Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, electrostatic, magnetic tape, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of the publisher.

Paperback ISBN 978-1-906552-80-0
Hardcover ISBN 978-1-906552-81-7

All sales or enquiries should be directed to Quality Chess UK Ltd,
20 Balvie Road, Milngavie, Glasgow G62 7TA, United Kingdom
Phone +44 141 227 6771
e-mail: info@qualitychess.co.uk
website: www.chessindia.net

Distributed in US and Canada by SCB Distributors, Gardena, California, US
www.scbdistributors.com
Distributed in Rest of the World by Quality Chess UK Ltd through
Sunrise Handicrafts, Smyczkowa 4/98, 20-844 Lublin, Poland

Typeset by Jacob Aagaard
Proofreading by Colin McNab
Edited by Jacob Aagaard, John Shaw and Colin McNab
Cover design by Adamson Design
Printed in Estonia by Tallinna Raamatutükikoja LLC
Key to symbols used

±    White is slightly better
±    Black is slightly better
±    White is better
±    Black is better
+-    White has a decisive advantage
→→    Black has a decisive advantage
=    equality
≡≡    with compensation
≡    with counterplay
≡    unclear

?    a weak move
??   a blunder
!    a good move
!!   an excellent move
!?   a move worth considering
?!   a move of doubtful value
□    only move
#    mate
Introduction

Experts vs. the Sicilian was invented in a brainstorming session-turned-argument in 2004. Together with Learn from the Legends by Mihail Marin, it was the first release from Quality Chess. We liked the format and so did the public, so it was natural to return to it at some point. That it would take seven years is a surprise, but the right idea did not exist before then.

Experts on the Anti-Sicilian includes articles from many writers, all of them grandmasters (with the exception of Andrew Greet who prefers to just write like one...) and all of them experienced in their field. The focus is a bit different from the first Experts book where White went out with all guns blazing in the main lines, hoping for an advantage against some of the best openings of our day.

The anti-Sicilian lines do not have as strong a theoretical reputation as the Open lines (which are characterized by 2.e4, 3.d4 4.e4x4 and 5.e4 in reply to almost anything) but anti-Sicilians are played in roughly a third of all games that start 1.e4. Success in this area of opening theory is important for everyone playing the Sicilian, with White or with Black.

This book, like the previous Experts volume, was written by the authors as they wanted to write it. Most of them have followed the traditional ABC format, while others have decided to put their own flavour on things. Beyond this, some chapters are repertoires offering (mainly) Black suitable advice against a certain line; while others have a more holistic approach, investigating (sometimes deeply) lines in every direction.

The authors and their articles are:

GM Boris Avrukh was already famous as a player before his surname became a verb (coined by Artur Yusupov) in the wake of his two-volume repertoire on 1.d4: Grandmaster Repertoire 1 (2008) & Grandmaster Repertoire 2 (2010). “To Avrukh your opponent” is to play a theoretical improvement first suggested by Boris. Boris recently won the ChessPublishing “Opening Book of the Year for 2010” (for GM2), became the coach of the Israeli national team and is just about to publish his repertoire book for Black Grandmaster Repertoire 8: The Grünfeld Defence, Quality Chess 2011. His chapter The Grand Prix Attack with 3...e6 gives a fascinating repertoire for Black against 2.e5 3...e5 3.f4.

GM Jacob Aagaard has won the ChessCafe Book of the Year prize (Excelling at Chess, 2002) and the English Chess Federation and Guardian Book of the Year awards (Attacking Manual 1 & Attacking Manual 2, 2010). As a player he has won the British Championship and several opens. A Classical Repertoire against 2.c3 gives a complete repertoire for Black after 2...d5, excluding irrelevant stuff such as 3.d3, 3...c2 and other nonsense...
GM Tiger Hillarp Persson should be well known to our readers due to his popular book *Tiger's Modern*. Perhaps we should mention that Tiger thought the name *Tiger's Modern* sounded immodest, but he was outvoted. Tiger has twice been Swedish Champion and has won numerous international events. Tiger's two chapters present a repertoire for Black against 2.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{d}6\) 3.\(\text{b}5\) and 2.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{d}6\) 3.\(\text{b}5\). In the former case he recommends 3...\(\text{d}6\) and in the latter 3...\(\text{d}7\). Thus the reader is offered a line against the Rossolimo System and two lines against the Moscow System.

As mentioned above, IM Andrew Greet is the only non-GM in the book, but the Englishman makes up for it by being the 2010 Scottish Champion. Greet explains the subtleties of the Moscow Variation with 5.\(\text{c}4\). That is, the position after 2.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{d}6\) 3.\(\text{b}5\) 4.\(\text{x}d7\) 5.\(\text{c}4\). Greet's focus is on suggesting ideas for White that avoid the notorious equalizing lines created by Ivanchuk and Agdestein.

GM Christian Bauer is a former French Champion and a specialist in offbeat anti-Sicilians. Bauer has proved these lines can work in international opens, as his FIDE rating of 2633 testifies. Bauer covers the following lines: 2.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{d}6\) 3.\(\text{c}4\), 2.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{d}6\) 3.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{f}6\) 4.\(\text{h}3\), *The King's Indian Attack*: 2.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{e}6\) 3.\(\text{d}3\) or 3.\(\text{g}3\) and 2.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{e}6\) 3.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{d}5\) 4.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{d}4\). In each case, Bauer offers far more than a repertoire; he shares his ideas and improvements in total coverage of these lines.

In contrast, GM Milos Pavlovic offers a strict repertoire approach. The Serbian opening expert's chapter is called *A 10-minute repertoire against the Closed Sicilian*. The title is tongue-in-cheek, but there is no denying Pavlovic provides a quick and effective answer to the Closed Sicilian.

GM Matthieu Cornette of France is an expert on the 2.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{c}6\) 3.\(\text{b}5\) variation. This is sometimes known as the Modern Grand Prix, but Cornette's preference is to call it the Tiviakov Grand Prix to honour its strongest exponent. Cornette offers in-depth and extensive coverage of a line that no book has ever before studied in such depth. In fact, Cornette's chapters could have been a reasonably sized book on their own...

GM Colin McNab has been Scottish Champion four times and has had even greater success as a World Champion chess puzzle solver. In his chapters McNab recommends a repertoire for Black against three lines that could and should have been included in *Grandmaster Repertoire 6: The Sicilian Defence*: 2.a3, 2.f4 \(\text{d}5\) and 2.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{d}6\) 3.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{cxd}4\) 4.\(\text{x}d4\) \(\text{f}6\) 5.\(\text{f}3\).

GM John Shaw has been Scottish Champion just three times. In his chapter on 2.d3 he offers a quick repertoire for Black against this offbeat line. One of the tricks of 2.d3 is that White often retains the option of transposing to a Closed Sicilian, so the repertoire in this chapter is designed to be consistent with Pavlovic's anti-Closed Sicilian line.

GM Peter Heine Nielsen is the highest rated player of our authors and has been Danish Champion five times. Nielsen's opening expertise is so highly regarded that World Champion Viswanathan Anand selected him as his second. Nielsen offers a repertoire for Black after 2.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{g}6\). The 2.\(\text{b}3\) variation is a quirky yet increasingly popular sideline; Nielsen's witty counter-fianchetto is a serious attempt at refuting it.
Chapter 1

Boris Avrukh

3...e6 versus the Grand Prix Attack

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.d4 c6 3.f4 e6 4.g3 d5 5.b5 e7 6.exd5 exd5 7.e2

7...f6!

A) 8.d4
B) 8.xc6†
C) 8.0–0

15
17
18
1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.f4

This is not such a popular line at the top level, but Black players often run into trouble when facing such minor variations, as they have concentrated their studies on the main lines. In fact this line is quite tricky and if you don't know how to react exactly it's very easy to end up in an unpleasant situation.

3...e6

The most common response is 3...g6, but the text move is a very challenging alternative. Below I will offer a repertoire for Black using 3...e6. In reply to 3...e6 White's minor lines are no threat and Black's solutions here are well-known. Accordingly, my recommendations versus the minor lines are similar to existing theory, including, for example, the book *Fighting the anti-Sicilians* by Richard Palliser. However, in reply to White's critical line I have created a completely new approach, using a move that is not even mentioned by many sources.

4.d3

Clearly White's first choice, but let's have a brief look at White's other options:

4.c4

I would say this is even a slight mistake and definitely plays into Black's hands. 4...\( \mathcal{D} \)ge7!

Black wants to play \(...d7-d5\) with tempo.

5.e5

Maybe the lesser evil in this position. After 5.d3 d5 I found more than a hundred games, but it's absolutely clear that Black has an excellent game after either 6.a5 a6 or 6.exd5 exd5. In the latter line one illustrative line is: 7.b3 (7.b5 a6 obviously leads to Black's advantage) 7...c4!? I like this most, as after 8.a4 a6 White is forced to give up his light-squared bishop with 9.xc6+ \( \mathcal{D} \)xc6.

5...d5 6.exd6 \( \mathcal{D} \)f5!

A small trick that allows Black to gain the more comfortable game, for example:

7.d3 xd6 8.d3 0-0 9.0-0 b6

White's problem is the f4-pawn, which will later make his kingside position slightly vulnerable. So my conclusion is that if Black manages to exchange White's e-pawn and complete normal development, then he has no problems at all and can start to fight for the advantage.

10.\( \mathcal{D} \)e4 \( \mathcal{D} \)b7
Black has the more comfortable game without any doubt and after the following strange manoeuvre by White:

11.\( \text{f}g5 \)!! h6 12.\( \text{h}3 \text{e}7 \\
Black was significantly better in Just – Thies, Leipzig 2007.

4.\( \text{b}5 \) seems an inaccurate move order to me, because instead of 4...\( \text{e}7 \), which would transpose to our main line after 5.\( \text{f}3 \), Black can also try 4...\( \text{d}4 \) getting a very good version of the following line: 1.e4 c5 2.\( \text{f}3 \text{c}6 \) 3.\( \text{b}5 \text{d}4 \) (see Chapter 13).

The attempt to reach some kind of Closed Sicilian is absolutely harmless:

4.g3 d5 5.\( \text{g}2 \\
If 5.e5 then I like the following idea for Black: 5...\( \text{h}6 \) 6.\( \text{g}2 \text{f}5 \)!! (6...\( \text{e}7 \) 7.\( \text{f}3 \) will be examined in the 5.\( \text{f}3 \) line) 7.\( \text{f}3 \text{e}7 \) 8.0-0 \\
h5 Black has a pleasant and active position (the annoying idea of ...h4-h3 is always in the air) Potapov – Botkin, Ozery 1997.

5...d4? \\
No doubt the natural 5...dxe4 6.\( \text{xe}4 \text{e}7 \) (or 6.\( \text{f}6 \) 7.\( \text{d}3 \text{e}7 \) 7.\( \text{f}3 \text{f}6 \) also promises Black absolutely no problems. Here the popular line is 8.\( \text{f}2 \) 0-0 9.0-0 \( \text{c}7 \) in order to prepare a queenside fianchetto with ...b7-b6 (which was not possible immediately in view of 10.\( \text{e}5 \)). 10.b3 b6 11.\( \text{b}2 \text{b}7 \) And Black has a comfortable game.

6.\( \text{ce}2 \) d3! 7.\( \text{cxd}3 \\
Here I found:

7...\( \text{b}4 \)!!N

After the natural-looking 7...\( \text{xd}3 \) White has the strong 8.\( \text{h}3 \) which has occurred three times in practice; this seems pretty double-edged, as White will chase Black's queen away from d3 by means of \( \text{f}2 \) and then d2-d3 followed by \( \text{e}3 \) and maybe d3-d4 at some point.

8.d4 \( \text{cxd}4 \)??

8...\( \text{d}3 \)† 9.\( \text{f}1 \text{cxd}4 \) 10.\( \text{f}3 \) leads to the same position, but White gets an extra option in 10.\( \text{e}5 \)!!.

9.\( \text{f}3 \)

If 9.d3 then 9...\( \text{a}5 \) 10.\( \text{f}1 \text{a}6 \) keeps the initiative on Black's side.

9...\( \text{d}3 \)† 10.\( \text{f}1 \text{f}6 \\
We have reached a very complex and exciting position. Below are some illustrative lines:

11.\( \text{a}4 \)†

Other options are not very exciting for White: 11.\( \text{xd}4 \) e5 12.\( \text{xe}5 \text{g}4 \) and Black has a dangerous initiative. Or 11.e5 \( \text{g}4 \)

12.\( \text{xd}4 \text{g}2 \) 13.\( \text{a}4 \)† \( \text{d}7 \) 14.\( \text{b}3 \text{c}5 \)

15.\( \text{f}3 \text{h}1 \) and Black is clearly better.

11...\( \text{d}7 \) 12.\( \text{c}4 \)

After 12.\( \text{xd}4 \text{b}5 \) Black is better.

12...\( \text{b}4 \) 13.\( \text{xd}4 \text{e}8 \) 14.\( \text{b}3 \text{c}5 \)

With obvious compensation.

4...d5

The less popular alternatives include 4...\( \text{ge}7 \), 4...a6 and 4...g6. Or 4...d6 when one
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

high-profile example continued 5.\textit{b5} \textit{f6} 6.\textit{xc6}! \textit{bxc6} 7.d3 \textit{d7} 8.0-0 \textit{e7} 9.e1++, Short – Azmaiparashvili, Yerevan (ol) 1996.

5.\textit{b5}

Definitely the most challenging move, but it is important to briefly examine the alternatives as well:

5.d3

This looks harmless, but Black must know how to develop his pieces.

5...\textit{f6}

Probably good enough for eventual equality is 5...\textit{dxe4} 6.dxe4. (As I mentioned already, the pawn structure after 6.\textit{dxe4} is absolutely harmless for Black and of course he is doing fine after 6...\textit{f6}.) 6...\textit{xd1} 7.\textit{xd1} \textit{f6}

But after 8.\textit{f2} we reach a playable endgame, where Black still has a little work to do to achieve equality.

6.e5

In some games White played 6.\textit{e2}, but the bishop is pretty passive here and also takes away the e2-square from the c3-knight after a possible \textit{...b5-b4}. I like the following example: 6...\textit{b5}?! (of course there is nothing wrong with 6...\textit{e7}) 7.e5 Certainly the \textit{b5}-pawn is untouchable (7.\textit{xb5}? \textit{a5}↑ 8.\textit{c3} d4 and White loses a piece). 7...\textit{b4} 8.\textit{b1} \textit{d7} 9.\textit{e3} a5 10.\textit{bd2} a4 11.\textit{c4} \textit{bxc3} 12.\textit{xc3} \textit{e7} 13.0-0 0-0 14.\textit{c1}?! \textit{a6} 15.\textit{d1} \textit{f6}! 16.\textit{xf6} \textit{xf6}↑ Of course White’s last two moves were not the best, but Black’s play looks very thematic in this example, Egorov – Gasanov, Evpatoria 2002.

6...\textit{d7}

Not very clear is 6...\textit{d4} 7.\textit{e4} \textit{xe4} 8.\textit{dxe4} \textit{e7} 9.\textit{d3}.

7.g3 \textit{b5}!

A nice idea; by using White’s king on \textit{e1} Black saves a tempo in achieving \textit{...b5}.

8.\textit{g2} \textit{b4} 9.\textit{e2} \textit{e7} 10.0-0 0-0

When we compare this position with the well-known line 1.e4 \textit{c5} 2.\textit{f3} \textit{e6} 3.d3 \textit{d6} 4.g3 \textit{d5} 5.\textit{bd2} \textit{f6} 6.g2 \textit{e7} 7.0-0 0-0 8.e5 \textit{d7} 9.\textit{e1}, it’s easy to understand that here we have an improved version for Black, since White lacks useful ideas. This is mostly because he cannot quickly play the advance \textit{f4-f5}, since the \textit{e5}-pawn needs to be protected. The following example illustrates these points:

11.\textit{c3} a5 12.a3 \textit{bxa3} 13.\textit{bxa3} \textit{a6} 14.g4 \textit{c7} 15.\textit{g3} \textit{ab8} 16.\textit{f2} \textit{fc8} 17.c3 \textit{b3}

Black has the initiative on the queenside, Jakymov – Voitsekhovsky, St Petersburg 2001.

After 5.e5 Black can develop comfortably as follows: 5...\textit{h6} 6.g3 \textit{e7} 7.\textit{h3} 0-0 8.0-0 This is Thorhallsson – Karason, Reykjavik 1997, and now simply 8...\textit{b6} 9.\textit{e2} \textit{d4} 10.d3 \textit{f5}! would give Black excellent play.

Clearly harmless is 5.\textit{xd5} \textit{exd5} 6.\textit{b5} in view of 6...\textit{f6} 7.0-0 \textit{e7}. Here Black shouldn’t
worry about 8.\( \text{d} \text{e}5 \) because of the neat trick: 8...\( \text{c} \text{c}7 \). 9.\( \text{f} \text{f}3 \) 0-0 10.\( \text{d} \text{e}5 \) \( \text{d} \text{d}5 \) 11.\( \text{d} \text{d}4 \) ! And Black takes over the initiative after 12.\( \text{d} \text{d}3 \) \( \text{e}6 \). 13.\( \text{f} \text{f}4 \) 14.\( \text{f} \text{f}5 \) 15.\( \text{e} \text{e}2 \) \( \text{e} \text{e}2 \), Tokovic - Kraschl, Hradec Kralove 1992.

5...\( \text{d} \text{e}7 \)?
Black has other options as well, but 5...\( \text{d} \text{e}7 \) is the subject of my work. The text move is very challenging, since Black intends to solve his opening problems by forcing White to take on \( \text{c}6 \), when Black can recapture with his second knight.

6.exd5
The main continuation, but as always there are alternatives:

6.0-0
Absolutely harmless; Black can react in two ways:
6...a6
Also 6...\( \text{d} \text{e}4 \) 7.\( \text{d} \text{e}4 \) a6 is perfectly playable for Black.
7.dxc6+ \( \text{d} \text{c}6 \) 8.d3 \( \text{e}7 \)
And this position is quite promising for Black, as the following nice example shows:
9.\( \text{d} \text{e}1 \) 0-0 10.\( \text{g} \text{g}3 \)
A typical idea, but Black easily creates counterplay:

10.d4

11.\( \text{d} \text{d}1 \)
The main point lies in the following clever line: 11.\( \text{d} \text{e}2 \) \( \text{d} \text{b}4 \). 12.\( \text{d} \text{e}1 \) \( \text{h} \text{h}4 \). 13.\( \text{f} \text{f}3 \) \( \text{d} \text{d}1 \) 14.\( \text{d} \text{e}1 \) \( \text{d} \text{xc}2 \) - Krasnov - Rychagov, Tula 2006.

11...f5!
A thematic positional decision; Black not only stops any ideas connected with \( \text{f}4 \)-\( \text{f}5 \), but is also aiming to get his bishop into play effectively on the h1-a8 diagonal.

12.\( \text{f} \text{f}2 \)
12.\( \text{d} \text{e}1 \) runs into 12...\( \text{b} \text{b}4 \) 13.\( \text{f} \text{f}2 \) as in To Quoc Khanh - Dao Thien Hai Vung Tau 2002, and here after the simple 13...\( \text{f} \text{f}6 \) 14.\( \text{d} \text{d}4 \) (14.\( \text{d} \text{e}4 \) \( \text{d} \text{d}3 \) ! looks horrible for White) 14...b6 Black is ready to start playing on the a8-h1 diagonal.

12.\( \text{b} \text{b}4 \)
If 12...\( \text{f} \text{f}6 \) then 13.\( \text{g} \text{g}5 \).
13.\( \text{d} \text{e}1 \)
This occurred in Lazic – Cvetkovic, Vrbas 1993, and now I like the positional approach:
13...f6 N 14.a3 g6 15.b3 c6
Black has a fine game.

6.e2

A tricky move, which Black should answer with:
6...d4
And not 6...dxe4 when after 7.e5! White has some initiative.
7.d1 a6 8.xc6+ bxc6 9.d3
I don’t believe White can fight for an advantage by giving up his light-squared bishop for nothing. Here I recommend the following line for Black:
9...e7 10.0-0 b6 11.d2 b7
In some variations Black keeps the option of castling long, so White cannot start his attack on the kingside immediately.
12.d2 w d7 13.a3 f6 14.eb1 0-0
Now that White has lost some time on the queenside, castling short works beautifully.
15.g4
It was probably better not to rush with this move.
15...f5! 16.eb1 e8 17.h3 d6+
Very soon Black opened up the position in his favour, G. Horvath – Jurkovic, Austria 2008.

6.e5 d7
The most principled reply.
At first glance it seems Black can easily solve his problems with 6...f6? but actually this falls into a trap: 7.h5+ g6 8.xg6! xg6
9.f5 and White is clearly better.
A reasonable alternative is 6.a6 7.xc6+ bxc6 8.xc6 bxc6 with a complex game.

7.xd7
Another line is 7.exd5. Here I like 7...xd5
8.xc6 (if 8.xd7 xd7 9.0-0 e7 then Black is absolutely alright) 8...xc6 9.xc6 bxc6 and eventually we have reached an interesting position, which has occurred almost 40 times in practice. This is considered to be very good for Black, since his activity and White’s vulnerable kingside (because of f2-f4) fully compensates for his damaged pawn structure on the queenside. The stem game continued: 10.0-0 e7
11.f4 (11.d2 0-0 12.e4 f5 13.g3 d6 is also very nice for Black) 11...0-0
12.d3 f5 13.g3 f6 14.c3 g6 15.d2 b6
And Black had a great game in Smyslov – Olafsson, Bled 1959.
7...xd7 8.exd5
There is also 8.d3 a6 9.xc6 xc6 10.0-0 e7 11.g4 and here Black solves his problems with: 11...dxe4! 12.xg7 (12.xe4 d4+ 13.h1 0-0 14.d1 d2! is just perfect for Black, Lazarevic – Belavenets, Belgrade 1998) 12...d4+ 13.xd4 xd4
Chapter 1 – 3...e6 versus the Grand Prix Attack

14.dxe4 Qxc2 15.b1 Black cannot have any difficulties in this endgame, Reinecker – Maniocha, Germany 2005.

8...exd5
Certainly there is also nothing wrong with 8...Qxd5.

9.0-0 0-0-0
Very unusual and interesting play by Black.

10.a3 Qf5 11.ee2 c4 12.Qf3 Qc5† 13.Qh1 :f5!
And Black managed to create very interesting attacking chances in Short – Topalov, Dos Hermanas 1997.

6...exd5
This is critical, since I am not sure Black can equalize after 6...Qxd5 7.0-0! when it is dangerous to accept the pawn sacrifice: ...Qxf4 8.d4 Qg6 9.d5 and I am really concerned about White’s initiative.

7.Qe2
Clearly the critical continuation; other moves pose Black no problems, for example:

7...a6 8.Qxc6† Qxc6 9.d4 Qe7 10.Qe3
This is Da Fonseca – Eboli, e-mail 2005, and here I like the natural 10...Qg4 11.Qd2 Qxf3 12.exf3 0-0† with excellent play for Black.

7...e5 a6 8.Qxc6† Qxc6 9.Qxc6 (9.0-0 Qe7)
9...bxc6 10.0-0 Qe7 Black has a very pleasant game. For instance, 11.f5 and now I like the normal: 11...0-0N (instead of 11...g6 12.d3 Qxf5 13.Qh6 Qe6 14.Wf3 when White had reasonable compensation in Wynn Zaw – Roca, Vung Tau 2001) 12.d3 Qf6 13.Qd2 Qe8†

Finally we have reached a critical position of this line and now Black must make a serious decision about how to solve his development problem.

7...f6!
This move is clearly underestimated by theory and is Black’s sixth most popular option, according to my database. 7...f6 is not mentioned in Palliser’s Fighting the anti-Sicilians or in Starting Out: Sicilian Grand Prix Attack by GM Gawain Jones, even though Jones mentions four moves for Black in this position. Thus it is a move that will surprise many White players. And indeed it looks a bit strange, since Black’s idea is to run away with his king from two pins to the f7-square and then to free his e7-knight. The play becomes very concrete since White should try as quickly as possible to use his development advantage, otherwise he might end up with a positionally suspect set-up. I believe Black’s other possibilities do not promise Black a good
game. In fact, he experiences problems in all the other lines:

7...g6
This move has been played by Alexey Shirov, but in my opinion it fails to equalize. Black would be fine if he could complete development with \ldots \texttt{Ng7} and then castle short, but White has the important resource:

8.\texttt{Wxe5!} \texttt{g8} 9.\texttt{xc6\#} bxc6 10.0-0 \texttt{g7}

8.\texttt{xc6\#}!
The only idea which promises White better chances.
After the natural 8.0-0 Black opts for 8...\texttt{g4}! followed by 0-0-0 with good play.

8...\texttt{xc6}
Once again Black's pawn structure becomes vulnerable after 8...bxc6 9.0-0 g6 10.b3 \texttt{g7} 11.a3 and Black can hardly defend his c5-pawn.

9.d4 c4
Also 9...\texttt{g4} does not solve Black's problems, after 10.dxc5 0-0-0 11.b5! \texttt{xc5} 12.a3 \texttt{xf3} 13.dxc5 \texttt{xe2} 14.dxe2 and Black is going to suffer in this endgame.

11.\texttt{We1\#}!
A very important improvement. (I later noted that GM Jones had suggested a similar idea, except without the previous exchange on c6 on move 9. The problem with that move order is that Black can then avoid getting doubled pawns.)
In all five games to reach this position, White opted for 11.\texttt{e2} and in this case Black solves his opening problems with 11...\texttt{g4}!
12.\texttt{f2} \texttt{xf3} 13.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{f8}, Fougerit - Barbet, France 2004.

11...\texttt{f5}
Now 11...\texttt{g4} runs into 12.\texttt{e5!}.
12.d3 \texttt{f8} 13.b3
Black's c5-pawn is a clear target.
13.\texttt{a5} 14.\texttt{c2} \texttt{c7} 15.\texttt{e5}
And White obviously has the initiative.

7.\texttt{d6}
Black's first choice according to theory.

10.\texttt{e5!}
A strong improvement over 10.0-0 \texttt{g4} 11.h3 \texttt{xf3} 12.\texttt{xf3} 0-0-0 when Black was doing fine in Rich - Kosteniuk, West Bromwich 2004.

10.\texttt{d6}
Another illustrative line is: 10...\texttt{e6} 11.0-0 \texttt{f6} 12.f5! \texttt{xf5} 13.\texttt{h5\#} g6 14.\texttt{xg6} hxg6 15.\texttt{xh8} \texttt{d7} 16.\texttt{g5\#}
11.0-0 \texttt{f5}
Black's problem is that he cannot play 11...\texttt{f6} in view of 12.\texttt{h5\#} g6 13.\texttt{xg6} \texttt{xg6} 14.\texttt{f5\#}.
12.g4 \texttt{d7} 13.b3
And White clearly has a strong initiative.

7.\texttt{g4}
A serious mistake would be 8...cxd4? as happened in two games. 9...dx4 $\textit{Qf7}$ And now the simple novelty 10...e3!N following by castling long leads to a very difficult position for Black.

At this point we have the following options: A) 8.d4, B) 8...xc6† and C) 8.0-0.

A) 8.d4 $\textit{Qf7}$

A serious mistake would be 8...cxd4? as happened in two games.
16 Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

This strong manoeuvre promises White a slight edge.

Other possibilities are not so dangerous:

13.\texttt{\textbackslash d2} \texttt{\textbackslash b8} 14.\texttt{\textbackslash g4} \texttt{\textbackslash b4} 15.\texttt{\textbackslash b3} \texttt{\textbackslash d4} 16.\texttt{\textbackslash d3} \texttt{\textbackslash xc5} 17.\texttt{\textbackslash b1} \texttt{\textbackslash c4}! or 13.\texttt{\textbackslash f2} \texttt{\textbackslash xc5} 14.\texttt{\textbackslash xc5} \texttt{\textbackslash xc5} 15.\texttt{\textbackslash he1} \texttt{\textbackslash h5} 16.\texttt{\textbackslash d3} \texttt{\textbackslash b8}∞.

13...\texttt{\textbackslash xc5} 14.\texttt{\textbackslash xc5} \texttt{\textbackslash xc5} 15.\texttt{\textbackslash he1} \texttt{\textbackslash b4} 16.\texttt{\textbackslash f1} \texttt{\textbackslash b8} 17.\texttt{\textbackslash b3}

The b3-knight stabilizes White's position so he can start thinking about a kingside attack; White has better chances.

b) 10...\texttt{\textbackslash xe3}

This seems stronger.

11.\texttt{\textbackslash xe3} \texttt{\textbackslash xd4} 12.\texttt{\textbackslash xd4} \texttt{\textbackslash c5} 13.\texttt{\textbackslash xc6} \texttt{\textbackslash bxc6}
14.\texttt{\textbackslash f3}

It is important that after 14.\texttt{\textbackslash he1} \texttt{\textbackslash g4}! 15.\texttt{\textbackslash h3} \texttt{\textbackslash xd1} 16.\texttt{\textbackslash e6}+ \texttt{\textbackslash f8} Black keeps everything under control. 17.\texttt{\textbackslash xc6} \texttt{\textbackslash d6} 18.\texttt{\textbackslash xd1} \texttt{\textbackslash xe6} 19.\texttt{\textbackslash xe6} \texttt{\textbackslash f7} 20.\texttt{\textbackslash f5} \texttt{\textbackslash he8} And White is going to fight for a win in this endgame.

14...\texttt{\textbackslash xd4} 15.\texttt{\textbackslash xd4} \texttt{\textbackslash e8}

Black has a fine game.

9...\texttt{\textbackslash f5}

![Chess Board]

10.\texttt{\textbackslash xd5}

At first sight this looks like a promising blow, but in fact Black quickly develops his pieces and obtains more than sufficient compensation.

Best would have been:

10.\texttt{\textbackslash e3}

In this case the critical line is:

10...\texttt{\textbackslash a6} 11.\texttt{\textbackslash xc6} \texttt{\textbackslash bxc6} 12.\texttt{\textbackslash f2}

After 12.\texttt{\textbackslash g3} 13.\texttt{\textbackslash xc6} \texttt{\textbackslash b5} we transpose to a position that was examined after 9.\texttt{\textbackslash e3}.

12...\texttt{\textbackslash a5} 13.\texttt{\textbackslash g4}!

Now we have a pretty much forced continuation:

13.\texttt{\textbackslash xc5}
13...\texttt{\textbackslash h6} 14.\texttt{\textbackslash h3} is hardly satisfactory for Black.

14.\texttt{\textbackslash gxf5} \texttt{\textbackslash e8} 15.\texttt{\textbackslash e5}+ \texttt{\textbackslash fxe5} 16.\texttt{\textbackslash h5}+ \texttt{\textbackslash f8}
17.0-0

Another interesting line is 17.\texttt{\textbackslash xc5}+ \texttt{\textbackslash xc5} 18.0-0-0 which looks very dangerous for Black, but he manages to create counterplay just in time: 18...\texttt{\textbackslash e3}+! 19.\texttt{\textbackslash b1} \texttt{\textbackslash b8} 20.\texttt{\textbackslash e2} And it seems to me a draw would be the fairest outcome: 20...\texttt{\textbackslash xf4} 21.\texttt{\textbackslash f6} (if 21.\texttt{\textbackslash xh7} Black can think about playing for an advantage with 21...\texttt{\textbackslash e5} 22.\texttt{\textbackslash d4} \texttt{\textbackslash b4}!) 21...\texttt{\textbackslash xe2} 22.\texttt{\textbackslash xh7} \texttt{\textbackslash gxf6} And White is obliged to force a draw by perpetual with either 23.\texttt{\textbackslash h6}+ \texttt{\textbackslash f7} 24.\texttt{\textbackslash h7}+ or 23.\texttt{\textbackslash hgl} \texttt{\textbackslash g4} 24.\texttt{\textbackslash xh6}+ \texttt{\textbackslash f7} 25.\texttt{\textbackslash h7}+.

17...\texttt{\textbackslash e4} 18.\texttt{\textbackslash xh7} \texttt{\textbackslash e3}

Again a draw is the logical outcome:

19.\texttt{\textbackslash h8}+ \texttt{\textbackslash f7} 20.\texttt{\textbackslash h5}+ \texttt{\textbackslash f8}=

10...\texttt{\textbackslash c6} 11.\texttt{\textbackslash xc6}

White is also worse after: 11.\texttt{\textbackslash c3} \texttt{\textbackslash d4} 12.\texttt{\textbackslash xd4} \texttt{\textbackslash xh4} 13.\texttt{\textbackslash d3} \texttt{\textbackslash xc5} 14.\texttt{\textbackslash e3} (14.\texttt{\textbackslash a4} \texttt{\textbackslash b6} is very dangerous for White) 14...\texttt{\textbackslash xb5}
15.\texttt{\textbackslash xc5} \texttt{\textbackslash xc5} 16.\texttt{\textbackslash d4} \texttt{\textbackslash d7} 17.\texttt{\textbackslash d6} \texttt{\textbackslash c6}+.

11...\texttt{\textbackslash bxc5} 12.\texttt{\textbackslash c3} \texttt{\textbackslash xc5} 13.\texttt{\textbackslash d2} \texttt{\textbackslash b8}
14.0-0-0 \texttt{\textbackslash a5}

Black has rapidly developed all his forces and his initiative on the queenside looks very dangerous.

15.\texttt{\textbackslash xde1} \texttt{\textbackslash he8} 16.\texttt{\textbackslash e4}
Chapter 1 - 3...e6 versus the Grand Prix Attack

16...\textit{b6}!N

After the inaccurate 16...\textit{Wa6}?! 17.\textit{a4} \textit{b6} 18.b3 White managed to consolidate his position and kept the better chances thanks to his extra pawn in Evans–Davis, corr. 2001.

17.\textit{d1} \textit{b5}!N

After 17.d1 \textit{b5} it is hard to find a decent move for White.

9.0–0

Other possibilities are:

9.d3 \textit{f7} 10.0–0 \textit{f5} 11.\textit{f2} This position occurred in Nun–Bakalarz, Germany 1993, and here Black should have reacted with 11...\textit{d6}! 12.\textit{a4} \textit{d4}! 13.\textit{d2} \textit{e8} 14.\textit{fe1} \textit{g8} with balanced play.

9.\textit{a4} \textit{f7} Very attractive for Black seems 9...\textit{a5} 10.b3 \textit{a6}, but in fact after the powerful 11.\textit{e6}! White is better.

10.0–0

Of course it is dangerous for White to accept the pawn sacrifice: 10.\textit{xc5}?! \textit{g6} 11.d3 \textit{b6} 12.\textit{e3} \textit{f5} Black has very nice play for the pawn.

10...\textit{f5}!N
Black's knight belongs on the f5-square in this variation.
Much worse is 10...\(\text{g}6\) as in Weiler - Haba, Lippstadt 2000, and now White had the strong 11.d4! cxd4 12.f5, with an initiative.
11.b3 \(\text{d}6\) 12.\(\text{w}f2\) c4
Black is doing fine.

9.b3 \(\text{f}7\) 10.0–0 \(\text{f}5\) 11.\(\text{w}f2\) simply transposes to the main line.

9...\(\text{f}7\) 10.\(\text{e}1\)
After 10.\(\text{w}f2\) \(\text{f}5\) we get a position from our main line.

10...\(\text{f}5\) 11.d3 \(\text{d}6\) 12.\(\text{d}2\)
This occurred in Macarry - Rigolot, France 2007. Black should now have reacted with:

12...\(\text{e}8\) 13.\(\text{w}f2\) \(\text{g}8\) 14.\(\text{a}4\) d4
And we already saw this position in the 9.d3-line.

C) 8.0–0

The most natural move.

8...\(\text{f}7\)
A serious mistake would be 8...a6? 9.\(\text{x}c6\)\# bxc6 10.b3 \(\text{f}7\) 11.\(\text{w}f2\) \(\text{f}5\) 12.\(\text{a}3\)\# and White is clearly better.

9.\(\text{w}f2\)\#N
An interesting idea.
In practice White has played the rather harmless:
9.b3 \(\text{b}4\)!
A very nice unexpected move.
10.d4 \(\text{f}5\) 11.\(\text{e}1\)
Also after 11.a3 cxd4 12.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{c}6\) Black enjoys a fine game.

11...cxd4
Of course Black will not fall into the trap:
11...\(\text{x}d4\) 12.\(\text{x}d4\) cxd4 13.\(\text{e}8\)\#! \(\text{g}8\)
14.\(\text{w}h5\) \(\text{g}6\) 15.\(\text{x}g6\)\# \(\text{hxg6}\) 16.\(\text{x}g6\)\# \(\text{g}7\) 17.\(\text{e}8\)\# \(\text{x}e8\) 18.\(\text{x}e8\)\# \(\text{h}7\)
19.\(\text{w}b5\) \(\text{x}c2\) 20.\(\text{x}d5\) \(\text{xa}1\) 21.\(\text{w}e2\)! And White wins.
12.\(\text{w}d5\)?
An incredible blunder.
Better would have been 12.\(\text{a}4\) when after
12...\(\text{d}6\) Black has nothing to worry about.
12...\(\text{x}d5\) 13.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{c}5\)\#+
White could easily resign, Sievers - Maksimenko, Germany 2003.

9.d3 \(\text{a}5\)!
An excellent idea; Black starts to play against White's light-squared bishop.
The problem is that after the natural 9...a6N 10.\(\text{x}c6\) \(\text{xc6}\) 11.\(\text{w}f2\) it's not easy for Black to complete his development; White has tactical ideas such as \(\text{e}5\) or f5.
Chapter 1 – 3...e6 versus the Grand Prix Attack

11...b3 12.axb3 \( \text{\texttt{f5}} \) 13.\( \text{\texttt{e2}} \) h5 is perfectly playable for Black.
So far this is Jakubovic – Tratar, Kastav 1999, and now simply:
11...\( \text{\texttt{f5}} \)!!
With excellent play for Black.

9...\( \text{\texttt{f5}} \)

The idea behind White's 9th move can be seen from the following variation: 9...
\( a6 \) 10.\( \text{\texttt{x6}} \) 11.\( \text{\texttt{x6}} \) 12.\( \text{\texttt{e5}} \)!! \( g8 \) (of course
11...\( \text{\texttt{e5}} \) 12.\( \text{\texttt{e5}} \)!! is dangerous for Black)
12.\( \text{\texttt{x6}} \) 13.\( \text{\texttt{e5}} \)!! And Black is in trouble,
for example: 13...\( \text{\texttt{c4}} \) (or 13...\( \text{\texttt{e5}} \) 14.\( \text{\texttt{a4}} \) c4
15.\( \text{\texttt{e5}} \)!! 14.\( \text{\texttt{xc4 dxc4}} \) 15.\( \text{\texttt{f5}} \) h5 16.\( \text{\texttt{h1}} \) With a
clear edge for White.

10...\( \text{\texttt{xc6}} \) 11.\( \text{\texttt{b3}} \)

11...\( \text{\texttt{c4}} \)!
Otherwise this pawn becomes a serious
target, whereas now the position is very
double-edged.

12.\( \text{\texttt{a4}} \)

White should avoid opening the position
with 12.\( \text{\texttt{xc4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{a5}} \)!! 13.\( \text{\texttt{e2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xc4}} \) because then
Black's bishop pair starts to play.
12...d6 13.b2 e8

Black has managed to complete his kingside development and perhaps later he will need to play ...g8. The arising position is very complex, but I believe Black can look to the future with confidence.

Conclusion

The Grand Prix Attack, 1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.f4, is well met by 3...e6. White has only one critical line, 4.d3 d5 5.b5 d7 6.exd5 exd5 7.e2, and here the little-known 7.f6! is a key resource, which leads to a fascinating fighting position.
A Classical Repertoire against 2.c3

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.c3 1f6 3.e5 1d5

Part 1) 4.1c4, Part 2) 4.1f3 e6 5.g3,
Part 3) 4.d4 cxd4 5.1xd4 & Part 4) 4.d4 cxd4 5.cxd4 d6 6.1f3 e6

A) 7.1d3 31
B) 7.1d2 32
C) 7.a3 1c6 8.1d3 dxe5 9.dxe5 g6! 10.0-0 1g7
   C1) 11.1f2 33
   C2) 11.1e1! 34
D) 7.1c3 1xc3 8.bxc3 1c7! 9.1d2 1d7
   D1) 10.1d3?! 37
   D2) 10.exd6 38
E) 7.1c4 1c6 8.0-0 1e7
   E1) 9.1d2?! 39
   E2) 9.1c3 41
   E3) 9.exd6 1xd6 10.1c3 0-0 11.1e1 1d8! 12.1b3 1f6! 13.1e3 b6 14.1e2 1b7
      15.1ad1 1a5! 16.1c2 1ac8 17.1e5 1c6
      E31) 18.1g5?! 43
      E32) 18.1e4! 44
   E4) 9.a3 0-0 45
      E41) 10.1e1 1d7 45
      E42) 10.1d3 1d7 11.1e2 47
   E5) 9.1e2 0-0 50
      E51) 10.1e1 1b6! 50
      E52) 10.1c3?! 1xc3 11.bxc3 dxe5 12.dxe5 1a5
         E521) 13.a4 54
         E522) 13.1b1?! 54
         E523) 13.1e4 56
      E53) 10.1e4 1d7 59
         E531) 11.1e1 60
         E532) 11.1d3 61
      E54) 10.1d1 1a5 11.b3! 63
This is the starting position for our investigation. I do not want to waste my or your time discussing 3.d3. If you cannot get a decent position against such a move, you are in need of something far more basic than an opening book...

At this point it makes sense to divide the chapter into four parts. They are 1) 4.c4, 2) 4.f3 e6 5.g3 (which can also arise after 4.g3), 3) 4.d4 cxd4 5.exd4, and finally, the main line, 4) 4.d4 cxd4 5.cxd4 d6 6.f3 e6.

I do not want to give the impression that everything is covered in here (though I have covered quite a bit). Those who opt for really obscure lines are often trying to escape opening theory more than anything else, meaning that in many positions almost every random move has been tried. At some point we have to play for ourselves, so I have decided to omit a number of minor sidelines, with the argument that hardly anyone would have been able to remember them anyway! Better to focus on the important stuff.

4...b6

I should mention that it is possible to aim for a transposition to the main line given later in this article with:

4...e6 5.d4 d6!

I do not entirely trust Black's compensation after 5...cxd4 6.exd5 exd5 7.xd4 c6 8.xd5 d6 9.exd6 xd6.

6.exd6??

6.f3 cxd4 7.cxd4 reaches the main line which will be examined in variation E of Part 4.

6.dxc5?! dxe5 is already more pleasant for Black.

6...cxd4 7.xd5?!

7.xd4 c6 8.xe4 Kozomara – Parma, Ljubljana 1960, 8...xd6N 9.f3 c7=

7...xd4 xxd6 is also just equal.

7...exd5 8.xd4 xd6 9.f4!

9.e2 c6 10.xd3 was tried in Tiviakov – Neverov, Warsaw 2005. Black can play anything here, but my choice would be
10...\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{\textbf{e}}7?!}}N based on 11.\textit{\textbf{\textbf{\textbf{f}}4 }\textit{\textbf{\textbf{b}}6!} with at least even chances. If 12.\textit{\textbf{\textbf{\textbf{e}}}}xd5, then Black has 12...\textit{\textbf{\textbf{\textbf{g}}4} 13.\textit{\textbf{\textbf{f}}3 }\textit{\textbf{\textbf{d}}8 14.\textit{\textbf{b}}b3 }\textit{\textbf{\textbf{f}}5, intending ...\textit{\textbf{d}}d3 with lots of compensation.}

9...\textit{\textbf{\textbf{\textbf{c}}}}c6\textit{N}

9...\textit{\textbf{\textbf{\textbf{c}}}}c6? was played Jakymov – Fritz 8, Kiev 2003. Whether this was some guy in his bedroom is hard to say. However, it is easy to say that computers have evolved since then, as 10.\textit{\textbf{\textbf{\textbf{x}}}}xd6 \textit{\textbf{\textbf{\textbf{x}}}}xd4 11.\textit{\textbf{\textbf{x}}}xf8 \textit{\textbf{\textbf{\textbf{c}}}}c2\textit{N} 12.\textit{\textbf{d}}d2 \textit{\textbf{\textbf{x}}}xa1 13.\textit{\textbf{\textbf{x}}}g7 \textit{\textbf{g}}g8 14.\textit{\textbf{d}}d4\textit{±} is close to winning.

9...\textit{\textbf{\textbf{\textbf{g}}}}g6\textit{!N is interesting, but you will need to have something ready after 10.\textit{\textbf{\textbf{\textbf{e}}}}xd5 \textit{\textbf{\textbf{\textbf{c}}}}c6 11.\textit{\textbf{g}}g5\textit{!N.}

10.\textit{\textbf{\textbf{d}}}d2 \textit{\textbf{\textbf{d}}}d6 12.\textit{\textbf{f}}f1 \textit{\textbf{e}}7 12.0–0 0–0

The position should be about equal. The question is really if you want to play this kind of position...

5.\textit{\textbf{b}}b3 \textit{\textbf{c}}4 6.\textit{\textbf{c}}c2 \textit{\textbf{c}}c6 7.\textit{\textbf{f}}f3

White can also try 7.\textit{\textbf{\textbf{\textbf{e}}}}e2 \textit{\textbf{d}}5 and now either 8.d4\textit{N cxd3 9.\textit{\textbf{x}}xd3 g6 10.\textit{\textbf{f}}f3 }\textit{\textbf{g}}7 11.\textit{\textbf{f}}f4 \textit{\textbf{g}}4 12.\textit{\textbf{\textbf{b}}}bd2 \textit{\textbf{d}}4\textit{? or the more (but not terribly) attractive 8.\textit{\textbf{e}}xd6 e5! 9.\textit{\textbf{\textbf{\textbf{d}}}}d3 (9.\textit{\textbf{f}}f3 }\textit{\textbf{d}}d6= is pure joy as well) 9...\textit{\textbf{e}}e6 10.\textit{\textbf{b}}b5 (10.b3 \textit{\textbf{x}}xb3 11.\textit{\textbf{\textbf{x}}}xb3 \textit{\textbf{\textbf{x}}}xb3 12.axb3 \textit{\textbf{d}}d6 13.\textit{\textbf{f}}f3 0–0 14.0–0 \textit{\textbf{d}}d5 15.\textit{\textbf{c}}c4 \textit{\textbf{d}}d8± Roinel – Pujos, France 2003.) 10...\textit{\textbf{x}}xd6 11.\textit{\textbf{d}}d6\textit{N Morgan – Yermolinsky, Washington DC 1990.

10.h3?!}

This is the most popular move, but I think the weakening of the kingside it entails is unjustified. However, Black also experiences no problems after: 10.\textit{\textbf{e}}e1 0–0 11.b3 \textit{\textbf{f}}f6! 12.\textit{\textbf{\textbf{\textbf{a}}}}a3 \textit{\textbf{d}}d5 13.\textit{\textbf{b}}b2 \textit{\textbf{xf}}3 14.\textit{\textbf{xf}}3 \textit{\textbf{\textbf{x}}}xf3 15.\textit{\textbf{g}}xf3 \textit{\textbf{cxb}}3 16.axb3 \textit{\textbf{e}}6= 7...d6!

It seems logical to remove the e5-pawn as quickly as possible to free up space for the black pieces. 7...\textit{\textbf{\textbf{e}}}e6 8.\textit{\textbf{e}}e2 \textit{\textbf{g}}5 is the main line, and now 9.\textit{\textbf{a}}a3! is the hot new idea for White.

8.\textit{\textbf{x}}xd6 \textit{\textbf{x}}xd6

8...\textit{\textbf{e}}e5 is another good move.

9.0–0 \textit{\textbf{g}}4

7...d6!
24 Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

Pariglas – Vachier Lagrave, Germany 2010. As John Shaw (who told me about this line) pointed out, White cannot advance his pawns without creating further weaknesses. So although the position is objectively equal, Black has the more pleasant experience here.

10...\(\text{h}5\) 11.\(\text{e}1\) 0–0–0 12.\(b3\)

12.\(\text{e}2?!\) De. Marjanovic – Sa. Andreev, Cetinje 2008, 12...\(\text{f}6\)N does not look like an improvement for White.

12...\(\text{f}6\)

13.\(\text{e}4\)

13.\(\text{bxc}4\) \(\text{xf}3\) 14.\(\text{xf}3\) \(\text{xf}3\) 15.gxf3 \(\text{xc}4\) 16.d4 e6 is obviously pleasant for Black. White may be okay too, although Black does not have to copy the following game: 17.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{a}5\) 18.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{xd}2\) 19.\(\text{xd}2\) \(\text{xb}3\) 20.axb3 a6=


13.\(\text{a}3??\) as in Karpatchev – Chernov, Germany 2007, is worse now, as Black has a direct path to an advantage: 13...\(\text{d}5!N\) 14.\(\text{b}2\) \(\text{xf}3\) 15.\(\text{xf}3\) \(\text{xf}3\) 16.gxf3 \(\text{xb}3\) 17.axb3 \(\text{f}4\) White will have a hard time avoiding the loss of a pawn. It is worth pointing out that after the tricky 18.\(\text{f}1!\), instead of trying 18...\(\text{e}6\) 19.d4 \(\text{hx}3\) 20.\(\text{c}1\), which might be complicated, Black should probably prefer 18...\(\text{d}3!!\) 19.\(\text{xd}3\) \(\text{xd}3\) 20.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{d}5\) with a clear positional advantage.

13...\(\text{e}5\) 14.\(\text{g}4\)

The alternatives are inferior, for instance 14.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{d}5?\), or 14.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{d}3!\) 15.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{xf}3\)\# 16.\(\text{xf}3\) \(\text{xf}3\) 17.\(\text{xf}3\) \(\text{xf}3\) 18.\(\text{xf}3\) \(\text{xf}3\) 19.gxf3 \(\text{xb}3\) 20.axb3 \(\text{e}5\).

14...\(\text{xf}3\)\# 15.\(\text{xf}3\) \(\text{xf}3\) 16.\(\text{xf}3\) \(\text{g}6\) 17.\(\text{a}3\)

White got into a mess after 17.\(\text{b}4\) \(\text{d}3!\) 18.c5 \(\text{d}5\) 19.\(\text{a}3\) e6 20.\(\text{h}2\) g5 Allen – Jacot, e-mail 2006. At the moment the knight on b1 and the rook on a1 are symptomatic of the value of White's whole position...

17...\(\text{e}6\) 18.\(\text{xc}4\)
Chapter 2 – A Classical Repertoire against 2.c3

The game Murin – Gnurov, e-mail 2010, was agreed drawn here. Rybka 4 gives a verdict of 0.00, which might have influenced one or both of the players in their decision-making.

18...\textit{dx}c4 19.bxc4 d3 20.e5 dxc4 21.d4 b6 22.\textit{g}g2 d6 23.e1 d7

Jozefini – Kürren, e-mail 2009. White drew comfortably in the game, but the question is how he would have fared had the game been without aids such as time and (possibly – you can never know) technology.

Part 2 - The Fianchetto System

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d6 3.e5 \textit{d}d5 4.\textit{f}f3 e6 5.g3

This line is not dangerous for Black at all, but you can still get outplayed, of course. Sometimes White plays 4.g3, but he still puts the knight on f3, so there are no serious alternatives to the main line given here.

5...\textit{c}c6 6.\textit{g}g2 d6 7.exd6 \textit{x}xd6 8.0-0 0-0

This is all pretty standard. Black will equalize with simple moves.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\draw[help lines] (0,0) grid (8,8);
\node at (0.5,0.5) {1}; \node at (1.5,0.5) {2}; \node at (2.5,0.5) {3}; \node at (3.5,0.5) {4}; \node at (4.5,0.5) {5}; \node at (5.5,0.5) {6}; \node at (6.5,0.5) {7}; \node at (7.5,0.5) {8}; \node at (0.5,1.5) {a}; \node at (0.5,2.5) {b}; \node at (0.5,3.5) {c}; \node at (0.5,4.5) {d}; \node at (0.5,5.5) {e}; \node at (0.5,6.5) {f}; \node at (0.5,7.5) {g}; \node at (0.5,8.5) {h};
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

9.d4

The slow 9.\textit{d}d3 b6 10.\textit{c}c4 \textit{c}c7 is completely inoffensive. You can skip the details if you like... 11.\textit{f}f1 (11.d3 \textit{b}b7 12.\textit{w}c2 h6 13.\textit{d}d2 \textit{w}d7 14.\textit{d}e1 \textit{d}ad8= Erenburg – Jakovenko, Oropesa del Mar 2001) 11...\textit{h}h7 12.a4 \textit{w}d7 13.d4 \textit{c}xd4 14.cxd4 \textit{d}ad8 15.\textit{g}g5 \textit{f}f6 – Floescu, Romania 1994. Here 1 would suggest 15...f6?N 16.\textit{d}d2 \textit{f}f8 with equality.

9...\textit{xd}d4 10.\textit{c}cxd4 \textit{c}cxd4 11.\textit{w}xd4 \textit{w}c7 12.\textit{f}f2

12.\textit{x}xd5? looks suicidal. 12...\textit{xd}5 13.\textit{x}xd5 \textit{h}h3 14.\textit{f}f1 \textit{b}ae8 15.\textit{d}e3 \textit{e}5 16.\textit{w}f3 \textit{c}c8 (16...h5?!?) 17.\textit{d}d2 \textit{f}f8 Ziffer – Learre Pastor, e-mail 2004. Black has a dream version of the Marshall Attack.
12.c4 d6 13.\textit{e}4 d7 14.\textit{e}5 15.\textit{d}3 \textit{xd}8= Deviatkin – Tregubov, Dagomys 2009.

12...\textit{d}7 13.\textit{e}4 \textit{e}5 14.\textit{c}5!

This is the new way to play the position. Curiously, despite the variety of possible responses, so far Black has always responded in the same way.

14.\textit{d}3 a6 15.\textit{d}1 (15.\textit{d}1 \textit{b}5 16.\textit{c}2 \textit{ad}8 17.\textit{d}2 h6= 18.\textit{f}4? \textit{d}4† 19.\textit{h}1 \textit{f}5! → 20.\textit{c}1? \textit{a}7 21.\textit{f}2 \textit{b}4 22.\textit{b}3 \textit{xf}2 23.\textit{xd}8 \textit{xd}8 24.\textit{xb}4 S. Pedersen – Schandorff, Odense 1994, 24...\textit{d}3!N 25.\textit{xe}6† \textit{h}8=+) 15.a4 would be a concession, although it seems playable. Probably 15...\textit{c}6 followed by ...\textit{ad}8 is best.) 15...\textit{b}5 16.\textit{f}3 \textit{c}6 17.\textit{e}2 This was Rozentalis – Tkachiev, Hastings 1997, and now after 17...\textit{ad}8N Black has no problems. For example, after 18.\textit{f}4 \textit{f}6= the knight is not inferior to the bishop.

14...\textit{b}8!N

I like this best. Black keeps the queens on and gets some squares for his pieces.

14...\textit{c}6

This is fully playable as well.

15.\textit{f}4 \textit{b}6 16.\textit{c}4 \textit{d}6 17.\textit{xd}6 17.\textit{f}5?!N (17...\textit{ex}f5 18.\textit{xf}5 \textit{e}7 19.\textit{xd}6 \textit{xd}6 20.\textit{f}4 \textit{d}7 21.\textit{xc}6 \textit{xc}6 22.\textit{xc}6 \textit{xc}6 23.\textit{d}5± Marciano – Lejeune, France 1997. Black can of course draw this, but it is rather tedious to have to do so.) 18.\textit{e}2 (18.\textit{d}3 \textit{ex}f5 19.\textit{xd}6 \textit{xd}6 20.\textit{xf}5 \textit{c}5† 21.\textit{d}4 \textit{xd}4† 22.\textit{cxd}4 \textit{f}d8=) 18...\textit{f}5 19.\textit{xd}6 \textit{xd}6 20.\textit{xf}5 \textit{f}e8 21.\textit{f}2 \textit{e}6 22.\textit{d}2 \textit{f}6 23.\textit{e}1 \textit{e}4†

17...\textit{xd}6 18.\textit{d}4 \textit{f}d8

This leads to an ending with knight against bishop. Generally I don't really want to play this type of position, although Black should be able to hold it.

19.\textit{c}4 \textit{b}4 20.\textit{xd}6 \textit{xd}6 21.\textit{xc}6 \textit{xc}6 22.\textit{e}3

Tu Hoang Thong – Nguyen Anh Dung, Hanoi 2009. 22.\textit{e}3 23.\textit{f}2 \textit{ad}8 24.\textit{e}2 \textit{f}8

Black is okay, although to be honest I always prefer the bishop in such positions, and with good reason I think.

14...\textit{xc}5??N

I think this is a reasonable improvement, making things just a bit simpler and easier for the second player.

15.\textit{xc}5 \textit{c}6

The position simply looks equal. The idea that White's extra pawn on the queenside is enough to create some pressure is too optimistic. Black is also immune to tactical ideas, for example:

16.\textit{d}1 \textit{f}6 17.\textit{c}4 \textit{b}6 18.\textit{xc}6 \textit{xc}6 19.\textit{e}4??
Chapter 2 – A Classical Repertoire against 2.c3

I

Followed by ...\( \text{\textit{d}} \times c^4 \) with a good position.

Part 3 – The 5.\( \text{\textit{d}} \times d^4 \) Variation

4.d4 cxd4 5.\( \text{\textit{d}} \times d^4 \)

This line is seldom used by serious players, but Deviatkin has tried it a few times.

5...e6 6.\( \text{\textit{f}} \text{\textit{f}}^3 \) c6 7.e4 f5!

Although there are many other good options here, this aggressive move seems to be the jam. It is worth considering two replies: A) 8.exf6 and B) 8.e2.

A) 8.exf6 \( \text{\textit{d}} \times f^6 \) 9.\( \text{\textit{h}}^4 \)

Here it was tradition to play 9...d5 and allow a bishop check on g6. Black is at least equal.
there, but I think he can do even better with the following ambitious idea.

9...e5?! 10.\textit{g}5

It is hard to find any other sensible moves for White. 10.\textit{d}3? e4\textit{=} certainly does not qualify.

10...e4 11.\textit{g}5 d5

Black is probably already better...

12.0–0

12.c4? \textit{b}4\textit{=} 13.\textit{d}2 (13.\textit{c}3 \textit{d}4 14.\textit{xc}6\textit{bxc}6 15.\textit{a}3 \textit{a}5 16.\textit{b}4 \textit{dxc}3 17.\textit{bxa}5 \textit{d}3\textit{=}+) 13...0–0 14.\textit{cxd}5 N. Kosintseva – Trofimova, Kolontaevo 1997. 14...\textit{xd}2\textit{=}N 15.\textit{xd}2 \textit{d}4 16.\textit{a}4 \textit{a}5 17.\textit{d}1 \textit{e}8\textit{=}

12.\textit{e}3 \textit{e}7 13.\textit{d}4 \textit{f}5 14.\textit{h}4 \textit{d}7 15.h4 (15.\textit{d}2\textit{=}+) 15...\textit{h}5 16.\textit{e}3 \textit{h}6 17.\textit{h}3 W. Moser – Neumann, Germany 1988, 17...0–0N Black is probably just winning.

13.\textit{a}4 \textit{b}5 14.\textit{b}3 \textit{e}5\textit{=} 15.\textit{d}2 \textit{g}6

Sohh – Hakki, Cairo 2003. Maybe 17...\textit{c}7N was even stronger, but either way White is in a pretty poor place here.

B) 8.\textit{e}2

8...\textit{b}5!

I am quite excited about this pawn sacrifice. Black can of course play quiet moves as well, but my strategy against Anti-Sicilians has always been to overrun them – and successfully so.

8...\textit{c}7 9.g3 \textit{b}5

This is another version of the pawn sac – except now it is not a sac. I find this approach a bit slow, but it still equalizes.

10.\textit{g}2

10.\textit{xb}5 \textit{xe}5 11.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5\textit{=} 12.\textit{xe}2 \textit{xe}2\textit{=}+ M. Zaitsev – Drabke, Germany 2005.

10...\textit{a}5 11.0–0 \textit{a}6 12.\textit{h}4??

The most interesting attempt here.

12.\textit{d}1 is harmless: 12...\textit{e}7 (12...\textit{c}5 13.\textit{h}4 \textit{de}7 14.\textit{xe}3 \textit{xe}3 15.\textit{xe}3 \textit{d}8= Andreikin – Yakovich, Voronezh 2006.)

13.\textit{h}5 (13.\textit{h}4?? 0–0 14.\textit{xd}5 \textit{exd}5 15.\textit{xd}5\textit{=} \textit{h}8 16.\textit{g}6\textit{=} \textit{h}xg6 17.\textit{f}1 \textit{h}4\textit{=} 18.\textit{h}3 \textit{d}8\textit{=} Kopylov – Rogozenko,
Hamburg 2004.) 13...0-0 14.\texttt{\texttt{A}xe7} \texttt{\texttt{B}cxe7} 15.\texttt{\texttt{A}bd2} a4= Henris – Litwak, Belgium 2007.

12...b4!

An important nuance.

12...g6 is less to my taste because of:

13.\texttt{\texttt{A}xd5!N (13.\texttt{\texttt{A}d1} b4! [13...\texttt{\texttt{A}g7?!} 14.\texttt{\texttt{A}xf5!} \texttt{\texttt{gxf5} 15.\texttt{\texttt{B}h5}+ \texttt{\texttt{g}f8} 16.\texttt{\texttt{A}xd5} Deviatkin – Papin, Moscow 2006, 16...\texttt{\texttt{A}xe5}N 17.\texttt{\texttt{A}d4}±] 14.\texttt{\texttt{c}c4} [14.\texttt{\texttt{E}e1} \texttt{\texttt{g}g7}±] 14...\texttt{\texttt{A}xe5} 15.\texttt{\texttt{E}e1} \texttt{\texttt{B}xc4} 16.b3 \texttt{\texttt{B}a6} 17.\texttt{\texttt{A}xd5} \texttt{\texttt{exd5} 18.\texttt{\texttt{A}b2} \texttt{d6} 19.\texttt{\texttt{f}f}4 \texttt{\texttt{g}g7} 20.\texttt{\texttt{f}xe5} 0–0 21.\texttt{\texttt{f}f3} \texttt{\texttt{c}c4 (13...\texttt{\texttt{A}d1} b4! 14.\texttt{\texttt{c}c4}, where Black is doing well. Instead 13.\texttt{\texttt{A}xd5!N is better, but if Black uses the correct move order then this option will not exist.)} 14...\texttt{\texttt{A}g7} 15.\texttt{\texttt{A}f4} 0–0= Shishkov – Fernandez Vicente, e-mail 2006.

13...\texttt{\texttt{B}h5}+ 13.\texttt{\texttt{c}c4} g6 14.\texttt{\texttt{b}b3} (14.\texttt{\texttt{d}d1} reaches the note to the previous move – see 12...g6 13.\texttt{\texttt{d}d1} b4! 14.\texttt{\texttt{c}c4}, where Black is doing well. Instead 13.\texttt{\texttt{A}xd5!N is better, but if Black uses the correct move order then this option will not exist.) 14...\texttt{\texttt{A}g7} 15.\texttt{\texttt{A}f4} 0–0= Shishkov – Fernandez Vicente, e-mail 2006.

13...\texttt{\texttt{A}g6}+ 14.\texttt{\texttt{A}xg6} hxg6 15.\texttt{\texttt{A}xg6}+ 15.\texttt{\texttt{A}xh8} \texttt{\texttt{xf1} 16.\texttt{\texttt{A}xd5} \texttt{\texttt{exd5} 17.\texttt{\texttt{A}h6} 0–0–0 18.\texttt{\texttt{A}xf8} \texttt{\texttt{d}d3} 19.\texttt{\texttt{A}d2} \texttt{\texttt{b}c3} 20.\texttt{\texttt{A}xc3} \texttt{\texttt{exe5} 15...\texttt{\texttt{A}d8} 16.\texttt{\texttt{A}xd5} \texttt{\texttt{c}c8} 17.\texttt{\texttt{A}f6} \texttt{\texttt{g}g8} 18.\texttt{\texttt{A}g2} \texttt{\texttt{xf1} 19.\texttt{\texttt{A}xf1} \texttt{\texttt{c}c5}}

20.\texttt{\texttt{A}f4!N 20.\texttt{\texttt{A}d2} \texttt{\texttt{b}xc3} 21.\texttt{\texttt{A}xc3} \texttt{\texttt{h}h8} Da Fonseca – Leite, e-mail 2006. 20...\texttt{\texttt{A}b7} 21.\texttt{\texttt{A}xb4} 21.\texttt{\texttt{A}d2} \texttt{\texttt{A}a8}=

21...\texttt{\texttt{A}xb4} 22.\texttt{\texttt{A}d2} 22.\texttt{\texttt{A}h6}? \texttt{\texttt{d}d4}+ 22...\texttt{\texttt{A}a8} 23.\texttt{\texttt{A}h6} \texttt{\texttt{g}g8}=

This should be a draw, but White can lose:

24.\texttt{\texttt{A}g5??} \texttt{\texttt{g}g8 25.\texttt{\texttt{A}f6} \texttt{\texttt{h}h7}! 26.\texttt{\texttt{A}b3} \texttt{\texttt{e}e7} 27.\texttt{\texttt{A}xc6}+ \texttt{\texttt{A}xc6} 28.\texttt{\texttt{A}c1}+ \texttt{\texttt{A}b7} 29.\texttt{\texttt{A}xc7} \texttt{\texttt{A}xc7}→

9.\texttt{\texttt{A}xb5}

I think accepting the sacrifice makes most sense. Mamedjarov’s sister has rejected it continuously, which is perhaps why people continue to play it against her!

9.g3 a5 10.\texttt{\texttt{A}g2} \texttt{\texttt{e}e7} 11.0–0 0–0 12.\texttt{\texttt{A}d1} \texttt{\texttt{a}a6}
Because Black did not spend time on ...\texttt{c7}, there was never any \texttt{h4} malarkey.

13.\texttt{d4}
13.\texttt{bd2} \texttt{c7} 14.\texttt{e1} (14.\texttt{f1} \texttt{c5} 15.\texttt{e1} \texttt{ce7=} Mamedjarova – Kochetkova, Khanty-Mansiysk(ol) 2010.) 14...\texttt{ac8=} Mamedjarova – Borovikov, Paleochora 2010.

13...\texttt{b4}
13...\texttt{xd4=}N 14.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{b4} 15.\texttt{c4} transposes and is simply a better move order. And after 15.\texttt{d1=} \texttt{c7} 16.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{exd5} 17.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{wc6} 18.\texttt{xd7} \texttt{fd8} Black has all the fun.

14.\texttt{c4}
14.\texttt{b5=}N is the reason to avoid this move order.
14...\texttt{xd4} 15.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{ec8} 16.\texttt{d2}

16...\texttt{b6=}N
16...\texttt{f4} 17.\texttt{e4=}N (17.\texttt{g4} \texttt{c5} 18.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{exd5} 19.\texttt{xd5=} \texttt{h8} 20.\texttt{f3} \texttt{b6=} Mamedjarova – Smirin, Baku 2010.) 17...\texttt{b6} 18.\texttt{h3} \texttt{c5} 19.\texttt{h2}=

17.\texttt{f3} \texttt{c5}
17...\texttt{fd8}?
18.\texttt{h4} \texttt{c7} 19.\texttt{g5} \texttt{e7} 20.\texttt{b3} \texttt{g6} 21.\texttt{h5} \texttt{b7}=

9...\texttt{c7} 10.\texttt{c2} a5

11.\texttt{bd2}N
I think this is best.

11.\texttt{c4} \texttt{a6} 12.\texttt{d1} is unimpressive, and after 12...\texttt{b6}! 13.\texttt{c5} \texttt{c4=} White is overrun, Deviatkin – Najer, Moscow 2007.

11.\texttt{g3} \texttt{a6} 12.\texttt{c4} K. Horvath – Csetneki, Budapest 2010, was very optimistic. The c-pawn is not hard to attack: 12...\texttt{a4=}N 13.\texttt{bd2} (13.\texttt{c3} \texttt{b4} 14.\texttt{d2} \texttt{xc3} 15.\texttt{xc3} \texttt{xc3} 16.\texttt{bxc3} \texttt{a5=} 13...\texttt{db4} 14.\texttt{b1} \texttt{a5} 15.\texttt{a3} \texttt{c8} 16.\texttt{d2} \texttt{b7} 17.\texttt{g1} \texttt{c5=}

11...\texttt{a6}
11...\texttt{c5} 12.\texttt{c4} 0–0 is decent as well.

12.\texttt{c4} \texttt{c5} 13.\texttt{d1} 0–0
Black’s activity should enable him to regain his pawn, for instance:

14.\texttt{e2} \texttt{ce7} 15.0–0 \texttt{xc4} 16.\texttt{xc4} \texttt{xf2=} 
17.\texttt{xf2} \texttt{xc4=}
Black has a comfortable position.
Part 4 - The Main Line

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d6 3.d4 d5 4.dxe5 cxd4 5.cxd4 e6

There are several move orders that can lead to this position, for instance 1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.e3 d6 4.e5 dxe5 5.d4 cxd4 6.cxd4 d6, or 1.e4 c5 2.c3 d6 3.e5 dxe5 4.d3 e6 5.d4 cxd4 6.d4 cxd4 7.cxd4. White has five important options: A) 7.d3, B) 7.d2, C) 7.a3, D) 7.c3 and finally the overwhelming main line. E) 7.c4.

A) 7.d3

11...a7
Another attractive idea is the following crazy move: 11...a5!?N 12.a5 baxd1 13.a5 baxd1 a4 14.c3 a4 15.c1 a6 16.d3 a4 17.c4 a7 18.a1 cxa1 d8∞. The knights are not brilliant in the ending, but there are two of them!

12.c3 c5=

7...b4! 8.e2
The alternatives are equally unappealing:

8.0-0 9.xd3 cxe5 10.xe5 g7 11.h2 12.c7 was seen in Gneiss - Rooze, Velden 2009. I think the simplest answer is 12...0-0N 13.b1 c6= with no problems at all.

8.g5 9.xd3 e7 10.xe7 xe7 is just equal. White got an advantage in some games, but this should not happen against decent play.

8.b5+ c7 9.xd7 t
White also was not dangerous after 9.e2 c6 10.0-0 c5 11.g5 c7 12.b2 d7 13.c4 dxe5 14.e5 e5 15.xe5 d6 16.c6 bxc6= Barbaric Vuk - Palac, Zadar 2002.

9...c7 10.0-0 dxe5

This is something of a beginner's move. Black equalizes immediately.

8...dxe5 9.dxe5
9.xe5? xd4! wins a pawn.
9...\texttt{\textsubscript{W}}xd1\texttt{\textsubscript{+}} 10.\texttt{\textsubscript{Q}}xd1 \texttt{\textsubscript{c}}7

I think it makes equal sense to play actively with 10...\texttt{\textsubscript{B}}c5?! 11.\texttt{\textsubscript{F}}f1 0–0 12.e2 \texttt{\textsubscript{d}}8, when Black seems to take over the initiative.

13.\texttt{\textsubscript{B}}c3 \texttt{\textsubscript{g}}8c6 Black might just be better here.

14.\texttt{\textsubscript{F}}c1 (14.\texttt{\textsubscript{F}}c4 \texttt{\textsubscript{B}}b6\texttt{\textsubscript{t}}; 14.a3 \texttt{\textsubscript{d}}5\texttt{\textsubscript{=}}) 14...\texttt{\textsubscript{E}}d4

15.\texttt{\textsubscript{E}}e4 \texttt{\textsubscript{E}}xf3 16.gxf3 (16.\texttt{\textsubscript{E}}xf3 \texttt{\textsubscript{h}}8\texttt{\textsubscript{=}}) 16...\texttt{\textsubscript{d}}8

17.a3 \texttt{\textsubscript{d}}d3=

11.a3 \texttt{\textsubscript{d}}d5 12.e2 \texttt{\textsubscript{d}}d7 13.\texttt{\textsubscript{B}}c3 \texttt{\textsubscript{B}}xc3\texttt{\textsubscript{+}}

14.\texttt{\textsubscript{F}}xc3 \texttt{\textsubscript{a}}a4\texttt{\textsubscript{+}} 15.\texttt{\textsubscript{E}}d2 \texttt{\textsubscript{d}}d7=

Pujos – Delchev, St Affrique 2002. Although Black does not have any objective advantage here, I prefer his position because of how White’s pawns are unable to go backwards.

\textbf{B) 7.\texttt{\textsubscript{E}}d2}

I have faced this solid move in a weekender. Even though I won the game, I lost the score sheet...

7...\texttt{\textsubscript{E}}d7!

With plenty of time on his hands, Black should fight for the d5-square.

8.\texttt{\textsubscript{B}}c3 \texttt{\textsubscript{B}}c6 9.\texttt{\textsubscript{B}}b5

9.\texttt{\textsubscript{B}}c4 Spanton – Stebbings, Hastings 1995, is best met with: 9...\texttt{\textsubscript{B}}xc3\texttt{\textsubscript{N}} 10.\texttt{\textsubscript{x}}c3 \texttt{\textsubscript{d}}x5 11.dxe5 \texttt{\textsubscript{W}}xd1\texttt{\textsubscript{+}} 12.\texttt{\textsubscript{E}}xd1 \texttt{\textsubscript{d}}d7= Black has an easier endgame, as the e5-pawn is exposed.

9...\texttt{\textsubscript{B}}c3 10.\texttt{\textsubscript{B}}xc6\texttt{\textsubscript{+}} \texttt{\textsubscript{B}}xc6 11.\texttt{\textsubscript{E}}xc3 \texttt{\textsubscript{d}}5!

After exchanging his own bad bishop, Black makes his opponent’s bishop bad. 11...\texttt{\textsubscript{d}}xe5= is also okay, if a little dull.

12.0–0 \texttt{\textsubscript{E}}c7

Black has of course equalized. Here is a good example of how play could go our way:

13.\texttt{\textsubscript{E}}e1 b5 14.b3 \texttt{\textsubscript{B}}c8 15.\texttt{\textsubscript{E}}d2 \texttt{\textsubscript{B}}b6 16.\texttt{\textsubscript{f}}4 0–0 17.\texttt{\textsubscript{E}}f3

\textbf{Schmitz – P. Cramling, Catalan Bay 2003.}

17...\texttt{\textsubscript{B}}a3??

Black takes control of the c-file, exploiting the fact that 18.b4? is poor due to 18...\texttt{\textsubscript{W}}a7\texttt{\textsubscript{+}} when the bishop on c3 is very exposed.

17...\texttt{\textsubscript{B}}c7?!\texttt{\textsubscript{N}} is a decent alternative.

\textbf{C) 7.a3}

White wants to put his bishop on d3 without allowing the antidote which we saw in line A.

7...\texttt{\textsubscript{B}}c6

7...\texttt{\textsubscript{E}}d7 8.\texttt{\textsubscript{E}}d3 \texttt{\textsubscript{B}}c6 9.0–0 \texttt{\textsubscript{E}}d7 is the main line, but when I studied it back in 2007 I actually found it a bit unpleasant for Black in places, and thus decided to go for the line GM Johan Hellsten suggested to me in the mid-1990s, and GM John Shaw again in 2007.
Chapter 2 – A Classical Repertoire against 2.c3

8.\( \texttt{\textit{d3}} \texttt{\textit{dxe5}} \texttt{\textit{9.dxe5}} \texttt{\textit{g6!}} \)

The bishop is generally well-placed on \(g7\) in these lines.

10.0–0 \(g7\)

White does not have an obvious square for his c1-bishop and thus will have to decide where to put his rook and queen before anything else. This gives us the options of (C1) 11.\( \texttt{\textit{e2}} \) and (C2) 11.\( \texttt{\textit{e1!}} \).

(C1) 11.\( \texttt{\textit{e2}} \texttt{\textit{c7!}} \)

To me it makes sense to force White to play \(\texttt{\textit{e1}}, \) as the black queen hardly has any better square at its disposal. The counterargument would be that the white rook does not have a better square than \(e1\), and the black queen does not have to spend time going to \(c7\). Both views seem reasonable, so it is hard to decide which is correct without checking some practical games.

The following is a good indication of why the queen is not happy on \(d8\). 11...0–0 12.\( \texttt{\textit{e1}} \texttt{\textit{b6}} \texttt{\textit{13.d2}} \texttt{\textit{b7}} \texttt{\textit{14.c3}} \texttt{\textit{a5}} \texttt{\textit{15.ad1}} \texttt{\textit{b3}} \texttt{This was Adams – Anand, Paris 1992, and now 16.\( \texttt{\textit{xd5?!N}} \texttt{\textit{\&xd5}} \texttt{17.b4\#}} \texttt{might be a bit better for White.}

12.\( \texttt{\textit{e1}} \texttt{\textit{0–0}} \texttt{13.d2} \texttt{\texttt{I am not sure how White should otherwise finish his development. 13.\( \texttt{\textit{e4}} \texttt{\textit{b8!}} \texttt{does not improve his position much.}}

Neither does 13.b4 \(f6\) based on 14.\( \texttt{\textit{exe6}} \texttt{\textit{\&xe6}} \texttt{15.\( \texttt{\textit{xe5}} \texttt{\textit{f6}} \texttt{16.\( \texttt{\textit{b2}} \texttt{\textit{g5\#}} \texttt{)} \texttt{14.\texttt{\textit{xf6}} \texttt{15.a2 \&d4 \texttt{16.xd4 \&xd4 \texttt{17.e4}} \texttt{\textit{b6}} \texttt{18.e3 \&xe3} \texttt{19.\( \texttt{\textit{exe3}} \texttt{\textit{a5\#}} \texttt{and White's weakness on the queenside is more real than the apparent weaknesses around the black king.}}

13...\( \texttt{\textit{d8}} \)

It is also possible to play: 13...\( \texttt{\textit{a5}} \texttt{14.\( \texttt{\textit{c3}} \texttt{\textit{b3}} \texttt{15.\( \texttt{\textit{b5}} \texttt{\textit{b6}} \texttt{16.\( \texttt{\textit{ad1}} \texttt{\textit{xd2}} \texttt{17.\( \texttt{\textit{xd2}} \texttt{\textit{d7}} \texttt{18.\( \texttt{\textit{d6}} \texttt{This position was reached in Tzermiadianos – Szabo, Kavala 2003, and here I suggest: 18.\( \texttt{\textit{ad8?!N}} \texttt{19.\( \texttt{\textit{c4}} \texttt{19.\( \texttt{\textit{c6=}} \texttt{20.h4 \texttt{\textit{xd6}} \texttt{21.\texttt{\textit{xd6 \&d8}} \texttt{This might not be to everyone's taste, but to those who like this sort of thing, it should be most appetizing.}}

14.\( \texttt{\textit{g5}} \)

White has to do something. 14.\( \texttt{\textit{c3}} \texttt{\textit{exe5\#}} \texttt{and 14.\( \texttt{\textit{e4}} \texttt{b6} \texttt{do not look better.}}

14...\( \texttt{\textit{d7}} \texttt{15.b4 a6} \)

Also promising is 15...\( \texttt{h6?!N} \texttt{16.\( \texttt{\textit{d2}} \texttt{a6} \texttt{17.\( \texttt{\textit{c1}} \texttt{\textit{d8}} \texttt{18.\( \texttt{\textit{c4}} \texttt{\textit{d7=}.}}

16.\( \texttt{\textit{c1N}} \)
I decided to analyse this new move, although it turns out that it does not solve White's problems. He needs an improvement over 16.b5 axb5 17.axb5 h6 18.\texttt{c}d2 \texttt{d}8! \texttt{f} Schuster -- Schroeder, corr. 1998.

Perhaps the best move is 16.\texttt{a}2!?N when White might still be equal.

16...\texttt{b}5!

White has nothing on the c-file, so Black can develop his queenside pieces in the optimal way.

17.\texttt{b}d2 \texttt{h}6 18.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{b}7
18...\texttt{d}8?! 19.\texttt{xe}6 \texttt{b}7 looks nice, but after 20.\texttt{xe}6! \texttt{xe}6 21.\texttt{xe}6\texttt{g}∞ it has not truly worked.

19.\texttt{e}4

Another line is 19.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{d}8 20.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{b}8 21.\texttt{c}5 \texttt{xe}5 22.\texttt{xe}5 \texttt{xe}5 23.\texttt{xd}7 \texttt{xd}7 and White is in trouble.

19...\texttt{ad}8\texttt{f} 20.\texttt{d}2

White would simply lose a pawn after:
20.\texttt{c}5 \texttt{xe}5! 21.\texttt{xe}3 (21.\texttt{xd}7 \texttt{xd}7--) 21...\texttt{xe}5! 22.\texttt{xd}7 \texttt{xf}3† 23.\texttt{xf}3 \texttt{xd}7→

20...\texttt{b}6 21.\texttt{c}5 \texttt{xe}5 22.\texttt{xe}5 \texttt{xe}5 23.\texttt{xe}5 \texttt{xe}5 24.\texttt{xd}7 \texttt{a}1 25.\texttt{c}5 \texttt{g}7\texttt{f}

This set-up is better.

11...0--
11...\texttt{c}7 12.\texttt{e}4 0-- would transpose.

12.\texttt{e}4

After 12.\texttt{g}5 \texttt{c}7 13.\texttt{e}2 I am quite keen on the little finesse 13...\texttt{h}6! 14.\texttt{d}2 Tosky -- Tosić, Nizhniy Tagil 1998, and now the computer points to 14...\texttt{d}8!N being clever. It believes White should play 15.\texttt{h}3 or 15.\texttt{h}1, which shows that it has no good ideas. The main point is of course that 15.\texttt{c}3?! fails to 15...\texttt{xe}5\texttt{f}.

12.\texttt{b}4 \texttt{c}7 13.\texttt{b}2 \texttt{d}8 14.\texttt{c}2 is harmless. I would like to be active with:
14...b5!?N (14...d7 15.\textit{\&}d2 \textit{\&}ac8= Degraeve – Hellsten, Germany 1997, is surely fine as well.) 15.\textit{\&}bd2 (15.\textit{\&}c1 \textit{\&}b7 16.\textit{\&}xb5 \textit{\&}xe5=) Black can now either be simply equal with 15...\textit{\&}b6= or play more deliberately with 15...\textit{\&}d7 16.\textit{\&}e4 \textit{\&}ac8 17.\textit{\&}ac1 (17.\textit{\&}d6? \textit{\&}xe5=) 17...\textit{\&}b8 18.\textit{\&}b1 \textit{\&}xe5 19.\textit{\&}xe5 \textit{\&}xe5 20.\textit{\&}xe5 \textit{\&}xe5 21.\textit{\&}c5 \textit{\&}b8 22.\textit{\&}xb5 \textit{\&}f6 23.\textit{\&}d3 \textit{\&}d5=.

12...\textit{\&}c7! 13.\textit{\&}xd5 exd5

14.\textit{\&}c3

The greedy 14.\textit{\&}xd5? \textit{\&}d8 15.\textit{\&}c5 would give Black more than enough compensation after 15...\textit{\&}g4 16.\textit{\&}bd2 \textit{\&}ac8= How is White going to get his pieces out?

14...\textit{\&}e6

14...d4 is brutally met with 15.\textit{\&}d5 \textit{\&}d8 16.\textit{\&}f6+ \textit{\&}h8 17.\textit{\&}f4 and White is probably a bit better. The knight on f6 is quite difficult to get rid of.

15.\textit{\&}f4

15.\textit{\&}xd5 is the way to a quick draw. After 15...\textit{\&}xd5 16.\textit{\&}xd5 \textit{\&}xe5! 17.\textit{\&}xe5 (17.\textit{\&}f4 \textit{\&}xf3\textsuperscript{+} 18.\textit{\&}xf3 \textit{\&}b6=) 17...\textit{\&}ad8 18.\textit{\&}b3 \textit{\&}xe5= Black has no problems.

15...\textit{\&}ad8 16.\textit{\&}c1

16...\textit{\&}g4!N

16...\textit{\&}a5 (Janev – Van Elst, Saint Affrique 2008) is not bad, I just like my move better.

16...a6? is also okay, but once again, I favour the more active approach.

17.h3!

I doubt White can keep the balance after 17.b4 f6!. For example: 18.\textit{\&}b5 \textit{\&}b8 19.exf6 \textit{\&}xf4 20.fxg7 \textit{\&}f5+

17...\textit{\&}xf3 18.\textit{\&}xf3

18.\textit{\&}xe5

18...\textit{\&}d7? is also completely fine: 19.\textit{\&}g3 \textit{\&}f8 20.\textit{\&}d1 \textit{\&}e6 21.\textit{\&}b5 \textit{\&}d7 22.\textit{\&}d6 \textit{\&}ee7 23.\textit{\&}c1 h6 24.\textit{\&}c8 \textit{\&}e8 25.\textit{\&}d6 \textit{\&}ee7=
19...\textit{g}3
\begin{itemize}
\item 19...\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 20...\textit{xd}5 \textit{d}6 21...\textit{c}d1 \textit{f}e8
\end{itemize}
is just equal.

20...\textit{e}8
\begin{itemize}
\item 20...\textit{xd}5 \textit{w}a5
\end{itemize}

Black does not have any problems here. The following is just toying around...

21...\textit{c}3
\begin{itemize}
\item 21...\textit{xe}5 \textit{xd}5 22...b4 leads to a quick draw, of course.
\end{itemize}

21...\textit{e}6 22...\textit{e}4 \textit{f}e8
\begin{itemize}
\item Also after 22...\textit{d}3 23...f3 \textit{c}6 24...\textit{xe}6 \textit{fxe}6
\item 25...\textit{g}4 \textit{f}5 the position is equal.
\end{itemize}

22...\textit{d}1
\begin{itemize}
\item 23...\textit{c}e1 \textit{c}4!+
\end{itemize}

gives White problems with the b2-pawn.

23...\textit{c}6 24...\textit{xe}6 \textit{xe}6 25...\textit{d}7 \textit{b}6 26...b4
\begin{itemize}
\item 27...d2 \textit{e}5 28...\textit{d}5 \textit{d}4= 29...\textit{b}8+ \textit{g}7 30...\textit{a}4
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
\item 30...\textit{xd}2! 31...\textit{xb}6 \textit{e}1+ 32...\textit{h}2 \textit{f}1+
\end{itemize}
The game ends in a perpetual.

D) 7...\textit{c}3

\begin{itemize}
\item 8...\textit{xc}3 8...\textit{xc}3 \textit{c}7!
\end{itemize}

An important move. White should not be given time to play 9...\textit{d}3 and 0–0, when the freedom he has achieved for his pieces is more important than the vulnerability of the c3-pawn.

7...\textit{xc}3 8...\textit{xc}3 \textit{w}c7!
Chapter 2 - A Classical Repertoire against 2.c3

9...d2 d7

At this branching point, we shall have a look at:

D1) 10.d3!? and D2) 10.exd6.

D1) 10.d3!?

This sacrifice is perfectly sensible. White has already sacrificed his long-term soundness, so why not throw in a pawn as well?

10...dxe5 11.0-0 d6 12.e1

12...0-0!

12...exd4 13.cxd4 0-0 14.e1 d8 15.e4

This is the line I wanted to recommend, but White has a lot of compensation for the missing pawn. It is not so easy for Black to get his pieces out. An example goes like this:

15...e7 16.e2 e8 17.g4 f8 18.e5 f5

I'll throw in a diagram to scare you straight.

19.xg7!? xg7 20.h5 f6

Better was 20...g6 21.h6+ g8 22.xg6 f6 23.e5 e7 24.c4+, but of course it is still grim.

21.h6+ h8 22.f7+ g8 23.hd8 xd8 24.d5 xd4 25.xf6 xd3 26.g5+ g6 27.h4

1-0 Filimonov - Nevostrujev, Novokuznetsk 2003. A very bloody nose for the grandmaster against the amateur. Although I think this line is in general playable for Black, it is entirely impractical, as evidenced by this and other games.

13.dxe5 dxe5 14.xe5 e5 15.xh7+ xh7 16.h5+ g8
17.\texttt{Exe5}
After 17.\texttt{Exe5} Black will have ever so slightly the better side of a drawn ending.

17...\texttt{f6} 18.\texttt{Exe4}
If 18.\texttt{Exe4} then 18...\texttt{e5} gives easy equality, Pirrot – Rajkovic, Baden-Baden 1988.

18...\texttt{e7}!
With full equality, Kozlicek – Cerveny, Czech Republic 2007.

D2) 10.\texttt{exd6} \texttt{Exd6} 11.\texttt{d3} \texttt{b6}

12.0–0
12.\texttt{g5}?! is just nonsense. After 12...\texttt{f6} 13.\texttt{e4} \texttt{Exe4} 14.\texttt{Exe4} \texttt{b8} 15.h3 0–0 16.0–0 \texttt{b7\#} Black has an edge thanks to his better pawn structure, Djugebuadze – Delchev, Cannes 2005.

12...\texttt{b7} 13.\texttt{e1} 0–0
Black has easily equalized.

14.h3
14.\texttt{e4} \texttt{Exe4} 15.\texttt{xc4} \texttt{Ee8} 16.\texttt{wc2} \texttt{ac8} 17.\texttt{h4} \texttt{f8\#} gives Black a chance to play on the light squares. Khamrakulov – Bologan, Sanxenxo 2003.

14...\texttt{ac8}

Also fine is 14...\texttt{f4} 15.\texttt{xf4} \texttt{xf4} = Timman – Piket, The Hague 1995.

15.a4 \texttt{f4} 16.\texttt{xf4} \texttt{xf4}

\textbf{E) 7.\texttt{c4} \texttt{c6} 8.0–0 \texttt{e7}}

I guess I would have been forgiven (not least by the editors) if I had started the article at this
point. John Shaw, who has played this position against me, says that the white strategy is to get to around here, and then just make stuff up. In my own games I have found this to be true, even if there are a few players around, like Pavasovic and the Zhigalko brothers, who play this position based on preparation.

White has five main tries: E1) 9.\( \texttt{d}2\)?, E2) 9.\( \texttt{c}3\), E3) 9.\texttt{exd}6, E4) 9.\texttt{a}3 and finally the current trend, E5) 9.\( \texttt{e}2\).

Beyond these, I can quickly mention the following moves:

9.\( \texttt{exd}5\) \texttt{exd}5 10.\( \texttt{c}3\) \( \texttt{e}6\) 11.\( \texttt{f}4\) \texttt{dxe}5 12.\( \texttt{e}xe5\) \( \texttt{e}8\) 13.\( \texttt{e}1\) 0-0 Blauert – Kozul, Portoroz 1997. Although the position is just equal here, it is my opinion that such positions are far easier to play with Black. The bishop on \( \texttt{e}6\) is not a "traditionally bad" bishop, but one half of a genuinely strong bishop pair.

9.\( \texttt{e}1\)

This move is so generic that it can transpose to almost anything. Here is a less important variation:

9...\( \texttt{0-0}\) 10.\( \texttt{tlc}3\) \texttt{dxe}5 10...\( \texttt{tlxc}3\) 11.\( \texttt{hlc}3\) \( \texttt{d}5\) 12.\( \texttt{tlxe}5\) \texttt{tlxe}5 12...\( \texttt{hlxe}5\)

12.\( \texttt{e}2\)

This is harmless. Black has two good ways to play.

12...\( \texttt{a}5\)

Also very interesting is 12...\( \texttt{d}7\)?!N 13.\( \texttt{e}2\)?!

10.\( \texttt{xc}3\) 11.\( \texttt{xc}3\) \( \texttt{d}5\) 12.\( \texttt{d}3\) might be a bit better for White, but it is hard to tell before 12...\( \texttt{d}7\)N is tried in practice.

11.\( \texttt{dxe}5\) \( \texttt{b}6\)!

Black is playing against the white bishops.

11...\( \texttt{xc}3\) 12.\( \texttt{xc}3\) \( \texttt{b}6\) as in Sermek – Cebalo, Ljubljana 1997, should give White a chance to create a bit of pressure with: 13.\( \texttt{a}4\)!N \( \texttt{b}7\) 14.\( \texttt{fd}1\) \( \texttt{c}7\) 15.\( \texttt{ac}1\)!

12.\( \texttt{c}2\)!

12.\( \texttt{b}3\)

This is harmless. Black has two good ways to play.

12...\( \texttt{a}5\)

This holds a good deal more bite than on move 7, where we saw in line B that Black has plenty of freedom to organize himself.

9...\( \texttt{0-0}\) 10.\( \texttt{c}3\) \texttt{dxe}5

10...\( \texttt{xc}3\) 11.\( \texttt{xc}3\) \( \texttt{d}5\) 12.\( \texttt{d}3\) might be a bit better for White, but it is hard to tell before 12...\( \texttt{d}7\)N is tried in practice.

11.\( \texttt{dxe}5\) \( \texttt{b}6\)!

Black is playing against the white bishops.

11...\( \texttt{xc}3\) 12.\( \texttt{xc}3\) \( \texttt{b}6\) as in Sermek – Cebalo, Ljubljana 1997, should give White a chance to create a bit of pressure with: 13.\( \texttt{a}4\)!N \( \texttt{b}7\) 14.\( \texttt{fd}1\) \( \texttt{c}7\) 15.\( \texttt{ac}1\)!

12.\( \texttt{c}2\)!

12.\( \texttt{b}3\)

This is harmless. Black has two good ways to play.

12...\( \texttt{a}5\)

Also very interesting is 12...\( \texttt{d}7\)?!N 13.\( \texttt{e}2\)?!

(13.\( \texttt{e}1\) \( \texttt{c}5\) 14.\( \texttt{c}4\) \( \texttt{a}6\) just equalizes)

13...\( \texttt{dxe}5\) 14.\( \texttt{xe}5\) \( \texttt{xe}5\) 15.\( \texttt{fd}1\) \( \texttt{g}6\)

16.\( \texttt{ac}1\)N \( \texttt{d}7\) 17.\( \texttt{c}3\) \( \texttt{e}8\)= I think the
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

extra pawn will be lost at some point, but Black is fine anyway.

13...\(\textit{a}2\)

13...\(\textit{ac}4\)

Black can also put the other knight on \(c4\):

13...\(\textit{bc}4\) 14...\(\textit{bc}2\) \(\textit{xd}2\) 15...\(\textit{xd}2\) \(\textit{ac}6\)

16...\(\textit{e}4\) \(g6\) 17...\(\textit{f}3\) \(\textit{b}6=\) 18...\(\textit{a}4\) Scannell – Jones, Fuegen 2006, 18...\(\textit{c}7\)N 19...\(\textit{fd}1\) \(\textit{d}7=\)

14...\(\textit{e}2\) \(\textit{xd}2\) 15...\(\textit{xd}2\) \(\textit{d}7\) 16...\(\textit{e}4\)

16...\(\textit{de}4\) \(\textit{c}6\) 17...\(\textit{ad}1\) \(\textit{c}7=\) is not a problem either.

16...\(g6=\)

Here White self-destructed with:

17...\(\texttt{xb}7?? \texttt{c}8+-\)


12...\(\texttt{d}7\)N

12...\(a6\) 13...\(\texttt{c}2\) \(\textit{c}7\) was played in Strikovic – Kozul, Yugoslavia 1989, but I am not too trusting of Black’s position after 14...\(\textit{e}4\)N \(\textit{d}5\), and now 15...\(\textit{g}5\) or 15...\(\textit{ac}1\) should give White freer play.

13...\(\texttt{f}4\)

13...\(\texttt{c}2\) \(\textit{dx}e5\) 14...\(\textit{xe}5\) \(\textit{xe}5\) 15...\(\textit{fd}1=\)

13...\(g5=\)

I like this adventurous launch. Black could also consider 13...\(\texttt{a}5\), but after 14...\(\textit{b}5\) \(\textit{d}8\) 15...\(\textit{e}2=\), I feel that he will have to work a bit to neutralize the pressure. The line I looked at went: 15...\(\texttt{c}5\) 16...\(\textit{ad}1\) \(\textit{d}7\) 17...\(\textit{c}4\) \(a6\)

18...\(\textit{e}4\) \(\textit{xe}4\) 19...\(\textit{xe}4\) \(\textit{e}8\) 20...\(\textit{e}3\) \(\textit{xd}1\)

21...\(\textit{xd}1\) \(\textit{d}8=\) and Black should make the draw. However, this is all a bit dull.

14...\(\texttt{e}3!\)

14...\(\texttt{g}3\) allows Black to obtain good play by simple means. 14...\(g4\) 15...\(\textit{d}4\) \(\textit{dx}e5\)

16...\(\texttt{g}4\) (16...\(\textit{xc}6\) \(\textit{xc}6\) 17...\(\textit{c}1\) [17...\(\texttt{g}4\) \(f5=\) ] 17...\(\texttt{d}4\) 18...\(\textit{d}1\) \(\texttt{g}7=\) In a practical game, I would probably prefer to have the pawn...) 16...\(f5=\) 17...\(\textit{xe}5\) \(\textit{xe}5\) 18...\(\textit{e}2\) \(\textit{f}6\)

19...\(\texttt{c}1\) \(a6=\)
Chapter 2 – A Classical Repertoire against 2.c3

11...cxd5 is weaker. The knight on f3 is pinned down to the defence of the e5-pawn, and this logic also works in practice. 11...\textit{Cd}xd1 12.Cxd1 C\textbf{d}7 13.Ce3 Cc8. Black is at least equal, for example: 14.Cab1 Ca5 15.Cb5 Cxb5 16.Cxb5 b6 17.Cd4 0–0 18.Cf1 Cfd8 Erenska – Jankovic, Warsaw 2008.

11...Cxe5 12.dxe5

White has some initiative, on the other hand Black has a pawn and decent squares for his pieces. For players who like unbalanced positions, this makes perfect sense.

\textbf{E2) 9.Cc3}

12...\textit{Cd}xd1!

This is slightly boring, but it really is the best move. Attempting to ride out the storm on the kingside is objectively okay, but in practice it has proved more difficult for black. Here are two examples where amateurs got winning positions against up-and-coming young grandmasters.

12...0–0 13.Cg4 Cc7 14.Ce1 Cd8 15.Ch6 g6 16.Cd4 C\textbf{d}7 17.Ch5 Cc8?! 18.Cxg6 hxg6 19.Cc3 \textbf{C}dc8 20.Cb3 Cc5?
21.\(\text{Bae1!!}\) \(\text{Axe3}\) 22.\(\text{Bxe3\ Wa5}\) 23.\(\text{h4++}\) - Bergez – Vachier Lagrave, Paris 2005.

12...\(\text{Aa5}\) 13.\(\text{Be1}\) 0-0 14.\(\text{Bg4\ Ad8}\) 15.\(\text{Bh6!}\) \(g6\) (15...\(\text{Bf8}\) 16.\(\text{Be3\ Ad7}\) 17.\(\text{Bae1}\rightarrow \text{Bac8}\)? 18.\(\text{Bxg7?!++}\) 16.\(\text{Bd3!\ Ad7}\) 17.\(\text{h4!\ Bac8}\) 18.\(\text{h5\ Wa4}\) 19.\(\text{hxg6\ hxg6}\) 20.\(\text{Bf4\ Bc2}\) (20...\(\text{Wfd3}\)? 21.\(\text{Bd1\ Bg8}\) 20.\(\text{Wc2}\) 21.\(\text{Bc1\ Bb2}\) 22.\(\text{Ba4}\) → \(\text{c5}\)?

23.\(\text{Bh4!++}\) – Friedrich – Nyzhnyk, Bad Woerishofen 2010. Black managed to draw the game, but at this stage he should have been dead and buried.

13.\(\text{Bxd1}\) \(\text{Ad7}\) 14.\(\text{Bb1\ Bb6}\) 15.\(\text{Ba6}\) This position was reached in Arribas Robaina – Galego, Santa Clara 2005. Here the most accurate continuation seems to be:

The ending should of course be a draw. It would be tough to play for a win with Black, but absolutely impossible to do so with White.

\begin{center}
\textbf{E3) 9.\(\text{cx}}\text{d6\ W}}\text{xd6}
\end{center}

Recapturing with the queen is tried and tested, and Black should equalize easily.

9...\(\text{Bxd6?}\) 10.\(\text{Bc3}\) 0-0 11.\(\text{Be1\ h6}\) has been played in three games between Stevic and Kozul, but although Kozul has managed to gain a plus score from these games, I am not convinced he was successful in the opening. Anyway it is a lively alternative, which can be considered entirely untheoretical at the moment, as I have no doubt that both players could have improved their play in all three games.

10.\(\text{Bc3}\) 0-0 11.\(\text{Be1\ Bd8!}\)
This is the point. The pressure against the e4-pawn prevents White from obtaining any real advantage.

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

12...\(\text{b5}\) \(\text{b8}\) 13...g3 creates a slight threat, but chess is too complex for such simplistic play to be effective — at least most of the time.

13...\(\text{cb4}!\) 14.a3 \(\text{a6}\) 15...c3 \(\text{b5}\) 16...b3 Zaitsev – Drabke, Germany 2009. Here Black should simply play 16...\(\text{xc3}\)N 17.bxc3 \(\text{d5}\) 18.d3 \(\text{b7}\) and due to the weakening of the white kingside, Black has slightly the more pleasant side of the roughly equal position.

12...\(\text{f6}!\) 13...e3

Thanks to Black’s previous accurate move, White has to put his bishop on this relatively inactive square.

13...\(\text{b6}\) 14...e2 \(\text{b7}\) 15...d1 \(\text{a5}!\)

An important move. Black does not want to allow 15...\(\text{ac8}\) 16.d5±.

16...c2 \(\text{ac8}\) 17...e5 \(\text{c6}\)

We have reached a typical IQP position, except that White has not managed to put all his pieces on active squares. For the reason it is White who must play accurately to prove equality, as shown in the two lines E31) 18...g5?! and E32) 18...e4!

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

Taking the exchange is not without dangers, but it holds up to scrutiny. 18...\(\text{xe5}\)? 19...\(\text{xe5}\) \(\text{c6}\) occurred in Landenbergue – Pavlovic, Biel 2007, but here White could have more or less won the game directly with:

20...\(\text{f1}!\) 21...d5 21...xe7 \(\text{x7}\) 22...e4 \(\text{d5}\) Otherwise \(\text{b5}–\text{d6}\) wins something. 23...\(\text{xd5}\) exd5 24...f5 \(\text{b8}\) 25...d3 g6 26...e6± Black is in trouble in view of 26...\(\text{xf6}\)? 27...g3+ \(\text{h8}\)

28...e5+ \(\text{g8}\) 29...f6 fxg6 30...d3+-.

19...\(\text{xd4}\)

19...\(\text{xf6}\)

19...\(\text{xd4}\)

20...\(\text{xf6}\)
White might be able to hold the endgame after 20.\( \text{cxf7} \) \( \text{gxf8} \) 21.\( \text{axe6} \) \( \text{exe7} \) 22.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{c6} \) 23.\( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 24.\( \text{xfs6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 25.\( \text{b5} \) \( \text{g6} \) 26.\( \text{d6} \) \( \text{g7} \) 27.\( \text{xf7} \) \( \text{xf7} \) 28.\( \text{xfs7} \) \( \text{xfs7} \), but it is truly awful to have to play it.

20...\( \text{xf6} \) 21.\( \text{xf7} \)

21.\( \text{xf7} \) \( \text{xf7} \) is a nice line for the album; the continuation might be 23.\( \text{h8} \) \( \text{g5} \) 24.\( \text{g6} \) \( \text{g7} \) and White loses a piece.

21...\( \text{e8} \)

21...\( \text{a6} \) 22.\( \text{xa6} \) \( \text{xf7} \) 23.\( \text{b3} \) is not so convincing.

22.\( \text{h5} \)

22.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{f4} \) 23.\( \text{c6} \) \( \text{e5} \) is also a disaster for White, for instance 24.\( \text{xh7} \) \( \text{gh7} \)? 25.\( \text{h5} \) \( \text{g6} \) 26.\( \text{xe8} \) \( \text{d4} \) 27.\( \text{h1} \) \( \text{f8} \)! and the knight is trapped.

22...\( \text{g6} \) 23.\( \text{axg6} \)

23.\( \text{f8} \)!! 23...\( \text{hxg6} \)!! 24.\( \text{gxg6} \) leads to instant perpetual after 24...\( \text{g7} \) 25.\( \text{h6} \), as after 24...\( \text{f8} \)? 25.\( \text{h6} \) White just wins.

24.\( \text{xh7} \) \( \text{d2} \) 25.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{e7} \) 26.\( \text{h5} \) \( \text{xg3} \) 27.\( \text{xc3} \) \( \text{xc3} \) 28.\( \text{g6} \) \( \text{g7} \) 

Black will soon be an exchange up in the endgame and thus has excellent winning chances.

E32) 18.\( \text{e4} \) \( \text{d5} \)

19.\( \text{xf6} \) 

19.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{h6} \)! 20.\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{a8} \) 21.\( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 22.\( \text{xd5} \) (22.\( \text{e4} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 23.\( \text{exe5} \) \( \text{xd1} \) 24.\( \text{xd1} \) \( \text{xe4} \)) 22...\( \text{xd5} \) Black has a typical slight edge in the endgame, although White should be able to hold it with accurate play.

19...\( \text{xf6} \) 20.\( \text{xf7} \)

20...\( \text{f8} \)!!

Black is so well placed that he is fully justified in playing for an advantage. 20...\( \text{xf7} \) leads to
Chapter 2 - A Classical Repertoire against 2.c3

21...g4!

White needs to play carefully to maintain the balance.

22.f3?! dxe5 22.dxe5 wxe5 is just worse for him, for example: 23.xd8+ xxd8 24.b3
24.xb6 wxe2 25.c5+ xe7 26.xe7+ xe7 27.xe2 g6 28.xc2 h8+ Black is close to winning with his soon-to-be extra piece.)
24...hx4! 25.c1 axa6! 26.f4 wxf4! 27.xf4

Black's extra pawn gives him good winning chances.

Alternatively, after 21.c6 xxc6 22.g4
g6 23.h3 a6! 24.f3 c4+ White has numerous problems. Equality does not seem to be something he can expect in the near future.

21...dxe5 22.dxe5 wxe5 23.b3 a5 24.b1
d5

I doubt that Black can claim a real advantage here, but the extra central pawn makes his position ever so slightly preferable in my eyes.

E4) 9.a3 0–0

At this fairly inconspicuous point White has two options: E41) 10.e1 and E42) 10.d3.

E41) 10.e1 d7

Now there are two moves to consider: E411) 11.bd2 and E412) 11.d3.

E411) 11.bd2 c8

12.e4! N

The only testing option. I have a positive experience against another move:

12.b4

This is a bit feeble and allows Black to fight for the initiative immediately. White can still maintain the balance, but the fact that
he even has to think about doing this twelve moves into the game is a sure sign that his opening must have gone wrong.

12...b5! 13.\(\textit{\textcopyright}\)d5
13...exd5 14.\(\textit{\textcopyright}\)b3 \(g4!\)
14...\(f5=\) was a simpler way to play, but I wanted to put my opponent under pressure.

17...a5!
Black needs to play forcefully before White achieves full coordination.

18.bxa5 \(\textit{\textcopyright}\)xa5 19.\(\textit{\textcopyright}\)d4 \(c5\) 20.g4?! 
White weakens his kingside unnecessarily. 20.\(\textit{\textcopyright}\)xb5 \(b6\) would also have been unpleasant for him. 
The right move was 20.\(\textit{\textcopyright}\)d3N when White maintains the balance.

23...\(b2!\)
Other moves are equally good according to my other brain, but my heart prefers to cash in when possible...

24.\(\textit{\textcopyright}\)d2 \(\textit{\textcopyright}\)xd4 25.\(\textit{\textcopyright}\)xd4 \(d3\)
D. Howell – Aagaard, Great Yarmouth 2007. Black won the game and later on the tournament, leading to a kind of unofficial ban on Scottish players at the British Championship.

