not least because White is often quite happy to close the diagonal with f\textsubscript{3}, if required, and then e\textsubscript{4}. The a\textsubscript{6}-f\textsubscript{1} diagonal, on the other hand, is more of an irritation. White’s doubled c-pawns have gone, but he still has the problem that the c4-square is a slight weakness, making it difficult to play c\textsubscript{4}, especially if Black’s bishop is pressing on this square.

12 \textit{N}e\textsubscript{1}

To free the knight.

12...\textit{Q}c\textsuperscript{6}

The natural square. She completes her development, before pushing the pawn with ...e\textsubscript{5}.

13 \textit{Q}g\textsubscript{3}

13 \textit{Q}f\textsubscript{4}, seemingly more aggressive, has not gained much attention. 13...e\textsubscript{5} 14 \textit{Q}d\textsubscript{5} \textit{Q}xd\textsubscript{5} 15 \textit{Q}xd\textsubscript{5} \textit{Q}ad\textsubscript{8} 16 dxc\textsubscript{5} \textit{Q}e\textsubscript{7}! leaves Black comfortable.

13...\textit{Q}ad\textsubscript{8}

In such positions, it is often difficult to decide which rook should be placed on the d-file. In previous games, Black had tended to play 13...\textit{Q}fd\textsubscript{8}, with the option of placing rooks on the c-file and d-file. Polgar has decided instead that she wants to add extra cover for the f7-square, after she has opened up White’s diagonal with ...e\textsubscript{5}.
14 b2

14 Nh5 Qxh5 15 Rxh5 Qd3, followed perhaps by ...g6, covers any attack by White on Black’s kingside.

White prefers to complete his development, before attacking.

14...e5

She takes over the initiative in the centre, but loosens some light squares.

14...d5 15 e4 Qc4 16 Qc1 cxd4 17 cxd4 Qd7 18 Qxc4 Qxc4 19 Qb2 still gives White a slight edge, with the idea of d5 followed by breaking up the pawn structure with Qxf6.

15 Qc2

In Informator, Polgar suggests as better 15 d5! Qa5 16 e4 Qc4. White's connected passed pawn is of course useful, but this is not enough to force an edge of itself. To aim for a realistic plus, White would need to push pieces to the kingside, maybe starting off with 17 Qb1, taking advantage that Black’s knight on a5 is far away from the kingside. Black is not yet equal.

15 Qc1 Qa5 16 Qf3 Qf8 17 e4 Qc4 18 Qb1 Qb3 was tried in M.Ilescas-F.Vallejo Pons, Spanish Team Championship 2004. It might look as though Black has gained an edge, attacking the rook, and putting great pressure on the pawn on d4, but White sacrificed the exchange with 19 d5! Qxc1 20 Qxc1, keeping a strong pawn centre, and being ready to attack on the kingside. Vallejo opted for safety by returning the exchange, with 20...Qd6 21 Qf5 Qd7 22 Qxd6 Qxd6, draw agreed.

The computer suggests that White may still be slightly better at the time of the draw agreement, but a strong human player would find it difficult to make any progress. It is difficult to activate the bishop-pair, and it is difficult to open up the pawns. Any exchange of the light-squared bishops will leave Black’s knight more effective than White’s remaining bishop. Also, Black has an extra queenside pawn, in compensation, obviously, for White’s extra central pawn, and Black can try to expand with a later ...c4, or a more general push with ...b5 and ...a5. Probably the position is, as the players agreed, just equal.

15...Qd7

With great tension on the d-file, most obviously on the d4-pawn, but also an attempt to restrain the pawn from playing to d5.
The immediate liquidation, with 15...cxd4?! 16 cxd4 exd4 17 \( \text{\textsection} \text{x} \text{d} \text{4} \),
would give White a comfortable slight edge with the help of the bishop-pair.

If 15...\( \text{\textsection} \text{a} \text{5} \), Polgar suggests 16 dxe5
\( \text{\textsection} \text{d} \text{3} \) 17 \( \text{\textsection} \text{c} \text{1} \) \( \text{\textsection} \text{x} \text{e} \text{5} \) 18 c4 \( \text{\textsection} \text{e} \text{6} \) 19 e4 with chances of attack for White.

15...\( \text{\textsection} \text{c} \text{8} \) was suggested by the computer, with the idea that if 16 \( \text{\textsection} \text{a} \text{d} \text{1} \) \( \text{\textsection} \text{e} \text{6} \text{?} \), Black’s isolated pawn structure is no real weakness, and the knight on c6 does not have to reach to a5 to offer a bishop exchange. The simple 17 \( \text{\textsection} \text{b} \text{1} \) leaves White slightly better.

16 \( \text{\textsection} \text{a} \text{d} \text{1} \)

16 \( \text{\textsection} \text{e} \text{4} \) \( \text{\textsection} \text{x} \text{e} \text{4} \) 17 \( \text{\textsection} \text{x} \text{e} \text{4} \) looks like an improvement. White has no pin on the d-file, as opposed to the interpolated 16 \( \text{\textsection} \text{a} \text{d} \text{1} \) \( \text{\textsection} \text{f} \text{d} \text{8} \) 17 \( \text{\textsection} \text{e} \text{4} \) \( \text{\textsection} \text{x} \text{e} \text{4} \) 18 \( \text{\textsection} \text{x} \text{e} \text{4} \) when Black may safely try 18...\( \text{\textsection} \text{e} \text{7} \). In the suggested improvement, White might still have a slight edge after 17...\( \text{\textsection} \text{f} \text{d} \text{8} \) 18 d5 \( \text{\textsection} \text{e} \text{7} \) 19 c4.

16...\( \text{\textsection} \text{f} \text{d} \text{8} \)

White no longer has an edge on the d-file.

17 h3!?

White’s position is fully playable, and remains so for the next few moves. There is no need to criticize Sokolov’s quiet move here. Polgar plays dramatic attacking chess later on, and this may easily create the impression that Sokolov’s quiet move early on was a mistake of judgement, causing problems much later. Playing through the position move-by-move such an assessment would seem not so clear.

We are in a classic Nimzo-Indian early middlegame, in which both pawns and pieces are finely balanced. There are four possibilities, two on either side, of central pawn exchanges, but neither side would gain from initiating the pawn exchange, and indeed would lose ground. White wants to keep his d-pawn, this being clearly his best and most effective pawn, while Black would not want to exchange with ...cxd4 or ...exd4, when White could recapture with a pawn on d4. The only possibilities of making progress in the centre would either be d5 for White, too early and it would lose a pawn, or ...e4 and/or ...c4 for Black, which would gain space but would release the central pawn tension. Both players will want to keep in mind these ideas.

In the meantime, it is unclear how White should play his next couple of piece moves. 17 \( \text{\textsection} \text{e} \text{4} \) is a possibility, but so too is 17 \( \text{\textsection} \text{f} \text{5} \). It is unclear as yet which would be the better square for the knight. The bishop would be good on the b1-h7 diagonal, but it is also good on the a2-g8 diagonal, and it is not totally clear that an extra bishop move would be worth a tempo. Other piece moves are also possible, but do not improve their positions.

This leaves off-centre pawn moves. The two main candidates are 17 f3!? or 17 h3!?, as played. The 17 f3 idea is fully
playable, preventing Black from trying ...e4 or a possible threat with ...Qg4 after White makes a knight move. White is, however, weakening his dark squares. Sokolov instead pushes his h-pawn, cutting out possible weaknesses on the back rank, and also cutting out ...Qg4.

17...c4!

Polgar takes the initiative in the centre, not perhaps because of aggression intent, but more from a sense that if play drifts on, Black will have fewer good quiet moves than White.

Polgar suggests 17...Qa5 18 dxe5 Wxe5 19 c4 We6 20 Qb1 as a possibility. Here White could continue the theme of trying to play constructive quiet moves with 18 Qb1 Qc4 19 Qc1. It is not fully clear that the knight is better on c4 than on c6. The position is probably about equal, or the usual very slight edge for White.

18 a4?

The first real question mark given by Judit Polgar. It is still more of an indicator that White could have played the line better, rather than any indication that White would be worse. Polgar gives as better 18 Qb1 g6 (otherwise Qh5) 19 We2 with much improved centralization.

18...e8

Aiming for ...e4.

19 a3

Sokolov is still presumably aiming for a slight edge, despite his previous two quiet moves, hoping that the bishop-pair will prevail in the long run. Otherwise, there is a simple and natural repetition with 19 De4 Qd5 20 Qg5 Qf6 21 Qe4 (21 d5 h6 is at least equal for Black). Here Polgar gives 19...Qxe4 20 Wxe4 g6, but ultimately White should have an edge after, for example, 21 Wf3 with the bishop-pair starting to become more effective.

19...e4

The next stage of the central pawn structure. Both players may presumably be reasonably happy with the pawn structure, White having a secure passed pawn, and Black having set up a couple of tusk with two advanced pawns close to the centre.

20 Qb1

Sokolov could consider 20 d5!? Qxd5 21 Qxe4, but presumably he wants to keep his passed pawn. After 21...Qe5 22 Qd4 Qd3 23 Qd1 play could easily be-
come deadlocked, with any active piece move by either side allowing the opponent to find new squares. The position looks tense but equal, one possibility being 23...h6 24  Dg3  De8 25 De4  Ee8 with a repetition.

Sokolov holds back his passed pawn, but Black's pieces turn out to be the more active.

20...Dd5!?

Very direct. She aims for attack. There will be tactics, but one cannot calculate everything in advance. 20...Da5 is more solid, and who knows, possibly more accurate, but does not give all that many chances of a win.

21 De2

The knight is the piece that can best improve its position.

21...Dg5

Continuing to attack. This is do-or-die chess, and soon Polgar is obliged to drop a pawn to gain any chance of carrying on the attack against the king.

22 Df4

A good square for the knight, assisting both the defence of h3 and g2, and helping a pawn attack with d5.

22...Ac8?!

Polgar has played aggressively, but so far has not been taking risks. She has allowed White to set up a strong passed pawn, but so long as the pawn is not charging forward, that is acceptable, provided she has reasonable counterplay.

Her next move takes risks, though, as no longer is Black's bishop covering the c4-pawn.

22...Dd7!?, suggested by Polgar in her notes, is safer if less ambitious. Black would probably try ...De7, and then one of the knights to d5. Black looks at least equal.

My reading of the position is that Polgar's move is a mistake, overpressing, but that she soon recovers well, by aiming for a full-blown attack. See the notes to White's 25th, below.

23 De2

Aiming for the pawn.

Polgar notes the alternative, 23 Axa2!? Da5 24 d5 Ab7 25 d6 Dd7 with unclear play. This may well be Black's best line in this line. Indeed, 23...Dd5?! 24 Axc4 Dxf4 25 exf4 Dxf4 26 Ae3, also given by Polgar, favours White. After instead 23...De7 24 Axe7 Dxe7 25 d5 De8, with the idea of 26 d6 (26 Dd4 looks equal) 26...Axd6 27 Dd5 Db7 28 Axe7+ Dxe7 29 Dd2 Ag6, Polgar suggests there is compensation for the exchange, but this seems slightly fragile after 30 Dd5!, and if 30...hxh3 (30...De8 is possible, when maybe the simplest is 31 Axd6 Dxd6 32 Dxd6 with an edge for White) 31 Dd8+ Aa8! (31...De8 32 Dxe8+ Aa8 33 g3 Aa4 34 Dd8 Ef8 35 Axc4 with an edge for White) 32 g3 Da5 33 Dd5 Dg3+ 34 Ah1, and Black's attack fades away after, for example, 34...Ag2+ 35 Ah2 Ah3+ 36 Dg2 Wh1+ 37 Df1.
23...\textit{Wd7!}  
She abandons the c4-pawn.

If 23...\textit{Qe7} 24 \textit{Qa2}, and to save the pawn Black would be required to lose two tempi with 24...\textit{Qa6}. White can try for an edge with 25 \textit{Qxe7} \textit{Qxe7} 26 \textit{Qb1}.  
24 \textit{Wxc4}  
Naturally.

24...\textit{Qa5}  
Black takes over the light squares, but with pieces rather than pawns.

25 \textit{Wb4?}  
Sokolov is aiming to keep the extra pawn, on a4, but his kingside is too weak.

25 \textit{We2!} keeps White better centralized. White's isolated a-pawn is not significant enough to try to defend. Polgar gives 25...\textit{Wxa4} 26 \textit{Qb4} \textit{Qc6} 27 \textit{Qc2} \textit{Wa6} as unclear, but the suspicion is that White is better, with the more effective pawn structure, and a dangerous and very safe passed d-pawn. A good starting point might be 28 \textit{Wxa6} \textit{Qxa6} 29 \textit{Qa1}.

This leaves the question of whether Polgar has overpressed. Indeed, if 25...\textit{Qd5}, Polgar gives 26 \textit{Qb4!} \textit{Qc6} 27 \textit{Qc1}, shoring up the defences:

a) The recapture of the pawn is only temporary, since if 27...\textit{Qxc8} 28 \textit{Qxb4} \textit{Qxb4} 29 \textit{Wc4} a5, White has 30 \textit{Qxe4!}; White's pieces have been carefully set up.

b) There are ways of playing quietly, a pawn down, such as here with 27...\textit{Wd8} 28 \textit{Qa3} \textit{Wf6}, but they are not especially enticing.

c) Finally, the yahoo attack with 27...\textit{Qxf4} 28 \textit{Qxf4} \textit{Wxg2+?} (28...\textit{Qg6} 29 \textit{f5 wins more slowly for White}) 29 \textit{Qxg2} \textit{Wxh3}+ 30 \textit{Qg1} \textit{Qe6} (30...\textit{Qg4} 31 \textit{Qf1}) 31 \textit{Qxe4} does not work. White quickly shifts the bishop from the queenside to the kingside.

There are various alternatives by Black, but centralization by White seems to keep an edge.

25...\textit{Qd5}  
Something of a reprieve for Black. The exchange of knights now leaves White's pawns on g2 and h3 seriously weak, and behind the pawns there is a frightened king.

26 \textit{Qxd5}  
26 \textit{Qb5!} \textit{Qxb5} 27 \textit{axb5} \textit{Qxc3} 28 \textit{Qc1} \textit{Qxb1} (but not 28...\textit{Qxb5?} 29 \textit{Qe7!} \textit{Qf5} 29...\textit{Qxe4} 30 \textit{Qxb1} \textit{Qc4} 30 \textit{h4} \textit{Qf5} 31 \textit{Qc1} a5! 32 \textit{bxa6} \textit{Bxa5} is still slightly uncomfortable for White, even with the
queens off the board. His bishop on c1 is bad.

26...\textit{\texttt{\textcircled{W}}xd5}

On 26...\textit{\texttt{\textcircled{M}}xg2+} 27 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{Q}}xg2} \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{W}}xh3+} 28 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{Q}}g1} \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{W}}g4+}, the simple 29 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{Q}}h2} gives Black no more than a perpetual. Black has no time for quiet moves, as White’s queen bounds around with \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{W}}d6}.

Polgar would naturally have analysed the rook sacrifice, and would have wanted to ensure that she had at least a draw, just in case other lines did not work. It would have been in this context that she gave the line, in \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{I}}ntormator}, 29 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{Q}}f1} \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{K}}6+} 30 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{K}}d3} exd3 31 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{C}}c7!} \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{C}}c4} 32 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{K}}d2} \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{W}}h3+} 33 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{Q}}g1} \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{W}}g4+}, and finally it is a draw after various attempts at refutation.

27 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{H}}4}

White has no defending pieces supporting his king, and this could easily lead to fatal exposure. If, for example, 27 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{Q}}h2}, Polgar gives 27...\textit{\texttt{\textcircled{A}}xh3!} 28 g\textit{\texttt{\textcircled{X}}}h3 (28 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{W}}b5} \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{W}}d8l}) 28...\textit{\texttt{\textcircled{W}}f5} 29 f4 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{K}}h5} with a winning attack.

If instead 27 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{W}}d6?}, Black could of course simplify, and recover the pawn with 27...\textit{\texttt{\textcircled{W}}xd6} 28 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{K}}xd6} \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{A}}xh3} 29 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{Q}}g3} with possibly Black keeping a slight edge after 29...\textit{\texttt{\textcircled{Q}}}g4 30 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{C}}}c1 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{C}}c4}, and if 31 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{Q}}a2} \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{K}}b2} 32 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{R}}}c2 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{D}}}d3 33 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{B}}}b1 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{D}}}d7. Black has the more active pieces, but she must be careful about White’s passed pawn and bishop-pair.

Polgar instead gives 27...\textit{\texttt{\textcircled{W}}f5}, playing for the attack, with a win after 28 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{Q}}h1} \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{D}}}c4 29 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{W}}}c6 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{D}}}d7l 30 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{W}}}xc4 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{M}}xg2} 31 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{Q}}xg2} \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{W}}f3+} 32 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{Q}}}h2 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{K}}xh3} 33 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{M}}g1} \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{E}}}e6. The counterattack with 34 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{M}}xg7+} \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{M}}xg7} 35 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{W}}f1} \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{H}}h5+} 36 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{Q}}g1} \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{K}}h3} does not work. There are possible improvements for White, though, for example with 28 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{W}}}h2 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{W}}}xh3 29 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{A}}a2} \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{W}}}xh2+ 30 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{A}}}xh2 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{D}}}d7 31 d5 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{A}}}xa4 32 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{D}}}d4 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{B}}}b3 33 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{K}}}e2 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{A}}}xa2 34 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{A}}}xa2, although then 34...\textit{\texttt{\textcircled{B}}}b3l is still advantageous to Black, and if 35 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{M}}b4} \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{C}}}c5.

27...\textit{\texttt{\textcircled{H}}g4}

With an attack on the h4-pawn.

27...\textit{\texttt{\textcircled{Q}}}h5 is a possibility, but then White can force the exchange of queens: 28 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{W}}}b5!? \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{W}}}xb5 29 axb5 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{M}}}xb5 with unclear play, but no chances of attack.

28 \textit{\texttt{\textcircled{W}}}b5

Naturally Sokolov would still like to swap the queens.

28...\textit{\texttt{\textcircled{W}}}d8l

An unusual starting point for a vicious kingside attack. All Black’s pieces
are on the periphery, with only a solitary pawn in the centre. Black's queen and bishop are, however, in the process of regrouping. Polgar is aiming for a direct attack.

28...\textit{\textbf{W}}xb5!? 29 axb5 \textit{\textbf{Q}}c4 30 \textit{\textbf{Q}}c1 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d7 is also good, with a positional edge for Black. But an effective mating attack speeds things up.

29 g3?

This is a weak reply. In a couple of moves time, Black can take the h4-pawn anyway, and White has loosened the pawns in front of his king.

29 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d6!? at least brings the bishop to the kingside (29...\textit{\textbf{W}}xd6?? 30 \textit{\textbf{W}}xe8+), and keeps the play live. Polgar gives 29...\textit{\textbf{Q}}d7, without further analysis. After 30 \textit{\textbf{W}}b4 \textit{\textbf{W}}xh4 31 \textit{\textbf{Q}}g3 Black has:

a) She could consider sacrificing the exchange with 31...\textit{\textbf{Q}}xg3 32 fxg3 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xg3, maybe about equal, but it seems sensible to wait for the sacrifice until more pieces are developed.

b) So maybe 31...\textit{\textbf{W}}g5 32 d5 h5 33 \textit{\textbf{Q}}h1 \textit{\textbf{Q}}b7 (33...f4?! 34 \textit{\textbf{K}}f4 is premature) 34 \textit{\textbf{Q}}c2 (the computer suggests this as best, but it is not so clear that it is better or worse than a few alternatives) 34...\textit{\textbf{W}}g6 35 \textit{\textbf{Q}}g1 (otherwise ...h4 is threatened) 35...\textit{\textbf{Q}}c5 36 a5 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d3 37 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xd3 exd3 38 \textit{\textbf{W}}b1 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xg3 39 fxg3 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xg3 40 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e1 \textit{\textbf{Q}}a4 41 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xd3 \textit{\textbf{Q}}c2 42 \textit{\textbf{W}}xc2 \textit{\textbf{W}}xe1+ 43 \textit{\textbf{Q}}h2 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e4 44 g3 h4 with a winning attack. Not forced, but White would have to find a considerable improvement to hold this.

29...a6!

Forcing the queen from the b5-e8 diagonal.

30 \textit{\textbf{W}}b4

What Sokolov had presumably missed was that if 30 \textit{\textbf{W}}h5 \textit{\textbf{Q}}c4 31 \textit{\textbf{Q}}c1 g6 32 \textit{\textbf{W}}h6 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d6, and White's queen is about to be trapped with \ldots\textit{\textbf{Q}}f5. It takes four moves by the knight to move from the a-file to the h-file, and sometimes such a manoeuvre may easily be overlooked.

30...\textit{\textbf{W}}xh4

Recapturing the pawn, and also re-establishing the rook sacrifice.

31 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xe4

If 31 \textit{\textbf{W}}d6 \textit{\textbf{Q}}c4 32 \textit{\textbf{W}}c6 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xg3+ 33 fxg3 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xg3+ 34 \textit{\textbf{Q}}h1 \textit{\textbf{Q}}h3+ 35 \textit{\textbf{Q}}g1 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d7! 36 \textit{\textbf{W}}xc4 \textit{\textbf{Q}}g3+ 37 \textit{\textbf{Q}}h1 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e6 (probably the simplest) 38 \textit{\textbf{W}}xe6 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xe6, and the queen and bishop still create havoc. White's two rooks and extra bishop, in return for the queen, do not coordinate well,
and at the very least White will have to sacrifice a bishop to slow down the attack slightly.

31...\textit{**A**}xg3+!

This rook sacrifice is hardly by now unexpected, but the new feature is no longer the complete demolition of the white pawns, but rather the great pressure on the long diagonal.

32 \textit{**f**}xg3 \textit{**w**}xe4

Now the queen is fully centralized, and there are worrying mate threats, with ...\textit{**h**}b7 or ...\textit{**w**}f3 and ...\textit{**w**}xg3+, combined perhaps with ...\textit{**g**}4 or ...\textit{**h**}3. This is extremely dangerous, and Black has excellent compensation for the exchange sacrifice.

Is Black winning? Maybe the players might have thought so.

33 \textit{**d**}d2?

White has to find tough and resourceful defensive play, but this isn’t it. The alternatives were:

\begin{itemize}
  \item a) Polgar gives 33 \textit{**d**}5 \textit{**c**}c4 34 \textit{**d**}d4 \textit{**w**}f3 35 \textit{**w**}xc4 \textit{**w**}xg3+ 36 \textit{**f**}f1 \textit{**h**}h3+ 37 \textit{**e**}e2 \textit{**e**}xe3+ 38 \textit{**d**}d2 \textit{**w**}xe1+ 39 \textit{**c**}c2 \textit{**c**}c2+ with a winning attack. As promised, the queen and bishop work successfully together.
  \item b) 33 \textit{**b**}b2 is a logical defensive plan, making use of the second rank, but the problem is, of course, the knight fork with 33...\textit{**d**}d4. If then 34 \textit{**w**}a2 \textit{**x**}xa3 35 \textit{**w**}xa3 \textit{**h**}h7 36 \textit{**d**}d5 \textit{**x**}xd5 37 \textit{**x**}xd5 \textit{**w**}xd5, and Black has recovered her material, is a pawn up with active play, and her opponent’s pawns are all isolated. It will eventually be a loss, as with various positions where White does not take back the knight after ...\textit{**x**}xa3. White slightly prolongs the game, but does not hold it.
  \item c) 33 \textit{**c**}c1?, cutting out any ...\textit{**c**}c4xa3 threats, is a sensible reply:
    \begin{itemize}
      \item c1) If, for example, 33...\textit{**b**}b7 34 \textit{**d**}5 or 33...\textit{**h**}h3 34 \textit{**d**}d2, White’s position is holding.
      \item c2) 33...\textit{**c**}c4! is an attractive surprise reply, sacrificing the knight for nothing, and not even attacking anything – a positional sacrifice in the midst of an attack!
    \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image}
\caption{Diagram of the game's position after 33...\textit{**c**}c4.}
\end{figure}

\begin{itemize}
  \item c21) The point is that if 34 \textit{**w**}xc4 \textit{**b**}b7, White cannot play 35 \textit{**d**}5??, as the queen is no longer defended. White could still try 35 \textit{**e**}e2 \textit{**h**}h1+ 36 \textit{**f**}f2 \textit{**w**}xd1, but essentially his defence is broken.
  \item c22) A more resilient reply is 34 \textit{**e**}e2!? \textit{**b**}b7 35 \textit{**f**}f1, aiming to spirit the
\end{itemize}
king to e1 and beyond. 35...\(\text{xe}6!\) is the most accurate response, bringing the rook into the attack. If then 36 \(\text{Wxc}4\), Black wins after 36...\(\text{Wh}1+\) 37 \(\text{xf}2\) \(\text{xf}6+\). If instead 36 \(\text{f}2\), White is checkmated after 36...\(\text{xf}6+\) 37 \(\text{e}1\) \(\text{xf}1+\) 38 \(\text{xf}1\) \(\text{Wh}1+\) 39 \(\text{f}2\) \(\text{g}2+\) 40 \(\text{e}1\) \(\text{g}1\) mate. It is only a small consolation that the king finally reaches e1.

Is there any further try? It is too early to give up on White just yet.

d) 33 \(\text{Wb}1!\) \(\text{f}3\) 34 \(\text{Wa}2!\) seems to give good chances of holding, provided White does not mind returning his extra exchange. After 34...\(\text{c}4\) 35 \(\text{c}1\) Black will not be able to force a direct win, but there are two good choices for an endgame edge:

\[\text{d1) One idea is 35...\(\text{g}4\) 36 \(\text{Wf}2!\) \(\text{xf}2+\) 37 \(\text{xf}2\) \(\text{xd}1\) 38 \(\text{xd}1\) f5 39 \(\text{e}2\) (it is too early to hurry with 39 d5) 39...\(\text{f}7\) 40 \(\text{d}3\) b5 41 axb5 axb5 42 \(\text{xf}1\) \(\text{e}6\) (42...\(\text{g}6\) 43 \(\text{f}4\) holds) 43 e4 fxe4+ 44 \(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{d}6+\) 45 \(\text{d}3\) and White, with care, should draw.

\[\text{d2) Alternatively, 35...\(\text{Wxg}3+!\) has the merit of setting up two passed pawns, beneficial in an endgame: 36 \(\text{Wg}2\) \(\text{Wxg}2+\) 37 \(\text{xf}2\) \(\text{g}4\) 38 \(\text{d}3\) \(\text{f}5\) 39 e4 (39 \(\text{dd}1\)? \(\text{c}2\) leaves Black a clear pawn up) 39...\(\text{xe}4+\) 40 \(\text{f}2\) f6 41 \(\text{g}3\) \(\text{f}7\) 42 \(\text{g}4\) f5 43 \(\text{h}4\) g6 44 \(\text{h}5\). White has defended well so far, but one would expect that Black's three connected passed pawns would eventually break through.

So it seems that Polgar did not have a quick winning attack with best play, but that her opponent had to make concessions.

33...\(\text{Wf}3\)

With a threatened invasion on g3.
Play might continue 35 d5 Qc4 36 Rf2 Wg4 37 Wc7 Qxd5 38 Qd6 We4 39 Wh2 Qd2, and Black wins.

34...Wh5+
A repetition before the time control.

35 Qg1 Wf3
Back to move 33.

36 Wh2
36 Wd6? could again have been tried.

36...Qf5!
Back to normal play. The threat is 37...Qe4, and White has no real resistance.

37 e4
White no longer has time to try 37 Wd6? Qc4, as Black is simply winning material, Rf2 no longer being an option.

On other moves, ...Qe4 is the main threat: for example, 37 Rxd1 Qe4 38 d5 Wh5+ 39 Qg1 Wh1+ 40 Qf2 Wf3+ 41 Qe1 Qc2! with a quick win.

Sokolov tries a desperate exchange sacrifice, but it doesn’t work.

37...Qxe4 38 Qxe4 Wxe4
Black is now a pawn up, with good centralization and continued chances of an attack on the king.

39 d5
White’s only hope is his passed pawn.

39...Qc4 0-1
But this squeezes any counterplay.
1 e4 e5 2 ∆f3 ∆c6 3 ∆b5 a6 4 ∆a4 ∆f6 5 0-0 ∆e7 6 ∆e1 b5 7 ∆b3 0-0

Varying from the main non-sacrificial line, 7...d6. See the notes to Game 14, Navara-Socko.

8 c3

White knows, of course, that Aronian is happy to offer the Marshall Gambit. In Game 10, Ivanchuk-Aronian 2006, Ivanchuk side-stepped with 8 a4.

Kasparov never allowed the Marshall Attack, in recent years preferring 8 a4 or 8 h3, and earlier, sometimes 8 d4. Shipov, writing in New in Chess, commented, tongue in cheek, that it was the Marshall that caused Kasparov to give up chess for politics. Actually, he scored very well in the quieter lines. Maybe it was the Berlin Wall, 3...∆f6, that caused the rift?

8...d5

main line with 8...d6, but Black is playing for a more direct attempt at equality, rather than trying to manoeuvre quietly until move 20 and beyond.

9 exd5

9 d3 has been tried several times, but after 9...dxe4 10 dxe4 ∆xd4 11 ∆xd4 it is clear that White is hardly trying for an edge.

9 d4 exd4 10 e5 ∆e4 11 cxd4 ∆g4 12 ∆c3 ∆xf3 13 gxf3 ∆xc3 14 bxc3 f5 15 ∆h1 ∆a5 16 ∆c2 ∆h8 has been tried a couple of times at high level. Both games were drawn, although maybe there are chances for White to try for more. White has the solid passed pawn, but Black can defend against the pawn, and White's doubled f-pawns are blocked.

9...∆xd5 10 ∆xe5

Often the one way to refute a gambit is to accept it. This was what Capablanca tried close to a century ago, and is still the main line.

10 d4!? exd4 11 cxd4 seems to have been under-examined. If one day there is finally an accepted view that the Marshall sacrifice is completely sound, then attention might shift to this. A recent example is L.Nisipeanu-A.Beliavsky, Pune 2004, which continued 11...∆b4 12 ∆d2 ∆b7 12 ∆c3 ∆xc3 14 bxc3 ∆a5 15 ∆c2 ∆c4. Here there are various quiet alternatives for White, the computer suggesting, for example,
16 \( \text{Qd3} \) as a slight edge.

Nisipeanu instead went all-out for a sacrificial attack with 16 \( \text{Qg5} \) f6 17 \( \text{Qd3} \) g6 18 \( \text{Qh6} \) \( \text{Qf7} \) 19 \( \text{Qg4} \) \( \text{Qd7} \) 20 \( \text{Qg3} \) \( \text{Qh8} \) 21 \( \text{Qxg6} \) \( \text{hxg6} \) 22 \( \text{Qxg6+} \) \( \text{hxg6} \) 23 \( \text{Qf8} \) \( \text{Qxe3} \) 24 \( \text{Wh4+} \) \( \text{Qxg6} \) 25 \( \text{Wh6+} \) \( \text{Qf5} \) 26 \( \text{Wh3+} \) \( \text{Qg8} \) 27 \( \text{Wh6+} \) \( \text{Qf5} \), drawn by perpetual.

10 a4 \( \text{Qb7} \) 11 axb5 axb5 12 \( \text{Qxa8} \) \( \text{Qxa8} \) 13 \( \text{Qxe5} \) \( \text{Qxe5} \) 14 \( \text{Qxe5} \) \( \text{Qf4} \) 15 \( \text{d4} \) \( \text{Qxg2} \) has tended to favour Black. Simple reason – White’s king is not safe, while Black’s pieces are well developed, and his own king secure.

10...\( \text{Qxe5} \) 11 \( \text{Qxe5} \) \( \text{Qe6} \)

So here we have the Marshall Gambit.

The original Marshall approach was with 11...\( \text{Qf6} \) 12 \( \text{Qe1} \) \( \text{d6} \) 13 \( \text{h3} \) \( \text{Qg4} \) 14 \( \text{Qf3} \), but after a few tactical fireworks with 14...\( \text{Wh4} \) 15 \( \text{d4} \) \( \text{Qxf2} \) 16 \( \text{Qe2} \) \( \text{Qg4} \) 17 \( \text{hxg4} \) \( \text{Qh2+} \) 18 \( \text{Qf1} \) \( \text{Qg3} \), White consolidates with 19 \( \text{Qxf2} \), J.Capablanca-F.Marshall, New York 1918.

In the modern approach, the knight stays on \( \text{d5} \). Black is not too worried about the bishop for knight exchange, as the bishop-pair tends to be more important in open attacking play.

12 \( \text{d4} \)

This is the main line, if White is trying for a win. There are, however, various drawing options. There have been, for example, some painless draws after 12 \( \text{Qxd5} \) cxd5 13 d4 \( \text{Qd6} \) 14 \( \text{Qe3} \) \( \text{Wh4} \) 15 h3 \( \text{Qf4} \) 16 \( \text{Qe5} \) \( \text{Qf6} \) 17 \( \text{Qe3} \), and a repetition.

Alternatively, 12 \( \text{Qe1} \) (or 12 g3, soon transposing) 12...\( \text{Qd6} \) 13 g3 \( \text{Qf5} \) 14 \( \text{d4} \) \( \text{Qd7} \) 15 \( \text{Qe3} \) \( \text{Qae8} \) 16 \( \text{Qd2} \) \( \text{Qg4} \) 17 \( \text{Wh1} \) (or 17 \( \text{Qc2} \), soon repeating) 17...\( \text{Qf5} \) 18 \( \text{Qd1} \) \( \text{Qg4} \), and Black can repeat. This repetition is possible, but is not forced. A recent Aronian win for Black was 18 \( \text{Qc1} \) \( \text{Qe6} \) 19 \( \text{Qf3} \) \( \text{Qg4} \) 20 \( \text{Qg5} \) \( \text{Qg6} \) 21 f3 \( \text{Qxf3} \) 22 \( \text{Qxf3} \) \( \text{Qxg3} \) 23 \( \text{hxg3} \) \( \text{Qxg3}+ \) (two minor pieces sacrificed) 24 \( \text{Qf2} \) \( \text{Qh3} \) 25 \( \text{Qe2} \) \( \text{Qg2+} \) 26 \( \text{Qd3} \) \( \text{Qxf3} \) (a minor piece down, in return for an attack) 27 \( \text{Qxd5} \) cxd5 28 \( \text{Qc2} \) \( \text{Qe8} \) 29 \( \text{Qd2} \) \( \text{Qd3}+ \) 30 \( \text{Qb3} \) \( \text{Qb8} \), A.Shabalov-Laronian, Calvia Olympiad 2004. If the attack on the king doesn't force a win immediately, the three passed pawns on the kingside will mop things up. White was unable to bring his pieces to good squares.

12...\( \text{Qd6} \)

12...\( \text{Qf6?!} \) has been occasionally tried, but not in high-level games. Black needs to attack with the bishop against the weakened kingside, and not against the firmly protected d-pawn.

13 \( \text{Qe1} \)

13 \( \text{Qe2} \) has also been tried, with the thought that if 13...\( \text{Wh4} \) 14 g3 \( \text{Wh3} \), White can flick the queen over to f1, either now (15 \( \text{Qf1} \)), or as an alternative possibility, slightly later. White could still, of course, transpose into the main line with 14 \( \text{Qe4} \).

Alternatively, 13...\( \text{Qg4} \) 14 f3 \( \text{Qf5} \) 15 g3 \( \text{Qc7} \) 16 \( \text{Qf2} \) \( \text{Qd7} \) 17 \( \text{Qxd5} \) cxd5 18
Modern Chess: Move by Move

\( \text{Qd2} \text{ d3} 19 \text{ Ke3} \text{ g6} \) (Marin notes that Black could force a draw with 19...\text{Wh3} 20 \text{ g1} \text{ xg3}) 20 \text{ Qf1} a5 21 a3, agreed drawn in V.Anand-L.Aronian, FIDE World Championship, Mexico City 2007. Naturally there is plenty of play here. Possibly, one suspects, Black could have played on. He is a pawn down, but he has the more active pieces, and White's king is slightly open.

13...\text{Wh4}

The only realistic move. If Black does not want to attack, he should avoid gambit play!

14 g3

White has to accept the weakness of the pawns, and this of course adds to the prospects of Black obtaining full compensation for the pawn.

14 f4?! \text{ g4} 15 g3 \text{ xd1} 16 hgx4 \text{ xb3} 17 axb3 f5 gives Black a slight edge. He will soon recover the extra pawn, on f4, and he will have the better queenside pawn structure.

14 h3?!

15 \text{ xd5} cxd5 16 gxh3 \text{ Wh3} 17 \text{ e5} \text{ xe5} 18 dx5 does not provide Black an instant win, but after, for example, 18...\text{ Hae8} 19 \text{ f4} \text{ We6}, followed by...f6, Black has the better prospects.

14...\text{Wh3}

Now...\text{ g4} is a strong threat.

15 \text{ e4}

A critical choice for White. Here he tries to offer the exchange of queens, in order to soften Black's kingside attack, and he attempts to set up a \text{ d1} exchange.

Another try along similar lines would be 15 \text{ f3}, followed by \text{ w2}, or alternatively 15 \text{ d5} cxd5 16 \text{ f3} followed by \text{ w2}.

15 \text{ Wd2} is a more recent idea, with \text{ Wf1} to follow. This perhaps seems less clumsy than the 13 \text{ e2} and \text{ f1} idea, when the rook is soon hit, but White has in comparison given up a tempo; \text{ Wd1-e2-f1} instead of \text{ d1-f1}. In the game R.Kasimdzhanov-E.Bacrot, French League 2008, play ended up in a perpetual after 15...\text{ d7} 16 \text{ Wf1} \text{ Wh5} 17 \text{ xd2 Hae8} 18 f3 \text{ f4} 19 \text{ Hxe8} \text{ Hxe8} 20 \text{ de4 Hh3+} 21 \text{ g2 Hf4+} 22 \text{ g1 Hh3+} 23 \text{ g2}.

Or quite simply White can try to defend with 15 \text{ e3}, trying to keep his minor pieces as solid as possible. A recent try, with a win for White, is Wang Hao-A.Grischuk, Russian Team Championship 2008: 15...\text{ g4} 16 \text{ d3 Hae8}
17 Qxd2 Be8 18 a4 Wh5 19 axb5 axb5 20 Wh1 h3 21 Ad1!? (there have been a few draws with 21 We2 A.g4) 21...Wf5 22 Ae2 c5 23 Qf3 Qf4 24 Qxd2 Qxa3 25 axe3 A.h6 26 Wh2 Bfe8 27 Ac2 Wh5 28 e4! Wh8 29 Ad1, and White had finally opened up his position, and won without too much trouble. Here an earlier game, P.Leko-V.Kramnik, Monaco (blindfold) 2007, led to only equality after 27 Qe5?! Wxf2+ 28 Qxf2 f6, though Leko immediately slipped up with 29 Qg4? (29 Qg4! is better) 29...Qxe5! 30 Qh3 Qe4+, Black winning a pawn and later the game.

15...g5

This is standard opening theory, even though Black is opening up lines in front of his king. Black wants to prevent White from pushing the queen away with A.h4, and he is arguing that if he can keep good control on the kingside, with queen, pawns, bishops and other pieces, White will not get near Black’s king.

Various alternatives have been tried, but the pawn push remains by far the most popular.

16 Wf1

A few players have fallen for 16

Qxg5?? Wf5, forking the rook and bishop. White has occasionally tried an exchange sacrifice with 16 Wf3 A.f5 17 Ac2 Axe4 18 Axe4, but after 18...We6 19 Qxg5 f5 20 Qxd5 cxd5 21 Qd2 f4 22 Qxf4 Qxf4 23 gxf4 Aa7 24 Ah1 Ae7 25 Ag1+ Ah8, V.Topalov-M.Adams, Sarajevo 2000, Black is clearly better, and later won. While White has three pawns and knight for the rook, neither the pawns nor the knight make much impact against Black’s major pieces.

So White instead offers a queen exchange.

16...Wh5

Which Black not too surprisingly declines.

Even so, Black is so far ahead in development that the queen exchange is possible. 16...Wxf1+ 17 Qxf1 A.f5 18 Qd2 h6 (18...Axe4 19 Axe4 allows White to take a second pawn for the exchange, and he will have a lively position) 19 Ae1 Aae8 20 Qf3 g4 21 Qxh6 gxh6 Qxf3 22 Qxf8 Qxf8 23 Ad1 Qg4 is a recent try, unclear, maybe in the end equal. A draw was agreed later on in E.Bacrot-V.Anand, Mainz (rapid) 2007, after 24 a4 A.d8 25 axb5 axb5 26 Qg1 Qg7 27 h3 A.xh3 28 Qxf3 Ae6.

17 Qd2

A natural developing move.

17...A.f5

And Black too makes a natural developing move, with the intention of gaining a tempo.

17...f5?! 18 Ad1 Wh6 19 Ae1 f4 20 Qe4 Ac7 21 Ad2, as in A.Shirov-V.Akopian, Carlsbad 2007, leaves Black’s kingside pawns too loose. Black was unable to keep an attack going, and lost.
18 f3
White is happy to sacrifice the exchange, if he can keep his extra pawn, he will keep active pieces and the better pawns.

18...Qxf6
Taking up the exchange challenge does not seem worth it. 18...Qxe4 19 fxe4 Qe3 20 Wf3! Qg4 21 Qf1 covers White's kingside weaknesses.

19 a4
One of the deepest opening traps in recent years was exposed in a World Championship game, Kramnik-Leko, 8th matchgame, Brissago 2004. Play continued 19 Re1?! Rae8 20 Qxe8 Qxe8 21 a4 Qg6 22 axb5 d3 23 Qf2? (23 Wd1 Qe2 24 Wd1 Qe2 with a repetition) 23...Qe2!. This obvious and natural move hardly needs comment, except for the point that the computer gives White's position as winning after 24 Wxe2 Qxe2 25 bxa6. White is about to queen a pawn, and after the seemingly compulsory sacrifice with 25...Qxa6? 26 Qxa6, to be followed by Qxc6, White has a substantial, and winning, material advantage.

Checkmate comes first though, and 25...Qd3!! wins.

The critical line is 26 a7 Qe3+ 27 Qg2 Qxf3+ 28 Qxf3 Qe2+ 29 Qg1 Qg4 30 a8Q+ Qg7 31 Qxc6 Wf2+ 32 Qh1 Wf1+ 33 Qg1 Qf2 mate. Kramnik avoided this, but after 26 Qf2 Qxf3 27 Qxf3 Qe4+ 28 Qe1 Qxc3! 29 bxc3 Qxc3+ 30 Qf1 Qxa1 Black had a clear material advantage, and White's a-pawn was by now harmless. Kramnik resigned a few moves later. A superb win for Leko.

This is regarded by some as the greatest win of the decade. At both amateur and professional levels, people talk about it, when relaxing after the game, and talk with great admiration. It is the classic 21st Century win at the highest level. The computer can go far in analysis, but the human analyst, with the help of inspiration, can see things even deeper.

19...Qxe4
19...Qxe4 20 Qxe4 Qxe4 21 fxe4 gives White an edge. See further commentary to Black's 20th.

20 Qxe4
He wants to complete his development, and further to ensure that the knight will become genuinely active.

20 fxe4 Qe6 21 Qd1 is about equal.
Pawns without active pieces are not so effective as pieces and pawns together.

20...\textit{Wg6!}

We have already seen the position before after 20...\textit{Rx e4} 21 \textit{fx e4}. In I.Kurnosov-S.Azarov, Kusadasi 2006, play ended up with a perpetual after 21...\textit{Rg7} 22 \textit{Ad2} f6 23 \textit{Wf5} \textit{We2} 24 \textit{Cc2} \textit{Wf7} (24...\textit{Wxd2} 25 e5 \textit{We3+} 26 \textit{Ah1} \textit{Gf7} 27 \textit{exd6} is winning for White) 25 e5 \textit{Wxd2} 26 \textit{Wh7+} \textit{Gf8} 27 \textit{Wh8+?} \textit{Gf7} 29 \textit{Wxa8} \textit{We3+} 30 \textit{Ah1} \textit{Wf3+} 31 \textit{Gg1}. White can play for much more than this with 26 \textit{exd6}, as Marin notes for ChessBase. White's king is not in as much danger as it looks, and Black's king, in conjunction with White's excellent passed pawn and dangerous pieces, makes life difficult for Black.

In the game, Aronian is really jettisoning an extra pawn to avoid problems, rather than trying for an edge, although naturally he will be happy to take a chance in the unclear and unbalanced position.

21 \textit{Rxd6}

The natural reaction.

21 \textit{Rxg5?!} \textit{Rae8} 22 \textit{Qe4} is not worth giving up two tempi for a not very useful pawn. Marin gives 22...\textit{Rx e4} 23 \textit{fx e4} \textit{Rx e4} 24 \textit{Cc2} f5 24 \textit{Rx e4} \textit{fx e4}, and Black has considerable pressure in return for the pawn.

21...\textit{Wxd6} 22 \textit{Rxg5}

22 \textit{axb5} axb5 23 \textit{Rx a8} \textit{Rx a8} 24 \textit{Rxg5} releases the tension a little too early. At the minimum, White would want to exchange after Black has already moved the king's rook.

This position had reached before by Shirov, just three days earlier. There was no great excitement in the previous encounter, quickly ending up with perpetual check in A.Shirov-P.Leko, Moscow 2006. Play finished with 22...\textit{Rfe8} 23 \textit{Rx e1} \textit{Wg6} 24 \textit{Rx e7} \textit{Ha7} 25 \textit{Cc5} \textit{Baa8} 26 \textit{Rx e7} \textit{H a7} 27 \textit{Cc5}, draw agreed.

It is possible, but unlikely, that Shirov would be happy to agree two draws with White in succession. What is more likely is that he would have examined the last few moves, and tried to find an improvement for his game with Aronian, maybe instead of repeating, trying something new like 26 \textit{a5}?

Aronian is a renowned specialist in the Marshall, and while it is possible that he was working hard analysing in the last couple of days in his hotel, it
seems more likely that he had seen his novelty a long time before.

Black is about to win a bishop, but before Black can take it, White too has counterplay. Eventually this process could resolve to equality after 29 d5 \(\text{exb3} \ 30 \text{d6} \text{fxe6} \ 31 \text{fxe6} \text{xf6} \ 32 \text{d7} \text{f8} \ 33 \text{d8w} \text{xd8} \ 34 \text{xd8}+ \text{f7} \ 35 \text{d3} \text{b4.}
\]

If 36 \(\text{f2} \text{bxc3,} \) the safest way to defend is to bring the rook behind the opponent's pawn with 37 \(\text{d6} \text{c5} \ 38 \text{c6} \text{vb2}+ \ 39 \text{e3} \text{h2} \ 40 \text{xc5} \text{c2} \ 41 \text{d2} \text{f2} \ 42 \text{f4.}
\]

24...\(\text{axb5} \ 25 \text{axb5} \text{axa8}
\]

Once the exchanges have started, they must continue.

26 \(\text{f2}
\]

One can in fact see the logic for Shirov's rook exchange, in that now White's pieces appear to have covered any weaknesses on the e-file, while there is no breakthrough on the a-file, and White's two bishops seem to work well together. The next move changes the balance of play, though.

26...\(\text{c4!}
\]

An unexpected reply, perhaps, as normally a player would not want to set up doubled isolated pawns. Black's pawns turn out to be easily protected though, and his two isolated pawns clamp White's three connected pawns.
27 \( \text{\&c4} \)

If White meekly withdraws with 27 \( \text{\&c2?!} \), Black can start taking over with rook and bishop, with 27...\( \text{\&e6} \) 28 \( \text{\&e3} \) \( \text{\&h3} \) 29 \( \text{\&g1} \) \( \text{\&a2} \) 30 \( \text{\&f2} \) \( \text{h6!} \), covering the check on g5. The burden of proof is in Black’s favour as he is the exchange up, and clearly has the more active pieces, while White’s two extra pawns are ineffective. Krmic gives 31 \( \text{\&b1} \) \( \text{\&xb2} \) 32 \( \text{\&f5} \) \( \text{\&xf5} \) 33 \( \text{\&xb2} \) \( \text{\&xf3} \) 34 \( \text{\&d2} \) \( \text{\&d5} \) 35 \( \text{\&f1} \) \( \text{\&g2+} \) 36 \( \text{\&e2} \) \( \text{\&c4+} \) 37 \( \text{\&e3} \) \( \text{\&xh2} \) 38 \( \text{\&d1} \) \( \text{\&h3} \) 39 \( \text{\&f3} \) \( \text{\&d5} \) 40 \( \text{\&f4} \) \( \text{\&h1} \) 41 \( \text{\&g4+} \) \( \text{\&f8} \) 42 \( \text{\&c8+} \) \( \text{\&e7} \) 43 \( \text{\&c7+} \) \( \text{\&e6} \) 44 \( \text{\&c8+} \) \( \text{\&f6} \) 45 \( \text{\&h8+} \) \( \text{\&e7} \) 46 \( \text{\&e5+} \) \( \text{\&d7} \), and Black should eventually win, after some delicate manoeuvring of king versus queen.

27...\( \text{\&xc4} \)

We now have a complicated endgame to evaluate, with of course the added problem that there are clear middlegame features to the position. If either player becomes careless, he is in danger of being checkmated! Black can add pressure to White’s b2-pawn, for example, but it is going to be very difficult to attack the pawn with both queen and rook. White in return will find it difficult to attack the doubled isolated c-pawns, which at first glance might have been a problem.

There is the additional problem that we are starting to draw close to the move 40 time control. It is unlikely that there would be serious time trouble as yet, but equally there would probably not be the luxury of either player having a prolonged think, a quarter of an hour or more, to work out strategic problems.

It is unlikely that either player will have been able to play 100% accuracy, and in the case of Shirov’s play he must clearly have done something wrong, as he was rather too quickly in a losing position.

28 \( \text{g4} \)

White wants to add a bolt square for the king. He will not be checked if the king reaches g3. Also, he would be thinking about pressing forward with the pawns on the g-file. At this stage, Shirov might well be thinking of playing for a win.

28 \( \text{\&e7} \) is possible, and if 28...\( \text{\&e8} \) 29 \( \text{\&a3} \) \( \text{\&d3} \) 30 \( \text{\&g5+} \), and then to avoid perpetual check he has to play 30...\( \text{\&g6} \), but then White has a draw anyway with 31 \( \text{\&c1?!} \).

White’s position is solid, rather more so than it looks. Probably Shirov should have held if he had played ultra-solidly, but Shirov has to take calculated risks in order to try for an edge.

White’s \( \text{g4} \) push allows Black to think of setting up...\( \text{f5} \) or...\( \text{h5} \) pushes.

28...\( \text{\&e8} \)

With the queens on the board, the e-file is far more critical for the rook than the a-file. Aronian is planning to attack with the pieces on the light squares, with ...\( \text{\&d3} \) and maybe ...\( \text{\&e2+} \) or
...\text{Be}2+\text{, following up perhaps with...f}5\text{ or ...h}5.

Black could also think of setting up an immediate pawn attack with, for example, 28...h5 when White has to decide whether to hold the position with 29 \text{h}3 \text{hxg}4 30 \text{hxg}4, with only two pawns on the kingside working together, or, more aggressively, 29 \text{gxh}5 \text{Bxh}5, and either 30 \text{Wf}4 or 30 \text{Af}4, and White's pawns have been weakened, but not fatally, and he still keeps a passed h-pawn.

28...f6!? is less direct, and keeps open the possibilities either of pawn attack against \text{g}4, or some piece development. After 29 \text{Af}4, 29...h5? 30 \text{Wf}1!, threatening \text{Wxc}4+, is premature. Therefore 29...\text{Wd}3, and if White tries to defend with 30 \text{We}3?, Black wins the b-pawn with 30...\text{Wxe}3+ 31 \text{Ax}e3 \text{B}a2 32 \text{Q}c1 \text{B}a1 33 \text{Q}e3 \text{Bb}1. White is still under long-term pressure in other lines, though. For example, if 30 \text{Qg}3 \text{Be}8 31 \text{Wa}1 \text{We}2 32 \text{Wb}1 \text{Qh}8?!, opening up g8 for the rook, and White will continually have to worry about ...h5.

This line is difficult to assess, but Black seems slightly better. In the end, it is hardly unexpected that the queen and rook have more piece-power than queen and bishop. White's two extra pawns supply compensation, but not quite enough.

29 \text{Af}4

Into more active play.

29...\text{Wd}3?!

Possibly the effects of shortage of time creep in. This move is, of course, highly direct, but Black should probably have covered his defence on the dark squares first, with 29...f6!, much as discussed a move earlier.

It is not wholly clear why Aronian keeps refusing ...f6, covering the important e5- and g5-defensive squares.

30 \text{Qg}3?

This is a serious missed opportunity. White needs to attack on the dark squares, with 30 \text{Ce}5!.

Krmic in \textit{Informator} suggests the pawn sacrifice 30...f6 31 \text{Af}6 \text{We}2 32 \text{Qg}3 \text{Be}3 33 \text{Wh}1 \text{Wb}2 34 \text{Qg}5 \text{We}2 (34...\text{Wxc}3? 35 \text{We}1! wins) 35 \text{Wf}1. This is a doubtful line for Black, as he has no winning chances, but there are many winning chances for White. Black's rook is pinned, and to unpin with 35...\text{Wa}2, White may play 36 \text{h}3, followed perhaps with \text{Af}4 and \text{Ce}5. Black has gone backwards, and his f-pawn has gone. There is a simpler escape for Black, though, as Shipov notes in \textit{New in Chess}. Black has 34...\text{Wxc}3! 35 \text{Ax}e3 \text{Wxe}3, and his passed pawn is so strong, White must escape for a perpetual with 36 \text{Wa}1 \text{c}3 37 \text{Wa}8+.

Here 30...c5 exchanges one of the isolated pawns, but is likely to veer towards equality. One line is 31 \text{h}4 \text{cxd}4 32 \text{Ax}d4 \text{We}2+ 33 \text{Qg}3 \text{Wd}2 34 \text{Wa}1 \text{Qg}2+ 35 \text{Qh}3 \text{Qg}2+ 36 \text{Qg}3 \text{Qg}2+ with perpetual.

220
It seems that the best that Black can do, if hoping for a win, is 30...\textit{W}g6, repeating. If 31 \textit{W}f1, there is, of course, another draw offer with 31...\textit{W}d3 32 \textit{W}c1. Here 31...\textit{W}e6 is more ambitious, but 32 g5! is a promising reply.

Thus with best play, the game should end up as a draw.

\textit{30...W}e2?

Again, 30...f6! looks better. It is only when the pawn can stop the bishop arriving on e5 that Black genuinely looks better.

\textit{31 W}b1?

The most serious of these inaccuracies, which allows Black a good endgame. Shirov was presumably not worried about the queen exchange, but after delicate endgame play by Aronian, Black ends up with an advantage.

31 \textit{A}e5! is, yet again, the best and most natural move. Black now has no time to retreat with 31...\textit{W}d3? 32 h4! \textit{W}g6 33 h5 \textit{W}e6 34 \textit{W}g5+, winning. We thus return to 31...f6 32 \textit{A}xf6 \textit{A}e3 33 \textit{W}h1 \textit{W}xb2, drawn.

\textit{31...W}e1+

With relief, probably from both sides, that the queens are finally being exchanged. We are still only on move 31, so the players will have to play briskly before the time control. Neither player will be able to adjust completely just yet. The immediate impression is that this ought to end up as a draw, with accurate play. After the queen exchange, White can protect the weak b-pawn with a bishop on a3, but surely White cannot create a kingside passed pawn?

The position proves to be more difficult than it looks, and by move 40, Shirov is already in a losing position, with problems of zugzwang. After all, if the bishop is stuck on a3, that only leaves the king and pawns for White, and sometimes it may be difficult to find good moves.

\textit{32 W}xe1 \textit{A}xe1 33 \textit{A}d6

To lock his queenside pawn structure with the bishop to a3.

\textit{33...A}g1+

Quite often extra random checks in the endgame can prove to be pointless. Here, though, Aronian forces Shirov to decide where the king has to go. Any of the four squares have defects.

\textit{34 \textit{F}f2}

The king is retreating. If though 34 \textit{F}f4? \textit{G}g2, White loses a pawn. Simi-
Natural enough.

Generally players would not want to make a committal pawn push, such as 36 h4, just before the time control. Such a move might not be a positive improvement, if the pawn push could always be made later. It might, however, create a weakness, and once the pawn has been pushed to h4, it cannot retreat. Here after 36...h5 37 g3 g6 38 g2 Krmic suggests that Black is winning by attacking the g-pawn either with 38...f5 or a preliminary exchange. After 38...hxg4 39 fxg4 f5 40 h5+ g5 41 gxf5 \( \text{xh5} \), for example, White's king will be squeezed out by Black's.

36...g6

Aronian too makes a quiet move. Soon, however, one of the players is about to open up their pawns.

37 h3

Probably no better or no worse than any other reasonable move here. Various writers at the time, such as Marin, Krmic, and Shipov, made no comment on this move, no doubt assuming that White was losing anyway.

37 f4? is interesting aiming to pick up some queenside pawns, and creating counterplay with his d-pawn:
a) Then 37...h1? 38 e5! xh2 39 d6 f2 40 xc6 xf3 41 d5, and suddenly Black is in danger, his king being unable to cover White’s passed pawn, and his rook cannot cover White’s united pawn, king and bishop.

b) Clearly this would be too crude for Black. He needs to cover the e5-square. 37...f6?! is not the best option, though, since if 38 h4 h5 39 gxh5+ xh5 40 f5, and Black’s f-pawn drops.

c) This leaves 37...e1, and to avoid loss of tempo (after, for example, 38 g3 e2), White tries 38 h4. Then 38...h5, to prevent White playing h5+ himself:

  c1) 39 gxh5+ xh5 40 f5 e6! defends Black’s pieces with comfort, so White has to try something else.

  c2) 39 d6 e2 40 a3 g2? sets up a zugzwang, but White can play on with 41 e5! hxg4 42 fxg4 xg4 43 d6 f5 44 xc6 f4 45 d5 f3 46 d6 f2 47 d7 f1 48 d8#. An unexpected result. However, here 40...f2! 41 g3 (41 e5 xf3 is too slow for White) 41...d2 42 f4 e2 deliberately gives away a tempo, and after 43 g3 hxg4 44 fxg4 f5, we reach positions close to those analysed by Kronic after 38 h4, below.

Zugzwang!

Sometimes such zugzwang positions are less than obvious, there being no clear indicator that material is going to be lost. Look closely though, and any move by White is going to be retrograde. If his bishop moves, he is going to lose the b2-pawn. If any pawn moves, his pawn structure will be weakened. Finally his king is on its best square, but that means that any king move will be to a worse square.

38 h4

If 38 f4? h4!, and Black will pick up the h-pawn, and queen his own passed pawn. White therefore no longer has the option of active play. He has to defend passively.

If the king retreats with, for example, 38 g2, Black can use the thematic 38...c1 followed by...c2+, and soon a fresh zugzwang arises. The king will not be able to retreat twice to the second row.

If 38 h4 hxg4 39 fxg4 f5, and now if White allows the pawns to split with, for example, 40 h5+ f6 41 gxf5 xf5, Black will eliminate the passed pawn.
on the kingside, and will gradually squeeze through on the light squares on the queenside, with a win. Here Krmic suggests some counterplay with 40 d5, but he shows that Black is still winning after 40...cxd5 41 h5+ $\text{f}6$ 42 $\text{c}5$ fxg4 43 $\text{x}g4$ $\text{xb}2$ 44 $\text{d}4+$ $\text{f}7$ 45 $\text{f}5$ $\text{e}2$. Play on a few moves, for example, and after 46 h6 $\text{g}8$ 47 $\text{e}5$ $\text{h}7$ 48 $\text{e}6$ d4 49 cxd4 c3 50 $\text{f}5$ $\text{xe}5+$ 51 dxe5 c2 Black queens a pawn.

38...$\text{g}1$

Krmic gives this as winning in Informator, while Marin for ChessBase merely gives it as ‘the best chance’. The idea is to set up another zugzwang. With the black rook on g2, White’s pieces are immobile. This leaves only the pawns, but zugzwangs are quite often a problem in the endgame, as pawns can never move backwards, and sooner or later they run out of forward moves.

39 $\text{c}5$

For the moment, the bishop may still move, and it being on move 39, he probably moved it quickly after Black attacked the pawn again.

39...$\text{g}2$ 40 $\text{a}3$

41...$\text{f}5$!

This sets up a diabolically crafty trap. It also happens to be the best and most direct move.

41...$\text{f}7$ or 41...$\text{g}7$ are possible, but more difficult.

The king needs to be active – a basic rule of endgame principle!

42 $\text{f}4$

Shirov’s position looks dreadful, but his one saving grace is that if Black’s king moves too far forward, White has chances of counterplay with his passed h-pawn.

42...$\text{g}8$
And so Black must avoid 42...\textit{xf}4? 43 h6 \textit{g}8 44 \textit{h}5, when the only safe reply is a draw with 44...\textit{g}5+ 45 \textit{h}4 \textit{g}8.

43 \textit{d}6

Naturally White must cover the f4-pawn, but now Black gains a tempo, attacking the bishop with the king.

43...\textit{e}6

Setting up a trap.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess-board.png}
\end{center}

44 h6

And Shirov falls for it. Or rather he is hoping to set up a counter-trap himself, but it doesn’t quite work.

44 \textit{a}3 \textit{f}7 45 \textit{d}6 \textit{g}2 46 \textit{a}3 \textit{g}7 leads to a straightforward zugzwang, and Black will win the b-pawn. The next question is, after Black wins the b2-pawn, how Black will be able to pick up another pawn, and eventually win the game?

Marin gives the answer. After 47 \textit{b}4 \textit{x}b2 48 \textit{a}5 \textit{b}5 49 \textit{d}8 \textit{b}8 50 \textit{c}7 \textit{b}3 51 \textit{a}5 \textit{h}6 52 \textit{g}4 f5+! 53 \textit{h}4 (53 \textit{xf}5?? \textit{x}b6+) 53...\textit{b}2, here he suggests that with extra pawns still in danger, Black is about to win. There is still some play to follow, however: 54 \textit{d}8 \textit{f}2 55 \textit{c}7 \textit{f}3 56 \textit{e}5 \textit{x}c3 (56...\textit{h}7??) 57 d5 \textit{d}3 58 dxc6 \textit{d}5! (rather than the more obvious 58...\textit{d}8?) 59 c7 \textit{c}5 finally wins for Black.

Therefore it seems that quiet play by White would not have given the draw either.

44...\textit{xd}6!

Setting up a memorable finish.

44...\textit{f}5? 45 \textit{h}5 \textit{h}8 46 \textit{c}7 only draws.

45 \textit{h}5

Certainly having got this far, White must carry on.

45 f5? \textit{e}7 46 \textit{h}5 \textit{f}7 47 h7 \textit{a}8 49 \textit{h}6 \textit{h}8 ends up losing more quickly.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess-board-2.png}
\end{center}

45...\textit{f}5!

Black has to be very careful. To try to win this, he has to know exactly where the king will have to go, and whether his pawn will be on f6 or f5. Aronian plays the only correct move, and in such pawn endings there is no room for casual thinking.

\textit{Fritz}, after some thought, gives 45...\textit{d}5 as the clearest and simplest win. If we play on though, the outcome is far less clear. After 46 h7 \textit{h}8 47 \textit{g}6 \textit{e}4 48 \textit{g}7 \textit{a}8 49 \textit{xf}6 (49 h8\textit{w} also draws; as an exercise in calculation, the reader is invited to work out the final
line, without using the board or computer—it is notoriously difficult to calculate such king and pawn endgames over the board) 49 \textit{xf6 xf4} 50 \textit{g7 a7+} and the rook returns to a8, holding the draw.

46 h7

Looking good so far. White will win the rook for the passed pawn, and there is a second passed h-pawn to win.

46...\textit{h8}

Natural enough. The next couple of moves are obvious, but the sting comes later.

47 \textit{g6 e7} 48 \textit{g7 e8}!!

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess-diagram.png}
\end{center}

A very big zugzwang. Aronian will have seen this well in advance. White can win the rook, but if he takes it, the h7-pawn will not allow the king to escape.

48...\textit{xh7+??} 49 \textit{xh7} wins for White.

49 \textit{g6}

There is no chance of a stalemate after 49 \textit{h8 f7} 50 h4 \textit{xf8} 51 h5 \textit{g7} 52 h6 \textit{f8}. If White were to try 53 b4 cxb3 54 d5 cxd5 55 c4, Black checkmates first and wins with 54...b2.

The alert reader will have noted that if White had no pawn on b2 in the diagram, there would be no win for Black. It would have been stalemate.

In endgame, it is wise for either player to keep in mind possible stalemate ideas. Here Aronian kept everything under control.

Shirov’s line kept things going a little longer, but by now he must surely have recognized that he was doomed.

49...\textit{g8}

A necessary triangulation manoeuvre.

50 h4

The only move. 50 \textit{h6 f7} wins quickly for Black.

50...\textit{e7}

And the winning manoeuvre is repeated. Sooner or later, White will run out of pawn moves to push, and then he will lose.

51 \textit{g7 e8}

An attractive idea, but we have seen this on move 48.

52 \textit{g6 f8} 53 h5 \textit{e7} 54 \textit{g7 e8}

And again.

White’s second h-pawn has moved a couple of squares forward since the previous diagram, but this means he is running out of squares, rather than progress.
57...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{x}}xh7 58 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{g}}g6 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{f}}f7 0-1}}}

58...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{h}}h8 also wins with the now familiar idea: 59 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{g}}g7 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{f}}f8 60 h7 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{h}}h8 61 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{g}}g7 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}e7 62 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{x}}xh8 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{f}}f7},}}}}}}}

\textit{\textbf{\texttt{55 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{g}}g6 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{f}}f8 56 h6 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}e8 57 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{f}}f6}}}}}}}

A final try, hoping to make use of his second h-pawn.

\textit{\textbf{\texttt{57 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{g}}g7 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}e7 58 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{g}}g6 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{f}}f7}}}} wins easily for Black.}}

and Black wins after 63 b4 cxb3, en passant.
1 e4 c5 2 ⌛f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ⌛xd4 ⌛c6
5 ⌛xc6 a6 6 ⌛e2

We are heading for a Scheveningen. White makes a quiet developing move with the bishop.

For 6 ⌛xc6, see Game 5, Bacrot-Rublevsky.

6...∥c7

Or Black can simply play 6...d6, delaying what to do with the queen, which sometimes stays at home.

7 0-0

Having played ⌛e2 quickly, he might just as well castle quickly on the kingside.

