A CUNNING CHESS OPENING FOR BLACK

Lure Your Opponent into the Philidor Swamp!

SERGEY KASPAROV
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Sergey Kasparov

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2015 New In Chess

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Published by New In Chess, Alkmaar, The Netherlands
www.newinchess.com

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All photos: New In Chess Archives, unless indicated otherwise.

Cover design: Volken Beck
Supervisor: Peter Boel
Proofreading: René Olthof
Production: Anton Schermer

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website www.newinchess.com and implement them in a possible next edition.

**Explanation of Symbols**

The chess board with its coordinates:

\[ \text{\textbullet} \text{ King} \]
\[ \text{\textbullet} \text{ Queen} \]
\[ \text{\textbullet} \text{ Rook} \]
\[ \text{\textbullet} \text{ Bishop} \]
\[ \text{\textbullet} \text{ Knight} \]
\[ \pm \text{ White stands slightly better} \]
\[ \mp \text{ Black stands slightly better} \]
\[ \pm \text{ White stands better} \]
\[ \mp \text{ Black stands better} \]
\[ + - \text{ White has a decisive advantage} \]
\[ - + \text{ Black has a decisive advantage} \]
\[ = \text{ balanced position} \]
\[ ! \text{ good move} \]
\[ !! \text{ excellent move} \]
\[ ? \text{ bad move} \]
\[ ?? \text{ blunder} \]
\[ !? \text{ interesting move} \]
\[ ?! \text{ dubious move} \]
→ attack
# mate

corr. correspondence
Introduction

Hello, dear reader!

This is Sergey Kasparov, grandmaster from Belarus (not to be confused with Russia!). We may have met before – in previous books or articles.

First a couple of words about geography. This is relevant to the subtitle and an important theme of this book. Belarus is a country in Eastern Europe situated between Poland and Russia. The territory is mostly plain and covered with wilds.

Let me hasten to inform you about something I forgot to mention in my previous book, *Steamrolling the Sicilian*: the technical part of the work on this book is performed by my wife Tatiana (WIM) and the translation from Russian into English was done by my daughter Eva. You may also know them, if we have met in some tournament.

The initial moves of this book’s subject are as follows: 1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5!?. Now please don’t put the book back on the shelf! Take a few minutes and let me give you a couple of good arguments to study this opening, which looks so strange at first glance.

Firstly, 3...e5!? is applied even by chess players whose Elo is over 2600-2700 – just look at the game list at the end of the book.

Secondly – well, can you name an opening where Black has no problems at all? Not? Quite.

Thirdly, a well-known publishing house like New in Chess wouldn’t get involved with any senseless topics, would they? From several options, this one was chosen.

If all this doesn’t satisfy you, then allow me to try and explain the essence of the ‘strange’ move 3...e5!?

Chess is a model of war. The white and black pieces represent armies which are equal in their material supplies and placed in the same way, and opposite one another. The basic difference lies in the military leaders (the chess players) and the advantage of the first move. The white army is the first to strike, it seizes the initiative at least temporarily.

Perhaps the author should present the facts as neutrally as possible, as if he were an anchorman with Euronews or CNN. But gradually you will realize that I mostly investigate this opening from Black’s point of view. For one, because I use it myself from time to time. So I won’t sail under false colours, and I will show my hand from the very beginning. Yes, I aim to convince you to play this structure with black!

Let’s go back to the war model. The enemy is approaching us and we are to organize a defence, taking into account the peculiarities of the environment. Black’s development in this opening is reminiscent of warfare in swampy lowlands. Do you know what a swamp is? If you are from the United States, England or Poland, I think you can. For all other readers, here is a definition, taken from Wikipedia:

A swamp is a wetland that is forested. Other names for swamps include ‘bog’, ‘mire’ and ‘muskeg’. A swamp is a mire that accumulates peat, a deposit of dead plant material – often mosses. Water flowing out of swamps has a characteristic brown colour, which comes from dissolved peat tannins.

So, you see, it is difficult to wage an attack in a swampy area. Even simply walking is dangerous there! One wrong move and you may die, getting sucked down in the bog by natural powers.
We know from World War II that the Wehrmacht, during its offensive in 1941-42, practically ignored the part of the territory situated in Ukraine and Belarus which is called ‘Polesye’ – especially because of these barely negotiable swamps.
If you look at the maps of the actions of that period, you will see that raids of the Armies Group Centre and South were directed along diverging lines. There is no ‘shoulder-to-shoulder connection’ between them, these two groupings were separated by up to 300 kilometers(!). During its three-year occupation, many regions of Polesye remained under the control of partisans (the resistance movement). They say that there were even autonomous Soviet bodies there.

Now let’s return to our opening. When applying 3...e5, Black as it were draws the enemy fire. In fact, after the principled 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.Qxd8+ Kxd8 Black has lost his castling rights; White is on move again and he can later develop with 0-0-0+. This means that he will be about two moves ahead of his opponent. But that is exactly the catch. You get the impression that Black is balancing on the precipice, and that it will suffice for White to just strike a couple of crucial blows in order to win. Alas, reality is often much more prosaic.

White’s pieces are being ‘sucked’ into several echelons of the enemy defence, as if in a swamp. His legs are growing sluggish because they get stuck in the slime. Each move is arduous for him, his breathing gets heavy and rapid. And then a thick green mass closes over his head... A nightmare, isn’t it?

Have I managed to convince you to buy the book? If yes, then hurry, for it may be the last copy on the shelf.

The treacherous ‘ending’ I have just described, is dealt with in Part I of this book. If the white player prefers a full-blooded, complicated struggle – something like warfare in regions with good transport infrastructure (highways, railway) – then he usually chooses not to transfer to an ending, but plays 4.Nf3 (Part IV) or something like that (Part II and III). Especially after 4.Nf3, the fight continues in the spirit of the Philidor Defence. Here Black has to decide
whether he wants to stick to central strategy or, sooner or later, to surrender the centre with ...e5xd4, gaining access to the half-open e-file.

In conclusion I’d like to mention – to those who are not acquainted with me – that I do not claim to present you with the ultimate truth. The opening under scrutiny does not so much rely on tempo-play as the Sicilian Defence, the Marshall Attack, and others. That is why in our opening, the move order is usually not so critical, with the exception of some positions.

You can never please everyone, so I will try to cater for the majority. And I dare guess that a great number of amateur chess players prefer to create at the board rather than swot long variations of 15-20 moves. That is why I have tried to cover the main lines and explain the plans for both sides, which will considerably facilitate your search for the right paths during the game.

If you have any remarks about the book, please send them to me, at tkasparova@rambler.ru. Your ideas may be presented in an updated later version of the book. Besides, I may be able to use them in my lessons.

If possible, please try to read the book with a more or less fresh head, when you are not too tired. Then everything will be clear and easy for you!

I wish you a pleasant, useful and splendid time with this book!

*Sergey Kasparov,
Mogilev, Belarus, January 2015*
In this Part we will describe all the ins and outs of the treacherous endgame described in the Introduction.

Chapter 1
The Principled 6.\texttt{g5}

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \texttt{f6} 3.\texttt{c3} e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.\texttt{xd8+ xd8} 6.\texttt{g5}
We start our research with White’s most principled reaction. 6.\textit{B}g5 is one of the most reasonable moves. The f6-knight is pinned; queenside castling is in the offing. If White wishes, he can also damage the enemy pawn structure by means of \textit{N}c3-d5xf6 or even \textit{B}g5xf6.

As a rule Black’s reply is to bring the c8-bishop out to e6, followed by putting the b8-knight on d7. In recent years, 6...c6 has also become fashionable.

6...\textit{B}e6

White’s move order is not so important now. One way or another he tries to blow up Black’s centre by f2-f4. If instead White limits himself to simple development, then Black doesn’t have many problems. Let me show you a couple of examples from my own practice.

1
Ahmad Issa
Sergey Kasparov (2458)
Lebanon 2002 (6)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \textit{N}f6 3.\textit{N}c3 e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.\textit{Q}xd8+ \textit{K}xd8 6.\textit{B}g5

Here is how events could develop: 6.\textit{N}f3 \textit{B}d6 7.\textit{B}e3 a6 8.0-0-0 \textit{e}7 9.\textit{B}g5!? This move can be found from time to time, for instance in Chelyabinsk constructions of the Sicilian Defence. In this variation we don’t see it often. 9...\textit{c}6 The unsophisticated 9...\textit{c}6 is more solid, taking under control point d5, for example 10.\textit{c}4 \textit{c}7 with an acceptable position. 10.\textit{h}4 \textit{g}6 I dare assume that Black missed the following effective response – otherwise it was more logical to develop, for example: 10...\textit{d}7 11.\textit{f}5+ \textit{x}f5 12.\textit{e}xf5\text{±}. 

\textbf{1.e4 d6 2.d4 \textit{N}f6 3.\textit{N}c3 e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.\textit{Q}xd8+ \textit{K}xd8 6.\textit{B}g5}
11.\( \text{\#f5} + ! \) Nice and effective – two in one. 11...gxf5 12.exf5 \( \text{\#g8} \) It is also possible to give back the piece with 12...\( \text{\#xa2} \) 13.\( \text{\#xa2} \) h6 14.\( \text{\#h4} \) \( \text{\#d7} \) 15.\( \text{\#g4} + \) 13.\( \text{\#xf6} + \) \( \text{\#xf6} \) 14.fxe6 fxe6 A ‘compact’ and solid move, however we shouldn’t forget that Black’s pawn structure is considerably weakened now. White has a perfect blockading square at his disposal on square e4, as well as the prospect of a passed pawn on the kingside. In reply to the natural 14...\( \text{\#xe6} \), the pressure upon the light squares is unpleasant, for instance 15.\( \text{\#c4} + \) \( \text{\#e7} \) 16.\( \text{\#d5} + \) \( \text{\#f8} \) 17.\( \text{\#b6} + \) 15.\( \text{\#d3} \) \( \text{\#g7} \) 15...\( \text{\#xg2} \) 16.\( \text{\#e4} + \) 16.\( \text{\#e4} \) \( \text{\#a7} \) 17.\( \text{\#d3} \) \( \text{\#d7} \) 18.\( \text{\#h3} \) \( \text{\#f8} \) 19.\( \text{\#d1} \) The second rook goes to the third rank for a frontal attack. 19...\( \text{\#e7} \) 20.\( \text{\#d3} \)
Once again the computer isn’t inclined to ‘dramatize’, but for a human being it’s rather... disgusting to hold such a position with black, wouldn’t you agree? 20...c6 21...d3 f7 22...f3 xf3 He couldn’t shun the exchange: 22...g7 23...h3 xg3 24...xg3 f7 25...d3 e7 26...f3±. The knight will come out to e4 soon, the bishop – to h5, thus demoralizing the enemy. 23...xh3 a8 24...e4 d8 25...h5 d7?? 25...d7 would have continued the resistance, though it was dismal. 26...g3 Disaster. White threatens g3-g7+ and the king can’t move because of the d6-bishop. 1-0 Predojevic-A. Indjic, Zadar 2013.

6...e6 7.0-0-0+ d7 8.f3

Careful, but very modest. Black doesn’t experience any problems now.

8...c6

Limiting the jumper on c3 and securing a comfortable shelter on c7 for the king.

9.a2 e7 10.a3 a5 11.b4 b7 12.g3 c5 13.d4

A spectacular leap, allowing an exchange operation. But the Lebanese player is right. The knight on e2 had no prospects (due to the e5-pawn) and it prevented its own bishop’s development.

13...xd4 14.exd4 h5 15.d2

Interesting is the creative 15.xd7+ xd7 16.xe5 with sufficient compensation for the exchange. The dark-squared bishop is very strong.

15...xg3 16.xg3

Black already has a better position. Please note the passive f1-bishop. Don’t forget that White’s central pawn is fixed on a light square.

16...f6
The standard push of White’s doubled g-pawns suggests 16...h5!?

17.\textbf{Be} 2 \textbf{Rd} 8 18.\textbf{d} 1 \textbf{h} 6 19.\textbf{c} 3 \textbf{b} 6 20.\textbf{xd} 8 \textbf{xd} 8 21.\textbf{g} 4 \textbf{d} 7 22.\textbf{d} 1+ 23.\textbf{xd} 1 \textbf{a} 4 24.\textbf{e} 1 \textbf{b} 5 25.\textbf{b} 3 \textbf{b} 6 26.\textbf{b} 2 \textbf{d} 6 27.\textbf{f} 1 \textbf{c} 5 28.\textbf{c} 3 \textbf{b} 4+

It looks like I’m doing my best to get a grip on all the dark squares, and indeed it works, but it is not enough for anything real.

29.axb4+ axb4+ 30.\textbf{d} 2 \textbf{c} 8

The total centralization of Black’s monarch wouldn’t bring success either: 30...\textbf{d} 4 31.\textbf{g} 3 with ideas like \textbf{g} 3-h5 or \textbf{g} 3-e2+, pushing back the uninvited guest.

31.\textbf{e} 3 \textbf{d} 6 32.\textbf{d} 2 \textbf{g} 8 \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}

The following encounter took place during the first stage of the Belarus team championship. Please don’t get confused by the Elo-ratings. In those days they were all considerably lower than today (‘inflation’). Besides, the white pieces were led by a future Belarus champion (1997).

This game shows that White doesn’t have the right to play ‘as he wants’ in this line. Even without pawn defects, he may have problems due to Black’s advantage of the two bishops.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{l}
\textbf{2} \\
German Kochetkov (2385) \\
Sergey Kasparov (2320) \\
Belarus tt 1996 (4)
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

1.d4 d6 2.e4 \textbf{f} 6 3.\textbf{c} 3 e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.\textbf{xd} 8+ \textbf{xd} 8 6.\textbf{g} 5 \textbf{e} 6 7.0-0-0+ \textbf{d} 7 8.\textbf{f} 3?! \textbf{c} 8 9.\textbf{h} 4

With the idea \textbf{f} 3-g5, breaking up Black’s kingside pawns and gaining the bishop pair.
9...h6 10.g3 d6 11.b5

11.b5 doesn’t work because of 11...xe4.

11...a6 12.xd7+ xd7 13.d5 f6 14.d2
d2-c4 is planned, but Black has many good lines here.

14...b5

14...c6 15.e4 c5 16.b4 cxd5 17.exd5 g4

d2-c4 is planned, but Black has many good lines here.

15.f1 e8 16.f3 c5

16...b7.

17.f5 f8 18.e1
You shouldn’t be misled by the highly active arrangement of White’s forces. The presence of two bishops in the opponent’s hands and the absence of weaknesses in his position justify the evaluation ‘better for Black’. The white cavalry will have to retreat soon.

18...c6 19.\texttt{c}c3 \texttt{c}c7 20.f4 \texttt{ad}8 21.h3 \texttt{f}f7 22.h2 \texttt{x}xf4 23.\texttt{x}xf4+ \texttt{e}e5 24.\texttt{x}xd8 \texttt{xd}8 25.\texttt{x}xe5+ \texttt{fx}e5 26.\texttt{f}f1 \texttt{d}d7 27.a3 \texttt{g}6 28.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{h}5

Compare this position with the one in the previous diagram. Black’s pawn structure is very flexible, and there are no strongpoints for White’s knights. For the sake of objectivity we should note that it is difficult for Black to win. But the fight is for two results only.

29.\texttt{d}d1 \texttt{h}6 30.\texttt{x}xd7+ \texttt{xd}7 31.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{c}4 32.\texttt{d}d1 \texttt{d}6 33.\texttt{e}e1 \texttt{e}6 34.\texttt{e}e2 \texttt{g}5 35.b4 \texttt{d}8 36.\texttt{d}d3 \texttt{b}6 37.c4 \texttt{d}4
38.\text{c5+} \text{e7} 39.\text{h4} \text{f6} 40.\text{g3} \text{a5} 41.\text{c3} \text{a4}

Now the a3-pawn is potentially weak, but will the two bishops have enough resources to overcome the adversary without the king’s participation? With adequate defence it is a draw.

42.\text{cd1} \text{g8} 43.\text{c3} \text{h7} 44.\text{e2} \text{b2} 45.\text{c2} \text{g8} 46.\text{d2} \text{g5}

Gradually trying to make the board ‘broader’. Now the pawn on the h-file may become weak, but not the one on the g-file.

47.\text{c3}

Houdini assures that White’s defence has not been optimal, and he could have paid for it.

47...\text{gxh4}?!  
Winning is 47...\text{b3}! 48.\text{d1} (48.\text{d1} \text{xc2} 49.\text{xb2} \text{gxh4} 50.\text{gxh4} \text{xe4} 51.\text{e3} \text{c2}! and the knight is arrested: 52.\text{d2} \text{b1} 53.\text{d1} \text{f5+-}) 48...\text{xc2} 49.\text{xc2} \text{d4} 50.\text{d2} \text{f2} 51.\text{hxg5+} \text{xg5} 52.\text{f3}+ \text{f6+-}. The g-pawn perishes and the king can’t leave the queenside because of the weakness on a3.

48.\text{gxh4} \text{b3}

Alas, now there is only a pawn on h4 and White has enough time to protect it.

49.\text{b1} \text{e6}

49...\text{xc2} 50.\text{xc2} \text{d4} 51.\text{d2} \text{f2} 52.\text{f3} – do you see the difference? Earlier on there were two weaknesses: h4 and g3.

50.\text{c3} \text{g4} 51.\text{d1} \text{d4} 52.\text{d3} \text{f3} 53.\text{d3} \text{b2} 54.\text{e1} \text{g4} 55.\text{d2} \text{e6} \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}

Well, does Black have chances of victory in this ‘swamp’? For me this is a definite yes.
In the following game from the Baku Open, White, trying to avoid sharp lines, even failed to make a draw. You can observe the viability of the structure f7-f6-e5. In such cases Black should pay attention to the control of the blockading squares f5 (if the enemy pawn stays on e4) or e4 (like in this game).

3
Amimeza Pourramezanali (2455)
Denis Khismatullin (2661)
Baku Open 2013 (1)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.e5 dxe5 4.dxe5 Nf6 5.Qxd8+ Kxd8 6.Bg5 Be6 7.0-0-0+ Kc8 8.Nf3
I think it is difficult to raise obstacles for Black without playing f2-f4 because the e5-pawn is easily defendable.
8...Nb7 9.Bxf6 gxf6 10.Nh4 c6 11.b1 Qc5
The bishop sorties 11...b4 or 11...c5 deserve attention.
12.f3 h5 13.Ne2 Qc7 14.Qc1 h6 15.d3 ad8 16.Qe2 a4

The initiative is in Black’s hands – besides, having the two bishops is generally good.

17.Nf5 Qxf5 18.exf5 Qe3!†
Not allowing the knight’s transfer to the ideal blockading square e4. By the way, it is important for Black to give his bishop for this knight so as to remain with dissimilar pieces.

19.He1 h4 20.f1?!
20.g3.
20...g1!
Weakening White’s structure.

21.\textit{\textbf{e4 \textit{\textbf{b6 22.h3}}}}

Now one h4-pawn fixes two white pawns.

22...\textit{\textbf{d5}}

Even stronger is 22...\textit{\textbf{c8!}} with the ‘carnivorous’ desire ...\textit{\textbf{c8-d6xf5}}.

23.\textit{\textbf{de1 \textit{\textbf{h2}}}}

23...\textit{\textbf{e7?!}} 24.f4.

24.\textit{\textbf{g4 \textit{\textbf{g3 25.c1 b6 26.a4 a5 27.c4 e3+-}}}}

The triumph of Black’s strategy. The threat is 28...\textit{\textbf{xf1}} and then 29...\textit{\textbf{xd3}}; besides, the white f5-pawn will perish. This spells disaster for the first player, as the pawn mass f7-f6-e5 becomes mobile.

28.\textit{\textbf{a3 \textit{\textbf{d4 29.e2}}}}

29.\textit{\textbf{xe5 \textit{\textbf{xf1 30.xf1 fxe5}}}} also leaves no doubts about the result.

29...\textit{\textbf{xc4 30.xc4 \textit{\textbf{xc4 31.c3 \textit{\textbf{d6 32.b4 b8 33.bxa5 bxa5+ 34.b3 \textit{\textbf{xb3+ 35.axb3 \textit{\textbf{xf5 36.b2 e1 37.d1}}}}}}}}}}

\textit{\textbf{d6 38.c4 e7 39.c2 d6 40.a6 f5 41.e3 e6 42.c4 b5}}

Denis Khismatullin

Of course, Black shouldn’t trade off the knights:

42...\textit{\textbf{xc4 43.xc4+}} with drawing tendencies.

43.\textit{\textbf{d1 b4 44.c8+ f6 45.b6 g5 0-1}}

Further resistance is futile.
Of course, concrete play looks more aggressive. While the black king is in the centre and his rooks are disconnected (this is one of the main downsides of this line) White must try to open up lines and diagonals.

In the following encounter the pawn chain of the same Russian player (Khismatullin) quickly falls to pieces. But this is one of the paradoxes of this strange opening. The bishop pair harmonizes with the pawns on f7, f6, f4. The light-squared one is always located on e6 and its elimination will automatically improve Black’s pawn structure, after which Black’s other bishop will be the boss on the dark-square complex. On e5 it also holds Black’s central structure together.

Besides, the foot soldier on e4 is isolated, which sometimes is not good.

4. Marat Dzhumaev (2495)
Denis Khismatullin (2655)
Voronezh Open 2010 (2)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.Qxd8+ Kxd8 6.Bg5 Be6 7.0-0-0+

What can be more logical than this move?

7...Qe8 8.f4 exf4 9.Qxe2 d6 10.Qxf6 gxf6
The tripled pawns shouldn’t confuse you as the bishops ‘hold them together’.

11. \( \text{Nd5} \) \( \text{Nd7} \) 12. \( \text{Nxf4} \) \( \text{c6} \)

Simple and good. Black’s position is already the more pleasant.

13. \( \text{Nx}6 \)

I don’t see any other options, but now the black pawn formation is repaired.

13...\( \text{fxe6} \) 14. \( \text{Nc3} \) \( \text{Kc7} \)

Interesting was 14...\( \text{Bf4+} \) 15. \( \text{Kb1} \) \( \text{Be5} \).

15.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{Be5} \) 16. \( \text{Nc2} \) \( \text{c5} \) 17. \( \text{g2} \) \( \text{h5} \)

The Russian player intends to shake White’s foundations on the kingside by a minority attack.

18. \( \text{Nf4} \) \( \text{Rg8} \) 19. \( \text{h3} \) \( \text{b6} \)

Or 19...\( \text{xf4+} \) 20.\( \text{gxf4} \) \( \text{a5} \). But there is already nothing real for Black.

20. \( \text{Nxe6} \) \( \text{xe4} \) 21. \( \text{hf1} \) \( \text{a5} \)

21...\( \text{h4}!? \).

22. \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{a4} \) 23. \( \text{f5} \) \( \text{d6} \) 24. \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{h4} \) 25.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{a5} \)

The Elo-favourite has managed to put up a tough fight and has obtained the better chances. The computer suggests 25...\( \text{c5}!? \) but it is a little scary for a human player to weaken point d5.

26.\( \text{c5} \)
The moment of truth.

26...\texttt{c}c8?

Correct was 26...\texttt{b}b5 with the following possible variation (not forced): 27.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{hxg}3 28.\texttt{hxg}3 \texttt{h}h1+ 29.\texttt{f}f1 \texttt{xf}1+ 30.\texttt{xf}1 a3! 31.\texttt{bxa}3 \texttt{xf}3\pm, or even 26...\texttt{f}f7 with the idea...\texttt{g}5, trading the knights. After that the c5-pawn may fall and White’s kingside pawns are also endangered.

27.\texttt{c}c2 \texttt{hxg}3 28.\texttt{hxg}3 \texttt{g}4

28...\texttt{x}xg3 29.\texttt{x}xg3 \texttt{gx}3 30.\texttt{d}d8=. Black can’t protect the b7- and a5-pawns simultaneously.

29.\texttt{d}d8 ½-½

As you see, even vapid endings can be fraught with nuances. Khismatullin had real chances to win.

Frequently Black abstains from moving his c-pawn as long as he can, so as to maximally avoid weakenings. Let me show you a master-class taken from the famous tournament in Wijk aan Zee. I haven’t ever participated there, but on the whole, the Netherlands appeal to our family. I’m allowing myself a little flattery to my publisher here, but it is absolutely true.

The tournaments in Hoogeveen, Roosendaal and Haarlem have left a good impression on us. The great amount of bicycles is beautiful too – in our country we always use this means of transport to combine sport and pleasure. The infrastructure is ideal for bicycles. You can ride for several kilometers without any mechanical obstacles. In Eastern Europe this is still not the case.

Let’s see how American player Varuzhan Akopian obtained a comfortable ‘good knight versus bad bishop’ position in his fight with Emil Sutovsky. The knight on e5 feels perfectly at ease between the white e4-pawn (which covers it from a frontal attack) and its own foot soldier on e6, which secures it against side attacks by rooks from f5 or d5.

5
Emil Sutovsky (2655)
Varuzhan Akopian (2625)
Wijk aan Zee B 2010 (10)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.Qxd8+ Kxd8 6.Bg5 Be6 7.0-0-0+ Kc8 8.f4 exf4 9.Qe2 Bd7 10.Qf4 Ng4

A typical manoeuvre. From here the knight is ready to jump to either f2 or e5.

11.Qd4

Anyway! Emil ignores the enemy threat. 11.Qg3 was the alternative.

11...c5

I wonder what White had prepared against the naive 11...f2. Perhaps something like 12.Qxe6 fxe6 13.Qc4 Qxh1 14.Qxe6 Qd6 15.Qxd6 cxd6 16.Qxd6 (16.e5) 16...Qd8, with very unclear consequences.

12.Qcb5

A poor decision. Better was 12.Qg3 or 12.Qxe6.

12...b6

Moves like 12...Qxa2 are usually not seriously considered over the board.

13.Qxe6 fxe6 14.Qc4 Qe8

Thus Black manages without ...c7-c6, even though his rooks are still disconnected.

15.Qhfl? a6

Or at once 15...Qe3+ 16.Qxe3 (16.b1 Qxf4 17.Qxf4 Qe3+) 16...Qxe3 17.Qf7, unclear.

16.Qa3 Qe3+ 17.Qb1
Now this is possible, because the a3-knight protects the bishop.

17...\textit{xf4} 18.\textit{xf4} \textit{ge5} 19.\textit{e2} \textit{d8}

19...b5.

20.\textit{c4} \textit{e7} 21.\textit{xe5} \textit{xe5}

Black has a very pleasant position. There is no comparison between the activity of the knight and that of the bishop. However, with some accurate manoeuvring the Israeli forces a draw.

22.\textit{h4} h6 23.\textit{h5} \textit{c6} 24.\textit{h3} \textit{d8} 25.\textit{g3} \textit{xd1}+ 26.\textit{xd1} g5 27.\textit{b3} \textit{b8} 28.\textit{h3} \textit{h8} 29.\textit{b3} b5 30.\textit{a3} a5 31.\textit{c3} \textit{d6} 32.\textit{d3}+ \textit{e7} 33.\textit{c3} \textit{d6} 34.\textit{d3}+ \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}

Well, White held out. It happens in chess...

A similar structure (the pawn remains on c7) was held for a long time by Tatiana against a very promising Franco-Armenian player in Luxemburg. The situation looked alarming, but our silicon friend isn’t so pessimistic about it. Generally, I try to minimize the number of my wife’s games in my books. However, from time to time she performs rather satisfactorily.

6
Tigran Gharamian (2517)
Tatiana Kasparova (2217)
Kaupthing Open 2007 (1)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \textit{f6} 3.\textit{c3} e5 4.\textit{dxe5} dxe5 5.\textit{xd8}+ \textit{xd8} 6.\textit{g5} \textit{e6} 7.0-0-0+ \textit{d7} 8.f4 exf4 9.\textit{f3} h6 10.\textit{xf4} \textit{b4} 11.\textit{b5} \textit{a5} 12.\textit{e5}!? \textit{c8}

A worthy alternative was 12...g5!? Let’s have a look at some lines: 13.\textit{g3} \textit{xe4} 14.\textit{c4} All reserves join the action! If 14.\textit{d4} \textit{e7}. 14...\textit{h7}
The rook protects the d7-knight ‘through the pawn’.

A) 15.\textbf{x}e6 fxe6 16.\textbf{h}f1 \textbf{e}8 17.\textbf{x}d7 \textbf{x}d7 18.\textbf{x}d7 \textbf{x}d7 19.\textbf{x}c7 \textbf{d}8! Maintaining a dynamic balance. 20.\textbf{d}1+ \textbf{e}7 20...\textbf{d}2+ 21.\textbf{x}d2+ \textbf{x}d2 22.\textbf{x}d2 \textbf{a}6 23.\textbf{e}3\pm. 21.\textbf{x}d8 \textbf{x}d8 22.\textbf{x}c6+ \textbf{e}7 23.\textbf{d}4 \textbf{x}g3 24.hxg3 \textbf{f}6 with counterplay;

B) 15.\textbf{h}f1 doesn’t improve, viz. 15...\textbf{e}8 16.\textbf{x}d7 \textbf{x}c4 and now:

B1) 17.\textbf{f}5 \textbf{e}6 18.\textbf{e}5 \textbf{d}8=;

B2) 17.\textbf{xc}7+ \textbf{xc}7 18.\textbf{fe}1 \textbf{f}5 19.\textbf{ff}6+. 

Tigran Gharamian
This looks effective, but let’s not forget that Black has an extra pawn and he has time to consolidate while his opponent restores the material balance: 19...\texttt{Kf7} 20.\texttt{N\times h7} \texttt{B\times g3} 21.\texttt{hxg3} \texttt{Be6} with compensation. The wanderer on h7 is facing death;

B3) Let me remind you that square e1 is controlled by the a5-bishop: 17.\texttt{Rfe1}? \texttt{\times e1}.

13.\texttt{c4} a6 14.\texttt{d4}

To me, during the game, White’s striking constellation in the centre seemed menacing. However, the computer doesn’t panic and gives a modest \pm assessment.

14...\texttt{\times c4} 15.\texttt{\times c4} \texttt{b4} 16.\texttt{c3} \texttt{\times c5} 17.\texttt{Rhe1}
Up to this point Tatiana has played quite logically and the position is near equality. Tigran is clearly ahead in development (the black rooks are still separated), but on the other hand one pair of minor pieces has already been exchanged.

17...\textit{\textit{Re8}}

I would also have played this. Direct ‘computer’ moves like 17...\textit{b5}?! may be objectively stronger, but how can they be found by a human?!

18.e5 \textit{\textit{Bxd4}} 19.\textit{Rxd4} \textit{\textit{Nc5}}?!

Now it was already necessary (the position has simplified after another exchange): 19...\textit{\textit{b5}}! 20.\textit{\textit{Na5}} \textit{\textit{Ng4}} 21.h3 (21.\textit{\textit{Nc6 Re6}}) 21...\textit{\textit{Ngxe5}} 22.\textit{\textit{Rxd7}}! \textit{\textit{Kxd7}} 23.\textit{\textit{Bxe5}} – a rook and pawn are roughly equivalent to two pieces in this ending.

20.\textit{\textit{Bg3}}

Here the Franco-Armenian player misses a better option: 20.b4! \textit{\textit{a4}} 21.\textit{\textit{f6d1}}±.

20...\textit{\textit{h5}}! 21.\textit{\textit{f2}}
In the tournament hall (to tell the truth, I was rather distracted by my own game at the time) it seemed to me that Tatiana was losing without much of a fight. But this was an optical illusion.

21...\textit{e}6

Now the elegant 21...\textit{f}4! would have at least equalized: 22.\textit{c}2 \textit{ce}6 and both the rook and the g2-pawn are exposed.

22.\textit{d}2 \textit{f}4

Here, instead of 23.\textit{c}2 White has a range of more useful moves.

23.\textit{g}3 \textit{h}5 24.\textit{h}4 \textit{b}5

24...g5.

25.\textit{a}5 \textit{h}4 26.\textit{c}2 \textit{g}6 27.\textit{g}3 \textit{d}8 28.\textit{f}2 \textit{d}7 29.\textit{ef}1 \textit{d}8 30.\textit{h}3
Even in this position Black is rather solid.

30...c6?!

Better was 30...d5!.

31.\textcolor{red}{e}c5


31...\textcolor{red}{e}7

I asked Tatiana: ‘Why not 31...d5?’ Now she can’t remember... If 32.e4 \textcolor{red}{xe}5=.

32.e4 \textcolor{red}{xe}5

Alas, now square d6 is not under control.

33.d6+ d7 34.d1

This is the end already. Throughout the game, the a8-rook was never able to join the struggle.

34.g4 35.xf7+ e8 36.d6+ d7 37.xb5+ e8 38.d6+ d7 39.f5+ e8 40.f3 ½-½

However, let’s be objective. Gharamian is a very strong player, his current Elo (December 2014) is 2658. Not everyone can make a draw with black against such an opponent.

A special ending occurred in the following duel. Well, this was not Biel or Linares, however White was one of the strongest young Belarus players of the time. Our average reader doesn’t have any practice in elite tournaments either, does he?

So, in order to avoid the worst, the author gave a pawn. In the art of warfare this is called the ‘scorched earth policy’.

Meanwhile, the flexibility of Black’s position is big enough and gradually (not as the result of a blunder) I took over the initiative, pressing on the weakness that had arisen on a3. The computer also thinks Black is better. Fortunately,
nowadays we have the possibility to find the truth (and write articles, books) with the help of more or less objective evaluations of chess engines.

Dmitry Surma (2280)
Sergey Kasparov (2315)
Belarus tt 1997 (12)


10...b4.

11.h3 c6 12.Nd4 g5
A risky decision. More careful is 12...Re8.

13.h2± b6 14.Nxe6+ fxe6 15.c4

Black definitely experiences problems here. White’s two bishops together with his rooks are delivering a crossfire. The weaknesses on f6, e6, d6 are no adornments to Black’s position.

15...Cc7!?

I decided to pay things off with a pawn, to get rid of the annoying h2-bishop and to establish a solid defence. If 15...Re8 16.Rf1 with pressure.

16.xc7+ xc7 17.xe6 Ae8 18.xd7?!
I cannot exclude that 18.f5 would have been nastier for Black.

18...xd7 19.Rf1 h7 20.f5 h6 21.df1?! b5 22.a3 a5
With the trivial idea to banish the knight from c3 and capture on e4. In fact, the unbiased computer gives only ± here.

23.b4?!

This move suddenly proves to be fatal. Probably more accurate is 23.b3 b4 24.d1, when the a5-pawn is exposed.

23...a4

Unclear. Now the c3-knight is safe and secure, but next on the agenda is an unpleasant trip by its counterpart to c4.

24.d2

Moving in the wrong direction, but are there any other options?

24...e5 25.e2 e6 26.f6 e4

Obvious and unbelievable. White is gradually losing the ending in spite of his extra pawn!

27.f7+ e7 28.exf7+ exf7 29.f5 fxe3 30.f6 d6 31.d3 e4 32.d4

White’s apparently active pieces are absolutely impotent and cannot change anything. The passed a-pawn determines the outcome.

32...a3 33.exa3 c7!? 34.f6?

Time trouble.

34...d7+ 35.e5 d6

Threatening 36...b7 mate.

36.d5+ b5 37.f3 xe4+ 38.xb5 a2 39.a3 d1 0-1
There is some point to the move g2-g3, intending to fight for the dark squares and to keep the pawn structure flexible.

Now you will see how a grandmaster from Kiev got a certain advantage playing against a specialist of this system. Under pressure, the Russian made a mistake in the end, after which White’s far-advanced pawns tore his defence to pieces.

The Russian player tries to chase away the bishop from the diagonal h2-b8 and, depending on where it retreats to, to bring out his own dark-squared bishop. Another interesting option is to harass the knight with 10...\textbf{\textit{b4}} 11.\textbf{\textit{b5}} (11.\textbf{\textit{d5}}) 11...\textbf{\textit{a5}} 12.\textbf{\textit{g5}} \textbf{\textit{e8}} (Black protects, and doesn’t allow any weaknesses) 13.\textbf{\textit{e2}} (Wyss-Gagunashvili, Zurich Open 2010) 13...\textbf{\textit{a6}} with initiative.

It looks as if the Ukrainian grandmaster has seized the initiative.

However, the two black bishops and the absence of weaknesses in his camp can’t be disregarded. The downside – disconnected rooks.

Everything fits like clockwork. With a dark-squared bishop – pawns on light squares.

The assessment of the computer becomes ‘kinder’ to Black.
23...Nd4?

In a position with far-advanced enemy pawns (e5, f6) one wrong move can spoil the game. The vigorous 23...h5!? would have reminded White of Black’s passed h-pawn: 24.Rxd8 Rxd8 25.Rxd8 Kxd8 26.gxh5 gxh5 27.Ne4+.

24.Ne4 Be3+ 

24...b6.

25.b1 f4 26.e6! Bxd3 27.exd3 fxe6 28.d4

A passed pawn and a herd of wild horses are literally trampling on Black’s position.

28...b6 29.Qxe6 Re8 30.Qc5 Qd6 31.Rb3+ Qa5 32.Ra3+ Qb5 33.c4+ Qxc4 34.Rc3+ Qb4 35.a3+

And Black resigned.

White tried to play similarly in the next example, but got no more than equality.

Please pay attention to the way in which Sanan Sjugirov arranges his bishops and pawns (...f7-f6, Qe6, Qe5) and to the solidity of this structure.

White has to give up the bishop.

11.Bxf6+ gxf6 12.g3 e5

Once again the bishops hold the broken pawn structure together.

How can White ruin the central f7-f6-e6-e5 skeleton? This is the problem. The trade-off of any of the two bishops will improve Black’s pawn structure. Meanwhile, it is unpleasant for White to have to tolerate such ‘monsters’ in the centre.

13.Qd5 c6 14.Qe3 Ne7

14...c7 15.Qf5+ Qd8.

15.Qc4

15.Qf5+ Qd8.

15...Qe5 16.Qxe6 Qxf4

16...fxe6? 17.Qg6+.

17.gxf4 fxe6

See the comment to the 12th move. The position has been equalized. The Azerbaijani youth (who is a very promising guy – I played with him in Iran when he was small) has failed to get anything special out of the opening.
18.\texttt{Rhg1 Ehg8} 19.\texttt{Ng4 h5} 20.\texttt{Nh6}

This is playing with fire already. The knight runs the risk of not surviving this raid.

20...\texttt{Rxg1} 21.\texttt{Rxg1 Rh8} 22.\texttt{Rg7+ Ee8} 23.\texttt{Rg6}

I wonder what Ulvi had calculated here. Maybe he missed the point 23.\texttt{f7? Ef8} when both pieces are subject to attack.

23...\texttt{Nxe4} 24.\texttt{c4}

More persistent is 24.\texttt{f5 Eh7+}.

24...\texttt{Exh7} 25.\texttt{Ed1 Ef2+}

Even more efficient 25...\texttt{Ef8!} 26.\texttt{Eg8+ Ee7} 27.\texttt{Eg6 f5} – if anything, with the idea ...\texttt{Ee4-f2-g4}.

26.\texttt{Ed1 Eg4}
In the next game, a specialist of this variation treated the opening very creatively, not to say defiantly, in the Russian Higher League championship. We can see the drawback of the pseudo-active move of the black pawn to g4. It reminds one of a separation of the attacking outpost from the provisions. In this case there was a happy end, but I’d recommend the reader to be more cautious and not to forget the truism: ‘Pawns can’t move backwards’!

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1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.Qxd8+ Kxd8
6.Bg5 Be6 7.g3

This looks like a sound idea. White is going to get connected pawns in the centre instead of an isolated one.

7...Nc6 8.f4


8...b4 9.d3
9...∞e8

Creatively played, as it is not clear what the knight will do here when the white pawn gets to e5. It is not easy to assess the dynamic position after 9...exf4 10.gxf4 ∞xc3+ 11.bxc3 ∞a6. Both parties have plenty of possibilities.

10.fxe5 h6 11.∞f4

A grandmaster playing for micro-nuances. Ivan provokes the opponent to weaken his position.
But how could he not? After for instance 11.∞e3 ∞c6 12.∞f3 ∞g4 the e5-pawn falls.

11...g5 12.∞e3 ∞d7 13.∞f3
13...\texttt{g}8

Let’s guess the meaning of this strange manoeuvre! Ildar is going to eliminate the e5-pawn without making any special positional concessions by means of \ldots \texttt{g}7 and \ldots \texttt{x}e5. If by analogy with the above-mentioned line Black plays 13...\texttt{g}4 14.0-0 \texttt{x}c3 15.bxc3 \texttt{x}f3 16.\texttt{x}f3 \texttt{x}e5 17.\texttt{f}5, then the inclusion of \ldots \texttt{g}7-g5 is obviously not to his benefit as after 17...\texttt{f}6 18.\texttt{d}4 the f6-pawn is very weak.

14.\texttt{d}4

More interesting is 14.0-0-0!? \texttt{g}7 15.h4 \texttt{g}4 16.\texttt{d}4 with initiative. Still, Black’s kingside pawns are weak and his rooks remain disconnected.

14...\texttt{g}7 15.\texttt{d}5 \texttt{g}4 16.\texttt{h}4 \texttt{x}e5 17.c3 \texttt{f}6

Maybe more precise is 17...\texttt{d}6.

18.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{e}8 19.0-0 \texttt{c}6 20.\texttt{x}e6 \texttt{x}e6 21.\texttt{f}5\pm
Let’s stop here for a moment. White has surely succeeded with his manoeuvres in the centre. The isolated e4-pawn might have felt uneasy if it faced a flexible enemy structure (for example, h7-g7-f6). But now all Black’s kingside pawns are uncoordinated and weak. The f5-knight is very strong and White has substantial pressure on the f-file.

21...e7 22.e3 d6 23.xd6

It was possible to intensify White’s presence on the battlefield with 23.ad1 as Black can’t play 23...e5? 24.xc5 xc5 25.d4+-.

23...xd6 24.xh6 e5 25.c2

Simplification is also interesting: 25.f4 e7 26.xe5 xe5 27.f4.

25...f3+ 26.xf3! gxf3 27.e5+!
27...Rxg5
Cheerless is 27...Rxg5 28.f4+ d5 29.b3+.

28.f4 g4 29.xe5+
More accurate is 29.h3 f2+ 30.g2, but here White would have had to calculate 30...e3+ 31.xf2 c2 32.c1± and the knight drops.

29...xe5 30.f2 e6 31.d1 f5 32.h4 c5 33.d2
Stronger was the disturbing check 33.b3+, when Black would have had to advance the pawn with 33...c4 34.c2, losing control over d4, which could later be exploited by the white rook.

33...g8
Giving Popov another chance to transfer his strongest piece to the desired 4th rank.

34.d1?
34.d4! (such a non-conventional trick isn’t easily found!) 34...xd4 35.b3±.

34...f4!
Taking over the initiative.
Now the pawns are traded off and it’s a draw. Black could have saddled White with some problems with 35...fxg3+ 36.fxg3 d8++.  

36.gxf4 xf4 37.h1 g4 38.d1 g2+ 39.e3 f2 40.f1 h2 41.e2 hxg4 ½-½  

Here are two more examples from my own practice. Viktor Moskalenko, who later became a well-known chess writer, allows a somewhat straightforward exchange on e6, thus making it easier for me to choose a plan. Black obtains a small but comfortable advantage without any risk of losing.

11

Viktor Moskalenko (2480)
Sergey Kasparov (2320)
Minsk Open 1996 (2)

1.d4 d6 2.e4 f6 3.c3 e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.xd8+ xxd8 6.g5 e6 7.f4 exf4 8.f3 h6 9.xf4 bd7 10.d4 b4 11.xe6+?!  

I’m not sure that this is a good idea. The Spanish-Ukrainian grandmaster determines the pawn structure too early, and the change is to Black’s benefit.

11...fxe6 12.d3  

The e4-pawn needs protection, but the bishop is passively placed here.

12...d6  

In principle, the unclear 12...xc3+ 13.bxc3 is also possible, spoiling White’s ‘hairdo’ on the queenside. However, as a rule I try to keep at least one bishop against the opponent’s two, so that it remains a real option to trade them.
13. \texttt{\textbf{\varepsilon}e3}

Viktor logically preserves the dark-squared bishop, and so keeps the tension. In addition, the chance may appear to escape into an opposite-coloured bishops ending, which is drawish. Black’s position is rather pleasant after 13. \texttt{\textbf{\varepsilon}xd6 cxd6 \textbf{0-0-0 e7}}.

13...\texttt{\textbf{\varepsilon}c5 14. \texttt{\textbf{\varepsilon}d2 c7 15. \texttt{a4 d6 16. \textbf{\varepsilon}e3 a6}}}

With the undisguised intention to restrict the opponent by ...b7-b5.

17.a3 b5 18. \texttt{\textbf{c3 c5}}

With the simple idea to kick the bishop from d3, after which the e4-pawn will feel uneasy.

19. \texttt{\textbf{\varepsilon}e2} ac8 20.0-0 c4 21. \texttt{\textbf{h1 e5 22. \textbf{f3 c5}}}
Black’s positional advantage is evident, but what should he do next? Ideally, it would be nice for him to exchange the dark-squared bishops and then to penetrate to the key points e5, d4, d2.

23.\textit{Rae1 Ifh8}

As earlier, the consequences of 23...\textit{Bxc3 bxc3 e5 are not clear. The c3-pawn looks vulnerable (...\textit{c5-a4}: 25.\textit{Bxc5+ Rxc5 26.\textit{Ra1. If he can carry out the a2-a4 push White will obtain certain counterplay. I don’t think the outcome of the game is already determined here.}}

24.g3

Generally, with a light-squared bishop it is reasonable to place your pawns on squares of the opposite colour.

Viktor Moskalenko


Something completely different is 28.c3!? but then the enemy rook could get to d3, with unpleasant pressure along the third rank, where White’s bishops are stationed.

Alas, the intrigue is over. Black’s extra pawn plays no role after the rook exchange. You can only give yourself airs claiming you have gained a draw from a position of strength... Still, 23...\textit{e}5xc3 might have given me better winning chances.

35...\textit{x}d3 36.\textit{x}d3 \textit{hxg3} 37.\textit{hxg3} \textit{x}g3 38.\textit{a}4 \textit{d}6 39.\textit{axb5} \textit{axb5} 40.\textit{g}4 \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}

Things went considerably worse in the final round of an open tournament in Bethune. Me and my opponent were the leaders, as up to that moment each of us had lost just half a point. The French grandmaster played committedly and vigorously, while your obedient servant... had no computer in those years. So I couldn’t prepare for the game. The encounter is commented in detail, so let me leave you for a while, I don’t want to feel the sadness again.

12
Jean Marc Degraeve (2588)
Sergey Kasparov (2475)
Bethune Open 2001 (7)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \textit{c}6 3.\textit{c}3 e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.\textit{xd}8+ \textit{xd}8 6.\textit{g}5 \textit{g}6

6...c6; 6...\textit{d}7 7.0-0-0 \textit{e}6 8.f4 \textit{e}7 9.\textit{f}3 \textit{g}4 10.\textit{d}2 \textit{f}6 11.fxe5 \textit{fxg5} 12.\textit{c}6 \textit{c}7 13.\textit{xd}7 \textit{xd}7= Acs-Rogozenko, see Game 14.
7.f4 exf4 8.f3 h6 9.xf4 b6 10.0-0-0 c6

For 10...b4 11.b5± see Gharamian-T. Kasparova, Game 7.

11.d4

11...e5

A very natural move, but after this game it calls forth some unpleasant associations for me. More concrete looks 11...b4, disturbing the enemy and indirectly attacking the e-pawn. Let’s see:


B) 12.e5 is the most principled move: 12.g4 12...d5 doesn’t equalize: 13.xd5 xd5 14.h4 e6 15.xe6+ fxe6 16.h3!±. A vigorous rook transfer. Now all the files are open for it, Palac-Tratar, Nova Gorica 2002. 13.xe6+ fxe6 14.e4 Substantially weaker is 14.xe4 e7 15.he1 h8 (15...xc3 16.bxc3± Topalovic-Ferenc, Rijeka 2003) 16.g3 xf5 17.d6 c5 18.d4 f2 unclear, Svidler-Bologan, Novgorod 1995. 14.e7 15.c3 a5 16.e2 gxe5 17.c5 xc5 18.xe5± Gharamian-Elliot, see Game 7.

12.e2 e8 13.f3 c8?!

The desire to move away from the rook’s X-ray can be understood. The computer suggests 13.g4 14.h3 xf3 15.gxf3, but here things are also joyless for Black. The unpleasant d4-f5 is threatened.

14.e5!

Straightforward and strong.

14...xd4?!

This is unsatisfactory. But were there any worthy alternatives?
After 14...\text{c}5 15.\text{c}5 \text{cxd}5 16.\text{b}3 \text{b}6 17.\text{xd}5 \text{xd}5 18.\text{xd}5 Black is simply a pawn down; moreover, the a8-rook is no adornment for his position.

15.\text{c}d4 \text{e}7 16.\text{e}4±

The preponderance of the centralized white pieces is clear. I remember putting my hopes on the weakness of the f4-bishop, which is boxed in by its own e5-pawn.

16...\text{c}7 17.\text{d}6 \text{e}7 18.\text{hd}1 \text{hf}8 19.\text{g}3 \text{a}5 20.h4

The French grandmaster pushes this pawn to h5 and only then intends to play \text{g}3-h4. Thus, I won’t be able to reply ...\text{g}7-g5.

20...\text{b}6?

This is a mistake, but any continuation is already losing.
21. \( \text{f5} \)!

After the fall of the g7-pawn further resistance is pointless.

21... \( \text{Rd7} \)

21... \( \text{Bxf5} \) 22. \( \text{e6+} \) \( \text{Kc8} \) 23. \( \text{Rd8#} \).

22. \( \text{Nxg7} \) \( \text{Rxd4} \) 23. \( \text{Rxd4} \) \( \text{Rd8} \) 24. \( \text{f4} \) 1-0

A good game by Degraeve.

Now it is time to get acquainted with other ideas for Black on the 6th move, instead of the natural 6... \( \text{Be6} \).

6...c6 is an interesting plan. It saves a tempo on the bishop’s development, restrains the enemy knight, and creates an escape square for the king. How should White react?

Baadur Jobava acted sharply in the following game, attacking the centre at once by f2-f4. The Elo-favourite didn’t meet an adequate rebuff, although Serbian grandmaster Miroljub Lazic had some possibilities. As a result he ended up significantly behind in development, and on the 26th move he already had to concede defeat.

13
Baadur Jobava (2678)
Miroljub Lazic (2459)
Milan Crespi Memorial 2011 (3)

1.d4 d6 2.e4 \( \text{Qf6} \) 3.\( \text{c3} \) e5 4.\( \text{dxe5} \) dxe5 5.\( \text{Qxd8+} \) \( \text{Kxd8} \) 6.\( \text{g5} \) c6 7.f4 \( \text{exf4} \)

It’s interesting to ‘check the documents’ of the white bishop with 7...h6 8.\( \text{Qxf6+} \) \( \text{gxf6} \). This is approximate equality – it seems we don’t have to be afraid of doubled f-pawns in this opening.

8.e5
8.0-0-0+

8...h6 9...xf4 9fd7?! 
It would again be interesting to find out the bishop’s intentions: 9...g5 10.d2 g4 11.f3 d7 is unclear.

10.c4
More flexible is 10.0-0-0, leaving the choice of where to bring out the bishop for later: 10.e8 11.e2+.

10.e8 11.e6
Also a good idea. Simple and strong.

11...fxe6 12.xe6 b6 13.xc8 xc8 14.0-0-0
Black has no weaknesses, but compare the activity of the pieces. White actually has 2-3 extra tempi. And don’t forget that the black monarch has already lost his castling rights.

14.b6 15.f3 d8d7 16.e4 f7 17.c4
It was more accurate to bring in the last reserves with 17.e1.

17.e8
A better option was the bishop sortie 17...b4, allowing the king’s rook to move to the centre and taking under control point e1 for the moment: 18.a3 e8.

18.e1 b4 19.d2
Here again, Black could have held the line by making use of tactical nuances.

19.xd2+?!
19...\( \square f6 \)! (square d6 is still under control of the half-dead bishop!) 20.\( \text{\texttt{xb4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xe4}} \).

20.\( \text{\texttt{xd2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{c8}} \) 21.\( \text{\texttt{c2}} \)

The Georgian grandmaster exerts substantial pressure along the files.

21...\( \square f6 \)!

The lesser of evils was 21...\( \text{\texttt{e7}} \) 22.\( \text{\texttt{xd7}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xd7}} \) 23.\( \text{\texttt{e5+}} \) \( \text{\texttt{e8}} \) 24.\( \text{\texttt{xd7}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xd7}} \) 25.\( \text{\texttt{c5+}} \) \( \text{\texttt{c7}} \).

22.\( \text{\texttt{c5\pm}} \) \( \text{\texttt{b6}} \) 23.\( \text{\texttt{d3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{e7}} \) 24.\( \text{\texttt{de5+}} \) \( \text{\texttt{g8}} \) 25.\( \text{\texttt{d7}} \) \( \text{\texttt{h5}} \) 26.\( \text{\texttt{xd4}} \) 1-0

Full domination for White, with material equality.

Earlier on, Dorian Rogozenco had treated this structure better in a game against a strong Hungarian grandmaster. Two bishops and domination on the dark squares with actions over the entire board made White’s task extremely difficult. It ended on the... 27th move!

14
Peter Acs (2601)
Dorian Rogozenco (2522)
Germany Bundesliga 2010/11 (6)

1.e4 \( \text{\texttt{d6}} \) 2.d4 \( \text{\texttt{f6}} \) 3.\( \text{\texttt{c3}} \) e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.\( \text{\texttt{xd8+}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xd8}} \) 6.g5 \( \text{\texttt{d7}} \) 7.0-0-0 c6 8.f4 \( \text{\texttt{e7}} \) 9.f3

In reply to 9.fxe5 usually follows 9...\( \text{\texttt{g4}} \), eyeing f2 and e5, and Black stands at least not worse.

9...\( \text{\texttt{g4}} \)

Here this is also good.
10.\text{Rd2 f6}

White already has problems.

11.\text{fxe5 fxe5 12.e6 }\text{\textit{c7 13.exd7 }\textit{xd7}}

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

White has failed to equalize: two good black bishops and weakened dark squares in his camp. Everything is in favour of the Romanian mercenary.

14.\textit{c4 f6 15.d1 eae8 16.e1 e7 17.f2 xf2 18.xf2 g4 19.d2 e5}

I don’t really know what should I write as a comment. Both sides make more or less logical moves, and Black’s advantage is gradually increasing.

20.g3 h5 21.f1 h4

Threatening simply 22...hxg3 and 23...h3.

22.gxh4 xh4 23.ee2 g5
Now the bishop gets a promising outpost on f4.

24.\textit{\texttt{Ef7}}??

This leads to instant disaster, but, admittedly, it also saves him from prolonged torment.

24...\textit{\texttt{Exf7}} 25.\textit{\texttt{Exf7}} g3 26.\textit{\texttt{Bxg3}} \textit{\texttt{Bf4+}} 27.\textit{\texttt{d1}} \textit{\texttt{g4}} 0-1

Who can say after seeing such a game that this variation is unpromising for Black?! I recommend you to pay attention to the status of the competition and to the Elo of the Hungarian chess player.

Yannick Pelletier can be called a specialist in this variation. The Swiss grandmaster fights not only for equalization, but also tries to confuse his opponent, aspiring to more. His high Elo rating scares his adversaries, who are usually satisfied with pulling off a quick draw.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
15 & \\
\hline
Valery Atlas (2448) & \\
Yannick Pelletier (2604) & \\
Switzerland tt 2013 (1) & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \textit{\texttt{f6}} 3.\textit{\texttt{c3}} e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.\textit{\texttt{Bxd8+}} \textit{\texttt{Bxd8}} 6.\textit{\texttt{g5}} c6 7.\textit{\texttt{c4}} \textit{\texttt{e8}} 8.a4 a5 9.0-0-0 \textit{\texttt{fd7}}
This manoeuvre also remains unpunished, which proves the robustness of Black’s position. Let’s count the number of ‘moves’ from both sides (e2-e4, c1-g5, 0-0-0...): 6-4 in White’s favour, and he is to move. Moreover, Black is deprived of his castling rights.

10. \texttt{Ng2} f6 11. \texttt{Bh4} b4 12. \texttt{g3} b6 13. \texttt{a2}

White’s most active piece (especially after ...f7-f6) is his light-squared bishop.

13....\texttt{g4} 14. \texttt{f3} \texttt{h5} 15. \texttt{f2} \texttt{d8d7} 16. \texttt{h4} \texttt{c5} 17. \texttt{e1} h6

A slightly strange, weakening move. 17...\texttt{f7} would have led to a full balance, exchanging the strong bishop on a2.

18. \texttt{gg3} \texttt{g6} 19. \texttt{h5} \texttt{h7}
20.\(\text{Nf5}\)

This was unnecessary. White definitely had a possibility to seize the initiative with 20.\(\text{Rh4}\). Obviously, the a2-bishop is more active than its counterpart on h7.

20...\(\text{Bxf5}\) 21.\(\text{exf5}\) \(\text{Be3}\) + 22.\(\text{Kb1}\) \(\text{Ke7}\) 23.\(\text{Rh4}\) \(\text{Rhd8}\) 24.\(\text{e4}\) \(\text{c5}\) 25.\(\text{g3}\)

\(\text{Rg4}\).

25...\(\text{b4}\) 26.\(\text{f2}\) \(\text{c5}\) 27.\(\text{e1}\) \(\text{b4}\) 28.\(\text{f2}\) \(\text{c5}\) \(\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}\)

16

Jean Noel Riff (2505)
Yannick Pelletier (2610)
France tt 2010 (2)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \(\text{Qf6}\) 3.\(\text{c3}\) e5 4.\(\text{dxe5}\) dx\(\text{e5}\) 5.\(\text{Qxd8}\) + \(\text{Kxd8}\) 6.\(\text{g5}\) e6 7.0-0-0+

7.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{d6}\) 8.0-0-0 \(\text{e7}\) and after ...c7-c6 the king can be conveniently placed either on c7 or on e7: 9.\(\text{c4}\) \(\text{c7}\) (with this placement of the bishops all the entry squares on the d-file are controlled) 10.\(\text{h4}\) h6 11.\(\text{f5}\) + \(\text{xf5}\) 12.\(\text{xf6}\) + \(\text{gxf6}\) 13.\(\text{xf5}\) \(\text{xf8}\) 14.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{d7}\) (Moen-Pelletier, Eilat tt 2012) 15.\(\text{e4}\) +. But of course, objectively it’s a draw.

7...\(\text{e8}\) 8.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{bd7}\) 9.\(\text{fxe5}\)
9...Ng4

Geometrical play. The knight intends to nestle on the blockading square e5. I can understand the desire of the French player not to give the pawn for free, and damage Black’s structure instead.

10.e6 fxe6

Not serious is 10...Nf2 11.exd7+ Bxd7 12.e3 Bxh1 13.f3+- as the knight will be lost.


More careful is 14...f8=.

15.Nf4 d7 16.Nb1

The poorly placed knight moves to f3 (c4) to get a grip on square e5. White stands more pleasantly after 16.h4.

24.e5!?  
To the point, though the position is a dead draw anyway.

24...fxe5 25.d3 h6 26.d2 c5 27.e4 b6 28.e3 f6 29.h4 b5 30.g4 a5 ½-½  
The following encounter from the Georgian championship developed in an unusual manner. Making use of his opponent’s inaccurate move order, Jobava, who is already familiar to us, strikes a tactical blow, temporarily sacrificing the exchange. Soon a bishop vs knight ending ensued. After some mutual inaccuracies it turned out that Black’s position was not tenable.

17  
Baadur Jobava (2721)  
Konstantin Shanava (2589)  
Tbilisi ch-GEO 2012 (1)  

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5  
It’s worth noting that Baadur applies this set-up himself from time to time, so he is well aware of the nuances.

4.dxe5 dxe5 5.Nxd8+ Nxd8 6.g5 d6 7.0-0-0 d7 8.f3 e8 9.b5  
This move seems strange but if it’s made by a player whose Elo is above 2700, then there are deep motives hidden behind it. We shall see...
9...\( \text{f8?} \)!

I wonder what would have followed in reply to 9...a6. The fight might have continued 10.\( \text{xd7}+ \text{xd7} \) 11.\( \text{d5 f6} \) 12.\( \text{e3 b5} \) 13.\( \text{d3 b7} \) 14.\( \text{hd1 d8} \) with a certain initiative for White.

10.\( \text{xd7} \text{xd7} \) 11.\( \text{b5 f6} \) 12.\( \text{e3 e7} \)

13.\( \text{xd6!} \)

A stunning strike.

13.\( \text{xa7? xa7} \) 14.\( \text{xa7} \) doesn’t work in view of 14...b6 and the bishop perishes.
13...cxd6 14.\(\text{c7}\) b6

The rook turns out to be very cramped: 14...\(\text{b8}\) 15.\(\text{xa7}\) d8 16.\(\text{xb8}\) \(\text{xb8}\) 17.\(\text{b5}\)±.

15.\(\text{xa8}\) d8 16.\(\text{d2}\) b7 17.\(\text{c4}\) \(\text{xa8}\) 18.\(\text{xd6}\)

As a result of the exchange operation White has an extra pawn. In this case the opposite-coloured bishops do not guarantee a draw as there are also other pieces on the board. Besides, the pawn arrangement doesn’t enable a fortress construction.

18...\(\text{c7}\) 19.\(\text{b5}\)± b8 20.d1 c6 21.c4 \(\text{xb5}\) 22.cxb5 d8 23.e2 c7 24.a4 f8 25.\(\text{xd8}\) \(\text{xd8}\) 26.c3 e7 27.e4 d6

The first offensive is stopped. The doubled b-pawns give Black hopes for a successful defence. However, Jobava’s plan is to grab space on the kingside too, after which Black will find himself in zugzwang one day.

18...\(\text{e7}\) 19.\(\text{b5}\)± b8 20.d1 c6 21.c4 \(\text{xb5}\) 22.cxb5 d8 23.e2 e7 24.a4 f8 25.\(\text{xd8}\) \(\text{xd8}\) 26.c3 e7 27.e4 d6

The first offensive is stopped. The doubled b-pawns give Black hopes for a successful defence. However, Jobava’s plan is to grab space on the kingside too, after which Black will find himself in zugzwang one day.

28.f4! g6 29.f5 \(\text{h4}\) 30.g4?!

Stronger is 30.g3! as now 30...\(\text{g2}\) does not work (30...\(\text{f3}\) 31.h3+- is analogous to the game) because of 31.d2 and the black knight dies.

30...\(\text{f3}\)??

Considerably more tenacious is 30.\(\text{g2}\), after which the game’s outcome remains open.

31.h3

A mistake, Black should have pranced on with his knight, and not moved his pawns: 31...\(\text{e1}\) 32.a5 \(\text{g2}\) 33.f2 c7 34.axb6+ axb6 and 35.d5 is still pointless because of 35.f4+, though White could have achieved victory one way
or another, for example: 35.h4 \( \text{Ng}4 \) 36.h5 h6 37.\( \text{Nc}3 \text{ f}4 \text{ e}2+ \) (37...\( \text{Nh}3 \) 38.\( \text{Be}3 \)) 38.\( \text{Nd}3 \text{ f}4+ \) 39.\( \text{Ke}4+ \) (triangulation with c3-d3-c4).

\[32.a5 \text{ bxa}5 \] 33.\( \text{Nd}5+ \text{ d}7 \) 34.\( \text{d}5 \)

As you see, on f3 the knight is not able to help, whereas on f4 it would have been able to bother the enemy.

\[34...\text{N}g5 \] 35.\( \text{Bxa}7 \text{ Nh}3 \) 36.\( \text{b}6 \text{ Nf}4+ \) 37.\( \text{c}3 \text{ d}3+ \) 38.\( \text{c}4 \text{ xb}2+ \) 39.\( \text{b}5 \) 1-0

### Conclusion

So, what conclusion can we draw from our analysis? In the variation with 6.\( \text{Bg}5 \) White obtains some initiative, but... if he tries to capitalize on his advantage, Black gets real counterchances. The situation is asymmetrical, which allows Black to organize counterplay.

The doubled pawns on the f-file may turn out to be not just a weakness. Furthermore, the fact that Black has a dark-squared bishop without an opponent is often more important than pawn structure defects.
Chapter 2
Pressure on f7: 6.\textit{c4}

This is also a quite logical move. White instantly starts pressing on the f7-pawn, which has been left undefended. There are only two ways to save it: by covering it with the bishop on e6 (Section 1, 6...\textit{e6}) or by returning the king to e8 (Section 2, 6...\textit{e8}). The counter-thrust 6...\textit{b4} is sporadically applied and doesn’t have independent significance. Two examples for this line are given in the notes to Game 22 (Korneev-Kabanov).

Section 1: 6...\textit{e6}

6...\textit{e6}

This is the move which suggests itself first as a reaction to White’s aggression.

7.\textit{xe6}

Do you see any other options?

7...\textit{fxe6}
Let’s compare the pros and cons of the position. Black’s pawn structure has ceased to be flexible, which is usually undesirable. However, the new pawn on e6 takes under control several important light squares: f5 and d5. I’d like to emphasize that there are only dark-squared bishops left on the board, and that is why this is especially important. It is difficult for White to trade off this valuable pawn as the ‘breakwater’ e5 is standing in front of it. It looks a bit like the battery at the entry to the Oslo fjord – one that cannot be ignored.

White can point out the weakness of the doubled pawns only with the opponent’s collaboration. Usually, placing the knights on d3 and c4 is unpleasant for Black, while the white bishop exerts pressure on the diagonal a1-h8.

Let me open this chapter with some examples from my own practice.

The first game was played at the Zonal tournament for the World Championship (sounds not bad, doesn’t it?). Black equalized easily and could have forced a draw. But my underestimation of the future Moldavian grandmaster (at that time Alexey was considerably inferior in Elo) led to a deplorable result.

18
Alexey Khruschiov (2281)
Sergey Kasparov (2465)
Minsk zt 2000 (1)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ∆f6 3.∆c3 e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.∆xd8+ ∆xd8 6.∆c4 ∆e6 7.∆xe6 fxe6 8.∆e3 ∆d6 9.f3 a6 10.∆ge2 ∆e7 11.∆c1

White has a natural desire to redeploy the knight from the poor e2-square to a more active one, where it will have an impact on the further struggle. An alternative route is ∆g1-h3-f2-d3.

11...∆bd7 12.∆d3 c5
Don’t be confused by the positioning of the pawn on a dark square, blocking its own bishop. The infantryman is going to move to c4, thus grabbing space and chasing away the enemy knight which has just arrived in the centre.

13.a4

A preventive measure. Not being able to avert ...c5-c4 effectively, White tries to isolate the enemy outpost as much as possible. The intention is to cut off the provision chain by preventing ...b7-b5. No advantage I promised by 13.b3 c4!? 14.bxc4 (14.Nb2 Nb4 15.bd2 Bhc8 16.Nxc4 b5 17.d1 xd2+ 18.xd2 xc2 with counterplay) 14...Bc8 15Nb2 Nb4 16.d2 b6 with initiative. I doubt that it is pleasant to play with such a pawn structure (c2, c4, a2)...

13...c4 14.Nf2 c5

14...Bac8!?.

15.e2

15.xc5+.

15...Bac8 16.a5 Bxe3 17.Bxe3 c5 18.a4 Bhc8 19.ha1
What a strange concentration of rooks on closed files! The moral is that so as to maintain the status-quo Black tries to exert pressure on the advanced pawn on a5. He has the possibility to transfer his cavalry detachment from the kingside. Meanwhile, the white knights lack manoeuvring space.

19...\textbf{Q}e8 20.\textbf{Q}fd1 \textbf{Q}d6 21.\textbf{Q}d2 g5

The minority attack is double-edged. Weaknesses will appear on both sides. The pacific 21...\textbf{Q}b8 was more careful.

22.\textbf{Q}e3 h5 23.h4!?

Typically, the Moldavian player reminds me that he is not going to wage a blind defence.

23...gxh4 24.\textbf{R}h1 \textbf{Q}b8

Preferring active play. The ‘boring’ 24...\textbf{Q}f6 was also acceptable.

25.\textbf{Q}xh4 \textbf{Q}h8 26.g4 \textbf{Q}c6

The material balance is preserved. Neither side has crossed the line.

27.\textbf{Q}xh5 \textbf{Q}xh5 28.gxh5 \textbf{Q}d4

The f3-pawn can’t be protected.

29.\textbf{Q}g4 \textbf{Q}xf3+ 30.\textbf{Q}e3 \textbf{Q}d4 31.\textbf{Q}d2 \textbf{Q}4b5 32.\textbf{Q}e3

32.\textbf{Q}xb5 axb5 is unclear.

32...\textbf{Q}d4 33.\textbf{Q}d2 \textbf{Q}f3+ 34.\textbf{Q}e3

The repetition of moves would have been a reasonable end to the game. But I wanted to start the Zonal tournament in a more aggressive way. Such decisions are often regretted later...
34...Ng5?! 35.e1 gf7 36.h6 Ec8 37.h7 Eh8

I have to retreat in all directions. Was it worth it to avoid the draw?!

38.Eh1 Ec8


39.e4 Ef6 40.exf6 Exf6 41.Ac5+-

The misfortune comes from the other side. I have to admit that Alexey has played well. The remainder doesn’t need any comment.

41...Ee7 42.exb7 Ec8 43.Eg1 Eh8 44.Eh1 Ec8 45.b4 cxb3 46.cxb3 Eh8 47.b4 Ec3+ 48.Ed2 Eb3 49.Eg1 Eh3 50.Ac5 Exh7 51.Ea6 Ef7 52.Ac5 Ed6 53.Eg6 Ed8 54.Ed3 Ec7 55.Ec4 Ec6 56.Ob5 Aa7+ 57.Ab6 Ec8+ 58.Ac6 Ec6 59.Exe6+ Exe6 60.Exe6 Ad6 61.Ag5 Ab5 62.Ob7 Ac7+ 63.Aa7 Ab5

63...Ab5+ 64.Ab8.

64.Ac5 Axb4 65.Ab6 1-0

So that the reader doesn’t get the impression that one side has a substantial advantage in this variation, here is a game where Black was successful.

19

Daniel Hristodorescu (2253)
Sergey Kasparov (2458)
Den Helder 2002 (3)


but not dangerous for the opponent, Zarinfam-S.Kasparov, Ahvaz 2007). For instance, 15...\(\text{a1xb3}\) 16.cxb3 \(\text{a8d8}\) is enough for equality.

8...\(\text{d6}\) 9.b3

Preparing to exert piece pressure on e5.

9...a6 10.\(\text{b2 e7}\) 11.\(\text{h3 c6}\) 12.\(\text{f2 h5}\) 13.\(\text{d3 f4}\)

A multifunctional knight manoeuvre. Firstly, it trades off its counterpart, releasing the pressure in the centre. Secondly, the e5-pawn will move to f4, vacating a perfect square for a piece.

14.\(\text{xf4}\) exf4 15.0-0-0 \(\text{e5}\) 16.\(\text{he1 f6}\) 17.\(\text{e2 xbe2}\) 18.\(\text{xb2 e5}\)

18...g5!? was interesting, leaving the e5-square open for the knight, as suggested above.

19.\(\text{d7}\) \(\text{ac8}\) 20.\(\text{c3 hd8}\) 21.\(\text{ed1}\)

Here we have an example of the ‘swamp’, where you may be dragged to the bottom. It seems like only White is fighting for victory. But that is exactly the point: he mustn’t overstep the mark.

21...\(\text{xd7}\) 22.\(\text{xh7 e7}\) 23.b4?!

White could have maintained the initiative with 23.\(\text{d5+ xd5}\) 24.exd5 h5 25.c4±.

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

Now chances are equal.

24.\(\text{d2 b5}\) 25.\(\text{a4 c6}\) 26.\(\text{e2 bxa4}\)

An attempt to revive the play on the queenside, which is suddenly successful. The alternative was 26...c5!?.
27...c5

Creating a remote passed pawn which, together with the activity of Black’s pieces, gives the second player the better chances.

28.\texttt{\textipa{xa4}} exb4 29.\texttt{\textipa{xb4}} c6+ 30.\texttt{\textipa{a3}}?

Better was 30.\texttt{\textipa{a4}}.

30...\texttt{\textipa{a5}}

When the knight gets to c4 it will dominate.

31.\texttt{\textipa{b4}} \texttt{\textipa{c4}} 32.\texttt{\textipa{d1}} \texttt{\textipa{e3}} 33.\texttt{\textipa{c1}} \texttt{\textipa{xc2}} 34.\texttt{\textipa{xc2}} \texttt{\textipa{xc2+}} 35.\texttt{\textipa{a5}} \texttt{\textipa{e1}} 36.\texttt{\textipa{xa6}} \texttt{\textipa{xg2}} 37.\texttt{\textipa{b6}} \texttt{\textipa{e1}} 38.\texttt{\textipa{g1}} \texttt{\textipa{c2}} 39.\texttt{\textipa{e5}} \texttt{\textipa{d4}} 40.\texttt{\textipa{e4}} g5 41.\texttt{\textipa{d3}} h5 42.h3 \texttt{\textipa{d6}} 43.\texttt{\textipa{e4}} \texttt{\textipa{e2}} 44.\texttt{\textipa{d3}} \texttt{\textipa{a3}} 45.\texttt{\textipa{e2}} \texttt{\textipa{e5}} 46.\texttt{\textipa{c3}} \texttt{\textipa{b5}} 47.\texttt{\textipa{e2}} \texttt{\textipa{b4}} 48.\texttt{\textipa{d2}} \texttt{\textipa{c4}} 49.\texttt{\textipa{e1}} \texttt{\textipa{d4}} 50.\texttt{\textipa{g1}} \texttt{\textipa{d3}} 51.\texttt{\textipa{f2}} h4 52.\texttt{\textipa{f1}} \texttt{\textipa{e3}} 53.\texttt{\textipa{g2}} \texttt{\textipa{e2}} 0-1

In the following duel and the example added in the notes, we can see White’s ‘blue dream’. The opponent plays passively and doesn’t prevent White from developing an initiative. In both games the e5-pawn turns out to be vulnerable.
White is clearly far ahead in development. The e5-pawn will fall. 14...c5 15.Nc4 Ke7 16.dxe5 Nxe5 17.Nxe5± Tihonov-S. Kasparov, Minsk 1996.

One of the basic positions in this variation. Up to this point both sides have played quite logically.

12...b5

This move is possible, however White doesn’t oblige by capturing as we are not playing draughts.
13. \( \text{Nc}d1 \)

Suggesting to the enemy to spend another tempo with 13...\( \text{N}xe3 \) 14.\( \text{N}xe3 \). The knights are dreaming of attacking the e5-pawn by settling down on c4 and d3.

13...\( \text{B}hd8 \) 14.\( \text{Nd}3 \) \( \text{B}d6 \)

Admitting his mistake. Nothing terrible has happened, but the waste of two tempi is unpleasant.

15.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{B}b8 \) 16.\( \text{N}1b2 \)

Now the knight is on b8, the sharp thrust 16.c4!? was worth considering, hurrying to cross the ‘chess Rhine’ (a3-d6) while the opponent is regrouping: 16...b6 17.b4 with the simple idea c4-c5, catching the bishop. Earlier on, c2-c4 didn’t appeal to me because of the rebuttal with ...c7-c5.

16...\( \text{Cc}6 \) 17.\( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{b}5 \) 18.\( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{E}db8 \) 19.\( \text{R}b1 \) \( \text{B}d7 \) 20.\( \text{b}4 \) \( \text{f}7 \) 21.\( \text{a}2 \)

One way or another, White has gained a certain superiority. With the last move he aims for a doubling of the rooks on the a-file, after which the threat of a4xb5 becomes really dangerous.

21...\( \text{R}g8 \) 22.\( \text{axb}5 \)

In reply to 22.\( \text{Ba}1 \) the black rook would evade the opposition with 22...\( \text{ad}8 \) (22...\( \text{ab}8 \) 23.\( \text{axb}5 \) axb5 24.\( \text{a}6 \)) 23.\( \text{axb}5 \) axb5 24.\( \text{a}6 \), and now 24...\( \text{db}8 \), showing the uninvited guest the door.

22...\( \text{axb}5 \) 23.\( \text{Ba}1 \) \( \text{xa}2 \)

Paunovic decides to simplify the position. The alternative was 23...\( \text{ad}8 \).

24.\( \text{xa}2 \) \( \text{h}5 \) 25.\( \text{a}6 \) \( \text{db}8 \) 26.\( \text{a}8 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 27.\( \text{xg}8 \) \( \text{gxg}8 \)

Can White win this ending? With optimal defence, it seems he can’t. But Black has no prospects at all, and so he may
make a mistake.

28.\text{d2} 29.\text{f7} 30.\text{b3} 31.\text{g3}

White’s flexible pawn structure (g3, f3) prevents the opponent from getting counterplay. At the same time the white king is ready to participate in an attack on the queenside.

31...\text{e8} 32.\text{c4} 33.\text{xc4} 34.\text{d7} 35.\text{a4} 36.\text{h4} 37.\text{h6} 38.\text{hxg3}

Disaster is near. White’s king manoeuvre up the flank has added to Black’s troubles.

38...\text{e7} 39.\text{c1} 40.\text{d2} 41.\text{c3} 42.\text{g6}

It seems there are several roads to success here.

42.\text{xd6} 43.\text{xd6}

Or 42...\text{xd6} 43.\text{b6} and the passed pawn will cost Black his knight; 42...\text{xd6} 43.\text{b7} 44.\text{c5}+ is no remedy either.

43.\text{xe5}+ 44.\text{xe5} 45.\text{xe5} 46.f4

The most efficient. Now the passed g- and, eventually, b-pawns will be too much for Black.

46...\text{xe4} 47.\text{g4} 48.\text{d4} 49.\text{e5} 50.\text{e5} 51.\text{g6} 52.\text{g7} 53.\text{a7} 54.\text{xc7} 1-0

Now b6-b7-b8 is inevitable.

In the next game, a Spanish grandmaster with an Elo rating of 2635 couldn’t cope with a strong woman player from Ukraine. The Elo-favourite even found himself in a hopeless position and was saved only with some help of his opponent.
1.d4 d6 2.e4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.Qxd8+ Kxd8 6.c4 e6 7.exd6 fxe6 8.cxd6 Qe7 9.f3 Qe7 10.h3 Bd7 11.f2 c5 12.e2 Bxe3 13.fxe3 a6 14.a4 g5

No reservations due to the Elo gap.

15.h4

Attacking the pawn before Black plays ...h7-h5, when he could respond with ...g5-g4.

15...g6

15...hxg4 16.hxg5 leads to the same type of position.

16.hxg4 h5 17.e2 Rhg8 18.g3 b5 19.d3 c5

Black is fighting with strong and simple means. The position favours White, but how can he convert his advantage? For example, it is difficult to increase the pressure on the h-pawn. And there are no other black weaknesses in sight.

20.hh1 Bg8 21.axb5 axb5 22.Ac1 Bg8 23.f2 Bgb8 24.b3 b4 25.Ab1 Ac8 26.b2 Ad6 27.h1 Ac5

In reply to 27...Af6, 28.d3 Axa1 29.Axa1 Ad7 30.Ab1 Ac7 31.Aa5 is unpleasant.

28.Ac4 Ad4

More accurate is 28...Axa1 29.Axa1 Ac3.

29.Ac4 exd4 30.e2 f6?!

The first more or less serious mistake which, however, doesn’t make a significant change. There is a large safety margin
in the position.
30...\(\text{Rxa1}\) was better.

31.\(\text{Rxa8}\) 32.\(\text{Rxh5}\) \(\text{Ra2}\)

33.\(\text{Rh6}\)?
33.\(\text{d1}\) probably wasn’t winning, but still it was noticeably stronger: 33...\(\text{Ra1}\) + 34.\(\text{d2}\) \(\text{g1}\) 35.\(\text{g4}\) (35.\(\text{h6}\)) 35...\(\text{g2}\) + 36.\(\text{c1}\) \(\text{g1}\) + 37.\(\text{b2}\) \(\text{g2}\) with the threat ...d4-d3.

33...\(\text{g7}\)! 34.\(\text{xe6}\) \(\text{c5}\)
34...d3+.

35.\(\text{xe5}\) d3+ 36.\(\text{d2}\) \(\text{xc2}\) + 37.\(\text{e3}\)
Retreating is simply bad: 37.\(\text{e1}\) \(\text{xb3}\) +. The white knight is attacked, while the passed pawn is very powerful.

37...\(\text{xb3}\) 38.\(\text{d6}\)
38.\(\text{xd3}\) \(\text{c3}\)+.
The Ukrainian player misses a winning chance. Correct was 38...\textit{c}e5!. Here are some variations:

A) 39.g4 b3+;
B) 39.\textit{f}5+ \textit{f}6 40.\textit{xe} 5 \textit{xe} 5 41.\textit{d}4 \textit{c}3 42.\textit{d}2 \textit{e}--;
C) 39.\textit{d}5 b3.

39.\textit{f}5+ \textit{f}6

Now a series of mutual mistakes follows (time trouble, perhaps?).

40.\textit{b}5?!  
40.\textit{d}5.

40...\textit{e}2+  
40...\textit{d}2!  
41.\textit{f}4 \textit{d}2 42.\textit{d}5 b3 43.e5+??
Stepping from the path into the swamp. The Spanish player could have drowned, but, miraculously, he will escape from the clutches of the bog. 43.\(\text{d}6+\) would have led to a draw.

43...\(\text{f}7\)

Also good was 43...\(\text{xe}5\) 44.\(\text{d}6+\) \(\text{e}6\) 45.\(\text{xd}2\) b2! 46.\(\text{xb}2\) \(\text{d}3+\).

44.\(\text{d}7+\) \(\text{e}8\) 45.e6 b2?

Here it is – a bough offered to a drowning man. 45...\(\text{d}3+\) 46.\(\text{xd}3\) (46.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{xe}6\)) 46...b2+.

46.\(\text{e}7+\) \(\text{d}8\) 47.\(\text{d}7+\) \(\text{e}8\)

Or 47...\(\text{c}8\) 48.\(\text{e}7+\) \(\text{b}8\) 49.\(\text{c}6+\) \(\text{c}8\) (49...\(\text{a}8\) 50.\(\text{a}7#\)) 50.\(\text{e}7+\).

48.\(\text{e}7+\) \(\text{d}8\) 49.\(\text{d}7+\) \(\text{e}8\) \(\frac{1}{2}\)-\(\frac{1}{2}\)

The next example (with the move 6...\(\text{b}4\) mentioned in the notes) is taken from an open tournament in Voronezh (Russia). I used to study in this city, so I try to lobby for the interests of the local chess players when I can. Those who like extremes (Russia is not only Moscow and St. Petersburg) I advise to visit Voronezh. The tournament organizer is the well-known chess writer and coach Alexander Raetsky.

You can also meet him in the open tournament in Cappelle la Grande. Alexander performs as an arbiter there. In a red coat, on the scene – observing the games of the leaders.

Oleg Korneev achieves an advantage with confident play, but once again we see that Black’s set-up is hard to breach.

Oleg Korneev (2617)  
Nikolay Kabanov (2472)  
Voronezh Open 2013 (3)

1.e4 \(\text{d}6\) 2.d4 \(\text{f}6\) 3.\(\text{c}3\) e5 4.dxe5 \(\text{dxe}5\) 5.\(\text{xd}8+\) \(\text{xd}8\) 6.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{e}6\)
Here are a couple of fragments on the topic of 6...\texttt{b4}. This is a very rare continuation. Black is going to destroy White’s pawn structure.

### Analysis Diagram

**A) 7.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{e}7 8.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{bd}7**

9.\texttt{d}5+?! (more accurate seems to be 9.0-0-0!? \texttt{c}6 10.\texttt{d}5+ \texttt{xd}5 (10...\texttt{cxd}5 11.\texttt{xb}4+ ) 11.\texttt{exd}5 \texttt{xd}2+ 12.\texttt{xd}2 with...
initiative) 9...\texttt{Qxd5} 10.\texttt{Qxd5} \texttt{Qxd2+} 11.\texttt{Qxd2} c6= Sanduleac-Delchev, Albena 2011;

B) 7.\texttt{Bxf7} \texttt{Rf8} 8.\texttt{b3} \texttt{Qxe4} 9.\texttt{Qe2} \texttt{Qxf2} 10.\texttt{Qf1} (weaker is 10.0-0 \texttt{Qc5}) 10...\texttt{Qg4} 11.\texttt{Qg5+} \texttt{Qe8}

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\draw[step=1cm,lightgray,very thin] (0,0) grid (8,8);
\node at (0.5,-0.5) {a}; \node at (0.5,8.5) {b}; \node at (8.5,8.5) {c}; \node at (8.5,-0.5) {d}; \node at (7.5,-0.5) {e}; \node at (7.5,8.5) {f}; \node at (6.5,8.5) {g}; \node at (6.5,-0.5) {h};
\draw[ultra thick,black] (1,1) -- (1,7) -- (7,7) -- (7,1) -- (1,1);
\draw[ultra thick,black] (2,2) -- (2,8) -- (8,8) -- (8,2) -- (2,2);
\node at (1.5,1.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (1.5,5.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (1.5,3.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (1.5,7.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (7.5,1.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (7.5,5.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (7.5,3.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (7.5,7.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (2.5,2.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (2.5,6.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (2.5,4.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (2.5,8.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (6.5,2.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (6.5,6.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (6.5,4.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (6.5,8.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (3.5,3.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (3.5,7.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (3.5,1.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (3.5,5.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (5.5,1.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (5.5,5.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (5.5,3.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (5.5,7.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (4.5,2.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (4.5,6.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (4.5,4.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (4.5,8.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (0.5,4.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (0.5,2.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (8.5,4.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (8.5,2.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (1.5,6.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (1.5,4.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (7.5,6.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (7.5,4.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (2.5,5.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (2.5,3.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (6.5,5.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (6.5,3.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (3.5,4.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (3.5,2.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (5.5,4.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (5.5,2.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (4.5,5.5) {\textbullet}; \node at (4.5,2.5) {\textbullet}; \end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

\textit{analysis diagram}

(Korneev-Torres Ventosa, Linares 2013; or 11...\texttt{Qf6} 12.0-0-0+ with an attack even without queens) 12.0-0-0 with more than enough compensation for the pawn.

7.\texttt{Qxe6} fxe6 8.f3 \texttt{Qd6} 9.\texttt{Qe3} a6 10.\texttt{Qh3} \texttt{Qe7} 11.\texttt{Qf2} \texttt{Qbd7} 12.\texttt{Qe2} \texttt{Qh5}

I am not quite sure about this move. After the natural g2-g3 the knight is doing nothing here.

13.g3 \texttt{Qhf8}
14.b3

Interesting is 14.\(\text{b}1\), transferring the knight to \(d2\) in order to defend the \(f3\)-pawn. This may be useful if Black doubles his heavy artillery on the \(f\)-file. In principle, on \(c3\) the knight is passive.

14...h6 15.\(\text{a}4\)

Oleg is actually doing the same thing, only the knight is travelling via \(b2\).

15...\(\text{a}3\) 16.\(\text{ab}1\) b5 17.\(\text{b}2\) \(\text{xb}2\) 18.\(\text{xb}2\) \(\text{fb}8\) 19.\(\text{c}1\)

White has been quite successful. His pawn chain is elastic and his bishop, working on both flanks, is stronger than either
of the enemy knights. On the agenda is c2-c4, opening the c-file. Otherwise the pawn can move further.

19...\(\text{Nh6} \) 20.c4 b4

Of course, Nikolay doesn’t wish to open up the game, but here is another problem.

21.\(\text{Ra1} \)

21.\(\text{Nd3} \) is also quite nice.

21...a5 22.a3 a4

Not the best choice. 22...bxa3 was likely the lesser of evils, though after 23.\(\text{Exa3 a4} \) this is also not quite satisfactory due to 24.\(\text{Nd3} \).

23.axb4 axb3

23...\(\text{Rxb4} \) is bad because of 24.\(\text{Nd3 a3} \) (after 24...\(\text{Rb7} \) 25.\(\text{Exa4} \) the rook on b2 is protected) 25.\(\text{Exa3 Exa3} \) 26.\(\text{Nb4} \).

24.\(\text{Rxa8} \)

White has a big advantage. A plus pawn, a better structure, and his bishop is stronger than either knight – just look at the ‘handsome man’ on f6.

26...\(\text{Nd6} \) 27.\(\text{Nxb6} \)

Significantly stronger was 27.\(\text{Nd1}! \) as 27...\(\text{Rxb2}?! \) is not good because of 28.c5 \(\text{Nd7} \) 29.c6++ and White’s queenside pawns are unstoppable.

27...\(\text{cxg6} \) 28.\(\text{Ee3} \) 29.\(\text{Nd3} \) 30.\(\text{Ea3} \) \(\text{Exh2} \) 31.\(\text{Ea7} \) \(\text{Ed8} \) 32.\(\text{Ea8}+ \) 33.\(\text{Ea7} \) \(\text{Ed8} \) 34.c5 \(\text{bxc5} \) 35.\(\text{bxc5} \) \(\text{Ec2} \)

36.\(\text{Ea6} \) \(\text{Ec7} \) 37.\(\text{Ec7} \) \(\text{Ec8} \) 38.\(\text{Ec6} \) \(\text{Ee7} \) 39.\(\text{Ec6} \)
39...\(\text{b}8\)

We can conclude that the Spanish grandmaster hasn’t realized his advantage in the best way and here 39...\(\text{b}8\)! could have balanced the position: 40.\(\text{a}7+\) \(\text{d}6\) 41.\(\text{x}g7\) \(\text{xc}6=\).

40.\(\text{a}7+\) \(\text{d}6\) 41.\(\text{xc}5\) \(\text{xc}5\) 42.\(\text{g}7\) \(\text{xc}6\) 43.\(\text{h}7\) \(\text{c}2\)?

It is strange for a good blitz player to make such a move. The h6-pawn could have been saved by 43...\(\text{c}3+\) 44.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{c}2+\) 45.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{c}1+\) 46.\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{c}2+\) 47.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{f}2\) 48.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{h}2\).

44.\(\text{h}6\)

Please allow me to give the rest without comment. The analysis of rook endings may be something for a future book.

44...\(\text{g}2\) 45.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{e}7\) 46.\(\text{h}7+\) \(\text{f}6\) 47.\(\text{d}7\) \(\text{a}2\) 48.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{a}3+\) 49.\(\text{f}2\) \(\text{b}3\) 50.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{b}1\) 51.\(\text{h}2\) \(\text{b}1+\) 52.\(\text{f}2\) \(\text{a}1\) 53.\(\text{h}6+\) \(\text{f}7\) 54.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{b}1\) 55.\(\text{f}6+\) \(\text{e}7\) 56.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{h}1\) 57.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{h}2\) 58.\(\text{g}6\) \(\text{f}2\) 59.\(\text{h}7+\) \(\text{f}8\) 60.\(\text{g}2+\) 61.\(\text{h}5\) \(\text{g}3\) 62.\(\text{f}7+\) \(\text{e}8\) 63.\(\text{h}6\) \(\text{h}3+\) 64.\(\text{g}7\) \(\text{g}3\) 65.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{ex}f4\) 66.\(\text{x}f4\) \(\text{e}3\) 67.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{g}3\) 68.\(\text{h}7\) \(\text{f}8\) 69.\(\text{f}4+\) \(\text{e}7\) 70.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{h}3+\) 71.\(\text{g}7\) \(\text{h}1\) 72.\(\text{h}7+\) \(\text{e}8\) 73.\(\text{i}6\) \(\text{f}1+\) 74.\(\text{xe}6\) \(\text{g}1\) 75.\(\text{f}6\) \(\text{f}1+\) 76.\(\text{g}7\) \(\text{g}1\) 77.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{h}1\) 78.\(\text{f}8+\) \(\text{e}7\) 79.\(\text{h}8\) \(\text{g}1\) 80.\(\text{h}5\) \(\text{g}2\) 81.\(\text{h}7\) \(\text{f}8\) 82.\(\text{f}5+\) \(\text{e}7\) 83.\(\text{g}7\) \(\text{h}2+\) 84.\(\text{g}6\) \(\text{g}2+\) 85.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{e}5\) 86.\(\text{xg}5\) \(\text{f}7\) 87.\(\text{f}5\) 1-0

From time to time the author has had to struggle against his ‘own’ opening with the white pieces, and I must admit that it was never easy. I did get a pleasant position against the current leader of Georgian chess.

23

Sergey Kasparov (2464)
Baadur Jobava (2640)
Bad Zwesten Open 2005 (8)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \(\text{f}6\) 3.\(\text{c}3\) e5 4.\(\text{dxe}5\) dxe5 5.\(\text{xd}8+\) \(\text{xd}8\) 6.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{e}6\) 7.\(\text{xe}6\) fxe6 8.f3 \(\text{c}5\) 9.\(\text{d}1\)
This retreat is not often seen at such an early stage. But in this case the bishop’s development on c5 suggests the reply \( \text{c1-e3} \) and \( \text{d1xe3} \).

9...\( \text{c7} \) 10.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{b6} \) 11.\( \text{h3} \) \( \text{c6} \) 12.\( \text{c3} \)

A solid preventive move. Now the knight feels uneasy on c6.

12...\( \text{ag8} \) 13.\( \text{hf2} \) g5 14.\( \text{xb6} \) axb6 15.\( \text{e3} \)

Strengthening his control of g4.

15...\( \text{h5} \) 16.\( \text{h4} \) g4 17.\( \text{e2} \)

It seems to be more reasonable to keep the king in the centre. Besides, it is comparatively safe on e2. The squares f4 and d4 can be defended.

17...\( \text{d8} \) 18.\( \text{a4} \) gxf3+ \( \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} \)

I also obtained some initiative against a Bulgarian woman player. But like the Spanish grandmaster in the above game I had to look for an escape soon. Fortunately, the lady turned out to be gracious and favoured me with a draw. Well, is the book’s content worth its title?

<table>
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<th>24</th>
<th>Sergey Kasparov (2462)</th>
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<td>Margarita Voiska (2356)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Campobasso Open 2002 (3)</td>
</tr>
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1.d4 d6 2.\( \text{c4} \) d f6 3.\( \text{c3} \) e5 4.\( \text{dxe5} \) dxe5 5.\( \text{xd8+} \) xd8 6.\( \text{c4} \) e6 7.\( \text{xe6} \) fxe6 8.\( \text{f3} \) b4

A quite possible sally. Is it any use? It disturbs White’s development a little, but later on Black will have to spend a tempo on the bishop’s return.

9.\( \text{e2} \) b d7 10.\( \text{e3} \) a6 11.0-0-0 \( \text{e7} \) 12.b1 b5 13.d2 d6

13...\( \text{c5} \) 14.f1.

14.\( \text{c4} \)

It is not desirable to allow the advance ...c7-c5-c4. Generally White has every reason to fight for space on the queenside.

14...\( \text{c5} \) 15.\( \text{xe5+} \) xc5 16.c2 b4
The knight is perfectly placed on c5, but it isn’t entirely stable there. White has enough resources to chase it away.

17. \( \text{Na1} \)

17. \( \text{N}b3 \).

17...a5 18. \( \text{Nd3} \) \( \text{Na7} \)

Or 18... \( \text{Nd7} \) 19. \( \text{Nxc5} \) \( \text{Nxc5} \) 20. \( \text{Nxd3} \) \( \text{xd3} \) with initiative. The pawn ending is not always satisfactory for Black due to the weak a-pawn.

19. \( \text{Nd7} \) 20.a3

20.c5 is interesting, but also risky as the pawn may be surrounded and destroyed.

20...a4 21. \( \text{N}d2 \) bxa3

21...b3+!? is possible, but the a4-pawn may become weak in the future.

22.bxa3 c5 23. \( \text{Nc3} \) \( \text{a5} \) 24. \( \text{N}b1 \) \( \text{c6} \) 25. \( \text{N}b7 \) \( \text{d6} \) 26. \( \text{Nh1} \) \( \text{hc8} \)

The white rooks have been activated along the b-file. The d3-knight is also fully engaged. Now only the last reserves have to join the battle.

27.f4 exf4 28.e5+

Vacating e4 for the knights. 28. \( \text{Nxf4} \).
28...\(e7\)

Black mustn’t capture either way: 28...\(\text{c}xe5\) 29.\(e4+\) \(e7\) (29...\(c6\) 30.\(xe5+\) \(xe5\) 31.\(b6#\)) 30.\(xe5+-\) or the very short line 28...\(dxe5\) 29.\(e4#\).

29.\(xc5?!\)

29.\(e4\) might have kept some initiative.

29...\(xe5\) 30.\(xd7\) \(xd7\) 31.\(e4\)

White has enough compensation for the pawn, but not more.

31...\(d8\) 32.\(g5\) \(a6\) 33.\(f7+\)

More reasonable is 33.\(xh7\) with a dynamic balance, but as my opponent was in time trouble I tried to play more aggressively. However, I can recall a mitigating circumstance. It was the only time in my chess career (I am writing this in March, 2014) when the counting was as follows: win=3 points, draw=1 point, loss=0. So now you may understand why I played like this.

33...\(e8\) 34.\(g5\) \(ac6\)
Margarita doesn’t agree to a repetition of moves and I’m already standing with my feet in the swamp. I have to get out urgently!

35.\texttt{\textbf{b}1}\texttt{b4} \texttt{\textbf{f}6} 36.\texttt{\textbf{b}2} \texttt{h6} 37.\texttt{\textbf{f}3}?! \\
More stubborn was 37.\texttt{\textbf{f}7}, intending to move the c-pawn, for example 37...\texttt{\textbf{g}4} 38.e5 with counterplay.

37...\texttt{\textbf{xc}4} 38.\texttt{\textbf{xc}4} 39.\texttt{\textbf{xc}7} \texttt{\textbf{e}4} 40.\texttt{\textbf{c}2} \\
Silently asking the Bulgarian girl to let me go in peace.

40...\texttt{e5} 41.\texttt{\textbf{d}2} \texttt{\textbf{d}4} \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} \\
...which is what she did! Objectively White’s position is bad.

A Ukrainian player equalized easily when playing in the Greek club championship. What else can I add? It was a good advertisement for the variation.