Adventurous players may wish to investigate the alternative: 12...\(\textit{\textcopyright}\)xe5?! This idea is loved by Rybka, but it is a bit risky for a human to play. 13.dxe5 \(\textit{\textcopyright}\)xc4 14.exd6
+...\textit{xe}4! (14...\textit{f}6?! 15.\textit{xf}6+ \textit{xf}6? \textit{\textit{e}5±) 15.\textit{xe}4 \textit{xd}6± Black's pieces are very well placed in the centre, and you could easily imagine his pawns advancing and the white rook having to retreat undignifiedly. However, one could also make the argument that a single pawn is not quite enough for the exchange. I think it partially depends on your mood and how energetic you are feeling on the day...

13.\textit{g}5
13.\textit{ex}d6 \textit{xd}6 14.\textit{xd}6 \textit{xd}6 is equal.

13...dxe5 14.\textit{dxe}5 \textit{x}g5 15.\textit{h}xg5 h6 16.\textit{d}3 g6 17.\textit{xd}5
Or 17.\textit{c}4 \textit{xe}5! 18.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 19.\textit{c}c3 \textit{\textit{e}5, 20.\textit{xd}5 exd5 21.\textit{xd}5 \textit{c}c6 with comfortable equality once again.

17...\textit{ex}d5 18.e6 \textit{hx}g5 19.\textit{ex}d7 \textit{xd}7 20.\textit{g}xg5 \textit{e}8=
I doubt that White can generate any significant threats against the only slightly weakened black kingside before the pieces are stopped off.

E412) 11.\textit{d}3 \textit{e}8 12.\textit{d}2
Black is discouraged from playing ...\textit{a}5 and White is preparing to recapture with the bishop on \textit{c}3. This is the scale of the ideas in these lines...

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
& & & & & & & & \\
\hline
& & & & & & & & \\
\hline
& & & & & & & & \\
\hline
& & & & & & & & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

12...\textit{a}6
I like this move best, although there are some other decent options:

12...\textit{a}5?! is not one of them: 13.\textit{xd}5 \textit{ex}d5 14.\textit{xa}5 \textit{xa}5 15.\textit{c}3± \textit{\textit{e}6 16.\textit{xd}6! \textit{xd}6? 17.\textit{g}5±

12...\textit{c}7 13.\textit{xd}5 \textit{ex}d5 14.\textit{c}3 \textit{\textit{e}6 15.\textit{g}5 a6! 16.\textit{ac}1 \textit{dxe}5 17.\textit{dxe}5 \textit{\textit{fd}8= Narciso Dublan – Edouard, La Massana 2010.

12...\textit{e}8?N has not been tested, but looks like a sensible novelty, not that one is needed...

13.\textit{c}3
There are no other threats. 13.\textit{xd}5 \textit{ex}d5 14.\textit{c}3 \textit{\textit{e}6= and 13.\textit{ex}d6 \textit{xd}6 14.\textit{c}3 \textit{\textit{ce}7! (14...\textit{xc}3 15.\textit{xc}3 \textit{\textit{ce}7 16.d5± creates unpleasant pressure against \textit{g}7) 15.\textit{e}4 \textit{\textit{f}4= are both fine.

13...\textit{xc}3 14.\textit{xc}3
14.\textit{ex}d6 \textit{xd}6 15.\textit{xc}3 was played in Okhotnik – Bujisho, France 2008. This continuation is not so bad for White, but it seems inconsistent for him to recapture with the b-pawn after putting the bishop on d2. The most logical reply looks to be 15...\textit{a}5N 16.\textit{g}5 (16.\textit{a}2 \textit{\textit{b}5 Black gets active) 16...\textit{g}6 17.\textit{h}3 (17.\textit{a}2 \textit{\textit{e}7) 17...\textit{h}5 18.\textit{a}2 \textit{\textit{c}4 when Black's kingside has been weakened slightly, but he has a promising queenside initiative to keep his opponent busy.

14...\textit{d}5!
This seems to be the soundest way to continue. I just want to quickly illustrate why other plans fail with hard evidence:

14...\textit{b}5 15.\textit{a}2 \textit{dxe}5 16.\textit{dxe}5 \textit{\textit{b}6 (16...\textit{c}7 17.\textit{ac}1 \textit{\textit{fd}8 18.\textit{b}1± is only a bit better for White, but Black is playing only for a draw...)
17.\texttt{fxd7} \texttt{\textbackslash exd7} 18.\texttt{\textbackslash exd7} \texttt{\textbackslash d8} 20.\texttt{e6} \texttt{\textbackslash fxe6} 21.\texttt{\textbackslash exd6}+ \texttt{\textbackslash h8} 22.\texttt{b4=}

14...\texttt{\textbackslash d5} Bengtsson – Iwanow, Herceg Novi 2008, 15.\texttt{\textbackslash xxa5!!N} \texttt{\textbackslash xxa5} 16.d5= 

15.\texttt{\textbackslash b3} 
15.\texttt{\textbackslash b3} \texttt{\textbackslash d5} 16.\texttt{\textbackslash c2} g6 17.a4 \texttt{\textbackslash b6=} is fine for Black. The bishop is tactically vulnerable on \texttt{\textbackslash c2}, so it is more efficient for White to put it on \texttt{\textbackslash b1} instead.

15...\texttt{\textbackslash d5} 16.\texttt{\textbackslash ac1}

16...\texttt{\textbackslash c4=N}

16...\texttt{\textbackslash b5} 17.\texttt{\textbackslash d2} \texttt{\textbackslash c4} 18.h4 was complex but probably a little better for White in Howell – Hillarp Persson, Oslo 2008. By shuffling his move order slightly, Black can prevent the smooth transfer of the white queen to the kingside.

17.\texttt{\textbackslash b1} g6 

With ...\texttt{\textbackslash b5} on the way, Black has decent counterplay as far as I can determine. It is not so easy for White to start an attack on the kingside...

E42) 10.\texttt{\textbackslash d3} \texttt{\textbackslash d7} 11.\texttt{e2} \texttt{\textbackslash c8} 12.\texttt{\textbackslash e4} f5 13.\texttt{\textbackslash exf6} \texttt{\textbackslash xf6}

14.\texttt{\textbackslash e2}  

14.h4 can safely be met by 14...\texttt{\textbackslash e8}, while the untested 14...\texttt{\textbackslash d6!?N also looks interesting. Another playable option is 14...d5 15.\texttt{\textbackslash g5} \texttt{\textbackslash h6}, although this does enable White to force a draw with 16.\texttt{\textbackslash xh6} \texttt{\textbackslash xh6} 17.\texttt{\textbackslash g3}+ \texttt{\textbackslash h8} 18.\texttt{\textbackslash g6} as seen in Babic – Saric, Bosnjaci 2010.

14...d5!? 

I find this move to be the most entertaining and ambitious option, but the alternative is by no means worse.

14...\texttt{\textbackslash e8}  

This is the simplest route to equality.

15.\texttt{\textbackslash c3} \texttt{\textbackslash h5} 16.\texttt{\textbackslash d2}  

16.h4 d5!!N (16...\texttt{\textbackslash g4} 17.\texttt{\textbackslash e3} \texttt{\textbackslash h5} was equal in Afek – Riemersma, Amsterdam 2010, but who wants to play like this unless forced to?) 17.\texttt{\textbackslash d2} (17.\texttt{\textbackslash xd5} \texttt{\textbackslash xxd5}! [17...\texttt{\textbackslash exd5} 18.\texttt{\textbackslash d2=} 18.\texttt{\textbackslash e3} \texttt{\textbackslash e8=} gives Black excellent prospects.) 17.\texttt{\textbackslash d4} 18.\texttt{\textbackslash xh4} \texttt{\textbackslash xh4} 19.\texttt{\textbackslash f4} \texttt{\textbackslash c7=} The position is quite complicated, but with the two bishops Black should have decent chances in the middlegame.

16...\texttt{\textbackslash d5N}

16...\texttt{\textbackslash h8} 17.\texttt{\textbackslash ac1} \texttt{\textbackslash c8} was played in Wadsack – Niederwieser, Leonding 2006. It did not work out ideally, and after 18.\texttt{\textbackslash fe1N} White would have been a little better.

17.\texttt{\textbackslash xd5} exd5
The doubled pawns are not really weak, and they control a lot of important central squares.

8.\text{d1} f6 19.\text{e3} a5\text{?N}

Before moving on, let us briefly note that the untested 14...\text{b6?!N} 15.\text{d1} a5 16.\text{c3} b3 17.\text{b1} a6\text{?N} also looks viable.

15.\text{c3}

15.f4 could be met by 15...\text{b6} 16.e3 e8 when all Black's pieces have bright futures.

15...\text{d6} 16.g5 e8?!?

This move is ambitious and a bit risky. There is a safe alternative in 16...\text{b6} 17.ad1 h8 18.b1= Adianto - Zhang Zhong, Beijing rapid) 2008.

17.h3

23.\text{xc3}

Another option is: 23...\text{xg6?! 24.xf3 xf3 25.gxf3 e5 26.g2 d3= Black has nice compensation, although for the moment he does not have any extra pawns and must rely solely on his piece activity to provide compensation for the exchange. Black should probably be okay, although his margin for error looks to be narrower than White's.

24.bxc3

24.xf4 leads to a draw: 24...\text{xf4} 25.h5+ g8 26.h7+ f8 27.h8+ e7 28.xg7+ d8 29.h8+ e7= 

17...\text{h5?!N}

17...\text{h5} 18.fe1 e8 19.d2\text{? is not in Black's interest, Andronov - Sklyarov, Joensuu 2008.}

18.c2 \text{xf3}?!?

18...g6 19.d1 f4 is of course also playable.

19.xh7+ h8 20.g6 f8 21.d1 xd4 22.xd4

White does not have a lot of options around here. For instance, after 22.xh5 f5 23.e3 c2! 24.xc2 xh5 Black is better.

22.f4 23.d1
24...\f6 25.\j7 5.g8
26.\h5= 27.\g6 \xa3 28.\xa3 \xa3=

The engines disagree at this point; is Black a bit better, or is the position just equal? The reality is White will probably be able to play \xe6 at some point, and get so many checks as to make it impossible for Black to promote his queenside pawns. Therefore I conservatively estimate the position as equal, although it is White who will have to work harder to prove it.

E5) 9.\e2 0-0

This is the biggest tabiya within the 7.\c4 line. All of the following four tries have been played a lot, but in my opinion none of them are truly to be feared: E51) 10.\e1, E52)

10.\c3?, E53) 10.\e4 and E54) 10.\d1.

The following two moves are even less dangerous:

10.\d2 \b6 11.\c3 \xd4 12.\xd4 \xd4
13.\xd5 \xd5 14.\xd6 \xd6 15.\b5 \e5
16.\xe5 \xe5 Drepaniotis - Filippas Ntekouan, Kallithea 2008.

10.\xd6 \xd6 11.\c3 is another random line. I like 11...\d8N, reminiscent of E3 above.

E51) 10.\e1 \b6!

I really like this move; I think it solves all of Black’s problems immediately and makes the whole line redundant from White’s point of view. Here I have analysed E511) 11.\e4 and E512) 11.\c3?N.

11.\xd5 \xd5 12.\c3 \xd4 (Via this move order Black also has the option of 12...\e6 with easy equality.) 13.\d4 \d4 reaches line E512 below.

E511) 11.\e4 \dxe5

11...\f5 12.\xf6 \f6 was played in A. Zhigalko – A. Fedorov, Minsk 2010. Now after 13.\c3 I would rather be White.

12.\xe5 \c5 13.\e2
Sveshnikov in his book does not consider this move here, which I find odd. It could be that although published in 2010, the book is actually a translation from Russian, and the advertised updating has not reached all corners of the book.

Having said this, I also think that $13 \ldots \text{f5}$! $14. \text{exf6} \text{xf6} 15. \text{h4} \text{d8}$

$16. \text{d2}?!$

This move has been played a few times, but it is an inaccuracy from which White will have difficulty recovering.

$16. \text{c3}?! \text{d4} \text{f}+$ is also not good.

$16. \text{bd2}?! N$

This looks like White's best chance.

$16... \text{d4} 17. \text{xd4} \text{xd4} 18. \text{g3} \text{d7}$

$18... \text{d5}$ is equal.

$19. \text{b3}$

$19... \text{c7}! 20. \text{xe6} \text{h8}$

Black has fine compensation, for instance:

$21. \text{xd7}$

$21. \text{f3} \text{a4} 22. \text{xd4} \text{xb3} 23. \text{xb3} \text{xb8}$

$24. \text{xc5} \text{xc5} 25. \text{f4} \text{xe6} 26. \text{xe6} \text{c4}$

$27. \text{a1} \text{xf4} 28. \text{e8} \text{g8} 29. \text{d1} \text{c4}$

$30. \text{g3} \text{xa2} 31. \text{dd8} \text{a5}$

$21... \text{xd7} 22. \text{h3}$

$22. \text{f1} \text{d3} 23. \text{c4} \text{c8} 24. \text{h4} \text{d4}$

$25. \text{h3} \text{c3} 26. \text{gxf3} \text{e1}$

$22... \text{d8} 23. \text{f3} \text{d1}+ 24. \text{h2} \text{d6}+ 25. \text{g3}$

White is probably not worse in this line, but from a practical perspective I like Black.
16...\(\text{\texttt{d4}}\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{xd4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xd4}}\) 18.\(\text{\texttt{xd4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xd4}}\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{b3}}\)

White also fails to equalize after 19.\(\text{\texttt{d2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xb2}}\) 20.\(\text{\texttt{xb2}}\) (20.\(\text{\texttt{b1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{d4}}\)) Jordanova – Videnova, Vratsa 2008 20...\(\text{\texttt{xb2}}\) 21.\(\text{\texttt{d1}}\) b5 (21...\(\text{\texttt{d7}}\) 22.\(\text{\texttt{e4}}\)† 22.\(\text{\texttt{b3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{b7}}\) Karacsony – Bastos, e-mail 2003, as after 23.\(\text{\texttt{xe6}}\)† \(\text{\texttt{h8}}\)† he still has some problems to solve.

19...a5 20.\(\text{\texttt{c3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{d7}}\) 21.\(\text{\texttt{e2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{c5}}\) 22.\(\text{\texttt{g5}}\)

22\(\text{\texttt{f8}}\)!\(\text{\texttt{N}}\)

22...a4 23.\(\text{\texttt{xf6}}\) axb3 24.\(\text{\texttt{g5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{f8}}\) 25.a3 \(\text{\texttt{b5=}}\) was played in both Vysochin – Solodovnichenko, Odessa 2006, and Potapov – Solodovnichenko, Nabereznye Chelny 2008. But I think Black can play for more.

23.\(\text{\texttt{c3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{d5}}\) 24.\(\text{\texttt{f1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xc3}}\) 25.bxc3 a4 26.\(\text{\texttt{c4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{b5}}\) 27.\(\text{\texttt{xb5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xb5}}\) 28.\(\text{\texttt{e4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{c6=}}\) White will have some problems in the ending.

E512) 11.\(\text{\texttt{c3?!N}}\)

This novelty was suggested by John Shaw when we were trying to work out why the Zhigalko brothers were playing this line. The first point is that the ...\(\text{\texttt{xc3}}\) lines are a bit less pleasant for Black when his queen is misplaced on b6. The second point comes in the following forced line – all suggested by John as well...

11...\(\text{\texttt{xd4}}\)

This is clearly the critical reply.

12.\(\text{\texttt{xd4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xd4}}\) 13.\(\text{\texttt{xd5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{exd5}}\) 14.\(\text{\texttt{f4}}\)

The computer found this move, but I cannot help but be impressed. However, a decent solution exists.

14...\(\text{\texttt{e6}}\)† 15.\(\text{\texttt{exd6}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xf4}}\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{xe7}}\) \(\text{\texttt{c8}}\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{ad1}}\)

17\(\text{\texttt{d6}}\)!

Safeest. 17...\(\text{\texttt{g5}}\) 18.\(\text{\texttt{h4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xe7}}\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{xd5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{c5}}\) 20.\(\text{\texttt{e5}}\) might provide White with some pressure. It still leads to a draw, but why should you get into a line where you have to play a number of only moves?
18.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{W}}e5}

White can delay direct action, but Black has many ways to improve his position, for instance: 18.h3 \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{B}}ac8}! ?

18...\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{B}}xe5} 19.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{W}}xe5}

19.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{d}}d4!}

19...\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{B}}xe7} 20.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{d}}xd5} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{B}}ee8} 21.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{c}}c7} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{B}}ed8}

22.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{A}}ac1} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{A}}ac8} 23.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{x}}xe6} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{B}}xe6} 24.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{A}}f1}± is also drawish, but the weakness on e6 makes Black's position a tad unpleasant.

20.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{A}}xd4}

20.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{d}}xd5} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{B}}xd5} 21.\texttt{\textit{B}}xe5 \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{A}}e7} =

20...\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{B}}xe7} 21.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{d}}d5} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{B}}ee8} ! ?

The only trap left to avoid is: 21...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{d}}d7}?

22.\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{B}}xe6!} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{B}}xd5}! 23.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{A}}xd5} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{B}}xe6} 24.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{A}}f1}±

22.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{f}}4} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{f}}6} 23.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{x}}xe6} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{x}}xe6} 24.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{c}}c7} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{A}}e1}† 25.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{f}}2} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{e}}8} 26.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{A}}x e 1} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{A}}x c7}

The draw is inevitable.

\texttt{E52) 10.\textcolor{red}{\textit{d}}c3!?}

This favourite of Sveshnikov seems a bit risky to me. I am not convinced that White is in a position to start a real attack on the kingside.

10...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{A}}xc3} 11.\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{B}}xc3} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{dxe5}}} 12.\texttt{\textit{dxe5}} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{A}}a5}

12...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{b}}6} 13.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{w}}e4} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{c}}c7} 14.\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{d}}d3} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{g}}6} 15.\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{h}}h6} is known to give White a bit of an initiative, although Black is probably okay here too.

\texttt{E521) 13.\textcolor{red}{\textit{a}}4, E522) 13.\textcolor{blue}{\textit{B}}b1!!} and the big main line \texttt{E523) 13.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{w}}e4}.}

At this point we have three main options,

\texttt{E521) 13.\textcolor{red}{\textit{a}}4, E522) 13.\textcolor{blue}{\textit{B}}b1!! and the big main line E523) 13.\textcolor{red}{\textit{w}}e4.}

On top of these I should also mention the following alternative, although I do not rate it highly:

13.\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{d}}d2}

This has been quite popular, but it makes little sense to me. The bishop is passive on d2 and Black was intending to return to c7 with the queen soon anyway.

13...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{B}}d8} 14.\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{d}}d3}

14.\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{d}}fd1} is supposed to give a slight edge according to Vladimir Sveshnikov, the son of the great man himself. However, he does not consider the most natural reply: 14...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{w}}c7} ! ?

15.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{w}}e4} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{b}}6} 16.\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{d}}d3} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{g}}6} If we compare this with the position that might have occurred after 12...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{c}}c7}, the move ...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{d}}d8} has helped more than \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{d}}d2} and \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{d}}fd1} combined. 17.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{g}}5} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{x}}g5} 18.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{x}}xg5} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{b}}7} 19.\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{h}}h4} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{h}}5} 20.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{f}}4} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{e}}7}†

White must fight for equality.

14...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{d}}d7} 15.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{w}}e4} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{g}}6} 16.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{f}}4} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{B}}ab1} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{B}}ab8} =

Smerdon – Jakovenko, Goa 2002. Black was at least equal and went on to win.
E521) 13.a4

13...\textit{d}8

This is the no-nonsense reply.

Dominguez does not like the look of 13...wxc3 14.d2 w.c2 15.d3 w.b3 16.e4 w.b6 17.a5 w.c7 18.a.c1 and he opines that White even stands better. I am not entirely convinced about this, but I agree that Black should not aim for this position from the opening when there is a safer alternative available.

14.d2 d7

This is fine, but I consider 14...w.c7!N to be slightly more accurate:

After 15.d3 b6 it is difficult for White to create an attack on the kingside, as the bishop looks silly on d2. Furthermore the d3-bishop is tactically vulnerable, and will remain so even if a rook appears on d1. So overall, yes, I am happy to obtain the move ...\textit{d}8 in return for a4 and \textit{d}2 anytime.

15.d3 e8 16.e.e1 d7 17.e4 g6 18.a.b5

This was Radjabov – Dominguez Perez, Linares 2009. Here Dominguez recommends:

18...\textit{ad}8N 19.a.g5 a.xg5 20.xg5 h6 21.b.f3 w.xc3 22.a.c1 w.a5 23.a.h4 g7 24.a.f6+ g8 25.a.h4

The game ends in a draw by repetition.

E522) 13.b1?!
Chapter 2 – A Classical Repertoire against 2.c3

13...\textit{\textit{dx}c3!}

Had I known that White is only bluffing and does not have a real attack, I would of course have taken this pawn. But instead, when I reached this position over the board against the greatest 2.c3 expert in the world, I chickened out. I must confess that due to tiredness at the end of the event I did not prepare thoroughly for the game.

13...\textit{\textit{ex}d8}

Even though this is not the most accurate move, it is still enough to obtain a good position without much difficulty.

14.\textit{\textit{b}5} \textit{\textit{c}7} 15.\textit{\textit{d}3} \textit{\textit{b}6}

Good pieces belong on good squares. You don't need theory to find these moves.

16.\textit{\textit{g}5}

16...\textit{\textit{ex}g5}!

I actually consider this a slight improvement over 16...\textit{\textit{ex}d3} 17.\textit{\textit{ex}d3} \textit{\textit{ex}g5} 18.\textit{\textit{ex}g5} \textit{\textit{a}6} 19.\textit{f}4 \textit{\textit{ex}b5} 20.\textit{\textit{ex}b5} \textit{\textit{h}6} 21.\textit{\textit{h}4} \textit{\textit{e}7} 22.\textit{\textit{ex}e7} $\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{2}$ Sveshnikov – Bojkovic, Nova Gorica 1997.

17.\textit{\textit{ex}g5} \textit{\textit{a}6} 18.\textit{\textit{ex}d8} \textit{\textit{ex}d8} 19.\textit{f}4

19.\textit{\textit{c}4} was probably neither better nor worse, just different: 19...\textit{\textit{ex}b5} 20.\textit{\textit{ex}h7}! \textit{\textit{ff}8}! (Alternatively there is 20...\textit{\textit{ex}h7} 21.\textit{\textit{c}2} \textit{\textit{g}6} 22.\textit{\textit{cx}b5} \textit{\textit{d}5} 23.\textit{\textit{ex}c6} \textit{\textit{ex}e5} and White is passive here as well, but maybe closer to a draw?) 21.\textit{\textit{cx}b5} \textit{\textit{ex}e5} Black has all the fun in the ending.

19...\textit{\textit{ex}b5} 20.\textit{\textit{ex}b5} \textit{\textit{e}7}

I was very pleased with the outcome of the opening, still I had not expected to win material as quickly as I did.

21.\textit{\textit{e}4}!

A pawn sacrifice accompanied with a draw offer.

21...\textit{\textit{e}5} 22.\textit{\textit{ff}1} is the computer's choice. Black can improve his position slowly, or be brutal with 22...\textit{g}5! 23.\textit{\textit{ex}g5} \textit{\textit{g}6}+

21...\textit{\textit{ex}c4}

I accepted the sacrifice but declined the draw, for two reasons. First of all, a pawn is a pawn! Secondly, draws could not be agreed before move 30 at this Olympiad, so accepting would have meant that the score would be 0–0!

22.\textit{\textit{ex}c4} \textit{\textit{e}8} 23.\textit{\textit{b}3} \textit{\textit{xc}3} 24.\textit{\textit{d}1} \textit{\textit{c}6} 25.\textit{f}5

25...\textit{\textit{ff}8}!

Simplest.

26.\textit{\textit{fxe}6} \textit{\textit{fxe}6} 27.\textit{\textit{ex}d7} \textit{\textit{ex}e}5 28.\textit{\textit{xa}7} \textit{\textit{d}3} 29.\textit{\textit{ff}1} \textit{\textit{c}5}+

White drew this ending in Sveshnikov – Aagaard, Dresden 2008, but this was mainly due to the poor technique of yours truly...

14.\textit{\textit{b}5}

14.\textit{\textit{b}3} is less dangerous. After 14...\textit{\textit{a}5} 15.\textit{\textit{e}4} \textit{\textit{d}8} 16.\textit{\textit{g}5} \textit{\textit{h}6} the attack had come to an end in Ghaem Maghami – Milos, Istanbul 2000.
14...\(\text{Nd}5\)!
Forced, but good enough.

15.\(\text{Nd}3\) \(\text{bd}8\) 16.\(\text{Nd}1\) \(\text{b}6\)
16...\(\text{Exd}3??\!\) Godena - Jankovic, Croatia 2004, is unnecessary.

17.\(\text{N}b2\)
White also does not have enough for the pawn after 17.\(\text{N}b1\) \(\text{N}b7\), 18.\(\text{Ng}5\) \(\text{N}a3??\!\) Smerdon - Bird, Brisbane 2005.

17...\(\text{N}c7\) 18.\(\text{Ne}4\) \(\text{Exd}3!!\) 19.\(\text{Exd}3\) \(\text{N}b7\)
20.\(\text{N}a4\) \(\text{N}d6??\!\)
Guido - Vocaturo, Montebelluna 2006.

E523) 13.\(\text{N}e4\)

18.\(\text{N}xc6\)
18.\(\text{Nd}3\) \(\text{b}6\) 19.\(\text{N}ad1\) \(\text{N}e8??\!\) Cereda - Martinez, Bratto 2008.
18...\(\text{N}xc6\) 19.\(\text{N}xa7\) \(\text{Exd}1??\!\) 20.\(\text{Exd}1\) \(\text{N}a8\)
21.\(\text{N}e3\) \(\text{Nxa2}\) 22.\(\text{Nd}4\) \(\text{N}d5??\!\)
Pavasovic - Kozul, Nova Gorica 1996. Black is very slightly better, but turning it into a win will be difficult.
This strong move virtually forces a queen exchange, after which the best White can hope for is equality.

White sets a trap, but fortunately there is a common-sense solution.

The endgame is equal, but in practice White's position is more difficult.

White has no compensation for his split queenside pawns, and is destined to suffer in the endgame.

Taking the critical g5-square under control.

This attempts to force a draw, but Black does not have to play along on such sad lines...

A miscalculated winning attempt. The ending should still have been a draw, but Black pressed too hard and ended up losing.

At the same time White is thoroughly stuck on the kingside, with more responsibilities than options.
16...fxe7 17...fbd1 b6=

The middlegame is objectively equal, but Black has reasonable chances to exploit the split queenside pawns later.

15...dxe7 16...ab1

A more interesting, and fully functioning alternative is:

16...c6? 17...d3

The following line is depressingly boring, but sometimes that is the way the game goes. 17...d3 wxe4 18...xe4 c6 19...xc6 bxc6 with a dull ending. I don’t want to lose the better structure so freely given to me, but if you do, you can play this of course...

17...b4!

This move was introduced by Nisipeanu, and is the only dangerous idea. White wants to swing the rook to g4.

17...fbd1 b6 18...e2 (18...d4 b7 19...d3 xf3 20.gxf3 c6= Flores – Jakovenko, Saint Vincent 2001.) 18...b7 19...d4 This was Stergiou – Mastrovasilis, Kallithea 2003, and now after 19...d5!N 20...xd5...xd5 White has to struggle for equality.

17...c6 18...e3

18...e2 b6 19...d4 c5 20...e1 b7= 21...b3? wxe3 22...c4 a5 23...a4 c5 24...c4 Causo – Jia, Kuala Lumpur 2008, 24...d5!N 25.f3 a6 26...a4 ...xe2 27...xd5 c5= 28...xe2 a5+

18...d3 wxe4 19...xe4 b6= is standard stuff. Black eventually won the ending in Smerdon – McShane, Goa 2002.

18...a5!

18...b6 19...d3 b7 20...g4 gave White real attacking chances in Nisipeanu – Ramirez Alvarez, Decameron 2003.

19...b5

19...d4?! does not seem to work: 19...c5! 20.c5...xe3 21...xe7†
eventually managed to grind out a win in a rook endgame with four pawns versus three on the kingside.

**E53) 10.\(\text{Be}4\)**

In principle I would always expect Black to be okay against the \(\text{Be}2-\text{e}4\) plan, although this did not stop me from losing a horrible game against this line.

10...\(\text{cd}7\)

At this point we should look at **E531)** 11.\(\text{Be}1\) and **E532)** 11.\(\text{d}3\).

White is not threatening to take a pawn:

11.\(\text{xd}5?!\) exd5 12.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{db}4\) 13.\(\text{Be}4\) R. Nielsen - Drabke, Koge 2010. Here I like the look of 13...\(\text{c}6\)N 14.\(\text{Be}2\) \(\text{xf}3\) 15.\(\text{gxf}3\) \(\text{b}6=\) when the extra pawn is much less important than positional factors, for example 16.\(\text{c}3\) dxe5 17.dxe5 \(\text{Be}6\) and the e-pawn falls, as 18.\(\text{f}4\) loses to 18...\(\text{g}6\) 19.\(\text{h}1\) \(\text{c}2\) 20.\(\text{g}1\) \(\text{c}6=\).

11.exd6 \(\text{xd}6\) 12.\(\text{xd}5\)? (12.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{Be}8=\))

12...exd5 13.\(\text{xd}5\) has been played a few times, but is also highly dubious. The strongest response is 13...\(\text{e}6\)! 14.\(\text{h}5\) (14.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{a}6\))

14...\(\text{d}7\) 15.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{c}4\) 16.\(\text{Be}1\) \(\text{b}4\) 17.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{xa}2\) 18.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{d}5=\) as in Pavlikov - Van den Cruyce, e-mail 2007.
E531) 11.\texttt{Be1}

This is a decent move, but there is no reason for Black to be afraid.

11...\texttt{Ec8} 12.\texttt{a3} \texttt{Da5} 13.\texttt{Da2} \texttt{Da4} 14.\texttt{Dg4} \texttt{Cc2}!

Solid and logical. The bishop that looked so modest a few moves ago is now Black’s best piece.

Another idea is: 14...h5??

\texttt{15.Dxh5}! (The tactical point is revealed after 15.\texttt{Dxh5??} \texttt{Dxc1!} 16.\texttt{Dxc1} \texttt{Df4+}) 15...\texttt{Cc2}

The computer likes Black, but I am not certain about anything here. One line I analysed goes:

16.\texttt{Dxd5} \texttt{exd5} 17.\texttt{Dc3} \texttt{b3} 18.\texttt{Dc6} \texttt{Dg6} 19.\texttt{Dad1!} h4 20.\texttt{Dh3} \texttt{gxh6} 21.\texttt{Dxd5} \texttt{Dh7} 22.\texttt{exd6} \texttt{Dxd6} 23.\texttt{Dxh4} \texttt{Da5}

15.\texttt{Dxh5}!!

An important improvement on 15...\texttt{Dxd5} 16.\texttt{Dc3} which has been played a number of times. The main issue is that 16...\texttt{Dd3} 17.\texttt{Dxh5} is very dangerous for Black. On the other hand after inserting the moves ...\texttt{Df5} and \texttt{Dg3}, the trick with \texttt{Dxc8} is no longer there, and White lacks active play.
16.\textit{\textbf{g4}}

This looks like it should be critical, but White's position goes entirely wrong after a beautiful forced sequence.

16.\textit{\textbf{g3} exd5} 17.\textit{\textbf{c3} b3} 18.\textit{\textbf{f4} xa1} 19.\textit{\textbf{exd6} f6} 20.\textit{\textbf{xa1} c6} White has some compensation for the exchange, but overall Black's chances are higher.

16.\textit{\textbf{h5}?! g6} 17.\textit{\textbf{g4} exd5} is evidently a disaster for White. The only further point I want to share is the following line: 18.\textit{\textbf{c3} b3?!} 19.\textit{\textbf{xd5}!!}

18...\textit{\textbf{d6}!}

An important move to include. Black will now play ...\textit{\textbf{b3}} and ...\textit{\textbf{xa1}} unhindered. Instead the immediate 18...\textit{\textbf{b3}} 19.\textit{\textbf{c3} xa1} 20.\textit{\textbf{xd5}!!} is about even.

19.\textit{\textbf{e5}}

19.\textit{\textbf{e3} e8} 20.\textit{\textbf{e5} b3!!} Black will walk away with an extra exchange.

19...\textit{\textbf{b3}} 20.\textit{\textbf{c3} xa1} 21.\textit{\textbf{g4} xe5!} Eliminating this knight is the simplest way to kill White's counterplay.

22.\textit{\textbf{xe5}}

22.dxe5 \textit{\textbf{d7}!!}

22...\textit{\textbf{e8} 23.\textbf{f4} c2!!}

Black should be able to make his material advantage count.

\textit{\textbf{E532})} 11.\textit{\textbf{d3} f5} 12.\textit{\textbf{xf6} xf6}

13.\textit{\textbf{e2}}

13.\textit{\textbf{h4}} would be desirable, but for the fact that 13...\textit{\textbf{b4}}! is irritating: 14.\textit{\textbf{d1} (14.\textbf{e2? c2})} 14...\textit{\textbf{xd3} 15.\textit{\textbf{xd3} e8} Black is better, as without the light-squared bishop the white attack is harmless.

13...\textit{\textbf{a5} 14.\textit{\textbf{c3} h5} 15.\textit{\textbf{f4}!!}}
This is the most dangerous move. Rogozenko only considered 15.a3 \( \text{Nd}5 \) in his book. After 16.\( \text{exd}5 \) (16.\( \text{exd}5 \) exd= 16...\( \text{eae}8 \) 17.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{xc}3 \) 18.\( \text{xc}3 \) d5 19.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{d}6= \) Black had good play in Sermek – Atalik, Beijing 1997.

15...\( \text{Nd}5 ?? \)

I like this tough move. 15...\( \text{g}4 \) is less complicated, but also less ambitious.

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

16...exd5!

Not 16...\( \text{exd}5 ?? \) 17.\( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{f}5 \) 18.\( \text{g}3+ \) as in Kos – Sale, Pula 1996. The black pawns are a bit too tender for my liking, and 18...d5 19.\( \text{b}5 \) is unpleasant, even if Rybka does not understand why...

17.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{eae}8 \) 18.\( \text{e}6 \)??N

I decided to investigate this natural move, which seemed like a sensible try to improve White’s play.

The more defensive 18.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 19.\( \text{g}3 \) eventually brought White a draw in Brandenburg – Giri, Groningen 2009. At this point I would suggest 19...\( \text{d}8 ?? \)N with interesting play.

18...\( \text{g}4 \) 19.\( \text{e}2 \)

19...\( \text{d}8 !\)

This activates the final piece, initializing an attack. Already at this point, after only logical moves for White, I cannot find equality for him!

20.\( \text{xd}6 !\)

White has no alternatives. 20.a3? for example loses to 20...\( \text{ex}e2 !\) 21.\( \text{xe}2 \) \( \text{xf}3 \) 22.\( \text{gx}f3 \) \( \text{b}6 !-+ \), with the point 23.\( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{f}6 \) and it is all over.

20...\( \text{f}6 \) 21.\( \text{c}5 !\)

Again the only move. If 21.\( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{a}5 \) 22.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{h}6 \) Black wins the exchange.

21...\( \text{h}6 \) 22.\( \text{f}4 \)

22.\( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 23.\( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{e}6 ? \) sees White hanging on to an extra pawn, but not to equality. Black is about to play ...\( \text{d}6 \).
Chapter 2 – A Classical Repertoire against 2.c3

22...\xa5!
Forcing a better rook ending. I wanted 22...\xf6 23.\xe6! (23.\xa3 \xc7 25.\xh3! \xh3 26.\xg5! (26.\xe5 \xh4 \xe5) 26...\xa4 27.\xh5 \xh5 28.\xb5 all signs of an advantage have disappeared.

23.\xb4 \xb4 24.\xb4 \xb4 25.\xd1!
Again the only move. Think of this: your opponent has to find all these odd bishop moves to avoid losing quickly, and then still ends up in a worse ending...

25...\xb8 26.\xe5 \xf3 27.\xf3 \xf3! 28.\xh5 \xh5 29.\xf3 \xc2 30.\xa1 \xa1 31.\xc1 \xh4
31...\xf7 32.\xc1! enables White to maintain the balance.

32.\xe8† \xf7 33.\xb8 \xb6 34.\xb7† \xb6 35.\xa7 \xd4†
White should be able to draw, but he will have to suffer for a while.

E54) 10.\xd1

This is a natural set-up. The traditional reason why it is not the main line is that it leaves the light-squared bishop short on retreat squares.

10...\xa5!
With this, the critical response, Black immediately challenges his opponent’s play.

11.\xb3!
This is the only idea worth playing for in this line. White wants to play \xa3 and get an ending where Black is left with the bad bishop.

Less critical is:
11.\xd5 exd5 12.\xc3 \xe6 13.\xf4
This continuation points in the same general direction, but the light-squared bishop is not truly bad here, and Black has plenty of play:

13...\xa6
Even the less ambitious 13...\xc6 14.exd6 \xd6 15.\xd6 \x6 16.\xe5 \bac8 is not an issue, Baklan – Moiseenko, Port Erin 2004.

14.\xb3
This is not the “program” move, but it is one of the more ambitious ones. I just want to show how Black can actually get some interesting play here, as achieved by the creative young Italian GM Vocaturo.

14...\xe8 15.\xe3 \xe6 16.\xg5 \xg5 17.\xg5 dxe5 18.dxe5 d4 19.\xf4 \x6 20.\xe4 \xa5 21.\xe2 d3 22.\xd3

Now the most accurate continuation would have been:
22...\xd8?! N
Black is already fighting for the advantage, for example:

23...\texttt{\textbackslash d}6?! \texttt{\textbackslash x}b3 24.\texttt{\textbackslash x}h6 \texttt{\textbackslash x}e5

It is important to look out for the bishop immediately. Here the main moves should be \texttt{E5411) 14.a3N} and \texttt{E5412) 14.exd6N}. I think Black can hold his own, but he needs to know what he is doing.

14.\texttt{\textbackslash a}3 misplaces the bishop. 14...d5! 15.\texttt{\textbackslash a}b1 (15.\texttt{\textbackslash b}2?!?) 15...a5 16.cxd5 \texttt{\textbackslash a}6 17.\texttt{\textbackslash e}4?! (17.\texttt{\textbackslash d}2 exd5 18.\texttt{\textbackslash e}1\texttt{\textbackslash e}) 17...exd5 18.\texttt{\textbackslash g}4 \texttt{\textbackslash c}8 19.\texttt{\textbackslash b}2 \texttt{\textbackslash c}4\texttt{\textbackslash t} Can – Mitrovic, Vung Tau 2008.

\texttt{E5411) 14.a3N}

This seems the most natural move, but it has not been tested in practice yet.

14...\texttt{\textbackslash c}6

Black's position looks to be under siege here, but actually he is okay. In the long term Black has excellent prospects thanks to the two bishops, so White's only way forward is a direct assault...

\texttt{15.exd6}

15.d5 looks dangerous but does not lead to anything: 15...exd5 16.\texttt{\textbackslash x}d5 \texttt{\textbackslash e}6 17.\texttt{\textbackslash d}1 \texttt{\textbackslash a}5 18.\texttt{\textbackslash d}5 dxe5 19.\texttt{\textbackslash b}2 \texttt{\textbackslash x}d5 20.\texttt{\textbackslash x}d5 \texttt{\textbackslash c}8 21.\texttt{\textbackslash x}e5 f6 22.\texttt{\textbackslash d}7 \texttt{\textbackslash f}7 23.\texttt{\textbackslash e}6 \texttt{\textbackslash c}6=

15.\texttt{\textbackslash f}4?! \texttt{\textbackslash b}7 16.d5
This is a bit more venomous, although Black should be fine after accurate defence.

\[ \text{...exd5 17.exd6 } \text{xd6 18.} \text{xd5} \]

The situation looks horrible for Black, but there is a good solution available:

\[ \text{...w6! 19.}\text{xd6 } \text{xd5 20.} \text{e1 } \text{xc8} \]

Without this attacking move White has nothing.

\[ \text{...h6!} \]

But his threats can all be parried.

\[ 22.\text{e4}! \]

22.\( \text{e4} \) leads to an equal, but still complex ending: 22...\( \text{d4} \) 23.\( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{xe4} \) 24.\( \text{e5} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 25.\( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{d8} \)...

\[ \text{...e8!} \]

This cool move neutralizes White’s initiative. There are three options, all of which lead to equality.

\[ 23.\text{e5} \]

White continues to plough forwards. Another option is:

\[ 16.\text{e4} \text{b7 17.} \text{d5 exd5 18.} \text{xd5} \]

This looks decisive, but Black has another cunning defence.
18...\text{c}e8! 19.\text{d}e6

After 19.\text{c}xd6 then 19...\text{e}7! is the most precise: 20.\text{d}f6+ \text{e}6 21.\text{c}xe8+ \text{x}e8
22.\text{x}f6 \text{gxf6}=

19...\text{h}6 20.\text{e}3

20...\text{e}xh2+! 21.\text{x}h2 \text{c}7+ 22.\text{g}1

22.\text{d}6 can transpose, but Black has an extra option in: 22...\text{e}5!? 23.\text{d}e4 \text{xd}5 24.\text{x}d5 \text{f}5 25.\text{c}h5 \text{c}4 26.\text{f}6+ \text{xf}6 27.\text{g}6+ \text{g}7
28.\text{x}g7+ \text{x}g7 29.\text{c}x4 \text{f}4 30.\text{d}2 \text{ad}8
31.\text{x}f4 \text{e}4 32.\text{c}7 \text{xd}5 33.\text{e}3 \text{d}2=

22...\text{x}g5

23.\text{d}6

23.\text{d}xg5 \text{f}6! 24.\text{f}3 \text{e}5± is a bad choice for White.

23...\text{a}6 24.\text{ad}1 \text{e}5 25.\text{xb}7 \text{xb}7
26.\text{xb}6 \text{xc}4 27.\text{xb}6 \text{xb}6 28.\text{e}xg5 \text{d}8=

With drawish equality.

16.\text{b}8 17.\text{d}5 \text{exd}5 18.\text{d}x5

18...\text{g}4!

This tactical solution equalizes.

Without it Black would be in trouble, for instance: 18...\text{bxc}5 19.\text{g}5 (19.\text{e}4 \text{e}6!=) 19...\text{e}8 20.\text{c}4 White has the initiative, as illustrated by the following line: 20...\text{e}5 21.\text{xe}5 \text{xe}5 22.\text{f}4 \text{e}6 23.\text{e}1

Black is already lost, for instance: 23...\text{a}6 24.\text{xc}5 \text{xf}4 25.\text{e}7+ \text{h}8 26.\text{g}6+ \text{hxg}6
27.\text{xf}8+ \text{h}7 28.\text{e}8 \text{g}5 29.\text{xf}7 Black has no choice but to enter a lost endgame.
29...\text{xf}6 30.\text{xf}6 \text{gxf}6 31.\text{g}3 \text{d}6 32.\text{d}1 \text{xa}3 33.\text{d}d8+-

19.\text{b}2

19...\text{cxb}6 \text{e}5 20.\text{b}1 \text{e}8 is equal.

19.\text{xb}6 leads to the same outcome after a few accurate moves: 19...\text{xh}2! 20.\text{h}1
Chapter 2 – A Classical Repertoire against 2.c3

Classical Repertoire against 2.c3

15...\(\text{b}5 \text{b}7\)

15...\(a\text{a}6\) does not make much sense, I fear. After 16.a3 \(\text{c}6\) 17.a4\text{e} the bishop is misplaced.

16...b1!

16.d5 looks good, but Black has 16...\(\text{c}5\)!

17.a3 (17.dxe6 \(\text{e}6\) is not a problem)

17...\(a\text{a}6\) 18.d6 \(\text{e}6\) 19.b2 \(\text{f}5\) with a complex middlegame ahead.

16...e7 17.a3 \(\text{c}6\) 18.d5 exd5 19.cxd5 \(\text{a}5\) 20.f4 \(\text{c}5\)

E5412) 14.exd6!N \(\text{x}\text{d}6\)

This looks to be the critical position. White is a bit more active at the moment, but Black has a sound structure and the two bishops going forward. Objectively White might be a bit better, but I would not be afraid of going into this struggle if I wanted to win with Black.

E542) 11...\(\text{d}7\)

This is the solid move, allowing White to execute his strategic plan in the hope that it will not prove too dangerous.

12...xd5

12.a3 \(\text{c}6\) 13.xd5 xd5 14.c3 xf3 15.xf3 c6 is equal according to Rogozenko.
68  Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

12...exd5 13.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{a}6\)

14.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{c}6\) 15.\(\text{a}c1\)

15.\(\text{b}5\) dxe5 16.\(\text{xe}7\) \(\text{xe}7\) 17.dxe5 a6
18.\(\text{bd}4\) \(\text{g}4\) 19.h3 \(\text{xd}4\) 20.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{fx}3\)
21.\(\text{xf}3\) \(\text{xe}5\) 22.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 23.\(\text{xd}5\)
\(\text{ad}8\) 24.\(\text{ad}1\) \(\text{xd}5\) 25.\(\text{xd}5\) f6 soon led to a
draw in Tkachiev - Moiseenko, Villarrobledo (rapid) 2009.

15...\(\text{c}8\)
15 ... \(\text{e}8\) 16.\(\text{d}3\) dxe5 17.\(\text{xe}7\) \(\text{xe}7\)
18.\(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{ac}8\) 19.\(\text{xe}3\) \(\text{xe}5\) 20.dxe5 \(\text{ad}8\)
Lakatos - Loinjak, e-mail 2005. The position
is rather interesting. If White could put his
knight on d4 and queen on d2, he could claim
a solid edge, but arranging this is not so easy.
Black eventually won the game, but at this
stage the position is dynamically balanced.

16.h3
16.b5 is met by 16...dxe5 17.\(\text{xe}7\) \(\text{xe}7\)
and now either 18.\(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{fe}8\) or 18.dxe5 \(\text{g}4\)
offer Black full equality.

16...\(\text{a}6\) 17.\(\text{d}3\)
This was Pavasovic's improvement over
the following game: 17.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{e}8\) 18.\(\text{d}3\) h6
(18...f6?? is the kind of absurd-looking move
the computer loves. I am confused, which
might be a good thing. Black's ideas include
...\(\text{f}7\)-g6, amongst others.) 19.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{c}7\)

20.\(\text{e}1\) dxe5 21.\(\text{xe}7\) \(\text{xe}7\) 22.dxe5 \(\text{c}8!\)
White is already struggling to keep the balance
although he eventually managed to do so,
20.$e2!!N
This would give White an edge if Black played 20...f6?! as recommended by all the engines. Eventually you would have a knight on d4 against a bishop dying to find a good square. It may not be a disaster, but if you want that kind of position, you are welcome to take the French Defence.

20...$e1 is toothless: 20...d4 21.$e2 $d5 22.$fxd4 $xe5 23.$f5 $xf5 24.$xf5 $e6! 25.$fg3 $d7 Andriuschenko - 02zmen, e-mail 2005.

20...$c8!
This accurate move puts immediate pressure on $e5 and thus equalizes.

Conclusion
The main line of the Alapin Variation with 2.c3 $f6 offers a lot of interesting positions. It is in the nature of the Alapin that White can look for a simple, sometimes drawish, position early in the game. But in my experience, Black gets active play in most lines. In every one of my own games in this opening, no matter how poorly I played on the day, I stood better with the black pieces at some stage. Objectively, this is of course not what is on offer here, but I cannot believe that Black's position is any worse at all...
Chapter 3

Tiger Hillarp Persson

Beating 2.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{c6}\) 3.\(\text{b}5\) with 3...\(d6\)

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{c6}\) 3.\(\text{b}5\)

3...\(d6\)

Game 1 – 4.d4 cxd4 5.\(\text{W}xd4\) \(\text{d}7\) 6.\(\text{x}c6\) \(\text{xc6}\) 7.\(\text{c}3\) 71
Game 2 – 4.d4 cxd4 5.\(\text{W}xd4\) \(\text{d}7\) 6.\(\text{x}c6\) \(\text{xc6}\) 7.\(\text{c}4\) 74
Game 3 – 4.\(\text{x}c6\)† bxc6 5.0–0 \(\text{g}4\) 6.d3 78
Game 4 – 4.\(\text{x}c6\)† bxc6 5.0–0 \(\text{g}4\) 6.h3 80
Game 5 – 4.0–0 \(\text{d}7\) 5.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{f}6\) 6.c3 a6 7.\(\text{x}f1\) \(\text{g}4\) 8.d3 83
Game 6 – 4.0–0 \(\text{d}7\) 5.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{f}6\) 6.c3 a6 7.\(\text{x}f1\) \(\text{g}4\) 8.d4? 88
Game 7 – 4.0–0 \(\text{d}7\) 5.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{f}6\) 6.c3 a6 7.\(\text{x}c6\)? 93
Game 8 – 4.0–0 \(\text{d}7\) 5.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{f}6\) 6.c3 a6 7.a4 98
1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.b5

Compared with 2...d6 3.b5\$, this is a significantly more aggressive move. You do not have to worry about White wanting a draw here.

### Game 1

Kamsky – Mohota

Philadelphia 2005

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.b5 d6 4.d4 cxd4 5.exd4 d7

5...f6 is an interesting alternative:

a) 6.c4 d7 7...xc6 dxc6 transposes to the note to Black’s 7th move in Game 2. You should only choose 5...f6 if you are happy to forgo the early lunge by the f-pawn that is the main line of that game.

b) 6.c3 e5 7.d3 h6 followed by ...e7 and ...a6 seems fine for Black.

c) 6.e5 a5\$, 7.c3 wxb5 8.xb5 dxd4 9.xd4 dxe5 10.c7f w7 11.xa8 exd4 12.xf4 d6 13.0-0-0 d7 14.xd4 e5 15.c4+ c5 This is rather unclear, although I suspect that Black is a bit better.

6...xc6 dxc6 7.c3

White can dissuade Black from ...f6 with 7.g5, but Black gets the better game with 7.e5! 8.e3 f6! 9.h4 w6 (9.e7\$, intending ...d5, looks even stronger) 10.xb6 axb6 11.c3 b5 12.d2 b4 13.d1 e7 14.f3 d5 Mastrovasilis – Atakisi, Athens 2008.

7.c4 is seen in the next game.
7...h6!?  
Preparing ...e5 and ...d6. With this move we start treading less known territory. In 80% of games Black plays 7...d6 8.d5 e6, which leads to a very complex tabiya that would take another chapter to explain.

It is a bit risky to play a move like 7...h6, since there is only a handful games played between strong opponents. But I believe it is always better to head for the new ground; to be, if not an explorer, then at least a colonist of the unknown.

8.e3  
With this move, White plans 0-0-0 followed by d3-h4-f5. There are a couple of alternatives:

8.d3?! This is played with the intention of following up with d3-d2-c4-e3-(f5). 8...e5 9.d2 d6 10.c4 (10.0-0 leads to a position discussed below after 8.0-0)

Black now has a choice:

a) He can force the game into a rather drawish endgame with:

10.dxe4 11.dxe4 d5 12.g3?!

After 12.dxe4 dxe4 13.xd8+ xd8 14.xc6 bxc6 15.e3 d7 16.e2 d6 a draw seems likely.

12...dxc4

12...dxe4 13.dxe5+ d8 14.d6+ d7 15.e5+ e6 16.f7+ e7 17.f4+ Tsitlin.

13.dxe5+ e7 14.d6+ d7 15.xc4 xg2! 16.g1

And now instead of blundering with 16...e8? 17.f4, as in Rozentalis – Borge, Copenhagen 1996, Black could have gained the upper hand with:

16...d5!

b) 10...e7  
This is critical, since Black may not be able to avoid this type of position if White plays 0-0 before going c4.

11.d3 0-0

11...d7?! 12.f5 c5 13.d4 d8, followed by ...g6, ...g7 and ...f5 is unclear.

12.0-0

12.d5 d7 13.g4 xf5 14.gxf5 b6 15.e3 xb2 leads to a long sharp line that ends in approximate equality, but I am not totally convinced by this line. I would have more
Chapter 3 – Beating 2.\( \text{d}f3 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 3.\( \text{b}5 \) with 3...\( \text{d}6 \)

It seems that White can claim a slight advantage with:

16.a3

The standard operation in this kind of structure where Black has moved the pawn to b4 prematurely.

16...\( \text{b}3 \) 17.\( \text{a}3 \)

Black will suffer.

8...e5 9.\( \text{c}4 \)!

After 9.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 10.0–0 0–7 11.\( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{a}5 \) 12.\( \text{d}2 \) 0–0 followed by ...\( \text{d}5 \) (prepared, if necessary, with ...\( \text{f}d8 \)), Black is doing very well.

9.\( \text{f}6 \) 10.0–0–0

Now we can see the main point behind 9.\( \text{c}4 \); White is threatening to take on e5, which forces Black to move the queen. This in turn makes it easier for White to carry out the \( \text{f}3 \)–h4–f5 manoeuvre, since the knight will not be exposed to tactics involving ...\( \text{d}x e4 \) followed by ...\( \text{xb}4 \).

10...\( \text{c}8 \)

It is quite possible that 10...\( \text{a}5 \)?? is a stronger move here. Looshnikov - Bylino, St Petersburg 2002, continued: 11.\( \text{d}2 \) d5 12.\( \text{c}x d5 \) \( \text{c}x d5 \) 13.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 14.\( \text{c}x b4 \) \( \text{b}x c4 \) 15.a3 \( \text{c}a6 \) 16.\( \text{c}3 \) b6 With approximately equal chances. It seems a bit shaky for Black though, after something like 16.\( \text{f}4 \)!!.

I do not like releasing the tension so early, and would suggest: 11...\( \text{e}7 \)! 12.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{d}8 \)

This is paradoxical, but good; Black will use the knights on c3 and b3 to accelerate the pawns down the a- and b-files. 13.\( \text{f}3 \) 0–0 14.\( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{e}8 \) 15.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{c}7 \) (15...\( \text{a}5 \)!!) 16.g5 hxg5 17.\( \text{a}x g5 \) d5! A neat idea. 18.\( \text{h}x f6 \) \( \text{d}x e4 \) 19.\( \text{c}x e4 \) \( \text{x} e4 \) 20.\( \text{b}x e4 \) \( \text{x} f6 \) With some advantage for Black.

11.\( \text{d}3 \)

Black was threatening to play ...\( \text{x} e4 \).

This tricky move prepares to meet 11.\( \text{c}4 \) with 11...\( \text{x} e4 \), while other moves can be met by ...\( \text{c}d8 \), intending ...\( \text{d}5 \)!

11...\( \text{e}4 \)

The knight again heads to e3, but this time without giving Black the opportunity to take on e4.

11...\( \text{b}5 \)??

11...0–0! 12.\( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{e}8 \) might be safer, transposing to Zvijaginsev - Navara above.

12.\( \text{e}3 \) b4 13.\( \text{c}d5 \) \( \text{x} d5 \) 14.\( \text{x} d5 \) \( \text{x} d5 \) 15.\( \text{x} d5 \) 0–0

This has been played in several games, including Zelcic - Tiviakov, Ohrid 2001.
11...\textit{\&}e7!

11...a6 12.\textit{\&}h4 b5 (12...g6?! 13.\textit{\&}f4 \textit{\&}c7 is an improvement, but it needs testing) 13.\textit{\&}f4 b4 14.\textit{\&}xe5 dxe5 15.\textit{\&}d5 \textit{\&}b5 16.\textit{\&}d2 White had a strong initiative in Hou Yifan – Arun Prasad, Gaziantep 2008.

12.\textit{\&}h4 g6 13.\textit{\&}f4

This is very principled and possibly best, although it does not promise White any advantage. A more careful approach would be 13.h3, when Black has to come up with a plan. 13...a6 is a nice waiting move, since 14.\textit{\&}f4 e6 doesn't work out well for White. Better is 14.\textit{\&}b1 b5 15.\textit{\&}f4 (15.a3?!?) 15...\textit{\&}h5 16.\textit{\&}f3 exf4 17.\textit{\&}d2 0–0 18.\textit{\&}d4 \textit{\&}b7 with a complicated position where it is difficult to say who is better. Instinctively, I would not mind playing the black side.

13...\textit{\&}g4?!

Black goes astray, but that g2-pawn smelled just too yummy. Sadly, there is only one road for Black after this and it goes down, down, down.

Instead 13...\textit{\&}h5! is much stronger.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{cccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 \\
1 & & & & & & & \\
2 & & & & & & & \\
3 & & & & & & & \\
4 & & & & & & & \\
5 & & & & & & & \\
6 & & & & & & & \\
7 & & & & & & & \\
8 & & & & & & & \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Black hits the f4-pawn and the knight on h4, forcing White to play energetically in order to keep the balance. Sacrificing a piece with 14.\textit{\&}xe5 \textit{\&}xh4 15.\textit{\&}xh4 \textit{\&}e6 16.\textit{\&}h1 \textit{\&}g5 17.\textit{\&}d5 \textit{\&}xe3† 18.\textit{\&}xe3 \textit{\&}xd5 19.\textit{\&}xd5 0–0 does not work, and 14.\textit{\&}f3 \textit{\&}xf4 15.\textit{\&}xf4 exf4 16.\textit{\&}d5 \textit{\&}xd5 17.exd5 0–0 (17...\textit{\&}c5 18.\textit{\&}h1!) 18.\textit{\&}e4 \textit{\&}e8 19.\textit{\&}xf4 \textit{\&}c5 is fine for Black. After 20.\textit{\&}xh6 \textit{\&}f6 21.\textit{\&}he1 \textit{\&}xb2† the game ends in a draw.

14.\textit{\&}f3 \textit{\&}xg2

No better is 14...exf4 15.h3 \textit{\&}xg2 16.\textit{\&}d4, when \textit{\&}dgl will make Black unhappy on the next move. There is not much to be said about the rest of the game; Kamsky never takes his eyes off the ball.

15.\textit{\&}xe5! \textit{\&}xf3 16.\textit{\&}h1 \textit{\&}xf1 17.\textit{\&}xf1 dxe5 18.\textit{\&}d5 \textit{\&}xd5 19.exd5 0–0 20.d6 \textit{\&}d8 21.\textit{\&}xh6 \textit{\&}e8 22.\textit{\&}b5 \textit{\&}b8 23.\textit{\&}e3 a6 24.\textit{\&}b3 b5

So far the game seems to make sense, but the rest is flawed in some way. I include the final moves for the reader as an exercise in fantasy.

25.d7 \textit{\&}e6 26.\textit{\&}c5 \textit{\&}e8 27.\textit{\&}b1 \textit{\&}xd7

I doubt that this is what really happened, although the result seems logical (in the position a few moves ago).

1–0

\begin{center}
\textbf{Game 2}
\end{center}

\textbf{Ni Hua – Bluvshtein}

Edmonton 2009

1.e4 c5 2.\textit{\&}f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\textit{\&}xd4 \textit{\&}c6 5.\textit{\&}b5 \textit{\&}d7 6.\textit{\&}xc6 \textit{\&}xc6 7.c4

White has a certain scenario in mind; a few moves into the future the c- and e-pawn will make it difficult for Black to do anything in the centre. Nothing to worry about really, but why let White have his way?

7...\textit{\&}f5?!

This idea has stood the test of time, and seems sound enough to be my recommendation. The solid alternative is:
Chapter 3 – Beating 2.\textit{d}f3 3.c6 3.\textit{b}b5 with 3...d6

Here I would urge you to play like Sutovsky did in the rapid playoffs at the latest European Championship:

\textbf{9.0-0} \textit{g}7 10.\textit{d}d3 0-0 11.\textit{d}d4 \textit{e}c8 12.\textit{b}3 \textit{a}6

13.\textit{b}b2 \textit{w}a5 14.\textit{e}f1d1

This was Socko's improvement over: 14.\textit{w}f1 e6 15.\textit{d}xc6?! \textit{w}xc6 16.\textit{e}ad1 \textit{d}d7 17.\textit{d}f2

\textbf{b}5! 18.\textit{c}c1 \textit{bxc}4 19.\textit{bxc}4 \textit{d}e5 Black was winning in Socko – Sutovsky, Rijeka (3) 2010.

14.\textit{e}c2 \textit{g}7 18.\textit{b}4 \textit{w}h5?! 19.h3 \textit{d}d7 20.\textit{d}xc6

\textit{c}c6 21.\textit{f}4

White eventually managed to win this unclear position in Socko – Sutovsky, Rijeka (5) 2010. Here my silicon friend recommends:

11...\textit{g}5!

With some initiative for Black.

\begin{center}
\begin{chessboard}
\forslash
1. \texttt{f}3 2. d4 3. c4 e6 4. c5 \textit{c}c6 5. d5 \textit{e}5 6. dxe6 fxe6 7. \textit{e}4 \textit{d}d5

\textbf{8.\textit{e}f5}

White has a sensible option in:

9.\textit{d}c3 \textit{f}xe4 9.\textit{g}5

9.\textit{d}xe4?! \textit{f}6! 10.\textit{d}xf6\textit{++}! (10.\textit{d}c3\textit{??}) 10...\textit{g}xf6 11.\textit{g}g4 \textit{d}d7 12.\textit{h}5\textit{+} \textit{d}d8 13.0-0

\textit{g}g8 14.\textit{b}3 \textit{w}g4 15.\textit{x}g4 \textit{x}g4\textit{++} Heinemann – Gurman, Germany 1992.

10...\textit{e}5 10.\textit{w}e3 \textit{f}6 11.0-0

11.\textit{d}gxe4? \textit{d}xe4 12.\textit{d}xe4 \textit{w}h4\textit{++} Bruzon – A. Rodriguez, Cuba (ch) 1997.

\textbf{11.\textit{e}e7!}

This is simple and good.

11...\textit{d}d7?! gives White the opportunity to seize the initiative with 12.\textit{b}4\textit{??} as was played in Chandler – Borriss, Bundesliga 1997.

11...\textit{e}c8?! 12.\textit{d}xe4 \textit{d}xe4 13.\textit{d}xe4 \textit{d}d4 14.\textit{x}f6\textit{+} \textit{g}xf6 15.\textit{d}f3 \textit{f}f7 16.\textit{d}d1 \textit{f}5

17.\textit{d}d2 was quite unclear in Dzhumaev – Gallego Jimenez, Ubeda 2000.

12.\textit{d}xe4

12.\textit{d}b4 \textit{b}b6!

12...\textit{d}xe4 13.\textit{d}xe4 0-0 14.\textit{b}3 \textit{w}e8

14...\textit{d}5! is slightly better for Black.

15.\textit{a}a3 \textit{g}g6 16.\textit{f}3 \textit{f}4 17.\textit{a}d1 \textit{f}f8 18.\textit{g}3

\end{chessboard}
\end{center}

And now rather than 18...\textit{b}6?! as in Dzhumaev – Laxman, Chennai 2004, I suggest:

18...\textit{h}5!

With active play for Black.

8...\textit{w}a5\textit{+} 9.\textit{bd}2

This is the most testing move. White's plan is to castle and push the b-pawn until it makes contact with the bishop on c6.

The older main line is not particularly dangerous for Black:

9.\textit{c}c3 \textit{w}xf5 10.\textit{d}d5

Also possible is: 10.0-0 \textit{e}5! (10...\textit{f}f6 11.\textit{e}1 \textit{e}5? 12.\textit{d}xe5 is awkward) 11.\textit{e}1 \textit{xf}3
12...gxf3 Qxf6 13.Qb5 (13.f4 Qg4+ 14.Qh1 Qh4!? is an interesting line that my silicon side-kick advocates. After 15.Qd2 0-0-0 it is messy.) 13...Qf7 14.Qxd6+ Qxd6 15.Qxd6 Qhe8 White should take a draw if it can be gotten.

10...e5!

10...Qxd5 11.cxd5 Qf6 12.Qg5 Qxd5 13.0-0 h6 14.Qd2 led to an initiative for White in Bromann – Kovalyov, Leros 2010.

11.Qd1 Qe8 12.0-0 Qf6 13.Qe1 Qxd5 14.Qd4?! Qh5 15.Qxh5+ Qxh5 16.cxd5 Qxd7

Due to the weak d5-pawn, Black was clearly better in Damjanovic – Groszpeter, Prague 1986.

9...Qxf5

9...Qxf5?! 10.b4! Qxf5 11.Qxf5 Qf6 12.0-0 e5 13.Qe3 (or 13.Qd1 Qe7 14.Qg5) 13...Qe7 14.Qb2 was more comfortable for White in Ni Hua–Nepomniachtchi, Sochi 2009.

10.0–0 e5

When I was analysing this position I found game after game where Black put his knight on f6 and White continued by undermining the e5-pawn with c4-c5. Not that this led to catastrophe, but I still felt a bit bereft of my central pawn phalanx. So, was there no way to over-protect the e-pawn so that c4-c5 can be met with ...d6-d5? What if I put my knight on g6?

11.Qe7?!

If you believe in what the computers say, then the downside of this move is that it allows White the luxury of a knight on e4 – which is something a human might agree with.

12.Qe1!

After 12.b3 there is another route the knight can take: 12...Qg6! 13.Qb2 Qf5 14.Qe2 Qe7 Black is very active.

12...Qg6? 13.Qg6 13.b4!

13.Qd4

13.b4 Qe7 14.b5 Qxf3 15.Qxf3 Qxf3 16.Qxf3 Qf7 is double-edged because of the weak pawn on c4, and moreover ... a6 may come in handy at some stage.

13...Qd7 13...Qf7?!

14.b3

14.f4 is simply met by 14...Qe7.

14...Qe7 15.Qxc6 bxc6 16.Qb2 0–0
Chapter 3 – Beating 2.\ De3 \ Dc6 3.\ Db5 with 3...d6

With a complex game, I give this variation for those who like to venture into the unknown...

12.c5
12.\ De1 \ Df6 13.\ Dd4 \ Dd7 14.\ Dxc6 \ Dxc6
15.\ Dc2 0-0 16.\ Df3 \ Dd8 17.\ Db3 \ Dd6 18.\ De5 \ De5 19.\ Wxe5 \ b5 was unclear in Zhang Zhong – Paragua, Ho Chi Minh City 2009. The digital mob will tell you that White is better here, but I doubt it.

12...0-0-0! 13.\ Dxd6
After 13.\ Dc4 \ Wxf4 14.cxd6 Black can avoid the continuation from the game with:
14...\ Wg2! 15.\ Wxa7! \ Dxd6 16.\ Db6+ \ Dc7
17.\ Dxe2 Here Black has nothing better than taking the perpetual, since after 17...\ Wg4+ 18.\ Dh1 \ Df3+ 19.\ Dg1 \ Dc7 20.\ Dxe5 \ Dc6
21.\ Wac1 Black has no time to strengthen his position, due to the threat \ Dxe5\.

13...\ Dxd6

14.\ Dc4
The critical option here is:
14.\ Wxa7 \ Dc7 15.\ De1
White may also choose:
a) 15.\ Dc4 \ Wxf3 16.\ gxf3 \ Wxf3 Black has at least a draw.
b) 15.\ Wa5+ \ Dc7 16.\ Wc5+ \ Dd6 Black will develop a dangerous initiative.

15...\ Wf8
Targeting f2.
16.\ Dc4
Other moves are met by ...
16...\ Wxf4 17.\ gxf4 \ Dxf4 18.\ b6\ Dc7 19.\ Dc6 \ De6 20.\ Wac1 \ Wg4+
Again, the game ends in perpetual check.

14...\ Wxf4 15.\ Wxf4!!
This is White's last chance to play 15.gxf4 and force Black to cash in the perpetual after:
15...\ Dc7 16.\ Wxa7 \ Wxf4

15...\ Wxf4 16.\ gxf4 \ Dc7

17.\ Dc3?! The bishop does not attack the e-pawn from here, it should go to b2, c3, or g3. The endgame after 17.\ Dg5+ \ Df6 18.\ Wc1 \ Df8 19.\ Dc2 \ Bhe8 is almost equal since ...

17...\ Wb8
Even stronger is 17...b6! 18.\ Wac1 \ Db7, when Black is slightly better due to his more active king and his superior pawn structure.

18.\ Wd1
\hfPath=0.5
The position is about equal, but after 18...\ Df6 I would rather be Black.
1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.b5 d6 4.axc6 bxc6 5.0-0 e6 6.d3

Sergei Tiviakov is the 'Star' of this variation and I advise you to always keep an eye on what he is up to. One example is the following game:

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.b5 d6 4.axc6 bxc6 5.0-0 e6 6.d3 e5

Tiviakov avoids putting the pawn on e5 since that would give White something to play against with either d4 or f4; instead he keeps a low profile and adopts a Hippopotamus attitude that I cannot help but applaud!

10...e6!? Also possible, albeit less flexible is:
6...e5 7.d3 d6 8.b2 c5 9.h3

Giving the bishop a square on f7.
11.Be1 Be6 12.d2 d5 13.f4 d5?! 14.g3
14.c4 0-0 15.g4 h8 17.a4
d4+
14...0-0

It is interesting to see how difficult it is for White to play against this kind of central structure; neither f5 nor e5 will improve the white position, and if White does nothing Black can combine play on the queenside (...a7-a5-a4) with slowly building on the kingside.

15.g4 h5

I guess Black is planning on playing ...d4 followed by ...f5, but I'm not certain...

16.exd5! This ruins the only long term advantages White has in the position - closed position, doubled pawns on the c-file - so it is either a good move (if White has a strong follow-up) or a bad one.

16...cxd5 17.Bb1 Bb6 18.Bh6+ Bh8 19.Bh4?


6...e6!? Also possible, albeit less flexible is:
6...e5 7.Bd2 Be6 8.h3

8.Bc4 This plan of bringing the knight to e3 was used by Shirov to beat Vallejo Pons in Monte Carlo (rapid) 2005, and it has been considered one of White's most dangerous set-ups. Still, it seems to me that Black is doing okay after: 8...Be6 9.0-0 e6 8...Be6 9.Be1 Be6 10.0-0 d7 11.Bg3 Bg6 12.c3 0-0 13.d4 cd5
13...Bf5 14.Bxe5 Bxe5 15.Bxe5 dx5 16.Ba4 is unpleasant for Black.
14.cxd5

Although White has scored appallingly from this position, I believe he is slightly, but clearly better. Depending on circumstances, he can continue with either 15.Bb3 or 15.dxe5 Bxe5 16.Bxe5 dx5 17.Bc3.


In Liverpool in 2008 I tried to be principled and launch the g-pawn against the master of this line - it didn't end well:
Chapter 3 – Beating 2.\(\text{Qf3} \text{c6} 3.\text{b5} \text{with} 3...d6\) 79

11.g4 \(\text{Ag6} \text{12.Qg3 f6} \text{13.Qh4 A.f7} \text{14.f4 e5} \text{15.Qh5} \text{exf4} \text{16.Axf4 0-0} \text{17.Qf5 Qe5} \text{and Black is a bit better due to his less naked king.} \text{15...Qf8!} \)

Black is ready to kick the knight back to where it came from.

16.fxe5 fxe5 17.Qf3?! 18.Qh6 19.Qe3 Ag7 20.Ad2 Qb6 21.b3 0-0 22.Bf1 Bd8++) was my last chance for a decent position. Now I lose my coordination, never to find it again.

17...\(\text{g6} \text{18.Qh6} \text{Ae6} \text{19.Qf1} \text{We7} 20.Qg2 Ag7 \text{21.Qe3?!} \text{21.Qe2?!} \text{22.b3? Bb8 23.Qd1 Bf4+} \text{Hillarp Persson – Tiviakov, Liverpool 2008.} \)

Another weak idea is: 11.c3?! \(\text{Qe5} \text{12.g4} \text{Qxf3} \text{13.Qxh6} \text{Qg6} \text{14.Qg3 0-0 15.Qf5 Af6} \text{Black has no problems.} \text{11...Qg6 12.b3} \)

12...\(\text{Qf4} 0-0 \text{13.e2 f6} \text{14.Qad1} \text{A.f7} 15.Qc1 \text{e8} \text{16.Qh2} \text{Af8} 17.f4 e5 \text{was Mamedov – Radjabov, Baku (1) 2005. I believe Tiviakov would have tried something like 17...d5. And me? I would have gone for the ambitious 17...w.a5.} \)

In the analogous position in the note to Black's 6th move above, White's plan was c3 and d4, but with the black pawn still on e6, that is not a good idea: 12.c3 0-0 13.d4?! d5! The sum of Black's advantages will increase as he will end up with an extra centre pawn to be added to the bishop pair.

12...0-0 13.Qb2 Qe8 13...e5?! 14.c3 Af6 15.d4 Qe8 with a balanced game. Instead of 15.d4, I think 15.Qf5 followed by g2-g4 would have left the bishop on f6 looking rather stupid.

14.Qh2 Qh4?! 14...a5?! so that after 15.a4 White will have a weak b3-pawn if he later plays c2-c4. A possible continuation is: 15.d5 16.c4 \(16.Qh5 e5! \text{17.Qg3 c4! 18.dxc4 dxc4 19.bxc4} \text{Qb4} 20.e3 Qf8 followed by ...Qc5 gives Black excellent chances) 16...\(\text{d6} 17.e5 \text{Qc7} 18.Qf3 \text{Bb8} 19.Qa3 Bc6! \text{Black intends ...Bb6 with a clear advantage.} \text{The downside to pushing the a-pawn too early is that it might become a liability in the endgame, but I think it is well worth taking that risk.} \)

15.Qe2 e5 15...\(\text{e5} \text{Since White is quite far away from implementing c3 and d4, Black takes the first step in the BIG PLAN; to play ...e5 and reroute the knight from d7 to e6.} \)
16...f6 17.d4 e5 18.c3!

This is the only decent plan White has in this position.

18...e6 19.d4 f6

I could be wrong, but I prefer Black here – it is difficult to see how White will improve the central situation.

Also possible is: 19...exd4 20.cxd4 f5 22.d5 e5 23.exd5 Bb8. This seems pretty unclear.

20.b4 d5

21.b5 cxb5

Wang Yue has guided his minor pieces towards their optimal squares, now he is ready to launch back!

22.e3 exd4

22...d5 is much stronger, but getting the bishop pair against a pair of knights was alluring.


This is the only decent plan White has in this position.

25...Bxb5! 26.Bxd1 Bxb4 27.Bg5 d5 28.exd5 cxd5 29.Bac1 Although Black should be a bit better, White’s set-up looks solid.

26.Bed1 Bb5!!

There was no reason to avoid the exchange of queens. 26...Bxd4 27.Bxd4 a5! is very strong, White is unable to get out of trouble by putting pressure on Black’s weakest point: 28.0-0 a4 29.Bb1 axb3 30.axb3 g6! 31.Bxd6 Red8 32.Bbd1 Bxb3 33.Bxd2 Ra1† 34.Bh2 c5 35.Bxd3 Ba2†

27.Bac1 a5 28.Bg5 Bb8!! 29.Bc3

Here White even had some winning chances with: 29...c5! Bxe4 (29...c5 30.Bc4) 30.d4 Bg5 31.Bxc6 The a-pawn is weak and Black’s bishops are very passive compared to the knights. Instead the game takes a drawish turn.


I have been among the followers of this line for White, but I have turned my attention elsewhere and do not intend to return. Black seems to be doing fine, and missed an excellent chance on move 22 of this game.

---

**Game 4**

**Rublevsky – Teterev**

Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010

1.e4 c5 2.Bf3 d6 3.d4 Bc6 4.Bxc6† bxc6 5.0–0

Considering that Black always plays ...Bg4 on the next move, it is natural to wonder what happens if White decides to put an end to such nonsense:

5.h3

Indeed, the bishop cannot go to g4 anymore, but White has lost time, which makes
two otherwise suspect ideas become very attractive for Black.

5...e5 6.0-0
6.d3 might be safer, but Black is fine after:
6...c7 7...bd2 f5
6...g5!
6...f5!? also seems good, but the lunge with the g-pawn is critical since it is difficult for White to deal with the threat of ...h5 and ...

d4.

7.d3
The alternatives do not solve White's problems either:

a) 7.d4 g4! 8.hxg4 cxd4 is very pleasant for Black.
b) 7.c2 h5 8.d3 g4 is no good for White.
c) 7.b4 h5 8.bxc5 g4 9.c2 hxg3 10.c2 dxc5 was good for Black in A. Wagner – Strupunsky, Pardubice 1994, although the more energetic 10...f6 seems even better.
7...g4 8.hxg4 hxg4 9...bd2 c7 10...e1 g8 11...h4 c6 12...xg6 hxg6 13.f3 ...h3 14.e2

This was Spasov – Rogers, Groningen 1989, and now Black should play:
16...d7 17...h6 h6
With ...g8(t) coming next, Black has a winning attack.

5...g4 6.h3

When I was fooling around with my Binary Helper, I stumbled across an interesting line:
6.c3! f6 7...e1 e6 8.d4 This is seldom a good idea with so many weak light squares around.
8...cxd4 9...xd4 ...e7 10.h3 ...h5 11...g5 h6 12...h4 d5 13...a4 0-0 14...e5 ...xe4! This is where the fun begins. 15...xc6 ...xh4 16...xd8 ...xf2+ 17...f1 ...e1 18...xe1 ...xd8 Although Binary Helper seems confused, I am ready to go all-in on Black.

6...h5 7.e5 dxe5 8.g4 e4 9...xe4 exf3 10...c3!
White should first stop Black playing ...d5, before taking back the f3-pawn. After
10...xf3 ...d5 a draw was agreed in Komiliakov – Konовалов, Moscow 2006. It seems to me that Black is doing well here: 11...g2 ...f6 12.c3 ...xf3+ 13...xf3 ...h5 14.d3 e6
15...e4 (15...c3 ...f6 16...e4 ...d5! with the initiative for Black) 15...d8 16.a3 ...d5 17.b4
If I would rather not be playing the white side.

10...f6 11...xf3

I find it hard to believe that Black is worse here, but GMs come back to this position again and again, trying for a little something. There is still no win in sight for White though.

11...d5
This move is the most reliable, but the alternatives are also interesting:

11...\textcolor{blue}{d}d7 12.d3 g6
Black's idea is that White is forced to play:
13.h6
There are now two interesting ways for Black to continue, but both seem rather speculative.
13...\textcolor{red}{d}d5
This seems stronger than: 13...g5 14.ee1 0-0-0 15.ee4 (15.ee5! looks like an improvement for White) 15...e8 16.e6 f5 17.e4 fxe3 18.xe3 e6 19.e5 dxe5 With some initiative for Black, Nikolenko - Inarkiev, Moscow 2009.
14.ee4
Consistent, but to some extent playing into Black's hands. White could consider:
14..dxe5! 15..dxe5
14...\textcolor{blue}{f}f5 15.xax5 gxf5 16.e4 e5??
This is too ambitious. Better was 16...e6 17.e3! (17.d4 e3!) 17...e8 18.eh1 e6 19.d2 exd2 20.exd1 e6 21.axb4 ebxb4 22.exb6 with an unclear endgame, where Black will have the better chances if White is not able to get in a few punches on the queenside.
17.e6 0-0 18.ee1!!
As Dobrov points out, White could have got the better chances by playing 18..d2 f4 19..e1 intending d3-d4.
18..e8

11...e8 makes sense if it is a good idea to keep the knight on f6, which it might well be: 12.ee1 (12..h1 g6!) 12...e6 13.d3 ee7 14..f1 0-0 15.e6 g6 16.e5 d7 17.e5 e8 18..a1 f6 19.exf6 xf6 20.e4 dxe5 21.xe4 (White can still fight for equality with 21.dxe4 e6 5 22..h2 e8 23..d7 eb8 24..e7, although Black retains some initiative after 24..cd8 due to the weak white king) 21..g5+ 22..h2 e6 Black went on to win in Al Tamimi, - Ergoddu, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010. This game highlights the fact that White might live to regret the 'Mess' that is his pawn structure; especially with queens on the board.

12.d3 e6 13..d2 ee7 14.eh1
This idea – which is rather dangerous for Black – is not on the menu if Black plays 11..e8, since with the knight on f6, Black can play ...g6 and force White to close the kingside.

14...0-0 15.e1 f5! 16.ee1 e7 17.e2 ef7!

Defending the e-pawn and stepping out of a possible bind on the g-file! Rublevsky has developed some pressure here, but it's difficult to improve the white position further, and as pieces start being exchanged, White's king will start to feel a cold draught...

18.e2 e8
After 18..e8 19..d4 Black has to watch out for: 19...e6? (19...e8) 20.xc5 e5 21..e5! Since Black will have to play ...e8 anyway, it's best to get it over with straight away.
19.b3 a8e 20.a4 b6
This is not really necessary, but if your aim is keeping the position balanced, it is the most effective. Another possibility is 20...d6 intending 21.h6 g6 22.c4 d6 23.e3 e5 with an unclear position.

21.b2 a6 22.c4 xxc4 23.bxc4 e5 24.g5

24...e4! 25.xd2 cxd3 26.xe8 xxe8 27.xf6 xxf6 28.g5 e6 29.cxd3 xd3

This might look too carefree, but Black is doing well; partly because the g2-rook needs a few moves to get back in the game.

30.xg7
Another line illustrating the relative balance of the position is: 30.g3 xh1 31.h2 xg2 32.g3 33.xg7 xh5 34.d2 f4 35.d7 f6 36.xf6 x6 37.xf4 x5 38.xh4 g7 39.g2 e6 40.e7 It is a draw.

30...xh3+ 31.g1 xh5 32.g3!
After 32.f4 a perpetual check for one side or the other seems unavoidable.

32...f4 33.g5 d1 34.g2 d4
Here Black could take over the initiative with 34...f3 35.g3 d6 followed by e7.

35.xh7 d6
Black had another chance to take the initiative: 35.e7! 36.xf5 d6 Although White should be able to draw with best defence.

36.g6+ e6 37.xe6+ xe6 38.f3 c3 39.xf4 xc4 40.xe4 xe4 41.xe4 d6 42.a4 a5 43.d3 d5 44.f3 c4 45.c3 c5 46.f4 d5 47.f5 e5 48.xc4 exf5 49.e5 d6 50.xc6 e7 51.b5 d7 52.xa5 c7 53.b4

½–½

Game 5
Leko – Movsesian

Istanbul (ol) 2000

1.e4 c5 2.d3 c6 3.b5 d6 4.0–0 d7 5.ee1

5...d6
It is important to wait for White to move his c-pawn before playing ...a6. The immediate 5...a6 gives White the promising option: 6.xc6 xc6 7.d4

6.c3
6.h3 has been popular, but I think it is harmless after: 6...g6 7.c3 Qe5! For example, 8.Qxd7+ Qxd7 and White has scored poorly with both 9.d4 Qxf3† 10.Qxf3 Qg7 and 9.Qxe5 Qxe5.

6...a6 7.Qf1
The alternatives 7.Qxc6 and 7.Qa4 are seen in the following games. Now White is planning to occupy the centre with d2-d4, but if given the chance he will first play 8.h3!, after which Black's minor pieces would have too little space. In order to stop this happening, Black needs to get the bishop to g4 before it is too late.

7.Qg4 8.d3 e6
8...g6?! would allow White to force the exchange of bishop for knight under favourable circumstances. After 9.Qbd2, followed by 10.h3 Qxf3 11.Qxf3, White has the bishop pair and is all set to play d3-d4.

9.Qbd2
9.Qg5 is a clear sign that White will not roll the pawns down the kingside: 9...Qe7 10.Qbd2 0–0 11.Qb3 b5 12.d4 c4 13.Qc2 d5 14.exd5 Qf5 15.Qd1 Now 15...exd5 was about equal in Dreev – Timoschenko, Moscow 1992, but 15...Qxd5 16.Qxe7 Qxe7 looks even better to me. Objectively the position is balanced, but I would prefer to be Black.

9...Qe7
9...Qd7 has been played a number of times by no less a player than Topalov, but I prefer to keep open the option of playing ...d5. After 10.h3 Qh5 11.Qg4 Qg6 12.d4 cxd4 13.Qxd4, neither 13...e5 14.d5 nor 13...Qe7 14.d5 Qxe5 15.Qxe5 dxe5 fully equalizes for Black.

10.h3
10.a3 0–0 11.b4 d5 12.Qb2 dxe4 13.Qxe4 Qc7 14.Qe2 Qd8 15.h3 was Bricard – Bernard, Bad Wildbad 1990, and now 15...Qh5 would have been fine for Black.

10...Qh5!

11.Qg4
There are a couple of other moves:

11.a3 and now after 11...d5 12.Qg6 Qg6 13.Qh4 dxe4 14.Qxg6 hxg6 15.Qxe4 Qxe4 16.Qxe4 Qd7 (16...Qc7!) Now 17.Qf4 0–0 was fine for Black in Christiansen – Khalifman, Munich 1992, but I think White can keep some initiative with 17.b4.

For this reason I suggest 11...0–0! 12.b4 d5 and Black is doing very well, since 13.bxc5 is met with 13...dxe4 14.Qxe4 Qxe4 15.Qxe4 Qxc5 with excellent chances for Black. 13.Qg4?! Qg6 14.Qh4 d4 is also bad for White.
11...\text{d}2 \text{d}5 12.\text{c}h2 \text{c}7 13.\text{g}3 0-0 14.\text{d}f3 \text{b}5 (14...\text{f}ad8 15.e5 \text{d}7 16.\text{f}4 \text{h}6 17.\text{g}4 \text{g}6 18.\text{g}d2 \text{d}4 is also promising for Black) 15.e5 \text{d}7 16.\text{f}4 A. Sokolov – Volzhin, Elista 1996. Now 16...\text{h}6 would be clearly better for Black, intending: 17.\text{g}4 \text{g}4 18.\text{h}xg4 \text{g}5 19.\text{e}3 \text{c}xe5 20.\text{d}xe5 \text{d}xe5 White does not have enough compensation for the pawn.

11...\text{g}6 12.\text{h}4

12.\text{g}2 \text{d}7 13.\text{f}1 \text{h}5?! has been played in a number of games and it seems to me that Black already has slightly the better chances. The game Solodovnichenko – Avrukh, Internet 2004, continued: 14.\text{g}3 \text{h}xg4 15.\text{h}xg4 Now Black went wrong with 15...\text{h}4?! when 16.\text{f}5! would have been a strong reply; but, for instance, 15...\text{d}e5 should leave Black with the better position.

12...\text{d}7

It is tempting to try:
12...\text{d}5?!

For a day and more I tried to make this variation work for Black, but it seems that White is clearly better after:
13.\text{f}4! \text{d}xe4 14.\text{d}xe4 \text{d}7

I set my hopes on 14...\text{c}7, but the simple 15.\text{f}3 \text{h}xg6 16.\text{f}3 followed by \text{g}5 and \text{f}5, is also better for White.

15.\text{f}3?! 15.\text{e}2 \text{g}5 16.\text{f}5 (16.\text{f}3?! \text{gxf4} 17.\text{d}h4 \text{g}xh4 18.\text{f}4 \text{e}5 19.\text{f}2 \text{f}8 20.a3 \text{d}6

15...\text{g}xh4 With this move Black's position goes from just about playable to much worse.

17.\text{f}3

Grischuk indicates that 17.\text{g}5 is even better.

17...\text{c}7 18.\text{f}4 \text{d}5 19.\text{g}5

White had a big advantage in Grischuk – Babula, Panormo 2001. If Black castles long, he has no counterplay on the kingside, and if the king goes the other way, then h3-h4-h5 is almost winning.

13.\text{g}2

There are two alternatives:
13.\text{f}5 \text{exf}5 14.\text{xf}5 \text{f}5 15.\text{g}xf5 0-0 16.\text{g}2

Now 16...\text{c}8! with the idea 17.\text{d}c4 \text{b}5 seems appealing for Black.

13.\text{x}g6 \text{hxg}6 14.\text{f}4 \text{b}4!

This is a double-edged move; its main aim is to disturb White's coordination, but it is also means that Black can play ...\text{g}5 without leaving the bishop very passive on \text{e}7. On the downside there is the risk that the bishop will be stuck on \text{h}4 forever...

Other moves are slightly worse:
a) 14...\text{g}5?! 15.\text{f}5 \text{d}e5 16.\text{b}3
b) 14...\text{d}5 15.\text{f}5 \text{h}4 16.\text{d}b2 \text{g}5 17.\text{f}xg6 \text{fxg}6 18.\text{f}b3+
and the knights are stronger than the bishops) 16...\(\mathcal{Q}d5\) Now if White decides to play \(\mathcal{Q}b3\) followed by \(d3-d4\), the rook will obstruct the f1-bishop and allow the black knight to land on c4. Also \(\mathcal{Q}f3\) is out of the question. So we can see why White would rather put the rook on e3 in the first place.

15...e5!

15...g5 16.f5 \(\mathcal{Q}d5\) 17.\(\mathcal{Q}f3\) was Rublevsky – Korotylev, Moscow (blitz) 2007. It is slightly worrying for Black, as it is unclear how and when the bishop will escape from h4.

16.f5 \(\mathcal{Q}g5!\) 17.\(\mathcal{Q}e2\) gxf5!

I prefer this to the riskier 17...b5!? 18.\(\mathcal{Q}b3\) \(\mathcal{Q}xc1\) 19.\(\mathcal{B}xc1\) g5 was played in Sedlak – Vucovic, Mataruska Banja 2008. Black is doing fine here, but I would be more worried about 19.\(\mathcal{W}xc1\) gxf5 (What else?) 20.exf5 0-0 21.\(\mathcal{L}g2\), when White has some attacking chances with g4-g5, \(\mathcal{W}c1-e1-h4\) etc.

18.exf5 \(\mathcal{Q}c7!\)

Followed by ...0–0–0 with good counterplay.

13...h6

It is important to retain the light-squared bishop. The other way of achieving this is not as good: 13...f6!? 14.\(\mathcal{Q}b3\) \(\mathcal{Q}h7\) 15.d4 cxd4 16.cxd4 d5 17.exd5 exd5 18.\(\mathcal{Q}f4\#) 15.d4 exd4 16.\(\mathcal{Q}f7\) 17.d5 exd5 18.exd5 \(\mathcal{Q}c5\) 19.f4 White will continue with \(f5\) and \(\mathcal{Q}g2-f4-e6\). Ouch!

14.f4! \(\mathcal{A}h7\) 15.\(\mathcal{Q}f3\) 0–0 16.\(\mathcal{W}e2\)!

White is trying to get as coordinated as possible before going f4–f5. I have played the immediate: 16.f5 \(\mathcal{Q}d5\) 17.\(\mathcal{Q}f4\) (after 17.\(\mathcal{Q}h2?!\) \(\mathcal{W}b6\) it is mighty difficult for White to organize a central break) 17...\(\mathcal{W}xf5\) 18.\(\mathcal{W}xf5\) \(\mathcal{Q}h4\) Black is fine; as long as White is unable to move the h- and g-pawns, there is nothing to worry about. 19.\(\mathcal{W}e2\) \(\mathcal{A}h8\) 20.\(\mathcal{W}g2\) \(\mathcal{A}c7\) 21.\(\mathcal{A}e3\) \(\mathcal{A}ae8\) (21...\(\mathcal{A}ae8\#) intending b7-b5-b4) 22.\(\mathcal{B}d1\) g6 23.\(\mathcal{A}c1\) gxf5? (23...\(\mathcal{W}d8\)! would give Black excellent chances) 24.exf5 \(\mathcal{A}xf5\) 25.gxf5 \(\mathcal{A}g8\) 26.\(\mathcal{A}g6\) Hillarp Persson – Zolotukhin, Budva 2009. Although I managed to win in the end, I came away from the game with the feeling that I really did not have anything.

16...\(\mathcal{W}h8\)

This move is very flexible. The main point is that later – after White has played f4–f5 – Black will be ready to play \(\mathcal{A}e8\) and ...f6 at some stage. There are a couple of alternatives:

16...\(\mathcal{A}e8\) is not as flexible, but is playable: 17.\(\mathcal{W}f2\) d5 18.exd5 exd5 19.f5 Black is suffering a bit, because of the awkward position of the bishop on h7. 19...\(\mathcal{A}d6\) 20.\(\mathcal{A}f4\) \(\mathcal{A}c7\) 21.\(\mathcal{A}g3\) \(\mathcal{A}xf4\) 22.\(\mathcal{W}xf4\) \(\mathcal{W}xf4\) 23.\(\mathcal{W}xf4\) \(\mathcal{A}f6\) 24.a3 White was clearly more comfortable in Morozevich – Gelfand, Monte Carlo 2002.

16...\(\mathcal{B}c7?!\) (with the idea of ...\(\mathcal{A}ae8\) followed
Chapter 3 - Bearing

2.1 If with $... d6$ 87

by $... d5$) 17.$\text{g}f2$ $\text{c}ae8$ 18.$\text{f}5$ $\text{d}e5$ 19.$\text{g}xf3$ $\text{xf}3$+ 20.$\text{xf}3$ $\text{b}5$ 21.$\text{a}3$ $\text{wb}7$ (21...$5?!$) 22.$\text{lg}3$ $\text{ed}8$ 23.$\text{lad}1$ $\text{a}5$! 24.$\text{c}c1$ $\text{g}6$ (Or 24...$b4$? 25.$\text{d}4$ $\text{cxd}4$ 26.$\text{cxd}4$ $\text{e}5$ and Black will bring the bishop out from $h7$ slowly, with $... \text{h}h8$, $... f6$ and $... \text{g}8$. Again $\text{h}h8$ is shown to be a useful move.) 25.$h4$ This is very active, but not quite working: 25...$\text{b}4$ 26.$\text{axb}4$ $\text{axb}4$ 27.$\text{c}4$ (27.$g5$ $\text{hxg}5$ 28.$\text{hxg}5$ $\text{xe}5$ 29.$\text{g}4$ $\text{exf}5$ 30.$\text{xf}5$ $\text{cxc}3$ 31.$\text{bxc}3$ $\text{xc}3$ 32.$\text{g}6$ $\text{g}xg6$ 33.$\text{fxg}6$ $\text{le}1$ 34.$\text{xe}1$ (34.$\text{xe}5$ $\text{e}5$ $\text{f}6$ 27...$\text{c}e5$ 28.$\text{wh}3$ $\text{f}h8$ 29.$\text{f}4$ $\text{e}7$ 30.$\text{wh}1$ $g6$ 31.$\text{g}2$ $\text{d}d4$ 32.$\text{g}f1$ $\text{g}8$ 33.$\text{f}2$ $\text{xf}5$ 34.$\text{e}x f5$ $\text{xf}5$ 35.$g5$ $\text{hxg}5$ 36.$\text{hxg}5$ $\text{g}xg5$ 37.$\text{c}e6$ $\text{b}6$ 38.$\text{xd}8$ $\text{cxd}8$ 39.$\text{f}4$ $\text{e}4$ 40.$\text{xe}5+$ $\text{d}5$ 41.$\text{g}1$ $\text{g}5$

Black’s position was crushing in D. Popovic–Vuckovic, Herceg Novi 2005. This game is a nice example of Black’s resources.

17.$\text{g}f2$ $\text{c}7$ 18.$\text{d}2$ $\text{a}e8$ 19.$\text{lad}1$!

With this move (and the previous one) I guess Leko is not just waiting in general, but waiting specifically for Black to play $... b5$ – which is, you might say, the natural thing for Black to do! Indeed, but it also weakens some squares in the event of the centre opening up.

One day we will probably see 19.$\text{ac}1$ (with the idea of $\text{ac}2$, $\text{c}1$ and $\text{ce}2$), but Black is fine after 19...$\text{d}8$!! which simultaneously gets off the c-file and supports a later $... d5$.

19.$b5$ 20.$\text{f}5$ $\text{d}e5$ 21.$\text{gh}2$!

In Informant, Leko points out that 21.$\text{c}xe5$ $\text{dxe}5$ 22.$f6$!! can be met by 22...$\text{xf}6$ 23.$\text{b}h6$ $\text{c}7$ 24.$\text{b}e3$ $f5$ with the initiative.

21.$d5$

This is the standard reaction to $f4$-$f5$, and it is important to have it ready.

22.$\text{exd}5$

22.$\text{h}4$ $\text{dxe}4$ 23.$\text{dxe}4$ $\text{exf}5$! and Leko’s judgement is “unclear”. A possible continuation is: 24.$\text{exf}5$ $c4$ 25.$\text{b}e3$ $g5$!! This is not among my Binary Friend’s top four, but I like it anyway. The idea is to be able to play $... \text{f}6$ without worrying about $\text{g}2$-$\text{f}4$-$\text{g}6$ in reply. 26.$\text{hxg}5$ $\text{hxg}5$ 27.$\text{b}6$ (27.$\text{f}6$ $\text{d}4$) 27...$\text{b}8$! Followed by $... \text{f}6$ and $... \text{g}8$.

22...$\text{exd}5$ 23.$\text{f}4$

After 23.$\text{d}4$ $\text{cxd}4$ 24.$\text{cxd}4$ the safest option is 24...$\text{c}d7$. The alternative is the wild: 24...$\text{d}x \text{d}4$! 25.$\text{xc}5$ $\text{xe}5$ 26.$\text{f}4$ (26.$\text{c}3$? $\text{d}6$!! → Leko) 26...$\text{d}4$ This is Rybka’s suggestion. (26...$\text{d}f6$ 27.$\text{xd}4$ $\text{c}5$ 28.$\text{f}3$ $\text{c}d4$ 29.$\text{d}4$ $\text{e}4$ is very, very unclear) 27.$\text{f}4$ $\text{d}c5$ 28.$\text{f}3$ It’s impossible be sure what’s going on here.

In case White plays 23.$\text{f}4$? then Leko’s 23...$\text{d}4$? seems to be the best option: 24.$\text{d}5$ $\text{d}6$ 25.$\text{b}e7$ $\text{b}6$ 26.$\text{f}4$ $\text{f}6$ 27.$\text{g}2$ $\text{b}8$ Black is beautifully coordinated.

23...$\text{d}4$!

23...$\text{d}6$ 24.$\text{d}4$ $\text{d}x \text{d}4$ 25.$\text{c}d4$ is a bit better for White, since Black is playing without his h7-bishop.

24.$\text{c}d4$ $\text{c}dx \text{c}d4$ 25.$\text{c}f3$

25.$\text{c}f3$ $\text{d}6$ 26.$\text{c}1$ $\text{d}6$ $\text{c}f3$ transposes to the game.

25.$\text{f}6$ 26.$\text{c}1$ $\text{d}7$

Leko mentions: 26...$\text{d}x \text{f}3$? 27.$\text{xf}3$ $\text{xf}4$ 28.$\text{xf}4$+

But I have a humble suggestion in: 26...$\text{b}8$!!


![Chess Diagram]

87
This is a sort of prophylaxis against $Be4$ later on. 27. $\Box xe5 \Box xe5 28. $\Box h1$ (The point of having the queen on b8 is demonstrated by 28. $Be4$!! $g5$! 29. $\Box g3$ f6 30. $\Box xd4$ $\Box g8$ with excellent compensation!) 28... $\Box b8$ 29. $Be4$ f6 30. $\Box h4$ $\Box f8$ (It will be difficult for White to pick up the d-pawn without giving Black lots of counterplay.

27. $\Box xe5 \Box xe5 28. $Be4$!!

If the white king runs from the a7-g1 diagonal, it is best to protect the pawn on d4: 28. $\Box h1$ $\Box c6$??

28... $f6$

This is branded "?" by Leko, but with some help I have come to the conclusion that it is not that bad. Black may play more solidly with 28... $\Box c6$ 29. $\Box xd6$ $\Box xd6$ 30. $\Box f4$ $\Box d7$ 31. $\Box e1$ f6 32. $\Box g2$ $\Box xe4$ 33. $\Box xe4$ $\Box e5$ 34. $\Box f3$ $\Box e8$ 35. $\Box xe5$ $\Box xe5$, although Leko finds some initiative for White after 36. $\Box f2$ $\Box g8$ 37. $\Box h4$ $\Box d5$ 38. $\Box c5$ (in fact 38. $g5$! is even stronger and almost winning).

29. $\Box xd4$ $\Box a7$?

This is — as far as I can see — the real mistake. Nor does 29... $\Box e5$? 30. $\Box xe5$ work for Black.

But 29... $\Box c8$ is not mentioned by Leko in Informant, and it seems to hold the balance: 30. $\Box xc8$ $\Box xc8$ 31. $\Box b4$ $\Box e7$ 32. a3 $\Box c3$ 33. $\Box e1$ h5 White has counterplay.

30. $\Box e3$!! $\Box b8$ 31. $\Box e4$?

This is where Leko misses his chance. The following lines are his: 31. $\Box f4$ $\Box b8$ (31... $\Box g8$ 32. $\Box xd6$ $\Box xd6$ 33. $\Box c5$ $\Box c7$ 34. $\Box d4$+) 32. $\Box xc8$ $\Box xc8$ 33. $\Box g2$ (33. $\Box e4$) 33... $\Box g8$ 34. $\Box e6$±

31... $\Box b7$? 32. $\Box f4$ $\Box xd3$

Now Black is back in the game.

33. $\Box xd3$ $\Box xe4$ 34. $\Box xe4$ $\Box xe4$ 35. $\Box e6$ $\Box e8$ 36. $\Box e1$ $\Box d5$ 37. $\Box f4$ $\Box g8$

Finally Black manages to release the bishop from its jail, and the position holds no danger for him anymore.

38. $\Box xd6$ $\Box xd6$ 39. $\Box e3$ $\Box xe6$ 40. $\Box xe6$ $\Box xe6$ 1/2–1/2

Mamedyarov — Vasquez

Calvia (oll) 2004

1.e4 c5 2.$\Box f3$ $\Box c6$ 3.$\Box b5$ d6 4.0–0 $\Box d7$ 5.$\Box e1$ $\Box f6$ 6.c3 a6 7.$\Box f1$ $\Box g4$ 8.d4??

This is one of the most dangerous variations that you will have to face with Black in this system. There are a number of interesting ways to meet this move, but only two of them seem to be playable. First, the exchange on d4 is obligatory.

8... $\Box xd4$ 9.$\Box xd4$

Finally Black manages to release the bishop from its jail, and the position holds no danger for him anymore.

38. $\Box xd6$ $\Box xd6$ 39. $\Box e3$ $\Box xe6$ 40. $\Box xe6$ $\Box xe6$ 1/2–1/2

Mamedyarov — Vasquez

Calvia (oll) 2004

1.e4 c5 2.$\Box f3$ $\Box c6$ 3.$\Box b5$ d6 4.0–0 $\Box d7$ 5.$\Box e1$ $\Box f6$ 6.c3 a6 7.$\Box f1$ $\Box g4$ 8.d4??

This is one of the most dangerous variations that you will have to face with Black in this system. There are a number of interesting ways to meet this move, but only two of them seem to be playable. First, the exchange on d4 is obligatory.

8... $\Box xd4$ 9.$\Box xd4$

Finally Black manages to release the bishop from its jail, and the position holds no danger for him anymore.

38. $\Box xd6$ $\Box xd6$ 39. $\Box e3$ $\Box xe6$ 40. $\Box xe6$ $\Box xe6$ 1/2–1/2

Mamedyarov — Vasquez

Calvia (oll) 2004

1.e4 c5 2.$\Box f3$ $\Box c6$ 3.$\Box b5$ d6 4.0–0 $\Box d7$ 5.$\Box e1$ $\Box f6$ 6.c3 a6 7.$\Box f1$ $\Box g4$ 8.d4??

This is one of the most dangerous variations that you will have to face with Black in this system. There are a number of interesting ways to meet this move, but only two of them seem to be playable. First, the exchange on d4 is obligatory.

8... $\Box xd4$ 9.$\Box xd4$

Finally Black manages to release the bishop from its jail, and the position holds no danger for him anymore.

38. $\Box xd6$ $\Box xd6$ 39. $\Box e3$ $\Box xe6$ 40. $\Box xe6$ $\Box xe6$ 1/2–1/2

Mamedyarov — Vasquez

Calvia (oll) 2004

1.e4 c5 2.$\Box f3$ $\Box c6$ 3.$\Box b5$ d6 4.0–0 $\Box d7$ 5.$\Box e1$ $\Box f6$ 6.c3 a6 7.$\Box f1$ $\Box g4$ 8.d4??

This is one of the most dangerous variations that you will have to face with Black in this system. There are a number of interesting ways to meet this move, but only two of them seem to be playable. First, the exchange on d4 is obligatory.

8... $\Box xd4$ 9.$\Box xd4$

Finally Black manages to release the bishop from its jail, and the position holds no danger for him anymore.

38. $\Box xd6$ $\Box xd6$ 39. $\Box e3$ $\Box xe6$ 40. $\Box xe6$ $\Box xe6$ 1/2–1/2

Mamedyarov — Vasquez

Calvia (oll) 2004

1.e4 c5 2.$\Box f3$ $\Box c6$ 3.$\Box b5$ d6 4.0–0 $\Box d7$ 5.$\Box e1$ $\Box f6$ 6.c3 a6 7.$\Box f1$ $\Box g4$ 8.d4??

This is one of the most dangerous variations that you will have to face with Black in this system. There are a number of interesting ways to meet this move, but only two of them seem to be playable. First, the exchange on d4 is obligatory.

8... $\Box xd4$ 9.$\Box xd4$

Finally Black manages to release the bishop from its jail, and the position holds no danger for him anymore.

38. $\Box xd6$ $\Box xd6$ 39. $\Box e3$ $\Box xe6$ 40. $\Box xe6$ $\Box xe6$ 1/2–1/2

Mamedyarov — Vasquez

Calvia (oll) 2004

1.e4 c5 2.$\Box f3$ $\Box c6$ 3.$\Box b5$ d6 4.0–0 $\Box d7$ 5.$\Box e1$ $\Box f6$ 6.c3 a6 7.$\Box f1$ $\Box g4$ 8.d4??

This is one of the most dangerous variations that you will have to face with Black in this system. There are a number of interesting ways to meet this move, but only two of them seem to be playable. First, the exchange on d4 is obligatory.

8... $\Box xd4$ 9.$\Box xd4$

Finally Black manages to release the bishop from its jail, and the position holds no danger for him anymore.
many problems for Black arises after: 12...d7
Best, but not good enough. 13...b6 (13.a4?)
13...b5 14.a4? bxa4 15...d7 And I could not
find a way to coordinate the black forces.

9...xf3 10.gxf3 d5
In some sources this is given as a simple
solution, but I have my doubts about this.

11.e5
This move does not seem logical to me, since
the knights clearly increase in strength as the
position is closed. A possible improvement is
11...c6 12.g5, when Black has to fight
d for a draw with 12...c7 13.xf6 xf6
14.xd5 xd5 15.xe4xb6 16.xe6 xe6
17...d5 xd8. White has a definite initiative
here, but it is not clear if it leads anywhere.

11...h5
11...d4? 12.e6 fxe6 13...h3 is dangerous
for Black.

12.f4
After 12.e6 fxe6 13...h3 g6 14...c6 ...g7
15...a4 ...f5 16...c5 xcd4 17.xf5 xf5
18.xe6 ...d7 19...d2 ...e8 20...c3 ...g8
Black is ready to untangle with ...e6.

12...g6 13.f5 ...g7
13...e6?

14.f6?
In Papin – Vachier Lagrave, Crete 2004,
White hadn't achieved anything special,
although he went on to win after:
14.exf6!
14...f5 15.xe7 xxe7 16...c3 xcd4
17...g2 ...e8 is balanced.
15.xf6+ xe6 16...c3
Black is indeed now struggling.

10.e5
White can aim to rain on our parade with
10.xd5. This is not really dangerous, but it is
a bit annoying since it can lead to positions
that are dead equal. After 10...xd5 11...c3
e6 White has two ways of trying to retain the
initiative:

12.h3 h5!
At first I thought 12...xf3 13.xf3 ...e7
14.xd5 xd5 15.xd5 exd5, as in Kett –
R. Jones, Cardiff 2004, was fine for Black,
but then I realised that 16...e3, followed by
g3 and ...g2, would have been slightly better
for White.