7...∥f6

Black aims to catch up his kingside development.

7...b5 is possible, but after 8 ⌛xc6 dxc6 (or 8...∥xc6 9 ⌛f3) 9 a4!? White keeps a slight edge. If 9...b4 10 ⌛b1 followed by ⌛d2 and ⌛c4, and Black’s position is playable, but slightly worse. He has lost his queenside pawn dynamism.

8 ⌛e3

For 8 ⌛h1, see Game 20, Ni Hua-Jakovenko.

8...d6

This, believe it or not, is a slightly unusual position, even though it seems clearly mainstream. If Black is aiming for a Scheveningen, he generally plays 8...∥e7 first, then later ...d6. There is no real objection to Black’s play, it seems just a question of habit. If Black plays ...

...d6 early on, then quite often what happens is that he usually plays ...∥e7 before ...

There was another possibility for Black in trying 8...∥b4. Then 9 ⌛a4 ⌛e7 (or perhaps 9...∥d6 10 g3 b5; not though 9...∥xe4? 10 ⌛xc6 ∥xc6 11 ⌛d4 ∥f8 12 c4, with advantage to White) 10 ⌛xc6 bx с6 11 ⌛b6, and White has the normal slight edge.

![Chess Board Diagram]

9 f4

The standard attacking plan. White can make a pawn charge with e5, usually as a pawn sacrifice, or f5, or even g4-g5.

9...∥d7

A small piece of originality in the move order, but Shirov, a noted attacking player, has always been confident in finding new ideas in less-explored variations. Illescas is taking something of a risk, and indeed he ultimately loses.
As happens so often in experimental play, the innovator as Black loses, but it is not totally clear that the line is bad. With some extra homework, Black’s play could have been improved.

9...\texttt{\texteight e7} leads to well established main line theory:

a) 10 \texttt{\texteight h1} transposes into Game 20, Ni Hua-Jakovenko.

b) 10 a4, restraining Black’s queenside, is also popular.

c) 10 g4?! is not so effective, though. After 10...\texttt{\textx d4} 11 \texttt{\textx d4} e5 12 \texttt{\texte e3} exf4 13 \texttt{\textx f4} \texttt{\texte 6} Black is equal.

10 g4!

\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textw h1} dxe5 18 gxf6 exf6 19 \texttt{\textw e2+ \texte h8} 20 \texttt{\textd a d1}! Black is in trouble with his king. 11 \texttt{\textg g5}}

11 gxh5 is possible, but unthematic. If he wants to push forward with the pawns in front of his king, he needs to attack, rather than make unnecessary pawn exchanges. Here 11...\texttt{\textx d4} 12 \texttt{\textx d4} e5 is equal.

11...\texttt{\textg g4}

With counterattack.

12 \texttt{\textx xg4}

This is positionally forced, Black’s two knights being troublesome.

12...hxg4 13 \texttt{\textg g6}

Not 13 \texttt{\textw xg4? \textx d4} 15 \texttt{\textx d4} e5, and Black wins a piece.

An old game, G.Fiensch-W.Pietzsch, East German Championship, Schkopau 1958, continued instead with 13 \texttt{\textx c6} \texttt{\textx c6} 14 \texttt{\textw xg4} 0-0-0 15 \texttt{\textd d5} with advantage to White, although after the knight was eventually captured, Black kept some chances. The game was later drawn. A good line for White, one might think, and quite possibly earlier theoretical books might have given Black a question mark at move 9.

One of the most significant influences of modern opening theory is that with the help of a modest computer engine, it is possible to re-establish previously rejected lines. The computer engine suggests that 13...bxc6! is equal, and also that later 13...\texttt{\textw xc6} 14 \texttt{\textw xg4} b5 might give chances of equality. By quietly drinking a coffee, and glancing at the computer, it is easy to find a respectable innovation without effort. The computer then gives, without much effort on my part, 13...bxc6 14 \texttt{\textw xg4} \texttt{\textb b8} 15 \texttt{\texta a b1} d5 16 g6 \texttt{\textc c8}. This leads to an interesting and experimen-
tal position in which White has an extra pawn, but his kingside pawns are uncomfortably open, and Black has a useful extra passed pawn. Black should probably be reasonably happy with this line, given that the main theoretical problem for Black is to avoid a clear advantage to White.

13...0-0-0

White’s pawn stab is dangerous, and Illescas rushes his king to the queenside, in safety, allowing his opponent an extra passed pawn on the seventh, but relying on Black having developed his pieces, and being able to make use of Shirov’s advanced and exposed pawns.

13...Hh3!? is to be considered, again with wild open play:

a) The ‘positional’ approach is 14 gxf7+ Hxf7 15 f5 Hxd4! (15...Hg8 16 Hxe6 Hxe6 17 fxe6 Hxe5 18 Hd5 with advantage to White) 16 Hxd4 (16 fxe6+ Hg8 17 Hxd4 Hxe6 18 Hd5 Hxd5 19 dxe5 g3 20 hxg3 Hxg3+ gives White only a slight edge) 16...exf5 17 Hxg4 Hg8 18 exf5, and White has a workable edge.

b) 14 f5 could transpose into the game after 14...0-0-0 15 gxf7. Alternat-

tively, Black could try 14...Hxe3 15 fxg7+ Hd8 16 fxe6 Hxe4 17 e7+!, and this must surely deserve a diagram.

Sometimes diagrams of Shirov’s games can, indeed, look like misprints. Here play would continue with 17...Hxe7 18 f8W+ Hxf8 19 Hxf8+ He7 20 Hxa8 Hxc3 21 Hxd4, and White is winning.

Black could try to quieten the position down with 13...Hxd4 14 gxf7+ Hxf7 15 Hxd4 Hg8, but his position does not look fully secure. 16 Hf2 Hc8 17 Hg2 is good for White.

14 gxf7?!

What else? White snatches a pawn, sets up an annoying pawn on the seventh, and starts to undermine the whole of Black’s defensive pawn structure. For an attacking player, this is almost an ideal early scenario. The problem is that Black can also attack on the kingside, against White’s exposed king, and Illescas soon sets up counterplay. Black’s pawn on g4 can easily create problems, and a simpler way for White is to take the pawn. Not though 14 Hxg4? Hxd4 15 Hxd4 e5, and Black wins a piece.

Therefore 14 Hxc6! Hxc6 15 Hxg4,
and White wins a pawn, and also creates pressure on the light squares with gxf7, f5, or Qd5. 15...d5 keeps play active, but after 16 exd5 Qxd5 17 Qxd5 Bxd5 18 gx7 Wxf7 19 Mad1 White retains an edge. Simple play in a complicated line.

14...h3

Black now has serious counterplay.

The computer suggests 14...Qxd4 15 Bxd4 g6 as an alternative, but this soon fizzles out, with advantage to White, after 16 hxg3 c5 17 Wg4 Wxf7 18 Mad1.

\[ 
\]

15 f5?

A question mark, even though Shirov's move is imaginative and deeply thought through, and leads to spectacular winning play. This may seem a harsh judgement from the critic, but what other assessment could reasonably have been made? If Illescas Cordoba had played completely accurately, he would have been better. If a player with the white pieces ends up in a worse position, he must have made a mistake.

Shirov is a renowned maximalist, an attacker, although naturally when needed, like all great players, he will switch to steady positional play. Here he senses it is time for all-out attack. If over the board he cannot find a way for his opponent to find a refutation, then he has every moral right to play for an attack. If he outplays his opponent, he will win. If his opponent outplays him, he will lose. If both players make absolutely the best moves over a long string of moves, then who knows, he might be winning, drawing or losing.

In this particular game, the likelihood would be that Shirov would have assumed that his attack was good. It is only later that doubts may start to be expressed.

Many of us less ambitious players would be more than content to defend and develop quietly with 15 Wd2!, protecting the bishop on e3, giving away nothing on the b8-h2 diagonal, and waiting to see how Black will deal with the f7-passed pawn:

a) The computer's initial suggestion is 15...Qxd4 16 Bxd4 g3 17 hxg3 hxg3+ 18 f2, but this cannot be good for Black, and indeed the computer revises this as a win for White, who still has the extra pawn on f7, and his pieces are active.

b) Black could also try 15...g3 16 hxg3 hxg3+ 17 f2 Wg4 in which case the simplest for White is to untangle the pieces with 18 Bb3!?. Again, it would be extremely difficult for Black to demonstrate any chances of equality.

15...d5

Black goes on the basis that that one bishop cannot simultaneously cover both the c7-h2 diagonal and the a7-g1 diagonal.

15...Bxe3? eliminates the bishop, but 16 fxe6 is strong, destroying Black's light squares. As well as the advanced
passed pawns, $\text{Qd5}$ is a threat.

15...$\text{Qxd4}$? is sensible, if again sharp. After 16 $\text{Wxd4}$ $\text{d5}$ 17 $\text{Qf4}$ $\text{c5}$ 18 $\text{xc7}$ $\text{Qxd4+}$ 19 $\text{Qg2}$ $\text{xc7}$ 20 $\text{fxe6}$ $\text{Qxe6}$ 21 $\text{f8}$ $\text{W}$ $\text{xf8}$ 22 $\text{xf8}$ $\text{dxe4}$ White has an extra exchange, but his knight is not so active, and Black has a good bishop-pair. This would have been an interesting battle after, for example, 23 $\text{He8}$ $\text{Qd7}$ 24 $\text{Hb8}$ $\text{Qe5}$ 25 $\text{Qd1+}$ $\text{cc6}$ 26 $\text{He8}$ $\text{Qxh2+}$ 27 $\text{Qg1}$ $\text{Kh6}$ with White perhaps being slightly better.

Black's move in the game improves on this, provided he plays with great accuracy.

16 $\text{Qf4}$

At least the bishop is safe, and on a good and active square.

16...$\text{Wb6}$

But now White's knight is pinned, and threatened.

17 $\text{fxe6}$

A radical way of breaking up the opposing pawn structure. Shirov simply captures the opposition pawn chain, and now has White pawns, rather than Black, on f7 and e6.

17 $\text{Qa4}$? would win quickly if Black were to fall for the trap with 17...$\text{Wxd4+??}$ 18 $\text{Wxd4}$ $\text{Qxd4}$ 19 $\text{Qb6}$

mate. The trap is easily avoided, though, with 17...$\text{Wxa7}$ 18 $\text{c3}$ $\text{e5}$, and advantage to Black.

17...$\text{Qxe6}$

A sensible reply, not least because the knight on d4 is pinned.

17...$\text{Qxd4}$ 18 $\text{exd7+}$ $\text{Qxd7}$ 19 $\text{Qd5}$ $\text{Qf3+}$ 20 $\text{Qg2}$ $\text{Wc6}$ is to be considered, but Black does not quite break open White's kingside, and White can build up his central play. After 21 $\text{Qg3}$ $\text{Qxf7}$ 22 $\text{Wd3l}$ (centralizing), White keeps an advantage:

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_board.png}
\end{center}

a) For example, if 22...$\text{Qd6}$ (the only realistic chance to attack the h2-square), White has 23 $\text{Qb6+}$ $\text{Wxb6}$ 24 $\text{Wxd6}$ with a much better pawn structure for the endgame.

b) 22...$\text{Wh6}$ does not improve on this. White has 23 $\text{Wc3}$ $\text{Qd8}$ 24 $\text{Wa5+}$ $\text{Qe8}$ 25 $\text{Qc7}$ $\text{Qd7}$ 26 $\text{Wd5+}$ $\text{Qc8}$ 27 $\text{We6+}$, and although Black has wriggled well, White still exchanges the queens with an advantage.

c) If 22...$\text{Qc5!?}$, the tactics favour Black after 23 $\text{Qad1}$ $\text{Qh4+}$ 24 $\text{Qh1}$ $\text{Qxf1+}$ 25 $\text{Wxf1}$ $\text{Qf3}$ 26 $\text{Wc4}$ $\text{Qxg3l}$ 27 $\text{Qb4}$ (27 $\text{Qe7+}$ $\text{Qxe7}$ 28 $\text{Wxc6+}$ $\text{bxc6}$ 29 $\text{hxg3}$ with an endgame edge to Black) 27...$\text{Qd6}$ 28 $\text{Wg8+}$ $\text{Qf8}$ 29 $\text{Wxf8+}$ $\text{Qxf8}$
30 hxg3, and now Black picks up the knight with 30...\textit{xb4}. However, 23 \textit{wc4!} gives White an advantage, not just with the obvious threats of 24 \textit{b4} or 24 \textit{\textbf{b}6+}, but also with the sideways threat of e5, with thoughts of \textit{w{x}g4+}.

\textbf{18 d4}

18 \textit{\textbf{d}xd5} is the alternative. Then 18...\textit{\textbf{d}xd5} (18...\textit{\textbf{w}xd4}? 19 \textit{\textbf{w}xd4}) 19 exd5 \textit{\textbf{d}xd4} 20 dx{e}6 \textit{\textbf{e}e2+} 21 \textit{\textbf{g}2} results in complications. The trouble is that Black is winning after 21...\textit{\textbf{w}xe6} 22 \textit{\textbf{f}f2} \textit{\textbf{e}e4+} 23 \textit{\textbf{f}f1} g3!! (23...\textit{\textbf{d}xf4}? 24 \textit{\textbf{w}xg4+}) 24 \textit{\textbf{w}d2} (what else?) 24...gxh2! (24...gx{f}2? 25 \textit{\textbf{d}d1} \textit{\textbf{h}h1+} 26 \textit{\textbf{e}e2} \textit{\textbf{f}f3+} only draws) 25 \textit{\textbf{h}h2} \textit{\textbf{f}f3+} 26 \textit{\textbf{f}f2} \textit{\textbf{d}xf4} 27 \textit{\textbf{f}f3} \textit{\textbf{w}xf3+}, and then a few well-placed checks.

18...\textit{\textbf{w}a7}

Not 18...\textit{\textbf{w}xd4+?} 19 \textit{\textbf{w}xd4} \textit{\textbf{d}xd4} 20 \textit{\textbf{b}6} mate.

\textbf{19 e3}

Just a quiet defensive pawn push. Not quite such an innocuous move as it looks, though, as the pawn later turns into a queen.

19...\textit{\textbf{d}xe4!}

This is analytically the best move, even though Illescas later loses. His mistake comes later, and only as a result of not pushing his passed pawn a second time, a move later. Sometimes the best way of defending is vigorous counterplay.

19...\textit{\textbf{d}d7} is to be considered with the idea of 20 \textit{\textbf{e}xd5} \textit{\textbf{d}xd5} 21 \textit{\textbf{w}xg4}, and there is no check on the diagonal. Play is unclear, maybe favouring White, after 21...\textit{\textbf{d}xd4} 22 \textit{\textbf{c}xd4} \textit{\textbf{w}xd4} 23 \textit{\textbf{f}f2} \textit{\textbf{d}d3} 24 \textit{\textbf{c}c1+} \textit{\textbf{c}c6}. Moreover, White can continue with 20 \textit{\textbf{g}2!}, as in Shirov's main line, and if 20...\textit{\textbf{d}xf7} 21 \textit{\textbf{w}xg4} \textit{\textbf{h}h8} 22 e5 White keeps a strong positional edge without complications.

20 \textit{\textbf{g}2!}

White unpins the d4-knight from the king, but it is still unpinned against the queen. This is, however, very much a minor pin, and in most lines White is more than happy to give up the queen in return for rook and bishop, and so the elimination of two pieces which are covering the pawn on the seventh.

20...\textit{\textbf{d}xd4?}

This must surely be one of the most difficult positions in this book for the player to analyse over the board. Almost all of the lines for Black lose quickly. There is just one extremely obscure line for Black which would have
given him, unexpectedly, an advantage. We need to strip out the more obvious but less effective tries, to leave, finally, the only good move:

a) Black decides in the game to get rid of the knight as soon as possible. The alternative way of removing the knight immediately, avoiding dropping the bishop on e6, is 20...\textit{Q}xd4?, but this opens up the c-file too early. Play continues 21 cxd4 \textit{Q}xd4 22 \textit{Q}c1+ \textit{Q}d8:

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_board.png}
\end{center}

\textit{Q}xe7 29 f8\textit{Q}+ and checkmate follows. White again makes full use of the passed pawn on the seventh.

b) Black would certainly have considered 20...\textit{Q}d3, but this allows 21 \textit{Q}xe6 \textit{Q}xd1 22 \textit{Q}ad1. Black’s queen is not very effective, whereas White’s pieces and passed pawn create dangerous threats. Then 22...b5 23 \textit{Q}xf8 \textit{Q}xf8 24 \textit{Q}d6 is uncomfortable for Black. If, for example, 24...\textit{Q}xb4 25 \textit{Q}xc6+ \textit{Q}b7 26 \textit{Q}c7+ \textit{Q}xc7 27 \textit{Q}xc7 \textit{Q}xc7 28 \textit{Q}g3, and White will end up with an extra pawn in a rook and pawn endgame.

c) Black could consider developing the back row with 20...\textit{Q}h8 21 \textit{Q}xe6 \textit{Q}xd1 22 \textit{Q}axd1, but White still keeps a strong attack:

c1) If 22...e3 23 \textit{Q}c7 e2 24 \textit{Q}b6+ \textit{Q}xb6 25 \textit{Q}xb6 exf1\textit{Q}+ 26 \textit{Q}xf1, and Black is almost in zugzwang.

c2) Or 22...b5 23 \textit{Q}xf8 \textit{Q}xf8 24 \textit{Q}d6 \textit{Q}xf7 25 \textit{Q}b6+! \textit{Q}xb6 (25...\textit{Q}d8 26 \textit{Q}b8+) 26 \textit{Q}f7, and White’s pieces dominate.

d) 20...\textit{Q}f3 21 \textit{Q}xe6 \textit{Q}xd1 22 \textit{Q}axd1 ends up with a slightly better position for Black than in the previous line, but is not quite adequate:

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_board2.png}
\end{center}

d1) If, for example, 22...\textit{Q}xf1 23 \textit{Q}xf1
b5 24 Qb6+ Wh6b6 25 Qxf8, and Black will be unable to defend against queening on f8: 25...Qd8 26 Qd7 wins.

d2) 22...b5 23 Qxf8 Whxf7 24 Qb6+ Wh7 25 Qd7+, and White wins material.

d3) 22...e3 23 Qxf8 e2 24 Qd7 exf1 Wh+ 25 Whxf1 Whd7 26 f8W is winning for White. If you lose a queen, setting up a new queen is often more than full compensation.

Finally, there are a few fiddly pawn moves with 20...e3, 20...g3, and 20...g5, which might or might not challenge the balance of play, but which need to be examined.

e) 20...g3 is easy enough to eliminate when considering Black’s best move. After 21 hxg3 Wh8 22 Qxe6 White is simply a pawn up on variation ‘c’.

f) 20...g5 21 Qxg5 forces White to a different diagonal with the bishop, but it is by no means an inferior one. After 21...Qd5 22 Qxe6 Qxd1 23 Raxd1 White is still winning.

g) Now for the final pawn push, 20...e3!!.

The idea is not so much to try to queen the e-pawn, but rather to open up the long diagonal for the bishop:

g1) Black is a key tempo up after the thematic queen sacrifice with 21 Qxe6? Qxd1 22 Qfxd1 e2 23 Qe1 b5, and if 24 Qxf8? Whxf7.

The critical line is 21 Wh2 Qxd4 22 cxd4 Qxd4.

This is about as wild an open position as you can get. In contrast with the previous lines here, Black is attacking sharply, as well as defending. Indeed, Black’s attack is at least more dangerous than White’s, and therefore play should be at least equal:

g21) 23 Qxe3? loses quickly after 23...Qd5+ 24 Qg1 Qg1, and if 25 hxg3 (or an inserted check on the c-file) 25...Qh1+ 26 Qf2 Qh2+.

g22) That leaves 23 Qac1+ Wh7 and then:

g221) White would suffer the same problem on 24 Qxe3? Qd5+ 25 Qb1 Qg3.

g222) White might try instead 24 Qcd1 Qd5+ 25 Qg1 when he has set up a useful semi-pin on the d-file. Indeed, after 25...Qd2?! there is an unusual perpetual with 26 Whxg4+ Qe6 27 We2 Qd5! 28 Wg4+ Qe6; an attractive finish, but Black can play for more. 25...Qf3! is good for Black. If 26 Qxe3 Qxd1 27 Qxa7 Qxf1+ 28 Whxf1 Qxf1+ 29 Whxf1 Qxf7, reaching a minor piece endgame...
Modern Chess: Move by Move

in which Black is a pawn up and has the bishop-pair against bishop and knight. It is quite likely that Black will win. This cannot be what White would want.

g223) Unfortunately for White, 24 \texttt{\sf{xc7+ \texttt{d8 25 \texttt{xc5 \texttt{xc5 26 \texttt{xc5 \texttt{wc5}}} is no improvement. After 27 f8\texttt{w+ \texttt{xf8 28 \texttt{g5+ \texttt{w7 29 \texttt{xe7+ \texttt{xe7}}} Black has rook, bishop and two pawns for the queen. The queen has no active play, though, and Black should win comfortably. Here even two queens would not hold the position together after 27 \texttt{g5+ \texttt{w5 28 f8\texttt{w+ \texttt{d7.}}} Black should again win.

There is an old question of chess philosophy of whether there is much point for the analyst trying to examine the position so deeply, when neither of the players would have had the chance of calculating any but a few sample lines of a genuinely complicated position. Underlying this point is the recognition that the annotator would also, before the help of the computer, be guessing just as much as the players.

These days, someone wanting to analyse a game in depth would be able to give a reasonable indication of whether in an unbalanced position the attacker is better, equal or worse. I would feel reasonably certain that without the help of computer analysis, I would have been unable to find the critical line, and would have regarded Shirov's attacking play in this game as brilliant and totally sound. Instead Shirov is shown as having overpressed his attack, always of course assuming that I have not made my own errors in interpretation. Indeed, the computer is of considerable help in interpreting what is happening in a game of chess, going beyond the familiar question of finding innovations in the opening.

We now return to Black's misguided exchange sacrifice:

\texttt{21 cxd4 \texttt{d3}}

\texttt{22 d5!}

Again, Shirov aims directly for the sharpest line, giving away queen for rook and minor pieces, and relying on his advanced connected passed pawns, and on the difficulties of Black's king.

\texttt{22 \texttt{wae2 \texttt{xd4 23 \texttt{ad1 b5 24 \texttt{xc3 \texttt{b7}}} is far from clear. White has the extra exchange, but Black's pieces are becoming coordinated, and it is Black who has the most dangerous passed pawn. \texttt{22 \texttt{xd1 23 \texttt{xd1}}}
23...e3
23...\texttt{xf7} 24 dxc6 bxc6 25 \texttt{g5} wins for White. Black’s king is exposed and his pieces are not well coordinated.

24 \texttt{fe1}
But not the hasty 24 dxe7 e2, and one of White's rooks drops.

24...b5
Hoping for counterplay. 24...\texttt{xf7} 28 \texttt{xe3} soon allows White to win.

25 dxe6
The simplest.

25...\texttt{xa4} 26 \texttt{d7}

The position is no longer wild. White is slightly down in material, but with two highly advanced passed pawns and a rook on the seventh, supported by the bishop, and also a second rook about to join in, it is clear that White should soon win. In addition to everything, Black’s king is exposed, and faces the danger of mate threats.

26...\texttt{b6}
Some minor counterplay.

27 \texttt{xe3}
This will do nicely.

27 \texttt{c7+? \texttt{xc7} 28 \texttt{xc7} \texttt{e7} 29 \texttt{xe3} wins the queen, but gives away some of the advantage.

27...\texttt{xb2+}

The queen should neither be overestimated, nor underestimated. Here the queen is still dangerous, but with careful play, White wins.

28 \texttt{g3}
The king is safer here than on the back rank.

28...\texttt{g5}
To stop the winning check on c7.

29 \texttt{xe5}
The trouble is that now the rook has a winning check on d8.

Not 29 \texttt{c7+?? \texttt{d8}, and White has overextended himself.

29...\texttt{d4}
There is still some hope for practical counterplay, especially before the time control.

30 \texttt{d8+!}
White needs to play precisely, bringing the king up, before aiming for e7.

30 \texttt{xd4?! \texttt{xd4} 31 e7 \texttt{xe7} 32 \texttt{xe7} is far less precise, as the white rook is not giving check. White still wins after 32...\texttt{d6+ 33 \texttt{d6} \texttt{d1+}, but he has to negotiate umpteen checks until his final victory.

30...\texttt{b7}
30...\texttt{c7} 31 \texttt{xd4} leads to much the same finish.
31...\textbf{Nxd4}

White still needs to be careful of perpetual checks by the queen, and Shirov chooses the safest plan.

31...\textbf{Nxf8?} leads to one step away from the win, but the final tempo is elusive: 31...\textbf{Nf5+} 32...\textbf{Kf4} (32...\textbf{xg4?} 33...\textbf{exf3} 33...\textbf{exf3} 34...\textbf{Ng7+} allows Black to pick up the rook) 32...\textbf{Nf2+} 33...\textbf{Nxc4} 34...\textbf{Nh3} 34...\textbf{Nxe3+} 34...\textbf{Nxe3} 34...\textbf{Nf2+}! keeps Black alive (but not 34...\textbf{Nxe3+} 35...\textbf{b6}+ 35...\textbf{xb6} 38...\textbf{f8w}, with a straightforward win). With careful play on both sides, this will end up in a draw after, for example, 35...\textbf{Nf5} 36...\textbf{d3}+ 36...\textbf{f6} 37...\textbf{c3}+ 37...\textbf{g6} (37...\textbf{e7} 37...\textbf{f7+}) 37...\textbf{wc2+} 38...\textbf{g5} 39...\textbf{g2+} 39...\textbf{f6} 39...\textbf{b2+}, and the merry-go-round continues.

\textbf{31...Nxd4 32 e7}

Forced on both sides.

32...\textbf{wh8}

A last-ditch attempt to give a few checks.

32...\textbf{xe7+} 33...\textbf{xe7+} loses quickly, as does 32...\textbf{xe3+} 33...\textbf{xe3} 34...\textbf{xe7} 34...\textbf{h6.}

33...\textbf{e8w}

Naturally.

33...\textbf{h3+} 34...\textbf{f4}

34...\textbf{f2} \textbf{wh2+} still gives Black some hope.

34...\textbf{d6+} 35...\textbf{f5} 1-0

The end. White has too many pieces for Black to be able to set up many more checks. If 35...\textbf{g3+} 36...\textbf{g6} or 35...\textbf{h7+} 36...\textbf{hxg4}. 
Game 18
S.Rublevsky-A.Grischuk
7th matchgame, Elista 2007
Scottish Game C45

1 e4 e5 2 f3 c6 3 d4

The Scotch Opening, which Rublevsky tried out several times in this match. In the end, he lost more games than he won with the white pieces, a serious shortcoming in match-play.

The Scotch is a principled enough opening to be tried, but the general feeling is that opening up the centre so quickly gives rather less long-term pressure than the Ruy Lopez, examined from Game 7, Svidler-Topalov, onwards.

3... exd4

There is probably no need for Black to have to think about other lines.

4 f3

The nine-times British Champion from the 1950s and 1960s, Jonathan Penrose, was an advocate of the Scotch Gambit, 4 c3. There are certainly many tactical ideas if Black were to accept the challenge, but it is difficult for White to prove any sort of advantage after Capablanca’s suggestion, 4...d5! 5 exd5 Wxd5 6 dx5 g4 7 e2 b4+ 8 e3 xf3 9 e3 c4! A peculiarity of the rules of chess is that a player is not allowed to castle with the king over check, so that, for example, 10 0-0 is not allowed, as the queen covers the f1-square, which the king was intending to cross. If castling were allowed in this position, White would be better. Instead it is only equal.

4 f3 has been tried, but isn’t White effectively losing a tempo after 4...f6 5 e5 d5 6 b5 a4 7 a4 d7 with equality?

4...d5

In many ways, the simplest and most direct move, developing, and attacking the d4-square.

Black can also try attacking the pawn on e5, the main line being 4...f6 5 axc6 bxc6 6 e5 Wc7 7 Wc2 d5 8 c4 a6 9 b3 0-0-0. Certainly this breaks the symmetry, with White’s pawns in danger of being overextended, and his pieces underdeveloped, while Black’s pieces are on strange positions. Rublevsky found an unusual idea after 10 g3 g5? 11 b2 g7 12 d3 d4 13 f3 h6 14 a3 g4:

![Chess Diagram]

a) Previously White had tried 15 h4 fxe5 16 0-0-0 a2+ 17 c2, reaching a strange position where the stray knight on a2 is about to be trapped, and one of

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Black's bishops is ineffective, but where everything else is centralized and active. This is maybe equal but complicated.

b) 5.Rublevsky-A.Onischuk, Foros 2007, saw instead 15 axb4!? gxf3 16 We3 Wb4+ 17 Ac3! Axf5! (a good tactic, but not winning) 18 Ac4 Axe3+ 19 fx3 Axa1 20 Aeh3, and White was two pawns down at the start of the endgame. Black's pieces were unable to cooperate, however, and he soon had to drop pawns. Play continued 20...Ae5 21 0-0 Ab7 22 Ad1 c5 23 Axc5 Ac6 24 Ac2, and White was now clearly at least equal. The game was later drawn, and Black's pawn on f3 was unexpectedly still on the board at the end.

4...Wh4!? is something of an oddity, one possibility being 5 Ab5 Axe4+ 6 Ae2 Ad8 7 0-0. Sometimes Black even tries 7...We8, exchanging the bed of the king and queen. It is the sort of opening that Steinitz would have enjoyed playing, but he suffered a World Championship loss in M.Chigorin-W.Steinitz, 19th matchgame, Havana 1892, after 6 Ae3 Ab4 7 Axc3 We5 8 Ad5 Af6 9 Abxc7 Axd6 10 f4 Axe4 11 Ad3 Axe3 12 Afxg2 13 Ag1 Whxh2 13 Wh3 Axd5 14 Axd5 Wh6 15 0-0. Then, as now, gambit play was difficult to handle for both sides. Players would not be surprised to learn that White won from this position, but the computer gives Black as an edge.

There are few recent games at high level with 4...Wh4, indicating that the pawn grab is regarded with suspicion.

5 Axc6

Rublevsky has tried 5 Ae3 several times, but for this Candidates match, he varies his play. After 5.Wf6 6 c3 Ag7 Rublevsky has tried, with some success, 7 g3!?, with, for example, two wins against Sasikiran in 2005. The general view, though, is that this line tends to give Black good equalizing chances after 7...d5 or 7...h5.

5...Wf6

5...bxc6 6 Ad3 leaves White slightly better. Doubled pawns are often not serious weaknesses, but the player with the doubled pawns would have liked some compensation in return.

6 Wf3

Rublevsky had recently dropped trying 6 Wd2. In 5.Rublevsky-V.Akopian, Sochi 2004, play continued 6...dxc6 7 Ac3 Ad4!? 8 Ad3 Ae7 9 0-0 Ag6 10 Ae2 Ab6 11 Ag3 Ae5 12 Ae2 0-0 13 Ac3 Ae8 14 Ae3 Ag4 15 Wxf6 Axf6 16 Axb6 axb6. Not very exciting if White is trying for a win, and Rublevsky duly overpressed and lost.

6...bxc6

6...Wxf3 7 gxh3 bxc6 is, it has to be said, fairly easy equality, despite much recent interest. After 8 Ae3 Axc3 9 fxe3 Ab8 10 b3 Ae7 11 Axc3 d6 12 f4 f5, Zhang Zhong-V.Akopian, Turin Olympiad 2006, Black was comfortable, and indeed his opponent later overpressed and lost.
7 \textit{\textbf{W}}g3

So at least we reach a middlegame. Black’s pieces have developed quickly, but his pawn structure is slightly suspect. White has reasonable chances of playing for a slight edge. Moreover, this is one of the few lines where decisive results outnumber draws in the 4...\textit{\textbf{D}}c5 variation.

7...\textit{\textbf{H}}5

7...d5 8 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d3 \textit{\textbf{D}}d6 9 f4 gives a slight edge to White. Black prefers to maintain the kingside tension.

8 \textit{\textbf{H}}4

The usual reply, but White could also ignore the pawn push with 8 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d3!? h4 9 \textit{\textbf{W}}f4.

8...\textit{\textbf{D}}h6

For so long as this developing move is satisfactory, there is no particular need for alternatives.

8...d5 9 \textit{\textbf{Q}}c3 (9 e5 \textit{\textbf{W}}f5 10 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d3 \textit{\textbf{W}}g4 is equal) 9...\textit{\textbf{D}}d6 10 f4 dxe4 11 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xe4 \textit{\textbf{W}}e6 is, at the moment, unclear.

9 f3

Preserving his pawns.

9 e5 \textit{\textbf{W}}f5 10 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d3 \textit{\textbf{W}}g4 is comfortable for Black.

9...d5

In a ChessBase annotation, Ftacnik gives 9...0-0 10 \textit{\textbf{Q}}c3 \textit{\textbf{E}}e8 11 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e2 as equal. Readers may decide whether 10 \textit{\textbf{W}}g5 \textit{\textbf{W}}d4 11 \textit{\textbf{W}}xh5 is foolhardy, or a refutation of this, or something between.

10 \textit{\textbf{Q}}c3

10 e5? \textit{\textbf{F}}f5 11 exf6? (11 \textit{\textbf{W}}f4 \textit{\textbf{W}}g6 bails out to a slight edge for Black) 11...\textit{\textbf{Q}}xg3 12 fxg7 \textit{\textbf{H}}g8 traps White’s rook.

Has White gained anything from his opening? Ftacnik noted at the time that Rublevsky had tested this position five times in Elista, and had won only once, losing twice. Rublevsky really could do with widening his opening range.

10...\textit{\textbf{D}}d4

Grischuk varies from their previous encounter.

Shortly before the Grischuk-Rublevsky match, S.Rublevsky-V.Tkachiev, Poikovsky 2007, had gone 10...\textit{\textbf{S}}b4 11 \textit{\textbf{S}}d2 dxe4 12 0-0-0 e3 13 \textit{\textbf{S}}xe3 \textit{\textbf{S}}xe3 14 \textit{\textbf{Q}}g5? \textit{\textbf{S}}xb2+ 15 \textit{\textbf{B}}b1 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e6 (but not 15...\textit{\textbf{W}}c3?? 16 \textit{\textbf{S}}d8 mate nor, more sophisticatedly, 15...\textit{\textbf{S}}b8 16 \textit{\textbf{S}}xf6 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e5? 17 \textit{\textbf{F}}f1 \textit{\textbf{S}}xg3?? 18 \textit{\textbf{S}}d8 mate) 16 \textit{\textbf{S}}xf6 \textit{\textbf{S}}xf6 17 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e1, and sadly Black’s enterprising queen sacrifice did not work, and he soon lost.
Who is going to have the bravery to repeat Tkachiev’s queen sacrifice? Grischuk was reported as saying that he was prepared to take on Rublevsky in this line, but as we shall see later, Rublevsky was the first to diverge. Indeed, here 15...\texttt{b8}! would have sacrificed the queen more effectively, and if 16 \texttt{xf6} \texttt{gxf6}.

If White wants a quick and easy draw, there is 17 \texttt{g7}?! \texttt{a3}+ 18 \texttt{a1} \texttt{b2}+ 19 \texttt{a1} with a perpetual. Can he try for more, though? 17 \texttt{c3} \texttt{f5}+ 18 \texttt{d3} is a possible attempt, and if 18...\texttt{a3}?! 19 \texttt{c2} \texttt{b2}+ 20 \texttt{d1} \texttt{b1}+ 29 \texttt{e2} and the king escapes, and Black does not have enough for the queen. Better is 18...\texttt{xc3}+! 19 \texttt{c2} \texttt{e5} 20 \texttt{f4}. Ftacnik assesses this as a clear advantage for White, but this seems to overstate White’s play. 20...\texttt{d6} looks safest, allowing the pieces and pawns to work together. Two minor pieces and two pawns for the queen would be an uncommon material balance. Black will, though, win the exchange soon, resulting in a more common balance, with Black being roughly half a pawn ahead in terms of material. Much depends on whether White or Black can bring his pieces working together, and also on whether Black finds he has an overexposed king, or whether some pawns drop. There are so many possible lines to analyse in depth. Quite possibly the position is about equal, and the better player will win.

In one of his other games against Grischuk, Rublevsky decided to avoid the queen sacrifice with 14 \texttt{bxc3}:

a) This had earlier been tried, with a win for Black, following 14...\texttt{d5}?! 15 \texttt{g5}?! \texttt{xe3} \texttt{xe3}+ \texttt{e7} 16 \texttt{xe7}+ \texttt{e7} in Ni Hua-E.Najer, Ergun 2006, and after White mishandled a rook ending.

Marin, annotating for ChessBase, suggests that White has a considerable advantage after 15 \texttt{c7}!, and if 15...\texttt{xe3}?! 16 \texttt{d6} \texttt{e6} 17 \texttt{xc6}+ \texttt{e7} 18 \texttt{c5}! with plenty of nasty discovered checks.

b) Another try is 14...\texttt{xc3}, which looks risky, but maybe there are chances of equalizing after 15 \texttt{d4} \texttt{a3}+ 16 \texttt{b2} \texttt{e3}+ 17 \texttt{b1} \texttt{e6}.

c) Finally, we return to S.Rublevsky-A.Grischuk, 4th matchgame, Elista 2007, in which Black tried too hard to avoid tactics, and ended up positionally
worse after 14...0-0? 15 \textit{g}5 \textit{f}5 16 \textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 17 \textit{f}4 with a later win for White.

Perhaps we can see why Grischuk changed tack later on.

11 \textit{d}2

11 \textit{d}1 seems possible, and complicated, but without any advantage to White.

11...\textit{b}8

Hitting \textit{b}2. As we shall soon see, Black is reasonably certain of being able to draw, with the help of a perpetual on \textit{b}2.

What happens, though, if White tries for a win?

12 0-0-0

12 \textit{d}1 \textit{e}7 allows Black to take over the initiative.

12...\textit{e}5

Black avoids the temptation of offering a queen exchange:

a) 12...\textit{e}5? 13 \textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 14 exd5 cxd5 15 \textit{e}1 pins and wins the bishop.

b) 12...\textit{d}6? 13 \textit{xd}6 cxd6 14 \textit{f}4 \textit{xc}3 15 bxc3 allows White an advantage.

round encounter with 13 \textit{g}5 \textit{d}6 14 exd5 0-0 15 \textit{c}4 cxd5 16 \textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 17 \textit{xb}2+ 18 \textit{b}1 \textit{c}3+ 19 \textit{c}1 \textit{b}2+ 20 \textit{b}1 \textit{c}3+, drawn by perpetual.


13...\textit{d}4

The only move.

14 \textit{d}3

14 e5 \textit{f}5 15 \textit{f}3 \textit{g}6 16 \textit{d}3 \textit{g}4 leaves Black comfortable. In this line, 15 exf6 \textit{g}3 traps the rook, as if 16 \textit{h}2 \textit{g}1, and 16 fxg7 \textit{g}8 17 \textit{e}1+ \textit{d}8 still does not allow White's rook to escape.

14...\textit{g}4

This might end up as a draw, if White so wants.

14...dxe4 15 \textit{x}e4+ \textit{f}8 16 \textit{e}3 \textit{xc}3 17 bxc3 \textit{g}4 18 \textit{d}4 \textit{f}5 19 \textit{e}1 is close to equality, but the small gap between discomfort and safety can be difficult to close. White's two bishops make an impact on both sides of the board, given an open pawn structure, while Black's knight covers only the kingside. After, for example, 19...\textit{xe}4 20 \textit{xe}4 \textit{f}5 21 \textit{c}5+ \textit{g}8 22 \textit{d}2 White is better.

\begin{center}

\textbf{13 f4}

In this, the first play-off game, Rublevsky avoids following their sixth-

\textbf{15 e5}

15 \textit{e}2 is to be considered, but is ultimately not successful:
a) After 15...\texttt{axc3} 16 \texttt{axc3} \texttt{wxf4+} (16...\texttt{axe2} 17 \texttt{wxe2} \texttt{wxf4+} 18 \texttt{xd2} also forces Black to work hard, given the threat on g7; maybe 18...0-0, but White has an edge after 19 exd5 cxd5 20 \texttt{wxh5} \texttt{gf5} 21 \texttt{wgs5}) 17 \texttt{wd2} \texttt{wdx2+} 18 \texttt{xd2} Black's pawn advantage is only temporary, as he is under attack on g7 and e5. Meanwhile, the knight is the least effective of the minor pieces. Playing on, we might have 18...\texttt{axe2} 19 \texttt{exe2} \texttt{gf8} 20 dxe5 cxd5 21 \texttt{exe5} c6 22 \texttt{he1}, and White has definite chances of playing for a win, in spite of his pawn minus.

b) So far, so good, for White, but it is unlikely that White should be better. Indeed, further investigation shows that Black has an edge after 15...\texttt{axe2!} 16 \texttt{wxexe2} 0-0-1:

b1) After 17 e5 \texttt{we7} Black is threatening to attack with ...\texttt{wb4}.

b2) White also has problems with the dark squares after 17 \texttt{wxh5} dxe4, and if 18 \texttt{de1} e3 19 \texttt{axc3 \texttt{exe3} 20 bxc3 \texttt{wxc3}.}

b3) 17 exd5 \texttt{dg4!} is a useful \texttt{zwischenzug}. If White deals with the knight fork, then Black recaptures on d5 with advantage. Therefore 18 dxc6 \texttt{xf2} 19 \texttt{wxh5 \texttt{hxh1} 20 \texttt{hxh1} \texttt{wxc6}, but Black's pieces are active, and the extra exchange is more significant than the two pawns.

Rublevsky's move is therefore the best, objectively.

15...\texttt{axc3}

The only move.

16 \texttt{wc3}

White can take the queen with 16 \texttt{exf6 \texttt{xb2+} 17 \texttt{b1 \texttt{xf6+} 18 \texttt{c1 \texttt{b2+} 19 \texttt{b1, but Black has at least a draw. What Rublevsky might have been concerned with is not so much that he is worried about giving away another draw with the white pieces, but rather that White is still in trouble after 19...\texttt{exe1!}.}

Rublevsky tries to play it safely, and with, he hopes, chances of an edge. Grischuk in reply plays smooth and effective positional chess.

16...\texttt{we6}

Now the tactical exchanges are out of the way, it is time to assess the positional balance of power.

The immediate thought is that Black has excellent control with his light-square play, with bishop, queen and knight having the opportunity to find useful central and semi-central outposts. White's central pawns are, if anything, in the way. He would like to take advantage of the diagonal from a1 to h8, but the e5-pawn is in the way. Also, White's f4 pawn is in the way. White would have likely to have exchanged bishop for knight on h6, and/or pushed out Black's bishop with f3. Thus White is not better. The practical question is whether White can hold equality, or whether he is worse.

17 \texttt{he1}
It is too early to think about sacrificing the exchange.

17...0-0

Black, of course, castles, bringing both rooks into play. Grischuk waits to see which minor piece should take over on f5. It is best to keep open the option.

18...e3?!?

White wants to use the bishop on the diagonal, but there are too many hits against it, with ...d4, ...Qf5, ...Qg4, or even ...c5, threatening ...d4.

Ftacnik gives instead 18 Wa5!, which helps tie down Black’s queenside pawns, and gives a new lease of attacking chances for the light-squared bishop if he were to try Qa6 against ...b7 or ...Qf8. Ftacnik gives further 18...d4 19 b3 We7 20 d3 Qf5 as equal. Playing on a few moves, the computer suggests that White can play for an advantage after 21 e6 fx6 22 Ax6 Wxe6 23 c4 Wxc4 24 bxc4 Qg3 25 Re1 Qe2+ 26 Axe2 Axe2. The queen and opposite-coloured bishop can easily prove to be highly effective. Imagine, for example, the chances White would have after Wxd4 and Qc3. Probably, though, Black should not open up the centre so quickly. 18...Qf5!? is a good pawn sacrifice, and if 19 Wxc7 Qf8 20 Wa5 c5, and Black may feel it is a positive advantage to have given up the backward c-pawn.

18...Qfd8

Preparing a possible ...d4-push. The immediate 18...d4 is already possible, but not yet effective, and after 19 Qxd4 Wxa2 20 Qc4 Wa4 21 Qb3 Wa6 a draw by repetition is likely.

If 18...Qf5, Ftacnik gives 19 Qxa7 Qa8 20 Qc5 Qfd8 21 a3 d4 22 Wc4 Wh6 as equal.

19 Wc5

Marin notes that 19 Qa6? would unexpectedly lose to 19...d4 20 Qxd4 c5!.

It is sometimes difficult to see why such a move is so strong. Black attacks the bishop on d4, certainly, but surely he won’t be able to take it? To make any move in chess, a player moves into a square, but also vacates another square. The square that disappears opens up lines through that square, and here Black is threatening ...Wxe6xa6, the queen travels by express through c6.

19...a5?!

Perhaps this is not quite the ‘just in time’ move that Marin suggests, since
19...\(\text{Qf5}\) still gives Black an edge. If 20 \(\text{a6?!}\), the hope for defence, then 20...\(\text{Bb6}\) leaves Black happy.

The ...\(\text{a5}\) move is useful in helping any attack.

20 \(\text{b1}\)

And 20 \(\text{Wxa5?}\) simply helps Black's attack, with 20...\(\text{d4 21 f2 Bb8 22 Bb4 Wxa2}\). White needs to add protection to the \(a2\)-square.

20...\(\text{a4}\)

Grischuk conspicuously avoids the natural knight move, 20...\(\text{Qf5}\), and we shall soon see why. A few moves later, he plays ...\(\text{Qf5}\), adding pressure on the \(h7\)-\(b1\) diagonal.

21 \(\text{d3}\)

Rublevsky sees that Black is planning ...\(\text{Qf5}\), and so sets up a bishop exchange on d3 with the hope of recapturing with the c-pawn, putting pressure on Black's doubled c-pawns. It doesn't quite work, but maybe it is the next move that is the problem.

Ftcnik gives instead 21 \(\text{Wxa5 d4 22 ad2 Qf5 23 Wxa4 Ba8 24 Wb3 d3 25 Wxe6 dxc2+ 26 Qc1 fxe6 27 Qc4 Qg4}, which should end up with level play after 28 Qe2. However, Black can improve with 24...\(\text{Wxb3!}\) (opening the a-file) 25 axb3 d3!. Here, with the queens off the board, it is time to start a mating attack: 26 cxd3 Qxd3 27 Qxd3 Qxd3+ 28 Qc1 Bb1 mate, or if 26 c4 Qa6 27 b4 ada8 28 b3 Qa1+ 29 Qb2 Qa2+ 30 Qc3 Qc2+, and Black wins a piece.

This is hardly an improvement for White, and 21 \(\text{Wa3}\) is a losing transposition after 21...\(\text{d4 22 d2 Qf5 23 Wa4}\).

Looking through the other alternatives, 21 \(\text{d2}\) looks reasonable, but Black is again better after 21...\(\text{Qf5 22 ad3 Qg3 23 Qhg1 Qe4! 24 Qxe4 dxe4}\), and if 25 Qa5 Qb5 26 Wc3 Qdb8 27 Qxe4 Qxb2+ 28 Qxb2 Qxb2+ 29 Qxb2 a3+! 30 Qxa3 Qd5 31 Qa4 Qc5+, spearing the pawn on g1.

21...\(\text{Qf5}\)

Showing that Grischuk judged well in delaying ...\(\text{Qf5}\).

22 \(\text{Cc1?!}\)

Both Ftcnik and Marin suggest 22 \(\text{Qe2}\) as giving equality with, of course, a possible repetition after 22...\(\text{Qg4}\). However, 22...\(\text{Qe4!}\) is promising for Black. If then 23 \(\text{Qxh5 Qf5! 24 Qe2}\) (to prevent ...\(\text{Bb5}\)) 24...\(\text{Qxe3 25 Wxe3 Bb6}\), and as we have seen before, and we shall see again, White is in trouble on the b-file.
Therefore 24 $\textit{g}4$, pinning, looks critical, and there are several dead ends, but 24...a3! 25 $\textit{W}xa3?! $\textit{x}c2+ 26 $\textit{Q}xc2 $\textit{Q}xe3+ 27 $\textit{Q}xe3 $\textit{W}xg4 favours Black. If 28 g3 d4, with attack.

Here White might try 25 b3!? $\textit{a}5$, and then take on a3 more accurately with 26 $\textit{W}xa3?! $\textit{Q}xe2+ 27 $\textit{Q}xc2 $\textit{Q}xe3+ 28 $\textit{Q}xe3 $\textit{W}g4 29 g3. Then probably Black has a slight edge after 29...c5 30 $\textit{d}d1 $\textit{W}g6+.Sharper is 29...d4, but it seems that Black has no more than a perpetual after 30 $\textit{d}d1 $\textit{d}xe3 31 $\textit{d}d8+ $\textit{h}7 32 $\textit{f}8 $\textit{e}2+ 33 $\textit{b}1 $\textit{e}1+ 34 $\textit{b}2.

White may also try, instead of the immediate capture on a3, the intermediate 26 $\textit{Q}xf5?! $\textit{Q}xf5 27 $\textit{W}xa3$, but Black has good attacking chances, and excellent compensation for the two pawns with 27...d4 28 $\textit{d}d1 c5 29 $\textit{f}2 $\textit{d}b8. There are sacrifices coming up on b3. If, for example, 30 $\textit{a}1 $\textit{c}c2 31 $\textit{c}c1 $\textit{xb}3 32 $\textit{x}b3 $\textit{d}5, and the additional threat of $\textit{a}a8 will lead White's position to fold.

In total, the onus is on White to prove he can hold. There is not a simple drawing option available.

Grischuk does not even have to give away any pawns to keep attacking against the king.

23 $\textit{c}x\textit{d}3 $\textit{a}5

This is a dream square for the knight, provided Black keeps in mind the thought that the knight has the chance of moving to even better squares.

24 $\textit{f}2

24 $\textit{d}d2 also ends up in problems. 24...$\textit{W}g6 25 $\textit{W}xc6 $\textit{W}xg2 is good for Black, while if White tries to stir things up with 25 $\textit{h}g1 $\textit{Q}xh4 26 $\textit{W}xc6 $\textit{W}xd3+ 28 $\textit{c}c2, Black has a winning sacrifice with 28...$\textit{x}xb2+! 29 $\textit{b}x\textit{b}2 $\textit{b}b8+ 29 $\textit{d}c1 $\textit{d}d4.

24...$\textit{b}5

Black gains a tempo with his attack on b2. There is no point in defending c6, as White's b-pawn is far more significant than Black's doubled c-pawn.

25 $\textit{W}xc6

Not satisfactory, but what else is there? Certainly 25 $\textit{a}3 $\textit{d}b8 26 $\textit{c}c2 $\textit{b}4 27 g3 d4 is miserable.

25...$\textit{d}b8!

Hitting b2.

26 $\textit{W}xe6

The least-resistance option, but it
turns out that Black is winning the endgame. Others:

a) 26 Hf2?? loses immediately:
26...Hxb2+ 27 Hxb2 Hxb2+ 28 Hxb2 Hxc6.

b) 26 b3 axb3 27 a4 Hb4 28 Wxe6 fxe6 29 Hxc7 Hxa4 allows White to keep playing, but obviously he is in serious trouble on the queenside.

c) 26 Wc2 is a possibility, there being no immediate win after 26...Hxb2?! 27 Hxb2 Hxb2+ 28 Hxb2. Black instead waits until the pieces and pawns are better coordinated, and breaks the tension later with, for example, 26...Wa6? (with thoughts of threats on d3) 27 Hcd1 c5 28 Hhg1 c4 29 dxc4 Hxb2+ 30 Hxb2 Hxb2+ 31 Hxb2 a3+ 32 Hb3 Hxc4+ 22 Hxa3 Hc3+ 34 Haa4 Hc2, winning.

White may still look as though he is able to hold, thanks to the pin, but this is illusory.

28...a3

The only move. After 28...Hxb1+? 29 Hxb1 Hxb1+ 30 Hxb1 d4 31 Hb2, Black would even have been worse.

29 Hc5

29 Hxb2 Hxb2 30 Hf1 d4 31 g3 H c5 leaves White move-bound.

26...Hxb2+

An in-between move, or alternatively a 'zwischenzug'.

27 Ha1 fxe6

Good knight versus bad bishop, and a rook on the seventh, with no weaknesses in Black's position.

28 Hb1

The attempt to mix up the position with 28 Ha7 Hb7 29 Hc6 a3 30 Hc5

29...Hxh4+

The knight joins the battle.

30 Hxb2
White's bishop, 'bad' a few moves ago, could set up counterplay with 30 \( \text{axa3} \text{xb1+} 31 \text{xb1} \text{xb1+} 32 \text{xb1} \text{gg2} 33 \text{c1}, \) but one would assume that Black is winning. After all, his passed pawn is the more advanced, and cannot be covered. It is still a close call after 33...h4 34 a4 h3 35 a5 h2 36 a6 h1w 37 a7, as analysed by Ftacnik, and unexpectedly White's pawn will be promoted. Black is still a couple of safe pawns up after 37...\( \text{xf4} 38 \text{a8w+} \text{h7}, \) though, and will eventually win. However, Black must be careful not to be over-clever. If 33...\( \text{f7?} 34 \text{a4} \text{e8??} \) (34...h4 still wins) 35 a5 \( \text{d7} 36 \text{a6} \text{c6} 37 \text{f5l}, \) and with two passed pawns coming up, it is White who queens and wins.

Perhaps the most entertaining of all the knight tours, ending up with a rook sacrifice, is, as given by Ftacnik, 30 \( \text{b1f5} 31 \text{h5g3} 32 \text{xa3 d2} 33 \text{h2 e2!} 34 \text{g4 a8} 35 \text{b2 x} 3. \) 30...\( \text{axb2+} 31 \text{b1 xg2} \)

A more straightforward knight tour.

32 f5

This will not change the outcome.

32...\( \text{f4} \)

Or maybe 32...\( \text{exf5}, \) but Grischuk prefers to keep the knight in play.

33 fxe6

He will not queen the pawn.

33...\( \text{xd3} \)

As Grischuk appreciates too, and takes another pawn.

34 \( \text{a3 x} 5 \)

And another.

35 \( \text{c2} \)

If instead 35 \( \text{xb2} \) then 35...\( \text{c4} \) wins the bishop.

35...\( \text{c4} 36 \text{c5 d2l} \)

Quickest. Black makes another good knight move to win the rook.

37 a4 b1w+ 38 \( \text{xb1 x} 3 \text{xb1} 39 a5 \text{b5} 0-1 \)
Game 19
L. Van Wely – T. Radjabov
Biel 2007
King’s Indian Defence E97

1 d4 ♙f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♙c3 ♙g7

The King’s Indian Defence, a favourite opening for Black, especially if he is looking for sharp attacking and counter-attacking chess. It just so happens that the King’s Indian is under-represented in this book, but the two games which are included give a fair indication of quite how complex this opening can be.

3...d5!? the Grünfeld Defence, is another complicated possibility. After, for example, 4 cxd5 ♙xd5 5 e4 ♙xc3 6 bxc3 White has a big pawn centre just at the moment, but Black can soon counter-attack, with 6...c5 or 6...♗g7 followed by a later ...c5.

4 e4

White sets up a big pawn centre. Other moves, for example, 4 g3 or 4 ♙f3, might allow a Grünfeld with 4...d5, or Black might continue with a King’s Indian and ...d6.

4...d6

Sometimes Black may tease the opponent with 4...0-0, and then a move later ...d6, transposing. Older players will remember R. Letelier–R. Fischer, Leipzig 1960, written up in Fischer’s My 60 Memorable Games. After 5 e5?! ♙e8 6 f4 d6 7 ♙e3 c5 8 dxc5 ♙xc5 9 cxd6 exd6 10 ♙e4 ♙f5 11 ♙g3 ♙e6 12 ♙c3 ♙c7, White may have been a pawn ahead, but his development was slow, and his prematurely advanced pawns left several weaknesses in the centre. Fischer won in just 23 moves.

5 ♙f3

For 5 f3, see Game 29, Bu Xiangzhi–Zvjaginsev.

See also comments there on other lines.

5...0-0

With quick development, but what about his pawns?

6 ♙e2

The most popular line. White keeps his bishop on a safe square, and castles quickly.

6...e5

Finally Black recovers some space in the centre. This is very much the main option, although 6...♗g4, 6...♕a6, 6...c5, 6...c6 and 6...♗bd7 are all playable. In the early years of the King’s Indian, Black often tried 6...♕c6, with the idea that after 7 d5 ♙b8, White has loos-
ened his dark squares. There is, however, the problem that Black has lost two tempi.

7 d5

The main line.

7 d5 is an obvious alternative, gaining space immediately, but after 7...a5 followed by ...a6, it is difficult for White to gain any more space on the queenside.

7 dxe5 dxe5 8 wxe5 dxe5 9 g5 (after 9 dxe5? dxe4 Black is comfortably equal) 9...e8! is probably equal.

7 e3 has been moderately fashionable, with the idea that after 7...g4 8 g5 f6 9 h4 (or even 9 c1) Black's kingside has been slightly disrupted.

7...e6

This too is the main line, forcing White to decide what to do with his d-pawn. 7...exd4, 7...bd7 and 7...a6 8 e3 g4 9 g5 are all standard alternatives, and there have been experiments with other moves.

There is so much theory to consider, that all we can do in one game is to give a pointer of some of the alternatives, rather than attempt to try to analyse all of them.

8 d5

The most direct move.

There is the final opportunity of an exchange of pawns on e5. It has been known for a long time that after 8 dxe5 dxe5 9 wxd8 xd8 10 g5, the slightly unusual-looking 10...e7! leaves Black comfortably equal, so White pushes the pawn ahead instead. Here 9 g5!? is a possibility, and perhaps an irritation to a tactically-inclined opponent.

8...e7

To the uninitiated, this can seem to be extremely passive for Black, but he can usually recoil with great effect with a knight move away from f6, and then ...f5, putting pressure on e4, or maybe advancing with ...f4, and then aiming at a pawn storm with ...g5 and ...g4. There are many examples of this position in Kasparov’s play, though only up until a loss against Kramnik in 1997.

9 b4

And this is the move that Kramnik chose.

There are many alternatives, too many theoretical lines to write up in detail here.

9...h5

Radjabov goes for the sharpest line, ignoring White’s c5 queenside push,
and instead ramming through on the kingside with ...f5. As so often, the most
direct line leads to complications.

9...a5 10.axa3 axb4 11.axb4 Qd7 12
a4 is a quieter alternative, both sides' attacking chances being slowed down.

10.Re1

A waiting move. Black is going to try ...
Qf4 or ...f5, and White wants to con-
tinue his development in such a way
that either move by Black is useful in
reply.

10.c5 is perhaps slightly premature.
Black can hit back on the queenside
(and the kingside) with 10...f5 11.Qg5
Qf6 12.f3 a5!?

10...f5

Playing for the thematic kingside
pawn rolle.

The alternative is to try to spike
White's queenside pawns with, for ex-
ample, 10.Qf4 11.Qf1 a5 12.bxa5
Bxa5 13.Bd2 c5 14.a4 Qa6 15.Qa3, but
in V.Kramnik-G.Kasparov, Novgorod
1997, White still kept some queenside
pressure, and his pieces were unusually
well placed to defend on the kingside.
Kramnik later won.

After 10...a5 11.bxa5 Bxa5 12.Qd5
Qf4 13.Qf1 the position transposes
into the last line. Black has tried this a
few times recently, mostly with de-
pressing results.

Like it or not, Black's strategy is to
play sharp tactical lines here. Radjabov
usually does not mind attacking chess!
Van Wely too is renowned for highly
tactical chess, as well as deep theoreti-
cal preparation.

11.Qg5

Immediately focusing on the weak-
ness on e6. 11.Qd2 is possible, but less
exciting, for both players.

11...Qf6

11...Qf4 is no longer played at top
level. It leads to some unusual pawn
structures after 12.Qxf4 exf4 13.Qc1
Qf6 14.Qe6 Qxe6 15.dxe6 Qxc3 16
Qxc3 fxe4. Unfortunately, when White
has recaptured his pawn on e4, he has a
dangerous passed pawn on e6. In
V.Kramnik-A.Shirov, Tilburg 1997,
White later won after 17.Qf1 e3 18.fxe3

12.f3

To bolster the e4-pawn.

Radjabov has had to encounter 12
Qf3 a few times too. For example,
12...c6 13.b5 (13.Qb2!?; 13.Bb3!?)
13...h6 14.Qe6 Qxe6 15.dxe6 fxe4 16
Qxe4 Qxe4 17.Qxe4 d5 18.cxd5 Qxd5
Qxe6 23.Qxe4 a6, soon agreed drawn in
Y.Pelletier-T.Radjabov, Kemer 2007. This
was already well known as a standard
drawing line, such as in Y.Pelletier-
J.Gallagher, German League 2002
(Pelletier played 23.Qe3 instead), and a
few other games around the same
time. What can Black do, though, if
both players know their theory, and
both players play correctly?
12...h8

It is decision time for Black.

After White's f3 move, it has become clear that if the knight is under pressure, it will have to force an exchange with dxe6. After the resulting pawn is captured on e6, there could be tactics on the a2-g8 diagonal, particularly if White plays c5 at some stage. Therefore the immediate 12...h8 has its logic.

A couple of years earlier, Van Wely made excellent use of this semi-long-diagonal after his opponent tried 12...c6 13 h1 h6 14 dxe6 hxe6 15 dxe8 h8 16 b3 c7 17 c5 d5 18 exd5 cxd5 19 b2 e8 20 a4 a6 21 d1 d8 22 xd5!, LVan Wely-D.Stellwagen, Dutch Championship, Leeuwarden 2005.

12...d5 is worth considering, though, and has been tried a few times. Black's knight is moving backwards and forwards, certainly, but the point is that pawns are not allowed to move backwards, and the h5-square for Black is comfortable. If 13 c5 d4 with complicated play.

13 dxe6?

A natural move, certainly, but also, according to Mikhalevski 'a surprising novelty' when reporting a previous Van Wely-Radjabov game, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005. Thus, there is something of a paradox. The point is that White usually waits for Black to spend an extra tempo with ...h6, before playing dxe6. If, however, the knight move is good, then quite often there is no need, one would think, to avoid it.

After 13 c5 dxc5! 14 bxc5 h6 15 d6 White has 'gained' a tempo, but with the extra move he has allowed his queenside pawns to deteriorate. 15...dxe6 16 dxe6 d4 led to an edge for Black, and later a win in Z.Gyimesi-T.Radjabov, Moscow 2005.

13 dxe3 has been tried, then maybe 13...dxe8, leaving the danger of a hit with ...f4.

13 dxe6

Of course. Radjabov has pleasant memories in this position, after previous encounters against Van Wely, although as we shall soon see, there was also a resounding win for White earlier.

14 dxe6 d5?

14...fxe4 was tried in their first encounter, LVan Wely-T.Radjabov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005. Mikhalevski hinted that this might have been inaccurate, 'but right now I can't see anything better'. It was Radjabov himself who first demonstrated the improvement, although Van Wely has, of course, done his own analytical work in reply.

This 2005 encounter continued 15 fxe4 c6 16 d5 dxe4 17 f3 d6 18 b5 d5 19 dxe6 d6? (in an extremely complicated game, this is the first serious slip; 19...c3! keeps White down to a slight edge) 20 a7 b8 21 c5 e4 22 e4 d5 23 wxd8 fx8 24 g5 e8 25 d1 d4+ 26 exd4 cxd4 27 e7 h6
28 \textit{f}6+ \textit{g}8 29 \textit{x}d4 \textit{f}7

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}[scale=0.8]
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

the Biel game), White tried 15 \textit{g}3, preventing \ldots \textit{f}4. Radjabov showed a less obvious way of attacking the advanced but isolated e-pawn with the knight, via 15...\textit{f}6!? 16 \textit{c}5 \textit{f}4 17 \textit{g}4 \textit{g}7, and after 18 \textit{c}4 \textit{c}6 19 \textit{x}d6 \textit{x}d6 20 \textit{e}2 \textit{c}8, it was clear that Black was starting to take over. He later won.

For the next stage of his theoretical battle, Van Wely decided it was better to go for an immediate attack.

\textbf{15...\textit{f}4}

If 15...\textit{d}xc5 16 \textit{w}xd8 \textit{x}d8 17 bxc5 \textit{f}4 18 \textit{h}b1, White is slightly better.

15...\textit{f}xe4 18 \textit{e}xe4 d5 19 \textit{g}5 favours White.

\textbf{16 \textit{c}4}

White’s c5-pawn move was not just to play for a queenside pawn attack. He also wanted to open up the c4-square for the bishop, guarding the advanced e-pawn.

16...\textit{f}xe4

While Black wanted to open up lines on the kingside.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}[scale=0.8]
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

White now has to decide how to recapture the pawn on e4. Which way should he do it? The question is going to be one of tactics, rather than quiet positional play.
17 \text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{a}x}e4}}}

Van Wely sacrifices the exchange.

A quieter way of continuing would be 17 \text{\textit{\textbf{fx}e4?}}, trying to stabilize the pawn centre:

a) The computer suggests 17...\textit{\textbf{dxc5}}
18 bxc5 \textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{W}d}4+}} 19 \textit{\textbf{Wxd4 exd4}} 20 \textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{Q}d}5 d3}}
21 \textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{B}b1 \textit{\textbf{Qe}2+}}}} 22 \textit{\textbf{Wh1}}, but it turns out that White's passed pawns are stronger than Black's. White is better.

b) 17...\textit{\textbf{c6!}} shows that while White has good control on the light squares, he is weak on the dark squares with \textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{Q}d4}}} being a possibility. If 18 \textit{\textbf{cxd6}}
\textit{\textbf{cxd6}} 19 \textit{\textbf{Qb5}}, Black has 19...\textit{\textbf{Qxe6}} 20
\textit{\textbf{Qxd6}} (20 \textit{\textbf{Qxe6? \textit{\textbf{Wb}6+}}}) 20...\textit{\textbf{Wb6+}} 21
\textit{\textbf{Qe3 \textit{\textbf{Qxd4}}}} 22 \textit{\textbf{Qxe6 \textit{\textbf{Wxd6}}}} 23 \textit{\textbf{Qd5}}, probably about equal.