Dmitry Svetushkin (2597) 
Alexander Zubarev (2600) 
Greece tt 2012 (7) 

1.e4 \texttt{d6} 2.d4 \texttt{\textbf{f}6} 3.\texttt{\textbf{c}3} \texttt{e5} 4.dxe5 \texttt{dxe5} 5.\texttt{\textbf{xd}8}+ \texttt{\textbf{xd}8} 6.\texttt{c4} \texttt{\textbf{e}6} 7.\texttt{xe6} \texttt{fxe6} 8.f3 \texttt{\textbf{c}6} 9.\texttt{\textbf{e}3} \texttt{\textbf{b}4} 10.0-0-0+ \texttt{\textbf{e}7} 11.\texttt{\textbf{b}1} \\
After 9...\texttt{\textbf{b}4} this manoeuvre looks logical.

11...\texttt{a5} \\
Wow – where will this knight go?
12.\textit{\textbf{d2}}

Attractive is 12.b3!? \textit{\textbf{c6}} (if, by analogy to the game, 12...\textit{\textbf{d6}} 13.\textit{\textbf{h3}} \textit{\textbf{c5}} then 14.\textit{\textbf{a3±}} c4? (14...\textit{\textbf{a6}}) 15.\textit{\textbf{b5+-}}) 13.\textit{\textbf{h3}}, and later c2-c3 may follow.

12...\textit{\textbf{d6}} 13.\textit{\textbf{h3}} \textit{\textbf{c5}}

Now the idea becomes clear: the pawn is going to advance further.

14.\textit{\textbf{f2}}

You will have guessed that opposing with 14.c4 can hardly give chances for an advantage as long as the e6-pawn is safely protecting the key points f5 and d5.

14...c4 15.c3 \textit{\textbf{hd8}} 16.\textit{\textbf{c2}} b5 17.h4

17.b4!? cxb3+ 18.axb3.

17...\textit{\textbf{b7}} 18.h5 h6 19.g3 \textit{\textbf{c5=}}

The h5-pawn fixes two enemy pawns simultaneously. But in this opening this is not dangerous for Black. For instance, White must take into consideration that he will have to use a strong piece for the protection of the outpost.

20.\textit{\textbf{de1}} a5?!

20...\textit{\textbf{xe3}} 21.\textit{\textbf{xe3}} \textit{\textbf{c5=}}.
21.g4?

Then why did he play g2-g3? It is strange that Dmitry didn’t play the common advance against such structures (c4-b5-a5): 21.a4! bxa4 22.\(\text{Nx}c4\) ±. However, we cannot rule out that the Moldavian player disliked the following line:

21...\(\text{Bxe3}\) 22.\(\text{Rxe3}\) \(\text{Nd6}\) 23.axb5 a4 24.\(\text{Re1}\) a3 25.b6±, though the computer is optimistic about White’s position.

21...a4 22.a3 \(\text{Bxe3}\) 23.\(\text{Bxe3}\) \(\text{c5}\) \(\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conclusion</th>
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<tr>
<td>Apparently, we can conclude that by playing 6...(\text{Be6}) Black doesn’t take much risk – with more or less careful play, of course. From time to time, in search of advantage White will overstep the mark and will run into problems.</td>
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Section 2: 6...\textit{e}8

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \textit{c}f6 3.\textit{c}3 e5 4.dxe5 \textit{d}xe5 5.\textit{d}xd8+ \textit{xd}8 6.\textit{c}4 \textit{e}8

This decision may seem strange. Black is initially a tempo behind, now it will be two tempi already; besides, he is deprived of his castling rights. Of course, the most powerful pieces – the queens – have left the board, but all the others still remain.

You might think that the black king will be vulnerable in the centre. However, after seeing some sample games, you will be convinced that the static (not closed, but static!) centre can’t be so easily destroyed. The black monarch often cold-bloodedly goes on foot to his residence on g7. This corresponds with the convenient pawn structure: h6, g6.

Thus, White is also morally damaged: although considerably ahead in development, he is powerless to prevent the enemy from strengthening his position.
Let’s start with a ‘peaceful’ line (from White’s point of view). The pawn goes to f3, solidly consolidating in the centre, intending to take action on the queenside. When you have about +3 in Cappelle la Grande Open you are bound to face very strong opponents. The author tried to play without too much risk in the following game, and tried to build up the pressure. In the notes I give a fragment from another game, where your obedient servant missed a promising sacrifice.

26
Sergey Kasparov (2486)
Ivan Ivanisevic (2542)
Cappelle-la-Grande 2004 (7)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ½f6 3.½c3 e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.½xd8+ ½xd8 6.½c4 ½e8 7.f3
Modest, but safe. White can hardly claim to have a real advantage, but it is also difficult to lose.

7. \( \text{c} \text{g}2 \text{e}5 \) 8.\( f \text{f}3 \text{h}6 \) 9.\( \text{d} \text{d}2 \) With the idea to gain tempi by chasing the bishop from the a7-g1 diagonal – not exchanging it. 9...\( \text{b} \text{b}d7 \) 10.\( a \text{a}4 \text{c}6 \) 11.\( \text{c} \text{c}1 \text{d}6 \) 12.\( \text{d} \text{d}1 \text{a}5 \) 13.\( \text{b} \text{b}3 \) Another nuance. The a5-pawn is under pressure. If White now also managed to trade the light-squared bishops and then to transfer the knight to c4 ...if, if, if...

13...\( \text{c} \text{c}7 \) 14.\( \text{c} \text{c}3 \text{f} \text{f}8 \) 15.0-0 \( \text{e} \text{e}6 \) 16.\( \text{f} \text{f}5 \text{f} \text{f}8 \) 17.\( \text{e} \text{e}3 \text{b}6 \) 18.\( \text{f} \text{f}d1 \text{h}5 \)

*analysis diagram*
19.\textit{f1} A comfortable advantage of the bishop pair could have been gained by 19.\textcolor{red}{d}6 \textcolor{blue}{e}7 (in response to 19...\textcolor{blue}{a}6, good is 20.\textcolor{red}{x}e6 (20.\textcolor{red}{x}a6 \textcolor{blue}{a}xa6 21.\textcolor{red}{d}3\pm) 20...\textcolor{red}{f}xe6 21.\textcolor{red}{c}4!) 20.\textcolor{red}{x}c8+ \textcolor{red}{a}xc8 21.\textcolor{red}{d}2\pm. 19...\textcolor{blue}{e}8 20.\textcolor{red}{f}2 \textcolor{red}{g}6 21.\textcolor{red}{e}3 \textcolor{red}{d}6

\textbf{analysis diagram}

22.\textcolor{red}{c}4?! At the risk of belittling myself in your eyes as a chess player, let me show you a nice, not very difficult sacrifice: 22.\textcolor{red}{x}d6! \textcolor{red}{x}xd6 23.\textcolor{red}{c}4 \textcolor{red}{c}7 24.\textcolor{red}{x}b6 \textcolor{red}{b}x6+ 25.\textcolor{red}{b}b8 26.\textcolor{red}{x}c8 \textcolor{blue}{a}xc8 27.\textcolor{red}{x}a5\pm. The long-range bishop + two connected passed pawns (in perspective) are to be preferred above the rook. Also the presence of other pieces is to White’s benefit. 22...\textcolor{blue}{x}c4 23.\textcolor{red}{x}c4= S. Kasparov-Papa, Deizisau 2003.
7...c6 8.a4 a5 9.e3 Bd7 10.ge2 c5 11.d1

The well-known ‘tempi-economy’. If you can’t avoid the exchange, then the knight will at least get to the ideal e3-square quickly.

11...xe3 12.xe3 c5 13.c1

The knight would have no future on e2 or c3, which is why White agrees on its exchange.

13...e7 14.e2 g6 15.d3 xd3 16.xd3 e6 17.c4

This looks like absolute equality, but still there are some nuances. In particular, if the white knight gets to c4, the a5-pawn will be under attack and the squares b6, d6, e5 will be subjected to pressure. This is all due to the advance ...c7-c6. If this pawn were on c7 the c4-knight could be restrained by the simple ...b7-b6.

17...hd8 18.xe6 xe6 19.hd1 xd1 20.xd1 b5

After the natural 20...d7, 21.c4± is already unpleasant. In reply to 21...b5 Black should reckon with 22.d6+ e7 23.xd7+ xd7 24.b6+.

21.a1 d6 22.a3 d7 23.d3+ e6 24.axb5 cxb5 25.d5 b8 26.c4

The right idea. I’m trying to harass the a-pawn.

26...bxc4 27.xc4 b4 28.d3

White could have kept a mini-initiative with 28.d6+ e7 29.c6.

28...xc4 29.xc4 b6+ 30.c5 xd5 31.exd5+ d7
It seems that White can win, as he has a plan at his disposal: d5-d6 and c5-d5. But reality is not so rosy, otherwise the Croatian grandmaster wouldn’t have consented to this ending.

32.g4

Introducing the ‘subtlety’ 32...f5 33.g5. But actually, the tempi that White keeps in stock (h2-h3-h4) turn out to have no impact on the outcome. Neither is anything changed by 32.d6 f5 33.d5 e4 34.fxe4 fxe4 35.cxe4 cxd6=.

32...f6

32...f5 33.g5.

33.d6 f5 34.gxf5 gxf5 35.d5 e4 36.fxe4 fxe4 37.cxd6 38.d4 c6 39.c4 b6 40.h4 h5 41.b3 b5 42.a3 a4 43.b3 ½-½

Eight years later, when playing in the same tournament, Solak managed, thanks to a few micro-nuances, to pull a less sophisticated opponent into the ‘swamp’ and win. A good sign for aficionados of this opening. You have chances to win with black even in a more or less simple ending!

27
Jose Padeiro (2315)
Dragan Solak (2602)
Cappelle-la-Grande Open 2012 (6)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 f6 3.c3 e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.xd8+ xdx8 6.c4 e8 7.f3 c6 8.a4

8.e3 a5 (or 8...b5 9.b3 a5 10.a4 b4 11.b1 and White tries to establish his own piece on c4) 9.a4 a6 10.ge2 e5 11.xc5 xc5= Quesada Perez-Bruzon Batista, Ciego de Avila ch-CUB 2010.

8...bd7
The Turkish grandmaster ignores the push of the enemy rook’s pawn. As we will see, it is not dangerous for Black.

9.a5

Usually after such a move Black responds with ...\text{a}8-b8 and ...b7-b5, so as in reply to a5xb6 to recapture with the pawn: ...a7xb6, preserving the flexibility of his structure.

9...\text{R}b8 10.\text{N}h3 \text{d}6 11.\text{f}2 b5 12.axb6 axb6 13.0-0 b5 14.\text{B}d1 \text{c}5 15.\text{e}2

More promising, perhaps, is 15.\text{b}3. Here the bishop is more active and in the event of ...\text{d}7-c5 it can retreat to a2.

15...\text{e}7 16.\text{f}1 \text{b}7 17.\text{d}3 \text{d}4 18.\text{b}1 \text{a}8

The a-file is taken over by Black. Thus, the a2-a4-a5 push proves pointless. Back on a4 this pawn prevented the counter-strike ...b7-b5, whereas after it is pushed to a5 it doesn’t.

19.\text{xa}8 \text{xa}8 20.\text{c}3 \text{b}6 21.\text{a}3 \text{e}8 22.\text{b}3 \text{c}7 23.\text{b}2 \text{e}6 24.\text{c}2 f6 25.\text{a}1
25...\textit{\texttt{ed}} 8

The Elo-favourite tries to keep as many pieces as possible on the board, understandably fearing drawing tendencies in the ending. If 25...\textit{\texttt{exa}} 1+ 26.\textit{\texttt{exa}} 1 \textit{\texttt{dc}} 5 27.\textit{\texttt{c}} 1 \textit{\texttt{f}} 4, still with initiative.

26.\textit{\texttt{b}} 1 \textit{\texttt{cd}} 6 27.\textit{\texttt{b}} 4 \textit{\texttt{c}} 7 28.\textit{\texttt{g}} 3 \textit{\texttt{f}} 5 30.\textit{\texttt{exf}} 5 \textit{\texttt{gxf}} 5 31.\textit{\texttt{f}} 4 \textit{\texttt{xe}} 3 32.\textit{\texttt{fxe}} 3 \textit{\texttt{exf}} 4 33.\textit{\texttt{xf}} 4 \textit{\texttt{xf}} 4 34.\textit{\texttt{gxf}} 4 \textit{\texttt{f}} 6 35.\textit{\texttt{xf}} 5 \textit{\texttt{d}} 5 36.\textit{\texttt{d}} 4 \textit{\texttt{b}} 6 37.\textit{\texttt{e}} 6 \textit{\texttt{dd}} 6

Solak has managed to pull his opponent into a struggle even in an ending which seemed to be dry and drawish.

38.\textit{\texttt{b}} 5 \textit{\texttt{xc}} 3 39.\textit{\texttt{f}} 3 \textit{\texttt{ed}} 4
White cannot protect both weaknesses, b4 and f4, at the same time.

40.\text{Re1}

After 40.\text{Ne6 Rxb4} the computer’s assessment is $\frac{3}{2}$, but I doubt that White can stop the two connected passed pawns.

40...\text{Rxf4} 41.\text{Kg2 Rxh4} 42.\text{Nd7+ Kc7} 43.\text{Re7 Qd6} 44.\text{Rd2} 45.\text{f5} 46.\text{Rxb1} 47.\text{b5} 48.\text{Qf2} 49.\text{g1} 50.\text{Qc8} 51.\text{Rd4} 52.\text{Qe2+} 53.\text{Kf1} 54.\text{Qxf6} 55.\text{Qd4} 56.\text{Qc5} 57.\text{Qd4} 58.\text{Qb6} 0-1

I believe everything is clear here and we don’t need any further comments.

51.\text{Qe5 Qd4} 52.\text{Qg2 Qe2+} 53.\text{Qf1 Qf4} 54.\text{Qh6 Qxg2} 55.\text{Qxc6+ Qb7} 56.\text{Qh6 Qe3+} 57.\text{Qe1 Qg4} 58.\text{Qhe7+ Qb6} 0-1

Here is a fresh game – it was played during the time I was working on this book. In a round-robin tournament which took place not far from Pretoria (Republic of South-Africa) I applied this solid set-up again. This example may serve as a warning for Black: even in such an innocent position he cannot play anything.

On the next page you can see a picture taken in this unique country – the Republic of South Africa.

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28
Sergey Kasparov (2480)
Aleksa Strikovic (2533)
Centurion 2014 (5)

1.d4 d6 2.e4 Qf6 3.e5 d5 4.exd5 c5 5.Qxd8+ Qxd8 6.Qc4 Qe8 7.f3 c6 8.a4 a5 9.a3 b4 10.Qe2 Qc5 11.Qd1 Qe7 12.Qc1 Qxe3 13.Qxe3 Qc5 14.Qb3

An attempt to keep the bishop on the diagonal a2-g8.

14...Qxb3 15.Qxb3 g6 16.Qe2 Qd7 17.Qc4=

Absolute equality. The white bishop seems to be a bit worse than its counterpart because the white pawns are fixed on
light squares (a4 and e4), but Black cannot draw any real profit from this.

17...\textit{b}6
17...\textit{c}5 18.\textit{hd}1 \textit{d}7=.

18.\textit{hd}1 \textit{f}6
Also not bad is 18...f5.

19.\textit{b}3 \textit{d}8
A very slight inaccuracy. Now White seizes the initiative.

20.\textit{x}d8 \textit{x}d8 21.h4

The right decision. For the moment Black’s forces are concentrated on the queenside, leaving the other flank without proper attention. I’m trying to exploit this.

21...\textit{e}7 22.h5 \textit{g}5?!
The Serbian grandmaster prefers not to open up files, in order to avoid the penetration of the rook into his camp.

If 22...e6 23.xe6 xe6 24.b3 with initiative. It seems that now Black is all right as e3-f5+ is not dangerous because of the simple ...c8xf5, but...

23.g8!

This looks nonsensical. Why force the pawn to a dark square?

23...h6

Also 23...g4 24.xh7 xh5 25.b3 is slightly better for White.

24.b3 d7 25.h7
Now White’s idea becomes evident. The bishop heads for f5, driving its counterpart from the important diagonal.

25...\text{\textit{N}}c8 26.\textit{f}f5 \text{\textit{d}}d6 27.\textit{x}xd7 \textit{xd}7 28.\textit{g}4

Black has permanent pawn weaknesses, which are, however, hard to get to.

28...\text{\textit{e}}7 29.\textit{R}d1

With the idea \textit{xf}6.

29.\textit{x}h6?! \textit{h}8 30.\textit{g}4 \textit{x}h5.

29...\textit{f}7 30.\textit{E}d3 \text{\textit{e}}6 31.\textit{E}d1 \textit{a}7 32.\textit{E}d3 \textit{b}6 33.\textit{c}3 \textit{c}5 34.\textit{d}3

White is manoeuvring with his rook in the hope of creating additional weaknesses for his adversary.

34...\textit{E}c7 35.\textit{E}e3 \textit{d}6 36.\textit{g}4±

I was very unwilling to close the pawn structure as only the queenside remains available for active play. But the threat of counterplay with...f6-f5 was unpleasant.

36...\textit{E}c6 37.\textit{d}d2 \textit{E}c8 38.\textit{d}5?!

An inaccuracy in slight time trouble. Very strong was 38.\textit{f}5! \textit{xf}5 (if 38...\textit{f}7 39.\textit{c}3+- the king will move towards the b6-pawn) 39.\textit{xf}5+ \textit{e}7 40.\textit{c}3 \textit{c}4 (otherwise \textit{c}3-c4-b5 will follow) 41.bxc4+-.

38...\textit{c}4! 39.\textit{c}3 \textit{xb}3+ 40.\textit{xb}3 \textit{E}c6 41.\textit{c}4 \textit{E}c8?!

An unfortunate decision. More careful was 41...\textit{e}7.

42.\textit{f}5 \textit{xf}5 43.\textit{xf}5+ \textit{e}7 44.\textit{b}5

In this unpleasant situation Aleksa thought for quite a long time, but still he didn’t find the best move.
44...d8?! 

The most persistent was 44...c6 45.c5 xxc5 46.xb6 c1 (weaker is 46...d5 47.c4 d4+ 48.b5 f4 49.xa5 xf3 50.a6+-) 47.b7+ f8 48.b5±. 

45.c3 

Also good is 45.c5! bxc5 46.xa5 d3+ 47.c4 xf3 48.a7+±. 

45...d4? 

Resistance could have been prolonged by 45...d1, but these are nuances. 

46.xb6 f4 47.e6+ 

I intended to put an exclamation mark here, but then deleted it as this is not the only path. Also winning is 47.c5. 

47.d7 

Or 47.f7 48.c5 and the pawn is unstoppable since the black king is cut off. 

48.c5 xa4 49.xf6 f4 50.xh6 xf3+ 51.c4 f4+ 52.d5 xg4
Each side has three (!) passed pawns, but the white ones are further advanced. Besides, the difference in the kings’ activity is huge.

53.\textit{c6}+ \textit{\textit{\textit{c7}}} 54.\textit{\textit{h7}}+ \textit{\textit{\textit{c8}}} 55.\textit{f6} 1-0

Most often White applies the following set-up: \textit{\textit{\textit{f3}}, \textit{\textit{g5}}, 0-0-0, \textit{\textit{h1}}}. So now we will focus on this plan.

In the following game, a Russian grandmaster confidently coped with Black’s opening problems.

29
Robert Hovhannisyan (2495)
Ildar Khairullin (2615)
Rijeka Ech 2010 (8)

1.e4 \textit{\textit{\textit{d6}}} 2.d4 \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{f6}}}} 3.\textit{\textit{c3}} e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{xd8}}}}+ \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{xd8}}}}} 6.\textit{\textit{c4}} \textit{\textit{\textit{e8}}} 7.\textit{\textit{f3}} \textit{\textit{\textit{d6}}} 8.\textit{\textit{g5}} \textit{\textit{\textit{bd7}}} 9.0-0-0 a6 10.a4 h6 11.\textit{\textit{h4}} \textit{\textit{f8}}
A fashionable move. The king is going to g7 ‘on foot’. White’s pieces, placed *in front of* their pawns (\(\text{Nf3, Nc3, Bc4}\)), prevent a quick pawn storm. This gives Black time to consolidate.

12.\(\text{Nd2}\) \(\text{Bb4}\)

For comparison, I insert an example of a less successful treatment from the black side: 12...c6 Too early. 13.\(\text{Ba2}\) \(\text{Bb4}\)

14.\(\text{c4}\) b5 15.\(\text{d6}\) This intrusion is unpleasant. Probably it was missed by the German grandmaster.

*analysis diagram*

The f7-pawn is hanging. 15...\(\text{xd6}\) 16.\(\text{xd6}\) \(\text{e8}\) 17.\(\text{d2}\) b4 18.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{c5}\) 19.f3 b3 Tricky, but not sufficient. There are no satisfactory alternatives, though. 19...\(\text{xa4}\) doesn’t work because of 20.\(\text{f2}\), cutting off the knight: 20...\(\text{b8}\) 21.\(\text{d8}\)
\[ \text{e7 22.} \text{hd1+-} \text{. 20.cxb3} \text{ } \text{xb3+ 21.cxb3} \text{ } \text{e6 22.c2} \text{ } \text{b8 23.c1} \text{ } \text{f6 24.hd1} \text{ } \text{g5 25.f2} \text{ } \text{h7 26.e5+} \text{ } \text{g8} \text{ 27.d8+-} \text{. with a great material and positional advantage,} \text{ Hracek-Handke, Germany Bundesliga 2010/11.} \]

13.\text{d5} \text{ } \text{xd5} 14.\text{xd5} \text{c6} 15.\text{a2} \text{b5}

As usual (in this opening), taking the c4-square from the opponent.

16.f3 \text{g6} 17.\text{c3} \text{e7} 18.\text{g3} \text{g7} 19.\text{b3} \text{a7} 20.\text{a5} \text{c7}

The Russian player coolly parries the threats and equalizes the position.

21.\text{c2} \text{h5} 22.\text{h4} \text{f6} 23.\text{he1} \text{e8} 24.\text{f2} \text{c5} \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}

Much more eventful was the following encounter, from the European championship, 2011. Already on the 22th move the young Russian black player surrounded a white rook in the centre of the board. Not for the faint-hearted? However, his Swiss colleague put up a good fight. His opponent made a slight mistake, and his passed pawn dashed to the queening square. After mutual mistakes, the black king was mated.

30

Joseph Gallagher (2500)
Sanan Sjugirov (2643)
Aix-les-Bains Ech 2011 (4)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \text{f6} 3.\text{c3} \text{e5} 4.\text{dxe5} \text{dxe5} 5.\text{xd8+} \text{xd8} 6.\text{c4} \text{e8} 7.\text{f3} \text{d6} 8.\text{g5} \text{d7} 9.0-0-0 \text{h6} 10.\text{a4} \text{a6} 11.\text{a4} \text{a8} 12.\text{h3} \text{g6} 13.\text{e1} \text{g7}

Nice and modest. The position is already equal. Black just needs to develop the c8-bishop.

14.\text{d2} \text{b4} 15.\text{e3} \text{c6} 16.\text{f3} \text{b5} 17.\text{a2}

I suppose that the Elo-favourite was already thinking of taking over the initiative, otherwise he would have played more carefully, for instance with 17...\text{e8}.
17...g5 18...g3 e8 19...f5

Not a common sight! The white rook is surrounded by pawns from every quarter. It was more natural for White to use his other pieces here.

19...d8 20.e5 d8

Here it is! It turns out that the rook has to be surrendered (not for free, of course), as Black’s knights will soon attack it, and there is no retreat. White must think how to get maximal compensation for the material loss.

21.d3 d1+ 22.d1 d6
Well, White hasn’t equalized.

23.\textit{\text{N}}\textit{e3} \textit{\text{Nxe5}} 24.\textit{\text{Bxe5}} \textit{\text{Bc5}} 25.\textit{\text{Nxd4}} \textit{\text{g6}}

Even better was 25...\textit{\text{d7}}.

26.c3 \textit{\text{d7}}

Also good was 26...\textit{\text{Nxe4}} 27.\textit{\text{b1}} f5 28.f3 \textit{\text{d6}} 29.g4 bxa4.

27.\textit{\text{Bb1}} \textit{\text{Re8}} 28.\textit{\text{Bc7}} \textit{\text{Kg7}} 29.axb5 axb5 30.f3

The Swiss grandmaster has consolidated his forces. The rook doesn’t have any files to go to right now, but it is difficult to believe that Black may lose this. There are no serious defects in his position, while he still has a slight material advantage.

30...\textit{\text{Bxd4}}

30...h5.

31.cxd4 \textit{\text{d5}}!?

An interesting exchanging operation. The Russian player intends to open up files and to simplify the position, which usually favours the rook party.

32.\textit{\text{Exd5}}

32.exd5 \textit{\text{Xe3}} 33.dxc6 \textit{\text{xc6}} with initiative for Black.

32...\textit{\text{Lexd5}} 33.\textit{\text{d2}} \textit{\text{c6}} 34.\textit{\text{e3}}
Another possible line is 34...dxe4 35.fxe4 f5 36.\textit{e}5+ \textit{f}8±.

35.\textit{d}6 \textit{a}4 36.\textit{d}3 \textit{b}4

Black has an advantage, but still no win after 36...\textit{a}2 37.\textit{a}3 \textit{b}4 38.\textit{x}b4 \textit{xb}2 39.\textit{d}2.

37.exd5 \textit{xd}5 38.\textit{e}4 \textit{xe}4 39.fxe4 \textit{b}3 40.d5 \textit{f}6 41.\textit{e}5

The manoeuvres have led to a situation where Black still has the upper hand, but it looks more like a draw now. The Swiss player has arranged his pawns appropriately. Together with the bishop they have created ‘no-go areas’ for the
enemy king. The b2-pawn is on a dark square, but at this juncture this is right because it is separated from the rest of the army and should be protected by the long-range dark-squared bishop.

41...\textcolor{red}{Rc4}??

A glaring blunder. Maybe there was time trouble, but usually after the 40th move time is added... It would have made sense to start moving the king with 41...\textcolor{red}{Kf7}.

42.d6!

Suddenly it turns out that the king and the rook, even though they are close to the pawn, are unable to stop its advance.

42...\textcolor{red}{Rc3}+ 43.\textcolor{red}{Kd2}

Likely the strongest was 43.bxc3 b2 44.d7 b1=\textcolor{red}{Q} 45.d8=\textcolor{red}{Q}g1+. Black can still put up resistance, though.

43...\textcolor{red}{Rc2}+ 44.\textcolor{red}{Kd1} b2 45.d7 \textcolor{red}{Rb1}+ 46.\textcolor{red}{Ke2} b2

Much more accurate was 46...\textcolor{red}{Re1}+!

47.\textcolor{red}{d8}=\textcolor{red}{Q}

47.\textcolor{red}{f8}+.

47...\textcolor{red}{Re1}+ 48.\textcolor{red}{f2}?

Correct was 48.\textcolor{red}{f3}, outstripping his pursuer: 48...\textcolor{red}{Rf1}+ (48...b1=\textcolor{red}{Q} 49.\textcolor{red}{f8}+ \textcolor{red}{h7} 50.\textcolor{red}{f7}+ \textcolor{red}{h8} 51.\textcolor{red}{xf6}+ \textcolor{red}{h7} 52.\textcolor{red}{f7}+ \textcolor{red}{h8} 53.\textcolor{red}{d4}#) 49.\textcolor{red}{g4} \textcolor{red}{f4}+ 50.\textcolor{red}{g3}+.

48...b1=\textcolor{red}{Q}?

This looks like permanent time trouble, as there are so many mutual mistakes. 48...\textcolor{red}{Rf1}+ was better.

49.\textcolor{red}{f8}+ \textcolor{red}{g6} 50.\textcolor{red}{e8}+ \textcolor{red}{g7} 51.\textcolor{red}{f8}+ \textcolor{red}{g8} 52.\textcolor{red}{e7}+ \textcolor{red}{g7} 53.\textcolor{red}{f8}+ \textcolor{red}{g6} 54.\textcolor{red}{xf6}+ \textcolor{red}{h5} 55.\textcolor{red}{g4}+

And mate on the following move (1-0).

An excellent educational example on the topic of ‘How to win with black against an opponent whose Elo is 2550 in a “dry” ending’ was shown by Baadur Jobava, a specialist in this opening.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>31</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Samvel Ter Sahakyan (2558)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baadur Jobava (2713)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Sevan 2011 (5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \textcolor{red}{Qf6} 3.\textcolor{red}{c3} e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.\textcolor{red}{Qxd8}+ \textcolor{red}{Qxd8} 6.\textcolor{red}{c4} \textcolor{red}{e8} 7.\textcolor{red}{f3} \textcolor{red}{d6} 8.\textcolor{red}{g5} \textcolor{red}{bd7} 9.0-0-0 a6 10.a4 h6 11.\textcolor{red}{h4} \textcolor{red}{f8} 12.\textcolor{red}{d2} \textcolor{red}{e7}

What is the idea behind this retreat? The bishop escapes from the rook’s gaze and relieves the d7-knight of the obligation to protect its colleague. Besides, the trade of dark-squared bishops would be desirable for Black. 12...\textcolor{red}{c5} is an alternative.
13.\textit{\textbf{\textbackslash b}3} \textit{\textbf{\textbackslash c}5} 14.\textit{\textbf{\textbackslash g}3} \textit{\textbf{\textbackslash fd7}} 15.\textit{\textbf{\textbackslash a}2} \textit{\textbf{\textbackslash b}5}

16.\textit{\textbf{\textbackslash d}5}

No good is 16.\textit{\textbf{\textbackslash axb5}}? \textit{\textbf{\textbackslash axb5}} and Black’s rook becomes active without moving.

16...\textit{\textbf{\textbackslash \textbackslash b}8} 17.\textit{\textbf{\textbackslash c}6}

Now there was a point in ‘unloading’ with 17.\textit{\textbf{\textbackslash axb5}}! \textit{\textbf{\textbackslash axb5}} 18.\textit{\textbf{\textbackslash c}6}.

17...\textit{\textbf{\textbackslash h}5} 18.\textit{\textbf{\textbackslash h}4} \textit{\textbf{\textbackslash bxa4}} 19.\textit{\textbf{\textbackslash xa4}} \textit{\textbf{\textbackslash xa4}} 20.\textit{\textbf{\textbackslash xa4}} \textit{\textbf{\textbackslash c}5} 21.\textit{\textbf{\textbackslash c}6} \textit{\textbf{\textbackslash h}6}

Gradually all the black pieces have been activated and chances are even now. White’s slightly better structure on the queenside is not of great importance.
I do not want to boast, but I guessed this rook transfer. Here the rook performs a lot of functions, exerting pressure upon e4, h4 and g3 (g2). Although surrounded by enemy forces, this piece is hard to get at for White. The move f2-f3 is not feasible because of the hanging bishop on g3. It is also difficult for the white bishop to get to the diagonal d1-h5.
26.\textit{Be}3 \textit{Ac}5 27.\textit{Bc}3 \textit{Ad}6 28.\textit{Bd}5 \textit{Ce}7 29.\textit{Bb}3 \textit{Ce}6 30.\textit{Bxe}6 \textit{Bxe}6 31.\textit{Be}3 \textit{Ab}4

Baadur as it were entangles the opponent with ‘palpi’.

32.\textit{Rhe}1 \textit{a}5 33.\textit{Bd}2 \textit{Ac}5 34.\textit{Bd}3 \textit{a}4!

He could already have feasted on the pawns with 34...\textit{Rx}xe4, but after 35.\textit{Rx}xe4 \textit{Rx}xe4 36.\textit{f}3 \textit{Ad}4 37.\textit{Bxd}4 \textit{Bxd}4 38.\textit{Bd}3 the extra pawn could have been insufficient for a win. White’s only weakness is the h4-pawn. But the pawn on a5 doesn’t look good. Do you understand what I am hinting at? Both these pawns are fixed on dark squares – the colour of the bishops.

35.\textit{Bxa}4 \textit{Bxa}4 36.\textit{Bd}8 \textit{g}5

More trouble. The bishop is in danger, while its retreat is tantamount to ruining the kingside.

37.\textit{Bh}1 \textit{Bxe}4?!

The Georgian grandmaster has played almost perfectly so far. Now the struggle flares up. 37...\textit{g}xe4! was stronger.

38.\textit{f}3! \textit{Bg}3

38...\textit{Ad}4+!? 39.\textit{Bxd}4 \textit{Bxd}4+.

39.\textit{fxe}4 \textit{g}4
The advantage is surely on Black’s side, but we shouldn’t underestimate the strength of the rooks in the ending.

40.\textit{Re8+ Kf7} 41.\textit{Rh8 Rxg2+} 42.\textit{g3} 43.\textit{Re8+} 43...\textit{b6} 46...\textit{c4.}

The main thing is: Black came out of the opening with promising counterplay and gradually increased his advantage. We thank Jobava for an instructive master-class.

44.\textit{Ra1 Rh2} 45.\textit{Raa8 Rxh4} 46.\textit{Rg8+} 46...\textit{f7} 47.\textit{Rg8+} 48.\textit{Rae8+} 49.\textit{Rd8+} 50.\textit{Rxf6+} 51.\textit{Rg8} 52.\textit{Rd4} 53.\textit{Re2} 54.\textit{Re3} 55.\textit{Rd5} 56.\textit{Rf4} 57.\textit{Rf5} 58.\textit{Rxg6} 59.\textit{Rf4} 60.\textit{Rf5} 61.\textit{Rf6} 62.\textit{Rf7} 63.\textit{Rf8} 64.\textit{Rf8} 65.\textit{Rxg6} 66.\textit{Rg6} 67.\textit{Rg6} 68.\textit{Rg6} 69.\textit{Rg6} 70.\textit{Rg6} 71.\textit{Rg6} 72.\textit{Rg6} 73.\textit{Rg6} 74.\textit{Rg6} 75.\textit{Rg6} 76.\textit{Rg6} 77.\textit{Rg6} 78.\textit{Rg6} 79.\textit{Rg6} 80.\textit{Rg6} 81.\textit{Rg6} 82.\textit{Rg6} 0-1

Is there anyone left who still doubts that Black can play for three results in this line?

In the following encounter White was also subject to pressure, even though his name was Karjakin. But, adhering to some unknown principle, Luke didn’t capture on c3, whereas this exchange and the spoilt white structure promised him considerable positional dividends. As things went, the situation gradually equalized.

32
Sergey Karjakin (2645)
Luke McShane (2625)
Tiayuan 2005 (8)
This is one of the most frequently seen positions. Perhaps we can call it a tabiya.

9...a6 10.a4

Clearly White isn’t eager to allow ...b7-b5.

10...h6 11.Bh4 b6 12.Re1 Bb7 13.Bb1 Bb8 14.h3 g6

A subtle move, but I don’t understand its use. Maybe the king will go to g7.

15.Bb3 Aa8 16.d2

The knight will be parked on c4, with real threats to d6 and e5 already.

16...g5 17.g3 b5

Luke McShane makes well-timed pawn moves, taking squares from the opponent.

18.axb5 axb5 19.c1

The computer isn’t keen on this move, but what can we suggest instead? Here the knight at least heads (or pretends to head) for the weakened square f5.

19...Bb4

Rather good is the simple 19...c5 20.f3 Bxb3 21.cxb3 h5=.

20.f3 c5
A sharp position has arisen, and it is Black who is showing the aggression.

21.\textit{\textbf{\textit{Na}} \textit{d5}}?!

The computer’s recommendation is amusing: 21.\textit{\textbf{\textit{Nh4}} e3 c4 22.\textit{\textbf{\textit{Na}} a2 xc3 23.bxc3} and here Houdini’s verdict is $\pm$. But how can a man dare to play a position with such a bishop?! Of course, Black has many weaknesses now, but who can guarantee that the Count of Monte Cristo (a2) will ever be released?

21...\textit{\textbf{\textit{Nxd5}}} 22.\textit{\textbf{\textit{exd5}} f6}

A bit more accurate was 22...\textit{\textbf{\textit{Bxc3}}} 23.bxc3 f6.

23.\textit{\textbf{\textit{Nh4}}}

23.\textit{\textbf{\textit{Nh5}}.}

23...\textit{\textbf{\textit{Nf7}}} 24.\textit{\textbf{\textit{Ne2}}}
24...\text{g6} 

For some reason, known only to the English player himself, he keeps ignoring the possibility to spoil the enemy structure with 24...\text{xc3}! 25.bxc3 \text{hd8}\text{+}.

25.\text{e1} \text{h5} 26.\text{h4} \text{gxh4} 27.\text{hxh4} \text{c4} 

27...\text{xc3} 28.bxc3 \text{b6}\text{+}.

28.\text{e1} \text{f5} 29.d6 \text{h4} 

29...\text{xc3}.

30.\text{ed5} \text{xd5} 31.\text{xd5} 

As a result, the knight, instead of dying on c3, becomes active. Can this really be auspicious for Black?

31...\text{xe1} 32.\text{exe1} \text{f4} 33.\text{e7}+ 34.\text{f5} 35.\text{g5} 36.\text{c3} \text{f5} 37.\text{e4} \text{h3} 38.\text{gxh3} \text{xh3} 

Finally Black takes over the initiative. In the future ...\text{xf3} and ...\text{xe4} may be threatened, creating connected passed pawns.

39.\text{f1} \text{cxb3} 40.\text{xb3}
40...d8

In principle, the problematic 40...xf3 could have worked already: 41.exf3 \( \text{xe}4 \) with sufficient compensation.

41.c3 b4 42.d5 dh8 43.c2 h2+ 44.d2 xd2+ 45.c3 c5 46.xb4 xb3+ 47.c3 d4 48.c4 e6 49.d7 xd7 50.d5 h5 51.d3 e7 52.xf4 exf4+ ½-½

From time to time Black prefers a sharper pawn advance of his g-pawn to the modest ...g7-g6. This advance has its pros and cons. It weakens point f5, but contributes to the knight’s penetration to f4 and generally grabs space. In the next game, from the well-known Aeroflot Open, a Russian grandmaster even gradually took over the initiative playing against a member of the Armenian team, Karen Asrian, who, unfortunately, left this world early. Still, White didn’t really risk losing and it all ended in a draw.
Karen Asrian (2634)  
Dmitry Bocharov (2602)  
Moscow Aeroflot Open 2007 (6)  

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.Qxd8+ Kxd8 6.Bc4 Nc6 8.g5 Bd7 9.0-0-0 a6 10.a4 h6 11.h4 b6 12.Rh1 b7 13.h3 g5 14.g3 e7 15.Re2 e8 16.h2  

Starting the planned knight manoeuvre. Its arrival on f5 seems to spell disaster for Black.  

16...Rad8 17.f1 c5 18.f3 h5 19.f2 f4 20.Re2  

No, no, the notation is correct – this is not a blunder. The g2-pawn is poisoned.  

20...Qc6  

Not 20...xg2? 21.xc5 xc5 22.xg2.  

21.Qe3 b4 22.f5+ f8  

After all the knight has reached the commanding height f5. Let’s see how Black copes with it.  

23.Bxd8 Bxd8 24.Bxd8+ Nxd8 25.a2  

Jumping to the centre was better: 25.d5! Bxd5 26.exd5 b5 (unsatisfactory is 26...xg2 27.xa6 (or 27.d6!?± at once)...
...with the intention to tear the remainder of Black’s queenside pawn structure to pieces by means of d5-d6. Please note how the f5-knight is dominating) 27.axb5 axb5 28.Bf1.

25...Be7 26.Bf1 h5 27.g3 Ng6

White has preserved the flexibility of the pawn structure, but only temporarily: ...h5-h4 is inevitable, making the dark squares vulnerable.

28.e4
28.h4?! gxh4 29.gxh4 Ne6 and Black stands at least not worse.

28...h4 29.gxh4 Nxe6 30...hxg4= 31...c3 e6 32.d1 a5 33...d5 a4 34...d1 b7 35.c3 a5 36...c4 f4 37...f5 e8 38...h4 xh4 39...xh4 xh3 40...g2 g5 41...e2 d7 42.b3 e6 43...e2 e7 44...e3 h3 45.b4 g7 46.d1 f6 47...d5+ xd5 48.exd5

I suppose it’s clear to everyone that the initiative is already in Black’s hands (bad bishop). Nevertheless, it is hardly probable that the Russian player will gain something real.

48...xe7 49.d3 d6 50.c4 f5 51.b5 xd5 52.bxa5 bxa5 53.xa5 e4 54.xe4+ fxe4 55.b5 e3 56.a5 e2 57.xe2 xe2 58.a6 xc3+ 59.b4 a2+ 60.a3 c3 61.b4 ½-½

Alexander Morozevich poses problems to Black in the next game. However, he can do that in any opening. I don’t have the heart to criticize his opponent. A 200-point Elo difference and the white colour... One way or another, the Russian player acquired the advantage with the bishop pair, with a flexible structure and a space advantage thanks to his advanced a-pawn. At some point the Elo-favourite played not optimally, and the struggle dragged on.

34
Alexander Morozevich (2739)
Bator Sambuev (2524)
Tromsø FIDE World Cup 2013 (1)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 c3 e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5...xd8+ xd8 6.c4 e8 7.f3 d6 8.g5 bd7 9.0-0 a6 10.a4 h6 11.h4 g5

Straightforwardly played.

12.g3 h5

In such cases I usually say: ‘Well, candid at least.’ The knight may intend to go to f4, as the capture on g3 is strategically risky. The reason is that the light squares will be weakened and the d6-bishop will remain passive.
13. \( \text{d}5 \text{f}6 \)

Quite justifiable was 13...c6 14. \( \text{d}e3 \text{c}7 \) 15. \( \text{h}4 \text{xg}3 \) 16. \( \text{f}xg3 \) unclear.

14. \( \text{h}e1 \text{c}5 \) 15. \( \text{a}5 \)

It is always advisable to put pressure on the enemy and grab space. On the agenda is b2-b4.

15... \( \text{g}4 \) 16. \( \text{e}3 \text{f}8 \) 17. \( \text{b}4 \text{d}7 \) 18. \( \text{h}3 \text{xf}3 \) 19. \( \text{x}f3 \text{f}4 \) 20. \( \text{c}3! \)

20... \( \text{b}8 \)

Disastrous was 20... \( \text{x}g2 \)? 21. \( \text{x}c7+ \text{xc}7 \) 22. \( \text{e}6+- \) with a crushing defeat. The centralized knight should have been annihilated: 20... \( \text{d}x5 \) 21. \( \text{x}d5 \text{e}7 \) with the idea...c7-c6, because 22. \( \text{xb}7 \) is not dangerous on account of 22... \( \text{ab}8 \) 23. \( \text{xa}6 \text{xb}4 \) with compensation.

21. \( \text{xf}4 \text{xf}4 \) 22. \( \text{xc}7+! \)

Morozevich is so strong that I have to carefully select the places for exclamation marks, as most of these moves are taken for granted by such strong players.

22... \( \text{xc}7 \) 23. \( \text{e}6 \)

This idea is working again: it is impossible to protect the two pieces simultaneously.

23... \( \text{e}5 \) 24. \( \text{ed}3! \)

Weaker is 24. \( \text{xd}7+ \text{e}7 \).

Now Black has to decide how he wants to give back the piece. In this case he cannot put his hopes on the drawish tendencies of the opposite-coloured bishops.
I myself once had such fears when playing against Sambuev with opposite-coloured bishops, but here both sides only had a single rook each, and the pawn configuration was different. Sambuev-S. Kasparov, Montreal 2009 (8), went 39...Rx7

\[ \text{analysis diagram} \]

39...Rx7 40.Rxe6 Rx7 41.Rxb7 f5 42.Bf3 e7 43.d5 h5=.

24.Rcd3!

The activity of the white rooks + potential weakness of the pawns on b7 and a6 (fixed on light squares) give White good chances of success. However, this would have been the lesser of evils for Black.

24...b2+?

The Canadian grandmaster prefers to keep the knight, which is even worse. Most tenacious was 24...c5 25.bxc5 e7 26.f5±; if 24...e7 25.f5!.

25.Kxb2 e5 26.Rc3

26.d6! e7 27.b3 would have led to a win, due to the awful threat of 28.e6+, and the f6-pawn perishes.

26...e7 27.d5 xd8 28.e7+ d7 29.xd7+ xd7 30.c4

30.xb7+ c7 31.xa6 xb4+.

30...e7 31.c3

Alexander has thrown away part of his advantage and the intrigue is still alive.

31.d8 32.Bb1
32...h5

32...a8!? preventing b4-b5, for instance 33.b5 axb5 34.xb5 (34.cxb5 a5) 34...c6.

33.b5

The rest is clear.

33...b8 34.d4 d7 35.c5 axb5 36.xb5 g4 37.h4 e5 38.b6 f3 39.g3 d7 40.e5 b6 d7 42.e6 a8 43.e6 bxc6 44.xc6+ d8 45.a6 b7 46.e6 c7 47.c6 a7 48.d6 xa6 49.xd7+ c8 50.b7+ 1-0

I will now present a large-scale battle from the World Cup with additional comments by grandmaster Alexander Finkel. I believe it is interesting to compare our opinions.

Azmaiparashvili played not very typically, and quite creatively. He applied the manoeuvre ...d7-b6, putting the knight in front of the pawn, but thus chasing off the enemy bishop. Then the Georgian grandmaster sacrificed the c7-pawn. Later, with many pieces still on the board, he started a striking king manoeuvre with ...e7-f6-g6-h7 with the king in front of its own pawns.

Evgeny still had some initiative, but not more. Hardly did he lose his vigilance, when his opponent took over the initiative by means of a sharp counterblow. The Russian player defended stubbornly, but nothing could save him now.

35

Evgeny Bareev (2702)
Zurab Azmaiparashvili (2673)
Shenyang 2000 (1)

1.d4 d6 2.e4 d6 3.c3 e5!? 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.xd8+ xd8 6.c4 e8

‘During the last couple of years this move has replaced 6...e6, which was the main reply. Black has a slightly passive, but very solid position and it’s not so easy for White to prove that his opening advantage is not temporary’ (Finkel).
7. \( \text{Nf3} \text{d6} \) 8. \( \text{Bg5} \)

8. \( \text{Be3} \text{a6} \) 9. \( \text{a4} \text{Nc6} \) 10. \( \text{Ng5} \text{Rf8} \) 11. \( \text{Nd5} \text{Nxd5} \) 12. \( \text{Bxd5} \text{c6} \) 13. \( \text{h6} \text{h6} \) 14. 0-0-0  15. \( \text{Nf3} \text{²} \); 8.0-0 \( \text{a6} \) 9. \( \text{a4} \text{Nc6} \) 10. \( \text{Ng5} \text{d8} \) 11. \( \text{d5} \text{x5} \) 12. \( \text{d5} \text{f6} \) 13. \( \text{f3} \text{e6} \) 14. \( \text{xe6} \text{exe6} \) 15. \( \text{d1} \text{e7=} \).

8... \( \text{bd7} \) 9.0-0 \( \text{h6} \) 10. \( \text{h4} \text{b6} \)

Aha, we can conclude that the main purpose of the manoeuvre ...\( \text{d7-b6} \) is to drive the enemy bishop away.

11. \( \text{e2} \)

11. \( \text{b3} \).

11... \( \text{e7} \)

11... \( \text{e6} \) 12. \( \text{b5} \) (12. \( \text{xf6} \text{gxf6} \) 13. \( \text{h4} \text{a6} \) 14. \( \text{f5} \text{b4=} \)) 12... \( \text{xe4} \) 13. \( \text{ed3} \) \( \text{c5} \) 14. \( \text{xd6+} \text{cxd6} \) 15. \( \text{b5+} \text{d7} \) 16. \( \text{xd7+} \text{xd7} \) 17. \( \text{xf6} \text{f6} \) 18. \( \text{hd1=} \).

12. \( \text{g3} \text{bd7} \) 13. \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{b6} \) 14. \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{bd7} \)

The best, and also the most principled move.

15. \( \text{d2} \text{b4=} \)? 16. \( \text{f4=} \)?

16. \( \text{d5+} \text{x5} \) 17. \( \text{exd5} \text{h5} \) 18. \( \text{h4} \text{f5} \) 19. \( \text{f3=} \).

16... \( \text{xc3} \)

The best, and also the most principled move.

17. \( \text{bxc3} \) \( \text{e5=} \)?

17... \( \text{xf4} \) 18. \( \text{xf4} \text{e8} \) 19. \( \text{e5} \text{c5} \) 20. \( \text{hf1} \text{e6} \) 21. \( \text{e3} \text{b6=} \).
18. \( \text{Bxf3 exf4} \) 19. \( \text{Bxf4 Be6!?} \)

Resolutely played. Black gives up the c7-pawn, gaining counterplay along the opened c-file for it.

20. \( \text{Bxc7} \) \( \text{Rac8} \) 21. \( \text{Ba5} \)

21. \( \text{Bg3} \) \( \text{Na4} \).

21... \( \text{Nd7} \)

It was also interesting to try to get to e5 with tempo: 21... \( \text{Ng4!} \) (threatening 22... \( \text{Nf2} \)) 22. \( \text{Bxg4} \) \( \text{Bxg4} \) 23. \( \text{Nf3} \) \( \text{Rhe8=} \).

22. \( \text{Nb3} \) \( \text{b6} \) 23. \( \text{b4} \) \( \text{f6} \)

Frankly, it’s rare for me to see a commander-in-chief marching in front of his army with a board full of pieces.

24. \( \text{Bf1} \) \( \text{g6} \) 25. \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{e5} \)

With compensation.
To tell you the truth, Black’s position seems more pleasant to me due to White’s weakened pawn structure. Nevertheless, the computer prefers White – due to the extra pawn...

26.\( \text{Bxc5} \)

26.\( \text{d4 xa2} \) 27.\( \text{b2 c4\pm} \); 26.\( \text{f3!?} \).

26...\( \text{bxc5} \) 27.\( \text{Rd6} \) \( \text{Kh7} \) 28.\( \text{Rf1} \) \( \text{Ec7} \) 29.\( \text{h3} \) \( \text{Ec8} \) 30.\( \text{Ed8} \) \( \text{Ec7} \) 31.\( \text{Ed6} \) \( \text{Ec4} \)

With full equality, but after Evgeny’s slightly artificial response, Black seizes the initiative.

32.\( \text{d1}?! \)

32.\( \text{d3} \).

32...\( \text{f5}?! \)

Attacking the central pawn and threatening \( \text{f5-f7} \) at the same time. 32...\( \text{f6} \) was even more careful.

33.\( \text{exf5!} \)

The best reply.

33...\( \text{f7} \) 34.\( \text{h5} \)

It turns out that by giving up the exchange (for a pawn) White can fix the black king into the corner.

34...\( \text{xd8} \) 35.\( \text{g6+} \) \( \text{h8} \) 36.\( \text{xd8+} \) \( \text{g8} \)
I guess this is dynamic equality. It is difficult to chase the white rook from the 8th rank.

37. $\textbf{h}5$

Obviously intending to redeploy the bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal. 37.c4 was the alternative.

37... $\textbf{e}5$

37... $\textbf{cd}7$ 38. $\textbf{f}8$ (38. $\textbf{xd}7$ $\textbf{xd}7$ 39. $\textbf{xc}5$ $\textbf{d}5\text{=}+$) 38... $\textbf{d}5$ (38... $\textbf{e}1+$ 39. $\textbf{b}2$ c4 40. $\textbf{d}4$ $\textbf{b}7+$ 41. $\textbf{a}3$ $\textbf{e}5$ 42. $\textbf{a}4$) 39. $\textbf{b}2$ (39. c4 $\textbf{de}5$ 40. $\textbf{b}2$ unclear) 39... $\textbf{ed}7$ 40. $\textbf{f}3$ $\textbf{d}8$ 41. $\textbf{xd}8$ $\textbf{xd}8$ 42. $\textbf{xc}5$ unclear.

38. $\textbf{f}8$ g6!? 39. $\textbf{xg}6$ $\textbf{g}7$ 40. $\textbf{b}8$ $\textbf{e}3$ 41. $\textbf{h}5$ $\textbf{d}5$ 42. g4 $\textbf{xh}3$
The kinetic energy of Black's pieces is amazing. I doubt if White can hold this.

**43...\( \text{Re}8 \text{ Rx}c3 \) 44.\( \text{Nd}2 \text{ Rd}7 \) 45.\( \text{N}e5 \text{ Rh}3 \) 46.\( c4 \)**?

More tenacious was 46.\( \text{Ne}4 \text{ xe}4 \) 47.\( \text{xe}4 \).

**46...\( \text{xc}4 \)**

46...\( \text{f}7 \) 47.\( \text{xf}7 \text{ xf}7 \).

47.\( \text{e}4 \text{ f}7 \) 48.\( \text{f}6+ \)

48.\( \text{xc}5 \text{ e}7 \) 49.\( \text{xf}7 \text{ xf}7 \) 50.\( \text{d}2 \text{ g}3 \).

**48...\( \text{f}8 \) 49.\( \text{xf}7 \) 50.\( \text{g}5 \text{ h}5! \)**

50...\( \text{hxg}5 \) 51.\( \text{xg}5 \) (51.\( \text{xg}5+! \text{ xf}6 \)).

51.\( \text{xe}5 \text{ hxg}5 \) 52.\( \text{c}2 \)

52.\( \text{gx}5+? \text{ g}6-+ \).

52...\( \text{h}2+ \) 53.\( \text{c}3 \text{ h}3+ \) 54.\( \text{c}4 \text{ h}4 \) 55.\( \text{e}5 \text{ xe}4+! \)

'The rook ending is easily winning’, says Finkel. I fully agree.

**56.\( \text{xe}4 \text{ xf}6 \) 57.\( \text{a}4 \text{ a}5 \) 58.\( \text{c}5 \text{ e}7 \) 59.\( \text{d}4 \text{ e}5+ \) 60.\( \text{d}6 \text{ f}5 \) 61.\( \text{e}4 \text{ g}6 \) 0-1**

A titanic struggle and a glorious victory for the experienced Georgian grandmaster.

Against one of the strongest players of Western Europe, Jules Moussard obtained a solid position. But two wasted tempi (...\( \text{a}8-\text{a}7-\text{a}8 \)) caused a lag in development. The Elo-favourite opened up the c-file in his favour and won.

36

Arkadij Naiditsch (2698)

Jules Moussard (2402)

Saint-Quentin 2012 (3)

1.\( \text{d}4 \text{ d}6 \) 2.\( \text{e}4 \text{ f}6 \) 3.\( \text{c}3 \text{ e}5 \) 4.\( \text{dxe}5 \text{ dxe}5 \) 5.\( \text{xd}8+ \text{ xd}8 \) 6.\( \text{c}4 \text{ e}8 \) 7.\( \text{f}3 \text{ d}6 \) 8.\( \text{g}5 \text{ bd}7 \) 9.0-0-0 \( \text{a}6 \) 10.\( \text{he}1 \text{ h}6 \) 11.\( \text{h}4 \text{ h}5 \)
Also not bad is the aggressive 11...b5 12.b3 b5 13.g3 h5 14.h4 g6 15.d5 f8 16.f3 a5 17.a3 c5±. The d6-bishop ‘glues together’ the pawns on both flanks and decreases the impact of the enemy rooks, Gerzhoy-Predojevic, Bosna Open, Sarajevo 2010.

12.d5 a7
Creatively played, but... to what end? Flank thrusts were quite possible, for example 12...b5 or 12...g5.

13.g4 h6
Not 13...f4? 14.xf4 exf4 15.e5+-.

14.h3 xd5 15.exd5 g5 16.g3 f6
Black feels rather safe. If you imagine a pawn on d6, then his structure would be strong. However I still don’t understand why the rook is better placed on a7 than on a8.

17.\(\textit{d}2\) f7 18.\(\textit{f}3\) b5 19.\(\textit{f}1\) c5 20.\(\textit{f}2\) a8

Here we are.

Meanwhile, the fact that the waste of a couple of tempi does not really hurt Black proves the large reliability margin of his position!

21.c4!

Arkadij starts to play concretely. There are no alternatives in sight.

21...bxc4?!

21...b4 doesn’t maintain the blockade: 22.\(\textit{e}4\) xe4 23.xe4 a5 24.c5. It was the least of evils, though.

22.xc4 d7 23.e3

23.b1.

23...b5 24.e3 xc4

Was this necessary? White’s light-squared bishop will be stronger than the knight.

25.xc4 b7 26.d2 h8 27.dc2 e7 28.d3 d8 29.e1 a5
White has made obvious progress. The pawns on a5 and c7 are weak (White has the potential blow $\text{R}xc7+$). His bishop can be established on f5 with pressure on the enemy defences. There is also an opening of the h-file in the offing (h3-h4).

30.$\text{Ra}4$

30.$\text{b}3\pm$.

30...$\text{b}7$ 31.$\text{f}5$ $\text{e}5$ 32.$\text{ac}4$ $\text{d}6$ 33.$\text{h}4$ $\text{a}4$ 34.$\text{xc}7+$!

Believe it or not, I hadn’t guessed these last moves. However, it could have been guessed by any reader who read the above. The moves h3-h4 and $\text{xc}7$ strongly suggest themselves...

34...$\text{xc}7$ 35.$\text{xc}7+$ $\text{e}8$ 36.$\text{hx}g5$ $\text{hx}g5$ 37.$\text{b}4$ $\text{a}6$ 38.$\text{h}7$ $\text{d}8$ 1-0

Should White prevent Black’s aggression on the queenside? I dare say yes, he should (a2-a4). For one thing, gaining space is desirable.

In the following example, the Israeli white player ignored the...b7-b5 push. This didn’t lead to disaster, but after the opening of the a- and b-files, Black seized the initiative and kept it.

| 37 | Tamir Nabaty (2566) | Ivan Ivanisevic (2644) | Skopje 2013 (5) |

1.$\text{e}4$ $\text{d}6$ 2.$\text{d}4$ $\text{c}6$ 3.$\text{c}3$ $\text{c}5$ 4.$\text{dxe}5$ $\text{dxe}5$ 5.$\text{wx}d8+$ $\text{xd}8$ 6.$\text{e}4$ $\text{e}8$ 7.$\text{f}3$ $\text{d}6$ 8.$\text{g}5$ $\text{bd}7$ 9.0-0-0 $\text{a}6$ 10.$\text{h}3$

As a rule, White tries to prevent the expansion ...b7-b5. Let’s see what happens if he ignores it.

10...$\text{b}5$ 11.$\text{b}3$ $\text{h}6$ 12.$\text{h}4$ $\text{f}8$ 13.$\text{he}1$ $\text{b}8$ 14.$\text{a}4$ $\text{g}6$ 15.$\text{ax}b5$ $\text{ax}b5$ 16.$\text{d}5$ $\text{g}7$ 17.$\text{c}3$ $\text{e}8$
It looks like Black has easily solved all his opening problems. The king has found a proper shelter and even his rooks are already developed.

18.\texttt{Ke2 Nxd5}

18...\texttt{Nh5}!?

19.\texttt{Bxd5 b4 20.Nd2 bxc3 21.bxc3 c5 22.Nc4 Bd7}

With the idea ...\texttt{d4+}. The opening of the queenside files is not to the benefit of the white king. Or 22...\texttt{f8 23.c6 d6} unclear.

23.\texttt{Nxd6 exd6 24.Kb1 g5 25.g3}
25...f5

I like solid moves, but 25...e6 leads only to equality: 26.xe6 xb1 27.xb1 fxe6 28.f3.

26.f3 fxe4 27.fxe4 a4+ 28.d2 b3

A curious bypass manoeuvre. If White allows ...xd5, exd5, the structure will change in Black’s favour. The backward d6-pawn would be ‘filled’ like a tooth, and besides Black would get a protected passed pawn on e5.

29.xb3 xb3+ 30.c2 c5 31.xb8 xb8 32.f2

Competent play by the Israeli grandmaster has saved him from trouble, the position is approximately equal.
32...\(\text{Na4}\) 33.\(\text{Nd3}\) \(\text{Ec8}\) 34.\(\text{Ec1}\) \(\text{f6}\) 35.\(\text{Ec2}\) \(\text{e6}\) 36.\(\text{Ec3}\) \(\text{Ec7}\) 37.\(\text{Ed2}\) \(\text{Ec4}\) 38.\(\text{Ed3}\) d5 39.\(\text{exd5+}\) \(\text{Kxd5}\) 40.\(\text{g4}\) e4+ 41.\(\text{Ed2}\) \(\text{Ec6}\) 42.\(\text{Ed4}\) \(\text{Db6}\) 43.\(\text{Exb6}\) \(\text{Exb6}\) 44.\(\text{Ec3}\) \(\text{Eb3}\) 45.\(\text{Ec1}\) \(\text{Ee5}\) 46.\(\text{Ec2}\) \(\text{Eb1}\) 47.\(\text{Ea2}\) \(\text{Ee1+}\) 48.\(\text{f1}\) \(\text{Ec1}\) 49.\(\text{Ea5+}\) \(\text{Ee6}\)

The king wants to burst into the enemy camp, but 49...\(\text{Ef4}\) 50.\(\text{Ef5}\) is mate.

50.\(\text{Ea6+}\) \(\text{Ed5}\) 51.\(\text{Ea5+}\) \(\text{Ec4}\) 52.\(\text{Ea4+}\) \(\text{Ed5}\) ½-½

Black put up a sturdy defence in the next game, from the Serbian team championship. Branko Damljanovic handled the set-up ...\(c7-c6\), ...\(\text{d6-c7}\) expertly. The damage to the pawn structure and the triumphant appearance of the knight on f5 (in front of the doubled pawns) was practically ignored by Black.

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**38**
Viorel Iordachescu (2603)
Branko Damljanovic (2625)
Serbia tt 2006 (4)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \(\text{df6}\) 3.\(\text{c3}\) e5 4.\(\text{dxex5}\) dxe5 5.\(\text{Exxd8+}\) dxd8 6.\(\text{Ec4}\) \(\text{Ec8}\) 7.\(\text{Ef3}\) \(\text{Fd6}\) 8.\(\text{Gg5}\) c6

The Serbian grandmaster hurries to move the bishop from the d-file before White castles 0-0-0. Let’s find out whether this is any good.

9.0-0-0 \(\text{Ec7}\)

This set-up is quite flexible. The entry squares (d6-d7-d8) are safely controlled, and the c6-pawn limits White’s pieces considerably.

10.\(\text{Nh4}\) h6 11.\(\text{Xxf6}\) gxf6 12.\(\text{Ff5}\)

This looks good, but what is the concrete profit, if Black just continues with his development?

12...\(\text{d7}\) 13.a3
The computer opts for the intrusion with 13.\text{n}\text{e}6+, but it is not clear what is gained by this. For example, 13...\text{n}\text{xd}6 14.\text{fxd}6 \text{c}7 15.\text{hd}1 \text{b}6, gradually covering White with ‘slime’.

13...\text{c}5 14.f3 a5 15.b4 axb4 16.axb4 \text{a}4

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

17.\text{e}2

Damljanovic doesn’t have any problems anymore. After the superior 17.\text{x}a4 \text{x}a4 18.c3 the simple exchange 18...\text{xf}5 19.\text{xf}5 \text{e}7= is enough.

17...h5

17...\text{xf}5.

18.\text{b}3 \text{h}4

Branko Damljanovic

Branko’s idea was likely not to allow the knight’s passage to the blockading square e4.

19.c3 \text{b}6 20.\text{c}2 \text{xf}5 21.\text{xf}5 \text{e}7 22.g4 \text{hd}8 23.\text{xd}8 \text{xd}8 24.h3 \text{d}6 25.\text{d}1 \text{c}7 26.\text{xd}8

Draw agreed.

And here is the last example on this topic. I insert an almost entire game by a beautiful French player in the notes.

The idea of the knight sortie \text{f}3-g5 is studied in the next clash. White 1) forces the enemy rook to go to f8, which in future may cause some disharmony; 2) pushes forward
the f-pawn.

39
Parimarjan Negi (2615)
Mikheil Mchedlishvili (2625)
Sestao tt 2010 (3)


Wow. By the way, there is a point to this move. The road is opened for the f-pawn as Black doesn’t have time to chase back the knight at once.

Here is the main alternative:

8.Qe3 a6 9.0-0 Ignoring the queenside, and planning (or so I think) aggression on the kingside. Will this succeed? 9.a4 9...b5 10.b3 b7 11.Qg5 Kf8 Let me remind you that Black has lost her castling rights. 12.f3 This is deliberately modest, but now the Russian grandmaster will enjoy a ‘free’ initiative. In my opinion, better is 12.f4!? h6 (12...Qd7) 13.fxe5 Qxe5 14.Bf3 Qxe3 15.bxc3 with very unclear consequences. 12...h6 13.Qh3 Qd7 14.a3 Qe7 The cause of further discomfort. More accurate is the immediate 14...c5 15.Qa2 c4
... and Black’s position is more active. 15...a2 c5 16.e2! The knight goes to f5, which is quite unpleasant as...g7-g6 will result in the loss of the h6-pawn. 16...fc8 17.g3 e8 18.f5 f8 19.c4!

19...bxc4 This move, destroying Black’s structure, looks provocative. However, 19...b4 doesn’t equalize either. 20.xc4 b6 21.a2 c6 22.f2 22.fc1±. 22...fd7 23.d1 I suppose the idea of this move is clear? Yes, the knight is going to move along the route f2-d1-c3-d5. 23...h5 24.f2 The French girl is playing quite well. Her knights intend to occupy the light squares, which have been weakened by the opponent. 24...c4 25.c3 g6 26.e3 c5 27.ad1 ac8 28.a4 28.d2. 28.d4? A mistake. Black should have stopped the enemy advance by 28...a5, with acceptable play.
29. a5 Na8 30. Qd5 Also good is 30. c2 Bxf2+ 31. Qxf2 e5 32. Qd2 Qf6 33. Qe3±. 33... Qxa5? doesn’t work in view of 34. Qxc4. 30... Bxf2+ 31. Qxf2 e5 32. Qe3 Qf6 33. Qd2 Qe7

A crucial moment. 34. h4 The sudden central blow 34. f4! would have been powerful. I assure you that I am not so smart that I can see all the tactical nuances. I’m just analysing with the computer: 34... exf4 (34... Qxa5 35. fxe5 Qxe5 36. Qxc4+- threatening e4-e5 and Qd7+) 35. Qxc4 Qxc4 36. Qxc4 Qxc4 37. e5+-. 34... Qxa5 35. Qxc4 Qb6 36. Qb3 Qac5 (Milliet-Bocharov, Jakarta 2012) 37. Qf2±

8... Bf8 9. f4 Qc6

Risky is 9... exf4 10. e5 Qxe5 11. 0-0. With the absence of pawns on the e-file the black king feels insecure.

10. Qb5
A picturesque position. White tries to undermine the enemy defence by cavalry raids. He doesn’t succeed, though.

10...h6 11.\textit{N}xd6+ cxd6 12.\textit{N}f3 \textit{N}xe4!

A principled and strong decision. White will have compensation for the pawn, but not more.

13.\textit{B}d5 f5 14.fxe5 \textit{N}xe5

The mirror move 14...\textit{N}b4!? is interesting, for example 15.\textit{b}b3 \textit{e}6! 16.\textit{d}d2 (doubtful is 16.\textit{xe}6 \textit{xc}2+ 17.\textit{e}2 \textit{xa}1 and it will be difficult to catch the stray knight) 16...\textit{xd}2 17.\textit{xd}2 \textit{xb}3 18.\textit{xb}3 \textit{c}6=.

15.0-0 \textit{f}6 16.\textit{b}3 \textit{xf}3+ 17.gxf3 d5 18.\textit{e}3 \textit{f}7 19.\textit{d}4
Clearly the Indian grandmaster has achieved a pleasant position. The bishop on d4 is a feast for the eye. However, to restore the material balance, sooner or later White will have to exchange one of the bishops for a knight.

19...\textit{Re}8 20.a4 \textit{Be}6 21.a5 a6 22.\textit{Rfe}1 \textit{Bac}8 23.\textit{Rxe}5 \textit{Bd}7 24.\textit{Rae}1 \textit{Rxe}5 25.\textit{Rxe}5 ½-½

\textbf{Conclusion}

With the move 6...\textit{Ke}8 Black is spoiling for a fight, more so than with the ‘dry’ alternative 6...\textit{Be}6. Strong chess players have the possibility to outplay less experienced colleagues here. I can’t see a clear plan for White to gain an advantage. With reasonable play from both sides White holds some initiative, but not more. However, let me finish like an amateur doctor: ‘Every person is an individual and I can’t say for sure how the medicine will catch on!’

With such statements it seems that everyone can be a doctor... or a chess writer.
In this Part we will consider the development of White’s kingside knight at e2. Why here, and why not at the more active square f3? The thing is that on e2 the knight is placed more flexibly, as it doesn’t hamper the mobility of the f-pawn. By the way (though this is my subjective opinion), it seems to be the most logical that pawns first move forward and the pieces follow them. Besides, pawns exercise the most power when they are standing shoulder to shoulder (for instance, on e4, f4), as this way they have a full grip of all the squares in front of them.

I apologize to all qualified players for this detailed explanation of some basic principles. But the majority of my audience consists of amateurs.

I first took serious notice of the idea 0-ge2 against the Pirc-Ufimtsev Defence during my childhood. One of my favourite books was Montreal 1979: Tournament of Stars. There, in the second round, the then World Champion produced an excellent example of how to play this line, and the book featured his own comments to the game. Before you consider more modern games, I recommend you to get acquainted with this masterpiece. In this game the black bishop was developed to g7, which differs slightly from Black’s usual central strategy, but... after the moves 1.e4 d6 2.d4 0-f6 3.0-c3 e5 4.0-ge2 Black can also fianchetto the bishop. Please study also the second game (Nisipeanu-Ivanisevic) thoroughly.

After that I will present an example from the author’s own practice. The principal difference with the game Karpov-Timman is the position of the white knight on f3 instead of e2. But soon the outlines become similar to this elite encounter.
So I will show you one of my favourite masterpieces, performed by two great chess players. Karpov’s way of playing highly appealed to me, which resulted in a paradox. In the titanic Karpov-Kasparov struggle I supported Garry, my fellow countryman and namesake, while I preferred his opponent’s chess style.

Here I have been guided by the comments of the 12th World Champion, while I have added my own notes.

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.g3 Bg7

4...c5?! is no good due to 5.dxc5 Qa5 6.cxd6 Nxe4? 7.Qd5+-.

5.g2 0-0 6.Ge2 e5 7.0-0 Na6

Anatoly Evgenyevich takes a sceptical view of this move. With my own experience in this system, I also cannot understand the knight’s placement on the edge of the board in front of its own pawn.

8.Be1 c6 9.h3

White’s flexible pawn structure on the kingside narrows down the adversary’s possibilities (...Bg4,...Ng4).

9...e8 10.g5 h6

Better is 10...b6 11.b1 exd4 12.Qxd4 (perhaps more precise is 12.Qxd4 Qxd4 13.Qxd4 and White’s position is slightly better as the d6-pawn is weak) 12...g4 (this move wasn’t mentioned in the book) 13.hxg4 Qxd4=.

11.e3 c7

Black fails to include the poorly placed a6-knight into the game.

A) 11...exd4 12.Qxd4 (12.Qxd4?! Qc5 13.Qf4 Qh5) 12...c5 13.e5! Qh7 14.exd6 Qxd6 15.Qxg7 (15.b4 Qa6 16.b5 cxb5 17.Qxb5±) 15...Qxd1 16.Qxd1 Qg7 17.b4 Qa6 18.b5±;

12.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{h}7 \) 13.\( \text{ad}1 \) \( \text{d}7 \\
13...\text{e}6 14.\text{g}4 \text{ad}8 15.\text{f}4 \text{c}4 16.\text{fxe}5 \text{dxe}5 17.\text{d}5\pm. \\
14.\text{g}4 \text{ad}8 15.\text{g}3 \text{c}8 16.\text{f}4

The computer does not think it’s a drama, but Black is clearly uneasy in the face of White’s total consolidation.

16...\text{b}5 17.\text{a}3 \text{b}4 18.\text{AXB}4 \text{xb}4 19.\text{ce}2!? \\
The World Champion is going to force the black knight back to the ‘stable’ on \text{a}6 by means of \text{c}2-\text{c}3.

19...\text{exd}4 \\
19...\text{c}5 is no remedy: 20.\text{fxe}5 \text{dxe}5 (20...\text{cxd}4 21.\text{exf}6 \text{dxe}3 22.\text{xb}4\text{+-}) 21.\text{d}5\pm.

20.\text{xd}4 \text{a}5 21.\text{c}3 \text{a}6
22.\textit{Qc2}

A preventive measure against \textit{Na6-c5}, which can now be met by b2-b4, chasing back the unlucky knight again. The straightforward 22.\textit{Nxc6!} doesn’t look bad either, for example 22...\textit{Qxc6} 23.e5 d5 24.exf6 \textit{xf6} 25.\textit{Bxd5}².

22...\textit{Bd7}?! 23.\textit{Nf3}

23.g5! was strong: 23...hxg5 24.fxg5 \textit{g8} 25.\textit{Qf2} and disaster strikes. The queen attacks \textit{f7} and threatens a deadly check on h4: 25...\textit{c8} 26.\textit{Qg5!} gxf5 27.exf5+-.

But Anatoly Evgenyevich is used to playing in another manner. He prefers to stifle the opponent.

23...\textit{Re7} 24.\textit{Rf2}±
24...\textit{e}8?

Aggravates his problems, which are already formidable.

25.\textit{d}3! \textit{b}7

25...\textit{b}8 26.e5 \textit{d}5 27.exd6 \textit{x}e1+ 28.\textit{x}e1 \textit{x}d6 29.c4+-.

26.\textit{a}1!

The computer insists on 26.g5! \textit{g}8 27.f5+-, but I definitely prefer the ‘stifling’ strategy. Not out of sadistic inclinations, but because it involves less risk.

26...\textit{c}7

26...\textit{xb}2? 27.\textit{eb}1+-.

27.\textit{xa}5 \textit{dd}7 28.b4 \textit{e}6 29.\textit{e}3

In reply to 29.\textit{d}2 the foolhardy 29...d5!? could have followed, for example 30.e5 \textit{e}4 31.\textit{xe}4 \textit{dxe}4 32.\textit{d}4 c5. This is also unsatisfactory for Black, but at least it complicates the struggle.

29.c5 30.f5 \textit{d}8 31.b5

Usually in this type of structure the move f4-f5 weakens White’s control of the point e5, but as the case stands, Black’s pieces are so ‘stalemated’ that he has to effectively exploit this weakening.

31...\textit{h}8 32.\textit{f}2 \textit{c}7 33.\textit{a}4 \textit{b}8 34.c4+-

A spectacular sight – hardly inferior to flashy attacks.
34...\text{a7} 35.\text{xa7} \text{xa7} 36.\text{e5} \text{dxe5} 37.\text{xe5} \text{a2} 38.\text{xe5} 1-0

However, black players needn’t worry. They should just correct the mistakes of the former leader of Dutch chess. At the 2008 Olympiad, Serbian grandmaster Ivan Ivanisevic played much more effectively and took over the initiative.

\begin{table}
\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu (2684)} & \textbf{Ivan Ivanisevic (2658)} \\
Dresden ol 2008 (8) & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}
\end{table}

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \text{c6} 3.\text{c3} e5 4.\text{ge2} c6 5.g3 \text{g6}

Transitioning into a ‘normal’ Pirc-Ufimtsev Defence.

6.\text{g2} \text{g7} 7.0-0 0-0 8.h3 b5 9.a3 \text{b7} 10.\text{e3}

As usual, releasing the tension in the centre leads to approximate equality: 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.\text{xd8} \text{xd8}. I wonder why White’s position should be better here. Earlier on he had a preponderance in the centre (e4- and d4-pawns against e5-pawn), but not anymore.

10...\text{bd7} 11.g4 a5 12.\text{g3}

Before playing g4-g5, Liviu-Dieter takes h5 under control, where otherwise the enemy knight could go.
12...b4

More accurate is 12...exd4, with the forced variation 13.exd4 (it seems that the bishops’ opposition on the a1-h8 diagonal favours White – however, Black can drive the bishop away:) 13...b4 14.axb4 (14.Nce2 c5 15.Be3 Qe7²) 14...axb4 15.Rxa8 Bxa8 16.Nb1 c5 17.Ne3 We7².

13.Nce2 c5

Now in reply to 13...exd4 White may capture with the knight: 14.Nxd4 c5 15Nb5=. Here the knight is considerably more active than on b1 or e2.

14.dxe5?!

Interesting is 14.g5!? Ne8 15.dxc5 Nxe5 16.axb4 axb4 17.Qd2, forcing the advanced pawn on b4 to declare its intentions.

14...Nxe5

The knight aims for c4 and it is highly undesirable to allow it there.

15.g5 Nd7 16.b3

16...f6

A questionable decision. Weakening the king’s position wasn’t necessary as there were worthy alternatives. Rather good, for instance, is 16...c6 17.Ra2 We7².

17.gxf6

Or 17.axb4 axb4 18.Rxa8 bxa8 19.Nf4= pointing at the drawbacks of the move ...f7-f6.
17...\textit{xf6}

18.axb4

Tactical skirmishes would result in absolutely unclear positions, for example 18.f4!? \textit{f7} 19.e5 \textit{xg2} 20.exf6 \textit{xf6} 21.\textit{xg2} \textit{xa1} 22.\textit{xa1}.

18...axb4 19.\textit{e1}?! 

Liviu-Dieter plays too subtly. The simple 19.\textit{xa8} is more reasonable, for example 19...\textit{xa8} 20.\textit{f4}.

19...\textit{e7} 20.\textit{f4} \textit{f7} 

The e4-pawn is already feeling the heat.

21.\textit{e1} 

In reply to the thematic 21.f3, the unpleasant 21...d5 may follow.

21...\textit{ae8} 22.\textit{d2} \textit{d7} 23.\textit{d5} \textit{h4} 24.\textit{g4} \textit{xg4} 25.hxg4
If White managed to put pawns on g5 and f4, everything would be fine. The Serbian grandmaster duly interferes with this plan.

25...\text{N}fe5 26.g5 \text{N}f3+

Even stronger is 26...\text{Ng}4! 27.\text{N}c7 (White mustn’t move the pawn: 27.f4? \text{B}d4+ 28.\text{K}f1 (28.\text{K}h1 \text{B}f2+-) 28...\text{N}h2+ 29.\text{N}e2 \text{N}xd5+ 27...\text{Be}7 28.\text{N}d5 \text{B}e7 29.\text{N}h3 \text{N}de5+ and White is absolutely crushed.

27.\text{N}xf3 \text{B}xf3 28.\text{g}2 \text{B}e8 29.\text{e}3 \text{De}5 30.\text{cd}1

30.\text{h}3!?.

30...\text{G}g4
I can just imagine the state of mind of the Romanian team members when seeing this position (with white!) on their top board.

31.\textit{\textbf{e}2} \\

There was a possibility to cut the communication lines along the f-file with 31.\textit{\textbf{f}5}?! , but after 31...\textit{\textbf{e}xf5} 32.exf5 \textit{\textbf{x}e}+ 33.fxe3 \textit{\textbf{f}5} 34.e4 \textit{\textbf{x}g}5+ the chances are still on Black’s side. He has two pawns for the exchange, and besides, the bishop pair is worth a lot.

31...\textit{\textbf{x}e}3+ 32.\textit{\textbf{x}e}3 \\

32.fxe3!?.

32...\textit{\textbf{d}4} 33.\textit{\textbf{g}4} \textit{\textbf{f}3} 34.\textit{\textbf{f}3} \textit{\textbf{g}7} \\

34...\textit{\textbf{x}f3} 35.\textit{\textbf{x}f6}+ \textit{\textbf{e}xf6} 36.gxf6 h5+ (36...\textit{\textbf{x}f6}).

35.\textit{\textbf{h}2} d5?! 36.\textit{\textbf{e}5}? \\

White could have revealed the shortcomings of Black’s previous move by means of 36.exd5 \textit{\textbf{d}5} 37.\textit{\textbf{e}7}+ \textit{\textbf{f}7} 38.\textit{\textbf{x}f7}+ \textit{\textbf{x}f7} (38...\textit{\textbf{x}f7} 39.\textit{\textbf{e}2}). The position is about equal now, though the two bishops are still alive.

36...\textit{\textbf{c}8} 37.\textit{\textbf{e}1} \\

Vacating square e2 for the knight.

37...\textit{\textbf{h}4} \\

37...\textit{\textbf{c}3}? 38.\textit{\textbf{e}3} \textit{\textbf{h}4}+.

38.\textit{\textbf{e}6} \textit{\textbf{e}8} 39.\textit{\textbf{e}2} \textit{\textbf{x}e}6 40.\textit{\textbf{d}4} \textit{\textbf{x}d}4 41.\textit{\textbf{d}4} \textit{\textbf{x}e}1 42.\textit{\textbf{x}d}5 \textit{\textbf{e}2}+ 43.\textit{\textbf{g}3} \textit{\textbf{x}c}2+.
The (probable) time scramble has finished, and White’s position remains unenviable. He has to set his hopes on the drawish tendencies of rook endings.

44. \( \text{Ng4} \) \( \text{Kf7} \)

Better was 44... \( \text{Be6} \).

45. \( \text{Re5} \) \( \text{Rc3} \)

45... \( \text{Be6} \).

46. \( \text{Nf6?} \)

The lesser of evils was 46. \( \text{Kf2} \), when the rook is still eyeing the c5-pawn, so that in case of ... \( \text{Rxb3} \) White can reply with \( \text{Rxc5} \).

46... \( \text{b7-+} \) 47. \( \text{Nd7} \) \( \text{xf3+} \) 48. \( \text{g4} \) \( \text{xb3} \) 49. \( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{f3+} \) 50. \( \text{f4} \) \( \text{c3} \) 51. \( \text{a4} \) \( \text{a3} \) 52. \( \text{b6} \) \( \text{c6} \) 53. \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{f3+} \) 54. \( \text{g4} \) \( \text{d3} \) 55. \( \text{c5} \) \( \text{d4+} \) 56. \( \text{g3} \) \( \text{d5} \) 57. \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{e6} \) 58. \( \text{b5} \) 0-1

Now I will show you a fragment from an open tournament in Calcutta, India. During the last decade or so we can associate the Indian Chess Federation with high-level play, even between the lesser-known representatives.

### 42

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sergey Kasparov (2546)</th>
<th>Kantholi Rathnakaran (2395)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calicut Open 2007 (10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As in the elite encounter above, the counter-fianchetto on g7 was made, but there is a difference. In this case the white knight was developed at f3. Of course, putting this piece on e2 is more flexible, but alas, we don’t always have that possibility. These things also depend on what the opponent does! However, White’s plans here are analogical to the ideas of Anatoly Karpov, which is not surprising as in such structures I was always guided by them.
1.\textit{\textit{N}}f3 \textit{\textit{g}}f6 2.d4 g6 3.g3 \textit{\textit{B}}g7 4.\textit{\textit{g}}g2 0-0 5.0-0 d6 6.\textit{\textit{R}}e1

The sense of this early involvement of the rook is that e2-e4 is prepared. After 6.\textit{\textit{N}}c3 White must take 6...d5 into consideration, when I am not sure that the c2-pawn is happy.

6...\textit{\textit{N}}bd7

What is the problem? you may ask. Black can play 6...d5 now, too. True, but then 7.c4 is possible, resulting in Grünfeld schemes. Black will have to be ready for a dull, symmetrical struggle. And those who play Indian structures will hardly be glad with such a prospect.

7.e4 e5 8.\textit{\textit{N}}c3

Only now. Now, instead of a King’s Indian we get a Pirc-Ufimtsev Defence. There is a principal difference: the white pawn remains on c2 instead of c4. This is not to every black player’s liking. For instance, he may normally reply to 1.e4 with 1...e5 only.

8...e6 9.a4 \textit{\textit{e}}e8 10.h3 a5 11.\textit{\textit{e}}c3 \textit{\textit{c}}c7 12.\textit{\textit{d}}2
How should Black continue?

12...exd4

The surrender of the centre, all other things being equal, favours White. Developing Black’s last minor piece seems reasonable. However, in reply to 12...b6 there may follow 13.d5, closing off the bishop: 13...cxd5 14.b5 b8 15.exd5, which is not downright terrible, but the weakening of the points b5 and c6 is unpleasant.

13...xd4

The bishop faces its counterpart on the diagonal a1-h8. Black can kick it with ...c6-c5 but this will lead to negative consequences, as we will soon see.

13...e5 14.h2

Please note (if your Elo-rating exceeds 2300, skip this remark) that such ‘strange’ moves do have their meaning. At the moment White owns more space (due to the e4-pawn) and it is favourable for him to keep more pieces on the board. By means of f2-f4 I was going to banish the black knight from the centre and to extend my influence area, with the intention to bring the wanderer from h2 back to life afterwards.

14...e6

Similar is 14...c4 15.c1 e6 16.b3.

15.b3 d8 16.f4 c5
A radical decision. Now the knight from e5 will go to c6, but the chronic weakening of the light squares will tell. I suppose we both didn’t see 16...c8!? here. However, then White’s position is also better after 17.Qf2² (17.fxe5? dxe5-+).

17.Qf2²

The inclusion of 17.Qb5!? is sound too.

17...c6 18.ad1 d4 19.g4 d7

White should always watch out for the counterblow in the centre (especially after his knight has retreated to h2), but it doesn’t work here: 19...d5? 20.exd5 Qxd5 21.Qxd5 Qxd5 22.Qxe8+.

20.Qf3

Right, of course, as capturing on d4 with the bishop is bad.

20...xf3+ 21.Qxf3 c6
White is dizzied by the multitude of nice continuations:

22.g5

Is there anything more logical? White drives the knight off before he occupies square d5. The computer, however, prefers other moves: 22.Nb5!? or 22.Qd3!?

22...Nh5 23.Nd5 Bxd5 24.exd5

The simple threat is 25.Bxh5, destroying the enemy pawn structure.

24...h6
25.gxh6

I can’t say this is a bad move, but Houdini suggests a stronger one. The powerful 25.f5! would have crushed the residence of the black king and caused him great problems: 25...hxg5 (25...Be5 26.Bxh5 gxh5 27.Bh4!±, but this is too sophisticated for me. Besides, the position that arose in the game was similar) 26.Bxh5 gxh5 27.Qxg5 and Black has no satisfactory defence against the threat f5-f6: 27...f6 28.Qxh5+-.

25...hxg6 26.Bxh5 gxh5 27.h4 Qd7?

The thrifty 27...Rc8 was more stubborn, but after 28.g2+ Kh7 29.Qf3± the pawn on h5 will fall, with dire consequences (for example, Bh4-g5).

28.Qxh8 Qxd8

29.Qe2

Not bad, but it makes the realization of White’s advantage more difficult. There were a lot of cold-blooded winning continuations, such as 29.Qxa5, 29.Qc3, or 29.Qe3.

29...Qxh3 30.g2+ Qxg2+ 31.Qxg2 Qxf4

I won’t be offended if you don’t play the game through till the end. The opening part was interesting, and of reasonable quality. You needn’t repeat the further mistakes of the author.

32.Qf3

Better was 32.Re7.

32...g5 33.h1 g7 34.Qxh5 Qg6 35.Qh1 Qf5 36.de1 Qg8 37.Qhg1 Qh8 38.Qh1 Qg8 39.Qf1 Qh8 40.Qe2+ Qe4 41.Qxf7+-
The position is still technically won.

41...b6

41...\textit{\texttt{xd5}} 42.\textit{\texttt{f5+}}.

42.\textit{\texttt{d1+ d4}} 43.\textit{\texttt{f3}}

43.\textit{\texttt{f5}}.

43...c4! 44.\textit{\texttt{g1 e4}} 45.\textit{\texttt{c3}}

45.\textit{\texttt{f1 e3}} (45...\textit{\texttt{xb3?}} 46.\textit{\texttt{g5 b2}} 47.\textit{\texttt{d2+-}}) 46.\textit{\texttt{g4+}} (46.\textit{\texttt{e1 h3}} 47.\textit{\texttt{xc4}}) 46...\textit{\texttt{xd5}} 47.\textit{\texttt{xc4+}}.

45...\textit{\texttt{xb3}} 46.\textit{\texttt{xb3 e3}} 47.\textit{\texttt{e1 h3}}
The bishop is pinned from two sides, but it is not clear how White can profit from this.

48.\textit{R}xb6 \textit{R}h2 49.\textit{R}xe3+ \textit{K}xe3 50.\textit{R}c1

50.\textit{R}xd6 \textit{R}h1#.

50...\textit{R}h4 51.\textit{R}b2

Better was 51.\textit{R}xd6 \textit{K}d4 52.\textit{R}a6\pm.

51...\textit{R}xa4 52.\textit{K}b3 \textit{R}h4 53.\textit{R}d6 \textit{R}d4 54.\textit{R}d8 \textit{c}5 55.\textit{R}a8 \textit{R}xd5 56.\textit{R}xa5+ \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}

My handling of the ending left much to be desired. Frankly, I don’t remember exactly if it was time trouble. A pity, as this was the last round and the last chance to gain prizes.

In this Spanish team championship game, Arkadij Naiditsch exerted pressure on the black defensive lines throughout the game. However, Black’s position is solid. On the 60th move (in time trouble?) a mistake occurred, and the Georgian grandmaster even won.

\begin{table}[h]
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
43 & Arkadij Naiditsch (2712) \\
\hline
& Mikheil Mchedlishvili (2636) \\
\hline
& Spain tt 2011/12 (4) \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \textit{Q}f6 3.\textit{c}c3 e5 4.\textit{g}e2 c6 5.\textit{g}3 \textit{e}7 6.\textit{g}2 b5

White ignored this threat, so why not expand? Furthermore, on the kingside White is usually the attacking side.

7.0-0 \textit{bd}7

The unsophisticated 7...b4 is also good, viz. 8.dxe5 dxe5 9.\textit{R}xd8+ \textit{R}xd8 10.e1=. Or 7...\textit{b}7 8.h3 \textit{h}5 9.a3 \textit{bd}7 and now:
A) 10.\(\text{\&}e3\) a5 11.b4 axb4 axb4 12.\(\text{\&}a4\) 0-0 14.dxe5 dxe5=.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chessboard1}
\caption{Analysis diagram}
\end{figure}

Please note that after the move ...b5-b4 and the exchange of pawns on e5, the knight is clumsy on e2, Genzling-Nisipeanu, France tt 2011;

B) 10.f4 0-0 11.\(\text{\&}h2\) \(\text{\&}e8\) 12.\(\text{\&}e3\) \(\text{\&}f8\) 13.\(\text{\&}xe5\) dxe5 14.d5 cxd5 (14...a6 is not the most accurate. There may be no need for this move) 15.\(\text{\&}xd5\) \(\text{\&}xd5\) 16.exd5 \(\text{\&}f6\) with initiative.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chessboard2}
\caption{Analysis diagram}
\end{figure}

The passed d-pawn is under pressure, and ...h5-h4 will be unpleasant, Naiditsch-Mladenov, Deizisau 2012.
8.d5

A) 8...cxd5 9.Nxd5 Nxd5 10.Qxd5 Rb8=;

B) As a rule I prefer 8...b7 in such situations, as from this square the bishop exerts pressure on the e4- and d5-pawns, while after the exchange d5xc6, b7xc6 holds off the c3-knight. If it jumps to d5, Black will capture it and White will have a pawn on d5, for example 9.Re1 0-0 10.dxc6 bxc6 11.d5 Qxd5 12.exd5 b7=.
Now Black has full scope for aggression on the kingside (..f7-f5, ...e7-f6).

9.dxe6 Qxe6 10.e1

With 10.Nd4! White could have underlined the vulnerability of the hyper-active queen, for example 10...exd4 11.e5 d5 12.exf6 Qxf6 13.Qxd4=.

analysis diagram

I can’t see what dissuaded Naiditsch from playing this.

10...b7 11.d5 Qxd5 12.exd5 Qc7= 13.a4 bxa4

13...b4 suggested itself, but there are also nuances: 14.d2 a5 15.c3 bxc3 16.Qxc3 and the knight’s penetration on b5 will be very unpleasant.

14.Qxa4 0-0 15.b3 a5 16.Qd2 Qe5 17.a3
17...a4?!

A doubtful decision at this critical juncture. As you will understand, it is not wise to allow the creation of a white ‘avalanche’ with b4-c4-d5, but maybe there was some tactical reason for this move? Natural and sound was 17...f5, according to the rule: ‘play on the side where you are stronger’.


22.c4

The bishop protects the d5-pawn after 22.Rh4 Qf8 23.Qa1. The queen makes a switch to the corner, and Black cannot protect the a4- and d4-pawns simultaneously.
22...dxc3 23.bxc3 e5 24.xa4 xd5 25.xe5 xg2 26.ea5

Better is 26.e7.

26...xa5 27.bxa5 e6 28.g4 xc3 29.xg2 c6+

A critical moment.

30.f3?
I don’t understand why this should be better than 30.\textit{Qe}4, as the second rank is weakened. However, this was a team tournament, and it cannot be ruled out that Arkadij had to take a risk. After the ‘normal’ 30.\textit{Qe}4 d5 31.\textit{Qd}4 \textit{Ra}8 32.\textit{Rb}4± White stands better, but it looks like a draw.

30...\textit{Qc}2+= 31.\textit{Sh}3 h5

To provide his king with an escape square with tempo. 32.\textit{Sh}xh5 is impossible as it loses the rook.

Also acceptable was 31...\textit{Qd}1 32.a6 \textit{Qf}1+ 33.\textit{Sh}4 \textit{Qe}2 34.f4 (34.\textit{Sh}h3 \textit{Qf}1+=) 34...\textit{Sh}xh2+ 35.\textit{Sh}h3 \textit{Qe}2= and with such a vulnerable enemy king, Black isn’t likely to lose. If things threaten to go wrong he will find a perpetual check.

32.\textit{Qe}4 \textit{Qc}8+ 33.\textit{Sh}g2 \textit{Re}8 34.\textit{Qd}3 \textit{Qc}1?!

34...\textit{Rf}3!? would have equalized elegantly, viz. 35.\textit{Qe}3 \textit{Qc}2+ 36.\textit{Sh}h3 \textit{Qxa}4=.

35.\textit{Qa}2±

Now the white king can heave a sigh of relief and the passed a-pawn is ready to continue its march.

35...\textit{Qc}5 36.a6 \textit{Rf}8 37.\textit{Qa}3

Stronger was 37.\textit{Qb}3, introducing motifs like 37...d5 38.a7 \textit{Ra}7 39.\textit{Qb}8+.

37...\textit{Qb}6 38.a7 d5 39.\textit{Qa}5 \textit{Qb}3 40.\textit{Qa}4 \textit{Qb}6 41.\textit{Qa}5 \textit{Qb}3 42.\textit{Qa}3 \textit{Qb}6 43.\textit{Qa}6 \textit{Qb}3
Please note that the queen exchange is still contra-indicated for Black: 43...\textit{xa6} 44.\textit{xa6} \textit{f8} 45.\textit{f2}+-, as the king goes to d4 and Black’s central pawn will perish.

\textbf{44.\textit{e2}} \textit{b6} 45.\textit{a6} \textit{c5}

45...\textit{b7}! 46.\textit{a2} d4 looks equal because the passed d-pawn will distract the enemy and therefore its counterpart on a7 will be eliminated.

\textbf{46.\textit{b2}} \textit{c7} 47.\textit{d4} \textit{e2}+ 48.\textit{f2} \textit{c4} 49.\textit{a2} \textit{c7} 50.\textit{a4} \textit{b7}

After some protracted manoeuvring the chances are still more or less equal.

\textbf{51.a5} \textit{b2}+ 52.\textit{h3} \textit{b6} 53.\textit{a6} \textit{b7} 54.\textit{a5} \textit{b6} 55.\textit{a6} \textit{b7} 56.\textit{a3} d4 57.\textit{g2} d3 58.\textit{f2} d2

See the note to the 45th move.

\textbf{59.\textit{e2}??}

I fully understand the German player. It’s disappointing to have to agree to a draw, but sometimes precisely because of this we lose! 59.\textit{d6}=

\textbf{59...\textit{d8} 60.\textit{d6} \textit{c7}+ 61.\textit{f2} \textit{xd6} 62.a8=\textit{+} \textit{h7} 63.e5 d1=\textit{+} 0-1}

A dramatic finish.

So White may ignore the move ...\textit{b7-b5}, but in the following encounter the preventive \textit{a2-a4} was played. Later on the white pawn advanced to \textit{a5}, which seems doubtful to me in this case. Black attained an excellent position – please don’t be confused by the final result: it was a rapid game.

\underline{David Howell (2611)}
\underline{Stewart Haslinger (2543)}
1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nge2 c6 5.a4 Nbd7

6.h3 h5 7.g3 Be7 8.Bg2 b6 9.0-0 a6
A flexible set-up which enables Black to move any pawn when needed.

10.d5 cxd5 11.exd5 0-0= 12.Ne3

12.f4!?.

12...e8 13.d2 c6 14.a5 b5

In my opinion this queenside structure favours Black. The early ...a7-a6 serves, among others, to be able to play ...b6-b5 in reply to a4-a5. And here White has forced this move himself – to what use? Now the outpost on b5 can’t be attacked by a2-a4, and the far-advanced a5-pawn itself needs constant care.

15.a2 e8 16.b4

White’s idea becomes more clear. The knight has occupied the blockading square and is eyeing c6. However, all this is not dangerous because the b7-bishop controls the knight (d5, c6, a6).

16...c5 17.b3

17.c3 d7 18.ad1=.

17...fe4 18.d1 f5

With an initiative. All quite logical: each side attacks on the flank where it is strongest.
19.\textit{e}4 \textit{b}xc4 20.\textit{b}xc4 \textit{h}4 21.\textit{g}4?

Too sharp. White’s kingside position was not so bad that he should stoop to such radical measures. Better was 21.\textit{c}6 \textit{c}7 22.\textit{x}e7+ \textit{x}e7 23.\textit{c}2 with roughly equal chances.

21...\textit{fxg}4 22.\textit{hxg}4 \textit{d}7= 23.\textit{h}2 \textit{g}5

The pawn is still inedible: 23...\textit{x}g4 24.\textit{f}3+-.

24.\textit{a}3

Better was 24.\textit{c}2.

24...\textit{f}8 25.\textit{f}3 \textit{xe}3 26.\textit{xe}3

26...\textit{g}5?!

Let’s not be too critical, as the time control of this game was not classical. The pawn sacrifice was a more powerful option: 26...\textit{g}3 27.\textit{x}g3 \textit{hxg}3+ 28.\textit{x}g3 \textit{f}7 with an initiative. The weakness of the black complex (\textit{f}4) becomes clear.