13...c4
The sharp 13.g4 ...g6 14.g5 (14...b3 ...e7?!
15.xb7? ...a5 loses the queen) 14...e7
15.xe7 xe7 16...b3 is roughly level.
13...e7 14.xd5
14.xd5 exd5 15...g5 f6 16...f4 0–0 17...b3
...b4 18.xd5? ...
f7
14...exd5 15...b3 0–0
With a balanced game, Gausel – Petursson,

Most tedious is:
12...e4 ...e7! 13.xd5 exd5 14.g5! f6
14...0–0! leads to a boring position, where
White's slight lead in development
will soon come to nothing: 15...xe7 xe7
16.h3 xe5 (16...h5? 17...e5) 17.xe4
xe5 18...f3 ...d5 19...d1 ...d8 19...a3 ...c6 A draw is the
likely outcome.
15...f4 0–0 16...b3 ...b4 17.xd5 xe1
18...c7 ...a5 19...xa5 ...xa5 20...xf6+ ...h8
21...xe4 ...b6
In S. Novikov – Gasanov, Belgorod 2009,
White was a bit cooperative when he continued with:
22.\texttt{W}xb6 \texttt{A}xb6 23.\texttt{R}d1

Black should be slightly better in this endgame with pawns on both flanks. The knights look scary, I know, but the rook is strong in such positions.

10...\texttt{Q}d7

Black has a serious alternative here in 10...\texttt{Q}g8, intending to play ...\texttt{e}6 and then put pressure on d4 with – if White allows it – both knights. White has a couple of ways to react:

a) 11.e6!

This very strong idea of Alexei Kornev’s from 2004 immediately crosses Black’s plans. It is not too obvious how Black will release the white pressure. 11...\texttt{B}xe6 12.\texttt{B}xe6 \texttt{f}xe6 13.\texttt{B}b3?! \texttt{C}a5 14.\texttt{C}e3 \texttt{B}c8?! (a possible improvement is 14...\texttt{B}d6 15.g3 \texttt{Q}h6 [15...g6 16.\texttt{Q}h3] 16.\texttt{Q}e2 \texttt{Q}c6 17.\texttt{B}f4 \texttt{W}d7 18.\texttt{A}xh6 \texttt{g}xh6 19.\texttt{Q}h3 \texttt{Q}g7 20.\texttt{A}xe6 \texttt{W}d6 21.\texttt{Q}c3 \texttt{F}f8 22.\texttt{A}xd5 \texttt{Q}xd4 23.\texttt{B}xd4 \texttt{Q}xd4 24.\texttt{B}d1 \texttt{F}xf2 25.\texttt{F}h5+ \texttt{F}g6 26.\texttt{F}xg6+ \texttt{hxg6} 27.\texttt{F}xd4 \texttt{F}xb2, but it all looks a bit scary for Black) 15.\texttt{Q}c3 \texttt{F}d6 16.g3 \texttt{g}6 17.\texttt{Q}h3 White had a strong initiative in Wang Hao – Timofeev, Nizhnij Novgorod 2007.

b) 11.\texttt{B}d2 Although this looks fine for Black from a positional point of view, White has a serious lead in development which could count for something: 11...\texttt{e}6 12.h3 \texttt{F}h5 13.\texttt{B}b3 \texttt{Q}ge7 14.g4 \texttt{Q}g6 15.\texttt{Q}c5 (or 15.\texttt{Q}h4?! \texttt{wb}6 16.\texttt{Q}e3 \texttt{Q}e4 17.f3 \texttt{Q}g6 18.\texttt{Q}c5 \texttt{h}5 19.\texttt{F}xg6 \texttt{Q}xg6 20.b4 with the initiative) 15...\texttt{e}7 16.\texttt{B}h3 \texttt{Q}a5 17.\texttt{Q}a4+ \texttt{e}6 18.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{Q}c5 19.dxc5 I am not entirely sure what to make of all this, but it seems to be awkward for Black.

11.\texttt{h}3

Other moves are:

11.\texttt{Q}e3 \texttt{e}6

Now Black can keep the bishop if White starts hunting it with h2-h3. The knight is not optimal on d7, but neither is it in the way of the other pieces. It seems to me that Black’s chances are quite good here. For instance:

12.a3 \texttt{Q}e7 13.\texttt{B}d2 0-0 14.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{h}5 15.\texttt{W}b1 15.\texttt{F}c1 \texttt{Q}g6 16.\texttt{B}xg6 \texttt{hxg6} 17.g3 \texttt{e}c8 18.h4 \texttt{Q}a5 19.\texttt{F}xc8 \texttt{W}xc8 20.\texttt{F}g5 was a bit better for White in Papin – Magalashvili, Budva 2003, but 16...\texttt{f}xg6 is a possible improvement, with the idea ...\texttt{F}e8-f7-f5.

15...\texttt{Q}g6 16.\texttt{B}xg6 \texttt{hxg6}
16...\texttt{f}xg6?!

17.\texttt{B}d3 b5 18.\texttt{B}ec1 \texttt{e}c8 19.\texttt{B}c2 \texttt{Q}h6 20.b3 \texttt{e}e8

The manoeuvring became too intricate for any further comment in Kuczynski – Hracek, Germany 1995. I like 20...\texttt{W}d7?! with a fairly balanced game.
After 11...c3 e6 White will have to play dxe3 anyway, with similar play to the above.

11.e6? dxe6 12...xe6 fxe6 13...b3 e6 Black is helped by the fact that the knight is on d7 rather than on g8 (as in the lines in the previous note).

11...fxe3 12...xf3

12...dxe4

This is a principled decision. Instead 12...e6 leads to a position where Black is only slightly, but quite clearly worse. White carried out a convincing plan in Rocha - Hracek, Istanbul (ol) 2000: 13...f6 14...d2 e7 15...d1 0-0 16...f3 c8 17...e4 f6 18...xf6 ...xf6 19...g5 ...d6 20...e3 e4! 21...xe4 dxe4 22...g2 ...xd4 23...xe4 White had a clear advantage.

13...xd5

Psakhis mentions 13...d1? which is very interesting if one has spotted the follow-up on move 17(!): 13...c6 14...e6 (after 14...xd5 e6 15...b3 c7 16...f4 ...dxe5 17...d2 ...d6 White did not have enough compensation in Fernandez Garcia - Guerra Mendez, Havana 2007) 14...fxe6 15...xe6 ...f6 Psakhis adds "intending ...d7", while I was at first preoccupied with ...f7 next. However, I soon realised that after 16...c3, both 16...d7 and 16...f7 encounter the same problem: 17...xf6!! (t) followed by ...xd5. It is possible to argue about how bad these positions really are for Black, but it seems to me that White gets a dangerous initiative for the exchange.

Instead I prefer (with a little help from my Digital Friends) to avoid 15...f6 altogether and play 15...c5!

13...c2 14...d1 c7

It is quite possible that 14...e8? is a better move, making it more difficult for White to create problems for Black. After 15...e6 fxe6 16...xe6 ...xa1 17...c3 ...f6 (this is the point) 18...e5 e6 19...g5 ...e7 20...xa1 0-0 White does not have enough compensation. For instance: 21...c1 ...c6!

15...e6 fxe6 16...xe6 ...c6 17...e2 ...xa1

I prefer 17...e5! so that 18...a3 can be met by 18...xa3.

18...c3

I would be more worried about 18...a3! if I were Black. After 18...e6 19...g3 ...xa3 20...xa3...
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

92

Qf6 21.g2 Wb6 22.b2 Bd8 23.Bxa1 0-0

my computer programs heavily favour the Black side, but I'm not totally convinced.

18...0-0-0

This is playing into White's hands, but the alternative is very sharp and almost impossible to evaluate during a game: 18...e5? 19.g3 (19.Bc3 b4 20.Bxa1 0-0) 19...c5 20.Bg2 Wb6 21.d5 Bxf2+ 22.h2 White has a dangerous initiative.

19.Bc3

White will soon employ his bishop on g2, from where it will completely dominate the queenside together with its brother on e3. There is not much to be done about the g3, Bh2 idea, but it is possible to limit the scope of the other bishop. Therefore, it is imperative for Black to exchange - or at least oppose - the e3-bishop.

19...Qf6?

Psakhis gives the line 19...e6 20.Bxa1 (20.Qc1 Bb8) 20...c5 (opposing the bishop) 21.Bc1 (21.Bg5?? does not help because of 21...Bd8 22.Be4 Bf5) 21...Bxe3 22.Bxe3 Bb8 with a "slight advantage for Black", and I can only agree.

20.Bxa1 e5 21.a4?

This is a tricky move that prepares to launch the knight to b5. But possibly stronger was 21.g4! planning g5, Bh2, Bc1 and Ba4. Between humans, the white side of such a position is clearly to be preferred.

21...Bb8

Psakhis points out that it is now too late to try to exchange the dark-squared bishops: 21...c5?! 22.Bc1 Bxe3 23.Bxe3 Bb8 24.Bxb5 Wxc1 25.Wxc1 axb5 26.Bxb5 Black's weak pawn structure and exposed king makes his position impossible to defend.

22.Qb5 Qd5!

22...axb5 is not clear, but it is too dangerous to even contemplate when there is a solid alternative.

23.Ba7† Bb8 24.Bxe5 Qc5 25.Qd4!

Objectively a losing move, but after 25.Qxc5 Bxc5 26.Qc3 Bh8 (Psakhis)

Black has no ghosts to worry about anymore. White's move is an ingenious way to make life difficult for Black.


White throws another log on the fire, and now 27...b6 (Psakhis) is a simple enough way to make White resign, but noooo...

27.axb5 28.axb5 Qc7 29.Qe2 Bh8?

29...b6 was still winning, but now Black starts drifting.

30.Bb6† Bb8 31.Aa7† Ac8 32.Ag4† Ad7 33.Ac5 Bh7??

Black had only one defence in 33...Be8, when 34.Ba8† Bb8 35.Bxb8† (35.Ac7?? Ae1#) 35...Bxb8 36.Axd7 leads to an endgame that is not too clear.

But now White gets an endgame with an extra pawn - the rest is technique.

34.Ac8† Bb8 35.Aa7 Ac7 36.Axb8† Ac6 37.Ad7 Bxd7 38.Ac5 Ae7 39.f4 Qxb5
Chapter 3 – Beating 2.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{c6} \) \( \text{3.b5} \) with 3...d6


d6 93

Game 7

Nikolenko – Motylev

Ulan Ude 2009

1.e4 c5 2.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{f3} \) d6 3.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{b5} \uparrow \text{c6} \) 4.0--0 i.d7

This is the sharpest continuation here and it is a sure sign that your opponent is playing for the whole point. Good for you!

7...d5!?
The most challenging move. There are alternatives and before we proceed I should sound a warning: If you decide to have a look at some of these lines with a computer program as back-up, be prepared to be fed more disinformation than information. In some of these lines White sacrifices a pawn (and sometimes two) and lets Black have the bishop pair for no obvious tactical reason. The computer will love Black... but it is not that easy. Okay, the alternatives:

9...\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{g6} \) and the critical line goes: 10.d5 c7 11.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{bd2} \) 0–0–0 12.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{c4} \) b8 13.b4 White had a strong initiative in, among others, Ghaem Maghami – Motylev, Karternberg 2010.

9...\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{c6} \) is also interesting. After 10.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{x}f6 \) gxf6 11.d5 \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{d7} \) 12.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{bd2} \) I thought first that Black could just play something like 12...\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{g7} \), but it is more dangerous than one might think. White continues 13.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{h}4 \) followed by \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{h}5 \) and \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{e}3 \), and it can easily go very wrong for Black.

9...d5 is not played very often and the only reason I can find is: 10.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{bd2} \) cxd4 11.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{x}f6 \) gxf6 12.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{e}4 \) dxe4 13.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{x}d4 \) \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{f5} \) 14.e4 \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{d}5 \) 15.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{e}6 \) b4 17.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{xd5} \) dxe5 18.c4 0–0–0 19.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{d}5 \) \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{d}5 \) 20.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{e}4 \) a7 This was Zarnicki – Smirin, Oviedo 1993, and now 21.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{c2} \) b3 22.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{e}3 \) \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{d2} \) 23.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{c1} \) would have left White with some symbolic advantage.

10.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{bd2} \)

This is clearly the main line, but White has a very dangerous alternative at hand: 10.c4?! This will be covered in a separate analysis after this game!

10...b5!

This is the most reliable move here. There are two alternatives:

10...e6

This is the old main line, which I find somewhat risky for Black.

11.c4 \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{xf3} \) 12.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{xf3} \) cxd4 13.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{f6} \)

13.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{xb7} \) \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{e}7 \) 14.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{c6} \uparrow \text{h8} \) 15.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{b3} \) h6

16.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{xf6} \) \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{xf6} \) 17.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{d1} \) \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{c8} \) 18.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{xa6} \) e5


13...gxf6 14.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{xb7} \) \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{g7} \) 15.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{c6} \uparrow \text{h8} \)

15...\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{f8} \) is met by 16.e4.

16.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{c3} \)

16.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{e4} \) \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{c8} \) 17.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{c3} \) f5 18.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{d3} \) \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{b6} \)

(18...\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{b8} \) 19.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{d4} \) \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{xb2} \) 20.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{xe6} \uparrow \text{xe6} \)

18...d5 19.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{xd5} \) \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{xd5} \) 20.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{e}5 \) a5! 21.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{d}5 \) \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{c8} \) 22.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{c3} \) \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{b5} \) 23.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{d3} \) \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{a3} \) 24.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{xd5} \) \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{xd5} \) 25.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{f4} \) \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{d6} \) 26.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{e4} \) \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{c5} \) 27.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{f5} \) \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{d7} \) 28.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{g6} \) \( \text{\textit{B}} \text{e8} \) 29.\( \text{\textit{B}} \text{h5} \end{array}}}
21.\textit{B}xe6 gives White a strong attack.) 19.b3
Now instead of 19...\textit{g}f6, as in Zarnicki – Hoffman, Argentina (ch) 1999, I think 19...a5! is a better way for Black to gain counterplay.

16...f5 17.\textit{ad}1 \textit{c}8!
17...\textit{d}d7?! 18.\textit{d}5! was clearly better for White in Hammer – Lie, Tonsberg 2008.

18.\textit{g}5 \textit{h}g8 19.\textit{f}6! \textit{h}xf6 20.\textit{d}2 \textit{xc}4
This is an improvement on: 23...\textit{d}3 24.\textit{c}xh7? Romanishin – Sosonko, Reggio Emilia 1985.

24.b3?!
Otherwise:
a) 24.\textit{d}xf7? \textit{d}3 is bad for White.
b) 24.\textit{d}h7 \textit{xa}2 25.\textit{d}xf8\textit{xf}8 gives Black compensation for the exchange.

24...\textit{c}2! 25.\textit{h}7 \textit{d}5
The position is unclear.

10...\textit{c}4?! is Black's weakest option. After 11.b3 \textit{b}5 12.\textit{xc}4 \textit{xc}4 13.\textit{f}f1! White develops a very strong initiative: 13...\textit{a}5 14.\textit{xf}6 \textit{gf}6 15.\textit{e}3 \textit{e}6 16.\textit{d}2 \textit{e}8 17.\textit{b}1! And \textit{h}5 is coming next.

\textbf{11.\textit{dxc}5}
White has also tried:

11.b3 \textit{e}6 12.\textit{c}4 \textit{b}7 13.\textit{d}5!

After 13.\textit{xb}5?! \textit{axb}5 14.\textit{b}2 \textit{b}6 15.\textit{dxc}5 \textit{dxc}5 16.a\textit{b}4 \textit{bxa}4 17.\textit{c}4 \textit{c}7 18.\textit{b}a4 \textit{a}7 White does not have enough for the pawn.

13.\textit{d}d7!
13...\textit{e}5 14.\textit{dxe}5 \textit{dxe}5 15.\textit{dxe}5 \textit{d}7 16.\textit{e}4 gives White a dangerous attack.

14.\textit{xf}6 \textit{gf}6 15.\textit{e}4
Or:
a) 15.\textit{h}4 0–0–0!

White is far away from creating any threats against the black king; but after the coming...\textit{f}8 the same cannot be said about the white king.

b) 15.\textit{e}2 \textit{e}7! 16.\textit{h}4 (16.\textit{dxe}6? \textit{fxe}6 17.\textit{xe}6 \textit{xe}6 18.\textit{xe}6 \textit{f}7 16...\textit{f}5 is also slightly better for Black.

15...\textit{c}7 16.\textit{b}2 \textit{f}3 17.\textit{b}2 0–0–0 18.\textit{e}5 \textit{d}5 19.\textit{x}g5 19.\textit{x}g5 e5
White does not have enough compensation for the pawn.

11.\textit{c}4?! is premature since 11...\textit{b}xc4 12.\textit{dxc}5 can be met with: 12...\textit{e}6! 13.\textit{e}8! (13.\textit{cxd}6? \textit{xd}6 14.\textit{c}1 0–0 15.\textit{xc}4 \textit{b}4 16.\textit{f}1\textit{f} Zhang Jilin – Zhao Xue, Beijing 2008) 13...\textit{e}8! (13...\textit{dxc}5 14.\textit{e}5 is unclear) 14.\textit{xf}6 (14.\textit{dxc}4 \textit{xf}5) 14...\textit{xf}6 15.\textit{xd}6 \textit{xd}6 16.\textit{a}4 \textit{d}7 17.\textit{xa}6 \textit{e}8 18.g3 \textit{d}8 Black has a strong initiative since 19.\textit{dxc}4? falls to 19...\textit{e}6, winning at least an exchange.

11.\textit{c}2 \textit{e}6 12.\textit{dxc}5 \textit{dxc}5 transpose to the note to White's 12th move below.
11...dxc5
11...e6?! has never been played, but it seems interesting. The most critical line goes:
12...fxe6 gxf6 13.c6! (13...c2 dxc5 14...c4 a6; 13...xd6 a5d6 is at least a bit better for Black.)
13...a5? (13...axc6 14...d4 a5 15...h5 a5) 14...d4 0-0 15...f1 c5 16...g3 h6 17.a4
a6 18.axb5 axb5 19...h5 g8 20...a7 d7 21...f3 The silicon family likes White, although there is nothing drastic happening within the next few moves. It does look like Black has a tough defence ahead.

12.c4
White must act fast. After the slow 12...c2 Black has time to get his act together with 12...e6 13.c4 a6 when White is just a pawn down.

12...axc4
12...a6? is interesting, although risky due to: 13...xh3 a5 14...h6 15...xf6 gxf6 16...e4 h5! It seems that Black again and again is forced to play 'only moves' just to keep the balance. For this reason I would prefer the game continuation.

13...xc4 bxc4 14...e5 e6 16...xf6
After 16...xc4 a6 Black gets an improved version of the game.

16...gxf6 17...xc4 a6
This passive move should hold the balance, but Black has alternatives:

The seemingly normal 17...g8?! leaves Black facing long term trouble after: 18...e4 g4
(18...e8?! is a typical mistake; 19...xd8 a5 20...e3 c7 21...e6 22...b3
d5 23...a3 a6 c3 Black has great problems with coordination) 19.f4 a5 20...f2 Black's forces are cut in two.

I spent some time on this position some time before writing this chapter and came to the conclusion that Black's best option is:

17...f5?

Black's idea is to put the bishop on d4 as quickly as possible, while White's main idea is to lift a rook to a3 or b3, so let's see how that works out:

18...e3
18...d5 a5 19...d3 0-0 is similar to the main game, but with an extra tempo for Black.

18...a7 b3 d4!
A tricky move that stops White playing 20...b7, because then 20...0-0-0! (threatening ...xf2+) wins Black the exchange.

20...d3
White has a couple of alternatives:

a) 20...a5 c8! 21...b6 0-0 22...c6 (22...a6 a5b2 doesn't help White) 22...a5 23...d3
e8 24...a5 c4 25...d6 cxb3 26...x b3 a6 27...f4 e2+ 28...a7 29...b7 0-0 30...b6
22...xf2! 23...xd8 a5d8 24...a6
After 24...xf2 d4 Black regains the piece and gets an excellent rook ending.
24...a4 d4 25...c7 a6 c6 26...xf7 a8 27...a3 a6 Black has good winning chances.
18.\textit{e}3 0–0

18...\textit{a}7?! 19.\textit{b}3 0–0 is a slight improvement, but it doesn’t change a lot.

19.\textit{g}3\textit{f}\textit{f} 20.\textit{f}1 \textit{a}7

Black is a pawn up, but White has a beautiful knight on \textit{c}4, active rooks and the slightly better pawn structure – the position is balanced.

21.\textit{b}3 \textit{g}7 22.\textit{g}3\textit{h}8 23.\textit{b}3 \textit{f}5 24.\textit{b}6 \textit{g}7 25.\textit{d}3 \textit{d}8 26.\textit{x}d8 \textit{x}d8 27.\textit{c}6 \textit{a}5 28.\textit{xc}5 \textit{a}4 29.\textit{ec}2 \textit{b}7 30.\textit{xc}6 \textit{xa}7 31.\textit{xc}5 \textit{h}5 32.\textit{b}5 \textit{f}6 33.a3 \textit{g}7 34.\textit{d}6 \textit{d}7 35.\textit{ce}4 \textit{a}7 36.\textit{d}6 \textit{g}5 37.\textit{c}4 \textit{f}6 38.\textit{b}4 \textit{xb}4 39.\textit{xb}4 \textit{c}5 40.\textit{b}5 \textit{d}4 41.\textit{xb}4 \textit{xc}5 42.\textit{xb}5 \textit{d}4

Analysis based on

\textbf{Ristic – Grivas}

\textit{Ano Liosia} 1999

This is a serious try for the initiative that has been played by Ivanchuk and deserves our respect. I am not sure it is entirely sound, but the point is to make life difficult for Black.

\textbf{10...\textit{xc}4}

I beg your pardon for not having been able to find something that can be played without memorizing a few lines, but it is the price you pay for trying to win with Black. First I intended to recommend 10...\textit{xf}3 11.\textit{xf}3 \textit{cxd}4 12.\textit{xb}7 \textit{xc}8 13.\textit{f}3 \textit{e}5 ("" in \textit{Informant}) 14.\textit{d}2 \textit{d}7 15.\textit{b}3 \textit{f}6 when Black was very fine in Ivanchuk – Topalov, Monte Carlo (blindfold) 2003. The problem with this line is 14.\textit{xf}6 \textit{gxf}6 15.\textit{c}5! when I have not been able to find a comfortable defence for Black.

\textbf{11.\textit{c}3}

This is stronger than 11.\textit{xf}6 \textit{gxf}6 12.\textit{d}5. Now instead of 12...\textit{b}5, as in Rozentalis – Cu. Hansen, Copenhagen 2004, I like the more active: 12...\textit{g}8! 13.\textit{d}3 (13.\textit{a}3 \textit{b}5 14.\textit{xb}5 \textit{axb}5 15.\textit{d}3 \textit{d}7) 13...\textit{d}7 14.\textit{g}3 (14.\textit{b}3! \textit{b}5 15.a4 \textit{g}4 16.\textit{g}3 \textit{d}7 and the bishop escapes) 14...\textit{a}5 15.\textit{c}2 \textit{a}6 With an advantage for Black.

11...\textit{cxd}4

The main line goes 11...\textit{e}6 12.\textit{xf}6 \textit{gxf}6 13.\textit{d}5 \textit{e}5! 14.\textit{h}4 \textit{b}5 15.\textit{e}4 \textit{d}7 16.\textit{h}5 when we have a position that first arose in Martinovic – Anand, Groningen 1989, and has been played a few times since. It is not inconceivable that Black is fine here, but neither is it inconceivable that Black is lost. I have been
unable to come to a definite conclusion, so I had to look for an alternative – but it turned out that Grivas had already found one.

12.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{W}}xd4 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}}c8!

Although I am – as anybody would be – suspicious about the black position, I have not been able to find anything wrong with it. On the contrary; it seems White is struggling to prove enough compensation. Before going on with the analysis, I shall mention a few general points. White will usually take on f6, when after \ldots gxf6 it is important for Black to activate his queen. There are two main ways to do this, via a5 or d7. Often the queen goes to f5, but g4 is also a good square (especially if Black has an open g-file and a rook on g8).

13.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{A}}}xf6

This seems more critical than:

13.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}ad1 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}e6!

This is a typical move in this line. The bishop obstructs the e-file, evacuates from the insecure position on c4, prepares \ldots \textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}c4 and deals with threats such as \textit{\textbf{\texttt{A}}}xf6 gxf6 followed by \textit{\textbf{\texttt{W}}}xf6 – a lot of achievements for a single move.

13...e6 is shaky due to: 14.b3 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}b5 15.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{D}}}d5 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}c7 16.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{C}}}xe7 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{W}}}xe7 17.a4 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}d7 18.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{W}}}b4

14.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{W}}}d3

Other squares for the queen are available:

a) 14.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{W}}}h4 is met by the rook lift: 14...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}c4!

b) 14.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{W}}}a7? \textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}c7! (after 14...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{W}}}d7 15.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{D}}}d4! h6 16.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}xf6 gxf6 17.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{A}}}e4 the idea of b2-b4 followed by \textit{\textbf{\texttt{A}}}c5 may give Black some headaches) 15.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}d4 (or 15.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}e3 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}c8) 15...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}c8 16.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{C}}}xe6 fxe6 White’s compensation is hardly enough.

14...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}c5!? 15.b4 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}c7 16.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{D}}}d4 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}c8! 17.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}c4

This time the bishop is back to stay!

18.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{W}}}f3 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}d7

White’s initiative is not enough to compensate for the two pawn minus.

13...gxf6 14.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{W}}}xf6!

Only one pawn now; this is White’s best shot at complications. 14.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}e4? was seen in the original game in this variation (the comments are mostly from Grivas): 14...e5 15.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{C}}}ac1 (15.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{W}}}a7 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}c7 16.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{C}}}ac1 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}e7++; 15.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}ad1 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}e6--) 15...b5 (15...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}c7? 16.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{C}}}xc4!) 16.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{C}}}c7 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}e7 17.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}g3?! (17.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{W}}}xa6 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}d7) 17...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}d7!+ 18.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{W}}}xa6 0-0+ And in Ristic – Grivas, Black won easily by rolling the f- and e-pawns down the board.

14...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{W}}}g8

This is necessary, but strong; now Black is ready to use the g-file and create counter-threats that will make it hard for White to avoid the exchange of queens.

15.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{W}}}h4

15.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}ad1 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{W}}}d7?! (As Grivas points out, 15...e6?! 16.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{W}}}h4, is unpleasant for Black. Either \textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}e4 or \textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}e5 on the next move will create havoc in Black’s position.) 16.g3 (16.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{W}}}h4 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}g4++; 16.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{W}}}xd6?! \textit{\textbf{\texttt{W}}}xd6 17.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{C}}}xd6 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}g7++) 16...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}e6! 17.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{W}}}h4 h6 and Black should be able to defend and keep the pawn.

After 15.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}e4 Black’s safest option is 15...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}e6, when a possible continuation is: 16.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{W}}}h4 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{B}}}g6
(or 16...h6 17.ad1 [17.d4 eg6 17...eg7] 17.h4 18...f6 19.xf5 xf5 20.xf5 ef8 21.ad1 ef6 22.h3 af4 23.af3 eg6 Black keeps the pawn again.

15...eg6!
This is a key move that protects d6 and f6 in case White plays the knight to e4.

I do not like 15...d7 16.e4 ef6 16...g7?? 17.xg5! eg6 18.xh7 d5 19.ad1 ef6 20.xg8 ef6 21.xc3 eg6 22.xg6 fxg6 23.xe6= although, objectively, this is about equal.

15...a5 is not a bad move, but it is not flexible; the queen might be needed on d7 and it is better to improve the position of either the g8-rook or the c4-bishop first. 16.xe4 (after 16.e4 ef6 17.xh7 eg7 18.xh4 eg6 I still prefer Black, due to his bishop pair and centralization) 16...c7 17.xh7 eg6 One might wonder what Black gained by not playing...eg6 immediately.

16.ad1
After 16.ac1 Black can consider either keeping the pawn with 16...h6 or playing more actively with 16...e6 17.xh7 exf4=.

The materialistic 16.xh7?? is dubious because of 16...b6! 17.ab1 (17.h8 xb2 18.ab1 eg2=) 17...e6 18.h8 ef7 19.h7 xh7 and Black takes over the initiative: 20.e4 ef4 21.a3 c5

16...a5!
Defending against de5.

16...g7 17.xh7 ef8 18.fe5 ef6 19.xf5 &e6 20.xf4 eg8

16...d7?? 17.de5 ef6 18.de4 ef6 19.xc4 ef4 20.xb7 ef8 21...f4

17.xh7 ef5!
This is a nice square for the black queen. Now 18.xg2= is a threat.

18.de4 ef6 19.ge3 ef4

Now White cannot prevent the exchange of queens when Black continues with...f6. Black is clearly better due to his bishop pair and central pawn mass.

20.d4 ef7

I advise you to spend some quality time with this analysis before you take it to the practical level. It is a sharp line and there are not many general principles that can save you if White comes up with a move that is not analysed above. Still, I believe Black is better – which is why I recommend this line.

Game 8
Pavasovic – Petkov
Zadar 2005

1.e4 c5 2.de3 d6 3.xb5 de7 4.0-0 ef7 5.e1 ef6 6.c3 a6 7.cc4 b5 8.cc2

If White plays 8..b3 Black should continue as in the main game with 8..g4 9.d3 e6! 10.h3 h5! followed by ...e7 and ...0-0. The bishop on b3 would be slightly better off on c2 in this line.
Chapter 3 - Beating $2 \check{Q}f3 \check{Q}c6 3.\check{Q}b5$ with $3...d6$

8...g4!

Otherwise White will play h2-h3. For example, 8...e5 9.h3 $\check{Q}e7$ 10.d4 0-0 leads to a position from the Ruy Lopez Chigorin where Black is a tempo up - White has played $\check{Q}a4-c2$ in one go and Black has avoided the $\check{Q}c6-a5-c6$ manoeuvre. I think Black is all right here, but it is a bit outside my scope here to explain such a complex position.

9.d3

There are a couple of alternatives:

9.a4?! g6!

At first I thought 9...b4?! was interesting, but 10.h3! spoils all the fun (10.a5?! $\check{Q}d7$ 11.d4 $\check{Q}xd4$ 12.$\check{Q}xd4$ $\check{Q}xf3$ 13.gxf3 e5 was unclear in Xu Yuhua – Harika, Beijing 2008, but 11.$\check{Q}a4$ would have been stronger): 10...$\check{Q}h5$

However, 9...$\check{B}b8$ is interesting.

10.h3

10.axb5 axb5 11.$\check{B}xa8$ $\check{W}xa8$ 12.h3 $\check{Q}xf3$

13.$\check{W}xf3$ $\check{Q}g7$ 14.e5 $\check{Q}xe5$ 15.$\check{Q}e5$ $\check{Q}d7$

16.$\check{Q}e1$ $\check{W}a6$ is equal.

10...$\check{Q}xf3$ 11.$\check{W}xf3$

We have transposed to the 9.h3 line below.

9.h3 $\check{Q}xf3$!

9...$\check{Q}h5$ 10.a4! leads to an improved version of the 9.a4 line.

10.$\check{W}xf3$ g6 11.a4!

This is extremely dangerous for Black, unless one knows some of the traps beforehand and how to avoid them.

11...$\check{Q}b8$

Other moves are worse:

a) 11...h4 12.a5 $\check{Q}d7$ 13.$\check{Q}a4$! White has strong pressure.

b) 11...$\check{Q}d7$ 12.axb5 axb5 13.$\check{Q}xa8$ $\check{W}xa8$

14.e5! $\check{Q}xe5$ 15.$\check{Q}xe5$ $\check{Q}xe5$ 16.$\check{Q}e4$ $\check{Q}d7$

17.$\check{W}xf7$ was unpleasant for Black in S. Zhigalko – Sjugirov, Gaziantep 2008.

12.axb5 axb5 13.$\check{Q}a3$ $\check{W}a5!!$

This is the only decent move here: 13...$\check{Q}g7$?! 14.$\check{Q}xb5$ $\check{Q}xb5$ 15.$\check{Q}a4$! $\check{W}b6$! 16.$\check{Q}e2$ c4! 17.d4± is dangerous for Black.

10...$\check{Q}d3$

11.$\check{Q}d3$ $\check{Q}xf3$

12.$\check{Q}d4$ 13.$\check{Q}e4$ 0-0 14.$\check{Q}d4$ $\check{Q}c7$! is harmless.

14...$\check{Q}h6$?

14...$\check{Q}g7$ 15.$\check{Q}xe4$ 0-0 16.$\check{Q}d4$ $\check{Q}c7$! is terrible for Black.

15.$\check{Q}b4$

15.$\check{Q}xb5$ $\check{Q}xb5$ 16.$\check{Q}xe5$ $\check{Q}xe5$ 17.$\check{Q}xe5$ $\check{Q}xe5$

18.$\check{Q}c6$ is no longer dangerous, because of 18...$\check{Q}f8$ 19.$\check{W}xb5$ $\check{W}xb5$ 20.$\check{Q}xb5$ $\check{Q}g7$ followed by ...$\check{Q}d8$!

15...$\check{Q}b4$ 16.$\check{Q}c2$ $\check{W}b6$ 17.$\check{Q}xb4$ $\check{Q}xb4$

18.$\check{Q}xb4$ 0-0

Black is fine.

9...e6
It is a mistake to play $9...g6$, after which $10.Qbd2 Qg7$ 11.h3 $\spadesuit$xf3 12.$\spadesuit$xf3 leads to a position where White is ready to play d3-d4 with a clear advantage.

10.$\spadesuit$bd2 $\spadesuit$e7 11.h3 $\spadesuit$h5 12.$\spadesuit$f1

This position is very similar to the one we saw after move 10 of Game 5, the difference being in the placement of White’s light-squared bishop. In some ways the bishop seems to be better off on c2 (the $\spadesuit$d2-f1-g3 manoeuvre is easier to accomplish), but it is also further away from the white king and is less likely to attack the b5-pawn if White continues with a4 and axb5.

12...0-0 13.$\spadesuit$g3 $\spadesuit$g6 14.$\spadesuit$h4 d5 15.$\spadesuit$xe6 hxg6 16.e5

Exchanging pawns is not especially ambitious:

16.exd5 $\spadesuit$xd5

Fabiano Caruana explains that he prefers this move to 16...$\spadesuit$xd5 since the knight on f6 restricts its counterpart on g3.

17.$\spadesuit$e2 $\spadesuit$fd8 18.a3

This move is prophylaxis against ...b4, but Black is not really into that move and, as Caruana points out, after a2-a3 there is no way for White to harass the Black queen with $\spadesuit$b3 later.

18.$\spadesuit$f4 $\spadesuit$h5 19.$\spadesuit$hx5 $\spadesuit$hx5 20.$\spadesuit$e4 $\spadesuit$d5 was not too convincing in Smirin – Tiviakov, Gothenburg 2005, but 18...$\spadesuit$ac8 seems all right for Black.

18.$\spadesuit$e3 is also best met with 18...$\spadesuit$ac8.

18...$\spadesuit$ac8 19.$\spadesuit$e3 $\spadesuit$e5! 20.$\spadesuit$f3

Caruana gives the variation: 20.$\spadesuit$e4 $\spadesuit$xe4 21.$\spadesuit$xe4 $\spadesuit$g5? 22.$\spadesuit$ad1 $\spadesuit$xe3 23.$\spadesuit$xe3 g5

This illustrates just what Black is wishing for.

20...$\spadesuit$c7 21.$\spadesuit$f4

Caruana points out the tactic: 21.$\spadesuit$e4? $\spadesuit$xd4

21...$\spadesuit$d6 22.$\spadesuit$g5 $\spadesuit$xp3 23.$\spadesuit$xp3 $\spadesuit$xp3 24.$\spadesuit$fg3 $\spadesuit$ed5 25.$\spadesuit$e3 $\spadesuit$e5 26.$\spadesuit$ed1 c4 27.d4 $\spadesuit$ec6 28.g4 $\spadesuit$ed7 29.$\spadesuit$e1 $\spadesuit$e5 30.$\spadesuit$ad2 $\spadesuit$a5

In Godena – Caruana, Martina Franca 2007, Black went on to win a nice game by continuing with ...$\spadesuit$pb3, ...a5 and ...b4. For those who would like to have a closer look at this game, it is excellently annotated by Caruana in ChessBase Magazine.

16...$\spadesuit$bd7 17.d4 $\spadesuit$e8

17...$\spadesuit$fd7 seems more logical, to be followed by ...$\spadesuit$ac8. It will take White some time to whip up an attack on the kingside, and there is no reason why Black should play with only one rook on the queenside.

Also good is 17...b4! which seems like a move that will be played whatever happens.

18.$\spadesuit$e2

18.a3? cxd4 19.cxd4 $\spadesuit$xd4 20.$\spadesuit$xe6 $\spadesuit$eg6 21.$\spadesuit$xd4 $\spadesuit$e5 leads to catastrophe for White.

18...b4 19.$\spadesuit$bd3 bxc3 20.bxc3 $\spadesuit$a5 21.$\spadesuit$ad2 cxd4 22.cxd4 $\spadesuit$xb4

Black is very happy to make this exchange, partly because the dark squares in the white position are weakened, and partly because Black is slightly cramped and is happy to get more space for the remaining pieces.

23.$\spadesuit$xb4 $\spadesuit$xb4 24.a3 $\spadesuit$xd3 25.$\spadesuit$xd3 $\spadesuit$e4!
Chapter 3 - Beating 2.\textit{\texttt{Q}}f3 \textit{\texttt{Q}}c6 3.\textit{\texttt{B}}b5 with 3...d6

At first I found 25...\textit{\texttt{Q}}b6 intending ...\textit{\texttt{Q}}c4 and ...\textit{\texttt{B}}b8 quite appetizing for Black, but then I changed my mind as h3-b4-h5, followed by \textit{\texttt{B}}f4 should not be taken lightly.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
8 & 7 & 6 & 5 & 4 & 3 & 2 & 1 \\
\hline
a & b & c & d & e & f & g & h \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

26.\textit{\texttt{B}}eb1 \textit{\texttt{Q}}b8 27.\textit{\texttt{B}}b3 \textit{\texttt{Q}}c6 28.\textit{\texttt{B}}ab1 \textit{\texttt{B}}c8 29.g3 \textit{\texttt{Q}}a7 30.\textit{\texttt{B}}g2

It would be a mistake to play 30.\textit{\texttt{B}}h8 \textit{\texttt{Q}}b5 31.\textit{\texttt{B}}xc4 dxc4 32.\textit{\texttt{B}}xc8\dag because after 32...\textit{\texttt{B}}h7 White's coordination is appalling. For instance: 33.\textit{\texttt{B}}g2 g5! (33...\textit{\texttt{B}}xa3?! 34.\textit{\texttt{Q}}g1!) 34.a4 \textit{\texttt{B}}xa4 35.\textit{\texttt{B}}c1 \textit{\texttt{A}}a2 Black keeps the c-pawn.

30...\textit{\texttt{Q}}b5 31.\textit{\texttt{B}}b2!

White covers the second rank and although Black has a certain pressure, there is nothing to be done with it.

31...\textit{\texttt{A}}a4

31...\textit{\texttt{A}}a4 32.\textit{\texttt{B}}h2 \textit{\texttt{B}}xd4 doesn't work due to 33.\textit{\texttt{B}}b4 and Black loses a piece.

32.\textit{\texttt{B}}c3 \textit{\texttt{B}}c4 33.h4 \textit{\texttt{B}}d8 34.\textit{\texttt{B}}e3 \textit{\texttt{B}}c7 35.\textit{\texttt{B}}d3 \textit{\texttt{B}}c6 36.\textit{\texttt{B}}h2 \textit{\texttt{B}}c7 37.\textit{\texttt{B}}g2 \textit{\texttt{B}}e7 38.\textit{\texttt{B}}e3 \textit{\texttt{B}}c8 39.\textit{\texttt{B}}c3 \textit{\texttt{B}}xc3 40.\textit{\texttt{B}}xc3 \textit{\texttt{B}}ac4 41.\textit{\texttt{B}}bc2 \textit{\texttt{B}}c7 42.\textit{\texttt{B}}xc4 dxc4

This does not change the balance of power; Black is still symbolically better, but is not capable of strengthening his position since the c-pawn must be protected.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
8 & 7 & 6 & 5 & 4 & 3 & 2 & 1 \\
\hline
a & b & c & d & e & f & g & h \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

43.\textit{\texttt{B}}c3 \textit{\texttt{B}}c6\dag 44.\textit{\texttt{B}}h2 \textit{\texttt{B}}d5 45.\textit{\texttt{B}}c1 \textit{\texttt{B}}b8 46.\textit{\texttt{B}}c3 a5 47.\textit{\texttt{B}}b1 \textit{\texttt{B}}d8 48.\textit{\texttt{B}}d1 g5 49.\textit{\texttt{B}}xg5 \textit{\texttt{B}}e7 50.\textit{\texttt{B}}g1 \textit{\texttt{B}}b8 51.\textit{\texttt{B}}f3 \textit{\texttt{B}}g6 52.\textit{\texttt{B}}c1 \textit{\texttt{B}}c8 53.\textit{\texttt{B}}f2 \textit{\texttt{B}}b5 54.\textit{\texttt{B}}c2 \textit{\texttt{B}}b8 55.\textit{\texttt{B}}g4 \textit{\texttt{B}}g7 56.\textit{\texttt{B}}g3 a4 57.\textit{\texttt{B}}b2 \textit{\texttt{B}}d5 58.\textit{\texttt{B}}b4 \textit{\texttt{B}}c6 59.\textit{\texttt{B}}g2 \textit{\texttt{B}}g8 60.\textit{\texttt{B}}g3 \textit{\texttt{B}}g7 61.\textit{\texttt{B}}g2 \textit{\texttt{B}}g8 62.\textit{\texttt{B}}f2 \textit{\texttt{B}}g7 63.\textit{\texttt{B}}g3

\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}

Conclusion

There are a number of critical positions in these lines. My recommendation in Game 1 is quite sharp and it is important to have a good idea what to do against 8.\textit{\texttt{B}}d3\dag. Game 2 is on reasonably solid theoretical ground, but further developments should be monitored closely, especially if you intend to play it against GMs. Game 3 and 4 hold little to fear, but Game 5 is a key battleground and should be studied with some care. Especially my recommendation of 15...e5 in the 13.-\textit{\texttt{B}}xg6 line needs further practical tests. The variations I have advocated in Game 6 and 7 are both sharp, but quite reliable, although I would definitely sleep more soundly if I had memorized 14...\textit{\texttt{B}}c8\dag in the sixth game. Finally, after 9.a4 (or 9.h3 and 11.a4) in Game 8, Black is up for something of a balancing act and those who do not like it should consider 8...e5.
Tiger Hillarp Persson

Beating 2.\( \text{Bf3} \) d6 3.\( \text{Bb5} \) with 3...\( \text{Qd7} \)!

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.\( \text{Bf3} \) d6 3.\( \text{Bb5} \)

3...\( \text{Qd7} \)

Game 1 – 4. c3
Game 2 – 4.\( \text{d4} \) cxd4 5.\( \text{Wxd4} \) a6 6.\( \text{Qxd7} \)\( \text{f3} \)g5
Game 3 – 4.\( \text{d4} \) cxd4 5.\( \text{Wxd4} \) a6 6.\( \text{Qxd7} \)\( \text{f3} \)g5
Game 4 – 4.\( \text{c4} \)!
Game 5 – 4.\( \text{0-0} \)

103
107
113
115
117
Chapter 4 – Beating 2.\texttt{\texttt{d}f3} d6 3.\texttt{\texttt{b}b5} with 3...\texttt{d}d7!

1.e4 c5 2.\texttt{\texttt{d}f3} d6

This move is generally played by theory-loaded hotheads who aim for maximum complications in either a Najdorf or a Dragon. It should not be a shock that some White players will pass up the offer.

3.\texttt{\texttt{b}b5}!

There are three main types of players that launch the bishop to b5 in this position:

1. Those who are more afraid of losing a game than they are happy to win one and;
2. Those who are more afraid of losing a game than they are happy to win one;

And you can guess the third type yourself.

Once – in a weak moment – against Tiviakov, I played this very move myself and was completely outplayed. It is my humble opinion that with White you should try to win and I was already psychologically lost after my third move. I knew that deep down I did not want to win!

In this position 3...\texttt{d}d7 has traditionally been considered a simple enough way to get an equal position. However, after 4.\texttt{\texttt{x}xd}7\texttt{\texttt{W}xd}7 5.c4

\texttt{\texttt{d}f6} 6.\texttt{\texttt{c}c}3 g6 7.d4 cxd4 8.\texttt{\texttt{x}xd}4 \texttt{\texttt{g}g}7 White has recently turned to 9.f3 0–0 10.\texttt{\texttt{e}e}3 \texttt{\texttt{e}e}8 11.b3, when it is not so clear that Black can equalize. For more details, see Chapter 5.

3...\texttt{d}d7!

1., for one, am quite happy to pick up the gauntlet – “You want a draw, do you? Well, come on then, try and get it!” To be truthful, for a long time I thought this line was just too dangerous for Black due to 4.d4, but a new idea that is seen in Games 2 and 3 made me change my mind. Now White has a number of different ways to continue. In the first game we have a look at the critical lines that arise after 4.c3. Then, in Games 2 and 3, we find a way to repel White’s initiative after 4.d4. After that, in Game 4, the drawish 4.c4 is dealt with and finally, in Game 5, we take a look at the natural 4.0–0.

**Game 1**

Rytshagov – Efimenko

Istanbul 2003

1.e4 c5 2.\texttt{\texttt{d}f3} d6 3.\texttt{\texttt{b}b5} \texttt{d}d7 4.c3

This move is only the third most popular alternative for White, but I believe that it is more dangerous than is commonly thought.
4...\(\text{g}6\)!

4...a6 5.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{g}6\) gives White the extra opportunity 6.\(\text{c}2\). Playing ...\(\text{g}6\) immediately has the advantage of forcing the queen to go to e2, which — although it is not a bad spot for the queen — slightly restricts White’s options.

5.\(\text{e}2\)

5.d3 is not a serious attempt to gain an advantage, but White might try to make the argument that the black knight is somewhat misplaced on d7, giving White time to play his pawn to d4 in a less direct manner. Still, after 5...\(\text{g}6\)! 6.0-0 \(\text{g}7\) 7.\(\text{e}1\) a6 8.\(\text{a}4\) 0-0 9.d4 b5 10.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{b}7\) it seems that Black is doing well. A possible continuation is 11.\(\text{c}4\) (or 11.d5 \(\text{e}8\) and Black aims to continue with ...e6) 11...\(\text{c}7\) 12.\(\text{b}3\), when 12...e5 leads to equality whereas 12...e6 is more ambitious.

5...a6 6.\(\text{a}4\)

Now we arrive at a junction. There are a number of ideas Black can choose that involve playing ...c4 at some point. For instance Black can try the immediate 6...c4. Then 7.\(\text{xd}7\)† \(\text{xd}7\) 8.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{b}5\) gave Black a terrible initiative in Nezad – Zagrebelsky, Doha 2003. The problem in this variation is if White just continues calmly with 7.\(\text{c}2\), threatening to take the pawn. Now 7...b5 8.b3 is unappetizing (since Black will end up with a central minority), and 7...\(\text{c}7\) 8.a4! followed by b3 leads to similar problems for Black. I definitely prefer keeping the c-pawn on c5.

6.b5! 7.\(\text{c}2\)

If 7.\(\text{b}3\) then 7...c4 is at least fine for Black after 8.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{b}7\) 9.b3 (9.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{c}5\)! is bad for White) 9...\(\text{c}7\). Here Black has an extra tempo compared to the lines where Black plays ...c4 before the bishop has moved from a4.

7...\(\text{b}7\)

I prefer to play this position in the most flexible manner possible. Historically 7...e5 has been the main move here, and although there may not be anything wrong with it, I think it is slightly inconsistent to play a very sharp line and then go for something like this: 8.d4 \(\text{e}7\) 9.0-0 0-0 10.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{b}7\) (indirectly protecting the b5-pawn since e4 will also be hanging) 11.\(\text{b}1\) \(\text{b}6\) 12.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{d}5\) The Pawn structure is symmetrical and lacking in dynamic possibilities. In Liiva – Gopal, Beijing 2008, Black tried to play for a win and eventually self-destructed.

Once, thorough a slightly different move order I got the position after 7...\(\text{g}6\) 8.0-0 against Tiviakov. It did not go well for me: 8...\(\text{g}7\) 9.d4 \(\text{c}x\text{d}4\) 10.\(\text{c}x\text{d}4\) \(\text{b}6\)! I had no clue how to proceed and managed to quickly get into trouble. 11.\(\text{h}3\) 0-0 12.\(\text{b}2\) \(\text{b}7\) 13.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{c}8\) 14.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{a}4\)! Hillarp Persson – Tiviakov, Helsingor 2009. Instead of 9.d4, I believe 9.\(\text{a}4\) (or 8.\(\text{a}4\)) is stronger (before Black puts the knight on b6)!. Still, this line is an interesting alternative for Black.

Maybe 7...\(\text{b}6\)! is possible, intending 8.d4 \(\text{c}x\text{d}4\) 9.\(\text{c}x\text{d}4\) \(\text{g}6\) etc. If there had been more games with this idea, I might have chosen my game against Tiviakov as the main game.
8. \(d4\) \(e6\)

This stops White from playing \(e4-e5\) and prepares to finish Black's development. I would think twice about taking on \(d4\) before White has developed his knight to \(d2\) (so that it cannot go to \(c3\)).

9.0-0 \(\&e7\)

Not 9...\(\&c7\)?! when 10.a4! \(\text{cxd4}\) 11.axb5 followed by \(\&xa8\) and \(\text{Qxd4}\) is problematic for Black. In our main line the queen is ready to take back on \(a8\) (if White opens the a-file), effectively creating a counter-attack on the \(e4\)-pawn.

10. \(\&bd2\)

Another option for White is 10.a4 when Black can reply calmly with 10...0-0, since 11.axb5 axb5 12.\(\&xa8\) \(\&xa8\) 13.\(\&bd2\) gives Black two excellent ways to continue:

a) 13...\(e5\)! Black is fine, because White has opened up the queenside prematurely.

b) 13...\(\text{cxd4}\) 14.\(\&xd4\) (14.\(\text{cxd4}\) \(\&c8\) with initiative) 14...b4 15.\(\text{cxb4}\) \(\&c8\) Black has nice compensation.

10. \(\text{cxd4}\)

It is interesting to first play 10...\(\&c7\):

a) This would clearly be the right choice if White had to move the c2-bishop. 11.\(\&d3\) c4 12.\(\&c2\) 0-0 13.\(e5\) \(\&d5\) looks fine for Black.

b) The critical continuation is: 11...\(e5\)! Can Black find enough space for his pieces? 11...\(\text{dxe5}\) (11...\(\text{d5?!}\)?) 12.\(\text{dxe5}\) \(\&d5\) This complex position is very difficult to evaluate. My intuition favours the White side, but it not so easy to prove an advantage. A possible continuation is: 13.\(\&e1\) \(\&f4\) 14.\(\&e3\) \(\&g6\) 15.\(e4\) 0-0 (maybe 15.g3 intending h2-h4-h5 is stronger, but Black should still be okay) 16.b3 \(\&fd8\) 17.\(\&b2\) \(\&b6\) Black is doing fine. All in all, 10...\(\&c7\) may be playable, but I feel it is a bit risky.

11. \(\text{cxd4}\)

11.\(\text{cxd4?!}\) leads to a somewhat strange Sicilian structure, where Black would normally (at least) equalize with a well timed ...\(d5\). 11...\(\&c7\) 12.\(\&e1\) (otherwise Black just goes ...\(d5\) next move) 12...b4! I prefer Black's position.

11...\(\&c7\)

I'm not too happy about placing the queen here, since it will soon have to move again. There are a number of alternatives:

11...\(\&c8\) 12.\(\&d3\) 0-0 13.\(a4\) \(\&xa4\) 14.\(\&xa4\) and the black a-pawn is weak.

11...\(\&b6\) has the advantage of stopping the \(\&d2-b3\), \(\&c1-d2\), \(\&a5\) plan, but the downside is that it lets White keep the bishop on \(c2\). Still, is that really a problem? After 12.\(\&b3\) (12.b3 0-0 13.\(\&b2\) \(\&fc8\) 14.\(\&d3\) is similar to the main game) 12...0-0 13.\(\&f4\) (13.\(\&d2\) a5 gives Black the initiative) 13...\(\&fc8\) 14.\(\&fc1\) \(\&f8\) the position is equal, albeit complex.
11...0-0 is flexible and possibly the best way to proceed without showing one's cards too soon. For instance: 12.e5 dxe5 13.dxe5 d5 14.Qe4 Bc8 Black is creating counterplay just in time to counter White's kingside aggression.

12.d3
Here and on the next move I believe the critical line is to go 12.Qb3! when Black has a choice of different plans:

a) The most challenging way to proceed is: 12...a5 But in this line the queen would have been better on b6 rather than c7 (which is the reason I find 11...b6 interesting). 13.Qd3! (after 13.d5?! exd5 14.exd5 [14.Qfd4?! dxe4 15.Qxb5 Bb6] 14...0-0 15.Qg5 Qxd5 Black has the initiative) 13...a4 14.Qbd2 b4 15.a3 bxa3 16.bxa3 0-0 17.Qb2 Bc8 Black has almost equalized, although the a4-pawn could turn out to be weak in the endgame.

b) The safe alternative is: 12...0-0 13.d3 Bc8 14.Qd2 Qb6! Black gets enough counterplay by continuing ...Qc4 and ...d5.

12...0-0 13.b3
After this move I believe Black is fully equal. The strongest move seems to be 13.Qb3! with similar ideas to the previous note.

13.Bc8
A somewhat circuitous way to proceed is 13...Bc6 with the idea of building a battery on the a8-h1 diagonal: 14.Qb2 Qb7 15.Qac1 Bc8 16.Qc2 Qa8 17.Qfc1 Qb7 18.Qa3 Black will have to play ...Qb8 to meet the threat of e4-e5. There must be a better way for Black than this.

14.Qb2 Qc6 15.Qac1 Bb7 16.Qc2 Qf8 17.Qfc1 Qd7 18.Bxc8 18.g3??

This is generally a good move in these kinds of structures, especially when a black knight is heading towards g6, since it can easily be expelled from there with h4-h5 without it creating havoc on f4. However, I believe Black can respond with: 18...Exc2 19.Exc2 Bc8 20.e5 dxe5 21.Bxc8 Bxc8 22.dxe5 Qd5 23.Qe4 Qc6 Playing ...Qb7 next should suffice to neutralize the White initiative (...and eventually grab it ourselves).

18...Exc8 19.Exc8 Bxc8

The position is now clearly outside our opening preparation, but it is the kind of position that I would aim for with Black. If White played 3.Qb5+ in order to get a slight advantage in a solid position with few pieces on the board, then the plan has clearly misfired.
20.\text{c}e1 \text{d}8 21.\text{c}e2 \text{c}6 22.\text{f}b4 \text{b}7 23.e5?! 
White loses his patience and decides to do something. Doing nothing was preferable.

23...dxe5 24.dxe5 \text{d}5
The position after 24...\text{d}6 25.\text{e}4 \text{g}6 26.\text{d}3 \text{b}6 27.\text{g}3 \text{e}7 28.\text{xb}7 \text{xb}7 29.\text{e}4 is the best that White could have hoped for, but it is still very comfortable for Black after 29...\text{d}5.

25.\text{xd}5 \text{xd}5
According to my computer program this position is dead equal, but from a practical, human point of view it is not. Black’s position is easier to play due to the passive \text{b}2-bishop, the weak squares around the \text{e}5-pawn and the fact that things have turned out differently from White’s original aspirations.

26.\text{e}4?! 
The \text{d}5-bishop seemed too strong, but the \text{d}3-bishop was the only active minor piece for White and it was better to retain it and continue with 26.\text{e}4 planning 26...\text{g}6 27.\text{c}2 with excellent drawing chances.

26...\text{c}6 27.\text{xd}5 \text{xd}5 28.\text{f}3
This is a clear sign that something is wrong with the white position; the knight now only fulfils a defensive task.

28...\text{g}6 29.g3 \text{h}6 30.\text{g}2 \text{c}7 31.\text{e}3 \text{c}6
Even stronger is 31...\text{e}7 32.\text{a}7 \text{c}6 with the devious idea 33.a3? \text{f}5 and there is no defence against ...\text{b}6 followed by ...\text{c}5. Now White blunders:

32.\text{c}3? \text{b}7?
It isn’t too hard to spot that Black can win by: 32...\text{d}5

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
8 & 7 & 6 & 5 & 4 & 3 & 2 & 1 \\
\hline
& & & & & & & \\
\hline
& & & & & & & \\
\hline
& & & & & & & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Did this in fact happen, or is it one of those post-mortems on a digital board that is playing a trick on us?

33.\text{c}5 \text{d}8 34.\text{d}6 \text{c}7 35.\text{d}7
\text{b}7

In a sense everything went according to plan for Black in this game, but the end was a disappointment. If you feel uncomfortable with this kind of slightly cramped position, then 7...\text{c}5 is available as a solid alternative.

\textbf{Game 2}

\begin{center}
\text{Movsesian – Topalov}
\end{center}
Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010

1.e4 c5 2.\text{f}3 d6 3.\text{b}5? \text{d}7 4.d4
There are a number of less dangerous alternatives for White here:
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

4.a4 Qg6 5.Qc3 a6 6.Qxg6† Qxg6 7.Ed4† It is hard to see how White will be able to avoid playing d2-d4 (which will lead to play similar to the main game).

4.Qc3 is another decent-looking move, but Black can force White’s hand by playing: 4...a6! (4...Qg6 5.d4 exd4 6.Qxd4 e5 7.Ed3 is outside our repertoire, since White has not yet exchanged on d7) 5.Qxd7† Qxd7 6.d4 cxd4 7.Qxd4 e5 8.Qe6 h6 Again we have something similar to the main game.

4.0-0 might be the trickiest move order, when 4...a6! 5.Qxd7† Qxd7 6.d4 leads to the main game, while 6.Qc1 is seen in the final game in this chapter.

4...cxd4 5.Ed4
5.Qxd4 is possible in this and many similar situations in these lines, but it is generally not a good idea for White to combine d4/Exd4 with Qb5. One reason is 5...Qg6 6.Qc3 a6 and White has a choice between two evils; either exchange the bishop, leaving Black with the slightly better chances in the middlegame, or go back with the bishop when Black will get a line from the Najdorf with an extra tempo. Black also has a strong alternative in 6...e6, giving White similar problems to deal with.

5...a6 6.Qxg6† Qxg6
This is the first critical position in this critical variation.

7.Qg5
This is the most dangerous set-up. White stops the e-pawn from moving and simultaneously makes it less appetizing to place the knight on f6. White has a number of alternatives:

7.Qc3 is nothing to worry about, since 7...e5 8.Qd3 h6 is similar to the next game, with the difference that Black can choose when/if to play ...Qc8.

7.0-0 Qc8 8.Qc3 e5 9.Qd3 h6 is seen in the next game.

7.e4 Bologan states that this “is also possible but after ...e5 followed by ...h6, ...Qf6 Black feels comfortable.” Personally I like 7...Qc8, after which 8.0-0 is covered in the notes to the next game.

7...Qc8??
During a training session with the Swedish national team just before the Olympiad in Dresden in 2008, some team mates and I analysed this position, following a suggestion of Slavko Cicak’s. The more we looked, the more we liked it, and in the upcoming Olympiad we got to play the ...Qc8??-idea no less than four times, scoring 3/4! The idea — which was originally played by Bologan — is to collect as much information about the white set-up as possible before doing anything with the knight and the e-pawn.

8.Qc3 h6 9.Qxh6 e5!
Now 10.Qxg6 loses a piece, so White is forced to move the queen.

10.Qd3!
This has been by far the most common move in this position, but there is something to be said for the awkward-looking:
Chapter 4 – Beating 2...d6 3...b5† with 3...d7!

10...a7?!  

The position is balanced. It's not to everybody's taste to play such a position, but it is a price I am prepared to pay in order to make life difficult for my opponent.

10...g5  
10...e7?! 11.xe7 xxe7 12.xb7 c6  
13.e4 0-0 14.0-0-0 g4 15.e3 c7  
Black had enough compensation and went on to win in Domont – Gallagher, Saas Almagell 2005. However I have a feeling that there are improvements for White.

11.g3 c6!  
This seems okay for Black, although the position definitely needs to be tested in practice.

11...c7?! 12.d5 xxc2 13.0-0 is obviously very dangerous for Black.

12.0-0-0  
This is more testing than:

a) 12.e4 13.e4 14.e4 e4 15.f5 0-0-0 1 do not see how White will break up the black centre – it is hard even to come up with a good suggestion for a move.

b) 12.e5 White has lost some time forcing the black bishop to c6 rather than e6, but I don't think the bishop is significantly worse off on c6.

12...c7 13.e4! 13...f6 14.e4 e4 15.f3 is unclear.

13...f6!  
13...g7?! 14.fxg7 15.e5 is very messy.

14.e5 e5 15.d3 a5! 16.e4 b5 17.xc7 xc7 18.xf2 d8!

10...g5!  
...the first step on the right rope. Black has to play a number of strong moves in a row now, in order not to lose. But there are benefits too – the position becomes complex and the better prepared opponent has good reason to hope for success.

It is possible to go wrong immediately with 10...e7?! 11.xe7 xxe7 12.0-0-0 xxe6 13.e4 and Black has no defence against xh6 followed by xh6.

11.g3 f6  
I quite like the black side of this position for a number of reasons. First of all, Black has the bishop pair; secondly, the minor pieces on g3 and f3 are very passive; and thirdly, White will have to spend time in order to get these pieces to decent squares. The price Black has paid for this is having a pawn on g5 that clearly does not belong there, White can attack with h2-h4, and the f3-square might be weak later on. Still, Black is a bit ahead in development and so can hope to force White onto the defensive before he can successfully carry out his plans.
12.h4!
This is the strongest move. I have faced:
12...d2  a6 13...f3 a5 14...b3 c7 15.0-0-0 b5 16.a3 e7 17...h1!!
Advancing the h-pawn is still correct: 17.h4! g4 18...b1 c4! 19...d2 a5! The standard
plan. 20...d2 20...d5...d5 21...exd5 b4 22...xb4 axb4 23...xb4 gxf3 24...xf3...g8
25...e1...e2 26...d2...f3 and Black is better) 20...g8! 21...hg1!...g6! 22...xa5
d5 23...exd5...a5 24...xa5...a5 25...xa5...g3 26...e1...xa2? 27...xa2...f4) 22...xa2?? 23...xa2...xc2
12...g4??
This is a new try from Topalov. I do not see
anything obviously wrong with the old move:
12...g8 13...h5...h5 14.0-0-0...c7!
14...a5 This is an interesting but probably flawed idea. 15...d2...e6 16...b3...c7!
(Bologan mentions 16...xb3 17...xb3...a1?? 18...b1 when "Black's attack is out of fuel.") 17...b1...e7 18...f3 b5 19...a3...c4
20...d2 a5 This position would be similar to my game with Mikheev above, but for the
open h-file. White keeps the better chances after 21...d5!...d5 22...exd5...d8 23...f2.
15...b1 b5 16...h1
16...d2 seems more logical to me: 16...b4
17...d5...d5 18...exd5 f5 19...f3 g4 This is
better for Black according to Bologan, but
I do not think it is so clear. After 20...e1,
I believe Black should hurry to exchange
queens with 20...c5 21...b3...f3 22...f3
...c3 23...xc3...xc3 24...c4...b5 25...d3
...wc4 26...xc4...g7 27...bc4...gc7 28...h4
g7 29...h5 f4 with equality.
16...b4??
This is a very ambitious move. Instead
16...c4! is safe for Black:

```
17...xc4 18...d2 a5 19...b1 b4 20.axb4 axb4
21...d2 0-0 22...xb4...a8 23...ac1...fc8
24...d4...c7 25...e3...a4 26...d3...a6
```

![Diagram](image)
The bad position of the black king. Which actually makes the game with equal chances for both sides. Also Black has to show a bit of care. Indeed.

19...d2 f5! 20.f3 g4!

According to Bologan, he should have preferred this to the overly slow 20...g7 from Degraeve – Bologan, Belfort 2002.

21.a2 gxf3 22.gxf3 g2 23.e3 a5 24.g1 exg1 25.exg1 a4 26.g8 wxe7 27.hh8 a3 28.b3 wxc3

This appears balanced, but it is a long and shaky line, so 16...e4 looks like the best option.

13.d2
Planning h5 and h4, followed by d1-f3, or perhaps just d3 (although the latter seems less like a plan and more like a way of getting the knight out of the way).

13...b5 14.a3?! This seems a bit meek to me. More critical is:

14.h5!

White intends to play his bishop to h4.

14...b4 15.d1 w6b6!

Those who feel adventurous could try 15...b5 16.b3 w7d7 17.exb4! exc2 18.a4 xd2! 19.xd2 xc4, but I doubt whether Black has enough for the exchange here.

16.e3 b5 17.w b3

17.e4 c6 18.b3 xc4 It is important to take on c4 before White can play f2-f3 and take back with the other knight. 19.bxc4 e7 20.h4 d7 This somewhat unclear position is probably better for Black.

17.a5!
The point behind ...w6b6.

18.c4 18.a4 d7 19.a4 exh5 20.d5 w6c6 21.d3 bxc3 22.bxc3 w7g7 23.g3 w6e6 24.wb1 wc5! 25.e4 w6d5 26.exd5 f5 seems promising for Black.

18...bxc3 19.bxc3 w6c5 20.c4 d6 21.d5 w6d5 22.exd5 w6d7

Black will play ...f5 next, and he is at least fine.

14...w6e6

15.0–0 This is a surprising choice from Movsesian. Again the most promising move is: 15.h5 wb6 16.0–0–0 b4 (16...e7?! 17.h4 w6d4 18.d1!! is better for White unless Black can make the exchange sacrifice on c3 work – and maybe it does?!) 17.axb4 w6b8! This is another interesting position that needs testing. A possible continuation is 18.w4 w6b4 19.b3 w6e7 20.wxf6 wxf6 21.wb1 w6g5 22.wd5 w6d5 23.exd5 a5 when Black is doing well with the primitive ...a5–a4 idea.
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

15...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash e7}} 16.\texttt{\textbackslash f6}d1
16.a4 b4 17.\texttt{\textbackslash d5} \texttt{\textbackslash x}d5 18.exd5 \texttt{\textbackslash d}7
19.\texttt{\textbackslash x}a6 0-0 With ...f5-f4 coming, Black’s compensation looks good to me.

16...\texttt{\textbackslash b}6 17.\texttt{\textbackslash d}f1 \texttt{\textbackslash e}4
One interesting idea is: 17...\texttt{\textbackslash x}c3!? 18.bxc3 \texttt{\textbackslash c}6 19.\texttt{\textbackslash d}d2 0-0 20.\texttt{\textbackslash e}3 \texttt{\textbackslash g}7 Black has plenty of compensation due to the multiple weaknesses in the White position – I’m thinking of e4, c3 and the passive bishop on g3.

18.\texttt{\textbackslash d}d2
White gives up all his ambitions in favour of keeping the e-pawn well protected.

Clearly 18.\texttt{\textbackslash e}3? \texttt{\textbackslash d}d4 19.\texttt{\textbackslash f}1 \texttt{\textbackslash x}e4 is no good.

However 18.\texttt{\textbackslash d}d5 is interesting. After 18...\texttt{\textbackslash x}d5! 19.exd5 \texttt{\textbackslash e}4 White has two plausible options:
- a) 20.b3 \texttt{\textbackslash d}d4 21.\texttt{\textbackslash e}3 \texttt{\textbackslash x}g3 22.fxg3 \texttt{\textbackslash d}8 23.\texttt{\textbackslash x}d4 \texttt{\textbackslash x}d4 24.\texttt{\textbackslash x}d4 exd4 Black is slightly better.
- b) 20.c3 leads to great complications: 20...\texttt{\textbackslash x}g3 21.\texttt{\textbackslash x}g3 f5 22.\texttt{\textbackslash e}3 \texttt{\textbackslash f}4 23.\texttt{\textbackslash e}1 0-0 24.\texttt{\textbackslash c}2 \texttt{\textbackslash d}8 25.\texttt{\textbackslash e}3 \texttt{\textbackslash x}h4 26.g3 \texttt{\textbackslash g}5!

19.\texttt{\textbackslash c}6 20.\texttt{\textbackslash e}1
After 20.\texttt{\textbackslash b}3 I have two suggestions:

White is defenceless. For instance: 27.gxf4 \texttt{\textbackslash x}f4 28.\texttt{\textbackslash d}d3 (28.\texttt{\textbackslash a}7 \texttt{\textbackslash h}4 29.\texttt{\textbackslash e}3 \texttt{\textbackslash h}2\texttt{\textbackslash t} 30.\texttt{\textbackslash f}1 g3 31.\texttt{\textbackslash x}g3\texttt{\textbackslash t} \texttt{\textbackslash x}g3 32.\texttt{\textbackslash e}3 \texttt{\textbackslash h}4\texttt{\textbackslash f}4) 28...\texttt{\textbackslash h}4 29.\texttt{\textbackslash e}3 e4 30.\texttt{\textbackslash d}1 \texttt{\textbackslash f}7! There is nothing to do against ...g3! These might seem like long speculative variations, but they nevertheless illustrate some of Black’s more dangerous ideas.

18...\texttt{\textbackslash d}d4 19.\texttt{\textbackslash x}c3
White would only have been slightly worse after 19.\texttt{\textbackslash e}2 \texttt{\textbackslash c}6 20.\texttt{\textbackslash e}1. Compared with the note to Black’s 21st move below, White wins a tempo after 20...\texttt{\textbackslash d}8 21.\texttt{\textbackslash b}3 due to the fact that there is no fork on queen and knight after a subsequent \texttt{\textbackslash x}d4.

19...\texttt{\textbackslash x}e4 20.\texttt{\textbackslash e}1

My main recommendation is 20...\texttt{\textbackslash x}d1\texttt{\textbackslash t} 21.\texttt{\textbackslash x}d1 0-0! Black has a clear advantage due to the passive bishop on g3 and the weak e-pawn. Now 22.\texttt{\textbackslash x}h6 is bad because of 22...\texttt{\textbackslash x}e4, and something slow like 22.\texttt{\textbackslash c}1 will end in tears: 22...\texttt{\textbackslash h}7 23.\texttt{\textbackslash d}3 a5 24.\texttt{\textbackslash f}4 \texttt{\textbackslash x}f3 25.\texttt{\textbackslash x}f3 \texttt{\textbackslash g}8 26.\texttt{\textbackslash h}2 \texttt{\textbackslash b}7 and there is no way to stop ...\texttt{\textbackslash b}4.
20...\textbf{d}8 21.\textbf{b}3

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{llllllll}
\textbf{a} & \textbf{b} & \textbf{c} & \textbf{d} & \textbf{e} & \textbf{f} & \textbf{g} & \textbf{h} \\
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

21...\textbf{e}c4

Here Topalov missed a chance to play: 21...\textbf{b}6! 22.\textbf{w}e2 \textbf{e}c4 23.\textbf{xd}1 \textbf{w}c7! (preparing to meet \textbf{d}d2 with ...\textbf{e}c6) 24.\textbf{xd}2 \textbf{e}c6 25.\textbf{xc}1 \textbf{b}8! 26.a4?! \textbf{xc}3! 27.\textbf{xc}3 \textbf{xc}3 28.\textbf{xc}3 \textbf{bxa}4 29.\textbf{dd}2 \textbf{de}7 Black has typical compensation for the exchange, plus a passed a-pawn.

22.\textbf{ad}1 \textbf{b}6 23.\textbf{d}d3 \textbf{xc}3 24.\textbf{xc}3 \textbf{de}7 25.\textbf{dd}2 \textbf{eg}8 26.\textbf{h}2 \textbf{gg}6 27.c4 \textbf{xc}4?

Topalov is playing for a win and oversteps the boundaries of what one can allow oneself against such an opponent. Instead 27...\textbf{xc}4 28.\textbf{a}5 \textbf{xa}5 29.\textbf{xa}5 \textbf{xe}4 30.\textbf{xe}4 \textbf{xe}4 31.\textbf{c}c\textbf{t}+ \textbf{f}8 32.\textbf{xd}6 \textbf{gg}7 33.\textbf{gg}6\textbf{t} \textbf{gg}6 34.\textbf{gg}e5 is a long forced line that ends in a draw.

28.\textbf{a}5 \textbf{wc}7

Black can improve with 28...\textbf{xa}5 29.\textbf{xa}5 \textbf{gg}8 30.\textbf{dd}2 \textbf{h}5 31.\textbf{e}c3 \textbf{dd}7, but it is hardly enough.

29.\textbf{b}7! \textbf{e}8 30.\textbf{b}1 a5 31.\textbf{h}5 \textbf{gg}5?

This loses quickly, but the alternative 31...\textbf{gg}8 32.\textbf{h}4\textbf{t} f6 33.\textbf{c}3 \textbf{dd}7 34.\textbf{dd}5 g3+ 35.\textbf{gg}3 \textbf{gg}4 36.\textbf{bb}2 \textbf{cc}6 37.\textbf{xc}4 \textbf{xb}7 38.\textbf{eb}1 also wins for White.

32.\textbf{h}4 f6 33.\textbf{xxg}5 \textbf{fg}5 34.c3 \textbf{a}7?

The last mistake. Black could still have fought on with 34...\textbf{dd}7 intending ...\textbf{cc}6.

35.\textbf{red}1 \textbf{d}7 36.\textbf{dd}5 g3+ 37.\textbf{xxg}3 1-0

This was a tragic end for Topalov after he had managed to wrest the initiative from his opponent. I recommend the reader to have a serious look at the developments in this line, since it lies at the core of the repertoire that I advocate here.

\textbf{Game 3}

\textbf{Spasov – Volokitin}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Romania 2010}
\end{center}

1.e4 c5 2.\textbf{d}f3 \textbf{d}6 3.\textbf{b}b5+ \textbf{d}d7 4.0-0

The more common move order is: 4.d4 \textbf{cx}d4 5.\textbf{xd}4 a6 6.\textbf{dd}7\textbf{t} \textbf{xd}7 7.0-0 \textbf{cc}8(!)

4...a6 5.\textbf{dd}7\textbf{t} \textbf{dd}7 6.d4 \textbf{cx}d4 7.\textbf{cx}d4 \textbf{be}8!

This is a cunning waiting move, which invites White to put his knight on c3.

Playing 7...\textbf{c}5 immediately is not as good, since 8.\textbf{dd}3 \textbf{h}6 can be met with 9.\textbf{c}4?! (9.\textbf{b}3 is not dangerous due to 9...\textbf{ff}6 10.\textbf{c}4 \textbf{b}5 11.\textbf{a}3 \textbf{bb}6). Although this position might be less than clear, it seems that White is happier with the pawn on c4. An interesting continuation now is 9...b5, a move that, according to my database, was first played by Mihail Marin and has been played twice by Suba in the 21st Century.

8.\textbf{dc}3

This is what Black is waiting for!

White can also try 8.\textbf{c}4, but then we get to see the whole idea behind Black's 7th move: 8...\textbf{cc}7!
9.b3 e5 10.\textdollar d3 b5! Now White must develop his knight to a square other than c3. This kind of concession from White is enough to ensure that Black is okay. There are two options for White:

a) 11.\textdollar a3? \textdollar b7 12.\textdollar e1 \textdollar c6! 13.\textdollar b2 \textdollar f6 14.cxb5 axb5 15.\textdollar ac1 \textdollar b8 White will still have to play a few exact moves in order to maintain the balance.

b) 11.\textdollar bd2 \textdollar f6 12.\textdollar a3 \textdollar e7 13.\textdollar ec1 \textdollar b6 14.\textdollar ec2 b4 15.\textdollar b2 0-0 16.\textdollar ac1 \textdollar b7 17.\textdollar h4 \textdollar g6 18.\textdollar c5 \textdollar b5 19.\textdollar \textdollar f3 \textdollar d7 20.\textdollar c6 \textdollar xc6 21.\textdollar g3 Black had an overwhelming position in Hammer – Roiz, Gibraltar 2009, but somewhere along the way a miracle occurred and White escaped with a draw.

Another possibility is: 8.a4 e5 9.\textdollar d3 \textdollar c7! (not allowing c2-c4) 10.\textdollar c3 \textdollar e6 11.\textdollar d1 h6 12.\textdollar e3 \textdollar f6 13.a5 \textdollar c4 14.\textdollar \textdollar d2 \textdollar c6 15.\textdollar b6 \textdollar c6 16.\textdollar e3 0-0 17.\textdollar h4 \textdollar b6 18.\textdollar f5 \textdollar xf5 19.exf5 \textdollar d8 Black was clearly better in Sverushkin – Hillarp Persson, Dresden (ol) 2008.

8...e5! 9.\textdollar d3 h6!

After 9...\textdollar f6?! 10.\textdollar g5! \textdollar c6 11.\textdollar fd1 h6 12.\textdollar xf6 \textdollar xf6 13.\textdollar d5 \textdollar d8 14.\textdollar ac1 White is clearly better.

10.\textdollar e3

White has a number of alternatives, but none is very convincing:

10.\textdollar d2 White's idea is to bring this knight via c4 (or f1) to e3 and then d5, but it is a very slow and not too scary scenario. Black can try: 10...\textdollar f7! (in order to stop \textdollar c4, but 10...\textdollar e6 looks more natural to me) 11.\textdollar d1 \textdollar f6 12.\textdollar f1 \textdollar e7 13.\textdollar e3 \textdollar c6 14.\textdollar d2 0-0 15.\textdollar ac1 b5 (Black could also consider 15...\textdollar f5?! 16.\textdollar \textdollar f3 \textdollar e8 17.\textdollar d5 \textdollar xd5 18.\textdollar \textdollar d5 \textdollar g5) 16.\textdollar \textdollar d5 \textdollar xd5 17.\textdollar \textdollar d5 \textdollar xd5 18.\textdollar \textdollar d5 \textdollar c4 19.\textdollar \textdollar d3 \textdollar xd5 20.\textdollar \textdollar d5 \textdollar e6 The endgame is approximately equal, although Black eventually won in Yu Ruiyuan – So, Olongapo City 2010.

10.\textdollar d1 \textdollar f6 11.\textdollar h4 This time the knight is heading towards e3 via the f5-square, from where it will also hit the d6-pawn. 11...\textdollar c7 (11...\textdollar g6?! is not out of the question) 12.\textdollar f5 \textdollar xf5 13.exf5 0-0 Black is doing fine.

10.a4 \textdollar f6 11.b3

This is the only way to avoid playing one of the other ideas... 11...\textdollar c7 12.a2 \textdollar e7 13.\textdollar ac1 (13.\textdollar \textdollar d1 0-0 14.\textdollar d2 \textdollar d6 15.\textdollar f1 \textdollar fd8 16.\textdollar \textdollar d1 \textdollar f5?! 17.\textdollar g3 \textdollar f6 18.\textdollar e3 b5 was clearly better for Black in Jurcik – Likavsky, Slovakia 2008) 13...0-0 14.\textdollar d2 \textdollar e6 (14...\textdollar f5?! 15.\textdollar c4 b5 16.\textdollar e3 \textdollar f8 is an interesting way to prevent White using the d5-square, in view of 17.\textdollar d5 \textdollar xd5 18.\textdollar \textdollar d5 \textdollar g5) 15.\textdollar d5 \textdollar xd5 (this is not bad, but 15...\textdollar xd5 16.exd5 \textdollar d7 followed by ...f5 would have been stronger) 16.exd5 \textdollar d7 Black
was fine in Claesen – Chuchelov, Charleroi 2001.

10...\&d6 11.a4 \&e7 12.a5 \&e6 13.\&f1 0–0

This position is similar to some Najdorf positions, apart from the fact that White has exchanged his light-squared bishop for a knight. In a position where White still had the bishop on, let’s say, e2, the plan would be to protect the c-pawn and follow up with \&d5. But here that is not easily achieved; as well as protecting the c-pawn, the queen would have to move to avoid \&d5 being met with ...\&xd5 followed by ...e4.

14.\&h4!?

This does not turn out too well for White, but – quite seriously – I’m unable to suggest a good plan for him. The best option might be:

14.\&d2 d5 (14...\&d7?? 15.\&h1 \&e4?? 16.\&d5! \&xd5 17.exd5 \&fc8 18.c3 \&h4 19.h3 \&h7 is one way to make the game more interesting) 15.\&b6 \&d7 16.exd5 \&xd5 17.\&xd5 \&xd5 18.\&xd5 \&xd5 19.c3 \&d8 20.\&f1 \&e6 Black is only slightly better.

14...\&c6 15.\&b5 \&xf5 16.exf5 \&c8 17.h3 \&d8 18.\&b6 \&d7

Black is ready to start the pawns rolling. The rest is a smooth performance.

19.\&f3 \&d8 20.\&e3 \&c4 21.\&d5

21.\&g3 \&h8 and White has – as we say in Swedish – “sowed his last potato”; he has run out of options.

21...\&xc2 22.\&a4 \&c6 23.\&g4 \&xg4 24.\&xg4

Now \&xh6 and f5–f6 look like terrible threats, but Black has everything under control.

24...\&c4! 25.\&g3

Also hopeless is 25.f4 f6 and Black will continue with ...\&e2, winning.

25...\&h4 26.\&f3 \&e2 27.\&xe2 \&xe2 28.b4 \&c2

The rest is simple.

29.g3 \&g5 30.\&b6 \&b2 31.\&e1 \&f4 32.gxf4 \&h4 33.\&h1 \&e2 34.\&d3 f6 35.\&c3 \&e7 36.\&e3 \&f7 37.\&d2 g5 38.\&xf6 \&xf6 39.\&xd6 \&b2 40.\&f4 f5 41.\&d6 \&f7 42.\&d5 \&f6 43.\&a4 \&b1† 44.\&g2 \&e4 45.\&d7† \&e8 46.\&e3 \&d4 47.\&e3† \&f7 48.\&e2 \&a1

0–1

Game 4

Shchukin – Matlakov

St Petersburg 2007

1.e4 c5 2.\&f3 d6 3.\&b5† \&d7 4.c4!!

This is possibly the most drawish line in the whole 3...\&d7-system and I have not been able to come up with a simple anti-draw remedy. However, Black has no problem reaching a decent position with lots of pieces on the board.

4...\&g6

A very interesting alternative is 4...a6? 5.\&xd7† (for some strange reason, White has nearly always played the silly-looking 5.\&a4
here; after 5...\(\text{g}6 6.\,c3 \,e6 7.0-0 \,f6 8.\,e2 0-0\) Black is fine).

Black may now play:

a) 5...\(\text{f}6 6.\,cxd4 7.\,xd4\) (less advisable is 7.\(\text{e}4?! \,e7 8.\,b3 \,\text{f}6 9.\,c3?! \,b5\) and White cannot hold his position together) 7...\(\text{c}8 \,h6 9.0-0 \,e5 10.\,d3 \,f6\) The position is complex, but I am not entirely happy with this line.

b) For those who like to take the game into unknown territory, I had a look at: 5...\(\text{xd7?!} 6.\,\text{d}4 \,cxd4 7.\,xd4 \,e5 8.\,d3 \,f5?!\) is one potential break) 6...\(\text{b}5?\)

5.\(\text{c}3 \,\text{g}6\)

This leads to the type of position that White has been aiming for — although it is one which is all right for Black. But there is not much good to be said for the strange-looking: 5...\(\text{e}5?! 6.\,d3 \,e7\) 7.0-0 0-0 8.\(\text{a}4\) White has a slight advantage here because he has an obvious plan of advancing his b-pawn, whereas it is less clear what Black should do. 8...\(\text{b}6\) (perhaps Black should try 8...\(\text{b}8?!\)) 9.\(\text{c}2 \,\text{e}8\) Pilnik – Panno, Buenos Aires 1953. White could now have seized the initiative with 10.a3 preparing b2-b4.

6.\(\text{d}4 \,\text{xd}4 7.\,\text{g}7 8.0-0 0-0 9.\,\text{xd}7\)

Otherwise Black can play ...\(\text{b}6/...\text{e}5\) followed by ...\(\text{a}6\).

9...\(\text{xd}7 10.\,\text{b}3\)

If we compare this position to a Maroczy Bind, it is clear that both sides have something to be happy about; White has been able to exchange the abominable e2-bishop and Black is ready to start counterplay on the queenside with ...\(\text{a}6\) and ...\(\text{b}5\). The position seems balanced.

10...\(\text{a}6 11.\,\text{a}6!\)

After any other move Black just goes ...\(\text{b}5\), for example: 11.\(\text{d}3 \,\text{b}5 12.\,\text{xb}5 \,\text{axb}5 13.\,\text{xb}5!\) \(\text{xe}4+\)

11...\(\text{a}5 12.\,\text{b}2 \,\text{e}8?!\)
A typical move in this kind of structure, which defends against various tricks connected with $\text{d}3$-$\text{d}5$. At this moment it is stopping White from exchanging any more pieces.

13. $\text{d}2$

With 13. $\text{e}1$ White prepares to occupy $\text{d}5$, but even that does not secure him any advantage: 13... $\text{ac}8$ 14. $\text{d}5$ $\text{dx}d5$ 15. $\text{ex}d5$ e5! 16. $\text{dx}e6$ $\text{xe}6$ 17. $\text{c}1$ $\text{d}7$ 18. $\text{e}2$ $\text{xb}2$ 19. $\text{xb}2$ $\text{c}6$

13... $\text{b}4$ 14. $\text{b}1$!

White probably got scared by variations like 14. $\text{a}3$? $\text{xe}4$ and Black wins. However 14. $\text{c}2$ e6 15. $\text{de}2$ $\text{Rad}8$ would have kept the balance.

14... $\text{c}5$?! $\text{b}4$ 15. $\text{xb}2$ $\text{h}6$! 16. $\text{xf}4$ $\text{h}5$ 17. $\text{g}3$ $\text{g}7$!

This is clearly better for Black, whose knight is heading to $\text{c}5$, after which it will be very difficult for White to keep both the $\text{e}$- and $\text{b}$-pawns protected, while coordinating his forces and not allowing Black to break with ...$\text{f}5$ or ...$\text{b}5$ under favourable circumstances. It seems like White is facing a Mission Impossible.

15. $\text{c}3$ $\text{wb}4$ 16. $\text{b}1$ $\text{wb}6$ 17. $\text{a}5$ $\text{wc}5$ 18. $\text{c}3$ $\text{e}6$ 19. $\text{fe}1$ $\text{ad}8$ 20. $\text{f}3$ $\text{ac}6$

21. $\text{d}4$ $\text{d}7$

21...$\text{d}5$? was worth a try.

22. $\text{f}3$ b5 23. $\text{ax}b6$ $\text{xb}6$ 24. $\text{c}2$ $\text{c}6$

25. $\text{a}1$ $\text{e}8$ 26. $\text{a}3$ d5 27. $\text{e}5$ $\text{d}7$ 28. $\text{d}6$

And despite the fact that Black is still slightly better, the combatants agreed to a draw.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Game 5}
\end{center}

\textbf{Arribas Robaina – Madl}

Elista (ol) 1998

1. $\text{e}4$ c5 2. $\text{f}3$ d6 3. $\text{b}5$ $\text{d}7$ 4.0–0 $\text{g}6$

5. $\text{e}1$ a6 6. $\text{xd}7$!

This is the critical move here, but there are alternatives:

$6.\text{fl} b6$ 7. $\text{c}3$ $\text{b}7$ 8.d3 (White has to spend a tempo on this and follow up with $\text{bd}2$ before the $\text{d}$-pawn can move one step further) 8...$\text{g}6$?! 9. $\text{bd}2$ $\text{g}7$ 10.d4 $\text{xd}4$ 11.cxd4 0–0 We have a complex position with mutual chances. The game Cori Tello – Shabalov, Sao Paulo 2009 ended quickly: 12. $\text{b}3$ e5 13. $\text{b}2$ $\text{exd}4$ 14. $\text{xd}4$ $\text{be}8$ 15. $\text{c}2$ $\text{c}5$! 16. e5 (White can fight for equality with 16. $\text{b}2$ $\text{xe}4$ 17. $\text{xe}4$ $\text{xe}4$ 18. $\text{d}2$) 16...$\text{g}4$ 17. $\text{xd}6$ $\text{xd}4$ 18. $\text{xe}4$?! (18. $\text{xd}4$ $\text{xd}6$ 19. $\text{xf}3$ is slightly better for Black) 18... $\text{xe}8$ 19. $\text{xd}4$ $\text{e}5$ 0–1

6. $\text{d}3$?! has been played a few times, but Black should equalize comfortably by playing ...$\text{f}5$ as soon as White plays $\text{c}2$–$\text{c}3$. For example: 6...$\text{b}6$ 7.c3 $\text{e}5$ (7...$\text{e}7$ can be met by 8.$\text{c}2$) 8.$\text{xe}5$ $\text{dxe}5$ 9.$\text{f}1$ e6 10.d3 $\text{c}7$ Black has a clear plan of increasing the pressure on the $\text{d}$-pawn.

6...$\text{xd}7$ 7. $\text{c}3$ $\text{g}4$?!$\text{b}4$?

This move has only been played in a handful of games. The main line goes 7...$\text{c}6$ 8.$\text{d}4$ and
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

is dealt with (by transposition) in Game 7 of Chapter 3.

8.d4 e6! 8...d7 This seems a bit passive to me.
9.h3 h5 10.d5! exf5?! (10...h6) 11.gxh6 g6 Saldano – Arencibia, Linares 2002, now continued 12.g3! g7 13.f4 d7 and Black was doing all right. Instead 12.g4 g7 13.a4 0–0 14.e3 d7 15.e2 is problematic for Black, since it will be difficult to play either ...e6 or ...b5.

9.g5
White has a number of alternatives, but none that can really disturb Black:

9.e4?! (9...e7! 10.h3 h5 11.d5 exd5 12.exd5 0–0 leads to a position that is covered below after 9.d5?! 10.exd4 e7 11.e3 b5?! (11...d7 is better) 12.h3 a5 13.d5! (13.e1 0–0 14.g3 a6 15.d5 exd5 16.e4 d7 17.e4 c5 18.d1 a6 was a bit better for Black in Akhmadeev – Ruban, Moscow 1994) 13...exd5 14.exd5 0–0 15.cxd4 The knight will be quite annoying on c6.

9.dxc5 dxc5 10.e4 d7 11.c5 d7 12.h3 (12.e4 a3 13.a3 c5 14.e3 e3 15.e5 d6 16.a4 d7 17.a4 g5 18.a4 a6 19.a4 c6 20.a4 e6 and White is struggling to prove that he has enough compensation) 12.h4 h8 13.c4 0–0 14.a4 e7 15.e4 b6! It seems to be easier to play Black here.

The most critical is 9.d5?! when Black should avoid closing the centre (especially if the moves h3 and ...h5 have been inserted): 9...exd5 10.h3 h5 11.exd5+ e7 12.g4 d7 0–0 13.e1 d7 14.a4 e8 15.g3 g6 16.h2 (16.a4 e7) 16...b5 17.ee2 d6 18.ee1 f7 Black has counterplay.

9...e7 10.e4 0–0
I see no reason to take on d4; mainly because it will always be easier for White to develop an initiative on the queenside with e5. One example is: 10...exd4 11.exd4 0–0 12.e5! e6 13.e1 h6 14.a4 e8 (14...d7?) 15.exd7 exc7 16.c4 White had some initiative in Kislinsky – Stets, Yuzhny 2009.

11.e5
11.e5 makes little sense when the e-pawns are still on the board since 11...e7 easily defends and improves the black position.

11...e5 12.e4 d5!
This is more active than: 12...d7?! 13.e7 exc7 14.h3 a5 15.e2 White is planning e3 and c3–c4 with some advantage.

13.e7 e7 14.h3 a5!
Black is planning to use the d3-square for his pieces, and the bishop is an important part of this plan. Instead 14...d3? 15.e5 is quite boring, but slightly better for White.
15.\textit{A}_a4

It would be nice for White to be able to plant a knight on d6, but that does not work for tactical reasons: \textit{C}_c4\!?! \textit{B}_d8 16.\textit{W}_e2 (16.\textit{C}_d6 \textit{f}6) 16...\textit{b}5 17.\textit{C}_d6\!?! \textit{f}6 And the White position falls apart.

15...\textit{B}_d8 16.\textit{W}_e4 \textit{b}5

Black is better and ready to set about doubling on the d-file.

17.\textit{F}_f1 \textit{g}6 18.\textit{W}_g4 \textit{h}5 19.\textit{W}_g3 \textit{h}6 20.\textit{C}_e3 \textit{D}_xe3 21.\textit{B}_xe3 \textit{f}a7 22.\textit{B}_ae1 \textit{B}_ad7 23.\textit{C}_h4 \textit{h}7 24.\textit{f}1 \textit{f}1d1??

Up to this point Black has played excellently, but this is the first in a series of suboptimal moves; obviously Black should not exchange all the rooks in this position as White's chances of defending are much better in a \textit{W}_+\textit{C} vs. \textit{W}_+\textit{C} endgame. The best option seems to be: 24...\textit{B}_d2! 25.\textit{B}_3e2 \textit{B}_xe2 26.\textit{B}_xe2 \textit{D}_d1\!+ 27.\textit{C}_h2 \textit{d}d3

Followed by ...\textit{c}4 and ...\textit{b}4, with winning chances.

25.\textit{C}_f3 \textit{c}7 26.\textit{W}_f2 \textit{D}_c6 27.\textit{B}_xd1 \textit{B}_xd1\!+ 28.\textit{E}_e1 \textit{D}_d3 29.\textit{E}_e2 \textit{D}_d5 30.\textit{B}_d2 \textit{B}_f8 31.\textit{B}_xd3 \textit{B}_xd3

Now the position is only very slightly better for Black. The rest is not very instructive.

32.\textit{b}4?

32.\textit{a}3 should draw without too much trouble. The rest of the game is not interesting for us. White blunders on move 49.

32...\textit{c}xb4 33.\textit{c}xb4 \textit{f}e4 34.\textit{f}d2 \textit{f}c2 35.\textit{a}3 \textit{D}_d3 36.\textit{f}f1 \textit{W}_g8 37.\textit{W}_e3 \textit{D}_d1 38.\textit{W}_f2 \textit{D}_d3 39.\textit{D}_d2 \textit{W}_c2 40.\textit{W}_g3 \textit{W}_h7 41.\textit{C}_f3 \textit{f}e4 42.\textit{C}_e1 \textit{W}_b1 43.\textit{f}f2 \textit{W}_g8 44.\textit{D}_d2 \textit{D}_d5 45.\textit{B}_c2 \textit{a}6 46.\textit{E}_e8\!+ \textit{h}7 47.\textit{E}_c2\!+ \textit{g}6 48.\textit{D}_d3 \textit{g}7 49.\textit{C}_c2\!? \textit{b}2 50.\textit{W}_g3 \textit{A}_c4 51.\textit{W}_c4 \textit{C}_c3\!+ 52.\textit{E}_e3 \textit{D}_d5

0–1

\textbf{Conclusion}

All in all, I believe the 3...\textit{D}_d7 variation to be underestimated. The future of this line depends first and foremost on whether Black is able to hold his own in the Movsesian – Topalov line. But in the event that you find 12...\textit{g}4 problematic, then the 'old' line 12...\textit{g}8 appears to be alive and kicking. In the other lines the problem is more of a: "What can I do to make life difficult for my opponent?" ...And I prefer to try and answer that question in this line rather than after 3...\textit{d}7.
Andrew Greet

Moscow Variation with 5.c4

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.f3 d6 3.b5+ d7 4.xd7+ xd7 5.c4 f6 6.c3 g6 7.d4 cxd4

8.xd4 g7

A) 9.f3 0–0 10.h3
   B1) 9.0–0
   B2) 9.xf3 0–0
      B21) 10.b3
      B22) 10.h5
      B23) 10.de2

B) 9.h3

C) 9.b3

D) 9.b3
Chapter 5 – Moscow Variation with 5.c4

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.\textit{b5} \textit{d7} 4.\textit{xd7} \textit{xd7} 5.c4

In this chapter we will investigate White's attempts to fight for an advantage in the 5.c4 variation. 5.0-0 is a different subject and will not be covered here. I consider the latter approach to be less challenging, and a review of the recent games in that line has not provided me with any reason to change my opinion.

White's general strategy after 5.c4 is well known. He will follow up with d2-d4 in the near future, which will usually lead to a Maroczy Bind structure. Compared with the standard Maroczy Bind positions reached via the Accelerated Dragon, White hopes to benefit from the exchange of his bad light-squared bishop, which would have been restricted by the two central pawns. On the other hand, the early bishop exchange aids Black's development and relieves the congestion in his position.

Four Systems for White

Before delving into any analysis, it is worth familiarizing ourselves with the following four set-ups that White may employ. This will make it easier to understand the various move order subtleties that we will encounter later.

The Traditional System

This is the most natural way for White to arrange his pieces, and it has been tested extensively. It remains fully playable, but is not normally regarded as overly threatening for Black.

The Modern System

This is a bit more sophisticated, and is designed to inhibit Black's thematic pawn breaks of ...b5 or ...d5. The retreat of the knight to e2 avoids the possible knight exchange and clears the d-file. Another important difference is that White's bishop will usually go to g5 rather than c3. This will make it practically impossible for Black to carry out ...e6 and ...d5, as White can eliminate the defensive knight on f6 at a moment's notice. For many years this system was the weapon of choice for practitioners of the 5.c4 variation.

Unfortunately, from White's point of view, the Modern System has fallen under something of a cloud thanks to an ingenious equalizing line that was first unveiled by Ivanchuk. (Details of this will follow shortly.) For this reason, White has developed a couple of other set-ups designed to avoid what I will henceforth refer to as the Ivanchuk Variation.
The h3 System

This is similar to the Traditional System, except that White has played h2-h3 instead of f2-f3. It has yielded excellent practical results for White, and for a while it looked like being a worthy successor to the Modern System as White's chief try for an advantage. Unfortunately a few years ago the Norwegian GM Simen Agdestein unveiled a clever equalizing line for Black, details of which can be found in variation C.

The Fianchetto System

I introduced this line myself. It is not hugely ambitious, but at least it enables White to make it to the middlegame without allowing mass simplifications to an equal ending. It will be analysed in variation D.

A brief review of the Modern System

1.e4 c5 2.d4 c6 3.d5 f6 4.e5 e6 5.e4 d5 6.e6

This is the tabiya of the Modern System. It can be reached via a few different move orders, of which the above is one of the most typical. Many players would like to reach this position with White, but, as I have already mentioned, this whole line has become less relevant in recent years, thanks to a clever equalizing line which we will review shortly. For this reason, I do not intend to analyse this variation in much detail. Instead I will merely present a few illustrative lines from the diagram position, which I hope will serve as useful background information before we move on to the main part of the chapter.

The main line below is taken from a game between two strong grandmasters. I have tested the present variation extensively in my own games, and have encountered a variety of contrasting responses, a few of which have been mentioned in the notes.
11...a6

11...e6 12.g5 By creating the possibility of \textbf{xf6}, White renders the \textbf{d5} break difficult to achieve. In the following game Black decided to chase the bishop away, but this led to other difficulties: 12.h6 13.h4 g5 14.f2 \textbf{ad8} 15.c2 e5 16.b3 d5 17.ead1 c8 18.exd5 exd5 19.c5 \textbf{fe8} 20.d4

This was Greer - Hulley, West Bromwich 2005. Black has a passive position with no prospects for counterplay. His knights may look attractive but in reality they are not doing anything.

13.g5

The ability to develop the bishop on this active square constitutes one of the chief advantages of the Modern System over the Traditional System.

12.a4

White's strategy is to restrain the \textbf{...b5} and \textbf{...d5} breaks, and gradually squeeze his opponent.

12...e6

Fixing the queenside with 12...a5? may look tempting, but is in fact a strategic blunder. 13.g5 \textbf{d8} 14.b3 b4 15.d2 d7 16.ab1 \textbf{e8} 17.b5 c5 18.h1 \textbf{d7} 19.f1 d8 20.e3±

13.c7

Black improves his queen and prepares to deploy her actively on a5 or b6. Here is an example of passive defence from Black:

13.h6 14.h4 b6? 15.e1 \textbf{d8} 16.d2 c7 17.f1 b7 18.e3 \textbf{d7} 19.b3 a7 20.d4 c6 21.xc6 xc6 22.b3 c5 23.f2 xe3 24.xe3 b8 25.b1 e8 26.a2 b7 27.b4 a8 28.f2
White has a pleasant, risk-free advantage and eventually broke through in Greet – D. James, West Bromwich 2005.

14.\textbf{h1}
Anticipating a check on b6 or c5.

14...d7 15.b3 c5
This is the best square for the knight.

16.b1 f8
16...c8 can be played as well.

17.\textbf{h4}!!
This is often a useful prophylactic move. 
17.d2 is playable, although White will have to remain on guard against a timely ...a5.

17...\textbf{b4}!?
It may seem tempting to occupy this outpost, but Black is revealing his intentions too quickly. 17...c8! is more flexible.

18.d2 cd3

19.a2!
Exchanging one of the troublesome knights.

19...\textbf{xa2} 20.xd3 \textbf{b4} 21.d2 c6
Black has spent several tempos with his knights, but has achieved nothing apart from exchanging one of them.

22.fd1 f8 23.fe2
We have been following the game Rublevsky - Leitao, Istanbul (ol) 2000. Black's position remains reasonably solid, but it is also passive with limited prospects for counterplay. The subsequent course of the game is not especially relevant for our study of the opening, but White eventually won after a long fight.

This was far from a comprehensive theoretical review, but it should give some idea as to what White is aiming for when he plays 5.c4 in conjunction with the Modern System.

The Ivanchuk Variation

Having familiarized ourselves with the Modern System, let us now turn to the variation which has, in many players' minds, practically refuted it as a try for an advantage. The following is probably the most important theoretical discovery ever to have been made in the 5.c4 line.

1.e4 c5 2.d4 d6 3.d5 b5 4.axb5 a6 5.c4 f6 6.e3 c6

Black purposefully delays the development of his knight on c6, for reasons that will soon become apparent.

7.d4 exd4 8.cxd4 g7 9.f3 0-0 10.0-0

10...c6 leads to the Modern System after 11.de2, or the Traditional System with 11.e3, if White prefers to play that way. Both of these lines are okay for Black if he knows what he is doing, but the text move leads by force to an equal endgame, thus rendering White's chosen opening completely ineffective as a try for an advantage.

11.b3
14...exd5 15.\textit{ex}g7 \textit{x}g7 16.\textit{b}b5!

This leads to a dead level endgame. After other moves White risks becoming worse.

16...dxc4 17.\textit{d}d6 \textit{d}d8 18.\textit{xb}b7 \textit{xd}1
19.\textit{xf}xc1 \textit{xd}1 \textit{f}x\textit{d}1 20.\textit{xd}1 \textit{xc}b3 21.\textit{ax}b3 \textit{c}c6

Theoretical Section

The time has come for us to investigate each of the four systems noted above. We will begin by reviewing recent developments in A) The Traditional System, to evaluate White's chances of achieving an advantage there. Next we will consider B) White's attempts to reach the Modern System while avoiding the Ivanchuk Variation. Finally we will turn our attention to C) The h3 System and D) The Fianchetto System.

A) The Traditional System

1.e4 c5 2.\textit{d}f3 \textit{d}f6 3.\textit{b}b5+ \textit{d}d7 4.\textit{xd}7+ \textit{xd}7 5.\textit{c}c4 \textit{f}f6 6.\textit{c}c3 \textit{g}g6 7.d4 \textit{c}xd4 8.\textit{xd}4 \textit{g}g7 9.\textit{f}f3 \textit{e}e8 10.\textit{c}c6

This used to be viewed as less challenging than the Modern System, and was unfashionable for many years. But once the Ivanchuk Variation appeared on the scene, the Traditional System suddenly became much more appealing! Many hundreds of games have been played from the present position. I will focus on what I regard as a few of the better and more interesting lines at Black's disposal, especially those that have featured in recent games involving titled players.

10...\textit{c}c6

Black can also try a quick attack on the c-pawn:

10...\textit{e}e8?! 11.\textit{b}3

Obviously the Ivanchuk-type treatment will not work with the d4-knight defended. Nevertheless Black can try to exploit the undefended knight on c3 by preparing a quick ...b5 or ...d5.

11...\textit{a}6

11...\textit{c}c6 12.0-0 leads back to a standard position. The immediate central break does not work so well: 11...c6 12.\textit{c}c1 d5?! (Black should prefer 12...\textit{c}c6 first, and only then...
follow up with ...d5) 13.e5 Qe8 14.cxd5 cxd5 (14...Qxc5 15.dxe6 fxe6 16.0-0;
Al Modiahki – Harter, Dresden 2008)
15.f4 Qc6 16.0-0 Qc7?!! (The somewhat
better 16...Qd8 also fails to equalize:
17.Qa4?? [the straightforward 17.Qd3N
may be even better] 17...Rac8 18.Qc5 Qe7
Modiahki – Dimakiling, Subic Bay 2009.)
17.Qxc6 bxc6

18.Qe4! Qe8 19.Qc5 Qe7 20.Qd3 White
had a clear advantage in Adams – Williams,
Canterbury 2010.

12.a4 e6

13.Bc1
13.Qd2 Qc6 14.0-0 (14.Qde2??N is worth
considering) 14...d5 15.cxd5 exd5 16.Qxc6
bxc6 17.e5 Qe8 18.f4 f6 19.Qc5 Qc7
20.Qa1 fx5 21.fxe5 Qc6 Black was able
to maintain the balance in Svetushkin –
Motylev, Romania 2007.

13...Qc6 14.0-0 d5 15.exd5
15.Qxc6 bxc6 16.e5 Qe8 17.f4 was played
in Roganovic – Yilmazyerli, Subotica 2007,
and now Aagaard’s suggestion of 17...Qf8N
makes a good deal of sense, preparing to put
the knight on g7 and later e6 or f5.

15...exd5 16.Qc6
16.c5 Qe8 17.Af2 Qh6! 18.Ab1 Qb4
(18...Qh5??N) Black has enough activity to
compensate for his isolated pawn, Jaksland –
Obers, Gibraltar 2008.

16...bxc6 17.cxd5

17...Qxd5!!N
After 17...cxd5 18.Qd4 White’s position
was slightly more comfortable in Ni Hu–
Areshchenko, Moscow 2005, although the
game was soon drawn.

The text move is a suggestion from
Aagaard, who analyses the following line to
demonstrate that Black’s activity easily makes
up for his slightly inferior structure:
18.Qd4 Qxc3 19.Qxc3 Qa7+ 20.Qh1 Bx8
21.Ac2 Qxc3 22.Wxc3 Bxb8 23.b4 Wd4
24.Wxd4 Qxd4 25.Bxc6 Bxb4 26.a5 Bxa4
27.Qxa6 Qa2=

With an absolutely equal endgame. Even
though 10...Qc8 does not have quite the
same power here that it does in the Ivanchuk
Variation, it still seems to be perfectly viable.

11.0-0 Rac8
11...Rc8 12.b3 is possible and has been seen
in numerous games, but generally I think it is
more useful for Black to preserve the option of ...\( \text{Rf8} \) d8 in order to support a subsequent ...d5.

Another idea is 11...c6 12.d2 ef8 intending a quick ...d5, but after 13.ad1 d5 14.xc6
bxc6 15.\( \text{Qf3} \) as played in Morozevich – Sader, Fista (ol) 1998, I was unable to find a convincing route to equality for Black.

