experts vs. the Sicilian
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†        Check
!        A strong move
!!       A brilliant move
!?       An interesting move
?!       A dubious move
?        A mistake
??       A blunder

+-       White has a winning position
±        White is better
±        White is slightly better
=        The position is equal
≡        The position is unclear
∥∥       Compensation for the sacrificed material
††       Black is slightly better
††       Black is better
→+       Black has a winning position

1–0       White won
½–½      The game was drawn
0–1       Black won
(x)      x’th match game
corr.     Correspondence game
Preface

GM John Nunn had a lot of success with his trilogy Beating the Sicilian 1, 2 and 3. Others have tried to follow suit, but none with the same success. (The latest being Nigel Davies with Taming the Sicilian, where the White repertoire was based on g3-lines against almost everything.)

It was with this knowledge that Ari Ziegler and Jacob Aagaard discussed the idea of a repertoire book against the Sicilian in 2003, while developing the idea of a new chess publishing company. The discussions (leading to this book) ended with the idea of contacting strong players who had specialist knowledge in the lines in question. It was our conviction that this would give the reader the best possible insight into the finer points of a particular line. As experienced players and opening book writers we know that important finesses are missed if you do not:

1. Use a lot of time analysing the games, instead of just believing the players’ own analysis.
2. Have prior knowledge of the system.

It is obviously not easy to get many busy chess players to deliver up-to-date material all at the same time. However it was also not as difficult as we feared. Alexander Raetsky and Peter Wells were playing tournaments at the time of the deadline, but still managed to deliver with only a week’s delay. And this despite serious computer problems for both!

It has been interesting to learn how differently some very strong players view opening theory, and see how this has made itself apparent in their contributions. At one extreme there is Viktor Gavrikov with his dense theoretical style, at the other Peter Heine Nielsen with his ideas-based approach. This is not a matter of playing strength or necessarily style of play. These two GMs are the two highest rated players contributing to this book, and are both renowned theoreticians. For this reason we decided that it did not make any sense to make huge changes to the style chosen by the different contributors. Clearly a lot of general editing has been done, but we made no particular effort to limit the diversity of the book’s authors.

We hope you will find this book enlightening and entertaining.

Glasgow, October 2nd 2004          Jacob Aagaard          John Shaw
The writers

Grandmaster Thomas Luther vs. the Najdorf
35-year-old Thomas Luther from Erfurt in Germany (where Martin Luther went to university) is twice German champion and a regular member of his country’s Olympiad team, including 2000 when they were close to winning the tournament, but in the end had to settle for silver medals.

Although this is Thomas’ first contribution to a chess book, his 20 years of playing $6.\text{Bg}5$ against the Najdorf at a high level cannot but impress.

Grandmaster Mikhail Golubev vs. the Dragon
Mikhail Golubev is a strong 34-year-old grandmaster from Ukraine who mainly considers himself a journalist. He is known as a diligent chess writer and the author of some well-received opening books.

Mikhail contributes often to *New In Chess Yearbook* with theoretical surveys, and mainly on the Sicilian Dragon. In recent years a great number of books on the Dragon have been published, but none caught the attention of the editors of this book as Golubev’s small book, *Easy Guide to the Dragon*.

We are very happy that Mikhail accepted our invitation to contribute to this book.

International Master Jacob Aagaard vs. the Sveshnikov & several minor lines
Jacob Aagaard is 31 years old, born in Denmark, but resident in Glasgow, Scotland. His best results are his two GM-norms, both attained in 2004. Jacob has written many chess books. Especially close to heart is the Excelling at Chess series of 5 books, from which the first, *Excelling at Chess*, won book of the year at chesscafe.com, while the final two received even better reviews.

Jacob is also the author of *Easy Guide to the Sveshnikov* (Everyman Chess 2000).

Grandmaster Peter Wells vs. the Classical Sicilian
Peter Wells is 39 years old and has for many years been one of the best players in England. During his work for this book he found time to take second place in the British Championship. At the publication date of this book Peter will represent England at the Olympiad.

Peter’s participation is a real scoop for this book. His reputation as a chess opening author is unchallenged. Kasparov, with his usual diplomacy, said about Peter’s book on the Semi-Slav, that he could not understand how such a weak player could write such a

In 1998 Peter wrote The Complete Richter-Rauzer together with Viacheslav Osnos. He plays the Classical Sicilian often and with good results.

**Grandmaster Sune Berg Hansen vs. the Taimanov and the Kan**
Sune Berg Hansen is 33 years old and has been one of Denmark’s strongest grandmasters for many years. He has competed in several Olympiads and once in the World Championship. He is well known in Denmark for the high quality of his chess annotations, and as the daily chess columnist for the large newspaper Politiken. His article in this book is his first larger contribution to a chess book. His great knowledge of opening theory will become apparent to anyone who reads his work in this book.

**Grandmaster Peter Heine Nielsen vs. the Accelerated Dragon**
Peter Heine Nielsen is 31 years old and currently Scandinavia’s number one. Peter has won many international tournaments, ahead of such players as Ivanchuk, Short, Svidler and Beliavsky. He also won a bronze medal at the 1994 Olympiad in Moscow.

Peter co-authored the book The Sicilian Accelerated Dragon in 1998 with fellow Dane Carsten Hansen. They are currently contemplating an updated edition.

**Grandmaster Viktor Gavrikov vs. the Scheveningen**
Viktor Gavrikov is 47 years old and famous on the tournament circuit for his vast knowledge of opening theory. As a player he has competed at the highest level for many years, and won games against players such as Karpov, Beliavsky, van Wely, Lautier, Andersson and Adams. Currently he contributes theoretical articles to ChessBase Magazine and is working on a book on the middlegame.

Viktor has played the Keres Attack with both colours, but does not consider himself a true expert. However his contribution to this book suggests otherwise.

**International Master Jan Pinski vs. the Kalashnikov**
Jan Pinski is a 25-year-old journalist, currently working hard on uncovering corruption in his native Poland, as well as on his next chess book. Jan has written a number of chess books, the first being The Kalashnikov Sicilian with Jacob Aagaard. In an e-mail to the editors Jan states, “It is incredible that I played this line for so long without being punished!”
International Master Alexander Raetsky vs. the Four Knights.
42-year old Alexander Raetsky very recently made his first grandmaster norm after 9, 10 and 11 rounds of the Biel Open 2004, but was unfortunately given one and not three norms for the effort. He has for a long time been one of the best players in his home region of Voronezh in Russia, where for the last five years he has organized one of the largest open tournaments in the world.

Alexander is also the author of several chess books, most often with his close friend Maxim Chetverik, as well as a contributor to New In Chess Yearbook. Among his books is *Meeting 1.e4*, which is a repertoire book with the main line being the Four Knights Sicilian, an opening he has played regularly since.

International Master John Shaw vs. several minor lines.
John Shaw is a strong IM from Scotland who has represented his country in many international team tournaments, including Olympiads. He has written two opening books for Everyman Chess, and will soon release a book on the 3.b5 Sicilian.
The Najdorf

- By Thomas Luther

The Najdorf System is one of the most popular systems of the Sicilian Defence. It arises after the moves 1.e4 c5 2.d4 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.cxd4 f6 5.c3 a6. The Argentine Grandmaster M. Najdorf played it for the first time in a tournament game in the 40s.

Nowadays it is seen in every level of tournament. Many World Champions, including Fischer and Kasparov, used it as their main defence against 1.e2-e4. In many variations an uncompromising battle arises where every move has great importance. It is a very practical choice if Black wants to play for a win from the very beginning of the game. In our times many moves from the older games belong only to history, because strong computer programs show that they are incorrect. Nevertheless, in some lines White just crushes Black’s set-up. I will give some examples where I show the reader some basic ideas (for example the c3-d5 sacrifice), and I try to show the connection of different variations and the tricks of move orders.

This book recommends 6.g5. I have played this move for nearly 20 years now and I have won many games with it. There are relatively few recent games in the 6.g5 line, because 6.e3 is more popular right now. However when comparing the results of these two variations we see that 6.g5 is doing fine.

There are some specialists in this line and I have annotated some of their best games. Among many others I want to mention GMs Short, Timman, Kotronias and Sulskis for their great efforts.

The most important lines are the Poisoned Pawn variation (6...e6 7.f4 b6), which is the most critical line and the mainline (6...e6 7.f4 bd7 8.f3 c7 9.0-0-0 e7) and now 10.d3. These two lines dominate at the moment in tournament practice. Other formerly well known lines, like the Polugayevsky Variation (6...e6 7.f4 b5), are rarely met nowadays.

I have checked most variations given in this chapter with my computer. But soft- and hardware are developing fast, and sooner or later improvements will be found. If you are uncertain about
a position after reading this book I truly advise you to check it with your computer.

In the beginning I will give some sidelines. Each of them is dangerous if White does not know what to do. I start with 6...\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)bd7 (the usual move which is played in almost all other games here is 6...e6). Black’s idea is to avoid getting double pawns on the f-line, and maybe later there could be an \(e7-e5\) in one move. In most of the games Black just plays \(e7-e6\) on the next move and the game transposes to another line. Really not recommendable is this idea in connection with 7...\(\text{\texttt{W}}\)b6. Black is just too far behind in development to do so. The following game is a perfect example of how White should deal with this plan.

Game 1
Stripunsky - Granda Zuniga
New York 1998

1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)xd4 \(\text{\texttt{B}}\)f6 5.\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)c3 a6 6.\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)g5 \(\text{\texttt{B}}\)bd7
6...h6 7.\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)xf6!.

7.\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)f4 \(\text{\texttt{B}}\)b6?!

7...e6 is of course the move, transposing to 6...e6 7.\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)f4 \(\text{\texttt{B}}\)bd7.

7...h6? 8.\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)xf6 \(\text{\texttt{B}}\)xf6 9.e5 dxe5 10.fxe5 \(\text{\texttt{B}}\)d5 11.e6\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)±.

7...b5? also does not really work. After 8.\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)xf6 \(\text{\texttt{B}}\)xf6 9.e5 b4 10.\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)cb5! – Nunn. White has a strong position. Here are some lines:

8.\(\text{\texttt{W}}\)d2 \(\text{\texttt{W}}\)xb2

Otherwise Black’s play does not make a lot of sense.

9.\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)b1 \(\text{\texttt{B}}\)a3 10.\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)xf6!

White uses his lead in development by this immediate action.

10...\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)xf6

Forced. 10...\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)xf6 11.e5 \(\text{\texttt{B}}\)g4 12.\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)d5 is pretty hopeless for Black. 12...\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)c5 (12...\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)a7 13.\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)b3 \(\text{\texttt{B}}\)xa2 14.\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)c3 \(\text{\texttt{B}}\)d7 15.\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)c7\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)9) 13.\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)b8 13.\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)c6 \(\text{\texttt{B}}\)xa2 14.\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)d1\(\text{\texttt{B}}\) 13.\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)b3 \(\text{\texttt{B}}\)c6 14.\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)a5 \(\text{\texttt{B}}\)c5

Now the weaker player could have won if he played 15.\(\text{\texttt{B}}\)xb7\(\text{\texttt{B}}\), but respect for the grandmaster made him repeat moves, Bindrich - Zagrebely, Dresden 2000.
11.\textit{d5 \textit{b8}}

Other moves are no better, or maybe even worse.

11...\textit{xa2} 12.\textit{b4 \textit{d8} (12...\textit{b5}}
13.\textit{c7+ \textit{d8} was Zunker - Holfelder, Bruchkoebel 2002. Now 14.\textit{x8 \textit{b7}}
15.\textit{c4! wins) 13.\textit{b3 \textit{a1+ 14.\textit{f2 e6}}
15.\textit{b1 \textit{a2} 16.\textit{c4 a5 17.\textit{c3 \textit{c5}}
18.\textit{c6+ \textit{xc6 19.\textit{xf6+ \textit{e8 20.\textit{c7+ \textit{d7 21.\textit{xf7+ \textit{c7 22.\textit{xa2 1-0}}}
Garbarino - Sabas, Buenos Aires 1982.}

11...\textit{c5 12.\textit{b3 \textit{c6 13.\textit{a5 \textit{c5}}
14.\textit{xb7 \textit{b8 15.\textit{xc5 \textit{xb1+ 16.\textit{f2}}
\textit{xc5 17.\textit{a5+-}}.

12.\textit{b3!}

White needs to bring his pieces into action. Worse was 12.\textit{c7+ \textit{d8}
13.\textit{xa6 bxa6 14.\textit{c6+ \textit{c7 15.\textit{xb8}}
\textit{xb8} 16.\textit{c4 \textit{c6+}}.

\begin{center}
[Chess Diagram]
\end{center}

does not work, but 12...\textit{xa2! has been suggested, and is in fact the only way for Black to play on. Still, analysis assisted by a computer indicates that White has the advantage. 13.\textit{c4! is of course the move. Now we have:

a) 13...\textit{a1+}. This only helps White.
14.\textit{f2 \textit{h1}. White now has a winning combination with 15.\textit{c7+ \textit{d8}}
16.\textit{a5! b6 17.\textit{de6+ fxe6 18.\textit{xe6+ \textit{e8 19.\textit{h5 mate.}}}

b) 13...\textit{c5? 14.\textit{xb7! (14.0-0? \textit{xb3 15.\textit{xb3 \textit{a3 16.\textit{f3, is also tempting, but winning the queen is more convincing.) 14.\textit{b1+ 15.\textit{xb1 \textit{xb1+}}
16.\textit{e2 \textit{h1 17.\textit{a5+-}}.

c) 13...\textit{e6 14.\textit{c7+ \textit{d8} 15.\textit{c3!}}
(15.0-0 \textit{a4! and it is not possible to find more than equality for White. This shows the old truth that an advanced soldier behind enemy lines can do a lot of damage.) 15...\textit{c5 16.\textit{xb7 \textit{b1+}}
17.\textit{xb1 \textit{xb1+ 18.\textit{e2 \textit{h1 19.\textit{a5}}
\textit{d7 20.\textit{c5! and the White attack crashes through.}}}

d) 13...\textit{a4 14.\textit{c3 \textit{c5 15.\textit{b6 \textit{a2 16.0-0 \textit{xe4 17.\textit{e1 \textit{c5 18.\textit{b4}}}
and the black queen is trapped.}

13.\textit{xa6! e5?}

13...\textit{bxa6 14.\textit{c3!+ Vitolinsh - Arakas, USSR 1978.}}

13...\textit{xa2 14.\textit{c3 e6 15.\textit{c7+ \textit{d8}}
16.\textit{c4 is of course not playable for Black. There is nothing that justifies the weakening of the king's position.}

14.\textit{b4 \textit{xa2}}

12...\textit{a4}

After this there is not a lot to talk about. White is simply much better.

12...\textit{c5 13.\textit{c3 \textit{a7 14.\textit{xa6}}+-}
The Najdorf

14...\textit{wa}5 15.\textit{eb}3 looks good for White. 15...\textit{xa}2 16.\textit{eb}5 with a crushing attack.

15.\textit{eb}3 \textit{bxa}6? 16.\textit{ec}3! 1–0

Black resigned. His queen is trapped after 16...\textit{aa}8 17.0–0 \textit{a}5 18.\textit{eb}5 \textit{a}4 19.\textit{cc}7+ \textit{td}8 20.\textit{ac}1.

Another old sideline is 7...\textit{ac}6. It came to popularity after GM Shabalov played it. Funnily it was also GM Shabalov who started crushing this line.

Black wants to achieve a Rauzer-like set-up and make use of White's early f2-f4. In fact the early f4 gives White the chance to kick Black's knight on f6 with e4-e5. Since White has better development the tactics should go fine for him, and they do so. In the game below GM Adams shows fine technique and gains a great advantage. Only a silly blunder, which had nothing to do with the opening, cost him half a point.

Game 2
Adams - Anand
Linares 1997

1.e4 c5 2.\textit{f}3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\textit{xd}4 \textit{f}6 5.\textit{c}3 a6 6.\textit{gg}5 \textit{e}6 7.f4 \textit{c}6

Usually in the Najdorf the \textit{b}8 is going to d7, compared to the Rauzer where Black sets up with, d6, \textit{f}6 and \textit{c}6.

8.e5!

Here Black wants to make use of the early f2-f4, so after the "normal" Rauzer move 8.\textit{d}2 \textit{h}6 9.\textit{h}4 (9.\textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 is not attractive for White either) 9...\textit{xe}4 is very strong. But this is not a Rauzer, but a Najdorf, where White is prepared for an early e4-e5.

8...h6 9.\textit{h}4

9...\textit{xe}5

9...\textit{xd}4 keeps the pawn structure on the queenside intact, but Black has to commit his kingside with g7-g5. 10.\textit{xd}4 (10.\textit{xf}6?? falls into a nice trap: 10...\textit{f}5! This was discovered by Adorjan. 11.\textit{xg}7 \textit{xh}4+ 12.g3 \textit{g}3 13.\textit{xh}8 \textit{e}4† and notwithstanding his two queens, the white king will soon be checkmated.) 10...\textit{xe}5 11.\textit{xd}8+ \textit{xd}8 12.\textit{xe}5 \textit{g}5 13.\textit{g}3! \textit{d}7 14.0–0–0 \textit{g}7 15.\textit{e}2 (for some reason this natural move is not in Kosten's book \textit{Easy Guide to the Najdorf}) 15...\textit{e}7 16.\textit{h}5! (f7 is the weakest point in Black's territory) 16...\textit{f}8 (16...\textit{xe}5 does not work here. 17.\textit{he}1 \textit{f}6 18.\textit{xe}5
fxe5 19...f1! f6 20.c4 f8 21.g2! and White is clearly better.) 17.c4xe5 18.fxe1 f5 19.c3 f4 20.f2 b6 21.xb6 b7 22.c5 f6 23.xe5 1–0 Luther - Senff, Cappelle la Grande 2001.

10.xc6 wxc6 11.xd1 bxc6 12.fxe5 d5

Also possible is 12...d7! but Black still has a passive position. 13.c4 g5 14.g3 g7 15.d6 fxe7 16.c4 a5 17.h4. This is a very strong move: White wants to weaken the g5-pawn and trade his passive rook. Now it is difficult for Black to develop his last pieces, as can be seen by the following lines: 17...a4 18.a6 19.xa5 bxc6 20.c4 xa2 21.hxg5 hxg5 22.xh5 xh5 23.xg5= 18.xh5 hxg5 19.xh8 20.xe2±.

13.e4 b8 14.b3

14.e7

14...g5?! Making the check on b4 happen is not worth weakening the structure. 15.xg3 xg4 16.e2! and by threatening c2-c4 White obtained a big advantage in Brodsky - Rechel, Groningen 1993.

15.g3!

This move certainly secures an advantage for White. Black has too little space for his pieces. This is more important than just the usual good/bad bishop stuff. Worse is 15.xe7 xe7, and with a weak pawn on e5, White can never be better.

15...0–0 16.e2

16.c4?! White should be careful with pawn moves: 16.b4 17.xd8 with counterplay.

16.a5

16...e3 hunting the g2-pawn is not good for Black: 17.xd2 xg2 18.f2 h4 19.f6!. Without this move White would have nothing. 19...gxg6 20.xh4 c5 21.f3 fxe5 22.f6 and after xg3 and g2 White has a dangerous attack.

17.c4 b4 18.xd2!

It is important to protect the a-pawn since it keeps Black's knight out of the game. Huzman gives: 18.0–0 xa2 19.a1 b4 20.xa5 c2 and Black has good counterplay against the b3-pawn.

18.xd8 19.f1!

Another brilliant move by Adams. The king stays in the centre to cover the important squares.

19.xd2 20.xd2 a6
Now this is different. The white king dominates the knight on b4 after: 21...a1 b4 22.xa5 the position is ±.

21.xh5

Forcing Black to weaken the kingside structure.

21...g6 22.f3 b7 23.c3 d8 24.d6 a8 25.a3??

This spoils all the previous achievements. After protecting the knight on d6 once more, White's victory would have been only a question of time. 25.d1! was the right move.

25...f5!

Now Black has counterplay.

26.b4 g5 27.h3 f8 28.c5 b8

28...g7 29.c4 does not change much.

29.h5

29.a1 with the idea 30.c4 was recommended after the game.

29...c7 30.f3 a6 31.h5 c7

32.f3 ½–½

White could have played on, but probably he was frustrated with his 25th move.

Now we turn to the above mentioned game from GM Shabalov. Instead of heading for an ending, as in the previous game, Black can burn his bridges and crack White's centre with 9...g5. White has to play carefully and have some theoretical knowledge about the position. With the right move order White can prevent Black building up a strong centre. He has to take the d5 knight before he takes the one on c6. As soon as White castles the black king will find himself under a strong attack.

**Game 3**

**Shabalov - Browne**

Las Vegas 1997

1.e4 c5 2.d4 d6 3.dxc5 4.xd4 xd4 5.c3 a6 6.g5 e6 7.f4 c6 8.e5! h6 9.h4 g5

Black acts concretely against White's centre and the game becomes very tactical. Since White has better development, tactics should work in his favour.

10.fxg5 d5

10...h7 Knights need to be placed in the centre! 11.xc6 bxc6 12.exd6 with advantage for White.

Of course not 10...hxg5?? 11.xc6 bxc6 12.xg5 and Black loses a piece.
**11. \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{dx}d5}} \)**

It is important to take first on d5 and later on c6, so that Black does not have the option to take with a later c-pawn on d5.

**11...exd5 12.exd6**

The best. Other moves like e5-e6 have been tried, but without much success.

```
11. \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{dx}d5}} \)

11...exd5 12.exd6
```

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Starting position</th>
<th>Ending position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{dx}d5}} )</td>
<td>( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{ex}d6}} )</td>
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12. \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{w}xd6}} \)**

12...\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{dx}d6}} \) 13. \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{xc}c6}} \) bxc6 14. \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{d}d4}} \)

White plays this move because he wants to protect his bishop on h4 and then play g5-g6. 14...\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{e}e7+}} \) 15. \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{e}e2}} \) \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{e}e5}} \) 16. \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{a}a4}} \) \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{b}b8}} \)

(16...\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{d}d6}} \) is met by a surprisingly strong move: 17. \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{g}g3+}} \) \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{d}d7}} \) (17...\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{x}xg3+}} \) 18. \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{hxg3}} \) \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{x}xg3+}} \) 19. \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{f}f1}} \) Both c6 and h6 are hanging, besides Black’s king is in danger. White is clearly better.) 18.gxh6 with advantage for White.) 17.g6 (when White achieves this Black is usually busted) 17...\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{d}d6}} \) (17...\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{b}b4+}} \).

This was once recommended as equalising, but I think White is still better. 18.\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{xb}b4}} \) \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{xb}b4}} \) 19.\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{gf}f7+}} \) \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{xf}f7}} \) 20.0–0+ \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{g}g7}} \) 21.\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{f}f2}} \) \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{xb}b2}} \) 22.\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{d}d3}} \) After lots of exchanges Black still has problems, his pieces are not coordinated. A possible line could be: 22...\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{f}f8}} \) 23.\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{ae}1}} \) \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{c}c3}} \) 24.\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{e}e7+}} \) \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{g}g8}} \) 25.\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{c}c5}} \) \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{xf}f1+}} \) 26.\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{xf}f1}} \) \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{g}g4}} \) 27.\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{c}c7}} \) \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{xa}a2}} \) 28.\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{xc}c6}} \) \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{d}d1}} \) 29.\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{e}e3}} \) \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{a}a3}} \) 30.\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{xa}a6}} \) \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{xa}a6}} \) 31.\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{xa}a6}} \) \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{xc}c2}} \) 32.\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{xb}b6}} \ and good technique should bring White the full point.) 18.gxh7+ \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{f}f8}} \) 19.\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{f}f2}} \) \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{xb}b2}} \) 20.0–0 \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{h}h7}} \) 21.\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{h}h1}} \) \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{xf}f7}} \) 22.\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{d}d4}} \ With a decisive attack in McDonald - Danner, Budapest 1996.

13.\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{e}e2+}} \)

The point of White's play. White gets the clearly better game now.

13...\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{e}e7}} \) 14.\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{xc}c6}} \)

Of course not 14.0–0–0? \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{f}f4+}} \). 14...\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{xc}c6}} \) 15.\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{g}g3}} \) \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{g}g6}} \)

15...\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{b}b4+}} \) 16.c3 and, thanks to \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{e}e2}} \), the b2 pawn is protected.

16.\( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{e}e5}} \) \( \text{\textit{\text{\textbf{g}g8}} \) 17.gxh6!
Finally! White secures his extra pawn.

17...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}}c2

17...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}}}}5?! 18.e2! \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{xc}}}2 19.0-0 and with his king in the centre Black is helpless against all the threats.

17...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}}}}}xh6 (with this move Black is just accepting to play a pawn down) 18.f4 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{g}}}6 (18...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}}}6 19.\texttt{\texttt{xe}}6 \texttt{\texttt{xe}}6 20.g3 was seen in Luther -Abreu, Havana 2001. Black had no compensation for the pawn.) 19.0-0-0±. With a safe king and an extra pawn White has a clear advantage.

18.e2 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{g}}}5

Desperation! 18...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{g}}}6 19.h4! is very uncomfortable for Black.

19.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{h}}}8t! \texttt{\texttt{d}}7 20.\texttt{\texttt{c}}3+-

This finishes all Black’s hopes.

20...\texttt{\texttt{xc}}3t

20...\texttt{\texttt{e}}4 21.0-0 \texttt{\texttt{xe}}2 22.ae1 and the various threats cannot be parried anymore.

21.bxc3 \texttt{\texttt{f}}6 22.0-0

After this move everything is clear. The passed pawn on h6 decides the game.

22...\texttt{\texttt{xc}}3 23.\texttt{\texttt{xf}}7t \texttt{\texttt{e}}6 24.ae1 \texttt{\texttt{d}}7 25.h4 \texttt{\texttt{g}}6 26.h5 1-0

Now after \texttt{\texttt{xf}}h6 \texttt{\texttt{g}}4t White wins a piece, so Black resigned.

The early \texttt{\texttt{c}}7 is another sideline. Black wants to play b7-b5 without allowing e4-e5. If White does not react to this plan and slowly develops, Black will kick White’s knight on c3 by playing b7-b5-b4. If White has to remove this knight to e2 or a4 then Black is doing fine. There are many tactical lines but I cannot recommend them. Basically, if White gets the chance to take on f6 and Black has to recapture with the g-pawn White should do it. The arising position is more common in the Rauzer Defence, so I advise the reader to study this chapter as well.

**Game 4**

**Khalifman - Lautier**

Moscow 2001

1.e4 c5 2.\texttt{\texttt{f}}3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\texttt{\texttt{xd}}4 \texttt{\texttt{f}}6 5.c3 a6 6.g5 e6 7.f4 \texttt{\texttt{c}}7

With this move Black wants to trick White in his set-up. If he goes for \texttt{\texttt{d}}1-f3 and castling queenside Black quickly plays b7-b5-b4. Since at this early stage of the game there is no \texttt{\texttt{d}}5 - sac possible the c3-knight has to be moved backwards, which is a big concession.

\begin{center}

\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chess_board.png}

\end{center}

8.\texttt{\texttt{xf}}6
On the other hand there is the chance to break Black’s pawn chain, since Black has not played either $\text{c8-d7}$ or $\text{f8-e7}$. In my opinion, this is the most principled way to treat the $\text{wc7}$-line.

8. $\text{f3}$ is often played in this position. 8...$\text{b5}$ (Black decides not to enter one of the main lines by playing 8...$\text{bd7}$ or $\text{e7}$.) 9.$\text{xf6}$ $\text{xf6}$ 10.$\text{e5}$ d5 (10...$\text{b7}$ 11.$\text{h5}$ with the idea of $\text{d4xe6}$ and White is better here.) 11.$\text{exf6}$ b4 12.$\text{xd5}$ exd5 13.0-0 $\text{b7}$ and, after studying this position for some time, I came to the conclusion that White should not risk this piece sacrifice.

8...$\text{gxf6}$ 9.$\text{d2}$

9.$\text{e2}$ is another way of setting up the pieces for White. Generally I do not think the white king belongs on the kingside. 9...$\text{c6}$ 10.$\text{b3}$ b5 11.0-0 $\text{b7}$ and Black will castle queenside and aim for the standard break d6-d5.

9...$\text{b5}$

Pushing the b-pawn is in the spirit of the variation. The drawback is that the black king will never find a safe spot on the queenside.

9...$\text{c6}$ 10.0-0 $\text{d7}$ 11.$\text{b1}$ h5 12.$\text{c4}$ 0-0 0 13.$\text{xc6}$ $\text{xc6}$ 14.$\text{b3}$ $\text{b8}$ 15.$\text{h1}$ was seen in Topalov–Anand, Dortmund 1997.

10.$\text{d3}$

10.$\text{a3}$ $\text{b7}$ 11.$\text{e2}$ with the idea of castling kingside is another option, but Black can even stop this plan by playing $\text{wc7-b6}$.

10...$\text{b7}$ 11.0-0 $\text{d7}$

Black cleverly keeps the knight because it will be strongly placed on c5. After 11...$\text{c6}$ 12.$\text{xc6}$ White is better.

12.$\text{h1}$ 0-0 0 13.$\text{f5}$ $\text{c5}$ 14.$\text{a3}$

White has to secure the c3-square for his knight.

14.$\text{b8}$ 15.$\text{b1}$ h5 16.$\text{e3}$ $\text{h6}$ 17.$\text{h3}$ $\text{e7}$

18.$\text{f3}$ $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

Here the players agreed a draw. In my opinion White could have continued the game. Instead of 18.$\text{f3}$ I prefer:

a) 18.$\text{b4}$. OK, it is not everybody’s taste to open one’s king, but getting rid of the c5 knight is worth it. 18...$\text{xd3}$ 19.$\text{xd3}$ $\text{de8}$ 20.$\text{ed1}$ with pressure. Or:

b) 18.$\text{e2}$, hitting h5. 18...$\text{e5}$ (18...$\text{xe4}?$ 19.$\text{xe4}$ $\text{xe4}$ 20.$\text{f3}$ and White wins) 19.$\text{b3}$ $\text{xe4}$ 20.$\text{d5}$ $\text{xd5}$ 21.$\text{xd5}$ and White has good compensation. He has play on the light squares and against Black’s king.
Great players have their own openings is an old saying which is difficult to fulfil in our time, since most of the sensible (and even most of the stupid) moves from the starting position have been played already. However GM Polugayevsky invented $7\ldots b5$, played it and published a lot of analysis on it, so this system took his name: the Polugayevsky Variation. The idea is to kick the c3 knight as early as possible. White is forced to take counter measures and the game develops in a very tactical way. What was a tremendous workload back in the 70s and 80s can now be done quickly with a computer program. Nevertheless the work of GM Polugayevsky will always be remembered.

Game 5
Leko - Ghaem Maghami
Yerevan 2001

1.e4 c5 2.$\text{f}3$ d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.$\text{xd}4$ $\text{f}6$ 5.$\text{c}3$ a6 6.$\text{g}5$ e6 7.f4 b5

This aggressive move was played and analysed deeply by the Russian GM Lev Polugayevsky.

$8.e5$

The only way to deal with b7-b5 successfully. Otherwise Black just manages to kick White's knight with b5-b4.

$8...dxe5$

$8...h6$? (this move does not promise Black much here) 9.$\text{h}4$ g5 10.$\text{fxg}5$ $\text{h}7$ 11.$\text{h}5$ hxg5 12.$\text{g}3$ $\text{g}7$ 13.0-0-0 and White had a big advantage in Kasparov - Ehlvest, Baku 1978.

$9.fxe5 \text{c}7$

The idea behind Black's play. He does not lose material, but White gains a lot of time.

$10.exf6$

There is also $10.e2$ but it is not in the spirit of White's set-up.

$10...\text{e}5\uparrow$ 11.$\text{e}2$ $\text{xg}5$ 12.0-0

12.$\text{d}3$ is considered as the main alternative here. Bringing the white king out of the line of fire is, in my opinion, the better option.

![Chess diagram]

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

Black's defence is based on this idea: the rook goes to d7.

12...$\text{e}5$ was for a long time considered the main line, but is now less popular in practice. It is considered in the next game.

Not the natural 12...$\text{b}7$? 13.$\text{f}3$ when Black's position cannot be saved:

a) 13...$\text{xf}3$ 14.$\text{xf}3$ $\text{a}7$ (14...$\text{c}5$
Experts vs. the Sicilian

15.\textit{\textithetilde}xa8 as in Bisset - Martinez, e-mail 1994 offers Black no compensation.

15.\textit{\textithetilde}ad1 \textit{\textithetilde}e5 16.\textit{\textithetilde}fe1 \textit{\textithetilde}xf6 17.\textit{\textithetilde}g3 \textit{\textithetilde}d7 18.\textit{\textithetilde}d5 \textit{\textithetilde}d8 19.\textit{\textithetilde}c6 and White wins.

b) 13...\textit{\textithetilde}e3+ 14.\textit{\textithetilde}h1 \textit{\textithetilde}xf3 15.\textit{\textithetilde}xf3 \textit{\textithetilde}e5 16.\textit{\textithetilde}d2! \textit{\textithetilde}d6 17.g4 b4 18.\textit{\textithetilde}f5!! After this Black is done for.

18...\textit{\textithetilde}c7 19.\textit{\textithetilde}e1 \textit{\textithetilde}xh2+ 20.\textit{\textithetilde}xh2 \textit{\textithetilde}xh2 21.fxg7 \textit{\textithetilde}g8 22.\textit{\textithetilde}d5 \textit{\textithetilde}d7 23.\textit{\textithetilde}xh2 \textit{\textithetilde}d8 24.\textit{\textithetilde}de7 1–0, Stripunsky - Jaracz, Poland 1995.

c) 13...\textit{\textithetilde}a7 14.\textit{\textithetilde}xe6!! An absolute stunner. 14...\textit{\textithetilde}fxe6 (14...\textit{\textithetilde}e3+ 15.\textit{\textithetilde}h1 fxe6 16.fxg7! and it is the end of the world) 15.f7+ \textit{\textithetilde}e7 16.\textit{\textithetilde}d4 The key move. At best Black will be an exchange down with a ruined position.

16...\textit{\textithetilde}f7 17.\textit{\textithetilde}xb7+ \textit{\textithetilde}e8 18.\textit{\textithetilde}e4 \textit{\textithetilde}xb7 19.\textit{\textithetilde}xg5 \textit{\textithetilde}d7 20.\textit{\textithetilde}e5 1–0, Kaehmann - Hamburg, Ruhrgebiet 1999.

13.\textit{\textithetilde}d3 \textit{\textithetilde}d7 14.\textit{\textithetilde}e4 \textit{\textithetilde}e5

14...\textit{\textithetilde}d5?! is worse than the text. The game Sulskis – Stocek, Isle of Man 2002 went as follows: 15.c3 \textit{\textithetilde}c6 16.\textit{\textithetilde}xc6 \textit{\textithetilde}xc6 17.\textit{\textithetilde}e3 \textit{\textithetilde}b7 18.\textit{\textithetilde}f3 and Black still could not free his position from White’s attack.

15.\textit{\textithetilde}f3!

15.c3?! \textit{\textithetilde}b7 16.\textit{\textithetilde}f3 \textit{\textithetilde}xe4 17.\textit{\textithetilde}xe4 gxf6 and White does not have enough compensation for the pawn.

15...\textit{\textithetilde}xb2

As in many tactical lines Black is forced to take some material.

After 15...\textit{\textithetilde}c7 16.\textit{\textithetilde}e3 \textit{\textithetilde}b7 17.\textit{\textithetilde}xe4 \textit{\textithetilde}xe4 18.\textit{\textithetilde}xe4 gxf6 19.cxb5 \textit{\textithetilde}b6† 20.\textit{\textithetilde}h1 axb5 21.a4!! White simply has a great attack for no risk at all. The game Vasquez – Arancibia, Maipu 2003 was soon 1–0.

16.\textit{\textithetilde}e3 \textit{\textithetilde}b7 17.a4 b4

After 17...\textit{\textithetilde}b4 Black could not solve all his problems following 18.c4 \textit{\textithetilde}xe4 19.\textit{\textithetilde}xe4 \textit{\textithetilde}c5† 20.\textit{\textithetilde}h1 b4 21.\textit{\textithetilde}f4 \textit{\textithetilde}d6 (a serious commitment, but 21...\textit{\textithetilde}c6 22.\textit{\textithetilde}ad1 \textit{\textithetilde}f5 23.\textit{\textithetilde}e3 \textit{\textithetilde}xd1 24.\textit{\textithetilde}xd1 \textit{\textithetilde}xf6 25.\textit{\textithetilde}b6 is no fun either) 22.fxg7 \textit{\textithetilde}g8 23.\textit{\textithetilde}h6 \textit{\textithetilde}e5 24.\textit{\textithetilde}xh7 \textit{\textithetilde}xg7 25.\textit{\textithetilde}h8† and soon 1–0 in Rodriguez Cespedes - Stangl, Biel 1988.

17...\textit{\textithetilde}xe4 does not solve Black’s problems. 18.\textit{\textithetilde}xe4 \textit{\textithetilde}c5† 19.\textit{\textithetilde}h1 gxf6 20.axb5 and White wins back the material and keeps a clear advantage.

18.\textit{\textithetilde}ab1

18.c3 This move is an old recommendation. The text is better.

18...\textit{\textithetilde}xe4 19.\textit{\textithetilde}xe4 gxf6 and the best
White can get a repetition by following Black's queen with his rooks.

18...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{W}}xc2

18...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{W}}a3 19.c3 Only now does White play this move. Black cannot finish his development and is in trouble.

19.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{F}}g5! \texttt{\textcolor{red}{W}}c7

Black is in serious trouble as any computer shows. Nowadays any program can analyse this tactical position far better than any human.

19...h6!? does not help either. 20.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{B}}bc1 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{W}}xc1 21.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{F}}xc1 hxg5 22.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{W}}g3 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{F}}c6 23.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{X}}xa6 and White wins.

19...g6 20.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{F}}fc1 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{W}}a2 21.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{C}}c4 and White wins again...

20.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{A}}xb4!

Opening up the position, after this blow there is no longer a defence.

20...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{X}}xe4 21.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{F}}xe4 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{A}}xb4

Allowing a nice finish.

22.fxg7 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{B}}g8 23.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{F}}f6† \texttt{\textcolor{red}{D}}d8 24.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{X}}xg8 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{C}}c5 25.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{F}}f6! \texttt{\textcolor{red}{X}}xe3† 26.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{H}}h1 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{C}}c8

27.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{A}}xd7 1-0

In the next game we shall continue analysing the Polugayevsky Variation. Compared to a line like 7...Nbd7 it might seem less relevant. But first of all many club players really like to play this way, as there is something macho about it. Secondly, the knowledge necessary for playing an opening is not necessarily always centered around the critical lines.

Game 6

\textbf{Wosch - Nordin}

e-mail 2001

Sometimes a relatively weak player (here 2000 elo) plays at the level of a grandmaster for the entire length of a game. This is the case with this wonderful game. Some might think that this is because of computer assistance, as it is an e-mail game, but looking this game over with my own computer does not suggest this at all. On the contrary!

1.e4 c5 2.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{F}}f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{X}}xd4 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{D}}f6 5.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{D}}c3 a6 6.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{G}}g5 e6 7.f4 b5 8.e5 dxe5 9.fxe5 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{W}}c7 10.exf6 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{W}}e5† 11.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{E}}e2 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{X}}xg5 12.0-0 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{E}}e5 13.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{D}}f3 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{C}}c5†

13...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{W}}xf6 14.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{E}}e4 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{W}}xb2 15.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{F}}g5 and, with most of his pieces in the starting position, Black is helpless against White’s various threats.

13...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{W}}e3† 14.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{E}}h1 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{D}}d7 15.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{B}}e1 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{W}}a7 16.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{X}}xg7 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{X}}xg7 17.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{W}}d6 was played in a blindfold rapid game between Leko and
Ivanchuk. It seems that White still has some pressure here.

14...\textit{h}h1 \textit{xf}6 15...\textit{e}4 \textit{e}7 16...\textit{e}5!

The most dangerous. 16...\textit{f}g5 \textit{f}5! has proven to be nothing. 17...\textit{h}5+ \textit{g}6 18...\textit{x}h7 \textit{xf}7! and Black was OK in several games.

16...\textit{f}5?

Now this does not work. 16...0-0 is the only move. Now White should play 17...\textit{xf}7! and then we have:

a) 17...\textit{c}6? 18...\textit{h}5!± is no good for Black. I have analysed the following line 18...\textit{d}4 19...\textit{e}5 20...\textit{g}4! with a winning attack. 20...\textit{d}7 21...\textit{h}6+ \textit{h}8 22...\textit{f}7 \textit{xf}7 23...\textit{xf}7+ \textit{g}8 24...\textit{h}6+ \textit{h}8 25...\textit{g}5 \textit{g}6 26...\textit{f}1! \textit{f}8 27...\textit{h}7+ \textit{g}8 28...\textit{h}4 and Black has no defence.

b) 17...\textit{b}7 is an interesting alternative. 18...\textit{d}3. Nunn’s suggestion. (18...\textit{xc}5 \textit{xc}5 19...\textit{d}6 \textit{xd}6 20...\textit{xd}6 \textit{xf}1+ 21...\textit{xf}1 \textit{d}5= was played in Bartoli - Innorta, e-mail 1998) 18...\textit{xf}7 19...\textit{xf}7 \textit{xf}7 (19...\textit{xf}7 20...\textit{h}5+±) 20...\textit{xc}5 \textit{d}5 21...\textit{e}4 \textit{g}6 22...\textit{e}2 and I think White has good chances for achieving an advantage here. He has ideas of \textit{e}4-c3 and a2-a4, creating further weaknesses in the Black camp.

c) 17...\textit{xf}7 18...\textit{xf}7 \textit{xf}7 19...\textit{h}5+ \textit{g}8 (19...\textit{g}6 20...\textit{xc}5 \textit{a}7 21...\textit{e}4 \textit{g}7 22...\textit{f}3 \textit{d}7 23...\textit{e}1± Kover - De Almeida, corr. 1980.) 20...\textit{xc}5 Now we have the following options:

  c1) 20...\textit{xc}5 21...\textit{d}8+ 1-0. Lukas - Feist, corr. 1997. Black probably overlooked 21...\textit{f}8 22...\textit{f}7+±;

  c2) 20...\textit{c}6 21...\textit{f}3 \textit{d}7 22...\textit{xd}7 \textit{xd}7 23...\textit{d}1± Schneider - Riedmueller, corr. 1996.

  c3) 20...\textit{d}7? 21...\textit{xe}6!± Beliavsky - Polugayevsky, Moscow 1979.

  c4) 20...\textit{a}7 21...\textit{d}3!. A new idea, but not a very surprising one, as the alternatives are less encouraging. (21...\textit{e}4 \textit{d}7 22...\textit{e}2 \textit{c}6 23...\textit{c}3 \textit{e}5 24...\textit{f}1 \textit{b}7= Denaro - Bosco, corr. 1990, and 21...\textit{d}4 \textit{c}7! 22...\textit{e}4 \textit{xc}2 23...\textit{f}1 \textit{d}7!± Mauro - Soranzo, corr. 1990.) 21...\textit{c}6 22...\textit{f}3 \textit{d}4 (22...\textit{b}7? 23...\textit{g}1! \textit{a}8 24...\textit{c}5±) And now White has many ways to proceed. 23...\textit{e}4± is probably easiest. Of course Black can fight for a draw in such an endgame, he is only slightly worse, but certainly White would accept this position from the opening.

17...\textit{h}5+ \textit{g}6 18...\textit{xc}6 \textit{hx}6 19...\textit{g}6+ \textit{f}8 20...\textit{xc}5 \textit{h}6!

The alternatives are not cheerful.
The Najdorf

20...\texttt{\(\text{h}g7\)} is met strongly with 21.\texttt{\(\text{d}xe6+\)} \texttt{\(\text{g}xe6\)} (No better fate is to be found after 21...\texttt{\(\text{d}xg6\)} 22.\texttt{\(\text{f}f4\)+!} (22.\texttt{\(\text{xf}5?!\)} \texttt{\(\text{d}xf5\)} 23.\texttt{\(\text{d}d3\)+} \texttt{\(\text{d}xe6\)} 24.\texttt{\(\text{e}e1\)+} \texttt{\(\text{f}f7\)} 25.\texttt{\(\text{d}xe7\)+} \texttt{\(\text{d}xe7\)} 26.\texttt{\(\text{e}e4\)+} \texttt{\(\text{d}e6\)} 27.\texttt{\(\text{f}xa8\)+} 22...\texttt{\(\text{g}7\)} (22...\texttt{\(\text{h}h6\)} 23.\texttt{\(\text{h}h5\)++-) 23.\texttt{\(\text{f}3\)}!. This manoeuvre is not that easy to find, but very logical. Black has no way to bring his pieces to the defence of the king. 23...\texttt{\(\text{e}e5\)} (23...\texttt{\(\text{d}d7\)} 24.\texttt{\(\text{d}d3\)} \texttt{\(\text{c}c6\)} 25.\texttt{\(\text{d}c3\)} \texttt{\(\text{d}d7\)} 26.\texttt{\(\text{f}3\)+-) 24.\texttt{\(\text{g}3\)+} \texttt{\(\text{f}6\)} 25.\texttt{\(\text{f}3\)} \texttt{\(\text{h}h6\)} 26.\texttt{\(\text{h}h5\)+} \texttt{\(\text{e}e6\)} (26...\texttt{\(\text{d}h5\)} 27.\texttt{\(\text{d}h5\)} and Black has no way to survive the attack.) 27.\texttt{\(\text{d}d1\)} and the black king cannot escape.) 22.\texttt{\(\text{f}xf5\)} \texttt{\(\text{h}h4\)} (22...\texttt{\(\text{f}xf5\)} 23.\texttt{\(\text{xf}5\)} \texttt{\(\text{h}h4\)} 24.\texttt{\(\text{d}d6!\)} transposes) 23.\texttt{\(\text{d}d6\)} \texttt{\(\text{xf}5\)} 24.\texttt{\(\text{xf}5\)} \texttt{\(\text{d}e8\)} 25.\texttt{\(\text{d}f1\)} \texttt{\(\text{d}a7\)} 26.\texttt{\(\text{f}5\)+} \texttt{\(\text{d}d8\)} 27.\texttt{\(\text{c}c5\)} \texttt{\(\text{c}c7\)} 28.\texttt{\(\text{h}h5\)} 1–0. Uboldi - Lalanne, San Antonio de Padua 2001.

20...\texttt{\(\text{x}c5\)} 21.\texttt{\(\text{d}d8\)+} \texttt{\(\text{g}7\)} 22.\texttt{\(\text{g}5\)} with a winning attack. A crucial line is 22...\texttt{\(\text{h}h2\)+} 23.\texttt{\(\text{h}h2\)} \texttt{\(\text{e}5\)+} 24.\texttt{\(\text{f}1\)} \texttt{\(\text{f}6\)} 25.\texttt{\(\text{g}3\)} \texttt{\(\text{g}6\)} 26.\texttt{\(\text{c}3\)++-}.

21.\texttt{\(\text{b}b4\)}

Probably the best move.

21.\texttt{\(\text{g}4?!\)} \texttt{\(\text{xc}5\)} 22.\texttt{\(\text{g}5\)} \texttt{\(\text{g}6\)} 23.\texttt{\(\text{h}g6\)} \texttt{\(\text{a}7\)\texttt{\(\infty\)}).

21...\texttt{\(\text{e}6\)+} \texttt{\(\text{e}6\)} 22.\texttt{\(\text{xf}5\)} \texttt{\(\text{f}7\)} looks unclear to me.

21...\texttt{\(\text{o}c6!\)}

21...\texttt{\(\text{x}c5?!\)} 22.\texttt{\(\text{d}8\)+} \texttt{\(\text{g}7\)} 23.\texttt{\(\text{f}3\)} \texttt{\(\text{h}5\)} 24.\texttt{\(\text{g}3\)+} \texttt{\(\text{f}7\)} 25.\texttt{\(\text{g}8\)+} \texttt{\(\text{e}7\)} 26.\texttt{\(\text{g}7\)+} \texttt{\(\text{f}6\)} (26...\texttt{\(\text{d}d6\)} 27.\texttt{\(\text{f}8\)+} \texttt{\(\text{d}5\)} 28.\texttt{\(\text{d}1\)+} and White wins the queen.)

27.\texttt{\(\text{f}7\)+} \texttt{\(\text{e}5\)} 28.\texttt{\(\text{g}3\)+} \texttt{\(\text{d}5\)} 29.\texttt{\(\text{d}1\)+ and it is all over.

22.b4!

This move makes a lot of sense: White sacrifices his extra pawn to derail the knight. If this or the alternative 22.\texttt{\(\text{o}e4?!\)} is stronger I do not know. The position needs a lot of independent analysis before anything can be said with certainty. I have tried to give some variations here that I believe are critical, however they cannot be said to be conclusive in any way.

22...\texttt{\(\text{b}b7\)} (22...\texttt{\(\text{e}5?!\)} is the computer’s first choice, but after 23.\texttt{\(\text{g}4?!\)}.. Seems strange, but it works! 23...\texttt{\(\text{d}d4\)} 24.\texttt{\(\text{d}d2\)} \texttt{\(\text{g}7\)} 25.\texttt{\(\text{c}3\)} \texttt{\(\text{d}b7\)} 26.\texttt{\(\text{a}e1!\)} White has a very strong attack) 23.\texttt{\(\text{g}4?!\)} \texttt{\(\text{o}d4\)} (23...\texttt{\(\text{d}d8\)} 24.\texttt{\(\text{f}3\)} \texttt{\(\text{e}5\)} 25.\texttt{\(\text{f}4\)} \texttt{\(\text{g}7\)} 26.\texttt{\(\text{a}e1\)} \texttt{\(\text{h}5\)} 27.\texttt{\(\text{d}x5\)} \texttt{\(\text{d}h6\)} 28.\texttt{\(\text{fe}1\)+}) This position is probably critical. I have tried to outline the possibilities here, but cannot give full conclusions.

a) 24.\texttt{\(\text{d}d1?!\)} \texttt{\(\text{xc}2\)} 25.\texttt{\(\text{d}d3\)} \texttt{\(\text{h}7\)} (25...\texttt{\(\text{d}5\)} 26.\texttt{\(\text{g}3\)} \texttt{\(\text{h}7\)} 27.\texttt{\(\text{g}5\)} \texttt{\(\text{d}7\})
28. \( \diamondsuit h3 \) \( \heartsuit h7 \) 29. \( \heartsuit g6 \) \( \heartsuit xg6 \) 30. \( \heartsuit xg6 \) \( \heartsuit xg6 \) 31. \( \heartsuit xg6 \pm \) 26. \( \diamondsuit g5 \) \( \heartsuit g8 \) 27. \( \heartsuit h4 \) \( \heartsuit g7 \) 28. \( \heartsuit g3 \) \( \heartsuit f8 \).

b) 24.c3? \( \diamondsuit c2 \) 25. \( \heartsuit ad1 \) \( \diamondsuit e3 \) 26. \( \heartsuit f4 \) \( \heartsuit xh5 \) 27. \( \heartsuit x e3 \) \( \heartsuit h4 \)++.

c) 24. \( \heartsuit g3 \) \( \heartsuit f6 \) 25. \( \heartsuit f4 \) \( \heartsuit e5 \) 26. \( \heartsuit f2 \pm \) The following analysis might be correct, but chances are that they are a bit too long to be bulletproof. 26 \( \heartsuit d4 \) 27. \( \heartsuit c3 \) \( \heartsuit d8 \) 29. \( \heartsuit b6 \) \( \heartsuit x d1 \) 30. \( \heartsuit x d1 \) \( \heartsuit x g2 \). Far from the only option here. 31. \( \heartsuit x g2 \) \( \heartsuit x h4 \) 32. \( \heartsuit g1 \) (32. \( \heartsuit x h2 \) \( \heartsuit h4 \)=) 32. \( \heartsuit d2 \) 33. \( \heartsuit b3 \) \( \heartsuit h4 \) 34. \( \heartsuit f3 \) \( \heartsuit h3 \) 35. \( \heartsuit b8 \) \( \heartsuit e7 \) 36. \( \heartsuit b7 \) \( \heartsuit f8 \) 37. \( \heartsuit e2 \) \( \heartsuit g4 \) 38. \( \heartsuit f2 \) \( \heartsuit h4 \) 39. \( \heartsuit f1 \) \( \heartsuit x b2 \) 40. \( \heartsuit d3 \pm \). Of course all of this is not that clear, and improvements can probably be found for both players.

22 \( \heartsuit x b4 \) ?

After this I cannot find a good position anywhere for Black. 22 \( \heartsuit a5 \) looks stronger. 23. \( \heartsuit f3 \) \( \heartsuit c7 \) 24. \( \heartsuit h3 \) \( \heartsuit x b4 \) 25. \( \heartsuit d2 \) \( \heartsuit g6 \) (25 \( \heartsuit g7 \) 26. \( \heartsuit c3 \) \( \heartsuit x g2 \) looks dangerous) 26. \( \heartsuit d3 \pm \).

23. \( \heartsuit f3 \) \( \heartsuit c7 \) 24. \( \heartsuit h3 \) \( \heartsuit c6 \) 25.a4! \( \heartsuit x a 4 \)

Also after 25 \( \heartsuit b4 \) 26. \( \heartsuit d2 \) Black has no easy choice. 26. \( \heartsuit g6 \) (26 \( \heartsuit g7 \) 27. \( \heartsuit c3 \pm \)) 27. \( \heartsuit d3 \) \( \heartsuit b7 \) 28. \( \heartsuit x b4 \pm \).

26. \( \heartsuit d2 \) \( \heartsuit g7 \)

It is close to being over for Black. The following line clearly shows the potential in White’s position. 26. \( \heartsuit g6 \) 27. \( \heartsuit h5 \) \( \heartsuit g7 \) 28. \( \heartsuit h6 \) \( \heartsuit e7 \) 29. \( \heartsuit a e 1 \) \( \heartsuit g8 \) 30. \( \heartsuit x e 6 \) \( \heartsuit x e 6 \) 31. \( \heartsuit x e 6 \)++.

27. \( \heartsuit x a 4 \) \( \heartsuit e 5 \)

27 \( \heartsuit a 7 \) 28. \( \heartsuit h4 \) loses for Black as well, but it might have taken a few extra moves. 28. \( \heartsuit x h 4 \) 29. \( \heartsuit g5 \) \( \heartsuit f7 \) 30. \( \heartsuit x h 4 \) and the black king is simply too fragile. One line could be 30 \( \heartsuit e 5 \) 31. \( \heartsuit x h 7 \) \( \heartsuit f 8 \) 32. \( \heartsuit h 6 \) \( \heartsuit e 7 \) 33. \( \heartsuit g 5 \) \( \heartsuit f 8 \) 34. \( \heartsuit f 6 \) \( \heartsuit f 7 \) 35. \( \heartsuit x e 6 \) \( \heartsuit x e 6 \) 36. \( \heartsuit x e 6 \) \( \heartsuit x c 2 \) 37. \( \heartsuit d 5 \)++.

28. \( \heartsuit h 4 \) \( \heartsuit g 6 \)

28 \( \heartsuit x h 4 \) 29. \( \heartsuit g 5 \) \( \heartsuit f 8 \) 30. \( \heartsuit f 6 \) \( \heartsuit f 7 \) 31. \( \heartsuit x h 4 \) and everything is going wrong for Black.

29. \( \heartsuit h 5 \) 1-0

Black resigned. Probably a bit early, but after 29 \( \heartsuit d 6 \) 30. \( \heartsuit d 3 \) \( \heartsuit f 6 \) 31. \( \heartsuit x g 6 \) \( \heartsuit x h 4 \) 32. \( \heartsuit x f 5 \) White has a very strong attack and an extra pawn.

For a long time the set-up with 10. \( g 4 \) was considered as the main variation against the main line with 7 \( \heartsuit e 7 \). There is still nothing wrong with it and maybe it will once again become the main line in the future. However, right now 10. \( \heartsuit d 3 \) enjoys greater popularity. This will be discussed in another game. Most of the games in the 10. \( g 4 \) line are very old. When 13. \( f 5 \) was discovered for many years the line saw a revival and much analysis was published. Seeing it from today’s point of view I have to say that the line still has lots of resources for both sides.
In this game I give a summary of older lines, which have gone out of fashion. Like anything old, there may one day be a revival.

1.e4 c5 2.d5 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.xd4 a6 5.xg5 d6 6.xe7 e6 7.f4 fe7

7...d7 is an interesting concept. Black wants to put his knight on c6, after which the position has a more Rauzer-like character. 8.e2. White takes the chance to place the queen on e2. In the Rauzer the queen is less efficient on d2. 8...c6 9.0-0-0 xd4 (9...c7 10.xf6 gxf6 11.b1 gives White a typical position where he is slightly better) 10.xd4 a5 (10...b6 This does not give Black equality either. 11.d2 c6 This was played in Najditsch – Nakamura, Wijk aan Zee 2004. Now 12.xf6 gxf6 13.c4+ and a future f4-f5 will cause Black a lot of problems.) 11.d2 c6 12.f5 e5 13.xf6 exd4 14.xd4 b5 15.e3 with a big advantage for White in Lastin – Cvitan, Moscow 2001.

8.f3 e5

8...a5?! This line has recently been refuted by Radjabov. 9.0-0-0 d7 10.xf6! (the older move 10.e5 does not give White anything) 10...xf6 11.e5!

Now the threat of xb7 causes Black trouble. 11...dxe5 12.fxe5 g5+ 13.b1 c6 14.e4 xe5 (14...xe5?! This only opens up Black’s king. 15.f5 exf5 16.xg5 e7 17.c4. White is clearly better. Also 14.e7 15.d6+ xd6 16.exd6 is just clearly better for White.) 15.d6+ e7 16.b3 a4 17.b6 xc8 18.xc8+ and in the game Radjabov – Dominguez, Tripoli 2004, White won within a few moves.

9.0-0-0 c7

9...0-0 is an old sideline. Now White should play 10.g4. (This move seems to me more in the spirit of the position. 10.d3 c6 11.xc6 bxc6 12.a3 was played in Unzicker – Fischer, Buenos Aires 1960, after 12...e5 Black could have achieved a nice game.) 10.c6 11.h4! (of course White keeps this bishop now) 11.xd4 12.exd4 b5 13.g5 and White later won, Hector – Evertsson, Stockholm 1999.
10.g4 b5 11.a4f6 a4f6
11...a4xf6 12.g5 12.axb5 0–0 (12... axb5?? This is the wrong reply. 13.dxb5 wxb5 14.exd6† c8 15.e5 and White is winning.) 13.axd7 axd7 Black has fine compensation for the pawn.) 12.a4xd4 (12...e7 transposes to the main line) 13.axd4 0–0 14.axh3. White was better in Luther – Ardeleanu, Linares 1998.

11...gxf6 is another option here. Since White has played g2-g4 it is not so easy for him to attack e6. 12.f5 d7 13.axh3 (this is better than the more common 13.axh3) 13...d7 14.axh3 c6 15.axc6 axc6 16.fxe6 fxe6 17.g5 and White was much better in Guseinov – Makoll, Turkey 2004.

12.g5 d7 13.f5
Here many moves have been tried. For example: a2-a3, a1h3, h2-h4, etc. I think only the text offers White attacking chances.

13...axc5

13...axg5†. Taking this pawn is the principled reaction. 14.b1 e5 15.wxh5 axf6! (This move is better than the more common moves 15...e8 and 15...d8: 15...d8 16.h4! axf6 17.fxe6 0–0 18.axh3. White was better in Luther – Vink, Wijk aan Zee 2001.) 16.axe6 (16.fxe6 Leaving the bishop c8 alive later causes White some problems. 16...g6 17.axd5 axd7 18.axf7† axf7 and suddenly White’s queen is in trouble.) 16.axe6 17.fxe6 and the position needs further investigation.

14.f6 afxf6 15.axf6 a8 16.agg1 h5 17.a1!
This move was found by GM Peter Enders. While working on the Fritz opening book I entered this move as a recommendation for the computer program. Anyway, some time later I had the chance to play this move in a tournament game.

17.a3 is another possible move, but I prefer the text.

17.agg7 This funny exchange sacrifice was played a couple of times in the late 80s and early 90s. White had some nice victories but today’s computer analysis proved it is incorrect.

17...d7
17...b4 does not work here. 18.ad7 This is the main idea behind 17.a1.

17...a7?! 18.axh3 0–0 0–0 19.ad5 with a strong initiative.

18.b1
A useful waiting move. White wants
to see where Black’s king is going before committing himself to one specific line of action.

18...0–0–0?!

This must be wrong since now White is in control of the game. 18...b4 was called for. 19.\( \text{e}5 \)ce2. There is no need for \( \text{d}5 \) here as Black cannot bring his bishop to b7 anymore. White is better.

19.\( \text{g}5 \)

Not every game is won by a great attack. White just wants to collect the h-pawn.

19...h4 20.J\( \text{f}1 \)!

The rook has done its job on e1 and now defending the \( \text{d}4 \) is necessary to avoid counterplay.

20...b8

Black wants to bring his passive bishop into the game, but there is no way it will reach a comfortable square.

23.\( \text{x}h \)4 \( \text{g}5 \) 24.\( \text{g}4 \)h4?!

This is not leading anywhere. 24...h6 was better.

25.\( \text{g}2 \)

Preparing e4-e5.

25...J\( \text{a}7 \) 26.\( \text{g}7 \)J\( \text{d}8 \) 27.e5!

Now it comes. Black is lost.

27...d5 28.J\( \text{f}4 \)

The conclusion comes from the other side. \( \text{h}4 \) is trapped.

28...J\( \text{a}4 \) 29.\( \text{a}2 \)!

Preventing any counterplay!

29...J\( \text{h}5 \) 30.\( \text{f}3 \)J\( \text{h}8 \) 31.\( \text{e}2 \)J\( \text{a}5 \)

The last try.

32.\( \text{g}4 \)J\( \text{e}1 \) 33.\( \text{b}3 \)

Finally Black’s bishop is lost.

1–0

Recently a friend asked me what I recommend against the Gelfand-line. I was surprised but I knew which line he meant. GM Boris Gelfand has played many famous games with the Najdorf Defence and his usual set-up against 6.\( \text{g}5 \) involves not developing the \( \text{f}8 \), but looking for a quick mobilisation of his queenside pieces. The move 11...\( \text{b}6 \) became popular after he used it against GM Shabalov. We will look at this game now.
Game 8
Shabalov - Gelfand
Bermuda 2004

1.e4 c5 2.Qf3 d6 3.d4 cx:d4 4.Qxd4 
5.Qc3 a6 6.Qg5 e6 7.f4 Qbd7 8.Qf3 Qc7 9.0–0–0 b5

Black plays without Qf8-e7 and focuses on quick development of the queenside.

10.Qd3 Qb7

10...b4 11.Qd5 exd5 12.Qhe1 leads to a previously mentioned game.

11.Qhe1 Qb6

For 11...Qe7 see Kotronias - Lesiege.

11...0–0–0. This has been played a few times. I think the black king is misplaced.

Black’s position is losing all its dynamics.


On 20...Qc8 then 21.Qc6 is a standard exchange sacrifice. 21...Qxc6 22.dxc6 Qhd8 23.Qb1 d5 24.Qxd5 and Black will not find happiness in this game.

12.Qd5

If White wants to prove something in this position he has to jump forward. Any retreat, such as Qd4-b3, gives Black an easy life.

12...Qxd4

12...exd5 13.Qc6! This jump from the knight causes Black a lot of trouble.

13.Qxf6 Qxf6 14.Qxb5 Qc5

15.b4?

Here Shabalov goes wrong. White wins the queen, but in return Black gets three minor pieces and lots of good squares.

15.Qxf6† Qd8 16.Qxd7 Qxb5 17.Qxf8 (17.Qc3 does not offer anything after 17...Qxd7 18.Qxh8 Qh5) 17...Qxf8 18.Qa3! (18.Qxd6† is also
possible, but the text is better. 18...\texttt{c7} 19.\texttt{f6} \texttt{ad8} 20.\texttt{e3}+ \texttt{c6} 21.e5.) 18...\texttt{e8} 19.\texttt{xd6} \texttt{c8} 20.b3. With three pawns for the bishop, White keeps an advantage. In the coming endgame he plays c2-c4 and places his king on c3.

15...\texttt{xb5} 16.\texttt{c7}+ \texttt{e7} 17.\texttt{xb5} \texttt{axb5} 18.\texttt{h5} \texttt{xa2}

18...\texttt{c6} is a much safer reply.

19.\texttt{xb5} \texttt{h6} 20.e5 \texttt{f65}

Better was 20...\texttt{c8}, which secures Black a big advantage. 21.exd6+ \texttt{d8} 22.\texttt{d3} \texttt{xf4}+ 23.\texttt{b1} \texttt{xxc2} 24.\texttt{xc2} \texttt{xc2} 25.\texttt{xc2} \texttt{g2} black is winning.

21.\texttt{xb7} \texttt{xf4}+ 22.\texttt{b1} \texttt{xa8} 23.g3 \texttt{a7} 24.\texttt{c6} \texttt{a6} 25.\texttt{c3}

I have the impression that White should not have lost this position. On the other hand he certainly has no advantage either.

25...\texttt{h6} 26.\texttt{e4} d5 27.\texttt{h4} d4 28.\texttt{b2} \texttt{g5} 29.\texttt{h7} \texttt{f6} 30.h4 \texttt{d5} 31.\texttt{d3} \texttt{d2} 32.\texttt{xd2} \texttt{c3}+ 33.\texttt{c1} \texttt{a1}+ 34.\texttt{a1} \texttt{a1}+ 35.\texttt{b2} \texttt{b1}+ 36.\texttt{a3} \texttt{e4} 37.\texttt{f2} e3 38.\texttt{xf7}+ \texttt{d6} 39.\texttt{d7}+ \texttt{c6} 40.\texttt{c7}+ \texttt{d5} 41.\texttt{cd7}+ \texttt{e4} 42.\texttt{de7} \texttt{f3} 43.\texttt{xe6} \texttt{e2} 44.\texttt{d7} \texttt{d2}!

A nice manoeuvre: Black’s king joins the mating attack.

45.\texttt{xe3} \texttt{xe3} 46.\texttt{f7} \texttt{d5} 47.b5 \texttt{d2} 0–1

The sacrifice on b5 is a well-known idea in the Najdorf. Instead of developing the bishop from f1 White immediately sacs it for two pawns. The lead in development and the possible capture of a third pawn (usually the one on d6) makes it possible. Here this sacrifice is connected with e4-e5 after which many tactical lines arise. I think there is plenty of scope for improvements in this line. However even the typical endings in this line (queenside passed pawns for White vs. a piece, or passed pawn + rook vs. 2 minor pieces) are not clear. I can only give the reader a brief summary of this line. I recommend further study before trying it in a tournament game.

Game 9
Timman - Gelfand
Wijk aan Zee 2002

1.e4 c5 2.\texttt{f3} d6 3.d4 \texttt{xd4} 4.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{f6} 5.\texttt{c3} a6 6.\texttt{g5} e6 7.f4 \texttt{bd7} 8.\texttt{f3} \texttt{c7} 9.0–0–0 \texttt{b5}

Black plays without \texttt{f8-e7} and focuses
on quick development of the queenside.

10. \textit{\texttt{exb5}}

This move was for a long time considered the main reply to Black's set-up.

10.e5. The most forcing reply. Unfortunately, nowadays most of these purely tactical lines have been analysed till the end. This line is a forced draw, where neither side can avoid it. 10... \textit{\texttt{tb7}} 11. \textit{\texttt{Wh5}} dxe5 12. \textit{\texttt{dxex6!}} \textit{\texttt{fxe6}} 13. \textit{\texttt{wxex6}} \textit{\texttt{wex7}} 14. \textit{\texttt{wxf6}} \textit{\texttt{gxf6}} 15. \textit{\texttt{wxe2}} h5 16. \textit{\texttt{we5}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 17. \textit{\texttt{exe6!!}} \textit{\texttt{fxe6}} 18. \textit{\texttt{we7}} \textit{\texttt{exe6}} 19. \textit{\texttt{we5}} \textit{\texttt{g6}} 20. \textit{\texttt{we3}} h5 21. \textit{\texttt{we7}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 22. \textit{\texttt{we3}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 23. \textit{\texttt{wex5}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 24. \textit{\texttt{e5}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 25. \textit{\texttt{exe5}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 26. \textit{\texttt{exe5}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 27. \textit{\texttt{exe5}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 28. \textit{\texttt{exe5}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}}


10. \textit{\texttt{txf6}} \textit{\texttt{txf6}} (10... \textit{\texttt{gxf6}} 11. \textit{\texttt{wex5}} gives White a good game) 11.e5 \textit{\texttt{b7}} 12. \textit{\texttt{wex5}}

(This is a recent discovery from GM J. Hector. 12. \textit{\texttt{wex5}} dxe5 13. \textit{\texttt{cxex6}} \textit{\texttt{b6}} (13... \textit{\texttt{axb5}}? 14. \textit{\texttt{cxex6}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 15. \textit{\texttt{exe5}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 16. \textit{\texttt{wex5}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 17. \textit{\texttt{exe5}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 18. \textit{\texttt{exe5}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 19. \textit{\texttt{exe5}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 20. \textit{\texttt{exe5}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 21. \textit{\texttt{exe5}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 22. \textit{\texttt{exe5}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}})


10. \textit{\texttt{txf6}} \textit{\texttt{txf6}} (10... \textit{\texttt{gxf6}} 11. \textit{\texttt{wex5}} gives White a good game) 11.e5 \textit{\texttt{b7}} 12. \textit{\texttt{wex5}}

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10. \textit{\texttt{txf6}} \textit{\texttt{txf6}} (10... \textit{\texttt{gxf6}} 11. \textit{\texttt{wex5}} gives White a good game) 11.e5 \textit{\texttt{b7}} 12. \textit{\texttt{wex5}}

(This is a recent discovery from GM J. Hector. 12. \textit{\texttt{wex5}} dxe5 13. \textit{\texttt{cxex6}} \textit{\texttt{b6}} (13... \textit{\texttt{axb5}}? 14. \textit{\texttt{cxex6}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 15. \textit{\texttt{exe5}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 16. \textit{\texttt{wex5}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 17. \textit{\texttt{exe5}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 18. \textit{\texttt{exe5}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 19. \textit{\texttt{exe5}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 20. \textit{\texttt{exe5}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 21. \textit{\texttt{exe5}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}} 22. \textit{\texttt{exe5}} \textit{\texttt{exe5}})

serious concession. 21...𧰉xa2 22.𧰉xa2 𧰉xc7 23.𧰉xf7 𧰉c5 24.𧰉h6+ 𧰉g7 25.𧰉f7+ 𧰉xf7 26.𧰉xf7 𧰉xf7 27.𧰉a7+ 𧰉d7 28.c4 Black lacks coordination and is helpless against the advance of White's pawns.

13.exf6 gxf6
13...𧰉xb5 14.𧰉xb5 𧰉xb5 15.𧰉c3+-.

14.𧰉h6!
Rather funny, the bishop sacs itself.

14...𧰉h6 15.𧰉d6+ 𧰉e7 16.𧰉b1
There was the threat of 𧰉d7-e5.

16...𧰉d8
16...𧰆b6?! 17.𧰆b5 𧰆xb5 18.𧰆xb5 𧰆xf4 19.𧰉c3 𧰆d7 20.𧰉a3+ 𧰉e8 21.𧰆d6+ 𧰆xd6 22.𧰉xd6 𧰉g8 23.g3 𧰉g5 24.𧰉h1. This position requires further investigation, but I think White has the better play here.

17.𧰉e1 𧰉b6
17...𧰉g7 18.𧰉c6 and, thanks to the threats of 𧰆xf7 and 𧰉xc8 followed by 𧰆d5+, White wins material.

18.𧰆cb5

18...𧰆xb5
This move does not seem to be the best.


Half a year later Gelfand played 18...𧰆a6 19.𧰉c3 (19.𧰉f5+. This move leads to a draw. 19...𧰉f8 20.𧰉c3! A forced move again, as is the whole line actually! 20...𧰆xb5 21.𧰉xf6 𧰆xb2+. This surprising capture saves the day for Black. 22.𧰆xb2 𧰆d5 23.𧰉xd5!. Another forced blow continues the series. 23...𧰆xb2+ 24.𧰉xb2 𧰉g7+. This check secures Black the draw. 25.𧰉xg7 𧰉xd5 26.𧰉xe6+ 𧰆xe6 27.𧰉xe6 ½-½ Lutz – Gelfand, Dortmund 2002.) 19...𧰆xb5 20.𧰉xb5 𧰆xb5 21.𧰉b4+ 𧰆d6 22.𧰉xb5 𧰉xf4. So far as in Kantler – Kuporosov, Sochi 1979. Now White should have played 23.a4 𧰉c7 24.𧰉xd6 It is not easy to assess this position, but the passers on the queenside should give White better chances.

19.𧰆xb5 𧰉xd1+!!
19...𧰉c4 forces a difficult ending. I recommend that the reader study this kind of ending before testing it over the board. 20.𧰉b3 𧰆d2+ 21.𧰉xd2 𧰉xd2 22.𧰉b4+ 𧰆d6 23.g3!. Winning a tempo. 23...𧰉d7 24.𧰉xd6+ 𧰉xd6 25.𧰉xd6 𧰉xd6 26.𧰉d1+ 𧰉c7 27.𧰉f1. After stopping e6-e5 for some time, White shall advance his queenside pawns. I cannot
come up with a final conclusion, but my feeling is that White’s position is fine.

20.\textit{xd1} \textit{xf4} 21.g3

Again we see the same kind of ending arising: rook + 3 passed pawns vs. 2 minor pieces + a central passed pawn.

21...\textit{e5} 22.\textit{a3}t \textit{e8} 23.\textit{d6}t!

It is very much in White’s favour here to exchange pieces.

23...\textit{xd6} 24.\textit{xd6} \textit{xd6} 25.\textit{xd6} \textit{d5} 26.c4 \textit{e7}??

A horrible blunder by Gelfand, but even after other moves White keeps an advantage. Once the queens are exchanged White can safely advance his queenside pawns.

27.\textit{c6}t+ \textit{b7} 28.\textit{cxd5} \textit{xc6} 29.\textit{xc6} \textit{d6} 30.\textit{g4}

The pawn ending is an easy win.

1–0

Thanks to the following game the move 10.\textit{d3} enjoyed a revival. GM Kotronias played a great novelty after which Black faces a very difficult defence. In many variations White has long lasting compensation due to the unfortunately placed black pieces. This game is a nice example to study when White is ready to sacrifice his c3 knight on d5. It is very important that the bishop on f8 remains weak and does not enter the game.

Game 10

Kotronias - Lesiege
Montreal 2002

1.e4 c5 2.\textit{f3} d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\textit{xd4} \textit{f6} 5.\textit{c3} a6 6.\textit{g5} e6 7.f4 \textit{bd7}

7...h6?! From today’s knowledge I can say that Black should not play h7-h6 at any stage of this opening. 8.\textit{h4}. Now there are two main lines:

a) 8...\textit{e7} 9.\textit{f3} \textit{c7} (9...g5. Black wants to fight for the e5 square. But even if he manages to place one of his knights...
there it is not clear if he has achieved much. 10.fxg5 dxe6! White is going for a direct refutation. 11...fxe6 12.\(\text{\textit{h}}\text{5}\) \(\text{\textit{f}}\text{8}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{b}}\text{5}\) This was first seen in the 50s. The most famous game is Gligoric - Fischer, Portoroz 1958. Much has been written about this game and finally computer analysis proved that White is winning here. In the original game the American future World Champion saved the draw. A recent example shows how dangerous Black’s position is: 13...\(\text{\textit{h}}\text{7}\) 14.0-0+ \(\text{\textit{g}}\text{8}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{g}}\text{6}\) \(\text{\textit{g}}\text{7}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{f}}\text{7}\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{h}\text{4}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{xh}\text{6}\) \(\text{\textit{g}}\text{xf7}\) 18.\(\text{\textit{g}}\text{x}\text{f7}\) 19.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{f1}\) \(\text{\textit{g}}\text{f6}\) 20.e5 dxe5 21.\(\text{\textit{e}}\text{4}\) axb5 22.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{h7}\) \(\text{\textit{f}}\text{8}\) 23.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{h8}\) \(\text{\textit{e}}\text{7}\) 24.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{h7}\) \(\text{\textit{f}}\text{8}\) 25.\(\text{\textit{g}}\text{xf6}\) \(\text{\textit{b}}\text{b6}\)?? (25...\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{x}\text{f6}\) 26.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{h8}\) \(\text{\textit{d}}\text{f7}\) 27.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{xf6}\) \(\text{\textit{d}}\text{xf6}\) 28.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{c}\text{8}\) \(\text{\textit{d}}\text{f7}\) and the fight continues) 26.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{h1}\) \(\text{\textit{d}}\text{xf6}\) 27.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{xf6}\) \(\text{\textit{d}}\text{e}8\) 28.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{f7}\) 1-0 Naiditsch – Enders, Höckendorf 2004.) 10.0-0-0 \(\text{\textit{b}}\text{d7}\) 11.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{d3}\) \(\text{\textit{g}}\text{5}\) (The same idea as mentioned above. At least Black is not getting checkmated immediately. 11...b5? This runs into a direct refutation. 12.e5 \(\text{\textit{b}}\text{7}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{e6}\) fxe6 14.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{g6}\) Here is the difference from positions without \(\text{\textit{h}}\text{6}\) and \(\text{\textit{h}}\text{4}\) included: White has this check. 14...\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{f8}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{f6}\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{f3}\) (15...\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{f6}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{h3}\) Black has too many weaknesses and no compensation for them in return) 16.fxe7\(\text{\textit{d}}\)\(\text{g}8\) 17.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{f3}\) with a big material advantage.) 12.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{g5}\) \(\text{\textit{d}}\text{e}5\) 13.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{e}2\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{g4}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{f3}\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{f3}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{h5}\) \(\text{\textit{g}}\text{6}\) (15...\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{e}5\) 16.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{h5}\) \(\text{\textit{d}}\text{g6}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{g}3\) \(\text{\textit{h}}\text{g}5\) 18.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{f3}\) \(\text{\textit{d}}\text{d}7\) White is better, but Black can definitely play this position. Luther – Ginsburg, Germany 2004.) 16.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{g}3\) \(\text{\textit{e}}\text{5}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{xe5}\) dxe5 18.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{d}f1\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{h}7\) 19.\(\text{\textit{h}}\text{4}\) White’s attack is coming too fast for Black to set up a defence. Luther – Ott, Höckendorf 2004.

b) 8...\(\text{\textit{b}}\text{d}7\) 9.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{f3}\) \(\text{\textit{e}}\text{5}\) A relatively new and surprising idea. 10.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{f5}\) (10.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{e}\text{5}\). This is the wrong reaction. 10...\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{e}5\) 11.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{d}1\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{e}7\) 12.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{e}2\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{e}4\) 13.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{e}7\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{c}3\) 14.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{d}8\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{d}1\) 15.\(\text{\textit{c}}\text{c}7\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{b}2\) 16.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{d}6\) \(\text{\textit{b}}\text{c}4\) with a decisive advantage for Black in Radjabov – Dominguez, Tripoli 2004.) 10...\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{f}4\) 11.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{f}4\) \(\text{\textit{g}}\text{5}\) 12.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{d}6\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{d6}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{d}6\) \(\text{\textit{g}}\text{xh}4\) 14.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{e}7\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{e}7\) 15.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{e}7\) \(\text{\textit{d}}\text{xe}7\) 16.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{f}6\) The tactics are finished and White has a better ending.

8.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{f3}\) \(\text{\textit{c}}\text{7}\) 9.0-0-0 \(\text{\textit{b}}\text{5}\) 10.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{d}3\) \(\text{\textit{g}}\text{7}\)

10...\(\text{\textit{b}}\text{4}\) 11.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{d}5\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{d}5\) 12.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{e}1\) with transposition to the lines mentioned below.

11.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{e}1\) \(\text{\textit{e}}\text{7}\) 12.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{g}3\) \(\text{\textit{b}}\text{4}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{d}5\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{d}5\)
14.exd5!
This game of V. Kotronias changed the evaluation of the line. Before it the theory was 14.e5 dxe5 15.fxe5 d5 16.Wh4 xg5† 17.Wg5 g6 18.e6 d5 19.exf7† xf7 20.xf1† g8 21.d5 e6 22.h6† with a perpetual, Luther - Nielsen, Malmö 2002. There were many other lines analysed and games played, but theoretically they belong to the past.

14...d8 15.c6† xc6 16.dxc6

Here Black has a large choice. Most of the variations I give below I analysed with my computer. Since soft- and hardware develop fast and this is a highly tactical position, I recommend that the reader check his favourite lines. I have played this position twice (vs. GMs Shneider and Dvoirys.) and I think that in practice the piece sacrifice is fully justified.

16...c5

16...b6 17.h4 b8 (17...g8 18.xh7 h8 19.e4 d5 (19...xe4?

20.Wxg7 and Black is lost) 20.xf6 xf6 21.xd5 xd5 22.xd5† with a strong attack.) 18.xf6† xf6 19.e4 and White obtained the typical compensation and has good practical chances.

16...xc6 The most principled reply. Black eliminates the dangerous passer. 17.xf6 leaves Black with a difficult choice. 17...xf6 (17...xf6 18.e4 wa4 Black has no big choice here. (The alternative 18...c8 19.xa8 xa8 20.xd6 e8 21.xd7† xd7 22.d3† c7 23.c4† b6 24.xb4† c7 25.c5† b7 26.d5† allows White an instant win) 19.xa8 xa2 20.xd6 xb2† 21.d1 b1† 22.e2 xc2† 23.f1! (23.f3?? In my game against Dvoirys I chose the wrong square for the king. Now Black could save the game. 23.e8 24.xe8† xe8 25.c6 f8! 26.xd7 e7 27.xf6 gxf6 28.g4 b3 29.e1† f8 30.a5= Luther - Dvoirys, Austria 2003.) 23...c4† 24.d3 e8 25.ed1 e7 26.f3 and White is winning.) 18.xg7 g8 19.xf7 e8 20.c4 (20.b3?!. This move is weaker than the text, but White is still better, Luther - Shneider, Istanbul 2003.) 20.c8 21.xb4 c6 22.g3 and White is clearly better. Besides the three pawns he has for the knight, Black's king is in extreme danger.

16...h6 This move also does not change the evaluation of the position, White picks up another pawn in compensation for the sacrificed knight and is continuing
the attack. 17.\texttt{ Nh4} g5 18.fxg5 hxg5 19.\texttt{ Wxg5} \texttt{ Qc5} 20.\texttt{ f5} White is clearly better here.

17.\texttt{ Nh4}!

17...\texttt{ f8}

This makes it easier for White. More trouble is:

17...g6 18.f5. This line does not change the final conclusion either: White keeps attacking.

17...\texttt{ g8} 18.\texttt{ c4}! \texttt{ Qe4} (18...\texttt{ Qce4} 19.\texttt{ Wf3} and White controls the game) 19.\texttt{ Wg4} \texttt{ Qf6}. A typical computer move, as my friend Jacob Aagaard pointed out.

a) White has easier play after: 19...\texttt{ xh4} 20.\texttt{ Wh4}+ \texttt{ Qf6} (20...\texttt{ Wh7}? 21.\texttt{ Wd6}+ Losing d6 is bad news for Black. White is winning.) 21.g4 \texttt{ Qc8} 22.g5 and White is overrunning Black's strongholds.

b) 19...\texttt{ a7} 20.\texttt{ d5} \texttt{ xh4} 21.\texttt{ Wh4}+ \texttt{ Qf6} 22.\texttt{ Qf3} with the already mentioned idea of g2-g4-g5. 20.\texttt{ d5} \texttt{ xh4} 21.\texttt{ Wh4}+ \texttt{ Qf6} 22.g4 again with initiative.

However, just as the book was finished and ready to go into print a new masterpiece of invention was revealed by our Greek hero Kotronias:

18.\texttt{ xh7}!! This very surprising move does not tempt the computers, but all will become clear soon enough. 18...\texttt{ h8} 19.\texttt{ Wxg7} \texttt{ Exh7} 20.\texttt{ Wh6} \texttt{ Exh4} (20...\texttt{ xh6}?? 21.\texttt{ Wf6}+ \texttt{ Qc8} 22.\texttt{ We8}+ is bad style) 21.\texttt{ Wh7} \texttt{ h8} (21...\texttt{ g4} 22.\texttt{ Qd5}! with the idea of 23.\texttt{ Qh5} and Black has no defence) 22.\texttt{ e5} \texttt{ a4} 23.\texttt{ e6} \texttt{ c5} (the computer move does not really work here: 23...\texttt{ b6} 24.\texttt{ de1} \texttt{ Qc8} 25.\texttt{ Wh7} \texttt{ Qe8} 26.f5 \texttt{ Wh6} 27.f6+) 24.\texttt{ Qe5} \texttt{ a4} 25.\texttt{ Qe3} \texttt{ a7} (Black cannot pretend to repeat the line, as after 25...\texttt{ c5} 26.\texttt{ de1} he has nothing better than 26...\texttt{ Wh6}+ with a bad endgame. 26...\texttt{ Qe8} 27.\texttt{ xe7}+-) 26.\texttt{ de1} \texttt{ Qe8} (A possible alternative is 26...\texttt{ Wh6} 27.\texttt{ xe7} \texttt{ xe7} 28.\texttt{ xe7}+ \texttt{ Qc8} 29.h4+ but White certainly still has all the chances, and should not be unhappy about reaching this kind of position.) 27.f5 \texttt{ Wh6} 28.f6 \texttt{ Wh2}!. After this the white attack wins without any problems. (28...\texttt{ c5} 29.\texttt{ xe7}+ \texttt{ Qc8} and 28...\texttt{ c7} 29.\texttt{ e2} are probably both only slightly better for White and certainly what Black should have opted for.) 29.\texttt{ xe7}+ \texttt{ Qd7} 30.\texttt{ Wh3} \texttt{ a8} 31.\texttt{ Qg6} \texttt{ c5} 32.\texttt{ d1} \texttt{ b7} 33.\texttt{ Qe6}+ \texttt{ Qc7} 34.\texttt{ Qg4} a5 35.\texttt{ c4}+ 1-0 Kotronias - Shneider, Korinthos 2004.

18.\texttt{ c4}

It is this kind of position White is
basically aiming for. Sooner or later he will take on f6 and ruin Black's pawn structure. \( \texttt{f8} \) will be locked in and White penetrates Black's position via the e-line. The main game is a perfect example of transferring White's strategy into a win.

18...\( \texttt{a7} \) 19.\( \texttt{d5} \) a5 20.\( \texttt{e3} \) \( \texttt{c8} \) 21.\( \texttt{d1} \) \( \texttt{f5} \) 22.\( \texttt{xf6} \) \( \texttt{gx6} \) 23.\( \texttt{e8} \) \( \texttt{c7} \) 24.\( \texttt{f3} \)

White has no direct threats, but he controls the game. Black suffers from the lack of coordination between his pieces.

24...h5 25.\( \texttt{b1} \) \( \texttt{g7} \)?

Making White's task easy, but staying passive is not what one wants to do in Black's position.

26.\( \texttt{xh8} \) \( \texttt{xh8} \) 27.\( \texttt{xf7} \) \( \texttt{b6} \) 28.\( \texttt{xh5} \) a4 29.\( \texttt{g4} \) \( \texttt{h7} \)

30.\( \texttt{c7} \)!

This pawn has done its job. Now White opens the lines to the black king.

30...\( \texttt{xc7} \) 31.\( \texttt{d5} \) f5 32.\( \texttt{xd6} \) \( \texttt{c6} \) 33.\( \texttt{d8} \) \( \texttt{c7} \) 34.\( \texttt{hxh8} \) \( \texttt{fxg4} \) 35.\( \texttt{d4} \) \( \texttt{b5} \) 36.\( \texttt{b3} \) axb3 37.axb3 \( \texttt{d6} \) 38.\( \texttt{c4} \) \( \texttt{a5} \) 39.\( \texttt{e5} \)

Still Black is completely tied up.

39...\( \texttt{d1} \) 40.\( \texttt{a2} \) \( \texttt{d6} \) 41.\( \texttt{d5} \) \( \texttt{c7} \) 42.f5 \( \texttt{b6} \) 43.\( \texttt{xb4} \) \( \texttt{a7} \) 44.\( \texttt{d4} \)

A great game!

1–0

Many players consider the Poisoned Pawn variation as the main reply against the \( \texttt{g5} \) system. White has no good way to avoid losing the b2 pawn so he is committed to attacking Black at all costs. In a possible arising ending White would not only be a pawn down but also have a weak pawn structure on the queenside. On the other hand White gets a large advantage in development and the threats can be really dangerous. In this game GM Short came very close to beating the World Champion.

Game 11

Short - Kasparov

Riga 1995

1.e4 c5 2.\( \texttt{f3} \) d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\( \texttt{xd4} \) g5 e6 5.c3 a6 6.\( \texttt{g5} \) f6 7.\( \texttt{f4} \) b6

7...h6 8.\( \texttt{h4} \) \( \texttt{b6} \). The combination of these two lines is not recommendable for Black. 9.a3! with the idea of \( \texttt{f2} \). Of course 9...\( \texttt{xb2} \) 10.\( \texttt{a4} \) wins the queen.

8.\( \texttt{d2} \)

The only reasonable way to play the position.
8.a3 is just a tricky sideline. 8...\(\text{c6}\) 9.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{e3}\)† (9...\(\text{e7}\) 10.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{h6}\) 11.\(\text{xf6}\) \(\text{xf6}\) 12.0-0-0 \(\text{c7}\) 13.\(\text{d4}\) \(\text{d7}\) 14.\(\text{g4}\) 0-0-0 15.\(\text{g2}\) \(\text{b8}\) 16.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{c8}\) 17.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{c8}\) was played in Luther - Dominguez, Havana 2001. The position is unclear.) 10.\(\text{f2}\) \(\text{xe2}\)† After exchanging queens Black has no problems at all.

8.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{e7}\) (8...\(\text{e3}\)† 9.\(\text{f2}\) \(\text{xe2}\)† is a very sound continuation for Black. I think the only reason why it is played so rarely is that the usual Najdorf player does not want to enter an even ending, but instead prefers to attack.) 9.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{bd7}\) 10.0-0-0 \(\text{c7}\) 11.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{b5}\). Black has reached his normal set-up, but White's knight is no longer on d4 but on b3, so all the nice tactics do not work anymore. 12.a3 White would rather avoid this move but after 12.\(\text{he1}\) \(\text{b4}\) White has to remove the knight and Black gets very comfortable play. 12...\(\text{b8}\)! Black's attack comes faster now.

8...\(\text{xb2}\)

8...\(\text{c6}\). This sideline has been seen often in tournament games recently. Black decides not to take on b2 but transfers the game into a Rauzer-like set-up. 9.\(\text{xf6}\)! (Only with this move can White fight for an advantage. This capture is a standard reply if Black has to take back with the pawn. Instead 9.0-0-0 \(\text{xd4}\) 10.\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{d4}\) 11.\(\text{d4}\) \(\text{d7}\) with an even ending.) 9...\(\text{xf6}\) 10.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{d7}\) 11.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{h5}\) If Black does not play this move White will place his bishop on h5. 12.0-0-0 0-0-0 13.\(\text{b1}\) \(\text{b8}\) 14.\(\text{h4}\)!. A strong idea. White fixes h5 as a weakness and prepares to bring the h1 rook into the game. 14...\(\text{a5}\) 15.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{c8}\) 16.\(\text{xa5}\) \(\text{xa5}\) 17.\(\text{d3}\) with advantage for White in Sulskis - Loginov, Vilnius 1997.

9.\(\text{b3}\)

9.\(\text{xb1}\) This move leads in many lines to a forced draw. 9...\(\text{a3}\) 10.\(\text{f5}\) \(\text{c6}\) 11.\(\text{xe6}\) \(\text{xe6}\) 12.\(\text{xc6}\) \(\text{xc6}\) 13.\(\text{e2}\) This is a famous drawing line which has been seen many times in tournament games: 13...\(\text{e7}\) 14.0-0 0-0 15.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{c5}\)† 16.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{e5}\) 17.\(\text{d4}\) \(\text{a5}\) 18.\(\text{b6}\)=) 13...\(\text{dxe5}\) 14.\(\text{xf6}\) \(\text{gxf6}\) 15.\(\text{e4}\) \(\text{xa5}\) 16...\(\text{e7}\)? This move brings Black trouble. 16.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{h5}\)

17.\(\text{f1}\) \(\text{f5}\) 18.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{xa2}\) 19.\(\text{fb3}\)!. A great idea of the White player! Black's queen is cut off for a long time; meanwhile White focuses on Black's king. 19...\(\text{f4}\) 20.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{d8}\) (20...0-0 21.\(\text{a1}\) \(\text{b4}\) 22.\(\text{xb4}\)
\[ \text{Experts vs. the Sicilian} \]

\[ \text{\textcopyright{\textcopyright{}}} \]

9...\textsf{wa3}

9...\textsf{bd7} 10.\textsf{xf6} \textsf{gxf6} (10...\textsf{xf6}? 11.a4 traps Black's queen) 11.\textsf{e2} leads to the main line.

9...\textsf{c6}. This move disappeared from tournament practice because it leads to a better ending for White. 10.\textsf{xf6} \textsf{gxf6} 11.\textsf{a4} \textsf{wa3} 12.\textsf{b6} \textsf{b8} 13.\textsf{c4} \textsf{a4} 14.a3! (14.\textsf{f2}. This is an old line, but after 14...\textsf{e7} 15.\textsf{xd6}\textsf{f8} White has nothing.) 14...\textsf{b5} 15.\textsf{xd6} \textsf{xd6} 16.\textsf{xd6} \textsf{xe4}\textsf{f7} 17.\textsf{e2} \textsf{d5} There is nothing better then this.

a) 17...\textsf{xg2}? 18.0–0 B.\textsf{b7} 19.\textsf{d7}\textsf{f8} 20.\textsf{d6}\textsf{e8} 21.\textsf{h5} leads to a winning position for White.

b) 17...\textsf{b7}. This move does not solve Black's problems either. 18.\textsf{c5} (18.0–0 \textsf{d8} and Black is doing fine) 18...\textsf{d4} 19.\textsf{d1} \textsf{bd6} 20.\textsf{xd6} \textsf{d8} 21.\textsf{xb7} \textsf{xb7} 22.\textsf{xa6} with a better ending for White. 18.\textsf{xd5} \textsf{exd5} 19.0–0 \textsf{e7} (19...\textsf{e6} 20.g4 \textsf{f5} 21.\textsf{e1} \textsf{e7} 22.d3 \textsf{f8} (22...\textsf{b6} 23.\textsf{xf5} (23.\textsf{d2} \textsf{d8} 24.\textsf{xf5} \textsf{c8} 25.\textsf{de2}.)) 23...\textsf{c8} 23.\textsf{xf5} \textsf{xf5} 24.\textsf{e5} \textsf{e7} 25.\textsf{c5} \textsf{b6} 26.f5 \textsf{c6} 27.\textsf{xe6}\textsf{fxe6} 28.\textsf{fxe6} \textsf{e8} ½–½ Rogers - van der Sterren, Hertogenbosch 1999).

9...\textsf{a3}

Now White can try either 20.\textsf{f3} or 20.\textsf{e1}. Let us look at 20.\textsf{e1} first:

a) 20...0–0 21.\textsf{xb5} was played in
Kotronias – Fratnik, Pula 1997, White is better. (21.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{e}6 \) leads to the above mentioned line.).

b) 20...\( \text{b}6 \) 21.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{e}6 \) 22.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{xe}1 \) 23.\( \text{xe}1 \) \( \text{d}8 \)

c) 20...\( \text{b}6 \). This reply saves Black. 21.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{e}6 \) 22.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{xe}1 \) 23.\( \text{xe}1 \) \( \text{d}8 \)=. After exchanging one pair of rooks, Black has equality.

After 20.\( \text{f}3 \) the normal reply is 20...\( \text{e}6 \) and only now 21.\( \text{he}1 \) O-O! (21...\( \text{g}8 \) 22.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 23.\( \text{f}5 \) gives White a pleasant advantage). Now 22.\( \text{g}4 \)! is best. Other moves promise less:

a) 22.\( \text{c}5 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 23.\( \text{d}7 \) \( \text{xd}7 \) 24.\( \text{xe}7 \) \( \text{xe}6 \) 25.\( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{xd}5 \) 26.\( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{c}8 \) with equality.

b) 22.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 23.\( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{f}5 \) 24.\( \text{xf}5 \) \( \text{f}5 \) 25.\( \text{xf}5 \) \( \text{f}5 \) 26.\( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{e}6 \) and again the game is even.

c) After 22.\( \text{g}4 \)! play can continue 22...\( \text{f}5 \) 23.\( \text{gx}f5 \) \( \text{xf}5 \) 24.\( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{e}6 \) and much better play for White. 25.\( \text{b}7 \)! (25.\( \text{xe}6 \) \( \text{xe}6 \) \( \frac{1}{2} \)-\( \frac{1}{2} \) Adams – Gelfand, Wijk aan Zee (3) 1994) 25...\( \text{c}8 \) (25...\( \text{b}8 \)! 26.\( \text{c}5 \)!±. 25...\( \text{xb}3 \) 26.\( \text{xb}3 \) \( \text{xe}1 \) 27.\( \text{xe}1 \) \( \text{d}6 \)+

To win this position with White requires good technique, but defending Black's side is no fun either.) 26.\( \text{xc}8 \) \( \text{xc}8 \) 27.\( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{h}4 \) 28.\( \text{g}5 \)+ \( \text{h}8 \) 29.\( \text{d}6 \) and White keeps some advantage.

10.\( \text{xf}6 \) \( \text{gx}f6 \) 11.\( \text{c}2 \)

11...\( \text{h}5 \)

11...\( \text{c}6 \). This is another standard reply. Black wants to bring his rook to c8 as quickly as possible. 12.0–0 \( \text{d}7 \) (12...\( \text{g}7 \)?! 13.\( \text{f}3 \) 0–0. Black has chosen a very dangerous set-up. White's pieces will target Black's king very rapidly. 14.\( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 15.\( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{d}5 \) 16.\( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{f}5 \) 17.\( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{f}8 \) 18.\( \text{f}6 \) \( \text{h}8 \) 19.\( \text{a}4 \) with a large advantage in Kasimdzhianov – Polgar, Moscow 2002.) 13.\( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{c}8 \) (13...\( \text{h}5 \) 14.\( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{c}8 \) 15.\( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 16.\( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 17.\( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 18.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{h}4 \) 19.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{h}7 \) 20.\( \text{b}6 \) \( \text{c}5 \) 21.\( \text{xd}7 \) \( \text{xd}7 \) 22.\( \text{ab}1 \) \( \text{h}3 \) 23.\( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 24.\( \text{f}5 \). This was played in Kotronias – Sasikiran, Moscow 2004. For the two sacrificed pawns White has a strong initiative. Black's pieces are bad placed, especially his king and queen. White managed to win this game later, but it requires more analysis to come to a final conclusion about the position.) 14.\( \text{h}5 \)?! (Too early,
White should wait with this move until Black has played \( \text{f8-e7} \). Better is 14.\( \text{f3} \) to protect \( c3 \) and prepare some action on the kingside. 14.\( \text{ad1} \) \( \text{e7} \) 15.\( \text{h5} \) \( \text{f8} \) 16.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{d8} \) 17.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{c7} \) 18.\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{a4} \) 19.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{a3} \) 20.\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{a4} \) 21.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{a3} \) was played in Luther – Georgiev, France 2003. All White’s pieces are in good positions, but Black is rather solid too. 14...\( \text{g7} \)! 15.\( \text{f3} \) 0–0. Now this is a good idea. The \( \text{h5} \) is misplaced and slows down White’s attack. 16.\( \text{af1} \) \( \text{a5} \) 17.\( \text{f5} \) \( \text{c4} \) 18.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{e5} \) and Black was better in Kasimdzhanov – Sadvakasov, Skanderborg 2003.

11...\( \text{g7} \) Black should not play this move so early. The bishop on \( g7 \) can be attacked later by \( \text{g3} \). 12.0–0 \( \text{b4} \) 13.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{d7} \) 14.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{b6} \) 15.\( \text{h1} \) \( \text{c7} \) 16.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{f8} \) 17.\( \text{h5} \) \( \text{c5} \) 18.\( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{xc5} \) 19.\( \text{e5} \). After this standard move White gets a great attack. \( \text{a5} \) 20.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{dxe5} \) 21.\( \text{xf7} \) \( \text{xf7} \) 22.\( \text{h5} \) 23.\( \text{e4} \) After bringing the knight into the attack Black is defenceless. \( \text{d7} \) 24.\( \text{h4} \) \( \text{xf4} \) 25.\( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{e8} \) 26.\( \text{g7} \) 1–0 Hamdouchi – Bologan, Belfort 2002.

12.0–0

12.\( \text{h4} \)?! Stopping Black’s h-pawn so drastically is not a recommendable idea. 12...\( \text{c6} \) 13.0–0 \( \text{d7} \) 14.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{e7} \) 15.\( \text{h2} \) \( \text{b4} \) 16.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{d8} \). A typical manoeuvre to bring back Black’s queen. 17.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{a5} \) 18.\( \text{a3} \) \( \text{b5} \) 19.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{xb3} \) and Black had a large advantage in Luther – Sutovsky, New York 1998.

12...\( \text{d7} \) 13.\( \text{h1} \)

A useful practical move. 13.\( \text{f5} \) is more direct. 13...\( \text{e7} \) (13...\( \text{c5} \) 14.\( \text{h1} \) \( \text{d7} \) !). I think this is the reason for Black’s problems. It is better to try \( \text{Be7} \) here. 15.\( \text{ab1} \) \( b5 \). Black’s king should not be safe in the centre, and Kotronias shows a way to prove it. 16.\( \text{fxe6} \) \( \text{fxe6} \) 17.\( \text{e5} \)± with an attack in Kotronias – Ilincic, Yerevan 2000.) 14.\( \text{d4} \) \( b5 \) 15.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{b7} \) 16.\( \text{fxe6} \) \( \text{fxe6} \) 17.\( \text{h3} \) \( h4 \) 18.\( \text{g4} \) \( \text{f7} \) 19.\( \text{d5} \) White had a big attack in Guseinov – Villavicencio Martinez, Stockholm 2002.

13...\( \text{h4} \)!

It is very useful for Black to advance his h-pawn in this early stage of the game, because otherwise later White might have had the opportunity to place his rook on \( h3 \).

13...\( \text{b6} \). A dubious move. Now the black queen is getting in trouble. 14.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{c5} \) What else? 15.\( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{h7} \) 16.\( \text{f5} \) \( \text{e7} \) 17.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{b7} \) 18.\( \text{fxe6} \) \( \text{fxe6} \) 19.\( \text{ab1} \)

14.h3

Forced. After 14.\textit{g}4 h3! 15.\textit{x}h3 \textit{g}xh3! Yes of course! With an open king White will have a lot of trouble in the future. 16.\textit{g}xh3 b5± and Black is doing very well.

14...\textit{e}7!

14...b6 15.\textit{ad}1 (15.\textit{d}4 was much better here. The lines are similar to the above-mentioned game Sulskis-Sutovsky.) 15...b7 16.f5 \textit{c}8 17.fx e6 fxe6 18.\textit{d}4 (18.\textit{e}3 \textit{b}4! causes White trouble) 18...\textit{e}7 19.\textit{g}4 \textit{c}5 20.\textit{f}3 \textit{xb}3 21.cxb3 \textit{c}5 22.\textit{xe}6 \textit{xd}4 23.\textit{xd}4 \textit{c}5 24.\textit{d}5 and White was better in Luther–Kasimdzhanov, Essen 2002.

15.\textit{ad}1 b6 16.\textit{e}3

It is difficult to decide where to put White’s queen. In this position the e3 square seems to be the right one. 16.\textit{d}4!? \textit{c}5 (16...\textit{b}7? 17.\textit{b}1! \textit{xa}2 18.\textit{d}2!±) 17.e5 dxe5 18.\textit{xe}5 f5 with an unclear game. Anyway, Black is a pawn up so White has to prove something.

16...\textit{b}7 17.f5

17.\textit{d}4? \textit{c}8 and the threat of \textit{b}2 was very unpleasant for White in the game Wells - Zhang Zhong, Szeged 1997.

17.\textit{c}8 18.\textit{xe}6 fxe6 19.\textit{g}4!

Finally White has managed to target Black’s weakest spot: the e6-pawn!

19...\textit{b}2

19...\textit{b}4. This move does not greatly change the outcome of the variation. It just shows once again how strong White’s attack is once he has access to the black king. 20.\textit{d}3 f5 21.\textit{xf}5 \textit{e}5 22.\textit{f}6 \textit{g}4 23.\textit{xe}6 \textit{xf}6 24.\textit{e}3! Bringing the rook to the e-line causes great problems for the coordination between Black’s pieces. 24...\textit{h}7 (24...\textit{g}8 25.\textit{d}5 wins instantly for White) 25.\textit{xf}6 \textit{d}8 26.\textit{xe}7 \textit{xe}7 27.\textit{e}1 d5 28.a3! Now Black loses material. 28...\textit{xa}3 29.\textit{b}1 \textit{b}4 30.c3 and White is winning.

19...\textit{f}7? 20.\textit{d}5± does not look great for Black either.

19...\textit{c}5. This does not help Black either, as any computer can show. 20.\textit{f}3 f5 21.exf5 \textit{xf}3 22.gxf3 \textit{c}6 23.\textit{f}6! \textit{xf}6 24.\textit{xe}6 and White has a clear advantage.

20.\textit{d}3!

The standard reply.

20...\textit{f}5!
Here Nigel Short went wrong. But back in 1995 chess was a different game than it is nowadays. Today we can all check these lines with our computers and find out how White is winning in this position.

21. exf5! This is the way! 21... e5 22. f6! \( \text{\#} \)xc2 (22... \( \text{\#} \)xg4 23. \( \text{\#} \)xe6 \( \text{\#} \)xf6 24. \( \text{\#} \)e3 is very similar to an above mentioned line. White also has a very strong attack here) 23. f7\#. This unpleasant check disturbs all Black's coordination. 23... \( \text{\#} \)xf7 (23... \( \text{\#} \)f8 24. \( \text{\#} \)c2 \( \text{\#} \)xd3 25. \( \text{\#} \)d4+- and 23... \( \text{\#} \)d7 24. \( \text{\#} \)xe6\# \( \text{\#} \)c7 25. \( \text{\#} \)d5\# \( \text{\#} \)xd5 26. \( \text{\#} \)c3\#++) 24. \( \text{\#} \)f2. The point. Black's queen is trapped. 24... \( \text{\#} \)xd3 25. \( \text{\#} \)xd3 \( \text{\#} \)e5 26. \( \text{\#} \)d4 \( \text{\#} \)xg4 27. \( \text{\#} \)xf7 \( \text{\#} \)d7 28. \( \text{\#} \)f7 e5 29. \( \text{\#} \)xb6 \( \text{\#} \)b8 30. \( \text{\#} \)c5\# dxc5 31. \( \text{\#} \)xc5 \( \text{\#} \)he8 32. \( \text{\#} \)d5 1–0 Luther – Quezada, Merida 2003.

21... \( \text{\#} \)xb1\# 21... \( \text{\#} \)xc2? 22. \( \text{\#} \)d1 f4 23. \( \text{\#} \)f3 \( \text{\#} \)e5 24. \( \text{\#} \)xc2 \( \text{\#} \)xf3 25. \( \text{\#} \)xf3 \( \text{\#} \)e5 26. \( \text{\#} \)a5! bxa5 27. \( \text{\#} \)xb7 \( \text{\#} \)xc3 28. \( \text{\#} \)a4\# \( \text{\#} \)f8 29. \( \text{\#} \)xd6\# would have given White a very pleasant advantage.

22. \( \text{\#} \)xb1 \( \text{\#} \)xg4 23. \( \text{\#} \)xg4 h3?! Probably this spoils Black's advantage. Other possibilities were 23... \( \text{\#} \)xc2 and 23... \( \text{\#} \)e5 with complicated play. However all my computer programs favour Black.

24. \( \text{\#} \)c3?! 24. \( \text{\#} \)xh3! was a good try to win the game. 24... \( \text{\#} \)e5 (24... \( \text{\#} \)xc2 25. \( \text{\#} \)c3! \( \text{\#} \)xa2 26. \( \text{\#} \)c7\# \( \text{\#} \)xe4\# 27. \( \text{\#} \)xe4 \( \text{\#} \)h3\# 28. \( \text{\#} \)g1 \( \text{\#} \)xb3 29. \( \text{\#} \)d2 \( \text{\#} \)xd2 30. \( \text{\#} \)c8\# \( \text{\#} \)f7 31. \( \text{\#} \)h7\# \( \text{\#} \)f6 32. \( \text{\#} \)h6\# \( \text{\#} \)e5 33. \( \text{\#} \)xd2 and White has winning chances.) 25. \( \text{\#} \)c3 \( \text{\#} \)xg4 26. \( \text{\#} \)xb6 \( \text{\#} \)xc3 27. \( \text{\#} \)xc3 \( \text{\#} \)h3\# 28. \( \text{\#} \)g2 \( \text{\#} \)xc3 29. \( \text{\#} \)xb7 and White is better here.