27.\textit{e}1 \textit{d}8?!

Indirectly protecting the \textit{h}4-pawn, which is now inviolable because of 28...\textit{xf}3+. However, 27...\textit{e}4!? seems to be more adequate, attacking the base \textit{f}3, while the black queen is still monitoring square \textit{g}4: 28.\textit{d}4 (28.\textit{f}4 \textit{f}3+ 29.\textit{xf}3 \textit{exf}3 30.\textit{exf}3 \textit{ce}8) 28...\textit{xf}3 29.\textit{xf}3 with an unclear position.

28.\textit{f}4

White has the initiative.

28...\textit{f}7 29.\textit{c}6 \textit{xc}6 30.\textit{dxc}6 \textit{e}4
More tenacious was 30...g6!?

31.g5+-

The rest is not so interesting. The h4- and e4-pawns are marked for death, and White’s position is technically won.

31...Nxg5 32.fxg5 Qxg5 33.Rh3

Better was 33.Rxf8+ Rxf8 34.Rh3+-.

33...Rxh1 34.Bxf1 Qe5+ 35.Kh1 g5 36.Qc3 Qxh6 37.Nd5?!

37.Rxe3 d5 38.cxd5 Rf6 39.Qg2+-.

37...Ec8 38.Qc3 Eb8

With compensation.

39.Qxe5 dxe5 40.Qc3 Eb3 41.Qe3

41.Qd5?!. Now Black gets counterplay.

41...g4 42.Qe2 g3 43.Qg2 Qa4??

43.Qe6=.

44.Qd5?!

44.e5+ Qxc5 45.Qc4+ Qg7 46.Qxb3 Qxb3 47.Qxe4.

44...Qb2 45.Qxe4 5c5 46.Qxe5 5d3 47.Qe3 Qc1 48.Qf4 Qf7 49.Qh3 Qf6?

Better was 49...Qxe2 50.Qxe2 Qc2 51.Qf4 (51.Qe4 Qf6=) 51...Qxc4 52.Qg2 Qc5 53.Qa3±.
50.f3+ h2+ 51.g4 a2 52.c5 b4 53.c6 xc6 54.e6+ f7 55.d5 a2 56.e1+ f6 57.xa2 g2 58.h3 f5 59.xg2 f6 60.e6+ f5 1-0

In the following game from the Serbian team championship White quickly obtained a positional advantage and confidently converted it into victory. Please pay attention to the sharp g2-g4 (instead of g2-g3).

45
Arkadij Naiditsch (2706)
Nikolay Ninov (2518)
Serbia tt 2011/12 (2)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nge2 c6 5.h3 b5

5...e7.

6.a3 Bd7 7.g4

And I like it too! The pawn gets to g4 in one move, saving a tempo.

7...b6 8.g2 a5 9.0-0 b4

The modest 9...e7 is not bad, for example 10.dxe5 (10.g3) 10...dxe5 11.xd8+ xd8 12.d1=.

10.axb4 axb4 11.xa8 xxa8

Of course the knight is passive on this square.

12.a4 a6 13.e1 c5 14.c3

Perhaps more reasonable was 14.g5 b5 (14...cxd4 15.xd4! exd4 16.e5+-) 15.b3=.

14.dxc5 is not dangerous, viz. 14...dxc5 15.xd8+ xxd8 with an acceptable position for Black.
14...d7 15.g3 bxc3 16.bxc3 a5 17.f1

It looks as if White is better. The light-squared bishops can be traded and Black’s dark-squared bishop on f8 is bad due to the structure (e5, d6, c5).

17...c4?!

Strategically unfavourable. Black relieves the tension from the d4-pawn, the c4-pawn itself will be subjected to pressure and the bishop on b5 is blocked by its own pawn. The lesser evil was 17...xf1 18.xf1 a5 19.b3 c7.

18.h2 ab6 19.e3± e7

The reckless 19...h5?? might have frightened the enemy, but does not really solve Black’s problems: 20.xh5 g6 21.g3 h6 22.xh6 xh6 23.dxe5 dxe5 24.d6+- with an extra pawn and a positional advantage.

20.a1 d5?!
Optimistically played, taking into account that Black’s king is still in the centre. 20...0-0 was better.

21.\( \text{\underline{\text{\textit{f5}}} \ 0-0 \ 22.\text{\textit{\underline{a5}}} \ \text{\textit{\underline{c6}}} \ 23.\text{\textit{\underline{dxe5}}}} \)

Black’s centre is falling to pieces, as a result of his impulsive 20th move.

23...\( \text{\textit{\underline{g5}}} \ 24.\text{\textit{\underline{f4}}} \ \text{\textit{\underline{h4}}} \ 25.\text{\textit{\underline{d1}}} \ \text{\textit{\underline{dxe4}}} \ 26.\text{\textit{\underline{xb6}}} \ \text{\textit{\underline{b8}}} \)

26...\( \text{\textit{\underline{xb6}}} + \ 27.\text{\textit{\underline{xb6}}} \ \text{\textit{\underline{xb6}}} \ 28.\text{\textit{\underline{h4}}} + \).

27.\( \text{\textit{xc4}} \)

Black resigned.

I have the impression that this was an easy victory for Arkadij.

An essentially different queenside set-up was applied in the following game between a Peruvian and a Spanish master. The move a2-a4 was mirrored with ...a7-a5, and the black knight cheerfully galloped to the weakened square b4. The opening resulted in a quite favourable position for Black, but later on the difference in class told (perdone me, por favor).

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\begin{center}
\textbf{Julio Granda Zuniga (2614)  
Jose Cuenca Jimenez (2450) 
La Roda Open 2010 (4)}
\end{center}

1.d4 d6 2.e4 \( \text{\textit{\underline{f6}}} \ 3.\text{\textit{\underline{c3}}} \text{\textit{\underline{e5}}} \ 4.\text{\textit{\underline{ge2}}} \text{\textit{\underline{e7}}} \ 5.\text{\textit{g3}} \ 0-0 \)

5...\( \text{\textit{\underline{g4}}} \ 6.dxe5 (6.\text{\textit{\underline{g2}}}?? \text{\textit{\underline{c6}}} \ 7.\text{\textit{h3}}} \text{\textit{\underline{e6}}} \ 8.\text{\textit{\underline{e3}}} \text{and the bishop’s move to g4 has been in vain}) 6...\text{\textit{\underline{dxe5}}} \ (6...\text{\textit{\underline{xe4}}} \ 7.\text{\textit{\underline{xe4}}} \text{\textit{\underline{f3}}} \ 8.\text{\textit{\underline{g1}}} \text{\textit{\underline{xe4}}} \ 9.e6 \text{\textit{\underline{fxe6}}} \ 10.\text{\textit{\underline{f4}}} =) \ 7.\text{\textit{\underline{xd8+}}} \text{\textit{\underline{xd8}}} \ 8.\text{\textit{\underline{g2}}} \text{\textit{\underline{c6}}} \ 9.\text{\textit{h3}}} \text{\textit{\underline{e6}}} = \text{\textit{Xiong-Zherebukh, Richardson 2013.}} \)

6.\( \text{\textit{\underline{g2}}} \text{\textit{\underline{c6}}} \ 7.a4 \text{\textit{\underline{a5}}} \)
A bit stronger than 7...b6. Now the knight will be directed along the route b8-a6-b4 so as to burden some major white piece (for instance, the queen) with the protection of the c2-pawn.

8.0-0  
9.a6  
10.b3  
11.Re8  
12.Bf8  
13.Rfe1  
14.h3  

With all the black pieces mobilized, White isn’t any better. Partly this can be blamed on the troublesome knight on b4. How can White chase it away? In case he prepares this with c2-c3, the b2-bishop will be displeased.

15.Nb1!

A subtle manoeuvre! The very experienced white player plans the knight’s transfer to square c4. After that several of Black’s pawns and pieces will feel uneasy (e5, d6, b6, a5).
15...d5?!

The modest move 15...Be6 is more appropriate, continuing development and taking point c4 under control. Now 16.dxe5 dxe5 17...xe5? is not dangerous because of 17...xe4+ and the e5-bishop drops.

16.exd5 cxd5

Black had an amusing option in 16...e4!, for example: 17.dxc6 Bxh3! 18.cxb7 (18.Bxh3! e3 19.bc1 (19.fxe3 Bxe4 20.Bc1 a2+ is mate to the queen) 19...a2 20.cxb7 ac7 21.Bc7 22.Bxe3 Bxe3 23.fxe3 ef8=) 18...ad8 with compensation.

17.dxe5 Ne4 18.Bxe4 dxe4 19.Qf4 Qf5

Not 19...xe5? 20.Qxe4 and White wins.

20.Qa3± ad8 21.Qe3

A poor decision. Stronger was 21.Qc1± and the knight strives to jump to c4 with tempo.

21...Qxe3 22.fxe3 Bxd1 23.Bxd1

23...Bxe5?!

The h3-pawn would be quite tasty, for instance: 23...g5 24.h5 Bxh3 25.xg7 c3+ f6 27.Ke7+ Kg6 28.Bxb7 Bxe6 and Black has his own trumps.

24.Qxe5 Bxe5 25.Qxd8+ Qg7 26.Qc4 Qc6 27.Qd2 Qc5?!

27...Qe7.

28.g4 Qc8 29.Qd6+
We can see the significant superiority of the centralized knight over the bishop.

29...\textit{\texttt{d}b4} 30.\texttt{c}c4 \texttt{b}b6 31.\textit{\texttt{d}f}2

Actually, there are no satisfactory continuations anymore for Black.

31...\texttt{h}5?

31...\texttt{d}d3+ 32.\texttt{xd}xd3 exd3 33.\texttt{xd}xd3 \texttt{e}e6±.

32.\textit{\texttt{xe}4}+\texttt{e}e5 33.\textit{\texttt{d}e}d6 \texttt{e}e6 34.gxh5 gxh5 35.h4

35...\texttt{e}e8+!?.

35...\texttt{a}a6? 36.\texttt{d}d3 1-0
The rook is arrested in the centre of the board.

The Chinese mercenary Ni Hua played an instructive game in the Russian club championship of 2010. Black sacrificed a pawn, but his compensation was insufficient and soon he lost another one.

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Ni Hua (2665)
Stanislav Novikov (2550)
Dagomys tt 2010 (1)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nge2 Be7 5.g3 0-0 6.Bg2 c6 7.a4 Nbd7 8.0-0 b6

If ...b7-b5 is not allowed, then it makes sense to at least set up the queenside pawns flexibly and to develop the bishop to b7.

9.h3 Nb7 10.g4 g6 11.g3 Ne8

This looks a bit artificial; 11...exd4.

12.Nh6 f5 13.f4
It looks as if White stands better, but Houdini doesn’t think so. Perhaps the pawn has to be captured, otherwise Black must always take f4-f5 into account.

13...exf4 14...xf4 c5

A crucial decision. The restrained 14...Ne6 was more careful: 15.Nh6 e8 and Black’s position is remindful of a spring.

15.dxc5

15.d5 is interesting, trying to limit the g7-knight (points e6, f5, h5) and the b7-bishop at the same time. But there is a negative: the weakening of point e5.

15...xc5 16.Nb5

16.Nge2!? – the knight is passive if it stays on g3.

16...Ne6 17.Nxd6 a6 18.Nxe7 Qxe7 19.Nc3

Wrong is 19.Qd6?? Qh4+ and both knights are under attack.

19...Qh4 20.Kh2+

The Chinese player is gradually building up his advantage. His extra pawn provides him with a substantial edge.

20...Rd8 21.ad5 Qd7 22.Qe1

Reasonable: the absent dark-squared bishop is replaced by the queen.

22...Qe5

Threatening to take on g4.

23.Qg1 f6?
A blunder. Better was 23...\text{c}8.

24.\text{h}5!

Threatening to strike on f6 with check(!).

24...\text{xe}1

Downright bad is 24...\text{g}5 25.\text{xf}6+ \text{h}8 26.\text{h}4 \text{h}6 27.\text{c}3+-.

25.\text{hxf}6+ \text{g}7 26.\text{axe}1 \text{f}7 27.\text{f}2

Better was 27.h4 h6 28.h5 \text{g}5 29.hxg6 \text{xg}6 30.\text{d}1 \text{c}8 31.c3±.

27...\text{df}8 28.\text{ef}1 \text{c}6

28...a5!?.

29.b3

No matter how passive the bishop on g2 is, two extra pawns is a serious matter, and it should be enough for victory.

29...b5 30.a5

30.axb5.

30...b4

30...h6 31.h4 b4±.
31.h4?!

The following ‘surgical intervention’ was interesting: 31...\textcolor{red}{\text{Nxh7}}! \textcolor{red}{\text{N}xh7} (the computer suggests 31...\textcolor{red}{\text{R}}xf2 32.\textcolor{red}{\text{R}}xf2 \textcolor{red}{\text{R}}xf2 33.\textcolor{red}{\text{R}}xf2 \textcolor{red}{\text{R}}xh7 34.\textcolor{red}{\text{R}}xb4, but playing with a piece down is rather depressing, since the e5- and e6-knights are real ‘beasts’) 32.\textcolor{red}{\text{R}}xf7+ \textcolor{red}{\text{N}}xf7 33.\textcolor{red}{\text{N}}xb4±.

31...\textcolor{red}{\text{B}}b5 32.\textcolor{red}{\text{R}}d1 \textcolor{red}{\text{B}}xf6 33.\textcolor{red}{\text{N}}xf6 \textcolor{red}{\text{R}}xf6 34.\textcolor{red}{\text{R}}d6

Better was 34.g5 \textcolor{red}{\text{R}}xf2 35.\textcolor{red}{\text{N}}xf2 \textcolor{red}{\text{N}}f8±. Black’s position is still solid, but the resource \textcolor{red}{\text{g}2-h3(f1)} is very unpleasant for him.

34...\textcolor{red}{\text{R}}xf2 35.\textcolor{red}{\text{R}}xf2 \textcolor{red}{\text{R}}f6 36.\textcolor{red}{\text{B}}f1 \textcolor{red}{\text{e}7} 37(3,297),(995,838) 38.\textcolor{red}{\text{N}}e5+ 39.\textcolor{red}{\text{B}}xf1 \textcolor{red}{\text{N}}xf1 40.\textcolor{red}{\text{N}}xb4

With a struggle on two flanks, a rook and two pawns are stronger than two knights.

40...\textcolor{red}{\text{N}}d6

It was better to go to d7 at once. Unfortunately 40...\textcolor{red}{\text{N}}e3+ couldn’t be played due to 41.\textcolor{red}{\text{N}}e2 \textcolor{red}{\text{N}}xc2 42.\textcolor{red}{\text{R}}c4+-.

41.\textcolor{red}{\text{B}}b6+ \textcolor{red}{\text{B}}d7 42.\textcolor{red}{\text{B}}e2 \textcolor{red}{\text{e}5} 43.\textcolor{red}{\text{B}}e3 \textcolor{red}{\text{h}6}

43...\textcolor{red}{\text{c}6}!±.

44.\textcolor{red}{\text{B}f4+-}
The rest is logical, and needs no further comment.

44...Nd6 45.b4 Ne6+ 46.Kg3 Nc7 47.f4 Ne5 48.Ne2 Nc7 49.Ng4 50.Nd4 Nc6+ 51.Kc3 g5 52.h5 g4 53.b5 axb5 54.cxb5 Ne5 55.Bxh6 Bxb5+ 56.Nc2 d6 57.Bh7+ Ke6 58.a6 Ke4 59.a7 Nc6+ 60.Ka4 Bxa7 61.Ba7 a3 62.h6 g5 63.g7

Black resigned.

I kindly ask you to pay special attention to the last example, keeping in mind the title and subtitle of this book. It is dangerous for White to overestimate his chances – a space advantage does not guarantee success. In this highly important last-round game, Russian grandmaster Peter Svidler played too optimistically and suffered a loss.

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Peter Svidler (2731)

Iyan Salgado Lopez (2595)

Khartys-Mansiysk ol 2010 (11)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nge2 Ng8 5.g3 Bb4 6.Bg2 c6 7.a4 b6 8.0-0 a6 9.h3 h5!?

On 5...c6 Magnus Carlsen played 6.Ng2, not afraid of the threat ...b7-b5. If he isn’t, maybe this move is really not dangerous? But there is also a counter-argument: in the following game the Norwegian didn’t obtain any advantage: 6...b5 7.a3 Bb7 8.0-0 0-0 9.h3 a5 10.g4 Ba6 With initiative. So far all the moves have been logical, he intends to play ...b5-b4. 11.Ng3 The ‘bayonet counterattack’ with 11.b4 is unconvincing due to 11...b6 12.Ng3 cxb4. The knight is perfectly placed here. 11...Bb7 12.Nc2 Bxa3 13.Bxa3 d5 14.Nxe3 The complications are unclear after 14.exd5 Bxa3 15.dxc6 Bc7 16.exd7 Kxa7 17.Nc6 with compensation. 14...dxe4 with equality in Carlsen-Radjabov, Biel 2007.

6.Ng2 c6 7.a4 b6 8.0-0 a6 9.h3 h5!?

I would also play this, as I wouldn’t allow the restraining g3-g4 etc. The weakening does not seem to be too significant.

10.Nc3 Bb7 11.c1 0-0 12.d3 Bc7 13.f4 b5
13...Rae8!? would have preserved equality.

14.\text{\texttt{f2}}?!

Embarking on the wrong path. 14.axb5 cxb5 15.\text{\texttt{d2}}=.

14...Rfe8

Opening the centre is also good, aiming to play on the queenside: 14...exd4!? 15.\text{\texttt{x}}d4 c5 16.\text{\texttt{d3}} b4=.

15.g4?!

Peter is trying to extract the maximum out of the position, even more than there is in it. He has the white pieces, it’s a team tournament, there’s a 130 Elo difference.

Adequate was, for instance, 15.axb5 axb5 16.\text{\texttt{xa8}} \text{\texttt{xa8}} 17.\text{\texttt{e2}}, which is about equal.

15...hxg4 16.hxg4 b4 17.\text{\texttt{e2}} exd4 18.\text{\texttt{x}}d4 c5 19.\text{\texttt{d3}}
Finally the Spanish player has managed to expand on the queenside, and now he will do so in the centre.

19...d5

19...c4!? is also promising, for example 20.\(Qd2\) \(\diamond c5\) 21.\(g3\) \(f8\). Usually such rash pawn moves result in a weakening of the d4-square, but how can e4 otherwise be protected?

20.e5 \(\diamond e4\) 21.\(\diamond x e 4?!\)

Better is 21.g5.

21...\(d x e 4 =\) 22.\(Qd1\)

The thing is that the pawn mustn’t be taken: 22.\(\diamond x e 4?\) \(c4\) 23.\(Qd4\) \(\diamond c5\)-+.

22...\(Rd8\) 23.\(\diamond c1\) \(f6\) 24.e6 \(\diamond b6\) 25.f5
Seeing Svidler’s position here, his team members must have been satisfied: a far-advanced protected passed pawn in the centre, providing a lasting edge. But this impression is deceptive: Black has sound counterplay.

25...Nd5

25...c4!.

26.Qf4

Greed is inappropriate when your king is not guarded: 26.Qxe4? Qe5 27.Qxd5 Qxd5 with a powerful attack.

26...c4 27.Qxd5 Qxd5 28.Qf4

Better was 28.Qe1.

28...Qb6+ 29.Qh2?
This is a serious mistake. I dare assume that it seemed to Peter that there were no threats on the h-file. After all, how can the black rook fly over the monarch to h8?! However, the modest 29.\textit{Be3} would have been correct, upholding the front line, for example 29...\textit{c5} 30.\textit{e1}.

29...\textit{g5}!+- 30.\textit{fxg6}

I can’t see any acceptable continuation for White here: 30.\textit{Be3} \textit{Qd6}+ 31.\textit{Kg1} \textit{Qg3}+- and the queen is attacking almost everything simultaneously; 30.\textit{Bg3} \textit{Kg7}+- with the very dangerous threat 31...\textit{Rh8}+, and so on.

30...\textit{Qxe6} 31.\textit{Bc8} \textit{Bg5}

Effective and sufficient. The simple 31...\textit{c8} was even stronger, for example 32.\textit{h3} \textit{g7} with the already familiar idea ...\textit{e8-h8xh3}.

32.\textit{Bxg5} \textit{fxg5} 33.\textit{d6}+ 34.\textit{e2} \textit{e3}+ 35.\textit{Qg1} \textit{Qg2} 36.\textit{xg2} \textit{e4}+

And White resigned.

It seems that the sporting result of this game was of great importance. I am not quite sure about the nuances, but according to the table this loss led to a draw in the match and Russia taking second place, with the slightest gap between them and the winner, Ukraine.

\textbf{Conclusion}

If Black plays passively in the variation with 4.\textit{Ng2}, he may be gradually strangled. However, he can make use of the counterplay opportunities on the queenside and can often stop the enemy offensive on the kingside by means of ...h7-h5.
Part III
The Rare 4.f3

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.f3

So, what should we do if White flatly refuses our invitation to shift to a ‘boring’ ending (4.dxe5 dxe5 5.Qxd8+ Kxd8) by playing 4.f3?

To my mind, it is more reasonable to play f2-f3 on the 3rd move, after which, for instance, a transposition into the Sämisch Variation of the Old-Indian Defence (c2-c4) is possible. It is seldom played on the 4th move by strong players.

The simple 4...exd4 looks not bad from Black’s point of view. White has to recapture with the queen (his other pieces haven’t been developed yet). In response, Black may attack this super-strong warrior of the opponent with the knight: 5...Nc6. White has to pin with 6.Bb5, agreeing on the exchange of the bishop for the knight in the near future.

In the first game of this chapter, from a Hungarian tournament, the Ukrainian grandmaster Vladimir Malaniuk didn’t manage to raise problems for his opponent, but why should Black necessarily have to win?!

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Martin Borris (2340)
Vladimir Malaniuk (2500)
Kecskemet 1991 (6)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.f3 exd4

This surrender of the centre is the first preference of the computer.

5.Qxd4 Nc6 6.Bb5 d7

Up to here everything has been logical. Black develops, attacking the queen at the same time.
7. \textit{Bxc6 Bxc6} 8. \textit{Bd3}

Or 8. \textit{Bg5} \textit{Be7} 9.0-0-0 0-0 (opposite castling is the harbinger of swift pawn attacks) 10.g4 a5 11.h4 b5.

\textit{analysis diagram}

Black is already prepared to force the c3-knight back, while White has certain chances because of the bishop on g5, but is this the right place for it? 12. \textit{Ne2} b4 13. \textit{Nd5} \textit{Nxd5} 14.\textit{exd5} \textit{d7} (it is impossible to make a feast of the pawn: 14... \textit{Bxg5}+?! 15.\textit{hxg5} \textit{Qxg5}+ 16.\textit{f4}+- and the piece drops) 15. \textit{Ng3} f6 (here a man with a robust nervous system might try 15... \textit{Bxg5}+ 16.\textit{hxg5} \textit{Qxg5}+ 17.\textit{f4} \textit{g6} 18.\textit{Rdg1 Rfe8} with unclear consequences) 16. \textit{Qf4} \textit{Bb8} 17.\textit{Wd2} a4 with counterplay, Rasik-Nun, Czechia 2013.

8... \textit{Be7} 9.0-0-0 0-0 10. \textit{ge2} \textit{d7}

Interesting is 10...b5!? so as in case of the exchange on d5 to lure the white e-pawn there.

11. \textit{Nd5} \textit{xd5} 12. \textit{Wxd5}!

See the previous remark.

12... \textit{c6} 13. \textit{Wb3} \textit{c7} 14. \textit{Ad4±}
Now the d6-pawn is weak, which determines White’s advantage.

14...\textit{R}e8 15.\textit{N}f5 \textit{g}f8 16.\textit{R}d2

16.h4.

16...\textit{N}e5

Vladimir decided not to protect the pawn (all the more as this is highly problematic), but to organize counterplay during the time which White will spend on the conquest of the foot soldier on d6. Well, in times of war sometimes one unit is sacrificed as a bait... 16...\textit{R}ad8!?

17.\textit{R}hd1 \textit{b}5

An alternative was 17...\textit{R}ad8!? 18.\textit{B}g5 \textit{d}d7 19.\textit{b}b1 \textit{b}5.

18.\textit{N}xd6 \textit{N}xd6 19.\textit{N}e6 \textit{N}c4 20.\textit{R}d7 \textit{N}xh2 21.\textit{N}c3 \textit{N}xe3 22.\textit{R}xe3 \textit{N}xg2

The Ukrainian grandmaster is even one pawn up! However, the activity of White’s pieces compensates for this slight deficit.
23.\textit{g1} \textit{h2} 24.\textit{xg7+}

A tactical operation which secures the draw.

24...\textit{xg7} 25.\textit{g5+} \textit{f8} 26.\textit{c5+} \textit{g8} 27.\textit{g5+}

Draw agreed.

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\begin{tabular}{|l|}
\hline
Pavel Vavra (2393) \\
Jiri Stocek (2514) \\
Pardubice Open 2000 (8) \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \textit{f6} 3.\textit{c3} e5 4.f3 exd4 5.\textit{xd4} \textit{c6} 6.\textit{b5} \textit{e7} 7.\textit{g5}

7.\textit{e3} 0-0 (attacking the centralized queen, thus saving a tempo. The c8-bishop can go out not only to d7) 8.\textit{xc6} (8.\textit{d2}) 8...\textit{bxc6} 9.\textit{d1} and now:

A) 9...\textit{e6} 10.\textit{ge2} d5 = R. Müller-Zagorskis, Schwäbisch Gmünd 1995;

B) Probably a bit more accurate is 9...\textit{e8} and now 10.\textit{ge2} (10.\textit{f4} \textit{a6} 11.\textit{a4} \textit{c8} 12.\textit{xc6} \textit{b7} 13.\textit{a4} d5=) 10...d5= with a confrontation on the e-file, for example:
11.exd5 cxd5 12.\texttt{N}xd5 xxd5 13.\texttt{Q}xd5 h4+ 14.\texttt{B}f2? a6.

7...0-0 8.\texttt{Q}d2 a6

The redeployment of the knight with 8...\texttt{N}e5 looks a little artificial, for instance 9.f4 \texttt{Nd}7 10.0-0-0 c6 11.d3 but it is also possible to play this way.

9.\texttt{B}xc6 bxc6 10.0-0-0 \texttt{B}b8 11.\texttt{B}ge2 \texttt{Be}8 12.d4 \texttt{Ad}7 13.g4 h6 14.\texttt{Be}3

Or 14.\texttt{B}f4 \texttt{h}h7 15.\texttt{B}f5 \texttt{g}g5=.

14...d5
15. e5 Nh7 16. Nh3

16. f5!? f8 17. f4 g6 18. h8 g1.

16... f8

The outpost on e5 is attacked, and it is unfavourable to protect it by means of f3-f4 because then the g4-pawn drops; 16... h4!?

17. d4 g5 18. f2 e6 19. e3 f6

A bit more accurate is 19... b4 20. d3 f6=.

20. exf6 xf6 21. f4 b4 22. d3 xc3 23. xc3
I don't like the sight of the weak dark squares d4 and c5. Black's doubled pawns are no adornment to his position either, while there is also a passive bishop on d7. Houdini doesn't agree with the author, though.

23...\textcolor{red}{\text{\textit{R}}b4} 24.f5

The normal continuation is 24.a3 \textcolor{red}{\textit{Ra4}}, keeping a dynamic balance.

24...\textcolor{red}{\textit{Ng5}} 25.\textcolor{blue}{\textit{Bd4}?!}

A poor decision. Pavel is gradually losing the thread of the game.

In Pardubice, despite the perfect organization, it is usually very hot inside the playing venue. Some participants (your obedient servant, for example) would walk 'to the ice' between moves in search of coolness (the main tournament took place in the ice hall, which was called 'Arena'). But with little time left on the clock you cannot walk 100 meters and 100 meters back, and so the quality of your play inevitably deteriorates.

However, you shouldn't let this comment put you off. Our family has played in Pardubice for 5-6 times, spending part of holidays there, and I think we will do it again. I recommend you to visit the Pardubice Open on your own at least once, and draw your own conclusions.

25.\textcolor{red}{\textit{Qg2}?!}.

25...\textcolor{red}{\textit{Qe4}} 26.\textcolor{red}{\textit{Qg1}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{Qg5}+} 27.\textcolor{red}{\textit{Qe3}}

27.\textcolor{red}{\textit{Qb1}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{Qxc3}+} 28.\textcolor{red}{\textit{Qxc3}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{Qb5}+}.

Alas, 27.\textcolor{red}{\textit{Qe3}} doesn't work due to 27...\textcolor{red}{\textit{Qxc3}} 28.\textcolor{red}{\textit{xg5}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{Qe2}+}. 
27...\textit{\textbf{R}}xd4?! \\
Jiri is also straying from the right path. The sharp 27...c5! would have won: \textit{28.\textbf{N}}xc5 (28.h4 \textit{\textbf{Q}}f4=+) 28...\textit{\textbf{R}}xd4 29.\textit{\textbf{N}}xd7 \textit{\textbf{N}}f6=.

\textbf{28.\textit{\textbf{N}}}xd4 \textit{\textbf{N}}d6 29.\textit{\textbf{N}}e6 \textit{\textbf{B}}xe6 30.h4 \\
30.\textit{\textbf{K}}b1. \\
\textbf{30...\textit{\textbf{Q}}}f4 31.\textit{\textbf{K}}b1 \\
The fight continues... \\
\textbf{31...\textit{\textbf{B}}}d7 32.\textit{\textbf{R}}d6 29.\textit{\textbf{e}}6 \textit{\textbf{B}}xe6 30.h4 \\
32.\textit{\textbf{K}}b1=.

\textbf{30...\textit{\textbf{Q}}}f4 31.\textit{\textbf{K}}b1 \\
The fight continues... \\
\textbf{31...\textit{\textbf{B}}}d7 32.\textit{\textbf{R}}a3? \\
... but not for long. After 32.\textit{\textbf{R}}xe8+ \textit{\textbf{B}}xe8 33.\textit{\textbf{Q}}d1 Black would still have had to demonstrate some technique.

\textbf{32...\textit{\textbf{Q}}}c4 33.\textit{\textbf{c}}3 \\
If 33.\textit{\textbf{R}}xa6 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xb2= with a lethal attack.

\textbf{33...\textit{\textbf{R}}b8 34.b3 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d2+ 35.\textit{\textbf{R}}b2 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e5} \\
Better was 35...d4.

\textbf{36.\textit{\textbf{a}}3 \textit{\textbf{c}}4+ 0-1} \\
36...\textit{\textbf{Q}}xc3 is a forced mate in 6.

The modest queen retreat from the centre doesn’t promise any dividends for White, as was creatively demonstrated by one of the best chess players of the former USSR in the next game. Black advanced ...d6-d5 instantly, eliminating the opponent’s e4-pawn. The pawn structure became symmetrical, and in terms of development White is certainly not
1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.c3 e5 4.f3 exd4 5.Qxd4 Nc6 6.Qf2

Sergey prefers not to pin with Bb5 – perhaps he is unwilling to part with the bishop.

6...d5!

This is likely to be the downside of the queen’s retreat from its central position. Black strikes this counterblow immediately, balancing the position.

7.Bg5


7...Bb4 8.exd5 Qxd5 9.Bd2

Both parties could mutually spoil each other’s structure with 9.Bxf6 Qe6+ 10.Qe2 gxf6 11.0-0-0 Nxc3 12.bxc3 Nd7=.

9.Qe5+ 10.Qe2 Qe6 11.a3 Qa5 12.0-0-0 0-0-0 13.Qxe5 Qxe5

It will be clear to everybody that there are no signs of a white advantage. Just count the number of developed pieces on both sides.

14.Re1 e4 15.Qe2

After 15.Qxe5 Qxc3 16.Qxc3 Qxf1 17.Qg5 it seems that White has seized the initiative, but this is an optical illusion:
17...h6! 18.xg7 h5 19.g4 f5 is unclear.

One rook has problems on the g-file, the other runs the risk of suffocation after …xg2.

15...d7 16.xf4 hd8 17.xe5 xc3

A curious situation, not often seen in practice.

18.bxc3

18.xc3 xd1#.
18...\textbf{xf1} 19.\textbf{xf1} \textbf{xd2} 20.\textbf{xe7} \textbf{d2}7=

I will leave the further attempts of the experienced grandmaster without detailed comments.

21.\textbf{xd7} \textbf{xd7} 22.\textbf{e1} \textbf{d8} 23.\textbf{d3} \textbf{e7} 24.\textbf{xe7} \textbf{xe7} 25.\textbf{c5} b6 26.\textbf{d3} \textbf{d6} 27.\textbf{c4}

A slight plus for Black all the time, not more.

27...\textbf{d7} 28.\textbf{d2} \textbf{f8} 29.\textbf{c3} \textbf{g6} 30.\textbf{g3} \textbf{f8} 31.\textbf{b4} \textbf{e6} 32.\textbf{f4} \textbf{d4} 33.\textbf{c3} \textbf{f3} 34.\textbf{h4} c5 35.\textbf{f2} f5 36.\textbf{d3} \textbf{d4} 37.\textbf{c3} \textbf{e6} 38.\textbf{d1} g6 39.\textbf{e3} \textbf{g7} 40.\textbf{f3} \textbf{h5} 41.\textbf{g4} \textbf{f6}

41...\textbf{fxg4}+ 42.\textbf{xg4} \textbf{f6}+ 43.\textbf{g5} \textbf{e7} 44.\textbf{e3}=.

42.\textbf{f2} \textbf{e6} 43.\textbf{g5} \textbf{e8} 44.\textbf{e3} \textbf{d6} 45.\textbf{d3} a6 46.a4 b5 47.\textbf{exb5} axb5 48.\textbf{axb5} \textbf{d5} 49.b6 \textbf{e6} 50.\textbf{d1} \textbf{xb6} 51.\textbf{c3} \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}

Black’s play is also quite acceptable if he doesn’t surrender the centre. Both parties hurry to push their pawns into the enemy’s headquarters, which is typical in positions with opposite-side castling. There follows a fierce battle by a famous Norwegian grandmaster and football player. At a crucial moment Simen decided to plunge into the whirlpool of a promising attack and found himself on the verge of disaster. More precisely, he fell into a precipice, but while falling he was clutching at all the available branches. Finally, only a few meters from the bottom, Agdestein managed to grab a twig that was strong enough to save him.

Have I managed to describe the plot expressively? I hope that children at least will appreciate it. And this is a book for children, too.

52
Simen Agdestein (2572)
Stanislav Krylov (2290)
Vadsø 2002 (2)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \textbf{d6} 3.f3 e5 4.\textbf{d3} \textbf{bd7} 5.\textbf{e3} \textbf{e7}

5...c6 is likely to be a little more flexible. The f8-bishop needn’t hurry to get out. Who knows which square will be the most attractive for it? For example, 6.\textbf{d2} \textbf{a5} 7.g4 h6 8.h4 a6 9.\textbf{h2} \textbf{e7} 10.\textbf{ge2} d5 (exploiting the fact that g4-g5 is not dangerous because of the h2-rook’s vulnerability after ...h6xg5) 11.\textbf{g3}?! (11.exd5 \textbf{xd5} 12.0-0-0 \textbf{b4} 13.\textbf{d3} \textbf{d7}b6=) 11...dxe4 (11...\textbf{b4}+) 12.\textbf{cxe4} \textbf{x}d2+ 13.\textbf{xd2} \textbf{xe4}+ 14.\textbf{xe4} \textbf{f6} 15.\textbf{xf6}+ \textbf{xf6} 16.\textbf{xe5} \textbf{xe5} 17.\textbf{e2} \textbf{e6} 18.c3 0-0-0+ 19.\textbf{c2} \textbf{g3} 20.\textbf{f2} \textbf{xf2} 21.\textbf{xf2} h5 22.g5 \textbf{f5}+ 23.\textbf{b3} \textbf{he8} with a very pleasant ending for Black.

6.\textbf{d2} c6 7.0-0-0 0-0 8.g4
With such a pawn configuration White will have to spend many moves before he manages to ‘fasten’ on the enemy kingside pawns. They are all still in their initial positions, there are no weaknesses. However, the white king is protected by an analogous formation.

8...b5 9.g5 Nh5 10.Nce2 Nb6 11.b3

Doubtful is 11.Ng3 because of 11...exd4 12.Qxd4 Nxd3 13.hxg3 Nc5 and White will have to prove the soundness of his pawn sacrifice.

11...Be6 12.Kb1 Rb8

More logical seems to be 12...a5, utilizing the rook along the a-file where it is already standing: 13.Ne2 Qc7 14.a4 with counterplay; or 12...c5 13.d5 Bd7 14.Qg3 Qf4 unclear.

13.Qc1 Qc7 14.Ng3 Nc5

An amusing idea was 14...Qf4!? 15.Qxf4 (15.Qe1) 15...Qg6 16.Qxf4 g6 17.h4 c4 with compensation.

15.hxg3
The opening of the h-file is disappointing for Black, but it is not easy for the white queen to get there.

15...f6?!

More critical is 15... Ng4! as this is the reason why the rook had gone to b8: 16.bxc4 bxc4+ 17.Ka1 c3 (threatening ...Rb2 and ...Qa5) 18.a3 (18.d5 cxd5 19.exd5 Qf5=) 18...b2 19.d5 cxd5 20.exd5 Qxd5 21.Qxd5 b7 22.Rb5 (22.Rd1 b8=+) 22...Rxh3 23.Rxh3 Qh5 24.Qh3 c4 25.Qc3 d4 with compensation.

16.Bh3

I would also have played this. After ...f7-f6 the light-square complex in Black’s camp is weakened and therefore White wishes to exchange the bishop. If instead 16.gxf6!? Qxf6 17.a2.

16...f7?!

Interesting, but this move is roasted by the computer. Simplifications would have led to approximate equality: 16...Qxh3 17.Qxh3 fxg5 18.dxe5 h6= or 18.Qxg5 Qxg5 19.Qxg5 Qxf3 18.Qxg5 exd4 19.Qxe7 Qxe7 20.f4=.

17.dxe5 fxe5 18.f4 Ng4 19.f3

19.d2.

19...d5!!?
20.bxc4??

Right was 20.a5! with attacking lines that are puzzling, but here and there favourable for White: 20...g6 21.xf5 gxf5 22.exf5 a3 (the queen is caught, but now the struggle really flares up) 23.g4 e8 (gluttony is, of course, inappropriate: 23...xc1 24.f6+ g7 25.xh7#) 24.d4 (casting menacing looks at the broken residence of the black monarch; or 24.g6) 24...xc1 25.xh7!.

![Analysis Diagram](image)

A nice picture! If 25.xh7 26.h1+ h5 27.f6+ g7 28.xe8+ g8 29.xc7+-.

20...bxc4+-+
The remainder is more or less simple, though the conversion took a long time. It seems unclear what the Norwegian grandmaster expected to gain in this hopeless position. The answer can be found at the end of the game...

21. \textit{K}a1 \textit{Q}a5 22.\textit{c}3 \textit{A}a3 23.\textit{h}h2 \textit{Ax}c1 24.\textit{Exc}1 \textit{E}b3 25.\textit{xe}5 \textit{Exc}1+ 26.\textit{xc}6 \textit{Exc}1+ 27.\textit{xc}1 \textit{c}3+ 28.\textit{b}1 \textit{X}g3 29.\textit{h}1 \textit{f}3 30.\textit{h}2 \textit{xe}4+ 31.\textit{b}2 \textit{g}6 32.\textit{a}3 \textit{e}8 33.\textit{e}5 \textit{e}1 34.\textit{e}6+ \textit{h}8 35.\textit{b}2 \textit{b}4+ 36.\textit{a}1 \textit{c}3+ 37.\textit{b}1 \textit{h}5 38.\textit{b}2 \textit{e}8 39.\textit{d}7 \textit{f}8 40.\textit{e}6 \textit{e}1 41.\textit{xd}5 \textit{c}3 42.\textit{b}7 \textit{c}8 43.\textit{a}4 \textit{c}2+ 44.\textit{b}2 \textit{e}3+ 45.\textit{a}2 \textit{d}4 46.\textit{b}3 \textit{e}8 47.\textit{e}7 \textit{h}5 48.\textit{d}7 \textit{e}4 49.\textit{b}2 \textit{f}5 50.\textit{f}7+ \textit{xf}7 51.\textit{xf}7 \textit{g}6 52.\textit{Ex}a7 \textit{h}6 53.\textit{Xg}7 \textit{Xg}7 54.\textit{Xg}7+ \textit{Xg}7 55.\textit{gx}h6+ \textit{X}h6 56.\textit{X}c2 \textit{X}c2+ 57.\textit{b}3 \textit{f}2 58.\textit{b}4 \textit{g}7 59.\textit{a}5 \textit{f}7 60.a6 \textit{e}7 61.\textit{c}5

61...\textit{d}7?

Correct was 61...\textit{a}2 62.\textit{b}6 \textit{d}6, pushing his white colleague to the boards: 63.\textit{b}7 (63.a7 \textit{a}2+ 64.\textit{a}6 \textit{c}7) 63...\textit{d}7 64.a7 \textit{b}2+ 65.\textit{a}6 \textit{c}7 66.a8=\textit{a}+ \textit{c}6+-.

62.a7!= \textit{a}2 63.\textit{b}6 \textit{b}2+

Without the f-pawn, 63...\textit{c}8 would win, but here 64.f5 \textit{b}2+ 65.\textit{c}6 \textit{a}2 66.\textit{b}6 draws.

64.\textit{c}5 \textit{a}2 65.\textit{b}6 \textit{d}6 66.\textit{b}7 \textit{b}2+ 67.\textit{e}8 ½-½

A slightly defiant treatment of this line was demonstrated by the German player Sebastian Siebrecht in the following encounter. An unforced retreat (..\textit{f}6-e8), then with ...\textit{g}7-g6 he ‘persuaded’ the adversary to attack, and on the 14th move he already landed in a hopeless position. A nice example on the topic of ‘how not to play’.

53

Csaba Horvath (2535)
Sebastian Siebrecht (2360)
Budapest Elekes Memorial 1994 (4)

1.e4 \textit{d}6 2.d4 \textit{f}6 3.f3 \textit{e}5 4.\textit{c}3 \textit{bd}7 5.\textit{ge}2 \textit{e}7 6.\textit{g}4 0-0 7.\textit{e}3 \textit{e}8
Quite provocative. I am not sure he should have played this. Sebastian may wish to trade off bishops by means of ...\textit{e}7-g5, but the opponent will easily prevent this transparent idea.

8.\textit{d}2 c6

If Black stuck to his guns with 8...h6 then after 9.0-0-0 \textit{g}5 10.f4 (or even 10.h4) things are hardly pleasant with all the pieces back on the 8th rank.

9.\textit{g}3 g6?!

In structures of this type you should consider the following: restricting the g3-knight is desirable, but the advance of the pawn to g6 provides the enemy with a ‘hook’ and allows him to organize an attack with the advance h2-h4-h5.

Better was 9...b5 10.a3 exd4 11.\textit{xd}4 \textit{e}5 12.\textit{f}2 a5 with counterplay.

10.0-0-0

More accurate looks 10.d5! when Black has to spend time on the preparation of...b7-b5.

10...b5 11.\textit{b}1 a5

Better was 11...exd4 12.\textit{xd}4 \textit{f}6.

12.h4 \textit{g}7 13.h5±

See the notes to the 9th move.
13...\texttt{Ke}8?

There was a way to slow down the ‘Normandy assault’ by means of 13...\texttt{exd}4!? 14.\texttt{Bxd}4 \texttt{g}5± aiming to send the ‘fianchettoed’ knight to e6 and keeping the defence line, relying on the fragile but still fortified f4/e5 cluster.

If 13...\texttt{e}6 14.d5+-.

14.\texttt{hxg}6+- \texttt{fxg}6 15.\texttt{Qh}2 \texttt{Qf}8 16.\texttt{dxe}5 \texttt{Qc}7

17.\texttt{Qf}5!

The cramped knight decides to sacrifice itself and Black’s position collapses after a few more blows. There is no
salvation.

17...gxf5 18.exd6 hxg6 19.hxg6 fxg6 20.Bxb5 cxb5 21.Rd5

This mustang is another problem.

21...Bb8 22.f6+ f7

22.h8 Qxh8+ h7 22.Qxh7#.

23.Qxe8 Qxe8 24.e5+ g6 25.Qh7 Qxe6 26.Qxe6+ Qd8 27.Qd8 1-0

A crushing defeat.

Not the best way to obtain counterplay was chosen at the 1990 Olympiad by another German grandmaster. Readers from Germany, this is nothing personal, but the variation is so rare! On the whole, I like Germany: a civilized country with punctual people and (relatively) quite cheap prices.

Exploiting the opponent's mistakes, Murray Chandler built up an effective attack, and on the 21st move already it was mate on the board.

54 Murray Chandler (2560)
Matthias Wahls (2525)
Novi Sad ol 1990 (10)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.f3 Be7 5.Nf3 0-0 6.g3 c6 7.g2 b5 8.a3 Nbd7 9.g4 d5 10.g3 exd4 11.Bxd4

11...d5

In reply to a flank attack – a counterblow in the centre. However, this looks suspicious to me because of 12.0-0-0 especially, and the vis-à-vis of the d1-rook with the queen on d8 is unpleasant. More interesting is 11...a5?!, taking into
account that the white king can go nowhere but to the queenside, for instance 12.\texttt{Nf5} \texttt{Bxf5} 13.gxf5 \texttt{b4} with counterplay.

\textbf{12.0-0-0} dxe4 13.\texttt{Ncxe4} \texttt{Qxe4} 14.\texttt{Qxe4} \texttt{d6}

More careful is 14...\texttt{Qc7} 15.\texttt{Qd3} \texttt{Qd8}, when it seems that there are no promising blows like \texttt{Qxg7} or \texttt{Qxh7+} (after a knight move).

In other respects Black is all right – he has no weaknesses.

\textbf{15.\texttt{Qf4} \texttt{Qb8}}

15...\texttt{Qd7}.

\textbf{16.\texttt{Qe5}}

Who would agree on a trade here? Murray intends to attack!

16...\texttt{Qb7} 17.g5!

With an attack for White. After long deliberation the computer becomes more and more pessimistic about Black's position.

\textbf{17...\texttt{Rfd8} 18.\texttt{Qf6}+?}

This blow suggested itself, but it is unfavourable here. 18.\texttt{Rxd8+} would have led to victory: 18...\texttt{Rxd8} 19.\texttt{Qfxd6++} and there is no satisfactory defence, even though there are two bishops at hand and there are no pawn weaknesses: 19...\texttt{Qh8} (19...\texttt{gxh6} 20.\texttt{gxh6}) 20.\texttt{Qd3}.

\textbf{18...\texttt{Qh8}?}

There was only one narrow path to continue the struggle: 18...\texttt{Qxf6} 19.\texttt{gxh6} (19.\texttt{Qxf6} \texttt{Qxd1+} 20.\texttt{Qxd1} \texttt{Qh8} 21.\texttt{gxf6} \texttt{gxf6} 22.\texttt{Qd3} \texttt{Qf8+}) 19...\texttt{Qxd1+} 20.\texttt{Qxd1} \texttt{Qc8} (but who could find such a strange move?) 21.\texttt{Qd3} g6 22.\texttt{Qc1}. 
19.\text{d}3 \text{d}5

All the pieces are rushing by to help, but it is too late already.

20.\text{h}4 a5 21.\text{xh}7#

An impressive demolishing of Black’s defences.

\begin{quote}
**Conclusion**

With the move 4.f3 White is spoiling for a fight, but we cannot call it extremely dangerous. Black has reasons to hope for equality, either with the ‘unloading’ by 4...exd4 5.\text{xd}4 \text{c}6, or by maintaining the centre and organizing counterplay on the queenside.

Let me remind you that it is not so easy for White to ‘fasten’ on the opponent’s pawns on the kingside, as all Black’s pawns are still on the 7th rank there.
\end{quote}
Part IV
Transposing to the Philidor


With this natural knight development White transposes to the regular Philidor Defence.

Chapter 1
The Surrender of the Centre (...exd4) on Different Moves

In this chapter we will consider different modifications of one plan.

As for me, I don’t think this is an optimal line, and maybe it isn’t. However, while working on the book I got familiar with a number of nuances and I can now see certain reasons for practising it.

So, besides the ‘central strategy’ (pawn remains at e5), Black also has the option to ‘surrender the centre’ (...exd4). This release of tension can be carried out at different moments; we will analyse all these options to get a more or less full notion of the types of position.

Black’s general idea is to bring the rook out on the now half-opened e-file, to take the bishop to f8, and to manoeuvre with his knights, exerting pressure on the enemy pieces and the e4-pawn.

Section 1: 4...exd4
In this first Section we look at the immediate capture on move 4.

At the tournament in Las Palmas, 1993, a specialist of our opening managed to trade off a pair of knights rather quickly, which is usually wholesome for Black as he is always lacking space. But then Zurab made several pawn moves, and I have the impression that Michael Adams crafty enticed him, as if persuading him, to weaken his pawn structure. After another excessively aggressive thrust (25...g5) it was already impossible to ‘get out of the web’.

55
Michael Adams (2630)
Zurab Azmaiparashvili (2655)
Las Palmas 1993 (5)


White can also place the bishop more actively with 6.d3, but it may get under fire there, for example 6...0-0 7.0-0 Re8 8.h3 c6 9.e1 Bd7 10.f5 (10.f4 Ne5 11.a3 f8=) 10...f8 11.g5 e5 12.e3 b5=, Gashimov-Berg, Gibraltar 2009.

6...0-0 7.0-0 Re8 8.e1 h6 9.a4 f8 10.e4

The bishop’s transfer to c4 has been made with the loss of a tempo.

10...c6 11.e3 b4 12.d5 bxd5 13.exd5 d7=
A pair of knights have been exchanged, which is good for Black. As they say: ‘You are breathing my air’. If he manages to develop the bishop at g7, everything will be in perfect order. The knight from f6 can manoeuvre (...\(\text{N}f6-g4\), ...\(\text{N}f6-e4\)).

14.h3 c6

I can’t understand why the computer doesn’t like 14...g6 15.\(\text{Q}d3\) \(\text{B}g7\).

15.\(\text{Q}f3\) c5?!

A responsible decision. A change of the pawn structure would sooner be to White’s benefit. Interesting is 15...\(\text{N}xd5!\)? 16.\(\text{B}xd5\) cxd5 17.\(\text{W}xd5\) \(\text{W}c7\) and the bishop pair compensates for the isolated d-pawn.

16.\(\text{N}b5\)

16.\(\text{f}5!?\).

16...a6 17.\(\text{c}3\) b6

This is directed against the fixing move a4-a5. A flexible pawn chain on the queenside will always keep White waiting for ...b6-b5. Black may experience a slight discomfort if White exerts pressure on the a6-pawn along the f1-a6 diagonal. 17...g6!? is an alternative.

18.\(\text{d}3\) g6 19.\(\text{f}4\)

Michael aims at the key d6-pawn, also hampering the fianchetto with ...\(\text{g}7\).

19...\(\text{h}5\)

19...\(\text{a}7\) 20.\(\text{x}e8\) \(\text{xe}8\) 21.\(\text{w}e3\). By the way, because of...b7-b6, the rook has to keep watch over the a6-pawn.

20.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{f}6\) 21.\(\text{x}e8\) \(\text{xe}8\) 22.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{g}7\) 23.\(\text{f}4\)
While I take a short break (I have to answer a phone call), please think: how would you play here?

23...\texttt{xc3}!!?

Creative. ‘Old-Indians’ value this bishop highly as a rule, but were there better alternatives? After the ‘normal’ 23...f5 24.\texttt{g3} \texttt{f6} 25.h4 White stands better.

24.bxc3 \texttt{f6} 25.\texttt{g3}

Unattractive is 25.\texttt{xh6}?! \texttt{xf3} 26.gxf3 \texttt{xa4}.

25...\texttt{g5}?

This looks logical. Black has lost his dark-squared bishop and now puts his pawns on dark squares, thus surrounding the enemy. But according to the law of communicating vessels, there is also another side to the coin. Better was the modest 25...\texttt{h7}!!, intending 26.h4 \texttt{f5}.

26.\texttt{d2}

26.h4 \texttt{xf4}.

26...\texttt{g7} 27.f4±
Here is a drawback to the expansion with ...g6-g5, Adams ‘hooks’ Black’s outpost.

27... Nh5

Totally poor is 27...gxf4 28. Bxf4+- and the important d6-pawn falls.

28.fxg5 hxg5 29. Qxg5+

Also good was 29. Bxg5 N xg3 30. Bxf6 exf6 31. Kh2 Nh5 32. Be7±.


34. Bxd6 Bxd6 35. Bxd6 Bxd6 leads to complete domination. The rook and the dark-squared bishop will safely guard the queening square of the enemy pawn (?1), and the passed h- and g-pawns will provide the victory.

34... Qxd5 35. Bxd6

35. Bxd6 Be6±.

35... Bg7 36. c4 f6 37. Bc1 Bc8

37... Bb7 38. Bxd7 Bxd8 39. Bxb6 Bxd7 40. Bxa6 Bxc4 41. Bc6+-.

38. Bxe5+-
With all due respect for the passed a-pawn, the outcome is undisputed.

38...a5 39.\textit{R}xb6 a4 40.\textit{Be}4 \textit{R}a7 41.\textit{Rh}6 \textit{f}f8 42.\textit{d}d5 \textit{xd}5 43.\textit{cxd}5 \textit{e}e7 44.\textit{b}b2

White could have finished off even more quickly with 44.\textit{d}6! \textit{R}xe5 45.\textit{Rh}8+ \textit{K}g7 46.\textit{d}7 \textit{K}xh8 47.\textit{d}8=\textit{Q}+-.

44...\textit{R}e2 45.\textit{d}6

Also winning.

45...\textit{R}d2 46.\textit{B}a3 \textit{K}g7 47.\textit{R}h4 \textit{N}xd6 48.\textit{B}xc5 \textit{N}f5 49.\textit{R}a4 \textit{R}xc2 50.\textit{B}f2

Taking into account the fact that the queening square (h8) is of the bishop’s colour, there are no chances of escape.

50...\textit{Ec}1+ 51.\textit{Kh}2 \textit{Ec}2 52.\textit{Ef}4 \textit{G}g6 53.\textit{g}4 \textit{E}e3 54.\textit{G}g3 \textit{Ef}1+ 55.\textit{G}g2 \textit{Ec}3+ 56.\textit{G}f3 \textit{D}d5 57.\textit{Ef}5 \textit{Ec}3+ 58.\textit{G}g2 \textit{Ed}3 59.\textit{Ef}3 \textit{Ed}2 60.\textit{Eg}3 \textit{Ef}6 61.\textit{Ec}3 \textit{Ba}2 62.\textit{Ef}3 \textit{Ba}4 63.\textit{Ed}3 \textit{Fh}7 64.\textit{Ed}4 \textit{D}d5 65.\textit{e}e3 \textit{Fe}6 66.\textit{h}4 \textit{Fe}5 67.\textit{G}g5 \textit{Ba}8 68.\textit{h}5 \textit{G}g8 69.\textit{Ec}1 \textit{Fe}6 70.\textit{h}b2 \textit{Ef}8+ 71.\textit{G}g3 \textit{Ef}1 72.\textit{Ef}3 \textit{G}g1+ 73.\textit{h}h1+ 74.\textit{G}g5 \textit{Ec}7 75.\textit{h}6 1-0

At the Ukrainian team championship, Gevorg Harutiunian played a little slowly in a position with opposite castling, which allowed his opponent Moiseenko to carry out a swift and destructive attack. On the 20th move already capitulation would have been appropriate. Does that scare you? Well, I didn’t advise you to play ...e5xd4, so please direct your complaints not to me, but to the variation.
There are several satisfactory continuations.

6.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash f4 0-0 \texttt{\textbackslash d2}}}

7...\texttt{\textbackslash e8}

A bit cooperative, but 7...d5?! is doubtful: 8.\texttt{\textbackslash db5 c6? 9.\texttt{\textbackslash c7}} and it’s time to resign.

8...\texttt{\textbackslash b4} is the only move, and now:

A) 9.exd5\texttt{\textbackslash ;}
B) 9.\texttt{\textbackslash xc7 d4 10.\texttt{\textbackslash xa8 \texttt{\textbackslash xe4}}\texttt{\textbackslash ;}\)
C) 9.\texttt{\textbackslash xc7 \texttt{\textbackslash e7 10.e5 \texttt{\textbackslash c6}} with counterplay;}
D) 9.0-0-0 \texttt{\textbackslash a5 10.exd5 a6 11.\texttt{\textbackslash d4 e4 12.\texttt{\textbackslash e3 \texttt{\textbackslash xc3 13.bxc3}}\texttt{\textbackslash .}}}

8.0-0-0 \texttt{\textbackslash bd7}

8...\texttt{\textbackslash a6; stronger is 8...\texttt{\textbackslash c6}, joining the struggle for the centre at once.}

9.f3 \texttt{\textbackslash e5 10.\texttt{\textbackslash b1 c6}}

10...\texttt{\textbackslash a6.}

11.h4 \texttt{\textbackslash c7}

An interesting try to restrain White is 11...h5!?.

12.g4 \texttt{\textbackslash b5 13.g5 \texttt{\textbackslash fd7 14.\texttt{\textbackslash g2 b4 15.\texttt{\textbackslash ce2 \texttt{\textbackslash b6 16.h5}}}}}

Both players are hurrying to be the first to attack, but White is considerably ahead. His two pawns are already on the 5th rank and are ready to come into contact with the bodyguards of the black monarch.

16...c5 17.\texttt{Nf5} \texttt{Bxf5}?! \\

Are there any acceptable alternatives? I am not sure, for instance 17...\texttt{Bf8} 18.g6 \texttt{fxg6} (18...\texttt{Bxf5} 19.exf5 \texttt{h6} 20.f6±) 19.hxg6 \texttt{h6} 20.\texttt{Neg3}+- and on the next move there will be a devastating piece sacrifice on h6.

18.exf5 \texttt{bc4} \\

More tenacious, though also insufficient, was 18...\texttt{d5} 19.g6 \texttt{f6} 20.gxh7+ \texttt{sh7} 21.h6 with a fierce attack.

19.\texttt{ce1} \texttt{f8} 20.g6+-
The light-square complex is exposed, which, in the absence of the bishop of that colour, may have a negative impact on the health of the black king.

20...\textit{Q}e7 21.h6

Nice, isn’t it? We can see with a naked eye that Black’s attack is lagging behind.

21...fxg6 22.fxg6 hxg6 23.\textit{B}xe5 \textit{Q}e3

23...\textit{Q}xe5 24.f4+–.

24.\textit{N}xd6 \textit{Q}f6 25.\textit{N}xg2 hxg6 26.hxg7

Another picturesque sight. There is nothing left to comment on; all roads lead to Rome.

26...\textit{Q}xf8 27.gxf8=\textit{Q}+ \textit{Q}xf8 28.\textit{Q}xg2 \textit{Q}e8 29.f4 \textit{E}c4 30.\textit{R}h7 \textit{Q}g8 31.\textit{R}d7

Black resigned.

So as not to upset you too much, I will now present to you a masterpiece: an almost perfect performance by Anish Giri. The Dutch grandmaster (in fact both players in this game represent the Netherlands) didn’t allow any pawn weakening and came up with the tough counter-blow ...d6-d5. After some inaccuracies by his opponent, Anish obtained the bishop pair and soon steered the game to its logical outcome. On the 25th move already it was all over. A beautiful sample where Black won without hardly shedding any blood.

57
Sipke Ernst (2558)
Anish Giri (2696)
Amsterdam ch-NED 2012 (2)

1.d4 d6 2.e4 \textit{g}f6 3.\textit{c}c3 e5 4.\textit{f}f3 exd4 5.\textit{N}xd4 \textit{Q}e7
5...d5?! is rash and it doesn’t equalize – otherwise it would be too easy for Black: 6.e5 (also good is 6.g5 dxe4 7.xe4) 6...e4 7.xe4 dxe4 8.c4 (8.c3) 8...e5 9.e3, Tiviakov-Strikovic, Torres Vedras 2011.

6.h3 0-0 7.g4?!

Courageous, at least. It looks impressive, however the white king is still in the centre while White’s development hasn’t been completed yet.

7.f4.

7...d5!

In reply to a flank attack – a counterblow in the centre!

8.e5 f5 9.xe5 g6 10.g2 h5 11.f4

Now it was more accurate to evacuate the monarch with 11.0-0!?.

11...c6 12.xe5 e8

We can already see some discomfort with White. His opponent can gain the bishop pair.

13.f3?!

More careful, though not leading to full equality, was 13.e3 e5 14.c3; or 13.0-0 e5 14.b3, when the two bishops and the absence of weaknesses in his position give Black the better chances.

13...d7

How easily did Anish manage to get an advantage with black! True, he got some essential help from his opponent.

14.e3 xex5 15.xex5 a5+ 16.d2 xd2+ 17.xd2 xex5 18.c4 e7 19.f4 e6 20.e5

20.e3!?.
20...d8+ 21.d3 c4

22.f1?
Correct was 22.ad1 e3+ 23.c3 xd3 24.xd3 xd3+ 25.xd3 xf4 with an extra pawn for Black, but drawing tendencies because of the opposite-coloured bishops.

22.e3+ 23.c3 d5 24.h2 c5!
As soon as the pawn chases away the knight, and the f4-pawn falls in the presence of the two bishops, it will be a catastrophe for White.

25.e1 de8 0-1
Too many threats. However, it is a bit early to resign in such a position. Maybe Ernst exceeded his time-limit?

In the following encounter both parties castled kingside. After that the play on both sides was far from faultless. Having obtained quite a sound position out of the opening, Rauf Mamedov didn’t dare embark on a promising exchange sacrifice at a key moment. Black’s chances would have been at least not worse. As it went, he had to defend an ending two (!) pawns down. Nevertheless, he coped admirably with this task, taking into account the Elo-rating of his adversary.

58
Ivan Salgado Lopez (2626)
Rauf Mamedov (2660)
Moscow Aeroflot Open 2011 (6)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nf3 exd4 5.Nxd4 Be7 6.g3

The simplifying 6...Nc6 is quite acceptable: 7.Qxc6 bxc6 8.g2 0-0 9.0-0 Bb8= Perunovic-Jovanovic, Dunaharaszti 2012. On the whole, any exchange makes the life of the cramped side easier.

7.g2 Be8 8.0-0 f8 9.f4
9...a6

In my opinion, it would have been reasonable to construct a ‘breakwater’ against the g2-bishop and the knight by means of 9...c6. This weakens the d6-pawn a bit, but the bishop is on f8, not on g7.

10.Qd2 Bd7 11.Aad1 Be5 12.b3

The preventive 12.h3!? is more accurate, controlling the square g4.

12...h6

Interesting was the principled sortie 12...Bg4!? 13.f3 (13.Ae1 Bd7) 13...d7 and it’s hardly pleasant for the white bishop to be hampered by the f3-pawn.

13.h3 b5 14.g4 Bb7 15.Ae1 h5?!

I don’t understand the sense of forcing the white pawn to g5. Better was 15...Ah7!? with the idea 16.Ag3 Ag5 17.f4?! (17.Ae3 Ae6) 17...c5 with counterplay.

16.g5 Ah7
17.\textit{\texttt{xe}3}?! \\
This looks reasonable. The bishop makes way for the infantry (f2-f4-f5), but this provides the opponent with opportunities for counterplay. More concrete was 17.\textit{\texttt{f}5} g6 18.\textit{\texttt{h}6+} \textit{\texttt{x}h}6 19.\textit{\texttt{gx}h6} \textit{\texttt{f}6} 20.\textit{\texttt{d}5} \textit{\texttt{xd}5} 21.\textit{\texttt{exd}5}. \\
17...b4 \\
With counterplay. \\
18.\textit{\texttt{ce}2} \\
Now the jump to the centre is not timely: 18.\textit{\texttt{d}5}?! c6 19.\textit{\texttt{xb}4} (19.\textit{\texttt{xb}4} \textit{\texttt{xb}8}) 19...c5. Do you see the difference? The other knight is still on d4. \\
18...\textit{\texttt{g}6} \\
Some small problems are emerging. How to protect e4? f2-f3 is aesthetically not acceptable, and in reply to \textit{\texttt{g}3}, ...h5-h4 will follow. \\
19.\textit{\texttt{xb}4} \textit{\texttt{xe}4} 20.\textit{\texttt{c}6} \textit{\texttt{c}8} \\
The following line is amusing: 20...\textit{\texttt{xc}6}!? 21.\textit{\texttt{xc}6} \textit{\texttt{xe}3}! 22.\textit{\texttt{f}xe3} \textit{\texttt{g}5} with compensation. \\
21.\textit{\texttt{c}4} \\
21.\textit{\texttt{xe}4} d5 22.\textit{\texttt{d}2} dxe4±. \\
21...\textit{\texttt{x}g}2 22.\textit{\texttt{x}g}2
22...a5?

I don’t know why, but Rauf doesn’t wish to sacrifice the exchange: 22...Rx3!? 23.fxe3 Nxe5 24.Rh1 Qf5 25.Rd1 Qd7 with compensation. He may have been withheld by the passivity of the f8-bishop(?).

23.Ed5?!

23.c1

23...a6 24.ed4 h8

24...e4!? suggests itself, for example 25.d3 f4+ unclear. The only blot on Black’s play is the bishop on f8. Perhaps that’s why White has placed his pieces on the blockading squares c6 and d5. This prevents the move ...d6-d5, opening up the bishop.

25.g3?!

Frankly speaking, sometimes I also allow myself the liberty of such an ‘activation’ of the king. We get the impression that the white commander-in-chief doesn’t shrink from a role in the ‘total domination’. However, such democracy may boomerang one day, as there are too many pieces on the board. 25.b5!?

25.e5

I suppose more accurate is 25...f6!? 26.e2 (26.gxf6 xf6 with counterplay) 26...e5 27.xe5 so as to capture on e5 with the other pawn: 27...fxe5.

26.xe5 dxe5 27.f3
27...\textit{g6}??

Again the rook switch to the kingside looks reasonable, but there is a trivial tactical refutation. Correct was 27...\textit{d6}. Every time when I write something like ‘correct was...’ I get angry with myself, as, of course, with a computer beside and unlimited time anyone can criticize the players. Please excuse me... but I have to point out the mistakes.

28.\textit{xe5 \textit{d6} 29.\textit{x}d6}+-

Too obvious to give an exclamation mark.

29...\textit{xe5}

29...\textit{xd6} 30.\textit{xf}7+.

30.\textit{exg6 fxg6 31.f}4 \textit{e8 32.f}2

Now please pay attention to a small nuance. Amateurs sometimes underestimate such things. If the white h-pawn hadn’t foresightedly been left on h3, but had moved to h4, square g4 would have been available for the black queen, which would have been unpleasant. Such subtleties are often seen when White plays g2(-g3)-g4 in the Pirc-Ufimtsev Defence.

32...\textit{xe1} 33.\textit{xe1 \textit{e}8 34.f}2 \textit{f}8 35.\textit{xa}5
Black is in bad shape. White only has to hide his king, for example on b2 or somewhere on the kingside.

35...\(\text{Ne6}\) 36.\(\text{Bd2}\) \(\text{Qd7}\) 37.\(\text{Be3}\)

Everything has been correct up to here. The bishop cuts the knight short (d4-c5 and f4-g5).

37...\(\text{c6}\) 38.\(\text{Qe4}\) \(\text{Kh7}\) 39.\(\text{Kg2}\)

This is also not bad. The bishop takes control of the dark squares. The advance of the a-pawn is on the agenda.

39...\(\text{c7}\) 40.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{d5}\) 41.\(\text{d2}\) \(\text{e6}\) 42.a4 \(\text{e7}\) 43.a5 \(\text{f5}\) 44.\(\text{f2}\) c5 45.a6 \(\text{c6}\)

The position is still technically won, but the Azerbaijani grandmaster has succeeded in placing his pieces on the most
active squares. The queen is ready to storm into the enemy camp (...\text{c6-h1}) and... ‘nothing terrible’, informs the computer. However, from the human point of view it is unpleasant when in time trouble the enemy queen and knight attack your exposed king.

46.e3?!

Frankly, I am too lazy to analyse this ending in detail and will confine myself to short, dry notes. As an excuse let me remind you that this saves space and thus makes the book cheaper. You see that the author is concerned not only about your chess education, but also about your well-being. 46.\text{e3}+-.

46...h4 47.\text{e2}?

47.\text{e3}+-.

47...\text{e6+} 48.\text{f2}

48.\text{e3}!?.

48...\text{xb3}

Now it’s unclear.

49.\text{d7}

49.\text{e2} \text{g3} 50.\text{g4} \text{f5} 51.\text{e2}=-.

49...\text{d1} 50.a7??

50.\text{d3} \text{g3} 51.c4=.

50...\text{g3}+- 51.\text{d3}

51.a8=\text{f1}+ 52.\text{e3} \text{e2}#.

51...c4 52.\text{f3} \text{xd2}+ 53.\text{g1}
53...\(\text{c1+}\)

53...e2+ 54.f1 xf4 55.a8=\(\text{c1+}\) 56.f2 d3+ 57.g2 e1+ 58.h2 xf3+ 59.xf3 xg5-+.

54.h2 f1+ 55.g2 e3+ 56.f2 d2+ 57.g1

57.e2 d1+ 58.f1 xf4+ 59.e1 xc3-+.

57...e1+ 58.h2 f1+ 59.g2 e3+ 60.h2 d2+ 61.g1 c1+ 62.f2 d2+ ½-½

A muddled finish.

The paradoxical idea ...c7-c5!? was essayed in an encounter during the Swiss tournament in Biel, 2007. To tell you the truth, I am not sure about the benefit of this move, which makes square d5 chronically weak. Besides, the white player, Leonid Kritz, had an opportunity to exchange his dark-squared bishop against the enemy knight (\(g5xf6\)). This would have led to a cheerless (for Black) situation with a rather bad bishop on f8.

59
Leonid Kritz (2571)
Sebastien Mazé (2530)
Biel Open 2007 (6)

1.e4 e5 2.f3 d6 3.d4 exd4 4.xd4 f6 5.c3 e7 6.e2 0-0 7.0-0 e8 8.e1

8.f4 is not very effective because of the counterattack on the e4-pawn. 8...f8 9.f3 c5! looks anti-positional, but has a concrete tactical point: 10.b3 c6 11.e3 f5!
12.exf5 (there is no way to protect the pawn, i.e. 12.\textit{Qd}3 \textit{N}b4) 12...\textit{Rxe}3= Macieja-Byklum, Stockholm 2010.

8...\textit{f}8 9.\textit{f}1 c5!

Sebastien plays it all the same – furthermore, the computer agrees! It looks like a serious weakening of point d5, especially as the exchange \textit{g}5xf6 is possible.

10.\textit{b}3

Wasn’t 10.\textit{f}3 more accurate?
10...c6 11.g5

As predicted.

11...h6 12.h4

Can anyone explain to me why Leonid didn’t exchange the bishop for the knight? After 12...xf6 xf6 13.d5 White actually has an extra pawn on the light-square complex, and the f8-bishop can’t participate in the struggle for the highly important point d5. For example, 13...d8 (13...xb2 14.b1 a3 (absolutely bad is 14...xa2? 15.a1 b2 16.c3 and 17.e2, capturing the queen) 15.e7±) 14.d2 e6 15.c4±.

12...a6 13.a4


13...e6 14.d2 e7 15.g3

Now it is already impossible to get much benefit from the intrusion on d5: 15.c4 e5 16.xe5 dxe5 17.xf6 xf6 18.d5 xd5 19.xd5 xd5 20.exd5 e4 with approximate equality. The presence of opposite-coloured bishops may neutralize the extra pawn.

15.d5

The smooth implementation of this counterblow is the precursor of equality.

16.exd5 xd5 17.xd5 xd5 18.c4 e6 19.c3 xd1

Worse was 19...b5 20.xd8 axd8 21.axb5 axb5 22.e3±.

20.xd1 ed8

Let’s assess this position after the release of the tension in the centre. White stands a little better due to the slight
weakening of the enemy queenside.

21.f3 f8 22.f2 h5

Black could have equalized with 22...b5!? 23.e3 c4=. His structure has improved and White’s positional advantage has vanished into the air.

23.b6 xd1 24.xd1 d8 25.xd8+ xd8 26.c4 h4 27.d6+ e7 28.c7 e8 29.f4 g5 30.e3

Draw agreed.
Section 2: 5...e5xd4

Here are several fragments where Black surrendered the centre after developing his knight to d7. Please, don’t be lazy – don’t skip these pages. Of course our time is most valuable, which is why I’ve tried to exclude really poor or uninteresting examples.

Cheer up! Here are only three games, each of which with their own specific qualities. The moral is that in this line the black knight can’t jump to c6, and so it is appropriate for White to capture on d4 with the queen.

In the first example both opponents played well enough, saving the status-quo up until the ending. Only then, perhaps in time trouble, the Dutch player committed a mistake and lost.

60
Robin van Kampen (2592)
Ivan Ivanisevic (2644)
Skopje Karpos Open 2013 (9)

The capture by the queen makes more sense if Black cannot reply by developing with tempo with ...\texttt{Nb8-c6}. Besides, the white knight can be useful on \texttt{f3}.

6...\texttt{Be7} 7.0-0 0-0 8.\texttt{d1}

8.\texttt{e1} a6 9.a4 \texttt{c5} Looking at the board, I want to play 9...\texttt{g4}, and I am happy to inform you that the computer agrees with me. What is the idea? Well, I wish to put the knight on \texttt{e5} and trade off some pieces. Besides, it also prevents e4-e5. However, White is still better here after 10.\texttt{d5 g5e5 11.xe5 xe5 12.f1}. 10.\texttt{xe5} dxe5 This looks like a bluff. The magic of Ivan’s Elo-rating must have played a role. Objectively Black should have taken the pawn on \texttt{e5}.
11.\textit{Qxd8}?! After 11.\textit{Qxe5 \textit{Qg4} 12.\textit{Qf4 \textit{Qe5} 13.\textit{Qe2 \textit{Qe6} Black has some compensation, but it is insufficient; 14.\textit{e5}. 11...\textit{Qxd8} 12.\textit{Qd5 \textit{Qxd5} 13.\textit{Qxd5 a5 14.\textit{Qe3 \textit{Qf8} 14...\textit{Qa6}!?=. 15.f3 and a draw was agreed in Djukic-Ivanisevic, Skopje 2013.}

8...\textit{Qb6} 9.\textit{Qe2 \textit{Qe6}}

9...\textit{Re8}.

10.\textit{Qf4}

It was interesting to go after the b6-knight: 10.a4 a5 11.b3 d5 12.e5 \textit{Qfd7} 13.\textit{Qf4}. 10...\textit{Qfd7} 11.\textit{Qe3 \textit{Re8} 12.\textit{Qd4}

The Dutchman may have wished to get the advantage of the two bishops, but Black doesn’t allow even this.

12...\textit{c4} 13.\textit{Qf3 \textit{Qf6} 14.b3

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{chessboard.png}
\end{center}

14...\textit{Qa6}

Spectacular, but not equalizing, is 14...\textit{Qd5}!? 15.\textit{Qd5 \textit{Qxd5} 16.e4 \textit{Qc6} 17.\textit{Qxc6 bxc6, and with the bishop pair White’s chances are to be rated a little higher.}

15.\textit{Qd2}

15.a4!?.

15...\textit{Qe5} 16.\textit{Qe2 \textit{Qxe2} 17.\textit{Qdx e2 \textit{Qbd7} 18.f3 \textit{Qg6} 19.\textit{Qe3 \textit{Qe5} 20.f1 \textit{Qf6} 21.\textit{Qad1 c6 22.\textit{Qd3 \textit{Qe7} 23.Qg5 d5
}
With a claim on full equalization. Don’t be confused, this is not a blunder, everything has been calculated.

24.exd5 ²c5+ 25.²h1?!

Better was 25.²e3 ²e7 (25...²xh2+ 26.²f2 ²e7 27.g3 (27.dxc6) 27...²e5 28.²d4±) 26.²fe1 (26.dxc6? ²xc3 27.²xc3 ²xe3+) 26...cxd5 27.²f2 ²c7, with a more or less balanced position; the isolated pawn is not so important, as Black can, for instance, press along the c-file.

25...²xd5 26.²xd5 ²xd5 27.²e3 ²e7 28.²g1 ²ac8 29.c3 ²cd8 30.²fe1 a6 31.²d4

31.g3!?.

31...²f4 32.²d2 ²h5 33.²f2 ²g6 34.g3 ²f6 35.h4 ²e7 36.²g2 ²c8 37.²c1 ²d7 38.²d3 ²e7 39.²c2 ²ec8 40.²d1 ²e5 41.²e2 ²c6

I can see you getting impatient: why no comments? Because nothing special is happening!
42.e4 b5 43...cc1

43.c5!?.

43...bxc4 44.bxc4 d6 45.cxd5 exd5 46.cxd5 xc8+ bxd5 47.f5 e3 48.d6 f5 49.d7 b7 50.c6 d2 b1?!

51...g6!?

52.d4!± e8 53.e3 f6 54.d8 f7 55.d4

It was possible to saddle the opponent with certain problems by means of 55.e4!? b8 56.xb8 xb8 57.c6 with initiative.

55..b8 56.xb8 xb8 57..b3 = xb3 58.axb3
An equal ending has arisen. I dare say that the white h4-pawn, fixed on the square of the bishop’s colour, should cause some discomfort for White.

58...\(f7\) 59.e3 e6 60.g4 e5

I wouldn’t have guessed it. The bishops are traded off and the black king is hyper-active now.

61.xe5 xe5 62.gxh5 d6 63.f2 a5

64.e2?! He "wins" his last move back?

Houdini offers a study-like idea here: 64.b4!. Nonsense? Well, let’s continue the forced line: 64...axb4 65.a2 b3
66. \texttt{c1} b2 67. \texttt{d3}+ and the pawn perishes.

Two chess players with an Elo-rating of around 2600 didn’t notice this, I suppose maybe only a cheater could have found it. Sometimes opponents with an Elo-rating of 2100-2200 demonstrate such computer-like play. I don’t want to mention any names, but if they read these lines, let them be ashamed.

64... \texttt{f5} 65. \texttt{e4} \texttt{d4}+ 66. \texttt{d3} \texttt{xb3} 67. \texttt{f2} \texttt{f5} 68. \texttt{c3} \texttt{c5} 69. \texttt{c4} \texttt{d7} 70. \texttt{d3}+ \texttt{d6} 71. \texttt{f4}? \texttt{f6}

71...a4 72. \texttt{b4} \texttt{d5}+.

72. \texttt{h6} gxh6 73. \texttt{e5} \texttt{e6}!!

73... \texttt{g4}+.

74. \texttt{c6} \texttt{h5} 75. \texttt{d4}+ \texttt{f6} 76. \texttt{e2} \texttt{g7} 77. \texttt{b5} \texttt{e6} 78. \texttt{xa5} \texttt{g6} 79. \texttt{b5} \texttt{h5} 80. \texttt{c4} \texttt{g4} 81. \texttt{c3} \texttt{xf4} 82. \texttt{d4} \texttt{g2} 0-1

Please take note of Black’s action in the following fragment. I liked Denis Kadric’ manoeuvres very much. He was not daunted by the high Elo-rating of his adversary and by the colour of his own army. A very good game. As far as the time-trouble stuff – it happens in the games of World Champions too. Borki Predojevic put up vehement resistance, raising many obstacles, and managed to hold the draw.

61
Borki Predojevic (2616)
Denis Kadric (2460)
Sarajevo Bosna Open 2013 (6)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \texttt{f6} 3.\texttt{c3} e5 4.\texttt{f3} \texttt{bd7} 5.\texttt{c4} exd4 6.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{e7} 7.\texttt{g5} 0-0 8.0-0-0 \texttt{g4}

A reasonable exchange operation. Black tries to eliminate two pairs of pieces, which will give him a lot of extra space. Also not bad was 8...h6 9.\texttt{h4} \texttt{b6}.
9. Qxe7 Qxe7 10.h3
10...Nd5 Qd8 11Nb1±.
10...Qe5 11Nb3 Nb6 12Nb1 a5 13.a3 Qd7 14.Qe1?!  
Better was 14Nb2 with the idea f2-f4.

14...Nh3  
Principled and strong.
15.Nxe5 dxe5 16Nb5 Qd5 17.exd5 Qf6! 18.Qe5  
18.Qe4 doesn’t provide an advantage either: 18...a4 19.Qc4 (19.Qxa4?! Qxg2?) 19...d7 20.Qxe5 Qxe5 21.Qxe5 Qf6=.
18...Qxg2 19.f4 Nh3  
Kadric fights cold-bloodedly and Black’s chances are no worse here.
20.c4 Nh5+ 21.Na1  
21.Na2!?.
21...b6  
It was already possible to seize the initiative with 21...h5 22.g1 h4.
22.Na4 Qd8 23.h1 g6 24.Qe3 Nh7 25.Qg1 Qd7  
Black will regret losing this bishop. Maybe a better option was to prepare the advance of the passed h-pawn. Attractive was 25...h6, not allowing the rook on g5.
26.Qxd7 Qxd7 27.h1 Qd8 28.Qh3 Qh5 29.Qg3 Nh8 30.f5 Qe8
The position gradually simplifies and becomes technical.

31.\textit{R}xe8+ \textit{K}xe8 32.\textit{fxg6} fxg6 33.\textit{Q}h3 \textit{Q}f5

Was this necessary? 33...\textit{K}d8.

34.\textit{Q}c3

34.\textit{Q}xf5 gxf5 35.\textit{R}xh5 \textit{R}f7 36.\textit{R}h3 \textit{Q}e7\textsuperscript{+}.

34...\textit{R}e7 35.\textit{R}d1 \textit{Q}e5 36.\textit{R}c2 \textit{Q}d6

Stronger was 36...\textit{K}f7!?

37.\textit{Q}g1 \textit{Q}g7 38.\textit{Q}e1+ \textit{Q}e7 39.\textit{Q}g1 \textit{Q}f7 40.\textit{Q}f1+ \textit{Q}g7 41.\textit{Q}f2 \textit{Q}h7 42.\textit{Q}a2 \textit{Q}c5

Black tries to persuade his opponent to exchange the queens, offering him various pawns, even the one on the h-file earlier on. But understandably Predojevic is not willing to part with his most aggressive piece.

43.\textit{Q}h4 b5 44.\textit{Q}f4 a4 45.\textit{Q}f6?

This negligence could have cost him the game.
45...£e3

Very strong was 45...£4! 46.axb4 £xb4+ and suddenly it turns out that the white king is less safe than its black colleague.

46.£f3 £e4?!

Right was 46...£c5 47.£c3 bxc4 48.£f8 £d6 49.£xc4 g5 with a winning advantage to Black.

47.£c3 bxc4 48.£c6 £e5?

This is likely to be a blunder, otherwise how could we explain that Black gives up a pawn with check? The preventive move 48...£h6+ was more accurate.

49.£xc7+ £h6 50.d6 £d5 51.£xc4??

51.£c8!?

51...£e6+ 52.£a1
52...\textsf{\texttt{xd6}}

The precise 52...\textsf{\texttt{d1+}} would have won: 53.\textsf{\texttt{c1}} \textsf{\texttt{xd6+}} or 53.\textsf{\texttt{a2}} \textsf{\texttt{d4}} 54.\textsf{\texttt{d7}} \textsf{\texttt{xc4+}}.

53.\textsf{\texttt{c8}} \textsf{\texttt{d1+}} 54.\textsf{\texttt{a2}} \textsf{\texttt{d5}} 55.\textsf{\texttt{f8+}} \textsf{\texttt{h7}} 56.\textsf{\texttt{e7+}} \textsf{\texttt{h6}} 57.\textsf{\texttt{f8+}} \textsf{\texttt{h7}} 58.\textsf{\texttt{e7+}} \textsf{\texttt{g8}} 59.\textsf{\texttt{e8+}} \textsf{\texttt{g7}} 60.\textsf{\texttt{xa4}}

60.\textsf{\texttt{c7+}} \textsf{\texttt{f7}} 61.\textsf{\texttt{xf7+}} \textsf{\texttt{xf7}} 62.\textsf{\texttt{xa4}} \textsf{\texttt{g5+}}.

60...\textsf{\texttt{c1}}?

Now it’s a draw. Black could still have won with 60...h4.
It is not advisable to evade the perpetual check: 61...\( \text{Kh6??} \) 62.\( \text{Qe3+} \).

For dessert, especially for danger-seekers, I suggest the following game with the unexpected sacrifice \( \text{Bc4xf7?!} \). In principle, in a game with a short time-control (blitz, or even rapid) this does make some sense, because it is difficult for the adversary to grasp the situation and to eliminate all the threats. But in this given case Berkes had enough time and played perfectly. On the 23rd move it was already all over.

\[
\begin{array}{cc}
\text{62} & \\
\text{Adam Horvath (2531)} & \\
\text{Ferenc Berkes (2677)} & \\
\text{Gyula ch-HUN 2013 (7)} & \\
\end{array}
\]

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \( \text{Nf6} \) 3.\( \text{Nc3} \) e5 4.\( \text{Nf3} \) \( \text{Nbd7} \) 5.\( \text{Bc4} \) exd4 6.\( \text{Qxd4} \) \( \text{Be7} \) 7.\( \text{Bxf7+?!} \)

Wow, this is creative, taking into account that it was a classical time-control game.

7...\( \text{Kxf7} \) 8.\( \text{Ng5+ Kh8} \) 9.\( \text{Qc4++} \) 9.\( \text{Kg8} \) 9.\( \text{e6} \) 10.f4+ \( \text{xf4} \) 11.\( \text{xf4} \) 12.b4+.

9.\( \text{e6} \) c5

The only move.

10.\( \text{Qd1} \)

10.\( \text{Nxd7} \) \( \text{Kf7} \) +.

10...\( \text{b6} \) 11.\( \text{Nxd7} \) \( \text{Kf7} \) 12.\( \text{f5} \) \( \text{f8} \)
It is not easy to give a clear assessment of this position. Two pawns for the bishop + an attack on the exposed king represent certain compensation.

13.0-0 \( \text{Bg8} \) 14.f4

Or 14.\( \text{Nd5} \) \( \text{Qc6} \) 15.\( \text{h4} \) \( \text{Bg6} \) 16.\( \text{h5} \) \( \text{Bg4} \) 17.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{Bg8} \)

14...\( \text{Qc6} \) 15.\( \text{Nd5} \) b5!\( \# \)

Ferenc is playing very strongly, and one gets the impression that he was prepared for the dubious sacrifice on f7.

16.b3 \( \text{b7} \) 17.\( \text{c4} \) bxc4 18.bxc4 \( \text{Bc8} \) 19.\( \text{e1} \) \( \text{a6} \) 20.\( \text{c2} \)

Or 20.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{xd5} \), and any pawn capture is bad.
20...\textit{\texttt{Qxd5}} 21.\textit{cxd5} \textit{\texttt{Qxd5}}

Yes, this works – it is unfavourable for White to accept the sacrifice.

22.\textit{\texttt{Bb2}}

22.\textit{exd5} \textit{\texttt{Rxe1+}} 23.\textit{\texttt{Kf2}} \textit{\texttt{Rf1+}} 24.\textit{\texttt{Ke3}} \textit{\texttt{Nf6+-}}.

22...\textit{\texttt{Qd3}} 23.\textit{\texttt{Qa4}} \textit{\texttt{b6}} 0-1

White stands absolutely hopeless. Only one pawn for a bishop, and furthermore all Black’s pieces have taken up efficient positions.
Section 3: The Manoeuvre ...\( \text{d7-b6} \)

1.e4 \( d6 \) 2.d4 \( \text{\textit{f6}} \) 3.e3 \( e5 \) 4.f3 \( \text{\textit{bd7}} \) 5.c4 \( \text{\textit{e7}} \) 6.0-0 \( \text{\textit{b6}} \)

Let’s try to find out what the use of this strange move is. Earlier it seemed to me that in such structures the knight has nothing to do at b6. Besides, it performed an important function on d7 – protecting the central e5-pawn. Anyway, the white bishop has to retreat now, and most frequently it goes to e2.

In the team championship of Montenegro in 2011, the very experienced player Branko Damljanovic had quite good play after the opening (he was Black) and could even have hoped for something more than equality, but didn’t manage it. In a rather complicated, computer-like fight, full of tactics, both players made mistakes but the last one was committed by Branko.

\[ \text{63} \]
Alekssandr Kovacevic (2568)
Branko Damljanovic (2607)
Tivat tt 2011 (3)

1.e4 \( d6 \) 2.d4 \( \text{\textit{f6}} \) 3.e3 \( e5 \) 4.f3 \( \text{\textit{bd7}} \) 5.c4 \( \text{\textit{e7}} \) 6.0-0 \( \text{\textit{b6}} \)

The bishop is asked to declare itself.

7.e2

The most frequent retreat.

7...exd4 8.xd4 0-0 9.a4

White in his turn wants the plans of the enemy knight to be clarified. In general, the placement of the knight at b6 looks
strange and can be explained only by an advance of Black’s c- and/or d-pawn.

9...a5 10.f4

Was this necessary?

10...\textit{Re8}

10...d5!? 11.e5 \textit{Qe4} 12.\textit{exe4} (12.\textit{Qe3}?!?) 12...\textit{dxe4} 13.\textit{h1} f6=.

11.\textit{Bf3} \textit{Re8} 12.\textit{Be1} c6

This move is quite logical. The pawn restrains three of White’s light pieces at once. It will hardly be necessary to advance it to c5 because (after ...c7-c5) point b5 will be a weakness.

13.b3 g6 14.\textit{Ba3} \textit{Bg7}

Or 14...\textit{Nbd7} with the idea ...\textit{Qd8-b6}, ...\textit{Nbd7-c5}.

15.h3?! This allows a liquidation which favours Black. More careful was 15.\textit{Qd2} as now the a1-rook defends its colleague on e1.

15...\textit{Nd5}! 16.\textit{Ce2}

16.exd5 doesn’t promise anything special after 16...\textit{Qxe1+} (distracting the queen from d4) 17.\textit{Qxe1} \textit{Qxd4+} 18.\textit{Kh1} c5.

16...\textit{Bb4} 17.\textit{Qd2} d5

More modest was 17...\textit{Qc7}?! 18.\textit{Qad1} (White can win a pawn with 18.\textit{Qxb4 axb4} 19.\textit{Qxb4 Qd7} with compensation thanks to the very strong g7-bishop on the weakened long diagonal) 18...\textit{Qd7}.
18.e5 f6 19.c3 \(\Box a6\) 20.exf6

An alternative is the gambit-like 20.e6 \(\Box x e6\) 21.\(\Box x e6\) \(\Box x e6\) 22.\(\Box d4\) \(\Box x e1+\) 23.\(\Box x e1\) \(\Box c7\) 24.\(\Box f2\) and White keeps initiative, but not more.

20...\(\Box x f6\) 21.\(\Box x d1\) \(\Box f 8\) 22.\(\Box x f8\) \(\Box x f8\)

23.c4

It is strategically risky to weaken the whole dark-square complex (d4, c3, c5, b4) if you have only a light-squared bishop. 23.\(\Box e3\)!±.

23...\(\Box b4\) 24.f5?! dxc4 25.fxg6 \(\Box x g6\)

25...hxg6!?.

26.\(\Box f 4\) \(\Box h 6\)=

Even stronger is 26...\(\Box g5\)!.

27.\(\Box e 4\) \(\Box d 7\)

27...c3?! suggested itself, as the queen cannot leave the diagonal h6-c1: 28.\(\Box e 3\) c2 29.\(\Box c 1\) c5 with initiative. The move ...c6-c5 is shady from a positional point of view, but it has a concrete tactical point. The bishop strives to jump to f5. 27...c5 at once is also good.

28.bxc4
Better was 28...\texttt{Nxa4} 29.\texttt{Nde2} \texttt{Bf5} (there is a natural desire to put the knight on the blockading square with 29...\texttt{Nc5}, but Houdini flatly objects: 30.\texttt{Rae5} \texttt{Ba6} 31.\texttt{Re5} with attack. Almost the entire white army is concentrated on the kingside against the exposed black king) 30.\texttt{Rae7} \texttt{Rae8} 31.\texttt{Rxb7} \texttt{Cc5} (only now!) unclear.

\section*{29.\texttt{Qc1} \texttt{d6} 30.\texttt{Re7}?!}

Please don’t be too critical of the quality of the game. In such crazy positions only a computer doesn’t commit mistakes. Judge for yourselves: there are few pawns on the board, but the pieces are involved in a kind of ‘Brownian motion’. Is it realistic to want to calculate everything? There was an option to seriously embarrass Black in 30.\texttt{Nde6}! \texttt{Nxe4} 31.\texttt{Rxe4} \texttt{Nxf4} 32.\texttt{Rxh7} \texttt{xf4} 33.\texttt{c4}+ \texttt{Kc8} 34.\texttt{Rxh7}\texttt{±}.

\section*{30...\texttt{Rf7} 31.\texttt{Rxf7} \texttt{Rxh7} 32.\texttt{Nde2} \texttt{d5} 33.\texttt{Nxe4} \texttt{Qe8} 34.\texttt{Wc5} \texttt{d7}?}

Correct was 34...\texttt{Qf6} with inhuman lines like 35.\texttt{d6} \texttt{Qd7} 36.\texttt{Cc4}+ \texttt{Qf7} 37.\texttt{xh7+} \texttt{Kh8} unclear.

\section*{35.\texttt{Qf2}?!}

35.\texttt{Qe7} \texttt{g7} 36.\texttt{Qh4}\texttt{±}.

\section*{35...\texttt{Qf6} 36.\texttt{Qg3}}
36...\textit{Q}g5??

The players must have been in time trouble for a while already; 36...\textit{Q}g7.

37.\textit{B}b1?

White would have been winning with a move that is natural in time trouble: 37.\textit{N}e6 \textit{Q}h4 38.\textit{R}f1+-.. But Kovacevic must have missed the only right reaction to the predictable reply 37...\textit{Q}e5: here 38.\textit{R}e1! would have finished the struggle, with the threat of a discovery by the bishop, for instance 38...\textit{Q}xe6 39.\textit{B}xh7+.

37...\textit{B}f7 38.\textit{N}f5 \textit{N}fd5 39.\textit{R}d4 \textit{W}f6 40.\textit{Q}xd5 \textit{Q}xd5??

ʻHe laughs best who laughs last’. Alas, on the last move before the time control (?) Branko makes a mistake which is irrecoverable. Now there are many ways to victory for White.

40...\textit{Q}xe6 was equal.

41.\textit{Q}e7+ \textit{Q}xe7 42.\textit{Q}g4+ \textit{Q}g7

42...\textit{Q}h8 43.\textit{W}b2+-.

43.\textit{Q}f5 \textit{W}xg4 44.\textit{W}xg4+ \textit{Q}f8 45.\textit{Q}xh7 \textit{Q}e7 46.\textit{h}4 b5 47.\textit{h}5 \textit{Q}d6 48.\textit{h}6 \textit{bxa}4 49.\textit{Q}f5 \textit{Q}e5 50.\textit{h}7 a3 51.\textit{Q}c8 1-0

Black can try to fight for a win even in quite simple positions. Playing this opening still doesn’t deprive Black of the ‘right’ to take over the initiative. In the next game, Ukrainian grandmaster Baklan made skilful use of the preponderance of the bishop over the knight and gained the victory with the help of some micro-nuances.
1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nf3 Nbd7 5.c4 c5 6.0-0 b6 7.Ne2 exd4 8.Qxd4 0-0 9.a4 a5 10.e1

This is more flexible than f2-f4.

10...Re8

10...Qf7!?

11.Bf4 c6 12.f1 f8 13.h3 Bd7

The Moor has done his duty, let him go.

14.c4

This was my thought too: if the bishop can return here, then what was the use of ...d7-b6?

14...Qc5

14...b6!?.

15.e5

Also reasonable was 15.Qf3 dxe4 16.Qxe4 Qxe4 17.Qxe4 Qxe4 18.Qxe4 d5 19.Qxd5 Qxd5 20.Qxd5 cxd5. White stands better because of the isolated d5-pawn, but everything is still within limits.

15...dxe5 16.Qxe5 Qxe5 17.Bxe5 f6 18.f3 Bf7 19.Qd4 Qe6 20.d2?!

Strange. The Indian grandmaster just abandons the bishop! Better was 20.Qe4 Qxd4 21.Qxd4, intending Qg5 with attack on the f7-pawn: 21...c5 (21...h6? doesn’t help due to 22.Qe1 with the same frightful idea) 22.Qd3±.

This looks like absolute equality, White must simply be watchful of the dark-squared enemy bishop in the ending. There it is superior to the knight since it can operate on two flanks.

25...\(b4\) 26.\(\text{e}\text{x}c4\) 27.\(\text{e}\text{x}c4\) f6

In situations like this I tell my students: ‘There is no non-sense in this move’. Yes, pawns usually should be put on squares not of the bishop’s colour, but this pawn is still not fixed, and it can move further.

28.\(f1\) 29.\(e2\) b5 30.\(d2\) f5

See the note to the 27th move.

31.\(d4\) \(e6\) 32.\(b3\) g5
33.\textit{\textbf{Ed1}}?! \\
Bearing in mind what I just said about pawn placement, it was possible to fix the g5-pawn on a dark square with 33.g4?!.

33...\textit{\textbf{bxa4}} 34.\textit{\textbf{Nd4+ Kf6}} 35.\textit{\textbf{Ra1}}

If White captures on a4, he will have the better pawn structure. If, If, if... 35.\textit{\textbf{Nxc6 Rc8}} 36.\textit{\textbf{Nd4 a3}} 37.bxa3 \textit{\textbf{Bxa3}}².

35...\textit{\textbf{a3!}}

Feel the superiority of the long-range bishop (reaching from f8 to a3) over the knight!

36.\textit{\textbf{bxa3 c5}}

36...\textit{\textbf{Re8+}} 37.\textit{\textbf{Kf1}} \textit{\textbf{Re8}} 38.c3 (38.\textit{\textbf{Nxc6 Rc8}} 39.\textit{\textbf{c3 c5}} 40.\textit{\textbf{d4 a4}} with initiative) 38...\textit{\textbf{a4=}}.