A plausible line might be 17...\textit{\textbf{d5}} 18
\textit{\textbf{xf4 dxe4}} (18...\textit{\textbf{exf4?}} 19 \textit{\textbf{Qxd5}}, advantage to White) 19 \textit{\textbf{Wxd8 \textit{\textbf{Qf}x}d8}} 20 \textit{\textbf{Qg5}}
\textit{\textbf{Qd4}} 21 \textit{\textbf{Qb3 \textit{\textbf{Qe}8}} 22 \textit{\textbf{Qxe4}} and White has reasonable compensation with knight (on a good and safe square) and pawn (well guarded) for rook, but without any obvious reason why he should be clearly better.

a) Play might turn out to be around equal after 22...\textit{\textbf{h6}} 23 \textit{\textbf{Qxe7 \textit{\textbf{Qxe7}}}} 24 a3
\textit{\textbf{Qg8}} 24 \textit{\textbf{Qf2}}.

b) Or 22...\textit{\textbf{Qd5}} 23 b5 \textit{\textbf{Qxe6}} 24 \textit{\textbf{Qe3}}
\textit{\textbf{Qd3}} 25 \textit{\textbf{Qc4 \textit{\textbf{Qxe3}}}} 26 \textit{\textbf{Qxd5}}. Or here
23...\textit{\textbf{Qxb4?!}} 24 \textit{\textbf{Qe1?!}}, with reasonable compensation for the material.

Maybe all this will be examined at some stage over the board.

18 \textit{\textbf{g3?!}}

The first new move.

L.Van Wely-T.Radjabov, Monaco (blindfold) 2007, continued 18 \textit{\textbf{xf4}}
\textit{\textbf{exf4}} 19 \textit{\textbf{Qd5 \textit{\textbf{Qe}8}} 20 \textit{\textbf{Qxf4 \textbf{c6}}}} 21 \textit{\textbf{e7 \textit{\textbf{Qxe7}}}}
22 \textit{\textbf{Qe5 \textbf{Wb8}} 21 \textit{\textbf{e7 \textit{\textbf{Qxe7}}}} 22 \textit{\textbf{Qe6 \textbf{Wb8}}}} 23
\textit{\textbf{Qxg7 \textbf{Qxg7}}}, possibly close to equal, with Black's knight being slightly better that White's bishop, the knight covering squares of both colours. Black gradually took control as play continued.

17...\textit{\textbf{Qf5?!}}

No comment on this move by either Van Wely or Radjabov, but \textit{\textbf{Fritz}} assesses 17...\textit{\textbf{d5}} as good for Black. Since Radjabov has already played 17...\textit{\textbf{Qf5}} before, and has used this move a second time, we can assume that 17...\textit{\textbf{d5}} is probably not quite as good as the computer suggests. Both players have been quiet as to what is actually going on, presumably because the pawn move might be tried on some future occasion.
18...\(\text{h}3+\)

'Check!!!' – Radjabov

Obviously the idea is not so much that Black is going to start a big kingside attack. More it is the case that the check gains a tempo, allowing Black to bring his knight to a dangerous if risky square.

Maybe there are some initial indications that White's king might be exposed, but this will happen later, when Black's pieces are more fully developed.

19 \(\text{g}2\)

He does not want his king on the f-file.

19...\(\text{g}5\)

The knights are dangerous.

20 \(\text{g}4\)

This was still within Van Wely's opening preparation, according to Radjabov's notes. The position is certainly complicated, and White has the basic choice either of simplifying or, as Van Wely chooses, making play even more complicated.

Black's g5-knight is threatening, with the danger not just picking up the exchange on e4, but also various tactics with \(\text{xf}3\). Thus we must also examine:

a) The simplification route is 20 \(\text{xg}5\) \(\text{xg}5\) 21 \(\text{d}5\) (threatening \(\text{e}3+\)):

a1) Radjabov then gives 21...\(\text{c}6!\) 22 \(\text{cxd}6\) \(\text{x}d6\) 23 \(\text{g}4\) \(\text{h}6\) 24 e7 \(\text{cxd}5\) (24...\(\text{f}c8\) 25 \(\text{b}6!\)!) 25 \(\text{exf}8\text{w}+\) \(\text{x}f8\) 26 \(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{f}5\) 27 \(\text{e}4\) \(\text{e}3+\) 28 \(\text{xe}3\) \(\text{xe}3\) 29 \(\text{d}1\) b6 (or alternatively 29...\(\text{c}3\)) as unclear. White seems better though. Both queens are active, but White's rooks and bishop are far more flexible than Black's.

a2) Quite often it is wisest not to uncover one's full analysis when it is possible that the opening may be repeated at some other event. A computer playthrough would suggest that 21...\(\text{dxc}5!\) 22 e7 \(\text{f}c8\) is highly promising for Black.

b) Another possibility for White would be to gain a tempo, at the attempt of sacrificing the passed pawn with 20 e7? \(\text{xe}7\) 21 \(\text{d}5\) \(\text{d}8\) 22 \(\text{xg}5\) \(\text{xg}5\) 23 \(\text{x}c7\) \(\text{e}3+\) 24 \(\text{xe}3\) \(\text{xe}3\) 25 \(\text{xa}8\) e4! 26 f4 \(\text{xa}8\) 27 \(\text{cxd}6\) \(\text{d}8\), as noted by Radjabov. All the pieces on both sides, queen, rook and opposite-coloured bishops are active, with also a passed pawn on either side. Neither player has enough to win, and the likelihood is a perpetual after, for example, 28 \(\text{c}1\) \(\text{xd}6\) 29 \(\text{xd}6\) \(\text{xf}3+\) 30 \(\text{h}3\) \(\text{h}5+\) 31 \(\text{g}2\), or 28 \(\text{f}1\) g5 29 \(\text{fxg}5\) \(\text{f}3+\) 30 \(\text{h}3\) (not 30 \(\text{x}f3??\) \(\text{xf}3+\) 31 \(\text{xf}3\) \(\text{xa}1\)) 30...\(\text{f}5+\) 31 \(\text{g}2\) (but not 31 \(\text{h}4??\) h6) 31...\(\text{f}3+\). These lines are given, slightly abbreviated, from Radjabov.

There are many lines on both sides that could be considered, but the general impression is that White at best is aiming only for a draw, with careful play, after an exchange on g5. It is understandable that Van Wely would
want to try a more ambitious line.

20...\texttt{\textsf{xf3}}!

Black ends the knight manoeuvre with a sacrifice, to bring the king into the open.

The computer at first suggests \texttt{20...e4?!}, with the idea 21 \texttt{\textsf{Exg5 \textsf{Xg5}} 22 \texttt{\textsf{Exg5 \textsf{Ee3+}} 23 \texttt{\textsf{Eh1 \textsf{Exd1}} 24 \texttt{\textsf{Exd1 \textsf{Exc3}, but after a few tactics, this is life-}}}}

less. After 25 \texttt{\textsf{cxd6 cxd6 26 fxe4}} Black still has to deal with the passed pawn on e6.

21 \texttt{\textsf{Exf3}}

Allowing the scary thought of a discovered check.

Naturally there are too many tactical ideas to allow White to give up the queen for various forces with 21 \texttt{\textsf{Exf3? \textsf{Eh4+}} 22 \texttt{\textsf{Ehxh4 \textsf{Exf3}} 23 \texttt{\textsf{Exf3 e4+}. Radja}}}

bol gives 24 \texttt{\textsf{Exe4 d5 25 \textsf{Eg5 \textsf{Ef6}} 26 \texttt{\textsf{Eg2 \textsf{dxc4}} 27 \texttt{\textsf{Ehxh7 \textsf{Exh4}} 28 \texttt{\textsf{gxh4 \textsf{Exa1}}, Black ending up with a winning}}}}

\texttt{\textsf{endgame.}}

21...\texttt{\textsf{e4+}}

Black is not so much interested in the discovered attack on the f-file - that will keep - but is more interested in bringing the King's Indian bishop into play, with a violent attack. He would like to recover the material balance.

22 \texttt{\textsf{Exe4}}

Black is a clear pawn up, with no particular compensation for White, after 22 \texttt{\textsf{Exe4 \textsf{Exc3}} 23 \texttt{\textsf{Ef4 \textsf{Ff6}} 24 \textsf{e7 \textsf{Exa1 25 exf8\textsf{E+ \textsf{xf8}.}}}}

22...\texttt{\textsf{Exa1}}!

The only move, and play is getting wilder.

Radjabov notes that 22...\texttt{\textsf{d5? 23 \textsf{Eg5! \textsf{dxe4+ 24 \textsf{Eg2 \textsf{Exg5}} 25 \textsf{Exg5 \textsf{Ee3+}} 26 \textsf{Eh3 \textsf{Exd1 27 Exd1 gives White a clear}}}}}

advantage, not least because White's passed e-pawn is more dangerous than Black's passed e-pawn.

23 \texttt{\textsf{Eg5}}

The only move, attacking queen and bishop.

23...\texttt{\textsf{Ee7+}}

Out of all the safe discovered checks, this is in some ways the least expected. The natural reaction is to find something violent, maybe a double check, but Radjabov merely retreats to a safe square where White's passed e-pawn no longer creates an immediate threat.

24 \texttt{\textsf{Eg2}}

Neither Radjabov nor Van Wely mentioned the obvious 24 \texttt{\textsf{Ef4!}}? in their notes. If 24...\texttt{\textsf{Exe5}, White at the very least may transpose into the game with}
25 \( \text{g2}\?), with, Radjabov suggests, a complicated draw. Readers might want to experiment in trying for more. Here, though, 24...\( \text{xf4+} \) 25 \( \text{xf4} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 26 \( \text{cxd6} \) \( \text{cxd6} \) 27 \( \text{xd6} \) \( \text{xd6} \) 28 \( \text{xd6} \) \( \text{xe6} \) 29 \( \text{e6} \) \( \text{e8} \) 30 \( \text{e4} \) \( \text{g7} \) 31 \( \text{b5} \) \( \text{c6} \) 32 \( \text{xc6} \) \( \text{bxc6} \) 33 \( \text{e5} \) is comfortable for White.

24...\( \text{xe5} \)

To the most dominating square.

Black could consider hibernating with 24...\( \text{g7}\?)!, but the e6-square is worth protecting. After 25 \( \text{cxd6} \) \( \text{cxd6} \) 26 \( \text{xd6} \) (26...\( \text{xd6}\?) \( \text{c8}\?) favours Black) 26...\( \text{c7} \) 27 \( \text{f7+} \) \( \text{g8} \) 28 \( \text{d7} \) White is in control, his passed pawn being troublesome.

25 \( \text{dxf4} \)

White is not too bothered about sacrificing the second exchange, so long as he may keep control of the long diagonal.

Van Wely suggests 25 \( \text{h4} \) as a possibility, but without closer analysis. Black seems comfortable after 25...\( \text{xe8} \) 26 \( \text{g4} \) d5! 27 \( \text{h3} \) h5 28 \( \text{xe7} \) \( \text{xe7} \) 29 \( \text{xd5} \).

25...\( \text{xf4} \)

So Black is two exchanges ahead, two rooks for two bishops, but those bishops look formidable.

This exchange is so natural, that it could easily not be mentioned. If you can win material, you should take it. Neither Radjabov nor Van Wely give any alternatives here in their notes. This perhaps would be a rather simplified version of events: Radjabov wins after this move, but in later analysis, it becomes clear that the position is only equal after best play. It is possible that this position could be repeated at some stage, and so neither player would want to advertise their analysis prematurely. The computer suggests that there are several good alternatives, with chances of an edge for Black. It only takes one of these lines to be shown as giving a slight edge for Black, for there to be a substantial novelty.

Two promising ideas for Black would be 25...\( \text{xf4}\?) \( \text{gxf4} \) \( \text{g7} \), keeping the bishop rather than the knight, and 25...\( \text{c8}\?) \( \text{g7} \), so that if White exchanges on d6, Black has instant counterplay.

26 \( \text{gxf4}\?)

This recapture leaves him significantly worse, whereas 26 \( \text{xf4} \) holds. Such a conclusion is the result of pure tactics, playing through several strange lines of attack and defence, and in the end showing that in one critical line the position folds, while in the other critical line the position holds. The position is quite simply far too difficult for the players to analyse with certainty over the board, and while both players make a credible stab in their annotations, written shortly after the game, neither player gives the complete picture.

Radjabov, analysing for ChessBase, suggests that White could and should have taken a draw with 26 \( \text{xf4}\?). It
turns out that his assessment is correct. This move is instinctively unappealing in that White has released the pin against the knight, but on the other hand White does not face any problems of counterplay along the g-file, as in the game.

Radjabov gives as the main line 26...d5 27 Wa1+ (though not 27 Wd4+?? Qg8 28 Ah6 Qf5) 27...Qg8 28 Ah6 Qf5 29 e7 Wxe7 30 Axd5+ Qf7 31 Qf6+ Qh8 32 Qh5+ with a perpetual.

Or 26...Qxf4? 27 Wa1+ Qg8 28 gxf4 Wf8 29 Qf6+, and another perpetual.

Finally, 26...Qf5 27 Wa1+ Qg7 28 Ah6 Wf7 29 Qg5 Wf7 would be another drawing line after 30 Ah6 Wf7, but if White wants to play on, 30 e7? keeps live complications, and a genuine chance of an edge after, for example, 30...Qg8?! 31 Qf6 32 Wd4 a6 (avoiding White’s b5) 33 Qg1 and Black is under great pressure. Here 30...Qf7 31 cxd6 cxd6 32 Qxd6 Wc6+ might well end up as a draw, although 33 Qh3!? would force both players to think.

So the bishop recapture on f4 is good and safe.

26...d5

‘The position is simply crazy!’ – Radjabov.

27 f5

This is really just a wild waiting move. Van Wely wants to see what is happening with Black’s d-pawn. If Black wants to take on c4 or e4, White has a big check with Wa1+. If White checks first with 27 Wa1+, Black covers the diagonal with 27...d4. If, however, White plays a ‘quiet’ move, and Black plays ...d4, White has saved a vital tempo through not moving the queen to a1.

In a highly charged tactical position, often a quiet move adds to the tension, rather than resolving it. The opponent can’t capture everything at once in a crazy game, giving an extra sacrificial course to add to the menu. White’s pawn thrust is genuinely dangerous, as he is threatening f6, but there is no good way for Black to take the pawn, or even one of the pieces. Dangerous!

We must explore:

a) 27 Wd4+ Qg8 is the obvious start to the attack:

a1) Then 28 Ah6 Qf5! is a triple knight fork, covering both of the main attackers, and also the opponent’s mating threat. It is difficult to do much more with one defending knight. 29 e7 Qxd4 30 exf8 W+ Wxf8 31 Qxd5+ Qh8
32 \textbf{\textit{Qxf8}} \textbf{\textit{Bxf8}} gives Black a safe extra exchange.

a2) 28 \textbf{\textit{Qf6+}} \textbf{\textit{Bxf6}} 29 \textbf{\textit{Qxf6}} \textbf{\textit{Wf8}} also covers the mating threats, again keeping an extra piece.

b) We return to 27 \textbf{\textit{Wa1}}:

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_diagram.png}
\end{center}

b1) After 27...d4 Van Wely in \textit{Informer} simply stated that 28 \textbf{\textit{Qd6}} was good, but Radjabov showed that he has the same rejoinder as in the main line, 28...h6. He continues with 29 \textbf{\textit{Qxh6}} \textbf{\textit{Qh7}} 30 \textbf{\textit{Qxf6}} \textbf{\textit{Wxf8}} 31 \textbf{\textit{Qf7}} \textbf{\textit{Qf5}}, claiming a slight plus for Black. The suspicion is that this is slightly optimistic, and that after 32 \textbf{\textit{Qd3}} \textbf{\textit{Wg7}} 33 \textbf{\textit{Qg5+}} \textbf{\textit{Qg8}} 34 \textbf{\textit{Qxf5}} \textbf{\textit{gxg5}} 35 \textbf{\textit{Wb1}} White should be about level. White is still the exchange down, not unexpectedly given his earlier sacrifices, but he has an imposing passed pawn, and solid squares for the knight close to the opposing king. Here 35...\textbf{\textit{Qd8}}? is an attempt to make use of the extra exchange, but White still draws with 36 e7 (36 \textbf{\textit{Wxf5}} d3 37 e7 also draws, with care) 36...\textbf{\textit{Wxe7}} 37 \textbf{\textit{Wb3+}} \textbf{\textit{Qf8}} 38 \textbf{\textit{Qe6+}} \textbf{\textit{Qe8}} 39 \textbf{\textit{Qxd8}}, and Black is best advised to take a perpetual with 39...\textbf{\textit{We2+}}.

b2) This leaves 27...\textbf{\textit{Qg8}}:

b21) Both Radjabov and Van Wely agree on 28 \textbf{\textit{Qh6}} \textbf{\textit{Qf5}} 29 \textbf{\textit{Qxf8}} \textbf{\textit{Wxf8}} (29...\textbf{\textit{Dxc4}} 30 \textbf{\textit{Qd6}} \textbf{\textit{cxd6}} 31 \textbf{\textit{Qf6+}} \textbf{\textit{Qh8}} is a perpetual) 30 \textbf{\textit{Qf6+}} \textbf{\textit{Qh8}} as leading to an edge for Black after, for example, 31 \textbf{\textit{Qxd5}} c6 or 31 \textbf{\textit{Qxd5+}} \textbf{\textit{Qg7}}. The advantage of the exchange persists.

b22) 28 \textbf{\textit{Qf6+}} \textbf{\textit{Bxf6}} 29 \textbf{\textit{Wxf6}} \textbf{\textit{Wf8}} is also good for Black, as we noted in variation 'a2'.

b23) 28 f5 gxf5 29 \textbf{\textit{Qf6}} d4 was also analysed as good for Black by Van Wely.

b24) 28 \textbf{\textit{Qb3??}} seems best, but was not given by the players. There is, however, an excellent reason for this omission, in that \textbf{\textit{Qb3}} a move earlier cuts down a couple of options by Black, before the check on the long diagonal.

c) So finally, we reach Van Wely's suggested improvement for White. Go back to the last diagram, and we have 27 \textbf{\textit{Qb3??}}.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_diagram_2.png}
\end{center}

This is a quiet move which means that only one white piece is now attacked. White has more control in his play than after the 'violent quiet move' with f5. If Black takes this piece, 27...\textbf{\textit{Dxe4}}, White has 28 \textbf{\textit{Wa1+}} \textbf{\textit{Qg8}} 29 \textbf{\textit{Qh6}} \textbf{\textit{Wd2+}} 30 \textbf{\textit{Qh1}} \textbf{\textit{Qf6}} 31 \textbf{\textit{Wxf6}} \textbf{\textit{Wf1+}} with a perpetual.

Quite often in chess, the more that
one tries to analyse, the more that one recognises that hidden resources come alive, and that it takes many attempts to reach any sort of final analysis. Go back a couple of moves, and try 30...\( \text{Qf5!} \) (not given by Van Wely) 31 \( \text{Qxf8!} \) (31 \( \text{e7+?} \) \( \text{f7} \) leads to nothing, Black wins) 31...\( \text{h5!!} \) (Black cannot take the bishop) 32 \( \text{e7+} \) \( \text{f7} \) 33 \( \text{f7} \) (33 \( \text{e6} \) \( \text{d4} \) 34 \( \text{f7} \) \( \text{xf4} \) wins for Black) 33...\( \text{xf4} \) 34 \( \text{e8W} \) \( \text{xh8} \) 35 \( \text{xe8} \) \( \text{e3} \) when White has the extra minor piece, but Black’s passed pawn is strong, and will win back a bishop. After 36 \( \text{b5} \) \( \text{xf3+} \) 37 \( \text{g1} \) \( \text{f2+} \) 38 \( \text{h1} \) \( \text{e2} \) 39 \( \text{exe2} \) \( \text{xf3} \) Black has an extra pawn, and White’s bishop is very badly placed. Black will win.

On the whole, I do not like too many double exclamation marks. A sparingly given single exclamation mark is usually sufficient. If Radjabov’s next move, 27...\( \text{h6!!} \), is worth giving the double bang, then surely the 31...\( \text{h5!!} \) in this last variation deserves similar acknowledgement.

Returning to 27 \( \text{f5} \):

\[
\text{27...h6!!}
\]

This extra flight square alters the balance. After some extremely compli-
cated play, Black is now winning.

Radjabov does not give any alternative moves, and from his point of view, why should he? Job done, end of question.

It is nevertheless useful for the reader to consider what alternatives, notably grabbing pieces, should be examined. Only then would we be able to see why Radjabov’s move was, indeed, worthy of a double-exclaim:

a) The more obvious point is that if 27...\( \text{dxe4?} \), Black is shredded on the long diagonal after 28 \( \text{wa1+} \) \( \text{g8} \) 29 \( \text{h6} \) \( \text{xf5} \) 30 \( \text{e7+} \), winning. One of Van Wely’s thoughts about his previous \( \text{f5} \) move is that he would have wanted, as here, to prevent any queen check on \( \text{d2} \).

b) A vastly more subtle approach for Black is 27...\( \text{xf5!} \) 28 \( \text{wd4+} \) \( \text{g8} \) 29 \( \text{h6} \) (29 \( \text{xf6+} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 30 \( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) is also successful for Black) 29...\( \text{xf8!} \), sacrificing the queen. After 30 \( \text{xf8} \) \( \text{xf8} \) 31 \( \text{g3?!} \) \( \text{xf4} \) 32 \( \text{e5} \) \( \text{dxc4} \) 33 \( \text{xc7} \) \( \text{c3!} \) White is in trouble. Van Wely gives instead 31 \( \text{d3} \) as unclear. A first impression might be that the two rooks could outrun the white queen, but Black has problems in doing anything active with the knight. Black is not clearly better.

c) 27...\( \text{dxc4} \) 28 \( \text{wa1+} \) \( \text{g8} \) 29 \( \text{f6} \) gives White an extremely dangerous attack, though with only a bishop for two rooks, there is a danger of running out of attacking pieces. The best reply seems to be 29...\( \text{h6!} \) 30 \( \text{f7+!} \) (30 \( \text{fxe7} \) \( \text{wd5} \) 31 \( \text{exf8W+} \) \( \text{xf8} \) 32 \( \text{exh6} \) \( \text{exe4} \) 33 \( \text{g1} \) \( \text{g4+} \) 34 \( \text{h1} \) \( \text{f3+} \) and Black soon wins) 30...\( \text{xf7} \) 31 \( \text{exf7+} \) \( \text{xf7} \) 32 \( \text{xf6+} \) \( \text{e8} \) 33 \( \text{g7} \) \( \text{d7} \) 34 \( \text{c6+} \) \( \text{xc6} \) 35 \( \text{c5+} \) \( \text{c8} \) 36 \( \text{xe7} \) \( \text{wd2+} \), and Black escapes with a perpetual.

Radjabov would presumably have
noted this line up to at least ...h6, and decided that there was at the very least no clear win. The next stage would have been the jump in imagination, in seeing that ...h6! a couple of moves earlier would have been extremely effective, and indeed would probably save a tempo. In the game line Black does not have to play ...g8, but can quickly move with the safer ...h7.

28 \textit{Wd4+}

Quite dizzying. White is two exchanges down, and all three of his minor pieces are under attack. White also has chances of attack against Black's king, although opening up the h7-square gives chances of escape by the king. Finally, White has two potential connected passed pawns, allowing chances of recovering some of the sacrificed material.

The verbal commentary might imply that Black should be better, but it is a case of analysing White's chances move by move, just to see whether Black is covering everything:

a) 28 \textit{Wa1+} is a good start. Then after 28...h7! (not 28...d4? 29 $\texttt{Axe7 }\texttt{Wxe7 }29\texttt{Wxd4+ }h7 31 \texttt{f6 We8 }32 \texttt{d5 }33 \texttt{We5, and White has a winning attack}) 29 f6 (29 f6 $\texttt{xf6 }30 \texttt{xf6 hxg5!} 29...\texttt{dxc4! }30 \texttt{fxe7 Wd5 }31 \texttt{exf8A+ }\texttt{xf8} Black wins. There has been much sacrifice and counter-sacrifice in this line, but basically, Black starts off well ahead in material, and keeps staying ahead at every stage. When the position is simplified, he wins.

b) Another attempt to take advantage of the long diagonal is 28 f6. After 28...\texttt{dxc4! }29 \texttt{wa1 }f5, we arrive at the earlier line with 28 \texttt{wa1}. As we have seen, Black wins. Here 28...hxg5?! 29 \texttt{wa1} is less clear; Black allows White to move dangerously with the knight to g5.

c) The simple 28 xh6!, which threatens \texttt{d4+}, seems the best line, although White is still only struggling for a draw.

Radjabov gives 28...\texttt{xf5 }29 \texttt{wa1+!} (his own exclamation mark) 29...d4 30 $\texttt{Ag5 }\texttt{We8 }31 \texttt{Wg1} (to avoid checks or pins on the long diagonal) 31...b5 32 $\texttt{Axb3 }\texttt{Wc6 }33 \texttt{We1 }g7 with a big advantage for Black. With the help of the computer, though, and a little bit of nudging, it seems that 34 e7! is a draw, and more if Black makes even the slightest error.
28...\textit{We}8!, taking over the g6-square. If 29 \textit{Wd}4+ \textit{Gg}8 30 \textit{Gf}5 31 \textit{Gxf}6+ \textit{Gxf}6 32 \textit{Wxf}6 \textit{Gg}6 33 \textit{Wxg}6 \textit{Gxg}6, and with Black's pawns still attacking two different bishops, he wins material. Black has not had the chance of taking either bishop for many moves, which is an indication of the extreme complexity of the game. We now return to 28 \textit{Wd}4+:

c1) 34...\textit{Gxe}7?! 35 \textit{Gxe}7 \textit{Gf}3 36 \textit{Wh}4 \textit{Gh}8 37 \textit{Gg}4 ends up as good for White, not desirable for Black.

c2) 34...\textit{Gf}7?! is a better try. Then 35 \textit{Gg}3! \textit{Gxg}3 36 \textit{We}5+ \textit{Gh}7 37 \textit{Wxg}3 \textit{Gf}3 38 \textit{Gxf}7 \textit{Wxf}7 39 \textit{Wh}4+ \textit{Gg}8 40 \textit{Gf}6 \textit{Wh}7 41 \textit{Wxd}4, and White is creating pressure after, for example, 41...\textit{Gxe}8 42 \textit{Wd}5+ \textit{Gf}7 43 \textit{Wc}6.

c3) 34...\textit{Gf}e8! seems steadier. If 35 \textit{Gf}6+ \textit{Wxf}6! (35...\textit{Gh}7? 36 \textit{Gg}5+ \textit{Gh}6 37 \textit{Ge}6, and the three minor pieces are toxic) 36 \textit{Gxf}6 \textit{Gxe}7! 37 \textit{Ge}4 \textit{Gae}8 38 \textit{Gd}5 \textit{Ge}3 39 \textit{Gc}6 \textit{Gxe}4 40 \textit{Gxe}4 \textit{Gxe}4 41 \textit{Gh}3 with a likely draw in a queen versus rook, knight and pawn endgame.

Can Black improve on this? Return to move 29, and 29...\textit{Gh}7! 30 \textit{Gg}5 \textit{Ge}3+?! (30...\textit{Gxe}4!? 31 \textit{Gxd}8 \textit{Gxd}8 is given by Van Wely as promising) 31 \textit{Gg}1 \textit{We}8 32 \textit{Gxe}3 \textit{Gxc}4 33 \textit{Gf}6+ \textit{Gxf}6 34 \textit{Wxf}6 \textit{Wh}8 35 \textit{Wh}4+ \textit{Gg}8 36 \textit{Wxc}4 \textit{Wf}6 is analysed by Van Wely. Is Black better? Substantially so. Black's queen and rook will not allow any stability for White's passed pawn, and if the queens get exchanged, Black's king will cover the passed pawn, and the rook will attack White's queenside pawns.

d) Finally, if 28 \textit{Gxg}6, Black must play

28...\textit{Gh}7!

Snuggling to the cosiest square. 28...\textit{Gg}8?? 29 \textit{Gxe}7 \textit{Wxe}7 30 \textit{f}6! would even win for White, with the \textit{f}7+ threat coming up, and if 30...\textit{Wxe}6 31 \textit{Gxd}5, pinning.

29 \textit{Gxg}6+

There is not much coordination in White's remaining attack, although perhaps this is not too unexpected if White has already sacrificed two exchanges, and has three minor pieces under attack. 29 \textit{Gf}7+ \textit{Gx}4 does nothing.

29 \textit{Gf}6+ \textit{Gxf}6 30 \textit{Wxf}6 \textit{hxg}5! 31 \textit{Wf}7+ \textit{Gh}6 allows the king to slip through. This is difficult to visualize far in advance. Before Black's 27th, the h-pawn was on its starting square, blocking the king. Every time the pawn
moves, it sweeps open a square for the king.

29 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}e7} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}e7} 30 \textit{\texttt{f}xg6}+ \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}e6} transposes to the game.

29...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}g6}

Obviously the only sensible move. Black's king is exposed, but that is only for the short term. Black is material up, and his pieces will soon become active.

30 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}e7}

Otherwise White drops another piece.

30...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}e7} 31 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}d5}

Radjabov gives 31 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}3} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}e6} 32 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash g}3}+ \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash f}7} 33 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash f}5} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}8} 34 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}d5}+ \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash g}7} 35 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}4}+ \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash f}6} 36 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}4} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}7} with a win for Black. Again, winning an exchange for White is not enough when he has already sacrificed two.

31...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash a}d8}

To win simply, he needs to use all his pieces.

32 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}5}

32 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}b7} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash h}4} starts a mating attack.

32...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash f}5}

Again, using both rooks.

33 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}3}

33 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash w}g3} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash h}7} wins for Black.

33...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash w}g7}

Setting up a discovered check on the g-file.

34 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash w}g3}+?!\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash h}1}

A tame finish.

With 34 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash w}c2}! White could at least have set up a few confusing pins and discoveries to enliven the time scramble. Black cannot escape with the king (34...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash h}7}+?? 35 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash g}3}; 34...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash h}5}+?? 35 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash g}3}+), while if 34...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}4}? 35 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}7} and White is turning the pieces around. Thus 34...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash f}4}! (or maybe 34...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}5}) looks best, allowing the discovered check:

a) If then 35 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}6}+? \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash h}5}+, the return discovered check wins, with a quick mate.

b) 35 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash g}3}+ \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash f}6} 36 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}3}+ \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}d4} keeps Black's material advantage, and he will escape the pin with ...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}7}.

34...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash h}7}

Queens gone, no more cheapos.

35 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}g7}+ \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}g7} 36 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash g}3} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}4} 0-1

And as a piece falls, it is no longer worth reaching move 40.
Game 20

Ni Hua-D Jakovenko

Nizhniy Novgorod 2007

Sicilian Defence B85

This is the only game in this collection in which the author knowingly selected a game in which the player eventually later won, but was earlier losing. The impact of the game is outstanding, though. How on earth did Jakovenko win this game? Wasn’t he about to get checkmated? The spirit of Emanuel Lasker, the great World Champion of a century ago, survives, even though these days attackers and defenders have immensely greater technique than a century ago, and arguably even a quarter century ago.

1 e4 c5 2 d4 f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 cxd4 c6 5 d3 wC7 6 a2 e2 a6 7 0-0 a6 f6 8 h1

but 8 e3 is possible, and leads to Game 16, Shirov-Illescas.

8...e7 9 f4

Clearly aiming for a pawn push with e5, and maybe a later kingside attack.

9...d6

The natural reply, keeping the Scheveningen formation.

9...d5 is also worth considering if Black doesn’t mind the isolated d-pawn after 10 exd5 exd5. If 11 f3 0-0, White is only equal if he tries 12 dxe5 dxe5 13 d5 d4 14 wXd4 dxc2. Instead 10 e5 d4 11 wXd4 d7 leads to something approximating to a French Defence.

10 e3 0-0

Natural development on both sides.

11 wE1

The queen wants to attack. This is the most direct plan for White, with the idea of wG3 followed by e5.

11 a4 leads to the Scheveningen main line, restraining Black’s counterplay on the queenside. Black develops behind the pawns with, for example, 11 f8, followed later by ...f6, and it is difficult for White to open up the centre with his pawns, while Black is waiting for a good opportunity for ...e5 himself. There is much manoeuvring, often ending up with sharp play. In some lines, Black develops with ...d7 and ...d7, before re-fianchettoing with ...d7-c8-b7 and ...e7-f8-g7.
Modern Chess: Move by Move

Sometimes White will have played a4 before \( \texttt{h1} \), such as after, earlier, 8 \( \texttt{d3} \texttt{d7} \) \( \texttt{f4} \texttt{d6} \) 10 a4 0-0 11 \( \texttt{h1} \). Ni Hua has been careful to find a slightly less common attacking idea, aiming for an innovation later.

Various other moves have also been tried.

12 \( \texttt{xd4} \texttt{b5} \)

12...\( \texttt{e5} \) 13 fxe5 dxe5 14 \( \texttt{g3} \) puts Black under pressure in the centre. After 14...\( \texttt{d6} \) 15 \( \texttt{xf6} \texttt{exd4} \) 16 \( \texttt{xd6} \texttt{xd6} \) 17 \( \texttt{xd6} \texttt{xc3} \) 18 b3! White will be able to swallow up the advanced pawn on c3 in the fullness of time, and without giving away doubled isolated pawns.

13 a3

He wants to keep his knight on a good square.

13 \( \texttt{e5} \) opens up the position a little too quickly, at least if aiming for an edge. After 13...\( \texttt{dxe5} \) 14 fxe5 \( \texttt{d7} \) 15 \( \texttt{e4} \texttt{b7} \) there is:

11...\( \texttt{xd4} \)

Here Black aims to push the b-pawn. The immediate 11...\( \texttt{b5} \)! is premature in view of 12 \( \texttt{xc6} \texttt{xc6} \) 13 \( \texttt{e5} \texttt{ xd5} \) 14 \( \texttt{f3} \), with pressure on the long diagonal. Black avoids this by exchanging the knights himself.

11...\( \texttt{d7} \) is standard, here and in many slightly different positions. It is a developing move, bringing the rooks working together, usually a good start for the middlegame. Also, Black has the idea of playing ...\( \texttt{b5} \), and recapturing with the bishop, rather than the queen, on c6.

11...\( \texttt{e5} \) is possible, but reduces some of Black's flexibility. After 12 fxe5 dxe5 13 \( \texttt{g3} \texttt{?} \), threatening \( \texttt{h6} \), White has a slight edge.

11...\( \texttt{d5} \) 12 \( \texttt{e5} \)AI resembles a French Defence, except that Black has given a tempo with ...\( \texttt{d7-d6-d5} \), instead of more directly ...\( \texttt{d7-d5} \). White is probably happy.

12...\( \texttt{xd4} \texttt{b5} \)

12...\( \texttt{e5} \) 13 fxe5 dxe5 14 \( \texttt{g3} \) puts Black under pressure in the centre. After 14...\( \texttt{d6} \) 15 \( \texttt{xf6} \texttt{exd4} \) 16 \( \texttt{xd6} \texttt{xd6} \) 17 \( \texttt{xd6} \texttt{xc3} \) 18 b3! White will be able to swallow up the advanced pawn on c3 in the fullness of time, and without giving away doubled isolated pawns.

13 a3

He wants to keep his knight on a good square.

13 \( \texttt{e5} \) opens up the position a little too quickly, at least if aiming for an edge. After 13...\( \texttt{dxe5} \) 14 fxe5 \( \texttt{d7} \) 15 \( \texttt{e4} \texttt{b7} \) there is:

a) White can try a little tactic with 16 \( \texttt{f6} \), and if 16...\( \texttt{gf6} \texttt{?} \) 17 \( \texttt{g3} \texttt{h8} \) 18 \( \texttt{xf6} \texttt{gxg3} \) 19 \( \texttt{fxe7} \texttt{e5} \) 20 \( \texttt{exf8} \texttt{g} \texttt{xf8} \) 21 \( \texttt{hxg3} \texttt{exd4} \), and after all the removal of pieces, White is the exchange ahead. However, Black can defend better with 16...\( \texttt{xf6} \texttt{?} \) 17 \( \texttt{exf6} \texttt{xf6} \) 18 \( \texttt{xf6} \texttt{gf6} \) 19 \( \texttt{xf6} \texttt{xc2} \) 20 \( \texttt{g3} \texttt{h8} \) 21 \( \texttt{we5} \texttt{xe6+} \) 22 \( \texttt{xe6+} \texttt{xe5} \) 23 \( \texttt{xe5} \), ending up as a draw, or maybe as a micro-advantage for Black after 23...\( \texttt{ae8} \) 24 \( \texttt{xe8} \texttt{xe8} \) 25 \( \texttt{f1} \texttt{g7} \), and the king is
slightly closer to the opponent’s king in the endgame.

b) 16 ♘d3 is safer, with probable equality after 16...♗ad8. As one might suspect, there is a string of dangerous pins after 16...♕xe5?. Play continues with 17 ♕g3 f6 18 ♗xf6+ ♘xf6 19 ♘xf6 ♘xf6 20 ♘xe5 ♙f7 21 ♘xf6 ♘xf6 22 ♘f1 ♘e7 (22...♗xb2? 23 ♘c7), and after the tactics, a positional grind follows. White has the more active pieces, and the better pawns, not quite enough to win quickly, but enough to cause pressure. A top-level player would be happy to grind this down. This, however, stems from a mistake by Black. With more accurate play, with 16...♗ad8, followed, if required, by exchanging bishop for knight on e4, play is equal.

13...♗b7

The most accurate move.

The reader will recall that a move earlier, we considered 12...e5, instead of 12...b5 13 a3, and regarded it as unsound. What changes with the extra queenside pawn moves?

Let us try, in comparison with the earlier situation, 13...e5 14 fxe5 dxe5 15 ♕g3 ♘d6 16 ♘xf6 exd4 17 ♘xd6 ♘xd6 18 ♘xd6 dxc3. Black’s queenside pawn structure here is more advanced than in the earlier line, and 19 b3?! ♘b7 is now comfortable for Black. White can try instead 19 bxc3 ♘b7 20 c4 ♘xe4 21 ♘xb5 axb5 22 ♘xb5 ♘xc2, but his outside passed pawn will not force a win after accurate play by Black. For example, 23 a4 ♘fb8 24 ♘d2 ♘xb5 25 ♘xc2 ♘f7 is a drawn rook and pawn endgame.

So is this only equal? Not quite. The tactics do not give an advantage this time, but positional play with 16 ♘e3! gives White a reasonable chance of a good edge. Black’s knight on f6 is under pressure, and his d5-square is weak. White could, of course, have tried this in the corresponding line after 12...e5?, but there would have been less point, as there White’s tactical reply was more effective.

14 ♕g3

14 ♘d3 or 14 ♘f3 have been tried, but seem slightly less logical. The queen move is a constructive attacking move, and quiet defending of a pawn is not necessary as yet.

If 14 e5, Black’s best attempt at complete equality seems 14...♕d7! 15 exd6 ♘xd6 16 ♕g3 f6, followed by ...e5. White’s attack is slightly mistimed.

14...♗ad8

It soon becomes clear that Black is setting up a defensive fortress, rather than aiming for any immediate counterattack. This is, of course, quite common in the Scheveningen. He manoeuvres behind the pawns, taking care that his king will not be in immediate danger, and waits, and waits further. Black also looks for possibilities of counterplay, when given the chance, later on.

The next few moves are all theory.
15 \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{a}}e1}

Obvious enough, although 15 \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{a}}d1} and 15 \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{d}}d3} are also well worth considering. Black has probably not quite yet equalized in any of these lines, but the edge is slight, just a normal edge. Chess theory holds that White starts off with a small edge, with his extra move, but that this is not a decisive advantage if Black plays accurately.

\textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{15...d7}}}

This has also been tried after White’s previous-move alternatives. For example, 15 \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{d}}d3 \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{d}}d7} 16 \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{a}}e1} would have transposed into the game. Black wants to use the rook on the d-file to defend if White opens up the position with e5. Black also wants to add protection to the knight with \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{...\textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{d}}d8}}}. Black is hoping not to have to give way with \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{...\textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{c}}c8}}}, with a continued slight edge for White.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\textbf{268}
\end{center}

16 \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{d}}d3}

The bishops are lining up towards the black king’s fortifications.

\textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{16...e8}}}

A quiet and unobtrusive move, but what else can he play? Look through the position, and imagine Black’s moves, piece by piece, and really it is only the rook move that makes sense. The only other constructive move is with the queen, but 16...\textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{w}}a5}?! moves too far away from the kingside defence after, for example, 17 \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{h}}h3, while 16...\textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{w}}d8}?! is too passive.

This leaves the rook moves. 16...\textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{c}}c8} looks at first slightly more aggressive, but try playing 17 e5 dxe5 18 \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{x}}xe5 \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{w}}d8} (or other queen moves), and there is a problem: 19 f5! is strong. If the rook were on e8, Black could cover this second pawn break.

\textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{17 e5}}}

White decides it is time to break open the centre. The only other way of trying to attack on the kingside with quiet moves is 18 \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{h}}h3, but then it is Black’s turn to take over the e5-square with 18...e5:

\begin{itemize}
  \item a) If then 19 \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{e}}e3, Black strongpoints the e5-square with 19...\textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{d}}d8}.
  \item b) 18 fxe5?! dxe5 veers to favour Black.
  \item c) The sacrificial line 19 \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{d}}d5 \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{x}}xd5} 20 exd5 \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{x}}xd5} 21 \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{xf}}xf6} 22 \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{w}}xh7+} \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{f}}f8} is quite simply unsound.
\end{itemize}

\textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{17...e5}}}

The only good move. 17...\textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{h}}h5 18 \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{w}}g4} g6 leaves White too much free space after 19 f5.

\textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{18 \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{x}}xe5}}}

And this is White’s only move. 18 fxe5? drops the bishop after 18...\textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{xd4}}, leaving Black a clear pawn up after 19 \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{xf6}} \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{w}}xg3} 20 \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{hxg3}} \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{xf6}}}}.

\textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{18...d8}}}

Black’s kingside is under attack. He needs to provide extra cover to the f6-square.

\textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{19 \textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{d}}d4}}\textbf{}}}

Putting pressure on Black’s knight. 19 f5 has been tried a few times, but 19...\textit{\textcolor{green}{\textbf{d6}}}! equalizes.
which is dangerous, with an attempt to throttle on g7, but it is unconvincing. After 23...\texttt{Wa3} 24 \texttt{Wh4} \texttt{Ed8!} Black can counterattack on the d-file, and defend with ...\texttt{Wf8}. This should cover all attacks: for example, 25 \texttt{Exe3} \texttt{Ed4} or 25 \texttt{Exe6} \texttt{Exd3} 26 \texttt{cxd3} \texttt{Wa2} with a counter-threat on g2.

19...\texttt{Qh5}

The knight runs away. Clearly Black will want to protect the knight with ...\texttt{g6}.

19...\texttt{Exe4} 30 \texttt{Exe4} \texttt{Qf8} cuts down any mating attacks, but White keeps the bishop-pair, and reasonable chances of a durable edge.

19...\texttt{g6}? is well worth considering. Then 20 \texttt{Qxf6+} \texttt{Qxf6} 21 \texttt{Qxf6} \texttt{Qxf6}, and now there is the danger of overpressing with 22 \texttt{f5?!}. Various quieter lines would equalize. The pawn push sets up a few pins and discovered checks, but 22...\texttt{Wxb2!} seems a good response:

a) If then 23 \texttt{fxe6} \texttt{fxe6} 24 \texttt{Qxg6} \texttt{Qg7!}, and it is not a good idea to win two rooks for queen with 25 \texttt{Qf7+?!} \texttt{Qh8} 26 \texttt{Qxe8} \texttt{Qxg3} 27 \texttt{hxg3} \texttt{Qd5}. Black's bishop is far stronger than White's, and White's pawns are also weak. Here 25 \texttt{Qxe6!} is far better, and if 25...\texttt{Qxe6??} 26 \texttt{Qb8+} and a back-rank mate. Thus the position ends up as a draw by perpetual after either 25...\texttt{Mc8} 26 \texttt{Mb6} \texttt{Qxg6} 27 \texttt{Qxg6+} \texttt{hXg6} 28 \texttt{Qxg6+} \texttt{Qg7} 29 \texttt{Qe6+} \texttt{Qh8} 30 \texttt{Wh3+} or 25...\texttt{Ma8} 26 \texttt{Qxh7+} \texttt{Qxh7} 27 \texttt{Qe7!} \texttt{Qxe7} 28 \texttt{Qh4+} \texttt{Qg8} 29 \texttt{Qxe7} \texttt{Qg7} 30 \texttt{Qe6+} \texttt{Qh8} 31 \texttt{Wh3+}.

b) White has tried instead 23 \texttt{f6?!},

20 \texttt{Qe3!}

An innovation. White has tried both 20 \texttt{Wh3} \texttt{g6}, and 20 \texttt{Wg4} \texttt{g6}, but the apparently promising kingside attacks have proved not to materialize, and in the end White can keep equality, but not much more. We will limit ourselves to exploring the bold 20 \texttt{Wg4} \texttt{g6} 21 \texttt{f5?!} \texttt{exf5} 22 \texttt{Qxf5}:

a) The computer then gives a 'refutation' with 22...\texttt{Qg7} 23 \texttt{Qxg7} \texttt{gx6}, supposedly winning for Black. Look closer, though, and it is in White's favour after 24 \texttt{Qxf5} \texttt{Qxg7} 25 \texttt{Qd6!} \texttt{Qxg2+} 26 \texttt{Qg1} \texttt{Qb6+} 27 \texttt{Qxg2} \texttt{Qg8} 28 \texttt{Qxf7+} \texttt{Qh8} 29 \texttt{Qh3}.

b) In F.Volkmann-J.Horvath, Budapest 1997, Black won quickly after 22...\texttt{Exd3!} 23 \texttt{Qxh5} \texttt{Wd7} 24 \texttt{Wf2?} \texttt{Qd5} 25 \texttt{Qf3} \texttt{gxh5} 26 \texttt{Whx5} \texttt{f6} 27 \texttt{Qg5} \texttt{fxg5}, and White resigned. White could, though, have added to the sacrificial
complexities with 24 Ñxh7? Ñh7
(24...Ñxg4?? 25 Ñh8 mate) 25 Ñf4.
White is a rook down, but is threaten-
ing mate, and attacking the rook, as
well as having an extra pawn if the po-
sition gets simplified:
   b1) 25...Ñxe4? 26 Ñxf7+ Ñh6 27
cxd3 Ñf5 28 Ñg7+ Ñh5 29 Ñh7+ Ñg5
30 Ñe3!, threatening h4+ and mate, is a
win for White, not surprisingly, given
the exposed black king.
   b2) 25...f6 26 Ñxf6 Ñd5 27 Ñh4+
Ñh5 28 Ñxe7 with enthralling play. Un-
fortunately, reality sets in with
28...Ñxh4! 29 Ñxf6+ Ñh6 30 Ñxd7 Ñg4,
and White is in trouble.
   Thus if White cannot make progress
with his queen on the light squares,
then maybe he can try to make pro-
gress on the dark squares on the other
side of the board?

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Modern Chess: Move by Move}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Qc5 Ñxc5 22 Ñxc5 Ñf6 23 h3 Ñd5 24}
b3 with equality, but White can try to
improve with 21 Ñd1!?. If Black wants
to exchange bishop for the highly-
centralized knight, White should have
the opportunity of making Black ex-
change the light-squared bishop rather
than the dark-squared bishop. If
21...Ñxe4? 22 Ñxe4, Black’s queenside
pawns are weak. 21...Ñf6 is another
option for an exchange, but again after
22 Ñxf6+ Ñxf6 23 Ñe2!, White is
slightly better. He will eventually want
to exchange the light-squared bishops.
21 Ñxf6!

By deflecting Black’s bishop, White
can set up the exchange of Black’s light-
squared bishop with Ñc5.
21 Ñc5 Ñxc5 22 Ñxc5 Ñg4, as given
by Ftačnik, is only equal.
21...Ñf6

21...gxf6 weakens the pawn struc-
ture, and so does not help. There are
many good tries for White, the most
direct being 22 Ñf3!?, pressing on the g-
and h-files.
22 Ñc5!

So the bishop goes.

22...Ñxg2+!

Black is in ‘another fine mess’, bor-
rowing from Laurel and Hardy, based on Ftacnik's comment. How is Black going to escape? There are few examples in this book of tactical escape from a losing or almost losing game, as we are concentrating mostly on classic winning chess, whether through excellent positional chess, or through deep tactical calculation. The art of defence, of changing a losing position into a winning position, is however a vital aspect of chess, even and especially at top level. A century ago, World Champion Emanuel Lasker was the pioneer of aggressive defensive play. Jakovenko continues the great tradition.

It looks as though Black's position is about to collapse very quickly after White's initial attack, but somehow it just about holds, and if there is not a quick win, then there is hope for a draw, maybe even hope for a win. The percentage chances are often more attractive in playing for a win, even in a clearly worse position.

Black's bishop sacrifice, based on the recovery of the piece with ...\(\text{a}\text{d}4\), forces White's king out into the open, which provides some hope for Black. His own king looks much weaker, and for a long time he will be faced by a discovered attack. If there is counterplay, though, there is life.

22...\(\text{h}\text{c}7\)? 23 \(\text{a}\text{x}\text{b}\text{b}\text{7}\) \(\text{a}\text{x}\text{b}\text{7}\) 24 \(\text{a}\text{x}\text{h}\text{7}\text{+}\) \(\text{c}\text{f}\text{8}\) 25 \(\text{e}\text{e}\text{4}\) \(\text{a}\text{b}\text{6}\) 26 c3 (Ftacnik) leaves White a clear extra pawn and active pieces. The percentages are not good. How can Black possibly win this?

Black has another option, 22...\(\text{a}\text{x}\text{b}\text{2}\text{!}\), chopping material on the other long diagonal. Then 23 \(\text{a}\text{x}\text{b}\text{7}\text{!}\) \(\text{a}\text{x}\text{b}\text{7}\) 24 \(\text{w}\text{e}\text{4}\) \(\text{c}\text{c}\text{7}\) 25 \(\text{w}\text{x}\text{h}\text{7}\text{+}\) \(\text{c}\text{f}\text{8}\) leads only to equality; Black has done some damage to White's queenside pawns.

White can instead grab the exchange with 23 \(\text{a}\text{x}\text{d}\text{7}\) \(\text{w}\text{x}\text{d}\text{7}\) 24 \(\text{h}\text{b}\text{1}\) \(\text{f}\text{d}\text{4}\) 25 \(\text{w}\text{h}\text{3}\) 96 26 c4 \(\text{b}\text{c}\text{4}\) 27 \(\text{a}\text{x}\text{c}\text{4}\). With bishop and pawn for the rook, there might be hope for a draw if Black's pieces and pawns were watertight. Unfortunately this is not the case, Black's isolated a-pawn is a problem, and also neither bishop is totally secure in the centre.

23 \(\text{a}\text{x}\text{g}\text{2}\) \(\text{a}\text{d}\text{4}\)

Forking the queen and knight. White in return sets up play on h7.

24 \(\text{a}\text{x}\text{h}\text{7}\text{+}\)

An immediate punch.

24 \(\text{w}\text{h}\text{3}\) \(\text{a}\text{x}\text{c}\text{5}\) 25 \(\text{w}\text{x}\text{h}\text{7}\text{+}\) (25 \(\text{a}\text{x}\text{h}\text{7}\text{+}\) \(\text{c}\text{f}\text{8}\) 25...\(\text{c}\text{f}\text{8}\) 26 f5 \(\text{w}\text{g}\text{5}\text{+}\) 27 \(\text{h}\text{h}\text{1}\) looks promising, but Black has some intricate bishop play with 27...\(\text{a}\text{e}\text{3}\) 28 \(\text{f}\text{f}\text{3}\) \(\text{d}\text{f}\text{4}\) 29 \(\text{e}\text{e}\text{4}\)

29...\(\text{a}\text{e}\text{5}\text{!}\), an excellent tactical resource. White equalizes after, for example, 30 \(\text{f}\text{f}\text{3}\) f6 31 \(\text{f}\text{e}\text{6}\) \(\text{a}\text{e}\text{6}\), but why can't he take the bishop? After 30 \(\text{e}\text{e}\text{5}\), Black has 30...\(\text{a}\text{x}\text{d}\text{3}\text{!}\), with queen forks on the second row after either 31 \(\text{c}\text{c}\text{3}\?) \(\text{a}\text{c}\text{1}\text{+}\text{!}\) 32 \(\text{g}\text{g}\text{2}\) \(\text{a}\text{x}\text{b}\text{2}\text{+}\text{!}\) or 31 \(\text{a}\text{x}\text{d}\text{3}\?) \(\text{c}\text{c}\text{1}\text{+}\text{!}\) 32 \(\text{g}\text{g}\text{2}\) \(\text{a}\text{x}\text{c}\text{2}\text{+}\). In each case, a different rook drops. Finally, 31 \(\text{w}\text{h}\text{8}\text{+}\) \(\text{c}\text{e}\text{7}\)
32 f6+ \( \text{Wh}6 \) 33 \( \text{Wxe8+ } \) \( \text{Kxe8} \) 34 \( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{Ad1+} \) 35 \( \text{g2} \) \( \text{gxf6} \) ends up with an extra pawn for Black in a rook ending, but it is not going to be easy to win.

And, one feels, this ought to get to the end.

25...\( \text{xc5} \)

Black recovers the knight, with level material. He doesn't even hold an extra pawn in compensation for the difficulties on his exposed h-file. The one small comfort is that White's king is also exposed, but it is difficult to see how Black can attack it. Black can, of course, slip in an occasional check, if given the opportunity, to gain a tempo, but that is about as much as he can do.

24...\( \text{h8} \)

A bold decision. Black is now permanently in danger of being under threat of checkmate, and lethal discovered checks. If, though, White is not actually winning, then still there is hope.

Not every player would have tried Jakovenko's move, and many would have decided that it would have been better to take a realistic approach, and concede that Black has gone wrong, and that all Black can do is try to salvage the game with 24...\( \text{Qxh7} \) 25 \( \text{Wd3+ g6} \) 26 \( \text{Qxd7 Wxd7} \) 27 c3 \( \text{Wb7+} \) 28 \( \text{Wf3 Wxf3+} \) 29 \( \text{xf3} \). This would still have been fairly hopeless. White would eventually be able to set up a queenside passed pawn.

In terms of defensive play, sometimes one should not be too worried about leaving the king under severe pressure, so long as the opponent does not have an immediate forced win, especially if the alternative is to end up with a 100% loss.

25 \( \text{Wh3} \)

26 \( \text{He5} \)

'The second truly critical position in a dramatic game', according to Ftacnik. There must be well over half a dozen moves, including four discovered checks from the bishop, that need to be considered, and each of these is likely to be promising, but not quite enough to clinch the issue. One could easily imagine that time trouble was going to be an issue.

There are two broad options to be considered – either to use a discovered check immediately, or to hold the check until later, improving the other pieces first. As we can see, Ni Hua took the second option.
What happens if he gives the check immediately? Thus we have:

a) There is no immediate checkmate, so 26 $g6+?! $g8 27 $h7+ $f8 28 $h8+ $g7 $d2+ 30 $g3 $f8 seems too crude. If White is not careful, Black can hit hard on the g-file. 31 $f5 (threatening $xg6+) 31...$d6 32 $d1 $c6 holds the balance, but White would have liked to have done more.

b) 26 $f5+ $g8 27 $h7+ $f8 28 $h8+ $e7 29 $xg7 $d6 similarly allows Black to escape.

The simple 26 $e4+! $g8 27 $h7+ $f8 28 $c6 is the best of the discovered checks, concentrating on winning the exchange, rather than hoping for checkmate.

After 28...$d2+ 29 $h1 g6?, hoping for 30 $xe8?? $a8+, White has a winning attack with 30 $f1!. If then 30...gxf5 31 $xf5 exf5 32 $h8 mate.

Black therefore tries 29...$e7 30 $xe8 $xe8 31 $h8+ (31 $e4 $xh2+! with a perpetual) 31...$f8 32 $h3. Then 32...$d5+ 33 $f3 $xf3+ 34 $xf3 $xc2 35 $f1! still gives White winning chances, but 32...g6! helps consolidate Black’s pawn structure, with good chances of holding the draw. So this is close to a winning try for White, gaining the exchange, but Black’s active pieces, and the weakness of White's kingside pawns, and the openness of his king, keep play close to a balance. Ni Hua would have wanted more.

d) Of the other bishop checks, 26 $d3+ $g8 27 $h7+ $f8 28 $f1! $g5+ 29 $h1 $e7, given by Ftacnik, gives White some chances for attack, but is not as good as grabbing the exchange. White can win a pawn after 30 fx6 $xe6 31 $xe6+ $xe6 32 $e4+ $e5 33 $xe5+ $xe5 34 $e1+ $f4 35 $xe8, but it is unlikely that he would have good winning chances, Black having the more active pieces in a rook and bishops-of-opposite-colour endgame.

e) Of the non-bishop moves, Ni Hua chooses the most aggressive rook move. Also 26 $h1!, sidestepping checks, is a sensible option, with a possible transposition to variation ‘c’ after 26...$d2 27 $e4+ $g8 28 $g7+ $f8 29 $c6.

By a process of elimination, Ni Hua’s rook move, adding to the pressure on Black’s king, would seem the best chance of a large advantage. It is now up to Jakovenko to show whether he can defend.

26...$d4!

Black needs to use the bishop on both diagonals, defending between $d4 and h8, and counterattacking towards g1.

26...$d2+? fatally weakens the f7-square. White wins after 27 $h1 $d4 28 $h5 $g6 29 $xg6+ $g8 22 $h8+ $xh8 33 $h7+ $f8 34 $xf7 mate.

27 $e4

After 27 $h5 $g6 28 $xg6+ $g8, with the rook on d7, there is no immediate checkmate after 29 $h8+?? $xh8.
27 \textcolor{red}{\textmd{g6+ \textmd{g8 28 \textmd{h7+ \textmd{f8 29 \textmd{h8+\textmd{e7 30 \textmd{xg7 f8 also runs out of steam after, for example, 31 c3 \textmd{xex5 32 fxe5 e8.}}}}}}}}

There is, however, a third option to be considered, the quiet positional move, 27 \textmd{e2!?}. White is arguing that he is not giving checkmate himself, but that he still undoubtedly has an edge, and the best way of handling this is to cut out any awkward counterplay, in particular checks on his second rank. White has several good consolidating ideas, such as c3, \textmd{d1} and/or a bishop discovered check. It would seem sensible for Black to take the initiative with 27...\textmd{xxb2. Play might continue with 28 \textmd{e4+ g8 29 h7+ f8 30 c6 g6 31 c4. Here there are some complicated options for Black, maybe ending up about equal. The simple line is 31...\textmd{d2!? 32 xd2 xxd2 33 f2 d1! 34 xxb2 (34 xxe8 xg4+ is an immediate draw) 34...xg4+ 35 f1 (35 h1 d1+ 36 g2 g4+ repeats) 35...xf4+ 36 f2 xc4+ 37 g1 c1+ 38 f1 xc5+ 39 f2, draw. Except of course that this is 'simple' with the help of computer, but can easily seem very complicated over the board.}}

27...\textmd{f6}

The bishop has now reached a safe and active square, which is progress for Black.

Even so, Black could consider 27...\textmd{xb2}, not so much to grab the pawn, although it is useful, but more to use the queen on the d8-h4 diagonal, while still keeping the bishop on the long diagonal. Ftacnik gives a perpetual check after 28 f5 g5+ 29 xg4 h6 30 h4 d2+ 31 f2 g5+ 32 g4 h6, but this is not the whole story.

In this line, White has 29 h1!, and there are no more checks. Black has to give up the queen for rook, bishop and pawn, with 29...h6 30 h4 xh7 31 xhx6+ gxh6 32 fxe6 fxe6. Material is level, but Black has weaknesses on the light squares, and White's queen, with the help of the rook, will cause considerable problems.

Advantage to White, then? We can go back a move earlier, with the easily overlooked 28...\textmd{c1!?}, a startling indication of the mobility of the bishop across the board, but naturally only on the dark squares. Then 29 xxc1? overpresses. After 29...g5+ 30 f3 xc1 31 g6+ g8 32 h7+ f8 33 h8+ e7 34 xex6+ fxe6 35 xex8+ d6 36 xex6+ f7 Black's king escapes, and White has given up the exchange. It would seem wisest to play safely with 29 fxe6 xex6 30 xex6 fxe6 31 d3+ (or another bishop square), and now the next stage of the bishop excursion continues with 31...h6. Black will experience some temporary discomfort after 32 xex6 d6 33 e4 g6, but he should be able to hold.

Jakovenko decides instead not to take the pawn.
28 Wh5?!

Ni Hua is still trying to force the win, cutting through the ...Kh4 valve, but with this move, he overbalances. All this can only be seen in retrospect, and Jakovenko in turn makes a mistake in reply.

28 Re2 leads to a broadly balanced position after 28...Kh4 29 Re4 Kg8 30 c6 Rd2 31 Rxh2 Rxd2+ 32 Kh1 Rc8 33 Re4 Rc4 34 Wf3. The tactics on both sides finally settle down. Here Black may, of course, also try 28...Kxb2?!, transposing into the line 27 Re2? Kxb2, probably level.

28...g6?

It turns out that Jakovenko did not quite make a perfect defence after his opening slip up, but how many of us would have seen the hidden defence?

After 28...Kd2+ 29 Kg3 Wd5 30 Wxf7? Kh7 31 Wxe8 Kh4+!! (31...Wxe4 32 Wh5+ is a perpetual) 32 hxh2 Wxh2+ 33 Kg3 Wd2 White is suddenly in serious danger of being checkmated.

He is a rook up, but his pieces do not coordinate, and he cannot give any saving check. The only way of avoiding an immediate loss is 34 Re2 Wxe2 35 Wc6, returning the rook, but avoiding checkmate. Black keeps an extra pawn after in the endgame after 35...Wxc2. There may be more ambitious ideas.

White can avoid taking the poisoned bishop, but after 32 f3 Wxc2 33 Wxe6 Wd3+ 34 Kg4 Kg2+ 35 Kxh4 Wxf1 36 Wxf5+ Kg6, Black’s win is straightforward, the only slightly difficult point is finding the quiet king move on 37 Re3 Wf2+ 38 Kh5 Wxh2+ 39 Kh3 Wxe2+ 40 Kh4 Kg6. If then 41 Kg3 Wh2+ 42 Wh3 Wf2, zugzwang. A startling resource, analysed by Tlacnik, but one cannot expect that Black should be winning. The run of play has been so much in favour of White that there must surely be drawing resources, or better, for him.
Modern Chess: Move by Move

After 30 \( \text{Wh}3 \), Ftcnik stops his analysis by suggesting that 30...\( \text{Wd}6 \) is slightly better for White. Here 30...\( \text{AxC}2 \) is more ambitious:

a) If 31 \( \text{Bxh}4 \), there is an echo of the bishop check with 31...\( \text{Ah}4+! \) 32 \( \text{Bxh}4 \) (32 \( \text{Wxh}4 \) \( \text{Bg}2 \) mate) 32...\( \text{Bxh}7 \), and Black finally gets rid of White’s infuriating bishop. Black is then winning.

b) 31 \( \text{Bxh}5! \) improves. After 31...\( \text{Bg}2+ \) 32 \( \text{Bxg}2 \) \( \text{Bxg}2+ \) 33 \( \text{Bxg}2 \) \( \text{Bxh}5 \) 34 \( \text{Bxg}5+ \) \( \text{Bxh}7 \), and an annihilation of pieces, a level rook and pawn endgame arises.

Going further back, 28...\( \text{Bxh}2! \) appears to be another drawing line. Then 29 \( \text{Bf}5 \) \( \text{Bd}2+ \) 30 \( \text{Bh}1 \) \( \text{Wf}6 \) 31 \( \text{Bh}4 \) (but not 31 \( \text{Bxh}6+! \) \( \text{Bxg}8 \) 32 \( \text{Bh}4 \) \( \text{Bf}8! \) and the king escapes), leaves Black threatened with a win by \( \text{Bxh}6+ \), and there are two attempts to hold the position:

\[ \text{Diagram} \]

a) 31...\( \text{Wh}6 \) leads to various sacrifices, but White can eventually make a quiet little move, and Black ends up in trouble. Play continues 32 \( \text{fxe}6 \) \( \text{Bxe}6 \) 33 \( \text{Wf}7 \) \( \text{Bxh}7 \) 34 \( \text{Wf}5+ \) \( \text{Bh}8 \) 35 \( \text{Bxh}6+ \) (35 \( \text{Bxe}6 \) \( \text{Wxh}4 \) 36 \( \text{Wf}8+ \) \( \text{Bh}7 \) 37 \( \text{Bxg}8+ \) \( \text{Bg}6 \) 37 \( \text{Wh}7+ \) is only a draw) 35...\( \text{Bxh}6 \) 36 \( \text{h}3! \), and it seems that Black’s rooks do not coordinate, nor the bishop. How-

ever, by the time I had started up writing this line, the computer showed a draw after 36...\( \text{Bxa}3! \) 37 \( \text{Bc}8+ \) \( \text{Bh}7 \) 38 \( \text{Bc}3 \) \( \text{Bb}4! \), and now a perpetual after 39 \( \text{Bxh}4 \) \( \text{Bxh}4+ \). An attractive finish, and yet again the bishop is doing magnificent defensive work.

b) The other try is 31...\( \text{g}5 \) 32 \( \text{Bg}6+ \) \( \text{Bxg}8 \) 33 \( \text{Bf}7+ \) \( \text{Bf}8 \) (33...\( \text{Bxf}7? \) 34 \( \text{Bxg}5+ \) followed by \( \text{Bxh}2 \) 34 \( \text{Bxh}8 \) \( \text{Bxh}4 \) 35 \( \text{Bc}6 \) \( \text{Bd}8 \) 36 \( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{Bxa}4 \) 37 \( \text{Bxa}4 \) with tension still in the position, but after 37...\( \text{Bd}4 \) it should end up level.

It is, of course, more than understandable why Jakovenko would want to create some fresh air for his king, but he has made a tactical oversight. However, uncomfortable the king might have been, close to suffocation on \( h8 \), there was not any direct mating threat, and if Black could set up active play with his other pieces, he still had good chances.

29 \( \text{Bxg}6+ \)

29 \( \text{Wh}6? \) \( \text{Bg}7 \) 30 \( \text{Wh}3 \) \( \text{Bxh}2 \) is certainly no improvement for White.

29...\( \text{g}7 \)

The king slips out.