24... \( \text{\#} \)h3\# 25. \( \text{\#} \)xg2 \( \text{\#} \)g8 26. \( \text{\#} \)xc8\# \( \text{\#} \)xc8 27. \( \text{\#} \)f1 \( \text{\#} \)xg4 28. \( \text{\#} \)d2 e5! 29. \( \text{\#} \)c3! \( \text{\#} \)b7 30. \( \text{\#} \)c7

And in this still very complicated position the players agreed a draw.

\( \frac{1}{2}–\frac{1}{2} \)
Shortly before this chapter was completed, an almost anonymous e-mail appeared in my mailbox. The sender proclaimed that *The Dragon is refuted*, and attempted to prove it. As this issue seems to be of interest to many, I decided to discuss both the Dragon and its refutation in this introduction.

The Sicilian Dragon is defined by the sequence 1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.dxd4 g6 5.c3 g6. It is virtually the only system I play with both colours (and inevitably more often with Black). Being more or less unable to propose a complete antidote to any of my pet systems, I consider the Sicilian Dragon to be an exception. This opening is one of the few whose theoretical side attracts me more (meaning: to search for the best moves for both colours) than its practical side. It is hard to explain why. Perhaps it is because the basic conflict is outlined very nicely. With 5...g6 Black builds up an inferior pawn structure with the hopelessly weakened d5-square. (Certainly the Dragon structure is less reliable for Black than that of the Scheveningen. Once, many years ago at a juniors training session, I tried to discuss this with Boris Gelfand, but only half seriously). Simultaneously, however, Black also develops his kingside bishop as aggressively as possible. If White does not attempt to exploit the disadvantages of his opponent's set-up in the most principled way, then the activity of the dark bishop can easily turn into a more important factor than the pawn structure.

As practice has showed, White's only critical reply to the Dragon starts with the moves 6.e3 e7 7.f3, followed by 8.d2 and then queenside castling. This paradoxically places the white king on the more dangerous side of the board: in the sphere of influence of both the Dragon bishop and Black's queenside rook, which is destined to emerge on the semi-open c-file sooner or later. Paradoxical, yes, but there is simply no other way for White to meet Black's initial strategic threats. 7.f3, which both prevents ...g4 and removes the pressure on the e4-pawn, would leave White without a clear plan if played together with kingside castling.
Experts vs. the Sicilian

Black as a rule answers with 7...0-0 8.\(\text{\textit{d2}}\) \(\text{\textit{c6}}\), or 7...\(\text{\textit{c6}}\) 8.\(\text{\textit{d2}}\) 0-0, which is of course the same thing (the only really important sideline is 7...\(\text{\textit{c6}}\) 8.\(\text{\textit{d2}}\) \(\text{\textit{d7}}\)). The most common approach is now to try to use all possible tactical tricks to open lines on the queenside and bring displeasure to the white monarch. At White’s disposal we have the logical schematic attack on the kingside with \(h4, g4, h5\), etc. As in every opening where both sides have clear aims and targets, the Dragon is strategically simple, but tactically very complex. What is strictly defined. Only How is a real question. Under such circumstances, ambitious amateurs can have a real chance to beat lazy professionals, which they use from time to time!

The current state of affairs is that Black experiences difficulties after both of White’s main moves: 9.0-0-0 and 9.\(\text{\textit{c4}}\) (stopping 9...\(d5\) entirely).

To choose 9.0-0-0 as the main recommendation was not difficult. Firstly, I consider it to be at least no weaker than 9.\(\text{\textit{c4}}\). And secondly, 9.0-0-0 is slightly easier to prepare and play, as the amount of accumulated material and the number of sensible answers for Black is somewhat lower.

The two sharp lines 9...\(\text{\textit{d7}}\)! and 9...\(\text{\textit{xd4}}\) 10.\(\text{\textit{xd4}}\) \(\text{\textit{e6}}\) both see Black attacking in the usual Dragon spirit. But both are in fact dubious, especially the first, while the latter allows White to use positional means to fight for an advantage if he wishes.

9...\(d5\)! is, in my view, Black’s best move. However, this allows White to exploit his pluses strategically. Extraordinary attention to the safety of his king is usually not required. White has several popular options here (Dvoirys’ move 10.\(\text{\textit{e1}}\)! is still interesting) but I will concentrate on the main line 10.\(\text{\textit{xd5}}\) \(\text{\textit{xd5}}\) 11.\(\text{\textit{xc6}}\) \(\text{\textit{bxc6}}\) 12.\(\text{\textit{d4}}\)!

It is true that lately the claims of the “refutation” of the Dragon were more often related to White’s particular findings in the sharpest sub-lines of the 9.\(\text{\textit{c4}}\)-system. However, a simple example (which should remove unrealistic expectations of this chapter) is the line 9.0-0-0 \(\text{\textit{xd4}}\) 10.\(\text{\textit{xd4}}\) \(\text{\textit{a5}}\) 11.\(\text{\textit{c4}}\)? 11...\(\text{\textit{e6}}\) 12.\(\text{\textit{b3}}\), which is a part of the repertoire. This old and now rare deviation from the main lines is also an integral part of the 9.\(\text{\textit{c4}}\) system, where it arises after 9...\(\text{\textit{xd4}}\) 10.\(\text{\textit{xd4}}\) \(\text{\textit{e6}}\) 11.\(\text{\textit{b3}}\), represents approximately 3% of the mass of material related to 9.\(\text{\textit{c4}}\).

It makes no practical sense to speak about a guaranteed win in this somewhat better strategic position with its almost never-ending possible continuations. Very little in chess can be fully proved or refuted. All theory is based on evaluation, comparison, probability and similar uncertainties. The task for a serious player preparing a specific line for White is to find reasons and variations that
will convince himself that he will be able to get an advantage. Only someone located above will really know if it will be sufficient to win or not.

With Black we usually aim at convincing ourselves that we can achieve clear equality with our openings. And if we do not succeed, we switch to other lines that we hope are better. I believe it was this and not a refutation, which caused such giants as Alexander Khalifman and Kiril Georgiev to abandon the Dragon. One way or another, I limited the aim of my work to prove at least a small advantage for White in the most critical lines. And this can still only be achieved as a wish, as no writings on the opening can ever claim to be free from vulnerable assessments.

The accuracy of the data here obviously has its natural limitations. I have sometimes changed the original move order of the specified games. And for accuracy on the origins of the novelties, I refer the readers to their electronic databases. The recent CD by Dorian Rogozenko B75-B79 is, by the way, absolutely wonderful. It is the first commercial Dragon database that I not only merged with my own, but also tend to use separately.

Finally a few words of thanks: I am grateful to Emil Wellner for sending me his interesting analyses, as well as to Ilia Balinov, Erik van den Doel, Jonathan Rowson, and Bogdan Lalic who agreed to answer questions regarding their games. My friend, International Master Carmen Voicu, helped me significantly in analysing a couple of tricky variations, and for that I am grateful.

Now to the games.

Game 12
Palac - Lalic
Pula 2000

1.e4 c5 2.\textit{\texttt{df}}3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\textit{\texttt{xd}}4 \textit{\texttt{f6}} 5.\textit{\texttt{c3}} g6 6.\textit{\texttt{e3}}

6...\textit{\texttt{g4}}?? now loses to 7.\textit{\texttt{b5}}†!, so there is no reason to begin with 6.f3. 6...\textit{\texttt{g7}}

6...\textit{\texttt{c6}} has virtually no independent significance. 7.f3, and now 7...\textit{\texttt{g7}} is the most normal, and 7...\textit{\texttt{d7}} will transpose to the early ...\textit{\texttt{d7}} after 8.\textit{\texttt{d2 c8}} 9.0–0–0 8\textit{\texttt{g7}}, a main sideline for Black in the Rauzer Attack, which will be considered below in the note to Black’s 8\textsuperscript{th} move.

An unusual move order from Kasparov - Georgiev, Sarajevo 2000 is related with
another topic - the early ...a6. After 5...a6 6.e3 bd7 7.f3 g6 (which is equivalent to 5...g6 6.e3 bd7 7.f3 a6) 8.d2 b5?! (8.g7 transposes to the 6...g7 7.f3 a6 lines), White of course played 9.a4! bxa4 (9...b4 10.a4!) 10.xa4! d7. Later Kasparov proposed 11.c4! with advantage, as the most precise.

7.f3!

![Diagram]

Rauzer's concept, which time has proved to be the best. White controls both e4 and g4 and the f6-knight now becomes a passive, defensive piece. At the same time f3 builds the basis for a future attack with g2-g4 and h2-h4-h5.

7...c6

7...0-0 makes no difference if Black wishes to play the main lines with 8.d2 c6. An independent line for Black after 7...0-0 8.d2 is 8...d5?! 9.e5 e8 (9.fd7 10.f4 should give White some advantage after all reasonable moves, e.g. 10.b6 11.e2?! c6 12.0-0-0, etc.) 10.f4 f6. Now 11.0-0-0 fxe5 12.fxe5 c6 13.f3 g4 14.xd5 is a very common recommendation, but 14...e6!! gives Black chances to survive in a slightly worse endgame. So I would rather advise White to deviate with 11.f3, and if 11...fxe5 then 12.xe5! as in Gufeld-Zimin, USSR 1958.

More grounded is another sideline with 7...a6 (a hybrid between the Dragon and the Najdorf). The disadvantage of the ...a6, ...b5, ...b4 plan in the Dragon is evident: it does not really help Black to gain control over the d5-square. Still 7...a6 was tested by some of the greatest chess players ever. But, starting from the 70s, the line began to be forgotten. Yet recently it has begun to reappear occasionally at grandmaster level. Here I recommend 8.d2 (the immediate 8.c4?! is a decent alternative) 8...bd7!. The early ...a6 can only be justified with play in the spirit of the Najdorf. (The hasty 8...b5 is considered to be insufficient in view of 9.a4 b4 10.a2 a5 11.b5+ d7 12.c3 bxc3 13.xc3.

After 8...0-0?! 9.0-0-0! followed by h4 White has great chances of developing a crushing attack on the kingside. He scores over 80% from this position! An illustrative line is 9...b5 10.h4 h5 11.g4! e5?! 12.b3 hxg4 13.g5, etc.

It is important to note that 8...c6?! in conjunction with ...a6 is always dubious, and rather devalues the ...b5 idea. In the normal ...c6 lines Black plays ...a6
only somewhere around move 14, which is usually a sign that he has run out of constructive ideas in the position.) 9. \(\text{c}4\)?!
Several old sources, for example Geller in ECO in 1984, gave a clear preference to this move, while in other lines the bishop remains passive. And now:

a) 9...h5 prevents 10.\(\text{h}6\), but White’s position becomes pleasant. Amongst other ideas he can consider castling kingside.

b) After 9...\(\text{c}5\) 10.\(\text{h}6\)? might be recommended.

c) 9...\(\text{c}7\) 10.\(\text{b}3\)! b5 (or 10...0-0 11.\(\text{h}4\)? with prospects for an attack, Bilek - Simagin, Budapest 1961, and 10...h6 11.0-0-0 \(\text{b}6\)? 12.\(\text{e}5\)! Karjakin - Romero Holmes, Pamplona 2003 with the idea 12...dxe5 13.\(\text{d}5\) axb5 14.\(\text{x}b5\) \(\text{d}7\) 15.\(\text{b}4\) 11.0-0-0 \(\text{b}3\) 19.\(\text{h}6\) \(\text{x}h6\) (or 12...0-0 13.\(\text{h}4\)!) 13.\(\text{x}h6\) with initiative, Torre - Fuller, Australia 1975.

d) 9...b5 10.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{b}7\)

This move transposes to a position which often arises via 8.\(\text{c}4\). (On 10...\(\text{c}5\) then 11.\(\text{d}5\)? is funny, but 11.\(\text{h}6\) seems to be more solid. 10...h5! 11.\(\text{a}4\) is clearly better for White, as is probably also 10...0-0?! 11.\(\text{a}4\)! with the ideas 11...b4 12.\(\text{d}5\) and 11...bxa4 12.\(\text{c}6\) \(\text{e}8\) 13.\(\text{x}a4\) \(\text{b}7\) 14.\(\text{e}5\)!) 11.\(\text{h}6\)? (evaluated as strongest by Botvinnik, who also faced 11.0-0-0 over the board) 11...0-0. “Dangerous” according to Botvinnik. (Krutikhin - Botvinnik, Moscow Spartakiad 1963 continued 11...\(\text{x}h6\) 12.\(\text{x}h6\) \(\text{c}5\) 13.0-0-0 \(\text{x}b3\) 14.\(\text{b}3\)! \(\text{b}6\) 15.\(\text{b}1\) 0-0-0 16.\(\text{b}4\)! and White created some pressure. After this experience of struggling for half a point against his not too famous opponent, the 6th World Champion simply stopped playing the Dragon) 12.\(\text{xg}7\) \(\text{xg}7\). Approximate, overoptimistic analysis may continue 13.0-0-0 b4 (13...\(\text{c}5\) 14.e5!? dxe5 15.\(\text{f}5\)? \(\text{h}8\) 16.\(\text{h}6\) gxf5 17.\(\text{xd}8\) \(\text{axd}8\) 18.\(\text{e}3\) 14.\(\text{a}4\) (if 14.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 15.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 16.\(\text{xd}5\), then Black has 16...\(\text{a}5\)!) 14...\(\text{b}8\) 15.\(\text{h}4\)! (15.\(\text{xb}4\) \(\text{xe}4\)!, followed by 16...\(\text{a}8\) and 17...e5) 15...e5?! 16.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{a}5\) 17.\(\text{h}5\)! \(\text{c}6\) 18.\(\text{xg}6\) \(\text{fxg}6\) 19.\(\text{xd}6\) \(\text{xa}4\) 20.\(\text{e}7\)? \(\text{h}8\) 21.\(\text{xa}4\) \(\text{fe}8\) 22.\(\text{f}7\) \(\text{f}8\) 23.\(\text{xh}7\)± \(\text{xh}7\) 24.\(\text{xd}7\)++.

The conclusion is that in the lines with 7...a6 Black has little influence in the centre, and is therefore somewhat worse. \(\text{h}6\) is, as a rule, an important resource
for White. When Black castles kingside White usually should begin his kingside attack with h4! rather than g4.

8. \( \text{d2} \) 0–0

If Black likes the idea of 8...0–0 9.0–0–0 \( \text{d7} \), then 8...\( \text{d7} \) 9.0–0–0 \( \text{c8}! \)? looks a significantly more flexible move order. The point is that in reply to g4 Black gets the additional possibility of an early ...h5?! (GM Sergei Tiviakov's speciality), urging White to close the kingside by g5 (h3? will lose a pawn after ...hxg4). Still, after g5 Black will be forced to retreat a knight to h7 (e8 is still occupied by the king!) where it will become extremely passive. White can then develop an initiative with f3-f4-f5!. Let us consider all of this with more details.

I suggest 10.g4 which is more popular than other moves. Now 10...0–0 of course transposes to 8...0–0. Instead Black may play 10...h5 at once, or wait for h4 with 10...\( \text{e5} \). After the first of these White scores extremely well, while the latter seems to be more critical. This is because in positions where the kingside is closed ...\( \text{e5} \) can be more useful for Black than h4 for White. Thus:

a) 10...h5 11.g5 \( \text{h7} \) 12.f4 (after 12.\( \text{b1} \) 0–0, then Xie Jun's suggestion 13.\( \text{b3}! \) allows quite a typical reply for these lines 13...\( \text{xc3}! \). If White wishes to delay f4 then 12.\( \text{e2} \) is reasonable.) 12...0–0 (12...\( \text{f8} \)? 13.\( \text{f5} \). Untested is 12...\( \text{g4}?! \) 13.\( \text{e2} \) (also of interest is 13.\( \text{f5}! \) and 13...\( \text{e5} \) 14.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{e8} \) shifts to Yagupov - Motylev below. If Black instead plays 13...\( \text{a5} \) 14.\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{xf5} \), then both 15.\( \text{xc6}!? \) \( \text{xc6} \) 16.\( \text{d5} \) \( \text{d8} \) 17.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{b8} \) 18.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{xe4} \) 19.\( \text{xh5} \) \( \text{g4} \) 20.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{xf5} \) 21.\( \text{xe5} \) Coleman, and 15.\( \text{xf5}! \) \( \text{xf5} \) 16.\( \text{xf5} \) \( \text{xf5} \) 17.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{a5} \) 18.\( \text{d5}!? \) \( \text{xd2} \) 19.\( \text{xd2} \) e6 20.\( \text{f4} \) h4 21.g6 with initiative for the pawn, Coleman - De Holanda, corr. 2000 are promising for White. Imprecise is 13.\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{g4} \) 14.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 15.\( \text{xd}4 \) \( \text{xd4} \) 16.\( \text{xd}4 \) e5! - Xie Jun) 13...\( \text{e8} \) (or 13...\( \text{a5} \) 14.\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 15.\( \text{xd}4 \) \( \text{xd4} \) 16.\( \text{xd}4 \) e6 17.\( \text{f5}! \) Jandek - Binas, corr. 1998-2000) and now White should probably play 14.f5!? (why not?) 14...\( \text{e5} \) (or 14...\( \text{a5}!? \) 15.\( \text{b1} \) and then for example 15...\( \text{xd4} \) 16.\( \text{xd}4 \) \( \text{xd4} \) 17.\( \text{xd}4 \) \( \text{c5} \) 18.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{e5} \) 19.\( \text{hf1} \) ± Reichardt - Berclaz, corr. 1998-9) 15.\( \text{hf1} \) with pressure after 15...\( \text{h8} \) 16.\( \text{d5} \) Yagupov - Motylev, Russian Ch 1998, or 15...a6 16.\( \text{f2}! \) b5 17.\( \text{fd1} \) - Coleman.
b) 10...\(\text{\#e}5\) 11.h4 h5!? (after the rare 11...b5 the principled move is in many ways 12.\(\text{\#c}xb5\). Then: 12...0–0 13.h5 \(\text{\#f}3\) 14.\(\text{\#xf}3\) \(\text{\#xg}4\) Mestel - Christiansen, Hastings 1978/9, and now 15.\(\text{\#e}2\) \(\text{\#xe}4\) 16.\(\text{\#e}1\)! Nunn.) 12.g5 \(\text{\#h}7\) 13.\(\text{\#b}1\)!? 0–0 (13...\(\text{\#f}8\) 14.f4 or 14.\(\text{\#e}2\)? \(\text{\#e}6\) 15.\(\text{\#xe}6\) \(\text{\#xe}6\) 16.\(\text{\#d}4\) 0–0 17.\(\text{\#d}5\) \(\text{\#xd}5\) 18.exd5 \(\text{\#c}4\) 19.\(\text{\#b}4\)! Istratescu - Gelashvili, Kallithea 2002) 14.\(\text{\#e}2\) \(\text{\#c}8\) (Zuidema - Bilek, Havana (Ol) 1966) 17.f4?!± Matulovic.

Before going on with 8...0–0 it is useful to observe a recent trend: in a number of games Black tried to combine an early ...\(\text{\#d}7\) with an early ...h5, without even waiting for White’s g4 or h4 (e.g. 8...h5, or 8...\(\text{\#d}7\) and 9...h5). I always used to think that such ideas are unsound for Black, because White will quickly play h3?! (and develop the f1-bishop, if necessary), intending g4. If Black then allows g4 the pawn will create colossal strategic pressure on the f6-knight, which Black can hardly survive. So, after h3 Black’s only logical continuation will be ...h4 (forgetting completely all ideas involving castling, as then the h4 pawn will be doomed), followed by moves like ...\(\text{\#h}5\) or ...\(\text{\#h}5\).

The move order nuance is that 8...\(\text{\#d}7\) 9.0–0–0 h5 allows White to develop his bishop to c4 (which is promising here and not really transposing to the 8...0–0 9.\(\text{\#c}4\) labyrinth), while in the line which we just considered above, i.e. 8...\(\text{\#d}7\) 9.0–0–0 \(\text{\#c}8\), the main move 10.g4 prevents Black from the ...h7–h5–h4 advance, while 10.\(\text{\#b}1\) allows it. Black’s entire concept looks so strategically unsound to me that I will refrain from further details. Normally, if Black plays with the king in the centre, he should collapse quite quickly.

9.0–0–0

“Strong and safe”, comments GM Boris Alterman, one of the greatest experts in the Dragon, who amazingly has a negative score against White’s queenside castling. Alternative 9.\(\text{\#c}4\) prevents 9...d5 completely, but gives Black some time to prepare his actions, and is therefore much more complicated.

9...\(\text{\#d}7\)!?

“Fundamentally unsound” - FM Stefan Sieveres, “a flagrant error” - IM Attila Schneider.

Now I partly agree with these strong
Experts vs. the Sicilian

statements. The second player takes great risks with this move, while White faces no pressure and can calmly start his kingside assault, as no adequate counter-plan for Black can be seen. Even the common but rather innocent idea from the 9...c4 line: ....c8, ...e5 and ...c4 looks senseless here, as Black will lose two tempi in comparison with the sharp positions after 9...c4.

As usual in the Dragon, the advance b7-b5-b4 sends a rather pleasant invitation to the white knight to visit d5. From another point of view, 9...d7 is in some ways the most complex of the available moves for a very simple reason: Black does not exchange pieces! This factor alone cannot change the assessment of the line, but (with the exception of the very top level of chess) it significantly improves the practical chances for an ambitious Black player. In the last decade theory has begun to develop intensively in this line. White has started to learn how to avoid the opponent’s tricks, and Black’s choice of playable looking lines has gradually narrowed.

The system with 9...d7 is highly transpositional, so here the first player should definitely know the evaluation of at least 3-4 key positions (both promising and unpromising). Such knowledge will be essential for navigating during a practical game. Before we dive into variations, I should also note that the value of the developing move e2 is often underestimated. In fact e2 is a very good square for the bishop! Thus, the continuation of Svidler-Golubev, Baden-Baden 2002: 9...c4 d7 10.0-0 e5 11.e2?, where a top 10 regular puts his bishop on e2 even with the loss of a tempo, should at least make us think.

10.g4!

We will concentrate on this, the most popular continuation.

10...c8

10...e5 11.h4 as a rule transposes after 11...c8. The most common option to do without...c8 is 11...b5 (11...a5 can be answered by b3 at some point, or by 12.b1 c8 13.e2!, Grischuk - Soloviov, Russian Ch 1999, which is akin to Macieja’s important game below.

On 13...b5 Grischuk recommended 14.cx b5 d8 15.h5 Too risky, perhaps, is 11...h5 12.e2! or 12.xh5 xh5 13.g1). After 11...b5, the line goes on with 12.h5 (12.d5 is also good.)
b4 (12...\(\text{\textit{Qxf3}}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{Qxf3}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qxg4}}\) is hardly sound after 14.\(\text{\textit{Qe2?!}}\)) 13.\(\text{\textit{Qd5}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qxd5}}\) (13...\(\text{\textit{e6}}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{Qxf6}}\) + \(\text{\textit{Qxf6}}\) + and now maybe 15.\(\text{\textit{Qe2}}\) - but not 15.\(\text{\textit{Qg5?}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qd3?!}}\)) 14.\(\text{\textit{exd5}}\) \(\text{\textit{wa5}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{Qb1}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qxd5}}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{hxg6}}\) (16.\(\text{\textit{Qf5?!}}\) is another dangerous move for Black which GM Vladimir Chuchelov and I analysed some 10 years ago. Even now I am not quite sure about 16...\(\text{\textit{Qxd2}}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{Qxe7}}\) + \(\text{\textit{Qh8}}\) 18.\(\text{\textit{Qxd2}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qfe8}}\) 19.\(\text{\textit{h6}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qf8?!}}\) 20.\(\text{\textit{Qd5}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qxf3}}\) 21.\(\text{\textit{Qxb4}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qxg4}}\) with the idea 22.\(\text{\textit{Qc7}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qe4?!}}\) 16...\(\text{\textit{fxg6}}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{Qh2}}\) with a very strong White initiative: 17...\(\text{\textit{h6}}\) (both 17...\(\text{\textit{h5}}\) and 17...\(\text{\textit{Qf7}}\) can be answered in the same way) 18.\(\text{\textit{Qe2?!}}\) ±

Bologan-Fedorov, Elista (Ol) 1998.

10...\(\text{\textit{wa5}}\) and now 11.\(\text{\textit{Qb3?!}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qc7}}\) 12.\(\text{\textit{g5}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qh5}}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{Qe2?!}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qac8}}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{Qd5}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qd8}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{f4}}\) \(\text{\textit{e6}}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{Qc3}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qb4}}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{Qb1}}\)! Nevostrujev - Soloviov, Samara 2000. Instead 11.\(\text{\textit{Qc4?!}}\) transposes to the 9.\(\text{\textit{Qc4}}\) \(\text{\textit{wa5}}\) system.

11.\(\text{\textit{h4}}\)

A very common move. Also interesting is: 11.\(\text{\textit{Qb1?!}}\)

... (11.\(\text{\textit{Qe2?!}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qe5}}\) 12.\(\text{\textit{Qb1}}\) just transposes) \(\text{\textit{Qe5}}\) 12.\(\text{\textit{Qe2}}\). This is the pet line of GM Oleg Korneev, which has been used by him at least four times. Virtually Black's only sensible reply is 12...\(\text{\textit{b5?!}}\) (discouraging is 12...\(\text{\textit{h5?!}}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{h3!}}\) or 13.\(\text{\textit{gxh5}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qxh5}}\) (somewhere in line 14.\(\text{\textit{Qc4}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{Qxc4}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qxc4}}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{f5}}\) Korneev - Belezky, Lorca 2001, or 12...\(\text{\textit{a6}}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{h4}}\) h5 14.\(\text{\textit{gxh5?!}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qxh5}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{Qhg1}}\) with initiative. And after 12...\(\text{\textit{wa5}}\), then 13.\(\text{\textit{h4}}\) is good, and even better is 13.\(\text{\textit{Qb3?!}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qc7}}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{g5}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qh5}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{Qd5}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qd8}}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{Qxa7}}\) Korneev - Getta, San Sebastian 2000). Now White can consider:

a) 13.\(\text{\textit{Qdxb5}}\) was tested in the stem game Korneev - Fedorov, Krasnodar 1998: 13...\(\text{\textit{xb5}}\) (worse is 13...\(\text{\textit{Qc4?!}}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{Qxc4}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qxc4}}\) and now maybe 15.\(\text{\textit{e5?!}}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{xb5}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qb8}}\) (14...\(\text{\textit{a6?!}}\) Fedorov) 15.\(\text{\textit{c4}}\) (brave is 15.\(\text{\textit{Qxa7?!}}\) 15...a6 16.\(\text{\textit{Qd4}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qc7}}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{Qc1}}\). Here Black could prevent the c4-c5 advance with 17...\(\text{\textit{Qfd7}}\)! and if 18.\(\text{\textit{Qb3}}\), then 18...\(\text{\textit{Qc5?!}}\) with compensation - Fedorov.

b) 13.\(\text{\textit{Qcxb5?!}}\) was tried by Korneev recently. It seems that 13...\(\text{\textit{xb5}}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{xb5?!}}\) is the idea. Instead, Korneev - Carlsen, Reykjavik 2004, continued with 13...\(\text{\textit{a6}}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{Qc3}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qc4}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{Qxc4}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qxc4}}\) when Black had no real compensation. 16.\(\text{\textit{Qde2?!}}\) ± could be a move here.

c) 13.\(\text{\textit{h4?!}}\) makes sense as well. 13...\(\text{\textit{b4}}\) (on 13...\(\text{\textit{Qc4?!}}\) follows 14.\(\text{\textit{Qxc4}}\) \(\text{\textit{bxc4}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{h5?!}}\) 13...\(\text{\textit{wa5?!}}\) is considered in Macieja's line below) 14.\(\text{\textit{Qd5}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qxd5}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{exd5}}\) \(\text{\textit{wa5}}\) (15...\(\text{\textit{Qc4?!}}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{Qxc4}}\) \(\text{\textit{Qxc4}}\)
17.h5\(±\), and now untested is 16.h5! with the idea 16...\textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{W}$}xd5 17.\textcolor{blue}{$\mathcal{D}$}f5!. This is probably stronger than 16.\textcolor{blue}{$\mathcal{D}$}b3 \textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{W}$}c7 17.h5, which transposes to the variation with 15...b4, deviating from the main game.

11...\textcolor{blue}{$\mathcal{D}$}e5

The main alternative is 11...h5. Now 12.\textcolor{blue}{$\mathcal{D}$}d5!? is perhaps the most dangerous move for Black. I remember analysing it for a really long time in the army, fourteen years ago. Since then no really important games have been played with it. The most significant of the lines, already published by me in Correspondence Chess Informant and New In Chess, are:

a) 12...hxg4 13.h5 (much stronger might be 13.\textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{D}$}xf6\(±\)! \textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{D}$}xf6 14.\textcolor{blue}{$\mathcal{D}$}xc6!, or 13.\textcolor{blue}{$\mathcal{D}$}xc6!? followed by 14.\textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{D}$}xf6\(±\) \textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{D}$}xf6 15.h5 after any Black recapture) 13...\textcolor{blue}{$\mathcal{D}$}xd5 (13...\textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{D}$}xh5?! and now after both 14.\textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{D}$}f5 Schneider & Sapi and 14.\textcolor{blue}{$\mathcal{D}$}xc6 bxc6 15.\textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{D}$}f4! not everyone would be convinced about White's chances) 14.exd5 \textcolor{blue}{$\mathcal{D}$}xd5 15.\textcolor{blue}{$\mathcal{D}$}xd4 Hazai - Bilek, Budapest 1981. Now 15...\textcolor{blue}{$\mathcal{D}$}xd4?! 16.\textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{W}$}xd4 \textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{D}$}b6 and Black is hardly much worse. However those 13th move alternatives need to be investigated in practice.

b) 12...\textcolor{blue}{$\mathcal{D}$}xd5 13.exd5 \textcolor{blue}{$\mathcal{D}$}xd4 14.\textcolor{blue}{$\mathcal{D}$}xd4 \textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{W}$}xd4 15.\textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{W}$}xd4 and now 15...\textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{W}$}a5 16.gxh5 \textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{W}$}xa2 17.h6 f6 18.\textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{D}$}d3\(±\) or 15...hxg4 16.fxg4!.

c) 12...\textcolor{blue}{$\mathcal{D}$}xd4 13.\textcolor{blue}{$\mathcal{D}$}xd4 e5 (13...hxg4 14.\textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{D}$}xf6 \textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{D}$}xf6 15.h5 g5 16.f4?! less clear is 16.e5 dxe5 17.\textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{D}$}xf6+ exf6 18.\textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{W}$}xd7 \textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{W}$}xd7 19.\textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{D}$}xd7 gxf3 and the black pawns are at least frightening) 14.\textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{E}$}e3 \textcolor{blue}{$\mathcal{D}$}xd5 (Shianovsky-Geller, Kiev 1957) 15.\textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{W}$}xd5! hxg4 16.h5 and I evaluated this in White's favour.

After 11...\textcolor{red}{$\mathcal{W}$}a5?! then 12.\textcolor{blue}{$\mathcal{D}$}b3?! looks unpleasant for Black.

12.h5

Again, the dominating choice in practice. And again, not necessarily the best.
The position after 12.\textit{b}1 is known since Boleslavsky-Geller, Zurich Ct 1953. I suggest White to avoid it: 12...\textit{h}5! seems to be playable for Black.

Better is 12.\textit{e}2?! and now:

a) 12...\textit{h}5 is very risky here: 13.\textit{d}g1!? (recommended by Schneider & Sapi) 13...\textit{c}4 (13...\textit{b}5 14.\textit{gxh}5 \textit{b}4 15.\textit{d}5 \pm) 14.\textit{xc}4 \textit{xc}4 and now, probably, 15.\textit{f}5!? with an attack.

b) 12...\textit{b}5!? 13.\textit{b}1 (13.\textit{h}5 \textit{a}5 is the Smeets-Carlsen game, see 12.\textit{h}5 \textit{a}5 13.\textit{e}2) and we are back in Korneev’s line, which after 13...\textit{a}5 in its turn transposes to 12...\textit{a}5 below.

c) 12...\textit{a}5 13.\textit{b}1!

This is one of these important positions, which can be found at the crossroads between a lot of lines. It first appeared in Macieja-Grabarczuk, Sopot 1997. Black faces problems here: 13...\textit{b}5 is critical, but it gives White a maximum of possibilities: He can grab the \textit{b}5-pawn, or choose between three other lines represented in the games Smeets-Carlsen, Lau-Tiviakov and Palac-Lalic. (13...\textit{xc}3 14.\textit{xc}3 \textit{xc}3 15.\textit{xc}3 \textit{c}8 is a typical Dragon endgame, where Black’s compensation for the exchange is insufficient. To feel really confident after the ...\textit{xc}3 sacrifice, Black should ensure himself of either an extra pawn on the kingside, or the preservation of the queens on the board. Now 16.\textit{b}2!± was Sutovsky-Hodgson, Oxford 1998.) 14.\textit{b}3?! (14.\textit{h}5!? transposes to Smeets-Carlsen - see this game below) 14...\textit{c}7. Here a line is 15.g5 (15.\textit{h}5!? transposes directly to the main game) 15...\textit{h}5 (15...\textit{b}4? loses a piece after 16.\textit{b}5 \textit{xb}5 17.\textit{gxf}6+- Lau-Tiviakov, Montecatini Terme 1994) 16.\textit{d}5 \textit{d}8, followed by the principled 17.\textit{xa}7!? \textit{c}4 18.\textit{xc}4 \textit{bxc}4 19.\textit{b}6 \textit{e}8 20.\textit{d}4. White has an extra pawn, but unfortunately I am afraid to recommend such a greedy choice to White. The position is complex and some global investigation is required.

12...\textit{a}5!

12...\textit{xf}3 13.\textit{xf}3 \textit{xe}4 is considered to be insufficient: 14.\textit{e}2 (I like this more than 14.\textit{h}6) 14...\textit{xe}5 and now the simplest is probably 15.\textit{d}4 \textit{xe}2 16.\textit{d}xe2! (16.\textit{xe}2 \textit{xc}3 17.\textit{xc}3 \textit{xe}4 18.\textit{h}6 Sermek-Kovacevic, Belgrade 1989 allows 18...\textit{xc}3!) 16...\textit{h}5 (or 16...\textit{g}4 17.\textit{d}4 \textit{e}5 18.\textit{e}3±) 17.\textit{xa}7!? Hanison-Betts, corr. 2000.

13.\textit{b}3!?
13.\(\textbf{b}1?!\) (which is the most played move here) is basically what Black hopes for in the entire 9...\(\textit{d}7\)-system.

Now comes 13...\(\textit{xf}3\)! (according to Ward, this is a more accurate introduction than 13...\(\textit{xc}3\)) 14.\(\textit{xf}3\) \(\textit{xc}3\) (or 14...\(\textit{xd}xg4\) first) 15.\(\textit{xc}3\) \(\textit{xc}3\) 16.\(\textit{xc}3\) \(\textit{xc}3\) 17.\(\textit{g}2\) \(\textit{xe}4\) with fine compensation for the rook, which is confirmed by a few dozen games, starting with Sandor - Aagaard, Hamburg 1993.

Fresh is 13.\(\textit{e}2?!\) \(\textit{b}5\) (13...\(\textit{xc}3\) fails to impress. 14.\(\textit{xc}3\) \(\textit{xa}2\) and now 15.\(\textit{a}3\), or the more ambitious 15.\(\textit{b}3?!\) \(\textit{a}1\)† 16.\(\textit{d}d2\) \(\textit{a}5†\) 17.\(\textit{c}3!) and now 14.\(\textit{b}1?!\) (if 14.\(\textit{b}3\) then 14...\(\textit{xc}7\) transposes to Palac - Lalic, while Black's additional possibility is 14...\(\textit{a}6\) 14...\(\textit{xc}3\) (14...\(\textit{b}4\) 15.\(\textit{d}5\) \(\textit{xd}5\) 16.\(\textit{exd}5\) with the idea 16...\(\textit{xd}5\) 17.\(\textit{f}5!\)± is something we have already seen in Korneev's line. Or 14...\(\textit{c}4?!\) 15.\(\textit{xc}4\) \(\textit{bxc}4\)± 16.\(\textit{d}5?!\)) 15.\(\textit{xc}3\)

The position after 15.\(\textit{b}1\) is quite complex, but White seems to have good chances. (Still, we remember the promising early deviations: 13.\(\textit{e}2\), 12.\(\textit{e}2\) and Korneev's 11.\(\textit{b}1\) \(\textit{e}5\) 12.\(\textit{e}2\)). Now 16.\(\textit{hxg}6\) \(\textit{fxg}6\) 17.\(\textit{g}5\) is already quite a threat, which would be seen after moves like 15...\(\textit{a}6?\).

15...\(\textit{c}4?!\)

Another direction is 15...\(\textit{b}4\) 16.\(\textit{d}5\) \(\textit{xd}5\) 17.\(\textit{exd}5\) and now Black must make a difficult choice:

a) 17.\(\textit{f}5\) weakens the kingside: 18.\(\textit{hxg}6\) \(\textit{hxg}6\) 19.\(\textit{h}6\) \(f4?!\) 20.\(\textit{d}4?!\) \(\textit{c}5\) 21.\(\textit{e}1\)
with a dangerous initiative, Fressinet - Polzin, Bundesliga 2001/2.

b) 17...a5 18.\textit{\&}d4! (the tempting 18.\textit{\&}h6?! does not work well: 18...\textit{\&}xh6 19.\textit{\&}xh6 \textit{\&}xc2\texttt{+} 20.\textit{\&}a1 \textit{\&}xe2!! and now 21 hxg6 \textit{\&}xd1\texttt{+} 22.\textit{\&}xd1 fxg6 with excellent compensation, Short - Bu Xiangzhi, Taiyuan 2004, or 21.\textit{\&}d4 \textit{\&}xg4! 22.fxg4 and there is not only 22...\textit{\&}e5 23.hxg6 \textit{\&}g7 24.gxh7\texttt{+} \textit{\&}h8∞ Sax - Cebalo, Croatia 2002, but also 22...\textit{\&}e4! - Cebalo) 18...\textit{\&}c4 (18...a4 19.\textit{\&}h6\texttt{±}) 19.\textit{\&}xc4 \textit{\&}xc4 20.hxg6 (less clear is 20.\textit{\&}h6 \textit{\&}xd4 21.\textit{\&}xf8!? and now 21...\textit{\&}f6, or even 21...\textit{\&}c3) 20...fxg6 21.\textit{\&}h2. In Hautot - Goormachtigh, Belgium 2003/4 Black should now have played 21...h6!, when I can suggest 22.b3!? \textit{\&}xd5 23.\textit{\&}f5! with advantage for White, rather than 22.\textit{\&}xh6 \textit{\&}xd4 23.b3?! \textit{\&}c3 24.\textit{\&}xd4 \textit{\&}xd4 25.\textit{\&}e3 \textit{\&}g7 26.\textit{\&}d4 \textit{\&}f6 27.g5 \textit{\&}f5!.

c) 17...\textit{\&}c4?! 18.\textit{\&}xc4 \textit{\&}xc4 19.\textit{\&}d4\texttt{±}.

d) 17...\textit{\&}e8 18.\textit{\&}h2 as in Tomescu - Piva, Porto San Giorgio 2003 may look reasonable, but here Black has 18...\textit{\&}c4! (instead of the game’s 18...a5?) 19.\textit{\&}xc4 \textit{\&}xc4 when he is alive, because the h2-square is no longer available for the white queen. e.g. 20.hxg6 (20.\textit{\&}dh1 g5 21.\textit{\&}xg5 a5! 20.\textit{\&}f2 \textit{\&}e5?!} 20...fxg6 21.\textit{\&}dh1 (21.\textit{\&}hh1 \textit{\&}e5) 21...\textit{\&}f8! 22.\textit{\&}xh7 \textit{\&}xf3! and now 23.\textit{\&}xg7\texttt{+} only gives a draw.

But, instead of all this, 18.\textit{\&}d4!? preserving the initiative looks interesting.

16.\textit{\&}xc4 bxc4

16...\textit{\&}xc4?! looks terribly bad for Black: it can be punished by 17.e5 or 17.\textit{\&}h6.

17.\textit{\&}d4

In the line 9.\textit{\&}c4 \textit{\&}a5 10.0–0–0 \textit{\&}d7 11.\textit{\&}b3 \textit{\&}fc8, when White follows with h4, g4, h5 and Black responds with ...\textit{\&}e5, b5, \textit{\&}c4, a quite similar position often arises, which is difficult for Black. Here he can attack b2 faster, but it hardly improves his chances.

17...\textit{\&}b7

17...\textit{\&}b8 would normally transpose.

18.\textit{\&}h2?!

18.\textit{\&}a1? \textit{\&}b8 19.\textit{\&}b1 is probably a more suitable method to protect b2. After that Black’s prospects for counterplay would have been limited.

At the same time, 18.\textit{\&}h6! \textit{\&}b8 19.b3 looks a more concrete decision. Of course, b3 is (hypothetically) vulnerable, but White’s attack appears to be faster.

18...\textit{\&}b8 19.\textit{\&}c1 h6?!
Prophylactic against the possible 20 hxg6 and 21 d5. White’s bishop is busy defending b2, so the h6 pawn is untouchable for the moment.

20 hxg6 fxg6 21 b3
Attacking h6. 21 e2! was safer.

21...cxb3 22 axb3 ffc8?!
22...g5! with double-edged play.

23 d3?
23 xh6! is of course tempting, but it is surprisingly hard to make it work. Still, it seems that White is better after 23 xc3 24 xg7 xg7 25 h6 f7 26 g5 e8 27 h4! e5 28 h7 f8 29 dh1!, which is inevitably followed by 30 xg6 exd4 31 h8 e7 32 xe8 f.

23...h5?
23...e5? is refuted by 24 xh6! but 23...g5! was called for, even more evidently than one move earlier.

24 gxh5 xh5
24...e5 25 h6!?±

25 g2!±
Black’s king has become too vulnerable. Though the following was not free from inaccuracies, White got to the enemy monarch in the end.

25 e8 26 xh5 xh4 27 xh4 xc3 28 b2 xc2 29 xc2 gxh5 30 g2 f8 31 b4 b5 32 g6 e6 33 h6 f7 e7 34 d4 e2 35 e5! xf3 36 g7 f8 37 f8 f7 e8 39 g8 f7 e7 38 g7 f7 e8 40 f6 c5 41 d7 c6 42 f8 f7 c7 43 e7 c6 44 e4 b5 45 d7
1–0

Game 13
Golubev – Poliantsev
Mariupol 1990

1 e4 c5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 xd4 f6 5 c3 g6 6 e3 g7 7 f3 0–0
8 d2 c6 9 0–0–0
Black’s ideal plan after 9 0–0–0 includes the exchange on d4, ...a5 and ...e6, taking control of many squares. Fortunately for White he is able to prevent the execution of this plan in its pure form. Now we will start considering Black’s options one after another.

9 xd4
The immediate 9...a5 is very rare. Then 10 c4! requires knowledge of 9 c4 to which it transposes, and 10 b1 should suit White if he intends to meet 9 xd4 10 xd4 xa5 in the same way. The most radical reaction, however, is 10 b3! c7 and now 11 h4 or 11 g4 e6 12 g5 d7 13 h4 a5 14 b5 c8 15 b1 with advantage, Smirin – V. Alterman, Haifa 1993.

10 xd4
By far Black’s most popular move here is 10...e6. It will be covered separately in the next game.

10 a5!?
The main idea behind this queen move (used by Geller and other strong players in the 50s) is, of course, 11 e6!. For example, after 11 g4 it will transpose to the main line of the 9 g4 line, which is acceptable for Black. 11 h4 also
allows 11...\texttt{\textdollar}e6, but there is a fresh idea: 12.\texttt{\textdollar}g5?! Yemelin - Kalashnikov, St Peters burg 2000 should, at least, be mentioned. Usually, White chooses between two other promising, but very different, options.

\textbf{11.\texttt{\textdollar}c4}

Improving the position of the only relatively passive piece. A reasonable alternative is 11.\texttt{\textdollar}b1?!, which can lead to tense play after 11...e5 (not 11...\texttt{\textdollar}e6? 12.\texttt{\textdollar}d5) 12.\texttt{\textdollar}e3 \texttt{\textdollar}e6. e.g. 13.a3 \texttt{\textdollar}fc8! 14.\texttt{\textdollar}e2 \texttt{\textdollar}c6 and after 15.\texttt{\textdollar}b5, 15...\texttt{\textdollar}a4! was found by Wellner. Instead White can consider 15.g4 \texttt{\textdollar}ac8 16.\texttt{\textdollar}d5.

\textbf{11...\texttt{\textdollar}e6 12.\texttt{\textdollar}b3!}

An important part of White’s concept. In contrast 12.\texttt{\textdollar}xe6 would significantly improve Black’s influence in the centre.

In this position Black has tried four main plans: a quick ...b5-b4 (without exchanging on b3), 12...\texttt{\textdollar}xb3 and 13...\texttt{\textdollar}fd8 (trying to prepare...e5 and ...d5), 12...\texttt{\textdollar}f8c8 and ...b5-b4 (usually with the inclusion of ...\texttt{\textdollar}xb3 at some early point), and finally, the less forcing ...\texttt{\textdollar}fc8 and ...\texttt{\textdollar}c6 (which also normally involves...\texttt{\textdollar}xb3). None of these plans has been found to be satisfactory by Black players. Before entering into greater detail it is important to note that White should not be afraid to capture on b3 with his c-pawn (which in fact will remain his main option even if Black will allow him to play \texttt{\textdollar}b1 first). There is no way for Black to exchange major pieces without serious concessions, and middlegame factors are of most importance. The capture cxb3 ensures a safe position for the white king, and Black’s pawns majority in the centre, as well as his kingside, becomes a target of White’s long-term pressure.

\textbf{12...\texttt{\textdollar}fc8}

12...\texttt{\textdollar}xb3 13.cxb3 \texttt{\textdollar}fd8 14.\texttt{\textdollar}b1 \texttt{\textdollar}d7 is the oldest of Black’s ideas. After 15.g4 \texttt{\textdollar}ad8 White has usually tried the prophylactic 16.\texttt{\textdollar}e2, which works well against 16...e5? 17.\texttt{\textdollar}e3 d5 18.g5 +-. As 16...\texttt{\textdollar}a6?! is not entirely clear to me, I will follow Boleslavsky’s main recommendation: 16.h4!? e5 17.\texttt{\textdollar}e3 d5 18.exd5 \texttt{\textdollar}xd5 19.\texttt{\textdollar}xd5 \texttt{\textdollar}xd2 20.\texttt{\textdollar}xd2 \texttt{\textdollar}xd5 21.\texttt{\textdollar}xd5 \texttt{\textdollar}xd5 22.\texttt{\textdollar}c1! with a better endgame (Goglidze - Toprover, Tbilisi 1955).

After 12...b5 13.\texttt{\textdollar}b1 b4 14.\texttt{\textdollar}d5 \texttt{\textdollar}xd5 15.exd5 \texttt{\textdollar}b5 White’s best, according to Rogozenko, seems to be 16.\texttt{\textdollar}d3! \texttt{\textdollar}xd3 (after 16...\texttt{\textdollar}b7 17.\texttt{\textdollar}he1 a5 18.\texttt{\textdollar}a4...
Experts vs. the Sicilian

ab8 19.g4 af8 20.hf2 White is clearly better - Gufeld) 17.xd3 afc8! (17...a5? 18.a4! Gufeld) 18.e1 (Here 18.a4?! allows 18...exd5! 19.xg7 b6!) 18..c7 19.c3 a5 20.cxb4 axb4 21.xd1 with a better endgame in Motylev-Felgaer, Linares 2001.

13.b1

13...xb3

Or 13...b5 14.he1! xb3 (14...b4 15.d5! xd5 16.exd5 c7 17.a4! with a clearly superior position, Bagirov - Gufeld, Leningrad 1960 14..ab8 15.e5!±) 15.cxb3. Now:

a) Black has never tried 15..c6. One of the interesting options for White here is 16.xf6 xf6 17.d5 wb7 18..d1 g7 19.c1.

b) Another waiting move is 15..ab8??, Emil Wellner analysed 16.e5 dxe5 17.xe5 e6! 18..xb5 (18..e2?! d8! 19.xb5 xb5 20..xb5 e5! Wellner, and now 21..xe5 e8 with the idea 22..e7 ef6! 23..e2 a6!, or 21..c3 xd1† 22..c2 wb6 23..xd1 d5!) 18..xd2 19..d2 e5 20..xa7 c7 21..xd5 exd5 22..e3± with a sharp endgame. White's less obliging options are 16..xf6 and 16.a3?.

c) 15..b4 16..xf6! (16.d5 xd5 17.xg7 is not a precise move order as it allows an intermediate 17..e3!) 16..bxc3 17..xc3 xc3 (17..xc3? is refuted nicely by 18..e2!! c5 19.b4+-) 18.bxc3 xc3 (18..xc3 wb3 19..xc3 xc3 20..c1 can lead to the same) 19..e3 ac8 (Black is also suffering after 19..c5 20..xa5 xa5 21..c3 or 21..c1) 20..xc3 xc3 (or 20..xc3 21..b2 c5 22..xa5 xa5 23..c1±) 21..xc3 xc3 22..c1 xc1† 23..xc1. The arising pawn endgame will be in White's favour - his queenside majority offers prospects of sacrificing a pawn there, distracting Black's king from the kingside, and to win the black pawns then. Black, however, can build up some kind of fortress by keeping his f-pawn on f7 and placing his e-pawn on e6. This will prevent immediate access to the black pawns for the white king. Dutch IMs Karel van der Weide and Jeroen Bosch filled eight pages of New In Chess Magazine 1998/4 with extensive analysis proving White wins even in this case. They showed that every pawn move on the kingside is extremely sensitive. The authors' main line goes: 23..f8 (Not 23..g5 24..b2 and the white king reaches a6) 24..c2 (24.b4 e8 25..b5
5b. The Dragon

\( \texttt{\#d7 26.\texttt{\#c2}, proposed by Shereshevsky & Slutsky, allows Black to escape after 26...d5! - van der Tak.) 24...\texttt{\#e8 25.\texttt{\#c3 \#d7 26.\texttt{\#c4 \#c6 27.h4! (Not 27.b4 g5!) 27...h6 28.b4 e6 29.a4 \texttt{\#b6 30.f4! (not 30.g4? g5) 30...\texttt{\#c6 31.g4 \texttt{\#b6 32.f5. White will advance his pawns to f6, b5 and a5, then he will push e4-e5, which after ...d5 will allow him to move the king via c5 and d6 to Black’s f7 pawn, and promote his f6 pawn. In his turn, Black will get time to promote his d5 pawn to a queen, but will end up in a losing queen endgame in various versions. So the endgame is probably winning for White, but playing against a prepared “masochist” who also has some two or three hundred Elo points less than you, it makes some sense to deviate earlier.}

13...\texttt{\texttt{\#c4 is a rare idea. White is usually advised to play 14.h4 b5 15.h5 e5 (or 15...b4 16.\texttt{\#d5 \texttt{\#xd5 17.\texttt{\texttt{\#xg7 \texttt{\#xb3 18.cx\texttt{\#b3 \texttt{\#c3+ 19.bxc3 bxc3 20.\texttt{\#xc3 \texttt{\#xc3 21.\texttt{\#xc3 \texttt{\#xc3 22.\texttt{\#c1 with an advantage in the endgame, Ribli - Velimirovic, Pula 1971) 16.\texttt{\texttt{\#e3 b4 17.\texttt{\texttt{\#c2 \texttt{\#xb3 18.cx\texttt{\#b3 \texttt{\#c6 19.hxg6 fxg6 20.\texttt{\#g5?! with better chances, as in Nikitin - Ignatiev, Moscow 1963.

13...\texttt{\#c6?! must be compared with 13...\texttt{\#xb3 14.axb3 b5. Now: 14.g4 b5! (14...\texttt{\#xb3 transposes to 13...\texttt{\#xb3) 15.\texttt{\#d5 (after 15.\texttt{\#xf6 \texttt{\#xf6 16.\texttt{\#d5 \texttt{\#xd2 17.\texttt{\#xd2 Black has 17...\texttt{\#h4!, but interesting is 15.g5?! 15...\texttt{\#xd2 16.\texttt{\#xd2 \texttt{\#xd5 17.exd5 with a slight advantage.}

\texttt{\#c6 14...b5 15.\texttt{\#e1! was already considered above.}

14.\texttt{\#xb3 \#c6

14...b5 15.\texttt{\#e1! was already considered above.

15.\texttt{\#g4

15.\texttt{\#h4 allows 15...h5?.

15...\texttt{\#e6

After 15...\texttt{\#ac8 16.\texttt{\#h4 h5?! and now possible are both 17.gxh5?! and 17.g5 \texttt{\#e8 18.\texttt{\#xg7 \texttt{\#xg7 19.f4 (Winants - Sosonko, Dutch Cht 1992), where White’s chances are at least slightly better.

16.\texttt{\#h4 \texttt{\texttt{\#h6

Or 16...b5 17.a3! (It makes sense for White to prevent 17...b4 and keep his knight on c3.) 17...\texttt{\#ac8 (not good for Black are both 17...h5 18.\texttt{\#xf6! \texttt{\#xf6 19.\texttt{\#d5, and 17...b4 18.\texttt{\#a2!, winning a pawn) 18.h5 c5 (Gruenfeld - Ma.Tseitlin, Israel (Ch) 1990) and here 19.\texttt{\#e3 looks clearly better for White.

17.\texttt{\#g5! \texttt{\#xg5 18.\texttt{\#xg5 \texttt{\#h5 19.\texttt{\#xg7 \texttt{\#xg7 20.f4
Black's previous play is not too bad, but for the reasons described in the note after 12...b3, White's chances can be preferred.

20...\texttt{ac8}

20...b5? gives White promising attacking possibilities such as 21.\texttt{d4}+ \texttt{g8} 22.\texttt{exh5 gxh5} 23.g6?.

21.\texttt{h3}!

21.\texttt{df1, preparing f4-f5}, was also possible as after 21...\texttt{g3} White has 22.\texttt{h2}!

Also interesting is the immediate 21.f5!? \texttt{exf5} 22.\texttt{d4}+ \texttt{e5} 23.exf5 \texttt{xd4} 24.\texttt{xd4} with an initiative in the endgame.

21...\texttt{c5}

Here 21...b5 deserves attention. Then White could preserve some advantage by 22.a3!? \texttt{b6} (22...\texttt{b4} 23.\texttt{a2!}) 23.b4 with the idea 23...a5 24.bxa5 \texttt{xa5} 25.f5.

22.\texttt{d3 b5}

This leads to a sharp endgame, which is objectively better for White. 23.\texttt{xd6} was not a direct threat, but after passive Black moves White could have improved his position by 23.f5 or 23.\texttt{d4}.

23.\texttt{xd6} \texttt{xd6} 24.\texttt{xd6} \texttt{xd6} 25.\texttt{xd6}

25...\texttt{xf4}

25...\texttt{b4} 26.\texttt{e2}±.

26.\texttt{xb5 c5}?

The best chance was 26...a5! Then 27.\texttt{d7} \texttt{h3}! 28.\texttt{d6} \texttt{f8} looks unconvincing for White as his g5 pawn falls. Better is 27.\texttt{d4}, and if 27...\texttt{h8} then 28.a4 with the ideas: 28...\texttt{h3}? 29.\texttt{xe6}+ \texttt{xe6} 30.\texttt{d7}+ \texttt{g8} 31.\texttt{d8}+ \texttt{g7} 32.\texttt{wh8} \texttt{hxh8} 33.b4+-, and 28...\texttt{h5} 29.b4!.

27.\texttt{xa7 xg5 28.b4}

White's b-pawn is too dangerous.

28...\texttt{e5}

Or 28...\texttt{g1}+ 29.\texttt{c2} g5 30.b5 g4 31.b6 g3 32.b7 g2 33.b8\texttt{c1}+ 34.\texttt{xc1}
g1 $\mathbb{W}$ 35.$\mathbb{B}$c2 and White wins.
29.b5 $\mathbb{B}$xe4 30.b6 $\mathbb{B}$d5 31.b7 $\mathbb{B}$b4
32.$\mathbb{B}$d7 $\mathbb{B}$f6 33.$\mathbb{B}$c7 $\mathbb{B}$d5 34.$\mathbb{B}$c6! $\mathbb{B}$b6
35.$\mathbb{B}$d7 And Black resigned.
0-1.

Game 14
van der Wiel - Sax
Plovdiv 1983

1.e4 c5 2.$\mathbb{B}$f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.$\mathbb{B}$xd4 $\mathbb{B}$f6 5.$\mathbb{B}$c3 g6 6.$\mathbb{B}$e3 $\mathbb{B}$g7 7.a$\mathbb{B}$c6
9.$\mathbb{B}$d2 0–0 9.0–0–0

9...$\mathbb{B}$xd4
The immediate 9...$\mathbb{B}$e6!? has very rarely been used by grandmasters in recent years. It is playable to some extent, so we should consider it.

Black's first problem is 10.$\mathbb{B}$b1 when 10...$\mathbb{B}$xd4 just transposes to 9...$\mathbb{B}$xd4, and it is unlikely that his life is easier in lines such as 10...$\mathbb{B}$c8 11.$\mathbb{B}$xe6 (or 11.h4!? $\mathbb{W}$a5 12.$\mathbb{B}$xe6 fxe6 13.$\mathbb{B}$c4
$\mathbb{B}$f7 14.$\mathbb{B}$b3 $\mathbb{B}$e5 and now possibly 15.$\mathbb{B}$e2!? $\mathbb{B}$h5 16.$\mathbb{B}$h3 $\mathbb{B}$xc3 17.$\mathbb{B}$d2)
11...fxe6 12.$\mathbb{B}$c4 $\mathbb{W}$d7 13.$\mathbb{B}$b3 $\mathbb{B}$e5
10.$\mathbb{B}$xe6 fxe6 is Black's second problem. His e6 pawn covers d5, but appears to be a weakness itself. Now 11.$\mathbb{B}$c4 $\mathbb{W}$c8! 12.$\mathbb{B}$b3 $\mathbb{B}$a5 may be dubious for Black, but it is at least complicated. 11.h4 is uncommon and Black can answer with 11...$\mathbb{B}$e5!. 11.g4 (which transposes to the 9.g4 line) weakens $\mathbb{F}$3 and is therefore rather illogical. White’s bishop pair is strong, so 11.$\mathbb{B}$h6!? may not seem logical either. Still, it is not at all easy for Black to develop counterplay:
11...$\mathbb{B}$xh6 12.$\mathbb{W}$xh6 $\mathbb{B}$e5 13.$\mathbb{B}$b5 $\mathbb{B}$c8! fails to 14.$\mathbb{W}$h3! $\mathbb{B}$f7 15.f4± Akopian - Alterman, USSR 1986.
Or 11...$\mathbb{B}$e5 12.$\mathbb{B}$xg7 $\mathbb{B}$xg7 13.f4!.
After 11...$\mathbb{B}$c8 12.$\mathbb{B}$c4 $\mathbb{W}$d7 13.$\mathbb{B}$b3 Black maybe can try to improve on Geller's line 13...$\mathbb{B}$a5?! 14.$\mathbb{B}$xg7 $\mathbb{B}$xb3† 15.axb3 $\mathbb{B}$xg7 16.e5±, by 13...$\mathbb{B}$h5, which still looks slightly dubious.

Keeping 11.$\mathbb{B}$h6 in mind, I also recommend 11.g3?! This is the kind of move which is rarely seen in the Rauzer Attack, but is interesting here as White prepares $\mathbb{B}$h3. Black’s possibilities are:

a) 11...$\mathbb{W}$a5 12.$\mathbb{B}$c4!.

b) 11...$\mathbb{B}$e8!? 12.f4 $\mathbb{B}$c8! (if 12...$\mathbb{B}$c7 13.h4!) 13.$\mathbb{B}$b1 (Here 13.h4 $\mathbb{B}$b4! 14.$\mathbb{B}$h3 $\mathbb{B}$f7 gives Black counterplay,
but the alternative which I like is
13. h3! c7 14. e2. 13. c4!? can also be considered.) 13... a5 (13... a5
14. b5?!) 14. h3 xc3 (not 14... d7? 15. xe6! h8 16. bxc3 c7
17. b3 b5 and Black's piece play gives him some compensation, Oll - Fedorov,
St Petersburg 1996.

c) 11... c8 12. h3 f7 13. c2 c7
14. b1 with clearly better prospects for White, Stillger - Farago, Budapest
1996.

d) 11... c8 12. h3 e5 13. e2!

e) 11... d7 12. h3!? xf3 13. xe6+ h8 14. h1.

f) 11... d7 12. h3 e5 13. e2!
b5 14. f4 c4 15. e5 e8 16. d4 with strong pressure, Romero Holmes -
Martin Gonzalez, Linares 1990.

g) 11... e5 (in some ways this is a
principled move) 12. f4! eg4 13. g1
(13. d4 e5! and the queen sacrifice
14. fxe5!? h6 15. xh6 h6 16. xf6
17. c4+ g7 is dubious: Black will transfer his knight to e5) 13... c8
(unsufficient is 13... a5 14. c4!
Grabarczyk - Jedryczka, Plock rpd 1994 and
13... c7 14. e2! a6 15. h3 h5
16. g2! e5?! 17. h3 h6 18. fxe5 dxe5
19.g4 Pletanek - Jerabek, corr. 1999)
14. b1! (14. e2 xc3!? 15.bxc3
a5 with some compensation, Traub -
Bakalarz, Germany 1998. 14. g2 a5?!
15. b1 c4) 14...b5 (or 14... a5
15.h3 h6 16. d5!) 15. xb5 xe4
16. e2 gf6 17. h3?! d7 18. d4
(18. d4? xb8!) 18...a6 and now the
simple 19. xf6 with the idea 19... xf6
20. d4! is very good for White. On the
whole, the entire position after 10. xe6
f6 favours White, but the play is rather
strategic in these lines.

10. xd4 e6

A sharp but somewhat unreliable
system, which is Black's second most
popular option after 9.0-0-0.

11. b1!

The only advisable alternative to this
main move is Timman's 11. d5?! and
further lines often can merge with ones
which arise after 11. b1! c7 12. d5?.
It is easy to see a common idea between
11. b1 and 11. d5 - both these moves
prevent 11... a5.
11... c7!

Being unable to place his queen on
a5 at once (11... a5? 12. d5±), Black
prepares 12...£fc8 and then 13...£a5 - even with a loss of tempo. Not an especially impressive concept, but activating the queen is vital for Black. After other moves he scores terribly:

11...£h8?! is a move which is hard to take seriously. 12.h4 £a5 13.g4 £fc8 14.f4 (planning 15.h5 and 16.h6) 14...£h5 15.gxh5 £xh5 16.£h6! £g8 17.£xg7 £xg7 18.£h5 followed by 19.£d5 with a decisive attack.

11...£b8?! does not help Black to activate his pieces. 12.h4 £c8 13.h5 b5 14.hxg6 hxg6 15.g4 (it is not necessary for White to accept the pawn sacrifice) 15...b4 16.£d5 £xd5 17.exd5 £a5 18.g5 £h5 19.£xg7 £xg7 20.£h3 £c4 21.£g4± Golubev - Glienke, Le Touquet 1995.

11...£d7? 12.£b5! £c7 13.£a4 followed by 14.£b3 and White is better. 11...£d7 12.£xg7 £xg7 (Konstantinopolsky - Lisitsyn, Leningrad 1935) can be met by 13.£d5!? preventing 13...£a5.

11...£c8 is a natural move, but it does not help Black to develop counterplay. 12.g4 (or 12.h4 h5 13.£e2?! preparing 14.g4, Arakhamia - Matveeva, Jakarta 1993) 12...£c4 (12...£d7 13.£xg7 £xg7 14.£d5!? £e5 15.£e2 with better chances, Golubev - Matveeva, Groningen 1993) 13.h4 £xf1 14.£hxf1 (Pachman - Golombek, Venice 1950) 14...£c4 15.£d3 with initiative.

11...a6 just wastes time, as 12...b5 and 13...b4 is not a serious idea - White can play £d5 even without invitation. e.g. 12.h4 (12.g4 is of course also possible) 12...£h5 (12...b5 13.h5 b4 14.£d5, White is better, Geller - Horowitz, USA-USSR (3) 1954) 13.£d5 £xd5 14.exd5 Bronstein-Denker, USA-USSR (2) 1954, and White is clearly better: 14...£d7 (with the idea of 15...£f5) is refuted by 15.g4 hxg4 16.h5 with a crushing attack. We now return to 11...£c7.

12.h4

This very direct attempt (White plans to open the h-file quickly) is my main suggestion for White. After other moves Black faces problems as well. One of these is the positional 12.£d5!? £xd5 13.exd5 £ac8 14.£c1! (defending against 14...£xd5!). This slightly releases White's pressure, but also keeps Black's queen passive. 14...a6 15.g4 e6 looks more or less playable for Black here.

12...£fc8
12...h5 cannot stop White’s initiative. 13.g4 (13...e2 ffc8 14.g4 transposes) 13...fc8 (highly unpleasant for Black is 13...hxg4?! 14.h5!. Then 14...gxh5 15.g5! fc8 16.d3! gave White a dominating position in Blodstein - Serper, USSR 1982), and here:

a) 14 gxh5 provokes the sacrifice 14...a5, but I do not see any real danger for White after 15.hxg6!. Otherwise, 14...hxh5 15.xg7 xg7 16.g1! a5 17.g5 c5 18.d4 f6 19.b4! b6 20.a4! ± Mannion - Pert, Hastings 1994/5.

b) 14...e2?! a5 (14...hxg4 favours White. 15.h5 gxh5 16.fxg4 a5 17.a3!, Mochalov - Roizman, Minsk 1981). Now 15.g5 as in Dominguez - Kudrin, Buenos Aires 2003 does not look like a critical test for Black, but 15.g5 is interesting: 15...b5 16.d5 xd5 (or 16...xd5 17.exd5 f6 18.xg6 xd5 19.b3?) 17.exd5. It is not clear how Black can get sufficient counterplay now. Dominguez gives 17...a4 18.d2 with a slight advantage to White. In my view, 18.c3 b4 19.c4!, and 18.b3!? b4 19.gxh5 xhx5 20.xg7 xg7 21.d3 also look better for White.

13.h5! a5

13...hxh5? loses by force after 14.xg7 xg7 15.g4 f6 16.h6+ g8 17.e5 dxe5 18.g5 h5 19.d3+- Evans - Zuckerman, USA Championship (New York) 1967.

14.hxg6 hxg6

The relatively little studied alternative 14...fxg6 gives Black more prospects to survive White’s kingside assault, but at the same time it worsens the pawn structure. 15.a3 (The immediate 15.xf6 as usual fails to 15...xc3!). Now the important difference with 14...hxg6 is that there White’s 16. xf6 xf6 17.d5 is not a threat because Black has 16...xd2 17.xf6+ g7! 18.xd2 xf6. But here Black cannot leave the h7 pawn unprotected. He is forced to take on f6 with the e-pawn, creating an isolani on d6. There is no sensible way for Black to avoid White’s exchange operation, and it is for White to decide whether he wants to torment Black in an endgame, or to develop an initiative in some different way. Now we consider:

a) 15...f7 16.xf6+ or 16.g4!?, where Black hardly has anything better than 16...ab8.

b) 15...c6 gives White such additional
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possibilities as 16.\texttt{\textbackslash d}d5!? and 16.\texttt{\textbackslash b}b5!? \texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash xc}3?! 17.a4! \texttt{\textbackslash d}xe4 18.\texttt{\textbackslash w}e1± Ghysens - Koller, corr. 1990.

c) By playing 15...\texttt{\textbackslash d}c4 Black is aspiring to obtain a tenable endgame. 16.\texttt{\textbackslash a}xf6 \texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash xf}6 17.\texttt{\textbackslash w}h6 \texttt{\textbackslash xc}3!= or 17.\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash xc}4\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash xc}4 18.\texttt{\textbackslash d}d5 \texttt{\textbackslash w}xd2 19.\texttt{\textbackslash d}xf6\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash xf}6 20.\texttt{\textbackslash w}d2 \texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash d}8, as in Cichy - Bauer, Bundesliga 1983/4 playoff, may not look too convincing, and White can try 16.\texttt{\textbackslash w}e1?! instead, and if 16...\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash xf}1, then 17.\texttt{\textbackslash w}xf1.

d) After 15...\texttt{\textbackslash w}ab8, 16.g4!? can be recommended for White if he wishes to play for an attack. 16...b5 (Black creates a threat of 16...b4. The passive 16...\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash f}7 17.g5! \texttt{\textbackslash d}h5 18.\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash x}g7 \texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash x}g7 19.\texttt{\textbackslash w}h2! \texttt{\textbackslash d}h5 20.\texttt{\textbackslash d}d5 \texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash xd}5 21.\texttt{\textbackslash e}xf6 \texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash f}8 22.\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash h}3 results in a clearly better position for White, Ivanovic - Kudrin, Lone Pine 1981) 17.\texttt{\textbackslash w}g5! (probably White also can allow ...b4 in the lines 17.g5± b4! 18.\texttt{\textbackslash d}b5! and 17.\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash xf}6 \texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash xf}6 18.\texttt{\textbackslash d}d5± b4 19.axb4!? \texttt{\textbackslash w}a4 20.b5) 17...\texttt{\textbackslash w}c7 (After 17...\texttt{\textbackslash f}7 18.\texttt{\textbackslash d}d5 the continuation 18...\texttt{\textbackslash d}8 19.\texttt{\textbackslash w}h4! h6 20.g5 hxg5 21.\texttt{\textbackslash w}xg5± gives us an idea why g4 can be more useful here than \texttt{\textbackslash d}3. Also difficult for Black is 18...\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash xd}5 19.\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash xf}6, where he cannot allow the white queen to emerge on d5 with check: 19...\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash c}5 20.\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash xd}5± Lukin - Cebalo, Biel 2004) 18.e5. Now Black's only chance appears to be 18...\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash d}e4?! 19.fxe4 dxe5. After the retreat of the bishop from d4, Black will play 20...b4 with an attack. It is a big question whether it gives him sufficient compensation, but White also has 20.\texttt{\textbackslash d}d3? exd4 (20...b4 21.\texttt{\textbackslash d}d5!) 21.\texttt{\textbackslash d}d5 \texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash xd}5 22.\texttt{\textbackslash w}xd5+ e6 23.\texttt{\textbackslash w}e6+ \texttt{\textbackslash w}f7 24.\texttt{\textbackslash w}xf7+ \texttt{\textbackslash w}xf7 25.\texttt{\textbackslash w}h7 with an extra pawn and winning chances, Sebag - Pogonina, Elista 2004.

15.a3

Black's main idea was not 15...\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash xc}3, which is not killing unless White plays 15...\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash f}6?, but rather 15...b5!.

15...\texttt{\textbackslash w}ab8

Importantly, the immediate 15...\texttt{\textbackslash d}c4 allows White to prepare a brutal, straightforward attack along the h-file by 16.\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash h}3!. Then:

a) 16...b5?! 17.\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash xc}4 \texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash xc}4 (17...bxc4 18.\texttt{\textbackslash d}h1 \texttt{\textbackslash w}ab8 occurred in Short - Velimirovic, Banja Luka 1985. Short played 19.\texttt{\textbackslash d}a1?!, but here, in contrast to variations which arise in the line 15...\texttt{\textbackslash w}ab8 16.\texttt{\textbackslash d}d3 \texttt{\textbackslash d}c4, White has time for 19.\texttt{\textbackslash d}c1! \texttt{\textbackslash w}b7 20.g4! \texttt{\textbackslash \\textbackslash cb}8 21.\texttt{\textbackslash w}h2, winning by direct attack - Velimirovic)
18.\(\text{B}d1!\) e5 (18...b4? 19.\(\text{B}x\text{f}6\) exf6 20.\(\text{Q}d5\). 18...\(\text{B}\text{a}c8\) or 18...\(\text{B}b8\) is answered by 19.\(\text{B}x\text{f}6!\) and 20.\(\text{B}h7\).) 19.\(\text{B}e3\) \(\text{B}x\text{c}3\) (19...b4 20.\(\text{B}h6!\) bxc3 21.\(\text{B}x\text{g}7\) \(\text{c}x\text{d}2\) 22.\(\text{B}x\text{f}6\) and White mates) 20.\(\text{B}x\text{c}3\) \(\text{B}x\text{c}3\) 21.\(\text{B}x\text{c}3\) d5 22.\(\text{B}g5!\) with a technically winning endgame, van der Wiel - van de Mortel, Wijk aan Zee 1996.

b) 16...\(\text{B}f1\) 17.\(\text{B}f1\) \(\text{c}4\) 18.\(\text{B}h1\) \(\text{a}c8\) (Without ...b5 this position offers Black more hope. Now he plans 19...e5.) 19.\(\text{B}x\text{f}6!?\) \(\text{B}x\text{f}6\) (19...exf6?! 20.\(\text{B}h7\!), and following 20...\(\text{B}\) funny enough is 21.exf5 \(\text{B}x\text{c}3?!\) 22.\(\text{B}h8\)!, but 21.\(\text{B}x\text{g}7\)! is also good. After 20...\(\text{B}g5\) or 20...g5 White plays 21.\(\text{W}x\text{d}6\) \(\text{B}x\text{c}3\) 22.\(\text{B}h2\).) 20.\(\text{B}h7\) \(\text{e}5\) (20...\(\text{B}b6?\) 21.\(\text{B}h6\) \(\text{d}4\) 22.\(\text{f}4!\) \(\text{g}7\) 23.\(\text{B}h2\) f5 24.e5! and Black resigned in the e-mail game Schoen - Thorn Leeson, 2001 in view of 24...\(\text{d}e5\) 25.\(\text{B}x\text{g}7\), etc.) 21.f4 \(\text{d}4\) (21...\(\text{B}a5?\) 22.g4! \(\text{f}8\) 23.e5! \(\text{d}x\text{e}5\) 24.g5 seems to be completely crushing.) 22.\(\text{W}x\text{d}4\) \(\text{d}4\) 23.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{B}x\text{d}5\)! 24.\(\text{e}x\text{d}5\) \(\text{B}c5\). Black gets a pawn for the exchange, and some chances for survival.

16.\(\text{d}3!\)

van der Wiel's important invention. 16.g4 is less dangerous for Black.

16...\(\text{b}5\)

After this programmed move Black faces problems. The waiting 16...a6 can be met best by 17.\(\text{B}h4!\) b5 18.\(\text{A}g5\) and here 18...\(\text{c}5\) 19.\(\text{x}c5\) \(\text{d}x\text{c}5\) seems to be totally incorrect: 20.\(\text{B}x\text{c}5\) \(\text{d}7\) 21.\(\text{B}b4\) \(\text{c}7\)

(In the case of 17.\(\text{B}h2?!\) the white rook would be hanging now.) 22.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{d}5\) 23.\(\text{e}x\text{d}5+\) Bley - Jackwerch, corr. 1998.

16...\(\text{c}4\) is often considered to be Black's most realistic chance for acceptable play. The choice between White's main answers is difficult, so we will consider the most important ones:

a) 17.\(\text{e}3?!\) is the move that I analysed in New In Chess Yearbook 11 (1989). As of now, Black is alive here:

a1) 17...b5? 18.\(\text{h}6\) \(\text{h}8\) 19.\(\text{f}8!\) is losing for Black: 19...\(\text{h}5\) 20.\(\text{x}h5\) \(\text{x}c3\) (20...\(\text{g}xh5\) 21.\(\text{x}e7+\) Allemann - Loetscher, Switzerland 2003) 21.\(\text{h}6+-\) was pointed out by Olthof.

a2) After 17...\(\text{e}8?\) 18.\(\text{x}c4\) \(\text{x}c4\) 19.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{b}5\) 20.b3! \(\text{e}6\), White obtains a big advantage by 21.\(\text{h}6!\) \(\text{e}x\text{d}5\) 22.\(\text{x}g7\) \(\text{x}g7\) 23.\(\text{e}x\text{d}5\).

a3) An important line is 17...\(\text{d}7?!\) 18.\(\text{x}c4\) \(\text{x}c4\) (18...\(\text{x}c3?\) 19.\(\text{d}4!!\)) 19.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{d}2\) (19...\(\text{b}5?\) 20.b3+- Black
loses material.) 20.\textsubscript{xd}2 \textsubscript{e}8 (20...e6? 21.b3!) 21.\textsubscript{xa}7 b6 (This was my main suggestion for Black in 1989.) 22.\textsubscript{xd}3 \textsubscript{a}4 (22...c6 23.\textsubscript{hd}1 \textsubscript{f}8?! 24.\textsubscript{b}3 \textsubscript{a}8 25.\textsubscript{xb}6! \textsubscript{xa}7 26.\textsubscript{xd}7+ \textsubscript{xd}7 27.\textsubscript{b}8+ wins for White. 23...\textsubscript{f}8 gives more chances but is still insufficient.) 23.\textsubscript{xb}6 e6 24.\textsubscript{c}7 exd5 25.\textsubscript{xd}5 \textsubscript{e}5 26.\textsubscript{xd}6 \textsubscript{c}4. Despite White’s four pawns for a piece his advantage is not easy to prove (Cordovil - Lecroq, 14th corr. Wch 1994-2000).

a4) 17...\textsubscript{xd}3?! 18.cxd3 (less ambitious, but interesting is 18.\textsubscript{xd}3?! b5 19.\textsubscript{a}2 Moussesian - Burne, e-mail 2002) 18...b5 is an interesting line. It may look dubious, even disastrous for Black, but he needs just one move (...b4) to develop serious play, and a forced win for White on the kingside has not been found. 19.\textsubscript{h}6 \textsubscript{h}8 20.\textsubscript{d}5 (Or: 20.\textsubscript{g}5 \textsubscript{g}7 21.d4 b4 22.\textsubscript{a}2 \textsubscript{a}4 with counterplay, Ward. Then 23.\textsubscript{xb}4 a5 24.\textsubscript{xf}6 axb4! 25.\textsubscript{xg}7 bxa3! results in an inevitable draw after, e.g. 26.d5?! f6!. Also not dangerous for Black is 21.e5 b4! 22.axb4 \textsubscript{xe}5 or 20.e5 b4 and 20.\textsubscript{f}8 \textsubscript{h}5. This was discussed on the ChessPublishing.com forum with an acceptable verdict for Black: 21.\textsubscript{xe}7 \textsubscript{xc}3 22.bxc3 b4!, or 21.\textsubscript{h}5 \textsubscript{xc}3! 22.bxc3 \textsubscript{xc}3 23.\textsubscript{xc}3 \textsubscript{xc}3.) 20...\textsubscript{d}8 21.\textsubscript{g}5 (21.\textsubscript{xf}6+ \textsubscript{xf}6 22.\textsubscript{g}5 can hardly give White a significant advantage.) 21...\textsubscript{d}5, and now 22.\textsubscript{xh}8+ \textsubscript{h}8 23.\textsubscript{h}1+ \textsubscript{g}7 24.exd5 transposes to the game van der Wiel - Zult, Leeuwarden 2001, where Black could save himself by 24...\textsubscript{c}7=, with the idea 25.\textsubscript{xe}7?! \textsubscript{h}8.

b) 17.\textsubscript{h}2 (17.\textsubscript{h}4 or 17.\textsubscript{h}3 lead to similar play - in the latter case Black obtains the additional resource ...\textsubscript{e}6 at some point.) 17...b5 18.\textsubscript{hd}1 (18.\textsubscript{g}5 e5!) 18...e5! (18...b4! 19.\textsubscript{xc}4 and now 19...\textsubscript{xc}4? loses to 20.\textsubscript{xf}6! \textsubscript{xf}6 21.\textsubscript{d}5 \textsubscript{b}2 22.\textsubscript{h}8+, and 19...bxc3 20.\textsubscript{xc}3 \textsubscript{xa}3 21.\textsubscript{b}3 \textsubscript{xb}3 22.\textsubscript{xb}3 \textsubscript{xb}3 23.g4 favours White, Perez - Cabrera, Villa Clara 1998.) 19.\textsubscript{e}3 b4 20.\textsubscript{d}1 (unimpressive but 20.\textsubscript{a}2 \textsubscript{xa}2+ 21.\textsubscript{xa}2 allows 21...\textsubscript{c}3!) 20...\textsubscript{xd}3 21.cxd3 with unclear play after 21...\textsubscript{a}4?! De la Riva - Molander, Andorra 2001, or 21...\textsubscript{b}5 22.axb4 \textsubscript{xb}4.

c) 17.\textsubscript{xc}4 \textsubscript{xc}4 18.\textsubscript{c}1? (instead, 18.\textsubscript{xf}6 \textsubscript{xf}6 19.\textsubscript{d}5 \textsubscript{xd}2 20.\textsubscript{xd}2± gives White slight pressure in the ending, Marjanovic - Messing, Bela Crkva 1984) 18...e6 (18...\textsubscript{bc}8? 19.\textsubscript{d}5! \textsubscript{xc}2 20.\textsubscript{xe}7+ \textsubscript{f}8 21.\textsubscript{f}4+. 18...e5? 19.\textsubscript{e}3 and White dominates.) 19.g4 \textsubscript{bc}8! (Not 19...b5?! 20.g5 \textsubscript{h}5 21.\textsubscript{xg}7 and now 21...\textsubscript{cg}7 22.\textsubscript{hx}5! \textsubscript{gx}5 23.\textsubscript{xf}4! with a decisive attack, Bennedik - Demian, corr. 2002. Nor 21...\textsubscript{cg}7 22.\textsubscript{f}4 b4 23.\textsubscript{xd}6! \textsubscript{cc}8 24.\textsubscript{d}5?! \textsubscript{c}7 25.\textsubscript{xc}7 \textsubscript{xc}7 26.\textsubscript{b}5± - Bennedik.) 20.g5 \textsubscript{h}5 21.\textsubscript{xg}7 \textsubscript{yg}7 22.\textsubscript{xd}6, and here 22...\textsubscript{xc}3! (instead of 22...\textsubscript{e}5?! 23.\textsubscript{d}2± Parligras - Cebalo, Nova Gorica 2004) 23.bxc3 \textsubscript{g}3,
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suggested by Ivan Markovic in *Chess Informant*, leaves White with only a small advantage. Black’s main idea is 24.\texttt{e}1 \texttt{c}2! 25.\texttt{xe}2 \texttt{b}5+. 

d) 17.g4

17...b5 (Black gets ready to attack by 18...e5 and 19...b4) 18.\texttt{xc}4! is, taking into account the absence of a forced win in other lines, my main recommendation for White. Now 18...\texttt{xc}4 19.\texttt{xf}6 \texttt{xf}6 20.\texttt{d}5 \texttt{xd}2 21.\texttt{xd}2 \texttt{g}7 22.\texttt{dh}2 \texttt{g}8 23.\texttt{h}7+ \texttt{f}8 24.\texttt{xf}6 exf6 leads Black to a difficult endgame. 25.\texttt{h}8?! was played in A. Ivanov - Vigorito, Las Vegas 1997.

So, he plays 18...bxc4 and the arising position is quite complex. Black, using his major pieces, is able to create some threats against White’s a3 and b2 pawns. However, these threats are parried easily, and White’s evident positional pluses on three quarters of the board (the c- to h-files) should ensure his advantage.

19.\texttt{a}1!? (19.\texttt{a}2 is of course also possible: 19...\texttt{a}6 20.g5?! \texttt{a}6 21.\texttt{c}1 \texttt{h}5 22.\texttt{d}5 \texttt{b}7 23.\texttt{g}7 \texttt{g}7 24.\texttt{e}3 Olothof, or 19...\texttt{b}7 20.\texttt{h}3?! \texttt{cb}8 21.\texttt{b}1 \texttt{e}6 22.g5 \texttt{h}5 23.\texttt{g}7 \texttt{g}7 24.\texttt{x}d6 Mishkovski - Niemand, corr. 1987. Now 24...\texttt{x}g5 25.\texttt{h}2.)

19...\texttt{c}6 (after 19...\texttt{b}7, 20.g5?! \texttt{h}5 21.\texttt{x}g7 \texttt{g}7 22.\texttt{d}4+ \texttt{g}8 23.\texttt{d}5, De Sousa - Molander, Budapest 1999, preserves White’s initiative, but also possible is 20.\texttt{h}3 \texttt{cb}8 21.\texttt{b}1). Now 20.\texttt{d}5?! \texttt{xd}2 21.\texttt{xe}7+ \texttt{f}8 22.\texttt{xc}6 may appear interesting, but it allows Black to equalise by 22...\texttt{xc}2?! 23.\texttt{xb}8 \texttt{b}3!. Therefore White should not hurry. After, e.g. 20.\texttt{h}3 \texttt{a}6 21.\texttt{c}1?! it is difficult to propose any sensible idea for Black.

17.\texttt{g}5!

17...\texttt{c}7?! 

This is bad, but in the more than 20 years since the game was played Black
has not succeeded in finding a reliable antidote to van der Wiel’s idea.

17...d5?! can be refuted is three ways. The most direct of them is 18.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xd5 \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xd5 19.exd5 b4 20.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xg6! fxg6 (20...bxa3 21.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}h7!+- Turunen - Pyhala, Espoo 1984) 21.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xg6 \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}a4 22.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xf6 exf6 23.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}h7 and wins - Olthof.

17...\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}c4? 18.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xc4! \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xc4 19.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}d5 \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}d8 20.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}h4 is just hopeless for Black. Typically for the lines with the bishop on e6.

17...a6 should be met by 18.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}h4?! The same advice can be given regarding another waiting move: 17...\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}b7.

17...\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xc3!? 18.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xc3 \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}a4 is an exchange sacrifice that does not solve Black’s problems, but can be dangerous in practice. So I would ask the reader to pay special attention here. The following variations are given by Nisipeanu and Stoica in \textit{Informant 90}: 19.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}h4?! b4 20.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xb4 (not 20.axb4?! \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}h7 21.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xh7 \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xc3 22.bxc3 \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}a3!=, but possible is 20.e5?! \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}d5 21.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}d2 a5 22.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}g6! \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}c3! 23.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xc3 bxc3 24.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}d1 \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xb2\textsuperscript{+} 25.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}c1+) 20...\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}h7 (also insufficient is 20...\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xb4 21.axb4 \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}a2\textsuperscript{+} 22.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}c1) 21.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}h7! \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xh7 22.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}h4\textsuperscript{+}! (an important check) 22...\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}g8 23.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xe7 \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}f8 (the line 23...a5 24.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}a7! \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xb4 25.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}a8\textsuperscript{+} explains White’s 22\textsuperscript{nd} move) 24.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}g5 \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}g7 25.f4! with an obvious advantage.

If Black gives away a rook: 17...\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}c5 18.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xc5 b4, White needs to make just one precise move, 19.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}e3\textsuperscript{+}-++. Then after 19...d5 there are many ways, including 20.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}a2?! bxa3 21.b3 \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}a4 22.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}c1 which is totally convincing.

17...\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}d8?! was recommended by Chris Ward in his book \textit{Winning with the Sicilian Dragon 2}. There he considers only 18.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xa7 as an illustrative line. Perhaps the critical continuation is 18.e5 b4 (18...dxe5?! 19.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xe5+- with the idea 20.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xg6), where 19.exf6 exf6 is unclear, but 19.axb4 is stronger.

Then:

a) 19...dxe5 20.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xe5 \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xb4 21.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}a6! (21.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xg6?! \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xb2\textsuperscript{+} 22.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xb2 \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}b6\textsuperscript{+} 23.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}c1 fxg6 gives Black compensation.) 21...\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xb2\textsuperscript{+} (21...\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}a5 22.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xc8 \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}d7 is refuted by 23.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xd7! \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xd7 24.f4! \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xc8 25.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xe7\textsuperscript{+}-) 21...\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}b6 22.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xc8 \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xc8 23.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}c1\textsuperscript{?} (±) 22.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}c1! (even stronger than 22.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xb2 \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}b6\textsuperscript{+} 23.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}b5) 22...\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}b6 23.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xc8 \textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xc8 and White should win after 24.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}d2! or 24.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}d4!.

b) 19...\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}xb4 20.exf6 exf6 21.\textit{\textbf{\doubledagger}}e3? and
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Despite the fact that Black is very active, it is not clear how he can obtain sufficient compensation. 21...\textbf{c}b8 (21...\textbf{xd}4 22.\textbf{xd}4 \textbf{f}5 23.\textbf{a}4! and 21...\textbf{a}5 22.\textbf{e}4!) 22.\textbf{e}2?! \textbf{a}5 23.\textbf{c}1

17...\textbf{h}7? 18.\textbf{x}h7 \textbf{xd}4 19.\textbf{h}6 \textbf{b}4 20.\textbf{h}1 \textbf{e}5 21.\textbf{f}4 results in a decisive material advantage for White.

18.e5! dxe5 19.\textbf{xe}5

White is objectively winning, but he must find a few more good moves.

19...\textbf{c}5

19...\textbf{b}6 20.\textbf{x}g6! fxg6 21.\textbf{xe}5 (White is threatening the killing 22.\textbf{h}7) 21...\textbf{e}8 (21...\textbf{f}7 allows the thematic 22.\textbf{h}8!! \textbf{x}h8 23.\textbf{xf}7) 22.\textbf{d}6!! exd6 23.\textbf{xe}6+ \textbf{f}8 24.\textbf{g}7+ \textbf{g}7 25.\textbf{g}4+ and the game is over - van der Wiel.

20.f4! \textbf{b}7

20...\textbf{b}6 does not change much. 21.\textbf{x}g6 (or 21.\textbf{h}4 \textbf{d}7 22.\textbf{dh}1 Gutman & Reschke, or 21.\textbf{b}4 \textbf{c}6

Bennedik - Kreiling, Steinbach 1998, when White wins with 22.f5 - Olthof, but not 21.\textbf{h}6? \textbf{g}4!) 21...fxg6 22.\textbf{xe}6 \textbf{e}8 (22...\textbf{f}7 23.\textbf{h}8!!) 23.\textbf{h}7+ \textbf{f}8 24.\textbf{h}5 and White wins easily, e.g. 24...\textbf{c}4 25.\textbf{x}g7+ \textbf{g}7 26.\textbf{g}5 \textbf{f}5 27.g4 \textbf{d}6 28.\textbf{e}1.

21.\textbf{x}g6! \textbf{fx}g6

21...b4 22.\textbf{h}7!.

22.\textbf{xe}6 \textbf{f}7

There was no other defence against 23.\textbf{h}7, but now...

23.\textbf{h}8!! 1–0

One of the greatest ever Dragon games - especially from White’s point of view!

Game 15

Ehlvest - Marin

Calcutta 1997

1.\textbf{f}3 c5 2.e4 \textbf{d}6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\textbf{xd}4 \textbf{d}f6 5.\textbf{c}3 \textbf{g}6 6.f3 \textbf{g}7 7.\textbf{e}3 \textbf{c}6 8.\textbf{d}2 0–0 9.0–0–0 d5!
Konstantinovsky’s move, which in fact is a pawn sacrifice. Nowadays White accepts the offer rather rarely. His choice is still not narrow, but I will consider here only White’s main continuation, which was entered into practice by Suetin in 1955.

10.exd5 \( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}} \) xd5

Unsuccessful is 10...\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) b4?! , which can be answered by 11.\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) c4 \( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) fx d5 12.\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) de2\( \text{\textbullet} \).\( \text{\textbullet} \)

11.\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) xc6 bxc6 12.\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) d4!

White encourages Black either to exchange the dark squared bishops, or to close the a1–h8 diagonal.

12...e5

The modest alternatives to this move attracted little attention before the 90s. We will consider them in the next two games. By playing 12...e5 Black preserves the Dragon (or, as some say, “Gufeld’s”) bishop, and hopes to fight for the initiative. From another point of view 12...e5 weakens Black’s pawn structure even more - the d6 square becomes quite sensitive now.

13.\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) c5 \( \text{\textit{\texte}} \) e6

Black supports the d5 knight, which is the key detail in his set-up.

After 13...\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) b8?! the simplest is 14.\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) c4! with an advantage (14.\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) xd5 cxd5 15.\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) xd5 \( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) f6?! is more complex). An even more dubious idea is 13...e4?! when White can play 14.\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) xe4?! (14.fxe4?! \( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) xc3 15.\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) xd8 \( \text{\textit{\texte}} \) h6\( \text{\text†} \) 16.\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) d2 \( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) xd2\( \text{\text†} \) 17.\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) xd2 \( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) xe4 18.\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) xf8 \( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) xd2\( \text{\textbullet} \)) 14...f5 15.\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) c3\( \text{\textbullet} \).

13...\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) e8?! is the only real alternative to the main line. White can fight for an advantage in three ways. The current main lines after both 14.\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) c4?! and 14.\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) xd5 result in slightly worse endgames for Black. I will consider 14.\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) e4, which is the most principled.

Now 14...\( \text{\textit{\texte}} \) e6 (which may be best) just transposes to the 13...\( \text{\textit{\texte}} \) e6 line, and thereafter 13...\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) e8 just loses its point.

We will consider two other moves here:

a) 14...f5?! 15.\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) d6! \( \text{\textit{\textf}} \)!\( \text{\textbullet} \). For a long time this was considered as equalising. In 1993 Beliavsky introduced 16.\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) b5!, which was only the first step in the right direction. After 16...\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) d7 (forced), White’s strong and mysterious novelty 17.\( \text{\textit{\textdagger}} \) a4! (which was found by Deep Blue’s support team according to De Firmian, or found by GM Lembit Oll according to other sources, and was played by “Leon” (Shirov) at Internet
Chess Club), was finally revealed only in De Firmian-Ernest, Stockholm 2002. Black's position becomes strategically dubious even in the case of the strongest 17...e4! (Or: 17...b8 c4!, transposing to Misailovic-Jovicic, Tivat tt 1995.

18...b6 19.xb6! xb6 20.b3! and Black will get no real compensation for either pawn or exchange. 17...h4 was mistakenly suggested in New In Chess 8/1995 as winning for Black. White plays 18.b3! and now 18...h6 19.e3 or 18.xd6 19.xd6 ad8 20.he1 xh2?! 21.xe5! xxe5 22.h1 g3 23.h3. If 17...e6, then Rogozenko suggests 18.c4 f6 19.b7!! but the immediate 18.b7 may be stronger: 18...h4 and now, perhaps, 19.a5!.

After 17...e4, amongst White's various promising options there is 18.fxe4!? (not too bad for Black is 18.b3 xd6 19.xd5+? cxd5 20.xd5+ e6 21.xd6 g5+ 22.f4 xg2± De Firmian-Ernest, Stockholm 2002) 18...xe4 19.b3 (19.c4 transposes to Sutovsky-Alterman, Rishon Le Zion 1994. It continued 19.e3 20.xxe3± and White preserves his extra pawn in all variations, but 19.xd6! would be less clear. e.g. 20.xd6 e3 21.e2 a5?! with the idea 22.b3 c3) 19...xd6 20.xd6 and White's positional advantage seems to be quite certain to me, also in the case of 20...e3 21.e2.

b) 14...c7?! is a little studied move which I tried against Alexei Shirov in the Bundesliga. Black's specific idea now is to ensure an early ...d8. 15.d6 looks unclear when the black pawn is still on f7, while after either 15.c4 or 15.g4 Black can transpose to acceptable lines by 15...e6. I see two principled options for White, where Black in fact has many problems:

b1) 15.h4. The most direct. 15...d8 (After 15...f5 then 16.d6 ed8 17.xf6 gxf6 can give Black some chances. So White can try 16.h5!?. 15.e6?! transposes to a bad position from the 13.e6 line where of course White plays 16.h5!±. 15...f5?! 16.d6 will be followed by xxc8 and c4!. 15...h6?! just transposes to the main line after 16.g4 e6 16.h5 (16.c4!? has the idea 16.e6 17.g5!, so Black can play 16...f5 17.c3 e6 18.h5 which transposes to 16.h5 f5 17.c3!?) 16...f5 (16...f5!? 17.hxg6! fxg6 18.c4) and now 17.g5 allows 17...h6!, which looks OK for Black. White must decide between three other quite promising continuations. Both 17.c3?! e6 18.c4! and 17.hxg6!? fxg4! 18.fxe4! e6! 19.xd5 cxd5 20.a3?! Shirov-Golubev, Bundesliga 2002 leave Black with certain counterchances. White's choice should probably be 17.h6?!, which I totally missed in my New In Chess Yearbook 65 analysis. This was tried by Andrei Volokitin in a blitz game against me. (17.c3?! e6 18.c4! is very complex.) 17.h8 (17...fxe4? 18.hxg7 exf3 gives Black some chances,
but basically I do not trust his devastated position. 17...\( \text{d}f8?! \) 18.\( \text{d}f6\) does not work.) 18.\( \text{g}5! \) \( \text{f}6 \) 19.\( \text{c}4! \) \( \text{b}8 \). Now Volokitin - Golubev, ACP Internet Blitz 2004 continued 20.\( \text{b}3?! \) when I could have played 20...\( \text{xb}3 \) and 21...\( \text{f}4\). Instead, White must take care of his wonderful bishops: thanks to them, Black is almost paralysed. One idea is 20.a4?! (Not necessarily the best, but 20.\( \text{he}1 \) and 20.\( \text{b}1 \) both allow the remarkable 20...\( \text{b}5?! \) 21.\( \text{a}3 \) \( \text{a}5 \) 22.\( \text{b}4 \) \( \text{a}4 \), and 20.\( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{fxg}4 \) looks unclear.) 20...\( \text{b}7 \) (20...\( \text{b}7 \) 21.\( \text{c}3 \). And after 20...\( \text{f}4 \) 21.\( \text{xd}5\)† probably only gives a draw - but 21.\( \text{e}4 \) is good) 21.\( \text{he}1 \) \( \text{b}8 \) 22.\( \text{b}3 \) with pressure.

b2) 15.\( \text{d}6?! \) is a tricky transpositional attempt to avoid the stuff with ...\( \text{d}8 \) and ...\( \text{f}5 \) entirely. Then: 15...\( \text{d}8?! \) (back!) is principled. (Also possible is 15...\( \text{b}6 \). Now White's bishop can always return to c5, but of course he plays 16.\( \text{h}4! \) first, and after 16...\( \text{d}8?! \) (16...\( \text{f}5?! \) 17.\( \text{c}5! \) and 18.\( \text{d}6. \) 16...\( \text{e}3?! \) 17.\( \text{c}5 \) \( \text{xf}1 \) 18.\( \text{xf}1?! \) with advantage), 17.\( \text{e}7! \) (the main idea behind 15.\( \text{d}6) \) 17...\( \text{d}7 \) 18.\( \text{c}5! \) destroys Black's scheme. So 16...\( \text{h}6 \) is preferable, hoping to transfer to the 13...\( \text{e}6 \) main line (17.\( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{e}6, \) etc.) 16.\( \text{a}3?! \) (claiming that the bishop is placed better on a3 rather than c5) 16...\( \text{b}6?! \) 17.\( \text{h}4 \) (17.\( \text{c}5 \) \( \text{c}7 \) returns us to the beginning) 17...\( \text{b}8 \) 18.\( \text{h}5 \) \( \text{f}8 \) 19.\( \text{hxg}6 \). In the notes for New In Chess 19...\( \text{fxg}6 \) undeservedly escaped my attention, but 20.\( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{xa}3 \) 21.\( \text{b}3! \) gives White interesting compensation. Instead, 16.\( \text{b}5?! \) \( \text{xb}5 \) 17.\( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{f}5! \) 18.\( \text{xb}5 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 19.\( \text{exe}4 \) \( \text{g}5\)† 20.\( \text{b}1 \) \( \text{wg}2, \) as in the computer game Arena - Hagrid, 2002, looks playable for Black. (As I recently found on the web site perso.wanadoo.fr/lefouduroi, there were two entire thematic computer tournaments on 14...\( \text{c}7.) \) It is time now to return to 13...\( \text{e}6 \).

14.\( \text{xf}8? \) \( \text{xf}8 \) is premature because of the threat 15...\( \text{h}6! \) (which also works in case of 15.\( \text{e}4?! \) \( \text{h}6! \) 16.\( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{f}6 \) and Black has fantastic counterplay. 14.\( \text{e}4! \)

The complex position which arises after 14.\( \text{e}4 \) has been explored quite intensively (636 games in Dorian Rogozenko's recent Dragon CD database certainly means something). In short, White's basic plan involves \( \text{c}4 \) and the advance of his kingside pawns. Fortunately
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for the first player Black’s most aggressive ideas, linked with ...f5, do not seem to work well against White’s strongest moves: White’s only potentially vulnerable point is b2, which can be covered easily even if Black manages to attack it. It is not clear how Black can gain sufficient counterplay to fully compensate for his long-term problems with the pawn structure.

14...e8

Among the alternatives, only one (14...b8) has been tried by Black often. Here are all of them:

Black of course would have preferred to put his rook on d8 instead of e8, but after the preparatory 14...c7 White takes the exchange: 15.xf8! xf8 (15...xf8 16.c4 b8 transposes to 14..b8 15.c4! c7) 16.c4 with advantage, e.g. 16.b8 17.g4 b6 and now 18.b3!, rather than 18.c3 xc3! with the idea 19.xe6? xe4 20.xf7+ h8! 21.fxe4 h6—+

After 14..b8 White can play 15.c4!? or 15.xf8!? (After 15.h4 d8 possible is 16.c4 with an already mentioned idea 16..c7 17.g5!, while 16.h5 f5 17.g5 e4 looks unclear to me.) 15.xf8 16.a5! (the optimal square for the queen) 16..b8 (or: 16..e3 17.e1!, 16..h6! 17.b1 e3 18.c4±) 17.c4 e7! (17..f5! 18.g5 or 18.g5 e4 19.xe6!? xb2 20.d2 h6+ A. Ivanov - Ashley, Philadelphia 1997. After the ‘normal’ moves such as 18.h4 Black hardly has full compensation.

Another rare idea is 14..a5, when White has several promising options, the simplest of them being 15.c4.

Yurtaev’s dangerous 14..b8!? almost certainly should be answered by 15.c4! (15.c4 is another serious move, but the sacrificial 15..c7! has not been refuted so far). After 15..c4! Black has tried various options, but none of them have proved to be satisfactory:

a) 15..e8 16.h4 (16.xa7!?) 16..a5 (16..f5 is, quite typically, answered not by 17.d6? f8!, but by 17.g5! e4 18.c3 which seems to favour White. After 17..h6, ..f6 is no longer possible and the pin does not trouble White much. After 16..h6 17.g4! f5? 18.gxf5 gxf5, 19.d6 is already possible, but stronger is 19.hg1 fx4 20.xh6 b7 21.g6! and now 21..f5 22.xg7+ xg7 23.xc6± Zapolskis - Hosruashvili, Leningrad B 1989. Instead, 21..f6?
22.\texttt{Exf6 Exh6+ 23.\texttt{Exh6 exf3 24.\texttt{Exe6! Exe6 25.\texttt{Exd5! cxd5 26.\texttt{Exd5 +} - works nicely for White).}

After 16...a5, 17.h5?! f5 (analysed by Veselovsky) is rather unclear. Possible is 17.\texttt{Bb3?!} (Popovic - Sax, Subotica IZ 1987), when 17...f5 is answered by 18.\texttt{Bg5}. Also, both 17.g4 and 17.a4 look good when the almost forced 17...h6 can hardly justify Black’s previous moves.

b) 15...\texttt{Wc7} must be answered by 16.\texttt{Exf8! Exf8

17.\texttt{Bb1} (Even more principled is 17.\texttt{Bxd5!? cxd5 18.\texttt{Bf6+ Bh8 19.\texttt{Bxd5 and White should be better in further complications.}) 17...\texttt{Wb6} (17...a5? 18.\texttt{Bb3 \texttt{Bb7 is a better chance for Black, but still hardly sufficient after 19.c4?!}) 18.\texttt{Bb3 a5 19.c4! Be3 20.c5! Bxc5 21.Bxc5 (21.Bxe6!? Bd4! 22.Bb3!) 21...Bxc5 22.Bc1 f5+ 23.Ba1 Bd4 24.Bxd4! (less clear is 24.Bxa5 Bc2+) 24...exd4 25.g4 (25.Bxc6 Bxb3!)


c) After 15...a5?! White has usually opted for 16.\texttt{Bb3?!} (16.a4 \texttt{Wc7?! 17.Bxf8 \texttt{Bxf8}, possibly offers slightly more hope for Black than the similar line with 15...\texttt{Wc7}) 16...\texttt{Be8 17.h4, transposing to the Popovic - Sax game.


e) 15...h6 hardly makes much sense: 16.g4 (16.Bxf8?!, 16.Bxa7?) 16...\texttt{Be8 (16...f5 17.gxf5 with the idea 17...gxh5 18.Bg1 Bh8 19.Bg6!) 17.h4 transposes to 15...\texttt{Be8 16.h4 h6 17.g4.}

f) 15...\texttt{Be8?! is awkward: 16.Ba3!}
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(16.\textsf{\textbf{xf}8}!? \textsf{\textbf{xf}8} 17.\textsf{\textbf{a}5} was the original move order in A. Ivanov - Ashley game - see 14...\textsf{\textbf{b}8} 16.\textsf{\textbf{h}4} \textsf{\textbf{d}8} 17.\textsf{\textbf{h}5} \textsf{\textbf{f}4} 18.\textsf{\textbf{xd}8} \textsf{\textbf{xd}8} 19.\textsf{\textbf{xd}8} \textsf{\textbf{ad}8} 20.\textsf{\textbf{e}6} \textsf{\textbf{e}6} 21.\textsf{\textbf{hxg}6} \textsf{\textbf{fxg}6}±. Also possible is 16.\textsf{\textbf{a}5}!? 16...\textsf{\textbf{d}8} 17.\textsf{\textbf{a}5} with pressure for White, Atlas - Yuneev, Podolsk 1990.

g) 15...\textsf{\textbf{f}5}!? is a desperate attempt to get practical chances. Now 16.\textsf{\textbf{g}5} (16.\textsf{\textbf{xf}8}!? is another option) 16...\textsf{\textbf{e}4} (after 16...\textsf{\textbf{h}6} 17.\textsf{\textbf{h}4} \textsf{\textbf{f}7} the strongest is probably 18.\textsf{\textbf{he}1}?!± - Tiviakov) 17.\textsf{\textbf{b}3} \textsf{\textbf{f}6} (if 17...\textsf{\textbf{e}3}?! the simplest is 18.\textsf{\textbf{xe}3}!) 18.\textsf{\textbf{c}3} (but not 18.\textsf{\textbf{d}4}? \textsf{\textbf{e}3}! 19.\textsf{\textbf{xe}3} \textsf{\textbf{xe}3} 20.\textsf{\textbf{xf}6} \textsf{\textbf{xf}6}! 21.\textsf{\textbf{xe}6}± \textsf{\textbf{xe}6} 22.\textsf{\textbf{xe}6} \textsf{\textbf{xb}2}± Perunovic - Dimitrijevic, Serbia (ch) 2002) 18...\textsf{\textbf{xb}3} (the move order 18...\textsf{\textbf{e}3} 19.\textsf{\textbf{xe}3} \textsf{\textbf{xb}3} allows 20.\textsf{\textbf{d}4}!) 19.\textsf{\textbf{xb}3} \textsf{\textbf{e}3} 20.\textsf{\textbf{xe}3} \textsf{\textbf{xe}3} 21.\textsf{\textbf{xe}3} \textsf{\textbf{xe}3} 22.\textsf{\textbf{d}7} is a position which I considered in the 1991 \textit{New In Chess} article. Then, and now, I cannot see real compensation for Black. 22...\textsf{\textbf{c}5}, threatening 23...\textsf{\textbf{a}6}, is answered by 23.\textsf{\textbf{xa}7}!.

After the immediate 14...\textsf{\textbf{f}5}?! White has usually played 15.\textsf{\textbf{g}5} \textsf{\textbf{h}6} 16.\textsf{\textbf{h}4}, which is OK, but 15.\textsf{\textbf{xf}8} followed by 16.\textsf{\textbf{g}5} is even stronger.

We now return to 14...\textsf{\textbf{e}8}.

\textbf{15.\textsf{\textbf{h}4}!}

Both 15.\textsf{\textbf{c}4} and 15.\textsf{\textbf{c}4} allow Black to regroup with 15...\textsf{\textbf{c}7}!. The main aim of 15.\textsf{\textbf{h}4}! is to prevent 15...\textsf{\textbf{c}7}?, which can be answered with 16.\textsf{\textbf{h}5}! \textsf{\textbf{ad}8} 17.\textsf{\textbf{hxg}6} \textsf{\textbf{hxg}6} 18.\textsf{\textbf{g}3}± Nikulishin - Haba, Voronezh 1981.