37.\textit{\textbf{Nb5 c4}} 38.\textit{\textbf{Ed1 Re8+}} 39.\textit{\textbf{Kf1 a4}}

Fixing the enemy pawn on a dark square. At the same time, the b5-knight loses its support. However, all is still within the limits of equality.

40.\textit{\textbf{Ed4 Re8}} 41.\textit{\textbf{d6?}}
I dare assume that the Indian player made the 41st move in order not to exceed the time-limit, as sometimes the notation may be wrong. But such an action bears risk because the opponent can think everything over and reveal the defects of such rashness.

Right was 41.\(\text{Na}3\) 42.\(\text{Na}4\).

41...

\(\text{K}\text{e5}!\)

42.

\(\text{R}\text{xc4}\)

Very bad was 42.\(\text{Nxc8}\) \(\text{Kxd4}\) 43.\(\text{Nf7+}\) \(\text{Kf6}\) 44.\(\text{Nf5}\) \(\text{Kf7}\) 45.\(\text{Rxc4}\), putting his hopes on the wrong colour of the queening square.

43...

\(\text{K}\text{d5}\)

44.\(\text{Rxc4}\) \(\text{Ba}\text{xa3}\+\).

44...

\(\text{K}\text{d4}\)

45.\(\text{Na7}\) \(\text{Rb1+}\) 46.\(\text{K}\text{e2}\) \(\text{Kf4}\) 47.\(\text{Na5}\) \(\text{K}\text{f5}\) 0-1

In the next example, the Italian and Dutch grandmasters create a practically flawless game. Brunello sacrificed a pawn, banking on the superiority of his bishops over the black knights. This was enough for compensation, but nothing more, and the result was a logical draw.

65

\[\text{Sabino Brunello (2603)}\]

\[\text{Robin van Kampen (2601)}\]

\[\text{London Classic Open 2013 (9)}\]

1.d4 d6 2.e4 \(\text{f5}\) 3.e5 c6 4.\(\text{f6}\) e5 5.\(\text{d4}\) f4 6.d6 f6 7.e1 \(\text{exd4}\) 8.\(\text{xd4}\) 0-0 9.a4 a5 10.a4 c6 11.a4

In reply to the preventive 11.\(\text{g3}\), 11...d5?! is also quite good. I think that if this move doesn’t lead to the creation of an isolated pawn (d5), then it usually equalizes: 12.\(\text{exd5}\) (12.e5 doesn’t promise any laurels either: 12...\(\text{f7}\) 13.\(\text{f6}\) \(\text{c5}\) 14.\(\text{f2}\) f6=) 12...\(\text{xd5}\) 13.\(\text{axd5}\) \(\text{exd5}\)=.
analysis diagram

Why on earth should White have any real advantage here? The pawn structure is symmetrical, and the slight lead in development is gradually levelled out: 14...\textit{f}3 \textit{f}6 15.c3 \textit{e}7 16.\textit{e}1 \textit{f}5 17.\textit{x}f5 \textit{x}f5 18.\textit{b}3 \textit{c}8 19.\textit{d}6 \textit{e}6 20.\textit{x}e6 and draw agreed, because with opposite-coloured bishops the formation of a ‘splinter’ on e6 doesn’t play a crucial role, Bauer-Delchev, French tt 2013.

11...d5 12.e5 \textit{e}8

With the queen on d3 the only right manoeuvre is the following: 12...\textit{fd}7!? 13.b3 (13.e6? is no good, viz. 13...fxe6 14.\textit{xe}6 \textit{c}5 15.\textit{xd}8 \textit{xd}3 16.\textit{c}7 \textit{xb}2 17.\textit{xb}6 \textit{xd}8; or 17...\textit{f}6+) 13...\textit{c}5 14.\textit{g}3 \textit{h}4 15.\textit{e}3 \textit{e}6=.

13.\textit{g}3 g6 14.f4 \textit{g}7
The Dutchman has built a well-fortified line (e6-f5) which is as hard to cross as the river Meuse. White in his turn draws
the enemy fire, as it were, and doesn’t prevent the black majority on the queenside from moving (...c6-c5). This would
weaken square b5 and the white cavalry would joyfully rush there.

15. \( \text{B}f2 \text{ f6} \) 16.\( \text{exf6} \text{ Bxf6} \)

After the elimination of the outpost e5 White loses all his trumps.

17.\( \text{Qd2} \text{ d7} \) 18.\( \text{Nb3} \text{ c7} \) 19.\( \text{Qe5} \text{ Qe8} \) 20.\( \text{Qxd7} \)

At least gaining the bishop, though in such structures this is not so essential.

20...\( \text{Qxd7} \) 21.\( \text{ae1} \)

It seems that the Italian isn’t daunted by the loss of a pawn. In reply to 21.\( \text{g4} \) the concrete 21...\( \text{xc3} \) 22.\( \text{xc3} \text{ Qxf4} \)
23.\( \text{xd7} \text{ xd7} \) 24.\( \text{xa5} \) is amusing, but the modest 21...\( \text{e6} \) is also not bad: 22.\( \text{ae1} \text{ de5} \).

21...\( \text{xc3} \) 22.\( \text{xc3} \text{ Qxf4} \)

He is not afraid. As for me, I usually try to avoid having two knights against two bishops, because this actually amounts
to an extra pawn for the adversary.

23.\( \text{f3} \)

23.\( \text{g3} \text{ b6+} \).

23...\( \text{d8} \)

23...\( \text{xe1} \)?? 24.\( \text{xe1} \text{ c4} \).

24.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{ff8} \) 25.\( \text{xe8} \text{ Qxe8} \) 26.\( \text{e1} \)
This is the kind of trouble I am always afraid of. Long-range bishops start bothering pawns from a distance.

26...\textit{Q}b6+ 27.\textit{K}h1 \textit{Q}a6 28.\textit{Q}g1 \textit{Q}b6+ 29.\textit{Q}f2 \textit{Q}d8 30.\textit{Q}e1 \textit{Q}b6+ 31.\textit{Q}f2 \textit{Q}d8 32.\textit{Q}e1 ½-½

The following example helps to evaluate the queen’s placement on the central square d4. Serbian grandmaster Indjic carries out the not quite conventional and aggressive-looking thrusts ...c7-c5 and ...f7-f5, after which White seizes what turns out to be a long-term initiative.

However, at one point the Russian player didn’t find the right move which could have led to victory, and missed a tactical counterblow. Next, a short skirmish resulted in an ending with an extra pawn for Black, but the opposite-coloured bishops soon produced a draw.

Ildar Khairullin (2651)
Aleksandar Indjic (2530)
Minsk Bronstein Memorial 2014 (6)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \textit{Q}f6 3.\textit{Q}c3 e5 4.\textit{Q}f3 \textit{Q}bd7 5.\textit{Q}c4 \textit{Q}e7 6.0-0 \textit{Q}b6 7.\textit{Q}e2 exd4 8.\textit{Q}xd4
Why not? The black knight can’t go to c6.

8...0-0 9.a4

9...g4 e6 10.ad1 fd7 11.fe1 e8 12.h3 f6.

analysis diagram

Every bit counts. The bishop is activated with tempo. 13.d2 c4 (it’s a bit more precise to include 13... c5, intending ... xc3 and ... xe4, for example 14.f1 c4=) 14.b3 xe2 15.xe2 e5 16.xe5 xe5 17.xe5 xe5 18.d5 d7= Bedouin-Vachier-Lagrave, France tt 2013.

9...a5 10.b3 d5! 11.e5
As usual, 11.exd5 \( \text{Q} \)xd5 12.\( \text{Q} \)d1 \( \text{N} \)b4= is insipid.

11...\( \text{N} \)e8

More to the point is 11...\( \text{Q} \)fd7 12.\( \text{Q} \)xd5 \( \text{Q} \)xd5 13.\( \text{Q} \)xd5 \( \text{Q} \)xe5! (did Black overlook this resource?) 14.\( \text{Q} \)xe5 \( \text{Q} \)f6=.

12.\( \text{Q} \)d3 c5

Better was 12...c6.

13.\( \text{Q} \)f4 f5

Wow! A couple of sharp moves, but Black’s position is slightly worsened by the creation of some weaknesses.

14.\( \text{Q} \)b5 \( \text{Q} \)c7 15.\( \text{Q} \)xc7

Right; it is not desirable to allow the knight to go to the blockading square e6.

15...\( \text{Q} \)xc7 16.c3

I considered blocking with 16.c4. Houdini neither criticizes it, nor is it keen on it.

16...\( \text{Q} \)e6 17.\( \text{Q} \)g3±
Obviously, the Russian clears the way for the bishop, and a wholesale fight for the dark squares on the kingside begins. I suggest h2-h4 and c1-g5.

17...h8 18.h4 d4 19.cxd4 d5

Indjic is playing creatively. More prosaic and maybe stronger was 19...xb3!?; of course not 19...cxd4? 20.xd4.

20.g5

Here there were many attractive continuations:

A) 20.dxc5!? f4 21.h2 ad8 22.d4;

B) I am glad to inform you that the computer’s first line is the move I mentioned above: 20.g5!?. Certainly, it doesn’t win, but generally an exchange of the dark-squared bishops is in White’s favour. Then the weaknesses in enemy camp will be more visible, for example 20...f4 21.h2. The queen looks passive here, but capturing on g5 is not on for Black as the h7-pawn and then also the king will be subject to a crossfire (d3-h7, h2-h7).

20.xg5 21.hxg5 cxd4 22.h4 xe5

Principled but risky. The most careful option was not to eliminate the e5-pawn, but to use it as a cover against the monster on c1 and to exert pressure along the e-file with 22.e7 23.d4 b4.

23.g6 g8

23...h6 24.xh6+-.

24.g5 ae8 25.ad1 e6 26.gxh7 xh7
The combination of the $h_7$ with the f5-pawn is, to put it mildly, not nice for Black.  

26...$f7$!?.

27.$d2$?

A serious mistake. Khairullin may have missed the following reply. Black would have found himself on the verge of defeat after 27...c4! when all lines end with the assessment ‘still alive, but hardly’: 27...$e4$ (27...$ee8$ 28.$xd4$ $f6$ 29.$fd1$+) 28.$xe4$ (28.$xd4$ $xh4$ 29.$xh4$+) 28...fxe4 29.$xd4$ $e5$ 30.$xd5$ $xd5$ 31.$xd5$ $f5$ 32.$xe4$+

27...$e3$! 28.$xe3$

There are no worthy alternatives: 28.$fe1$ $h6$+ as the diagonal c1-h6 is blocked!

28...$xe3$ 29.$c1$ $e2$ 30.$xe2$ $xe2$ 31.$de1$ $a6=$
Black’s extra pawn is neutralized by the opposite-coloured bishops and the poorly-placed f5-pawn (on a light square).

32.\textit{R}xe6 \textit{Q}xe6 33.\textit{f}f3 \textit{g}g8 34.\textit{b}b2 f4

Reasonable, but even this is not sufficient for an advantage.

35.\textit{q}g5 \textit{g}6 36.\textit{e}e5

36.\textit{xa}5.

36...\textit{xe}5 37.\textit{xe}5 \textit{e}4 38.\textit{xf}4 \textit{xf}4 39.\textit{c}c2 40.\textit{c}c7 \textit{xb}3 41.\textit{xa}5 \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}

Now we will see what happens in case of the bishop’s retreat to d3. In the following Olympic encounter, up to a certain point Black played quite logically and had an acceptable position – although I don’t understand why the queen went out to b6 so late. After that the struggle grew fiercer. Canadian player Eric Hansen ventured to take the b2-pawn, after which the residence of his king was subject to big pressure. Hansen couldn’t cope with it and committed a decisive mistake. However, he was amnestied, and a draw was the result.

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\begin{center}
67
Gadir Guseinov (2613)
Eric Hansen (2472)
Istanbul ol 2012 (5)
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1.e4 d6 2.d4 \textit{c}c6 3.\textit{c}c3 e5 4.\textit{f}f3 \textit{bd}7 5.\textit{c}c4 \textit{e}7 6.0-0 \textit{b}6 7.\textit{d}3

Will the bishop’s placement here (instead of on e2) influence the course of the fight?
7...exd4 8...xd4 0-0 9.ee1 c6 10.h3 ee8 11.a4 a5

Perhaps Black shouldn’t play the pawn here, for example 11...bd7 12.a5 e5 13.f4 d7 14.f1.  

12.f4 f8 13.g5?!

Creative, but actually this leads to the loss of a tempo.

13.f3.  

13...bd7 14.c4 h6 15.h4 e6

The computer keeps suggesting 15...b6. And indeed, why not make use of the knight’s departure? For example, 16.d2 b4.  

16.b3 g6 17.g3 d7
18.f4

For a moment the diagonal c8-h3 is intercepted, so maybe it’s a good idea to win a pawn? 18...f5! 19.xd6 xd6 20.xd6 (20.xd6 xb3 21.cxb3 e6 with compensation) 20...xd6 21.xd6 xb3 22.cxb3 e6 23.b4 axb4 24.xb4±.

18...c5 19.a2

Interesting, but still not very promising, is 19.xf7+!?
19...\textit{xf}7 20.\textit{h}5 \textit{d}7 (Black wants to play ...\textit{f}6) 21.\textit{f}5 \textit{g}5 22.\textit{xg}5 (22.\textit{fxg}6+ \textit{xg}6 23.\textit{fl}+ \textit{f}6 24.\textit{xf}6+ \textit{xf}6, and now what?) 22...\textit{hxg}5 23.\textit{fxg}6+ \textit{xf}6=. Don’t forget that Black has two bishops!

19...\textit{b}6

At last!

20.\textit{h}2

20.\textit{b}1.

20...\textit{xb}2

The Canadian plays the principled move. Perhaps he didn't have a big load of responsibility, since his team has usually not been among the favourites so far.

21.\textit{e}3?!

More promising is 21.\textit{f}3! \textit{b}6 22.\textit{ab}1 \textit{d}8 23.\textit{h}5 with initiative; the simple threat is 24.\textit{xg}6. The bishop’s pressure on the f7-pawn is highly unpleasant, and the rook confines Black’s pieces to protecting the gate (b7) to Black’s camp on the queenside.

21...\textit{b}6 22.\textit{b}1 \textit{d}8 23.\textit{h}5

Almost the same as above.

23...\textit{f}6?

After some thinking I decided to put a question mark here, as Hansen had a good alternative in 23...\textit{d}5! since the rook on e3 is not protected. For example, 24.\textit{f}5 \textit{h}8 25.\textit{be}1 \textit{xe}4 26.\textit{xe}4 \textit{xe}4 with compensation.

24.\textit{f}5
24.e5! dxe5 25.fxe5 \( g_5 \) 26.\( f_3 \) \( h_8 \) 27.\( f_1 \) \( g_6 \) 28.\( e_4 \).  

**analysis diagram**  
The pressure intensifies and the knight at h8 hardly feels comfortable.

24...\( h_8 \) 25.\( d_1 \) \( a_6 \) 26.\( h_4 \) \( e_5+ \) 27.\( g_3 \) \( f_6 \) 28.\( h_1 \) \( g_5 \) 29.\( f_3 \) \( f_6 \) 30.\( h_5 \) \( d_7?? \)  
An inaccuracy which remains unpunished. Again Black should have made use of the vulnerability of the e3-rook with 30...d5!.

31.e5?!  
Even stronger was 31.\( e_6 \)!...
... and Black perishes: 31...d5 32.\texttt{N}c7+-; 31...\texttt{B}e7 32.e5 dxe5 33.\texttt{N}e4+- with ‘mate’ to the queen; 31...g6 32.fxg6 fxe6 33.g7+- 31...fxe6 32.\texttt{Q}xe8.

31...\texttt{Q}g5 32.\texttt{Q}xg5 \texttt{hxg}5 33.e6?!

We cannot exclude that the load of responsibility shows itself again. I can proudly say that in recent years in Transcaucasian states chess has become very popular. This sport is cheap, and it contributes to the development of the intellect. That is why even though these countries are small, their teams, Georgia (especially the women), Armenia and Azerbaijan are usually among the favourites at Olympiads. So each half-point has considerable importance for these teams. Maybe that is why in this game White opts for good, solid continuations. Still, White could have won with 33.\texttt{N}e6! d5 (33...fxe6 34.exd6 \texttt{Q}f6 35.fxe6...
... and White wins) 34.\(\text{c7+}\).

33...\(\text{f6}\) 34.\(\text{de1 fxe6}\) 35.\(\text{fxe6 e7=}\)

36.\(\text{c4}\)

36.\(\text{f5}\) \(d5\).

36...\(\text{b6}\)
I like this move, while Houdini is discontented, suggesting 36...\texttt{a}a8 instead.

37.\texttt{d}d3?  
37.\texttt{f}f5! d5 38.\texttt{d}d6! (this can be missed in time-trouble) 38...\texttt{x}xd6 (38...\texttt{g}g6 39.\texttt{d}d3\pm) 39.\texttt{x}xd6\pm.

37...d5 38.\texttt{c}c7 \texttt{e}e5!

The dark-squared diagonal is exposed.

39.\texttt{x}xb6 \texttt{x}xb6 40.\texttt{e}e2 \texttt{c}c5! 41.c3 cxd4 42.\texttt{e}e4

42...\texttt{e}e4

The charm of a high Elo-rating? However, I would also go for simplification here. More precise was 42...\texttt{c}c5, when White would still have to work for a draw. Two pieces are stronger than the rook as White doesn’t have an outside passed pawn and his e-pawn may be surrounded and destroyed.

43.\texttt{x}xe4 dxe4 44.\texttt{f}f6 45.\texttt{b}b5 \texttt{c}c5 46.\texttt{e}e7 \texttt{e}e7 ½-½

Judging by my database, in 2013 an interesting idea for Black was thought up by Serbian grandmaster Robert Markus. I saw Robert for the first time during a tournament in Subotica. He was a little boy then, while today he is a successful professional with an Elo-rating of above 2600.

With the centre not closed, 7...\texttt{f}f6-d7 looks a bit artificial. I apply this move myself sometimes in the Benko Gambit when the structure is fixed: white pawns on e4-d5, black pawns on e7-d6-c5. However, let’s analyse an instructive encounter of Markus with an elite Israeli grandmaster.

The black knights are redeployed to e5 and c5. Ilya (who, by the way, was born in our country, Belarus) reasonably avoids exchanges, thus forcing Black to manoeuvre in small spaces. Black was subjected to strong pressure, but he coped with the task.

Is the plan with...\texttt{f}f6-d7 sound? I don’t want to give an ambiguous answer –time will tell. I’ll just note that playing
with black against an adversary with an Elo-rating of 2660 you will probably have difficulties in any opening!

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Ilya Smirin (2659)
Robert Markus (2605)
Skopje Karpos Open 2013 (5)


Perhaps this manoeuvre can be patented by Markus.

8.Qe1

8.a4 a5 9.Qe3 c6 10.Qe2 The knight rushes to the kingside, which has been abandoned by the black cavalry. The moves go into opposite directions. 10...exd4 Right, otherwise White maintains his strong central duo e4+d4 with 11.c3. 11.Qxd4?! This seems to give away a piece; 11.Qxd4!? 11...0-0 Strangely, both players missed 11...c5! 12.Qxg7 Qg8 13.Qc3 c4.
Because of the unconventional placement of the knight on e2, the bishop can’t escape. I don’t see White having sufficient compensation for the piece.

12.\( \Box \)g3 \( \Box \)f6 13.c3 \( \Box \)e5 14.\( \Box \)xe5 dxe5 15.\( \Box \)e3 \( \Box \)e6= Nemeth-Markus, Nagykanizsa 2013.

8...0-0 9.\( \Box \)f1

9.\( \Box \)e3 c6 10.h3 \( \Box \)e8 11.a4 a5 12.\( \Box \)f1 \( \Box \)f8 The computer is constantly advising to take on d4: 12...exd4!? 13.\( \Box \)xd4 \( \Box \)c5. 13.d5!? Interesting. With a pawn on b7 this does not seem very appropriate. But in this case, the manoeuvre ...\( \Box \)f8-e8 and ...\( \Box \)e7-f8 will have less value because these pieces will be relatively passive now. 13...\( \Box \)f6 14.\( \Box \)a3 cxd5 15.exd5 Or 15.\( \Box \)xd5 \( \Box \)xd5 16.exd5\( \pm \). 15...\( \Box \)d7 16.\( \Box \)xb6 \( \Box \)xb6 17.\( \Box \)b3\( \pm \)
White clearly has some pressure on the queenside, besides the f8-bishop is a bit passive.

9...c6 10.a4 a5 11.e3 exd4 12.xd4 c5 13.ad1 e8 14.h3 f8

Black could have regrouped his knights with 14...bd7!? 15.c4 (15.e5 d5=) 15...f8, planning to put a piece on e6.

15.b3 h6 16.d2 bd7 17.f4 f6

As often happens in Old-Indian constructions, the d6-pawn is maintained by means of tactical nuances. For instance, now the c3-knight is hanging.
18.\textit{Bg3} \textit{e5} 19.\textit{d4} g5

This is like extinguishing a fire with petrol. 19...\textit{d7}!?

20.\textit{Be3}

20.f4 gxf4 21.\textit{xf4} with initiative.

20...h5 21.\textit{xe5}!?

Ilya intends to get a grip on the light squares, especially on f5. For such a good cause he is even ready to exchange the bishop. Now White has an extra pawn on the light-square complex (the f8-bishop doesn’t participate).

21...\textit{dx} 22.\textit{gf3} \textit{g6} 23.\textit{c4} \textit{e6}

23...\textit{exd} 24.\textit{xf7}+ \textit{xf7} 25.\textit{xf7} \textit{xf7} 26.\textit{g5}! \textit{xc} 3.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

\textit{analysis diagram}

Curious – for the queen Black has a rook, two bishops and a knight! But he cannot defend himself: 27.\textit{h5}+ \textit{e7} 28.\textit{xc}+- and so on.

24.\textit{xe6} \textit{xe6} 25.\textit{xe6} fxe6

Protecting the f5-square, but now the 7th rank is weakened.
26. \( \text{Qe2} \)

More optimal is 26. \( \text{Rg3} \). Here are some variations: 26...\( g4 \) (26...\( \text{h6} \) 27.\( \text{d7} \pm \)) 27.\( \text{hxg4} \) \( \text{Qc5} \) (27...\( \text{h4} \) 28.\( \text{Rh3} \) \( \text{Qxg4} \pm \)) 28.\( \text{h2} \) (28.gxh5 \( \text{Qxg3} \pm \)) 28...\( \text{hxg4} \) 29.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{f7} \) 30.\( \text{Qxg4} \) \( \text{Qxg4} \) 31.\( \text{Qxg4} \) \( \text{Qxf2} \) (threatening ...\( \text{Qh8} \pm \)) 32.g\( \text{3} \) with initiative.

26...\( \text{Be7} \)

26...\( \text{b4} \) doesn’t promise Black any joy: 27.\( \text{Qe3} \) \( \text{ed8} \) 28.\( \text{Qd8} \pm \) \( \text{Qd8} \) 29.g\( \text{4} \) \( \text{h4} \) 30.\( \text{b6} \) \( \text{Qd7} \) 31.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{Qe8} \) 32.\( \text{c1} \)\( \pm \).

Here the queen + knight are stronger than the queen + bishop.

27.\( \text{Qe3} \) \( \text{g4} \) 28.\( \text{Qfd3} \) \( \text{xe4} \)

Preparing to at least go down with his head held high! 28...\( \text{g5} \)?.

29.\( \text{Qg3} \) \( \text{g6} \) 30.\( \text{hxg4} \) \( \text{h4} \) 31.\( \text{h5} \)

Also good is 31.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{Qxg4} \) 32.\( \text{xe5} \)\( \pm \).

31...\( \text{Qxg4} \) 32.\( \text{xe5} \)\( \pm \) \( \text{ad8} \)
33. $\text{K}h2$?! 

33. $\text{Q}f6+!? \text{xf6}$ 34. $\text{Qxf6}$ looks nice. Maybe the Israeli didn’t like 34... $\text{Qxd1+}$ (34... $\text{Rd5}$ 35. $\text{Rd1}$ 36. $\text{Qh2}$ $\text{d7}$, but here White is the only one playing for victory, as the enemy king is unsafe. Whether there will be enough resources to win is another question.

Also possible was 33. $\text{Nf4}$ $\text{Qxd1+}$ 34. $\text{Rxd1}$ $\text{Rxd1+}$ 35. $\text{Kh2}$ $\text{Bd6}$ 36. $\text{Qg5+}$ $\text{Kh8}$ 37. $\text{Qh4}$.

33... $\text{Rxd3}$ 34. $\text{Rxd3}$ $\text{Rf8}$ 35. $\text{Rd4}$ $\text{Bg6}$
Correct was 36.\textcolor{red}{\textit{f}}4 \textcolor{red}{\textit{f}}7 37.\textcolor{red}{\textit{b}}8+ \textcolor{red}{\textit{xf}}8 38.\textcolor{red}{\textit{x}}f8+ \textcolor{red}{\textit{xf}}8 39.\textcolor{red}{\textit{e}}5 and Black faces an unpleasant struggle for a draw.

36...\textcolor{red}{\textit{f}}5= 37.g4 h\textcolor{red}{\textit{x}}g3+ 38.\textcolor{red}{\textit{d}}xg3 \textcolor{red}{\textit{f}}7 39.\textcolor{red}{\textit{g}}4?

An obvious blunder in time-trouble (39.\textcolor{red}{\textit{g}}2).

39...\textcolor{red}{\textit{xf}}2+ 40.\textcolor{red}{\textit{h}}3 \textcolor{red}{\textit{xe}}2 41.\textcolor{red}{\textit{x}}g6+ \textcolor{red}{\textit{f}}7 42.\textcolor{red}{\textit{x}}xe2 \textcolor{red}{\textit{x}}g6 43.\textcolor{red}{\textit{g}}4 \textcolor{red}{\textit{d}}6 44.\textcolor{red}{\textit{f}}3 \textcolor{red}{\textit{f}}5 45.\textcolor{red}{\textit{e}}3 \textcolor{red}{\textit{e}}5 \textcolor{red}{\textit{f}}+-

Sooner or later White will put his knight on e4, with an impenetrable fortress.

And what if the bishop goes to b3, from where it controls the b6-knight? In that case the manoeuvre \textcolor{red}{\textit{d}}f6-d7-c5 makes even more sense because the knight will attack the bishop. An instructive game on this theme was played in the picturesque town of Benasque.

In the summer there are many chess competitions in Spain and organizers often ‘connect’ these so as to make it easier for foreign players who come from far away to participate in several events. Once our family was moving from one event to another with a special chess bus together with the Indian delegation and other colleagues.

From Catalonian Sort to Benasque (Aragon) the bus moves to a height of 1140 metres above sea level. The landscape is beautiful. However, sometimes you may prefer to avert your gaze from a yawning abyss right outside the window. For this purpose, the bus does have a TV on board. But then the Indian girls inserted a tape with a film called ‘P-2’ (Parking-2). The plot was as follows.

The parking guard is a handsome maniac. In a Santa Claus costume he drags a young blonde to the parking lot. Candles, romance... he wants something. Not what you think, however. He intends to dismember the girl and eat her, but at one point she takes a fork and stabs it into his back. That’s what women are like! Always deceptive. The film was full of screaming and shouting, rivers of blood, brains spilling out, and so on. The only way to escape was to look out the window. The passengers were happy to reach the first sanitary stop. Their faces were greenish...

OK, let’s return to chess. Ukrainian grandmaster Vladimir Baklan allowed the knight to capture on b3, which damaged White’s pawn structure. Vladimir pressed against Black’s defensive fortifications during the entire game, until finally his opponent made a fatal mistake.
Does it make sense to give up a bishop? 7.\textit{Q}d3 exd4 8.\textit{Q}xd4 0-0 We won’t find out because in the following game Alexander Delchev didn’t capture: 8...\textit{N}xc4 9.\textit{Q}xc4 0-0 I don’t understand, what didn’t the Bulgarian like about it? This looks like approximate equality. The fewer pieces – the more space. 9.\textit{b}3± Vachier-Lagrave-Delchev, France tt 2013.

7...exd4 8.\textit{Q}xd4

8.\textit{Q}xd4 c5 9.\textit{Q}de2 (insipid, but necessary, since 9.\textit{Q}f5 \textit{xf}5 10.\textit{ex}f5 c4 11.\textit{a}4+ \textit{xa}4 12.\textit{xa}4 0-0 is all right for Black) 9...c4! 10.\textit{a}4+ \textit{xa}4 11.\textit{xa}4 \textit{xe}4 12.\textit{d}4 \textit{f}6 13.\textit{xc}4 0-0. Black’s two bishops and harmonious development compensate for the isolated pawn, Zherebukh-Bauer, France tt 2013.

8...0-0 9.\textit{a}4 a5 10.\textit{h}3 \textit{fd}7 11.\textit{e}3 \textit{c}5 12.\textit{d}1 \textit{xb}3 13.\textit{xb}3
Vladimir takes a certain strategic risk. White’s weakened pawn structure may eventually have an impact on the result.

13...\textit{d7} 14.\textit{c2} \textit{e5}?! \\
Interesting is 14...b6!? 15.\textit{d5} \textit{c5} 16.e5 \textit{b7}, unclear.

15.\textit{xe5} dxe5 16.\textit{ad1}± \textit{d6} \\
Bad is 16...\textit{e8} on account of 17.\textit{d5} and material loss is inevitable.

17.f4 \\
17.\textit{b5}!?.

17...\textit{xf4} 18.\textit{xf4} \textit{a6} 19.\textit{h1} \\
19.e5 doesn’t work due to 19...\textit{c5}+ 20.\textit{h2} \textit{e8} 21.\textit{d5} \textit{c6}± because of the bishop pair + White’s pawn weaknesses.

19...\textit{h4} 20.\textit{xd6} cxd6 21.\textit{d3} \textit{e6} 22.\textit{b5}
Even without using Houdini we can see that the position is more or less balanced. The d6-pawn is marked for death, however the isolated e4-pawn, the weak pawns on b2 and b3, and the strong e6-bishop roughly compensate for this.

22...\(\text{e7}\)

There seems to be nothing horribly wrong with 22...\(\text{d8}\)!? 23.\(\text{e7}\) \(\text{b6}\) 24.\(\text{d5}\) \(\text{a6}\) 25.\(\text{b5}\) \(\text{b8}\).

23.\(\text{xd6}\) \(h6\) 24.\(\text{f5}\) \(\text{xf5}\) 25.\(\text{xf5}\) \(\text{e8}\) 26.\(\text{d5}\)

A long-winded dance of major pieces begins.

26...\(\text{xe4}\) 27.\(\text{xf7+}\) \(\text{f7}\) 28.\(\text{f4}\)
Not 28.\texttt{d7}\texttt{g6} with counterattack.

28...\texttt{e2} 29.\texttt{g1} \texttt{g6} 30.\texttt{xb7} \texttt{xb2} 31.\texttt{d5} \texttt{e3} 32.\texttt{f3} \texttt{e1} 33.\texttt{f8} \texttt{xg1+} 34.\texttt{xg1} \texttt{c1+} 35.\texttt{f1} \texttt{e3+} 36.\texttt{h1} \texttt{g5} 37.\texttt{f3} \texttt{e5} 38.\texttt{d1} \texttt{c3} 39.\texttt{b1+} \texttt{g8} 40.\texttt{d1} \texttt{c8} 41.\texttt{g6} \texttt{b8} 42.\texttt{d3} \texttt{e5} 43.\texttt{g3} \texttt{e8}?

The most tenacious was to transfer into the rook ending with 43...\texttt{xg3} 44.\texttt{xg3} \texttt{f7} 45.\texttt{h2}. 44.\texttt{d5} \texttt{a8} 45.\texttt{c7} \texttt{h7} 46.\texttt{d7} \texttt{g6} 47.\texttt{d6}?! A blunder; it must have been time-trouble (47.\texttt{h2}).

47...\texttt{b1+} 48.\texttt{h2} \texttt{xb3}=

It seems that the draw is near, but the continuous time-trouble did its destructive job after all.

49.\texttt{d7} \texttt{b2} 50.\texttt{f4} \texttt{a6}??

50...\texttt{b4}=. 51.\texttt{e4+} \texttt{g6} 52.\texttt{d6} 1-0
Section 4: 8...e5xd4


This later surrender of the centre is quite often played. In short, Black’s plan is as follows: the knights are placed on g6 and f6, the bishops – on f8 and d7, the rook usually goes to e8. From time to time the bishop retreats to the centre (…&e7-d8) and afterwards, depending on the circumstances, there may be the tempting prospect of moving it to b6 or a5. On the queenside Black organizes counterplay with his pieces or with the move ...b7-b5, and the pawns will move forward if the adversary allows it.

An alternative is the activation of the queen with ...&d8-a5, manoeuvring on the queenside and kingside to demoralize the enemy.

Let’s analyse some model games.

Sometimes White prefers to take on d4 with the queen. Denis Khismatullin, a specialist of our opening, was modestly developing and waiting until the opponent made an unpromising trade-off of bishop for knight. Then he ‘lured’ his adversary into a doubtful exchange sacrifice and won, though with some difficulty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>70</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Israel Caspi (2425)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denis Khismatullin (2655)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rijeka Ech 2010 (2)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1.e4 d6 2.d4 &f6 3.&c3 e5 4.&f3 &bd7 5.&c4 &e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.&e1 c6 8.a4

One of the basic positions – a tabiya. Black is at a crossroads.

8...exd4 9.&xd4
This looks logical, but it is played considerably less frequently.

9...\textit{\textit{f}}e5

Is this possible?! I thought White was controlling square e5.

10.\textit{\textit{g}}e2

The principled continuations are not promising: 10.\textit{\textit{x}}e5?! \textit{\textit{d}}xe5 11.\textit{\textit{f}}xe5? (11.\textit{\textit{x}}xd8 \textit{\textit{x}}xd8=) 11...\textit{\textit{g}}4 12.\textit{\textit{f}}4 \textit{\textit{d}}6 13.e5 \textit{\textit{x}}e5 14.\textit{\textit{d}}1 (14.\textit{\textit{x}}xe5 \textit{\textit{c}}7 15.\textit{\textit{x}}f7+ \textit{\textit{h}}8...
... and Black is winning) 14...\( \mathcal{Q} \)xe4 15.\( \mathcal{Q} \)xe4 \( \mathcal{Q} \)c7=.

10...\( \mathcal{Q} \)c7 11.h3 \( \mathcal{Q} \)g6

More accurate seems to be: 11...\( \mathcal{N} \)fd7!? 12.\( \mathcal{N} \)e3 \( \mathcal{N} \)f6 13.\( \mathcal{Q} \)d2 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xf3+ 14.\( \mathcal{Q} \)xf3 a5 15.\( \mathcal{Q} \)ad1 \( \mathcal{Q} \)e5 16.b3 \( \mathcal{Q} \)c5 17.\( \mathcal{Q} \)e2 \( \mathcal{R} \)e8 18.g4!? Better 18.\( \mathcal{Q} \)f4. 18...h5 19.gxh5 19.\( \mathcal{Q} \)g2!? 19...\( \mathcal{Q} \)xh3 20.\( \mathcal{Q} \)f4 \( \mathcal{Q} \)c8! 21.\( \mathcal{Q} \)d3?? A gross blunder. The following forced variation leads to an equal ending: 21.h6 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xe4 22.\( \mathcal{Q} \)xe4 \( \mathcal{Q} \)g4+ 23.\( \mathcal{Q} \)h2 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xf4+ 24.\( \mathcal{Q} \)xf4 \( \mathcal{R} \)e4 25.\( \mathcal{R} \)g1 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xf4+ 26.\( \mathcal{Q} \)xf4 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xf4 27.\( \mathcal{R} \)xg7+ \( \mathcal{Q} \)h8 28.\( \mathcal{Q} \)xh3 \( \mathcal{R} \)xf2=.

\[ \text{analysis diagram} \]

21...\( \mathcal{Q} \)xe4! 22.\( \mathcal{Q} \)c1 On 22.\( \mathcal{Q} \)xe4 \( \mathcal{Q} \)g4+ 23.\( \mathcal{Q} \)h1 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xe4+ wins at once. 22...\( \mathcal{Q} \)c3 Better 22...\( \mathcal{Q} \)f5. 23.\( \mathcal{Q} \)xe5 dxe5 23...\( \mathcal{Q} \)xd1+ 24.\( \mathcal{R} \)d3 e4 25.\( \mathcal{Q} \)xc3 exf3+.
Amusingly, this is the end of the notation in the database and the result of the game Solodovnichenko-Paunovic, Pamplona 2011, is given as $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$! But especially for you, dear reader, I have asked Yury, who played with white, on Facebook. Indeed it was not a mistake. Around the 80th move a draw was agreed.


15. $a5$ $b5$ 16. $Q_b3$ $a8=.$

15... $N_d7$

The computer suggests the radical 15...$c5$, but then the weaknesses d5, b5 are too evident to play this without any concrete benefit.

16. $Q_d4$ $R_fe8$ 17. $Q_c4$ $Q_ge5$ 18. $Q_f1$

18. $Q_f5!$?

18. $f8$ 19. $f5$ $c5$ 20. $Q_a2$ $a5$
What do you think about this position? I believe that White definitely has the initiative. He has no weaknesses, and the d6-pawn and both bishops are no adornments to Black’s position.

21.\texttt{Bxc5}?! bxc5 22.\texttt{f4} \texttt{d7} 23.\texttt{e3}

Houdini prefers Black already.

23...\texttt{d5}?!

Stronger was 23...\texttt{f6}, intending to drive back the enemy knight by means of ...g7-g6. For example, 24.\texttt{g3} c4!\texttt{+} and the next move will almost certainly be ...d6-d5: 25.\texttt{xc4} d5.

23...\texttt{b6} was also possible.
24. exd5 exd5 25. d6!? 
25... Nxe3 Qxf4 26. c4 exd5 27. cxd5 =.

**analysis diagram**

The blockade on the light squares is convenient for White.

25.... Qb6 26. Bc4

Better was 26. Nxe3.

26... Exc3!? 27. bxc3 Kh8

White’s compensation for the piece is not sufficient.

28. Bb1 a7 29. xf7 Qf6

The insertion of 29...c4+!? is more precise: 30. h1 Qf6.

30. e6 d8 31. e7?

31. e5 c4+ 32. h2 c5 33. e6 c6+

31... c4+-- 32. h1 a8 33. h5 d7?!

33... f2--; of course not 33... xh5 34. g8#.

34. xd7 xd7 35. f3+
I leave the rest without comments as we have long left the opening.

35...\texttt{c}5 36.\texttt{xc}6 \texttt{e}4 37.\texttt{b}5 \texttt{xd}6 38.\texttt{xa}5 \texttt{b}7 39.\texttt{xb}7 \texttt{a}7 40.\texttt{a}7 \texttt{xe}7 41.\texttt{xb}7 \texttt{d}6 42.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{a}8 43.\texttt{d}7 \texttt{f}8 44.\texttt{e}7 \texttt{xa}4 45.\texttt{g}2 \texttt{g}8 46.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{d}6 47.\texttt{d}7 \texttt{a}3 48.\texttt{b}7 \texttt{f}8 49.\texttt{e}4 \texttt{e}7 50.\texttt{c}7 \texttt{f}6 51.\texttt{d}5 \texttt{xc}3 52.\texttt{xc}4 \texttt{a}3 53.\texttt{e}6 \texttt{a}6+ 54.\texttt{f}5 \texttt{f}6 55.\texttt{h}4 \texttt{a}5+ 56.\texttt{e}6 \texttt{e}6+ 57.\texttt{f}5 \texttt{a}3 58.\texttt{g}4 \texttt{f}7 59.\texttt{h}5 \texttt{e}6 60.\texttt{e}4 \texttt{c}3 61.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{e}7 62.\texttt{h}3 \texttt{e}8 63.\texttt{g}4 \texttt{d}7 64.\texttt{d}2+ \texttt{e}6 65.\texttt{e}2+ \texttt{f}6 66.\texttt{h}3 \texttt{b}4 67.\texttt{g}4 \texttt{d}6 68.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{b}8 69.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{c}7 70.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{e}3 71.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{e}2 72.\texttt{c}3 \texttt{d}8 73.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{h}2 74.\texttt{c}6+ \texttt{f}7 75.\texttt{g}4 \texttt{f}6 76.\texttt{c}4 \texttt{a}2 77.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{a}3+ 78.\texttt{g}2 \texttt{c}3 79.\texttt{h}3 \texttt{e}7 80.\texttt{g}4 \texttt{d}4 81.\texttt{c}7+ \texttt{d}6 82.\texttt{b}7 \texttt{f}2 83.\texttt{c}5+ \texttt{c}6 84.\texttt{f}7 \texttt{xg}3+ 85.\texttt{f}5 \texttt{xc}5 86.\texttt{e}4 \texttt{d}6 87.\texttt{f}5 \texttt{d}4 0-1

For a long time the following encounter between a Polish girl and Mikhail Kobalia, a strong Russian grandmaster and trainer, was equal. Not until deep in the ending did the Russian manage to ‘torture’ his opponent.

71

Jolanta Zawadzka (2386)
Mikhail Kobalia (2672)
Aix-les-Bains Ech 2011 (1)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \texttt{f}6 3.\texttt{c}3 e5 4.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{bd}7 5.\texttt{c}4 \texttt{e}7 6.0-0 0-0 7.\texttt{e}1 c6 8.a4 \texttt{exd}4 9.\texttt{xd}4 \texttt{c}7 10.a5
Mikhail allowed this move – he may have considered it not dangerous. Probably, but now the opportunity appears for Black to carry out ...b7-b5 after ...a8-b8. With the pawn on a4 this would have been virtually impossible.

10.h3 is the other move.

10...e5 11.xe5 dxe5 12.e3 b4

Now White must attend to the safety of the a-pawn.

13.a6 b5 14.b3 e8 15.d2 f8 16.ed1 d7

16...b4!? 17.a2 c5 18.c3 c4 19.a4 d8 20.cxb4 xa6 unclear.

17.e2 c5 18.a5 b8 19.b4 xb3

The desire was natural to eliminate this animal, which was casting voracious glances at the f7-pawn. Greed was inappropriate here: 19...xa6 and now we have some forced variations: 20.xa6 c5 (20...xa6? 21.xf7+ xf7 22.b3+ g6 23.d7+ with a lethal attack) 21.xf7+ xf7 22.b3+ c4 (the only move) 23.f3+ g8 unclear; White has the initiative.

20.xb3 e6 21.a3
21...\texttt{xb4}

Also interesting was 21...c5!? 22.\texttt{xc5 (22.a5 b4 23.d3 c8) 22...b4 23.e3 xc5 24.xc5 e8 25.a5 xc2} with initiative.

22.\texttt{xb4 b6 23.d6 d8 24.c3 h6}

Logical, and correct, was 24...\texttt{xd6 25.e6 f6}. The bishop is a bit stronger than the knight and the a6-pawn is permanently weak.

25.\texttt{d5!}

Not killing, but it equalizes the chances.

25...\texttt{b8 26.c6 d5 27.exd5 d5 28.e1 ed8 29.h3 d1 30.xd1 d1+ 31.h2 e4+ 32.g3 e5 33.c8+ h7}
34.\text{c}5

White could have kept the balance with 34.\text{c}5 \text{f}6 35.\text{c}3=.

34...\text{e}6 35.\text{c}3?!

The Polish woman loses the thread of the game. More precise was 35.\text{a}3 \text{e}1 36.\text{c}3 \text{e}2 37.\text{g}2 \text{xa}6 38.\text{f}1 \text{b}4 39.\text{c}4=, but frankly speaking, in probable time-trouble, allowing the rook to penetrate to the 2nd rank is unpleasant.

35...\text{xa}6\text{f} 36.\text{c}3 \text{b}7 37.\text{e}2

As a result of some slight inaccuracies Black now has an extra pawn.

37...\text{e}1 38.\text{xb}5 \text{xb}5 39.\text{xb}5 \text{xc}2 40.\text{g}1 \text{g}6\text{f}
From here on, Mikhail technically realized his material advantage:

41.\( \text{Ra5} \text{ Rc7} \)
42.\( \text{Re5} \text{ f5} \)
43.\( \text{g4} \text{ fxg4} \)
44.\( \text{hxg4} \text{ Rc4} \)
45.\( \text{Kg2} \text{ Rb4} \)
46.\( \text{b3} \text{ e3} \)
47.\( \text{Rxe3} \text{ Rxb4} \)
48.\( \text{Kf3} \text{ Rb4} \)
49.\( \text{Kg3} \text{ a5} \)
50.\( \text{Rc3} \text{ Rb5} \)
51.\( \text{f3} \text{ Kf5} \)
52.\( \text{Rc4} \text{ g5} \)
53.\( \text{Rc7} \text{ h5} \)
54.\( \text{Rc4} \text{ e5} \)
55.\( \text{h2} \text{ d5} \)
56.\( \text{Rc3} \text{ c6} \)
57.\( \text{Rc4} \text{ c5} \)
58.\( \text{Rc4} \text{ b5} \)
59.\( \text{f2} \text{ f5} \)
60.\( \text{e3} \text{ h4} \)
61.\( \text{Rg4} \text{ h3} \)
62.\( \text{Rf2} \text{ h2} \)
63.\( \text{Rg2} \text{ xf3} \)
64.\( \text{Rh2} \text{xb3} \)
65.\( \text{Rg2} \text{ a4} \) 0-1

However, usually White takes on d4 with the knight. Then, after 9.\( \text{Nxd4} \text{ e5} \) White has to decide where to retreat the bishop. I will make a division into two lines.

**A) The bishop remains on the diagonal a2-g8**

The highest division of the Russian team championship features many elite players. Once I had the opportunity to watch this impressive tableau.

On that occasion, four years ago a well-known Italian player didn’t obtain anything special in the game given below. Black could even have taken over the initiative. But in a complicated position, Russian grandmaster Bocharov lost the thread of the game and the fight was over.

72

**Fabiano Caruana (2716)**
**Dmitry Bocharov (2595)**

Olginka tt 2011 (1)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \( \text{Qf6} \) 3.c3 \( \text{e5} \)
4.f3 \( \text{Qbd7} \) 5.c4 \( \text{Qe7} \) 6.0-0 0-0 7.a4 \( \text{c6} \) 8.e1 \( \text{exd4} \)
9.\( \text{Qxd4} \text{ Qe5} \)

Let’s see how an elite chess player treats this line with white.

10.a2
From here the bishop is permanently making the opponent nervous, exerting pressure on f7. Besides, square d5 is controlled, which reduces the mobility of the infantryman on d6.

10...\textit{f}e8 11.h3

A preventive measure before he starts the offensive. Just to be safe, White takes away square g4 from the enemy pieces.

11...\textit{d}7 12.f4 \textit{g}6 13.\textit{e}3 \textit{a}5 14.d3

In analogical structures (though the white bishop is usually on g2) I like to put the queen precisely on this square. Here, the strongest piece as it were paralyzes the opposing army. With the bishop on a2 the queen manoeuvre pursues another aim. The simple \textit{d}3-c4 may be annoying for Black as it sets up a long-range battery along the diagonal a2-g8.

14...\textit{d}8

A multifunctional move. Square e7 is vacated for the rook. If necessary, the bishop can go out to the promising diagonal a7-g1.

15.\textit{d}2

The bishop lies in ambush, suggesting the black queen to move. Not good is 15.\textit{f}5? \textit{xf}5 16.\textit{xf}5 \textit{h}4\textit{f} or 15.\textit{c}4 \textit{e}7. And thrilling lines are not for team matches, especially on the leaders’ tables: 15.b4!? \textit{xb}4 16.\textit{ab}1 \textit{a}5 17.\textit{xb}7 \textit{b}6 18.\textit{b}1, intending \textit{a}2xf7+, \textit{xf}7, \textit{xc}6.

15...\textit{h}5 16.f5

Such moves, weakening the e5-square, are usually made by either very weak or very strong players. The downside is obvious, but there is a logic to the move as well. In particular, preconditions for an assault on the black king are created, and square f4 can be used for a knight or other pieces.

16.\textit{e}5 17.g3 \textit{b}6 18.\textit{e}3
18...d5!

A timely blow in the centre. The chances are equal.

19.\textit{f}2 \textit{h}6 20.\textit{e}3 \textit{h}5 21.\textit{ad}1 dxe4 22.\textit{ce}2

The moment of truth. The Russian player has placed his pieces harmoniously, and he has an extra pawn. He just has to play a few more first choices of Houdini and the initiative will be in his hands.

22...\textit{c}7

Stronger was 22...\textit{h}6!, preparing ground for the queen on g5. However, such computer nuances are hardly noticed in
practice. There could follow: 23.\textit{f2} (bad is 23.\textit{f4} \textit{g5}, forcing the exchange of queens, otherwise ...\textit{b6xd4} and then ...\textit{e5-f3+}) 23...\textit{xd4} 24.\textit{xd4} c5 25.\textit{b5} \textit{xb5} 26.axb5. The queen on h5 is strongly restricted in its movements. Who would dare go in for such a position? But the computer doesn’t worry and suggests the cold-blooded 26...\textit{b6}.

23.\textit{f4} \textit{h6} 24.\textit{fe6}

A hand-to-hand fight sets in.

24...\textit{f3+} 25.\textit{xf3} \textit{exf3} 26.\textit{xf6}

Up to this point everything has been logical.

26...\textit{fxe6}

More accurate was 26...\textit{g3}. White has an extra pawn but ‘everything that moves’ is ready to be captured (\textit{h6}, \textit{e6}, \textit{e1}), and Black threatens 27...\textit{f2+}. In a word – unclear.

27.\textit{fxe6} \textit{c8} 28.\textit{g5} \textit{fxg2}?

Again, more resistant was 28...\textit{g3} 29.e7+ \textit{d5}, giving up a knight and a pawn as payment for the elimination of the monster on a2.

29.e7+ \textit{h8}

29...\textit{d5} doesn’t help to alleviate the pressure: 30.\textit{b5} (there are also many other winning continuations) 30...\textit{a5} 31.\textit{d6}+-.

30.\textit{xg2} \textit{d5} 31.\textit{xd5} \textit{cxd5} 32.\textit{b5} \textit{b8} 33.\textit{xd5} \textit{b6} 34.\textit{f1}

Black resigned.
The a8-rook was never able to join the fight.

Both players acted not very soundly in the following example. Besides its value for this opening book, the game may raise your self-esteem. Chess is a complicated game and even highly experienced professionals with Elo-ratings of 2600-2650 make many mistakes.

73
Evgeny Vorobiov (2592)
Denis Khismatullin (2667)
Kavala Open 2010 (8)


Evgeny prefers moving the bishop to and fro to the f2-f4 push, which is not very convincing.
12...\textit{a}5 13.\textit{b}3 \textit{d}8 14.\textit{d}2 \textit{c}5

In this case the queen can’t escape to the kingside, however there is much to do for her on the queenside.

15.\textit{f}3

Harassing the queen is unpromising: 15.\textit{e}3 \textit{c}4 16.\textit{x}c4 \textit{xc}4. After this exchange White’s hopes for an advantage vanish, for example 17.\textit{d}3 (17.\textit{f}4?! \textit{b}6) 17...\textit{xd}3 18.cxd3 a5=.

15...\textit{e}6 16.\textit{e}3 \textit{xf}3+ 17.\textit{xf}3 \textit{b}4

A cosy spot for the queen. On the whole, this piece does a great job, bringing uneasiness into the enemy camp (pressure
on b3, e4, b2, protection of the d6-pawn).

18.\(\text{Rxe6}\) \(\text{Rx}e6\) 19.\(\text{d2}\) \(\text{a5}\) 20.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{ae8}\) 21.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{b}6\)

Also possible is 21...\(\text{xb2}\), but Khismatullin doesn’t wish to provide the opponent with counterplay: 22.\(\text{b}1\) \(\text{a}3\) 23.\(\text{xb7}\).

22.\(\text{b}1\)

\[ \text{Diagram} \]

\[ \text{Diagram} \]

22...\(\text{d}7\)

Grandmasterly subtleties. Stronger was the natural 22...\(\text{xc3}\) 23.\(\text{xc3}\) \(\text{xe4}\) and Black has a healthy extra pawn. I don’t see any compensation.

23.\(\text{b}3\)

23.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{b}4\) 24.\(\text{d}1\) keeps the material balance. For instance, in reply to 24...\(\text{c}4\) (with the idea ...\(\text{xc3}\) and ...\(\text{xe4}\)), 25.\(\text{d}2\) may follow, reminding Black of the weakness of the d6-pawn.

23...\(\text{e}5\) 24.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{d}8\) 25.\(\text{f}4\)

\[ \text{Diagram} \]
25...\textit{g6}

It should be noted that the players often did not make the best move. This might be explained by the relaxing nature of the surroundings. Summer, the Aegean Sea...

Much stronger was 25...\textit{d5}! as capturing is bad: 26.exd5 \textit{g6}+ and after 26.d1 \textit{d4} 27.a2 \textit{c7} the pawn has moved from d6 to d4, cramping the enemy. Black’s pieces are positioned almost ideally.

26.\textit{h1} \textit{e6} 27.\textit{h2} \textit{h4} 28.f4

Will Black really lose material?
28... Ng4?

Right was 28... Ng4! and now:

A) Tempting but insufficient is 29.hxg4? hxg4 30.fx e6 fxh2+ 32.fh2 fd3 33.fd3 fd2+ 34.f2+ fh8-f7 (but not 34... fxh2+! 35.f3+ e6+) 35.f1 f6-+. This is the point. Now the queen controls square e8 and the monarch is ready to eliminate the passed e7-pawn (...g6-f7);

B) 29.e1 fxh5 30.fg3 (or 30.hxg4 fxg4-+ with the same motifs, like ...g6-h6) is unclear.

But was all this necessary? See the note to the 22nd move.

29.gxf3 g3 30.f5

Also good was 30.e1 g6 31.g2! fxg2 32.fxg2 fxh5 33.fg3 fc3 34.f5±.

30... he8??

30... fxh3 31.fx e6±.

31.fg1?

It must have been time-trouble, otherwise it is not clear why here are so many serious mistakes that completely reverse the assessment: 31.e1 fxh3 32.hxh3 fxe4 33.fx h2 fc3+-. White is a rook up.

31... Exh3 32.fg5 Exh5

32... fxh2+ 33.fxh2 fxh2+ 34.fh2 fc3±.

The rest needs no comment.


Next, another creative sample from the Russian team competition. In recent years it has been held in different resorts at the Caucasian Black Sea coast. These are holiday resorts, but the atmosphere at the tournament is quite ‘active’, I
would even say – fighting.

Skilfully, Dmitry Frolyanov literally tears the defence of one of the opening’s experts to pieces. Of course, a gross blunder on the final move played a major role, but Black’s position was unsatisfactory anyway.

Dmitry Frolyanov (2610)  
Dmitry Bocharov (2595)  
Olginka tt 2011 (5)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.f3 Bd7 5.c4 c6 6.0-0 0-0 7.a4 c6 8.e1 exd4 9.Nxd4 Ne5 10.Ba2 e8 11.h3 a5 12.f4

Not messing about.

12...Ng6 13.Qd3 d8 14.d2 h5 15.f5 e5 16.g3 b6 17.e3 d7 18.f2

18...e7

I believe the correct defence is connected with the move 18...h6!? with the already familiar idea ...h5-g5.

19.Rad1 Rae8 20.Bde2

What should the dark-squared bishop do? A retreat to c7, to protect the pawn, would mean to doom the queen to perdition. In case of the exchange on f2, eliminating a dangerous opponent, how should Black protect d6?

20.d5

20...c7 21.f4 h6 22.e3++; 20...xf2+ 21.xf2+.

21.xb6 axb6 22.exd5 xf5 23.d6 d7 24.d4 e4?
More stubborn resistance was offered by 24...g6 25.Qxf5 Qxf5 26.f2+ Qxf2+ 27.Qxf2±.

25.Ed2

A quiet move which drives the opponent into the corner. Now the threats are 26.Qxe4, 26.Ed2-e2. It was still too early for 25.Qxe4 Qxe4 as the d1-rook was under attack by the queen. After the text, Black resigned.

To conclude this theme, I will show you the bishop’s retreat to b3 in a performance by the best chess player of our country (in recent years). Black’s interests were defended (rather successfully) by my old acquaintance, grandmaster Ramil Khasangatin from Kazan. For your information: Kazan is the capital of Tatarstan, one of the biggest Russian regions. Chess is quite popular there.

So, in the opening Sergei missed an opportunity to strike a blow in the centre, after which the initiative was firmly seized by Black. Ramil won a pawn and in the ending the Belarusian had to display all his defensive skills to save the game.


Black equalized confidently in another encounter: 11.h3 d7 12.e3 a5 13.d2 b4 (with the poorly concealed intention to play ...e5-c4) 14.e2 f8 15.ad1 h6 16.a2 a5 17.c3=, Kobalia-Bocharov, Moscow 2011.

11...g6 12.a5

With the idea of playing a5-a6, cutting the ground from under the feet of the c6-pawn. Black has to take care of this threat.

12...c7
Self-blocking with 12...a6 seems not so nice.

13.\(\text{Qf3} \text{f8} \) 14.\(\text{d2} \text{d7} \) 15.\(\text{h3} \text{b5} \) 16.\(\text{axb6} \text{axb6} \) 17.\(\text{xa8} \text{xa8} \) 18.\(\text{g3} \)

I wonder why Sergei rejected the principled 18.g4 b5 19.g5 \(\text{e8} \) 20.h4, with an evident initiative.

18...b5

18...\(\text{e8}=.\)

19.\(\text{f3}?\)

The breakthrough 19.e5!? is promising as, for instance, after 19...dxe5 20.fxe5 \(\text{e8}?\) can’t be played due to the blow 21.\(\text{x7f+!} \text{x7f7} 22.e6+ and the queen drops.

19...b4! 20.\(\text{d1} \)

20...c5

The computer votes for 20...d5! because in reply to 21.e5 unpleasant is 21...\(\text{e4} \) and White will have to give up an exchange to avoid the worst: 22.\(\text{xe4} \text{xe4} 23.\text{g5}\text{e8±}.\) There is certain compensation, but the presence of Black’s rook on the open a-file is alarming for White.

21.\(\text{c4} \text{c6} 22.\text{g5} \text{d5!} \)

A timely counterblow. The usually peaceable Ramil reminds his opponent that he can also bare his teeth.

23.\(\text{exd5} \text{xd5} 24.\text{xd5} \text{xd5} 25.\text{f3} \text{d8} \)

Why should White stand better here? Black is not even inferior in terms of space. The only blots in his position are the c5- and b4-pawns being placed on dark squares (the bishop’s colour).
26.f5 Qe5 27.Qe2 Qe6!

Obviously intending to get to d4.

28.c3 Qf6 29.Qf2 Qd7 30.Qe4 Qxe4 31.Qxe4 Qxf5

The outcome of the opening is catastrophic for White. He is simply a pawn down.

32.Qg5 Qd5

Pinning with 32...Rxe8? is useless because of 33.Qf6+ Qxf6 (or 33...gx6 34.Qxe8 fxg5 35.Qc6±) 34.Qxe8 Qg5 35.Qxc6±.

33.Qb5 Qd7 34.Qf4

A good idea, reducing the tension.

34...Rd1 35.Qe2 Qxe1+ 36.Qxe1 Qe6 37.Qg3 f5! 38.Qd2 Qxe1+ 39.Qxe1
The ending looks very unpleasant for White. Without the knights, both sides would attempt to put their pawns on light squares. As it is, things are not so clear.

39...\textit{Ne}5

39...\textit{f}7.

40.cxb4 cxb4 41.b3

The Belarussian grandmaster prefers to put the pawn on a light square here too.

41...\textit{f}7 42.\textit{f}1 e6 43.e2 d5 44.\textit{f}3
44...\(\text{e}6\)

I can’t make a conclusive assessment, but it seems that Black’s resources won’t be enough for a victory in the bishop ending, partly because of the poorly-placed pawn on b4: 44...\(\text{xf3}\) 45.\(\text{gx}\text{f3}\) (or 45.\(\text{xf3}\) \(\text{d}4\) 46.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{g}5\) 47.\(\text{d}2\) 45...\(\text{g}5\) 46.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{e}7\) 47.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{h}5\) 48.\(\text{b}6\). The bishop controls square d4, and if it is chased away (...\(\text{e}7\)-c5), it will go, for instance, to d8.

45.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{e}7\) 46.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{f}6\) 47.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{d}4\) 48.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{c}5\) 49.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{g}5\) 50.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{f}4\) 51.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{h}6\) 52.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{h}5\) 53.\(\text{h}4\)!

Was this necessary? Waiting passively would likely have been more stubborn. Because then the passed pawn will be on the f-file, whereas now...

53...\(\text{f}3\)! 54.\(\text{gxf}\text{3}\) \(\text{gxh}\text{4}\)

Of course, it is more difficult to stop the passed pawn on the h-file, however if White manages to give all his pieces for the knight and b4-pawn, it will be a draw.

55.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{h}3\) 56.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{e}5\)

Marking time with 56...\(\text{e}6\) seems to be a subtler option, though it is not clear how Black can win after the white bishop’s transfer to the diagonal b8-h2: 57.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{f}5\) 58.\(\text{c}7\) h4 59.\(\text{h}2\) \(\text{a}5\) 60.\(\text{a}1\)! \(\text{d}4\) 61.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{c}3\) 62.\(\text{d}6\).

57.\(\text{xb}\text{4}\) \(\text{xf}\text{3}\) 58.\(\text{xc}\text{5}\) \(\text{xc}\text{5}\) 59.\(\text{f}2\) \(\text{h}2\) 60.\(\text{g}\text{2}\) \(\text{d}4\) 61.\(\text{x}\text{d}4\) \(\text{x}\text{d}4\) 62.\(\text{xh}\text{2}\) \(\text{c}\text{5}\) 63.\(\text{h}\text{3}\) \(\text{b}\text{4}\) 64.\(\text{h}\text{4}\) \(\text{x}\text{b}\text{3}\) 65.\(\text{h}\text{x}\text{h}\text{5}\) \(\frac{1}{2}\)-\(\frac{1}{2}\)

B) The bishop leaves the diagonal a2-g8

The first example is quite sad for the black side. The famous Kazakh grandmaster Murtas Kazhgaleev treated the opening poorly and soon faced problems. Despite stubborn resistance, he didn’t manage to get out of this mess.
1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.f3 Bd7 5.c4 Ne7 6.0-0 0-0 7.e1 c6 8.a4 exd4 9.Nxd4 Ne5 10.Bf1

The advantages of this retreat are that the bishop controls some important squares for the e5-knight and it glances at b5.

10...Re8 11.h3 f5 12.Bf4 d6 13.h2 Qb6

After the departure of the other bishop to the kingside, Murtas tries to terrorize the b2-pawn. However, the bluff doesn’t work.

14.a5! Qc7

Gluttony leads to indigestion: 14...Qxb2? 15.Qd2 (where to retreat to?!) 15...Qb4 16.Qa4 Qc5 17.Qb3+-.

15.Qh1 Qg6 16.f4 b5 17.axb6 Qxb6

If 17.axb6 had been favourable for Black, this could have explained the move 13...Qb6, but this line is deplorable for Black: 18.Qxa8 Qxa8 19.e5 Qe8 20.Qc4 d5 21.f5+-.
18.\textit{d}2 a5

18...\textit{xb}2 19.\textit{eb}1+–.

19.\textit{b}3 \textit{ed}8 20.\textit{d}3 \textit{d}5 21.e5 \textit{e}4

Black has to run off the rails. Stepping back was totally bad.

22.\textit{xe}4 \textit{dxe}4 23.\textit{xe}4 a4

23...\textit{xh}3 24.\textit{c}3±.
24.\textit{c1}  

Perhaps more accurate was 24.\textit{g1}! \textit{b4} 25.\textit{xb4} \textit{xb4}, but here 26.\textit{ed1}! may be missed in lengthy calculations; 26...\textit{axb3} 27.\textit{xd7}.  

24...\textit{xb2} 25.\textit{d3} \textit{d4} 26.f5 \textit{e7}  

The e5/f5 tandem sweeps away everything in its path.  

27.e6  

27.\textit{g1}?.  

27...\textit{e8}  

27...\textit{f}e6? doesn’t work due to 28.\textit{e}5 \textit{a7} 29.f6+ with a strong attack.  

28.\textit{c}7  

An annoying move. Before playing \textit{e}5 the Italian wants to drive the rook off the e-file. The immediate 28.\textit{e}5 couldn’t be played in view of 28...\textit{xe}5+.  

28...\textit{e}5?  

‘It doesn’t matter, I’m dead anyway!’  

28...\textit{d}c8 29.\textit{e}5+.  

29.\textit{a}8 \textit{x}a8 30.\textit{e}5 \textit{d}5 31.f6  

Vocaturo also doesn’t play all the best moves, but his advantage is too big to spoil it all.  

31...\textit{xf}6 32.\textit{xf}6 \textit{g}6
More stubborn was 32...fxe6.

33.e7 Kg7 34.Bxg7 hxg7 35.c3+ f6 36.Bxe5 Bxe5 37.Qxe5+-

White has an overwhelming superiority: an extra exchange and a pawn are more than sufficient for victory. And even though there were some difficulties with the realization, I leave the rest without comment. It is another story and theme.

The following good-quality Ukrainian ‘derby’, from the Russian team championship again, demonstrates the high versatility of the variation. Even passive defence can be enough to hold on against White’s pressure, exerted by a player with an Elo-rating of almost 2700.

1.e4 d6 2.d4 d5 3.c3 e5 4.f3 d3 d7 5.c4 e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.e1 c6 8.a4 exd4 9.cxd4 e5 10.f1 e8 11.h3 g6 12.g3
This reminds us of the game Karpov-Timman, given elsewhere in this book.

12...f8 13.g2 d7 14.f4 c7 15.h2 ead8 16.f3 b6 17.f5

The computer isn’t keen on this move.

17...e5 18.xe5 dxe5 19.f3 c8 20.g4

A curious structure, which I meet in my blitz games from time to time. White’s plan is quite clear: marching his kingside pawns. But what should Black do?

20...h8 21.e2 a6 22.g5 g8 23.e3 f6 24.g6 h6 25.g3
The situation still hasn’t been clarified. White tries to control the entry squares on d-file, but doesn’t put his rooks there. On the kingside Black is very solid and... passive.

25...\textit{Rd}7 26.\textit{Bf}1

And here Houdini proposes to release the tension with a rook swap: 26.\textit{Rd}1 \textit{Rd}8 27.\textit{Rxd}7 \textit{Rxd}7 and only now 28.\textit{Bf}1. This idea looks appealing to me.

26...\textit{Bxf}1 27.\textit{Qxf}1 \textit{Rd}8 28.\textit{Rd}1

Areschenko also decides to simplify the position.

28...b5 29.\textit{Rxd}7 \textit{Rxd}7 30.axb5 cxb5 31.\textit{Qf}2

The computer prefers 31.\textit{Bxb}5 \textit{Wxc}2+ 32.\textit{Kh}1 \textit{Rd}3. But who would be willing to allow the penetration of major pieces into his camp?

31...a5 32.\textit{Bb}6 \textit{Cc}6 33.\textit{Xxa}5
With consistent play the Elo-favourite has won a pawn, but the compensation turns out to be quite sufficient.

33...c5 34.e1 b4! 35.h4

35.xb4? xb4 36.xb4 xc2+ may be dangerous for White only.
If 35.c3!? b3 36.e1 d3 with compensation.

35...b5?!

A false step, which goes unnoticed by the adversary.
Better was 35...a7.
36.\textit{h}3?! \\
36.c3! could have saddled Black with some real problems, for example 36...b3 (after 36...bxc3 37.bxc3 White simply has an extra pawn) 37.b4 axb4 38.cxb4 d4 39.h3 exb4 (even worse is 39...xb4 40.bxb4 b4 41.e7+- and I don’t see any protection against h5, xg7, and h8 mate) 40.e8+-. The white queen will gradually join the attack, which will be terrible.

36...\textit{a}7 37.d8d7 38.a5 a7 39.d8d7 40.e8

Playing with fire.

40...\textit{b}7 41.a1 f2 42.a4 xg3 43.xg3 xe4 44.xd7 e3+ \textbf{1/2-1/2}

Here is a similar example where Black patiently holds the draw.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
1.e4 & d6 & 2.d4 & e6 & 3.c3 & e5 & 4.f3 & d7 & 5.c4 & e7 & 6.0-0 & 0-0 & 7.e1 & c6 & 8.a4 & exd4 & 9.dxd4 & e5 & 10.f1 & e8 & 11.h3 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Ibragim Khamrakulov (2496) vs Branko Damljanovic (2611), Pamplona Open 2011 (4)}
\end{table}

It is not clear whether it makes sense to play 11.a5 here, allowing Black, as usual, to carry out ...b7-b5: 11...f8 12.h3 d7 13.e3 h6 (is this necessary? 13...b5??) 14.d2 c7 15.f4 g6 16.d3 b5 17.axb6 axb6 18.xa8 xa8 19.f3 b5

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{analysis_diagram.png}
\caption{Analysis diagram}
\end{figure}

20.e2 (missing, or underestimating, a strong breakthrough in the centre: 20.e5! dxe5 21.xg6 fxg6 22.fx5±) 20...d8=, Orak-Markus, Bol 2011.

11...f8 12.g5
This seems to be less accurate than 12.\textit{f4}, but such nuances can be discerned only with a microscope.

12...\textit{h6} 13.\textit{h4} \textit{g6} 14.\textit{g3} \textit{a5} 15.\textit{b3} \textit{g5}!

Black’s unusual grouping of pieces guards the residence of his king. However, White is also concerned with safety.

16.\textit{d2} \textit{h5} 17.\textit{xg5} \textit{hxg5} 18.\textit{h2}

The pawn’s shift from \textit{h6} to the \textit{g}-file is in Black’s favour. The \textit{g5} outpost makes it difficult for the enemy \textit{h-} and \textit{f-} pawns to pass through.

18...\textit{e5} 19.\textit{ad1} \textit{g6} 20.\textit{a5} \textit{f6} 21.\textit{f3} \textit{fd7} 22.\textit{g3} \textit{a6} 23.\textit{c4} \textit{xc4} 24.\textit{xc4} \textit{e5}
A changing of the guards. Damljanovic has transferred and traded off the not very active f6-knight, which was limited by the pawns on f3 and e4.

25.\textit{b}3 b5 26.axb5 axb5 27.\textit{xa}1 \textit{d}7 28.\textit{ed}1 \textit{xa}1 29.\textit{xa}1 \textit{b}8 30.\textit{a}7 \textit{g}7 31.\textit{f}1 \textit{g}7 32.\textit{d}1 \textit{f}6 33.\textit{f}2 \textit{d}8 34.c3 \textit{f}8 35.\textit{e}2 \textit{e}7 36.\textit{d}3±

I don’t know what to write here. Both players are making reasonable moves. White certainly has the initiative, but Black has locked himself in a fortress, and he has enough provisions.

36.\textit{d}7 37.e5

37...d5

The Serbian grandmaster may have been considering regaining the initiative here. He could equalize with 37...dxe5 38.\textit{xe}5 \textit{c}5 39.\textit{c}2= (39.\textit{a}2 f6 40.\textit{g}4 \textit{d}3 with counterplay).

38.f2

38.c2 c5 39.f2 c4 40.g4±.

38...c5 39.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xe}5

39...c4 40.\textit{b}4 \textit{xb}4 41.cxb4 \textit{xe}5 42.\textit{c}5+ \textit{g}7 43.\textit{e}4 with initiative.

40.\textit{e}4 \textit{xd}3 41.\textit{xd}3 \textit{c}4 42.\textit{e}4 f5 43.\textit{c}2 b4 44.\textit{a}4 \textit{bxc}3 45.\textit{bxc}3 \textit{f}6 46.\textit{c}5+ \textit{g}8 47.\textit{xe}8 \textit{xe}8+ 48.\textit{d}2 \textit{d}8+ 49.\textit{c}2 \textit{d}3 50.\textit{b}4 ½-½

Here is a lively encounter from the 2013 European championship. White played 11.b3, which is far from optimal. However, Elo-favourite Alexander Motylev must have decided to win by a direct attack and if White had replied adequately, he could have found himself in an unenviable position. Both sides played not in the best way, but the game itself became spectacular.
Croatian grandmaster Ante Brkic gradually lost all his advantage and then the struggle flared up. Then it was the Russian who strived for a win, but he went too far and lost the game. A quite dramatic finish.

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.f3 Bd7 5.c4 Bc7 6.0-0 0-0 7.e1 c6 8.a4 exd4 9.Nxd4 Nf3 10.hf1 Be8 11.b3?!

The Croatian grandmaster appears to plan a fianchetto, but is it good? The computer is indignant and diagnoses: ‘White stands slightly worse’! Let’s try to sort this out.

11...d5! 12.exd5 b4! 13.Bd2

Correct was 13...cxd5 14.b5 Bb7 and Black’s position is at least not worse. The isolated d5-pawn can’t be easily blocked due to White’s weakened pawn structure on the queenside. The c2-pawn is actually weak as it can be exposed to pressure along the c-file.

Also not bad is 13...Bg4 14.Qc1 c5 15.e3 cxd5.

14.e4 cxd5 15.axb4 dxe4 16.Qd2

Or 16.Qxe4 Qh4, attacking two targets near the white king at the same time – h2 and f2.

16...a5 17.Nc3 Qc7
A critical situation on move 17 already. What has Black achieved with the cavalry raid ...\( \text{f6-g4} \)? The e4-pawn may fall, and the mate attack isn’t successful.

18.f4?!

With the cold-blooded 18.h3! White could have driven Black into a bad position. Here are some lines: 18...\( \text{f6} \) (18...e3 19.fxe3 \( \text{f6} \) 20.\( \text{b5} \) with a material and positional (two bishops) advantage) 19.\( \text{b5} \) \( \text{e7} \) 20.\( \text{d6 d8} \) 21.\( \text{ad1 e8} \) 22.\( \text{xe5 e5} \) 23.\( \text{xf7+} \).

18...\( \text{c6} \)

The most stubborn was 18...exf3 19.gxf3 \( \text{xh2} \) 20.\( \text{g2} \). The knight can’t be captured on h2, but it is also not clear how it can get out of the trap.

19.h3 \( \text{h6} \)

19...\( \text{xd4} \)\!? 20.\( \text{xd4 h6} \).

20.\( \text{xc6} \) \( \text{xc6} \)

Now Black’s pawn structure has worsened.

21.\( \text{ad1 f5} \)
22.\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}e3}

Ante tries to be careful, but this allows his opponent to resist. Very strong, and also natural, was 22.\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}d6}, because the exchange would actually mean defeat for Black. He won’t be able to protect his many weaknesses. If 22...\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}b6}+ 23.\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}d4}; or even the sharp 22.g4.

22...\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{f6}}} 23.\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{B}}d4}; or even the sharp 22.g4.

22...\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{f6}}} 23.\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{g4}}} \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{B}}g6} 24.\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{B}}g2}

Again 24.f5 suggested itself. I don’t understand what deterred the Croatian from playing this move, for instance 24...\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{B}}f7} 25.\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{g2}+}--}.

24...\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{f5}}}!

Of course, Motylev doesn’t miss the opportunity to set up a blockade. His problems remain, but the situation is already not so catastrophic.

25.\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{g5}}}

More accurate was 25.\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{e5}}}.

25...\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{f7}}} 26.\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}d4}

This pressure along the diagonal a1-h8 may have been White’s intention. But Black has time for a regrouping.

26...\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d8}}} 27.\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}d7} \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}xd7} 28.\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{R}}xd7} \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}e6}

The position has become acceptable for Black. Now Brkic has to win for the second time.

29.\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}e5} \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Qf7}}} 30.\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{h4}}}
30...\text{c5}?

And here Alexander could have even equalized with 30...\text{f8}! 31.\text{c7} \text{g6} 32.\text{d1} (or 32.\text{xc6} \text{xe5} 33.\text{xe5} \text{xe5}, unclear) 32...\text{xe5} 33.\text{xe5} and now Black can keep chasing the uninvited guest: 33...\text{ec8} 34.\text{b7} \text{eb8}=.

31.\text{c7} \text{a6} 32.\text{xc6} \text{b4} 33.\text{c7} \text{ec8} 34.\text{e2} \text{exc7} 35.\text{xc7} \text{ec8} 36.\text{xa5} \text{xc2}

Motylev has obtained counterplay, but White still has an extra pawn. Moreover, the two bishops may have their say in the struggle on two flanks.

37.\text{b6}?!
There were many errors in this game. Let's be happy: we are not alone! The stars also make mistakes. More interesting was 37.b4 \( \text{b}3 \) 38.b5 \( \text{bxa4} \) 39.b6 \( \text{b}c5 \) 40.\( \text{b}f1 \) \( \text{xa5} \) (40...\( \text{c}6 \) 41.\( \text{d}2\pm \)) 41.\( \text{xc2} \) ! 42.\( \text{b}7\pm \).

37...\( \text{h5} \) ! 38.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{e3} \) 39.\( \text{d}8\pm \) \( \text{xd8} \) 40.\( \text{xd8} \) \( \text{e2} \) 41.\( \text{a}5 \)

The time-trouble phase must have passed and now Black wins a piece.

41...\( \text{e1=\#} \) 42.\( \text{xe1} \) \( \text{xe1} \) 43.\( \text{h1} \)

Reasonable, as it is desirable to save the long-range fighter. The game starts over for the third time. Now it is the Russian player who has the better chances.

43...\( \text{c2} \) 44.\( \text{a5} \)

Let's have a look at this intriguing ending. There are not many pieces left, so we won't get tired. It is not a queen ending with endless labyrinths of checks.

44...\( \text{d4} \) !

Believe it or not, I was thinking of 44...\( \text{e2} \). The idea is to construct an impassable barrier for the white king: f3, e3, d3, e2, e1. But I was immediately distracted when I noticed that 45.\( \text{f2} \) drives the bishop away. Well, what of it?

45...\( \text{a6} \dagger \) and the white king can’t move any further, while his colleague is ready for a quick march to the queenside.

45.\( \text{f2} \) \( \text{f7} \) !

Black should simply have brought on fresh forces with 45...\( \text{f8} \).

46.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{b5} \)

46...\( \text{xb3} \) ?? 47.\( \text{a6} \) and the pawn is unstoppable.

47.\( \text{c6} \) \( \text{c7} \) 48.\( \text{f8} \) 49.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{e7} \) 50.\( \text{c5} \)
50...\(\text{N}e6+\)??

The knight is moving away from the battle scene. The situation had considerably worsened for Black, but the draw could still have been achieved with the accurate 50...\(\text{Na6+}\) 51.\(\text{Kb5}\) \(\text{Nc7+}\) 52.\(\text{Kb6}\) \(\text{Kd6}\) (52...\(\text{Nd5+}\) 53.\(\text{Kc5}\) \(\text{c7}\) 54.\(b5+-\)) 53.\(b5\) \(g6\) 54.\(a6\) \(\text{d5}\) 55.\(\text{xd5}\) \(\text{xd5+}\) 56.\(\text{b7}\) \(\text{e5}\) 57.\(\text{a7}\) \(\text{b6}\) 58.\(\text{a6}\) \(\text{a8=}\).

51.\(\text{b6}\) \(\text{xf4}\)

Ah, I see, the Russian player decided to organize counterplay. But it is obviously unsatisfactory, as White had several ways to win now.

52.\(\text{a6}\) \(\text{d5+}\) 53.\(\text{b7}\) \(\text{xb4}\) 54.\(\text{a7}\) \(\text{xc6}\) 55.\(\text{a8=}\)

55.\(\text{xc6??}\) \(\text{h5}\) and the bishop goes to \(f3\).

55...\(\text{d8+}\) 56.\(\text{b6}\)

Amazingly quickly White now brings the game to an end.

56...\(\text{e6}\) 57.\(\text{a3+}\) \(\text{e8}\) 58.\(\text{c6}\) \(h6\) 59.\(\text{d6}\) \(hxg5\) 60.\(\text{a8+}\)

Black resigned.

In the Russian Championship of 2010, elite grandmaster Sergey Karjakin didn’t manage to equalize in the opening with white. Khismatullin won an important central pawn, but then, maybe under the influence of the opponent’s Elo-rating, he started to retreat in all directions.
1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.a3 Qb7 5.Qc4 Qe7 6.0-0 0-0 7.a4 c6 8.Qe1 exd4 9.Qxd4 e5 10.Qe2

A rather rare retreat, let's take a guess at the intention. The bishop makes the diagonal d1-h5 vulnerable, and after f2-f4 it can go out to f3.

10...Re8 11.f4 Ng6 12.a5 Qf8 13.Qd3

White has not enough time to play the desired move 13.a6 because of 13...Qxe4.

13...Qd7 14.Qd2 c5 15.Qf3 Qc6 16.Qf1 b5!

Making use of the vulnerability of the e4-pawn, Khismatullin opens a second front on the queenside.
17.axb6
17...AXB5? A xe4+.

17...axb6 18.Ed1

Or 18.Axa8 Wxa8 with growing pressure along the long light-squared diagonal.

18...b5

This is White’s problem: it is impossible to build a blockade on the supposedly weakened square b5 because his pieces are overburdened with the protection of the e4-pawn.

19.Cd5?!

This jump results in a change in the central structure which favours Black. Better was 19.f5 Cc5 20.Dxe5 Dxe5 21.Dxe5, keeping a dynamic balance.

19...Axd5 20.exd5 D xe1 21.Dxe1 Cc4!

A multi-purpose move, cutting off the d5-pawn from the main body (c2-c4 is difficult) and limiting the f1-bishop.

22.De4 Dc7

As you see, there is nothing to protect d5 with.

23.h3 Aa2 24.g4 D fxd5 25.f5 Dc7?!

Was it necessary to retreat? Good was, for instance, 25...Ac7.

26.Cg5 h6 27.Ch4 Dc8?!

Blindly switching to defence. More powerful would have been 27...Aa8 28.g2 D ed5, but, of course, it’s easy for me to
advise this sitting at home behind the computer.

28.b3 d5 29.bxc4 bxc4 30.\textit{xc4} $\textit{xc2}$

30...dxc4 31.\textit{xd8}.

31.\textit{xd5}

The difference in piece activity is huge, but Black hasn’t gone too far yet and holds the draw.

31...\textit{xd5} 32.\textit{xd5} $\textit{xd5}$ 33.\textit{xe8} f6 34.\textit{d4} $\textit{e1}$+ 35.\textit{h2} $\textit{f7}$ 36.\textit{d8} $\textit{b6}$ 37.\textit{g3} $\textit{d1}$ 38.\textit{e6} $\frac{1}{2}$-$\frac{1}{2}$

\begin{quote}
\textbf{Conclusion}

The surrender of the centre makes quite some sense. Black can manipulate with different plans. His knights can move along the routes ...b8-d7-b6, ...f6-d7-c5(e5), disturbing the opponent. With a knight on b6, the direct counterblow ...d6-d5 leads to equality. It is desirable to have a piece, rather than an isolated pawn, on d5 after the exchanges. White should even reckon with ...c7-c5. In a word, Black has no less resources than in case of the central strategy (keeping the pawn on e5). Maybe I will also start playing ...e5xd4 in the future!
\end{quote}
Chapter 2
Rare lines on White’s 5th move


As we already know, 5.Bc4 is considered a ‘normal’ continuation.

So now we will look into all the other lines. Please, don’t sigh. There are not many reasonable moves and the material is not so extensive. I am not prone to overburden the reader. You may always tell me what you like and dislike in this book – please send you feedback to tkasparova@rambler.ru.

The most widespread idea in recent years is the move 5.g2-g4

5.g4
White tries to confuse the opponent with early activity on the kingside. This can be done at various moments. On occasion the pawn will move forward to attack the enemy knight.

The gambit-style 5.g4 works excellently in blitz games. An unprepared opponent can hardly comprehend all the subtleties of this idea within 3-5 minutes. And even with a classical time-control it is unpleasant when this move comes unexpectedly.

To begin with, we will analyse several clashes in which Black accepts the sacrifice. Objectively this is really the strongest response. At least the computer greedily votes for the capture, as if saying: ‘Let’s be thankful for small mercies’.

I saw this sacrifice for the first time at the European team championship in 2003. The black pieces were led by the famous grandmaster and FIDE personality Zurab Azmaiparashvili. He played the doubtful 9...\$c7, with dire consequences. Both players performed very skilfully up to a certain moment, but then time trouble must have interfered. Shirov had a beautiful position and was very close to victory, but a few mistakes spoiled everything, and Black took over the initiative. But that was still not the end. Zurab looked to be winning, but he also missed his chance.

Only a dilettante would criticize these slight errors with today’s time-controls. You have probably felt yourself how difficult it is to play with little time.

Anyway, this large-scale fight won’t leave you untouched.

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_Alexei Shirov (2737)  
Zurab Azmaiparashvili (2693)  
Plovdiv Ech 2003 (6)_

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \$f6 3.\$c3 e5 4.\$f3 \$bd7 5.g4 \$xg4 6.\$g1 \$gf6 7.\$c4

With the idea 8.\$g5. Another option is 7.\$e3.

7...\$h6 8.\$e3 c6

This looks reasonable, Black tries to control as many central squares as possible. In fact, his task is to finish his
development painlessly. Then the extra pawn will tell later – in the ending, for instance.

9.\texttt{Qd3 Qc7?!}

As we will see, this is an inaccuracy. Better is 9...b5 at once, and that’s why it is more often played (please note: this phrase always means ‘in recent games of strong chess players’).

10.0-0-0 b5

Are there any alternatives? 10...b6 11.\texttt{Bb3 Bb7} 12.\texttt{Qc4} – problems with the f7-pawn over and over again.

11.\texttt{Bxb5!}

Quite in Alexei’s style. The cowardly 11.\texttt{Bb3} is weaker: 11...a5 12.a4 b4 13.\texttt{xf7+ Kxf7} 14.\texttt{c4+ d5} 15.\texttt{xd5 xd5} 16.exd5 \texttt{a6}±.

11...\texttt{xb5} 12.dxe5 dxe5

12.\texttt{xe5?} 13.\texttt{xe5 a6} (13...dxe5 14.\texttt{xb5}+) 14.\texttt{f3}±.

13.\texttt{Bxb5 a5} 14.\texttt{c4}

The only move.

14...\texttt{b8}

The only move.

15.\texttt{a4}

The pseudo-active 15.\texttt{c7+} achieves nothing: 15...\texttt{d8} 16.\texttt{d5 e8}± and there is no mate to be seen, while Black has an extra piece.

15...\texttt{b4!} 16.\texttt{xe5!}

Both sides make the best moves in this complicated position.

16...\texttt{xe4} 17.\texttt{xc4}
Remarkably, even without the queens White has sound compensation. But this is not so surprising when we compare the activity of the pieces. And White also has two pawns...

17...a6

The only move.

18.\(\text{bd6}^+\)

Unconvincing is 18.\(\text{c7}^+\) d8 19.f4 b4 20.e5 xc7 21.xf7+ b7 22.xh8, unclear.

18...xd6 19.xd6+ f8 20.f4 b7 21.e5 e8?
The first mistake, although I can understand the black player’s desire to place his pieces more solidly so that they protect each other. It’s highly probable that Black was already in time trouble. The computer suggests 21...\text{Nh}5!?, preserving a dynamic balance.

22.\text{Nx}e8?

The time trouble must have been mutual... it is surprising that Shirov didn’t venture upon the rather favourable complications with 22.\text{Ba}7! \text{Bf}3 23.\text{Bxf}7! \text{Bxd}1 24.e6 (24.\text{Bxh}8 \text{Bb}7 25.e6\pm) 24...\text{Ba}8 25.\text{Bxh}8 \text{Bd}6 26.\text{Bg}6\pm.

22...\text{Bxe}8 23.\text{Bxg}7 \text{Bc}8

More careful was 23...\text{Bf}8 24.\text{Bd}6 \text{Bf}8 25.\text{Bd}6 \text{Bf}8 and Black holds on, though he is still under pressure.

24.\text{Bd}6 \text{Bf}8

Better 24...\text{Be}7.

25.\text{Bg}1?! 25.e6! \text{fxe}6 (25...\text{Bf}7 26.exd7 \text{Bxd}7 27.\text{d}4+ \text{h}7 28.\text{Bxh}8 \text{Bxa}4 29.\text{c}3\pm) 26.\text{Bxd}7 \text{Bxd}7 27.\text{Bxd}7 \text{Bf}8 28.\text{Bd}7\pm.

25...\text{Bg}8 26.\text{Bxg}8+ \text{Bxg}8 27.\text{Bxh}6 \text{Bf}8 28.\text{Bd}6 \text{Ba}8 29.\text{c}4 \text{Be}6 30.b3

An unconventional situation! Four pawns against a knight is a significant advantage, but here the opposite-coloured bishops play an important role. As you see, White’s kingside pawns are hemmed in on the diagonal c8-h3.

30.c5?!

30...\text{Bg}7 31.\text{Bb}2 \text{Bg}6\mp 32.h4 \text{Bh}5 33.\text{Bc}3 \text{Gg}6 34.b4 \text{Bxh}4 35.\text{Bc}1 \text{Bc}8 36.e5 \text{a}5

Making use of his opponent’s uncertain play, the Georgian grandmaster takes over the initiative.

37.\text{Bb}6?!
37...\text{f5} 38.g3

38...\text{e3}?

White could have faced serious problems after the natural 38...\text{xb4} 39.xb4 \text{g4} 40.a5 \text{e3}⁺.

39.bxa5 \text{d5}+ 40.d3 \text{xb6}?

40...\text{g4}!?.

41.axb6 \text{d5} 42.a5 e8 43.d4 \text{c6} 44.b4 \text{g6}
A highly intriguing position. It looks like Black’s pieces are successfully placed and he is winning. For instance, his king can go to the queenside and replace the rook there. But let’s not forget that the material is approximately equal (4 pawns against a rook), and White’s counterarguments shouldn’t be underestimated.

45.e6!

Shirov finds an excellent resource. The brave pawn sacrifices itself to create space (e5) for the monarch’s entry.

45...f6

If 45...fxe6 46.\textit{Ke}5 with counterplay. The king penetrates to d6, which is dangerous for Black.

46.f5+?

46.\textit{K}c4!? 47.e7 with counterplay.

46...\textit{K}xf5 47.e7 \textit{K}e6

Probably Azmaiparashvili threw away the win here. Stronger was 47...\textit{Re}8! 48.a6 \textit{Rx}e7 49.b7 \textit{R}xb7 50.axb7 \textit{R}xb7 51.\textit{Ka}5 \textit{R}d7+ 52.\textit{K}c4 \textit{Ke}6 and Black seems to be winning.

48.a6! \textit{Re}7

48...\textit{Rx}a6?? 49.b7 and one of the pawns turns into a beautiful queen (49.e8=\textit{Q}+).

49.b7 \textit{R}d8+ 50.\textit{K}c4 \textit{R}d7 51.\textit{K}c3 \textit{R}f8

51...f5 52.\textit{K}e5=.

52.\textit{K}xf6 \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}

A titanic clash. Maybe the draw was justified as scales had been fluctuating all the time. Are you tired? Well, I am. I’m going to drink yoghurt (it’s evening in Belarus now). You can relax a bit too.
In a game from the Montenegro team championship, both sides played quite logically. In the ending Black even tried to obtain something more than a draw, but he didn’t succeed.

82
Jovan Todorovic (2410)
Dragan Solak (2567)
Cetinje tt 2010 (2)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nf3 Nbd7 5.g4 Nxg4 6.Rg1 Nxf6 7.Bc4 h6 8.e3 c6

One of the basic positions in this variation.

9.Qd3

Very doubtful is 9.a4?!, trying to prevent the advance of the b-pawn. After 9...Qa5 the threat is still in force and it is not clear where the white king should go. Both flanks are weakened.

9...b5 10.Bb3

I’m happy to tell you that there are games with the sacrifice 10.Qxf7+!? in the database. So I have some material to rely on, which is quite convenient as otherwise I would have had to analyse it myself: 10...Qxf7 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.Qxe5+ This is the idea of 10.Qxf7+: the knight is inedible because of 13.Qxd8. 12...Qxe5 And still he captures it!! The computer prefers 12...Qg8, but this is more rarely played, for example 13.Qxc6 (13.Qg6 Qe8+, Voicu-Kirillova, Kharkov 2006) 13...Qc7 14.Qxb5 Qb7 unclear. The position is very special. There are those who like playing it with white, others prefer black here. And then there are also those who try to avoid such hand-to-hand fights altogether. 13.Qxd8 Qf3+ 14.Qd1 Qxg1 15.Qc7+ Qe7 16.Qc5 Qe8 Here also we have an unconventional, complicated, unclear position. Black has many pieces for the queen – rook, bishop and knight – but White has more pawns (c6 and b5 are weak), Plenca-Z.Jovanovic, Pula 2011.

10...Qa5 11.0-0-0 Qa6
The bishop is lying in ambush. The transparent threat is...b5-b4. If the queen retreats, White may lose the e4-pawn.

12.dxe5 dxe5 13.\(\text{d2}\)

Such manoeuvres can be seen in grandmaster games from time to time.

13...0-0-0

Now 13...b4?! doesn’t bring Black anything due to 14.\(\text{c4}\) \(\text{c7}\) 15.\(\text{a4}\).

This is one of Black’s advantages. On occasion he may return the pawn so as to get comfortable development. In ‘normal’ variations with a material balance this may be more problematic.

14.\(\text{xf7}\) b4

More flexible looks 14...\(\text{c5}\), leaving the pawn on b5 for a while. The threat (...b5-b4) itself is often more unpleasant than its execution, because the adversary needs to consider it every time: 15.\(\text{f1}\) \(\text{c7}\) (15...b4 16.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{xb8}\) with counterplay) 16.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{xb3+}\) 17.\(\text{xb3}\) (B.Vuckovic-Markus, Cetinje tt 2010) 17...\(\text{xd1+}\) 18.\(\text{xd1}\) \(\text{b8}\)=.

15.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{xd3}\) 16.\(\text{xa5}\) \(\text{a6}\) 17.\(\text{b1}\)

17.\(\text{xc6}\) bxc3 18.\(\text{g6}\) cxb2+ 19.\(\text{xb2}\) unclear.
A rather loose position, at least from the black side.

17...c7 18.d2 g5 19.f3


19...e5

Correct. This bishop was bad, as Black’s pawns have been fixed on dark squares.

20.xc5 dxc5 21.de4 xd1+ 22.xd1 xc4 23.xc4 f8

23...fd7!=.

24.xe5?

A crucial mistake, after which Black gains the upper hand. More apt was 24.g6 fd7 25.f5. Here the bishop is perfectly placed, and White enjoys a pleasant initiative.

24...fd7 25.xd7 xd7 26.e6

If 26.h5 f4 27.g4 e5 with initiative.

26...e5 27.f5 xf3 28.d7+ b6 29.d6 h5 30.h6?!

30.h3!?

30...h4 31.g6

31.h3 d4 32.g4 f2=.
31...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{d8?!}}}

Stronger was the simple 31...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{\text{\texttt{xh2}}}}} 32.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{xg5}}} \textit{\textbf{\texttt{f3}}+}.

32.h3 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{d2}}} 33.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{g4}}} \textit{\textbf{\texttt{f2}}} 34.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{xf3}}}

34.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{d1}}}=

34...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{xf3}}} 35.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{xg5}}} \textit{\textbf{\texttt{hxh3}}} 36.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{h5}}} \textit{\textbf{\texttt{h2}}} 37.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{a3}}} a5 38.axb4 axb4 39.b3 h3 40.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{b2}}} \textit{\textbf{\texttt{h1}}} 41.e5 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{c5}}} 42.e6+ \textit{\textbf{\texttt{d6}}} 43.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{h6}}} \textit{\textbf{\texttt{e7}}} 44.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{a2}}} \textit{\textbf{\texttt{h2}}} 45.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{b2}}} \textit{\textbf{\texttt{h1}}} 46.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{a2}}} \textit{\textbf{\texttt{h2}}} \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}

Here is an example of confident management of the black pieces. Earlier on Vladimir was one of the leading USSR chess players. Here, some skilful aggression on the queenside forced White to exchange queens and then the technical stage began, where the Chinese player failed to escape.

83

Li Chao (2610)

Vladimir Malaniuk (2580)

Sydney Open 2010 (9)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{f6}}} 3.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{c3}}} e5 4.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{f3}}} \textit{\textbf{\texttt{bd7}}} 5.g4 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{xg4}}} 6.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{g1}}} \textit{\textbf{\texttt{gf6}}} 7.e4 h6 8.e3 c6 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{d3}}} b5!? 11.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{b3}}}

Or, as we know, 11.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{xf7+}}} \textit{\textbf{\texttt{xf7}}} 12.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{xe5+}}} \textit{\textbf{\texttt{g8}}} 13.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{xc6}}} \textit{\textbf{\texttt{c7}}} 14.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{xb5}}} \textit{\textbf{\texttt{b7}}}=

11...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{a5}}} 12.0-0-0 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{a6}}} 13.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{e2}}}
Now let’s consider another knight manoeuvre. For 13.\( \text{Nd2} \) see the previous game.

13...\( c5 \)

White has sacrificed the g-pawn, but who is attacking who here?!
13...\( b4 \) 14.\( \text{Bc4} \).
14.\( \text{c4} \) bxc4

Also good enough is 14...\( b4 \). I wish I could have a knight on d4 as well... 15.\( \text{g3} \) g6 16.h4 0-0-0 17.h5 \( \text{b7} \) 18.hxg6 fxg6 19.\( \text{c2} \) c7 20.\( \text{h4} \) g8 21.\( \text{g2} \) (21.f3!? is an interesting alternative) 21...\( \text{b8} \) and you guessed it. Generally, with pawns on e4+c4 respectively e5+c5, both sides will like to set up a knight on d5 respectively d4. 22.\( \text{xd8+} \) \( \text{xd8} \) 23.\( \text{a4} \) c7 24.\( \text{d2?} \) (24.f3) 24...\( \text{c6} \) 25.\( \text{xc6} \) \( \text{xc6} \) 26.f3 \( \text{e6?} \), Dann-Pelletier, Basel 2013.

15.\( \text{xc4} \) \( \text{xc4} \) 16.\( \text{xc4} \) \( \text{b4} \) 17.\( \text{xb4} \) \( \text{xb4} \) 18.\( \text{d2} \) g6\( \text{f} \)

We can conclude that White does not have enough compensation for the pawn. Sure, Black’s bishop is a bit passive, but not very.
19.f3 \textit{\textit{b}6

There was a point in trading this not-so-great piece with 19...\textit{e}c8+!? 20.\textit{b}1 \textit{c}5 21.\textit{xc}5 \textit{xc}5\textit{f}.