30 \( \text{Wh}7+ \)

Effectively forced, but a move one
would want to play anyway.
30...f8 31 h5
Likewise.
31...d2+
It is too late to take the b-pawn with 31...xb2. Ftacnik gives 32 f5 d2+ (or 32...exf5 33 xf5 d2+ 34 h3) 33 h1 w6 34 xf7! xf7 35 wh6+, winning the rook.
32 h1
A safe square. Ni Hua should be winning,
32...g7
32...wd7 33 g1 doesn't help Black.

After the complexities of the early middlegame, the last few moves are easy enough to understand, and there have been few chances to deviate from the game. If Black's 28...g6 was wrong, it is now time to refute Black's play.
33 xf7??
A careless transposition turns a well-deserved win into a loss. The move he actually plays allows Black to escape with the king from the back row, and set up counterplay with a later ...h8.
33 f5! is better, and wins. Play might continue 33...w6 34 xf7! xf7 (34...wxf7 35 f6 h6+ e7 37 wxd2 picks up the rook, keeping extra material) 35 fxe6+ xe6 36 xf6+ xf6 37 wh5+ with a win on material. Or, a move earlier, 33...wg5 34 g4! (more accurate than 34 g1, given by Ftacnik; White wants to keep a rook on the f-file to support fx6) 34...wh6 (34...w6 35 xf7! wxf7 36 xg7 wg7 37 fxe6 is winning) 35 wh6 hxh6 36 fxe6 with checkmate after 36...xe6 37 xf7+ e8 38 g8+.
33...xf7
Of course, but now watch the ...h8 idea.
34 f5

A win? It looks good.
34...hxh2+!!
Pure serendipity, a marvellous lucky break. Naturally, if a player does not ride his luck, he will deservedly lose.
35 wh2
White could also consider 35 xh2? h8 36 fxe6+ e8! (but not 36...e7? 37 xf7+ d6 38 xd7+ xxd7 39 wh8) 37 wh8+ hxh8 38 e7 when the passed pawn on the seventh is a serious annoyance. Ftacnik then gives 38...wd6+ 39 g2 xf6 as winning for Black, but is this so? After 40 c3 wd6 41 fe1 xe7 42 h3 Black it seems has no better than perpetual check. Thus Black has to
play it more accurately with $38\ldots \text{w}d2+!$
$39\text{ g}3 \text{ g}5+ 40\text{ h}3 \text{ e}5$, and the
queen and bishop work together in at-
tack against the king, rather than get-
ing worried about surrounding
White's pawn.

$35\text{ g}8$

Pinning the queen, but Black had to
calculate White’s counter-measures.

$36\text{ fxe6+}$

Black's king is exposed and under at-
tack.

$36\ldots \text{e}7$

The only good move. $36\ldots \text{g}8? 37$
\text{w}xh8+ \text{hxh8} 38\text{ e}7 \text{ e}8 39\text{ f}5$ will
probably end up level, while $36\ldots \text{e}8??$
$37\text{ w}xh8+ \text{hxh8} 38\text{ e}7$ even wins for
White.

$37\text{ f}7+$

Ni Hua had presumably planned $37$
\text{h}4, but it turns out that $37\ldots \text{w}d5+! 38$
\text{g}1 \text{d}4+ wins.

If $39\text{ f}2 \text{xf2+} 40\text{ wxf2}$ (or $40\text{ xf2}$
\text{w}d2+ 41 \text{g}3 \text{e}3+ 42 \text{g}2 \text{g}8+ 43$
\text{f}1 \text{f}8+ winning) $40\ldots \text{g}5+$, winning
the rook. Or $39\text{ x}d4 \text{xd}4+$ 40 \text{f}2
\text{g}8+ 41 \text{h}1 \text{e}4+ 42 \text{f}3 \text{h}7+ and
mate next move.

A remarkable turnaround.

$37\ldots \text{e}8 38 \text{w}h8+$

$38\text{ xg7 w}d1+$ wins, picking up the
queen and then an exposed rook.

$38\ldots \text{xh8} 39 \text{g}2$

There is no hope in trying to hold
with $39\text{ f}8+ \text{xf8} 40\text{ e}7+ \text{xe}7 41$
\text{xe7 xx}e7 42\text{ b}3\text{ d}6$. If White's king
were closer, and Black's king were fur-
ther away, it might still have been in-
teresting. But they weren't.

$39\ldots \text{w}d5$

$39\ldots \text{xb2} 40\text{ e}7 \text{w}d2+ 41\text{ f}2 \text{g}5+$
should also win, but it is simpler to stop
White playing e7 in advance.

$40\text{ ff}4$

Or $40\text{ f}3 \text{xb2}.$

$40\ldots \text{xb2}$

Thank you.

$41\text{ c}4$

If $41\text{ e}7$, then $41\ldots \text{f}6$ is simplest.

$41\ldots \text{bxc4} 0-1$

It is Black's pawn that queens.
Game 21
E.Alekseev-V.Tkachiev
Spanish Team Championship 2007
Queen’s Indian Defence E15

1 d4 d6 2 c4 e6 3 f3 b6 4 g3 a6 5 wc2

For 5 b3, see Game 4, Topalov-Anand.

A natural developing move, one might think, covering the c4-square without losing a tempo. Unfortunately, White has released the pressure on the d-file, and according to earlier theory, Black should be able to equalize quickly. 5...b7!?  

Black even loses a tempo, being unimpressed with White’s queen move.

5...c5 has also been tried, but with the likelihood of a transposition after 6 d5 cxd5 7 cxd5 b7 8 g2. With this particular move order 8 e4 has also been tried. Then 8...we7 9 d3 dxe5 10 a3 c6 11 o-o c7 12 c3 e6 23 e3 wd8 14 b1 e7 15 c4 with compensation for the pawn, and later a draw, in S.Mamedyarov-B.Gelfand, Wijk aan Zee 2006. All this is ‘unclear’, and is attractive for both players, a chance of trying to outplay the opponent, rather than relying on the ever-expanding tentacles of opening theory.

6 g2

White has also tried 6 c3, the most logical reply being 6...c5, with instant pressure on the d-pawn. White then releases the tension with 7 dxc5 xc5. At first sight, there has been a conspicuous loss of a tempo by Black (...c8-a6-b7), but look more closely, and White has also lost a tempo with dxc5 xc5 before Black has developed ...e7. The two gains and losses cancel each other out, with perhaps the usual very slight edge for White, or maybe equal.

6...c5

This is what Black is normally aiming for, but even quieter moves such as 6...b4+ or 6...e4 are not to be rejected out of hand.

7 d5?  

This suddenly became highly fashionable, and led to a renewal of interest in the 5 wc2 variation. Mamedyarov kicked this off as White against Gelfand at the start of 2006 (see the note to Black’s 5th, above), then Gelfand tried it a few months later as White against Aronian, and then Aronian tried it several times. There were well over thirty games between 2600+ opponents in
the next two years. It has become fashionable! It will be interesting to see whether players are going to be equally interested in this line by 2010 and beyond, or whether after later experimenting this gambit will prove to be less interesting for White.

7...exd5

Black might as well take it. There are a few alternatives next move, including either accepting the gambit or declining it.

8 cxd5

8 Qh4? is pointless: 8...Qc6 9 cxd5 Qd4 is good for Black.

8...exd5

Black is not forced to take the pawn:

a) He could try developing with 8...Qa6!? 9 Qc3 (9 e4? Qb4 10 We2 a6, winning material, and making good use of the a6-square) 9...Qb4 10 Qd2 Qbd5 11 Qe5 Qxc3 12 Qxb7 a5 13 Qc6 Qc7 14 We3+ Qe4 15 Qxb8 Qxb7 16 f3 Qxb7 17 fxe4 Qb7 18 Qe1 Qc6 leaves Black comfortable.

b) Another try is 8...Qxd5 9 Qc3 Qc6 (9...Qxf3!? 10 Qxf3 Qc6 11 Qa4! Qc8 12 Qf4 Qe7 13 0-0-0 keeps an initiative, and White later won in LNisipeanu-V.Baklan, Romanian Team Championship 2006) 10 e4!? We are in the realms of gambit play, rather than a clear positional sacrifice. B.Gelfand-L.Aronian, Dortmund 2006, continued 10...Qe7 11 Qf4 0-0 12 0-0-0 Qe7 13 We2 (Gelfand suggests 13 a3!? 13...Qb4! 14 a3 Qc8 15 Qb1 a5 16 Qe5, and White was able to roll through on the kingside, later winning. Here Gelfand suggests that 16...b5! would have been an improvement on 16...Qe8?.

9 0-0

9 Qg5?! Qe3! 10 Qxe3 Qxg2 11 Qe1 Qc6 leaves Black comfortable.

9...Qe7

The position is, of course, complicated, and there are several possible moves for Black to consider, such as 9...Qc6, 9...Qc7 and 9...Qb4. It is quite possible that at least one of these might well be promising. We are at an early stage in this new variation, and it is noteworthy that Black has almost
universally chosen the bishop development here, blocking any check on the e-file.

The prevailing assumption would seem to be that Black is a pawn up, that his natural development, aiming for quick castling, cannot possibly be wrong, and that it is up to White to try to prove that his gambit is good or sound.

10 \texttt{\textit{xd}}1

Another piece into play, and adding pressure on the long diagonal. This is overwhelmingly the main line at top level. White has done extraordinarily well in practical terms. It is very difficult for Black to score a win at the higher levels, and White has achieved a substantial plus score.

Probably the ratio will change, as Black finds new resources.

10...\texttt{\textit{Wc}}8

This is the main line for Black, protecting against any tactics on the bishop. Others:

a) 10...0-0? 11 \texttt{\textit{We}}4 f5 12 \texttt{\textit{Wc}}4 b5 13 \texttt{\textit{Wb}}3 c4 14 \texttt{\textit{Wxb}}5 is good for White.

b) 10...\texttt{\textit{Qc}}6 is a natural developing move:

b1) After 11 \texttt{\textit{xd}}5?? \texttt{\textit{Qb}}4 Black wins material.

b2) 11 \texttt{\textit{Wf}}5 has been tried a few times, with reasonably good results.

b3) 11 \texttt{\textit{Wa}}4!? \texttt{\textit{Qf}}6 12 \texttt{\textit{Qc}}3 0-0 13 g4! was played in A.Shirov-L.Aronian, 2nd matchgame, Elista 2007. One of Shirov's great trademarks is setting up pawn storms in even the most unexpected of situations, and this is an excellent example. After Black's 10th it would take imagination to find a way of provoking the knight to f6, to allow a pawn push to g5. Play continued 13...\texttt{\textit{Qb}}4 14 a3

\texttt{\textit{Qbd}}5 15 \texttt{\textit{Qxd}}5 \texttt{\textit{Qxd}}5 16 g5 \texttt{\textit{Qc}}6 17 \texttt{\textit{Wh}}4 \texttt{\textit{Qe}}8 18 \texttt{\textit{Qe}}5, with a strong attack, although Aronian was later able to squeeze a draw.

11 \texttt{\textit{Qg}}5

There has been no broad consensus to date as to which line might be best for White, several alternatives having been tried. No attempt is made here as to which line is best, not least because some player might well have found a critical innovation in the last couple of weeks:

a) Statistically, the most promising line might seem to be 11 \texttt{\textit{Wf}}5, with two wins and two draws between 2600+ opponents from 2007 to April 2008. This sounds good, until one plays through the games, and appreciates that one of the wins by White was in a rapidplay in which Black was a pawn up in the endgame, and would probably have won comfortably in a standard-play game. 11...\texttt{\textit{Qf}}6 12 \texttt{\textit{Qc}}3 \texttt{\textit{Qc}}6 13 \texttt{\textit{Qg}}5 d5 should, despite the statistics, be comfortable for Black.

b) 11 \texttt{\textit{Qh}}4!? \texttt{\textit{Qxh}}4 12 \texttt{\textit{xd}}5 is a 2007 idea. Then 12...\texttt{\textit{Qe}}7 13 \texttt{\textit{Qc}}3 \texttt{\textit{Qc}}6 14 \texttt{\textit{We}}4 0-0 15 \texttt{\textit{Wh}}5 g6 16 \texttt{\textit{Qh}}3!? looks strange. What is the rook doing on h3? The point
is that Black’s structure is even more uncomfortable, and it is only due to the white rook adding pressure on the h-file that Black is in danger:

b1) After 16...f5 17 ♕e3 (Krasenkow gives 17 ♕c4+ ♗f8 18 ♕d5 with advantage to White) 17...♗f7 18 ♕d5 both players were evidently feeling uncomfortable with this position, and maybe were also worried about potential time pressure. They agreed a draw in Nisipeanu-V.Baklan, German League 2007.

b2) Almasi tried something new with 16...♗f6 17 ♕d5 ♗d8 18 ♗h6 ♖xb2 19 ♖d1 ♖e8 20 ♗g4, and White was starting to break open Black’s kingside pawn structure after 20...♖e6 21 ♖g5 h5 22 ♗h4 f6 23 ♗e3 in A.Beliavsky-Z.Almasi, European Team Championship, Crete 2007. Beliavsky won after a sacrificial breakthrough on the kingside. Play is complicated, and Ftacnik has suggested possible alternatives from moves 20 to 25.

In all this, there is an obvious question that has not been asked - why cannot Black grab the exchange? A possible answer is that after 13...♖xd5 14 ♖xd5 ♗c6 15 ♗e4 ♖d8 16 ♖g5 f6 17 ♗h4 ♗c8 18 ♗h3 White has considerable attacking chances in return for the sacrifice.

It is unusual these days for top players to be on unexplored ground so early in the game, and it will take some time for theory to clarify.

11...f6

There are various alternatives here. Indeed, L.Aronian-M.Carlsen, Wijk aan Zee 2007, led to quick equality, and soon a draw, after 11...h6 12 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 13 e4 0-0 14 ♗c3 ♗bc6 15 ♖d2 ♖a6 16 ♕h3 ♗g6 17 ♖xd7 ♗b7 18 ♕h3 ♖ad8 19 ♖ad1 ♗b8 20 ♗g2. Black abandons the backward d-pawn, which allows him to equalize quickly.

12 ♗c1?! An unusual, and indeed extravagant, idea. The bishop returns to base immediately, sacrificing a couple of tempi, as well as the pawn, and without any hope of a quick attack on the king. However, pawns cannot move backwards, or indeed sideways, and once the pawn has advanced from f7 to f6, Black cannot cover the a2-g8 diagonal, and he cannot, more specifically, give protection to the e6- or g6-squares. Black will very much want to play ...d5, to cover the central squares, but his light squares will then be seriously compromised.

A few months later, Aronian played the more natural 12 ♕d2 ♗c6 13 ♗a4 ♗c7 14 ♗c3 0-0 15 ♗f4 ♗e6 16 ♗d6 ♗e8 17 ♗xe7 ♗xe7 18 ♗xd7, ending up as a draw in L.Aronian-P.Leko, Wijk aan Zee 2008. Clearly he had looked at Alekseev’s game, and was not totally impressed, at least as far as the return to the starting square is concerned. Aronian, Leko and others will presumably
have digested Alekseev's strange retreat, and will have found ways to improve Black's play. Tkachiev, in contrast, will have been on his own resources, a difficult situation when it is not clear whether Black is better, equal or worse, and whether he should try to hold on to the extra pawn or to simplify.

12...Qb4

A natural enough move. There are of course alternatives, such as 12...Qc7, 12...a6, or even 12...Qc6. The advantage of Tkachiev's choice is quite simple—he hits the queen.

13 Wb3

The best square, although even that is not so promising. At the moment, it might look as though White has no compensation for the gambit pawn, but maybe this is deceptive?

13...d5

One can imagine that Tkachiev was by now feeling quite confident, and was ready to roll the pawns in the centre, or at least keep the pawns on stable squares on c5 and d5. The problem is that if either of these pawns continues to advance, he will have created weaknesses. Here, for example, White has an excellent outpost on d4 if Black tries...c4. Further, if the bishop gets stuck on b7, behind the pawn on d5, it is difficult for Black to activate his pieces.

Black could also try 13...e4, but the exchange of light-squared bishops with 14 De1 (14 Da3 d5 leaves Black in control) 14...Qxg2 15 Qxg2 accentuates Black's weaknesses on the light squares. If, for example, 15...d5 16 a3 Wa6 17 Qf4 with advantage to White.

14 a3

Kicking the knight out of the way.

If 14 Qc3? c4 16 Wa3 Qc6 (but not 16...Qc2?? 17 Wa4+) and Black wins material.

14...c4

A natural move, keeping the extra pawn and holding on to everything. The trouble is that, as Alekseev demonstrates, White can take control of the dark squares. When pawns advance, you gain squares, but you also lose squares, and here the loss is more significant than the gain.

If Black wants to try to refute Alekseev's play, he has to try 14...Qc6!, which is a good opportunity to return the pawn in exchange for piece activity. For example, 15 Wxd5 Qd4 16 Wh5+ g6 17 Wh6 Qxe2+ 18 Wh1 Qxc1 19 Wg7 Wf8 20 Wxc1 Wg4 21 Ke1 Qc6 22 Qc3 (better than 22 Wh7 23 Qxe5 Qxg2+ 24 Qxg2 fxe5, and now 25 Qxe5? Wh3+ 26 Wh3 0-0-0!) with the winning threat of...Wh8) 22...Qe5 23 Ke3 Qd8 24 Ke1. This probably holds the balance, since neither knight wants to initiate the exchange.

This is merely one of several different lines. In practical terms, it would be very difficult to analyse this in depth for Black, knowing that Alekseev would already have considered the variation at home.
15 \[\text{Wc3}\]

A slight loss of tempo in that 15 \[\text{We3?? Dc2}\] loses a rook, but White is still happy that he has gained the d4-square.

15...\[\text{Da6}\]

15...\[\text{a5?!}\] 16 \[\text{Re3!}\] does not help.

16 \[\text{We3}\]

Finally, to the square he wants. It is going to be difficult for Black to castle, either kingside or queenside, and this enables White to develop his blockade.

16...\[\text{Cc7}\]

Black is curling up in a little corner, with the hope of keeping the extra pawn, and gradually uncurling again.

It is often difficult to decide as an attacker whether a pawn sacrifice is likely to be good or not, and it can be equally difficult to decide whether a player with the extra pawn should keep it, or whether he should jettison the pawn to gain extra play.

After 16...\[\text{Cc6}\] 17 \[\text{Cc3}\] 0-0! Black has very quickly recovered from the problems of his king, and following 18 \[\text{Dxd5}\] \[\text{Cc5!}\] even the bishop is on an active square. 19 \[\text{Wc3}\] \[\text{Da5!}\] then covers the c-pawn. Black’s knights on the edge might look slightly unusual, but they cover important squares: the a5-knight defends the pawn on c4, and threatens an exchange on b3; and the a6-knight can offer White’s active knight on d5 an exchange via c7. Play is probably about equal, but maybe Tkachiev was hoping for more.

Here a less effective attempt at returning the pawn would have been 17...\[\text{d4?!}\] 18 \[\text{Dxd4}\] \[\text{Dxd4}\] 19 \[\text{Dxb7}\] \[\text{Wxb7}\] 20 \[\text{Wxd4}\]. The position is simplified, but with White keeping a slight edge.

17 \[\text{Cc3}\]

Finally he resumes his queenside development. White’s pieces still look uncomfortable, but Black has left some gaps on the dark squares, and White fills in.

17...\[\text{Da6}\]

Black cannot castle, as his bishop would drop. The only other development idea is to bring the knight into play.

17...\[\text{Dd7}\] does not allow any immediate refutation, but it would be understandable if Black felt uncomfortable after, for example, 18 \[\text{Dh3}\] \[\text{Wd8}\] 19 \[\text{Dd4}\].

17...\[\text{Cc6}\] is an attempt to return the pawn for equality. After 18 \[\text{Dxd5}\] \[\text{Dxd5}\]
19 \textit{Exd5}, there is some entertaining knight manoeuvring with 19...\textit{Qb4} 20 \textit{Ed2 Qd5} 21 \textit{We4 Cc3} 22 \textit{Wc2 Qe4}, but the faster-moving pieces sooner or later run away. 23 \textit{Ed4} is good for White.

Tkachiev's move is logical enough, but there is still some unwrapping of the minor pieces to follow.

18 \textit{Qd4}

He could try to tempt Black's kingside pawns forward with 18 \textit{Qh4}!? \textit{g5} (before White can consolidate on f5 with \textit{Wf3}) 19 \textit{Qf3 h5}!?. It is difficult to decide whether White gains or loses from this interpolation. Black's advanced kingside pawns create a few weaknesses, but one possibility is that after \textit{Wf3}, Black can offer a queen exchange with ...\textit{Wg4}.

18...\textit{Wd7}

Black keeps open the possibility of castling on either side.

If 18...\textit{Qc5}, then 19 \textit{Wf3}, and Black would soon want to play ...\textit{Wd7} anyway.

19 \textit{Wf3}

Almost the first indication of what White is trying to do aggressively. Alekseev has shuffled his pieces around, and has provoked a few vaguely weakening pawn moves, but White needs to do more than this if he has sacrificed a pawn.

Black is now forced to overprotect his d-pawn, since if that pawn drops, then unless there is good positional compensation, his centre will collapse. Naturally White will want to attack this pawn, maybe with pure piece pressure, or maybe with an e4-pawn push. White will be looking for good ways to move the knight from d4, already a good and safe square, to an even more aggressive square. The dark-squared bishop will be able to re-manoeuvre itself to f4, putting pressure on the knight on c7, and in consequence on the other knight on a6.

The one genuine positive thought for Black, apart from his extra pawn, is that if he can hold his defence well, it could well be difficult for White to break through the pawn barriers, and the weakened squares behind them.

19...\textit{g6}

Black clearly feels uncomfortable about the f5-square.

If 19...0-0 20 \textit{Qf5} \textit{Ac5} 21 \textit{Exd5 Qxd5} 22 e4, Black has not yet equalized: for example, 22...\textit{Ad8} 23 \textit{exd5 Qc7} 24 \textit{Wg4} g6 25 \textit{Qh6+ Qg7} 26 \textit{Wxc4 Qxd5} 27 \textit{Exd5 Qxd5} 28 \textit{Qg4 Qf7} 29 \textit{Qh6+ Qg8} 30 \textit{Qac1}. Black has weaknesses on the kingside.

20 \textit{Af4}!?

Before attacking, he needs to develop, but where should the bishop go?

The bishop on f4 is aggressive and active, but Black has several chances of a hit there, with ...\textit{g5} being a chance of seizing the initiative for Black, and ...\textit{Qe6} being a good and natural move as well.

20 \textit{Ah6}! looks more accurate, pre-
venting kingside castling, and keeping the bishop safe. If 20...\textit{\texttt{Q}}c5, then maybe 21 h4, followed by g4, keeping chances of an initiative.

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\end{center}

\textbf{20...0-0}

Black has completed development, and is also a pawn up. All this is good news, but Black’s three minor pieces on the queenside are only half-developed. Tkachiev’s longer-term challenge will to bring these pieces into play.

\textbf{21 \textit{\texttt{Q}}c2}

Maybe 21 g4!? immediately. If then 21...\textit{\texttt{Q}}c5, White could return to the main line with 22 \textit{\texttt{Q}}c2. Naturally there are alternatives on either side.

\textbf{21...\textit{\texttt{Q}}c5}

21...\textit{\texttt{Q}}c5?! 22 \textit{\texttt{Q}}x\textit{\texttt{Q}}7 \textit{\texttt{Q}}x\textit{\texttt{Q}}7 23 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xd5 favours White.

\textbf{22 g4}

A dual-purpose pawn move. White wants to vacate the g3-square in case he wants to use that square, either for the bishop (after ...\textit{\texttt{Q}}g5), or the queen. He also wants to make a pawn prod against the f6-pawn, creating further weaknesses on the dark squares.

Tactically, 22 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xd5? \textit{\texttt{Q}}xd5 23 e4 would not have been good in view of 23...\textit{\texttt{Q}}a4.

\textbf{22...\textit{\texttt{W}}f7}

Avoiding any pins on the d-file.

\textbf{23 \textit{\texttt{W}}g3}

For the next few moves, both players will need to consider ...\textit{\texttt{Q}}g5 by Black. Here 23 h4 g5 25 \textit{\texttt{Q}}g3 g\times\textit{\texttt{Q}}h4 26 \textit{\texttt{Q}}x\textit{\texttt{Q}}h4 is promising for Black, so White regroups his pieces.

\begin{center}
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\textbf{23...\textit{\texttt{W}}ad8}

We have the classic question of timing during gambit play. Should the defender grimly hold on to the extra pawn? Or should he return the pawn, in return for safety and/or compensation?

Here 23...\textit{\texttt{Q}}g5 24 \textit{\texttt{Q}}e3 f5 is a chance to escape, but this is probably not the best timing. After 25 gxf5 \textit{\texttt{W}}xf5 26 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xc5 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xc5 27 \textit{\texttt{Q}}e3 \textit{\texttt{W}}f4 28 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xd5 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xd5 29 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xd5+ \textit{\texttt{Q}}xd5 30 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xd5 White is clearly better to some extent. Play might continue 30...h6 31 \textit{\texttt{Q}}c1 \textit{\texttt{Q}}e4 32 \textit{\texttt{W}}xf4 \textit{\texttt{W}}xf4 33 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xc4 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xf2 34 \textit{\texttt{Q}}c7 with White having the more active pieces.

Quite often a useful general approach in gambit play is to return the pawn only if the defender is satisfied that he will have at least clear equality or an edge. If the defender is worried that he will end up in a worse position after returning the pawn, then the like-
lihood is that the counter-gambit is mistimed.

Tkachiev holds on to the extra pawn, just for now, and this seems correct. The rook is moving to a good square, so this seems fine. The problems of timing will re-emerge later.

24 h4
To gain space for the pawns.

24...\textit{d}7?! \texttt{25 \textit{d}d2}
Both players are concentrating on attack and defence on the d-file.

25...\textit{f}d8
But again, 25...g5!? seems well worth considering.

26 \textit{a}d1

26...\textit{a}8?!

If one were playing through the position quickly, and trying to decide where Black was starting to go wrong, this bishop retreat is an obvious candidate. Is the move really relevant? One would not necessarily expect that Black will go from a good position to a bad position in one move, but it does increase Black's difficulties. However, White will have to play with great vigour to prove that Black faces any problems whatsoever.

As far as the defender is concerned, his ...\textit{a}d8 idea, rather than ...g5, was good, the rook moving to an active square. The plan of ...\textit{d}7 and ...\textit{f}d8 seems less promising, though, placing pieces on purely passive squares, while ignoring counterplay, and ignoring the possibility of giving up the extra pawn in return for taking over the initiative.

26...\textit{a}8?!

If one were playing through the position quickly, and trying to decide where Black was starting to go wrong, this bishop retreat is an obvious candidate. Is the move really relevant? One would not necessarily expect that Black will go from a good position to a bad position in one move, but it does increase Black's difficulties. However, White will have to play with great vigour to prove that Black faces any problems whatsoever.

This was a good time for Black to give back his extra pawn, and relinquishing the obligation of trying to defend the extra pawn. 26...\textit{e}6! is good for Black, who is able to exchange his quiet knight for an active and aggressive bishop:

a) If now 27 \textit{d}x\textit{d}5? \textit{f}xf4! and Black wins material: 28 \textit{f}xf4? \textit{d}x\textit{d}2.

b) 27 \textit{d}x\textit{d}5?! does not work either:
Modern Chess: Move by Move

27...£xd5 28 £xd5 £xf4 29 £xd7 £xe2+ keeps an extra pawn, while gaining active play.

c) White can play quietly, and indeed may well have to, with, for example, 27 e3 or 27 £e3, but then the second knight enters active play with ...£ac7.

This is undoubtedly an improvement for Black.

27 e3

It is important to consolidate d4.

28 £g5

27...£b5?!

The psychology is all wrong. In these notes, the author has questioned many of Black’s moves, but individually perhaps none are particularly bad. The real question is not identifying any serious blunder, but rather suggesting possible thought processes for the player who started off with an edge, but ended up losing a brilliancy.

The obvious implication is that Tkachiev was coasting. He was a pawn up, with some slight pressure from his opponent, and he was relying on his extra pawn for victory. In particular, it would seem that his main strategy, in terms of chess psychology, was avoiding any complications, avoiding any tactics. The astute opponent will naturally take advantage of this, and any 2700+ player will have excellent understanding of any weaknesses of his opponent.

27...£e6 is still possible, although this time he loses the extra pawn. After 28 £xd5 £xd5 29 £xd5 £xd5 30 £xd5 £xd5 31 £xd5 £xf4 32 £xf4 £c7 Black keeps a slight edge, his bishop being more active than the opposing knight, and Black having a potentially dangerous extra queenside pawn.

Alekseev obtains a second wind. Suddenly he finds weaknesses to attack. In particular, Black’s pawn on f6 will either advance or be exchanged, and this will create weaknesses on the dark squares leading to his king. White now has genuine attacking chances.

28...£f5

He prefers to keep his three kingside pawns.

29 £e5

White now has genuine compensation for the pawn. At times it has to be admitted that the gambit has looked somewhat speculative, but now White has good control on the dark squares, and is able to consider attacking pawns on the light squares.
29...\textit{d6}
Black decides that it is time to exchange the dominating bishop.
If 29...\textit{xe8}, White could consider playing for a kingside push with 30 \textit{f3} and later h5.

30 \textit{xd6}
Or maybe 30 \textit{d4}, and if 30...\textit{xe5} 31 \textit{xe5}.
One possible reason for exchanging on d6 immediately is that the queen stays on g3, well covered and unlikely to have to face threats of queen exchanges.

30...\textit{xd6} 31 \textit{d4}

We are reaching the climax of the positional control on the dark squares, but control on half the squares is not necessarily enough to win. Over the next few moves, Alekseev opens up the light squares as well, with the help of the occasional sacrifice.

32...\textit{e8}
Covering the b5-pawn.

32 b4!
He is still finding ways of taking extra control of the dark squares. If Black does not exchange en passant, then it will be very difficult to coordinate his pieces. He will not be able to move a knight to c5, and it would take considerable time to juggle his queenside pieces to reasonable squares, without dropping the b- or d-pawns. Indeed, how will the bishop find any activity whatsoever?

32...\textit{xb3}
Therefore, probably with reluctance, he exchanges his passed pawn.

33 \textit{xb3}
Now, with four attacking pieces on the isolated pawn on d5, and four defensive pieces, there is obvious tension in the centre. Remember though that Black is a pawn up, and so there is a possibility of relinquishing the isolated pawn in return for the stability of his pieces.

33...b4?!
The simplest defensive plan would be 33...\textit{b6} 34 \textit{xd5} \textit{xd5} 36 \textit{xd5+} \textit{xd5} 36 \textit{xd5} \textit{xd5} 37 \textit{xd5} b4 38 \textit{xb4} \textit{xb4} with probably level play. Visually, it looks as though Black’s kingside is weak, but this should not be overstated. As soon as White’s queen enters active play, his own king will itself become exposed.

Tkachiev has an understandable desire to hold on to his extra pawn, but Alekseev continues to develop his initiative.

34 axb4 \textit{xb4}
A fifth piece defending the pawn, but this does not deter White.

35 e4?
Quite startling, and Tkachiev seems to go off-balance immediately.
White’s position was already at least equal, even though he was a pawn down, but it would be difficult to try to force a significant edge through quiet play if he tried, for example, 35 \textit{e2}
and placing the knights on f4 and/or d4. Somehow, White needs to create just a little extra weakness in Black's pawn structure, and here Alekseev manages this immediately.

35...f4?

Tkachiev's response is to sacrifice the extra pawn, but this does not help. White will now have level pawns and an aggressive piece formation.

Black cannot take the bold pawn: 35...dxe4?? moves immediately into a pin with 36 axd6, while 35...fxe4 36 dxe4 a6 37 f6+ axf6 38 exf6 is not immediately decisive, but is unappealing for Black.

It is better for Black to stand the strain with 35...xf7! when ...f4 is now a genuine threat. White continues his plan with 36 exf5 when 36...xf5?! allows a substantial edge after 37 de4!. Therefore 36...gxf5 is correct, even if Alekseev has achieved his immediate objective of breaking up Black's pawn structure. White seems to have no quick winning plan, but he has plenty of grinding opportunities. It is impossible to analyse this in depth, there being too many possibilities for each position. A line aiming for simplification might be 37 de2 de6 38 xf4 dxf4 39 xf4 dc6 40 dd4 dxd4 41 edx4 with a slight edge for White. Black is a pawn up, but he has four isolated pawns, and if one of these pawns were to drop, his remaining pawns will still remain weak. Black has to play carefully.

36 xf4

Thank you.

36...de6

The first chance for a while to make a threat, but White's pieces are far better coordinated.

37 wg4!

A good move.

There is plenty of chess geometry here. In effect, we have a mirror image
of the letter 4, with the tension on the d-file, and White’s queen pressing both of Black’s knights, on the fourth rank to b4, and the diagonal to e6.

Also, of course, there is tension on the h1-a8 long diagonal: White is threatening exd5, while Black is unable to play 37...dxe4? because of the rook pin.

37...d4

Forced, unless he meekly wants to give up a pawn on d5.

38 e5

Some more chess geometry.

38...b6

38...dxc3 is hopeless. White wins after 39 Bxd6 c2 40 Bxe6+ (best, and also the most attractive) 40...Bxe6 41 Bxd8+ Nf7 42 Bxd7+.

38...Bg2 39 Bxg2 Bxd7 40 Bxd4 Bxd4 41 Bxd4 Bxd4 42 Bxd4 Bxd4 43 Bxd4 leaves White with a comfortable extra pawn in the endgame.

39 Bxa8

Diverting the rook from the d-file.

39...Bxa8

39...dxc3 40 Bxd8 Bxd8 41 Wc8 wins for White.

40 Qe4

40 Qxd4 is also good.

40...Bd5

40...We7 41 Qf6+ Wh8 42 Bxd4 leaves White with a safe extra pawn.

41 Bxd4

As does this.

41...h5

Just hoping for something. It is possible that the players would still have been thinking that the time control had not yet been reached.

42 Wf3

Simplest, adding pressure on the long diagonal.

42...Qe4

Maybe there is a chance to grab the pawn on e5?

43 Qf6+

Not really.

43...Bxf6

Can he keep the knights together?

44 exf6 1-0

It’s not worth Black carrying on.
For 9...\textit{\&}e7, see Game 7, Svidler-Topalov, with Black trying for ...\textit{\&}g6. Eljanov here tries an earlier Kramnik plan.

The emphasis in the Berlin Variation is for complete solidity by Black, and in this game it is not too surprising that we end up in a minor piece endgame. Trying to squeeze this is difficult with either colour, even more so with Black, who is suffering slightly from the doubled pawns, making his queenside pawns less dynamic than White’s kingside pawns. However, play must continue.

\textbf{10 b3}

This apparently modest move has gradually become the most popular since the 9...\textit{\&}d7 line was tried from the late 1990s. There is no ideal development square for the c1-bishop, and the pawn on e5 will block the fianchetto, but at least White defends the pawn on e5, which might otherwise have been a weakness. If White can somehow roll through with his kingside pawns, the bishop may yet become powerful.

This is not the sort of opening line where bishops are likely to outplay rooks. There are few chances of long diagonals for either side, but neither can the knights find any unrestricted outposts.

\textbf{10...\textit{\&}c8}

10...h6 11 \textit{\&}b2 \textit{\&}c8 was tried twice by Kramnik against Kasparov in the 2000 World Championship. He drew comfortably on each occasion, and in fact Kasparov did not score a single win in the match. This naturally made other players interested in the Berlin. To squash Kasparov’s attacking play as White is quite an achievement.

There are, of course, alternatives for both sides, but the ‘Berlin Wall’ has proved extremely difficult to break through.

\textbf{11 \textit{\&}b2}

Continuing his plan. There was no need to develop the rook to d1, since Black’s plan was to play ...\textit{\&}c8 anyway. White can try to find a more active line with the move he saves.
Stellwagen naturally wants to being a second knight to cover g5.
12 \texttt{Nad1} a5 13 a4 \texttt{Nd8} 14 h4 h5 ended up as equal in Z.Almasi-A.Aleksandrov, Moscow 2007; two great Berlin connoisseurs in opposition here. 12...h5!

11...e7!?  
Aiming to consolidate even more thoroughly than Kramnik tried in the first and third games of the 'Berlin Defence match'. First time round against Kasparov, Kramnik played 11...h6, by transposition (the games actually went 10...h6 11 \texttt{b2 f8}), with play continuing 12 h3 (maybe too quiet?) 12...b6 13 \texttt{Nd1 e7} 14 \texttt{de2 g6} 15 \texttt{e1}. Kramnik then tried 15...h5?, despite the loss of tempo. After 16 \texttt{d3 c5} 17 c4 a5 18 a4 h4, and a later ...\texttt{h5}, the game was blocked, soon agreed drawn.

Second time around, in Game 3, Kasparov played more directly: 12 \texttt{Nd1} b6 13 \texttt{de2 c5} 14 c4 \texttt{c6} 15 \texttt{f4} \texttt{b7} with perhaps a small edge for White, but Kramnik was able to hold for a draw. Kramnik prevented his opponent from finding any improvement in this match, with slightly different set-ups.

Eljanov would have noted Kramnik's ...h5 idea, and would doubtless have wondered whether ...h6 is necessary. We see his plan unfolding over the next few moves. The first step is to develop his bishop, and to cover the g5-square, while avoiding having to play ...h6.
12 \texttt{e4}

With a revised version of the Kramnik idea. Eljanov wants to keep the knight safe, preventing g4.
13 \texttt{f5}

Looking promising so far.
13...\texttt{xg5!}

The usual assumption is that the pair of bishops is worth retaining, and that quite often even a single bishop against a knight is useful. Flexible thinking in chess is necessary, though, and here Eljanov is quite prepared to give up bishop for knight – twice! The resulting outcome leaves Black more comfortable than he would have been otherwise.
14 \texttt{xg5 e6!}

He is not too concerned about the possible isolated pawn on e6. White's e5-pawn stops any attacks along the e-file, and of course there are no light-square attacking pieces, bishop or knight, to attack e6.
15 h3?!  
Not so bad in itself—it is a quiet move which does no great damage in a closed position—but part of a misplaced strategy. After the pawn roller on the kingside, with f4 and g4, it turns out that it is Black who takes control with the rooks on the h-file.

The more straightforward 15 Axd1 seems better. Then, for illustrative purposes, 15...Axd8?! 16 Axd8+ Axd8 17 Axe6+ fxe6 18 Ac1 Ae8 19 Ad1 Ad8 20 Ad8+ Axd8 21 c3, followed by centralizing the king, gives White the better chances in the endgame. White will be able to improve his pieces, and then think about what to do with the pawns.

Black would not want to exchange pieces so quickly. Maybe 15...a5, then perhaps ...b6, ...Ac7, ...c5, and keeping both pairs of rooks on board. White would find it difficult to claim any sort of edge.

15...c5  
Black wants to give the option of playing ...Axd4. Also, more generally, he might want to consider a queenside structure with pawns on c5, c7, b6 and a5.

16 g4?!

Still overplaying his kingside attack. 16 Axd1 or 16 Axe6 fxe6 17 Axd1 allows White a minimal edge, or, Black might argue, equality.

16...Ae7!

16...Ad4 17 Axd4 cxd4 18 Axe6 fxe6 19 Afd1 c5 is drawish, but Eljanov sees the opportunity to play for a slight edge.

17 f3  
Sellewagen holds the pawn on g4.

The computer suggests that the knight for bishop exchange, with 17 Axe6 fxe6, favours White, but it is difficult to agree with this. Black's bishop was doing nothing much, while White's knight was mobile. After the exchange, Black's knight would be better than White's bishop. Knights are often better than bishops in semi-closed pawn structures. In positions such as this, the bishops can be blocked by pawns and are ineffective, whereas the knights have good outposts, guarded by pawns. Often, as here, it is only of secondary importance whether the pawns are damaged by being isolated or doubled, provided they cannot be attacked. It is useful, though, to have a good aggressive minor piece on the board if the
pawn structure is damaged. Play might continue 18 $\text{d}1 \text{d}5 19 \text{g}2 \text{b}5 20 \text{g}3 \text{b}7 21 \text{d}2 \text{hxg}4 22 \text{hxg}4 \text{g}5 23 \text{fd}1 \text{h}7, followed by doubling on the h-file, and Black is slightly better, maybe even more than that.

17...\text{d}7

There is nothing to be done on the kingside yet, so Eljanov straightens up his queenside, and develops his rook.

18 \text{f}2

Stellwagen holds similar thoughts on the kingside.

18...\text{c}6

Ditto.

19 \text{g}3

Ditto.

19...a5

At no stage does either player try to make use of the rooks on the open file. There are no breakthrough points. Black is concentrating here on opening files on the outside, the a- and h-lines.

20 f4

While White is trying to push through his pawns on the kingside with f5.

20...g6

Black must prevent this.

21 a4

Not quite so necessary, but it is useful to stop Black from playing ...a4.

21...\text{h}6!

The 'mysterious rook move', as Nimzowitsch used to say. The rook plunges into its own pawns, and Black is planning to bring the other rook to h8, with no escape square. What is his idea? It is not difficult to see now. He will exchange pawns on g4, and then Black will take control, or at least create pressure on the h-file.

22 \text{f}2

To cover the h2-square, and to give the chance of doubling up his own rooks on the f-file.

Black's position is comfortable after 22 \text{xe}6 \text{fxe}6 23 \text{g}5 \text{f}5+ 24 \text{f}3 \text{hh}8 25 \text{ad}1 \text{ad}8. White blocks the h-file, but Black has an excellent blocking square for the knight on f5.

22...\text{hxg}4

22...\text{ah}8 23 \text{af}1 \text{hxg}4 24 \text{hxg}4 transposes.

23 \text{hxg}4

23 \text{exe}6?! \text{f}5+ 24 \text{gx}4 \text{fxe}6 does not help White's position.

23...\text{ah}8

The mysterious rook move now makes clear sense.
24 $e_1f1

White too is doubling up rooks, not taking an open file, but rather pressing behind his kingside pawn majority. If White can push with $f5$ successfully, then all Black's ingenuity will still leave him worse.

24...$h1

Therefore Black must try to exchange rooks. 24...$h4?! for example, leaves White better after 25 $f5$ $gxf5$ 26 $gxf5$ $h4h5$ 27 $c1$.

25 $c4$

In endgames, players need to push their pawns carefully. White is undoubtedly weakening his queenside pawn structure, but he also has to take account of the possibility of placing the knight or bishop on $d5$, or the possibility of Black opening up his queenside pawn majority with ...$c4$ at some stage. Stellwagen decides to consolidate.

25 $xh1$ $xh1$ 26 $dxe6$ $fxe6$ is to be considered, but even here it seems wisest to close up the queenside with 27 $c4$. If instead 27 $d3$, for example, then 27...$d5$, and Black's rook and knight start to become annoying. A careless 28 $e4?!$ $h3$ would even allow a mate threat.

25...$b6$

Eljanov is happy to wait, and consolidates his queenside pawn chain.

26 $xh1$

Stellwagen is in a minor zugzwang, and this must have been disconcerting for him later on. There was no need for him to crumble so quickly, though.

White has no pawn moves, and neither has he got any progressive rook move. The immediate minor piece exchange, 26 $xg6$, even drops a pawn after 26...$h7h3$+ 27 $g2$ $fxe6$. The quiet king move, 26 $f3?!$, also leads to trouble after the exchange sacrifice 26...$h7h3$+ 27 $xh3$ $xh3$+ 28 $g2$ $xb3$ when White's pawns start to drop.

If White makes a quiet move with the bishop, for example 26 $c3$, Black could try 26...$h4$ 27 $xh1$ $xh1$, much as in the game. The slight change in the position of White's bishop is of no great significance.

White might just as well exchange immediately.

26...$xh1$ 27 $dxe6$

A second piece exchange in succession.

27 $e3$ is not particularly safe, as after
27...\textbf{H}b1 28 \textbf{H}d2 \textbf{Q}g8! Black can hit on the g4-pawn with ...\textbf{Q}h6. After 29 \textbf{Q}g5 \textbf{H}g1+ 30 \textbf{H}g2 \textbf{X}g2+ 31 \textbf{X}xg2 \textbf{X}xg4 32 \textbf{X}xf7 \textbf{X}d1 Black’s bishop escapes, and wins all the queenside pawns. Such a prospect persuades White to get rid of the bishop.

27...\textbf{fxe}6 28 \textbf{H}h2

A third exchange in succession. Black’s rook is potentially far more active than White’s, and so White will probably have to offer the exchange anyway, for example with 28 \textbf{Q}g2 \textbf{A}d1 29 \textbf{A}c3 \textbf{H}b1 30 \textbf{H}b2.

28...\textbf{X}xh2

Eljanov is happy to exchange.

29 \textbf{X}xh2

Heading for a draw? White pushes his king to g5, Black defends with the king to h7, and then there seems to be no progress.

29...g5!

Black has been saving this idea for a long time. Strategically, he is making a minority attack on the kingside, aiming for two pawns to outplay three pawns, maybe with simplification of the pawns, and hoping to reduce the opponent’s kingside either to an ineffective isolated pawn, or preferably nothing at all. Black is a pawn up on the queenside, and hopes to eventually take advantage of this.

Black is, however, sacrificing a pawn. What is the compensation? At the very least, after 30 fxg5, Black can blockade White’s kingside with 30...\textbf{Q}g6, and the king cannot break through. This will be a comfortable draw. Maybe though the black king can reach g6, trying to hoover up the kingside pawns.

29...\textbf{Q}d7?! 30 g5 is only a draw; for example, 30...\textbf{Q}f5 31 \textbf{Q}g2 \textbf{Q}d4 32 \textbf{A}xd4 cxd4 33 \textbf{Q}f3 c5 with complete blockage. Here 33...\textbf{Q}c6?! 34 \textbf{Q}e2 \textbf{Q}c5? 35 \textbf{Q}d3 \textbf{Q}b4? would be wildly ambitious: 36 f5! allows White a pawn breakthrough.

30 \textbf{Q}g3

White could, of course, take the pawn with 30 fxg5. The idea is not so much for Black to blockade with the knight on g6, which would give equality, but rather to take the trek with the king to g6. Most of the lines are broadly similar to the main line. One alternative would be 30...\textbf{Q}d7 31 \textbf{Q}g3 \textbf{Q}e8 32 \textbf{Q}h4 \textbf{Q}f7 33 \textbf{Q}h5 \textbf{Q}g7 34 \textbf{A}c3 \textbf{Q}g6 35 \textbf{A}a1 \textbf{Q}f4+ 36 \textbf{Q}h4 \textbf{Q}g6, and we are about to rejoin the main game.

30...\textbf{Q}d7
The king returns to the kingside.

What Black must not do is to exchange with 30...gx f4? 31 xf4, and the king invades via g5, and it is White who is heading for an edge. Black must blockade the pawn on g5.

31 f3

Waiting.

31...e8

Black continues his main plan.

32 fxg5

He could continue waiting with 32 g3 f7 33 f3. Then it is time for 33...gx f4 and ...g6. Once Black’s king is on g6, the extra white pawn on g5 is almost an irrelevance. White’s king will have to move at some stage, and Black’s king will move on g5, either recapturing the pawn or quite simply just moving into space.

32 e4 gx f4 33 xf4 ef7 34 xg5 g7! at first sight might look effective for White, as he has a passed pawn and a king helping to advance the pawn. In fact White is in trouble, as Black has ...c6 and ...d4, and if the bishop exchanges, the king and pawn endgame is winning for Black, as in the game.

32...f7

Naturally it is the king that wants to move to g6. White will not be able to advance his doubled pawns.

33 e4

Centralizing.

33...c6

33...g6 is, of course, also possible.

34 c3

A quiet move.

34...g6

Then a constructive move.

35 f4

35 d2 d4 36 b4? axb4 37 xb4 cxb4 38 xd4 c5+ wins for Black.

Superb strategy by Black, who has achieved his ideal position. Even at this late stage, analysis shows that he is not yet winning, though.

36 xd4??

Unfortunately, White immediately collapses just before the time control.

His only chance is to accept that his b3-pawn will fall, but that he can make it difficult for Black to make any further progress. White has two isolated queenside pawns, indeed five isolated pawns altogether, but it is difficult to see how Black can make progress. In particular, it is difficult for Black to convert his four queenside pawns to overcome White’s two opposing pawns.

After 36 d2! x b3 37 e3! Black can win the b-pawn, but it is very difficult to attack either the a-pawn or the c-pawn, and Black’s king is tied down to defending White’s passed pawn. To try to break through with the extra pawn, Black would have to try ...a6 and ...b5, with either the help of the king or the knight, and the other piece defending on the kingside. Black redevelops with 37...d4 38 d2, and then makes his choice:
a) The quicker and more direct approach would be 38...c6 39 0xe4 b5 40 axb5 cxb5 41 cxb5 0xd5 42 0xa5 0xd1 43 0g6 c4 44 0f3, but White holds.

b) Therefore Black needs to try the long way round. White’s defensive plan is to give up a second pawn, on c5, at the necessary time, in order for the bishop to take advantage of the h4-d8 diagonal, with hopes of chewing up a few of Black’s queenside pawns. Play might continue 38...c6 39 0xc3 0xd8 40 0xe1 0f7 41 0h4 c6 42 0e4, and if Black is too ambitious, with 42...0xg5+?, he would even turn out to be worse after 43 0xf4 0xf7 44 0e7. Perhaps Black’s most dangerous idea is 39...0b4 (instead of 39...0xd8), trying to set up a few zugzwangs in a battle between knight and bishop, and then 40 0a1 0a2! 41 0b2 c6 42 0a1 0c1. Black has made good use of minor zugzwangs, and now it is time for White to cut his losses with 43 0g3 0xg5 44 0b2. Black cannot quite seem to make progress.

Sometimes the Sherlock Holmes principle needs to be applied in chess, that if all other lines fail, the one that does not fail needs to be played. If White is a pawn up, it does not necessarily mean that the loss of two pawns will lead to a loss. It may still be possible to recover from being a pawn down. 36...0xd4

The king and pawn ending is simple. A sad finish.

37 0xe4 c5 38 0xf4 d3 0-1

If 39 0xe3 0xg5 40 0xd3 0xg4 41 0e4 0g5 42 0e3 0f5, winning the pawn and the game.
Game 23
M. Carlsen-S. Tiviakov
European Team Championship, Crete 2007
Queen’s Indian Defence E17

1 d4 d6 2 c4 e6 3 f3 b6 4 g3 b7

The most natural move, placing the bishop on the long diagonal, and challenging the white bishop on g2. This move is, of course, sound, logical and solid, but the general impression is that at top level there have been many draws, a few wins for White, and not many wins for Black.

For 4...a6, see Game 4, Topalov-Anand. This tends to lead to much livelier play.

5 g2 e7

Also possible, and transposing into the Bogo-Indian is 5...b4+, but Black’s results have not been very successful recently. 6 d2, in this particular line of the Bogo, is the most popular.

6 c3

6 0-0 0-0 7 c3 could transpose to the main line in this game after 7...a6. Quite often, though, White does not castle immediately.

6...c5 7 d5 exd5 8 h4 keeps an edge for White.

6...a6

The old main line, 6...d4, and then 7 cxd4 cxd4 8 0-0 0-0 9 d1 (or 9 d4, soon transposing) is generally regarded as boring and drawish. 7 d2 f5 is the current main line. White is not too worried about the knight versus bishop exchange, with 7...xd2 8 xd2, as he has more control in the centre.

6...0-0 is also standard main-line play if White castles immediately, but 7 d5! attempts to play more aggressively. Tiviakov has played 7...b4 a few times, giving up a tempo, but arguing that White too has made concessions with his early pawn advance. He has also played 7...a6.

7 0-0 0-0

Standard castling by both sides, but
where will White develop his pieces? Or, indeed, should he move a pawn?

Tiviakov’s favourite knight move in this opening looks slightly unnatural, perhaps. The knight is on the edge, and it will take some time for it to get back into play, maybe with a timely ...c5. Even so, all his minor pieces are off the back rank, he has castled, and he is not under immediate attack. In other words, he has completed his development. Soon he will have to sort out his central pawns.

8  ¿f4

This too is just a developing move to get the minor pieces out of the back rank. It does not really attack anything, but at least the bishop is active if the centre opens up. Carlsen is aiming for a quiet edge, trying nothing spectacular.

8 d5 is more combative, pushing the pawn to the other side of the board, but one senses that this is slightly anti-positional. White is allowing the knight to escape to c5, which can create pressure on the e4-pawn. Maybe Black can try 8...exd5 9 cxd5 ¿e8 with equality.

8...¿e4

A standard defensive idea of this opening, but usually played without ...¿a6 and ¿f4. Going through Tiviakov’s games on the database, it is clear that he is careful to have tried different moves, here and earlier, just to create a little bit of variety. It is useful not to allow his opponent to know exactly what he is going to try in the opening. Tiviakov has, for example, tried 8...c5 and 8...¿d6, with different ways of playing on.

Here he tries possibly the steadiest and safest plan. Black wants to exchange White’s knight on c3, making it difficult for White to create pawn pressure with d5 and/or e4. If 9 ¿xe4 ¿xe4, it is difficult to activate White’s kingside pieces for attack.

9 ¿e1

Maybe White can still claim a micro-advantage, even so, after 9 ¿xe4 ¿xe4 10 a3!? , trying to prove the knight is misplaced. If 10...c5 11 dxc5 ¿xc5, for example, White is doing well after 12 b4. Here 10...c6!? provides a different escape route for the knight.

9...d5

9...¿xc3 10 bxc3 looks fully playable, doubling the c-pawns, and then maybe 10...f5 or 10...¿e4.

Tiviakov’s move is also good. Whatever else Carlsen achieves in this game, he has not managed to dent Tiviakov’s pet opening.

10 cxd5

If 10 ¿d2 ¿xc3 11 bxc3, the computer suggests a stonewall-type defence with 11...g5 12 ¿e3 f5, and maybe 13 ¿f3 f4 14 ¿c1. The experienced human player would tend to be suspicious of this, seeing the e5-square as a serious weakness for Black, not helped by the knight being on the edge on a6. Also, are Black’s forward pawns
starting a genuine attack, or are they merely creating weaknesses for his own king?

11...c5 12 cxd5 exd5 is a standard-enough idea for both sides.

10...exd5

There is no need to offer the knight exchange first. The knight is still strong on e4.

11 Qe1

11 Qe5 c5 12 Qxe4 dxe4 13 dxc5 Qxc5 14 We2 is probably also about equal.

11...c5

Black could have tried blocking White’s c-pawn with 11...Qxc3, since if 12 Qxc3?? Qb4 Black wins the exchange.

Now we have reached the characteristic Tarrasch pawn structure in the centre. Black will probably have to endure an isolated d-pawn, which is a weakness in the pawn structure, but so long as his pieces remain active, as here, the pawn can survive. It follows that Black would want to allow the isolated pawn quickly, if at all, rather than trying to attempt any slow manoeuvring.

12 dxc5

It is difficult for White to develop his pieces further, and still maintain tension in the centre, and so Carlsen decides it is time to exchange pawns, and force Tiviakov to declare his intentions.

After 12 Wa4, the computer suggests another Stonewall with 12...g5 13 We3 f5. Right or wrong, it is certainly different, and there is far less likelihood of a quiet draw.

12...Qxc5

The one recapture that may be considered and rejected quickly is 12...bxc5?! 13 Qxe4 dxe4 14 We5. White has active pieces, and Black has two uncomfortable isolated pawns, while the e4-pawn is also a problem. If Black needs to play...f5 to defend the pawn, then he is wholly open on the a2-g8 diagonal.

12...Qxc5?! should barely even be considered too. Black’s pieces are moving backwards, and getting in the way.

Of the other moves, 12...Qxc5 at least attacks something, and gains a tempo, although the knight on a6 is still a slight problem, and 12...Qxc5 gets in the way of the bishop, and it is the bishop that needs priority at the moment.

13 e3

Carlsen cuts off the diagonal immediately. After 13 Qd4, White will probably have to play e3 anyway, so he might as well do it now, without loss of time.

13 Qxe4 dxe4 14 Qe5?! (14 Qg5 We7 might give Black a fractional edge) 14...g5! runs into tactical problems: 15 Qd2 Qxf2+ 16 Qxf2 Wd4+ wins the pawn, while 15 We3 Qxe3 17 Qxe3, with doubled isolated pawns, is not inspiring.

13...Qxc3

Simplest, relieving the tension on e4 and d5.
14 bxc3
14 dxc3? e4 wins the exchange.
14...We7

The computer suggests 14...f6, but Tiviakov would have wanted to avoid a g5 fork after ...Rad8.
15 Qd4
Still trying to squeeze an edge. Other moves are equal.
15...Rad8
It would be unwise to trap the bishop with 15...g5?. After 16 Wg4 h6 17 Qf5 Wf6 18 h4 c8 19 e4 dxe4 20 Qxe4 it is Black’s attacking pawn that falls, not White’s defender.
16 h4
But now it is useful for White to secure the g5-square.
16...Re8

Standard development by Black, bringing both rooks into play. It is unclear as yet whether the other underdeveloped piece, the knight on a6, should play to c7 or, after a bishop move, to c5. He therefore waits.
17 f1

Carlsen gains some slight pressure on the f1-a6 diagonal, but loses pressure on the long diagonal. Does he gain anything overall with this? Who knows?

The important point is that White’s play remains solid both before and after his move, while Tiviakov’s play remains equally solid. A level position. It is only when one player falters, and either plays indecisively, or overpresses, leaving behind weaknesses, that the other can start to take advantage.
17...Qa3
Black decides he must bring the knight into play before being pressed on a6.

18 Qc2
At first it seems there is no real difference between this move and 18 Qb1, both looking about equal. Keeping the protection of the pawn on c3 is useful though in case play speeds up.
18...Qc5
The knight finally emerges, either to e6 or to e4.
19 Qb5
White attacks something, but play is still equal. Once White’s knight moves, Black’s knight can move to e6, a safe square.
19...Qe6
And so it proves.
20 e5
If 20 Qxa3 Wxa3 21 e5, Black may
transpose into the main line with 21...\(\text{c6}\), or there may be other more active choices. However, here 20...\(\text{Qxf4!}\) would be a case of overpressing. After 21 \(\text{b5}\) White has a better bishop, and has an edge. The pawn sacrifice with 21...\(\text{d4?!}\) 22 \(\text{cxd4 We4}\) 23 \(\text{f3 Wg6}\) 24 \(\text{f2}\) is unconvincing.

20...\(\text{c6}\)

Asking the knight to make a decision.

Maybe 20...\(\text{Qf8?!}\) could be slightly more accurate. If 21 \(\text{Qxa3?!}\) \(\text{Wxa3}\), Black is even slightly better, while if 21 \(\text{d4 Qa6}\), Black is holding satisfactorily.

21 \(\text{Qxa3?!}\)

An obvious move, gaining the bishop-pair, but a slight inaccuracy.

21 \(\text{Wg4!}\) is better, with pressure against the king.

22...\(\text{Wxa3}\) 22 \(\text{Wg4}\)

The right idea but mistimed.

22...\(\text{Wxa4!}\)

Equalizing.

23 \(\text{Wxa4}\)

He cannot avoid the queen exchange, as the rook was under attack.

23 \(\text{Wf5?! Qc5}\) is promising for Black.

23...\(\text{Qxa4}\)

After the exchange White has achieved nothing in terms of an edge. If anything, Tiviakov as Black should have slightly the easier position.

What is interesting about this game is not so much any in-depth strategy, from opening through to endgame, but rather the way in which quite suddenly Carlsen was able to overrun his 2600+ opponent from an apparently easily equal endgame. A few slight slips, and Carlsen is on the way.

Quite often it is the younger player who succeeds. He will have the energy to keep playing, and carry on keep playing, hour upon hour, waiting for the slightest slip-up by the opponent. The older player is more likely to relax, seeing the opportunity of aiming for a clear draw and a half-point without extra effort. Then slight mistakes start to slip in, and suddenly the older player has to work hard to hold the position, and then maybe he will make further slight mistakes, and increasingly there is a danger of losing.

24 \(\text{d2}\)

The rook has to move, and he might as well keep some pressure on the isolated pawn.

24...\(\text{Qc5}\)
Black can force an exchange of knight for a bishop, if required. To maintain complete security, he would like to exchange the knight for a light-squared bishop, keeping the excellent drawing prospects of bishops of opposite colour.

Black could also exchange the other bishop with 24...\texttt{\texttt{Qg5}}!? 25 hxg5 \texttt{hxg5}. Then 26 c4 d4! 27 \texttt{Qb1} d3, and perhaps 28 \texttt{Qxd3} \texttt{Qd7} (White threatened \texttt{Qxh7+}) 29 \texttt{Qbb2} \texttt{Qxg5} 30 \texttt{Qe2} gives Black even slightly the better pawn structure. Instead 26 f4 \texttt{Qe8} 27 \texttt{Qf2} might well end up as equal, although it is possible that White can create pressure with his kingside pawn mass. Who knows?

Tiviakov plays it cautiously.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{chessboard.png}
\end{center}

25 \texttt{Qd4}

Centralizing, and keeping the bishop-pair.

White has slightly more chance of drifting into a worse position, but with reasonably strong play on both sides, one would normally expect a draw.

25...\texttt{Qc8}

Putting pressure on the c3-pawn.

26 \texttt{Qb2}

Now Black no longer has a chance to hit d2 with tempo after ...\texttt{Qe4}.

White could also have added extra defence to the pawn with 26 \texttt{Qc1}.

26...\texttt{Qc7}

All good moves are presumably equal here. Tiviakov creates the option of doubling on the c-file.

27 \texttt{Qb4}

27 \texttt{Qb5} \texttt{Qxb5} 28 \texttt{Qxb5} \texttt{Qe4} 29 \texttt{Qxd5} \texttt{Qxc3} ends up as a drawn rook and pawn ending.

27...\texttt{Qc2}

Black’s bishop is now on a better diagonal.

28 c4

Leading to an ‘obviously drawn’ opposite-coloured bishop endgame. To play for a win, sometimes one has to exploit the most micro of micro-advantages.

28 \texttt{Qa1}!? avoids the opposite-coloured bishops, and maybe this too can lead to microscopic pressure. White’s hope would be to play c4 at some stage, while still keeping the bishop-pair.

28...\texttt{Qd3}

The natural move, though other replies are not necessarily bad.

29 \texttt{Qxd3} \texttt{Qxd3} 30 \texttt{Qxd5}
The pawn gain is only temporary.

30...\texttt{Ed}7

And Black wins it back.

31 \texttt{Ec}1

A slight sense of an initiative. White controls the open c-file, and Black's d-pawn is blocked because the bishop on d4 is securely guarded by the e3-pawn.

31...\texttt{Exd}5 32 \texttt{Ea}4?!

Many players, and Fritz, might prefer 32 \texttt{Ec}7 \texttt{Ea}5 33 \texttt{a}4, but Carlsen prefers to avoid spending a tempo with \texttt{a}4. To be able to do something effectively with his tiny edge, he needs to move quickly.

32...\texttt{Ed}7

Time for a general assessment, and in particular to answer why the players did not simply agree a draw.

We start with the bishops. White's bishop is slightly more active than Black's because his bishop on d4, already strong by itself, is supported by a solid potential passed pawn on e3. Black cannot attack this bishop with any of his pawns. Black's bishop is not quite so secure, though. Naturally it can run quickly when attacked, but Black cannot rely on the security of counterplay with the bishop on a central square.

The bishops by themselves would not give White any chances of playing for an edge, were it not for White having the more active rooks. White has control of the open c-file, and he creates pressure on the a7-pawn. Black, in contrast, keeps rooks on the d-file and the e-file, but cannot attack any pawns.

His rooks and his bishop then slightly outweigh his opponents', so there is no particular reason for White to agree a draw. What about his pawns, though? We shall soon see.

33 \texttt{g}4!

Carlsen is pressing forward, and if Tiviakov plays quietly, perhaps lulled by the seeming dullness of the position, then Carlsen can start to take the initiative.

White wants to stop Black from playing \texttt{...h}5, which would allow his opponent to create, if not exactly counterplay, then at least some solid squares for the bishop on the light squares.

33...\texttt{h}6?!

Probably this was intended as a quiet and natural move, played quickly to help reach the time control. Tiviakov creates an escape square for the king, and prevents for the moment a \texttt{g}5-advance. He needs, though, to defend more actively.

33...\texttt{Ee}2! is equal. If, for example, 34 \texttt{g}5 \texttt{h}6 35 \texttt{g}xh6 \texttt{g}xh6 and Black has broken up White's kingside pawn phalanx. The isolated pawns for Black are of no great weakness. White can try instead 34 \texttt{Wh}2 \texttt{Exg}4 35 \texttt{Exg}7 (35 \texttt{Eg}1? \texttt{f}5) 35...\texttt{Exg}7 36 \texttt{Exg}4+ \texttt{Ef}8 37 \texttt{Eg}3 \texttt{Ee}6, but Black should have no trouble in holding the rook endgame.

34 \texttt{f}3

Now White is gaining ground. A 4-3
pawn initiative often creates many more problems for the defender than a 3-2 initiative. Even more importantly, Black’s 2-1 queenside initiative provides less punch.

34...\textit{h7?!}

Black is just stalling. Clearly the king is going in the wrong direction, but any other piece move could have possibly worse consequences.

It is often a difficult judgement to decide whether to defend passively a slightly inferior position, or whether to change the balance of the position. Here 34...f5!? looks tempting. After 35 gxh5 \textit{xf5} White has a passed e-pawn, but the opposite-coloured bishops help to defend the weaker player; White will not have much opportunity to advance the pawn beyond e5. Meanwhile, Black’s pieces have rather more freedom of action than in the actual game.

It is quite likely, especially given time shortage, that Black would have been worried about 35 \textit{a3} \textit{e2} 36 \textit{f2?!}, but he has a tactical resource, 36...\textit{fxg4!} 37 \textit{xe2} \textit{xd4}. White should still hold with 38 \textit{xa7}, but this is not really what he wanted.

35 \textit{f2}

This king move, closer to the centre and the advancing pawns, makes more genuine progress.

35...\textit{dxe7}

Allowing Black to advance with \textit{...b5}, without losing the pawn.

It is unexpectedly difficult for Black to coordinate his pieces now. His bishop has few squares, while his rook on d7 is tied down to his pawn, and his other rook does not coordinate well. Also, his king is tied down to the pawn on g7.

Maybe it is time for Black to play \textit{35...f6} immediately, rather than shuffling around with the rooks. White still has some slight pressure after 36 \textit{h5} \textit{g8} 37 \textit{a3} \textit{h7} 38 \textit{ac3} \textit{f7} 39 \textit{g3} \textit{f5}, but Black should be able to hold. He is not fully equal though.

36 \textit{a3}

Forcing the bishop to a worse square.