\textbf{15...\textsf{\textbf{h}6}}

The most popular move which can again be considered as a concession. Black agrees to forget about \textsf{\textbf{...f}5}. The alternatives are:

15...\textsf{\textbf{f}6}?!, unfortunately for Black, simply loses material after 16.\textsf{\textbf{xd}8} \textsf{\textbf{xd}8} 17.\textsf{\textbf{xd}8}± 18.\textsf{\textbf{xe}7} 19.\textsf{\textbf{d}4}! 19.\textsf{\textbf{xe}3} \textsf{\textbf{xe}3} 20.\textsf{\textbf{xe}3} \textsf{\textbf{xe}3} 21.\textsf{\textbf{xe}3} \textsf{\textbf{xe}3} 22.\textsf{\textbf{d}7} is a position which I considered in the 1991 \textit{New In Chess} article. Then, and now, I cannot see real compensation for Black. 22...\textsf{\textbf{c}5}, threatening 23...\textsf{\textbf{a}6}, is answered by 23.\textsf{\textbf{xa}7}!.

After the immediate 14...\textsf{\textbf{f}5}?! White has usually played 15.\textsf{\textbf{g}5} \textsf{\textbf{h}6} 16.\textsf{\textbf{h}4}, which is OK, but 15.\textsf{\textbf{xf}8} followed by 16.\textsf{\textbf{g}5} is even stronger.

We now return to 14...\textsf{\textbf{e}8}.

\textbf{15.\textsf{\textbf{h}4}!}

Both 15.\textsf{\textbf{c}4} and 15.\textsf{\textbf{c}4} allow Black to regroup with 15...\textsf{\textbf{c}7}!. The main aim of 15.\textsf{\textbf{h}4}! is to prevent 15...\textsf{\textbf{c}7}?, which can be answered with 16.\textsf{\textbf{h}5}! \textsf{\textbf{ad}8}
1998) and here I suggest that White takes on a7: 19.\(\text{\textgreek{d}xa7}\)! which can be assessed as \(\pm\), although untested.

15...\(\text{\textgreek{b}8}\)! can be answered by 16.g4! (or 16.\(\text{\textgreek{c}4}\)! transposing to 14...\(\text{\textgreek{b}8}\) 15.\(\text{\textgreek{c}4}\) 16.h4) 16...f5 (a logical, but insufficient continuation) 17.gxf5 gxf5 18.\(\text{\textgreek{d}6}\)! (also good is 18.\(\text{\textgreek{g}5}\) e4 19.\(\text{\textgreek{d}4}\) e3 20.\(\text{\textgreek{w}g2}\)! \(\text{\textgreek{f}4}\) 21.\(\text{\textgreek{x}e6}\), initially suggested by R. Schwarz) 18...\(\text{\textgreek{f}8}\) (18...\(\text{\textgreek{f}8}\) is refuted by 19.\(\text{\textgreek{c}4}\)! \(\text{\textgreek{xd}6}\) 20.\(\text{\textgreek{g}1}\)! 21.\(\text{\textgreek{h}8}\)! 21.\(\text{\textgreek{w}h6}\) \(\text{\textgreek{b}7}\) 22.\(\text{\textgreek{xd}6}\) \(\text{\textgreek{xd}6}\) 23.\(\text{\textgreek{xd}5}\)! in accordance with Muchnik's analysis) 19.\(\text{\textgreek{c}4}\)! with strong pressure, Timman - Miles, Bad Lauterberg 1977.

15...a5 16.\(\text{\textgreek{c}4}\) (16.h5 \(\text{\textgreek{b}4}\)!? with the idea 17.a3? \(\text{\textgreek{h}6}\)! is given by Tiviakov. The possible improvement for White is instead 16.g4!? with the idea 16...\(\text{\textgreek{f}4}\) 17.\(\text{\textgreek{w}e1}\) \(\text{\textgreek{xd}5}\) 18.h5) 16...h5?! (Ljubojevic's move. If 16...a4?! White has 17.h5! f5 18.\(\text{\textgreek{d}6}\) \(\text{\textgreek{e}7}\) 19.hxg6 hxg6 20.\(\text{\textgreek{g}5}\)!, but 16...h6 17.g4 a4? makes some sense). As Black can aspire to reach the position after 16...h5 in two possible ways (also via 15...h5), it deserves double attention: 17.a4 (17.g4?; as in A. Sokolov - Ljubojevic, Belfort 1988, is not so clear after 17...\(\text{\textgreek{f}4}\)! 17...\(\text{\textgreek{c}7}\) (17...\(\text{\textgreek{f}4}\)! 18.\(\text{\textgreek{xd}8}\)! \(\text{\textgreek{xd}8}\) 19.\(\text{\textgreek{xd}8}\) \(\text{\textgreek{xd}8}\) 20.\(\text{\textgreek{x}e6}\) \(\text{\textgreek{xe}6}\) 21.\(\text{\textgreek{b}6}\)! with a serious advantage in the endgame, Kudrin - Golubev, Moscow 1995) 18.g4?! \(\text{\textgreek{f}4}\) 19.\(\text{\textgreek{x}e6}\) \(\text{\textgreek{xe}6}\) and now maybe 20.\(\text{\textgreek{d}7}\)! \(\text{\textgreek{xd}7}\) 21.\(\text{\textgreek{xd}7}\) hxg4 22.fxg4 f5 23.gxf5 gxf5. Black’s connected pawns may become dangerous, but after 24.\(\text{\textgreek{g}3}\)! \(\text{\textgreek{f}6}\) 25.\(\text{\textgreek{e}3}\) I would prefer White.

15...h5 is “my edition” of Ljubojevic’s idea. Now 16.\(\text{\textgreek{c}4}\) \(\text{\textgreek{f}4}\) 17.\(\text{\textgreek{xd}8}\) \(\text{\textgreek{xd}8}\) 18.\(\text{\textgreek{x}e6}\) \(\text{\textgreek{xe}6}\) (Howell - Golubev, Biel open 1993) 19.\(\text{\textgreek{e}7}\)! \(\text{\textgreek{xd}1}\)† 20.\(\text{\textgreek{xd}1}\) \(\text{\textgreek{f}4}\) 21.\(\text{\textgreek{f}6}\)† \(\text{\textgreek{xf}6}\) 22.\(\text{\textgreek{xf}6}\) \(\text{\textgreek{g}2}\)! leads Black to a dubious but quite puzzling endgame. The most direct 16.g4!? may well be the best: 16...\(\text{\textgreek{f}4}\) (16.hxg4 17.h5 with an attack, Korneev - Susnik, Kranj 2004) and for example 17.\(\text{\textgreek{w}e1}\)!? (Kutuzovic - Baric, Pula open 1998) 17...\(\text{\textgreek{d}5}\) 18.c4 (another move is 18.gxh5) 18...\(\text{\textgreek{c}7}\) 19.\(\text{\textgreek{d}6}\) \(\text{\textgreek{b}6}\) 20.gxh5 \(\text{\textgreek{xe}4}\) 21.\(\text{\textgreek{xe}4}\) \(\text{\textgreek{h}5}\) 22.c5 \(\text{\textgreek{b}7}\) 23.\(\text{\textgreek{e}2}\) with the idea 23...\(\text{\textgreek{f}4}\) 24.h5 does not look nice for Black. So 16.g4 is interesting after both 15...a5 and 15...h5.

15...\(\text{\textgreek{f}4}\)!? is Sergei Tiviakov's move, which was topical in the 90s. White is certainly slightly better after 16.g3, but I have decided to recommend 16.\(\text{\textgreek{w}e1}\)!?, which is more fun - and possibly also the strongest. 16...\(\text{\textgreek{d}5}\) (16...\(\text{\textgreek{c}7}\)! 17.h5?! is given by Rogozenko, whose main explanatory line goes 17...\(\text{\textgreek{ch}5}\) 18.g4 \(\text{\textgreek{f}4}\) 19.\(\text{\textgreek{h}4}\) h5 20.gxh5 \(\text{\textgreek{ch}5}\) 21.\(\text{\textgreek{g}5}\) \(\text{\textgreek{ad}8}\) 22.\(\text{\textgreek{hx}5}\) \(\text{\textgreek{xd}1}\)† 23.\(\text{\textgreek{xd}1}\) \(\text{\textgreek{d}8}\)† 24.\(\text{\textgreek{d}3}\) gxh5 25.\(\text{\textgreek{hx}5}\) \(\text{\textgreek{e}7}\) 26.\(\text{\textgreek{h}4}\) \(\text{\textgreek{f}8}\) 27.\(\text{\textgreek{f}6}\)++) Now 17.h5! brought some fantastic results for White in recent correspondence games. The main direction seems to be 17...f5 (17...\(\text{\textgreek{ch}5}\)?! 18.g4?! or 18.c4 \(\text{\textgreek{h}6}\)† 19.\(\text{\textgreek{e}3}\) \(\text{\textgreek{e}3}\)†
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20.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textbullet}}}}e3}\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}a5}}\) 21.cxd5 cxd5 22.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}d2}}\)


Finally we can go on with 15...h6.

16.g4

In this position Black's pieces are active, which gives him many chances. At the same time, White's king seems to feel safer than Black's, so the prospects of the first player can be preferred.

The main potential problem for Black is the emergence of White's bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal after the probable elimination of the black light squared

bishop. Play can continue 21.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}e4?!}}\) fxe4 (Hardly sufficient is 21...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}h5}}\) and now 22.g4 or 22.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}h3}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}e8}}\) 23.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}xf5?!}}\) – Haugen.) 22.fxe4 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}e8}}\) (22...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}h5}}\) 23.exd5 e4 24.c3 cxd5 25.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}c4}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}f6}}\) and now 26.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}e3}}\) or 26.g4?!), and here the prophylactic 23.b3?! can be suggested for White (who has at least five or six other possibilities to consider). 23.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}e6}}\) (or 23...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}g5}}\) 24.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}e3}}\) with the idea 24...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}xe4?!}}\) 25.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}c4}}\)† \(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}d5}}\) 26.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}xd5}}\) 24.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}e3}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}d4}}\) 25.exd5 cxd5 26.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}xd4?!}}\) exd4 27.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}d2}}\). White plans to continue 28.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}d3}}\) with a lasting positional advantage.

The alternatives are:

16...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}b8?!}}\) 17.g5! h5 18.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}c4}}\) and 18.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}c7}}\) 19.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}d6}}\) wins an exchange for White. After 16.a5 17.g5 h5, then 18.a4 (with a probable transfer to our featured game after 18...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}c7}}\) 19.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}c4}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}ed8}}\) 20.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}}}f2}}\))
is more precise in Z. Almasi’s opinion than 18...\texttt{c4} which allows 18...a4?!

16...f5?! 17.gxf5 gxf5 18.\texttt{d6} followed by 19.\texttt{a}1 is much better for White. 16...\texttt{d4}!, planning 17...\texttt{d5} is Black’s serious alternative. There are other moves, but most often White answers with 17.\texttt{c3}. After 17...\texttt{d5} (worse is 17...\texttt{c7}?! 18.\texttt{d6}! or 17...\texttt{d5} 18.\texttt{a3}! with pressure), White faces an important choice: 18.g5 h5! 19.\texttt{a}3 \texttt{c7} 20.\texttt{f6}+ \texttt{xf6} 21.gxf6 \texttt{ad8} 22.\texttt{e7} \texttt{d7} 23.\texttt{h2} \texttt{dxe7}?! 24.\texttt{xe7} \texttt{xe7}, Demetrio - Donnelly, corr. 2001 was examined in great detail in issue 78 of Internet Magazine \textit{Correspondence Chess News}, with the verdict of acceptable for Black. 18.h5?! f5 19.gxf5 gxf5 20.\texttt{d6} \texttt{e6}! 21.\texttt{g1} \texttt{f6} 22.\texttt{a}3 \texttt{d8} 23.\texttt{b7}?! \texttt{d7} 24.\texttt{a5} \texttt{e8} 25.\texttt{c4} \texttt{e6} 26.\texttt{xc6} \texttt{xd1}+ 27.\texttt{xd1} (van Kempen - Gupta, corr. 1991) is too complex and risky to be suggested for White, even if he is better here. So I leave it as it is, and go on with 18.\texttt{a3}?! \texttt{c7} (Black has nothing better). Now I propose 19.h5?!, when 19...g5 transposes to Psakhis - Vasiukov, Vilnius (USSR Ch) 1980, which is known to be good for White. So, 19...gxh5 (A cooperative line is 19...\texttt{xe4}?! 20.fxe4 g5 21.\texttt{c4} \texttt{f8} 22.\texttt{xf8} \texttt{xf8} 23.\texttt{d6}±, collecting a pawn. After 19...f5 20.gxf5 gxf5 21.\texttt{d6} \texttt{f8} 22.\texttt{g1} \texttt{h8} White can try 23.\texttt{c4}?! 20.gxh5 \texttt{h8} 21.\texttt{d6}? (the alternative is 21.\texttt{g1} \texttt{f8}?! 22.\texttt{f6} \texttt{xc5} 23.\texttt{xc5}) 21...\texttt{ed8} 22.\texttt{f5} \texttt{f6}! 23.\texttt{a6}!? with somewhat better chances. Note that 23.c4?! \texttt{e6} 24.\texttt{d6}? fails to 24...\texttt{xf5}! 25.\texttt{xc7} \texttt{e2}! 26.\texttt{xe2} \texttt{g5}.

17.g5!

Another way to fix the kingside pawns: 17.h5 g5, now occurs rarely. 18.\texttt{c4} \texttt{d8} 19.\texttt{f2} a5 20.a4 \texttt{b8} 21.\texttt{d2} f5 gave Black reasonable counterplay in Ye Jiangchuan - Zhu Chen, Beijing 1997. 17...\texttt{h5} 18.\texttt{c4}!

18.\texttt{d6} \texttt{b6} 19.\texttt{c5} is the typical way to make a draw against a stronger opponent.

18...\texttt{ed8}

Or 18...\texttt{ad8} 19.\texttt{f2}!, and Black’s rook on e8 is not so useful, while White attacks the a7 pawn already.

19.\texttt{f2}!

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

The critical position for 16...h6 (which, at least statistically, is the main line of the entire 9.0-0-0 Dragon). White plans to develop his h1 rook, and improve his
Experts vs. the Sicilian

position step by step: \( \texttt{a3} \), with a possible invasion of the knight on \( \texttt{c5} \), is one typical method. Experience shows that it is extremely difficult for Black to hold the position by passive defence. Instead, his only constructive idea is ...\( \texttt{f4} \), which can be played at once or in the next few moves (after \( \texttt{xd2} \) and \( \texttt{hd1} \) it would be too late). Then ...\( \texttt{f4} \) is followed by a strategic struggle, where the availability of squares on the d-file for the opponent's pieces is especially important. Black has more weaknesses than White, which ensures an edge for the first player.

19...\( \texttt{a5} \)

Provoking \( \texttt{a4} \), which will give Black some attacking chances if White later plays carelessly. At the same time ...\( \texttt{a5} \) allows White to fix this pawn on a dark square, weakens the b6 square and restricts the possibilities of the black queen. The alternatives are:

19...\( \texttt{d7} \) 20.\( \texttt{d2} \) \( \texttt{ad8} \) 21.\( \texttt{hd1} \) and there is no obvious continuation of Black's plan (Popovic - Georgiev, Vrsac 1987). If 21...\( \texttt{f4} \) (21...\( \texttt{a5} \) 22.\( \texttt{a4} \) \( \texttt{f4} \)? 23.\( \texttt{b6} \)), then 22.\( \texttt{xe6} \)±.

19...\( \texttt{b7} \) 20.\( \texttt{he1} \)!? \( \texttt{f4} \) (20...\( \texttt{h7} \)?) 21.\( \texttt{b3} \) \( \texttt{c7} \) 22.\( \texttt{a4} \) \( \texttt{f5} \) 23.\( \texttt{a3} \) with pressure, Lupulescu - Golubev, Bucharest 2003. White's main ideas are \( \texttt{b2} \) and \( \texttt{c5} \), and 23...\( \texttt{b6} \) 24.\( \texttt{d6} \) \( \texttt{c8} \) is answered not by 25.\( \texttt{xf7} \)?! \( \texttt{b7} \), but by 25.\( \texttt{c5} \)!) 21.\( \texttt{xe6} \) \( \texttt{xe6} \) 22.\( \texttt{d6} \) \( \texttt{d7} \) (22...\( \texttt{d4} \) 23.\( \texttt{f4} \)) 23.\( \texttt{d2} \)? \( \texttt{ad8} \) 24.\( \texttt{ed1} \)± is akin to the 19...\( \texttt{f4} \) line.

19...\( \texttt{f4} \)? 20.\( \texttt{xe6} \) \( \texttt{xe6} \) is important.

Not so convincing now is 21.\( \texttt{d6} \) \( \texttt{b6} \)! , aiming for 22.\( \texttt{c3} \) \( \texttt{d7} \) 23.\( \texttt{d2} \) \( \texttt{ad8} \) 24.\( \texttt{hd1} \) \( \texttt{xf2} \) 25.\( \texttt{xf2} \) \( \texttt{f5} \) 26.\( \texttt{xf6} \) \( \texttt{f8} \) ! 27.\( \texttt{fd2} \) \( \texttt{h6} \) Gyimesi - Schutt, corr. 1997. I vote for 21.\( \texttt{xd8} \)!? \( \texttt{xd8} \) 22.\( \texttt{d1} \) (not 22.\( \texttt{xa7} \) \( \texttt{a8} \) with the idea 23.\( \texttt{b6} \) \( \texttt{b7} \)! 24.\( \texttt{a3} \) \( \texttt{b8} \)--) 22...\( \texttt{xd1} \)+ (22...\( \texttt{d5} \)!) 23.\( \texttt{xa7} \) 23.\( \texttt{xd1} \) and it is not easy for Black to solve his problems. For example, 23...\( \texttt{a5} \) 24.\( \texttt{a3} \) \( \texttt{xc5} \) 25.\( \texttt{xc5} \) \( \texttt{xc5} \) 26.\( \texttt{xc5} \) \( \texttt{f6} \) 27.\( \texttt{e6} \) ! fxg5 28.\( \texttt{hxg5} \) \( \texttt{h4} \) 29.\( \texttt{e2} \) e4 30.fxe4 \( \texttt{xb2} \) 31.\( \texttt{a4} \)± Korneev - Komljenovic, Alcobendas 1994.

20.\( \texttt{a4} \) \( \texttt{b7} \) 21.\( \texttt{he1} \)!

Apart from this move of Ehlvest, reasonable also is 21.\( \texttt{b3} \)!, preparing 21...\( \texttt{f4} \) 22.\( \texttt{xe6} \) \( \texttt{xe6} \) 23.\( \texttt{xd1} \) \( \texttt{xd8} \) 24.\( \texttt{b6} \) as in Z.Almasi - Watson, Bundesliga 1994/5.

The continuation 21.\( \texttt{d2} \) \( \texttt{f4} \) ? 22.\( \texttt{xe6} \) \( \texttt{xe6} \) 23.\( \texttt{d6} \) (23.\( \texttt{xd8} \)+ \( \texttt{xd8} \) 24.\( \texttt{b6} \)?) \( \texttt{d8} \) 23...\( \texttt{d4} \) 24.\( \texttt{hd1} \) \( \texttt{xd6} \)!
25. \( \text{cxd6} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c4}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b4}}} \) 26. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e4}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b8}}} \) 27.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b3}}} \) 28. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c2}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xa4}}} \) 29. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xd8}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xd8}}} \) 30. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xd8}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{h7}}} \) 31. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b1}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{a1}}} \) with a draw in Palac-Kolev, Skopje 2002 illustrates what should be avoided.

21...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{ab8}}} \)

After the immediate 21...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f4}}} \) 22. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xe6}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xe6}}} \) White has 23. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d6}}} \)! \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d7}}} \) (23...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d4}}} \) 24.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f4}}} \) or 23...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c5}}} \) 24. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xc5}}} \)! 24. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{g3}}} \)!

22.\( \text{b3} \)

22. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b3}}} \)! (Ehlvest) is the typical alternative for White.

22...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f4}}} \)

Two possible waiting moves are 22...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{h8}}} \) (Marin) and 22...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{h7}}} \). In either case quite a logical continuation seems to be 23. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d2}}} \) (22. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{a3}}} \) is also an option) 23...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f4}}} \) 24. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xe6}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xe6}}} \) 25. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d6}}} \)! . Now either version of Black’s exchange sacrifice (25... \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xd6}}} \) or 25... \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d4}}} \)) would hardly work well for him, while after 25...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{bc8}}} \) White will at least have 26. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c5}}} \)! with a positional advantage.

23. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xe6}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xe6}}} \)

24. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f6}}} \)!

Such an exchange of the knight for the bishop is always a major decision for White. Even if he wins the e5 pawn (which is usually the aim of \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f6}}} \) ), Black can sometimes organize counterplay, using his queen and knight duo. But, importantly, here the black queen cannot be activated easily.

Also possible is 24. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d6}}} \) !

24...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xf6}}} \) 25. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xf6}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d5}}} \)

25...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xd1}}} \) 26. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xd1}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e8}}} \) 27. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e3}}} \) ! and White is better.

26. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d6}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d8}}} \) !

Both players mentioned 26... \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c8}}} \) ! 27. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xe5}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c5}}} \) in their annotations. I believe Black cannot get full compensation after 28. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xd5}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xd5}}} \) 29.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c4}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b7}}} \) 30. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e3}}} \).

27. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xe5}}} \) !

Better than 27. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xd5}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{cxd5}}} \) 28. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xe5}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d4}}} \).

27...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b4}}} \) 28. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xd5}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{cxd5}}} \) 29. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b2}}} \) !

29. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d2}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xb4}}} \) 30. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xa5}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d4}}} \)! gives Black counter chances.

29...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d4}}} \)

After 29... \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f4}}} \) ? 30. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d2}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f4}}} \) 31. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xa5}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d4}}} \) is impossible because of 32. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xe6}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xe6}}} \) 33. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xd8}}} \). Marin decides to advance the d-pawn immediately, but faces another problem:

30. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xe6}}} \) !

Instead 30. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d2}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{h7}}} \) 31. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xb4}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xa4}}} \)

32. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e5}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{g5}}} \) 33. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{hxg5}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{g6}}} \) gives Black counterplay (Marin).

30...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{fxe6}}} \) 31. \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{g3}}} \) !
Now Black cannot defend his g6 pawn with the king because of 32.\textit{W}c7\textdagger, so White wins it, obtaining a technically won position.

31...\textit{G}b8

If 31...\textit{G}h8?! 32.\textit{G}b1 \textit{W}b7 33.\textit{W}xg6 \textit{W}h7 34.\textit{W}g3! \textit{G}c8 35.\textit{W}g5! \textit{W}xc2+ 36.\textit{G}a2 \textit{W}h7 37.\textit{G}xd4 followed by \textit{W}xa5 with an easy win.

32.\textit{G}b1 \textit{W}b7!

Not 32...d3? 33.\textit{W}c7 dxc2\textdagger 34.\textit{G}a2! c1\textit{G}\# 35.\textit{G}b1 and Black can resign.

33.\textit{W}xg6 \textit{G}f7 34.\textit{A}a3\textdagger \textit{G}e8 35.\textit{W}h6

Also possible was 35.\textit{G}g5 (Ehlvest) 35...\textit{G}d5 36.\textit{W}f4 \textit{G}d7 37.\textit{G}e7, etc.

35...e5

Hardly better is 35...d3 36.cxd3 e5 (or 36...\textit{G}xd3 37.\textit{G}e7! \textit{G}d1\textdagger 38.\textit{G}b2 \textit{G}g1 and now 39.\textit{G}c3?!, avoiding the checks) 37.\textit{G}c2, etc.

36.\textit{W}g5! \textit{G}d5 37.\textit{W}f5! \textit{G}d8 38.f4 d3? Black could have continued his unpromising defence by 38...\textit{W}xf4 39.\textit{G}e7\textdagger \textit{G}c7 40.\textit{W}xf4\textdagger, etc.

39.cxd3 \textit{G}d4?

The final blunder in time trouble.

40.\textit{G}e7\textdagger \textit{G}c7 41.\textit{W}xe5\textdagger 1–0

Game 16
Balinov - Velickovic
Vienna 1998

1.e4 c5 2.\textit{G}f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\textit{G}xd4 \textit{G}f6 5.\textit{G}c3 g6 6.\textit{G}e3 \textit{G}g7 7.f3 0–0
8.\textit{W}d2 \textit{G}c6 9.0–0–0 d5 10.exd5 \textit{G}xd5
11.\textit{G}xc6 bxc6 12.\textit{G}d4 \textit{G}xd4

This is less ambitious in comparison with 12...e5. Now Black is essentially fighting only for a draw.

13.\textit{W}xd4 \textit{W}c7

This move of Hodgson is stronger than 13...\textit{W}b6 14.\textit{A}a4!. This practically wins a tempo for White because c3 is not an optimal square for his knight. 14...\textit{W}a5 (14...\textit{W}xd4 15.\textit{W}xd4 is just what White wants) 15.b3! \textit{G}f5 (15...\textit{W}b8 16.\textit{W}c5!, forcing the exchange of queens was good for White in Suetin - Vasiukov, Voroshilovgrad 1955) 16.\textit{W}c5 (a serious, but much more complicated alternative, is 16.g4 with the idea 16...\textit{W}xc2 17.\textit{G}d2) 16...\textit{W}xc5 17.\textit{G}xc5 \textit{G}c3 (or 17...\textit{G}e3 18.\textit{G}e1 and Black is suffering) 18.\textit{W}e1! (not 18.\textit{W}d4?! \textit{W}fd8, and after 19.\textit{W}xd8\textdagger \textit{G}xd8 20.g4 \textit{G}d5! Black is fine) 18...\textit{W}xa2\textdagger 19.\textit{G}b2 \textit{G}b4. Here I had the “pleasure” to meet the novelty 20.\textit{A}c4! over the board. (20.\textit{W}xe7?! \textit{W}fe8!, Korneev - Summercale, Groningen 1995, with the idea of 21.\textit{G}b7 \textit{G}d5 22.\textit{G}c? \textit{G}c8! and White's rook is trapped.) 20...\textit{W}fe8 21.g4! Here we play for two results, and a zero for White is not among them: 21...\textit{W}c8 (similarly discouraging is 21...\textit{W}xc2 22.\textit{G}a6! - van der Wiel. 22...\textit{G}d3\textdagger 23.\textit{G}xc2 \textit{G}xe1\textdagger 24.\textit{W}xe1 where Black must follow with 24...\textit{W}ac8 and await his fate) 22.\textit{W}e5?! , etc. van der Wiel - Golubev, Germany 1999.

14.\textit{W}c5

I cannot expect that every reader will have time to study two or more complex
The principled alternative is 14...\texttt{Wf4}†. Kiril Georgiev successfully used this move against Almasi in 1996, but did not repeat it against Morozevich in 2000. 15.\texttt{Bb1} \texttt{Bf5}. Now White can obtain a relatively small advantage in two ways: 16.\texttt{Ad3} \texttt{Axc3}† (16...\texttt{Ae3}?! 17.\texttt{Gg3} \texttt{Wxf3} 18.\texttt{Axg2} \texttt{Axc2}† 19.\texttt{Bc1}! \texttt{Bxd1}, and now possibly 20.\texttt{Bxd1}? \texttt{Wf2} 21.\texttt{Bf1} \texttt{Bxh2} 22.\texttt{Wxe3} with an initiative.) 17.\texttt{Wxc3}, and 16.\texttt{Ad2}†.

He can also take on d5, which involves some risk but seems to be the most principled: 16.\texttt{Bxd5} cxd5 17.\texttt{Wxd5} (not 17.\texttt{Wxe7} \texttt{Axc2}† 18.\texttt{Bxc2} \texttt{Aa4}† 19.\texttt{Bd2} \texttt{Ac8} 20.\texttt{Bd3} \texttt{Aa5}† 21.\texttt{Bg2} \texttt{Axe8}→ Alterman) 17...\texttt{Bc8} and here:

\begin{itemize}
\item a) 18.\texttt{Wd4}? is refuted by 18...\texttt{Axc2}†! (Alterman) 19.\texttt{Bxc2} \texttt{Afc8}† 20.\texttt{Bb1} \texttt{Axc1}†.
\item b) After 18.\texttt{Bd4}? Black gets good play by 18...\texttt{Wc7} or 18...\texttt{Wc3} - Alterman.
\item c) 18.\texttt{Bc4} \texttt{Bc7}! (18...\texttt{Be6}?! 19.\texttt{Wd4}
\end{itemize}

14.\texttt{Bc4}, twice used by Shirov against Fedorov, is no weaker but more complex. Then 14...\texttt{Bb6} is Black’s most popular move, when White can fight for the initiative in various ways. Shirov played 15.\texttt{Be2}?! (15.\texttt{Bb3} \texttt{c5}!), trying to underline the drawbacks of Black’s passive knight retreat. Alternatively, White can allow ...\texttt{Axc4}, because such an exchange cannot be called a strategic achievement for Black. Instead of 14...\texttt{Bb6}, Black can play actively with 14...\texttt{e5}?! 15.\texttt{Wd2} (after 15.\texttt{Wc5}?! \texttt{Axc3}, 16.\texttt{Wxc3} is no longer possible) 15...\texttt{Be6}. Here 16.\texttt{Ba4} \texttt{Bd8}?! (after 16...\texttt{Bab8} 17.\texttt{h4} Black has more problems) 17.\texttt{Cc5}?! looks slightly better for White.

White’s reasonable options also include the rare moves 14.h4 and 14.g3?!.

14...\texttt{Bxc3}
Experts vs. the Sicilian

\[ \text{\( wxd4 \) 20.\( \text{\textit{\( \text{\textit{x}\textit{d}\textit{d}4} \text{\textit{b}\textit{4} \text{\textit{xc}\textit{4} is refuted by 22.a3!± Balje - Nagley, corr. 1999) 19.\( \text{\textit{b}\textit{3} (19.\text{\textit{b}\textit{3}?? \text{\textit{e}\textit{6}) 19...\text{\textit{bd}8!\), and here a draw was agreed in Almasi - Georgiev, Cacak 1996. White could fight for something by 20.\text{\textit{b}5 \text{\textit{xd}1+ (20...\text{\textit{x}h2 21.g4 \text{\textit{c}8 22.\text{\textit{de}1!) 21.\text{\textit{xd}1 \text{\textit{wh}2 22.g4!\), but it looks rather double-edged.}}}}} \text{\textit{d)}} \text{I do not see a convincing way for Black to obtain full compensation after 18.b3!? e) Worthy of attention is 18.\text{\textit{d}2!?. For example, 18...\text{\textit{e}5 (An alternative is 18...\text{\textit{a}4 19.\text{\textit{d}3 \text{\textit{fd}8 20.\text{\textit{he}1 \text{\textit{xd}3 21.cxd3 when it is not so easy for White to convert his extra pawn.) 19.b3 \text{\textit{fd}8 (19...a5 20.g4! \text{\textit{e}6 21.f4 followed by 22.f5!) 20.\text{\textit{xd}8+ \text{\textit{xd}8 21.\text{\textit{xd}8+ \text{\textit{g}7 and now not 22.\text{\textit{d}3 \text{\textit{a}5! but 22.\text{\textit{d}1! The presence of bishops improves Black's chances in such endgames, but White's extra pawn is still an extra pawn.}}}}} \text{\textit{15.\text{\textit{xc}3 \text{\textit{e}6}}}}} \text{\textit{16.h4!?}} \text{White is aiming to create weaknesses in Black's kingside.}} \text{\textit{16...\text{\textit{fd}8}} \text{16...\text{\textit{xa}2!? 17.b3 a5 18.h5! favours White. For example 18...g5 19.h6 e5 20.\text{\textit{c}4 and after 20...a4 21.\text{\textit{d}7! \text{\textit{xd}7 22.\text{\textit{xe}5 Black is mated on g7.}}}}} \text{\textit{17.\text{\textit{d}3 c5 18.h5 \text{\textit{f}4+ 19.\text{\textit{b}1 \text{\textit{d}4 20.hxg6 hxg6}}}}} \text{\textit{21.a5!}} \text{Black's king is potentially vulnerable and White rightly avoids the exchange of queens. With the same idea, weaker would be 21.\text{\textit{e}1 (Kurnosov - Solovjov, St Petersburg 2004) because of 21...\text{\textit{ab}8 22.b3 c4!}} \text{\textit{21...\text{\textit{ab}8}} \text{Not 21...\text{\textit{b}4? 22.\text{\textit{c}7! 21...\text{\textit{d}7 22.\text{\textit{de}1 could transpose to the game after 22...\text{\textit{b}8 23.b3.}}}}} \text{\textit{22.b3 \text{\textit{d}7!}} \text{It is hard to propose a better move: 22...}}}}} \text{\textit{20}}\text{\textit{hxg6}} \text{\textit{hxg6}} \text{\textit{21.\text{\textit{xc}3 \text{\textit{e}6}}}} \text{\textit{22.b3 \text{\textit{d}7!}} \text{It is hard to propose a better move: 22...}}\]
c4? 23.\texttt{\textasciitilde}e2 22...\texttt{\textasciitilde}d6? 23.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xa7. In the game Black wishes to exchange queens by 23...\texttt{\textasciitilde}b4.

23.\texttt{\textasciitilde}de1! \texttt{\textasciitilde}d5!

23...\texttt{\textasciitilde}b4 loses a pawn after 24.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xb4 cxb4 25.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xg6!, as well as 23...c4 24.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xc4! \texttt{\textasciitilde}xc4 (24...\texttt{\textasciitilde}xc4? 25.\texttt{\textasciitilde}e5) 25.\texttt{\textasciitilde}e4.

24.\texttt{\textasciitilde}e4!

24.\texttt{\textasciitilde}d5 exd5

Better than 25...\texttt{\textasciitilde}xd5?! 26.\texttt{\textasciitilde}e4\texttt{\textasciitilde}± (or 26.\texttt{\textasciitilde}d1?!), or 25...\texttt{\textasciitilde}xd5?! 26.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xa7.

26.\texttt{\textasciitilde}d1!

White removes his rook from one of the open files that he controlled – it is more important to disturb Black’s centralised queen! 26.\texttt{\textasciitilde}h3 would have been premature as 26...\texttt{\textasciitilde}b4! forces a queen exchange.

26...\texttt{\textasciitilde}b4

24...\texttt{\textasciitilde}e6

The alternative 24...\texttt{\textasciitilde}bd8?! 25.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xd5 \texttt{\textasciitilde}xd5 would hardly resolve all Black’s problems: 26.\texttt{\textasciitilde}d1! \texttt{\textasciitilde}g5 (or 26...\texttt{\textasciitilde}xd1\texttt{\textasciitilde}† 27.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xd1 \texttt{\textasciitilde}xd1\texttt{\textasciitilde}† 28.\texttt{\textasciitilde}b2, winning one of Black’s pawns) 27.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xd7 (rather than 27.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xd8\texttt{\textasciitilde}† \texttt{\textasciitilde}xd8 28.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xd8\texttt{\textasciitilde}† \texttt{\textasciitilde}g7 29.g4 c4?!?) 27...\texttt{\textasciitilde}xd7 28.\texttt{\textasciitilde}a6?!, and it seems that after 28...\texttt{\textasciitilde}d8 (28...e5?!?) 29.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xa7 \texttt{\textasciitilde}xg2 30.\texttt{\textasciitilde}e1 \texttt{\textasciitilde}xf3 31.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xc5 e6 32.a4 White’s pawns should be faster. e.g. 32...\texttt{\textasciitilde}d5 33.\texttt{\textasciitilde}c7 \texttt{\textasciitilde}f2 34.\texttt{\textasciitilde}h1 \texttt{\textasciitilde}g7 35.\texttt{\textasciitilde}c3\texttt{\textasciitilde}† \texttt{\textasciitilde}d4 36.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xd4\texttt{\textasciitilde}† \texttt{\textasciitilde}xd4 37.a5 f5 38.\texttt{\textasciitilde}b2, etc.

25.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xd5 exd5

27.\texttt{\textasciitilde}a6!

Black should have been able to defend the endgame after 27.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xb4 cxb4!, but not 27...\texttt{\textasciitilde}xb4 28.c4 d4 29.\texttt{\textasciitilde}he1!.

27...\texttt{\textasciitilde}b6?

Only here does Black go clearly wrong. 27...\texttt{\textasciitilde}g7? loses to 28.\texttt{\textasciitilde}h7\texttt{\textasciitilde}† \texttt{\textasciitilde}xh7 29.\texttt{\textasciitilde}f6.

After 27...\texttt{\textasciitilde}c3 White wins the pawn by 28.\texttt{\textasciitilde}c6 c4 29.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xd5. The continuation 27...\texttt{\textasciitilde}f4 28.\texttt{\textasciitilde}h3?! (28.\texttt{\textasciitilde}c6 \texttt{\textasciitilde}d6 29.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xd6 \texttt{\textasciitilde}xd6 30.c4\texttt{\textasciitilde}±) 28...c4 29.\texttt{\textasciitilde}dh1 \texttt{\textasciitilde}d4 30.\texttt{\textasciitilde}c6 \texttt{\textasciitilde}bd8 allows Black to
maintain the material balance, but having passive rooks and an unsafe king his chances for survival are uncertain.

28.\text{\textit{a}4}!

A kind of fork: the d7 rook is attacked and White gains time to transfer his queen to the kingside.

28...\text{\textit{d}8}

Otherwise 29.\text{\textit{h}4} would have been decisive.

29.\text{\textit{f}4}!

With two threats: 30.\text{\textit{h}6} and 30.\text{\textit{h}2}. White's attack seems to be unstoppable.

29...\text{\textit{b}4} 30.\text{\textit{e}5}

Even simpler was 30.\text{\textit{h}6}! \text{\textit{f}6} 31.\text{\textit{d}e}1!+-.

30...\text{\textit{f}6} 31.\text{\textit{e}6}+ \text{\textit{g}7} 32.\text{\textit{h}3}!

Black could continue his suffering for a few more moves, but he blundered his rook by

32...\text{\textit{g}8}??

and immediately resigned. Still, the game was very well played until Black's understandable mistake on the 27th move. It gives us an example of White's optimal strategy in positions with Black's weakened queenside pawn structure: to open a second front on the kingside, in accordance with the "Principle of two weaknesses".

1–0

Game 17

Rowson - Mah

Birmingham 1999

1.e4 c5 2.\text{\textit{f}3} d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\text{\textit{x}d}4 \text{\textit{f}6} 5.\text{\textit{c}3} g6 6.\text{\textit{e}3} \text{\textit{g}7} 7.f3 0–0 8.\text{\textit{d}2} \text{\textit{c}6} 9.0–0–0 d5 10.exd5 \text{\textit{xd}5} 11.\text{\textit{x}c}6 bxc6 12.\text{\textit{d}4} \text{\textit{xc}3}?

This move is linked with a similar concept to 12...\text{\textit{x}d}4: Black limits his ambitions and goes for exchanges, aiming to defend a slightly worse position.

13.\text{\textit{xc}3} \text{\textit{h}6}+!

13...\text{\textit{x}d}4?! 14.\text{\textit{x}d}4 \text{\textit{b}6} and now 15.h4?! is the most direct. 15...\text{\textit{e}6} (15...h5 16.\text{\textit{e}4} \text{\textit{e}6} 17.g4 \text{\textit{d}5} 18.\text{\textit{e}3} hxg4 19.h5 with an attack, Brkic - Baric, Bizovac 2003.) 16.h5 \text{\textit{fd}8} 17.\text{\textit{dh}4}?! (17.\text{\textit{x}d}8+ \text{\textit{xd}8} 18.hxg6 forcing the weakening 18...fxg6 is also interesting.) 17...g5 18.h6 f6 19.\text{\textit{e}4} with a dangerous initiative, Linford - Pym, England 2003.

14.\text{\textit{e}3}

14.\text{\textit{b}1}?? loses the bishop after 14...e5!.

14...\text{\textit{xe}3}+ 15.\text{\textit{xe}3} \text{\textit{b}6}!

The best chance.
Worse is 15...\textit{\texttt{a}}\texttt{5}?! 16.\texttt{c}4 with a strategically dominant position: 16...\texttt{a}6 17.\texttt{b}3! \textit{e}6 (17...\textit{c}5 fails to 18.\texttt{d}5, Alterman \& Vaisman) 18.\texttt{d}6 \textit{c}5 19.\texttt{e}1?! (I. Almasi’s suggestion, which forces an exchange of queens. Also good is 19.\texttt{e}5 \texttt{ad}8 20.\texttt{hd}1 \texttt{c}7, Isupov - Maksimenko, Vladivostok 1995. Now 21.\texttt{xe}6! \texttt{xd}1\texttt{t} 22.\texttt{xd}1 is recommended by Othhof.) 19...\texttt{xe}1\texttt{t} 20.\texttt{xe}1 \texttt{b}7 21.\texttt{d}7?! and it is hard for Black to save his pawns.

Similarly unadvisable for Black is 15...\texttt{c}7?! 16.\texttt{c}4! and now, for example, 16...\texttt{b}8 17.h4?! \texttt{b}6 18.\texttt{c}3. Here Black is a tempo down compared to the normal lines. 18...\texttt{b}4 (or 18...\texttt{a}6 19.\texttt{b}3?! \textit{c}5 20.h5 \textit{c}4 21.hxg6 \texttt{xg}6 22.\texttt{xc}4 \texttt{fc}8 23.\texttt{d}3 with an extra pawn) 19.\texttt{xb}4 \texttt{xb}4 20.b3, and in this endgame Black will suffer greatly.

The idea of offering a pawn sacrifice by 15...\texttt{b}6 attracted attention in 1990, after Boris Alterman employed it in a game against Sergei Tiviakov. This stem game was followed by active discussion. Later, Kasparov’s win with White over Topalov in 1995 delivered a psychological blow to the supporters of this line. The objective theoretical evaluation of the line is similar to that of 12...\texttt{xd}4: a slight advantage and almost no risk for the first player.

16.\texttt{xe}7!

Accepting the offer. Black now obtains a slight initiative, which does not fully compensate for the pawn. Less principled is 16.\texttt{c}3?! \texttt{e}6 17.h4 \texttt{fd}8 18.\texttt{d}3 with a small plus, when 18...\texttt{e}3\texttt{t} 19.\texttt{b}1 \textit{c}5 20.h5 \texttt{d}4, which transposes to Balinov - Velickovic, does not look like Black’s best choice. 16.\texttt{xb}6 axb6 (Tiviakov - Alterman, Sochi 1990) 17.\texttt{c}4?! \textit{b}5 18.\texttt{b}3 \textit{c}5 19.\texttt{d}5 \texttt{a}7 is acceptable for Black according to Alterman \& Vaisman.

16...\texttt{e}6!
16...\(\texttt{\textbf{b}8}\) puts little pressure on White. 
17.\(\texttt{\textbf{f}6}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{c}6}\) (If 17...\(\texttt{\textbf{f}2}\)? 18.\(\texttt{\textbf{d}4}\)! forces an exchange of queens, and 17...\(\texttt{\textbf{f}5}\) is parried by 18.\(\texttt{\textbf{d}3}\)!.) 18.\(\texttt{\textbf{c}3}\)! \(\texttt{\textbf{f}d8}\) 19.\(\texttt{\textbf{x}d8}\)\(\texttt{\textbf{t}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{x}d8}\) 20.\(\texttt{\textbf{d}3}\) (20.\(\texttt{h4}\)?) 20...\(\texttt{\textbf{f}2}\) 21.\(\texttt{\textbf{d}2}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{d}4}\) 22.\(\texttt{\textbf{d}1}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{d}7}\) (not 22...\(\texttt{\textbf{x}a2}\)? 23.\(\texttt{\textbf{e}4}\)! and White is winning) 23.\(\texttt{a}3\). Here the draw was agreed in Brod-Bonstingl, Gamlitz 1998. Perhaps White was worried that Black would be able to claim compensation after 23...\(\texttt{\textbf{d}5}\), but the continuation 24.\(\texttt{h4}\) \(\texttt{a}2\) 25.\(\texttt{c}3\) clearly favours White.

After 16...\(\texttt{\textbf{e}6}\) Black's main threat is 17...\(\texttt{\textbf{e}3}\)\(\texttt{t}\)! with a guaranteed draw following 18.\(\texttt{\textbf{d}2}\) (18.\(\texttt{\textbf{b}1}\)? \(\texttt{\textbf{x}a2}\)?) 18...\(\texttt{\textbf{e}1}\)\(\texttt{t}\).

17.\(\texttt{\textbf{a}3}\)!

The most solid continuation.

17...\(\texttt{\textbf{f}d8}\)

The alternatives include:

17...\(\texttt{\textbf{x}a8}\) can be answered well by 18.\(\texttt{\textbf{d}3}\).

17...a5 18.\(\texttt{\textbf{d}3}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{b}4}\) 19.\(\texttt{\textbf{e}4}\) (Not 19.\(\texttt{\textbf{x}b4}\) \(\texttt{a}x\texttt{b}4\) 20.a3 \(\texttt{b}x\texttt{a}3\) 21.\(\texttt{b}3\) c5, preparing ...\(\texttt{c}4\)!) 19...\(\texttt{\textbf{x}a3}\) 20.\(\texttt{\textbf{x}a3}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{a}6}\) (Schneider recommended 20...\(\texttt{\textbf{b}8}\) 21.\(\texttt{\textbf{x}c6}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{x}a2}\) 22.\(\texttt{\textbf{e}4}\)! \(\texttt{\textbf{c}8}\) but after 23.\(\texttt{\textbf{d}2}\)! Black has no compensation) 21.\(\texttt{\textbf{d}6}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{c}8}\) 22.\(\texttt{\textbf{h}d1}\). White is likely to exchange bishops by 23.\(\texttt{\textbf{d}5}\) on the next move, and Black's life will be hard. GM Tolnai tried to defend the Black side as many as three times, and his two draws with one loss looks like quite a good result.

17...\(\texttt{\textbf{f}2}\), and after 18.\(\texttt{h4}\)\(\texttt{t}\)? \(\texttt{\textbf{f}d8}\) 19.\(\texttt{\textbf{d}3}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{x}g}2\) 20.\(\texttt{h}5\) \(\texttt{\textbf{x}f}3\)! Black probably should be able to defend his king in further complications. Instead, 18.\(\texttt{\textbf{a}5}\), taking control of d8, is a common move for White. After 18...\(\texttt{\textbf{a}8}\) (18...\(\texttt{\textbf{f}5}\)!? 19.\(\texttt{\textbf{d}2}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{c}5}\) 20.\(\texttt{\textbf{d}3}\)! (Pupo considers 20.\(\texttt{\textbf{c}3}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{x}c}3\) 21.\(\texttt{bxc}3\) \(\texttt{\textbf{e}6}\) 22.\(\texttt{c}4\) \(\pm\), which does not look like a winning endgame) 20...\(\texttt{\textbf{d}8}\) 21.\(\texttt{\textbf{b}1}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{x}d}3\) 22.\(\texttt{cxd}3\) and Black has problems) White as a rule has opted for 19.\(\texttt{h}4\). Here it seems that Black has to play 19...\(\texttt{\textbf{f}5}\)!. White's advantage does not look impressive here. 20.\(\texttt{\textbf{d}2}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{c}5}\) and Black's very strong threat now is 21...\(\texttt{\textbf{x}b}2\)! But 19.\(\texttt{h}4\) is not necessarily best. One alternative is 19.\(\texttt{b}3\)! and after 19...\(\texttt{\textbf{e}3}\)\(\texttt{t}\)! 20.\(\texttt{\textbf{b}2}\) followed by \(\texttt{\textbf{c}3}\), and 19...\(\texttt{\textbf{f}5}\) 20.\(\texttt{\textbf{d}2}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{c}5}\) 21.\(\texttt{\textbf{c}4}\) Black does not have full compensation.

17...\(\texttt{\textbf{a}8}\)? (initially suggested by Kasparov) may be slightly more precise.
than moving the other rook. 18.\textit{d}3 \textit{d}5 (According to Tiviakov, insufficient is 18...\textit{f}2 19.\textit{d}2 \textit{e}3. White can continue with 20.\textit{hd}1.) and we come to a very important position.


a) 19.\textit{c}3 \textit{c}5 20.\textit{f}6 \textit{xa}2 looks playable for Black: 21.h4 (or 21.\textit{he}1 \textit{d}5, planning 22...\textit{a}5, Pelletier - Berndt, Germany Bundesliga 1999) 21...\textit{b}8!? (after 21...\textit{a}5 White can try 22.b3?) 22.h5 (22.\textit{he}1!? can lead to a total mess, e.g. 22...\textit{a}5 23.h5 \textit{hx}h5 24.b3 \textit{c}5 25.\textit{a}1) and 22...\textit{hx}h5! equalizes.

b) 19.b3 \textit{fd}8 will be considered via the move order 17...\textit{fd}8.

c) I suggest 19.\textit{he}1 \textit{a}5 20.\textit{c}3 \textit{xa}2 21.b3 \textit{a}5! 22.\textit{b}2!? (Rogozenko), with a slight advantage. Note that 21...\textit{a}5?! 22.\textit{xa}5 \textit{xa}5 and now, according to Rogozenko 23.\textit{b}2 gives an unpleasant endgame for Black. 23...\textit{h}5 24.\textit{h}3 a5 and now 25.\textit{e}4 \textit{d}8, Kasimdzhanov - Alterman, Bad Wiessee 1997 where White has 26.\textit{de}1!? – Rogozenko, or perhaps even better is 25.\textit{e}4!.

\textbf{18.\textit{d}3}

After 18.\textit{a}6!? (Kasparov - Topalov, Amsterdam 1995) Black can try 18...\textit{ab}8!? 19.\textit{he}1 \textit{d}5 20.\textit{x}d5 \textit{xd}5! or 18...\textit{d}5!? 19.\textit{x}d5 \textit{xd}5!.

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

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{18...\textit{d}5}
\end{itemize}

After 18...c5, 19.\textit{e}2!? transposes to the Kasparov - Topalov game, which continued 19...c4 20.f4! \textit{d}4 21.\textit{x}d4 \textit{xd}4 22.g3±. Instead, 19.h4 c4 20.\textit{e}4 \textit{ac}8 21.h5 (Arnold - Bozino, Vienna 2003) 21...f5!? is complex and, most likely, not bad for Black.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{19.\textit{he}1!?}
\end{itemize}

White proceeds by analogy with the Kasimdzhanov - Alterman game.

Other approaches are:

\begin{itemize}
\item a) 19.\textit{c}3 \textit{c}5 20.\textit{f}6 \textit{xa}2 21.\textit{he}1 \textit{a}5!? and Black is probably alive. After 21...\textit{d}5?! the small difference with the
Pelletier - Berndt game allows White to win a crucial tempo: 22.\(\text{E}e7\) \(\text{E}a5\) 23.b3 \(\text{W}b4\) 24.\(\text{E}de1!\) \(\text{E}f8\) 25.\(\text{E}e8!\) with advantage, Flores - Ballesteros, corr. 1997.

b) 19.b3 \(\text{E}ad8\) 20.\(\text{E}he1\) a5 (maybe Black could try 20...\(\text{E}f5!!\)) 21.\(\text{W}e7\) \(\text{E}8d7\) (or 21...a4 22.\(\text{E}xe6\) fxe6 23.\(\text{W}xe6\) \(\text{E}g7\) 24.\(\text{W}e7\) \(\text{E}h6\) 25.\(\text{E}e1\)) 22.\(\text{W}f6\) a4 23.\(\text{E}e4\) axb3 24.axb3 and White's chances are preferable, Furlan - Gomboc, Ljubljana 1998.

c) Curious is also 19.\(\text{E}de1!?\) (as in van den Doel-Zomer, Vlissingen 2002).

19...\(\text{E}a5\) 20.\(\text{W}c3\) \(\text{E}xa2\) 21.b3 c5?

A careless move, which will be refuted neatly.

Akin to Kasimdzhanov - Alterman is 21...\(\text{W}a5!!\) 22.\(\text{W}xa5\) \(\text{E}xa5\) 23.\(\text{B}b2\) with an initiative in the endgame.

Better is 21...\(\text{E}a5\) 22.\(\text{B}b2\) with a slight advantage for White. If 22...\(\text{B}b8\) (threatening to win by 23...\(\text{E}c5!!\)), then

23.\(\text{E}xe6!?\) (not 23.\(\text{B}xg6?\) \(\text{E}c5\) 24.\(\text{W}d3\) \(\text{E}d5!!\)) 23...fxe6, and here 24.\(\text{B}c4\) \(\text{E}d5\) 25.\(\text{B}xd5\) \(\text{cxd5}\) 26.\(\text{E}a1\) preserves White's pluses, while one may also consider 24.\(\text{B}xg6\) \(\text{E}d5!\) (24...hxg6?? 25.\(\text{W}d7\) e5 26.\(\text{W}d3!!\) 25.\(\text{B}d3\)!!.

22.\(\text{E}xe6!!\)

Here this sacrifice allows White to use the awkward position of the black rook. 22...\(\text{W}xe6\)

After 22...f6?! 23.\(\text{B}c4\) White completely dominates.

23.\(\text{B}c4\) \(\text{W}c6\)!

23...\(\text{W}c8\) was the only way to avoid the immediate loss: 24.\(\text{B}b1\) \(\text{E}a6\) 25.\(\text{B}xa6\) (25.\(\text{E}e1!!\) with the threat 26.\(\text{E}e7\) can be inserted) 25...\(\text{W}xa6\) 26.\(\text{B}xc5\) \(\text{E}e2\) 27.\(\text{W}d5\) \(\text{E}c8\) 28.\(\text{E}d2\) with a healthy extra pawn for White.

23...\(\text{W}b6?\) would save a rook, but lose the king: 24.\(\text{B}xf7!!\) \(\text{B}xf7\) 25.\(\text{E}d7\) \(\text{E}e6\) 26.\(\text{E}g7\) \(\text{E}a1\) 27.\(\text{B}b2\).

24.\(\text{B}d5!\) \(\text{W}a6\) 25.\(\text{B}xa8\) \(\text{E}a1\) 26.\(\text{B}d2\)

Certainly not 26.\(\text{B}b2??\) \(\text{W}a3\) mate.

26.\(\text{W}d6\) 27.\(\text{W}d3\) \(\text{W}f4\) 28.\(\text{B}e2\)

and Black admitted defeat.

1–0
The Sveshnikov

- By Jacob Aagaard

It is almost impossible to describe the huge changes the Sveshnikov has undergone since I wrote a small book on it for Cadogan in the late 90s. A great contribution to this opening has been delivered by players such as Kramnik, Leko, Kasparov and Shirov, as well as lesser known grandmasters, but still experts on the opening in their own right, like Rogozenko (who published a CD for ChessBase with the opening, as well as writing various articles for different magazines), Yakovich (who wrote a book on the opening for Gambit, which is great despite some flaws), McShane, and the latest addition, the world's youngest grandmaster, Magnus Carlsen. To give a strong recommendation against an opening that is favoured by such a group of outstanding grandmasters is by no means easy. Still it is possible to give some useful practical advice on where to look for an advantage and some indication of where the most recent successful assaults on this solid defence have been made.

The main line I have chosen against the Sveshnikov (11.c3 and 12.exf5) is in many ways the most practical, as well as being objectively a strong line, as it does not allow Black to choose between two main lines, as he can against 11...d3. The main game, Hector – Carlsen, clearly proves that Black needs to find a different way to treat this position, as the very simple harmonious set-up demonstrated by the Swedish grandmaster brought the Norwegian boy wonder real troubles. The solution chosen by Carlsen was a desperate bishop sacrifice, which ultimately brought him the draw, but white's play could be improved.

After 1.e4 c5 2.d4 f3 c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4 d6 5.c3 e5 6.db5 d6 we have the standard position of the Sveshnikov Sicilian. Here the main choice for a long time has been 7.gf5 a6 8.g3 b5 when White can either choose 9.d5 or the sharper move, creating weaknesses on the Black kingside: 9.xf6 gf 6 10.g5 f5

In this position Black could also play 10...g7 with the idea of c6-e7, but if White answers 11.c3 then Black cannot avoid transposition, as his only fully playable move is 11...f5.
Now after 11.c3 \textit{g7} 12.exf5 \textit{xf5} 13.\textit{c2} Black can choose between different ways to play this position. There is 13...\textit{e6} with the idea of a quick \textit{c6}-e7 to exchange a knight on d5. White will in this case play 14.g3!, a move made main line. The idea is to recapture with the bishop instead of the knight on d5, as the exchange of bishops would favour White; partly because it eliminates the bishop pair, but also because of light squared weaknesses in the Black camp, and because the white knight would do little good on d5.

Usually these days Black does not play this but 13...0-0 14.\textit{ce3} \textit{e6}. Here 14...\textit{g6}? is an interesting alternative, popularised by Leko and not so easy to meet. The main point is 15.h4 \textit{e4}! when Black has provoked White into weakening his kingside. However, the main line is still 14...\textit{e6}, when I suggest following continuation: 15.\textit{d3} f5 16.0-0 \textit{a7} 17.a4!

Theory does not consider this troublesome for Black – yet. However, once the gravity of the Hector game becomes apparent, Black players will most likely look elsewhere for satisfaction. Here there are many choices, as considered below.

Those are the main lines and recommendations chosen for this book. However, we will start with a line that is not considered a main line at all, but is still seen in tournament practice from time to time. Here Black rejects 8...b5, the move that changes this from the Lasker-Larsen variation to the Sveshnikov.

\textbf{Game 18}
\textit{Yemelin - Kharlov}

St Petersburg 1998

1.e4 c5 2.\textit{c3} \textit{c6} 3.\textit{ge2} \textit{f6} 4.d4 cxd4 5.\textit{edx4} c5 6.\textit{db5} d6 7.\textit{g5} a6 8.\textit{da3} \textit{e6}

This is the Lasker/Larsen/Pelikan-variation – or at least these are some of its many names. This line had disappeared from practice some time ago, but Kharlov has tried to revive it, and thereby challenged his strong opponents to show why it is untenable.

9.\textit{c4} \textit{c8}

9...\textit{e7} 10.\textit{xf6}\pm.

10.\textit{d5} \textit{d5} 11.\textit{xf6}!

This point is what gives White the advantage. Now the light squares are too weak to be justified by a fleeting initiative.
11...gxf6 12.\( \text{B} \text{xd5} \)

![Diagram](image)

12...\( \text{Q} \text{d4} \)

Maybe the best of Black's rather sad list of choices.

12...\( \text{Q} \text{b4} \) leads to a position with opposite coloured bishops where Black can only hope for a draw, but will certainly lose more than one game in ten, which is where the 45% score which is the minimum any acceptable Black opening can offer a player slips out of sight. 13.\( \text{B} \text{d2} \text{d5} \) 14.\( \text{B} \text{xd5} \text{Q} \text{xc2} \)† (14...\( \text{B} \text{xd5} \) 15.\( \text{B} \text{xd5} \text{Q} \text{xd5} \) 16.0–0–0† is simply more comfortable for White. Black can often reach this kind of endgame right from the opening. 16...\( \text{Q} \text{b4} \) 17.\( \text{c} \text{c3} \text{c6} \) 18.\( \text{d} \text{d3} \text{c5} \) 19.\( \text{e} \text{e4} \text{c7} \) 20.\( \text{d} \text{d6}† \text{xe6} \) 21.\( \text{B} \text{xd6} \text{c7} \) 22.\( \text{d} \text{d3} \text{b5} \) 23.\( \text{e} \text{b1} \text{h6} \) 24.\( \text{B} \text{h1}± \text{Kurnosov - Zang Pengxiang, Cappelle la Grande 2002.} \)

15.\( \text{B} \text{xc2} \text{Q} \text{b4}† \) 16.\( \text{Q} \text{d1} \) and now:

a) 16...\( \text{B} \text{b5} \) 17.\( \text{B} \text{e4}! \) The logical thing is to get out of the pin. 17...\( \text{B} \text{xe4} \) 18.\( \text{B} \text{xc4} \text{B} \text{b6} \) 19.\( \text{Q} \text{e2}?! \) (This move makes most sense to me. The king will find safety on the kingside and the rooks get connected. 19.\( \text{Q} \text{c1} \text{d6} \) 19...\( \text{c5} \) was played in Matulovic - Simic, Yugoslavia 1980. Now strongest was 20.\( \text{B} \text{f5} \text{c7} \) 21.\( \text{B} \text{b3}± \) 20.\( \text{Q} \text{c2} \text{e7} \) 21.\( \text{Q} \text{e2}± \text{Schandorff - Morovic Fernandez, Copenhagen 1982.} \)

19...\( \text{d6} \) (19...\( \text{c5} \) 20.\( \text{B} \text{f2} \) is possible, and probably best answered by 21.\( \text{Q} \text{xa6}± \) when White's advantage is beyond question. However the tempting 21.\( \text{B} \text{f5} \) did not work because of 21...\( \text{Q} \text{c4}! \) 22.\( \text{B} \text{xc4} \text{B} \text{b2}† \) 23.\( \text{Q} \text{f3} \text{d3} \) 24.\( \text{B} \text{c8}† \text{e7} \) 25.\( \text{B} \text{c7}† \text{f8} \) 26.\( \text{B} \text{c8}† \) and White has no more than a draw, \( \frac{1}{2}–\frac{1}{2} \text{Filipenko - Sveshnikov, USSR 1980.} \)

20.\( \text{B} \text{b3} \) (20.\( \text{Q} \text{b3} \text{e7} \) 21.\( \text{Q} \text{h1} \text{c5} \) 22.\( \text{B} \text{xc5} \text{c5} \) 23.\( \text{d} \text{d1} \text{b5}† \) 24.\( \text{Q} \text{f3} \text{c5} \) 25.\( \text{g} \text{g3}± \text{Bhend - Svedenborg, Lugano (ol) 1968.} \)

20...\( \text{Q} \text{g8} \) 21.\( \text{Q} \text{a1} \text{e7} \) 22.\( \text{g} \text{g4} \text{h5} \) 23.\( \text{h} \text{h3} \text{hxg4} \) 24.\( \text{h} \text{hxg4} \text{g5} \) 25.\( \text{d} \text{d3} \) 26.\( \text{c6} \) 27.\( \text{h} \text{h4}+\) 28.\( \text{h} \text{h4}+\) Yastreb - Moskovets, Alushta 2002. White is winning here. Black has no counterplay and is simply a pawn down for nothing.

b) 16...\( \text{B} \text{xd5}† \) 17.\( \text{Q} \text{c1} \) Black cannot regain his piece as is seen in the following brilliant example. 17...\( \text{B} \text{b5} \) (17...0–0 18.\( \text{a} \text{a3} \) and White has won this position in several games, one of them being Anka - Tomcsanyi, Hungary 1998) 18.\( \text{Q} \text{e7} \) 19.\( \text{Q} \text{d6}† \text{e7} \) 20.\( \text{Q} \text{xc8} \text{xc8} \) 21.\( \text{Q} \text{xb5} \) 22.\( \text{Q} \text{d1}† \) 23.\( \text{d} \text{d6} \) 24.\( \text{B} \text{b4} \) 25.\( \text{Q} \text{c2} \text{xa1} \) 26.\( \text{Q} \text{xa6}†+\) Berndt - Thiel, Germany 1998.
Another attempt is: 12...b5 13.\( \square \)e3

Now Black has tried:

a) 13...h6? does not work because of the following tactical solution. 14.\( f5! \) b4 15.\( \square \)d6+ \( \square \)d7 (15...\( \square \)e7 16.\( \square \)f7+ \( \square \)d6 17.\( \square \)d1++) 16.\( \square \)xf7+ Only one of several winning moves. 16...\( \square \)c6 (16...\( \square \)xd6 17.\( \square \)d1++) 17.\( \square \)b7+ \( \square \)c5 (17...\( \square \)xd6 18.\( \square \)d1++) 18.\( \square \)d1 \( \square \)xc2+ 19.\( \square \)e2 \( \square \)d4+ 20.\( \square \)xd4! exd4 21.\( \square \)d5+ \( \square \)b6 (21...\( \square \)b4 22.\( \square \)b3++) 22.\( \square \)xc8+ \( \square \)xc8 23.\( \square \)xd4+ \( \square \)a5 24.\( \square \)f3 and White went on to win in Smagin - Kharlov, Cheliabinsk 1991.

13...\( \square \)e7 14.\( \square \)d3 (14.\( \square \)b7 \( \square \)a5+ 15.c3 \( \square \)c7 16.b4 \( \square \)xb7 17.bxa5 \( \square \)h6 18.\( \square \)g4 \( \square \)g7 19.a4± Murey - Jamieson, Luzern 1982.) 14...\( \square \)h6 (14...\( \square \)c6 15.\( \square \)e2 h5 16.0-0 \( \square \)h6 17.\( \square \)d5 \( \square \)xd5 18.\( \square \)xd5 \( \square \)xc2 19.\( \square \)xh5± Smirnov - Pilavov, Alushta 2001.) 15.\( \square \)e2 \( \square \)xe3 16.fxe3± Korneev - Hernandez Montalvo, Padron 2002.

b) 12...f5? is the newest attempt in this position. After 13.0-0-0 b5 14.\( \square \)e3 \( \square \)h6 15.\( \square \)b1 White is simply better. 15...\( \square \)xe3 16.fxe3 fxe4 17.\( \square \)xe4 \( \square \)c7 18.g3! A nice move that exploits the weak structure. 18...\( \square \)e7 19.\( \square \)h3 \( \square \)d8 20.\( \square \)g4 \( \square \)g8 21.\( \square \)h5± Al Sayed - Sveshnikov, Dubai 2004.

13.\( \square \)d3

13.0-0-0!? with the idea of \( \square \)xd4! has also been played, but the text move simply assures the edge without any problems.

13...\( \square \)e7 14.\( \square \)a5 \( \square \)xc4?!

This does not work tactically for many reasons.

14...d5 does not promise Black any happiness. 15.\( \square \)b6 \( \square \)c5 16.\( \square \)xc5 \( \square \)xc5 17.c3! As so often in this line Black's sick structure is so important that White only focuses on containment of the black forces. 17...dxe4 18.\( \square \)xe4 \( \square \)c6 19.0-0-0± \( \square \)h6+ 20.\( \square \)b1 \( \square \)b5 21.\( \square \)c4 0-0 22.\( \square \)d6 \( \square \)b6 23.\( \square \)f5 1-0 Balinov - Haurath, Budapest 1999.

14...\( \square \)c5 15.\( \square \)d2 \( \square \)c7 16.c3 \( \square \)e6 17.\( \square \)e3 \( \square \)h6 18.0-0± Varavin - Kharlov, Elista 1994.

15.\( \square \)xc4 \( \square \)xc2+ 16.\( \square \)e2 \( \square \)xa1 17.\( \square \)c1!!±

Was this direct assault on the king something Kharlov had overlooked in his home analysis? My computer still has problems finding it, 6 years of technological advance after the game. Even after this move it takes time for the machine to see that something is terribly wrong.
17...h6

What else? 17...f5 18.exf5 g5 is the best option for Black according to the computer. But with some human assistance, it is possible for the machine to find the following nice winning attack. 19.b5† c7 20.c7† f6 21.d8† xf5 22.d3† g4 23.d7† f5 (23...h5 24.xf7† h6 25.e6† h5 26.c4+) And now a move that takes only a few seconds for the machine to find.

24.h4!! xh4 25.h1† g4 26.xf5 xf5 27.f3† g5 28.h5† xh5 29.xf5† h6 30.f6† h5 31.g4 mate. To a human this line might seem rather fanciful, but to the machine it is pure logic.

18.xf7†! xf7 19.c7 d8?!

Slightly better was 19...e8 20.xe7† xe7 21.c3 f8 22.b4 d7 23.xa1 d5 24.exd5 xd5± - Yemelin.

20.d5† f8 21.xe7 xe7 22.xb7†

d7 23.c8+ d5 24.g8! f8 25.exd5 e8 26.e6† e7 27.xa6 xd5 28.xc6† d7 29.xc1 b3 30.axb3 f8 31.b4 d4 32.c8† f7 33.b5 b4 34.b3 h5 35.g3 d6 36.d7† e7 37.c6 d8 38.d5† e8 39.d6 d4 40.e6† 1–0

From this we will move to the main line, and only after going through it in two games will we pay attention to the sidelines.

In this first game with the main line I have given the most important options until 20.xf5?! which I do not consider critical at all. I just liked the game and would rather include a few more moves than have one game going on for 8 pages or so.

Game 19
Zelic – Zelenika
Pula 1999

1.e4 c5 2.d3 c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.xd4 d6 5.c3 e5 6.db5 d6 7.g5 a6 8.da3 b5 9.xf6 gxf6 10.d5 f5

10...g7 11.c3 f5 is nothing but a transposition of moves after 12.exf5. Note that Black cannot play his standard idea of 11...e7?! here, as White gets the advantage with 12.xe7 xxe7 13.c2± when Black cannot play his regular push on the kingside because of a simple double threat: 13...f5?! 14.exf5 xf5? 15.f3+-.

11.c3
11...\textbf{g7}

11...fxe4? is known to be a mistake as Black is in trouble after 12...xb5 axb5 13...xb5 The main points are: 13...\textbf{a4} (13...\textbf{a7} 14...xa7 \textbf{xa7} 15...\textbf{a4}++) 14...bc7++ \textbf{d7} 15...\textbf{g4}++.

12...xf5 \textbf{xf5} 13...c2 0–0 14...ce3

14...\textbf{g6}!? is maybe a move for the future. 15.a4!? This move apparently ignores the fragile placement of the bishop on g6. However the usual (15.h4 is not that convincing, 15...\textbf{e4}! is Leko's idea, after which Black apparently is doing OK.) 15...b4 (15...bxa4 is probably best answered with 16...h4! \textbf{e4} 17...\textbf{xa4}. The point behind 15.a4, at least when I played it. 17...\textbf{xd5} 18...\textbf{xd5} \textbf{c7} 19...\textbf{c4}++) 16...xb4! Obviously White does not want to accept a strong knight on d4.

16...\textbf{xa7}

This move seems logical and has been played many times at the top level. However it is far from the only move.

16...\textbf{b8} 17...\textbf{h5} \textbf{d7} 18...\textbf{d1} \textbf{h8} 19...c2 b4∞ was played in David - Manor, Germany 2001.
Bikurei Haitim 1997. However this is not really relevant. White gets the advantage after 17.\textit{c2}! when the move \textit{b8} has done very little for Black, while White has ideas of \textit{wh5} and \textit{b3}, both with advantage for White. Thanks to Thomas Luther for this advice.

16...\textit{e7}? loses in a very famous way to 17.\textit{xe7}\textasciitilde \textit{xe7} 18.\textit{xf5! xf5} 19.\textit{xf5 xf5} 20.\textit{d5\textasciitilde+-}.

16...\textit{h8}? has been played several times, and is bound to become more popular if the attack on the 16...\textit{Ra7} line by De Firmian and Hector continues to be successful. However White seems to be able to create real problems for Black in this line as well, though the last word is far, far away (no, not in that sci-fi movie!). 17.\textit{wh5} Now Black has two choices, neither of them fully satisfactory.

17...\textit{f7} 18.\textit{wh3 e4} 19.\textit{c2 e5}. This was the way Illescas Cordoba played with Black against Judit Polgar. Now Polgar blundered with 20.\textit{f3}?! after which Black had a strong manoeuvre in \textit{wg5\textasciitilde} followed by \textit{d2} with good play. Instead White should play 20.\textit{fd1 xd5} 21.\textit{xd5 gf6} 22.\textit{ad1 ad8} 23.\textit{f4!}. Probably preparation from Topalov and his coach. After this there are many ways for White to create real problems for Black. 23...\textit{xf5} 24.\textit{xf5 fg2} 25.\textit{hxg2} (an interesting alternative was 25.\textit{g5?!} \textit{gg8} 26.\textit{hxg2 g6} 27.\textit{f1±} 25...\textit{gg8} 26.\textit{h1} (It seems that it was possible to play 26.\textit{xd6}?! \textit{xd6} 27.\textit{xd6 fg7} 28.\textit{g3 c4} 29.\textit{e4} \textit{d5} 30.\textit{h6 g7} 31.\textit{g2±} when White has good chances.) 26...\textit{f8} 27.\textit{h3 g6} 28.\textit{d4} (28.\textit{f5d4}! is very good for White according to Fritz.) 28...\textit{e8} 29.\textit{h5 g7} 30.\textit{g1 fh7} 31.\textit{f5 kb7\textasciitilde} 32.\textit{f3 xf3\textasciitilde} 33.\textit{xf3 e6} 34.\textit{d4 f6} 35.\textit{f5 c7} 36.\textit{e3 f4} 37.\textit{h4 cf7} 38.\textit{b3 g7} 39.\textit{hg4 xg4} \textit{½–½} Topalov - Leko, Monte Carlo 2003.

17...\textit{e4} 18.\textit{c2 e7} 19.\textit{ad1 c8} 20.\textit{f3 f7} 21.\textit{h3 xd5} 22.\textit{xd5 b4} 23.\textit{f4} \textit{xc3} 24.\textit{xc3 xd5} 25.\textit{xd5 xc3} 26.\textit{d3 d4\textasciitilde} 27.\textit{h1 g5} 28.\textit{xf5} (28.g3!? \textit{gf6}! 29.\textit{g2} a5 30.\textit{e2}! (30.\textit{xf5}! \textit{xf5} 31.\textit{xd4 c1} 32.\textit{dd1 xd1} 33.\textit{xd1 e3}! 30...\textit{e5} 31.\textit{b1±}) 28...\textit{xf5} 29.\textit{xf5} \textit{h5} 30.\textit{xf5} \textit{e3} 31.g3 \textit{c1} \textit{½–½}. Anand - Topalov, Sofia 2004.

16...\textit{e4} is discussed in Game No. 21 below.

17.\textit{a4}!
fine, so there is no real reason to go further down this dead-end road.

I think that 17.a4 was actually an idea of co-author Golubev.

17...\texttt{d}e7

This move does not seem to offer Black enough compensation for the pawn. However the alternatives are also not recommendable. 17...bxa4 18.EXxa4 a5± Rogozenco. 19.h5 e4 20.fx\texttt{f}4 \texttt{f}7 21.c4 \texttt{x}xc4 22.EXxc4 \texttt{d}7 23.Ea1± 1-0 Kolcak-Kucinskas, Email 2002.

17...b4 also does not seem to be very promising. 18.cxb4 (18.h5 e4 19.f4 \texttt{f}7 20.c4± - Golubev) 18...f4 (18...d4?! is unclear according to Golubev. However this seems a bit superficial. 18.e4 19.f4 \texttt{f}7 20.c4± Pedersen - Aagaard, Aarhus 1999 is my own sad experience with this position.) 19.h5 \texttt{f}7 (19...h8 20.fx\texttt{f}5 \texttt{f}5 21.xf5 \texttt{x}d5 22.f1 d4 23.a1 \texttt{x}d6 24.xd6!, Areshchenko - Holmsten, Cappelle la Grande 2003) 20.xh7+ \texttt{f}8 21.fx\texttt{f}5 \texttt{f}5 22.xf5 \texttt{x}d5 23.b5= Vallejo Pons - Shirov, France 2002.

17...f4 18.h5 \texttt{x}h8 (18...\texttt{f}7 19.xh7!! \texttt{f}8 20.fx\texttt{f}5± - Golubev) 19.xh7+ \texttt{x}h7 20.g6+--.

17...e4 18.f4 \texttt{f}7 19.axb5±.

18.EXe7+\texttt{t}

White has two alternatives, one cautious, and one wild and hot headed:

18.c2!? \texttt{x}d5 19.xd5 bxa4 20.xa4± is certainly possible. Now after 20...h8 21.d2 a5 22.d1 b7 23.b3 \texttt{d}7 24.a2 \texttt{b}5 25.c4 \texttt{c}5 26.c3? Black was OK in Wedberg - Von Bahr, Stockholm 1999, but instead White could have played 26..e3 \texttt{f}6 27.ea1±. 18.axb5?! \texttt{x}d5 (18...f4?! 19.EXe7+ \texttt{x}e7 20.h5+- Golubev-Horvath, Scul 2001) 19.c4! (inferior is 19.fx\texttt{f}5?! \texttt{f}5! 20.xf5 a5!! 21.c4 \texttt{f}4 22.xd6 \texttt{f}8 23.c5 (23.e4 \texttt{h}4+?) 23...\texttt{d}7!, Nijboer) 19...f4 20.EXe6+ \texttt{xe}6 21.d5= Topalov - Leko, Monte Carlo 2004.

18.EXe7

18...\texttt{x}e7? 19.axb5 axb5 20.xa7 \texttt{xa}7 21.axb5. Why not? In Navara - Hansen, Bled 2002 White also achieved a good game with 21.c2, but this is more convincing. 21...\texttt{c}5 22.a4 \texttt{f}4 (22...d5 23.b4 \texttt{d}6 24.b3±) 23.b3=±.

19.axb5 axb5

20.EXf5?!

In the next game we shall look at the critical 20.axb5, but here we shall investigate a few side options. 20.xa6 d5
does not give White anything besides the option to transpose again with 21.\texttt{xb5}!. The following examples should make this clear:

21.\texttt{h5} e4 22.\texttt{xb5} f4 23.\texttt{xe6} \texttt{xe6} 24.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{xd5} 25.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{b8} 26.\texttt{c4} h8 27.\texttt{xf4} \texttt{e8} 28.\texttt{b3} \texttt{xc3=} Nilsson - Binelli, Corr. 1998.

21.\texttt{xe6}! \texttt{xe6} 22.\texttt{xg7} e4?! 23.\texttt{xg7} \texttt{xe8} 24.\texttt{xb5±} Zelcic-Sermek, Belisce 1999.

After 21.\texttt{c2} c8 22.\texttt{a8} \texttt{d7} 23.\texttt{b4} e4 24.\texttt{e2} \texttt{b7} 25.\texttt{a5} d4 26.\texttt{xd4} Black has no problems.½–½, Anand - Kasparov, Moscow 2004. Though improvements on White's play have been suggested, they do not include any chance of an advantage.

20.\texttt{c2} h8! also fails to impress.

21.\texttt{a6} (21.\texttt{b3} f4! 22.\texttt{xe6} \texttt{xe6} 23.\texttt{d5} f3!,) 21...e4 22.\texttt{d5} (22.\texttt{xd6} \texttt{b8}!?\texttt{xf6}) 22...\texttt{ee8} = Rogozenko.

20...\texttt{xf5}

20...\texttt{xf5}? does not work because of 21.\texttt{xf5} \texttt{xf5} 22.\texttt{d5+} \texttt{ef7} 23.\texttt{a8±} and White wins the queen.

21.\texttt{xf5} \texttt{xf5} 22.\texttt{b3} \texttt{d7}

Black should defend with the bishop close to his king, as the pin is very uncomfortable after 22...\texttt{c8}?! 23.\texttt{d5+} h8 24.\texttt{a8±}.

23.\texttt{a8+} \texttt{f8} 24.\texttt{fa1} \texttt{f7} 25.\texttt{e3}!

With this move White simply gets out of the open file. The grandmaster might have known that 25.\texttt{b8}?! \texttt{e6} (25...\texttt{g6} 26.\texttt{d5} \texttt{f5} 27.f3± Rogozenko.) 26.\texttt{g3+} probably leads to draw after 26...\texttt{g7} 27.\texttt{f3} \texttt{f7} 28.\texttt{g3+} as shown by Rogozenko.

25.\texttt{a7}?! is a very bad idea. 25...\texttt{xa7} 26.\texttt{xa7} \texttt{xa7} 27.\texttt{d5+} \texttt{g7} 28.\texttt{f4} \texttt{f6} 29.\texttt{xe5+} dxe5± It is difficult to evaluate how much worse White is in this endgame, but the main point is that he went on to lose it in the game David - Yakovich, St Vincent 2000.

25...\texttt{e6} 26.\texttt{b8} \texttt{d5} 27.\texttt{g5+} \texttt{g6} 28.\texttt{h4} \texttt{c5} 29.\texttt{g3}

Obviously Black is not seriously worse here. However it is of little theoretical importance.

29...\texttt{e4} 30.\texttt{a5} \texttt{f5} 31.\texttt{b4} \texttt{d5}?

Black should not insist on protecting the b-pawn with the queen. Now White had a very strong continuation.

32.\texttt{e3}?

32.\texttt{axb5}! Of course either rook can capture here. 32...\texttt{xb5} 33.\texttt{xb5} \texttt{xb5} 34.\texttt{c4}! \texttt{xb4} 35.\texttt{h5±}.

32...\texttt{h5} 33.\texttt{f4} \texttt{f5} 34.\texttt{c1}!

34.\texttt{e3=}.

34...\texttt{h5}?

Very strong was 34...\texttt{d3}!±.

35.\texttt{a1}!

35.\texttt{xb5} \texttt{xb5} 36.\texttt{xb5} \texttt{xb5} 37.\texttt{c4±} was still good for White.

35...\texttt{e6} 36.\texttt{e3} \texttt{g6} 37.\texttt{f1}?

37.\texttt{h2} \texttt{g4} 38.\texttt{g3} with some chances for a draw.

37...\texttt{f3}!?

37...\texttt{g4}! was very strong here.

38.\texttt{g3}!?

38.gxf3 was stronger, as Black cannot
win. 38...exf3 39.\(\text{Wd4}\) \(\text{g2}^\text{t}\) 40.\(\text{e1}\) \(\text{e5}^\text{t}\) 41.\(\text{d1}\) \(\text{f1}^\text{t}\) 42.\(\text{c2}\) \(\text{xa1}\) 43.\(\text{g4}^\text{t}\) \(\text{f7}\) 44.\(\text{xf3}^\text{t}\) \(\text{e6}\) 45.\(\text{g4}^\text{t}\) \(\text{f7}\) 46.\(\text{f3}^\text{t}\).

38...\(\text{g4}\) 39.\(\text{e1}\) \(\text{d5}^\text{t}\)?

Deep in time trouble Black goes in for the kill, but leaves his own king without a defence. White now wins in style.

Best was improving the king’s safety with 39...\(\text{g7}^\text{t}\)! 40.\(\text{d4}^\text{t}\) \(\text{g6}\) 41.\(\text{xf8}\) \(\text{xf8}\) 42.\(\text{a6}\) \(\text{f6}\) 43.\(\text{xd6}^\text{t}\).

40.\(\text{xf8}^\text{t}\)!

Now White wins.

40...\(\text{xf8}\) 41.\(\text{h6}^\text{t}\) \(\text{f7}\) 42.\(\text{a7}^\text{t}\) \(\text{e8}\) 43.\(\text{a8}^\text{t}\) \(\text{f7}\) 44.\(\text{d8}^\text{t}\) \(\text{e7}\) 45.\(\text{f6}^\text{t}\) \(\text{d7}\) 46.\(\text{d8}^\text{t}\) \(\text{c6}\) 47.\(\text{a8}^\text{t}\) \(\text{c7}\) 48.\(\text{f7}^\text{t}\) 1–0

In the next game we shall see my main recommendation. The Swedish grandmaster delivers a great concept in the opening to shake the Norwegian wonderboy. The line is based on an idea of Nick De Firmian.

**Game 20**

**Hector – Carlsen**

Malmö 2004

1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{c6}\) 3.d4 cxd4 4.\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{f6}\) 5.\(\text{c3}\) e5 6.\(\text{db5}\) d6 7.\(\text{g5}\) a6 8.\(\text{a3}\) b5 9.\(\text{xf6}\) gxf6 10.\(\text{d5}\) \(\text{f5}\) 11.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{g7}\) 12.\(\text{xf5}\) \(\text{xf5}\) 13.\(\text{c2}^\text{0–0}\) 14.\(\text{ce3}\) \(\text{e6}\) 15.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{f5}\) 16.0–0 \(\text{a7}\) 17.a4 \(\text{e7}\) 18.\(\text{xe7}^\text{t}\) \(\text{xe7}\) 19.\(\text{AXB5}\) \(\text{AXB5}\) 20.\(\text{XB5}\)

This should be the real test of Black’s pawn sacrifice. However the pawn cannot be accepted without a valid idea to follow. And that idea should probably be to triple the heavy pieces on the a-file and invade Black’s position on the 8th rank to force exchanges.

20...\(\text{d5}\)
The Sveshnikov

this is very unpleasant for Black. Still, it is worthwhile to take a look at the alternatives provided by this position:

a) 21. \( \text{d}4 \) is the most promising of the alternatives, even though I do not think it should be really dangerous for Black. 21...f4 22. \( \text{c}2 \) ef7 (22...f3?! Generally Black should not make such rash decisions concerning the attack. Now he has lost a lot of flexibility and it is much easier for White to defend the kingside, and thereby also to operate freely on the queenside. 23.g3 \( \text{b}7 \) 24. \( \text{b}4 \) \( \text{g}5 \) 25. \( \text{fd}1 \) ± Here I have great doubt about the compensation for the pawn. Yefremov - Gilbert, Corr. 1998.) 23. \( \text{fd}1 \) \( \text{g}5 \) 24. \( \text{c}6 \) e4 25. \( \text{b}5 \) e3 26.f3 (Maybe it is possible to improve here with 26. \( \text{xd}5 \)? which of course seems very greedy, but it is not so easy to refute. Black has no easy way to crash through on the kingside. A possible line could be something like 26...exf2\( ^+ \) 27. \( \text{xf}2 \) f3 28.g3 \( \text{h}5 \) 29.h4 \( \text{c}5 \) 30. \( \text{g}1 \) !? \( \text{h}8 \) 31. \( \text{e}3 \) ±) 26...\( \text{h}8 \) 27. \( \text{a}5 \) \( \text{h}4 \) 28. \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{b}8 \) 29. \( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{xb}5 \) 30. \( \text{xb}5 \) \( \text{b}7 \) ½–½ Szczepankiewicz - Kruse, Email 2000.

b) 21. \( \text{c}6 \) is not dangerous for Black. After 21...d4 22. \( \text{a}8 \) \( \text{d}6 \) 23. \( \text{a}6 \) he can play 23...Qd8 when White has nothing more than a repetition of moves, or even go for a better game with 23...\( \text{h}8 \) 24.cxd4 exd4 25. \( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{c}5 \) 26.b4 \( \text{c}3 \) 27. \( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{b}3 \) 28.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 29. \( \text{a}3 \) \( \text{b}2 \) which was altogether bad news for White in Smirnov - Sitnikov, Russia 2001.

c) 21. \( \text{c}2 \) is also feeble. The best White can hope for is probably the drawish line chosen by Kramnik. Jelen's idea seems to be risk free for Black, but certainly dangerous for White. 21...\( \text{b}7 \) 22. \( \text{c}6 \) \( \text{b}6 \)? (22...\( \text{xb}2 \) 23. \( \text{a}8 \) \( \text{d}6 \) 24. \( \text{a}6 \) \( \text{c}5 \) 25. \( \text{b}4 \) \( \text{xc}3 \) 26. \( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{xb}4 \) 27. \( \text{xe}6 \) \( ^+ \) 1/2–1/2. Svidler - Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 1999) 23. \( \text{b}4 \) d4 24. \( \text{a}7 \) e4∞ Skytte - Jelen, Budapest 1999.

21...\( \text{h}8 \)?

Rogozenko writes that this is clearly the best move. He has no faith in 21...f4 because of the obvious exchange sacrifice 22.\( \text{xe}6 \) !\( \text{xe}6 \) 23. \( \text{xd}5 \) (To me it actually make sense to investigate 23. \( \text{xd}5 \)? as well. The best is probably the computer's suggestion 23...\( \text{h}8 \) (23...f3 24.\( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{b}8 \) 25.\( \text{c}4 \) ±) 24. \( \text{e}1 \) e4) 23...\( \text{xd}5 \) 24. \( \text{xd}5 \) Now the best option is 24...\( \text{h}8 \) (24...f3?! 25. \( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{xg}2 \) 26. \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 27. \( \text{e}4 \) ± van Kempen - Arduman, Email 2000.) 25.\( \text{f}3 \) ± Rogozenko. Staudler - Hohm, Corr. 1999. Also worth looking at is 25.b4?! e4 26.c4 e3 27. \( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{d}4 \) 28. \( \text{f}1 \) and White looks better here, doesn't he?

Anyway, the main conclusion about 21...f4 is that it is hard for Black to prove complete equality. It would be sad for those defending the Sveshnikov to have to resort to this kind of position. If this really were the case the popularity of the opening would vanish overnight. However, it is also not pleasant to be Black in the main game, so maybe it is
necessary to look for improvements for Black earlier, maybe as early as move 16?

22. \( \textcolor{red}{\texttt{a4}} \! \) !

An idea by the American grandmaster living in Denmark, Nick De Firmian. No other move seems to give White a position he can really feel good about playing.

22. \( \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{c2}} \) !? \( \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{b8}} \) 23. \( \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{e2}} \) \( f4 \) 24. \( \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{f3}} \) \( \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{c8}} \) has given Black a good game on several occasions. It is a dead end we do not have to go down.

22. \( \textcolor{red}{\texttt{h5}} \) !? \( f4 \) 23. \( \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{g4}} \) \( \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{b8}} \) is also nothing. Hodova - Priborsky, Plzen 2003.

22. \( \texttt{f4} \) !? is, according to Rogozenko, “the most logical move, even if Black wins an exchange by force after that.” I do not understand the logic that encourages advancing pawns in front of your own king and losing material in the process. This is at least not the classical way to view such situations. Rogozenko of course has good reasons for his assessment (...\( f4 \) was coming), however I think the balance is tipping in the wrong direction. Now after 22...d4 23. \( \texttt{cxd4} \) \( \texttt{exf4} \) 24. \( \textcolor{red}{\texttt{xf4}} \) \( \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{c8}} \) 25. \( \textcolor{red}{\texttt{a3}} \) \( \texttt{h6} \) 26. \( \textcolor{red}{\texttt{f3}} \) \( f4 \) 27. \( \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{c2}} \) \( \texttt{g4} \) the game was very complicated in Hector - Rogozenko, Gothenburg 2004. However, I do not think that the first player should be very happy about the outcome of the opening. Eventually Black managed to win this game, though this was hardly the only possible outcome.

22... \( \texttt{f4} \)

Obviously this was what Hector feared in his game above against Rogozenko. However, it is clearly the lesser of two evils, as Black has no easy way to break through White’s defences.

23. \( \texttt{c2} \) \( \texttt{g8} \)

This is the first new move of the game. In the stem game of 22. \( \textcolor{red}{\texttt{a4}} \) Black chose a less natural, but still somewhat logical move 23...\( \texttt{f5} \) which tries to provoke the white knight into occupying an unwanted square. However, Black also loses important time and White should be able to gain an advantage. 24. \( \texttt{b4} \) (24. \( \textcolor{red}{\texttt{d1}} \) !?) could also turn out to be a good move. It is not clear that opposite coloured bishops will be an advantage for Black in the coming double-edged position. However De Firmian’s choice looks good, so we will focus on that here.) 24...\( \texttt{ef7} \) 25. \( \texttt{d1} \) \( \texttt{g5} \) 26. \( \texttt{xd5} \) \( \texttt{g4} \) (26...\( \texttt{e4} \) !?) 27. \( \texttt{f1} \) \( e3 \) 28. \( \texttt{h1} \) \pm) And now I would suggest following Fritz 8 which gives 27. \( \texttt{d3} \) ! (And not 27. \( \texttt{d2} \) !? \( \texttt{f3} \) 28. \( \texttt{f1} \) \texttt{e4} De
Firmian - Svensson, Gothenburg 2004, which eventually ended in a draw, where White was the one defending.) 27...\textit{f5} 28.\textit{d}d2 \textit{f3} 29.\textit{e}e3\pm The position is still very complicated, but Black's attack is still restrained and it seems likely that White will be able to benefit from his extra pawns.

23...\textit{c}c8 24.\textit{a}a8 \textit{e}e6 25.\textit{a}a1 \textit{h}h6 26.\textit{b}b4 \textit{h}h4 27.\textit{d}d7! \textit{x}xd7 29.\textit{x}xf8+ \textit{x}xf8 30.\textit{e}eg7 31.\textit{d}d6 \textit{x}g2\pm with a draw by perpetual check was the correspondence game Teichmann-Marotta, 2003. But after 26.\textit{e}e1\pm I prefer the White pieces.

The computers love for 24.\textit{b}b4?! is completely unjustified. The knight has to go to e1 to protect the king. 24...\textit{f}f8!\textit{e} gives Black good play. Now White should take the draw promised to him in the tactical lines, or everything might soon be very bad. 25.\textit{c}c6 (25.\textit{g}g3? \textit{fxg3} 26.\textit{hxg3} \textit{eg7}\pm) 27.\textit{xe}6? \textit{h}h4=) 25...\textit{x}xe2 26.\textit{h}h1 \textit{g}g4!! (26...\textit{we}8 27.\textit{c}c2 \textit{eg7} 28.\textit{xe}5\pm) 27.\textit{x}g2 (27.\textit{xd}d8 \textit{f}f3 28.\textit{h}h3!) 27...\textit{eg7} 28.\textit{xd}d8 (28.\textit{f}f3? \textit{h}h3!! 29.\textit{f}f2 \textit{h}h4\pm 30.\textit{c}c2 \textit{xf}1\pm) 31.\textit{xf}1 \textit{wh}2 32.\textit{e}e1 \textit{g}g2 33.\textit{f}f1 \textit{d}d2=) 28...\textit{d}d1\pm 29.\textit{h}h3 \textit{g}g4\pm.

24.\textit{a}a1\pm is the only natural alternative to the text move, and could be used as a surprise move against someone who thinks the position after 24.\textit{Ra}1 is playable. However, I have a feeling that well informed Black players will tend to avoid this in the future, once it has been tested a few times at the top level.

24...\textit{c}c8

Maybe a new idea can be conceived here for Black. However I cannot see that Black gains anything with 24...\textit{f}3 25.\textit{g}3 \textit{c}c8 26.\textit{a}a8\pm.

25.\textit{a}a8 \textit{f}f8

Black is getting ready to create threats against g2. However they are not strong enough and they come too late.

26.\textit{f}f1

This seems to favour White, but it all becomes very complicated now. Strong was the direct 26.\textit{c}c6! and now it seems to be difficult for Black to defend against
threats like $\texttt{b5}$ and $\texttt{d1}$. The important thing for White is that $\texttt{e1}$ will protect the kingside almost single-handed. 26...$\texttt{c7}$ (26...$\texttt{eg7}$ 27.$\texttt{e1}$ 26...$\texttt{exg2}$ 27.$\texttt{exg2}$ $\texttt{g7}$ 28.$\texttt{h1}$ $\texttt{g4}$ 29.$\texttt{e1}$+–) 27.$\texttt{dl}$ $\texttt{g5}$ 28.$\texttt{e1}$±.

26...$\texttt{eg7}$ 27.$\texttt{c6}$ $\texttt{c7}$

The only move.

28.$\texttt{b5}$ $\texttt{c5}$?!

The young Norwegian is desperately looking for counterplay, however he would have been better off asking White to prove his advantage after 28...$\texttt{cg7}$? 29.$\texttt{d1}$ $\texttt{c7}$! This is not so clear, as after 30.$\texttt{xd5}$ $\texttt{d7}$ Black will win the exchange with ...$\texttt{Bc6}$ and the endgame is not that bad for him. Maybe 29.$\texttt{c4}$? would be stronger?

29.$\texttt{b4}$ $\texttt{xf2}$?!

Carlsen goes into these tactics searching for some action, as he is likely just to be run over after 29...$\texttt{f8}$ 30.$\texttt{c4}$±. It is always possible to dismiss such desperate measures after the game, especially armed with thorough computer analysis. However from a practical point of view this was obviously the right decision, as Black gained a lot of ground in the remaining part of the game, and should have played on when it finished.

30.$\texttt{xf2}$ $\texttt{xc3}$ 31.$\texttt{e1}$

Not the only choice, but certainly one that makes sense.

31...$\texttt{f3}$?!

Again complicating matters. Black opens files and gains time at the cost of yet another pawn.

32.$\texttt{xf3}$?

Probably kingsafety was more important than anything else in this position. After 32.$\texttt{g1}$! it is not easy to see how Black would be able to attack White's king. 32...$\texttt{h4}$ (32...$\texttt{e4}$ 33.$\texttt{xa2}$ and what now?) 33.$\texttt{h1}$ Here I cannot work out a method to create a successful attack against White's king. 33...$\texttt{f2}$ (33...$\texttt{e3}$ 34.$\texttt{xc8}$ $\texttt{xc8}$ 35.$\texttt{xf3}$ $\texttt{e4}$ 36.$\texttt{d7}$ $\texttt{f8}$ 37.$\texttt{a7}$ $\texttt{g6}$ 38.$\texttt{xd5}$+–) 34.$\texttt{xa2}$ $\texttt{d4}$ 35.$\texttt{a4}$ $\texttt{h3}$ 36.$\texttt{d1}$+. All of this is of course still very complicated, and all the conclusions should be seen as temporary. Still, I feel that White should be successful.

32...$\texttt{e4}$ 33.$\texttt{e1}$ $\texttt{f6}$? 34.$\texttt{g1}$ $\texttt{f8}$ 35.$\texttt{a2}$

35.$\texttt{f3}$? is the computer's favourite move for some time. A human would hardly consider this, and after 35...$\texttt{xf3}$ 36.$\texttt{xd5}$ $\texttt{c2}$? it all turns out to be
horrible, as it should be. However, as we shall see, the idea is not at all stupid.

35...\texttt{\textit{a}3}? 
This was the apparently brilliant idea conceived by Carlsen. The rook cannot be accepted of course, because of \texttt{f}2\texttt{f}2. However, White still has a chance to make his extra piece count, by returning it if nothing else. Therefore a simpler method of play, achieving instant repetition of moves, was preferable.

35...\texttt{d}4\texttt{f} 36.\texttt{h}1 \texttt{d}7 37.\texttt{a}6 \texttt{c}8 38.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{g}4=.

Note that 35...\texttt{d}7 36.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{g}4? would not work because of 37.\texttt{f}2\texttt{f}2. However, 36...\texttt{d}4\texttt{f} would still draw.

36.\texttt{e}2?
This should probably have been punished by a strong tactical resource. However with little time on the clock it is hard to find the right path through such a tactical maze.

36.g3 \texttt{a}6 37.\texttt{xa}6 \texttt{d}4\texttt{f} 38.\texttt{h}1 \texttt{xa}6 39.\texttt{xa}6 \texttt{xb}4 and White is maybe on the way to being worse.

36.\texttt{f}3! was the best move. After 36...\texttt{xa}2 37.\texttt{xa}2 \texttt{ex}f3 38.\texttt{f}2! Black still has not solved his problems. Actually there is no way for him to save both the d5-pawn and the f3-pawn, so a sad defensive task awaits him in a 3 pawns vs. 2 pawns endgame.

36...\texttt{b}6\texttt{f} 37.\texttt{h}1 \texttt{f}6 38.\texttt{g}1 \texttt{d}4\texttt{f} 1/2–1/2
A draw was agreed. However in this position it was Black's turn to play on.

39.\texttt{h}1 could be answered strongly with 39...\texttt{g}4! and now White seems to be worse:

40.\texttt{b}5 \texttt{xa}2! (40...\texttt{xa}1 41.\texttt{xa}1 \texttt{xa}1 42.h3 \texttt{xe}1 43.hxg4 \texttt{ex}f1\texttt{f} 44.\texttt{h}2 \texttt{d}1 45.\texttt{d}7 and White should be able to deliver perpetual check) 41.\texttt{xa}2 \texttt{d}1 42.h3 \texttt{xe}1 43.\texttt{g}1 (43.\texttt{h}2 \texttt{xf}1 44.\texttt{xf}1 \texttt{xf}1 45.hxg4 \texttt{d}4\texttt{f} 43...\texttt{d}7 44.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{xb}4--

40.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{af}3! 41.\texttt{a}8 \texttt{xa}8 42.\texttt{xa}8\texttt{f} \texttt{g}7 and White is definitely in trouble.

However, Black was short of time and a draw seemed to be a good outcome from such a bad experience in the opening.

In the next game we shall investigate a minor sideline that offers little hope for Black. In fact the analysis goes in the direction of a clear edge for White in the opening, so it is probably not here that the future lies for Black. Still, it is wise for
White to know this line in case it should come up in a real game. Not everything is easy to find over the board.

Game 21
Rivas Romero - Sarlat
Corr. 2000

1.e4 c5 2.\f3 \c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\xd4 \f6 5.\c3 e5 6.\db5 d6 7.\g5 a6 8.\a3 b5 9.\xf6 gx\f6 10.\d5 \g7 11.c3 f5 12.exf5 \xf5 13.\c2 \e6 14.\ce3 0-0 15.\d3 f5 16.0-0 e4

One commentator writes that Black has scored well with this approach recently. I do not know where he has been looking, as to me it seems that Black is actually not doing very well in this line.

17.\f7

The alternatives are: 17...\d7!? 18.\c2 \e5 19.\ed5 \h8 20.\h5 \g8 21.f3± with better play for White in Burnoiu - Veneteanu, Curtea de Arges 2002.

17...\d7 18.\c2 \e5 19.\xe6 was played in Rogovoi - Nikolaev, St Petersburg 1998. However, stronger seems to be 19.\ed5!? \ae8 20.\xe6 \xe6 21.a4.

18.\c2 \e5

18...\d7 19.\b3 \ad8 20.\xf7+ \xf7 21.\d5 \xd5 22.\exd5± Mamedov - Djafarli, Baku 2002.

19.\fd5

19.g3 \xf4 20.gxf4 \f6 is even according to van Wely/Cifuentes.

19...\g5

19...\f4? 20.\g4 \g6 21.\e1 e3 22.fxe3 \xc2 23.\xc2 \g5 24.\xe5 \xe5 25.\h1±, Kramnik.

19...\h4 20.g3 \h3 (20...\g5 21.f4 \xf3 22.\f3 \h5 and now 23.\f2 was played in Palecha - Mikhajlichenko, Evpatoria 2001. Instead 23.\g2!± would have been very strong.) 21.f4 \g7 22.\c7 (22.\b3 \h8 23.\c7 \h5 24.\d2± Lantini - Frilli, Arco 1999.) 22.\ad8 23.\b3 d5 24.\xd5 \h8 25.\e2 \d7 26.\xf7 \xc7 27.\b3 \d4 28.cxd4 1-0 Collazo - Bianchi, Email 1999.

19...\e6 20.f4 \xf3 21.\xf3± f4? 22.\e4 \a7 23.\xf4+- Grabarczyk - Rydzik, Zakopane 2000.

20.f4 \xf3
The Sveshnikov

21.\textit{xf}3?! 

Probably stronger is 21.\textit{xf}3 when after 21...\textit{h}5 22.\textit{h}3 \textit{f}4 Anand - Kramnik, Linares 1998 23.\textit{c}7! is very strong. (23.\textit{f}5 \textit{h}8 24.\textit{h}4 \textit{a}7 25.\textit{f}3 \textit{x}f3 26.\textit{xf}3 \textit{f} Longson - Son, Istanbul 1998.) 23...\textit{f}xe3 24.\textit{xa}8 \textit{xf}1+ 25.\textit{xf}1 \pm was played in Karasek - Underwood, e-mail 2001. White is clearly better according to Kramnik. The reality is probably that he is completely winning.

21...\textit{h}5 

van Wely analyses 21...\textit{f}4 and comes to the conclusion that 22.h4! gives White an advantage. 22...\textit{d}8 23.\textit{xf}4! \textit{x}h4 24.\textit{h}3! \textit{xf}4 25.\textit{x}h7+ \textit{g}7 26.\textit{f}5+ \textit{f}6 27.\textit{h}4!+-.

22.\textit{c}7 \textit{f}4 

This does not seem necessary, but Black still should not be worse.

23.\textit{d}5+ \textit{h}8 

23...\textit{f}7 24.\textit{xc}6 \textit{xe}3+ 25.\textit{h}1+-.

24.\textit{xf}4

This is, of course, the correct bishop to eliminate.

24...\textit{xf}4 25.\textit{e}1 

Also possible was 25.\textit{f}5!? \textit{e}7 26.\textit{xd}6 \textit{xd}6 27.\textit{xd}6 \textit{a}7 28.\textit{e}6 \textit{f}6=.

25.\textit{e}5 

Surely an improvement over 25...\textit{ac}8??

26.\textit{e}6 \textit{h}4 27.\textit{g}3 \textit{g}8 28.\textit{xf}5+- Topalov - van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 1999.

26.\textit{xd}4! 

Necessary. White cannot accept the rook, as Black would naturally ignore the knight on \textit{a}8 and instead go for the king. 26.\textit{xa}8? \textit{g}8!! 27.\textit{xd}8+ (Or 27.\textit{g}3 \textit{g}3+ 28.\textit{h}xg3 \textit{g}3+ 29.\textit{f}1 (29.\textit{g}2 \textit{f}3) 29...\textit{f}4+ 30.\textit{g}1 \textit{f}3++ with a winning attack.) 27...\textit{xg}8 28.\textit{xf}5 \textit{h}4 29.\textit{f}1 \textit{g}5+- van Wely.

26...\textit{xd}4 

Now there follows a series of forced moves that leads to an endgame that Black plays quite badly. Of course, we can all have bad days, but it must feel terrible when you play correspondence chess and have so many of them in the same game.

27.\textit{xd}4 \textit{ac}8 28.\textit{e}6 \textit{fe}8 29.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xc}2 30.\textit{xc}2 \textit{xe}6 31.\textit{d}4 \textit{xe}5 32.\textit{xe}5 \textit{dxe}5 33.\textit{xf}5 

This should be a draw, but realistically only White can win.

33...\textit{g}6 34.\textit{d}6 \textit{g}7 35.\textit{b}7 \textit{f}7 36.a3 \textit{d}5 37.\textit{c}5 \textit{a}5 38.\textit{d}7 \textit{e}4 39.\textit{f}2 \textit{c}6 40.\textit{c}5 \textit{f}6 41.\textit{e}3 \textit{e}5 42.g4 \textit{h}6 43.h4 a4 44.g5
Experts vs. the Sicilian

44...h5?
As I said, Black’s play has not been great. One move that was hard to understand was 43...a4, but that was hardly the only mysterious move. Now he chooses to keep the h-pawn on the board. All endgame experts agree that when you try to defend, you aim for the exchange of pawns. Here Black could probably have held a draw with 44...hxg5 45.hxg5 h5 46.d4 hxg5 (46...e3!? is perhaps even better.) 47.xe4 h4 48.c3 d7 49.c5 e3 50.xb5 d2 51.c3 c2 and, with only one pawn remaining, White should not be able to win this endgame.

45.g6 h5 46.xe4 h4 47.hf4 h7 48.g3 g6 49.e5

Now Black can no longer save the game. The two weaknesses and the bad bishop seal his fate.

49.e8 50.e2 f7 51.f4 g7 52.e6 h6 53.d4 c4 54.e6 f1 55.f4 h6 56.f6 c4 57.e6 f1 58.d4 1-0

Finally, I will end this chapter with what I believe will be a main line in the Sveshnikov Sicilian in the future. An under-rated player delivers a performance with White of which he can be truly proud. He defeats one of Israel’s younger stars in a convincing manner.

Game 22
Jenni - Avrukh
Bled (ol) 2002

1.e4 c5 2.f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.xd4 d5 5.c3 e5 6.db5 d6 7.g5 a6 8.a3 b5 9.xf6 gxf6 10.d5 e5 11.exf5 xf5 12.c3 g7 13.c2 e6?

The main idea here is to play c6-e7xd5 and liquidate White’s pressure. The immediate 13...e7?! was refuted by Ivanchuk with 14.d3! and White has a clear plus.

I think 13...e6 is the move Black players will be playing in the future. They
have not played it a lot for the last few years, but it offers a relatively safe position with good counter chances. I still prefer to be White, but in such a reliable opening as the Sveshnikov it would be too much to hope for to prove an easy advantage for White in every line. That I have come as close as I have is pure luck, and was not something I thought possible in advance.

14.g3!

This was played by Anand a long time ago, but Short made it popular with some good games, including a win against Kramnik. The key idea is that if Black exchanges on d5 then White would like to recapture with the bishop. The plan is that if White ends up with knight vs. bishop, then d5 and f5 are likely to be rather weak squares.

14...0–0 15.\textit{g}2 a5

This is clearly the main line. Other moves have been played, but I would not recommend anyone outside the world's top 50 players to try to memorise the differences between 15...\textit{b}8 and 15...a5. The main point for White is that the same set-up is recommended against both options.

16.0–0 f5

This specific line can of course be prepared to a great extent, but many different moves are possible all the time, and it is therefore more important to grasp the essentials of the position. I would not like to claim mastery of the position, but I think that I can give a few hints and ideas. First of all, I recommend placing the queen in the centre, and out of the way of the rooks. I dislike 17.\textit{h}5 as I do not see a fair argument for attacking f5 already, and I dislike 17.\textit{d}2 as this should be the place of a rook, not the queen.