20.\textit{b}1 \textit{fd}7 21.\textit{c}1 \textit{e}7 22.f4 exf4 23.\textit{xf}4 \textit{c}5 24.\textit{e}3 \textit{d}8 25.\textit{d}4 \textit{d}3 26.\textit{xe}2 \textit{g}5 27.\textit{xg}5 \textit{hxg}5 28.\textit{c}6 \textit{d}7 29.e5 \textit{h}4

Hardly good is 29...\textit{xh}2 30.\textit{e}4 \textit{xc}2 31.\textit{f}6+, when almost all the white forces are attacking the black monarch: 31...\textit{f}8 32.\textit{xd}7+ \textit{xd}7 33.\textit{xc}2 \textit{xe}5 unclear.

30.\textit{f}3 \textit{c}4 31.b3

31.\textit{xg}5?!.

31...\textit{xc}2 32.\textit{xc}2
We are deep in the ending already – it’s getting boring. Let’s minimize the further comments. The main thing is clear: in the opening Black got an extra pawn, and he hasn’t lost anything in return for it.

32...\textit{c7}

More accurate was 32...\textit{f4} 33.\textit{fd4} (33.\textit{xg5?} \textit{c7-+}) 33...\textit{d5\textsuperscript{+}}.

33.\textit{xd3} \textit{xc6} 34.\textit{d4}

34.\textit{gx5}!?

34...\textit{e5} 35.\textit{xg5} \textit{d7} 36.\textit{h4}

36.f3 \textit{c3+} 37.\textit{e2} \textit{c2+} 38.\textit{d3} \textit{xa2} 39.e6 fxe6 40.\textit{xg6} \textit{f7} 41.\textit{g3\textsuperscript{+}}.

36...\textit{xe5+} 37.\textit{e4} f6 38.\textit{g2} \textit{f7} 39.\textit{e2} \textit{xc2} 40.\textit{xc2} a5\textsuperscript{+} 41.\textit{d4} \textit{g7} 42.\textit{e2} \textit{h6} 43.\textit{g3} \textit{g4} 44.\textit{f4} \textit{f2}
45.\textit{\texttt{Ke3}}?!  
More tenacious was 45.\textit{\texttt{Ne2}}!!.

45...\textit{\texttt{Nd1+}} 46.\textit{\texttt{Kd3}} \textit{\texttt{Nc3}} 47.\textit{\texttt{a3}} f5 48.\textit{\texttt{axb4}} axb4 49.\textit{\texttt{Ke3}}  
49.\textit{\texttt{Kc4}} f4-+.  
49...\textit{\texttt{Ne4}}!  
Kicking the knight from g3 so that the king can penetrate to h5.

50.\textit{\texttt{Ne2}} \textit{\texttt{Nc5}} 51.\textit{\texttt{Nc1}} \textit{\texttt{Nh5}} 52.\textit{\texttt{Nd4}} \textit{\texttt{a6}} 53.\textit{\texttt{Nc4}} f4 54.\textit{\texttt{Nd3}} f3 55.\textit{\texttt{Nd4}} 0-1

Events developed in an extraordinary manner in an encounter between the leader of German chess and a Czech grandmaster. Naiditsch played c2xb3, which seems not typical for our opening. Black had a rather sound position, but then he unwisely opened up the centre, while his king was still there. On the 19th move his position was already hopeless. The Elo-favourite just needed to make a couple of not so difficult moves to end the game. However, he didn’t, and the struggle continued. There seems to have been time trouble throughout the game, and in the ending Peter got a chance to win, but also missed it.

84
Arkadij Naiditsch (2690)  
Pet\v{r} Neuman (2435)  
Deizisau Open 2010 (9)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \textit{\texttt{f6}} 3.\textit{\texttt{c3}} e5 4.\textit{\texttt{f3}} \textit{\texttt{bd7}} 5.\textit{\texttt{g4}} \textit{\texttt{xg4}} 6.\textit{\texttt{g1}} \textit{\texttt{gf6}} 7.\textit{\texttt{c4}} h6 8.\textit{\texttt{e3}} c6 9.\textit{\texttt{b3}}

The bishop steps back in advance.
9...\texttt{wa5}

Also nice is 9...\texttt{b5} 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.a3 \texttt{wc7}±.

10.\texttt{db2}

Continuing development seems to be more sound: 10.\texttt{wd3} exd4 11.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{xc5} 12.\texttt{xc5} \texttt{xc5} 13.0-0-0 with compensation. For instance, 13...\texttt{wg4}?? can’t be played in view of 14.e5 and White wins.

10...\texttt{wc7}

I also admire such ‘tacking’ manoeuvres. Not 9...\texttt{wc7} at once, but first lure the bishop to a passive position and then retreat. Black could also have opened the centre with 10...exd4!? 11.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{we5}, when the hyperactive queen attacks everything in sight (h2, e4, d4), thus demoralizing the enemy.

11.a4 exd4 12.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{xc5} 13.\texttt{wf3} \texttt{xb3}
14.cxb3?!

Such moves are played by either very weak or very strong players. The defects in White’s pawn chain are considerable. We can only assume that Arkadij didn’t like 14.a×b3 either. But why? White’s position is objectively worse in any case. He is a pawn down, it is not clear where he should castle (thanks to a2-a4), and finally the adversary has two bishops at his disposal.

14...Be6

Gluttony is not advisable, as it leads to complications: 14...Qb6 15.Be3 c5 16.f5 xf5 17.xf5 xb3 18.b5 xb2 19.d1 unclear. 15.0-0-0 d7 16.e3 d5?

A bit risky, as his king still lingers in the centre. 16...c8!?; or maybe 16...a6 was reasonable, followed by ...0-0-0. 17.exd5 xd5 18.xd5 xd5?!

After 18...xd5± the position would have been dangerous, but still defensible.

19.e6 xe6??

With his last 3-4 moves Peter has worsened his position (an unfounded opening of the centre) and he should have paid for it.

20.d3+-

20.e1+-.

20...xd8
It was the last round. On the final day of this tournament (or so it was the several times when we participated), the 8th round is played in the morning, and the 9th – in the evening. So we can assume that: 1 - Naiditsch was already tired; 2 - he was in a bad mood. As the table shows, he had won his first five games, but after that he had been not very successful.

With the careful 21.\textit{h}g3+- White could have won, with the same transparent idea of \textit{g}e1. From g3 the queen also attacks g7, but here it is not subject to the counterattack with ...\textit{d}8-d5-c5.

21...\textit{d}5!

The only manoeuvre, which makes it easier to find.

22.\textit{d}e1

In reply to 22.\textit{b}1, sufficient is 22...\textit{d}7, retreating under the safe cover of the d5-rook, which can’t be attacked by an enemy pawn (see the note to 14.cxb3?!).

22...\textit{c}5 23.\textit{xe}6+ \textit{fxe}6 24.\textit{xc}5 \textit{xc}5 25.\textit{xg}7 \textit{f}8

With counterplay.

26.\textit{g}6 \textit{d}7 27.\textit{hx}h6 \textit{xf}2 28.\textit{h}7+ \textit{d}6 29.h4 e5 30.h5 e4 31.h6
31...b5

Moving his own passed pawn would have led to a draw: 31...e3 32.c3 f1+ 33.c2 e2 34.h8 e1=+ 35.xe1 xe1 36.d8+ c7 37.h7 d4! 38.xd4 h1=.

32.h8 f1+ 33.c2 h1 34.h7 c7 35.f4+ d7 36.e5 e7 37.e3 e6 38.d4?!

Better is 38.g7.

38...e3
39. \( \text{Ke8}?? \)

39. \( \text{Kg8} \).

39...\( e2 \) 40. \( \text{Rxc6+ Kh7?} \)

I can dryly claim that 40...\( \text{Kf5!} \) 41. \( \text{Bg3 Rh7} \) 42. \( \text{Rc2 Bf6+} \) 43. \( \text{d5 Kh2} \) would have won, but after 10-12 hours of play (two rounds of about 5-6 hours each) it is hardly possible to find something like this. By the way, this tournament is interesting, but it’s one of the hardest events in a physical sense. Despite an almost perfect organization, the participants still suffer from chess overload. For amateurs, I suppose, playing in Deizisau is very instructive. Tatiana, my wife, told me that in the last minutes of the final round there were a lot of spectators at this table. You could hardly push your way through... however, they let relatives pass. And I remember boiling my brains on this final day against grandmasters Gustafsson and Epishin.

41. \( \text{Ke7+ Kh8} \) 42. \( \text{h8=Q} \) \( \text{Rxh8} \) 43. \( \text{e1 Bh3} \) 44. \( \text{e1xb3} \) \( \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} \)

A happy end.

Does it make sense for Black to concede the centre by means of \( ...\text{e5xd4} \)? It’s difficult to give an unambiguous answer, and I am no advocate of doing so. It’s better to examine. In the following game from the Serbian team championship (2013) Black faced big problems, but got off with a scare.

85

Dusan Popovic (2568)
Dragan Paunovic (2503)
Kragujevac tt 2013 (3)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \( \text{Qf6} \) 3.c3 e5 4.f3 \( \text{bd7} \) 5.g4 \( \text{Qxg4} \) 6.\( \text{Qg1} \) \( \text{Qf6} \) 7.e4 \( \text{exd4} \) 8.\( \text{Qxd4} \)

8.\( \text{Qxd4} \) a6 9.\( \text{Qf4} \) \( \text{b6=} \).

8.\( \text{Qg5??} \) \( \text{Qe5} \) 9.\( \text{Qxd4} \) h6+.
8...c6

It’s also possible to attack the bishop without changing the pawn structure: 8...b6 9.b3 e6 9...g4!? 10.d3 h6. 10.d3 g6 11.d4 xb3 12.axb3 h5 It is not clear why the Russian didn’t continue his development with 12...g7 13.g5 e7 when, as usual, there is no full compensation for the pawn. 13.a5 Such creative manoeuvres appeal to me, but Houdini is not keen on the move and prefers 13.g5. 13...c5 14.b5+ 14.f3!? 14...d7 Not good was 14...d7 15.xb6! cxd4 16.xd4 with initiative. 15.g5 15.de2 g7 16.a3 0-0 with initiative. 15...e7 16.xe7 xe7 Even stronger was the computer-like 16...xe7!

\[analysis\ diagram\]

17.f3 a6 18.a4 e8+. 17.de2 17.xb7 b8+. 17.b6 18.d5
This incorrect attack should have led to White’s loss. 18...\textit{d}8 After the principled 18...\textit{xe}4! 19.\textit{c}7+ \textit{e}7 20.\textit{x}a8 \textit{b}xa5+ Black has two pawns more, the \textit{a}8-knight is obviously out of the picture and the white king will have no shelter, while the black monarch may hide on \textit{g}7. 19.\textit{a}1 0-0 20.\textit{g}3 \textit{g}x\textit{g}3 21.\textit{x}g3 White could have equalized with the not so difficult blow 21.\textit{d}7! \textit{d}7 22.\textit{f}6+ \textit{g}7 23.\textit{xd}7 \textit{fd}8 24.\textit{xb}6 \textit{xb}6 25.\textit{a}8 \textit{ax}a8 26.\textit{g}3+ 21...\textit{f}6+


\textbf{9.\textit{f}4 \textit{b}6}

This looks sensible. The exchange of queens would neutralize White’s attacking potential.

9...\textit{b}5!?

\textbf{10.\textit{d}2 \textit{b}4 11.\textit{b}3 \textit{c}5}

The greedy 11...\textit{xe}4 is dubious: 12.\textit{e}3 \textit{d}5 13.\textit{a}3 \textit{e}7 14.\textit{xe}4 \textit{xe}4 15.\textit{xe}4+ \textit{d}xe4 16.\textit{g}5. There is nothing to protect the \textit{f}7-pawn with and the king runs the risk of catching a cold in the draught.

\textbf{12.0-0-0 \textit{xb}3+ 13.\textit{xb}3 \textit{e}6}

Dragan is ready to castle queenside and then cast a curious glance at his opponent: ‘Why have you sacrificed your pawn?’
14. \( \text{e}3 \)

Eyeing the a7-pawn. The restoration of the material balance with 14. \( \text{xd}6 \text{xd}6 \) 15. \( \text{xd}6 \text{xd}6 \) 16. \( \text{xd}6 \text{e}7 \) 17. \( \text{d}2 \text{g}6 \) would have simplified the position and equalized the chances.

14... \( \text{b}6 \) 15. \( \text{d}4 \text{0-0-0} \)

Done. However, White still retains some initiative.

16. \( \text{a}4 \text{a}6 \)

16... \( \text{a}5 \) 17. \( \text{g}5 \text{a}6 \) 18. \( \text{xe}6 \text{fxe}6 \) 19. \( \text{h}3 \text{b}8 \) 20. \( \text{xe}6 \text{a}8 \).

17. \( \text{xe}6 \text{fxe}6 \) 18. \( \text{h}3 \text{e}8 \)!

Perhaps a more forceful move was needed: 18... \( \text{b}5 \) 19. \( \text{xe}6+ \text{b}8 \) 20. \( \text{c}3 \text{a}1+ \) 21. \( \text{b}1 \text{a}5 \) 22. \( \text{f}3 \).

19. \( \text{xd}6 \text{xe}4 \)
20. $\text{Nx}f8$

Even more subtle is to save as many pieces as possible with $20. \text{Nx}f4! \pm$, because $20... \text{Nx}f2$ doesn’t work due to $21. \text{Qh}5+$. But in the lengthy calculations you could miss $21...g6 22. \text{Qe}5$; mate on c7 is threatened and the h8-rook is hanging.

$20... \text{Nx}f2 21. \text{Qh}5?!$

$21. \text{Qg}2 \text{xd}1 (21... \text{Rxf}8 22. \text{Rd}2+) 22. \text{Rd}6 g6 (22... \text{e}3 23. \text{Rg}7+) 23. \text{xd}1 \pm$.

$21... \text{Rxf}8 22. \text{Rg}7$
22...\texttt{d8}??

If 22...\texttt{xd1} 23.\texttt{e5+}. Right was, for example, 22...\texttt{xb5}.

23.\texttt{e1}?

Letting Black off the hook. The natural line was winning (which is easy for me to say, meanwhile it could have been time trouble already): 23.\texttt{xd8+ xd8} 24.\texttt{b1}. There is no adequate protection against \texttt{h5-f7} followed by mate.

23...\texttt{f5} 24.\texttt{h4 a5} 25.\texttt{eg1 d5}?

This looks logical: centralization with a mate threat (...\texttt{d5-d1+}). But probably better was 25...\texttt{h5}!?.

26.\texttt{b1 e4} 27.\texttt{xh7+-}

![Chess diagram]

Black’s main problem is the weakness of the 7th rank. It’s impossible to guard all the squares at the same time. There is no counterplay, actually, due to the invulnerability of White’s king.

27...\texttt{d6} 28.\texttt{c3}?

Simple brute force would have finished the struggle quickly: 28.\texttt{c7+ eb8} 29.\texttt{e7 df8} 30.\texttt{g7+- Everybody, to the 7th rank!}

28...\texttt{a5} 29.\texttt{d1 h5}

29...\texttt{ff8}!?.

30.\texttt{g6 f5??} 31.\texttt{g1}?

Again, penetration into the ‘underground headquarters’ of the black monarch would have brought victory: 31.\texttt{xd6! xd6} 32.\texttt{e8+ d8} 33.\texttt{e7+-}.
Sometimes White doesn’t bring the bishop out to c4, and there is a point to this: the bishop is not subject to attacks by the black pawns. The following clash from the 2013 Scottish Championship could have been finished quickly and effectively, but unexpectedly the strong English grandmaster didn’t find the optimal solution. Black continued balancing on the edge of the precipice, but Jones let him off the hook again. In the end, it was like that saying in football: ‘If you don’t kick the ball, it will be kicked into your goal!’
1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.dxe5 Nbd7 5.g4 Nf6 6.Rg1 Ng6 7.e3

The Englishman prefers the quick development of his queenside. Well, this is reasonable.

7...c6 8.Qd2 b5!?

This aggression is well-motivated. Black combines ‘work with pleasure’. He develops (the bishop will go out to b7) and frightens the adversary with an assault on his king’s residence, which is still under construction. More modest was 8...Qc7 9.0-0-0 g6 10.Ng5 h6 11.d3 g5 (Giri-Driessens, Netherlands tt 2012/13) 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.a4 with compensation.

9.0-0-0 Bb7

Interesting is 9...b4!? Here are a few options: 10.b1 (irrational positions result after 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.Nb5 Qxd2+ 12.Rxd2 Nxe4 13.Qxe7+ Qxe7 14.Qxe6 with unclear consequences) 10...Nxe4 11.Nxb4 Bb8 12.Qe1 d5 unclear.

10.dxe5 dxe5?

The lesser of evils was 10...Nxe5 11.Nxe5 dxe5 12.Nxb5 Qxd2+ 13.Rxd2 Nxe4 14.Qc7+ Qxe7 15.Qxa8 Qxd2 16.Qxd2 Qxa8 17.Qxa7++. The ending is worse for Black due to his lag in development and White’s passed a-pawn.

11.Nxb5!

The right decision. White’s attack is rather strong, he can afford such a sacrifice.

11...Qxe4
Black loses instantly after 11...cxb5 12.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xB}}5 \texttt{c8} 13.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xe5}} \texttt{b8} 14.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{c6+}}-.

12.\texttt{e1}

12.\texttt{e2} cxb5 13.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xe5}} \texttt{xe5} 14.\texttt{xd8+} \texttt{xd8} 15.\texttt{xb5+-}.

12...cxb5

13.\texttt{xb5}?

This also looks strong, but it allows the opponent to continue resistance. White could have finished the fight with 13.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xe5}} \texttt{d6} 14.\texttt{xd6}! \texttt{xd6} 15.\texttt{g5}! winning. Everything falls apart at the seams: the e-file, the diagonal h4-d8...

13...\texttt{d6} 14.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xe5}} \texttt{xe5} 15.\texttt{xd7} \texttt{xd7} 16.\texttt{xd7+} \texttt{xd7}
As you see, Black’s material compensation for the queen and pawn is more than sufficient (rook, bishop and knight). The problem is, however, that his pieces (the rooks) are underdeveloped and the king has no safe shelter.

17.\texttt{Qa5}

Unclear.

17...\texttt{Rh8} 18.\texttt{Rd1+ Kc8} 19.\texttt{Nf6} 20.\texttt{Qg5}?

Very strong was 20.\texttt{Qc4+ Kd8} 21.\texttt{Rd3}+ or 21.\texttt{Qxf4} \texttt{xf4+} 22.\texttt{Rxf4+} \texttt{c8} 23.\texttt{Qc4+} \texttt{b8} 24.\texttt{Rf7}+. As long as the rook is on a8, Black’s position cannot come to life.

20...\texttt{Re6} 21.\texttt{Qc5+ c6} 22.\texttt{f4 d7}!

It’s unbelievable, but the fight flares up once again.

23.\texttt{Rxd7} \texttt{xb2+} 24.\texttt{Qxb2} \texttt{Rxd7} 25.\texttt{Qd4+ Rd6} 26.\texttt{Qg7 d5} 27.\texttt{d4}?!?

27.a4±.

27...\texttt{Rb8}+ 28.\texttt{Qc1}??
My God, now White even loses! While around the 19th move his advantage was winning. So, even the great make incredible mistakes from time to time.

28.\texttt{Kc3} \texttt{Rc8+} 29.\texttt{Kb2} \texttt{Rxc2+!} (the same motif as in the game) 30.\texttt{xc2 b3+} 31.\texttt{Kd3} (this is the principal difference. The king protects the queen, and the rook perishes) 31...\texttt{xa2} 32.\texttt{f6}, and the ending with opposite-coloured bishops is drawish.

28...\texttt{Rb1+!}

Luring the king to a light square.

29.\texttt{Kxb1}

29.\texttt{d2} \texttt{xa2-+}.

29...\texttt{xa2+} 30.\texttt{xa2} \texttt{xd4} 31.\texttt{b3} \texttt{e6} 32.\texttt{c3} \texttt{e4} 33.\texttt{f6} 34.\texttt{h4} \texttt{xf4} 35.\texttt{g3} \texttt{g4} 36.\texttt{b4} f5 37.\texttt{f2} a6 0-1

An absolutely illogical outcome, taking into account how things were right after the opening.

There is an alternative line for Black, though more seldom played. He refuses the offer, preferring not to open g-file. But this hardly solves the problem, as White can move the pawn to g5 all the same – same consequences, as the g-file is opened anyway but with balanced material now.

\begin{center}
\textbf{87}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Boban Bogosavljevic (2549)}
\textbf{Dusan Popovic (2558)}
Banja Koviljaca 2013 (4)
\end{center}

1.d4 d6 2.e4 \texttt{f6} 3.\texttt{c3} e5 4.\texttt{f3} \texttt{bd7} 5.g4 h6
6.g5 hxg5 7.\textit{\texttt{N}}xg5 exd4 8.\textit{\texttt{Q}}xd4 \textit{\texttt{N}}e5

Such moves seem provocative to me. The knight is unstable here, and the natural f2-f4 will follow sooner or later.

The multi-functional 8...\textit{\texttt{c6}}!? seems more cautious. Beside restricting the opponent (squares d5, b5), it allows the queen to jump to b6 or a5.

9.\textit{\texttt{B}}e2

In the following game, the Polish player Dariusz Swiercz reacted instantly with 9.f4 \textit{\texttt{N}}h7! 9...\textit{\texttt{c6}} 10.\textit{\texttt{Q}}c4 \textit{\texttt{Q}}e7 11.\textit{\texttt{B}}e2. 10.\textit{\texttt{Q}}e2 10.fxe5 \textit{\texttt{N}}xg5. 10...\textit{\texttt{Q}}xg5 11.fxg5 \textit{\texttt{Q}}e6 12.h4 \textit{\texttt{Q}}e7 13.\textit{\texttt{Q}}g1 c6. Black has no weaknesses, and he has a knight permanently installed on e5.
14.\texttt{\textbf{d}f4}?! 14.\texttt{\textbf{d}e3}?! 14...\texttt{\textbf{g}g6} 15.\texttt{\textbf{g}g3} \texttt{\textbf{a}a5} The consistent 15...\texttt{\textbf{b}b6}?! is good, glancing at g1 and b2, for example 16.\texttt{\textbf{w}xb6} axb6± and the a8-rook joins the play at once. 16.a3 d5 Vitaly Kunin is playing forcibly but not optimally. Better was 16...\texttt{\textbf{b}b6}. 17.exd5 \texttt{\textbf{d}xd5} 18.\texttt{\textbf{h}h2} \texttt{\textbf{c}c5} 19.\texttt{\textbf{f}f2} \texttt{\textbf{b}b4}?! More careful is 19...\texttt{\textbf{d}d6} 20.0-0-0 \texttt{\textbf{h}h2} 21.\texttt{\textbf{w}xh2} \texttt{\textbf{e}e6}, which is unclear. However, here the equilibrium is dynamic too. I wonder if Black’s extra exchange is worth the worry of the king remaining in the centre. 20.\texttt{\textbf{d}d4±}

\textbf{analysis diagram}

20...\texttt{\textbf{d}d6} 21.h5 0-0-0 In this game both players are definitely not squeamish about their material. 22.0-0-0? Actually forcing the enemy to capture the rook. The simple 22.\texttt{\textbf{x}xg7} was good: 22...\texttt{\textbf{e}e6} (22...\texttt{\textbf{h}he8} 23.\texttt{\textbf{f}f6}+) 23.\texttt{\textbf{x}xh8} \texttt{\textbf{x}xh8} 24.hxg6 \texttt{\textbf{x}xh2} 25.gxf7±. 22...\texttt{\textbf{x}xh2} 23.\texttt{\textbf{x}xh2} \texttt{\textbf{e}e6} 24.\texttt{\textbf{e}e4} \texttt{\textbf{f}f5} 25.\texttt{\textbf{d}d6}+ \texttt{\textbf{x}xh6} 26.\texttt{\textbf{x}h6} \texttt{\textbf{x}xg5}+ 27.\texttt{\textbf{b}b1} \texttt{\textbf{d}d8} 28.\texttt{\textbf{b}b4} \texttt{\textbf{e}e4}
White’s bishop pair entirely compensates for the pawn. Chances are equal, but here suddenly 29.Bf3?? was played (29.f3=), and White could resign after 29...Nxe2 30.xg5 Rxd1+ in Swiercz-Kunin, Budva Ech 2009.

9...Nh7


10.Qxh7 Bxh7 11.f4 c6 12.0-0-0

12.xe5?! dxe5 13.Qxe5+ Qe7 with an excellent dark-squared bishop that has no counterpart.

12...e6 13.Qb5!
Elegant. He doesn’t even take anything, he just offers the knight.

13...cxb5 14.\textit{\texttt{xb}}xe5 a6

Utterly bad is 14...dx5?? 15.\textit{\texttt{xb}}xb5+ \textit{\texttt{e}}e7 16.\textit{\texttt{xe}}xe5 \textit{\texttt{b}}b6 17.\textit{\texttt{d}}d7++-.

15.\textit{\texttt{g}}g3 \textit{\texttt{e}}e8 16.f4

16.\textit{\texttt{b}}b1!?\texttt{±}.

16...\textit{\texttt{c}}c7

A human being wouldn’t seriously consider 16...\textit{\texttt{xa}}2 17.\textit{\texttt{g}}g4 \textit{\texttt{e}}e6 18.\textit{\texttt{xe}}e6 fxe6 19.\textit{\texttt{b}}b1\texttt{±}.

17.\textit{\texttt{d}}d3 \textit{\texttt{c}}c5

17...\textit{\texttt{xa}}2?!.

18.\textit{\texttt{xc}}c5 dxc5 19.\textit{\texttt{e}}e2=
And this is a more or less decent position. There are certain drawbacks to Black’s pawn structure on the queenside. But everything is within bounds. The position is more or less equal. Please, play through the rest of the game yourself, if you wish. We have analysed the opening part in considerable detail. Moreover, the line is rare, so you will hardly face it in practice. I have to go to the swimming pool now – to play good chess one must keep fit. Yes, this sounds trivial, but still not everyone adheres to it.

19...\text{R}d8 20.f5 \text{R}xd1+ 21.\text{R}xd1 \text{B}d7 22.\text{g}4 f6 23.\text{d}2 c6 24.\text{e}3 c4 25.h3 \text{e}5+ 26.\text{f}3 \text{c}7 27.\text{f}4 \text{h}8 28.\text{g}3 \text{e}8 29.e5 \text{fxe}5 30.\text{xe}5 \text{f}8 31.\text{f}4 \text{c}7 32.\text{d}6 \text{xd}6+ 33.\text{xd}6 c3 

33...\text{R}e1!? 34.\text{f}5 (34.\text{h}5 \text{e}7 35.\text{g}6 \text{f}8=) 34...\text{f}7 unclear.

34.\text{bxc}3 \text{e}4+ 35.\text{g}5 \text{e}8 36.\text{d}8

With initiative.

36...\text{e}7 37.\text{b}8 \text{c}4

37...\text{c}6 38.\text{g}6+.-

38.\text{xb}7+ \text{f}8 39.\text{b}8 \text{e}7 40.\text{b}7+ \text{f}8 41.\text{b}6 \text{xc}3 42.\text{xa}6 \text{xc}2 43.a3 \text{c}4 44.h4 b4 45.axb4 \text{xb}4 46.\text{h}5 \text{b}7 47.\text{e}8 \text{b}6 48.f6 \text{gxf}6+ 49.\text{h}4 \text{c}7 50.\text{a}7+ \text{f}8 51.\text{g}6 52.\text{a}8+ \text{f}7 53.\text{h}5 \text{b}4+ 54.\text{g}3 \text{b}3+ 55.\text{f}2 \text{h}2+ 56.\text{e}3 \text{h}8 57.\text{a}7+ \text{e}6 58.\text{g}6 \text{xh}6 59.\text{a}6+ \text{e}5 60.\text{h}5 \text{h}7 61.\text{a}5+ \text{d}6 62.\text{d}4 \text{c}7 63.\text{f}3 \text{f}5 64.\text{xf}5 \text{e}6 65.\text{g}4 \text{e}7 66.\text{f}2 \text{d}8 67.\text{e}5 \text{e}7 68.\text{f}3 \text{c}5+ 69.\text{d}5 \text{c}7 70.\text{f}7+ \text{d}8 71.\text{f}8+ \text{e}7 72.\text{g}8 \text{d}7 73.\text{g}6 \text{d}8 74.\text{g}8+ \text{e}7 75.\text{g}6 \text{d}8 76.\text{e}6 \text{e}7 77.\text{h}6 \text{c}5+ 78.\text{d}5 \text{c}7 79.\text{c}6 \text{d}8 80.\text{h}8+ \text{e}7 81.\text{h}6 \text{d}8 82.\text{d}6 \text{d}7+ 83.\text{e}5 \text{g}7 84.\text{e}6 \text{e}7 85.\text{f}6 \text{g}7 86.\text{d}6 \text{d}7+ 87.\text{xd}7 \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}

In the following clash the kingside remained blocked and Black had a green light on the opposite flank.

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Dmitry Lavrik (2387)
Dmitry Bocharov (2582)
1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nf3 Nbd7 5.g4 h6 6.Rg1

It looks like White intends to carry out the breakthrough g4-g5 later, with more ‘comfort’.

6...c6 7.\_e3 b5 8.a3 \_b7?!

I’m not sure about this move. It is more flexible for the bishop to remain on the c8-h3 diagonal, for example 8...\_c7!?
9.h4 \_b6 10.g5 hgx5 11.hxg5 \_g4.

9.h4 h5 10.g5

It wasn’t necessary to provide the enemy knight with a strongpoint: 10.gxh5!? a5 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.\_g5±.

10...\_g4 11.d5 \_xe3 12.fxe3 g6
I think this was played not to fianchetto the bishop to g7, as it would have no prospects here, but rather as a preventive measure against g5-g6, which would make Black’s light squares vulnerable.

13.\textit{\textit{\textit{W}}\textit{d2}}

13.dxc6 doesn’t win a pawn, here is a rough line: 13...\textit{\textit{B}}\textit{xc6} 14.\textit{\textit{B}}\textit{xb5} \textit{\textit{B}}\textit{xb5} 15.\textit{\textit{N}}\textit{xb5} \textit{\textit{Q}}\textit{b6} (attacking e3 and b5) 16.\textit{\textit{Q}}\textit{d3} a6 17.\textit{\textit{N}}\textit{c3} \textit{\textit{W}}\textit{xb2} 18.\textit{\textit{R}}\textit{b1} \textit{\textit{Q}}\textit{xa3} 19.\textit{\textit{N}}\textit{d5} \textit{\textit{Q}}\textit{c5} unclear.

13...a6 14.dxc6 \textit{\textit{B}}\textit{xc6} 15.0-0-0 \textit{\textit{B}}\textit{e7} 16.\textit{\textit{Q}}\textit{d5} \textit{\textit{Q}}\textit{xd5}

Now how should White capture? As a rule in such positions it is more reasonable to take with a piece, so that the weakness on d6 and the opened diagonal a2-g8 (for White’s light-squared bishop) remain. But here things are not that clear.

17.exd5

After 17.\textit{\textit{W}}\textit{xd5} 0-0 18.\textit{\textit{b}}\textit{b3} \textit{\textit{b}}\textit{b6}= White’s bishop and knight are unable to get to the desired d5-square, while Black is generally ready for an offensive on the queenside.

17...0-0 18.e4 \textit{\textit{c5}}
19. $\textit{Qxe5?}$

I can’t understand what Lavrik expected, as the opponent now has more than one way to get an advantage. A normal fight would have ensued after 19. $\textit{Qe2}$ $\textit{Rb8}$ 20. $\textit{Nd2}$ $\textit{b4}$ 21. $\textit{Rg3}$=.

19...$\textit{dxe5}$ 20.$\textit{d6}$ $\textit{Qc8}$

Threatening 21...$\textit{Nc5-b3+}$. However, 20...$\textit{Nxe4}$ 21.$\textit{dxe7}$ $\textit{Qxe7}$ was also good.

21.$\textit{Qc3}$ $\textit{d8}$ 22.$\textit{Qh3}$

The only move.

22...$\textit{Qe6}$ 23.$\textit{Qxe5}$ $\textit{Qc5}$ 24.$\textit{Qxc5}$ $\textit{Qxc5}$ 25.$\textit{e5}$ $\textit{b6}$ 26.$\textit{Qg1}$ $\textit{ad8}$ 27.$\textit{d7}$ $\textit{Qe4}$
Two pawns don’t counterbalance a knight, besides White now commits another inaccuracy.

28.\texttt{Rf3}??

More stubborn resistance could have been put up with 28.\texttt{Rde1} \texttt{Bf2} 29.e6 \texttt{Bxh3} 30.e7 \texttt{Rxd7} 31.exf8=\texttt{Q} \texttt{Kxf8} 32.\texttt{Rf3}+.

28...\texttt{Bf2}+ 29.e6 \texttt{Bxh4} 30.\texttt{Rd4} \texttt{Bxg5+} 0-1

The move 5...\texttt{g6} was the response of an expert to White’s aggression in the following encounter (with notes by grandmaster Khuzman and the author), which turned out quite spectacular. Black failed to equalize in the opening and in order to avoid the worst he sacrificed an exchange. Then Lastin did not play very confidently and the Georgian grandmaster Azmaiparashvili managed to build up a flexible defence-line all over the board, without opening any files. Moreover, a bit later Zurab started his own attack, which, however, turned out to be insufficient for victory.

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\textbf{Alexander Lastin (2622)}
\textbf{Zurab Azmaiparashvili (2679)}
\textbf{Tripoli Wch k.o. 2004 (2)}

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \texttt{Qf6} 3.\texttt{c3} e5 4.\texttt{f3} \texttt{bd7} 5.g4 \texttt{g6}!!?
Black secures the h5-square for the ♕f6 and hopes to create counterplay with the move ...f7-f5 later. 5...exd4 6.♕xd4 ♕c5?! 6...h6!?. 7.f3?! Considerably tougher is 7.g5 ♕fd7 (7...♕fxe4 8.♕e2) 8.♕e3±. 7...♕xg4!? An amusing blow. 8.fxg4 ♕h4+ 9.♔e2 Better was 9.♔d2 ♕g5+ 10.♕e2 ♕xg4+ 11.♕f3, unclear. 9...♕xg4+ 10.♕f3 f5 The position is difficult to assess. In Russian we have a proverb for such cases: ‘You need a bottle of vodka to sort it out.’ However, a humourist has said about the Russians: ‘There are only two reasons why they drink: joy or sorrow.’ (10...♕e7 with compensation) 11.exf5 0-0-0 12.♕g2 ♕h5 13.♕f1 d5 14.♕d3 ♕xf5 15.♕d4±, Dubov-Pardo Simon, Gibraltar 2014.

6.g5

Dubious is 6.♕c4 ♕b6 7.♕b3 ♕xg4 8.dxe5 ♕fd7! 9.♕g1 (9.exd6 ♕f6+) 9...♕xf3 10.♕xf3 ♕xe5±.

6...♕h5 7.♕e3 ♕g7 8.♕d2 0-0 9.0-0-0 f5?!
If this move had not been played by Azmaiparashvili, I would have written: ‘What is this? He’s exposing his king...’. But here I will confine myself to the exclamation: ‘Interesting!’

9...\(\text{b6?!}\) 10.e2 g4 11.hg1 \(c4\), trading off some pieces.

10.exf5 \(xf5\) 11.dxe5

Also not bad is 11.e2 \(f8\) 12.h4 \(f4\) 13.xf4 \(x4\) 14.he1±.

11...\(xe5\)

11...\(xf3\) 12.d5+.

12.xe5 \(xe5\) 13.xe4+ \(h8\) 14.b1±

Objectively, Black stands worse. His king is not sufficiently secured, while there is still no counterplay.

14...\(d7\) 15.he1 \(c6\)

Better 15...\(f8\).

16.e6 \(f3\) 17.g4 \(xe3!\)

17...\(g7\) 18.d5 \(xd5\) 19.e5 \(f8\) 20.h4+-.

18.xe3 \(f4\) 19.f3 \(xg5\) 20.d5?!


20...\(xd5\) 21.xd5 c6 22.h1 \(f6\)
Now the compensation for the material damage is almost adequate. Where can the white rooks break through? Should he really move his queenside pawns?

23.\textit{Q}b3 \textit{Q}g7 24.\textit{R}e3 a5 25.a4 h5?!

Interesting, I had guessed this (according to the computer) doubtful move. Black may have an automatic desire to cluster his formation more closely with...\textit{K}h8-h7-maybe even h6. But the g6-pawn is weakened. More moderate was 25...\textit{Q}c7, but with the pawn on h7, White has the potential resource h2-h4-h5 at his disposal, after appropriate preparation. So everything is not so clear.

26.\textit{c}3 \textit{R}f8 27.\textit{c}2 \textit{F}f6 28.\textit{h}3 \textit{f}7 29.\textit{c}e4 \textit{g}7 30.\textit{g}1 \textit{h}6

By golly – I guessed the king would be going here! Well, such ideas are not so difficult to find. Many of you must have seen it too.

31.\textit{d}2 \textit{g}7 32.\textit{f}3 \textit{c}4 33.\textit{c}2 b5 34.axb5 cxb5 35.\textit{e}1 b4
36. cxb4 axb4 37. b3 c6 38. f3 c8 39. c1

39. cxb4!?

39... f5+ 40. c2 e6 41. b3 f5+ 42. a2??

Better 42. c2.

42... e6?!

Interesting is 42... d5, opening up the 6th rank for the rook (... f6-a6+).

43. c8 f4?!

43... f4 44. xe6 xe3 45. c7+ h8 46. c8+= would have led to a draw.

44. c2

44. xe6 xe6 45. c7+ with initiative.

44... c5 45. d5

45. c4±.

45... d4 46. c7+ h6 47. g8 b3+

Or 47... f8 48. h7+ g5 49. c4 h4!? unclear.
48.\textit{\texttt{NxN}} 49.\textit{\texttt{Rxf2}}

Interesting is 48...\textit{\texttt{NxN}}, and in reply to any capture 49...\textit{\texttt{Rxf2}} will follow.

49.\textit{\texttt{Ec4}} 50.\textit{\texttt{Rxb4}} 51.\textit{\texttt{Ec4}} 52.\textit{\texttt{a5+}} 53.\textit{\texttt{b1}} 54.\textit{\texttt{e2}} 55.\textit{\texttt{f8}} 56.\textit{\texttt{e3}} 57.\textit{\texttt{a2}} 58.\textit{\texttt{Qxa8}}+

57...\textit{\texttt{Qf1}} 58.\textit{\texttt{f3}} 59.\textit{\texttt{a4}} + 60.\textit{\texttt{Qb6}} 61.\textit{\texttt{d2+}} 62.\textit{\texttt{g7}}

Better is 62...\textit{\texttt{a4}}.
63.\texttt{b1}?
63.\texttt{c8}=.
63...\texttt{d4}?
63...\texttt{b4!}–+ 64.\texttt{c2} \texttt{c5} 65.\texttt{b4} (65.\texttt{b3} \texttt{xf4=}+) 65...\texttt{e1}+ 66.\texttt{a2} \texttt{c1}.
64.\texttt{e8} \texttt{d1}+ 65.\texttt{a2} \texttt{d5+}
65...\texttt{xa3}+ 66.\texttt{xa3} (66.bxa3 \texttt{a1}+ 67.\texttt{b3} \texttt{c3}+ 68.\texttt{a2} \texttt{c4}+ 69.\texttt{b1} \texttt{b3}+ 70.\texttt{c1} \texttt{xa3}+–+) 66...\texttt{d3}+ 67.\texttt{a2} d5±.
66.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{xd5} 67.\texttt{g3} g5 68.fxg5 \texttt{g5} ½-½

A similar structure arose in the following duel from the 2013 Croatian team championship. A black knight was again comfortably established on h5. Then, however, Jovanovic allowed an objectionable exchange on h5 and could have faced big problems. But White’s performance was also far from ideal and as a result Saric was near losing deep in the ending...
Another modification. Instead of the bishop, the rook stirred, which means that kingside castling is off limits.

5...g6

Black hasn’t put the bishop on e7 yet, so he has the right to fianchetto it. From g7 this piece can exert pressure on the queenside, where the white monarch will probably go.

6.g4 g7 7.g5


7...Nh5

The move g4-g5 always has a negative side – the black knight can conveniently go to g5. Of course, it’s the edge of the board, but here the knight performs several functions simultaneously:

1) It hampers the assault with h2-h4-h5;
2) It controls point f4, where the knight can also move to if necessary. With the bishop on g7 this idea is even more effective, as after a probable ...e5xf4 recapture the diagonal h8-a1 is opened up;
3) On the safe side, it controls point f6, which may come in handy if we wish to strike the counterblow ...f7-f5 (f6).

8.Be3 0-0 9.d2

9.e2 c6 10.d2 a5 11.a3 e8 12.0-0-0 f8 13.d5 c5 14.b1 a6 with counterplay, Lopez Martinez-Elianov, Merida
2005.

9...c6

9...f5!? 10.exf5 \(\text{xf5}\) with counterplay.

10.0-0-0 \(\text{a5}\) 11.\(\text{b1}\) \(\text{e8}\) 12.a3 \(\text{a6}\) 13.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{b5}\) 14.\(\text{e1}\)

14.dxe5 dxe5 15.\(\text{e1}\) \(\text{f4}\) with counterplay. See the note to 7...\(\text{h5}\).

14...\(\text{c7}\)!!

The thrust 14...\(\text{f4}\)! was more appropriate here: 15.\(\text{xh4}\) exf4 16.\(\text{xf4}\) \(\text{b4}\) with enough compensation for the pawn.

15.dxe5 dxe5 16.\(\text{hxh5}\) gxh5 17.\(\text{e2}\)±

The knight is directed to g3. I really don’t understand why the Elo-favourite failed to win this game. Black’s kingside is in ruins and the g7-bishop is blocked by its own pawn on e5.

17...\(\text{b6}\) 18.\(\text{a5}\)

Usually it is very unpleasant to allow ...\(\text{c4}\) with an attack on the queen and the bishop, but in this given case it is not dangerous. After 18.\(\text{g3}\) \(\text{c4}\) 19.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{xe3}\) 20.\(\text{xe3}\) \(\text{g4}\) 21.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{h4}\) 22.\(\text{fxg4}\) hxg3 23.\(\text{hxg3}\)± White has an extra pawn and the position is nice.

18...\(\text{c5}\) 19.\(\text{g3}\) \(\text{e6}\) 20.\(\text{xh5}\) \(\text{c4}\) 21.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{xe4}\)

In comparison with the previous note, Black has now succeeded in the elimination of an enemy central pawn.

22.\(\text{xh5}\) \(\text{g5}\) 23.\(\text{g3}\)!!

23.\(\text{f6+}\) \(\text{xf6}\) 24.\(\text{xf6+}\) \(\text{h8}\) 25.\(\text{f3}\)±.
23...\text{g4}

With compensation.

24.f3 \text{h3} 25.\text{d3} e4

The situation has become totally confusing, and White didn’t need to allow this push. It is not clear who is playing for a win here.

26.\text{xg7+! xg7} 27.\text{f4}

The queen is regained because it has no retreat squares.

27...\text{xg3}

Or 27...\text{xh2} 28.h1 \text{xg3} 29.h5+ g6 30.xg3=.

28.\text{xg3} exf3 29.h5+ g6 30.f4+ g7 31.b3 e3?!

This leads to problems again. The balance could have been maintained with 31...ac8 32.h5+ (32.d4+ f8 33.bxc4 xc4 34.d2 e4=) 32.g6=.

32.h5+ h8

32...g6 33.d6++.+

33.d4+ g8 34.f6+ f8 35.e5+

35.xe8 xe2+ 36.c1 xd1 37.xc2 f2 38.xf2 xf2 39.f6=.

35.g7 36.xe8+ xe8
37. \text{\textit{Bxe3}}

More accurate was first 37. \text{\textit{Bd4+! Kg6 38. Bxe3 Rxe3 39. Ke1 Ke4 (39... Rxe2 40. Rd6+ – this is the main difference with the game. The rook escapes from square d1 with a check, vacating it for the king; 40... Kg7 41. Rxf3+-) 40. Rf1}}

38... Rxe3 39. Kc1 Bc6 40. Ke1 Rf2 41. Kc1 Be4 42. Kc2 Rf3 43. Kc3 Kf5 44. Kg3

I’d hazard the guess that the players had been in time trouble for a long time already, with so many mistakes from both sides.

37... Rxe3 38. Rf1

Now 38. Kc1 doesn’t gain the advantage in view of 38... Rxe2 with counterplay, for example 39. Rd2?? f2!+.
45...<i>e2</i>?

The natural 45...<i>f4</i> was strong, as after 46.<i>f6</i>+ Black can interpose with 46...<i>f5</i>+.  

46.<i>f6</i>+ <i>e5</i> 47.<i>gxf3</i> <i>xg3</i> ½-½

A long and arduous struggle...

Well, now it’s turn to show some creativity by the author. I have only one of my own games to offer here. Conclusion: this line is rare.

So, I need to think of a more or less convincing excuse for the negative result.

There are some stock explanations:

1) I was out of form  
2) It made me sick to play such a (bad) position  
3) Someone put a jinx on me/him/her (!)  
4) It was very hot (by the way, in big tournaments, especially in summer, this is often true. You have to run outside after every move to get a breath of fresh air)  
5) I mixed up the moves  
6) I was tired  
7) I had no wish to fight  
8) The result just didn’t matter to me.

I would opt for point 6. In the open tournament of Cappelle-la-Grande, as a rule one round is played per day, and so you have the possibility both to relax and to prepare for a game. But Sunday is a day with two rounds. I would be glad to make a quick draw in the morning and to struggle against a tired adversary in the evening. Alas, not everything depends on myself. My morning opponent was strong (~2550), young, and spoiling for a fight. We went all the way, I was close to winning, but the game ended in a draw. In Cappelle-la-Grande everything is conveniently organized – for instance, the restaurant is near the tournament hall, but still I was in tatters, which is not surprising after 5-6 hours of play. I
suppose that my opponent Nikita Vitiugov was also not fresh, but anyway he is considerably younger than me.
Up to a certain point Black had a nice position, even after I gave up an exchange. I believe I committed a micro-
inaccuracy on the 21st move. The Russian player gradually increased his chances and then a blunder on the 37th move
was disastrous.
I remember my skeptical estimation of Black’s defensive resources. But, as so frequently happens, the computer thinks
it wasn’t that bad.

91
Nikita Vitiugov (2605)
Sergey Kasparov (2458)
Cappelle-la-Grande Open 2008 (4)

1.d4 .AddItem(91)

Entirely insipid is 6.0-0 0-0 7.h3 c6 8...e3 b5 9.a3 ...b7 10...g5 ...c7= Azarov-S. Kasparov, Minsk 1998.

6...h6

6...g6?! was played in a strange game played in Moscow: 7.g5 ...h5 8.h4 c6 9.a3 ...c7 10...e3 b6 11...h2 As you can
see, the bishop on e2 is useful, it is ready to capture on h5. 11...g7

analysis diagram

12.f4 More accurate is the preparatory 12...g4. 12...e6? 12...f5. 13.f5 13.fxe5 dxe5 14.d5±. 13...xd4 14.xd4 exd4
15...xd4 ...e5 16.f6 ...f8 17...f3 ...e6 18.0-0 0-0-0-0?? 19.xe5 and ...e2-a6+ is threatened, Nepomniachtchi-Vorobiov,
Moscow 2012.

7.g1

7.g5 hxg5 8...xg5 c6 9...e3 ...g4! After this leap the Elo-favourite even faced certain problems in the following game:
10.\text{x}g4 10.\text{xf}7? \text{dxe}3 11.\text{xd}8 \text{xd}1-+. 10...\text{gx}g5 11.\text{d}2 \text{xe}3 12.\text{xe}3 \text{h}4 13.\text{xd}7+ \text{h}7 14.\text{dxe}5 \text{dxe}5
(Khairullin-Mihajlovskij, St Petersburg 2007)

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{analysis_diagram.png}
\end{center}

\textit{analysis diagram}

Black’s pawn structure is better (2 islands against 3) and the bishop is superior to the knight.

7...c6 8.a4

It seems to me this move provides some discomfort for the white king in case of queenside castling. In the following game, Moscow grandmaster Vladimir Belov managed without this weakening. By the way, it was precisely Belov with whom I played my tough morning game. 8.h4 h5 (8...\text{f}8!? 9.dxe5 \text{dxe}4) 9.gxh5! \text{dxe}5 10.\text{e}3 \text{f}6 11.a3 \text{e}7 12.\text{d}2 \text{f}8 13.0-0-0 \text{g}6 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.\text{g}5 \text{gf}4 16.\text{c}4 \text{e}6 (Belov-Maletin, Sochi tt-2 2007) 17.b1
... with a clear advantage for White.

8...\texttt{wc7}

8...exd4!? 9.exd4 (9.exd4 \texttt{g8} 10.h3 \texttt{e6=} 9...\texttt{c5} 10.f3 g6 (10...d5!? 11.e5 \texttt{fd7} 12.f4 \texttt{e6} 13.xe6 fxe6 14.d3 \texttt{h4=} 11.e3 \texttt{h7} 12.d2 \texttt{h4+} 13.g3=, Amin-Khukhashvili, Dubai 2012.

9.e3 \texttt{f8}

The knight is going to g6, and taking into account the weakening of point f4 this seems reasonable. Besides, it clears the
way for the c8-bishop.
More concrete was 9...d5!? 10.exd5 e4 11.dxc6 bxc6 12.\text{\textit{N}}d2 \textit{\textit{Q}}xh2 unclear, but I tried to play solidly.

10.h3 \textit{\textit{Q}}g6

The computer suggests the central counter-blow 10...d5 here, but it is difficult to venture on such a move with underdeveloped pieces: 11.exd5 (11.dxe5 \textit{\textit{N}}xe4 ²) 11...e4 12.\textit{\textit{Q}}e5 cxd5=.

11.\textit{\textit{W}}d2 \textit{\textit{A}}d7 12.a5 \textit{\textit{N}}h7

Kingside castling is interesting, all the more so because the pawn is already on a5 and, in case of White's 0-0-0, it will perish.

13.\textit{\textit{A}}c4 \textit{\textit{D}}g5 14.\textit{\textit{B}}g3

Unattractive is 14.\textit{\textit{W}}xg5 hxg5 15.\textit{\textit{A}}xg5? exd4.

14...\textit{\textit{A}}e6

Complications do not favour Black: 14...\textit{\textit{D}}xe4? 15.\textit{\textit{W}}xe4 d5 16.\textit{\textit{A}}xe5 \textit{\textit{N}}xe5 17.dxe5 \textit{\textit{W}}xe5 (17...dxe4 18.\textit{\textit{W}}d4 ²) 18.d4 \textit{\textit{W}}xe4+ 19.\textit{\textit{B}}e3 \textit{\textit{W}}h1+ 20.\textit{\textit{B}}f1 ².

15.\textit{\textit{B}}e2

Nikita guards the squares f4 and d4. I believe that such manoeuvres are not sufficient for gaining an advantage. We can conclude that Black has solved his opening problems successfully.

15...\textit{\textit{h}}5

There was also the option of ceding the centre, but such a strategy does not agree with me: 15...exd4 16.\textit{\textit{A}}exd4 (16.\textit{\textit{A}}xd4 \textit{\textit{B}}h4 17.\textit{\textit{A}}f5! \textit{\textit{A}}xg3 18.\textit{\textit{A}}exg3 with compensation) 16...\textit{\textit{D}}c5 17.\textit{\textit{A}}d3 \textit{\textit{A}}f6 unclear; or 15...0-0; 15...\textit{\textit{A}}h4.
16.\textit{\textbf{g1}} h\textit{xg4} 17.\textit{hxg4} \textit{\textbf{h3}} 18.\textit{\textbf{g3}}

Black’s position looks tenable. He must think of a way to castle queenside. Meanwhile, the e3-bishop is casting lustful looks at the a7-pawn. But moving it to a6 would mean a weakening of point b6.

18...\textit{\textbf{ef4}}

18...\textit{exd4} 19.\textit{\textbf{xd4}} \textit{\textbf{xd4}} 20.\textit{\textbf{xd4}} \textit{\textbf{g4}} 21.\textit{\textbf{xg7}} \textit{\textbf{e5}} 22.\textit{\textbf{e2}}=.

Houdini recommends 18...\textit{c5}!? 19.dxe5 dxe5, even assessing it as \textit{$\frac{1}{2}$}. Maybe it is right, but I don’t like the weakening of the light-square complex.

19.\textit{\textbf{f1}} \textit{\textbf{g4}}!

Here I support the computer as I don’t have any better ideas.

20.\textit{\textbf{xh3}} \textit{\textbf{h3}} 21.\textit{\textbf{h1}}
Up to here the author’s play has been quite logical, not mentioning some slight inaccuracies.

21...\textit{h}f4

This move is also possible, but now gradually the scales are turning in White’s favour. Rather good was 21...0-0-0, with full compensation for the exchange. The a7-pawn has nothing to fear. In fact, opening of the d-file is not an option for White: 22.dxe5?? (by the way, after 22.\textit{h}2 Black would have had to find 22...\textit{h}4! unclear) 22...dxe5 23.\textit{e}2 \textit{h}f4+-.

22.\textit{g}1 \textit{g}2+ 23.\textit{f}1 \textit{xe}3+ 24.\textit{xe}3 a6

24...0-0-0 25.dxe5 \textit{b}8 with compensation.

25.\textit{f}5 \textit{f}6 26.f3 \textit{xf}5 27.exf5 \textit{f}8 28.dxe5 dxe5 29.e2 0-0-0 30.\textit{g}3
30...e4!? 31.\textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textemdash}}}xe4 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textemdash}}}xb2 32.\textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textemdash}}}b1 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textemdash}}}d4 33.\textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textemdash}}}b3 g6 34.f6 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textemdash}}}e6 35.\textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textemdash}}}h7

I read a sorrowful note in my laptop: ‘What is the use of playing the first line, if the position is getting worse?’ Yes, sometimes it can be like this. Then one must admit his opponent’s strong play. This is not surprising: Nikita represents the Russian team, and his Elo-rating is now about 2750!

35...b8?

35...e5.

36.c3

36.xe6! fxe6 37.xc7 e7 38.f7± and 39.g5.

36...e3

In reply to the creative 36...xf6 follows the cynical 37.xe6 (after 37.xf6 g5 and ...xf3 the white king may get into trouble) 37...xe6 38.cc7 xc7 39.xf6 xf8 40.e4 xf3+ 41.e2±.

37.e2
37...a7??

After 37...f4 Black could still have put up stubborn resistance.

38.\textit{\texttt{\textsf{\textsc{Wh6}}}}\textit{\texttt{\textsf{\textsc{fxe6}}}} 39.\textit{\texttt{\textsf{\textsc{Rxg7}}}}\textit{\texttt{\textsf{\textsc{xc7}}}} 40.\textit{\texttt{\textsf{\textsc{Rh1}}}}\textit{\texttt{\textsf{\textsc{Ed5}}}} 41.\textit{\texttt{\textsf{\textsc{Rh7+}}}}\textit{\texttt{\textsf{\textsc{Ed8}}}} 42.\textit{\texttt{\textsf{\textsc{Rh8+}}}} 1-0

On the whole, we can conclude that the opening turned out favourable for Black. The quality of my play was, up to the 37th move, quite acceptable. However, at that moment it seemed to me that I was playing terribly, as I was exhausted.

The fianchetto with 5.g3 was applied in a top-level encounter in the 2013 World Cup. It’s not bad in itself, but later on Kravtsiv made the disputable move a4-a5, and the queenside structure changed in Black’s favour. Baadur had more than sufficient compensation for the pawn. Then the opponents exchanged a few mistakes. But it was the Ukrainian player who committed the last one.

92
Martyn Kravtsiv (2607)
Baadur Jobava (2696)
Tromsø FIDE World Cup 2013 (1)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \textit{\texttt{\textsf{\textsc{Qf6}}}} 3.\textit{\texttt{\textsf{\textsc{c3}}}} 4.\textsf{\texttt{\textsc{f3}}} 5.g3

I often play this move myself, but with the black bishop on g7. Guided by long experience, I dare conjecture that g2-g3 has more sense if White’s knight has been developed at e2. You will be convinced of this after studying another chapter of this book.

5...c6

And here is a sample from the creativity of two beautiful ladies. Paradoxically, I have never met the Russian player, while we have played in the same tournament with Humpy twice, and not on the Indian peninsula. The first time I saw her was in a strong round-robin tournament in Denmark in 2003, where she obtained 1.5 points out of 9. The next time was in a large open tournament in Luxemburg in 2007, where Koneru was ahead of all the men with 7 points out of 9...
5...e7 6.g2 0-0 7.0-0 a6 8.a4 b6 9.e1 b7 10.b3 c6 11.b2 c7

Tigran Gharamian

analysis diagram

It looks like Black has almost equalized. The move ...b6-b5 is on the agenda, and maybe it can be pushed even further. 12.b1 Tatiana doesn’t wait until she is forced and begins the knight’s transfer to d2 immediately. This clears the way for the c-pawn and the diagonal for the dark-squared bishop. 12...b5 13.bd2 fe8 14.c4 A committal move; in future the weakening of squares on the c-file may tell. If 14.e2 f8 15.axb5 axb5=. 14...exd4 15.xd4 bxa4 16.bxa4 ab8 17.f5=. 15.bxa4 Better 15.xa4. 15...exd4 16.xd4 g6 17.c2 ab8 18.c3 f8 19.f4 g7 20.f3 c5 21.a5 e7 22.e2 be8 23.e1 c8 T. Kosintseva-Koneru, Ulaanbaatar 2010.
Black has no problems.

6.a4 e7 7.g2 0-0 8.0-0 e8

Another plan was showed by Czech grandmaster Vlastimil Babula: 8...b8 9.е1 Better is 9.a5 e8 10.е2. 9...b6 10.h3 a6

Typically creating a flexible structure, in which any pawn can advance. 11.е4 g6 12.e6 e8 13.d2 13.f3!?
13...exd4 14.\textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}xd4} b5 15.axb5 axb5 16.\textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}d2} \textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}e5} 17.b3 \textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}h5} 18.\textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}e3} Or 18.\textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}f3}!? \textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}xf3}+ 19.\textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}xf3} \textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}xh3} 20.\textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}xh5} gxh5 unclear. As my daughter says: ‘Such positions scare me.’ 18...\textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}e6} 19.\textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}e2} c5?! 19...\textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}xh4} 20.gxh4 f5 with counterplay.

20.\textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}ad1} \textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}c8} 21.\textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}f4}!? \textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}c6} 22.f5±, Efimenko-Babula, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011.

9.\textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}e1} \textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}f8} 10.b3 b6 11.a5

The Ukrainian youth hurries to play this move, otherwise after ...c7-c6 it will lose its sense. Why? Please see below.

11...b5 12.d5

This is the micro-nuance. Now Black can’t play, for instance, 12...\textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}b7} because of 13.a6±, but the moral of such situations is that Black, as a rule, can leave the b5-pawn without protection.

12...cxd5 13.exd5 a6

And the queenside has been stabilized.

14.\textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}d2} \textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}b7} 15.\textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}f1}?!

Better was 15.\textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}de4} \textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}c7} 16.\textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}a3} \textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}ab8} 17.\textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}b4}.

15...\textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}c8} 16.\textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}d2} g6 17.\textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}e2} \textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}g7} 18.\textit{\texttt{\textordmasculine}e3}
Please assess the position for a couple of minutes. What are your conclusions? I certainly prefer Black’s position – not because Houdini gives an evaluation of -0.44. More important is the pawn structure. White’s c2-pawn is backward, it is difficult for him to exploit his numerical superiority on the queenside. Note the drawback of the move a4-a5. Now the b5-pawn feels perfectly comfortable and is actually limiting the enemy forces.

18...e4

It would be ideal to move the f-pawn too, but Baadur manages without it.

19.Rad1 h5 20.h4 Qc5 21Nb1 Qfd7 22.Na3 Qe5 23.b4

If Martyn manages to play c2-c4 too, then the situation will improve for him.
23...\textit{Q}f3+

The Georgian grandmaster prefers to give a pawn for nice compensation. 23...\textit{N}a4 looks very attractive, but Black has to calculate the sacrifice option 24.\textit{N}xb5 axb5 25.\textit{Q}xb5 \textit{Q}d7 26.\textit{Q}xd7 \textit{Q}xd7 +.

24.\textit{B}xf3 exf3 25.\textit{Q}xf3 \textit{Q}e4 26.\textit{N}b1

My stock idea was obviously not timely here: 26.c4? \textit{Q}xd2 27.\textit{R}xd2 \textit{B}c3.

26...\textit{Q}f6

26...\textit{Q}e7!?.

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27.\textit{Q}g2?!

White should have traded off the queens: 27.\textit{Q}xf6 \textit{Q}xf6 28.\textit{B}c1. Now Black possesses the initiative and he can make use of the resource ...\textit{f}7-f5-f4.

27.\textit{Q}b2

The penetration of the strongest piece into the enemy camp causes some chaos, while it is not possible to catch the queen – Black’s other pieces are too active.

28.c3 \textit{Q}a2

How to protect d5 now? Kravtsiv must have regretted here that he hadn’t simplified the position on the 27th move.

29.\textit{Q}f3 \textit{Q}xd5?!

Stronger was 29...\textit{Q}e5, as the d5-pawn is dead anyway.

30.\textit{B}xd5 \textit{Q}xd5 31.\textit{h}6
The struggle is revived. There is much more space now, which plays into White’s hand, as he was hemmed in in his camp earlier.

31...\textit{c}6 32.\textit{x}g7 \textit{xc}7 33.\textit{e}3 \textit{d}5 34.\textit{ed}3 \textit{e}5 35.\textit{e}3 \textit{f}6 36.\textit{b}6?  

Stronger was 36.\textit{xd}5! \textit{xc}3 37.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 38.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xd}1 39.\textit{d}2\textsuperscript{\ast}. The reduced number of pieces and weak a6-pawn make for a probable draw.

36...\textit{c}6

37.\textit{d}4??
37. \textit{Qa}7. \\
37...\textit{Rc}4+ 38. \textit{Qb}6 \\
38. \textit{Qe}3 \textit{Nxc}3+. \\
38...\textit{Re}6 39. \textit{Qa}7 \textit{d}4! \\
Baadur interrupts the a7-g1 diagonal. Now both the f2- and c3-pawns are attacked and there is no satisfactory defence already, so White resigned. \\
In this final example, White didn’t sacrifice the pawn but pushed it with h2-h3, g2-g4-g5. This didn’t bring him anything special, and Markus obtained a better position. Then the play on both sides was not perfect, and deep in the ending Black realized his advantage.

\begin{center}
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93
\hline
Mladen Milenkovic (2405)
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Robert Markus (2629)
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Valjevo 2011 (6)
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1.e4 d6 2.d4 \textit{Nf}6 3.\textit{Nc}3 e5 4.\textit{Nf}3 \textit{Nbd}7 5.h3 \\
I’ll tell you a secret. Sometimes in blitz games I try to save a tempo and for the fianchetto I move the g-pawn two squares at once. But in that case my knight is placed on e2.

5...\textit{Be}7 6.\textit{Be}3 \textit{c}6 7.\textit{g}4 \\
As you see, the pawn is not sacrificed and White keeps his kingside castling rights. But will it still be good now?

7...0-0 \\
This looks provocative. It was possible to stop 8.g5 with 7...\textit{h}6 or 7...\textit{wa}5.

8.g5 \textit{h}5 9.\textit{h}4 \\
9.\textit{d}2!? \textit{c}7 (9...\textit{f}5!? 10.gxf6 \textit{xf}6) 10.\textit{e}2 \textit{b}5 with counterplay.

9...\textit{g}6 10.\textit{d}2 \textit{c}7 11.0-0-0 \textit{b}5 12.\textit{e}2 \\
This makes sense: the knight is running away from Black’s advancing infantry, and aiming for g3. After the exchange for its counterpart on h5, White’s pawns will be able to harass the black king (h4-h5).

12...\textit{b}6
With counterplay.

13. \( \text{N} \)g3?

A natural move, but poor for tactical reasons. 13. \( \text{Q} \)a5 \( \text{g} \)4 14. \( \text{N} \)h2= would have kept the status-quo.

13... \( \text{B} \)g4 14. \( \text{B} \)e2 \( \text{N} \)c4³

This unpleasant sortie was on the surface, so it’s strange that White allowed it.

15. \( \text{Q} \)c3

15. \( \text{B} \)xc4 \( \text{b} \)xc4 (15... \( \text{B} \)xf3) 16. \( \text{Q} \)e2 \( \text{d} \)5+- (16... \( \text{Q} \)a5).

15... \( \text{N} \)xe3

15... \( \text{N} \)xg3 16.fxg3 \( \text{d} \)5 with initiative.

16. \( \text{Q} \)xe3 \( \text{f} \)4 17. \( \text{b} \)1 \( \text{f} \)6

17...c5.

18.dxe5

18. \( \text{h} \)2!? \( \text{e} \)6 19.\( \text{h} \)5.

18...dxe5 19.\( \text{g} \)xf6 \( \text{x} \)xf6 20.\( \text{h} \)2 \( \text{x} \)xe2 21.\( \text{x} \)xe2 \( \text{x} \)h4 22.\( \text{g} \)4 \( \text{g} \)5

As a result of several doubtful manoeuvres Markus has lost his slight advantage. He is a pawn up but his king is unsafe.

23. \( \text{g} \)1

23.\( \text{xf} \)4!? \( \text{xf} \)4 (23...\( \text{xf} \)4 24.\( \text{h} \)3± with the terrible threat \( \text{d} \)1-\( \text{d} \)7) 24.\( \text{h} \)3 \( \text{f} \)7 and everything is protected, but it
doesn’t feel secure.

23...h5 24.\( \text{\textit{Nf3 \textbf{f6}}} \) 25.\( \text{\textit{Nxf6+ Rxf6}} \) 26.\( \text{\textit{Rd2}} \)

26.a3.

26...\( \text{\textit{Ed6}} \) 27.\( \text{\textit{Ehd1 Ead8}} \) 28.\( \text{\textit{Eg1}} \)

Ooh, after such manoeuvres, wasting two tempi, the outcome is not surprising.

28...\( \text{\textit{Exd2}} \) 29.\( \text{\textit{Exd2}} \) \( \text{\textit{Qd6}} \) 30.\( \text{\textit{b3 a5}} \)

The knight controls the entire kingside, so the other black pieces and pawns have freedom to act on the queenside.

31.a3

Perhaps he should have tried 31.\( \text{\textit{Nxa5 Ed1+}} \) 32.\( \text{\textit{Ec1 Exc1+}} \) 33.\( \text{\textit{Exc1 Ed6+}} \) when Black stands better but at least the number of pawns is equal.

31...\( \text{\textit{a4}} \) 32.\( \text{\textit{Ec1 Eg7}} \)

32...\( \text{\textit{b4}} \) 33.\( \text{\textit{axb4 Exb4+}} \).

33.\( \text{\textit{Ea7+ Ed7+}} \)
The rest is not interesting. You can read and you have a board (or a monitor) in front of you. Please try to do something for yourself now – it’s an ‘independent task’. By the way, I have a university diploma as a pedagogue – not in chess, but in geography.

34.\texttt{a8} \texttt{f7} 35.\texttt{a2} \texttt{e2} 36.\texttt{b4} \texttt{d4} 38.\texttt{d3} \texttt{f8} 39.\texttt{b7}+ \texttt{f7} 40.\texttt{c8} \texttt{f8} 41.\texttt{b7}+ \texttt{f7} 42.\texttt{c8} \texttt{f3} 43.\texttt{d1} \texttt{d7} 44.\texttt{a8} \texttt{h4} 45.\texttt{b8} \texttt{f8} 46.\texttt{b6} \texttt{h3} 47.\texttt{f2} \texttt{e6} 48.\texttt{c7}+ \texttt{f7} 49.\texttt{b8} \texttt{d7} 50.\texttt{d3} \texttt{h2} 51.\texttt{h1} \texttt{f7} 52.\texttt{c5} \texttt{e7} 53.\texttt{b6} \texttt{f6} 54.\texttt{a1} \texttt{g5} 55.\texttt{d3} \texttt{g4} 56.\texttt{f2} \texttt{g6} 57.\texttt{g3} \texttt{g5} 58.\texttt{f2} \texttt{g3} 59.\texttt{a7}+ \texttt{h8} 60.\texttt{f1} \texttt{g2} 61.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{g1=Q}+ 62.\texttt{a2} \texttt{xa7} 0-1

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\textbf{Conclusion}

With the continuations considered in this chapter White can hardly lay claim to an advantage; if they did, they would be more often played. Incidentally, the application of such radical ideas as g2-g4 suggests that in ‘normal’ lines White may feel stagnation.
In this chapter we look at the developing move 5.\( \text{B}c4 \), with which White is eyeing the weak point \( f7 \) in the black position. Can he even sacrifice on \( f7 \)?

Section 1: The Sacrifice 6.\( \text{B}xf7+ \)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \( \text{Q}f6 \) 3.\( \text{c}3 \) e5 4.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{Q}bd7 \) 5.\( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 6.\( \text{B}xf7+ \)
Let’s pay some attention to a quite rare, but charismatic offshoot. How frequent is it? In my 20-25 years of practice in this opening I have never faced it in a classic game. In Internet blitz games I have automatically made the ‘pre-move’ 6...\textit{K}xf7, but in vain. So, I just opened my blitz database, and found only two games with this line.

So don’t worry, you may let this cup pass from you. But to satisfy our conscience we will consider several examples to try and understand the plans and chances for both sides.

We’ll start with a quick defeat and a beautiful performance by Spanish grandmaster Marc Narciso Dublan in the Ibero-American championship, 2010. White’s aggression boomeranged very soon and in the end it was his king who suffered.

\begin{tikzpicture}
\node[inner sep=0] (board) {
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{b}& \textbf{c}& \textbf{d}& \textbf{e}& \textbf{f}& \textbf{g}& \textbf{h} \\
\hline
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chessboard.png} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
};
\end{tikzpicture}

\begin{verbatim}
94
Jorge Baules (2349)
Marc Narciso Dublan (2536)
Mexico City 2010 (1)

1.d4 d6 2.e4 \textit{N}f6 3.\textit{N}c3 e5 4.\textit{N}f3 \textit{N}bd7 5.\textit{c}c4 \textit{e}e7 6.\textit{xf}7+ \textit{xf}7 7.\textit{g}5+

Where should the king go?

7...\textit{g}8

Strictly the only possible move. All other moves lead to instant loss. It is risky to put the king in front of its own army in open space with 7...\textit{g}6?!}


8.h4 Also good is 8.f4. 8...h5 9.f4 exf4? More stubborn is 9...\texttt{g}g8, but who would venture to play the line 10.f5+ \texttt{h}h6 ? The bishop lies in ambush on c1 and is aiming at the monarch, who has no retreat. This is computer play, a human player will hardly find such a line. 11.\texttt{e}e6+ \texttt{h}h7 12.\texttt{g}g5± or 12.d5. 10.\texttt{e}e6?! 10.\texttt{e}e2±. 10...\texttt{g}g8 11.\texttt{xf}f4+ \texttt{f}f7 11...\texttt{h}h7±. 12.0-0 c5= was seen in the game Gazik-Szalai, Szekszard 1989.

7...\texttt{f}f8 8.\texttt{e}e6+- and 7...\texttt{e}e8 8.\texttt{e}e6+- are both too cooperative.

8.\texttt{e}e6

This looks unpleasant, but while White is eating away, Black will be ahead in development and take over the initiative.
8...e8 9.xc7 g6 10.xa8

Under the motto ‘Let my suffering be not in vain.’ In case of 10.0-0 it is reasonable for Black to be materialistic. After the modest 10...b8 the two pawns are worth less than the sacrificed bishop.

10...xg2 11.f1 exd4

12.e2?

And catastrophe strikes. The strongest move 12.xd4 is considered below.

12...dxc3 13.c4+

It seems that Black stands poorly, but...

13...d5! 14.xc8+ f7

The Spanish grandmaster doesn’t cling to his material, and with right. He organizes a counteroffensive, making use of his significantly superior development.
15.\text{\textit{x}}c3

The greedy 15.\text{\textit{x}}h8 results in defeat: 15...\text{\textit{x}}e4+ 16.\text{\textit{d}}d1 \text{\textit{f}}3+ 17.\text{\textit{e}}1 cxb2 18.\text{\textit{xb}}2 \text{\textit{b}}4+-.

15...\text{\textit{x}}e4+ 16.\text{\textit{e}}3

16.\text{\textit{d}}d1 \text{\textit{xa}}8+.

16...\text{\textit{x}}c2

The a8-knight is not long for this world, so Black doesn’t even pay attention to it. He’s aiming at the white king.

17.\text{\textit{b}}3 \text{\textit{b}}4+! 18.\text{\textit{xb}}4 \text{\textit{c}}5

Or 18...\text{\textit{e}}8+ 19.\text{\textit{e}}3 \text{\textit{e}}5, also winning. White resigned.

The Hungarian grandmaster Attila Czebe managed to win too, although it was more difficult for him. However, he also coordinated his pieces and secured his king, while keeping his extra material.

Inside the main game you will find many notes with instructive fragments from other clashes.

10...\text{\textit{b}}8 11.\text{\textit{d}}3

Now let’s make a more thorough investigation of this ‘pacific’ line.
In the following game, Evertsson played differently, but with a sad result: 11.f4

**analysis diagram**

A) 11...exd4 It’s better to build a shelter for the stray king: 11...h6!? 12.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{e}d}3}\) \(\text{\textit{\texttt{c}h7}}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{g}d}5}\) \(\text{\textit{\texttt{c}d}8}\) (this is clear even without using the computer. The bishop cuts off the retreat of the knight) 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{e}e}3}\) b6=. 12.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{x}d}4}\) d5?! Intending to play ...\(\text{\textit{\texttt{c}c}5}\). 12...\(\text{\textit{\texttt{q}f7}}\)=. 13.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{e}e}3}\)?! 13...\(\text{\textit{\texttt{q}h5}}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{c}c}5}\) \(\text{\textit{\texttt{c}c}5}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{c}e}7+}\) \(\text{\textit{\texttt{c}f7}}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{e}x}g6}\) is unclear. 13...\(\text{\textit{\texttt{c}c}5}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{x}d}3}\)?! 14.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{d}d}2}\). 14...dxe4+ Evertsson-Strikovic, Dos Hermanas 2003;

B) 11.dxe5 dxe5 The computer claims that capturing with the knight is worse. 12.f4 \(\text{\textit{\texttt{c}c}5}\)+ 13.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{h}h1}}\) h6?! 13...\(\text{\textit{\texttt{h}h5}}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{x}h}5}\) \(\text{\textit{\texttt{c}x}h5}\) 15.fxe5 \(\text{\textit{\texttt{c}xe}5}\)=. 14.fxe5 \(\text{\textit{\texttt{c}xe}5}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{f}f}4!}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{xf}6}}\) \(\text{\textit{\texttt{xf}6}}\) (15...\(\text{\textit{\texttt{g}x}f6}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{d}d}5+}\) \(\text{\textit{\texttt{c}h7}}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{x}c}5=}) 16.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{d}d}5+}\) \(\text{\textit{\texttt{c}h7}}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{x}c}5}\) b6 18.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{c}g}1}\) with compensation. 15...\(\text{\textit{\texttt{g}g}4}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{d}d}2}\) \(\text{\textit{\texttt{c}c}6}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{f}f}5}\) \(\text{\textit{\texttt{d}d}8}\) 18.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{c}c}7}\) \(\text{\textit{\texttt{c}h7}}\)?! 18...\(\text{\textit{\texttt{e}e}7}\) 19.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{xf}6}}\) \(\text{\textit{\texttt{xf}6}}\) 20.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{c}c}7}\) \(\text{\textit{\texttt{c}d}7+}\). 19.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{x}d}8}\) \(\text{\textit{\texttt{x}d}8=}\) Villanueva-Llanos, Buenos Aires 1999.

11...h6 12.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{g}d}5}\) \(\text{\textit{\texttt{x}d}5}\)

The immediate bishop retreat is also not bad: 12...\(\text{\textit{\texttt{f}f}8}\), or 12...\(\text{\textit{\texttt{d}d}8}\).

13.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{x}d}5}\) \(\text{\textit{\texttt{x}d}8}\) 14.f4 \(\text{\textit{\texttt{c}h7}}\)

Black has organized his forces, and I don’t see exactly what is threatening him.

15.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{e}e}3}\) b6 16.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{f}f}3}\)

16.dxe5 dxe5 17.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{c}c}1}\) \(\text{\textit{\texttt{c}c}8}\).

16...\(\text{\textit{\texttt{b}b}7}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{g}g}3}\) \(\text{\textit{\texttt{e}e}8}\) 18.dxe5 dxe5 19.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{d}d}1}\)

19.c4?.

19...\(\text{\textit{\texttt{f}f}8}\)
The Hungarian grandmaster develops his pieces and White’s chances are getting worse and worse. If he fails to give mate, then Black’s bishop will prove to be stronger than two (not even connected) pawns.

20.fxe5

20.f5 hxg5 21.exd5 e4+-.

20...\(\text{N}xe5\)

Now all roads lead to Rome, Black’s pieces have been activated.

21.\(\text{We}2\) \(\text{hxh4+}\) 22.\(\text{Whh3}\) \(\text{Qg6}\) 23.\(\text{Qc1}\) \(\text{Qf2}\) 24.\(\text{Qd3}\) \(\text{Qe5}\) 25.\(\text{Qd4}\) \(\text{Exc2}\)
26. $\text{c}e3$

26.$\text{c}h4 \text{g}6+-,$ threatening to give mate on g2 or play 27...$\text{f}3+$.

26...$\text{c}4$ 27.$\text{d}2 \text{g}6$ 28.$\text{f}4 \text{g}4$ 0-1

The following example is taken from the Icelandic team championship, 2013. The level of the players is not very high, but there is a small choice of games with this subject. Anyway, the key moments in this game are very instructive.

96
Einar Hjalti Jensson (2305)
Halldor Palsson (2051)
Reykjavik tt 2013 (3)

1.d4 d6 2.e4 $\text{c}c3$ e5 4.$\text{f}3 \text{bd}7$ 5.$\text{c}4 \text{xe}7$ 6.$\text{xf}7+$ $\text{xf}7$ 7.$\text{g}5+$ $\text{g}8$ 8.$\text{e}6 \text{e}8$ 9.$\text{xc}7 \text{g}6$ 10.$\text{xa}8 \text{g}2$ 11.$\text{f}1 \text{exd}4$ 12.$\text{xd}4$

The critical move.

12...$\text{e}5$ 13.$\text{f}3$

Certainly not good is 13.$\text{f}4$?
analysis diagram

Some other lines and fragments: 13...\( \text{g4} \) Threatening the deadly 14...\( \text{h4} \). 14.\( \text{d5} \) \( \text{f7} \) The only move. 15.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{h4} \+) 16.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{e6} \! \) 17.\( \text{e2} \) 17.\( \text{b5} \) \( \text{d7} \) 18.\( \text{e2} \) (18.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{e5} \) 19.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{g4} \+) 18...\( \text{e3} \) (better is 18...\( \text{f2} \+) 19.\( \text{xe3} \) \( \text{g4} \+). Of course, there is no mate here, but after the elimination of the queen Black will tear the enemy central forces to shreds, Sam. Williams-Prokopchuk, Torquay Open 2002. 17...\( \text{f2} \+) 17...\( \text{e3} \) 18.\( \text{xe3} \) (far more resilient is 18.\( \text{xe3} \) 18...\( \text{g4} \+) 19.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{xf3} \+ \) 20.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{f2} \) 21.\( \text{d3} \) 0-1 Sanchez Castillo-Gomez Ledo, Bogota 2013. 18.\( \text{xf2} \) \( \text{xf2} \) and shortly after White resigned in Heidenfeld-Wolpert, Johannesburg 1955, which is apparently the stem game.

Also not good is 13.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{h3} \) (0-1 Pepe-Laketic, Porto San Giorgio 2005) 14.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{f3} \+) +.

13...\( \text{g4} \)
Black is a bit better even after 13...\(\Box xf3+\) 14.\(\Box xf3\) \(\Box xf3\) 15.\(\Box c4+\) d5 16.\(\Box xc8+\) \(\Box f7\) 17.\(\Box f5\) \(\Box xf5\) 18.exf5 \(\Box xa8\).

14.\(\Box f4?!\)

14.fxg4 \(\Box h4+\).

White could have put up a more or less satisfactory resistance by following a narrow path: 14.\(\Box d5+!\) \(\Box f7\) 15.\(\Box c4\) \(\Box h4+\) 16.\(\Box d1\) \(\Box e6\) 17.\(\Box e2\) \(\Box f2+\) 18.\(\Box xf2\) \(\Box xf2\) 19.\(\Box f4\) \(\Box g1+\) 20.\(\Box d2\) \(\Box xa1\) 21.\(\Box xf2\) \(\Box xb2\) unclear; Black has a slight material preponderance, but the situation is very shaky.

14...\(\Box xh2?\)

There was an easy win with 14...\(\Box h4+\) 15.\(\Box g3\) \(\Box xh2+-\), Montabord-Sanchez, Gibraltar 2011.

15.0-0-0 \(\Box xf1\) 16.\(\Box xe5!?\)

16...\(\Box e6?\)

There were several alternatives: 16...dxe5 17.\(\Box c4+\) \(\Box f8\) 18.\(\Box xc8+\) \(\Box f7\) 19.\(\Box f5+\) \(\Box f6\) 20.\(\Box d7+\) \(\Box f8\), and I don’t see any mate while we are threatening with 21...\(\Box g5+\) with exchanges; or 16...h6 17.\(\Box f4\) \(\Box h7\), unclear.

17.\(\Box xd6+\)

I must confess I am too lazy to comment on the rest of the game. Black has missed the best continuations several times already, so the end of the game has lost its value.

17...\(\Box xd6\) 18.\(\Box xd6\) \(\Box f7\) 19.\(\Box c7\) \(\Box h3\) 20.e5 \(\Box g5+\) 21.\(\Box b1\) \(\Box e7\) 22.e6+ \(\Box xe6\) 23.\(\Box f4+\) \(\Box f6\) 24.\(\Box xe6\) \(\Box xf4\) 25.\(\Box xf4\) \(\Box h2\) 26.\(\Box e4\) \(\Box e8\) 1-0

We see the value of the inserted exchange d4xe5 in the following encounter, played in the Celestial Empire. I suppose that any recapture on e5 is normal for Black, the choice just depends on the player’s style. 6...\(\Box d7xe5\) leads to quiet play, while 6...d6xe5 is rather aimed at gaining the initiative.

From my younger days I have this association: in case of a recapture with the pawn, the sacrifice on f7 becomes stronger. That’s why it may be better to capture with the knight, because then at least one piece is exchanged. Does this correspond to the facts? I think so, but let’s check it together.

6...Nxe5 7.Nxe5 7.Be2 brings nothing special: 7...0-0 (7...Nxf3+!??) 8.Bf4 ed7 (8...g6!?) 9.0-0 Prié-Paunovic, Elgoibar 2007. 7...dxe5 8.Qxd8+ Bxd8 9.a4 c6 10.a5 Bd7 11.f3 Be7 12.b3 e6 13.a3+ d6 14.Bxd6+ Bxd6 15.Bxe6 I believe that Sergey didn’t include 15.0-0-0+ in order to keep the rook on the a-file. 15...Bxe6 16.Be2 Bhd8 17.g4 (Volkov-Gubaidullin, Moscow 2009) 17...d7=

7.Bxf7+?! Bxf7 8.g5+ g8

Black can play for a win with 8...g6!? and now:

A) 9.f4 exf4 10.g6+ 11.xf4+! (11.xc7 e5 12.xa8 g4 13.d4 c6 14.a4 d7 15.d5?) 11...f7+, but a black player must have strong nerves to embark upon such positions, Seger-Miltner, Gladchen ch-GER 1997;

B) Or 9.h4, with a poorly concealed desire to announce mate: 9...h5 10.f4 exf4 11.e6 g8 12.xc7 e5 13.d5+ xdx5 14.Bxd5 Bhd8 15.Bxf4 xh4+ 16.g3 Bg4 17.c1 f6 18.e3 c8 19.f2 a5+
0-1 G. Richter-Miltner, Walldorf 2006;

C) 9.\( \textsf{Ne6} \) \( \textsf{Qg8} \) 10.\( \textsf{Nxc7} \) \( \textsf{Rb8} \) and White’s compensation doesn’t look sufficient, Camacho-Kadric, Richardson 2014.

9.\( \textsf{Ne6} \) \( \textsf{Qe8} \) 10.\( \textsf{Nxc7} \) \( \textsf{Qg6} \) 11.\( \textsf{Nxa8} \)

A) 11.0-0 \( \textsf{Rb8} \)! 12.f4 \( \textsf{d8} \)?! (12...\( \textsf{h6} \)) 13.\( \textsf{fxe5} \) \( \textsf{Nxc7} \) 14.\( \textsf{d5} \) Bujak-Berezjuk, Czechia 2008;

B) 11.\( \textsf{e3} \) \( \textsf{b8} \) 12.\( \textsf{xa7} \) (12.\( \textsf{Qd3} \) \( \textsf{b6} \) Welz-Glienke, Leutersdorf 2001) 12...\( \textsf{Qxg2} \) 13.\( \textsf{f1} \) \( \textsf{h6} \) unclear.

11...\( \textsf{Qxg2} \) 12.\( \textsf{f1} \)
A familiar position, only the d4- and d6-pawns are absent. In whose favour is this? Houdini believes that here the chances are about equal. In the above examples we looked at, Black captured ...e5xd4, after which the knights started to pound on the white king. However, now Black does not have this possibility.

12...Nc5 13.Qe2 h3 14.Qc3 Qxf1+ 15.Qxf1 Qf7 17.Qc7 Qxe4

Or 17...e8 18.Qxc5 Qxc5 19.Qd5 d4, with approximate equality in Kan-Riumin, Moscow ch-URS 1931.

18.Qxe4 Qxe4 19.Qd5 Qe8

Numerous exchanges have led to a level ending.

20.Qxe7 gxe7 21.Qe1

21.c3 b6=.

21...Qxc2 22.Qxa7 Qd2+ 23.Qg2 Qf6 24.Qb8 e4 25.Qe2 Qxb2 26.Qf4 Qe4 27.Qxe4 Qc2 28.a4 g5 29.Qg3 h5 30.h3 ½-½

Another modification is a sacrifice on f7 after Qf3-g5. I will show you a high-quality example from the European championship, 2012. Funnily enough, both players didn’t see an opportunity for Black to win quickly with the effective 12...Qg4!! And then the Georgian representative gradually outplayed his opponent in a positional fight.

98
Julian Raduski (2552)
Mikheil Mchedlishvili (2626)
Plovdiv Ech 2012 (7)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Qf6 3.Qc3 e5 4.Qf3 Qbd7 5.Qc4 Qe7 6.Qg5

I don’t know which mark I should put here. Perhaps ‘?’ , although after the right reaction by Black, his chances are not
6...0-0 7.Nxf7+

7.f4?! c6! 8.a4 exd4 9.Qxd4 h6?! (9...d5! 10.e2 h6 11.h4 c5+) 10.Qxf7 Qxf7 11.Qxf7+ Qxf7 12.e5 Qe8 13.e3 and Black had no problems in Al Qudaimi-Al Sayed, Doha rapid 2011.

7...Qxf7 8.Qe6 Qe8 9.Qxc7

Now the queen cannot move to g6, but his king is safe.

9...Qd8 10.Qxa8
10...b6

In my childhood, 10...b5!? was stamped in my memory, but it seems that the modest...b7-b6 is more careful: 10...b5
11.dxe5 (11.f3 a6 12.a4 b4 13.b5 wxa8 unclear; no good is 11.xb5? wa5+ 12.c3 xe4+) 11...xe5 12.f4 g4

11.d5?!

11.dxe5 xe5 12.f4 (12.f4 g4 13.d2 c6 14.0-0 xa8 is unclear) 12...g6 (12...d7!?) 13.xb6 xb6 with
initiative) 13.e3 b7 14.xb6xb6= Turner-Bigg, Davos 2011; 11.b5 may lead to a draw: 11...a6 (11...xe4?)
12.ac7xb5 e6 (13.xb5 a6+)
13...e8 14.c7 f8= S.Farago-To, Budapest 2012.

11...a6

The bishop prevents White’s castling and the queen is ready to regale herself with some horse meat on a8.

12.f3


12...xa8

With the computer move 12...g4! Black could have won easily!
13.fxg4 (13.a4 $\texttt{h4}$+ 14.g3 $\texttt{hxh2}$!-+) 13...$\texttt{h4}$+ 14.g3 $\texttt{f6}$-.

13.a4 $\texttt{h5}$ 14.$\texttt{b5}$ $\texttt{c8}$ 15.0-0

The game actually starts anew. Chances are about equal.

15...$\texttt{a6}$ 16.$\texttt{c3}$ $\texttt{f4}$ 17.$\texttt{e3}$ $\texttt{b8}$ 18.$\texttt{a3}$ $\texttt{a5}$ 19.$\texttt{b5}$ $\texttt{a6}$

Better was 19...$\texttt{c5}$ 20.$\texttt{d2}$ $\texttt{d7}$=.

20.$\texttt{g3}$ $\texttt{g6}$ 21.$\texttt{c3}$ $\texttt{c8}$ 22.$\texttt{e2}$ $\texttt{h5}$ 23.$\texttt{b4}$±

The Bulgarian has improved his position. White’s pawn structure is flexible, while the g6-knight is unfortunately placed.

23...$\texttt{h4}$ 24.$\texttt{b3}$ $\texttt{gf8}$ 25.$\texttt{c4}$?

25.$\texttt{bb1}$! $\texttt{h7}$ 26.$\texttt{bxa5}$ $\texttt{bxa5}$ 27.$\texttt{c4}$±.

25...$\texttt{xb5}$ 26.$\texttt{exb5}$?!

Better was 26.$\texttt{axb5}$.

26...$\texttt{axb4}$ 27.$\texttt{xb4}$ $\texttt{e5}$ 28.$\texttt{c4}$ $\texttt{fd7}$ 29.$\texttt{g2}$ $\texttt{e8}$ 30.$\texttt{b1}$ $\texttt{d8}$
The tables have turned. The Georgian grandmaster has built a solid defence along the d8-a5 diagonal, and he has also blocked the c-file.

31.\texttt{Rf1} \texttt{Rf8} 32.\texttt{g4}

This looks like a strategic mistake. It is well-known that knights like strongpoints (for instance, f4) and rooks prefer open files. In light of this, Houdini comes up with the right suggestion: 32.\texttt{gxh4}!? with the intention to employ the rook: 32...\texttt{Qh5} 33.\texttt{Kh1} \texttt{Qxh4} 34.\texttt{Rg1}=.

32...\texttt{Qg6} 33.\texttt{Qd2}?! 33.\texttt{Qd2} \texttt{b3} 34.\texttt{Qd1} \texttt{dc5} 35.\texttt{Qb4} \texttt{a5} 36.\texttt{Qd2}=.

33...\texttt{g5} 34.\texttt{Qe1} \texttt{e8} 35.\texttt{Qf2} \texttt{Wh6} 36.\texttt{e1} \texttt{h3}+ 37.\texttt{Kb3} 38.\texttt{a3} \texttt{dc5} 39.\texttt{d1} \texttt{d4} 40.\texttt{xd4 exd4} 41.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{f6} 41...\texttt{c1}!?.

42.\texttt{c4} \texttt{c5} 43.\texttt{c2} \texttt{f8}+
White has a material advantage: a rook + 3 pawns against a knight and a bishop. But Black takes control of the entire board, relying on his long-term weapons on e5 and c5.

44.\textit{Qd2}

This may have been a blunder, otherwise I can’t think of an excuse for this move. However, the computer doesn’t agree; it asserts that there are no better alternatives. For instance, 44.\textit{Re2} \textit{Qf4} 45.\textit{Qg1} \textit{Rc8}+- with full domination.

44...\textit{Qxd2}µ

45.\textit{Rxd2} \textit{Nxe4} 46.\textit{Rc2}

46...\textit{fxe4} 47.\textit{Rc4} g5 48.f4? 
Better was 48.\textit{Kg1} \textit{Kg7} 49.\textit{Re3}.

48...\textit{gxf4}+-

The remainder is clear.
49. \( \text{Rxh3} \) f3 50. \( \text{Kg1} \) \( \text{Nh3} \) 51. \( \text{Kc2} \) \( \text{Bd4+} \) 52. \( \text{Kf1} \) \( \text{Be3} \) 53. \( \text{g5} \) \( \text{Nd2+} \) 54. \( \text{Rxd2} \) \( \text{Bd2} \) 55. \( \text{Rb4} \) \( \text{b4} \) 56. \( \text{h5} \) \( \text{Rf5} \) 57. \( \text{Rg6+} \) \( \text{Kf7} \) 58. \( \text{Rg6+} \) \( \text{Kf7} \) 59. \( \text{bxa5} \) 60. \( \text{h6} \) \( \text{Rxd5} \) 61. \( \text{Rf6+} \) \( \text{Ke7} \) 62. \( \text{Rxf3} \) \( \text{Bxb6} \) 63. \( \text{Rf3} \) \( \text{Rd1+} \) 64. \( \text{Kc2} \) \( \text{Rg1} \) 65. \( \text{Rb3} \) \( \text{Bd4} \)

And White resigned.

**Conclusion**

The sacrifice on f7 makes sense only in encounters with a short time control. If Black has enough time, he will be able to come up with an adequate response. Objectively, the sacrifice is half-correct and it leads to a draw at best.
Section 2: Black Plays ...a7-a5

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.f3 Bd7 5.c4 Ne7 6.0-0 0-0 7.e1 c6 8.a4 a5

In this section we will analyse the games where Black applies a natural idea: a mechanical stopping of the white a-pawn. Besides, the move 8...a5 secures squares for the black knights on c5 and b6. Yes, to me the placement of a knight on b6 also looks doubtful in these constructions. I used to implement another plan, which is why you won’t see any examples of the author’s creativity in this section. However, during my work on this book I gained a better understanding of this set-up, and I hope you will do so too. However, we will also look at other deployments of the knight.

After ...a7-a5 it seems illogical to fianchetto the bishop on b7. Judge for yourself: the pawn structure will remind you of a bathtub, but of course it is not only a question of aesthetics.

Against the pawn formation e5-d6-c6-b6-a5, the move d4-d5 will expose the weaknesses on the light squares in Black’s camp (d5, c6, b5). That’s why, to activate the light-squared bishop, the knight on d7 must go somewhere.

A) Knight goes to the queenside

After 9.h3 Nb6 the knight attacks the well-placed bishop. A dilemma arises: where to retreat? First let us look at the games where the bishop steps back along the diagonal a2-g8.

In the following encounter in sunny Catalonia White managed to hem the enemy pawn structure, which ensured him a certain advantage, but obviously it was not sufficient for a victory.

99
Yuniesky Quesada Perez (2604)
Alvar Alonso Rosell (2540)
Barcelona 2012 (1)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.c3 e5 4.f3 Bd7 5.c4 Ne7 6.0-0 0-0 7.a4 a5 8.e1 c6 9.h3 Nb6 10.a2 Nfd7
This looks a bit strange, but the knight is likely to be directed to the queenside and square f6 will be occupied by the bishop. Will I guess right again?

11.\textit{Be}3 exd4 12.\textit{Bxd}4

A well-known Chinese chess player reacted differently in the following game: 12.\textit{Qxd}4 \textit{Nc}5 13.\textit{Rad}1 \textit{Be}6 14.\textit{Bxe}6 fxe6 15.e5 d5= with a perfect pawn centre for Black, Ni Hua-Danielsen, New Delhi 2011.

12...\textit{Nd}5

The knight threatens the a4-pawn and takes control of square e6, where the c8-bishop can go to neutralize its active opponent on a2.

13.\textit{Bxe}5

Reasonable. Let’s see whether Black’s two bishops are enough compensation for his damaged pawn structure.

13...dxe5 14.\textit{Qde}2 \textit{Qd}6 15.\textit{Rad}1 \textit{Qh}6
I find White’s position attractive. The c5-pawn doesn’t look good. If it were on c7, the dark-squared bishop would be freer in its actions (...e7-b4/c5).

16.\textit{\text{d}2}

16.e5 looks more natural.

16...\textit{\text{e}6} 17.\textit{\text{c}4}

Why not exchange light-squared bishops? 17.\textit{\text{x}e6} \textit{\text{x}e6} 18.f4, with initiative.

17...\textit{\text{x}c4}

And here Black could permit himself to trade the bishops, with an equal position, for instance 17...\textit{\text{x}c4} 18.\textit{\text{x}c4} \textit{\text{ae}8}.

18.\textit{\text{x}c4} \textit{\text{ad}8} 19.\textit{\text{xe6} \textit{\text{xe6}} 20.\textit{\text{e}3} \textit{\text{xd}1} 21.\textit{\text{xd}1} \textit{\text{f}6}

Was this necessary? 21...\textit{\text{e}8}!?.

22.\textit{\text{x}e5} \textit{\text{xc}3} 23.\textit{\text{xc}3} \textit{\text{xe}4} 24.\textit{\text{d}4}

More accurate was 24.b3, aiming for lines like 24...\textit{\text{f}5} 25.\textit{\text{e}1} \textit{\text{d}8} 26.\textit{\text{e}5} \textit{\text{f}6} 27.\textit{\text{xa}5} \textit{\text{d}1}+ 28.\textit{\text{e}1}.

24...\textit{\text{e}5} 25.\textit{\text{e}3} \textit{\text{xe}3} 26.\textit{\text{xe}3}

As they say, ‘rook endings can’t be won’. I will minimize the following comments, so as not to bore the reader.

26...\textit{\text{b}8} 27.\textit{\text{d}7} \textit{\text{f}8} 28.b3 b5 29.axb5 \textit{\text{xb}5}

29...\textit{\text{xb}5}!?.