Quite often Black prefers 11...a6 in order to provoke 12.a4 before continuing with 12...e6 or 12...axb5. The reasoning is that the mutual a-pawn moves are more likely to benefit Black, as White's queenside pawn chain is a bit less stable. On the other hand White also gains some other options such as 12.d2 a4, which has seldom been seen, but might offer White chances for a small plus.

12.b3 e6

13.c1
White can also put this rook on the d-file:
13.d2 ef8
13...d5 may be a little premature: 14.xc6
bxc6 15.e5 \( \text{Qe8} \) 16.c5 \( \text{Qxe5} \) 17.xf8
\( \text{Qxf8} \) 18.ad1 This was Roganovic – Oriov, Pancevo 2005, and now it looks logical for Black to play 18...\( \text{Rc7} \)N 19.f4 \( \text{Qg7} \). He certainly has compensation for the exchange, but perhaps not quite enough to claim fully equal chances.

14.ad1 d5

15.cxd5 16.dxc5 exd5 17.\( \text{Qxc6} \) (Harmless is 17.d2 \( \text{Qe7} \) 18.xd5 \( \text{Qxd5} \) 19.cxd5 \( \text{Qb4} \) 20.f4 Jain – Bonafonte, London 2006, and now after 20...\( \text{Qc2} \)N 21.d2 \( \text{Qxd2} \) 22.xd2 \( \text{Qxd2} \) Black has a pleasant choice between 22...g5? and 22...\( \text{Qxa2} \)) 17.dxc6 18.d2 \( \text{Qc8} \) 19.xd5 \( \text{Qxd5} \) 20.cxd5 \( \text{Qb5} \) Black should have enough activity to regain his pawn, and in the following game White achieved nothing: 21.\( \text{Qf2} \) \( \text{Qe8} \) 22.\( \text{Qe2} \) \( \text{Qc3} \) 23.xc3 \( \text{Qxe2} \) 24.\( \text{Qe1} \) \( \text{Qxa2} \) The position is equal and a draw was agreed a few moves later in Kazantsev – Sanchez Rodenas, e-mail 2008.

15...exd5 16.\( \text{Qxc6} \)
16.exd5 can be met by 16...\( \text{Qxd5} \) or 16...\( \text{Qb4} \).

16.bxc6
17...Nf6!
This is the way to keep some tension in the position.
17.exd5 Nxd5 18.Qxd5 cxd5 19.a4 Qxd4 20.Bxd4 Nc2 was equal in Mustafac - Le Quang, Vung Tau 2008.
17...Nxd6
I also checked 17...e8N 18.exd5 Qxd5 19.Qxd5 Qxd5 20.Nxd2 Nxd2 21.Qxd2 Nxd4 22.Qh1 Bxe2 23.dxe2
Black should have enough compensation for the pawn.
13...Qf8

14.Bd2
This has been by far the most popular choice, although that does not necessarily mean it is best. Here are a couple of other options that have been tested at a high level.
14.Be1!!
This has hardly ever been played, but it seems quite logical.
14...a6
14...d5 looks risky, as after 15.exd5 exd5 16.Bxc6 bxc6 17.e5 the rook on e1 is ideally placed to support the e-pawn. Play may continue 17...h5 (17...Qe8 18.Qg5 f6 19.Qh4! is awkward) 18.Qg5 f6 19.exf6 Qxf6 20.Qa4! and White maintains an edge.
15.Qxc6 Qxc6 16.a4 b6

Black has not managed to free his position forcibly with ...d5 or ...b5. On the other hand his position remains very solid, and with two pairs of minor pieces exchanged he is not too cramped. In the following high-level game he held the draw without much difficulty:
130  Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

31.\texttt{Be}c1 \texttt{cxd}3 32.\texttt{Bxd}3 \texttt{c}6 $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

14...\textit{d}5!
In the present position Black has no reason to refrain from this thematic break.

15.\textit{exd}5
After 15.cxd5 \textit{\texttt{c}6} 16.\texttt{c}xc6 bxc6 17.\texttt{c}xd5 \texttt{c}xd5 18.\texttt{c}xc6 19.\texttt{d}4 the isolated d-pawn gave White no more than a symbolic advantage in Caruso – Barberi, Corsica 1996.

15...\textit{exd}5 16.c5?
This is quite a common reaction to the ...\textit{d}5 break, but in this particular position it suffers from a tactical flaw. White should have settled for a level game by means of 16.\texttt{c}xc6 bxc6 17.cxd5, transposing to the previous note.

16...\texttt{c}xd4!
Shirov improves on one of his own games. Twelve years earlier he preferred 16...\texttt{e}8? and after 17.\texttt{f}2 Black was a little worse in Gelfand – Shirov, Wijk aan Zee (blitz) 1998.

17.\texttt{c}xd4 \texttt{e}4! 18.\texttt{f}3?
The lesser evil was: 18.fxe4 dxe4 19.\texttt{xe}4 \texttt{c}xd4† 20.\texttt{xc}d4 \texttt{c}xd4† 21.\texttt{h}1 f5 (21...\texttt{b}6?!N) 22.\texttt{c}d6 \texttt{c}xc5 23.\texttt{b}7 (23.\texttt{c}xc5 \texttt{c}xc5 24.\texttt{a}h\texttt{b}7 looks like a fairly safe route to a draw) 23...\texttt{c}xc1 24.\texttt{c}xc1 \texttt{f}f8† G. Rodríguez – Benz, corr. 2000. White is a bit uncomfortable here, but he should be able to hold the endgame.

18...\texttt{c}xc5
18...\texttt{c}x\texttt{d}4 19.\texttt{c}xd4 \texttt{c}xc5 is also strong.
20.\texttt{c}xd1 (20.\texttt{c}c1 \texttt{c}e6 21.\texttt{e}5 d4 22.\texttt{f}e4 \texttt{c}7 23.\texttt{c}xc7 \texttt{b}xc7 Black converted his extra pawn in Schuetze – John, corr. 1991) 20...\texttt{c}e6 21.\texttt{c}xa7 \texttt{c}7 22.\texttt{c}f2 d4 23.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{e}5 24.\texttt{c}xe8 \texttt{c}xe8 White was still a pawn down and under pressure, and after the further error 25.\texttt{c}d2? \texttt{c}f4 he was clearly lost in Bednarski – Pokojowczyk, Slupsk 1978.

19.\texttt{c}c1 \texttt{c}xd4 20.\texttt{c}xd4
After 20.\texttt{c}xd4 \texttt{c}e6† Black keeps his extra pawn, as 21.\texttt{c}xd5?? \texttt{c}7 wins material.

20...\texttt{c}c6

21.\texttt{c}e2
White is not helped by: 21.\texttt{f}d1 \texttt{c}e8 22.\texttt{c}f2 \texttt{c}e6† (22...\texttt{c}xb3 is a strong alternative) 23.\texttt{d}5† (23.\texttt{c}d3 \texttt{f}4++) 23...\texttt{c}xd4 24.\texttt{c}xd4 White’s counterplay appears dangerous, but Black can clinch victory as follows:
Chapter 5 – Moscow Variation with 5.c4

There are no useful discovered checks so Black wins comfortably, for instance:

24.\textit{Be2}! 25.\textit{Bf6}† \textit{h8}! There are no useful discovered checks so Black wins comfortably, for instance: 26.\textit{Bc4}† \textit{f6} 27.\textit{Bxf6} \textit{Bc5} 28.\textit{Bxc5} \textit{Bxc5}→

21.\textit{Bf6} 22.\textit{Bd2} \textit{d4}

23.\textit{Bxd4}? With his position rapidly becoming desperate, White makes a final miscalculation. He had to try something like 23.\textit{Bd3} or 23.\textit{Bxe4}, although Black obviously has every chance of converting his extra pawn.

23.\textit{Bb6} 24.\textit{Bd1} \textit{Bd5}!

0–1


The Traditional System remains a viable option for White. A number of strong grandmasters have dabbled with it, although none of them have incorporated it into their main repertoire. Black should have more than one route to a reasonable game, but he must play accurately.

B) White’s attempts to reach the Modern System while avoiding the Ivanchuk Variation

1.e4 c5 2.\textit{Bf3} d6 3.\textit{Bb5}† \textit{Bd7} 4.\textit{Bxd7}† \textit{Bxd7}

In the Ivanchuk Variation it has been firmly established that by the time his move 10...\textit{Be8} appears on the board, White can already kiss goodbye to even the slightest aspirations for an opening advantage. Here we will investigate the various ways in which he may attempt to tweak the move order in order to steer the game towards the Modern System while avoiding Ivanchuk’s troublesome equalizing line.

5.c4

This may seem like an automatic choice, but White can also consider the rare:

5.d4!? \textit{cxd4}

5...\textit{Bf6}?! is an independent option, but Black has no special reason to avoid or delay the exchange on \textit{d4}.

6.\textit{Bxd4} \textit{Bf6}

6...\textit{Be6} 7.e4 transposes to a position usually reached after the move order 5.c4 \textit{Bc6} 6.d4 \textit{cxd4} 7.\textit{Bxd4}. White should feel happy here, as the knight on \textit{c6} prevents Black from employing the Ivanchuk Variation.
It occurred to me that White may try to delay the moves c4 and d5 until a moment when Black no longer has the option of playing Ivanchuk's line. But when I looked at the position in detail, it became clear that the idea was never going to work. Instead 7...c3 leads to a harmless version of the Open Sicilian in which the exchange of light-squared bishops should tend to favour Black slightly. A logical idea is 7...g6, hoping for an improved version of a Dragon. In that system Black often utilizes the c4-square for a knight, and the bishop exchange should prove useful in facilitating that objective.

7...g6
7...e5 transposes to a position that has been reached in a few hundred games, usually via the move order 3.d4 cxd4 4.cxd4 d5 5.c3 e5 6.b5+ a6 7.xd7t xd7. An in-depth analysis of this position would take us too far away from our main subject, but I will briefly mention that after 8.f5 d5 9.g5 White has scored highly.

8.c4 g7 9.0-0 0-0
After 9...c6?! 10.e2 followed by bxc3 White has good chances of achieving his objective.

10.e3
Unfortunately for White, there is no good way for him to postpone this move any longer.

10...f5? d6 11.e2 e6! is awkward.
10.e2?! gives Black a pleasant choice between 10...e8 which more or less forces the awkward 11.a3, and 10...b5! freeing his position immediately.

10...e8
We are back in the Ivanchuk Variation.

5.f6 6.c3 g6 7.d4
Occasionally White chooses to delay this move with a sequence such as:
7.0-0 g7 8.h3 0-0 9.d3 c6 10.e3
White is playing in a chameleon-like way, reserving the option of opening the centre with d3-d4, which could work well in certain situations, notwithstanding the tempo loss. On the other hand he might just keep the centre closed and aim for b2-b4 or f2-f4. The idea is interesting and may carry some surprise value, but objectively it should not give Black too many problems.

10.e4?
Black takes a pre-emptive step against d3-d4.
10.e5 11.d4! justifies White's play.
10.a6 is a good neutral alternative, which could prove useful with either an open or a closed centre.

11.d2 h5?
Black can afford to play provocatively.
11...e8 12.h2 f5 was balanced in Makarov - Gufeld, Kiev 1960.
12.\textit{g4}?! 
Otherwise Black will be able to consider both \textit{\ldots f5} and \textit{\ldots d4}. *

12.\textit{\ldots f6} 13.\textit{h2} \textit{e8} 14.\textit{f4} \textit{f5} 15.\textit{eae1} \textit{e6} 


7.\textit{\ldots cxd4} 8.\textit{\ldots d4} \textit{\ldots g7}

From here, if White wishes to enter the Modern System without allowing Ivanchuk's equalizing line, there are two main options at his disposal: \textbf{B1)} 9.\textit{0-0} and \textbf{B2)} 9.\textit{f3}. The alternatives 9.\textit{h3} and 9.\textit{b3} will be considered in variations \textit{C} and \textit{D} respectively.

It is worth mentioning that 9.\textit{d2?} is not a serious option, and after 9.\textit{\ldots c6!} White was already in trouble in Wallis - Bird, Brisbane 2006.

\textbf{B1)} 9.\textit{0-0}

There are a few ways in which White may use this move order to reach his desired set-up while sidestepping Ivanchuk's equalizing line. Unfortunately there are also some drawbacks, including one on the very next move.

9.\textit{\ldots 0-0}

If you play the white side of the Moscow Variation and are reading this with a view to reaching a quiet, stable position with chances for a slight advantage, then I'm afraid 9.\textit{0-0} is likely to be a non-starter. The problem is that Black can attempt to exploit the absence of \textit{\ldots f3} by switching plans with 9.\textit{\ldots c6?!} 10.\textit{d2} \textit{e6?!} (After 10.\textit{\ldots 0-0} 11.\textit{f3} White gets the position for which he was aiming.)

This ambitious and double-edged line was made famous by the \textit{Kasparov versus the World} game in 1999. White's c- and e-pawns are under attack, and he has no choice but to dive into the unclear complications resulting from 11.\textit{d5} \textit{dxe4} 12.\textit{c7+ d7} 13.\textit{xac8 xc4} 14.\textit{b6+ axb6} as first seen in Kasparov - The World, Internet 1999. This variation has been tested numerous times since that game, and is generally regarded as unclear but by no means unfavourable to Black. Personally, this is not the kind of position I have in mind when playing the 5.\textit{c4} variation.
10. \&g5!

This is a common move in the main line, but it is usually played after the preliminary f3 and \&de2. Instead 10.f3 \&c8 is the Ivanchuk Variation, and 10.b3 \&c6 11.\&b2 leads to the Fianchetto System as examined in line D.

10.h3?! leads to a position more commonly reached via the move order 9.h3 0–0 10.0–0 (see the note to Black's ninth move in line C for more details on this). This way White has avoided the equalizing line 9.h3 \&c7!, but risks allowing 9.0–0 \&c6?! 10.\&de2 \&e6?! as noted above.

The only other plausible try leads to trouble for White: 10.\&de2? This attempt to shuffle the move order is too passive and leaves White's central pawns vulnerable. 10...\&c8 11.\&d3 (11.b3? \&xe4) 11...\&a6 (11...\&e6 and 11...\&c6 are also awkward for White) 12.\&f4 \&g4! 13.\&h3 \&e5 14.\&h4 e6 15.\&h3 \&xc4 Black was a pawn up for very little in Molkova – Yemelin, Vladimir 2004.

10...\&c6

Black is somewhat spoiled for choice, with 10...h6?! being a promising and somewhat tricky alternative: 11.\&h4 \&c6 12.\&c2 (12.\&de2?! is worse than the main line, as after 12...g5! 13.\&g3 \&e6 White loses a pawn.) 12...\&e6 13.\&e2 \&ac8 14.\&ad1 \&d7 15.\&d5 \&g5 16.\&g3 f5 The initiative was with Black in Skripchenko – Motoc, Ohrid 2009.

11.\&de2

11.\&xc6 bxc6 is nothing for White.

11.\&c2 \&e6 can be compared with Skripchenko – Motoc above. White is slightly better off here as the bishop is not sidelined on h4, but Black should still be comfortable enough.

11...\&e6!

Once again this queen move highlights the problem with White's present move order. (Remember it was also featured in the note to Black's ninth move above.) In view of the double attack on the e- and c-pawns, White has no choice but to exchange his bishop for the enemy knight.

Black should not delay this move, as alternatives would allow f3, when White reaches his desired set-up.

12.\&xf6 \&xf6

The alternative is 12...\&xf6 13.b3. According to the database White has scored five wins out of five from this position, which I find surprising as it looks equal to my eyes.
Chapter 5 – Moscow Variation with 5.e4

13.b3

13..b3 was played in Zarnicki – Golubev, Internet 2005, and here it looks logical to play 13..e5N 14.e1 e6, with similar play to the main line below.

13...d8 14.ad1 e6

This is White’s most frequently played option at the present turn. Having witnessed the events of line B1 above, we can appreciate the importance for White in taking the sting out of ...e6.

9..0–0

As we know, 10.0–0 e8 leads directly to the Ivanchuk Variation. The question is whether White can find a suitable way to weaken his move order to avoid Ivanchuk’s equalizing line without compromising his position in other ways. We will analyse three options: B21) 10.b3, B22) 10.g5 and B23) 10.de2, while remembering that 10.e3 takes us back to line A.

B21) 10.b3

This was my choice the first time I was confronted with Ivanchuk’s move order. White anticipates the attack on the c-pawn, but the time spent on this non-developing move allows Black to prepare a quick break in the centre.

8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
da c d e f g h

10..c6!

This seems like the most principled reaction; Black hopes to exploit the slowness of his opponent’s last move. Another possibility is 10..c8? when 11.0–0 d5 is the Ivanchuk Variation, 11..e3 transposes to the note to
Black's tenth move in variation A, and 11.\( \text{\textit{de}} \) reaches line B23 below.

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

11.0-0?? was played in Olsarova – Qurbanboeva, Kemer 2009, but after 11...\( \text{\textit{exd}4} \) Black wins the house.

11...e6!

Since White has spent a tempo on a non-essential, non-developing move, it is logical for Black to prepare a quick break in the centre.

12.\( \text{\textit{g5}} \)

By preparing to eliminate the knight, White prevents ...d5 for the moment.

12...h6 13.\( \text{\textit{h4}} \) g5!

A slow continuation such as 13...\( \text{\textit{ac8}} \) 14.0-0 would lead back to the Modern System, which is what White wants.

We saw something similar to the text move in the game Greet – Szaberenyi, referenced in the note to Black's eleventh move in the section on the Modern System. The difference is that in that game White had already castled, whereas here he has spent a tempo on the prophylactic b2-b3, which is largely useless in the present position.

14.\( \text{\textit{f2}} \) \( \text{\textit{ad8}} \) 15.\( \text{\textit{e2}} \) d5!

Black should not fear the pin along the d-file.

16.\( \text{\textit{d1}} \)

The game continuation led to interesting complications:

16...\( \text{\textit{e7}} \) 17.\( \text{\textit{cxd5}} \) exd5 18.\( \text{\textit{xd5}} \) \( \text{\textit{xd5}} \) 19.exd5 \( \text{\textit{b4}} \)

20.\( \text{\textit{c5}} \)

20.\( \text{\textit{c4?!}} \) \( \text{\textit{fe8}} \) 21.0-0! was better, when Black has some problems to solve.

20...\( \text{\textit{xd5}} \) 21.\( \text{\textit{xe7}} \) \( \text{\textit{xe7}} \) 22.\( \text{\textit{xa7?!}} \)

There was no need for this. 22.0-0 would have been equal.

22...\( \text{\textit{a8}} \)
Chapter 5 – Moscow Variation with 5.c4

Worse is 22...\texttt{exd1} †!? 23.\texttt{exd1} \texttt{a8} 24.\texttt{c5} \texttt{d5} 25.\texttt{a4}.

23.\texttt{c5}

23...\texttt{exd2} 24.\texttt{d4}?! 
White could still have maintained the balance: 24.\texttt{dxe7} \texttt{dxe7} 25.\texttt{d1} \texttt{a1} † 26.\texttt{d1} \texttt{d1} † 27.\texttt{dxe7} \texttt{a8} 28.\texttt{d2} =
24...\texttt{a8}! 25.\texttt{dxe7} \texttt{xd4} 26.\texttt{h4} \texttt{xe8} 0–1

17.\texttt{cxd5} \texttt{exd5} 18.\texttt{d5} \texttt{xd5} 19.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{xd5} 20.\texttt{exd5} \texttt{a5} † 21.\texttt{d2} \texttt{xd2} † 22.\texttt{xd2} \texttt{d8}
Black easily regains his pawn.

23.\texttt{c3} \texttt{b6}= 
Followed by ...\texttt{b4xd5}. We can conclude that 10.\texttt{b3} offers no advantage against accurate play from Black.

B22) 10.\texttt{g5}

This time White accelerates the development of his bishop. This more or less rules out any ideas of a quick ...\texttt{d5}, but Black can exploit the delay in his opponent's castling.

10...\texttt{c6}!
After 10...\texttt{c6} 11.\texttt{b3} \texttt{c6} 12.\texttt{de2} White is happy enough, and will soon be able to castle to reach his desired set-up.

11.\texttt{de2} \texttt{a6}! 12.\texttt{a4}
White should certainly avoid 12.\texttt{a4}?! \texttt{d8}
13.\texttt{b1}? Claverie – Navrotescu, France 2006.

13...\texttt{b5} †. The following two options are more reasonable, but neither should worry Black.
12.0-0 \( \text{?e}5 \) 13.b3 b5 14.cxb5 axb5 Black executed a desirable pawn break and obtained at least equal chances in Kubala – Dumitrescu, Szombathely 1993.

The following idea is more principled, although it should not worry the second player: 12.\( \text{?xf6} \)N \( \text{?xf6} \) 13.\( \text{?d5} \)

13.\( \text{?xb2} \)!! (also interesting is 13...\( \text{?e6} \!
14.\( \text{?c7} \) \( \text{?xc4} \) 15.\( \text{?xa8} \) \( \text{?xa8} \) 16.\( \text{?d7} \)

Black continues to hinder his opponent's development.

13.b3

13.0-0?! is risky: 13...\( \text{?b6} \)† 14.\( \text{?f2} \) h6! (But not 14...\( \text{?xb2} \) 15.\( \text{?b1} \) \( \text{?a3} \) 16.\( \text{?e3} \) when Black's queen is in serious danger.)

13...\( \text{?c7} \)

12...\( \text{?c7} \)

Black has promising compensation for the exchange, for instance: 17.\( \text{?b3} \) (after 17.0-0 \( \text{?a5} \) Black will win a second pawn) 17...\( \text{?a5} \) 18.\( \text{?b4} \) (18.\( \text{?b6} \) \( \text{?c8} \) 19.\( \text{?xc7} \) \( \text{?xc7} \) Black will have the better endgame after picking up the c-pawn.) 18...\( \text{?xc4} \) 19.\( \text{?xb7} \) \( \text{?a5} \)† 20.\( \text{?f2} \) \( \text{?c5} \)† 21.\( \text{?e1} \) \( \text{?c8} \) (21...\( \text{?a5} \)†=) Black has a pawn for the exchange and White's king is uncomfortably placed.

15.\( \text{?xf6} \) (15.\( \text{?h4} \) g5 16.\( \text{?g3} \) \( \text{?a5} \)† is awkward for White, as is 15.\( \text{?d2} \) \( \text{?e5} \)†.) 15...\( \text{?xf6} \) 16.\( \text{?d5} \) \( \text{?xb2} \) 17.\( \text{?b1} \) \( \text{?e5} \) 18.\( \text{?xb7} \) \( \text{?ab8} \) And White has problems.

13...\( \text{?a5} \)! 14.\( \text{?d2} \)

14.\( \text{?c1N} \) keeps the rook defended, but the queen is awkwardly placed on this square. 14...\( \text{?c8} \) 15.\( \text{?b1} \) (15.0-0 \( \text{?b6} \)†) 15...\( \text{?b5} \) 16.axb5 \( \text{?xb5} \) 17.\( \text{?xb5} \) \( \text{?d4} \) Black has the initiative.
14...b5!
Exploiting the fact that the rook on a1 is undefended – a direct consequence of White's decision to delay castling.

15.axb5 axb5 16.0-0 bxa4 17.bxa4 Afc8
17...Afd8!N was another idea, supporting a subsequent ...d5.

18.Afb1
This position was reached in Gharamian – Savchenko, Metz 2007. Here I would suggest:

18...Qe5!N
Eyeing the c4-square, with an obvious advantage for Black.

B23) 10.Qde2

10...Ae8!
This is the best way to start. Instead 10...Qc6 11.0-0 reaches the position for which White was aiming.

11.b3
11.Ae3
This looks rather clumsy.

11...Qc6
Threatening to win material with ...Qe5 or ...Qb4.

12.b3 a6 13.Qb2
Perhaps the lesser evil for White would have been: 13.a4!!N Qd8! Not only improving the queen, but also preparing a thematic knight manoeuvre. 14.Qe3 (14.0-0? Ab6↑ 15.Qe3 Axb3 Black can get away with this pawn grab due to the trick of 16.Afb1 Qe5!.) 14...Aa5? Black has an improved version of the normal Modern System. White's bishop is on the less active e3-square instead of the usual g5, and the impending ...Qc5 will gain a tempo against the misplaced white queen.
13...b5 14.cxb5 "b4
Another tempting move was 14...axb5?!N intending 15...xe5 (15...xe5 14.b4 --)
15...a7! with excellent compensation, as White will have serious trouble castling.
15.d2 axb5 16.0-0

This position was reached in Bojkov – Stojic, Parramatta 2010, and here the correct move looks to be:
16..."b7N
With a promising position for Black.

12...xe4
13...b5?
The alternatives are no better.

12...xe4 13.b3 meets with a powerful rebuttal: 13...a6! Forcing the knight to retreat to an unfavourable square. 14...d4 f5
15.0-0 d5! With advantage to Black.

12.e5? is tricky, but ultimately not unfavourable for Black: 12...e8! (After 12...dxe5 13...xd7 followed by 14...xe5 White is at least not worse.)
13...xe5 14...b1 (14...e4 d5! 15...xd5 16...xd5 cxb5 17...xe7+ g7 18...c8 c6 Black wins as the knight is trapped on c8.) 14...e6! Black is at least equal with ...d5 coming soon.

12...xe4
13...xe4? cxb5 14.d5 is an interesting try, but Black has a powerful counterargument:
14...e6! 15...xa8 a6 16...xc8 bxc8 17.bxa6 d5 White has a material advantage, but his pieces lack coordination and Black will pick up at least one or two more pawns. The second player stands better.

13...xc3
Black must avoid the trap with 13...xc3? 14...xc3 d5+ at all costs.
Chapter 5 – Moscow Variation with 5.c4

The possibility of d1-d5 is a recurring theme throughout this line.

14...exc3
After 14...d5 xc8! 15...xa8 &xa1 Black's chances are higher.

14...xc3† 15...f2!
15...d2? xa1 16...xb5 Black is a pawn up with a better pawn structure and a safer king.

15...a6?!
This remarkable idea is a somewhat risky try for an advantage. The immediate 15...xa1? is punished by 16...d5!, so Black offers the knight in order to prepare the rook capture.

The more solid alternative was 15...xb5 16...b1 &d7 when Black has obvious compensation for the exchange. 17...d5

17...b8! Black should keep the queens on, even if it means retreating temporarily to an awkward spot. (After 17...e6 18.exd5 White is better in the endgame.) 18...g5 e6 19...c4 (19...d5? &c5!) 19...a5 Black has sufficient compensation for the small material investment. The likely plan for the next few moves will be ...b6†, ...e5 and ...b7.

16.bxa6
This seems safest. After 16...b1 &c5 Black is temporarily a whole exchange down, but he will soon pick up one of the pawns on e4 or b5 and his positional compensation is quite real.

16...xa1 17...e3 &e5

The dust has settled, and the resulting semi-endgame is rather double-edged. In theory White has the weaker pawn structure, with doubled a-pawns and a weakness on e4, but if White can advance his queenside pawns far enough he could easily secure a decisive positional advantage, bearing in mind that the a7-pawn is a permanent weakness. Here is a short sample continuation.

18...d5
18...d3 &g4! with counterplay against White's exposed king.
Everything is still to play for, but in view of White's exposed king, I would consider a draw the most likely outcome.

Summing up, White has a number of ways in which he may attempt to shuffle his move order, with a view to reaching the Modern System without allowing the Ivanchuk Variation. None of them are perfect, but they all demand accurate handling from Black, especially the last line, B23, beginning with 9.f3 0-0 10.dxe2, which leads to interesting complications in which the chances remained roughly equal.

Having dealt with White's attempts to transpose to the Modern System, let us now turn our attention to two independent set-ups.

C) The h3 System

1.e4 c5 2.d4 c6 3.d5 cxd5 4.exd5 d6 5.exd8 Qxd8 6.0-0 e6 7.e3

Although the database contains one game reference of this position from 1998, it took until 2008 for the world to take notice of White's ninth move, when Adams used it to defeat Cheparinov. Since then several strong players have followed suit, with encouraging results: according to my database, White has scored just over thirty wins, with approximately the same number of draws and only four defeats!

Does that mean it is time for fans of the 5.c4 system to break out the champagne? Not yet, I'm afraid. Just seven months after the Adams – Cheparinov game, the following equalizing line came to light.

9...c7!

This move, along with the following forced sequence, was first uncorked by Simen Agdestein at the 2008 Dresden Olympiad. It has since been repeated in several games, every one of which has ended in a draw.

We should also take a brief look at the positions resulting from:

9...0-0

Since Agdestein's treatment effectively refutes the 9.h3 system as a serious try for an opening advantage, I will only provide brief coverage of the alternative. The resulting positions have a similar character to the Traditional and Modern variations. Black's position should be playable enough, although White will generally have slightly the more comfortable side of a quiet position. As I mentioned previously, practical results have favoured the first player heavily.

10.d5

10...d5 allows a familiar trick: 10...e8 11.b3 d5! The Ivanchuk treatment works equally well with a white pawn on h3 instead of f3. 12.exd5 Qxd5! 13.Qxd5 e6 Black equalized in S.B. Hansen – E. Berg, Helsingor 2008, and several subsequent games.

10...c6

10...e8 is playable, but after 11.b3 Black is unable to execute a quick ...d5 or ...b5. After 11...c6 12.0-0 we transpose to normal lines, although Black has committed
his king’s rook to c8 a little earlier than he would normally.

11.0-0 \text{\textit{\textbackslash E}ac8}

11...\textit{\textbackslash f}d8 12.\textit{\textbackslash E}c1 \textit{\textbackslash E}ac8 13.b3 e6 14.\textit{\textbackslash f}3 \textit{\textbackslash e}7 15.\textit{\textbackslash f}d1 a6 16.\textit{\textbackslash D}xe6 \textit{\textbackslash D}xc6 17.\textit{\textbackslash D}d4± was the first high-level encounter in this line, Adams – Cheparinov, Baku 2008.

11...\text{\textit{\textbackslash F}c8} has been tested and should also be okay. I will not examine this move in detail, as the general character of the play will remain the same as in the main line below.

12.b3 a6

Other moves allow Black to free his position effortlessly, for instance: 13.\textit{\textbackslash E}c1 b5! 14.\textit{\textbackslash D}xb5 \textit{\textbackslash D}xd4 15.\textit{\textbackslash D}xd4 axb5 16.\textit{\textbackslash D}xf6 (There is also 16.\textit{\textbackslash D}d3, G. Garcia – Delgado Ramirez, Guayaquil 2003, and now 16...\textit{\textbackslash E}a8! is equal according to Kritz.) 16...\textit{\textbackslash D}xf6 17.\textit{\textbackslash D}d5 \textit{\textbackslash D}xc1 (An interesting and more ambitious alternative is 17...\textit{\textbackslash D}g5?!N 18.f4 \textit{\textbackslash D}h4 intending ...e6.) 18.\textit{\textbackslash D}xf6+ exf6 19.\textit{\textbackslash D}xc1 \textit{\textbackslash E}a8 20.\textit{\textbackslash D}b2 \textit{\textbackslash D}e6 With equality, A. Muzychuk – Harika, Nalchik 2008.

13...e6

Black usually plays this move at some point, although he can also consider postponing it for a while with 13...\textit{\textbackslash D}d8!? 14.\textit{\textbackslash D}d2 \textit{\textbackslash D}a5.

14.\textit{\textbackslash E}c1 \textit{\textbackslash D}fd8 15.\textit{\textbackslash D}f3 \textit{\textbackslash D}e7

An earlier game had continued: 15...\textit{\textbackslash D}g4?! 16.\textit{\textbackslash D}xg4 \textit{\textbackslash D}xd4 17.\textit{\textbackslash D}xd4 \textit{\textbackslash D}xd4 18.\textit{\textbackslash D}d1 \textit{\textbackslash D}c6 19.\textit{\textbackslash D}d2 \textit{\textbackslash D}c7 20.\textit{\textbackslash D}e3 \textit{\textbackslash D}a5 21.\textit{\textbackslash D}fd1 White’s advantage is tiny, but he eventually managed to grind out a win in Malakhov – Evdokimov, Helsingor 2008.

16.\textit{\textbackslash D}fd1 \textit{\textbackslash D}d7 17.\textit{\textbackslash D}de2 \textit{\textbackslash D}c5 18.\textit{\textbackslash D}b1 \textit{\textbackslash D}b4

Black’s position is active and harmonious enough to provide roughly equal chances, McShane – Elsness, Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010.

If Black plays carefully then he should be okay in the quiet positions resulting from 9...0-0, but he can do even better by following the main line below, which more or less equalizes by force.
main line, but on the other hand the queen is less than ideally placed on e2, and Black can equalize without difficulty.

10...\(\text{c6}\) 11.\(\text{d2}\)

11.\(\text{e3}\)? \(\text{xe4!}\) immediately highlights one drawback of White's tenth move. White is also not helped by 11.\(\text{xc6?!}\) \(\text{c6}\)

12.0-0 \(\text{c8}\) when the attack on the c-pawn is tough to meet.

11...0-0 12.0-0 a6 13.\(\text{d2}\) e6

14.\(\text{a1}\)

A subsequent game resulted in a quick draw:

14.\(\text{fd1}\) \(\text{f8}\) 15.\(\text{d4}\) \(\text{e5}\) 16.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{c6}\)

17.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{h2}\) Ni Hua – So, Wijk aan Zee 2010.

14...\(\text{fe8}\) 15.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{d4}\) 16.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{d7!}\)

A good way to activate the knights.

17.\(\text{h1}\) \(\text{e5}\) 18.\(\text{b1}\) \(\text{e8}\)

Black was doing fine in Malakhov – Hracek, Ohrid 2009.

10...\(\text{a5!}\)

This is the key to Agdestein's idea. Black exploits his opponent's temporary lack of development.

11.\(\text{d2}\)

By this stage White has no choice.

11...\(\text{xe4}\)! 12.\(\text{xe4}\) \(\text{e5}\)

Thanks to this clever tactical resource Black succeeds in regaining the sacrificed piece.

13.\(\text{b1}\)

White does not have much choice if he wants to regain his pawn. 13.\(\text{f3}\) quickly transposed back to the main line after 13...\(\text{f5}\) 14.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{xe4}\)† 15.\(\text{xe4}\) in Hendriks – Wells, London 2009.

13...\(\text{f5}\) 14.\(\text{c3}\)

Once again, there is no other good move.

14...\(\text{xe4}\)† 15.\(\text{xe4}\) \(\text{xe4}\) 16.\(\text{b5}\) \(\text{xc3}\)†

17.\(\text{xc3}\)

The dust has settled, and White will regain the c-pawn to reach an equal endgame. The position is not as dead as the one resulting from Ivanchuk's equalizing line, and it is conceivable that a stronger player might play for a win with either colour. That being said, the fact that all thirteen of the games currently on the database
resulted in draws provides us with a strong indication of the likely outcome.

17...e3
17...fxe3 is a good alternative.

18.f3 c6
The position is equal, and the aforementioned Hendriks – Wells game was agreed drawn here. In the stem game, Hracek – Agdestein, Dresden (ol) 2008, White pressed on for a while but finally agreed to a draw on move 54.

Agdestein has done to the 9.h3 line what Ivanchuk did to the Modern System: effectively put it out of business as a try for an opening advantage. Fans of the 5.c4 line will have to look elsewhere. Can the next and final set-up fare any better?

D) The Fianchetto System

1.e4 c5 2.d4 d6 3...b5+...d7 4...xd7
dx7 5.c4 ...f6 6.c3 g6 7.d4 cxd4 8...xd4
...g7 9.b3

I introduced this move myself back in 2007, and I have scored reasonably well with it. The positive side of this system is that it is easy to learn and prevents Black from liquidating the centre, which means that White can maintain his space advantage. On the other hand, 9.b3 is not the most ambitious attempt for a theoretical advantage. From the b2-square, the white bishop will be quite effective in neutralizing its counterpart on g7, but is unlikely to take an active role in the game, as it might from e3 or g5. Nevertheless, after reviewing a number of games played in this variation, I have noticed that White very often seems to end up with a nagging plus, so let us see how the game may develop.

9...c6
9...0–0 just leads back to the main line after 10.0–0 c6. After 10...c8 White has a few ways to prevent the ...d5 idea, including 11...b2 and 11...el!?.) 11...b2.

10...b2
Having weakened the long diagonal with his previous move, White can no longer contemplate a knight retreat.

10...0–0
This will be an automatic move for many players, although Black can also force a queen exchange with 10...g4?. I have faced this move twice:

a) The first was a blitz game in 2008, which continued: 11.0–0...xd1 12...xd1 cxd4 13...xd4 0–0 14...d2 a6
15.a4 e8 16.f3 f8 17.d5 (17.fd1??N should also provide a slight edge) 17...fxd5
18.xg7+ xg7 19.xd5 d6 20.xf2 xab8
21.xd1 e6 22.xe3 f6

If I reached the position after 10...xg4
again, I would definitely switch back to the
continuation seen in Greer - Le Quang, as
White enjoyed a slight plus after the opening.

23.xd4? There is no reason to advance the
king this far. (23.f4N was better, when White's
space advantage gives him a slight plus.)
23...xd7 24.xg5? b6! I overlooked this clever
resource and went on to lose in Greer - Le Quang, Beijing (blitz) 2008.

b) Just over a year later I varied with 11.xg4
xg4 12.xc6 bxc6

13.h3 (13.f3?! de3 14.g2 xbd4 15.g3
e5 only helps Black) 13...f6 14.0-0-0
d7 15.a4 (15.he1 0-0-0 is also equal)
15...xb2+ 16.xb2 0-0-0 17.he1 g5
White achieved absolutely no advantage in
Greer - Sreeves, Glasgow 2009.

Before looking any further, let us take stock
of the position. Both sides have more or less
completed their development, and White
maintains his typical space advantage. The
fact that the bishop has settled on b2 brings
both pros and cons compared with the more
traditional posts on e3 or g5.

On the plus side, the bishop is unlikely to fall
under attack from any of Black's pieces. White
is helped by not having to spend a tempo on
e2-f3, a move which is a feature of both the
Traditional and Modern systems. The bishop
also helps to safeguard both white knights
against tactical threats.
On the negative side, the bishop is not really doing anything active at the moment. The best thing we can say about it is that it is doing a good job of neutralizing any pressure from the g7-bishop on the long diagonal.

Very often the opposing bishops will end up being exchanged, usually after White plays \( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d5}} \). The challenge for White will be to play this move at a time that does not allow mass simplifications leading to dry equality.

One of the advantages of the 9.b3 system is that no real theory exists. Generally speaking Black's main objective will be to prepare ...b5, while White will attempt to restrain this move while preparing a \( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d5}} \) jump at the right moment. Without further ado, we will investigate some possible developments from this position.

11...\texttt{a6}

This natural move has been Black's most popular choice, although several alternatives have been tried.

11...\texttt{\textbackslash d8} 12.\texttt{\textbackslash e1}

This is always a useful move. White not only defends the e-pawn, but also anticipates a future knight exchange on d5, after which the reply exd5 will unleash the rook.

12...\texttt{\textbackslash x4d4} 13.\texttt{\textbackslash x4d7} 14.\texttt{\textbackslash d2} a6

15.\texttt{\textbackslash d5}

The computer likes 15.\texttt{\textbackslash e4d1N b5} 16.\texttt{\textbackslash x4b5} 17.\texttt{\textbackslash a3}, but after 17...\texttt{\textbackslash c5} 18.\texttt{\textbackslash b4} \texttt{\textbackslash a4} 19.\texttt{\textbackslash x4a4} \texttt{\textbackslash x4a4} I think Black should be okay.

15...\texttt{\textbackslash x4b5} 16.\texttt{\textbackslash x4b2} b5 17.\texttt{\textbackslash a4c1}

17.\texttt{\textbackslash x4b5} \texttt{\textbackslash x4b5} 18.\texttt{\textbackslash x4c1} c6 19.\texttt{\textbackslash b4} \texttt{\textbackslash c5} is equal.

17...\texttt{\textbackslash x4c4} 18.\texttt{\textbackslash x4c4} \texttt{\textbackslash b6}

This was Greet - D. Eggleston, Gibraltar 2007, and here the best continuation would have been:

19.\texttt{\textbackslash x4b6N} \texttt{\textbackslash x4b6} 20.\texttt{\textbackslash x4c1}

With a modest but pleasant edge for White, thanks to his domination of the c-file.

11...\texttt{\textbackslash e6}

Whenever this move appears on the board, White must watch out for the idea of ...\texttt{\textbackslash x4d4} followed by ...\texttt{\textbackslash d5}.

12.\texttt{\textbackslash d2}

Usually I would play \texttt{\textbackslash e1} before this move, as Black will sometimes exchange knights on d4, in which case I would prefer not to lose a tempo with the queen. In the present case I made an exception as Black is intending to break with ...d5, so I wanted to prepare \texttt{\textbackslash x4d1} as quickly as possible.

12...\texttt{\textbackslash d5}

This direct approach deserves attention, but it should not be enough to equalize.

A logical alternative was: 12...\texttt{\textbackslash x4d4N}

13.\texttt{\textbackslash x4d4} \texttt{\textbackslash d5} (13...d5 14.exd5 transposes to the game) 14.\texttt{\textbackslash x4d2} \texttt{\textbackslash x4c3} 15.\texttt{\textbackslash x4c3} \texttt{\textbackslash x4c3}
16.\text{wx}c3 The resulting position is close to equal, but Black's d-pawn is a permanent target so White need not agree a draw just yet.

13.\text{ex}d5
If followed up correctly, this should lead to a slight plus in a quiet position.
Also interesting is: 13.\text{c}xc6?!N bxc6 14.\text{ad}1 \text{fd}8 15.e5 \text{g}4 16.\text{e}2! \text{h}6 (16...\text{xe}5? 17.f4) Now both 17.\text{e}4 and 17.\text{a}4 leave White with a pleasant edge.
13...\text{xd}4 14.\text{xd}4 \text{xd}5
So far we have been following my debut game with the Fianchetto System, Greet–Eames, Hastings 2006/7.

15.\text{d}3?!N
In the game I played the slightly less accurate 15.\text{d}2 \text{f}6 16.\text{xd}7 (16.\text{ad}1?! \text{fd}8 17.\text{c}3 deserved attention, but the improvement on move 15 is still preferable as the queen's best square is f3.) 16...\text{xd}7 17.\text{ad}1 \text{fd}8 when the semi-endgame was equal.
15...\text{f}6 16.\text{f}3
During the game I was happy to swap queens, but the white queen is ideally placed on f3, so it is Black who should have to work for the exchange!
16...\text{fd}8 17.\text{ad}1
White keeps some initiative.
11...\text{fc}8 12.\text{e}1 \text{d}8

13.\text{c}xc6?N
This exchange is often worth considering in positions in which a black rook has moved to c8, as the positionally desirable ...\text{bxc}6 will leave the rook misplaced.
13.\text{d}2 was a decent alternative, as usual.
13.\text{xc}6
13...\text{bxc}6 14.\text{a}4±
14.\text{d}5 e6
After 14...\text{xd}5? 15.\text{g}7 \text{g}7 16.\text{d}5 \text{e}7 17.\text{e}4 Black's king is in some danger.
The present position was reached in Cvorovic–Tolnai, Pula 1993, and now, instead of exchanging knights, White could have maintained an edge with:
15.\text{b}4N \text{b}6 16.\text{d}3±
White has a space advantage and the more harmonious position.
11...\text{ac}8 12.\text{e}1
As I explained previously, I find this a more useful developing move than \( \text{d}2 \), as the queen will sometimes save a tempo by moving to \( \text{d}4 \) in one move instead of two. We will investigate two options for Black from this position:

a) 12...a6 13.\( \text{c}x\text{c}6!\)N
This looks like the best try for an edge.
13.\( \text{c}d\text{d}5 \) is less challenging. 13...\( \text{c}x\text{d}5 \)
14.exd5 At this point Black can equalize easily with: 14...\( \text{c}x\text{d}4! \)N (The illogical 14...\( \text{e}5?! \) 15.\( \text{c}c\text{c}2 \) was pleasant for White in Kuznetsova – Fedorova, Salekhard 2003.)
15.\( \text{x}x\text{d}4 \) 16.\( \text{c}c\text{c}4 \) \( \text{b}5= \) White is not sufficiently mobilized to develop any meaningful pressure along the e-file or on the kingside.
13...\( \text{x}x\text{c}6 \)
13...\( \text{b}x\text{c}6 \) 14.\( \text{a}a\text{a}4 \) \( \text{c}c\text{d}8 \) 15.e5 is more pleasant for White.

White can also play more patiently with 14.\( \text{a}4?! \).
14...\( \text{c}x\text{d}5 \) 15.exd5 \( \text{c}c\text{c}5 \) 16.\( \text{x}x\text{g}7 \) \( \text{x}x\text{g}7 \)
17.\( \text{d}d\text{d}4 \) \( \text{g}8 \) 18.\( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{e}6 \)
After 18...\( \text{b}5 \) 19.\( \text{c}x\text{b}5 \) \( \text{x}x\text{b}5 \) 20.a5 the a-pawn is a powerful force, and after other moves White will simply double rooks on the e-file, after which Black will face a difficult defence.
19.dxe6 \( \text{f}x\text{e}6 \) 20.\( \text{a}x\text{a}4 \)
White maintains some pressure on the central files. Black will have to defend carefully, with little hope of achieving anything more than a draw.

b) 12...\( \text{e}6?! \)
Black prevents the knight jump to \( \text{d}5 \), and hopes to become active in the centre.

13.\( \text{x}x\text{c}6!\)N
In the only relevant game in the database White overlooked the threat: 13.\( \text{d}2? \) \( \text{c}x\text{d}4 \)
14.\( \text{x}x\text{d}4 \) \( \text{c}c\text{c}5 \) 15.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{x}x\text{c}3 \) 16.\( \text{x}x\text{c}3 \) \( \text{c}c\text{c}3 \)
17.\( \text{x}c\text{c}3 \) \( \text{b}5 \) And already it was White who had to worry about equalizing in Alsina Leal – Pena Gomez, Mondariz 2003.
13...\( \text{x}x\text{c}6 \)
13...\( \text{x}x\text{c}6? \) 14.\( \text{b}5 \) wins material.
13...\( \text{x}x\text{c}6 \) is playable, but after 14.\( \text{d}2 \) White should be a little better.
14.\( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{d}d\text{d}8 \) 15.\( \text{f}3 \)
It looks a little too early for 15.e5 \( \text{h}5 \).
15...\( \text{e}7 \) 16.\( \text{a}d\text{d}1 \)
Black remains solid enough, but White’s position is slightly more pleasant.

12...\text{cxd5}?!  
12...\text{d5}  
This is a safe move, leading to a position that is very close to equal, but perhaps minutely favourable for White.

Other sensible ideas which have yet to be tested are 12.a4?!N and 12.e1?!N.

12...\text{cxd5} 13.exd5  
13.cxd5 leads to dull equality and after 13...\text{cxd4} a draw was agreed in S. Johnsen – O. Pedersen, Tromso 2007.

13...\text{cxd4} 14.\text{cxd4} b5 15.e1  
White intends to answer ...bxc4 with \text{xc4}, controlling the c-file and hoping to utilize the queenside majority of two pawns versus one in the endgame.

15...\text{xc8} 16.\text{xc8} 17.\text{d4} 18.e3 19.e4 \text{xc4} 20.\text{xc4} \text{b5} 21.e1 \text{xc4} 22.e4

The endgame is close to equal, but plenty of play remains.

22...\text{b8} 23.a4 \text{b6}  
23...\text{b5}N looks better. After 24.\text{xa6} \text{xd5} White’s pawns appear slightly more dangerous, but I am confident that Black should hold. The game continuation is playable, but rather passive.

24.e1 e6 25.e4  
Black should have preferred 25...\text{g7} 26.\text{d3}N.

We have been following the game Kuznetsova – Demianjuk, Khany-Mansiysk 2007. Black’s last move was a mistake, which could have been punished by means of:

26.e6N fx6 27.e4

When the white rook becomes annoyingly active.

12...\text{xc6}  
Black wants to retain the possibility of ...b5.

12...\text{xc6}N 13.\text{a4} is just marginally favourable for White, and resembles the position occurring after 11...\text{bc8} in the note to Black’s eleventh move above.

The fact that the black a-pawn stands on a6 instead of a7 helps White slightly, as the b6-square might prove useful for White’s pieces at some point (aside from the incidental threat of a knight fork in the present position). Also, in the event of a future e4-e5 followed by a pawn exchange involving ...\text{xe5}, the a6-pawn can be attacked by a white knight from c5. These minor points may not seem like much, but they could easily make a difference later in the game.

13.\text{d5} \text{xd5} 14.exd5 \text{c5}

14...\text{c7} 15.\text{xc7} 16.\text{d4} 17.\text{e1} is slightly more pleasant for White.
Chapter 5 – Moscow Variation with 5.c4

15...\text{\textbf{xg7}} 16.e1

16...\text{\textbf{f6}\textbf{e8}}

The most accurate move was 16...\text{\textbf{e5!N}} 17.dxe6 \text{\textbf{fxe6}} when Black has enough activity to compensate for the slight looseness of his central pawns.

17.e1 \text{\textbf{bac8}} 18.d2 b5?

Black chooses the worst possible time for this pawn break, having overlooked a simple refutation. It is worth emphasizing that even after other moves, his position would remain slightly worse. White intends to play \text{\textbf{c4}} next. The main plan is not to pile up on the e-file with \text{\textbf{c1}}, although White may well choose to do this at some point. The more dangerous attacking idea is \text{\textbf{h4-h5}} with threats against the black king. Depending on circumstances, White may continue with \text{\textbf{h5-h6}} with threats on the dark squares, or \text{\textbf{hxg6}} followed by transferring one or both rooks to the h-file.

19.b4 \text{\textbf{a7}} 20.c5

White’s advancing pawns were too strong in Greet – Urbina Perez, Gibraltar 2008.

Conclusion

The Traditional System remains a valid option. White’s pieces develop naturally, and he aims for a quiet position with a slight but nagging advantage. Black should have a few different routes to an equal or close to equal position, but he should not underestimate his opponent’s set-up.

If White wishes to employ the Modern System, he will not have an easy time sidestepping Ivanchuk’s equalizing line. In variation B we became acquainted with a number of different ways in which White may try to shuffle his move order in an effort to transpose to his desired set-up, but each of them carried some kind of drawback. The most interesting attempt was line B23 with 9.b3 0-0 10.\text{\textbf{d}2}, after which 10...\text{\textbf{c8}} 11.b3 b5! resulted in a complicated position in which neither player could afford to make a mistake. According to my analysis the position should be about equal, but there is plenty of scope for further investigation.

The 9.h3 System is currently on the shelf thanks to Agdestein’s clever retort of 9...\text{\textbf{c7!}} when 10.b3 \text{\textbf{a5!}} leads by force to an equal endgame.

Finally, the Fianchetto System is interesting and worth considering for White. It is not wildly ambitious, but it avoids any excessive early simplifications and leads to positions in which White will have chances to claim a modest edge. I would not regard it as a critical attempt for a theoretical advantage, but I suppose one could make the same remark about the entire 5.c4 line; and some people might even extend that judgement as far back as 3.\text{\textbf{b}5}!!
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{\textit{d}f3}\) d6 3.\(\text{\textit{c}c4}\) \(\text{\textit{d}f6}\)

4.d3

A) 4...e6 5.\(\text{\textit{b}b3}\) \(\text{\textit{c}c7}\) 6.0–0 0–0 7.c3 \(\text{\textit{c}c6}\)
   A1) 8.\(\text{\textit{e}e1}\)
   A2) 8.\(\text{\textit{e}e2}\)
      A21) 8...b5? 155
      A22) 8...b6 159

B) 4...\(\text{\textit{c}c6}\)
   B1) 5.0–0 165
      B11) 5...\(\text{\textit{g}g4}\) 167
      B12) 5...\(\text{\textit{g}g6}\) 168
   B2) 5.c3 170
      B21) 5...d5 172
      B22) 5...a6 172
      B23) 5...\(\text{\textit{g}g6}\) 6.0–0 \(\text{\textit{g}g7}\) 7.\(\text{\textit{b}b3}\) 0–0 176
         B231) 8.h3 176
         B232) 8.\(\text{\textit{b}b2}\) 177
         B233) 8.\(\text{\textit{e}e1}\) 182
Chapter 6 – 2.\f3 d6 3.\c4

1.e4 c5 2.\f3 d6 3.\c4

This system, regularly employed by players such as Timofeev, McShane and Yudasin, aims to avoid the main lines. White develops his bishop before playing d2-d3; later on he will try to achieve c2-c3 followed by d3-d4. Although current theory says that Black has several ways to obtain a level game, the middlegame is generally complex. Indeed, early exchanges are not common, meaning that the real battle is postponed to a later stage, where the stronger player will have the chance to outplay his rival.

3...\f6

This natural move, developing with gain of tempo, is Black’s most frequent continuation. As the knight will almost invariably head for f6, Black’s most flexible approach is to go there right away, only then deciding between ...e6 and ...g6.

We will have a brief look at the alternatives, which in my view only have drawbacks compared to the knight move. An obvious one is that in some circumstances White may save a tempo by playing d2-d4 in a single move. Having said that, moves like 3...e6, 3...a6 or 3...\c6 are all quite sensible, and will usually lead to transposition into the main line. Let’s look at some exceptions to this:

Believe it or not, there are 60 games (out of a total of 5000 games, so maybe that is a reasonable ratio?) featuring the disastrous 3...\g4??. Even more curiously, White doesn’t always reply 4.\xf7\xf7 5.\g5+, when his advantage is already winning.

3...\c6 4.0-0

I prefer 4.c3 \f6 5.d3, leading to our main line B2.

4...\f6 5.\e1 g6 5...\g4?*

6.c3 \g7 7.h3

7.d4 cxd4 8.cxd4 \g4 is fine for Black.

7...0-0

Also possible is: 7...\xe4!? 8.\xf7\xf7 9.\xe4 \e8 8.\h3 b5??

8.e5 seems more to the point, when play may continue: 9.d4 exd4 10.cxd4 cxd4 11.\xd4 d5 The position is similar to some of those examined in Chapter 7 (1.e4 c5 2.\f3 d6 3.c3 \f6 4.h3 \c6 5.\d3), and is about level.

9.d4

Rasik – Jiříček, Czech Republic 1998. With d2-d4 White has saved a tempo in comparison with a ‘normal’ move order; he therefore stands slightly better.

3...a6 4.\b3

4.c3 e6? (this already seems inaccurate, since the move ...a6 will later on prove useless;
Correct was 4...\( \text{c5} \), but not 5...\( \text{g4}?! \) 6.e5! \( \text{dxe5?} \) 7.\( \text{xf7} \)!! 5.\( \text{h3} \) \( \text{f6} \) 6.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{e7} \) 7.d4 \( \text{cxd4} \) 8.cxd4 e5?! 9.0-0 \( \text{g4} \) 10.\( \text{dxe5} \) \( \text{xf3} \) 11.\( \text{xf3} \) \( \text{dxe5} \) 12.\( \text{g3} \) David - Gouanelle, Paris 2010.

4...\( \text{b5} \) 5.d3 \( \text{c6} \) 6.c3 \( \text{f6} \) 7.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{e7} \) 8.d4 \( \text{cxd4} \) 9.\( \text{cxd4} \) e5?! Black is playing with fire. It was more solid to play either 7...\( \text{g4} \) or 7...\( \text{e6} \), although in the former case Black's queenside expansion would have precluded any set-up involving long castling.

8.a4! \( \text{b8} \) 9.axb5 axb5 10.\( \text{g5} \)!

The lesser evil. Black obviously isn't prepared for opening up the game with 10...\( \text{d5}?! \) 11.\( \text{exd5} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 12.\( \text{h5} \) g6 (12...\( \text{b7} \) 13.\( \text{f3} \) is nasty for Black). White has a pleasant choice between a rather complicated tactical win, namely 13.\( \text{xf7} \) \( \text{xf7} \) 14.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{e6} \) 15.\( \text{e4} \) \( \text{e7} \) 16.\( \text{g5} \)!! \( \text{g5} \) 17.\( \text{g5} \) with a clear edge; and the quieter 13.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{g5} \) 14.\( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{d8} \) 15.\( \text{e4} \) \( \text{f5} \) 16.\( \text{g3} \) - Black has so far avoided any material loss, but he will be unable to cope with 17.0-0 followed by \( \text{f2-f4} \).

11.\( \text{d8} \) \( \text{a5} \) 11...\( \text{h6} \) is no improvement: 12.\( \text{xf7} \)!! \( \text{xf7} \) 13.\( \text{xf7} \) \( \text{xf7} \) 14.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{e6} \) (or 14...\( \text{g6} \) 15.\( \text{xb5} \) \( \text{c7} \) 16.\( \text{c4} \) with a clear edge) 15.\( \text{d8} \) \( \text{xb3} \) 16.\( \text{c8} \) \( \text{e7} \) 17.\( \text{xf8} \)!! \( \text{xf8} \) 18.\( \text{xb3} \) White has a healthy extra pawn.

12.\( \text{d5} \)!! \( \text{xd5} \) 13.\( \text{exd5} \) \( \text{d7} \) Instead 13...\( \text{c4} \)!! just doesn't work: 14.\( \text{dxc4} \) \text{gx} 5 15.\( \text{xc8} \)!! \( \text{d7} \) 16.\( \text{fxa6} \)!! \( \text{xf8} \) 17.0-0 The potential discovered attack on his queen prevents Black from solving the problem of his a5-knight.

There remains 13...\( \text{xc4} \)!! which may be the most tenacious option: 14.\( \text{xc4} \) \( \text{d7} \) 15.\( \text{e8} \) \( \text{g5} \) 16.e1 \( \text{fxd5} \) 17.e5 \( \text{xd3} \) With three pawns for the piece, Black has chances of surviving.

14.\( \text{de4} \) \( \text{c7} \)!!

10...\( \text{b7} \)

15.\( \text{e6} \)!! \( \text{xb7} \)

15...\( \text{fxe6} \) would have led to a nice finish:

16.\( \text{dxe6} \) \( \text{f8} \) (or 16...\( \text{e7} \) 17.\( \text{xc8} \)!!) 17.\( \text{d6} \)!! \( \text{gxf6} \) 18.\( \text{f6} \)!! \( \text{e7} \) 19.\( \text{g7} \)

16.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{g6} \) 17.\( \text{dxe6} \) \( \text{c8} \) 18.\( \text{d6} \)!! \( \text{g6} \) 19.\( \text{d6} \) \( \text{e7} \) 20.\( \text{d6} \) \( \text{d8} \) 21.\( \text{d6} \) \( \text{g8} \) 22.\( \text{d6} \) \( \text{xe6} \) 23.\( \text{d6} \) \( \text{g7} \) 24.0-0 \( \text{f8} \) 25.\( \text{d5} \) \( \text{e8} \) 26.\( \text{d6} \)!!

1-0 Arakelian - Minasian, Yerevan 2000.

3...\( \text{e6} \) 4.0-0

4.\( \text{e2} \) seems unnecessary, but if White prefers a slow approach, not trying to play \( d2-d4 \) quickly, then the move is fine. Leko - Moiseev, Nettetal 1992, continued 4...\( \text{e7} \) 5.0-0 \( \text{d6} \) 6.\( \text{c3} \) 0-0 7.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{b6} \) 8.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{b7} \) 9.\( d3 \) \( \text{c6} \) 10.\( \text{b2} \) with mutual chances.

4...\( \text{f6} \)

4...\( \text{a6} \) 5.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{f6} \) 6.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{e7} \) 7.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{c6} \) 8.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{cxd4} \) 9.\( \text{cxd4} \) \( \text{d5} \) 10.e5 \( \text{d4} \) 11.\( \text{f4} \) both 11.\( \text{d3} \) and 11.\( \text{d3} \) deserved serious
attention; in the latter case Black would probably sacrifice a pawn for compensation on the light squares, but I doubt whether he would have enough) 11...\texttt{Qxd2} 12.\texttt{Bxd2} \texttt{Bb6} 13.\texttt{Qc3} \texttt{Qd7} 14.\texttt{Bd2} a5 15.h4 a4 Hodgson - Rashkovsky, Ubeda 1996. Black is planning ...\texttt{Qa5}(-c4) and ...\texttt{Bb5}, with an unclear position.

Given White's great lead in development, the central push 4...d5? is highly dubious. After 5.exd5 exd5 6.\texttt{Bb5}+ \texttt{Qd7} 7.\texttt{Bxd7}t \texttt{Qxd7} 8.\texttt{Bf1}t \texttt{Qe7} 9.d4 \texttt{Qg6} 10.\texttt{Bc2} Black probably has to opt for the sad 10...\texttt{Qf6}, since 10...\texttt{Qe4} is strongly met by 11.\texttt{Qc3}.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
& a & b & c & d & e & f & g & h \\
\hline
1 & & & & & & & & \\
2 & & & & & & & & \\
3 & & & & & & & & \\
4 & & & & & & & & \\
5 & & & & & & & & \\
6 & & & & & & & & \\
7 & & & & & & & & \\
8 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

6.c3

It may be more accurate to prepare this with 6.\texttt{Qb3}, when play is likely to return to the 'right track', that is, to be similar to the main lines, but with White possibly saving the tempo d2-d3.

6...d5! 7.exd5 \texttt{Qxd5} 8.d4 0-0 9.dxc5 \texttt{Qxc5} 10.\texttt{Qxd5}!

10.\texttt{Qb3} should offer White better chances of fighting for an opening edge.

10...\texttt{Qe5} 11.\texttt{Qe3} \texttt{Qe7} 12.\texttt{Qb3} \texttt{Qc6}=

Black's two bishops compensated for his isolated d-pawn in Hellsten - Akesson, Malmo 1997.

4.d3

4.e5?! is premature, as after 4...dxe5 5.\texttt{Qxe5} e6 Black will continue ...\texttt{Qbd7} and equalize without any problem.

We shall now look at A) 4...e6 and B) 4...\texttt{Qc6}.

As I mentioned above, Black's principal choice is between set-ups with ...e6 and those with ...g6, but there are many different move orders and transpositions available. To make the material easier to understand, nearly all variations with an early ...e6 are covered in line A, while line B concentrates on ...g6 set-ups.

A) 4...e6

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
& a & b & c & d & e & f & g & h \\
\hline
1 & & & & & & & & \\
2 & & & & & & & & \\
3 & & & & & & & & \\
4 & & & & & & & & \\
5 & & & & & & & & \\
6 & & & & & & & & \\
7 & & & & & & & & \\
8 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

5.\texttt{Qb3}

White may also play:

5.c3 \texttt{Qc6}

5...\texttt{Qe7} 6.\texttt{Qb3} 0-0 7.0-0 transposes to main line.

5...d5 attempts to profit from the bishop not retreating. White should presumably reply 6.\texttt{Qb5}+ \texttt{Qd7} 7.\texttt{Qxd7}+ \texttt{Qxd7} 8.e5 \texttt{Qg8} 9.c4 with a somewhat better game. The position is analogous to those we will meet in Chapter 11 (1.e4 c5 2.\texttt{Qf3} e6 3.c3 d5 4.e5 d4 5.\texttt{Qb5}+ \texttt{Qd7} etc.).

6.\texttt{Qb2} \texttt{Qe7} 7.0-0 0-0 8.\texttt{Qe2} a6 9.\texttt{Qb3} b5 10.\texttt{d4} cxd4 11.\texttt{Qxd4} \texttt{Qb7} 12.\texttt{Qd1} \texttt{Qc7}

We are following Art. Minasian - Sebag, Cappelle la Grande 2003. That game took an interesting course, with White trying to keep
his centre mobile and repel the enemy pieces at the cost of some peculiar manoeuvres. Black did well until the 20th move, when she fatally blundered.

13.axf1 a5 14.\(\text{c}c2\) \(\text{b}4\) 16.\(\text{b}1\) \(\text{e}c8\) 17.\(\text{e}e1\) \(\text{c}4\) 18.\(\text{e}e3\) \(\text{c}c6\) 19.\(\text{b}3\) axb3!

19... \(\text{b}4\) is clearly inferior: 20.a3 \(\text{a}5\) (20... \(\text{xb}3\)!! 21.\(\text{e}d3\) traps the queen, although Black is still far from dead after 21.\(\text{xd}4\) 22.\(\text{xb}3\) \(\text{xb}3\) 23.\(\text{b}2\) \(\text{xa}1\) 24.\(\text{xa}1\)) 21.\(\text{b}4\) White can safely prepare his operations on the king's flank.

20.axb3

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{a} & \text{b} & \text{c} & \text{d} & \text{e} & \text{f} & \text{g} & \text{h} \\
\hline
8 & 7 & 6 & 5 & 4 & 3 & 2 & 1 \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

20... \(\text{b}4\)?

20... \(\text{xd}4\)! 21.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{xa}1\) followed by 22.\(\text{xb}1\) would have left Black with a pleasant game.

21.\(\text{c}2\)

Oops!

21... \(\text{g}4\)!!

21... \(\text{xa}1\) was more stubborn, although after 22.\(\text{xb}4\) \(\text{xb}1\) 23.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{a}1\) 24.\(\text{c}6\) White's material superiority of queen versus rook and bishop should prevail in the long run.

22.\(\text{xa}8\) \(\text{xa}8\) 23.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{xd}4\) 24.\(\text{xd}4\)??

1–0

That is how the game finishes in the database, but I suspect that 24.\(\text{xd}4\) was actually played, since after 24.\(\text{xd}4\) it would be Black who wins: 24... \(\text{xd}4\)! 25.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{xc}1\)?? 26.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{xf}1\)?? 27.\(\text{xf}1\) \(\text{xb}2\)!!

5... \(\text{e}7\)

Or 5... \(\text{c}6\) and now:

a) 6.0–0

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

Black can also simplify the game somewhat with a manoeuvre we shall encounter again:

6... \(\text{a}5\) 7.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{a}7\) Zagema – Shipov, Groningen 1994.

7.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{d}5\)

7...0–0 returns to the main line.

8.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{d}7\) 9.\(\text{e}5\)

This aggressive thrust looks misguided in my opinion. In Kovalev – Akshayraj, Alusha 2007, White reacted coolly:

10.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{g}4\) 11.\(\text{f}d2\) \(\text{g}8\) 12.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{b}6\) 13.\(\text{c}6\) \(\text{x}c6\)??

Strategically, Black is in bad shape, having numerous weaknesses and a silly light-squared bishop.

b) 6.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{d}5\)

In Tkachiev – Oll, Groningen 1997, 6... \(\text{g}6\)!! was played, but it appears illogical in conjunction with ...e6.

6... \(\text{c}7\) 7.\(\text{d}2\) (7.0–0 is line 'a' above)

7...0–0 8.0–0 \(\text{d}5\) 9.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{d}7\) 10.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{b}5\)

11.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{b}4\) 12.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{d}4\) 13.\(\text{c}1\) \(\text{c}7\) 14.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{b}7\)

15.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{e}8\) 16.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{h}8\) 17.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{d}8\)

18.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{e}8\) with a balanced position.


7.\(\text{c}5\)
This is of course not compulsory - White can opt for 7...\(\text{bd}2\)!? or 7...\(\text{we}2\) instead.

7...\(\text{cd}7\) 8.d4 \(\text{de}7\)

The immediate 8...b5?? was played in Poluljahov – Zakharstov, Cherkessk 1997, and is okay too. The pressure on d4 should discourage White from launching an attack based on \(\text{g}5\) and \(\text{wh}5\).

9.0-0 b5

9...b6!? 10.\(\text{xe}1\) (10.\(\text{a}4\)? may slow down Black's play) 10...\(\text{a}6\) 11.\(\text{f}4\)?? (11.a3 has the point that a subsequent \(\text{c}2\) can no longer be met by exchanging pawns on d4 followed by ...\(\text{b}4\), and looks more useful to me) 11...\(\text{e}8\) 12.dxc5 Not ideal, but it is not clear what else White should do. 12...\(\text{xc}5\) 13.\(\text{d}2\) g5?? 14.\(\text{g}3\) h5 15.h3 The position is difficult to assess, Dzhumaev – Kostenko, Aden 2002.

10.\(\text{xe}1\)

10...\(\text{a}5\)

I prefer this to 10...\(\text{b}7\) from Adams – Kasparov, New York (rapid) 1995: 11.\(\text{bd}2\) \(\text{a}5\) 12.a4 (12.\(\text{f}1\)??) 12...b4 13.c4 dxc4 14.\(\text{xc}4\) cxd4 15.\(\text{g}5\) (White could try 15.\(\text{d}6\)\# \(\text{xd}6\) 16.exd6 with an unclear position) 15...0-0 16.\(\text{xe}7\) \(\text{xe}7\) 17.\(\text{xc}4\) \(\text{c}5\) 18.\(\text{xc}6\)! (White should have preferred 18.\(\text{c}2\)) 18...\(\text{xc}6\) 19.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{d}5\) Black has seized a certain initiative.

11.\(\text{bd}2\) \(\text{a}6\) 12.\(\text{f}1\) b4 13.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{b}5\)

The position offers mutual chances, Adams – Marin, Yerevan (ol) 1996.

6.0-0 0-0

7.c3

White may also choose:

7.\(\text{xe}1\)

This may well come to the same thing as the main line, but we shall look at a few examples where play diverges.

7...b5

7...\(\text{bd}7\) 8.\(\text{bd}2\) (I believe that White shouldn't commit himself too early with \(\text{bd}2\), as after White plays c2-c3 and d3-d4, an exchange of pawns on d4 would free the c3-square, a better post for the knight. Thus I would rather play 8.c3 immediately,) 8...a6 (8...b5?? can be met by 9.a4 b4 10.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{f}1\) b5 10.c3 \(\text{b}7\) 11.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{e}5\) 12.d4 \(\text{xf}3\) 13.\(\text{xf}3\) \(\text{xd}4\) 14.\(\text{xd}4\) d5 15.e5 \(\text{e}4\) 16.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{h}8\) 17.\(\text{c}2\) (17.\(\text{h}5\)?) 17...\(\text{e}8\) 18.\(\text{d}3\) f5 19.\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{xf}6\) 20.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{e}5\) Black had more or less equalized in Godena – Miralles, Marseille 2007.

8.c3

Black needn't fear 8.a4 b4 because he can still play ...d5, in order to deny White access to the c4-square.

8...\(\text{d}c3\) is an interesting attempt to win a tempo and then bring the knight to g3 via another route: 8...a6 (8...b4?? is also possible) 9.a4 (9.\(\text{e}2\) d5 may not appeal to White) b4 10.\(\text{e}2\) The position is roughly balanced.
As the knight belongs on g3 in all cases, I think this is more precise than: 10...c2! ec8 11...f1 b4 12..g3 d7 13..bxc3 bxc3 14..a4 cxd4 15..xd4 (15..b1 d3!) 15...b4 16..b3 (16..b1 is answered by 16...c7, intending either ...c2 or ...c3) 16...d5 Black stood a tad better in Mainka – Tiviakov, Eupen (rapid) 2000.

16...c6 17..xd4 c7 18..c4 c8 19..b4

Missing the gorgeous 19...e5! which would have brought Black a marked edge.

20..xd6 c4 21..a3 a4? 21...c3 was the only move, when White can either acquiesce to a draw or sacrifice his queen.

22..c5 ..xd6 23..xd6士

8...b7 9..bd2 c6 10..f1

As the knight belongs on g3 in all cases, I think this is more precise than: 10...c2! ec8 11..f1 b4 12..g3 d7 13..bxc3 bxc3 14..a4 cxd4 15..xd4 (15..b1 d3!) 15...b4 16..b3 (16..b1 is answered by 16...c7, intending either ...c2 or ...c3) 16...d5 Black stood a tad better in Mainka – Tiviakov, Eupen (rapid) 2000.

16...c6 17..xd4 c7 18..c4 c8 19..b4

Missing the gorgeous 19...e5! which would have brought Black a marked edge.

20..xd6 c4 21..a3 a4? 21...c3 was the only move, when White can either acquiesce to a draw or sacrifice his queen.

22..c5 ..xd6 23..xd6士

8...b7 9..bd2 c6 10..f1

As the knight belongs on g3 in all cases, I think this is more precise than: 10...c2! ec8 11..f1 b4 12..g3 d7 13..bxc3 bxc3 14..a4 cxd4 15..xd4 (15..b1 d3!) 15...b4 16..b3 (16..b1 is answered by 16...c7, intending either ...c2 or ...c3) 16...d5 Black stood a tad better in Mainka – Tiviakov, Eupen (rapid) 2000.

16...c6 17..xd4 c7 18..c4 c8 19..b4

Missing the gorgeous 19...e5! which would have brought Black a marked edge.

20..xd6 c4 21..a3 a4? 21...c3 was the only move, when White can either acquiesce to a draw or sacrifice his queen.

22..c5 ..xd6 23..xd6士

8...b7 9..bd2 c6 10..f1

As the knight belongs on g3 in all cases, I think this is more precise than: 10...c2! ec8 11..f1 b4 12..g3 d7 13..bxc3 bxc3 14..a4 cxd4 15..xd4 (15..b1 d3!) 15...b4 16..b3 (16..b1 is answered by 16...c7, intending either ...c2 or ...c3) 16...d5 Black stood a tad better in Mainka – Tiviakov, Eupen (rapid) 2000.

16...c6 17..xd4 c7 18..c4 c8 19..b4

Missing the gorgeous 19...e5! which would have brought Black a marked edge.

20..xd6 c4 21..a3 a4? 21...c3 was the only move, when White can either acquiesce to a draw or sacrifice his queen.

22..c5 ..xd6 23..xd6士

8...b7 9..bd2 c6 10..f1

As the knight belongs on g3 in all cases, I think this is more precise than: 10...c2! ec8 11..f1 b4 12..g3 d7 13..bxc3 bxc3 14..a4 cxd4 15..xd4 (15..b1 d3!) 15...b4 16..b3 (16..b1 is answered by 16...c7, intending either ...c2 or ...c3) 16...d5 Black stood a tad better in Mainka – Tiviakov, Eupen (rapid) 2000.
14.\texttt{We}2 d5 15.\texttt{ex}d5 (15.e5?) 15...\texttt{X}xd5 16.\texttt{D}e3 \texttt{Da}8 17.\texttt{D}g4 With approximate equality. Dworakowsk\k{a} - Gaponenko, St Petersburg 2009.

11...\texttt{e}7

11...\texttt{e}5 12.d4 \texttt{Qxf}3† (if Black plays 12...\texttt{Q}g6 then, compared with the continuation of Waitzkin - Yermolinsky, White will have an extra tempo since he has not played \texttt{Bf}4) 13.\texttt{W}xf3 cxd4 14.\texttt{cx}d4 d5 15.e5 \texttt{Q}e4 16.\texttt{W}g4 \texttt{Q}xg3 (16...\texttt{Sh}8 17.\texttt{D}h5) 17.\texttt{hx}g3 \texttt{Sh}8 18.\texttt{We}2 A multi-purpose move, as rightly pointed out by GM Har-Zvi in ChessBase Magazine: "White denies his opponent the option of... \texttt{Qa}6(-d3), prepares the relocation of his own bishop to c2, and prepares a dangerous assault on the kingside by g4, g3, \texttt{D}g2, \texttt{H}h1 etc." This explains why Black choose the weakening: 18...f5 19.\texttt{ex}f6 \texttt{Q}xf6 20.\texttt{D}d3 \texttt{D}d7 21.\texttt{Q}d4 \texttt{Q}c6 22.\texttt{Q}c2 g6 23.\texttt{Q}d1! White had a marked advantage in Morozevich - Petrushin, Krasnodar 1997.

12.\texttt{Q}f4 \texttt{Q}e5 13.d4 \texttt{Q}g6 14.\texttt{Q}g5 h6 15.\texttt{Q}d2 The position is unclear. Waitzkin - Yermolinsky, Modesto 1995.

After 7...\texttt{Q}c6 White finds himself at an important juncture; he has to choose between A1) 8.\texttt{Be}1 and A2) 8.\texttt{We}2.

**A1) 8.\texttt{Be}1**

A common motif in this kind of position. Black isn't afraid of doubled pawns because the backward d3-pawn would then be exposed. He can't prevent the d3-d4 push, but is happy to trade a pair of pieces because he has less space.

9.d4

Or 9.\texttt{Q}c2 \texttt{Qxf}3† 10.\texttt{W}xf3 b6 11.d4 \texttt{B}b7± Maze - Huhndorf, Biel 2008.

9...\texttt{Qxf}3† 10.\texttt{W}xf3 d5 10...\texttt{cx}d4!? 11.\texttt{cx}d4 d5 would have avoided what follows.

11.\texttt{ex}d5! \texttt{ex}d5

White also keeps an edge after: 11...\texttt{Q}xd5 12.dxc5 \texttt{xc}5 13.c4 \texttt{B}b4 14.\texttt{Q}c3± 12.dxc5 \texttt{g}4 13.\texttt{Q}d3!

Stronger than 13.\texttt{Q}g3?! \texttt{xc}5 14.\texttt{Q}g5 Kobalia - Forster, Biel 1997, when Black could have profited from his opponent's Achilles' heel, the f2-pawn, by means of: 14...\texttt{h}6! 15.\texttt{xf}6 \texttt{xf}6 16.\texttt{Q}xd5 \texttt{B}d8 17.\texttt{Q}f3 h5! 13...\texttt{xc}5 14.\texttt{Q}e3±

**8...d5**

Black, in turn, has a wide range of options here:

With 8...\texttt{Q}d7? Black is looking to enter a sort of French after: 9.d4 \texttt{cx}d4 10.\texttt{cx}d4 d5 11.e5 (11.\texttt{ex}d5?) 11...\texttt{Q}e4 12.\texttt{Q}bd2 Berzinsh - Kanep, Liepaja (rapid) 2006. Now simply 12...\texttt{Q}xd2 13.\texttt{Q}xd2 \texttt{Qa}5 offers equal chances.

**8...\texttt{Q}e5**
8...b5 9.d4
In Malakhov - Khairullin, Krasnoyarsk 2007, the first player avoided this natural push, probably unwisely: 9.a3 \&b8 Since the rook soon goes to c8, this may be inaccurate.
10.\&bd2 \&c7 11.\&f1 \&b7 12.\&g3 \&fd8 13.h3 \&bc8 14.a2 \&e5 15.\&b1 \&xf3\textdagger 16.\&xf3 \&d7 17.\&e2 d5 18.e5 d4 Black had built up a good position, although he later faltered and lost.

9...\&b7
There are a couple of playable alternatives:
a) 9...cxd4 10.cxd4 \&b7 (10...d5?! is of course possible, either here or on the next move) 11.a3 a5 12.d5 exd5 13.exd5 \&e5 14.\&d4 (14.\&f4?!) 14...\&d7 15.\&c3 b4 16.\&b4 \&d8 Black had no worries in Totsky - Ljubicic, Zadar 2000.
b) 9...b4 10.d5 exd5 11.exd5 \&e5 12.h3 (12.\&xe5 dxe5 13.\&xe5 \&d6 followed by ...\&g4 looks a bit like the Marshall Attack, and is dangerous for White) 12...\&b7 13.c4 (White could consider 13.\&xe5 dxe5 and now 14.c4 is interesting, whereas 14.\&xe5 \&d6 15.\&e1 \&xd5! is only equal) 13...\&d7 Nanu - Colovic, Chamberry 2002.

10.\&bd2
10.dxc5 is innocuous: 10...dxc5 11.\&e2 c4 12.\&c2 \&d7 13.a4 a6 14.axb5 axb5 15.\&xa8 \&xa8 16.\&bd2 \&c5 17.b4 cxb3 18.\&xb3 With equality, Zagema - Dvoirys, Leeuwarden 1994.

10...cxd4 11.cxd4 e5
In Zakic - G. Arsovic, Vrsac 2000, Black preferred the more flexible 11...\&c8.
12.d5 \&b4 13.\&f1 a5 14.a3 \&a6 15.\&c2

Boskovic - Tadic, Petrovac 2004. The position resembles a Ruy Lopez, and is fully acceptable for Black.

8...b6 9.\&bd2
After 9.d4?! \&b7 10.\&g5? Black replied 10...h6? in Kalod - Tyomkin, Bermuda 2001, missing the opportunity to snaffle a pawn with 10...\&xe4!.

9...\&a6
9...\&b7 transposes into the note to Black's 7th move in line A above.

10.\&f1

10...\&e5
Once more, Black has a choice:
a) 10...\&c8 11.\&c3 (or 11.\&g3?!) 11...\&c7
12.h3 \&a8 13.\&c2 \&d8 14.a3 \&e5 15.\&h2
Galdunts – E. Pinter, Cappelle la Grande 2002. White is ready to advance with f2-f4.

b) 10...\(\text{e}8\) 11.\(\text{d}g3\) \(\text{e}5\) 12.\(\text{c}c2\) \(\text{f}c7\) (maybe Black should try 12...\(\text{c}4\)? with the idea 13.d4 \(\text{d}d3\)) 13.h3 \(\text{g}6\) 14.\(\text{g}5\) h6 15.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{ed}8\) 16.\(\text{c}c1\) b5 17.d4 Zhou Weiqi – Bancod, Cebu City 2007. White has more space and stands perhaps a trifle better.

11.\(\text{c}c2\) \(\text{e}8\) 12.\(\text{f}4\)

I have tried 12.\(\text{g}5\)? in order to free the f-pawn: 12...\(\text{d}d7\) 13.\(\text{h}3\) Bauer – Borovikov, Metz 2009.

12...\(\text{x}f3\)?

Similar play results from 12...\(\text{d}d7\) 13.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{x}f3\)† 14.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{e}5\) 15.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{g}6\) 16.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{h}4\) 17.d4 \(\text{x}g3\) 18.\(\text{hxg3}\) \(\text{x}d4\) 19.\(\text{cxd4}\) e5 20.\(\text{b}3\) Seul – Dinstuhl, Bermuda 2003. White stands well, largely because his knight can jump to d5 or f5 at any moment. Retreating and hitting the bishop with 12...\(\text{g}6\) is also possible.

13.\(\text{x}f3\) \(\text{d}7\) 14.\(\text{a}1\) \(\text{e}5\) 15.\(\text{b}5\) Waitzkin – Browne, USA 1995.

8...\(\text{e}5\) 9.\(\text{d}d2\)

9.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{h}5\)?! (either 9...\(\text{e}8\) or 9...\(\text{d}7\) looks more judicious) 10.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{e}6\) 11.d4 \(\text{exd4}\) 12.cxd4 \(\text{x}g4\) 13.dxc5 dxc5 14.\(\text{d}3\) White had a small white plus in Godena – Delchev, Cannes 1999.

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

Black has also tried many other moves. Let's have a browse through them:

\[\text{\begin{tabular}{ccccccc}
8
---
9
---
10
---
11
---
12
---
13
---
14
---
15
---
16
---
\end{tabular}}\]

a) 9...\(\text{e}8\) 10.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{f}6\) 11.h3 \(\text{e}6\) 12.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{c}7\) 13.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{g}6\) 14.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{w}7\) 15.d4 \(\text{cxd4}\) 16.\(\text{cx}d4\) \(\text{ex}d4\) 17.\(\text{h}x\text{d}4\) \(\text{xd}4\) 18.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{e}5\)...\(\text{d}5\) 19.\(\text{f}3\) With this move, White prevents ...\(\text{h}5\) and maintains a pull, Tkachiev – Balinov, Makarska 1997.

b) 9...\(\text{g}4\)?! 10.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{d}7\) 11.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{h}5\) 12.h3 \(\text{x}f3\) 13.\(\text{xf3}\) \(\text{x}g3\) 14.\(\text{x}g3\) The two bishops gave White a clear advantage in Okhovnik – Parkanyi, Szombathely 2003.

c) 9...\(\text{e}6\)?! Roy Chowdhury – Sundararajan, Visakhapatnam 2004.

10.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{e}6\)

In Ki. Georgiev – Rusev, Plovdiv 2004, Black tried 10...\(\text{h}7\)?, planning to simplify the game by means of ...\(\text{g}5\text{xf}3\) followed by ...\(\text{g}5\).

10...\(\text{e}8\) 11.\(\text{g}3\) (I prefer this to 11.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{f}8\) 12.h3 \(\text{e}6\) 13.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{d}7\) Kogan – T. Ernst, Kemer 2007) 11...\(\text{f}8\) 12.h3 \(\text{e}6\) 13.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{c}8\) 14.d4 \(\text{f}6\) Pikula – B. Jaracz, Biel 2000.

11.\(\text{e}3\)

The drawback of this knight jump, in comparison with \(\text{g}5\), is that White finds it more difficult to play for d3-d4.

11...\(\text{d}7\) 12.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{e}8\) 13.h3 \(\text{ad}8\) 14.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{b}8\) 15.\(\text{h}2\) \(\text{e}7\) 16.\(\text{c}4\)

With shared chances, Bauer – Spirin, Metz 2008.

9.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{d}7\) 10.\(\text{d}4\)
10...b5
There are several alternatives:

a) 10...Be8?!
This is rather passive.
11...bd2 b5 12...c2 c4 13.a3 Qf8 14.h4? a5
Taking up the gauntlet would have provided White with nice compensation: 14...hxh4 15.exh4 Qxh4 16.Be3 f5 17.exf6 Qxf6 18.Bh5 Intending g3, f3 etc.
15.h5 Bb8 16.h6 g6 17.Qf1 b4 18.axb4 axb4 19.Qh2

Tkachiev – Hoffman, Villa Martelli 1997. White's plan is crystal clear: g4, f4, d2, g5 and mate!

10...b6! 11.c2 f6 12.exf6 Qxf6 Seul – Pelletier, Essen 2000. The position is reminiscent of a type of French Tarrasch, and is balanced.

10...b6 11.a3 a5 12.f4 a6 13.c2 b5 14.Qd3 g6 15.Qe3 Qe8 Fette – Pelletier, Bundesliga 2000.

11...bd2
The alternatives are:

11.dxc5? Qxc5 12.c2 f6 (this is probably too early; I prefer 12...b7?!) 13.exf6 Qxf6 14.Qe3

11.a3 cxd4 12.cxd4 Bb6 13.Qc3 was slightly more pleasant for White in Totsky–Brkic, Pardubice 2003.

11...b4
11...a5 is interesting and led to a position with mutual chances in Parligras – Najer, Sovata 2000: 12.Qf1 b4 13.Qg3 a6 14.Qc2 Qe8 16.Qe3 cxd4 17.cxd4 Qb5 18.g3

Leko – Gelfand, Tilburg 1996. White's prospects on the kingside look better than Black's on the other wing.

A2) 8.We2
Now Black usually chooses between the active A21) 8...b5!? and the more restrained A22) 8...b6, although he has a third option that we shall look at briefly:

8...d5!? 9.e5 d7

10.e4

10.d4 f6 (10...b6!? was played in F. Benko – Panno, Buenos Aires 1977) 11.exf6 exf6 12.g5 h6 13.dxc6 White would enjoy a nice edge.

11.dxc6 dxc6 12.g5 f6 13.h4 g6 From White’s perspective, the following sequence of moves is virtually forced.

13...dxe5 14.dxe5 \ld{d}7

12...\ld{d}5!? could be considered.

13.c2

White has a couple of other valid options:

13.e5 d5 14.xc6 c5 15.f4 c4 16.e4 g6 From White’s perspective, the following sequence of moves is virtually forced.


13...e4!? earned White an edge in the encounter Sedlak – Kuruzovic, Zadar 2003:

13...dxe5 14.xc5 dxc5 15.xc3 xac6 16.axb3 xac4 17.xb6 xbd8 18.xd6= 13...\ld{c}7!
Hitting the e5-pawn at once, while addressing the threat of $\text{f}4$, is probably best. Otherwise:

13...$\text{c}5$ 14.$\text{d}3$! is unpleasant for Black. White is planning 15.$\text{f}3$ $\text{x}c5$ 16.$\text{e}4$, or maybe 15.$\text{e}1$.

13...$\text{b}7$ 14.$\text{a}3$ (not 14.$\text{d}3$! $\text{b}4$! 15.$\text{e}4$ $\text{x}e4$ 16.$\text{f}xe4$ $\text{d}5$, when Black has solved all his problems) 14...$\text{c}7$ 15.$\text{f}4$ $\text{b}4$ 16.$\text{e}1$ $\text{f}8$ 17.$\text{b}2$ $\text{e}5$ 18.$\text{e}3$±

McShane – Sebag, Malmo 2003. The $\text{c}5$-knight is unstable (a later $\text{g}4$-$\text{g}5$ could eliminate its defender) and the latent vis-à-vis of the rook and queen on the c-file could prove troublesome.

14.$\text{e}3$

14.$\text{f}4$ $\text{b}4$ is unclear.

14...$\text{a}6$! This is best, as the following sample lines show:

14...$\text{b}4$ 15.$\text{b}5$ $\text{b}6$ 16.$\text{d}1$ (or 16.$\text{c}3$) The potential threat of $\text{x}h7\text{+}$, combined with ideas such as $\text{f}4$ and $\text{d}6$, give White the ascendancy.

14...$\text{d}xe5$ 15.$\text{x}b5$ $\text{xb}8$ 16.$\text{e}4$±

15.$\text{x}b5$ $\text{x}b5$ 16.$\text{xb}5$ $\text{d}xe5$ 17.$\text{dxe}5$ $\text{dxe}5$ 18.$\text{e}2$ $\text{fd}8$

Black looks to be active enough to have compensation for the enemy bishops.

A22) 8...$\text{b}6$ 9.$\text{bd}2$

9.$\text{d}4$!! gave chances to both sides in Del Rio Angelis – Cvitan, Lugano 1999: 9...$\text{cx}d4$ 10.$\text{d}4$ $\text{d}4$ 11.$\text{f}4$ $\text{a}6$ 12.$\text{e}3$ $\text{d}5$ 13.$\text{e}5$ $\text{g}4$ 14.$\text{f}4$ $\text{h}6$∞

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

10.$\text{e}2$ 10.$\text{d}1$? may be a simpler way to develop White’s play: 10...$\text{e}8$ 11.$\text{f}4$ $\text{d}5$ 12.$\text{e}5$ $\text{d}7$ 13.$\text{g}4$ c4 This results in the black position losing flexibility. 14.$\text{d}4$! $\text{xb}3$ 15.$\text{xa}6$ $\text{xa}2$ 16.$\text{xa}2$

10...\textit{c}c7

Or 10...d5 11.e5 \textit{d}d7 12.\textit{e}e1 \textit{c}c7 with an unclear position.

11.a3 \textit{d}d7 12.\textit{e}e1 \textit{f}6

Again 12...d5? is worth considering.

13.\textit{f}f1 \textit{g}e5 14.\textit{g}f3 \textit{a}d8

After 14...\textit{x}xf3 White could also hope to get a kingside initiative: 15.\textit{xf}3 \textit{e}e5 16.\textit{e}e3

15.\textit{h}h5

Black had already seized the initiative in Adams – Khalifman, Aarhus 1997.

5...\textit{a}a5!! 6.\textit{b}b5? \textit{d}d7 7.a4 \textit{a}6 8.\textit{x}xd7+ \textit{xd}7 9.\textit{e}e1 White plans b2-b4 followed by \textit{c}c4, which should ensure him a small pull.

6.0–0 \textit{a}6 7.a4 \textit{e}7

Now that the bishop can't go to b5, Black could consider: 7...d5? 8.\textit{b}b3 \textit{e}e7 9.\textit{e}e1 The position is close to level, although White may still nurture some hope of achieving the pawn chain c3–d4–e5.

8.\textit{b}b3 \textit{a}a5 9.\textit{a}a2 b5 10.c3 \textit{b}b7 11.\textit{c}c2 0–0

The principal moves are B1) 5.0–0 and B2) 5.c3, but there are various minor options to be covered first:

5.\textit{b}d2

The drawback of this move compared with 5.c3 seems to be that White isn't as well equipped to meet ...e6 followed by ...d5. Indeed, he would like to answer with e4-e5 followed by d3-d4, but obviously needs his pawn at c3 for that purpose.

5...e6

5...g6 6.a3 (an unsuccessful experiment by Adams; instead 6.c3 would return to well-trodden paths, e.g. 6...\textit{g}g7 7.0–0 0–0 8.\textit{b}b3 is line B232) 6...\textit{g}g7 7.0–0 0–0 8.\textit{a}a2 b5 9.\textit{e}e1 \textit{b}b8 10.c3 \textit{a}5 11.d4 cxd4 12.cxd4 \textit{b}b6 13.\textit{f}f1 \textit{g}g4

B) 4...\textit{c}c6
166 Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

12.\texttt{b1} \texttt{b6}
Black could be satisfied with the outcome of the opening in Hammer – Royset, Tromso 2009.

5.h3?!  
This prophylactic move directed against \ldots\texttt{g4} is almost always useful, yet it is not a priority right now. White does not maximize his chances of gaining an edge, and may even concede his opponent some initiative.  
5...\texttt{e6}  
On 5...\texttt{a6} 6.a4 (In Moldovan – Marjanovic, Bucharest 2000, White got an improved version of the Adams – Khalifman duel seen above by choosing 6.a3. That said, after 6...\texttt{g6} 7.0–0 \texttt{e7} 8.\texttt{e1} 0–0 9.\texttt{b2} \texttt{b5} Black had nothing to complain about.) 6...\texttt{e6} 7.\texttt{a2} \texttt{e7} 8.\texttt{c3} 0–0 9.0–0 \texttt{b5} With a balanced position, Radlovacki – Cheparinov, Pancevo 2003.

6.0–0 \texttt{e7} 7.\texttt{bd2} 0–0 8.\texttt{c3} \texttt{b8} 9.\texttt{b3} \texttt{d5} 10.\texttt{e1}  
On the immediate 10.\texttt{e5} \texttt{d7} 11.\texttt{d4}, Black would likewise play 11...\texttt{b5}.

10...\texttt{b5} 11.\texttt{e5} \texttt{d7} 12.\texttt{d4} \texttt{a6} 13.\texttt{f1} \texttt{b4} 14.\texttt{g3} \texttt{bxc3} 15.\texttt{bxc3} \texttt{exd4} 16.\texttt{cxd4} \texttt{eb4}  

Black’s queenside operations were evidently faster in Zufic – Kozul, Zagreb 2006.

5.\texttt{b3}?!  
This doesn’t look very promising to me because Black has the following simplifying line, which may be considered the drawback of this move order.  
5...\texttt{a5}  
The usual 5...\texttt{e6} and 5...\texttt{g6} are of course possible, and likely to transpose into lines A and B23 respectively.

Kasimdzhanov – Ashley, Bad Wiessee 1997 saw 5...\texttt{g4} 6.h3 \texttt{xf3} 7.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{e6} 8.\texttt{c3} \texttt{e7} 9.0–0 0–0 10.\texttt{d2} which yielded White a small but enduring edge due to his bishop pair. However, Black should certainly have preferred either 6...\texttt{h5}, or 7...\texttt{d4} followed by \ldots\texttt{xb3}, with a balanced game in each case.  
6.\texttt{a4} \texttt{d7} 7.\texttt{c3} \texttt{xa4} 8.\texttt{wxa4} \texttt{e6}  
Black had equalized in Tseshkovsky – Shipov, Le Touquet 1996.

5.a3?!  
This move pursues one goal only, namely safeguarding the c4-bishop against an eventual \ldots\texttt{a5}, whereas 5.c3 also prepares d3-d4.

5...\texttt{g6}  
Otherwise: 5...\texttt{g4} 6.\texttt{bd2} \texttt{e6} 7.0–0 \texttt{e7} Vajda – Lupulescu, Brasov 2004. White has given up his ambition to play for d3-d4, which leaves him without a constructive plan.

6.\texttt{a2}  
6.0–0 6.\texttt{g7} 7.\texttt{e1} 0–0 8.\texttt{h3} \texttt{d5} 9.\texttt{exd5} \texttt{xd5} 10.\texttt{bd2} \texttt{b6} Black had a comfortable game in Ansell – Edouard, Hastings 2010.

6...\texttt{g7} 7.0–0 0–0 8.\texttt{e1}  
After 8.\texttt{h3} Black decided on a more rigid set-up in Vajda – Lupulescu, Bucharest 2006: 8...\texttt{h6} 9.\texttt{c3} \texttt{e5} 10.\texttt{b1} \texttt{a5} The position is unclear; Black has got more space, but also more weaknesses, notably on d5 and b5.

8...\texttt{b5} 9.\texttt{h3} \texttt{d7} 10.\texttt{c3}  
10.c3?! is another approach.  
10...\texttt{b8} 11.\texttt{b1}
11...c4?!
I don’t like this push because Black loses his grip on d4 while the a2-bishop won’t be masked for long. White probably intended to meet the natural 11...a5 with 12.a4, when closing the queenside by 12...b4 seems to play into his hands. Instead Black should probably choose between 12...bxa4 13.bxa4 and 12...d4 13.exd4, both of which are pretty murky.

12.d2
12.d4 or 12.c3 are valid options as well.

12...b4 13.d5 bxa4
This move was likely based on a misjudgement. Had Black opted for 13...bxa4 14.bxa4 b4 followed by 15...e6 and then ...xd3, the equilibrium would not have been disturbed.

14.cxb3 cxd3 15.b4 e6?
Running into serious trouble. 15...b7 was better, although the d3-pawn may soon fall for nothing.

16.g5! f6 17.f4 fxg5 18.xe6 fxe6 19.xf8t?
19.d6+ h8 20.xc6 was very good for White.

19...f8 20.c1
Imaginative, but the straightforward 20.xd3 might be better.

20.d4 21.xg5 h6 22.e5! dxe5 23.dxe6
23...xh6 24.c4 xh6 25.bd1 is about equal.

24.xf4?
Black stands decidedly better in the ensuing endgame. Instead 24.xc7! dxed2 25.xe2 dxe2 26.xd5 would have been rather tricky for Black to hold, despite his extra bishop, in view of White’s dominant pieces.

24...exf4 25.c3+ f8 26.xd1 d6 27.b5
28.xb5 xb5 29.xd3 xh2 30.xd5
31.xd1 xg2+ 0–1 Ansell – Shulman, Reykjavik 2010. White threw in the towel, because of 32...c3 33.xe1 xd3 winning an exchange.

B1) 5.0–0

We now have a split between B11) 5...g4
and B12) 5...g6. First we take a look at a few other moves:

Trying to simplify the position with 5...a5?!
is dubious. Indeed, after 6.b5+ d7 7.xd7+ xd7 8.e5! White’s move order (5.0–0 before c2-c3) is totally justified.

5...e6 6.e1 (6.xd2 e7 7.c3 followed by 8.xb3 seems more precise to me, so as to be ready to react efficiently to ...d5) 6.e7 7.b3
8.a5 8.a4+ d7 9.xd7+ xd7 10.c3 0–0
11.xd2 (11.d4 is more ambitious) 11...c6
5...a6 6.a3
Or 6.a4 \( \text{\textgreek{g}}4 \) 7.\text{bd}2 e6 8.h3 \text{h}5 9.a2 \text{e}7 10.c3 d5 11.\text{we}2 \( \frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{2} \) Magem Badals – Kolev, Spain 1999. This final position is of course quite rich, and if the game had continued then both sides would have their chances.

6...e6 7.a2 \text{e}7 8.\text{e}1 0–0 9.c3

9.e5?!
Inviting a French-like pawn structure, by means of 9...d5 was more to the point: 10.e5 \text{d}7 11.d4 b5 With a balanced game.

10.h3?!
White should have played 10.b4 with a slight plus.

10...\text{e}6 11.\text{xe}6 fxe6 12.b4 \text{h}5
The position is rather unclear, McShane – Hübnner, Germany 2002.

B11) 5...\text{g}4

With this move, Black aims to show that 5.0–0 is inaccurate.

6.\text{bd}2
Other moves have been tried as well:

6.h3 \text{xf}3
6...\text{h}5 is likely to transpose into the main line after 7.\text{bd}2 e6.

7.\text{xf}3 \text{d}7
Black wants to play ...\text{e}5 without allowing \text{b}5\# in reply, but 7...a6 might be a better way to go about this, keeping the d7-square free for the f6-knight.

8.\text{g}5 \text{e}5 9.\text{e}2 \text{xc}4 10.\text{xc}4

White had negotiated the opening better in P. Popovic – Hoelzl, Austria 1997.

6...e6
On 6...\text{d}4 White can either go 7.c3, when he will soon establish a strong centre in return for the weakening of his castled position, or he can play 7.\text{bd}2 b5 8.\text{d}5.

7.h3 \text{h}5 8.\text{b}5 \text{d}7
Black doesn’t want to be left with isolated, doubled c-pawns after an exchange on c6 followed by e4-e5.

9.e5 \text{d}7 10.\text{f}4 \text{c}8 11.\text{xc}6?!
11.\text{bd}2 looks more sensible.

11...\text{xc}6 12.d4 0–0 13.\text{bd}2 13.d5?! was worth a try.

13...\text{xd}4 14.\text{xd}4 \text{f}6?!
Tseshkovsky – Ki. Georgiev, Niksic 1996. White had nothing in return for the pair of bishops he so lightly gave up.

6...e6 7.h3
7.c3 \text{e}7 8.\text{b}3 doesn’t change much. McShane – Guidarelli, France 2004, continued:

8...d5 9.\text{e}2 \text{c}7 10.e1 0–0–0 11.\text{f}1 \text{d}6
12.\text{d}1 Now the Frenchman decided it was time to sharpen the game. 12...g5! With a promising position for Black.

7...\text{h}5 8.c3 \text{e}7
The spicier 9...g4!? was the theme of Nevednichy – Ki. Georgiev, Yugoslavia 1999: 9...g6 10.b5 d7 11.h2 (11.e1 is another option, also leading to an obscure position after 11...h5 12.f4) 11...a6 (11...h5!?)

12.xc6 bxc6 13.f4 f6 14.e2 h5 15.d3 hxg4 16.hxg4 f5 17.e5 d4 18.a4 e5 19.f5 g5

Although Black went on to win, the present position looks preferable for White, whose knights should feel more at ease than the enemy bishops.

9...d5 10.e2

10.e1 is liable to come to the same thing, but one independent example is: 10...0-0 (as in the main line, Black can prepare queenside castling with 10...e7) 11.e2 b5 12.e2 c6 13.g4 (13.e5 d7 14.e3! is powerfully met by 14...d4!) 13...g6 14.h4 d4 With a level game, McShane – Sasikiran, Hastings 2003. Another route to a balanced position is 14...c4! 15.dxc6 g5.

9...w2 11.e1 0-0-0

11...d8? isn’t bad in itself, but Black remained bothered by his king throughout the following game: 12.e5 d7 13.g4 g6 14.f1 h5 15.e4 a5 16.c2 c4 17.d4 xxc2 18.xc2 d8 19.b4 cxb3 20.axb3 g6 21.g3

White had the upper hand and eventually won in Lutz – Sadler, Ostend 1992.

12.e2

12.a4?! is a bit hard to understand. At any rate, it enabled Black to seize the initiative in McShane – Macieja, Reykjavik 2003: 12...e5 13.g4 xf3? 14.xf3 g6 15.e5 d7 16.f4 h5 17.g3 hxg4 18.hxg4 e4! 19.d4 (after 19.dxc4? Bxc4 20.Bxc4+ Bxc4 Black is intending ...c5-d3, where the knight will do more harm than the white knight can do on d4) 19...h6+

12...e5 12...g5? is an aggressive alternative.

13.g4 xf3+ 14.xf3 g6 15.e5 d7 16.f4 h5 17.g3 hxg4 18.hxg4

White has an improved version of the position that arose in McShane – Macieja, but it is still only enough for equality.

18.e3 19.g2 Ed8 20.c1 d8 21.d4 xc2 22.xc2 c4 23.h1 xh1 24.xh1 xh1 25.xh1 d8 26.g2 g6 27.d1 b5

1/2–1/2

Bauer – Fargere, Switzerland 2010.
B12) 5...g6 6.h3

The main alternative is to go into line B23 with 6.c3, but there are a couple of other options:

6...g5?!  
Once again, the main option is 7.c3, going into line B23.

7.0-0  
The alternative is: 7...a5 8.b5+ d7 9.exd7+ xd7. White now played 10.g5= in McShane - Sutovsky, Esbjerg 2001, but perhaps he could have tried 10.e5 dxe5 11.dxe5 c6f5 12.ee1 0-0 13.g4 we8 14..f3.

6.c3

White could try to muddy the waters with 10.fg6 dxe4 11.eg1, although Black should prevail after: 11...e7 12.exf7 (12.gxf7 eg8 is good for Black) 12...d4+ 13...e3 eg4!!

8.a3

Vacating the a2-square for the bishop, as well as contemplating a5b1 followed by b2-b4.

6..e7 7...e3 (7.h3 0-0 8.c3 transposes to the note to White's 7th move in B23) 7...g4 8..b2  
This allowed the levelling 8..d4 in Bezdol - Ginsburg, Germany 2001. Then the attempt to liven up the game by 9.e5 falls short: 9...xf3 10.exf3 dxe5 11.d4f7 12.dxe5 dxe5 13..xd7+ xd7 14..xe5 dd6=

6...g7 7.d1

Weakening his kingside is obviously committal, but the a5-knight on the rim gives White some hope of bothering his opponent.

8...a6

Black has several other choices:

8...h6?! 9..e3 e5 10..b1 White had a slight plus in McShane - Paragua, Bled 2002.

8..d4 9..e3  
Or 9..xd4 cxd4 10..d5 cxd5 11..xd5 dd7 12..d2 ..c6 13..xe6 xexe6 14..c4 dxc3 15..xc3 2-1 S. Hansen - Smirin, Turin (ol) 2006.

9...d7 10..h2 b5!! 11..a2 ..b6 12..d2 ab7 13.f4

13..g4?? could be tried.
13...d5
Black judiciously counterattacks in the centre, closing the dangerous a2-g8 diagonal in the process.
14.b4 15.axb4 cxb4 16.f6? 16...bxc3 16...bxc3 17.f6 17...xf6? is also possible.

9.e3
In an earlier game, McShane aimed to provoke ...h6 by playing 9.g5, although that is not necessarily advantageous for White. Black wasn’t provoked, and the game continued: 9...b5 10.a2 b5 11.e3 b7 12.d2 d5 13.g3 b4 14.a4 d4 15.xd4 exd4 16.h4+ McShane – R. Webb, Birmingham 2001.

9...b5 10.a2
9...b5 10.a2
I prefer this to:
10...e5 11.d5
11.b1?! proved rather useless in McShane – Bu Xiangzhi, Goa 2002: 11.d4 12.d5 (the logical follow-up to White’s 11th move is 12.b4, but that could have been risky; after 12...e6 13.xe6 xe6 14.bxc5 dxc3 15.xf3 h5 Black obtains good attacking chances on the kingside) 12...e6 13.g5
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

172

11.\textit{W}d2 \textit{Cc8} 12.\textit{Ah}2!?  
In McShane – Zagorski, Bled (ol) 2002 White had first played the strange 12.\textit{Ba}1, and after 12...\textit{W}b6 13.\textit{Ah}2 a5 his opponent obtained enough counterplay on the queenside.

12...\textit{Cd}4 13.\textit{F}f4 \textit{Ed}7 14.\textit{B}d1 \textit{Cc}6 15.\textit{G}g4 \textit{D}f6 16.\textit{X}xf6+ \textit{X}xf6 17.\textit{F}f5  
Black had wasted too much time with his knights, giving White attacking chances on the kingside in McShane – Salas Arros. Bled (ol) 2002.

B2) 5.\textit{C}3

We shall look at three main options for Black: B21) 5...d5, B22) 5...\textit{a}6 and B23) 5...g6. The other possibilities are:

The important 5...e6 has been covered in line A.

5...\textit{G}g4? is countered by 6.\textit{W}b3! and Black is simply losing a pawn.