17.\textit{e}2! \textit{b}8 18.\textit{ad}1

18.\textit{fd}1 is slightly more popular, but honestly I prefer this one. Now an early ...e5–e4 can be met by f2–f3 with much greater strength.

18...\textit{d}7

18...e4 19.f3!±.

19.f4! e4

19...\textit{h}8!? 20.\textit{ce}3 b4 looks like a sensible plan, but with the help of my computer I managed to find an idea that I believe is unpleasant for Black. 21.fxe5!? (21.\textit{h}1 bxc3 22.bxc3 \textit{e}7∞ Resika - Sallai, Budapest 2003.) 21...\textit{xe}5 22.\textit{c}4!±. The following line shows how it is possible for Black to end up
with a weaker pawn structure, where the weaknesses are on the light squares, which should be very unpleasant. 22...bxc3 23.bxc3 $\textit{\emph{F}d8} 24.\textit{\emph{G}d}e3 \textit{\emph{X}c}3 25.\textit{\emph{F}xd6} \textit{\emph{X}c}4 26.\textit{\emph{X}c}4 $\textit{\emph{E}e}7 27.\textit{\emph{G}e}6 $\textit{\emph{C}}c5 \uparrow 28.\textit{\emph{F}h}1 $\textit{\emph{D}d}4 29.\textit{\emph{G}e}5 $\textit{\emph{B}b}4 30.\textit{\emph{F}d}3 \pm.

20.\textit{\emph{G}c}3 \textit{\emph{E}e}7

Black needs to fight for the centre. 20...b4 is strongly met with 21.g4! bxc3 22.bxc3 $\textit{\emph{F}x}g4 23.\textit{\emph{B}xe}4 && .

21.\textit{\emph{G}d}2 $\textit{\emph{X}d}5 22.\textit{\emph{X}d}5

22...$\textit{\emph{F}f}7

22...b4! with the idea of 23.c4 b3 24.a3 \pm is probably the way to play Black’s position. Right here is probably the most difficult place to prove an advantage for White. I have looked at natural moves such as 24...$\textit{\emph{G}fe}8 25.\textit{\emph{F}d}1 $\textit{\emph{A}a}7 \uparrow 26.\textit{\emph{F}h}1 $\textit{\emph{C}c}5 27.\textit{\emph{G}e}3 $\textit{\emph{B}bc}8 and now I can only manage to prove a draw for White. 28.\textit{\emph{F}h}3! (28.\textit{\emph{X}d}6? \textit{\emph{X}c}4 29.\textit{\emph{X}c}4 $\textit{\emph{X}c}4 30.\textit{\emph{F}h}5 $\textit{\emph{F}f}7 \uparrow because of the weakness of the b2-pawn.) 28...\textit{\emph{X}c}4 29.\textit{\emph{X}c}4 $\textit{\emph{X}c}4 30.\textit{\emph{F}xe}5 $\textit{\emph{F}xe}5 31.\textit{\emph{F}xe}5 $\textit{\emph{F}xe}5 32.\textit{\emph{F}xe}5 $\textit{\emph{F}xe}5 33.\textit{\emph{F}xe}5 $\textit{\emph{F}xe}5 and White will be able to scrape the draw without any problems. However, this is far from an advantage for White.

23.\textit{\emph{F}d}1 $\textit{\emph{F}c}8 24.\textit{\emph{F}e}3 \pm

I really think that this is the way forward. 24.g4 $\textit{\emph{F}x}g4 25.\textit{\emph{X}e}4 $\textit{\emph{F}h}8 was unclear in Gruenfeld - Sutovsky, Israel 1996.

24...$\textit{\emph{X}a}2 25.\textit{\emph{X}d}6 $\textit{\emph{B}b}3 26.\textit{\emph{G}d}2

26...b4?

This allows White to enter the 7th rank, a very careless admission. It was necessary to return the bishop and start to protect the coming weaknesses in advance with 26...\textit{\emph{X}e}6 27.\textit{\emph{F}h}3! (27.g4?! $\textit{\emph{F}f}8 \uparrow 28.\textit{\emph{F}e}6?! $\textit{\emph{F}e}6 29.gxf5 $\textit{\emph{F}h}6 \uparrow) and now we have:

a) 27...$\textit{\emph{F}e}8 28.\textit{\emph{F}xe}6 $\textit{\emph{F}xe}6 29.\textit{\emph{F}xf}5 $\textit{\emph{B}b}6 (29...$\textit{\emph{F}f}6?! 30.\textit{\emph{D}d}7! $\textit{\emph{B}bd}8 (30...\textit{\emph{F}h}6 31.\textit{\emph{F}h}5!+- $\textit{\emph{D}d}5 will come and Black will not be able to defend his king. Probably it
will transpose.) 31. \( \texttt{d5!} \) \( \texttt{f8} \) 32. \( \texttt{h5} \) \( \texttt{h6} \) 33. \( \texttt{g6} \) \( \texttt{xd7} \) 34. \( \texttt{f6} \)\( \texttt{xf6} \) 35. \( \texttt{xe8} \)\( \texttt{e8} \) 36. \( \texttt{xd7} \)\( \texttt{+} \) 30. \( \texttt{g2} \) (30. \( \texttt{h1} \) \( \texttt{bd8} \) 31. \( \texttt{xd8} \) \( \texttt{xd8} \) 32. \( \texttt{xe4} \) \( \texttt{e6} \) 33. \( \texttt{f3} \) \( \texttt{h8} \)\( \texttt{∞} \) ) 30... \( \texttt{bd8} \) 31. \( \texttt{d5} \)\( \texttt{+} \) \( \texttt{xd5} \) 32. \( \texttt{xd5} \) \( \texttt{d6} \) 33. \( \texttt{h5} \) \( \texttt{f8} \) 34. \( \texttt{xe7} \)\( \texttt{+} \) \( \texttt{e3} \) 35. \( \texttt{f5} \)\( \texttt{+} \)\( \texttt{−} \).

b) 27... \( \texttt{f8} \) ? Overprotecting \( \texttt{f5} \).
28. \( \texttt{c2} \) \( \texttt{b4} \) 29. \( \texttt{cxb4} \) \( \texttt{axb4} \) 30. \( \texttt{d4} \) \( \texttt{c4} \) 31. \( \texttt{f2} \)\( \texttt{±} \).

27. \( \texttt{d7} \)
White is better.
27... \( \texttt{f8} \) 28. \( \texttt{cxb4} \) ?
It is possible to understand this move, but not to fully approve of it.
28. \( \texttt{c4} \)\( \texttt{±} \) would quickly have made Black's position fall to pieces, as \( \texttt{a2} \) is out of play. One critical line is 28... \( \texttt{a4} \)? but analysis suggests that this is not dangerous (28... \( \texttt{c5} \) 29. \( \texttt{h3} \) \( \texttt{a4} \) 30. \( \texttt{b7} \)\( \texttt{d5} \) and White wins. Probably White was afraid of the a-pawn) 29. \( \texttt{h3} \)! \( \texttt{a3} \) (29... \( \texttt{c5} \) 30. \( \texttt{h5} \) \( \texttt{e8} \) 31. \( \texttt{h4} \) \( \texttt{a3} \) 32. \( \texttt{f5} \)\( \texttt{+} \) and there is no defence against the attack.) 30. \( \texttt{bxa3} \) \( \texttt{bxa3} \) 31. \( \texttt{xf5} \)\( \texttt{+} \).

28... \( \texttt{axb4} \) 29. \( \texttt{c3} \) \( \texttt{e6} \) 30. \( \texttt{d6} \) \( \texttt{f7} \) 31. \( \texttt{xe6} \) \( \texttt{xe6} \) 32. \( \texttt{xf5} \) \( \texttt{c1} \)\( \texttt{+} \) 33. \( \texttt{g2} \) \( \texttt{b6} \) 34. \( \texttt{xd7} \) \( \texttt{d8} \)

35. \( \texttt{h5} \) \( \texttt{f6} \) ?
35... \( \texttt{xd7} \) was the only move. However, after 36. \( \texttt{e8} \)\( \texttt{+} \) \( \texttt{f8} \) 37. \( \texttt{exe6} \) \( \texttt{f7} \) 38. \( \texttt{xe6} \)\( \texttt{+} \) \( \texttt{f7} \) 39. \( \texttt{xe4} \)\( \texttt{+} \) it is hard to believe that Black would survive.

36. \( \texttt{d5} \)
One of many winning moves.
36... \( \texttt{xb2} \) 37. \( \texttt{h3} \) \( \texttt{xd7} \) 38. \( \texttt{xe7} \)\( \texttt{d5} \) and \( \texttt{d5} \)\( \texttt{+-} \) was definitely easier.
38... \( \texttt{f8} \) 39. \( \texttt{xd7} \) \( \texttt{c5} \) 39... \( \texttt{h1} \) 40. \( \texttt{g4} \) \( \texttt{xe2} \) 41. \( \texttt{f5} \)\( \texttt{+} \) was still winning.
40. \( \texttt{g6} \) \( \texttt{d4} \) 41. \( \texttt{e6} \)
1–0
The Classical

-By Peter Wells

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.cxd4 
5.c3 
6.g5

The Classical Variation of the Sicilian has one powerful and enduring appeal. Black's development is faster and healthier than in several other Sicilians, and this tends to afford some protection from the blustery winds of theoretical change. Of course fashion still takes its toll, but a certain stability over time can be expected here.

6.g5

The Richter-Rauzer is the most respected antidote, and also combines aggression – early pressure on d6 in particular which often obliges Black to accept doubled f-pawns – with a degree of solidity missing from, for example, the main lines of 6.c4. One fundamental decision White has is where to play his f-pawn. Throughout - Games 3-5 - I have opted for f4 based systems, in spite of a current surge of fashion for f3 followed by a kingside pawn storm. I strongly suspect that these will better stand the test of time, and that the strategic ideas are also easier to explain and to grasp. It also seemed important to create an internally consistent repertoire – it is easier to get a feel for playing these positions if ‘mix and match’ is kept to a minimum.

Having co-authored a rather substantial work on the Richter-Rauzer in 1998, three main questions sprang to mind as I embarked on the project of constructing a repertoire for White that is effective, efficient and internally coherent.

1) How much have the fundamentals of the theory changed in 6 years?

2) How, even allowing for the advantages of the repertoire format, will it be possible to be able to condense such a chunk of theory into a neatly proportioned chapter?

3) Lastly, even though my previous work took a ‘neutral’ perspective, a certain emotional attachment to the Black cause was inevitable, and although I have played both sides, my ailing memory has rendered outings with 1.e4 something of a treat. How would I feel advocating the White side, trying to do damage to the Classical Sicilian?
The reader will ultimately have to judge how I have risen to the task. The answer to question 1 varies greatly with different lines – the system with 7...a6 and 8...h6 covered in Game 24 has been entirely transformed by a new and dangerous attacking idea. By contrast, the changes to theory in Games 25-27 are essentially those of detail.

Never forget either, fashion in opening theory moves in mysterious ways. This we shall witness right here in game 23. After 6...d7 I sense a drift from 7.e2 towards the more voluminous theory of 7.d2. I see no reason – let’s keep things simple!

Game 23
Kotronias – Schwartz
Philadelphia 2000

1.e4 c5 2.f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4 f6 5.c3 c6 6.g5

6...d7

The most frequently encountered, but by no means the only alternative to the main line 6...e6 of Games 24-27. The others I would like to consider in approximately ascending order of importance:

a) 6...g6?! has a dubious reputation and this is pretty well deserved. In fact after 7.xf6 exf6 Black’s hopes of dynamic play to compensate his structural damage are not completely without foundation, but with careful handling should be insufficient. For example, 8.c4 g7 9.db5 0–0 10.xd6 and now:

a1) 10...f5 11.0–0 0–0 12.f4 h6 13.b1 fxe4 14.xe4 g4 15.de1 ad8 16.f6+ h8 17.xg4 h4 18.c7 xg4 19.d6 with a clear plus in Goloshchapov – Chernikov, Moscow 2002.

a2) 10...a5! 11.c7 b4 12.b3 f5 13.0–0 fxe4 14.d6 also looks good for White, since the complications arising from 14...xc3 15.bxc3 xc3 16.xf7 g7? (16...a1+ 17.d2 d4+ 18.e1 b4+ 19.f1 g7 20.g5+ e7 is better but still unpleasant for the defender) 17.g5+ h6 18.xh7+ xg6 19.h4+ f6 20.d6+ e5 21.g7+ and wins.

b) 6...a5 is well met by 7.b5!. (In my view this is considerably stronger than the also popular 7.xf6 gxf6 8.b3 g5! for one good reason. White’s pieces ensure that Black’s queen will not become active by crudely but effectively blocking
off the more enticing squares.) 7...\texttt{d}7 8.\texttt{\texttt{b}}3 \texttt{\texttt{w}}b6 (Or 8...\texttt{w}d8 9.\texttt{\texttt{xf}}6 (9.f4?) 9...\texttt{gx}f6 10.\texttt{w}h5 \texttt{g}g8 11.g3 \texttt{g}g5 12.\texttt{w}e2 a6 13.\texttt{\texttt{d}}3 \texttt{e}6 14.f4 \texttt{g}g7 15.\texttt{w}h5 \texttt{w}b6 16.0-0-0 0-0-0 17.\texttt{\texttt{b}}1 \texttt{\texttt{b}}8 18.\texttt{w}h4 when White has a pleasant version of a structure which will become very familiar - Topalov - Corral Blanco, Spain 2000.) 9.\texttt{\texttt{x}}f6 \texttt{gx}f6 10.\texttt{\texttt{d}}5 \texttt{\texttt{d}}8 11.0-0 (also 11.\texttt{w}h5 \texttt{e}6 12.\texttt{\texttt{e}}3 a6 13.\texttt{\texttt{e}}2 \texttt{\texttt{w}}c7 14.0-0-0 \texttt{\texttt{e}}7 15.\texttt{\texttt{b}}1 0-0-0 16.f4 \texttt{\texttt{df}}8 17.\texttt{\texttt{d}}3 \texttt{\texttt{b}}8 18.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{hd}}}1 \texttt{\texttt{c}}8 19.a3 left Black passive in S. Nikolic - Gufeld, Kislovodsk 1968. With this characteristic Rauzer doubled f-pawn structure the knight on e3 is rather well placed for restraining any counterplay.) 11...\texttt{\texttt{g}}7 12.c3 0-0 13.\texttt{w}h5 a6 14.\texttt{\texttt{xc}}6 bxc6 15.\texttt{\texttt{e}}3 c5 16.\texttt{\texttt{d}}ad1 \texttt{\texttt{b}}8 17.\texttt{\texttt{d}}3 \texttt{h}6 18.\texttt{\texttt{fd}}1 \texttt{\texttt{b}}7 19.\texttt{\texttt{xc}}5! with decisive advantage in Korneev - Lopez Guerrero, Malaga 2001. This time the quality of the knight on e3 rather speaks for itself!

c1) 7.\texttt{\texttt{e}}3!? still seems to me to be interesting six years on, but it has not really found very many takers, despite further endorsement from NCO! Critical can only be 7...\texttt{\texttt{x}}b2 (not 7...\texttt{\texttt{g}}4 8.\texttt{\texttt{d}}5 \texttt{\texttt{xe}}39.\texttt{\texttt{xe}}3 \texttt{\texttt{a}}5+ 10.b4! winning material, while 7...\texttt{\texttt{c}}7 8.\texttt{\texttt{d}}5 looks nice for White. 7...a6 cannot be a major test either. White had a pleasant position after 8.\texttt{\texttt{d}}2 \texttt{\texttt{xd}}4 9.\texttt{\texttt{xd}}4 \texttt{\texttt{c}}6 10.\texttt{\texttt{d}}3 \texttt{e}5 11.\texttt{\texttt{e}}3 \texttt{\texttt{e}}6 12.f4 \texttt{\texttt{xf}}4 13.\texttt{\texttt{d}}4 \texttt{\texttt{e}}7 14.\texttt{\texttt{xf}}4 0-0 15.0-0-0 \texttt{\texttt{ac}}8 16.\texttt{\texttt{hf}}1 \texttt{\texttt{d}}7 17.\texttt{\texttt{d}}5 \texttt{\texttt{d}}8 18.c3 in Ivanchuk - Miroshnichenko, Antalya (European-Ch) 2004) 8.\texttt{\texttt{db}}5 \texttt{\texttt{b}}4 9.\texttt{\texttt{d}}2 \texttt{\texttt{c}}5! (9...\texttt{\texttt{e}}4? 10.a3 is a catastrophe for Black, which recently befell so high-powered a victim as the young Georgian star Baadur Jobava. At least he had the
good grace to resign forthwith!) 10.\(\text{c}2\)!
(10.\(\text{c}3\) repeats, while 10.\(\text{c}7\)\(\text{d}8\) 11.\(\text{c}a8\) \(\text{g}4\) gives Black excellent
compensation since 12.\(\text{f}2\) loses to the acutely embarrassing 12...\(\text{d}4\) 13.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{e}5\)!
10...\(\text{b}6\) 11.\(\text{b}1\) \(\text{d}8\)! (an improvement over 11...\(\text{e}5\)?) 14.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{a}5\) 15.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{g}6\) 16.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{d}8\) 17.\(\text{c}a7\)
\(\text{d}7\) 18.\(f4\)! Balashov - Petrienko, Voronezh, 1987) and now I think the
simple 12.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 13.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{e}5\) 14.0-0 offers good compensation since
Black has no straightforward means of
developing. This still awaits a practical
test, although to be fair it has been Black
as much as White who has steered clear of it.

c2) 7.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{e}6\) 8.\(\text{xf}6\)? Before Black
can play ...\(\text{e}7\). I have to confess, I
am not convinced that these positions
should give White a theoretical plus
and hence here and later in the book I
shall always try to offer an alternative.
However, it is invaluable to learn how to
handle the structure with the doubled f-
pawns and, in addition, White’s position
does seem easier to handle in practice.
8...\(\text{gxf}6\) 9.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{a}6\) 10.0-0-0 \(\text{d}7\) 11.\(f4\)
0-0-0 12.\(\text{b}1\) \(\text{b}8\) 13.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{h}5\)! There
is plenty of scope here for move order
flexibility. However, I suspect that it is a
good sound instinct to answer \(\text{e}2\) thus.
One example of omitting this precaution -
13...\(\text{e}7\) 14.\(\text{h}5\) \(\text{e}8\) 15.\(\text{he}1\) \(\text{c}8\)
16.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{exd}5\) 17.\(\text{exd}5\) \(\text{e}5\) 18.\(\text{f}xe5\) \(\text{f}xe5\)
19.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{f}6\) 20.\(\text{xe}8\) \(\text{hxe}8\) 21.\(\text{d}3\) with
a great superiority on the light squares.
Nataf - Thorhallsson, Reykjavik (rapid)
2003. See also the superb game Almasi -
Damljanovic, given under the note ‘a’
to Black’s 7th in game 26.
14.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{e}7\) 15.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{dg}8\) 16.\(\text{f}1\)
\(\text{g}4\) 17.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{c}8\) 18.\(\text{a}4\)! \(\text{c}7\) 19.\(\text{f}2\)
\(\text{b}5\) 20.\(\text{c}3\)! Instructive, both how White
forces this weakness, and the ferocity of
the attack, which he builds thereafter.
20...\(\text{a}7\) 21.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{h}8\) 22.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{b}4\)
23.\(\text{a}2\) \(\text{a}5\) 24.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{b}7\) 25.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{xc}6\)
26.\(\text{xa}5\)! A nice combination which strips
Black’s king bare. 26...\(\text{xa}5\) 27.\(\text{xb}4\)
\(\text{b}7\) 28.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{xa}4\) 29.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{xc}6\)
30.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{d}7\) 31.\(\text{b}7\) \(\text{e}8\) 32.\(\text{c}8\)
\(\text{d}8\) 33.\(\text{b}3\) 1-0 Alekseev - Kiselev, Suetin
(mem) Tula 2002.

d) 6...\(\text{a}6\) is by no means bad, but since
Black is often liable to meet 7.\(\text{d}2\) with
7...\(\text{e}6\) it has no independent significance
in the majority of cases. However Black
does have a distinctive idea, albeit a
rather inferior one, in 7...\(\text{xd}4\). This
makes a certain sense when White has
already played 7.\(\text{d}2\). Indeed just such
logic underlies the preference for 7.\(\text{e}2\)! in the main game. However, after
8.\(\text{xd}4\) the follow-up 8...\(\text{e}5\) cannot be
recommended. As usual the price to pay
for this weakening of \(\text{d}5\) is especially high
in the Rauzer, and the inconvenience to
White’s queen is scarcely significant in
lines like 9.\(\text{a}4\)! \(\text{d}7\) 10.\(\text{xf}6\)? \(\text{gxf}6\)
(10...\(\text{xf}6\)? allows the shot 11.\(\text{b}5\)!
\(\text{d}8\) 12.\(\text{xd}7\) \(\text{xd}7\) 13.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{e}7\)
14. \( \text{d5} \) \( \text{d8} \) 15.0-0 0-0 16.\( \text{fd1} \) and White has one of those examples of minor piece superiority which are normally only seen in textbooks. Kotronias - Kovalev, Debrecen, 1992.) 11.\( \text{b3} \) b5 12.\( \text{e2} \).

White will follow up with \( \text{d5} \) with a safe plus.

7.\( \text{e2} \)!

Exceptionally, since Black cannot switch to \( ...\text{e6} \) without complication (see ‘c’ below), there is mileage here to the idea of castling short with \( \text{xf6} \), \( \text{f5} \) and \( \text{d5} \) in the air. This plan is no longer high fashion, but still seems to me to have a lot of bite.

7...a6

Four alternatives, one rather questionable, two of great importance, plus one that appears to be a slightly inferior way of trying to reach positions that could be arrived at a good deal less painlessly!

a) 7...\( \text{b6} \) is rather poorly timed as White has 8.\( \text{db5!} \) \( \text{c8} \) 9.0-0 a6 10.\( \text{xf6} \) gxf6 11.\( \text{d5} \) \( \text{d8} \) 12.\( \text{bc3} \) e6 13.\( \text{e3} \). Again one of the virtues of the move \( \text{d5} \) is that even if the knight is forced to retreat, this is rather a good square. 13...b5 14.a4 b4 15.\( \text{a2} \) \( \text{b6} \) 16.c3 a5 17.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{c5} \) 18.\( \text{c1}! \) with strong pressure against d6. Vogt - Mascarinas, Polanica Zdroj 1977.

b) 7...\( \text{c8} \) is probably just an attempt to reach the critical positions considered under ‘d’ below. It is just worth mentioning because after 8.0-0 \( \text{xd4} \) 9.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{a5} \). I rather suspect that as well as 10.\( \text{xf6} \) gxf6 11.a4 returning to line ‘d’, White can also consider 10.\( \text{e3}! \) \( \text{c6} \) and then some solid move like 11.\( \text{ad1} \), when the black pieces somehow look a bit wayward.

c) 7...e6! is rather a plausible response to a developing move which in general terms may be viewed as rather modest. It has moreover been greatly strengthened in recent times by the discovery that there may be a nasty surprise in store for White if he simply tries to head for the classic ‘Rauzer structure’ with the doubled f-pawns. After 8.\( \text{xf6} \)!, a young Dutchman overturned the previously unquestioned verdict of theory by playing 8...\( \text{xf6} \) and after 9.\( \text{db5} \), far from the promised ‘\( \pm \)’ White was confronted with 9...0-0-0! in D. Mastrovasilis – Berkvens, European (U20) Patras 2001, and shied away from 10.\( \text{xd6} \) \( \text{b8} \) 11.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{c5} \) 12.0-0 \( \text{e5}! \), which indeed would promise Black excellent compensation on
the dark squares. Of course after others 9.\texttt{\textbackslash d}b5 makes little sense and Black was quickly better. It is often the hallmark of a good novelty that it seems startlingly obvious in retrospect!

Therefore White needs to look elsewhere. Quiet moves like 8.0-0 or even 8.\texttt{\textbackslash c}d2 are unobjectionable, but 8.\texttt{\textbackslash d}b5!? seems more promising. E.g. 8...\texttt{\textbackslash f}b8 9.a4! a6 10.\texttt{\textbackslash a}3 \texttt{\textbackslash c}7 11.\texttt{\textbackslash d}2! (less common, but more incisive than the routine 11.0-0. White should force the issue by piling immediate pressure on d6) 11...\texttt{\textbackslash e}7 12.\texttt{\textbackslash d}1! and now:

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

c1) 12...\texttt{\textbackslash d}8 is natural but a bit passive. White can exploit the weakness of b6 with gain of time by 13.\texttt{\textbackslash c}c4 \texttt{\textbackslash c}8 14.\texttt{\textbackslash e}3! \texttt{\textbackslash b}8 15.\texttt{\textbackslash b}6!? \texttt{\textbackslash d}7 16.0-0 0-0 17.f4 \texttt{\textbackslash c}5 18.\texttt{\textbackslash f}3 with a modest but pleasant initiative in Spassky - Hort, Moscow 1971.

c2) 12...\texttt{\textbackslash e}5!? played in Lautier – Milov Cap d’Agde 2002 is a more active defence inviting serious complications. After 13.f4 \texttt{\textbackslash g}6, instead of the slightly lackadaisical 14.0-0 White should have played 14.\texttt{\textbackslash c}c4! d5!? (All but forced. Not 14...0-0? 15.e5 dxe5 16.\texttt{\textbackslash x}f6+-, while 14...\texttt{\textbackslash c}6 15.\texttt{\textbackslash x}f6 gxf6 16.\texttt{\textbackslash f}5 is also very unpleasant.) 15.exd5 \texttt{\textbackslash x}d5 16.\texttt{\textbackslash x}d5 exd5 17.\texttt{\textbackslash e}3!? (Wells – better I think than 17.\texttt{\textbackslash x}d5 \texttt{\textbackslash c}6 18.\texttt{\textbackslash d}6\texttt{\textbackslash d}6 19.\texttt{\textbackslash x}d6 \texttt{\textbackslash x}d6 20.\texttt{\textbackslash x}d6 f6! 21.\texttt{\textbackslash f}5 \texttt{\textbackslash e}7! 22.\texttt{\textbackslash f}4 \texttt{\textbackslash x}f5 when Black is quite OK.) 17...\texttt{\textbackslash x}g5 18.fxg5 \texttt{\textbackslash e}6 19.0-0 with an unusual position and structure, but I think slightly better chances.

d) 7...\texttt{\textbackslash a}5!? is arguably the single greatest challenge to White’s set-up.

With 7.\texttt{\textbackslash e}2 already on the board, the antidote which was so effective against the premature 6...\texttt{\textbackslash a}5 makes little sense here, and this helps to ensure that Black’s queen will enjoy some role along the 4th rank – perhaps with the move ...\texttt{\textbackslash g}5, or else utilising the fact that a well-timed
Experts vs. the Sicilian

exchange on d4 can be followed up with the tempo gaining...\(\text{\textit{W}}\)c5. Best in my view is 8.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)xf6 gxf6 9.0-0! (9.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)b3 \(\text{\textit{W}}\)g5 is quite playable for Black) and now Black has tried several moves:

d1) 9...0-0-0? cuts off the queen's retreat and causes her severe discomfort after 10.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)d5 e6 11.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)b3! \(\text{\textit{W}}\)a4 12.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)c3 \(\text{\textit{W}}\)b4 13.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)b5 d5 14.a3 \(\text{\textit{W}}\)d6 15.exd5 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)e5 16.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)xd7+ \(\text{\textit{W}}\)xd7 17.dxe6 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)xe6 18.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)h5 with obvious advantage in G. Shahade - Thorhallsson, Elbow Beach Club 2001.

d2) 9...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)g8 10.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)d5! (a key move, and also the main response to 'neutral' Black options on move 9) 10...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)h3 11.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)f3 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)e5 12.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)e3! (12.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)f4 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)d7 achieves little, and is usually only used for purposes of repetition) 12...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)h6! (of course 12...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)d7 is rather pliant, and White has a clear plan in 13.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)h5! e6 14.f4 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)c6 15.f5 with a dangerous initiative in Romero Holmes - Cifuentes Parada, El Vendrell 1996) 13.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)d5 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)xe3 14.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)xe3 \(\text{\textit{W}}\)d2! (safer than 14...0-0-0 15.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)h1 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)d7 16.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)d5 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)de8 17.a4 f5 18.b4 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)d8 19.exf5 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)xf5 20.a5 Borriss - Sherzer, Santiago (U-20) 1990, when it is White's queenside play which looks much the more serious,) 15.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)h1 \(\text{\textit{W}}\)xd1 16.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)xd1 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)d7 17.f4 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)c6!? (if 17...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)g4 18.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)xg4! \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)xg4 19.f5, Black can extricate his bishop by means of 19...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)e2 20.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)f2 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)b5, but the white knight on d5 will still be a fine piece securing some advantage) 18.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)d5 \(\text{\textit{W}}\)c8 19.c3 and although the players agreed a draw here in Ebeling - Krogius, Jyvaskyla 1991, Black is rather short on counterplay.

d3) 9...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)xd4 10.\(\text{\textit{W}}\)xd4 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)c8 (But not 10...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)c5? 11.\(\text{\textit{W}}\)xc5 dxc5 12.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)b5! Short - Anand, Amsterdam 1992)

when White has to choose between two interesting options:

e31) 11.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)d5. An interesting pawn sacrifice courtesy of Beating the Sicilian 2, which initially breathed life back into the then ailing 9.0-0. In general White was able to generate substantial play for a pawn, but the defender eventually found an antidote in the form of 11...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)c5 12.\(\text{\textit{W}}\)d2 (12.\(\text{\textit{W}}\)xc5?! \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)xc5 leads to an ending in which the bishop pair is likely to really come into its own) 12...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)c2 13.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)e3 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)h6! (13...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)c5 14.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)b3! \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)g7 15.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)xb7 e6 16.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)b5! \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)xb5 17.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)xc8† is an elegant trick which Vassilios Kotronias has had the opportunity to reveal twice) 14.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)xh6 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)xe2 15.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)g7 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)f8 16.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)c1
The Classical

\[ \text{x}c1 \ 17. \text{x}c1 \space \text{c}6 \ 18. \text{d}c7^+ \space \text{d}7 \ 19. \text{w}xf8 \space \text{we}4 \ 20. \text{g}7 \space \text{xc}7 \text{and Black's queen will return to g6, and White will be hard pressed to avert an ending in which his opponent enjoys ample compensation for the exchange.} \]

e32) 11.a4! This now appears the more promising. If Black does not prevent it then there is a very simple but rather effective positional idea of exchanging light-squared bishops on b5. If he does then the pawn sacrifice is enhanced. 11... \text{c}5 12. \text{d}2 and again a choice:

   e321) 12... \text{g}7 13. \text{b}5 f5 14. \text{d}5! \text{xb}5 15. \text{axb}5 \text{f}xe4 16. \text{g}5 \text{f}6 17. \text{xf}6^+ \text{xf}6 18. \text{xf}6 \text{e}5 19. \text{xe}5^+ \text{d}xe5 20. \text{a}7 \pm \text{Hracek - Heberla, Czech 2004.}

   e322) 12...h5 13. \text{b}5 \text{h}6 14. \text{d}3 e6 15.e5! clearing the e4 square was no less unpleasant for Black in Gallagher - Weindl, Switzerland 2004.

   e323) 12...a6!? At this point I wrote in 1998 "the interpolation of a4 and ...a6 benefits White here in view of the weakened b6-square." Good authorial waffle, but I had no idea of quite what specific importance this would turn out to be!

   In fact, in the case analogous with the 'refutation' of 11. \text{d}5 given above (see e31) the difference is probably decisive, although so far as I can see this has not yet been mentioned in the literature. After 13. \text{d}5! \text{xc}2 14. \text{e}3 \text{h}6 15. \text{x}h6 \text{xe}2

16. \text{g}7?! is no more promising than it was above, but there is an additional possibility: 16. \text{b}6! \text{c}7 17. \text{g}7! \text{f}8 18. \text{xd}7! (At this moment when Black must recapture with the rook. The king should be kept in the centre, and weakening the back rank wins time too.) 18... \text{xd}7 19. \text{ac}1 \text{d}8 20. \text{xh}7! (preventing ...\text{xe}4 which would grant the black queen a route back to g6 and effective defence) and White threatens to double on the c-file, while Black will have great difficulty playing with any pieces other than the queen. If this holds up, it should make a major contribution to bolstering the reputation of 7. \text{e}2.

9. \text{f}5!?

   Exploiting the absence of the move ...e6, this at the same time prepares an interesting pawn sacrifice, as we shall see. 9... \text{a}5

Extraordinarily, Black's main alternative here is the 'un-developing move' 9... \text{c}8!? Somehow, even if the move makes sense,
White can take some encouragement from the fact that his opponent is that desperate to remove the knight from f5. After 10.a4 e6 11.\(\text{\textDelta}\)e3 b6 12.0-0 \(\text{\textDelta}b7\) White has a choice of decent plans. 13.\(\text{\textW}d2\), followed by \(\text{\textA}d1\) and \(\text{\textC}c4\), or perhaps even more simply as in Stefansson - Zubarev, Las Vegas (Wch) 1999, just 13.\(\text{\textH}h1!!\)? \(\text{\textE}c7\) 14.f4. Now Black did himself no favours by 14...0-0? since the attack almost plays itself and after 15.\(\text{\textA}c4\) \(\text{\textH}h8\) 16.\(\text{\textW}h5\) \(\text{\textW}e8\) 17.f5 \(\text{\textA}e5\) 18.\(\text{\textA}b3\) granting the e4 square with 18...d5? was already the last straw. 19.exd5 \(\text{\textC}c5\) 20.\(\text{\textA}ae1\) \(\text{\textG}g8\) 21.\(\text{\textA}e4\) \(\text{\textX}xe3\) 22.\(\text{\textA}xf6\) 1-0. It seems unlikely that the time consuming 9...\(\text{\textA}c8\) will solve Black's problems. After all, as I have said before, the knight is a good piece on e3!

10.0-0 \(\text{\textA}xf5\) 11.exf5 \(\text{\textW}xf5\) 12.\(\text{\textD}d5\)

12...\(\text{\textG}d8\)

Of course Black has to deal with \(\text{\textC}c7\) and the alternative 12...\(\text{\textB}b8\) also scarcely leaves castling realistically on the agenda.

One very powerful attacker then built White's initiative effectively with 13.\(\text{\textG}g4\) \(\text{\textW}g6\) 14.\(\text{\textA}h5\) \(\text{\textG}g7\) 15.\(\text{\textE}e1\) \(\text{\textG}g8\) 16.\(\text{\textD}g3\) \(\text{\textF}5\) 17.c3 \(\text{\textD}d7\) 18.\(\text{\textB}b4!\) e6 19.\(\text{\textD}f4\) \(\text{\textE}c7\) 20.a4 \(\text{\textF}6\) 21.\(\text{\textB}b5\) in Vitolinsh - Grokhotov, USSR (ch) 1975.

13.\(\text{\textG}g4\) \(\text{\textG}g6\) 14.\(\text{\textA}h5\) \(\text{\textG}g7\) 15.\(\text{\textE}e1\) \(\text{\textF}6\) 16.\(\text{\textD}f4\) \(\text{\textD}d7\) 17.\(\text{\textC}4!\)

There is no set formula for handling the White side here. His strengths are his opponent's lack of effective development and his own active minor pieces. Given the positional costs of the move ...\(\text{\textE}5\), the knight also enjoys a de facto outpost on f4. Still, as in the example in the note above, it is a queenside pawn storm that gives this initiative its extra bite.

17...\(\text{\textG}d8\) 18.\(\text{\textB}b4\) \(\text{\textW}g5?!\)

It is not easy to give Black good advice here, although he might have preferred the immediate 18...\(\text{\textE}e5\). What is certain is that this 'changing of the f7 guard' is not viable, as Kotronias' excellent combination shows.

19.\(\text{\textG}g3\) \(\text{\textD}e5\) 20.\(\text{\textA}xg7!\) \(\text{\textX}xf7\) 21.\(\text{\textX}xe6\) \(\text{\textW}f5\) 22.\(\text{\textW}a4!\) \(\text{\textC}c8\) 23.\(\text{\textB}b5!\)

The hallmark of a strong attacking player. White is in no hurry to recoup his material, but rather uses the powerful position of his knight on e6 to spearhead a direct onslaught.

23...\(\text{\textG}e5\)

Or 23...\(\text{\textG}g5\) 24.\(\text{\textX}xg5\) \(\text{\textF}xg5\) 25.\(\text{\textB}xa6\) \(\text{\textC}c7\) 26.\(\text{\textB}ab1\) \(\text{\textB}b6\) 27.\(\text{\textW}b3\) \(\text{\textA}a5\) 28.\(\text{\textW}f3!\) and White invades decisively.

24.\(\text{\textB}xa6!\) \(\text{\textW}xe6\) 25.axb7! \(\text{\textG}c7\)
The Classical

25...\texttt{$\mathsf{bxc7}$} is met simply with 26.\texttt{$\mathsf{eb1}$} \texttt{$\mathsf{c8}$} 27.\texttt{$\mathsf{a7}$} mating.

26.\texttt{$\mathsf{a5}$} \texttt{$\mathsf{d7}$} 27.\texttt{$\mathsf{xd8}$} \texttt{$\mathsf{xd8}$}
28.\texttt{$\mathsf{b8}$} \texttt{$\mathsf{c8}$} 29.\texttt{$\mathsf{ab1}$} \texttt{$\mathsf{d7}$} 30.\texttt{$\mathsf{a7}$}!
30.\texttt{$\mathsf{e8}$}!.

30...\texttt{$\mathsf{h5}$} 31.\texttt{$\mathsf{b7}$} \texttt{$\mathsf{h7}$} 32.\texttt{$\mathsf{eb1}$} \texttt{$\mathsf{h4}$} and Black decided he had had enough, as 33.\texttt{$\mathsf{a5}$} \texttt{$\mathsf{e8}$} 34.\texttt{$\mathsf{f5}$} is crushing.

1–0

Vintage Kotronias, in his element in such attacking positions. White's compensation in any case looks very believable, and my hunch is there will not be too many takers for the cause of 7...\texttt{$\mathsf{a6}$}.

Game 24
Balashov – Makarov
Smolensk 2000

1.e4 c5 2.\texttt{$\mathsf{df3}$} \texttt{$\mathsf{c6}$} 3.d4 \texttt{$\mathsf{cx}d4$} 4.\texttt{$\mathsf{xd4}$} \texttt{$\mathsf{df6}$} 5.\texttt{$\mathsf{dc3}$} \texttt{$\mathsf{d6}$} 6.\texttt{$\mathsf{g5}$} \texttt{$\mathsf{e6}$} 7.\texttt{$\mathsf{d2}$} \texttt{$\mathsf{a6}$}
8.0–0–0 \texttt{$\mathsf{h6}$}

9.\texttt{$\mathsf{xc6}$}!

From the author's standpoint, this has been a very tough decision. At the time when The Complete Richter-Rauzer came out (1998) I would have had no hesitation at all in building a repertoire around the flexible and far from innocuous retreat 9.\texttt{$\mathsf{e3}$}. Indeed, at that stage, the line to be recommended here was little more than a mildly eccentric backwater. Now it is the height of fashion! I have to admit that there is still a part of me that rebels against this exchange on c6. Indeed there should be! It strengthens Black's centre, enables him to effect the move ...\texttt{$\mathsf{d5}$} under unusually secure circumstances, and opens the b-file for action that potentially could leave the white king most uncomfortable.

So what can White boast in return? Well, let us note first that the b-file problems are for the moment likely to be largely academic. Not only is the b8 square well covered, this is unlikely to change for a long time since the f4 bishop is pretty difficult to dislodge. In fact this is a great piece – White enjoys a qualitative lead in development as well as a quantitative one. The question is: Can Black neutralise this initiative? In essence, it boils down to dynamic vs. static features, and this usually makes for an entertaining scrap.

9...\texttt{$\mathsf{bxc6}$} 10.\texttt{$\mathsf{f4}$} \texttt{$\mathsf{d5}$} 11.\texttt{$\mathsf{e3}$}!

Again White is able to find aggressive squares for his pieces, which at the same time restrict his opponent's mobilisation – an unusual and very effective dark
square influence is being exerted along two sweeping diagonals. Still, advantages in development have a habit of being rather transient, and Black to move now has a very fundamental choice of ways to get his bits into the game.

11...a5?!

Interestingly, even as my opinions about the variation as a whole have fluctuated wildly, my belief that this is the most promising try has stayed quite stable. Let us first take a look at the others:

a) 11...e7 represents Black's simplest mode of development, but the potency of the attack which White can generate is in turn the best advertisement for his dynamic chances. As usual here White plays 12...e2, directed against ...h5, when Black can try:

a1) 12..0-0 13..h4!? (the older 13.g3 h8 14.c7 d7 15.e5 b7! 16.exd5 cxd5 17.e4 e8 18.d3 f6 of Nisipeanu - Ivanchuk, Las Vegas (Wch) 1999 is to my mind less convincing) 13..e8 14.g3 h8 15..c7! d7 16.e5 f8. Fressinet – Bacrot, France (ch) 2000 and now 17.f4!? g8 18.h5! a7 19.g4! – Gofshtein, would have presented Black with huge problems.

a2) 12...d7 has aspirations to control e5 and maybe have the liquidating ...g5 available too. White should try 13..e4 when after 13...b6 14.g3 d4?! 15.b1 a5 16.exd4 e5 17.d2 b6 18.c4 he already had a significant advantage in Khalifman - Xu Jun, China-Russia Shanghai 2001. Black can try a couple of improvements, but 14..g6 which has been suggested looks very dangerous too in view of 15.exd5 cxd5 16.exd5! exd5 17.d5 with every prospect of winning back material with a strong initiative. Also 13...0-0 failed in dramatic fashion to 14.exd5 cxd5 15.xh6! in Bauer – Chabanon, France (ch) 2003 since if 15..gxh6 16.xh6 e5 (16..e8 17.d3 d6 18.f4! then 17.e4! dxe4 (otherwise 18.g5 will be too strong) 18.xd8 xd8 19.h3! when White has regained material and retains a powerful attack.

b) 11...b4 does not overly impress me. Since 12.a3 looks good, it is not even a legitimate move order for transposing to the main game. White has 12.a3!? a5 (12..xc3 13.xc3 e4 14.xg7 f6 15.xf6 xf6 16.e5! e7 17.g4 favours White) 13.e2 0-0 14.e5 d7
(14...hxg3 15.c3 e4 16.e3 f6 17.fxe5 fxe5 g5 was better for White after the queen exchange in Degraeve - Apicella, France 1999, but 19.f4! e7 20.f3 could have heralded a still more punishing response.) 15.g3 c7 16.he1 f6 17.xh6 e7 18.h5 xe5 19.f4 xf4† 20.xf4 e5 21.h4 d8 and Black's strong centre gave him counter-chances in Mainka - Kritz, Germany (ch) Hoeckendorf 2004. However, while ...f6 can be quite a potent idea, Black really seems to me to lack a 'plan b'. So why not play a move which really acts as a deterrent to this pawn break. After 16.d3!

16...f6 17.wg6 is really too dangerous, while 'quiet' moves like 16...e7 17.he1 h8 allow 18.h3! and if now 18...f6, the sacrifice 19.xh6 gxh6 20.xh6† g8 21.e3 xe5 22.f4! is very strong.

c) 11...e7 also makes a rather artificial impression, especially when development deficit is Black's main challenge. Chandler - Bellin, Birmingham 2000 was typical. 12.exd5 cxd5 13.a2 a7 14.g3 d4 15.d3 d7 16.xd4 c5 17.e5 xf2 18.f3 c8 19.d3 b6?! and now White could have caused quite severe problems already with 20.c4!.

12.e2! b4?!

It is easy to be wise after the event. In putting the question to this move, it is worth reminding ourselves that it is only the extraordinary energy of White's solution that reveals its deficiencies. The problem is that after the coming exchange on c3, White's dark squared bishop (his pride and joy in this variation) will attain new heights and Black's inability to contest it will compensate for a pawn and some inconvenience to the white king.

Two alternatives, the second of which is of great importance and for a time gave me serious pause for thought before advocating White's hyper-aggressive set-up:

a) 12...c5 is all about driving away the queen in order to play ...d4. However, positional problems persist after 13.g3 d4 14.a4 b4 (14...xe4? 15.f3 d5 16.c4!) 15.b3! xb3 16.axb3 d7 17.xd4 e5 18.xd7! xd7 19.xe5 e6 20.d1 e7?! (20...d8 21.xa6! looks grim too) 21.d6! a5 22.c5+ h5 23.f3 when White had a terrific grip, Balashov - Kiselev, Russia 2000.

b) 12...dxe4!? is a tough nut to crack.
b1) I have spent a long time trying to make 13...c4 work (13...e4 d5 14.exd5 cxd5 15.d6 is also not without some venom, but is at the same time unnecessarily speculative) but had to bow to the inevitable after the excellent reply 13...f5! 14.f3 (14.g4 xg4 15.b6 xf4 16.b1 d7 17.xd7, Nataf - Gersho n, Bermuda, 1999 is fun, and after 18.b7t c7 19.d1t d6 20.xd6t xd6 21.e4 etc. White should have enough to draw, but not more) 14...c5! 15.d2 0-0 16.fxe4 xe4 17.xe4 xe4 18.d3 a4 and Black holds the balance. Again 18.xh6? should lead to no more than a draw by perpetual.

b2) 13.g3! is much more to the point, threatening 14.c7 and monitoring the g7 pawn too. The real conceptual breakthrough is that White is even willing to ‘mend’ his opponent’s compromised structure in the interests of maintaining the momentum of his initiative. After 13...d5! 14.exd5 (14.e5 xec3 15.exd5 g5t) 14...cxd5 15.b1 d7?! he can try:

b21) 16.f3?! which was recommended by Tsesarsky, who offered only the rather compliant 16...xf3 17.xf3, when indeed it is plausible that the opening of another file piles more woe upon the defender. Unfortunately, the liquidation which accompanies the very natural 16...b5! 17.e1 xe2 18.xe2 exf3 19.xf3 e7 looks just fine for Black. White adapted sensibly in Zaragatski-Rau, Germany U18(ch) Willingen 2003 with 20.c4 0-0 21.cxd5 e8 22.ed2 exd5 23.xd5 b6 24.xd8t and a draw was agreed.

b22) 16.e5! is strongly preferable, and consistent with White’s fundamental strategy: keep the black pieces at home! Lines like 16...g8 17.f4!? b5 18.h5!
g6 19.f5?! look very promising, but the whole thing needs practical tests.

13.\text{\texttt{\textbullet}}e5! \texttt{\textbullet}xc3

13...dxe4 is less ambitious, arguably less consistent and also probably falls short of equality although the young Chinese talent Bu Xiangzhi’s patronage gives pause for thought. White retained a structural plus after 14.\texttt{\textbullet}xf6 gxf6 15.\texttt{\textbullet}xe4 \texttt{\textbullet}e7 16.\texttt{\textbullet}d3 \texttt{\textbullet}a7 17.a3 \texttt{\textbullet}xc3 18.\texttt{\textbullet}xc3 in Degraeve – Lerner, Koszalin 1999, while 14.\texttt{\textbullet}g3?! \texttt{\textbullet}xc3 15.\texttt{\textbullet}c7 \texttt{\textbullet}xb2+ 16.\texttt{\textbullet}xb2 \texttt{\textbullet}b4+ 17.\texttt{\textbullet}a1 \texttt{\textbullet}d5 18.\texttt{\textbullet}xg7 \texttt{\textbullet}f8 19.\texttt{\textbullet}d4 \texttt{\textbullet}d7 20.\texttt{\textbullet}g3 \texttt{\textbullet}g8 21.c4 c5 22.\texttt{\textbullet}b2 \texttt{\textbullet}b4 23.a3 \texttt{\textbullet}d3 24.\texttt{\textbullet}xd3 exd3 25.\texttt{\textbullet}xd3 was a more punchy route to a good position in Ponomariov – Bu Xiangzhi, Lausanne 2001.

14.\texttt{\textbullet}xc3 \texttt{\textbullet}xa2

15.\texttt{\textbullet}d3!!

The priority of course is that Black should not be able to land a knight on e4, when his counter-chances are real indeed! The huge power of the bishop on c3 – especially in the context of opposite coloured bishops - in conjunction with the weakness of g7 are the grounds for White’s tremendous idea. I have to admit, I have found no flaw with Balashov’s play, but in later encounters White has demonstrated alternative methods of causing trouble too:

a) 15.f3 0–0 16.b3! \texttt{\textbullet}xe4 17.\texttt{\textbullet}xe4 \texttt{\textbullet}d5 18.\texttt{\textbullet}xd5 \texttt{\textbullet}xd5 (18...\texttt{\textbullet}d5 19.\texttt{\textbullet}d2! \texttt{\textbullet}a3 20.\texttt{\textbullet}d4) 19.\texttt{\textbullet}e1 \texttt{\textbullet}f5?! (19...f6! is not so clear.) 20.\texttt{\textbullet}b2 \texttt{\textbullet}g6? 21.\texttt{\textbullet}c3 \texttt{\textbullet}f6 22.\texttt{\textbullet}d4 1–0 Chanoine – Santo Roman, Paris 2001 is obviously striking. While Black could have defended much better, the potency of opposite coloured bishops for the attacker was very much in evidence.

b) 15.f3!? 0–0 16.g4 \texttt{\textbullet}d8 (16...dxe4 17.fxe4 e5 18.b3! and capturing on g4 is too risky, although White will enjoy a serious kingside attack in any case) 17.g5 d4?! (17...\texttt{\textbullet}a1+ 18.\texttt{\textbullet}d2 \texttt{\textbullet}d8+ 19.\texttt{\textbullet}d3 \texttt{\textbullet}a4 20.gxf6 \texttt{\textbullet}xd3 21.\texttt{\textbullet}xd3 \texttt{\textbullet}h4! 22.fxg7 also clearly holds dangers for Black, but no clear win is in sight) 18.\texttt{\textbullet}xd4 \texttt{\textbullet}xd4 19.\texttt{\textbullet}xd4 \texttt{\textbullet}a1+ 20.\texttt{\textbullet}d2 \texttt{\textbullet}xh1 21.\texttt{\textbullet}d8\texttt{\textbullet}h7 22.gxf6 \texttt{\textbullet}b7 23.\texttt{\textbullet}c7 c5 24.fxg7 \texttt{\textbullet}g2 (24...\texttt{\textbullet}g8 is tougher, but White is still winning after 25.\texttt{\textbullet}h4 \texttt{\textbullet}h7 26.g8\texttt{\textbullet}h8 \texttt{\textbullet}xg8 27.\texttt{\textbullet}f6 – Boto) 25.\texttt{\textbullet}f8 \texttt{\textbullet}g5+ 26.\texttt{\textbullet}e1 e5 27.\texttt{\textbullet}xe5 \texttt{\textbullet}xf8 28,gxf8\texttt{\textbullet}xg8 29.\texttt{\textbullet}xf7+ \texttt{\textbullet}g7 30.\texttt{\textbullet}xg7+ \texttt{\textbullet}xg7 31.\texttt{\textbullet}f2 1–0. E. Hossain - Mohammad, Bangladesh (ch) 2003.
15...dxe4 16...g3!!

The star move, and a graphic illustration of the weakness of Black's dark squares which as we shall see, persists deep into the endgame phase.

16...exd3 17...xg7

17...xg8

17...d2† does not help. Balashov himself gives the nice line 18...xd2 xe4† 19...e3 xg8 20...d8† xg8 21...xf8† c7 22...e5† b7 23...b4† a7 24...c7 and wins.

18...xf6 d2†

18...a1† 19...d2 a4 20...e3! - Balashov - also seems to be good. Black can try 20...b7 21...xd3 c5, but 22.f3! consolidates, and Black's dark square misery continues unabated.

19...xd2 w d5† 20...c1 w g5† 21...xg5 hxg5

21...xg5?! 22...f6 xd5 is tougher, although 23.c4 evicts the rook, with some positional advantage guaranteed.

22...f6 b7 23.h4! gxh4 24...xh4 c5

25.g4...f3 26...d3 e2 27...e3...f1

28.g5

Detailed coverage of the remainder of this game is clearly beyond our scope given limited space. Suffice to say that the dark-squared bishop remains the star of the show, and Black soon decides that a rook is a fair price to pay to get rid of it!

28...d7 29.c4 c6 30...d2 Ad8†?

31...xd8...xd8† 32...c2 g8 33...g4 d6 34.b3 h8 35.g6 fxg6 36...xg6 h3 37...g7...f5† 38...b2 c6 39...a7...b6 40...d7 c6 41...d2 h1 42...g3 a5 43...g8 a4 44...c8†...b7 45...xc5 b1† 46...a3 axb3 47...b5†...c6 48...xb3 c1 49...b4 h1 50...a3 b1† 51...c3 e1 52...a6†...b7 53...a5...b6 54...b5†...c6 55...a2...c1† 56...d4...d1† 57...e5 e1† 58...f6...d3 59...a6†...c7 60...c5†...b7 61...a3...c2 62...a2

1–0
1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4 d5 e6 5.g5 e6 7.d2 a6 8.0-0-0 d7

A flexible and popular developing move which as we shall see does not yet commit Black to any single set-up. Along with the 8...h6 of Game 24, this is by far the most significant choice. Others tend to be transpositional. The most significant, 8...e7, is likely to lead to the main lines of game 27.

9.f4 b5

One of the main lines of the Rauzer over many years, this attempt to create rapid play on the queenside without committing the e7 bishop has enjoyed a fluctuating reputation but has also enjoyed the truly fierce partisanship of a committed group of devotees. Chief among these are the talented Croatian grandmaster Zdenko Kozul and the wily Yugoslav Branko Damljanovic who have repeatedly shown the enormous power latent in the black bishop pair following the exchange on f6.

Two other moves also deserve detailed consideration:

a) 9...e7 10.d3!? b5

11.xf6 and now:
a1) 11...xf6 is not quite respectable. After 12.xd6 e7 (12...a7!? is interesting. 13.e5 e7 14.d2 a5 15.b1 b4 16.g5 xxc3 17.xc3 xxc3 18.bxc3 a5 restricts White to a modest edge, but 14.d3!? is worth a look too) 13.d2 b4 14.a4 b8!? (after 14...a7 15.e3 a5 16.b3 b7 17.d2 Black’s compensation is rather effortlessly neutralised) 15.d4 c7 16.b6 a7 17.b1 0-0 18.xd7 xd7 19.e5 c8 20.d3 c5 was Illescas Cordoba - San Segundo, Madrid
1997 when 21.f5! would have been strong.

a2) 11...gxf6 is the main line and introduces yet another version of the doubled f-pawn structure. It bears obvious comparison with the main game. White has withdrawn his knight to f3, while Black’s bishop is committed to the relatively modest e7. Indeed there is a sense that the Black position is a little passive in comparison with the 9...b5 lines. After 12...b1 wb6 13.f5 0–0–0 14.fxe6 fxe6 15.g3! b8 16...e8 17.e1 he8 18.e2 we reach a parting of the ways:

![Chess Diagram]

a21) 18...e5 19.f1 c4 20.f4 f8 (20...e3 21.xe6 xd1 22.xd1 1± completely and unacceptably cedes the light squares) 21.f2!. Instructive. The exchange of queens will still leave White with enough targets in the Black position. The priority in this strategy should be given to restraint. 21...xf2 (21...b7 offered more chances of counterplay, but 22.d2! goes a good way towards nullifying this too) 22.exf2 f5 23.exf5 e3 (23...exf5 24.d4!) 24.e1 xf5 25.g5 e5 26.d5 d4 27.xc8 xc8 28.c3 e6 29.xe6 xe6 30.b6 1–0. Bruzon – Molander, Santo Domingo 2003. A snappy victory for the talented young Cuban.

a22) 18...f8 19.f1 g7 20.f4 and now:

a221) 20...h8 21.c3 e7 was Adams – Timman, Wijk aan Zee 2004. White played 22.f2(?!), which granted time for 22...de8 so that 23.d4 could be met with 23...a5! and some counterplay. As Adams himself points out the immediate 22.d4! was better since 22...xd4?! 23.cxd4 is very pleasant for White, while 22...de8 23.xc6† xc6 24.f2 again represents a success for White’s strategy of constraint.

a222) 20...c5 21.c3 f5 (21...h6 22.d4 xf4 23.xf4! makes limited sense as 23...e5 can be met with 24.b3! and 25.h4 with substantial positional plusses) 22.exf5 exf5 23.f2 b4 24.cxb4 xb4 25.a3 c6 26.c1 xf2 27.xf2 d4 28.d1 xf3 29.xf3 and White retained a small advantage based on his opponent’s substantially damaged structure in Kolev – Damljanovic, Skopje 2002.

b) 9...h6!? is also interesting. Black prepares ...g5 and control of the e5 square. Interestingly, recent attention
has centred on White refusing to return the pawn lightly. The resulting positions are, as we shall see, full of tension. 10.\textit{h4} g5?! (Rather than 10...\textit{gxe4}?! 11.\textit{gxe4} \textit{xf6} (11...\textit{g5}? 12.\textit{gxe4} \textit{gxf4} 13.\textit{c3} is a major accident) 12.\textit{f5} \textit{a5} 13.\textit{xd6} 14.\textit{xh6} \textit{c7} (or 14...0-0-0 15.\textit{d1} \textit{c7} 16.\textit{f2} \textit{e7} 17.\textit{d3} with a pleasant position) 15.\textit{d2} \textit{xf4}! 16.\textit{xf6} \textit{xf6} 17.\textit{e4} \textit{e7} 18.\textit{xc6} \textit{xc6} 19.\textit{f5} \textit{xf5} 20.\textit{xf5} \textit{xf5} with a decisive plus in Guseinov - Mamedov, Baku (U-20) 2002.) 11.\textit{fxg5} \textit{g4} 12.\textit{e2} \textit{c5} 13.\textit{f3} \textit{c7} 14.\textit{eh1}!

Initially played by Ziatdinov in a couple of striking outings, this indirect defence of g5 ensures that Black will not win back his pawn so easily. Moreover, the considerable tension that arises in the position greatly restricts his options, and f7 is potentially very vulnerable.

14...\textit{b5} (14...\textit{g8}? 15.\textit{g3}! \textit{h5}

16.\textit{xe5} \textit{xe5} 17.\textit{xe5}! \textit{dxe5} 18.\textit{h5} heralds a nasty accident on f7. Ziatdinov – Barbero, Montpellier 1994) 15.\textit{f1}!. It is important to free up the d1 square as a comfortable retreat for the knight. 15...\textit{b4} 16.\textit{d1} \textit{b8} 17.\textit{b1} a5 18.b3!. The key move. Since e3 is out of bounds due to the ‘g5 situation’ the knight is headed for c4 via b2. Black has tried:

b1) 18...\textit{h5} (18...\textit{g6}?! 19.g3 \textit{g5} is met with the immediate 20.gxh6! although after 20...\textit{xg6} 21.\textit{xf3} \textit{a5}?! this still might be Black’s best choice) 19.\textit{gxf5} \textit{xf5} (maybe 19...\textit{xg5} 20.\textit{g5} \textit{a4} (Gofshtein) 21.\textit{b2} \textit{a5} but both f7 and d6 remain problems) 20.gxf5 \textit{xf5} 21.\textit{xf5} \textit{xf6} was Acs - van der Wiel, Wijk aan Zee ‘B’ 2003, when 22.\textit{fg1}! 23.\textit{d4} 24.\textit{d3}! \textit{e7} 24.f4 looks good for White according to Acs and Hazai.

b2) 18...\textit{a4} 19.\textit{b2} \textit{a5} 20.\textit{axb3} \textit{a5}! A mistake which nicely illustrates the problem of altering the delicate balance of force around g5. (20...\textit{h5} 21.\textit{g5} \textit{a5} 22.\textit{g5} \textit{a8} is better though either 23.\textit{a4} or 23.\textit{b5} look quite promising) 21.g6! \textit{xf6} 22.\textit{xe7} 23.\textit{xe7} This exchange is pretty disastrous for the black king. Not just d6 but also the dark squares on the f-file become very exposed. The speed of the denouement is still striking, 23.\textit{d7} 24.\textit{c4} 25.\textit{xc4} 26.e5! d5 27.\textit{d3} 28.\textit{f4} 1–0. Karjakin - Nijboer, Wijk aan Zee 2003.
Back to the main game with 9...b5.

10.\texttt{xf6}

Clearly the most principled continuation.

10...\texttt{xf6}

10...\texttt{xf6} is inferior due to 11.e5 dxe5 12.\texttt{dx5} \texttt{d8} 13.\texttt{d6} \texttt{xd6} 14.\texttt{xd6} exf4 when either 15.\texttt{e4}? or 15.\texttt{xa6} \texttt{xa6} 16.\texttt{b5} \texttt{a7} 17.\texttt{xa7} \texttt{d}x\texttt{a7} 18.\texttt{d4}! \texttt{c6} 19.\texttt{xc7} \texttt{f8} 20.\texttt{d2}! offer good chances.

11.\texttt{b1} \texttt{b6} 12.\texttt{xc6} \texttt{xc6} 13.\texttt{f3}?!?

For a long while 13.\texttt{e1} has been the most fashionable move here. The claim is that by floating the idea of \texttt{d5} into the equation, White forces his opponent to make some kind of concession. It has been a long haul for me towards the conclusion that, while Black may enter this system with high hopes of a more than usually active role for his king's bishop, in many cases the unpretentious \texttt{e7} is not such a bad square and slightly misplacing the queen in order to coax it there is not necessarily best.

Specifically Black's counterplay in the variation 13...\texttt{e7} 14.\texttt{f5} \texttt{c5} 15.\texttt{d3} \texttt{b4} 16.\texttt{e2} a5(!) (likely to replace the older 16...\texttt{e5} which aims to restrict White's knight, but in fact offers it a choice of promising routes via g3 or c1) 17.fxe6 \texttt{xe6} 18.\texttt{f4} \texttt{e5} 19.\texttt{f1} a4 20.\texttt{c4}, Nijboer - Acs, Wijk aan Zee 2003, when by flicking in 20...a3! it seems that White could be caused some embarrassment. Hence we shall try to expend no tempi on moving the queen, even if it is necessary to sacrifice a pawn in the process.

13...\texttt{b4}

Highly committal. There is the danger that if Black is not actually taking on \texttt{e4} then the text may merely be driving his opponent's knight to a better square, offering White's bishop more promising options than \texttt{d3} and rendering any future ...0-0-0 highly problematic. Rather a
menu of drawbacks for any move to bear.

For all these reasons I am more inclined towards the solid 13...\(\text{w}c5!\)!? eg 14.\(\text{dd}3\) h5 15.\(\text{we}1!\)!? (Only now. The tempo expended on ...h5 means that Black can no longer get the level of counterplay described in Nijboer – Acs above. Waiting for ...h5 to play this queen move seems like a fair rule of thumb.) 15...0–0–0 (If now 15...\(\text{de}7\) 16.\(\text{ee}2\) e5 17.h4!? (fixing the h5 pawn in order to target it) 17... a5 18.\(\text{gg}3\) \(\text{dd}7\) 19.\(\text{ee}2\) \(\text{ag}8\) 20.\(\text{ff}3\) a4 21.\(\text{hxh}5\) a3 22.b4! \(\text{cc}4\) 23.g4 with clear advantage Kosteniuk - Bu Xiangzhi, China-Russia, Shanghai (Juniors) 2001.) 16.\(\text{ff}1\) \(\text{hh}6!\) 17.\(\text{fxe}6\) \(\text{fxe}6\) 18.\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{we}5\) 19.\(\text{ff}2\) \(\text{bb}7\) (19...\(\text{ee}3!?\) is risky due to 20.\(\text{xe}3\) \(\text{xf}6\) 21.a4! (21.\(\text{bb}6\) \(\text{bb}7\) 22.\(\text{xb}5\) axb5 23.\(\text{xb}5\) \(\text{dd}7\) is just a draw after 24.\(\text{bb}7\) etc) 21...\(\text{we}7\) 22.axb5 axb5 23.\(\text{xb}5\) with promising compensation) 20.\(\text{ff}7\) \(\text{hh}8\) 21.a3 \(\text{xf}7\) 22.\(\text{xf}7\) \(\text{ff}8\) 23.\(\text{gg}6\) \(\text{ee}3\) 24.\(\text{ee}2\) and although Black has some activity for the pawn, there are still enough weaknesses for White to aim at too. Lastin – Palac, European Club Cup, Panormo 2001.

14.\(\text{ee}2\) e5

This has been played on several occasions, and a sneak look back through my private files suggest that a couple of years ago I spent a while on this variation without so much as suspecting Lastin's superbly economical novelty on move 17. Taking the pawn is also a serious option, but White's compensation looks quite attractive enough to recommend the line, and indeed there may even be a decent choice after 14...\(\text{xe}4\) 15.\(\text{xe}6\) (15.\(\text{dd}3!?\) is interesting but untested. Acs and Hazai consider 15...\(\text{bb}7\) (or 15...\(\text{dd}5\) 16.\(\text{hh}5\) 0–0–0 17.\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{bb}7\) 18.\(\text{xe}6\) \(\text{xe}6\) 19.\(\text{ee}2\) d5 20.g3 The bishop pair is scant compensation for the weakness of e6.) 16.\(\text{xe}6\) \(\text{xe}6\) 17.\(\text{ee}2\) although after 17...\(\text{dd}7!?\) I would be happier if the pattern of White’s further development was clearer) 15...\(\text{xe}6\) and now there are two good choices:

![Chess Diagram]

a) 16.\(\text{ff}4\) d5 (or 16...b3!? 17.axb3 \(\text{xb}3\) 18.\(\text{dd}3\) \(\text{xd}3\) 19.\(\text{xd}3\) \(\text{cc}4\) 20.\(\text{he}1\) e5 21.\(\text{bb}4\) – Acs/Hazai, again with definite compensation) 17.\(\text{dd}3\) 0–0–0 18.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{xe}4\) 19.\(\text{ee}2\) \(\text{xd}1\) 20.\(\text{xd}1\) e3 21.\(\text{ff}3\) \(\text{dd}6\) 22.\(\text{xe}6\) \(\text{ee}8\) 23.\(\text{dd}4\) \(\text{cc}7\) 24.g3 and White has a light-square advantage, although until he can round up the e3 pawn there will always be

b) 16.\textit{\textbf{f4}}!? f5 (16...d5 17.\textit{fxf6} \textit{\textbf{c8}} 18.\textit{\textbf{g3}} \textit{\textbf{g8}} 19.\textit{\textbf{d3}}! - Acs/Hazai.) 17.\textit{\textbf{g3}} \textit{\textbf{c6}} 18.\textit{\textbf{xe4}}! \textit{xe4} 19.\textit{\textbf{d2}}! was Acs - Duppel, Germany 2000, when after the best defence 19...\textit{\textbf{c6}}!? 20.\textit{\textbf{e2}} \textit{\textbf{g8}}! Acs and Hazai give 21.\textit{\textbf{he1}} but I also like the look of 21.\textit{\textbf{f3}}!? d5 22.\textit{\textbf{he1}} 0-0-0 23.\textit{\textbf{c1}}! and the coming \textit{\textbf{c4}} break will cause a real headache, en passant notwithstanding.

\textbf{15.\textit{\textbf{g3}}} h5 \textbf{16.h4!} \textit{\textbf{w5}}

Damljanovic's latest try was the pawn sacrifice 16...\textit{\textbf{h6}}!? 17.\textit{\textbf{xd6}} \textit{\textbf{d8}} 18.\textit{\textbf{xh5}} \textit{\textbf{xh5}} 19.\textit{\textbf{xd8}}+ \textit{\textbf{xd8}} 20.\textit{\textbf{xe4}} \textit{\textbf{xe4}} 21.\textit{\textbf{xf6}} \textit{\textbf{xf6}} 22.\textit{\textbf{xa6}} \textit{\textbf{e6}} 23.\textit{\textbf{e2}} \textit{\textbf{e7}} 24.\textit{\textbf{f1}} \textit{\textbf{e3}} 25.\textit{\textbf{g3}} \textit{\textbf{d4}} 26.\textit{\textbf{e4}} \textit{\textbf{h3}} 27.\textit{\textbf{f6}} \textit{\textbf{e6}} with the bishop pair spearheading quite decent compensation. However, 17.\textit{\textbf{e2}}!? looks very plausible here too.

\textbf{17.\textit{\textbf{e2}}!}

Another example of a novelty of 'why didn't I think of that' simplicity! Moving the queen immediately takes the sting out of defences based upon the activation of the bishop commencing ...\textit{\textbf{h6}}, while White has nothing to fear from 17...\textit{\textbf{b5}}?! since the exchange of light-squared bishops is near the top of his menu of positional goals.

\textbf{17...a5} 18.\textit{\textbf{hxh5}} \textit{\textbf{e7}} 19.\textit{\textbf{g4}} a4 20.\textit{\textbf{h3}}!

Another excellent move with both defensive and aggressive designs.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Diagram of the position after 20...a3 21.b3 \textit{\textbf{c8}} 22.\textit{\textbf{g2}}!}
\end{figure}

Now Black is also helpless against \textit{\textbf{c4}}, almost always a powerful move in this variation if it can be effected safely. The speed with which White accumulates almost every advantage imaginable against a player of Kevin Spraggett's calibre is quite awesome and an excellent advert for Lastin's treatment.

\textbf{22...\textit{\textbf{b6}}} 23.\textit{\textbf{c4}} \textit{\textbf{b7}} 24.\textit{\textbf{e2}} \textit{\textbf{g8}} 25.\textit{\textbf{g5}} f\textit{\textbf{xg5}} 26.\textit{\textbf{f6}}!

The rest is a massacre and requires little comment. A very powerful display, and I suspect we shall see a good deal more of these treatments without an early \textit{\textbf{e1}} in the future.

\textbf{26...\textit{\textbf{f8}}} 27.\textit{\textbf{g3}} \textit{\textbf{xc4}} 28.bxc4 \textit{\textbf{c6}} 29.h\textit{\textbf{xg5}} \textit{\textbf{a6}} 30.\textit{\textbf{d2}} \textit{\textbf{xc4}} 31.\textit{\textbf{xb4}} \textit{\textbf{xe4}} 32.\textit{\textbf{b3}} \textit{\textbf{c6}} 33.\textit{\textbf{xa3}} d5 34.\textit{\textbf{g7}}+ \textit{\textbf{d7}} 35.\textit{\textbf{a7}}+ \textit{\textbf{c8}} 36.\textit{\textbf{a5}} \textit{\textbf{c5}}

1-0
The Classical

Game 26
Dolmatov – Makarov
Samara 2000

1.e4 c5 2.d4 c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4
5.\textit{c3} d6 6.\textit{g5} e6 7.\textit{d2} \textit{e7}

With the customary apologies to historical record I have fiddled with
the move order. In fact Makarov chose
7...a6 8.0-0-0 \textit{xd4} 9.\textit{xd4} \textit{e7}, but
it useful to invert this in order to deal
conveniently with a number of minor
lines commencing 7...\textit{e7} here. First
though, this seems like a good moment to
consider various other 7th move choices:

a) 7...h6 does not impress. As we
have seen, every Rauzer player should
be ready to play the familiar structure
with the doubled f-pawns under certain
circumstances, but the enthusiasm for it
embodied in this loss of tempo is regarded
as slightly eccentric. White secures
good play with something like an extra
tempo over lines considered under Game
23 note c2 to 6...\textit{b6}. In Z. Almasi -
Damljanovic, Cacak 1996, White gave a
convincing example of how to handle this
structure after 8.\textit{xf6} gxf6 (8...\textit{xf6}?
9.\textit{db5}) 9.0-0-0 a6 10.f4 \textit{d7} 11.\textit{b1}
\textit{b6} 12.\textit{b3} 0-0-0 13.\textit{e2} \textit{b8}?! (Black
should at least try to prevent
White’s next by 13...h5, although 14.h4!
looks appealing then when the h5 pawn
is distinctly vulnerable.) 14.\textit{h5}! \textit{h7}
15.\textit{hf1} \textit{c8} 16.\textit{e2} \textit{c7} (if 16...\textit{e7}
then 17.\textit{d5}! is strong – a common
motif in such positions) 17.\textit{d4} \textit{xd4}
18.\textit{xd4} \textit{g7} 19.\textit{c4} \textit{e7} 20.\textit{f5} \textit{hh8}
21.\textit{d3} \textit{hg8} 22.a3 and all activity
and life is being squeezed out of Black’s game.
A rosy version of how to handle this
structure, but the f4-f5 plan has featured
many times, and this model execution is a
useful game to know, as well as a warning
against 7...h6.

b) 7...\textit{b6} poses questions for our
repertoire built as it is around 9.f4 rather
than 9.\textit{db3} in the main line of game 25.
Here White can again consider 8.\textit{xf6}
likely to transpose to positions dealt
with under the note to 6...\textit{b6} to game
23. However, as I said there, I am quite
keen not to force these difficult positions
upon the reader. So another alternative
with Garry Kasparov’s stamp of approval.
8.0-0-0!? \textit{xd4} (8...a6 9.\textit{xc6}! bxc6
10.\textit{c4}! \textit{e7} 11.\textit{b3} \textit{b7} (11...e5
12.\textit{xf6} gxf6 13.f4±) 12.f4 \textit{d8} 13.f5
e5 14.g4! h6 15.\textit{xf6} gxf6 16.\textit{b1} was
terrific for White in Vorobiov - Avrukh,
Moscow 2002. The only mystery here
is why there have been few imitators;
the idea looks very fine.) 9.\textit{xd4} \textit{xd4}
10.\textit{xd4} a6

Of course, the simplification may not
be to the taste of those who like a quick
knock-out, but this is definitely one
of the set of Rauzer endings in which I
find it inconceivable that White’s space
advantage should count for nothing. In
particular, bear in mind the weakness of
b6.
Experts vs. the Sicilian

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b1) 11.\(\text{xf6}!\) gxf6 12.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{d}7\) 13.\(\text{b}6\) \(\text{d}8\) 14.\(\text{xd}7\) \(\text{xd}7\) 15.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{g}8\) 16.g3 \(\text{h}6\) 17.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{e}7\) 18.\(\text{hd}1\) \(\text{c}8\) 19.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{c}5\) is not terribly exciting, with undeniable drawish tendencies, but there are pretty well only two results in play which will appeal to those who like to play very safe. It is unlikely to appeal to Black! J. Fernandez Garcia - Estremera Panos, Spain (ch) 2002.

b2) 11.f3 \(\text{d}7\) 12.\(\text{a}4(!)\) was Kasparov’s contribution which, as is customary, set the stage for subsequent tussles. Critical is probably 12...d5 (12...e5 13.\(\text{b}6\!\) favours White, whose knight by one route or another will enjoy the excellent outpost on d5; while after 12...\(\text{c}6\) 13.\(\text{b}6\) \(\text{d}8\) 14.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{c}7\) 15.\(\text{a}5!\) \(\text{c}8\) 16.\(\text{b}4!\) d5 17.\(\text{xc}6\) bxc6 18.\(\text{b}7\) \(\text{d}7\) 19.\(\text{d}2\!). White was richly rewarded for his creative manoeuvres in the influential Kasparov – Mchedlishvili, Bled (ol) 2002) 13.exd5 \(\text{xd}5\) 14.\(\text{c}4\)

\(\text{xa}4\) 15.\(\text{xd}5\) exd5 16.\(\text{xa}4\) f6 17.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{f}7\) 18.\(\text{d}1\) b5 19.\(\text{ad}4\) \(\text{c}5\) 20.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{xe}3\) 21.\(\text{xe}3\) \(\text{he}8\) 22.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{xe}3\) 23.\(\text{xe}3\) \(\text{e}8\) 24.\(\text{xe}8\) \(\text{xe}8\) 25.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{d}7\) and Black held the pawn ending in Volokitin - Gershon, Bermuda 2003.

It might be worth checking out 13.\(\text{xf6}!\) though. After 13...gxf6 14.exd5 White’s coordination may suffer a little after 14...e5 15.\(\text{h}4\), or 14...\(\text{h}6\) 15.\(\text{b}1\) e5 16.\(\text{c}4\!) b5 17.\(\text{b}6\), but whether that will amount to full value for Black’s investment is rather more doubtful.

Now we return to the main game after 7...\(\text{e}7\)

8.0-0-0 a6

8...\(\text{d}4\) 9.\(\text{xd}4\) 0-0 is a quite legitimate transposition of moves leading to Game 27, while 9...b5 10.f4 leads back to the main line here.

9.f4 \(\text{d}4\) 10.\(\text{xd}4\) 10.f4 b5!?
Almost unheard of just 10 years ago, this has already become another major Rauzer system, which has at any rate defied all the more brutal early attempts to kick it into touch. For this reason a solid system will be advocated here, heading for the doubled f-pawn structure but with due preparation.

11...\*e2!?

This requires some explanation since immediately inflicting damage on the opponent’s structure with 11...\*xf6 is by far the more popular choice. In particular a word on two on the popular tries which in my view ‘just miss’ for White:

11...\*xf6 gxf6! (11...\*xf6? 12.e5 dxe5 13.\*c5! (13.\*e4! is also very strong) 13...\*d7 14.\*xb5! meeting 14...\*xb5 with the devastating 15.\*xd7! while if 14...\*e7 simply 15.\*c7+ \*f8 16.\*xe5 is very strong according to Kasparov.) and now:

a) 12.\*e2 \*c7 13.f5 \*c5 14.fxe6 fxe6 15.\*xe5 dxc5 16.\*h5+ \*f8 17.e5
I do find myself disturbed at the large number of positional concessions that White is required to make. The position reminds me of the material of game 24, a true battle between strategic and dynamic features, and yet there it is somehow more believable that White’s initiative is durable and represents genuine compensation. It is true that the clever break 19.a4 is still troublesome for Black since 19...b4 is met by 20.\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}\)e4! dxe4 21.\(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{6}}}\) f7 22.\(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{7}}}\) f7 and White recoups the piece with interest. However, I am attracted to the deflecting 19...h4?! of Kovalev - Supatashvili, Leon 2001. 20.\(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{6}}}\) f7 21.\(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{3}}}\) when 21...0–0?! was OK, and even 21...bxa4 looks worth a look. I offer this so that the reader has a starting point for keeping pace with shifts in high fashion, but personally speaking I am fundamentally sceptical about White’s position.

11...\(\text{\texttt{b}}\text{\texttt{7}}}\) 12.\(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{3}}}\)

What has this manoeuvre achieved? Well, the e-pawn is well defended and the e2 square cleared for the knight, both useful preparations for the familiar strategy of pushing f5 against doubled f-pawns, and also as we shall see, handy too if Black wishes to keep his structure intact. More subtle, but no less important, the whole plan with f5 seems far more effective with Black’s bishop already committed to b7. Indeed it was this nuance that finally persuaded me that this set-up was worthy of the repertoire.

12...\(\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{7}}}\)

Or 12...\(\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{8}}}\) 13.\(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{6}}}\) and now:

a) 13...\(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{6}}}?! attempts to cross White’s plans. Black doesn’t even lose a pawn, but as is often the case in the Sicilian, the move ...b5, so useful in the middlegame, gives White a handy target for operations in the ending after 14.\(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{6}}}\) \(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{6}}}\) 15.\(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{6}}}\) \(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{3}}}\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{b}}\text{\texttt{xc}}\text{\texttt{3}}}\) \(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{3}}}\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{1}}}\) 0–0 18.\(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{7}}}! \(\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{8}}} \text{\texttt{(18...\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{6}}} 19.\(\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{7}}} \text{\texttt{b}}\text{\texttt{4}}} 20.\(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{4}}} \text{\texttt{b}}\text{\texttt{5}}} 21.\(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{3}}} \text{\texttt{b}}\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{3}}} 22.a4 \(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{1}}} 23.\(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{1}}} \text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{8}}} 24.\(\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{1}}} \text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{4}}} 25.\(\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{2}}} \text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{2}}} 26.\(\text{\texttt{xe}}\text{\texttt{2}}} also left Black very overstretched in the rook ending in Chandler - Fernando, Santo Antonio 2001) 19.\(\text{\texttt{a}}\text{\texttt{7}}} \text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{8}}} 20.\(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{4}}} \text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{8}}} 21.\(\text{\texttt{b}}\text{\texttt{2}}} \text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{5}}} 22.e5 \text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{7}}} 23.\(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{8}}} \text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{8}}} 24.\(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{3}}}! \text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{7}}} 25.\(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{7}}} \text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{7}}} 26.\(\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{3}}}! \text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{3}}} 27.\(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{3}}} \text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{7}}} 28.\(\text{\texttt{b}}\text{\texttt{4}}} \text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{7}}} 29.\(\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{5}}} and White’s superb king is a decisive asset in the bishop ending. Malakhov - Blehm, Cappelle la Grande 2000.

b) 13...gxf6! 14.f5 and now:
b1) 14...c5 15. chàng b1 c7 16. chàng d2 h5(!) My hunch is that the weakness of g6 outweighs the coverage of the h5 and h6 squares. 17.fxe6 fxe6 18. chàng e2 f8 19. chàng f4 striking at the dual weaknesses on e6 and g6. Again, I am struck by how the b7 bishop would be happier never to have moved. 19... chàng f7 20. chàng e2 h4 21. chàng h1 e7 22. chàng h5+ cxc5 23. chàng xh5 w7c4 24. wxc4 bxc4 25. chàng xf6! chàng g6 26.e5 w6xg2 27. chàng fe1 d5 28. chàng d4± Kreiman - Mainka, Bad Zwesten 1998.

b2) 14...c4 ?!, gaining a tempo to double on the c-file 15. chàng d3 c7 16.fxe6 (16. chàng e2?!) 16...fxe6 17. chàng e2 w7c5 18. chàng b1! w6e5 19. chàng d4 h5 (Again I am not convinced by this move. Shirov gives 19 ... chàng c8?! However, White will build with g3/ w7g2 etc and Black lacks counterplay.) 20. chàng h1 d7 21.g3! chàng g8? 22. chàng g2 chàng g4?! 23. chàng b3 w7c5 24. chàng d2+ c4 (24... w7d4? 25. chàng b3!) 25. chàng h3 c5 g5?! 26. chàng b3 chàng g7 Shirov - Pelletier, Elista (ol) 1998, when 27.b3! w7a5 28. chàng d4 c4 29. chàng xg4 hxg4 30.c3 – Shirov, would have been immediately decisive.

Of course these examples are not clear-cut, but the simplicity of White’s plan and the economy of force with which he can attack on the light squares suggest that this is a promising approach. The main game provides further promising evidence.

13. chàng xf6 gxf6 14.f5 h5

Yet again, this does not seem strictly necessary. However, the complexity of Black’s defensive task is rather reflected in the complete lack of agreement among commentators. There is in particular no consensus around whether Black should be looking to castle long, or whether his rook belongs on c8. If it was a check on h5 Black feared, then I think the text was questionable. After 14...c8 15.fxe6 fxe6 neither 16. chàng h5+ d7 nor 16. chàng g4 f7 17. chàng h5+ g7 18.e5 (18. chàng g4?! 18... w7d8!)

G. Garcia – Smirin, New York 1997 really convinces. However 15. chàng d2?! looks interesting. White will follow up with d1b1 and e2, while if 15... w7c4?! 16. chàng b1 b4 17. chàng e2 e4 18. w7e4 cxe4 19. chàng g3 w7c6 20.fxe6 fxe6 21. chàng he1 f7 22. chàng e2 d5 23. chàng f5 gives a strong attack. The argument against 14... c8 might indeed be that ...0-0-0 was needed in reserve!

15.fxe6

I see no special objection to this
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15...fxe6 16.b1 0–0–0?!

As we have seen, where to put the king is a riddle with no easy answer for Black in this line. However at this particular moment there is no impediment to White immediately compromising the king's new home, and we can give a fairly unambiguous assessment of this decision.

17.a4! d5

Looks a bit desperate, but stronger than the horrible 17...bxa4 18.exa4 when 18...Bh8 19.Bb3! Bd7 20.a4! – Gofshtein, illustrates one danger lurking!

18.exd5 b4 19.e2 Bb8?!

For better or worse, 19...fxd5 had to be tried. White has a positional plus based on Black's light-square looseness both in the centre and on the queenside after 20.fx d5 Bxd5 21.e4! but he can struggle on.

20.e3 e5 21.g3! c5 22.b3 h4 23.f5 e8 24.d6!

It is still all about White's light-square chances, but now they take on an added ferocity. White answers threat with counter threat, and the momentum never dies down!

24...b6 25.a5 Bb5 26.f7! ed7 27.xf6 e8 28.e7 Bb7 29.xb7 xb7 30.xe5 xxd6 31.c6† 1–0

Game 27

Iordachescu - Campos Moreno
Linares 2000

1.e4 c5 2.Bf3 Oc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4 Oc6 5.Oc3 d6 6.g5 e6 7.Od2 Be7

8.0-0 0-0

After 8...O xd4 9.Wxd4 a6 was covered in game 26, while 9...0-0 is also a quite legitimate move order, but since it is designed primarily to circumvent lines with 8...0-0 9.b3, it causes no inconvenience to our proposed repertoire and White should just return to the main game with 10.f4.

9.f4 Oxd4

Black can also put the question to White's bishop immediately with 9...h6, hoping to find situations in which its unprotected status on h4 will become a real issue. In addition, whereas there is often a sacrificial option available to the attacker in the event of a later ...h6, choosing this
The Classical

moment has the important virtue that the soundness of 10.h4?! is in real doubt (at least given that White is playing for a win) and therefore I am recommending that White accept the need for 10.\(\text{h4}\). The drawback for Black is that there are also cases where this square proves a good deal more comfortable (see in particular (d) below). Indeed the limitations of this piece’s supposed vulnerability are immediately evident in the event of 10...\(\text{Qxe4?!}\) 11.\(\text{Qxe7}\) \(\text{Qxd2}\) 12.\(\text{Qxd8}\) \(\text{Qxf1}\) 13.\(\text{Qxc6}\) \(\text{bxc6}\) 14.\(\text{Qe7}\) \(\text{Qe8}\) 15.\(\text{Qhxf1}\) \(\text{Qxe7}\) 16.\(\text{Qxd6}\) \(\text{Qb7}\) 17.\(\text{g3}\) c5 18.\(\text{Qfd1}\) Unzicker – Stahlberg, Moscow 1956, when although Black’s weaknesses do not leave him ‘lost’ his defensive task is certainly unenviable.

After 10.\(\text{h4}\), Black does nonetheless have quite a wide choice:

a) 10...\(\text{Wb6}\) has been pretty much condemned since White’s powerful display in Leko – Kramnik, Belgrade 1995. In the structure which arises from the forcing sequence 11.\(\text{Qxc6!}\) \(\text{bxc6}\) 12.e5 \(\text{dxe5}\) 13.\(\text{fxe5}\) \(\text{Qe4}\) 14.\(\text{Qxe4}\) \(\text{Qxh4}\) 15.\(\text{Wf4!}\), Black’s bishop pair is a decidedly mixed blessing, indeed it seems to me that he sorely misses his knights. White’s kingside aspirations are a bit crude, but rather effective, and although Kramnik undoubtedly missed a chance to generate a bit more on the other wing, the theoretical verdict remains intact. 15...\(\text{Qe7}\) 16.\(\text{Qd3}\) \(\text{Qb8}\) 17.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{Wc7?!}\) (A bit cooperative. On grounds of both offence and defence 17...\(\text{Wb4?!}\) makes more sense. However, even then I prefer White’s chances after 18.\(\text{Qhf1}\) a5 19.\(\text{Qb1}\) a4 20.\(\text{Qf3}\) \(\text{axb3}\) 21.\(\text{cxb3}\) \(\text{Wxa3}\) 22.\(\text{Qg3}\) \(\text{Qd8?!}\) Wapner – Pavasovic, Bled 1996 when with 23.\(\text{Qf1}\)! White could have exerted extreme pressure. Instead, 22...\(\text{Qh8}\)! makes more sense, but 23.\(\text{Wg4!}\) \(\text{Qg8}\) 24.\(\text{Qf1}\) is still promising. Black tends not to be really threatening to sacrifice on b3, provided the splendid knight on e4 stays put!) 18.\(\text{Qb1}\) c5 19.\(\text{Qf6+}\) \(\text{Qh8}\) 20.\(\text{Wf4}\) g6 21.\(\text{h4}\) \(\text{Qb7}\) 22.\(\text{Wf4}\) \(\text{Qg7}\) 23.\(\text{Qg4}\) \(\text{Qh8}\) 24.\(\text{Qdf1}\) \(\text{Qb8}\) 25.\(\text{Qf6}\) \(\text{Wd8}\) 26.\(\text{Wg3}\) h5 27.\(\text{Wg5}\) \(\text{Qh7}\) 28.\(\text{Qf4}\) with utter domination.

b) 10...\(\text{Wc7}\) has still more emphatically disappeared without trace. However, the ‘refutation’ is not just convincing, but also quite specific and hence worth being aware of. White should play 11.\(\text{Qdb5}\) \(\text{Wd5}\) 12.\(\text{Qe1!}\) \(\text{Wd8}\) 13.\(\text{a3!}\) \(\text{Qd7}\) 14.\(\text{Qxf6}\) \(\text{Qxf6}\) (14...\(\text{gxf6}\) 15.\(\text{Qd3}\) does not bear
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...d6 ...xc3 16...xc3

...xc3 17.bxc3 e5 18.f5 ...f8 19...e2 as in Yudasin – D. Gurevich, Beersheba 1993, and since 19...e7?? now loses to

20...xc8+ ...xc8 21.f6+ gxf6 22...xd7+ ...xd7 23...g4+ Black has particularly awkwardly placed pieces in addition to his pawn deficit.

c) 10...d7 11...f3! (directed against ...

...xd4 and ...

...c6 with the hope of showing that Black's 10th move is fundamentally rather passive) 11...a5

12...b1 ...fd8 13...d3 and now:

14...b5 14...g4!. This dangerous pawn storm is White's main strategy here, especially as 9...h6 has created a useful target. 14...b4 15...xf6 ...xf6 16...e2 e5 17.g5 hxg5 18.fgx5 ...e6 19...c1 ...e7 20.h4 d5 21...e2 ...d6 22.h5 ...ad8 23.g6 gave White a very powerful attack in Tiviakov - Shmuter, St Petersburg 1993. It is instructive that Black's execution of the standard central break with 20...d5 here does nothing more than create a rather meaningless 'tension' in the centre, neither impeding White on the kingside nor enhancing Black's efforts on the other wing.

c2) 13...ac8!? 14...hgl (the immediate 14...g4 is also possible, but Black can try 14...xg4 15...xe7 ...xe7 16...hgl ...xc3!? 17...xc3 (17...xc3 ...e5 18...g2 g6 doesn't really convince) 17...xc3 18.bxc3 ...f6 which is quite hard to assess) 14...e5 15.g4! exf4 16.g5 hxg5 17...xg5 ...e5

18...g1! (the safe 18...xe5 dxe5 19...d5! is also sufficient to suggest that White has won the opening battle, but the text is much more incisive) 18...xf3 19...xg7+ ...f8 20...xf4 ...xg1 21...xf6 ...xf6 22...xf6 ...e6 23...h7 ...e8 24...b5+ ...c6 25...h5 d5 26.exd5 ...xd5 27...xd5 ...xd5 28...e5+ ...f8 29...h8+ ...e7 30...xd5+ ...d6 31...h6+ ...c5 32...xc6 ...e1+ 33...c1 ...xc1+ 34...xc1 bxc6 35...f4 ...f3 36...h3 ...d4 and Black was active enough to hold the ending in Ivanchuk – C. Hansen, Skanderborg 2003. However 25...g5!? d5 26.exd5 ...xd5 27...xc6+ bxc6 28...xg1 retains material and positional plusses, while restricting any counterplay.

d) 10...xd4 11...xd4 ...a5 has, by contrast with the moves considered above, recently enjoyed a real renaissance. In the event of 12...c4! it quickly becomes clear that the move can only really be deployed in conjunction with a quick ...e5, which
represents a certain positional concession for which Black seeks solace in the bishop pair and some activity. The fate of 12...\textit{d}d7?, in the style of the main game, emphasises the problem that the white bishop enjoys a far more secure existence on h4 – 13.e5! wins material immediately. 12...\textit{d}d8 13.\textit{h}f1! is also problematic since White can open the f-file and cause trouble there. Hence 12...e5 13.fxe5 dxe5 14.\textit{c}d3 \textit{g}4 15.\textit{d}f1 (15.\textit{xf}6 is similar, but seems to me to allow Black more options – White can usually throw in this move when required) and now:

d1) 15...\textit{e}6 (the bishop on \textit{g}4 can be vulnerable. For example 15...\textit{ad}8?! 16.\textit{g}3 \textit{e}6 17.\textit{xf}6 \textit{xc}4 18.\textit{xh}6\textpm 16.\textit{xf}6?! \textit{xf}6 17.\textit{b}1 \textit{c}5 18.\textit{b}3 \textit{h}8 19.\textit{h}4 \textit{e}7 20.\textit{e}2 \textit{c}8 21.\textit{xe}6 fxe6 22.\textit{xf}8+ \textit{xf}8 23.\textit{b}5 \textit{c}8 24.\textit{e}2 \textit{c}7 25.\textit{c}1! \textit{c}8 26.\textit{e}2 with pressure Ponomariov - Avrukh, Panormo 2001.

d2) 15...\textit{c}5 16.\textit{b}3 \textit{h}8 17.\textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 18.\textit{b}1 \textit{ad}8 19.\textit{g}3 \textit{e}6 20.\textit{d}5 \textit{xd}5 21.\textit{xd}5 is very typical of the small but pleasant advantage White can expect here. He has the far superior bishop, and chances to activate his rooks, both on the f-file and swinging along the third rank. Kobalija - Gershon, Kharkov 2002.

e) 10...e5!? nonetheless remains by far the most important of these 'side-lines'.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
  \draw[black, very thick] (0,0) grid (8,8);
  \node at (1,1) {\textbullet}; \node at (2,1) {\textbullet}; \node at (3,1) {\textbullet}; \node at (4,1) {\textbullet}; \node at (5,1) {\textbullet}; \node at (6,1) {\textbullet}; \node at (7,1) {\textbullet}; \node at (1,2) {\textbullet}; \node at (2,2) {\textbullet}; \node at (3,2) {\textbullet}; \node at (4,2) {\textbullet}; \node at (5,2) {\textbullet}; \node at (6,2) {\textbullet}; \node at (7,2) {\textbullet}; \node at (1,3) {\textbullet}; \node at (2,3) {\textbullet}; \node at (3,3) {\textbullet}; \node at (4,3) {\textbullet}; \node at (5,3) {\textbullet}; \node at (6,3) {\textbullet}; \node at (7,3) {\textbullet}; \node at (1,4) {\textbullet}; \node at (2,4) {\textbullet}; \node at (3,4) {\textbullet}; \node at (4,4) {\textbullet}; \node at (5,4) {\textbullet}; \node at (6,4) {\textbullet}; \node at (7,4) {\textbullet}; \node at (1,5) {\textbullet}; \node at (2,5) {\textbullet}; \node at (3,5) {\textbullet}; \node at (4,5) {\textbullet}; \node at (5,5) {\textbullet}; \node at (6,5) {\textbullet}; \node at (7,5) {\textbullet}; \node at (1,6) {\textbullet}; \node at (2,6) {\textbullet}; \node at (3,6) {\textbullet}; \node at (4,6) {\textbullet}; \node at (5,6) {\textbullet}; \node at (6,6) {\textbullet}; \node at (7,6) {\textbullet}; \node at (1,7) {\textbullet}; \node at (2,7) {\textbullet}; \node at (3,7) {\textbullet}; \node at (4,7) {\textbullet}; \node at (5,7) {\textbullet}; \node at (6,7) {\textbullet}; \node at (7,7) {\textbullet}; \node at (1,8) {\textbullet}; \node at (2,8) {\textbullet}; \node at (3,8) {\textbullet}; \node at (4,8) {\textbullet}; \node at (5,8) {\textbullet}; \node at (6,8) {\textbullet}; \node at (7,8) {\textbullet}; \end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

11.\textit{f}5 \textit{xf}5 12.\textit{exf}5 \textit{exf}4! 13.\textit{b}1 d5! 14.\textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 15.\textit{xd}5 \textit{e}5 is a fairly well established sequence at the end of which we reach a position in which the key factor is the presence of opposite coloured bishops and with it a degree of dominance by the respective sides over 'their colour domains'. There are two dangers to be aware of – that Black will generate rapid counterplay based upon his excellent bishop on \textit{e}5, and that the advanced doubled \textit{f}-pawn can be
consolidated and prove a bit of a thorn in the side. However, I am confident that White's light square play should be the more durable if he carefully exerts pressure not just on the kingside but in the centre too.

16.c3!? Black tried 21...b4 but was clearly worse after 22.cxb4 \( \text{\textit{W}}b7 \) 23.\( \text{\textit{Q}}xf6 \) \( \text{\textit{Q}}xf6 \) 24.\( \text{\textit{W}}c4 \) \( \text{\textit{Q}}h7 \) 25.\( \text{\textit{W}}xe8 \) \( \text{\textit{Q}}xe8 \) 26.\( \text{\textit{Q}}xc6 \) \( \text{\textit{Q}}c8 \) 27.\( \text{\textit{Q}}c2 \) in Lutz – Lugovoi, Vienna 1996.

e2) 16...\( \text{\textit{Q}}g5 \)? 17.\( \text{\textit{Q}}d3 \) \( \text{\textit{Q}}ad8 \) 18.\( \text{\textit{Q}}e4 \) \( \text{\textit{Q}}d6 \) 19.\( \text{\textit{Q}}c2 \) \( \text{\textit{Q}}d8 \) 20.g3?! \( \text{\textit{Q}}xg3 \) 21.\( \text{\textit{Q}}xg3 \) \( \text{\textit{Q}}e7 \) 22.\( \text{\textit{Q}}e3 \) \( \text{\textit{Q}}xd1+ \) 23.\( \text{\textit{Q}}xd1 \) \( \text{\textit{Q}}c7 \) 24.\( \text{\textit{Q}}g4 \) and White has enduring chances on the kingside which deny Black full equality. Simacek – Furman, Olomouc 2003.

e3) 16...\( \text{\textit{Q}}e7 \) 17.\( \text{\textit{Q}}c4?! \) (17.\( \text{\textit{Q}}xe7+ \) \( \text{\textit{Q}}xe7 \) 18.\( \text{\textit{Q}}c4 \) might also yield a slight edge, but the text is richer in ideas.) 17...\( \text{\textit{Q}}xf5 \) (Critical, otherwise White's last would be an unambiguous improvement. 17...\( \text{\textit{Q}}xd5 \) 18.\( \text{\textit{Q}}xd5 \) \( \text{\textit{Q}}f6 \) 19.\( \text{\textit{Q}}he1 \) \( \text{\textit{Q}}ad8 \) 20.\( \text{\textit{Q}}e4 \) gives a clear plus according to Kobalija, although 18...\( \text{\textit{Q}}c7?! \) might restrict White's initiative a bit. The fact that Black is still slightly uncomfortable as the position simplifies, largely due to light square targets on b7 and f7, is a reassuring sign for White.) 18.\( \text{\textit{Q}}e2 \) \( \text{\textit{Q}}e8 \) (Alternatives are no panacea either. 18...\( \text{\textit{Q}}d6 \) 19.\( \text{\textit{Q}}xf4 \) looks innocuous enough, but the Black pieces are actually quite loose, as is the f7 pawn. For example 19...\( \text{\textit{Q}}e8 \) loses to 20.\( \text{\textit{Q}}xf7+ \) and 19...\( \text{\textit{Q}}c8 \) to 20.\( \text{\textit{Q}}e6! \). 19...\( \text{\textit{Q}}h8 \) holds but looks unappetising. If 18...\( \text{\textit{Q}}b8 \), Kobalija gives 19.\( \text{\textit{Q}}hf1 \), but 19.g3?! played already in Mark Tseitlin – Kveinys, Gdynia 1989 is effective against 19...\( \text{\textit{Q}}e3 \) 20.\( \text{\textit{Q}}xf4 \) \( \text{\textit{Q}}xd1 \) 21.\( \text{\textit{Q}}xe5 \) while 19...\( \text{\textit{Q}}xg3 \) 20.\( \text{\textit{Q}}d3! \) is exceptionally

This quiet but far from innocuous continuation is likely to increase in popularity now that the 'main line' 16.\( \text{\textit{Q}}c4 \) has recently suffered a slight dent after 16...b5 17.\( \text{\textit{Q}}b3 \) a5 18.a3 a4 19.\( \text{\textit{Q}}a2 \) b4! 20.\( \text{\textit{Q}}xb4 \) \( \text{\textit{Q}}f6 \) 21.\( \text{\textit{Q}}d5 \) \( \text{\textit{Q}}xf5 \) 22.\( \text{\textit{Q}}d3 \) \( \text{\textit{Q}}xd3 \) 23.\( \text{\textit{Q}}xd3 \) g5! and it looks as though, in spite of White's passed pawn and his opponent's doubled pawn, the black pawns might be the more mobile. Tiviakov - Solak, European (ch) Istanbul, 2003.) Black has tested various moves here:

e1) 16...\( \text{\textit{Q}}b8 \) 17.\( \text{\textit{Q}}c2 \) b5 18.\( \text{\textit{Q}}e2 \) \( \text{\textit{Q}}xe8 \) 19.\( \text{\textit{Q}}f3 \) \( \text{\textit{Q}}c8 \) 20.\( \text{\textit{Q}}he1 \) f6 21.\( \text{\textit{Q}}e4 \) and the light square bind is in full flow.
awkward!) 19.\texttt{b5}! \texttt{\texttt{e}6} 20.\texttt{xf4} \texttt{d6} 21.\texttt{d3}!. The key manoeuvre 21...\texttt{f6} 22.\texttt{c5}! with a lasting and powerful plus on the light squares. Kobalija – Zaitsev, Russia 1998.

10.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{a5}

There are not a million ways to develop in this position and the text, preparing either ...\texttt{e5}, or ...\texttt{d7} by tactical means exploiting the pin along the 4th rank, is by far the most popular. As usual, 10...\texttt{a6} represents an alternative, although for some reason less popular at this juncture. 11.\texttt{b1} still makes sense to me, and after 11...\texttt{b5} White has the shot 12.\texttt{xf6}! \texttt{xf6} 13.\texttt{e5} \texttt{dxe5} 14.\texttt{e4} \texttt{b6} 15.\texttt{xa8} \texttt{b7} 16.\texttt{d6}! \texttt{c7} 17.\texttt{a7} \texttt{xd6} 18.\texttt{xb7} \texttt{b4} (18...\texttt{xf4}?! 19.\texttt{d3} \texttt{xc3} 20.\texttt{xc3} would at least be less fun for White to play, although I do not believe that Black can claim full compensation.) 19.\texttt{e2} \texttt{exf4} 20.\texttt{e4} \texttt{d8} 21.\texttt{c1} \texttt{d1} 22.\texttt{g3} \texttt{d4} 23.\texttt{d3} \texttt{h5} Wells – A. Kiss, Hungary 1996, and now 24.\texttt{e2}! would have been an eminently sensible way to consolidate.

11.\texttt{c4}

This might be seen by some as the ‘old main line’, but in my opinion there is little doubt that it represents objectively the best try for an advantage – certainly when defending the Black side it is the line I have the most respect for. In addition it does have the serious practical virtue of being rather forcing, and results in a degree of simplification which retains a decent level of tension while at the same time somewhat restricting Black’s winning chances. Some commentators refer to it as leading to a boring endgame. Check this out – it is often the Black player annotating and trying to put his future opponents off the move!

11...\texttt{d7}

Black also has the sharp 11...\texttt{b5}!? at his disposal, but I like 12.\texttt{xb5} \texttt{b8} 13.\texttt{a4}! (Securing the bishop in preparation for a quick e5) 13...\texttt{h6} (13...\texttt{a6} 14.e5! \texttt{dxe5} 15.\texttt{e5} \texttt{axb5} 16.\texttt{xf6} \texttt{bxa4} 17.\texttt{e4}! \texttt{e5} 18.\texttt{d5} is very strong, especially as after 18...\texttt{xd5} 19.\texttt{fxe7}! \texttt{a5} 20.\texttt{exf8} \texttt{xf8} 21.\texttt{d8}+ \texttt{xd8} 22.\texttt{xd8} \texttt{c7} 23.\texttt{c7} \texttt{c8} 24.\texttt{d6}+ wins material)\texttt{h4} e5 (Here too 14...\texttt{a6} fails to solve the problems since 15.\texttt{e5} \texttt{dxe5} 16.\texttt{fxe5} \texttt{axb5} 17.\texttt{xf6} \texttt{gxf6} 18.\texttt{xf6} \texttt{xf6} 19.\texttt{xf6} \texttt{bxa4} 20.\texttt{d3} \texttt{g5}+ 21.\texttt{g5}+ \texttt{hxg5} 22.\texttt{xa4} leaves Black with little to show for the pawn.) 15.\texttt{fxe5} \texttt{dxe5}
16.\hsx e5 \hs e6 17.\hs d5 \hs xd5 18.exd5 \hs xh4 19.dxe6 \hs g5\dagger 20.\hs b1 \hs f6 21.exf7\dagger \hs h8 22.\hs d6\pm Campora - Moreno Tejera, Linares 2003.

12.e5 dxe5 13.fxe5 \hs c6!

A good square for this piece, and a tactical solution that underlies Black’s entire strategy. White’s best is simply to retreat and secure the bishop pair.

14.\hs d2! \hs d7 15.\hs d5 \hs d8

The trap 15...\hs c5?! 16.\hs b4? (16.\hs xe7\dagger!) 16...exd5 17.\hs xc5 \hs xc5 etc netting three pieces for the queen remains fairly victimless, but is worth being aware of!

16.\hs xe7\dagger \hs xe7 17.\hs he1

This may seem rather far into the game to be a describing the diagram position as a ‘crucial starting point for further theory’, but there is some recompense for this in that the forcing nature and the strong underlying logic of the play do serve as a useful ‘aide memoire’. In positional terms, there is also a fascinating and delicate balance of factors at work. White enjoys the bishop pair, more space and in many cases, whilst he might also reasonably aspire to attacking chances on the kingside, he will not be averse to an exchange of queens – Black’s lack of room may even paradoxically be emphasised in such cases. Black has a solid position and hopes of either play on the queenside, and/or the chance to target the e5 pawn. Combating the bishop pair, there are also prospects of the knight and bishop working together to obtain chances on the light squares.

17...\hs fd8

Two others also deserve consideration:

a) 17...\hs fc8 18.\hs f1?! a5! 19.h4 b5 20.\hs g5 \hs c5 21.\hs xc5 \hs xc5 22.\hs e7! with an edge for White in Lahno – Kotronias, Hastings 2003/4.

b) 17...\hs b6 18.\hs f1! (This time 18.\hs d3?! is well met by 18...\hs fd8 19.\hs g4 \hs xd3 20.cxd3 \hs a4 21.\hs h6 f5! 22.exf6 \hs xf6 23.\hs e3 \hs c8\dagger 24.\hs b1 \hs c2\dagger 25.\hs a1 \hs xd1 which tends to be given as ‘=’, but in fact the excellent black knight coming to d5 will give him at least an edge.) 18...\hs fd8 19.\hs g4 and now:

b1) 19...a6?! Weaken the knight on b6, and interestingly permits 20.\hs d3!? (threatening \hs g5), with the nice point that after 20...\hs xd3 21.cxd3 \hs a4
22.\(\text{h6}\) f5 23.exf6 \(\text{Wxf6}\) 24.\(\text{g7}\) \(\text{Wg7}\) 25.\(\text{xe6+}\) is very strong.

b2) 19...\(\text{c5}\) looks a better try. However, it is here that White's rosy prospects in some of the endings come to the fore. 20.\(\text{h6}\) is possible, but I much prefer 20.\(\text{b4}\)! and now:

b21) 20...\(\text{xb4}\) (20...\(\text{g1}\)?! has a quirky appeal, but 21.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{d5}\) (21...\(\text{d4}\) 22.\(\text{e3}\)) 22.\(\text{h4}\)! \(\text{c5}\) 23.\(\text{d3}\) g6 24.\(\text{g5}\) is clearly unsatisfactory for Black) 21.\(\text{xb4}\) \(\text{d5}\) 22.\(\text{d2}\)? b5 23.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{dc8}\) 24.\(\text{d4}\) a5 25.c3 a4 26.a3! (that's about it for Black's queenside play. Now switch to the other side) 26...h6 27.\(\text{d2}\) \(\text{b6}\) 28.\(\text{g4}\) h5 29.\(\text{h4}\) g6 30.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{d7}\) 31.g4! with very strong pressure \(\text{f3}\) 32.\(\text{xh5}\) \(\text{xh5}\) 33.\(\text{xb5}\) \(\text{c5}\) 34.\(\text{f6}\) \(\text{f8}\) 35.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{e8}\) 36.\(\text{d1}\) 1–0 Gallagher - Baumegger, Dresden (zt) 1998.

b22) 20...\(\text{f2}\) 21.\(\text{f4}\)! \(\text{c5}\) 22.\(\text{b4}\) \(\text{xd1+}\) 23.\(\text{xd1}\) \(\text{g1}\) 24.\(\text{c4}\) \(\text{d7}\) 25.\(\text{d6}\) \(\text{f8}\) 26.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{g6}\) 27.\(\text{g3}\) a5 28.\(\text{b1}\) a4 29.\(\text{e1}\) h5 30.\(\text{e3}\) Efimenko - Muir, Hastings Challengers 2003, and again the ending will favour White. For me personally the understanding that the bishop pair tends to be the number one factor in these endings has led to a degree of disillusion with 17...\(\text{b6}\), since the Black queen cannot flee the exchange indefinitely.