30.\textit{\text{a}7} \textit{\text{d}5} 31.\textit{\text{a}6} \textit{\text{c}5} 32.c4 \textit{\text{e}7} 33.\textit{\text{a}7}+ \textit{\text{e}6} 34.\textit{\text{f}2} h5 35.h4 g5 36.hxg5 \textit{\text{f}5}+ 37.\textit{\text{e}2} \textit{\text{g}5} 38.\textit{\text{f}3} \textit{\text{f}5}+ 39.\textit{\text{e}4} \textit{\text{g}5}
39...\text{e}5+ 40.f4 f6=.

40.f3 f5+ 41.e4 g5 42.e7 g4+?!

42...xg2 43.xc6+ d7 44.f6 e7 45.f5 with initiative; 42...c5 43.g3 e5+ 44.f3 f5+ 45.e2 g5=.

43.f3 a4 44.xc6+ d7 45.b6 axb3 46.e4 f5 47.exf5 xc4 48.xb3 e7 49.b6 h4 50.g6 f7 51.e4 c3+ 52.f4 h3 53.xh3

53.g3?? h2 54.h4 c4+-+

53...xh3 54.e5 \text{½-½}

In the next game, Chinese grandmaster Ni Hua gained the advantage of the two bishops and developed a lethal attack. Black got steamrolled.

\begin{center}
\textbf{100}

Ni Hua (2641)
Nikolay Kabanov (2522)
Moscow Open 2012 (4)
\end{center}

1.e4 d6 2.d4 f6 3.c3 e5 4.f3 c6 5.dxe5 c5 6.0-0 0-0 7.e1 c6 8.a4 a5 9.h3 b6 10.a2 d7 11.dxe5 dx e5 12.e3 c7

Still no good is 12...c5 because the pawn will be lost without sufficient compensation: 13.xc5 xc5 14.xd8 xd8 15.xe5.

13.g5

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\draw[help lines] (0,0) grid (8,8);

% Chessboard setup
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

13...xg5
It was possible to keep the bishop: 13...\(\text{c6}\)!? 14.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{h5}\).

14.\(\text{xg5}\) \(\text{c5}\) 15.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{e6}\)

15...\(\text{cxa4}\) doesn’t equalize: 16.\(\text{xa4}\) \(\text{xa4}\) 17.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{b6}\) 18.\(\text{c5}\) \(\text{e8}\) (18...\(\text{d8}\) 19.\(\text{f3}\)+). Now there is a nice geometrical mini-combination: 19.\(\text{xf7+}\) \(\text{xf7}\) (19...\(\text{xf7}\) 20.\(\text{h5++}\)) 20.\(\text{xb6}\)+ with the better structure for White as the \text{e5-} and \text{a5-} pawns are potentially weak. With opposite-coloured bishops this can become fatal.

16.\(\text{h5}\) \(\text{d4}\) 17.\(\text{ad1}\) \(\text{c5}\)

Doubtful is 17...\(\text{xc2}\) 18.\(\text{c5}\) \(\text{e6}\) 19.\(\text{d6}\) \(\text{c8}\) 20.\(\text{xf8}\) \(\text{xf8}\) 21.\(\text{xe6}\)+ as 21...\(\text{xe1}\)? cannot be played due to 22.\(\text{b3}\) and the knight perishes.

18.\(\text{b5}\) \(\text{xb5}\)

Unfortunately it is impossible to maintain the outpost on \text{d4}: 18...\(\text{e7}\)? 19.\(\text{g5}\) and the queen has no place to hide from the ubiquitous enemy pieces: 19...\(\text{d7}\) 20.\(\text{c3}\)+.

19.\(\text{axb5}\) \(\text{d7}\)??

As far as I remember, Nikolay is a good blitz player. Formerly in Pardubice we used to play matches. If I am not mistaken, though, against top-level chess players he has not been very successful.

19...\(\text{e6}\) 20.\(\text{xe6}\) \(\text{fxe6}\) 21.\(\text{g4}\) \(\text{f6}\) 22.\(\text{e2}\)+.

20.\(\text{h6}!!+-\)

A move that can be missed. However, when the king is not safely protected, ideas like \(\text{e(d)1-e3-g3}\) are hovering in the air.

20...\(\text{gxh6}\)

20...\(\text{e6}\) 21.\(\text{g7}+\) \(\text{xg7}\) 22.\(\text{g5}+\) \(\text{h8}\) 23.\(\text{f6}+\) \(\text{g8}\) 24.\(\text{d3}+-\) is no remedy.
21. ♕xh6 c4 22. ♕e3

Now all roads lead to Rome.

22...f6 23. ♕g3+ ♚f7 24. ♕g7+ ♚e8

Of course, 24...♚e6 25.♕h5 f5 26.♕h6+ ♚f6 27.exf5+ also loses.

25.♕xh7 ♚d8 26.♗xc4 ♕xc4 27.♕xd7+ ♚c8 28.♕d6 ♕c7 29.♕h6 1-0

In the following elite encounter the Bulgarian top player seemed to be not very successful in the opening. After c2xb3 (capturing away from the centre) White’s queenside pawns looked rather bad. But gradually Veselin outplayed his Russian opponent. White began to dominate and the quality of his play was almost perfect.

101
Veselin Topalov (2767)
Alexander Morozevich (2736)
Beijing 2013 (11)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♞f6 3.♘c3 e5 4.♗f3 ♞bd7 5.♗c4 ♞e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.a4 c6 8.♗e1 a5 9.h3 ♞b6 10.♗b3 ♞d7 11.♗e3 exd4 12.♗xd4

Here are some other possibilities: 12.♗xd4 ♞xd5 13.♗xc5 dxc5 14.♗e2 ♘d6 15.♗ad1 (15.♗e3 ♘g6 (15...♛c7?!)) 16.♗e2 ♘h6 17.♕xh6=, Quesada Perez-Narciso Dublan, Barcelona 2011) 15...♕h6 16.♗e5 ♘e6 17.♗xe6 ♘xe6 18.♗f3 ♘ad8=, Heimann-Pelletier, Basel Open 2010; 12.♗xd4 ♞d5 13.♗ad1 ♘e6 14.♗xe6 fxe6 15.b3 (15.e5 d5 16.♗g4 ♘e8 17.♗d4 ♘f7=) 15...♗bd7=, Sebag-Zhu Chen, Nanjing 2009.

12...♗c5

It looks as if White gets no benefits from having the bishop on b3 (instead of a2), while Black gets the extra possibility of trading ...♗c5xb3.
13. Qf3 ∇xb3 14.cxb3

14. ∇xb3 ∇c4.

14... ∇e6

Also acceptable is 14... ∇d7 15. ∇f5 ∇e5 16. ∇xe7+ ∇xe7 17. ∇e2=.

15. ∇ad1 ∇d7 16. ∇g3 ∇e5

16... ∇e8!? 17. ∇e2 ∇f8.

17. ∇e2

17. ∇f5  ∇xf5 18.exf5 looks strong, as the f5-pawn raises obstacles for the adversary, threatening on occasion to move forward, and taking square g6 from the knight.

17... ∇g6 18.f4 c5

The cold-blooded 18... ∇c8 was better: 19.f5 ∇h4 20. ∇h2 ∇e5. At least here Black’s pawns are still on d6/c6, not allowing any complications.

19. ∇f5

Houdini insists on 19. ∇xe6 fxe6 20. ∇g4 ∇c8 21. ∇b5 ∇a6 22. ∇ed2± with pressure.

19... ∇xb3

The right decision: if he has to suffer, then he should have some material for it.

20. ∇dd2 ∇c8

More sound is 20...b6.

21. ∇f2 ∇h8 22.h4 ∇g8 23.h5 ∇f8 24. ∇xd6 ∇xd6
Veselin has obtained an excellent initiative. His pieces cooperate perfectly.

25.e5

After the best move, 25.\textit{N}b5!, Black would have been ‘still alive, but hardly’.

25...f5

More stubborn is 25...\textit{Q}e8, though also here the picture is cheerless: 26.\textit{R}xd6 \textit{B}xa4 27.f5±.

26.\textit{R}xd6

26.\textit{N}b5+-.

26...\textit{Q}e8 27.\textit{Q}h3 \textit{Be}6

Alexander must set his hopes on the ‘Siegfried line’ (e6-f5-d4). If 27...\textit{Q}f7 28.\textit{R}fd2 \textit{h}6 29.\textit{N}e4±.

28.\textit{R}fd2 \textit{h}6 29.\textit{N}b5 \textit{Q}d7 30.\textit{Q}f3 \textit{b}6 31.\textit{R}d1+-
The end is near. The Bulgarian crushes the enemy defences not by violent but by geometrical means.

31...\textit{xf8} 32.\textit{xb6} \textit{e7} 33.\textit{f3} \textit{d7} 34.\textit{b7} \textit{b8} 35.\textit{a7} \textit{gd8} 36.\textit{d6} \textit{f7} 37.\textit{c7} \textit{c4} 38.\textit{e6} \textit{e7} 39.\textit{xd7} \textit{xd7} 40.\textit{exd7} \textit{xd7} 41.\textit{b5} \textit{we6} 42.\textit{g3} 1-0

A beautiful game by Veselin Topalov.

In the next game, in faraway Thailand, Sune Berg Hansen manages to obtain an advantage with white (numerous black weaknesses + unsafe king). Then he gets the option to increase it because of a mistake by the opponent. However, both rivals start to play irresolutely and finally the initiative passes to Black, who wins the game deep in the ending.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
1.d4 & d6 2.e4 \textit{Nf6} 3.\textit{Nc3} e5 4.\textit{Nf3} \textit{bd7} 5.\textit{Bc4} \textit{Be7} 6.0-0 0-0 7.\textit{Re1} c6 8.a4 a5 9.h3 \textit{Nbd6} 10.\textit{Bd3} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

Not on f1, but on the same diagonal. Let’s see whether this more active placement of the bishop will be of use.

10...\textit{exd4} 11.\textit{xd4} d5

White is better after 11...\textit{bd7} 12.\textit{f5} \textit{c5} 13.\textit{xe7+} \textit{xe7} 14.\textit{f4} \textit{e6} 15.\textit{f3}. The \textit{d6}-pawn is a bit weak due to the absence of dark-squared bishop.

12.e5 \textit{e8}

12...\textit{fd7} is preferable, hoping for 13.e6 (13.\textit{h5}!? \textit{g6} 14.\textit{f3}) 13...\textit{c5} 14.\textit{xf7+} \textit{xf7}=

13.\textit{f4} \textit{g6} 14.\textit{f3} \textit{g7} 15.\textit{e2}

Frankly, manoeuvring all the pieces backwards doesn’t make a good impression on me.
15...\texttt{d7}= 16.c3

16.c4 \texttt{c5} 17.cxd5 \texttt{xd5} won’t embarrass the opponent.

16...\texttt{c5} 17.c2 \texttt{f5}

A logical move. I would also play it. The exchange is favourable for Black for several reasons: he has slightly less space, the white bishop has spent two tempi on the transfer \texttt{f1-d3-c2}, and besides, almost all of Black’s pawns are placed on light squares.

18.h6 \texttt{xc2} 19.xc2 f6?!

More reserved was 19...\texttt{e8}!? 20.ed4 \texttt{ge6}=.

20.ed4

20.c4.

20...fxe5 21.xe5 \texttt{d6} 22.ad1 \texttt{e8} 23.df3 \texttt{d8}?!  

23...\texttt{f6} seems to be more sound.

24.c4
Black must always take this move into account, especially when the enemy rooks occupy central positions.

24...\texttt{Rf5} 25.\texttt{exd5 cxd5} 26.\texttt{Ng4±}

Stronger is 26.\texttt{Be3}, for example 26...\texttt{b6} 27.\texttt{Bxc5 bxc5} 28.\texttt{c4 xe1+} 29.\texttt{xe1 We7} 30.\texttt{e3±}.

26...\texttt{Rxe1+} 27.\texttt{Rxe1 Ne6} 28.\texttt{e3}

Threatening 29.\texttt{h6+}.

28...\texttt{f8} 29.\texttt{d4} \texttt{e4} 30.\texttt{b5}

30.\texttt{h6+} \texttt{g7} 31.\texttt{xe6+} \texttt{xe6} 32.\texttt{b3±} would have been extremely unpleasant for Black.

30...\texttt{e6} 31.\texttt{d3}

The exchange on c6 is not auspicious for White from a strategic point of view as it improves Black’s pawn structure. The isolated pawn on d5 gets a new friend on c6 and this will cause the adversary problems.

31...\texttt{f4} 32.\texttt{d4 h5} 33.\texttt{e5 We6} 34.\texttt{d3}

Better was 34.\texttt{c3}.

34...\texttt{g5??}
A serious mistake, which is left unpunished. Black would have certain counterplay after 34...\textit{xd}3 35.\textit{xd}3 \textit{h}4\pm.

35.\textit{e}5?

The unpretentious 35.\textit{xf}4 could have led to great superiority: 35...\textit{gxf}4 36.\textit{c}3 (attacking e4 and d5; 36.f3? \textit{b}6) 36...\textit{f}6 37.\textit{xd}5 38.\textit{xd}5\pm.

35...\textit{xe}5 36.\textit{xe}5 \textit{e}8 37.\textit{f}3 \textit{d}3 38.\textit{d}1

38.\textit{b}1!?

38...\textit{b}4

38...\textit{xb}2 39.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xa}4 40.\textit{xg}5 \textit{ac}3 is unclear.

39.\textit{c}3 \textit{g}4 40.\textit{d}4 \textit{g}3 41.\textit{xe}4 \textit{xe}4 42.\textit{f}5 \textit{gxf}2+ 43.\textit{xf}2 \textit{f}6 44.b3 \textit{h}7 45.\textit{g}3?! \textit{h}4!
Well, maybe the Asian heat played a role here, but the Scandinavian grandmaster has lost the thread of the game. The initiative has gradually passed to Black. I will flavour the rest of the encounter with minimal comments only.

46.\texttt{c1 e7} 47.\texttt{f3 f7+} 48.\texttt{f4 g6} 49.\texttt{e2 d8} 50.g3 b6 51.d2 e7 52.g4 h4 53.c3 d4 54.b5

54.e2 d3 55.c1 d7 56.e4=.

54...d3 55.d1?

Right was 55.a3.

55...e2?!

55...c2! would have won: 56.d2 e2 57.f4 (57.c3 d4+ 58.f4 c7#) 57...e3 58.xe3 xe3+-.

56.d2?

56.c3 e8 57.d2 f8+\texttt{E}.

56...d5 57.g5 e3+-
58. \texttt{Bxe3 xxe3+} 59. \texttt{Bg4 g3+} 60. \texttt{f4 e3+} 61. \texttt{e4 d2} 62. \texttt{c3 xg5} 63. \texttt{d5} 0-1

Ivan Ivanisevic led the white pieces confidently in the next game, in Switzerland. At the right moment \texttt{b2-b3} followed (interrupting the \texttt{a2-bishop}) and his Russian opponent had to retreat in all directions. Furthermore, he lost his central pawn. Then the fight was soon over.

\begin{table}[h!]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
103 & \\
Ivan Ivanisevic (2636) & \\
Alexander Cherniaev (2469) & \\
Geneva Open 2011 (7) & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

1.d4 d6 2.e4 \texttt{c3} e5 4.e3 e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.e1 c6 8.a4 a5 9.h3 Qc7 10.a2 b6

Interesting is 10...\texttt{b8}?! 11.e3 \texttt{a6}, heading for \texttt{b4}, from where the knight will paralyze White by exerting pressure on \texttt{c2}.

11.e3 \texttt{f6} 12.d2 f6 13.ad1= exd4

Black is not obliged to abandon the centre. He could play 13...\texttt{e8}, but then 14.g5± will follow.

14.xd4 \texttt{e5} 15.h2?!

He could have caused Black real trouble with 15.xe5 xxe5 16.f4 xxd4+ 17.xd4 xe6 18.xe6 fxe6 19.xd6±.

Instead, 15...dxe5?! is dubious: 16.c5 \texttt{d8} (16...\texttt{e8} 17.d6± 16...\texttt{e7} 17.e3 xc5 18.xc5+- threatening \texttt{c3-b5}) 17.d6 \texttt{d7} 18.e3+-.


16.c1 xd4 17.xd4 xe6 18.b3
This move looks extremely strange, as the bishop on a2 remains under grass for a long time. However, there is a tactical motivation. Black loses material.

18.f4± was also strong.

18...\(e_5\) 19.f4 c5

19...\(ed7\) 20.f5±.

20.b5 \(e_7\) 21.xd6 \(c_6\) 22.f5 \(c_8\)

22...\(d_7\) 23.g4 f6 24.c3±.

23.g4 \(d_7\) 24.e5+-
Overwhelming superiority. Now White can succeed even without using the bishop on a2.

24...\texttt{dxe5} 25.f6 \texttt{gxf6} 26.\texttt{xf6+} \texttt{h8} 27.\texttt{e4} \texttt{f5} 28.\texttt{d5} \texttt{e8} 29.\texttt{bc7} \texttt{xe4}

29.\texttt{f3+} doesn’t save Black: 30.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{g8+} 31.\texttt{f2} \texttt{f8} 32.\texttt{a1++-}.

30.\texttt{xe8} \texttt{xd5} 31.\texttt{c7} \texttt{e4} 32.\texttt{xa8} \texttt{xa8} 33.\texttt{g5} \texttt{xc2} 34.\texttt{f6+} \texttt{g8} 35.\texttt{h4} \texttt{g6} 36.\texttt{g5} \texttt{h5} 37.b4 1-0

The prisoner on a2 joins the attack, depriving the black monarch of his last illusions.

The following game by Zbynek Hracek convinced me once more of the negative consequences of the move ...\texttt{c6-c5} (with a black pawn on a5). Irrespective of the question whether the centre is closed or not, the weakening of square b5 is unpleasant for Black.

104

Zbynek Hracek (2628)
Kacper Drozdowski (2435)
Legnica Ech 2013 (7)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \texttt{f6} 3.\texttt{c3} e5 4.\texttt{f3} \texttt{bd7} 5.\texttt{c4} \texttt{e7} 6.0-0 0-0 7.a4 c6 8.\texttt{e1} a5 9.h3 \texttt{b6} 10.d5

More principled is 10.\texttt{e3}!? \texttt{c7} 11.\texttt{d2±} as Black will hardly be attracted by 10...\texttt{xb2}?! 11.\texttt{b3} \texttt{xc3} 12.\texttt{d2} \texttt{xa1} 13.\texttt{xa1±}.

10...\texttt{c7}

10...\texttt{c5} 11.b3 \texttt{a6}!? going to b4.

11.g5 h6 12.e3 \texttt{b6} 13.b3 \texttt{fd7} 14.d2 \texttt{f6} 15.e2 \texttt{h7} 16.ad1 c5?!
Absolutely ugly, weakening the light-square complex c4/b5. The Polish master must have thought that he would anyway trade off the ‘bad’ dark-squared bishop (...\textit{e}7-g5) and everything would be OK.

16...\textit{f}6 17.\textit{f}f1 \textit{fd}7± the computer’s advice for Black is just to mark time!

17.\textit{f}4

Better was 17.\textit{b}5 \textit{d}8 18.\textit{f}4±.

17...\textit{f}6 18.\textit{f}3 \textit{exf}4

Better was 18...\textit{d}7 19.\textit{b}5 \textit{b}8.

19.\textit{b}5+- \textit{d}8

Also inadequate was 19...\textit{e}7 20.\textit{xf}4 \textit{d}7 21.\textit{xd}6 \textit{xb}2 22.e5+-.

20.\textit{xf}4 \textit{c}4 21.\textit{xc}4 \textit{xa}4 22.\textit{xd}6 \textit{xb}2 23.\textit{b}1 \textit{xc}4 24.\textit{xc}4 \textit{e}7 25.\textit{c}7 \textit{d}7 26.\textit{e}5 \textit{e}8 27.\textit{d}6

White’s cavalry attacks. Despite the material equality, Black is helpless: the difference in piece activity is too great.

27...\textit{xd}6 28.\textit{xd}6

The rest is clear.

28...\textit{a}4 29.\textit{f}3 \textit{a}3 30.\textit{a}1 \textit{d}8 31.\textit{xf}8 \textit{xf}8 32.\textit{b}4 \textit{a}2 33.\textit{c}4 \textit{a}6 34.\textit{b}2 \textit{a}5 35.\textit{e}2 \textit{c}5+ 36.\textit{d}4 \textit{b}4 37.\textit{b}2 \textit{e}7 38.\textit{bxa}2 \textit{g}6 39.\textit{h}2 \textit{h}7 40.\textit{a}8 \textit{d}7 41.\textit{c}5 \textit{f}8 42.\textit{xc}8 1-0

And what if the bishop retreats along the diagonal \textit{f}1-\textit{a}6?

In this game, Moldavian grandmaster Victor Bologan refused to accept an early equilibrium and tried to fight. Alas, his opponent played skillfully to reveal the drawbacks of Black’s venturesome strategy (the move ...\textit{c}6-c5 was especially doubtful). Shortly White had both a material and a positional advantage.
1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.f3 Qbd7 5.Nf3 Qe7 6.0-0 0-0 7.Qe1 c6 8.a4 a5 9.h3 Bb6 10.Bf1

Is this any good? The bishop was very active on a2, as it had an impact on the well-being of the black king.

10...exd4 11.Qxd4 d5 12.exd5

I dare claim that by such an exchange White demonstrates his peacefulness. Indeed, how could he get a better position now?

12.e5 is considered in other examples below.

12...Qxd5 13.Qxd5


13...Qxd5 14.c3=

Almost perfect symmetry. At this moment it is not clear how Victor could have lost this game. 14.Qc4 Qc5 15.Qxd5 (15.c3 Qe6 16.Qxe6 fxe6 17.Qe3 Qxe3 18.fxe3 Bb6 with initiative, Berescu-Predojevic, Rijeka 2010) 15...Qxd5 16.Qe3 Qe8=.

14...Qf6

Better was 14...Qc5.

15.Qc4 Qb6?!

I don’t want to criticize the guru, and I can explain this move. We must understand that Elo-favourites fight for the win no matter what colour they play. But often you can’t win by making the objectively strongest moves if they are
simplifying and lead to a draw. That’s why even elite grandmasters (and Bologan is one of them) take risks by entering
doubtful positions, trying to confuse the opponent.

15...\textit{d7}?! 16.\textit{x}d5 \textit{cxd5} 17.\textit{c3} \textit{e8} -.

16.\textit{b3±} \textit{d7} 17.\textit{c3} \textit{c5}?! 
A weakening of the light-square complex. Well, returning to \textit{d5} wasn’t an option, was it?!

18.\textit{b5} \textit{xb5} 19.\textit{axb5}

As you see, the \textit{c5}-pawn is subject to pressure; the \textit{f6}-bishop, unlike its colleagues, is hampered by the ‘breakwater’
\textit{b2/c3}.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

19...\textit{c7}

Maybe 19...\textit{a4}?! was worth trying, but Black stands worse anyway: 20.\textit{c2} (20.\textit{xa4}?? \textit{xd1-}) 20...\textit{xd1} 21.\textit{xd1}
(21.\textit{exd1} \textit{c4} 22.\textit{xc5} \textit{xb2}) and now:

A) 21...\textit{a3} 22.\textit{xa3} \textit{xa3} 23.\textit{bxa3} \textit{xc3} 24.\textit{e2}.;

B) 21...\textit{c4} 22.\textit{xc5} \textit{fc8} 23.\textit{a3} \textit{e8} 24.\textit{xe8+} \textit{xe8} 25.\textit{f3} (25.\textit{xa4} \textit{xa3} 26.\textit{xa3} \textit{e1} + 27.\textit{h2} \textit{f8} +; or 27...\textit{e2}
28.\textit{d1} +) 25...\textit{b6}; Black is a pawn down.

20.\textit{h5}+ \textit{d7} 21.\textit{ad1} \textit{a4}? 22.\textit{f5}!

Michele is inexorable. If the knight retreats, then after \textit{b3-c2} it will be unclear how Black can protect \textit{h7}.

22...\textit{AXB3}

22...\textit{b6} 23.\textit{c2} \textit{g6} 24.\textit{xf6}.

23.\textit{xd7} \textit{a5}

23...\textit{c8} 24.\textit{xc5}+-. 
24.\textit{Qd5}?! Excessive subtlety. Easier and stronger was 24.\textit{Qxc5}+.

24...\textit{b6} 25.\textit{Qxb3} \textit{h6} 26.\textit{Qae8} 27.\textit{d7d6} \textit{ce5} 28.\textit{d6d8} 29.\textit{a7f1} \textit{a7} 30.\textit{c4 b8}

30...\textit{b8}+.

31.\textit{b4}!+-\textit{e7} 32.\textit{bxc5} \textit{bxc5} 33.\textit{g3} \textit{bxc5} 34.\textit{xc5} 1-0

Victor Bologan

The following duel, from an open event in Wroclaw, was short but rich in content. Polish player Tomasz Warakomski played principled moves (12.e5) and fought for the initiative. Robert Markus, a specialist in our opening, reciprocated. The struggle became spectacular, but the quality of play left much to be desired.

White is spoiling for a fight, the pawn structure is asymmetrical now. Please note that I don’t call this move stronger than 12.exd5, but it’s more ‘meaty’.
12...\(\text{\textit{e}}8\)
12...\(\text{\textit{f}}d7\).

13.\(\text{\textit{f}}3\) \(\text{\textit{g}}5\)

Guided by the adage ‘the fewer pieces, the better’ as Black is slightly lacking in space.
13...\(\text{\textit{g}}6)!? 14.\(\text{\textit{h}}6\) \(\text{\textit{g}}7\); 13...\(\text{\textit{f}}6\) 14.\(\text{\textit{e}}6\).

14.\(\text{\textit{f}}4\)
14.\(\text{\textit{c}}e2\) \(\text{\textit{x}}c1\) 15.\(\text{\textit{x}}c1\).

14...\(\text{\textit{g}}6\) 15.\(\text{\textit{a}}d1=\) \(\text{\textit{g}}7\)

You must have already guessed that the Serbian grandmaster was going to build a defensive line on e6/f5.
The exchange of dark-squared bishops doesn’t worsen the picture, because White cannot exploit the weakened squares f6 and d6. Let me guess: Black wishes to carry out ...\(\text{\textit{f}}7-\text{\textit{f}}6\) himself sooner or later.

16.\(\text{\textit{b}}3\) \(\text{\textit{e}}6\) 17.\(\text{\textit{c}}e2\)

I would preserve the bishop rather than exchange it for a knight...

17...\(\text{\textit{x}}f4\) 18.\(\text{\textit{x}}f4\) \(\text{\textit{e}}7\) 19.\(\text{\textit{g}}3\) \(\text{\textit{e}}6\)?

This looks like a tactical oversight. 19...\(\text{\textit{xf}}4)!? 20.\(\text{\textit{xf}}4\) \(\text{\textit{e}}6\).

20.\(\text{\textit{f}}3\)?!

It is strange that both players missed the following line (I suppose that Warakomski ‘believed’ his opponent and didn’t check it): 20.\(\text{\textit{x}}xe6\) \(\text{\textit{fx}}e6\) 21.\(\text{\textit{g}}4\). Now I don’t see how the e6-pawn can be protected: 21...\(\text{\textit{ae}}8\) 22.\(\text{\textit{xe}}6!\) \(\text{\textit{xe}}6\) 23.\(\text{\textit{xe}}5\) (I’m trying to understand what Robert meant here) 23...\(\text{\textit{f}}5\) (23...\(\text{\textit{f}}5\) 24.\(\text{\textit{d}}2\) \(\text{\textit{xe}}5\) 25.\(\text{\textit{xe}}5\) \(\text{\textit{xe}}5\) 26.\(\text{\textit{xa}}5\)) 24.\(\text{\textit{d}}2\). And now what? The a5-pawn is under fire.

20...\(\text{\textit{h}}6\) = 21.\(\text{\textit{h}}4\) \(\text{\textit{d}}7\) 22.\(\text{\textit{g}}5\)
22.\(\text{\textit{xe}}6\)!? \(\text{\textit{fx}}e6\) 23.\(\text{\textit{h}}5\).

22...\(\text{\textit{e}}5\) 23.\(\text{\textit{f}}3\) \(\text{\textit{ae}}8\)

The Polish player has gradually lost the thread and Black stands slightly better, for instance 23...\(\text{\textit{f}}5\) and the two bishops will have their say.

24.\(\text{\textit{e}}2\)?!

Better is 24.\(\text{\textit{xe}}6\).

24...\(\text{\textit{e}}8\) 25.\(\text{\textit{d}}4\) \(\text{\textit{f}}6\)?!

Considerably stronger is 25...\(\text{\textit{g}}7\) 26.\(\text{\textit{f}}4\) \(\text{\textit{f}}6\).
More powerful was 27.c4, but when you don’t have a dark-squared bishop, you automatically strive to strengthen your control of the dark squares.

27...\( \text{g7} \) 28.\( \text{h3} \) \( \text{e5} \)

Winning was 28...\( \text{exe1} \) 29.\( \text{xe1} \) (29.\( \text{xe1} \) \( \text{xb3} \) 30.\( \text{xb3} \) \( \text{xc3} \) 31.\( \text{c1} \) \( \text{xh3} \) 32.\( \text{gxh3} \) \( \text{xf3} \)+) 29...\( \text{xh3} \) 30.\( \text{gxh3} \) \( \text{f4} \)+.

29.\( \text{f2} \)?

Many mistakes from both sides. It may have been the second round on that day.

Let me hazard another suggestion. The game took place in the summer. As far as I remember, the Wroclaw tournament was organized by a couple of young guys and left a good impression. One of the few negatives was the heat in the playing hall. And outside, it was also about +35!

The fight would have continued after 29.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 30.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{xe5} \), though Black is clearly better.

29...\( \text{h5} \)

29...\( \text{xe1} \)+.

30.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{h6} \) 0-1

Black threatens \( \text{h6-f4} \) with ‘mate’ to the queen.

In the next game, in Amsterdam, the Elo-favourite had a tough job. The ...\( \text{c6-c5} \) push became fatal for him, too. Time for the old cliché: careful, pawns can’t move backward!

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Roeland Pruijssers (2461)
Dimitri Reinderman (2618)
Amsterdam Open 2011 (4)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \( \text{f6} \) 3.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{e5} \) 4.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{bd7} \) 5.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{e7} \) 6.0-0 0-0 7.\( \text{e1} \) \( \text{c6} \) 8.a4 \( \text{a5} \) 9.\( \text{h3} \) \( \text{b6} \) 10.\( \text{f1} \) \text{exd4} 11.\( \text{xd4} \) d5 12.e5 \( \text{d8} \) 13.\( \text{ce2} \) g6 14.\( \text{h6} \)

Or 14.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{g7} \) 15.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{f6} \) (15...\( \text{e6} \) 16.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{e8} \)=) 16.b3= Saric-Neuman, Deizisau 2013 (better is 16.\( \text{h6} \) \( \text{e8} \) 17.\( \text{f3} \)+).

14...\( \text{g7} \) 15.\( \text{f4} \) c5?!

A committal move, as we know by now. I think that 15...\( \text{e8} \) was more careful, untying the g7-knight, for example 16.\( \text{xg7} \) \( \text{xg7} \)=.
16.\( \text{b5} \) \( \text{e8} \) 17.\( g4!\)?

Cool! The Dutch master (today he is a grandmaster) limits the \( g7 \)-knight, although square e6 is still available for it.

17...\( \text{d6} \) 18.\( \text{g2} \) \( \text{xf4} \) 19.\( \text{xf4} \) \( \text{e6} \) 20.\( \text{b3} \)

Quite nice is 20.\( \text{d6} \) \( \text{xd6} \) 21.\( \text{exd6} \)\( \pm \).

20...\( \text{d7} \) 21.\( \text{f3} \) c4?!

A doubtful idea, from a strategic point of view. Now the dark-squared complex is weakened.

21...\( \text{eb8} \)!?.

22.\( \text{d6} \)\( \pm \)

Also good is 22.\( \text{e3} \).
22...\texttt{Rb8}

Even worse is 22...\texttt{Rxd6} 23.exd6, with gaping holes on h6, g7, f6.

23.\texttt{Rd1} cxb3 24.cxb3 \texttt{Qd8}

24...\texttt{Nc8} doesn’t bring any relief in view of 25.\texttt{Rxd5!} \texttt{Bxd5} 26.\texttt{Qxd5} \texttt{Qxd6} 27.exd6 \texttt{f8} 28.\texttt{Rc1} \texttt{ac8} 29.\texttt{c7++}.

25.\texttt{Qe3} \texttt{Ra6} 26.\texttt{Qd4}+-

With full domination. When playing against the young it is dangerous to relax, even for a 2600+ grandmaster...
26...\textit{c7} 27.\textit{e1} \textit{d8} 28.\textit{c2} 

More accurate was 28.\textit{ed1}.

28...\textit{f8} 

Suddenly Reinderman had a saving chance: 28...\textit{d7}!. The point is that in reply to 29.\textit{xd5} \textit{xd5} 30.\textit{xd5} there follows 30...\textit{xe5}! 31.\textit{xe5} (31.\textit{f5} \textit{xf5} 32.\textit{exe5} \textit{d6} 33.\textit{xa5±}) 31...\textit{xh5} 32.\textit{ed1} \textit{e8} 33.\textit{xd6} \textit{d8}, still offering stubborn resistance.

29.\textit{ec1} 

There is nothing more worth commenting, Black is helpless. A colossal difference in piece activity.

29...\textit{g7} 30.\textit{d2} \textit{a8} 31.\textit{c7} \textit{f8} 32.\textit{e1c5} \textit{d7} 33.\textit{xd5} \textit{d8} 34.\textit{c3} \textit{xd5} 35.\textit{xd5 b6} 36.\textit{xf7+ h8} 37.\textit{e6 f8} 38.\textit{c3} 

38.\textit{f7+}.

38...\textit{e8} 39.\textit{f7+ g8} 40.\textit{g5+ 1-0} 

Things were not so bright for the young Dutchman in the following encounter. By means of a pawn sacrifice Ivanisevic grasped the initiative. However, the Elo-favourite couldn’t derive any real benefits from this and went too far. He found himself on the verge of defeat, but the end was happy for him...

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
108 & Roeland Pruijssers (2484) \\
\hline
Ivan Ivanisevic (2630) & \\
\hline
Wijk aan Zee C 2011 (2) & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

1.e4 \textit{d6} 2.d4 \textit{f6} 3.\textit{c3} \textit{e5} 4.\textit{f3} \textit{bd7} 5.\textit{c4} \textit{e7} 6.0-0 0-0 7.\textit{e1c6} 8.a4 \textit{a5} 9.b3 \textit{b6} 10.\textit{f1} 

Black has no problems after 10.\textit{d3} \textit{g4} 11.\textit{e2} \textit{bd7} 12.h3 \textit{h5} 13.\textit{e3 e8} 14.\textit{d2 xe2} 15.\textit{exe2 d5} 16.exd5. Here, White is slightly better as Black has an isolated pawn (B.Vuckovic-Markus, Vrnj.-Banja tt 2010), but Black could have equalized with 16...\textit{b4}!=.

10...\textit{exd4} 

10...\textit{c7}. 

11.\textit{xd4} 

Capturing with the knight is also possible: 11.\textit{xd4} d5 12.e5 \textit{e8} (12...\textit{e4} 13.\textit{xe4 dxe4} 14.\textit{b2} (14.\textit{exe4 c5±) 14...f5} 15.\textit{exf6 xf6} 16.\textit{c3 e8} 17.\textit{c2±} 13.\textit{d3 g6} 14.\textit{h6 g7} 15.\textit{ce2 d7} 16.f4 \textit{c5} 17.f5 (Tomic-Predojevic, Sarajevo Open 2013) 17...\textit{g5} 18.\textit{xe5} \textit{xe5} with counterplay. 

Roeland Pruijssers 

11...\textit{g4} 12.\textit{e2} \textit{e8} 13.h3 \textit{h5} 14.\textit{e3} \textit{bd7} 

The traditional 14...\textit{f7}!? is likely to be more accurate, in order to enable the bishop to step into the open air, for
Square d7 is occupied, so the knight will have to move to the edge of the board.

16...Nh5 17.Qd1?! 

The Dutchman intends to win a knight, but then Black will gain the initiative.

17...d5! 18.exd5 Bb4! 19.Qd2

White has an extra pawn, but Black’s chances are better. The pawns on h3 and c2 and the e2-bishop are vulnerable.

24.\( \text{Bf1} \) \( \text{Rd8} \) 25.\( \text{Nf3} \) \( \text{Be4} \) 26.\( \text{Ne5} \) \( \text{Rd5} \) 27.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{Exe5} \) 28.\( \text{fxe4} \) \( \text{Rg5}+ \)

28...\( \text{Nce6}?!. \)

29.\( \text{Kf2} \) \( \text{Nd7} \)

White would have had more problems after 29...\( \text{Re8} \) 30.\( \text{Rd1} \) g6³.

30.\( \text{Rd1} \) \( \text{Ne5} \) 31.\( \text{Rd6} \) h5 32.\( \text{Ec3} \) \( \text{Rg6} \)

He could have preserved a certain advantage with 32...h4³.

33.\( \text{Exg6} \) \( \text{fxg6} \) 34.\( \text{Ec1} \) \( \text{Ef8} \) 35.\( \text{Fg1} \) \( \text{Ff7} \) 36.\( \text{Ec3} \) \( \text{Fe6} \) 37.\( \text{Ec5} \) \( \text{Ff3}+ \) 38.\( \text{Kf1} \) g5

38...\( \text{Rd8} \) with counterplay.

39.\( \text{Exa5} \) \( \text{Nd2}?!. \)

Better was 39...\( \text{Ne5} \).

40.\( \text{Bg2}! \)
Now White’s position becomes better. There’s no mate to be expected, whereas the passed a-pawn can distress Black.

40...Ed8?

40...Nxg2 41.Nxg2 Nxg4 42.Nd3!.

41.Nxg5 hxg5 42.Nxe2?!?

The subtle 42.Nf1! may have led to victory, as the rook penetration is not dangerous: 42...Ed1? 43.Ed1+. The bishop is going to jump to (or capture on) c4 with check.

42...Nxh2 43.bxc4 Ed2
After b3xc4 White has two extra pawns, but they are not more than debris.

44.h4 Ng4 45.a5 Nxc2 46.Bf1 Bc1 47.Bg1 Be5 48.Bg2 Bc2 49.Bf3 Bc3 50.Bg5+ Bd4 51.Bxh5 ½-½

Another version of the knight’s deployment is as follows: trade on d4, then move it to c5. From there it can get to e6 and it also exerts pressure on the points (pawns) e4, b3, a4.

In such cases the e6-square is often used for simplifications. A knight and/or bishop moves there to be exchanged. After the formation of the e6/d6/c6 structure, White usually destroys it by e4-e5. An isolated pawn appears on e6. This is something of a weakness, but how vulnerable is it? Let’s try to examine the nuances of this line.

Black’s problems are demonstrated in some games by the distinguished representative of the Soviet chess school, Alexander Beliavsky. There seem to be no bad omens for Black, but gradually his troubles are taking real shape: the isolated pawn is surrounded and then destroyed.

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Alexander Kovchan (2563)
Alexander Beliavsky (2619)
Aix-les-Bains Ech 2011 (3)


12.Bxe6

There was also an option to maintain the tension with 12.Bf1!?.

12...fxe6=

The central pawn structure has been changed in Black’s favour. At the same time the f8-rook has been opened up.
13.e5 \( \text{Bd}7! \)

Weaker is 13...\( \text{Nd5} \) 14.\( \text{Bxd5} \) \( \text{Bxf4} \) (14...\( \text{exd5} \) 15.\( \text{Nxd5} \) \( \text{cxd5} \) 16.\( \text{exd6} \) \( \text{+} \)) 15.\( \text{Bxe6} \) \( \text{h8} \) (15...\( \text{Nxe6} \) 16.\( \text{exd6} \) \( \text{Nxd6} \) 17.\( \text{Bxe6} \) \( \text{d4} \) 18.\( \text{Bxe6} \)) 16.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{b4} \) 17.\( \text{exd6} \) \( \text{Bxd6} \) 18.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{cc7} \) (Kokarev-Yudin, Voronezh 2012) 19.\( \text{Bxe4} \) \( \text{dxe3} \) 20.\( \text{dxe3} \).

14.\( \text{exd6} \) \( \text{Bxf4} \) 15.\( \text{Bxe7} \) \( \text{Bxe7} \) 16.\( \text{Bxe2} \) \( \text{Af8} \) 17.\( \text{Bf3} \) \( \text{Bf6} \) 18.\( \text{Bb3} \) \( \text{Bb6} \) 19.\( \text{Bd3} \) \( \text{Bd5} \) 20.\( \text{Bc4} \)

20.\( \text{Bxe4} \) \( \text{Bxe4} \)

Black’s position is rather solid. I don’t see why the guru of Soviet chess should have lost this game.

21...\( \text{Cc5}+ \) 22.\( \text{Bf2} \) \( \text{Bxf2}+ \) 23.\( \text{Bxf2} \) \( \text{Bf8} \)

Interesting is 23...\( \text{Cc3} \)? Here the knight feels comfortable and bothers the opponent as much as possible: 24.\( \text{Bd3} \) \( \text{f7} \).

24.\( \text{Bd3} \) \( \text{Bf6} \) 25.\( \text{Bc5} \) \( \text{h6} \)

25...\( \text{Bf7} \)?

26.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{Bb4} \)

26...\( \text{Af4} \) 27.\( \text{Ba1} \) \( \text{Ba8} \) 28.\( \text{Bb1} \).

27.\( \text{Bd1} \)

Black has real problems now.

27...\( \text{Ba8} \)

27...\( \text{Bd8} \) 28.\( \text{Bh7} \); 27...\( \text{Bb6} \) 28.\( \text{Bc4} \).
28.e4 f8 29.d7 f7 30.d6±

Alexander Beliavsky

30...f6 31.exf6 xf6 32.exf6 f7 33.e5 f6 34.h5 a7 35.g4 b6 36.h4 d7 37.g5+ hxg5 38.hxg5+ f7 39.g6+ f6 40.f5+ e6 41.f8 d6 42.e8 c7 43.a8 a2 44.e2 e7 45.f4 c1?

45...b4 46.b1 c5 47.d8+ c7 48.g8 c6±.

46.d8+

46.f5 e2+ 47.f1 xc2 48.f6+.

46...e5

46...d7 47.b8±.

47.f5+ b4 48.d1 e2+ 49.f1 xc2 50.f6 e2 51.fxg7 g3+ 52.g1 e2+ 53.f2 c3+ 54.f3 xd1 55.g8= 56.e2+ 56.g3 f1 57.g7 c3 58.f8+ xf8 59.gxf8= xb3 60.f3 c5 61.c6 xc4 62.xb6 xa4 63.xa5 e3 64.f3 d4 65.d8+ d5 66.h8+ c3 67.e5 1-0

Alexander Beliavsky had been confidently keeping equality against an elite grandmaster of our time.

Alexei Shirov maintained a certain initiative during the whole encounter, but pressure and defence balanced each other out. In such cases, as we know, a draw will be the outcome.

And here is a game from Latin America: 10...Nxe5 11.Nf1 d5 12.f4?! Better was 12.exd5 Qxd5 13.Nb2 Nxd5 14.Qxe5 Nxc3 15.Qd3 Qf6 16.Qf3 Qg6 17.Qd2 f6 18.Qe1 Nf5 19.c3 Qc5 with approximate equality. 12...Qb4 13.Nb2 Qg4?! (Contreras-Gomez Ledo, Bogota 2013) (13...g4?! 14.Qc1 dx4±).

11.h2

More to the point was 11.a3 Qe8 12.e5 dxe5 13.Nxe5 with some initiative.

11...Qe8 12.Qd2 f5 13.Qc1 Qf6 14.Qc1 dxe5 15.Qc1 Nf5 16.Qd5 Qb6 17.Qf3 Qg6 18.Qe5 Nf6 19.Qe2 Qg4

18...Qxe6 doesn’t equalize due to 19.Qe2±, heading for f5, from where it will exert pressure on d6 and g7.

19.e5 Qd5

Familiar motifs. Does Black manage to avoid damage to his pawn structure?

20.Qd2

Better was 20.Nxd5 cxd5 (in this case unfavourable is 20...exd5? 21.e6± with domination) 21.Qg4 dxe5 22.Qxe5±. The weaknesses on e6, e5, g7 cause discomfort for Black.

20...dxe5

It would be desirable to insert 20...Qxc3 21.Nxc3 d5 but, alas, Qc3xa5 will follow.
21. \( \text{Qg5} \) \( \text{e7} \) 22. \( \text{Qg3} \)

22. \( \text{Qxe5} \) \( \text{f6} \)

22... \( \text{Qc7} \) 23. \( \text{Nf2} \)

Alexei doesn’t hurry to restore the material balance with 23. \( \text{Nxd5} \). He probably considered that the e5-pawn is bothering Black too – in particular, it blocks the bishop.

23... \( \text{Qf4} \) 24. \( \text{Bxd8} \) \( \text{Bxd8} \) 25. \( \text{Qf2} \)

Black also has good play after 25. \( \text{Qf2} \) b5 26. \( \text{g3} \) \( \text{d5} \)

25... \( \text{g6} \) 26. \( \text{Qg4} \)

26. \( \text{d3} \)?? still cannot be played due to 26... \( \text{Bxd3} \) 27. \( \text{cxd3} \) \( \text{h4} \)

26... \( \text{Qd7} \) 27. \( \text{Qd3} \) \( \text{d6} \)

27... \( \text{b4} \) 28. \( \text{e4} \) \( \text{f4} \) 29. \( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{xd3} \) 30. \( \text{cxd3} \) \( \text{e7} \) 31. \( \text{d4} \) \( \text{d6} \)

28. \( \text{h4} \)

White has the initiative. Shirov tries to derive some dividends from it. The unsophisticated consumption of the e5-pawn will result in simplifications: the minor pieces will all leave the board, together with his chances of victory.

28... \( \text{Qf7} \) 29. \( \text{h5} \) \( \text{f4} \)

Attacking d3 and h5.

30. \( \text{xf4} \) \( \text{xf4} \) 31. \( \text{xe6} \) \( \text{f7} \)

Giving up a pawn was not necessary: 31... \( \text{f8} \) 32. \( \text{h3} \) (32. \( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{h4} \)) 32... \( \text{c7} \)

32. \( \text{xf7} \) \( \text{xf7} \) 33. \( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 34. \( \text{xe5} \) b6 35. \( \text{e2} \)

Interesting was 35. \( \text{g1} \)!! hoping for 35... \( \text{d2} \) 36. \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{d3} \) (36... \( \text{c5} \)) 37. \( \text{c5} \) \( \text{bxc5} \) 38. \( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{xb3} \) 39. \( \text{xa5} \)

35... \( \text{d5} \) 36. \( \text{g4} \) b5=

Beliavsky gives his adversary an unpleasant choice: a weakness on a4 (if White doesn’t react) or a potentially passed a-pawn.
37.\texttt{g2 bxa4 38.bxa4 c5 39.g3 c4 40.e5 c5 41.f5+ g8 42.g5 xc2 43.d5 c4 44.d8+ f7 45.d7+ f8 46.d8+ f7 47.f4 xa4 48.h8}

48...\texttt{a1 49.h6}

49.xh7 g8 50.g6 a4.

49...gxh6 50.xh7 e8 51.xh6

Progress. Shirov has managed to create two connected passed pawns, but it isn’t sufficient for victory.
51...a4 52.f5 a3 53.Ea6 c4 54.Ea8+ Ed7 55.f6 Ee6 56.Eg2 Ea2+ 57.Eg3 Ea1 58.Eg2 Ea2+ 59.Eg3 1/2-1/2

Playing in the Bundesliga in 2012, the now-deceased Russian grandmaster Igor Kurnosov revealed the flaws of Black’s development. Admittedly, his opponent, my old acquaintance Andrey Maximenko, operated not very confidently. He shouldn’t have given away any material without necessity.

111
Igor Kurnosov (2660)
Andrey Maximenko (2547)
Germany Bundesliga 2012/13 (6)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Cf6 3.d3 c3 e5 4.d3 f3 Bd7 5.c4 e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.a4 c6 8.Ee1 a5 9.h3 exd4 10.Ed4 Ec5 11.Ed4 Ed6

15.Ed1+-) 14...fxe6 15.Ed4 Ee8 (better is the annoying 15...Ef4 16.b3 Ed5 17.Ed3 Ed6= or 16.Ed3 Exa4 17.b3


White has the initiative because he exerts pressure on the d6-pawn.

13.Ed8

The radical 13...d5 shifts the struggle into an ending that is pleasant for White, for instance: 14.exd5 Ed5 15.Ed5


Alas, in spite of his efforts Black has failed to preserve the flexibility of his pawn chain.

17.Ed6 18.Ee5
Andrey gives away the pawn for nothing. More tenacious was 18...\textit{e}e8 19.exd6 \textit{x}xd6 20.\textit{e}e4 \textit{d}d7 because 21.\textit{d}d3 doesn’t work in view of 21...\textit{h}h2+. 

19.\textit{x}xd8 \textit{x}xc3 20.\textit{x}xf8+ \textit{x}xf8 21.\textit{xc}e3\texttt{±} b5 22.\textit{f}f1 \textit{b}b4 23.b3 \textit{d}d7 24.axb5 cxb5

24...\textit{xc}3 25.\textit{xc}3 cxb5 26.\textit{e}c5\texttt{±}.

25.\textit{xb}5 \textit{d}d2 26.\textit{c}c7

Even more accurate is 26.\textit{f}f3+ \textit{e}e7 27.c4\texttt{±}.

26...\textit{f}f7 27.\textit{f}f3+ \textit{e}e7 28.\textit{a}a6
28...a3?

Too subtle. Simpler and stronger was 28...\texttt{xc2} 29...xb4 axb4 30...c5 31.xb4 xe5+.

29.e3+- d5 30.e7+ f8 31.f4

The grandmaster from Lvo (Western Ukraine) has given away two pawns in succession unforced, and he doesn’t have any compensation for them.

31...h5 32.e2 g5 33.b8 e8

33...gxf4 34.d7++-

34.e4 d5 35.fg5 e4+ 36.f3 xe5 37.h4 d6 38.e8+ f7 39.d7 f5+ 40.e3 e7 41.g6 xd7 42.g7 xe8 43.g8=+ d7 44.g4

It is important for White to create a passed pawn.

44...hxg4 45.xg4 f1 46.h5 b1 47.g7+ c6 48.h6 xb3+ 49.e4 b4 50.h7 c3 51.h8=xe7 52.xg7 a4 53.a7 b4 54.d4 e5+ 55.xe5 xc4 56.a6+ e5 57.a5+ 1-0

A masterpiece was created by young Ukrainian grandmaster Martyn Kravtsiv. We first saw this modest guy during a tournament in India, where Martyn took first place. After that we were once staying next door to him in Pardubice. He made no noise at all, even though there was just a thin wall between us. Kravtsiv inflicted the following instructive defeat to not just anyone, but to the leader of Georgian chess.

As the black knight was attacking two pieces simultaneously, 14.Nf5 doesn’t make a good impression: 14...Nxf4 15.Nxe7+ Nxe7 16.Nxf4 Nf4=. (16...Qxb2 17.Qxd6+.)

14...Bxe6 15.Nxe6 fxe6 16.e5

A standard push. In fact, this is likely to be the only way to fight for an advantage. Martyn damages Black’s pawn structure.

16.dxe5 17.Nxe5 Qd7

17...Rd8? 18.Rad1 Qd7 19.g3 f8=.

18.g3 Qxb2?!

A venturesome line. Maybe Baadur was looking for a win, and a draw didn’t suit him. The ‘normal’ 18...Rf8 is unpromising, though: 19.Qe2 d5 20.Qe4 Qxe4 21.Qxe4 Nc5 22.Qxe6+ Kh8 23.Qe2=. So then the question arises: why should Black play this variation?

19.Qab1 Qxc2 20.Qxb7 Qc6

There follows a comprehensible tactic – at least for a player whose Elo-rating is above 2600.
21.\textit{Exe7! }\textit{Exe7 22.\textit{Exe6}}

The rook and the knight are attacked.

22...\textit{b7 23.\textit{d5!}}

The only move, but sufficient for an advantage.

23...\textit{exd5}

Absolutely poor is 23...\textit{xc6} 24.\textit{xe7+ f7 25.xc6+-}.

24.\textit{xc2 }\textit{xe1+ 25.h2}

The dust has settled, and now we can make an assessment after this sharp intermezzo.
Formally it’s about equal. Two rooks are usually even preferred to a queen. But here other factors play a role. The presence of pawns on the a-file is to White’s benefit. If they were removed from the board, the battle scene would actually be narrowed down to the square h1-h8-d8-d1. But now the actions take place all over the board, and that makes the bishop stronger than the knight here. Besides, the black king is not as solidly protected as his colleague is, and the rest of the forces of the Georgian player are poorly coordinated.

25...\(\text{h}8?!\)

More tenacious was 25...\(\text{e}7\), controlling the 7th rank. 26.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{h}8\) 27.\(\text{xd}5\)±.

26.\(\text{c}7\)+-

The rest is a matter of technique.

26...\(\text{d}8\) 27.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{f}7\) 28.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{e}1\) 29.\(\text{b}7\)

29.\(\text{xg}7++\).

29...\(\text{f}8\) 30.\(\text{b}2\) \(\text{xc}3\) 31.\(\text{xc}3\) \(\text{d}8\) 32.\(\text{xa}5\) \(\text{d}4\) 33.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{d}3\) 34.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{h}6\)
35.a5 \( \textit{Q} \)a5 36.a6 \( \textit{Q} \)e3 37.\( \textit{Q} \)a5 \( \textit{a} \)a8 38.\( \textit{Q} \)g1 h6 39.\( \textit{Q} \)c3 \( \textit{Q} \)d8 40.a7 \( \textit{Q} \)f5

40...d2 41.\( \textit{Q} \)xd2.

41.\( \textit{Q} \)c7 1-0

In the next game, my former teammate in the German Bundesliga, Emanuel Berg, got nothing special out of the opening. But then, almost from scratch, Emanuel started to outplay his adversary.
This position can be objectively assessed as equal. The weakness of Black’s isolated e-pawn is compensated for by his piece play. All the more amusing it is to watch how Emanuel managed to win this.

18.\textit{Qc1} \textit{Qh4}

18...e5!?

19.\textit{Qe3} \textit{Qg4} 20.\textit{g3} \textit{Qh3+} 21.\textit{Qg2} \textit{Qf4+} 22.\textit{Kh1} \textit{Qh3} 23.\textit{Qg2} \textit{Qf4+} 24.\textit{Kh1} \textit{Qh3} 25.\textit{Qf1}

25.f4 doesn’t work due to 25...e5! 26.\textit{Qg5} \textit{Qxg5} 27.fxg5 \textit{Qf5}+

25...\textit{Rf3}

Right.

26.\textit{Qe2} \textit{Qf5}

26...\textit{Qxg3}? 27.\textit{Qxg3} or 27.f3+-.

27.\textit{Qg2} \textit{Qf8} 28.\textit{Rxa3}
28...\textit{bxa3}?! \\

28...\textit{Qg4}?! (threatening 29...\textit{Qf4}+) 29.\textit{Kh1} h5 (29...\textit{Qh3}f4 30.\textit{Rxf4} \textit{Qxg4} 31.\textit{Qf4} with initiative) 30.\textit{Qxf3} \textit{Rxf3}=.  \\

29.\textit{bxa3} \textit{Qg5}?!  \\
Better was 29...h6 30.\textit{Qb1} \textit{Qf7} 31.\textit{Qb3} \textit{Qg5} 32.\textit{Qxg5} h\textit{xg5}² with at least material equality.  \\

30.\textit{Qxg5} \textit{Qxg5} 31.\textit{Qxe6}+ \textit{Qh8} 32.\textit{Qe1} h6 33.\textit{Qe5} \textit{Qd8} 34.\textit{Qe4} \textit{Qb6±} 1-0  \\
The notation ends here. It doesn’t matter for us, as the opening has ended long ago.
B) Knight goes to the kingside
Now let’s acquaint ourselves with the pattern of the struggle when the d7-knight moves in the opposite direction.

In the next game, Stelios Halkias obtained perfect play with the black pieces against a strong Russian grandmaster. Please take note of the consequences of the trade on g5. After the transfer to the g-file the pawn turns into a peculiar ‘breakwater’, hampering White’s aggressive actions on the kingside. Besides, Black can use the h-file for manoeuvres with his rook.

Such an idea is useful not only in this opening but in analogical structures in general. The Greek grandmaster got an overwhelming position, but he let his opponent slip.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
114 \\
Evgeny Naer (2665) \\
Stelios Halkias (2580) \\
Rijeka Ech 2010 (6)
\end{array}
\]

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nf3 Bd7 5.c4 c6 6.0-0-0 a5 7.a4 a5 8.0-0 0-0 9.h3 h6

Depriving the white pieces of the g5-square, after which the rook will go to e8.

10.e2 Re8 11.Ne3 Ne7 12.h4 f5

If 12...f8, there may follow 13.g6, gaining the advantage of the two bishops for free.


Unattractive is 14...Nf6 15.Qf5 Nxf5 16.Qxf5=.

15.Ne3


15...Nf5

Alas, White has to say goodbye to his bishop.

16.Nxg5 hxg5 17.Qf5 N7d8=

17...f8 is also possible because 18.h6+ is not dangerous: 18...gxh6 19.Nxf6 g7=.
18. $\mathcal{Q}e3$

Interesting is the positional pawn sacrifice 18.e5 dxe5 19.$\mathcal{R}$ad1 $\mathcal{Q}$e6 20.$\mathcal{B}$xe6 $\mathcal{R}$xe6 21.$\mathcal{Q}$e3 with compensation.

18...$\mathcal{Q}$e7 19.$\mathcal{R}$ad1 $\mathcal{B}$c7 20.$\mathcal{R}$e2 g6

Believe it or not, but I guessed this move! It's not the best one in the computer's view, by the way. It suggests a regrouping with 20...$\mathcal{B}$d7 21.$\mathcal{R}$ed2 $\mathcal{R}$ad8 and ...$\mathcal{B}$d7-c8.

21.$\mathcal{R}$ed2 $\mathcal{B}$g7

Yes, exactly what I thought. Taking into account the fact that only Black has a dark-squared bishop, the pawns are pushed to light squares and the king moves out of the intent gaze from a2.

22.$\mathcal{R}$d4 $\mathcal{R}$h8=}
Another resource. The pawns on g6 and g5 create prerequisites for Black’s pressure on the kingside.

23. \( \text{Ne2} \) \( \text{Bd7} \)

23...\( \text{Rh4} \).

24. \( \text{Ng3} \) \( \text{Rh4} \) 25. \( \text{Nc4} \)

It seems that the d6-pawn will fall, but...

25...\( \text{Be6} \)+

Now I can guess what will happen. After the exchange of this bishop for a knight Black will try to play the dark-squared symphony (f4, f2, e5, b6...). Let’s see.

26. \( \text{Qe3} \) \( \text{Rf4} \) 27. \( \text{Ne2} ? \)

A mistake, which goes unnoticed by the Greek grandmaster.
27...\textit{xc}4

It’s difficult to understand why Stelios didn’t attack the rook: 27...c5 28.e4d2 (after 28.xf4 gxf4+- White still lacks a piece) 28...xe4 29.d3 d5+- with an extra pawn and an overwhelming position. By all appearances, there was no time trouble yet.

28.e4c4

28.xc4 xe4 29.xe4 xe4 30.xe4 \textit{xe}4 31.d3+-.

28...xe4 29.xe4 xe4

Of course, Black is still a pawn up, but his advantage is not so substantial now.

30.b3?

A double attack on f7 and b7, but this is losing. Better was 30.xe4.

30...d5!!+ 31.d4

31.xb7 xe2.

31...e8 32.d3
32...\[\text{e7}\]

Many of us would make this solid move, indirectly protecting the b7-pawn, wouldn’t we? But more forceful was 32...g4! 33hxg4 \[\text{hxg4}\] 34\[\text{cxb7} (34.\text{c3 h8 35.\text{d4 f4-+ also somewhat computer-like play}) 34...\text{h5! (well, you can miss this during extensive calculations)} 35.\text{xc7 f4-+}.\]

33\[\text{c4}\]

33\[\text{xb7 h2+}.\]

33...g4 34hxg4 \[\text{hxg4}\] 35\[\text{c3}\]

35.cxd5? \[\text{xd5-+ with the terrible threat 36...f4}.\]

35...\[\text{b6}\] 36.f1 d4 37.a3
37...c5?
A blunder. Right was, for instance, 37...\textit{Re}8+.

38.\textit{Exd}4 \textit{Qe}6

38...\textit{cxd}4 39.\textit{Qxe}7.

39.\textit{Rd}2

The pawn structure has become symmetrical, and the victory problematic.

39...\textit{De}4 40.\textit{Ed}5 \textit{ac}7 41.\textit{Ed}3 \textit{b}6 42.\textit{Ec}2 \textit{f}6 43.\textit{Ed}1 \textit{Gg}4 44.\textit{Es}1 \textit{exe}1+ 45.\textit{exe}1 \textit{Wh}5 46.\textit{Eb}1 \textit{ae}5 47.\textit{Ef}3 \textit{Gg}4 48.\textit{Gg}1 \textit{ah}2+ 49.\textit{Ef}1 \textit{ae}5 50.\textit{Gg}1 \textit{Wh}6 51.\textit{Dxe}5 \textit{Wh}2+

51...\textit{Dxe}5+.

52.\textit{Ef}1 \textit{Xxe}5 53.\textit{Dc}3?!
An unforced weakening. Sufficient for approximate equality was 53.\textit{Ed}2.

53...\textit{Xxe}3 54.\textit{bxc}3 \textit{Dd}5
The fight continues, as White has long-term static weaknesses. Meanwhile, the c3-pawn, on a dark square, is taking control of points d4 and b4, minimizing the risk of losing.

55.\texttt{Ba2} \texttt{Nd3} 56.\texttt{Bb3} \texttt{Nc1}?!  
Playing with fire. Halkias doesn’t want to give up his winning intentions and goes to extremes. Better was 56...g5 57.\texttt{Bd1} \texttt{De5} 58.\texttt{Be2} f5.

57.\texttt{Bc2}  
How can the knight leave this cage now?!
57...a2 58.f3!
Taking away square e4 from the knight.

58...f6 59.f2 xc3 60.b3± b5
The b-pawn moves to the minefield deliberately, at the cost of its life, so as to clear the way for the knight which got trapped.
60.e5 61.e3 b1 62.d3 f4 63.c2 a3+ 64.b2 g3 65.xa3 xg2 66.d1 f2 67.b2±.

61.xb5 c4 62.xc4 xa4 63.e3 b6 64.d4 e7 65.a2 d6
Unsatisfactory is 65...f5 66.c5 d7+ 67.c6 a4 68.f4±.
66.xf7 g5 67.a2
67.g3 d7 68.f4±.
67...a4

68.g4?!
A poor decision. I’m not sure if it was winning, but more flexible was 68.g3±.

68...a3 69.g8 d7 70.b3 e5 71.e4 g6 72.f5 h4+ 73.xg5 xf3+ 74.f6 c5 75.g5 ½-½

Fabiano Caruana, who doesn’t need an introduction, applied a characteristic manoeuvre in the following game. The Italian developed his queen at c4, exerting pressure along the diagonal and threatening with knight jumps (to b5, for example). The response of the Russian player Evgeny Vorobiov was adequate, and he equalized. In this structure, the pawn’s shift from f7 to e6 was favourable for Black. The pawn took squares f5 and (especially important) d5 under control, and the f-file was opened up for the rook.
Please note that the horrible passivity of Black’s dark-squared bishop didn’t play a large role due to the weakness of White’s b3-pawn and other factors. I also recommend you to pay attention to the fixation of the queenside with 30...c6-c5!. Then Vorobiov ‘rattled off’ the game.

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Fabiano Caruana (2680)
Evgeny Vorobiov (2615)
Rijeka Ech 2010 (10)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.f3 Bd7 5.c4 c6 6.0-0 0-0 7.a4 a5 8.Ne1 c6 9.h3 h6 10.a2 e8 11.e3 Wc7
12.We2

The queen in a vis-à-vis with the rook on e8? But Fabiano will move this piece further.


12...Wf8 13.Wc4 Ad8

A multifunctional move. The f7-pawn and also the queen are protected.

14.Wad1 Ag6 15.d5 We6

Creatively played. This manoeuvre is unconventional. After 15...Ag8 16.Wb3 Wf8 White would have the initiative.


The regrouping 19.Ac4!? Ae8 20.Wb3± was interesting.

19...bxc6= 20.Wf1 Ah4 21.Wd2 Ae6 22.Axf4 Bxf4

Adventurous players might like 22...Axa2 23.Axh6 (23.Ah2 Ae6=) 23...gxh6 24.b3 d5 25.Wxh6 Ab8, unclear.
23.\textbf{Bxe6 fxe6} 24.\textbf{Nxf4 Rxf4}

Less promising is 24...\textbf{exf4} 25.\textbf{Nh2} and the knight goes to f3, taking up a favourable blocking position.

25.\textbf{c4}

25.\textbf{Qc3 a8} 26.\textbf{Qe2 aaf8} with initiative.

25...\textbf{Rc8} 26.\textbf{Qe2 d8} 27.\textbf{Qd3 Qb6} 28.\textbf{Qd2 Qd4} 29.\textbf{Qf3 Qxd3} 30.\textbf{Qxd3 c5=}

In this case the move...c6-c5 is not a mistake. The b2-pawn is weak. But there are no new weaknesses, because the e6-pawn plays a very significant role in taking control of white complex. It’s approximately equal.

31.\textbf{Qe1 Qb6} 32.\textbf{h3 Qf8} 33.\textbf{Qb2 Qfb8} 34.\textbf{Qc2 d5}

Evgeny reminds Fabiano that he may also have ambitious intentions.
35.exd5
35.Qe3.
35...e4
35...exd5 36.Rxd5 (36.cxd5 c4) 36...Rxb3 37.axb3 Rxb3 38.Rxe5 f7=.
36.d1 exd5 37.exd5 Qb3 38.axb3 Rxb3 39.g3
39.f1!? Rb2 40.e3 Ra2 41.e5 f7 42.d5 d6 43.Rxe4 Rxa4 44.g2 Ra3 45.h4 Rb3
With the initiative.
40.e3 Ra2 41.e5 f7 42.d5 d6 43.Rxe4 Rxa4 44.g2 Ra3 45.h4 Rb3
Gradually Caruana is being confronted with more serious problems. The outside passed a-pawn is very dangerous. The knight is limited by the black rook and can’t help.

46.h5

46...a4 47...e2 a3 48.f4

48...e2 50.e5

48...b2 49.xb2 axb2 50.c3 g6!
White has to fight without his knight actually, as it is bound to square b1. That’s why the Russian player opens a second front on the kingside.

51.hxg6+ hxg6 52.Kf3 h5 53.g4

In reply to 53.g4 Black won’t exchange the pawn, but will reply 53...h4+-.

53...c7 54.b1 a5 55.a3 b4 56.b1 e1 57.f3

57.d5 xg3 58.xc5 h4+-.

57...f5 58.a3 e3 59.b1 b4+-

The bishop easily forces zugzwang, as the knight and the king are not allowed to just jump up and down on their squares.

60.e3 g4 61.f2 a5 62.a3 c3 63.b1 b4 64.e2

64.g2 e1+-.

64...xg3 65.f5 a5 66.e6 d8 67.e5 c7 68.e1 f4 69.e5 e2 f6 70.d3 xf7 72.d2 f6 73.e4 d4 0-1

And now – a master-class from the opening expert. Unlike Halkias, Robert Markus moved the knight to g5 through h7. For a while the position was equal, but at some point White started to play very creatively, and as a result he found himself in a lost position in 3-4 moves...

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Baland Nadj Hedjesi (2376)
Robert Markus (2605)
Valjevo 2012 (9)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 f6 3.c3 e5 4.f3 bd7 5.c4 e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.e1 c6 8.a4 a5 9.h3 h6 10.a2 h7

There are so many things you can think up with black so as to play for a win against a lower-rated opponent. For instance, the slightly strange manoeuvres ...e7-d8, ...f6-d7, ...f6-h7. In this case the knight goes to g5 to be exchanged. In doing so, Robert intends to have the pawn transferred from the h- to the g-file and to later use it as a battering ram (...g5-g4), for example.

11.e2

11.e3.

11.g5
12. \textit{\textit{\textbf{x}g5 \textit{hxg5}}}

Black is spoiling for a fight. The simplifying 12...\textit{\textbf{x}g5 13.\textit{\textbf{x}g5 \textit{\textbf{b}xg5}}} would have equalized.

13. \textit{\textit{\textbf{e}3}}

13.e3.

13...\textit{\textbf{g}6} 14.\textit{\textbf{d}d3 \textit{exd4}} 15.\textit{\textbf{xd4 \textit{e}5}}

15...\textit{\textbf{c}5} 16.\textit{\textbf{xc5 \textit{dxc5}}} 17.\textit{\textbf{e}3 \textit{b}6} 18.e5±.

16.\textit{\textbf{e}3 \textit{f}6}

The g5-pawn performs the function of a ‘breakwater’: it is responsible for the security of the centralized knight.

17.\textit{\textbf{f}4}

17.\textit{\textbf{ad1}}.

17...\textit{\textbf{gxf4}} 18.\textit{\textbf{xf4}}

Now the e4-pawn is isolated.

18...\textit{\textbf{h}7}

If 18...c5 19.\textit{\textbf{f}2 \textit{d}7} 20.\textit{\textbf{g}3} with the initiative.

19.\textit{\textbf{ad1 \textit{e}7}} 20.\textit{\textbf{f}1 \textit{g}5} 21.\textit{\textbf{d}3}

Reasonable: the Serbian master dislodges the dark mustang from its dominating height.
21...\textit{\texttt{N}}xd3 22.cxd3
Interesting is 22.\textit{\texttt{R}}xd3, trying to manoeuvre along the 3rd rank (\textit{\texttt{R}}d3-f3).

22...\textit{\texttt{B}}e6 23.\textit{\texttt{B}}b1

How creative! I’ll even place a diagram here. Not every chess player would dare to withdraw the bishop to a diagonal crowded with pawns, in the presence of an active bishop of the opponent; 23.\textit{\texttt{B}}xe6 fxe6 24.\textit{\texttt{R}}xf8 \textit{\texttt{R}}xf8=.

23...f5 24.e5?
The balance would have been maintained by 24.exf5 \textit{\texttt{B}}xf5 25.\textit{\texttt{R}}de1 \textit{\texttt{Q}}d7=.

24...dxe5 25.\textit{\texttt{B}}c5
Perhaps this was White’s idea, but Markus sacrifices the exchange with pleasure, it seems. Also bad was 25.\textit{\texttt{B}}xe5 \textit{\texttt{B}}e3+ 26.\textit{\texttt{K}}h1 \textit{\texttt{Q}}d5=.

25...\textit{\texttt{R}}e8 26.g4?
The ending is cheerless for White: 27.\textit{\texttt{Q}}xe5 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xe5 28.\textit{\texttt{R}}xe5 \textit{\texttt{B}}f6 29.\textit{\texttt{R}}e2 \textit{\texttt{B}}b3=.

27...\textit{\texttt{B}}f6+=
The rest is clear. Black has a material and a positional superiority.

28.\textit{\texttt{W}}a3 \textit{\texttt{d}}5 29.\textit{\texttt{E}}e2 \textit{\texttt{G}}7 30.\textit{\texttt{H}}h2 \textit{\texttt{F}}xg4 31.d4 exd4 32.\textit{\texttt{E}}ef2 \textit{\texttt{H}}4 1-0

The aggressive thrust ...g7-g5-g4 occurred in a game from the Bosnian team championship in 2010. Black got no
benefits from it. On the contrary, he obtained several weaknesses, leading to torment and ultimately, defeat.

South-African master Ken Solomon treated this line a bit differently: 11...\textit{B}f8 12.\textit{R}ad1 \textit{Q}c7 13.\textit{N}b3 \textit{b}b8 (13...\textit{exd}4 14.\textit{ex}d4 \textit{e}5 15.\textit{h}4 (of course, not trading on e5. White is going to kick the knight with f2-f4) 15...\textit{ex}e6 16.\textit{xe}6 \textit{fxe}6 16.\textit{g}6 \textit{bd}7 17.\textit{xf}8 \textit{xf}8 18.dxe5=, Rozentalis-Solomon, Trieste 2013.

12.\textit{xd}4

\textbf{Diagram}

12...\textit{f}8

Black could try to exploit the centralization of the white queen with 12...\textit{c}5 13.\textit{e}5 \textit{e}6 14.\textit{ex}d6 (14.\textit{xf}6?! 15.\textit{f}4 \textit{g}5 16.\textit{g}3 \textit{xc}4 is unclear, for example 17.\textit{h}4 \textit{xc}3 18.\textit{bxc}3 \textit{e}4 19.\textit{h}2 \textit{g}4) 14...\textit{xd}6 15.\textit{ad}1 \textit{f}8 16.\textit{xe}6 \textit{xe}6 17.\textit{e}5 \textit{e}7=.

13.\textit{ad}1 \textit{c}7 14.\textit{h}4 \textit{e}5 15.\textit{e}2 \textit{g}5

A committal move. The white knight is not obliged to go to f5. Better was 15...\textit{e}6.

16.\textit{f}3= \textit{e}6 17.\textit{d}2 \textit{ad}8 18.\textit{h}4
18...g4?! 

The central counterblow 18...d5 was more to the point. Here are some possible lines: 19.exd5 cxd5 20.hxg5 Nxd5 21.Nxe3 g4 22.Nxd8 Nxd8 23.Nc1 d6 24.d1 (24.gxh6? is for aesthetes: 24...Bf4 25.a1 h2+ 26.f1 b6+ 27.e4 xf2+! 28.xf2 e3#) 

**analysis diagram**

24...e8 25.gxh6 (these motifs are reminful of the Benko Gambit, don’t you think?) 25...h2+ 26.f1 f4 27.a1 xh6 with nice play for Black. 

19.Nd4 h7 20.d3 g7?
A tactical oversight that remains unpunished.

 Strange... the obvious 21...\textit{N}d5! would have led to a win, for example: 21...\textit{Q}xd5 (21...\textit{c}xd5 22.exd5+ \textit{K}h8 23.dxe6 \textit{fxe}6 24.\textit{Q}xh6+ 21...\textit{W}c8 22.\textit{Q}xh6+) 22.exd5+ \textit{Q}xd3 23.\textit{Q}xd3+ \textit{K}h8 24.dxc6 bxc6 25.\textit{Q}f5+ and Black’s numerous weaknesses leave no chance for a happy outcome for him.

 21...\textit{Q}xd5 22.\textit{W}xd3 \textit{Q}h5 23.\textit{Q}f4 \textit{Q}xf4 24.\textit{Q}xf4 \textit{Q}e5 25.\textit{Q}xe5 \textit{Q}xe5 26.\textit{Q}xe6 \textit{fxe}6 27.\textit{W}b3±

The situation has stabilized. White stands better because of Black’s pawn weaknesses, but still the win isn’t so clear as it would have been after 21.\textit{Q}d5!.
27...e7 28.g3 f8 29.xg4 f4

Interesting is 29...b6!? 30.e3 g8 31.h5 xb2±, but it is psychologically difficult to move the queen away from the exposed monarch.

If 29...g8 30.h3 eg7 31.xe6 xg2+ 32.f1±.

30.e2

Better 30.h5±.

30...xh4 31.g3 eg7 32.g2 e7 33.d2 f6 34.e3 g6 35.h1 g4 36.xa5 xe4 37.c3 xa4

Slightly more precise was 37.f5 38.f3 f4 39.e1 g8, unclear.

38.e5 f4?!

38...f7±.

39.eh5

There was an opportunity to liquidate into an unpromising ending: 39...e4+ 40.f1 c4+ 41.xc4 xc4 42.xh6+ g8 43.c3±.

40.xh6+ xh6 41.xh6+ xh6 42.e3+ h7 43.xe6+-

Two connected passed pawns should win for White.

43...g7 44.f4 f5 45.e5 g6 46.f3 h6 47.f5 g7 48.e4 1-0

In the next game, from the Serbian team championship in 2010, the black player, quite familiar to us by now,
manoeuvred his knight like a forward on a football field: ...\( \text{Nd7-f8-g6-f4-e6-c5} \), trying to confuse the opponent. And he definitely managed to do this: the position became irrational and highly complicated for both sides.

Both players made mistakes, but Marjanovic made more of them, which determined the outcome.

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**Slavoljub Marjanovic (2505)**  
**Robert Markus (2616)**  
**Vrnjacka Banja tt 2010 (11)**

1.e4\( d6 \) 2.d4\( \text{Nf6} \) 3.c3\( e5 \) 4.f3\( \text{Nbd7} \) 5.c4\( \text{Nf6} \) 6.0-0\( 0-0 \) 7.e1\( c6 \) 8.a4\( a5 \) 9.b3

And here is a sketch from a small Hungarian town called Paks. Me and my family once had the occasion to see the flooding of the Danube there: 9.b3 exd4 10.cxd4\( \text{c5} \) 11.f4 (11.a2\( \text{d7} \) 12.f4\( \text{b6} \) 13.e5 dxe5 14.xe5\( \text{b6} \)) 11...\( \text{e8} \) (11...\( \text{xb3} \) 12.cxb3\( g6= \)) 12.h3 (better was 12.a2) 12...\( \text{b6} \) 13.f3\( \text{xb3} \) 14.xb3\( \text{c6=} \) Cao-Predojevic, Paks tt 2010/11.

9...\( \text{h6} \) 10.a3\( \text{e8} \) 11.h3\( \text{c7} \) 12.d2\( \text{f8} \)

White is usually better in case Black surrenders the centre: 12...exd4 13.xd4\( \text{e5} \) 14.f1\( \text{d7} \).

13.a1\( \text{g6} \) 14.e3\( \text{f8} \)

15.b2

Admitting that the bishop won’t reap any laurels on a3.

15...\( \text{e6} \) 16.d3

After other continuations Black also doesn’t have problems: 16.d5 cxd5 17.exd5\( \text{d7} \) 18.b5\( \text{d8=} \) 16.xe6\( \text{xe6} \) 17.a3\( \text{ee8=} \).
16...Rd8 17.Ree1 c8 18.Wc1 Qf4 19.f1 e6 20.e3 exd4 21.xd4 Oc5

21...d5!? equalizes, for instance 22.exd5 g5 23.Wd3 xe1 24.xe1 xd5 (24...c5 25.e1 Wb6=) 25.xd5 exd5=.

But Robert strives for more.

22.Wf3 e7 23.c4 d5!

Now this leads to an uneven position.

24.exd5 xe1+ 25.Rxe1 xe1+ 26.h2 d6+ 27.g3 e5 28.Qe2

28...Rxe8?!

Considerably stronger was 28...Oe4! and now even the first line of Houdini with its ‘inhuman’ variations ends in an advantage for Black: 29.xc6 (utterly poor is 29.dxc6 Rf1 30.cxb7 xb7 31.g2 xf2+-+) 29...g5 (29...bxc6 30.e5+; 29...xb2 30.xd8 g5 31.e3 xh3 32.xg5 hxg5 33.xh3=) 30.xe5 (30.d3 xb2 31.xd8 xh3=) 30...xf3+ 31.xf3 b1=. A very rare alignment of forces.

29.Qc3 hb1?!

29...d1=. The situation is too intricate for a human being. Both players commit inaccuracies.

30.Qd3?!

Stronger was 30.dxc6 Qe4 31.Qg2 bxc6 32.f4 xd4 33.Qxd4, unclear.

30...Qxd5 31.Qxa5


31...ed1! 32.Qf4 Qxd3
The computer recommends 32...\(\text{gxf4}\) 33.\(\text{gxc6}\) \(\text{cxd3}\) 34.\(\text{bxd1}\) \(\text{gxf2}\).

33.\(\text{cxd3}\) \(\text{gxf4}\)

33...\(\text{gxd4}\) 34.\(\text{gxd5}\) \(\text{cxd5}\) 35.\(\text{b6}\) \(\text{bxb3}\) 36.\(\text{gxd4}\) \(\text{dxd4}\) 37.\(\text{e5}\) \(\text{c6}\).

34.\(\text{gxc6}\) \(\text{fxd3}\) 35.\(\text{e5}\) \(\text{xe5}\) 36.\(\text{d5}\)?

A serious mistake.

Now Markus could have vacated square b7 for his bishop: 36...b6! 37.\(\text{gxb6}\) \(\text{gxb7}\) (taking up a murderous position on the long light-squared diagonal) 38.\(\text{f3}\) + or 38.\(\text{e5}\) \(\text{f3}\) + 39.\(\text{g2}\) \(\text{e1}\).

37.\(\text{c7}\)?! \(\text{e6}\) 38.\(\text{g1}\) \(\text{c6}\) 39.\(\text{g4}\) \(\text{e6}\) 40.\(\text{b6}\) \(\text{d5}\) 41.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{e4}\) 42.\(\text{g3}\) \(\text{d5}\) 43.\(\text{e5}\) \(\text{d8}\) 44.\(\text{e1}\)
44...\text{c}3! 45.\text{b}2 \text{d}4

45...\text{d}3+ 46.\text{h}2 \text{b}1+ with the idea 47...\text{d}2+.

46.\text{x}d4 \text{xd}4 47.a5 \text{d}3+ 48.\text{h}2 \text{e}3 49.\text{c}1 \text{e}2+ 50.\text{g}3 \text{c}2 51.\text{e}3 \text{c}6 52.b4 \text{e}4+ 0-1

In the team championship of Montenegro, Bojan Vuckovic pressed on the enemy defence for a long time. Interestingly, his opponent made a positional exchange sacrifice not at the best moment, but it turned out to be enough for a draw.

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Bojan Vuckovic (2623)
Borko Lajthajm (2496)
Tivat tt 2011 (3)
1.e4 d6 2.d4 \text{c}3 e5 4.\text{f}3 \text{bd}7 5.\text{c}4 \text{e}7 6.0-0 0-0 7.\text{e}1 c6 8.a4 a5 9.b3 \text{e}8 10.h3 h6 11.\text{b}2 \text{c}7 12.\text{f}1 \text{f}8 13.\text{d}3

13.\text{d}2 \text{g}6 14.\text{ad}1 \text{e}6 15.\text{c}1 \text{ad}8 16.g3 \text{c}8 17.\text{h}2 \text{h}7 (Sevian-Zherebukh, Richardson 2013) 18.d5 with initiative.

13...\text{g}6 14.g3 \text{e}6 15.\text{g}2

15.d5 \text{d}7.

15...\text{ad}8 16.\text{ad}1

Here, preferable was 16.d5 cxd5 17.exd5 \text{d}7 18.\text{d}2+.

16...\text{e}8 17.\text{f}1 \text{h}7

17...h5!?.
18. \( \text{N}h2 \text{ Ng5} \)

Generally, exchanges are expedient for Black because he lacks space.

19. \( \text{Nxg5} \)

Vuckovic had an unexpected option to avoid the trade: 19. \( \text{Nd2!} \) exd4 20. \( \text{Nxe2} \), threatening f2-f4-f5.

19...hxg5

Also acceptable was 19...\( \text{Bxg5} \) 20.h4 \( \text{Bf6} \) 21.d5 exd5 22.exd5 \( \text{Bg4} \), which is about equal.

20. \( \text{Ne2} \)

20.d5.

20...\( \text{f6} \) 21.c4 \( \text{g4} \)

21...\( \text{C7} \).

22.hxg4

The computer is constantly advising the move d4-d5 for White, and it may be right.

22...\( \text{Nxg4} \) 23.f3 \( \text{d7} \) 24.d5
What can we say about this position? White has a space advantage, the black knight is clumsily placed. However, if Black manages to trade off his dark-squared bishop, his situation will improve.

24...cxd5 25.exd5 c6 26.d3 f8

After the elimination of the d5-pawn, which restrained Black, the knight gets access to a promising route: g6-f8-e6-c5/d4.

27.a3 c7

The positional pawn sacrifice 27...e6! was appropriate, so as to exchange or revive the passive bishop on f6: 28.h3 (28.exd6 e7 29.exd8 xd8 with compensation; 28.xd6?! c5 with initiative) 28.c7 29.xe6 xe6 30.ed1 g5=.

28.ed1 e7 29.h3 d7 30.xd7 xd7 31.c3
White is squeezing his opponent.

31...d5?!

There was still no need for such radical measures. More reserved was 31...b6 32.c5 (32.d5 xd5 33.exd5=) 32...xb3 33.d5 xa4 34.b6 b5 35.xd7 xd7 36.cxd6 g5 37.c1, unclear.

32.xe7 d4 33.a3

Stronger was 33.g5 dxc3 34.xd7 xd7 35.b3±.

33...dxc3 34.xc3

Or 34.xd7 xd7 35.b6 b6 36.xd7 f2+ 37.h3 e6 38.e7 g6 39.g5 xf3, unclear.

34.ed8 35.cd3 b6 36.e7 xd3 37.xd3 xd3 38.b3 f2+ 39.h3 f5
The opposite-coloured bishops and unsafe kings on both sides level out White’s extra pawn. The drawing tendencies are large enough.

40.\textit{Ba}3 fxe4 41.\textit{Qd}8+ \textit{Kh}7 42.\textit{Qh}4+ \textit{Kg}8 43.\textit{Qd}8+ \textit{Kh}7 44.\textit{Qh}4+ \textit{Kg}8

Draw agreed.

For dessert, I will show you a duel which took place in the Croatian championship of 2012. White conceded the bishop pair, but continued to exert pressure with a skilful pawn set-up. A convincing and instructive win.

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\textbf{Ivan Saric (2651)}

\textbf{Zoran Jovanovic (2556)}

Opatija ch-CRO 2012 (11)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \textit{Nf}6 3.\textit{Nc}3 e5 4.\textit{Nf}3 \textit{Nbd}7 5.\textit{Bc}4 \textit{Bf}7 6.0-0 0-0 7.f3exd4 11.\textit{Qxd}4 \textit{Qb}4!!

Also possible is 11...\textit{Qxd}4 12.\textit{Qxd}4 \textit{Bf}8 13.\textit{g}5 \textit{f}8 14.\textit{h}4 \textit{d}5=.

12.\textit{Qc}3 \textit{Qb}5= 13.\textit{Qd}4

Not much is promised by 13.\textit{Qxe}5 dxe5 14.\textit{Qg}3 \textit{Qd}6.

13...\textit{Qd}8

Interesting is 13...\textit{Qx}h3!
analysis diagram

14.f4 (14.gxh3? \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{\textbullet}\textbullet\textbullet}}) 14...c8 15.fxe5 g4 16.dxe5 dxe5 17.b3 (17.f3 b6+ 18.e3 xe3 19.xe3 c5 20.e1 e8 with compensation) 17...\textbullet\textbullet\textbullet. Such quiet moves may be missed in long calculations.

14.d2 c4 15.xc4 xc4 16.b3 c5 17.d3 e8 18.f4 c7 19.ad1

Please note that the absence of the light-squared bishop isn’t so problematic for White, because the pawn structure ensures him control of the light-square complex.

19...d7?!
19...d7?! 20.f3 h6.

20...d5 ± e5 21.g3 g6

Unfortunately, insufficient is 21...xf5 22.exf5 d7 23.xe8+ xe8 24.xd6±.

22.e3 ² h8?

A blunder. Stubborn resistance could have been offered by 22...e6 23.g5 d8 24.xd8 axd8 ±.

23.g5

Saric could have played a 'dark-square symphony' with 23.h4+- d8 24.h6 xf5 25.xe5+ xe5 (25...dx5 26.xd8+- 25...xe5 26.f8#) 26.exf5+-.

23...xf5 24.exf5 d7 25.fxg6 fxg6 26.e7+ f5 27.xd6 xe3?


28.xe3+-

Also winning, but not as quickly as in the line mentioned above.
Conclusion
The impression is that 8...a7-a5 provides Black with acceptable play, for three results. He has different plans at his disposal. Only one of them, from my point of view, usually leads to a slight, but comfortable advantage for White: the surrender of the centre, followed by trades on e6. The arising phalanx – e6, d6, c6 – will be smashed by White’s pawn thrust e4-e5, which saddles the opponent with an isolated e-pawn. It looks as if Black will have a ‘boring’ fight for a draw there. And again, this is all just the author’s subjective opinion. You may have formed another opinion.
Section 3: The Flexible Structure (a6, b6, c6)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.f3 Nbd7 5.Nf3 Nbd7 6.0-0 0-0 7.e1 c6 8.a4 b6

Quite often Black prefers to arrange his pawns in a highly flexible way with d6, c6, b6, a6. Of course, this is not for the sake of beauty, although there is certainly an aesthetic component to it. The idea is that White always has to take into account the advances ...b6-b5 and ...c6-c5, and then ...d6-d5 may follow too.

Before we continue, I remind you that not everything the author writes is the ultimate truth. We cannot exclude that certain specialists may have other opinions. Besides, new lines may appear before the moment you open this book. I am trying to be as impartial as possible and to be guided by the latest games.

So, White has three basic plans at his disposal:

A) Opposing with b2-b4

B) The central approach: d4-d5

C) Maintaining the tension in the centre
A) Opposing with b2-b4
This most concrete reaction also seems to be the most popular now. The first time I faced b2-b4 in this line was in an encounter during a round-robin tournament in Kiev, the capital of Ukraine.

I was on my way to fulfilling a grandmaster norm and for that purpose it was necessary to win with black in the last round. From time to time one can hear rumours about ‘fixed’ games. However, many times I have lacked exactly half a point for an international master or grandmaster norm. The disappointment is terrible in such cases, but all the decisive games were fair.

One of those duels I bring forward here for you, dear reader. The author got a huge advantage rather quickly, but ingenious defensive play by his opponent and the pressure of responsibility prevented a logical outcome.

```
1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nf3 Bd7 5.c4 e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.Be1 c6 8.a4 b6 9.b1
```
A familiar idea, but in a slightly different version. Logically, it is more favourable for the rook to remain on the a-file, which will be opened.
In those years this was a surprise for the author.

More common is 11...axb5.

A natural move which raises obstacles before Black’s... and White’s pieces! Both light-squared bishops are limited, and the knight on c3 is also passive now.
Georgy is probably preparing the move c2-c4. If he manages it, then after the exchanges on c4 the a6-pawn will be under pressure, and so will be Black’s entire queenside.

17...\(\text{Nh5}\) 18.\(\text{N\text{d}1}\) \(\text{Bg5}\) 19.\(\text{Ne3}\) \(\text{Ra8}?!\)

This looks artificial; 19...h6.

20.g3

White has a certain superiority after the above-mentioned line: 20.c4 bxc4 21.\(\text{N\text{d}xc4}\) \(\text{Bxe3}\) 22.\(\text{Nxe3}\) \(\text{f4}\) 23.\(\text{Qf1}²\).

Obviously, the Ukrainian grandmaster supposed that c2-c4 was inevitable and tried to implement it in the most comfortable way.

20...\(\text{c8}\) 21.\(\text{h2}\) \(\text{d7}\)

Now the bishop has been activated and is working on two flanks.

22.c3

Already not good is 22.c4 bxc4 23.\(\text{N\text{d}xc4}\) \(\text{b5}\) with initiative.

22...\(\text{c8}\) 23.\(\text{d1}\) \(\text{f6}\) 24.\(\text{f1}\) \(\text{a5}³\)
In 4-5 moves the evaluation has changed from ‘±’ to ‘!’+. All Black’s pieces are successfully placed, whereas in the enemy camp some disharmony can be seen.

25.\textit{f}3 \textit{a}4 26.\textit{c}4?!  

This intensifies White’s problems, but there are no good continuations in sight.

26...\textit{a}xb4 27.\textit{c}xb5 \textit{b}b8 28.\textit{e}2 \textit{x}e3 29.\textit{f}xe3 \textit{c}3+-  

White’s pawn structure is irreparably weakened – objectively Black is technically winning.

30.\textit{xc}3 \textit{bc}3 31.\textit{c}4 \textit{xe}4 32.\textit{g}2 f5
Natural and strong.

33. \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{c5} \)

Maybe not the best; 33... \( \text{f6} \)?.

34. \( \text{f1} \) \( \text{e4} \) 35. \( \text{ec1} \) \( \text{c8} \) 36. \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{a4} \)! 37. \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{f6} \)

Even stronger was 37... \( \text{xc4} \) 38. \( \text{xc4} \) \( \text{d2} \) 39. \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{a2} \) 40. \( \text{h1} \) \( \text{e4} \) 41. \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{a4} \)+.

38. \( \text{xc3} \) \( \text{e4} \)

In time-trouble imperfections are unavoidable. More accurate was 38... \( \text{xd5} \).

39. \( \text{c2} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 40. \( \text{b3} \)!

The only good move, forcing the opponent to find the right decision within the last 1-2 minutes before the time control.

40... \( \text{xc3} \)?

40... \( \text{h8} \).

41. \( \text{xd6} \) \( \text{f8} \) 42. \( \text{h5} \)

This looks quite horrible. The lonely king is assaulted by almost the entire white army.

42... \( \text{e7} \)

The only move.

43. \( \text{xc8} \) \( \text{xc8} \) 44. \( \text{f7} \) \( \text{d6} \)

An important moment. I have spoiled the position so badly that White has the better chances now.

45. \( \text{c1} \)?

Right was 45. \( \text{b2} \), maintaining pressure.

45... \( \text{b4} \) 46. \( \text{d1} \+)

A moral attack!
46...\text{\textit{Kc7}}

I felt I had to play the principled move, but I had no energy to calculate long variations: 46...\text{\textit{Nxd1!!}} 47.\text{\textit{Qd5+ Kc7}} 48.\text{\textit{Nc5+ b8}} 49.\text{\textit{Nxd7+ c8}} 50.\text{\textit{Qd6+ c7}} 51.\text{\textit{Qxb4 xe3}} 52.\text{\textit{b6 d1+}} 54.\text{\textit{g2 xg3+}} 55.\text{\textit{xf1 a6+}} 56.\text{\textit{c4 e3+-}}.

47.\text{\textit{Rd2}} 48.\text{\textit{Nc2}} 49.\text{\textit{Qxf7?}}

Total exhaustion at the end of the tournament. Grudgingly, I decided to simplify the position. Taking into account the importance of the game, this was a wrong decision, of course. Black can now escape into a safe ending with an extra pawn. However, it is hardly probable that he can win there. Much better was 48...\text{\textit{Qe5+-}}.

49.\text{\textit{Qxf7}}

49.\text{\textit{xc3+ b4}} 50.\text{\textit{xc4+ b6}} 51.\text{\textit{c6+ xb5}} 52.\text{\textit{xf7 xc6}} with an easy draw: h3-h4, \text{\textit{h2-g2-f2}}...

49...\text{\textit{d6}} 50.\text{\textit{xc3 b2+}} 51.\text{\textit{g1 xb5}} 52.\text{\textit{h4}}
52...b1+ 53.f2 b2+ 54.g1 e6 55.xe6 xxe6 56.f1 d2 57.a3 d3 58.a6+ d6 59.a5 g6 60.a7 d7 61.a6+ f7 62.a5 g7 63.h5!

Georgy plays skilfully and doesn’t allow the black king to freely move forward (...g7-h6-h5-g4-f3).

63.h6 64.hxg6 hxg6 65.g4! fxg4 66.e5

And soon the draw was agreed.

The next time I came up against this plan was not until 11 years later. Nowadays, b2-b4 is quite often applied.

After the New-Year celebrations in beautiful Krakow the opponents in this game were struggling in deep opening preparation.
I have to admit that Czech grandmaster Petr Velicka showed superior skills in this struggle, and he got a considerable positional advantage. However, after that your obedient servant played creatively and, by sacrificing a piece, made the realization stage difficult for White. Black’s pawn phalanx was making Petr nervous until I restored the material balance. At the same time, a draw was agreed.

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Petr Velicka (2472)
Sergey Kasparov (2521)
Krakow 2012 (6)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \( \textit{\&f6} \) 3.\( \textit{\&c3} \) e5 4.\( \textit{\&f3} \) \( \textit{\&bd7} \) 5.\( \textit{\&c4} \) \( \textit{\&e7} \) 6.0-0 0-0 7.\( \textit{\&e1} \) c6 8.a4 b6

A flexible move. Black intends to put all his queenside pawns on the 6th rank, thus making the opponent nervous. He must always consider the breakthroughs ...b6-b5 (usually), ...c6-c5, and ...d6-d5. After ...b7-b6, though, the move ...a7-a5 will not be so good because White can render Black’s light squares (d5, c6, b5) vulnerable by means of d4-d5. With the pawn still on b7 this would be inappropriate.

9.\( \textit{\&a2} \) a6 10.\( \textit{\&e3} \) \( \textit{\&b8} \) 11.h3 b5

Done. The pawn doesn’t mind moving further and pushing the enemy knight aside. How can this aggression be stopped?

12.axb5 axb5 13.b4!?
Well, by putting mechanical obstacles in the adversary's way. The downside of this move is the weakness of the b4-pawn, upon which the e7-bishop is greedily glancing.

13...\text{Q}\text{c7}

Obviously 13...d5 is no good on account of 14.dxe5 \text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{b4}}}}}3} \text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{\textit{\textsmaller{\textmd{\textsc{x}}}}}}}}3} 15.\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{d3}}}}}3} \text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{xc3}}}}}3} 16.\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{xc3}}}}}3} \text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{xe4}}}}}3} 17.\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{xc6}}}}}3}±.

14.\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{b3}}}}}3} \text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{b6}}}}}3}

This looks compact and solid; the c8-rook will join the game. The pawn clash is not so clear but interesting: 14...c5 15.bxc5 dxc5 16.dxe5 \text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{xe5}}}}}3} 17.\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{xe5}}}}}3} \text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{xe5}}}}}3} 18.\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{d2}}}}}3} \text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{d6}}}}}3} 19.e5 (better 19.\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{d5}}}}}3}) 19...\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{x}}}}}}}2 20.\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{x}}}}}}}2 c4 with counterplay, Malakhov-Cuenca Jimenez, Spain tt 2009; 14...exd4 15.\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{xd4}}}}}3} \text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{e5}}}}}3} 16.f4± Ni Hua-Pridorozhni, Olginka tt 2011.