5...\textit{A}a5 6.\textit{B}b5+ \textit{A}d7 7.a4!  
This seems stronger than: 7.\textit{X}xd7+ \textit{W}xd7 8.0-0! (8.e5!? would achieve absolutely nothing, in view of 8...\textit{X}xe5 9.\textit{X}xe5 \textit{D}e6) 8...\textit{D}e6 9.\textit{E}e1 \textit{e}6 10.d4 \textit{X}xd4 11.\textit{X}xd4 d5 12.e5 \textit{E}e4 We have a level theoretical position that arises in the Moscow Variation after 1.e4 \textit{c}5 2.\textit{D}f3 \textit{d}6 3.\textit{B}b5+ \textit{A}d7 4.\textit{X}xd7+ \textit{W}xd7 and so on.  
7...a6 8.\textit{X}xd7+ \textit{W}xd7 9.\textit{B}b32+

The same position was reached in a line given earlier after 5.\textit{B}d2 \textit{A}a5 etc.

B21) 5...d5 6.\textit{exd}5 \textit{A}xd5 7.0-0 \textit{e}6 8.d4

White doesn’t seem to have anything better.

8...\textit{X}d4  
8...\textit{B}b6?! is designed to discourage White from recapturing on d4 with his knight after a subsequent ...\textit{X}xd4, but the black horse will soon turn out to be misplaced here: 9.\textit{X}b3 \textit{D}e7 10.\textit{W}e2 \textit{X}xd4 11.\textit{E}d1 0-0 12.\textit{X}xd4 \textit{A}d5?! (12...\textit{D}f6) 13.\textit{E}c3 \textit{E}e8 14.a3 \textit{O}xc3 15.bxc3 \textit{A}d7 16.\textit{W}e4 \textit{A}f6 17.\textit{G}e5 \textit{D}c7 18.\textit{Cc}2 \textit{g}6 19.\textit{G}g4 White had the upper hand in Rabiega – Hoelzl, Austria 1999.

9.\textit{X}d4  
9.\textit{D}xd4?! is also possible.
Chapter 6 - 2.\xf3 d6 3.\xc4

9...\xe7 10.\xc3 0-0

The alternative cannot be recommended:
10...\xc3?! 11.bxc3 0-0 12.\xd3 \xf6 13.\xe1 b6 14.h4! \xb7b7

In the event of 14...\xf4 15.\x95xh4 \x95xh4
16.\xe3 White has ample compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

Practice has shown that this is stronger than:
16...\xc3?! 17.\xc1 \xf6 18.\xa3!

Although this has been played dozens of times, 11...\xf6 may be a smarter idea.

11.\xe1 \xf6

Although this has been played dozens of times, 11...\xf6 may be a smarter idea.

12.a3 b6?!

White now gets a lasting and risk-free edge. A better option is 12...a6.

13.d5 exd5 14.\xc5 \x95xd5 15.\x95xd5 \xb7b7

16.\x95d5 \x95d6 17.\x95g5 \x95g6 18.\x95xg6 hxg6

19.\x95f4 \x95xg5 20.\x95xg5±

Benjamin - Zaichik, Philadelphia 2001. This is an unpleasant ending for Black, with White having the bishop pair and a slightly superior pawn structure. Black should be able to hold with perfect play, but it really is no fun.

B22) 5...a6 6.\xb3

White has a couple of alternatives:

6.\xc5 \x95g4 (or 6...e6??) 7.h3 \x95xf3 8.\x85xf3 \x95e5
9.\xe2 \x95xc4 10.dxc4 \x95e6 with approximate equality, Cicak - Paramos Dominguez, Cork 2005.

6.\xbd2 \xa5 7.a4 \x95e6 (7...\x95xc4?? 8.\x95xc4 \x95e6, preventing a4-a5 followed by \xb6, was okay too) 8.\xa2 \xe7 9.0-0 0-0 10.\xe1 \xc6 11.d4 \x95xd4 12.cxd4 \xd5 13.e5 \xd7 14.\x95b1 \x95f5 15.\x95xf6
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

6...Ag4

7.0-0

White can hit the bishop immediately:
7.h3 @h5
Exchanging is not to be recommended:
7...@xf3 8.Bxf3

I think that White can count on a slight but lasting advantage here, due to his pair of bishops. Play may continue: 8...g6 9.0-0 @g7 10.Bxe2 0-0 11.0-0 Bb5 (11...e6 12.0-0 @e8 13.@f4 Be7 14.Bad1 Bfe8 15.a3 b5 16.@a2 @d7 17.d4 exd4 18.cxd4#. Macieja – Grisak, Warsaw 2005) 12.f4 @d7 13.0-0 @b4 14.0-0 a5 15.a4 @b6 16.@c4 e6 17.h4 Morozevich – Shipov, St Petersburg 1997.

Now that the black knight has deserted its monarch, White has good attacking chances.

8.Bxe2 e6 9.g4 @g6 10.Bh4 @e7

10...d5 looks like an oversight, but it is in fact far from clear: 11.0-0 hxg6 12.g5 dxe4 (otherwise 13.exd5 wins at least a pawn) 13.gxf6 exd3 14.Bxg7+ Bxg7 15.Bf3 @d7 16.Bc3 c4 17.d1 Bb5 18.Bg2 d2t
19.Bxd2 @d3t 20.Bc2 Bxb2 21.Bc2 Bxc3? (this was the real mistake; after 21...0-0 22.Bc4 Bc6 23.Bf1 @d5 any outcome would have been possible) 22.Bc4 Bc6 23.Bf3 Bg7 24.Bf6t @g8 25.Bxc6 Bxc6 26.Bd4 White easily converted his large plus in Leko – A. Schneider, Hungary 1996.

11.0-0

This move may well have been the result of a miscalculation. Instead 12.0-0 is a sensible alternative.

11...d5 12.0-0 hxg6 13.g5 @h5 14.exd5 exd5 15.d4

15.Bxc5? was presumably White's idea, but it gets hit by 15...Bf4! and Black is doing well.

15...0-0 16.Bg4 Bg5 17.0-0

The position is unclear, Pavasovic – Cheparinov, Leon 2001.

7...e6

7...@e5 8.Bxe2 c6 9.h3 @xf3 10.Bxf3 @xf3t
Black's position is solid, but he hasn't much to show for having given up the bishop pair.

8.h3

Or: 8.0-0 @e7 9.Bxe2 d5 10.Be1 Bc7 11.h3 @h5 12.@f1 0-0 13.@g3 @xf3 In this case, concrete play makes the swap valid; the black knight will eye the d3-square. 14.Bxf3 @e5 15.Bc2 c4 16.dxc4 Bxc4 17.Bc2 Bb8 18.Bf4 @d6 19.Bh1 B6 20.Bb4 (White has a decent alternative in 20.Bad1 @d3 [or 20...Bb8] 21.Bxd6 Bxd6 22.Bf1 @d7 with a roughly
equal game) 20.cxb3 21.axb3 \( \text{c6} \) 22.c4 \( \text{d6} \) 23.d7 \( \frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{2} \) D. Popovic – Cvitan, Turin (ol) 2006.

8...\( \text{h5} \)

9.\( \text{We2} \)

This is White's most aggressive option. The alternatives are:

9.0-0 \( \text{e7} \) 10.e1 d5 11.c2 0-0 12.\( \text{e2} \) b5
13.\( \text{f1} \) b4 Black had a comfortable position in Safranska – Genov, Marseille 2003, his queenside action having taken concrete shape.

9.\( \text{f1} \) d5

The immediate reaction in the centre is natural, although Black has also tried:

9...\( \text{e7} \) 10.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{g6} \) 11.0-0 d5 12.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{c7} \) 13.\( \text{g5} \) dxe4 14.dxe4 \( \text{d6} \) ? (14...0-0 looks close to equal) 15.\( \text{f5} \) \( \text{xe4} \) ? (15...\( \text{f8} \) was the lesser evil) 16.\( \text{g7} \) \( \text{d7} \) 17.\( \text{ad1} \) \( \text{h8} \) 18.\( \text{xe6} \) \( \text{fxe6} \) 19.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{exe8} \) 20.\( \text{xd6} \) \( \text{xd6} \) 21.\( \text{xd6} \) \( \text{xd6} \) 22.\( \text{ed1} \) \( \text{xd1} \) 23.\( \text{xd1} \) \( \text{z} \) Shaposhnikov – Petrushin, Voronezh 2005.

10.\( \text{exd5} \)
10.\( \text{g3} \) dxe4 (or 10...\( \text{g6} \) 11.\( \text{e2} \) Pikula – Stucek, Zurich 2005) 11.dxe4 (not 11.\( \text{xh5} \) ? \( \text{fxf3} \)) 11...\( \text{xd1} \) 12.\( \text{xd1} \) \( \text{g6} \) The position is equal.

10.\( \text{e2} \) transposes to the following note after 10...\( \text{e7} \).

10...\( \text{xd5} \) 11.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{g6} \) 12.0-0 \( \text{e7} \)
12...\( \text{b6} \) 13.\( \text{e4} \) \( \text{e7} \) was also fine for Black in Panbukhtian – Cheparinov, Pleven 2005.

13.d4 0-0 14.dxc5 \( \text{xe5} \) 15.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{c7} \) 16.\( \text{e4} \) \( \text{e7} \)
Black was okay in Godena – Karr, Paris 1998.

9...\( \text{e7} \) 10.\( \text{c2} \)

Other moves are:

10.0-0 \( \text{c7} \) 11.\( \text{c2} \) d5 12.g4 \( \text{g6} \) 13.\( \text{f4} \) c4 14.dxc4 \( \text{dxc4} \) 15.\( \text{xc5} \) (White could have maintained the equilibrium by means of 15.\( \text{c6} \) \( \text{xc6} \) 16.\( \text{xc6} \) \( \text{xc6} \) 17.\( \text{exe4} \) \( \text{exe4} \) 18.\( \text{eg4} \) \( \text{e5} \) 19.\( \text{h4} \) \( \text{e6} \) 20.\( \text{d6} \) \( \text{d6} \) 21.\( \text{xe6} \) etc.) 15...\( \text{xd2} \) 16.\( \text{xe5} \)

17.\( \text{xd2} \) ? 17...\( \text{e3} \) 18.\( \text{f4} \) 0-0-0? (18...\( \text{exd5} \) ! would have kept the extra pawn and the advantage) 19.\( \text{g4} \) \( \text{h8} \) 20.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{e7} \) 21.\( \text{xe7} \) \( \text{xe7} \) 22.\( \text{f6} \) \( \text{f6} \) 23.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{d7} \) 24.\( \text{b3} \) – Sedlak – L. Olsson, Hallsberg 2004.

10.\( \text{f1} \) d5! 11.g4
11.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{xf3} \) ! 12.\( \text{xf3} \) (12.gxf3?!) 12...\( \text{e5} \) 13.\( \text{e2} \) dxe4 14.\( \text{exe4} \) \( \text{d3} \) ! 15.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{xc1} \) 16.\( \text{xc1} \) might be a tiny bit better for Black, but not more.

11...\( \text{g6} \) 12.e5?!
An unfortunate decision. Instead 12.\( \text{g3} \) was still balanced: 12...\( \text{c4} \) 13.\( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{xe4} \) 14.\( \text{exe5} \) \( \text{exf5} \) 15.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{a5} \) 16.\( \text{c2} \)

12...\( \text{d7} \) 13.\( \text{c2} \)
13.\( \text{f4} \) is strongly met by 13...\( \text{xd3} \)!! 14.\( \text{xd3} \) c4, after White should limit his disadvantage with 15.\( \text{e2} \), since 15.\( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{e5} \) would be catastrophic.

13...\( \text{c7} \) 14.\( \text{f4} \)
After 14.d4? \( \text{xc2} \) 15.\( \text{xc2} \) \( \text{e8} \) White is under enormous pressure.

14...f6! 15.\( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 16.\( \text{xf7} \) \( \text{e5} \)!
10...d5 11.g4
This radical measure against the pin is usually risky, and the present game is no exception.

11...g6 12.h4 c7 13.g2 0–0–0 14.f4
c4 15.d4?!
15.dxc4!? offers better chances of maintaining the balance.

15...dxe4
15...d6?! leads to wild complications.

16...xe4 dxe4 17.e3
White understandably didn’t fancy 17...xe4
e4 18...e4 h5!, which would have underlined the drawback of his kingside expansion.

17...b8?!
It is not at all obvious why Black didn’t keep the booty, with 17...a5 for instance.

18.xc4
The position is now unclear, Art. Minasian –
Cheparinov, Batumi 2002.

B23) 5...g6 6.0–0

6.b3
This will often transpose, but there are some independent possibilities.
Although Black should objectively be doing fine here, the position might appeal to some White players from the viewpoint of practical play. It is indeed complex and quite easy for both sides to go wrong.

9...\textit{g}4

It looks sensible to develop this bishop. Black has also played:
a) 9...e6 10.0–0 c4 11.dxc4 bxc4 12.\textit{xc4} h6 13.e5! (13.\textit{f}3 \textit{xe}4 14.\textit{xe}4 d5 offers Black beautiful compensation for a mere pawn) 13...\textit{d}7 14.\textit{xf7} 15.exd6 \textit{g}6

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
& & & & & & & \\
\hline
& & & & & & & \\
\hline
& & & & & & & \\
\hline
& & & & & & & \\
\hline
& & & & & & & \\
\hline
& & & & & & & \\
\hline
& & & & & & & \\
\hline

d8 & b8 & c8 & d8 & e8 & f8 & g8 & h8 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textit{Balashov – Lugovoi, St Peters burg 1998.}

Play could now continue 16.\textit{e}d1 \textit{a}5 with a highly unclear game.

b) 9...b4 10.0–0 (10.e5?! is interesting) 10...\textit{a}6 and now:

b1) 11.\textit{d}5?! \textit{b}6 12.\textit{xc6} Berezjuk – Vesslovsky, Frydek Mistek 1998. Now instead of inserting the moves 12...\textit{c}4 13.d4, Black should have recaptured at once with 12...\textit{xc6}!, when White would have no compensation for having given up the bishop pair.

b2) 11.\textit{d}2 was played in Dzhumaev – Wong Zi Jing, Mumbai 2003, and now the computer suggests 11...\textit{h}6?! 12.\textit{gf3} bxc3 13.bxc3 \textit{h}5 14.\textit{b}1 e6, which it judges as slightly in Black's favour.

10.\textit{f}3

White could consider 10.\textit{e}3?.

b) 10...e6 10...a5?! 11.a4 b4 is an alternative approach.

11.0–0

Given White’s lack of development, 11.h3?! looks a bit risky, but after 11...\textit{xf3} 12.\textit{xf3} d5 13.e5 \textit{d}7 14.0–0 it should be noted that Black can’t undermine the centre immediately: 14...\textit{f}6? 15.\textit{xd}5!

11...c4?! 12.\textit{c}2

Taking the bait is not out of the question: 12.dxc4?! \textit{bxc4} 13.\textit{xc4} (13.\textit{xc4}?! is worse because of 13...\textit{b}6\uparrow 14.\textit{h}1 \textit{a}5, intending the devilish 15.\textit{e}2 \textit{xe}4\uparrow 16.\textit{xe}4 \textit{a}6) 13...\textit{xe}4 14.\textit{xe}4 d5 15.\textit{c}2 \textit{xc}4 16.\textit{xc}4 \textit{vb}6\uparrow 17.\textit{h}1 \textit{f}d8 Black has obvious compensation for the sacrificed pawn, with his better development and supremacy on the light squares.

12...cxd3 13.\textit{xd}3 \textit{b}4

Black stood a bit better in Dzhumaev – Sadvakasov, Doha 2003.

6...\textit{g}7

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
& & & & & & & \\
\hline
& & & & & & & \\
\hline
& & & & & & & \\
\hline
& & & & & & & \\
\hline
& & & & & & & \\
\hline
& & & & & & & \\
\hline
& & & & & & & \\
\hline

d8 & b8 & c8 & d8 & e8 & f8 & g8 & h8 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

7.\textit{b}3

The alternatives are:

7.\textit{e}3 0–0 8.\textit{b}3 b6 9.\textit{e}1 \textit{b}7 10.\textit{bd}2 \textit{e}5 11.\textit{c}2 \textit{xf}3\uparrow 12.\textit{xf}3 \textit{e}8 With mutual chances, McShane – Savchenko, Germany 2003.
7...d5 (7...0-0 8...b3 is B231 below) 8.exd5 0-0 10...e4 (10...b3!? b6 11.d4 may be more to the point) 10...b6 Black was fully okay in Rozentalis – Akesson, Gausdal 2006.

7...e5

Instead of this central push, Black has various ways to play on the queenside:

8...b5 9.d4

9.a3 was played in Benjamin – Milman, Internet 2007. This slows down Black’s queenside action, as 9...b4 10.axb4 cxb4 is undesirable for him, while after 9...a5 Black still needs another tempo (...b8) to efficiently push ...b4. The drawback of the move is that Black may be able to use the weakness of the b3-square, by means of ...a5-a4 followed by ...b8.

White is profiting from the fact that the e4-pawn is immune due to b5.

9...b7

Black has other options:

a) 9...c7 10.e2 c4 11.a2 b8 12.d1 e5 13.d5 c8 14.a4 Tkachiev – Kudrin, Las Palmas 1997, was agreed drawn here, but it seems to me that White should be slightly better in this Ruy Lopez type of position.

b) 9...d7 10.a4 b4 11.d5 b7 12.cxb4 cxb4 13.a5 b8 14.a6 a3 With approximate equality, Sedlak – Kutuzovic, Sibenik 2005.

10.e1 e5 11.d5

White could also consider opening the position with 11.dxc5! dxc5 12.a4.

11...d5 12.c2 h5 13.d3 a6 14.b4 cxb4 15.cxb4 c4 16.bxc4 bxc4 17.c3

Chances are balanced, Totsky – Bologan, Sevastopol 1997. If Black now goes 17...b4
then 18.\(\text{xf4}\) exf4 19.\(\text{d2}\) followed by 20.\(\text{ac1}\), looks like a normal follow-up.

8...\(\text{eb8}\)? 9.\(\text{a4}\) \(\text{a6}\) 10.\(\text{ae1}\) \(\text{b5}\) 11.\(\text{axb5}\) axb5 12.\(\text{d4}\) e5 Peace was agreed at this point in Vasquez - Arancibia, Santiago 2005, though after 13.\(\text{ae3}\)? I would prefer White.

9...\(\text{b6}\)

9.\(\text{d4}\)? is okay too, but it more or less implies that White is ready to accept playing with an isolated d-pawn: 9...\(\text{e6}\) 10.\(\text{ae1}\) \(\text{cxd4}\) 11.\(\text{d4}\) \(\text{b4}\) 12.\(\text{g5}\) (or 12.e5 dxe5 and now 13.\(\text{xe5}\) is better than 13.dxe5?! Bergstrom - Sutovsky, Port Erin 2000, which could have been answered by 13...\(\text{wxh1}\)! 14.\(\text{bxd1}\) \(\text{e4}\) with a pleasant endgame for Black) 12...\(\text{d5}\) 13.\(\text{edx5}\) \(\text{c8}\) 14.\(\text{e5}\) \(\text{bxd5}\) 15.\(\text{wxf3}\) \(\text{b7}\) 16.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{c7}\) Seul - Pelletier, Essen 2001. The activity of White's pieces fully compensates for the isolani - the game is dynamically balanced.

9...\(\text{a6}\)

Probably the most active possibility, though the alternatives are reasonable too:

a) 9...\(\text{e5}\) 10.\(\text{d4}\) \(\text{wxf3}\) \(\text{b7}\)\(=\) Torsky - Zvjaginsev, Samara 2000.

b) 9...\(\text{b7}\) and now:

b1) 10.\(\text{b2}\) \(\text{c8}\) 11.\(\text{f1}\) \(\text{a5}\) 12.\(\text{c2}\) e5 13.\(\text{g5}\) Aiming to play on the light squares, and in particular to control the d5-square.

b2) 10.\(\text{wxd4}\) 1.e6 14.\(\text{xf6}\) \(\text{wxf6}\) 15.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{c6}\) 16.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{wxd4}\) 17.\(\text{g5}\) 18.\(\text{a4}\) Moldovan - Moreno Tejera, Andorra 2002. White intends \(\text{c4}\) and \(\text{a4-a5}\), whereas Black shall probably try to implement the ...\(\text{f5}\) thrust and generate play on the kingside.

b2) 10.\(\text{d4}\) \(\text{cxd4}\) (10...\(\text{e6}\) is interesting; Aronian - Hracek, Bundesliga 2002, continued 11.\(\text{bd2}\) [11.\(\text{g5?!}\)] 11...\(\text{e8}\) 12.e5 \(\text{wxe5}\) 13.\(\text{dxc5}\) \(\text{bxc5}\) 14.\(\text{wxd6}\) \(\text{xd6}\) and White had the better pawn structure, but the c5-pawn usefully covered the d4-square and Black enjoyed rather free piece play) 11.\(\text{cxd4}\) d5 12.e5 (12.exd5?!?) 12...\(\text{e4}\) 13.a3 (the 'traditional' 13.\(\text{c3}\) and 13.\(\text{bd2}\) deserved attention too) 13...\(\text{a5}\) 14.\(\text{a2}\) \(\text{h8}\) 15.\(\text{bd2}\) f6 16.\(\text{b1}\) \(\text{fxe5}\) 17.dxe5\(\text{wxd5}\) Golod - Middelburg, Antwerp 1999.

White now has to decide whether he wants to push 10.d4, transposing into 9.d4 above, or make a useful semi-waiting move.

10.\(\text{a3}\)

This may not be wise, as the knight could end up misplaced. Others options are roughly level:

a) 10.\(\text{a4}\) \(\text{wxf3}\) 11.\(\text{c2}\) Van Mil - Kovalev, Tel Aviv 2001.

b) 10.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{c8}\) 11.\(\text{c2}\) h6 12.\(\text{c3}\) e5 Galdunts - Van der Weide, Vienna 2006.

10...\(\text{e5}\)

10...\(\text{wxd7}\)? is worse, because White achieves his goal after 11.\(\text{d4}\) \(\text{cxd4}\) 12.\(\text{cxd4}\) Berzinsh - Palliser, Birmingham 2006.
11.\(\text{dxe5}\) dxe5 12.\(\text{\&c4}\) \(\text{\&b7}\) 13.\(\text{\&c2}\) \(\text{\&d7}\) 14.\(\text{\&a4}\) 
\(\text{\&e6}\) 15.\(\text{\&e3}\) a6 16.\(\text{\&b3}\) b5 17.\(\text{\&c2}\) \(\text{\&h5}\)

Yudasin – Sarkar, New York 2004. White experiences difficulties in finding a constructive plan. We saw a similar situation in the game Vasiukov – Ghinda, annotated in Chapter 9 after 1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{\&f3}\) d6 3.c3 \(\text{\&f6}\) 4.h3 \(\text{\&bd7}\) 5.\(\text{\&d3}\) \(\text{\&e5}\).

9.\(\text{\&e1}\)

Other options are:

9.\(\text{\&e3}\) h6 10.\(\text{\&e1}\)

10.\(\text{\&bd2}\) may be less accurate: 10...\(\text{\&e8}\) Black is planning ...\(\text{\&h7}\) followed by ...f5.

11.\(\text{\&h2}\) \(\text{\&a5}\) 12.\(\text{\&a4}\) \(\text{\&d7}\) The game is about level, Timofeev – Morozevich, Moscow 2007.

10...\(\text{\&h5}\)

The game is dynamically balanced. Black will usually continue with ...\(\text{\&h5}\), and possibly ...d5, while his opponent looks to queenside action based on b2-b4.

12.\(\text{\&b1}\)

The alternatives 12.\(\text{b4}\) cxb4 13.cxb4 b5 Sedlak – Solomunovic, Sozina 2004 and...
12.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{h}5 \) 13.a4 Rozentalis – Gashimov, Athens 2005 are both about equal.

12...\( \text{h}5 \) 13.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{f4} \) 14.\( \text{xf}4 \) \( \text{xf}4 \) 15.b4 \( \text{cxb}4 \) 16.\( \text{cxb}4 \) \( b5 \)


9...d5

A very committal decision; Black takes some space, but he must be careful about further changing the central pawn structure. Indeed, after an exchange of pawns on e4 the structure would suit White well, whereas ...d4 also entails some drawbacks – the b3-bishop becomes stronger and the c4-square would then be available for a white knight. The alternatives to this pawn move are:

9...\( \text{h}8 \)

Planning to move the f6-knight and then push ...f5. Totsky – Sorokin, Ekaterinburg 1997, continued 10.d4?! \( \text{cxd}4 \) 11.\( \text{cxd}4 \) \( \text{xd}4 \) 12.\( \text{xd}4 \) and now 12...d5 would have been level. Instead of this, 10.e3! seems to give White a small plus.

9...e6

10.e5! f6 11.e3 \( \text{e}8 \) 11...\( \text{f}4 \) is well met by 12.d4 12.e2 d2 e7 13.a3 \( \text{e}6 \) 14.a2 (14.d5) 14...e6 15.b4 \( \text{c}7 \) 16.e2 \( \text{e6} \) A draw was agreed in this still quite rich position in Mainka – Muse, Travemuende 2001.

10.e5

White can also develop with: 10.e3 d4 11.e4 (or 11.cxd4 \( \text{cxd}4 \) 12.d2 with some queenside pressure, V. Ivanov – Sherbakov, Moscow 2005) 11.d7 12.e2 b6 (in Kuporosov – Kiselev, Vladimir 2004, Black opted for the interesting 12.d8, which avoids being inflicted with doubled pawns and prepares ...f5) 13.e6 bxe6 14.cxd4 \( \text{xd}4 \)
182 Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

15...b4 16...d2 The position is easier to play for White, Yudasin – Simutowe, New York 2003.

10...d4
10...dxe4 11...xf6 12...xe4 13...bd2 14.e2 15...xe6 16...c4 Totsky – Volzhin, Budapest 1996. White has a small but enduring edge, since the natural 16...b5 17...e3 18...xe3 doesn't fully equalize for Black.

11...a4
Planning to weaken the opponent's structure.

11...c7
11...h6 12...h4 13...a3 14...c4 (not 13...xb2?? 14...c3 15...b4 16...a2) 14...bxc6 15...xex5 16...b4 Yudasin – Khachiyan, Los Angeles 2003. Now 18...xd4 19...g3 would have secured White a sizeable edge.

12...xc6 bxc6 13...xd4 cxd4 14...a3

Totsky – Lugovoi, St Petersburg 1998. The same kind of position has arisen that we saw in Yudasin – Simutowe (in the note to White's 10th move). Objectively Black shouldn't be much worse, but his side is more difficult to handle.

B232) 8...bd2

8...b5
Black has a host of alternatives to choose from, depending on what type of position he is after:

8...b6 9...e1 10...f1
10...c2 e5 11...h5 12...f1 13...d3 (12...f4 deserves attention) 14...d4 cxd4 15...f6= Ferguson – Greenfeld, Rethymnon 2003.
10...e5 11...c2

11...fd7
Black has a couple of other options at his disposal:
Chapter 6 - 2.\( \text{d}3 \) d6 3.\( \text{c}4 \)

a) 11...\( \text{e}8 \) 12.\( \text{g}5 \) (in a later game the American deviated with 12.\( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{w}c7 \)
13.\( \text{f}3 \)h2 Benjamin - Mixton, Kerhonkson 2003; White is playing for f2-f4, as in line 'b' below) 12...h6 13.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{g}5 \) 14.\( \text{e}3 \) e6 With a complex battle ahead, Benjamin - Baklan, Moscow (1.2) 2001.

b) 11...\( \text{e}7 \) 12.\( \text{h}3 \) e6 13.\( \text{f}3 \)h2 \( \text{c}6 \) 14.\( \text{f}4 \) White has slightly the better prospects, Benjamin - Baklan, Moscow (1.4 - rapid) 2001.

12.\( \text{g}5 \) h6 13.\( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{x}f3 \)t 14.\( \text{w}xh4 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 15.\( \text{w}d1 \) \( \text{c}6 \)
Black can't stop both \( \text{d}3-d4 \) and f2-f4. In the event of 15...\( \text{g}5 \) 16.\( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 17.\( \text{e}3 \) e6 18.\( \text{d}4 \) White also gains a slight plus.

16.\( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 17.\( \text{f}4 \) f5 18.\( \text{x}f5 \) gxf5 19.\( \text{w}h5 \) e6 20.\( \text{g}4 \)
Thanks to this energetic push White obtains a dangerous kingside attack. The instructive duel Adams - Gelfand, Linares 1997, took the following course:

20...\( \text{b}7 \) 21.\( \text{gx}f5 \) exf5 22.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{x}d4 \) 23.\( \text{c}xd4 \) \( \text{g}7 \) 24.\( \text{f}6+ \) \( \text{g}7 \) 25.\( \text{g}g7+ \) \( \text{x}g7 \) 26.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 27.\( \text{e}7 \) \( \text{e}8 \) 28.\( \text{x}e4 \) \( \text{x}e4 \) 29.\( \text{w}d6 \) \( \text{x}b2 \) 30.\( \text{f}5t \) \( \text{g}6 \) 31.\( \text{g}g3 \) \( \text{d}4t \) 32.\( \text{f}2 \) e3 33.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{h}5 \) 34.\( \text{f}5t \) \( \text{f}f6 \) 35.\( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{e}8 \) 36.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{xe}8 \) 37.\( \text{d}4t \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 38.\( \text{g}xh4 \) \( \text{xg}4 \) 39.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 40.\( \text{h}1 \) c2 41.\( \text{d}6 \) 1-0

8...\( \text{e}8 \) 9.\( \text{e}1 \) (9.\( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 10.\( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{a}5 \)
11.\( \text{a}2 \) d5 looked all right for Black in Tsekhovskoy - Maksimenko, Niksic 1996)
9...\( \text{c}7 \) 10.\( \text{h}3 \) e5 11.\( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{h}8 \) 12.\( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{f}6 \)
13.\( \text{h}4 \) g5 14.\( \text{g}3 \) f5 15.\( \text{ex}f5 \) \( \text{x}f5 \) 16.\( \text{d}4 \)

8...\( \text{d}7? \) 9.\( \text{h}3 \)
This is a bit slow and not necessarily useful.
9...\( \text{b}5 \) 10.\( \text{a}4! \)
After 10.\( \text{e}1 \) a5 the threat of ...a4-a3 forces a reaction: 11.\( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 12.\( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{b}7 \) 13.\( \text{d}4 \) e6 14.\( \text{xc}6 \) \( \text{xc}6 \) Black had the two bishops and a lasting edge in Vratonjic - Rabonovic, Bar 2006.

10.a3 a5 11.\( \text{h}2 \) \( \text{a}6 \) 12.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 13.\( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{c}4 \) 14.\( \text{xc}4 \) \( \text{xc}4 \) 15.\( \text{dxc}4 \) \( \text{xc}4 \) 16.\( \text{bxc}3 \) \( \text{w}c7 \)
Hamdouchi - Gelfand, Cap d'Agde 1998. Black has full compensation for the pawn deficit, his opponent's c-pawns presenting an easy target.

10...\( \text{b}4 \) 11.\( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{b}7 \) 12.\( \text{cxb}4 \) \( \text{xb}4 \) 13.\( \text{a}5 \)

Predojevic - Mankevich, Oropesa de Mar 2001. Earlier we met an analogous position, but with White's pawn on d4 and his queen's knight still in its stall, in the game Sedlak - Kutuzovic (see the note to Black's 8th move in line B231). Here too, the position is about equal after 13...\( \text{e}8 \).

8...\( \text{b}8 \)
With this semi-waiting move, Black wants to postpone his decision between ...b6 and ...b5. He will act according to what White does.

9.\( \text{e}1 \)
9.\( \text{d}4?! \) \( \text{cxd}4 \) 10.\( \text{cxd}4 \) \( \text{g}4 \) would suit Black well.

9...\( \text{e}8 \)
9...\( \text{d}7 \) is valid too: 10.\( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{de}5 \) 11.\( \text{xe}5 \) \( \text{dxe}5 \) 12.\( \text{xe}3 \) \( \text{b}6 \) With mutual chances, Narciso Dublan - Bndrich, Kusadas 2006. White will probably try to implement the b2-b4 push, while his opponent will prepare ...f5.
10.\(\text{d}f1\) b5 11.\(\text{e}3\)

11.a3?! could be tried.

11...b4 12.d4 bxc3 13.bxc3 cxd4 14.cxd4 \(\text{d}f6\)


8...d5

This may be dubious, as the following games tend to suggest.

9.\(\text{e}1\) e6

Or: 9...e5 10.exd5 \(\text{d}x\text{d}5\) 11.\(\text{c}c4\) \(\text{e}e8\) 12.\(\text{g}5\)

8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1

a b c d e f g h

D’Amore – Rombaldoni, Sarre 2009. The position is similar to a reversed King’s Indian, but with the white bishop better posted on b3 than it would be on g2.

10.h3 \(\text{c}7\)

After 10...b5 11.exd5 \(\text{c}x\text{d}5\) 12.\(\text{f}1\) h6 13.\(\text{f}4\) the position looks harmless, but it contains some venom: 13...\(\text{h}5\) 14.\(\text{h}2\) d4?! (14...\(\text{e}6\) would have limited the white plus to bearable proportions) 15.\(\text{e}4\) b4 16.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{d}2\) \(\text{e}8\) 17.\(\text{x}e8\)† \(\text{x}e8\) 18.\(\text{d}4\) According to my database, the game Yudasin – Lesiege, Philadelphia 2001, now finished abruptly with 18...\(\text{f}5\) 19.\(\text{d}2\) 1–0. This seems rather unlikely, but it is certainly true that Black is under considerable pressure.

11.\(\text{f}1\) dxe4 12.dxe4 b6 13.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{b}7\) 14.\(\text{e}2\) 14.e5?! would have been more ambitious.

14...e5 15.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{h}2\)

\(\frac{1}{2}–\frac{1}{2}\) Spraggett –Lesiege, Montreal 2001.

9.a3 a5

Carrying on with the queenside play looks more consistent than 9...\(\text{d}7\) 10.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{b}6\) Galstian – Konjuvel, Moscow 2006. Now, rather than the game continuation of 11.\(\text{f}1\) e5 12.\(\text{e}3\) a5 13.\(\text{d}5\), I think White should have tried a2–a4 on move 12 or 13.

10.\(\text{e}1\)

10.d4?! \(\text{c}x\text{d}4\) 11.cxd4 \(\text{b}6\) is very comfortable for Black.

10...a4

10...\(\text{b}8\)?? 11.h3 (11.d4?? is too hasty; after 11...\(\text{c}x\text{d}4\) 12.\(\text{c}x\text{d}4\) \(\text{b}6\) 13.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{g}4\) 14.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{d}4\) [or 14...a4] Black had a good game in Gormally – Ward, Torquay 1998) 11...b4 12.d4 (12.a4??) 12...bxc3 13.bxc3 \(\text{d}7\) With a roughly equal position, Prathamsh - Neelotpal, Mumbai 2009.

11.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{d}7\) 12.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{b}6\)

8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1

a b c d e f g h

The knight has completed its journey and Black is all set for the opening of the queenside. White’s position is somewhat cramped, and apart from d3–d4 he has no obvious plan available.

13.b3 b4
I prefer the radical 13...e5, since White is far from being able to profit from the hole created at d5.

14.axb4 cxb4 15.d4 b3
In the event of 15...a3?! White can gobble a pawn with 16.bxa3 bxc3 17.dxe5, although Black obtains reasonable activity in return: 17...e5 18.d5 a4d4 19.exc3 a6

16.ed3 e5 17.dxe5
On 17.d5 the knight would probably have moved to a5, from where it can bounce either to c4, or via b7 to e5.

Otherwise, 17.dg5 was an interesting possibility.

17...exe5 18.dxe5 exe5
18...dxe5?? is more solid.

19.c3
Maybe 19.dh6 e8 20.e5 could be tried, so that a later d3-b5 would be with tempo.

19...exe6
½–½

9.dbd2
White may develop his bishop first:

a) 9.e5 e6 10.dbd2 h6 11.h3 a5e8 12.f1 (perhaps White could try 12.exd6 fxe6 13.a3) 12...c7 13.ec1 db8 14.xb3 d6 15.ed1 d5 Black had equalized and peace was soon agreed in Bauer – Savchenko, Metz 2009.

b) 9.g5 h6 10.h4 (as we have seen in previous examples, White can also apply a light-squared strategy based on 10.exf6 xf6 11.dbd2 and so on) 10...a5 (Or 10...a5 11.bc2 g5 12.g3 h5 13.dbd2 df4 with balanced chances, V. Ivanov – Gasanov, Moscow 2006. Black is right not to take the g3-bishop, as after hxg3 followed by f1-e3 and g3-g4, White would have good chances of profiting from his opponent’s weakened kingside) 11.dbd2 d7 12.exd6

Once again, the question of move order is secondary in this system, and numerous transpositions are possible.

8...b5
The position is rich enough to see several correct approaches. The most important thing for each side is to acquire a feeling for the position, and to decide what type of pawn structure he wants. Let’s investigate Black’s many options:

8...e5

B233) 8.ee1
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

\( \text{\texttimes f6} \ 13.\text{\texttimes f1} \text{g7} \ 14.\text{\texttimes e3} \text{\texttimes h8} \text{Cicak - Van Wely, Bundesliga 2000. Black is ready for } ...f5, \text{ while his opponent may try to find counterplay based on b2-b4.} \)

9...h6

Black’s most frequent answer, but certainly not the only one. Others are:

a) 9...\text{\texttimes e6} 10.\text{\texttimes f1} \text{\texttimes d7} 11.\text{\texttimes a4} \text{\texttimes c7} \text{Yudasin - Komljenovic, Dos Hermanas 1998.}

b) 9...\text{\texttimes b8} 10.\text{\texttimes f1} \text{b5} 11.\text{\texttimes g3} \text{\texttimes e6} 12.\text{\texttimes c2} \text{h6} \text{Yudasin - Solovjov, St Petersburg 1999.}

c) 9...\text{\texttimes h5} 10.\text{\texttimes f1} \text{\texttimes e6} 11.\text{\texttimes g3} \text{\texttimes xg3} 12.\text{\texttimes xg3} \text{\texttimes xh5} 13.\text{\texttimes xh5} 1/2-1/2 \text{Godena - Palac, Saint Vincent 2001.}

In all cases the evaluation lies somewhere between a tiny plus for White and equality.

10.\text{\texttimes f1} \text{\texttimes b8}

Black has tested some other options:

a) 10...\text{\texttimes d5} 11.\text{\texttimes g3} \text{\texttimes e6} 12.\text{\texttimes a4} \text{dxe4} 13.\text{\texttimes x e4} \text{\texttimes c7} 14.\text{\texttimes x c6} \text{bxc6} 15.\text{\texttimes e3} \text{Yudasin - Krush, New York (rapid) 2003. White has a clear plan of laying siege to the doubled c-pawns.}

b) 10...\text{\texttimes h8} 11.\text{\texttimes h3} \text{\texttimes g8} 12.\text{d4}?! (12.\text{\texttimes g3} \text{intending 12...f5 13.\text{\texttimes f5} \text{\texttimes x f5} 14.\text{\texttimes h5!} \text{is an improvement}) 12...\text{\texttimes x f4} 13.\text{\texttimes c6} \text{\texttimes x c6} 14.\text{\texttimes x c6} \text{\texttimes x c6} \text{Sarsam - Paragua, Bled (ol) 2002. White has some compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but not quite enough.}

11.\text{\texttimes h3} \text{b5}

In D. Popovic - Ivanisevic, Petrovac 2004, Black addressed the ‘threat’ of d3-d4, with

\( 11...\text{\texttimes e8} \), but following 12.\text{\texttimes e3} \text{\texttimes a5} 13.\text{\texttimes c2} \text{b5} 14.a3, with the idea of b2-b4, White had some pull.

12.\text{\texttimes g3}

I think that 12.d4! is critical, the standard response of 12...\text{\texttimes x d4} 13.\text{\texttimes x d4} \text{\texttimes x d4} 14.\text{\texttimes x d4} \text{d5} being impossible in this particular position.

12...\text{\texttimes d7} 13.\text{\texttimes e3} \text{\texttimes b6} 14.\text{\texttimes x d4}

This is an improvement over 14...c4?!


15.\text{\texttimes x d4} \text{\texttimes c4}!

Black has a satisfactory position. A continuation such as 16.\text{\texttimes x c4} \text{bxc4} 17.d5?! \text{\texttimes b4} 18.\text{\texttimes a7} \text{\texttimes b7} 19.\text{\texttimes e3} f5! would even be quite dangerous for White.

8...\text{\texttimes g4}

With this move, Black clearly shows that he is ready to part with the bishop pair. In return he will slow down the d3-d4 thrust and initiate a quick queenside action.

9.h3

This has been most popular, but my preference is for 9.\text{\texttimes d2} and:

a) 9...\text{\texttimes d5} 10.\text{\texttimes f1} \text{\texttimes x f3} 11.\text{\texttimes f3} \text{\texttimes x f3} 12.\text{\texttimes x f3} \text{\texttimes x d1} 13.\text{\texttimes x d1} \text{White had a pleasant endgame edge in Shaposhnikov - Biriukov, St Petersburg 2002.}

b) 9...\text{\texttimes x c6} 10.\text{\texttimes f1} \text{\texttimes a5} 12.\text{\texttimes c2} \text{Godena - Tratar, Istanbul 2003.}
c) 9...b5 10.h3 a5 11.f3 a6 12.a3 a4 13.c2 Cicak – Jansa, Czech Republic 2001, was agreed drawn here, but d3-d4 is imminent and I would rather be White in this position.

9...f3 10.exf3 b5

11.g5
Aiming to provoke the weakening ... h6. White can of course go 11.e3 too, planning to slowly but surely implement d3-d4:


11...d7
11...c4? needs further investigation to determine if Black gets enough play for the pawn. Nedela – Stoeckl, Ostrava 1998 continued: 12.dxc4 bxc4 13.e5 14.e2 xc4 15.xc4 b8 16.e2 a5 17.c1 = Black has reasonable compensation.

12.d2 a5 13.e3
After 13.c2! b4! the threat to his c-pawn is problematic for White. White could retreat further with 13.d1!? (to facilitate dxc1), but it looks a bit awkward.

13.e8 14.h6 h8 15.f4 xb3 16.axb3

Galdunts – K. Lutz, Germany 2002. The pride of White’s position, the b3-bishop, has disappeared, but so has Black’s queenside counterplay. White can launch an attack on the other flank, and he stands better.

8.b6 9.a3 a6 10.d4 Now that the bishop can no longer go to the g4-square. 10...cx4 11.d4 d5 12. e5 e4 13.g5 (13.bd2?) 13...xg5 14.xg5 a5 15.a2 d7 16.c3 e6

Cicak – Palliser, Cork 2005. On principle Black should be fine, because he is about to play ...ra8 and then occupy the c-square with either his knight or bishop, whereas most of White’s pieces are far away from the kingside. That said, 17.b3 followed by d1-e3-g4 should not be underestimated.

8.d5 e5 d7 10.d4 cxd4 11.cxd4 b6 12.h3 f5 13.c3 White had a bit more space, and thus a small advantage in Fedorov – Danin, Voronezh 2007.
9.h3
White has several other options:

9.a3 \( \&g4?! \) (9...a5 10.h3 transposes into the main line) 10.h3 \( \&xh3 \) 11.\( wxf3 \) e4! 12.dxc4 \( \&a5 \) Black recovers his pawn, using the fact that White's 9th move left his light-squared bishop undefended. 13.\( \&a2 \) bxc4 The black pawn on c4 hampers the enemy development. 14.\( \&d2 \) e6 15.\( \&xe2 \) f8 16.e5 dxe5 17.\( wxe5 \) f6= Yudasin - Greenfeld, Ramat Aviv 2000.

9.d4?! \( \&g4 \) 10.\( \&e3 \) cxd4 11.cxd4 \( \&a5 \) 12.\( \&c3 \) (retaining the bishop by 12.\( \&c2 \) looks more normal, although in the game Black didn't actually take the bishop) 12...b4 13.\( \&d5 \) \( \&xe4 \) 14.\( \&f4 \) e6 15.\( wxe4 \) exd5 16.\( \&xd5 \) e8 With roughly equal chances, Bergez - Smirnov, Fuegen 2006.

9.\( \&bd2 \) a5
Black has a wide range of alternatives:

a) 9...b4 10.d4 (after 10.\( \&c4 \) bxc3 11.bxc3 d5 12.\( \&d2 \)! dxe4 13.\( \&xe4 \) \( \&a6 \) Black could already claim a slight edge in Perunovic - Bronberger, Balatonlelle 2000) 10...bxc3 11.bxc3 cxd4 12.cxd4 \( \&b4 \) Saryapragyan - Gopal, Chennai 2008. Now 13.e5 is the critical continuation.

b) 9...\( \&b8 \) 10.h3 (A. Kovacevic - Arsicovic, Banja Koviljaca 2002, concluded 10.\( \&f1 \) b4 11.\( \&e3 \) \( \&g4 \)! 12.\( \&c2 \) bxc3 13.bxc3 \( \&a5 \) 14.\( \&b2 \) \( \&xe3 \) 15.\( \&xe3 \) \( =/=/ \). However, 15.\( \&xe6 \) would have been quite nasty to meet, as ...\( \&b6 \) becomes a threat, while after the exchange 16.\( \&xe6? \) fxe6 the possibility of ...\( \&xb2 \) increases White's headache.) 10...a5 11.a4 b4 12.\( \&c4 \) bxc3?! (12...\( \&d7 \) is fine for Black) 13.bxc3 d5 14.\( \&b5 \) \( \&a7 \) 15.\( \&e5 \) \( \&d7 \) 16.c4 White now had the better of it in Prathamesh - Deepan, Mumbai 2009.

c) 9...\( \&b7 \) 10.\( \&f1 \) e8 11.\( \&g5 \) h6 12.\( \&h4 \) \( \&b6 \) 13.\( \&d2 \) \( \&h7 \) 14.\( \&e3 \) e6 15.\( \&c2 \) \( \&e5 \) 16.\( \&xe5 \) dxe5 17.f3 \( \&h5 \) 18.a4 a6 19.axb5 axb5 20.\( \&g4 \) With unclear play, Seul - De Firmian, Bundesliga 1999.

10.a4
10.h3 a4 11.\( \&e2 \) d7 12.a3 e5 13.\( \&f1 \) \( \&b7 \) (in Chuprov - Kokarev, Khanty-Mansiysk 2008, Black played 13...\( \&b6 \), which may in fact be more precise because it is not yet clear on which diagonal the c8-bishop belongs) 14.\( \&e3 \) \( \&b6 \) 15.\( \&d2 \) f5 A resolute attempt to dictate the course of the game. 16.b4 cxb4 17.\( \&b4 \) h8 18.\( \&d5 \) fxe4 19.\( \&g5? \) Looking for trouble - there was nothing wrong with simply recapturing on e4.

19...\( \&f3 \)? After this pretty queen sacrifice the white position collapses like a house of cards. 20.\( \&xd8 \) \( \&xd5 \) 21.\( \&g5 \) \( \&xc3 \) 22.\( \&d2 \) \( \&d4 \) 23.\( \&g3 \) (23.\( \&xc3 \) is decisively met by 23...\( \&ac8 \)) 23...\( \&ac8 \) 24.\( \&d1 \) \( \&xd1 \) 25.\( \&xd1 \) \( \&c2 \) 26.\( \&e7 \) \( \&fe8 \) 27.\( \&xd6 \) e4 28.\( \&c1 \) \( \&xc1 \) 29.\( \&xc1 \) \( \&xc1 \) 30.\( \&xc1 \) exd3 31.\( \&f4 \) \( \&d5 \)
Black's pieces are well posted for the opening of the game, as Ajrapetian – Khismatullin, Voronezh 2009, illustrates: 11.d4! bxc3 12.bxc3 cxd4 13.cxd4 a6 14.a3 Bb8 15.Bc1 Bb4 16.axb4 White could hardly tolerate the knight coming to d3. 16...Bxb4 17.e5 dxe5 18.dxe5 Qd5 19.Qd4 Qf4 20.Qc5 Bxd1 21.Bxd1 &c4 Black has the two bishops and a pleasant edge.

Maybe White should try 11.Qc4!? with the idea of meeting 11...d5 with 12.Qb5, as we saw in the game Prathamesh – Deepan above (after 9...Bb8 10.h3 a5 and so on).

11...a6 12.Qg5?! Qd7 13.d5 Qc8

In Godena – Rowson, Verona 2006, White could find nothing better than:

14.Qxc6 Bxc6

Black has a very comfortable position.

9...a5

Again, there are various alternatives:

9...Qd7 10.d4 b4 11.Qe3 bxc3 12.Qxc3 Libiszewski – Berbatov, Pamplona 2009. Chances are roughly equal after, for instance, 12...Bb8?.


10...bxc3 11.bxc3

11...cxd4

11...d5 looks a bit less to the point: 12.dxc5 dxe4 13.Wxd8 Qxd8 14.Qg5 Qb7 15.Qc2?! (the superior 15.Qd2 would have granted White a small plus) 15...Bc8 16.Qxe4 Qxe4 17.Qxe4 Qxe4 18.Qxe4 Qe6 19.Qe3 Qf6? (after 19...Qf8! it would be White who was looking for a way to equalize) 20.Qc4 Bf8 21.Qa3 White held onto his booty in Van Mil – Greenfeld, Tel Aviv 2001, and eventually managed to score the full point.

12.cxd4 d5 13.e5 Qe4 14.Qg5


9...e5 10.Qbd2 &b7

10...a5 11.a4 b4 12.Qf1 h6 13.Qe3 Qa6 led to a complex game with mutual chances in Kobalia – Hamitevici, Rijeka 2010.

11.Qf1 d5

This very committal move weakens the c5-pawn.
12...exd5 Qxd5 13.Qg3 Qxf4?!

Maybe 13...e8 should be played, in order to meet 14.Qe4 with 14...a5.

14.Qxf4 exf4 15.Qe4 Qb6?!

From now on White will relentlessly go onto the offensive. Though the vis-à-vis with the e1-rook may look scary, 15...Qe7 would at least have kept the queen nearer her consort.

14...Qh4 exf4 15.Qh4 Qe7?!

The consequences of 16.Qg5 Qe5 aren’t clear, for instance: 17.Qxf7 Qxf7 18.Qxf7+ Qxf7 19.Qxe5+ Qxe5 20.Qb3+ Qb8 21.Qxb5 a6 22.Qb6 Qc7 Black seems to be more or less okay.

16.Qd6 Qa5 17.Qxf7+ Qxf7 18.Qxf7 Qxf7 19.Qg5+ Qg8 20.Qe6 Qd8 21.Qg4 Qc8

On 21...Qxd3 White can enter a promising endgame by mean of 22.Qd1 Qf5 23.Qxf5 Qxf5 24.Qed6, but that was the lesser evil – Black cannot expect to survive long with the queens on the board.

22.Qae1 Qd7 23.Qh4 h6 24.Qxg6 hxg5 25.Qh6

There is no defence.

25...Qh8 26.Qe5 Qe8 27.Qxg7+ Qxg7 28.Qxg5

1–0 Svidler - P.H. Nielsen, Monte Carlo (blindfold rapid) 2006. White will collect the f4- and c5-pawns, giving him a huge material advantage.

10.a3


10...Qb7?!

Fixing the weakness on b3. As we shall see, White may push his b-pawn later on anyway, but at the cost of giving himself an isolated a-pawn.

10...Qd7 is liable to come to the same thing if Black pushes his a-pawn next move. For example, 11.Qe3 a4 12.Qc2 was the actual move order of the game Timofeev – Karpov featured in the main line, while 11.d4 a4 12.Qc2 transposes to the note to White’s 12th move below.


10...e5 11.Qg5 a4 12.Qa2 h6 13.Qh4 Qe8 14.Qbd2 Qe6 15.Qf1 Qxa2 16.Qxa2 Qe6 17.Qa1 Qd7 18.Qe3 Qb6 Harikrishna – Topalov, Bilbao (blindfold) 2007. Black has out-maneuvered his opponent. He has all of the pawn breaks...b4,...d5 and...f5 available
to him, whereas White seems bound to passivity.

11...\texttt{c2}

11...\texttt{a2} \texttt{b7} 12...\texttt{c3} (12...\texttt{d4}? could be tried)
12...\texttt{c7} 13...\texttt{bd2} \texttt{e5} 14...\texttt{c1} \texttt{h6} 15...\texttt{f1} \texttt{a5} A draw was agreed in this level position, Timofeev – Sakaev, Sochi 2005.

11...\texttt{d7}

12...\texttt{e3}

Although we are taking this as the main line, I am not convinced it is best. The alternatives are:

12...\texttt{g5} \texttt{h6} 13...\texttt{h4} \texttt{b6} 14...\texttt{bd2} The position is complex, with chances for both sides, Fedorov – Jianu, Eforie Nord 2008.

12...\texttt{d4}

Even though it doesn’t threaten much at the moment, I think that this central push constitutes White’s most natural plan.

12...\texttt{b6}

12...\texttt{a5} seems adequate too: 13...\texttt{bd2} \texttt{b7} 14...\texttt{f1} \texttt{e5} 15...\texttt{g5} \texttt{c7} With a balanced game, Ferguson – Tukmakov, Amsterdam 2006.

13...\texttt{d3} \texttt{c4}

13...\texttt{c4} looks counter-intuitive, but it has shown itself to be fully acceptable: 14...\texttt{c2} \texttt{a5} 15...\texttt{g5} \texttt{b3} 16...\texttt{xb3} \texttt{axb3} 17...\texttt{e1} \texttt{a4} Kayumov – Khismatullin, Abu Dhabi 2007. Although Black is unlikely to break through on the queenside, his knight will tie down a major piece for quite a while.

14...\texttt{xc4}

14...\texttt{dxc5} \texttt{dxc5} 15...\texttt{e2} was a quieter approach.

14...\texttt{bxc4} 15...\texttt{d5} \texttt{a5} 16...\texttt{xa4} \texttt{f5} 17...\texttt{bd2} \texttt{fxc4} 18...\texttt{xe4}

18...\texttt{b7}

Targeting the d-pawn is very tempting, but 18...\texttt{xh3}?! is an interesting alternative.

19...\texttt{d1}!!

19...\texttt{g5}! would have maintained the equilibrium: 19...\texttt{xh5} (the greedy 19...\texttt{xh3} fails to 20...\texttt{xc4} \texttt{axb1} 21...\texttt{h4} \texttt{h5} 22...\texttt{e6} followed by \texttt{xg7}) 20...\texttt{d1} \texttt{xf3} 21...\texttt{xf3} \texttt{d5}=

19...\texttt{h5} 20...\texttt{xe2}

Now 20...\texttt{xd5}?! was rather murky in
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

Avskulov – Shomoev, Montreal 2007, whereas 20...\textit{\texttt{axd5}}! would have left Black on top.

12...\textit{\texttt{c3}}
12...\textit{\texttt{c6}} would be met with 13.\textit{\texttt{dd2}}.

13.\textit{\texttt{dd2}} \textit{\texttt{c6}}

14.b4?!
Rather than just waiting in a slightly passive position, White does his best to try and get some play. 14.\textit{\texttt{hh2}} was certainly no solution: 14...\textit{\texttt{f5}}! 15.\textit{\texttt{exf5}} \textit{\texttt{gf5}} 16.\textit{\texttt{f4}} \textit{\texttt{dd5}} With a big plus for Black.

14...axb3 15.\textit{\texttt{xb3}}

15...\textit{\texttt{dd7}}
In a later game, Black deviated with 15...\textit{\texttt{h8}}. Now, instead of incorrectly sacrificing a pawn with 16.\textit{\texttt{d4}}?! as in Safarli – Sutovsky, Moscow 2008, White should have played 16.\textit{\texttt{a4}}, keeping Black busy enough on the queenside to delay the ...\textit{\texttt{f5}} push.

16.\textit{\texttt{wc2}} \textit{\texttt{aa6}} 17.\textit{\texttt{eb1}} \textit{\texttt{a8}}

18.\textit{\texttt{wc1}}
In his annotations for \textit{ChessBase Magazine}, Psakhis rightly mentions that White couldn't offer to trade the a2- and b5-pawns without being punished: 18.\textit{\texttt{xa2}}?! \textit{\texttt{xa3}} 19.\textit{\texttt{xb5}} \textit{\texttt{dd4}}! Initiating a tactical skirmish that will wake up the g7-bishop. 20.\textit{\texttt{xd4}} \textit{\texttt{exd4}} 21.\textit{\texttt{xb6}} \textit{\texttt{exf3}} 22.\textit{\texttt{yb1}} \textit{\texttt{exf2}}+ 23.\textit{\texttt{wf2}} \textit{\texttt{ba5}} 24.\textit{\texttt{dd5}} \textit{\texttt{xa1}}! 25.\textit{\texttt{xa8}} \textit{\texttt{xc3}}!!
The threat of ...\$d4 means that Black is assured of winning the a8-bishop. This final position is hard for White to defend.

18...\$a5 19.\$a2 \$c6 20.d4?
White would have been better off waiting and hoping for the best.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
 & & & & & & & & \\
 & & & & & & & & \\
 & & & & & & & & \\
 & & & & & & & & \\
 & & & & & & & & \\
 & & & & & & & & \\
 & & & & & & & & \\
 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

20...\$c4!
Black was now completely in control, and he eventually converted his advantage into a full point in Timofeev – Kasparov, Moscow 2004.

**Conclusion**

The system 1.e4 c5 2.\$f3 d6 3.\$c4 appears at first sight to be a somewhat naive approach from White, but I have found it to be a useful weapon in my armoury. Although it may not lead to a theoretical advantage, there is no obvious way for Black to simplify the game, and it generally leads to a complex middlegame.

We have seen throughout the chapter that transpositions abound, and I would like to draw attention to the fact that White may choose his move order so as to allow or avoid certain lines. For example, after the further moves 3...\$f6 4.d3 \$c6, White is advised to opt for 5.c3 only if he is willing to play the standard isolated queen's pawn position that arises in line B21) 5...d5; on the other hand, he may prefer 5.0–0, provided he is happy to face B11) 5...\$g4.
# 2.\( \text{d}f3 \text{ d}6 3.\text{c}3 \text{ g}f6 4.\text{h}3 \) – ...\( \text{g}6\)-lines

## Variation Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.\text{e}4 \text{c}5 2.\text{d}f3 \text{d}6 3.\text{c}3 \text{g}f6 4.\text{h}3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4...( \text{g}6 5.\text{&amp;}d3 \text{g}7 )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### A) 6.0–0 0–0
- A1) 7.\( \text{\&}c2 \text{e}5 8.\text{d}4 \text{exd}4 9.\text{cxd}4 
  - A11) 9...\( \text{\&}c6 \)
  - A111) 10.\text{d}xc5
  - A112) 10.\text{d}5 \text{\&}b4 11.\text{\&}c3 \text{\&}xc2 12.\text{\&}xc2 \text{a}6 13.\text{a}4
    - A1121) 13...\text{\&}b8
    - A1122) 13...\text{\&}h5
  - A12) 9...\text{cxd}4
- A2) 7.\text{\&}e1
  - A21) 7...\text{\&}c6
  - A22) 7...\text{e}5

### B) 6.\text{\&}c2 0–0 7.0–0 \text{\&}c6
- B1) 8.\text{d}3
- B2) 8.\text{\&}e1
  - B21) 8...\text{\&}d7?!?
  - B22) 8...\text{b}6?!?
  - B23) 8...\text{b}5
  - B24) 8...e5
- B3) 8.\text{d}4
  - B31) 8...\text{cxd}4 9.\text{cxd}4
    - B311) 9...\text{e}5 10.\text{d}5!
      - B3111) 10...\text{\&}b4
      - B3112) 10...\text{\&}e7
    - B312) 9...\text{d}5?!?
  - B32) 8...\text{d}5?!?
  - B33) 8...e5
    - B331) 9.\text{\&}e1 \text{exd}4 10.\text{cxd}4 \text{\&}xd4 11.\text{\&}xd4
      - B3311) 11...\text{\&}xd4
      - B3312) 11...\text{d}5
    - B332) 9.\text{d}xc5
The aim of the present line, which is considerably less common than 3.d4, is to build up a central pawn duo on d4 and e4. White intends to play d2-d4 and recapture with cxd4 in the case of the natural swap ...c5xd4, as in the Alapin variation (1.e4 c5 2.c3). There is however a significant difference because Black has already committed himself with 2...d7-d6. Thus, unlike in the Alapin, the reply ...d5 is now less appropriate.

3...d6

The logical reply on which we will concentrate all our attention. After any other answer White would achieve his goal, gain a central supremacy and a lasting edge.

4.h3

By playing 4.h3 White obviously excludes the option of ...c8-g4. This bishop move, pinning the f3-knight, would exert indirect pressure on d4, so White’s fourth move can be considered as part of his central strategy. One may note that 4.d4 was, for the time being, bad because e6 was hanging. However, now 4...dxe4?? drops a piece to the obvious 5.dxe4.

So instead we will have a look at 4...g6 in this chapter, 4...c6 in the next chapter, and finally “Other black replies” in Chapter 9.

Naturally, there are various transpositional possibilities between the chapters. For example, many of the games in this chapter (which of course on ...g7-g6 set-ups) actually started with the move order 4...c6 quickly followed by ...g7-g6.

4...g6

5.d3

White has also experimented with the other bishop’s moves, but without much success.

5...b5? b7

5...b5?? keeps a more complicated game: 6.e2 a6 7.b4 c7 8.0-0 c4 Guk – Mitenkov, Moscow 1994, with mutual chances.

6.xd7† xd7 7.e2

7.d3 gives up the idea of building a central pawn duo and therefore is not critical. That said, even after 7.e2 White should not achieve his opening aim.

7...c6?

This concrete means of preventing d2-d4 looks more to the point than 7...g7?? 8.d4 as in Brigljevic – Franic, Sisak 1998. Even though Black is relieved to have swapped the light-squared bishops, as now he has no real space problems, White enjoys a small but lasting edge.
196

Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

8.d3 c4 9.\( \text{\textit{c}}d2 \)

9.dxc4!? \( \text{\textit{w}}e4 \) 10.\( \text{\textit{e}}3 \) looks about equal too, since White's doubled pawns do not represent a serious handicap.

9...\( \text{\textit{x}}d3 \) \( \text{\textit{w}}d7-\)


5.\( \text{\textit{a}}4?! \)

Indirectly covering e4, because of the trick \( \text{\textit{a}}4\uparrow \) followed by \( \text{\textit{x}}f7\uparrow \). However, as we will see later on, exchanging e4 for f7 may not be such a smart idea, despite Black losing the right to castle.

5...\( \text{\textit{g}}7 \) 6.\( \text{\textit{w}}e2 \)

After 6.0-0 Black can play: 6...\( \text{\textit{x}}e4?! \) 7.\( \text{\textit{a}}4\uparrow \) \( \text{\textit{c}}6 \) 8.\( \text{\textit{x}}f7\uparrow \) \( \text{\textit{x}}f7 \) 9.\( \text{\textit{w}}e4 \) \( \text{\textit{a}}6 \)

Black first takes some measures against \( \text{\textit{g}}5\uparrow \) and will then continue...\( \text{\textit{d}}6-\text{\textit{d}}5 \) or...\( \text{\textit{c}}8-\text{\textit{f}}5 \).

With the pair of bishops and an extra central pawn he is at least not worse.

6...\( \text{\textit{c}}c6 \) 7.0-0 0-0

7...\( \text{\textit{e}}5?! \)

8.d4

Wohl – Deubelbeiss, Biel 2005, and now:

8...\( \text{\textit{x}}d4 \) 9.\( \text{\textit{x}}d4 \) \( \text{\textit{d}}5 \) 10.\( \text{\textit{x}}d5 \) \( \text{\textit{x}}d5 \)

This would have been quite decent for Black.

5...\( \text{\textit{g}}7 \)

The line now divides into A) 6.0-0 and B) 6.\( \text{\textit{c}}2 \). Once again transpositional possibilities abound.

A) 6.0-0 0-0

The inclusion of these two moves should not change much (compared to line B) if White wants to opt for \( \text{\textit{d}}3-\text{\textit{c}}2 \) anyway. Another option is the less frequently seen set-up \( \text{\textit{e}}1-\text{\textit{f}}1 \), which is likely to transpose to an Old Indian Defence with reversed colours. In my opinion White has fewer chances of extracting an opening edge that way, but with all the pieces still on the board the game will certainly remain complicated. The options now are A1) 7.\( \text{\textit{c}}2 \) and A2) 7.\( \text{\textit{e}}1 \).

A1) 7.\( \text{\textit{c}}2 \) \( \text{\textit{c}}5 \) 8.d4 \( \text{\textit{x}}d4 \)

Mazé – Vuilleumier, Geneva 2007, continued:

8...\( \text{\textit{w}}e7?! \) 9.\( \text{\textit{d}}xe5 \) \( \text{\textit{d}}xe5 \) 10.\( \text{\textit{a}}4 \) \( \text{\textit{d}}8 \) 11.\( \text{\textit{e}}2 \) \( \text{\textit{b}}6 \)

12.\( \text{\textit{d}}a3\uparrow \) This kind of pawn structure, though
rather solid for Black, should not guarantee him parity in my view. Indeed, White can hope later on to use the d5-outpost for his pieces. In addition the g7-bishop is likely to remain bad for a while.

9.cxd4
The line now splits between A11) 9...\(\text{\texttt{Q}}\)e6 and A12) 9...\(\text{\texttt{Q}}\)xd4.

A11) 9...\(\text{\texttt{Q}}\)e6

White has a choice between exchanging with A111) 10.dxc5 and seizing ground with A112) 10.d5. The latter is the more promising for White in my opinion, even though Black gets a fairly decent Benoni-like position.

A111) 10.dxc5 dxc5 11.\(\text{\texttt{Q}}\)c3 \(\text{\texttt{Q}}\)e6

12.\(\text{\texttt{Q}}\)e3
The text move is the most natural, though 12.\(\text{\texttt{Q}}\)g5, trying to induce ...h7-h6 and subsequently gain a tempo with \(\text{\texttt{W}}\)c1, also has merit.

12.\(\text{\texttt{W}}\)xd8 \(\text{\texttt{W}}\)xd8 13.\(\text{\texttt{Q}}\)g5 h6 14.\(\text{\texttt{Q}}\)e3 \(\text{\texttt{Q}}\)d4
Ghaem Maghami – Le Quang, Beijing 2008, is an equal endgame.

After 12.\(\text{\texttt{Q}}\)e3 both 12...\(\text{\texttt{Q}}\)a5 from Tischbiere – Ki. Georgiev, Nordhausen 1987, and 12...b6 13.\(\text{\texttt{W}}\)c1 \(\text{\texttt{Q}}\)b4 14.\(\text{\texttt{Q}}\)b1 \(\frac{1}{2}\)-\(\frac{1}{2}\) Sax – Balogh, Nagykanizsa 2008, offer mutual chances.

A112) 10.d5 \(\text{\texttt{Q}}\)b4 11.\(\text{\texttt{Q}}\)c3 \(\text{\texttt{Q}}\)xc2
12.\(\text{\texttt{W}}\)xc2 a6

12...\(\text{\texttt{Q}}\)e8!? is also plausible; it is one of the charms of such anti-Sicilian sidelines that logical moves can be relatively unexplored.

13.a4
Preventing the thematic push ...b7-b5. At this juncture Black has mainly tried A1121) 13...\(\text{\texttt{Q}}\)b8 or A1122) 13...\(\text{\texttt{Q}}\)h5. I will offer a few examples of these two moves:

A1121) 13...\(\text{\texttt{Q}}\)b8
14.a5
After 14...g5 Sofieva – Wang Pin, Subotica 1991, continued with the cautious 14...c7, but the more active 14...b5! looks perfectly valid, as suggested by the following (non-forcing) line: 15.axb5 axb5 16.e5 dxe5 17.Qxe5 Qf5 18.Qd1 Qd6 19.Qc6 b4! 20.Qf3 Qxc3 21.Qf4 Qxf4!! 22.Qxf4 Qxb2 23.Qd1 Qb7 Black is better.

14...b5 15.axb6 Qxb6
Westerinen – Elness, Manhems 1998. In typical Benoni-fashion Black will counterbalance his worse pawn structure by dynamic play along the b- and e-files.

A1122) 13...Qh5
Black intends ...f7-f5, from which he refrains on his next move because of the advance e4-e5.

14.Qe1 Qe8 15.Qg5

15...f6
Perhaps Black should try 15...Qc7, which was unclear in Astrom – Hellers, Stockholm 1990.

If 15...Qf6 White can either try 16.Qxf6 Qxf6 17.e5 dxe5 18.Qe4 or withdraw with 16.Qe3, contemplating the standard transfer of his f3-knight to c4.

16.Qe3
Or 16.Qd2? f5 17.Qb3 as in Howell – Paneo Munoz, La Massana 2008. I fancy White's chances, in conjunction with Qg5-e6, but that assessment may well be a matter of taste.

16.f5 17.exf5 Qxf5 18.Qd2
Barlov – Vera, Sochi 1985, was agreed drawn and indeed it is approximately equal.

A12) 9...cx4 10.Qxd4

10.Qc6
The text move is fine for Black and he also has other good equalizing options:

10...d5 11.e5 (a bit more bellicose than 11.exd5 Qxd5= as in Lukov – A. Sokolov, Monte Carlo 1999) 11...Qe4 12.Qf4 Qe8 (12...Qa6?! Seul – Hausner, Bundesliga 1993, proved worse: 13.Qc3 Qxc3 14.bxc3 Qc5 15.Qd2 Qe6 16.Qg3 Qxd4 17.Qxd4 Qe6 18.Qab1 b6 19.Qf4 Qd7 20.Qd3) 13.Qxe4

10...Qe8?! also looks natural and good.

11.Qxc6
11...\texttt{\textit{d5=}} was Seppeur - Ribli, Bundesliga 1986.

11...\texttt{\textit{bxc6 12.\texttt{\textit{d5}}}}
The key move for Black to equalize the game. Instead 12...\texttt{\textit{e8 13.\texttt{\textit{f3}}}} Marjanovic - Kudrin, Titograd 1984, was perhaps a tiny bit better for White.

13.\texttt{\textit{g5}}
Other attempts at gaining an edge have also proved unsuccessful. For instance, 13.e5?! \texttt{\textit{e8 14.f4 f6#}} Hachatrian - Gassanov, Batumi 2001, or 13.\texttt{\textit{f3 a5 14.bcl \texttt{\textit{e6=}}}} Bauer - Saric, Cannes 2008.

13...\texttt{\textit{h6 14.\texttt{\textit{xf6}} \texttt{\textit{xf6}}}}
Black may prefer 14...\texttt{\textit{xf6}} in order to try to keep winning chances: 15.exd5 \texttt{\textit{xd8 16.\texttt{\textit{b3}}} (16.\texttt{\textit{e4?!}}) 16...\texttt{\textit{b7 17.d6 c5 18.\texttt{\textit{e1}} \texttt{\textit{xd6}}} In Ujhazi - Ristic, Tivat 1995, all three bishops were good but the knight, ready to jump to e4, isn’t much worse. After 19.\texttt{\textit{e2}} Black objectively has nothing to fear but probably no tangible edge either.


A2) 7.\texttt{\textit{e1}}
Now there is a split between A21) 7...\texttt{\textit{c6}} and A22) 7...\texttt{\textit{e5}}.

A21) 7...\texttt{\textit{c6}} 8.\texttt{\textit{f1}}

Except for 8...\texttt{\textit{e5}}, which is examined under 7...\texttt{\textit{e5}}, Black has also tried 8...\texttt{\textit{b6}} and 8...\texttt{\textit{d7}}. In both cases I’d rate White's chances a little higher, though the position remains quite rich.

8...\texttt{\textit{b6 9.d4 cxd4 10.cxd4 d5 11.e5 \texttt{\textit{e4}} 12.\texttt{\textit{c3}} \texttt{\textit{xc3}} 13.bxc3 \texttt{\textit{a5}}} was Pinheiro - Yudasin, Dos Hermanas 1998. Black has an obvious target on c3 but his opponent’s attacking possibilities on the kingside should not be underestimated.

8...\texttt{\textit{d7 9.d4 cxd4 10.cxd4 d5}}
Or else White would rule out this possibility with \texttt{\textit{c3}} and consolidate his central superiority.

11.c5 \texttt{\textit{c4 12.\texttt{\textit{bd2 a5 13.b3?!}} Having in mind ideas such as \texttt{\textit{h4}} and then \texttt{f2-f3}, though it isn’t easy to deprive Black of the possibility of \texttt{...g3} then. 13...\texttt{\textit{a5 14.a4 f6 15.exf6 \texttt{\textit{xf6}} 16.\texttt{\textit{h6 a7}}} 17.\texttt{\textit{e1}} Magana - Adly, Windhoek 2007.

A22) 7...\texttt{\textit{e5}} 8.\texttt{\textit{f1}} \texttt{\textit{c6}} 9.d3
Unfortunately White isn’t ready for: 9.d4?! \texttt{\textit{cxd4 10.cxd4 exd4 11.\texttt{\textit{xd4}} \texttt{\textit{xd4}}} (or else
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

11...\(\text{\texttt{e}}\)\texttt{e}8\!? 12.\(\text{\texttt{c}}\)\texttt{c}6 \bxc6 13.\(\text{\texttt{d}}\)\texttt{c}3 \texttt{d}5 14.\texttt{e}xd5 \(\text{\texttt{f}}\)\texttt{x}e1 15.\texttt{f}\texttt{x}e1 \(\text{\texttt{f}}\)\texttt{x}d5 ½–½ Wang Wen Hao – Genov, Antwerp 1992) 12.\(\text{\texttt{f}}\)\texttt{x}d4 \texttt{e}e8 13.\(\text{\texttt{g}}\)\texttt{d}3 \texttt{d}5 14.\(\text{\texttt{f}}\)\texttt{c}3 (if 14.e5 then 14...\texttt{d}e4) 14...\(\text{\texttt{f}}\)\texttt{f}5 Pinheiro – Tyomkin, Dos Hermanas 2000. In both games Black was certainly okay and perhaps even slightly better.

B) 6.\(\text{\texttt{f}}\)\texttt{c}2

![Chess Diagram]

6...0–0

The text is by far the most natural but not the only move.

6...\texttt{b}6 7.0–0 \texttt{b}7 8.\texttt{e}e1± and next 9.d2–d4.

6...\texttt{e}5

We shall see more of this idea in the note to the next move; White should be wary of playing in the centre while his king is still on e1.

7.d4 exd4 8.cx\texttt{d}4 0–0

![Chess Diagram]

9.\(\text{\texttt{c}}\)\texttt{c}3!!

The better 9.0–0 transposes to lines treated under 6.0–0 d5 7.\(\text{\texttt{c}}\)\texttt{c}2 e5.

9...\(\text{\texttt{c}}\)\texttt{c}6 10.d5?! 10.dxc5 dxc5 11.\texttt{f}\texttt{x}d8 \texttt{f}\texttt{x}d8 12.\(\text{\texttt{c}}\)\texttt{c}3= would have limited the damage.

9...d5

Black can also delay this natural advance and prepare ...\texttt{e}6. For example: 9...\texttt{h}6 10.a3 \texttt{d}5 (on 10...\texttt{a}5 White would reply 11.a4 and consider himself satisfied with the weakening of the b5-square) 11.\texttt{b}d2 \texttt{e}6 (11...\texttt{d}4??) 12.b4 \texttt{c}xb4 13.ax\texttt{b}4 a6 We have reached an unclear middlegame.

10.ex\texttt{d}5

10.\(\text{\texttt{b}}\)\texttt{d}2?! keeps things fluid, but is it for the better?

10...\texttt{d}xd5 11.\(\text{\texttt{f}}\)\texttt{b}d2 \texttt{e}8 12.a4 \texttt{b}6 13.\(\text{\texttt{c}}\)\texttt{c}4 \texttt{h}6 14.\texttt{f}\texttt{h}3 \texttt{h}8

This was Panbukchian – Dragiev, Sofia 2003. White can now play 15.g3 and get a reversed King's Indian. In comparison with a standard position, his pawn stands on h3 rather than h2, but more importantly his light-squared bishop is quite passive on f1 (instead of g2).

9...d5

Black can also delay this natural advance and prepare ...\texttt{e}6. For example: 9...\texttt{h}6 10.a3 \texttt{d}5 (on 10...\texttt{a}5 White would reply 11.a4 and consider himself satisfied with the weakening of the b5-square) 11.\texttt{b}d2 \texttt{e}6 (11...\texttt{d}4??) 12.b4 \texttt{c}xb4 13.ax\texttt{b}4 a6 We have reached an unclear middlegame.

10.ex\texttt{d}5

10.\(\text{\texttt{b}}\)\texttt{d}2?! keeps things fluid, but is it for the better?

10...\texttt{d}xd5 11.\(\text{\texttt{f}}\)\texttt{b}d2 \texttt{e}8 12.a4 \texttt{b}6 13.\(\text{\texttt{c}}\)\texttt{c}4 \texttt{h}6 14.\texttt{f}\texttt{h}3 \texttt{h}8

This was Panbukchian – Dragiev, Sofia 2003. White can now play 15.g3 and get a reversed King's Indian. In comparison with a standard position, his pawn stands on h3 rather than h2, but more importantly his light-squared bishop is quite passive on f1 (instead of g2).
10...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}4}}!} 11.0-0
11...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}d}4}}? was wrong due to: 11...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}xd}4}}
12.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{w}xd}4}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}e}4}!!}}}
11...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}e}8}}}
12.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}c}3}}}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}x}c}2}} 13.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{w}xc}2}} b5!

In Sebag - T. Kosintseva, Istanbul 2003, Black had taken over the initiative.

7.0-0

Removing the king from the centre before playing d2-d4 avoids a later ... \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}4}!!}} trick. For example, one direct equalizing line is:

7.d4 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}xd}4}} 8.cxd4 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}c}6}} 9.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}c}3}}

Of course White could castle here.

9...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}5}!!}

The atypical 9...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}b}8}?! 10.0-0 b5 as in Garcia Blanco -- Miton, El Sauzal 2006, is also worthy of attention.

10.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}c}3}}

10.d5!! \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}d}4}!!} is the same trick as in Sebag -- T. Kosintseva above.

10.0-0 allows levelling simplifications:

10...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}xd}4}} 11.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}xd}4}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}e}4}}} 12.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}xc}6}}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}c}3}}}
13.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}xd}8}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}xd}8}}} 14.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}xf}7}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}xb}2}} 15.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}xc6}}
(15.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}h}6}!!} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{h}h}8}}) 15...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}c}4} 16.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}b}3}! (instead of 16.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}xc}4}? \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}a}x}a1}} 17.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{a}a}a}a3} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{g}g}7}}} 18.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}b}b3} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}c}6}}
19.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}e}e}1 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}f}f}7} 20.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}f}f}f8} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}f}f}f8}!!} Gallego Martinez -- A. Sokolov, Mulhouse 1997) 16...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}a}a1}}
17.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}d}xe}4}+ \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{g}g}7}} 18.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}e}e}1 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}d}d} 19.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}c}c7}+ \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}f}f6}
20.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}x}xh7}

Now the most popular plan is of course to occupy the centre with d2-d4, but first we shall look at B1) 8.d3 and then in B2) 8.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}e}1} we consider lines where White delays or even omits d2-d4. Finally we get to the main line of B3) 8.d4.

B1) 8.d3

This "shy" approach engages a protracted battle, in comparison with the more incisive 8.d4. White is preparing the b2-b4 push, or perhaps delaying the d4 one, depending on the circumstances. This may seem a bit passive, but on the other hand now Black cannot force simplifications.

Note that 8.a3?! is inaccurate due to 8...c4! and then after 9.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}e}2} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{a}a}5} White was irritated in Beshukov -- Chatalbashev, Anapa 1991, because the inevitable d2-d3 was going to leave him with an unfavourable pawn structure after ...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}xd}3}.
8...e5
The text move is the most consistent, but other ideas have also been tested:

8...d5 9.e5 \( \text{\#e}8 \) 10.d4+ Kosten – Bang, Naestved 1988.

8...b5 9.e1 a5 10.\( \text{\#d}2 \) \( \text{\#d}7 \) 11.\( \text{\#f}1 \) b4 12.d4 bxc3 13.bxc3 cxd4 14.cxd4 \( \text{\#a}6 \) Gonzalez – Leyva, Las Tunas 1996. In this complex middlegame White will try his luck with a kingside assault while his opponent seeks counterplay on the other wing.

9.a3 a5
This move weakens the b5-square and allows White to establish a knight on c4 for a while. Even so, it looks more appropriate than:

9...d5?!
Indeed, after the logical

10.b4

White's prospects are better in either the middlegame or in the ending resulting from 10...dxe4 11.dxe4 \( \text{\#xd}1 \) 12.\( \text{\#xd}1 \). The following two illustrative examples are drawn from GM Friso Nijboer's prolific (and highly successful) experience of the 4.d3 system:

a) 10...\( \text{\#xb}4 \) 11.\( \text{\#xb}4 \) d4 12.b5 \( \text{\#e}7 \) 13.\( \text{\#xe}5 \) \( \text{\#xe}4 \) 14.\( \text{\#xf}7 \) \( \text{\#xf}7 \) 15.\( \text{\#b}3 \) \( \text{\#e}8 \) 16.dxe4 dxc3 17.\( \text{\#e}2 \). Compared to the position half a dozen of moves ago, the picture has radically changed: Black's only pride, the c3-pawn, is condemned, whereas the black king is unlikely to survive for long in the centre. 17...d7 18.\( \text{\#d}1 \) c7 19.\( \text{\#a}3 \) d8 20.\( \text{\#g}5 \) b6 21.\( \text{\#c}4 \) \( \text{\#xb}5 \) 22.\( \text{\#xd}8 \uparrow \) \( \text{\#xd}8 \) 23.\( \text{\#d}1 \) \( \text{\#d}4 \) 24.\( \text{\#e}3 \) \( \text{\#c}6 \) 25.e5 \( \text{\#xc}4 \) 26.\( \text{\#xc}4 \) \( \text{\#f}5 \) 27.\( \text{\#b}5 \) 1–0 Nijboer – Burg, Groningen 2007.

b) 10...dxe4 11.dxe4 \( \text{\#e}6 \) 12.\( \text{\#e}3 \) \( \text{\#c}4 \) 13.\( \text{\#e}1 \) \( \text{\#xd}1 \) 14.\( \text{\#xd}1 \) \( \text{\#e}2 \) 15.\( \text{\#d}2 \) \( \text{\#xf}3 \) 16.\( \text{\#f}3 \) Black's position is a nightmare: he is facing two mighty bishops while his own cannot get into play. White's shattered pawn structure is irrelevant; in fact, the f3-pawn is highly useful in covering e4. 16...c4 17.a4 \( \text{\#e}8 \) 18.\( \text{\#a}3 \) \( \text{\#f}8 \) 19.a5 Planning \( \text{\#a}4-b5 \), or else \( \text{\#b}1-a2 \) if Black answers with ...\( \text{\#e}7-a6 \). The coming sacrifice misses the mark, but the situation was hopeless for Black anyway. 19...\( \text{\#xb}4 \) 20.\( \text{\#xb}4 \) \( \text{\#xb}4 \) 21.\( \text{\#dd}1 \) \( \text{\#xa}5 \) 22.\( \text{\#b}5 \) b6 23.\( \text{\#a}4 \) c6 24.\( \text{\#d}6 \) \( \text{\#c}6 \) 25.\( \text{\#xd}6 \) \( \text{\#e}7 \) 26.\( \text{\#xe}4 \) \( \text{\#f}8 \) 27.\( \text{\#c}7 \) 1–0 Nijboer – Lapshun, Barcelona 2007.

10.a4
Instead Degraeve – Relange, Marseille 2001, continued: 10.\( \text{\#e}3 \) \( \text{\#e}8 \) 11.\( \text{\#bd}2 \) \( \text{\#d}6 \) 12.d4 \( \text{\#xd}4 \) 13.cxd4 \( \text{\#b}7 \). The position is similar to 8.e1 e5 9.d3 h6 etc. Black has saved a tempo in not needing to play ...h7-h6, but the inclusion of a2-a3 and ...\( \text{\#e}7-a5 \) favours White. 14.\( \text{\#e}1 \) d5 15.dxe5 dxe4 16.\( \text{\#g}5 \) \( \text{\#d}4 \) 17.\( \text{\#a}4 \) b5 18.\( \text{\#c}4 \) \( \text{\#xa}4 \) 19.\( \text{\#xd}4 \) \( \text{\#d}5 \) 20.\( \text{\#d}6 \) \( \text{\#c}7 \) 21.\( \text{\#xb}7 \) \( \text{\#xb}7 \) 22.\( \text{\#xe}4 \) \( \text{\#xe}4 \) 23.\( \text{\#xg}7 \) \( \text{\#xd}1 \) 24.\( \text{\#xd}1 \) \( \text{\#xg}7 \) 25.\( \text{\#xe}4 \) White should either win or draw.

10...d5 11.\( \text{\#a}3 \) h6 12.\( \text{\#xd}5 \) \( \text{\#xd}5 \) 13.\( \text{\#e}1 \) \( \text{\#f}5 \)
This interesting move quickly hits d3. Previously played was 13...\( \text{\#c}6 \) 14.\( \text{\#b}3 \) \( \text{\#e}8 \) 15.\( \text{\#c}4 \) c7 16.\( \text{\#b}2 \), Nijboer – Henrichs, Vlissingen 2006.

14.\( \text{\#b}3 \) d4
Chapter 7 – 2.d3 d6 3.c3 e6 4.h3 – ...g6-lines

15...exf4 exf4 16.c4 g5 17.b3 d7

Now in Vysochin – Korbut, St Petersburg 2007, instead of 18.b5?? underestimating the danger of 18...hxg3, White should have preferred the more cautious:

18.b2

With a tense unclear middlegame.

B2) 8.e1

With this useful rook move White keeps flexible regarding his d-pawn, but offers his opponent another tempo to prepare for an eventual b2-b4. Several replies deserve attention now: B21) 8...d7??, B22) 8...b6??, B23) 8...b5 and B24) 8...e5.


B21) 8...d7??

9.d3


9...d5

If 9...b5 then 10.a3.

10.a5

Perhaps 10.h2, having in mind 10...d5 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.exd5 Bxd5 13.e4 b6 14.g5 and White should be able to display some activity.

10...dxe5 11.a3 a5 12.a4 b6 13.a3 Bb8 13...Bb5 may be more precise, intending 13...a6 14.d5 Bd7 15.a3 e6 16.c4.
13...a6 14. We2 Aa7
Cabrilo – Diaz, Vrnjacka Banja 1988. White can play b5 or c4 at any moment, but it is unclear whether this would bring him a real edge.

B22) 8...b6?

9.d3
Or 9.a3?! b7 10.d4 cxd4 11.cxd4 Ac8 12.d5 (otherwise Black would play ...d6-d5 himself) 12...b4 13.a1 Ad7 (13...Ad7??) 14.b5 a6 15.b4 Ad5 and Chiburdanidze – A. Sokolov, Bilbao 1987, had reached a balanced position.

The principled 9.d4 is not bad but is unlikely to gain an edge: 9...cxd4 10.cxd4 b4 11.b3 a6 12.e5 (12.g5??) 12...dxe5 13.dxe5?! (13.dxe5 is equal) 13...Ad1 14.ad1 Ac4 Yakishik – Abashev, Novosibirsk 2003, Black is better in this ending. Indeed, his whole army is mobilized, c5 needs protection, and White must watch for knight sallies to d3 and/or c5.

Lastly, 9.a3?! is again misguided in view of 9...c4.

9...e5
9...b7 10.a3 e5 11.b4 Cabrilo – Milovanovic, Nis 1995, would be similar. The bishop looks better placed at e6, but now Black has to spend a tempo on ...h7-h6.

10.a3 h6 11.b4 Aa6

In Siepert – Mchedlishvili, Internet 2004, White had achieved his aim, but his opponent’s position is hard to crack; the chances are about level.

B23) 8...b5 9.d4 cxd4 10.cxd4 Aa6

11.Ac3
White stopped the b-pawn in Zvjaginsev – Amonatov, Krasnoyarsk 2007, which continued 11.a3 c5 12.Ac3 a6 13.Ae3 cxd4 14.Axd4. At this point a draw was agreed. A plausible follow-up would have been 14.Ae5
15.b3 \textit{We}c7 16.\textit{W}d2 \textit{E}ac8 17.\textit{W}de2 \textit{E}fd8, when Black is ready for ...d6-d5 and has no problems.

11...b4 12.\textit{W}e2 \textit{E}c8 13.\textit{W}g3

Gonzalez – Almeida Saenz, Las Vegas 2006. I would rather be White here, but objectively the game should be roughly level.

\textbf{B24) 8...e5 9.d3}  

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

At this crossroads Black again has many options (although for 9.d4 see 8.d4 in line B3 below). Let’s browse through them:

9...\textit{E}e8 10.\textit{W}e3 b6 11.\textit{W}bd2 d5 12.\textit{W}g5 \textit{G}ipslis – I. Novikov, Naberezhnye Chelny 1988, with mutual chances.

9...\textit{E}h5 10.\textit{W}e3 b6 11.\textit{W}bd2 \textit{E}d7 12.d4 Cabrilo – Cserna, Albena 1984, led to massive simplifications that petered out to a merely symbolic white plus in the endgame: 12...\textit{E}xd4 13.\textit{W}xd4 \textit{E}xd4 14.\textit{W}xd4 \textit{E}xd4 15.\textit{W}xd4 \textit{E}xd4 16.\textit{W}xd4 \textit{W}b6 17.\textit{W}xb6 \textit{W}xb6 =\textit{E}

11.b4 b6 12.\textit{W}bd2 \textit{E}h5 13.\textit{W}b3 \textit{E}f4 14.\textit{W}f1±


9...\textit{E}e8 10.a3 \textit{E}c7 11.b4 b6 12.\textit{W}bd2 \textit{E}h8 13.\textit{W}b1 \textit{E}e6 14.\textit{W}b3= \textit{Shabalov} – \textit{Nakamura}, Las Vegas 2007, with a complex game ahead that is full of options for both sides.

9...\textit{E}h5 10.\textit{W}bd2 \textit{E}f4 11.a4 f5?! Tempting but probably too ambitious. 12.\textit{W}f6 13.\textit{W}xf4 exf4 14.\textit{W}b3 \textit{E}h8 15.e5 dxe5 16.\textit{W}xe5 \textit{Kurm}ann – \textit{Figura}, Berlin 2009, with a pleasant edge for White.

9...d5 10.\textit{W}bd2

10.\textit{W}a3?! can also be considered. Or 10.\textit{W}g5 dxe4 11.dxe4 \textit{E}c7 12.\textit{W}f6 \textit{W}xf6 13.\textit{W}bd2 \textit{E}e6 14.\textit{W}b3 \textit{E}e8 15.\textit{W}xe6 \textit{E}xe6 16.\textit{W}c4= was Gonzalez – Steigman, Washington 2006. White is angling for massive exchanges and a risk-free endgame with good knight vs. bad bishop. If this dream scenario doesn’t come true, then he can at least hope to profit from the fine outpost at d5 in the coming middlegame.

10...\textit{E}e8  

10...\textit{E}e6 11.\textit{W}e3 \textit{E}d7 12.d4 Cabrilo – Cserna, Albena 1984, led to massive simplifications that petered out to a merely symbolic...
Martin del Campo – Ocampo Vargas, Mexico 1996. Now instead of 15...c4?! I am fonder of:

15...b3

This should yield White a slight plus.

B3) 8.d4

Now we have a major branching point. The main lines are B31) 8...cxd4, B32) 8...d5?? and B33) 8...e5. But first there are a couple of minor options to consider:

8...b6 can be met by either 9.a3± as in Szitkey – Tischbierek, Berlin 1987, or 9.d5± Benjamin – Fernando, Internet 2000. In the latter case White has an improved version of 8.d5, as White's 0–0 is more useful than ...b7-b6.

8...d7?!! looks a bit too sophisticated, even though proving an edge for White is not so simple. 9.d5 a5 10.a4 a6 11.a2 b8=∞

Solak – Brankovic, Herceg Novi 2000. Making a useful move before the b2-b4 push becomes a real threat. Instead, inaccurate was 11...c4?!, for example: 12.e3 c5 13.b5 d7 14.e2 b5 15.exb5 axb5 16.a1 In Lukov – Relange, Montpellier 1997, White had a clear advantage.

9...b6 10.c3± was Martinovic – Marjanovic, Bela Crkva 1983.


B31) 8...cxd4 9.cxd4

White has succeeded in establishing his central pawn duo, so Black has to react. We will consider mainly B311) 9...e5 and B312) 9...d5 but first some minor alternatives.


10...d5?? is of course a gross blunder due to 11.d5 e5 12.dxc6± Banas – Stohl, Prague 1986.


11...dxe4? is of course a gross blunder due to 11.d5 e5 12.dxc6± Banas – Stohl, Prague 1986.


This is the same position as after 9...d5 10.e5 dxe4 11.dxc6, but with the inclusion of ...dxe4 and ...b3. This should be an improved version for White, since with d5 hanging, a later a2-a3 will force the exchange of knights.

12...b6

Only this move can attempt to justify Black's preceding play.
Chapter 7 – 2.\( \text{Qf3} \) \( \text{d6} \) 3.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{Qf6} \) 4.\( \text{h3} \) – ...\( \text{g6} \)-lines

12...\( \text{Qf5} \)! \(13.\text{Qe2} \) \( \text{f6} \) 14.\( \text{a3} \) \( \text{Qc6} \) 15.\( \text{Qf4} \)

\( \text{fxe5} \) (15...\( \text{e6} \) 16.\( \text{g4} \) wins a piece for only two pawns, even though White should then be careful about his vulnerable king) 16.\( \text{dxe5} \) \( \text{Qc5} \) 17.\( \text{Qxd5} \) \( \text{Qxd5} \) 18.\( \text{Qxd5} \) \( e6 \)

In Rodriguez Cespedes – Garcia Martinez, Cienfuegos 1985, the easiest way was 19.\( \text{Qxc6} \) \( \text{bxc6} \) 20.\( \text{Qe3} \) \( \text{Qd3} \) 21.\( \text{Qxd3} \) \( \text{Qxd3} \)

22.\( \text{Qfe1} \) with a solid plus owing to the safe extra pawn.

12...\( \text{Qxc3}?! \) doesn't appear consistent. White then has a broad choice between: 13.\( \text{bxc3} \) \( \text{Qc6} \) 14.\( \text{Be1} \) (14.\( \text{Qh2} \)!!, 14.\( \text{f4} \) and 14.\( \text{g5} \) have all been played with some success, but the rook move is my personal preference.)

14...\( \text{Qa5} \) 15.\( \text{Qc2} \) \( \text{d7} \) (15...\( \text{Qc7} \) 16.\( \text{Qg5} \) \( \text{e8} \) 17.\( \text{Qd2} \) Zvjaginsev – Kunin, Moscow 2008) 16.\( \text{Qg5} \) \( \text{e8} \) 17.\( \text{e6} \) \( \text{Qxe6} \) 18.\( \text{Qxe6} \) \( \text{fxe6} \) 19.\( \text{Qxe6} \) \( \text{Qd6} \) 20.\( \text{Qxf8} \) \( \text{Qxf8} \) \( \text{f4} \) – Baramidze, Heraklio 2004.

13.\( \text{Be1} \) \( \text{Qb7} \)

Now in Al. Karpov – Shomoev, Khanty-Mansiysk 2007, instead of 14.\( \text{Qe2} \)!! White should have played:

14.\( \text{Qg5} \)z

B311) 9...\( \text{e5} \) 10.\( \text{d5} \)!

I believe seizing ground is White's best hope of getting an opening advantage. In the current position, which is akin to a King's Indian Defence, his opponent now has to make up his mind between B3111) 10...\( \text{b4} \) and B3112) 10...\( \text{e7} \).

Instead 10.\( \text{dxe5} \)!! \( \text{dxe5} \) 11.\( \text{Qc3} \) \( \text{Qe6} \) Sturua – Szekely, Frunze 1985, is totally equal.

B3111) 10...\( \text{b4} \) 11.\( \text{Qc3} \)

Instead White can try to keep the bishop with:

11.\( \text{Qb3} \)

This is far messier after:

11...\( \text{Qxe4} \)??

I think this piece sacrifice is stronger than 11...\( \text{Qh5} \) when play can logically continue 12.\( \text{Qc3} \) \( \text{Qf4} \) 13.\( \text{Qxf4} \) \( \text{exf4} \) 14.\( \text{Qd2} \) \( \text{g5} \) (14...\( \text{Qg6} \)!! hands White the initiative: 15.\( \text{Qe1} \) \( \text{Qa6} \) 16.\( \text{e5} \) Shaposhnikov – J. Geller, Dagomys 2009) 15.\( \text{Qe1} \) Now Black shouldn't get too excited about a kingside assault: 15...\( \text{h5} \)!! 16.\( \text{e5} \) \( \text{g4} \) 17.\( \text{e6} \)!

12.\( \text{Qe1} \) \( \text{Qxf2} \)

Black gets two pawns for the piece and he eliminates the c1-bishop, leaving his own dark-squared bishop unchallenged. In addition his kingside pawns can start rolling at once, which makes the position dynamically balanced. For instance:

13.\( \text{Qxb4} \) \( \text{Qd3} \) 14.\( \text{Qe4} \) \( \text{Qxc1} \) 15.\( \text{Qxc1} \) \( f5 \)

Or 15...\( \text{Qf5} \); in either case with enough compensation.
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

11... \( \text{bxc2} \) 12.\( \text{bxc2} \) \( \text{d7} \) 13.\( \text{a4} \) \( \text{a6} \) 14.\( \text{wxc8} \) \( \text{wxc8} \) 15.\( \text{wxe3} \) \( \text{b5} \) 16.\( \text{dxe5} \) \( \text{dxe5} \) 17.\( \text{wxc4} \)


B3112) 10... \( \text{c7} \) 11.\( \text{e3} \)

11... \( \text{h5} \)

After 11... \( \text{e8} \) White has a choice between insisting on parting with his light-squared bishop: 12.\( \text{a4!?} \) \( \text{h6} \) 13.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{a6} \) 14.\( \text{xe8} \) \( \text{xe8} \) 15.\( \text{a4} \) \( \text{f5} \) 16.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{dxc4} \) Domont – Raetsky, Geneva 2007, and 12.\( \text{a4} \) \( \text{h6} \) 13.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{f5} \) 14.\( \text{exf5} \) \( \text{gxf5} \) 15.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{b6} \) 16.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{e4} \) 17.\( \text{e3} \), Martinovic – Hertel, Seefeld 1999. White has effectively blocked his opponent’s eastern offensive and can now concentrate his efforts on the other flank.

12.\( \text{a4} \) \( \text{f4} \) 13.\( \text{e1} \) \( \text{h8} \) 14.\( \text{xf4} \) \( \text{xf4} \) 15.\( \text{e5} \)

White had the initiative in Strikovic – Sande Edreira, La Coruna 1995.

B312) 9... \( \text{d5!!} \) 10.\( \text{e5} \) \( \text{c4} \)

The passive 10... \( \text{c8} \) offers fewer chances to obtain a level game: 11.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{c7} \) 12.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{f6} \) 13.\( \text{exf6} \) \( \text{exf6} \) 14.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{d8} \) 15.\( \text{h6} \) \( \text{c4} \) Cornette – Bruned, Cannes 2007.

11.\( \text{c3} \)

Players have also tested 11.\( \text{e1} \) and 11.\( \text{bd2} \), but the direct text move is simplest and best.

11... \( \text{f5} \)

Less challenging is 11... \( \text{xc3} \) 12.\( \text{bxc3} \) \( \text{f6} \) 13.\( \text{exf6} \) \( \text{exf6} \) 14.\( \text{e1} \) \( \text{Marjanovic – Ivanovic, Novi Sad 1984.} \)

12.\( \text{c2} \)

This is more ambitious than 12.\( \text{e1!?} \) \( \text{xc3} \) 13.\( \text{bxc3} \) as in Ovetchkin – Solodovnichenko, Internet 2005. Now the swap of light-squared bishops looks strategically desirable for Black. The second player shouldn’t be too optimistic, however, since his “good” bishop is at the moment worse than White’s “bad” one. This fact is compensated by White’s traditional weakness on c3.

12... \( \text{f6} \)

Sanz Alonso – Martin Gonzalez, Salamanca 1991, instead continued: 12... \( \text{c8} \) 13.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{f5} \) (13... \( \text{f6} \) and 13... \( \text{h6} \) are possible improvements) 14.\( \text{h4} \) \( \text{e6} \) 15.\( \text{xf5} \) \( \text{xf5} \) 16.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{g5} \); 17.\( \text{g5} \) \( \text{g5} \) 18.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{f6} \) and \( \text{d5} \) is about to fall.

13.\( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{xf6} \)

After 13... \( \text{xf6} \) Delorme – Ajrapetjan, Differdange 2008, continued 14.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{e6} \) 15.\( \text{e1} \) \( \text{f7} \) with approximate equality, but 14.\( \text{f4} \)? was a better try.

Similarly after 13... \( \text{xf6} \), as in Marjanovic –
Browne, Thessaloniki (ol) 1984, White plays 14.\(\mathcal{Q}f4\) with an unclear position where White is pressing.

A very interesting idea; GM Igor Glek has faced it twice recently, and he failed to achieve anything.

9.e5
This was Glek's choice the second time he faced 8...d5. Two days earlier he had played:

9.exd5 \(\mathcal{W}xd5\) 10.\(\mathcal{A}b3\)
10.dxc5 \(\mathcal{W}xc5\) as in Backelin - Ulibin, Stockholm 2005, was reminiscent of the line 1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 \(\mathcal{W}xd5\) 4.d4 g6; it offers mutual chances.
10...\(\mathcal{A}h5\) 11.\(\mathcal{E}e1\) \(\mathcal{R}d8\) 12.\(\mathcal{W}e2\) cxd4 13.cxd4 e6=

9...\(\mathcal{D}e4\)

In the current set-up White does not have the option of \(\mathcal{D}c3\), in contrast to after 8...cxd4 9.cxd4 d5. This makes Black's life significantly easier.

10.\(\mathcal{E}e1\)
If 10.\(\mathcal{B}bd2\) \(\mathcal{A}xd2\) then White has only 11.\(\mathcal{W}xd2=\) as on the natural-looking 11.\(\mathcal{A}xd2??\) the answer 11...\(\mathcal{A}b6\) is problematic.

10...\(\mathcal{W}b6\) 11.dxc5 \(\mathcal{A}xc5\)
11...\(\mathcal{W}xc5??\) is worth a thought too.
12.\textit{a}bd2 \textit{d}d7 13.\textit{a}b3 \textit{d}xe5 14.\textit{a}xe5 \textit{d}xe5 15.\textit{w}xd5 \textit{e}d8 16.\textit{w}c5 \textit{w}xc5 17.\textit{d}xe5 \textit{d}d5=


B33) 8...\textit{e}5

Now the two main lines are B331) 9.\textit{a}e1 and B332) 9.dxe5, but first an interesting minor line deserves a brief look.

After 9.d5 \textit{d}e7 10.c4 as in Westerinen – T. Andersson, Pelaro 2002, the position was similar to a King’s Indian and it offered mutual chances. Also possible were 10.a4!? and 10.b4!?

B331) 9.\textit{a}e1 \textit{cxd4}

The easiest way to deal with the central tension, although other moves also deserve attention:

9...\textit{cxd4} 10.\textit{cxd4} \textit{w}b6

The confusing 10...d5!? is possible.

11.d5 \textit{\textit{d}d4} 12.\textit{\textit{d}xd4} \textit{cxd4} 13.\textit{\textit{d}d2} \textit{d}d7

14.\textit{g}3 \textit{e}5!

This must be played at once.

In Davies – Browne, Saint John 1988, Black played 14...\textit{e}e8!! 15.\textit{b}b1 and only then 15...\textit{d}e5 but after 16.\textit{\textit{d}xd4} \textit{\textit{d}xh3} 17.\textit{\textit{e}e3=} White was clearly better as \textit{f}5xg7 is imminent.

15.\textit{\textit{d}xd4} \textit{\textit{d}xh3} 16.\textit{e}e3

Not 16.\textit{g}xh3? \textit{\textit{d}xd4}.

16...\textit{g}4 17.\textit{f}3 \textit{\textit{d}c4} 18.\textit{\textit{f}f2} \textit{\textit{d}xb2}

The point; this was not an option in the above game.

19.\textit{\textit{d}d2} \textit{\textit{d}c4} 20.\textit{\textit{w}c3}

20.\textit{\textit{d}d3} \textit{\textit{d}b2}=

20...\textit{\textit{d}a3}

And now White may try:

21.\textit{e}5∞

In Nijboer – Van Benthem, Netherlands 2009, after 9...\textit{h}6?! 10.\textit{dxc5} \textit{dxc5} 11.\textit{\textit{d}xd8} \textit{\textit{d}xd8} 12.\textit{\textit{a}a3=} Black had a nasty endgame to defend, as he has more squares to watch out for and a not-too-clever bishop on \textit{g7}.

B332) 9.dxe5

After 10...d5 11.e5 \textit{e}e4 12.\textit{\textit{d}c3} \textit{cxd4} 13.\textit{\textit{d}xe4} \textit{dxe4} 14.\textit{\textit{e}e4} \textit{e}e8 15.\textit{\textit{d}xc6} \textit{bxc6} 16.\textit{\textit{d}xd4} \textit{\textit{w}xd4} 17.\textit{\textit{d}xd4} in Sermier – Henrichs, Biel 1997, Black did not have quite enough for the sacrificed pawn.

11.\textit{\textit{d}xd4}

We have met this position with the white rook on \textit{f1} and White to move. (See 7.\textit{\textit{c}c2} \textit{c5} 8.d4 \textit{\textit{c}c4} 9.\textit{cxd4} \textit{\textit{c}c4} 10.\textit{\textit{d}xd4} \textit{\textit{e}e6}...) There the move 11.\textit{\textit{d}d1} was not covered, but it involves few nuances and the evaluation of the position remains equal.
The moves to consider in this position are:

B3311) 11...\(\text{x}d4\) and B3312) 11...d5.

B3311) 11...\(\text{x}d4\) 12.\(\text{w}x d4\)

12.\(\text{c}c6\)

12...\(\text{e}8\) as played in the game Hartikainen - Bator, Bonnecoie 1998, followed by a quick ...d6-d5, is also adequate.

13.\(\text{b}b4\) d5!

This solves all Black's problems; in fact, White has to be a little careful, as the following examples show.

14.\(\text{c}c3\)

14.e5?! \(\text{d}7\) 15.f4 \(\text{h}4\) In Gonzalez Martinez - Beltran Rueda, Logrono 2008, White had a difficult position to handle, as he is under-developed and has a rather vulnerable king.

14...\(\text{x}e4\) 15.\(\text{x}e4\) \(\text{dxe4}\) 16.\(\text{x}e4\) \(\text{wh}4\) 17.\(\text{d}d2\) \(\text{d}d8\) 18.\(\text{x}b7\) \(\text{d}d4\) 19.\(\text{a}a5\) \(\text{a}a4\) 20.\(\text{b}b5\) \(\text{b}b8\) 21.\(\text{a}c1\)?

White could maintain the balance with the exchange sacrifice 21.\(\text{x}e6??\) \(\text{f}xe6\) 22.\(\text{d}d7\).

21...\(\text{xa}2\) 22.\(\text{c}c3\) \(\text{xc}3\) 23.\(\text{xc}3\) \(\text{d}d4\)

All of a sudden White is experiencing serious trouble because of his pinned bishop.