18.\(\text{g4}\) \(\text{f8}\) 19.\(\text{d3}\)!

Note 'b' above should not blur the fact that other things being equal this is the most threatening posting for this piece. The exchange sacrifice above was so potent precisely because the black knight on b6 was well poised for counterplay. Great respect though there should be for the beast on f8, its perspective is not primarily aggressive, and as we shall see, the coming exchange sacrifice will also be dominated by defensive considerations.

19...\(\text{xd3}\)

A familiar exchange sacrifice to nullify White's attacking prospects and his queenside majority, while also enhancing control of the light squares. When I last wrote about this more than six years ago, I stressed the fact that the play often reached an ending in which Black was made to suffer with nothing more than a half point to even aspire to. However, just before we went to press, Black was just waking up to the fact that his knight is a great piece and retaining it is more important even than ensuring that he
Experts vs. the Sicilian

gets a pawn into the kitty. This has undoubtedly enriched the counterplay, although I am still generally enthusiastic for White.

The exchange sacrifice is not the only way to play. However, slow moves enable White to build up a serious initiative. 19...c7?! for example, was met with 20.b4 d5 21.b1 ac8 22.d6 c6 23.b3! b5 24.e3 g6 25.h4 f5 26.g5 d7 27.f8 f6 28.e2 f7 29.f2! h6 30.f4 h7?! 31.g4= in Tatai - Epishin, Reggio Emilia 1994. An excellent example of controlled aggression, keeping a tight grip on the position.

Personally, as Black I would still tend to favour the risky but apparently playable 19...d5!? The idea is clear - the rook exerts pressure on e5 and also prepares to put further major pieces on the d-file. The drawback is equally apparent - the rook like the knight before it is vulnerable to attack from White's c-pawn and even in some danger of entrapment. After 20.b4 d8 (But not 20...c7 21.c4! d7 (21...b5? 22.b1=) 22.d6 a5 23.b1 g6 24.h4! f5 25.g3 d8 26.h1! (26.h5 h4!) 26...h8 27.c5! - cementing the bishop on d6, and activating its partner - 27...b5 28.c2! a5?! 29.b3 White enjoyed a crushing position in Z. Almasi - Hracek, Germany 1997. It is useful to have an illustration of what White can achieve when all the circumstances are favourable.) 21.b6 g6

Black has two useful sources of counterplay - ...a5 forking pawns, and ...h4 commencing the task of probing White's kingside pawns - and one vital resource ...f5. The latter can be critical. 22.c4?! would all but win here were it not for 22...f5! when after 23.g3 the rook can nestle on d4 enjoying both security and swing potential. 22.g3 fails to impress either. After 22...a5 23.xg6 (23.b1? xe5) 23...hxg6 24.b1 c8 White is a long way from drumming up anything scary on the kingside. In general the exchange on g6 is only recommendable if a quick h4-h5 follows. The best move from the diagram position therefore seems to be 22.b1!.

Now of course 22...a5?! may be simply met with 23.g3 and it is instructive quite how difficult it is to strengthen Black's position. Moreover, the valuable role which the queen should be playing stopping h4 will soon become
apparent – much as in the Almasi – Hracek note above to 20...\textsuperscript{c7}!.

Much more serious then is 22...\textsuperscript{h4}?! Then after 23.\textsuperscript{wxh4} \textsuperscript{dxh4} 24.g3 \textsuperscript{f3} 25.\textsuperscript{e3}! (this position has as yet only been reached in Shomoev – Kharlov, ACP blitz (!) prelim 2004, and after 25.\textsuperscript{e2} \textsuperscript{b5} Black was fine) 25...\textsuperscript{f5}! (25...\textsuperscript{hxh2} 26.c4 virtually obliges 26...\textsuperscript{xd3} 27.\textsuperscript{1xd3}, which should be a reasonable version of the exchange sacrifice endings from White’s standpoint. 25...h5 26.h3! also leaves Black a bit stuck for what to do next) 26.\textsuperscript{xf3} \textsuperscript{xd6} 27.\textsuperscript{exd6} \textsuperscript{xf3} 28.\textsuperscript{f1} and White has time to support his pawn with c4-c5 and should stand somewhat better in the ending.

20.\textsuperscript{0:d3} \textsuperscript{d7} 21.\textsuperscript{b4}

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

21...\textsuperscript{g6}!

Of course! Keeping the knight is now almost always preferred to the rather depressing endings arising from 21...\textsuperscript{d5} 22.\textsuperscript{xf8}! (the point. With this knight gone Black’s hopes are almost purely defensive) 22...\textsuperscript{xf8} 23.\textsuperscript{b1} \textsuperscript{g2} 24.\textsuperscript{xb2} \textsuperscript{xb2} 25.\textsuperscript{c1} \textsuperscript{c6} 26.\textsuperscript{c2}! f5 27.\textsuperscript{exf6} \textsuperscript{xf6} 28.\textsuperscript{c3}!? 29.\textsuperscript{f1} \textsuperscript{h6} 30.\textsuperscript{g1} \textsuperscript{g6} (30...\textsuperscript{h5} 31.\textsuperscript{h4}±) 31.\textsuperscript{d4} g4 32.b4 a6 33.a4 h5 (33...\textsuperscript{xa4} 34.\textsuperscript{c8}+ \textsuperscript{f7} 35.\textsuperscript{c7}+ \textsuperscript{f6} 36.\textsuperscript{xb7}±) 34.\textsuperscript{xc6}! (not strictly necessary, but returning the exchange does clarify White’s task) 34...\textsuperscript{bxc6} 35.\textsuperscript{c5} e5 36.\textsuperscript{b6} \textsuperscript{d6} 37.\textsuperscript{xa6} \textsuperscript{xd3} 38.\textsuperscript{b6} \textsuperscript{b3} 39.\textsuperscript{a1}! and basically the a-pawn runs home. Marciano - Lugovoi, St Petersburg vs. Paris, 1996. Of course, this is a necessarily brief survey, but time and again Black’s problem has been that undertaking anything active merely assists White in exchanging rooks!

22.\textsuperscript{d6} f5!? 23.\textsuperscript{e2}!

An important improvement over 23.\textsuperscript{g5}. Quite simply the queen is better placed for dealing with any counterplay Black may muster on the queenside.

23...\textsuperscript{h8}!?
Just how well prepared White is to combat standard light-square efforts is illustrated by the terrible tangle in which Black caught himself in Stefansson – Gershon, Bermuda 2001 after 23...\texttt{d5} 24.\texttt{b1} \texttt{c6} 25.\texttt{d2} \texttt{xg2}? 26.\texttt{c1} \texttt{d5} 27.\texttt{c5} \texttt{f3} 28.\texttt{g1} \texttt{f1} 29.\texttt{g3} \texttt{h1} 30.\texttt{c1} \texttt{f8} 31.\texttt{c7} \texttt{h8} 32.\texttt{a1} \texttt{h2} 33.\texttt{c8} 1–0.

So Black gives priority to evicting the annoying bishop on d6. Sensible, but the powerful knight he tried so hard to keep is otherwise less impressive on f7.

24.\texttt{d2} \texttt{f7} 25.\texttt{c2}!

White doesn’t fear 25...\texttt{d6} 26.\texttt{exd6} \texttt{xd6} 27.\texttt{e5}! with a decisive invasion on the 7th rank on its way.

25...\texttt{e8} 26.\texttt{c5} \texttt{d5} 27.b3 a6?

A serious mistake. Better defensive chances were offered by 27...\texttt{b5} 28.\texttt{c3} \texttt{c8} 29.\texttt{b4} \texttt{xc3} 30.\texttt{xc3} \texttt{xd3} 31.\texttt{d2} \texttt{e4} 32.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{xd5} 33.\texttt{e2}

– Gofshtein, although Black is a long way from securing the draw. Now, having evicted the bishop from one excellent outpost, Black offers it others.

28.\texttt{b6}! \texttt{b5} 29.\texttt{c5} \texttt{d8} 30.d4 \texttt{a5} 31.\texttt{b2} \texttt{d7} 32.\texttt{ec1} \texttt{d8} 33.\texttt{c4} \texttt{d5} 34.\texttt{b4}

It is clear that compared with the note above, White’s coordination is quite admirable. All he needs is a plan to make further progress, and his excellent 36th move reveals this. The technical phase is a bit beyond our scope, but the Moldovan’s handling is very sound.

33...\texttt{d7} 35.a4 \texttt{g5} 36.\texttt{a7!} h6 37.\texttt{b6} \texttt{h7} 38.\texttt{xc6} \texttt{bxc6} 39.\texttt{xa6} \texttt{e4} 40.\texttt{xc6} \texttt{xd4} 41.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{xd4} 42.\texttt{a2} \texttt{d2} 43.\texttt{a3} \texttt{g2} 44.\texttt{c4} \texttt{g1} 45.\texttt{xe6} \texttt{a1} 46.\texttt{b4} \texttt{d4} 47.\texttt{b5} \texttt{d3} 48.\texttt{b4} \texttt{d4} 49.\texttt{c4} \texttt{d2} 50.\texttt{a3} \texttt{f2} 51.\texttt{c6} 1–0
The Kan and Taimanov are both very sound and flexible Sicilian systems. I think that with good preparation it is possible to gain an advantage against both of these systems, but after some time surely a proper antidote will be found for Black and in the long run I do not think that either system can be refuted. They are popular at the highest level and players such as Anand and Kramnik use them occasionally. If White finds a good (or winning) idea in one of the sharpest lines he can be sure that he will only be able to use it once. Then all serious players will have fed it to their computer program (Fritz or Junior) and found an improvement. If they cannot find an improvement they will switch to another line. So in the computer age one improvement usually means only one point. And it can take a week to find it!

The approach I will take in this chapter is a bit different. Instead of going for a refutation I will try to explain a system that is positionally well founded yet still active and aggressive. Therefore it can be part of the reader’s repertoire for a long time.

In general the idea behind the chosen systems means placing the pieces on active squares and finishing development very quickly. White will attack with the pieces when possible. One of the reasons for this is to keep the risks involved to a minimum – when White throws the g- and f-pawns at Black’s king he risks running into a nasty counterattack, and the endings also tend to favour Black. So the aim of this repertoire is what I will call controlled aggression: White will try to develop an initiative without taking undue risks. White’s main ideas include: attacking Black’s king (as usual in the Sicilian) and – more distinctively for the Kan and Taimanov – punishing b7-b5 if possible. I cannot guarantee a White advantage in every variation. But what I can promise is that you will usually know what you are doing, and why you are doing it! My ambition is that there will be no dead ends - there will always be play left in the suggested positions!

Let us start with a short introduction. First you should know that 1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{\textit{d3}}\) e6 3.d4 \(\text{\textit{cxd4}}\ 4.\text{\textit{xd4}}\) a6 is the Kan
variation (also called the Paulsen), and
1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 (or 2...e6) 3.d4 cxd4
4.Qxd4 e6 is the Taimanov variation.

The Taimanov and Kan variations enjoy a special place and reputation in the Sicilian. These systems are not so easily understood as, say, the Najdorf, Sveshnikov or Dragon. One of the reasons for this is that they overlap each other (if Black goes Qc6 in the Kan the game often transposes to the Taimanov) and they can also overlap with the Scheveningen and therefore some understanding of the Scheveningen is also necessary to avoid being ‘move ordered’. Move orders are one of the biggest problems in the flexible Taimanov and Kan lines. I will begin by explaining some of the things that characterize the Kan/Taimanov. The big difference compared to the Scheveningen (1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Qxd4 Qc6 5.Qc3 d6) is, of course, that Black has not played d7-d6 yet (and might not do so at all) or f6, but he has the option almost every move! This is very important for understanding White’s different lines against the Taimanov and Kan: Black is under no circumstances to be allowed to play d7-d6 with a favourable transposition to the Scheveningen, or to a line that is not part of the repertoire recommended in this book.

Hence the first principle for playing against the Taimanov/Kan: Always remember Black can play d7-d6 (and f6) ‘all the time’, and you should never allow him to get a good Scheveningen! A lot of tricky players use Kan or Taimanov move orders to avoid lines like the Ng5-Najdorf, the English Attack, the Keres Attack and lines with Qc4 – this should not be achieved without paying a price.

Most of the variations I recommend against both the Taimanov and Kan are based on putting the white squared bishop on the active square d3. Before we start the survey of the proposed repertoire I will briefly mention White’s other options. The reason is to avoid leaving the reader in the dark if he or she for some reason does not like the suggested repertoire.

Differences between the Taimanov and Kan
In the Taimanov Black has the knight on c6 from the beginning, this means that White has to keep the d4 knight guarded either by the queen from d1 or by the bishop from e3. In the Kan Black often keeps the knight at b8, and most Kan players prefer a set-up with the knight going to d7 instead of c6.

Maroczy set-up
Taimanov: 1.e4 c5 2.Qf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Qxd4 Qc6 5.b5 d6 6.c4 Qf6 7.Qc3 a6 8.Qa3
Kan: 1.e4 c5 2.Qf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Qxd4 a6 5.c4

White has the option of playing a set-up with pawns at c4 and e4. Some will argue
that this is the 'punishment' for adopting the Kan and Taimanov instead of say the Najdorf, Classical, Scheveningen or Dragon variations where White forces $\text{c3}$ before $c4$ by attacking $e4$ early. This line might give very good results for experts, but I do not think it fits very well with the rest of the repertoire suggested in this book. The lines are very positional in nature and I will recommend an attacking set-up instead. The $c4$-$e4$ system is better against the Kan than against the Taimanov where White has to put his knight at $a3$ in order to set up the Maroczy centre.

Recommended for positional 'system' players who enjoy a space advantage.

$g3$-systems

**Taimanov:** 1. $e4$ $c5$ 2. $\text{g3} \; \text{c6}$ 3. $d4 \; \text{cx}d4$ 4. $\text{exd}4 \; e6$ 5. $\text{c3} \; \text{c7}$ (or 5...$a6$ 6.$g3$) 6.$g3$

**Kan:** 1. $e4$ $c5$ 2. $\text{g3} \; e6$ 3. $d4 \; \text{cx}d4$ 4. $\text{exd}4 \; a6$ 5. $\text{c3} \; \text{c7}$ (or 5...$b5$ 6.$g3$) 6.$g3$

Another option for White is to fianchetto his white squared bishop at $g2$. In general this is not a very critical approach to the open Sicilian. The exception is the Taimanov where the $g3$ variation ranks among the critical responses. The experts are Adams and Tiviakov. Against the Kan this line is pretty harmless.

Recommended for patient players with a solid style and who like a heavyweight positional battle.

**$e2$-Systems**

**Taimanov:** 1. $e4$ $c5$ 2. $\text{f3} \; e6$ 3. $d4 \; \text{cx}d4$ 4. $\text{exd}4 \; \text{c6}$ 5. $\text{c3} \; \text{c7}$ 6. $\text{e2} \; a6$ 7.0–0 $\text{f6}$ and now 8.$h1$ or 8.$\text{e3}$

**Kan:** 1. $e4$ $c5$ 2. $\text{f3} \; e6$ 3. $d4 \; \text{cx}d4$ 4. $\text{exd}4 \; a6$ 5. $\text{c3}$ (or 5.$\text{e2}$) 5...$\text{c7}$ 6.$\text{e2}$

This is very popular and critical line against the Taimanov and a tricky sideline against the Kan. The biggest problem for White is that he has to be ready to accept a classical Scheveningen, which is not part of our recommended repertoire. At the moment I regard the $\text{e2}$, $\text{e3}$ line as White's most critical response to the Taimanov (this is what I fear the most when I play Black). Against the Kan this does not make so much sense.

Recommended for principled players who have the time to keep up with current opening theory (the verdict swings between an advantage for White and 'unclear' almost every week). Kasparov and Shirov play this successfully as White against the Taimanov. I think it is mostly recommended for players who also use $\text{e2}$ against the Najdorf and Scheveningen.

**English attack ($\text{e3}$ and $f3$)**

**Taimanov:** 1. $e4$ $c5$ 2. $\text{f3} \; e6$ 3. $d4 \; \text{cx}d4$ 4. $\text{exd}4 \; \text{c6}$ 5. $\text{c3} \; \text{c7}$ 6.$\text{e3} \; a6$ 7.$\text{d2}$

**Kan:** 1. $e4$ $c5$ 2. $\text{f3} \; e6$ 3. $d4 \; \text{cx}d4$ 4. $\text{exd}4 \; a6$ 5. $\text{c3} \; \text{c7}$ (or 5...$b5$ 6.$\text{e3}$ $\text{b7}$ 7.$f3$) 6.$\text{e3} \; \text{f6}$ 7.$f3$
This is all the rage against the Taimanov at the time of writing. Against the Kan this does not make much sense as Black can go \textit{wc7}, \textit{bb4} and \textit{d5} or \textit{b4} and \textit{d5} in one go. Again Black has the option of playing \textit{d7-d6} transposing to a line that is not part of our recommended repertoire against the Najdorf/Classical.

This line is only recommended for players with plenty of time for opening studies. The verdict changes on a daily basis and we are still far from a ‘stable’ situation. This might be a good line for young aggressive (professional) players, but only against the Taimanov.

\textbf{f4-systems}

White is currently doing very badly with f4-systems in all lines of the Sicilian and this is therefore not recommended for anyone.

There are also some lines that are particular to the Taimanov and Kan move orders.

\textbf{Special lines in the Taimanov}

White has the option of switching to the Pelikan/Sveshnikov kind of centre with 1.e4 c5 2.\textit{df3} e6 3.d4 \textit{cxd4} 4.\textit{xd4} \textit{c6} 5.\textit{b5} d6 6.\textit{f4} e5 7.\textit{e3}. A line favoured by Leko.

If Black dislikes this he might use the move order 1.e4 c5 2.\textit{df3} \textit{c6} 3.d4 \textit{cxd4} 4.\textit{xd4} \textit{wc7} instead. This line does not promise much, but positional players with a technical style usually does not like to play with e5 instead of the more flexible (and elegant) positions with the pawn on e6.

\textbf{Special lines in the Kan}

Black’s set-up is flexible in the Kan, but this also means there is no immediate pressure against White’s centre (no knight on c6 or f6). Therefore White can also stay flexible with 1.e4 c5 2.\textit{df3} e6 3.d4 \textit{cxd4} 4.\textit{xd4} a6 5.\textit{d3} keeping the options of playing c2-c4 or developing the knight at
The Kan and Taimanov

d2 instead of c3 open. This is regarded as the mainline and represents a whole different branch of the Sicilian (there is some overlap if White put the knight on c3 early). This line is very complex and Black has no fewer than 10 different respectable set-ups! Anand and Adams are among the experts in this line.

Recommended for players with plenty of time for studying theory. This line can lead to very different kind of positions, and therefore White must have a universal style to be successful with this line.

The above characteristics are the opinion of the author and are not by any means certified truths.

Part I: The Kan

Against the Kan I recommend a system based on playing 1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.dxe4 a6 5.c3 followed by 6.d3. White has two standard ways to play these positions. The first consists of playing moves like 0-0, e2, d2, e1, f4, h1 and then either transfer a rook to h3 or go e4-e5 aiming for a kingside attack. The other way to generate active play is to start an assault on the queenside with a2-a4 (After Black's b5.). This will usually be answered by b5-b4 after which White retreats the knight, and attacks b4 with c2-c3 leading to the opening of the c-file (Which is usually advantageous to White.). White will get active play on the queenside and in the centre.

Overview of part I

Game 28-30 covers the variation with 5... c7 which is the old mainline in the Kan. In Game 31-34 the fashionable 5... b5 is covered. We begin with the game that has put the old Kan under a cloud.

Game 28

Acs – Fancsy
Zalakaros 1997

1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.dxe4 a6 5.c3

If Black tries 5...d6 here, to sidestep the Keres Attack, White's best move is probably 6.g4! anyway (see page 277).

5...c7 6.d3 f6 7.0–0 c5

This is one of Black's main ideas. Before the bishop goes to e7 it kicks the white knight to the not very great b3-square. Black could of course play 7...d6 as the rush with the g-pawn does not fit with d3, but then the queen might not
belong at c7. (In the lines where White plays  \( \textit{d}3 \) Black does not play  \( \textit{w}c7 \) once in the lines given by Emms in his excellent book \textit{Play the Najdorf Scheveningen Style}. More on d6 set-ups in Game 33.).

\textbf{8.} \( \textit{b}3 \textit{e}7 \textbf{9.f}4 \)

Threatening e4-e5, which will kick the knight to a bad square and gain the e4-square for the white pieces.

\textbf{9...d}6 \textbf{10.a}4!

A very interesting idea. White wants to play a4-a5, which will seriously cramp Black’s queenside.

\textbf{10...b}6

Almost forced. If Black allows a4-a5 White is clearly better.

10... \( \textit{c}6 \textbf{11.a}5 \) is just clearly better for White. Emms’ idea 11... \( \textit{d}7 \) planning to play \( \textit{c}5 \) and maybe win the a-pawn, does not work at all because of 12.\( \textit{e}3 \textit{c}5 \textbf{13.a}4! \) Refuting the idea. 13... \( \textit{x}d3 \textbf{14.c}xd3 \) And White is controlling the c-file and b6, and is much better.

\textbf{11.e}5!

Without this move I would not recommend this line for White. White has a lead in development and is trying to blow Black away immediately. After normal moves like \( \textit{d}2, \textit{e}2, \textit{h}1 \) etc. Black would be happy, as he has reached his desired set-up and kicked White’s bishop to the b3-square. Also, without 11.e4-e5 it is doubtful White should play 10.a4 at all.

\textbf{11...f}d7

Almost forced. After the dangerous 11...dxe5 12.fxe5 the pawn is poisoned (12... \( \textit{w}xe5 \)? 13.\( \textit{f}4 \textit{h}5 \textbf{14.e}2 \textit{h}4 \) (14... \( \textit{g}6 \textbf{15.f}3 \textit{g}3 \textit{g}5 \textbf{16.f}3 \) wins for White.) and Black must play 12... \( \textit{d}7 \). I recently made an attempt to revive this line for Black, but (fortunately for us) I could not find a satisfactory reply to 13.\( \textit{f}3 \)!. Emms dismissed this line in his great book \textit{Sicilian Kan} because of 13... \( \textit{x}e5 \) (13...0-0 is too dangerous after 14.\( \textit{h}3 \textit{g}6 \) (14...h6 15.\( \textit{x}h6 \) wins) 15.\( \textit{h}6 \textit{e}8 \textbf{16.g}7! A brilliant attacking idea my little slave Fritz found while I was cooking. Now White is winning.) 14.\( \textit{x}a8 \textit{b}7 \textbf{15.b}5 \textit{axb}5 \textbf{16.a}7 \)

With the verdict \textit{unclear}. I, and maybe more notably Fritz, do not agree with this evaluation at all. In the modern age where computer programs are very strong (And everyone has one!) such positions can be worked out to a definite conclusion. I have not found a line where Black gets
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sufficient compensation. Some sample lines:

16...0–0 17.axb5 (Taking the c6-square away from the queen and knight. 17...\texttt{\textbackslash x}b5? \texttt{\textbackslash f}5\textdagger wins for Black. 17...\texttt{\textbackslash f}4 \texttt{\textbackslash f}5\textdagger 18...\texttt{\textbackslash c}x\texttt{c}5 \texttt{\textbackslash f}xc5 19...\texttt{\textbackslash h}1 \texttt{\textbackslash c}6 20...\texttt{\textbackslash f}2 is possible, but risky.) 17...\texttt{\textbackslash b}c6 18...\texttt{\textbackslash d}5! exd5 19..\texttt{\textbackslash b}xc6 \texttt{\textbackslash f}xc6 (19...\texttt{\textbackslash g}4 20...\texttt{\textbackslash f}4 \texttt{\textbackslash f}xc6 21...\texttt{\textbackslash w}a4.) 20...\texttt{\textbackslash d}4 \texttt{\textbackslash c}5 21...\texttt{\textbackslash e}3 \texttt{\textbackslash w}c7 22...\texttt{\textbackslash c}c3 \texttt{\textbackslash f}c4 (22...\texttt{\textbackslash g}4 23...\texttt{\textbackslash f}4.) 23...\texttt{\textbackslash f}4 and White is better. This, of course, awaits future practical tests. If White does not like this he can just play 13...\texttt{\textbackslash g}4 g6 14...\texttt{\textbackslash f}4 \texttt{\textbackslash c}6 15...\texttt{\textbackslash e}4 \texttt{\textbackslash b}7 16...\texttt{\textbackslash c}ae1 with a very active position. Please notice that the e-pawn is immune: 16...\texttt{\textbackslash c}xe5 (Or 16...\texttt{\textbackslash d}xe5 17...\texttt{\textbackslash x}c6\textdagger) 17...\texttt{\textbackslash x}b7! when White is winning material.

12...\texttt{\textbackslash f}d6 \texttt{\textbackslash x}d6

12...\texttt{\textbackslash x}d6 transposes after 13...\texttt{\textbackslash e}4 \texttt{\textbackslash c}7.

13...\texttt{\textbackslash e}4 \texttt{\textbackslash e}7

13...\texttt{\textbackslash b}7 14...\texttt{\textbackslash x}d6\textdagger \texttt{\textbackslash x}d6 15...\texttt{\textbackslash e}3 and White has the bishop pair in an open position. Black is solid but White’s advantage is quite clear. 15...\texttt{\textbackslash c}6 16...\texttt{\textbackslash g}4 0–0–0 17...\texttt{\textbackslash f}d1 \texttt{\textbackslash f}6 18...\texttt{\textbackslash e}2 \texttt{\textbackslash b}4 and now instead of 19...\texttt{\textbackslash c}4 which led to a draw in Trabert – Vasilev, Kavala 2001, 19...\texttt{\textbackslash a}5 \texttt{\textbackslash b}5 20...\texttt{\textbackslash x}b5 is almost decisive.

14...\texttt{\textbackslash f}5?! White should not rest for a second - he must use his better development before Black consolidates.

14...\texttt{\textbackslash e}5 15...\texttt{\textbackslash x}d6\textdagger is terrible for Black. Black never had a chance in Sulskis – Emms, Gausdal 1995: 15...\texttt{\textbackslash f}8 16...\texttt{\textbackslash g}5 \texttt{\textbackslash f}6 17...\texttt{\textbackslash c}3 \texttt{\textbackslash c}6 18...\texttt{\textbackslash f}3 \texttt{\textbackslash b}4 19...\texttt{\textbackslash g}3 \texttt{\textbackslash g}8 20...\texttt{\textbackslash h}6! \texttt{\textbackslash x}d3 21...\texttt{\textbackslash x}g7\textdagger \texttt{\textbackslash e}8 22...\texttt{\textbackslash c}xd3 \texttt{\textbackslash w}c2 23...\texttt{\textbackslash w}h5\textdagger \texttt{\textbackslash a}8 24...\texttt{\textbackslash f}7 \texttt{\textbackslash e}8 25...\texttt{\textbackslash c}x\texttt{f}6 1–0.

15...\texttt{\textbackslash f}4!

White is very active and keeps developing with tempo. 15...\texttt{\textbackslash f}5 \texttt{\textbackslash e}5 does not promise anything.

15...\texttt{\textbackslash e}5 16...\texttt{\textbackslash c}6 16...\texttt{\textbackslash d}4 and 15...\texttt{\textbackslash d}8 16...\texttt{\textbackslash d}6\textdagger is very scary for Black.

16...\texttt{\textbackslash c}3?! 16...\texttt{\textbackslash g}3 is much more aggressive and according to my analysis the complications favour White. White has to be prepared to sacrifice a piece in several lines here. Black has a choice between the solid 16...0–0 after which 17...\texttt{\textbackslash x}f5 \texttt{\textbackslash b}c6 18...\texttt{\textbackslash x}e7\textdagger \texttt{\textbackslash x}e7 19...\texttt{\textbackslash e}4 leads to a position where White has the bishop pair.
and the initiative, or the 'greedy' 16...g6!, which demands very aggressive play from White. He has two lines to choose from:

a) 17.\(\text{\textit{e1}}\) I think this is best. 17...\(\text{\textit{bd6}}\) (17...\(\text{\textit{bd7}}\) is not good, and after 18.\(\text{x f5}\) gxf5 19.\(\text{x f5}\) f6 20.\(\text{h5+ d8}\) 21.\(\text{ad1}\) White has a big attack.) 18.\(\text{d4!}\)

b) 17.\(\text{x f5}\) gxf5 18.\(\text{d5}\) f6 19.\(\text{x e5}\) fxe5 20.\(\text{x f5}\) \(\text{x f5}\) 21.\(\text{x f5}\) is given as good for White by Emms but after 21...\(\text{a7}\) this is not clear at all.

16...0–0 17.\(\text{d5}\) \(\text{c5}\) 18.\(\text{h1}\) \(\text{b7}\)

Black has no problems after 21...\(\text{g6}\)!

22.\(\text{xc5}\) bxc5 23.\(\text{ad6}\) \(\text{f8}\).

22.\(\text{d1}\) \(\text{h8}\) 23.\(\text{c3}\) f6 24.\(\text{xc5}\) bxc5 25.\(\text{xe3}\) \(\text{a7}\) 26.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{e8}\) 27.\(\text{fd1}\) \(\text{d7}\)

28.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{f4}\) 29.\(\text{xf4}\) \(\text{d4}\) 30.\(\text{h5}\) \(\text{b8}\)

31.\(\text{b4}\) \(\text{xd5}\) 32.\(\text{cxd5}\) \(\text{xd5}\) 33.\(\text{bxc5}\) \(\text{ec6}\) 34.\(\text{xb8}\)

Game over.

34.\(\text{xb8}\) 35.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{xf3}\) 36.\(\text{xf3}\) 1–0

I have given up this variation as Black because of this line.

Game 29

van der Wiel – Nijboer

Holland 1996

1.\(\text{e4}\) c5 2.\(\text{f3}\) e6 3.\(\text{d4}\) \(\text{xd4}\) 4.\(\text{xd4}\) a6

5.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{c7}\) 6.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{c5}\)!

This is a very typical thing for the Kan – after Black encounters problems in one line he changes the move order and tries to avoid the problem.

7.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{e7}\)

If White now continues like in the Acs’ game Black can just keep the knight at g8 for a move or two and thereby sidestep the e4–e5 advance.

8.\(\text{g4}\)!
The Kan and Taimanov

White immediately attacks g7. This is the downside to postponing \( \text{Qf6} \).

8...g6

Black has two alternatives:

a) 8...\( \text{Qf6} \) 9.\( \text{Qxg7} \) \( \text{Qg8} \) 10.\( \text{Qh6} \) \( \text{Qxg2} \) 11.\( \text{Qf4} \) and the bishop comes to g3, which is horrible for Black.

b) 8...\( \text{Qf6} \) A clumsy move. White just develops naturally and has a better position. 9.\( \text{Qd2} \) \( \text{Qc6} \) 10.0–0 d6 11.\( \text{Qg3} \) and White is slightly better.

9.\( \text{Qg5} \)!

White uses the fact that the Black queen is at c7 to try to exchange the black squared bishop. As all (!) Black's pawns are currently located on light squares, Black will have weak dark squares for a long time to come. Please note that this is not possible in the fashionable line: 1.e4 c5 2.\( \text{Qf3} \) e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\( \text{Qxd4} \) a6 5.\( \text{Qd3} \) \( \text{Qc5} \) 6.\( \text{Qb3} \) \( \text{Qe7} \) 7.\( \text{Qg4} \) g6 and there is no \( \text{Qg5} \) due to the queen at d8.

9...h5

9...d6 is more sensible. Hector has tried two moves in this position:

a) 10.0–0–0? Hector recently switched to this move. It is probably best, and White does seem to have good chances of getting an advantage. Hector - Agrest, Aarhus 2003 continued 10...\( \text{Qf6} \) 11.\( \text{Qf4} \) \( \text{Qbd7} \) 12.\( \text{Qxe1} \) (12.\( \text{Qb1} \) also looks promising e.g. 12...b5 (12...e5 13.\( \text{Qd2} \) b5 14.a3) and now 13.a3 as it is not certain the rook belongs on e1.) 12...e5 13.\( \text{Qd2} \) b5 (13...\( \text{Qb6} \)!! 14.\( \text{Qe2} \) Wins a pawn or forces the knight to go back again.) 14.\( \text{Qxb5} \) (Very typical of Hector, but I will recommend 14.a3(!) instead. After 14...\( \text{Qb7} \) 15.\( \text{Qb1} \) 0–0–0 16.\( \text{Qf3} \) White is better – he enjoys more space and has a safe king.) The game concluded 14...\( \text{Qxb5} \) 15.\( \text{Qxb5} \) \( \text{Qb8} \) 16.\( \text{Qxd6} \) \( \text{Qxd6} \) 17.\( \text{Qxd6} \) \( \text{Qxd6} \) 18.\( \text{Qxd6} \) \( \text{Qa6} \) 19.\( \text{Qxa6} \) \( \text{Qxa6} \) 20.\( \text{Qxf6} \) \( \text{Qxf6} \) 21.\( \text{Qc5} \) \( \text{Qc8} \) 22.\( \text{Qe7} \) 23.\( \text{Qc2} \) \( \text{Qd7} \) 24.\( \text{Qd3} \) \( \text{Qa6} \) 25.\( \text{Qc3} \) \( \text{Qc8} \) 26.b3 \( \text{Qe6} \) 27.a4 \( \text{Qc5} \) 28.\( \text{Qxc5} \) \( \text{Qxc5} \) 29.\( \text{Qd1} \) \( \text{Qc8} \) 30.\( \text{Qf3} \) f5 31.\( \text{Qa5} \) \( \text{fxe4} \) 32.\( \text{fxe4} \) \( \text{Qb7} \) 33.\( \text{Qxe1} \) \( \text{Qa6} \) 34.\( \text{Qd1} \) \( \text{Qb7} \) 35.\( \text{Qe1} \) \( \text{Qa6} \) 36.\( \text{Qe3} \) h5 37.\( \text{Qh4} \) \( \text{Qc5} \) 38.\( \text{Qg3} \) \( \text{Qf6} \) 39.\( \text{Qd3} \) \( \text{Qxa5} \) 40.\( \text{Qd6} \) \( \text{Qe7} \) 41.\( \text{Qxg6} \) \( \text{Qc8} \) 42.\( \text{Qg5} \) \( \text{Qg4} \) 43.\( \text{Qb4} \) \( \text{a2} \) 44.\( \text{Qxe5} \) \( \text{Qd6} \) 45.\( \text{Qd5} \) \( \text{Qc6} \) 46.\( \text{Qc5} \) \( \text{Qb6} \) 47.\( \text{Qb5} \) \( \text{Qc6} \) 48.\( \text{Qc5} \) \( \text{Qb6} \) 49.\( \text{Qb5} \) \( \text{Qc6} \) ½–½.

b) 10.\( \text{Qxe7} \) \( \text{Qxe7} \) (An earlier Hector - Agrest game went 10...\( \text{Qxe7} \) 11.0–0–0 e5 12.\( \text{Qg5} \) \( \text{Qe6} \) 13.\( \text{Qc2} \) \( \text{Qbc6} \) 14.\( \text{Qd2} \) and here Ziegler in ChessBase Magazine stated that White is slightly better.)
11.0-0-0 \texttt{d}f6 12.\texttt{W}g3 \texttt{d}bd7 13.\texttt{A}e2 e5 14.\texttt{W}e3 0-0 15.g4 b5 16.g5 \texttt{A}e8 17.\texttt{Q}d5 \texttt{W}d8 18.h4 \texttt{A}b7 19.h5 \texttt{A}xd5 20.\texttt{A}xd5 \texttt{Q}b6 21.\texttt{A}d3 \texttt{Q}c4 and the game was later drawn in Hector – Mortensen, Copenhagen 1996.

10.\texttt{W}h4 d6 11.0-0-0 \texttt{A}c6

White also has good attacking chances after 11...f6 12.\texttt{A}d2 g5 13.\texttt{W}g3 h4 14.\texttt{W}e3.

12.\texttt{A}xe7 \texttt{W}xe7 13.\texttt{W}g3 h4 14.\texttt{W}e3 g5 15.\texttt{Q}e2 \texttt{A}d7?!

A mistake but Black’s position is full of holes anyway. The text allowed...

16.\texttt{W}b6!

More or less winning a pawn by force. The b-pawn is attacked and White is planning to double rooks on the d-file.

17.\texttt{W}xb7 \texttt{W}d8 18.\texttt{A}d4 \texttt{A}a5 19.\texttt{W}b4 \texttt{W}c7 20.\texttt{A}b3 \texttt{A}b7 21.\texttt{A}d2! \texttt{A}b8 22.\texttt{Q}c4 The rest is easy. 22...h3 23.g3 \texttt{A}c6 24.\texttt{A}xd6† \texttt{A}xd6 25.\texttt{W}xd6 \texttt{W}xd6 26.\texttt{A}xd6 \texttt{Q}xe4 27.\texttt{Q}xe4 \texttt{Q}xe4 28.\texttt{A}d4 f5 29.f3 \texttt{Q}c5 30.\texttt{Q}c4 \texttt{Q}d7 31.\texttt{A}d1 \texttt{Q}f6 32.\texttt{A}c6 \texttt{Q}f7 33.\texttt{A}d6 \texttt{Q}be8 34.\texttt{A}c4 f4 35.gxf4 g4 36.fxg4 \texttt{Q}xg4 37.\texttt{A}xe6 \texttt{A}xh2 38.\texttt{Q}xe8† 1-0

Notice how weak Black’s dark squares became after the exchange of the black squared bishops.

Game 30
Predojevic – Fogarasi
Budapest 2004

1.e4 c5 2.\texttt{Q}f3 e6 3.\texttt{A}c3

A smart way to sidestep different lines like the tricky 4...\texttt{W}b6 and the Pin-variation. Black cannot exploit this move order in any way as both the White systems recommended in this chapter involve playing the knight to c3.

3...a6 4.d4 cxd4 5.\texttt{A}xd4 \texttt{W}c7 6.\texttt{A}d3 \texttt{Q}f6 7.0-0 \texttt{A}c5 8.\texttt{B}b3 \texttt{A}a7??

Another way for Black to retreat the bishop. Black is playing in similar fashion to 1.e4 c5 2.\texttt{Q}f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\texttt{A}xd4 a6 5.\texttt{A}d3 \texttt{Q}c5 6.\texttt{B}b3 \texttt{A}a7. It is White’s job to make sure that he gets a worse version!

9.\texttt{Q}h1!

If White chooses to play \texttt{W}e2 and \texttt{A}e3 then Black simply gains a good line.
from the 5...d3 c5 6.b3 a7 system. Once again this shows that it is necessary to have a broad knowledge of the various lines in the Sicilian.

9...d6

9...h5 10.f4! g4 11.f3 b5 12.e5 b7 13.e4 shows how ineffective the bishop can be at a7.

9...c6 10.f4 d6 just transposes to the game. 9...b5 might be premature after 10.a3 c6 11.f4 d6? 12.xb5! 0–0 13.e2 Black was just a pawn down and White went on to win in Semenova – Drmic, Harkany 1997.

10.f4

10.g5 is also possible. If White does not like the text he can investigate this idea.

10...bd7

Black can also play 10...c6. White now plays 11.e2! and seems to be a bit better as Black has problems in finding a safe haven for the king. 11...d7 (Not the optimal square for the bishop but the more active and thematic 11...b5 does not solve Black’s problems after the standard plan 12.d2 0–0 13.a3 b7 14.ae1 e7 15.e5. This is White’s normal play/plan against the Kan, and if you do not know what to do, this is often the recommended course! fd5 16.exd6 xc3 17.xc3 xd6 18.b4 d7 19.d1 d5 20.xc7 xe7 21.xh7+ xh7 22.exd5 and White won in Wiese – Guimaraes, Lisbon 2001.) 12.e3! Only now, when Black has messed up his set-up with d7, does White agree to this exchange. The game Ecsedi – Feher, Hungary 1995 concluded quickly: 12...xe3 13.xe3 b5 14.ae1(!) 0–0–0 15.a4 a7 16.a1 g5 17.axb5 g4 18.xg1 xg4 19.b6 c6 20.bxa7 d3 21.a6 a8 22.xf4 1–0. Admittedly not a great game, but White is better!

Some Black players (maniacs) will go 10...h5!?. This is not very trustworthy and if White just sticks to the scheme (e2, d2 ae1 and e5) he will get a good position with nice attacking chances.

11.d2

White is making room for the rook at e1. After e4-e5 the bishop will be good on the c1–h6 diagonal if Black takes on e5. And if Black does not take, and instead retreats the knight, this bishop can often find a nice square at c3 (after xd5 and exd6). In both cases the bishop will be helpful for White’s attack.
11...0–0 12.\textit{We}2 \textit{De}8?! 
Black does not have time for this, but even after the better 12...b5 13.\textit{Aa}e1 \textit{Ab}7 14.e5 dxe5 (14...\textit{D}d5 15.exd6 \textit{W}xd6 16.\textit{C}e4 \textit{Cc}7 17.\textit{A}a5 \textit{Ac}8 18.c4 bxc4 19.\textit{X}xc4 and White has the initiative.) 15.fxe5 \textit{D}d5 16.\textit{C}xd5 \textit{X}xd5 17.\textit{Ag}5! White has a strong attack. By the way, this is a good position to use to “play-out” against a computer program.
13.\textit{D}a1
White is ready for e4-e5 with a big attack.
13...e5?!
13...\textit{A}b8 (preventing e4-e5) is probably better, even though it is awfully passive. White should go 14.g4 when Black is pushed back.
14.g4!
Here we go! In general White does not push his g-pawn (and often not even his f-pawn) in the lines recommended in this chapter but, when the conditions dictate it, White must include the kingside pawns in the battle or else he will risk losing the initiative.
With g5 coming White is getting seriously involved in the fight for control of d5.
14...f8 15.g5 \textit{D}d6 16.\textit{D}d5 \textit{W}d8 17.\textit{F}5
Black is busted.
17...b5 18.\textit{Aa}5 \textit{Ab}8 19.c4 19.\textit{W}h5 is also good.
19...\textit{A}b6 20.\textit{X}xb6 \textit{W}xb6 21.b4 \textit{Ab}7 22.\textit{X}xb5
22.\textit{W}e3 is simpler.
22...d5 23.\textit{D}e3 \textit{Cc}7 24.\textit{Cc}1 \textit{D}d7 25.a4 \textit{g}6 26.b6 \textit{Cc}6 27.\textit{X}xc6 \textit{X}xc6 28.b5 dxe4 29.bxc6 \textit{Dxd}3 30.\textit{W}g2
1–0
The lines with \textit{A}a7 promise White good chances if he plays precisely.

Now we move on to the current mainline in the Kan.

\textbf{Game 31}
\textbf{Adams – Kasimdzhanov}
FIDE World Championship, Tripoli 2004

1.e4 c5 2.\textit{D}f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\textit{X}xd4 a6 5.\textit{Cc}3 b5?!
Black immediately starts the attack with the wing pawn, which is so typical of the Taimanov and Kan. The advance of the b-pawn creates the option of b5-b4, which increases Black’s influence in the
centre. The downside for Black is that the a6-b5 pawn-phalanx can easily become a weakness after either a well timed c2-c4 or especially a2-a4. Black is only making pawn moves so White is ahead in development and, even though Black is solid, White has good chances of creating an attack. This line has been very popular in the new millennium.

6.\textit{\texttt{d}3 w\texttt{b}6}

This has become very popular and is currently regarded as Black’s best chance in the Kan after 5.\textit{\texttt{c}3}. As usual Black wants a normal set-up with the queen at c7, but first he tries to kick White’s knight from d4 to the passive square b3. This is known in some sources as the Enhanced Kveinys variation. I will recommend:

7.\textit{\texttt{f}3}?!?

It looks almost like a beginner’s move - blocking the f-pawn and what on earth is the knight doing here? Of course the knight was under attack and had to retreat (I have not found any trace of an advantage after 7.\textit{\texttt{e}3}?! \textit{\texttt{c}5}!). At b3 the knight is just passive and sometimes even gets in the way, but at f3 it is eyeing g5 and e5. Black is using a lot of time to kick the knight so at the moment his development is in a sorry state, and this might give White the chance for a rapid attack with the pieces. When I was preparing this line for Black, this was the variation I was afraid of. If White can attack with the pieces instead of pawns he is also not taking the usual risks: If the attack fails the position will be approximately equal, whereas if this happens in the normal Sicilian lines, White is usually left with a lot of pawn weaknesses.

7...\textit{\texttt{c}7}

Black has many alternatives, but I believe this is best. Black avoids allowing White to go a4-a5 with tempo. The other lines are a jungle:

a) 7...\textit{\texttt{c}6} 8.0–0
and now:

a1) 8...\texttt{a}b7 was good for White after 9.\texttt{a}e2 (or 9.\texttt{e}e1!) \texttt{g}e7 10.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{a}5 11.a3 \texttt{g}6 12.d5 exd5 13.exd5 0–0 14.dxc6 dxc6 and later 1–0 in Krakops – Bellin, Gausdal 2000.

a2) 8...\texttt{g}e7 9.\texttt{e}e1! is nasty for Black. 9...\texttt{g}6 (9...\texttt{b}8 transposes to line c below) 10.\texttt{d}5?! (10.a4 allows 10...\texttt{c}5! when Black is more or less OK) \texttt{d}8 11.a4 \texttt{b}8 12.axb5 axb5 13.\texttt{c}3 \texttt{b}4 14.\texttt{b}5 \texttt{c}5 15.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{x}e3 16.\texttt{x}e3 0–0 17.\texttt{d}6 with a clear advantage for White, Xu Yuhua - Khurtsidze, Hyderabad 2002.

a3) 8...\texttt{b}8 (planning a set-up with \texttt{g}e7-g6 and \texttt{d}6) I think White's best move is 9.\texttt{e}e1! (9.e5 is also very popular). Black now has a choice between a3.1 9...\texttt{d}6, a3) 9...\texttt{g}e7 and a3.3 9...\texttt{d}6:

a3.1) 9...\texttt{d}6 10.a4!. Freeing c4 for the knight. 10...b4 11.\texttt{b}1 \texttt{g}7 12.\texttt{bd}2 \texttt{g}6 13.\texttt{c}4 \texttt{c}7 14.\texttt{f}1 \texttt{g}5 15.\texttt{cxe}5 \texttt{x}e5 16.\texttt{d}4 \texttt{b}7 17.\texttt{h}5 0–0 and now, instead of 18.\texttt{e}3, which quickly led to a draw in Smirnov – Fomyinh, Chennai 2004, White can keep an edge with 18.\texttt{d}2! attacking b4 and preparing c2-c3.

a3.2) 9...\texttt{g}e7 10.\texttt{c}3! eyeing b6. 10...\texttt{d}6 (10...\texttt{g}6 11.a4! b4 12.\texttt{d}5 is very good for White.) 11.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{g}6 12.\texttt{d}4 \texttt{xd}4 13.\texttt{c}4 \texttt{e}5 14.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{c}6 15.\texttt{f}2 \texttt{e}7 16.\texttt{d}5 exd5 17.exd5 This position was reached in two games:

Myo Naing - Zaw Win Lay, Bangkok 2004 was fun: 17...\texttt{a}7 18.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{d}7 19.\texttt{ae}1 \texttt{c}8 20.\texttt{h}4 \texttt{f}6 21.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{b}6 22.\texttt{h}1 \texttt{d}8 23.\texttt{xf}6! \texttt{g}xf6 24.\texttt{h}5+ \texttt{f}8 25.\texttt{h}6+ \texttt{f}7 26.\texttt{h}7 \texttt{g}4 27.\texttt{g}6+ \texttt{f}8 28.\texttt{xg}4 \texttt{h}7 29.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{e}8 30.\texttt{g}8+ \texttt{d}7 31.\texttt{h}7 1–0.

In Grischuk – Smirin, New Delhi (2) 2000 Black instead went 17...\texttt{e}5 18.\texttt{fxe}5 dxe5 19.\texttt{e}2 0–0 20.\texttt{d}4 exd4 21.\texttt{xe}7 \texttt{g}6 22.\texttt{f}6 \texttt{b}7 23.d6 \texttt{d}5 24.\texttt{xd}4? (White is totally winning after 24. \texttt{e}4!). The game concluded 24...\texttt{e}6 25.\texttt{xe}6 \texttt{fxe}6 26.c4 \texttt{xc}4 27.\texttt{xc}4 h5 28.\texttt{c}1 \texttt{a}7 29.\texttt{xe}6+ \texttt{h}7 30.\texttt{h}4 \texttt{b}7 31.d7 \texttt{xb}2 32.\texttt{h}3 \texttt{h}2–\texttt{h}1.

a3.3) 9...\texttt{d}6 should be answered by 10.\texttt{d}2! planning the typical a4 and c3.

a4) 8...\texttt{f}6 is very provocative after 9.e5 b4 10.\texttt{e}4 \texttt{g}4 11.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{a}5 Black defended successfully in Bauer – Ciuksysyte, Zurich 2002 after 12.\texttt{e}1 \texttt{gxe}5 13.\texttt{e}5 \texttt{xe}5 14.\texttt{h}5 \texttt{c}6 15.\texttt{g}5 \texttt{g}6 16.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{e}7 17.\texttt{h}4 0–0. But White is almost winning after 12.\texttt{eg}5! For example 12...\texttt{h}6 13.\texttt{xf}7! \texttt{xf}7 14.\texttt{h}3 or 12...\texttt{b}7 13.\texttt{e}4 with tremendous pressure.

a5) 8...\texttt{d}6 9. \texttt{b}2! when White has done well in practice. Spraggett – Boudy, Montreal 1996 proceeded: 9...\texttt{f}6 10.a4! b4 11.\texttt{b}1 Another route for the knight. 11...\texttt{e}7 12.\texttt{bd}2 coming to c4. 12...0–0 (12...\texttt{b}8 did not help Black in Baklan – Stiri, Corinth's 2004. The game concluded 13.\texttt{c}4 \texttt{g}4 14.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{e}5 15.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{f}5? Asking much too much of the black position 16.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{xe}3 17.\texttt{fxe}3 0–0
18. exf5 d5 19. e4! c5† 20. h1 xf5? 21. exf5 e4 22. xe4 dxe4 23. c4† h8 24. xc5 exf3 25. xc6 1-0.
13. c4 c7 14. a5 d7 15. f4 and White is better (1-0, 43).

b) 7... d6

b1) 8. 0-0 and now only 8... d7 has independent significance (8... c7 transposes to 2) under Black’s alternatives at move 8 and 8... c6 transpose to a5) above) 9. a4! is as usual the standard response. U. Ecker – E. Anka, Bayern 1999, took an interesting course 9... b4 10. a5 c7 11. a4! xa5 12. e3 c7 13. c3 Very dynamic. 13... bxc3 14. c1 g6 15. xc3 b8 16. c2 b7 17. b6 xb6 18. xb6 e7 19. a4† f8 and here White has a fantastic position after 20. f1, but instead he played 20. c7 and later went astray and even lost.

b2) 8. a4!? b4 (8... a4 9. c4 is better for White.) 9. a5! And Black has a choice.

9... b7 (After 9... c7 10. a4 d7 11. e3 b7 12. b6 White already has a clear advantage. The a-pawn is weak and the b6 is very annoying.)
10. a4 d7 11. 0-0 g6 12. e2 with a pleasant position.

c) 7... c5 8. 0-0 b7 (8... f6? 9. c5 g4 10. e4 and Black is busted.) 9. a4 b4 10. a5 c7 11. a4 xa5 This cannot be right. Black will miss his black squared bishop. 12. xc5 xc5 13. e3 c7 14. d2 f6 (14... a5 15. d4 f6 16. e3 and White has a raging initiative.) 15. xb4 c6 and now instead of 16. b6 as in Meshcheriakova – Kucherova, Essentuki 2003, White has 16. c3, which gives a huge advantage. Black is missing her bishop.

d) 7... b7?! 8. a4! a5 (A sign that everything is not right with Black’s set-up, but 8... b4 9. a5 c7 10. a4 is much better for White.) 9. 0-0 b4 10. b1 d5 11. e5 d7 12. bd2 c5 13. d4 c7 14. e1 c7 15. h5 g6 16. h4 g7 17. b3 h6 18. xc5 xc5 19. f3 and White is better. The game concluded.

... c6 20. e3 e7 21. g3 d7 22. a5 g5 23. c3 g4 24. xg4 xe5 25. xe5† xe5 26. h5 f6 27. xd4 xd4 28. cx4 ag8 29. f4 wg7 30. g3 f5 31. e5 g6 32. e2 a8 33. e1 he8 34. d2 c6 35. xb4 ab8 36. c3 b5 37. xf5! 1-0. Ghinda – Petre, Sovata 1999.

8. 0-0
8...\texttt{Bb7}

Again Black has alternatives:

1) 8...\texttt{d}c\texttt{c}6 is not very logical (it fits better with $\texttt{B}b8$) 9.\texttt{e}e\texttt{e}1 is a good reply.

   1a) 9...\texttt{d}6 10.a\texttt{a}4! The normal reply to d7-d6. 10...\texttt{b}4 11.\texttt{a}a2 \texttt{f}6 12.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{a}5 (White is better after both 12...d5 13.\texttt{e}xd5 \texttt{d}xd5 14.\texttt{e}e4 and 12...$\texttt{B}b8$ 13.c3 bxc3 14.\texttt{e}xc3! \texttt{e}7 15.b4 0-0 16.b5) 13.c3 bxc3 14.\texttt{e}xc3 and White is clearly better.

   1b) 9...\texttt{d}d\texttt{d}6 10.\texttt{e}e\texttt{e}b5?

   1c) 9...\texttt{f}f6 10.e5 \texttt{g}g\texttt{g}4 11.\texttt{f}f4 \texttt{f}6 12.\texttt{g}g3! fxe5 13.\texttt{g}g5 \texttt{f}f6 14.\texttt{h}xh7 d6 15.\texttt{g}g6+ \texttt{e}e7 16.\texttt{f}f7 \texttt{g}g8 17.\texttt{e}e4 d5 18.\texttt{e}eg5 1-0. Nikolenko – Ivanov, Moscow 2000.

2) 8...\texttt{d}6 9.a4! with the usual play on the c-file after b5-b4, \texttt{a}a2 and c2-c3.

3) 8...\texttt{f}f6 9.e5 \texttt{b}4 10.\texttt{d}e4 and White is better.

9.\texttt{e}e1

9.\texttt{d}d2! is an interesting alternative.

White had an easy time after 9...\texttt{e}7 10.a4 b4 11.\texttt{a}a2 \texttt{c}c6 12.\texttt{w}e1 \texttt{a}5 13.c3 bxc3 14.\texttt{c}xc3 \texttt{f}6 15.e5 \texttt{g}g4 16.\texttt{b}b5 $\texttt{B}b8$ 17.\texttt{c}c3!. Now all White's pieces are participating in the attack. 17...f5 18.h3 \texttt{h}h6 19.\texttt{d}d1 0-0 20.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{d}d8? 21.\texttt{d}d7! \texttt{d}xd7 22.\texttt{e}xe6+ \texttt{h}h8 23.\texttt{d}d7 \texttt{b}b4 24.\texttt{e}e2 \texttt{d}d5 25.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{f}f7 26.\texttt{f}f5 \texttt{c}5 27.e6 \texttt{d}d6 28.\texttt{h}h7 \texttt{h}h7 29.\texttt{g}g5+ \texttt{g}g8 30.\texttt{d}d6 \texttt{w}xd6 31.\texttt{h}h5 \texttt{f}f6 32.\texttt{w}f7+ \texttt{h}h8 33.\texttt{x}xb7 1-0 in Pelletier – Lobron, playchess.com 2004.

9...\texttt{c}c5

   a) 9...\texttt{d}d6 10.a4!

   b) 9...\texttt{e}7 Epishin's most recent idea and therefore probably the critical line. (Vladimir Epishin is the main connoisseur of this line in the Kan). I like 10.\texttt{d}d2! with the usual plan of generating play on the queenside. 10...\texttt{b}4 (10...\texttt{d}d6! 11.a4 bxa4 12.\texttt{x}xa4 with the usual slight advantage to White even though Black managed to draw in Tseshkovsky – Epishin, St Petersburg 2004) 11.\texttt{e}e2 \texttt{f}f6 (11...\texttt{c}c6 12.c3 \texttt{f}f6 13.\texttt{g}g3 bxc3 14.\texttt{x}xc3 0-0 15.\texttt{e}e1 and White has a slight advantage, Tyomkin – Epishin, Kapuskasing 2004) and now instead of 12.\texttt{d}d4 which was not very successful (even though White is slightly better) in Arizmendi Martinez – Smirin, Istanbul 2003, I think 12.\texttt{g}g3!, planning \texttt{d}d2 and c3, gives White good chances.

   c) 9...\texttt{f}f6 10.e5! b4 11.\texttt{a}a4 and White will play the bishop to d2 and then go c2-c3 with an initiative. This idea should be
familiar to the reader by now!

10. \( \text{d2} \)

Very artistic. White can also play 10. \( \text{d2} \), planning the usual a4 and a later c2-c3 opening the c-file. White has also enjoyed some success with 10. \( \text{g5} \)!? followed by manoeuvring the bishop to g3.

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

White was threatening 11. \( \text{g5} \).

11.b3? \( \text{f6} \) 12.\( \text{b2} \) d6 13.\( \text{a4} \) b4 14.\( \text{a2} \) \( \text{c6} \)

15.\( \text{d4} \)

15.c3! bxc3 16.\( \text{xc3} \) with the rook coming to c1. White has the initiative.

15...\( \text{xd4} \)

15...a5! is better. Black won in Zhang Zhong - Ye Jiangchuan, Taiyuan. After 16.\( \text{b5} \) \( \text{d7} \) 17.\( \text{ad1} \) 0–0 18.\( \text{e5} \) (A silly pawn sacrifice.) 18...\( \text{xe5} \) 19.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{c6} \) 20.f4 \( \text{g6} \) 21.f5 exf5 22.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{c5} \) and Black is in control.

16.\( \text{xd4} \) a5 17.\( \text{a1} \) 0–0 18.c3 bxc3

19.\( \text{xc3} \) \( \text{d8} \) 20.\( \text{b5} \) e5 21.\( \text{c7} \)!

White is better

21...\( \text{exd4} \) 22.\( \text{xb7} \) d5 23.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{b4} \) 24.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{dxe4} \) 25.\( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{xe4} \) 26.\( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{f6} \) 27.\( \text{c7} \) \( \text{ad8} \) 28.\( \text{d5} \) \( \text{d6} \) 29.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{e6} \) 30.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{ad6} \) 31.\( \text{xb4} \) \( \text{xb4} \) 32.\( \text{e7} \)!

\( \text{xe7} \) 33.\( \text{xd6} \) \( \text{e2} \) 34.\( \text{d4} \) h5 35.\( \text{xb4} \) \( \text{f3} \) 36.\( \text{h4} \) \( \text{c8} \) 37.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{c3} \) 38.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{c6} \) 39.\( \text{h2} \) \( \text{xb3} \) 40.\( \text{d8} \) \( \text{h7} \) 41.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{b7} \) 42.\( \text{xb7} \) \( \text{g8} \) 43.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{f6} \) 44.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{a7} \) 45.a5 g6 46.\( \text{b5} \) \( \text{h7} \) 47.\( \text{b6} \)!

1–0

It seems to me that Black has plenty of problems in this line at the moment. I doubt it will keep its current popularity.

Game 32
Svidler – Milov
Biel 2000

1.\( \text{e4} \) c5 2.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{e6} \) 3.d4 cxd4 4.\( \text{xd4} \) a6 5.\( \text{c3} \) b5 6.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{b7} \)

Another way to play.

7.0–0 \( \text{b6} \)

Black is trying to reach the 6...\( \text{b6} \) line by a different move order. We will look at the alternatives in Game 33.

8.\( \text{e3} \)!

White can also play 8.\( \text{f3} \) probably transposing to Game 31.

8...\( \text{c5} \) 9.\( \text{ce2} \)

Not 9.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{c6} \)!

9...\( \text{f6} \)

a) 9...\( \text{c7} \) is currently regarded as Black’s best chance - I think this will change after these notes are published!
White goes 10.a4!

a1) 10...b4 (10...bxa4 11.axa4 is a bit better for White.) and here in El Arousy – Annageldyev, Dubai 2001, White continued 11.c3 and the game was later drawn. Instead 11.c1! is very strong.

A move I found while trying to make this line work for Black. c2-c3 is coming and this will give Black big problems on the c-file. 11...d6 (11...c6 12.xe6 12.c3 b3! (12...g4 13.f4.) 13.g3 and b3 is dropping.

a2) 10...d6 11.axb5 dxe4 12.bxa6 dxa6 13.b5 and White is a clear pawn up.

b) 9...c6 is better for White after 10.c3 f6 11.b4 xd4 12.xd4 c7 13.xc6 xc6 14.f3 0–0 15.e2.

10.b4!

Already White is better.

10...xd4?!

Black could try 10...xb4? but White has a nice initiative after 11.f5!.

As usual White is generating attacking chances on the c-file (who knows, maybe this will one day teach Black players to keep the b-pawn back).

12.e5

12...bxc4 13.c1 xe4 14.xc4 and White is attacking.

13.b2 c6

13...bxc4 14.c1 d5 15.exd5 xd5 16.xc4 xc4 17.c2 is better for White according to Ribli.

14.cxb5 axb5 15.c3d4 16.xb5 0–0 17.d3

And Svidler's great technique decided the issue.

17.fd8 18.e1 d5 19.exd5 xd5 20.xd5 xd5 21.c1 b7 22.c4 d7 23.a3 ad8 24.d3 e4 25.e3 h6 26.h3 d6 27.f1 d5 28.c4 f5 29.c1 d6? 30.xf6 xf6 31.cxe4 b6 32.e5 g3 33.c8+ ad8 34.xd8+ 1–0
Game 33
Smirin – Markowski
Plovdiv 2003

1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{\=d}f3\) e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\(\text{\=d}x d4\) a6
5.\(\text{\=d}c3\) b5 6.\(\text{\=d}d3\) d6
A specialty of Svidler and Markowski.
7.0–0

7...\(\text{g}f6\)

a) 7...\(\text{b}7\) is answered by the standard 8.a4! b4 9.\(\text{a}2\) d5 (9...e5 is no better 10.\(\text{f}5!\) c6 11.\(\text{d}2\) a5 12.c3 bxc3 13.\(\text{xc}3\) with a clear advantage in Wiersma – H. van der Spek, Amsterdam 2002.) 10.e5 \(\text{c}6\) 11.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{xc}6\) 12.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{b}8\) 13.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{b}7\) 14.\(\text{c}1\) \(\text{e}7\) 15.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{g}6\) 16.f4 \(\text{d}7\) 17.\(\text{g}4\) and White was better and duly won in V. Malisauskas – M. Brodsky, Riga 1995.

b) 7...\(\text{c}7\) 8.a4 \(\text{f}6\) 9.\(\text{e}3\) bxa4 10.\(\text{xa}4\) \(\text{e}7\) 11.c4 0–0 12.b4 \(\text{bc}6\) 13.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{xc}6\) 14.\(\text{b}1\) \(\text{b}8\) 15.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{d}4\) ½–½ Kundin – Kudischewitsch, Tel Aviv 2002. A weird decision by White, as he is much better.

8.\(\text{e}2\)

The best move in my opinion. The queen is often good on this square, where it adds to the pressure on the f1–a6 diagonal, defends e4, and supports a future e4–e5. 8.\(\text{e}1\) is also possible.

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

8...e7 9.a4! b4 (9...\(\text{b}4\) 10.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{b}7\) 11.\(\text{d}2\) 0–0 12.b4 and White has the better prospects and went on to win in Cernousek – Bernasek, Lilie Litomysl 2003) 10.\(\text{a}2\)

a) 10...e5 11.\(\text{f}5!\). With Black’s central pawns on dark squares it makes a lot of sense to force the exchange of his white squared bishop. 11...\(\text{xf}5\) 12.\(\text{xf}5\) a5 (12...\(\text{a}5\) 13.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{c}6\) 14.c3 bxc3 15.\(\text{xc}3\) \(\text{b}6\) 16.b4 0–0 17.\(\text{e}3\) seems to be a bit better for White.) 13.\(\text{b}5!\) \(\text{bd}7\) 14.\(\text{g}5\) 0–0 15.c3 bxc3 16.\(\text{xc}3\) And White has an obvious advantage
according to Smirin in *New In Chess*. I tend to agree, as White has the bishop pair and free play. The black bishop does not seem to have a very bright future and if White is careful he will always be able to ‘play around it’. The game continued 16...

h6 17.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)h4 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)c5 18.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)ad1 \(\text{\textit{b}}\)3 19.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)xf6 \(\text{\textit{g}}\)xf6 20.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d5 \(\text{\textit{d}}\)d4 21.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)d3 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)c8 22.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)c1 \(\text{\textit{g}}\)g5 23.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)c3 \(\text{\textit{f}}\)xc3? (23...\(\text{\textit{c}}\)c5 is still good for White but Black has better chances than after the text move, which robs his knight of the d4-square) 24.bxc3 \(\text{\textit{b}}\)3 25.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d1 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)c5 26.\(\text{\textit{e}}\)e2 e4 27.\(\text{\textit{g}}\)g4 \(\text{\textit{f}}\)f6 28.\(\text{\textit{e}}\)e1 \(\text{\textit{e}}\)e5 29.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)h7 30.\(\text{\textit{h}}\)h3 g6 31.f3 exf3 32.gxf3 h5 33.f4 \(\text{\textit{g}}\)g7 34.\(\text{\textit{g}}\)g2 \(\text{\textit{g}}\)g8 35.\(\text{\textit{g}}\)h1 \(\text{\textit{f}}\)f6 36.fxg6+ fxg6 37.f5 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)h4 38.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)c4 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)c7 39.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)f3 \(\text{\textit{g}}\)g5 40.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)f4 \(\text{\textit{f}}\)xf5 41.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)h4 \(\text{\textit{e}}\)e7 42.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d3?. After a well-played game Smirin throws the win away. The easiest win is probably 42.\(\text{\textit{b}}\)b5! After the text move Black managed to draw. 42...\(\text{\textit{d}}\)xd3 43.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)xd3 \(\text{\textit{g}}\)g4 44.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)g2 \(\text{\textit{a}}\)xa4 45.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d1 \(\text{\textit{a}}\)a2–\(\text{\textit{a}}\)a1 Smirin – Markowski, Rethymnon 2003.

b) 10...

\(\text{\textit{b}}\)b6 Markowski’s latest try. 11.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d3 \(\text{\textit{b}}\)b7 12.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d2 (12.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)c3 \(\text{\textit{e}}\)e4 13.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)xf6 \(\text{\textit{g}}\)g5 0–0 15.\(\text{\textit{a}}\)a5 \(\text{\textit{d}}\)d5 16.f4 and here White quite prematurely agreed to a draw in Bakalarz – Markowski, Antalya 2004. Not the best decision as he has a promising attacking position.) 12... \(\text{\textit{e}}\)e5 13.\(\text{\textit{b}}\)b3 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)c6 14.\(\text{\textit{g}}\)g5 0–0 15.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)xf6 \(\text{\textit{g}}\)xf6 16.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)c4 \(\text{\textit{e}}\)e6 17.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)d1 The position is very unclear but later won by White in Cyborowski – Markowski, Warsaw 2004.

c) 10...a5 11.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)c3 \(\text{\textit{e}}\)e5 12.\(\text{\textit{b}}\)b5! and White is already clearly better. V. Faibisovich – R. Rodkin, Pardubice 2001.

9.\(\text{\textit{a}}\)a4 \(\text{\textit{b}}\)b4 10.\(\text{\textit{a}}\)a2 \(\text{\textit{d}}\)d5

10...\(\text{\textit{e}}\)e7 11.\(\text{\textit{b}}\)xb4! \(\text{\textit{d}}\)d5 12.e5 \(\text{\textit{b}}\)xb4 13.exf6 \(\text{\textit{g}}\)xf6 14.c3 \(\text{\textit{e}}\)e7 15.\(\text{\textit{b}}\)b5†! \(\text{\textit{d}}\)d7 (15...\(\text{\textit{f}}\)f8 16.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d3 e5 17.\(\text{\textit{b}}\)b3 leaves White only slightly better.) 16.\(\text{\textit{xd}}\)d7† \(\text{\textit{xd}}\)d7 17.\(\text{\textit{e}}\)e3 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)c8 18.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)f3 \(\text{\textit{d}}\)d6 And here, instead of 19.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)fe1 (Ribli – Garcia Martinez, Cienfuegos 1972), White should play 19.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d4! with an obvious advantage.

11.\(\text{\textit{e}}\)e5 \(\text{\textit{e}}\)e4 12.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)c3 \(\text{\textit{d}}\)d7

12...bxc3 13.\(\text{\textit{b}}\)xc3 \(\text{\textit{b}}\)xc3 14.\(\text{\textit{b}}\)xc3 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)c7 15.\(\text{\textit{b}}\)b1 and White is better according to Smirin. Black has no way to develop his pieces in a sensible way. And where is Black’s king supposed to go?

13.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)f3 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)c5 14.\(\text{\textit{b}}\)b4 \(\text{\textit{a}}\)a5

15.\(\text{\textit{b}}\)c6!

Very smart. Smirin has calculated that the discovered check is harmless.
15...\textit{\textasciitilde}b6 16.\textit{\textasciitilde}b5 \textit{\textasciitilde}b3 17.\textit{\textasciitilde}e3 \textit{\textasciitilde}xa1 18.\textit{\textasciitilde}xe6.
16.\textit{\textasciitilde}xc6 \textit{\textasciitilde}b6 17.\textit{\textasciitilde}b5 \textit{\textasciitilde}b3\textup{??}

17...\textit{\textasciitilde}c8 is better, but even here White is clearly better after 18.\textit{\textasciitilde}e3 \textit{\textasciitilde}xc6 19.b4! \textit{\textasciitilde}c7 20.\textit{\textasciitilde}ab1 \textit{\textasciitilde}a7 21.\textit{\textasciitilde}h1 \textit{\textasciitilde}e7 22.bxc5 \textit{\textasciitilde}xc5 23.\textit{\textasciitilde}g5 0–0 24.f4 with a nice kingside attack in the making.

18.\textit{\textasciitilde}e3 \textit{\textasciitilde}c5 19.\textit{\textasciitilde}ae1 \textit{\textasciitilde}c8 20.\textit{\textasciitilde}xc5 \textit{\textasciitilde}xc5\textup{??} 21.\textit{\textasciitilde}h1!

A computer move.

21...\textit{\textasciitilde}xc6 22.\textit{\textasciitilde}d1!

The rest is easy. White is just a pawn up.

22...\textit{\textasciitilde}c7 23.\textit{\textasciitilde}xb3 0–0 24.\textit{\textasciitilde}d1 \textit{\textasciitilde}b6 25.f4 g6 26.\textit{\textasciitilde}f3 \textit{\textasciitilde}g7 27.\textit{\textasciitilde}h3 h5 28.\textit{\textasciitilde}d3 \textit{\textasciitilde}c8 29.f5

A forceful shift of gear.

29...\textit{\textasciitilde}xf5 30.\textit{\textasciitilde}xd5 \textit{\textasciitilde}f2 31.e6 \textit{\textasciitilde}xb2 32.\textit{\textasciitilde}d7 \textit{\textasciitilde}xc3 33.e7!

Winning a piece.

33...\textit{\textasciitilde}xe7 34.\textit{\textasciitilde}d4\textup{??} 1–0

\textbf{Game 34}

\textbf{Ponomariov – Gallagher}

Biel 2000

1.e4 c5 2.\textit{\textasciitilde}f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\textit{\textasciitilde}xd4 a6 5.\textit{\textasciitilde}c3 b5 6.\textit{\textasciitilde}d3 \textit{\textasciitilde}c5

Another way to try to reach the positions with White's knight stuck at b3.

The alternative is 6...\textit{\textasciitilde}b7 7.0–0 and apart from 7...\textit{\textasciitilde}b6, which we looked at in Game 5, Black has the following options:

1) 7...\textit{\textasciitilde}c7 (In combination with b5 and \textit{\textasciitilde}b7 this is begging for trouble. The position often arises via 5...\textit{\textasciitilde}c7 too.) 8.\textit{\textasciitilde}e1!!?. Getting ready for a knight jump to d5. Now we have:

1a) 8...\textit{\textasciitilde}c6 9.\textit{\textasciitilde}xc6 \textit{\textasciitilde}xc6 (9...\textit{\textasciitilde}xc6 10.\textit{\textasciitilde}d5! and 9...dxc6 10.a4 is better for White) 10.a4 b4 11.\textit{\textasciitilde}d5 \textit{\textasciitilde}f6 12.\textit{\textasciitilde}d2 \textit{\textasciitilde}c5 13.c3 and White has the initiative.

1b) 8...d6 9.a4! bxa4 (9...b4 10.\textit{\textasciitilde}d5! A typical sacrifice even though 10.\textit{\textasciitilde}a2 with the usual plan of attacking the queenside is safe and good, 10...exd5 11.exd5\textup{??} \textit{\textasciitilde}e7 and here instead of 12.\textit{\textasciitilde}f5 which looked unclear in Stocek – Protaziuk, Zagan 1995, I prefer 12.\textit{\textasciitilde}g5 g6 13.\textit{\textasciitilde}e2!! with an interesting attacking position.) 10.\textit{\textasciitilde}xa4 White's play in this game is very instructive: 10...\textit{\textasciitilde}f6 11.\textit{\textasciitilde}c4 \textit{\textasciitilde}d8 12.\textit{\textasciitilde}b4 \textit{\textasciitilde}c7 13.\textit{\textasciitilde}g5 \textit{\textasciitilde}e7 14.\textit{\textasciitilde}c4 \textit{\textasciitilde}c6 15.\textit{\textasciitilde}xc6 \textit{\textasciitilde}xc6 16.\textit{\textasciitilde}xf6 gxf6 17.\textit{\textasciitilde}b3 \textit{\textasciitilde}g8 18.\textit{\textasciitilde}h5 \textit{\textasciitilde}g6 19.\textit{\textasciitilde}h7 f5 20.\textit{\textasciitilde}d5 1–0 Ribli – Tokaji, Hungary 1967.
1c) 8...b4?! 9.\(\text{f}6! (\text{The alternative } 9.\text{c}e2 \text{ led to a White success after } \text{f}6 10.\text{g}3 \text{c}5 11.\text{b}3 \text{d}6 12.\text{d}2 \text{c}6 13.\text{c}3 \text{a}5 14.\text{d}4 \text{c}5 15.\text{e}3 \text{e}5 16.\text{b}5 \text{b}6 17.\text{xc}5 \text{xc}5 18.\text{xb}4 1-0 \text{in Tiviakov – Anand, Tilburg 1992 but the text move is more forceful.}) 9...exd5 10.exd5 \text{d}8 11.\text{w}h5! and White's attack is very strong.

1d) 8...d6 rapidly led to a disaster for Black. 9.\text{f}3 b4 10.\text{a}4 \text{c}6 11.\text{e}3 \text{e}5 12.\text{xe}5 \text{xe}5 13.\text{w}h5 \text{f}6 14.\text{w}h4 \text{c}6? 15.\text{g}5 \text{d}6? 16.f4 1-0 Krakops – Kunte, Zagan 1997.

1e) 8...c5?! 9.\text{b}3 \text{e}7 10.\text{w}g4 g6 11.\text{g}5 is similar to Game 2.

1f) 8...\text{e}7 and in Emms – Franklin, West Bromwich 2004, White tried the adventurous 9.e5 (9.\text{w}e2?! is a good alternative.) and after 9...b4 10.\text{a}4 \text{c}6 11.\text{xc}6 \text{xc}6 12.b3 h5 13.\text{e}4 h4 14.\text{f}3 \text{c}8 15.\text{d}2 \text{h}6 16.\text{ac}1 \text{f}5 17.c3 bxc3 18.\text{xc}3 he had gained a big advantage. The game concluded: 18...0-0 19.g4 hgx3 20.hgx3 \text{xe}4 21.\text{xe}4 \text{a}7 22.\text{g}2 d5 23.exd6 \text{xd}6 24.\text{f}3 \text{f}6 25.\text{d}3 \text{fd}8 26.\text{a}5 1-0.

1g) 8...\text{f}6 is as usual answered by 9.e5!. Black went 9...\text{d}5 in Haba – Voloshin, Plzen 2003. After 10.\text{xd}5 \text{xd}5 11.\text{g}4 \text{c}6 12.\text{xc}6 \text{xc}6 13.\text{d}2 h5 White could have gained a clear advantage with 14.\text{g}5 when Black has problems developing. In the game White played 14.\text{h}3?! and still won with some luck.

2) 7...d6 8.\text{w}e2!

2a) 8...\text{f}6 Transposes to Game 33.

2b) 8...\text{c}6 9.\text{xc}6 \text{xc}6 10.a4! with a clear advantage.

2c) 8...\text{d}7 9.a4 bxa4 10.\text{xa}4 and White is a little better.

3) 7...\text{e}7 8.\text{g}5! has long been known to be good for White. Both 8...h6 and 8...f6 should be answered by 9.\text{e}3 when Black's structure is weakened and White has good attacking chances.

4) 7...\text{c}6?! 8.\text{xc}6

4a) 8...\text{dx}c6 9.e5 (9.a4!) \text{e}7 10.\text{w}h5 \text{c}7 11.\text{e}1 \text{g}6 12.\text{xc}6 \text{fx}c6 13.\text{g}4 \text{f}7 14.\text{f}5 \text{f}5 15.\text{w}h4 c5 16.\text{d}6+ \text{xd}6 17.\text{ex}d6 and White went on to win in Emms – Crouch, England 1997.

4b) 8...\text{xc}6 9.\text{e}1!

4b1) 9...\text{f}6 10.e5 is slightly better for White after 10...b4 11.\text{e}4. Black has some problems with his queenside pawns.

4b2) 9...\text{b}8?! 10.a4! b4 11.\text{d}5 \text{d}6 12.\text{w}h5 \text{xd}5 13.\text{ex}d5 \text{f}6 14.\text{w}g5 \text{f}8 A concession. The rest of the game is instructive – White goes very hard after Black's king. 15.\text{xe}6 \text{xe}6 16.\text{w}h4 \text{e}7 17.a5 \text{c}8 18.\text{d}2 b3 19.\text{c}3 \text{xc}2 20.\text{xc}2 \text{b}5 21.\text{ad}1 \text{c}4 22.\text{w}h3 \text{g}4 23.\text{xd}6 \text{xd}6 24.\text{d}3 \text{xc}3 25.\text{xc}3 \text{g}5 26.\text{g}3+ \text{e}7 27.\text{e}2 \text{d}2 28.\text{f}1 \text{h}5 29.\text{h}3 \text{c}8 30.\text{d}1 1-0 Tiviakov – Perez Candelario Malaga 2003.

4b3) 9...d6 10.a4 is good for White. 10...b4 is answered by 11.\text{d}5!
4b4) 9...d7 10.h5 g6 11.a4 b4 12.d5 d6 and now, instead of 13.e3 which was later drawn in Ponomariov - Dao Thien Hai, New Delhi 2000, I prefer 13.d2!.

7.b3 e7

8.g4! g6

8...f6 9.xg7 g8 10.h6 c6 11.f4 and Black has no compensation for the pawn.

9.e2

Back to the ideal square. Compared to the line 1.e4 c5 2.f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.xd4 a6 5.d3 c5 6.b3 e7 7.g4 g6 8.e2 Black has played b7-b5 too early and White can punish this with a well-timed a2-a4.

9...d6 10.0–0 b4?!

A strange move but White was planning to hit this pawn anyway with a2-a4 (as usual).

11.d1

11.b1 is also interesting.

11...b7 12.a3!

Another way to attack the queenside.

12.c6

12..bxa3 13.xa3 is slightly better for White.

13.d2 bxa3

13...a5 is answered by 14.b5.

14.xa3

According to notes by Ribli in ChessBase Magazine, White is now clearly better – I agree.

14..c8

Defending a6.

15.e3 f6 16.c4 c7 17.ca5

Now Pono wraps it up nicely.

17.e5 18xb7

The bishop will be sorely missed.

18..xd3 19.xd3 xb7 20.a5 d7

20..xb2 21.b3 a2 22.b7 with an attack.

21.b3 c8 22.c4 d8

23.h6! d5 24.b6xb6 a6 25.xb6 a4 26.f3 d7 28.dxe4 a5 29.b7
And here I conclude the survey of the Kan and move on to the Taimanov.

Part II: The Taimanov

Against the Taimanov I recommend the following system: 1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.cxd4 e7 5.e3 c7 6.e3 a6 7.d3. This is one of White's most aggressive systems. In no time White finishes his development and is ready for action. Plaskett's remark in his book from 197 The Sicilian Taimanov is still valid: 'It is possible for great violence to occur very early on in these games as you will soon gather'. A good rule of thumb is: If you spot an attacking idea – go for it!

In Game 34 we will investigate 7...b5. This move has a very good reputation. In Games 35-39 we will look at Black's different moves after 7...d6 8.0-0. In Game 40 we cover the lines after 5...a6.

Game 34
Hector – Lindberg
Umeå 2003

1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.cxd4 e7 5.e3 c7 6.e3 a6 7.d3 b5

This has a very good reputation. Once, when I was preparing to play against Hector, I noticed that the line he plays against this variation is actually very annoying for Black. So here we go.

8.dxc6

The move b7-b5 is almost always answered by dxc6 in the Taimanov.

8...dxc6 9.0-0 b7 10.h1(!)

Preparing f2-f3!

10...f6 11.f3?!
The Kan and Taimanov

French structure. Do not get confused by the chess programs' evaluations - they do not understand the position! Sample line: 18...g5?! c5 19.b3 f8 20.e2 c5 21.xc5 xc5 22.f4 h6 23.h4 d4 24.ab1 and White has a free hand on the kingside.

b) 11...d6 12.d2 e7 13.a4 bxa4 14.xa4 0-0 15.f6 e8 and 16.e2 (16.e2? might be better. For instance, 17...d5 17.e5 d7 18.g5 f8 19.h4 h6 20.f4 with an interesting attacking position.). 16...d5 17.exd5 xd5 18.xd5 xd5 19.xa6 (White could also force a good ending with 19.e4 d7 20.d3) Hector – Tozer, Copenhagen 2002, concluded 19...xa6 20.xa6 xa6 21.xa6 e5 22.a7 d5 23.f4 xb2 24.a6 b1+ 25.g1 b8 26.g3 h6 27.c4 c5 28.b7 d6 29.xd6 xd6 30.d7 c6 31.g2 g5 32.g3 g7 33.h4 gxh4 34.gxf4 h5 35.d4+ g6 36.e4 f6 37.f5+ 1-0.

12.e1 xe3 13.xe3 c7

A strong move according to Ribli. Alternatives:

a) 13...b4 14.e2 0-0 15.fc1! We have seen this theme before! 15...e5 16.c3 d6 17.g3 and White was better in Short – Rogers, Manila 1992.

b) 13...0-0? 14.e5 d5? 15.xd5 xd5?? 16.e4 xe5 17.xh7+ xh7 18.xe5 wins.

c) 13...d6 14.a4 b4 15.a2 c7 16.d2 transposes to the main game.

14.a4 14.e5 d5 15.xd5 xd5 is equal according to Ribli - and Ribli is almost always right!

14.b4 15.a2 a5 16.c3! bxc3 17.xc3 0-0 18.b5

18.e5 d5 19.xd5 xd5 does not give anything.

18...b8 19.e5

White could also try 19.ac1! with the more pleasant position.

19.f1 c6 20.d4 and draw agreed in Lutz – Ribli, Germany 1996, is not what we want!


After 21.exf6 xf6 a draw was agreed in Z. Almasi – Leko, Groningen 1995.

21.c6 22.d6 b4!

The only chance. If White is allowed to play b5 he will take over the c-file with an easy win.

23.fd1 xd3 24.xd3

I think this position is great for White. He has all the play and can slowly prepare.
a kingside assault with a transfer of the queen to the kingside followed by f4 and \( \text{g}3 \). If White is careful Black will not have any counterplay.

24...\( \text{a}6 \) 25.\( \text{wc}3 \) \( \text{wb}6 \) 26.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{a}7 \)
27.\( \text{bc}1 \) \( \text{bb}8 \) 28.\( \text{wd}2 \) \( \text{h}6 \) 29.\( \text{c}4 \)
29.\( \text{dc}3! \) \( \text{h}7 \) 30.\( \text{we}1 \) \( \text{gf}8 \) 31.\( \text{w}h4 \) \( \text{aa}8 \) 32.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{d}4 \) 33.\( \text{g}3 \) looks promising.

In the game White starts to drift.

29...\( \text{h}7 \) 30.\( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{gf}8 \) 31.\( \text{h}2 \) \( \text{aa}8 \) 32.\( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{ab}8 \) 33.\( \text{dc}3 \) \( \text{d}5 \) 34.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{xb}3 \) 35.\( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{d}5 \) 36.\( \text{gx}f5 \) \( \text{ex}f5 \) 37.\( \text{h}5 \) \( \text{e}6 \) 38.\( \text{kc}1 \) \( \text{wb}2 \) 39.\( \text{wx}b2 \) \( \text{xb}2 \) 40.\( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{g}8 \) 41.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{g}5 \) 42.\( \text{hxg}6 \) \( \text{gx}f6 \) 43.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{g}8 \) 44.\( \text{c}7 \)!

44.\( \text{h}1 \) and White should not lose.

44...\( \text{w}b4 \) 45.\( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{b}8 \) 46.\( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 47.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 48.\( \text{a}7 \) \( \text{h}5 \) 49.\( \text{xa}5 \) \( \text{b}3 \) 50.\( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{h}4 \) 51.\( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{b}2 \) 52.\( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{h}3 \) 53.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{h}2 \) 54.\( \text{xe}6 \) \( \text{b}3 \) 55.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{b}1 \) 0–1.

It is noteworthy that Ribli does not play this line anymore.

Game 36
Hector – Pogorelov
Copenhagen 2004

1.\( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{c}5 \) 2.\( \text{d}f3 \) \( \text{e}6 \) 3.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{cxd}4 \) 4.\( \text{c}xd4 \) \( \text{e}6 \) 5.\( \text{d}c3 \) \( \text{w}c7 \) 6.\( \text{d}e3 \) \( \text{a}6 \) 7.\( \text{d}d3 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 8.0–0 \( \text{d}d6 \)

8...\( \text{b}5 \) just transposes to Game 35 after 9.\( \text{xc}6 \) \( \text{xc}6 \) 10.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{b}7 \) 10.\( \text{h}1 \). We will deal with Black’s other options: 8...\( \text{h}5 \), 8...\( \text{xd}4 \), 8...\( \text{e}5 \) and 8...\( \text{d}6 \) in the following games.

9.\( \text{f}4 \)

A very aggressive move. White is trying to punish Black for the extravagant bishop move.

9...\( \text{c}5 \)

Once again we dive into a heavy theoretical minefield.

a) 9...\( \text{xd}4 \) 10.\( \text{e}5! \)

a1) 10...\( \text{xe}5 \) is risky. 11.\( \text{fxe}5 \) \( \text{xe}5 \) 12.\( \text{d}2 \) with a further split:

a1a) 12...\( \text{b}5 \) 13.\( \text{ae}1 \) \( \text{g}4 \) 14.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{c}5 \) 15.\( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{b}7 \) 16.\( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 17.\( \text{e}5 \) and White has a huge initiative.

a1b) 12...\( \text{g}4 \) 13.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{c}5 \) 14.\( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{f}5 \) (14...\( \text{e}5 \) 15.\( \text{ae}1 \)) 15.\( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 16.\( \text{b}4 \) \( \text{b}5 \) 17.\( \text{xd}4 \) \( \text{b}7 \) 18.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{bxa}4 \) 19.\( \text{xb}7 \) and White is much better. This is an improvement on 19.\( \text{xf}5 \) which ended in a draw in Vavra – Bunk, Bayern 1999.

a1c) 12...\( \text{d}5? \) 13.\( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{xd}5 \) 14.\( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{d}6 \) 15.\( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{f}5 \) 16.\( \text{xf}5 \) \( \text{exf}5 \) 17.\( \text{c}5 \) 1–0 Roger – Lemeaux, France 2002.

a1d) 12...\( \text{c}6 \) 13.\( \text{ae}1 \) 0–0 (13...\( \text{b}5 \)
14. \( \text{h}1? \) \( \text{b}7 \) 15. \( \text{g}5! \) (improving on 15. \( \text{b}6 \) from Senff – Miezis, Oslo 2003) 15... \( \text{d}8 \) 16. \( \text{xf}6 \) \( \text{gxf6} \) 17. \( \text{d}5 \) with a fantastic attack.) 14. \( \text{b}6 \) \( \text{h}5 \) 15. \( \text{xf6!} \) \( \text{gxf6} \) And now instead of 16. \( \text{e}4 \) as in Garcia – Lukov, La Pobla de Lillet 1996, White can play 16. \( \text{e}3! \) \( \text{e}5 \) 17. \( \text{d}4!! \) with a winning attack.

a2) 10... \( \text{c}6?! \) 11. \( \text{xf6} \) (11. \( \text{exd}6 \) is unclear.) 11... \( \text{gxf6} \) 12. \( \text{w}h5 \) (12. \( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 13. \( \text{g}7 \) \( \text{f}8 \) 14. \( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{f}5 \) 15. \( \text{f}6 \) \( \text{xf}6 \) 16. \( \text{xf}6 \) is very unclear.). 12... \( \text{e}7 \) (12... \( \text{f}5 \) 13. \( \text{xf}5 \) \( \text{a}5 \) 14. \( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{hx}5 \) 15. \( \text{hx}5 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 16. \( \text{a}4 \) and White is clearly better.) 13. \( \text{f}5 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 14. \( \text{ad}1 \) \( \text{b}5 \) and instead of 15. \( \text{e}4 \) which turned out badly for White after 15... \( \text{b}7 \) 16. \( \text{d}4 \) 0–0–0 17. \( \text{xb}7\text{t} \) \( \text{xb}7 \) 18. \( \text{fxe}6 \) \( \text{fxe}6 \) 19. \( \text{xe}5 \) \( \text{exe}5 \) 20. \( \text{exe}5 \) \( \text{g}8 \) 21. \( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{g}4 \) 22. \( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{g}8 \) 23. \( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 24. \( \text{xc}7 \) \( \text{xc}7 \) in Hector – S. Salov, Copenhagen 1997, I prefer 15. \( \text{fxe}6 \) \( \text{dxe}6 \) 16. \( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{b}7 \) 17. \( \text{d}4 \) 0–0–0 18. \( \text{exe}5 \) \( \text{fxe}5 \) 19. \( \text{xb}7\text{t} \) \( \text{xb}7 \) 20. \( \text{exe}5 \) with a slight advantage.

a3) 10... \( \text{c}5 \) 11. \( \text{exf}6 \)

a3a) 11. ... \( \text{xc}2 \) and the very famous game Azmaiparashvili – Kurajica, Strumica 1995, continued 12. \( \text{fxg}7 \) \( \text{xe}3\text{t} \) 13. \( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{g}8 \) 14. \( \text{xc}2 \) \( \text{g}7 \) 15. \( \text{ae}1 \) \( \text{xf}4 \) 16. \( \text{xf}4 \) \( \text{xf}4 \) 17. \( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{h}4 \) 18. \( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{g}4 \) 19. \( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{g}5 \) 20. \( \text{c}7\text{t} \) \( \text{d}8 \) 21. \( \text{xa}8 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 22. \( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{a}5 \) 23. \( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{xc}3 \) 24. \( \text{bxc}3 \) \( \text{c}5 \) 25. \( \text{hx}7 \) \( \text{b}5 \) 26. \( \text{b}6 \) \( \text{b}7 \) 27. \( \text{g}1 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 28. \( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{d}4 \) 29. \( \text{h}5 \) \( \text{dx}3 \) 30. \( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{f}5 \) 31. \( \text{h}6 \) \( \text{e}4 \) 32. \( \text{h}7 \) 1–0. It was rumoured that this game was prearranged, or maybe not even played at all, but that does not change the verdict: 11... \( \text{xc}2 \) is bad.

a3b) 11... \( \text{f}5 \) 12. \( \text{xc}5 \) \( \text{xc}5\text{t} \) 13. \( \text{f}2 \) is just better for White. 13... \( \text{g}6 \) (13... \( \text{gxf}6 \) 14. \( \text{h}5 \) is very good for White.) 14. \( \text{xf}5 \) \( \text{gx}5 \) and here I like 15. \( \text{f}3 \) preventing b7–b5.

a3c) 11... \( \text{b}5 \) 12. \( \text{f}7! \) \( \text{xe}3\text{t} \) 13. \( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{g}8 \) 14. \( \text{xb}5 \) \( \text{g}7 \) (14... \( \text{xb}5 \) 15. \( \text{d}3 \) wins for White.)

15. \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{xf}4 \) 16. \( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 17. \( \text{h}5 \) \( \text{b}5 \) (17... \( \text{d}6 \) 18. \( \text{f}6\text{t} \) \( \text{xf}6 \) 19. \( \text{xf}6 \) and with the other rook coming to \( \text{f}1 \), White has good chances.) 18. \( \text{xf}7! \) is good for White. 18... \( \text{xf}7 \) 19. \( \text{g}5 \) etc.

b) 9... \( \text{e}5?! \) has only been seen in one game. It received severe punishment. 10. \( \text{f}5 \) \( \text{exf}4 \) 11. \( \text{xd}6\text{t} \) \( \text{xd}6 \) 12. \( \text{xf}4 \) \( \text{c}5\text{t} \) 13. \( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{d}6 \) 14. \( \text{f}3 \) 0–0 15. \( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{g}4 \) 16. \( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{ce}5 \) 17. \( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{xd}3 \) 18. \( \text{cxd}3 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 19. \( \text{xe}5 \) \( \text{xe}5 \) 20. \( \text{xe}5 \) \( \text{c}2 \)

Experts vs. the Sicilian

10. f5 e7

A tricky move that forces White to sacrifice a piece.

Black has a safer alternative in
10... exf5† 11. xf5 d6 (11... b6?! 12. d2.) 12. h1! with the following split:

a) 12... b5? 13. xb5 axb5 14. xb5

12. d6† e7 16. e5 e8 17. f3

d7 18. ad1 And White has great compensation.

b) 12... b6(!) Best according to Ribli.

13. e1! White is planning g3 or h4

13... b7 (13... 0-0 14. h4 with a nice attacking position.) 14. c4! and now:

b1) 14... b5 15. xd6† xd6 16. e5

e7 17. xf6 gxf6 And now 18. f5 is nice

for White.

b2) 14... 0-0 0 15. e5 is great for

White.

b3) 14... 0-0 15. h4! ad8 16. ae1

b5 (16... h6 17. e5) 17. xd6! and White has a huge attack.

c) 12... 0-0?! 13. g4 (13. f3 is also
good. The game De Vilder – Kiseleva, Amsterdam 2000, was short and sweet.

13... b5 14. h3 b4 15. e5 d3

16. xd3 dxe5 17. g4 d8 18. xf6†
gxf6 19. xh7 f8 20. e4 1-0.) 13...
d5 (13... b5 14. g5 d7 15. h5! b7 and

now 16. f3 with 17. h3 coming is very
good for White according to Timman

– I do not see a defence for Black.) 14. g5

e4 15. cxd5 exd5 16. xd5 g3†

17. hxg3 d7 18. f3 h3† 19. g1
g4 20. g2 ad8 and White was just

a pawn up in Manso Gil – De la Riva

Aguado, Zamora 1996, even though the
game ended in a draw.

10... b6?! 11. xg7† is a worse version

than the text.

11. xg7† f8 12. xc5 xc5† 13. h1

xg7 14. e5 e8

The clumsy 14... f5 turned out

badly for Black after 15. e4 c6

16. d6 f5 17. h5 g6 18. xf5! exf5

19. xf5† f8 20. d6 f6 21. h6†
e7 22. g7† d8 23. xf6† c7

24. f5 g8 25. f3 d5 26. fxg6 1-0 in


15. e4 b6

15... c7 16. h5 g6 17. f6?! has

been known as good for White since

Topalov – Huebner, Wijk aan Zee 1996.
The text move was doing fine for Black,

but this game changed theory’s verdict

from unclear to winning for White.

16. h5 g6 17. f3 xb2 18. a1 b6

18... b5 should also be answered by
19. \( \text{g5!} \)
19. \( \text{g5!} \)
19. \( \text{h3} \) was unsuccessful after \( \text{b7} \)
20. \( \text{h6+ g8} \) 21. \( \text{g5 c8} \) 22. \( \text{xh7} \)
\( \text{xc2} \) 23. \( \text{xc2} \) \( \text{xc2} \) 24. \( \text{g1 b5} \) 25. \( \text{f5} \)
\( \text{xh5} \) 26. \( \text{h5 c2} \) 27. \( \text{h4 f2} \) 0-1 in Paalman – van der Elburg, Dieren 2001.

19... \( \text{b7} \) 20. \( \text{g3 c8} \)
20... \( \text{xa2} \) 21. \( \text{xf7} \) \( \text{xf7} \) 22. \( \text{f5} \) with a winning attack.

21. \( \text{h7!} \)
21. \( \text{xf7} \) \( \text{xf7} \) 22. \( \text{g6+ xg6} \)
23. \( \text{h8} \) also wins.
21... \( \text{h7} \) 22. \( \text{g6+ fxg6} \) 23. \( \text{g6+ f8} \)
24. \( \text{h7 g7} \) 25. \( \text{g6 b5} \)
26. \( \text{h8+ e7} \) 27. \( \text{h4+} \)

Please stay.
27... \( \text{f8} \) 28. \( \text{f6+ g8} \) 29. \( \text{f7+ f8} \)
30. \( \text{xe6+ e8} \) 31. \( \text{f7+ f8} \)
1-0.

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**Game 37**

**Parligras – Miladinovic**

Istanbul 2002

1. \( e4 \) \( c5 \) 2. \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{c6} \) 3. \( \text{c3} \) \( e6 \) 4. \( d4 \) \( cxd4 \)
5. \( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{c7} \) 6. \( \text{e3} \) \( a6 \) 7. \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{f6} \)
8.0–0 \( \text{h5}?! \)

A speciality of Miladinovic. I have tried this line on several occasions in blitz (it is kind of cool just to lunge forward with the h-pawn in Larsen-style) but I do not believe it is a good move. Too often the h-pawn would just love to get back to h7. And where is the black king going to go?

9. \( \text{h3} \) \( b5 \)

9... \( \text{xd4} \) is similar to 8... \( \text{xd4} \) except for the position of the h-pawns. 10. \( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{c5} \) 11. \( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{xc5} \) 12. \( \text{a4} \) Now with h5 and h3 inserted this move is good.

a) 12... \( \text{c6} \) got Black into trouble surprisingly quickly in Cuartas – Arias, Medellin 2003.
13.\textit{c4 d6 14.\textit{c1 d7 15.\textit{c3 g5 16.\textit{f3 e7 17.\textit{d5+! A typical device. 17...exd5 18.exd5 \textit{b6 19.\textit{fe1+ \textit{e6 20.\textit{f5 1–0.}}}

b) 12...\textit{c7 13.\textit{c4 d6 14.\textit{c1} The black h-pawn is misplaced in this structure. 14...\textit{b6 (14...\textit{d7 went wrong for Black in the following very instructive game. 15.\textit{c3 \textit{e5 16.a3 g5 Played in the grand style, but very risky! 17.\textit{f3 \textit{e5 18.\textit{e3 e7 19.\textit{fe1 \textit{h8 20.\textit{cd1 h4 21.\textit{d2 f4 22.\textit{e3 f8 23.\textit{f1 \textit{c6 24.\textit{e2! Winning material. 24...\textit{xe4 (24...\textit{e5 25.\textit{d4 25.\textit{e1 \textit{xf2+ 26.\textit{xf2 \textit{xf2 27.\textit{xf2 \textit{xc4 28.\textit{xd6 \textit{e7 29.\textit{d2 g4 30.hxg4 \textit{h4 31.\textit{d4 \textit{f4+ 32.\textit{f3 \textit{e8 33.\textit{d4 1–0 in Kolev – Miezis, Leon 2001) 15.\textit{b4 \textit{d7 16.\textit{e1 \textit{b7 17.\textit{f1 \textit{d8 18.\textit{d4 e5 19.\textit{e3 \textit{b8 20.\textit{c5! This is typical: with the h-pawn gone sailing away White can play very aggressively. We have been following S. Petrosian – Stanke, Germany 2002. The game concluded 20...\textit{bxc5 21.bxc5 \textit{a5 22.c6 \textit{xa4 23.\textit{c4 \textit{a5 24.cxd7+ \textit{xd7 25.\textit{b1 \textit{hc8 26.\textit{cb4! A nasty pin. 26...\textit{e7 27.\textit{c4 f6 28.\textit{f3 \textit{xc4 29.\textit{xc4 \textit{d5 30.\textit{xb8 \textit{xc4 31.\textit{xc4 32.\textit{h2 1–0.}}}

10.\textit{xc6! White almost always put this knight to sleep after b7–b5. 10...\textit{xc6 11.\textit{e2!}}}

A new idea, which was first played by Kotronics in 2001.

11...\textit{c7}}

a) 11...\textit{b4 12.\textit{e5 bxc3 13.\textit{fxe6 gxf6 14.bxc3 \textit{b8 And now instead of the crazy 15.\textit{xe5! from A. Vouldis – H. Banikas, Athens 2001 (0–1, 42) White should play 15.\textit{e1! Here is a possible line: 15...\textit{e7 16.c4 \textit{b7 17.\textit{f3 \textit{xc4 18.\textit{b1 \textit{c8 19.c4 with good compensation for the pawn.}}}

b) 11...\textit{b7 12.\textit{f3! e5 (a concession) 13.\textit{g5 (13.\textit{d5! might be better,) and White won after 13...\textit{b4 14.\textit{xf6 \textit{xc3 15.\textit{g7 \textit{g8 16.bxc3 \textit{g7 17.\textit{e1 \textit{xc3 18.\textit{e3 \textit{c5 19.\textit{xe5 0–0–0 20.\textit{f4 \textit{b8 21.a4 d5 22.axb5 axb5 23.\textit{b3 \textit{d6 24.\textit{ab1 dxe4 25.\textit{e2 f5 26.\textit{xf5 \textit{e3 27.bxe5 \textit{h4 28.\textit{f1 \textit{g7+ 29.e4 1–0 in M. Parligras – A. Botsari, Kavala 2002.}}}

12.\textit{f3 \textit{b8 13.\textit{d4 b4}}}

13...\textit{d6 is a rather risky alternative. Roskar – Kukovec, Dobrna 2002 continued: 14.\textit{e1! \textit{h2+ 15.\textit{h1 \textit{e5 16.\textit{d5! Always look out for this move when Black’s king is stuck in the centre. 16...\textit{d6 17.c3! h4 18.\textit{d2 \textit{b7 19.ed1 \textit{h7 and here instead of 20.\textit{e3 I prefer the more straightforward 20.\textit{xe5! \textit{xe5 21.\textit{b4 \textit{d8 22.\textit{e3 and White is much better.}}}

14.\textit{e5 bxc3 15.\textit{fxe6 cxb2 16.\textit{b1!}}}

A new move. 16.fxg7 \textit{g7 17.\textit{g7 \textit{g8 18.\textit{xb2 \textit{xb2 was unclear in V. Kotronics – I. Miladinovic, Patras 2001.}}}

16...\textit{gxf6 17.\textit{xf6 \textit{g8 18.\textit{xb2}}}

The black king is homeless, so White has the upper hand.
18...\texttt{b5}
18...\texttt{b7} is answered by 19.\texttt{d4}!
19.\texttt{d4} \texttt{b7}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.7\textwidth]{chess_board.png}
\end{center}

20.\texttt{xb5}?!  
20.\texttt{b3}! is a big improvement:  
20...\texttt{xb3} 21.\texttt{axb3} \texttt{xf3} 22.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{xc2}  
23.\texttt{a1} And White has a great attacking position.
20...\texttt{xb5} 21.\texttt{e1} \texttt{g7}  
21...\texttt{xf3}! 22.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{c6} is fine for Black. The rest is rather random.
22.\texttt{xe7} \texttt{g7} 23.\texttt{d4} \texttt{g5} 24.\texttt{h4} \texttt{f5}  
25.\texttt{xb7} \texttt{xb7} 26.\texttt{e5} \texttt{xe5} 27.\texttt{xe5} \texttt{c6} 28.\texttt{h8}! \texttt{e7} 29.\texttt{h5} \texttt{xc2}  
30.\texttt{xb5} d5 31.\texttt{b4} \texttt{e8} 32.\texttt{a4} \texttt{c1} 33.\texttt{h2} \texttt{c4} 34.\texttt{b5} \texttt{e7} 35.g3 \texttt{f6} 36.\texttt{xc4} \texttt{xc4} 37.a5 \texttt{c3} 38.a6 c2  
39.a7 c1 40.a8 41.g7 41.g2 \texttt{c4} 42.\texttt{f3} \texttt{f5} 43.\texttt{e3} \texttt{f7} 44.\texttt{e2} \texttt{e4}  
45.\texttt{h2} \texttt{f3} 46.\texttt{e3} \texttt{d5} 47.\texttt{e2} \texttt{d4}  
48.\texttt{h5} \texttt{g7} 49.\texttt{f3} \texttt{b4} 50.\texttt{h3} \texttt{b5} 51.g4 \texttt{fg4} 52.\texttt{gxf4} \texttt{f6}  
53.\texttt{g3} \texttt{f1} 54.\texttt{b3} \texttt{g6} 55.\texttt{h5} \texttt{g7}

56.g4 \texttt{f6} 57.g6 \texttt{e5} 58.g5 \texttt{d6} 59.f4 \texttt{e7} 60.h6 \texttt{g1} 61.h4 \texttt{h1} 62.g4 \texttt{d1} 63.f3 \texttt{c2} 64.h7 \texttt{c3} 65.g5 \texttt{d7} 66.b5 \texttt{c7}  
67.g5 \texttt{d7} 68.f4 \texttt{b2} 69.e5 \texttt{g2} 70.h5 \texttt{h1} 71.g6 \texttt{b1} 72.g7 \texttt{g1} 73.f7
1–0

\textbf{Game 38}
\textbf{Almasi – Piket}

\textbf{Istanbul 2000}

1.e4 c5 2.\texttt{f3} e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{c6} 5.\texttt{c3} 6.\texttt{e3} a6 7.\texttt{d3} \texttt{f6}  
8.0–0 \texttt{xd4}  
Black is trying to exchange everything and achieve a draw.
9.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{c5} 10.\texttt{xc5} \texttt{xc5} 11.\texttt{h1}!

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.7\textwidth]{chess_board2.png}
\end{center}

This is very similar to Hector’s play in Game 34.

11...\texttt{b5} 12.\texttt{e1}?!  
Looking to both sides of the board. A
nice flexible move.

12...\textit{b}7

After 12...d6 I recommend 12.f3 but
13.f4 is also possible.

13.f3

Just following the recipe from Game
35.

13...d6 14.a4 b4

14.bxa4 15.\textit{xa}4 is, as usual, a little
better for White.

15.\textit{a}a2 a5 16.c3

16.b5\textplus \textit{e}7 (16...c6 17.xc6\textplus xc6 18.c3 bxc3 19.xc3 is good for
White says Ribli.) 17.c3 transposes to the
game.

16.bxc3 17.b5\textplus \textit{e}7

17.c6 18.xc3 is a little better for
White.

18.xc3 $\textit{hc}8$

18.hd8 might be more logical.
White is slightly better after 19.d1 \textit{g}8
20.d3 \textit{g}8 21.d2.

19.d1 \textit{g}8 20.d3

With his good bishop at b5, pressure
against d6 and more activity, White is
better.

20.d5!!

20.c7 was suggested by Ribli, but
after 21.g3 e5 22.fd1 $\textit{d}8 23.e1
b4 24.d2 White is simply winning
the d6-pawn.

21.e5

21.exd5 $\textit{xd}5 22.xd5 \textit{xd}5 gives
nothing.