36...\textit{b5}

36...\textit{g6?} 37 \textit{h5} loses the bishop.

37 \textit{ac3}

White has taken control of the c-file, whereas Black’s rooks do not press against anything. White’s bishop is again more secure than Black’s. White is better.

37...\textit{d8}

Understandable in that he does not want his opponent to control the back rank.

38 \textit{g3}

The king needs to advance, but only when the pawns have started to push. It is all a question of proportion – kings and pawns need to work together. White’s bishop will soon work well with the king and pawns.

38...\textit{f6}

Belatedly, but Black will not want to
have to keep the king guarding the g7-pawn.

39 f4

More pressure from the pawns.

39...h5

Black seeks counterplay, breaking open the connected pawns on the fourth rank, and giving some chance of making use of the light-squared pawns, but in the end, he is just moving closer to a possible zugzwang. Black is not losing yet, but any small error will lead to trouble.

39...g6 is an alternative, with a slight edge for White.

40 g5

40 gxh5 e2 holds.

40...g6

The time control. Carlsen has worked hard for his edge, but he has not broken through, and the position still looks close to equal.

41 xb1

This apparently simple move adds pressure on Black’s bishop.

41...d5

Alternatively:

a) If 41...d7?, aiming to prevent f5+, the unfortunate bishop runs into a pin with 42 c7, probably winning.

b) If 41...a4 42 f5+ xf5 43 f1+ e6 44 gxf6 gxf6 45 xf6+ d7 46 a3, and the driftwood of Black’s pieces ends up facing a strong ocean current. Black can survive, just about, with 46...c8 47 xb6 g7+ (but not 47...axb6? 48 a8+ c7 49 a7+, winning the exchange) 48 f3 d1 49 c3+ b7 50 d4. He is a pawn down though.

c) 41...a6 covers any rook ideas on the f-file (42 f5+? xf5 43 f1+?? xf1), and it is difficult to find anything for White by direct means. For example, after 42 gxf6 gxf6 43 c6 f7 44 g1 b7 45 h3+ f5 46 xf6 xc6 47 xd8 d7 Black should be able to hold. Perhaps the best plan for White would be to drill away on the queenside with 42 a4!: for example, 42...d6 43 a5 bxa5 44 a1 fxg5 45 hxg5 b5 46 xa5 a6 47 c5 f7 48 f3, and the pressure continues. If 48...d7 49 e4, and if then 49...xd4? 50 xa6+, winning.

One cannot imagine that Tiviakov had an easy choice to make, but here he probably chose correctly.

42 c8

Into the back rank.

42...e8
Trying to seal things off. With this and the next few moves, at first sight Tiviakov’s plan looks absurd, moving into passivity. In fact, though, it takes only a good move for Black to hold the position together.

43 \textit{\textbf{Bc}1}

43 gxf6 gxf6 does not help White.

43...f5

Black continues to close the drawbridge.

44 \textit{\textbf{Bb}8}

White doubles up on the end rank.

44...\textit{\textbf{Bd}6}

And Black doubles on the e-file.

45 \textit{\textbf{Cc}8} \textit{\textbf{De}6}

Both players continue their plans.

46 \textit{\textbf{Be}5}

It looks close to zugzwang, but fortunately Black’s position is not so desperate.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess-board.png}
\end{center}

46...\textit{\textbf{Bf}7?!}

Tiviakov seems so fascinated about setting up a barricade, keeping the rooks and bishop unmoved, that he forgets about the need for activity.

The simple 46...\textit{\textbf{Cc}6!} holds the balance comfortably. Carlsen has done as much as he can to try to play for a win, and undoubtedly he has handled his play more creatively than the opponent in the endgame, but one of the basic rules of chess strategy is that one cannot force a win in chess from a level position, unless the opponent makes a mistake. Often there will be a large margin of error in a level endgame, but here the margin is about to slip.

47 \textit{\textbf{Dd}8}

Waiting for something to happen.

47...\textit{\textbf{Dg}6}

Tiviakov sees himself as safe. Dangerous!

After 47...\textit{\textbf{Cc}6} there are a couple of attempts by White to aim for an edge, but Black holds: 48 \textit{\textbf{Hh}8} \textit{\textbf{Dg}6} 49 \textit{\textbf{Bb}8} \textit{\textbf{Dxe}5} 50 \textit{\textbf{fxe}5} \textit{\textbf{Dxe}5} 51 \textit{\textbf{Dh}6+} \textit{\textbf{Df}7} 52 \textit{\textbf{Dxg}7+} \textit{\textbf{Dxg}7} 53 \textit{\textbf{Dc}6} \textit{\textbf{Dxe}3+} 54 \textit{\textbf{Df}4} \textit{\textbf{Dc}2} 55 \textit{\textbf{Dxf}5} \textit{\textbf{Df}2+} 56 \textit{\textbf{Dc}5} \textit{\textbf{Dxa}2} 57 \textit{\textbf{Dc}7+} ends up as a draw, and, similarly, 58 \textit{\textbf{Dc}4} \textit{\textbf{Dxe}4} (58...\textit{\textbf{Dxe}4}?? 59 \textit{\textbf{Df}8} wins immediately) 59 \textit{\textbf{Dd}6} \textit{\textbf{Db}7} 50 \textit{\textbf{Dxb}7+} \textit{\textbf{Dxb}7} 51 \textit{\textbf{Dd}7+} \textit{\textbf{Dc}8} 52 \textit{\textbf{Dxb}7} \textit{\textbf{Dxd}6} 53 \textit{\textbf{Dxa}7} leads to another level rook endgame.

48 \textit{\textbf{Df}2}

Carlsen continues his quiet manoeuvring.

48...\textit{\textbf{Df}7?}

And Tiviakov loses his sense of danger.
Modern Chess: Move by Move

48...c6 was still playable.
49 e4!

Time for a breakthrough. The pieces are now on their optimum squares for both sides, either attacking or defending, and White's king has quietly centralized but can do no more, so the only way to make progress is with the pawns.

49...g6

If 49...fxe4, White now has a pawn break with f5. Play continues with 50 d6 e3+ 51 e1 d7 53 xxd7+ xd7 53 f8+ g6 54 f5+, winning the rook.

The exchange sacrifice with 49...xe5 50 fxe5 xe5 should ultimately be unsuccessful: 51 g6+ f8 pins the pieces down, and after 52 exf5 xf5+ 52 e3 e5+ 54 f4, one idea for White is 54...e6 55 a4 e1 56 b7 e7 57 xe7 xe7 58 a8 a5 59 g5 xxa4 60 g8, and while Black has two connected passed pawns with the bishop, White's passed pawns, with the help of the rook, will be quicker.

49...g6 looks extremely unappealing, taking away the g6-square from the king, and weakening the dark squares. After 50 d6 d7 51 e5! (more accurate than 51 xd7+ xd7 52 e5 e8 when Black will be able to activate some of his pieces) 51...xd8 52 xd8 c6 53 f8+ g7 54 c8 e4 51 c7+ White has a comfortable extra pawn.

50 d6

The only sensible move. 50 exf5+? xf5 activates Black's pieces.

50...d7

Now Black has broken up his defensive e-file structure, and White has made further progress.

51 xd7

There is still the chance of a blunder.

After 51 xe8? xe6, Black has at the very least perpetual check on the d-file.

51...xd7 52 e5

Through sheer stamina, and of course excellent chess understanding, Carlsen has somehow performed some magic in a 'completely drawn' opposite-coloured bishop endgame.

52...c6

52...e8 53 b7 c6 54 xa7 wins a pawn, much as in the game.

53 c8

Into the seventh rank.

53...e8

Back to passive defence.

53...e4 54 c7 e8 55 e6 xe6 56 e5 threatens mate, and after 56...xe5 57 fxe5 White has a second advanced e-pawn, which with care should lead to a win.

54 a8

The pawn goes.

54...f7

To cover the g7-pawn.

55 xa7

Further progress.

55...e8

At last the rook can move somewhere.

56 a3
M. Carlsen - S. Tiviakov, European Team Championship, Crete 2007

After 58...\texttt{c}4 59 a4 White has a clear run with the pawn.
59 e6
We have seen this idea before. See the note to Black's 53rd.
59...\texttt{xe}6
Not much choice.
60 \texttt{e}5

Securing the pawn, so he can move his rook.
56...\texttt{d}5
Black can do nothing constructive.
57 \texttt{e}3
While White gradually improves his position.
57...b5
Maybe the pawn is a little safer?
58 \texttt{d}4
But what about Black's bishop?
58...g2

With a collapse on g7.
60...h7
60...\texttt{xe}5 61 \texttt{xe}5 also wins quickly.
61 \texttt{xg}7+ \texttt{h}8 62 \texttt{e}7+ 1-0
Game 25
G.Kamsky-M.Carlsen
Khanty-Mansiysk 2007
Petroff Defence C43

1 e4 e5 2 d4 f3 d6

For lines starting with 2...c6, see Game 7, Svidler-Topalov, and the many later games.

3 d4

3 dxe5 is the normal line. Then all juniors at some stage will have been taught that if Black tries to take the symmetry too far with 3...dxe4? 4 We2 dxe5?, White wins the queen with a discovered check, with 5 c6+.

Black's main line is 3...d6 4 dxe4. If White is happy with ultra-symmetry, with 5 d3 d6, or even 5 e2 e7 6 d3, it is difficult for Black to make play interesting. Sometimes, though, there may be catastrophic results if one of the players suddenly breaks the balance, overpressing and overbalancing. A recent example is N.Short-P.Harikrishna, Montreal 2007: 5 d3 d6 6 d4 d5 7 d3 d6 8 0-0 0-0 9 h3 h6 10 c3 c6 11 e1 e6 12 xxe8+ xxe8. At this stage, it would not be unexpected if the game finished after 19 moves with a draw, but Short went for the jugular with 13 e5 dxe5 14 dxe5 xxe5 15 Wh5 xxe6 16 xxe5? (planning to defend against ...wb6; he can still back out to equality with 16 xe2) 16...f6 17 xg6 xg6 18 xd6 (as if 18 xh6 f5, and White will lose one of the pawns, without compensation) 18...xd6 19 g4? (19 wg4 xg6 20 xg6 xg6 21 wxg6 we7 leaves Black slightly better developed, but without great advantage) 19...e4, and Harikrishna won a pawn.
In symmetrical positions, it is best, when trying to attack, to ensure that the attackers are more powerful than the defenders.

3...\(\text{\textxc4}\)

3...\(\text{\textexd4}\) has tended to be unfashionable at top levels. White keeps a very small edge after 4 \(\text{\textes5} \text{\textdxe4} 5 \text{\textwd4} \text{\textd5} 6 \text{\textexd6} \text{\textcxd6} 7 \text{\textxc3} \text{\textxc6} 8 \text{\textwf4}.

4 \(\text{\textxd3}\)

If 4 \(\text{\textdxe5}\), there is sharp play after 4...\(\text{\textxc5} 5 \text{\textwd5} \text{\textxf2+}, but Black has usually avoided the challenge with 4...\(\text{\textd5}\).

4...\(\text{\textd5}\)

4...\(\text{\textxc6}\)? - no misprint, Black is dropping the knight - is one of the most remarkable opening innovations in the last quarter century, at least in terms of paradox. If 5 \(\text{\textxe4} \text{\textd5} 6 \text{\textd3} \text{\texte4}, and Black is equal, albeit with play tending to be drawish. Here 5 \(\text{\textd5} \text{\textxc5} 6 \text{\textdxc6} \text{\texte4} 7 \text{\textxe2} \text{\textexf3} 8 \text{\textcxb7} \text{\textxb7} 9 \text{\textxf3} is an attempt at a microscopic edge for White, but it should only be equal. Thus, mostly, White usually ignores the pseudo-sacrifice with 5 \(\text{\textdxe5}.

5 \(\text{\textdxe5}\)

This worked on the day, but it may well be inferior. White's pawn on \(\text{\texte5}\) ought to have been slightly overloaded.

There is some history here. In the sixth game of the match between Kar- pov and Kamsky in 1996, Kamsky as White tried the standard 5 \(\text{\textdxe5}, play continuing 5...\(\text{\textxd7} 6 \text{\textxd7} \text{\textxd7} 7 0-0 \text{\textd6} 8 \text{\textxc3} \text{\textw4} 9 \text{\textg3} \text{\textxc3} 10 \text{\textbxc3} \text{\textwg4} 11 \text{\texte1+} \text{\textd8}. Probably play is around equal after the exchange of queens, but Kamsky played ambitiously with 12 \(\text{\texte2} \text{\textw5} 13 \text{\textb1} 16 \text{\textc4} \text{\textdxc4} 15 \text{\textdxc4} \text{\textw8} 16 \text{\texte3} \text{\textc6} 17 \text{\textd5} \text{\textxd7}, and Black started to take over the attack. Kamsky had not reached this line again at high level, and might well have felt nervous.

5...\(\text{\texte7}\)

Carlsen is being careful not to play 5...\(\text{\textxc6}\) too quickly. He knows where his bishops want to go, and he would like to keep open the option of castling as soon as possible.

6 \(\text{\texto-o}\)

Maybe 6 \(\text{\textbd2}, but Black should be reasonably happy with either 6...\(\text{\textxd2} or 6...\(\text{\textc5}.

6...\(\text{\textg4}\)

Black should have excellent chances of equalizing. The pin allows him to create pressure on White's \(\text{\texte5}\)-pawn.

7 \(\text{\texth3}\)

A useful move to slip in. He cannot be checkmated on the back row.

7 \(\text{\textxe4?} \text{\textdxe4} 8 \text{\textwd8} \text{\textd8} 9 \text{\textd4 might well be best, though. This was tried a few months earlier in A.Shirov- M.Adams, 6th matchgame, Elista 2007, Shirov later winning. Play continued 9...0-0 10 \(\text{\textd3} \text{\textd7} 11 \text{\texth5 12 \text{\texte6? \text{\textfxe6} 13 \text{\textdxe6} \text{\texte8} 14 \text{\textdxd8} \text{\textxd8} 15 \text{\textg5 with a slight advantage to White, Black having to deal with an isolated pawn. Ftacnik suggests instead 12...\(\text{\textc5} 13 \text{\textexf7+} \text{\textxf7}, and then 14 \text{\textbd3} \text{\textxb3\textbf{.}}}

313
15 axb3 \( \text{g6} \) with equality. Sometimes such lines never quite equalize fully, and here 14 \( \text{\textit{R}} \text{e3} \text{\textit{f6}} \text{\textit{f1}} \text{\textit{b1}} \), a computer suggestion, causes some difficulty. If White’s minor pieces can become firmly entrenched in the centre, he does not have to be too afraid of the bishop-pair, hampered by Black’s slightly weakened pawn structure.

7...\( \text{h5} \)

It is a little too early to exchange with 7...\( \text{xf3} \) 8 \( \text{xf3} \). Black wants to create some more pressure with the pin.

\[ \text{8 He1} \]

8 c4 \( \text{xc6} \) 9 \( \text{cxd5} \text{\textit{xd5}} \text{\textit{c2}} \text{\textit{xd1}} \text{\textit{c4}} \text{\textit{c5}} \) ends up with a slight edge for Black. The c-pawn push takes up two tempi, while Black makes two developing moves. In some lines, however, the \( \text{c4} \) and \( \text{cxd5} \) idea could be good.

It is too late to attempt to emulate Shirov’s idea with 8 \( \text{\textit{exe4}} \text{\textit{dxe4}} \text{\textit{xd5}} \text{\textit{d8}} \text{\textit{d4}} \), as Black may now comfortably play 10...\( \text{g6} \) with equality.

8...\( \text{xc6} \)

8...\( \text{c5} \) also looks fine.

9 \( \text{\textit{c3}} \)

White cannot grab the pawn. 9 \( \text{\textit{exe4}} \text{\textit{xex4}} \text{\textit{xd5+}} \text{\textit{d8}} \text{\textit{exe4}} \text{\textit{d5}} + 12 \text{\textit{exe1}} \text{\textit{xf3}} \) wins a piece for Black.

9 \( \text{\textit{bxd2}} \text{\textit{xe5}} \text{\textit{exe4}} \text{\textit{xf3+}} \text{\textit{f1}} \text{\textit{gxf3}} \text{\textit{dxe4}} \text{\textit{xd1}} \text{\textit{xd1}} \text{\textit{c6}} \) gives Black a fractional edge. He has the better pawn structure.

Kramny dropped chess for several years, and he has occasionally since not been fully focussed in terms of modern opening theory. Once he gets into the middlegame or endgame, though, he can still play superb top-level chess, as we shall soon see.
eral choices for Black, and at least one of these could prove promising. The most straightforward is 13...0-0 14 \( \text{Wg}4+ \text{Wxg}4 \) 15 h\(x\)g4 h5 with good chances for Black.

10 \( \text{Qd}2! \)

White is not worried about losing his bishop for knight. He consolidates his central piece and pawn structure.

10 \( \text{Qxd}5 \text{Wxd}5 \) 11 c4 \( \text{We}6 \) 12 \( \text{Qxe}4 \text{Wxc}4 \) 13 \( \text{Qd}5 \) is promising too, but after 13...\( \text{Wb}5 \) Black is close to equality.

10...\( \text{Qxd}2 \)

After 10...\( \text{Qxc}3 \) 11 \( \text{Qxc}3 \) Black is yet to prove that he is fully equal. If then 11...d4? 12 \( \text{Qxd}4 \text{Qxd}4 \) 13 \( \text{Qxd}4 \text{Wxd}4? \) 14 \( \text{Qb}5+ \), Black loses his queen. On more sensible alternatives, White keeps the positional threat of e6: for example, 11...\( \text{Wd}7 \) 12 e6 fxe6 13 \( \text{Qxg}7 \text{Qg}8 \) 14 \( \text{Qxg}6+ \text{hxg}6 \) 15 \( \text{Qc}3 \), and Black’s pawns have been weakened.

11 \( \text{Wxd}2 \)

After the unfortunate 9...\( \text{Qg}6 \), Black has quickly moved from a slight edge to a nagging disadvantage.

The bishop-pair is not always an advantage, and here the extra knight is more useful after the bishop exchange. The central point is not so much the pawn structure, but rather the development of the pieces. White is ahead, and can gain space with the minor pieces in the centre. Black has lost time with his \( ...\text{Qc}8-\text{g}4-\text{h}5-\text{g}6 \) manoeuvre, and will take time to catch up with casting and centralizing the rooks. White meanwhile can move on.

11...d4

Carlsen decides that if the pawn is weak on d5, he might just as well push towards d4. This is not an aggressive pawn push. He is merely trying to stabilize the centre.

11...\( \text{Qh}5 \) 12 g4! \( \text{Qg}6 \) loses more time for Black, and White should consequently be able to avoid serious weaknesses on the kingside: 13 \( \text{Qb}5 \) a6 14 \( \text{Qxc}6+ \text{bxc}6 \) 15 \( \text{Qd}4 \text{Wd}7 \) 16 e6 fxe6 17 \( \text{Qxe}6 \) is good for White. The knights and rooks work well together, whereas Black’s bishop-pair is passive and ineffective. White is attacking.

12 \( \text{Qe}4 \)

12...\( \text{Qxg}6 \) dxc3 loses material.

12...0-0

Carlsen would not have enjoyed keeping the king in the centre, but now Kamsky stabilizes his centre, and keeps a better pawn structure.

Alternatively:

a) 12...\( \text{Wd}5? \) leaves the king stuck in the centre after 13 \( \text{Qf}6+ \text{gxf}6 \) 14 exf6. White has a clear advantage.

b) 12...\( \text{Qb}4? \) 13 c3 dxc3 14 bxc3 damages White’s pawn structure, but Black has also lost time. Then:

b1) 14...\( \text{Qe}7 \) 15 \( \text{Qad}1 \) 0-0 16 \( \text{We}3 \) gives White piece pressure in the centre, with \( \text{Qe}5 \) to follow. If 16...\( \text{Wd}5 \) 17 \( \text{Qf}6+ \text{gxf}6 \) 18 \( \text{Qxg}6 \text{Wxa}2 \) 19 \( \text{Qe}4 \), White has a strong attack. The pawn-grabbing is not worth it.

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b2) 14...a5 gives livelier play for Black, but also weakens his kingside. There are unclear possibilities after 15 e6 fxe6 16 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}}}_c5\) 0-0. However, 16 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}}}_d1\) 0-0 17 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}}}_f4\) is a simpler and more effective plan, White thinking either of \(\text{\textit{\textbf{c}}}_c5\) or more probably of \(\text{\textit{\textbf{e}}}_g5\).

13 a3

This little quiet move with the pawn, cutting out the opponent’s attack, is often so important in helping a smooth attack.

If 13 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}}}_f4\) immediately, Black is at least equal after 13...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}}}_b4\).

13...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}}}_d5\)

13...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{h}}}_h5\) 14 g4 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{g}}}_6\) 15 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{b}}}_5\)! allows White to win a pawn. After 15...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}}}_d5\) 16 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{b}}}_x c6\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}}}_x c6\) 17 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}}}_x d4\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}}}_b6\) 18 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{c}}}_3\), followed by \(\text{\textit{\textbf{f}}}_5\), White has covered the kingside weaknesses.

14 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}}}_f4\)

Building up on the kingside, and in particular making sure that the e5-pawn is heavily protected, indeed 'overprotected', as Nimzowitsch (or, of course, his translator) used to say.

14...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{f}}}_e8\)

Black wants to keep some pressure on the e5-pawn, otherwise White's guardians of the overprotected pawn will be able to switch to dangerous attacking squares.

15 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{e}}}_e2\)

More overprotection.

15...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{f}}}_8\)

The bishop gets out of the way.

16 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{g}}}_3\)

The knight starts to join in the attack.

16...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}}}_x d3\)

Black exchanges, before White exchanges on g6, doubling the pawns.

17 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{c}}}_x d3\)

A glance of the pawn structure may at first look about equal, but in fact Black has considerable difficulties. White’s e5-pawn is attacked, but it can be defended without difficulty, and Black’s queen, two rooks and knight are all being defended with corresponding force. The remaining minor pieces, the white knight on g3 and the black bishop on f8, strongly favour White, though. White is going to be able to improve his pieces, while Black soon faces his limitations.

17...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{e}}}_6?\)

Black has to be careful, but Carlsen seems to have missed Kamsky’s positional manoeuvre.
Black should overprotect his advanced but potentially weak pawn on d4. With the rook and knight both covering, Black has the chance to swing the queen around, probably to b3, making it difficult for White to set up an unpimped attack. Black’s position is well balanced, and so is White’s. Play might continue something like 17...\texttt{\textbf{Aad}8 18 \texttt{\textbf{Aae}}1 (18 \texttt{\textbf{Aah}}5 \texttt{\textbf{Ae}}7! holds) 18...\texttt{\textbf{Ab}}3 19 \texttt{\textbf{Ad}}2 \texttt{\textbf{g}}6! 20 \texttt{\textbf{Ae}}4 \texttt{\textbf{Ag}}7 (at last, the bishop does something, even if it is only plugging a pawn weakness) 21 \texttt{\textbf{Af}}6+ (21 \texttt{\textbf{Ac}}5?! \texttt{\textbf{Bd}}5 22 \texttt{\textbf{Bxb}}6? \texttt{\textbf{Bb}}8 naturally leaves the knight in trouble) 21...\texttt{\textbf{Bxf}}6 22 \texttt{\textbf{Bxf}}6 (22 \texttt{\textbf{exf}}6? \texttt{\textbf{Bxe}}1+ 23 \texttt{\textbf{Qxe}}1 \texttt{\textbf{We}}6, and Black is better) 22...\texttt{\textbf{Bd}}5 with good chances for Black of holding.

The attack against Black’s king.

Play might continue with 23 \texttt{\textbf{Wh}}4 \texttt{\textbf{h}}5 (another weakness, but necessary) 24 \texttt{\textbf{Ade}}2 \texttt{\textbf{Ae}}6 25 \texttt{\textbf{Qg}}5 (otherwise ...\texttt{\textbf{Ade}}8 and a positional deadlock) 25...\texttt{\textbf{Ax}}e5 26 \texttt{\textbf{Qe}}4, and then probably a perpetual after 26...\texttt{\textbf{Bg}}7 27 \texttt{\textbf{Af}}6+ \texttt{\textbf{Bg}}8 28 \texttt{\textbf{Wh}}4.

Having established that ...\texttt{\textbf{g}}6 is a promising idea, could Black have tried it earlier? The problem would be that White would recapture with the pawn on f6. For example, 17...\texttt{\textbf{g}}6 18 \texttt{\textbf{Qe}}4 \texttt{\textbf{Bg}}7 19 \texttt{\textbf{Af}}6+ \texttt{\textbf{Bxf}}6 20 \texttt{\textbf{exf}}6!, and White is better, Black facing problems on \texttt{\textbf{g}}7. Or, more drastically, 17...\texttt{\textbf{Aad}}8 18 \texttt{\textbf{Aae}}1 \texttt{\textbf{g}}6?? (instead of the preparatory 18...\texttt{\textbf{Bb}}3 19 \texttt{\textbf{Ad}}2 \texttt{\textbf{g}}6) 19 \texttt{\textbf{Qe}}4 \texttt{\textbf{Bg}}7 20 \texttt{\textbf{Af}}6+ \texttt{\textbf{Bxf}}6 21 \texttt{\textbf{exf}}6 \texttt{\textbf{Bxe}}2 21 \texttt{\textbf{Wh}}6, and White gives checkmate.

18 \texttt{\textbf{Bh}}5!

Black no longer has the chance to play ...\texttt{\textbf{g}}6.

18...\texttt{\textbf{Aae}}8

The natural move, but White’s e-pawn remains stubbornly well protected. Maybe 18...\texttt{\textbf{Bb}}3 19 \texttt{\textbf{We}}4 \texttt{\textbf{Ad}}8 as an alternative.

19 \texttt{\textbf{Aae}}1

Four pieces attacking the e5-square, four defending. If White can hold on to
this square, he will be better, but can he do this?

19...a5

Black is unexpectedly now in serious trouble, as the alternatives also reveal:

a) 19...f6? 20 \( \text{Wg4!} \) (with threats on f6) 20...fxe5 (or 20...\( \text{Qxe5} \) 21 \( \text{Qxe5} \) fxe5 22 \( \text{Qf4!} \), with the same tactical theme) 21 \( \text{Qf4!} \), winning the exchange through a combination of knight fork and pin.

b) 19...\( \text{Qg6} \) 20 \( \text{Qh4} \) \( \text{Qge6} \) offers a draw by repetition with 21 \( \text{Qf3?!} \), but White can do better with 21 \( \text{Wg4!} \) with knight threats on f4 and f6. After 21...\( \text{Qxe5} \) 22 \( \text{Qxe5} \) \( \text{Qxe5} \) 23 \( \text{Qf6+ Qh8} \) 24 \( \text{Qxd5} \) \( \text{Qxe1+} \) 25 \( \text{Qh2} \) White is ahead on the material count, and should win. There are also various ways that Black can sacrifice the exchange for a pawn, not least in this line 21...\( \text{Wd8} \) 22 \( \text{Qf6+ Qxf6} \) 23 exf6 \( \text{Qxe2} \) 24 \( \text{Qxe2} \) \( \text{Wxf6} \), but such lines should in general be winning for White.

c) So how can Black hold this position? One answer is pure Steinitzian grit, with 19...\( \text{Qe6?!} \) 20 \( \text{Wg4} \) \( \text{Qh8} \), avoiding pawn moves for as long as possible, defending pawns as far as possible, and getting away from the knight check on f6. The computer suggests good prospects to hold for Black, but the human player would sense that there ought to be something for White. The answer is to ram the e-pawn with 21 \( \text{Qf4} \) followed by e6, breaking open Black's kingside pawns. So 21...\( \text{Wd7} \) (or most other queen moves) 22 e6! fxe6 23 \( \text{Qg6+} \) hxg6 24 \( \text{Qg5} \), entombing Black's king with the threat of \( \text{Wh4+} \).

It becomes understandable that Carlsen in effect does nothing, but Kamsky, of course, can do something. 20 \( \text{Wg4!} \)

Vacating the f4-square for a knight fork, and pinning Black's g-pawn with another fork on f6. The queen and knight are working smoothly. White is gaining material by force, which must have been an unexpected surprise for Carlsen.

20...\( \text{Qxe5} \)

20...\( \text{Qxe5} \) 21 \( \text{Qxe5} \) wins.

21 \( \text{Qf4!} \)

Sometimes there is no need to move the queen when it is attacked. There is generally an almost automatic response to look for checks when the queen is attacked, but on occasion a player might be slow in seeing that it may be possible to counterattack.
against the opposition queen.

22...\textit{Nx}g4
The best chance of holding.

22 \textit{Q}xd5 \textit{Ng}6
The rook is short of squares, and Kamsky now decides he wants to take advantage of this.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

23 g4
Threatening \textit{Q}f4, and if ...\textit{Nh}6, then g5 trapping the rook, with the help of the pawns and two knights.

23 \textit{Q}xc7 \textit{N}c8 is, of course, also good, but often it is more effective to win with an extra exchange rather than an extra pawn.

23...\textit{Kd}8

If 23...\textit{Kh}6, then 24 g5 \textit{Nh}3 25 \textit{Q}g2 \textit{Nh}5 26 \textit{Q}f4 again snares the rook.

If 23...h5, White must of course avoid 24 \textit{Q}f4?? \textit{hx}g4 25 \textit{Q}xg6 \textit{gx}f3, and Black is winning, but 24 g5 \textit{Ne}7 26 h4 is better. If Black makes an escape square with his rook, by moving his knight, then White will win both the c7- and d4-pawns.

24 \textit{Q}f4

Yes, the rook will fall.

24...\textit{Nh}6

A tiny hope. He tries to provoke the pawn to g5, allowing the knight to create a none too effective outpost on f5.

25 g5
Of course, winning the exchange is more important than allowing Black the extra square.

25...\textit{Ne}6
Blocking White's e-pawn.

26 \textit{Q}xe6 fxe6

White is the exchange up. Black's position is not quite resignable just yet, so in an important knockout game he plays on. The rest of the game is not all that exciting, and Kamsky does not loosen his grip. Only brief notes for the remaining moves, therefore.

27 \textit{Cc}1 \textit{Kd}5 28 \textit{Cc}4
Adding pressure to Black's d4-pawn.

28...\textit{Cc}5
Defending. The trouble is, of course, that the bishop is only defending, it can attack nothing.

29 h4
Over the next few moves, Kamsky brings forward his kingside pawns to add pressure on his opponent's kingside. He also starts to centralize his king. Carlsen attempts to find better moves for his pieces, but he cannot make much impact on his opponent.

29...\textit{b}6 30 \textit{Q}g2 \textit{Ce}7 31 \textit{h}5 \textit{Kd}8
Black can do nothing on the e5-pawn by now, but maybe he can add pressure to the f-file?

32...\(\text{Ne}4\)
White resumes the squeeze on the pawn on d4.

32...\(\text{Qf}5\)
If 32...\(\text{c5}\), White breaks open with 33 \(\text{b4}\).

33 \(\text{Kh}4\)
Aiming to exchange Black’s most active piece.

33...\(\text{De}7\)
33...\(\text{Oxh}4\) 34 \(\text{Oxh}4\) \(\text{Qf}8\) 35 \(\text{f}4\) should not cause much technical difficulty. If 35...\(\text{c5}\), White has 36 \(\text{b4} \ \text{cxb}4\) 37 \(\text{axb}4\) \(\text{a4}\) 38 \(\text{Qf}3\) \(\text{a3}\) 39 \(\text{Kh}2\) \(\text{a}8\) 40 \(\text{Ka}2\), etc.

34 \(\text{Qg}3\) \(\text{g}6\) 35 \(\text{Qg}4\)

Two more king moves to add to the pressure.

35...\(\text{Ad}5\) 36 \(\text{h}xg6\) \(\text{hxg}6\)

36...\(\text{Qxg}6\) 37 \(\text{Qxg}6\) \(\text{hxg}6\) 38 \(\text{a}4\) is no better, no worse.

37 \(\text{a}4\)

Avoiding having to think about \(\text{Qb}5\).

37...\(\text{Df}7\)
Extra cover, to give the knight the chance to move.

38 \(\text{Ec}1\) \(\text{Dd}8\) 39 \(\text{Kh}1\)
Without this plan, making use of the open h-file, it could still have been difficult for White to break through.

39...\(\text{Qg}7\)
Black cannot afford the exchange of rooks after 39...\(\text{Dh}8\) 40 \(\text{Qe}1\) followed by \(\text{Qg}2\) and \(\text{Df}4\).

40 \(\text{Qg}2\) \(\text{Df}5\)
Covering the h6 option, but of course White has several alternatives here.

41 \(\text{Df}4\)
White’s knight is even better than Black’s.

41...\(\text{Dg}8\) 42 \(\text{Qe}1\)
To double on the h-file.

42...\(\text{c}5\) 43 \(\text{Kh}3\) 1-0

The end. \(\text{Qeh}1\) crashes through.
Game 25
A.Morozevich-K.Sakaev
Russian Championship, Moscow 2007
Slav Defence D10

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Qc3 Qf6

4 cxd5
For 4 e3, see Game 1, Kasimdzhanov-Kasparov, and many other games. Here 4...a6!? 5 Qf3 b5 6 c5, as in Game 32, Inarkiev-Ni Hua, gives the closest structural similarities with the Morozevich game, in that the pawns in the centre are blocked, and cannot be further attacked by the c-pawns. In both cases, the players have to work hard to make the position interesting.

On 4 Qf3, the traditional main line of the Slav is 4...dxc4 5 a4, but these days Black tends to prefer at top levels the Semi-Slav with 4...e6.

In this game, though, we reach the Exchange Variation of the Slav. Strong players, and of course Morozevich is an extremely strong player, may use this as part of a ‘plus over equals’ philosophy. As the game develops, White is unlikely to lose, but if he finds that he has even the slightest chance of an edge, he can grind away indefinitely.

A lower-graded player might get anxious about the strength of his opponent, and use the Exchange Variation as an excellent chance to keep the play dull, equal, and, all being well, as a good drawing option. Among stronger players, the player with the white pieces might simply want to take the percentages. The Slav is difficult to play for an attack with White, and it will take a lot of effort to try to find an edge against good opposition, and this would in any case lead to some degree of risk. Why not play a simple and symmetrical line, with little chances of a loss, aiming for a standard 55% score with White without taking up much effort? Morozevich, as we shall soon see, tends to score rather more than 55% in this line.

4...cxd5
Black cannot avoid the symmetry: 4...Qxd5?! 5 e4 keeps White ahead in development.

Quite often, Black players may want to avoid the Exchange Variation, either avoiding the Slav completely, or, if aiming for a Semi-Slav, kicking off with 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Qc3 Qf6 4 Qf3 c6. The danger for this approach is that the Orthodox Exchange Variation, with 4 cxd5 exd5, is if anything more pleasant for White than the Slav Exchange.
5  \( \text{\textit{f}} \text{f}4 \)

A useful developing square. Morozevich is being careful not to commit the knight with 5  \( \text{\textit{f}} \text{f}3 \), although that move is, of course, possible.

5  \( \text{\textit{g}} \text{g}5 \) is worth considering, though less popular than  \( \text{\textit{f}} \text{f}4 \). White is aiming for a slight edge.

5...

\( \text{\textit{e}} \text{c}6 \)

Natural development.

6  \( \text{\textit{e}} \text{e}3 \)

6  \( \text{\textit{b}} \text{b}5? \text{\textit{a}} \text{a}5+ \) is a waste of time. Now, though, the knight threat at least forces the opponent to consider this possibility.

The quiet pawn push, with 6...

6...

\( \text{\textit{a}} \text{a}6 \)

A few days later, Grischuk tried 6...

6...

\( \text{\textit{f}} \text{f}5 \), again against Morozevich. After 7  \( \text{\textit{b}} \text{b}5 \) e6 8  \( \text{\textit{a}} \text{a}4 \)  \( \text{\textit{b}} \text{b}6 \) 9  \( \text{\textit{f}} \text{f}3 \)  \( \text{\textit{e}} \text{e}7 \) 10  \( \text{\textit{e}} \text{e}5 \) 0-0 11  \( \text{\textit{x}} \text{c}6 \)  \( \text{\textit{f}} \text{f}8 \) 12 0-0  \( \text{\textit{b}} \text{xc}6 \) 13  \( \text{\textit{f}} \text{fc}1 \) c5 14  \( \text{\textit{d}} \text{xc}5 \)  \( \text{\textit{x}} \text{xc}5 \) 15  \( \text{\textit{b}} \text{b}4 \)  \( \text{\textit{c}} \text{Cc}8 \) 16  \( \text{\textit{a}} \text{a}3 \), Black should probably be equal. In A.Morozevich-A.Grischuk, Russian Championship, Moscow 2007, Grischuk seriously overplayed his position with 16...d4? 17  \( \text{\textit{exd}} \text{4} \)  \( \text{\textit{wx}} \text{d}4 \) 18  \( \text{\textit{c}} \text{c}6 \)  \( \text{\textit{w}} \text{d}7 \) 19  \( \text{\textit{b}} \text{5} \), and Morozevich quickly won. However, other lines, such as 16...

7...

\( \text{\textit{g}} \text{g}4 \)

Black wants to keep play interesting.

7...

\( \text{\textit{f}} \text{f}5 \) is possible, with no realistic chances of an advantage for Black, but every chance of holding the draw with careful play. For example, 8  \( \text{\textit{f}} \text{f}3 \)  \( \text{\textit{c}} \text{c}8 \) 9  \( \text{\textit{e}} \text{e}2 \) e6 10 0-0  \( \text{\textit{d}} \text{d}6 \) 11  \( \text{\textit{xd}} \text{6} \)  \( \text{\textit{wdx}} \text{6} \) 12  \( \text{\textit{a}} \text{a}4 \) 0-0 13  \( \text{\textit{c}} \text{c}5 \)  \( \text{\textit{c}} \text{c}7 \) 14 0-0, draw agreed. A.Morozevich-V.Malakhov, Sochi 2005.

8  \( \text{\textit{f}} \text{f}3 \)

Morozevich gives his first indication that he is not going to accept a quick
draw. Indeed, soon play gets lively.

8 \text{\textit{W}}b3 \text{\textit{Q}}a5 9 \text{\textit{W}}c2 e6 gives good chances of equality.

8...\text{\textit{Q}}d7

The bishop retreats to a good defensive square, happy that White has no chance of creating pressure with \text{\textit{Q}}g1-f3-e5.

9 g4

Are those kingside pawns going to become strong or weak? Naturally there are arguments for both sides.

Morozevich some time earlier had tried 9 \text{\textit{Q}}ge2 e6 10 \text{\textit{Q}}g3 \text{\textit{M}}c8 11 \text{\textit{Q}}f4 \text{\textit{Q}}a5 12 \text{\textit{Q}}e2 \text{\textit{Q}}c4 13 \text{\textit{Q}}xc4 \text{\textit{Q}}xc4 14 \text{\textit{Q}}d3 \text{\textit{Q}}e7 15 \text{\textit{Q}}d3 \text{\textit{Q}}e7 15 \text{\textit{W}}b3 b5 16 0-0 0-0 17 \text{\textit{Q}}e5 \text{\textit{M}}c8 in A.Morozevich-P.Leko, Wijk aan Zee 2005, but was unable to demonstrate a lasting edge. The game was eventually drawn. Morozevich tried 18 \text{\textit{Q}}e2 \text{\textit{Q}}b6 19 \text{\textit{Q}}h4 \text{\textit{W}}b6 (and if 20 \text{\textit{Q}}g3 \text{\textit{W}}b6, repeating), but possibly 18 \text{\textit{Q}}h4?! immediately might improve.

9...\text{\textit{e}}6

9...\text{\textit{M}}c8 is possible, but Black would probably want, after 10 h4, to play 10...\text{\textit{e}}6 anyway.

10 h4

There is no real point in playing 10 g5 just yet, in view of 10...\text{\textit{Q}}h5. To just-}

ify White's kingside pawn push, he needs to keep going with h4 and h5 first, giving Black no time to respond with ...\text{\textit{Q}}h5 after g5.

10...\text{\textit{Q}}e7

To complete his development.

11 \text{\textit{Q}}d3

11 \text{\textit{W}}b3 is possible, but after 11...\text{\textit{b}}5 White's queen is arguably on the wrong side of the board.

11...0-0?!
seems less effective. White sets up some knight galloping with 14 \( \text{e4} \) \( \text{e5} \) 15 \( \text{xe6} \) 16 \( \text{xe1} \) \( \text{e5} \) 17 \( \text{xe5+} \) 18 \( \text{xe5} \) 19 \( \text{c4} \) 19 \( \text{c2} \) \( \text{d7} \) (otherwise 19...\( \text{xf8} \)) 20 \( \text{e7} \) is unpleasant) 20 \( \text{xe7} \) \( \text{xe7} \) 21 \( \text{e2} \), leading to an edge.

\( 12 \text{e1} \)

With obvious intentions of setting up a queen and bishop battery on the b1-h7 diagonal.

White's g1-knight is undeveloped, but with the help of a couple of moves to bring it into play, it could become effective in a kingside attack. Indeed, 12 \( \text{ge2} \) looks more accurate, with thoughts of helping a later kingside pawn push with \( \text{g3} \). If 12...\( \text{e8} \) 13 \( \text{g3} \) \( \text{c8} \) 14 a3, White does not have a drastic edge, given that the pawn structure is symmetrical, and Black's pieces are developed, but he should still have some chances of a nibble. White's \( \text{d3} \) move could have been delayed until later.

\( 12...\text{wb6} \)

In a later game, I.Khenkin-E.Postny, Maalot-Tarshiha 2008, Black was tempted to force the White king to move with 12...\( \text{e8} \) 13 h5 \( \text{h4+?} \) 14 \( \text{f1} \), but this was totally unnecessary. The king is as safe on f1 as on e1. After 14...\( \text{f5} \) 15 \( \text{g5} \) \( \text{g5} \) 16 f4 \( \text{e7} \) 17 \( \text{wxc2} \) White had a strong attack, and later won.

Sakaev's move seems better.

13 \( \text{h2} \)

Defending on the rank, while attacking on the file, a useful combination.

13...\( \text{fc8} \)

Black is still holding the balance, but he is defending, not attacking. If White cannot force a kingside breakthrough, then in the longer term Black will have useful chances on the queenside.

In other words, Black is close to equal, and White must be careful not to drift.

14 h5

There are many sensible but quiet moves, none of which creates an edge. If, for example, 14 \( \text{d3} \), with thoughts of g5, Black can simply push the queen away with 14...\( \text{b4} \), nothing gained, nothing lost, for either side.

White could consider covering the b4-square with 14 a3, but this weakens the light squares, and 14...\( \text{a5} \) allows Black to keep the balance.

14 g5 \( \text{h5} \) 15 \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{g6} \) is again possi-
ble for White, but does not create any real initiative.

14...\$e8

14...h6!? is possible. The tactical point is that White cannot break through on the kingside with 15 g5? hxg5 16 hxg5 in view of 16...\$g4!:

\[\text{Diagram 1}\]

- a) If now 17 \$xe7 \$xh2 18 \$d6 \$xd4! 19 \$xh2 \$xb2 20 \$d2 \$xd2+ 21 \$xh2 \$b5, and Black is ahead on material.

- b) Black also keeps a slight positional edge after 17 fxg4 \$xg5, with pressure on the e3- and d4-pawns. If, for example, 18 \$e2 \$xd4 19 exd4 \$xc1 20 \$xc1 \$xd4, and Black is better. Thus 18 \$d3 \$xd4 is critical (White could also transpose with 17 \$d3 \$xg5 18 fxg5 \$xd4!):

  - b1) Then 19 \$h7+ \$f8 20 h6 (there are no other effective attacking moves) 20...\$f3+! wins by force for Black.

  - b2) Therefore he has to play 19 h6 immediately, but Black still wins after 19...\$xe3 20 \$xh7+ (20 hxg7 f5!) 20...\$f8 21 hxg7+ \$e7, the king escaping and White’s passed pawn being ineffective.

  - b3) If White tries to side-track, avoiding checks by 19 \$d1, then 19...\$b5! is good for Black.

White must not play so hastily. Indeed, 15 \$h3! keeps reasonable attacking chances. If 15...\$f8 16 \$g2 \$h8, then maybe 17 a3?!, aiming to play \$d3 or \$c2 without any threats of ...

\[\text{Diagram 2}\]

...\$b4.

Perhaps it is this quiet plan that Sakaev would have been concerned about. Pushing a pawn in front of the king opens up potential weaknesses, and the pawn push is ideally to be avoided for as long as possible.

15 \$d3

The computer’s initial suggestion is 15 g5 \$d7 16 h6 g6, but then the only way to attack would be to try to give mate on g7, and unfortunately the bishop can easily cover with ...\$f8. Often it is better in defence to allow one weak square in front of the king, but without a pawn exchange, rather than try to defend against open lines, such as the h-file or the b1-h7 diagonal. This theme recurs throughout the rest of the game.

The text move is natural enough, but 15 a3 would probably have been more accurate.

15...\$b4
To gain time for the defence with ...\(\text{Qd7}\) and ...\(\text{Qf8}\).

16 \(\text{Wd2}\)

He is not yet ready to repeat with 16 \(\text{Wd1 Qc6}\).

16...\(\text{Qd7}\)

Black continues his plan. A knight on f8, next to the king, is extremely difficult to dislodge, and with knight and a couple of bishops to defend the king and pawns, he can cover White’s queen attack. The only ways of trying to attack the king would be a piece sacrifice or putting pressure on the g7-square.

17 \(\text{Qh3?!}\)

Morozevich seems stumped by Sakaev’s accurate defence, and for the time being he drifts around. It is easy enough to demonstrate, in retrospect, that this knight move must have been a positional error, since before too long Morozevich switched around the attack with \(\text{Qg1}\) and \(\text{Qf3}\) (after \(\text{f4}\) with the pawn), but without gaining any positional advantage.

17 g5!? gaining space with the kingside pawns, looks better. Then after 17...\(\text{Qf8}\) 18 \(\text{Qge2}\) White has improved his coordination. White could start to coordinate his rooks with the help of \(\text{Qf2}\), and maybe think either of a central pawn push with e4 or put pressure on the g- and h-files.

17...\(\text{Qf8}\)

With extra cover on the h7-square. White will have to do more than simply attack on the b1-h7 diagonal.

18 \(\text{Qg5}\)

18 h6 is again to be considered, but again 18...g6, followed later by ...f6, blocks out most attacks.

By contrast, an exchange of dark-squared bishops will be of more concern to Black, though it is still not so clear that White is then better.

18...\(\text{Wd8}\)

18...\(\text{Qd6}\) 19 \(\text{f4 f6}\) 20 \(\text{Qh4 Qf7}\) gives White more space on the kingside. Whether this is likely to convert into any real initiative is open to question.

19 \(\text{Qxe7}\)

The exchange of the dark-squared bishop will happen sooner or later. White has additional freedom with his kingside pawns, but this will not lead to any significant advantage.

19...\(\text{Wxe7}\)

Black has defended carefully, and is close to equal. All White has is some extra space with his pawns on the king-
side, while Black can set up some pressure on the queenside when the rooks have been doubled on the c-file.

20 f4!

The pawn push starts.

20...f6

And Sakaev sets up his kingside barriers.

20...h4+?! looks tempting, but after 21 wxf2 hxg4 22 Qg5! White threatens to trap the queen with h4. Black can survive with 22...e5 23 h4 w_d7 25 fx_e5, but this is not what he really wants. Here Black could instead exchange queens with 21...wxf2+ 22 Qxf2, but White keeps a slight edge. With the possibilities of g5 and Qg4, followed with h6, White if anything has better chances of kingside pressure without the queens.

21 Qf2

It is very difficult to play with complete accuracy a string of strategic moves, without making an unnecessary move with loss of tempo. A perfectionist might well be wondering whether this king move was necessary, especially with the king getting in the way of the second rank (queen to f2 or g2).

21 Qg1? might be better, and after quiet play by Black, White has avoided the king move. White played this knight move next time round, so the question is one of timing.

If Black wanted to try to open up the game, before White has the chance of playing Qf3, then he could try 21...e5 22 dxe5 fxe5 23 fxe5 (23 Qge2 is to be considered) 23...wx_e5 24 Qf3 w_g3+ 25 w_f2, and Black's isolated d-pawn is under pressure, whether the queens are on the board or off. If, for example, 25...w_d6, White has 26 a3 Qc6 27 a2 with an edge.

Psychologically, it is of course difficult for White to retreat to his earlier knight move, Qg1-h3, and return with h3-g1 and Qg1-f3. Very few players would want to consider it, and fewer would actually play this line. Here too it is doubtful whether White would have been more than level after 21...Qc7 22 Qf3 w_ac8 anyway.

21...w_d6

Possibly Sakaev felt he wanted to prevent f5.

21...Qc7 is again about equal. See too the note to Black's 26th, below.

22 Qg1

Redeveloping.
22 e4?! is visually aggressive, but leaves far too many weaknesses on the kingside and in the centre after 22...dxe4 23 dxe4 wb6.  
22...c7 23 f3 eac8
Natural moves by both sides.

24 h6
White wants to weaken Black's dark-squared pawns on g7, f6 and e5. He is quite probably not expecting that Black would allow the opening of the h-file, but the ...g6 reply will weaken the f6-pawn.

24 g5 f5 is at best equal for White, since if he were to try to take advantage of the e5-square with 25 e5, Black can offer the exchange of knights with 25...d7 or 25...c6. White would need to be careful about Black's pressure on the c-file, helped perhaps by ...b5.

24...g6
Of course, Black wants to keep the files closed.

25 a3
If 25 e4? dxe4 26 dxe4 w7 27 xxc7 xc7 28 g5 d5, and Black's knight gains a critical defensive square. After 29 xg6 xf6 30 xf6+ xf6, Black has if anything slightly the better of equality, White's three pawns in the centre and on the kingside each being isolated.

25...c6

26 e4
He plays to continue the attack, necessarily so.

26 g5?! f5 might look at first to be equal, but Black now even has a slight edge, White's a-pawn push having weakened his queenside. Black could consider at various stages ...a5, or possibly ...b5-b4.

26...wd8
Bringing the queen back to a safer square, in case of e5, or, after ...dxe4 then dxe4. Maybe there is a slight question mark over Black's 21...wd6. Was this the most accurate?

26...dxe4 27 dxe4 wd8 28 g5 makes some progress for White on the dark squares.

27 a2
White adds a little pressure first before pushing with e5: 27 e5 b5 is premature.

27...e7
Black decides to be suspicious of opening up the centre with 27...dxe4 28 dxe4 h8 29 g5 f5 30 f6. There are too many dangerous open lines after,
for example, 30...Qd7 31 Qxd7 Qxd7 d5!. Here the computer gives an interesting tactical idea with 29...Qe5?! 30 a3xc7 Qg4+ 31 Qg3 a3xc7 (or 31...a3xc7 32 a3e2) 32 a3e2, but Black's knight is exposed and does not attack effectively. The strong human player will always be careful about such desperado tactics, and sometimes they work, but not here. 28 e5

White decides it is time to close up the kingside pawns, and hopes that he can make some advantage of his extra squares.

28 exd5?! Qxd5 29 a3xd5 exd5 would not be so appropriate. This would be fine if he had castled, and his kingside pawns had not pressed forward, but just here, there are too many hits on the kingside pawns: for example, ...a3d6, ...a3d7, ...a3e6, and Black can, of course, use his rooks on the e-file. 28...f5

Black is happy to block the kingside. Indeed, he might even have been thinking of trying to play for a queenside edge, French-style.

The pawn structure is no longer symmetrical in the centre, once White has played e4 and e5, as White's d4-pawn cannot be protected by any pawns, while the corresponding black pawn on d5 is protected by the e6-pawn. Thus White has to be careful.

29 a3g1

29 g5? would be a positional blunder. White would have no chance of an advantage on either side, while Black could gradually make a few useful pin-pricks on the queenside.

Morozевич instead wants to open up lines with gxf5.

29...a3c6?!

It is difficult to work out what Black is planning with this move. Maybe he is just deciding that it is equal, and that all he needs to do is to hold the balance for a draw.

A more constructive approach, perhaps, would be to advance his queenside pawns with 29...b5, followed by ...a5 and even ...a3b7, by now a better square for the rook than c6.

30 a3b1

Morozевич by contrast is playing rather more directly, putting pressure on f5. Even so, any possible edge for White would seem microscopic.

30...a3h8

Moving away from the g-file.

31 a3h2

A bit more pressure on f5. 31 gxf5 a3xf5 32 a3xf5 exf5 would have been ineffective in terms of winning. Black can plug the gap with ...a3e6, with comfortable play.

31...a3xg4

Do not forget that Sakaev has his own ideas of active play. This is a convenient time to exchange pawns, then cement his kingside, and gradually switch the focus to the queenside.

32 a3xg4 a3f7

329
The bishop is now going to be a 'big pawn' on f7 or g8. If this is required to hold up the defensive pawn structure, then so be it. The bishop plays an important role.

33 \( \text{\textit{\oe2}} \)

The knight gradually shifts over to the kingside attack.

33...\( \text{\textit{\od7}} \)

While Black thinks of starting counter-pressure on the queenside. It is only because the bishop can defend h7 that Black can release the knight from f8.

34 \( \text{\textit{\og5}} \)

More pressure, but Black is holding.

34....\( \text{\textit{\og8}} \)

So White covers both squares, but loses control of the a3-square.

\( 36...\text{\textit{\of8}} \)

With pressure on the a3, f4 and h6 pawns. It is easy enough to cover two pawns, but three starts to create problems.

37 \( \text{\textit{\oa4}} \)

A slightly reluctant pawn push.

37...\( \text{\textit{\od7}} \)

The knight manoeuvre to b6 has done its job, provoking White into playing b3 and a4, and now Sakaev finds a fresh manoeuvre, bringing the knight eventually to b4, via d7, b8 and c6.

He is not interested as yet in taking the h6-pawn, which is dangerous, opening up the h-file.

38 \( \text{\textit{\oa5}} \)

Morozevich would like to play b4, but ...\( \text{\textit{\ob6}} \) would be a good reply. Hence an extra pawn move, although in structural terms it is not particularly desirable. The run of play is in favour of Sakaev.

38...\( \text{\textit{\oc6}} \)

Preparing his alternative knight manoeuvre.

39 \( \text{\textit{\of3}} \)

He decides he needs to overprotect the f4-pawn. The h6-pawn is not too great a concern.

39...\( \text{\textit{\ob8}} \)

Continuing his plan.

40 \( \text{\textit{\ob4}} \)

Probably more to keep the pawns guarded, rather than to try to take the initiative.

40...\( \text{\textit{\obc6}} \)

The last move before the time control, and not the most accurate. Another knight move, 40...\( \text{\textit{\of5}} \), keeps White under pressure, with the rook-
pair making it difficult for White to cover weaknesses on the b- and c-files.

41 \texttt{Ec1!}
With the chance of \texttt{Ec5}, blocking most of Black’s queenside play.

41...\texttt{wxh6?!}
This is very committal, almost surprisingly so just after the time control. It is often difficult to establish what is going on psychologically when a player suddenly does something unusual or controversial. Black has disdained the pawn grab for so many moves, but now he plays it, giving his opponent the first chance he has had of a genuine attack.

Probably Sakaev is making something of a reflex reaction after his previous slight error, allowing White to bring his rook to the c-file. If he can do nothing more on the queenside, the only possible chance he has of winning is on the kingside, and so he takes his risks.

41...\texttt{gf5} 42 \texttt{Ec5} is safe for Black, but he is not necessarily playing for a win here.

42 \texttt{Hh3}
He must use the h-file, and not 42 \texttt{f5? Wh2+}.

42...\texttt{Wh8}

Back to the f-file.

43 \texttt{f5!}
A second sacrifice to vaporize a second pawn. White needs to advance the knight to \texttt{f4} in order to keep the momentum of his attack, but he cannot do this if the pawn is blocked there.

43 \texttt{Hch1 g5} leaves Black ahead.

43...\texttt{exf5}
If 43...\texttt{exf5}, there will be more sacrifices coming up. The pawn sacrifices so far by White have been to open up lines for his pieces, so that he can start to think of a piece attack. The second phase would be to destroy Black’s pawn defences, with piece sacrifices, and then aim for checkmate:

a) 44 \texttt{Hxh7?}! is enterprising, but there is no need to hurry. If Black’s pawn can be forced to reach \texttt{h5}, there will be even better sacrifices there.

b) After 44 \texttt{Hch1 h5} 45 \texttt{f4 We8} 46 \texttt{Exh5+! gxh5} 47 \texttt{Exh5}, White will win either king or queen. Or 45...\texttt{g7} 46 \texttt{Exh5 gxh5} 47 \texttt{Exh5+ g7} 48 \texttt{Hh7} with another breakthrough.

It is more natural for Black to keep open the f-file for pieces. After all, White’s king is still vulnerable on the f-file.
From a blocked pawn structure, and following a few clearance sacrifices, all of White's pieces are attacking. All except for the king, which would rather be well hidden.

This position is now critical. If there is any weakness in Morozevich's sacrificial play, either Sakaev will find a refutation, or at least hold the balance, or alternatively his position will fold.

44...\textit{We}8

Black crawls back to passive defence once he has grabbed the pawn, but could he have played more actively?

a) After 44...\textit{Wxb}4 45 \textit{Wxb}4 \textit{Oxb}4 46 \textit{Oxg}6+ \textit{Og}7 47 \textit{Oxc}7+ \textit{Oxc}7 48 \textit{Of}4 Black is two pawns up in the early endgame, but it is clear that White's pieces are far the more active, and that Black's bishop on g8 is by now highly ineffective:

a1) If now 48...\textit{Oxd}4, White can win a rook with a few tactics after 49 \textit{Ogx}e6+ \textit{Oxe}6 50 \textit{Oxe}6+ \textit{Oxe}6 51 \textit{Ohx}7+.

a2) To cover the knight check on e6, Black can try 48...\textit{Oe}7, but White still plays 49 \textit{Of}xe6+ when Black has a choice of recapture:

b1) 45 \textit{Of}3 is a way of breaking the pin, with great complications after 45...\textit{Og}7, a computer suggestion. The human player might well feel more at ease as Black after 45...\textit{Og}7! 46 \textit{Oxd}4 \textit{g}5, breaking White's attack quickly, and giving Black an advantage.

b2) 45 \textit{Og}2! is more secure, ending up as a probable draw after 45...\textit{Wxb}4
46 \( \text{x}g6+ \text{g}7 47 \text{f}4 \text{f}5 48 \text{x}f5. \) If then 48...\text{x}f4 48 \text{x}f4 \text{ex}f5 50 \text{g}e6+ \text{xe}6 51 \text{xe}6+ \text{g}6 52 \text{h}h1, and White holds with reasonable care. Naturally he cannot force a win in this endgame after so many pawn sacrifices. Alternatively, 48...\text{ex}f5 49 \text{xf}5, and it ends up in a perpetual check after the continuation 49...\text{wd}2+ 50 \text{g}3 \text{e}3+ 51 \text{wd}2+.

One gets the feeling through many of Morozevich’s games that while he is in his element over the board in such complicated tactical play, few others can stand the pace.

46...\text{d}d8?!

A more active try is 46...\text{e}e7 with difficult play. Black’s idea is to open the valve with the knight, allowing an exchange of rooks, and then counterplay with ...\text{wa}4. Later, Black will be able to close the valve with ...\text{xc}6. The critical line is 47 \text{fe}6! \text{xc}5 48 bxc5:

a) There are then various sacrificial threats on h7. If Black tries 48...h5, White keeps the initiative flowing with 49 \text{de}4! f4 50 \text{f}6 (50 \text{xf}4? \text{f}5 favours Black, while 50 \text{d}6 \text{wd}7 is less clear than the main line) 50...\text{wh}7 (or 50...\text{xe}6 51 \text{xe}8 \text{wh}3 52 \text{f}6 with advantage to White) 51 \text{gg}5 \text{wh}8 52 \text{wh}4, and White is pressing hard.

b) 48...\text{ex}6 49 \text{dh}7 \text{ax}h7 50 \text{wh}6 regains the piece with advantage after, for example, 50...\text{gg}8 51 \text{wh}4 \text{wh}7 52 \text{gg}5 \text{we}7 53 \text{wh}4.

c) A potentially more dangerous try would be 48...\text{xe}6, and if 49 \text{dx}h7?, Black has 49...\text{f}4! 50 \text{f}6+ \text{wh}3 51 \text{xe}8 \text{exe}8 52 \text{wh}4 \text{gg}8!, and White would have overplayed his sacrifices. However, with 49 \text{hx}h7+ \text{gg}8 50 \text{gg}1 (there may be other good moves) 50...\text{wd}7 (50...\text{wa}4 51 \text{xe}7 wins for White by positional means) 51 \text{wh}2 \text{f}8

45 \text{xf}5

White is more than happy to block the f-file.

45...\text{ex}f5

Black elects to keep as many pawns as possible on the kingside.

45...gx\text{f}5 weakens the g-file and the h5-square.

46 \text{xc}5

White has in compensation the strong passed e-pawn, and later in the game this decides the result. First he consolidates his c-file.

46 e6? \text{e}e5! 47 \text{xc}7 \text{gg}4+ is premature, though.
52 \( \text{Hh}8+ \text{Ag}8 53 \text{Wh}7 \text{Ee}8 53 \text{Wf}7+ \text{Dd}8 \\
55 \text{De}6+ \text{We}6 59 \text{Wxe}6 \text{White wins.} \)

So Black's play seems not quite satisfactory in this line.

47 \( \text{We}3 \)

The queen adds her force behind the passed pawn.

47...h5

Such a move must be an encouragement for the attacker. There is a clear danger of a knight sacrifice on h5, and the g6-pawn is also weakened. White in the game does not sacrifice on these squares, but Black's pieces are forced to take extra cover of these squares, adding to the defensive problems.

Black can still set up a tight ship with 47...Ag7 48 e6 Ad6! (48...xb4?! 49 Wf5 Ac6 50 Wf6 is too greedy; if 50...We7?? 51 Ag6 mate, an attractive double pin), and White has no obvious breakthrough. However, the exchange sacrifice, 49 Bxc6!, maintains the pressure, opening up the e5-square for White's queen. Then 49...bxc6 50 We5 Ad8 51 e7 is reminiscent of the game, and just as difficult for Black, and 49...Wxc6 50 We5 threatens the Agx6 mating idea, and gives Black nothing to try, other than to aim for a perpetual: 50...Wc2+ 51 Ag3 Wb3+ 52 Ah4! Ad1 53 Agx6+ hxg6 54 Ag3+ wins for White.

48 e6

Progress! As well as advancing the passed pawn, White is planning to play We5+, obviously with preparation by an exchange sacrifice on c6.

48...Ag7

If, for example, 48...Ag7, White has 49 Bxc6 bxc6 50 We5. Black is in fact a tempo ahead on the game, but this is of no great significance. The computer gives only quiet moves with the other rook, with 50...Aa8, 50...Ab8, or 50...Ac8, and White could then continue his plan of constriction. Black is moving close to zugzwang.

49 Bxc6!

This simplest, and the most efficient.

White also has a tactical win after 49 Af7+!??, with complicated twists and turns. There is a hidden and spectacular queen sacrifice after 49...Af7 50 Axh5 Axh6+ Ag7 52 Wg7+!! Ag8 53 Af6+ Ah7 54 Axh7 mate. White still needs to subdue Black's play after 49...Af7! 50 Agx6+ Ag7 51 Wg5 Af6, though, but he has a winning attack after 52 Af4+ Ag6 53 Wxh5 Bxe6 54 Ag3+ Af8 55 Wg5 Af7 56 Wg7+ Af7 57 Ax e6.

It is better, though, when given the choice, to play simple wins rather than complicated wins.

49...bxc6

Or 49...Wxc6? 50 Wxe5+ Ag7 51 Agx6 mate.

50 We5+

The critical check. Note how White has complete control over the dark squares.
50...\texttt{\underline{\textit{g7}}}
Forced.

51 \texttt{\underline{\textit{Wf6}}}

The queen finds an even better dark-coloured square.

52...\texttt{\underline{\textit{xb8}}}

Black is only a toehold away from a catastrophic piece loss. If the queen moves into ‘safety’, White has \texttt{\underline{\textit{xg6}}} mate. If the bishop moves, with 52...\texttt{\underline{\textit{h7}}}, White wins with 53 \texttt{\underline{\textit{f7}}+}. Only the other rook may move.

52 \texttt{\underline{\textit{e7}}}
The pawn pushes harder.

52...\texttt{\underline{\textit{h7}}}
Again, 52...\texttt{\underline{\textit{Wxe7}}}? 53 \texttt{\underline{\textit{xg6}}} mate.

52...\texttt{\underline{\textit{xb4}}} allows White to queen the pawn after 53 \texttt{\underline{\textit{xg6+ Wxg6}}} 54 \texttt{\underline{\textit{Wxg6 Xxh5+ Wg7}}} 56 \texttt{\underline{\textit{e8W}}}.

53 \texttt{\underline{\textit{Ff3}}}
Another thump on the e-file.

53...\texttt{\underline{\textit{g8}}}
If 53...\texttt{\underline{\textit{xb4}}}, then 54 \texttt{\underline{\textit{Wf8+}}}.

54 \texttt{\underline{\textit{Wf6+}}}
Forcing the king back.

54...\texttt{\underline{\textit{h8}}}
What now? The computer even sug-

A throat-choker. White no doubt has other winning lines, but planning to exchange the knight for the lightsquared bishop, and then promoting the pawn, is quickest.

58...\texttt{\underline{\textit{Ag8}}}
Black could last longer with 58...\texttt{\underline{\textit{Ag8}}}

59 \texttt{\underline{\textit{Be5 Ff7}}} 60 \texttt{\underline{\textit{Wxf7+ Xxf7}}} 61 \texttt{\underline{\textit{Wb7 Wh7}}}

62 \texttt{\underline{\textit{Wxa8 Xxa8}}} 63 \texttt{\underline{\textit{e8W Xxe8}}} 64 \texttt{\underline{\textit{Axex8}}, but White, a knight up in return for a few ineffective pawns, will win. If 64...\texttt{\underline{\textit{Ag7}}, then simply 65 \texttt{\underline{\textit{Cd3}}}.}

59 \texttt{\underline{\textit{Be6 1-0}}}

If now 59...\texttt{\underline{\textit{Wb8}}, White has 60 \texttt{\underline{\textit{Ff7}}}}

mate, and after 59...\texttt{\underline{\textit{g7}}} 60 \texttt{\underline{\textit{xg7 Xxg7}}}

White several ways to win, maybe the simplest being 61 \texttt{\underline{\textit{Be6}}} followed by \texttt{\underline{\textit{Cc6}}}. 
1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Qc3 b4 4 f3

For alternative lines against the Nimzo-Indian, see 4 Qc2 in Game 12, Bareev-Efimenko, and 4 e3 in Game 15, Sokolov-Polgar.