24.\(\text{ec}1\) a6 25.\(\text{wc}6\) \(\text{xb}2\) 26.\(\text{a}a8\) \(\text{xf}2\uparrow\)

27.\(\text{h}h1\) \(\text{a}7\)

\(0-1\)

Dobrovolsky - Fracnik, Trnava 1984.

B3312) 11...d5 12.e5

Ujhazi - Bojkovic, Yugoslavia 2002, continued 12.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{bxc}6\) 13.e5 (13.\(\text{c}c3\)=) 13...\(\text{d}d7\) 14.\(\text{f}4\)\text{∞}.

12...\(\text{xe}4\) 13.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{bxc}6\) 14.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{dxe}4\) 15.\(\text{wd}8\) \(\text{xd}8\) 16.\(\text{f}4\)\text{∞}
This was Martinovic - Tringov, Vrnjacka Banja 1982. In this complex position I believe Black should be able to find enough activity before e4 is lost.

**B332) 9.dxc5 dxc5**

10.\(\mathcal{E}e3\)

Instead Ovetchkin - Lerner, Swidnica 1997, continued 10.\(\mathcal{W}e2\) \(\mathcal{W}e7\) 11.\(\mathcal{Q}a3\) \(\mathcal{Q}h5\) 12.\(\mathcal{Q}c4\) \(\mathcal{Q}f4\) 13.\(\mathcal{A}xf4\) exf4 14.\(\mathcal{W}d2\) \(\mathcal{A}e6\) 15.\(\mathcal{A}b3\) b5 16.\(\mathcal{Q}a3\) c4 17.\(\mathcal{A}c2\) \(\mathcal{A}ab8\) and Black was fine.

10...\(\mathcal{W}e7\) 11.\(\mathcal{Q}bd2\) h6 12.\(\mathcal{Q}e1\)

Banas - Mihalik, Slovakia 1995, continued 12.a4 \(\mathcal{A}e6\) 13.\(\mathcal{W}e2\) \(\mathcal{A}fd8\) 14.\(\mathcal{Q}c4\) \(\mathcal{Q}h5z\).

12...\(\mathcal{Q}h5\)

This horse belongs on f4! Thus weaker is 12...\(\mathcal{Q}e8?!\) 13.\(\mathcal{Q}c4\) \(\mathcal{A}e6\) 14.\(\mathcal{W}e2\) \(\mathcal{Q}c7\) 15.\(\mathcal{A}4z\).

In Rodriguez Cespedes - Rivera Kuzawka, Havana 1988, White's pieces were better placed.

13.\(\mathcal{A}b3\) \(\mathcal{Q}f4\) 14.\(\mathcal{A}xf4\) exf4 15.\(e5\)

**Conclusion**

4...\(g6\) is a highly logical and respectable reply to 2.\(\mathcal{Q}f3\) d6 3.\(c3\) \(\mathcal{Q}f6\) h3. As such it is not surprising that Black has various routes in this chapter to either equality or an unclear middlegame. One practical point to note for ambitious players with Black is that some of the most reliable equalizing lines lead to drawish positions.
2. \( \text{d}f3 \) d6 3. c3 \( \text{d}f6 \) 4. h3 \( \text{c}6 \)

Variation Index

1. e4 c5 2. \( \text{d}f3 \) d6 3. c3 \( \text{d}f6 \) 4. h3 \( \text{c}6 \)

4... \( \text{c}6 \)

The 5. d4 Gambit

The Main Line 5. \( \text{d}d3 \)

A) 5... e5

B) 5... e6

C) 5... g5!?  

D) 5... d5 6. e5 \( \text{d}d7 \)

D1) 7. e6?!  

D2) 7. \( \text{d}e2 \)

D3) 7. \( \text{b}b5 \)

D31) 7... a6?!  

D32) 7... e6  

D33) 7... \( \text{c}c5 \)

D34) 7... \( \text{c}c7!? \)

D35) 7... \( \text{b}b6 \)

D351) 8. \( \text{a}a4 \)

D352) 8. \( \text{a}a4 \)

D353) 8. \( \text{a}a3 \)

214

216

216

217

218

219

220

220

221

221

222

223

223

224

224

224

225
This chapter covers 4...\textit{c}6 in response to the 4.h3 system and will be split into two sections: the first on the unsound sacrifice 5.d4?! and the second on the "real" move, 5.c3.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, set-ups with \ldots g7-g6 are considered in that chapter, even if the games in question started with a 4...\textit{c}6 move order.

The 5.d4 Gambit

5.d4?!

This gambit had a few moments of glory in the 1980s, but it should objectively be unsound.
22...a3 &xd2+ 23...xd2 &xb7 24...c1 &b6
25...xb7 &xb7
In Fučak - Ghinda, Nis 1985, Black had a healthy extra pawn and every chance of scoring the full point.

In Fucak - Ghinda, Nis 1985, Black had a healthy extra pawn and every chance of scoring the full point.

In Fucak - Ghinda, Nis 1985, Black had a healthy extra pawn and every chance of scoring the full point.

22...a3 &xd2+ 23...xd2 &xb7 24...c1 &b6
25...xb7 &xb7
In Fučak - Ghinda, Nis 1985, Black had a healthy extra pawn and every chance of scoring the full point.

Below are two examples of this risky line:

a) 13...e5 14...c1 &d7 15...c7 &c6 16...b5
(16...c4 would not have solved the problems:
17...xc6+ bxc6 18...b1, eyeing f5 and b7.)
17...xc6+ bxc6 18...g4 &d8 19...g5 1-0
Barlov - Popovic, Caorle 1982.

b) 13...e6 14...b1 &e7 15...b5+ &f8 16...c2
a6 17...e2 &c6 18...b2 &f6 19...a3 &d4?
Running away from the danger zone was necessary: 19...&g8 20...fc1 &d7 21...a5
d5 22...c7 &e8 Black's position is quite cramped, but he can hope no neutralize his opponent's activity with a subsequent ...&d8,
maybe after ...g7-g6 and ...&g7.
20...c1 &c5 21...b4 &xb4 22...xb4 &e8
23...b6
In Kostic - Robatsch, Austria 1990, White already had more than enough compensation and he went on to win.

13.0-0 &g7 14...b5+ &f8 15...c1 &xd5
16...c4 &f5

Less incisive is 17...b3 h5 when in Kraft - Kalod, Germany 2006, Black should have been able to slowly digest his three extra pawns. After the text move the following sample variation illustrates how play may continue:

17...h5 18...e3 &d7 19...f3 &f6 20...c3
&g7 21...xf6+ exf6 22...e2 d5 23...d1 dxc4
24...xd7 &xd7
With rook, bishop and two pawns for the queen (after c4 is captured) Black can press for an eternity without any risk of losing.
The Main Line

5...d3

Black is at a major crossroads. 5...g6 was covered in the previous chapter, but that still leaves four main alternatives to discuss: A) 5...e5, B) 5...e6, C) 5...g5?? and D) 5...d5.

There are even two other minor moves:

5...c4?! 6...xc4 dxc4 7.d4± This is a tad better than the version with the queen's knight on d7 (see page 237), but still no fun for Black.

5...a6

Not a disastrous move, but it fails to challenge White's standard plan of c2 and d2-d4.

6...c2

6.0–0 is obviously playable too, and both moves are almost compulsory at some point. However, starting with the bishop move may offer White more options if he can achieve d2-d4 before castling. For example:

6...b5 7.d4 cxd4 8.cxd4 b4 9...b3!

In Ovetchkin – Nepal, Bhubaneswar 2009, the e4-pawn was taboo due to 9...dxe4 10.a3 dxe6 11.d5. White has emerged from the opening with a pleasant edge.

This gives Black very good chances of reaching a level game. In contrast with 4...e5 (see the next chapter) White cannot count on b5 to gain a tiny but risk-free edge.

6...e7

The less forcing 8...e7 9.d3 0–0 is balanced.

A) 5...e5

6...d5

7.d3 is of course harmless, but Black should then reject the possible ending after 7...dxe4? 8.dxe4 xd1+ 9...xd1, which may be unpleasant. Instead 7...e7 is fine.

6...c4?!

An ambitious push. Black is trying to repel the white knight before completing his development, but things are not so clear-cut. 
Black can now choose between taking the bait with 9...\(\text{Wxc4}\) or trying to take the driver's seat:

- 9...\(\text{Wxc4}\) 10.\(\text{Be1}\) \(\text{e6}\)
  10...\(\text{dxe4}\) 11.\(\text{fxe4}\) 0–0–0
  With genuine compensation.

7.d4
  Of course the simple 7.0–0 is an option.

7...\(\text{exd4}\)
  This leads to massive simplifications. Instead
  7...\(\text{exd4}\) was Z. Horvath – Loginov, Budapest 1991.

8.\(\text{cxd4}\) \(\text{cxd4}\)
  (8...\(\text{Lb4}\) 9.\(\text{Ld2}\) \(\text{e5}\) 10.\(\text{dxe5}\) \(\text{ Axe5}\) 11.\(\text{dxe5}\) \(\text{Lxe5}\) 12.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{dxe4}\) 13.\(\text{f5}\) \(\text{Lxa4}\) 14.\(\text{Lxe4}\) \(\text{exf5}\) 15.\(\text{Lxe5}\) \(\text{f6}\) 16.\(\text{Ld4}\) \(\text{h6}\) 17.\(\text{Ld4}\) \(\text{Lg8}\) 18.\(\text{Lc3}\) \(\text{Ld7}\) 19.\(\text{Lxd7}\) \(\text{Lxd7}\) 20.\(\text{Lc1}\) \(\text{Lde8}\) 21.\(\text{Ld2}\) \(\text{Ld6}\) 22.\(\text{Ld6}\)

A French-like pawn structure has appeared, in which White has absolutely no reason to complain. Indeed, he can easily deal with the enemy pressure on d4, while the thematic ...f7–f6 is quite perilous. Black has tried various approaches here, but I think White can secure an edge against each of them.

8...\(\text{e5}\)
  7...\(\text{e5}\)!! is as unpromising as it looks.

7...\(\text{d7}\) 8.d4

A French-like pawn structure has appeared, in which White has absolutely no reason to complain. Indeed, he can easily deal with the enemy pressure on d4, while the thematic ...f7–f6 is quite perilous. Black has tried various approaches here, but I think White can secure an edge against each of them.

8...\(\text{e7}\)
  Black has also tried 8...\(\text{b5}\) with the aim of undermining the white pawn chain. After 9.0–0 \(\text{e7}\) 10.\(\text{Be1}\) \(\text{b4}\) 11.\(\text{a4}\) White was a little better in Pokojowczyk – Stempien, Jachranka 1987.

8...\(\text{b6}\) 9.0–0 \(\text{cxd4}\) 10.\(\text{a4}\) \(\text{Lc7}\)
9.b3!? with an untested position where White has some compensation.

The third black try is:
6...@e4?!
This is dubious because the e4-knight feels unstable.
7.&#266;c2 c4 8.b3 cxb3?!
After the better 8...@c5 9.&#266;e2 b5 Black may survive the opening.
9.axb3 #f5 10.#h4 e6 11.#xf5 exf5 12.d3 #g5 13.h4 #e6 14.d4
In Rogulj - Danner, Austria 1997, with two bishops and a healthier pawn structure, White held all the trumps.

White now has three options: D1) 7.e6?,
D2) 7.#e2 and D3) 7.#b5.

D1) 7.e6?!

As practice has shown, this over-aggressive move is misguided:

7...fxe6 8.#g5 #f6 9.#xh7
9.#xh7?? is even worse since White will then suffer from the pin on his light-squared bishop. 9...#xh7 10.#h5+ #d7 11.#xh7 b6 Bissieres - Van Delft, Paris 2007.

9...#xh7 10.#h5+ #d7 11.#xh7

11...#e8?!
A fine exchange sacrifice, but note that 11...b6 was also excellent in Quillan - Ward, Oakham 1990. The very same position as after 9.#xh7 has arisen, except that a white knight occupies this square rather than a bishop. Here White can at least solve one of his problems, by mean of #xf8#. He has however given up the centre for nothing, as the black monarch is absolutely safe on d7.

12.#f6# exf6 13.#xh8 b6
Black had superb compensation in Minasian - Tiviakov, Frunze 1989.

D2) 7.#e2
7...c4
Also sensible are 7...e6 and 7...xc7, but they give White another chance to play a b5 set-up.

8...c2 xc7 9.e6
White has little choice as if 9...a4?! then 9...c5! is an excellent move made possible by ...c5-c4. Then, due to the hole on d3, White must play: 9...c2 (A draw offer?) 9...g6! No thanks; Black is already better.

9...fxe6

10.b3
White has little choice as if 9...a4?! then 9...c5! is an excellent move made possible by ...c5-c4. Then, due to the hole on d3, White must play: 9...c2 (A draw offer?) 9...g6! No thanks; Black is already better.

9...fxc6

10.b3
10...xe6 is hopeless after 10...xf6 and ...e7-e5.

The real alternative is 10...g5?!, but this lunge again looks dubious to me: 10...xf6 (Or 10...de5 11.0-0 g6 12.f4 d6 13.h4 dxe5 14.hxg5 E.f7 Barlov – Ilicic, Nis 1995. Black will one day free himself by ...e6-e5, when his extra pawn should have its say.) 11.0xe6 dxe6 12.dxe6 dxe5+ 13.fxe5 dxe5 In Rubinetti – Adla, Argentina 1989, Black was at least okay.

10...xcxb3 11.axb3
White could try the untested 11.axb3?N, keeping the light-squared bishop on its most threatening diagonal, but also allowing the possibility of 11...e5, as now there is no pressure on d5.

11...de5
Black even has the luxury of a promising alternative in 11...c5?.

12.0-0
It is doubtful that White has enough compensation for the pawn, Mazé – Abergel, Aix-les-Bains 2007.

D3) 7...b5

Now we have a major split. The main lines are: D31) 7...a6?!, D32) 7...e6, D33) 7...a5, D34) 7...c7?!, and most importantly D35) 7...b6.

One minor line that can quickly be rejected is: 7...b6?! 8.d4 c4 9.a4! (less convincing is 9.0-0?! d5 10.e1 h5 as in Peeren – Roeder, Vlissingen 2003) 9...d7 10.a5 d8 11.a6 b6 12.axb7 dxb7 13.a4± Bauer – Andriasian, Dresden 2007.

D31) 7...a6?!
This forces White to part with his bishop, but at the cost of a damaged pawn structure. Since White then has the simple plan of d3, c4,
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

Qc3-a4, b3 and a3, I believe Black’s concept is erroneous.

8. Bxc6 bxc6

9.d3
The most precise move order, discouraging Black from ...c5-c4. For example, 9.0-0 allows 9...c4 10.b3 exb3 11.axb3 e6 12.d4 c5 as in Tong Yuanming – Tiviakov, Beijing 1998, with a roughly equal game.

Even worse was 9.e6?! fxe6 10.d4 e5! 11.dxe5 c6 as in Ambroz – Bacrot, Biel 1995, when Black had a good version of the French Defence.

9...e6 10.0-0 Be7
Perhaps Black should get rid of the e5-pawn at once with 10...f6, Alvarez – Dominguez, Santa Clara 1999, though after 11.Qe2 fxe5 12.Qxe5 Qxe5 13.Qxe5 Ba7 14.Qf4 he still stood slightly worse.

11.c4
The positional approach, but White may also try to transfer his queen to g4 by means of 11.Qa4 as in Sofieva – Zagorskis, Berlin 1995, or 11.Rc1 0-0 (11...a5?!) 12.Qa4 as in Cornette – Poobalasingam, Sunningdale 2008.

11...0-0 12.Qc3 f6

Black is creating a weakness on e6, but otherwise he would have no counterplay at all.

13.Qxf6 Qxf6 14.Qe1
In Sax – Torma, Zalaegerszeg 2008, White had a lasting edge due to his better pawn structure and the bad bishop on c8.

D32) 7...e6

This sensible move does not force the pace, so what follows is merely an illustration of many possible continuations:

8.0-0 Qe7 9.d4 a6 10.Qd3 b5 11.a3 c4 12.Qc2 a5 13.Qe1
Directed against the ...f7-f6 push. White could also have tried to implement an f2-f4 advance by withdrawing his knight to e1 or h2.

13...Qb7
13...Qb6?! planning ...b5-b4xc3 and then ...a5-a4, ...Qa5-b3, seems better to me.

In Aronian – Grischuk, Monte Carlo (rapid) 2006, it had all gone wrong for Black, who had to surrender on move 44.

D33) 7...\texttt{a}5

Some top-class GMs have experimented with this move recently, but I have my doubts about it.

8.\texttt{xc}6!

The easiest, because after the alternative 8.\texttt{a}3 the knight is likely to end up misplaced. For example:

8.\texttt{a}3 \texttt{c}4

I believe Black should play ...\texttt{c}5-\texttt{c}4 sooner or later, as the alternative move illustrates: 8...\texttt{e}6 9.0-0 \texttt{c}7?! (9...\texttt{c}4!) 10.\texttt{e}1 0-0 11.\texttt{f}1 \texttt{b}6 12.\texttt{c}2 In Velickovic – Ilincic, Belgrade 2003, White was a trifle better in my opinion, but that may well be a matter of taste.

9.0-0

9.d4?! \texttt{cxd}3 10.\texttt{x}d3 was worthy of consideration, whereas after 10.\texttt{x}d3?! \texttt{e}6 11.\texttt{b}5 \texttt{c}xe5 12.\texttt{x}e5 \texttt{d}xe5 13.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{d}7 14.\texttt{x}e5 \texttt{xb}5 White should not have quite enough for the missing pawn.

9...\texttt{e}6 10.\texttt{b}4 \texttt{c}7 11.d4 \texttt{cxd}3 12.\texttt{x}d3?! White had to try 12.\texttt{e}1 \texttt{a}6 13.\texttt{x}c6 \texttt{bxc}6

14.\texttt{x}d3.

12...\texttt{a}6 13.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{c}xe5 14.\texttt{x}e5 \texttt{xe}5 15.\texttt{c}4 \texttt{d}6 16.\texttt{x}d5 \texttt{xd}3 17.\texttt{x}d6 \texttt{xd}6 18.\texttt{x}d3 exd5

In Glek – Shirov, Kallithea 2008, Black was a pawn up and gradually converted it.

8...\texttt{bxc}6 9.d3 \texttt{e}6 10.0-0 \texttt{c}7 11.\texttt{e}1 \texttt{a}6 12.b3 \texttt{d}8 13.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{c}7 14.\texttt{c}4 0-0

15.\texttt{b}2?


D34) 7...\texttt{c}7?? 8.d4 \texttt{a}6

9.\texttt{d}3?!

The text move, or 9.\texttt{e}2??, are better attempts at gaining an edge than 9.\texttt{a}4?! as
in Libiszewski – Brunner, France 2007, which continued 9...cxd4 10.cxd4 Qb6 11.Qb3 Qf5= and was agreed drawn.

9...cxd4 10.cxd4 Qb4 11.Qc3 Qxd3
12.Qxd3

White's lead in development and extra space more than compensates for Black's bishop pair.

D35) 7...Qb6

This queen sortie, challenging the bishop, is undoubtedly Black's best option. White now has three main replies: D351) 8.Qa4, D352) 8.Qa4 and the main line D353) 8.Qa3.

Instead 8.Qxc6?! Qxc6 is fine for Black. For the moment the bishops do not play a major role, but they may be important later.

D351) 8.Qa4 e6 9.d3 Qdb8!

White was ready to inflict doubled pawns on his opponent because c3-c4 could then follow.

10.c4 a6 11.Qc3 d4 12.Qe4
White could try the immediate 12.Qxc6† to prevent Black recapturing on c6 with his bishop, as happens in the game. For example, 12...Qxc6 13.Qe4 Qb4† 14.Qxb4 Qxb4 15.Qxe2 with an interesting and unclear queenless middlegame.

12...Qd7 13.0-0 Qa7 14.Qxc6 Qxc6 15.Qd1 Qxe4 16.Qxe4 Qc6
In Bauer – Damljanovic, Chalons en Champagne 2009, the game was approximately level.

D352) 8.Qa4 c4 9.d4 cxd3 10.0-0

10...e6
Or 10...Qc7 11.Qxd3 Qc5 12.Qd1 Qxa4 13.Qxa4 Qf5= Malakhov – Palac, Dresden 2007.
10...Qc5? runs into trouble, as our cybernetic friend understands after some thought:
11.Qxe3! Qxb2 12.Qxc6+ Qxc6 13.Qxc5 Qxa1
14.Qb3++

11.Qxd3
11.b4?! a5 12.a3 Qc7 13.Qf4 Qb6 Bauer – Palac, Geneva 2007, was good for Black who could even have played 13...axb4 14.cxb4 b5 15.Qxb5 Qxb4.

11...Qc5 12.Qd1 Qxa4 13.Qxa4 Qd7
14.Qg4=

D353) 8.Qa3 a6 9.Qxc6 Qc6 10.d4

Conclusion
After choosing 4...Qc6 Black still has a wide range of possibilities to counter White’s setup of c3, h3 and Qd3. Many of them are still rather unexplored, such as the solid 4...Qc6 5.Qd3 e5, or the more incisive 5...g5.

The critical test of White’s concept is line D, 5...d5 6.e5 Qd7. This is quite complicated strategically and offers Black good chances to quickly gain a decent game. Those who play 4.h3 with White should study this line with care, as White can quickly run into trouble if he is unprepared. White should try to reach the position after 7.Qb5 (line D3) when a tense middlegame is likely. However, note the move order 6...c4 which stops White reaching line D3; after, for example, 7.Qc2 Qd7 8.e6?! fxe6 8.b3 a fresh position awaits its first test.

The insertion of Qa3 and ...Q7-a6, in comparison with the direct 8.Qxc6, favours White slightly. Still, Black should not face major problems here. For example:

10...e6 11.Qc2 b6 12.0–0 Qe7 13.Qe3 b5
14.a4 c4 15.b3 Qxb3 16.Qxb3 0–0 17.a5
Qc7 18.Qa3 Qxa3 19.Qxa3

In Glek – Zubov, Voronezh 2010, White was only marginally better because of his opponent’s bad bishop.
2.\f3 d6 3.c3 \f6 4.h3 – Rare Lines

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.\f3 d6 3.c3 \f6

4.h3

A) 4...\d7
B) 4...a6
C) 4...e6 5.\d3
   C1) 5...b6 6.0-0 \b7 7.\e1 \bd7 8.\c2
      C11) 8...c4
      C12) 8...\e7
      C13) 8...\c8
   C2) 5...d5 6.e5 \fd7 7.\e2
      C21) 7...d4
      C22) 7...b6
      C23) 7...c4
   C3) 5...\e7
D) 4...e5
E) 4...b6
F) 4...\bd7 5.\d3!
   F1) 5...\e5
      F11) 6.\xe5
      F12) 6.\c2
   F2) 5...e5
   F3) 5...b6 6.0-0 \b7 7.\e1
      F31) 7...e5
      F32) 7...\c8
      F33) 7...\c7 8.\c2 \c8
         F331) 9.\a3
         F332) 9.a4
         F333) 9.d4?!
Chapter 9 – 2.e3 d6 3.c3 e6 4.h3 – Rare Lines

1.e4 c5 2.e3 d6 3.c3 e6 4.h3

We finish by studying Black's less usual 4th moves, which I define as anything that is not 4...g6 (Chapter 7) or 4...d6 (Chapter 8). The moves to consider are: A) 4...d7, B) 4...a6, C) 4...e6, D) 4...e5, E) 4...b6 and finally, the biggest of the minor lines, F) 4...bd7.

A) 4...d7

At first sight a curious move, but the bishop will not stay on d7 for long.

5.d3

Anything else leads to easy equality for Black. For example: 5.e5 dxe5 6.dxe5 d6 Wohl – Gormally, Hastings 2001, or 5.d3 dxe5 6.d3 bd7 7.bbd2 g6 8.d4 cxd4 9.bxd4 g7= Svidler – Movsesian, Odessa (rapid) 2009.

5...c6

Now that he has said "A", Black must say "B" – that is, post his bishop at c6. If he does not, then White should be happy. For example:

5...e5 6.a2 c7?! (6...c6!) 7.d4 c7 8.0-0 0-0 9.c3# Kruszynski – Emunds, Muenster 1993.

5...g6?! makes no sense here since the light-squared bishop does not belong on d7, or, at the very least, placing it there was far from a priority.

B) 4...a6

6.e2

There are a couple of alternatives to consider:

6...bd7

A rather artificial move.

7.g3 g6 8.c2

8...h6

This creative touch comes from Pikula – Javet, Biel 2003. The "normal" 8...g7 did not prove sufficient to gain equality either: 9.d4 cxd4 10.cxd4 0-0 11.c3# In Malakhov – Areshchenko, Torrelavega.
2007. White's central predominance outweighed his somewhat weakened kingside. If he does not feel like castling then d2f1-g2 will do perfectly well.

9. a3 c8?! 10.d4 xxc1 11.xxc1 0-0 12. e3

Black now dropped a pawn with 12... g7? 13.dxc5 dxc5 14.xxc5, but 12... cxd4 13.cxd4 or 12... a6 13. wh6 were not very appealing either.

6... e5 7. c2 e7 8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4 exd4 10.e4 was Ovetchkin — Golubev, Internet (blitz) 2006. White looks a little better, but this blitz game continued: 10...0-0 11.0-0 e8 12. c3 b7 13. f4 d5 14.e5 &d6 15.exd6?! cxe2 16. cxe2 xxe2

7. c2

White is now all set for d2-d4. If Black does nothing special, for example with 7... e5 or 7... e6, then he will just have less space and stand slightly worse.

7... e8

For 7... e5 8.d4 see 6... e5; instead White is a little better after either 7... e6 8.0-0 xf6 9.d4± or 7... c5 8.d4 xf3+ 9.xf3 cxd4 10.cxd4 e5 11.d5 a6, Hamdouchi — Krush, La Roche sur Yon 2007.

8.0-0


8... e6 9.d4 cxd4 10.cxd4 d5 11.e5 c4

We are following the encounter Aagaard — Ubilava, Torrelavega 2007. White now took the committal decision of letting his pawn structure be weakened, in return for free piece play.

12. c3

The quieter move was:

12. bd2

This was less demanding (for both players) and likely to gain a small but risk-free edge:

12... xd2 13. xd2 b6

Going for the pawn-pluck is very risky, so safer was 13... e7 when White can try 14.a4?.

14.a4! xb2 15.xh7??

The less imaginative 15.a3 leaves White with adequate compensation after 15... b6 16.a5 d8 17.g5 e7 18.g4.

15...xh7 16.d3

With the double threat of xh7 and a1, trapping the queen.

12... xc3 13. bc3 wa5

More ambitious than the solid 13... e7?.

14. d3 wc3 15. b1
Black has taken the bull by the horns with a principled reaction to his rival's idea. The computer engines are confident that Black is okay, but in a practical game it is not easy to defend against the looming $\text{g}5$.

15...$\text{e}7$ 16.$\text{b}3$ $\text{a}5$ 17.$\text{g}5$

As the coming lines show, enticing White to sacrifice would not be smart: 17...$\text{h}6$? 18.$\text{xf7}$ $\text{xf7}$ 19.$\text{h}5$+ $\text{g}8$ 20.$\text{g}6$ And now both 20...$\text{f}8$ 21.$\text{f}7$+ $\text{h}7$ 22.$\text{g}3$ and 20...$\text{f}8$ 21.$\text{g}4$ $\text{f}5$ 22.$\text{xf5}$ exf5 23.$\text{xf5}$ do not look funny for Black.

The computer recommends keeping an eye on the two sensitive spots in White's camp, namely $\text{a}2$ and $\text{d}4$, with 17...$\text{a}4$, when 18.$\text{g}4$ $\text{g}6$ looks quite unclear.

18.$\text{f}4$

White could strike immediately with: 18.$\text{xe6}$? $\text{xe6}$ 19.$\text{h}5$+ $\text{f}8$ 20.$\text{g}6$ (not 20.$\text{h}7$?! $\text{e}8$ 21.$\text{f}3$+ $\text{f}6$= when material parity is restored and White cannot really escape the trade of queens) 20...hxg6 21.$\text{xh8}$+ $\text{f}7$ 22.$\text{f}3$+ $\text{f}6$ 23.$\text{h}4$

18...$\text{g}6$ 19.$\text{g}4$ $\text{h}5$?

This is destroyed by a beautiful queen sacrifice. Better was either 19...$\text{a}5$ or 19...$\text{b}6$.

20.$\text{xe6}$!! $\text{fxe6}$ 21.$\text{dxg6}$+ $\text{f}8$ 22.$\text{xe6}$+ $\text{g}8$ 23.$\text{g}3$!

Black has an extra queen for only two pawns, but he cannot run away because of the killing possibility of $\text{h}7$+.

23...$\text{h}6$

23...$\text{h}4$?! illustrates my previous comment: 24.$\text{h}7$+ $\text{xh7}$ (or 24...$\text{f}7$? 25.$\text{g}7$+ and mate next move) 25.$\text{g}7$+ $\text{h}6$ 26.$\text{f}5$+ $\text{g}5$

And now the most precise way is to continue "ridiculing" the queen: 27.$\text{g}6$+ $\text{h}7$ 28.$\text{xg5}$ $\text{f}8$ 29.$\text{f}4$ $\text{f}7$ 30.$\text{g}5$+ $\text{g}5$ 31.$\text{xg5}$+

24.$\text{xd8}$ $\text{xd8}$

White played 25.$\text{xh5}$+ and won eventually, but the most convincing finish was:
25...\\textit{h}4 26.\\textit{xh}6 27.\\textit{f}6+++ \\
B) 4...a6 \\
Hardly the most to-the-point move, but perhaps Black reasons that ...a7-a6 is generally a useful Sicilian move.

5.\\textit{d}3 \\
Continuing the usual plan, but other moves have also been tested:

6.\textit{a}4?! b6 7.0-0 \textit{e}7 8.\\textit{c}2 e6 9.\textit{c}4! 10.\\textit{d}3 \textit{c}7 (the drawback of 6.\textit{a}4?! becomes apparent: White cannot take back with \textit{axb}3 if play goes 11.\textit{b}3 \textit{cxb}3) 11.\textit{d}4 \textit{xd}3 12.\textit{xd}3 \textit{xc}8+ Sanz Alonso – Ehlvest, Seville 1994.

6.0-0 b6 7.\\textit{c}2 e6 8.\\textit{c}2 \textit{b}7 9.\textit{d}4 Sanz Alonso – Ruiz Gutierrez, Seville 1994.

5...\textit{bd}7 \\
Black can also start his queenside advance at once:

5...b5 6.0-0 \textit{b}7 7.\textit{e}1 \textit{bd}7 \\
7...\textit{c}5 8.\textit{c}2 \textit{c}6 9.\textit{d}4 \textit{e}7 10.\textit{d}5 \textit{b}8+ Overchkin – Galkin, Internet 2007.

8.\textit{c}2 c4 9.b3 \textit{c}8 \\
9...g6 10.bxc4 \textit{xc}4 11.\textit{a}3 \textit{c}8 12.\textit{e}b1 \textit{a}8 13.\textit{b}4 \textit{g}7 14.\textit{xc}4 gave White a healthy extra pawn in Strikovic – Villavicencio Martinez, Santa Cruz de Tenerife 1995.

10.bxc4 \\
The text move is more in the spirit of the position than 10.b4?! as in Pandavos – Ermenkov, Chania 1993. Now if Black recaptures with 10...\textit{xc}4 then I am not sure if he can improve on the Strikovic – Villavicencio game above, whereas after 10...\textit{xc}4 both 11.d3 followed by 12.a4 and the immediate 11.a4 look good for White.

6.\textit{c}2 \\
Barlov – Damljanovic, Novi Sad 1995, continued: 6...b5 7.\textit{d}4 \textit{b}7 8.\textit{bd}2 \textit{e}5 9.0-0 \textit{e}7 10.\textit{e}1 0-0 11.\textit{f}1 \textit{e}8 12.\textit{g}3 \textit{f}8 13.\textit{d}5+ A theoretical position of the Breyer variation of the Ruy Lopez has arisen. The tempo count is the same, but Black has effectively chosen 12...c7-c5 instead of the immensely more popular 12...g7-g6. Therefore White has a slight edge.

7.\textit{d}4 \textit{c}7 8.0-0 0-0 9.\textit{e}1 \textit{e}8 10.\textit{bd}2 \textit{b}8 11.\textit{f}1+ \\
So far we have followed Barlov – Simic, Vrnjacka Banja 1982. This is likely to transpose into the 6...b5 line mentioned above. Again, compared to a normal Ruy Lopez, Black has lost some flexibility because his c-pawn stands on c5 and not c7.
C) 4...e6

A perfectly sensible move in general, but it does nothing to stop White's standard plan.

5.d3

5.b5† is also playable.

5...d5
6.0-0 .tb7 7.J.e7 8.1.f2 0-0
9.d4
cxd4
10.1.a3
Or 10.bxc4 bxc4 11.1.a3 1.b6 leads to the kind of situation we encountered under 4...a6 (line B), the difference being that the b6-knight is much more stable here.

10...1.e7 11.d4 cxd4
12.c4 1.f2
In Lukov - Cebalo, Montpellier 1997, White had better control of the centre and thus a promising game.

C) 4...e6

15.1.xe4 1.d5 16.1.e2 Black lacked adequate compensation for the sacrificed pawn; he gradually lost ground and eventually the game.

8.1.c2

A further split is required: C11) 8...c4, C12) 8...1.e7 and C13) 8...1.e8.

C11) 8...c4 9.b3 b5

10.1.d3

Or 10.bxc4 bxc4 11.1.a3 1.b6 leads to the kind of situation we encountered under 4...a6 (line B), the difference being that the b6-knight is much more stable here.

10...1.xb3 11.axb3 a6 12.1.f2
In Lukov - Cebalo, Montpellier 1997, White had better control of the centre and thus a promising game.

C12) 8...1.e7 9.d4 cxd4
9...d5† not to give White the c3-square.

10.cxd4 d5 11.c5 1.e4 12.1.c3
12.1.bd2† looks quite natural.

12...cxd3 13.cxd3 1.e8 14.1.d3 1.c7 15.1.d2
16.1.d3 1.a6 17.1.f2 1.c7 18.1.g3
In Ghaem Maghami – Aveskulov, Beijing 2008, White had interesting attacking prospects on the kingside.

C13) 8...\textit{c}8 9.d4 \textit{c}7

So far this is Porubszky-Angyalosine – Lakos, Budapest 1997. Now, instead of the inappropriate 10.\textit{b}d2?!, which after 10...\textit{x}d4 forced the undesirable recapture 11.\textit{x}d4, White could have secured a lasting edge with 10.d5 or even 10.\textit{x}d3. In the latter case White would not mind the strategically suspicious push ...\textit{c}5-\textit{c}4. Indeed, after the retreat 11.\textit{c}2 Black would merely have deprived herself of any potential counterplay linked with the opening of the c-file.

C2) 5...\textit{d}5 6.e5 \textit{fd}7 7.\textit{c}2

Now Black has three main moves: C21) 7...\textit{d}4, C22) 7...\textit{b}6 and C23) 7...\textit{c}4.

C21) 7...\textit{d}4

It is hard to believe that this version of 1.e4 \textit{c}5 2.\textit{f}3 \textit{e}6 3.\textit{c}3 \textit{d}5 4.e5 \textit{d}4 can be good for Black. In the following game it sufficed to reach equality, but I have no doubt White's play can be improved.

7...\textit{d}4 8.0–0 \textit{c}6 9.\textit{e}1

Perhaps 9.\textit{e}2?? with the point that now 9...\textit{d}3 can be met by 10.\textit{x}d3 \textit{c}x\textit{e}5 11.\textit{x}e5 \textit{d}xe5 12.\textit{x}d8\# \textit{x}d8 13.d4 \textit{c}x\textit{d}4 14.\textit{xd}4\# and White will quickly achieve \textit{d}4-\textit{d}5 and harass the black king.

9...\textit{d}3 10.\textit{x}d3

10.\textit{a}4?? looks interesting.

10...\textit{d}xe5 11.\textit{xe}5 \textit{e}5 12.\textit{b}5\#

And now 12...\textit{d}7= was even more reliable than 12...\textit{c}6 as played in Girinarh – Akshar, Nagpur 2008.

C22) 7...\textit{b}6 8.0–0 \textit{a}6 9.\textit{e}1 \textit{c}6 10.\textit{d}4

10...\textit{x}d4?!?

Even though the text move is an error (the simple 10...\textit{e}7 was better) it is worth playing through the following game to learn some typical ideas:

11.\textit{x}d4!

If 11.cxd4?! then 11...\textit{b}4! would be annoying.

11...\textit{x}d4

The \textit{e}5-pawn was not so tasty: 11...\textit{c}x\textit{e}5 12.f4 followed by 13.f5 or 11...\textit{c}x\textit{e}5 12.\textit{a}4.

12.\textit{x}d4 \textit{c}8 13.\textit{c}3 \textit{c}4? 14.\textit{d}2 \textit{b}6
Chapter 9 - 2.\textit{f}3 d6 3.c3 \textit{g}6 4.h3 - Rare Lines

15.\textit{g}4 \textit{a}6 16.\textit{ac}1 \textit{b}5

17.\textit{g}6!

Black is powerless against the combined threats of \textit{xe}6 and \textit{xd}5.

17...\textit{b}6 18.\textit{xe}6+ \textit{c}7 19.\textit{xf}7+ \textit{d}8 20.\textit{xd}5

1-0


C23) 7...c4 8.0-0 \textit{c}6 9.\textit{e}1 \textit{c}7

10.\textit{c}2 \textit{c}7

19.\textit{xc}8

If 19...\textit{xf}5 then 20.e6 \textit{d}8 21.exd7+ \textit{xd}7 22.\textit{c}3 intending 22...\textit{b}7 23.\textit{b}5+-.

20.\textit{xc}3 \textit{g}6?

One can understand Black's desire to attack the annoying bishop a second time, but it's still immune! Black had to move his queen (b7, c6 and even c4 are reasonable squares) when White is only a little better.

21.\textit{xd}5! \textit{d}8 22.\textit{xe}7 \textit{xe}7 23.\textit{e}4

White had a decisive advantage in Kalod – Dinger, Pardubice 2005.

C3) 5...\textit{e}7 6.\textit{c}2 0-0

11.d4

Another interesting option is to play on the queenside with 11.b3?.
White can also delay this push by one move, which does not fundamentally alter the assessment of the position:

7...b5 8.e2
Since it turns out the b5-pawn is never truly en prise, White should consider a standard move such as 9.0-0? simply followed by e1 and bd2. The game has hardly started so anything could happen, but White should be happy to have achieved his aim of building a big centre.

8...b7 9.0-0 bd7 10.e1

We are following Martinovic – De Firmian, Vrnjacka Banja 1983. If instead 10...cxd4 then 11.cxd4 c8 12.d3 a6 and after either 13.bd2 or 13.d4 White should be marginally better.

11.bd2
Sadly 11.xb5?! is not just a free pawn. After 11...cxd4 12.xd4 c5! White must be very accurate, and a little lucky, to escape with a draw. For example: 13.d2 a6 14.c6 b5 12.b3 d7 16.bxc5 xe5 17.e5 dxe5 18.xe5 b7 19.b5 a6 20.c6=

After the text move De Firmian released the tension with 11...c4, but perhaps more interesting is:

11.cxd4! 12.xd4 a6 13.a4
We have reached an unclear middlegame that has more in common with an Open Sicilian than a normal 4.h3 line. Thus 4.h3 specialists may be more at home with the option suggested on move 9.

D) 4...e5
A rare but quite interesting continuation.
This seems best. Other bishop moves are harmless:

5.\texttt{d}c4?! \texttt{e}xe4! 6.\texttt{b}b3 (6.\texttt{d}a4?! \texttt{c}c6 7.\texttt{x}xf7+ \texttt{x}xf7 8.\texttt{e}xe4 \texttt{e}e6 6...\texttt{d}d7 7.d4 \texttt{c}c6 8.dxe5 \texttt{a}5 ½-½ Santo Roman – Renet, Geneva 1986. Black already enjoyed comfortable equality following 9.\texttt{b}b5 \texttt{xc}4 10.\texttt{xc}4 \texttt{d}5.)

5.\texttt{d}d3 \texttt{e}e7 6.\texttt{c}c2 0-0

6...\texttt{d}5?!

7.0-0

After 7.d4 cxd4 8.cxd4 \texttt{c}c6 9.\texttt{c}c3 (9.d5 \texttt{b}b4 is also about equal) 9...exd4 10.\texttt{b}bxd4 \texttt{d}5= Black is fine.

7...\texttt{d}5 8.d3 \texttt{c}c6

We have been following Soševa – Wang Pin, Jakarta 1993. In this reversed Old Indian the light-squared bishop has more of a future on \texttt{c}2 than on \texttt{e}2. The move \texttt{h}2-\texttt{h}3 is useful, so, all in all, White is okay but can hardly claim an edge.

5...\texttt{b}bd7

We should also consider the other way to block on \texttt{d}7: 5...\texttt{d}d7 6.\texttt{x}xd7+ \texttt{x}xd7 (after 6...\texttt{b}xd7 White should probably also play 7.\texttt{b}b2, in order to avoid the hassle of 7.d3 \texttt{c}4?!) 7.\texttt{a}a2 \texttt{c}c6 8.d3 White certainly hasn’t much here, but his bishop is better than Black’s and he might use the \texttt{d}5-outpost one day.

6.\texttt{e}e2 \texttt{e}e7 7.d4 0-0 8.0-0 \texttt{a}6

9.\texttt{a}a7?

On 9.\texttt{d}d3 there could follow 9...cxd4 10.cxd4 \texttt{b}xd4 11.\texttt{c}c3 \texttt{d}d5 intending either ...\texttt{d}6-\texttt{d}5 or ...\texttt{f}8 followed by ...\texttt{f}8; either way, Black is fine.

9...\texttt{d}xd7 10.\texttt{x}xe5 \texttt{d}xe5

Maybe Black should try 10...\texttt{xe}5+ since White now enjoys a lasting initiative.

11.\texttt{d}d1 \texttt{c}e8 12.\texttt{c}c4 \texttt{d}d8

White would also be better after 12...\texttt{b}6 13.\texttt{b}b3 \texttt{b}b7 14.\texttt{d}d5+.

13.\texttt{c}c3 \texttt{b}8 14.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{b}6
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

Now Glek – Kondenko, Voronezh 2010, continued 15.b4!? cxb4 16.Qd5+. White could even consider sacrificing an exchange with 15.exd8?! Qxd8 16.Bd1. White would have good compensation, but there is no need for such an extravagant approach.

E) 4...b6

5.Qb5!

Or 5.Qd3 Qb7 6.Qe2 Qbd7 and so on, when we reach a position from the 4...Qbd7 line (see below) where White has had to commit himself with an early Re2, which is not a serious drawback.

5.Qc4

This avoids the inconveniences linked with a subsequent ...Ec8 and ...Qc7, as in the 4...Qbd7 section, but at the price of losing a tempo (Qc4-b3-c2 instead of Qd3-c2).

5...Qbd7 6.Qd3

Aiming to continue 0–0, Qe1, Qb3-c2 (or Qbd2) and d3-d4. At some point White will have to withdraw his bishop to b3, in order to be able to answer ...d6-d5 with the advance e4-e5.

5...Qbd7 6.Qe4 Qc7 7.e5

White was by no means obliged to force matters, and he could instead have kept a stable plus with 7.Qbd2 a6 8.Qd3.

F) 4...Qbd7

8.exd6?

Also interesting is 8.Qa4 b5 9.exf6 bxa4 10.Qxe7 Qc7 11.Qxa4 when Black has to justify his pawn sacrifice, however 8.exf6 only leads to a messy game after 8...axb5 9.Qxe7 Qxe7, Saw – Deepan, Canberra 2009.

8...Qxd6 9.Qd3 cxd4 10.cxd4

White has a rather promising IQP position.

5.Qd3!

This principled move is essential White if wants something out of the opening. However, many other moves have also been tried:
5.d3 is of course legal, but it shows a lack of ambition!

5.\( \text{c2} \)

This way of protecting e4 is alright for the moment, but the queen is likely to end up misplaced.

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

This move prevents the formation of a central pawn duo, but 5...e5 also deserves attention.

As for 5...g6, I am not convinced Black can achieve full equality with: 6.d4 \( \text{c7} \) 7.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{g7} \) 8.0-0 0-0 9.\( \text{e1} \) e5 10.\( \text{dxe5} \) dxe5 ½-½ Armas – S. Ivanov, Bordeaux 1997. I would have been tempted to continue (with \( \text{bd2}, \text{a4}, \text{c4} \) and so on) as White.

6.\( \text{c4} \) e6 7.0-0 \( \text{e7} \) 8.\( \text{d1} \) e1 0-0

9.\( \text{a4} \)

A sign that White’s set-up is somewhat artificial. The problem is that 9.d4 is hit by 9...\( \text{cxd4} \) 10.\( \text{cxd4} \) \( \text{xe4}! \).

9...\( \text{b6} \)

9...\( \text{d5?!} \) 10.\( \text{exd5} \) \( \text{xb6} \) looks roughly equal too.

10.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{b7} \) 11.\( \text{\textbf{f4}} \) \( \text{c6} \) 12.\( \text{bd2} \) \( \text{b7} \)

This is Wohl – Roiz, Biel 2005. Now the engines suggest that White could have claimed an advantage after 13.\( \text{b4}! \), and that his opponent should therefore have preferred 12...\( \text{a6}! \).

Black now has three main moves: F1) 5...\( \text{e5} \), F2) 5...\( \text{e5} \) and the main move F3) 5...\( \text{b6} \).

There are also quite a few minor options to consider:

5...\( \text{c4?!} \) Changing the pawn structure like this
is premature. White stands better whether he opts for 6.\textit{c}2!? or the even simpler 6...\textit{c}4 \textit{d}xe4 7.d4=. He may then continue 0-0, \textit{d}3, c4, \textit{c}3 and so on. The move h2-h3 will prove to be quite a useful precaution against ...\textit{g}4.

5...\textit{e}6 6.0-0 \textit{e}7 7.\textit{c}2 0-0 8.d4= was Lukov – Lepan, Creteil 2002. This is exactly what White aims to get from the opening: a central pawn duo and a space advantage, with no direct black counterplay in sight.

5...\textit{g}6 Fianchettoing the dark-squared bishop does not look so smart in conjunction with ...\textit{b}d7. It is not a disaster for Black just yet, but he will not manage to gain central parity in the near future. As a consequence his opponent gains more chances of an opening edge by just continuing with the standard \textit{c}2 and d2-d4. For example, 6.\textit{c}2 \textit{g}7 7.0-0 0-0 8.d4? or 7...\textit{e}5 8.\textit{e}1 0-0 9.d4 \textit{x}xd4 10.\textit{c}3 \textit{x}d4 11.\textit{x}d4= Barlov – Khenkin, Las Palmas 1994.

After 5...\textit{c}7 6.\textit{c}2 White plans the usual d2-d4 and the following attempt to disrupt that is ineffective: 6...d5 7.exd5 \textit{d}xd5 8.0-0 \textit{e}6 9.d4= Boskovic – Volas, Belgrade 2003.

For 5...\textit{a}6 see 4...\textit{a}6 (line B).

F1) 5...\textit{d}e5

In answer to his opponent's committal decision White has a choice between betting on his ability to exploit a superior pawn structure after 6.\textit{d}xe5 or following his usual plan (6.\textit{c}2 and then d2-d4). Thus the two lines are F11) 6.\textit{d}xe5 and F12) 6.\textit{c}2. The latter appears more promising, but let's have a look at both of these radically different approaches:

F11) 6.\textit{d}xe5 \textit{d}xe5 7.\textit{f}e2 \textit{g}6

8.\textit{b}5†
Trading light-squared bishops, here or on the next move, looks fairly sensible. White must however be aware that he may experience problems covering d3.

Other options include 8.\textit{c}4 and 8.\textit{a}3. In the latter case after 8...\textit{g}7 White should avoid 9.\textit{d}4? as in Vasiukov – Ghinda, Eforie Nord 1988, because then 9...\textit{h}5! provoked the weakening 10.g3.

8...\textit{d}7 9.a4
Another option was 9.\textit{a}3.

9...\textit{a}6
Now Black is okay however White replies:

10.\textit{c}4
Or 10.\textit{xd}7\textit{f} xd7 followed by ...\textit{d}8 and
...\texttt{\texttt{Wd3}}, or else \texttt{\texttt{Wc6}}, depending on what White does. Note that White cannot freeze his opponent's queenside and achieve the "dream position" (a4-a5 plus \texttt{\texttt{Qa3-c4}}) because of 11.a5 \texttt{\texttt{Ed8}} 12.\texttt{\texttt{Qa3}} \texttt{\texttt{Wf4}}.

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

10...\texttt{\texttt{b5}}! 11.\texttt{\texttt{axb5}} \texttt{\texttt{axb5}} 12.\texttt{\texttt{Exa8}} \texttt{\texttt{Wxa8}}
13.\texttt{\texttt{Exb5}} \texttt{\texttt{Wxe4}}

With a balanced endgame.

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

7...\texttt{\texttt{g6}}
Also possible is 7...\texttt{\texttt{e5}} when Armas - Fracnik, Wijk aan Zee 1995, continued: 8.0-0 \texttt{\texttt{ce7}}
9.\texttt{\texttt{Ed1}} 0-0 10.d4 \texttt{\texttt{cxd4}} 11.\texttt{\texttt{cxd4}} \texttt{\texttt{exd4}} 12.\texttt{\texttt{Exd4}} \texttt{\texttt{Wb6}} 13.\texttt{\texttt{Ed1}} \texttt{\texttt{ce6}} 14.\texttt{\texttt{Qc3}} \texttt{\texttt{fc8}} Black exerts some pressure on the enemy queenside and his only liability, the backward d-pawn, can be covered rather conveniently at the moment. His disadvantage is reduced to a minimum.

8.0-0 \texttt{\texttt{g7}}
8...\texttt{\texttt{h6}}? was tried in Mazé - Gerber, Geneva 2007. A similar idea exists in the Rossolimo variation: 1.e4 c5 2.\texttt{\texttt{f3}} d6 3.\texttt{\texttt{b5}}+ \texttt{\texttt{Ec6}} 4.0-0 \texttt{\texttt{Ed7}} 5.\texttt{\texttt{Be1}} a6 6.\texttt{\texttt{f4}} \texttt{\texttt{g4}} 7.h3 \texttt{\texttt{xf3}} 8.\texttt{\texttt{xf3}} \texttt{g6}
9.c3 \texttt{\texttt{h6}} Black aims to swap the dark-squared bishops, taking with ...\texttt{\texttt{cxd4}} and then playing ...\texttt{\texttt{e7-e5}}.

9.d4 0-0 10.\texttt{\texttt{Ed1}}
10.\texttt{\texttt{dxc5}}? is worth trying: 10...\texttt{\texttt{dxc5}} 11.\texttt{\texttt{ce5}} \texttt{\texttt{Ed7}} 12.\texttt{\texttt{e6}} \texttt{\texttt{fxe6}} 13.\texttt{\texttt{Wxe2}} \texttt{\texttt{ce5}} 14.\texttt{\texttt{Qd2}} In Fracnik - Krush, USA (rapid) 1999, White had definite compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

10...\texttt{\texttt{c7}} 11.\texttt{\texttt{dxc5}} \texttt{\texttt{Wxc5}} 12.\texttt{\texttt{Qc3}} \texttt{\texttt{Wc6}} 13.\texttt{\texttt{Qd2}} \texttt{\texttt{Wxe6}} 14.\texttt{\texttt{Qb3}} d5 15.\texttt{\texttt{Qd4}} \texttt{\texttt{dxe4}}

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

We have been following Armas - Z. Peng, Wijk aan Zee 1995. Now instead of 16.\texttt{\texttt{Qf4}} White should play:

16.\texttt{\texttt{xf6}}!
This would at least have brought White the better pawn structure. Even so after:
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

16...\textit{Rxf6} 17.\textit{Rxg6} bxc6 18.\textit{Rxe4} \textit{Rfc8}

It should not be too difficult for Black to hold.

\textbf{F2) 5...e5 6.0-0}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
& a & b & c & d & e & f & g & h \\
\hline
8 & & & & & & & & \\
7 & & & & & & & & \\
6 & & & & & & & & \\
5 & & & & & & & & \\
4 & & & & & & & & \\
3 & & & & & & & & \\
2 & & & & & & & & \\
1 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

6...\textit{Rc7}

Black's other standard set-up is: 6...g6
7.\textit{Re1} \textit{Ag7} 8.\textit{Cc2}! (this is more logical than 8.\textit{Cf1} which eventually led to messy play in Hernandez - Djurhuus, Turin [ol] 2006) 8...0-0 9.\textit{d4} This would give White a good version of the similar position with the queen's knight on c6. Indeed, there would be less pressure on d4 and no irritating options such as 9...\textit{Rxe4} (we saw such ideas in 4...g6 lines of Chapter 7).

7.\textit{Cc2}

Or 7.\textit{Re1} 0-0 8.\textit{Cf1} a6 9.a4 b6 10.d4\$, Malakhov - Amonatov, Sochi 2007.

7...0-0 8.\textit{d4}

We have reached the same position as after 5...e6, except that this pawn is placed one square further. Again, White has achieved what he wanted and can count on a stable plus.

\textbf{F3) 5...b6 6.0-0 \textit{Rb7} 7.\textit{Re1}}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
& a & b & c & d & e & f & g & h \\
\hline
8 & & & & & & & & \\
7 & & & & & & & & \\
6 & & & & & & & & \\
5 & & & & & & & & \\
4 & & & & & & & & \\
3 & & & & & & & & \\
2 & & & & & & & & \\
1 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

We have arrived at a standard position for the 4...\textit{Qbd7}/5...b6 system. Black usually tries to impede the plan of \textit{Cc2} and then d2-d4 by means of 5...\textit{Rc8} and ...\textit{Cc7}, which prevents the white c-pawn recapturing on d4. Another possibility for Black is simply to continue ...\textit{e7-e5}, ...\textit{Cc7} and ...0-0, not contesting White's central supremacy. Transpositions are frequent here. I will not point out all of them, but will instead try to illustrate how White can get an edge.

Black now has three important options: \textbf{F31) 7...e5, F32) 7...\textit{Rc8} and the main line F33) 7...\textit{Cc7}.}

Note that 7...c4?! is inadvisable. Similarly to 5...c4?! this trade of pawns suits White very well. After 8.\textit{Rxc4} \textit{Qxe4} 9.d3 \textit{Qe6} 10.d4 in Ibragimov - Langer, Lindsborg 2004, White had the better prospects.

\textbf{F31) 7...e5 8.\textit{Cc2} \textit{Cc7} 9.d4 0-0 10.d5}

This position is reminiscent of the Breyer variation of the Ruy Lopez: 1.e4 \textit{e5} 2.\textit{Qf3} \textit{Qc6} 2.\textit{b5} a6 4.a4 \textit{Qf6} 5.0-0 \textit{Cc7} 6.\textit{Re1} b5 7.\textit{b3} 0-0 8.\textit{c3} d6 9.\textit{h3} \textit{Qb8} 10.d4 \textit{Qbd7} and so on. In this line Black has already expanded on the queenside, which may help him to find counterplay. He has also kept the option of undermining his opponent's centre by ...\textit{C7-c6}, if White decides to gain ground with d4-d5.
All in all, I believe White has better chances of getting an edge in "our" position than in the one resulting from the Ruy Lopez.

10.\text{\textit{Q}}bd2 \textit{e}e8 11.\textit{dxe5} \textit{dxe5} 12.a4 as in Bosiocic – Aliavdin, Pardubice 2007, also looks more promising for White in my view.

10...\textit{Q}e8
Instead of this common plan, which prepares the ...f7-f5 thrust by ...\textit{Q}e8, ...g7-g6 and ...\textit{Q}g7, Black tried his luck on the other wing in two games in France:

10...b5 11.a4

Or 11.\text{\textit{Q}}bd2 \textit{c}4 12.\textit{Q}f1 \textit{c}5 13.\textit{Q}g3 (13.g4! first looks more appropriate, since \textit{Q}g3, \textit{h}2, \textit{g}1 and \textit{f}5 is the scariest plan for Black) 13...g6= Cornette – Genov, France 2008.

11...a6 12.\textit{A}e3 \textit{bxa4} 13.\textit{Q}fd2 \textit{b}6 14.c4 \textit{A}xa3!? 14...c8 15.\textit{Q}c3 \textit{A}b8 16.\textit{A}a2 \textit{e}e8 17.\textit{Q}x a4 \textit{Q}xa4 18.\textit{A}xa4

In Bauer – Chabanon, France 2007, White was slightly better due to the possibility of later bringing the knight to a5.

11.\text{\textit{Q}}bd2!?
The text is my suggested improvement over the game Kuznetsov – Panarin, Krasnodar 2004, which continued 11.c4 g6 12.\textit{h}6 \textit{Q}g7

13.g4 \textit{Q}f6 14.\textit{h}2 \textit{c}8 15.\textit{Q}g1 \textit{h}8 16.\textit{Q}c3 \textit{Q}g8 with unclear play. If the bishop retreats from h6 then Black will play ...f7-f5.

11...\textit{g}6 12.\textit{Q}f1 \textit{Q}g7 13.\textit{h}6
And then g4 and \textit{Q}g3. In contrast to the game quoted above, I think White needs the queen's knight on the kingside.

F32) 7...\textit{c}c8 8.\textit{c}c2

8...e5
In Bauer – Derieux, Cannes 2008, an alternative was tested:

8...c4?!
However, this proved to be too ambitious. Indeed, Black is a long way from castling short and is likely to experience problems if the queenside is opened.

9.\text{\textit{Q}}a3 \textit{a}6 10.b3 \textit{b}5 11.bxc4 \textit{bxc4} 12.\textit{e}e1 \textit{a}8 13.\textit{Q}b4 \textit{b}6 14.\textit{d}4!
242 Expercs on the Anti-Sicilian

14...d5
Black is in trouble however he plays.
14...cxd3 is of course strategically desirable, but with most of his pieces still in the garage and his king in the centre, Black would be blown away after, say, 15...xd3.
14...e6 looks as though it might keep the centre safely closed, but it is an illusion: 15.d5! For example: 15...exd5 16...e3! and now Black has a dismal choice between 16...xd7 17.exd5 18.xc4 and the even more terminal 16...fd7 17.exd5 18.xb6 x6 19.xd4.
15.e5 xe4 16.e6 f6 17.xd2 g6 18.xe4 dxe4 19.xc4 xc4 20.a4 t c6 21.xc61 xc6 22.wa4 3 23.d5 g7 24.dxc6 0-0 25.xf4 1-0

F33) 7...c7 8.xc2 xc8

I am again sceptical about 8...c4. In Bitoon – Paragua, Kuala Lumpur 2006, it worked well after White’s cooperative play: 9.d4 cxd3 10.xd3 e6 11.xg5 xe7 12.xbd2 0-0 13.xc1 a6 14.c4 uc8 And Black had obtained a comfortable hedgehog set-up. More critical, in my opinion, were the moves 9.b3 or 9.xc2.

9.d4 xe7 10.d5 a6

At this juncture White’s intended 9.d4 cxd4 10.cxd4 is impossible because the c2-bishop is hanging. Instead 9.d3 is playable but slow, so let’s check out White’s best tries, namely F331) 9.xa3, F332) 9.a4 and, rather surprisingly, F333) 9.d4.

F331) 9.xa3

As will become clear, the knight is not well placed here, which is Black’s gain in return for having less space.

9...e6
This is the piece development that Black should select.
9...g6?!  
This does not fit in with Black's set-up. In the encounter Kryvoiuchko – Sorcinelli, Rethymnon 2009, the second player was harshly punished for it:
10.d4 cxd4 11.cxd4 g7 12.e5!  
This timely action draws profit from the black king's situation.
12...dxe5 13.dxe5 xf3 14.xf3  

14...fxe5?
14...h5 had to be tried, even though White, at the very least, had 15.a4 a6  
16.xc4 0-0 17.xd7 xc8 18.xb6 xb6  
19.a4 cashing in a pawn.
15.a4 h5 16.a4† h8 17.c1 b8  
18.xc8† xxc8 19.xe5 xe5 20.xe5 xh3  
21.xd4 f6 22.g4 g7 23.xe7 1-0

In Golod – Gershon, Ramat Aviv 2000, White manoeuvred in order to try to avoid the thematic ...d6-d5:
10.b3 e7  
10...d5? is too hasty: 11.e5 dxe4 12..b2 with the idea of 13.d3.
11...b2  
Instead 11.d4 cxd4 12.cxd4 d5 13.e5 should be met by 13...e4!† rather than 13...xa3  
14.exf6 gxf6! 15.xa3 xc2 16.xc2 xc2  
17.ec1 with enough compensation for the pawn because White will threaten to penetrate on c7 after the rook swap.
11...0-0 12.c1 b8

13.d4?!  
Losing patience.
The game would still remain about level after 13.d3, contemplating b1-d2 and finally d3-d4. However, pushing the d-pawn only one square forward would be an admission of failure.
13...cxd4 14.cxd4 d5 15.e5 e4  
With a slight edge to Black.

10...cxd4 11.b5  
11.cxd4?! would of course be hit by the standard 11...d5!.

11...c5  
Hitting the knight (and thus preventing cxd4) is stronger than 11...b8?? as in Andriasian – Garza Marco, Benasque 2009,
which conceded White an advantage without any fight. 12.cxd4 \( \text{\textit{Sf}} \) 13.\( \text{\textit{Sf}} \) 14.\( \text{\textit{Sg}} \) 0-0 15.\( \text{\textit{Sd}} \) a6 16.\( \text{\textit{Sc}} \) b5 17.a3

12.\( \text{\textit{Sb}} \)xd4
White has not managed to obtain his dream pawn structure, but the features of the position, and namely the option of \( \text{\textit{Sg}} \)xe6, give him realistic chances to outplay his opponent.

12.\( \text{\textit{Sa}} \)a7?? \( \text{\textit{Sf}} \)a8 13.cxd4 \( \text{\textit{Sa}} \)a5

12.\( \text{\textit{Sf}} \)xd4! a6 13.\( \text{\textit{Sa}} \)a3 (13.\( \text{\textit{Sb}} \)b4! \( \text{\textit{Sf}} \)h5 is even worse because c3 will fall) 13...\( \text{\textit{Sf}} \)e7

12...\( \text{\textit{Le}} \)7
Or if 12...a6 then 13.\( \text{\textit{Sg}} \) having in mind the above-mentioned sacrifice on e6.

13.\( \text{\textit{Le}} \)3 \( \text{\textit{Sf}} \)h5
On 13...\( \text{\textit{Sf}} \)7 there is again 14.\( \text{\textit{Sg}} \)!!

14.\( \text{\textit{Sf}} \) 0-0 15.\( \text{\textit{Sd}} \)
With perhaps a tiny pull for White.

F332) 9.a4

This represents an attempt to improve on 9.\( \text{\textit{Sa}} \)a3, but as the following two examples suggest, Black can get a satisfactory game:

9...a6 10.\( \text{\textit{Sa}} \)a3 e6

11.d3
White would like to push this pawn one square further, but it does not work out well in this case: 11.d4?! cxd4 12.cxd4 d5! This is a common ploy in Black’s arsenal; we have already seen several such counter-strikes.

11...\( \text{\textit{Le}} \)7 12.\( \text{\textit{Le}} \) 0-0

13.\( \text{\textit{Lc}} \)1
Or i3.\( \text{\textit{Sa}} \)c4 b5 14.\( \text{\textit{Sa}} \)xb5 axb5 15.\( \text{\textit{Le}} \)3 \( \text{\textit{Sf}} \)d8 Parmensini – A. Hoffman, Mar del Plata 1996, also with mutual chances.

13...\( \text{\textit{Sf}} \)e8 14.\( \text{\textit{Sb}} \)h2 \( \text{\textit{Sd}} \) 15.\( \text{\textit{Sc}} \)e5 dxe5

16.\( \text{\textit{Sf}} \)2 \( \text{\textit{Sd}} \)7 17.\( \text{\textit{Sf}} \)4 exf4 18.\( \text{\textit{Sf}} \)d4 \( \text{\textit{Sf}} \)d8

19.\( \text{\textit{Sf}} \)f1 \( \text{\textit{Sf}} \)b8 20.\( \text{\textit{Sf}} \)2 \( \text{\textit{Sg}} \)6 21.\( \text{\textit{Sf}} \)e3 \( \text{\textit{Sf}} \)b8

Chapter 9 - 2.\(\text{\&f3}\) d6 3.\(c3\) \(\text{\&f6}\) 4.h3 – Rare Lines

Chapter Conclusion

Set-ups where Black plays ...\(\text{\&bd7}\), ...e7-e5, ...\&e7, ...b6 and ...\&b7 are akin to a closed Ruy Lopez. However, if Black then expands with ...a7-a6 and ...b6-b5 then the tempo count seems in White's favour. And otherwise it is not easy for Black to find any counterplay. Thus I believe White can claim a small but lasting edge in such lines.

Overall Conclusion

In the last three chapters we have taken an in-depth look at the system 1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{\&f3}\) d6 3.c3 \(\text{\&f6}\) 4.h3. In addition to leading to less-trodden paths than the usual 3.d4, it has an indisputable merit: it sets Black the problem of finding a remedy to the plan of pushing d2-d4 (and recapturing with the c-pawn in reply to ...c5xd4).

As we have seen, there are of course various adequate replies for Black; we could hardly hope to refute the Sicilian Defence! However, from my personal experience I can attest that Black is rarely ready to meet this line, so the second player usually fails to equalize the game.

I hope my analysis will offer food for thought for White or, for those interested in the black side, enough information so that you are not caught by surprise.
Christian Bauer

King's Indian Attack

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.d3

2...e6

A) 3.g3
B) 3.d3 c6 4.g3
   B1) 4...d6
   B2) 4...g6 5...g2 g7 6...0–0 d5 7...bd2 e7 8.e1 0–0
      B21) 9.h4
      B22) 9.c3
      B23) 9.e5
   B3) 4...f6 5...g2
      B31) 5...e7
      B32) 5...d5 6...bd2 e7 7.0–0
         B321) 7...c7
         B322) 7...b6
         B323) 7...0–0

247
251
251
254
255
256
258
261
261
264
266
267
269
1.e4 c5 2.\f3 e6

In this chapter we look at what happens when White fianchettoes his king's bishop, aiming for a reversed King's Indian. To this end, White chooses between A) 3.g3 or B) 3.d3, and although play often transposes, we shall see that White's move order can play a significant role.

A) 3.g3

This is much the less common of the two options, but it has some interesting points. In particular, if Black doesn't pay attention, his opponent may win a crucial tempo by later pushing d2-d4 directly, instead of the pawn taking two moves to arrive at d4. This possibility can effectively rule out some of Black's most popular setups.

On the other hand, a drawback may be that Black can cross White's plans by playing an early ...d5, before White is ready to support his e-pawn with Qbd2 (or \f62).

3...Qd6

Black can also advance his d-pawn at once, but it shouldn't change much:

3...d5 4.exd5

4.d3 is relatively unexplored and looks harmless. However, I believe that White does have some practical chances to gain an edge in the ending:


b) 4...Qc6 5.Qg2 dxe4 (5...Qf6 transposes to page 261) 6.Qxe4 \f6xd1+ 7.Qxd1 Qd6 8.Qf2? b6? 9.e5 Qd5 10.c4 Qd7 11.Qc3 (11.Qe4?) 11...Qb7 12.Qb5 0-0-0 13.Qd6+ Qd6 14.exd6 Qf5= Bauer – Ublava, Albox (rapid) 2009.

4...exd5 5.Qg2

5.d4 is liable to lead to the main line, either directly with 5...Qc6 6.Qg2, or by a longer route such as 5...Qf6 6.Qg2 Qe7 7.0-0 0-0 8.Qxc5 Qxc5 9.Qg5 Qc6 10.Qc3.

5...Qc7+?

Black decides to steer clear of the likely transpositions to the main line after either 5...Qc6 or 5...Qf6.

6.Qf1

More double-edged, but also more promising than: 6.Qe2 Qxe2+ 7.Qxe2=

6...Qc6 7.d4 Qf6 8.Qc3 Qe6 9.Qe3 0-0-0 10.Qe2 Qg4 11.Qg5 f6 12.Qd2 Qxd4 13.Qxd4 Qd7 14.Qxc6 Qxc6 15.Qd4 Qd7

Morozevich – Mietzis, Turin (ol) 2006. In this somewhat unclear position, Emms suggests the interesting 16.Qa5, after which 16...Qe8
248 Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

17.\texttt{We2} would leave the d-pawn looking sickly, so 16...b6 has to be tried. Then neither king is ideally placed, but the weakness of Black's looks more serious.

4.\texttt{Ag2} d5

An important feature of White's move order is that 4...g6 can be strongly met by 5.d4. The duel Short - Kostenko, Calcutta 2009, then continued: 5...\texttt{cxd4} 6.\texttt{Agxd4} a6 (6...\texttt{Ag7} 7.\texttt{Ab5} is unpleasant for Black) 7.\texttt{Cc6} bxc6 8.0-0 d6 9.c4 (9.\texttt{a3}??) 9...\texttt{Ag7} 10.\texttt{Wd3} \texttt{Aa7} 11.\texttt{Cc3} \texttt{Cf7} Now 12.\texttt{Ah6}! would have been strong, the point being that 12...\texttt{Axh6}?! 13.\texttt{Wd4} forks the two rooks.

5.\texttt{exd5}

5.d3 transposes to the note to Black's 3rd move above.

5...\texttt{exd5} 6.d4

6...\texttt{Af6}

Black can choose to develop either of his bishops first:

6...\texttt{Ac6}!!

I consider this to be inaccurate. The set-up with ...\texttt{Ac7} and ...\texttt{Af6} looks healthier than that with ...\texttt{Ac6} and ...\texttt{Ag7}.

7.0-0 \texttt{Ae7}

After 7...\texttt{Af6}?! 8.\texttt{Ae1}+ \texttt{Ae6} 9.\texttt{Ag5} 0-0

10.\texttt{Axe6} \texttt{fxe6} 11.\texttt{Axe6} Black does not have enough for the pawn.

8.\texttt{dxc5} \texttt{Axh5} 9.\texttt{Ad2}

Also possible is: 9.\texttt{Cc}3 0-0 10.\texttt{Cc1} d4 11.\texttt{Cd}4 \texttt{Ab}6 12.\texttt{Cd}3 \texttt{Af}5 Glek - Tregubov, Vlissingen 2002. White's position looks a bit preferable, but it is not obvious how he should make progress.

9...0-0 10.\texttt{Ab}3 \texttt{Ab}6

The position is reminiscent of a French Tarrasch (1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\texttt{Cc}2 c5 4.exd5 \texttt{exd5} 5.\texttt{Ag}3 \texttt{Cc6} 6.\texttt{Ab}5 \texttt{Cd}6 7.\texttt{dxc5} \texttt{Axh5} where White's light-squared bishop has landed on g2. The evaluation isn't altered - White can claim a small plus.

11.\texttt{Ae1} \texttt{Ag4}

11...\texttt{Af5}?? might be a better way to fight for control of the d4-square.

12.\texttt{h3} \texttt{Ah5} 13.c3 a5 14.a4 h6

14...f6 is a slight improvement, though 15.\texttt{Ag3} still gives White the upper hand.

15.\texttt{Cc}3 \texttt{Axe3} 16.\texttt{Hxe3} \texttt{Ab}6 17.g4 \texttt{Ag6} 18.\texttt{Cd}4

8...\texttt{Af6}

The position is reminiscent of a French Tarrasch (1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\texttt{Cc}2 c5 4.exd5 \texttt{exd5} 5.\texttt{Ag}3 \texttt{Cc6} 6.\texttt{Ab}5 \texttt{Cd}6 7.\texttt{dxc5} \texttt{Axh5} where White's light-squared bishop has landed on g2. The evaluation isn't altered - White can claim a small plus.

11.\texttt{Ae1} \texttt{Ag4}

11...\texttt{Af5}?? might be a better way to fight for control of the d4-square.

12.\texttt{h3} \texttt{Ah5} 13.c3 a5 14.a4 h6

14...f6 is a slight improvement, though 15.\texttt{Ag3} still gives White the upper hand.

15.\texttt{Cc}3 \texttt{Axe3} 16.\texttt{Hxe3} \texttt{Ab}6 17.g4 \texttt{Ag6} 18.\texttt{Cd}4
White has somewhat weakened his kingside, but this doesn't count for much here. Black has no counterplay and must defend passively.

18...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash b6}} 19.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d6}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d4}} 20.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d4}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash c6}} 21.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d1}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d7}} 22.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash h4}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash c7}} 23.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash h5}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash h7}} 24.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d2}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash f4}} 25.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash f3}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash xf3}} 26.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash xf3}}

White had a considerable advantage in Short - Ivanchuk, Wijk aan Zee 2010, although he ultimately failed to overcome the Ukrainian's stubborn defence.

6...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash g4}} 7.0-0

This is more natural than: 7.dxc5 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash e7}} 8.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash f1}} (forced, since both 8.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash e3?}} d4 and 8.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash c2?? \texttt{\textbackslash exf2}} 9.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash dxe2}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d4}†} lose for White) 8.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash dxc5}} 9.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash c3}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d6}} 10.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash f3}} 11.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash f8}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash f5}} 12.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash h3}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d6}} 13.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash b5}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash h5}} 14.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash f4}} Hasangatyn - Vorobiov, Krasnodar 2002. The weakness of Black's isolated d-pawn is balanced by White having a stupid king on f1.

7...cxd4

7...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d4}†} is riskier. White unpins with 8.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash e1}†} and now:

a) 8...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash e6}†}? Being behind in development, Black will have a hard time over the next few moves. 9.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d5}} 10.c4 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d6}} 11.cxd5 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d4}} 12.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash c3}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d3}} 13.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d5}†} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash e7}? (14...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash f8} was necessary, although White would still enjoy a clear edge after 15.bxc3) 15.bxc3 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d7}} (15...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash b6}†} is stronger, since 15...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d4} fails to 16.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash e1}}) 15...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash h3}} 16.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash f5}†} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash c7}? (Black could have stayed in the game with the correct 16...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash e8}†}, e.g. 17.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash f1}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash g8}} 18.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash b7} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash c7}} and there is no immediate tragedy) 17.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash b1}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash e5}} 18.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash b7} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash f1}} 19.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash c6}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash e5}} 20.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash g5}†} 1-0 Rozenblat - D. Cramling, Stockholm 2009.)

b) 8...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash e6}} 9.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d4}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d4}} 10.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d2}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash c5}} (10...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash f6} may be an improvement, although with 11.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d3}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash b6} 12.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d2} intending 13.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash f5} followed by \texttt{\textbackslash d4}, White regains the pawn with some advantage}) 11.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash b3}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash b6}} 12.a4 a5 13.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash f4}†} (instead of this sharp advance, White could have secured a small but enduring edge by means of 13.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash f4} or 13.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash e5} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d5}} 14.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d5}†} (13...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash e7}? was stronger, not fearing the complications that result from 14.f5 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d7}} 15.f6. Indeed, after 15...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash xf6}} 16.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash xf6}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d5†} 17.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash c3}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash x5}†} 18.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash fxe3}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d5} dxc2 the black king should soon reach relative safety with ...0-0 and ...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash g6}}. In the meantime White can win back the sacrificed pawns, but it doesn't seem that he can achieve anything more.) 14.f5 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d7}} 15.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash h1}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash f6}} 16.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d1}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash c4}} 17.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d4}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash h5}} 18.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash c3}†} Glek - Portisch, Hockenheim (rapid) 1997.)

8.c3

8.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash e1}†} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash e7}} 9.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d2}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash e6}} 10.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash b3}} 0-0 11.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d4}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash c5}†} Chadaev - S. Novikov, Dagomys 2010.

8...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash g4}}

8...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d6}} Black can also accept the challenge with 8.dxc3, and provided he doesn't try too hard to hang on to his extra pawn, he should be okay: 8...dxc3 9.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash dxc3}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash e6}} 10.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash a5}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash e7}} 11.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash b3}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d5}†} 12.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash b4}†} 13.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d3} 0-0= Slobodjan - Timoshenko, Arco 1998. White can and should take back the d-pawn, but this doesn't give him more than an equal game.

9.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash h3}}

Or 9.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash a4 \texttt{\textbackslash g7} 10.\texttt{\textbackslash d4} \texttt{\textbackslash d7} and Black isn't suffering much from his isolated d-pawn.}}

9...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash e4}} 10.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash f3}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash e7}} 11.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d1}} \text{\texttt{\textbackslash dxc3}} 12.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d3}}
d4 13.\noblique{b}5 \noblique{e}5
Black doesn't give back his booty without getting something in return. The following series of moves is logical and its outcome is an approximately equal ending.
14.\noblique{f}4 \noblique{b}8 15.\noblique{c}xd4 \noblique{x}f4 16.\noblique{c}xc6 bxc6
17.\noblique{x}xf4 \noblique{x}xf4 18.\noblique{g}xf4 \noblique{d}d8 19.\noblique{e}1
19.\noblique{a}c1?? might be a better try.
19...\noblique{d}d6 20.\noblique{e}3 \noblique{d}7

7.0–0 \noblique{e}7
Exchanging on d4 may also be good enough:
7...\noblique{c}xd4 8.\noblique{x}xd4 \noblique{e}7 9.c4
9.h3?! looks superfluous; after 9...0–0 10.\noblique{c}3 \noblique{b}6 White had to retreat with 11.\noblique{c}ce2 in Deviatkin – Grachev, Irkutsk 2010.
Perhaps 9.\noblique{c}c3 is best here, but after 9...0–0 10.\noblique{c}e3 \noblique{g}4 Black is quite close to equality anyway.
9...0–0 10.cxd5
On 10.\noblique{c}c3, the easiest path to equality seems to be 10...\noblique{g}4.
10...\noblique{c}xd5 11.\noblique{c}xc6 bxc6 12.\noblique{w}a4 \noblique{e}6

Black's superb d5-knight compensates for his isolated queenside pawns. Since 13.\noblique{w}xc6 would run into 13...\noblique{e}8 followed by ...\noblique{b}4, White's safest option may be 13.\noblique{c}c3 with equality.

8.dxc5

White has also tried:
8.h3 0–0 9.\noblique{c}e3?? (9.\noblique{c}c3) 9...\noblique{b}6 10.\noblique{c}c3 \noblique{w}xb2 11.\noblique{a}a4 \noblique{a}a3 12.\noblique{c}xc5 b6 13.\noblique{c}c1 \noblique{w}c3
14.\noblique{d}d2 \noblique{c}c4 15.\noblique{e}e1?? bxc5 16.\noblique{c}f1 \noblique{a}a4–+
8.\noblique{c}e3 \noblique{c}xd4 9.\noblique{c}xd4 0–0 10.h3 \noblique{e}e8 11.\noblique{e}e1 \noblique{h}6 12.\noblique{d}d2 \noblique{a}a6 13.\noblique{c}c3 \noblique{d}7 14.\noblique{b}b3 \noblique{a}a7 15.\noblique{a}ad1 \noblique{c}c7 Short – Caruana, Wijk aan Zee 2010. Chances are approximately level in this complex middlegame.

8...\noblique{c}xc5

The alternatives seem less critical:
9.\noblique{e}e1 \noblique{c}c6 10.\noblique{c}g5? 0–0 11.\noblique{c}xe6 \noblique{c}xe6
12.\noblique{c}xe6 \noblique{c}f2† 13.\noblique{h}h1 (13.\noblique{c}xc2?? \noblique{w}b6† 14.\noblique{c}e2 \noblique{c}e4 wins for Black) 13...\noblique{b}6 14.\noblique{c}xf8 \noblique{c}xf8 Black has at least equality.
9.\noblique{c}bd2 0–0 10.\noblique{c}b3 \noblique{c}c6 11.\noblique{c}bd4 (after 11.\noblique{c}c3 \noblique{e}e8 12.\noblique{c}bd4 \noblique{c}g4 13.\noblique{d}d3 \noblique{c}e4 14.\noblique{c}e3 \noblique{f}6 Black's active pieces fully compensated for his isolated pawn in Boidman – Schlosser, Germany 2007) 11...\noblique{e}e8 12.\noblique{c}e3 \noblique{c}g4 13.\noblique{h}h5 14.\noblique{c}c3 \noblique{e}4 15.\noblique{g}4 \noblique{g}6∞ Black is again very active, Bellini – Timman, Saint Vincent 2000.
9...0–0 10.\( \text{\textit{g5}} \)

10.e4 \( \text{\textit{e7}} \) 11.\( \text{\textit{e3}} \) \( \text{\textit{g4}} \) 12.h3 \( \text{\textit{d4}} \) 13.\( \text{\textit{f4}} \) \( \text{\textit{e6}} \) 14.b3 Roiz – Yagupov, Biel 2006, was agreed drawn in this unclear position.

10...\( \text{\textit{e6}} \)

This direct approach leads to simplifications, and the game soon becomes very drawish. White has also tried:

11.\( \text{\textit{xf6}} \)

This direct approach leads to simplifications, and the game soon becomes very drawish. White has also tried:

11.\( \text{d3} \) \( h6 \) 12.\( \text{\textit{f4}} \) \( \text{\textit{e8}} \) 13.\( \text{\textit{ad1}} \) \( \text{\textit{c8}} \) 14.a3 \( \text{\textit{a6}} \) 15.h3 \( \text{\textit{d7}} \) 16.g4 \( \text{\textit{a7}} \) With mutual chances. Bauer – V. Milov, Ajaccio (blitz) 2007.

11.\( \text{\textit{e1}} \) \text{d4} 12.\( \text{\textit{xf6}} \) \( \text{\textit{xf6}} \) 13.\( \text{\textit{e4}} \) \( \text{\textit{e7}} \) 14.\( \text{\textit{d3}} \) \( \text{\textit{b6}} \) 15.\( \text{\textit{h5?!}} \) Kim – Nadanian, Moscow 2003. Now 15...\( h6 \) 16.\( \text{\textit{ae1}} \) \( \text{\textit{b4}} \) looks level; a possible finish is 17.\( \text{\textit{xb4}} \) \( \text{\textit{xb4}} \) 18.\( \text{\textit{f6}} \) \( \text{\textit{xf6}} \) 19.\( \text{\textit{axe6}} \) \( \text{\textit{fxe6}} \) 20.\( \text{\textit{g6}} \) with perpetual check.

11...\( \text{\textit{xf6}} \) 12.\( \text{\textit{xd5}} \) \( \text{\textit{xb2}} \) 13.\( \text{\textit{g5}} \) \( \text{\textit{f5}} \) 14.\( \text{\textit{e4}} \) \( \text{\textit{b6}} \) 15.\( \text{\textit{b1}} \) \( \text{\textit{xa2}} \) 16.\( \text{\textit{xb6}} \) \( \text{\textit{axb6}} \) 17.\( \text{\textit{xb6}} \) \( \text{\textit{ad8}} \) 18.\( \text{\textit{wh5}} \) \( \text{\textit{g6}} \) 19.\( \text{\textit{wc5}} \) \( \text{\textit{d4}} \) 20.\( \text{\textit{d6}} \) \( \text{\textit{e6}} \) 21.\( \text{\textit{c3}} \) \( \text{\textit{xc2}} \) 22.\( \text{\textit{wc2}} \) \( \text{\textit{xc2}} \) 23.\( \text{\textit{be1}} \) \( \text{\textit{c5}} \) 24.\( \text{\textit{ec1}} \) \( \text{\textit{da4}} \) 25.\( \text{\textit{xb7}} \) \( \text{\textit{g6}} \) 26.\( \text{\textit{bc6}} \)

\( \frac{1}{2} \)–\( \frac{1}{2} \)


B) 3.\( d3 \) \( \text{\textit{c6}} \) 4.g3

Although the limitations of space mean that it is not possible to cover absolutely all of Black’s systems, we shall look at a variety of the most popular set-ups for his kingside pieces – when the knight goes to e7, the bishop may go to either d6 or g7; or the bishop may go to e7 and the knight to f6. Thus we deal with the options B1) 4...\( \text{\textit{d6}} \), B2) 4...\( g6 \) and B3) 4...\( \text{\textit{f6}} \).

B1) 4...\( \text{\textit{d6}} \)

This introduces a rare, but playable set-up. Black intends to continue with ...\( \text{\textit{ge7}} \), ...0–0, ...\( \text{\textit{c7}} \) and then ...\( d5 \). In the event of \( \text{\textit{ce2}} \), or \( \text{\textit{c4}} \) followed by f2–f4, Black can reinforce his control over the e5-square with ...\( f6 \). It looks a bit odd for Black to temporarily block his d-pawn, but if Black plays 4...d5 first, then after 5.\( \text{\textit{e2}} \) he finds that he has no time for ...\( \text{\textit{d6}} \).

The prospect of Black losing time with his bishop may encourage White to opt for an early d3–d4. However, Black need not fear the transformation of the pawn structure into one typical of the Open Sicilian; the resulting positions are usually quite decent for him.

5.\( g2 \)

White has also tried:

\text{\textit{g2}}
5. \( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 6. \( \text{d}4 \) \text{cxd}4 7. \( \text{c}xd4 \) 0–0
Zavgorodniy – Braun, Halkidiki 2001. The d6-bishop will relocate to e5, c5 or b4; Black can be confident about his chances.

5. \( \text{c}3 \)
This prevents Black from playing ...\( \text{c}7 \), but the white bishop is not well placed.
5... \( \text{d}6 \) 6. \( \text{g}2 \) \( \text{e}7 \)!
Black has seemingly lost a tempo, but in fact he is happy to have lured the enemy bishop to e3.
6. \( \text{d}4 \) \text{cxd}4
The premature 8.e5? would expose the e-pawn and soon lose it: 8...\( \text{d}7 \) 9.\( \text{f}4 \) g5?
8...\( \text{b}6 \)
This looks tempting, but is probably not best.
6... \( \text{c}4 \) 7. \( \text{c}4 \)
Black is looking for a tactical solution, in order to avoid a continuation such as 9.0–0?? \( \text{e}5 \) 10.\( \text{d}7 \) 11.0–0, when his queen proves misplaced at b6.
5...\( \text{dxe}4 \)! 10.\( \text{dxe}4 \) \( \text{c}xe4 \) would be not be such a solution: 11.\( \text{b}xe4 \) \( \text{xb}2 \) 12.0–0 \( \text{b}a1 \) 13.\( \text{c}c2 \) Black cannot avoid losing material.
7. \( \text{d}5 \)
8. \( \text{e}4 \)
The same idea that we saw in Tkachiev–Portisch above. Here Black can’t withdraw his bishop to e7, but he nevertheless gets a very satisfactory game.

5... \( \text{d}6 \) 6. \( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{cxd}4 \) 7. \( \text{c}xd4 \) 0–0
The structure has become akin to a French Defence. Black’s dark-squared bishop will find a good spot on b6, from where it can exert strong pressure on the d4-pawn.
8. \( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{c}x d4 \) 10. \( \text{c}x d4 \) \( \text{d}5 \) 11. \( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{a}5 \) 12. \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{c}a6 \) 13. \( \text{c}c1 \) \( \text{b}5 \)

The same idea that we saw in Tkachiev–Portisch above. Here Black can’t withdraw his bishop to e7, but he nevertheless gets a very satisfactory game.

The same idea that we saw in Tkachiev–Portisch above. Here Black can’t withdraw his bishop to e7, but he nevertheless gets a very satisfactory game.
Chapter 10 – King's Indian Attack

6.0-0

White has several other options:

6.0-0-0

White has achieved an improved version of 5...dxe5 6.d4, because c7 isn't the best post for the dark-squared bishop. But even so, Black doesn't seem to experience any real problems here.

7...dxe5 8.0-0 a6 9.0-0 a6= (Oratovsky recommends 9...c5 10.c4 as giving White a small plus after 10...dxe5 11.dxe5 0-0-0) 10.c4

6.c3 dxe5 7.dxe5

Developing the knight to this square is consistent with Black's plans, but he can also consider 6...dxe5. In Nevednichy – Prusikin, Miskolc 2004, White failed to gain any advantage: 7.0-0 0-0 8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4 a5= 10.d4

6.d4 cxd4 7.Qxd4

White has achieved an improved version of 5...dxe5 6.d4, because c7 isn't the best post for the dark-squared bishop. But even so, Black doesn't seem to experience any real problems here.

7...dxe5 8.0-0 a6 9.0-0 a6= (Oratovsky recommends 9...c5 10.c4 as giving White a small plus after 10...dxe5 11.dxe5 0-0-0) 10.c4

6.c3 dxe5 7.dxe5

Developing the knight to this square is consistent with Black's plans, but he can also consider 6...dxe5. In Nevednichy – Prusikin, Miskolc 2004, White failed to gain any advantage: 7.0-0 0-0 8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4 a5= 10.d4

6.d4 cxd4 7.Qxd4

White has achieved an improved version of 5...dxe5 6.d4, because c7 isn't the best post for the dark-squared bishop. But even so, Black doesn't seem to experience any real problems here.

7...dxe5 8.0-0 a6 9.0-0 a6= (Oratovsky recommends 9...c5 10.c4 as giving White a small plus after 10...dxe5 11.dxe5 0-0-0) 10.c4

6.c3 dxe5 7.dxe5

Developing the knight to this square is consistent with Black's plans, but he can also consider 6...dxe5. In Nevednichy – Prusikin, Miskolc 2004, White failed to gain any advantage: 7.0-0 0-0 8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4 a5= 10.d4

6.d4 cxd4 7.Qxd4

White has achieved an improved version of 5...dxe5 6.d4, because c7 isn't the best post for the dark-squared bishop. But even so, Black doesn't seem to experience any real problems here.

7...dxe5 8.0-0 a6 9.0-0 a6= (Oratovsky recommends 9...c5 10.c4 as giving White a small plus after 10...dxe5 11.dxe5 0-0-0) 10.c4

7.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{d3}}}\) b6 8.d4 d5?! (this seems over-ambitious; the normal 8.d4 cxd4 9.\(\text{\textit{x}}\)xd4 \(\text{\textit{a6}}\) 10.\(\text{\textit{e1}}\) 0–0 11.\(\text{\textit{c3}}\) \(\text{\textit{e}}\)xd4 12.\(\text{\textit{x}}\)xd4 was only slightly better for White in Sepp – Halkias, Crete 2007) 9.exd4 \(\text{\textit{cxd4}}\) 10.\(\text{\textit{g5}}\) f6 11.\(\text{\textit{c4}}\) \(\text{\textit{d7}}\) 12.\(\text{\textit{e3}}\) cxd4 13.\(\text{\textit{x}}\)xd4 \(\text{\textit{d7}}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{x}}\)xc6 \(\text{\textit{xc6}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{h5}}\)† g6 16.\(\text{\textit{e2}}\) \(\text{\textit{c7}}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{c3}}\) White had an obvious plus in Harikrishna – Navara, Reggio Emilia 2008.

7...\(\text{\textit{e6}}\) \(\text{\textit{d5}}\) h6 9.\(\text{\textit{c3}}\) a6

9...\(\text{\textit{d4}}\)?! might have been a better way to counter the threat of \(\text{\textit{b5}}\).

10.a3 b5?!

Now Black will face difficulties over the defence of his c-pawn; 10...d6 would have limited White's advantage.

11.\(\text{\textit{e3}}\) \(\text{\textit{c7}}\)

In the following game I decided to do without this knight move, but I must admit that I failed to set my opponent any problems: 7.\(\text{\textit{e2}}\) \(\text{\textit{g7}}\) 8.\(\text{\textit{e1}}\) 0–0 9.\(\text{\textit{c3}}\) b5! 10.e5 b4 Black correctly wastes no time and initiates his queenside action at once. 11.\(\text{\textit{g5}}\) h6 12.\(\text{\textit{e3}}\) (12.\(\text{\textit{f6}}\) might be worth a try) 12...bxc3 13.bxc3 d4 14.cxd4 cxd4 15.\(\text{\textit{d2}}\) \(\text{\textit{a6}}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{c3}}\) White had a comfortable game in Bauer – A. Sokolov, Metz 2010.

7...\(\text{\textit{g7}}\) 8.\(\text{\textit{e1}}\) 0–0

We shall study B21) 9.h4, B22) 9.\(\text{\textit{c3}}\) and B23) 9.e5, looking first at a couple of rarer tries:

9.\(\text{\textit{f1}}\) dxe4?! (9...e5! looks best here, reaching a good King's Indian with reversed colours) 10.dxe4 b6 If Black exchanges queens here or next move, the endgame should be somewhat favourable to White. 11.c3 \(\text{\textit{a6}}\) 12.\(\text{\textit{a4}}\) \(\text{\textit{c8}}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{d1}}\) b5 14.\(\text{\textit{c2}}\) \(\text{\textit{c7}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{e3}}\) \(\text{\textit{a5}}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{a4}}\) \(\text{\textit{c4}}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{f4}}\) e5 18.axb5 \(\text{\textit{xb5}}\) 19.\(\text{\textit{c1}}\) Sedina – Maksimenko, Nova Gorica 1997. White stood slightly better, in view of her superior pawn structure and the weakened d5-square.

9.\(\text{\textit{e2}}\) b6 10.\(\text{\textit{f1}}\)! (heading for the main lines with either 10.c3 or 10.e5 is a better try for an edge) 10...e5! The correct reaction, as after
9...f5 above. Instead, 10...a6?! 11.e5 suited White well in Haroson – Farago, Oerebro 1996.

**B21 9.h4 h6**

This prophylactic move is my personal preference, but Black has various other ways to respond:

9...c7 10.h5 h6 (10...gxh5?!?) 11.hxg6 fxg6 12.c3 $h7?! 13.$b3 d4 14.cxd4 cxd4 15.e5!? Mortensen – Agdestein, Espoo 1989.

9...e5 10.exd5 $xd5 11.c3 b6 12.$c4 $e8?! (12...f6 is better, although the position still looks pleasant for White) 13.$b3 $b7 14.$g5

Lau – S. Loeffler, Bundesliga 1988. White is contemplating the incursion d4-d6, as well threatening various tactics on the light-squared diagonals.

9...b6 10.h5 $b7 11.hxg6 hxg6 12.e5 $c7 13.$e2 g5 14.$xg5 $xe5 15.$d4 $d4 (obviously not 15...$xe4??) 16.$h5 $f5 17.$xe4 and White wins on the spot) 16.$h5 $f5 17.$d6 $g6 With an unclear game, Kristiansen – Kovalev, Aalborg 1995.

10.e5

White can continue to refrain from this advance and play 10.c3, hoping to get a favourable version of a reversed King’s Indian. For instance: 10...e5 (10...$c7 transposes to B22) 11.exd5 $xd5 12.$b3 $c7 13.$c4 $e8 14.$e3 $e6 15.a4 I would rather be White in this position, Hulak – Sermek, Radenci 1998.

10...f5!

10...$f5 isn’t bad either: 11.c3 f6 12.g4?! (12.exf6 is more circumspect) 12...xe5! 13.$xe5 $xf5 14.c4 $e8! 15.$f5? $xf4 $xg2 16.$xe5 $xe5 $xe5 $xb2, which looks at least equal for Black.

12...$d6 13.$c3

13.$f4? $xf4 14.$xf4 $xb2 15.$b1 $c3+

13...$h7 14.c4

In the event of 14.$g4 $f8 15.$e2 $d7 White finds it hard to further improve his position, whereas Black could continue with ...$e8 and then ...e5 at some point. White’s best may therefore be 16.$ge5 $xe5
17.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xe5 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xe5 18.\textit{\textbf{W}}xe5 \textit{\textbf{W}}xe5 19.\textit{\textbf{R}}xe5 \textit{\textbf{Q}}c6 20.\textit{\textbf{R}}e2 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d4 21.\textit{\textbf{R}}d2, but that is only equal.

14...\textit{\textbf{K}}d7

Movsziszian – De la Riva, Spain 1998. The game is complicated and full of possibilities for both sides.

12...\textit{\textbf{E}}f7 13.\textit{\textbf{Q}}g4 \textit{\textbf{W}}d6

After 13...e5!? White must play the critical 14.c4! in order to dispute the centre and gain access to the important c4-square. The situation is then rather messy.

14.\textit{\textbf{Q}}b3!

This is stronger than 14.\textit{\textbf{Q}}f3? e5! 15.\textit{\textbf{Q}}e3 (White probably realized too late that 15.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xh6?! runs into 15...\textit{\textbf{Q}}xh6 16.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xh6 \textit{\textbf{Q}}g4+, and as a consequence he has lost valuable tempos with his knight) 15...\textit{\textbf{Q}}e6 White stood clearly worse in Bologan – Lautier, Halkidiki 1992.

14...\textit{\textbf{E}}h7 15.c4 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d7 16.\textit{\textbf{Q}}e3 b6 17.d4 dxc4

17...\textit{\textbf{E}}xd4 18.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xd4 also looks to be in White’s favour.

18.dxc5 \textit{\textbf{W}}xd1 19.\textit{\textbf{W}}axd1\textit{\textbf{Q}}


B222) 9.c3

This is another way for White to keep the e4–e5 advance in reserve. In turn, Black has to decide whether or not it is profitable for him to change the central pawn structure. In my view, it is a matter of taste.

9...\textit{\textbf{W}}c7

Other options are:

9...b6 10.e5

10.a4?! \textit{\textbf{Q}}a6 11.exd5 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xd5 (11...exd5!? is also interesting) 12.\textit{\textbf{Q}}c4 \textit{\textbf{Q}}c7 13.\textit{\textbf{W}}e2 \textit{\textbf{Q}}ad8 14.h4 \textit{\textbf{Q}}fe8 (14...h6?!? 15.h5 e5! With ideas such as ...e4 in mind, Black is fine. Todorcevic – Miralles, Marseille 1988.

10...\textit{\textbf{Q}}c7

On 10...a5 White can either put a halt to his opponent’s queenside expansion by 11.a4, or simply pursue his own play, for instance: 11.\textit{\textbf{Q}}f1 a4 12.h4 h6 13.\textit{\textbf{Q}}f4 \textit{\textbf{Q}}h7 14.\textit{\textbf{W}}d2= Augustin – Suba, Decin 1977.

11.\textit{\textbf{W}}e2
This position can also be reached from the 9.e5 move order.

11...a6

Other moves deserve consideration:

a) 11...g5?! 12.h3 h6 13.e5 f6 14.d4

A big difference compared with line B23 is that here White has time to support the pride of his position, the e5-pawn. 14...a5

15.e6 cxd4 16.cxd4 a6 17.b7 White seems to be somewhat better here, Iuldachev – Murugan, Kuala Lumpur 1993.

b) 11...d7 12.e5 f6 13.exf6 xf6 14.g4

(of course, this is not forced; 14.e5 is an interesting alternative) 14...xf4 15.gxf4 xf6 (after a sequence of forced moves)


12.e5 d4 13.c4 b5 14.b3 cxd4 15.bxc4 ab8 16.g4

Minic – Hulak, Zagreb 1975. Also possible is the standard 16. h4 followed by h2-g4.

In either case, I prefer White as I feel that his kingside actions should be quicker than Black’s queenside counterplay.

9...d4?! 10.cxd4 a6 11.e5

Recapturing with 10...cxd4?! is worse due to 11.e5!

11...d4 12.e5

Damljanovic – Costa, Brno 1991. Next will come a5 or b3, with an edge for White.

Instead, the immediate 12.e5 c5 13.d4 a6 14.e3 would be acceptable for Black.

9...e5!!

Going into a reversed King’s Indian tempo down; this is taking things a bit far!

10.exd5 cxd5 11.b3

11.e5 essentially comes to the same thing; Black experiences difficulties containing his rival’s activity: 11...e8 12.e5 b6 13.a4 c7 Myo Zaw Min – Sermek, Kuala Lumpur 2008. Now the tactical shot 14.e6! would have gained White the bishop pair thus a lasting plus.

11...d7 12.c4 c7 13.a3 d5?! 13...d8 was the lesser evil, although 14.xc5 d5 15.e3 f5 16.h4xd3 17.e2 followed by xf5 remains unappealing for Black.

14.xc5 b6 15.e3 d5 16.e2±

Kuzubov – Ryachkov, Bhubaneswar 2009.

10.h4

White may also play:

10.e2 b6 11.h4 dxe4!!

Black should usually refrain from this capture, because if he then continues with ...e5, White gets a nice outpost at d5. Otherwise White may play e4-e5, vacating the e4-square for his knight. True, in that case Black obtains the d5-square in return, but overall it seems to me that White is benefiting.

11.h6 would return to the main line.

12.c4 a5 13.d3 a6 14.c4 b5

Trying to get some play at the cost of ruining his pawn structure. In any case, White would have continued with f1 and c2, with a pleasant position.

15.axb5 axb5 16.f1±

Dzhumaev – Al Modiahki, Doha 2003.

10.exd5!!

This does not look sufficient in order to fight for an advantage.

10...d5
11. \( \text{c4} \)

White has also tried:

a) 11. \( \text{a4} \) b6 12. \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{b7} \) 13. \( \text{h4} \) h6= Todorcevic – Miralles, Marseille 1987, is not dissimilar to Todorcevic – Miralles, Marseille 1988, seen in the previous note.

b) 11. \( \text{b3} \) b6 12. \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{d7} \) 13. \( \text{f4} \) \( \text{d8} \) 14. \( \text{d2} \) (14. \( \text{d4} \) seems preferable, e.g. 14... \( \text{a6} \)!! 15. \( \text{dxc5} \) \( \text{xb2} \) 16. \( \text{b1=0} \) 14... \( \text{a6} \) 15. \( \text{h4} \)!! \( \text{c8} \) 16. \( \text{ad1} \) \( \text{f5} \) White doesn't have much compensation for the hole on d4, Bauer – Hamdouchi, Montpellier 1993.

11... \( \text{b6} \) 12. \( \text{g5} \) \( \text{b7} \) 13. \( \text{g4} \) 14. \( \text{d8} \)

The position was approximately equal in Ljubojevic – Hulak, Zagreb 1975. If Black can keep any tactics under control, then he may eventually have an 'easy prey' in the form of the backward d3-pawn.

10... \( \text{h6} \) 11. \( \text{e2} \) b6 12. \( \text{e5} \) f6 13. \( \text{cxf6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 14. \( \text{f1} \) \( \text{f7} \)

15. \( \text{e3} \)

We have already seen in an analogous position (Frois – Grimaldi in the note to Black's 9th move) that 15. \( \text{f4} \)!! is liable to be met by an exchange sacrifice: 15... \( \text{xf6} \) 16. \( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{xf4} \) 17. \( \text{g3} \) \( \text{d7} \) 18. \( \text{h3} \) \( \text{f8} \) 19. \( \text{g2} \) \( \text{h7} \) Black had a pawn for the exchange, and the easier game in Movsziszian – Ibarra Jerez, Granada 2006.

15... \( \text{e5} \) 16. \( \text{h5} \) g5

If Black is afraid of the piece sacrifice that this provokes, then 16... \( \text{gxh5} \) 17. \( \text{h2} \) \( \text{d6} \) 18. \( \text{xf5} \) is playable for him, albeit slightly better for White.

17. \( \text{xg5} \! \! \! \! \! \! \!

At first glance this looks very promising, but it turns out to be quite chaotic.

17... \( \text{hxg5} \) 18. \( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 19. \( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{b7} \) 20. \( \text{xg5} \)

Or 20. \( \text{xf7} \) \( \text{xf7} \) 21. \( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{d8} \) and the vulnerable light squares around the white king make the position rather unclear.

20... \( \text{d8} \) 21. \( \text{xb7} \) \( \text{xb7} \)

The position remains highly unclear, although Black eventually triumphed in Rojas Keim – Ibarra Jerez, La Roda 2009.

B23) 9. \( \text{e5} \)

The most frequent continuation, denying Black the opportunity to play ... \( \text{e5} \) himself. Now that his c-pawn has crossed the equator of the board, White has announced his plan: \( \text{h2-h4} \) followed by \( \text{f1-h2-g4} \) etc.

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

Black has a broad choice. We shall briefly examine his various options:
9...f6 10.exf6
10.\texttt{b3}?! leaves Black with a nice grip on the centre: 10...exf6 11.\texttt{xc5} b6 12.\texttt{d2}
\texttt{f5} 13.\texttt{c3} \texttt{d6} 14.\texttt{b3} a5. It is already difficult to suggest a constructive plan for White. 15.\texttt{bd2} b5 16.\texttt{e2?} b4 17.\texttt{xe5}
\texttt{xe5} 18.\texttt{xe5} \texttt{d4} 19.\texttt{g4} \texttt{xe5} 20.\texttt{c4}
dxc4 21.\texttt{xg6}+ \texttt{g7} 22.\texttt{xa8} \texttt{xc2} 23.\texttt{e4}
\texttt{xd3} 24.\texttt{xf1} \texttt{d7} 25.\texttt{g4} c5 0–1 Maaroug – Bauer, France 2010.

10...\texttt{xf6}

We have reached the same position as in the main line of B21, except that both h-pawns are still on their initial squares. This shouldn't really alter the evaluation (unclear), since the moves h2–h4 and ...h6 are liable to be played sooner or later.

9.\texttt{f5} 10.\texttt{b3} \texttt{c7}

11.\texttt{f4} b6 12.c3 a5 13.a4 \texttt{a6} 14.\texttt{g4} \texttt{fe7}

J. Howell – B. Socko, Groningen 1995. Both sides have their trumps, and chances are shared.

After 9...a5 10.a4 Khachiyan – Peters, Los Angeles 2003, Black can play 10...\texttt{f5} or 10...b6, both of which are likely to transpose into 9...\texttt{f5} above.

9...b5 10.h4 h6 11.\texttt{f1} b4 12.\texttt{h2} \texttt{h7} 13.\texttt{f4} a5 14.\texttt{g4} \texttt{f5} 15.\texttt{d2} \texttt{a6}

Zablotsky – Rychagov, Internet 2004. White's kingside attack seems to be at a dead end, but on the other hand the black queen is restricted by the need to guard against a nasty \texttt{f6}+. For that reason, the paradoxical 16.a3?! is interesting here.

10.\texttt{e2} g5

This counter-intuitive thrust has worked well in practice. Let's take a look at some of the more classical continuations:

10...a5 11.\texttt{f1} b5 12.h4 \texttt{f5} 13.c3 a4 14.a3
b4 15.\texttt{f4} bxc3 16.bxc3 \texttt{b8} 17.g4 \texttt{fe7}

10...f6 11.\texttt{xf6} \texttt{xg6} 12.\texttt{f1} e5 13.\texttt{e3} \texttt{e6}
14.c4! d4?! (14...\texttt{ad8}) 15.\texttt{f1} Antunes – Mariotti, Andorra 1987. White has created a nice outpost at e4 for his knights, and stands better.
10...b6 11.\emph{d}f1 d4 12.h4 \emph{b}7 13.\emph{h}h2 \emph{h}8 14.\emph{g}4+ Ciocaltea – Eising, Amsterdam 1976.

10...\emph{d}d4?! 11.\emph{x}d4 \emph{x}d4 12.\emph{f}3 \emph{c}6 13.\emph{f}4 \emph{d}7 14.\emph{xd}2 \emph{e}c8 15.h4 a5 16.h5 White had good attacking chances in Antunes – Ye Jiangchuan, Dubai (ol) 1986.