21.g8?!

Ribli suggest 21...\textit{e}8? as an
improvement for Black, but then
22.f4! planning a kingside attack looks
promising. A sample line: 22..c7
23.h4 g8 24.h3 h6 25.g3 h8
26.d3 d4 and now 27.f5! gives White a
winning attack (Fritz is happy!).

22.e2

22.f4 \textit{h}6 is Black’s idea.

22.e7 23.d4?!

23.h4? is a better try. Sample line:
23.g8 24.c3 b4 25.xb4 axb4
26.xc8+ xc8 27.b3 a6 28.xa6
\textit{xa}6 29.d4 and it seems White has the
better ending.

23.c6!?

23...\textit{c}6! equalizes.

24.g4!

Rules out \textit{f}5 altogether.

24.xb5 25.axb5 a4?!

A strange move.

26.f2 a3? 27.bxa3!

Now White is winning.

27.e8 28.e3 a4 29.b1

29.f4 is not bad.
29...\texttt{b}b8 30.f4 h5 31.gxh5 \texttt{c}c4 32.g1 \texttt{d}d7 33.\texttt{g}xg7 \texttt{h}8 34.f5 \texttt{a}xh5 35.\texttt{a}xf7 exf5 36.e6\uparrow \texttt{c}c8 37.\texttt{g}g2 \texttt{a}h4 38.\texttt{f}b3 \texttt{c}2\uparrow 39.\texttt{g}g3 \texttt{g}4\uparrow 40.\texttt{h}3 d4 41.\texttt{a}xd4 \texttt{d}5 42.e7!

1-0

Game 39
Ponomariov – Sadler
Enghien les Bains 1999

1.e4 c5 2.\texttt{f}f3 \texttt{c}c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\texttt{a}xd4 \texttt{w}c7!?

Another way to reach the mainline Taimanov. Black is sidestepping the 5.\texttt{b}5 line.

5.\texttt{c}c3 e6 6.\texttt{e}e3 a6 7.\texttt{d}d3 \texttt{f}6 8.0-0 \texttt{e}5

Black's threat is 9...\texttt{f}g4. This is by far Black's best line against White's aggressive system.

9.\texttt{f}3!?

9.h3 is the mainline, and the rather meek 9.\texttt{e}2 is also possible. The text move is an invention of Ponomariov. It is very tricky and White does not have to play the risky f2-f4 as in the mainline.

9...\texttt{f}g4

Black has 7 (!) alternatives.

a) 9...\texttt{d}d6 10.\texttt{a}xe5 \texttt{e}xe5 11.f4 \texttt{xc}3 12.bxc3 \texttt{w}xc3 13.e5 \texttt{d}5 14.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{c}5\uparrow 15.\texttt{h}h1 b5 and now 16.\texttt{c}c1! with c4 coming looks promising.

b) 9...d6 10.\texttt{a}a4! \texttt{ed}7 11.c4 \texttt{e}7 12.\texttt{c}c1 b6 13.b4 0–0 14.\texttt{e}e1 \texttt{b}7 15.\texttt{d}d4 \texttt{g}4 16.\texttt{b}b1 \texttt{ac}8 17.a3 with an interesting position - later won by White in Mamedov – Esplana, Nakhchivan 2003.

c) 9...\texttt{e}g4 10.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{e}5 11.\texttt{w}e2 d6 12.h3 \texttt{e}5 13.\texttt{e}xe5 dxe5 14.\texttt{f}f3 0–0 15.\texttt{g}g5 and White is slightly better.

d) 9...\texttt{xf}3\uparrow 10.\texttt{w}xf3±.

e) 9...\texttt{c}c5 10.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{w}xc5 11.\texttt{a}a4 \texttt{w}a5 12.\texttt{xe}5 \texttt{xe}5 13.\texttt{b}b6 \texttt{b}8 14.\texttt{c}c4 \texttt{h}5 15.e5 \texttt{xd}1 16.\texttt{d}d6\uparrow \texttt{f}8 17.\texttt{axd}1 \texttt{e}8 18.\texttt{e}e4 with an obvious advantage for White, Hector – Buhr, Hamburg 2001.

f) 9...\texttt{c}c4 10.\texttt{xc}4 \texttt{wc}4 11.e5 \texttt{e}4 12.\texttt{xe}4 \texttt{xe}4 13.\texttt{e}e1 \texttt{wc}6 14.\texttt{d}d4 and White is better.

g) 9...\texttt{g}6 10.\texttt{a}a4 is good for White.

10.\texttt{xe}5

White has an alternative in 10.\texttt{f}4 if he does not like the text move.

10.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{d}6 (10...\texttt{e}7 11.\texttt{exe}5 \texttt{exe}5 is fairly equal - but not a draw). 11.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{xf}3\uparrow 12.\texttt{xf}3 \texttt{xe}3 13.\texttt{hx}3 \texttt{e}5
14. \( \text{Wh}5 \) is about equal. In Areshchenko – Bryzgalin, St Petersburg 2003, the better player won: 14...d6 15.\( \text{Ec2} \) b5 16.a3 \( \text{Ab7} \) 17.\( \text{Ad1} \) 0–0 18.\( \text{Ad4} \) \( \text{Ad8} \) 19.g4?! \( \text{Ag6} \) 20.\( \text{Wh2} \) e5 21.\( \text{Ed2} \) f4. This position is fine for Black. 22.\( \text{Ffd1} \) d6 23.\( \text{Gg3} \) d4 24.\( \text{Ad3} \) g6 25.\( \text{Gf3} \) \( \text{Dd7} \) 26.f3 \( \text{Cc7} \) 27.\( \text{Ff2} \) \( \text{Wd7} \) 28.a4 \( \text{Cc6} \) 29.axb5 axb5 30.\( \text{Ge2} \) e6 31.\( \text{Fb6} \) \( \text{Cc7} \) 32.\( \text{Cxc7} \) \( \text{Cc8} \) 33.\( \text{Cc7} \) \( \text{Ff8} \) 34.\( \text{Cc3} \) \( \text{Cc8} \) 35.b3 b4 36.\( \text{Ce2} \) \( \text{Aa8} \) 37.\( \text{Bb1} \) \( \text{Dd8} \) 38.\( \text{Cc1} \) \( \text{Cc8} \) 39.\( \text{Gg3} \) \( \text{Ff1} \). This rook soon gets into trouble. 40.\( \text{Da2} \) \( \text{Ff8} \) 41.\( \text{Cc3} \) \( \text{Cc7} \) 42.\( \text{Cxd3} \) h5 43.\( \text{Gxh5} \) \( \text{Gxh5} \) 44.\( \text{Cc2} \) \( \text{Ff6} \) 45.\( \text{Cc1} \) \( \text{Dxe4} \) 46.fxe4 \( \text{Dxe4} \) 47.\( \text{Fb2} \). Trapping the unlucky rook. 47...\( \text{Cxc1} \) 48.\( \text{Dxc1} \) \( \text{Cc6} \) 49.\( \text{Cc1} \) \( \text{Dxd3} \) 50.\( \text{Cxd3} \) f5 51.\( \text{Cc2} \) e4 52.\( \text{Cc5} \) g8 53.\( \text{Cxb4} \) \( \text{Dxg3} \) 54.\( \text{Cc2} \) \( \text{Cg2} \) 55.\( \text{Cc3} \) \( \text{Gg3} \) 56.\( \text{Cb4} \) \( \text{Dd3} \) 57.\( \text{Dd4} \) \( \text{Dxd4} \) 58.\( \text{Dxd4} \) h4 59.\( \text{Cc3} \) 1–0.

a) 11...\( \text{Cc5} \) 12.\( \text{Cc5} \) \( \text{Dxc5} \) 13.\( \text{h1} \) is a little better for White.

b) 11...\( \text{Cc4} \) is best says the guru (Ribli). 12.\( \text{Cc4} \) \( \text{Dxc4} \). Now White can choose between the safe 13.\( \text{Cc3} \)? \( \text{Dxd3} \) 14.cxd3 b5 15.\( \text{Cc1} \) \( \text{Bb7} \) 16.\( \text{Cc2} \) with a tiny edge or go into the jungle with 13.f5!?. Black answers 13...\( \text{Cc5} \)! 14.\( \text{Ff3} \) b5 (! Ribli) 15.\( \text{Cc5} \) \( \text{Cc5} \) 16.\( \text{Cc1} \) \( \text{Cc7} \) 17.\( \text{Cc1} \) with attacking chances for White according to Ribli. I think he is right. Sample line: 17...0–0 18.f6! \( \text{Cc5} \) 19.\( \text{Cc4} \) g6 20.\( \text{Cc4} \) h5 21.\( \text{Cc5} \)!

c) 11...\( \text{Cc3} \) 12.cxd3 and White will enjoy a huge initiative after the coming 13.\( \text{Cc1} \).

11.\( \text{Wh5} \) g6
11...\( \text{Cc3} \) 12.\( \text{Cc3} \) \( \text{Dg7} \) 13.\( \text{Wh5} \) g6 14.\( \text{Cc6} \) \( \text{Cc6} \) 15.\( \text{Cc6} \) \( \text{Cc6} \) 16.\( \text{Cc7} \) \( \text{Cc7} \) 17.\( \text{Cc1} \) and, even though he has sacrificed an exchange, White is better.

12.\( \text{Cc3} \) \( \text{Dxe5} \) 13.\( \text{fxe5} \) \( \text{Cc7} \)!

a) 13...f6! is clearly a better try. After 14.\( \text{Cc6} \) \( \text{Cc6} \) 15.\( \text{Cc6} \) \( \text{Cc6} \) 16.\( \text{Cc3} \) I think White is better but he has to play very energetically, otherwise Black’s pair of bishops will start to tell: 16...b5 17.\( \text{Cc1} \) \( \text{Cc8} \) 18.\( \text{Cc3} \) \( \text{Cxf1} \) 19.\( \text{Cc1} \) h6 20.e5 g5 and now instead of the known 21.\( \text{Cc4} \), I like 21.a4! b4 22.\( \text{Cc4} \) \( \text{Cc7} \) 23.a5! and White seems to be much better. How is Black going to free himself?

b) 13...f5 14.exf5 \( \text{Cc6} \) 15.g3 \( \text{Cc5} \) 16.e4 is much better for White.

c) 13...\( \text{Cc5} \)!! 14.\( \text{Cc7} \) \( \text{Dd8} \) 15.\( \text{Cc3} \) b5 16.\( \text{Cc2} \) \( \text{Cb7} \) 17.\( \text{Cc7} \) with a double-
edged position where I prefer White.

14...e4

Planning e4-e5 and e4-e4.

14...d6 15.e5!

Very important – White must attack!

15...dxe5

15...exd5! 16.exf7+ d8 17.h1, it is rather unclear but I prefer White.

16.a4 d7 17.b5 0-0-0

17...xb5? 18.xb5 0-0-0 19.c4+ b8 20.e7 wins for White (Ribli).

18.ad1 f5!

a) 18...xb5 19.e8+ d8 19...d8 20.xb5 axb5 21.d1+ c7 22.a5+ c6 23.a4 e6 24.axb5+ d7 25.e6 wins (Ribli).

b) 18...axb5 19.a8+ c7 20.xb5+ wins.

19.a5 e7 20.xa6

According to Ribli, White is a little better – and has a safe position - after 20.xd7+ xd7 21.xd7 xd7 22.eb6 c8 23.xe6+ b8 24.d5.

who will have a dominating knight at d5 after c4.

20...g5?! 21.c5 b8 22.xb7??

Here Ribli recommends the surprising 22.h4!! in ChessBase Magazine. After 22...h6 23.b6 White is much better. This is very complicated though, and I think I would prefer 20.xd7+!

22...xb7 23.e6 c8!

Strong defence.

24.eb6+ a8 25.b5 e7 26.e6

26...b8 27.eb6+ a8 28.h4 h6

29.xe6 g8 30.e4 g8 31.e6+ b8

32.d6 e3+ 33.h2 d8 34.g3 c7

35.eb5+ b7 36.xe5 xe4? 37.eb5+ b8 38.ee4?

38.xe4! wins.

38...xe4 39.a4+ a7 40.e4+ b7

41.h3 xe4 42.e4+ bd8 43.fe1

b7 44.a4 c7

½–½

A fantastic game!

Game 40

Yagupov – Khusnullin

Tula 1999

1.e4 c5 2.f3 e6 3.d3 d6 4.d4 cxd4 5.xd4 f6 6.f4

Not our usual move order. The position after move 11 would normally be reached by the following move order 1.e4 c5 2.f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.xd4 e6 5.c3 c7 6.e3 a6 7.d3 f6 8.0-0 d6 9.f4 e7 10.f3 0-0 11.h1.

6...c6 7.e3 a6 8.e3 c7 9.e3

This does indeed look good for White,
In practice Black is getting slaughtered from this position. The reason is simply that White has a very promising kind of classical Scheveningen: The bishop is at d3 and the queen is already active at f3. (In the classical Scheveningen the queen takes the route e1–g3, but here it might skip g3 altogether and go directly to h3).

11...\e7

a) 11...\e5 Here I like 12.\d2 e2!? e.g. 12...\b4 (12...\e6 13.f5; 12...\xf4 13.a1c1 and 14.a3 is coming.

b) 11...\e8 12.a1e1 \f8 13.\g3 \b4 14.e5 \d7 15.\e4 \xd3 16.cxd3 dxe5 17.f5?! \a5 18.fxe6 \xe6 19.\f3 And White won in Korneev – Vidarte Morales, Badalona 1995 after 19...\f6 20.xf6+ gxf6 21.xf6 xh6 22.\f3 \g7 23.\h4 \d8 24.\h5 \f8 25.\g5 h6 26.\f7 \xd3 27.xh6 \h7 28.e3 1–0.

c) 11...\xd4 12.\xd4 b5 13.e5 \d5 14.exd6 \xd6 15.\xd6 \e5 16.\xd5

12.a1e1

12.a4 is also not bad:

a) 12...b6 13.a1e1 \e5 14.\xe5 \dxe5 15.\e2 \xd3 16.cxd3 \e6 17.\f5 \xf5 18.\xf5 \d7 19.d5 \d8 20.a1f1 and White is a pawn up and went on to win, Mitkov – Bello Filgueira, Burgas 1998.

b) 12...\e8 led to another success for Emms: 13.\g3! A typical attacking move: eyeing g7 and preparing e5. 13...\h5 14.\h3 g6 15.f5 \xd4 16.xd4 \f6 17.xf6 \xf6 18.e4! with an ‘autoattack’. The rest was instructive:

18...\d8 19.a1f3 \xf5 20.\xf5 \c6 21.\h3 \h5 22.\g4 \f6 23.\g5 \e7 24.e3 \d8 25.a1f1 \g7 26.\h3 \h8 27.\h6+ \g8 28.fxg6 fxg6 29.\xg6! \c7 30.\g3 1–0. Emms – Naaktgeboren, Hastings 1995.

c) 12...\xd4 is extremely dangerous.
One example: 13.\texttt{\texttt{x}d4} \texttt{\texttt{c}6} 14.\texttt{\texttt{g}3} \texttt{b}6 15.e5!. The typical attacking move in this line. 15...\texttt{dxe5} 16.\texttt{\texttt{x}e5} \texttt{\texttt{b}7} 17.f5! Opening more lines. 17...\texttt{exf5} 18.\texttt{\texttt{xf}5} \texttt{\texttt{e}8} 19.\texttt{\texttt{h}3} \texttt{\texttt{d}6} 20.\texttt{\texttt{x}d6} \texttt{\texttt{x}d6} 21.\texttt{\texttt{d}5}!. The winning move. 21...\texttt{fd8} 22.\texttt{\texttt{x}h7}+ \texttt{\texttt{f}8} 23.\texttt{\texttt{e}1} \texttt{f5} 24.\texttt{\texttt{c}4} 1–0 Tseshkovsky – Brodsky, Rostov 1993. A model attacking game by White.

\textbf{12...b5}

12...\texttt{\texttt{b}4} is a bit tricky. In S. Polgar – Benkő, Budapest 1998 White quickly got an attack going. 13.\texttt{\texttt{e}2} e5 14.\texttt{\texttt{x}e5} \texttt{dxe5} 15.\texttt{\texttt{g}3} \texttt{\texttt{e}8} 16.\texttt{\texttt{f}5} \texttt{\texttt{x}f5} 17.\texttt{\texttt{x}5} \texttt{f6} 18.\texttt{\texttt{h}4} \texttt{\texttt{d}6} 19.\texttt{\texttt{f}3}!. Black is now defenceless. The finish was nice: 19...\texttt{\texttt{f}7} 20.\texttt{\texttt{h}3} \texttt{h}6 21.\texttt{\texttt{c}4} \texttt{\texttt{f}c}8 22.\texttt{\texttt{e}6} \texttt{\texttt{f}8}

23.\texttt{\texttt{x}h6} \texttt{\texttt{g}6} 24.\texttt{\texttt{g}3}+ \texttt{\texttt{h}7} 25.\texttt{\texttt{x}f6} 1–0

\textbf{13.\texttt{\texttt{g}3}!}

Again the standard attacking move. Black already has to be very careful – and even that might not be enough.

\textbf{13...\texttt{\texttt{b}4}}

The (overtly) prophylactic 13...\texttt{\texttt{h}8}? loses to 14.\texttt{\texttt{a}c6}! \texttt{\texttt{a}c6} 15.\texttt{\texttt{d}4} \texttt{b4} 16.e5 \texttt{\texttt{e}8} (16...\texttt{dxe5} 17.\texttt{\texttt{x}e5} \texttt{\texttt{a}5} 18.\texttt{\texttt{e}4} \texttt{\texttt{g}8} 19.\texttt{\texttt{g}5} \texttt{\texttt{f}8} 20.\texttt{\texttt{x}h7} \texttt{\texttt{x}h7} 21.\texttt{\texttt{h}7} \texttt{\texttt{h}7} 22.\texttt{\texttt{h}3}+ wins - a typical attack in this line.) 17.\texttt{\texttt{h}3} 1–0. Saltaev – Gikas, Katerini 1993.

\textbf{14.\texttt{\texttt{e}2} \\texttt{\texttt{h}8} 15.\texttt{\texttt{a}c6} \\texttt{\texttt{a}c6} 16.\texttt{\texttt{d}4}!}

The right square for the bishop.

\textbf{16.\texttt{\texttt{g}8}}

16...\texttt{\texttt{a}d8} 17.e5 \texttt{\texttt{d}xe5} 18.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}e}5} \texttt{\texttt{a}5} 19.\texttt{\texttt{d}4} \texttt{\texttt{d}5} 20.\texttt{\texttt{f}5} with a nice attack.

17.e5 \texttt{\texttt{e}4} 18.\texttt{\texttt{h}3} \texttt{\texttt{d}xe5} 19.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}e}5} \texttt{\texttt{d}6}?

Losing.

20.\texttt{\texttt{d}4}! \texttt{\texttt{f}5} 21.\texttt{\texttt{a}c6} \texttt{\texttt{f}7} 22.\texttt{\texttt{a}e4} \texttt{\texttt{a}xe5} 23.\texttt{\texttt{g}5} \texttt{\texttt{g}6}

24.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}h}7}+!

Oh yes!

24...\texttt{\texttt{x}h7} 25.\texttt{\texttt{f}7} mate.

1–0

The transposition to the Scheveningen
is very risky and none of the world’s top players enter this line as Black.

It is definitely worthwhile to go over the notes in the previous game as they contain a lot of useful attacking ideas.

Game 41
Hector – C Hansen
Malmö 2003

1.e4 c5 2.\( \square_f3 \) \( \square_c6 \) 3.d4 cxd4 4.\( \triangle_xd4 \) e6 5.\( \triangle_c3 \) a6

This position can, of course, also arise via the Kan: 1.e4 c5 2.\( \triangle_f3 \) e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\( \triangle_xd4 \) a6 5.\( \triangle_c3 \) \( \square_c6 \).

6.\( \triangle_e3 \)

6.\( \trianglexc6?! \) bxc6 7.\( \triangle_d3 \) is a good alternative.

6...\( \triangle_f6 \)

6...\( \trianglege7 \) is the real Taimanov variation. But against 6.\( \triangle e3 \) this runs into a strong reply, namely 7.\( \triangle b3! \).

A bit weird as we have struggled to avoid this move in other lines. However, in this position there is a traffic jam in Black’s position: one of Black’s \( \triangle s \) is superfluous (They are on the same circuit.) so White avoids the exchange on d4.

a) 7...d6 8.f4 (8.\( \triangle a4?! \) is also not bad.) 8...b5 9.\( \square f3 \) a5 10.\( \triangle xa5 \) \( \square xa5 \) 11.\( \triangle d3 \) \( \square c6 \) and White is better. A. Sokolov – Moor, Switzerland 2002 continued: 12.0–0 \( \square e7 \) 13.\( \square g3 \) g6 14.\( \triangle e2 \) \( \triangle b4 \) 15.\( \triangle d4 \) \( \triangle b7 \) 16.a3 \( \triangle xd3 \) 17.\( \square xd3 \) \( \square d8 \) 18.\( \square ac1 \) \( \square f6 \) 19.f5 \( \triangle e5 \) 20.\( \square h3 \) gxf5 21.\( \triangle xe6 \) fxe6 22.\( \square h5+ \) \( \triangle e7 \) 23.\( \squarexf5 \) \( \triangle g8 \) 24.\( \square xh7+ \) \( \triangle g7 \) 25.\( \triangle g5+ \) 1–0.

b) 7...\( \triangle g6 \) 8.f4 (8.\( \triangle a4 \) is possible again) and then:

b1) 8...d6 9.g3! preparing h2-h4-h5.

b11) 9...b5 10.h4 \( \square e7 \) 11.h5 \( \square f8 \) 12.\( \triangle d2 \) \( \triangle b7 \) 13.0–0–0 \( \square c8 \) 14.\( \triangle h3 \) \( \triangle a5 \) 15.\( \triangle d4 \) b4 16.\( \triangle d5! \) and White is attacking. Muir - Lalic, British Championship 1989.

b12) 9...\( \triangle e7 \) 10.h4 0–0 11.h5 \( \triangle h8 \) 12.a4! White is controlling the whole board and has a huge advantage.

b2) 8...\( \triangle b8 \) 9.g3 \( \triangle e7 \) 10.h4 0–0 11.h5 The march of the h-pawn is always a problem for Black in this line. We are following Reinaldo Castineira – Ortega Hermida, Lanzarote 2003. The game ended 11...\( \triangle h8 \) 12.\( \triangle d2 \) f6 13.0–0–0 b5 14.\( \triangle b1 \) \( \triangle f7 \) 15.g4 h6 16.\( \triangle g1 \) \( \triangle c7 \) 17.e5 b4 18.\( \triangle e4 \) fxe5 19.g5 d5 20.gxh6 \( \triangle xh6 \) 21.fxe5 \( \triangle f5 \) 22.\( \triangle f6t \) \( \triangle h8 \) 23.\( \triangle g4 \) \( \triangle xe3 \) 24.\( \square xe3 \) \( \square a7 \) 25.\( \square g3 \) \( \triangle g5 \) 26.\( \square d3 \) \( \triangle e7 \) 27.h6 g6 28.\( \triangle f6 \) \( \triangle e3 \)
29.\text{xg}6 \text{hxg}6 30.\text{xg}1 \text{g}8 31.\text{f}7 1–0.

c) 7...\text{a}5?? 8.\text{a}4! and \text{b}6 wins something.

d) 7...\text{b}5 and now 8.\text{a}4! is very annoying.

7...\text{b}4 9.\text{a}5!

d1) 9...\text{b}8 10.\text{a}4 \text{xa}5 11.\text{xa}5 \text{xa}5 12.\text{b}6 \text{xb}6 13.\text{xb}6 \text{xb}6 14.\text{f}d4 And White won at move 37, Senff – Vanderwaeren, Leuven 2002.

d2) 9...\text{xa}5? 10.\text{a}4! and White wins: a very good trick!

d3) 9...\text{d}6 was not a success for Black either after 10.\text{a}4 \text{b}7 11.\text{b}6 \text{b}8 12.\text{f}4 \text{c}7 13.\text{e}4 \text{d}8 14.\text{e}2 \text{b}8 15.\text{f}5 \text{xe}4 16.\text{fxe}6 \text{fxe}6 17.\text{d}4 1–0 Fressinet – Moor, Zurich 2001.

7.\text{g}4!?

An aggressive move that fits well with playing the Keres Attack against the Scheveningen. It is a relatively unexplored line and I expect we will see many developments in this line in the coming years.

7.\text{d}3 is possible but Black can reach a reasonable Scheveningen variation with 7...\text{d}6.

7...\text{b}4

a) 7...h6 8.\text{g}2 \text{c}7 9.\text{h}3 \text{xd}4 10.\text{xd}4 e5 11.\text{b}6 \text{xb}6 12.\text{xb}6 \text{d}6 13.0–0–0 \text{e}6 14.\text{c}7 \text{d}7. Now with \text{b}6 White keeps a small edge. Instead he went 15.\text{a}5 \text{b}8 16.\text{f}4 \text{b}6 17.\text{b}4 \text{c}7 18.\text{hf}1 \text{xf}4 19.\text{xf}4 \text{c}7 20.\text{e}5 \text{dxe}5 21.\text{xe}7 \text{xf}4 22.\text{d}6+ \text{c}8 23.\text{xf}4 \text{h}2+ \text{g}2. Hector – Andersson, Sweden 2000.

b) 7...\text{d}5 8.\text{g}5! \text{xe}4 9.\text{xe}4 \text{dxe}4 10.\text{xc}6 \text{xd}1+ 11.\text{xd}1 \text{bxc}6 12.\text{g}2 \text{d}7 13.\text{xe}4 and here White prematurely agreed a draw in Hvenekilde - Jensen, Aarhus 1976. White is slightly better but was apparently peacefully inclined.

8.\text{g}2 \text{d}5

Ribli recommended 8...h6? here.

9.\text{g}5!

This is almost always the answer to d5 after White has rushed forward with the g-pawn.

9...\text{dxe}4 10.\text{dxc}6! \text{bxc}6

10...\text{xc}3 is answered by 11.\text{d}4 and White has a dangerous initiative after 11...\text{b}5† 12.\text{xb}4 \text{bxc}6 13.0–0–0.

11.\text{xe}4 \text{xc}3†

Forced. The ending after 11...\text{dxe}4 12.\text{xd}8+ \text{xd}8 13.0–0–0† \text{e}7 14.\text{xe}4 is terrible for Black who has the living dead sitting at c8.

12.\text{bxc}3 \text{dxe}4 13.\text{xd}8+ \text{xd}8
Winning back the pawn and keeping the initiative. Opposite coloured bishops benefit the player with the initiative, and we will therefore see a hard struggle for the initiative in the following moves.

16...\textit{f6}  
16...\textit{g8} 17.\textit{h1e1} with an undisputed advantage for White.

17.\textit{gxf6} \textit{gxf6} 18.\textit{xf6} \textit{xf8} 19.\textit{e5} \textit{f5}!

19...\textit{xf2}! was better. According to Ribli in \textit{ChessBase Magazine} White still keeps an advantage after 20.\textit{h1f7} 21.\textit{g1e1} c5 22.\textit{xe4}.

20.\textit{g3} \textit{a5} 21.\textit{d4} e5

Getting the problem piece out.

22.\textit{b4}+ \textit{a7} 23.\textit{d1} \textit{f5} 24.\textit{d6}

White is clearly better. Usually Jonny Hector has a very bad score against Curt Hansen, but in this game he brings home the full point.

24...\textit{c8} 25.\textit{f6} \textit{g6} 26.\textit{e6} \textit{b8}

Pawn and initiative – White is winning.

29...\textit{b7} 30.\textit{c5} \textit{a3} 31.\textit{c3} \textit{f7} 32.\textit{h4!} \textit{b6} 33.\textit{d2} \textit{a2} 34.\textit{h5} \textit{b7} 35.\textit{d4} \textit{a3} 36.\textit{c3} \textit{a1} 37.\textit{f5} \textit{c4} 38.\textit{g5} \textit{h1} 39.\textit{g7}+ \textit{c6} 40.\textit{xh7} \textit{h3} 41.\textit{h6}  

The pawn decides.

41...\textit{d3}+ 42.\textit{e1} \textit{h3} 43.\textit{h8} \textit{b7} 44.\textit{e3} \textit{d3} 45.\textit{d2} \textit{b5} 46.\textit{h7}+ \textit{c6} 47.\textit{e7} \textit{d5} 48.\textit{h7} \textit{d3} 49.\textit{d4} 1–0.

And with this game I conclude the repertoire against the Taimanov and Kan. I sincerely hope it will give the reader many successes!
The Accelerated Dragon

- By Peter Heine Nielsen

Game 42
Svidler - Tiviakov
Chalkidiki 2002

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4 g6 5.c4

White's most solid and, I think, best choice. If instead White tries to transpose to normal Dragon lines then Black has extra options because he has not moved his d-pawn yet, which can be exploited in many possible ways.

5...g7 6.c2

An interesting sideline gaining in popularity these days. I have quite some experience on the Black side of the Maroczy systems, and always felt most uncomfortable when White kept as many minor pieces on the board as possible. It is rather strange, but to my mind White would prefer either to keep all four minor pieces, or to exchange them all! From the famous game Botvinnik - Toran (see below) we know that this structure with just rooks on is very uncomfortable for Black.

Botvinnik - Toran, Palma de Mallorca 1967

White is better, the question is whether to take on d5 with the rook or the e-pawn.

22...xd5!

22.exd5 c7 23.d2 g7 and despite Black's clumsy rooks, he will bring the king to f8 and slowly reactivate the g7-rook. White is, of course, better but it is difficult to find a way to make serious progress. This is much easier in the game.

22...c6?

22...c7 23.e5 dxe5 24.fxe5 f5 25.ed1
 Experts vs. the Sicilian

\( \text{\textit{g7}} \) is better for White, but Black keeps reasonable drawing chances.

23.e5 dxe5 24.fxe5 \( \text{\textit{e6}} \) 25.\( \text{\textit{f2}} \) \( \text{\textit{f8}} \) 26.\( \text{\textit{d7}} \) \( \text{\textit{e5}} \) 27.\( \text{\textit{e3}} \) \( \text{\textit{b8}} \) 28.\( \text{\textit{e4}} \) \( \text{\textit{g8}} \) 29.\( \text{\textit{d5}} \) \( \text{\textit{f7}} \) 30.\( \text{\textit{xe5}} \) \( \text{\textit{d6}} \) 31.\( \text{\textit{xd6}} \) \( \text{\textit{exd6}} \) 32.\( \text{\textit{xd6}} \) \( \text{\textit{ad8}} \) 33.\( \text{\textit{c7}} \) \( \text{\textit{d2}} \) 34.\( \text{\textit{xb7}} \) \( \text{\textit{xg2}} \) 35.\( \text{\textit{c5}} \) \( \text{\textit{xh2}} \) 36.\( \text{\textit{c6}} \) \( \text{\textit{xc2}} \) 37.\( \text{\textit{b4}} \) 1–0

A typical Botvinnik move: simple but very strong. This game has become a classic example of how to win with the Maroczy.

So, why not exchange as many pieces as possible and get closer to the goal? Well, Black will not cooperate. He will happily exchange some minor pieces, but will try to keep some on the board as well. Especially, White has to watch out for the scenario where Black ends up with a knight against a white squared bishop.

How often have I had positions like this as Black?

White should avoid such positions at any cost. White sooner or later will have to sacrifice on \( \text{\textit{d4}} \), but he will be hard pressed to make a draw. Of course when seeing this position it is obvious Black is better, however what normally goes wrong is that White realises too late that Black’s idea with knight against white squared bishop is \( \text{\textit{e7–e5}} \)! This weakens \( \text{\textit{d5}} \) but as no white knight is left, who cares? Then Black reroutes the knight to \( \text{\textit{d4}} \), normally via \( \text{\textit{c5–e6–d4}} \). This Diagram is Black’s dream; never let it become reality.

Therefore, I can say from experience that although White would like to exchange all the minor pieces, it felt unpleasant when he kept all four on as well! Black would definitely like to exchange one pair of knights. This is seen in all three major Black systems against White’s main line. The old mainline was 6 \( \text{\textit{e3}} \) \( \text{\textit{f6}} \) 7 \( \text{\textit{c3}} \) \( \text{\textit{g4}} \) which these days is much less popular, despite Larsen breathing some new life into the system in the 80s. My favourite was always 7...0-0 8 \( \text{\textit{e2}} \) \( \text{\textit{d6}} \) 9 0-0 \( \text{\textit{d7}} \) 10 \( \text{\textit{wd2}} \) \( \text{\textit{xd4}} \) 11 \( \text{\textit{xd4}} \) \( \text{\textit{c6}} \) 12 \( \text{\textit{f3}} \) \( \text{\textit{a5}} \). Why not 10 \( \text{\textit{c2}} \) here you might ask, as Black is now committed to putting his bishop on \( \text{\textit{d7}} \)? Good question. Experts like Tiviakov therefore play 9...\( \text{\textit{xd4}} \) as Black, which normally transposes back to what Black wants. Still, White has caused Black some problems in this system recently, so the real reason I have not recommended the mainline for White is 5...\( \text{\textit{f6}} \) 6 \( \text{\textit{c3}} \) \( \text{\textit{d6}} \).
7  \( \texttt{\textit{Qe}2} \texttt{\textit{Qxd4}} 8  \texttt{\textit{Wxd4}} \texttt{\textit{Bg7}}. \) A safe and solid system that, for example, the young Russian Malakhov uses to great effect. As I mentioned earlier, it is noteworthy that in all the main systems Black happily exchanges one pair of knights. So why let him? It was Boris Gulko who pointed this out to me. An extra pair of knights in the standard positions is definitely to White’s advantage.

6...\( \texttt{\textit{Qf6}} \) 7.\( \texttt{\textit{Cc3}} \texttt{\textit{d6}} \) 8.\( \texttt{\textit{Qe2}} \texttt{\textit{Qd7}} \) 9.\( \texttt{\textit{Qd2}} \)

Our main line. This defensive looking move prevents Black’s \( \texttt{\textit{Qxc3}} \). Is it really so clear that \( \texttt{\textit{Qxc3}} \) is a threat? Again, I’m not too sure. Nigel Short played \( \texttt{\textit{Qe3}} \) against Tiviakov and he did not take on c3. If two such experts agree \( \texttt{\textit{Qxc3}} \) is not dangerous then White should definitely go \( \texttt{\textit{Qe3}} \). However, compare this to the English opening: 1.\( \texttt{\textit{c4}} \texttt{\textit{c5}} \) 2.\( \texttt{\textit{Qc3}} \texttt{\textit{Qf6}} \) 3.\( \texttt{\textit{g3}} \texttt{\textit{d5}} \) 4.\( \texttt{\textit{Qxd5}} \texttt{\textit{Qxd5}} \) 5.\( \texttt{\textit{Qg2}} \texttt{\textit{Qc7}} \). There one of White’s main ideas is 6.\( \texttt{\textit{Wb3}} \texttt{\textit{Qc6}} \) 7.\( \texttt{\textit{Qxc6}} \texttt{\textit{bsc6}} \) 8.\( \texttt{\textit{Qa4}} \). He is actually willing to sacrifice a tempo in order to be able to take on c6. It is not a direct transposition as here Black has used time on \( \texttt{\textit{Qf6-d7}} \), still \( \texttt{\textit{Qxc3}} \) is a serious idea, even used by White players to go for an advantage. My suggestions are based on \( \texttt{\textit{Qd2}} \), but avoiding this slightly passive move is worth a punt, especially for players who enjoy unbalanced positions.

9...0–0 10.0–0 \( \texttt{\textit{Qc5}} \) 11.\( \texttt{\textit{b4}} \!?)

An interesting pawn sacrifice. The alternatives are worse. For example, 11 \( \texttt{\textit{f3}} \) was once the main line. I still do not see anything wrong with my old recommendation: 11...\( \texttt{\textit{Wb6}} \) 12 \( \texttt{\textit{Qh1}} \texttt{\textit{Wxb2}} \) 13 \( \texttt{\textit{Qb1}} \texttt{\textit{Qxc3}} \) which should be fine for Black. 11...\( \texttt{\textit{Qxc3}} \)

The principled, brave, but probably bad response to the challenge. 12.\( \texttt{\textit{Qxc3}} \texttt{\textit{Qxe4}} \) 13.\( \texttt{\textit{Qb2}} \)

Again there are huge similarities to the English opening. Without the move b4 included (and with colours reversed) it would be Vaganian - Kasparov. Garry then had to retreat his bishop to e8, but still gained enough positional compensation to draw. Of course an extra tempo is something, however often sacrifices intended to yield positional compensation for a draw as Black are often not enough for an advantage, even with an extra tempo. However, here there is one huge difference:

White gets to put his bishop on the a1–h8 diagonal directly. 11.\( \texttt{\textit{b4}} \) not only
grabbed space, it cleared b2 for the bishop. For those who are not impressed with all kinds of talk trying to justify White’s compensation, I will just add that Deep Fritz 8 claims White has an edge here despite the pawn minus.

13...\textcolor{red}{$\text{b6}$}

How to deal with this as Black then? At the time I thought Tiviakov’s approach was correct. Try and attack c4 in time. As Svidler effectively refutes this, Black has to look in other directions. An obvious try is to block the a1–h8 diagonal in time. This makes sense, but White keeps a dangerous initiative.

An instructive game is: 13...e5 14.\textcolor{red}{$\text{e1}$}? Freeing d1 for the rook. The queen is fine on e1, as White intends to push his f-pawns in order to pressurize on the long diagonal. 14...\textcolor{red}{$\text{g5}$} 15.\textcolor{red}{$\text{d1}$} \textcolor{red}{$\text{e6}$} 16.\textcolor{red}{$\text{h1}$} (16.\textcolor{red}{$\text{d3}$}? f5 17.f3 \textcolor{red}{$\text{f6}$} 18.f4 seems like an obvious improvement) 16...\textcolor{red}{$\text{h4}$} 17.\textcolor{red}{$\text{f3}$} f5 18.b5 \textcolor{red}{$\text{d8}$} 19.g3 \textcolor{red}{$\text{f6}$} 20.\textcolor{red}{$\text{e3}$} \textcolor{red}{$\text{f7}$} 21.\textcolor{red}{$\text{g2}$} \textcolor{red}{$\text{ac8}$} 22.f3 \textcolor{red}{$\text{c5}$} 23.f4 with good compensation and later 1–0, Milos – Spangenberg, Argentina 1995.

13...\textcolor{red}{$\text{b6}$} 14.a3 \textcolor{red}{$\text{e6}$} is a way of trying to get the positive sides of Tiviakov’s idea, without facing the rout as in the game. 15.\textcolor{red}{$\text{c1}$}? f6 16.\textcolor{red}{$\text{f4}$} \textcolor{red}{$\text{g5}$} 17.\textcolor{red}{$\text{e3}$} was promising for White in Gausel - El Taher, Moscow 1994. I like the idea of activating the queen before putting the knight on e3, but even the immediate 15 \textcolor{red}{$\text{e3}$} should give excellent compensation.

14.b5

Ugly but strong. It of course weakens the c5 square, but the fact that it wins tactically is more important.

14...\textcolor{red}{$\text{e5}$}?

14...\textcolor{red}{$\text{a5}$} is given by Svidler as the only chance. He thinks White has excellent chances after 15.\textcolor{red}{$\text{d4}$} \textcolor{red}{$\text{f6}$} 16.\textcolor{red}{$\text{e3}$} \textcolor{red}{$\text{c7}$} 17.\textcolor{red}{$\text{ac1}$} \textcolor{red}{$\text{c5}$} 18.\textcolor{red}{$\text{h4}$} \textcolor{red}{$\text{ac8}$} 19.\textcolor{red}{$\text{fd1}$}. I see no reason to disagree with him on that one.

14...\textcolor{red}{$\text{b8}$} 15.\textcolor{red}{$\text{d4}$} \textcolor{red}{$\text{f6}$} 16.g4 \textcolor{red}{$\text{b6}$} may seem OK for Black, however White keeps a huge initiative even without the queens: 17.g5 \textcolor{red}{$\text{xd4}$} 18.\textcolor{red}{$\text{xd4}$} \textcolor{red}{$\text{e4}$} (18...\textcolor{red}{$\text{fd7}$} 19.\textcolor{red}{$\text{f3}$} just wins b7) 19.\textcolor{red}{$\text{f3}$} d5 20.\textcolor{red}{$\text{g2}$} when Black’s centre is about to collapse.

15.\textcolor{red}{$\text{d4}$} \textcolor{red}{$\text{f6}$} 16.\textcolor{red}{$\text{f4}$} \textcolor{red}{$\text{ed7}$}

16...\textcolor{red}{$\text{eg4}$} 17.h3 \textcolor{red}{$\text{h6}$} 18.g4 left Black lost in van Wely – Gustafsson, Dieren 1999.

17.g4!
Wins a piece and thus the game. It is amazing that a top professional like Tiviakov loses like this in a very computerized age. Probably he made the mistake of trusting Carsten Hansen's and my book which recommended 13...\textit{b}6. 17...\textit{W}b6 18.\textit{f}5

The rest is easy.

18...\textit{A}xc4 19.\textit{A}xc4 \textit{D}xg4 20.\textit{A}d5 \textit{E}ac8 21.\textit{A}e3 \textit{D}ge5 22.\textit{W}xb6 \textit{A}xb6 23.\textit{A}xb7 \textit{E}b8 24.\textit{A}a6 \textit{D}d3 25.\textit{A}d4 \textit{A}b4 26.\textit{F}c1 \textit{D}xa6 27.\textit{B}xa6 \textit{e}5 28.\textit{f}xe6 \textit{f}xe6 29.\textit{A}ab1 1–0

Game 43

Aronian - Vorobiov
Aeroflot Open 2004

1.e4 \textit{c}5 2.\textit{f}3 \textit{c}6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\textit{A}xd4 \textit{g}6 5.e4 \textit{D}g7 6.\textit{c}c2 \textit{f}6 7.\textit{c}c3 0–0 8.\textit{A}e2 \textit{d}6 9.0–0 \textit{D}d7 10.\textit{A}d2 \textit{c}5 11.b4 \textit{D}e6

The sane choice. Black tries to establish control over the d4-square, as usual in the Maroczy hoping to secure it for one of his knights. White's b4 of course grabbed some space, however it has a downside as well. Soon Black will go ...a5 asking the question: Will White weaken \textit{c}5 by playing b5, or will he allow the a-file to be opened by answering it with a3?

12.\textit{A}c1?!

12.\textit{b}1 has been more popular, but this move has its hidden points. Mainly it protects \textit{c}3, which will soon become important. Also it leaves the a-file thus not allowing Black to exchange his rook there.

12...\textit{D}ed4

12...\textit{a}5 seems like a more logical move. Why not at least get the a-file opened? The b6-square is weakened, but this does not seem relevant in this exact position. 13.a3 axb4 14.axb4 \textit{D}ed4 15.\textit{A}xd4 \textit{D}xd4 16.\textit{A}e3! \textit{e}5?! (16...\textit{D}xe2\textdagger 17.\textit{W}xe2 \textit{D}e6 18.\textit{F}d1 \textit{A}xc3?! (18...\textit{W}c7 19.\textit{D}d5 \textit{A}xd5 20.exd5 gives White an edge. The tactical point is that 20...\textit{A}a4 21 \textit{c}5! is very strong and even after the better 20...b6 21 \textit{A}d4 \textit{D}f6! 22 \textit{W}e3 White has a serious initiative although Black benefits from the fact that the a-line has been opened.) 19.\textit{A}xc3 \textit{W}c7?! (19...\textit{W}b8 20.\textit{A}f4 \textit{E}c8 21.\textit{A}c1 \textit{b}6 22.e5 \textit{dxe5} 23.\textit{A}xe5 \textit{W}b7 24.\textit{E}e1 \textit{h}5 25.\textit{A}d4 \textit{h}7 26.\textit{h}3 \textit{E}c7 27.\textit{W}e5 \textit{E}g8 28.\textit{W}f4 was basically winning for White in Speelman – Pigusov, Sochi 1982. It is noteworthy that the presence of opposite coloured bishops makes it much worse for the defender. He cannot oppose on the black squares.) 20.c5 \textit{E}fc8
Experts vs. the Sicilian

(Just before this book was to go to the press I noticed that the following game had been played: 20...\textit{E}fd8 21.\textit{\&}f4 \textit{\&}c8 22.h3 dxc5 23.\textit{\&}xc5 \textit{\&}xd1† 24.\textit{\&}xd1 \textit{\&}d8 25.\textit{\&}xd8† \textit{\&}xd8 26.e5 \textit{\&}g7 27.\textit{\&}e3 \textit{\&}d5 28.\textit{\&}c1 h6 29.\textit{\&}c5 \textit{\&}d7 30.\textit{\&}a1 f6 31.exf6† ½−½. Fressinet - Maze, Val d’Isere 2004. I would not want to defend Black’s position in these lines, but there is a drawish tendency you have to acknowledge when you are White against this kind of opening. Besides, 22.\textit{\&}e1! with the idea of 22...dxc5 23.\textit{\&}xc5 and \textit{\&}xd1 is not with check looks like an obvious improvement. I would like to make the reader believe that it is my great understanding of chess, and not my ability to press ctrl+3 (enabling the Fritz engine – ed.), which found this improvement – but I would not enter such a foolish endeavour.)

21.\textit{\&}c1 (21.h3!? seems like an obvious improvement. It is not clear what Black should do except for dxc5 which however leaves White a tempo up on the game. Maybe 21...f6!? is the most useful, controlling some dark squares. Black might draw this fairly often, but it is an unpleasant task and obviously we are playing for two results only.) 21...dxc5 22.\textit{\&}xc5 \textit{\&}b8 23.h3 \textit{\&}xc5 24.\textit{\&}xc5 \textit{\&}c7 25.\textit{\&}e3 f6 26.f4 \textit{\&}d8 And Malakhov drew this somewhat inferior position as Black against Dominguez at the 2004 WC in Libya.)

17.\textit{\&}b5?! I like this direct approach although it has never really worked out in practice. If Black manages quietly to finish his development he should be fine. 17...\textit{\&}xb5 (17...\textit{\&}a2 18.\textit{\&}d3 (18.\textit{\&}e1!? Seems like the obvious improvement, not fearing \textit{\&}xe2 and questioning Black’s knight on d4 immediately.) 18...\textit{\&}d7?! was drawn in Geller-Velimirovic, Skara 1980. Black is now very active.) 18.cxb5 \textit{\&}e6 was seen in two Geller-Pigusov games. 19.\textit{\&}c4 \textit{\&}d7 20.\textit{\&}d3 \textit{\&}c8 was agreed drawn in their first encounter, Sochi 1989. The second, Cappelle 1992, went 19.b6!? f5 20.f3 \textit{\&}a3 21.\textit{\&}d2 \textit{\&}a2 was decent counterplay in the second. My recommendation is 20 \textit{\&}c4. The point being the positional pawn-sac. 20...\textit{\&}xc4 21.\textit{\&}xc4 f4 22.\textit{\&}d5† \textit{\&}h8 23.\textit{\&}d2 \textit{\&}xb6 24.\textit{\&}fc1, which to me looks like excellent compensation.

13.\textit{\&}xd4 \textit{\&}xd4 14.\textit{\&}e3!

Again this is the key motif. Here without the a-file open e5 does not make much sense, so Black has to go for \textit{\&}xe2.

14...\textit{\&}xe2† 15.\textit{\&}xe2 b6

The bishop pair is not a major factor here. White can easily exchange the dark squared bishops and Black lacks a way of creating counterplay. White has a huge edge.

16.\textit{\&}fd1 \textit{\&}b7 17.\textit{\&}d4 \textit{\&}xd4

Probably the ugly 17...f6 needed serious consideration.

18.\textit{\&}xd4 \textit{\&}c7
19.\textit{h4}!

A typical thrust leaving Black with an unpleasant choice. To allow the pawn to settle on \textit{h6} or to weaken himself with \textit{h5}, allowing an eventual \textit{g4} opening lines.

19.\textit{...}}\text{ac8} 20.\textit{h5} a6 21.\textit{d5} \textit{xd5} 22.\textit{exd5}!

Well, no need to be too dogmatic. Yes, I spoke highly of \textit{Exd5} in such positions. However, here White already has something going on the kingside and Black has no time for the typical \textit{e6} break. After 22 \textit{Exd5} a5 would give some counterplay.

22.\textit{...}}\text{ac8} 23.\textit{e4} \textit{d7} 24.\textit{e1} b5 25.\textit{xb5} axb5 26.\textit{h6} \textit{f8} 27.\textit{b2} f6 28.\textit{exe7}!

Crashing through.

28.\textit{...}}\text{xe7} 29.\textit{xe7} \textit{xe7} 30.\textit{e2}† \textit{f7} 31.\textit{xb5} \textit{c1}† 32.\textit{h2} \textit{c2}

But simultaneously Black resigned. Just pushing his a-pawn wins easily for White.

1–0

\textbf{Game 44}

\textbf{Bologan - Motylev}

Togliatti 2003

\begin{align*}
1.\textit{e4} & \textit{c5} \\
2.\textit{f3} & \textit{g6} \\
3.\textit{d4} & \textit{cxd4} \\
4.\textit{Exd4} & \textit{c6} \\
5.\textit{c4} & \textit{f6} \\
6.\textit{c3} & \textit{d6} \\
7.\textit{c2} & \textit{g7} \\
8.\textit{e2} & 0–0 \\
9.0–0 & \textit{d7} \\
10.\textit{d2} & a5
\end{align*}

A logical move, stopping White’s space grabbing \textit{b4}. The drawbacks are the weakening of the \textit{b6} and, especially, the \textit{b5} square.

11.\textit{a3}!?

11.\textit{w1} followed by \textit{h6} might also claim a small edge.

11.\textit{e1} \textit{c5} 12.\textit{f1} b6 13.\textit{a3} \textit{b7} 14.\textit{c1} \textit{c8} 15.\textit{g5} \textit{d4} was reasonable for Black in van Wely- van der Wiel, Leeuwarden 2004, but I guess White keeps a tiny edge in a complex position.

11.\textit{e3}. I once had a lot of sympathy for this. The point is that now \textit{xc3} is much less attractive for Black as \textit{a5} has weakened squares in the \textit{b-line} and Black
will not have $a_5$ pressurizing the c4-pawn. However, White’s most natural plan is sooner or later $d_4$, which will then lead to some standard positions with White having wasted some time. For example, 11... $c_5$ 12. $d_4$ $a_4$ (12... $x_d4$!? 13. $x_d4$ $d_7$ gives Black a reasonable version of one of the Maroczy main lines, though White may still have some edge) 13. $d_b5$ $e_6$ 14. $b_1$ $a_5$ which actually is a transposition to a later mentioned Dominguez-Malakhov game. 11 $e_3$ has its points, but as what Black wants is to establish himself on the b5 square, why go via d4 allowing Black a desirable exchange?

11... $c_5$ 12. $a_b5$ $d_4$

Black insists on exchanging knights. And why not? White just lost a lot of time going $c_2$-$a_3$-$b_5$. However, he has a strong retort prepared. 12... $e_6$ 13. $e_3$ $a_4$ 14. $b_1$ (I am not sure why this has to be played, but it is the only move seen in practice and by some very strong players indeed. 14. $c_1$? $a_5$ 15.f4 to me seems logical and strong. As usual in Maroczy positions with all minor pieces still on the board, Black finds it hard to develop naturally. He lacks space.) 14... $a_5$ 15.f4 (15. $c_1$ was Morozevich’s move, intending to go $d_5$ at some point without allowing Black to swap queens on d2, which would be the obvious square for the queen. 15... $f_8$ 16.f4 $d_8$ 17. $e_1$ $b_4$ 18. $d_2$ with the usual edge for White in Morozevich – Iskunsnyh,Togliatti 2003, a game later won by Black though!) 15...f5 (15... $a_3$! seems to work, which is one strong argument in favour of 14 $c_1$?. Here the point is that Black seems to survive the tactics after 16.f5 (16.e5 $a_b2$ 17. $x_b2$ seems like White’s best option. Despite his shattered pawns, White’s central pressure gives some hope, at least of equality.) 16...$x_b2$ 17.fxe6 $c_3$.) 16.exf5 (16. $e_5$!) 16...$f_5$ 17. $c_1$ $b_4$? 18.g4 $d_7$ 19. $d_5$ $a_5$ 20. $d_2$ (20. $x_e7$! $x_e7$ 21. $x_d6$ wins outright.) 20...$d_8$ 21. $c_3$ with a huge edge in Dominguez-Malakhov, Tripoli 2004.

If you are not too impressed with the quality of that game, keep in mind it was the deciding 6-5 minute blitz game of their Tripoli 2004 WC encounter. Many, including me, have made worse errors in that situation.

12...f5 is a logical and aggressive choice by Black. This is how White tries to fight for an edge with coloured reversed and thus an extra tempo. Here Black might argue that $a_3$-$b_5$ was indeed a bit slow, and therefore direct action is justified. 13.exf5 $x_f5$ 14. $e_3$ seems to give White an edge. Black’s problem is: what’s next? 12...f5 certainly compromises his position, but should give some activity in return. Here I do not see how Black can intensify his pressure, which means White’s positional advantages are more weighty.

13.$x_d4$ $x_d4$ 14. $h_6$?
Forcing a desirable swap.
14...\texttt{g}7?!
14...xc3!? 15.bxc3 e8. I think this is the better choice for Black, if only because here he can play for the win too. As usual in xc3 structures, it however hurts a lot that the black pawn is on a5. This is actually the only reason that I think White can claim an edge. 16.f3 is the correct approach for White. A direct attack with, for example, w d4 will not succeed. Black will put pawns on e5 and f6 anyway, no need to force him to do necessary deeds. Now White will put a rook on b1, the queen on d2, play h1, etc. I think White has a slight edge, but it is a very complex position. If this does not suit you, I would recommend doing Moro’s move order 11 e3.

15.xg7 xg7
16.g4!

White’s point, without this his play would make much less sense. Getting rid of the white squared bishops is huge progress. Often White ends up with that bishop being bad; this is an integral part of Black’s counterplay in the Maroczy. So why is the 3.b5t system against 2...d6 in the Sicilian not more popular then? It often ends up as a Maroczy with the white squared bishops exchanged. Well, as usual generalizing such concepts is impossible in chess. I guess it is again due to the fact that White prefers four minor pieces on the board rather than three, but will be happy to swap down to one or none. Three or two seems to favour Black somehow!

16...xg4
16...e6 17.e2 when White eventually will be ready for xe6 fx6 e5! leaving him structurally clearly better.

17.xg4 a4 18.e2 a5 19.ac1

White’s edge is bigger than it might seem at first sight. Apart from being solid Black has no plusses. His a-pawn march did not bring much joy, White managed to protect c3 in time, which means the undermining ...a3 is pointless. White simply has control of the centre and the possibility of playing on the kingside for free.

19.d7 20.d5 f6 21.fd1 xd5 22.xd5 a6 23.h4

Well, we have been here before. Such heavy-piece middlegames are just much better for White.

23.fc8 24.h5 e6 25.d4 c5 26.d2

Excellent judgement by Bologan. White still has a huge edge despite the
simplifications.
26...hxh5 27.bxh6 wa5 28.bxa5
29.axa5 29...c6 30.c5 c5 31.b6
b6 32.f4 wa6 33.a2 a5 34.f5 a5
35.a3

White is winning. The king enters with
decisive effect.
35...gxh5 36.gxh5 a5 37.a2 a1 38.e5 a5

39...a1 40.a4 a4 41.a5 wins,
although Black can play on a bit longer
than in the game.
40.b5 a3 41.d7 1–0

Game 45
Gulko - Nielsen
Esbjerg 2000

1.c4 c5 2.d3 g6 3.d4 cxd4 4.a3 d4
g7 5.e4 a6 6.e3
c2 is our preferred move-order
6...a6 7.a6 0–0 8.e2 d6 9.e3 d7
10.c2

Why discuss this position? Well, a6-
d7-c5 is not Black's only plan. Although
this position arises far more often by the
move order in the game rather than via
our early c2, Black can choose to enter
this position, only giving us some not
too relevant extra options like putting
the bishop on g5 instead of e3, etc. As
mentioned earlier Black has started going
9...a6 to avoid this exact position,
certainly most players prefer putting the
knights on d7, not the bishop.
10...a6

A favourite of Larsen. 10...a5?! 11.a4
c8 12.a1 a6 13.b4 d8 14.a3
was clearly better for White in Short-
Andersson, Wijk aan Zee 1990. Black is
clearly suffocating, and the weakness of
the b6-square makes things even worse.
11.a3 c8 12.a2

12.a3! is an interesting move order. After
12.a3 Short went back to the
game with 13.a2, but why 12.a3
might be a tad more exact was shown by
Schlosser against me as after 12...e5?! 13.a3
he had the very unpleasant
14.a3 eyeing the b6 square, and forcing
me to retreat with 14...a6 just to get b4
for my queen. I was definitely suff ering in
that game.
12...e8 13.a1 a5 14.a3

14.a3! is interesting as well. Originally I liked Black due to the game
Anand-Larsen, Roquebrune (rapid)
1992, won by my great compatriot after:
14...e5 15.a3 h5 16.a1 a4!
17.\( \text{Ne1} \) \( \text{Ac6} \) when Black had decent counterplay. However Short came up with the space grabbing 15 b4! \( \text{Nd8} \) 16 \( \text{Da3} \) a5 17 b5 \( \text{Ne6} \) 18 \( \text{Da4} \) \( \text{Dfd7} \) 19 b6! and held an serious edge against Felgaer, Argentina 2001.

14.\( \text{e6} \) 15.\( \text{ab1} \)

Definitely not as ambitious as Short’s approach, but White will potentially expand on the queenside, and in the meantime Black finds it hard to come up with a good plan for counterplay.

15.\( \text{De5} \) 16.b3 \( \text{Bb8} \) 17.a3 \( \text{Eec8} \) 18.b4 \( \text{Db8} \) 19.\( \text{Dd5} \) b6 20.\( \text{Efd1} \) a5 21.\( \text{Hh3} \) axb4 22.axb4 \( \text{Dd7} \)

Again the only positive thing to say about Black’s position is that it is solid. The extra set of minor pieces compared to the normal positions definitely favours White, and the weakness of b6 is also a factor.

23.\( \text{Da3} \) \( \text{Cc6} \) 24.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{Ded7} \)

A mistake but an instructive one! 25.\( \text{Cc3} \) followed by \( \text{Daab5} \) keeps the edge.

25.\( \text{a4}! \)

Finally I manage to exchange some minor pieces and get decent counterplay. An exchange could have been made earlier on d5, but that would change the pawn-structure in White’s favour. Now everything is OK.

26.\( \text{Ee1} \) \( \text{Dxd5} \) 27.\( \text{exd5} \)

Well, it is not always bad for Black to take on d5. Here I will find it easy to protect e7, and will soon be active on the a-line.

27.\( \text{Ec2} \) 28.\( \text{exc2} \) \( \text{Ba8} \) 29.\( \text{Ag5} \)

With a draw offer. Not even bothering to check if I knew the standard reply 29...\( \text{Af6}! \) intending to take back on f6 with the pawn, ridding myself of the e7 weakness. Thus White would not have taken on f6, but might have gone 30.\( \text{h4}!? \) with a balanced game.

\( \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}. \)
The Scheveningen

- By Viktor Gavrikov

After 1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4 f6 5.c3 e6 the move 6.g4 was introduced into tournament practice by Paul Keres in his game against Efim Bogoljubow, Salzburg 1943. The obvious idea is to play g4-g5 and thereby gain space and create attacking possibilities on the kingside.

Black has three main continuations:
He may further his own plans with 6...a6 or 6...c6 and allow g4-g5, or he may discourage the advance of g-pawn by 6...h6.
Against other moves it is easier for White to fight for the initiative:
1) 6...d5 7.exd5 xd5 8.b5+ d7 9.xd5 exd5 10.e2+ e7
   After 10...e7 11.e3, both 11...g6?!
   (Or 11...a6 12.xd7+ xd7 13.f5!? xe6 14.0-0-0 0-0-0 15.d3 with advantage for White.) 12.xd7+ xd7 13.b5 e5 14.0-0-0 g7 15.xd5 Fischer – Reshevsky, USA (ch), New York 1966, and 11...c6? 12.0-0-0 g6 13.he1 g4 14.xc6 bxc6 (Rosen – Fronczek, Germany 2000.) 15.d4! xe2 16.xg7! xe6 17.xc6 Black loses a pawn without compensation.
11.f5 f8 12.xd7 xd7 13.e3 c6 14.0-0-0 f6
14...d8 15.he1 c7 16.b1 h6 17.h4 with a dangerous initiative, Bebchuk – Shamkovich, Moscow (ch) 1964.
15.f3 d4

Luther – Rahls, Bad Wildbad 2000, and now instead of 16.f4 g6 stronger was:
16.g5 e5 17.b1! Intending to meet 17...d8 with 18.xd4 xd4 18...xd4 19.xd4 xd4 20.c3.
19.c3


\begin{itemize}
\item[\textbf{dxe4} 14.\textit{\textbf{W}}xd7\textdagger \textit{\textbf{Q}}xd7]
\end{itemize}

After 14...\textit{\textbf{Q}}xd7 15 hxg7 \textit{\textbf{Q}}g8
16 \textit{\textbf{Q}}g1 \textit{\textbf{Q}}c5 then 17 \textit{\textbf{Q}}h6 \textit{\textbf{Q}}c8 18 h4
is unpleasant, Aseev - Epishin, USSR 1988.

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textbf{15.hxg7} \textit{\textbf{Q}}g8 16 \textit{\textbf{Q}}g1 \textit{\textbf{Q}}c6 17 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e3 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e7
18.0-0-0\textdagger \textit{\textbf{Q}}e6 19 \textit{\textbf{Q}}c5 \textit{\textbf{Q}}f5 20 \textit{\textbf{Q}}f8
\textit{\textbf{Q}}d4 21 \textit{\textbf{Q}}b1! \textit{\textbf{Q}}f5 22 \textit{\textbf{Q}}c3 \textit{\textbf{Q}}f3!]
\end{itemize}

More stubborn was 22...\textit{\textbf{Q}}e6 23 \textit{\textbf{Q}}a3
\textit{\textbf{Q}}xg7 24 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xg7 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xg7 25 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d7 \textit{\textbf{Q}}g6
26 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xb7 \textit{\textbf{Q}}h8.

\begin{itemize}
\item[23.\textit{\textbf{Q}}h1! \textit{\textbf{Q}}gxh8 24 \textit{\textbf{Q}}fxh8 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xf8 25 h4]
\end{itemize}


\begin{itemize}
\item[b) 10...\textit{\textbf{Q}}xh5 11 \textit{\textbf{Q}}h6! \textit{\textbf{Q}}c6!]
\end{itemize}

11...g6?! 12 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xf8 gxf5 13 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xd6 \textit{\textbf{Q}}c6
14 \textit{\textbf{Q}}c5±.

\begin{itemize}
\item[12.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xh5 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e7]
\end{itemize}

12...g6?! 13 \textit{\textbf{Q}}g5 gxf5 14 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xf8 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xf8
15.0-0-0 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d4 16 \textit{\textbf{Q}}hg1 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e6 allows
White an excellent attacking position
after 17 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xd4! exd4 18 \textit{\textbf{Q}}g7\textdagger \textit{\textbf{Q}}e7
19 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d5\textdagger \textit{\textbf{Q}}d7 20.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xd4 \textit{\textbf{Q}}hc8 21 \textit{\textbf{Q}}b4!
\textit{\textbf{Q}}ab8 22 \textit{\textbf{Q}}a4\textdagger \textit{\textbf{Q}}c6 23 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xa7 \textit{\textbf{Q}}h6\textdagger
24 \textit{\textbf{Q}}b1, Shmuter - Obukhov, Russia
1993, or 20...b5 21 exf5 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e5 22 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d3
\textit{\textbf{Q}}c6 23 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d1, Korneev - Suba, Zaragoza
1995.

\begin{itemize}
\item[13.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xe7]
\end{itemize}

Less convincing is the recommendation
of Nunn: 13 \textit{\textbf{Q}}g4 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xf5 14 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xf5 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xh6
15.0-0-0 0-0-0 16 \textit{\textbf{Q}}b4 in view of
16 \textit{\textbf{Q}}g6 17 \textit{\textbf{Q}}h3 exf4.

\begin{itemize}
\item[13...\textit{\textbf{Q}}xe7 14.0-0-0 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xh6 15 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e2 0-0-0 16 \textit{\textbf{Q}}b1 \textit{\textbf{Q}}b8 17 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d5 \textit{\textbf{Q}}dh8 18 \textit{\textbf{Q}}f3]
\end{itemize}

After these minor lines, let us turn to the first main line.

The variation with 6...a6
6...a6

A standard Sicilian move. Black prepares b7-b5 and plans to organize counterplay on the queenside.
7.g5 d5 8.h4 b5

If Black plays 8...c7 9.h5 b5 10.a3 b7 White may reply 11.h3!? with the idea g5-g6.
9.a3 d5

After 9...b6 10.h5 Black has several possibilities which all seem insufficient to equalize:
   a) 10...e5?! 11.f5 d5 12.h6! gxh6 13.xh6 d4 14.e2 c6 15.g3± Lobron - K. Schulz, Germany 1985.
   b) 10...e7 11.g1 (In case of 11.g4 (with the idea 11...e5?! 12.f5 g6 13.hxg6 fxg6 14.e3! gxf5 15.exf5 and White has a dangerous initiative for a piece) 11.c7 is playable for Black.) 11...g6 12.e3, T. Ernst - Barash, Gausdal 1991, with the threat of 13.dxb5 axb5 14.d4.
   c) 10...d7 11.h3 c5 (11...c7 12.g2) 12.g6 f6 13.g3±, Nunn - Walden, Nottingham 1983.
10.e3

We will now deal with the most important moves, A) 10..b6, B) 10..c5, C) 10..e7 and the main move, D) 10..c6.

A) 10..b6
10...d5?! 11.exd5 b6 12.g2 d5 13.xd5 x5 14.g4 gave White a clear advantage in Sax - Fedder, Plovdiv 1983.
11.h5 d8?!

The alternatives are:
   a) 11..c4?! 12.xc4 bxc4 13.e2
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\[ \text{c7 14.0-0-0 d7 15.g6 hxg6 16.hxg6} \]
\[ \text{\element{A}}xh1 17.gxf7+ xf7 18.\element{A}xh1} \]
\[ \text{f6 19.\element{f}3!} \text{c6} \text{20.\element{g}5+ e7 21.d1} \]

followed by f2-f4 was very unpleasant for Black in Luther - Nagendra, Bad Wildbad 1993.

b) After 11...d5 White can play 12.h6!? (with the idea 12...g6? 13.\element{f}xe6 fxe6
\[ \text{14.d4} \] 12...gxh6 13.h5 d6 14.h3
e5 15.\element{f}5 \text{g6} 16.xg6 hxg6 17.xb6
gxf5 18.xf5 d4 19.d5 \text{xd5} 20.exd5
with advantage.

\[ \text{c) 11...e7 12.g4} \]

12...\element{b}d7?! (12...c6 is an untested alternative which is probably a better choice) 13.g6! f5?! (13...hxg6 14.\element{f}xe6! with the idea 14...fxe6? 15.xg6+ \text{f}8
16.h6 17.hxg7t 17.xg7t 18.\element{h}8t
19.h6t 20.h7t \text{f}6 21.f4, with the idea 14...c8 15.xg7t
f8 16.d4 \text{f}6 17.xf6 \text{xf6} 18.g4 followed by h5-h6) 14.g3! \text{f}8 15.h6
\text{f}6 16.hxg7 17.xg7t 18.gxh7 \text{f}6?!

18.h6 with a decisive advantage in Yagupov – Yezersky, St Petersburg 1993.

\[ \text{12.g6!} \]

The strongest continuation. This excellent idea was introduced into tournament practice in the game Adams – C. Hansen, Wijk aan Zee 1991. Less dangerous for Black is 12.\element{g}1 g6 or 12.\element{h}3 d5.

\[ \text{12.hxg6 13.hxg6} \text{e}xh1 14.gxf7t \text{xf7} \]

14...e7? is refuted by 15.\text{g}4! \text{c}8
16.xe6t \text{d}8 17.e8t \text{c}7 18.e6t
\text{c}6? (Black is also in a hopeless situation after 18...b8 19.xf8 xf8
20.xb6 \text{c}6 21.e7 \text{d}7 22.d8
h8 23.xd6t \text{b}7 24.e7) 19.d5!
xf1t 20.xf1 \text{xd5} 21.exd5t \text{xd5}
22.xf8t! \text{xe8} (22...xf8 23.d4t
\text{c}4 24.d4t or 22...e5 23.d1t
\text{e}4 24.d4t \text{f}5 25.f4t, Kotronias – Kr. Georgiev, Karditsa 1994, leads to
mate and 22...\text{c}6 loses to 23.e4†}
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Forster – Weigler, Switzerland 1993.) 23.fxe8\xb6 24.\xc8d7 \xc6 25.\xc8b6 \xbxb3 26.\xc8e3 \xbxb6 27.\xc8d1 \xc7 28.\xc8d4 with a won ending for White.

15.\xc8f3+ \xc8f6

Unsatisfactory is 15...\xc8f6 16.\xb8xh1 \xc7 17.\xc8f3!. For example 17...\xc8g8 18.\xc8g5 \xb8e8 19.0-0-0 d5? 20.\xb8h3! \xc8c8 21.\xb8xb5! and Black cannot parry the threat of \xb8h1, Svidler – Nepomniashy, St Petersburg 1996.

16.\xb8xh1 \xc5

In the aforementioned game Adams – C. Hansen Black tried 16...\xc5?! 17.\xb8xe6! \xb8xe6 18.\xb8xb6 d5. Play continued 19.\xb8d4 \xc6 (19...dxe4? 20.\xb8h5+ \xc8g6 21.\xb8f3.) 20.\xb8h3 \xb8e8 21.0-0-0 \xb8xd4 22.\xb8xd4 \xc5 23.\xc8d3 d4 24.\xc8c5 \xb8xd5 with good winning chances for White.

17.\xb8h5+? g6 18.\xb8g4

and it is hard to see what Black can do against the logical follow-up 0-0-0 and \xc8f3.

B) 10...\xc5 11.\xb8g4!? \xc8d7 12.h5

This is more accurate than 12.0-0-0 \xb8a5! 13.h5 b4 14.axb4 \xb8xb4 with strong counterplay for Black.

12...\xb8e5 13.\xb8g2 \xc4

13...\xc8c8 also looks good for White, e.g. 14.f4 \xc6 15.g6 hxg6 16.hxg6 \xc8xh1 17.gxf7+ \xc8xf7 18.\xb8xh1 \xb8f6 19.0-0-0 \xb8xd4 20.\xb8xd4 \xc7 21.\xc8g2±, De Vreugt - G. Horvath, Vlissingen 1997.

14.\xb8xc4 bxc4 15.0-0-0 \xb8b8

The alternative is 15...\xb8b6 when 16.g6 \xb8b8 17.gxf7+ \xc8xf7 18.\xc8f3! should be dangerous for Black. For example: 18...\xc6 (if 18...\xc8a8, then 19.\xc8a4! \xb8b5 20.\xb8xc5 \xb8xa4 21.\xb8g4!, or 20...dxc5 21.\xc8e5+ \xc8e8 22.\xb8g4!) 19.\xb8xc5 \xb8xc5 20.\xc8g5+ \xc8e7 21.\xb8g4 \xc6 22.\xb8f4 \xb8c8 (after 22...\xb8b6 winning is 23.\xb8f7 \xb8g8 24.\xb8xd6 \xb8xb2+ 25.\xc8d2 \xb8b3 26.\xb8h3) 23.e5! d5 (both 23...dxe5 24.\xb8h4 \xb8b6 25.\xb8xe6+! \xb8xe6 26.\xb8g4+ \xc8f7 27.\xb8xc4+ \xb8e6 28.\xc8c7+ \xb8e7 29.\xb8xb8 and 23...\xb8xe5 24.\xb8h4 \xb8f5 25.\xb8he1 \xb8d7 (25...e5 26.\xb8xe5! \xb8xe5 27.\xc8f3+ \xb8f6 28.\xc8d5+ and 26...dxe5 27.\xb8h7+ \xb8e6 28.\xb8xc4+ \xb8e7 29.\xb8d5+) 26.\xb8xe6 are bad for Black) 24.\xb8xe6! \xb8xe6 25.\xb8xd5 \xb8d7 (25...\xb8a4 26.h6! \xb8c6 27.\xb8h5) 26.\xb8d4! \xb8a5 27.e6+ \xb8c8 28.\xb8xc4+ \xb8b7 29.\xc8c7+ \xb8a8 30.\xb8b3 \xb8b7 31.\xc8c8+ \xb8b8 32.\xb8xe8 \xb8xe8 33.\xb8b4+ winning
The Scheveningen

16. \( \text{dxe2} \)?

Now \( \text{b6} \) can be met by \( \text{a4} \). However, also possible is 16.g6 \( \text{c7} \). 17.gxf7\( + \) \( \text{xf7} \) 18.\( g4 \) and White has at least a small edge.

16...\( \text{a5} \) 17.\( \text{g6} \)

With a strong initiative for White. Now the game Kulaots – Yewdokimov, Tallinn 2001 continued:

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

17...f5 18.gxh7 \( \text{xe4} \) 19.\( \text{g6} \)\( + \) \( \text{d7} \)
20.h6! \( \text{gxh6} \) 21.\( \text{f7} \)\( + \) \( \text{e7} \) 22.\( \text{hxh6} \).

18.gxf7\( + \) \( \text{xf7} \) 19.\( \text{f3} \)\( + \) \( \text{f6}?! \)

19...\( \text{e8} \) was better, when White plays 20.\( \text{g4} \) with the idea 20...\( \text{f7} \) 21.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{c8} \) 22.\( \text{g6} \! \)!

20.\( \text{xd6} \) with a clear advantage.

C) 10...\( \text{e7} \) 11.\( \text{d2} \)

Interesting is 11.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{c6} \) (11...\( \text{b6}?! \))

12.0-0-0 0-0 13.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 14.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{a5} \), Baikov – Antkowiak, Nuremberg 1989, and now 15.g6?! \( \text{fxg6} \) (15...\( \text{hxg6}? \)
16.h5) 16.\( \text{g4} \) \( \text{f7} \) 17.\( \text{xe6} \) with better prospects for White.

The continuation 11.\( \text{g4} \) \( \text{c6} \) 12.0-0-0 gives Black sufficient counterplay after 12...\( \text{ce5} \) 13.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{c8} \) 14.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{c4} \) 15.\( \text{xc4} \) \( \text{xc4} \) 16.\( \text{f5} \) \( \text{c5} \) (16...\( \text{e5}?! \)
17.g6 \( \text{fxg6} \! \)!, Zhao – Alcazar Jimenez, Oropesa del Mar 2000.

11...\( \text{c6} \)

11...\( \text{c5} \) 12.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{c7} \) is less accurate since after 13.0-0-0 White may meet 13...\( \text{bd7} \) (Or 13...\( \text{c6} \) 14.\( \text{xb5}?! \))

with a typical piece sacrifice 14.\( \text{xb5}?! \) \( \text{axb5} \) 15.\( \text{dxb5} \) \( \text{c6} \) 16.\( \text{xd6} \)\( + \) \( \text{xd6} \) 17.\( \text{xd6} \)\( + \), Fischer – Najdorf, Leipzig (ol 1960).

Another idea is 11...\( \text{b6}?! \) planning \( \text{d7-e5} \). Karlkins – Commons, Lone Pine 1972, now continued 12.\( \text{xe6}?! \) \( \text{fxe6} \) 13.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{c4} \) (unclear is 13...\( \text{a4} \) 14.\( \text{xc7} \) \( \text{f8} \) 15.\( \text{hxh7} \) \( \text{xc3} \) 16.\( \text{xc3} \) \( \text{a5} \) 17.\( \text{d2} \)) 14.\( \text{xc7} \) \( \text{d7} \) 15.\( \text{xc4} \)

16.0-0-0 \( \text{f8} \) (16...\( \text{g8} \)
17.\( \text{xd6} \)\( + \) \( \text{d6} \) 18.\( \text{d1} \)\( + \) \( \text{d5} \) 19.\( \text{d4} \)

\( \text{c6} \) 20.\( \text{xc4} \) or 16...\( \text{c6} \) 17.\( \text{a4} \)

\( \text{f8} \) 18.\( \text{c3} \)\( + \) \( \) 17.\( \text{xd6} \)\( + \) (17.\( \text{d4}?! \)

\( \text{c6} \) 16.\( \text{xc4} \)) 17.\( \text{xd6} \)\( + \) 18.\( \text{d4} \)

19.\( \text{b6} \)

\( \text{c7} \) 19.\( \text{b6} \)\( + \) \( \text{c8} \) 20.\( \text{xe6} \)\( + \) \( \text{d7} \)

(20...\( \text{d8} \) 21.\( \text{d1} \)\( + \) \( \text{e8} \) 22.\( \text{d5} \)\( + \) \( \))

21.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{d8} \? \) (This loses. Correct was 21...\( \text{e8} \) with the idea 22.\( \text{a4} \) \( \text{c5} \)!

And if 22.\( \text{xc4} \) \( \text{b8} \) 23.\( \text{f4} \)\( + \) \( \text{a7} \)

24.\( \text{e3} \)\( + \), then 24...\( \text{b8} \) 25.\( \text{f4} \)\( + \) with perpetual check.) 22.\( \text{a4} \) and Black has no defence against \( \text{xd7} \).

12.0-0-0 0-0

In Campora – Landenbergue, Biel 1991, Black tried 12...\( \text{c8} \) 13.\( \text{b1} \)

\( \text{a5} \) 14.h5 \( \text{b4}?! \) 15.axb4 \( \text{xb4} \), but after 16.\( \text{xc6} \) \( \text{xc6} \) 17.\( \text{d4} \)\( ! \) \( \text{xd4} \) 18.\( \text{xd4} \)

\( \text{xc5} \) White could play 19.\( \text{xa6} \) \( \text{xa8} \)

20.\( \text{b5} \) \( \text{xb5} \) 21.\( \text{xb5} \) when Black loses a pawn without compensation.

13.\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{b8} \) 14.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{e8} \) 15.\( \text{g6} \)\( ! \) \( \text{hxg6} \)

16.h5 \( \text{xd4} \), Vogt – Summermatter,
Lenk 1990, and here

17.\( \text{dx} \text{d}4 \) gives White good attacking prospects.

Now let us turn to our main game after 1.e4 c5 2.\( \text{f}3 \) d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\( \text{dx} \text{d}4 \) \( \text{c} \) \text{f6} 5.\( \text{c}6 \) e6 6.g4 a6 7.g5 \( \text{c} \text{d}7 \) 8.h4 b5 9.a3 \( \text{b} \) \text{b7} 10.\( \text{e} \) e3 with

D) 10...\( \text{c} \) c6.

Game 46
Renet – Summermatter
Swiss Championship 1992

D) 10...\( \text{c} \) c6 11.h5
11.\( \text{w} \) e2 \( \text{c} \) de5 (11...\( \text{c} \) c8 12.0-0-0 \( \text{c} \) c5 13.f4 \( \text{c} \) c4 is also good for Black, Heinemann – Hetey, Germany 1998.) 12.0-0-0 \( \text{c} \) c4 13.\( \text{x} \) x6 \( \text{x} \) x6 14.f4 \( \text{w} \) a5 15.\( \text{d} \) d5 (Alexander – Lundholm, corr. 1970-71) was recommended by Nunn in his book with Gallagher Beating the Sicilian 3, but after 15...\( \text{b} \) b7! White has serious problems!

11...\( \text{d} \) x \( \text{d} \) 4

The alternatives are:

a) 11...\( \text{c} \) c7 12.\( \text{g} \) g1 g6 13.\( \text{h} \) h1!? \( \text{d} \) f8 (13...\( \text{x} \) x5 14.hxg6 \( \text{x} \) x3 15.gxf7+ \( \text{c} \) xf7 16.\( \text{h} \) f5+ \( \text{e} \) e7 17.\( \text{x} \) x3 is slightly better for White.) 14.f4 \( \text{d} \) x4 15.\( \text{w} \) x4 e5 16.d2 \( \text{x} \) f4 17.\( \text{x} \) f4 \( \text{c} \) c5 (17...\( \text{e} \) e5 18.0-0-0 with the idea 18...\( \text{f} \) f3? 19.\( \text{e} \) e3 \( \text{x} \) x5 20.\( \text{x} \) b5!) 18.0-0-0! \( \text{c} \) x4? 19.\( \text{x} \) x4 \( \text{x} \) x4 20.g2 \( \text{x} \) g2 21.\( \text{w} \) x2 \( \text{c} \) c8 22.\( \text{e} \) e1 with decisive threats in Leenhouts – Muhren, Dieren 2003.

b) 11...\( \text{c} \) c8 12.\( \text{h} \) h3 \( \text{d} \) x4 (12...\( \text{e} \) e5 13.g6!, Ghinda – Tsarouhas, Ano Liosia 1998, with the idea 13...\( \text{x} \) x6 14.\( \text{x} \) x6 \( \text{x} \) x6 15.\( \text{x} \) xh8 \( \text{x} \) xh8 16.\( \text{w} \) h5 \( \text{g} \) g6 17.\( \text{x} \) x6) 13.\( \text{w} \) x4 \( \text{e} \) e5 14.0-0-0 \( \text{c} \) c4 15.g6 \( \text{x} \) x6 16.\( \text{x} \) x6 \( \text{x} \) x6 17.\( \text{x} \) x6 \( \text{x} \) x6 18.\( \text{w} \) e3 with a dangerous initiative, Tolnai – Janetschek, Austria 1993.

12.\( \text{d} \) x4 \( \text{e} \) e5 13.0-0-0 \( \text{c} \) c6 14.\( \text{d} \) d2 \( \text{c} \) c8 15.\( \text{h} \) h3!

This is a typical idea for such positions. White intends to play g5-g6.

15...b4 16.axb4 \( \text{b} \) x4 17.\( \text{b} \) b1 \( \text{a} \) a5 18.f3 \( \text{e} \) e7

18...d5 looks risky for Black after 19.g6. For example 19...e5? 20.exd5 \( \text{x} \) x5 21.\( \text{x} \) b6! \( \text{x} \) x6 22.\( \text{x} \) x5 \( \text{c} \) c6 23.\( \text{c} \) c4! with the threat of \( \text{b} \) b6.

19.g6 0-0?

An illogical decision that allows White to organize an attack against the black king. After 19...\( \text{x} \) x6 20.\( \text{x} \) x6 h6 White
20.\textit{\textbf{g3}}!

An important resource. Now Black has to reckon with the manoeuvre \textit{\textbf{f1-h3}}.

20...\textit{\textbf{xf6}}

The other moves are worse:
20...\textit{\textbf{f5}}? 21.\textit{\textbf{h6}} and 20...\textit{\textbf{w6h5}}?
21.\textit{\textbf{g6h7}}+ \textit{\textbf{w6h7}} 22.\textit{\textbf{g6g2}}.
Also 20...\textit{\textbf{fxg6}}? 21.\textit{\textbf{g6h3}} is no joyride.

21.\textit{\textbf{d4 e5}}

Black cannot exchange the dark-square bishops: 21...\textit{\textbf{xd4}}? 22.\textit{\textbf{wxd4 e5}}
23.\textit{\textbf{w6d6 ffd8}} loses to 24.\textit{\textbf{g6xf7}}+ \textit{\textbf{w6h8}}
25.\textit{\textbf{h6}}! or 24...\textit{\textbf{d5x7}} 25.\textit{\textbf{c6c4}}+!

22.\textit{\textbf{e3}}?

The natural reply, but this retreat was only strong after the inclusion of the moves 22.\textit{\textbf{g6xh7}}+! \textit{\textbf{w6xh7}}.

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

Missing a chance by 22...\textit{\textbf{hxg6}}! 23.\textit{\textbf{hxg6 d5}}! to punish White for his mistake.

23.\textit{\textbf{g6xh7}}+ \textit{\textbf{w6xh7}}

23...\textit{\textbf{w6h8}} would also be met by

24.\textit{\textbf{g6g5}}!.

24.\textit{\textbf{g6g5}}! \textit{\textbf{d4}}?

Resignation. The only possibility to continue the fight was 24...\textit{\textbf{xc6}}
25.\textit{\textbf{xc6 a2}}+ 26.\textit{\textbf{c1 a4}} 27.\textit{\textbf{b3 b6}}
28.\textit{\textbf{xb6}} 29.\textit{\textbf{g5xg5}} dxe4
(29...\textit{\textbf{c8}}+ 30.\textit{\textbf{b1 dxe4}} 31.\textit{\textbf{h3 c6}} 32.\textit{\textbf{f5}}+ \textit{\textbf{h6}} 33.\textit{\textbf{g4}})
30.\textit{\textbf{fxe4 c8}}+ 31.\textit{\textbf{c4 dxe4}} when it is not so easy for
White to realize his material advantage.

25.\textit{\textbf{c6 d6}}

1-0

The variation with 6...\textit{\textbf{c6}}

6...\textit{\textbf{c6}}

7.\textit{\textbf{g5 d7}} 8.\textit{\textbf{e3}}

A flexible move that prepares long castling and, in comparison with 8.\textit{\textbf{h4}},
reserves the attacking manoeuvre \textit{\textbf{g1-g3-h3}}.

The main alternative is 8.\textit{\textbf{d6b5 b6}}
9.\textit{\textbf{f4 e5}} (after 9...\textit{\textbf{e5}} 10.\textit{\textbf{e3 e6}}

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has only a small advantage.
11. \( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 12. \( \text{exd5} \) \( \text{e7} \) 13. \( \text{c4} \) White has a small plus.) 10. \( \text{h5} \) \( \text{g6} \) (worse is 10...\( \text{d7} \) because of 11.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{dxe5} \) (11...\( \text{g6} \)? 12.\( \text{xd6} \)) 12.\( \text{g6} \) a6 13.\( \text{gxf7+} \) \( \text{e7} \) 14.\( \text{a3} \) \( \text{c7} \) 15.\( \text{g1} \)?) 11.\( \text{g3} \) (to unclear play leads 11.\( \text{e3} \) a6 12.\( \text{d4} \) d5) 11...a6 12.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{e7} \) 13.0-0-0! \( \text{xe5} \) 14.\( \text{b1} \) 0-0 15.\( \text{xd6} \) \( \text{xd6} \) 16.\( \text{xe5} \) h6 17.\( \text{e3} \) with a slightly better position for White according to Kasparov.

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

A central strike is the recommended reaction to a wing attack, but here the plan with d6-d5 does not promise Black adequate counterplay:

a) 8...\( \text{b6} \) 9.\( \text{h4} \) d5 10.\( \text{b5} \) \( \text{d7} \) 11.\( \text{exd5} \) exd5 (11...\( \text{xd5} \) 12.\( \text{xd5} \) exd5 13.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{e7} \) 14.0-0-0) 12.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{e7} \) 13.0-0-0 0-0 14.\( \text{b3} \)! \( \text{e6} \) 15.f4 \( \text{e8} \) (15...\( \text{b4} \) 16.\( \text{d3} \) is similar.) 16.\( \text{h5} \) \( \text{b4} \) 17.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{c4} \) 18.\( \text{c5} \)! \( \text{xc5} \)?? (better was 18...\( \text{b8} \) 19.\( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{d6} \)?) 20.\( \text{xe4} \) 1-0, Glek – Dydyshko, Azov 1991.

b) Sometimes Black tries to create counterplay on the queenside by 8...a6 9.\( \text{h4} \) \( \text{c7} \), when White can choose between two queen moves:

b1) 10.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{b5} \) 11.\( \text{xc6} \)?? \( \text{xc6} \) 12.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{b7} \) (12...\( \text{b4} \) 13.\( \text{d5} \) a5 14.\( \text{b5} \)! \( \text{xb5} \) 15.\( \text{c7} \)! \( \text{d8} \) 16.\( \text{xb5} \) \( \text{b7} \) 17.\( \text{g2} \) is favourable for White according to Nunn) 13.0-0-0 0-0 14.a3 \( \text{b6} \) 15.\( \text{h3} \) \( \text{b8} \) 16.f4 with better prospects, Korsunsky –Engorn, Baku 1979.

b2) 10.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{b5} \) 11.0-0-0 \( \text{b7} \) 12.\( \text{xc6} \) \( \text{xc6} \) 13.a3 \( \text{e5} \) 14.f4! \( \text{c4} \) 15.\( \text{xc4} \) \( \text{xc4} \) 16.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{g8} \) 17.\( \text{h3} \) \( \text{e7} \) 18.\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{c8} \) 19.f5 with the initiative, Ermenkov – Kr. Georgiev, Bulgaria 1987.

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**Game 47**

**Timmermans – de Jonghe**

Belgium 1989

9.\( \text{g1} \)

Another interesting attacking possibility is 9.\( \text{h4} \) 0-0 10.\( \text{h5} \). The game Movsesian - Cvitan, Germany, 1997 is a good illustration of this idea: 10...a6 11.0-0-0 \( \text{d4} \) 12.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{b5} \) 13.\( \text{d3} \)?! \( \text{e5} \) (13...\( \text{b4} \) loses in view of the typical sacrifice 14.\( \text{xe5} \) \text{f6} 15.\( \text{h6+} \) \( \text{h8} \) 16.e5 etc. The same goes for 13...\( \text{e8} \) 14.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{g7} \) 15.\( \text{h6+} \) \( \text{h8} \) 16.e5 \( \text{f6} \) 17.\( \text{e4} \) \( \text{g6} \) 18.\( \text{f6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 19.\( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{g8} \) 20.\( \text{h5} \) \( \text{f8} \) 21.\( \text{xf7+} \) 1-0, Madl - Summermatter, Geneva 1988.) 14.f4 \( \text{d3} \) 15.\( \text{xd3} \) \( \text{b7} \) (15...\( \text{e8} \) gave White a crushing attack in Naiditsch - Bischoff, 2000 after...
16.f5 \( \text{xf5} \)?! (16..exf5 17.\( \text{xf1} \)) 17.f6 g6
18.\( \text{xf3} \) e5 19.h5! Black should have played 15..b4 16.\( \text{xe2} \) \( \text{wa5} \) 17.\( \text{xb1} \) e5
18.\( \text{xe3} \) \( \text{e6} \) 19.b3 d5, when White can still claim an edge by 20.\( \text{xf3} \) f5 21.gxf6 \( \text{xf6} \) 22.f5 \( \text{exe4} \) 23.\( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{xg7} \) 24.\( \text{g5} \),
16.\( \text{g1} \)! (the opposition with the black king is a decisive factor in this position)
16...b4 17.\( \text{d5} \)! exd5

18.\( \text{dg3} \)!! (with the terrible threat \( \text{h6} \))
18...\( \text{c7} \) (18...\( \text{e8} \) 19.g6 fxg6 20.\( \text{xe6} \) hxe6 21.\( \text{xe6} \) \( \text{e6} \) 22.\( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{e7} \) 23.\( \text{xg7} \)++)
19.\( \text{h6} \)! \( \text{xc2} \)++ 20.\( \text{xc2} \) \( \text{e8} \) 21.\( \text{d2} \) g6 22.g6 f5 23.\( \text{xf5} \) \( \text{e8} \) 24.exd5 \( \text{h6} \) 25.\( \text{f5} \) \( \text{c4} \)
(or 25...\( \text{f8} \) 26.\( \text{g7} \) \( \text{h6} \) 27.\( \text{f6} \) \( \text{e8} \) 28.\( \text{f5} \) winning) 26.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{ac8} \) 27.\( \text{g7} \) 1-0.

9...0-0
If Black plays 9...a6 White may reply 10.\( \text{h5} \) when Black has nothing better than 10...0-0 transposing back into the
main line.

10.\( \text{h5} \)

This looks natural and strong. The space advantage allows White to prepare his forces for an attack on the kingside.

10...\( \text{e8} \)
Black vacates the f8-square for the knight and prepares for the manoeuvre \( \text{g3} \)-h3. The alternatives are:

a) 10..a6 11.0-0-0 \( \text{e8} \) 12.\( \text{g3} \) (In Akopian - Brenninkmeijer, Groningen 1991, White included first the moves
12.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{f8} \) and only now played 13.\( \text{g3} \) g6 14.\( \text{h4} \) h5?! 15.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{g7} \) 16.\( \text{xc6} \)
bxc6 17.\( \text{xd6} \) \( \text{xc3} \) 18.bxc3 \( \text{a5} \) 19.\( \text{d2} \) with a clear edge.) 12...\( \text{xd4} \)
13.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{b5} \) 14.\( \text{b1} \) (preventing \( \text{g5} \) landing with check after \( \text{f3} \) or \( \text{h3} \)).
Now we have three options:

a1) 14...b4? is bad on account of
15.\( \text{f3} \) f6 (15...\( \text{f8} \)? 16.\( \text{h3} \) h6 17.gxh6)
16.\( \text{h3} \) \( \text{f8} \) 17.gxf6 \( \text{xf6} \) 18.\( \text{xf6} \) gxf6
19.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{h8} \) (Or 19...\( \text{g6} \) 20.\( \text{xd6} \))
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hxg6 21.\textit{W}xg6† ♙f8 22.\textit{W}h6† ♙f7 23.♗e2! with decisive threats.) 20.\textit{W}f7 ♘g6 21.♕h3 ♘f8 22.♗b5!.

a2) 14.♗f8? 15.♕d3! b4 16.♕xg7! ♘xg7 17.♕f3 bxc3 (17...♖g6 18.♕xf7† ♘xf7 19.♖xh7† ♘f8 20.♕f3†) 18.♕xf7† ♘g8 19.g6 winning, Zaichik – Siekanski, Polanica Zdroj 1989.

a3) Probably Black should settle for the worse position after 14...e5 15.♗e3 g6 16.♕h6 ♘f8 17.♕h4, as he did in the game Santo Roman – Bischoff, Uzes 1990.

b) 10...g6 11.♕h6 (unclear is 11.♕h4 ♘de5 12.♗e2 ♘xd4 13.♗xd4 f6, Wohl – Cvitan, Groningen 1997.) 11...♗e5 (the continuation 11...♖e8?! 12.0-0-0 ♘f8 13.♕h4 a6 14.♕g3 ♗g7 15.f4 ♘f8? 16.e5! looks very dangerous for Black, Ivanovic – Mascarinas, Manila (izt) 1990) 12.0-0-0 ♗f6 13.gxf6 ♘xf6 14.♗xc6 ♖xc6 15.♗e2 with slightly better prospects for White in Kengis – Murugan, Gausdal 1991.

c) 10...♘xd4 11.♗xd4 ♘e5 12.♕g3?! (an idea which deserves attention is 12.0-0-0?! g6 13.♕h6 f6 14.gxf6 ♘xf6 15.♗e2 ♗g7 16.♕d2) 12...g6 13.♕e2 ♘xg5 14.♗e3 ♗f6 15.0-0-0 with compensation for the pawn, Jansa – Nielsen, Gausdal 1990.

11.0-0-0 ♘f8 12.f4

Also possible is 12.♕g3 planning to meet 12...a6 by 13.♗xc6 bxc6 14.e5 ♘c7 15.♕e4! dxe5 16.♕f6† gxf6 17.gxf6† ♘g6 18.fxe7 ♘xe7 19.♕g5 with a dangerous initiative, Atri Sangari – Kelly, Moscow (ol) 1994.

12...a6

It is easy to criticise this move, but Black has serious problems since 12...♘xd4 13.♗xd4 ♗d7 14.♗d3 e5?! fails to 15.fxe5 dxe5 16.♗xe5 ♘c5 17.♗c4!. Better is 14...♖c8 with the idea of a future sacrifice on c3, when White's chances would only be slightly preferable. After 14...♖c8, the move 15.f5 with interesting prospects for White suggests itself.

13.♗g3 ♘xd4 14.♗xd4

Thanks to Black's last move the white bishop is able to take up a menacing position.

14...b5 15.♗d3 b4?

Provoking the following combination. The only chance for Black to prolong his resistance was a pawn sacrifice by 15...e5 16.fxe5 dxe5 17.♗xe5 ♘a5.

16.♗xg7! ♘xg7

After 16...bxc3 White wins with
17...h6 b6 18...xc3 e5 19...xe5.

17...h6† g8

Or 17...h8 18.e5 followed by ...xh7.

18.e5 g6

If 18...bxc3 then 19...xh7† xh7 20.g6 is decisive.

19.xg6 fxg6 20.h3 xg5 21.xh7† f8 22.h8†

1-0

The variation with 6...h6

6...h6

Black tries to keep his knight on f6 and gain some time for counterplay.

7.h4

For a long time White mostly played 7.g5 hxg5 8.xg5, but now 7.h4 is considered more promising. White wants to continue with g1 (or g2) and g5, driving the black knight away.

7...c6

The most natural reply, but Black has two other possibilities:

a) 7.a6 8.g2 c6 (8...g6 9.g5 hxg5 10.xg5 e7 11.xd2 e5 12.de2 e6 13.0-0-0 bd7 14.f4 a5 15.b1 is a little better for White.) 9.g5 hxg5 10.hxg5 xh1† 11.xh1 d7 12.f4 b6 (12...g6 13.e3 b6 14.a3 b8, Fernandez Garcia – Suba, Seville 1994, 15.d2 with the idea 0-0-0) 13.de2 g6 14.b3 c7 (after 14...c5 White plays 15.d2 b5 16.b2 b7 17.0-0-0 0-0-0 18.b1 b2 19.e1† followed by d1-e3, Short – Kindermann, Dortmund 1986) 15.b2 b5 16.a3 c5 17.d2 b7 18.0-0-0 b4 19.axb4 bx4 20.b1 a5 21.f5! with the initiative, van der Weide – Agdestein, Cappelle 2001.

b) 7...e7 8.f3

8...c6 (if 8...h5 9.gxh5 xh5, then 10.e3! c6 11.0-0-0 a6 12.e2 d7 13.g2 looks good for White, Brodsky – Krzywicki, Warsaw 1993.) 9.xc6 (dubious is 9.b5?! because of 9...d7
Experts vs. the Sicilian

10.\textit{\textbf{x}c6} bxc6 11.g5 hxg5 12.hxg5 \textit{\textbf{x}h1}+ 13.\textit{\textbf{x}h1} \textit{\textbf{g}4}! 14.\textit{\textbf{h}3} \textit{\textbf{b}6} 15.\textit{\textbf{x}g4} \textit{\textbf{x}d4}, Agopov – Gavrikov, Helsinki 2000.) 9...bxc6 10.g5 \textit{\textbf{d}7} 11.gxh6 gxh6 12.d2!? \textit{\textbf{x}h4} 13.0-0-0 \textit{\textbf{e}7} 14.\textit{\textbf{f}4} \textit{\textbf{f}6} (14...\textit{\textbf{g}5} 15.\textit{\textbf{g}3}) 15.\textit{\textbf{x}h6} \textit{\textbf{b}7} 16.\textit{\textbf{x}h8}\textit{\textbf{f}6} 17.\textit{\textbf{g}3} 0-0-0 18.\textit{\textbf{g}5} \textit{\textbf{f}6} 19.\textit{\textbf{x}f6} \textit{\textbf{x}f6} 20.e5 dxe5 21.\textit{\textbf{x}d8}\textit{\textbf{f}6} 22.\textit{\textbf{x}e5} with a favourable ending for White in Gallagher – Cu. Hansen, Germany 2002.

\textbf{8.\textit{\textbf{g}1}}

Now Black has a choice between two main continuations \textbf{A}) \textit{\textbf{d}5} and \textbf{B}) \textit{\textbf{h}5}. Possibilities like 8...\textit{\textbf{g}6} 9.g5 hxg5 10.\textit{\textbf{x}g5} \textit{\textbf{e}7} 11.\textit{\textbf{d}2} a6 12.0-0-0 or 8...\textit{\textbf{d}7} 9.g5 hxg5 10.\textit{\textbf{x}g5}? (10.hxg5 with the idea \textit{\textbf{e}3}.) 10...\textit{\textbf{b}6} 11.\textit{\textbf{b}3} a6 12.h5 are promising for White.

\textbf{A}) \textit{\textbf{d}5} 9.\textit{\textbf{b}5} \textit{\textbf{d}7} 10.\textit{\textbf{e}d5} \textit{\textbf{d}d5}

In the ending that arises after 10...\textit{\textbf{x}d4} 11.\textit{\textbf{x}d7}\textit{\textbf{f}6} 12.\textit{\textbf{x}d4} \textit{\textbf{x}d5} 13.\textit{\textbf{x}d5} \textit{\textbf{f}d5} 14.\textit{\textbf{e}d5} \textit{\textbf{x}d5} 15.\textit{\textbf{x}e}3 \textit{\textbf{c}7} 16.h5 White has slightly better prospects, Nikolenko – Zakharov, Smolensk 1991.

\textit{\textbf{x}d5} 13.\textit{\textbf{x}d5} \textit{\textbf{f}d5} 14.\textit{\textbf{e}d5} \textit{\textbf{d}d5} 15.\textit{\textbf{e}e}3 \textit{\textbf{c}7} 16.h5

\textbf{11.\textbf{x}d5} \textit{\textbf{e}d5}

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

\textbf{Game 48}

Karpov – Spassky

Tilburg 1980

12.\textit{\textbf{e}3}?!

This pawn sacrifice is more dangerous for Black than 12.\textit{\textbf{e}2}.

12...\textit{\textbf{e}7}

After 12...\textit{\textbf{x}h4} 13.\textit{\textbf{e}2} 14.\textit{\textbf{e}d4}+ 15.\textit{\textbf{e}d7}+ 16.\textit{\textbf{e}e}3 \textit{\textbf{d}8} 17.\textit{\textbf{f}d7} with the idea \textit{\textbf{f}5}.) 14.\textit{\textbf{x}c6} bxc6 15.0-0-0, White has sufficient compensation for the pawn. For example:

15...\textit{\textbf{d}6} 16.\textit{\textbf{f}5} \textit{\textbf{x}f5} 17.gxf5 \textit{\textbf{e}5} 18.f4! \textit{\textbf{f}6} 19.\textit{\textbf{b}4}! (19.\textit{\textbf{c}5} Nunn).
Or 15...\(\text{\textunderscore}c7\) Ferguson-Mirumian, European Youth Championship (U18) Chania 1994. 16.\(\text{\textunderscore}f4?!\) (with the idea 16...0–0 17.\(\text{\textunderscore}f3!\) \(\text{\textunderscore}f6\) 18.g5 hxg5 19.\(\text{\textunderscore}xg5\) \(\text{\textunderscore}xf3\) 20.\(\text{\textunderscore}xe7\) \(\text{\textunderscore}fe8\) 21.\(\text{\textunderscore}g5\) g6 22.\(\text{\textunderscore}h6!\) \(\text{\textunderscore}xe7\) 23.\(\text{\textunderscore}h1\) \(\text{\textunderscore}f6\) 24.\(\text{\textunderscore}h7\) \(\text{\textunderscore}xf8\) 25.\(\text{\textunderscore}h8\) etc.) 16...c5 17.\(\text{\textunderscore}f3\) (17.\(\text{\textunderscore}f5?!\)) \(\text{\textunderscore}f6\) 18.\(\text{\textunderscore}de1\) gives White a solid plus.

13.\(\text{\textunderscore}d2\) \(\text{\textunderscore}xh4\)

This is a risky idea.

The exchanges with 13...\(\text{\textunderscore}xd4\)
14.\(\text{\textunderscore}xd7\) \(\text{\textunderscore}xd7\) 15.\(\text{\textunderscore}xd4\) \(\text{\textunderscore}f6\) 16.\(\text{\textunderscore}b4\) are in White’s favour, e.g. 16...a5 (16...\(\text{\textunderscore}e7\) 17.\(\text{\textunderscore}b3\) with the idea 0–0–0) 17.\(\text{\textunderscore}a3\) \(\text{\textunderscore}c7\) 18.\(\text{\textunderscore}d3\) \(\text{\textunderscore}a4\) 19.0–0–0? (19.a3) 19...\(\text{\textunderscore}xa2\) 20.\(\text{\textunderscore}b5\) \(\text{\textunderscore}xf8\) 21.\(\text{\textunderscore}xb7\) \(\text{\textunderscore}d8\) (Rowson - Stocek, Budapest 1996) 22.\(\text{\textunderscore}c7!\) \(\text{\textunderscore}e8\) 23.\(\text{\textunderscore}c5\) \(\text{\textunderscore}xc5\) 24.\(\text{\textunderscore}xc5\) \(\text{\textunderscore}g8\) 25.\(\text{\textunderscore}a3\)±.

The best move for Black is probably 13...0–0 when White has the following options:

a) 14.\(\text{\textunderscore}xc6\) bxc6 15.0–0–0 \(\text{\textunderscore}b8\)
16.\(\text{\textunderscore}f5\) (16.g5 might be better according to Shredder 8. Unclear play arises after
16...h5 17.g6 \(\text{\textunderscore}b6\) 18.\(\text{\textunderscore}b3\) \(\text{\textunderscore}a6\) 19.\(\text{\textunderscore}d4\) f6 20.\(\text{\textunderscore}b1\) \(\text{\textunderscore}xf5\)? (16... \(\text{\textunderscore}f6\) is better when Black is not worse after 17.\(\text{\textunderscore}d4\) \(\text{\textunderscore}e8\).) 17.gxf5 \(\text{\textunderscore}f6\) 18.\(\text{\textunderscore}d4\) \(\text{\textunderscore}h7\) 19.\(\text{\textunderscore}c3\) \(\text{\textunderscore}xd4\) 20.\(\text{\textunderscore}xd4\), Nunn - J. Anderson, Kilkenny 1997, 20...\(\text{\textunderscore}g8\)? with equal play. The idea is to counter 21.\(\text{\textunderscore}xa7\) with
21...\(\text{\textunderscore}f6\) (21...\(\text{\textunderscore}a8\) 22.\(\text{\textunderscore}xf7\) \(\text{\textunderscore}xa2\) is also very interesting).

b) 14.\(\text{\textunderscore}f5\)? gives highly enterprising play: 14...d4?! 15.\(\text{\textunderscore}xh6\) \(\text{\textunderscore}b4\)! (15...gxf6? loses to 16.\(\text{\textunderscore}xh6\) \(\text{\textunderscore}a6\) 17.g5! \(\text{\textunderscore}e8\) 18.\(\text{\textunderscore}f1\) \(\text{\textunderscore}h8\) 19.\(\text{\textunderscore}g6\).) 16.c3 dxc3 17.bxc3 \(\text{\textunderscore}e5\) 18.\(\text{\textunderscore}e2\) \(\text{\textunderscore}e8\) 19.\(\text{\textunderscore}f1\) \(\text{\textunderscore}f8\) 20.\(\text{\textunderscore}f4\) \(\text{\textunderscore}a5\), Timmerman - Andersson, corr. 1996, gave Black good counter chances.

c) White’s most solid continuation is the relocation of the bishop to f3 with
14.\(\text{\textunderscore}e2\). White doesn’t have to fear 14... \(\text{\textunderscore}xh4\) because he will win back the d5-pawn, and perhaps obtain slightly better chances. e.g. 15.0–0–0 \(\text{\textunderscore}e8\) 16.\(\text{\textunderscore}f5\) \(\text{\textunderscore}g5\) 17.\(\text{\textunderscore}xg5\) \(\text{\textunderscore}xg5\) 18.\(\text{\textunderscore}xg5\) hxg5 19.\(\text{\textunderscore}f3\) and White seems to be slightly better.