4...d5

The Ragozin Variation. It can be reached via either a Queen’s Gambit, or, as here, the Nimzo-Indian. Naturally there is a mixture of both sets of ideas.

More standard Nimzo-Indian plans would include 4...c5, 4...0-0, or perhaps 4...Qe4.

5 cxd5

White treats it as a version of the Queen’s Gambit Exchange Variation, normally played with ...Qe7 rather than ...Qb4. The Nimzo bishop pins the White knight on c3, but also allows Black’s knight to be pinned on f6 by g5. This allows sharper play for Black, but in return is less solid.

5...exd5

5...Qxd5 and 5...Qxd5 would be playable, but slightly less trustworthy.

6 g5

Continuing the main line.

6 Qa4+ Qc6 7 Qe5 may be a temptation, but after 7...Qd7 Black is comfortably equal. If 8 Qxd7 Qxd7, Black is ahead in development, making White’s bishop-pair of little significance. If instead 8 Qxc6 bxc6 9 Qxc6 Qa4 10 Qxe4, Black is equal.

6...0-0

Black wants to play ...c5 without the preparatory ...Qd7.

The standard main line is 6...Qbd7 7 e3 c5 8 Qd3 Qa5 9 Qc2 c4 10 f5 0-0 11 0-0, maybe slightly favouring White. The bishops often drop back to h4 and g3.

6...h6 7 h4 (7 Qxf6 is level) 7...g5 8 Qg3 Qe4 is the most uncompromising line for Black, quickly gaining space with his pieces, though before the remaining pieces have developed, and leaving the king open.

After 9 Qd2 Qxc3 10 Qxc3 Qxc3 11 Qc1 Qb2 12 Qxc7 We7 13 Qd6 We6 14 Qb1 Qc3, the general impression might well be that White keeps an edge, but it has been difficult for him to prove this.

The endgame seems better for White after 15 Qa3 Qc6 16 e3 Qxd4 17 Qb5 Qe5 18 0-0 Qd6 19 Qxd6 Qxd6 20 Qe4 We5 21 Qxd5 Qxd5 22 Qf6+ Qf8
23 \text{d5} \text{e7} 24 \text{c7} \text{b8}. Following 25 f4 \text{f5} 26 e4 \text{xe4} 27 \text{be1} \text{d5} 28 \text{xe4} \text{xc7} 29 \text{c4} \text{e5}, I.Sokolov-A.Onischuk, Poikovsky 2006, White kept a very slight endgame edge, but Onischuk carefully held the draw. Less than a fortnight later, Sargissian demonstrated a much clearer endgame advantage with 25 e4 \text{g7} 26 f3d1 a6 27 \text{f1} \text{g4} 28 f3 \text{hc8} 29 \text{bc1} \text{h5} 30 \text{f2}, and duly won in G.Sargissian-K.Landa, German League 2006. White’s advantage in this was to create an attacking force with the kingside pawns, rather than, as in the Sokolov game, concentrating on his pieces.

7 \text{e3}

White develops his second bishop.

7 \text{b3}? looks promising, but seems almost unexplored.

7...\text{c5}

Movsesian aims for immediate central counterplay.

Mimicking the Queen’s Gambit Exchange with, for example 7...\text{c6} 8 \text{d3} \text{bd7} 9 0-0, seems promising for White. The bishop on b4 is not adding to the defence, when compared with the bishop on e7 in the QGD.

8 \text{dxc5}

White forces Black to decide how to recover the pawn. Other moves allow Black to equalize.

8...\text{bd7}

8...\text{xc5}? 9 \text{xf6} \text{xf6} 10 \text{xd5} allows White to win a pawn for inadequate compensation.

9 \text{xc1}

White has tried 9 \text{e2} \text{xc3} 10 bxc3 \text{xc5} 11 \text{h4} \text{ce4} 12 \text{wd4} \text{wa5} 13 \text{wb4 wc7}, drawn in V.Loginov-G.Kuzmin, Tashkent 1987, without much progress. Wang Yue plays some-

thing far more ambitious, and this, indeed, is the current main line.

9...\text{wa5}

Black needs to keep up pressure on the diagonal, otherwise he is worse. 9...\text{xc5} 10 \text{wd4 xc3}+ 11 \text{xc3} leaves White happy.

10 \text{a3}?

This is not the only try, but it is certainly the most enterprising. White sacrifices the exchange, but keeps the extra pawn, and sets up a dangerous queenside pawn majority.

Alternatively:

a) 10 \text{xf6 xf6} 11 \text{wd4 xc5} 12 \text{wd2} \text{e6} is about equal. White can gain a pawn with 13 \text{d5 wd2+} 14 \text{xd2 xd5} 15 \text{xc5 fc8}, but it is unlikely that he will keep it permanently.

b) 10 \text{d2} leads to a few minor tactics after 10...\text{de4} 11 \text{exe4 dxe4} 12 \text{a3 xc5} 13 \text{b4} (White can perhaps try something else here) 13...\text{xb4} 14 axb4 \text{wg5} 15 \text{xe4 we7} 16 \text{wd4}, but once Black has brought the knight into play with, for example, 16...\text{b6}, he is equal.

10...\text{b6}, tried a couple of times, is inventive. Play continued with 11 \text{c6 d4} 12 \text{cxd7 xc3} 13 \text{bxc3 xc3} 14 \text{xf6}

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gxf6 15 Bxc3 \(N\)xc3 16 dxcBw Bxc8, which is the end of Black's attack. After 17 \(A\)a6 Bcd8 18 \(A\)e2, A.Moiseenko-G.Giorgadze, Spanish Team Championship 2005, Black should not have convincing compensation for rook versus two bishops, but White's play later crumbled, possibly the result of time pressure.

10...Bxc3+ 11 Bxc3

11 Bxc3 is possible, and will give reasonable compensation for a pawn sacrifice, but Wang Yue is aiming for much more with an exchange sacrifice. He is following a line devised by Topalov, quite often a guarantee of sharp and intricate play.

11...\(A\)e4

The only sensible move.

12 B4

12 \(A\)a1 Bxc3 13 b4 transposes, but Black may have additional possibilities with 12...f6!? 13 Bb4 \(A\)d8 14 \(A\)f4 Bxc3 15 Bxc3 Be8!??, giving chances of equality. It is often best to cut down the additional possibilities.

12...Bxc3

A queen move is absurd here. He must accept the sacrifice, otherwise he is a pawn down.

13 \(A\)a1

Or 13 \(A\)b3, transposing.

13...\(A\)a4

Black is aiming for counterplay.

13...Bc7 14 \(A\)f4 Bc6 15 Bxc3 allows White easy play.

14 Bxc3


14...a5!?  

Movsesian is aiming for a quick sacrificial counterattack before White has developed his kingside. It is an interesting idea, but not totally convincing.

Another possibility is 14...f6 15 \(A\)f4 Be8:

a) If 16 \(A\)d4 a6, White has to avoid 17 \(A\)b5? axb5! 17 b5 is possible, but after 17...\(A\)e5 18 \(A\)e2 \(A\)g4 White cannot trap the queen, and Black probably keeps a slight edge.

b) 16 \(A\)d3 seems to give White a slight edge after 16...\(A\)f8 (16...a5? 17 \(A\)c2 axb4 18 \(A\)d3) 17 \(A\)d4 \(A\)d7 18 \(A\)c2 \(A\)a6 19 \(A\)b3 (or, of course, 19 \(A\)d3, repeating) 19...\(A\)c6 20 a4 \(A\)xa4 21 \(A\)xd5+ \(A\)h8 22 \(A\)c4 b5. Black is the exchange for a pawn up, but White has the more impressive minor pieces, and a strong passed pawn. Moreover, Black's bishop on a4 is just about on the worst possible square.
Movsesian has every reason to avoid this line. The problem is on his next move.

15 b5

He wants to keep his pawns strong and active.

15...c5?! 15

This had been played many months earlier by Carlsen (see the notes to Black's 16th). Movsesian clearly overestimated the improvement he had analysed.

It is always difficult for the defender whether to make a return sacrifice after a gambit, or whether to try to defend. Here it seems that defence would have been the better option.

Black would probably have done better in the style of Steinitz, keeping the extra material, and manoeuvring with pieces rather than pawns, giving nothing away. 15...e8, followed by ...f8, and if required ...e6, puts the onus on White:

a) After, for example, 16 d4 f8 17 d3 e6 18 c2 c4 19 xc4 dxc4 20 xe6 xe6 21 d2 ac8 Black seems to be slightly better.

b) Or 16 d3 f8 17 0-0 d7 18 e5 ac8 19 b1 xe5 20 xe5 xa3 with advantage to Black.

16 xc5 d7

It is essential for Black to develop with the bishop, taking control of the d-file with the rook. It is also useful to try to attack the b5 pawn. Black needs to set up a queenside pawn majority as soon as possible in case of any piece simplification.

16...e6? 17 c1 f8 18 a1 c2 19 e2 c1+ 20 xc1 xc1+ 21 d1 a1 22 a4 was a quick win for White in V.Topalov-M.Carlsen, Wijk aan Zee 2007. Movsesian demonstrates an improvement, but Wang Yue still shows that Black's play is inadequate.

17 e2

White must develop quickly, before his king is in trouble.

The computer suggests grabbing another pawn, with a likely winning advantage after 17 xd5, but the experienced player will be likely to regard this as much too greedy. 17...e6 18 d3 ac8 19 e4 is White's defensive idea, but after 19...h6! the bishop cannot cover both the d8- and c1-squares. If 20 d2 f8 21 b1 xa3, even the computer admits Black is now winning.

17 f8
Black has a choice of moving rooks to c8. He is being careful, though, to keep the queen’s rook on a8 to help the pawn being pushed through.

18 \textit{\textit{\textbf{W}}xd5  \textit{\textbf{N}}c1+} \\
18...\textit{\textbf{Rx}}xb5 19 \textit{\textbf{N}}d1  \textit{\textbf{N}}c1 transposes to the notes to Black’s 19th move. Here 19...\textit{\textbf{W}}c4 20 \textit{\textbf{W}}xc4  \textit{\textbf{N}}xc4 leaves Black’s rook less active than in the main line.

\textbf{19  \textit{\textbf{N}}d1} \\

The only move.

19...\textit{\textbf{W}}xb5 \\
Hoping to salvage something in the endgame. Black has a rook and pawn for two minor pieces, which would mean that Black is about half a pawn-point down in terms of material balance. If, though, Black is able to exchange queens, and start his queenside pawns moving, the play might become unclear.

19...\textit{\textbf{Rx}}xb5 20  \textit{\textbf{Q}}d2  \textit{\textbf{W}}xa3 21 \textit{\textbf{W}}xb5  \textit{\textbf{Wa2}}+ 22  \textit{\textbf{Q}}d3 (22 \textit{\textbf{W}}xc1??  \textit{\textbf{N}}c8+ leads to checkmate) 22...\textit{\textbf{N}}c8 continues with wild and sacrificial play, but in the end Black runs out of attack. A rook versus three minor pieces is a large deficit. Here 23 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d4 \textit{\textbf{N}}c5 24 \textit{\textbf{W}}xb7  \textit{\textbf{W}}c4+ 25 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e4  \textit{\textbf{W}}xg5 26  \textit{\textbf{Q}}b3  \textit{\textbf{W}}c5 27 \textit{f}4! allows Black to recover a piece, but leaves

White firmly in control.

\textbf{20  \textit{\textbf{W}}xb5} \\
The simplest and most direct way of playing.

Lines such as 20 e4  \textit{\textbf{N}}a1 21  \textit{\textbf{Q}}e3 are possible, but do not necessarily gain ground.

\textbf{20...\textit{\textbf{Rx}}xb5} 21  \textit{\textbf{Q}}d4 \\

The dream centralization of the knight, which ensures that White’s position is, at the very least, secure, and now White can play for a win.

Is it absolutely certain that he is indeed winning by force? It is difficult to say. Black will have chances of creating counterplay with his extra queenside pawn, and this could easily create problems if he is accurate. White has done the best he can so far, and if it can be shown that he is not winning, then so be it. The onus is on Black to play extremely precisely. The fact that he has to resign on move 32 would appear to indicate that he is not defending so well.

\textbf{21...\textit{\textbf{N}}d7} \\
A choice to be made here.

The inaccurate way of playing the defence would be 21...\textit{\textbf{N}}a4? 22  \textit{\textbf{Q}}d2  \textit{\textbf{N}}xd1+ 23  \textit{\textbf{Q}}xd1  \textit{\textbf{N}}xd1 24 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xd1, and af-
ter simplification, Black has no counterplay. White’s overall plan is to centralize the king, maybe to d3, and put pressure on Black’s queenside pawns. White has two minor pieces versus only one rook, and if a black pawn is under attack from both sides, it is difficult to set up a good defence.

21...\texttt{a6} is more sensible. A computer suggestion is 22 \texttt{d2} \texttt{ac8} 23 \texttt{g4} \texttt{xh1} 24 \texttt{xc8} \texttt{xh2} 25 \texttt{h3}, but on the whole human players do not want to sacrifice a pawn just for simplification unless, of course, there is a clear win. They would prefer 22 a4 \texttt{ac8} 23 \texttt{e7} \texttt{b1} 24 \texttt{d2} b5 25 axb5 \texttt{xh5} 26 \texttt{xb5} \texttt{xb5} 27 \texttt{c2}. This position is difficult to assess, although clearly Black is not better. Can White win? Or can Black hold?

![Diagram](image)

The extra pawn on the kingside would be a win for White if Black’s a-pawn drops. Black’s defensive hopes are to keep the a-pawn alive, and preferably dangerous. White will then find it difficult to bring the king to the a-or b-files. Also, while the bishops would help defend any push with the a-pawn, it is hard to attack the pawn directly.

Ultimately, though, it would be unlikely for Black to defend. Try, for example, 27...\texttt{d5}+ 28 \texttt{d3} \texttt{d7} 29 \texttt{h4} f6 30 \texttt{a1} \texttt{cd8} 32 \texttt{a3} \texttt{d5} when Black will be unable to improve his pieces, not least because if the king centralizes with, for example 31...\texttt{f8}, White’s bishops can start to attack the kingside pawns, such as after 32 \texttt{c2}. White meanwhile will be able at some stage to bring the dark-squared bishop into play, and maybe start pushing some kingside pawns.

Movsesian prefers to keep control with the bishop on the e8-a4 diagonal.

22 0-0

This is played not so much to bring the king to safety, but rather to allow the bishop to move, without using up any more time.

After 22 \texttt{d2} \texttt{a1}, the bishop is still pinned. 23 \texttt{e7} \texttt{a4}, followed perhaps by ...\texttt{a2+} or ...\texttt{c8}, gives chances to defend for Black.

22...\texttt{ac8}

The rooks need to help.

22...b5 23 \texttt{c2} \texttt{xf1}+ 24 \texttt{xf1} b4 25 axb4 axb4 26 \texttt{e2} \texttt{a2} 27 \texttt{d3} would allow White to swallow up Black’s passed pawn with little difficulty.

23 \texttt{f3}!!
He would like to bring his pieces into play, naturally, but this provides weaknesses, in particular making it easier for Black to set up a queenside passed pawn.

23 \( \text{a}7! \) is tighter, covering the a3-pawn. There is no easy way for Black to push the bishop off the diagonal. If 23...b5? 24 \( \text{b}3 \), White gains a pawn with a knight fork.

23...\( \text{a}8! \)

Movsesian keeps the bishop away from e7, and does not mind so much giving up a pawn on b7. Naturally, he will want to take White’s a-pawn.

23...\( \text{b}5 \) 24 \( \text{a}7 \) is a critical alternative. Black cannot safely breakthrough with 24...b4 25 axb4 a4 26 b5, as now the bishop covers a3, and White also keeps his passed pawn. Here 24...\( \text{c}3 \) looks complicated at first, but 25 \( \text{e}2! \) successfully attacks Black’s queenside pawns.

24 \( \text{a}8! \)

A pawn gone, but this is not the whole story.

24...\( \text{b}3 \)

White’s pawn will drop too.

Much will depend on Black’s remaining a-pawn. If this pawn can be held indefinitely, then he has good chances of holding. If not, then with two extra minor pieces and an extra pawn in return for the rook, White will win.

25 \( \text{a}4?! \)

A clever response? Or a good bluff?

If the a-pawns are exchanged, White should still have a winning material advantage. If, however, White has to give up the a-pawn, and Black still keeps his own a-pawn, the position could quite likely end up as a draw. To put this the other way round, it doesn’t really matter whether White keeps his a-pawn or not. All that is important is getting rid of Black’s pawn.

This helps explain why White strangely gives up his a-pawn. White wants to stop Black playing ...a4 himself, when the bishop protects the pawn.

25...\( \text{a}4 \)

Naturally, but now the bishop is blocking the a-pawn.

26 \( \text{d}8 \)

All part of his plan.

26...\( \text{b}3 \)

One gets the impression that Movsesian changes his mind halfway through, and decides next move that he feels forced to make a piece sacrifice in desperation.

26...\( \text{c}5 \) 27 \( \text{b}6 \) \( \text{xf}1+ \) 28 \( \text{x}f1 \) \( \text{c}1+ \) 29 \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{b}1 \) 30 \( \text{c}5+ \) \( \text{e}8 \) 31 \( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{d}7 \) gives much better chances for Black to hold. Even so, the likelihood is that White should win with careful play.

27 \( \text{xb}3 \)

Or was Movsesian merely setting a desperate trap? 27 \( \text{xa}5?? \) \( \text{c}4 \) wins a rook, as if 28 \( \text{xc}3? \) \( \text{xf}5 \) mate.

Taking the bishop by White is more natural anyway.
27...\text{x}f1+ 28 \text{xf}1

And when Black has taken the knight, a few tactics mean that his a-pawn will not be lost, and so the struggle remains.

28...a4??

A strangely panicky response.

Black could still force White to work hard with 28...\text{xa}b3 29 \text{c}6, and then 29...\text{c}3. Compared with positions discussed on Black's 21st, White's pieces are much more fluid. Play would still be delicate, though, after 30 \text{e}4 a4 31 \text{a}5!! making use of checks and pins on b4:

a) If then 31...\text{b}3 32 \text{c}2! \text{b}2 (32...\text{a}3?? 33 \text{b}+4+) 33 \text{a}4 \text{a}2 34 \text{b}4+, and the bishops escape when White wins.

b) Black lasts longer with 31...\text{c}1+ 32 \text{e}2 \text{g}8 (32...a3 33 \text{b}+4+) 33 \text{d}2 \text{h}1, and it is still a genuine fight. After 34 h3 a3 35 \text{d}5 Black's advanced passed pawn looks dangerous, but White's king and two bishops will pester Black's rook, and cover the advance of the a-pawn: for example, 35...\text{a}1 36 \text{c}3 \text{c}1 37 \text{d}3 \text{d}1+ 38 \text{d}2 \text{a}1 39 f4 a2 40 g4 h6 41 \text{b}3 \text{h}1 41 \text{a}2 \text{h}3, and while the pawns are level, and on the same side of the board, the two bishops will eventually outplay the rook.

It is always difficult to interpret the psychology of a player making obvious mistakes. A possible interpretation might well have been that Movsesian had appreciated that his opening preparation was seriously flawed, and that he felt depressed at his play, and so tried a wild stab.

29 \text{d}4

This will do nicely. The three pieces should be able to block Black's outside passed pawn. Even if by some chance the pawn will advance and force the sacrifice of a minor piece in return, the other two pieces will win.

29...\text{c}5

If 29...a3, then simply 30 \text{d}5.

30 \text{b}6

All three minor pieces are working together.

30...\text{e}5

30...\text{c}1+ 31 \text{e}2 a3 32 \text{d}5 is also simple enough for White.

31 \text{a}6 a3

As far as it gets. Black's bishop sacrifice was nowhere close to working.

32 \text{c}4 1-0

The end.
1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Qf3 e6

This is still part of the Semi-Slav family. 3...Qf6 is usual, but there is nothing wrong with the text.

4 Qc3

If 4 e3, Black can keep the Stonewall option with 4...f5. The argument is that White no longer has the option of trying for an advantage with g3 (in comparison with lines in the Dutch starting with 1 d4 f5 2 c4 e6 and ...d5). Here 5 g4!? is an attempt to try to break up the wall: 5...fxg4 6 e5 Qf6 7 Qxg4 Qe7 8 Qd3 0-0 Qg1 We8 1 Qc3 Qxg4 11 Wxg4 Qf6 12 Wg2 looked promising for White, and ended up as a win in S. Volkov-M. Kobalija, Russian Team Championship 2005.

4...Qf6

Black keeps to the established main lines.

4...dxc4 is another sharp Semi-Slav pawn grab on c4. After 5 e3 b5 6 a4 Qb4 7 Qd2 Qb7 8 b3 a5, play is already tense on 9 bxc4 Qxc3 10 Qxc3 b4 or 9 axb5 Qxc3 10 Qxc3 cxb5 11 bxc4 b4 12 Qb2. Black has his queenside pawn advances, and has created either a single passed pawn or two of them, but he has lost influence on the kingside.

Morozevich has found something even sharper with 9 Qe4!? f5 10 Qc5!. The tactics were already on full blast in A. Morozevich-K. Miton, Sochi 2007, with

10...c3 11 Qxc7 Qe7 12 Qc5 Q5! (there is no hurry to take the knight) 13 We2 e4 14 0-0 (14 Qxc3? exf3 favours Black) 14...exf3 15 Qxf3 cxd2 16 axb5 Qf6 17 bxc6. This would be an extremely difficult position to evaluate and find the best move for Black, untutored and over the board. Ftacnik suggests 17...Qd4 or 17...Qf6 as possibilities. Instead Miton played quietly, not bringing the knights into play, and after 17...Qa7?! 18 Qd3 0-0 19 Qxb4 Qxb4 20 Qc2 White was better, with bishop and two powerful passed pawns against the two ineffective knights. Morozevich later won.

In retrospect, this might have been a better game to give as a representative win for Morozevich than his game against Sakaev. In both cases, Morozevich showed his exceptional imagination, but it has to be admitted that against Sakaev he overpressed badly before winning.
5 \( \text{g5} \)

With highly complicated gambit play, advocated by Botvinnik over half a century ago, and by many other top grandmasters since.

5 e3 reaches the other main lines of the Semi-Slav. For the latest example in this book, see Game 31, Mamedyarov-Nepomniachtchi.

5 \( \text{cxd5} \text{ exd5}! \) avoids, for Black, the dullness of the symmetrical Slav Exchange (5...\text{cxd5}). The Orthodox Exchange after 5...\text{exd5} tends to be slightly less effective than when the \( \text{Qf3} \) move has been delayed after, for example, 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 \( \text{Qc3} \text{ Qf6} \) 4 \( \text{cxd5} \text{ exd5} \). It is a question of timing. White would like to play \( \text{Qg5}, \text{e3}, \text{Wc2}, \) and \( \text{Ad3} \) quickly, but the extra knight move slows him down.

5...\text{h6}

Avoiding the 5...\text{dxc4} 6 e4 b5 7 e5 \text{h6} 8 \( \text{h4} \text{ g5} \) 9 \( \text{Qxg5} \text{ hxg5} \) 10 \( \text{Qxg5} \text{ Abd7} \) Botvinnik main line. Forgive the author if we do not add several pages to the discussion of this extraordinarily complicated variation. We merely note that 5...\text{h6} is currently far more fashionable.

5...\text{Qbd7} 6 e3 leads back to a Queen’s Gambit Declined.

6 \( \text{h4} \)

For 6 \( \text{Qxf6} \), see the notes in Game 30, Gelfand-Alekseev.

6...\text{dxc4}

So it is still a gambit.

This is by far the most popular, although the Orthodox lines such as 6...\text{Qbd7} and 6...\text{Qe7} are also to be considered.

7 e4

The main line.

7 a4, to prevent ...\text{b5}, has been tried a few times, but is not especially dangerous after 7...\text{Qb4}.

7...\text{g5}

7...\text{b5} 8 e5 \text{h6} 9 \( \text{Qh4} \text{ g5} \) transposes into the Botvinnik system. Again, as at move 5, the players dodge this.

8 \( \text{Qg3} \text{ b5} \)

Holding the c4-pawn. Black is a pawn up, and he has a dangerous queenside pawn majority. This is all good news so far, but Black has made seven pawn moves out of his first eight, which means that first his pieces development has been slowed down, and second that the quick advance of the pawns leaves behind several weaknesses, which White would like to take advantage of.

9 \( \text{Qe5!} \)

A recent experiment. This looks like the natural move, starting the attack on the king, and making it easier to play \( \text{h4} \) without allowing a ...\text{g4} counterattack, but it has not often been played. One problem is that White’s king gets stuck in the centre for a long time, and the general feeling has been that it is difficult for White to start an attack when he is also being forced to watch his own king.

As a result, White has usually tried 9
\( \texttt{\#e2}, \) developing and keeping the king safe. Quite often it is a case of one quiet move, and then wild tactical play. Just before Kasparov’s retirement, Dreev surprised him by sacrificing a rook after 9 \( \texttt{\#e2 \#b7} \) 10 h4 g4 11 \( \texttt{\#e5} \) h5 12 f3 \( \texttt{\#bd7} \) 13 fxg4 hxg4 14 0-0 \( \texttt{\#xe5} \) 15 \( \texttt{\#xe5} \), and now 15...\( \texttt{\#d7} \)!, G.Kasparov-A.Dreev, Russian Championship, Moscow 2004. Quite a shock, but Kasparov kept his composure. After 16 \( \texttt{\#xh8} \) \( \texttt{\#xh4} \) 17 \( \texttt{\#xg4} \) \( \texttt{\#xh8} \) 18 e5 Dreev made one sacrifice too many, and after 18...\( \texttt{\#xe5} \) 19 dxe5 \( \texttt{\#c5} \) 20 \( \texttt{\#f2} \) \( \texttt{\#xe5} \) 21 \( \texttt{\#e2} \) White was material ahead, but Dreev took his opponent to a long hard struggle. Apparently Dreev had forgotten his home analysis, which would have gone 18...0-0-0 19 \( \texttt{\#e2} \) c5 20 \( \texttt{\#xb5} \) a6 with complicated play. This is one of many, many complicated lines in this sharp opening, and it is only human for even the top professionals to lose track of their analysis.

9...\( \texttt{\#b4} \)

This is unusual, but surely must be a critical idea. Black is pressing on both the d- and e-pawns, with \( \texttt{\#xe4} \) being a threat. As so often in chess, if both players try totally logical moves, sharp tactical play soon results. Black is attacking in the centre, certainly, but he is also moving the bishop well away from his kingside, and White is soon able to start an attack. It is too early to say with confidence whether Nepomniachtchi’s move, presumably looked at but rejected by other analysts, is good, bad, or merely one of a few alternatives. The line cannot be rejected on the basis of just one game when there are several alternatives for Black later on.

A few months after this game, Alekseev tried 9...\( \texttt{\#b7} \), and lost. See Game 30.

10 \( \texttt{\#e2} \)!

Dangerous, but probably not fully correct.

Cheparinov ignores his opponent’s central pawn attack, and concentrates first on developing his pieces, and then pressing hard on his opponent’s weaknesses. He has eyes on Black’s king. White has already gambited a pawn, and now he gives up a second pawn, and soon a third pawn. This is quite a responsibility for White, trying to ensure that he will keep his piece activity for as long as it takes, but at least he is giving away only pawns, and not pieces.

Most players would probably be content with 10 f3, shoring up the pawn centre, and starting to attack Black’s kingside pawns with h4. There seems to be good compensation for the gambit pawn.

Another idea is 10 \( \texttt{\#f3} \). Then P.Eljanov-V.Potkin, St Petersburg 2002, continued 10...\( \texttt{\#b7} \) 11 \( \texttt{\#d1} \) \( \texttt{\#bd7} \) 12 \( \texttt{\#e2} \) \( \texttt{\#e7} \) 13 0-0 0-0-0 14 d5, and later was agreed drawn in an unclear position after multiple exchanges in the
centre. Here 10...\texttt{dx}d4? is an attempt to force a quick draw by perpetual, but after 11 \texttt{w}xf6 \texttt{xc}3+ 12 bxc3 \texttt{wc}3+ 13 \texttt{e}e2 White's king can escape, even in some lines via \texttt{e}2-f3-g4-h5. After 13...0-0 14 \texttt{d}d1!, White is safe with an extra pawn: for instance, 14...\texttt{wc}2+ 15 \texttt{e}e1 \texttt{wc}3+ 16 \texttt{d}d2, and Black has been forced out of position with the queen checks. In time, White will win with the extra piece.

Accepting gambit pawns is often fully playable, if requiring good nerves. The extra pawn is useful, but the opponent will keep good chances with the pieces. When taking a second or a third gambit pawn, there are two basic possibilities. Either the extra sacrifice is completely unsound, and will lose, or the defender has swallowed too many pawns, and the attacker's pieces are far too strong, and will overrun the defender. Grabbing pawns is often an extreme way of playing, but sacrificing a string of pawns too casually is not good either.

Sometimes the position may be finely divided. It is feasible that the attack may be sound, but will not be decisive if the opponent has made no mistake. Then the natural result would be a sharp perpetual check. Cheparinov's game is close to the edge throughout. He won, but was his gambit idea as powerful as it looks? Or is it ultimately unsound? Or are we heading for the knife-edge of a draw? This remains to be seen.

10...\texttt{xe}4

Consistent with his last move.

11 0-0

White must bring his king out of checks as soon as possible. There is no point in giving away several pawns for an attack, when the opponent has the chance of a counterattack against the king.

Now Black has three main captures. Also perhaps 11...\texttt{d}f6, but then White still has good gambit chances after 12 f4.

11...\texttt{xc}3

This seems the safest.

11...\texttt{xc}3 12 bxc3 \texttt{xc}3 is thoroughly natural, but White can add a piece sacrifice to all the pawn sacrifices with 13 \texttt{xf}7. This is scary, but White's attack does not necessarily win. After 13...\texttt{xf}7 14 \texttt{h}5+ \texttt{g}8 15 \texttt{f}3 \texttt{e}7 16 \texttt{xc}3, there is no immediate mating threat, and Black has time to manœuvre his knight into play with 16...\texttt{d}7 followed by ...\texttt{f}6-d5.

The computer suggestion is not always the best, and instead of the immediate sacrifice on f7, White can improve with 13 \texttt{h}5!:

a) Probably White's position is to be favoured after 13...0-0 14 \texttt{xf}7+ (14 \texttt{xf}7? \texttt{d}d4!) 14...\texttt{xf}7 15 \texttt{xf}7, and now, for example, 15...\texttt{xd}4 (15...\texttt{f}6 16 \texttt{c}1?) 16 \texttt{e}5 \texttt{xd}1 17 \texttt{axd}1 \texttt{xe}5 18 \texttt{xe}5. Further exploration may well
be needed. White's rooks and knight are useful, but if Black can activate his minor pieces and pawns, he might have useful chances.

b) Another try is 13...\(\text{\texttt{W}}d5\) 14 \(\text{\texttt{Q}}xf7\) \(\text{\texttt{R}}f8\), but now, instead of the obvious discovered check (and a possible exchange sacrifice after 15 \(\text{\texttt{Q}}xh6+\) \(\text{\texttt{W}}d8\) 17 \(\text{\texttt{Q}}f7+\) \(\text{\texttt{R}}f7\)), White has 15 \(\text{\texttt{R}}c1\) \(\text{\texttt{Q}}xd4\) 16 \(\text{\texttt{Q}}f3!\) \(\text{\texttt{W}}c5\) 17 \(\text{\texttt{R}}d6\) with advantage.

It can be so difficult for an unprepared player to try to outplay an opponent who is well prepared, and with the help of computer preparation. Nepomniachtchi opts for something slightly less sharp, and correctly so, it would seem.

11...\(\text{\texttt{Q}}xg3\) 12 \(\text{\texttt{fxg3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Q}}xc3\) 13 \(\text{\texttt{bxc3}}\) 0-0 leads to unclear play, but Black again has to be careful with his king.

12 \(\text{\texttt{bxc3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Q}}xc3\)

Or, as just noted, 12...\(\text{\texttt{Q}}xg3\) 13 \(\text{\texttt{fxg3}}\) 0-0 with unclear play.

There seems no good reason, though, to avoid picking up the third extra pawn.

13 \(\text{\texttt{W}}c2\)

He must cover e2, and this seems the best of the alternatives if Black were to decide not to take the bishop.

13...\(\text{\texttt{Q}}xe2+\)

13...\(\text{\texttt{W}}xd4?\) 14 \(\text{\texttt{R}}ad1\) \(\text{\texttt{Q}}xd1\) 15 \(\text{\texttt{R}}xd1\) would be far too greedy. White soon hits back after 15...\(\text{\texttt{W}}c5\) 16 \(\text{\texttt{Q}}xf7\) \(\text{\texttt{Q}}xf7\) 17 \(\text{\texttt{R}}h5+\) \(\text{\texttt{W}}e7\) 18 \(\text{\texttt{Q}}g6\) with a mating attack. Here 14...\(\text{\texttt{Q}}xe2+\) 15 \(\text{\texttt{W}}xe2\) is also good for White; see the notes to Black's 14th, below.

14 \(\text{\texttt{W}}xe2\)

A strange position and, one might assume, critical. If Black does not handle the next few moves well, he could easily lose quickly. If White can find a few good moves, he might have reasonable attacking chances. Maybe though Black can win with perfect play, or maybe, perhaps most frighteningly, Black is already in serious trouble.

14...\(\text{\texttt{h}}5!\)

This is risky, in that he now has to play with complete accuracy. It is not an error, as on move 16, as Black could still have steered the position to at least a perpetual check, and indeed even an advantage.

There are alternatives in which Black can go seriously wrong. For example, 14...\(\text{\texttt{W}}xd4?\) 15 \(\text{\texttt{R}}ad1\) \(\text{\texttt{W}}b6\) 16 \(\text{\texttt{W}}h5\) is foolhardy. Giving up the open file for White's d-pawn is too much. After
16. \( \text{f8} \) 17 \( \text{wxh6} \) \( \text{Qd7} \) 18 \( \text{wg7} \) Black's defences crack.

14...\( \text{wd5?} \) makes far more sense, keeping the file closed, and placing the queen on a good central square which is not easily attacked. Then 15 \( \text{Wh5} \) (15 \( \text{Qg4 Qd7} \) is a possibility, but perhaps too indirect for White, who has given up some pawns) 15...\( \text{sf8} \) 16 \( \text{wxh6 e5} \), and the battle continues. An interesting position to analyse, but in terms of finding the best play for both sides we should concentrate on the main line, where Black has a later improvement.

15 \( \text{f4} \)

White has to open up the f-file, otherwise his attack soon folds, and he would be a few pawns down.

15...\( \text{f5} \)

Black tries to keep the f-file closed, or at least semi-closed. Black succeeds to some extent, but it is clear that he now has serious weaknesses on the dark squares, with e5 being the stepping point for possible invasions on the black side of the board. That is, of course, not the whole story, and later it becomes clear that Nepomniachtchi has done nothing wrong, so far.

The alternatives are:

a) 15...\( \text{wxd4+?} \) 16 \( \text{f2 xf4?} \) 17 \( \text{c5 Wh4} \) 18 \( \text{xf7} \) would be no improvement for Black. He might have gained five extra pawns (now down to four), but his pieces are close to collapse, and his extra pawns in any case attack nothing.

b) Other lines also lead to difficulties. For example, 15...\( \text{h4} \) 16 \( \text{xf7 xf7} \) 17 \( \text{fxg5+ g8} \) 18 \( \text{e5} \), and only a computer might think, if only for a moment, that Black is doing well. In fact, Black's king is far too exposed, and his material advantage of little significance. Play might continue 18...\( \text{we8} \) 19 \( \text{xe8} \) 18...\( \text{h8} \) 20 \( \text{g6 Wxg6} \) 21 \( \text{xf8+UGH7} \) 22 \( \text{xc8} \) with a winning position.

c) Or 15...\( \text{f6} \) 16 \( \text{fxg5} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 17 \( \text{xe5 Nh8} \) 18 \( \text{g6 Ne7} \) 19 \( \text{g7 Qd7} \) 20 \( \text{xf8} \), and White wins.

d) 15...\( \text{g4} \) makes it difficult for White to open the f-file, but with 16 \( \text{f5} \) he can still persist:

\[ \text{d1) 16...f6 17 Qg6 Nh7 18 fxe6 Wxd4+ 19 Qh1 only temporarily blocks the f-file, since after, for example, 19...Qg7 20 Mad1 Wc3 21 Qe1 the queen relinquishes the long diagonal, and Qxf6 should win.} \]

\[ \text{d2) 16...Wxd4+ 17 Qh1 gives another four-pawn plus, but it is unclear how Black is going to defend:} \]

\[ \text{d21) The initial computer suggestion is 17...0-0 18 Mad1 Wc3, but after 19 f6! Black's kingside soon collapses, with either a sacrifice on g4 or White kicks Black's queen out with Qe1, and gives his own queen a check on g5, via e3 or d2.} \]

\[ \text{d22) 17...h4 allows White to continue his pawn push with 18 fxe6. If then 18...Qxe6 19 Qxf7, and Black's final pawn in the centre collapses, and so too will the king, and 18...fxe6 19 Mad1} \]
16...\textit{Wxg5?}

Nepomniachtchi is naturally anxious about the possibility of keeping White’s advanced g-pawn on the board, but his queen is now decentralized, and this allows White to regroup with his pieces.

An immediate 16...\textit{h4}! keeps White on his toes:

a) The immediate attempts at quick tactics do not work for White. If 17 \textit{\texttt{Qg6? f}xg3 18 \textit{\texttt{Qxh8 W}d4+ 19 \textit{\texttt{Qh1 W}xh8, and Black wins. Or, even worse, 17 g6?? \textit{\texttt{hxg3 18 g7 W}d4+ 19 \textit{\texttt{Qh1 W}xh2 mate. Both lines indicate very good reasons why Black should retain his options with the queen on d8.}}

b) White must move his bishop, but if 17 \textit{\texttt{Af2?! W}xg5}, he has clearly lost some time in comparison with the main line.

c) Therefore 17 \textit{\texttt{Af4},} keeping his passed pawn. Play is complicated, with any slight deviations from both sides often ending up as quick losses. A finish with honour on both sides would be 17...\textit{Wxd4+ 18 \textit{\texttt{Qh1 W}e4 19 Wxe4 fxe4 20 g6 \textit{\texttt{Qd7 21 Qxd7 Qxd7 22 g7 Wg8 23 \textit{\texttt{Qd6 0-0 24 Wf7 Qe8 25 Wc7+ Wg8 26 Wd7+ Wc8 27 Wc7+ with a perpetual.}}

This is by no means the end of the story. On move 24, White has a passed pawn on the seventh, and an attacking rook and bishop, and it would be understandable for Black to settle for a draw. Black though has four passed pawns, two on each of the c- and d-files, and even if White can remove the front two pawns, at the cost perhaps of some simplification, there are two more passed pawns in reserve for the endgame. The onus is on White to prove the draw after 24...\textit{e3!}?

There are too many alternatives for either side to prove whether Black wins, or, probably more likely, that it’s an ultimate draw. In practical terms, if strong players were to analyse this whole game in depth, it would be highly unlikely that such a player would want to try this position in depth against one of his peers. Therefore, one might expect, Cheparinov’s imaginative gambit idea will disappear fairly quickly, although perhaps a mainstream player might find it interesting.
Without pretending that this is anything like a full analysis, one possibility is 25 \texttt{a1 c3 26 b2 e3 b4 27 b4} (two pawns down, but Black still has three more passes) 27...\texttt{e8} (now that White no longer has \texttt{c7+}) 28 \texttt{f1 c2 29 c3 d1 30 g1 g6}, and now it is clear that Black’s passed pawn on the seventh is far stronger than the White’s. 17 \texttt{ae1}

With no immediate counterattacks against him, White completes his development, setting up forceful attacking play after a quick interlude of manoeuvring his minor pieces. 17...\texttt{h4}

Now this is a move too late. Black could bring another defensive piece into play with 17...\texttt{h7}, but even here White keeps pressure with 18 \texttt{f4} followed by \texttt{f3}.

18 \texttt{f3}

The knight has done its job on e5. Now it is the turn of other pieces to land there, or to pass through the diagonals and files. 18...\texttt{w4}

If 18...\texttt{d8? 19 b8 b8 b8 20 b5}, and White forks both rooks. 18...\texttt{w5} 19 \texttt{h4} \texttt{g4} is to be considered. Black loses a tempo, but White’s bishop is on a less dangerous diagonal. 20 \texttt{we5} still gives White excellent chances on the dark squares. If 20...\texttt{xh4 21 c7 d7 22 b7}, and quite unexpectedly White switches his attention from the kingside to the queenside.

19 \texttt{w5}

There is no gain of material after 19 \texttt{xh8? xh8 20 we5}, and the skewer of the two rooks, as Black comfortably sidesteps with 19...\texttt{g8}.

19...\texttt{0-0}

The king is out of the centre, but neither on the kingside is it satisfactory.

If 19...\texttt{h5} 20 \texttt{xh4 xh4 21 f4}, and White has a winning attack. There are a couple of ways for Black to keep the position alive for a few moves, but with White’s queen and attacks with other pieces, the game will still not last for long. Or here 20...\texttt{f4 21 c7 e5 22 xf4 e6 23 xe5}, and now with Black’s e- and f-pawns gone, and his king still attacked by all the major pieces, he will not last for long.

20 \texttt{h4}

Now White is only two pawns down.

20...\texttt{f7}
If 20...\textit{wg7}, then White simply keeps the queen with 21 \textit{we3}, with a continuing attack. If 21...\textit{wf6} 22 \textit{xf5} exf5 23 \textit{xb8}, and Black is down to only one extra pawn, while White's pieces remain strong in attack. The drop of the pawn on the e-file leads to extra weaknesses. Here Black could perhaps consider 22...\textit{xb8} 23 \textit{g3+ g7} 24 \textit{xb8 xd4+} 25 \textit{h1}, getting rid of the mighty bishop, but White's queen and rooks continue to create dangerous threats.

The knight plugs any back-rank checks, so that there is no quick checkmate, but White's rook is still almighty, even without checks. 23 \textit{re8}

Black is now pinned to extinction. 23...\textit{c3}

Can Black queen the pawn? Probably not, but Black can do little else, and if White were to play slackly, there might be a slight chance of jumping back into the game. 24 \textit{g6}

White plays vigorously.

21 \textit{wd6}

The invasion of the dark squares pushes into far-flung territory. 21...\textit{d7}

Black feels obliged to give up his e-pawn in return for the chance to develop his pieces. It seems a little too late. Apart from anything else, White will have full control of the e-file with his rook.

21...\textit{h7} does not help. White wins after 22 \textit{f4 g7} 23 \textit{xf5 exf5} 24 \textit{h4+ g8} 25 \textit{e8+ f8} 26 \textit{xf8+ xf8} 27 \textit{h8+}.

22 \textit{xe6}

Simple and good. 22...\textit{f8}

24...\textit{e6}

24...\textit{b7} 25 \textit{xa8 xa8} 26 \textit{e5} does not help.

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25  \( \text{Qxe7} + \)

Possibly 25  \( \text{Rxax8} \)  \( \text{Wxg6} \)  26  \( \text{Wxc6} \) is more accurate. The black queen cannot take the pawn on d4.

25...\( \text{Rxex7} \)  26  \( \text{Rxax8} \)

26...\( \text{Wxg5?} \)

This loses quickly. After 26...\( \text{Rxf7} \), White still has to work:

a) If White were to concentrate on grabbing Black’s advanced c-pawn with 27  \( \text{Wc3?} \)  \( \text{Rd5} \) 28  \( \text{Wxc3} \), Black is better after 28...\( \text{Rxe2} \).

b) 27  \( \text{h3} \)  \( \text{Wg7} \) 28  \( \text{Wc5} \) is a more accurate way of implementing this, the point being that if 28...\( \text{Wxg3} \) 29  \( \text{Rxf5+} \) White is winning. If 29...\( \text{Rg6} \) 30  \( \text{Rxe7} \), Black soon runs out of checks. Otherwise, 29...\( \text{Rxf5+} \) 30  \( \text{Wxf5+} \) is soon checkmate. There is a similar, if slightly more complicated, theme, after 28...\( \text{Rd7} \) 29  \( \text{Wxc3} \) \( \text{Rb6} \) 30  \( \text{Rd8} \) \( \text{Rd5} \) 31  \( \text{Wxc6} \) \( \text{Wxg3} \) 32  \( \text{Rxd5} \) \( \text{We3+} \) 33  \( \text{Rh1} \) \( \text{We2} \) 34  \( \text{Rxf5+} \) \( \text{Rxf5} \) 35  \( \text{Rg5+} \) \( \text{Wg8} \) 36  \( \text{Rg5+} \) \( \text{Rg7} \) 37  \( \text{Rd5+} \), and White soon wins.

White should win, even after best play, but there are chances of an error short of time in a complicated position.

27  \( \text{Wd8} \)

With mate threats, and gaining a tempo.

27...\( \text{Wg7} \)

A sad retreat.

28  \( \text{Rd5} \)

Kicking the queen to a less effective square.

28...\( \text{Rf7} \) 29  \( \text{Rd6} \) 1-0

Winning further material.
1 d4 d5 2 .df4

One of those reasonable but obscure openings that has not been given a clearly recognized name. How about the Mason Variation after the American (formerly Irish) player from the 19th Century? And then there is the Steinitz Counter-Gambit, 2...c5. These were the names given by the late Hooper and Whyld, co-authors of The Oxford Companion to Chess. Presumably in other countries, other names have been allocated, but 2 .df4 is often regarded under the 'London' umbrella: 2 .df3 .df6 3 .df4 is the London System proper.

There is nothing wrong with this move, if we take the slightly negative sense that White cannot be worse yet. Whether White can be better remains to be seen. The bishop move is a developing move, and does not get in the way of anything, but it creates no pressure against the opponent. Even 2 .df5 at least pins the e-file, and obtains pressure when at some stage Black develops with ...df6.

The psychology of such an unusual move is not too difficult to appreciate, at least in broad terms. Eljanov naturally has knowledge and good grasp of the opening, but Ponomariov is, of course, also extremely well prepared. Does Eljanov feel it is a good time to try something new for his opponent? 2...c5

And so we reach the Steinitz Counter-Gambit. This is, of course, the only direct way to try to punish White’s centre, but other moves are, of course, reasonable.

2...e6 3 e3 .df6 4 .gf3 is a steady line briefly explored a century ago, and in a much more recent top-level blitz game, V.Kramnik-S.Rublevsky, Moscow 2007. Did the players make a mistake, as early as move 3? It seems not. The computer gives 4 .gf4 as an advantage for White, but playing though the moves, it becomes clear that after 4...df6 5 .wxg7  fh8 6 hf6  gh6 7  fh4  gh4 8  fh6  gh6 the position is heading for a perpetual.

3 e4

This could conceptually be regarded as an 'Albin Counter-Counter-Gambit', in recognition of Albin’s idea of the late 19th Century, 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e5!? (or perhaps ‘?!’) 3 dxe5 d4. Presumably both
players were trying to work out the implications of the additional \textit{Af4} in the main line. On the whole, the extra bishop move seems useful, but we shall see...

The J.Mason-W.Steinitz, London 1883, game continued with 3 dxc5 Qc6 4 Qf3 f6 followed by ...e5, and Black recovered his pawn with good chances for an edge.

3 \textit{Axb8?} Axb8 4 dxc5 \textit{Aa5+} 5 Qc3 e6 6 e4! Axc5 7 exd5 Axf6 8 Ab5+ Ae7 has been tried a few times about a century ago. Mason scored one of his greatest scalps, admittedly after a blunder by his opponent, with 9 Axf3 Axd5 10 Ad2 Axc3?? 11 Ag5+ f6 12 Axc5+ Af7 13 Ae8+, and Black resigned in J.Mason-M.Chiigorin, New York 1889. Chigorin later played a World Championship match against Steinitz in 1892. Here 10...Ab4! gives Black a small plus after 11 Axd5+ exd5 12 c3 Axb5 13 cxb4 Ae8, while 11 Ag5+ Af8 14 0-0 is unclear. There are no recent examples in this line. Explorers might also wish to consider 9 Ad2 Ab4 10 Age2, aiming for a slight edge.

Or White could quietly play 3 c3 or 3 e3.

3...dxe4
3...Wb6 4 Qc3 e6 is reasonable and also unexplored, but grabbing the ‘poisoned pawn’ with 4...Axb2? 5 Axd5 takes too many risks.

4 d5
4 dxc5 Axd1+ 5 Axax1 is deeply uninspiring, but should be about equal. Naturally there are many lines in which a player can press through for an edge with even the smallest of opportunities, but this does not seem to be one.

4...Af6
4...e6 leads to a memorable trap, known from the Albin Counter-Gambit. After 5 Ab5+ Ad7 6 dxe6 Axb5?? (6...fxe6 seems playable) 7 exf7+ Ae7 White wins with an under-promotion – 8 fxg8Q++!

5 Qc3
There is no time to set up pawn barracades with 5 c4.

5...a6
To cover any threats on b5.

Rudolf Spielmann, an exponent and theorist on the art of sacrifice in chess, found himself on the wrong end of an attack after 5...g6 6 Ab5 Qa6 7 d6 Ag4 8 f3 exf3 9 gxf3 Axf5 10 Wd2 Wb6 11 a4. White won quickly in B.Toupalik-R.Spielmann, Prague 1912. This was a simultaneous game, and Spielmann would presumably have been able to find improvements in proper tournament time limits.

6 We2
6 f3 exf3 7 Axf3 b5 is pure gambit play, with the hope for White of being able to develop quickly and start an attack in return for giving up a pawn. Black’s ...b5 and ...b4 sets up good countermeasures.

The text move, advocated by the Bel-
gian Grandmaster, Luc Winants, forces Black to work harder for the extra pawn.

6...g6

Black returns the pawn, in the hope of a quick and safe equality with the possibility of playing for more.

6...e6 or 6...f5 may tend to be more speculative.

7 Qxe4

Material is level, and White may even entertain hopes of playing for an advantage after quick play.

7 0-0-0 is also possible, and led to a transposition after 7...Qg7 8 Qxe4 Qxe4 9 Wxe4 0-0 in the McShane-Illescas game cited later.

7...Qxe4

Avoiding the beginners’ traps, 7...Wxd5?? 8 Qxf6+ and 7...Qxd5?? 8 Qd6+, in either case with a winning pin on the e-file.

8 Wxe4 Qg7

Or 8...Qf5, but there is no need to hurry with this. Ponomariov prefers to threaten the queen with ...Qd7 and ...Qf6.

9 0-0-0

If one were to take the view that this aggressive queenside castling creates too many chances of counterplay for Black, then 9 c3!? is worth considering. 9...0-0

It would be unwise for the king to stay for too long in the centre.

10 Qe2

10 Qf3 or 10 Qe5 are other possibilities, maybe equal, maybe with a slight edge for White. One cannot assume just from the quick win for Black in the game that White is automatically worse.

10 Ac4!? provokes Black into attacking the bishop:

a) However, after 10...b5 11 d6 a7 12 a5 Qf6 13 Qxf6 exf6 14 Qd5 Qd7 15 Wf4 Qg7 16 Qf3 White is better.

b) 10...Qd7!?, suggested by Wells, seems a good response for Black.

c) Instead, L.McShane-M. Illescas Cordoba, European Team Championship, Gothenburg 2005, continued 10...Qf5 11 Wf3 b5, and now the strange and interesting 12 Qf1!? White gives up two tempi with his bishop, but he has lured Black’s bishop to f5, and will soon hit back with g4. After 12...Wa5 13 g4 Wxa2!? 14 gxf5 Wxb2+ 15 Qd2, Black could have drawn by perpetual after 15...Wd4+ 16 Qe2 Wc4+, but Illescas
played for more with 15...\( \text{\textit{d}} \text{d7} 16 \text{\textit{e}} \text{e2} \text{~b6}, and later lost after unclear and complicated play. Wells suggested 13...\text{\textit{c8}}, as Black too gives up two tempi with the bishop. Black's idea is to follow up with 14 \text{a} \text{a3} \text{~b7}, and White has problems on the long diagonal.

10...\text{\textit{d7}}

10...\text{\textit{f5}} is also possible, again with complicated play.

\text{\textit{We3}}

White is going to be hit with ...\text{\textit{\textit{d6}} anyway, and so he decides to move the queen out of the way first. The hope is that White can hit the \text{c5}-pawn.

Again, there are choices here. This line is still unexplored in what is an unclear position. Two other possibilities, to cut out counterplay from Black's light-squared bishop, might be 11 \text{h3}! and 11 \text{\textit{g3}}!?

11...\text{\textit{d6}}

11...\text{\textit{d6}}!? sets up the trap, 12 \text{\textit{xc5}}? \text{\textit{d4}}, but this is hardly difficult for White to avoid. After 12 \text{\textit{c3}} \text{\textit{d4}} 13 \text{\textit{f3}} Black's knight is misplaced.

Ponomariov decides it is time to gambit a pawn.

12 \text{\textit{c3}}

12 \text{\textit{xc5}} \text{\textit{f5}} provides good attacking lines against White's king. Eljanov decides not to take the bait.

12...\text{\textit{b5}}?

With some sharp gambit play. It is not necessarily the best move, but it is playable, and offers the chance of surprise. Maybe Eljanov reached the previous position, and tried to analyse it, but probably he had not seriously considered Ponomariov's gambit idea. If White grabs the pawn, Black can take control of the c-file, and this is far from negligible.

There is a strong element of psychological pressure. Eljanov must clearly have decided beforehand that he wanted to mix the position up in the opening, trying to find unusual plans and sacrifices, and all that happens is that Ponomariov himself decided to take over the initiative through sharp counterplay.

The result of Ponomariov's enterprising play is that Eljanov soon looks disorientated, misses a not too difficult sacrifice, and loses in 22 moves. Ponomariov is generally a solid grinder in terms of chess, but like other top grandmasters, he can attack on occasion like the late Mikhail Tal.
What were the alternatives for Black? It would have been tempting to have tried 12...\textit{f5}?! with the idea that if 13 \textit{wxc5}?! \textit{dc8} Black can sacrifice the c-pawn without the unnecessary \textit{b5}. White sidesteps, though, this with the simple 13 \textit{h3}, aiming to push the bishop out with g4. Here 12...\textit{b6} is dull, allowing White a slight edge after 13 \textit{we2}, but 12...\textit{dg4}?! deserves serious consideration. If then 13 \textit{wxc5}?! \textit{b6}, and the queen is pushed away, and the knight will make a fork on f2: 14 \textit{wc6 \textit{d6}} does not help. Maybe best is 13 \textit{we1}?! \textit{xc3} 14 \textit{bxc3} with unclear play. This seems the best of the alternatives.

\textbf{13 \textit{wxc5}}

'Prove it!'

13 \textit{d6} is the main alternative, with play possibly fizzling out to equality after 13...\textit{e8} 14 \textit{dxe7 \textit{wxe7} 15 \textit{wxex7 \textit{exe7} 16 \textit{d8+ \textit{e8} 17 \textit{exe8+ \textit{exe8}.}}}

White can pick up a pawn instead with 14 \textit{wxc5 exd6} 15 \textit{exe6} (or 15 \textit{wxc5 \textit{wa5 16 \textit{d3 \textit{e6} 15...\textit{e6}, but Black has clearly the more active piece play, and it is difficult for White to force any simplification with exchanges. Neither is White likely to be able to push forward with his pawns: 16 \textit{c7 \textit{wc8 17 \textit{b6}}}

\textit{wb7 18 \textit{wc7 \textit{xc7 19 \textit{xc7 b4}} would be too simplistic an option. Black has by far the superior development, and stands better after 19...\textit{b4}.}

Earlier, Black could also consider 13...\textit{e5}?! but White can avoid complications after 14 \textit{wxe5}, instead trying 14 \textit{g5!}, cutting down Black's diagonals, and keeping White's advanced pawn.

13...\textit{f5}

The natural reply. Once Black has played ...\textit{xe8}, the bishops will create pressure with the rook, with attacks on \textit{c2} and \textit{c3}.

14 \textit{wb4}?!

Eljanov is hesitating, both on this move and the next. There are probably a dozen reasonable moves for White to consider, and it would be difficult to have the chance of considering more than a few of these to analyse over the board. Indeed, it would be difficult enough to find the best move at home with the computer. The wider the choice, the more difficult it is to find a convincing choice.

There are many ways in which White can shuffle around with the pieces, and Eljanov chooses one of them. A pawn push, to open up his own pieces, is another idea; 14 \textit{d6}?! is at the very least worth considering:

\textbf{a) 14...\textit{c8 15 \textit{dxe7 \textit{xd1+ 16 \textit{xd1 \textit{xc5 17 exf6+ \textit{xf6 18 \textit{e3} followed by \textit{xe3 gives Black some slight compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but not as much as he would like.}}}}}}}

\textbf{b) 14...\textit{d7}?! attempts to improve:}

\textbf{b1) 15 \textit{dxe7 \textit{xc5 16 exd8w \textit{xd8 17 \textit{d5 \textit{e4 gives Black compensation for the pawn, but more to hold the balance of play, rather than to try for an edge.}}}}

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b2) White could try instead 15...\textit{wa}3?! \textit{exd}6 16...\textit{axd}6 (16...\textit{ad}3 is about equal) 16...\textit{xc}6 17...\textit{xf}8 \textit{xf}8 18...\textit{wa}6 \textit{b}4, but after the exchange sacrifice Black’s position looks promising. One line is 19...\textit{g}4 \textit{xd}4 20...\textit{g}1 \textit{xd}1 21...\textit{xd}1 \textit{b}3!! 22...\textit{axb}3 \textit{wa}8 23...\textit{wd}3 \textit{h}6+ 24...\textit{e}3 (24...\textit{db}1 \textit{wa}5 gives checkmate) 24...\textit{xe}3 25...\textit{fxe}3 \textit{wd}6!, and this turns out to be a winning attack for Black with threats of ...\textit{w}f2 or ...\textit{xa}1+.

This is of course only scratching the surface, and if any strong grandmasters would be interested in testing this line, new ideas would undoubtedly emerge. 14...\textit{xc}8  

An important half-open file.

\textbf{15...\textit{dd}2?}  

Overly defensive, although it is not easy to find good alternatives:

a) White might want to try to kick out Black’s light-squared diagonal, but if 15...\textit{ae}2 \textit{de}8 16...\textit{g}4?, Black has 16...\textit{a}x\textit{g}4 17...\textit{a}x\textit{g}4 \textit{yc}4.

b) 15...\textit{h}3 seems logical, but Black now has attacking chances after 15...\textit{xc}2! 16...\textit{xc}2 \textit{xd}5 17...\textit{wb}3 \textit{e}6. If then 18...\textit{a}3 \textit{w}f6 19...\textit{dd}2 \textit{xf}2 20...\textit{b}1 \textit{xc}3+ 21...\textit{xc}3 \textit{xc}3 22...\textit{bxc}3 \textit{f}d8, and Black has ample compensation for the sacrificed piece. Here 18...\textit{dd}2 is even better for Black after 18...\textit{b}4 19...\textit{xa}6 \textit{xc}5 20...\textit{ee}3 \textit{xe}3+ 21...\textit{f}xe3 \textit{wa}5.

C) White needs to improve on this. 15...\textit{ae}5! is best, blocking Black on the long dark squares, rather than trying to cover the light squares. If 15...\textit{h}6+ 16...\textit{b}1 \textit{dd}7 17...\textit{d}4, and White is comfortable, but 15...\textit{wb}6! is the most dangerous reply. Then there are a few tactics to beware:

\begin{itemize}
\item[c1)] If, for example, 16...\textit{dd}4? \textit{xd}5! 17...\textit{xd}5 \textit{xc}2+ 18...\textit{b}1 \textit{cc}4+ 19...\textit{d}3 \textit{xd}4, and Black is winning.
\item[c2)] Or 16...\textit{xe}7? \textit{xf}2 17...\textit{d}3 \textit{xd}5 18...\textit{dd}5 \textit{cc}2+ 19...\textit{b}1 \textit{xb}2+ 20...\textit{xb}2 \textit{wb}2 mate.
\item[c3)] 16...\textit{wd}4 is natural, but after the queen exchange Black keeps a slight advantage: 16...\textit{wd}4 17...\textit{dd}4 (17...\textit{xd}4? \textit{b}4 18...\textit{xa}6 \textit{xa}8!) 17...\textit{h}6+ 18...\textit{b}1 \textit{dd}7 19...\textit{f}4 \textit{gg}7 20...\textit{d}2 \textit{xc}3 21...\textit{bxc}3 \textit{xc}3 allows level material, while White’s pawns have been damaged.
\item[c4)] Perhaps the best try for White, but not easy to visualize, is 16...\textit{dd}2! \textit{h}6 17...\textit{f}4 \textit{ee}3 18...\textit{d}1 \textit{dd}7 (18...\textit{a}4? looks threatening, but 19...\textit{e}2! holds everything together) 19...\textit{wd}4 \textit{wd}4 20...\textit{dd}4 \textit{xf}4 21...\textit{ff}2 with equality.
\end{itemize}

The mistake, it seems, is not so much the \textit{d}1 move itself, but rather in playing it a move too early. 15...\textit{ee}8!

This is vicious, and very easy to underestimate. One expects players when attacking to move pieces forward, rather than backward. The knight is moving towards a significant defensive square on \textit{d}6, but the more significant point is that Black’s two bishops now have clear and effective diagonals, and work very well with the rook. The queen
and knight are also ready to enter the attack, and there could be some dangerous prods with the queenside pawns. Black is better.

16 \( \texttt{\textit{\&d3?}} \)

A blunder, but Eljanov was under pressure. Two slips in consecutive moves can turn a position from being comfortable to being in danger, but the third slip can often be quickly decisive.

16 \( \texttt{\textit{\&d1?}} \), which may have been his intended move, would allow Black to saw through the queenside after 16...\( \texttt{\textit{\&xd5!}} \) 17 \( \texttt{\textit{\&xd5 \&xc2+}} \) 18 \( \texttt{\textit{\&b1 \&xb2+}} \) 19 \( \texttt{\textit{\&c1}} \) (19 \( \texttt{\textit{\&a1 \&b1 mate}} \) 19...\( \texttt{\textit{\&c2+}} \) 20 \( \texttt{\textit{\&b1 \&c4+}} \).

White's best would be 16 \( \texttt{\textit{\&e2}} \), and then hope for the best. The computer might suggest that White is comfortable after, for example, 16...\( \texttt{\textit{\&a5}} \) 17 \( \texttt{\textit{\&xb5 \&d6}} \) 18 \( \texttt{\textit{\&xd6 \&xd6}} \) 19 \( \texttt{\textit{\&d1 \&c5}} \) 20 \( \texttt{\textit{\&a4 \&b8}} \), but a good human player would find White's position extremely uncomfortable. Black can attack, while it is difficult for White to coordinate. For example, if 21 \( \texttt{\textit{\&f3 \&h6}} \) 22 \( \texttt{\textit{\&e3 \&e5}} \) 23 \( \texttt{\textit{\&a3 \&c7}} \), and Black is pushing.

16...\( \texttt{\textit{\&xd3}} \)

As simple as that. Black is now clearly winning.

17 \( \texttt{\textit{\&xd3}} \)

If 17 \( \texttt{\textit{\&xd3 \&c4}} \), winning the bishop.

17...\( \texttt{\textit{\&xd5}} \)

Pawns are now level, and the queen is forking the pawns on a2 and g2. If that is not enough, Black also has the more active pieces.

18 \( \texttt{\textit{\&b1}} \)

18 \( \texttt{\textit{\&f3 \&xa2}} \) is horrible.

18...\( \texttt{\textit{\&xg2}} \) 19 \( \texttt{\textit{\&e4}} \)

This speeds things up. A decent rook move keeps the position just about alive, although Black should win.

19...\( \texttt{\textit{\&xe4}} \) 20 \( \texttt{\textit{\&xe4}} \)

If 20 \( \texttt{\textit{\&e4}} \), then Black rolls through with 20...\( \texttt{\textit{\&c5}} \) followed by \( \texttt{\textit{\&f5}} \).

20...\( \texttt{\textit{\&f6}} \)

Completing his development!

20...\( \texttt{\textit{\&xc3}} \) 21 \( \texttt{\textit{\&xc3 \&xc3}} \) 22 \( \texttt{\textit{\&d7}} \) makes life more difficult.

21 \( \texttt{\textit{\&h1?}} \)

Dispirited, Eljanov falls for another trap. 21 \( \texttt{\textit{\&f3 \&h5}} \) 22 \( \texttt{\textit{\&g5 \&xc3}} \) 23 \( \texttt{\textit{\&xc3 \&f6}} \) 24 \( \texttt{\textit{\&h6 \&fd8}} \) might allow White to struggle to the time control.

21...\( \texttt{\textit{\&xc3!}} \) 22 \( \texttt{\textit{\&xc3 \&xe4}} \) 0-1

Winning a second pawn in a simplified endgame.
Game 29
Bu Xiangzhi-V.Zvjaginsev
Russian Team Championship 2008
King’s Indian Defence E83

1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♜c3 ♜g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3

The Sämisch variation. There is also another Sämisch system in the Nimzo-Indian, after 1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♜c3 ♜b4 4 a3!? ♜xc3+ 5 bxc3, often with the idea of setting up a big pawn centre with f3 and, if given the chance, e4.

Clearly 5 f3 here has the same general idea, but playing against a different defensive opening. In the ‘hyper-modern’ days, advocated by Nimzowitsch, Tartakower, Réti and others, leading players often experimented with Black on concentrating on quick piece development, but delaying pawn advances in the centre. Sämisch tended in his younger years to defend as Black with the hypermodern ...♗f6 and ...e6 after White’s initial 1 d4. He most certainly was not the sort of dogmatist to have argued that the big pawn push in the centre would have refuted the modern systems. Rather, he was trying out new ideas.

These days, White usually prefers to develop his pieces in the King’s Indian, such as with 5 ♜e2 and ♜f3, as in Game 19, Van Wely-Radjabov. As Bu Xiangzhi demonstrates, however, there are still advocates for Sämisch’s ideas.

5...0-0

Black develops. He knows he is going to have to castle sooner or later, and decides to do it now. He is waiting to see what White is going to do, and will then decide what to do himself. Is it, for example, going to be ...c5 or ...e5? Or even ...a6, ...c6 and ...b5?