10...b5 11.h4 h6

11...f6?! appears much riskier, though Black could have improved on his later play in Movsziszian – Leon Hoyos, Salou 2008: 12.exf6 \emph{xf}6 13.c4 bxc4 14.dxc4 \emph{f}5 15.\emph{b}3 \emph{d}7 16.\emph{f}4 \emph{b}6 17.\emph{d}d1 \emph{e}8 18.\emph{e}5 \emph{cd}4 19.\emph{xd}4 \emph{xd}4 20.\emph{xd}4 \emph{xe}5 21.\emph{x}d5 \emph{xf}4 22.\emph{xd}7±

12.\emph{f}1

12...\emph{f}5

It is important for Black to provoke c2-c3. In lordachescu – Prasad, Yerevan (ol) 1996, he chose a passive set-up and soon found himself in trouble: 12...b4?! 13.\emph{h}h2 \emph{h}8 14.\emph{f}4 \emph{g}8 15.\emph{g}4 \emph{e}7 16.\emph{d}2 h5 17.\emph{gh}2±

13.c3 d4 13...b4 14.\emph{f}4 bxc3 15.bxc3 \emph{b}8 16.g4 \emph{fe}7 Sammalvuo – Kosanovic, Paks 2001. The position is almost identical to the game Raaste – Kirov that we encountered under 10...a5, the difference being that the a-pawns are unmoved instead of being on a3 and a4.

12...\emph{f}5

It is important for Black to provoke c2-c3. In lordachescu – Prasad, Yerevan (ol) 1996, he chose a passive set-up and soon found himself in trouble: 12...b4?! 13.\emph{h}h2 \emph{h}8 14.\emph{f}4 \emph{g}8 15.\emph{g}4 \emph{e}7 16.\emph{d}2 h5 17.\emph{gh}2±

13.c3 d4 13...b4 14.\emph{f}4 bxc3 15.bxc3 \emph{b}8 16.g4 \emph{fe}7 Sammalvuo – Kosanovic, Paks 2001. The position is almost identical to the game Raaste – Kirov that we encountered under 10...a5, the difference being that the a-pawns are unmoved instead of being on a3 and a4.

12...\emph{f}5

It is important for Black to provoke c2-c3. In lordachescu – Prasad, Yerevan (ol) 1996, he chose a passive set-up and soon found himself in trouble: 12...b4?! 13.\emph{h}h2 \emph{h}8 14.\emph{f}4 \emph{g}8 15.\emph{g}4 \emph{e}7 16.\emph{d}2 h5 17.\emph{gh}2±

13.c3 d4 13...b4 14.\emph{f}4 bxc3 15.bxc3 \emph{b}8 16.g4 \emph{fe}7 Sammalvuo – Kosanovic, Paks 2001. The position is almost identical to the game Raaste – Kirov that we encountered under 10...a5, the difference being that the a-pawns are unmoved instead of being on a3 and a4.

12...\emph{f}5

It is important for Black to provoke c2-c3. In lordachescu – Prasad, Yerevan (ol) 1996, he chose a passive set-up and soon found himself in trouble: 12...b4?! 13.\emph{h}h2 \emph{h}8 14.\emph{f}4 \emph{g}8 15.\emph{g}4 \emph{e}7 16.\emph{d}2 h5 17.\emph{gh}2±

13.c3 d4 13...b4 14.\emph{f}4 bxc3 15.bxc3 \emph{b}8 16.g4 \emph{fe}7 Sammalvuo – Kosanovic, Paks 2001. The position is almost identical to the game Raaste – Kirov that we encountered under 10...a5, the difference being that the a-pawns are unmoved instead of being on a3 and a4.

This should favour White, who doesn't need to worry about ...\emph{b}3.

14.g4 \emph{fe}7 15.\emph{c}4?

15.\emph{cxd}4! \emph{x}d4 16.\emph{g}3 \emph{b}7 17.\emph{d}2 would have been roughly equal.

15...\emph{bxc}4 16.\emph{xc}4 \emph{a}6 17.\emph{b}3 \emph{ad}8

Black has a large advantage, David – Marciano, Clichy 1995; he can combine a pressure against the e5-pawn with ideas such as ...d4-d3 or ...\emph{d}5.

10...\emph{d}7 11.h4 (11.\emph{b}3 is probably more precise) 11...\emph{f}6 12.\emph{xf}6 \emph{xf}6 13.\emph{b}3 \emph{e}8 14.\emph{g}5 (14.\emph{xc}5? \emph{d}4 15.\emph{xd}4 \emph{xf}2 would have been disastrous for White) 14...\emph{f}6? Lastin – Epishin, Elista 1996.

12.\emph{f}3

12...\emph{xf}5

The alternatives are:

11.\emph{g}x\emph{g}5

The alternatives are:

11.h3 h6!

Or 11...\emph{g}6 12.\emph{b}3 h6 13.\emph{xc}5 \emph{xc}5 14.\emph{xe}5 \emph{xe}5 15.\emph{b}3 Varavin – Sergienko, Voronezh 1991.

12.\emph{b}3 b6 13.\emph{d}4 \emph{g}6 14.\emph{e}3

White can maintain the integrity of his pawn chain with 14.\emph{c}3, but after 14...\emph{cd}4 15.\emph{xd}4 a5 16.\emph{e}3 \emph{a}6 17.\emph{d}2 \emph{ef}2 Black obtains a slight initiative on the queenside.

14...\emph{cd}4 15.\emph{xd}4

Now 15...a5!? looks an interesting idea for
Black, although 15...\(\text{Qxd4} 16.\text{Qxd4}\) was also okay for him in Movsziszian – Ulibin, Dresden 1994.

After 11.\(\text{Qbd3} \text{g4} 12.\text{Qh4} \text{Wxe5} 13.\text{Qd1} \text{Wd6} 14.\text{Wxg4}\) the position should be dynamically balanced, Black possessing a strong centre in return for the more exposed king.

11...\(\text{Wxe5} 12.\text{Wxe5} \text{exe5}\)
Or 12...\(\text{Wxe5} 13.\text{Qf1} \text{Qf5} 1/2\) Damljanovic – Giorgadze, Belgrade 1992.

13.\(\text{Qb3} \text{g7} 14.\text{c3} \text{b6}\)

This position first arose in Daverkausen – Ulibin, Oberwart 1995, and has appeared a few times since. The ending is easier to play as Black, and indeed Black has scored highly from this position, but objectively it is close to equal.

B3) 4...\(\text{Df6} 5.\text{g2}\)

We shall look at two principal set-ups, split according to whether Black advances his d-pawn one square or two: B31) 5...\(\text{e7}\) and B32) 5...\(\text{d5}\).

B31) 5...\(\text{e7} 6.0–0 0–0 7.\text{e1 d6}\)
It is worth considering 9...\textit{dxe5?} \textit{dxe5}, followed by either \textit{10.f4} or \textit{10.a3}.

This seems more to the point than 10...\textit{d7} 11.\textit{a3}, when White's space advantage gave him a small plus in Dzhuamaev – Zvjaginsev, Linares 2000.

11.\textit{dxe5} \textit{dxe5} 12.\textit{we2} \textit{e6} 13.\textit{d2} \textit{xc7} 14.\textit{c4}.

Threatening 15.\textit{exf5} \textit{xf5} 16.\textit{f4}.

White should be marginally better because of the two bishops, Art. Minasian – Nisipeanu, Moscow 2005.

8...\textit{e5?!}

This was answered by 9.\textit{a3} in Yu Shaoteng – Wang Rui, Gyula 2000, but White has other valid options too, such as 9.a3 (intending b2-b4) or 9.h3, which prepares d3-d4 by preventing the ...\textit{g4} pin.

8...\textit{d5?!} concedes ground for no reason: 9.e5 \textit{e8} 10.d4\textit{2} Valido – Cruz Lima, Cuba 1995.

8...\textit{b8?!} is a bit peculiar, as the game continuation tends to confirm: 9.d4 \textit{cxd4} 10.\textit{d5} 11.\textit{e5} \textit{e4} 12.\textit{b2} \textit{xd2} 13.\textit{exe2} \textit{d7} 14.\textit{f1} 15.\textit{e5} \textit{xf6} 16.\textit{f4} White had an edge in Psakhis – Ye Jiangchuan, Moscow (2.4) 2001.

8...b6 9.d4 \textit{d5} 10.\textit{exd5} (10.\textit{e5?!} seems more ambitious) 10...\textit{cxd5} 11.\textit{d5} \textit{b7} 12.\textit{f4} \textit{e8} 13.\textit{xc6} \textit{xc6} = Skripchenko – V. Milov, Port Erin 2004.

9.\textit{bd2}

Other options are:

9.a3 \textit{c8}

This is most flexible, but there are playable alternatives:

a) 9...\textit{e5} 10.b4 \textit{b5} 11.\textit{b2} (11.d4?! \textit{cxd4} 12.\textit{xd4} \textit{g4} 13.d5 \textit{d4} 14.\textit{c3} White has more space, and he will be happy if his 'bad' g2-bishop is swapped) 11...\textit{b4} Brkljaca – Vukic, Yugoslavia 1993. Now 12.axb4 would have secured White a small plus.

b) 9...\textit{e5} 10.d4 \textit{xf3} 11.\textit{xf3} \textit{xd4} 12.\textit{xd4} d5 13.\textit{e5} \textit{c6} 14.\textit{g2} (if White grabbed the pawn with 14.\textit{xe4} \textit{dxe4} 15.\textit{c3} \textit{c6} 16.\textit{xe4} then Black would, of course, obtain long-term compensation on the light squares) 14...\textit{f6} 15.\textit{f3} \textit{g5} 16.\textit{e3} \textit{fxe5} (16...\textit{e7?!}) 17.\textit{dxe5} \textit{d4} 18.\textit{f2} (White could try 18.\textit{xe5} \textit{g5} 19.\textit{xd4}, but not 19.\textit{xd4}? \textit{b6}! 20.\textit{f5} \textit{d3} 21.\textit{h1} \textit{c6} and White's king is looking very vulnerable) 18...\textit{c6} 19.\textit{d2} \textit{d5} 20.\textit{c1}

Bologan – Sandipan, Gibraltar 2008. White is planning \textit{xc6} followed by f3-f4. The position is messy, but perhaps slightly in White's favour.
10.b4 b5 11...bd2

Play has transposed into the main line. Instead 11.a4 a6 12.axb5 axb5 13...xd2 was roughly equal in Riff – Dorfman, France 2006.

9.d4 cxd4 10.cxd4 d5

11.e5

Or 11.exd5 cxd5 12...e3 wb6 13...g5 

g5 14...xd5 h6 15...ge4∞ Kaidanov – Serper, Seattle 2002.
11...e4 12...bd2 cxd2 13...xd2 e8 14.a3

Amin – Margvelashvili, Yerevan 2007. The position is balanced. White will do his best to attack on the kingside, by means of h2-h4 and ...g5 at some point. In the meantime his opponent will aim to generate counterplay on the queenside.

9...e8

The immediate 9...b5 is quite acceptable too: 10.a4 bxa4 (10...b4 would be met by 11...c4) 11.e5 (This is a more inspired attempt at extracting an edge than 11...c4 

g4 12...xa4 ge5 13...xe5 xe5 14...a2 

fxe3† ½–½ Tkachiev – Hulak, Porec 1998. White cannot do much to make his superior pawn structure tell.) 11.dxe5 12...c4 e4

13.dxe4 xe5 14...xa5 xa5 15.e5 e5 16...g5 (16.e4?! ...b6 17...d2 a6 18...g5 leads to unclear complications) 16...e8

17...xg7 xe7 18...g5 h6 19...e4 White had full compensation for the missing pawn in Harcek – Bologan, Bundesliga 1995.

10.a3

Another approach is: 10.a4 a6 11.e5 ...e8

(after 11...xe5 12...c4 b5 13.axb5 axb5 14...xe5 ...e8 White is no more than a touch better, Tkachiev – Cvičan, Makarska 1997) 12.exd6 cxd6 13...b3 b6 Tkachiev – Bojkovic, Las Palmas 1997. Again White may stand a little better, but not more.

10...b5

11.b4

The alternative is playing in the centre:

11.d4! cxd4 12.cxd4 a5

Other options seem adequate too:

a) 12...b4 13.d5 exd5 14.exd5 ...xd5 15...e4 

...b6?! (15...xe6?! 16...e5 ...d7 17...xe6 

fxe6 18.axb4! was also unsuitable, but Black should have preferred 15...wa5 16...g5 ...e6 with roughly equal chances) 16...xd6 xe7

17...f4 White had an unpleasant initiative in Tkachiev – Gofshrein, Port Erin 1996.

b) 12...e5 13.d5 wa5 14.b3 w8 15...f1 

d8 With shared chances, Erenburg – Evdokimov, Internet 2006.

13.d5

13.b3? would keep the position more fluid.
Cementing the strong c4-knight. White cannot really make use of his bishop pair here.

19...\textit{b}1 \textit{h}6 20.\textit{h}4 \textit{e}7

$\frac{1}{2}$-$\frac{1}{2}$ Tkachiev - Cvitan, Geneva 1997.

11...\textit{cxb}4

Black has failed to reach a fully level game with other moves as well:

11...\textit{a}5 12.\textit{bxc}5 dxc5 13.e5 \textit{d}5 14.\textit{e}4 (or 14.c4 bxc4 15.\textit{xc}4 \textit{c}7 16.\textit{d}2 \textit{a}4 17.\textit{h}4+ Landa - Vogt, Germany 2001) 14...\textit{b}4

(14...\textit{c}4!? may be worth a try) 15.\textit{x}b4 \textit{axb}4 16.c4 \textit{b}6 17.\textit{e}3

White had the more promising game in Vachier Lagrave - Skripchenko, Cap d'Agde (rapid) 2006.

11...\textit{c}xb2 \textit{b}6 13.\textit{bxc}5 \textit{xc}5 (13...dxc5 14.c4! is unpleasant for Black) 14.a4 \textit{a}6 15.axb5 \textit{axb}5 16.a6 \textit{b}8 17.d4 \textit{c}7 18.ea7+ D'Amore - Solak, Sarajevo 2010.

12.\textit{axb}4 \textit{a}5 13.\textit{bxa}5 \textit{xa}5 14.\textit{a}3

This is probably Black's most common set-up against the King's Indian Attack. Black usually castles here, but sometimes delays committing his king. We shall concentrate on B321) 7...\textit{c}7, B322) 7...\textit{b}6 and B323) 7...0-0, but first we take a brief look at a few rarer options:

7...\textit{a}5? 8.\textit{a}4

A natural reply, although proving a white advantage is not easy.

8.e5?! is not advisable, as Black has the standard response 8...\textit{d}7 9.e1 \textit{g}5! and White finds himself on the defensive. However, 8.e1!! \textit{a}4 is worth further investigation. For instance, Nevednichy -- Stevic, Sarumi 1999 continued: 9.a3 \textit{h}6 10.c3 \textit{b}5 11.exd5 exd5 12.c4?! With interesting play.

8...\textit{b}6

Or: 8...0-0 9.e1 \textit{b}6 10.exd5 (10.e5?! is more ambitious) 10...\textit{d}7 11.\textit{f}3 \textit{e}6 12.\textit{f}4 The game is roughly equal, Bosboom - Cu. Hansen, Groningen 1990.

9.e1 \textit{b}7

10.exd5 exd5 (10...\textit{xd}5? looks a bit suspicious for Black, letting the white knight have the c4-square after having weakened his queenside) 11.d4 0-0 12.dxc5 \textit{xc}5

Yudasin - Sveshnikov, Lvov 1983. White stands slightly better, in view of the isolated b5-pawn; of course, the c3-pawn is taboo due to \textit{xb}4.
With a dynamically balanced game, Oll – Mortensen, Koge 1997.

10...h6

10...0-0?! 11.e5 seems awkward for Black, who will find it hard to generate counterplay.

11...e2 d7 12.exd5 exd5 13.d4 a6

½–½ Geller – Larsen, Biel 1976. Black's policy of delaying castling has borne fruit; the game is about level. White should perhaps have tried e4-e5 at some point if he wanted to try for more.

7...b5

8.exd5

White may also play:

a) 8.a4 b4 (I prefer this to 8...bxa4 9.a3 0-0 10.exd5 exd5 11.d4, as played in Glek – Nijboer, Groningen 1997, though in both cases the evaluation is somewhere between equal and slightly better for White) 9.exd5 (or 9.b3 10.exd5 cxd5 11.d4 0-0∞ Carlhammar – Hillarp Persson, Gothenburg 2010; White's c4-knight is ideally placed, but it is not obvious how he should continue) 9...exd5 (in the light of what follows, 9...cxd5?? looks safer) 10.b3 0-0 11.a3 b6 12.a5 b5 13.e1 a6?? 14.h4 &c8 15.a3 Strikovic – Drasko, Yugoslavia 1989. There is no doubt about White's ascendancy here, even though the game was eventually drawn.

b) 8.e5 d7 9.e1 is likely to transpose to B323, because having played ...b5, queenside castling is liable to be too risky.

8...exd5

Nor does the other recapture fully equalize:

8...cxd5 9.c4 bxc4 10.dxc4 a6 11.e2

9.c4 10.dxc4 0-0 11.exd5 cxd5


7...dxe4?! This is a not uncommon guest in tournament practice, but in my view the capture is premature. I shall give just one example where White takes advantage of it and achieves an edge by simple means: 8.dxe4 c7 9.c3 0-0 10.h2 e5 11.d4 b5 12.d3 a6 13.b1 b8 14.d5± Damljanovic – Larino, Lorca 2006.
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

B321) 7...\(\text{c7}\)

Black makes a useful move, while postponing the decision about where to hide his king.

8.\(\text{Be1}\) b6

9.e5!

The most resolute, though White has several other options at this point:

9.\(\text{Bf1}\)

White is intending \(\text{f4}\), which prompts Black's answer.

9...dxe4 10.dxe4 \(\text{a6}\) 11.\(\text{f4}\)

11.e5 \(\text{d8}\) 12.\(\text{d2}\) \(\text{g4}\) 13.c3 0–0 14.\(\text{a4}\)

\(\text{xf1}\) 15.\(\text{xd4}\)

15...\(\text{xg2}\) (15...\(\text{xg2}\) was interesting, as this bishop is currently playing a more active role than its counterpart. 15...\(\text{xe5}\) also deserved attention, though at the end of the melee White would remain with the more pleasant position: 16.\(\text{Exe5}\) \(\text{xd2}\) 17.\(\text{h6}\) [17.\(\text{xd2}\) \(\text{xd2}\) 17...\(\text{xf6}\) 18.\(\text{Exe7}\) \(\text{xd2}\) 19.\(\text{xd2}\)] 16.\(\text{h6}\) \(\text{g6}\) 17.\(\text{xd2}\) \(\text{xe8}\). This was approximately equal in Kasparov - Kramnik, Moscow (3 - blitz) 1998, since White's attacking potential is too limited to cause serious damage.

11...e5 12.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{d8}\) 13.\(\text{c3}\)!

White is planning \(\text{xf6}\) followed by \(\text{e3}\), but he runs into some tactics.

13...\(\text{xf1}\) 14.\(\text{xf1}\) \(\text{xe4}\)! 15.\(\text{xe7}\) \(\text{xd2}\)

16.\(\text{g4}\) \(\text{xe7}\)!

This would have rewarded Black for his daring 14th move, and improves on 16.\(\text{xe7}\) 17.\(\text{xe7}\), which provided White with enough compensation for the pawn in Tkachiev - Cornette, Belfort 2010.

17.\(\text{xe4}\)

After 17.\(\text{xe4}\) !? \(\text{d8}\) 18.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{f8}\) 19.\(\text{xe4}\) \(\text{g6}\) Black has a healthy extra pawn.

17...\(\text{xf6}\) 18.\(\text{g2}\) \(\text{xf2}\) 19.\(\text{h1}\) \(\text{xe2}\) 20.\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{g2}\) 21.\(\text{g2}\) \(\text{xe7}\)!

9.exd5 \(\text{xd5}\) (9.exd5 is also playable)

10.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{b7}\) 11.\(\text{c4}\) \(\text{f6}\) 12.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{c8}\) 13.\(\text{e2}\)

0–0 14.\(\text{f1}\) \(\text{d8}\) 15.\(\text{d4}\) \(\text{xd4}\) 16.\(\text{f4}\)

\(\text{xd4}\) 17.\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{xd4}\) 18.\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{xd4}\) 19.\(\text{xd4}\)

\(\text{b7}\) 20.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{f3}\) 21.\(\text{f3}\) Damljanovic - Nikcevic, Vrnjacka Banja 1998. The endgame
that has arisen is typical of the Catalan Opening, and yields White a small risk-free plus.

9.c3 \(a6\)

After 9...0-0 10.e5 \(\text{d}7\) 11.\(\text{e}2\) \(a6\) 12.\(\text{f}1\) Black’s queenside counterplay looks rather slow, so he should consider playing in the centre with either 12...d4 or 12...\(\text{e}8\)? 13.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{d}8\) 11.\(\text{d}2\) \(f6\) Titov – Beliavsky, Debrecen 1992.

10.exd5

Not a bad move, but the resulting position looks easier to play for Black. A more complicated try is 10.e5 \(\text{d}7\) 11.\(\text{e}2\) g5 12.c4 with a murky position, Doghri – Bammoune, Dubai (ol) 1986.

10...\(\text{d}5\)!

11.\(\text{c}4\) 0-0 12.a4 \(\text{d}8\) 13.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{e}2\)? looks safer.

13...\(\text{f}6\) 14.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{d}7\) 15.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{d}8\) 16.\(\text{c}1\) h6 17.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{b}7\) 18.\(\text{d}2\)?

18.\(\text{db}4\)!! 19.\(\text{xb}4\) \(\text{xd}3\) 20.\(\text{xe}2\) \(\text{xb}4\) 21.\(\text{xb}1\) \(\text{g}2\) 22.\(\text{xb}2\) \(\text{c}6\) 23.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{xa}4\) Frias – Cifuentes, Wijk aan Zee 1991. With three pawns for the piece and the white army lacking coordination, Black is clearly on top.

9...\(\text{d}7\) 10.\(\text{c}4\)

10.\(\text{e}2\) g5 seems promising for Black at first sight, but after 11.\(\text{c}4\)! it is hard to give a definitive assessment. For instance, V. Fedorov – Khait, Yerevan 1969, continued 11...g4 12.\(\text{cxd}4\) gxf3 13.\(\text{xd}3\) exd5, and now 14.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{d}8\) 15.\(\text{e}6\) \(\text{f}6\) 16.\(\text{g}5\) would be unclear.

10...\(\text{b}7\)

10...d4?! 11.\(\text{e}4\) is fine for White.

11.\(\text{cxd}5\) \(\text{exd}5\) 12.\(\text{f}1\)

White can also play 12.d4 directly. Adly – Laznicka, Yerevan 2007, continued 12...\(\text{f}8\) 13.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{e}6\) 14.dxc5 bxc5 15.\(\text{e}3\) with an edge for White.

12...0-0-0 13.d4 \(\text{f}8\)

Now 14.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{e}6\) 15.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{f}8\) gave White some advantage in Movsesian – Van den Doel, Germany 2006, but 14.dxc5 may have been even better. Then both 14...\(\text{xc}5\) 15.a3 and 14...bxc5 15.\(\text{e}3\) look like a sizable plus for White.

B322) 7...\(\text{b}6\) 8.\(\text{e}1\)

After 8.c3 \(\text{a}6\) White tried the creative 9.\(\text{e}5\) in Iordachescu – Kamiński, Bad Wiessee 1997, but it didn’t bring much: 9...\(\text{xe}5\) 10.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{b}5\) 11.\(\text{xa}6\) 0-0 0 Black had equalized, in view of 12.\(\text{xb}5\) \(\text{a}6\) followed by 13...\(\text{xd}3\).

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

8...\(\text{c}7\) transposes to B312 above.
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

9.e5
The principled reaction, though the game may soon become very sharp once Black castles long. 9.c3 and 9.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{c}7\) 10.\(\text{f}1\) are less committal options.

9...\(\text{d}7\) 10.\(\text{h}4\)

10...\(\text{h}6\)
Black may also choose:
10...\(\text{c}7\)
This often comes to the same thing, because after ...0-0-0 Black's main source of activity tends to be ...\(\text{h}6\) and ...\(\text{g}5\).

11.\(\text{c}2\) 0-0-0 12.\(\text{c}4\)
12.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{h}6\) returns to the main line.
12...\(\text{b}4\)?
Conceding the e4-square with 12...\(\text{d}4\)?! is not advisable.
However 12...\(\text{h}6\) is interesting: 13.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{d}xc4\) 14.\(\text{dxc4}\) \(\text{d}4\) 15.\(\text{x}d4\) \(\text{cxd4}\) With an unclear game E. Wilson – Bhat, Philadelphia 1997.

13.\(\text{cxd5}\)
13.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{d}xc4\) 14.\(\text{dxc4}\) \(\text{b}8\) 15.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{d}3\)
16.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{xc1}\) 17.\(\text{xc1}\) \(\text{d}6\) Black was at least equal in Anastasian – Radulski, Batumi 2002.

13...\(\text{exd5}\)
An improvement on 13...\(\text{d}5\)?! 14.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{h}6\) 15.\(\text{d}2\) Weindl – Van Dongen, Cannes 1993, which was a bit better for White.

11.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{c}7\) 12.\(\text{c}2\) 0-0-0 13.\(\text{h}2\)

13...\(\text{g}5\)
This is more active than: 13...\(\text{b}8\) 14.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{a}8\) 15.\(\text{g}4\) White had some initiative in Biyasas – T.V. Petrosian, Buenos Aires (ol) 1978.

14.\(\text{hxg5}\) \(\text{hxg5}\) 15.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{h}5\) 16.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{d}4\)!
This may seem paradoxical as Black is usually reluctant to free the e4-square for the white pieces. In the present circumstances, however, Black needs to open the long diagonal to fuel his attack.

17.\(\text{cd4}\)?!
Opening the position helps Black; 17.e4 should have been preferred.

17...\(\text{xd4}\) 18.\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{cxd4}\) 19.\(\text{d}2\)!
Other options are:

19.\(\text{f}6\)? is not any better: 19...\(\text{xf6}\) 20.\(\text{xf6}\) \(\text{dh8}\)!

A more tenacious defence is: 19.\(\text{xb7}\) \(\text{xb7}\) 20.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{dh8}\) 21.\(\text{g2}\) Black would naturally like to deflect the white knight from the defence of the h2-square, and the computer indicates a spectacular way to go about this: 21...\(\text{f6}\)!
(also strong is 21...\(\text{b}8\) with the threat of
Chapter 10 – King’s Indian Attack

22...f5 23.exf6 Qxf6 22.exf6 Qxf6 23.Qf2 g4
Black has a ferocious attack.

19...Qd8 20.Qh7+ Qxh7 21.f3

21...Qxe5!!
This bolt from the blue sees White’s fate.

22.Bac1† h5 23.Bxe5 Qxf3 24.Bxc5† bxc5
25.Bxc5† h7 26.Bh7† a8
0–1

B323) 7...0–0

8.Bc1
8.Bc1 is usually quite similar, but here is an instance where play took a different course: 8...b5 9.Bc1 a5 10.h4 (after 10.e5, besides the standard 10...Qd7, Black can also contemplate 10...Qe8 followed by ...Qc7 and/or ...f5) 10...b4 11.e5 Qd4?! White’s unusual move order has allowed this unorthodox manoeuvre.

12.Bh3 Qh6 13.Bf1 Qf5 14.c3 a4 15.a3 bxc3
16.bxc3 Qb8 Black stood well in Kozakov – Meier, France 2008.

8...b5
Black has several other options:

8...b6?! looks too slow to me: 9.e5 Qd7 10.Qf1 (10.c4??) 10...a6 11.h4 ec8 12.Qh2 In Ljubojevic – Korchnoi, Sao Paulo 1979, Black admitted his mistake by now playing 12...b5.

Exchanging pawns with 8...dxe4?! 9.dxe4 is similar to 7...dxe4?! and gives White a small edge.

8...Qc7?! 9.e5
9.Be2 b5 10.exd5 Qxd5 (10...exd5?! 11.c4 bxc4 12.dxc4 Qf6 13.b3= Shaker – Guliyev, Vienna 2009. Although White currently has the better pawn structure, Black may soon play ...a5-a4.

9...Qd7 10.Bd2 b5 11.Qf1 a5
Maybe Black should simplify the position and target the c2-pawn by means of 11...Qd4?! which would at least justify the queen’s placement on c7. The recent encounter Kononenko – S. Zhigalko, Alushra 2010,
continued: 12.\textit{\text{xd}}d4 \textit{\text{xd}}d4 13.\textit{\text{f}}4 (on 13.a4 Black can reply 13...\textit{\text{b}}b7 14.axb5 \textit{\text{f}}c8) 13...\textit{\text{b}}7 14.h4 \textit{\text{fc}}8 15.\textit{\text{ec}}1 \textit{\text{b}}6 With a balanced game.

12.h4!

12.\textit{\text{f}}4 a4 13.c3 b4 14.c4 (14.a3??) 14...\textit{\text{b}}6 15.\textit{\text{e}}e3 dxc4 16.dxc4 \textit{\text{a}}6 was fine for Black in Varavin – Volkov, Smolensk 1991.

12...\textit{\text{a}}6 13.\textit{\text{f}}4 b4 14.\textit{\text{e}}e3 \textit{\text{b}}6 15.\textit{\text{g}}4

15...\textit{\text{wa}}7

This looks a bit strange, but White was threatening \textit{\text{f}}6\textit{\text{f}}7, as the following sample line demonstrates: 15...\textit{\text{c}}4? 16.\textit{\text{f}}6\textit{\text{f}}7 h8 17.\textit{\text{g}}5 h6 18.\textit{\text{h}}5 (threatening \textit{\text{xf}}7 and then \textit{\text{g}}8\textit{\text{f}}7) 18...\textit{\text{c}}5 19.\textit{\text{g}}4\textit{\text{e}}4! The threat of \textit{\text{axh}}6 is winning for White.

16.h5 \textit{\text{fc}}8 17.h6 g6 18.c3 bxc3 19.bxc3 \textit{\text{d}}7 20.\textit{\text{g}}5

White has good chances to profit from the weakened enemy kingside, Benko – Csom, Palma de Mallorca 1971.

8...\textit{\text{bb}}8?! 9.e5 \textit{\text{d}}7 10.\textit{\text{f}}1 b5 11.h4 b4 12.\textit{\text{h}}2 a5 13.\textit{\text{g}}4 \textit{\text{a}}6 14.\textit{\text{g}}5 (14.\textit{\text{h}}5??) 14...a4 15.\textit{\text{d}}2 \textit{\text{c}}8 16.\textit{\text{e}}4 \textit{\text{b}}5 Bogur – N. Kosintseva, Sarajevo 2010. White could now have continued 17.h5 \textit{\text{hxg}}5 18.\textit{\text{hg}}5 h6 (not 18...\textit{\text{gd}}4? 19.h6! \textit{\text{xc}}2? [19...\textit{\text{g}}6 20.\textit{\text{b}}a1\textit{\text{a}}] 20.\textit{\text{hxg}}7 \textit{\text{hxg}}7 21.\textit{\text{axh}}7 and White wins) 19.\textit{\text{fb}}3 with approximate equality.

9.e5

White occasionally tries other moves:

9.\textit{\text{fxd}}5 \textit{\text{exd}}5

10.d4

10.e5!! h6 11.h3 \textit{\text{e}}6 12.\textit{\text{g}}4 This seemingly aggressive push will merely create weaknesses in White’s own camp, but finding a constructive plan is not easy. 12.\textit{\text{c}}7 13.\textit{\text{f}}5 h\textit{\text{g}}5 14.\textit{\text{f}}5 \textit{\text{d}}7 15.\textit{\text{g}}3 \textit{\text{a}}e8 Black clearly had the sounder position in Bischoff – Uhlmann, Bundesliga 1995.

10...\textit{\text{xb}}6!

10...\textit{\text{b}}b8? 11.a4 \textit{\text{b}}b8 (in the event of 11...\textit{\text{f}}5 White should reply 12.\textit{\text{f}}1\textit{\text{f}}7 rather than 12.axb5?! \textit{\text{b}}b4 13.\textit{\text{c}}3 \textit{\text{c}}2 14.\textit{\text{e}}5 \textit{\text{c}}c1\textit{\text{c}} 15.\textit{\text{xf}}5=) 12.axb5 (although this leads to an edge for White, the immediate 12.\textit{\text{e}}5!! is even stronger) 12...\textit{\text{xb}}5 13.\textit{\text{e}}5 \textit{\text{d}}4 14.\textit{\text{b}}1 \textit{\text{a}}5 15.\textit{\text{xa}}5 \textit{\text{xa}}5 16.\textit{\text{c}}3 \textit{\text{c}}5 In Bosboom – T. Ernst, Wijk aan Zee 1992, 17.\textit{\text{xd}}5?? led to an unclear position after 17...\textit{\text{xd}}5 18.\textit{\text{xd}}5 \textit{\text{b}}4. Instead 17.\textit{\text{e}}3 would have secured a plus for White.

11.\textit{\text{c}}3 \textit{\text{xd}}4

Simply developing with 11...\textit{\text{f}}5?? is also possible.

12.\textit{\text{xd}}4 \textit{\text{xd}}4 13.\textit{\text{xd}}4 \textit{\text{g}}4 14.\textit{\text{f}}3 \textit{\text{a}}e8 15.\textit{\text{d}}3 \textit{\text{f}}4=

Chapter 10 – King’s Indian Attack

9...\(\text{d}7\)

The other retreat occurs far less frequently:

9...\(\text{e}8\)

The main point of this move is that the c8-bishop covers e6, making a later ...f6 possible.

10...f1

The alternatives are:

a) 10...f6?! 11.exf6 \(\text{x}f6\) 12.e3 \(\text{d}6\) 13.c4! Attacking the black centre. 13...c7 14.g4 e5 15.xf6? gxf6 16.cxd5 \(\text{d}5\) 17.d2 Dolmatov – Meyer, Philadelphia 1991. White has an obvious weakness on d3, but the dynamic factors, such as the vulnerable black kingside and White’s pressure on the long diagonal, outweigh it.

b) 10...a5 is of course possible, but it seems less logical with the knight on e8 rather than d7.

c) 10...b4 11.h4 c7 12.g5 b5 13.h2 \(\text{bd}4\) Black judiciously trades a pair of knights in order to diminish his opponent’s attacking troops. We are following the heavyweight clash Harikrishna – Naiditsch, Wijk aan Zee 2010, which is worth looking at right to the end. 14.c3 \(\text{xf}3\) 15.xf3 h6? It is difficult to believe, but this could be the decisive mistake. One thing is for sure, White did everything to make his opponent regret this innocent push. 16.f4 bxc3 17.bxc3 \(\text{b}8\) 18.h2 \(\text{a}5\) 19.g4 I am not sure how critical Black’s situation is, but it seems that White can launch a dangerous assault in all cases. 19...d8 (19...f5 20.h6? Anyway! 20...gxf6 21.xh6 \(\text{xc}3\) 22.xh5 \(\text{b}4\) 23.b4+- White will play \(\text{f}4\) next, cutting off the black rook from the g4-square; 19...\(\text{xc}3\)? 20.xf4 \(\text{d}4\) 21.ef4 \(\text{b}4\) 22.a3! Deflecting the queen from its defence of the g4-square. 22...\(\text{xa}3\) 23.xh6 \(\text{xc}3\) 24.xh5 \(\text{b}4\) 25.b4 f5 26.h5 \(\text{xe}5!\) 27.xb4 [27.xe5 \(\text{f}1\) 27...cxb4 28.d4 \(\text{d}7\) 29.xe5 \(\text{e}8\) 30.d1= Black is just about holding here.) 20.xh6\(\text{tg}6\) 21.xh6 f5 (21...f8 was no better; after 22.g4+ \(\text{h}7\) 23.g5 White is winning) 22.h5 f8 23.g6+ \(\text{h}8\) 24.c4 \(\text{c}7\) 25edx5+ \(\text{d}4\) 26.d6 \(\text{d}7\) 27.a1c1 \(\text{b}7\) 28.xc5 \(\text{bxc}5\) 29.xc8 \(\text{xc}8\) 30.xf8 \(\text{xf}8\) 31.h6+ \(\text{g}8\) 32.g6+ \(\text{h}8\) 33.h5+ \(\text{g}8\) 34.xc1 \(\text{c}8\) 35.g6+ \(\text{h}8\) 36.xc8+ \(\text{xc}8\) 37.h5 \(\text{a}6\) 38.xh6+ \(\text{g}8\) 39.w3 \(\text{a}4\) 40.w5+ \(\text{f}7\) 41.wc7+ \(\text{g}8\) 42.d7 1–0

In contrast to the Dolmatov – Meyer game quoted above, 11...f5 is now fully adequate:
12...exf6 This is virtually forced, as otherwise White will have to defend on the queenside without having any kingside counterplay.

12...exf6 13.\(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{e}}\)3 \(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{d}}\)6 14.c3 (14.c4 bxc4 15.dxc4 \(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{d}}\)4 would have been quite okay for Black, for example 16.\(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{g}}\)4?! \(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{f}}\)3† 17.\(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{f}}\)3 \(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{d}}\)4 18.\(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{f}}\)4!! \(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{f}}\)4 19.\(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{f}}\)4 \(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{f}}\)4†)

14...e5 \(\frac{1}{2}\)–\(\frac{1}{2}\) Vorobiov – Alekseev, Rijeka 2010. In this complex position, White could have continued with either 15.a4 or 15.\(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{g}}\)5, with a double-edged game.

12.h5 b4 13.h6 g6 14.\(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{f}}\)4 \(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{d}}\)5

Reinderman – Bischoff, Venlo 2000. White has made some progress on the king's flank, but his opponent will distract him from his plan of \(\text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{h}}\)2, \(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{d}}\)2 and \(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{g}}\)5 by playing ...\(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{d}}\)4 shortly.

10.\(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{f}}\)1

10.c3?! \(\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{c}}\)7 (10...b4 11.c4 would provide the justification for White's 10th move) 11.\(\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{c}}\)2 a5 12.h4 a4 13.\(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{f}}\)1 (maybe 13.a3?! should be tried) 13...c4 14.d4 a3 Black had reached his goal first in Djurhuus – PH. Nielsen, Sweden 2001.

10...a5

A less usual set-up is: 10...\(\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{c}}\)7 11.\(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{f}}\)4 \(\text{\texttt{b}}\text{\texttt{b}}\)6?! The knight is heading for the d5-square. 12.h4 d4 13.\(\text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{h}}\)2 (13.h5?! \(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{d}}\)5 14.\(\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{c}}\)1 would have presented Black with the traditional dilemma; should he allow h5-h6 or play ...h6 himself, thereby creating a target for the enemy pieces?)

13...\(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{d}}\)5 14.\(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{g}}\)5 \(\text{\texttt{b}}\text{\texttt{b}}\)7 The position was about level in Maiwald – Appel, Germany 2004.

11.b4 b4

Black can develop his bishop first, but he usually pushes the b-pawn soon anyway:

11...a6 12.\(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{f}}\)2 b4 13.\(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{g}}\)5 13.\(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{g}}\)4 \(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{d}}\)∞ Lau – Uhlmann, Potsdam 1988.

13...a4 14.\(\text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{h}}\)3 \(\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{c}}\)8 15.\(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{f}}\)4 \(\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{e}}\)8

The usual recipe for countering White's plan of \(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{g}}\)5 and \(\text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{h}}\)5.

16.\(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{g}}\)4

16.\(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{g}}\)5?! \(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{d}}\)8! (16...h6 17.\(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{d}}\)6 is messy) 17.\(\text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{h}}\)5 h6 18.\(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{g}}\)4 and now:

a) 18...hxg5? 19.hxg5 may already be lost for Black: 19...\(\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{e}}\)7 20.\(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{f}}\)6 \(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{f}}\)6 (or else 20...gxf6 21.\(\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{f}}\)6 \(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{g}}\)6 22.\(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{e}}\)6++) 21.\(\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{e}}\)6 \(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{g}}\)6 22.\(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{f}}\)2 d4 23.\(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{g}}\)4+– Mare will soon follow.

b) 18...\(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{g}}\)5 19.hxg5 \(\text{\texttt{f}}\)5 kills White's offensive, illustrating the reason for 15...\(\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{e}}\)8.

16...\(\text{\texttt{b}}\text{\texttt{b}}\)5 17.\(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{g}}\)2

17.\(\text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{h}}\)5! represents the natural attempt to make progress. The following few moves are a bit odd as both players avoid taking a committal decision.

17...\(\text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{h}}\)8 18.\(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{g}}\)5 \(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{d}}\)8 19.\(\text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{h}}\)2 \(\text{\texttt{a}}\text{\texttt{a}}\)6 20.\(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{g}}\)2 \(\text{\texttt{b}}\text{\texttt{b}}\)5 21.\(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{g}}\)1 \(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{g}}\)8 22.\(\text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{h}}\)3 \(\text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{h}}\)∞

12...f4

Generally played either here or next move, but White occasionally does without this move:

12.h5 a6
Or 12...a4 13.h1h2 a6 14.g4 d5
15.d4 exd4 16.b3 d7 17.b2 fc8
18.b1 b6 19.b3 b5 20.g4 axb3
21.axb3 Aa2 22.d4 c6 23.f1 bx2
24.c1 c5 Black had adequate counterplay in Bacrot – Doetling, Le Port Marly 2009.
13.h6 g6 14.h2 e8 15.g4 a5 16.a3 bxa3
17.bxa3 b8 18.f4 d4 19.d4 cxd4
10...

20.d5?
This unexpected blow isn’t compulsory, but analysis shows that it is certainly interesting.
20...g5
This is Black’s ‘safest’ response, but accepting the challenge is also possible: 20..e6 21.e6 fxe6 (21..b6?? is inferior, due to 22.e5! followed by 24.d6 and the d4-pawn will fall) 22.axb8 xb8 23.e6=
21.d6?
21..f6 22.exf6 xf6
22..d5?? e5+=
23.axb8 xb8 24.bd1 b7 25.xb7 xB7 26.e5
White is at least equal.

12.h1h2 a4 13.a3 bxa3 14.bxa3 a6 15.h5 c4
16.d4 c3 17.h6 g6 18.g4= (it is worth noting that White couldn’t grab the c3-pawn for free, because 18..e3 wa5 19.e1 fc8 indirectly protects it: 20.xe3?? dx4 21.xe8 fxe8=)

V. Filippov – Kiriakov, Perm 1998. A typical position for this line has arisen. White’s chances lie in a kingside attack (f4, c1, g5, f4), Black’s on the opposite wing (...b8-b2, ...a5-c4), and ‘unclear’ seems a fair assessment.

12...a6
The main alternative is the immediate:
12...a4?? 13.a3
The most common reply, but 13..e2 deserves attention as well. For instance: 13...e3 14.e4 a6 15.e3 d4 16.h2 e8 17.h5 With shared chances, Starosek – Potkin, Internet 2004.
13..bxa3 14.bxa3 a6
14..d4 looks weaker, in view of: 15.c4! ef3† (or 15...b6?? 16.d4 exd4 17.g4 bh8 Sasikiran – Rees, Kelamabakkam 2000, and now 18.a4 is simplest, intending 19.exd5 and 20.xd4) 16.xf3
15.h1h2
Play has transposed back into the main line. Also possible is 15..e2=

13.h1h2
The direct 13.g5 is interesting, but the reply 13..e8! constitutes a perfect antidote,
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

as some old games from GM Uhlmann demonstrate:

a) 14.\texttt{g4} a4?? (14...\texttt{h8} is called for) 15.\texttt{xe6} Black resigned in Bronstein – Uhlmann, Moscow 1971, because after the obvious 15...\texttt{xe6} \texttt{h8} 17.\texttt{xc6} he would simply have been two pawns down.

b) 14.\texttt{h5} \texttt{xg5} 15.\texttt{xg5} (15.\texttt{hxg5} is well met by 15...f5!) 15...a4 16.\texttt{e3} \texttt{h8} 17.\texttt{ad1} h6 18.\texttt{h5} f5 19.\texttt{xe8} \texttt{xe8} 20.\texttt{c4} \texttt{d4} 21.\texttt{d6} \texttt{xc2} 22.\texttt{xe8} \texttt{xe8}! 23.\texttt{e2} b3 24.axb3 axb3

Black had beautiful compensation for the exchange in Browne – Uhlmann, Amsterdam 1972.

c) 14.\texttt{h2} a4 15.\texttt{h5} (as this primitive way doesn't seem to work, White should probably resort to 15.c4 \texttt{b6} 16.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{xd5} 17.\texttt{e4} Ye Jiangchuan – Matamoros Franco, Berne 1995) 15...\texttt{xg5} 16.\texttt{hxg5} \texttt{d4} 17.\texttt{ac1} b3 18.axb3 axb3 19.c3 \texttt{c2} 20.\texttt{ed1} \texttt{h8} Knaak – Uhlmann, Goerlitz 1972. Black is intending 21...f6 22.\texttt{exf6} \texttt{gx6}! and is more than okay.

13...\texttt{a4} 14.a3 \texttt{bxa3}

I feel that Black should consider the relatively rare:

14...c4?!

Horn assesses this as dubious, commenting for ChessBase Magazine: “After this move White can support his e5-pawn with d3-d4 and Black gets nothing in return. Because of the e5-pawn White has a spatial advantage and he can build up an attacking position on the kingside.” In my opinion this is only partially true. Although pushing the c-pawn looks strategically wrong, Black can still obtain decent counterplay on the queenside.

15.d4?!

White should certainly prefer: 15.axb4 cxd3 16.c3

15...c3 16.bxc3 bxa3

Black only needs to play ...\texttt{b8-b2} in order to obtain an overwhelming advantage, so White must rush with his kingside play.

17.\texttt{g5} \texttt{b8} 18.\texttt{h5} h6?

This mistake leads to serious trouble. Black should have eliminated the nasty g5-knight with 18...\texttt{hxg5} and:

a) 19.\texttt{hxg5} \texttt{a5} with the idea of 20.\texttt{xa3} \texttt{d4}.

b) 19.\texttt{xe5} \texttt{xe5} 20.\texttt{xg5} \texttt{xb2} 21.\texttt{xa3} \texttt{b6}\texttt{c}

19.\texttt{g4}\texttt{f} hxg5 20.\texttt{hxg5} \texttt{e8}

Bojczuk – Wielecki, Poland 1990. Now the simple 21.g6! \texttt{fxg6} 22.\texttt{xp6} would have given White a winning advantage.

15.bxa3 \texttt{e8}
15...\(\text{a8} \rightarrow \text{a7}\) (Exchanging a pair of knights with 16...\(\text{d4}?!\) is also possible; Lobron – Kiriakov, Internet [blitz] 2004, continued: 17.\(\text{xd4} \rightarrow \text{cxd4}\) 18.\(\text{g4} \rightarrow \text{h8}\) 19.\(\text{f3} \rightarrow \text{b2}\) 20.\(\text{h6} \rightarrow \text{g6}\) 21.\(\text{xd4} \rightarrow \text{c5}\) 22.\(\text{g5}?! \rightarrow \text{b6}\) 23.\(\text{e3} \rightarrow \text{xc5}\) 24.\(\text{h4} \rightarrow \text{d7}\) 17.\(\text{h6} \rightarrow \text{g6}\) 18.\(\text{g4} \rightarrow \text{b5}\) 19.\(\text{c4} \rightarrow \text{c3}\) 20.\(\text{d2} \rightarrow \text{d4}\)

We are following the game Poluljahov – McShane, Cappelle la Grande 1999. Black has cemented his Trojan horse and he is controlling the important b-file. In return for that, he has to endure a white attack on the kingside. Although Black seems to have been all right for most of this game, he finally collapsed under the pressure. 21.\(\text{g5} \rightarrow \text{b7}\) 22.\(\text{xe7} \rightarrow \text{xe7}\) 23.\(\text{g5} \rightarrow \text{xg2}\) 24.\(\text{xe2} \rightarrow \text{b3}\) 25.\(\text{e4} \rightarrow \text{xe4}\) 26.\(\text{xg4} \rightarrow \text{h8}\) 27.\(\text{xe4} \rightarrow \text{f3}\) 28.\(\text{e6} \rightarrow \text{xb3}\) 29.\(\text{xe1} \rightarrow \text{b5}\) 30.\(\text{f6} \rightarrow \text{h8}\) 31.\(\text{e4} \rightarrow \text{c4}\) 32.\(\text{g5} \rightarrow \text{xe4}\) 33.\(\text{xe5} \rightarrow \text{xd3}\) 34.\(\text{b7} \rightarrow \text{b8}\) 35.\(\text{exh7} \rightarrow \text{g8}\) 36.\(\text{g7} \rightarrow \text{e8}\) 37.\(\text{xe6} \rightarrow \text{e8}\) 38.\(\text{h7} \rightarrow \text{1-0}\)

16.\(\text{g4} \rightarrow \text{d4}\) 17.\(\text{xd4} \rightarrow \text{cxd4}\) 18.\(\text{h2} \rightarrow \text{e8}\) 19.\(\text{f3} \rightarrow \text{c5}\) =


Conclusion

The King's Indian Attack can certainly be recommended to relatively lazy players, who prefer to adopt stereotyped opening schemes. Knowing what your plan will be at the opening and early middlegame is indeed reassuring! We looked at several valid set-ups that Black can employ to counter his opponent's formation. According to theory, Black should be able to equalize, but he must take some care to avoid situations in which White's kingside attack 'plays itself'.

I would like to remind the reader of the important choice that White has to make on his third move – 3.g3 limits the number of set-ups available to Black, but this move order can only be used if you are happy with the suggested options for meeting an early ...d5.
Christian Bauer

2. ♘f3 e6 3. c3 d5 4. e5 d4

**Variation Index**

1. e4 c5 2. ♘f3 e6 3. c3 d5 4. e5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move</th>
<th>Moves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1) 5. ♘b5†</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="A1" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A11) 5... ♘d7</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A12) 5... ♘d7</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2) 5. ♘c4</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3) 5. cxd4 cxd4</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A31) 6. ♘a4†?!</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A32) 6. ♘d3?!</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A33) 6. ♘c4</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A34) 6. ♘b5†</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A341) 6... ♘c6?!</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A342) 6... ♘d7</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) 5. ♘a3</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C) 5. g3 ♘c6 6. ♘g2</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1) 6... ♘ge7</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2) 6... g5</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D) 5. ♘d3</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1) 5... ♘e7 6. 0–0</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D11) 6... ♘ec6</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D12) 6... ♘g6</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2) 5... ♘c6</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D21) 6. ♘e2</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D22) 6. 0–0</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D221) 6... g5?!</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D222) 6... ♘d7</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D223) 6... ♘ge7</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D3) 5... ♘d7</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 11 - 2.\( \text{\&} f3 \) e6 3.\( c3 \) d5 4.e5 d4

1.e4 c5 2.\( \text{\&} d3 \) e6 3.c3

With this move White clearly indicates that he is hoping to build up a central duo after a subsequent d4-push. If allowed, which rarely happens in practice, he would then recapture cxd4 if Black takes with ...cxd4. In comparison with a pure Alapin, 2.c3, Black's options have been limited by his second move. More concretely, White has avoided the option of developing the c8-bishop to g4, which is popular after 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 \( \text{\&} x d 5 \) 4.d4 \( \text{\&} f6 \) 5.\( \text{\&} f3 \).

3...d5

3...\( \text{\&} f6 \) is of course another important possibility, which is not covered here (see instead Chapter 2).

4.e5

4.exd5, like 3...\( \text{\&} f6 \) from Black's perspective, is also fully playable but outside the scope of this chapter. 4.e5 implies that White is ready for a debate on the Advance Variation of the French Defence, after 4...\( \text{\&} c6 \). Since Black chose a Sicilian it seems more likely, from a psychological point of view, that he will play the principled:

4...d4

This seizes ground and stops White's intended d2-d4. We have reached the basic position of the present chapter, which remains relatively unexplored. White has a wide range of options with the most promising ones, in my opinion, being B) 5.\( \text{\&} a3 \), C) 5.g3 and D) 5.\( \text{\&} d3 \).

Firstly though, in section A) Rare Fifth Moves we will briefly discuss other attempts at getting an edge for White, which have generally failed in practice.

Note that White generally welcomes the capture ...dxc3, and answers it by dxc3, liberating his c1-bishop (although sometimes the alternative bxc3 is also playable). The endgame arising after ...dxc3, dxc3 \( \text{\&} x d 5 \), \( \text{\&} x d 1 + \). \( \text{\&} x d 1 \) is usually quite pleasant for White owing to his space advantage. For this reason Black refrains from the aforementioned capture if he does not have a particularly good reason to go for it, and the central tension often remains for a while.

A) Rare Fifth Moves

We will now consider three rare moves in some detail: A1) 5.\( \text{\&} b 5 \), A2) 5.\( \text{\&} c 4 \) and A3) 5.cxd4. Although these moves are less promising than the main moves we shall consider later, they are worth a look as they lead to some tricky ideas that could catch out the unwary.
In contrast the following lunge is simple to deal with:

5.b4?!  
A bold move but it is rather ineffective.

5...cxb4!  
The easiest way to defuse White's idea. Riskier is 5...dxc3?! when after 6.b5! cxd2+ 7.\xe2xd2 (Or 7.\xe2xd2 as in Zaitsev – Suknev, Moscow 1998, and White enjoys good play in return for the pawn. Either way, Black will find it hard to harmoniously complete his development.) 7...\xe2e7 8.\xe2c3 \xe2d5 9.\xe2e4 \xe2h6 10.\xe2d3 \xe2b6 11.0-0 \xe2b7 12.\xe2e2 Pinski – Zemerov, Budapest 1997; White will continue \xe2f1 and can contemplate \xe2g3-h5 if his opponent dares to castle kingside. 6.\xe2xd4 \xe2e7 7.\xe2b5+ \xe2c6 8.0-0 \xe2d7  
In Zaitsev – Utemov, Podolsk 1993, White still had to solve development problems on his queenside; 5.b4 has not helped much in this respect.

A1) 5.\xe2b5†

Now there is a split depending on which minor piece Black places on d7: A11) 5...\xe2d7 or A12) 5...\xe2d7.

A11) 5...\xe2d7

This move is less common and should perhaps be answered by:

6.\xe2xd4  
Instead 6.0-0 a6 7.\xe2d3 \xe2e7 8.\xe2a3 \xe2c7 9.\xe2xd4 \xe2xd4 10.\xe2xd4 \xe2e5 proved fine for Black in Motylev – Yemelin, Ekaterinburg 1996, even if the possibility of an improvement for White cannot be excluded.

6...\xe2xd4 7.\xe2xd4 \xe2b6 8.\xe2a4

This leads to a weird position, but 8.\xe2xd7† \xe2xd7 provides Black with fine compensation for the pawn.

8.\xe2c5 9.\xe2b3 \xe2xf2† 10.\xe2f1

White has lost the right to castle, but in return he can quickly mobilize his army. For instance:
10...a6 11...e2...e5 12.d4...f8

Of course 12...e7 is possible but after 13...e3± Black must be willing to accept a shattered kingside after 13...h6 14...xh6 gxh6, as his knight would have no other square.

13...c3

Or 13...e3 followed by 14...f2 and ...c1.

A12) 5...d7 6...xd7†

6...a4??...e7 7.0-0...g6 8.d3...c6 Maciejewski – Adamski, Zielona Gora 1982, looks about equal.

6...xd7 7.c4

7.0-0 should come to more or less the same.

7...d3!!

I recommend this advance. Indeed, Black gains a superb platform on d4 and prevents the plan of d2-d3, ...f4 and then ...bd2-e4; Black's d-pawn is not really vulnerable.

Note that the move order 7...e7 8.d3...g6 also prevents White having an easy life.

Also acceptable is:

7...c6 8.d3...ge7 9.f4

White is well-advised not to hurry with castling kingside. The following example shows why: 9.0-0!...h6 10...bd2...e7 11...e1 0-0-0 12.a3...g5 Enabling ...g7 while ...g5-g4 will harass a defender of e5. Black is visibly quicker in generating action on "his" wing. 13.b4...g6 14...b3...g4 15...fd2...xe5 16...e4...h4† In Daly – Rogozenko, Moscow 1994, Black had the deadly threat of ...e3†.

9...h6 10...bd2

10.b4 certainly makes sense too.

10...g5 11...e4...g7 12...g3...c7

12...f5?!

13.0-0...xe5 14...xe5...xe5 15...f6†...d8 16...f3...g6 17...e1

8.0-0...h6? 9...c3...e7 10...e1...bc6 11.a3...f5

In Kauschmann – Fogarasi, Berlin 1997, Black was already rather happy.

A2) 5...c4...c6 6.d3
Also possible is 6.0-0?!. For example, Kyroniemi – Kochyev, Helsinki 1996, continued: 6...\(\text{Qg7}\) 7.d3 a6 8.a4 \(\text{Qg6}\) 9.\(\text{We2}\) \(\text{Qe7}\) 10.\(\text{We1}\) 0-0 and now instead of the misguided 11.\(\text{Qa3}\)!! I would suggest 11.\(\text{Qbd2}\) as an improvement as 11...\(\text{Qf4}\) is a shot in the dark due to 12.\(\text{We4}\).

6...\(\text{Qg7}\) 7.\(\text{Qf4}\) \(\text{Qg6}\) 8.\(\text{Qg3}\) h5 9.h4

The kingside is frozen and both camps may have to postpone castling because of the fragility of their respective h-pawns. It is still a bit early to judge if White will manage to efficiently use the e4-square, and thus if he can claim a slight opening plus.

9...a6 10.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{Qce7}\) 11.\(\text{Qbd2}\) \(\text{Qf5}\) 12.\(\text{We2}\) \(\text{Qd7}\) 13.\(\text{Qxd4}\) \(\text{Qxd4}\) 14.\(\text{Qc1}\) \(\text{Qc6}\) 15.\(\text{Qxc6}\) \(\text{Qxc6}\) 16.\(\text{Qe4}\) \(\text{Qd7}\) 17.\(\text{Qg5}\)

Threatening 18.\(\text{Qxf7}!!\), while opening the f-file with 17...\(\text{Qxg3}\) 18.fxg3 would not be wise for Black.

17...\(\text{Qa7}\) 18.0-0\(\text{Q}\)

In Vasiukov – Al Modiahki, Doha 1993, White had excellent compensation for the sacrificed exchange.

A3) 5.\(\text{cxd4}\)

On principle capturing at once on d4 should rather help Black, as the dark-squared bishop may now go to c5. For that reason I believe 5.\(\text{cxd4}\) reduces White’s chances to gain an opening edge. However, Black should be well prepared, as sacrificing a pawn is often essential to show the downside of White's play.

5...\(\text{cxd4}\)

White now has a major choice to make: A31) 6.\(\text{Wa4}??\), A32) 6.\(\text{Qd3}??\), A33) 6.\(\text{Qc4}\) or A34) 6.\(\text{b5}!\).

Instead 6.g3 was tried in Sveshnikov – Kharitonov, Sochi 1979, but the inclusion of 5.\(\text{cxd4}\) \(\text{cxd4}\) does not seem inspired.

A31) 6.\(\text{Wa4}??\)
Chapter 11 - 2.\(\text{d}3\) e6 3.c3 d5 4.e5 d4

This tempting check in fact hands Black a small edge. The second player can indeed virtually force a comfortable ending.

6...\(\text{c}6\) 7.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{d}7\)

8.0–0

White's forcing line is also a failure:

8.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{c}x\text{c}6\) 9.\(\text{xd}4\)

Black now has a pleasant choice:

9.\(\text{xd}4\)

Or 9...\(\text{xf}3\) 10.\(\text{xd}8+\) \(\text{xd}8\) 11.\(\text{xe}7\) 12.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{g}6\) 13.d4 \(\text{xd}4\) 14.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{c}4\)

(14...\(\text{ab}4??\) 15.\(\text{xa}7\) \(\text{xe}5\) was A. Vajda – Doncea, Bucharest 2004. This ending should be nice for Black owing to his superior pawn structure, but a draw is still the most logical outcome.

10.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{xf}2\) 11.\(\text{g}1\) \(\text{d}5\)

If Black does not wish to give back the pair of bishops he may try 11...\(\text{e}4\) 12.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{g}6\). 12.\(\text{c}3\) 0–0–0=

Stojanovic – Arnason, Bor 1983.

8...\(\text{a}6\)!

Curiously, and despite an impressive score of 6½/8 for Black in my database, this is not the most frequent move. 8...\(\text{c}5\) has been tried far more often, with 8...\(\text{ge}7\) another option, in both cases with mutual chances.

9.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{xc}6\) 10.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{xf}3\) 11.\(\text{xd}8\) \(\text{xd}8\)

12.gxf3 \(\text{d}3\)

Followed by 13...\(\text{e}7\) and so on.

A32) 6.\(\text{d}3\)? \(\text{c}6\)

The original 6...\(\text{e}7\) 7.0–0 \(\text{d}7\) as in Mahdi – J. Horvath, Velden 1996, is worth considering.

7.0–0 \(\text{ge}7\)

White has tried several moves from this position, but my feeling is that he should not be able to bother his opponent seriously.

8.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{g}6\) 9.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{fxg}6\) 10.d3 \(\text{e}7\) 11.a3 \(\text{a}5\) was Rogers – Gheorghiu, Lucerne 1999. White may continue \(\text{b}2\)-\(e\), \(\text{g}5\) and \(\text{c}1\). As for Black, a natural follow-up seems ...0–0
and ...h7-h6, in order to avoid the exchange of bishops after \( \text{Ag5} \). Then he can either try to transfer his c8-bishop to h5 or place it on the long diagonal.

8.\( \text{Da3} \) \( \text{Dg6} \) 9.\( \text{Dc4} \) \( \text{Dc7} \)?! (9...b5! would have equalized, whereas now White can arrange his pieces harmoniously.) 10.\( \text{Dc4} \) 0-0 11.\( \text{Dd3} \) f5 12.\( \text{Dxf6} \) gxf6 13.\( \text{Dh6} \) \( \text{Df7} \) In Florescu - Ionescu, Baile Tusnad 2000, after 14.\( \text{Dxe1} \) White was on top, but he could even have improved his play by the more energetic 14.\( \text{Dh4}! \) \( \text{Dxh4} \) 15.\( \text{Dg4} \) \( \text{Dh8} \) 16.\( \text{Dxh4} \) f5? 17.\( \text{Dh5} \).

8.\( \text{De2} \) \( \text{Df5} \) 9.\( \text{Da3} \) \( \text{Db4} \) 10.\( \text{Dc2} \) \( \text{Dxd3} \) 11.\( \text{Dxd3} \) \( \text{Dd7} \) 12.\( \text{Dxc4} \) \( \text{Dc6} \) 13.\( \text{Dc4} \) \( \text{Dxd4} \) 14.\( \text{Dxd4} \) \( \text{Dd5} \) 15.\( \text{Db5} \) \( \text{Dd7} \) In Lanzani - Arlandi, Saint Vincent 2000, Black had enough compensation for the pawn thanks to his domination of the light squares.

If 8.a3 then 8...a5 is easiest, even though Black did quite okay in Klimaszewski - Szypulski, Augustow 1989, following: 8...\( \text{Dg6} \) 9.\( \text{Dxg6} \) hxg6 9...\( \text{Dxg6} \)?! 10.\( \text{Dd3} \) \( \text{Dc7} \) 11.\( \text{Db4} \) \( \text{Dd5} \) 12.\( \text{Dxe2} \) f6 13.\( \text{Db2} \) \( \text{Dh5} \) 13...\( \text{Dg5} \)?! 14.\( \text{Dg4} \) \( \text{Dh3} \) 15.\( \text{Dg2} \) \( \text{Dh7} \) 16.\( \text{Dxe4} \) \( \text{Dxe4} \) 17.\( \text{Dxe4} \) \( \text{b6} \) 18.\( \text{Df4} \) \( \text{Da6} \) 19.\( \text{Dfd1} \) g5∞

If White is determined to play 5.\( \text{cxd4} \) then this move is worth a try; however, I will repeat my view that White should not start from here.

6.\( \text{Dc6} \) 7.0-0 \( \text{Dge7} \) 8.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{Dg6} \) 9.\( \text{Be1} \) a6

This position is akin to a line from the Rossolimo Sicilian: 1.e4 \( \text{c5} \) 2.\( \text{Df3} \) \( \text{Dc6} \) 3.\( \text{Dc4} \) \( \text{e6} \) 4.0-0 \( \text{Dge7} \) 5.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{a6} \) 6.\( \text{Dxa4} \) \( \text{b5} \) 7.\( \text{Dc2} \) \( \text{Dxb7} \) 8.\( \text{Be1} \) d5 9.\( \text{e5} \) d4 Here too the plusses for each camp are quite obvious: respective strong points at e4 for White and d5 for Black, and rather vulnerable pawns at e5 and d4.

10.a4

Jentsch - Kustar, Zalakaros 2000, featured an attempt to avoid weakening the b4-square. Though White quickly went astray, I do not think pushing the a-pawn only one square forward is really worse:

10.a3 \( \text{Dc7} \) 11.\( \text{b4} \)?!

11.\( \text{Dbd2} \) b5 12.\( \text{Da2} \) 0-0 13.\( \text{Df1} \)

11...\( \text{b5} \) 12.\( \text{Da2} \) \( \text{Db7} \) 13.\( \text{Dbd2} \) \( \text{Dc7} \) 14.\( \text{Dc4} \) \( \text{Dd8} \) 15.\( \text{Dg5} \) \( \text{Dxg5} \) 16.\( \text{Dxd7} \)?

White probably overlooked his opponent's strong reply. Instead 16.\( \text{Dfxg5} \) \( \text{Dxe5} \) 17.\( \text{Dxe6} \) was still about level.

16...\( \text{Dxd6} \) 17.\( \text{exd6} \) \( \text{Dd8} \) 18.\( \text{Dd7} \) \( \text{Dxd7} \)

10...\( \text{b6} \) 11.\( \text{Dg5} \) \( \text{Dd7} \) 12.\( \text{h4} \) \( \text{h6} \) 13.\( \text{h5} \) \( \text{Dge7} \)
14.\textit{\&}f4 \textit{\&}d5 15.\textit{\&}g3 \textit{\&}b7


\textbf{A34) 6.\textit{\&}b5†}

Now there is a split between A341) 6...\textit{\&}c6?? and A342) 6...\textit{\&}d7.

\textbf{A341) 6...\textit{\&}c6??}

This leads to a more complicated struggle than 6...\textit{\&}d7. Both sides have their chances and Black often has to gambit a pawn in return for activity.

7.\textit{\&}xc6†

7.0-0 \textit{\&}d7 as in Werner - Gheorghiu, Berlin 1989, does not give White any chance of an opening advantage, but after 8.\textit{\&}e1, which addresses the threat of ...\textit{\&}xe5, at least he avoids any complications.

7...\textit{\&}xc6 8.\textit{\&}a4

The text move attempts (and fails) to seize the advantage. White has a more positional approach at his disposal, namely playing against the backward c-pawn. For example, the encounter Grund - Kekelidze, Bad Wiessee 1998, went: 8.d3 c5 9.\textit{\&}a3 \textit{\&}c7 10.0-0 \textit{\&}b7 11.\textit{\&}c4 \textit{\&}d5 Both sides have their trumps and the game remained strategically interesting for a while. 12.\textit{\&}g5 \textit{\&}b6 13.\textit{\&}a5 \textit{\&}d5 14.\textit{\&}h5 \textit{\&}c7 15.\textit{\&}d2 h6 16.f4 g6 17.\textit{\&}h3 \textit{\&}e7 18.\textit{\&}f3 And so on.

8...\textit{\&}b6!

This is Black's best bet, remaining flexible with the c-pawn and contemplating ...\textit{\&}a6. White would have a promising position if he could play d2-d3 and 0-0, but he lacks a tempo for that.

Black has also been successful with 8...\textit{\&}e7 and 8...\textit{\&}c5, but I shall concentrate on 8...\textit{\&}b6, as inferior replies to inferior lines are of no interest to anyone.

9.d3

White has also tried a range of other moves, but all with little success.

In Kharlov - Pira, Paris 1991, White experimented with 9.b3, aimed to exchange dark-squared bishops. His lower-rated opponent reacted adequately and gained good play: 9...\textit{\&}a6 10.\textit{\&}a3 \textit{\&}c7 11.\textit{\&}xd4 \textit{\&}d5 The knight is on its way to d3. 12.\textit{\&}xf8 gxf8 13.\textit{\&}xb6 axb6 14.d4 \textit{\&}f4 15.\textit{\&}d2 c5 (the immediate 15...\textit{\&}xg2 was fine too) 16.\textit{\&}c3 \textit{\&}xg2 17.\textit{\&}h1 \textit{\&}f4 18.\textit{\&}a4 \textit{\&}b7 19.\textit{\&}xb6 \textit{\&}d8 20.\textit{\&}e3 \textit{\&}g6?? (20...\textit{\&}g2!! 21.\textit{\&}xe2 cxd4 was at least equal for Black, whereas now all his previous fine play is wasted) 21.dxc5++
9.0-0! a6 10...e1 e8 was Laine – Blees, Gausdal 1993; White could not easily complete his development and struggled to maintain the balance.

9...xd4 c5 10...h4 a6 11.d4 b4† 12.c3 e7 was Meschke – Kekelidze, Deizisau 2000. White has managed to retain his extra pawn but at the cost of having his king stuck in the centre. Black has plenty of compensation for a mere pawn and an arduous defence awaits his opponent.

9...xd4 a6 10.c3 e7 11.de2 c5 In comparison with 9...xd4 Black again has sufficient play for the pawn, but at least White's king will not be a concern.

9...a6 10...xd4
10...c2 would be similar to 8.d3, albeit under less favourable circumstances for White.

10...xd3
The point of this move is not so much restoring material parity but rather preventing White from castling. The other logical follow-up is less cunning: 10...c5 11.e3 e7 12.0-0 0-0

13...xc6 (13...xe6? would lead to a funny tactical skirmish: 13...xe3 14.xf8 xd3 15...d7 xb2 16.a3 c2 17...c3 xf1 18.fxf1 d4 19...xe7 xc3 20.e6 fxe6

21...xe6† h8 The smoke has cleared and the position is about level.) 13...xc6 14.xc5 xc5 15...xa6 b8= In Braga – Zichichi, Italy 1988, Black was about to take back the two pawns.

11...c3
11...xc6? a5 and 11...xc6† 12...xc6 a5 both lose on the spot.

11...e7?
Instead Westerinen – Issakainen, Finland 2006, continued 11...e8 12...b3 b4 13...e3 b5 and Black was only equal. All in all White seems to face an uphill task equalizing after 8...b6! so the "feeble" 8.d3 should be preferred to the ambitious but backfiring 8...a4.

A342) 6...d7
In this position, White's options are A3421) 7...\texttt{x}x d7†, A3422) 7...c4??, A3423) 7...\texttt{e}e2 and the critical A3424) 7...\texttt{x}x d4

A3421) 7...\texttt{x}x d7† \texttt{x}x d7

Later we will meet this position without the inclusion of cxd4 ...cxd4. In that case the scope of the f8-bishop is more limited, but White could not hope to make use of the c4-square. These two factors should more or less counterbalance each other.

8.d3

Or 8.0−0 \texttt{e}e7 (8...d3??) 9.d3 \texttt{e}e6 10.\texttt{e}e1 \texttt{d}d5 11.\texttt{f}f4 \texttt{d}d7 and in Ronchetti – Meijers, Cattolica 2005, Black seemed quite okay.

8...\texttt{e}e6

Black can also simplify by 8...\texttt{b}b4?? if he so wishes. I doubt that White would be able to profit from the weakened d6 spot in this event.

9.0−0 \texttt{g}g7

This rather uninspiring position has been reached surprisingly often, so it is worth some attention. White has at least three sensible continuations: a) 10.\texttt{f}f4, b) 10.\texttt{b}d2 and c) 10.\texttt{e}e1.

a) 10.\texttt{f}f4 \texttt{g}6

German GM Lutz Espig has twice tried another knight jump: 10...\texttt{d}d5 11.\texttt{g}g3 \texttt{e}e7 was Mischustov – Espig, Germany 1997, and 11...\texttt{e}e5 was Meister – Espig, Hoeckendorf 2004. On both occasions Black had a satisfactory game.

11.\texttt{g}g3 \texttt{e}e7

11...\texttt{d}d5 Centralizing Her Majesty is a common feature in this line, and Kotan – Kerek, Miskolc 1999 continued: 12.\texttt{e}e2 h5 13.h4 f5 14.\texttt{x}xf6 gxf6 15.\texttt{e}e1 \texttt{e}e7 Black had a majority in the centre but also a somewhat vulnerable position.

In reply to 11...h5, as played in Kotan – Maksimenko, Slovakia 1995, White answered 12.h4 leaving in doubt who was going to benefit from the respective h-pawn advances.

12.\texttt{b}d2

Or 12.\texttt{e}e1 0−0 13.\texttt{e}e4 \texttt{f}fd8 14.\texttt{e}e2 \texttt{e}e8 15.\texttt{b}d2 Kosmo – Tregubov, Fuegen 2006; Black decided at this point he had had enough of being tied down to his d-pawn and unleashed 15...\texttt{b}b4??, with the ideas ...\texttt{a}a4 and ...\texttt{e}e2.

12...0−0 13.h4 \texttt{d}d5 14.\texttt{e}e2 \texttt{f}fc8 15.h5 \texttt{g}g8

In Kotan – P. Horvath, Aggtelek 2000, the game was still unclear.

b) 10.\texttt{b}d2 \texttt{g}6 11.\texttt{e}e1 \texttt{d}d5 12.\texttt{b}b3 gives us two options.

b1) Black opted for 12...0−0−0?? in Mischustov – Marciano, Pau 1988, probably reckoning that after 13.\texttt{c}c4 b5 he would trade queens anyway. There followed however a surprise, to which Black quickly reacted erroneously: 14.\texttt{g}g5?? \texttt{b}xc4 15.\texttt{d}xc4 \texttt{a}a5 16.\texttt{x}xd8 \texttt{x}xd8 17.\texttt{e}e4 \texttt{c}c7 18.c5 d3! (18...\texttt{e}e7 intending ...\texttt{d}d8 was still murky) 19.b4 \texttt{g}xe5 20.\texttt{x}xe5 \texttt{x}xe5 21.\texttt{e}e8?? \texttt{b}b7 At this point, instead of 22.\texttt{f}ad1? White could have secured a huge advantage by 22.\texttt{e}e5 \texttt{x}xe5 23.\texttt{b}b5?? \texttt{b}b6 24.\texttt{c}c5 or 22.\texttt{d}d8?? \texttt{b}b6 24.\texttt{d}d8?.
b2) Safe is 12...\textit{\$}xb3 13.\textit{\$}xb3 \textit{\$}d8 14.\textit{\$}d2
\textit{\$}d5 Buchal – Raetsky, Biel 1997; after the imminent swap of e5 vs. d4 the endgame will favour Black slightly.

c) 10.\textit{\$}e1 \textit{\$}g6 11.\textit{\$}e4 \textit{\$}c5
11...f5 12.exf6 gxf6 Becker – Pieniazek, Germany 2003, is analogous to line a (10.\textit{\$}f4
\textit{\$}g6 11.\textit{\$}g3 \textit{\$}d5 12.\textit{\$}e2 and so on).
12.\textit{\$}c2 0–0 13.h4
And now instead of 13...f5?! 14.exf6 gxf6
15.h5 when Black was struggling in Gallardo Garcia – Paunovic, La Roda 2009, better is:
13...\textit{\$}ge7?! 14.h5 h6 15.\textit{\$}g4 \textit{\$}f5

A3422) 7.\textit{\$}c4!?
White considers himself happy to have lured the enemy bishop to d7, and so willingly withdraws his own bishop. In comparison with lines where Black develops with ...a6, ...b5 and ...\textit{\$}b7, the light-squared bishop may play a lesser role.

7...\textit{\$}c6
7...\textit{\$}c6?! could be considered.

8.0–0 \textit{\$}c5 9.a3 a6 10.b4 \textit{\$}a7 11.d3 \textit{\$}ge7
12.\textit{\$}f4 0–0 13.\textit{\$}e2 \textit{\$}g6 14.\textit{\$}g3 \textit{\$}ce7
In Djurhuus – Fossan, Oslo 1992, both sides had chances in a rich position.

A3423) 7.\textit{\$}e2

7...\textit{\$}e6
Black should avoid 7...\textit{\$}xb5?! 8.\textit{\$}xb5\textit{\$}d7
9.\textit{\$}xd4 \textit{\$}e7 10.\textit{\$}xd7+ \textit{\$}xd7 11.\textit{\$}f3 \textit{\$}bc6
12.d4 \textit{\$}b4 as in Baklan – Eljanov, Alushta 1999. As is often the case when White has grabbed the enemy d-pawn, his opponent enjoys a certain amount of compensation; in this case however the extra pawn is worth more.

8.0–0 \textit{\$}ge7!
8...a6?! would gain the two bishops but help White to solve the problem of his light-squared bishop. 9.\textit{\$}xc6 \textit{\$}xc6 10.d3 Baklan – Vazquez Igarza, Cappelle la Grande 2006.

9.d3 \textit{\$}g6

10.\textit{\$}e1
10.\textit{\$}c4?!! \textit{\$}c5 was played in Howell – Emms, London 2003, and was soon disastrous for White who could not cope with the manoeuvre ...
...\textit{\$}b6–c7, 11.a3 \textit{\$}b6 12.b4 \textit{\$}c7 13.\textit{\$}b2 0–0
14.\textit{\$}bd2 \textit{\$}cxe5 15.\textit{\$}xd4 \textit{\$}f4 16.\textit{\$}e3 \textit{\$}g4
17.\textit{\$}e1 \textit{\$}c6 18.\textit{\$}e4 \textit{\$}xh2 19.\textit{\$}xh2 \textit{\$}xd4–+

10...\textit{\$}e7
10...\textit{\$}cxe5?? 11.\textit{\$}xe5 \textit{\$}xb5 12.\textit{\$}xf7? was of course not a good idea.

11.\textit{\$}xc6
11.\textit{c}c4 would already be a sizable improvement on the aforementioned Howell - Emms game.

11...\textit{xc}c6 12.\textit{bd}2 \textit{b}b4 13.\textit{a}a3 \textit{d}f4 14.\textit{e}f1 \textit{b}b5 15.\textit{c}c4 \textit{xc}4 16.\textit{dxc}4 \textit{xe}1 17.\textit{xf}4 \textit{a}5

Margolin – Farago, Wiesbaden 1996; d4 is going to fall, but even so Black will be doing better materially and thus retain an edge.

A3424) 7.\textit{d}xd4

7...\textit{g}5!!

The text move is ambitious and fun to analyse, but highly risky. Instead swapping bishops guarantees Black easy equality:

7...\textit{xb}5 8.\textit{xb}5 \textit{c}c6 9.0-0 (if 9.d4 then 9...\textit{a}6 and 10...\textit{xd}4) 9...\textit{a}6 10.\textit{c}c5e3 (or else 10.\textit{c}a5 \textit{xe}5 11.d4 \textit{c}c6=, as in Kolcak – Dovzik, Slovakia 2004.)

Black can either regain his pawn at once with 10...\textit{d}d4 or choose 10...\textit{ge}7, as in Polasek – Chekhov, Prague 1989, when he enjoys lasting compensation for the pawn. Indeed, White has many weak squares along the d-file and will experience difficulties completing his development.

8.\textit{f}f3!

8.0-0?? is much less critical and after 8...\textit{xe}5 9.\textit{xe}d7t \textit{d}d7 as in Alavkin – Gusev, Tula 2001, White needs to play actively in order to compensate for his isolated queen's pawn.

8...\textit{xe}g2 9.\textit{g}g1 \textit{h}h3

Instead Kharlov – Tunik, Chelyabinsk 1991, tested a wild queen sacrifice: 9...\textit{g}g1t?? 10.\textit{d}xb5 \textit{c}c6

Black has visible compensation; the game is dynamically balanced in my view.

Following 9...\textit{h}h3 several practical examples merely suggest the position is unclear, but Black must be careful about the precarious situation of his queen. Let’s see how play may continue:

a) 10.\textit{g}g3 \textit{f}f5 11.\textit{e}e2 \textit{c}c7 12.\textit{c}c3 \textit{g}g6 13.d4 \textit{b}b4 14.\textit{d}d3 \textit{h}h5 15.\textit{g}g5 \textit{h}h3 16.\textit{g}g3 ½–½ Levin – Ippolito, Philadelphia 1998.

b) 10.\textit{c}c2 \textit{e}e7 11.d4 \textit{c}c6 12.\textit{g}g3 \textit{h}h5 13.h4 \textit{f}f5? (13...\textit{h}6!! was required) 14.\textit{c}c3 \textit{d}d7
15...g5! Winning the black queen for only two minor pieces. This shot was even more powerful one move earlier, but better late than never! 15...h6 16.d3 White was winning in Grund – Frusikin, Schwaebisch Gmuend 1999.

c) 10.d3 h6 11.d4 e7 12.f1 h5 13.e4 g5
14.d5 15.g2 b4† 16.f1 h3 17.g1 0–0–0 Cuartas – Franzoni, Biel 1981.
15.a3 e7 16.g3 xg3 17.hxg3 h5 18.d3 g4 19.e3 d8 20.b4 a6 21.e2 e4
22.d2 h7!!
22...g6 was preferable.
23.b3 b8?! Given the ridiculous placement of Black’s queen later on, 23...e4 looks right. As for the computer suggestion of 23...0–0 24.d3 h8 I will let you make up your mind about it.
24.d3 g8 25.a5 b6 26.c4
26.b7! Ec8 27.d5± but Black’s fate remains unenviable.
26...b5 27.a5 c6 28.b3 h5 29.g4 h4
30.e4 b8 31.e5 hxA 32.fxg3 Ec8 33.d5 exd5 34.xd5 &c6 35.0–0–0 Edh2 36.Edf1
1–0 Makarichev – A. Sokolov, Moscow 1981.

B) 5.Ea3

This move order is mainly designed to avoid the reply 5...Ed7, which is usual in response to the more common 5.d3 (see line D). Now White could simply capture on d4 and win a pawn.

5...Ee7
This looks more to the point than the natural 5...c6, as the two following examples tend to testify:

a) 6.d3 g7 7.0–0 g6 8.Ee1
We are following Cherniaev – Rudd, Coulsdon 2009.
8...Ee7
8...f4 and then ...d4–d3 is a common ploy in this kind of position. In that case the far-advanced d-pawn would severely hamper White’s position, but could quickly turn into a liability (for Black).
9.g3
Ruling out the idea of ...f4, as well as considering h2–h4 in some cases.
9...0–0 10.b3
And now instead of 10...f5?! as in the game, 10...e6! forcing White to take a decision, was more logical.

b) 6.c4
This was played in M. Petrov – Lindberg, Pardubice 2001, and should be a decent alternative:

6...Eh6
On the immediate 6...b5 White had 7.Ed6† Edxd6 8.Edb5 intending 8...Edb6 9.Ea4, but worthy of consideration was 6...Ed5?.
7.a4 Edf5 8.Ed3 h5
This was not compulsory since the push g2–g4 did not constitute a threat, but Black probably stood worse anyway.
11.h4? would have stabilized the kingside, given that this pawn was immune: 11...Edxh4? 12.Edxh4 Edh4 13.Ed6†
11...g5 12.h3 Ed7 13.Ed2 Eh4
Now instead of 14.\textit{\texttt{xe5}} which proved playable for Black, White could have secured a marked edge with 14.\textit{\texttt{xe5}}! \textit{\texttt{xf3}}! (or 14...\textit{\texttt{xe5}} 15.\textit{\texttt{xe5}} \textit{\texttt{xe5}} 16.\textit{\texttt{xb7}}!) 15.\textit{\texttt{xf3}} \textit{\texttt{xe5}} 16.\textit{\texttt{d6}}!

6.\textit{\texttt{d3}}
6.\textit{\texttt{c6}} and a2-a4 was a decent alternative.

6...\textit{\texttt{d7}} 7.\textit{\texttt{c4}} \textit{\texttt{c6}} 8.\textit{\texttt{e2}} \textit{\texttt{xe4}} 9.\textit{\texttt{xe4}} \textit{\texttt{bc6}} 10.\textit{\texttt{c4}} \textit{\texttt{g6}} 11.\textit{\texttt{d3}} \textit{\texttt{d5}}!

12.\textit{\texttt{a4}} \textit{\texttt{dxc3}} 13.\textit{\texttt{bxc3}} 0–0–0 14.\textit{\texttt{e2}}

The king is not in danger here, as it could rapidly hide on f1.

14...\textit{\texttt{f5}} 15.\textit{\texttt{exf6}} \textit{\texttt{gxf6}} 16.\textit{\texttt{d1}} \textit{\texttt{f5}}

Perhaps Black should have preferred the more flexible 16...\textit{\texttt{g7}}?!

17.\textit{\texttt{xd5}} \textit{\texttt{exd5}}

Leaving the black f-pawn isolated. Therefore the other recapture 17...\textit{\texttt{xd5}} deserved attention.

C) 5.\textit{\texttt{c3}}

In Bauer – Krasenkow, Nancy 2009, I had some chances in the endgame but did not use them ideally, and my opponent eventually achieved a draw without much trouble.

5...\textit{\texttt{c6}}

Instead Afek – Mokry, Dieren 2000, tested the ending resulting from:
5...\textit{\texttt{dxc3?!}} 6.\textit{\texttt{dxc3}} \textit{\texttt{xd1}}! 7.\textit{\texttt{xd1}}
This encounter continued:
7...\(\textit{d7} 8.a4! \textit{c6} 9.\textit{b5} \textit{e7}\)

At this point, instead of 10.\textit{g5} \textit{d7} 11.\textit{xc6} \textit{xc6} 12.\textit{f4} \textit{e7} 13.\textit{e4} \textit{a5}!, which was balanced because Black controlled the complex b3-c4, White could have chosen the simple:
10.\textit{bd2}

Intending to continue \textit{xc6} and \textit{c4}; he would then have enjoyed a fine space advantage.

6.\textit{g2}

Now Black has a choice between the steady C1) 6...\textit{ge7} and the critical C2) 6...\textit{g5}.

One rare try is 6...\textit{d3} as in Maximov – Koshiak, Evpatoria 2007. As usual this advance is double-edged: the pawn is not directly under fire, but it is far from home and may become a concern for Black in the long run.

C1) 6...\textit{ge7} 7.0–0 \textit{g6}

This knight sally puts pressure on e5 and in that respect is more logical than the alternative:

7...\textit{f5} 8.\textit{c2}

From White's other options the untested 8.\textit{a3} looks interesting.

Instead 8.\textit{a4}?! may be a bit slow because of 8...\textit{g5}! Instead, 8...\textit{h5} 9.\textit{h4} \textit{d3} 10.\textit{a3} \textit{a5} intending 11...\textit{c4} was played in Maximov – Peskov, Alushra 2007, and was unclear after 11.\textit{b3}.

8...\textit{d7}

Now instead of 9.\textit{a3} as in Giaccio – Valarga, Buenos Aires 2006, I prefer:

9.d3!

White would then wish to transfer his knight to e4, for a change, and could reply to...\textit{xc3} by bxc3, denying his opponent access to the beautiful outpost on d4.

8.\textit{c1}

8...\textit{xc3}?! Black should prefer a more neutral move such as 8...\textit{e7}. Still, the text move is worth a look as it leads to interesting play, especially for White!

9.\textit{xc3} \textit{d3} 10.\textit{e3} \textit{d7} 11.d4 \textit{e7} 12.\textit{b4}!

The drawback of having the king's knight parked at g6: Black cannot conveniently answer...\textit{h7–h5}, since after...0–0 his opponent would presumably remove the f3-knight and take on h5. As a consequence the irritating h4-h5 must be tolerated.

12...\textit{b6} 13.\textit{h5} \textit{f8}
Chapter 11 – 2.\( \text{d}3 \) e6 3.\( \text{c}3 \) d5 4.e5 d4

2.\( tlf3 \)

14...\( \text{a}6 \)

14.\( \text{bd}3 \)?

14...\( \text{a}6 \) 15.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{e}8 \) 16.\( \text{dx}c5 \)

16.\( \text{a}3 \)! would not have vacated the b6-square for the dark horse and kept the possibility of d4-d5.

16...\( \text{bxc}5 \) 17.\( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{d}7 \#


C2) 6...\( \text{g}5 \)

7.\( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{ag}7 \)!

Instead Predojevic – Corneille, Istanbul 2005, tested an alternative:

7...\( \text{h}6 \)?!

This was not fast enough, though improvements for both sides can be found.

8.\( \text{a}3 \) \( \text{ag}7 \) 9.\( \text{cx}d4 \) \( \text{cx}d4 \)

In the event of 9...\( \text{cx}d4 \)?! the imminent landing of the a3-knight on d6 will be much more annoying than it could have been in the actual course of the game:

10.\( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{ag}7 \) 11.0–0

Another idea was to first bring out the dark-squared bishop while securing the c4-knight:

11.\( \text{b}3 \) 0–0 12.\( \text{a}4 \)

11.\( \text{d}6 \)?! \( \text{f}8 \) would on the other hand see White struggle to defend his e-pawn.

11...0–0 12.\( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{g}6 \)

Black could also have contemplated a less forcing follow-up, namely 12...b6, when after 13.b3 White’s plus looks quite bearable to me.

13.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{ce}5 \) 14.\( \text{f}xe5 \) \( \text{xe}5 \) 15.\( \text{xe}5 \) \( \text{xe}5 \)

16.\( \text{wh}5 \) \( \text{g}7 \) 17.f4

Black’s decision to take on c3 was too hasty and he now stands worse.

8...\( \text{d}3 \)

Black’s decision to take on c3 was too hasty and he now stands worse.
After the last sequence of moves White has invested a pawn for a dangerous kingside initiative, which is not easy to repel.

![Chessboard](image)

17...f5
Black also had a greedy and ugly defensive try. Let's have a look: 17...f6 18.fxg5 hxg5 (18...fxg5 19.Bxf8† Bxf8 20.Bxg5! The bishop is taboo because of e4 and then Bf1. A nasty endgame results after 20...Bf7 21.Bxf7† Bxf7 22.Bf1†+) 19.Bxg5 (more promising than 19.e4 f5 20.Bxg5 Be8) 19...Ba5 20.heat d7 And now the pawn sacrifice 21.b4 Bxb4 22.Ba1 yields White good attacking chances.
18.fxg5 hxg5 19.heat d6
After 19...d6 20.Bg6† Bf8 21.Bd2 a5 22.Ba1 White's activity is worth more than the pawn.
20.Bf6 Bb5 21.gxf5 Bxf5 22.Bxf5 exf5 23.Bb7†
23...Bf5? was a better try, but White is still better after, for example, 24.Bg5† Bf8 25.Bf1.
24.Bb7†

8.Bd2 Bxe7
The text move was tested in Stoczek – Jansa, Czech Republic 2008, but Black has alternatives:

8...h6
This makes more sense now that White has developed his queen to e2 (in contrast to Predojevic – Cornette).

9.heat Bg6 10.Bc4 0–0 11.d3 h6 12.exd4
15.b3! intending a3, seems preferable. In that case I would prefer White's chances.
Rozkov – Yagupov, Nizhniy Novgorod 1999; Black won this ending as his queenside majority eventually prevailed, but only due to weak play from his opponent.

Also possible is 8...Bc7. By attacking the e5-pawn for a third time Black forces its trade for g5. However, following 9.heat Bxe5 10.Bxg5 it is not obvious who has benefited more from the swap.

![Chessboard](image)

15.Bd2! Bxe5 16.Bb4 was probably a better way to proceed. White would then have had sufficient compensation for the pawn, in similar fashion to the game.

15...b4
After 15...Bxa4! 16.Bxa4 Bb7 and Black is at least equal.

Chapter 11 - 2.\(\text{d}3\) e6 3.c3 d5 4.e5 d4

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

The h1-a8 diagonal belongs to White, whereas the scope of the \(\text{f}7\)-bishop is blocked. White will find enough play along the c-file or thanks to his access to the b5-square, as in the game. He has enough for the pawn but not more.

19...\(\text{d}7\) 20.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{a}7\) 21.\(\text{b}7\)

21...\(\text{c}5\) 22.\(\text{x}a7\) \(\text{w}b6\) 23.\(\text{e}e7\) \(\text{w}d6\)

The more ambitious 23...\(\text{x}e6\)?! is risky after 24.\(\text{x}xg5\) \(\text{x}e7\) 25.\(\text{f}3\), while 24...\(\text{hxg5}\)? is simply catastrophic: 25.\(\text{xe}5!\) \(\text{xe}5\) 26.\(\text{wg}4\) f6 27.\(\text{wh}5\) And mate is very near.

24.\(\text{Ra}7\) \(\text{b}6\) 25.\(\text{ee}7\) \(\text{d}6\) 26.\(\text{a}a7\)

2½-1½

A logical outcome for a game where the equilibrium was never really disturbed.

D) 5.\(\text{d}3\)

After this bishop sortie Black has three sensible replies at his disposal. We will examine D1) 5...\(\text{e}7\), D2) 5...\(\text{c}6\) and D3) 5...\(\text{d}7\).

Instead 5...\(\text{dxc}3\) frees the c1-bishop for no reason and thus cannot be recommended. Spassky - So. Polgar, London 1996, continued 6.\(\text{dxc}3\) \(\text{d}7\) 7.\(\text{b}d2\) \(\text{c}6\) 8.\(\text{we}2\) \(\text{d}7\) 9.\(\text{xc}4\) \(\text{d}5\) 10.\(\text{a}4\) when White was clearly better at this stage even though Black eventually escaped with a draw.

D1) 5...\(\text{c}7\) 6.0-0

Black now has two main options: D11) 6...\(\text{c}6\) and D12) 6...\(\text{g}6\). There are also a couple of less common knight moves to mention first.

Black chose an unusual set-up for this line in Torre - Cu. Hansen, Novi Sad (ol) 1990. After 6...\(\text{d}7\) 7.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{g}6\) 8.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{g}7\) 9.\(\text{c}4\) White could certainly be happy with the outcome of the opening, but note how sharp the position can be; only a few moves later his opponent had seized the initiative: 9...0-0 10.\(\text{e}4?!\) \(\text{f}5\) 11.\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{xf}6\) 12.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{xe}4\) 13.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{b}5\) 14.\(\text{xc}5\) \(\text{b}7\) 15.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{xe}5\) 16.\(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{xd}4\) Of course White had better options, including 10.\(\text{cxd}4\) \(\text{cxd}4\) 11.\(\text{b}4?!\) or 10.\(\text{a}4\).

6...\(\text{f}5\) was tried in Perez Pietronave - Hernandez, Buenos Aires 1998, but it appears less logical than the other knight moves, as there is no pressure against e5 and White may consider \(\text{xf}5\) at some point.

D11) 6...\(\text{c}6\)
The more ambitious move is:
7...e4
Intending to inflict doubled pawns on Black in the event of ...d7, but this allows a typical counter-strike for this line, namely:
7...g5!

Now the encounter Prié – Salaun, France 1993, continued:
8.d3
Instead 8.h3?! h5 would only be grist to Black's mill.
However, a decent deviation was 8.cxd4. Then 8...cxd4 9.d3 would see the same position as in the game, but with the swap of pawns inserted White may have increased his chances to profit from his rival’s rather weak king. If 8...xd4?! 9.ea3 I would also rate White’s prospects as better. There remains 8...g4 9.de1 xd4 10.xg4 xe5 11.e2 which is rather unclear.
8...g4 9.g5 xe5
9..h6?! 10.e7
10.f4 gxf3 11.xf3 g6
This move, contemplating ...f7-f5, was stronger than the game continuation:
11...bd7?! 12.xe5 xe5 13.wh5 ag7 14.ea3 g6 And now instead of 15.g5 White should have preferred the simpler 15.xc5!
After the text move White should try:
12.g5!!
Instead 12.xg6! hxg6 13.e5 could be met by the simple 13...d6.

7...e7
7...g5 is not as effective as after 7.e4. White may reply 8.e2 or 8.e4?!, with the idea 8...b5 9.de6+ xd6 10.exd6 g4 11.e1 h5 12.xb5 xd6. The position is murky, but White has the bishop pair and a safer king.
8.e2 0–0 9.a3?
Encouraging the somewhat weakening move that follows.
9...a5 10.wc2 d7

11.h5&
This accurate move avoids the little combination that occurred in Novoselski – Pikula, Kragujevac 2009: 11.a4?! dxc3 12.dxc3 Qdxe5 13.Qxe5 Qxe5 14.Qxh7+ Qxh7 15.Qxe5 Qd5. Thanks to his two bishops, Black had the better of it.

The tempting 11.Qe4 in fact allows Black plenty of activity in return for his static weaknesses after: 11...f5 12.cxf6 Qxf6 13.Qe2 Qd5

D12) 6...Qg6

7.Qe4

I prefer the bishop move over the weakening 7.g3?! as played in Nieuwenhuis – Van Mil, Netherlands 1987. It is surely possible to improve on that game continuation, but my feeling is that Black was comfortable anyway.


7...Qd7

Or 7...Qe7 8.d3 0–0 9.Qbd2 Qd7 10.Qc4 and in M. Petrov – Aroshidze, Batumi 2002, White enjoyed a space advantage and gradually converted his better position.

8.Qa4 &c7 9.cxd4 0–0

10.d3

This looks more to the point than 10.Qc3?! cxd4 11.Qxg6 (11.Qxd4?! Qdxc5!) 11...dxc3 12.Qb1 cxb2 13.Qxb2 Qe8 14.Qe4 Qf8 as in Benjamin – Yermolinsky, Durango 1992, when the b2-bishop looked rather silly.


15...Qb7 16.Qxd4

In Prié – Emms, Paris 1994, Black had some compensation, but I still prefer White here.

D2) 5...Qc6

8.Qa4 &c7 9.cxd4 0–0
This is the most natural continuation and the one that happens most frequently in practical play. It does not however seem sufficient to achieve a level game. The main moves are D21) 6.\textit{\textsf{We}}2 and D22) 6.0–0.

One minor option is: 6.\textit{\textsf{Ge}}4 \textit{\textsf{dd}}7 (6...\textit{\textsf{Gge}}7??) 7.d3 \textit{\textsf{Cc}}7 8.0–0 \textit{\textsf{Dxe}}5 9.\textit{\textsf{Dxe}}5 \textit{\textsf{Dxe}}5 10.\textit{\textsf{Dxb}}7 \textit{\textsf{Bb}}8 Adnani – Al Modiahki, Casablanca 2002, offered mutual chances.

D21) 6.\textit{\textsf{We}}2

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

6...\textit{\textsf{Gge}}7

6...\textit{\textsf{Gg}}5?? as in Cappon – Meijers, Lille 2010, does not feel right with the white king still in the centre. However, the computer is less dogmatic and it considers the g-pawn thrust fully acceptable. White should play 7.h3! rather than 7.\textit{\textsf{Cc}}4 as in the game, when Black returned the favour with 7...\textit{\textsf{ch}}5?? instead of the resolute 7...\textit{\textsf{Cf}}5! 8.\textit{\textsf{exf}}6 \textit{\textsf{Dxf}}6 ! 9.\textit{\textsf{Cc}}2 \textit{\textsf{Dd}}5 10.\textit{\textsf{Dg}}3 \textit{\textsf{Bb}}6 11.\textit{\textsf{Ce}}4 \textit{\textsf{Cg}}7 would have put 7.\textit{\textsf{Cc}}4 under a cloud.

7.0–0

7.\textit{\textsf{Cc}}4?? is for once inappropriate, as after 7...\textit{\textsf{Cc}}7 White is compelled to part with his bishop for nothing: 8.\textit{\textsf{Dxc}}6+ \textit{\textsf{Dxc}}6 9.d3 \textit{\textsf{Dxc}}3 10.bxc3 \textsf{b6}+ Gofshtein – Manor, Tel Aviv 1995.

7...\textit{\textsf{Gg}}6

7...\textit{\textsf{Gf}}5?? 8.\textit{\textsf{Cc}}4 \textit{\textsf{Dd}}7 9.d3 \textit{\textsf{Cc}}7 10.\textit{\textsf{Ca}}3± Paronen – Kochyev, Jyvaskyla 2001.

8.g3

Sax – Ljubojevic, London 1980, continued 8.\textit{\textsf{Dc}}4. This is also okay, even though White suffered a painful loss on this occasion: 8.\textit{\textsf{Cc}}7 9.\textit{\textsf{Ca}}3 0–0 10.\textit{\textsf{Dxc}}4 \textit{\textsf{Cxd}}4 11.\textit{\textsf{Cc}}2 \textit{\textsf{Cg}}7 12.\textit{\textsf{Dd}}8 13.\textit{\textsf{h}}4 \textit{\textsf{h}}5! 14.\textit{\textsf{g}}4?? This aggressive move will have a terrible boomerang-effect: 14...\textit{\textsf{hxg}}4 15.\textit{\textsf{h}}5 \textit{\textsf{Dxe}}5! 16.\textit{\textsf{Dxe}}5 \textit{\textsf{f}}5 17.\textit{\textsf{Cc}}2 \textit{\textsf{Df}}4 18.\textit{\textsf{Cd}}3 \textit{\textsf{Bb}}5 And White threw in the towel.

8...\textit{\textsf{Dc}}3

Instead 8...\textit{\textsf{f}}6!! 9.\textit{\textsf{exf}}6 \textit{\textsf{Gxf}}6 10.\textit{\textsf{Ca}}3 or 9...\textit{\textsf{Bxf}}6 10.\textit{\textsf{Cc}}4 both seem in White’s favour.

9.\textit{\textsf{Dxe}}6

9.\textit{\textsf{Dxc}}3?? \textit{\textsf{Ggx}}5 10.\textit{\textsf{Dxe}}5 \textit{\textsf{Dxe}}5 11.\textit{\textsf{Cc}}2 offers fairly decent compensation for the pawn.

9...\textit{\textsf{cxb}}2 10.\textit{\textsf{Dxf}}7+ \textit{\textsf{Dxf}}7 11.\textit{\textsf{Dxb}}2 \textit{\textsf{Cc}}7 12.\textit{\textsf{Dc}}4*

Karpatchev – Bolzoni, Charleroi 2005.

D22) 6.0–0

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Black now has three main tries: D221) 6...\textit{\textsf{Gg}}5??, D222) 6...\textit{\textsf{Dd}}7 and D223) 6...\textit{\textsf{Gge}}7.
D221) 6...g5!?

An active but obviously committal manner of trying to seize the initiative.

7.\xe4

Less natural is 7.\xc2 \xg7 8.\xb5 as in Hagara - Espig, Pardubice 1999. The game continued: 8...\xd7 9.d3 h6 10.\xc6 \xc6 11.\xbd2 \xe7 12.\xe4 \g6 13.\xc5 dxc3 14.bxc3 \xd5 15.\xe4

Now 15...0-0-0! would have been excellent. Instead Black grabbed on e5, which was risky with his king still in the centre. In fact, Black soon ran into big trouble: 15...\xe5?! 16.\xe5 \xe5 17.f4 \xf4 18.\xf4 f5? 19.\xe5 \xe5 20.\xf5

Black should defend against the positional threat of taking on c6, as the following alternative demonstrates:

7...g4?! 8.\xc6†
8.\xc1? \xe5 9.f4 \g6 10.\xc2 \xd6 In Karpatchev - Davitian, Bastia 2009, White had insufficient compensation for the sacrificed pawn, as he will need too much time to mobilize his queenside.

8...\xc6

Strategically Black is in bad shape, as he has weaknesses on both sides. If he fails to find dynamic counter-chances then his situation will be hopeless.

9.\xc1

No better is: 9...\xa6?! 10.d3 c4 Otherwise White would close the queenside and kill the a6-bishop. 11.\xb4 cxd3 12.\xd4 d2 13.\xd2 h5 14.\xd1 \xf1 15.\xf1 In Buchal - Kovalev, Cappelle la Grande 2007, White was very happy with two pawns for the exchange and the black king as a target.

10.d3

10.c4 as in Tempone - Glavina Rossi, Buenos Aires 1991, is also worthy of attention. 10...\g7 11.\xd3 \h6 12.b3 \g5 13.\f4 \xf3 14.\xf3 \d7 15.\xc5 \xe5 16.\xd7 \xd7 17.d3±

In both cases Black lacks adequate compensation for his static weaknesses.
10...\textit{g}7 11.f4 \textit{c}e7 12.d2 \textit{f}5 13.e4 \textit{b}6 14.c4

Illescas Cordoba - Vincent, Montpellier 1988; Black should not be able to efficiently attack on the kingside, whereas White's plan on the other wing is quite easy, with \textit{c}2 and b2-b3 a likely start.

8.d3 g4 9.e5

9...\textit{x}c6 \textit{x}c6 10.e5 h5 was fine for Black in Illescas Cordoba - A. Sokolov, Bilbao 1987.

9...\textit{dxe5}

In this rare case, capturing on e5 is actually Black's safest option.

The provocative 9...h6 is also worth a look even though it looks exceedingly risky for Black. White can then improve on Illescas Cordoba - Sokolov by playing 10.\textit{x}c6 \textit{x}c6 11.e4 or go for a more critical option: 10.\textit{x}xf7 \textit{x}xf7 11.\textit{x}g4 \textit{g}e7 12.a3 h5 13.\textit{f}3f3+ \textit{f}5f5 Sanduleac - Rajkovic, Pancevo 2002. I will stick to "unclear" as the most honest verdict, but such positions are desperately tough for a non-computer to defend; White did indeed win after many adventures.

However, in reply to 9...h6 perhaps best of all is: 10.\textit{h}7f7? \textit{xe}5 10...\textit{g}7 11.f4! 11.\textit{x}f8 \textit{xf}8 12.f4 White has fantastic compensation.

10.f4

10.e2!? 10...\textit{gxf}3

Once again, capturing is probably safest as for example, 10...h6f6 11.fxe5 hxe5 12.\textit{x}g4 was excellent for White in Tempone - Spangenberg, Buenos Aires 1992. However the alternative does have a few wildly unclear moments:

10...\textit{g}6 11.f5 \textit{xf}5 12.\textit{x}f5 \textit{xf}5 13.\textit{xf}5

Now Black has an unappealing choice:

13...\textit{h}6?? is beautifully refuted by: 14.\textit{e}4!! \textit{g}7 15.\textit{g}5 \textit{e}7 (15...\textit{b}6 16.\textit{f}6f6+ \textit{xf}6 17.\textit{x}f6 \textit{xb}2 18.\textit{d}2+-) 16.\textit{f}6f6+- Nunn - Miezis, France 1999.

13...\textit{f}6?? is also ropey. In Sax - Rezan, Bibinje 2006, White decided to enjoy himself with 14.\textit{e}4 \textit{e}5 15.\textit{x}e5?? \textit{xe}5 16.\textit{x}g4 \textit{e}7. This was certainly promising, but in this line White had good alternatives such as 14.\textit{e}2f or 15.\textit{f}4.

By a process of elimination, Black must therefore play 13...\textit{d}7 14.\textit{xf}7 \textit{e}7. This looks suspect, but Black is not dead yet. This means 10...\textit{g}6 looks too risky, but it is not clearly refuted (yet).

11.cxd4
If 11.\(\text{Q}x\text{f}3\) then 11...\(\text{Q}g4\) is messy (see the similar variation below).

11...\(\text{c}x\text{d}4\)
If 11...\(\text{f}x\text{g}2?!\) then White could try 12.\(\text{Q}f2\), as 12.\(\text{Q}x\text{f}7\) \(\text{Q}x\text{f}7\) 13.\(\text{Q}x\text{f}7\) \(\text{Q}x\text{f}7\) 14.\(\text{h}5\)\(\text{t}\) is just a draw.

12.\(\text{Q}f4\)
Or 12.\(\text{Q}x\text{f}3\) \(\text{Q}g4\) 13.\(\text{Q}g5\) \(\text{Q}h6\) with wild complications (instead on 13...\(f5\) there would follow 14.\(h3\), which is also a mess).