14.0–0–0 \(\text{\textunderscore}f6\)

The alternatives are dubious:

14...\(\text{\textunderscore}xd4\)? 15.\(\text{\textunderscore}xd7\) \(\text{\textunderscore}xd7\) 16.\(\text{\textunderscore}xd4\) with the idea 16...0–0? 17.g5! hxg5 18.\(\text{\textunderscore}xg7\) \(\text{\textunderscore}fc8\) (18...\(\text{\textunderscore}xg7\) 19.\(\text{\textunderscore}xg5\)?) 19.\(\text{\textunderscore}f6\) \(\text{\textunderscore}d6\) 20.\(\text{\textunderscore}xg5\) \(\text{\textunderscore}xg5\) 21.\(\text{\textunderscore}xg5\) \(\text{\textunderscore}f8\) 22.\(\text{\textunderscore}e1\)

14...0–0? 15.g5! \(\text{\textunderscore}xd4\) (15...\(\text{\textunderscore}xg5\) 16.\(\text{\textunderscore}xg5\) hxg5 17.\(\text{\textunderscore}xg5\) with the idea
Experts vs. the Sicilian

\[ \text{\&} x d 4 ? 1 8. \text{\&} x g 7 t \text{\&} x g 7 1 9. \text{\&} x d 4 t \\
\text{\&} f 6 2 0. \text{\&} g 1 t \text{\&} f 7 2 1. \text{\&} x d 5 t \text{\&} e 6 \\
2 2. \text{\&} x b 7 t (+ - ) 1 6. \text{\&} x d 4 \text{hxg} 5 (1 6... \text{\&} x b 5 ? \\
1 7. \text{gxh} 6 ! \text{\&} f 6 1 8. \text{\&} x g 7 t \text{\&} h 8 1 9. \text{\&} f 4) \\
1 7. \text{\&} x d 7 \text{\&} x d 7 1 8. \text{\&} x g 5 \text{\&} x g 5 t 1 9. \text{\&} x g 5 \\
\text{\&} f 6 2 0. \text{\&} x d 5 \pm .
\]

\[ \text{\&} f 5 \text{\&} x f 5 1 6. \text{gx} f 5 a 6 1 7. \text{\&} x c 6 t \text{bc} 6 \\
1 8. \text{\&} c 5 \text{\&} b 8 1 9. b 4 \text{\&} b 5 ?
\]

Black decides to eliminate the bishop, but this sacrifice fails because of his inability to bring the h8-rook into play. Deserving of attention is 1 9... \&d 7 !? \\
2 0. c 4 \&c 7 (2 0... \&c 8 ? 2 1. c x d 5 c x d 5 \\
2 2. \&e 2 \&b 7 2 3. \&f 3 \&c 6 2 4. \&g 4 ! with 
the idea \&c 4 .) 2 1. c x d 5 c x d 5 2 2. \&d 3 
with an unclear position.

\[ 2 0. \&g 1 t \&d 7 2 1. c 4 \&x c 5 2 2. b x c 5 \\
\&g 5
\]

After 2 2... \&b 8 White wins by 2 3. c x d 5 \\
\&g 5 2 4. \&e 3 \&x e 3 2 5. f x e 3 \&e 5 2 6. d x c 6 t \\
\&x c 6 2 7. \&d 7 t \&x c 5 2 8. \&a 7 t \&b 5 \\
(2 8... \&c 6 2 9. \&x a 6 t \&c 7 3 0. \&c 4 t \&b 8 \\
3 1. \&b 3 t with the idea \&d 4 + ) 2 9. \&b 7 t
\]

\[ \&c 5 3 0. \&d 2 ! \&a 1 t 3 1. \&c 2 \&x a 2 t \\
3 2. \&d 1 \&a 4 t 3 3. \&c 2 t \&d 6 3 4. \&c 7 t \\
\&d 5 3 5. \&e 5 t \&e 4 3 6. \&e 2.
\]

Therefore 2 2... \&d 4 was the best defence.

\[ 2 3. f 4 \&f 6
\]

\[ 2 4. c x d 5 !
\]

Of course not 2 4. f x g 5 ? \&a 1 t 2 5. \&c 2 \\
\&x a 2 t 2 6. \&d 3 \&x c 4 t 2 7. \&e 3 h x g 5 .

\[ 2 4... \&a 1 t 2 5. \&c 2 \&x a 2 t 2 6. \&d 3 \\
\&x d 2 t ?
\]

The last mistake. Black could have offered more resistance by 2 6... \&b 3 t \\
2 7. \&c 3 \&b 5 t 2 8. \&c 4 \&h 4 2 9. \&h 1 \\
\&f 2 .

\[ 2 7. \&x d 2 \&x f 4 2 8. \&a 2 c x d 5 2 9. \&x a 6 h 5 \\
3 0. \&d 4 h 4 3 1. \&x d 5 \&b 8 3 2. f 6 g x f 6 \\
3 3. \&x f 6 \&g 3 3 4. \&x f 7 t \&d 8 3 5. \&f 8 t \\
1-0
\]

**B) 8... h 5 9. \&x h 5 \&x h 5 1 0. \&g 5 \&f 6**

The main alternative is 1 0... \&b 6 (The 
passive 1 0... \&c 7 1 1. \&d 2 a 6 \\
1 2. 0-0-0 \&d 7 1 3. \&e 2 \&x d 4 1 4. \&x d 4
The Scheveningen

\[ \text{c6 15.g4?! b5 16.ge1 a7 17.d3 f6 (17...xf2? 18.f1 a7 19.xe6! fxe6 20.e5) 18.xf6 gxf6 19.d5 was very good for White in van Blitterswijk - van Beek, Haarlem 1996.) 11.b3 a6 12.e2 g6 (After 12...f6?! 13.h5 c7 14.h6! Black has immediate difficulties as in the game Fedorowicz - S. Polgar, Wijk aan Zee 1990, which continued 14...h7?! (14...d7) 15.hxg7 xg7 16.e3 f6 17.d2 d7 18.0-0-0 c7 19.h1 0-0-0 20.a4! with a large advantage for White.) 13.d2 and now:} \\

a) 13...c7 14.0-0-0 b5 15.a3 d7?! (15...b8) 16.xb5! axb5 17.xb5 b8 18.xd6+ xg6 19.xd6 xg6 20.xd6 c8 21.gd1 b8 22.e5 and the white pawns are stronger than the black knight, Govedarica - Mokry, Trnava 1987.

b) 13...d7 14.g2!? (White is not forced to sacrifice his pawn on f2) 14...c7 15.0-0-0 b5 16.a3 e5 (16...c8 17.f4?) 17.d4 h7 18.f4 c4 19.xh5 xh5 20.e1! c6 21.d5 xd5 22.exd5 e5 23.d3 e7 24.d4! xg5 25.hxg5 0-0-0 26.c6 dh8, Motwani - Roca, Dubai (ol) 1986, and here 27.ge2?! h3 28.d1 gives White a clear plus, as 27...exf4? does not work because of 28.e8+ xg7 29.xg7 b7 30.e4 xg5 31.d4+-.

**Game 49**
Morovic Fernandez - Veingold
Spain 1993

11.g3!?
This move is less investigated. Usually White has chosen 11.d2 or 11.e2 with the following possible continuations:

a) 11.d2 b6 (after 11...a6 12.0-0-0 d7 13.f4 c7 14.f5! xxd4 15.xd4 c7 16.fxe6 xfe6 17.h3 0-0-0 18.b4 (with the idea b3) White's position is preferable, Santo Roman - Lepelletier, Cannes 1994.)

12.b3 a6 13.0-0-0 d7 (Another
idea is 13...\(\text{c7}\) 14.\(\text{b1}\) b5 when White can proceed 15.f3?! \(\text{b7}\) 16.\(\text{f2}\) 0–0–0 17.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{d7}\) 18.\(\text{c1}\) \(\text{b8}\) 19.a4?! b4 20.\(\text{a2}\) with the idea c2–c3 which will yield slightly better play, as in Frolov - Raisa, Helsinki 1992. One point of White’s play is that Black can’t develop his dark squared bishop: 13... \(\text{e7}\)? 14.\(\text{e3}\) and \(g7\) hangs.) 14.\(\text{g3}\) (interesting is 14.\(\text{b1}\) intending to meet 14...0–0–0?! (14...\(\text{c7}\)) with 15.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{c7}\) 16.f3! \(\text{e8}\) (16...\(\text{xh4}\)? 17.\(\text{f2}\)) 17.\(\text{f2}\) \(\text{d7}\) 18.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{f6}\) 19.\(\text{f4}\)! \(\text{e7}\) 20.f5+ (Luther - Ungureanu, Oberwart 2003.) 14...\(\text{c7}\).

Now:

a1) in the game Karpov - Kasparov, Moscow (31) 1984, there occurred 15.\(\text{g2}\) \(\text{e7}\) 16.f4 0–0–0 17.\(\text{f2}\) \(\text{b8}\) 18.f5 \(\text{e5}\) 19.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{c4}\) 20.\(\text{d2}\) \(\text{xd2}\) 21.\(\text{xd2}\) \(\text{c8}\) and Black had overcome his opening difficulties.

a2) 15.\(\text{e2}\) b5 (in case of 15...0–0–0 16.\(\text{gd3}\) \(\text{b8}\) 17.f3 \(\text{e7}\) 18.\(\text{f2}\) \(\text{d5}\) (18...\(\text{xh5}\) 19.\(\text{h1}\) \(\text{xg3}\) 20.\(\text{hxh8}\) \(\text{xe2}\)+ 21.\(\text{xe2}\) \(\text{c6}\)! (21...\(\text{f6}\) 22.\(\text{xf6}\), White wins as in Ziegler - Maus, Lugano 1988.) 22.f4 \(\text{e7}\) 23.\(\text{xe7}\) \(\text{xe7}\) 24.f5 White is slightly...

b) 11.♗e2 a6 12.♕d2 (White has nothing after 12.h5 ♕d7 (12...♕e7?) 13.♕d2 ♕e7 14.0-0-0 ♘h5 15.♘h5 ♘xh5 16.♕xe7 ♘xe7 17.♕xg7 0-0-0) 12...♕b6 (Black can try 12...♗d7 13.0-0-0 b5 14.♗xc6 ♘xc6 15.♕e3 ♗a5 16.♗b1 ♕e7. However, White is clearly better after 17.e5!.) 13.♗b3 ♘d7 14.h5!? (14.♗g3!, which can transpose to the variation above, seems to be best. Actually, the idea 14.♗g2!, which was used in Motwani - Roca above, is also interesting.) 14...♕xh5! 15.♗h1 g6 16.0-0-0 ♘xf2! 17.e5!? and now, instead of 17...♕f5!? with unclear complications, an interesting idea is 17...♗xe5!? 18.♗e4 ♘f5 19.♕e3 (19.♗xh5 gxh5 20.♕f6+ ♕d8 21.♕d5+ ♘c8 22.♗b6+ ♘b8+ 19...♕c6 20.♕f6+ (after 20.♕bd2?! ♘d7! White does not have enough compensation for the sacrificed material) 20...♕xf6 21.♗xh8 ♗eg4 22.♗xg4 ♘xg4 23.♕d2 ♘d5 with better prospects for Black.

11...a6

In this situation the standard reply 11...♕b6 is dubious in view of 12.♕db5! ♗e5 (if 12...a6?, then 13.♗xd6+ ♘xd6 14.♕x6 ♘xb2 15.♗b1 ♘xc2 16.♗xf6 gxf6 17.♗c4 with the idea ♗b3) 13.f4! (less clear is 13.♗e3 ♘d8 14.♗xa7 ♘xh4) 13...♗g6 14.e5! dxe5 15.fxe5 ♘h5? (15...♗xe5 16.♕e2 ♕fd7 17.0-0-0f) 16.♗d3 ♘e7, Hellers - van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 1990. Now White has 17.♗d6+! ♘f8 18.♗xe7+ ♘xe7 19.♗f5+! ♘e8 20.♗d6 winning.

And after 11...♕e7 12.♕d2 ♘xd4 13.♘xd4 ♘b6?! 14.♗b5+! ♘f8 15.♘xb6 axb6 White can exploit the weak b-pawns by 16.0-0-0 e5 17.♗g3! ♘e6 18.f3, Gavrikov - Adorjan, Biel 1990, planning b3 and ♗a4.

12.♗xc6? ♖xc6 13.♗f3

White prepares queenside castling as quickly as possible, when Black has to reckon with the advance e4-e5.

13...♗b8

This is probably the best. The alternatives are:

a) 13...e5?! 14.♖c4! ♘e6 15.♗xe6 fxe6 16.0-0-0 ♗b8 17.h5! ♗b7? (17...♗b6!? 18.b3 ♘xh5? loses to 19.♗h1 g6 20.♗e3 followed by ♗xg6. Black should have tried 17...♗e7 after
which White can continue 18.h6!? gxh6 19.h4 $f8 20.$g7 $b6 21.b3 with the idea 21...$b7 (21...$f7 22.$xf7 $xf7 23.$xd6!) 22.$h3.) 18.h6 $f7 19.hxg7 $xg7 20.$d3 $f5 21.$xa6 $c7 22.$b5! $xb5 (Or 22...

b) 13...$d7?! 14.0-0-0 $e7 15.e5! dxe5 16.$e4 with compensation for the pawn, e.g. 18...$b8 17.$xf6 gxf6 (17...$xf6? 18.$xg7!) 18.$g2! $f8 19.$c4 (with the idea 19...$b4 20.$xe5 $xe6 $xe6 21.$g8 $c8 22.$xf8+ $xf8 23.$g1 $e8 24.$g8+ $g8 25.$g7 with a decisive advantage for White) 19...$b6 20.$b3 $a7 21.$bd3 $b7 22.$g7 and White's initiative proved decisive in Kir. Georgiev - Sax, Reggio Emilia 1988/89.

c) 13...$e7 14.0-0-0 $d5 (after 14...$c7 - 15.e5! dxe5 16.h5!? (with the idea h6) 16...$h5 17.$xe7 $xe7 18.$h3 $g6 19.$e4 $f5 20.$a3+ $f7 21.$d6+ $f6 22.$e2 gives White a strong attack, Sibarevic - Masic, Pula 1990) 15.$c4!? $b7 16.$b3 $f8 17.$h5!? $d7 (17...$xh5?! would be met by 18.$xe7+ $xe7 (18...$xe7? 19.$h1 $g6 20.$xg6) 19.exd5 $xd5 20.$xd5! exd5 21.$xd5+ $xd5 22.$xd5 $xg3 23.$xd8 $axd8 24.$xg3 with good winning chances for White) 18.$f4±, Pavlovic - Razuvaev, Cetinje 1991.

14.0-0-0 $b6 15.$b3 $h5

Less accurate is 15...$e7 because of 16...d5!

16.$g1

White did not achieve anything in the game van der Wiel - Winants, Budel (zt) 1987, after 16...g6 17.$c4! $a5 18.e5!? d5, but instead of 17.$c4?! both 17.$h3 and 17.$b1 deserved attention. The advance d6-d5 looks rather risky because White's forces are better prepared for concrete play and the position of the black king in the centre becomes more vulnerable.
17. \( \text{b1} \) \( \text{b4} \)!

Also if 17...\( \text{d6} \)?! then 18.\( \text{h3} \) causes serious problems, e.g. 18...\( \text{c7} \) (18...\( \text{e5} \) 19.exd5 \( \text{cxd5} \) 20.\( \text{ge1} \) with the idea 20...f6 21.\( \text{g4} \) g6 22.\( \text{xh5} \) \( \text{xh5} \) 23.\( \text{xd5} \) exd5 24.\( \text{xf6} \) 19.exd5 \( \text{cxd5} \) 20.\( \text{ge1} \) \( \text{e5} \) (20...\( \text{b7} \) 21.\( \text{xe6} \) fxe6 22.\( \text{xe6} \)\text{d7} 23.\( \text{f5} \)) 21.\( \text{xd5} \) exd5 22.\( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{h3} \) (22...f6 23.\( \text{xe5} \)\text{+}) 23.\( \text{xe5} \)\text{f8} 24.\( \text{e7} \)\text{+}.

Black should have sought to prevent the eventual sacrifice on d5 by 17...\( \text{b7} \), although White's position is more promising after, for example 18.\( \text{h3} \).

18.\( \text{h3} \)! \( \text{a5} \)?

Missing a second chance to play \( \text{b7} \).

19.\( \text{e2} \)?

A natural reply, although 19.exd5!? was strong too as White wins a pawn after 19...\( \text{cxd5} \) (19...\( \text{xe3} \)? 20.dxe6+) 20.\( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{b7} \) (20...\( \text{exd5} \)? 21.\( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{c7} \) 22.\( \text{xe8} \) \( \text{x8} \) 23.\( \text{e4} \)\text{+}) 21.\( \text{f4} \)! \( \text{xd5} \) (21...\( \text{c8} \) 22.\( \text{f6} \)\text{xf6} 23.\( \text{xb7} \) \( \text{c5} \) 24.\( \text{c4} \)) 22.\( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 23.\( \text{xd5} \) exd5 24.\( \text{xb8} \)\text{±}.

19...\( \text{d7} \)?

Black is already in trouble and it is hard to suggest anything else.

20.\( \text{c4} \)

Another, and perhaps better possibility, was 20.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{xf4} \) 21.\( \text{xf4} \) \( \text{b5} \) 22.\( \text{b7} \).

20...\( \text{xe4} \) 21.\( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{c7} \)?!

More stubborn is 21...\( \text{f6} \) 22.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{b7} \).

22.\( \text{f4} \)! \( \text{f6} \) 23.\( \text{e2} \)

23.\( \text{xf6} \) gxf6 24.\( \text{g7} \)! (Threatening \( \text{xe6} \)) would have won easily with the idea 24...\( \text{xh4} \) (24...\( \text{e5} \) 25.\( \text{d3} \)) 25.\( \text{g8} \)\text{f8} 26.\( \text{g6} \).!

23...\( \text{d6} \)?

The final mistake. 23...\( \text{d8} \) was the only way to continue the fight.

24.\( \text{xe6} \)! \( \text{xe6} \) 25.\( \text{xe6} \) fxe6 26.\( \text{xe6} \)\text{e7} 27.\( \text{xf6} \) gxf6 28.\( \text{g8} \)\text{g8} 29.\( \text{g8} \)\text{g8} 1-0
The Kalashnikov

- By Jan Pinski

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4 e5 5.b5 d6

The Sicilian Kalashnikov has become a real opening over the last 15 years or so. It was developed by Evgeny Sveshnikov more than anyone to start with, but he already had his own main line in the Sicilian!

Here I suggest 6.b5 is the right decision. 6.c4 is the main theoretical move, but it promises positional play with an easy way for Black to gain equality. Instead this more tactical and confrontational approach promises White an advantage, and makes me wonder how I ever got away with playing the Kalashnikov for so long without being punished!

But as this is a minor line, I will not waste your time with unnecessary talk. All you need to know is in the games below. Basically you play 8.d5, 9.exd5 and 10.c4!, or the same moves in another order!

Game 50
Motylev - Shariyazdanov
Tomsk 2004

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4 e5 5.b5 d6 6.b1c3 a6 7.a3 b5

The alternatives are:
7...e6 8.c4 b5 9.e3 d6 10.g3! The best way for White to play for an advantage. 10..c8 11.g2 and White is slightly better.

7...e7 8.c4 b5 9.e3 d6 10.g3! h5!? GM Teimour Radjabov's idea. (10...0-0 11.g2 d6 12.0-0 White is slightly better.) 11.g2 h4 12.e3 A new move. 12...d5 13.e3 h3 14.f3 d4 15.e3 xh3 16.xf3 b8 17.0-0 b3 18.ad1 White is a little better.

8.d5 dge7

The most popular move here. There was a time when I believed in this position for Black, but I have changed my mind. White is better but the position is extremely complicated.

8..e7 9.c4 b4 10.c2 (10.xb4? xxb4 11.a4+ xg7 12.xb4 d5 13.c3 b8 and Black is better.) 10..b8 11.b3 f6 12.d3 0-0 13.0-0 d7 14.b2
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The Kalashnikov

\( \mathcal{D}c5 \) 15. \( \mathcal{D}ce3 \) \( \mathcal{A}g5 \) 16. \( \mathcal{A}c2 \) a5 17. \( \mathcal{A}h1 \) White is better.

8...\( \mathcal{A}b8 \) 9.c4 \( \mathcal{D}ge7? \) (9...b4 – see 8...\( \mathcal{A}e7 \)). For nearly ten years this position has been assessed as unclear in ECO. The game Kaminski – Pinski, Katowice 1995, and the winner’s comments (GM Kaminski) were the basis for this. The truth is different: 10.cxb5 \( \mathcal{D}xd5 \) 11.exd5! \( \mathcal{D}d4 \) 12.bxa6 \( \mathcal{W}a5+ \) 13.\( \mathcal{D}d2 \) \( \mathcal{W}xd5 \) 14.a7 \( \mathcal{A}a8 \) 15.\( \mathcal{A}e3 \) \( \mathcal{A}xa7 \) 16.\( \mathcal{A}b5 \) with a clear advantage for White.

9.c4

It is easy to remember. No matter what Black play (8...\( \mathcal{A}c7 \), 8...\( \mathcal{D}ge7 \), 8...\( \mathcal{D}ce7 \), 8...\( \mathcal{A}b8 \)), White should always answer c2-c4.

9...\( \mathcal{A}xd5 \)

The more popular move order is: 9...\( \mathcal{D}d4 \) 10.cxb5 \( \mathcal{A}xd5 \) 11.exd5.

10.exd5

10.\( \mathcal{W}xd5?! \) \( \mathcal{A}d7 \) 11.\( \mathcal{A}e3! \) White is at least slightly better. 11.cxb5?! \( \mathcal{D}d4! \)

12.\( \mathcal{A}e3! \) \( \mathcal{A}e6 \) 13.\( \mathcal{W}b7 \) \( \mathcal{A}b8 \) 14.\( \mathcal{W}xa6 \) \( \mathcal{A}a8 \) 15.\( \mathcal{W}b7 \) \( \mathcal{A}b8 \) is equal.

10...\( \mathcal{D}d4 \) 11.cxb5! \( \mathcal{A}d7 \)

The only move, after which we reach the critical position for the 8...\( \mathcal{D}ge7 \) line. 11...\( \mathcal{W}h4? \) There was a time when people believed in this move. 12.bxa6!! I was unlucky enough to face this innovation. (Previously the weak 12.\( \mathcal{A}e3? \) had been played.) 12...\( \mathcal{A}e7 \) 13.\( \mathcal{A}e3 \) 0–0 14.\( \mathcal{A}xd4 \) exd4 15.\( \mathcal{A}d3 \) \( \mathcal{W}xa6 \) 16.0–0 and White has a winning position, Iordachescu-Pinski, Cappelle la Grande 1998. 11...\( \mathcal{A}e7?! \) 12.\( \mathcal{A}c4! \) 0–0 (12...\( \mathcal{W}a5+ \) 13.\( \mathcal{A}d2 \) \( \mathcal{W}b6 \) 14.bxa6! \( \mathcal{W}xb2 \) 15.\( \mathcal{B}b1 \) \( \mathcal{W}xa3 \) 16.\( \mathcal{A}b4 \) \( \mathcal{A}g4 \) 17.\( \mathcal{A}xa3 \) \( \mathcal{A}xd1 \) 18.\( \mathcal{A}xd1 \) and White wins.) 13.0–0 \( f5 \) 14.bxa6 \( f4 \) 15.\( \mathcal{A}c2 \) \( \mathcal{A}xc2 \) 16.\( \mathcal{W}xc2 \) \( f3 \) 17.\( \mathcal{A}d3! \) White has a clear advantage.

12.\( \mathcal{A}e3 \)

Just weak is 12.bxa6? \( \mathcal{W}a5+ \) 13.\( \mathcal{A}d2 \) \( \mathcal{W}xd5 \).

12...\( \mathcal{A}xb5 \)

Black can’t be happy after 12...\( \mathcal{A}xb5 \) 13.\( \mathcal{A}c4! \) Remember this useful idea: when the black knight takes on b5, the white knight comes to c4. 13...f5 14.a4 \( \mathcal{A}a7 \) 15.\( \mathcal{A}c1 \) f4 16.\( \mathcal{A}d2 \) \( \mathcal{A}c8 \) 17.\( \mathcal{W}b3 \) and White is better, Smirin-Shirov, Klaipeda 1988. 12.\( \mathcal{A}c7 \) 13.\( \mathcal{A}d3 \) axb5 (13...\( \mathcal{A}xb5 \) 14.\( \mathcal{A}c4! \) etc.) 14.0–0 \( \mathcal{B}b8 \) 15.\( \mathcal{A}xd4 \) exd4 16.\( \mathcal{A}c2 \) 0–0 17.\( \mathcal{A}xd4 \) \( \mathcal{W}b6 \) Here I have a new idea: 18.\( \mathcal{A}f5! \) (Instead of 18.\( \mathcal{A}c1 \) 18...\( \mathcal{A}f6 \) 19.\( \mathcal{A}xd7 \) \( \mathcal{A}xd4 \) 20.\( \mathcal{W}d2 \) and White is better.

13.\( \mathcal{A}xd4 \) exd4 14.\( \mathcal{A}d3 \) \( \mathcal{W}a5+ \) 15.\( \mathcal{A}f1 \)
The position after 15.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{e7} \)
16.\( \text{f2} \) \( \text{a5} \) \( \text{f4a5} \) 17.\( \text{c2} \) is not so clear. Black has some compensation for his pawn weaknesses here.

15...\( \text{e7} \)
15...\( \text{b4} \) 16.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{c5} \) 17.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{d8} \)
18.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{b5} \) 19.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{a7} \) 20.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{h5} \) 21.\( \text{h4} \) and White is better.

16.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{b8} \) 17.\( \text{c2} \) \( \text{f8} \) 18.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{b6} \)

White has an interesting plan: \( \text{e4-b4-b5} \).

24...\( \text{e5} \)
24...\( \text{b4} \)?? 25.\( \text{b5} \) and White wins.
24...\( \text{g6} \) 25.\( \text{e4} \) \( \text{d5} \) 26.\( \text{b4} \) \( \text{d6} \) 27.\( \text{d2} \)
28.\( \text{g7} \) 29.\( \text{g1} \) \( \text{hh8} \) 29.\( \text{xb5} \) \( \text{xb4} \) 30.\( \text{xh4} \) \( \text{xb5} \) 31.\( \text{d4} \) with good winning chances.

25.\( \text{e4} \) \( \text{g6} \)

There is no time for 25...\( \text{b4} \) 26.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{f6} \) 27.\( \text{xh5} \) and White gains a decisive advantage.

26.\( \text{b4} \) \( \text{g7} \) 27.\( \text{xb5} \) \( \text{hh8} \) 28.\( \text{b3} \)

In positions like this White can continue to play for a win forever, without having to take any risks.

29...\( \text{c5} \) 30.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{a3} \) 31.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{a8} \)
32.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{a7} \) 33.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{b2} \) 34.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{f6} \)

34...\( \text{xa2} \)?? 35.\( \text{xb2} \) and White wins.
35.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{a5} \) 36.\( \text{g2} \) \( \text{c5} \) 37.\( \text{g1} \) \( \text{b6} \)
38.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{a3} \) 39.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{a7} \) 40.\( \text{a4} \) \( \text{c5} \)
41.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{e5} \) 42.\( \text{d5} \) \( \text{a3} \) 43.\( \text{g2} \) \( \text{a1} \)
44.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{a2} \)?

The position was more or less lost, but after this mistake all is clear.
45.\( \text{xg6} ! \) \( \text{a1} \) 46.\( \text{xa1} \) \( \text{xa1} \) 47.\( \text{d3} \)
48.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{a3} \) 49.\( \text{e4} \) \( \text{c5} \) 50.\( \text{f4} \)
51.\( \text{d5} \) \( \text{e1} \) 52.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{c3} \) 53.\( \text{f5} \)
54.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{c7} \) 55.\( \text{b5} \) \( \text{c5} \) 56.\( \text{b4} \)
57.\( \text{f7} \) 58.\( \text{xb6} \) \( \text{c3} \) 59.\( \text{e2} \)
60.\( \text{g6} \) \( \text{f7} \) 61.\( \text{a6} \) \( \text{b2} \)
62.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{xb4} \) 63.\( \text{g6} \) \( \text{e7} \) 64.\( \text{b6} \)

1–0
Game 51
Delchev - Brumen
Zadar 2003

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.cxd4 e5 5.b5 d6 6.a1c3 a6 7.d3 b5 8.d5 d7 9.c4!
Keeping the symmetrical pawn structure is less dangerous for Black. White has some
problems with the knight on a3 after cxd5.
10...bxc4
There is no compensation after 10...e7
11.cx b5 f6 12.c4 0-0 13.bxa6 x a6 14.0-0 b6 15.d3 fc8 16.b3 h6 17.d1 White is clearly better.
11.xc4 f6
11...f5 12.d2 b8 (12...a5? 13.e4 f7 14.a3 b8 15.xa5 White take a pawn.) 13.a5 e7 14.b6 b7 15.e4 f7 16.g4! fxg4 17.h3 White has a clear advantage.
12.e3!

This is more dangerous than 12.d2.
12...b8 13.e2 e7 14.0-0 0-0 15.a4
The critical position for the 8...d7 variation. 15.b7 seems to be the best way to search for equality.
15...b7
15...d7 16.a5! This is better than the previously popular 16.Qd2. White's chances are on the queenside, therefore it makes no sense to play slowly. 16.f5 17.f4 g5 (17...exf4 18.xf4 d5 19.b6 b7 20.b4 e4 21.c1 and White is better.) 18.xf5 19.b6 b6 20.xc8 xc8 21.c1 d7 22.b6 White is slightly better, Ehrenfeucht - Pinski, Warsaw 1999.
15...d7 16.b6 f5 17.xc8 xc8 18.c1 f5 19.b3 a5 20.h3 e4 21.c4 and White is better.
15...a5?! 16.d2 a8 17.e1 with a clear advantage.
16.b6 d7
16...e8 17.a5 d8 18.c4 xb6 19.axb6! (19.xb6 d7 20.e3 f5 with counterplay.) 19...d7 20.b3 f5 21.f3 f4 22.f2 White is a bit better - he has the two bishops and an attack on the a6 pawn, Bogachkov-Sherbakov, Russia 2001.
17.a5 f5 18.f3 e8
19.d2
More thematic is 19.b4 \( \text{d}8 \) 20.\( \text{d}xd7 \) \( \text{wx}d7 \) 21.\( \text{b}1 \) and White has the more pleasant game.

19...\( \text{d}8 \) 20.\( \text{d}xd7 \) \( \text{wx}d7 \) 21.b4 f4?

If such a move does not win by force then it is a bad move! But seriously: Black breaks his own pawn chain, irreversibly, and without any compensation!

22.\( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{f}7 \) 23.\( \text{fd}1 \) \( \text{g}5 \) 24.\( \text{d}d3 \) \( \text{h}5 \)

25.b5 \( \text{xd}5 \)!

25...axb5 26.a6 \( \text{a}8 \) 27.\( \text{a}7 \) \( \text{bd}8 \)

28.\( \text{xb}5 \) White is simply better.

Brutal and effective. Black does not have any chance.

32...\( \text{h}4 \) 33.\( \text{b}6 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 34.\( \text{xd}8 \) \( \text{xd}8 \)

35.a7 \( \text{e}8 \) 36.\( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{a}8 \) 37.\( \text{xb}4 \) \( \text{d}7 \)

38.\( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{h}7 \) 39.\( \text{b}6 \) \( \text{d}5 \) 40.\( \text{h}3 \) e4

41.\( \text{a}5 \) \( \text{f}7 \) 42.\( \text{b}8 \)

1–0

Game 52
Anand – Shirov
Linares 2002

The annotations to this game are inspired by those of Anand, as published in several places.

1.e4 c5 2.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 3.d4 cxd4 4.\( \text{d}xd4 \) e5 5.\( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{d}6 \) 6.\( \text{c}3 \) a6 7.\( \text{a}3 \) b5

8.\( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 9.c4

This is the most aggressive line. 9.\( \text{g}5 \) transposes to very well known positions from the Sveshnikov Sicilian, and not the lines recommended in this book.

9...b4

9...\( \text{d}4 \) leaves us with some options:
The Kalashnikov

a) 10...dx5 11.exd5 transposes to the lines after 8...ge7 9.c4 d4 10.cxb5! exd5 11.exd5.

b) If you do not like complications, try 10.d3! dx5 11.cxd5 g6!
(This looks better than 11...e7 12.0-0 0-0 13.e3 This is a common position for the 8...f6 and 8...ge7 variations. (If Black takes dx5 of course) White has the advantage. 13...d7 14.ed2 b8 15.e1 d8 16.exd4! exd4 17.c2 ef6 18.f4 etc.)

c) 10.e5! a5† (Of course there is no real compensation after 10...e7? 11.xf6 xf6 12.cxb5) 11.d2 d8 12.cxb5 (12...xf6† xf6 13.c3 b7 leads to an unclear position.) 12...xd5 13.exd5 b6 14.e3! (14.e4 c5 15.bxa6 xa6 16.e3 xf1 Black has good compensation for the pawn.) 14...e7 15.exd4 exd4 16.d3 b7 17.f3! White has a clear advantage. For example: 17...c5 18.0-0 xd5 19.g4 0-0 20.e1! e8 21.b4! Nice trick. 21...xb4 22.f5 g6 23.exd5 and White wins.

9...xe4?! 10.cxb5! a5† 11.e2 exd2 12.exd2 axb5 13.xb5 xd2† 14.xd2 d8 15.e4 White has the advantage.

10.xf6†

Of course not 10.xb4?? because 10...a5 10.e4 (10...b8 This is better than 10...a5, after which the b6 square is weak. 11.d3 e7 12.b3 White stands slightly better – compare the line 8...e7 9.c4.) 11.c5 (11...f5 12.d3 e7 13.e4 fxe4 14.e4 e8 15.c4 White is better.) 12.db4

12.c2 (Interesting is 12.e3 g7 13.0-0 0-0 14.xd4 exd4 15.c2 with the plan b4-c6. However White should play very carefully because Black has good attacking chances here. 15...h4! 16.a4! (16.b4?! f5 17.xf5 xf5 18.e2 g4! 19.e2! (19...c2! f3!! 20.fe1 (20.xf3? e5 21.e1 xh2† 22.f1 h3† 23.e2 xe2† Black is winning.) 20...g5 (20...xg2 21.xg2 g4† 22.f1 h3† 23.g1 g4† Draw.) 21.g3 ac8 with initiative.) 19...e2 20.xe2 with unclear play.) 16...xa4 17.xa4 d7 18.a5 f5 19.exf5 xf5 20.b4 White is at least slightly better. 12...xc2† 13.xc2! (After 13.xc2 d7 the black bishop keeps control of the a4 square.) 13...g7 14.a4 d7 15.e3 0-0 16.0-0 f5 17.f3 and White is slightly better because of his space advantage.)


\[ \text{Experts vs. the Sicilian} \]

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10...\text{\textit{Wxf6}} 11.\text{\textit{Bc2 \textit{Wg6}}}

This position has been played a few times. The conclusion seems to be that White has the better chances. White has two possibilities now: 12.\text{\textit{Wd5}} leads to complicated play; 12.\text{\textit{Be3}} is less ambitious, but White is safer here.

12.\text{\textit{Wd5!}}

The winner of the following game wrote in \textit{New In Chess} that he found no faults in Anand's play, but all the same he decided to play more carefully and secure a simpler advantage with the following approach: 12.\text{\textit{Be3!?? \textit{Be7}} (12...\textbf{b7} 13.\text{\textit{Bd3 \textit{Be7}} 14.0-0 0-0 15.\text{\textit{Bf5 \textit{Bfd8}} 16.\text{\textit{Cc2 \textit{We6}} 17.\text{\textit{Be3 g6 18.\textbf{xe7} \textit{\textbf{xe7}} 19.b3 \textit{f5 20.\textit{g5 f4 21.a3 bxa3 22.\textit{Bxa3 and White is much better, Palac - Srebrnic, Ljubljana 2004.}}}}}}}}} 12...\text{\textit{Wxe4}} 13.\text{\textit{Bd3 \textit{Bd4}} 14.\text{\textit{Bd5 \textit{Bb8}} 15.0-0 \text{\textit{Wg4}} 16.\text{\textit{Wa4 \textit{Bd7}} 17.\text{\textit{Be3 \textit{Be7}} 18.\text{\textit{Bb6 \textit{Bc7}} 19.\textbf{x} \textbf{c8 \textit{Bc8}} 20.\text{\textit{Bxa6}} and White is slightly better, according to grandmaster Viorel Bologan.)}}}} 13.g3! 0-0 (13...h5? 14.\text{\textit{Bg2 h4}} 15.\text{\textit{Bf5 \textit{Be6}} 16.\text{\textit{Be3 \textit{Cc8}} 17.\textbf{xe7 \textit{\textit{xe7}} 18.c5 White is much better according to grandmaster Alexei Fedorov.)}} 14.\text{\textit{Bg2 \textit{Be5}} 15.0-0 \text{\textit{Bxe3}} (15...\text{\textit{Bd4?!}} 16.f4 \text{\textit{Bh6}} 17.f5 \text{\textit{Wg5}} 18.\textbf{d5 \textit{Bd8}} 19.\textbf{xe6 \textit{gxe6}} 20.f6 \text{\textit{Bh8}} 21.\text{\textit{Wh5}} and White has a decisive advantage.) 16.\text{\textit{Bxe3 \textit{Bb8}} 17.\text{\textit{Wa4 \textit{Bb7}} 18.\text{\textit{Bfd1 a5 19.\textit{Bd2! White stands better, Bologan-Tregubov, Belfort 2002.}}}}}} 12...\text{\textit{Bb7}} 13.\text{\textit{Bxb4 \textit{Cc8}}}

13.\text{\textit{Bd8}} 14.\text{\textit{Bd1! \textit{Wxe4}} 15.\text{\textit{Be3 \textit{Be7}} 16.\textbf{d5 \textit{Cc8}} (16...\text{\textit{Bh4}} 17.\text{\textit{Bd3 \textit{Bxd5}} (17...\text{\textit{Wxd5}} 18.\text{\textit{Bxd3}} is also better for White.) 18.cxd5 \text{\textit{Bd4}} 19.\text{\textit{Bd2 \textit{Be4}} 20.\text{\textit{Cc1 \textit{Bg5}} 21.\text{\textit{Bd3 \textit{Bb4} 22.\text{\textit{Cc3 \textit{Bxc3}} 23.\text{\textit{Bxc3 \textit{\textit{xe3}} 24.fxe3 This is one of the typical endings in the Kalashnikov. It is also much better for White. First of all, White has bishop against knight. Secondly, the black pawn on a6 is weak. Last but not least, White has good chances to create a passed pawn on the queenside.) 17.f3 \text{\textit{Wg6}} 18.\textbf{xe7! (Anand believes that after 18.\textbf{d2 White is much better. However it is not so easy to prove.}}}} \text{\textit{Bxd5}} 19.\text{\textit{Bd5}} (Of course bad is 19.cxd5 \textit{Cc2} 20.\textit{Bb4 0-0 and White is even worse.) 19...\textit{Bc6 and White has serious weaknesses on the kingside. The question is: how does White finish his}}

\[ \text{Diagram} \]

\[ \text{Diagram} \]

\[ \text{Diagram} \]
The Kalashnikov

development? For example: 20.\textit{d}2? d5! with an attack.) 18...\textit{x}e7 19.\textit{d}2 and White is much better!

14.\textit{e}3

14.\textit{f}3 \textit{e}7 15.\textit{x}c6 \textit{x}c6 16.\textit{f}2 f5 17.exf5 \textit{x}f5 18.\textit{e}2 0-0 19.0-0 e4 with compensation, according to Anand.

14...\textit{e}7

14...\textit{d}8 15.\textit{h}2 \textit{xe}4 16.\textit{f}3 h5 17.\textit{f}2 \textit{h}5 18.\textit{d}5 \textit{g}6 19.\textit{d}1 \textit{xd}5 20.\textit{c}xd5 \textit{e}7 21.\textit{g}3 White stands better.

15.\textit{h}4!

A strong prophylactic move, which is also a strong attacking move. Prophylactic, because White takes control of the g5 square. Attacking, because White threatens h4-h5.

15...0-0

15...\textit{g}4 Black defends \textit{c}8 and threatens \textit{xb}4. 16.\textit{d}1 0-0 17.\textit{f}3! \textit{x}h4\textdagger 18.\textit{e}2! \textit{g}6 19.\textit{xc}6 \textit{xc}6 20.\textit{xd}6 \textit{f}6 21.\textit{a}3 White’s position is much better: there is no real compensation for the material.

15...h5?! 16.\textit{f}3 0-0 17.0-0-0 \textit{xa}4 18.\textit{xb}7 \textit{xa}2\textdagger 19.\textit{c}2 White stands much better - Anand.

16.\textit{h}5 \textit{g}4 17.\textit{f}3 \textit{g}3\textdagger

17...\textit{d}7 18.\textit{xc}6 \textit{xc}6 19.\textit{d}2 White is better.
Experts vs. the Sicilian

25.b4! White has a clear advantage: Black has a wrecked pawn structure, and not enough active play to compensate for it. It is only an illusion that the rook on h3 is out of the game. After $\text{h}4 (xf4)$ it is playing at 100%!

20.$\text{d}7\dagger \text{h}8 21.$\text{d}3

21.$\text{xb}7? \text{f}2 22.$\text{e}2 (22.$\text{d}5 \text{xb}2 Black has a clear advantage.) 22...$\text{b}8 23.$\text{d}5 \text{xb}2 24.$\text{e}1 \text{g}5 Black is close to winning.

21...$\text{g}5 22.$\text{xc}8

22.$\text{f}5?$. This does not prevent Black's counterplay. 22...$\text{f}2 23.$\text{c}2 $\text{b}6 with a strong initiative for the pawn.

22...$\text{xc}8

23.h6?! 23.$\text{c}2 $\text{f}2\dagger 24.$\text{e}2 d5 25.$\text{af}1!! (25.$\text{exc}5?! \text{xd}5 26.b3 $\text{e}6 27.$\text{af}1 $\text{c}5 28.$\text{d}1 e4 29.$\text{exe}4 $\text{a}3 30.$\text{b}1 $\text{xc}4 31.$\text{c}2 $\text{e}6 32.$\text{b}2 $\text{a}5 33.$\text{h}1 h6 with good practical compensation.) 25...$\text{dxc}4 (25...$\text{c}5 26.$\text{exc}5 $\text{xd}5 27.$\text{b}1 and White wins.) 26.$\text{d}8\dagger $\text{d}8 27.$\text{xf}2 $\text{e}3 (27...$\text{d}2\dagger 28.$\text{c}3 $\text{e}3 29.$\text{g}3 and White wins.) 28.$\text{h}1 $\text{d}4 29.$\text{g}3 $\text{xf}2 30.$\text{xf}2 $\text{c}8 31.$\text{f}1 $\text{e}6 32.$\text{c}3 $\text{f}6 33.$\text{d}1 $\text{xd}1 34.$\text{xd}1 This ending is just lost.

23...$\text{gxh}6 24.$\text{c}2 d5?

24...$\text{f}5 25.$\text{exf}5 $\text{f}2\dagger 26.$\text{e}2 d5 27.$\text{ae}1 $\text{xc}4\dagger 28.$\text{b}1 $\text{b}6 29.$\text{a}3 $\text{c}8 Black has some compensation for the material.

25.$\text{exc}5 $\text{xc}5

25...$\text{f}2\dagger 26.$\text{e}2 $\text{xc}5 27.$\text{af}1 $\text{c}5 28.$\text{b}1 $\text{xc}4 29.$\text{xc}4 $\text{xc}4 30.$\text{xc}4 $\text{xc}4 31.$\text{d}1 and White wins.

26.$\text{xd}5 $\text{d}8

Better was 26...$\text{f}2\dagger 27.$\text{c}3 $\text{e}3\dagger 28.$\text{d}3 $\text{b}6 Now White should play very carefully. 29.$\text{d}1 e4 30.$\text{c}2! $\text{f}6\dagger (30...$\text{e}3\dagger 31.$\text{b}4 $\text{c}5\dagger 32.$\text{a}4 $\text{c}6\dagger 33.$\text{a}3 $\text{e}7\dagger 34.$\text{b}4 $\text{b}8 35.$\text{c}3\dagger $\text{g}8 36.$\text{c}5 and White wins.) 31.$\text{d}2 $\text{exe}3 (31...$\text{g}5\dagger 32.$\text{e}1 $\text{exe}3 33.$\text{c}3\dagger $\text{f}6 34.$\text{xf}3 $\text{b}4\dagger 35.$\text{f}2 $\text{xb}2\dagger 36.$\text{e}2 and White should win.) 32.$\text{c}1 and White wins.

27.$\text{xc}5 $\text{d}2\dagger 28.$\text{b}3 $\text{g}7 29.$\text{a}3 e4 30.$\text{h}3 $\text{f}4 31.$\text{exe}4 1–0
The Four Knights

By Alexander Raetsky

1.e4 c5 2.\f3 \c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\xd4 \f6 5.\c3 e6 6.\db5 \b4

The Four Knights variation of the Sicilian, as seen in the diagram above, is a rather sad variation that I, for reasons that will soon be clear to everyone, have chosen as my main defence. Some years ago I wrote a book called Meeting 1.e4 for Everyman. For this book my editors, Jacob Aagaard and Byron Jacobs, decided that the Four Knights variation was a timely choice: despite seeming quite playable it had found no real attention in recent theoretical works. Since I prefer to play football with my son rather than study chess, this became the line I knew best from Black’s point of view, and therefore I chose to adopt it in my own games.

I have now agreed to write another article about this line, this time with a few recommendations for White, on the condition that my jokes would not be removed from this manuscript. (I lied - Aagaard)

So let us move to the few lines you need to know to be able to get an advantage against me with White - if I still play this rubbish when this book comes out.

Game 53
Timoshchenko – Chernov
Bucharest 1993

1.e4 c5 2.\f3 \c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\xd4 \f6 5.\c3 e6 6.\db5 \b4 7.a3

7. \f4!? is a sharper line. However, I see no reason why it should be stronger, or even provide White with a guaranteed advantage. So I recommend just snatching the two bishops and getting on with it.

7...\xc3\t 8.\xc3 d5 9.exd5 exd5

9...\xd5 is a less popular alternative in this position. As in all other lines White should be slightly better. Here I will give two examples, but basically there is not a lot of theory here, nor a lot needed, as the position is more technical than tactical in nature.

a) 10.\xd5 \xd5 11.\xd5 exd5 12.\f4 \f5 13.0-0 0-0 14.f3 h5 15.\d2 \he8 16.\g3 a6 17.\e2 \e6 18.\hd1 \d7 19.\f1 d4 20.\f2 \c7 21.\d3 \xd3 22.\xd3 \e2 23.\d2 \xd2 24.\xd2 \d7± Peng - L.
b) 10.\(\text{d}2!\) \(\text{xc}3\). The safer choice. (10...0–0 11.\(\text{h}5!?\) \(\text{xc}3\) (11...\(\text{f}6\) 12.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{d}4\) would still have kept White's advantage to a minimum. 13.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{xd}4\) 14.0–0–0 e5 15.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{xb}5\) 16.\(\text{xb}5\) \(\text{f}5\) 17.\(\text{f}3\)±) 12.\(\text{xc}3\) e5 13.\(\text{d}3\) g6 14.\(\text{h}6\) \(\text{f}6\) 15.0–0 \(\text{g}7\) 16.\(\text{e}3\) g5 17.\(\text{h}4!?\) h6 18.hxg5 hxg5 19.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{e}6\) 20.\(\text{f}2\)± with an attack in Tal - Liberson, Kislovodsk 1964.) 11.\(\text{xc}3\) \(\text{xd}1\)† 12.\(\text{xd}1\) f6 13.f4 \(\text{d}7\) 14.\(\text{c}4\) 0–0 15.0–0 \(\text{c}7\) 16.\(\text{de}1\) \(\text{he}8\) 17.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{c}8\) 18.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{e}7\) 19.\(\text{ge}3\) \(\text{d}6\) 20.b4± with Fischer - Addison, New York 1962.

These kind of slightly worse endgames for some reason appeal very little to Black players, while being slightly worse with the queens on is another story.

10.\(\text{d}3\) 0–0 11.0–0

This is the standard position in this system. In the next game we shall consider one of the main moves, 11...\(\text{d}4\), here we look at two alternatives.

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

11...\(\text{g}4\) 12.f3. Now we have two alternatives:

a) 12...\(\text{e}6\) 13.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{b}6\)† 14.\(\text{h}1\) \(\text{d}7\) Only move. (14...\(\text{xb}2\) loses directly to a very simple attack. 15.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{b}6\) 16.\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{xf}6\) 17.\(\text{h}6\) \(\text{f}5\) 18.\(\text{xd}5!\) \(\text{xd}5\) and Black cannot defend himself.) 15.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{f}5\) (15...\(\text{h}6?\) 16.\(\text{hxh}6\) \(\text{h}xh6\) 17.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{de}5\) 18.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{xd}3\) 19.\(\text{hxh}6\) would allow White to establish a winning attack. Black can only escape with 19...\(\text{d}4\) 20.cxd3 \(\text{g}7\) when White will win all the same. Strongest is probably 21.\(\text{h}4!?)\) 16.b4 \(\text{d}4\) 17.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{c}7\) 18.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{d}5\) (18...\(\text{fe}8\)± was better.) 19.c4! \(\text{f}7\) 20.\(\text{xf}5\) \(\text{h}6\) 21.\(\text{hxh}6!\) \(\text{xc}4\) 22.\(\text{e}6\)† \(\text{xe}6\) 23.\(\text{xe}6\) \(\text{f}6\) 24.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{f}7\) 25.\(\text{c}5\) and White won in Teshkovsky - Maiorov, Novorossijsk 1995.

b) 12...\(\text{h}5\) 13.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{b}6\)† 14.\(\text{h}1\) \(\text{e}4\) It is hard to see any other good moves for Black. 15.\(\text{xe}4\) dxe4 16.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{xb}2\) 17.\(\text{b}1\) (17.\(\text{d}5!?\) \(\text{g}6\) 18.\(\text{ab}1\) \(\text{xa}3\) 19.\(\text{xg}6\) hgx6 20.\(\text{xb}7\) \(\text{a}6\) 21.\(\text{fb}1\)±) 17...\(\text{xb}1\) 18.\(\text{fxb}1\) \(\text{f}5\) 19.\(\text{d}3\) (19.\(\text{d}5\)† \(\text{f}7\) 20.\(\text{c}4\)± was also interesting) 19...\(\text{b}6\) 20.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{g}6\) 21.\(\text{d}5\) h6 (21...\(\text{f}4\) 22.\(\text{gxg}6\) hgx6 23.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{ae}8\) 24.\(\text{xe}8\) \(\text{xe}8\) 25.\(\text{g}1\) \(\text{e}2\) 26.\(\text{xf}4\) \(\text{xc}2\) 27.\(\text{d}6\)†) 22.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{h}7\) 23.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{ae}8\) 24.\(\text{xe}8\) \(\text{xe}8\) 25.f4 \(\text{f}8\) 26.\(\text{g}1\). White retains some pressure in the endgame, Teshkovsky - Barlov, Budva 1996. All in all a sad story for Black.
12. $\text{f4}$ $d4$

12...a6 has also been tried. In Areshchenko - G. Kuzmin, Kramatorsk 2003, White replied naturally with 13.$\text{e1} d4$ 14.$\text{d4}$ and now Black went wrong with 14...$\text{f5?!}$ (14...$\text{xe4}$ 15.$\text{xe4}$ $\text{f6}$ 16.$\text{g3}$ was preferable) when White had a tactical shot with 15.$\text{c7!}$ $\text{xc7}$ 16.$\text{xf6+}$ $\text{xf6}$ 17.$\text{xf5}$ $\text{f4}$ 18.$\text{e4}$ $\text{ad8}$ 19.$\text{g3}$ $\text{g5}$ 20.$\text{h4}$ $\text{g7}$ 21.$\text{h5}$.

13.$\text{b5!}$

Knight sorties to other squares promise little according to common practice.

13...$\text{d5}$ 14.$\text{f3?!}$

14.$\text{g3}$ $\text{e6}$ 15.$\text{e1}$ $\text{d7}$ 16.$\text{h3}$ $\text{ad8}$ 17.$\text{f3}$ $\text{de7}$ 18.$\text{d6}$ $\text{d5}$ 19.$\text{h5}$ $\text{f5}$ Krogius - Tal, Riga 1958.

14...$\text{e6}$

14...$\text{xf4}$ 15.$\text{xf4}$ leaves the d-pawn in trouble, and after 15...$\text{e6?!}$ (15...a6 16.$\text{d6}$ is necessary, though unpleasant) White has 16.$\text{c7!}$ $\text{c8}$ 17.$\text{e4}$ $\text{f5}$ 18.$\text{xf5}$ $\text{g6}$ 19.$\text{e6}$?

15.$\text{fe1}$

15...$\text{d7?!}$

This is too automatic as will soon be apparent. Black had two preferable alternatives.

15...$\text{f6}$ 16.$\text{e4}$ $\text{f5}$ 17.$\text{xf5}$ (17.$\text{xd5}$ $\text{xd3}$ 18.$\text{d6}$ $\text{xc2}$ 19.$\text{xf8}$ $\text{xf8}$ offers Black counterplay with the d-pawn) 17...$\text{xf5}$ 18.$\text{xf5}$ $\text{xf4}$ 19.$\text{ad1}$ $\text{ad8}$ 20.$\text{e4}$ and White is better.

15...a6!? 16.$\text{d6}$ $\text{xf4}$ 17.$\text{xf4}$ $\text{c7}$ 18.$\text{e4}$ $\text{g6}$ 19.$\text{c4}$ $\text{fe8}$ 20.$\text{h4}$ $\text{f7}$ and White is only slightly better.

16.$\text{e5}$ $\text{xe5}$ 17.$\text{exe5}$ $\text{e7?!}$

I have had this position once. I played 17...$\text{f6}$ when after 18.$\text{f4}$ $\text{fd8}$ 19.$\text{d1}$ $\text{e4}$ (Bromann - Raetsky, Taastrup 2002) my opponent should have played 20.$\text{f3}$! when the problems with the d-pawn leave me clearly worse. e.g. 20...$\text{e6}$ 21.$\text{f1}$?. Instead my opponent played something else and we drew 136 moves later.

18.$\text{e4}$ $\text{fd8?!}$

Black decides not to let the pawn go. It was a sad choice. He could have kept his kingside position together with 18...$\text{g6}$ when White wins a pawn with 19.$\text{c5}$ (19.$\text{xe6}$?) 19...$\text{fc8}$ 20.$\text{xc8+}$ $\text{xc8}$ 21.$\text{xd4}$ and he should win.

19.$\text{h7+}$ $\text{f8}$ 20.$\text{h8+}$ $\text{g8}$ 21.$\text{ae1}$ $\text{d5}$ 22.$\text{xd5}!

The bishop must be stopped from coming to $e6$. Now Black is mated.

22...$\text{xd5}$ 23.$\text{c7}$ $\text{d7}$ 24.$\text{h7}$

1–0
Game 54
Karjakin – Raetsky
Biel 2003

1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{d}f3\) \(\text{d}c6\) 3.d4 \(\text{cxd}4\) 4.\(\text{d}xd4\) \(\text{f}6\) 5.\(\text{d}c3\) e6 6.\(\text{d}b5\) \(\text{b}4\) 7.a3 \(\text{xc}3\)
8.\(\text{xc}3\) d5 9.exd5 \(\text{exd}5\) 10.\(\text{d}d3\) 0–0
11.0–0 d4 12.\(\text{e}e2\)

12.\(\text{e}e4\) might seem to be the natural option, but it leads to simplification and boring positions after 12...\(\text{f}5\) 13.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{x}e4\) 14.\(\text{x}e4\) \(\text{h}6\).

12...\(\text{g}4\)

12...\(\text{d}5\) is the main alternative to 12...\(\text{g}4\). 13.c4 White should try to open the game and use the strength of the two bishops. (White had a slight advantage after 13.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{d}d6\) 14.\(\text{h}5\) \(\text{x}h5\) 15.\(\text{x}h5\) \(\text{h}6\) 16.\(\text{d}d2\) \(\text{d}7\) 17.\(\text{ae1}\) \(\text{fe8}\) 18.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{e}7\) 19.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{c}6\) 20.\(\text{b}4\) \(\text{f}6\) 21.\(\text{c}4\) Xie – Z. Polgar, Jaen (8) 1996)
13...\(\text{xc}3\) 14.\(\text{xc}3\) \(\text{a}5\) 15.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{g}4\) 16.\(\text{b}1\) \(\text{d}4\) 17.\(\text{b}4\) \(\text{h}5\) 18.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{e}6\) 19.\(\text{b}2\) \(\text{d}8\) 20.\(\text{ae1}\)±, Kasimov - Lobron, Dortmund 1993.

12...\(\text{e}8\) is another quite solid alternative. 13.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{e}5\) (13...\(\text{h}6\) 14.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{a}6\)?) (Better was 14...\(\text{g}5\) 15.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{e}4\) 16.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{xg}3\) 17.\(\text{xg}3\) \(\text{e}5\) and Black is only very slightly worse) 15.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{g}5\) 16.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{e}4\)?! (16...\(\text{h}5\) was better) 17.\(\text{xd}4!\) \(\text{xd}4\) 18.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{g}4\) 19.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{xd}1\) 20.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{b}3\) 21.d5 \(\text{d}4\) 22.d6± with a close to winning ending for White in Alekseev - Ianocichin, Oropesa del Mar 2001.) 14.\(\text{f}4!\) \(\text{d}5\) 15.\(\text{g}3\) (15.\(\text{f}5\)!

with various attacking ideas also looks good) 15...\(\text{h}6\) 16.\(\text{h}4\) g5?! Otherwise White is just a whole lot better. 17.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{h}xg\) 18.\(\text{h}5\)! Only move. 18...\(\text{g}4\) 19.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{e}3\) 20.\(\text{f}6\) \(\text{xf6}\) 21.\(\text{xf6}\) \(\text{xd}1\) 22.\(\text{xd}1\) with a better endgame for White in Korneev-Moreno, Mondariz 2000.

13.\(\text{f}3\)

Harmless is 13.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{wd}6\) 14.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{fe8}\) 15.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{xe}2\) The standard exchange in this variation. 16.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{d}7\) 17.\(\text{exe}\) 18.\(\text{exe}\) \(\text{e}8\) 19.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{e}6\) 20.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{h}6\) 21.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{d}5\) 22.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{f}6\) Kasparov - Grischuk, Cannes 2001.

13...\(\text{h}5\)
the strength of his bishop pair. This is a typical modern chess struggle.

In my games I have also faced 14.\(\textit{Q}f4\) \(\textit{Q}g6\) 15.\(\textit{Q}xg6\) \(\textit{hxg6}\) 16.\(\textit{f}4\) \(\textit{Q}e7\) (also possible is 16...\(\textit{Q}d5\) 17.\(\textit{f}5\) \(\textit{gxf5}\) 18.\(\textit{xf5}\) \(\textit{Q}e3\) 19.\(\textit{Q}xe3\) \(\textit{dxe3}\) when 20.\(\textit{h}5\) \(g6\) 21.\(\textit{Q}h6\) \(\textit{d}4\) 22.\(\textit{Q}h5\)? gives White a very interesting attack.) 17.\(\textit{Q}e1\) \(\textit{Q}f5\) 18.\(\textit{Q}f3\) \(\textit{d}7\) 19.\(\textit{Q}e5\) \(a6\) 20.\(\textit{Q}d2\) \(\textit{Q}f8\) 21.\(\textit{Q}ae1\) and White is definitely better, A. Sokolov - Raetsky, Basel 2003.

14...\(\textit{Q}b6\) 15.\(\textit{Q}f4\) \(\textit{Q}g6\) 16.\(\textit{Q}xg6\) \(\textit{hxg6}\) 17.\(\textit{f}4\)

17...\(\textit{Q}d5\)

White should be better no matter what. Another example is: 17...\(\textit{Q}c7\) 18.\(\textit{Q}f3\) \(\textit{Q}ed5\) 19.\(\textit{Q}e1\) \(\textit{Q}fe8\) 20.\(\textit{Q}d2\) \(\textit{Q}c7\) (20...\(\textit{Q}e3\) 21.\(c4\)! is generally good for White) 21.\(\textit{Q}h1\) \(\textit{Q}d6\) 22.\(\textit{f}5\) \(\textit{gxf5}\) 23.\(\textit{Q}xf5\) \(g6\) 24.\(\textit{Q}d3\) \(\textit{Q}g7\) 25.\(\textit{h}3\) \(\textit{h}8\) 26.\(\textit{Q}f1\) \(\textit{Q}ae8\) 27.\(\textit{Q}ae1\) with an advantage for White in Galkin - Rabiega, Ohrid 2001.

18.\(\textit{Q}f3\)

This is probably best.

18.\(\textit{f}5\) \(\textit{Q}e3\) 19.\(\textit{Q}xe3\) \(\textit{dxe3}\) 20.\(\textit{Q}h1\) (A bad direction is 20.\(\textit{Q}e2\) \(\textit{gxf5}\) 21.\(\textit{Q}xf5\)? 21...\(\textit{d}4\) 22.\(\textit{Q}xe3?\) when Black wins with 22...\(\textit{Q}ae8\) 23.\(\textit{Q}f2\) \(\textit{Q}e2\) 20...\(\textit{Q}e5\)? (20...\(\textit{gxf5}\) 21.\(\textit{Q}xf5\) 20.\(\textit{Q}e5\)) 21.\(\textit{fxg6}\) \(\textit{fxg6}\) and Black has good counterplay.

18...\(\textit{Q}e3\)

19.\(\textit{Q}f2!\)

Subtle play from the kid who recently described his greatest fear in life as not becoming World Champion. If he takes a close look at what happened to his friend Ponomariov, he should maybe fear becoming World Champion more than not doing so?!

Anyway, 19.\(\textit{Q}e1\) \(\textit{Q}fe8\) 20.\(\textit{Q}d2\) looks natural, and the computer thinks White is better, but Black has 20...\(\textit{Q}xc2\)! 21.\(\textit{Q}xc2\) \(d3\) 22.\(\textit{Q}f2\) (22.\(\textit{Q}e3\) \(\textit{d}4\) 23.\(\textit{Q}f2\) \(\textit{Q}xe3!\) and Black ends on top.) 22...\(\textit{Q}xe1\) 23.\(\textit{Q}xe1\) \(\textit{dxc2}\) 24.\(\textit{Q}e3\) \(\textit{a6}\) and White is struggling to keep equality.
19...\textit{\c{a}}fe8 20.\textit{\c{a}}d2 \textit{\c{a}}e7

Here I could also have continued 20...a5?! White is still better after 21.b5 \textit{\c{a}}e7 22.\textit{\c{a}}e1 \textit{\c{a}}7d5 23.\textit{\c{a}}fe2 \textit{\c{a}}ac8 24.c4 dxc3 25.\textit{\c{a}}xe3 \textit{\c{a}}xe3 26.\textit{\c{a}}xe3 c2 27.\textit{\c{a}}xc2 \textit{\c{a}}xe3 28.\textit{\c{a}}xe3 \textit{\c{a}}xe3 29.\textit{\c{a}}xe3 \textit{\c{a}}xc2 30.\textit{\c{a}}e8\textit{\c{a}}h7 31.\textit{\c{a}}e7 and White has some winning chances in the endgame, even though I have drawing chances too!

21.h4?! \textit{\c{a}}ae8 22.h5 g5!?

He wants to complicate the game and I am not afraid to follow suit. I estimated that after 22...gxh5 23.\textit{\c{a}}xh5 g6 24.\textit{\c{a}}g5 White would have the better game. Black should fear the advance f4-f5, and the white rook will also come into play by f3-h3 with dangerous threats.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Diagram:}
\end{center}

23.h6!

OK, the little guy is not so bad. My main idea was 23.fxg5 \textit{\c{a}}e5 24.\textit{\c{a}}e4 (24.\textit{\c{a}}g3 \textit{\c{a}}xd3 25.cxd3 \textit{\c{a}}b5 and I cannot for the life of me pretend to be worse here.) 24...\textit{\c{a}}xd3 25.\textit{\c{a}}xd3 \textit{\c{a}}e5 26.g6 fxg6 27.hxg6 \textit{\c{a}}8e6 and I think I am fully in the game.

23...g4

I considered 23...gxh6 24.\textit{\c{a}}h5 to be very uncomfortable.

24.\textit{\c{a}}g3

24.h7\textit{\c{a}}h8 25.\textit{\c{a}}g3 is not clear at all. Maybe White is better, but I am not sure about that at all.

24...g6!?

Unfortunately I was running short of time. My alternatives here were 24...f5? 25.hxg7 \textit{\c{a}}xg7 (25...\textit{\c{a}}xg7 26.\textit{\c{a}}xf5! is not right.) 26.\textit{\c{a}}e2 \textit{\c{a}}ge7 27.\textit{\c{a}}ae1 and I would simply lose a pawn without compensation. 24...gxh6! was the right choice now. After 25.\textit{\c{a}}h4 \textit{\c{a}}g7 26.\textit{\c{a}}e1 White still has some pressure, but I would have had good chances of neutralising it.

25.b5! \textit{\c{a}}b8 26.f5

26.\textit{\c{a}}h4!? also looked quite strong. After 26...\textit{\c{a}}e6 27.\textit{\c{a}}e1 White is threatening f5 and after 27...f5 28.\textit{\c{a}}fe2 he is contemplating c3. White is better, but how much?

26...\textit{\c{a}}d7?

This is just a mistake. Necessary was the uncomfortable 26...gxh5 opening up the king. White is better, but at least there is some limit to how much.

27.\textit{\c{a}}b4

Ouch.

27...\textit{\c{a}}e5

27...\textit{\c{a}}e5 28.\textit{\c{a}}h4! and there is no real defence against \textit{\c{a}}xc5 and \textit{\c{a}}f6 as 28...\textit{\c{a}}e5, with the idea of later playing
...\textit{f8}, is met by 29.f\textit{xg6} f\textit{xg6} 30.\textit{f6} with a winning attack.

\textbf{28.f\textit{gxg6} f\textit{gxg6} 29.\textit{f4}}

Now it is all over. However I play on...

\textbf{29...\textit{e6} 30.\textit{xd4} \textit{h7} 31.\textit{d6} \textit{g3}}

\textbf{32.e\textit{e2} \textit{f5} 33.\textit{xf5} \textit{xf5} 34.\textit{xe5} d\textit{xe5} 35.a\textit{e1} \textit{h5} 36.e\textit{xe5} \textit{h2+}}

\textbf{37.\textit{f1} \textit{f8+} 38.\textit{e2} \textit{g2+} 39.\textit{g1}}

\textit{1-0}

\textbf{The Cobra Variation}

\textit{1.e4} c\textit{5} \textit{2.f3} e\textit{6} 3.d\textit{4} c\textit{xd4} 4.e\textit{xd4} \textit{d6} 5.\textit{c3} \textit{c6} 6.db\textit{5} \textit{c5}?

This line is called the Cobra and was popularised by an article in \textit{New In Chess} by Swedish IM Jesper Hall who, among other games, presented his win against grandmaster Krasenkow. However, since then White has been able to locate a simple way to gain a slight edge. This has not prevented me from playing it way too often!

7.\textit{f4}!

This is the simple choice. If White plays like this only masochists will continue to play the Cobra with Black.

7...0-0

7...\textit{e5} is met strongly with 8.\textit{e3}! d\textit{6} (8...\textit{xe5}? 9.d\textit{6}+ \textit{f8} 10.exe3 \textit{wb6} 11.d\textit{2} \textit{xb2} 12.b\textit{1} a\textit{3} 13.c4±) 9.xc\textit{5} d\textit{xc5} 10.xd\textit{8}+ xd\textit{8} 11.0-0-0+ with a very nice endgame for White.

8.c\textit{7}

Also interesting is 8.e5!? \textit{xe8} 9.e\textit{e4} \textit{xe7} 10.c3!? when White is probably better as well. 10...f\textit{6} 11.exf\textit{6} \textit{xf6} (11...\textit{xf6}? 12.c\textit{7} \textit{e8} 13.x\textit{xf6}+ \textit{xf6} 14.g\textit{3} \textit{f8} 15.d\textit{6} looks very good for White.) 12.d\textit{6} \textit{d6} 13.b\textit{xd6} \textit{e5} 14.e\textit{2} \textit{c7} 15.d\textit{3} \textit{c7} 16.d\textit{1} d\textit{5} 17.g\textit{5} d\textit{6} 18.f\textit{3} xd\textit{6} 19.xd\textit{6} xd\textit{6} 20.ex\textit{d6} f\textit{7} and the endgame slightly favours White - Hall.

8...\textit{e7} 9.d\textit{6} xd\textit{6} 10.wd\textit{6}

Basically this position is depressing
and passive for Black. All his dreams of winning the game seem to have gone.

10...\(\text{\texttt{d}}8\)

10...\(\text{\texttt{d}}8\) 11.0-0-0 a6 12.\(\text{\texttt{d}}4\) \(\text{\texttt{b}}6\) 13.\(\text{\texttt{c}}\text{xc6} \text{bxc6}\) (13...dxc6 14.\(\text{\texttt{d}}d2\) \(\text{\texttt{a}}5\) 15.\(\text{\texttt{f}}4\) b5 16.\(\text{\texttt{c}}c5\) also favours White. Soon will come e5 and \(\text{\texttt{e}}4\)-d6.) 14.f3 a5 15.\(\text{\texttt{a}}4\) \(\text{\texttt{b}}4\) 16.b3 \(\text{\texttt{xd6}}\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{xd6}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e}}8\) 18.\(\text{\texttt{d}}d3\) d5 19.\(\text{\texttt{c}}c3\) \(\text{\texttt{f}}6\) 20.\(\text{\texttt{d}}d3\) \(\text{\texttt{xd8}}\) 21.\(\text{\texttt{e}}e1\) \(\text{\texttt{b}}7\) 22.\(\text{\texttt{b}}b6\) \(\text{\texttt{a}}7\) 23.\(\text{\texttt{c}}c5\pm\) Oll - Janssen, Dieren 1996.

Even more passive is 10...\(\text{\texttt{xd6}}\) 11.\(\text{\texttt{xd6}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e}}8\) 12.\(\text{\texttt{xe8}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xe8}}\) 13.0-0-0 \(\text{\texttt{e}}7\) 14.\(\text{\texttt{b}}b5\) b6 15.\(\text{\texttt{d}}d6\) \(\text{\texttt{b}}8\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{b}}b5\) \(\text{\texttt{f}}8\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{xc6}}\) dxc6 18.\(\text{\texttt{xc8}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xc8}}\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{d}}d6\), which left Black a miserable endgame in Aagaard - Bellon Lopez, Gothenburg 2004.

11.\(\text{\texttt{xe7}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xe7}}\) 12.0-0-0 \(\text{\texttt{f}}5\) 13.\(\text{\texttt{d}}d6\)

The simplest. Also possible is 13.e5 \(\text{\texttt{g}}6\) 14.\(\text{\texttt{e}}e1\) a6 15.\(\text{\texttt{d}}d4\) b5 16.g3 \(\text{\texttt{b}}7\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{g}}g1\) f4 18.\(\text{\texttt{d}}d3\) with a slight edge for White, or 13.f3?! \text{fxe4} 14.\text{fxe4} a6 15.\(\text{\texttt{d}}d6\) \(\text{\texttt{xd6}}\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{xd6}}\) b5 17.\(\text{\texttt{e}}e2\) \(\text{\texttt{g}}6\) 18.\(\text{\texttt{b}}b6\) \(\text{\texttt{e}}5\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{f}}f1\) \(\text{\texttt{xf1}+}\) 20.\(\text{\texttt{xf1}}\) and White had some advantage in Fichtl - Opocensky, Prague 1953.

13...\(\text{\texttt{xd6}}\) 14.\(\text{\texttt{xd6}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xe4}}\) 15.\(\text{\texttt{xe4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{f}}5\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{d}}d2\) d5 17.\(\text{\texttt{g}}g5\) b6?! This is a marginal improvement. 17...\(\text{\texttt{d}}d7\) 18.\(\text{\texttt{d}}d3\) e5 is met strongly with 19.\(\text{\texttt{e}}e4!\) \(\text{\texttt{dxe4}}\) 20.\(\text{\texttt{xd7}}\) e3 21.\(\text{\texttt{f}}xe3\) \(\text{\texttt{exe3}}\) 22.\(\text{\texttt{xe1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xg2}}\) 23.\(\text{\texttt{xe5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{ad8}}\) 24.\(\text{\texttt{xd8}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xd8}}\) 25.\(\text{\texttt{e7}}\) \(\text{\texttt{f4}}\) 26.b4 and White has good winning chances - Hall.

18.\(\text{\texttt{f3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{d6}}\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{d3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{d7}}\) 20.\(\text{\texttt{e1}+}\)

\text{Berg} - \text{Hall}, Germany 2002.

This kind of endgame often arises from the French. White can now choose between different plans. The main problem for Black will always be his slightly worse bishop and pawn structure. He was able to draw the game with a pawn sacrifice and tenacious defence, but it was a difficult and unpleasant task.
The Pin Variation

- By Jacob Aagaard

1. e4 c5 2. ∆f3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ∆xd4 ∆f6 5. ∆c3 b4

However, an interesting alternative is to play 3. ∆c3?! in reply to 2...e6. Now after 3...Nf6 we can transpose to the Nimzowitsch variation with 4.e5!, as dealt with on page 255. And after all other reasonable moves 4.d4 leads into the normal main lines. In this way there is also a link to the Kan/Taimanov lines, where after 2. ∆f3 e6 Sune Berg Hansen suggests 3. ∆c3?! as a viable alternative. This actually prevents the Pin-variation; but who wants to do that?

The following line is the established refutation of the most important sideline with 6.e5 ∆e4?!, which is close to a losing mistake, though it has taken decades to prove it! In the sidelines White wins, but only after several minor improvements.

1. e4 c5 2. ∆f3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ∆xd4 ∆f6 5. ∆c3 b4 6. e5 ∆e4?!

6... a5? can be refuted in more than one way, but the following is probably simplest. 7.exf6 ∆xc3+ 8. bxc3 ∆xc3+ 9. d2 a1 10.c3! b1 11. d3 b6 12.fxg7 The only debatable move, but here we just go for it. 12...g8 13. g5! Here White gets an endgame with two bishops and 2-3 passed pawns, where at least one is extra. 13.h6 (13... d8 14. x d8+ x d8 15. g5+ c7 16. f6 d6 17. x h7 d7 18. x g8 x f6 19. x f7+-- Ngo Ngoc - Bao, Dalat City 2004.) 14. f6 d8 15. x d8+ Always this. 15... x d8 16. x h6 f5 17. x f5 exf5 18. c4 e8+ 19. d2 c6 20. f7
d6 21.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}}e1 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}}5 22.f4 and White won in Kozakov - Todorov, Valjevo 2000.

7.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash g}}4 \textit{\texttt{xc3}}

Again 7...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash a}}5 should be a losing move. 8.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}g7! (8.\textit{\texttt{xe4?! \texttt{xc3}+ 9.bxc3 \texttt{xc3}+ 10.\texttt{d1 \texttt{a1} 11.\texttt{b5 d5 is less clear than I want it to be. Probably it also wins though, but the main line seems most convincing to me.) 8...\texttt{xc3}+ 9.bxc3 \textit{\texttt{xc3}+ 10.\texttt{e2 b6 11.\texttt{\textbackslash xh8+ \texttt{e7 12.a3+ when White wins. Most sources stop here, but let us look a few moves further. 12...\texttt{xa3}? (12...d6 13.\texttt{b3! wins easily for White. There is no reason for 13.\texttt{c6+?! as played in some games.) 13.\textit{\texttt{xc8 \texttt{b2}}

14.\textit{\texttt{b3 \texttt{c6 15.\texttt{xa8 \texttt{xc2+ 16.\texttt{e3 \texttt{xf2+ 17.\texttt{xe4 \texttt{e5 18.\texttt{f8+!! (18.\texttt{xe5 \textit{\texttt{e3+ 19.\texttt{e4 f6 mate is wonderful, and probably blinded Black.) 18...\texttt{xf8 19.\texttt{xe5 \texttt{e3+ 20.\texttt{d6 \texttt{e8 21.\texttt{c7 1-0. Schatzle - Filartiga, corr. 1974.}

This is the line you could expect to find elsewhere, as the game is certainly very nice. But instead of 14...\texttt{c6?? Black has 14...\textit{\texttt{xe5, which is a winning novelty. After 15.f4 \textit{\texttt{xf4 there is no defence. One line is 16.c4 \texttt{\textbackslash f2+ 17.\texttt{d3 \texttt{c6 18.\texttt{xa8 \texttt{b4+ 19.\texttt{xe4 \texttt{f5+ 20.\texttt{e5 d6 mate.}

So White needs to come up with 14.\texttt{e3!, which is actually the only winning move here, and still it is not easy.

a) 14...\texttt{xf2 15.\texttt{e2 \texttt{\textbackslash xh1 16.\texttt{d1! (The most accurate move. White is threatening 17.\texttt{c6+!) 16...\texttt{a3+ 17.\texttt{b3 \texttt{b2 18.c3 and White wins.

b) 14...\texttt{xa1 15.\texttt{xe4 \texttt{e1+ 16.\texttt{f3 \texttt{xe5 17.\texttt{b7 \texttt{xd4 18.\texttt{xa8 \texttt{c6 19.h4! and the white king will escape. However this win is not hard to find. On move 16 there might be alternative ways to do it, but here 19.\textit{\texttt{g8? \texttt{e5+ 20.\texttt{g3 \texttt{g6!! would draw for Black.)

8.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash xg7

When I used to play the Pin Variation in Blitz I would often lose to 8.a3, but after 8...\texttt{f8! Black seems to be OK.

8...\texttt{f8 9.a3 \texttt{b5+}

Black has the following alternatives:

9...\texttt{c6 10.axb4 \texttt{xd4 11.bxc3 \texttt{xc2+ 12.\texttt{d1 \texttt{xa1, which simply loses to 13.\texttt{g5! as in Mendoza - Blejman, Guaymallen 2001 among others. Now 13...\texttt{\textbackslash xg5 14.\texttt{\textbackslash xg5 a5 is the computer's idea. The word desperation springs to mind.}
9...\texttt{a}5 10.\texttt{h}6 \texttt{e}7 11.\texttt{b}3! and I cannot see any justification for the exchange Black will eventually lose.

9...\texttt{a}5 is the most complicated move here, but Black will not escape after some simple moves from White. 10.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{d}5 (10...\texttt{c}e4† 11.axb4 \texttt{xb}4† 12.\texttt{c}3 \texttt{xc}3 13.\texttt{h}6 \texttt{e}4† 14.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{xd}2 15.\texttt{xf}8† \texttt{xf}8 16.\texttt{xf}8 \texttt{b}3 17.\texttt{a}3 and White won in Elis - Schork, Bonn 1998.) 11.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{a}2† (11...\texttt{e}7 12.bxc3 Schmidt - Boidman, Bad Breisig 2000.) 12.axb4 \texttt{xc}1 13.\texttt{xc}1\# Harasimovic - Berisha, Brno 1997.

10.axb4 \texttt{xd}4 11.\texttt{g}5 \texttt{b}6

The standard move. 11...\texttt{xc}2† 12.\texttt{d}1 \texttt{b}6 was successful for Black in May - Beier, East Germany 1979, but here 13.\texttt{h}6! \texttt{xb}4 14.\texttt{xc}2 would lead to an endgame where White has an extra exchange against a pawn, and every chance of winning.

12.\texttt{h}6

12.\texttt{d}3 was successful in some games, but 12...d6 13.c3 dxe5! leaves the position unclear.

12...\texttt{xb}4† 13.\texttt{c}3 \texttt{f}5 14.cxb4 \texttt{xg}7 15.\texttt{xg}7 \texttt{g}8 16.\texttt{f}6+?

This is the old main line. Now 16...\texttt{c}6? was analysed by my friend Torben Sorensen in Denmark a long time ago. The conclusion was the following wonderful winning line. Alternatively Black can try 16...d5 to fight for a draw in a very depressing way. After 17.exd6 \texttt{d}7 18.\texttt{c}3 \texttt{b}6 as in Krumova - Teodorescu, Bydgoszcz 1978, I think the simplest is 19.g3 \texttt{d}7 20.\texttt{d}3 f5 21.\texttt{e}5+. Is White not just a pawn up?

17.\texttt{a}3!

This wonderful manoeuvre was Torben’s recipe against his own idea.

17...\texttt{xb}4 18.\texttt{h}3 \texttt{d}5 19.\texttt{xh}7 \texttt{xf}6 19...d6?! is better, but White has the advantage after 20.h4! with similar ideas.

20.exf6 d5 21.h4

21.\texttt{b}5† only helps Black to play the move he wants to play, ...\texttt{f}8 with the idea of preventing \texttt{g}8†. However if White plays accurately, Black is too late with his planned counterplay on the queenside.

21...\texttt{f}8 22.h5 \texttt{d}7 23.h6 \texttt{e}8 24.\texttt{g}7 \texttt{h}8 25.h7 \texttt{a}4 26.\texttt{g}8†! \texttt{xg}8 27.h8\# and White wins.

So 6...\texttt{e}4 is discredited, but the same does not go for 6...\texttt{d}5.
The Pin-variation with 8...\textit{a}5.

1.e4 c5 2.\textit{f}3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\textit{xd}4 \textit{f}6 5.\textit{c}3 \textit{b}4 6.e5 \textit{d}5 7.\textit{d}2

Experience has proved that this is the strongest move here. If you have too much time on your hands you can try to investigate 7.\textit{g}4 and see if this is really true. Here I will focus on the main line.

7...\textit{x}c3 8.bxc3 \textit{a}5!?

The bishop abandons the defence of the kingside. However it is not so easy to refute, and a clear refutation has never occurred over the board. The bishop does leave the kingside unprotected, but on the other hand the bishop is not a very good defender in many lines, and now leaves room for the queen.

9.\textit{g}4 0–0 10.\textit{d}3!

This natural developing move has to be the right move. 10.\textit{g}3?! has scored well for White, but no one has played the principled 10...\textit{f}6! when the position is far from clear. Why should Black not be fine here?

Another way to play the opening for White is 9.\textit{d}3 when 9...0–0 10.\textit{h}5! looks nothing like the transposition which could occur after 10.\textit{g}4. However Black has other possibilities. 9...\textit{c}7 10.0–0 \textit{a}6. Being the only move that does not seem to lose by force, this is of course a new move. 11.\textit{g}4 \textit{g}6 12.\textit{g}5 \textit{x}c3 13.\textit{x}c3 \textit{f}6 14.\textit{f}6 0–0 15.\textit{e}2 \textit{c}5 16.\textit{g}3 \textit{d}6 17.\textit{xd}6 \textit{xd}6 18.\textit{h}5 \textit{gx}h5 19.\textit{g}5+ ½–½ was played in R. Jones – Aagaard, England 2004. It has not been possible for me to prove an advantage for White in this game, despite not believing much in my own play.

10...\textit{d}6!

This is, of course, the way Black should play. Now it gets really interesting. The alternative is rather passive: 10...\textit{c}6 11.\textit{xc}6 dxc6 12.0–0 \textit{d}5 13.\textit{h}4 \textit{g}6 14.\textit{h}6 \textit{d}8 15.\textit{f}4 \textit{e}8 16.\textit{fe}1±. This position is very uncomfortable for Black. Now the game finished 16...\textit{a}5 17.\textit{e}3 \textit{xc}3 18.\textit{d}1 \textit{c}5 19.\textit{f}3 \textit{e}7 20.\textit{e}4 \textit{b}6 21.\textit{g}5 \textit{f}8 22.\textit{h}4 \textit{h}5 23.\textit{g}4 \textit{g}7 24.\textit{gx}h5 \textit{h}7 25.\textit{f}6 1–0. Wosch - Rueppel, e-mail 2001.

11.\textit{f}3!

The most aggressive.

11.\textit{xd}6 is my computer’s preference. But now 11...\textit{f}5! 12.\textit{g}3 \textit{e}5 13.\textit{b}3 \textit{b}6 14.0–0 \textit{xd}6 15.\textit{ad}1 \textit{c}6 is closer to worse than to better for White. Lanc - Arnason, Prague 1980.
The direct attack with 11...g5! was analysed by Byrne and Mednis.

The lines credited here to the two American gentlemen are quoted from Nunn's and Gallagher's *Beating the Sicilian* 3. Essentially Black has two choices:

a) 11...c7 12.f6 xc3† 13.e2
And here it is not hard to find out that 13...g6! is the superior move order. (13...d2† 14.f1 g6 15.d1!! was the line given by Byrne and Mednis.)

14.g5 d7 15.h6 (15.b5 c5 16.exd6 e5†) 15...d2† 16.xd2 xd2 17.xd2 dx5 looks good for Black.

But what about 12.xh7†!! xh7 13.f6 xc3† 14.f1 gxf6 15.exf6 xa1† 16.e2 and White wins? This is beyond the immediate scope of the computers, but not this writer! (nice to have been of assistance Mr. Fritz...)

b) 11...xc3†! This move order is probably the most reliable. (11...f5!? is also possible, with the idea of transposing, but why bother?). 12.f1 f5! This is absolutely forced. (12...a5 loses easily to 13.f6 g6 14.g5 d2 15.f4 and Black cannot protect his king. And 12...f6? fails to 13.h5! g6 (13...h6 14.g6 and White should win.) 14.xg6 d7 (14...c7 15.xf6 xd4 16.exd6 c4† 17.d3 and White wins the queen for insufficient compensation.) 15.xe6 xa1 16.h6!++. The attack is too strong) 13.exf6

13...d7! The only move. It looks rather shaky, but to refute it is not so easy. (13...xf6 was part of the original analysis by B&M, but now 14.xh7†! xh7 15.xf6 xf6 16.h3† g8 17.xc3 c6 18.d1 and White wins.) 14.b1 (14.d1 g6 15.b5 f7 and the position appears unclear to me.) 14...c6! (14...g6?! 15.b3 xd4 16.xd4 c6 17.h4 e5 gives White a strong attack with 18.h6 f7 19.h4 and the black king is very tender.) 15.fxg7! (15.xc6
bxc6 16.fxg7 \( \text{#} \text{g7} \) 17.\( \text{#} \)h4. White might be better, but how clear is it after 17...\( \text{#} \)f7\(!\). It is possible to analyse these positions until one goes blue in the face. I will stop here saying that the position is complicated, and a clear conclusion is hard to make. Probably the chances are about level.) 15...\( \text{#} \)xg7! (15...\( \text{#} \)xf2\(!\) 16.\( \text{#} \)xf2 \( \text{#} \)xd4\(!\) 17.\( \text{#} \)e1 \( \text{#} \)xg7 18.\( \text{#} \)h5 and White wins. Black never got out) 16.\( \text{#} \)e6 and now:

b1) 16...\( \text{#} \)xe6? 17.\( \text{#} \)xe6\(!\) \( \text{#} \)h8 18.\( \text{#} \)h6 \( \text{#} \)f6 (18...\( \text{#} \)d4 19.\( \text{#} \)xf8 \( \text{#} \)xf8 20.f3 cannot be working) 19.\( \text{#} \)xf6\(!\) \( \text{#} \)xf6 20.\( \text{#} \)g5±.

b2) 16...\( \text{#} \)e5! 17.\( \text{#} \)c4\(!\) (17.\( \text{#} \)xh7\(!\) \( \text{#} \)xh7 18.\( \text{#} \)xf8 \( \text{#} \)g4 19.\( \text{#} \)xh7 \( \text{#} \)xh7 is just not very clear.) 17...\( \text{#} \)f7\(!\) (17...\( \text{#} \)xc4 18.\( \text{#} \)xg7 \( \text{#} \)b2 19.\( \text{#} \)h5 \( \text{#} \)xd3 20.cxd3\(!\) with chances for White in the endgame, though Black has reasonable drawing chances) 18.\( \text{#} \)xh7\(!\) \( \text{#} \)xh7 19.\( \text{#} \)xf8\(!\) \( \text{#} \)xc4 20.\( \text{#} \)xh7 \( \text{#} \)xh7 and the endgame could have any of three results.

I think we can conclude that 11.\( \text{#} \)g5\(!\) is not a killer, though clearly interesting. 11...\( \text{#} \)g6?

This is the traditional move, but my analysis seems to suggest that Black cannot allow White to attack the king unhindered like this. Suddenly the critical move becomes 11...f5! 12.exf6 \( \text{#} \)xf6 13.0–0 h6 14.\( \text{#} \)e4\(!\). I believe that White is better here, but it is not easy to prove. As there are limits to how much independent analysis there is time to provide for a book like this, especially on the Pin-variation, then I will stop by giving the moves in the game. 14...\( \text{#} \)d7\(!\) (14...\( \text{#} \)f5 is also possible, though it appears risky to me not to develop.) 15.\( \text{#} \)h7\(!\) \( \text{#} \)f7 16.\( \text{#} \)g5 \( \text{#} \)f8 17.\( \text{#} \)xf6 \( \text{#} \)xf6 18.\( \text{#} \)e4 \( \text{#} \)xc3 19.\( \text{#} \)ab1 d5\(!\) Bilbao - Ramos, Alicante 1989. Is White better in the end here? I am not certain. The game was eventually drawn, but then Black was much higher rated.

On 11...dxe5?? then 12.\( \text{#} \)xh7\(!\) \( \text{#} \)xh7 13.\( \text{#} \)h5\(!\) \( \text{#} \)g8 14.\( \text{#} \)g5 wins the game. 12.h4!

Again the most aggressive approach is necessary, as White otherwise risks being stuck with a bad structure.

12.0–0?! f5! 13.\( \text{#} \)g3 (13.exf6 \( \text{#} \)xf6 14.\( \text{#} \)g5 \( \text{#} \)g7\(!\) Milosevic - Ammann, Switzerland 1993) 13...dxe5 14.\( \text{#} \)xe5 \( \text{#} \)f6! (14...\( \text{#} \)d7\(!\) 15.\( \text{#} \)xg6+\(!\) 16.\( \text{#} \)g5 \( \text{#} \)g7 16.\( \text{#} \)b5 a6 17.\( \text{#} \)a4 \( \text{#} \)c7 18.\( \text{#} \)ae1\(!\) This kind of position is close to impossible to analyse. With the aid of a computer we
can give some predictions: 18...\textit{d}d7 is probably fine for Black is one of them.

\textbf{12...dxe5}

12...\textit{f}5 13.\textit{\textit{g}}3 dxe5 14.h5 transposes.

\textbf{13.h5 f5}

13...\textit{\textit{c}}7 14.hxg6 fxg6 15.0–0–0 leaves White with a very strong attack. I have not found a good defence.

15...\textit{e}4 16.\textit{\textit{xe}}4 \textit{xc}3 17.\textit{xc}3 \textit{xc}3 18.\textit{hxh}7! and White's attack is crushing.

15...\textit{c}6 16.\textit{\textit{h}}6! followed by \textit{\textit{dh}}1 and Black's position will collapse.

15...\textit{f}5?! A desperate computer move. 16.\textit{\textit{h}}6! There is no reason to take the exchange, even though this also favours White. 16...\textit{d}7 17.\textit{h}4 \textit{f}8 18.\textit{xf}5 \textit{xf}5 19.\textit{g}5 \textit{e}6 20.\textit{\textit{xh}}7 and White wins.

\textbf{14.\textit{g}3!}

It is this new move that does the most damage to Black's position.

14.\textit{xf}5?! is a very interesting sacrifice, but not completely conclusive as had previously been thought. 14...\textit{xf}5 15.\textit{c}4+ \textit{g}7! (15...\textit{f}7? 16.hxg6 hxg6 17.\textit{g}5 \textit{c}7 18.\textit{h}4+- Wagman - Barle, Biel 1981) 16.hxg6 \textit{f}4! The move overlooked in other sources, which claim the attack is winning. 17.\textit{hxh}7+ \textit{xg}6 18.\textit{e}4+ \textit{\textit{f}}5 19.\textit{h}3. White has a very strong attack here. Black is probably forced to play 19...\textit{h}7 when White should have more than enough compensation for the piece. But 14.\textit{g}3 just wins, so why not play it?

14.\textit{h}3?! \textit{g}5 15.\textit{\textit{xe}}5 as in Lerner - Khodos, Rostov 1976 is less strong. After 15...\textit{f}6!++ I would prefer to be Black. Where is White's attack?

\textbf{14...e4}

14...\textit{f}4 15.\textit{g}4 \textit{e}4 16.hxg6! (16.\textit{\textit{xe}}4 \textit{e}5 is less clear.) 16...\textit{xf}3 17.\textit{hxh}7 \textit{f}6 18.g7 and White wins.

\textbf{15.hxg6 \textit{xf}3}

15...\textit{exd}3 16.\textit{g}xh7+ \textit{h}8 17.\textit{\textit{e}}5 and White wins.
16.\textit{\textbf{exh7!}}

This is the way to play the attack. The h7-square is the weakest spot in Black's position, so it needs to be accessible. Again this is a move computers do not find easily, but they really do love it, once they are told about it.

16.gxh7\textsf{$\mathsf{\Diamond}$}? would allow the black king to hide behind the white pawn. After 16...\textsf{\textit{\textbf{gh8 17.e5+ ff6}} (17...\textsf{\textit{\textbf{ff6}}}? is maybe safer. After 18.g5 d7 19.xf6+ \textsf{\textit{\textbf{xf6}} 20.h6! fxg2 21.e2. White seems to end with a better game, but Black has the clever answer 21...\textsf{\textit{\textbf{sc7!}} 22.xf6+ \textsf{\textit{\textbf{xf6}} 23.xf6 \textsf{\textit{\textbf{h2}} when the endgame is at best even for White.) 18.xa5 fxg2 19.g1 b6 20.b4 b7 21.0-0-0 d7\textsf{$\mathsf{\Diamond}$}. I cannot see any reason why this should not be better for Black. An important line is 22.xd4 e5!! 23.xd7 \textsf{\textit{\textbf{c6}} 24.xf5 \textsf{\textit{\textbf{xf5}} 25.xf5 \textsf{\textit{\textbf{xf5}}}.}

16.\textsf{\textit{\textbf{xf6}}}

There are no alternatives. 16...\textsf{\textit{\textbf{d7}} 17.0-0-0 \textsf{\textit{\textbf{f6}} 18.h3 and White wins. 17.0-0-0 \textsf{\textit{\textbf{xc3}} 18.g7!}} and White wins.

In the next game we shall see a Danish GM, and co-author of this book, display his full mastery over the opening, by disposing of the old main line of 8...\textsf{\textit{\textbf{c7}} 9.g4 0-0?!}, before we turn to the critical lines of 9...Kf8! and 8...\textsf{\textit{\textbf{f8}}}.}

\textbf{Game 55}

\textbf{Hansen - Kristensen}

Taastrup 1998

1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.xxd4 f6 5.c3 b4 6.e5 d5 7.e2 xc3 8.bxc3 a7 9.g4

This is the way to go.

9...0-0?!}

This used to be the main move, but now it has been close to refuted.

9...g6?! is probably too passive and weakening at the same time. I like the true computer move 10.g5?! (10.h4 h5 11.g3 also looks reasonable.) 10...c6 11.d6+ xd6 12.exd6 a5 13.xf4 f5 14.d5 Shredder - Hiarcs 7.32, Debrecen 2000.

9...g5 also does not seem to work. 10.h4! h5 11.hxg5 hxg4 12.xh8+ f8

\begin{center}
\textbf{Diagram}
\end{center}

was played in Grosar–De Waal, Belgium 1986, and now 13.g6 fxg6 14.h6 f7 15.xf8+ xf8 16.xf8 xf8 17.e2 is
good for White according to Nunn and Gallagher. However this line is wishful thinking. 14...\textit{f7} makes little sense, and especially 13...fxg6 is an automatic move that serves the interests of the opponent. After 13...\textit{c7}! Black is simply winning. The lines could continue 14.0–0–0 \textit{xe5} 15.\textit{g8} \textit{e7} and, though the position is still complicated, it is very hard to believe that White will prove real counterplay.

Instead of 11.hxg5? then 11.\textit{g3!} was the right move. Black has little pleasure in the position. The weakness of the dark squares is terminal. After 11..gxh4 12.\textit{g7} \textit{f8} 13.\textit{b5} White wins. Eventually \textit{d6+} and \textit{h6} will ruin Black's position. Necessary is 11...\textit{g4} 12.\textit{b5} a6 (12...\textit{c6} 13.\textit{g5±}) 13.d6+ \textit{xd6} 14.exd6 \textit{c6} 15.c4 where I would not mind being White. Black will have a nightmare finding safety for his king, after White develops and then starts to open up the position.

\textbf{10..\textit{h6} g6 11.h4! \textit{a5}}

Though this is bad, 11...d6?! is an even worse move order for Black. After 12.h5 \textit{a5} (12...dxe5 13.hxg6 \textit{fxg6} 14.\textit{xf8} wins for White, as if Black recaptures on \textit{f8} then 15.\textit{xe6} and 16.\textit{c4} is winning. Now 14...\textit{xd4} 15.\textit{xe7} \textit{xe7} 16.\textit{d3} \textit{d7} 17.\textit{b1} \textit{b6} 18.\textit{xd4= }was played in Klovans - Schein, Graz 1999.) 13.\textit{b5!} Now White has won a tempo compared to the main line, which is also winning. 13...\textit{a6} 14.hxg6 \textit{fxg6} 15.\textit{xf8} axb5 16.\textit{d2} \textit{xf8} 17.\textit{xh7!} 1–0. B.

Lalic - Sulava, Pula 1997. White's attack is conclusive: 17...\textit{h7} 18.\textit{d3} \textit{h6+} 19.f4 \textit{g8} 20.\textit{xe6} \textit{g7} 21.\textit{e8+} \textit{f8} 22.\textit{h7+} and mate follows.

\textbf{12.\textit{g3} d6}

12...\textit{d8} looks entirely wrong, when White is not planning to take on \textit{f8} at the first given moment anyway. However, it does make sense to play it sooner rather than miss out on it later. But after 13.h5 \textit{d6} 14.hxg6 \textit{fxg6} 15.\textit{f4} (keeping the centre stable and the black king exposed) 15...\textit{dxe5} 16.\textit{xe5} \textit{d5} 17.f4 \textit{d7} 18.\textit{c4!} \textit{xe5} (18...\textit{xe5+} 19.\textit{fxe5} \textit{fxf5} 20.\textit{xe5} \textit{dxe5} 21.\textit{b3} - Nunn & Gallagher) 19.\textit{xd5} \textit{xd5} 20.\textit{xe5} \textit{xe4} 21.\textit{d2} White is completely winning, Wedberg - Pokojowczyk, Copenhagen 1984.

\textbf{13.\textit{b5!}}

White's strategy in this game is little short of amazing. Our very own expert in the Kan and Taimanov seems to bust this system.
13...c6
13...d7 as played in some games is best met with 14.d5! dxe5 (14...cxe5 transposes to the game) 15.c4! Probably strongest, as it forces Black into 15...g5 16.d6 when I am very optimistic about White's position. The next moves will be xf8, d1, or similar. White is winning. 13...dxe5 14.dxe5 f6 15.c7 leads to a lost endgame for Black.

14.h5!
A wonderful move. White is not after material gains, but instead aims at the naked black king. Only at the absolutely correct moment will he take the exchange. Right now after 14.exd6 f6 Black is allowed unnecessary counterplay. This is the kind of game Black wants, why give it to him?

14...dxe5 15.f4 d7
This allows White to get rid of his only strange piece, the knight on b5. But 15...d7 allows a winning attack. 16.d3 c5 (16...f6 17.hxg6 xc3† 18.d1 fxg6 19.xg6++) 17.hxg6 xd3† 18.xf6 fxg6 19.xf8 xf8 20.xd6 and the endgame after 20...xd6 21.xd6 xc3† 22.xc2+ 23.d1 h5 24.d8+ g7 25.h2 wins for White. The line analysed to the end goes like this: 25.xf5 26.hc1 xf4† 27.b1 h6 28.xf1 e5 29.ac1 and Black loses his bishop.

16.fxe5 xb5 17.xb5?! 17.xf8! is the superior move order, where Black is just lost.

17...xb5?!
After this it is all over. 17...fc8?! 18.exd6 xc3 19.d2 xg3 20.xa5± where White might have a few technical difficulties, was maybe the last hope?!

18.xe8 xf8 19.exd6 xg5 20.d1
Now White is simply winning.

20.h6 21.d7 f5 22.d3 e8 23.hxg6 e4† 24.f2 f5 25.e3 a4 26.e2 e4† 27.f3 d6 28.d1 e7 29.fd3 g7 30.e1 xd7 31.xd7 xd7 32.xe6 1–0

The final game of this chapter deals with the critical lines of the Pin-variation. I cannot promise White an easy advantage in these lines. They are still developing and Black players are learning more and more about the defensive possibilities in this line.

Game 56
Varga – Horvath
Hungary 1991

1.e4 c5 2.f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.xd4 d6 5.c3 b4?! 6.e5 d5 7.d2 xc3 8.bxc3 e7
8...xf8?! is a really interesting idea that has been popularised over the last few years. I think White is maybe a little better due to his lead in development, but it is not so clear. 9.d3 d6 (On 9...c6 then 10.xc6? makes good sense. 10...xc6 11.0–0 c7 12.e1±
This kind of position is hard to evaluate. Black is happy with his better pawn structure, while White enjoys more space and a lead in development. I think the position favours White, as the open b-file compensates for the double pawns, and the black king will be under some kind of harassment later in the game. However, the inconvenience for Black is likely to be minor.) 10.exd6 (Famous is 10...e2 11.d7 11.exe6 wb6 12.c7t 1–0. Kasparov - West, telex 1977, but 10...dxe5 would seriously test White’s idea. Probably the position is just unclear.) 10...xd6 11.0–0 (11...h5! is my preferred move here. The position is not really so clear. Both players have their chances, but White seems to retain slight pressure.) 11...h5! should be considered when the critical line is probably 12.e2 w7 (12...h5 13.b5! is unpleasant for Black, based on 13...c6 14.xh7t xh7 15.d3t e4 16.xd6 a6 17.xd8 xd8 18.c7 b8 19.f4 when White has the advantage.) 13...e1 where White might have the advantage, based on 13...exd4?! 14.h5 fe6 15.xe6 xe6 16.e1 xe1+ 17.xe1=) 12.h5 g6 13.h6± Sargissian - Bursteinas, Tallinn 1997. White has a slight edge after the opening. However, all the lines are too difficult to analyse conclusively based on just one game. We will stop here with the conclusion that White should not fear going for this line.

9.g4 f8!?

This also has to be taken into consideration, one opening book says. Actually it is quite a good move.

10.d3

10...d6?!

I do not like this approach. Black should be careful about how he opens the position.

10...h5! 11.e4 d5 12.exd6 xd6 13.0–0 e7 led to unclear play in Zyla - Sulskis, Swidnica 1999. This might very well be Black’s best option in the Pin-variation.

Very solid is 10...c6 but I still think that White is better. Black has no active play and the pawn weaknesses cannot really be attacked. 11.xc6 dxc6 12.0–0 c7 (12...h5!? 13.f3 d5 14.e2 h4 was Diaz - Luzuriaga, Buenos Aires 1999, when 15.h3 was the more normal move, when I think White should be a little better. There is no reason to fear weakening the g3-square, as
Experts vs. the Sicilian

Black has no way to exploit it.) 13.f4?! b6 14.\(\text{B}ae1\) c5 Black is completely oblivious to White's plans: 15.f5 is a nightmare for Black. White won quickly in Köttwitz-Hoen, St Ingbert 1994.

11.f4 2d7

11...\(\text{c}c6\) 12.0–0 d5 (12...\(\text{B}xd4\) 13.cxd4 \(\text{f}5\) 14.\(\text{B}f3\)± Leone -Galli, corr. 1969) 13.f5?! White goes for it. An alternative was 13.\(\text{B}ae1\) preparing this advance. (Also strong seems to be 13.\(\text{ab}1\). 13...\(\text{wa}5\) 14.\(\text{B}xc6\) \(\text{c}5\)† (14...\(\text{bx}c6\) 15.f5 \(\text{ex}f5\) 16.\(\text{B}xf5\) was also not pleasant.) 15.\(\text{B}d4\) \(\text{B}xd4\)‡ 16.cxd4 \(\text{B}xd2\) 17.f5 \(\text{B}h6\) 18.\(\text{B}b3\) \(\text{b}6\) 19.\(\text{B}b5\) \(\text{B}h4\) 20.\(\text{B}f2\) \(\text{e}7\), but Black had had enough and resigned in Bresadola -Vibranyevski, corr. 1996.) 13...\(\text{ex}f5\)?! (13...\(\text{B}xe5\) was the logical move. My analysis goes like this: 14.\(\text{B}e2\) \(\text{B}xd3\) 15.\(\text{fx}e6\) \(\text{B}e5\) (maybe better is 15...\(\text{xf}6\) 16.cxd3±) 16.\(\text{B}xe5\) \(\text{f}6\) 17.\(\text{B}e2\) \(\text{B}xe6\) 18.\(\text{B}xe6\)† \(\text{fxe}6\) 19.\(\text{B}xe6\) and I like White. The main point is 19...\(\text{Be}7\) 20.\(\text{B}xd5\) \(\text{B}d8\) 21.\(\text{B}g5\)±) 14.\(\text{B}xf5\) \(\text{B}b6\)† 15.\(\text{B}h1\) \(\text{g}6\) 16.\(\text{B}h6\)† \(\text{B}e8\) 17.\(\text{B}g7\)† \(\text{B}d8\) 18.\(\text{B}f4\) \(\text{B}e6\) 19.c4± Spiridonov -Poulin, e-mail, 1999.

12.0–0 \(\text{B}c5\) 13.\(\text{B}ae1\)

I like this approach from the Hungarian grandmaster. His attack has a very natural feel to it. However also successful was 13.f5?! dxe5 (An improvement would have been to remove the queen from the excellent square g4 with 13...h5?! 14.\(\text{B}e2\) dxe5 15.\(\text{B}xe5\) \(\text{d}d6\) 16.\(\text{B}e3\) \(\text{e}5\) 17.\(\text{B}b5\) \(\text{B}xd3\) 18.\(\text{B}xd6\) \(\text{B}xd6\) 19.cxd3 when

White is only very slightly better.) 14.\(\text{fxe}6\) \(\text{B}e6\)? (14...\(\text{f}6\) 15.\(\text{B}h5\) \(\text{B}xe6\) 16.\(\text{B}xe6\)† \(\text{B}xe6\) 17.\(\text{B}x}e5\) \(\text{B}d6\) 18.\(\text{B}e2\) would just have been slightly better for White) 15.\(\text{B}xf6\)! \(\text{B}xf6\) 16.\(\text{B}g5\) and White won comfortably in Chorfi-Nadli, Ronde 1995.

13.\(\text{B}xd3\) 14.\(\text{cxd}3\) \(\text{h}5\)

This look like a weakening move, but the computer's choice is not reassuring either.

14...\(\text{B}a5\) is met very strongly by 15.f5! All the pieces are ready, so why not? 15.dxe5 (White also wins after 15...\(\text{ex}f5\) 16.\(\text{B}xf5\) \(\text{B}xf5\) 17.\(\text{B}x}f5\) \(\text{B}a2\) 18.c4) 16.\(\text{fxe}6\) \(\text{f}6\) 17.\(\text{B}h5\) \(\text{g}6\) 18.\(\text{B}xe5\) Why exchange queens? 18...\(\text{B}a2\) 19.\(\text{B}h6\)† \(\text{B}g8\) 20.\(\text{B}g5\)! \(\text{B}f8\) 21.e7 and White is winning.

15.\(\text{B}f3\)†

The question is not if White is better, but how much he is better.

15...\(\text{g}6\) 16.\(\text{B}b1\) \(\text{d}5\) 17.\(\text{B}e3\) \(\text{b}6\) 18.c4 \(\text{B}b7\)

It is hard to see how Black should have played differently. Now White crashes through with a very thematic attack.

19.\(\text{f}5!\) \(\text{gx}f5\) 20.\(\text{B}xf5\) \(\text{ex}f5\) 20...\(\text{dxc}4\) 21.\(\text{B}xb7\) \(\text{ex}f5\) 22.\(\text{B}xf5\)± The \(f7\)-square is very weak. Black will not be able to resist the attack.

21.\(\text{B}xf5\) \(\text{B}e8\) 22.\(\text{B}g6!\)

A brilliant move. White wins by force.

22...\(\text{dxc}4\) 23.e6 \(\text{f}6\) 24.\(\text{B}xf6\)† \(\text{B}xf6\) 25.\(\text{B}xf6\)† \(\text{B}g8\) 26.\(\text{B}d4\)

1–0
The Nimzowitsch Variation

By Jacob Aagaard

The Nimzowitsch Variation is a very provocative line, in some ways not dissimilar to the Alekhine Defence. Black allows White to advance his e-pawn with gain of tempo, hoping that it will be weak rather than strong on e5. When I started to work on this chapter I believed that this was a minor line and could be dealt with quickly. Instead it proved at times more difficult to approach than the feared Sveshnikov.

Against the Nimzowitsch variation 1.e4 c5 2.d4 f6!? I have decided to recommend the less principled 3.d4! based on lengthy analysis and my own personal preference. I know that this move gives Black the chance to escape back to the main lines, but since we were ready to play them just a move ago, we still should be now. Obviously it would be desirable to punish Black for his provocation, but if 3.e5 d5 4.c3 then 4...xc3!. This is, of course, what Black wants to do. The e-pawn has advanced too far, and White's pawn structure is damaged. White gets so-called "free play", but I seriously doubt that this includes an advantage. 5.dxc3 c6.

This position has not give White a particularly good score. I generally do not like the position for White; I would much rather play the Black side, as in that case I would mind less if the game suddenly fizzled out into a draw! (4...e6 5.xc5 exd5 6.d4 c6 7.dxc5 bxc5 8.xd5 is notoriously bad for Black, but besides the Israeli IM Afek who has ½/4 with this system, no strong player seems to favour it regularly. Still I have included two games with it; game 59 and 60). 4.d4!? cxd4 5.xd4 promises White a slight edge in
ECO, but maybe that is the only place. This method of play seems to be logical and gives White a good score, but I did not find it dangerous enough to Black.