6 ♜ge2

The obvious 6 ♜d3 tends to be less popular, the bishop getting in the way. 6...c5!? 7 d5 ♜bd7, with a quick ...♕e5, should be equal.

6 ♜e3 could easily transpose into the main line. 6...c5!? is possible, and White usually offers a Dragon structure with 7 ♜ge2. White can, of course, win a pawn with 7 dxc5 dxc5 8 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 9 ♜xc5 ♜c6. He has weakened his dark squares considerably though, and experience has suggested that this is only an equalizing line after 10 ♜d5 ♜d7 11 ♜xe7+ ♜xe7 12 ♜xe7 ♜xb2 13 ♜b1 ♜c3+ 14 ♜f2 ♜d4+ 15 ♜g3 ♜e8 16 ♜g5 ♜f6. This position has, indeed, occasionally been agreed drawn around here, but in A.Graf-E.Inarkiev, Spanish
Team Championship 2007, Graf tried to squeeze on with 17 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash}}xf6 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash}}xf6 18 \texttt{e2} \texttt{\textbackslash}e5 19 \texttt{b5} \texttt{\textbackslash}xb5 20 \texttt{\textbackslash}xb5 \texttt{e6} 21 \texttt{f4} \texttt{c3} 22 \texttt{f3} \texttt{axa2} 23 e5. In this book, we have seen several examples of White trying to play for an edge in a 'drawn' endgame. White had chances of trying for an edge, but eventually the game was drawn.

6...a6

This strange looking move, seemingly developing nothing and attacking nothing, is based on the original idea of Oscar Panno in the mid-1950s. He wanted to try some new lines against the g3 fianchetto line of the King's Indian, and developed the idea of attacking White's c-pawn, no longer defended by the bishop, with moves such as ...a6, ...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash}}c6, ...\texttt{\textbackslash}d7, ...	exttt{\textbackslash}b8, and later ...\texttt{\textbackslash}b5. If White were to exchange on \texttt{b5}, then maybe ...\texttt{c5} or ...\texttt{\textbackslash}e5 followed by ...c5.

The Panno system may be applicable against the Sämisch as well. White has a big central pawn structure, and the pawn to attack is often the c-pawn, preferably from the flank.

6...c5 is perhaps the most straightforward option. Dreev has tried 7 \texttt{d5} \texttt{e6} 8 \texttt{g3} a few times, without great success, and has since reverted to the main line pseudo-Dragon with 7 \texttt{e3}.

7 \texttt{e3} 7 \texttt{g5} is also possible, and Black has a choice between continuing with a Panno, with 7...\texttt{c6}, or pushing a pawn forward with 7...\texttt{c5} or 7...\texttt{c6}.

7...\texttt{c6}

More aggressive than 7...\texttt{bd7}.

8 \texttt{\textbackslash}d2

8 \texttt{d5} \texttt{\textbackslash}e5 is a more direct attempt for an edge in the centre, but the trouble is that the knight in the centre is secure, as if at some stage White plays \texttt{f4}, Black has ...\texttt{\textbackslash}e4 with counterplay. Several years earlier, Bu Xiangzhi tried 9 \texttt{\textbackslash}d4 \texttt{c5} 10 \texttt{\textbackslash}c2 \texttt{e6} 11 \texttt{\textbackslash}a4 exd5 12 \texttt{\textbackslash}xd5 \texttt{\textbackslash}h5 13 \texttt{\textbackslash}e2, but Black started to take over the initiative in Bu Xiangzh-Ye Jiangchuan, Yangon 1999. Play continued 13...\texttt{f5} 14 exf5 gxf5 15 0-0 \texttt{f4} 16 \texttt{\textbackslash}f2 \texttt{\textbackslash}g5 17 \texttt{\textbackslash}h1 \texttt{\textbackslash}f5 18 \texttt{\textbackslash}a3 \texttt{\textbackslash}f6 19 \texttt{\textbackslash}e4 \texttt{\textbackslash}xe4 20 fxe4 \texttt{\textbackslash}g6, and Black later won.

Bu Xiangzhi now uses a much more aggressive way of handling the game. He starts by developing. Before too long, he will castle queenside, and start a pawn rush on the kingside with ideas of \texttt{h4} and \texttt{g4}, if given the opportunity.
8...\textit{\textbf{Q}}d7

Sticking to the Panno theme. Black has also tried 8...\textit{\textbf{B}}b8, with a similar idea, and this is the most common move at top level. Then 9 \textit{\textbf{B}}b1 \textit{\textbf{e}}6 10 \textit{\textbf{b}}4 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d7 11 \textit{\textbf{g}}3 (abandoning the pawn rush; he now just wants to castle) 11...\textit{\textbf{Q}}b6 12 \textit{\textbf{W}}d3 \textit{\textbf{f}}5 13 \textit{\textbf{A}}g2 \textit{\textbf{f}}xe4 14 \textit{\textbf{f}}xe4 \textit{\textbf{d}}5 15 \textit{\textbf{c}}5 \textit{\textbf{d}}xe4 16 \textit{\textbf{A}}xe4 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d5 17 \textit{\textbf{A}}d2 \textit{\textbf{e}}5 was agreed drawn in Bu Xiangzhi-P.Svidler, Internet 2004. Here 9 \textit{\textbf{Cc}}1 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d7 10 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d1 is an attempt at side-stepping the Panno plan. After 10...\textit{\textbf{e}}5 11 \textit{\textbf{d}}5 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e7.

If 9 \textit{\textbf{h}}4, Black could, as in the main game, try 9...\textit{\textbf{h}}5. Instead 9...\textit{\textbf{b}}5 10 \textit{\textbf{h}}5 \textit{\textbf{e}}5 11 \textit{\textbf{d}}5 \textit{\textbf{Q}}a5 12 \textit{\textbf{Q}}g3 \textit{\textbf{b}}xc4 13 0-0-0 leads to sharp play with castling on opposite sides, and attacks on the files against either king. The latest try is 13...\textit{\textbf{Q}}d7 14 \textit{\textbf{h}}6 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xh6 15 \textit{\textbf{W}}xh6 \textit{\textbf{W}}e7 16 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e2 \textit{\textbf{W}}b4 17 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d2 \textit{\textbf{c}}6 18 \textit{\textbf{Q}}f2, J.Lautier-P.Svidler, Internet 2004, and now Hazai suggests 18...\textit{\textbf{A}}fb8 as promising. Svidler tried 18...\textit{\textbf{h}}8 19 \textit{\textbf{h}}xg6 \textit{\textbf{f}}xg6 20 \textit{\textbf{W}}xg6 \textit{\textbf{c}}xd5?, but 21 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e3!, with an attack on \textit{\textbf{d}}5 and pressure on \textit{\textbf{f}}5, proved good for White, who later won.

The alternative approach is 8...\textit{\textbf{A}}e8. The problem for White is that it is difficult to develop his kingside minor pieces, so that, for example, after 9 \textit{\textbf{Q}}c1 \textit{\textbf{e}}5 10 \textit{\textbf{d}}5 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d4 11 \textit{\textbf{Q}}b3 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xb3 12 axb3 White has given away enough tempi with the knight to allow Black reasonable chances of equality.

9 \textit{\textbf{h}}4

Does this look as though White is about to punch the Dragon? Be assured that this is no illusion. White is aiming for a quick and direct mating attack, with plenty of sacrifices. Enjoy it!

The Dragon Variation in the Sicilian has always been popular, with sharp tactical play, and the chance of quick demolition after a slight mistake by either side. Such attacking ideas are also possible in the Sämisch King's Indian. White has to be aware, though, of the differences in the pawn structure between the Sämisch and the Dragon. Had White tried 9 \textit{\textbf{Q}}h6?!, for example, Black would have had comfortable counterplay with 9...\textit{\textbf{e}}5.

9...\textit{\textbf{h}}5

It is not pleasant to make a pawn push in front of the king, but allowing White to push further with \textit{\textbf{h}}5 is even more uncomfortable.

9...\textit{\textbf{e}}5 10 \textit{\textbf{d}}5 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e7 11 \textit{\textbf{g}}4 gives White excellent chances of rolling through. In this particular line, Black's ...\textit{\textbf{a}}6 proves to have been a waste of time, and White plays extremely vigorously.

9...\textit{\textbf{b}}5 10 axb5 \textit{\textbf{a}}xb5 11 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xb5 \textit{\textbf{Q}}a5 (threatening ...\textit{\textbf{Q}}b3) 12 \textit{\textbf{Q}}a3 at least diverts attention from the kingside, but Black probably does not quite have sufficient compensation for the pawn.

Finally, 9...\textit{\textbf{B}}b8 is slower than the line given with 8...\textit{\textbf{B}}b8 (instead of 8...\textit{\textbf{Q}}d7).
10...h6

10 0-0-0 is just as aggressive as in the game. In A. Miles-M. Jadoul, Brussels 1986, play continued 10...b5 11 h6 h7, and now White side-stepped the bishop exchange with 12 g5!? The idea is, of course, to lure the king to the h-file, to open up a scorching attack with g4, and if ...hxg4, then h5. Few players would be happy to defend such a position, and Jadoul attempted to pacify the h-file with a piece sacrifice with 12...bx4 13 g4 xg4 14 fxg4 xg4 15 h3 xh3 16 xh3. Black had three pawns for the piece, but it was White’s extra piece that won the day. I leave it as an open-ended exercise for the reader to decide what is going on, presumably with computer assistance, after 13 hxg4 14 h5 xh5.

11 0-0

11 d5 a5 12 xg7 xg7 13 c1 b6 leaves Black comfortable.

11...b5

Both players are aiming for a sharp battle.

11...exd4 12 exd4 exd4 13 xg7 xg7 14 wd4 e8 is a steadier approach, White trying to make use of the pinned knight. However, 15 g4?! hxg4 16 e2 gxf3 17 xf3 x5 18 dg1, following a computer suggestion, turns out not to be good. 18...wh8! 19 h5 wh6+ 20 b1 g5 keeps Black’s extra pawn. There are, of course, quieter lines on move 15, generally ending up about equal.

12 d5

Like it or not, White has to take the initiative. 12 xg7?! xg7 is already better for Black, White’s central pawns being under pressure, leaving his king slightly too open.

12 e8

12...bx4? loses material after 13 xf6+ xf6 14 g5 e6 15 d5.

12...xd5 13 xg7 xg7 14 cxd5 x4 15 x4 exd4 16 wd4+ gives White a slight positional edge. Black will have to work out what to do with his backward c-pawn. If ...c5 at some stage, White will have dxc6, and Black’s pawn on d6 is isolated.

Zvajginev continues to play for his own attack.

13 g4

Now it is definite that tactics, attacks and sacrifices are going to take place, and that there will not be a quiet, close-to-equal middlegame. The last chance for placid play would have been 13 xf6+ xf6 14 d5 e7 15 c3, roughly equal.
13 \&g5?! is a sensible idea, except that after 13...\&xd4 14 \&xd4 exd4 15 \&xd4 Black can jump out of the pin with 15...\&xd5!, and is slightly better.

We are now reaching as close to pure tactics as anyone is likely to find. All the pieces are on the board, there are three ‘pawn-takes-pawn’ captures on either side, which will suddenly change the pawn structure, maybe in unpredictable ways. Also there are knight-takes-knight and bishop-takes-bishop captures, which might help simplify the position, or alternatively might set up further tactics. Once minor pieces go, there are more chances, on either side, for attack against the king.

There is no time for delicate calculation as to whether there is a weakness in the pawn structure. All that a player can realistically do is to capture something, look for checks, get out of the opponent’s checks, and if the player has the chance of a breather, find the occasional quiet developing move for a piece, which is then brought into the attack.

13...hxg4!?  
If White is pushing all his pawns for-
15...exd4 16 gxh5 dxc3 17 Qxc3 is promising for White.

15...hxg4 16 h5 gxh5 17 Qg3 exd4 18 cxd4 leads to tense play, and with quiet moves, White will create some pressure, and Black will defend. Black can try for a tactical escape with 18...Qxd4 19 Wxd4 Qxd5!? If now 20 Wxd5? Wb8!, and Black is clearly better, White's king now being fully exposed with Black's queen and two bishops threatening to attack. Thus White needs to simplify. A possible finish might be 20 Qxd8 Qxd4 21 Qxd4, and Black cannot quite equalize: for example, 21...Qc3 22 Qf6 Qxa2+ 23 Qd2 Qe6 24 e4 dx5 25 Qxd7 Qxf6 26 Qc4 with a substantial edge.

Maybe Zvaginsev's move is best, but he still has to play extremely accurately afterwards.

14 h5

Having gone this far, he must continue with all-out attack.

14...gxf3

White will quickly chew up the kingside after 14...Qxd5 15 cxd5 gxf3 16 hxg6 fxg2 17 Qxf7+ Qxf7 18 Qxe2 Qxd4 19 Qh5+ Qg8 20 Qxg7.

A useful practical technique of attack is to force the opponent to have to make the critical and difficult decisions. Here the most direct method of play would be 15 Qxg7 Qxg7 16 hxg6, but then there is 16...Qg4! with complicated play not necessarily in favour of White. This knight move is not difficult to see, and creates problems. Bu Xiangzhi transposed the moves slightly, and after 15 hxg6 Black has several options to make, of which 15...Qg4 is but one.

15...fxg6?!

Watch out now for some heavy sacrifices.

If 15...fxe2, then White does not bother taking back the pawn with 16 Qxe2?!, sound but not advantageous after, for example, 16...Qxd4 17 Qxg7 Qxe2+ 18 Qxe2 Qxg7 19 Qf1. There is some complicated play to follow, and Black could easily make a wrong turn, but with care Black has chances of holding the balance with 19...Qh8 20 Qxh8 Qxh8 21 Qxf6 Qh6+ 22 Qb1 Qe6. Indeed, there could be a repetition after 23 Qxf7 Qxf7 24 Qg4+ Qg6 25 Qd7 Qf8 26 Qxc7 Qg2 27 Qh5+ Qh8 28 Qf6+ Qg7.

Instead White can continue sacrificing with 16 Qxg7!! exd1Q+ 17 Qxd1.
It is highly unusual for a player to make four pawn captures with the same pawn on four successive moves, and the natural inclination is that White cannot give away so many pieces, or indeed pawns. White is only a rook down, though, and material may quickly be recovered. More importantly, can Black escape from mate?

a) 17...\(\text{Qh5}\) 18 \(\text{Wh6}\) \(\text{fxg6}\) 19 \(\text{Axh5}\) \(\text{Ag4+}\) 20 \(\text{Cc1}\) \(\text{Ah5}\) 21 \(\text{xf6}\) \(\text{xf6}\) (the only move) 22 \(\text{xf6+}\) \(\text{f7}\) 23 \(\text{exe8}\) \(\text{exe8}\) 24 \(\text{Wh7+}\) \(\text{f8}\) 25 \(\text{xc7}\) \(\text{xd4}\) 26 \(\text{xd6+}\) forces Black to lose too much material to avoid checkmate.

b) 17...\(\text{Ag4+}\) 18 \(\text{Cc1}\) \(\text{ah5}\) 19 \(\text{Wh6}\) soon transposes.

c) This leaves 17...\(\text{Qg4}\), irritatingly covering the h6- and h2-squares from the queen, and also the f6- and f2-squares. There is another sacrifice coming up: 18 \(\text{Af6!}\) \(\text{xf6}\) (18...\(\text{xf6}\) 19 \(\text{xf6+}\) \(\text{xf6}\) 20 \(\text{Wh6}\) does not slow White down) 19 \(\text{Wh6}\) and White wins on the h-file. If 19...\(\text{Qg4+}\) 20 \(\text{Cc1}\) \(\text{ah5}\) 21 \(\text{Qxh5}\) \(\text{Qxh5}\) 22 \(\text{Wh7+}\) and mates.

A stunning finish, but there is more to follow. We have not seen a queen sacrifice just yet, and on cue there is 15...\(\text{exe4}\) 16 \(\text{Qxg7}\) \(\text{Qxd2}\) 17 \(\text{Af6}\).

Naturally Black must soon give the queen back, and after 17...\(\text{xf6}\) 18 \(\text{xf6+}\) \(\text{g7}\) 19 \(\text{exe8+}\) \(\text{exe8}\) 20 \(\text{xf7}\) \(\text{xf7}\) 21 \(\text{xd2}\) \(\text{fxe2}\) 22 \(\text{exe2}\) White remains a safe exchange ahead.

If instead 17...\(\text{fxg6}\), White has, of course, the guarantee of a perpetual check after 18 \(\text{Wh8+}\) \(\text{f7}\) 19 \(\text{Ah7+}\), since if 19...\(\text{Qe6??}\) 20 \(\text{Ah3}\) mate. There are two other king retreats: 19...\(\text{Qg8}\) forces a perpetual in 20 \(\text{Wh8+}\); 19...\(\text{f7}\) is also a likely draw by perpetual, but White has for now 20 \(\text{xd2}\).

However wild and aggressive the attack becomes, the number one rule of chess is that if no mistake is made on either side, the end result is a draw. In wild games, as here, it is likely to end up as a perpetual check, while in quieter games it is more likely that the defender will gradually equalize in an endgame.

But the game is not yet finished. Bu Xiangzhi won quickly, and Zvaginsev therefore lost quickly, but maybe the mistake came later on? We shall see.

16 \(\text{c3}\)

The right way, even though the knight is going away from the kingside. The d5-square is an excellent square for
the knight, and if White exchanges the first knight for a good defender, then the second knight will jump in.

White has a more bloodthirsty alternative with 16...\texttt{Axg7} \texttt{Bxe4} 17 \texttt{Bh8+ Bf7} 18 \texttt{Nh7 Bxd2} 19 \texttt{Bxe5+ Bf8} (19...\texttt{Be6??} 20 \texttt{Bh3 mate}) 20 \texttt{Bh8+ Bf7}, but this is only a perpetual. Moreover, Black does not have to comply with a draw: 16...\texttt{Bxg7}? 17 \texttt{Wh6+ Bf7} 18 \texttt{Bc3} would transpose into the main line after 18...\texttt{Bxd4}, but Black has alternatives, the simplest being 18...\texttt{Bh8!}? with advantage to Black.

16...\texttt{Bxd4}

Black's problem is that he cannot make any serious threat so as to slow down White's attack. Take a pawn? Attack a knight? That is nothing, when compared with serious mating threats against an exposed king. If, for example, 16...\texttt{Bb4!?} 17 \texttt{Bxg7 Bxc3} 18 \texttt{Wh6} \texttt{Bxb2+} 19 \texttt{Bb1}, and Black has run out of ideas, while White has one big idea. There is a similar idea after 16...\texttt{exd4} 17 \texttt{Bxg7}, while various other possibilities end up with a quick win for White.

16...\texttt{Bh5!} is the toughest defence, adding an extra barrier on the h-file. If White were to sacrifice the exchange on h5 at some stage, an annoyance would be for Black to play ...\texttt{g4} after \texttt{Bg1}. The pawn on h5, apparently feeble, helps block up the kingside highly effectively. The other black kingside pawn, on f3, makes all the difference between White winning easily, and White having problems.

The verdict of 'unclear' is never fully satisfactory, and it is better for both the analyst and the reader to be able to say that either White is better, or Black is better, or the position is equal or very close to equal. In practical terms, over the board, an 'unclear' assessment is often the best that a player can achieve. A player will try to make good moves, and wait to see whether the opponent will make a mistake.

Here 17 \texttt{Bxb5?} is sensible, there being no obvious kingside winning plans for White. He recovers a pawn, and possibly more importantly, he brings the light-squared bishop into play, most probably with \texttt{Bc4}. Then:

a) 17...\texttt{Bxd4} 18 \texttt{Bc4} seems good for White. If 18...\texttt{Be6} 19 \texttt{Bxh5 gxh5} 20 \texttt{Bg1 axb5} 21 \texttt{Bxg7+ Bh8} 22 \texttt{Bc7 Bxd5} 23 \texttt{Bxg7+ Bg8} 24 \texttt{Bxd5 Bxc4} 25 \texttt{Bf6+} and White wins.

b) 17...\texttt{Bxb5} sets up counterattacks. After 18 \texttt{Bxb5} \texttt{Bxd4} 19 \texttt{Bhx5} we have:

b1) After 19...\texttt{Bxa2!?} 20 \texttt{Bc4} (20 \texttt{Bxa2? Bb3+} 20...\texttt{Bxa1+} 21 \texttt{Bb1} White is ahead on material at the moment, and this makes the position easier for him. If 21...\texttt{Be6} 22 \texttt{Bxg7 Bxa4} 23 \texttt{Bf4} \texttt{Bxh5} 24 \texttt{Bf6}, and White wins. Or 21...\texttt{Be2+} 22 \texttt{Bxe2} fxe2 23 \texttt{Bg1 Bxh5} 24 \texttt{Bxg7+ Bh8} 25 \texttt{Bxe2}, and White is clearly better, such as after 25...\texttt{Bg4} 26 \texttt{Bxg4 Bxg4} 27 \texttt{Bh2}.

b2) Sometimes when defending, it is
best to grab material first, and then return the extra material later. Therefore 19...gxh5! is indicated: 20 \( \text{Qxd7} \) \( \text{Wxd7} \) 21 \( \text{Hg1} \) \( \text{Qf8}! \) 22 \( \text{Wxg7+} \) (22 \( \text{Qxg7} \) f2!) 22...\( \text{Wxg7} \) f2 24 \( \text{Qe3} \) f1\( \text{W}+ \) 25 \( \text{Qxf1} \) \( \text{Qxf1}+ \) 26 \( \text{Qd1} \) \( \text{Qxa2} \), and after complicated play, with sacrifice and counter-sacrifice, Black is winning. So White has to reinforce, or at least speed up, his attacking ideas with 20 \( \text{Qg1} \):

b21) One idea for Black is to pick up the bishop on b5, but this seems slow: 20...\( \text{Qxb5} \) 21 \( \text{Qxg7+} \) \( \text{Qh8} \) 22 \( \text{Qg5}! \) wins for White: for example, 22...\( \text{Qxc3} \) 23 \( \text{Qxd8} \) \( \text{Qxa2+} \) 24 \( \text{Qb1} \) \( \text{Qxg7} \) 25 \( \text{Wg5+} \), soon giving checkmate, or 22...f2 23 \( \text{Wxf2} \) \( \text{Qf8} \) 24 \( \text{Wg2}! \).

b22) 20...\( \text{Qxb5} \) 21 \( \text{Qxg7} \) \( \text{Qe2+?} \) 22 \( \text{Qxe2} \) f2!? 23 \( \text{Qf6} \) \( \text{fxg1+} \) 24 \( \text{Qxg1} \) \( \text{Wd7} \) is a cleverly thought-out defensive plan by Black. Visually, one would expect that White would be winning comfortably, but Black is two exchanges ahead. The help of the computer suggests that there is still a win after 25 \( \text{Wg5+} \) \( \text{Qf7} \) 26 \( \text{Wxd5+} \) \( \text{Qg8} \) 27 \( \text{Wg6+} \) \( \text{Qf8} \) 28 \( \text{Qf3}! \).

b23) The next, and most secure, option is to set up a pawn-and-bishop defensive chain with 20...\( \text{Qg4}! \):

b231) If then 21 \( \text{Qxe8?} \) \( \text{Qxa2} \), and Black has successfully set up winning counterplay.

b232) 21 \( \text{Qg5} \) \( \text{Qh6}! \) sees excellent use by both sides of the two bishops, combining attack and defence of various sets of pins. After White accepts the bishop sacrifice with 22 \( \text{Qxh6} \), it is time for Black to show what can be done with rook and knight with 22...\( \text{Qxa2} \). Then the tactics continue after 23 \( \text{Qc4} \) (23 \( \text{Qxa2} \) \( \text{Qb3+} \) or 23 \( \text{Qb1} \) \( \text{Qa1+} \) 24 \( \text{Qxa1} \) \( \text{Qb3+} \) would both pick up queens with knight forks) 23...\( \text{Qa1+} \) 24 \( \text{Qb1} \) \( \text{Qh7} \). If now 25 \( \text{Qg5?} \), there is a win for Black after 25...f2!: 26 \( \text{Qxg4} \) \( \text{Qb3+} \) 27 \( \text{Qxb3} \) f1\( \text{W}+ \), and Black should win as the two queens are powerful, or 26 \( \text{Qf1} \) \( \text{Qf3} \) 27 \( \text{Qxd8} \) \( \text{Qxb1+} \) 28 \( \text{Qxb1} \) \( \text{Qxd2+} \) followed by \( \text{Qxf1} \), and Black wins on material.

White needs to sacrifice the exchange a move earlier, with 25 \( \text{Qxg4} \) \( \text{hxg4} \) 26 \( \text{Qg5} \) f2 27 \( \text{Qxd8} \) \( \text{Qb3+} \) 28 \( \text{Qxb3} \) f1\( \text{W}+ \) 29 \( \text{Qd1} \) \( \text{Qxd1+} \) 30 \( \text{Qxd1} \) \( \text{Qxd8} \) 31 \( \text{Qxg4} \). After plenty of tactics, we reach an unusual endgame of two rooks, plus an extra pawn, versus three minor pieces. Black must be better, as he can create a passed pawn, while White cannot, and Black is more able to create pressure with his pieces than White. Whether Black can win is open to question.

But this is just one complicated line of a complicated variation. There are several more ideas to be considered. Instead of the capture on b5, White could simply try 17 \( \text{Qg5}?! \).

Then 17...\( \text{Wc8} \) releases the tension somewhat, and 18 \( \text{cxh5?} \) axb5 19 \( \text{Qxb5} \) \( \text{Qxa2} \) 20 \( \text{Qc4?} \), for example, gives White reasonable attacking chances. It
is possible that there might still be an improvement on this.

More critical, with chances of death or glory, would be 17...\texttt{wb8}\texttt{f} when White must do something quickly. Indeed, 18 \texttt{xh5 gxh5 19 \texttt{gf6+ \texttt{xf6 20 \texttt{xf6 \texttt{gf7 21 \texttt{wh6 \texttt{gg8 is critical:}}}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chess_diagram.png}
\end{center}

\texttt{a) 22 \texttt{wh7+ \texttt{xf6 23 \texttt{xd5+ \texttt{gg5 24 \texttt{xd7 \texttt{xd4 25 \texttt{xc7 \texttt{a7 26 \texttt{we7+ \texttt{gg4 27 \texttt{h3+ \texttt{gg3 28 \texttt{gg1+ \texttt{gh2 is too wild. Black's king hides between White's pieces.}}

\texttt{b) 22 \texttt{xd5 \texttt{wf8 23 \texttt{wh5+ \texttt{gg6 24 \texttt{wh7+ \texttt{gg7 25 \texttt{wh5+ \texttt{gg6 ends up as a repetition.}}

\texttt{c) 22 \texttt{dxe5l seems at first a little too straightforward and obvious, when one would normally expect some heavy sacrifices, but the pawn bolsters the bishop on f6, and can also take other pawns. There is, of course, a pin on the d-file.}

22...\texttt{we8l? offers a quick repetition, but White can play for more with 23 \texttt{wh7+ \texttt{gf8 24 exd6! \texttt{lc8 (this seems the best) 25 \texttt{ee7+ \texttt{xe7 26 dxe7+ \texttt{we7 27 \texttt{xd7 \texttt{whx7 28 \texttt{xh7 \texttt{ee8l. The first impression might well be that Black even has the more promising play, as he has kept his passed f-pawn, and White could easily have to sacrifice his extra material. 29 \texttt{hx5l? \texttt{gg1 30 \texttt{gf5+ \texttt{gg7 31 \texttt{xf3 \texttt{ff8 32 \texttt{xf8 \texttt{xf8 will soon end up as a drawn endgame, though, and White can improve: 29 \texttt{dd2! \texttt{gg1 30 \texttt{xe1 (30 \texttt{d3l f2 31 \texttt{xb5 axb5 32 \texttt{h5 f1w 33 \texttt{xf1 \texttt{xf1 only draws), and White, with bishop and knight against rook, remains in control, possibly also winning.}

Maybe Black is already in trouble by now. We now return to the game and 16...\texttt{xd4:}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chess_diagram2.png}
\end{center}

17 \texttt{eg7}

Black's kingside fortress is now knocked down into the open. A result, even if three pawns have fallen.

17...\texttt{eg7 18 \texttt{xf6}

18 \texttt{wh6+? allows too many chances of offering a queen exchange after 18...\texttt{f7 19 \texttt{xf6 \texttt{xf6 20 \texttt{dd5 \texttt{gg7. 18...\texttt{xf6 19 \texttt{dd5}

After the complications of the previous gambit play, it is within range to calculate that White is clearly better. He has not sacrificed any pieces, as opposed to pawns, and has by far the more active pieces, with Black's king being seriously open to attack.

19...\texttt{f8}
The only move. 19...\texttt{Wf7} 20 \texttt{Wh6}+ is hopeless.

20 \texttt{Wxh6}+

20 \texttt{Qxh6}+ \texttt{Bac8} 21 \texttt{Qxe8}+ \texttt{Kxe8} is about equal, but White can do better.

20...\texttt{ef7} 21 \texttt{Wg5}

In this extremely fierce attack, this is the first time that White has retreated one of his pieces. Even this is only to get away from the rook, which wants to run through to h7 with a winning check.

21...\texttt{Wg7}

Black has covered the threat. It even looks as though he might have guarded against the attack.

22 \texttt{exd4}

White sacrifices, just in time.

22...\texttt{exd4}

22...\texttt{c6} would by now be a desperate try. 23 \texttt{Kd3 cxd5} 24 \texttt{xf3+ Kg8} 24 \texttt{Kh6 Ke6} 25 \texttt{cxd5} wins.

23 \texttt{Wf4+}

Now there is no doubt that White is winning.

23...\texttt{xf5}

23...\texttt{g8} 24 \texttt{f6+ f8} 25 \texttt{Kh7 Wh7} 26 \texttt{Qxh7+ Kg8} 27 \texttt{Qg5 Wf8} 28 \texttt{Wh2} should end up as a win for White, queen and piece outweighing two rooks and a few pawns, especially if the pawns have no clear promoting prospects.

Of course, 23...\texttt{e6} 24 \texttt{h3 mate} wins immediately.

24 \texttt{xf5}

Now White has an extra piece – bishop and knight versus rook – and he has every reason to think that he has won the battle.

24...\texttt{g5}

Black cannot allow the f-file to be opened.

25 \texttt{Wg4}

25 \texttt{xf3? g4!} allows Black counterplay.

25...\texttt{Ke1+}

The computer suggests that various alternatives might be equal, but these turn out to be nothing. For example, 25...\texttt{Wxe5} 26 \texttt{Wh5+ f8} 27 \texttt{d3 f2} 28 \texttt{f6 We1+ 29 Kc2, and White is winning.}

25...\texttt{h8} might last longer, but do not expect a second time control after 26 \texttt{f6 Kxh1} 27 \texttt{Wd7+ Kg6} 28 \texttt{Wxg7+ Wf5} 29 \texttt{f7.}

26 \texttt{Qd2}

26 \texttt{c2? d3+} 27 \texttt{Qxd3 Wh8 leaves Black better. It is a standard principle of attacking chess not to allow the oppo-
ponent to make unnecessary checks.

26...\textit{\texttt{Aae8}}
26...\textit{\texttt{f2}} 27 \textit{\texttt{f6}} wins for \textit{\texttt{White}}.

27 \textit{\texttt{Wh5+}} 1-0

And Black resigns. Obvious maybe, with White having strong attacking chances, and he still has two minor pieces versus the rook. Even so, Black's resignation must surely have been premature, as White, despite initial appearances, is not giving checkmate.

The likelihood is that Zvjaginsev was so shattered by the ferocity of Bu Xiangzhi's vigour of attack, and so short of time, if indeed he had not already lost on time, that he had quite simply surrendered. After 27... \textit{\texttt{f8}} 28 \textit{\texttt{f6}} \textit{\texttt{Wg8}} the simplest line would seem to be 29 \textit{\texttt{Wxf3!}} g4 (29...\textit{\texttt{Exf3}} 30 \textit{\texttt{f7!}} wins) 30 \textit{\texttt{Wf4}} bxc4 31 \textit{\texttt{Wh6+}} \textit{\texttt{f7}} 32 \textit{\texttt{xc4}}.
Game 30
B.Gelfand-E.Alekseev
Russian Team Championship 2008
Semi-Slav Defence D43

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Qf3 Qf6 4 Qc3 e6 5 Qg5 h6

6 Qh4

Only to be played if you are ready for sharp and complicated play.

6 Qxf6 wxf6 is quieter. There were a couple of quiet and steady draws, with Gelfand as Black, in this very event. Also, a few months earlier, a game E.Alekseev-B.Gelfand, Moscow 2007, in which Alekseev tried 7 wc2 dxc4 8 e3 b5 9 a4 Qb7 10 axb5 cxb5 11 Qxb5 Qb4+ 12 Qc3, and play was level, drawn at move 24. Yes, the colours were reversed!

7 e3 Qd7 8 Qd3 dxc4 9 Qxc4 g6 10 0-0 Qg7 is the main line after the bishop-for-knight exchange. White is ahead in development, and has extra space with his pawns, but it is not so easy to break open the centre. If the pawn structure is opened, Black’s pieces soon become active.

6...dxc4 7 e4 g5 8 Qg3 b5 9 Qe5!? Qb7

There is a wide choice here.
For 9...Qb4, see Game 27, Cheparinov-Nepomniachtchi.

9...h5!? 10 h4 g4 11 e2 Qg7 12 0-0 Qbd7 leads to a popular line at top level, and one which can also come about via a 9 Qe2 move order.

The statistics show that over a large number of 2600+ games, White keeps an insignificant plus score, over the relevant time period, and more than half the games have been decisive. This clearly is attractive for Black if he wants to play for a win, but White too has excellent chances.

10 h4

Naturally he wants to prod the pawns.

10...g4

In a couple of games in Georgia in
the late 1990s, Jobava showed a significant innovation for White, with a piece sacrifice, after 10...\( \text{h}8 \) 11 a4 a6 12 h\( xg5 \) h\( xg6 \) 13 \( \text{hxh8}+ \text{hxh8} \) 14 \( \text{xc4} \). The bishop is too dangerous to touch. After 14...b\( xc4 \)? 15 \( \text{xc4} \) there is a big knight threat on d6, and if 15...c8 16 e5 \( \text{d5} \) 17 \( \text{h5} \) e7 18 \( \text{wxg5}+ \) f6 19 \( \text{w}6 \), Black’s king is in serious trouble.

Black can, however, decline the piece sacrifice, giving back his extra pawn. It is by no means obvious why giving up the extra doubled c-pawn should be any worse than Alekseev’s return of the g-pawn in the illustrative game. Black was not yet fully equal, even so, after either 14...b4 15 a2 a5 16 d3 e7 17 0-0, B.Jobava-S.Nikoladze, Tbilisi 1999, or 14...\( \text{bd7} \) 15 b3 e7 16 e2 \( \text{xe5} \) 17 \( \text{xe5} \), B.Jobava-V.Raceanu, Artek 1999. Jobava won both games.

Let us get up to date. Gelfand-Alekseev was played on the 5th of April 2008. A fortnight or so later, on the 22nd, Karjakin tried something new with 10...\( \text{g8} \)? 11 h\( xg5 \) h\( xg5 \).

\( \text{xf7} \) 13 e5 \( \text{d5} \) 14 h\( h7+ \text{g7} \) 15 h\( h5+ \text{f6} \) 16 f3+ e8 17 h\( h5+ \text{f8} \) 18 f3+ e8 19 h\( h5+ \). Quite possibly both players had worked out in advance that this could end up as a draw, but that 10...g4 would have been discouraging for Black.

11 \( \text{xc4} \)

The obvious move, but 11 \( \text{e2} \) h5 transposes into well-known main lines.

11...\( \text{bd7} \)

11...\( \text{xc4} \) 12 \( \text{wg4} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 13 d1 \( \text{wg7} \) 14 \( \text{wg7} \) \( \text{xe7} \) 15 e5 f8 16 e4 \( \text{b4}+ \) 17 e2 \( \text{d7} \) 18 h5! gives good compensation for the pawn. Instead Black had an edge, and later won, in P.Eljanov-A.Dreev, Sochi 2005, after 14 \( \text{f4}?! \) a6 15 e2 e7 16 e5 (Lutz has suggested 16 0-0!? 16...\( \text{b4} \) 17 e4 \( \text{d5} \).

Now Black was a pawn up, so White had to do something quickly. A.Grischuk-S.Karjakin, Baku 2008, finished up as a perpetual after 12 \( \text{xf7} \)

12 \( \text{xf6}+ \)

There are various alternatives, but none seem to keep an edge. Gelfand forces his opponent to decide which way he will recapture.

12...\( \text{xf6} \)

12...\( \text{xf6} \) is also possible: for example, 13 \( \text{d2} \) 0-0-0 14 h5 \( \text{g7} \) 15 0-0-0 (15 h4?! \( \text{xd4} \) favours Black) 15...\( \text{e7} \) 16 \( \text{e3} \) with maybe a slight edge for

13 \texttt{Wf3}

White has good reason to be happy with his position. He has kept his central pawn structure, and his pieces are well developed. He has not even needed to worry about the sacrificed pawn.

13...\texttt{Rg8}

Black must avoid 13...\texttt{Wxd4??} 14 \texttt{Dd1}, winning a piece.

13...\texttt{b4} loosens up the queenside pawns. After 14 \texttt{He2} c5 15 \texttt{He5} \texttt{g7} 16 \texttt{Dg3} cxd4 17 \texttt{Hxc4} White keeps an edge. It seems too early to open up the queenside.

13...\texttt{He7} does not quite seem satisfactory either. After 14 \texttt{He5} it is White who takes control of the long diagonal, and the knight is awkwardly pinned.

14 \texttt{He2}?

Quiet development, indeed too quiet. Gelfand aims to castle kingside, keeping the king safe, and once this has been done, he will aim, perhaps, to attack in the centre.

Unfortunately this seems mistimed. 14 \texttt{Dd1} is better, keeping the d4-pawn safe, and more generally bringing another piece in play. If 14...\texttt{b4}?! 15 \texttt{Daa4}, and there is no clear follow-up, as if 15...c5? 16 \texttt{Dxc5} \texttt{Dxc5} 17 dxc5, and it is White who is attacking. Or 15...c3 16 bxc3 bxc3 17 \texttt{Dd3}, and if 17...\texttt{Wxd4??} 17 \texttt{Dc2}, winning a piece.

14...\texttt{a6}?

A waste of a tempo, and from now on, Gelfand plays superbly.

After 14...\texttt{b4!} 15 \texttt{Daa4} c5 16 \texttt{He5?} there is no pin on the e5-h8 diagonal, and Black simply plays 16...\texttt{Dxe4}.

16 \texttt{Dxc4} would in effect admit that White has lost a tempo with his previous \texttt{He2}. After 16...\texttt{Dxe4} 17 \texttt{Db5+} \texttt{He7} 18 dxc5 \texttt{Dxf3} 19 \texttt{Dd6+} \texttt{Wxd6} 20 cxd6+ \texttt{Wxd6} 21 gx\texttt{f3} \texttt{Cc8} Black has the much better pawn structure.

White can play for equality with 16 \texttt{Dxc5} \texttt{Dxc5} 17 dxc5 \texttt{Dxe4}, but Black still keeps an edge after 18 \texttt{We3} \texttt{Dxg3} 19 fx\texttt{g3} \texttt{Cc7} or 18 \texttt{Wf4} \texttt{Wd4!}.

15 \texttt{Dd1}

Now White is again in control. White's 14 \texttt{He2} and Black's 14...\texttt{a6} are both inaccurate, but the end result of the slips on either side has been to gain an extra tempo for development.

15...\texttt{Dd7}

It is also unfortunate that he has to retreat after playing ...\texttt{Dd7xf6} earlier.
One can sense that it will soon be time for White to start a direct attack.

16 0-0

But first he must complete his development.

16 f4! is also worth considering.

16...Wf6

Some more backtracking when one compares with Black's 12th-move alternative. A reminder that in the Gelfand-Najer game, Black played ...Wd8xf6 in one move.

16...Ag7 is a possible alternative.

17 We3

Naturally he does not want to exchange queens. He is looking for an attack.

17...0-0-0

And Black has castled his king into some sort of safety, in draughts formation on the light squares. There might be a few question marks on the dark squares, particularly on the h2-b8 and g1-a7 diagonals, but so long as Black is safe on the light squares, he should be able to hold the dark squares.

18 b3!

So Gelfand quickly sets up pawn clashes on the light squares. Black's c4-pawn looks impressive, but as soon as it is exchanged, White can open lines on the c-file and the f1-a6 diagonal. Suddenly Black is on a breezy fortress.

18...cxb3

This is unpleasant for Black, but after 18...b4? 19 da4 c3 20 a3 a5 21 axb4 axb4 22 d5! White has standard mating ideas:

![Chess Diagram]

a) If then 22...cxd5 23 Wa7 (threatening Wb8+) 23...e5 24 Axd5! with a winning attack. The most precise line after 24...Axd5 is 25 exd5 (avoiding the queen sacrifice after 25 a6+ Wxa6) 25...Ag6 26 h5!, and Black can do nothing.

b) 22...exd5 23 Wa7 Ad6 24 Aa6 Axa6 25 Wxa6+ Ac7 provides more resistance, but after 26 exd5 Axc3 27 fxg3 Wd6 28 Wa7+ Ac8 29 dxc6 Wxc6 30 Axd7! White wins. Black's position folds on 30...Axd7 31 Ab6+ Ad8 32 Wb8+ Ae7 33 Ae1+!.

Black's best chance is an immediate counterattack with 18...c5!. He needs to keep the bishops in full play. White too has an excellent diagonal, on the h2-b8. Tactics will come thick and fast, e.g. 19 bxc4 cxd4 20 Axd4 (20 Wxd4? Wxd4 21 Axd4 Axb3! 22 fxg3 Ac5 favours Black) 20...Ac5 21 Axd7 Ae3 22 Ac7+ Ab8.
This would have been a nightmare position to analyse over the board. After 23 \textit{xf7}+ \textit{xg3} 24 \textit{xf6} Black's rook and bishop have somehow been forked by an unmoved pawn. After further tactics with 24...\textit{d4}! 25 \textit{xe6} \textit{xc3} 26 \textit{cxh5} \textit{xh5} 27 \textit{xe5} \textit{xc2} 28 \textit{xe4} Black has an extra bishop in return for a few pawns. Black has no pawns, but his two rooks and two bishops are active. The computer gives this as equal, but White's pawns do not do not work very well. White could try 29 \textit{d5} 30 \textit{e6} \textit{g8} 31 \textit{e8}+ \textit{xe8} 32 \textit{xe8} \textit{axa2}, which is entertaining, but White is clearly not better, and so it is necessary to find an improvement.

So we return to considering White's options earlier. 19 e5! cxd4 20 \textit{xd4} \textit{xe5} 21 \textit{xd8}+ \textit{d8} 22 \textit{d1}+ \textit{d8} 23 \textit{e5} \textit{g2}+ 24 \textit{f1} \textit{h4} 25 \textit{f3}! is almost disappointingly quiet after the previous tactics, but the point is that White has kept his extra piece, is defending and can attack himself.

The elaborate line is interesting, but sometimes the simplest and more direct line is to be preferred.

19 \textit{axb3}

Black has two extra pawns on the queenside, covering the a-, b- and c-files, but what can they do that is active? If the pawns advance, the king will be opened up. Meanwhile, White has an extra pawn in the centre, the d-pawn, and this constricts Black's hopes for ...c5 or ...e5.

Black's pieces, and in particular the light-squared bishop, will find themselves constrained in trying to defend the weak pawns in front of the king, and this in the end makes it difficult for him to stay in the game.

19...\textit{e7} 19...e5?!, opening up the dark squares for both sides, is close to the edge. After 20 \textit{dxe5} \textit{xe5} 21 \textit{xd8}+ \textit{d8} 22 \textit{a7} \textit{c8} 23 \textit{d5} \textit{e6} 24 \textit{b6}+ \textit{c7} 25 \textit{d7} \textit{xe7} (25...\textit{ad6} 26 \textit{xe5} \textit{xd7} transposes) 26 \textit{xe5}+ \textit{d6} 27 \textit{ad1} \textit{g6}, it looks at first as though it is all over with an attractive double pin with 28 \textit{h5} \textit{a6} 29 \textit{g4}. Black can, however, swiftly equalize with 29...\textit{xe5}! 30 \textit{xd7} \textit{c5}, trapping the queen.

With care White would still have an edge through gradual positional play with, for example, 28 \textit{wc5} \textit{we7} 29 \textit{xd6} \textit{xd6} 30 \textit{b4} \textit{f6} 31 \textit{g3} \textit{c8} 32 \textit{h5}, and
White slowly improves his position, fixing perhaps on the h6 weakness, and eventually breaking through. There are too many zugzwangs to allow Black to survive.

20 Ec1
Eyeballing the c-file.
20...Wg8
If 20...e5?! White has the advantage, and can even win a pawn with 21 Qd5 We6 22 Qxe7+ Wxe7 23 d5 c5 24 Wxh6. Black thus decides to move the queen out of the way before playing ...e5.
20...Wg7 at first seems more natural, but Alekseev wants to keep open the possible exchange sacrifice with ...Egxg3. Here 21 Qf3 e5 22 Qd5 Qd6 23 Qfd1 keeps an edge for White.

21 Qh2!
Gelfand decides he does not want to allow the ...Egxg3 sacrifice.
21 Qf3 is to be considered, although 21...e5 22 dxe5! (22 Qd5 Qd6 23 Qfd1 Qb8 is equal) 22...Egxg3! (22...Exe5 23 Qd5 Qa3 24 Wa7, and White has some advantage) 23 Qd5! (23 fxg3?? Qc5) 23...Qa3 24 fxg3 Qxc1 25 Qxc1 Wxe5 26 Wxh6 Qb8 27 Qe3 Wgx3 28 Qf5 Wc7 winds up as about equal after fast-moving play.

22 Wg7
And Alekseev decides he might as well take the extra tempo, with the threat of mate on g2.
22 Qf3
22 Wg3!? forcing an exchange of queens, gives an edge, but he can try for more. White intends to keep the queen on the board, within the view of mate threats.
22...e5
The b8-h2 diagonal just has to be covered.
23 Qd5
Naturally, Black’s c-pawn is pinned. Also his pawn on e5 is under enormous pressure.
23 Qd6
23...Qxh4 is to be considered. Then 24 Wc3 de8 25 Wa5 Qd8 26 Qxc6+! Qxc6? 27 Wxa6+ soon wins for White, the other rook joining the attack. 26...f8! provides a better defence, when Black is attacking queen and rook, but after 27 Wc3 Qe6 (27...Qa7 28 Qc7 keeps the attack going) 28 Qxe6 Qxe6 29 Qb4 Qb6 30 Qc6+ Qxc6 31 Wxc6 Qa7 32 Qa1 Black is still under great pressure.
24 Wc3
The rising pressure continues. 24 \( \text{Qf}d1 \) also adds to the pressure, and if 24...\( \text{exd4?} \) 25 \( \text{Qxd6} \ \text{dx}e3 \) 26 \( \text{Qe}7 \) mate.

24...\( \text{Rde8?} \)

Allowing a clean and attractive sacrificial attack.

Black needs to open his defences on the second rank with 24...\( \text{f5!} \). After 25 \( \text{exf5} \ \text{exd4} \) 26 \( \text{Qxd6} \ \text{dx}c3 \) there is no checkmate. Of course, White continues with 27 \( \text{Qe}7+ \) (if 27 \( \text{f6} \ \text{Wxf6} \) 27...\( \text{Wxe7} \) 28 \( \text{Qxe7} \ \text{Qe5} \) 29 \( \text{Qxc3} \ \text{Qxf3+} \) 30 \( \text{Qxf3} \text{c5} \) 31 \( \text{Qg3} \ \text{Qxg3} \) 32 \( \text{fxg3} \ \text{Qd2} \) 33 \( \text{Qf2} \ \text{Qd1+} \) 34 \( \text{Qh2} \) (he is not interested in a draw) 34...\( \text{Qd5} \) 35 \( \text{Qxc5} \ \text{Qxb3} \). After a breather to work out what is going on once the tactics have subsided, it soon becomes clear that there is no draw with the opposite-coloured bishops, and that White’s kingside pawns are more numerous and better placed than Black’s queenside pawns.

There may be other possibilities for White, but perhaps the simplest is 25 \( \text{Wa5} \), perhaps the clearest. 25...\( \text{Qxd5} \) 26 \( \text{Qxe6} \) 27 \( \text{Qc1} \) and White should win for White comfortably, even though he is currently a rook down. Black is about to drop a minor piece, and White still has good attackers and a few extra pawns. If, for example, 28...\( \text{Qxg6} \) 29 ...\( \text{Qxc6} \) 30 ...\( \text{Qxa6} \) 31 ...\( \text{Qxb5}+ \text{Qa8} \) 32 ...\( \text{Qb6+} \text{Qaxb6} \) 33 ...\( \text{Qa4}+ \text{Qb8} \) 34 ...\( \text{Qxb6}+ \text{Qa8} \) 35 ...\( \text{Qa5}+ \text{Qb7} \) 36 ...\( \text{Qxe5} \), and White will eventually win.

25...\( \text{Qb8} \) 26 ...\( \text{Qxc6} \) 27 ...\( \text{Qxb6} \) 28 ...\( \text{Qc1} \) should win for White comfortably, even though he is currently a rook down. Black is about to drop a minor piece, and White still has good attackers and a few extra pawns. If, for example, 28...\( \text{Qg6} \) 29 ...\( \text{Qxc6} \) 30 ...\( \text{Qxa6} \) 31 ...\( \text{Qxb5}+ \text{Qa8} \) 32 ...\( \text{Qb6+} \text{Qaxb6} \) 33 ...\( \text{Qa4}+ \text{Qb8} \) 34 ...\( \text{Qxb6}+ \text{Qa8} \) 35 ...\( \text{Qa5}+ \text{Qb7} \) 36 ...\( \text{Qxe5} \), and White will eventually win.

It is now time for Gelfand to think about a sacrificial attack, pushing away Black’s remaining queenside pawns.

26 ...\( \text{Qxc6}+ \)

It works!

The computer shows interest in 26 ...\( \text{Qxe5} \) 27 ...\( \text{Qb6+} \text{Qb8} \) 28 ...\( \text{Qxe5} \) 29 ...\( \text{Qd7}+ \), but at best it is only a slow technical grind. If tactics work, use them.

26...\( \text{Qxe6} \) 27 ...\( \text{Qc1} \)

Clearly Gelfand was not interested in 27 ...\( \text{Qxa6}+? \text{b7} \).

27...\( \text{Qb8} \)

The most consistent reply. He might as well force White to make a second sacrifice.

27...\( \text{Qb7} \) 28 ...\( \text{Qxc6} \) 29 ...\( \text{Qxa6}+ \text{Qb6} \) 30 ...\( \text{Qxb6}+ \text{Qd7} \) 31 ...\( \text{Qb7}+ \text{Qd8} \) 32 ...\( \text{Qb6} \) wins for White.
28 \text{\texttt{\textit{\textbf{x}}}c6+}

Of course, White must carry on the demolition.

28...\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{x}}}c}}6

After this Black has two rooks for a bishop, yet his position is hopeless. His queen is out of action, while White's queen and knight chew up Black's king and a few random pawns or pieces.

29 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{\textbf{x}}}a}}6+}}}

Now Black cannot protect his b5-square.

29...\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textit{\textbf{d}}}d}}8}

If 29...\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{b}}}b}}8 30 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{w}}}xb5+ \textit{\textbf{a}}7} 31 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textbf{w}}}b6+ \textit{\textbf{a}}8} 32 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textbf{w}}}xc6+ \textit{\textbf{b}}8} 33 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textbf{w}}}b5+ \textit{\textbf{a}}8} 34 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textbf{d}}}b6+ \textit{\textbf{a}}7} 35 \texttt{\textbf{\textbf{d}}}d7, and White wins.

30 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textbf{w}}}b6+}

Not 30 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textbf{w}}}xc6?}, as with a preliminary check he can aim to take the knight with check.

39...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{d}}}d7} 31 \texttt{\textbf{\textbf{w}}}b7+ \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{d}}}d8}

With his last two moves, though, Black has avoided the fatal capture with check. What now?

32 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{d}}}b6!}

With mating threats.

32...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{f}}}f5}

32...\texttt{\textbf{b}}b8 33 \texttt{\textbf{w}}c8+ \texttt{\textbf{e}}7 34 \texttt{\textbf{d}}d5 mate would have been an attractive finish.

Or 32...\texttt{\textbf{e}}e7 33 \texttt{\textbf{w}}c8 mate.

33 \texttt{\textbf{w}}c8+

It is time for hoovering up.

33...\texttt{\textbf{e}}e7 34 \texttt{\textbf{w}}d7+

34 \texttt{\textbf{d}}d5+ \texttt{\textbf{f}}f7 35 \texttt{\textbf{h}}h5+ is also good, indeed slightly more accurate.

34...\texttt{\textbf{f}}f8

34...\texttt{\textbf{f}}f6?! might well have caused a flutter in time scramble. After 35 \texttt{\textbf{d}}d5+ \texttt{\textbf{g}}g6 36 \texttt{\textbf{w}}x\textit{\textbf{e}}6+ \texttt{\textbf{h}}h7 37 \texttt{\textbf{f}}f6+ \texttt{\textbf{h}}h8 38 \texttt{\textbf{w}}x\textit{\textbf{g}}8 \texttt{\textbf{d}}d4 39 \texttt{\textbf{w}}d6 \texttt{\textbf{x}}f3+ 40 \texttt{\textbf{h}}h1 \texttt{\textbf{x}}h2 41 \texttt{\textbf{f}}f6 White would have safely achieved the time control, keeping a material advantage.

35 \texttt{\textbf{w}}x\textit{\textbf{e}}6

He has recovered the rook, and still has a big attack.

35...\texttt{\textbf{w}}e7

If 35...\texttt{\textbf{g}}g6 36 \texttt{\textbf{d}}d7+ \texttt{\textbf{g}}g7 37 \texttt{\textbf{w}}x\textit{\textbf{g}}6+ \texttt{\textbf{g}}g6 38 \texttt{\textbf{e}}xf5+ \texttt{\textbf{x}}f5 39 \texttt{\textbf{d}}xc6, and a win on material.

36 \texttt{\textbf{w}}x\textit{\textbf{h}}6+

36 \texttt{\textbf{w}}xf5+?! \texttt{\textbf{g}}g7 37 \texttt{\textbf{d}}d5 \texttt{\textbf{f}}f7 allows complications.

36...\texttt{\textbf{g}}g7

Similarly, 36...\texttt{\textbf{e}}e8 37 \texttt{\textbf{c}}c8 wins.

37 \texttt{\textbf{c}}c8 1-0

Now the bishop goes, and other pieces will soon fall.
Game 31
S.Mamedyarov-I.Nepomniachtchi
Russian Team Championship 2008
Semi-Slav Defence D47

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Qc3 Qf6 4 Qf3 e6 5 e3 Qbd7 6 Qd3 Qxc4 7 Qxc4 b5 8 Qd3 Qb7 9 e4

For 9 0-0, see Game 1, Kasimdzhanov-Kasparov. We are still very much in main-line play, which makes it all the more noteworthy that Mamedyarov was able to find a whole unexplored variation just a few moves later.

10...c5
Black is now attacking both central pawns, but White’s pawns can run. White often needs to attack with the pawns before Black is fully developed.

11 e5
He has to attack with the e-pawn.

11 d5? exd5 is mistimed here. In comparison with the Kasimdzhanov-Kasparov encounter, White no longer has a knight on c3.

11...Qd5
Clearly the best move. 11...Qxf3 12 Qxf3 Qd5 is just about playable, but White has the advantage of the bishop-pair in an open position.

9...b4
Black kicks the white knight away from the centre, which is good, but he is also weakening his queenside pawn structure.

The computer shows some initial interest in 9...c5!??, but there are too many pins after 10 Qxb5 Qxe4 11 Qe5 Qf5 12 Qg5 Qc8 with advantage to White.

10 Qe4
10 e5? bxc3 11 exf6 bxc2 12 fxg7 Qxg7 13 Qxb2 c5 leads to an edge for Black.

12 0-0
The early stages of a new idea.
Mamedyarov had already tried 12 Qxc5 Qxc5 13 dxc5 Qxc5, which gave a win against Topalov, a big result, but Black can improve, and Mamedyarov
has moved on from this line.

Here 14 \textit{b}5+?! does not gain much. The king has to move to a slightly worse square, but White's bishop has given up a tempo to go to a weaker square. Black is equal.

14 0-0 is best, and if 14...0-0? 15 \textit{xh7+ xh7 16 w2+} White wins a pawn. Therefore 14...h6 is necessary, and after 15 \textit{d}2! we have:

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

\begin{itemize}
\item[a)] If 15...0-0, the standard line, White had a slight edge, and later a win, with 16 \textit{e}4 \textit{d}4 17 \textit{d}6 \textit{c}6 18 \textit{h}7+ \textit{xh7 19 w4d4} in S.Mamedyarov-V.Topalov, Essent 2006.
\item[b)] A success, but the next month Gelfand showed he was able to equalize after 15...\textit{c}3!? 16 \textit{w}c2 \textit{d}5 17 \textit{f}3 \textit{d}8 18 \textit{e}1 \textit{d}4 19 \textit{d}2 \textit{b}5 in S.Mamedyarov-B.Gelfand, Moscow 2006:
\begin{itemize}
\item[b1)] 20 \textit{xb}4 \textit{xe}5 has been tried a few times, but with Black having equalized.
\item[b2)] Mamedyarov tried 20 \textit{f}3, Gelfand continuing with 20...\textit{b}6 21 \textit{c}4 \textit{c}5 22 \textit{e}3 \textit{c}6 23 \textit{e}2 \textit{c}7. White's position looks slightly more promising just at the moment, but it could easily fade to equality. The game finished with 24 \textit{ac}1 \textit{xe}3, and a draw was soon agreed after 25 \textit{fxe}3 0-0 26 \textit{d}3 \textit{b}6 27 \textit{d}2 \textit{a}6 28 \textit{xa}6. Here Krasenkow gives 25 \textit{xe}3 \textit{b}6 26 \textit{xb}6 \textit{axb}6 27 \textit{b}3 \textit{d}5 as equal, but one cannot help thinking that White has a micro-edge after 28 \textit{fd}1.
\end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

There are plenty of alternatives at earlier stages, and Mamedyarov no doubt wanted to try something new against a well booked-up opponent.

12...\textit{x}d4

Black opens up White's pawn centre, but White also has his pieces. This position is still known.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

13 \textit{xd}4

But this is less common, and Mamedyarov was clearly thinking in terms of a follow-up. White gambits a pawn. 13 \textit{e}1 is the normal move, but White has given up a tempo to secure the e-pawn. 13 \textit{e}1 g6 14 \textit{g}5 \textit{a}5 is about equal. Some months earlier, a draw was agreed in S.Mamedyarov-B.Gelfand, Moscow 2007, after 15 \textit{d}2 \textit{c}8 (15...\textit{a}6 was the older way, but the exchange sacrifice is promising) 16 \textit{c}4 \textit{xc}4 17 \textit{xc}4 \textit{g}7 18 \textit{c}1 \textit{xe}5 19 \textit{f}1 \textit{d}7 20 a3 0-0 21 \textit{d}2 \textit{b}8 22 \textit{b}3 \textit{a}8 23 \textit{c}4 \textit{e}5 24 \textit{c}5 \textit{d}8 25 axb4 d3 26
\( \text{Wd1 Qd7 27Cc4 Qe5 28Cc5 Qd7 29Cc4 Qe5. White has the exchange for a}
\text{pawn, but Black's minor pieces, plus passed pawn, are difficult to dislodge.}
\text{If Mamedyarov is going to search for a}
\text{win, he has to try something new.}

\text{13...g6}

\text{But can't Black just take the pawn? After 13...Qxe5 14Qb5+ Qd7 White has}
\text{played many times the slightly unconvinving line 15Qe1 Qc8 16Wh5 g6,}
\text{with some degree of compensation for a}
\text{pawn, but not really giving a plus.}

\text{Then a high-level quickplay game}
\text{showed that White could dispense with}
\text{Qe1, thereby not giving the extra defensive resource ...Qc8. J.Piket-A.Shirov,}
\text{Monaco (rapid) 2002, continued 15}
\text{Wh5 Qf5 16Qxe6! Qxh5 17Qxd8 Qxd8 18Qe1+ Qe7 19Qc5 Qc8 20Qg5}
\text{Qh6 21Qxf6 gxf6 22Qad1, and although Black was a piece up, the multiple}
\text{pens meant that he could not escape, and sooner or later would have to}
\text{move the king, giving away the extra piece, and settling to aim for an un-
\text{comfortable but playable rook and minor piece endgame. Indeed, Shirov}
\text{chose 22...Qg8 23f4 Qf8 24Qxd7+ Qxd7 25Qxd7 Qc5+ 26Qf1 Qxd7 27}
\text{Qxd7 Qg7, and the game was later drawn.}

\text{White, with more time for reflection, realized that the bishop for knight ex-
\text{change on f6 was unnecessary. So 21}
\text{Qad1 was tried, although after 21...a6}
\text{22Qa4 h6 23Qxf6 gxf6 24Qxd7 Qxd7 25Qxd7 Qxd7 26Qd1 0-0 27Qxd7 Qc8}
\text{29g3 Black was eventually able to draw}
\text{in Radjabov-Shirov, Wijk aan Zee 2003.}
\text{Some entertaining tactics, followed by long endgame grinding, that is the}
\text{modern way.}

\text{After 15 Wh5, Black can also try}
\text{15...g6 16We5 Wf6 17Qf3. However,}
\text{Black still has some pin problems, one idea being 17...Qc8 18Qg5 Qg7 19}
\text{Qac1, and if 19...Qxc1 20Wb8+, with}
\text{mate to follow. Black can, of course,}
\text{improve.}

\text{Finally, there is a possible queen sac-
\text{rifice with 15Qc6?! Qc7 16Qxd5 exd5}
\text{17Qe1+ Qe7 18Qxe7 Qf8, but White has}
\text{only two minor pieces for the}
\text{queen, and it is not enough.}

\text{14f4}

\text{Strangely this is a new line, yet what}
\text{could be more natural than protecting the}
\text{advanced pawn?}

\text{The main continuation has been}
\text{14Qg4, with the not too deep idea that if}
\text{14...Qxe5? 15Qb5+ Qd7, White can}
\text{regain the piece, with a winning attack,}
\text{after 16Qxe6 fxe6 17Qxe6+.}

\text{There have, of course, been tactics}
\text{after, for example, 14...Qg7 15Qg5,}
\text{and if 15...Qxe5 16Qxe6 Qxg4 17}
\text{Qxd8:}

\text{a) if 17...Qxd8 18Qb5+ Qd7 19}
\text{Qae1+ Qe5 20Qc5 Qc8 21Qh6l 0-0 22}
\text{Qxg7 Qxg7 23Qxe5 Qd6, and after}
\text{various tactics, White keeps a slight posi-
\text{tional edge.}
b) Or 17...h6 18 ∆h4 g5 19 ∆xb7 g×h4 20 ∆c4 ∆b6 21 ∆xb6 axb6 22 ∆d6+ ∏e7 23 ∆f7 ∏he8, V.Razuvaev-A.Bagirov, Jurmala 1987, and although White is probably better, the opposite-coloured bishops helped lead to a draw.

Entertaining, but has Black ever tried 14...w×a5, the computer recommendation? 15 ∆xe6 w×a4 makes White's attack look silly, while if 15 ∆b5 ∆a6 Black is doing well. If White abandons his queen for the kingside, quite often a good response is for Black to take over on the queenside.

14...a6

It is understandable for Black to want to prevent ∆b5, or even ∆b5 after an early ...g7, but it is also slow, and Mamedyarov unleashes an aggressive pawn sacrifice.

We are still on the cutting edge of modern opening theory, and between the time that the game was played in 2008, and my annotation a few months later, and the book being published in 2009, developments will have been found. It is difficult to believe that Mamedyarov's line will prove to have been a truly decisive opening innovation, but for the time being, it works.

Watch this space.

14...c8 and 14...w×h4 are to be considered.

15 f×f1!

The double exclamation mark is for shock value. Although this pawn sacrifice is hardly unexpected, dating back to the ideas of Pillsbury and others, it is a position which has not been seen before. So we have a position which Mamedyarov has seen before, but Nepomniachtchi hasn't. This can be extremely difficult for the defender, who has to

play with 100% accuracy over the board, while the opponent is able to use his home analysis.

Nepomniachtchi is comfortably a 2600+ player, aiming for more, but he loses in 23 moves. Given a second chance, he would have been able to find an improvement.

15...w×h4?

A big miscalculation, which leaves him on the way to a quick loss.

There are three ways of taking the pawn, and we must consider the three captures:

a) 15...g×f5 would be instinctively be rejected by a top player, and indeed by many others. After 16 ∆xe6 f×e6 17 w×h5+ ∏e7 18 g5+ ∏f7f6 White has several ways of playing for a winning advantage. Probably the most clear-cut is 19 ∆xf5 exf5 20 exf6+, and Black is fatally exposed to White's queen and two rooks. Even here, though, Black's play is not wholly to be discounted. After 16...w×e7! 17 ∆xf8 w×f8 18 ∆xf5 ∆xe5 19 w×d4 Black equalizes with 19...g×g8!, hitting g2. There are plenty of alternatives, and maybe someone will try it.

b) 15...exf5 is another possibility,
again with wide open central play. After 16 e6 fxe6 17 Qxe6 Wf6 18 Qe1 Qe5 19 Qc5 Qxc5 20 Qxc5 0-0-0! Black has escaped the problems with the king on the e- and d-files, and is a pawn up.

White opens Black’s king on the queenside with 21 Qxa6 Qxa6 22 Qxa6 Wb6+! 23 Qh1 Qc7 (much clearer than 23...Qg4?!) 24 Qc2+ Qc3 25 h3! with no perpetual check) 24 We2 Qd3 25 Qxc7, and now Black can force a repetition with 25...Qf2+ 26 Qg2 Qh3+, but 25...Qxe1? 26 Qe3 would be unwise. A draw, unless of course Mamedyarov has found something even deeper for White.

c) Finally, there is 15...Qxe5 16 fxe6 fxe6 17 Qxe6 Wd6. The computer gives this as equal, through several possible lines, but the human player might well slightly prefer the two bishops after 18 Qxf8 Qxf8 19 Qxf8+ Wxf8, and maybe something like 20 Qe4 Qd8 21 We1 We7 22 Qd2 Qc6 23 Qc2.