15.\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{d3}}}}}3} \text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{e6}}}}}3}

15...\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{d7}}}}}3} 16.\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{a6}}}}}3} (16.dxe5 dxe5 17.\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{c5}}}}}3} \text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{c8}}}}}3} 18.\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{ed1}}}}}3} \text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{xc5}}}}}3} 19.\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{bx}}}}}}}7 \text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{bd7}}}}}3} 20.\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{e3}}}}}3}± Mekhitarian-Strikovic, La Laguna Open 2010) 16.\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{fd8}}}}}3} 17.\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{e2}}}}}3} \text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{e8}}}}}3} 18.\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{ea1}}}}}3} \text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{b7}}}}}3} 19.dxe5 dxe5 20.\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{c5}}}}}3} \text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{xc5}}}}}3} 21.bxc5 \text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{bd7}}}}}3} 22.\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{e3}}}}}3}± Berg-J. Johansson, Kungsor ch-SWE 2009.

16.\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{xe6}}}}}3} fxe6 17.\text{\textit{\textsmaller{\text{\textmd{\textsc{g5}}}}}3}
An important moment. Your obedient servant has played more or less optimally so far, but now he commits an error.

17...Qc8?!

More accurate was 17...Qd7, keeping control of the 7th rank, for example: 18.dxe5 (or 18.d5 exd5 19.Qxb6 Qxb6 20.exd5 h6 21.Qg4± or 21.Qe6 Qf8±) 18...dxe5 19.Qxb6 (weaker is 19.Qxd7 Qfxd7 20.Qxe6 Qf6 21.Qc5 Qxc5 22.bxc5 Qc4=) 19...Qxd3 20.exd3 Qxb6 21.Qeb1±. White retains a certain advantage, but all is ‘within permissible limits’.

18.Ra7 Re8 19.d5 Qxd5?!

Not wishing to die a slow and agonizing death, I try to organize some activity. 19...exd5 20.Qxb6 Qxb6 21.exd5 Qa6 22.Qxa6 Qxa6± was Caruana-Hautot, Novi Sad Ech-tt 2009.

20.exd5 exd5
A nice pawn grouping in the centre. White is only 'half-a-pawn' up (the knight is worth ~ 2.5 pawns).

21.\textit{d}2 h6?!  
More careful was 21...\textit{b}7.

22.\textit{f}3 e4 23.\textit{e}3 \textit{b}7  
More stubborn was 23...\textit{d}8! 24.\textit{f}4\textpm, but who could play so precisely here? The position is highly unconventional.

24.\textit{x}b7 \textit{x}b7 25.\textit{h}4  
Better 25.\textit{d}4.

25...\textit{d}7 26.\textit{g}6 \textit{d}8
Can you find a mate? The computer and I can’t. Somehow Black has managed to put up stubborn resistance.

27. \( \text{Ne2} \) \( \text{Nf7} \) 28. \( \text{Ne4} \) \( \text{d7} \) 29. \( \text{Ng3} \)

More precise was 29. \( \text{a7} \) \( \text{e5} \) 30. \( \text{xf7}+ \) \( \text{xf7} \) 31. \( \text{xe5}+ \) \( \text{dxe5} \) 32. \( \text{e2} \). The rook goes to a1, seizing the file.

29... \( \text{Ne5} \)

29...\( \text{d4} \).?

30. \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{xg6} \)

Thrilling but unsatisfactory is 30...\( \text{h7} \) 31. \( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{dxe5} \) 32. \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{d4} \) 33. \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{c4} \) 34. \( \text{g4} \) \( \text{xc2} \) 35. \( \text{xh6} \) \( \text{xh6} \) 36. \( \text{c1} \).

31. \( \text{g6} \)

Also good was 31. \( \text{xg6} \) \( \text{f6} \) 32. \( \text{h4} \) (32. \( \text{xd6} \)!) \( \text{d4} \) (32...\( \text{g6} \)? 33. \( \text{xc6} \)?) 33. \( \text{f4} \) \( \text{g6} \) 34. \( \text{xc6} \).

31...\( \text{g6} \) 32. \( \text{xg6} \) \( \text{f6} \)

An important moment. The white rook cannot move to a1. The a-file is the only open highway and it is advisable for Black to grab it.

33. \( \text{f4} \) \( \text{d4} \) 34. \( \text{c1} \) \( \text{f7} \) 35. \( \text{f1} \) \( \text{d5} \)
Reasonable. The d4-pawn prevents White from blocking the black pawn phalanx.

36.\textit{d}d1  \textit{a}a8 37.\textit{b}b2?

An inaccuracy which allows me to get off with a whole skin. The precise 37.\textit{e}e2! would have preserved the advantage: 37...\textit{a}a1 (37...\textit{a}a2 38.\textit{x}xd4  \textit{x}xd4 39.\textit{x}xd4  \textit{x}xe2 40.\textit{e}e3± with a solid blockade on the dark squares) 38.\textit{e}e1  g5 (38...\textit{b}b1 39.\textit{a}a3+-) 39.\textit{b}b2±.

37...g5 38.\textit{h}h5

Now 38.\textit{e}e2 couldn’t be played because of the obvious 38...d3± and two white pieces are under fire.

38...\textit{a}a2 39.\textit{x}xf6  \textit{x}xb2

A rook and a knight are essentially weaker than a rook and a bishop.
40. \( \text{Nxe}4 \)

40. \( \text{Ng}4 \) \( \text{Bxc}2 \) 41. \( \text{Rxd}4 \) \( \text{Rxc}2 \) 42. \( \text{Rxe}4 \) \( \text{Kf}6 \) 43. \( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{c}5 \) 44. \( \text{bxc}5 \) \( \text{Rc}5 \) 45. \( \text{hxg}5+ \) \( \text{hxg}5 \) 46. \( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 47. \( \text{exe}5 \) \( \text{exe}5 \) 48. \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 49. \( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{d}4 \) 50. \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{b}3 \) 51. \( \text{c}1 \) \( \text{e}3 \)

Draw, as White plays 52.f4.

Black took too much risk in the following clash at the Aeroflot Open. Very soon Yakov Geller obtained an overwhelming position. The bishop on a6 looked quite poor, while White’s rooks lorded it on the 7th rank! However, Bocharov’s inventive defence forced the enemy to make a mistake and even lose.

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Yakov Geller (2544)
Dmitry Bocharov (2605)
Moscow Aeroflot Open A 2011 (5)

1.e4 \( d6 \) 2.d4 \( \text{c}f6 \) 3.\( \text{c}c3 \) e5 4.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{bd}7 \) 5.\( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 6.0-0 \( 0-0 \) \( 7.\text{a}4 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 8.\( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 9.\( \text{a}2 \) \( \text{a}6 \) 10.\( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{b}8 \) 11.\( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{b}5 \) 12.axb5 \( \text{axb}5 \) 13.\( \text{b}4 \) \( \text{c}7 \)

Or 13...\( \text{b}7 \) 14.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{h}6 \) 15.\( \text{b}3 \) exd4 Interesting is 15...c5!? 16.dxc5 (the analogical 16.bxc5 dxc5 is unclear) 16...dxc5, threatening...c5-c4 and the e4-pawn is kept under fire. 16.\( \text{xd}4 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 17.\( \text{e}2 \) (Smeets-J. Johansson, Sweden tt 2010/11) and here 17...d5! could have equalized.
Evidently intending to capture on b4.

14.\textit{d}3 exd4 15.\textit{x}d4 \textit{e}5

Reasonable. The Russian makes use of the fact that the white queen is too actively placed.

16.\textit{e}3 \textit{f}d7

Black regroups his pieces. The bishop on e7 is willing to go out to f6, and the knight on e5 may eventually occupy point c4.
17. Ne2 f6 18. Nxe5 dxe5 19. c3 b6

I think that after the appearance of a black pawn on e5 the position is about equal. Why should White be better here? The pawn structure is almost symmetrical.

20. c1 a4 21. b3 xc3 22. xc3 c7 23. d3 d6 24. c5 e7

Somewhere deep down, Black may be planning ... d6xc5. I wonder if this was really the case.

25. e3 h8

Also not bad is 25... xc5 26. xc5 xc5 27. bxc5 d8.

26. f5 27. ad1 f6?

Playing with fire. Bocharov tries to exploit the advantage of the bishop pair – otherwise I don’t see any explanation. If 27... xc5 28. xc5 xc5 29. bxc5 and White is slightly better.

28. d2 c7

29. a6!

‘Swift punishment’, we could say – if the game had come to its logical end.

29... xa6

29... a8? 30. xc7 xc7 31. d8+.

30. d7 f8 31. xc7

Not a trace remains of the two bishops. White is dominating.
31...fxe4 32...g5

Actually, I also thought of this move. Houdini, however, suggests the even stronger 32...e3 c8 33...xe4 xf2 34...xe5, threatening c7xg7 with a win as both rooks on f2 and b8 are hanging.

32...e8 33...dd7 g6 34...h5 e3

Despair, but what else can be done? After 34...c8 35...f7 g8 36...f6 White is also winning.

35...xe3 xb4

The moment of truth.

36...h2?!

Brilliances like 36...xe6? don’t work: 36...hxg6 37...xg7 h4.
Correct was 36...d1!, for instance: 36...e4 37...d2 c8 38...xc8++; or 37...f8 38...f7 f6 39...xf6 gxf6. Here the computer’s verdict is ‘totally winning’, as the white king hides from the e3 check by 40...h2, and then the decisive penetration with d6 is threatened.

36...e4

The only move.

37...f3 xf3 38...xf3

After the trade of the queens Black can breathe again.

38...c8 39...f7

39...e7=. 
39...\texttt{Bxe8}\?

40.\texttt{Bxd7=}

40...\texttt{Bxe8} 41.\texttt{e7 f7} 42.\texttt{xf7}\texttt{g8} 43.\texttt{e7 d6} 44.\texttt{g3 d5}

44...\texttt{d2} 45.\texttt{c4!}!

45.\texttt{g4 e5} 46.\texttt{f5 e2}

Two passed pawns have appeared. Such a pair is able to ensure the victory without help of the king.

47.\texttt{e6 h6} 48.\texttt{xe8+ h7} 49.\texttt{xe5 c3} 50.\texttt{e4 xf3} 51.\texttt{d6 b4} 52.\texttt{e5 d3+} 53.\texttt{xc6 g6} 54.\texttt{f8 b3} 55.\texttt{f2 xh3} 56.\texttt{e6 b2} 57.\texttt{f1 b1=} 58.\texttt{xb1 f6} 59.\texttt{e1 e7} 60.\texttt{d5 g3} 61.\texttt{e5 g5} 62.\texttt{h5 xg5} 63.\texttt{e4 g6} 64.\texttt{d5 g4} 65.\texttt{e4 g5} 66.\texttt{e3 xe6} 67.\texttt{f2 e5} 68.\texttt{g2 f4} 69.\texttt{f2 g3+ 0-1}

In 2010, in an Olympic encounter, the struggle developed around the advanced c5-pawn, which lost touch with the rest of the infantry. The Russian grandmaster did not play flawlessly (19...b4) and White seized a substantial initiative. On the 35th move the situation was catastrophic for Black, but then suddenly amnesty was granted.
Does the c5-pawn bother the enemy or is it a potential weakness for White?

19...b4

Was this necessary? Interesting is 19...\textit{d}d8, intending simply ...\textit{d}d8-e7 and ...\textit{d}d7xc5, for instance: 20.\textit{h}4 \textit{xc}5! 21.\textit{xc}5 \textit{d}7 22.\textit{xc}6 \textit{b}6 23.\textit{d}5 \textit{h}4. The initiative is, however, in White's hands.

20.\textit{a}4 \textit{b}5

The Russian player tries to surround the c5-pawn, while his own pawn on b4 is also potentially weak.

21.\textit{d}2

21.\textit{h}4!?.

21...\textit{a}6 22.\textit{c}4 \textit{b}b8

It looks like Black admits his mistake. We can conclude that the push 19...b4 has turned out to be unsuccessful. White's knights now tread the enemy camp with their dirty hooves.

23.\textit{d}6 \textit{b}5 24.\textit{b}2

24.\textit{ed}1 \pm.

24...\textit{bd}8 25.\textit{ed}1 \textit{e}8

I don't think this is what Black strived for initially...

26.\textit{f}5 \textit{h}7
27. \( \text{Qd2} \)

Strong is 27.\( \text{a2!} \): the rooks are doubled on the a-file and will get to the 7th rank.

27... \( \text{Nef6} \) 28. \( \text{Qe3} \) \( \text{Nef8} \) 29.f3 \( \text{Nef6} \) 30. \( \text{Nd6} \) \( \text{Kg8} \) 31. \( \text{Rd2} \) \( \text{Nh5} \) 32. \( \text{Rd1} \) \( \text{Nf4} \) 33. \( \text{Kh2} \) \( \text{Qa7} \) 34. \( \text{Nxb5} \) cxb5

A key moment. Obviously, Black is on the verge of defeat, because the d7-knight is stuck in a nasty pin and material loss is inevitable.

35. \( \text{d3?} \)

Time trouble, perhaps? Otherwise it is difficult to understand why a chess player with an Elo-rating of about 2600 rejected the simple win of a piece with 35. \( \text{Rd6} \) \( \text{Qc7} \) 36. \( \text{Qd2} \) \( \text{Qxc5} \) 37. \( \text{Rxd7} \) \( \text{Rxd7} \) 38. \( \text{Qd7} \). Black doesn’t have any compensation, for example 38... \( \text{Qf2} \) 39. \( \text{Qd2} \) and... what?

35... \( \text{Rc8} \) 36. \( \text{Qxe5} \) \( \text{Qxe5} \) 37. \( \text{Qf4} \) \( \text{Qxc5} \) 38. \( \text{Qg3} \) \( \text{Qe7} \) 39. \( \text{Qd5} \) \( \text{Qc4} \) 40. \( \text{Qf2} \) \( \text{Rf8} \) 41. \( \text{Qg1} \) \( \text{Qe7} \) 42. \( \text{Qd4} \) \( \text{Qh7} \) 43. \( \text{Qxc5} \) \( \text{Qxc5} \) 44. \( \text{Rd7} \) \( \text{Qf6} \) 45. \( \text{Qd5} \) \( \text{a1+} \) 46. \( \text{Qf2} \) \( \text{Qxd5} \) 47. \( \text{Qxd5} \) \( \text{Qa7+} \) 48. \( \text{Qg3} \) \( \text{Qc7+} \) 49. \( \text{Qf2} \) \( \text{a7+} \) 50. \( \text{Qg3} \) \( \text{c7+} \) 51.f4 \( \text{g5} \)

A typical strike. White has lost all his advantage.

52. \( \text{Qf5+} \) \( \text{Qg8} \) 53. \( \text{h4} \) \( \text{gxf4+} \) 54. \( \text{xf4} \) \( \text{b6} \) 55. \( \text{h3} \) \( \text{g7} \) 56. \( \text{g4+} \) \( \text{h7} \) 57. \( \text{f5+} \) \( \text{g7} \) 58. \( \text{g4+} \) \( \text{h7} \) 59. \( \text{f4} \) \( \text{g7} \) 60. \( \text{g4+} \) \( \text{h7} \) 61. \( \text{h2} \) \( \text{d6+} \) 62. \( \text{g3} \) \( \text{d2+} \) 63. \( \text{h3} \) \( \text{e1} \) 64. \( \text{f5+} \) \( \text{g7} \) 65. \( \text{g4+} \) \( \text{h7} \) 66. \( \text{f5+} \) \( \text{g7} \) 67. \( \text{g4+} \) \( \text{h7} \) 68. \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{g7} \) 69. \( \text{g4+} \) \( \text{h7} \) 70. \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{g7} \) 71. \( \text{g4+} \) ½-½

In the Russian team championship of 2011, the Chinese mercenary Ni Hua got the advantage by exchanging his knight for a bishop (18. \( \text{Qxe7} \)), but then he acted extremely irresolutely, which even allowed the opponent to take over the initiative. Finally, only respect for the representative of the Celestial Empire’s Elo, or maybe team interests, urged Pridorozhni to agree on a draw in a promising position.
1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nf3 Bd7 5.c4 Be7 6.0-0 0-0 7.a4 c6 8.e1 b6 9.a2 a6 10.h3 Bb8 11.e3 b5 12.axb5 axb5 13.b4 c7 14.b3 exd4 15.cxd4 Nc5

Without attacking anything, this jump is not so spectacular, but still quite logical.

16.f4 Ng6

Also possible was 16...c4, but after 17.xc4 bxc4 18.b5 White has the initiative; the c4-pawn is slightly discordant with the c8-bishop.

17.Qf5 Re8 18.Qxe7+ Qxe7 19.f5 Qe5 20.g5±
Black’s prospects look extremely bleak, and Houdini agrees with this. Judge for yourself: White has two bishops, and the only black one (on c8) is very limited in its actions. The d6-pawn is potentially weak, and can hardly move. On the other hand, all White’s pieces are maximally active.

20...Re8 21.Qd2

More accurate seems to be 21.Bxf6 gxf6 22.Qd2±, aiming, on occasion, to harass the black king.

21...Bb7

21...Qe7.

22.Qe3 h6 23.Qh4


23...Kh7 24.Qh1 Qe7 25.Qe2?
The Chinese player is operating too slowly. Apparently, he planned to send the knight to h5, but Black has an instant counterblow:

25...c5! 26.c3

26.bxc5 dxc5

26...g5 27.fxg6+ fxg6 28.g3 f8

In reply to 28...g5 White had planned 29.f5, though it is not dangerous: 29...d7 is unclear.

29.d5

29.a7 a8 doesn’t change the picture.

29...c8 30.xf6 xf6 31.c4?!
Ni Hua tries to liven up the game. I suspect it may have been time trouble, because this move sooner plays into Black’s hands. Please note how cramped the g3-knight is, there are hardly any squares for it to jump to.

31...\textit{\text{n}}xc4

More logical was 31...\textit{\text{b}}xc4 32.\textit{\text{b}}xc5 \textit{\text{d}}xc5. Why trade off the nice blockading knight? However, this is easy for me to say than to decide over the board.

32.\textit{\text{b}}xc4 \textit{\text{b}}xc4 33.\textit{\text{b}}xc5 \textit{\text{d}}xc5 34.e5 \textit{\text{e}}b6 35.\textit{\text{a}}e1 \textit{\text{e}}6 36.\textit{\text{d}}e4 \textit{\text{g}}7 37.\textit{\text{f}}6 \textit{\text{b}}1 38.\textit{\text{g}}3\texttt{+}

Obviously Black is better here, but team tournaments have their own rules: draw agreed.

Sound play was demonstrated by Ruben Felgaer in the following game, who managed to hold against an elite Ukrainian
grandmaster. Black sacrificed a pawn and obtained abundant piece play as compensation.

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ¤f6 3.c3 e5 4.¤f3 ¤bd7 5.¤c4 ¤e7 6.0-0 c6 7.a4 0-0 8.¤e1 b6 9.¤a2 a6 10.h3 ¤b8 11.¤e3 b5 12.axb5 axb5 13.b4 ¦c7 14.¤d3 ¦b6

14...exd4!? 15.¤xd4 ¤e5 16.¤e3 ¦b7 17.¤e1±.

15.¤b3 h6 16.¤d1 ¦e6

Or 16...¤d8!? – in any case I don’t see any ‘contra-indications’ for this move.

17.¤xe6 fxe6 18.dxe5 dxe5 19.¤xb6 ¦xb6=

What does White actually have here? The pawns are equal, the e5-pawn is exposed, but so is the b4-pawn. White’s knights have no strongpoints.

20.¤ab1

20.¤xe5 ¦bd8 21.¤f3 ¦xb4=.

20...¦bd8 21.¤e2 ¦h5

Simpler was 21...¦d6 or 21...¦c7.

22.¤xd8 ¦xd8 23.¤xe5 ¦f4 24.¤e3

24.¤d2 ¦g5; 24.¤e1? ¦d4 25.¤xc6 ¦xc3 26.¤xc3 ¦e2+-.
24...\text{\textit{b7}!}

Ruben plays very precisely. After 24...\text{\textit{Qxe3}} 25.\text{\textit{fxe3 b6}} (25...\text{\textit{h5}} 26.\text{\textit{g4 f6}} 27.\text{\textit{x6c6+}}-) 26.\text{\textit{xc6±}} Black might have problems.

25.\text{\textit{d3}}

25...\text{\textit{xd3}}

More accurate is 25...\text{\textit{b6}} 26.\text{\textit{c5 e7}} with compensation. Besides, the pawn which, after trades, inevitably ends up on c5, will be weak.

26.\text{\textit{xd3 b6}} 27.\text{\textit{d1 f7}} 28.\text{\textit{e2 g6}} 29.\text{\textit{h1}}

More reasonable is 29.\text{\textit{a1±}} with the transparent idea \text{\textit{a1-a6}}.

29...\text{\textit{f6}} 30.\text{\textit{b3 d4}} 31.\text{\textit{g4 e5}} 32.\text{\textit{f3 d8}} 33.\text{\textit{d3 f8}} 34.\text{\textit{f3 d8}} 35.\text{\textit{d3 f8}} 36.\text{\textit{f3}} ½-½

Dimitri Reinderman confidently equalized against a famous Israeli grandmaster. First he drove the white knight from c3, then he struck a blow in the centre: ...d6-d5. Emil tried to confuse his opponent, throwing almost all his troops at the black king and ignoring material.

In a complicated position the opponents, perhaps due to lack of time, made mistakes here and there. The last one was made by the Dutchman.
12. \( \text{\textit{f5 f8}} \) 13.\textit{dxe5} \\
13.\textit{g5 h6} 14.\textit{h4 b5} 15.\textit{dxe5 xe5} is a transposition. \\
13...\textit{xe5} \\
Not good is 13...\textit{dxe5} 14.\textit{Qf3} \pm with great pressure on Black’s castled position. \\
14.\textit{g5 h6} 15.\textit{h4} \\

15...\textit{b5} \\
Black can also include the bishop in the struggle on the kingside with 15...\textit{c8} 16.\textit{d4} g5 17.\textit{g3 h5} 18.\textit{xe5} \pm. \\
16.\textit{e3}?! \\
Better seems to be 16.\textit{d4}, also taking square b4 under control. \\
16...\textit{b4} \pm 17.\textit{e2 d5} \\
This advance is usually stronger when the white knight has left c3. \\
18.\textit{exd5 cxd5} 19.\textit{d4 ed7} \\
Dimitri supports the f6-knight, threatening 19...\textit{c5} at the same time. A common truth is worth remembering: the knight is the best blockader, not the queen. \\
20.\textit{g3 h7} 21.\textit{f4}
This reminds of a football-like collision (inspired by the latest World Championship in Brazil). Many black players might have resigned here, especially when an opponent with an Elo-rating of 2650 is sitting in front of you.

21...\textit{\texttt{R}}e5

I can’t criticize this move, being a ‘practitioner’. I realize how difficult it is to change your behaviour at the board. There were better moves, but this is what the computer wants to play: 21...g5! 22.\textit{\texttt{B}}xg5 h\textit{\texttt{x}}g5 23.\textit{\texttt{R}}xg5 \textit{\texttt{R}}e4; 21...\textit{\texttt{R}}e4! 22.\textit{\texttt{W}}d2 (22.\textit{\texttt{B}}x\textit{\texttt{f}}6 \textit{\texttt{E}}xd4 23.\textit{\texttt{B}}xd4 – not 23.\textit{\texttt{B}}xd8 \textit{\texttt{E}}xf4-+) 22...g6 23.\textit{\texttt{O}}xd5 \textit{\texttt{O}}xd5 24.\textit{\texttt{B}}xd5 \textit{\texttt{O}}xh4 25.\textit{\texttt{A}}xa8 (25.\textit{\texttt{O}}xh4 \textit{\texttt{O}}b6\texttt{±}) 25...\textit{\texttt{g}}xf5 26.\textit{\texttt{S}}c6 \textit{\texttt{E}}c4\texttt{±}.

22.\textit{\texttt{e}}3?!

22.\textit{\texttt{A}}xf6 \textit{\texttt{W}}xf6 23.\textit{\texttt{O}}e3 \textit{\texttt{O}}g8 24.\textit{\texttt{R}}f3 unclear.

22...\textit{\texttt{g}}6

22...b\textit{\texttt{c}}c3?! 23.bxc3 \textit{\texttt{W}}c7 24.\textit{\texttt{A}}xf6 \textit{\texttt{O}}xf6 25.\textit{\texttt{O}}e3 \textit{\texttt{E}}d8\texttt{±}.

23.\textit{\texttt{B}}b1?!

Each move deserves a mark, at best ‘?’. You can’t avoid mistakes here. Best was 23.\textit{\texttt{A}}xf6 with a long and forced variation: 23...\textit{\texttt{W}}xf6 24.\textit{\texttt{O}}e3 bxc3 25.bxc3 \textit{\texttt{A}}c5 26.\textit{\texttt{O}}xd5 \textit{\texttt{E}}xd5 27.\textit{\texttt{O}}xd5 \textit{\texttt{A}}xd4 28.\textit{\texttt{A}}xf6+ \textit{\texttt{O}}xf6 29.\textit{\texttt{A}}xf7 \textit{\texttt{O}}e5, and how should the chances be assessed here?
23...\textit{c}e5 24.\textit{d}2 \textit{g}xf5 25.\textit{d}3

An unconventional material situation (but surely favourable for Black) emerges after 25.\textit{h}5 \textit{x}h5 26.\textit{x}d8 \textit{g}x3 27.\textit{c}xb4 \textit{e}2+ 28.\textit{f}1 (after 28.\textit{h}1 \textit{xf}2 29.\textit{x}f5+ \textit{g}8+ a number of pieces are in line for capture, but Black simply has more of them) 28...\textit{xd}8+.

25...\textit{c}7?

The right way through the minefield was 25...\textit{e}4 26.\textit{xc}5 \textit{xc}5+.

26.\textit{xc}5 \textit{xc}5 27.\textit{f}4?

After 27.\textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 28.\textit{f}4 the Dutchman would have been feeling uncomfortable.

27...\textit{e}4+–

Do you see the difference? Of course, now the rook is protected by the d7-knight. It seems that the extra piece will bring a point for Black, as there is no mate, but...

28.\textit{c}xb4 \textit{d}4

Better was 28...\textit{xb}4 29.\textit{f}6 \textit{d}xf6 30.\textit{x}e5 \textit{g}x3 31.\textit{x}g3 \textit{e}4+ or 31.\textit{xf}6 \textit{e}1+ 32.\textit{h}2 \textit{f}1+ 33.\textit{h}1 \textit{d}2+ 34.\textit{h}2 \textit{f}3+ with mate in 11 moves.

29.\textit{h}2 \textit{d}2 30.\textit{e}3 \textit{xb}2?!

Better was 30...\textit{xb}4 31.\textit{xe}4 dxe4 32.\textit{d}1 \textit{d}5+.

31.\textit{xe}4 dxe4 32.\textit{d}1 \textit{d}5 33.\textit{g}3 \textit{ae}8

It was possible to revive the bishop by opening up the long diagonal with 33...e3 34.fxe3 \textit{ae}8+. 
34.\textit{g5}!

A trick that can easily be missed.

34...\textit{h8} 35.\textit{h4} \textit{xb4}?! 36.\textit{f4}?

Suddenly the rook is caught in the centre of the board.

36.f4!? e3 37.fxe5 \textit{xe4} 38.\textit{xh4} e2 39.\textit{xd5} e1=\textit{h} 40.\textit{xf7+} \textit{h8} 42.\textit{xf8+=}.

36...\textit{d6}?

I suppose it was huge time trouble already, but the phase exhausting calculation of long variations is over. Stronger was 36...\textit{e7}, which suggested itself, for instance 37.\textit{g5} \textit{d6} 38.\textit{f4} \textit{c5+-}.

37.\textit{d8} \textit{g6} 38.\textit{xe5} \textit{xe5}

38...\textit{e5} 39.\textit{xd5} \textit{xd8} 40.\textit{xd8\pm}.

39.\textit{xd7} \textit{e6}?

More stubborn was 39...\textit{b3}!?, but who would move the bishop so far away from the main army in his last seconds?

40.\textit{d6}\textit{+-}
In a duel at the Turin Chess Olympiad the bishop was brought to g5, which didn’t bring White anything. Ukrainian grandmaster Pavel Elianov first equalized, and then seized the initiative. The opponents exchanged mistakes, but the Azerbaijani player made more of them, leading to Black’s victory.

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Gadir Guseinov (2615)
Pavel Elianov (2665)

Turin ol 2006 (11)


In the same town this variation had already been applied against Gadir: 10...b7 11.h4 exd4 12.exd4 c5 13.d1 g6 14.h6 e8 15.f3 f8 16.fx8 xf8 17.g5 e7 18.f3 g7 19.ad1+ (Guseinov-Nguyen Ngoc Truongson, Turin Olympiad 2006). Black stands considerably worse, taking into account the weakness on d6.

11.g5


11...b5 12.axb5 axb5 13.b4
The same motif. But does the bishop feel good on g5 in this scheme? We will see.

13...\textit{Re}8

Here is a fragment taken from an acquaintance of mine from Siberia. It is easier for chess players who come from wealthy Russian regions (yes, they do exist) to travel and participate in strong tournaments. They are sent on assignments and don’t have to spend their own money.

13...\textit{Qc}7 14.\textit{Qd}3 \textit{h}6 15.\textit{Be}3 \textit{exd}4 16.\textit{Qxd}4 \textit{Qe}5 17.\textit{Re}8 (or 17...\textit{d}7?! 18.f4 \textit{Qc}4 19.\textit{Qxc}4 \textit{bxc}4 20.\textit{Qxc}4 \textit{fc}8 with certain compensation for the pawn – bishop pair, counterplay. Here, 21.\textit{Ra}7 \textit{d}8 is not fatal) 18.f4 \textit{Qg}6 19.\textit{Bd}7 (19...\textit{f}8 20.\textit{Qb}3 \textit{d}7±) 20.\textit{Qf}5 \textit{b}6 (20...\textit{f}8 21.\textit{ad}1+-) 21.\textit{xe}7+ \textit{xe}7 22.\textit{ad}1\textit{±} Smeets-Kabanov, Aix-les-Bains Ech 2011.

14.\textit{Rb}1 \textit{Qc}7 15.\textit{Qh}4

The white knight’s departure to the edge of the board is as always followed by...

15...\textit{exd}4 16.\textit{Qxd}4 \textit{Qf}8 17.\textit{Qd}3 \textit{Qc}6=  

With the liquidation of the source of Black’s constant concern (the a2-bishop) the position becomes even.

18.\textit{xe}6 \textit{fxe}6

Better was 18...\textit{xe}6 with a slight initiative for Black, for example 19.\textit{Qd}2 \textit{Qd}7 and the knight goes to c4.

19.\textit{Qg}3 \textit{Qd}7 20.\textit{Qf}3 \textit{e}5 21.\textit{h}4 \textit{Qh}5 22.\textit{Qg}4 \textit{Qxg}5 23.\textit{xg}5 \textit{Qf}4

Pavel has completely solved his opening problems. His pawn structure ensures Black central control.

24.\textit{Qe}2

24.\textit{f}5 \textit{Qb}6=.
24...\(\text{Ne6}\) 25.\(\text{Qe3}\) \(\text{Nb6}\) 26.\(\text{Qf5}\) \(\text{Qc4}\) 27.\(\text{Qd3}\) \(\text{Qbd8}\) 28.\(\text{a1}\) d5 29.\(\text{ea6}\)

29.exd5 cxd5 30.\(\text{ea6}\) \(\text{Qb7}\) =.

29...\(\text{Qb7}\) 30.\(\text{ca1}\) \(\text{Qf7}\)

A curious line is 30...\(\text{dxe4}\) 31.\(\text{Qxe4}\) \(\text{Qxa6}\) 32.\(\text{xa6}\) \(\text{d1+}\) 33.\(\text{h2}\) \(\text{d2}\) 34.\(\text{xc6}\) (34.\(\text{e3}\)?) 34...\(\text{f1+}\) 35.\(\text{g1}\) \(\text{d2}\) =.

31.\(\text{xc6}\) \(\text{xf4}\) 32.\(\text{xf4}\) \(\text{xf4}\)

Complicated geometry. White has an extra pawn, but the enemy has many threats: ...\(\text{c4-e5}\), \(\text{d5xe4}\)...

33.\(\text{d1}\) \(\text{dxe4}\) 34.\(\text{g4}\) \(\text{h8}\)

34...\(\text{e5}\) 35.\(\text{h6}\) +.

35.\(\text{xf4}\)?

Only a dilettante would criticize the players here. I used to play for teams in different European countries and leagues. I know the burden of responsibility you can feel in team tournaments. I suppose that at the Olympiad this burden is even heavier, especially in the leading group. Both Ukraine and Azerbaijan are among the strongest squads in the world.

Guseinov had an opportunity to elegantly force a draw with 35.\(\text{xg7+}\)! \(\text{g7}\) 36.\(\text{g7}\) \(\text{g7}\) 37.\(\text{a7+}\) \(\text{g8}\) 38.\(\text{cc7}\), and it is impossible to avoid perpetual check along the 7th rank: 38...\(\text{d6}\) 39.\(\text{g7+}\) \(\text{f8}\) 40.\(\text{h7}\) \(\text{g8}\) 41.\(\text{ag7+}\) \(\text{f8}\) 42.\(\text{cc7}\) =.

35...\(\text{g6}\)?

Right was 35...\(\text{d5}\) 36.\(\text{g4}\) \(\text{e5}\) 37.\(\text{ca6}\) g6 38.\(\text{a7}\) \(\text{d7}\) or 35...\(\text{e3}\) 36.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{xe3}\). White is in trouble in all lines.

36.\(\text{c7}\) \(\text{xf5}\) 37.\(\text{xf5}\) \(\text{xf5}\) 38.\(\text{aa7}\)
This must be a draw by analogy with the line given above, because also here, White’s rooks are raging on the 7th rank.

38...\textit{E}e6 39.\textit{E}xh7+ \textit{Ke}8 40.\textit{E}hg7+ \textit{Kf}8 41.\textit{E}af7+ \textit{Ke}8

The time-control is passed and now the players can think things over.

42.\textit{E}xf5?!  
Playing with fire, but we don’t know what was happening in the match at this point. It may have been that the Azerbaijani grandmaster had to take a risk as his team was losing!  
More careful was 42.\textit{E}b7, threatening \textit{E}g8 with mate: 42...\textit{E}f6 43.\textit{E}ge7+ \textit{Kf}8 44.\textit{E}h7 \textit{E}g6 45.\textit{E}h8+ \textit{E}g8 46.\textit{E}h6, and this looks like a draw.

42...\textit{E}d1+ 43.\textit{E}h2 \textit{O}d6 44.\textit{E}h5 \textit{E}e7 45.\textit{E}xe7+ \textit{Kxe}7 46.\textit{E}c5 \textit{E}d2\text{±}
47.\(g1\)

47.\(g3\) doesn’t work due to 47...\(e3\)! with the threat ...\(d6-e4+\), for example 48.\(e5+ f6 49.xe3\) (or 49.\(f4\) 49...\(f5+\).

47...\(e6?! 48.h4?\)

Better 48.g4.

48...\(d4\)

48...\(d1+ 49.h2 \(f1+\). Remember that 50.\(g3\) is met by 50...\(e3\!\).

49.c3 \(c4?\)

49...\(d1++\).
50.g4?

The player who makes the last mistake, loses. 50.h5! would have led to a draw, for example: 50...\(\text{Rxc5}\) 51.bxc5 \(\text{Nf7}\) 52.g4 \(\text{d5}\) 53.\(\text{g2}\) \(\text{xc5}\) 54.\(\text{g3}\) \(\text{c4}\) 55.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{xc3}\) 56.g5 \(\text{b4}\) 57.g6 \(\text{h6}\) 58.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{g8}\) 59.\(\text{h6}\) \(\text{xh6}\) 60.\(\text{xh6}\) \(\text{b3}\) 61.g7 \(\text{b2}\) 62.\(\text{g8=Q}\) \(\text{b1=Q}\).

50...\(\text{e3!+}\) 51.\(\text{f3}\)

The point is that 51.\(\text{xc4}\) is bad due to 51...\(\text{e2!}\) and the homely pawn becomes a beautiful queen.

51...\(\text{xf4!}\) 52.\(\text{xf1}\) \(\text{xf3+}\) 53.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{h3}\) 0-1

A depressing finish. For a long time, the struggle was for all three results.

Ukrainian grandmaster (the scourge of European opens) Sergey Fedorchuk obtained a comfortable advantage in the following duel. However, it turned out to be a mirage once again. Objectively, the evaluation fluctuated around equality all the time. As often happens, in search of a victory that wasn’t there, Fedorchuk, from having an extra pawn, ended up in a position with a pawn less. But then Sergey took control and drew.

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Sergey Fedorchuk (2662)
Nikolay Kabanov (2524)
Aix-les-Bains Ech 2011 (7)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \(\text{d6}\) 3.\(\text{c3}\) e5 4.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{bd7}\) 5.\(\text{c4}\) \(\text{e7}\) 6.0-0 0-0 7.a4 \(\text{c6}\) 8.\(\text{e1}\) \(\text{b6}\) 9.h3 a6 10.\(\text{a2}\) \(\text{b8}\) 11.\(\text{d3}\)

Compact play, the queen as it were ‘glues the white pieces together’. Now almost all squares in the centre are under his control.

11...\(\text{b5}\) 12.\(\text{AXB5}\) axb5 13.\(\text{b4}\) \(\text{c7}\) 14.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{b6}\)
If Black surrenders the centre with 14...exd4, after 15.\(\text{N}x\text{d}4\) \(\text{N}e5\) 16.\(\text{Q}d2\) White stands better.

15.\(\text{B}x\text{f}6\) \(\text{B}x\text{f}6\) 16.d5

After the exchange on f6 White closes the centre, thus devaluating the dark-squared bishop. Actually, in the fight for the light squares White has an extra piece now.

16...\(\text{cxd}5\)

16...\(\text{d}7\)!? 17.\(\text{d}xc6\) \(\text{wc}6\) 18.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{d}xd5\) 19.\(\text{d}xd5\) \(\text{wc}7\) 20.\(\text{ec}1\).

17.\(\text{d}xd5\)

Also good was 17.\(\text{d}xd5\) \(\text{c}4\) 18.\(\text{xc}4\) \(\text{bxc}4\) 19.\(\text{d}2\).

17...\(\text{d}xd5\) 18.\(\text{d}xd5\) \(\text{e}6\) 19.\(\text{a}5\)

Maybe White should have played 19.\(\text{xe}6\) \(\text{fxe}6\) 20.\(\text{a}6\), with a certain initiative.

19...\(\text{d}xd5\) 20.\(\text{d}xd5\) \(\text{wc}2\) 21.\(\text{xb}5\) \(\text{xb}5\) 22.\(\text{xb}5\)

It looks as if White is considerably better here. He has a passed pawn, and in addition the black bishop is quite passive.
22...d8 23.b7 h6 24.a1 b2 25.a8

The rook has been activated, but the first rank has been weakened.

25...c1+ 26.h2 f4+ 27.h1 c1+ 28.g1

White has managed to escape from the checks, but there are not enough resources to win.

28..d2 29.d7 g5 30.xf8+ xf8 31.b5 xf2 32.xd6+ g8 33.b8+ h7 34.xe5 e1 35.h2 e3 36.f5+ g8 37.c8+ h7 38.f5+ g8 39.f3 c5 40.e2 f4+ 41.g3 xg3+ 42.xg3 xg1+ 43.f3 h1+ 44.f2 h2+ 45.e1 xh3 46.d2 b3 47.d3
The Russian player has even won a pawn, but the far advanced b-pawn insures White’s safety. In queen endings, often not the number of pawns is important, but how far advanced they are.

47...\(\text{b2+}\) 48.\(\text{e3}\) g5 49.\(\text{d8+}\) \(\text{h7}\) 50.\(\text{d5}\) \(\text{c3+}\) 51.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{g7}\) 52.\(\text{c6}\) \(\text{b2+}\) 53.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{b3+}\) 54.\(\text{f2}\) \(\text{b2+}\) 55.\(\text{f3}\) h5 56.b6 g4+ 57.\(\text{f4}\) f6 58.\(\text{c7+}\) \(\text{g6}\) 59.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{b3+}\) 60.\(\text{d2}\) \(\text{b2+}\) 61.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{b3+}\) 62.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{b2+}\) 63.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{b3+}\) ½-½
B) **The central approach: d4-d5**

White’s plan connected with the move d4-d5 essentially differs from the one considered above. We don’t have to dig deep to understand its sense:

a) A simple space grab

b) The elimination of the c6-pawn, after which Black’s pawn structure will look like a mouth without teeth. The weaknesses of the light squares, which were protected by the c6-pawn, will immediately tell.

From my own experience, the most instructive game in this line is a duel against Konstantin Landa, a Russian grandmaster and commentator who is well-known to Western readers (he lives in Germany).

I recommend you to study the comments and other game fragments given inside the main game. I know it doesn’t always seem entertaining to read a massive amount of small print, that’s why I’m stressing it in this case.

During the exchanges on d5, Konstantin gave up his bishop. He then built a pawn chain on the light squares. Right up to the 35th move the author maintained an acceptable position, but in time trouble the Elo-favourite managed to tilt the balance in his favour after all.

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**Konstantin Landa (2632)**

**Sergey Kasparov (2439)**

Senden Open 2002 (5)


A radical solution. White makes Black’s light squares vulnerable and aims at exploiting these weaknesses in the future.

9...cxd5

Please don’t be lazy and read this comment. This is an important moment. Black cannot comfortably close the centre as in reply to 9...c5 there may follow 10.a5!
analysis diagram

Right now, as long as Black still hasn’t played...a7-a6, and he cannot play ...b6-b5 unlike with the pawn on a6. Events can develop as follows: 10...bxa5 (10...a6 11.axb6 Nxb6 12.Bxe2 Nxe8² T. Ernst-J. Johansson, Stockholm 1992) 11.Nd2

10.Kxd5

Exactly with the bishop. Here there are some very subtle nuances for both sides.

10...Nxd5 11.Nxd5 Bb7

Or 11...f6 12.c4 (preferable seems 12.xe7+ xe7 13.g5 h6 14.xf6 xf6 15.d3 with initiative) 12...xd5

12.b3 f6

A stronger plan seems to be 12...c8!? , eyeing the c2-pawn. Black wants to capture on d5 to get the enemy e-pawn on this square, which would take away the frontal pressure on the d6-pawn. Besides, Black could have started an offensive on kingside with ...f7-f5, for example: 13.c4 c5 14.a3 (14.b4 suggests itself, depriving the c4-pawn of a solid defence: 14...e6 15.d3 a6 16.b5 c5 with counterplay) 14...xd5 (14...e8 15.xc5?! bxc5 16.xe7+ xe7 17.d2 g5 18.e3 e6 19.f1 f8 with initiative) 15.cxd5 f5 and Black is already better, M. Kuijf-V. Georgiev, Sitges Open 2003.

13.xf6+ xf6 14.c4 c7

Or at once 14...e7, as this move is necessary anyway, for instance: 15.d3 and now:

A) 15...c8 16.a3 c6 17.ad1 ad8 18.d2 White’s position is more pleasant, but only if the opponent marks time. Meanwhile, White must always reckon with ...f7-f5!, Papp-Monroy, Chur 2010;
B) The immediate 15...f5?! has also been played: 16.exf5 f6 The immediate 16...e4!? was applied against my old friend Tiviakov, forcing him to make a promising exchange sacrifice: 17.\textit{Rxe4} \textit{Bxe4} 18.\textit{Qxe4} \textit{f6} 19.\textit{Qd5+ Kh8} 20.\textit{Rb1 e5} 21.g4± Tiviakov-Shaw, England tt 2010/11.

\textit{analysis diagram}

If even a careful chess player like Tiviakov makes such a sharp move, then, believe me, it will be good. 17.\textit{Rb1 e4} 18.\textit{Qxe4} \textit{Qxe4} 19.\textit{Qxe4±}, Acs-Conquest, Bled ol 2002 (11).

\textbf{15.\textit{Qd3}} \textit{c6} 16.\textit{Qc3} \textit{Qd8} 17.\textit{Qd2} \textit{b7} 18.\textit{f3} a6

\textit{analysis diagram}

I intend to push ...b6-b5 in search of counterplay.
19.\textit{f1}

Worse is 19.\textit{b1}?! with the same idea \textit{c3-d5}, because of 19...d5! 20.cxd5 \textit{xd5} 21.exd5 e4 22.fxe4 \textit{xa1} and White may not have sufficient compensation for the exchange.

19...\textit{e7} 20.\textit{ed1} \textit{b5} 21.\textit{a5}

21.cxb5?! axb5 22.a5 d5 cannot be recommended.

21...\textit{de8}

21...f5! looked quite good, breaking the chain g2-f3-e4: 22.\textit{d2} (22.exf5 e4 23.fxe4 \textit{xe4} is unclear) 22...fxe4 23.\textit{xe4} d5. In all the lines light-squared bishop is revived.

22.\textit{b6} bxc4 23.bxc4 \textit{d7}

The bishop is transferred to e6 to attack the c4-pawn.

24.\textit{e3} \textit{e6} 25.\textit{d5} \textit{g5} 26.\textit{g3} \textit{xd5} 27.cxd5

27.\textit{xd5} leads to a drawn ending: 27...\textit{xd5} 28.\textit{xd5} \textit{e7} 29.c5 dxc5 30.\textit{e1} (30.\textit{xe5}?? \textit{f6}) 30...f6 31.\textit{d7} \textit{f8}.

27...\textit{g6} 28.\textit{g2} h5 29.\textit{h4} \textit{d8} 30.\textit{db1}±

Konstantin has definitely succeeded; White’s chances are better. However, despite my inaccuracies, a draw is still is the most probable outcome.

30.\textit{d7} 31.\textit{c1} \textit{g7} 32.\textit{xe8} \textit{xe8} 33.\textit{a2}

33.\textit{xa6}?? \textit{xb6} 34.axb6 \textit{c2}+ 35.\textit{g1} \textit{h3}+-.

33...\textit{b7} 34.\textit{e2} \textit{xb6} 35.\textit{b2}
A crucial moment. Lack of time prevented us from finding the best moves here.

35...Ec5?!

Considerably stronger was 35...Ec7! 36.axb6 Ec1 37.Ed1 Ec3 38.b7 Ed8, when I doubt that White can make progress. The passed a-pawn will move forward, distracting the enemy’s attention, while he needs to control the 2nd rank and the b-pawn, for instance: 39.Ed2 (39.Ed3 Ed2+ 40.Eh3 a5) 39...a5 40.Ed3 Exb3 41.Exb3 a4.

36.axb6 Ec1


37.Ed3 Ec5 38.Ed3 Ed8?

Under the motto: ‘Better a quick death than endless torture’.

38...Ec8.


40...Exc6 41.dxc6 Exc6 42.b7 also wins for White.

41.b7 a5 42.Ed6 1-0

The queen goes to a8.

Capturing on d5 with the knight is more common. Please have a look at a good-quality example taken from a tournament in the capital of Uzbekistan. It’s difficult to find any mistakes in this nice game.

131
Evgeny Alexeev (2688)
Mikheil Mchedlishvili (2629)
Tashkent Agzamov Memorial 2011 (6)
1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♙f6 3.♗c3 e5 4.♗f3 ♙bd7 5.♕c4 ♙e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.a4 c6 8.♕e1 b6 9.d5 cxd5

Which piece should capture? The knight seems to be a logical choice as usually White wants to preserve the bishop.

10.♕xd5 ♙b7

Or 10...♕xd5 11.♕xd5 ♙b8 and White stands slightly better.

11.b3

There is no point in taking the bishop: 11.♘xe7+ ♙xe7 and White’s concerns about the e4-pawn quite compensate for the bishop pair.

11...♗c8 12.♖e2

This strange-looking move serves to protect the c2-pawn, as White plans to recapture on d5 with pieces, not with the e-pawn.

12...♗c5 13.♗xf6+ ♙xf6 14.♘d5

I dare assume that White’s dream in similar structures is to get a foothold for a piece (but not a pawn!) on d5, and leave the opponent with the dark-squared bishop.

14...♕d7

Black also has competent play after 14...♕xd5 15.♕xd5 ♙e6 16.♕e3 ♙c7 (interesting is 16...♖e3!? 17.♖d1 ♙c8= or 17.a5 ♙c7 18.axb6 axb6 19.g3 ♙e7=) 17.♕d3 (17.♕b7 ♙b8 18.♕c6 with initiative – not 18.♕xa7 ♙c8=) 17...d5!? with counterplay, for example 18.a5 d4 19.axb6 axb6 20.♗d2 ♙e6= G. Flear-R. Mamedov, Bastia 2011.

15.♗a3 ♙xd5 16.♕xd5 ♙d8 17.♗e3

Bad is 17.♕xe5 ♙xc5 and...d6-d5 will follow on the next move.
17...\textit{N}e6 18.c4 \textit{B}g5 19.\textit{R}e1 \textit{Q}f4 20.\textit{d}1 \textit{g}4

It looks as if Black possesses the initiative. In a blitz-game this could even be frightening.

21.g3

The only move.

21...\textit{N}e6 22.\textit{N}xg5 \textit{Q}xg5 23.\textit{B}c1 \textit{Q}g6 24.\textit{e}3 \textit{e}5 25.a5

Alexei tries to keep alive the dying flame of the struggle, but his resources are gradually running out.

25...\textit{b}xa5 26.\textit{R}xa5 \textit{N}xe4 27.\textit{B}xa7 \textit{h}5 28.\textit{d}3 \textit{f}5 29.\textit{b}4 \textit{e}6 30.\textit{c}1

30.\textit{Q}d5 \textit{Q}xd5 31.\textit{c}xd5 \textit{c}2 with counterplay.

30...\textit{d}5

Having made this sharp move, the Georgian grandmaster must have offered a draw, and Alexeev must have accepted. After the strongest continuation 31.c5 the situation is quite double-edged. All white pawns are placed on dark squares (the bishop’s colour), which is in Black’s favour.

Ruben Felgaer got quite a safe position out of the opening playing against one of the strongest grandmasters in the world. I don’t know why his nerves failed the Argentinian, but he made several pseudo-active moves, and after that the implacable Karjakin brought the win home rather quickly.

132
Sergey Karjakin (2660)
Ruben Felgaer (2607)
Cuernavaca Young Masters 2006 (4)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \textit{f}6 3.\textit{c}3 e5 4.\textit{f}3 \textit{bd}7 5.\textit{c}4 \textit{e}7 6.0-0 \textit{c}6 7.a4 0-0 8.\textit{e}1 \textit{b}6 9.d5 \textit{cxd}5 10.\textit{d}xd5 \textit{b}7 11.b3


Up to this point the play on either side can hardly be improved.

16...e6

Ukrainian grandmaster Pavel Elianov got a better position with black after 16...Rfd8!? 17.d1 e6 18.Bb5 (the simple tripling on the d-file is interesting: 18.ed2!? d4 19.exd4 exd4 20.Bf5 with some initiative; or 18.Bxd6 Bf4+) 18...f4 19.ed2 g4 20.f1 (better 20.e1) 20...d5! 21.h1 (21.exd5 e4 22.e1 e3±) 21...d4 22.e1 g5 Naiditsch-Elianov, Sochi 2006.

17.Bb5

Why not just to take the pawn?! 17.Bxd6. Now what? 17...e7 18.b4 (18.Bxe5?? Rfd8–+) 18...Bd8 19.e4! (19.d3 a6 20.b4 d4) 20.e3 e7 with sufficient compensation for the pawn. Black is threatening ...f6-e7 and ...b7-c8.

17...e7 18.ae1

You don’t often see two rooks looking at one pawn. If the d6-pawn is not poisoned then it’s at least not tasty: 18.Bxd6?! Rfd8 19.Bxe5 (19.d2 exd4 with initiative; 19.a3 a6 20.b4 f4) 19...Bc5.


Was this necessary? Marking time with 22...c5 23.Bxc5 bxc5= was also possible. The weaknesses on d6 and b3 fully compensate each other. The white knight will hardly get to d5 unhindered.

23.cxb5 axb5 24.a5 Bf4

Or 24...c5!? 25.b4 a4 26.e3 e4.
25. \(Ra2\) f5?

Despair, while only three moves ago the position was about equal.

26. exf5 e4

27. a6?!

More accurate was the insertion of 27. \(Qe3\)! \(d3\) (27... exf3 28. \(Qxf4\) fxg2 29. \(b2\)) and only now 28. a6 \(c6\) 29. \(e1\) \(xe1\) 30. \(xe1\) \(xa6\) 31. \(xe4\).

27... \(Qa8\)?

He should have taken the pawn: 27... \(xa6\) 28. \(xf4\) \(b4\) 29. \(xf4\) \(bxa3\) 30. \(h3\). Here Black has certain compensation in the form of his strong passed pawn on a3.

28. g3 exf3 29. gxf4 \(h8\) 30. \(e6\) \(dc7\)

Better 30... \(a7\).

31. \(b2\) + -
White has two extra pawns, and the tripled pawns on the f-file don’t spoil the picture.

31...\textit{f8} 32.a7 \textit{c6} 33.f6 \textit{a8} 34.h1 \textit{d7} 35.d5 \textit{xa7} 36.\textit{xa7} \textit{xa7} 37.e1 \textit{e8} 38.f5 1-0

Black operated much more confidently in an analogical variation in a game from the Russian championship, 2012. Dmitry Bocharov clearly demonstrated the resources of Black’s position with a bad bishop. In such situations White’s passed b-pawn may get under pressure of enemy pieces, while the backward black pawn on d6 is relatively solidly protected.

133

\textbf{Mikhail Panarin (2538)}

\textbf{Dmitry Bocharov (2600)}

Tiumen 2012 (11)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \textit{c3} 3.e5 4.f3 \textit{bd7} 5.c4 \textit{e7} 6.0-0 0-0 7.a4 \textit{c6} 8.e1 \textit{b6} 9.d5 cxd5 10.\textit{xd5} \textit{b7} 11.b3 \textit{ec8} 12.e2 \textit{c5} 13.xf6+ \textit{xf6} 14.d5 \textit{d7} 15.a3 \textit{xd5} 16.\textit{xd5} \textit{e6} 17.b5 \textit{b7} 18.ae1 a6 19.b4 \textit{fd8} 20.c4

Up to this point we have followed the game Karjakin-Felgaer.

20...\textit{c5}

The Russian player decides to direct the knight to the queenside, which is probably best. 20...\textit{d7} was another option.

21.e3 \textit{h6} 22.h4 \textit{e7} 23.d2

23.g3!?.
23...b5

If White plays like in the above-mentioned game with 24.cxb5, then after 24...axb5 25.a5 d5, he will rather have problems.

24.axb5 25.cxb5


25...Qxb5 26.Qd5?!

It looks as if White has a positional advantage, but in fact the opposite is true.


26...Qb6 27.g3
In reply to 27.\textit{\texttt{N}}xc5 follows 27...\textit{\texttt{N}}xc5 and then, sooner or later,...d6-d5. For instance, 28.\textit{\texttt{Q}}d3 d5 with initiative – not 29.\textit{\texttt{Q}}xe5?? d4+.

27...\textit{\texttt{Q}}d7

Manoeuvring to f6 so as to dislodge the enemy queen from its outpost. Note that the white knight can’t take square d5 under control in the near future.

28.\textit{\texttt{Q}}d1 \textit{\texttt{Q}}a7 29.\textit{\texttt{B}}b2 \textit{\texttt{Q}}f6 30.\textit{\texttt{Q}}d3

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

30...d5

A committal breakthrough. Geometrical play was preferable: 30...\textit{\texttt{Q}}a6!? 31.\textit{\texttt{N}}b1 \textit{\texttt{Q}}b8=.

31.\textit{\texttt{Q}}xe5

The tactical justification of Black’s sacrifice consists in the following line: 31.exd5 \textit{\texttt{Q}}c5 32.\textit{\texttt{Q}}g2 (32.\textit{\texttt{R}}d2 \textit{\texttt{B}}b4 33.d6 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xd2 34.\textit{\texttt{Q}}xd2 \textit{\texttt{Q}}g4=) 32...\textit{\texttt{Q}}g4 33.\textit{\texttt{Q}}e2 f6 with compensation.

31...dxe4

Puzzling complications emerge after 31...\textit{\texttt{Q}}xe4 32.\textit{\texttt{Q}}g4 \textit{\texttt{Q}}b7 33.\textit{\texttt{Q}}xh6+ gxh6 34.\textit{\texttt{Q}}g4+ \textit{\texttt{Q}}f8 35.\textit{\texttt{Q}}g7+ \textit{\texttt{Q}}e8 36.\textit{\texttt{Q}}g8+ \textit{\texttt{Q}}d7 37.\textit{\texttt{Q}}xf7, unclear.

32.\textit{\texttt{Q}}xd8+ \textit{\texttt{Q}}xd8 33.\textit{\texttt{Q}}e2 \textit{\texttt{Q}}b7=
Material is equal, and both sides’ positional merits and drawbacks also balance each other. The e4- and b3-pawns are a bit weak.

34.\textit{Qc4} 35.\textit{ec6} 36.\textit{Nd4}

Better was 36.\textit{Rc1}.

36...\textit{Qd7} 37.\textit{Kg2}

37.b4!?.

37...\textit{Rd5} 38.\textit{ce2}!?

38.\textit{Cc2}!? 39.\textit{Cc5} 39...\textit{Qe2}=.

38...\textit{Cc5} 39.\textit{Cc4} 40.\textit{Cc5}

He could have saddled his opponent with problems by the move 39...\textit{Qb7}!, taking aim at the king and the pawn simultaneously, for example 40.\textit{Cc4} \textit{Cc2}=.

40.\textit{Cc4} 41.\textit{Cc4} 41.\textit{Cc5} (41.\textit{Cc1} \textit{Cc2}+) 41...\textit{Cc5}=.

41.\textit{Cc5} 42.\textit{Cxcl} 43.\textit{Cxcl}

Now, of course, there follows...

43.\textit{xf6} \textit{gxf6}

... damaging Black’s pawn structure.

44.\textit{xe4} 45.\textit{xb3}
As a result of his mysterious manoeuvres, Bocharov now has to protect a drawish but unpleasant ending. We all know how unpleasant it is to fight for two results without any chances of victory.

45. Ne2 Qe6 46.Qf3 Ne5 47.g4 Qd6 48.Qg3 Kh7 49.Qf5 Qf4 50.Qd3 h2+ 51.Qf1 c5 52.Qg3+ Qg8 53.Qd8+

More aggressive was 53.Qf5! Qh3+ 54.Qe2 Qd6 55.Qh5±.

53...Qf8 54.Qf5 Qh1+

The pawn can’t be taken: 54...Qh3+ 55.Qe1 Qxg4?? 56.Qxh6+.

55.Qe2 Qe4+ 56.Qe3 Qg7

With the counterblow 56...f5! he could have made his life easier: 57.gxf5 Qf4 58.Qf6 Qc5=.

57.Qa5 Qd6

57...Qe5 58.Qa8 f5= 59.gxf5 Qc5 60.Qf3 Qf6.

58.Qf5 Qe6 59.Qf1 Qf8 60.Qf3 Qh7 61.Qf5 Qc4+ 62.Qg2 Qc5 63.g5

The rest is simple. 63.h5±.

63...fxg5 64.hxg5 Qf8= 65.gxh6 Qxh6 66.Qh5 Qe6+ 67.Qf1 Qa6+ 68.Qg1 Qg6+ ½-½

In the Greek team championship of 2005, two Caucasian mercenaries met over the board. Karen Asrian, who left this world too early at a young age, managed to win a pawn. But the highly experienced Georgian grandmaster Zurab Azmaiparashvili has a good feeling for such positions, and he managed to neutralize White’s slight material advantage.
Zurab Azmaiparashvili (2672)
Greece tt 2005 (6)


A normal move.


The Georgian grandmaster plays extremely straightforwardly.

16.exd5 Nxd5

16...e4 doesn’t equalize, for example: 17.g5 and now:

A) 17...Qb6 18.Qxe4 Qf6 19.Nxf6+ Qxf6 and it seems that White can’t keep the advantage. In reply to 20.d2 there is 20...Qxe2!. Nevertheless, 20.b2! Qc3 (or 20...Qxb2 21.c4=) 21.Qd2 Qxe8 22.Qf1=;


17.Qxd5 Qd5 18.c4


18.Qc3 19.Qe3
19...e4

The non-trivial 19...d1! was strongest: 20.d3 (20.e1 keeps the initiative but not more: 20...fd8 21.xe5 c5 22.a2 f6 23.f3 d3 with compensation) 20...fd8 21.xe5 xd3 22.xd3 d8 and it is not easy for White to coordinate his forces.

20.b2 c5 21.xc3 exf3 22.xf3 cd8 23.c3

White has a healthy extra pawn.

23...a5

He doesn’t like to put the pawn on a dark square, but is there any other way to stop the adversary?

24.e1 d7 25.g3 f6 26.g2 f7 27.h4 fd8 28.h5

Maybe he should have tried 28.b1!? d3 29.e1 d1 30.xd1 xd1 31.c3. However, if this had led to a draw, I would have said: ‘28.h5 was worth attention!’.

The thing is that there is no win for White anyway.

28...d3 29.e1 e6 30.e1+

Zurab Azmaiparashvili

30.h6 xf3 31.xf3 gxh6 32.e2 and White’s position is slightly more pleasant.

30...f7 31.e1 e6 32.e1+ f7 ½-½

Karen didn’t see an opportunity to strengthen his position and I suppose indeed there isn’t one.

An instructive pressing game ‘on points’ was
demonstrated by Dutch grandmaster Sergey Tiviakov in the team championship of Portugal, 2010. His opponent kept control for a long time, but a specific feature of such positions is that White can torture the enemy almost endlessly.

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nf3 Nbd7 5.Bc4 Bc5 6.0-0 0-0 7.a4 c6 8.e1 b6 9.d5 Bb7

Also possible – it’s not necessary to capture on d5.

10.dxc6 bxc6 11.g5

Sergey intends to exchange the bishop for the knight and have an extra piece in the fight for the light squares, in particular the outpost on d5.

11...Qc7

Black didn’t equalize after 11...Rc8 12.Bxf6 Nxf6 13.Qd3 (taking squares b5-a6 under control) 13...c7 14.b3 (White is slightly better in case of 14.Ba6 Bcd8 15.Qc4 Qd7 16.b5 Qxb5 17.Qxb5 Qxc4 18.Qxc4) 14...a5 (better was 14...b7 15.b5 Qb8 16.h3 Qc5=) 15.ad1, Macieja-Bebel, Wroclaw Open 2010.


More accurate was, perhaps, the compact and solid 14.Qd3.
14...\textit{Qxd5} 15.\textit{Qxd5} \textit{Qxd5} 16.\textit{Qxd5} \textit{Qc3}

There was also the option of the pawn capture 16...\textit{Qxc2}, but White would have obtained more than sufficient compensation after 17.\textit{Rac1} \textit{Qb2} 18.\textit{Rc7}, with the initiative. The queen on d5 is incredibly strong.

17.\textit{Ra2} \textit{Rfc8} 18.\textit{Re3}

I recognize Tiviakov’s style. Strangulation without special risk, in this case by geometrical play on the light squares.

18...\textit{Qc6} 19.\textit{Qxc6} \textit{Qxc6} 20.\textit{c4} \textit{g6}

20...\textit{Rb8} 21.\textit{Nd2} \textit{a6} 22.\textit{Rd3}⁺.

21.\textit{Qe1}

The knight moves to d5, which doesn’t guarantee victory, but does aggravate the enemy’s discomfort.

21...\textit{f5} 22.\textit{Qe2} \textit{Qg5} 23.\textit{Be2} \textit{Qf7} 24.\textit{Qb4} \textit{Bce8} 25.\textit{Ba1} \textit{a6} 26.\textit{Qd5} \textit{Bab8} 27.\textit{f3} \textit{Bb7} 28.\textit{Ed1} \textit{Ba8}

Black cannot free himself, for instance 28...\textit{b5}? 29.\textit{cxb5} \textit{axb5} 30.\textit{a5}⁺.

29.\textit{c3} \textit{e6} 30.\textit{Ed5}

If your Elo-rating is below 2400, please stop for a moment and try to find a fruitful idea for Black.
30...\textit{c}8

More promising was 30...\textit{c}1! 31.g3 \textit{a}3+\textdagger. The bishop is transferred to c5, or even to d4. Either way it would be considerably more active. If you found this manoeuvre yourself, it means that you have a good feeling for these positions.

31.g3 \textit{c}5 32.d3 \textit{c}8 33.g2 \textit{c}1

The same idea, but the timing is not right. Now Sergey prevents the opponent’s attempt to revive the bishop.

34.a2 \textit{g}5

Unsatisfactory is 34...\textit{a}3 35.b4 \textit{xb}4 36.xb4 \textit{xc}4 37.b3 a5 38.d5 \textit{xa}4 39.xb6 \textit{xb}6 40.xb6±.

35.b4 \textit{a}8 36.a2 h5 37.a1 \textit{e}7 38.a2 \textit{g}5 39.a1 \textit{e}7 40.d5 \textit{g}5

The ‘time trouble dances’ were probably over here.

40...h4 41.g4 \textit{xe}4 42.xe4 \textit{f}8±.

41.ad1 \textit{d}8

It is not easy to venture on a pawn sacrifice: 41...b5 42.cxb5 axb5 43.axb5 \textit{d}8± and it is difficult to find compensation for the material.

42.c3 \textit{e}7 43.e1 \textit{d}8 44.d5 \textit{h}7
During the last 20-25 moves the situation hasn’t changed much. But now White had an opportunity to liven up the game.

45.\text{Ne2}?! 

Interesting was 45.f4!? \text{f6} 46.\text{e2}± intending e4xf5 and \text{e2-d4+}.

45...\text{fxe4} 46.\text{fxe4} \text{h4} 47.\text{d3} h3+ 48.\text{h1 aa7} 

48...\text{c7}! could have provided good counterplay, for example 49.\text{f3} b5 50.cxb5 axb5 51.axb5 \text{b8}.

49.\text{ed1 ad7} 50.\text{g1 b7} 51.\text{g4 h4} 52.\text{g3}
The Romanian master has withstood the pressure of his distinguished opponent for a long time, but it is psychologically difficult to stay alert all the time. Now a fateful mistake follows:

52...\textit{Rh}7?

52...\textit{d}8 53.\textit{Rd}5 \textit{f}7 54.\textit{Nxh}3 \textit{f}f1+ 55.\textit{g}2 \textit{b}1±.

53.\textit{Ed}d3?

Sergey missed it too. Maybe it was again (or continuous?) time trouble.

53.\textit{f}3 \textit{h}4\textit{h}6 54.\textit{g}5++-.

53...\textit{b}5?

53...\textit{d}8.

54.\textit{f}3 1-0

In the following game, one of the strongest Ukrainian chess players of modern times decided to carry out d4-d5 after ...a7-a6, inviting ...c6-c5. The position took on ‘Old-Indian’ outlines. Further on, both players made some mistakes and the advantage was changing hands. In such cases, the player who commits the last-but-one mistake, wins.

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Zahar Efimenko (2655)
Dmitry Bocharov (2590)
Moscow Aeroflot Open 2010 (5)

1.e4 \textit{d6} 2.d4 \textit{Qf}6 3.\textit{c}3 \textit{e}5 4.\textit{f}3 \textit{bd}7 5.\textit{c}4 \textit{e}7 6.0-0 0-0 7.\textit{e}1 \textit{c}6 8.a4 \textit{b}6 9.\textit{g}5 \textit{a}6

9...\textit{h}6 10.\textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 11.d5 \textit{c}5 12.a5 (as ...a7-a6 hasn’t been played yet) 12...\textit{b}7?! (12...\textit{b}xa5 13.\textit{d}2 \textit{b}6 14.\textit{b}5 \textit{a}6 15.\textit{c}6 with initiative) 13.\textit{a}2 (the space grab 13.a6 \textit{c}8 14.\textit{b}5± looks more to the point) 13...\textit{e}7 (better 13...\textit{b}xa5) 14.\textit{e}2±, N. Mamedov-Zeynalov, Baku 2012.

10.d5

It is more reasonable to play this on the 9th move.

10...\textit{c}5

10...\textit{xd}5 11.\textit{xd}5 \textit{b}7 12.\textit{xe}7+ \textit{xe}7 13.\textit{h}4±.
11.\textbf{f1}


11...\textbf{e8}

The exchange of dark-squared bishops would be favourable for Black, as his position is cramped and the e7-bishop is passive.

12.\textbf{e3}

Then why did it go to g5?

12...\textbf{g6} 13.\textbf{h6} \textbf{g7} 14.\textbf{d2} \textbf{f6} 15.\textbf{h3} \textbf{h8}

Some of you may not be familiar with Old Indian structures, so I will explain this strange-looking king move. It vacates square g8 for the knight, which in its turn will both enable the f-pawn to move forward, and chase away the enemy bishop.

16.\textbf{ab1} \textbf{g8} 17.\textbf{e3} \textbf{f5}
For the moment, Black is ahead in the development of the initiative. He threatens simply 18...f4.

18.exf5
18...gxf5
Better was 18...Nxf5.

19.Bg5
Have you counted how many times the bishop has moved to and fro between c1-g5-e3-h6-e3-g5? I doubt that this loss of time is helpful for White.

19...Ra7 20.b4

20...Bg5 21.Bxg5 f4?
A strategic mistake, though it seems logical to put his pawns on dark squares, taking into account the c8-bishop. Normal play would have followed after 21...h6 22.Qf3 Qh5 23.bxc5 bxc5 24.Rb8=.

22.Qce4=
Alas, now the white knights can make use of the perfect blockading square e4 to put pressure on the enemy position.

22...\textit{N}f5 23.bxc5 bxc5 24.\textit{R}b8 \textit{Qe}7 25.\textit{Re}b1

Strong was 25.\textit{N}e6! \textit{B}xe6 26.\textit{R}xf8 \textit{Q}xf8 27.dxe6±.

I like the idea of the bishop’s trade: 25.\textit{B}e2 \textit{Nd}4 26.\textit{Bg}4±. The black knight on d4 is unsteady. At any moment c2-c3 may follow.

25...\textit{N}f6 26.\textit{Q}a5?!

The beginning of a wrong plan. 26.\textit{xf}6².

26...\textit{R}g8 27.\textit{Q}b6 \textit{R}d7 28.\textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6= 29.\textit{e}6 \textit{d}4

A pair of knights has been exchanged; now Black has got more space and the chances have equalized.

30.\textit{xa}6?!

Risky play. The Ukrainian sends all his pieces to the queenside as if he wants to draw fire on his own king. He could have kept the status-quo with 30.\textit{xc}5 \textit{dg}7 31.\textit{e}6 (31.\textit{d}3?? \textit{f}3+ 32.\textit{h}1 \textit{h}4+-) 31...\textit{xe}6 32.dxe6 \textit{xe}6=.

30...\textit{g}6 31.\textit{f}1 \textit{f}3+ 32.\textit{h}1 \textit{d}2 33.\textit{b}5

The only move. There is no worthy alternative as the f1-bishop has to be replaced with something. The g2-point needs protection.

33...\textit{e}7 34.\textit{xc}8

White has to give up an exchange anyway, as Black was threatening 34...\textit{x}f1 35.\textit{xf}1 \textit{xe}6+-.

34...\textit{xc}8 35.\textit{d}3?
The only narrow path is 35.\textit{wa6}! Here are some lines (though optional for Black): 35...\textit{eg8} 36.\textit{xd6 eg7} (36...\textit{xf1} 37.\textit{xe5}++) 37.\textit{e6} \textit{xf1} 38.\textit{g7} \textit{xg7} 39.g4 \textit{fxg3} 40.\textit{b8 g5} 41.\textit{xe8}+ \textit{xe8} unclear.

\textbf{35...\textit{h5}+}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chessboard.png}
\caption{Chessboard diagram showing the position after 35...\textit{h5}+}
\end{figure}

Threatening the lethal 36...\textit{f3}.

\textbf{36.\textit{f3}}

36.\textit{g1} f3 37.\textit{h2} \textit{fxg2} 38.\textit{e2} \textit{f3}+ 39.\textit{xf3} \textit{xf3} 40.\textit{b3} \textit{xb3} 41.\textit{cxb3} \textit{b8}+-.

36...\textit{xb1} 37.\textit{xb1} \textit{h4} 38.\textit{f1} \textit{a7} 39.\textit{b5} \textit{ca8} 40.\textit{c6} \textit{b8} 41.\textit{b5} \textit{g8} 42.\textit{c3} \textit{f7} 43.\textit{e2} \textit{f6} 44.\textit{f1} \textit{ba8} 45.\textit{g1} c4 46.\textit{d1} g8 47.\textit{xc4} \textit{hxh3} 48.\textit{f1} \textit{g3} 49.\textit{d4} \textit{b7} 50.\textit{b5} \textit{xb5}!?

There was no point in this, though it is easy for me to say so whereas Black may have been in permanent time trouble. And the knight jumps must have made him nervous. 50...\textit{h3} 51.\textit{e1} (51.\textit{xd6 b2}+) 51...\textit{d7} was winning.

\textbf{51.axb5}

Now the outcome of the game is not absolutely clear again.

\textbf{51...\textit{g7} 52.b6 \textit{b7} 53.b1 \textit{b8} 54.h2 \textit{g5}}

54...\textit{xb6} 55.\textit{hxh7}. 
55.c4?

55...b5 would have kept the intrigue: 55...xb6? 56.d7 the black king will feel uneasy) 56.d3 h4+.

55...xb6+ 56.xh7 b7!

The white queen is strongly limited in its actions and cannot give any check.

57.h3 c8! 58.g4 h8 59.xh8+ 60.g2 b8 61.f2 a2+ 62.e2 f6 63.e1 e4 64.xe4 e5 65.g5 a3 0-1

Black played too passively in the following example on this topic. Bulgarian grandmaster Alexander Delchev obtained an overwhelming advantage, not meeting with serious resistance.

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Aleksander Delchev (2622)
Sebastien Cossin (2509)
France tt 2013 (7)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nf3 Nbd7 5.Bc4 Bb7 6.0-0 0-0 7.a4 c6 8.b4 e8 1.d5

With 10.xf6 White can hardly lay claim to an advantage, for example 10...xf6 11.d5 c5 12.e2 g6 13.d2 e7 (better was 13...g5 14.c4 f6=) 14.g4, Bologan-Elianov, Wijk aan Zee B 2007.

10...c5

10...cxd5 11.d5 b7 12.xe7+ xex7 13.h4=.

11.d2 e8

11...h6 12.e3 e8 13.f1 (13.g2 g5 14.d1=) 13...df6 looks a bit artificial: 14.c4 b8 15.f4?! (15.h3?)

When Black has a rook on a8, 11...Nd5 12.Bxd5 doesn’t work.

12.Bxe7

12.e3!?

12...Qxe7 13.Bf1 g6 14.c4 Qc7

We know the knight can also head for the kingside: 14...Rb8 15.d2 g7 16.ab1 b7?! 17.b4 cxb4 18.bxc5 Qxc5 19.Qxb6± 18.Qxb4±, Caruana-Pridorozhni, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011. Fabiano is clearly ahead of his opponent here. Black’s kingside play hasn’t got off the ground yet.

15.d2 h8

In such situations they say: ‘This move is too sophisticated’. I suppose Black could have saved this tempo: 15...b8 16.b3 g7 17.d3±.

16.h6 b8 17.ab1 e8

Another preventive measure (?), likely to be directed against f2-f4.

18.g3 b7
White had an original manoeuvre here: 19...Qh4! f6 (bad is 19...Qxh4 20.gxh4 and the d6-pawn perishes: 20...Ng7 21.Qxd6±) 20.Qh3 Qc8 21.d1 with a clear advantage.

19...b5 20.Qa5 Qa8 21.b4

I believe 21.Qd2 Qb6 (21...b4 22.Qd1) 22.b3± was more principled.

21...bxa4?

It’s more accurate to capture the other pawn first: 21...cxb4 22.Qxb4 bxa4 23.Qa4 (here, as in the game, 23.Qxd7? doesn’t work due to 23...Qxb4 24.Qxe8 Qxe8+) 23...Qc5 24.Qa3 Qb2 with counterplay.

22.Qxd7 Qxd7 23.bxc5

Do you see the difference? There is no knight on d7, so White can now break the defensive line on c5.

23...Qxb1

Also unsatisfactory was 23...Qb5 24.c6 Qc7 25.Qxb5 axb5 26.Qd2 Qg7 27.Qb4±.
An interesting position. The knight and bishop have no moves. However, White’s steed will soon be freed from its imprisonment by means of c2-c4, while the bishop is doomed to remain static.


The notation ends here. White’s advantage is great and enough for the win.
C) Maintaining the tension in the centre
Now we will consider all the ideas that have not been described above.

The first example allows me to be proud of some rather good-quality play. At the tournament in Deizisau there is no time to prepare as you play two games a day. Maybe that’s why Ukrainian grandmaster Vladimir Baklan did not play optimally. Please note that the trade on f5 is not always good for White.

138
Vladimir Baklan (2604)
Sergey Kasparov (2486)
Deizisau Open 2004 (8)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3. c3 e5 4. f3 Qd7 5. c4 Qe7 6.0-0 0-0 7.e1 c6 8.a4 b6 9.h3 a6 10.a2 Qb8 11. h4

So, immediately. Is it any good? The c8-bishop hasn’t left for the queenside yet.

11...exd4

Reasonable, as soon as the f3-knight has left the centre. Not so convincing is 11...g6?! 12. h6 Qe8 13. f3 (after the weakening ...g7-g6 the knight returns, with the intention to attack Black’s castled position) 13...f8 (it is dangerous to ignore White’s threats, for example 13...b5? 14. g5+) 14. g5 Qe7 (the only move; 14...xh6 15. xf7± 15. xf8 fx8= Aveskulov-Biriukov, Kharkov 2011.

12. xd4 Qc5 13. f5

13. f3 doesn’t bring White anything, see 13...e6 14. d1 Qxa2 15. xa2 Qe8 16. d4 Qd7 17. f3 d5! 18.exd5 cxd5=, Timofeev-Bocharov, Moscow 2008.

13...xf5 14.exf5
14...a5

One of two good moves. The other one was 14...d5, but Houdini slightly prefers the text move. Black secures the c5-square for the knight (now there is no point in b2-b4).

15.\text{Bg5}  \text{Rb7}

Modest, but the most accurate according to the computer. Of course, also good was 15...d5 with a pleasant position.

16.\text{Fxe2}  \text{Qe8}

Also true. Black should either trade off the passive bishop on e7 or bring it out into the open.

\text{Vladimir Baklan}

17.\text{xe7}  \text{xe7}  18.\text{xe7}
After 18...\( \texttt{\texttt{Ke7}} \) the objective assessment is \( \pm \), but the authority of my opponent had an impact on me. I would also remind you once more that in Deizisau we had two rounds a day – about 10-12 playing hours a day in total.

An unconventional structure emerged in the following duel, played in Buenos Aires. Ruben Felgaer destroyed the enemy pawn structure by means of ...\( \texttt{f6xc3} \). Shirov did not respond in the best way, and the position was somewhere around equal. However, in the ending Black surrendered one line after the other until he lost.

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Alexey Shirov (2698)
Ruben Felgaer (2572)
Buenos Aires 2012 (5)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \( \texttt{\texttt{f3}} \) 3.\( \texttt{c3} \) e5 4.\( \texttt{c4} \) \( \texttt{c7} \) 5.\( \texttt{c4} \) \( \texttt{c7} \) 6.0-0 c6 7.a4 0-0 8.e1 b6 9.a6 \( \texttt{c5} \) 10.\( \texttt{f3} \) \( \texttt{g4} \)

This looks reasonable. The Argentinian intends to gain control of the c5-square.

13.h3 \( \texttt{f6} \) 14.\( \texttt{d1} \)
14...\textbf{xc}3?! \\
Creatively played. We will find out what is more important: bishop pair or pawn structure. The ‘normal’ continuation would be 14...\textbf{e}5 15.\textbf{d}4 \textbf{c}7.

15.bxc3 \textbf{e}5 16.a5+ \textbf{xf}3+ 17.\textbf{x}f3 \textbf{e}6 18.axb6 \\
The paradoxical 18.c4!? is interesting, for example 18...b5 19.e5 bxc4 (19...dxe5 20.\textbf{a}3+-) 20.exd6 \textbf{d}5 21.\textbf{g}4\textpm.

18...\textbf{xa}2 19.\textbf{xa}2 \textbf{xb}6 20.\textbf{f}4 \\
20.\textbf{a}3!?.

20...\textbf{fe}8=
Alexey has squandered his advantage. He has to start all over again.

21.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{R}}a1}

Doubtful is 21.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{R}}}xd6 \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{Q}}}xe4 22.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{B}}}f4 (22.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{R}}}xe4 \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{Q}}}b1+) 22...a5=.

21...\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{R}}}e6

Better 21...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Q}}}b8.

22.e5 dxe5 23.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{R}}}xe5 \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{Q}}}xe5 24.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{B}}}xe5 \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{Q}}}e6 25.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{R}}}d1 \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{R}}}d8 26.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{R}}}xd8+ \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{Q}}}xd8 27.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Q}}}d3 \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{Q}}}e6

How can Black lose this? Generally, after the exchange of the queens Black will be out of danger. However, the queens are still on the board.

28.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Q}}}d7 \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{Q}}}f8 29.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{R}}}e8 c5 30.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{B}}}f4 f6

Curious is 30...c4!? , trying to build a defensive line on the light squares (...\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{Q}}}e6).

31.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{B}}}e3
31...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{c7}?!}}

Better was 31...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{e6}} 32.\textit{a8 \textcolor{blue}{c4=}} and now White cannot play 33.\textit{c5?? e1+ 34.h2 e5+}.

32.\textit{a8f7}

32...a5 33.c4 (33.\textit{d5+ f7 34.xc5 a4 with counterplay}) 33...f7 34.d2±.

33.\textit{xa6 d7}

33...c4!?

34.\textit{c4+ f8 35.e6 d8 36.f4±}

This is already serious, as the deadly 37.d6+ is threatened. The king and the c-pawn are under pressure.

36...g5

The only move.

37.d6+ g7 38.c4

Shirov fixes the enemy pawn on a dark square which can be attacked by the bishop.

38...h5 39.h4 gxh4 40.h2

Black’s position is a ruin, wouldn’t you agree? It is hardly probable he can hold.
In the Summer of 2003, the Danish town of Esbjerg hosted two round-robin tournaments simultaneously. In one – of grandmaster level –, players with Elo-ratings of around 2600 participated, like Dreev, Sasikiran and Koneru. Your obedient servant took part in a parallel master tournament. The winner of our competition would earn the right to play in the main GM tournament the following year, with good conditions. I endeavoured and succeeded. Naturally, the next year there was no tournament...

When playing against Harriet Hunt I was very afraid I would lose, as I was when playing against any woman in those times. I can’t remember which one of us was more ambitious. However, we didn’t make any glaring mistakes and events developed quite logically.

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Harriet Hunt (2402)
Sergey Kasparov (2482)
Esbjerg B 2003 (8)


10...h6 11.h4 Nh7 12.g3. When the knight is on h7, the bishop can retreat to g3. But now Black gets an additional resource: 12...g5. Trades favour the cramped side: 13.dxe5 fxe3+ 14.xf3 dxe5 15.d1 f6 16.e3=, Solak-Pancevski, Skopje 2012.

11.e2 h6 12.h4 h5
A typical simplifying manoeuvre in positions like this. The white bishop has no option but to exchange.

13.\texttt{Bxe7 Qxe7} 14.g3 \texttt{Kh7} 15.d5 \texttt{c5}

Who benefits from the closing of the centre? It is difficult to give an unambiguous answer, let’s see how events develop.

16.\texttt{Bc4 Ra8} 17.\texttt{Nd1} g6 18.\texttt{Nd2 Ng7} 19.\texttt{Kh1 Bb7}

This looks strange, since the bishop is blocked by the pawn on d5. But I planned the breakthrough ...f7-f5, exerting pressure on the long light-squared diagonal. Slightly more accurate was 19...f5, and Black’s further moves will depend on the opponent’s reaction.

20.\texttt{Rb1} f5 21.f3 f4
This is standard in ‘Old-Indian’ constructions. Black approaches the enemy king, while White tries to break through on the queenside.

22.g4 Kb8 23.Nc3 Ne8 24.b4 Nd8 25.Nb2 Nc8 26.Nb1 Nb7 27.b5

Were there any alternatives? I have gathered all my forces on the queenside, thus securing it.

27...a5 28.Ng1 Nb8 29.Nf2 g5 30.Ng2 Nh8 31.Nf1 Ng6 32.Ne2 Nf6 33.Na2 Ng7 34.Nc1 Nxd7 35.Nd3 c7 ½–½

Only a pair of bishops has been exchanged, but the resources for a struggle have already run out.

Most frequently White fianchettoes the bishop on b2, redeploying the knight to the kingside with c3-e2-g3. Black adapts to this and replies ...g7-g6, restricting the enemy knight. The rook is put on e8, the bishop is taken via f8 to g7.
First, please have a look at how you should not play. Mazé made some strange moves with his queenside pawns (18...c5?!), which allowed White to carry out the devastating breakthrough a4-a5 and, later on, b3-b4.

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nf3 Bd7 5.Nc4 e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.c6 c6 8.a4 b6 9.b3 b7 10.b2 a6 11.d3 e8 12.c2 f8 13.g3 g6

This pawn move looks logical because the g3-knight is restrained.

14.Qd2

14.c3 c7 15.c2 g7 (to those of you who like unconventional material correlations I can recommend 15...d5?! 16.dxe5 xe5 17.xe5 xe5 18.exd5 xe1+ 19.xe1 xe1+ 20.f1 cxd5?) 16.h3 ad8 17.ad1 h6=, A. Rombaldoni-Sjugirov, Chennai 2011.

14...Qc7 15.ad1 g7 16.c4

Against the author, a different move was played: 16.h3 ad8 17.c1 f8 (relieving the tension in the centre could have equalized: 17...exd4 18.xd4 c5, and the simultaneous attack on two pieces (f3 and d3) forces the exchange 19.xe5 dxe5 20.b2=) 18.a1 (18.dxe5 dxe5 19.c4±) 18...d7 19.f1 f6 (19...e6!? 20.e3 h8 21.c4 e6 (quite acceptable is 21...exd4 22.xd4 c5 23.c2 a5) 22.d5 cxd5 (22...f4 23.f1 c5 24.g3) 23.xd5±, Souleidis-S. Kasparov, Werther 2002.

16...ad8

Good enough was 16...exd4 17.xd4 a5=, getting a grip on the dark squares.
17.\textbf{h3 c8} \\
17...\textbf{a5}!?. \\

18.\textbf{a5 c5} \\
I don’t know how you feel about this, but I prefer 18...b5 19.cxb5 cxb5 20.b4, when White has a positional advantage but all ‘within permissible limits’. \\

19.\textbf{d5 f8} \\
19...\textbf{bxa5} 20.\textbf{c3} \\

20.\textbf{c3 de8} 21.\textbf{b1} \textbf{h8±} \\
White’s advantage is clear. In the future he will threaten with b3-b4, and I don’t see any adequate counterplay. \\

22.\textbf{axb6} \textbf{xb6} 23.\textbf{a5} \textbf{a7} 24.\textbf{c2} \textbf{e7}?! \\
It makes no sense to criticize Sebastien severely. When there are no good moves, you have to make bad ones. 24...\textbf{b8} 25.b4 \textbf{b7} 26.a4±. \\

25.b4+- \textbf{g8} 26.bxc5 \textbf{xc5} 27.b6 \textbf{a8} 28.b4 \\
Simple enough was 28...\textbf{xc5}!? dxc5 29.a4+-.

28...\textbf{b7} 29.\textbf{a4} \\
Please note that this move is applied in almost each line. The idea is that the light-squared bishop was bad and closed in by its own pawns (e4, d5, c4). But now it breaks into open air, actively participating in the battle. \\
29.\textbf{f1}?!? \\

29...\textbf{d7} 30.\textbf{xd7}

30... Rxd7 31. Qa4 f6 32. e3 Bc7 33. Bb6 a5 34. Bb5 d7 35. Be6 Bd8

36. Ba1

Black has big problems, which could have been proved, for instance, by the manoeuvre 36. Bd2.

36... Bc5 37. e2 e7 38. c3 Bc8

Black could have livened up the play with 38... f5, but it wouldn’t have solved his problems: 39. Bd2± and now ... f5-f4 is not dangerous because the bishop can always exchange on c5. Meanwhile, with the knight on d7, the bishop was ready to leap to b6. It doesn’t make sense to surrender the centre: 39. exf5?! gxf5 40. Bxc7 Bxc7 41. g5 e4 42. a3±.

39. Bb6 Bb7 40. Bxc7 Bxc7 41. Bxc5 Bxc5 42. Bxc7 Bxc7 43. Bb5 Bb7 44. Bxa5

White had a sudden blow here: 44. Bxd6! a4 45. Bb5±. If 44... Bxd6 45. Bxa5, threatening 46. Bxc5 and 46. a8+ at the same time, for example 45... Bb7 46. Bb5 Bb8 47. c5±.

44... Bf8±
We can conclude that Laurent has allowed the enemy to prolong his resistance. Now he has to win the game for the second time. The ending is technical and boring, so, with your permission, I will minimize the further comments.

45.\textit{Ra8 Kg7} 46.\textit{Nd2 Ke7} 47.\textit{f3 Kg5} 48.\textit{f1 h5} 49.\textit{e8 Ke7} 50.\textit{e3 h4}?! 

50...\textit{Nd3}.

51.\textit{f1 g5} 52.\textit{d1}

52.\textit{g4}?!.

52...\textit{d3} 53.\textit{f2 f4} 54.\textit{e6 e7} 55.\textit{d1 Ed8} 56.\textit{Ec7 f8} 57.\textit{a7 Ec8} 58.\textit{e3 b8} 59.\textit{e1 d3+} 60.\textit{d2 c5} 61.\textit{c2 b6} 62.\textit{g4 a6} 63.\textit{xax6 xax6} 64.\textit{f2 c5} 65.\textit{d3 d7}

65...\textit{xd3} 66.\textit{xd3 f6} 67.e5+.-

66.\textit{c3 f5}

66...\textit{f6} 67.\textit{b4} (67.\textit{a7 c7} 68.\textit{c6+ e8} 69.c5 dxc5 70.\textit{c4 f6} 71.\textit{b5}+).

67.\textit{c7}

67.c5! dxc5 68.d6+- \textit{f7} 69.\textit{c4}+.-

67...\textit{f6}

67...\textit{f7}.

68.\textit{e6 h6} 69.e5 dxc5 70.\textit{dxc5 b6} 71.\textit{b4 e7} 72.\textit{b5 c8} 73.\textit{b7 fxe4} 74.\textit{fxe4 e3} 75.\textit{ec5} 1-0

Square e5 is often a ‘meeting point’ for minor pieces. Trades, which are usually auspicious for Black, who lacks space, frequently occur on this square.

12.Ne2 Nf8 13.Ng3 g6 14.c3


14...Qc7 15.Qc2 g7 16.dxe5 Qxe5

Remember that this capture is strongest with this white set-up, when the e5-knight attacks two pieces simultaneously. Then White cannot evade the exchange. Otherwise he could have retreated his knight, for example, to d2 with the idea f2-f4.

17.Qxe5 dxe5 18.Nad1 h5 19.Nf1 h4 20.h3 Nh5 21.Ne2 Ng4 22.Rd1 23.a5 24.Qd8=

Black has solved his opening problems.

23.Na3 a5 24.Nxd8

24.g3 Ne6 (24...hxg3 25.fxg3 Ne6=) 25.Nxd8 Qxd8=.

24...Qxd8 25.Nd1 a6 26.g3 hxg3 27.fxg3 Nh5
27...d3!? 28.d4 h5.

28.xh5 gxh5

The pawn structure has changed, but the assessment hasn’t. It’s still parity.

29.e3 c8 30.h4 h6 31.f5 xf5 32.exf5 d5 33.c4 d4 34.e2

It is not easy to protect the h5-pawn. It could become dangerous for Black, but the weakness of the white king ensures the draw.

34...d7

34...g4?! 35.d6±.

Most accurate seems to be 34...d8, when Black is even better.
35.\textit{Rf1 Rd2}

Perhaps it was time trouble. Here, strong was 35...\textit{Rg4!} 36.\textit{Kh2 e4\textsuperscript{+}} as 36.\textit{Rxe5?} doesn't work due to 36...\textit{Rd3 37.Rf2 (37.Rg2 e4\textsuperscript{+}) 37...Rh7-+}.

36.\textit{Rxe5 Rg7 37.f6 Rf3}

The only move.

38.\textit{Rxe5+ Kh7 39.Rf4+ Kg8 40.Rg5+ Ke7 1-0}

During the manoeuvre \textit{Nc3-e2-g3} the knight moves away from the centre for a moment, also intercepting the rook on e1. So Black starts operations in the centre immediately, making use of this favourable opportunity.

In a World Cup game, our old acquaintance took over the initiative in this way, having two bishops, but then Nikolay Kabanov refused an 'egg today' and failed to catch a 'hen tomorrow'. Czech player David Navara handled the technical stage magnificently, once he had gleaned the advantage again.

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David Navara (2722)
Nikolay Kabanov (2520)
Khanty-Mansiysk FIDE World Cup 2011 (1)


14...\textit{xf6 15.Nb1 e8 16.Nf4 \textit{Nc3}}

Black is even slightly better here. He has two bishops and quite actively-placed pieces.
17. Be3 g7 18. c4

If David had managed to exchange the light-squared bishops on d5 without changing the pawn structure, he would have the advantage. However, he cannot do this trouble-free.

18... h6


19. Bxd6 f6?!

He could have preserved a slight but comfortable advantage with 19... Ng8 20. Qxd6 Rxd6 21. g5 Bf5 22. gxf6 Bxe4 23. Bxe4 Bxe4 24. Bf7+ Kh8, and Kolya could have tortured his elite opponent without risk.


Weaker is 23... Bf5 24. gxf5 a5 25. e4 with initiative.

24. dxe5 dxe5 25. Bxe5 a6 26. Be2 Bc3 27. g3 Bh7 28. Qh5 Qxd5 29. c4 Bb8 30. Qg2 Bh8 31. Qf3

Feel the difference. In the variations I mentioned above the Russian had some advantage, whereas here Navara can endlessly wring his opponent drop by drop, and Black is doomed to hopeless defence.

31... Bd4

31... h5! =.

32. Bf4

32. de5 Bh7 33. d6 Be7 34. ec4±.
32...\textit{c}3 33.\textit{d}2 \textit{b}5 34.axb5 \textit{xb}5 35.\textit{e}2

The Czech grandmaster forces the exchange of knights, after which Black is left with a rather harmless, bad (at least not too good) bishop (because of the c5-pawn).

35...\textit{x}e2 36.\textit{x}e2 \textit{a}4 37.bxa4 \textit{b}4 38.\textit{c}3!

David is skilfully keeping the flame alive. More boring was 38.\textit{d}3 \textit{xa}4.

38...\textit{x}e4

38...\textit{xc}3 39.\textit{a}2! \textit{g}7 (39...\textit{xc}4 40.\textit{d}3 \textit{b}4 41.\textit{xc}3\pm) 40.\textit{d}3 \textit{e}7 41.a5\pm.

39.\textit{ex}d4 \textit{xa}4

39...\textit{xd}4 40.\textit{a}2\pm.

40.dxc5 \textit{c}4

For the time being Kabanov has played well, putting up stubborn resistance. White may not have enough resources to win.

41.\textit{d}5 \textit{e}7 42.\textit{d}3 \textit{c}1 43.\textit{d}2 \textit{c}4 44.\textit{e}5+ \textit{d}7

Bad is 44...\textit{f}6 45.f4\pm and the black king is cut off from the queenside, where the passed c-pawn dreams of becoming a queen.

45.h4 h5 46.\textit{d}3 \textit{e}1 47.\textit{d}4 \textit{d}1+ 48.\textit{e}4 \textit{e}1 49.\textit{d}5+ \textit{e}7

Losing is 49...\textit{c}6 50.\textit{d}6+ \textit{xc}5 51.\textit{f}6 \textit{e}1+ 52.\textit{f}4 \textit{e}7 53.\textit{g}5, and the king goes to g7.

50.\textit{d}4 \textit{c}2 51.f4 f6 52.f5!
White has gradually increased his advantage. With this blow Navara damages the enemy pawn chain.

52...g5 53.hxg5 fxg5 54.Rd6 Rd2+ 55.Ke5 R2e+ 56.Kd5 Rd2+ 57.Kc6 Rg2 58.Qe6+ Kf7 59.Qd7 Rxg3 60.c6 Rd3+ 61.Kd6 Rc3 62.c7 1-0

Quite an acceptable position was obtained after the opening by the guru of Georgian chess in the 2005 Greek team championship. Suddenly a pawn sacrifice followed, the meaning of which I still fail to understand. Still there was some compensation, but only with correct play by Black. However, new oversights led to a deserved win by the Polish grandmaster.

144
Bartosz Socko (2615)
Zurab Azmaiparashvili (2672)
Greece tt 2005 (3)


It is not clear to me why the kingside should be weakened, but if the expert of this opening plays this, then it must make sense. Let’s see.

12.Qd2 Ke8 13.Rad1

Here are some other options with short notes: 13.d1 f8 (better 13...exd4 14.Qxd4 f8 15.Qb2 g7=) 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.Qe3 b5 16.b4 (16.h3!? Qc7 17.Qg4 Qxg4 18.hxg4 and White stands better) 16...Qe7= Saric-Neelotpal, Benasque 2011; 13.dxe5?! Qxe5 14.Qd4 (14.Qe2 b5) 14...Qf8 15.f4?! (15.Qf1) 15...Qh6! 16.Qf2 Qxd3 17.cxd3 c5 with initiative, Miton-Khismatullin, Moscow 2010.

13.Qf8 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.Qe2 b5

15...Qc7 looks more compact.
16.axb5

16...cxb5 17.Ng3 Qb6 18.h3 a5

16...Qc7 17.Ng3 Qc5.

Black is looking good, and he may create a passed a-pawn.

19.Qc3

In reply to the immediate 19.Ra1 Black could have either forced c2-c3 or exchanged the bishops (b2-c3). 19...b4.

19...c6 20.Ra1 Qb7?!

Should Black really do this? Simple and sound was 20...b4 21.b2 Qc7. I don’t understand why he gives up the pawn, and it seems to be impossible to win it back.

21.Qxa5 Qc5

Azmaiparashvili may have intended 21...b4, but then follows 22.Qc4± threatening f3-g5.