Still, after 3.\(\Box\)c3 there are ways for Black to continue with deviations from the main lines. And actually many Black players would choose to do so: with 3... e6, inviting 4.e5 (which we accept), with 3...d5?, which is considered in our first game, and with 3...\(\Box\)c6 4.d4 (4.\(\Box\)b5 is another popular move here, but I want to stay true to our repertoire) 4...d5?, which is underrated by theory. However, I still think White is a little better – see game 58.

We will start by having a look at the counterintuitive 3...d5?.

**Game 57**

**Borriss - Bartsch**

Germany 2003

1.e4 c5 2.\(\Box\)f3 \(\Box\)f6!? 3.\(\Box\)c3! d5?  
This is pushing it! Black decides to open the position after a move like ...c5, and obviously being behind in development. It is no surprise that aggressive play seems to give White an advantage.  
3...d6 4.d4 leads to the standard positions of the Sicilian.  
4.exd5 \(\Box\)xd5 5.\(\Box\)b5\(\Box\)d7 6.\(\Box\)e5!  
I like this move and find it logically correct, but 6.\(\Box\)e2 is a possible alternative to this aggressive approach.

6...\(\Box\)xb5?!  
The alternative is 6...\(\Box\)f6 and now White has two options, where only the most aggressive seems to work.  
a) 7.\(\Box\)xd7 \(\Box\)xd7 8.d4 cxd4 (8... a6 9.\(\Box\)xd7\(\Box\) (9.\(\Box\)e2\(\Box\)) 9...\(\Box\)xd7 10.d5 g6 11.\(\Box\)g5 \(\Box\)g7 12.0-0 f6?! (12...0-0 13.d6\(\Box\)) 13.\(\Box\)f4 0-0 14.\(\Box\)e2\(\Box\) Poulsen - Bach, Esbjerg 2004) 9.\(\Box\)xd4 a6! (9... e6 10.\(\Box\)g5 a6 11.\(\Box\)xf6 gxf6 12.\(\Box\)xd7\(\Box\) xd7 13.\(\Box\)xf6 \(\Box\)g8 14.0-0 (14.\(\Box\)f3\(\Box\)) 14.\(\Box\)c6 15.g3 \(\Box\)g7 16.\(\Box\)h4 \(\Box\)xc3 17.bxc3 \(\Box\)xc3 18.\(\Box\)xh7 \(\Box\)h8 19.\(\Box\)e4\(\Box\) Papin - Grigorov, Chalkidiki 2003.) 10.\(\Box\)e2 (10.\(\Box\)xd7\(\Box\) \(\Box\)xd7 11.\(\Box\)e3 \(\Box\)c6= Bielczyk - Kunin, Schwarzach 2002.) 10...\(\Box\)c7 11.0-0 e6= Almagro Llanas - Solaesa Navalpotro, Madrid 2003.  
b) 7.\(\Box\)f3! \(\Box\)e2 8.0-0 (8.\(\Box\)xd7 \(\Box\)bd7 9.d3 (9...a6 10.\(\Box\)xd7\(\Box\) \(\Box\)xd7 11.\(\Box\)g5 was unpleasant for Black in Gentinetta - Perez, e-mail 2000. 9...0-0-0 10.\(\Box\)f4! e5 11.\(\Box\)g3 a6 12.\(\Box\)c4 \(\Box\)b6 13.0-0-0
250 The Nimzowitsch Variation

\[ \text{d6 14.} \text{h4± Shirov - Fernandes, Elista 1998.} \text{ e6 10.} \text{f4} \text{ c8 11.} \text{e4± Ganguly - Sriram, Calicut 2003.} \text{ 8...e6 (8...}\text{xe5? 9.}\text{xb7+-. I see no possible compensation. Remember 9...g4? 10.}\text{c8 mate.) 9.e1! In this position it is very difficult to find a way for Black to escape from the opening without permanent scars in his pawn structure or loss of material.} \]

\[ \]

a) 9...\text{e7 10.a4? was played in Gusev - Krivobokov, Tula 2002. Instead 10.}\text{g3! would have won a pawn for very little.} \text{10...xb5 (10...c6 11.}\text{g7} \text{ f8 12.}\text{d7} \text{d7 13.}\text{e4±. 10...0-0 11.}\text{xb5} \text{b6 12.}\text{xg7} \text{f8 13.a4±.} \]

b) 9...\text{c6 10.}\text{xd7} \text{xd7 11.}\text{xc6± with a very nice endgame.} \]

c) 9...\text{d6 does not work because of 10.}\text{d7±! bxd7 11.}\text{b5} \text{b8 12.}\text{d6+} \text{xd6 13.}\text{x7 0-0 14.}\text{xd7} \text{d7 15.d3++. It is just a pawn.} \]

d) 9...\text{xb5 10.}\text{xb5} \text{b6 11.a4! gives White a position that is close to, or perhaps even directly, winning. It is all based on trapping the black queen in an unusual manner.} \text{ (11.}\text{a3} \text{bd7 12.}\text{g7 d7 13.}\text{c4} \text{a6 14.b3 e7 15.}\text{b2 0-0=} \text{11...}\text{c6! Only move.} \text{ (11...e7 12.}\text{c4±. 11...a6 is met strongly with 12.a5!}\text{xb5 13.c4 b4 14.b3+. The next move is 15.}\text{a4.) 12.}\text{xc6} \text{d6 13.}\text{g3} \text{Black's position is obviously problematic, still it is not entirely clear.} \text{13...}\text{d4! 14.}\text{c7+ e7 15.}\text{e3} \text{c8 16.b5 e8±) 12...bxc6 13.}\text{a3±.} \]

e) 9...\text{a6! This is the best try. Actually the only one I cannot refute directly. 10.}\text{d5?! Otherwise White has nothing.} \text{ (10.}\text{xd7 c4 b6!=) 10...}\text{xd5! (Black is forced to sacrifice} \text{h8. 10...}\text{d8 11.}\text{xf6+ gxf6 12.}\text{xd7} \text{d7 13.}\text{d7+ d7 14.}\text{f6}\text{e8 offers no compensation.)} \text{11.}\text{xd7+ (11.}\text{xf7+ d8 12.}\text{xd7} \text{e6 13.}\text{xe5 f6 15.d4 d7!\text{e5!! 11...}\text{xd7 12.}\text{x7f6 (12...}\text{g8 13.}\text{xe6+ e7 14.d4! with a winning attack) 13.}\text{h8 0-0-0 14.}\text{h4 f4 15.}\text{h4 This position is, of course, hard to evaluate. If White is afraid of going for this kind of adventure, then 8.}\text{xd7 offers a slight edge without any complications. However I truly believe that White is better here.} \text{15.}\text{d6 16.d4 h8 17.dxc5 e5 18.}\text{xf4}\text{xf4 19.}\text{xe6± is just one line where White} \]
enjoys the strength of a rook vs. two minor pieces which have no good squares.

7. \( \text{f3}! \)

This is a famous trick-shot.

7... \( \text{f6} \) 8. \( \text{dxb5} \) \( \text{a6} \)

This is the gambit choice behind 6... \( \text{xb5} \), but it is flawed. Unfortunately for Black it seems that the best move is 8... \( \text{f5} \) 9. \( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 10. \( \text{c7}+ \) \( \text{d7} \)

Then the endgame is great for White. Laznicka - Malmqvist, Marianske Lazne 2003.

8... \( \text{b4} \) 9. \( \text{xb7}! \) just wins for White.

9... \( \text{f5} \) 10. \( \text{c7}+ \) \( \text{f7} \) 11. \( \text{f3}+ \) \( \text{g8} \)

This is the way to play. The queen enters the game and slows down Black's initiative.

Less clear is 14. \( \text{h3} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 15. \( \text{xc2} \) 16. \( \text{b1} \) \( \text{d6} \) 17. \( \text{g1} \) \( \text{f4} \) Dirr - Bartsch, Germany 2003. The pawn structure is a true nightmare, and White cannot develop without compromising it further.

14.d3!? looks sound. However, after 14... \( \text{xc2} \) 15. \( \text{h6} \) 0–0? Black certainly has a lot of play. One plausible line is 16. \( \text{c1} \) \( \text{h6} \) 17. \( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{ab4} \) 18. \( \text{b6} \) \( \text{xd3} \) 19. \( \text{e4} \) \( \text{xe4} \) 20. \( \text{a6}+ \) 21. \( \text{g1} \) \( \text{h3}+! \) 22. \( \text{gxf4} \) \( \text{g8}+ \) 23. \( \text{g4}+ \) \( \text{hxg4} \) 24. \( \text{d3} \) 16. \( \text{d1} \) looks safer, but still Black obviously has play.

14...0–0 15. \( \text{e4}! \)

Offering the exchange of queens without ruining the pawn structure.

15... \( \text{d7} \)
It is easy to criticise this, but Black’s position is bad. 15...\(\texttt{wx}e4\) 16.\(\texttt{a}xe4\) \(\texttt{dxc2}\) 17.\(\texttt{b}1\) \(\texttt{cb}4\) 18.a3 \(\texttt{d}3\) 19.h4\(\pm\). Here I do not trust Black’s compensation. A queen is obviously needed, or a general target. Both \(\texttt{a}6\) and \(\texttt{f}8\) are out of play.

16.a3 \(\texttt{f}5\) 17.\(\texttt{c}4\) \(\texttt{xc}2\) 18.\(\texttt{b}1\)\(\pm\)

White has escaped from the opening an exchange up. It really is that simple. If the advantage is \(\pm\) or \(\pm\) is not so clear, but does it really matter?

18...\(\texttt{b}8\) 19.d3 \(\texttt{e}5\) 20.\(\texttt{g}5\) \(\texttt{xd}3\) 21.\(\texttt{xd}3\) \(\texttt{xd}3\) 22.h4! \(\texttt{xa}3\) 23.\(\texttt{xa}3\) \(\texttt{xc}3\) 24.h5 gxh5 25.\(\texttt{xe}5\) \(\texttt{d}6\)?

Losing a piece. But after 25...\(\texttt{c}7\) 26.\(\texttt{h}7\)\(\pm\) \(\texttt{c}6\) 27.\(\texttt{h}xb7\) \(\texttt{xa}3\) 28.\(\texttt{xa}7\) c4 29.\(\texttt{f}7\) \(\texttt{d}6\) 30.\(\texttt{xf}5\) White is a likely winner.

26.\(\texttt{d}1\)!

1–0

I clearly have my doubts about 3...d5, though an outright refutation probably cannot be found. However the next line was a real nightmare to prepare for. It took me two days to decide that the uncommon 6.dxc5?! is White’s best try for an advantage.

**Game 58**

Ismagambetov - Palit

Kuala Lumpur (U-16 Wch) 2002

1.e4 c5 2.\(\texttt{d}f3\) \(\texttt{f}6\) 3.\(\texttt{c}3\) \(\texttt{c}6\) 4.d4 d5?!

The more I studied this move the more surprised I was. It is actually not stupid at all!

5.exd5 \(\texttt{d}5\)

By transposition we have reached the position after 3.\(\texttt{c}3\) \(\texttt{c}6\) 4.d4 d5 5.exd5 \(\texttt{d}5\).

6.dxc5?!

This is the best attempt for an advantage
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I can offer here. Basically I think Black should be able to scrape a draw quite often, but still it is a sad life...

6...b5?! g4! leads to no advantage for White, only problems. I wonder why g4 has been played only a few times.

6...xd5 xd5 7.e3 cxd4 8.exd4 a6 9...e2 e5 also seems reasonable to me.

6...xc3 7.xd8+ xd8!

7...xd8 is the main alternative. My feeling is that White should gain a small plus in all lines. 8.bxc3 f6 (8...e5 9.g5 e8 10.c4 d8 11.f4 h6 12.e4± Santo Roman - Hausner, Prague 2000.) 9.e3 e5 10.c4 (10.d2!? is a very natural alternative with the score of 3/3. 10...e6 11.c4 xc4 12.cxc4 c7 13.0-0-0 c7 14.d3 ad8 15.hd1± Feygin - Afek, Belgium 2004.) 10...c7 (10...g4 as in Collins - Schalkwijk, Corr. 2001 is best met with 11.d2 c7 12.f3 f5 13.e4± where Black soon could be much worse) 11.d2 f5 12.0-0-0 c7 13.f3 ad8 14.h4 c8 15.e4 h6 16.g4 h5 17.xd8 xd8 18.g5± Rowson - Murey, Pula 2002.

8.bxc3 f6!

Building a big centre is the best plan for Black.

On 8...g6 then 9.b5+! seems to be the best way forward. 9...c6 (9...d7 10.xd7+ xd7 11.e3 c8 12.0-0-0+ e8 13.d3±) 10.e5 g7 11.xc6 a6 12.a4 d7 13.b1 xc3 14.d2 xd2+ 15.xd2 bxc6 16.b7± Froeyman - Hajenius, Belgium 2001.

8...d7 9.e3! is known as better for White. The following lines shows why:

a) 9...g6 10.0-0-0 g7 11.d4 h6+ 12.b2 0-0 13.e5 e6 14.b5 f6 15.d3 d5 16.f3 e5 17.f2± Krnic - Wedberg, Eksjo 1978.

b) 9...f6 10.d4 c8 11.b3 e5 12.c4 b6 13.a6 b8 14.0-0± Bravo Barranco - Paredes, Barcelona 1996.


9.e3 e5

10.d2

The most flexible. Also played has been 10.0-0-0?! With this White loses the option of invading down the b-file, and with that all chances of an advantage.
The Nimzowitsch Variation

10...\textit{d}d7 (10...\textit{e}e6 11.\textit{d}d5 \textit{c}c7?! 12.\textit{d}d2 \textit{e}e6 13.\textit{b}b5+ \textit{f}f7 14.\textit{c}c4 \textit{e}e8 15.\textit{h}d1\pm is not what Black is looking for. Those “repetitions” make his position worse continually.) 11.\textit{d}d2 \textit{c}c8? 12.\textit{e}e4 \textit{e}e6 (12...\textit{f}f5?! was a better try. After 13.\textit{d}d6+ \textit{x}d6 14.\textit{c}xd6 \textit{b}6 15.\textit{b}b2\pm White is better all the same.) 13.\textit{d}d5 \textit{c}c6 14.\textit{d}d6+ \textit{x}d6 15.\textit{b}b2\pm Vallejo Pons - Afek, France 2003. However 11...\textit{b}6! would have kept Black at least equal. The main point is 12.\textit{e}e4 \textit{b}b7\! with compensation. I have analysed this line somewhat and equality was the best I found for White, and that was not so evident in all lines!

10...\textit{e}e6

10...\textit{e}e6 11.\textit{e}e4 \textit{d}d7 12.\textit{b}b1 \textit{c}c6 as in Schramm - Pawlitzki, Germany 1992. White might have a slight advantage, but I am not even certain. However all moves are open to discussion.

11.\textit{b}b5+ \textit{d}d7

12.\textit{x}d7??

White has the chance to play for an advantage only through his lead in development. Therefore the right choice was a developing move, and not a move that develops the opponent’s king.

12.\textit{b}b1! would guarantee White a slight advantage: 12...\textit{c}c8! (12...\textit{x}b5 13.\textit{x}b5 \textit{d}d7 14.\textit{e}e2 and 15.\textit{h}b1 is clearly good for White.) 13.\textit{d}d7+ \textit{x}d7 14.\textit{b}b3\pm Now there is no a7-a5, so I think that White has the better prospects. One line could be 14...\textit{e}e6 15.\textit{e}e2 \textit{a}a5 16.\textit{c}c5\textit{c}c5 17.\textit{xc}c5 \textit{xc}c5 18.\textit{xb}b7? \textit{e}e6 19.\textit{xa}a7 \textit{xc}c3 20.\textit{b}b1\pm.

12...\textit{x}d7 13.0-0?!

13.\textit{e}e2 is also better here.

13...\textit{e}e6 14.\textit{f}d1 \textit{c}c6 15.\textit{b}b3 \textit{e}e7??

Black realises that he cannot allow White to invade to the 7th rank. However, if he had prepared it, taking the c-pawn would have been fine. 15...a5! 16.a4 \textit{xc}c5 17.\textit{xc}c5 \textit{xc}c5 18.\textit{xc}c5 \textit{xc}c5 19.\textit{d}d7 b5\= and the distant passed pawn and active king are quite good for creating counterplay.

16.\textit{a}a5+ \textit{c}c7 17.\textit{xb}b7?±

And White won.

In the next two games we shall see the heavily theoretical main line of the Nimzowitsch Sicilian. I actually think that the previous line represents Black’s best option here, and that the next two games are fought over in somewhat dubious territory.
Game 59
Braun - Choroba
e-mail 2002

1.e4 c5 2.dı3 dı6 3.e5 dıd5 4.dıc3 e6
Our move order is of course with 3.dıc3
e6 4.e5! dıd5, when we can continue
with the game.

However in our move order it would
also be possible to play 4.d4 aiming
for a normal Sicilian. If Black is a true
Nimzowitsch-Sicilian player he can try
4...d5!? I now prefer 5.exd5, but let us
look at both lines:

a) 5.e5!? is possible, but now we are
in the French Defence. Positions such as
5...dıe4 (5...dıf7 6.dxc5 dıxc5 7.dıd3
dıc6 8.dıf4 f6 (8...dıb6?! 9.0-0 dıxb2
is a bad idea. White wins with 10.dıb5
0-0 (10...dıf8 11.dıd2! d4 12.dıe2 and
the queen is trapped.) 11.dıxh7!! dıxh7
12.dıd3† g6 13.dıf1 dıb4 14.dıg5†
dıg7 15.dıh3+-) 9.exf6 dıxf6 10.0-0 0-0
11.dıe5 Black should be OK here, still
the position is not that easy. 11...dıe4?
12.dıxe4! dıxf4 13.dıd3, White is slightly
better in Zatonskii - Tessier Desrosiers,
Kapuskasing 2004.) 6.dıd3 dıxc3
7.bxc3 c4 8.dıe2 dıe7 9.h4 h6 10.h5
dıc6 11.dıh3 dıa5 12.dıd2 dıd7 13.dıg3
dıf8 14.dıf1 0-0-0 15.dıg1± Baklan -
Danneel, Ghent 2003. It is all a matter of
what kind of position you enjoy playing,
of course.

b) 5...dıxd5 6.dıxd5 dıxd5 (6...
exd5 7.dıb5† dıd7 8.dıe2?!, Hardly the
only way to play. 8...dıe6 9.0-0 dıe7
10.dxc5 dıxc5 11.dıg5 dıc6 12.dıxe6
fxe6 13.dıg4 dıf6 14.dıe2 dıd4 15.dıd3
0-0 16.dıe3 dıac8 17.dıae1, with a slight
advantage for the first player, Filippov -
Kohanchik, Moscow 2002.) 7.dıe3 exd4
8.dıxd4± a6 9.dıe2 e5?! But it was not
so easy for Black anyway. 10.dıf3 dıa5†
11.dıd2 dıb4 12.0-0 dıxd2 13.dıb3 dıc7
14.dıxd2 0-0 15.dıf1 dıe6 16.dıa5 dıc8
17.dıxe5, White is objectively winning,
Tiviakov - Afek, Vlissingen 2003. That
White did not win this game is not easy
to understand.

5.dıxd5 exd5 6.d4 dıc6
6...d6 has long been held in disregard
because of

7.dıb5†! giving White a slight but lasting
effect in all lines. 7...dıc6 (7...dıd7
8.dıxd7† dıxd7 9.0-0 dıc6 10.exd6
dıxd6 11.dıe1† dıe7 12.dxc5 dıxc5
13.dıe3± with a sad endgame for Black
in Nemec - Volf, Czech Republic 2003.)
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8.0-0 e7 9.c4 and we now have:

a) 9...e6 10.e3 b6 11.a4 a6 12.a5 c7 13.exd6 cxd6 14.dxc5 d8 15.xc6 bxc6 16.e5 c7 17.a4 c8 18.cxd5 exd5 19.c4, White is better, Unzicker - Pomar Salamanca, Bad Aibling 1968.

b) 9...dxc4!? is possible. White however retains the better play after 10.d5! a6 11.a4 b5 12.c6 bxa4 13.exd6 cxd6 14.xa4 0-0 15.d1 c7 16.g5. Old theory says:

c) 9...a6 10.exd6 cxd6 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.exd6 cxd6 and now White has two ways to go.

c1) 13.g5!? xg5 14.xg5 0-0 15.dxc5 c5 16.d3.

c2) 13.dxc5 c5 14.e3 b5 15.d4 with a clear edge for White according to Boleslavsky. However I think that evaluation is a bit optimistic. A minor advantage for White is probably more accurate. One game went 15...xb2?! 16.e6 d6 16...f6 17.xd5 e6 18.d6 b7 19.d6, gives that minor ± I'm talking about.) 17.xe7 xe7 18.c5 d7 19.d4 a3 20.e1 h8 21.b1 ac8 22.e5 a5 23.b7+ d8 24.ab1 c5 25.b6 e7 26.a6 a4 27.d6 d7 28.b4 e8 29.d6+ 1-0. Herbst - Rossell, e-mail 2000.

7.dxc5 xc5 8.xd5 b6

...d6 is maybe slightly sounder, and portrayed in the next game.

9.c4 xf2† 10.e2 0-0 11.f1 c5 12.g5

12...d4†

This main line move does not seem to lead anywhere. I have a bad feeling about Black's position in these lines.

12...xe5!? is a very tricky move. According to theory it is just winning for White. However, the theoretical line leads to unclear play or a forced draw, if Black finds some simple improvements. 13.xe5 d5 14.xd5 (14.xd5 g4† 15.f3 ad8! was unclear in two mid 80s correspondence games from Prieto Fernandez. However I am not sure that White cannot find an advantage here as well, though it would be under very unclear circumstances. In Beating the Sicilian 3 Nunn and Gallagher only give a game with 15...g1, which to me seems less relevant. To be fair, I must point out that the databases over the last few years have improved immensely.) 14...g4† 15.d3 was successful in Kaidanov - Kreitner, Chicago 1995, which made
Kaidanov believe it was close to winning. However (15.e1?! bae8 16.axf7† h8 17.\textasciitilde xef8! (17.\textasciitilde xe8? \textasciitilde a5†!!→+) 17...\textasciitilde xe8† 18.\textasciitilde xe8 h6 19.h3 (19.\textasciitilde e4 \textasciitilde e3∞) 19...hxg5 20 hxg4 \textasciitilde e6†=) 15...\textasciitilde fe8!! gives White only perpetual check with 16.\textasciitilde xf7, as 16.\textasciitilde xf7† h8 17.\textasciitilde xe8?? \textasciitilde d8†! is mate in a very few moves.

13.\textasciitilde f4?! might be the right move.

Now we have:

a) 13...\textasciitilde xc4 14.\textasciitilde xf7++.

b) 13...\textasciitilde d6 14.\textasciitilde e4 g6 15.\textasciitilde xf7 \textasciitilde xf7 16.\textasciitilde xf7 \textasciitilde xf7 17.\textasciitilde e8† \textasciitilde f8 18.\textasciitilde xf7† \textasciitilde g7 19.\textasciitilde xf8† \textasciitilde xf8 20.\textasciitilde d5±. This endgame is terrible for Black: behind in development and with a clearly inferior pawn structure.

c) 13...d6 14.\textasciitilde e4 g6 15.\textasciitilde xf7! \textasciitilde g4† 16.\textasciitilde xg4 \textasciitilde xg4 (16...\textasciitilde xc4 17.\textasciitilde xg6† hxg6 18.\textasciitilde xg6 mate.) 17.\textasciitilde g5† \textasciitilde h8 18.\textasciitilde xg4 \textasciitilde ae8† 19.\textasciitilde d3 \textasciitilde e3 20.\textasciitilde e6 Having used quite some time on this position, I think it is clearly better for White. The main line goes 20...d5 (20...\textasciitilde f4 21.\textasciitilde xe3 \textasciitilde xe3† 22.\textasciitilde xe3 \textasciitilde xg4 23.\textasciitilde d5±) 21.\textasciitilde xd5 \textasciitilde xe6 22.\textasciitilde xe6 \textasciitilde d8† 23.\textasciitilde d7! \textasciitilde xc1 24.\textasciitilde xc1 \textasciitilde d6† 25.\textasciitilde d4† \textasciitilde xd4† 26.\textasciitilde xd4± and White has great chances to win the endgame.

d) 13...h6 Probably the best option. 14.\textasciitilde xf7(14.\textasciitilde xe5?! d5! Always this move. 15.\textasciitilde xd5 hxg5 16.\textasciitilde xf7 \textasciitilde xf7 17.\textasciitilde e8† \textasciitilde h7 18.\textasciitilde xf7 \textasciitilde g4† \textasciitilde e. I have my doubts about White’s chances of surviving such an attack.) 14...\textasciitilde xf7 15.\textasciitilde xf7 \textasciitilde e6† Only move, which is actually not such bad news for White. 16.\textasciitilde xe6 dxe6 17.\textasciitilde xf8† \textasciitilde xf8±. Here White can play many things. The endgame is slightly preferable, but nothing fantastic. It is possible to study the lines further, but my general feeling is that this is the kind of thing White will be able to get. A complete bust is hard to find.

13.\textasciitilde d1 \textasciitilde e6 14.\textasciitilde e4 d6

14...\textasciitilde g1 has only been played once. In that game Black even managed to get the advantage, but logical play wins for White. 15.\textasciitilde d6! An excellent square for the knight. 15...\textasciitilde xh2 (15...\textasciitilde d4†? 16.\textasciitilde xd4 \textasciitilde xd4 17.\textasciitilde e1± and Black cannot easily get his pieces into play.). Now 16.g3 \textasciitilde c6 17.\textasciitilde f4 was played in Kopelevich - Muehlenweg, e-mail 2002. 17...\textasciitilde xd5† 18.\textasciitilde xd5 g5!! is not what White is looking for. 16.\textasciitilde d3 also looks tempting, but I could not make it work. 16...\textasciitilde c6! 17.\textasciitilde xc6 (17.c4 h6 18.\textasciitilde f5
The Nimzowitsch Variation

\[ E:e8 \]

19. \( \text{d}xh6 \) \( \text{wx}d5 \) 20. \( \text{cx}d5 \) \( \text{axe}5 \)!

17...\( \text{d}xc6 \) 18. \( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{xe}5 \) 19. \( \text{x}h7 \) \( \text{h}8 \)
20. \( \text{g}6 \) \( \text{g}8 \) 21. \( \text{xf}7 \) A wonderful combination, but only a draw.

21...\( \text{xf}7 \) 22. \( \text{xh}8 \) \( \text{xe}5 \) 23. \( \text{xf}7 \) \( \text{g}8 \)
24. \( \text{xe}5 \).

But 16. \( \text{h}1 \), simple and strong, seems to be too dangerous for Black.

My analysis gave these lines:

a) 16...\( \text{g}3 \) 17. \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{h}6 \) (17...\( \text{f}5 \) 18. \( \text{xf}5 \) 18. \( \text{xf}5 \) 19. \( \text{e}7 \) \( \text{h}8 \)
20. \( \text{e}4 \)++)

b) 16...\( \text{h}6 \) loses in similar ways to the other lines. 17. \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{f}4 \) 18. \( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{f}5 \)
19. \( \text{xf}6 \) \( \text{xd}6 \) 20. \( \text{fg}7 \) \( \text{vg}7 \) 21. \( \text{h}7 \) \( \text{f}7 \)
22. \( \text{fx}f1 \) and White wins material.

c) 16...\( \text{f}2 \)! 17. \( \text{d}3 \) (17. \( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{f}5 \))
17...\( \text{f}4 \) 18. \( \text{h}7 \) A very nice refutation.

18. \( \text{x}f4 \) \( \text{xf}4 \) 19. \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{xd}2 \) 20. \( \text{xd}2 \). It is obvious that White has a fantastic position once he regains the material, but he also has a fantastic attack after 20...\( \text{e}6 \) 21. \( \text{hx}h2 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 22. \( \text{a}4 \)!

\[ \text{a}1\text{-a}3\text{-g}3 \] coming, deciding the game in White's favour.

d) 16...\( \text{h}5 \)? appears to be the hardest move to kill. The point is that the pawn is better placed on \( \text{h}5 \) than on \( \text{h}6 \) in many lines. However I seem to have found a way to grind Black down. 17. \( \text{a}4 \)!

A whole new resource. (17. \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{g}6 \) surprisingly seems to lead nowhere: Black's position is hard to crack. So what I thought was that White should get \( \text{a}1 \) into play, since this was the problem with all my previous attempts. And I should know, having lectured continuously on the importance of this simple rule in my books.)

17...\( \text{f}4 \) 18. \( \text{a}3 \).

I think White must have the better chances here. Moves like \( \text{h}3 \) and \( \text{f}3 \) are coming, and \( \text{f}7 \) seems bound to fall. My two main lines are:

d1) 18...\( \text{c}6 \) 19. \( \text{xc}6 \) \( \text{dc}6 \) 20. \( \text{xe}6 \)
\( \text{fxe}6 \) 21. \( \text{xf}4 \) \( \text{xf}4 \) 22. \( \text{hx}h5 \)++. White clearly wins positionally, but he has a winning attack as well.

d2) 18...\( \text{g}6 \) 19. \( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{xc}1 \) 20. \( \text{xc}1 \) and White has an absolutely winning position. The next few moves are likely to be \( \text{d}3 \) and \( \text{e}6 \). One line is 20...\( \text{b}4 \)
21. \( \text{e}4 \) with the idea of various sacrifices:

18. \( \text{g}7 \)
22. \( \text{e}7 \) \( \text{xf}7 \) 23. \( \text{xf}7 \) \( \text{xf}7 \) 24. \( \text{xe}6 \)++

15. \( \text{xd}6 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 16. \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{xd}6 \) 17. \( \text{h}5 \) \( \text{f}5 \)
18. \( \text{xd}6 \) \( \text{xd}6 \) 19. \( \text{xf}5 \) \( \text{bx}2 \)

I do not believe that Black's position can be saved anymore.

Another try has been 19...\( \text{f}8 \), but 20. \( \text{h}7 \) \( \text{h}8 \) 21. \( \text{xf}4 \) seems to put Black
a pawn behind. It is really as simple as that. Here are a few lines to prove it:

a) 21...\textit{g}6 22.\textit{xd}6 \textit{g}4\texttt{+} 23.\textit{e}1 \textit{xd}6 24.\textit{f}4 \textit{f}6 25.\textit{g}3\texttt{+}-- Zanetti - Corinthios, corr. 1986.

b) 21...\textit{xf}4 22.\textit{xf}4 \textit{f}5 Repp - Boeckler, corr. 1993. Now strongest is 23.\textit{e}2! \textit{e}8\texttt{+} 24.\textit{f}2\texttt{+} with a winning endgame.

c) 21...\textit{e}7 22.\textit{d}2\texttt{!}. White is best off developing. 22...\textit{g}6 23.\textit{g}5 \textit{xf}5 24.\textit{xe}5 \textit{d}5 25.\textit{e}3 \textit{g}4\texttt{+} 26.\textit{c}1 \textit{e}5 27.\textit{e}4\texttt{+}-- Wolff - Izumikawa, USA 1987.

d) 21...\textit{c}5 22.\textit{e}3 \textit{h}5\texttt{+} 23.\textit{e}1\texttt{!}. Simplest. There is security to be found on the kingside. 23...\textit{d}7 24.\textit{f}2 \textit{g}6 25.\textit{g}5 \textit{f}8\texttt{+} 26.\textit{g}1+- Lehner - Kummer, Hartberg 1992.

20.\textit{h}7\texttt{+} \textit{h}8 21.\textit{g}5 \textit{g}8 22.\textit{e}3 \textit{xf}4 The only move. The alternative 22...\textit{d}8 23.\textit{f}4 \textit{xf}4 24.\textit{xf}4\texttt{+} has given White a clearly better endgame in many games. There is no reason to know more than this.

23.\textit{h}5\texttt{!}

The old move. An impressive game was 23.\textit{c}1\texttt{!}. 24.\textit{f}5 \textit{h}1\texttt{+} 25.\textit{d}2 \textit{h}2\texttt{+} 26.\textit{f}2\texttt{!} \textit{h}4 27.\textit{g}1 \textit{g}6 28.\textit{h}1\texttt{!} The final blow. 28...\textit{b}4\texttt{+}, but Black resigned because of 29.\textit{c}1 \textit{g}7 30.\textit{h}7\texttt{+}! Haba - Kummer, Austria 1998.

However, there is still life in Black's position, despite the computer's disbelief. 23...\textit{h}2! 24.\textit{f}3 \textit{e}5 25.\textit{h}1 \textit{f}8\texttt{!!} was an impressive discovery. I am not sure White is better after this. 26.\textit{h}7\texttt{+} \textit{g}8 27.\textit{h}3 \textit{d}4 28.\textit{h}8\texttt{+} \textit{f}7 29.\textit{xf}8\texttt{+} \textit{xf}8 30.\textit{f}1\texttt{+} \textit{f}5 31.\textit{f}4 \textit{d}5 32.\textit{c}4 \textit{e}4 33.\textit{d}6\texttt{+} \textit{e}8 34.\textit{h}2 \textit{e}6 35.\textit{d}3 \textit{h}2 ½--½. Elburg - Turati, e-mail 2000.

23...\textit{g}6 24.\textit{d}4\texttt{+} \textit{g}7 25.\textit{xf}7\texttt{+} \textit{xf}7 26.\textit{e}5\texttt{+} \textit{h}6 27.\textit{e}3\texttt{!}

27.\textit{f}4\texttt{+} \textit{g}7 28.\textit{f}6\texttt{+} \textit{h}6 29.\textit{h}4\texttt{+} \textit{g}7 30.\textit{d}4\texttt{+} \textit{h}6 leads nowhere.

27...\textit{g}7

27...\textit{g}5 28.\textit{c}1\texttt{!} (28.\textit{f}6\texttt{+} \textit{g}6 29.\textit{f}2 \textit{h}3 30.\textit{h}3\texttt{+} \textit{h}3\texttt{∞}) 28...\textit{h}3 29.\textit{e}7 \textit{g}6 30.\textit{d}1\texttt{±} is similar to the game. Black is suffering and there is no end in sight.

28.\textit{c}1\texttt{!}

This quiet waiting move underlines the real problem in Black's position, which is not the open king, but that he is unable to develop his pieces sensibly.

28...\textit{f}5

This must surely have hurt, but Black cannot save the position. 28...\textit{h}3 29.\textit{f}2 \textit{g}1\texttt{+} 30.\textit{d}2 \textit{g}4 31.\textit{h}1 \textit{b}4\texttt{+}
32.\(\text{\(\mathbb{d}1\)}\) \(\text{\(g4\)}\) 33.\(\text{\(\mathbb{c1}\)}\) h5 34.\(\text{\(\mathbb{e5}\)}\) \(\text{\(h6\)}\) 35.\(\text{\(\mathbb{f7}\)}\) and the king is toasted.

28...\(\text{\(\mathbb{h2}\)}\) 29.\(\text{\(\mathbb{d4}\)}\) \(\text{\(h6\)}\) looks like a defence, but White wins elegantly with 30.\(\text{\(\mathbb{d5}\)}!!\) \(\text{\(h3\)}\) 31.\(\text{\(\mathbb{h1}\)}\) \(\text{\(\mathbb{g3}\)}\) 32.\(\text{\(\mathbb{f1}\)}\)\+.

29.\(\text{\(\mathbb{d4}\)}\) \(\text{\(h6\)}\) 30.\(\text{\(\mathbb{g1}\)}\) \(\text{\(\mathbb{h3}\)}\) 31.\(\text{\(\mathbb{xf5}\)}\) \(\text{\(\mathbb{gf5}\)}\) 32.\(\text{\(\mathbb{d2}\)}\) f4 33.\(\text{\(\mathbb{xf4}\)}\) \(\text{\(h5\)}\) 34.\(\text{\(\mathbb{e5}\)}\) \(\text{\(h6\)}\) 35.\(\text{\(\mathbb{e1}\)}\)!

White has succeeded in stripping Black's king completely, and material is still level. If White succeeds in getting \(\text{\(\mathbb{a1}\)}\) into play he will win very easily. This is exactly what happens in the game. There are many lines possible in the coming moves, all leading to White's satisfaction. I have chosen not to include them, as this position is clear enough to make an evaluation on, and as almost any move is possible all the time.

The game played by White here is a great achievement, especially as both players are rated around 2000. However, being an e-mail game I cannot help wondering if they had some help from the silicon monsters. Advanced chess does seem to live quite well in e-mail tournaments. From a theoretical point of view it is, of course, a great thing that this game exists.

35.\(\text{\(\mathbb{ac8}\)}\) 36.\(\text{\(\mathbb{b1}\)}\) \(\text{\(\mathbb{c6}\)}\) 37.a4 \(\text{\(\mathbb{g5}\)}\) 38.\(\text{\(\mathbb{e7}\)}\) \(\text{\(\mathbb{f5}\)}\) 39.\(\text{\(\mathbb{a3}\)}\) \(\text{\(\mathbb{xc2}\)}\) 40.\(\text{\(\mathbb{a1}\)}\) \(\text{\(\mathbb{g2}\)}\) 41.\(\text{\(\mathbb{f8}\)}\) \(\text{\(h5\)}\)

41...\(\text{\(\mathbb{g7}\)}\) 42.\(\text{\(\mathbb{ae3}\)}\) \(\text{\(\mathbb{a6}\)}\) 43.\(\text{\(\mathbb{f4}\)}\) \(\text{\(\mathbb{g5}\)}\) 44.\(\text{\(\mathbb{e7}\)}\) and Black's position is collapsing.

42.\(\text{\(\mathbb{f3}\)}\)

1–0

In the last game of this chapter we will have a look at the double pawn sacrifice line with 8...d6. This is not played as often as 8...\(\text{\(\mathbb{b6}\)}\), probably because it is less dramatic. White should be able to prove an advantage by keeping one of the pawns and torturing Black in endless endgames, until Black players stop playing this line.

**Game 60**

**Hlavac – Bazant**

Czech Republic 2000

1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{\(\mathbb{d3}\)}\) \(\text{\(\mathbb{f6}\)}\) 3.e5 \(\text{\(\mathbb{d5}\)}\) 4.\(\text{\(\mathbb{c3}\)}\) e6

5.\(\text{\(\mathbb{xd5}\)}\) \(\text{\(\mathbb{xd5}\)}\) 6.d4 \(\text{\(\mathbb{c6}\)}\) 7.dxc5 \(\text{\(\mathbb{xc5}\)}\)

8.\(\text{\(\mathbb{xd5}\)}\) d6?  

This move has a better theoretical reputation than 8...\(\text{\(\mathbb{b6}\)}\), which is probably justified. I still think that White should get the advantage.

9.\(\text{\(\mathbb{exd6}\)}\) \(\text{\(\mathbb{b6}\)}\) 10.\(\text{\(\mathbb{e4}\)}\)
This is the main response, and probably also the best.
10...\(\texttt{\textit{\textit{e}}6\texttt{\textit{\textit{h}}4}}

11...\(\texttt{\textit{f}}6\)

Black has many alternatives, from which the first is the best, and the last is the worst possible move in the position.

On 11...\(\texttt{\textit{\textit{xd}}6}\) then 12...\(\texttt{\textit{d}}3\)! is a fine move. (12...\(\texttt{\textit{e}}2\) is played more often, but after 12...\(\texttt{\textit{f}}5\)! as in David - Luther, France 2003 it is not easy to prove an advantage, nor after the main line 12...\(\texttt{\textit{e}}7\) 13.\(\texttt{\textit{e}}4\) 0–0–0) 12...\(\texttt{\textit{b}}4\)
(12...\(\texttt{\textit{b}}4\) 13.c3 \(\texttt{\textit{\textit{x}}h}4\) 14.\(\texttt{\textit{\textit{h}}xh}4\) 0–0–0 Joecks - Arnold, Germany 1989. Now strongest was 15...\(\texttt{\textit{f}}5\)!± and Black has some compensation, but not enough.)
13.0–0 \(\texttt{\textit{\textit{xd}}3}\) was played in Paavilainen - Westerinen, Finland 1991 among others. Now White has an improvement in 14.\(\texttt{\textit{a}}4\) which forces a nice endgame 14...\(\texttt{\textit{c}}6\) 15.\(\texttt{\textit{c}}6\) 16.\(\texttt{\textit{\textit{\textit{c}}6}}\) where only White has winning chances. The key idea is to play \(\texttt{\textit{f}}3\)-d2-e4 or c4 when the talk of the two bishops will stop.

11...\(\texttt{\textit{f}}5\) 12...\(\texttt{\textit{c}}4\) 0–0 13.0–0 \(\texttt{\textit{xc}}2\)
(13...\(\texttt{\textit{xd}}6\) 14.\(\texttt{\textit{b}}3\)±) 14.\(\texttt{\textit{f}}4\) \(\texttt{\textit{xb}}2\)
15.\(\texttt{\textit{ac}}1\) \(\texttt{\textit{a}}3\) 16.\(\texttt{\textit{fe}}1\)± Doggers - Afek, Tilburg 2003.

11...0–0 12.\(\texttt{\textit{d}}3\) \(\texttt{\textit{b}}4\)± 13.c3 \(\texttt{\textit{\textit{x}}h}4\) 14.\(\texttt{\textit{\textit{x}}h}4\) \(\texttt{\textit{ad}}8\) was played in Jurek - Suchon, Poland 1999. Now the strongest continuation is 15...\(\texttt{\textit{f}}4\) \(\texttt{\textit{xd}}6\) 16.\(\texttt{\textit{xd}}6\) \(\texttt{\textit{xd}}6\) 17.0–0–0± and there is no compensation for the pawn.

11...\(\texttt{\textit{\textit{b}}4}\) 12.\(\texttt{\textit{e}}7\) mate! 1–0. Paaske - Pedersen, Copenhagen 2003.

12...\(\texttt{\textit{d}}3\)

12...\(\texttt{\textit{d}}7\)? \(\texttt{\textit{\textit{xd}}7}\) 13...\(\texttt{\textit{e}}2\) as in Ribeiro - Fernandes, Lisbon 1998 only helps Black as 13...\(\texttt{\textit{g}}5\)! is very strong now. Other alternatives are equally senseless.

12...0–0–0

12...g5 13...\(\texttt{\textit{\textit{\textit{x}}g}}5\)! \(\texttt{\textit{\textit{fxg}}5}\) 14...\(\texttt{\textit{\textit{\textit{g}}5}}\) \(\texttt{\textit{a}}5\)± 15.c3 1–0. Schwab - Dumitriu, corr. 1995.

13.0–0
13...\\textit{\textbf{xd6}}

13...g5 14.\textit{\textbf{wh6}} g4 15.\textit{\textbf{g5}} \textit{\textbf{d5}} 16.\textit{\textbf{e4+}} Seirawan - Seybold, Zurich (sim) 1988.

13...h5 14.\textit{\textbf{e3}}!? Not the only way to play, but a very reliable move. 14...\textit{\textbf{xe3}} 15.\textit{\textbf{xa5}} this is given as compensation in \textit{ECO}, which is completely wrong. Though the book is a very well structured reference guide, it is sometimes too apparent that the lines are made up of a reshuffling of all the games in the Informants, and no evaluation by the editors themselves. This is also why a weaker player's recommendations are made to seem more important than Kasparov's choices over the board, when given the main lines. (Also after 16...\textit{\textbf{xd6}} 17.\textit{\textbf{g3}}! Black is in deep trouble. White simply wins a pawn without any counterplay. 17...\textit{\textbf{hd8}} 18.\textit{\textbf{g7}} \textit{\textbf{g4}} 19.\textit{\textbf{ae1}} \textit{\textbf{b6}} 20.\textit{\textbf{d2+}}. ) 17.\textit{\textbf{g3+}}. A very powerful move. Now Black cannot free himself. 17...\textit{\textbf{c5}} 18.\textit{\textbf{ad1}} \textit{\textbf{b8}} 19.\textit{\textbf{e4}} \textit{\textbf{e5}} 20.\textit{\textbf{xe5}} \textit{\textbf{xd1}} This was Hansson - Fernandes, London 1984. Now 21.\textit{\textbf{g7}} just wins outright. 21...\textit{\textbf{c8}} (21...\textit{\textbf{b4}} 22.\textit{\textbf{c6+}}; 21...\textit{\textbf{b5}} 22.\textit{\textbf{c4+}}; 21...\textit{\textbf{b6}} 22.\textit{\textbf{xh8+}}) 22.\textit{\textbf{f5+}}! and Black has no squares for the queen since 22...\textit{\textbf{c5}} 23.\textit{\textbf{d7+}} is all over.

14.\textit{\textbf{a3}}!

Black's pieces are not ready to meet the advance of the queenside pawns.

14...\textit{\textbf{d4}}

14...g5 15.\textit{\textbf{h6}}! A standard move in these lines. 15...\textit{\textbf{d8}} 16.b4 \textit{\textbf{b6}} 17.\textit{\textbf{e3}}\# Lamprecht - Bach, Hamburg 1998.

14...a5 does not work at all. 15.b4! axb4 16.axb4 and Black loses material: 16...\textit{\textbf{xb4}} 17.\textit{\textbf{c3}} \textit{\textbf{c5}} 18.\textit{\textbf{a8+}} \textit{\textbf{b8}} 19.\textit{\textbf{f4}} g5 20.\textit{\textbf{xd6}} gxh4 21.\textit{\textbf{xb8+}} \textit{\textbf{d7}} 22.\textit{\textbf{xc5}} \textit{\textbf{xc5}} 23.\textit{\textbf{e8+}}.

15.\textit{\textbf{g3}}?!

This subtle move is probably even stronger than 15.\textit{\textbf{xd4}} \textit{\textbf{xd4}} 16.\textit{\textbf{g3}}\# when I am not certain that Black does not have a little compensation. Now weak is 16...\textit{\textbf{d7?!}} 17.\textit{\textbf{e3}} \textit{\textbf{xe3}} 18.\textit{\textbf{xe3}} \textit{\textbf{xe3}} 19.\textit{\textbf{exe3}} as in Negri - Elburg, e-mail 2000. Why did Black want to play this endgame?

15...\textit{\textbf{c6}}

The alternatives are not better. 15...\textit{\textbf{b3?!}} 16.\textit{\textbf{xb3}} \textit{\textbf{xd3}} 17.b4 \textit{\textbf{d6}} 18.\textit{\textbf{f4+}}.

15...g5 16.\textit{\textbf{e3}}\#.

15...\textit{\textbf{xf3+}} 16.\textit{\textbf{xf3}} \textit{\textbf{d4}} 17.\textit{\textbf{c3}} \textit{\textbf{e5}}
18.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}5}}}$\pm$ This all seems very clear-cut to me.

16.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}d}4}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}d}4}}

16...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}d}4}} 17.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}4}}!} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}5}} 18.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}4}} (also possible is 18.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}5}}$\pm$? $\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}6}}$ 19.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}g}7}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}8}} 20.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}h}7}} and why should Black have compensation for this sea of pawns?

20...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}7}}} 21.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{h}3}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}x}f}5 22.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}f}5}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{g}8}} 23.g3$\pm$) 18...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}7}} 19.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}d}5}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}5}}} 20.c3$\pm$. This is the simplest. There is no hope for Black here.

17.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{h}3}} \texttt{\texttt{g}5} 18.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}4}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}6}} 19.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}2}}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}4}} 20.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{a}e}1}

20...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}7}}}?!

Black is looking for excuses. I have not found sufficient compensation for him here, and I cannot see why I should.

The most obvious line goes 20...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}8}}} 21.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}2}}}! h5 22.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}e}1}} h4 23.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}f}4}} Forced. (23.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{h}2}}? leads to 23...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}4}} 24.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}1}} \texttt{\texttt{x}d}3 25.cxd3 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}d}4} 26.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}3}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}7}} 27.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{h}1}} \texttt{\texttt{x}d}3$\pm$) 23...\texttt{\texttt{x}f}4 24.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}e}6}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}6}} 25.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}7}}$\pm$ and Black's defence is just a nightmare. If

White is actually already winning here is hard to tell, but he has all the chances at least.

21.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}1}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{h}4}} 22.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}4}}$\pm$ \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}7}} 23.\texttt{\texttt{f}4} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}8}} 24.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}3}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}8}} 25.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}5}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}5}} 26.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}1}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}4}}$\pm$ 27.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}3}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}2}} 28.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}1}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}2}} 29.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}1}} h6 30.b5 1-0
Minor lines

- By John Shaw

In this chapter we will have a brief look at some of Black’s less popular lines. This does not necessarily mean that they are bad, though some are, just that they are played less often. We will in turn look at 2...b6, 2...a6 (O’Kelly), the Andersson line, the 2...g6 3.d4 g7?! line, different versions of ...cxd4 followed by ...b6, the dubious Löwenthal and finally 1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.cxd4 c6 5.c3 d6, which is by no means bad at all.

The first game is with 2...b6, which is more respectable than it looks.

Game 61
Thorhallsson – Balinov
Plovdiv 2003

1.e4 c5 2.d3 b6

A few years ago this was almost unknown but now it is a recognised, if still minor, variation. Several grandmasters have tried it and it is even the main defence to 1.e4 of the Austrian GM Stanec. Here we see it employed by his grandmaster compatriot.

3.d4 cxd4 4.cxd4 b7 5.c3 a6!

This move is the reason for the mini-revival of 2...b6. Black’s idea is to delay the development of his kingside until he has one more move’s information about the destination of White’s king bishop. Specifically, if White plays 6.d3 Black will choose a set-up with g7-g6 and d7-d6. Who would play d3 against the Dragon? While if White tries 6.c4 then Black will play e7-e6 and leave the d-pawn alone. There are no good c4 lines against the Kan. White’s task is to find a set-up that is threatening against both Dragon and Kan style positions.

The Brazilian 1M Limp has a weakness for the move 5...f6. The simple 6.e5 must be reasonable but 6.g5 is great fun. His countryman GM Milos played this in his second attempt against 5...f6, so we can assume he prepared 6.g5 and trusts it. After 6.xe4 7.xe4 xe4 8.e2 White has a dangerous lead in development. Milos - Limp, Sao Paulo 2004, continued 8...d5 (8...b7? illustrates the danger. 9.b5! and White is already completely winning. For example, 9...d5 10.f4, or 9...d6 10.0-0-0.) 9.d1 h6 10.h4 a6 11.f3 h7 12.f2 (Intriguing, but I would prefer the immediate 12.c4!) 12...d7 (12...b5?) 13.c4 and White had a strong initiative and soon won.

6.e3!

I think this is the logical answer and guarantees White an edge. White plans d2, f2-f3 and 0-0-0. Whether this is a Yugoslav Attack or an English Attack is up to Black.

I also like the look of 6.g5? This is not quite as clear as 6.e3, but it does
give White the chance to play for mate at a shockingly early stage of the game.

Now after 6...h6?! the weakening of g6 is more than just theoretical. 7.\textit{h}4 \textit{d}6 8.\textit{c}4 \textit{c}8 (This may seem odd but 8...\textit{c}7 allows the incredibly annoying 9.\textit{e}6!. The justification is 9...\textit{fxe}6 10.\textit{xe}6 \textit{c}8 11.\textit{h}5+ \textit{d}7 12.\textit{f}5 and White wins.) 9.\textit{e}2 \textit{d}7 10.0–0–0 g6 11.\textit{f}4 \textit{g}7 12.e5 \textit{xe}5 was Moreno Carnero - Korneev, Dos Hermanas 2003. Now White missed his big chance with 13.\textit{e}6!! when Black has no defence. For example, 13...\textit{fxe}6 14.\textit{xe}6 \textit{c}6 15.\textit{g}4.

The punch of 6.\textit{g}5 is shown by the fact that a 2600 player was lost with Black after only 13 moves.

6...\textit{c}7 prepares e7–e6 and is probably the only move to avoid immediate trouble. Now White has several reasonable moves such as 7.\textit{d}3 or even 7.\textit{g}4 but a critical try is 7.\textit{d}5!? when Black has little choice. 7...\textit{xd}5 (7...\textit{e}5 8.\textit{e}3 should just be a transposition after 8...\textit{xd}5, but in Groszpeter - Berezjuk, Pardubice 2000 Black blundered with 8...e6?? when 9.\textit{f}3! won easily.) 8.\textit{xd}5 \textit{e}5+ 9.\textit{e}3 \textit{xd}5 10.\textit{e}2 I believe White’s massive lead in development gives him excellent compensation for the pawn.

6...\textit{e}6

This is now the only sensible set-up. Playing in Dragon-style would be mad with the passive a6 and b6 already played, and White heading for a Yugoslav Attack.

7.\textit{d}2 \textit{b}4 8.\textit{f}3 \textit{f}6

Instead 8...\textit{c}7 transposes to Karjakin - Balinov, Vienna 2003. After 9.a3 \textit{e}7 (If 9...\textit{xc}3 then either recapture is good enough for an edge. Black will have weak dark squares and no bishop to cover them.) 10.0–0–0 \textit{b}5 11.\textit{f}4 \textit{c}8 12.\textit{b}3! \textit{c}6 13.\textit{d}6 Black’s position was disgusting. This game was played two months before our main game, so we can assume that the text is GM Balinov’s (unsuccessful) attempt to improve.

9.a3 \textit{xc}3

Now Black has problems on the dark squares but 9...\textit{e}7 10.e5! was even worse. For example, 10...\textit{d}5 11.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 12.\textit{f}5! is a disaster.

10.\textit{xc}3 \textit{d}5 11.e5 \textit{fd}7 12.0–0–0 \textit{c}5 13.\textit{f}4

White has an excellent version of the Classical French.

13.\textit{d}7 14.\textit{f}3

Challenging Black’s only well-placed
piece with 14. \( \text{b}3 \)! seems more logical. For example, 14... \( \text{e}4 \) 15. \( \text{b}4 \) \( \text{b}5 \) 16. \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 17. \( \text{e}1 \) and White has a great position.

14...0–0 15. \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{c}8 \) 16. \( \text{b}1 \) \( \text{a}5 \)

Planning to improve his feeble bishop with \( \text{a}6 \), but the tactics dictate that \( \text{xd}3 \) must be played very soon.

17. \( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{a}6 \)?

This was Black’s last chance to reach a decent position with 17... \( \text{xd}3 \).

18. \( \text{xc}5 \)

White begins to clear the queen’s path to \( \text{h}3 \).

18... \( \text{bxc}5 \)

It was too late for 18... \( \text{xd}3 \) because of 19. \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{bxc}5 \) 20. \( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 21. \( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{h}5 \) 22. \( \text{e}4 \) with a winning attack.

19. \( \text{xh}7 \)!

The Greek Gift is still claiming victims.

19... \( \text{xh}7 \) 20. \( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{g}8 \) 21. \( \text{h}3 \)

White is winning since \( \text{f}4 \)-\( \text{f}5 \) will further strengthen the attack.

21... \( \text{d}8 \) 22. \( \text{h}5 \) \( \text{a}7 \)

Or 22... \( \text{e}8 \) 23. \( \text{f}5 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 24. \( \text{h}7 \) \( \text{f}8 \) 25. \( \text{e}4 \)! and Black has no defence. For example, 25... \( \text{dxe}4 \) 26. \( \text{xd}7 \) \( \text{xd}7 \) 27. \( \text{f}6 \) leads to mate.

23. \( \text{f}5 \) \( \text{exf}5 \) 24. \( \text{e}6 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 25. \( \text{h}7 \) \( \text{f}8 \) 26. \( \text{e}7 \)

1–0

The O’Kelly Variation has never been regarded as fully respectable, yet several GMs are willing to risk it. Former World Junior Champion Kurajica is a true believer and the 2600-rated Baklan has recently added it to his repertoire. Still, White should get an edge.

Game
Shirov – Kurajica
Sarajevo 2002

1. \( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{c}5 \) 2. \( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{a}6 \) 3. \( \text{c}3 \)
I hesitated before selecting this as our main line: a c3-Sicilian in a book that recommends only the most critical lines? I convinced myself by studying the database: 3.c3 is the anti-O’Kelly choice of even the most aggressive of the world’s top GMs (Shirov, Bologan and even Kasparov). It is also the move that scores most heavily against the 2...a6 experts. The convincing logic of 3.c3 is that a7-a6 is rarely a useful move in the normal c3-Sicilian.

Those determined to play in Open Sicilian style could consider 3...c3. After 3...b5 4.d4 transposing to our anti-Kan repertoire may seem likely but Black has enjoyed considerable success with the surprising 4...e6. The critical line should be 5.d5 but then we reach a 1.d4-style position where White seems to have “forgotten” to answer ...a6 with a4.

3.c4 is a logical, reliable move, but if Black chooses a line with e7-e6 the positions reached are inconsistent with both this book’s anti-Kan/Taimanov recommendations and our attacking piece play style. Furthermore, the 2...a6 specialists have had several recent successes in the line 3...d6!? 4.d4 g4. The idea is if 5.dxc5 then 5...xf3 and Black hopes to land a mighty knight on d4.

The trick every player must know (and probably already does) is that 3.d4?! is a mistake. After 3...cxd4 4...xd4 f6 5...c3 e5 Black has an excellent version of the Sveshnikov with c5 or b4 as extra options. The usual db5 is ill advised and 6...d5 is not clever either. Instead White would have to retreat the knight passively, and hope to hang on to equality.

3...g6

This is one of many possible replies. The unforced nature of the play means that it is neither possible nor necessary for White to memorise much theory in this position. Black has a multitude of ways to achieve a worse version of a normal variation. For example:

a) The most solid try is probably 3...d5 but after 4.exd5 cxd5 5.d4 White’s “extra” move gives him a pleasant position. One example: 5...f6 6.e2 cxd4 7.cxd4 g6 8.c3 d8 9.0-0 g7 10.e5 0-0 11.f3 d8 12.f4 d6 13..d2 f5 14.ad1 d7 15.d1i and White was clearly better in Karjakin - Khamrakulov, Dos Hermanas 2004.

b) 3...e6 4.d4 d5 5.e5 gives White a good version of the Advance French. Black can try to make use of 2...a6 with 5...d7 planning to exchange the bad bishop on b5 but this runs into problems. For example, 6.d3 (Not the only good move. Reasonable alternatives include a3 and b2.) 6...cxd4 (The problem with 6...b5 is 7.xb5 axb5 8.cxc5 xcx5 9.b4 x6 10.a3 and White wins a safe pawn.) 7.xd4!. Cutting across Black’s plans. 7...c6 8.cxc6 xxc6 9.0-0 and White’s lead in development gives him attacking chances on the kingside.
4.d4 cxd4 5.cxd4 d5 6.exd5 Qf6 7.Qc3 Qxd5 8.Qc4 Qxc3 9.bxc3 Qg7 10.h4!

This is certainly not forced, but it does exploit the slowness of Black's second move. If White tried to hack a normal c3-Sicilian in this style then Black would never consider the irrelevant a6 in reply. 10...Qc7 11.b3 e6 12.Qd3 Qc6 13.h5 Qd7 14.Qg5 Qc8 15.Qe4 0–0 16.hxg6 hxg6 17.Qg5 f5

Black should probably have fought for control of the dark squares with 17...f6, but White still has good attacking chances.

18.Qc5 Qa5 19.Qb4 Qf7 20.Qb1 Qf8 21.Qf1 Qc6 22.Qg1 e5 23.dxe5 Qxe5 24.Qe3 Qd5 25.Qf1 Qxa2 26.Qh4 Qg7 27.Qd1

Among many, many others, Black has to defend against 28.Qxb7. 27...Qd5 28.Qd2

Winning the queen for rook and minor piece is good enough, but White could have concluded the attack with 28.Qh8+ Qf7 29.Qh7! Qxh7 30.Qxh7+ Qg7 31.Qh6 Qg8 32.c4! 28...Qxd2 29.Qxd2 Qxc5 30.Qd8 Qf7 31.Qe3 Qc6 32.Qh4 Qg7 33.Qxc5 Qxc5 34.Qc4 1–0

The following sideline, here ascribed to Ulf Andersson, is sometimes called the Haberditz variation.

1.e4 c5 2.Qf3 Qc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Qxd4 Qf6 5.Qc3 e5 6.Qd5 h6

This rare move is a favourite of GM Ulf Andersson. Most of the main lines involve an early exchange of queens, which explains the interest of this famous endgame expert. However, White is able to achieve an edge with accurate play. 7.Qd6+

This is the logical way to exploit the omission of d7–d6, but there are other
options. 7. \( \text{d}5 \) should be avoided. After 7...\( \text{d}5 \) 8.exd5 a6! analysis and practice show that Black has equalised. For example, 9.dxc6 axb5 10.cxd5+ \( \text{d}7 \) 11.\( \text{d}5 \)  \( \text{c}7 \).

If White is determined to keep the queens on then 7.\( \text{e}3 \) is worth considering. Black must play 7...\( \text{d}6 \) 8.\( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{d}5 \) 9.exd5 \( \text{b}8 \). The only move. (9...\( \text{e}7 \)? loses a pawn to 10.\( \text{c}3 \)! because if 10...a6?? then 11.\( \text{a}4 \), a standard trick known from the 7.\( \text{d}5 \) Sveshnikov.) 10.\( \text{c}4 \). Compared to a normal 7.\( \text{d}5 \) Sveshnikov White has the extra move \( \text{e}3 \), and Black has ...h6. Generally, this must favour White, but ...h6 may help prepare a later \( \text{e}7-g5 \). I would recommend this line to players who prefer an unclear middlegame to a slightly better ending.

7.\( \text{x}d6 \) 8.\( \text{wx}d6 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 9.\( \text{w}xe7+ \)

This is the simple approach. The sharpest try is 9.\( \text{b}5 \)!? but Black has recently strengthened his defence with 9...\( \text{b}8 \). This obviously avoids the fork but also fights to prevent the knight landing on \( \text{d}6 \). Previously 9...\( \text{wx}d6 \) was always played with White scoring well after 10.\( \text{xd}6+ \)  \( \text{e}7 \) 11.\( \text{f}5+ \). After 9...\( \text{b}8 \) one critical line is 10.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{xe}4 \)! 11.\( \text{xe}7+ \)  \( \text{xe}7 \) 12.\( \text{a}3+ \) \( \text{d}6 \) 13.\( \text{f}3 \) a6! 14.fxe4 axb5 15.\( \text{xb}5 \)  \( \text{a}8 \) and Black is fine.

9...\( \text{xe}7 \) 10.\( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{d}6 \)

10...\( \text{g}4 \)? is premature. 11.\( \text{d}5+ \)  \( \text{d}8 \) 12.\( \text{c}5 \) and Black is crushed.

\[ \text{11.f3 \( \text{e}6 \) 12.0-0-0} \]

White has a slight but definite edge. The plan is \( \text{g}2-g4 \) and \( \text{h}2-h4 \) preparing a later \( \text{g}5 \). White can wait and play \( \text{d}5+ \) only if and when it is most inconvenient for Black.

The following line has been around for a while, but it does not seem to be fully trustworthy.

\[ \text{1.e4 \( \text{c}5 \) 2.\( \text{d}f3 \) \( \text{g}6 \)} \]

This is a perfectly acceptable move order to reach either variety of Dragon. However, if Black avoids this possibility then he runs into immediate trouble. Of course White has third move alternatives, but none of them are superior to 3.\( \text{d}4 \).

\[ \text{3.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{g}7 \)!} \]

Black can, and should, head back towards regular Dragon lines with 3...\( \text{xd}4 \) 4.\( \text{xd}4 \). White can prevent a transposition with 4.\( \text{wx}d4 \) but I think
Black is OK after 4...\(\texttt{d}f6\). For example, 5.\(\texttt{b}b5\) a6 6.e5 axb5 7.exf6 \(\texttt{c}c6\).

4.\(\texttt{d}xc5\)

It is worth noting that 4.c4 does not force a transposition to the Accelerated Dragon. Black has interesting alternatives in 4...\(\texttt{b}b6\) and 4...\(\texttt{a}5\). 4...\(\texttt{a}5\) 5.c3!

5.\(\texttt{c}c3\) is a little speculative. After 5...\(\texttt{x}c3\) 6.bxc3 \(\texttt{x}c3\) 7.\(\texttt{d}d2\) \(\texttt{xc}5\) Black has had encouraging results.

5...\(\texttt{xc}5\)

\textbf{6.\(\texttt{a}a3!\)}

This causes Black far more problems than the obvious 6.\(\texttt{e}e3\). Black now has six likely replies of which four are clearly bad.

6...\(\texttt{f}6\)

a) 6...\(\texttt{x}c3\)? is a trap which has caught several strong players. 7.bxc3 \(\texttt{xc}3\) 8.\(\texttt{d}d2!\) \(\texttt{x}a1\) 9.\(\texttt{b}b5\). The threatened fork gives White just enough time to trap the queen. 9...\(\texttt{a}6\) 10.\(\texttt{c}c3\). There is no escape. For example 10...\(\texttt{c}c5\) 11.\(\texttt{d}d4!\) and White wins easily.

b) Preventing \(\texttt{b}b5\) with 6...a6? is disastrous after 7.\(\texttt{c}c4\) with \(\texttt{e}e3\) to follow.

c) 6...\(\texttt{a}5\)? 7.\(\texttt{d}d5!\) forces an advantage in every variation: 7...\(\texttt{c}c6\) 8.\(\texttt{x}a5\) \(\texttt{x}a5\) 9.\(\texttt{b}b5\), 7...\(\texttt{d}d8\) 8.\(\texttt{c}c4\) e6 9.\(\texttt{d}d3\) and 7...\(\texttt{x}d5\) 8.\(\texttt{x}d5\) \(\texttt{f}6\) 9.\(\texttt{d}d6 - \texttt{Bruzon.}\)

d) 6...\(\texttt{c}7\)? allows White to gain a clear advantage: 7.\(\texttt{b}b5\) \(\texttt{d}d8\) (7...\(\texttt{a}5\) 8.\(\texttt{d}d5!\)) 8.\(\texttt{f}4\) d6 9.e5 a6 10.\(\texttt{a}4\) - \texttt{Bruzon}.

e) 6...d6 is the only serious alternative to 6...\(\texttt{f}6\), but White can still achieve a slight advantage. 7.\(\texttt{b}b5\) a6 (7...\(\texttt{b}6\)? wastes more time than Black can afford. Markowski - Danner, Istanbul (ol) 2000, continued 8.\(\texttt{e}e3\) \(\texttt{a}5\) 9.\(\texttt{c}c4\) \(\texttt{c}c6\) 10.\(\texttt{d}b3\) \(\texttt{d}d8\) 11.\(\texttt{x}a7!\). And now 11...\(\texttt{x}a7?\) loses to 12.\(\texttt{b}b6\).) 8.\(\texttt{e}e3\) \(\texttt{c}6\) 9.\(\texttt{a}7\) \(\texttt{c}7\) 10.\(\texttt{x}c8\) \(\texttt{x}c8\) 11.\(\texttt{b}3\) \(\texttt{f}6\) 12.e5 \(\texttt{d}xe5\) 13.\(\texttt{e}e5\) 0–0 14.\(\texttt{e}e2\) and White was a little better and later won in Dolmatov - Solak, Istanbul 2003.

7.\(\texttt{b}b5\) 0–0

7...\(\texttt{xe}4?\) is rather naive. 8.\(\texttt{e}e3\) \(\texttt{c}6\) 9.\(\texttt{f}d4\) \(\texttt{x}d4\) 10.\(\texttt{x}d4\) \(\texttt{f}6\) 11.\(\texttt{a}x7\) and White has a clear advantage.

7...\(\texttt{g}4\) is direct but White has a convincing answer. 8.\(\texttt{f}d4\) d6 9.h3 \(\texttt{xf}2\). This is effectively forced. (For example, 9...\(\texttt{f}6?\) 10.\(\texttt{e}e3\) wins.) 10.\(\texttt{xf}2\) e5 11.\(\texttt{e}e3\) \(\texttt{xd}4\) 12.\(\texttt{c}xd4\) \(\texttt{b}6\) b6. This is Al Sayed - Velikhhanli, Abu Dhabi 2003. Now 13.\(\texttt{c}c1\) \(\texttt{a}6\) 14.e5! is very strong.

8.\(\texttt{e}e3\) \(\texttt{c}6\) 9.\(\texttt{f}d4\) \(\texttt{x}e4\) 10.\(\texttt{c}7\) b6
So far this is **Bruzon - Malakhov**, Yerevan 2000. Now Bruzon’s suggestion of 11.\texttt{Wf3}! forces a queen exchange while still winning the exchange.

The line with 2...\texttt{c6} and 4...\texttt{wb6} is a favourite of Israeli GM Golod, who plays it with absolutely fantastic results (94%, a fabulous 2790 performance in the last 5 years. But all games were played against lower rated opponents.). It should not be underrated. Still, it is not the refutation of the Open Sicilian and White can fight for an advantage just as in any other system. Especially if he follows my recommendation.

4.\texttt{dc3} e6

5.\texttt{db3} \texttt{ff6} 6.\texttt{cc3} e6

7.\texttt{We2}!

I think this is the best way to attack Black’s system. White prepares queenside castling, while the f1 bishop will develop to g2. A common alternative is 7.\texttt{e3} but it not clear that this is a gain of tempo. Firstly, the queen is almost certain to move anyway to enable a later b7-b5. Secondly, since \texttt{b4} is a definite possibility, d2 may prove to be the correct square for the bishop.

7...\texttt{d6}

The major alternative is 7...\texttt{b4} 8.\texttt{d2} 0-0 9.a3 and now Black has a major decision to make:

a) Most strong players have given up 9...\texttt{xc3} 10.\texttt{xc3} e5 11.0-0-0 \texttt{dd8. (In A. Ivanov- Yermolinsky, USA (ch))

**Game 63**

**Movsesian – Kozul**

Sarajevo 2002

1.e4 c5 2.\texttt{f3} \texttt{c6} 3.d4 cxd4 4.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{wb6}

This is an interesting, playable line. Black nudges the d4-knight towards b3, while keeping his own pawn structure as flexible as possible.
2000, Black tried the tricky 11...d6. After 12.xd6 d4 13.xd4 xxd6 14.e5 c7 15.xf8 xf8 16.f3?! (Instead I think 16.c4! refutes the gambit. The idea is 16.xc4 17.xc4 xe4 18.xe1 d6 (Not 18...xf2? 19.xf1) 19.d3 and White will soon be a pawn ahead.) 16...e6 Black had enough for the pawn.) 12.d6! c7 (12...d4?? is now simply a blunder. 13.xd4 exd4 14.a5.) 13.xf6! This idea of Michael Adams has effectively ended the popularity of 9...xc3. 13...xf6 14.g4 h8 15.h4 d6 (A later game Nijboer - Piket, Amsterdam 2001, continued 15...d6 16.xf6+ g8 17.g5+ h8 18.f4 and White was much better.) 16.f4 e6 (Nijboer suggested 16...g8 as a better defence but also supplied a promising reply. 17.g4? xe7 18.b5 d6 19.h3 and White has superb compensation. For example, 19...g7 20.f1 a6 21.xc6 bxc6 22.fxe5 dxe5 23.b4 d8 24.a5! and Black is lost.) 17.b5 Adams - Knezevic, France 1997. Black is already in trouble since the natural 17...d6? fails to 18.xc6 bxc6 19.fxe5 dxe5 20.b4!.

b) 9...e7 10.e5. It is wise to push now since 10.0–0–0 d5! has scored exceptionally well for Black. 10...d5 11.0–0–0 (If 11.xd5 exd5 12.0–0–0 d6 Black’s potential c-file play compensates for his weaker structure.) 11...d6 12.exd6 xdx6 13.b5! e5 (13...f4 was tried in Kotenko - Arzumanian, Ukraine 2003. After 14.c4 xd2+ 15.xd2 c7 16.c5 xb5 17.xb5 xb5 18.xb5 White had a definite edge.) 14.c4 This only looks risky—"Trust me, I know what I’m doing.” 14...a6 15.exd5 exd5 16.e3 xb5 17.xb5 axb5 18.xb5 e6 Motylev-Kunte, India 2002. Now Judit Polgar suggests 19.xh1 is slightly better for White.

Black can also play 7...c7, but this generally transposes to the 7...d6 variations. One independent example is 8.g4 h6 9.h4 a6 10.g2 d6. A creative and unusual attempt to stop White’s traditional pawn storm. 11.e3 (11.g5?! 11...b5 12.0–0–0 f4?! 13.d5! and White was much better in Ciuksyte - V. Georgiev, Porto San Giorgio 2003.

8.g4 a6 9.d2 c7 10.0–0–0

Black has far too many possibilities here to give comprehensive coverage. However, White appears generally to have the better chances in an unbalanced position.

b) 10.d7

Black can also choose to delay g4-g5 with 10...h6. Now 11.h4 g6 12.g2 b5 transposes to Tomescu - Bruno, Porto San Giorgio 2002. Play continued 13.e5! dxe5 14.f3 d5 15.xd5 exd5 16.xd5 b7 (16...d7 17.a5!) 17.c5. Black is already worse but 17...d8? 18.xa6! b6 19.xb5! did not help.

11.f4 b5 12.g5 c5

Kozul clearly believes 12...b4 13.a4 safely blocks his queenside attack.

13.xc5 dxc5 14.e3 d4 15.b2 b7 16.g2 0–0–0 17.e5
17...\texttt{e7} 18.\texttt{xe7} \texttt{xe7}?

Now White wins a safe pawn. Black had to try 18...\texttt{xb7} but after 19.\texttt{xe1} White is still a little better.
19.\texttt{xe7} 20.\texttt{xe7} \texttt{d8} 21.\texttt{d7} \texttt{e5} 22.\texttt{d3} \texttt{d8} 23.\texttt{f3} \texttt{c6} 24.\texttt{f1} \texttt{d4}

Of course if 20...\texttt{c5} 21.\texttt{f3}.
21.\texttt{d4} \texttt{c5} 22.\texttt{d3} \texttt{d6} 23.\texttt{f3} \texttt{c6} 24.\texttt{f1} \texttt{d4}

There is still work to do but Movsesian completes the job convincingly.
25.\texttt{e2} \texttt{e4} 26.\texttt{g3} \texttt{a4} 27.\texttt{b1} \texttt{f3} 28.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{g1} 29.\texttt{c3!} \texttt{c4} 30.\texttt{c2} \texttt{c7} 31.\texttt{e2} \texttt{b6} 32.\texttt{h3} \texttt{c6} 33.\texttt{e7} \texttt{g6} 34.\texttt{d3} \texttt{d5} 35.\texttt{h4} \texttt{a5} 36.\texttt{g3} \texttt{b4} 37.\texttt{e4} \texttt{bxc3} 38.\texttt{bxc3} \texttt{c4} 39.\texttt{f6} 1-0

2...\texttt{e6} and 4...\texttt{b6} is a rare line now but an old favourite of GM Kveinys (which explains why a later ...\texttt{b6} in the Kan is known as the Enhanced Kveinys variation). The idea, as in many of the Kan lines, is to encourage the \texttt{d4} to leave its perfect central position.

\textbf{Game 64

Yu Shaoteng - Zaw Win Lay
Bangkok 2004}

1.e4 c5 2.\texttt{f3} e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{b6}

4...\texttt{c5} is likely to transpose back to our main game after 5.\texttt{c3} \texttt{b6}, but White can also try an immediate attack on Black's position with 5.\texttt{b5}! \texttt{b6} 6.\texttt{e3}.

First played by Paul Morphy! It gives White good compensation and a wonderful score after 6...\texttt{xe3} 7.fxe3 \texttt{xe3}. The only move. (7...\texttt{e7} was played once, but 8.\texttt{d3!} with the ideas \texttt{b4} and \texttt{c3}, as well as 9.e5 blows Black away. One line is 8...\texttt{d6} 9.e5! \texttt{dxe5} 10.\texttt{a3} \texttt{f6} 11.\texttt{d2} \texttt{c6} 12.\texttt{d3} with the makings of a winning attack. e.g. 12...\texttt{xe3} 13.\texttt{d1} \texttt{h6} 14.\texttt{f1} \texttt{f5} 15.\texttt{c7} \texttt{b8} 16.\texttt{xf5}! and White wins. And after 7...\texttt{f6} 8.\texttt{d6} \texttt{e7} 9.\texttt{c4}}
274 Minor Lines

\[ \text{$c5$ 10.e5 $d8$ (10... $d5$ 11.$h5!$ and I do not see how Black can defend his kingside.) 11.$c3$ $f6$ Hru
cior - Rusev, Oropesa del Mar 2000.) 8.$e2$ $a6$
9.$e1$ $h6$ (9... $f6$ 10.$d6$ $f8$ 11.$f1$ White has far more compensation than needed for the
pawn, Staniszewski - Ostrowski, Augustow 1996.) 10.$d6$ $e7$ 11.$c4$ $c5$ 12.a3 b5 13.b4 $c6$
He converted this to a better endgame, but a full-blown attack on the king was also an option.

$5.b3$

The most common move is $b3$ but in an active repertoire it is worth avoiding this slightly passive retreat if there is a reasonable alternative.

The unusual $a3!?$ was once played by the creative Russian GM Dvoirys. In the game Dvoirys - Agrest, Cattolica 1994, Black allowed the planned $c4$ and was soon worse. The critical try must be $5...a3$ 6.bxa3 when the positional question is obvious - will White’s dark square play be more important than his weak pawns? Dvoirys gave the line 6.$f6$ 7.$d3$ 0–0 8.$e2$ $c6$ 9.$b5$
$d5$ 10.exd5 exd5 11.$b2!$ $e4$ 12.0–0 $e6$ 13.$ab1$ a6 14.$d4$ $xd4$ 15.$xd4$ $c7$ 16.$a4$ which is interesting but not forced.

$5.c5$ 6.$e4$

If $e3$ Black is OK after 6...$c6$, but he must avoid 6...$xb2??$ 7.$db5$;

winning instantly.

6...$a5$ 7.$c3$

7.$c3$ $b6$ is relevant only as a way of playing out a pre-arranged draw.

7.$xd4$

Black is committed to giving up his better bishop as 7...$e7$ 8.$b5$ $d6$ 9.$f4$
$e5$ 10.$e3$ is simply good for White.

8.$xd4$

Basically, White already has what he wants - the bishop pair. The onus is on Black to find compensation.

8.$f6$

Or 8...e5 9.$c5$ and White keeps a clear edge.

9.$c5$ $c6$

9...0–0 10.$b3$ allows White to consolidate his gains.

10.$e6$?

I prefer this positional pawn sacrifice to the more common and passive 10.$e3$, which seems to give Black good equalising chances.
10...b6 11.\( \texttt{\&b3} \) \( \texttt{\&e5} \)

It is telling that Zaw Win Lay switched to this move after trying the main line a year earlier. The critical position is reached after 11...\( \texttt{\&xe4} \) 12.\( \texttt{\&xc6} \) dxc6 13.\( \texttt{\&xa5} \) bxa5 14.\( \texttt{\&e3} \).

Black has a healthy extra pawn on the kingside, but his shattered queenside and White’s bishop pair constitute more than adequate compensation. I believe that White’s control of the position means that he can play for the win with virtually no risk of defeat, or in modern jargon: White is playing for two results.

Hamdani - Zaw Win Lay, Vietnam 2003, continued 14...0–0 (Instead, Nikolenko - Arzumanian, Tula 2000, continued 14...\( \texttt{e5} \) 15.0–0–0 \( \texttt{\&e6} \) 16.\( \texttt{\&a6} \) \( \texttt{\&b8} \) 17.\( \texttt{\&he1} \) \( \texttt{\&f6} \), and now the simple 18.\( \texttt{\&c5} \) would have given White a clear advantage.) 15.0–0–0 e5 16.\( \texttt{\&c4} \) \( \texttt{\&f5} \) 17.\( \texttt{\&f3} \) \( \texttt{\&f6} \) 18.\( \texttt{\&d6} \) \( \texttt{\&fc8} \) 19.\( \texttt{\&h1} \). This is a typical position in this variation. White dominates the d-file while Black is tied to defending his weak pawns. 19...\( \texttt{\&e8} \) 20.\( \texttt{\&d6} \) \( \texttt{\&c7} \) and now White, the lower rated player, headed for a draw with 21.\( \texttt{\&d6} \). Instead he could have played for the win with no risk in several ways. One example is 21.a4?!, simply fixing the weaknesses. 21...\( \texttt{\&e6} \) 22.\( \texttt{\&xe6} \) \( \texttt{\&xe6} \) 23.\( \texttt{\&d7} \) and White will soon recover his pawn with a fine position.

12.\( \texttt{\&xe5} \) \( \texttt{\&xe5} \) 13.\( \texttt{f4} \) \( \texttt{\&g6} \) 14.\( \texttt{\&d5} \) 15.\( \texttt{\&g3} \) \( \texttt{\&b7} \) 16.\( \texttt{\&g2} \) 0–0–0 17.0–0

Without doing anything special White has achieved a slight but definite edge.

17...\( \texttt{d6} \) 18.\( \texttt{\&xd6} \) \( \texttt{\&xd6} \) 19.\( \texttt{\&d4} \) \( \texttt{\&d7} \) 20.a4

It was worth considering 20.f5?! exf5 21.\( \texttt{\&xf5} \) f6 and only then 22.a4.

20.\( \texttt{\&d7} \) 21.\( \texttt{\&a5} \) \( \texttt{\&xg2} \) 22.\( \texttt{\&xg2} \) \( \texttt{\&b7} \) 23.\( \texttt{\&e3} \) \( \texttt{\&c6} \) 24.\( \texttt{\&xb6} \) \( \texttt{\&xb6} \) 25.\( \texttt{\&xc6} \) \( \texttt{\&xc6} \) 26.\( \texttt{\&a6} \) \( \texttt{\&b8} \) 27.\( \texttt{\&c4} \) \( \texttt{\&e7} \) 28.\( \texttt{\&b4} \) \( \texttt{\&f5} \) 29.\( \texttt{\&g1} \) \( \texttt{\&d3} \) 30.\( \texttt{\&c5} \) \( \texttt{\&e3} \) 31.\( \texttt{\&xe3} \) \( \texttt{\&xe3} \) 32.\( \texttt{\&c1} \)

The simple 32.\( \texttt{\&d1} \) gives White decent winning chances.

32.\( \texttt{\&b7} \) 33.\( \texttt{\&xb6} \) \( \texttt{\&b5} \) 34.\( \texttt{\&ca1} \) \( \texttt{\&c3} \) 35.\( \texttt{\&a5} \) \( \texttt{\&xb4} \) 36.\( \texttt{\&a7} \) \( \texttt{\&e2} \) 37.\( \texttt{\&h3} \) \( \texttt{\&xb6} \) 38.\( \texttt{\&a1} \) f5?!

38...e5 should draw.

39.\( \texttt{\&xg7} \) \( \texttt{\&c5} \) 40.\( \texttt{\&c7} \) \( \texttt{\&c6} \) 41.\( \texttt{\&xh7} \) \( \texttt{\&e2} \)

Black has a very unpleasant defensive task ahead, and soon cracks.

42.\( \texttt{\&h1} \) \( \texttt{\&d5} \) 43.\( \texttt{\&h4} \) \( \texttt{\&e4} \) 44.\( \texttt{\&g5} \) \( \texttt{\&f3} \) 45.\( \texttt{\&a1} \) \( \texttt{\&e3} \) 46.\( \texttt{\&a5} \) \( \texttt{\&g2} \) 47.\( \texttt{\&e5} \) \( \texttt{\&e4} \) 48.\( \texttt{\&h6} \) \( \texttt{\&a6} \) 49.\( \texttt{\&xf5} \) 1–0
The next line we will examine is the Löwenthal, which was first played more than 100 years ago. It has never achieved any popularity in high-level chess. Black’s weakened dark squares do not appeal to strong players. At lower levels the Löwenthal is far more common. I suspect the large number of tactical tricks in the main lines is the main attraction.

1. e4 c5 2. d3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Qxd4 e5 5. Qb5 a6

This is the initial position of the Löwenthal. 5...d6 is of course the Kalashnikov (see page 219).

6. Qd6+ Qxd6 7. Qxd6 Qf6

8. Qxf6

This is an easy way to guarantee an edge. The positions tend to be not very exciting, but they are even less fun for Black. The main line is considered to be 8. Qd1 but I do not think it is any better than 8. Qxf6. It also commits White to studying and remembering a large amount of theory about a rarely met line.

8... Qxf6 9. Qc3

Black is now committed to searching for compensation for his positional concessions.

9... Qb4

The only other significant try is 9...d5. Now 10.exd5 is better than the frequently recommended 10. g5. After 10.exd5 play continues 10... Qb4 11. Qd3 Qxd3+ (If 11... Qxd5 12. Qxd5 Qxd5 13. Qd2 White has an edge in a simple position.) 12.cxd3 Qf5 13.0-0? (I find this clearer than the also promising 13. Qg5.). Now:

a) 13...0-0 14. Qg5 Qxd3 15. Qfd1 Qf5 16. Qc1 and Black is in trouble. 16... Qd7 (16... Qb8 17. f4) 17. Qa4.

b) 13...0-0 14. Qe1 Qe8 15. Qg5 Qxd3 16. Qad1 Qf5 17. Qxf6 gxf6 18. d6.

c) 13... Qxd3 and now 14. Qe1 wins a pawn.

10. Qd2 d5

This is the only aggressive try. The quiet 10...d6 changes nothing. A sample line: 11.a3 Qc6 12. Qd3 Qe6 13. Qd1 0-0-0 14. Qe1 and, as usual, Black will suffer in a long ending.

11.a3 d4 12.axb4 Qxc3† 13. Qe3

This convincing line has been known for decades.

13... Qg4†

The critical attempt but White has it covered. Quiet play will leave White with a simple advantage. One recent example is 13... Qe6 14. Qd3 0-0 15.f3 Qc8 16.b3
Experts vs. the Sicilian

\[ \text{\texttt{\textbackslash}} b8 \ 17.b5 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash}} c7 18.bxa6 bxa6 19.a3 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash}} d8 20.b4 \text{\textbackslash} and \text{\textbackslash} White \text{\textbackslash} was \text{\textbackslash} already \text{\textbackslash} winning \text{\textbackslash} in \text{\textbackslash} Kotronias \text{\textbackslash} - \text{\textbackslash} Stankovic, \text{\textbackslash} Greece \text{\textbackslash} 2002. \text{\textbackslash} GM \text{\textbackslash} Kotronias \text{\textbackslash} is \text{\textbackslash} not \text{\textbackslash} a \text{\textbackslash} player \text{\textbackslash} who \text{\textbackslash} ducks \text{\textbackslash} a \text{\textbackslash} theoretical \text{\textbackslash} challenge, \text{\textbackslash} so \text{\textbackslash} he \text{\textbackslash} clearly \text{\textbackslash} believes 8.\texttt{\textbackslash} xf6 \text{\textbackslash} is \text{\textbackslash} an \text{\textbackslash} effective \text{\textbackslash} answer \text{\textbackslash} to \text{\textbackslash} the \text{\textbackslash} Löwenthal. \text{\texttt{\textbackslash} 14.\texttt{\textbackslash} e2 f5 15.bxc3 \texttt{\textbackslash} d6 16.a5!} \]

and White has a clear advantage.

In the last game of this chapter we shall look at an anti-Keres Scheveningen line. Naturally I suggest playing the Keres attack all the same.

**Game 65**

**Senff – Schlosser**

Germany 2004

1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.cxd4 \texttt{\textbackslash} c6 5.a3 d6

This has never been a popular position with Black players though there is nothing particularly wrong with it. White has many options, but the consistent move with our anti-Scheveningen line, and also the most theoretically respected, is 6.g4!

The Pseudo-Keres Attack seems like a reasonable name. This move first attracted attention after being played by Anatoly Karpov in his 1985 World Championship match against Kasparov.

Instead 6.e3 is a good alternative but 6...\texttt{\textbackslash} f6 transposes to a Scheveningen line outside this book’s repertoire, so we will keep our focus on 6.g4.

6...a6

This standard Sicilian move is the most popular, but Black has several reasonable, and little explored, alternatives.

6...h6 was Kasparov’s choice in his previously mentioned game against Karpov. Karpov continued 7.h4, but the developing 7.e3 is also fine. Transpositions are always possible but one distinct, and inspirational, example is Kasimdzhanov - van der Sterren, Germany 2001. 7.e3 \texttt{\textbackslash} f6 8.h3 e7 9.d2 a6 10.0-0-0 \texttt{\textbackslash} d4 11.xd4 \texttt{\textbackslash} d7 12.f4 c6 13.g1 \texttt{\textbackslash} d7 14.c4 a5 15.xe6 fxe6 16.xg7 f6 17.g6+ e7 18.e5 dxe5 19.xd7+ xd7 20.d1+ e7 21.g5 h8 22.\texttt{\textbackslash} h7+ f7 23.xf6+ xf6 24.xh6+ e7 25.f5 1-0.

6...e7 is also reasonable and may transpose to other lines. This really is an ideal variation for those who would rather play chess than learn theory.
Of course 6...\( \text{d}6 \) is a regular Keres Attack. See Page 199.

7.\( \text{d}e3 \) \( \text{d}g7 \)

Now the game is distinct from the real Keres. Black plans to ease the congestion by \( \text{d}xd4 \) followed by \( \text{d}e7-c6 

8.\( \text{d}d3 \)!

This is the key point to remember. The idea is borrowed from the Taimanov Variation. \( \text{d}d4-b3 \) is usually a passive move but here it leaves Black's pieces cramped and uncoordinated, in particular Black's knights, which are on the same circuit and so “step on each other’s toes.”

8...b5

9.\( \text{d}d2 \)

I would prefer 9.f4 first. The possible downside of this move order is the pawn sacrifice 9...g5, but after 10.fxg5 I do not believe in Black’s compensation. The knight will look very pretty on e5, but White also has active pieces and Black’s king has no safe haven.

9.a3?! is an interesting and unusual way to avoid the regular lines. Gallagher - Klauer, Switzerland 2003, continued 9...\( \text{d}g6 \) 10.g5 \( \text{d}b7 \) 11.h4 \( \text{d}ge5 \) 12.f4 \( \text{d}c4 \) 13.\( \text{d}xc4 \) bxc4 14.\( \text{d}d4 \) with an unclear position.

9...\( \text{d}d7 \)!

The normal move here is 9...\( \text{d}b7 \).

Svidler - Bischoff, Bled (ol) 2002, continued 10.f4 \( \text{d}c8 \) 11.0-0-0 \( \text{d}e7 \) 12.\( \text{d}b1 \) 0-0 13.g5 with a sharp opposite side castling position. In other words a fairly typical Sicilian.

The move I want to avoid with the 9.f4 move order is 9...\( \text{d}e5 \) with unclear play.

10.0-0-0 \( \text{d}c8 \) 11.f4 \( \text{d}e7 \) 12.g5 0-0 13.e5!

Black suffers because of the position of his bishop on d7.

13...\( \text{d}e8 \)!

This allows White to decisively strengthen his kingside attack but Black’s position was already unpleasant. For example 13...a5 14.\( \text{d}xa5 \) \( \text{w}xa5 \) 15.\( \text{d}g2 \)!! \( \text{b}b8 \) 16.\( \text{d}b1 \) and White is clearly better.

14.\( \text{d}e4 \) dxe5?!

Now White has a forced win but the alternative 14...d5 still leaves Black in trouble. 15.\( \text{w}g2 \) \( \text{h}8 \) (or 15...\( \text{w}c7 \) 16.\( \text{d}f6 t \) \( \text{h}8 \) 17.\( \text{d}d3 \) 16.\( \text{w}h3 \) and White’s simple, crude attack is deadly.

15.\( \text{w}g2 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 16.\( \text{d}f6 t \)!
16...\textit{h}8 17.\textit{d}3 \textit{xf}6
If 17...\textit{exf}4 White wins with 18.\textit{x}h7!.
For example 18...\textit{fxe}3 19.\textit{f}6! and mates.
After 17...\textit{gx}f6 White has an easy win with 18.\textit{gx}f6 \textit{g}8 (if 18...\textit{xf}6 then 19.\textit{e}4 and mate next move) 19.\textit{h}3 \textit{g}6 20.\textit{xf}6 \textit{fxg}6 21.\textit{xe}6.

18.\textit{gx}f6 \textit{g}6
Black is forced to weaken his structure since 18...\textit{g}8 loses immediately to 19.\textit{x}h7!.

19.\textit{g}5 \textit{exf}4 20.\textit{xf}4 \textit{e}5 21.\textit{h}4!
Not the only way to finish but definitely the most stylish.

21...\textit{exf}4 22.\textit{h}6 \textit{g}8 23.\textit{h}5
Black has no answer to the beautiful threat of 24.\textit{w}h7†! \textit{w}xh7 25.hxg6 mate.

1–0
5th move alternatives

- By Jacob Aagaard

In this chapter we shall investigate Black’s alternatives on the 5th move to the normal lines. In the following position

Black has some alternatives to the normal 5...a6, 5...g6, and so on. These include 5...e5, 5...d7 and 5...d7. Though none of them are really completely reliable, they are still not as bad as might be imagined. In this chapter I will quickly present a way to play against each of them.

5...e5

This line is a true provocation. Normally Black plays 5...a6 in order to play ...e5 without allowing b5+, but here Black decides to allow it. This will lead to a position where White has a slight positional pull, and the better player will most likely win with White, and draw with Black.

Basically the 5th move alternatives presented in this chapter have their drawbacks, but are not really bad moves as such. Therefore it is usual for White to achieve a slight advantage, but not more.

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4

Lately IM Bator has gone 4...e5 5.b5+ d7 6.f5 a6 7.xd7+ xd7 when he is retaining some flexibility with the g8-knight. Still White must be a little bit better here. 8.c3 c6 9.f3 e7 (9.e6 10.g5 f6 11.d2=. Ramesh - Ferrufino, Bled 2002 looks reasonable to me) And now it is of course possible to go 10.g4 e6 11.e3 d8 12.ed5=. Hector - Bator, Sweden 2003. But White should also do well with the simple 10.xe7 xe7 11.g3=.

5.c3 e5 6.b5+ bd7

6..d7 7.xd7+ xd7 leads to a slightly inferior position after 8.de2! (8.f5?! xe4 9.xg7+ xg7 10.xe4 d5 11.h6 0-0 leads to an equal position, or maybe even a forced draw. One line is 12.c5 d6 13.xg7 xg7 14.xb7 b4= 15.d2 xb7 Schopf - Hendrix, e-mail 1997). Now Black has the following possibilities:

a) 8..g4!? This looks very strange, but it does win a pawn. 9.d3=?
very aggressive approach that left Black with material but without development. 9...\texttt{W}xg2 (9...\texttt{Q}c6 10.0-0 \texttt{Q}e7 11.\texttt{Q}g3\texttt{Q} according to Peng. However, maybe the position is just really bad for Black. The queen is utterly misplaced and 12.\texttt{Q}d5 would be a strong reply against 11...g6.) 10.\texttt{B}g1 \texttt{W}xh2 11.\texttt{B}g5 \texttt{B}bd7 12.0-0-0 13.\texttt{B}c3 \texttt{B}f3 14.\texttt{B}g3 \texttt{B}h5 15.\texttt{B}b5 \texttt{B}c8 16.\texttt{B}xa7 \texttt{B}d8 17.\texttt{B}b5 \texttt{B}e7 18.\texttt{B}xg7 \texttt{B}c5 19.\texttt{B}c4 \texttt{B}cxe4 20.\texttt{B}c7\texttt{Q} d7 21.\texttt{B}xf7 and the attack was very strong in Willemze – S. Ernst, Vienna 2003. Possibly Black can defend better at various places, but what about 9.\texttt{Q}d5! which leaves White with a small but lasting advantage after 9...\texttt{Q}xd5 10.\texttt{W}xd5 \texttt{Q}c6 11.\texttt{Q}g3 \texttt{B}e6 12.c4. Compared to the Kalashnikov, White’s bad bishop has been exchanged, while Black will find it hard to exchange his bad bishop, in contrast to the Kalashnikov. 9.\texttt{Q}g3 \texttt{B}xd1\texttt{Q} 10.\texttt{Q}xd1 also looks like a preferable position for White.

b) 8...\texttt{Q}e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.\texttt{Q}g3 g6 is no way to play chess. 11.\texttt{B}g5 \texttt{Q}c6 12.\texttt{W}d2 \texttt{B}h8 13.\texttt{B}ad1 \texttt{B}ad8 14.f4 \texttt{B}g8 was played in Peng - Alexandria, Jakarta 1997. Now Peng gives 15.f5 \texttt{B}xg5 16.\texttt{W}xg5 f6 17.\texttt{W}e3\texttt{Q} as the best continuation.

c) 8...h6. This seems to be the most serious move. But the fact is that White is a little better no matter what. 9.0-0 (9.\texttt{Q}g3!? with the idea of 9...g6 10.\texttt{B}f1\texttt{Q}) 9...\texttt{Q}c6. So far Paehz - Petrenko, Plovdiv 2003. In the game I think Black could have equalised, but after 10.\texttt{Q}g3 White is simply slightly better.

7.\texttt{Q}f5 a6 8.\texttt{B}xd7\texttt{Q} \texttt{W}xd7

\begin{center}
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9.\texttt{B}e3\texttt{Q}

This is a very modest decision, far from an outright refutation of Black's opening. Usually when I meet an unusual line I do not try to refute it, unless there is no other way of gaining an advantage, or unless I think it is straightforward to refute it over the board. Here this kind of thinking explains my choice. Instead of 9.\texttt{B}e3 White has a more aggressive alternative:

9.\texttt{B}g5 \texttt{Q}xe4 10.\texttt{Q}xg7\texttt{Q} 11.\texttt{Q}xe4 0-0 12.\texttt{W}xd6 f6 13.\texttt{W}xd7 \texttt{Q}xd7 14.\texttt{B}d2 \texttt{B}c6 15.\texttt{Q}d6 has been played a number of times, and this also leads to a slight advantage for White. The two bishops and the strong pawns in the centre do provide Black with some counterplay though, and I do not feel that this is the most challenging way to play with
White. The positional approach, where d5 remains weak, is more to my liking.

9...\(\text{xc6}\) 10.\(\text{xd3}\)

There is an alternative that also really appeals to me. 10.\(\text{xf5}\) \(\text{xf5}\) 11.\(\text{xf5}\) \(\text{ed7}\) 12.\(\text{f3}\)± Strautins - Gallerani, e-mail 2002.

10...\(\text{e6}\) 11.0–0 \(\text{c8}\)

11...\(\text{e7}\) is also playable. 12.a4 0–0 13.\(\text{d2} \text{fc8}\) 14.a5 b5 15.axb6 \(\text{wb6}\) Marinkovic - Rajkovic, Ulcinj 1997.

16.\(\text{a4}\)± \(\text{d7}\) (Untenable is 16...\(\text{xb2}\)? 17.\(\text{b1} \text{xc3}\) 18.\(\text{xb2} \text{xd3}\) 19.\(\text{xd3}\)±) 17.\(\text{cd5} \text{xd5}\) 18.\(\text{xd5} \text{d8}\) 19.\(\text{xa6}\) \(\text{xa6}\) 20.\(\text{xa6}\) and White would be laughing, as 20...\(\text{xc2}\) 21.\(\text{c3}\) traps the rook.

12.a4

White has won the opening battle as far as I am concerned. He has exchanged the correct pair of bishops and prevented Black’s counterplay on the queenside. Soon he will advance his pawns and create lasting problems for Black on the queenside.

12...\(\text{e7}\) 13.a5 \(\text{c5}\)

13...0–0 14.\(\text{cd5} \text{d8}\) 15.c4 \(\text{d7}\) 16.b4 \(\text{xd5}\) 17.\(\text{exd5} \text{d8}\) 18.\(\text{a3} ±\) Della Morte - Larrea, Vicente Lopez 2004.

14.\(\text{a1} \text{d4}\) 0–0 15.\(\text{d2} \text{fe8}\) 16.\(\text{f1} \text{f8}\) 17.\(\text{a4} \text{c6}\) 18.\(\text{b6} \text{c7}\) 19.\(\text{f3} \text{h5}\) 20.c4± White later won. Hjartarson - Bator, Gausdal 1996.

This provocative move was invented by Bent Larsen who has played it from time to time, never presuming that it is very good, but to get young players out of theory. In the game fragment below his much younger opponent shows him the drawback with this kind of thinking: Bad moves often lead to bad positions!

1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{f3}\) d6 3.d4 \(\text{xd4}\) 4.\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{f6}\) 5.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{bd7}\) 6.g4!

This is the strongest reply, both statistically and logically. Black will be badly placed to play a hybrid between the English Attack and whatever he is trying to do.

6...\(\text{c5}\)!

I think this move is questionable.

6...d5 does not look good once we have a deeper look at the practical examples. 7.\(\text{exd5}\) (7.\(\text{xd5}\)?) is a serious alternative.

7...\(\text{xd5}\) (7...\(\text{xe4}\)?) 8.\(\text{b5}\)± 8.exd5 \(\text{a5}\) (8...\(\text{f6}\) does not work on
account of 9...b5+ d7 10.c4±) 9.c3 w xd5 10.g1 and White is probably slightly better here. One line is 10...e5 11.e2 c5 12.g2 d6 13.f5 f6 14.e3±) 7...b6 8.b5+ d7 9.d6 a6 as played in Feher - Gross, Budapest 1998. (9...exd6 10.f5 xb5 11.xb5 d5 12.f4± was something White quickly made a full point of in van Asperen - Barks, e-mail 1998) Here White played the innocuous 10.e2?! and the game was eventually drawn after the strongest reply 10...e5!. But White had a much stronger continuation with 10.g5!

when I cannot find a playable move for Black! 10...xb5 (10...xb5 11.gxf6 gxf6 12.dxb5 either transposes or gives Black problems after 12...exd6 13.xd6+ xxd6 14.wxd6±) 11.dxb5 axb5 12.gxf6 gxf6 13.xb5 exd6 14.e2+ c7 15.f4± and Black’s position is a complete wreck. I am sure a stronger player than I would go all the way and say that White is winning...

6...h6 is probably Black’s best move here. I would imagine that 7.h4!? is a good reply. 7.e3 a6 (7...h5? is punished with 8.g5 g4 9.g6! fxg6 10.e6 xe3 11.fxe3 a5. This was all played in Gaggiotti - Beggi, Italy 1995. Now the computer quickly finds the winning move: 12.d5!! xd5 13.xd5 xb8 14.dc7+ f7 15.c4+-) 8.h4 g6 9.d2 h5 10.g5 c6 11.0-0-0 g7 12.g1 c5 13.f4± with a good attacking position for White in Fogarasi - Bilek, Zalaegerszeg 1992.

7.f3 g6

This is one way to play the position for Black. But really he has no easy options anymore. 7...e6 8.e3 a6 9.d2 b5 10.a3?! Strictly speaking this is not necessary. 10.b7 11.g5 fd7 12.0-0-0 c8 13.b1 e7 14.h4±. These kind of attacking positions do not usually allow a player to waste time, as Black has done here with the artificial knight manoeuvre. White won in Barczay - Ciocalteva, Varna 1967, though Black is still in the game at this moment.

8.e3 d7

8...a6 9.d2 b5 10.0-0-0± is pleasant for White. Here Black is not really ready to face ideas such as d5 followed by c6, or just the basic g5 and c3-e2-g3. Black has a problematic choice to make. 10...b7?! is, however, not the way to go. After 11.dxb5! White had just won a pawn in Shevelevich - Makarov, corr.
1985, based on 11...axb5 12.\textit{xc}5 dxc5? 13.\textit{xb}5† and White wins.

9.h4 a6 10.h5

I quite like White’s flexible play in this game. Already here he must have been thinking of 11.b4 and the later \textit{c}4 and \textit{d}3. However 10.\textit{d}2?!, with the idea of 11.0–0–0, would also have given White the better game.

10...b5

11.b4!

This move is rather surprising. Usually White would not commit to an offensive on both sides of the board. Here it is fully justified.

11...\textit{a}4

It is hard to argue with this move, even though Black will be worse after it. The computer wants to play rough with 11...e5, but White has a refutation in 12.g5! \textit{\textit{x}h}5 13.bxc5 exd4 14.\textit{xd}4 \textit{g}8 15.\textit{d}5±, based on ideas with \textit{\textit{x}h}5, and 15...dxc5 16.\textit{e}5 and White wins.

12.\textit{x}a4 \textit{b}xa4 13.hxg6 fxg6 14.\textit{c}4 \textit{c}8

14...e5 15.\textit{e}6 \textit{c}8 16.\textit{xf}8 \textit{xc}4 17.\textit{xd}7 \textit{xd}7 18.\textit{xd}6 \textit{c}3† 19.\textit{f}2 \textit{xc}2† 20.\textit{g}3± was no alternative either. Black’s position is simply bad.

15.\textit{d}3 \textit{g}7 16.0–0–0 a5 17.b5 \textit{b}8 18.a3±

White won an exciting game and later the Danish Championship in a play-off between the same two players. \textit{Mortensen - Larsen}, Aalborg 1989.

5...\textit{d}7

This variation is the best of the three 5th move alternatives, and is usually attributed to the Byelorussian grandmaster Kupreichik.

1.e4 c5 2.\textit{f}3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\textit{xd}4 \textit{f}6 5.c3 \textit{d}7 6.f3!

I think the English Attack is the most natural reaction to this move. Black now has the option to go into the unusual lines of the Dragon, or play a position where the bishop is a little strangely placed on d7.

6.\textit{g}5 will most often transpose to the Richter-Rauzer after 6...\textit{c}6. This is, of course, something White can choose to play, but I like to recommend the best move in the position.

6.\textit{e}2 is another way to play the position, but is not in line with our repertoire.
6...a6

I am not convinced this is the best plan. The alternatives are:

6...e5 7.Qb3 a5 8.a4 Qe7 9.Qe3 Qa6 10.Qb5± Topalov - Ivanchuk, Monte Carlo 1998.

6...Qc6 7.Qe3 g6 (7...a6 8.Qd2 Qc8!? is an interesting idea that cannot be correctly evaluated before it has been played between stronger players than it has currently.) 8.Qd2 transposes to the Dragon variation, see page 43. In this way, choosing 6.f3 is maybe just a question of which transposition to allow.

7.Qe3 e6 8.Qd2 b5 9.0–0–0±

White is a little better after the opening.

9...h5 10.Qd3 Qe7 11.g3?!

A slow but dangerous plan. Black needs to react in the centre as in the game, or he will be in trouble.

11...Qc8 12.h3 e5!

12...Qc6 13.g4 with an advantage for White.

13.Qf5 Qxf5 14.exf5 d5 15.f4 d4 15...e4? 16.e2 Qb4 17.Qd4 Qbd7 18.g4± and Black will soon find himself with very serious problems.

16.Qg2 Qc6

16...Qbd7 17.fxe5 dxc3 18.exf6 cxb2± 19.Qb1 Qxf6 20.Qd4 0–0 21.g4± leads to a position where White has good attacking prospects.

17.Qe4! dxe3?

This simply loses the exchange without compensation. After 17...Qd5 18.Qf2 f6 19.fxe5 fxe5± Black is worse, but there is no clear way for White to break down Black's defences.

18.Qxf6+ Qxf6 19.Qe4 Qc7 20.Qxa8

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The Sicilian Defence is the most popular opening at all levels of tournament play from Linares to the local club championship. The Sicilian is played regularly by Kasparov, Anand, Kramnik, Leko, Topalov, and Shirov - a.k.a. the best players in the world.

In this book a multinational line-up of leading experts give recommendations against their own pet lines in the Sicilian Defence. This repertoire book recommends the critical main lines and reveals Black's greatest fears to you.

These experts are:

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GM Peter Heine Nielsen. A world-class player (Elo 2653) and regular training partner of World No.2 Anand) writing about the Accelerated Dragon.

GM Peter Wells. Author of the finest opening book according to the respected reviewer IM Jeremy Silman, plotting against his own pet defence: the Classical Sicilian.

GM Thomas Luther. Twice German Champion and silver medallist at the 2000 Chess Olympiad, writing about his lifelong passion for 6...g5 against the Najdorf.

GM Mikhail Golubev. A regular contributor to New In Chess Yearbook with articles on the Dragon variation, on which he has also written a book.

GM Sune Berg Hansen. Former Danish Champion and highly respected opening expert, attacking his own favourites: the Kan and Taimanov.

GM Viktor Gavrikov. Acclaimed theoretical expert writing about the Scheveningen variation, recommending the aggressive Keres Attack.

IM Alexander Raetsky. An experienced Russian theoretician who recently made his first GM norm. Raetsky shows us how to beat the Four Knights Variation, the line that is the cornerstone of his popular book Meeting 1.e4.

IM Jan Pinski. The Polish author of The Sicilian Kalashnikov targets his own main defence: the Sicilian Kalashnikov.

IM Jacob Aagaard. A strong Danish IM, covering the best lines against the popular Sveshnikov variation on which he has written a book.

IM John Shaw. The Scottish IM shares his talent for deep opening preparation with the reader on some “minor” lines.