We can suggest, for the sake of argument, that there were four reasonable moves, two of which were equal, one a very slight advantage for White, and one was close to losing. How often it happens that when a player is sud-
denly under severe pressure, he plays the very worst move!

16 fxe6!

Much better than the presumably anticipated 16 Qf3 Wh5, although even here White is slightly better after 17 fxe6 fxe6 18 Qg5.

16...Wxd4+

He takes a knight with check!

16...f6 17 Qxe6 We7 is an attempt to repair the damage, but Black is effectively a tempo down.

17 Qh1

We are only four moves away from well-known theory, but Black is already in a desperately poor position, and we can be reasonably certain that Mamedyarov has analysed this in advance, and seen it through to the end.

17...0-0-0?!

Avoiding the critical line.

Unfortunately, if 17...fxe6, or indeed any knight escape, White wins the queen with 18 Qxg6+ (or 18 Qb5+ after a knight move).

The computer suggests 17...Qxe5 18 exd7+ Qxd7 as the best chance, but Black’s pieces are fragile, with the king out in the open, and plenty of pins, and there must be significant danger. 19
Modern Chess: Move by Move

筫f4 seems sharpest, speeding up his development, and more or less forcing Black to open up the d-file with 19...筫xf4:

18 exd7+
But this is clearly winning.
18...筫b8
18...筫xd7 19筫f5 筫xd1 20筫xd7+ wins the exchange for White.
19筫xa6
Here he grabs a pawn, while keeping his own advanced pawn for as long as possible.

a) If then White uses a double-check, with either 20筫b5+ or 20筫f5+, the king can scurry away with 20...筫e7, and then on to f6, with likely equality.

b) 20筫e4+! is more accurate. If then 20...筫d5 21筫xd5 筫xd5 22筫b6+筫d8 23筫e1 筫d6 24筫xd5, and White is much better, Black's king still being under pressure, and his development is slow. Thus 20...筫d6 21筫xb7 seems critical:

b1) If 21...筫ad8, White can coordinate with 22筫b6+筫c7 23筫c4 筫e7 25筫f3 with a positional edge.

b2) 21...筫e2 (21...筫h5 transposes) 22筫g3 筫xg3+23筫xg3 筫xg3 leads to a mating threat and possible perpetuals. The position is incredibly open, and White has chances of countering the counter-attack: 24筫c5+!筫d8 (the only safe king move) 25筫f2! over-turns Black's counterplay after, for example, 25...筫h4+ 26筫g1 筫g5+ 27筫g2 筫xc5 28筫xa8 with a win for White.

So it seems that Black is in trouble, anyway.

19...筫xe5?
Black can still keep the position alive, just about, with 19...筫xd1 20筫xd1 筫xd7. The computer may suggest that White is effectively positionally two pawns ahead, but it can sometimes be difficult to convert this into a win. White is in fact only one pawn up, and it is going to be a long time before he will be thinking about a quick promotion. Black's pieces, slightly uncoordinated at the moment, can soon work together.

The computer's main line is 21筫xb7 筫xb7 22 a3筫e7, and then if 23筫g5 (23筫xb4 筫xb4 24筫d2筫e7 25筫g5 is slightly less effective) 23...筫hd8 24筫xe7 筫xe7 25筫xb4 筫xe5, and White's doubled extra pawn is only a slender plus in the equation. More important, perhaps, is that even in the endgame
Black’s king is isolated and under attack from two rooks and a knight.

There are many possible ideas for innovation here, perhaps starting with 22 h6 or 22 e3. For the author, this has been a long and hard exercise to write such a complicated book, and the temptation is to give an end-of-term exercise to ask the reader to find the best line for White. This is, after all, the type of exercise that top players are increasingly having to work on.

At the very least, Black’s position is not collapsing yet. Instead, after Nepomniachtchi’s possibly dazed reply, Mamedyarov finishes quickly.

20 e1

Gaining time by attacking the queen.

20... wd6

Most other moves lose to the same reply.

Of others, White has 20... h5 21 xb7 xb7 22 g4, winning the knight.

21 e8!

All sorts of pins and small tactics now come up, based on the use of the rook on the back rank. Perhaps there is nothing particularly deep at this stage, but the point is that White was able to take advantage of the isolated pawn on d7 before it drops.

This is very much in the style of Kasparov. Not even Tal would have been able to play a game like this, since he never had the technology available of extremely deep computer-based theoretical analysis. As we have seen from this collection, there are more and more players who have been able to combine both ultra-deep theoretical knowledge, and the clarity of thought over the board. The challenge of the newer super-super-grandmasters is whether they can emulate Kasparov’s achievements, and whether anyone can go beyond, even if only slightly. Chess carries on, chess continues, and chess evolves.

21... wxd7

Or 21... g7 22 xh8 xh8 23 xb7 xb7 24 f4! xf4 25 xd5+ and Black’s king will soon drop.

22 f4+

The first bishop move, and it wins. For such a situation to have worked, all the other developed pieces must have coordinated with maximum effectiveness.

22... d6

If 22... xa7 23 xb7 xe8 (23... xb7 24 xf8! and c5+) 24 xd5, and the poor king has no cover.

23 xh8 1-0

Black has had enough. 23 xh8 24 c5 e7 25 xd6+ xd6 26 xb7 xc5 27 xd5 wins a piece, or 23... xf4 24 xd8+ xd8 25 xb7 xb7 26 c5+ c8 21 c1 with an easy win.

Mind-blowing attacking chess.
Game 32
E.Inarkiev-Ni Hua
Russian Team Championship 2008
Slav Defence D10

My apologies to Grandmaster Inarkiev for introducing two losses of his from within a fortnight. What happened is that I had already decided that Karjakin’s win (Game 33) was well worth publishing, and much later on there were only three wins for Ni Hua to be selected from (players over 2700 beating someone over 2600). The other two were regarded as not fully publishable by the standards of games of the highest level. This one is, I hope, far more enjoyable for the reader.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Cc3 Cc6 4 e3

For the Exchange Variation, 4 cxd5 cxd5, see Game 25, Morozevich-Sakaev. Over the next few moves, White keeps the option of setting up a symmetrical exchange on d5. Usually, though, he avoids it in this line, as the pawn on e3 prevents the bishop developing on f4.

4 Cf3 dxc4 5 a4 (preventing b5) is the standard main line of the Slav Defence. White regains the pawn, and keeps slightly more activity with his pieces, but Black’s position is very solid. Black usually plays ...Cb4, taking advantage that White cannot attack that square with the a-pawn.

There are also, of course, many examples of the Semi-Slav with 4...e6. The reader can track through the games beginning with Kasimdzhanov-Kasparov, Game 1.

With 4 e3, Inarkiev cuts out any further gambit options.

4...a6

Black’s ...a6 move is not really a waste of time. In the Morozevich-Sakaev game, Black quickly played ...a6 voluntarily anyway. Black cuts out any Ab5 or Cb5 ideas, and can later make ground himself with ...b5.

5 Cf3

Straightforward development.

5...b5

The obvious continuation, but Black can still move into a Schlechter Variation with 5...g6, as tried by Kamsky a few times.

6 c5

The main line in recent years, by a small majority. White gains space on the queenside, but cannot make any useful open lines there. Meanwhile, Black has if anything slightly the better structure in the centre and on the king-
side, his pawn on c6 giving extra protection to d5, while White’s pawn on c5 has shot through any protection of d4. The problem for White in trying to take an edge is whether he can make advantage of a queenside push with b4 and a4. This does not happen in the game, as Black sets up a counter-initiative in the centre, with ...,e5, based on the point that if White takes with dxe5, his pawn on c5 drops.

6 b3 is also popular, though again it has proven difficult for White to claim an edge.

Then, of course, there is another Exchange Variation, with 6 cxd5 cxd5, and the likelihood of equality.

6...g6

Black develops his pieces and castles, before deciding what to do with the pawns in the centre and on the queenside. A bishop on g7 will, of course, help a pawn advance to e5 later on. Also the g6-pawn blocks any pressure against h7 after ...d3. 6...bd7 and 6...g4 are other possibilities.

7 d3

7 d3 has been tried a few times, then maybe 7...g7 8 h3 0-0 9 0-0 bd7. It is not clear that White achieves much of an edge. Black can try to equalize with a later ...e5, and if White tries e4 himself, then it is again not clear that he can try for an edge.

So Inarkiev tries a Stonewall set-up, with f4 to follow, to prevent Black from playing ...e5, and maybe to set up a later attack on the kingside.

7...g7

The obvious continuation, although 7...fd7 might even be more accurate:

a) If 8 f3, then who would blink first to avoid the quick repetition? The answer to this conundrum is that Black, if he wants to be ambitious, might try 8...e5!?

b) Similarly, 8 d3 e5!?

c) 8 f4?! exd5 9 fxe5 f6 10 exf6 xf6 11 d3 f5 allows Black to start taking control of the centre, so is not satisfactory.

d) 8 xd7 xd7 9 e4 dxe4 10 xe4 g7 is equal.

8 f4

Building up the Stonewall.

In most other recent games, White has started off with 8 e2, maybe deciding later whether to push with f4 or with h4. This tends to give Black time to respond with ...f5 after White’s f4. For example, 8 e2 0-0 9 0-0 fd7 10 f4 f5 11 d3 a5 12 d2 ef6, and Black was able to equalize in A.Moiseenko-Ni Hua, Beersheba 2005. Later on, Ni Hua was able to take control of the f-file, and eventually won after White opened up the g-file with g4, and Black then created counter-pressure with ...g5.

8...fd7

To eliminate the strong white knight.

9 d3

This is better centralized than 9 f3.
Modern Chess: Move by Move

9...a5

If 9...f5, then White has gained time on the queenside, by quickly playing the knight manoeuvre to d3, and by delaying any bishop move, and 10 a4 gives a slight but clear edge on the queenside.

10 g4

Premature? It certainly provokes his opponent to go for the attack quickly himself.

10 a2, then castling, is quietly equal.

White has the same sort of problem in the main game, but at least he does not need to give back the extra pawn. In the game, it is a considerable irritation for Black that White keeps the pawn on g4, cutting out for quite a while any attacks with the bishop on f5.

10...e5!

The spirit of the gambit still continues. Otherwise, there must be half a dozen ways to equality, or at least something very close to it.

11 fxé5

White should take it, and with the f-pawn, not the d-pawn: 11 dxe6 dxe6 would allow Black to at least equalize.

11 a5 é5 12 fxe5 wxe5+ 13 d2 fxe4 again allows Black comfortable equality, or more, without loss of a pawn. The problem is not so much that White’s king is going to be directly attacked, but rather that the king is seriously in the way of the queenside pieces.

11...f6

This is the point of the previous sacrifice. Black opens up the e- and f-pawns with the hope of pressure in the centre, and later an outright attack.

The basic idea is, of course, well known, and such gambits were often popular in the 19th Century. The Blackmar Gambit, 1 d4 d5 2 e4 dxe4 3 dxe4 f6 4 f3, has had sporadic popularity at amateur levels, but is not really sound after good professional play by Black. Here, though, White has free play with his pieces. What is remarkable in Ni Hua’s idea is that he gives away the pawn without being able to activate his queenside pieces quickly. Should it work? White’s pieces are also constrained, but one cannot help sensing that White should be able to overcome the gambit.

12 exf6

White might just as well take the ex-
extra pawn. A quick flick through the computer gives 12 e6 \( \text{Qf8} \) 13 e4 \( \text{Qxe6} \) 14 exd5 \( \text{Qxd4} \) 15 \( \text{Qf2} \) f5 16 \( \text{Qe3} \) \( \text{Wf7} \) 17 \( \text{Qce4} \) fxe4 18 \( \text{Qxd4} \) e3 19 \( \text{Qe4} \) \( \text{Wxe4} \) 20 \( \text{Qxg7} \) \( \text{Gg8} \) 21 \( \text{Wd4} \) \( \text{Wf3} \), and Black is on top.

12...\( \text{Qxf6} \)!

A difficult choice among the three recaptures, and even, one might suspect, his second-choice reply after a change of mind. It does not quite seem fully worthwhile to set up a bishop check on h4 in return for giving up a pawn, when White’s king can run to safety on the queenside. There were easier ways to equalize:

a) 12...\( \text{Wxf6} \) 13 h4 seems comfortable for White.

b) 12...\( \text{Qf6} \)? is more natural, and might well have been Ni Hua’s earlier choice, but 13 g5 forces Black’s knight to move onwards before Black can kick White’s knight with ...\( \text{b4} \). Then:

b1) 13...\( \text{Qg8} \) looks appealing, with the idea of setting up a blockade on f5 with ...\( \text{Qe7} \), but Black is a tempo short of realizing his plan. After 14 h4 h6 (14...\( \text{Qe7} \) 15 h5, with an edge to White) 15 \( \text{Qf4} \) hxg5 (or 15...\( \text{Qf5} \) 16 \( \text{Qd3} \), breaking Black’s blockade on the diagonal) 16

\( \text{Qxg6} \) \( \text{Gg6} \) 17 h5 \( \text{Qf5} \) 18 \( \text{Qd3} \) White safely keeps the extra pawn.

b2) 13...\( \text{Qh5} \)! seems an improvement, then 14 \( \text{Qg1} \) 0-0. After 15 \( \text{Qe2} \) \( \text{We8} \), for the moment Black does not have to develop with the bishop and knight on the queenside. Instead he can give priority to the rook with ...\( \text{Qa7} \), and then either ...\( \text{Qe7} \) or ...\( \text{Qaf7} \).

Black seems fully equal, and with chances of playing for more if White does not find a good way of developing his queenside. After the text move, the suspicion is that White remains slightly better, despite the final result in favour of Black.

13 \( \text{Qg2} \)

He cannot keep both bishops at home, and he must keep an open square on d2 for the king.

13...\( \text{Qh4+} \)

A useful little stab, but while giving check on h4, the bishop has no influence on the queenside.

14 \( \text{Qd2} \)

Uncomfortable, but with the central pawn structure closed White will have reasonable chances to bring the king to safety, quite likely on b1.

14...0-0
Over the next few moves Black has to decide whether to poke the knight with ...b4. He does not want to allow the white knight to remain on c3, but on the other hand after ...b4; $\text{d}4$ Black will be concerned about the hole on b6.

Here 14...b4 looks reasonably well timed. Then 15 $\text{d}4$ 0-0 could later transpose into the main line, or there might be minor improvements on either side. If 16 $\text{f}1$, to prevent Black from castling, then 16...$\text{f}6$ 17 $\text{h}3$ (17 $\text{b}6$? $\text{x}g4$ 18 $\text{b}3$ $\text{e}4+$ 19 $\text{x}e4$ $\text{xf}1$ 20 $\text{xa}8$ $\text{d}4$ favours Black) 17...$\text{bd}7$, and at least Black would be reasonably comfortable with his development, but it is not so clear that he has full compensation for the sacrificed pawn. White could instead give up the knight for three pawns, with 15 $\text{xd}5$ $\text{cxd}5$ 16 $\text{xd}5$ $\text{a}6$ 17 $\text{wa}4$, but 17...$\text{wg}5$ is only unclear. It is too early to give back the extra material.

15 $\text{c}2$

Has he missed an opportunity? The computer suggests that 15 $\text{xd}5$? $\text{xc}5$ 16 $\text{dxc}5$ $\text{cxd}5$ 17 $\text{wb}3$ is good for White. He has broken up Black’s pawn centre, and he will win a second pawn, if he wants. The only problem is that White’s king is stuck in the centre, potentially exposed, and his bishop and rook are thereby undeveloped.

After 17...$\text{e}6$ 18 $\text{f}4$ $\text{wd}7$ there are pins for both sides if White were to take the central pawn:

a) If 19 $\text{xd}5$?, Black is winning after 19...$\text{xf}4$!.

b) 19 $\text{f}1$ is natural, but after 19...$\text{a}6$, White cannot chew up the d5-pawn to advantage. If, for example, 20 $\text{xe}6$ $\text{xe}6$ 21 $\text{xd}5$ $\text{fd}8$ 22 $\text{e}4$ $\text{b}4$, and White is in trouble with the exposure of his king.

c) This suggests that it is time to escape a move earlier with 19 $\text{c}2$ $\text{a}6$ 20 $\text{xd}5+$ $\text{xd}5$ 21 $\text{xd}5$ (21 $\text{xd}5+$ $\text{xd}5$ 22 $\text{xd}5$ $\text{ad}8$ gives White no realistic winning chances, Black’s pieces being so active) 21...$\text{f}7$, and then after 22 $\text{b}6$ $\text{wc}6$ Black is better.

In these comments, the temptation is to knock out the bishop on e6, and to win the d-pawn. Maybe, though, that pawn should be left. It is the b-pawn that should be taken, not opening lines in front of the king. 18 $\text{xb}5!$ gives Black some piece compensation for the two pawns, but there is no obvious breakthrough, and White should be
able to keep an edge.
Even after quiet play, as in the game, White should be able to stay ahead.

15...\(\texttt{a6}\)
Starting to bring the knight into play.

16 a3
A difficult choice to make, or even maybe a relatively easy but lazy move. It is difficult to decide, without actually watching the players. White is, of course, worried about \(\texttt{\texttt{b4+}}, \) and if the knights are exchanged, then Black has options of attack with \(\texttt{\texttt{f2+}}, \) or maybe on the h7-b1 diagonal. Thus Inarkiev cuts out the b4-square with a defensive pawn. The trouble is that while he is eliminating the knight move, he is positively encouraging the pawn push, \(\texttt{\texttt{b4}}, \) opening up the b-file. Inarkiev has, of course, seen this possibility, and has noticed that \(\texttt{\texttt{b4}} \) by Black would allow White to reply with \(\texttt{\texttt{a4}}, \) and possibly later \(\texttt{\texttt{b6}} \) with counterplay.

The old principles of Steinitz would suggest that the defender should not advance pawns in front of the king. Pawns cannot retreat, and any pawn advance, however slight, creates a broader weakening in the pawn structure. These days, the Steinitz idea cannot be regarded as a dogma, or even as a majority opinion, as it is recognized that there are so many opposing ideas to be considered in a complicated game, and that sometimes it is best to cover an immediate weakness, not being too worried about giving up a theoretical longer-term weakness. Nevertheless, it is often a starting point for examination. Thus we should consider alternatives at this point:

a) 16 \(\texttt{\texttt{b1}} \)? is a possibility:

a1) Then if 16...\(\texttt{\texttt{b4}} \) 17 \(\texttt{\texttt{xb4}} \) \(\texttt{axb4} \) 18 \(\texttt{\texttt{xd5}} \) \(\texttt{\texttt{f2}} \) 19 \(\texttt{\texttt{f4}} \), White’s position looks dodgy at first, but Black has no immediate attack on the king, and after 19...\(\texttt{g5} \) 20 \(\texttt{\texttt{xc6}} \) Black’s centre collapses, and it will be easy for White to defend.

a2) Black would do better to think about using both sides of the board with 16...\(\texttt{\texttt{f6}} \) 17 \(\texttt{h3} \) \(\texttt{g5} \), followed by \(\texttt{\texttt{we8}} \) and \(\texttt{\texttt{wg6+}} \). The position remains unclear. After, for example, 18 \(\texttt{\texttt{xf1}} \) \(\texttt{\texttt{we8}} \) 19 \(\texttt{\texttt{d2}} \), it is perhaps time for Black to abandon any ideas of \(\texttt{\texttt{b8}} \), and play to centralize with 19...\(\texttt{\texttt{a7}} \), followed by \(\texttt{\texttt{af7}} \) or \(\texttt{\texttt{e7}} \). That said, 20 \(\texttt{\texttt{e2}} \) seems to keep a slight edge for White, as Black’s bishop on h4 is now out of play.

b) The opposite approach for the defender is to play for tactics himself, here to try to break up the attacker’s central pawns, to try to stop the attacker’s pieces from working together. The idea would be 16 \(\texttt{\texttt{xd5}} \) \(\texttt{\texttt{dxc5}} \) 17 \(\texttt{\texttt{f4}} \) \(\texttt{\texttt{xd3}} \) 18 \(\texttt{\texttt{xd3}} \) \(\texttt{\texttt{b4+}} \) 19 \(\texttt{\texttt{b1}} \), but White’s pieces look uncomfortable, with problems on the light-squared diagonal. Therefore 19...\(\texttt{\texttt{xd3}} \) 20 \(\texttt{\texttt{xd3}} \) \(\texttt{\texttt{gxg4}} \), and while the computer might
be impressed by White, human players will tend to favour Black’s chances:

\[ \text{Diagram} \]

b1) 21 \( \text{Axc6} \) would be too greedy. White is heavily reliant on the queen and bishop on two diagonals, and if one falls, the whole position is likely to collapse. Black plays 21...\( \text{Axc8} \), and if 22 \( \text{Wxb5 Axc6} \) 23 \( \text{Wxc6 Axf3} \) 24 \( \text{We6+ Aah8} \) 25 \( \text{Af1 Ae8} \), and White has to relinquish the queen. Likewise, 22 \( \text{Axb5 Axf3} \) makes use of a different diagonal. If 23 \( \text{Af1 Wd5} \) 24 \( \text{Axh3 Wxf3} \), and White is under pressure.

b2) Maybe White can improve earlier with, for example, 21 \( \text{Ae4} \), but his position is still uncomfortable.

c) 16 \( \text{Ae2} \) is another option, and usually in over-the-board chess it is difficult to analyse confidently three unclear positions, let alone four. White’s idea, apart from development, is to create an extra escape square for the king on b1:

c1) If now 16...\( \text{Axb4+} \) 17 \( \text{Axb4 axb4} \) 18 \( \text{Axd5} \), and White is on top, his king now being safe, even after 18...\( b3+ \) 19 \( \text{Axb3} \).

c2) 16...\( \text{Af6} \) is better, and after 17 \( \text{Ae5 We8} \) the position is finely balanced.

The purpose of using computer analysis, for the player or writer, is not so much to try to analyse with certainty the next twenty moves through thickets of lines and sidelines. What is generally of more interest is to examine a few critical lines, and give an indication of which of the candidate moves is most promising. Then the analyst may have the chance of comparing his or her first impressions with comparison to computer-assisted analysis. In a position where the opponent has gambited a pawn, when should a player immediately counterattack? Or when should he develop? Or when should he quietly push a pawn to cover an attack? Or when should the king try to run to safety? None of these questions can be answered with confidence without analysis of the critical positions, and trying to analyse such positions is useful for the player to understand different types of position. This is what is known as experience.

In conclusion, Inarkiev’s 16 \( a3 \) seems good, and also 16 \( \text{Ab1} \). The quiet developing move, 16 \( \text{Ad2} \), is playable, but not as promising. The tactics with 16 \( \text{Axd5?!} \) are, though, best avoided.

16...\( \text{Af6?!} \)

Black wants to catch up with his development. His light-squared bishop is seen as important. This seems slightly mistimed, though.

Another angle of approach is an immediate 16...\( b4 \), instead of delaying it a couple of moves. The point is that after 17 \( \text{Aa4} \) White will be unable to try \( \text{Ab6} \), Black’s knight being able to cover that square. After, for example, 17...\( \text{Bb8} \) 18 \( \text{Af1 Bxf1} \) 19 \( \text{Wxf1 bxa3} \) 20 \( \text{bxa3 Ac7} \) 21 \( \text{Bb1 Aa6} \) Black has reasonable com-
pension for the pawn. It is possible that Ni Hua might have been slightly worried about 17 \( \text{Qxd5} \text{Qxc5} 18 \text{dxc5 cxd5} 19 \text{Qf4} \). After 19...\text{b7} 20 \( \text{Qxd5}+ \text{Qxd5} 21 \text{Wxd5}+ \text{Wxd5} 22 \text{Qxd5} \text{Kad8} 23 \text{e4 Qxc5} 24 \text{axb4 axb4} 25 \text{Qxb4 Kf2}+ 26 \text{b1 Qxe4} \) White is a pawn up as we start reaching the endgame, but it is an isolated pawn on its initial square, and Black's pieces are more active. The likelihood is a draw.

17 h3

Building up the pawn defences.

17 \( \text{Qe5 We8} 18 \text{Qf1 b4} \) is a possibility, but White with his knight advance has weakened his grip on b4.

17...\text{Qe6}

Again 17...b4 is a possibility, but after 18 \( \text{Qa4} \) the b6-square is an annoyance. 18...\text{bxa3} 19 \text{bxa3 Kb8} 20 \text{Qf1} gives White an edge. He still keeps the option of blocking the b-file with \( \text{Qb6} \).

18 \( \text{Qb1} \)

Inarkiev clearly feels more comfortable behind the unadvanced pawns than out in the open. We have already seen a possible danger, though. There have been lines in which Black plays ...b4 and exchanges the pawn, opening up at least part of the danger file.

18 \( \text{Qd2!?} \), developing, would seem to be a possible improvement, then maybe \( \text{Kc1} \) before \( \text{b1} \), castling by hand.

18...b4

Ni Hua breaks the tension. He will, of course, be well aware that White's knight can end up on b6, which is an irritation, but he is ready to give up the exchange, rook versus pawn and knight, to take much greater control with his own queenside forces.

This game would have been very difficult to handle over the board, with both players having to undertake complicated defensive manoeuvres, while continually having to bear in mind that tactics may arrive at any stage. Probably Black should play quietly with 18...\text{We8}?! , defending the pawn on c6 in case White were to try \( \text{Qe5} \), and aiming to use the queen on the h7-b1 diagonal after Black tries ...g5. It also helps that the queen is in position on the half-open e-file. Then if 19 \( \text{Kf1} \), a natural choice for White, Black opens the diagonal with 19...g5, keeping ...b4 as an option, but keeping White waiting.

There are many quiet moves, but 20 e4 is the most direct, and forcing. Then
after 20...b4 (20...dxe4 21 Qxe4 favours White) White can create a passed pawn, either on the e-file or on the c-file, but it is not totally clear that he can create a serious advantage, provided Black stays in touch with the h7-b1 diagonal. If, for example, 21 e5 Qd7 22 Qxf6+ Qxf6 23 Qxe2 Qf7, and Black now has the plan of ...Qg6 and a pawn exchange on a3. If the rook recaptures there, Black has ...Qg4. If the pawn recaptures, Black has the open file leading to the king.

The position remains complicated, and one cannot cover all lines. A reasonable attempt for White, and the computer’s suggestion, is 24 Qg1!, attacking with Qf3, and defending with Qf1. Then 24...Qg6! 25 Qf3 Qf2, with a sneak attack on the d4-pawn. If 26 Qa2 Wb8!, and White's knight on d3 is still pinned by tactics, as if 27 Qxf4? Qb4+ 28 axb4 axb4+, with a quick checkmate. Instead 27 Qxg5 is the further computer suggestion. After 27...Qe6 28 Qf1 Qxd4 29 Qxd4 Qxd4, Black’s position is still very much alive: 30 Qe3 b3+ 31 Qa1 Qc2+ 32 Qxc2 bxc2 33 Wxc2 is probably level.

19 Qa4

The thematic response over the last few moves, although 19 axb4 is also promising. If 19...axb4 20 Qe2, and White will be thinking about pressing forwards with the knights with Qf4 and/or Qe5.

19...Qe4

The point of Black’s last, although it is remarkable that White does not at any stage give a bishop for knight exchange on e4, eliminating the strong knight and cutting out any open diagonals leading to b1. Moreover, White’s bishop-pair is nothing special. In semi-blocked positions, with good outposts for knights, the bishop-pair is often useful, but sometimes its main use is to exchange a bishop for a good knight.

20 Qb6

A natural response, but later he will have to take care of exchange sacrifices on b6.

20 Qxe4 dxe4 21 Qe5 Wc7 is to be regarded as unclear, and hence no genuine improvement for White, who still has genuine aspirations for an edge.

20...Qb8

Ni Hua is relying on the possibility of sacrificing the exchange to break open his opponent’s queenside advanced defences.

\[ \text{Diagram} \]

21 Qf1!? 

Despite the final result, and despite Ni Hua’s creative attacking play, Inarkiev’s position is better. He could have played more vigorously himself with 21 Wa4!, attacking all his opponent’s pawns and knight on the queenside:

a) After 21...Qxb6 22 cxb6 Wxb6 23 axb4 Qxb4, White is effectively a tempo up on his queenside defensive ma-
noeuvres in the main game. The computer suggests that 24 Qf4 Bxf4 25 exf4 Bxd4 is winning for White, but many players would be sceptical. White’s two extra rooks do not work together, and Black has two strong extra minor pieces, plus a protected passed pawn. This could be difficult. Instead the simple plan would be 24 a5xb4 axb4 26 Bxe4 dxe4 26 Bd2 Ke7 27 Wa7 Bb5 28 Wa6, and White squeezes through with his one extra exchange.

b) 21...Qf2 does not help Black: 22 Wxc6 dxc7 23 Qxf2 (23 Qf4 Bf6 holds the balance for Black) 23...Qxf2 24 Kg1 gives White excellent chances of a win. His pawns are by now very solid, and defend excellently, while Black’s depleted pawns are crumbling.

21...Qc7

The first real chance to develop the queen.

22 a5xb4

The immediate 22 Qf4 Qf7 23 Bxe4 dxe4 24 We2 is certainly not worse. After 24...Bxb6 25 cxb6 Wxb6 26 a4 Bb3 White is better, but not decisively so.

22...Bxb4

22...Wh2 is reckless. After 23 Bxf8+

24 Qg5?

Probably the sort of strange move that can be played only with time on the clock for reflection. Few players would hit on this idea quickly. The point is that Black is threatening ...g5, and if the knight moves, then ...g6. Inarkiev temporarily stops Black’s pawn advancing to g5 by advancing his own pawn instead, hoping to gain a useful tempo. Unfortunately a few moves later, Ni Hua again creates threats on the diagonal leading to White’s king, and with greater impact.

The alternatives were:

a) 24 Bxa5 g5 25 Wa4 Bxf4 26 Wxb4 Kg6 27 a1 fxe3 28 Bxf8+ Bxf8 29 Bxe3 Bg3 30 Bxe4 ex4 causes some problems for White, with attacks on the back rank.

b) 24 Bxe4 fxe4 25 d2 gives White a clear positional edge.
24...\texttt{x}g5

Of course.

25 \texttt{hx}a5

If 25 \texttt{W}g4 \texttt{xf}4 26 \texttt{ex}f4, Black takes over the initiative with an exchange sacrifice with 26...\texttt{xB}6 27 \texttt{cx}b6 \texttt{Wxb}6.

25...\texttt{x}f4

An important white piece to exchange. Now the knight can no longer cover good squares against the light-squared bishop, and Black's attack speeds up.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

26 \texttt{ex}f4

Visually the least impressive of the three recaptures; White has broken up his pawn structure. The problem is that after the more natural 26 \texttt{xf}4, Black quickly sets up an open diagonal against the king with 26...g5. However, White then has good counterplay with 27 \texttt{xe}4! dxe4 28 \texttt{Wg}4 \texttt{Wd}8 29 \texttt{xe}4. It is he who covers the critical b1-h7 diagonal. After, for example, 29...\texttt{h}5 30 \texttt{Wg}2 \texttt{Qd}5 31 \texttt{Qd}2 White is starting to make good use of the bishop-pair.

Indeed, even at this late stage of the game, White still has good chances of being better. Perhaps this is not all that surprising. White starts off with a slight advantage, and it is not all that frequent for Black to be able to obtain an edge early on, especially if White is a strong grandmaster.

Instead 26 \texttt{xe}4 fxe4 27 \texttt{xf}4 \texttt{Qd}5 28 \texttt{xe}4 \texttt{Qxb}6 29 \texttt{cx}b6 \texttt{Wxb}6 probably ends up about equal. White has an extra pawn, but Black can create pressure with bishops of opposite colour, plus queens and rooks. It is doubtful whether White can play for a serious edge.

26...

\texttt{e}6

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

26 \texttt{ex}f4

The bishop is about to move to the winning diagonal on f5.

27 \texttt{Wb}3?

A serious miscalculation. Did he think he was winning material, without redress?

It is probable, though, that the position has already swung towards Black:

a) 27 \texttt{xe}4?! dxe4 is by now an irrelevance, as Black can set up checks with ...\texttt{e}3 and ...\texttt{xf}5.

b) 27 \texttt{a}4 \texttt{Qxc}5 28 \texttt{dx}c5 \texttt{xf}5+ 29 \texttt{a}1 \texttt{c}2 30 \texttt{Wd}4 \texttt{xa}4 31 \texttt{Wxb}4 \texttt{ac}2 leads to obvious problems for White's king on the a-file. After 32 \texttt{a}3 \texttt{b}7 33 \texttt{d}2 \texttt{a}8 34 \texttt{xa}8 \texttt{xa}8 35 \texttt{a}5 \texttt{b}5 36 \texttt{b}4 \texttt{e}4 37 \texttt{xe}4 (37 \texttt{g}3? \texttt{xb}4) 37...\texttt{xf}1+ 38 \texttt{b}1 \texttt{xf}4 the position
tends to favour Black. Usually White's bishop-pair would be expected to be more impressive than rook and pawn, but here the rook is superior. White's bishops cannot move far away from covering the ranks and diagonals leading to his king on a1, while there is no prospect for White in setting up an attack against Black's king.

c) 27  $$\text{a1}$$ would quickly transpose to our last variation after 27...
$$\text{xf5}$$ 28 $$\text{xa4}$$
$$\text{xc5}$$.

d) 27 $$\text{a4}$$! is a more accurate way of moving the queen when compared with the game; the rook on a5 does not get attacked. Moreover, there is a highly unexpected defensive idea by White, involving a perpetual. Play might continue 27...
$$\text{xb6}$$ 28 $$\text{xb6}$$ $$\text{xb6}$$ 29 $$\text{xe4}$$
$$\text{dx4}$$ 30 $$\text{xc5}$$ $$\text{xf1}$$? 31 $$\text{wa8+}$$
$$\text{g7}$$ (31...
$$\text{xf8}$$ 32 $$\text{wa4}$$ is a tame repetition)
32 f5! $$\text{a4+}$$ 33 $$\text{xa1}$$ $$\text{a7}$$ 34 $$\text{h6+}$$
$$\text{hxh6}$$ 35 $$\text{f8+}$$ $$\text{h5}$$. Now at first White's play would seem to be hopeless. However 36
$$\text{fxg6+}$$! leads to a perpetual check, very easily missed by mere humans:

\[27...\]

\[27...\]

\[27...\]

\[27...\]

\[27...\]

\[27...\]

\[27...\]

\[27...\]

\[27...\]

\[27...\]

\[27...\]

29 $$\text{a4}$$

White loses a tempo because his rook is under attack.

There may well be a case for returning the exchange with 29 $$\text{xe4}$$ $$\text{xa5}$$
30 f5 $$\text{b5}$$ (30...
$$\text{a8}$$ 31 $$\text{a3}$$ holds) 31
$$\text{xf3}$$ $$\text{gxf5}$$ 32 $$\text{c2}$$, and while Black is better, it will be difficult to prove strong
winning chances. This is a reasonable alternative for White, but his decisive mistake is not on this move, but rather a move later.

29...\(\text{f5}\)

![Chessboard diagram](image)

30 \(\text{Wxb4?}\)

Presumably short of time, he falls for a quick checkmate.

30 \(\text{a1}\) allows White to resist for longer, but after 30...\(\text{Wxd4}\), Black’s three minor pieces, plus of course the open lines for queen and rook, make it impossible for White to defend:

a) If 31 \(\text{Wxb4 Wxb4 32 Wxb4 Aa8+ 33 Wb1 Cc3 mate, much as in the game.}\)

b) If 31 \(\text{Axd1 Cc5 32 Wxd4 Cb3 mate, the three minor pieces mating.}\)

c) If 31 \(\text{Ae3 Cc5 32 Wa3 Cc2+ 33 Wa2 Wxa4, winning material for Black.}\)

d) 31 \(\text{Wxa3 Ab8}\) gives no immediate checkmate, but White is completely tied up by threats of ...\(\text{Cc2}\) followed by \(\text{Wb6}\).

e) 31 \(\text{Af3!}\) forces Black to have to work hard. The point is that after 31...\(\text{Dd2 32 Axd2 We4, apparently mating, White has 33 Ad3! Wxd3 34 Wxd3 Axd3 35 Af1, surviving to an endgame, though a pawn down. Probably it is best not to allow the opposite-coloured bishops in the endgame, so therefore 35...\(\text{Cc5}\) 36 Aa3 Ce4, followed by ...\(\text{c5}\), and Black should win.

An earlier try for Black, involving an exchange sacrifice, is 32...\(\text{Wxd2}\) 33 \(\text{Wxb4 Wxg2}\) 34 \(\text{He3}\). This is tempting, but does not seem conclusive. If, for example, 34...\(\text{c5}\) 35 \(\text{He1}\), and if Black decides to block the e-file with 35...\(\text{Ge4}\), White returns the exchange with 36 \(\text{Axe4 dxe4}\) 37 \(\text{Wxe4 Wxe4}\) 38 \(\text{Axe4}\) with a drawn rook and pawn ending. Or 34...\(\text{Wc2}\) 35 \(\text{He1}\) \(\text{c5}\) 36 \(\text{Wb5 Wd2}\) 37 \(\text{Wa5}\) (37 \(\text{We2? Wxf4!}\) 37...\(\text{Wf2}\) 38 \(\text{Cc3}\), which gives White chances of holding, after either 38...\(\text{d4}\) 39 \(\text{Cc4+ Ah8}\) 40 \(\text{Wc1}\) or 38...\(\text{c4}\) 39 \(\text{We5 Ed8}\) 40 \(\text{We7}\).

30...\(\text{Wxb4}\) 31 \(\text{Axb4 Cc3+ 0-1}\)

Not every one of the eight discovered checks win, as if Black is careless, the king can escape via \(\text{a2}\) and \(\text{b3}\), but 31...\(\text{Dd2+}\) or 31...\(\text{Cc5+}\) also give mate with ...\(\text{Aa8}\) next move.
Game 33
S.Karjakin-E.Inarkiev
Baku 2008
Ruy Lopez C99

1 e4 e5 2 ∆f3 ∆c6 3 ∆b5 a6 4 ∆a4 ∆f6 5 0-0 ∆e7 6 ∆e1 b5 7 ∆b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ∆a5

For 9...∆b8, see Game 14, Navara-Socko.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{chess_board.png}
\caption{Position after 9...∆a5}
\end{figure}

Inarkiev plays the natural move, the Chigorin Defence, attacking the bishop, with a likely gain of tempo. This is the most popular, but once White’s bishop has moved, the knight often finds itself out of play. Usually it will retreat to c6.

10 ∆c2

The bishop-pair should be kept, unless there is a specific reason otherwise. 10 d4?! ∆xb3 11 ∆xb3 has been almost completely ignored in the last century or more, Black being easily equal.

10...c5

This in turn is the natural reply for Black.

The American Grandmaster William Lombardy tried 10...c6 several times back in the 1950s and 1960s, and if 11 d4 ∆c7 12 ∆bd2 ∆e8. White still keeps a slight edge, but the same can be said of the...c5 line.

A fashionable, very recent modern gambit is Gajewski’s 10...d5!?

11 d4

Again, the main line. White tries to take over the pawn initiative in the centre.

11 d3 is a more modest approach, but seems reasonable enough.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{chess_board2.png}
\caption{Position after 11 d4}
\end{figure}

11...∆c7

This avoids any unwanted queen exchanges, when Black’s pawns would become weak. With queens on or off the board, Black needs to be careful with his e5-pawn. That said, after 11...∆b7 12 dxe5 dxe5 13 ∆xd8 ∆xd8 14 ∆xe5 ∆xe4! 15 ∆xe4?! ∆xe4 17 ∆xe4? ∆d1+ Black is doing well.
In an old game, Leonid Stein showed that classic queen and knight Lopez play could cause pressure after 13 \( \text{Q} \text{bd}2 \text{Q} \text{c}7 14 \text{Q} \text{f}2 \text{Q} \text{ad}8 15 \text{Q} \text{f}3 \text{Q} \text{c}8 16 \text{Q} \text{df}1 \text{Q} \text{c}4 17 \text{Q} \text{g}3, \text{L Stein-A.Bannik, USSR Championship, Moscow 1961, and Black's position eventually crumbled. Black's problem was that his bishop on b7 was found to be misplaced.}

Oleg Romanishin has experimented a few times with 11...\text{Q} \text{c}6!?, the obvious reply being 12 d5 \text{Q} \text{a}5. After 13 \text{Q} \text{bd}2 Romanishin's idea was 13...g6!? followed by ...\text{Q} \text{h}5. Normally placing both knight moves on opposite edges would not be recommended, but either knight would have the chance of jumping into central play with ...\text{Q} \text{c}4 or ...\text{Q} \text{f}4. The alternative 14 b4 \text{Q} \text{b}7 15 a4 \text{Q} \text{d}7 has given reasonable chances of equalizing for Black.

11...\text{Q} \text{d}7 was recommended by Paul Keres, as readers of Bobby Fisher's My 60 Memorable Games will recall. It still remains popular in top-level play, but the results tend to favour White. Without analysing this variation in depth, we note that the next few moves may run in parallel with the Karjakin-Inarkiev game (starting with 11...\text{Q} \text{c}7). Play could, indeed, continue 12 \text{Q} \text{bd}2 \text{cx}d4 13 \text{Q} \text{cx}d4 \text{Q} \text{c}6 14 \text{Q} \text{b}3 a5 15 \text{Q} \text{e}3 a4 16 \text{Q} \text{bd}2. Black is more flexible with 11...\text{Q} \text{d}7, than in the corresponding variation with 11...\text{Q} \text{c}7. and play is equal after 16...\text{ex}d4 17 \text{Q} \text{xd}4 \text{Q} \text{xd}4 18 \text{Q} \text{xd}4 \text{Q} \text{e}5. This line is for illustration, and for comparison with the Karjakin-Inarkiev game. In practice these days, White, after 11...\text{Q} \text{d}7, regularly exchanges with 12 dxc5 dxc5 13 \text{Q} \text{bd}2, then quite often \text{We}2 followed by \text{Qf}1 and \text{Qe}3 or \text{Qg}3.

12 \text{Q} \text{bd}2

White follows the very well established main line.

12 d5 looks tempting, gaining some space in the centre, and making it difficult for Black to bring his knight from a4 back into play. Kasparov tried this a few times in his teenage years, and even pre-teenage years, but some of the tension has been broken, giving Black reasonable chances of equality. Karjakin has also tried this move a few times, mainly with draws against top-level opponents. An example is 12...\text{Q} \text{d}7 13 \text{Q} \text{bd}2 g6 14 \text{Q} \text{f}1 \text{Q} \text{h}5 16 \text{Q} \text{h}6 \text{Q} \text{g}7 17 \text{Q} \text{w}2 f6 18.g4 \text{Q} \text{d}7 19 \text{Q} \text{g}3 \text{Q} \text{f}7 20 \text{Q} \text{e}3 a5 21 a4 \text{bxa}4 22 \text{bxa}4, S.Karjakin-P.Harikrishna, Dos Hermanas 2005, with a blocked pawn structure, and later a draw.

Perhaps the best argument is that this line is essentially harmless is by making a comparison with Romanishin's line, given earlier, with 11...\text{Q} \text{c}6!? 12 d5 \text{Q} \text{a}5. If Romanishin is happy with this, and has scored good results against grandmaster opposition despite losing a couple of tempi, then 11...\text{Q} \text{c}7 12 d5 should not be dangerous. There is a counter-argument though that

402
11...\textit{Wc7} 12 d5 seems to give White a plus score in recent years. Make of this what you want!

\textbf{12...\textit{cxd4}}

It is difficult to say whether this is statistically the best line or not, but it is certainly attractive in terms of setting up open play. Black quickly opens up the c-file, setting up some attacking hits before White has completed his queenside development.

12...\textit{Qd7} 13 \textit{Qf1} \textit{He8} 14 \textit{Qe3} g6 15 dxe5 dxe5 16 \textit{Qh2} \textit{Qad8} 17 \textit{Wf3} \textit{Qe6} 18 \textit{Qhg4} \textit{Qxg4} 19 hxg4 was well-established theory from the 1950s and 1960s. White is behind in piece development, but this is not all that important. After all, the bishops will quickly bounce back. What is more significant is that Black has slight but annoying pawn weaknesses in the centre, notably on d5, and even on f5, with the possible help of a knight attack. This helps explain why Black generally tries to exchange with ...\textit{cxd4}, rather than waiting for White to exchange with dxc5 or dxe5.

\textbf{13 cxd4}

13...\textit{Qc6}

Another branching point. The knight return adds pressure on White’s d-pawn, and also, as we shall soon see, creates space for Black’s queenside pawns to push through.

The developing moves, 13...\textit{Qd7} (met mainly by 14 \textit{Qf1}), and, less popularly, 13...\textit{Qb7} (met usually by either 14 d5 or 14 \textit{Qf1}) are the chief alternatives.

\textbf{14 \textit{Qb3}}

Karjakin is being careful not to press on with 14 d5, although it is of course playable, and has reasonable chances of an edge after 14...\textit{Qb4} 15 \textit{Qb1} a5. The point is that Karjakin wants to retain his options in the centre. A pawn advance with d5 is useful, but so too is the exchange on e5, with the possibility of an attack on Black’s e5-pawn. It is not absolutely certain that White will want to exchange the pawns, but it is in White’s interest to maintain the tension.

\textbf{14...a5}

The usual choice. Keres experimented with 14...\textit{Qd8} a couple of times, many years ago, but White has an edge with 15 d5!.

\textbf{15 \textit{Qe3}}

Developing, and overprotecting the d4-pawn. Once that pawn is fully cov-
ered, he does not have to be scared of ...a4.
15 a4 bxa4 16 axa4 Qb4 is equal.
15...a4
15...Qb4 16 b1 a4 17 Qbd2 a3 18 bxa3 axa3 19 Qb3 gives White a slight edge.
16 Qbd2
The knight is going backwards and forwards, while Black’s a-pawn advances. Black is not gaining any advantage, however, and White can now put pressure on Black’s b5-pawn.
16...Qd7
If in doubt, develop. The bishop no longer obstructs the rook, and on d7 the bishop is helping support the b5-pawn, and also keeping an eye on the kingside. 16...Qb7 gives neither of these defensive options.
17 Ac1
Very natural. The rook plays itself on the long c-file, with an almost certain gain of tempo, given the pressure on Black’s c7-pawn.
17 a3 is also a reasonable try.
17...Wb7
We are still in main line opening play. There have been gradual divergences for both sides from most of the previous positions, and soon the number of games thin down further, and before long there will be unique innovations.
17...Ac8 has been tried a few times, usually with the idea of retreating to the queen on b8, and sometimes following up with ...Ac7 and ...Af8. In P.Leko-M.Adams, 6th matchgame, Miskolc (rapid) 2005, play continued 18 Qf1 Wb8 19 Qb1!? (maybe 19 Wd2!?) 19...Ac7 (19...Da5!? 20 Ae2 Ac1 22 Ac1 Ac8 22 De3 g6, draw agreed,
E.Vladimirov-E.Magerramov, Abu Dhabi 2003) 20 Wd2!, preventing ...Da5, and Adams could find nothing more, given the quick time limit, than 20...exd4 21 Qxd4 with a structural edge for White, Leko later winning.
18 Qf1
The most straightforward, although 18 We2, a developing move, also gets played. A comparison may be made with an earlier game, A.Shirov-V.Akopian, Wijk aan Zee 2004, where play continued 18...Af8 19 Qd3 Ac8 20 dxex5 Qxe5 21 Qxe5 dxex5 22 Qf3 Qb4 23 Qd2 Qd6 24 b4 axb3 25 axb3 h6, and Black had equalized. A week later, Shirov aimed to improve with 23 Qd1 Ac6 24 Ac5 Qxc5 25 Ac5 Qd7 26 Ac3 Qf6 27 Ae1 b4 28 Ac5 Qd7 29 Ac4 Qf6 30 a3 bxa3 31 bx a3, and Black was unable to equalize the position in A.Shirov-I.Dorfman, French League 2004.
There has also been a game, V.Kramnik-M.Adams, Sofia 2005, in which Kramnik slightly varied with 22 Ac5 Ac6 23 Ac7 Ac7 24 Qf3 h6 (to prevent a later Qg5 after ...Ac6) 25 Ac5 Qd7 26 Ac3 Ac6 27 Ac1 Ac8 28 Wc2 Qf6, and Adams was able to hold the
endgame after 29 \( \text{Qxe5} \text{Qxe4} 30 \text{Qxe4} \text{Wxe4} 31 \text{Wxe4} \text{Qxe4} 32 \text{Ac8} \text{Re8} 33 \text{Kxd8} \text{Kxd8}. \)

Quite clearly Karjakin had studied these games and learnt from them. He also has thought about the opening, and the attempt to find the most accurate way of reaching this type of endgame. These days, it is ever more the case that to study the opening, the top player needs to study the resulting endgame with depth and precision.

18...\text{Be8}

Black is still trying to shore up his defences.

Another possibility is 18...\text{h6} 19 \text{g3} \text{Af8} 20 \text{Bb1} \text{Ad8}. Then White kept up a slight edge after 21 dxe5 dxe5 22 \text{h4} \text{De7} 23 \text{Wf3} in V.Akopian-M.Kobalija, Moscow 2005, although the game ended up as a draw.

Here 21 \text{Wf2} \text{Ab6} 22 dxe5 \text{Qxe5}? seems close to being equal, Black being more active than in the analogous game in Karjakin-Inarkiev. Ivanchuk instead went for a sharp sacrificial attack after Black tried 22...\text{Qxe3} in V.Ivanchuk-L.Bruzon Bautista, Skanderborg 2005. Play continued 23 \text{Bxc6}! \text{Wxc6} 24 exf6 \text{Af4} 25 \text{h5} \text{Be5} 26 \text{fxg7} \text{Aa6}. So far, so good, for White, and he has genuine long-term positional pressure after, for example, 27 \text{Qxe5} dxe5 28 \text{Ad1}. Ivanchuk appears to have missed a tactic after 27 \text{h4?}, and following 27...\text{Wc1!} 28 \text{Af5} \text{Qxf5} 29 \text{exf5} \text{Wxe1+} 30 \text{Wxe1} \text{Ac6} White was powerless to keep the extra queen. Black later won.

19 \text{g3}

White could also have tried 19 d5 here and at many other stages, and maybe after 19...\text{b4} 20 \text{b1} he has chances of keeping a slight edge, in view of his extra pawn space.

The reason he delays is in order to keep his opponent guessing whether he will push with d5, exchange on e5, or keep the central pawn tension. These are three different possibilities that Black has to defend against, while White can decide what to do in his own time.

19...\text{d8}

All Black can do is wait.

20 \text{Wf2!}

An innovation. White has usually preferred 20 \text{Bb1}, another quiet waiting move, but Karjakin is thinking about the positional pressure after the
exchange on e5, and pressure on Black's b5-pawn after \( \text{We2} \) and \( \text{Ad3} \).

When compared with the 18 \( \text{We2} \) alternative (instead of 18 \( \text{Cf1} \)), Black has added ...\( \text{Af8} \) and ...\( \text{Ad8} \), against White's \( \text{Cf1} \) and \( \text{Gg3} \). White has gained from these extra moves, and it is up to Karjakin to try to show that he has an edge.

20...\( \text{h6} \)

Continuing with quiet waiting moves.

20...\( \text{exd4} \) 21 \( \text{Cxd4} \) \( \text{Cxd4} \) 22 \( \text{Ax} \text{d} \) leaves White's pieces better developed. If 22...\( \text{d}5 \) 23 \( \text{Cf3} \) \( \text{dxe4} \) 24 \( \text{Cxe4} \) \( \text{Cg8} \) 25 \( \text{Cf6} \) \( \text{Cxe1}+ \) 26 \( \text{Cxe1} \) \( \text{Cf3} \) 27 \( \text{Cxd7} \) \( \text{Cg5} \) 28 \( \text{Cxf3} \) \( \text{Cxe1} \), Black's bishop attacks nothing of importance, and the rook does not cooperate well, whereas White's three minor pieces work well together.

20...\( \text{b5} \) 21 \( \text{Ced1} \) and 20...\( \text{b4} \) 21 \( \text{b1} \) would keep slight edges for White, there being no really effective follow-up for Black.

21 \( \text{d3} \)

Again 21 \( \text{d}5! \) is a possibility, but White has in mind a more interesting alternative.

21...\( \text{b8}?! \)

21...\( \text{b4} \) 22 \( \text{b1} \) does not gain much for Black, and indeed may lose time if the knight retreats.

Maybe it is time for Black to force White to make a decision in the centre, with 21...\( \text{b6}?! \):

a) if then 22 \( \text{xb5} \) \( \text{exd4} \) 23 \( \text{f4} \) \( \text{d}5 \) 24 \( \text{xc6} \) \( \text{xc6} \) 25 \( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{Cf4} \), and Black is equal.

b) 22 \( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{b4} \) 23 \( \text{xb6} \) \( \text{xb6} \) 24 \( \text{a3} \) \( \text{d3} \) 25 \( \text{xd3} \) \( \text{Cac8} \) 26 \( \text{b4} \) \( \text{axb3} \) 27 \( \text{xb3} \) is also only about equal.

c) White can try 22 \( \text{dxe5} \) \( \text{dxe5} \) 23 \( \text{Cxe5} \) \( \text{dxe5} \) when in comparison with the main line, Black now has ...\( \text{xb6} \) instead of ...\( \text{g8} \). This seems an improvement for Black. If, for example, 24 \( \text{b4} \) \( \text{axb3} \) 25 \( \text{xb6} \) \( \text{xb6} \) 26 \( \text{axb3} \), Black's rook is on a better file, and 26...\( \text{a3} \), among others, seems close to holding the balance.

In slow manoeuvring positions, there is always a danger of moving a piece from a better square to a worse square, and this seems to be what is happening to Inarkiev.

22 \( \text{dxe5} \! \)!

Karjakin has kept the tension for a long time, but now he must make a decision. His pieces are on their optimal squares, and he cannot make good piece manoeuvres, so he must do something with the pawns.

22 \( \text{d}5 \), gaining space, looks natural, but after 22...\( \text{b4} \) 23 \( \text{b1} \) \( \text{a6} \), followed by ...\( \text{b6} \), Black exchanges the 'bad bishop', and is very solid. White can cut across the bishop exchange with 24 \( \text{d3} \), but then, of course, Black can repeat with 24...\( \text{b4} \).

Karjakin instead exchanges pawns, with a symmetrical pawn structure, and demonstrates that he can play for a clear edge.
22...\(\text{\texttt{Qxe5?!}}\)

This helps the attacker. Inarkiev might be worried about the knight getting in the way of the bishop on d7, but Black’s knight is stronger than White’s knight on f3. Black should keep open the possibility of playing ...\(\text{\texttt{Qd4}},\) and if there is an exchange and Black recaptures with a pawn, he has the chance of press against White’s e4-pawn. A possible line would be 22...\(\text{\texttt{Dxe5}}\) 23 \(\text{\texttt{Med1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Ab6}}\):

a) If now 24 \(\text{\texttt{Ac5}}\) (24 \(\text{\texttt{Kxb5?}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Kxe3}}\) 26 \(\text{\texttt{Kxc6}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Kxf2+}}\) with advantage for Black) 24...\(\text{\texttt{Qd4}}\) 25 \(\text{\texttt{Kxd4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Kxd4}}\) 26 \(\text{\texttt{Kxb5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Kxe4}}\) 27 \(\text{\texttt{Kxd4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Kxd4}}\) 28 \(\text{\texttt{Wd3}}\) with equality.

b) White still has chances of an edge, but maybe only slight after 24 \(\text{\texttt{Kb3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Kxe3}}\) 25 \(\text{\texttt{Kxe3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{axb3}}\) 26 \(\text{\texttt{axb3}}\). This resembles the pawn structure of the main line, except that because of the knights remaining on the board, White has less pressure on the dark squares. 26...\(\text{\texttt{Ba8?!}}\) 27 \(\text{\texttt{Kc5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{b4}}\) 28 \(\text{\texttt{Kb5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Qd4}}\) 29 \(\text{\texttt{Kxd7}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Kxd7}}\) 30 \(\text{\texttt{Kd5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Kf6}}\) is a draw. Possibly better is 28 \(\text{\texttt{Kc4?!}}\) with a slight advantage. It is never easy in such positions to equalize completely as Black when White plays accurately.

Going back several moves, to the notes on 18 \(\text{\texttt{We2}}\) (instead of 18 \(\text{\texttt{Kf1}}\), there is the interesting question as to whether after 18...\(\text{\texttt{Kfe8}}\) 19 \(\text{\texttt{Kd3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Kad8}}\) 20 \(\text{\texttt{Dxe5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Dxe5}}\), Black would have been safer after 20...\(\text{\texttt{Dxe5}}\) (rather than 20...\(\text{\texttt{Qxe5}}\)). One possible answer is that in the Shirov line, White’s knight is still on d2, so that after 21 \(\text{\texttt{b3}}\) White would create considerable pressure with the help of the knight on the queenside. In the Karjakin line the knight is on the kingside, and is far less supportive to the queenside.

One suspects that Inarkiev falls for a common positional slip, remembering a particular recapture known in a specified position, but using the same recapture in a less appropriate position. 23 \(\text{\texttt{Qxe5}}\)

23 \(\text{\texttt{Kb1?!}}\) also looks good: for example, 23...\(\text{\texttt{Qc4}}\) 24 \(\text{\texttt{Qd4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{d5}}\) 25 \(\text{\texttt{b3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{axb3}}\) 26 \(\text{\texttt{axb3}}\) with an edge. Karjakin prefers playing for a symmetrical pawn structure with the more active pieces. This tends to make the game much easier to play for the attacker.

23...\(\text{\texttt{Dxe5}}\)

23...\(\text{\texttt{Qxe5}}\) 24 \(\text{\texttt{Qf4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Qe6}}\) 25 \(\text{\texttt{Qf5}}\) is uncomfortable for Black.

24 \(\text{\texttt{b4}}\)

Gaining space with the pawns.

24...\(\text{\texttt{axb3}}\)

Taking en passant. Black exchanges the pawns while he can. Black’s pawns are more advanced on a4 and b5 than White’s b4- and a3- (or a2-) pawns. Black’s pawns are, however, weaker than White’s, since it is much easier for White to attack the backward pawn on b5 than for Black to attack a2. Black’s b-pawn is exposed, and could easily drop. If one black pawn falls, the other is likely to drop. Better just to have the danger of losing one pawn, if necessary.
Karjakin’s quiet move sets up the continued attack on b5, if appropriate. Also he cuts out any checks on the back row.

27...\textit{e}6

The bishop starts to show some life. 27...\textit{x}c1 28 \textit{x}c1 does not quite allow Black to equalize.

With a symmetrical pawn structure, and apparently level pieces, but quite often even the slightest edge in such a position can end up with a big plus, as the player with the better pieces allows no chance for the opponent to create any counterplay.

Here the dark-squared bishops are going to be exchanged. What about the light-squared bishops, though? White’s bishop is active, and puts pressure on Black’s b5-pawn. Black’s bishop is passive, and can do little other than protect the same pawn. If White can add pressure to this weak pawn, he has excellent chances of gaining material. This essentially is the story behind the rest of the game.

26...\textit{xe}c8

Challenging the c-file.

27 \textit{h}2

Not 27 \textit{x}c8+ \textit{x}c8 28 \textit{x}b5? \textit{xe}3 29 \textit{xd}7 \textit{xf}2+, and Black is even slightly better.

28 \textit{xc}8+

One of Black’s recaptures will be a weakening move. White is not simply giving away this c-file.

28...\textit{xc}8

If 28...\textit{xc}8 29 \textit{xb}5 \textit{xe}3 30 \textit{a}6! (as Black has no check on f2) 30...\textit{xb}4 31 \textit{xc}8 \textit{xf}2 32 \textit{xf}2 \textit{xc}8 33 \textit{d}1, White has a rook against bishop and pawn, but his e-pawn is isolated. It is not totally clear that White is winning by force, but few as Black would want to take on this position. The danger here is not so much of trying to set up a passed pawn for White, as this is unlikely in the short term. Rather, White would try to force the other pieces to cover the attack on the king, thereby weakening the pawns on e5 and f7.

Inarkiev elects to carry on the defence with level material.
29 \textit{c1}

White regains the c-file.
29 \textit{xb5} \textit{xe3} 30 \textit{f}xe3 is only a draw.

This leaves 30 \textit{c5 as the only likely chance of an edge, Black exchanging with 30...\textit{xc5. Then 31 \textit{xc5 d}d7 leads to a standard draw. So White could try 31 bxc5?!}, with passed pawns on both sides. Both pawns are dangerous, but both can be blocked after, for example, 31...b4 32 \textit{b}2 \textit{c}8 33 \textit{xb}4 (or 33 \textit{c}6 \textit{d}6, equal) 33...\textit{d}d7, regaining the pawn, and drawing. Or 32 \textit{c}6 \textit{e}7 33 \textit{a}6 \textit{c}7 34 \textit{b}2 \textit{b}3, and while both queens would be slightly uncomfortable in having to defend the advanced passed pawn, it is not so clear how either of the queens may be dislodged.

30 \textit{xb6}

Now Black is slightly weak on the dark squares.

30...\textit{xb6}

Somehow Black's pawns do not fall immediately after 30...\textit{xb6 31 \textit{c}5 \textit{b}7 32 \textit{f}5 (32 \textit{xe5? \textit{d}4) 32...\textit{e}6 33 \textit{b}2 \textit{e}8, but there is a clear sense that Black would not hold indefinitely after, for example, 34 \textit{f}3.

31 \textit{e}3

The next stage of the battle. White has exchanged the first set of bishops and can now think about trying to win the weak isolated b5-pawn. He can at-
tack it three times, with the queen, rook and bishop, while Black can defend it three times. This is an unstable equality, though, as White can put pressure on other squares. The attack of two weaknesses can overbalance Black’s defence.

White’s last move puts pressure on the rook, and after \( \text{wc5} \) he can also put pressure on the e5- and b5-pawns.

31...\( \text{wb8} \)

31...\( \text{d7} \) 32 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{b8} \) 33 \( \text{a7} \) piles on the pressure.

32 \( \text{wc5} \)

White is making inroads. It is in the nature of such positions, relatively stable but with one of the sides being clearly better, that there is often no quick attacking win against a single specified major weakness. It is more a case that the stronger player battles square by square, and the weaker player finds it difficult to hold these squares. One square may hold, but it is often not so clear which weakness will decide the position.

Black wants the c-file.

34 \( \text{w} \)

White stays centralized. His control of the a-file, and the pressure on the diagonals with the bishop and queen have more impact than the c-pawn, which is well protected.

34 \( \text{xb5?} \) \( \text{b6} \) 31 \( \text{c5} \) \( \text{xb4} \) would be a mistake. White wants to keep the pawns on the board. It is far more likely that White can win the b-pawn for nothing than Black can. If the pawns are exchanged, Black would not have to worry about defending them.

34...\( \text{d6} \)

If 34...\( \text{c3} \) 35 \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{c7} \) 36 \( \text{a5} \), Black has problems on b5 and c3. Inarkiew therefore retreats.

35 \( \text{e2} \)

Continuing to centralize. The knight has not been doing much over the last few moves, and by the time that it can be activated, the danger will be that Black’s defensive pieces will be overloaded.

35...\( \text{c6} \)
At last, some slight counterplay.

36 f3
White adds an extra pawn defence on e4. This is not immediately necessary, but sooner or later he will want to do it.

36...d7
Covering the c5-square.

37 a5
White still has the c5-square if Black’s knight is moved again.

37...d4
Almost the height of Black’s counterplay, but it is nothing.

38 d2
Not 38 xd4?? exd4+, giving away a queen.

The simple retreat covers the b4-pawn, and again threatens the rook.

38...d6
All Black can do is retreat.

39 g3
Black’s pieces are so tied up with the defence of the b5- and f5-squares that White can suddenly change the attack to the kingside, and in particular f5. The problem is that Black’s knight is obstructing the bishop on d7.

39...f8
Black too tries to activate his knight, but White is a move quicker.

40 c3
Or 40 f5, which is probably slightly more accurate, forcing Black to decide immediately whether he should play 40...e6 (defending) or 40...d7 (pinning). If 40...e6, White would almost certainly not want to try 41 c3?!i, transposing into a line given in the next note, but could consider 41 e2!, winning the b-pawn. If 40...d7 instead, White can revert to the 41 c3 plan.

At move 40, one must find a good and solid move quickly, rather than find the very best move. Here White should win in either case.

40...b6?
A more serious slip, again on move 40. The queen move is ineffective.

The choice here is difficult to make at speed, but 40...e6! 41 f5 h7 keeps the balance for the time being. There will be a lot of grinding manoeuvring to follow, with one defensive idea for Black being 42 c5 d7 43 e3 f6 44 c2 f8 45 d3 e8 46 c5 xc5 47 bxc5 a8 48 xa8 xa8 49 xf7 d7 50 e8 xc5 51 xb5 g6, and at the minimum White will have to demonstrate he can win, a pawn up but
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with all the pawns being on the kingside.

41 Qf5

The natural move.

41...Ed7?! 

Missing a tactic. 41...e6 42 wC5 is, though, a merciless grind. If 42...wxc5 43 bxc5 b4 44 Ac4 He8 45 Aa6 Ad7 46 Ad6 Ae7 47 Aa7, and Black’s pieces fall apart.

42 Axb5

42 wxe5 f6 43 Ag3 Ah7 wins a pawn for White, but takes more time to subdue the opponent.

42...Ad1

If 42...Axb5, then 43 wxe5, forking the bishop and the mating square on g7. White wins two pawns.

43 Ac3 1-0

Avoiding a trap: 43 wxc6? Ag1+ 44 Ag3 Ae1+ 45 Ag4 Ad2!, with a draw.

There are several other ways for White to win. All that he needs is to avoid being greedy.

It is now time to finish. We have shown that the more that players study chess, the more that new ideas continue to be found. We have clearly not reached the point that there is nothing new in chess, and no competent player will ever lose a game. There are always surprises, and the inventive player, with the help of the computer, will find many new ideas.

The reader will have noticed that we did not consider games from after spring 2008. At some stage, there needs to be a cut-off point, but no doubt brilliant new games have been produced in great numbers. Several more players have passed 2700 since then, but for the moment, there is neither space in the book nor time to give analysis to the further top players. There is, though, always the prospect of a sequel.

It is much easier to write up a game at leisure, rather than trying to analyse up-to-date in a magazine. I have had the chance to examine positions several times over, finding new ideas, and possibly correcting misconceptions. If I have done my job well, the book format should have a more measured approach than magazines or journals or an online approach. This is for the reader to decide.
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