22.Qc3 Qxe4


23.Qxa8 Qxa8 24.Qxe5 Qxf3 25.gxf3 Qd7

More tenacious was 25...Qxd3 26.Qxd3 Qc6 27.Qd1 b4 and, taking into account the defects of White’s pawn structure on the kingside, it will not be easy for White to convert his material advantage.

26.Qb2 Qe8?

And here Black should have captured on d3: 26...Qxd3 27.Qxd3 Qc6 28.Qd4 f6 29.Qe4±.
27. \textit{Be4+} - \\

27... Qc7 \\

27... Qxe4? 28. Qxe4 with great pressure along the long diagonal. \\

28. \textit{Qd4} \\

Even stronger was first 28. \textit{Bd5!}, pinning the f7-pawn and threatening the devastating 29. \textit{Qd4}. \\

28... f6 29. \textit{Bd5+} Kh8 30. f4 \textit{Nxe4} 31. \textit{Qd4}?! \\

Bartosz allows the enemy to prolong his resistance. Correct was 31. b4 \textit{Nxa4} 32. \textit{Bxa1}- with the intention to bring up the knight (\textit{g3-e4}). \\

31... Qxe4 32. \textit{Qxe4} \textit{c5} 33. \textit{d2} f8 \\

33... b4 34. \textit{e6}. \\

34. \textit{Be6} \textit{e8} 35. \textit{c3} b8 36. \textit{Bxf6+ g7} 37. \textit{Qxg7+ Bxg7} 38. \textit{g4 f8} 39. \textit{f6} \\

Black’s troubles are horrible. \\

39... h5 40. \textit{e7} \textit{Qf6} 41. \textit{Qxf6}+ \textit{xf6} 42. \textit{e8+ g7} 43. \textit{Bxb8} \textit{hxg4} 44. \textit{hxg4} \textit{xf4} 45. \textit{xB5 g4+} 46. \textit{fx1 f6} 47. c4 \textit{e6} 48. \textit{e5} \textit{e4} 49. \textit{d3 f4} 50. \textit{e2 e7} 51. f3 1-0 \\

So, should White advance the pawn to a5, if the opponent can easily respond with \textit{b7-b6} and \textit{a7-a6}? The answer to this question can be found in the following example. On the whole, White played a bit adventurously and the best thing he managed to do was to prevent Black from converting his extra material.
1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.c3 e5 4.d3 Bd7 5.c4 c7 6.0-0 0-0 7.e1 c6 8.a4 b6 9.b3 Bb7 10.a5

The Croatian grandmaster immediately lashes out to the enemy on the queenside, drawing the fire upon himself (...b6-b5).

10...Rb8 11.Bd3 b5 12.b2 a6

Let’s examine the position. Can such a structure be good for White? The a5-pawn may turn out weak in the future. On the other hand, the b5-pawn cannot be attacked by a2-a4.

13.Ne2 Qc7 14.Ng3 g6 15.c4 exd4 16.Nxd4

Or 16.cxb5 cxb5 and the b7-bishop is opened up; 17.Nxd4 with approximate equality.

16...bxc4 17.Bxc4 Ne5 18.f1 Re8

18...c5!?.

19.f4 Ne6 20.e5?

A mistake. This pawn will be cut off and will come under crossfire. Better was 20.e2 f8 21.Nf3 c5= when the pressure on the e4-pawn compensates for the weakness on d6.

20...dx5 21.fxe5 Nxb4
Material losses are inevitable. But Saric seems to have thought he had sufficient compensation.

22.e6?!

This would look impressive in a blitz-game, but with a classic time-control...better was 22.Nf3.

22...Bxe1 23.Qxe1 c5

Files and diagonals are opened up, which is highly desirable for the black rooks.

24.c4

24.exf7+ Kxf7 25.c4+ d5 (the only move)+.

24...d5 25.xd5 Qxd5 26.exf7+ Kxf7 27.f1+
27...\textit{N}f6?!  

Stronger was 27...g8 and the leaps of the white knights may scare the monarch, but they will not kill him: 28.\textit{N}df5 gxf5 29.\textit{N}xf5 \textit{Q}f4+ and this is not the only good continuation.

28.\textit{N}f3 \textit{R}xb3?  

A serious mistake, or maybe just a downright blunder, which changes the logical course of the game. There were also better lines, for instance 28...\textit{Q}f4 29.\textit{B}xf6 \textit{Q}xf6 30.\textit{R}d1 \textit{N}f4 \pm. But perhaps 28...\textit{Q}d6 was even more precise.

29.\textit{B}xf6 \textit{R}xf3  

I don’t see any other options. It turns out that 29...\textit{N}xf6 can’t be played because of the simple 30.\textit{Q}c4+- and if 29...\textit{N}xf6 30.\textit{N}d4+±.

30.\textit{Q}xf3  

Much stronger was 30.gxf3 \textit{N}xf6 31.\textit{Q}c4+ \textit{g}7 32.\textit{Q}xa6=, restoring the material balance.

30...\textit{Q}xf6 31.\textit{R}b1?  

We don’t know the tournament situation at this moment. By all appearances, a draw didn’t suit the Croatian player and he aspired to more. Meanwhile, the position called for 31.\textit{R}f1±.

31...\textit{Q}xa5 32.\textit{R}f1 \textit{R}d8 33.\textit{Q}b7+ \textit{e}7 34.\textit{Q}xa6 \textit{Q}d4+ 35.\textit{Q}h1 \textit{g}7±
The situation has clarified. Black has ended up with a healthy extra pawn without any compensation.

36.\textit{h}3 \textit{e}5 37.\textit{f}3 \textit{d}5 38.\textit{c}4 \textit{e}3 39.\textit{d}3 \textit{h}5 40.\textit{d}8 \textit{e}8

40...\textit{f}7!? 41.\textit{xf}7+ \textit{x}f7 42.\textit{d}7+ \textit{g}8 43.\textit{c}8+ \textit{h}7 44.\textit{b}7+ \textit{h}6\textdagger.

41.\textit{d}7+ \textit{e}7 42.\textit{d}3 \textit{h}4 43.\textit{c}3+ \textit{h}7 44.\textit{f}1 \textit{f}5

44...\textit{x}f1 45.\textit{xf}1\textdagger.

45.\textit{g}1??

A blunder. White could have continued putting up stubborn resistance with 45.\textit{f}4.

45...\textit{d}4+ 46.\textit{e}3 \textit{e}2+ 47.\textit{x}e2 \textit{x}e2

I leave the technical part without much comment.

48.\textit{xc}5 \textit{e}5 49.\textit{a}7+ \textit{h}6 50.\textit{d}4 \textit{e}1 51.\textit{f}4+ \textit{g}7 52.\textit{d}4 \textit{h}7 53.\textit{h}2 \textit{e}7 54.\textit{c}4 \textit{f}2 55.\textit{d}3 \textit{e}2 56.\textit{d}7+ \textit{h}6 57.\textit{d}5
57...\textit{xe1}

The knight couldn’t be captured because of the elegant stalemate trick 57...\textit{x}f1? 58.g5+ \textit{x}g5=. The black monarch can’t escape from the pursuit by the white queen – when a lady wants something it is difficult to refuse: 58...g7 59.xg6+ f8 60.g7+ e8 61.d7+.

58.d2+ xd2 59.xd2 g5 60.f3 a1 61.g4 hxg3+ 62.xg3 h5 63.g2 a2+ 64.g3 a3 65.g2 g6 66.d4 d3 67.e2 f5 68.g3+ f4 69.h5+ e5 70.g3 a3 71.f2 a4 72.f3 f4+ 73.g2 f8 74.h5 h8 75.g3 f4 76.e2+ e3 77.g3 a8 78.h5 a1 79.f6 a6 80.h5 h6 81.g3 h6 82.f1+ f4 83.g3 h6 84.e2+ e5 85.g3 h4 86.e2 a4 87.g3 a3 88.f2 b3 89.g2 f4 90.h5+ e4 91.g3+ e3 92.h5 b4 93.g3 h4 94.f6 d4 95.g4 d4 96.f6+ f5 97.g4 h8 98.e3+ e4 99.g4 a8 100.h6 a6 101.g8 b6 102.e7 e6 103.e8 f5 104.f3 f6 105.a7 b6 106.c8 b3+ 107.g4 e6 108.a7 d7 109.xg5 b7 110.h4 a7 111.h5 e7 112.g6 f8 113.h6 g8 0-1

Azmaiparashvili reacted to a4-a5 in another way. However, after...b6-b5, here a5-a6 could have followed. But Black would have ample play in that case too. In this game Shirov gave his bishop the monopoly on the light squares, and gradually turned his advantage into a sound point. I advise inexperienced readers to pay attention to the problems the defending side is facing with opposite-coloured bishops. There are also other pieces on the board!

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Alexei Shirov (2726)
Zurab Azmaiparashvili (2672)
Calvia ol 2004 (5)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 f6 3.c3 c5 4.f3 d7 5.c4 e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.e1

Will the push 7.a4 c6 8.a5 bring any dividends? 8...b8 A standard response, with the idea to advance the b-pawn. 9.e2 b6 10.axb6 axb6 With the rook on a8, Black would have to capture with a piece. 11.d5 cxd5 Black won’t necessarily get any compensation for the pawn after 11...b5 12.dxc6 bxc4 13.exd7 xd7 14.xc4 b6 15.d3±. 12.exd5 b7 13.a7 c7 14.b5 c8 15.d1 15.b3 looks unpleasant, taking into account that it is dangerous to
capture the pawn on d5: 15...\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}d5 (stronger is 15...\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}xd5 16.\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}d1 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}c7 17.\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}xd6 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}xd6 18.\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}xd6 with counterplay, for instance: 18...b5 19.\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}d3 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}e8 20.\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}xd7 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}xd7 21.\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}xe5 with very unclear play) 16.\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}xd5 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}xd5 17.c4 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}f6 18.\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}a3 and Black stands poorly. 15...\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}a8 16.\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}xa8 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}xa8 Sutovsky-Azmaiparashvili, Pune 2004.

7...c6 8.a4 b6 9.b3 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}b7

Or 9...a6, transposing to basic structures.

10.a5

10...\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}b8

10...b5 suggested itself, with lines like 11.a6 (11.\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}d3 a6=) 11...\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}c8 (11...bxc4 12.axb7 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}b8 13.bxc4 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}xb7 unclear) 12.\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}f1 (12.\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}d3 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}b6 13.\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}e3 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}g4 14.d5 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}xe3 15.\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}xe3 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}b8=) 12...\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}b8 13.b4 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}c7=. Black has acceptable play in all cases.

11.axb6

Interesting is 11.a6 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}c8. Black doesn’t manage to surround the outpost a6 due to a blow in the centre: 12.d5 b5 13.dxc6 bxc4 14.cxd7 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}xd7 15.bxc4 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}c7 and White is better, but his weaknesses (c4, a6) are permanent.

11...axb6 12.\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}b2 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}c7 13.\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}d2 b5

13...\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}a8.

14.\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}d3 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}fd8 15.\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}e2

It’s difficult to recommend the radical 15.b4 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}b6 16.h3 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}c4 17.\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}xc4 bxc4, unclear.

15...c5 16.dxe5 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}xe5 17.\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}g3 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}c8

White seizes an essential initiative after the natural 17...\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}xf3+ 18.gxf3 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}c8 19.e5! \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}e8 20.exd6 \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}xd6 21.\textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}g5= and the
king can hardly feel safe, being under the fire of almost all the enemy pieces.

17...c4 doesn’t equalize, viz. 18.f1 (18.bxc4 bxc4 19.xe4 20.xe4 xf3+ 21.gxf3 xb2±) 18...dc8 19.a5±.

18.e2 xf3+?! 18...e8±.

19.xf3 e6 20.f5

20...xf5 21.exf5±

Alexey has become superior on the light squares after opening up the long diagonal for the f3-bishop. If there were no dark-squared bishops on the board, then after ...d6-d5 I suppose Black’s position wouldn’t be bad. If, if, if... Here this is not so wholesome.


22.e5 d6 23.xf6 gxf6 24.h6±
The presence of opposite-coloured bishops only increases Black’s troubles here.

24...\hbox{\texttt{B}}f4

The Georgian grandmaster forces his opponent to take the \texttt{f}6-pawn in the hope of clearing the dark-squared diagonal for his bishop. Instead, 24...\texttt{R}b6 25.\texttt{R}d1 \texttt{d}4 26.\texttt{R}e4 \texttt{B}f8 27.\texttt{R}h5 \texttt{h}6 28.\texttt{R}g4+± looks sad for Black.

25.\texttt{Q}xf6 \texttt{R}d6

25...\texttt{R}d6 26.\texttt{R}h4 \texttt{B}e5 27.\texttt{R}g5+ \texttt{R}f8 28.\texttt{R}a7 \texttt{R}a8 29.\texttt{R}b7±.

There is no time for gluttony: 25...\texttt{B}xh2+ 26.\texttt{K}f1 \texttt{R}d6 27.\texttt{R}xd5+-.

26.\texttt{Q}e7 \texttt{Q}xe7 27.\texttt{Q}xe7 \texttt{Q}g5 28.\texttt{Q}c7 \texttt{c}4 29.\texttt{Q}a7+-
Shirov has failed to force mate, but that doesn’t influence the result. White has an overwhelming advantage.

29...f8 30.h5 f6 31.g4

If even such a move works (usually in the fight for an advantage you try to put pawns on the squares of the enemy bishop’s colour), then Black is in a bad way.

31...f4 32.d7

A ‘par terre’ position, to use a term from wrestling: absolutely passive, and Black can only defend sluggishly. His bishop fails to protect both the defensive line on the kingside and his queenside pawns. Meanwhile, his rooks are glued to the f7-pawn.
32...d6 33.h4 h6 34.f1 b8 35.ab7

The rest of the moves may be explained by the specific characteristics of a team match. It is not desirable to lose quickly, especially on first board.

35...d4 36.exd4 cxb3 37.cxb3 d6 38.xb5 c7 39.d7 b6 40.xb6 x6 41.f6 c5 42.g2 a3 43.f4 1-0

In conclusion, I give you an epic game between your favourite (or perhaps most hated, at the end of this book) author and the ‘terror of the Iberian peninsula’, well-known Russian grandmaster Oleg Korneev. We continued to play more or less logically for about 100 moves. After that exhaustion can be the only excuse...

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Oleg Korneev (2565)
Sergey Kasparov (2536)
Sort 2007 (7)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Qf6 3.c3 e5 4.f3 Qbd7 5.c4 Qe7 6.0-0 0-0 7.e1 c6 8.a4 b6 9.h3 a6 10.a2 Qb8 11.c3 b5 12.axb5 axb5 13.d2

This intricate manoeuvre is probably Oleg’s patent, and I was ready for it.

13...b7

The Polish player Tomasz Markowski got convenient play with 13...exd4 14.xd4 b7 15.e3 e8 16.e2 f8 17.g3 c5 18.c4 b4 19.b1 g6, and it was not Black who stood worse in Kryvoruchko-Markowski, Ustron 2008.

14.e2

There may be something I fail to comprehend, but it is hardly possible to get an advantage with such knight manoeuvres, both moving backward, when there is tension in the centre.
14...c5 15.d5 e8

15...a8!?

16.f3

I seem to have been guided by the following game: 16.c4 b4 17.f3 g6 18.h6 g7 19.g4 f6 20.g3 h8 21.b1 g8 22.e3 c8 23.h2 f5 with counterplay, Korneev-Elianov, Montreal 2006.

16...g6 17.h6 g7 18.d2 a8 19.c4 b4 20.b3

20...c7

The computer agrees with me here, but there was a point in exchanging at least one pair of rooks with 20...xa1 so as to reduce the potential tension on the kingside.

21.ad1!?

Try to guess the idea of this illogical-looking move! The rook leaves the open file and moves to a closed one! The idea is to save as many pieces as possible for an offensive on the kingside.

Also, on the a-file Black has no entry squares yet.

21...c8 22.g3 a6 23.h2 d8 24.f1 h4 25.f3 e7 26.g5 f6 27.a1 b6 28.h1 e7 29.f3 a7 30.e1 d7 31.h2 c7 32.g4
Up to this moment both players have been carrying out unhurried manoeuvres, trying to provoke each other into weakening their positions. Here I decided to simplify the position by trading off a piece.

32...\textit{B}xg4 33.hxg4

Now White’s plan could be as follows: g2-g3, f2-f4, g4-g5. However, with adequate opposition it will hardly bring any rewards.

33...\textit{N}d7 34.\textit{N}e2 35.\textit{D}f8 36.\textit{D}g2 37.\textit{D}h1 38.\textit{D}e7 39.\textit{D}h8 40.\textit{D}e3 41.\textit{D}g1

41...\textit{h}5!?
The time-control has been reached, and Black tries to change the structure on the kingside. Otherwise the duel might have lasted till the following morning.

42.gxh5

White can’t play 42.g5 Nh7 43.f4 exf4 and the e4-pawn is attacked.

42...Nxh5 43.Nh3

Now another manoeuvring phase begins.

43...Nh8 44.Nf2 Nh7 45.Ng4 Nf8 46.Nf2 Nf6 47.Nf2 Qa7 48.Ng4 Kf8 49.Qd2 N5f6 50.Qd1 Qe7 51.Nf2 Nh7 52.Rh2

It was more logical to put the queen on the 1st rank first, preventing the penetration of the enemy rooks there.

52...Ra1 53.Rxa1 Rxa1 54.Rh1 Exh1 55.Rh1=

Now Black can breathe more easily. The fewer pieces, the better!

55...Qe8 56.Qg2 Qa8 57.Qd1 Qd7 58.Qc2 Qa2 59.b3 Qf6 60.Qb1 Qxb1 61.Qxb1 Qh7 62.Qd3 Qh6

If the dark-squared bishops are exchanged, White will have nothing to hope for.

63.f4 Nh5 64.f3 Nh6 65.Qc2 Qd7 66.Qd3 f6 67.Qf2
67...g5?

In time trouble, a strange decision. It can be explained by tiredness, as I had already produced about 70 moves in the fight against the tournament favourite. Even in the year before (2006), Korneev had an Elo-rating of around 2670.

Obviously stronger was 67...exf4! 68.gxf4 g5, making White’s dark squares vulnerable. For example, in reply to 69.f5 (69.e5? gxf4) here 69...Ne5+ will follow. Unlike in the game, this square is vacant here.

68.f5 f8

I thought that this fortress was impregnable. Indeed it is likely to be, but the fight goes on and tired chess players may make mistakes...

69.g2 g7
70. \( \text{d1?} \)

Time trouble.

70... \( \text{e7} \) 71. \( \text{c2} \) \( \text{d8} \) 72. \( \text{b1} \) \( \text{h5} \) 73. \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{g7} \) 74. \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{g8} \) 75. \( \text{g4} \) \( \text{f8} \) 76. \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{f7} \) 77. \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{d7} \) 78. \( \text{e1} \) \( \text{f8} \)

79. \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{h7} \) 80. \( \text{d1} \) \( \text{e8} \) 81. \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{d7} \) 82. \( \text{e1} \) \( \text{b6} \)

Perhaps more careful was 82... \( \text{a5} \) 83. \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{c7} \) 84. \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{b6} = \).

83. \( \text{d3} \)

All Oleg’s piece manipulations are aimed at a coming sacrifice on g5, c5 or b4, as there are no other ways to be seen for White to make progress.

83... \( \text{e7} \)
84. \( \text{Nxb4} \)!

Done.

84...\( \text{cxb4} \) 85. \( \text{Bxb4} \) \( \text{Nf8} \) 86. \( \text{Ba3} \) \( \text{Bd4} \) 87. \( \text{b4} \) \( \text{Nd7} \) 88. \( \text{Ba4} \) \( \text{Nb6} \) 89. \( \text{Bb5} \)

The white king and the g7-knight are keeping each other in check, while the other pieces are struggling on the queenside. It looks like a dynamic balance.

89...\( \text{Be3} \) 90. \( \text{Kf3} \) \( \text{Bd4} \) 91. \( \text{g4} \)

Now the cavalry must rush to help the main forces, which is not easy, as the only mountain path (e8) is exposed to enemy fire.

91...\( \text{d7} \) 92. \( \text{c2} \) \( \text{d8} \) 93. \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{e8} \) 94. \( \text{xd7} \) \( \text{xd7} \) 95. \( \text{c5} \) \( \text{c7} \) 96. \( \text{c4} \)
96...\( \square b7?? \)

Now the serious mistakes start. I believe we had both been keeping our shape up to here, but one hundred moves...

There were several waiting moves, for instance 96...\( \square c8 \) and now:

A) Not 97.\( b5? \) \( dxc5 \) 98.\( \square xc5 \) \( \square xc5 \) 99.\( \square xc5 \) \( \square d7-+; \)

B) 97.\( \square b5 \) \( \square c7 \) 98.\( \square a6 \) \( \square e3 \) 99.\( c6 \) \( \square b8 \) 100.\( b5 \) \( \square c5 \) looks terrible, but Houdini confidently states ‘equality’ after 101.\( \square c1= \), and not 101.\( \square xc5?? \) \( dxc5 \) 102.\( \square a5 \) c4 103.\( \square b4 \) \( \square c7 \) 104.\( \square xc4 \) \( \square d6+-+. \)

97.\( \square b5? \)

Time trouble. Winning was 97.\( b5! \) \( dxc5 \) 98.\( \square xc5 \) \( \square xc5 \) 99.\( \square xc5 \) \( \square c7 \) 100.\( b6+ \) \( \square d7 \) 101.\( b7 \) \( \square c7 \) 102.\( d6+! \) \( \square xb7 \) (102...\( \square xd6 \) 103.\( b8=\# \) ) 103.\( d7+-+. \)

97...\( \square c7+ \) 98.\( \square c4 \) \( \square a6 \) 99.\( \square c1 \)
Avidly glancing at g5. 99.cxd6? \( b5 \) 100.d7 \( x3+ \) 101.b3 \( b6+ \).

99...\( e8 \)??

Closer to the kingside. I should have played 99...\( b5 \) 100.xg5 fxg5 101.f6 dxc5 102.bxc5 \( a3+ \) 103.b4 \( c2+ \) 104.c4 \( e3+ \) 105.b4 \( c2+ \) and the king can’t abandon the c5-pawn.

100.a3

100.b5+!+-.

100...\( c7 \) 101.c1 \( e8 \)
And in this position, which is actually hopeless for Black, the peace agreement was signed. A dramatic finish.

**Conclusion**

With the flexible pawn formation d6, c6, b6, a6 Black’s chances are not worse than in other lines. That is, White keeps some initiative, but Black’s pressure on the e4-pawn and the prospect of ...b6-b5-b4 provide counterplay. I think that currently, white players are inclining to b2-b4. With this move White is likely to saddle Black with the biggest problems.
Section 4: Black Doesn’t Play \ldots c7-c6

In this section we will analyse what happens if Black doesn’t play an early \ldots c7-c6, postponing it to better times. What is the value of this nuance? As it turns out, it is for the sake of the light-squared bishop, which is fianchettoed at b7, piling up the pressure on the e4-pawn.

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nf3 Nbd7 5.Bc4 Be7 6.0-0 0-0 7.e1 a6 8.a4 b6

I suppose I don’t have to explain the purpose of 8.a4? Yes, you are right, White shouldn’t allow \ldots b7-b5.

First let’s acquaint ourselves with White’s instant knight jump to the centre: 9.Nd5.

In the first round of a famous festival sponsored by the main Russian airline Aeroflot, Turkish grandmaster Dragan Solak played a bit passively and soon got in a really difficult situation. White had a ‘free’ extra pawn and, accordingly, good chances of success. Why did she fail to convert her advantage? In earlier times I would have written something like ‘this is women’s chess’, but after being defeated by women a couple of times I won’t talk about gender inequality.

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Nazi Paikidze (2411)
Dragan Solak (2613)
Moscow Aeroflot Open 2012 (1)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.c3 e5 4.f3 Bd7 5.c4 e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.e1 a6

An attempt to save time on \ldots c7-c6. If White won’t react, then predictably \ldots b7-b5, \ldots b7, and so on, will follow.

8.a4 b6 9.Nd5
What is this? Usually exchanges benefit Black here, as he lacks space. White must have planned $\texttt{d5xe7}$, obtaining the popular advantage of two bishops.

9...$\texttt{xd5}$ 10.$\texttt{xd5}$

10.$\texttt{exd5}$ $\texttt{b6}$ 11.$\texttt{c3}$ $\texttt{b7}$ 12.$\texttt{b3}$ $\texttt{e8}=$.

10...$\texttt{b8}$ 11.$\texttt{c6}$

Or 11.$\texttt{e2}$ $\texttt{f6}$ 12.$\texttt{c3}$ $\texttt{a5}$ 13.$\texttt{dxe5}$ $\texttt{xe5}$ (worthy of attention is 13...$\texttt{dxe5}$, keeping the symmetry in the centre. After 14.$\texttt{b4}$ White has a certain initiative as the knight, the rook and the $\texttt{c8}$-bishop are clumsily placed) 14.$\texttt{d4}$ $\texttt{b7}$ 15.$\texttt{f4}$ $\texttt{g6}$ 16.$\texttt{c6}$ $\texttt{xc6}$ 17.$\texttt{xc6}$ $\texttt{e7}$ 18.$\texttt{b5}$.  

11...$\texttt{f6}$ 12.$\texttt{c3}$ $\texttt{e7}$ 13.$\texttt{d3}$ $\texttt{d8}$ 14.$\texttt{d2}$ $\texttt{f8}$ 15.$\texttt{f1}$

Interesting is 15.$\texttt{d5}?!$, curiously glancing at the $\texttt{d8}$-rook, the $\texttt{f8}$-knight and the $\texttt{f6}$-bishop. What are they doing there?

15...$\texttt{e6}$

Better is 15...$\texttt{exd4}$ 16.$\texttt{cxd4}$ $\texttt{e6}$ 17.$\texttt{e3}$ $\texttt{d7}$ 18.$\texttt{ac1}$ with initiative.

16.$\texttt{e3}$ $\texttt{f4}$ 17.$\texttt{d1}$ $\texttt{d7}?!$

17...$\texttt{f8}$; 17...$\texttt{g5}$.

18.$\texttt{f5}$! $\texttt{e8}$

18...$\texttt{xf5}$ 19.$\texttt{exf5}$ and the $\texttt{f4}$-knight gets into trouble: 19...$\texttt{f8}$ 20.$\texttt{g3}$ $\texttt{h3+}$ 21.$\texttt{g2}$ $\texttt{g5}$ 22.$\texttt{h4}$.

19.$\texttt{xd7}$ $\texttt{xd7}$ 20.$\texttt{xf4}$ $\texttt{xf4}$ 21.$\texttt{g4}$+.
The f4-pawn perishes without sufficient compensation, as the black bishop is restrained by the pawn trio b2-c3-d4.

21...g6 22.\(N\)h6+ \(K\)g7 23.\(Qxf4\) \(Qe7\) 24.\(g4\) \(g5\) 25.\(g3\) \(h5\) 26.\(e3\) \(xe3\) 27.\(xe3\)

The Georgian woman player has a healthy extra pawn.

27...b5

27...c5 28.h3 \(Re8\) 29.d3 b5 30.d5±.

28.axb5 axb5 29.f4 b4 30.\(a7\)

Quite nice is 30.c4, creating a phalanx on the 4th rank.

30...\(e8\) 31.\(b7\) \(db8\) 32.\(xb8\) \(xb8\) 33.d5

I wonder why the logical 33.c4!? was ignored, for example 33...\(e8\) 34.h3 \(d7\) 35.d5 f6 36.\(a7\)±.

33...\(xc3\) 34.\(xc3\)+

Better is 34.bxc3.

34...\(f6\) 35.\(e2\)

Not fatal is 35.e5 dxe5 36.\(fxe5\) \(b6\) 37..\(h1\) \(b4\) (37..\(xb2\) 38.\(xc7\)).

35...\(xc3\) 36.bxc3 c6
Dragan decreases the number of pawns on the board. However, 36...\texttt{b1}+?! seems to be more accurate: 37.\texttt{f2} \texttt{c1} 38.\texttt{e3} f6 and realization of the extra pawn is hardly feasible.

37.dxc6 \texttt{e8} 38.\texttt{f2} \texttt{xc6} 39.\texttt{e2} \texttt{f6} 40.\texttt{e3} \texttt{e6}

Now White’s task is highly complicated as there are no passed pawns.

41.\texttt{d4} \texttt{a6} 42.\texttt{f2} \texttt{a1} 43.f5+

43.g3!?

43...\texttt{e7} 44.\texttt{e3} \texttt{c1} 45.\texttt{d3} \texttt{d1}+ 46.\texttt{d2} \texttt{f1} 47.fxg6 fxg6 48.\texttt{c4} \texttt{e6} 49.\texttt{d4} g5 50.\texttt{e3} \texttt{e1}+ 51.\texttt{f3} \texttt{f1}+ 52.\texttt{e3} ½-½

In the following Caucasian contest, Georgian representative Mikheil Mchedlishvili, with black, parted with his bishop at once and got under long-term pressure of his Azerbaijani colleague. However, Black had a very solid fortress and only in probable time trouble (it may just be my fib) did he commit a mistake.

149
Nidjat Mamedov (2587)
Mikheil Mchedlishvili (2629)
Turkey tt 2011 (2)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \texttt{f6} 3.\texttt{c3} e5 4.\texttt{f3} \texttt{bd7} 5.\texttt{c4} \texttt{e7} 6.0-0 0-0 7.\texttt{e1} a6 8.a4 b6 9.\texttt{d5} \texttt{b7}
Mikheil is playing principled moves. He doubts the value of the bishop pair in this position – as does your obedient servant.

10.\textit{\texttt{Nxe7+}}

The computer is not keen on this, but then why was \textit{\texttt{Nc3-d5}} played? 10.c3.

10...\textit{\texttt{Qxe7}} 11.\textit{\texttt{Bd3}} \textit{\texttt{Rfe8}}

After ...e5xd4 the e4-pawn will be under heavy fire, therefore:

12.d5
2300+ players may skip this remark, but such a move in structures of this kind purports to restrain the e8-rook and the b7-bishop.

12...\(\text{Qc5}\)

Mchedlishvili exploits the fact that the bishop can’t retreat now, as it protects the e4-pawn.

Quite possible was 12...c6 13.c4 and now:

A) 13...cxd5 14.cxd5 \(\text{Qd8}\) 15.\(\text{Qe3}\) c5 16.\(\text{Qg5}\) h6 17.\(\text{Qxf6}\) xf6 18.b4 \(\text{Qd7}\) with acceptable play;

B) A bit more passive is 13...a5 14.\(\text{Qh4}\) g6 (this weakening of the dark-square complex is very undesirable, but \(\text{Qh4-f5}\) is too unpleasant) 15.g5 \(\text{Qf8}\) (15...c5 16.\(\text{Qce2}\) ac8 17.\(\text{Qa3}\) with initiative; 15...\(\text{Qg7}\) 16.\(\text{Qf3}\) c5 17.\(\text{Qc2}\) cxd5 18.exd5 \(\text{Qc8}\) 19.\(\text{Qc3}\) with initiative) 16.\(\text{Qd2}\) with initiative, McShane-Nevednichy, Aix-les-Bains Ech 2011.

13.\(\text{Qg5}\)

13.b4 \(\text{Qxd3}\) 14.\(\text{Qxd3}\) h6=.

13...\(\text{h6}\) 14.\(\text{Qh4}\)

Not bad was the bland 14.\(\text{Qxf6}\) xf6 15.b4 \(\text{Qxd3}\) 16.\(\text{Qxd3}\) with an initiative due to White’s space advantage.

14...c6 15.c4

15.\(\text{Qxf6}\) xf6 16.c4.

15...a5

Dangerous was 15...g5?! because of the obvious sacrifice 16.\(\text{Qxg5}\) hxg5 17.\(\text{Qxg5}\). The dark-squared bishop, who has no opponent, shatters the black kingside: 17...cxd5 18.cxd5 \(\text{Qg7}\) 19.\(\text{Qe3}\) with attack.

16.\(\text{Qe2}\) \(\text{Qcd7}\)

Better was 16...\(\text{Qa6}\).

17.\(\text{Qxc6}\) \(\text{Qxc6}\) 18.\(\text{Qd2}\) \(\text{Qe6}\)

He probably wanted to get out of the pin on the h4-e7 diagonal without moving any pawns.

18...\(\text{Qf8}\) 19.\(\text{Qf1}\) \(\text{Qg6}\)=.

19.f3 \(\text{Qh5}\) 20.b3 \(\text{Qf4}\) 21.\(\text{Qf1}\) \(\text{Qg6}\) 22.\(\text{Qf2}\)
White has gradually changed his approach and enjoys a stable advantage now: two bishops and, in future, frontal pressure on the d6-pawn.

22...\textit{N}c5 23.\textit{Q}d2 \textit{R}ed8 24.\textit{R}ad1 \textit{e}7 25.\textit{e}3 \textit{e}8 26.\textit{h}4

26.\textit{h}4!?.

26...\textit{f}6 27.\textit{g}4

Total chess. Is it good? How should White break through the enemy defences?

27...\textit{h}5! 28.\textit{h}2 \textit{h}xg4 29.\textit{fxg}4 \textit{c}6 30.\textit{f}5 \textit{xf}5 31.\textit{gx}f5 \textit{f}7 32.\textit{e}2 \textit{f}8
Black has broken up White’s pawn mass and is now gathering his army in the centre.

32...\text{Be8}!!? 33.\text{Qe3} \text{Qh5}.

33.\text{Bg1} \text{Be7} 34.\text{Bg6}

Or 34.\text{Qg4} \text{Bg8} 35.\text{Qh3} \text{Qad8=}.

34...\text{Rh8} 35.\text{Qg4} \text{Kh7}

Here the rook is definitely more active than on g8. White already has to show some accuracy. His advantage has faded.

36.\text{Bg1} \text{Qf8}?

The first considerable mistake. The unemployed a-rook should have been moved to the kingside, for instance 36...\text{Rg8} 37.\text{h5} \text{Qf8} 38.\text{Be3} \text{Be8} with a solid position.

37.\text{h5} \text{Be8} 38.\text{Bh4}!

Now Black must always take into account h5-h6 or \text{Bh4xf6}. The a8-rook can hardly help the king.

38...\text{Ra7}

38...\text{Qd7} is not a remedy because of the obvious sacrifice 39.\text{Qxf6} \text{Ra7} (39...\text{gx6} 40.\text{Qxf6}+ \text{Qe7} 41.\text{Qh4} \text{Qxh5} 42.\text{Qf7}+!+-) 40.\text{Qh4} \text{Qxg6} 41.\text{fxg6} (41.\text{Qxg6}) 41...\text{Qh8} 42.\text{Qg5}+.

39.\text{Qd1} \text{Qd3} 40.\text{h6}!

The Azerbaijani grandmaster doesn’t intend to linger as the black cavalry is approaching (...\text{Qc5-d3-f4}).

40...\text{Exh6} 41.\text{Exh6} \text{gxf6}

42.\text{Qg3}?
A strange mistake, considering that the time-control has already been reached. Significantly stronger was 42.\(\text{Qf3!}\), forcing the knight to decide which route it shall take. The only acceptable reply is 42...\(\text{Nf4}\) (not good is 42...\(\text{Nc5}\) and Black cannot protect both the h6- and f6-pawns). But now the bishop goes to f2 at once: 43.\(\text{Bf2}\) \(\text{h5+}\) (43...\(\text{Bb7}\) 44.\(\text{Bf3}\)±) 44.\(\text{Qxh5}\) \(\text{xh5}\) 45.\(\text{Qxb6}\) \(\text{Bb7}\) 46.\(\text{Qxa5}\) \(\text{xd1}\) 47.\(\text{Qxd1}\) \(\text{xb3}\) 48.\(\text{Qxd6}\)±.

42...\(\text{Ke7}\) 43.\(\text{Qf3}\) \(\text{Nf4}\)?

Returning the favour. Right was 43...\(\text{Nc5}\)=.

44.\(\text{Qxf4}\) \(\text{exf4}\) 45.\(\text{Qxf4}\)±

If there were no rooks on the board, Black would have a good position (...\(\text{Qf7-g7-g5}\)), but the difference in activity between the rooks brings Mamedov the point.

45.\(\text{Qf8}\) 46.\(\text{Qe3}\) \(\text{b7}\) 47.\(\text{Qf3}\)

Threatening 48.e5.

47.\(\text{Bb8}\) 48.\(\text{g3}\) \(\text{h5}\) 49.\(\text{g1}\) \(\text{h6}\) 50.\(\text{g8}\) \(\text{d2}\)±

More tenacious was 50...\(\text{Qf4}\)+ 51.\(\text{g3}\) \(\text{e5}\) 52.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{Qg3}\)+ 53.\(\text{Qg3}\)±.

51.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{d3}\) 52.\(\text{g3}\) \(\text{xh3}\) 53.\(\text{g7}\) 1-0

Black will either suffer irreplaceable material loss – 53...\(\text{f7}\) 54.\(\text{xf7}\)+ – or he will be mated.

Michele Godena

In the following game, Russian Elo-favourite Ernesto

Inarkiev had no simple task in the fight against one of the

leaders of Italian chess. Godena is quite a strong chess

player and it is not easy to beat him with black. At one

point, the Russian player could even have been subjected
to a crushing attack. However, Michele was too slow. He withdrew his pieces and was gradually outplayed. His former activity had to make way for pawn weaknesses.


The Italian grandmaster prefers to clarify things in the centre. Let’s see if this idea yields an advantage.

10... dxe5

11. Qxf6+

Absolutely boring is 11. Qxe7+ Qxe7. Here Black doesn’t have any problems, despite the fact that the enemy has the two bishops. The thing is that the e4-pawn isn’t sufficiently secured. Here are some possible lines:


11...\textit{xf6} 12.b3 \textit{e7} 13.b2 \textit{b4} 
A disturbing move, enticing the pawn to c3, where it would block the diagonal for the white bishop.

14.\textit{e3} 
The rook may be useful on the 3rd rank: \textit{e3}-d3, \textit{e3}-f3 (g3, h3).

14...\textit{e7} 15.\textit{h4} g6 
More careful was 15...\textit{xh4} 16.\textit{xd7} \textit{c5} 17.\textit{e2} \textit{d6}, but here Black has minimal chances of winning the game. Possibly the Elo-favourite aspired to a complicated struggle.

16.\textit{g4}+ \textit{h8} 

17.\textit{f3}?! 
Alas, Godena didn’t venture on an exciting attack. He should have made use of the mobility of his rook. Let’s take a look at all the nice things that remained behind the scenes:

17.\textit{h3}! \textit{c5} 18.\textit{f1} \textit{g8} 19.\textit{f3} \textit{g7}
20. \( \text{Qxd7}!! \)

I couldn’t help adding another diagram. This is a non-conventional sacrifice which is seldom applied. 20... \( \text{Qxd7} \) 21. \( \text{Qxe5} \) with a strong attack. Here are some possible lines:

A) 21... \( \text{Qe7} \) 22. \( \text{Nxf7+} \) \( \text{Kg8} \) 23. \( \text{Ng5+} \) \( \text{Kf8} \) 24. \( \text{De6++} \);

B) 21... \( \text{Qxh3} \) 22. \( \text{Qxf7+} \) \( \text{Qg8} \) 23. \( \text{Qg5+} \) \( \text{Qf8} \) 24. \( \text{Qxg7+} \) \( \text{Qg7} \) 25. \( \text{gxh3±} \); the presence of two black bishops doesn’t compensate for White’s two extra pawns.

17... \( \text{Bd6} \) 18. \( \text{Ed1} \) \( \text{Ed8} \) 19. \( \text{h4} \) \( \text{Ed8} \) 20. \( \text{Qg5} \) \( \text{Qf6} \) 21. \( \text{Ed1} \) \( \text{Ec8} \) 22. \( \text{Ed3} \) \( \text{Qg7} \) 23. \( \text{c1} \) \( \text{Qg4=} \)
The Russian player has fully stabilized his position. There is not a shred of trouble left.

24.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{Qxe7 Bxe7}}} 25.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{b2 f6}}} 26.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{d1 d8}}} 27.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{ed2 xd2}}} 28.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{xld2 b4}}} 29.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{c3 d6}}} 30.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{h2 h6}}} 31.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{f1 f5}}} 32.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{d5}}}

More careful was 32.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{exf5}} Bxf5} 33.\texttt{g3=}. The h4-pawn has been pushed in vain. White should support it.

32...\texttt{\textit{\textbf{g4}}} 33.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{xf5 gxf5}}} 34.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{b4}}}

Better 34.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{c4}}}.

34...\texttt{\textit{\textbf{g6}}} 35.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{c1}}}

35.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{b5}}}

35...\texttt{\textit{\textbf{d7}}}

Several inaccurate moves, and White’s position has gradually worsened. I still don’t like the h4-pawn, and now the queenside also needs attention. At the same time the black e5/f5 tandem is looking good.

36.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{b3 e4}}} 37.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{d1 f4}}} 38.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{f3 exf3}}} 39.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{gxf3 e5}}}

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

The h4-pawn is cut off from the main forces and is bound to perish. The game is approaching a grievous end for White.

40.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{d2 c6}}} 41.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{c2+ h5}}} 42.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{f2 c7}}} 43.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{g1}}}

He could have obtained more practical chances after 43.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{e4}} Bxh4+} 44.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{e2 f7}}} 45.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{h1}}}.

43...\texttt{\textit{\textbf{xh4+}}} 44.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{f1 f7}}} 45.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{g8?}}}

45.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{c4 e7}}} 46.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{f5 xa4}}} 47.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{e4}} is ‘only’ clearly better for Black.}

45...\texttt{\textit{\textbf{e7}}} 46.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{f5 d5}}} 47.\texttt{\textit{\textbf{g2}}}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chess-board.png}
\end{center}
47.\textit{E}g1 \textit{c}c4+.

47...\textit{d}d3 0-1

The struggle takes a somewhat different turn in case of the apparently slightly artificial manoeuvre \textit{c}3-e2. And indeed, both examples are of a rather high quality: we will give examples from the Olympiad and the Germany Bundesliga. In both encounters Black got pleasant play. Moreover, the white pieces were led by more distinguished players.

The highly experienced Eduardas Rozentalis didn’t achieve anything against an adversary who had 220 Elo-points less. And the repeated champion of chess super-power Russia, Peter Svidler, lost all his chances for victory on the 23rd move already.

\begin{center}
\textbf{151}
\textbf{Eduardas Rozentalis (2611)}
\textbf{Kenneth Solomon (2394)}
Khanty-Mansiysk ol 2010 (11)
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{c}
1.e4 d6 2.d4 \textit{f}f6 3.\textit{c}c3 e5 4.\textit{f}f3 \textit{bd}7 5.\textit{c}c4 \textit{e}7 6.0-0 0-0 7.\textit{e}e1 a6 8.a4 b6 9.\textit{e}2
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

This looks strange, but white players do apply such plans from time to time. I used to face this idea with black. Usually the evaluation is around equality.

9...\textit{b}b7 10.\textit{g}3 \textit{exd}4 11.\textit{xd}4 \textit{e}8

Now the knight has left square f3 and \textit{f}3-g5 isn’t threatened, Kenny (whom I know from several tournaments in South Africa) regroups his pieces with his soul at ease.
12. Bf4  f8 13. d3

13. Qf3 doesn’t look impressive after 13... Ne5 (an exchange that suggests itself. Also good is 13... g6 14. Rad1 g7 and what does White have besides his concerns about the e4-pawn?) 14. x e5 xe5 (bad is 14... dxe5 15. df5± with great pressure on the kingside) 15. f4 b5 16. a2 d7 (16... c5!?) 17. f3 e7=, Hess-Inarkiev, Barcelona 2010.

Black also gets an acceptable position after 13. f3 Ne5 14. a2 g6 15. g5 h6= or 15. d2 d5 16. exd5 xd5 17. xe8 xe8=.

13... Ne5 14. df5 g6

The computer seriously considers 14... g6, but giving away the dark-squared bishop doesn’t appeal to me: 15. h6+ xh6 16. xh6 d5 with equality, but are you willing to hold a position with weakened dark squares when only your opponent has a dark-squared bishop?

15. d2 d5!
The African master takes over the initiative.

16.e5

Black’s position is more pleasant after 16.exd5 \( \text{Nxd5 (16...Qxd5 \text{\#})} \) 17.Bg5 f6 18.e3 xe3 19.xe3 f4\text{\#}.

16...Qg4

After 16...d7?! 17.h5 (17.g5 c8 18.a5 dxe5 19.axb6 cxb6 20.e3 xdx3 21.xd3 c7\text{\#}) leads to complications: 17...gxe5 18.e3 g6 19.g3 xdx3 20.cxd3 c8 21.h6+ xh6 22.xh6 c7 unclear.

17.h5 xdx5

This looks similar to the position we considered above, but of course it is not the same. The knight is now on g6, not d7. The alternative here is 17.d4.

18.h6!

Showy, isn’t it?
18...\texttt{\textsc{h}4!}

Strictly the only move. Black offers an exchange of the knights, which reduces White’s attacking potential. Otherwise, ...\texttt{\textsc{f}3+} is threatened.

Not 18...\texttt{gxh6? 19.\texttt{\textsc{n}xh6+ \texttt{k}h8} (19...\texttt{b}xh6? 20.\texttt{w}xh6 and mate is not far off) 20.\texttt{xg6 fxg6 21.\texttt{\textsc{x}e5 \texttt{e}7}} (threatening ...\texttt{\textsc{h}6-f7+}) 22.\texttt{ae1±}.

\textbf{19.\texttt{\textsc{x}e5}}

19.\texttt{\textsc{x}g7 \texttt{x}g7 20.\texttt{\textsc{h}6+} (20.\texttt{\textsc{x}g7 \texttt{e}f3+-+}) 20...\texttt{\textsc{f}8 21.\texttt{\textsc{f}4 \texttt{h}f3+ 22.gxf3 \texttt{g}5+ 23.\texttt{\textsc{x}g5 \texttt{xf}3+±}.}

\textbf{19...\texttt{\textsc{x}e5 20.\texttt{\textsc{g}5}}}

Dear reader, I won’t tire you with long comments to each move. Trust me when I say that both players are making the strongest moves. Don’t pay attention to Solomon’s Elo, he can play nearly flawlessly. I have seen him doing this during a tournament in Pretoria.

\textbf{20...\texttt{\textsc{d}7 21.\texttt{\textsc{h}4}}}

Each move deserves an exclamation mark. Now a dynamic balance could have been maintained by 21...h6.

21...\textit{Q}g4?!

Better was 21...h6 22.\textit{N}f6+ gxf6 23.\textit{Q}xf6 \textit{e}6 (23...\textit{R}e8 24.\textit{N}f5+-) 24.\textit{Q}f4 \textit{xf}6 25.\textit{Q}xf6 \textit{e}8= and there is no mate to the black king.

22.\textit{N}f3 \textit{Q}xh5 23.\textit{N}xe5 f6 24.\textit{Q}xf6 gxf6 25.\textit{N}d7!

Please note that the pawn structure is similar to the variation mentioned above, however, here Black forfeits the bishop pair.

25...\textit{Q}f7

25...\textit{B}e7? 26.\textit{Q}e3+- with numerous threats to the unsafe black monarch.

26.\textit{Qxf}8 \textit{Bxf}8 27.a5!

For Eduardas this all is elementary stuff. I know him personally; we even played a match once, at a resort in Palanga. The Lithuanian grandmaster ‘squeezes’ the dark squares, neutralizing Black’s numerical superiority on the queenside. Besides, he fixes the enemy pawns on light squares. With a light-squared bishop, this is unpleasant for Black.

27...\textit{b}5 28.\textit{Q}e3 \textit{e}8 29.\textit{Q}d4

29.\textit{Q}a7!?.

29...\textit{Q}e7 30.b4 \textit{Q}e5 31.c3±
White stands better, but is it feasible to convert this advantage into a win?

31...c8 32.h3 g7 33.d1 d7 34.f4

34.c5!?

34..d6 35.f1 c8 36.e1 e8 37.e3 xe3 38.xe3 e6 39.g3+ h8 40.h4 g8 41.f2 e6 42.d4 d7 43.e2 g7 44.f3 e6 45.f2 f7 46.h4

Better is 46.g4.

46..h5 47.g3 e6= 48.c5 d7 49.g2 f5 50.f3 d7 51.e2+ f5 52.xc7 c2+ 53.h3 f5+ 54.g4 hxg4+ 55.xg4 d3+ 56.g2 c2+ 57.g3 d4

With counterplay. Both players are on the ball, and the evaluation isn’t far from equal. Black even manages to win a pawn, but his king is insufficiently covered and a draw results.

58.d7 xc3+ 59.f3 xb4 60.h5

More accurate was 60.g4+ h6 61.c8 e1+ 62.g2 g7 63.g4+=.

60..e1+ 61.g2 d2+ 62.g3 e1+ 63.g2 h4 64.xd4 xh5

64..e6!?

65.a7+ h6 66.xa6 xf4 67.xh5 g5+ 68.f2 c5+ 69.g2 g5+ 70.f2 c5+

70..xh5 71.e6=.

71.g2 g5+ ½-½

A titanic struggle.
1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nf3 Bd7 5.c4 c6 6.0-0 0-0 7.e1 a6 8.a4 b6 9.c2 b7 10.g3 Qe4!?

A quite acceptable simplification in the centre. It seems that White gets the initiative, but everything is within bounds.

11.Qxe4 d5

A key moment.

12.Bxd5

One of White’s normal reactions. Worthy of attention is 12.dxe5 dxc4. If Black is to suffer, then in return for the bishop pair. 12...dxe4?! doesn’t work due to 13.e6 fxe6 14.d4 (14.Qxe6+ Qh8 15.Qxd7 exf3 16.g3=) 14...e5 15.a2 and Black’s pawn structure has been weakened. 13.e2 b5 14.d1 Qe8 15.c3 Qb6 with near-equality.

12...Bxd5 13.dxe5

The Russian has won a pawn, but just for a moment.

13...Qxe5!

Not very difficult for elite players, and sufficient for equality.

14.Qxe5 Qxe4

The weakness of the first rank doesn’t allow the e1-rook to satisfy its hunger.

15.Qxd8 Qxd8 16.f4 f5?!
More precise was 16...a8 17.a5 b5 18.c6 d6, and now not 19.xd8? xf4 20.ad1 d6= and the knight is trapped.

17.c6! xc6 18.xe7 f7 19.xc7=

White’s position is certainly more pleasant, but the opposite-coloured bishops produce a draw.

19...xe7 20.xe7 d2 21.c1 e4

The most accurate. If 21...xa4 22.b3.

22.xb6 xc2 23.a5 d1+ 24.xd1

Draw agreed.

In the following game from the Gibraltar Open White put the bishop on d5, which seems strange as it is instantly eliminated by the knight. In the ensuing creative struggle both opponents committed quite a few mistakes and the game finished with a happy end.

153
Stefan Kuipers (2391)
Gabriel Sargissian (2683)
Gibraltar Open 2012 (6)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 c3 e5 3.f3 d7 4.c4 e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.e1 a6 8.a4 b6 9.b5?! Creative, but I am not sure that giving a bishop for a knight is auspicious for White. More modest is 9.d3 b7 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.c5 xd5 (11...c5 also equalizes, viz. 12.c4 (12.xe5 xd5 13.exd5 xd5=) 12...xd5 13.exd5 xd3 14.xd3 f6=) 12.exd5 b6 13.d4 f5. Now in the following game, the Elo-favourite entered an asymmetrical position, not willing to agree to an exchange operation in the centre: 14.g5 c5 15.b4 xd3 16.xd3 c8 17.c5 bxc5 18.bxc5 xc5 19.xe5 f6= Bodnaruk-Khismatullin, St Petersburg 2011.

9...xd5 10.exd5 f6
We don’t often see such a pawn structure (g7-f6-e5-d6-c7). In this case it makes sense as the light squares are controlled by the c8-bishop and the opponent doesn’t have such a piece.

11. \( \text{N} \)e4

11.\( \text{Q} \)d3 \( \text{Q} \)e8 12.\( \text{N} \)a2 \( \text{b} \)b7 13.c4 b5 with counterplay.

11...\( \text{B} \)b7 12.c4 c6

A bit more forceful is 12...c5 13.dxc6 \( \text{B} \)xc6 14.\( \text{g} \)3 g6=.

13.dxe5 \( \text{N} \)xe5 14.\( \text{N} \)d4 \( \text{Q} \)d7

Objectively, White’s position is a bit better due to the weaknesses on c6 and e6. This could have been underlined by the modest 15.\( \text{N} \)c3.

15.\( \text{N} \)e6

15.\( \text{c} \)c3!? \( \text{R} \)e8 16.dxc6 \( \text{B} \)xc6 17.\( \text{e} \)e6 \( \text{f} \)f7 18.\( \text{f} \)f4± and the d6- and b6-pawns are no adornment to Black’s position.

15...\( \text{xc} \)c4?!

Gabriel plays creatively, otherwise how could he win against such a solid opponent playing with black? The ‘normal’ continuation is 15...\( \text{R} \)fe8.

16.\( \text{xf} \)f8 \( \text{xf} \)f8 17.\( \text{d} \)d4 cxd5 18.\( \text{c} \)c3

More exact is 18.\( \text{g} \)g3±.

18...\( \text{c} \)c8 19.f3

The ‘carnivorous’ 19.\( \text{x} \)xd5 could have led to interesting complications: 19...\( \text{e} \)e5 20.f4 (20.\( \text{x} \)xb6?? \( \text{c} \)c6 21.f3 \( \text{xf} \)f3+ 22.gxf3 \( \text{xf} \)f3+) 20...\( \text{f} \)f7 21.\( \text{e} \)e3 (21.fxe5 fxe5 22.\( \text{x} \)xb6 \( \text{xd} \)d5 with counterplay) 21...\( \text{c} \)c4 22.\( \text{xc} \)c4 \( \text{xc} \)c4 23.\( \text{f} \)f2 d5
19...\(\text{de}5\) 20.b3

Kuipers plays thematically, keeping the doubled pawns (d6, d5) on the board, which hamper the black bishops. Unfortunately, now the Armenian player forces an opening of the centre.

20...\(\text{de}6\)

Reminding his opponent of the fact that the queen is not the best blockader!

21.\(\text{xd5}\+)

Unpromising is 21.\(\text{xb6}\) d4 22.\(\text{d5}\) d3 23.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{e}5\), unclear.

21...\(\text{h}8\) 22.\(\text{b}2\)

22.\(\text{d}1\).

22...\(\text{e}5\) 23.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{f}7\) 24.\(\text{e}2\)

24.\(\text{e}4\).

24...\(\text{xb3}\) 25.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{d}3\) 26.\(\text{ad}1\)

After 26.\(\text{xd3}\) \(\text{xd3}\) 27.\(\text{eb}1\) White would be the one to aspire to a draw.

26...\(\text{xd2}\) 27.\(\text{xd2}\) \(\text{g}8\)

Stronger was 27...\(\text{d}5\).

28.\(\text{f}5\)
I dare assume that the players were short of time, as a series of mistakes now follows.

28...\(c6\)?

A serious error. Better was 28...\(c4\) 29.\(c2\) \(f7\).

29.\(c1\)±

The exchange of rooks can hardly be avoided now, which is favourable for White.

29...\(d5??\)

This could have led to instant loss.
30...Rxd5?
30...fxe5 31.dxc2 g6 (the problem is that 31...c5+ is unsatisfactory because of the simple 32.exc5 bxc5 33.\texttt{?}e7++) 32.exc6 exc6 33.exc6 gxf5 34.\texttt{?}f1! (murderous prevention, after which at least two black pawns will drop. 34.exb6? c5+) 34...c5 35.a5+-.

30...\texttt{?}xd5 31.Rxc8 \texttt{?}e6
The knight is lost. I will leave the remainder without notes, as the logical course of events has been broken.

32.Rxa8 \texttt{?}xf8 33.a3 \texttt{?}d7 34.\texttt{?}xf8 35.\texttt{?}a6 \texttt{?}d7 36.a5 bxa5 37.\texttt{?}a5 \texttt{?}e6 38.\texttt{?}f2 \texttt{?}f7 39.\texttt{?}g5 40.\texttt{?}a6 \texttt{?}e5 41.\texttt{?}g6 42.h3 h5 43.\texttt{?}a4 \texttt{?}d3+ 44.\texttt{?}e3 \texttt{?}f4 45.\texttt{?}f2 h4 46.\texttt{?}a5 \texttt{?}d5 47.\texttt{?}a3 \texttt{?}f5 48.\texttt{?}a6 \texttt{?}e5 49.\texttt{?}a4 \texttt{?}c6 50.\texttt{?}a6 \texttt{?}d7 51.\texttt{?}a7 \texttt{?}e6 52.\texttt{?}a4 \texttt{?}d5
52...f5!?

53.\texttt{?}a6 f5 54.\texttt{?}h6 \texttt{?}d4 55.\texttt{?}h8 \texttt{?}d3+ 56.\texttt{?}e2 \texttt{?}c4 57.\texttt{?}d8+ \texttt{?}e5 58.\texttt{?}e3 f4+ 59.\texttt{?}d2 \texttt{?}c5 60.\texttt{?}e8+ \texttt{?}d6 61.\texttt{?}e7 \texttt{?}e6 62.\texttt{?}c1 \texttt{?}d5 63.\texttt{?}e2 g4 64.\texttt{?}xg4 h3 65.\texttt{?}f2
65.gxh3 \texttt{?}d4+ 66.\texttt{?}f2 \texttt{?}xf3=.

65...hxg2
65...h2 66.\texttt{?}h1=.

66.\texttt{?}xg2 \texttt{?}e5 67.\texttt{?}c3 \texttt{?}d4 68.\texttt{?}a3 \texttt{?}c5 69.\texttt{?}f2 \texttt{?}d3+ 70.\texttt{?}e2 \texttt{?}c4 71.\texttt{?}a8 \texttt{?}e5+ 72.\texttt{?}f2 \texttt{?}d3+ 73.\texttt{?}e2 \texttt{?}b2+ 74.\texttt{?}f2 \texttt{?}d3+ 75.\texttt{?}e2 \texttt{?}h2

Macedonian master Filip PANCEVSKI obtained perfect play as Black in the next game. His activity on the kingside developed easily and naturally, whereas on the queenside White didn’t make much progress. Unfortunately, Black’s inaccuracies in time trouble were too serious.

Stefan Kuipers

154
David Howell (2614)
Filip Pancevski (2470)
Plovdiv Ech 2012 (9)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \texttt{?}f6 3.\texttt{?}c3 e5 4.\texttt{?}f3 \texttt{?}bd7 5.\texttt{?}c4 \texttt{?}e7 6.0-0
0-0 7.\texttt{?}e1 a6 8.a4 b6 9.b3 \texttt{?}b7 10.d5 \texttt{?}e8

The Macedonian player regroups his forces right after the closing of the centre in the ‘Old-Indian’ manner. Here are some other set-ups for Black: 10...\texttt{?}c5 11.\texttt{?}a3 (11.b4 \texttt{?}cd7 12.a5 (12.\texttt{?}a3 a5=) 12...b5 13.\texttt{?}b3 \texttt{?}c8 14.h3 \texttt{?}h5 15.\texttt{?}e3 h6=) 11...h6 12.h3 \texttt{?}e8= 10...\texttt{?}e8 11.\texttt{?}e2 \texttt{?}c8 12.\texttt{?}d1 \texttt{?}f8 13.h3 \texttt{?}g6=. 
11. Na2 a5 12. Nb5 g6


13. Bh6 Ng7 14. Qd2 f5 15. exf5 gxf5

The two pawns on e5 and f5 look strong. And so they are, but in this case also interesting was 15... Rxf5!? because White can’t easily exploit the blockading square e4, for example 16. Nd3 c5.

16. b4

Perhaps more accurate is 16. Nd3 c5 17. Rad1, waiting for the black pawns to move and hoping to make use of the resulting weakening.

16... Rf6 17. Rab1 Kg6
An attractive rook transfer, isn’t it? Black’s position is already preferable.

18.\texttt{\textipa{c6}}?!

The Englishman allows an unfavourable change of the central pawn structure. This can happen in situations where a player can’t find a promising plan. The clock is ticking, you have to make a move, but you don’t see a good one... then you just make any move.

After 18.bxa5 \texttt{\textipa{xa5}} 19.\texttt{\textipa{b4}} f4 20.\texttt{\textipa{xg7}} \texttt{\textipa{xg7}} Black is also better. It is not easy to make convenient use of the point e4, and...\texttt{\textipa{d7-f6}} is on the agenda.

18...\texttt{\textipa{xc6}} 19.\texttt{\textipa{dxc6}} \texttt{\textipa{f8}}

More logical and stronger is 19...\texttt{\textipa{f6}}.

20.b5 \texttt{\textipa{fe6}} 21.\texttt{\textipa{xg7}} \texttt{\textipa{xg7}} 22.\texttt{\textipa{c3}} \texttt{\textipa{f6}}

More aggressive is 22...e4!? 23.\texttt{\textipa{d4}} \texttt{\textipa{xd4}} 24.\texttt{\textipa{xd4}}+ \texttt{\textipa{f6}} 25.\texttt{\textipa{c4}} \texttt{\textipa{xc3}} 26.\texttt{\textipa{xc3}}+ \texttt{\textipa{f6}}, keeping a certain initiative. With the absence of minor pieces, it will be difficult for White to sacrifice something on b6 or d6 so as to activate his outpost on c6.

23.\texttt{\textipa{d5}} \texttt{\textipa{h8}} 24.\texttt{\textipa{h1}} \texttt{\textipa{g8}} 25.e4 \texttt{\textipa{f8}} 26.g3 \texttt{\textipa{g7}} 27.\texttt{\textipa{b3}}
Black definitely stands better. Moreover, he has many good continuations at his disposal, for instance 27...h6 28.a3 e4 29.xf6 xf6 30.h4 g5 with the idea (maybe) of ...xh4 and ...f3.

28.a3 h5

28...h6.

29.d1 h6 30.g1 h7 31.d2 g8 32.f4 h4

A minority attack. Up to here the Balkan chess player has been doing everything right.

33.gxh4 xg1+ 34.xg1 xh4?

Stronger was 34...xf4 35.xf4 exf4.

35.fxe5 dxe5 36.f3 g4 37.a1

The picture has altered considerably. White attacks the e5-pawn and, after that, the enemy king too.

37.d4??

The only way was 37...h3, but these computer lines are hard to find for a mere mortal: 38.xe5 g7 39.e2 h5 40.e5 xa3 41.xg4 fxg4 42.e8+ g7 43.xd8 c1=.

38.xe5 c2 39.c3 g7 40.xg4 xa3 41.h3+ h7

41...g8 42.h6+ f8 43.xa3++-

42.xa3 fxg4 43.f8+ 1-0
After the queen exchange Black’s position is hopeless. White has different plans at his disposal. He can carry out c4-c5, then b5-b6 and c6-c7. Or just play g2-g4xg4.

Black’s structure took on the usual shape in the following game by one of the strongest Russian chess players. Ian did put the pawn at c6, even though he played not very confidently. White’s bishop on a2 was beautiful, while the black pawn, in my opinion, ran to b4 in vain, creating weaknesses around it.

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.c3 e5 4.f3 bd7 5.c4 e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.e1 a6

In this game the ideas of...c7-c6 and...a7-a6 are intertwined. I’ve put the game in this section. I hope you don’t mind.

8.a4 b6 9.a2 b7 10.h3

10...d3 c6 We are already familiar with this idea. 11.h4 g6 An amusing tactical skirmish ensues after 11...c5 12.d5 xe4!? 13.xe4 xh4 14.xd6 xf2+ 15.xf2 f6+ 16.f5 g6 17.g4± 12.g6?! It’s better to return: 12.xf3 c5 13.dxe5 xe5 14.e2±. 12...g4! 13.xg3 13.xf8 xh4 14.g3 xf8 15.f3 gf6 16.dxe5 xe5 17.g2 h5 18.xh4 xh4 unclear, with sufficient compensation for Black. He controls squares g3, f4, e5. 13.xh6 14.xg6

14...g5 15.xf8 xf8 16.dxe5 xe5 17.f1 17.f4 h4±. 17...h4 18.e3 hg4 19.e2 xf2+?! 19...a5 20.f4 a6±. 20.xf2 xf2 21.xf2±, Guseinov-Golod, Tashkent 2012.

10...c6 11.dxe5 dxe5

11...xe5!?.
12. \textit{Nh4 b5} \\
It is also possible to bring the bishop closer to the kingside: 12...\textit{c8}?! 13. \textit{Bc8} a5 14. \textit{f3 c7±}.

13. \textit{f5 b4} 14. \textit{b1 e8}?! \\
I suppose that Ian knows what he is doing, however Black’s position is getting worse. 14...\textit{c8} 15. \textit{e3 a5} 16. \textit{d2±}; after the weakening of point c4 White’s advantage has increased.

15. \textit{e3} \\
Even stronger is 15. \textit{g4 h8} 16. \textit{d2±}.

15...\textit{c5} 16. \textit{d2} \\
The a2-bishop is exerting extremely unpleasant pressure, but how can it be neutralized? White had different options to get a better position, for example also 16. \textit{f3 xe3} 17. \textit{xe3 g6} 18. \textit{h6+ g7} 19. \textit{d1 c8} 20. \textit{xf7 xf7} 21. \textit{xf7 xf7} 22. \textit{b3+ g7} 23. \textit{xb4±}.

16...\textit{g6} 17. \textit{b3 xe3} 18. \textit{xe3 c7} 19. \textit{a5}?! \\
This looks reasonable, putting a pawn on a dark square, but better was 19. \textit{f3 a5} 20. \textit{ad1}±.

19...\textit{d8} 20. \textit{f3 d6} 21. \textit{ad1 g7} \\
Gradually the position has evened out.

22. \textit{g3 xe4} 23. \textit{f5+ h8} 24. \textit{xe4 gxf5} 25. \textit{g5 fxe4} 26. \textit{xd7} \\
The Czech grandmaster forces a draw.

26...\textit{xd7} 27. \textit{f6+ g8} 28. \textit{g5+} \\
Draw agreed.

The straightforward d4-d5 proved its vitality in the following game, played in Macedonia. English International Master Adam Hunt exerts pressure on the lonely black a6-pawn on the queenside. Elo-favourite Alexander Delchev arranges counterplay on the opposite part of the board. It was White who was superior most of the time.

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|}
\hline
156  \\
\textbf{Adam Hunt (2454)}  \\
\textbf{Alexander Delchev (2622)}  \\
Skopje Open 2012 (5)  \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

1.e4 d6 2.d4 \textit{df6} 3.\textit{c3 e5} 4.\textit{f3 bd7} 5.\textit{c4 e7} 6.0-0 0-0 7.\textit{e1 a6} 8.\textit{a4} b6 9.d5 \\
The Englishman locks the centre at once. I am not sure that it is appropriate, as after d4-d5 the bishop returns from b7 to c8 from time to time. And now Black can save two tempi (!) on this manoeuvre. The weakening of point c6 may turn out to be not of essential significance.

9...\textit{h8}
Not so promising is 9...\textit{c}c5 10.b4 (10.\textit{e}e2) 10...\textit{b}b7 11.a5 (11.\textit{a}a3 a5=) 11...\textit{b}xa5 12.bxa5±.

10.a5
10.h3.

10...\textit{b}5 11.\textit{f}f1 \textit{b}7=

The pawn structure has changed once again (a4-a5, b6-b5) and the Bulgarian grandmaster chooses another plan accordingly. Now ...c7-c6 looks attractive, as the white bishop has left the diagonal a2-g8.

12.b3 \textit{c}c8 13.\textit{a}a3 \textit{c}5
The flexible 13...c6!? is also interesting.

14.dxc6
14.\textit{c}1.

14...\textit{x}c6 15.\textit{d}d5 \textit{x}d5 16.exd5
16.\textit{xd}5 \textit{c}7±.

16...\textit{c}7 17.c4 bxc4 18.\textit{x}c4
The plans of both sides are clear. White exerts pressure on the a6-pawn and on the queenside on the whole. Black tries to make use of his pawn majority on the kingside.

18...\textit{e}e8 19.\textit{d}d2 \textit{a}8
A familiar manoeuvre; the queen goes to ‘take the corner’.

20.\textit{ad}1
The annoying 20.\textit{ Ng5}?! could have provided some initiative.

20...\textit{ Nh6} 21.\textit{ h3} 22.\textit{ Nh2} 23.\textit{ g4} 24.\textit{ e3} 25.\textit{ Nh5} 26.\textit{ g4} 27.\textit{ Bh5} 28.\textit{ Bd7}

Better was 24...\textit{ Rd8}.

25.\textit{ d3} 26.\textit{ e4}?! 25...\textit{ f4} 26.\textit{ f1} 26...\textit{ ed8} suggested itself. However, I believe not many players would be willing to double rooks behind their own d6-pawn.

26.\textit{ d4}

26.\textit{ e2}?! is likely to be more unpleasant for Black, keeping the a6-pawn in suspense. For example, 26...\textit{ f6} 27.\textit{ b2} with initiative.

26...\textit{ f6} 27.\textit{ d2} 28.\textit{ b2} 29.\textit{ xe5} 30.\textit{ xe5}

Delchev has surrounded the d5-pawn, but there are enough resources to protect it.

30.\textit{ b4} 31.\textit{ d4} 32.\textit{ b8}

32.\textit{ b6}

If Adam had exchanged the knights, he could have got a considerable advantage: 32.\textit{ g4}! 33.\textit{ xg4} 34.\textit{ hxg4}±. Moreover, the pawn which appears on g4 would have made the support of the advanced e4-pawn with ...\textit{ f7-f5} impossible.

32...\textit{ d7} 33.\textit{ d4} 34.\textit{ f5}

Of course, the Bulgarian doesn’t repeat moves, but he strengthens his pawn formation in the centre.

34.\textit{ b2}
34.\text{b}1!\

34...f6

More natural and strong was 34...f4!? 35.\text{g}4 \text{e}7 36.\text{d}4 h5 37.\text{h}2 \text{e}8 and Black’s chances are not worse.

35.b5 axb5 36.\text{x}b5 f4 37.\text{g}4

Perhaps even more forceful was 37.\text{b}1, for example: 37...fxe3 38.\text{x}b7 exf2+ 39.\text{f}2 \text{b}7 40.\text{x}b7 \text{e}8 (40...\text{x}d5 41.\text{b}5+) 41.\text{f}1 \text{x}d5 42.\text{a}1\text{±}.

37...\text{x}g4 38.hxg4 \text{c}8 39.\text{e}2

The unsophisticated 39.a6 is also good, for instance: 39...\text{a}8 40.d4 \text{e}8 41.b1\text{±}.

39...\text{a}8

Probably the players were in time trouble, otherwise Alexander might have ventured the promising 39...f3! 40.\text{x}f3 exf3 41.\text{x}f3 \text{x}d5 42.\text{x}d5 (42.\text{e}5 \text{xf}3--; 42.\text{d}5 43.\text{d}5 unclear) 42...\text{e}1+ 43.g2 \text{a}1, with an unclear position.

40.\text{c}4 \text{c}8 41.\text{e}2 \text{a}8 42.\text{c}4

Draw.

\textbf{Conclusion}

I have the impression that in this line Black achieves quite acceptable positions with adequate counterplay. If the worst comes to the worst, he can defend tenaciously, and it is highly difficult for White to convert the evaluation of $\pm$ into a sound point.
Exercises

Before you start making these exercises, I must warn you. In this book I give a choice between three answers with each task. You may not only gain points, but also lose some if you come up with a clearly weak line. So please don’t take these exercises lightly.

There are 35 exercises, and this magic number is comprised of: 32 chess pieces + 3 possible results (victory, loss, draw).

1

Black to move. How would you play?
A) 18...a5
B) 18...c6
C) 18...f8

Show/Hide the Solution

Sundar Shyam (2507)
Somak Palit (2421)
Kolkata Open 2014 (4)

A) The right move is 18...a5 (+2), involving the rook in the fight. The game saw 19.a4 a6 20.b3 d8 21.b2 c6=.
B) Those who chose 18...c6?? 19.f7+- deserve a deduction of -1.
C) 18...f8 =0.
Black to move. Evaluate the position.
A) White has a big advantage.
B) What a silly question. My Elo is above 2300!
C) Equality.

Show/Hide the Solution

Batuhan Dastan (2416)
Branko Damijanovic (2566)
Skopje Open 2014 (8)

A) =0.
B) =0.
C) The chances are equal (+1), it is hardly possible to exploit Black’s pawn weaknesses: 28...\textcolor{red}{\text{d}4}+ 29.\textcolor{blue}{\text{c}3} \text{h}5 30.\textcolor{green}{\text{h}4} \textcolor{red}{\text{b}d}8 31.\textcolor{red}{\text{xd}4} \text{cxd}4+=.
White to move.
A) 26. \( \text{Bxe5} \)
B) 26. \( \text{Na4} \)
C) 26. \( \text{Rb1} \)

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**Warda Aulia Medina (2351)**
**Dusan Popovic (2537)**
Albena 2014 (3)

A) After 26. \( \text{Bxe5} \) \( (=0) \) 26... \( \text{Bxe5} \) 27. \( \text{dx5} \) \( \text{Bxd1+} \) 28. \( \text{cxd1} \) \( \text{c4} \) 29. \( \text{b3} \) \( \text{d2+} \) 30. \( \text{Kd2} \) \( \text{xb3} \)−+ the avalanche of black pawns decided the game.

B) Correct is 26. \( \text{Na4}! \) \( \text{xa4} \) 27. \( \text{Bxa4} \) b5 (27... \( \text{Bxb2} \) 28. \( \text{Bb1} \) \( \text{c4} \) 29. \( \text{Bxb7} \) unclear) 28. \( \text{c1} \) with counterplay. If you have come so far, clock up +3 points.

C) Bad is 26. \( \text{Bb1} \) \( (=0) \) 26... \( \text{c4} \)−.
Black to move.
A) What can I think of? White is two pawns down, he stands hopeless!
B) 20... $\text{d}6$
C) 20... $\text{f}8$

Show/Hide the Solution

Vadim Moiseenko (2474)
Nikolay Korniushin (2357)
Vladivostok 2014 (9)

A) ‘What? White’s position is hopeless!’ OK, just take 0 points and relax.

Right is
B) 20... $\text{d}6$! 21.$\text{h}6$ $\text{c}7$+ +1. If you also calculated 21.$\text{d}2$ $\text{x}d2$ 22.$\text{x}d2$ $\text{g}7$ 23.$\text{x}a7$ $\text{e}6$ 24.$\text{x}e6$ $\text{x}e6$+, there is a +2 bonus.

C) In the game Black played 20... $\text{f}8$?! 21.$\text{d}2$! $\text{x}d2$ 22.$\text{x}d2$ and even lost.
Black to move.
A) 8...g4
B) 8...exf4
C) 8...h6

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Auzout & Maubisson (2548)
Maubisson & Morant (2388)
London blindfold 2010 (6)

A) Bad is 8...g4 (=0) 9.f3±.
B) Right is 8...exf4! (+1): 9.f3 (9.e5 h6 10.xf6+ gxf6 11.exf6 c5=) 9...c6 10.e5 h6 11.h4 g5 12.xg5 hxg5 13.xg5 c7 14.exf6 h6 15.xh6 xh6=. 
C) After 8...h6?? 9.xf6 gxf6 10.f5? a piece drops, please deduct -1 point.
White to move.
A) 33. \(\text{Nx}e5\)
B) 33. \(\text{Ra}1\)
C) 33.\(cxb6\)

Show/Hide the Solution

Liu Guanchu (2412)
Erik Blomqvist (2492)
Budapest 2014 (3)

A) 33.\(\text{Nx}e5\) doesn’t look good (=0): 33...\(\text{Rxc}5\) 34.\(\text{Nx}g6\) \(\text{Rc}2\) with counterplay.

B) Stronger is 33.\(\text{Ra}1!\) (+2) 33...\(bxc5\) 34.\(\text{Nx}e5\)±. For the line 33...\(\text{e}7\) 34.\(\text{a}7+\) \(\text{d}8\) 35.\(\text{cxb6}\) \(\text{xb6}\) 36.\(\text{a}8+\) \(\text{c}7\) 37.\(\text{a}5\)± you get a dividend of +1.

C) The game saw 33.\(cxb6\)+? (=0), when after 33...\(\text{b}7\)! 34.\(\text{a}1\) \(\text{xb}6\) 35.\(g3\) \(\text{f}xg3\) 36.\(g1\) \(\text{c}7\) 37.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{e}7\) 38.\(g5\) \(\text{d}6\) Black took the initiative.
White to move.
A) 17.a4
B) 17.g4
C) 17.Bc1

Show/Hide the Solution

Thomas Casper (2395)
Christian Seel (2493)
Germany Bundesliga 2009/10 (10)

B) If you chose 17.g4?! Ng4+ 18.Bxf4 exf4 please subtract -1 point.
C) 17.Bc1 =0.
Black to move.
A) 1... $\text{Kf6}$
B) 1... $\text{Kh6}$
C) 1... $\text{Bd8}$

Show/Hide the Solution

Sergey Kasparov (2486)
Séverin Papa (2349)
Deizisau 2003 (7)

A) 80... $\text{Kf6}$ (=0) 81.c5 $\text{Bd8}$ 82.$\text{Bb6}$ $\text{Be7}$ 83.$\text{Bxa5}$ $\text{Bxc5}$ 84.$\text{Bc3}$.

B) This may look like a dead draw, and Black might not have expected any danger: 80... $\text{Kh6}$? (-1) and he lost the game:
81.c5 $\text{Bd8}$ 82.$\text{Bb6}$ $\text{Be7}$ 83.$\text{Bxa5}$ $\text{Bxc5}$ 84.$\text{Bd4}$ 85.$\text{a5}$ $\text{c5}$ 86.$\text{b6}$ $\text{c4}$ 87.$\text{xd4}$ exd4 88.$\text{f3}$ 1-0.

C) The only right move is 80... $\text{Bd8}$! (+2) 81.c5 $\text{Bg5}$ 82.$\text{b8}$ $\text{f6}$ 83.$\text{c7}$ $\text{d2}$ 84.$\text{h4}$ $\text{g6}$ 85.$\text{xe5}$ $\text{e3}$ 86.$\text{g3}$ (86.$\text{d6}$ $\text{f2}$+; 86.$\text{c7}$ $\text{f2}$+) 86... $\text{xc5}$±. If you found all this, add +1 point.
White to move.
A) 42.b6
B) 42.Nxd6
C) 42.f4

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Sergey Kasparov (2491)
Dragan Paunovic (2505)
San Sebastian 2006 (9)

A) There is no point in moving pawns. You won’t profit from it: 42.b6?! (=0) 42...cxb6.
B) 42.f4? =0: 42...exf4 43.gxf4 Nxf4.
C) Natural and correct was 42.Qxd6 (+2) 42...Qxd6 (42...cxd6 43.b6+-; 42...Qxd6 43.b7 Qd7 44.c5+ Qd6 45.b4+-) 43.Qxe5+ Qxe5 44.Qxe5 Qc4 45.Qg7 Qd2 46.f4 Qxe4 47.g4+-.
Black to move. Assess the position.
A) White wins.
B) Black stands better.
C) Around equality.

Show/Hide the Solution

Vugar Gashimov (2426)
Sergey Kasparov (2465)
Minsk zt 2000 (6)

B) The pin on the knight looks terrible, but concrete lines are more important. Black stands better (+2) after 36...\texttt{exd2}. It may be too much to put an exclamation mark here as this strike lies on the surface. 37.\texttt{xe4+} \texttt{xe4} 38.\texttt{xd2} \texttt{h4+}

Even more accurate is 38...\texttt{e3}!. 39.\texttt{xe2} \texttt{f5} 40.\texttt{d6} \texttt{e3}+

36...\texttt{f2} 37.\texttt{f1} \texttt{xd2} 38.\texttt{xe4+} \texttt{xe4} 39.\texttt{xd2} is unclear.

Answers A) and C): = 0.
Black to move.
A) 1... Nxc4
B) 1... Ra8
C) 1... Nxd5

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Martin Mrva (2405)
Sergej Berezjuk (2380)
Brno 1995 (6)


B) 18... Ra8?! is too passive: =0.

C) In the game there followed 18... bxd5 19. Qxd5 Qxd5 20. Qxd5 c6 21. d5 with initiative: +1.
The last move played was 10. \( \text{Ngxe2} \).
A) This move is correct and leads to a stable advantage.
B) A mistake which causes problems.
C) Absolute equality is maintained.

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Pavel Vavra (2330)
Petr Spacek (2400)
Czechia tt 1999/00

A) 10... \( \text{Nd7?!} \) \((-0\)) was played: 11. \( \text{Bxe7} \text{Qxe7} \) 12. \( \text{Ng3} \text{Qf6} \) 13. \( \text{Nf5} \) with initiative.

B) 10. \( \text{Ng2} \) was inaccurate, as Black could have won a pawn with 10... \( \text{Nxe4!} \) \((+2)\) 11. \( \text{Bxe7} \text{Nxc3} \) 12. \( \text{Qxc3} \) (12. \( \text{Bxd8} \text{Nxe2+} \)) 12... \( \text{Qxe7} \) 13. \( \text{Nd4} \text{d7+} \) \((+2)\).

C) \=(-0).
Suggest Black’s move.
A) 1... ♙d8
B) 1... ♙e4
C) 1... ♙f7

Show/Hide the Solution

Pavel Vavra (2393)
Jiri Stocek (2514)
Pardubice Open 2000 (8)

A) =0.

B) Queen retreats are inappropriate here as 25... ♙e4! leads to a big advantage (+2): 26.♗g1 26.♗e1 ♘xd4++; 26.♗e3 ♘xc3 27.♕xe8+ ♙xe8 28.♕xf6 ♘xa2+ 29.♔b1 gxf6 30.♕xa2 ♙xg4++ +1. 26...♕g5+ 27.♗e3 (27.♗e3 ♘xc3 28.♕xg5 ♘e2+-+) 27...♕xd4++ Considerably stronger is 27...c5!+-.

C) 25...♕f7 =0;
25...♕d8 =0
Suggest Black’s move.
A) 14...c5
B) 14...Ne8
C) 14...Bxe2

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Alexander Moiseenko (2707)
Fabiano Caruana (2791)
Dubai Wch rapid 2014 (4)

A) If you chose 14...c5? 15.Qe3± please deduct one point (-1).
B) The Pacific 14...Ne8 isn’t worth anything: =0.
C) If, like the Italian super-grandmaster, you noticed that after 14...Bxe2 (14...Ne8 =0; 14...c5? -1 15.Qe3±) 15.Qxe2
   dc5 16.Qf4 Qxe5 +2 17.Qxe5 Qe8 Black wins a pawn, please add +2 points.
How should Black play?
A) 20...g5
B) 20...g6
C) 20...b4

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Ivan Rozum (2482)
Marat Dzhumaev (2549)
Kazan 2013 (8)

A) For the crazy 20...g5?? immediately substract -2 points. No hysterics, please, and don’t blame me – blame your coach. It’s not my fault that you didn’t see 21.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash}}\texttt{x}d6 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash}}\texttt{x}d6 22.f6+ g7 23.d4+-.

B) After 20...g6? =0 Black was subject to a crushing attack: 21.h6 gxh5 22.g5 d7 (22...f5 23.d4 f7 24.xh4±) 23.d4+-.

C) Best is 20...b4 (+1), distracting the opponent on the queenside.
Black to move.
A) 12...b5
B) 12...c5
C) 12...h6

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Tomas Habinak (2350)
Zdenek Husek (2255)
Slovakia tt 1995

A) Both players probably had little understanding of the variation. The mistake 12...b5? (=0) remained unpunished and the game ended in a draw after 13.Qe2 Qb7 14.Qc7 Qxe4 15.Qxe4.

Winning is 15.Qxb5 Qxc3 16.Qxd7 Qe4+ 17.Qe3 Qc4 18.Qe8+ Qf8 19.Qe6+; or 15...Qxe4 16.Qe3 Qf3 17.Qxb5 Qg4 18.Qd2 Qf6 19.Qae1 h6 20.Qg1 Qf5 21.Qb3+ Qh7 22.Qf7 Qe4+ 0-1.

B) Right is 12...c5! (+2) with normal play and mutual chances.

C) =0
White to move, which would you prefer?
A) 1. \( \text{Nxf4} \)
B) 1. \( \text{Nd5} \)
C) 1. \( \text{Nc7} \)

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**Rüdiger Seger (2340)**
**Arndt Miltner (2410)**
Gladenbach ch-GER 1997 (3)

A) In the game there followed 11. \( \text{Nxf4}+?! \) (=0) and after 11... \( \text{f7} \) 12. \( \text{O-0} \) \( \text{d6} \) White regretted his mistake.

B) 11. \( \text{d5} \) (+1) could have kept the attack going with unclear consequences.

C) Also unsatisfactory is 11. \( \text{xc7} \) (=0) 11... \( \text{e5} \) with initiative.
Please suggest White’s move.
A) 14. \textit{f}2
B) 14. \textit{e}2
C) 14. \textit{e}2

Show/Hide the Solution

Ivan Martic (2182)

\begin{tabular}{l}
Alexandar Danilovic (2378) \\
Subotica jr 2000 (9) \\
\end{tabular}

A) The narrow path in the right direction is 14.\textit{f}2! \textit{g}1+ (14...\textit{h}4? 15.\textit{xd}5+ \textit{e}6 16.\textit{xc}5+) 15.\textit{e}2 (the only move) 15...\textit{xc}3+ 16.bxc3 \textit{e}+- +3.

B) I can hardly recommend 14.\textit{e}2? (=0) 14...\textit{b}4 with attack.

C) In the game White didn’t find the proper continuation and played 14.\textit{e}2? (-1) 14...\textit{h}4+ 15.\textit{d}2 \textit{g}5+ 16.\textit{d}1 \textit{xc}3+ 17.bxc3 \textit{d}8+ 18.\textit{d}2 \textit{e}6 19.\textit{b}5 \textit{e}7-+.
White to move.
A) 13.a3
B) 13.\texttt{N}xb5
C) 13.a4

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Gawain Jones (2509)
Sam Collins (2398)
England tt 2006/07 (7)

A) 13.a3? is weak (=0) due to 13...\texttt{a}6+.  
B) Totally bad is 13.\texttt{N}xb5? (-1) 13...\texttt{cx}b5 14.\texttt{xb}5 \texttt{b}8+. How could you choose this one?!  
C) Logical and right is 13.a4!, breaking Black’s pawn chain: 13...\texttt{b}4 14.\texttt{c}4 (+2).
Black to move. Which retreat should the knight choose?
A) 10... Ng4
B) 10... c6
C) 10... fg4

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Ian Nepomniachtchi (2545)
Stéphane Hautot (2368)
Fügen tt 2006 (6)

A) Doubtful is 10... Ng4?! (=0) 11.h3±.
B) Correct is 10... c6 (+2) 11.c4 e6 12.xe6 fxe6; this is unclear as 13.xe6? is not good in view of 13... d4±.
C) After the optimistic 10... fg4? (=0) 11.h3 h6 Black could have faced problems following 12.d5±.
Black to move.
A) 25...h6
B) 25...xf6
C) 25...d4

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Deimante Daulyte (2355)
Liza Soloviova (2308)
Moscow Open 2014 (2)

A) The game saw the mistake 25...h6? 26.d2! d4? (=0) (26...f8) 27.xh6 xf3 (27...xh6 28.d2 g4 29.f4 e3 30.h6+?) 28.gxf3 xe5 29.e2 ±.
B) Also bad is 25...xf6? (=0) 26.exf6 ±.
C) Right is 25...d4 (+2) 26.d2 f8 27.f4 b4. 
Black to move.
A) 1... \texttt{d}d7
B) 1... \texttt{e}d8
C) 1... \texttt{f}h4

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\textbf{Samuel Franklin (2307)}
\textbf{Jacob Aagaard (2519)}
\textit{England tt 2013/14} (6)

A) The quiet 19... \texttt{d}d7 (=0) and

B) 19... \texttt{e}d8 (=0) maintain approximate equality.

C) The aggressive 19... \texttt{h}h4! should be played, for example: 20.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{d}d4- (+2).
A) The activation of Black’s unsuccessfully placed bishop looks reasonable: 21...\textit{\texttt{c}}c8! (+1) 22.h3 \textit{\texttt{d}}d7 23.\textit{\texttt{g}}g5 \textit{\texttt{b}}b2 with counterplay

B) Absolutely awkward is 21...\textit{\texttt{f}}xe4?? (-2) 22.\textit{\texttt{e}}xe4 \textit{\texttt{e}}xe4 23.\textit{\texttt{e}}xe4+- . I hope you didn’t choose this option!

C) 21...\textit{\texttt{c}}d7 is not very timely here; =0.

\textit{\texttt{Zigurds Lanka (2465)}}
\textit{\texttt{Zsivko Bratanov (2467)}}
\textit{\texttt{Germany tt 2010/11 (3)}}
White played 28.Nh2. How would you assess this move?
A) Right; it contributes to the development of White’s initiative.
B) A mistake which will lead to problems.
C) Please, don’t ask me silly questions!

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Neil Stewart (2300)
Rafael Fridman (2482)
Germany tt 2011 (9)

A) =0.
B) 28.Nh2? (+2) leads to material losses (28.b4?): 28...d4 29.e2 f5+-.
C) Smart alecks who have chosen this option, please return 1 point (-1).

28.b4?
White to move.
A) 17.\textit{R}d1
B) 17.h4
C) 17.\textit{B}xc5

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Carlos Ernesto Burgos Figueroa (2301)
Jose Francisco Cuenca Jimenez (2493)
Malaga Open 2011 (4)

A) Approximate equality could have been maintained by 17.\textit{R}d1 (+1).
B) Unattractive is 17.h4?!, for instance: 17...\textit{N}e6 18.g3? \textit{N}f4!+ (=0).
C) 17.\textit{B}xc5?! is not the best move (=0) as it allows Black to blast the centre: 17...\textit{R}xc5 18.\textit{Q}d3 \textit{d}5 with initiative.
Black to move.
A) 10...d8
B) 10...exd4
C) 10...d5

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A) 10...d8?! is illogical (-1).
B) The most critical move is 10...exd4 11.Qxd4 Qxd4 12.Nxd4 b6= (+2).
C) The impulsive 10...d5? (=0) led to disaster: 11.exd5 Bb4 12.dxc6 Bxc3 13.cxd7 Qxd7 14.dxe5 xe1 15.Qxe1 h5 16.g4+-.

27
Suggest Black’s move.
A) 19...c5
B) 19...d5
C) 19...g6

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Attila Csonka (2387)
Peter Michalik (2584)
Austria tt-2 2013/14 (3)

A) Doubtful is 19...c5?! (=0), clearing the b5-square for the white knight.
B) The ambitious 19...d5! is the strongest move (+2): 20.exd5 cxd5 21.xe7 xe7 22.e3 c5³.
C) 19...g6 is more modest (=0).
How should Black play?
A) 31...b5
B) 31...\text{Nf6}!
C) 31...d5

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Alessandro Bove (2371)
Miroljub Lazic (2461)
Padova Open 2013 (3)

A) 31...b5? (-1) looks totally inappropriate: 32.axb5 cxb5 33.\text{f1±}.

B) The careful 31...\text{Nf6}! is right (+2): 32.\text{h4 b6} 33.\text{h1 d5} 34.e5 \text{e6} unclear.

C) 31...d5?! gives White the edge (=0): 32.\text{exd5 xf4} 33.\text{c4 xe1+} 34.\text{xe1 xe1+} 35.\text{xe1 xc2} 36.\text{f2±}.
Black to move.
A) 19... Nf4
B) 19... Rb8
C) 19... f5

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Nastasia Ziaziulkina (2350)
Eva Moser (2434)
Warsaw Ech-tt w 2013 (5)

A) Bad is 19... Nf4? (=0) 20.dxe5 dxe5 21.h4 Nh7 22.Nxe5+-.
B) The lesser of evils is 19... Rb8² (+1).
C) When Eva played the pseudo-active 19... f5? (=0), she first lost a pawn, and then the game: 20.exf5 Exf5 21.Nxe5! dxe5 22.Nxe6+ Nxe6 23.xg6 Ng6 24.g3+- +2.
How should White play?
A) 19. \( \text{Nc3} \)
B) 19. \( \text{c4} \)
C) 19. \( \text{b3} \)

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Sergey Grigoriants (2574)
Giorgi Bagaturov (2408)
Yerevan Ech 2014 (5)

A) Bad is 19. \( \text{Nc3} \)? (=0) because of the simple 19... \( \text{Nxa4} \).

B) A cardinal spanner in the enemy’s works is 19.\( \text{c4} \)! (+2) 19... \( \text{Nd7} \)? (19... \( \text{Nxa4} \) 20. \( \text{Qc2} \) \( \text{b5} \) (20... \( \text{Rxf3} \) 21. \( \text{gxf3 Nb6} \) 22. \( \text{Qc3\pm} \) 21. \( \text{Qg5\+} \)) 20. \( \text{Qg5\+} \)).

C) After 19.\( \text{b3} \)! (=0) Black organizes counterplay with 19... \( \text{c4} \).
Black to move.  
A) 21...f6  
B) 21...d7  
C) 21...g6

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Pouria Darini (2540)  
Ebrahim Ahmadinia (2398)  
Tabriz ch-IRI 2013 (8)

A) Very bad is 21...f6?? 22.Qh5+. Subtract -2 points if you opted for this one.  
B) The most tenacious move in this joyless position is 21...d7+ (+1).  
C) The Iranian committed a mistake with 21...g6? (-1) and was subjected to a strong attack after 22.fxg6 hxg6 23.Rf1 Qg7 24.Rf4! Qe5 25.Qf5 (25.Qxg6+).  

32
How should White play?
A) 15. d2
B) 15. c4
C) 15. e5

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Aryan Tari (2420)
Darius Zagorskis (2480)
Warsaw Ech-tt 2013 (8)

A) The most accurate move is the careful 15. d2 (+1).
B) In the game White could have come under attack after the poor 15. c4? (=0): 15... d5 16. exd5 e5 (16... b5! 17. axb5 axb5 18. dxb5 e5+ 19. f1 xe1+ 20. xe1 f8).
C) =0.
Suggest White’s move.
A) 18.b4
B) 18.a5
C) 18.\(d3\)

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Ioan Cristian Chirila (2504)
Vasile Sanduleac (2405)
Arad Open 2012 (5)

A) Those who chose 18.b4? cxb4 should deduct 2 points: -2.
B) White could have carried out an effective breakthrough: 18.a5! b5 19.\(\text{axb5!} \ (+3)\) 19...axb5 20.a6 \(\text{e6} \ 21.\text{c6!} \ \text{c8} \ 22.\text{b7}+-.\)
C) In the game 18.\(d3\) was played; =0.
White to move.
A) 27.e5
B) 27.\textit{Rae2}
C) 27.d5

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\textbf{Slavisa Marinkovic (2406)}
\textbf{Branko Tadic (2517)}
\textbf{Cetinje tt 2012 (6)}

A) Obviously 27.e5? is not good due to 27...\textit{xf3} 28.exf6 (28.gxf6 \textit{Qxd4-+}) 28...\textit{Rxe1+} 29.\textit{Qxe1 Rc1-+ (-2)}.

B) 27.\textit{Rae2} would have continued the struggle; +1.

C) Wrong was 27.d5? (-1) 27...\textit{Bd5+}.
How should White play?
A) 19.\textit{Na2} 
B) 19.g4 
C) 19.\textit{Ne2}

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Adam Horvath (2495)  
Attila Vertetics (2409)  
Heviz 2012 (8)

A) Of course, the most reasonable move is 19.\textit{Na2} (+2), sending the knight to the blockading square b4: 19...\textit{Ra8}  
20.\textit{Qc3 Re8} 21.\textit{Nb4 Rxal} 22.\textit{Qxa1±}.

For B) 19.g4 (=0)

or C) 19.\textit{Ne2} (=0) you won’t get anything, but you don’t have to deduct any points either.

Your results
Well, you have done the exercises and gained a certain amount of points. Let’s try to estimate your chess level. I hope that you understand, though, that this evaluation is relative.

Above 60 points
Your name is either Veselin, or Fabiano, or Hikaru.

51-60
You are a grandmaster with an Elo-rating of 2500+. I hope this book wasn’t too simple for such an experienced chess player.

41-50
You perform at about 2350-2499 level, but your Elo-rating is gradually increasing. It is not excluded that you will become a grandmaster soon.

27-40

Either your Elo is 2200-2349, or at times you have chosen inadequate answers (with minuses) which led to deductions of points.

0-26

Your hunger for chess deserves praise. My advice to you is to communicate with players who are considerably stronger than you. This experience will be useful for you.

Below 0

I guess you have just been turning the pages. Please leave this book alone and look around elsewhere. There are so many interesting things in life.
Conclusion

Well, here we are, we have finished our research of this opening.

I hope you have found a lot of new material to study and that the time you spent was useful. Many must be glad with the book: your wife (you didn’t go to the pub), your mother (you didn’t come home late), your children (you didn’t pick on them lying on the sofa with the book in your hands).

As for the chess component, of course I can’t remember every detail either, even in a book I have written myself. At times, during tournament preparation for a concrete game or opponent, I get confused and experience some problems. Then Tatiana advises: ‘Well, just read it in... our book!’ And you know, sometimes this works: to look at the things from the other side, as a reader.

I don’t lay claim to a 100% correctness of the lines. Besides, time changes everything, and new ideas always keep appearing. However, I like the way the book was written, and I think it is quite easy to understand. OK, it would be strange if such a book didn’t appeal to me.

The investigated opening line 1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 seems to be not worse than any other more or less correct scheme. White enjoys some initiative, but it is as difficult to overcome the enemy defence as it is to cross a boggy morass. Moreover, he runs the risk to be mired down.

Before I say goodbye, I urge you to direct your remarks or wishes straight to the author at tkasparova@rambler.ru. We will collect them all and take them into consideration for possible new editions, and also in our work on our next books.

See you on future pages or in the tournament halls! Nowadays I often not only play myself, but also accompany my pupils there. If you are an organizer of youth tournaments, please send us a note.
Index of Variations
1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.c3 e5

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6...c6 7.c4
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7.\( \text{Na3} \)
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6...dxe5 7.\textbf{\textit{\textit{xf7+}}}
6.\textbf{\textit{\textit{g5}}} 0-0 7.\textbf{\textit{xf7+}}
6.0-0 0-0 7.a4 c6 8.a5

7.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{e1}}}}

7...c6 8.a4
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