12...\(\text{Q}g7?!\)
Black had to play 12...\(\text{h}6\) to keep the game unclear. After the text move, instead of 13.\(\text{Q}d2\) as in Rivas Pastor – Iturrizaga, Benidorm 2009, White should have gone for:

13.\(\text{Q}x\text{b}7?!\) \(\text{B}b8\) 14.\(\text{Q}x\text{f}3\)
White has the advantage.

D222) 6...\(\text{d}7\) 7.\(\text{a}3\) a6 8.\(\text{c}2\)

8...\(\text{Q}c7\)
8...\(\text{g}5?!\)

9.\(\text{e}1\)
The text move was suggested by Chuchelov in his analysis of the following game: 9.\(\text{W}e2\) \(\text{g}5?!\) 10.\(\text{c}x\text{d}4\) \(\text{c}x\text{d}4\) 11.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{Q}g7\) and now both

12.\(b4\) \(g4\) 13.\(\text{Q}x\text{d}4\) \(\text{Q}x\text{f}5\)\(=\) David – Chuchelov, Fuert 1999, and 12.\(h3\) \(h5\) 13.\(\text{W}e4\) \(\text{Q}h6\)\(=\) are unclear.

9...\(\text{d}8\) 10.\(\text{c}x\text{d}4\)
Here or on the next move, as Chuchelov also mentioned, 10.\(b3\) was interesting.

10...\(\text{c}x\text{d}4\) 11.\(\text{Q}c\text{d}4?!\)
This move is worth analysing in some detail, as it leads to interesting tactics and ideas that may reappear in various lines where White has the chance to grab a pawn on \(d4\). However, White should steer clear of this particular move, as Black gains excellent play. As mentioned above, 11.\(b3\) was wiser when White has decent chances of an edge.

11...\(\text{c}x\text{d}4\) 12.\(\text{c}x\text{d}4\)

12...\(\text{c}6?!\)
The text move is simpler and more reliable than the fun line that Chuchelov gave:

12...\(\text{c}8\) 13.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{c}5\) 14.\(\text{W}g4?!\)
We shall follow the wild possibility that Chuchelov mentioned, but in fact White should try 14.\(\text{W}c2\) when, for example, 14...\(\text{W}b6\) 15.\(\text{Q}f3\) \(\text{Q}x\text{f}2\)\(t\) 16.\(\text{W}h1\) is rather unclear.
14...f5
The computer points out 14...g5! with the idea 15.fxg5 hxg5 and one of White's pieces on the d-file will drop off. For example, 16.h4 Qg6 17.g4 h5. 15.exf6 Qxf6 16.Qxe6 Qxe6 17.Qxh2 Qxh2 18.Qxg4t
With a crazy position where Black has just enough compensation.

13.Qxc6
White has no choice, as 13.Qg4 is refuted by 13...Qh6! (13...Qb6?! is needlessly messy after 14.Qxe6). Now after 14.Qxe6 (instead 14.Qf4 fails to 14...Qb6 15.Qxc6 Qxd5 or even 14...g5) 14...fxe6 15.Qxe6+ Qxe6+ Qf5. White may have three pawns for the piece, but the pawns are no threat.

14.Qc4
After 14.Qc2 Qd7 15.Qd4 Qc5 16.Qe4 Black has a pleasant choice between 16...Qe7 with superb compensation and 16...Qxd4 17.Qxc7 Qxf2+ 18.Qxf2 Qxc7, restoring material equality while keeping a positional advantage.

14...Qxb4 15.Qa4t Qd7 16.Qxb4 Qe7
Black has more than enough for the pawn. This position is worth remembering as a typical example of the punishment for grabbing the d4-pawn too early.

D223) 6...Qge7
In this popular position we need another split: D2231) 7.Qa3, D2232) 7.Qe4 and D2233) 7.Qe1.

D2231) 7.Qa3 Qg6 8.Qe1

8...Qc7

In reply to 8...a6 in Sherbakov - Grebionkin, Izhevsk 2009, White conducted the early middlegame beautifully: 9.g3 Qc7 10.Qe2 b5 11.Qc4 Qb7 12.exd4 exd4 13.Qc2 Qd8 14.d3 Qe7 15.Qd2 0-0 16.Bc1 Qb6 17.h4 Qe8 18.h5 Qf8 19.h6 White had the better prospects and his opponent was for the time being deprived of any counterplay.

9.b3

Instead Adianto - Kamsky, Minneapolis 2005, continued: 9.exd4 exd4 10.Qc4 Qb4 11.Qxg6 hxg6 12.a3 Qc6 13.d3 b5 14.Qc2 Qb7 15.Qe4 Qd5 Black's position looks easier to play in my view, with the possibility of continuing with ...f6, ...g5 and so on.

9...0-0 10.Qb2 Qf4

And now instead of the rather passive 11.Qf1 as in Spassky - Arakhamia-Grant, London 1996, White would have good chances of an edge after:

11.Qe4?

D2232) 7.Qe4

7...Qd7

Black should avoid 7...Qg6? as his queenside is shattered after 8.Qxc6+ bxc6 9.Qc4, Lupu - Zetocha, Romania 1992.

More interesting is 7...g6 8.d3 Qg7 9.Qf4 0-0 10.Qc4 with unclear play in Prič - Thorhallsson, Reykjavik 1993.

Another good option is:

7...Qc7 8.Qe1 Qd7 9.Qa3 a6

On 9...Qg6 as in G. Wall - Seuffert, Germany 2002, White should try 10.Qb5, for instance 10...Qb6 11.Qd6+ Qxd6 12.Qxd6 or 10...Qb8 11.Qxd4 a6 12.Qa3 Qxd4 13.Qc4.

10.Qc4 Qg6 11.a4

Now instead of the perilous 11...0-0-0, as in Bardel - Pogorelov, Budapest 1991, Black should have tried:

11...Qe7

With quite a decent game.

8.d3

The text move is obviously sensible but there is a fascinating alternative:

8.b4! Qg6

By opting for 8...dxc3 Black insures himself of the better pawn structure at the cost of
allowing his opponent a certain initiative: 9.bxc5 (or 9.b5?! 9...d4 10...dxc3) 9...cxd2 10...dxd2 9...d5 Lamorelle – Bujisho, Val d’Isere 2004; Now 11...a3, intending to jump soon 9...c4–d6, would have put some pressure on Black 9...dxc5 9...xc5 10...b2 0–0 11...b3 dxc3 12...xc3

In Ehlvest – Markowski, Polanica Zdroj 1995, White was somewhat better.

8...g6 9.e4

9...g6?? should in my view be delayed as long as possible, and played only if White gets something substantial in return for the pair of bishops.

9...e7 10...a3 0–0 11...cxd4 cxd4 12...xg6

This should not promise White anything, but the alternative 12...c4 b5 13...d6 0–b8 was worse.

12...fxg6 13...c2 e8 14...e4 e5 15.b4

Otherwise Black would rule b2–b4 out by playing ...a7–a5.

15...xb4 16...xb4 xb4 17...xd4

Now the correct move is:

17...d5= 18...d7

Instead Rainfray – Spielmann, France 2000, continued 17...c3? and after 18...e6 0–e7 19...b3 White was better, though the game was eventually drawn after a long battle.

D2233) 7...e1 g6

I am sceptical about Black’s chances to equalize after 7...e1, but for that purpose 7...g6 seems best. Let’s browse through some alternatives:

7...g6 8.b3 9...g7 9...a3 0–0 10...c2 dxc3 11.dxc3 Deev – Timoshenko, Berlin 1993, seems a tad better for White.

7...d5 8...e4 Black has employed several different moves here, but none of them looks wholly satisfactory. For example: 8...g5 (or 8...e7 9.d3 0–0 10...c4 f5 11...xf6 0–xf6 12...xc6 bxc6 13...bd2 when in Willemze – Gayson, Ohrid 2009, White had a strategically winning position, given Black’s awful pawn structure) 9.d3 h6 10...c4 0–d7 11.h4? gxh4 12...f4 0–f5 13...xc6† 0–xc6 14...bd2 Grosar – Mencinger, Slovenia 1991. Black has a horrible light-squared bishop and numerous weaknesses. His attacking prospects on the kingside are a dream and the extra pawn is meaningless.

7...h6 8...a3 g5 9.h3 0–g7 10...c4 0–0 11...d4 Dhumaev – Al Modiahki, Kuala Lumpur 1993. The same kind of position as after 5...g3 0–c6 6...g2 g5 has arisen. The light-squared bishop plays a more active role on d3 than on g2, so White must stand better.

7...f5 8...e4 f4 9.d3 0–e7 10...a4 0–d3 11...c5 McShane – Markowski, Bled 2002. White had more options and he could play where he wished on the board. His position was thus the more pleasant.

7...b6?! should be met by 8...e4 (instead of the rather pointless 8...e2?? of Bove – Lenic, Lodi 2008). Maybe White had feared 8...d3? but then 9...a3 followed by 10...e3 renders the d-pawn advance quite hazardous.

8..c4!

8...c4! looks like a strategic mistake. 8...e7 9...xg6 (if 9...c2 then 9...d3 10...a4 d7 is critical and should favour Black) 9...hxg6 (9...fxg6 is also fine, as is often the case in this type of structure) 10.d3 g5 11.h3 f5 12.a3 b6 Runić – Djuric, Golubac 2003. Black could prepare the lever ...g5–g4 at his leisure, with every chance of a successful kingside assault.
Chapter II -

2. \( \texttt{f3 \ e6 \ c3 \ d5 \ e5 \ d4} \)

This position has been extensively tested, so we need a further split: D22331) \( 8...f6 \), D22332) \( 8...a6 \) and D22333) \( 8...e7 \).

A few minor moves are also worth a quick look:

8...b6 9.h4 \( \texttt{d7} \) 10.h5 \( \texttt{ge7} \) 11.\( \texttt{a3} \) \( \texttt{b7} \) 12.\( \texttt{c4} \) \( \texttt{d5} \) 13.a4 0–0 0 14.\( \texttt{e4} \) \( \texttt{f5} \) 1/2–1/2

Gdanski – Shkapenko, Warsaw 2008. Instead of prematurely agreeing a draw, White could have continued 15.exf6 gxf6 16.a5, intending 16...b5 17.a6 \( \texttt{a8} \) 18.\( \texttt{a3} \), when although the situation is unclear, it looks more dangerous for Black.

8...c7 9.\( \texttt{e2} \) a6 10.a4 \( \texttt{d7} \) 11.h4= Blalock – Rocha, Lisbon 2003.

8...d7 9.\( \texttt{a3} \) a6 10.\( \texttt{c2} \) \( \texttt{b6} \) 11.\( \texttt{e2}! \) (after 11.\( \texttt{b1} \) \( \texttt{e7} \) 12.b4 0–0 Najer – Grigoriants, Pardubice 2004, White’s play looked more artificial than efficient) 11...\( \texttt{e7} \) 12.b3 \( \texttt{f6} \) 13.exf6 \( \texttt{gxf6} \) 14.\( \texttt{cxd4} \) \( \texttt{cxd4} \) 15.\( \texttt{b2} \) e5 Black was probably confident at this point, but a nasty surprise awaited him: 16.\( \texttt{fxd4!} \) \( \texttt{exd4} \) 17.\( \texttt{cxd4} \) \( \texttt{c7} \) 18.\( \texttt{xf6} \) 0–0 0 19.\( \texttt{xe}8 \) \( \texttt{xxh8} \) 20.\( \texttt{e4} \) In Mokshanov – Shaposhnikov, Kazan 2010, White had a decisive material advantage which he converted soon afterwards.

D22331) \( 8...f6 \)

Note that \( 8...f5 \) comes to the same thing because White has to take en passant if he wishes to play for an edge.

9.exf6 gxf6

On 9...\( \texttt{xf6} \) the easiest is 10.\( \texttt{e4} \) and then 11.d3 with a small white plus.

10.\( \texttt{cxd4} \)

White naturally had a choice here, and moves such as 10.\( \texttt{e4} \) or 10.\( \texttt{a3} \) were also quite acceptable. In each case I would rate White’s chances a tad higher.

10...\( \texttt{cxd4} \) 11.\( \texttt{c4} \) e5 12.d3 \( \texttt{a5} \)

12...a6?

13.\( \texttt{a4} \) \( \texttt{d7} \) 14.\( \texttt{b5} \) \( \texttt{c6} \) 15.\( \texttt{b3} \) \( \texttt{g4} \)

We have followed Degraeve – Markowski, Rethymnon 2003, which continued 16.\( \texttt{bd2}!! \) when after 16...\( \texttt{d7} \) 17.\( \texttt{c4} \) \( \texttt{e7} \) Black was fine and he eventually won; in the later course of the game White’s cavalry could hardly move. Better was:

16.\( \texttt{fd2} \)

D22332) \( 8...a6 \)
9.h4

The thematic choice, but White has also tested other moves:

9.\textit{We}2 dxc3 10.\textit{Xg}6

Also possible is 10.dxc3, a possibility we encountered in the line 6.\textit{We}2 \textit{Ge}7 7.0-0 \textit{G}g6 8.g3 dxc3 and soon. Here too this gambit yields White reasonable compensation after 10...\textit{G}xe5 11.\textit{Xe}5 \textit{Xc}5 12.\textit{Xc}2.

10...\textit{Xc}xb2!

The only correct move, which leads to an unclear position.

10...\textit{Xf}xg6?! 11.dxc3 was unsuitable, because of the looming \textit{Q}bd2-e4 and \textit{G}g5.

10...\textit{h}xg6?! is also a mistake. (As after 10.dxc3, we have reached a position reminiscent of the 6.\textit{We}2 \textit{Ge}7 7.0-0 \textit{G}g6 8.g3 dxc3 section, namely Karpatchev – Bolzoni, Charleroi 2005.) After 11.dxc3 \textit{b}5 as in Lupu – Z. Varga, Odorheiu Secuiesc 1992, White could have secured an edge by means of 12.\textit{G}g5 or 12.a4.

11.\textit{Xe}7? 12.\textit{Xe}7 12.a4

9.a4 \textit{b}6 10.h4 \textit{G}c7 11.\textit{We}2 \textit{cb}7 12.\textit{O}a3 \textit{O}a5 13.h5 \textit{Q}e7 14.\textit{Xe}4 \textit{Xe}4!

An improvement over 14...\textit{O}d5?! as in Formanek – Gheorghiu, Lone Pine 1978. White now missed the opportunity to continue 15.\textit{O}c4! and gain the advantage. A plausible follow-up is then: 15...\textit{Xc}4

16.\textit{W}xc4 \textit{O}e3?? 17.\textit{W}d3 \textit{c}4 18.\textit{W}b1 \textit{G}f5 19.\textit{O}xd4 \textit{O}xd4 20.\textit{X}xd4 \textit{X}d8 21.\textit{X}xb7 \textit{X}xb7 22.\textit{X}e4 Followed by 23.d3 when it seems that Black does not have enough for his pawn.

15.\textit{W}xe4 \textit{W}c6

Black's plan is:

16.\textit{X}xd4 \textit{X}d8! 17.\textit{d}xc5 \textit{O}b3 18.\textit{X}b1 \textit{Xc}5

With ample compensation for the pawn.

9...dxc3

Black can instead try to avoid the endgame that usually results from the text move with:

9...\textit{G}c7 This should not be sufficient to gain equality, but at least Black is fighting in the middlegame. 10.\textit{We}2 \textit{bd}7 11.h5 \textit{G}e7 12.\textit{a}3 \textit{G}d5

And now the most accurate move was:

13.\textit{a}c2!!

Instead Hendriks – Timman, London 2009, continued 13.\textit{a}e4 0-0–0 and only then 14.\textit{O}c2 but then 14...\textit{O}e8 15.\textit{X}xd4 \textit{f}5! 16.\textit{xf}6 \textit{X}h5 was not so clear. A sample continuation now (instead of the game's 17.d3) was 17.\textit{f}xg7 \textit{W}xg7 18.\textit{d}xc5 \textit{X}xc5 19.d4! \textit{X}d6, when Black has full compensation for the missing pawn.

10.\textit{X}d3 \textit{c}4 11.\textit{a}c2 \textit{W}xd1 12.\textit{X}xd1

White can rely on his space advantage to claim an edge in this ending. The positional threat of h4-h5 then \textit{O}bd2-e4 provoked Black's next move.
In McShane - Lau, Germany 2003, White had a large advantage after the simple 17.\textit{\texttt{e4}}, but he could also have chosen:

17.\textit{\texttt{Axe5?! fxe5}} 17.\textit{\texttt{Axc4}}

When White’s initiative more than compensates for the exchange; in fact, White is close to winning.

D22333) 8...	extit{\texttt{e7}} 9.\textit{\texttt{h4}}!

A thematic thrust to dislodge the g6-knight.

9...	extit{\texttt{e7}}

Black prepares to evacuate his monarch to the west. This obviously involves a fair amount of risk and practice has seen White maintain an edge. The alternatives also fail to solve all Black’s problems:

9...\textit{\texttt{0-0}}? 10.\textit{\texttt{h5}} \textit{\texttt{g8}} 11.\textit{\texttt{We2}} \textit{\texttt{g6}} 12.\textit{\texttt{e4}} was ugly for Black in Rahlß - Kupreichik, Berlin 1992.

9...\textit{\texttt{dxc3}} 10.\textit{\texttt{dxc3}} \textit{\texttt{c4}} 11.\textit{\texttt{c2±}} was Hendriks - Boros, Budapest 2008; see 8...\textit{\texttt{a6}} 9.\textit{\texttt{h4}} above (McShane - Lau) for an example of the endgame arising after ...\textit{\texttt{xd1}}.

Instead after 9...\textit{\texttt{f6}} 10.\textit{\texttt{exf6}} both recaptures lead to a lasting plus for White. For instance:

a) 10...\textit{\texttt{gx6}} 11.\textit{\texttt{e4}} \textit{\texttt{d7}} 12.\textit{\texttt{h5}} \textit{\texttt{ge5}} 13.\textit{\texttt{xe5}} \textit{\texttt{dxe5}} 14.\textit{\texttt{d3}} \textit{\texttt{wc7}} 15.\textit{\texttt{f4}} \textit{\texttt{d6}} 16.\textit{\texttt{cxd4}} \textit{\texttt{cxd4}} 17.\textit{\texttt{c3}} in Meyer – Rahls, Germany 2003, with \textit{\texttt{g5}} on the way, the weaknesses induced by 9...\textit{\texttt{f6}} were making themselves felt.

b) 10...\textit{\texttt{xf6}} 11.\textit{\texttt{e4}} 0–0 (11...\textit{\texttt{ge5}} 12.\textit{\texttt{d3}} \textit{\texttt{dxc3}} 13.\textit{\texttt{bxc3±}} S. Zhigalko – Shaposhnikov, St Petersburg 2006) 12.\textit{\texttt{d3}} The following sequence of moves is of course not compulsory, though it is rather logical. 12...\textit{\texttt{d7}} 13.\textit{\texttt{g5}} \textit{\texttt{xg5}} 14.\textit{\texttt{e4}} \textit{\texttt{fe8}} 15.\textit{\texttt{c2}} \textit{\texttt{e5}} 16.\textit{\texttt{e2}} \textit{\texttt{h6}} 17.\textit{\texttt{h5}} \textit{\texttt{ge7}} 18.\textit{\texttt{gxe7}} \textit{\texttt{exe7}} 19.\textit{\texttt{b3}} \textit{\texttt{dxc3}} 20.\textit{\texttt{bxc3}}

White was better in Torre – Illescas Cordoba, Novi Sad (ol) 1990.

10.\textit{\texttt{We2}}

Otherwise the g6-knight could be knocked backwards into passivity. For example: 10...\textit{\texttt{d7}} 11.\textit{\texttt{h8}} 12.\textit{\texttt{a3}} \textit{\texttt{a6}} 13.\textit{\texttt{c2}} 0-0-0 14.\textit{\texttt{xd4}} \textit{\texttt{xd4}} 15.\textit{\texttt{cxd4}} \textit{\texttt{xd4}} 16.\textit{\texttt{xd4}} \textit{\texttt{e8}} 17.\textit{\texttt{f3}}

In Ponkratov – Nukin, Voronezh 2009, White possessed a sound extra pawn and a clear advantage.

11.\textit{\texttt{xf6}} \textit{\texttt{gx6}} 12.\textit{\texttt{e4}} \textit{\texttt{d7}} 13.\textit{\texttt{cxd4}} \textit{\texttt{xd4}}
14. $\text{Qxd4}$ $\text{cxd4}$ 15. $\text{d3}$ $\text{d6}$

So far this is Gharamian – Arakhamia-Grant, Calvia 2007. Now the computer suggests:

16. $\text{d2}$

Intending $\text{Qa3-c4}$. Note that the threatening

16... $\text{a}3$ $\text{g8}$

is coolly defused by:

17. $\text{c1} \text{ b8}$ 18. $\text{h1}$

D3) 5... $\text{d7}$

6.0–0

6. $\text{a3} \text{c6}$

6... $\text{e7}$ should more or less come to the same provided that after 7. $\text{c2}$ Black prefers 7... $\text{c6}$ over releasing the tension by 7... $\text{dx}c3$?

7. $\text{f3} \text{e7}$ 8.0–0 $\text{g6}$ 9. $\text{e4} \text{d7}$

9...$\text{d3}$?

10. $\text{d3} \text{x}e4$ 11. $\text{wxe4} \text{c6}$

In Quillan – D’Costa, Le Touquet 2008, rather than 12. $\text{c2}!!$ $\text{dx}c3$ White should have preferred 12. $\text{cxd4}$, with slightly the better chances.

6. $\text{cxd4} \text{c6}$ 6...$\text{cxd4}$ is also valid as after 7. $\text{cxd4}$ then 7...$\text{c6}$! 8. $\text{f3} \text{c7}$ would recover the pawn at once because 9. $\text{e2}$ would allow 9... $\text{xe5}$ as the c1-bishop would be hanging. Instead of 7...$\text{c6}$ Gutman – Balogh, Cappelle la Grande 2007, continued 7...$\text{g5}$ when White should have played 8.$\text{b3}!!$. After 8... $\text{xb2}$ the game would be similar to 5. $\text{cxd4} \text{cxd4}$ 6. $\text{b5}++ \text{d7}$ 7. $\text{cxd4} \text{g5}$ and so on. In this case White’s light-squared bishop is not under attack, but on the other hand it also blocks the d-pawn.

7. $\text{c3} \text{c7}$ 8.0–0 $\text{cxd4}$ 9. $\text{b5} \text{g6}$ 10. $\text{xg6}$

Although there is nothing wrong with the text move, the alternative 10...$\text{xb5}$ was also fine. For example: 11. $\text{e4} \text{xf1}$ 12. $\text{xb7} \text{g2}$ 13. $\text{xa8} \text{xf3}$ 14. $\text{xf3} \text{c7}$=

11. $\text{gx}d4$

Now Black can either keep his strong light-squared bishop or concede it in return for accelerating his kingside activity:

11. $\text{d5}$

11...$\text{g5}$ 12. $\text{xc6} \text{xc6}$ 13. $\text{wa4} \text{b4}$ 14. $\text{d3}$

(14.c3? $\text{g4}$ 15. $\text{hxg4} \text{wd3}$ intending...$\text{h1}$, and clearly the cure has been worse than the disease) 14...$\text{g4}$ 15. $\text{g5} \text{xd3}$ 16. $\text{a3} \text{c7}$

17. $\text{wxe4} \text{xe5}$ 1/2–1/2 McShane – Su.B. Hansen, Malmo 2003.

12. $\text{c2} \text{c6}$ 13. $\text{d4} \text{c7}$ 14. $\text{c3} 0–0$


6. $\text{e4} \text{c6}$ 7. $\text{e2}$ (also about equal is 7. $\text{d3}$ $\text{xe4}$ 8. $\text{dx}e4 \text{c6}$ 9. $\text{wb3} \text{wb6}$ 10. $\text{a}3$ $\text{xb3}$

11. $\text{axb3} 0–0–0$ G. Wall – Vavra, Germany 2004)

7...$\text{e7}$ 8. $\text{d3} \text{xe4}$ 9. $\text{wb3} \text{dxc3}$ 10. $\text{xc3} \text{xb3}$

$\text{d5}$= Timman – Ljubojevic, Breda 1999.

6...$\text{c6} 7.\text{e2}$

Surprisingly, it makes a huge difference whether White opts for 7. $\text{e2}$ or 7. $\text{e1}$:

7.b3 $\text{e7}$ 8. $\text{cxd4} \text{g6}$ 9. $\text{e1} \text{cxd4}=$ was Illescas Cordoba – J. Polgar, Madrid 1994.
Chapter II -

2.1 tlf3 e6 3. c3 d5 4. e5 d4

This natural move is in fact rather risky, as it occupies a square the B-knight might need:

7...g5!
7...e7?! is feeble in comparison. 8.d3 g6 9.g3 d7 10.h4 We are following Raud – Seeman, Tallinn 2000. Black chose 10...a6 here, but even after the improvement 10...d7 11.b5! xb5 12.xb5 White would have retained some edge due to the looming h4-h5.

8.f1
This odd move (creating a retreat for the knight on g1!) suggests White has problems to solve. The alternatives are not so easy either:

8.h3 h5 9.h2 (9.e4? g4 10.hxg3) cxd4 11.g3 Ronchetti – Netzer, Heraklio 2004, would have been quite awkward for White after 11...h4 12.g4 d7 9...g4 10.xg4 hxg4 11.xg4 dxc3 Salmansuu – J. Horvath, Helsinki 2001. Now after White saves his d3-bishop, there should follow 12...cxb2 13.xb2 when I prefer Black.

8.b4 is the computer's suggestion. Then after 8...g4 9.h3 d7 10.xd4 (not 10.e4?! a6!) 10...cxd4 11...d4 White has invested a piece for only two pawns, but g4 is under attack and Black will not be able to complete his development soon. I suspect human players will find this sac very hard to trust.

8...g4 9.xg1 h6 10.e4 xe4 11.xe4 c6 G. Wall – Rowson, West Bromwich 2004; quite an unusual position after 11 moves! I believe the concerns of both camps should more or less balance. Still, the position after 7.f1 g5! seems much easier for Black to play.

7.d3 e7 8.cxd4
The duel Alavkin – A. Zhigalko, St Petersburg 2007, took an original course: 8.b4 cxb4 9.xb5 c6 10.xd4 bxc3 11.xc3 dxc3 12.xc2 d5 13.xh7 Black obviously could not trap the bishop with 13...g6? because of 14.xg6, so material parity was restored and the game was unclear.

8...cxd4
Instead Grosar – S. Kovacevic, Formia 1994, continued 8...g6!? 9.xg6 hxg6 10.dxc5 and now 10...d4! would have given Black adequate compensation for his two pawns. The game instead went 10...g5? 11.d4 e7 and now White could have secured a large plus with 12.e3!.

9.xc2 g6 10.f1
For 10.xg6 hxg6 11.xcxd4 see 6.cxd4 c6 7.e3 e7 etc.

10...d4
10...h4?

7.d7
The 7.g5?! lunge is still possible, though less scary with e1 clear for the knight: 8.b4 (maybe 8.b3 or 8.d4) 8...g4 9.f1 cxb4 10.cxb4 xxb4 In Reichenbach – Rahls, Bad Wiessee 2003, White could have punished the g-pawn's impudence with 11.xg4, with a complete mess.

8.e4 xe4
After 8...Ng6 9.d3 Nh4 10.Rxh4 Qxh4 11.Qd2 as in Zubarev – Vorobiov, Gyumri 2008, White had a slight plus.

9.Qxe4 Bc6

9...Qd5 should also suffice for an equal endgame: 10.Qxd5 Qxd5 11.cxd4 Qc6 12.dxc5 Qxc5 13.Qc3 Qd5 14.Qb5 Now instead of 14...Qd3?! as in Prié – A. Sokolov, Clichy 1993, 14...Qc2! was correct, asking White to choose between the liquidation 15.d4 and the risky 15...Bb1.

After 9...Qd6?! 10.d3 Black's piece arrangement seems less effective than after 9...Bc6. He is a little worse here, but he could certainly have improved on the disaster that follows: 10...Qd7 11.Bc1 Qc7 12.Qg4 g6 13.Qh6 Qb6?! 14.Qbd2 Qxb2 15.cxd4 cxd4 16.Qc4 Qc3 17.Qd6† Qxd6 18.exd6 Qxd3 19.Qg7 Qg8 20.Qxe6† Qd8 21.Qh4† – Huebner – Seeman, Finland 2008.

10.d3

This should be about level; I recommend:

10...Qd5

As in Kuruzov – Dvalishvili, Moscow 2007. Other possibilities are:

10...Qf5 11.c4 Qc7 12.Qa3 h5 13.Qc2 g5 14.Qd2 Qg4 15.Qf3 Qc7 16.f4 0–0 0–0 17.a3 h4 18.b4 Cicak – D'Costa, Cork 2005. White is guaranteed to open lines on the queenside if he wishes, whereas Black's assault on the other wing may reach a dead end if a later ...f7–f6 or ...Qg3 does not work.

10...dxc3 11.bxc3 (Instead 11.bxc3?! Qc5 12.Qe3 Qd7 as in Buchal – Cornette, Dresden 2007, left White with a backward d-pawn, even though he could hope to equalize by means of Qd1 and then d3-d4.) 11...Qd5= Timman – Ljubojevic, Breda 1999, seen under 6.Qe4, with the inclusion of 0–0 and ...Qc6, which does not alter the assessment of the position.

Conclusion/Common themes

We have examined White's different attempts at extracting an edge from the current position. Let's summarize the various ploys and themes we encountered:

White's perspective

The 5.g3 line has its specific details, but as in more traditional continuations White is usually happy if he can stabilize a knight at c4, after Qa3-c4 followed by a2-a4.

A dark knight is likely to appear on g6, aiming sometimes at jumping to f4. In this event White can react by g3 and contemplate h4-h5. The exchange Qxg6 is normally undesirable, as both recaptures ...fxg6 and ...hxg6 are usually fine for Black.

White may grab the d4-pawn, but his opponent almost always has compensation. Indeed, in the worst case for him a strongpoint at d5 will remain and White's extra d-pawn will be backward.

Doubling Black's pawns after the trade Qe4xc6 will probably lead to a very good position for White from a strategic point of view.

Black's perspective

The active ...g7–g5 push is worth remembering. It threatens ...g5–g4 and indirectly puts pressure on the sensitive e5 spot, at the cost of slightly weakening the black kingside.

The manoeuvre ...Qc7–g6 also occurs frequently, occasionally followed by the double-edged ...f7–f6.
A 10-minute repertoire against the Closed Sicilian

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.d4 c6 3.g3 g6 4.h4 g7 5.d3

5...d6

A) 6.f4 e5
   A1) 7.d5
   A2) 7.\(\text{\textit{ge2}}\)
   A3) 7.d3

B) 6.\(\text{\textit{ge2}}\)
As the reader can no doubt tell from the title of this chapter, this will not be a heavy theoretical treatise on every game ever played in the Closed Sicilian. I want to offer a sound fighting line for Black with just enough detail to play it with confidence. The Closed Sicilian is well-suited to such an approach as understanding the positions is the most important skill, as there are few forcing lines or tricky tactics to learn.

I will split the material into two major parts depending on White's next move; although I must point out that the game often switches from one to the other.

White's two main set-ups are A) 6.f4 and B) 6...e3.

Before we continue I will add that moves such as 6...gge2 or 6...h3 will almost always transpose to lines given below after the reply 6...e5 in both cases. One can just about imagine a set-up where White continually avoids playing either f2-f4 or e3 and so this would indeed be an independent line. However, avoiding these moves makes White's position so insipid that no preparation is required for Black.

One independent line that is worthy of a very brief mention is:

6...g5

White's hope is to provoke ...h7-h6 and use this pawn as a target for a Wd2 + e3 battery.

6...f6 7...e3 e5

We reach our planned set-up with the extra move ...f6, which, as we shall see later, is sometimes a move Black willingly spends a tempo on. Now White must decide on his set-up.

8.Wd2

Another sensible choice is 8.f4, even though it causes Black no serious problems. For example, after 8...gge7 9.gge3 g3 4.0-0 0-0 11.Wd2 e6 Black has a pleasant version of positions we shall study in more depth later in the chapter.

8...g5

Exchanging dark-squared bishops with h6 is even less of a threat than usual, as the f-pawn gives Black better control of the key squares. Thus Black has no reason to delay ...g7.

If White plays quietly (for example, an f2-f4 line) then Black will be very comfortable, so let's see what happens if White plays boldly:

9...h6 0-0 10.h4 a5 11.xh6 a6 12.0-0-0 a5

Black's attacking prospects are more realistic than White's. One classic trick is:
13.h5?? g5!+

The trapped queen can be rounded up with ...\varepsilon h8 and ...\varphi g8 (or perhaps in some cases with both black knights to f5!). With this minor line dismissed, we can start with White’s serious lines:

A) 6.f4 e5

Personally I always considered the Botvinnik set-up to be Black’s best choice against the Closed Sicilian, although it is really a matter of taste. The Closed Sicilian is a rather elastic line and Black can use many ideas, but in any case deep understanding is essential to play with either colour.

A1) 7.\varphi h3

The idea of this move is to leave the f-file open so that f4-f5 may land with greater effect.

7..\varepsilon xf4

A key idea; if Black plays 7..\varphi g7 then 8.f5?! is a rather interesting attempt.

8.\varepsilon xf4

Another important option is taking with the knight:

8.\varepsilon xf4 \varphi g7 9.0-0 0-0

10.\varepsilon fd5

The other knight can also go to d5: 10.\varepsilon cd5 \varepsilon b8 11..c3 b5 12.\varphi e3 b4 13.\varepsilon d4 bxc3 14.bxc3 cxd4 15.\varepsilon xd4 \varepsilon xd5 16.\varepsilon xd5 \varepsilon b4 17.\varepsilon b4 \varepsilon xb4 White has managed to build a centre, but in this position it means little. After 18.\varepsilon d3 \varphi a5 19.\varepsilon fc1 \varphi a4 20.\varepsilon c2 \varepsilon a3 21.\varepsilon e2 \varepsilon a6 22.\varepsilon f2 \varepsilon a4 23.\varepsilon b2 \varepsilon c8 Black had good play in Palacin Algas – Franco Ocampo, Zaragoza 2009.

10..\varepsilon xd5 11.\varepsilon xd5 \varepsilon c6

I have used the following idea: 11..\varepsilon e5 12.\varepsilon f4 \varphi e6 13.\varepsilon d2 \varepsilon xd5 14.\varepsilon xd5 \varepsilon b6 15.\varepsilon ab1 \varepsilon a8 16.\varphi h1 a5 17.\varepsilon a3 \varepsilon a6 18.\varepsilon b5 19.\varepsilon h6 b4 With good play for Black, although my opponent successfully held on to draw in Saravanan – Pavlovic, Benasque 1998.

12.\varepsilon f4 \varepsilon d7 13..c3 b5 14.\varepsilon e3 b4 15.\varepsilon d4 bxc3 16.bxc3 cxd4 17.\varepsilon xd4 \varepsilon b8 18.\varepsilon f2 \varepsilon b4!

We have already seen this motif.

19.\varepsilon d2 \varepsilon a5 20.\varepsilon d5 \varepsilon a4 21.\varepsilon f2 \varepsilon c4 22.\varepsilon c2 \varepsilon b6 23.\varepsilon c3 \varepsilon a5 24.\varepsilon b1 \varepsilon e8

With balanced play and chances for both sides, Rivera – Ubilava, Navalmorral de la Mata 2006.

8..\varphi g7 9.\varepsilon d2 0-0 10.0-0 \varepsilon b8
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

Black is heading for the usual \ldots\textcolor{red}{b}7-b5 idea, although I must stress that Black will not always play \ldotsb5.

11.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{b}6}

The usual idea for White, as exchanging the dark-squared bishops will liberate the f4-square for the h3-knight and weaken the position of the black king.

The following alternative is also okay, as can be seen from a couple of new games:

11.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{x}h3} 12.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{x}h3} b5 13.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{x}g7} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{x}g7} 14.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}e2} b4 15.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{f}2} d5 16.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e}3} dxe4 17.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}xe4} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}6}

Or 17...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}d4} 18.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{f}4} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{b}6} 19.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{a}f1} c4 20.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{h}1} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}c6} 21.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{f}3} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{e}5} 22.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{g}2} c3 and Black had wonderful play in Larino Nieto–Tatai, Vecindario 2010.

18.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{a}f1} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{e}5} 19.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{f}4} c4 20.b3

A draw was agreed in Larino Nieto–Bruzon Batista, Montcada i Reixac 2010; Black has decent counterplay.

12.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{x}g7} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{x}g7} 13.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{f}4} b4 14.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}c5} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}xd5} 15.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}xd5} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{e}7!}

Black is ready to eliminate the dangerous knight.

16.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{f}6} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{g}8} 17.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}5} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{b}7} 18.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e}3} a5 19.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{f}4} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{c}8!} 20.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{a}f1} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{e}6} 21.a3 \textcolor{red}{\textbf{b}6} 22.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{h}1} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{f}6}

23.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{h}4} a4 24.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{h}2} bxa3

Black is okay and a draw was agreed in Garcia Castro–Andersson, Liverpool 2008.

A2) 7.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{g}e2}

Now after the usual sequence of moves:

7.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{g}e7} 8.0–0 0–0 9.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e}3} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}d4} 10.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}2} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{e}6}

We have reached an important set-up for the \textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}e2} line. As we saw above, White can place this knight on three different squares (h3, e2 or f3) and each square has its own ideas. In this case, we can expect plenty of heavy manoeuvring.

11.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e}2}

White can also choose a different set-up for his rooks:

11.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{f}2}

The resemblance with the Boevingnik System of the English Opening is obvious especially if you are familiar with Mihail Marin’s Grandmaster Repertoire 3. This is a situation where White is actually playing a black position! Naturally with an extra tempo, but even so the position remains complex.

11.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}7} 12.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{a}f1} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{a}c8}

Also possible is 12...f6. This copies a strong idea introduced by Hungarian GM Csom
in the English Opening (thus with reversed colours, so it was f3 in his case). 13.\(\text{c1}\) Preparing \(\text{d}1\) and c2-c3. 13...\(\text{eac}8\) 14.\(\text{d}1\) b6 15.c3 \(\text{dc}6\) 16.c4 a6 (also possible is 16...\(\text{exf}4\) 17.\(\text{gx}f4\) \(\text{f}5\) 18.b3 with complex play) 17.\(\text{dc}3\) \(\text{exf}4\) 18.\(\text{gx}f4\) \(\text{f}5\) 19.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{b}8\) The position was still unclear in Todorovic – Tadic, Herceg Novi 2001.

13.\(\text{c1}\) \(\text{exf}4\) 14.\(\text{d}xf4\) d5 15.\(\text{h}6\) dxe4 16.\(\text{gx}g7\) \(\text{hxg}7\) 17.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{f}5\) 18.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{g}8\) 19.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{dc}6\) 20.\(\text{e}1\) h6 21.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{e}8\) 22.\(\text{f}2\)

In Pokojoyczyk – Jansa, Sochi 1976, Black was close to equality.

11...\(\text{d}7\) 12.\(\text{c}1\) \(\text{e}8\)

Also possible is 12...\(\text{d}8\) 13.\(\text{d}1\) b6 14.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{dc}6\) 15.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{exf}4\) 16.\(\text{xf}4\) \(\text{d}4\) 17.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{ec}6\) 18.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{xe}2\) 19.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{a}6\) 20.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{de}8\) 21.\(\text{f}6\) b5 22.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{e}5\) 23.\(\text{xg}7\) \(\text{hxg}7\) 24.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{e}8\) and the game was drawn in Kholmov – Tai, Kiev 1964.

13.\(\text{d}1\) b6

This stage is far enough for Black to start playing chess and not worry about theory. Thus the next moves show some ideas of what might happen, and are not specific moves the reader needs to memorize.

14.\(\text{f}xe5\)

One possible idea behind this move is to take firm control of the d5-square by playing a later \(\text{c}4\) and putting a knight on d5. However, in my opinion this exchange is rather premature. The alternative may be more reliable:

14.\(\text{d}6\) 15.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{f}5\) 16.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{xe}4\) 17.\(\text{dxe}4\) \(\text{d}4\) 18.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{d}6\) 19.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{a}6\) 20.\(\text{d}5\) b5 21.\(\text{xd}6\) \(\text{bxc}4\) 22.\(\text{bxc}4\) \(\text{dxe}5\) 23.\(\text{bxc}5\) \(\text{dxe}5\) 24.\(\text{b}h6\) \(\text{f}7\) 25.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{xf}1\) 26.\(\text{xf}1\) \(\text{xd}5\) With another draw after a complicated struggle in Fernandes – Wojtkiewicz, Debrecen 1992.

14...\(\text{dxe}5\) 15.\(\text{x}e6\) \(\text{dc}6\) 16.\(\text{h}6\) \(\text{e}4\) ?

Otherwise White was ready for his \(\text{axg}7\) and \(\text{c}3\) idea. Analysis in Chess Informant shows that Huebner did not like his own move (even awarding 16...\(\text{c}4\) a ?!) but I do not agree. Huebner’s recommendation was 16...\(\text{d}8\), which he assessed as a little better for Black.

In this unbalanced ending Black has decent chances of seizing the initiative, although unclear is the fairest verdict. In Korchnoi – Huebner, Barcelona 1989, Black won after a tough fight.

A3) 7.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{g}7\) 8.0-0 0-0 9.\(\text{f}5\)!!

This interesting attempt is the only truly independent approach here.
If White plays instead 9...\(\texttt{e}3\) then after 9...\(\texttt{d}4\) 10.\(\texttt{d}2\) \(\texttt{exf}4\) 11.\(\texttt{xf}4\) \(\texttt{xf}3\) \(\texttt{d}6\) we simply transpose to line B.

9...\(\texttt{gx}f5\) 10.\(\texttt{h}4\) \(\texttt{f}4\)

Also worth considering is:

10...\(\texttt{fx}e\) 11.\(\texttt{dx}e\) 6 12.\(\texttt{xf}5\) \(\texttt{xf}5\)

Also possible but probably riskier is 12...\(\texttt{xf}5\)?? as once played by a big Sicilian expert. After 13.\(\texttt{ex}f5\) \(\texttt{e}7\) 14.\(\texttt{d}3\) \(\texttt{h}8\) 15.\(\texttt{e}3\) \(\texttt{h}8\) 16.\(\texttt{ad}1\) \(\texttt{c}4\) 17.\(\texttt{e}4\) \(\texttt{b}5\) 18.\(\texttt{xa}7\) \(\texttt{b}7\) 19.\(\texttt{w}e\) 2 \(\texttt{xe}2\) 20.\(\texttt{w}x\) 2 \(\texttt{g}2\) a draw was agreed in a position still rich with possibilities for both sides, Pinel Fulgoni – Gheorghiu, Lausanne 2003.

13.\(\texttt{ex}f5\) \(\texttt{h}8\) 14.\(\texttt{d}5\) \(\texttt{d}7\) 15.\(\texttt{c}3\) \(\texttt{ad}8\)

The moves all look logical, so no deep comments are needed.

16.\(\texttt{g}4\) \(\texttt{h}8\) 17.\(\texttt{d}5\) \(\texttt{d}7\) 18.\(\texttt{h}4\) \(\texttt{xf}5\) 19.\(\texttt{h}1\) \(\texttt{g}5\) 20.\(\texttt{h}5\) \(\texttt{g}6\) 21.\(\texttt{c}3\)!

Taking control of important squares, in particular \(\texttt{d}4\) of course.

Up till this moment we have been following a game Bujisho – Bacrot, France 2004, and now White should have tried the direct:

16.\(\texttt{g}4\) \(\texttt{xd}5\) 17.\(\texttt{hx}d\) 18.\(\texttt{e}e\) 19.\(\texttt{xf}3\) \(\texttt{d}5\) 20.\(\texttt{h}3\)

With compensation; of course this is just one possible idea.

11.\(\texttt{gx}f4\) \(\texttt{ex}f4\) 12.\(\texttt{xf}4\)

Another idea is 12.\(\texttt{h}5\) with the possible sequence of moves: 12...\(\texttt{g}6\) 13.\(\texttt{f}5\) \(\texttt{f}5\) 14.\(\texttt{d}5\) \(\texttt{h}8\) 15.\(\texttt{c}3\) \(\texttt{g}8\) 16.\(\texttt{h}1\) \(\texttt{e}6\) 17.\(\texttt{xf}4\) \(\texttt{xf}4\) 18.\(\texttt{xf}4\) \(\texttt{xf}4\) 19.\(\texttt{xf}4\) \(\texttt{g}5\) 20.\(\texttt{e}2\) \(\texttt{d}7\)

With complicated play.

12...\(\texttt{g}6\) 13.\(\texttt{f}5\) \(\texttt{xf}5\) 14.\(\texttt{ex}f5\) \(\texttt{xf}4\) 15.\(\texttt{xf}4\) \(\texttt{f}5\)

In my opinion the position remains about equal.

Overall I would say the line starting with 9.\(\texttt{f}5\)?? is interesting and I would assess the chances as roughly balanced.

B) 6.\(\texttt{e}3\) \(\texttt{e}5\) 7.\(\texttt{d}2\) \(\texttt{e}6\)!!
Black waits a little before developing the g8-knight, thus sidestepping \( \text{h6} \) ideas. As we shall see, the text move was played a long time ago by Tal – a fine recommendation.

Instead I have played \( 7...\text{\text{d}d4} \) a couple of times, which is also interesting.

\[ 8.f4 \text{\text{d}e7} \text{\text{f}3} \]

We can consider this to be another part of the system; now White wants to play a sneaky \( \text{fxe5} \). If instead White plays \( 9.\text{\text{d}e2} \) then he would transpose to a set-up considered via the \( 7.\text{\text{d}e2} \) move order in line A2.

\[ 9...\text{\text{d}d4} \]

Blocking White’s idea, as now Black can simply reply \( \ldots \text{dxe5} \).

\[ 10.0-0 0-0 \]

Before we continue with the main line, I will mention an idea I came up with for a plausible new move order:

\[ 10...\text{\text{xf}3}+ \]

An interesting novelty in this exact position. It crossed my mind while analysing these old games and it may in fact lead to a well-known idea of Kramnik that is considered very solid for Black. For instance:

\[ 11.\text{\text{xf}3} \]

The alternative is \( 11.\text{\text{xf}3} \text{\text{xf}4} 12.\text{\text{gf}4} 0-0 \)

\[ 13.f5 \text{\text{h}1} \text{\text{xe}4} 15.\text{\text{dxe}4} \text{\text{g}6} \]

but White does not have enough for a pawn.

\[ 11...\text{\text{xf}4} 12.\text{\text{xf}4} \text{\text{b}6} 13.\text{\text{b}1} 0-0 \]

The game has simply transposed to better known lines:

\[ 14.\text{\text{h}6} \]

Also seen has been: \( 14.\text{\text{g}5} \text{\text{c}6} 15.\text{\text{d}5} \text{\text{ax}d}5 16.\text{\text{ex}d}5 \text{\text{c}e5} 17.\text{\text{ff}1} \text{\text{f}5} 18.\text{\text{h}1} \text{\text{e}8} 19.\text{a}3 \text{\text{ac}8} 20.\text{b}3 \text{\text{c}7} 21.\text{\text{be}1} \text{\text{d}7} 22.\text{\text{f}4} \text{\text{b}6} 23.\text{\text{e}2} \text{\text{f}7} \)

Black has a satisfactory game, Bachin – Kokarev, Dagomys 2010.

\[ 14...\text{\text{ae}8} \]

Also possible was \( 14...\text{f}6 15.\text{\text{ag}7} \text{\text{ag}7} 16.\text{\text{f}2} \text{\text{ae}8} 17.a3 \text{\text{d}8} 18.b4 \text{\text{b}6} 19.\text{\text{bf}1} \text{\text{c}6} 20.\text{\text{ce}2} \text{\text{ce}5} 21.\text{\text{f}4} \text{\text{g}8} 22.c3 \text{\text{d}7} 23.\text{\text{c}2} \text{\text{c}7} 24.\text{\text{h}3} \text{\text{c}4} 25.d4 \text{\text{d}3} \]

and Black had strong play in Houska – Delchev, Saint Vincent 2003.

\[ 15.\text{\text{ag}7} \text{\text{ag}7} 16.\text{\text{h}1} \text{\text{f}6} 17.a3 \text{\text{d}5} 18.b4 \text{\text{xb}4} 19.\text{\text{xb}4} \text{\text{c}7} 20.\text{\text{b}5} \text{\text{d}7} 21.\text{\text{d}4} \text{\text{g}8} 22.\text{\text{e}3} \text{\text{c}6} 23.\text{\text{c}6} \text{\text{xc}6} 24.\text{h}4 \text{\text{b}6} \]

3.16

Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

11...f5N
The usual attempt in the Closed Sicilian.

11...gx5 12.h4 f4 13.gxf4 Qg6

14.Qf5
If instead 14.Qxg6 fxg6 15.fxe5, then
15...Exf1† 16.Axf1 Aexe5 17.Qd5 Axd5

18.exd5 Wh4 and Black is fine.

14...Axf5 15.exf5 Axf5 16.Axe5 Qxe3 17.Qxe3
Axe5 18.Qh6 Qh8 19.Qh1 f5
Black is better.

11.Bf2 exf4N
The original attempt was a failure: 11...Ae7
15.fxe5 dxe5 16.Ag5 In Short – Rodriguez,
Linares 2000, White had the upper hand
after winning the bishop pair.

12.Qxh4 Qxf3† 13.Qxf3 Wh6
Black has obviously won a whole tempo
compared to the normal line we saw above, so
we can safely say Black has more than adequate
play.

In the stem game after:

11...Qxf3† 12.Qxf3 Whd7 13.Qg2 Axe8
14.fxe5 Aexe5 15.Qh6 Axe8 16.Ag5 Axe8
17.Ah1 Qg7 18.Qe2 Qg4 19.Qh6
A draw was agreed in this game between
two great experts on this opening. Hort – Tal,
Wijk aan Zee 1968, may be an old game but it
shows useful ideas for both sides.

Conclusion

The 10-minute repertoire I have outlined
against the Closed Sicilian is sound and rather
easy to learn. The two-second version would be:
play ...e5 and ...Qe7 and watch out for
f4-f5 tricks. Still, I must confess the chapter
title exaggerates a little, as it will take longer
than 10 minutes to learn. On the other hand,
compared to the mass of theory Black must
study in some other Sicilian lines, this is a walk
in the park.
## Variation Index

1. e4 c5 2. d3 d6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. e5</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. e6</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. d6</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. g6</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1) 4... bxc6</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2) 4... dxc6</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A) 3... e6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) 3... d6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Matthieu Cornette
Tiviakov Grand Prix
1.e4 c5 2.d4 c6 3.d5 A logical developing move with many transpositional possibilities.

4.exd5

4.exd5 transposes to a well-known line of the Rossolimo and may well be White's best reply. However, I shall mention a few ideas about 4.exd5 for those who wish to avoid such a transposition.

4...exd5

After 4...exd5 5.d3 both sides have many options, but one likely continuation is to transpose to a 3...a6 line (see variation C below) with 5...g6 6.f4 g7 7.d3.

5.d3 e5

6.dxe5

This is cautious. The idea is to play f2-f4 when everything is under control. Instead the immediate 6.f4 may look natural but after 6...exf4 7.xf4 c4? Black has counterplay.

3...d5

If Black decides not to play 3...d5 then he generally selects a pawn move. So the lines we shall study in depth in this chapter are: A) 3...e6, B) 3...d6, C) 3...g6 and D) 3...e5.

However, there are also a few other minor lines to briefly consider first:

3...f6
Taking on c6 is clearly no longer an option and Black plans ...a6 and ...b5. Compared to the related line in the Rossolimo, White still has the option of f2-f4.

4.a4!

This makes sense as the knight on c3 would be a target for Black's queenside expansion; White's kingside plans can wait. Also possible is 4.f4 a6 5.a2 b5 6.a3 with a curious position where the knight on a5 makes little sense.

4...a3, transposing to a Rossolimo, is a serious option.

4...a6 5.a2

Now if White chooses a plan involving d3 and f4 then the a5-knight will have spent a tempo going to a pointless square. For example:

5...d6 6.f4

In many of these side-lines White should remember the option of 6.a3! when White can consider ideas with d2-d4 and then try to prove the knight on a5 has committed itself prematurely.

6...g6 7.a3 a7 8.0-0 a6 9.d3 0-0 10.e1

In Kabanov – Kryakvin, Voronezh 2006, Black could find nothing better than 10...c6.

3...e7 Once again there is a similar idea in the Rossolimo. Black's main idea is to play ...a6 and recapture on c6 with the queen. This is structurally ideal but time-consuming, so White should select an aggressive counterplan. For example: 4.d3 e6 5.f4 a6 6.xc6 bxc6 7.a3 The game has hardly started, so anything could happen. Black has the bishops but White has a lead in development, so White should react boldly to whatever set-up Black selects.

Now we can continue with the more popular of the unpopular lines!

A) 3...e6 4.xc6 bxc6 5.d3

5.f4 is also playable but I prefer not to allow the possibility of 5...c4?.

5...d5 6.f4

Of course, this position is critical but I have always thought that White is better here because of the weakness of the c5-pawn; he just has to watch out for ...c4.

6...e6

We should also have a quick look at the knight's other option: 6...e7 7.a3 a7 8.0-0 a6 9.e2 e7 10.a4 Thematic, as White initiates pressure against the c5-pawn. 10...0-0 11.g3 (or 11.c4? in order to fix the pawn on c5) 11...c4 12.dxc4 a6 13.exd5 exd5 14.d4 Threatening We6+; Najer – Cherniaev, Moscow 1996.

7.a3

b) 7...dxe4 8.dxe4 Wxd1+ 9.EXd1 White has an edge thanks to his better pawn structure,
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

for which the bishop pair does not fully compensate.

c)  7...c4  8.e5  \( \text{\#d7} \)  9.dxc4!
  9.d4?!  e5\#
  9...\(a6 \)  10.cxd5
  10.0-0?  \(a4c4\)
  10...cxd5  11.\(a2c2\)

  Simpler may be 11.\(a3e3 \)  \(b8 \)  12.\(b1 \) followed by  \(d4 \) and  \(f2\).

  11...\(b6\)
  11...\(b8 \)  12.\(c3 \)  \(b6 \)  13.\(d4 \)  \(c5 \)  14.b4\#
  12.a4  \(a5 \)  13.a5  \(b7\)
  13...\(b4 \)  14.c3  \(e4 \)  15.b4  \(e7 \)  16.\(c2f2 \)  \(e8 \)  17.\(e1\#
  14.c3  \(c8 \)  15.b4  \(e7 \)  16.\(d2\)
  16.\(f4 \)  \(a4 \)  17.\(p3 \)  \(e7 \)  18.0-0 0-0-0
  16.0-0?  \(a4 \)  17.\(a2 \)  \(b3\)

  16...0-0

  Even worse was 16...d4?!  17.cxd4  \(c4\)
  18.\(f2 \)  0-0 19.\(e1\), as in Morozevich - Hamdouchi, Cannes (rapid) 2001.

  17.0-0  \(c7\)

8.0-0 0-0 9.e5

As mentioned above, White must keep an eye out for ...c5-c4. For example, 9.\(e1 \)  c4?! was Zhang Pengxiang - Nguyen Anh Dung, Mumbai 2003, or 9.\(b3 \)  c4?! 10.e5  \(b6 \)  11.d4  \(e4\)!

9...\(a2d7\)

9...\(g4 \) also fails to solve Black's problems:

10.\(a4? \) \(a6 \) (10...c4?! 11.\(a4d4 \) 11.\(e2 \)  \(b5\)
  11...\(h6 \)  12.c4  \(d5 \)  13.b3\#

10.b3  \(a6\)

Again, this is a critical position where Black has alternatives.

a) 10...\(b6 \)  11.\(a3? \)  d4
  11...\(e6 \)  12.\(c2d2 \)  \(b8 \)  13.\(d1 \)  \(d7\)
  13...c4  14.\(e7 \)  \(a7 \)  15.dxc4  dxc4

12.\(e4 \)  d5  13.\(x5\)#

b) 10...\(d6 \)  11.\(e1 \)  \(xf5 \)  12.\(e5 \)  \(d5 \)  13.\(g3\)

  Followed by  \(d1-\) e3.

11.\(b2?\)

I prefer this move to 11.\(a4 \)  c4!.

11...\(b8\)

11...c4  12.dxc4  dxc4  13.\(d1 \)  \(b6 \)  14.\(h1 \)  \(a6\)
  14...\(a5 \)  15.\(d2 \)  \(d8\)

15.c4  dxc3  !  (15...\(e1 \)  16.\(e1 \)  \(a4 \)  17.\(b1 \)  \(a7\))
  18.bxa4  \(a4 \)  19.\(x5\)

13.\(x5 \)  14.\(x5 \)  \(c3 \)  15.\(d2 \)  \(d5 \)  16.\(e4 \)

17.\(d2\)  \(a4 \)  \(b5\)

13...\(x5 \)  14.\(x5 \)  \(c3 \)  15.\(d2 \)  \(d5 \)  16.\(e4 \)

17.\(e1 \)  17.\(x1 \)  \(a5 \)  18.\(a4 \)  \(c5 \)  19.\(a2 \)  \(b7 \)

20.\(f2\)

Even though Black is an exchange up, I prefer the white position.

b) 10...\(f6 \)  11.\(e1 \)  \(xf5 \)  12.\(e5 \)  \(d5 \)  13.\(g3\)

11.\(a2\)

I prefer this move to 11.\(a4 \)  c4!.

12.\(a3 \)  \(e7\)

12...\(a5 \)  falls for a typical trick:  13.\(d5\)!
Followed by c2-c4 or, in the event of 13...b5, 14...b2 followed by c2-c4 and then putting the knight back on a4. White enjoys a clear positional edge.

B) 3...d6 4...xc6+ bxc6

5.f4!

This move order is fine in this case because ...c4 is not as effective and ...e5 is plainly bad. If instead White is careless with his move order then his opening advantage can vanish immediately:

5.d3 e5! (For 5...g6, see 3...g6) 6.f4 (6...ge2 De7?!) 6...exf4 7...xf4 De7?! With ...Dg6, ...Bb8 and ...Dc7 coming next. This is the position I want to prevent Black from reaching.

5...e6

Black can also reach this position via the move order 3...e6 and then ...d6.

5...e5? 6.fxe5 dxe5± is much better for White in view of Black's poor pawn structure.

For 5...Df6 6.Df3 g6 see 3...g6. Similarly, for 5...g6 6.Df3 Dg7 7.Dd3 see 3...g6.

6.d3 Df6

The simplest development, but Black can also choose a set-up with the knight on g6:

6...De7 7.Df3 Dg6 8.0-0 Dc7 9.Dc2 0-0 10.a4

We have already encountered this thematic manoeuvre; White is planning e4-e5 in order to weaken c5.

10...Df6 11.Da1

11.e5? would be premature: 11...Dxe5 12.fxe5 Dxe5 13.Dxe5 Dd4+

11...e5

If 11...b8 then 12.b3 intending to play Dh1 and finally e4-e5.

12.f5 Df4 13.De1

Now Black has a few options, but White should be happy whichever one occurs.

a) 13...Da6 14.b3

14...xf4 exf4 15.Dd2 Db5 15...g5 16.fg6 fg6 17.e5± 16.Dc3 g5 17.fg6 fg6 18.Dxb5 axb5 19.c3

14...Dc7 14...Dxd3?! 15.exd3 Dxd3 16.De3 Db1 17.Dxb1 Da5 18.Dd5 Db8 19.Dc1±

14...g5?! 15.Dd1! is good for White; g2-g3 is looming and the f4-knight is in trouble.

15.De3 Dxb8 16.Dd2 g5

16...Dh5 17.g4 Df4 18.Dxf4 exf4 19.Dxf4+

17.g3 Dh3+ 18.Dg2 g4 19.Dh6+ Preventing ...h7-h5; White has a strong initiative.
b) 13...b8 14.b3 g6  
14...e7 15.e3 g6 16.g3 h3† (16...h5  
17.h6 e8 18.g4 f4 19.d2=) 17.g2  
gxf5 (17...g5 18.xg5 xg5 19.f2=)  
18.exf5 xf5 19.g1=  
15.g3 h5 16.h6 e8 17.g4 f4 18.d2=  
With good attacking chances for White.

c) 13...g6 14.g3 h3† 15.g2 g5 16.xg5  
xg5 17.f2 gx5 18.f2= Najer–Grigorianis,  
Elista 2000.

7.e3 e7 8.0–0 0–0 9.e5!  
There are many games featuring this position;  
White is always on top because of his superior  
structure.

C) 3...g6  
After this move, or generally after any pawn  
move, White usually takes on c6.

4.xxc6

Now the line splits depending on how Black  
recaptures: C1) 4...bxc6 or C2) 4...dxc6.

C1) 4...bxc6

This interesting capture is quite fashionable in  
France. My friends Sébastien Mazé and Fabien  
Libiszewski have played this line as Black, while  
GM Grigore used it against me last summer.

5.d3  
5.f4 is almost the same.

5...g7 6.f4  
6.e3? is a mistake because b2 becomes  
vulnerable after 6...b8!. Also possible is  
6.ge2, but this is less logical than the text  
move in my opinion.

6.d6  
Black can also choose the following set-up:  
6.b8 7.e3 d6 8.0–0 h6 9.h1 0–0

10.e2 f6  
For 10...f5 11.e5 d7 12.b3, see Tiviakov–  
Mazé, page 324.

11.b3 d7 12.d2 c5 13.f5!  
13.xe5 dxe5 14.xe5 fxe5  
13.gxf5  
13...g5 14.h4†  
13...e7?! 14.fxg6 hxg6 15.h4 h5  
14.exf5 d5  
14.xxf5 15.xe5  
15.h4  
Despite the absence of white pawns in the  
centre, I fancy his position.

15.d6 16.d4 b7  
16.c4 17.dxc4 dxc4 18.ad1=  
17.f3!  
With a strong attack; after missing some
wins I eventually lost in Cornette – Grigore, Condom 2010.

7...h6

Another option is 7...f5 when I recommend 8.e5, as I prefer to prevent ...f6 (for example, 8.0–0 f6? was Najer – Chuprov, Internet 2004).

8.0–0

Remaining flexible; later the queen may go from d1–e1 to g3 or h4. Thus, committing the queen immediately is imprecise. For example:

8...e2 0–0 9.0–0 f6? I think this is the best way to proceed for Black.

10.d2

Or 10.b3 e5 11.fxe5 fxe5 12.g5 c7 13.f4 c7 14.f8 d8, followed by ...e6.

10...e5 11.fxe5 fxe5 12.g5 &d7 13.h3 c7 14.f8 f8 15.a3 f7?!


16.f3

Black has no problems in this balanced position.

8...0–0 9.h1 f5

Black can also prepare to place a pawn on e5:

9...f6? 10.e1

Now we can see the point of White’s accurate choice on move 8. I like the idea of transferring the queen to the kingside.

10...f7

Or 10...e5 11.fxe5 fxe5 12.g5 c7 13.b4 c7 14.f8 c7 15.f6 with a slightly better game for White.

11.d2 e5 12.fxe5 fxe5 13.g3 c6 14.b3 d7 15.h3

I believe this is an improvement over 15.f2, as played in Antoniewski – Maze, Marrakesh 2010. That game continued:

15...g4 16.h4 g8 This strange-looking move may be best here. Black will manage to exchange all the rooks, thus easing his game. 17.a1 f2 18.xf2 c8 19.f8 f8 20.e3 c6 21.d1 d7 22.b3 f6 23.h2 g7 Black eventually lost, but his position is okay at this stage.

15...e7 16.f2 b8 17.a1 c8 18.d1 d8 19.g5 c7 20.h4 c6 21.e3

I prefer White even though Black is solid.

10.e5!

An important move; White gains space and closes the position to fight against the bishop pair.

10...f7 11.c2 c7 12.e1

Tiviakov has reached this position twice!
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

12...\( \texttt{\textbackslash d8} \)

Tiviakov has also faced the following line: 12...\( \texttt{\textbackslash b8} \) 13.\( \texttt{\textbackslash a4} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash d8} \) 14.\( \texttt{\textbackslash d2} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash e6} \) 15.\( \texttt{\textbackslash f2} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash d7} \) 16.\( \texttt{\textbackslash b3} \) I really appreciate how Tiviakov slowly improves his position. 16...\( \texttt{\textbackslash h8} \) 17.\( \texttt{\textbackslash h4} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash e8} \) 18.\( \texttt{\textbackslash c3} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash d8} \) 19.\( \texttt{\textbackslash e2} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash c8} \) 20.\( \texttt{\textbackslash g5} \)

After this move the black position collapses. 20...\( \texttt{\textbackslash xg5} \) 21.\( \texttt{\textbackslash xg5} \)± Tiviakov – Sharbaf, Mashhad 2010.

13.\( \texttt{\textbackslash d2} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash e6} \) 14.\( \texttt{\textbackslash f2} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash d8} \) 15.\( \texttt{\textbackslash a4} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash f8} \)

16.\( \texttt{\textbackslash b3} \)

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

White always plays in the same vein and why not, as it is highly effective...

16...\( \texttt{\textbackslash e6} \) 17.\( \texttt{\textbackslash c4} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash e8} \) 18.\( \texttt{\textbackslash c3} \)

And so on; White eventually won in Tiviakov – Mazé, Montreal 2009.

C2) 4...\( \texttt{\textbackslash dxc6} \) 5.\( \texttt{\textbackslash d3} \)

5.\( \texttt{\textbackslash f4} \) is also possible of course, but I rate the text move more highly. Indeed, by developing his queenside first, White keeps the possibility of trading the dark-squared bishops with a subsequent \( \texttt{\textbackslash h6} \).

5...\( \texttt{\textbackslash g7} \)

Black can also try to occupy the centre immediately:

5...\( \texttt{\textbackslash e5} \) 6.\( \texttt{\textbackslash f4} \)

White must strike back in the centre at once in order to fight for an advantage.

6...\( \texttt{\textbackslash exf4} \)

The capture is natural, but a couple of other moves have also been tested. 6...\( \texttt{\textbackslash d6} \) 7.\( \texttt{\textbackslash f3} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash g4} \) 8.\( \texttt{\textbackslash h3} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash xf3} \) 9.\( \texttt{\textbackslash xf3} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash exf4} \) 10.\( \texttt{\textbackslash xf4} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash g7} \) 11.0–0 0–0 12.\( \texttt{\textbackslash g5} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash d4} \) 13.\( \texttt{\textbackslash h1} \) With a pleasant initiative, Heberla – Stamenkov, Kavala 2006.

6...\( \texttt{\textbackslash h4} \) 7.\( \texttt{\textbackslash g3} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash e7} \) 8.\( \texttt{\textbackslash f3} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash exf4} \) 9.\( \texttt{\textbackslash xf4} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash g7} \) 10.\( \texttt{\textbackslash e5} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash f6} \) (or 10...\( \texttt{\textbackslash f6} \) 11.0–0 \( \texttt{\textbackslash fxg5} \) 12.\( \texttt{\textbackslash xg5} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash xc3} \) 12...\( \texttt{\textbackslash c7} \) 13.\( \texttt{\textbackslash e4} \)±) 13.\( \texttt{\textbackslash d2} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash e6} \) 14.\( \texttt{\textbackslash xc3} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash d5} \) 15.\( \texttt{\textbackslash ael} \) White stands better.

7.\( \texttt{\textbackslash xf4} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash g7} \) 8.\( \texttt{\textbackslash f3} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash e7} \) 9.\( \texttt{\textbackslash d2} \) 0–0 10.\( \texttt{\textbackslash h6} \)

White had fairly good attacking chances in Macieja – Haznedaroglu, Antalya 2004.

6.\( \texttt{\textbackslash e3} \) \( \texttt{\textbackslash b6} \) 7.\( \texttt{\textbackslash d2} \)

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

Another critical position has arisen. White again plans to continue with \( \texttt{\textbackslash h6} \), just like in some lines of the Sicilian Rossolimo. It is undoubtedly a plus to have the knight on \( \texttt{\textbackslash g1} \) because sometimes White may play \( \texttt{\textbackslash f2} \)-\( \texttt{\textbackslash f4} \) and only then \( \texttt{\textbackslash f3} \). Now Black can either play \( \ldots \texttt{\textbackslash e5} \) or \( \ldots \texttt{\textbackslash f6} \) without being afraid of \( \texttt{\textbackslash h6} \).

7...\( \texttt{\textbackslash e5} \)
This move prevents, or at the very least delays, the exchange of dark-squared bishops which the alternative allows:
7...\(\text{\texttt{\texttt{f6}}} 8.\texttt{\texttt{h6!}}

Some players insert 8.h3 before \(\texttt{\texttt{h6}}\) but I fail to see the point.

8...0-0

After 8...\(\texttt{\texttt{xh6}} 9.\texttt{\texttt{hx6}}\) Black has tried various moves, but nothing is really working:

a) 9...\(\texttt{\texttt{g4}} 10.\texttt{\texttt{d2}} e5 11.h3 \(\texttt{\texttt{g6}}\) 12.f4! We can already see the main difference between this variation and a normal Rossolimo...

b) 9...\(\texttt{\texttt{d4}}\) A very peculiar move! 10.h3 \(\texttt{\texttt{h5}}\) 11.g4 \(\texttt{\texttt{g7}}\) 12.\(\texttt{\texttt{d2}}\) (12.\(\texttt{\texttt{e3}}\) ) 12...\(\texttt{\texttt{f6}}\) 13.\(\texttt{\texttt{f4}}\) \(\texttt{\texttt{b7}}\) 14.\(\texttt{\texttt{f3}}\) 0-0-0 15.0-0-0± Cornette - Javet, Lausanne 2010.

c) 9...e5 10.h3 \(\texttt{\texttt{e7}}\) 11.\(\texttt{\texttt{f3}}\) (11.\(\texttt{\texttt{f4}}\) is the move we want to play, but things are not so clear: 11...\(\texttt{\texttt{exf4}}\) 12.\(\texttt{\texttt{xf4}}\) \(\texttt{\texttt{d5?!}}\) Movsesian - Babula, Czech Republic 2000) 11...\(\texttt{\texttt{d7}}\) 12.0-0 \(\texttt{\texttt{f8}}\) 13.\(\texttt{\texttt{d2}}\) \(\texttt{\texttt{e7}}\) 14.\(\texttt{\texttt{h2}}\) 0-0 15.\(\texttt{\texttt{f4?!}}\) 12.g4? \(\texttt{\texttt{f6}}\) 13.\(\texttt{\texttt{xe5?!}}\) \(\texttt{\texttt{xe5}}\) 14.\(\texttt{gh5}\) The usual f2-f4 will follow next.

9.\(\texttt{\texttt{xg7}}\) \(\texttt{\texttt{xg7}}\) 10.\(\texttt{\texttt{f4!}}\) e5

10.\(\texttt{\texttt{e7}}\) 11.\(\texttt{\texttt{f3}}\) \(\texttt{\texttt{g4}}\) (11...\(\texttt{\texttt{e6}}\) 12.b3 \(\texttt{\texttt{ad8}}\) 13.\(\texttt{\texttt{e3}}\) b5 14.0-0 \(\texttt{\texttt{b6}}\) 15.\(\texttt{\texttt{exf5}}\) Solak - Charbonneau, Istanbul [ol] 2000) 12.\(\texttt{\texttt{e5}}\)

\(\texttt{\texttt{ad8}}\) 13.\(\texttt{\texttt{f2}}\) \(\texttt{\texttt{c8}}\) 14.0-0 \(\texttt{\texttt{d6}}\) 15.\(\texttt{\texttt{h1}}\) b5 16.\(\texttt{\texttt{f3}}\) \(\texttt{\texttt{e6}}\) 17.\(\texttt{\texttt{b3?!}}\) Wojtaszek - Kukla, Lubniewice 2002.

11.\(\texttt{\texttt{xe5}}\)

Less convincing is 11.\(\texttt{\texttt{f3}}\) \(\texttt{\texttt{xf4}}\) 12.\(\texttt{\texttt{xf4}}\) \(\texttt{\texttt{h5}}\) 13.\(\texttt{\texttt{d2}}\) \(\texttt{\texttt{g4?!}}\) C. Horvath - Cebalo, Rabac 2003.

11.\(\texttt{\texttt{g4}}\) 12.\(\texttt{\texttt{f3}}\) \(\texttt{\texttt{e8}}\) 13.\(\texttt{\texttt{f4}}\) \(\texttt{\texttt{c7}}\) 14.0-0 \(\texttt{\texttt{xe5}}\) 15.\(\texttt{\texttt{xe5}}\) \(\texttt{\texttt{xe5}}\) 16.\(\texttt{\texttt{f3}}\)

In Cornette - Nieto de la Cruz, La Roda 2009, White's position was very easy to play. He, or should I say I, enjoyed a small but enduring initiative.

8.0-0-0

After prolonged thought I prefer this move to the alternatives. However, all three of the likely moves have scored well for White.

8.f4

GM Mitkov's pet move, with which he has won seven games!

8...0-0

The best move, as we can see by looking at two alternatives:

8...\(\texttt{\texttt{f6}}\)

The usual f2-f4 will follow next.

8.\(\texttt{\texttt{f6}}\)!

An unusual but interesting manoeuvre designed to put the knight on e3. 13...0-0-0 14.\(\texttt{\texttt{c3}}\) \(\texttt{\texttt{g4}}\) 15.\(\texttt{\texttt{a5}}\) \(\texttt{\texttt{b7}}\) 16.\(\texttt{\texttt{c3}}\) \(\texttt{\texttt{h8}}\) 17.\(\texttt{\texttt{c2}}\) 10.\(\texttt{\texttt{f3}}\) 0-0 11.\(\texttt{\texttt{h6}}

\(\texttt{\texttt{e5}}\)
326  Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

\[ \text{3e6 12.\text{hxg7} h\text{xg7} 13.0-0 h6 14.b3 \text{e7} 15.e1. This is exactly the kind of position where White is slightly better without any risk; the plan could be to create some threats on the kingside. Tiviakov - Moingt, Bastia (rapid) 2008.} \]

8...\text{Wf4+} A novelty; I recall avoiding playing 8.\text{f4} because of this move. 9.g3 \text{e7} (or 9...\text{h5} 10.\text{fxe5} \text{dxe5} 11.\text{f4!} \text{g7} 12.h3 \text{e7} 13.\text{g2} followed by castling long) 10.\text{fxe5} (much murkier is: 10.\text{d3} \text{fxe5} 11.\text{g4} 12.\text{f1} [12.0-0 \text{h6-o}] 12...h6 13.h4 0-0-0 14.0-0-0 \text{f6} 15.\text{dxe5} \text{d7-o}] 10...\text{f6} (or 10...\text{xe5} 11.\text{d3} \text{g7} 12.e5! gives White a strong initiative) 11.0-0-0 (11.\text{d3} \text{h8-o}] 11...\text{f6} 12.\text{h6!} \text{hxh6} 13.\text{h8} \text{g4} 14.\text{d2}+

8.\text{dxe5} Even though I have played this move myself, I don’t think it is best. The idea is to play \text{h6} once the g8-knight has moved, and then \text{f2-f4}. The drawback is that after \text{f2-f4} the knight is always better on f3.

8...\text{e6}  With the text move Black finds a developing move that still prevents \text{h6}. For example, 8...\text{f6} would naturally be met by 9.\text{d3}.

Or after 8...\text{h6} 9.\text{f4} \text{exf4} 10.\text{xf4} \text{g5} 11.\text{d3} \text{e7} 12.\text{d3} 0-0 13.h4 White had a powerful initiative in Abergel – Moiseev, Tournefeuille 2008.

9.\text{fxe5}  Less clear is: 9.\text{d3} \text{g4} 10.\text{dxe5} \text{dxe5} 11.\text{fxe5} \text{dxe5} Even though Mitkov has won two games in this line, I am not sure there is any advantage here.

9...\text{g4} 10.\text{g5} \text{e7} 11.\text{d3} \text{dxe5} 12.\text{dxe5} \text{f6} 13.\text{dxe5} \text{e7} 14.\text{dxe5} \text{dxe5} 15.\text{dxe5} \text{dxe5} 16.\text{dxe5} \text{dxe5} 17.\text{dxe5} \text{dxe5} 18.\text{dxe5} \text{dxe5} 19.\text{dxe5} \text{dxe5} 20.\text{dxe5}+ N. Mitkov – C. Munoz, Alajuela 2008.

13.\text{d6} \text{dxc3}†  After 13...\text{f5} 14.\text{hxg7} \text{xg7} 15.\text{dxe5} \text{dxe5} 16.\text{dxe5} \text{dxe5} 17.\text{dxe5} \text{dxe5} 18.\text{dxe5} \text{dxe5} 19.\text{dxe5} White has a small plus, but not more.

14.\text{fxe3} \text{f4} 15.\text{f1} \text{h8} 16.\text{d1} \text{e6} 17.b3†  Once again White keeps a slight edge.

9.\text{d4} \text{exf4}  Or 9...\text{c4} should be met by: 10.\text{d4}! \text{exd4} 11.\text{d4} \text{d4} 12.\text{d4} White's better structure secures a favourable endgame. 12...\text{d4} 13.\text{d4} \text{d8} 14.\text{d4}+ De Graeve - Hein, Bad Wiessee 2006.

If 9...\text{d6} then 10.h3 stops the planned ...\text{g4} and next White will play \text{d3}.

10.\text{d4} \text{d7} 11.\text{d3} 0-0-0
Chapter 13 - Tiviakov Grand Prix 327

The most logical continuation, as Black's king is safer on b7 than on the other wing.

12.\[b1\] h6

This is the most accurate reply. The issue with 4.\[xc6\] is 4...\[xc6\] 5.d3 \[d6\] and then ...\[e7\] leads to a solid set-up.

4...\[d6\]

After 4...\[d6\] White of course avoids taking on c6. For example: 5.\[ge2\] \[ge7\] 6.0-0 0-0 7.\[g3\] \[c7\] 8.\[c4\] Black's dark-squared bishop was awkwardly placed in Tishin - Ikonnikov, Moscow 2005.

If 4...\[ge7\] then a consistent reply is 5.f4 \[xf4\] 6.\[xf4\] \[g6\] 7.\[g3\] \[e7\] 8.\[f3\] 0-0 9.0-0 \[d6\] 10.\[d5\] and White was more active in Guidarelli - Visier Segovia, Mallorca 2003.

D) 3...\[e5\]

This is a move that White should note carefully because now we break the general rule that if Black pushes a pawn on move 3 then 4.\[xc6\] is best.

4.d3!

Now White should once again be careful with his move order.

5.f4!

This was Tiviakov's choice; I am less keen on 5.\[xc6\] because after 5...\[xc6\] 6.f4 \[xf4\] 7.\[xf4\] \[e7\] we transpose to a position I wish to avoid (see line B with the 3...\[d6\] move order on page 321). After the text move we can follow one excellent example:

5...\[xf4\] 6.\[xf4\] \[d6\] 7.\[d3\] \[e7\] 8.0-0 0-0 9.\[xc6\]

Note how White delayed this capture until Black no longer had quick counterplay.
9...bxc6 10.e5!
Undermining Black's pawns in perfectly thematic style.

10...d5 11.exd6 cxd6 12.bxc6 bxc3
13.e1 xd6 14.xc3

In Tiviakov – J.A. Nilssen, Vlissingen 2002, Black's shattered queenside forced him to face an unpleasant defensive task.

Conclusion

The lines covered in this chapter are far less popular than 3...d4.

In practice the rare lines 3...e6, 3...a5 and 3...c7 frequently transpose to the Rossolimo as White chooses a later f3. However it is possible, as I hope I have shown, to avoid the transposition and still find interesting play.

The main pawn moves (3...e6, 3...d6 and 3...g6) share a common problem: White can exchange on c6, which weakens Black's structure. The "other" pawn move (3...e5) is worth noting as in this case 4.d3 is more accurate than taking on c6.

In general White has excellent chances of an edge but, as we have seen, it is often vital to be precise in choosing a move order. Despite these lines being widely considered to be "non-theoretical" it is thus vital for White to study the move-order nuances.
3...\textit{d}d4 Early Deviations

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.\textit{d}c3 \textit{d}c6 3.\textit{d}b5

3...\textit{d}d4

A) 4.\textit{a}a4

B) 4.\textit{f}f3
   B1) 4...e6
   B2) 4...\textit{x}xb5 5.\textit{x}xb5 \textit{d}6 6.\textit{d}d4
      B21) 6...a6
      B22) 6...\textit{f}f6

C) 4.\textit{c}c4
   C1) 4...d6
   C2) 4...a6
   C3) 4...\textit{f}f6!?
1.e4 c5 2.\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}c3 \textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}c6 3.\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}b5 \textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}d4

The most common move; Black immediately occupies his outpost on d4.

Now the lines split depending on whether White wants to move his bishop or allow its exchange: A) 4.\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}a4, B) 4.\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}f3 or C) 4.\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}c4. Of course variation C is by far the most significant. In this chapter we shall merely cover sidelines with 4.\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}c4 as the mainlines are studied in later chapters.

A) 4.\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}a4

This very often transposes to one of the other lines, but also allows Black the possibility to play as follows:

4...\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}a5!? 5.\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}f3 b5 6.\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}xd4 cxd4

7.\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}xb5

Forced as the following is dubious:
7.b4?! \textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}xb5 8.\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}xb5

8.d5 loses after: 8...\textit{\textbf{\textit{a}}}a5 9.\textit{\textbf{\textit{b}}}xb5 \textit{\textbf{\textit{a}}}a6 10.\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}d5 \textit{\textbf{\textit{a}}}xa4 11.\textit{\textbf{\textit{h}}}h5 \textit{\textbf{\textit{b}}}xb2

8...\textit{\textbf{\textit{a}}}a4 9.\textit{\textbf{\textit{c}}}c7+ \textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}d8 10.\textit{\textbf{\textit{b}}}xa8 \textit{\textbf{\textit{c}}}c6 11.\textit{\textbf{\textit{a}}}a5+ 11...\textit{\textbf{\textit{a}}}a4 12.\textit{\textbf{\textit{h}}}h5 \textit{\textbf{\textit{b}}}c6!

A good move, as from here the queen controls several important squares.

13.d3

13.\textit{\textbf{\textit{c}}}xf7 \textit{\textbf{\textit{f}}}xf6 14.\textit{\textbf{\textit{c}}}d5 \textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}xd5 15.\textit{\textbf{\textit{b}}}xd5 \textit{\textbf{\textit{a}}}xd5 16.\textit{\textbf{\textit{c}}}xf7 \textit{\textbf{\textit{a}}}c6 17.\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}7\textbf{=}


7...\textit{\textbf{\textit{a}}}a4

Black should take at once as 7...\textit{\textbf{\textit{a}}}a6 allows 8.b4! The following few moves are all either forced or by far the most natural:

8.\textit{\textbf{\textit{c}}}c7+ \textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}d8 9.\textit{\textbf{\textit{a}}}xa8 \textit{\textbf{\textit{b}}}b7 10.d3 \textit{\textbf{\textit{a}}}xa8 11.0-0 \textit{\textbf{\textit{e}}}6

12.c3

A strange and unbalanced position. Apart from the text move a couple of other moves are worth mentioning.
12.\textit{Wh5} fails to trouble Black after 12...\textit{f6} 13.b3 \textit{Wh4} 14.a\textbf{b}2 \textit{Gc7} followed by \ldots \textit{Gc6} and \ldots \textit{Gc5}.

Maybe the best try is: 12.b3 \textit{Wh4} 13.a\textbf{b}2 \textit{Gc7} 14.a\textbf{e}1 \textit{Gc6} (if 14...\textit{Gc6} then 15.c3 dxc3 16.a\textbf{x}c3 \textit{Wh5} 17.d4 \textit{Ga}3 18.d5! is dangerous for Black) 15.c3 dxc3 16.a\textbf{x}c3 \textit{Wh5} 17.d4 \textit{Gd}2 f6 18.a\textbf{d}4 \textit{Gg}6 19.f4 \textit{Gd}6 With a double-edged position.

12...\textit{Wxd}1 13.a\textbf{d}1 \textit{Gc5}

The position was very unclear in Sirkova – Nikolova, Dupnitsa 2010.

\textbf{B) 4.a\textbf{f}3}

Of course Tiviakov has also played this move (he has really tried everything in "his" line!) but more recently the young Russian grandmaster Andreikin used it with some success.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_board.png}
\caption{Chess board diagram}
\end{figure}

4...g6 5.a\textbf{c}4 transposes to the next section. In this section we shall look at \textbf{B1) 4...e6} and \textbf{B2) 4...Gxb5}.

\textbf{B1) 4...e6}

This is a main line (and one of my personal favourites). Quite often this position is reached via a Rossolimo move order (that is, 2.a\textbf{f}3 instead of 2.a\textbf{c}3). In general, I have not covered the Rossolimo as it is a completely different opening, but in this case I will make an exception as I like this line!

\textbf{5.0–0}

5.a\textbf{x}d4?! does not work due to a double attack: 5...cxd4 6.a\textbf{e}2 \textit{Gg}5! Attacking the b5-bishop and the g2-pawn.

5...a\textbf{6}

Of course it's also possible to take immediately.

5...Gxb5

Let's see a recent example:

6.a\textbf{xb}5 d6 7.d4 Gd7 8.a4 a6 9.a\textbf{c}3 cxd4 10.Gxd4 \textit{Gc6} 11.a\textbf{e}1

The best move!

However, 11.g5 a\textbf{f}6 12.a\textbf{d}5!? is also interesting and thematic. 12...cxd5 The correct reaction. (Instead 12...Gc7 13.a\textbf{e}7 Gxe7 14.e5 dxe5 15.a\textbf{e}5 gave White a good advantage in Rozentalis – Tassopoulos, Chalkis 2010.) 13.cxd5 a\textbf{d}7 14.a\textbf{f}e1 Gc7 15.a\textbf{x}f6 Gxf6 16.a\textbf{x}f6 Gg8 This position is critical for the assessment of White's piece sacrifice. After thorough analysis I have failed to find any advantage for White.

11...Gf6 12.a\textbf{d}5!

This provides White with a sizable edge.
6. \( \text{d3} \)

This quirky move keeps the game in independent territory; others would transpose into "normal" lines.

6... \( \text{c6?} \)

6... \( \text{c7} \) is also playable and 6... \( \text{xf3} \) 7. \( \text{xf3} \) \( \text{c7} \) 8. \( \text{e1} \) \( \text{d6} \) seems a very interesting set-up to me; Rublevsky and Vitiugov have employed it successfully.

7. \( \text{e1} \)

Intending to play \( \text{f1} \) and then d2-d4. A mainline option is to play 7. \( \text{e2} \) and on the next move White will go d2-d4 and enter a standard Open Sicilian.

8. \( \text{g5!} \)

This move, which has been tried by Avrukh, looks very promising for Black in my opinion.

Less entertaining is 7...d6 8. \( \text{f1} \) \( \text{f6} \) 9. \( \text{d4} \) \( \text{cxd4} \) 10. \( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{c7} \) 11. \( \text{xc6} \) \( \text{bxc6} \) 12. \( \text{a4}\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!
Chapter 14 – 3...\(\text{cxd4}\) – Early Deviations

a1) 9...\(\text{cxd4}\) \(\text{b7}\) 10.0–0–0 A tempting continuation, but it does not seem to gain any advantage. 10...\(\text{c6}\) 11.\(\text{xe1}\) \(\text{c8}\)!? (11...\(\text{d7}\) 12.\(\text{xc6}\) 0–0 13.\(\text{vb5}\)) 12.\(\text{d5}\)\(\text{f6}\) 13.\(\text{cxd5}\) \(\text{xd5}\) 14.\(\text{c5}\) \(\text{c5}\) 15.\(\text{d3}\) 0–0\(\text{f6}\)? Theising – Reinderman, Breda 2000; 12...\(\text{bxc6}\) 13.\(\text{d6}\) \(\text{f6}\) \(\text{c7}\)=) 12...\(\text{xc6}\)! (12...\(\text{d5}\) 13.\(\text{c5}\) \(\text{c5}\) 14.\(\text{xf6}\)\(\text{xf6}\) 15.\(\text{c5}\) \(\text{xf6}\) 16.\(\text{e5}\)\(\text{e5}\) ) 13.\(\text{c5}\) \(\text{c8}\) 14.\(\text{e5}\)\(\text{e5}\) \(\text{xc6}\).

a2) 9.0–0 \(\text{b7}\) 10.\(\text{d5}\)! I like this move as it disrupts the coordination of Black’s pieces. 10...\(\text{f6}\) 11.\(\text{d4}\) \(\text{cxd4}\) 12.\(\text{cxd4}\) \(\text{d6}\) 13.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{e7}\) 14.\(\text{b5}\)\(\text{b5}\) 15.\(\text{a4}\) \(\text{e6}\) 16.\(\text{e5}\)\(\text{e5}\) Followed by \(\text{d5}\). If Black prevents this jump with ...\(\text{e5}\), then the d5-square will be weak. Shabalov – P. Zhao, Philadelphia 2006.

b) 5...\(\text{d5}\)
This is not such a good idea...
6...\(\text{cxd5}\) 6...\(\text{a6}\)
After 6...\(\text{cxd5}\) 7.\(\text{c4}\) White is simply a pawn up.
7.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{c6}\) 8.0–0 \(\text{cxd5}\) 9.\(\text{c4}\)\(\text{e5}\) 9...\(\text{b6}\) 10.\(\text{b5}\)
10...\(\text{c4}\) 11.\(\text{c5}\) \(\text{c5}\) 12.\(\text{xc4}\) \(\text{xc5}\) 13.\(\text{d5}\) \(\text{xc5}\) 14.\(\text{e5}\)\(\text{e5}\) Followed by \(\text{e5}\). If Black prevents this jump with ...\(\text{e5}\), then the d5-square will be weak, Shabalov – P. Zhao, Philadelphia 2006.

b) 5...\(\text{d5}\)
This is not such a good idea...
6...\(\text{cxd5}\) 6...\(\text{a6}\)
After 6...\(\text{cxd5}\) 7.\(\text{c4}\) White is simply a pawn up.
7.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{c6}\) 8.0–0 \(\text{cxd5}\) 9.\(\text{c4}\)\(\text{e5}\) 9...\(\text{b6}\) 10.\(\text{b5}\)
10...\(\text{c4}\) 11.\(\text{c5}\) \(\text{c5}\) 12.\(\text{xc4}\) \(\text{xc5}\) 13.\(\text{d5}\) \(\text{xc5}\) 14.\(\text{e5}\)\(\text{e5}\) Followed by \(\text{e5}\). If Black prevents this jump with ...\(\text{e5}\), then the d5-square will be weak, Shabalov – P. Zhao, Philadelphia 2006.

b) 5...\(\text{d5}\)
This is not such a good idea...
6...\(\text{cxd5}\) 6...\(\text{a6}\)
After 6...\(\text{cxd5}\) 7.\(\text{c4}\) White is simply a pawn up.
7.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{c6}\) 8.0–0 \(\text{cxd5}\) 9.\(\text{c4}\)\(\text{e5}\) 9...\(\text{b6}\) 10.\(\text{b5}\)
10...\(\text{c4}\) 11.\(\text{c5}\) \(\text{c5}\) 12.\(\text{xc4}\) \(\text{xc5}\) 13.\(\text{d5}\) \(\text{xc5}\) 14.\(\text{e5}\)\(\text{e5}\) Followed by \(\text{e5}\). If Black prevents this jump with ...\(\text{e5}\), then the d5-square will be weak, Shabalov – P. Zhao, Philadelphia 2006.

b) 5...\(\text{d5}\)
This is not such a good idea...
6...\(\text{cxd5}\) 6...\(\text{a6}\)
After 6...\(\text{cxd5}\) 7.\(\text{c4}\) White is simply a pawn up.
7.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{c6}\) 8.0–0 \(\text{cxd5}\) 9.\(\text{c4}\)\(\text{e5}\) 9...\(\text{b6}\) 10.\(\text{b5}\)
10...\(\text{c4}\) 11.\(\text{c5}\) \(\text{c5}\) 12.\(\text{xc4}\) \(\text{xc5}\) 13.\(\text{d5}\) \(\text{xc5}\) 14.\(\text{e5}\)\(\text{e5}\) Followed by \(\text{e5}\). If Black prevents this jump with ...\(\text{e5}\), then the d5-square will be weak, Shabalov – P. Zhao, Philadelphia 2006.

b) 5...\(\text{d5}\)
This is not such a good idea...
6...\(\text{cxd5}\) 6...\(\text{a6}\)
After 6...\(\text{cxd5}\) 7.\(\text{c4}\) White is simply a pawn up.
7.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{c6}\) 8.0–0 \(\text{cxd5}\) 9.\(\text{c4}\)\(\text{e5}\) 9...\(\text{b6}\) 10.\(\text{b5}\)
10...\(\text{c4}\) 11.\(\text{c5}\) \(\text{c5}\) 12.\(\text{xc4}\) \(\text{xc5}\) 13.\(\text{d5}\) \(\text{xc5}\) 14.\(\text{e5}\)\(\text{e5}\) Followed by \(\text{e5}\). If Black prevents this jump with ...\(\text{e5}\), then the d5-square will be weak, Shabalov – P. Zhao, Philadelphia 2006.

An interesting move order.

7.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{cxd4}\) 8.\(\text{cxd4}\)

8...\(\text{e5}\)
In this sharp position Black has a few options:
8...\(\text{c}5\) 9.\(\text{g}5\) e6 10.0-0-0
Also sensible is 10.0-0 \(\text{e}7\) 11.\(\text{ad}1\) 0-0
12.\(\text{x}f6\) \(\text{gx}f6\) 13.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{h}8\) 14.\(\text{d}3\)± Hou Yifan – Dembo, Beijing 2008.
10.\(\text{e}7\) 11.\(\text{e}5\)
This powerful move has only been tested once.
11...\(\text{d}xe5\) 12.\(\text{x}e5\) \(\text{d}7\)
If 12...\(\text{b}6\) then 13.\(\text{e}4!\) \(\text{xe}4\) 14.\(\text{x}e7\)
\(\text{xe}7\) 15.\(\text{x}e4\) \(\text{f}6\) 16.\(\text{d}3\)± (less convincing is 16.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{f}7\) 17.\(\text{h}5\)† \(\text{g}6\) 18.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{e}5\)∞ R. Popov – N. Kosintseva, Internet 2004).

8...
13.\(\text{g}3!\)
Next comes \(\text{f}5\), when I really like White.
13.\(\text{a}5\)
White is better, no matter how Black plays.
13...0-0 14.\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{xf}6\) 15.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{h}8\)
16.\(\text{d}3\)±
13...\(\text{h}6\) 14.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{h}5\) 15.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{a}5\) 16.\(\text{d}4\)±
14.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{c}6\) 15.\(\text{h}1\) 0-0 16.\(\text{h}6\) \(\text{e}8\)
17.\(\text{e}6\) \(\text{bxc}6\) 18.\(\text{b}1\)
White has an edge.

8...\(\text{g}4?!\) can be met straightforwardly: 9.\(\text{h}3!\)
\(\text{xf}3\) 10.\(\text{gxf}3\) This is dangerous for Black after either 10...\(\text{e}6\) 11.\(\text{e}3\) when White has an obvious lead in development, or 10...\(\text{f}6\)
11.\(\text{g}5\) e6 12.0-0-0 \(\text{e}7\) 13.\(\text{f}4\) with a strong initiative, A. Muzychuk – C. Peptan, Predeal 2007.

9.\(\text{d}3\)
Chapter 14 – 3...\(\text{\&}d4\) – Early Deviations

11...b5?

Inaccurate is: 11...0-0?! 12.\(\text{\&}g5\) \(\text{\&}e6\)
13.\(\text{\&}xf6\) \(\text{\&}xf6\) 14.0-0 \(\text{\&}d5\) don't like 14.\(\text{\&}d5\)
due to 14...\(\text{\&}xd5\) 15.\(\text{\&}xd5\) \(\text{\&}c8\) 16.0-0 \(\text{\&}e5\)
17.\(\text{\&}d3\) \(d5=\), but certainly not 14...\(\text{\&}g5?!\) as
in A. Muzychuk – Nikolajev, Warsaw [rapid] 2008, which allows
15.\(\text{\&}xd6\)\(\text{\&}xd6\) 16...\(\text{\&}e8\) 17.\(\text{\&}e3\) \(\text{\&}g5\) 18.\(\text{\&}cd5\)± And then \(\text{\&}d1\) and
c4.
12.\(\text{\&}e3\) 0-0 13.0-0 \(\text{\&}e6\)

With an unclear position.

b) 10.\(\text{\&}d5\)

It is logical to use the d5-square at once, since Black has not prevented this.
10...\(\text{\&}f6\) 11.\(\text{\&}xf7\) \(\text{\&}xf7\) 12.\(\text{\&}g5\) \(\text{\&}g4\)
Or 12...0-0 also fails to equalize: 13.0-0
\(\text{\&}d8\) 14.\(\text{\&}c4\) \(\text{\&}h6\) 15.\(\text{\&}xf6\) \(\text{\&}xf6\) 16.\(\text{\&}e1\) \(\text{\&}d7\)
17.\(\text{\&}a4\) \(\text{\&}ac8\) 18.\(\text{\&}b3\)
13.\(\text{\&}d2\) \(\text{\&}h6\) 14.\(\text{\&}xf6\) \(\text{\&}xf6\) 15.\(\text{\&}c4\) \(\text{\&}d8\) 16.\(\text{\&}f3\)
b5 17.\(\text{\&}e3\)
Tiviakov – Hilmer, Trieste 2007; it is not
a surprise that it is Tiviakov who shows the
correct path.

10.\(\text{\&}d2\)

This is the logical move.

10...\(\text{\&}f6\) 11.\(\text{\&}c4\) \(\text{\&}e6\)
11...\(\text{\&}e7\) 12.\(\text{\&}e3\) \(\text{\&}e6\) 13.\(\text{\&}b6\) \(\text{\&}b8\) 14.\(\text{\&}f3\)
0-0 15.0-0± Pridorozhni – Ibrayev, Alushta
2008.

12.\(\text{\&}e3\)! \(d5\)
12...\(\text{\&}c8\) 13.\(\text{\&}b6\) \(\text{\&}c6\) 14.\(\text{\&}bd5\)±

13.\(\text{\&}xd5\) \(\text{\&}xd5\) 14.\(\text{\&}xd5\) \(\text{\&}xd5\) 15.\(\text{\&}xd5\)
\(\text{\&}d6\) 16.\(\text{\&}b6\)
Less precise is 16.\(\text{\&}xe5\) \(\text{\&}xg2\) 17.\(\text{\&}g1\) \(\text{\&}h3\)
18.0-0-0 \(\text{\&}e6=\).

16.\(\text{\&}d8\) 17.\(\text{\&}xd5\) \(\text{\&}xd5\) 18.\(\text{\&}e2\) \(\text{\&}e7\) 19.\(\text{\&}c4\)
\(\text{\&}e6\) 20.\(\text{\&}c5\) \(\text{\&}d7\) 21.\(\text{\&}hd1\) \(\text{\&}d8\) 22.\(\text{\&}b4\)±

B22) 6...\(\text{\&}f6\) 7.\(\text{\&}c3\)

7.0-0 allows the possibility of taking the
central pawn with 7...\(\text{\&}xe4??\).

7...\(\text{\&}xd4\) 8.\(\text{\&}xd4\) \(e5\)
After this move the fight will be all about
the d5-square. Instead if 8...\(\text{\&}g4\) then 9.\(\text{\&}g5\)
followed by castling long is good for White.

9.\(\text{\&}d3\)

White would gain nothing clear-cut with
9.\(\text{\&}a4\) \(\text{\&}d7\) 10.\(\text{\&}b3\) \(\text{\&}c7\) 11.\(\text{\&}g5\) \(\text{\&}e6\)
12.\(\text{\&}b5\) \(\text{\&}d7\).

9...\(\text{\&}h6\)

The best move, as Black has to prevent \(\text{\&}g5\).

9...\(\text{\&}e7\) 10.\(\text{\&}g5\) 0-0 11.\(\text{\&}xf6\)
11.0-0 \(\text{\&}e6\) 12.\(\text{\&}xf6\) \(\text{\&}xf6\) 13.\(\text{\&}f1\) \(\text{\&}b6\)
14.\(\text{\&}b5\) \(\text{\&}c7\) 15.\(\text{\&}d2\) a6 16.\(\text{\&}d5\) \(\text{\&}xd5\)
17.\(\text{\&}xd5\)± Guerra Bastida – J. Sanchez, San
Juan 2008.

11...\(\text{\&}xf6\) 12.0-0-0 \(\text{\&}e6\)
12...\(\text{\&}e7\) 13.\(\text{\&}d5\)±
13.\(\text{\&}xd6\) \(\text{\&}a5\) 14.a3 \(\text{\&}xc8\) 15.\(\text{\&}b4\)±

10.\(\text{\&}d2\)

The start of a thematic plan to exploit the
d5-square.
10...\( \text{e6} \) 11.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{c8} \) 12.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{d7} \) 13.0-0 \( \text{e7} \)

14.\( \text{b3} \)

14.\( \text{d2} \) was played by Muzychuk, one of the specialists of this line, but I didn't like her position after: 14...0-0 15.\( \text{b2} \) \( \text{a6} \) 16.\( \text{a4} \) \( \text{fe8} \) 17.\( \text{fd1} \)

The position is maybe slightly better for White but the black position is very solid...

C) 4.\( \text{c4} \)

6...a6

The many possible alternatives include:

6...g6 7.\( \text{xd4} \) cxd4 8.\( \text{c2} \) \( \text{e5} \) 9.c3\( \text{f3} \) In such positions it is always important to open the centre, Tiviakov – Abasov, Gjovik 2008.

6...\( \text{xe2} \) 7.\( \text{xe2} \) \( \text{e6} \) 8.0-0 \( \text{e7} \) 9.f4\( \text{f3} \) Bachmann Schiavo – Noritsyn, Internet 2009.

6...\( \text{e6} \) 7.\( \text{xexd4} \) cxd4 8.\( \text{xe2} \) \( \text{b6} \) 9.0-0 \( \text{e7} \)

10.c3 dxc3 11.\( \text{xc3} \) Then \( \text{xe3} \) and \( \text{e1} \); White has a lead in development.

6...\( \text{e6} \) 7.0-0 \( \text{e7} \) 8.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{d7} \) 9.\( \text{exe5} \) dxe5 10.\( \text{xd4} \) cxd4 11.\( \text{d5} \) With a pleasant position, Kulasek – Skoberne, Budapest 2008.
Chapter 14 – 3...\(\text{Qd}4\) – Early Deviations

6...\(\text{Qc}6\) 7.0–0 a6 8.a3 e6 9.\(\text{Qa}2\) (9.d4 \(\text{Qd}4\) 10.\(\text{Qxd}4\) would transpose to a Sicilian Sozin variation!) 9...\(\text{Qe}7\) 10.f4 0–0 11.f5 White has good attacking chances, in similar style to a regular Grand Prix Attack, Movsesian – Mrva, Czech Republic 2004.

7.\(\text{Qxd}4\) \(\text{cxd}4\) 8.\(\text{Qe}2\) e5 9.0–0\(\text{Q}f6\)
Followed by c3 or f4.

C2) 4...a6

Another unusual move order but one which deserves our attention.

5.d3
The text move is the one I prefer, however 5.a4 is a good move if you intend to play a2–a4 in the main line (see page 379).

5.\(\text{Qf}3\) b5 (5...\(\text{Qf}6\) will transpose after both 6.a4 or 6.d3 to one of our main lines) 6.\(\text{Qd}5\) \(\text{Bb}8\) 7.\(\text{Qxd}4\) This transposes to 5.\(\text{Qe}2\), as 7.d3 e6 8.\(\text{Qb}3\) a5! is very annoying.

5.\(\text{Qge}2\) b5
5...\(\text{Qf}6\) 6.d3 will be a transposition.

6.\(\text{Qd}5\)
Trying to profit from the absence of the pawn at e6, but this is ill-advised.

6...\(\text{Bb}8\) 7.\(\text{Qxd}4\) \(\text{cxd}4\)

After 8.\(\text{Qxf}7\)\(\text{Qxf}7\) 9.\(\text{Wh}5\)\(\text{g6}\) 10.\(\text{Qe}5\) \(\text{Qb}7\) 11.\(\text{Qxh}8\) \(\text{Qg}7\) 12.\(\text{Qxh}7\) \(\text{Qf}6\) 13.\(\text{Wh}4\) \(\text{dx}c3\) Black stands better.

8...\(\text{Qf}6\) 9.\(\text{Qb}3\)
Or 9.\(\text{Qxd}4\) first.

9...\(\text{Qxe}4\) 10.\(\text{Qxd}4\) e6 11.\(\text{Qc}3\) \(\text{Qb}7\) 12.0–0 \(\text{Qd}6\)!
12...\(\text{Qf}6\) 13.\(\text{Qc}5\) 14.\(\text{Qc}2\) \(\text{Qd}6\) 15.\(\text{b}4\) \(\text{Qd}7\) 16.\(\text{a}4\) E. Berg – Lindberg, Vaxjo 2008.

13.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{Qf}6\)
13...\(\text{Qc}5\) 14.\(\text{Qc}2\) 0–0 15.\(\text{f}4\)\(\text{Q}f6\)
14.\(\text{Qe}2\) 0–0 15.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{Qd}5\)
Black does not have any problems, Shyam – Konguvel, Mangalore 2008.

5...b5 6.\(\text{Qb}3\) \(\text{Qxb}3\)
Also possible is 6...e6, as in general Black plays this move, so it should transpose.

7.\(\text{axb}3\) \(\text{Qb}7\)

8.\(\text{Qge}2\)
Then again, it depends where you put this knight in your main line.

8...g6
After another move we transpose.

9.0–0
Instead 9.d4? looks also promising.

9...\(\text{Qg}7\) 10.\(\text{Qe}3\) d6 11.d4 \(\text{cxd}4\) 12.\(\text{Qxd}4\) \(\text{Qf}6\)
I prefer this direct move to 13.f3, as played in T.L. Petrosian - Krush, Internet (blitz) 2004.

C3) 4...\textit{f6}?

Magnus Carlsen recently used this very interesting move order. There are many transpositional possibilities, but as we shall see, those who play with the knight on f3 can run into some problems.

5.\textit{f3}

Or 5.\textit{ge2} \textit{a6} and after either 6.d3 or 6.a4 play will transpose to one of our main lines. For 5...\textit{d6}, see 4...\textit{d6}.

5...\textit{d6}?

This move deserves serious attention; White cannot take on d4 and ...\textit{g4} is a threat. Of course 5...\textit{e6} would head back towards the main lines.

6.h3

One would prefer to avoid playing this move, but what else?

6...\textit{g6}

6...\textit{e6} is also fine.

7.d3 \textit{g7}

8.\textit{xd4}

This capture is likely at some stage, but perhaps White should delay it:

8.0-0

This may be White's best bet.

8...0-0 9.\textit{g5} \textit{h6} 10.\textit{h4} \textit{e6}

Instead 10...\textit{h7} seems rather strange to me. 11.\textit{xd4} \textit{cxd4} 12.\textit{d5} \textit{xd5} 13.\textit{xd5} \textit{wc7} Kazhgaleyev - Movsesian, Cappelle la Grande 2002.

11.\textit{xd4}

11...\textit{xe6} \textit{fxe6} 12.\textit{xd4} \textit{cxd4} 13.\textit{exe6} (13.\textit{e2} \textit{d7}) 13...\textit{exe6} 14.\textit{e2} \textit{f5} !

11...\textit{cxd4} 12.\textit{d5} \textit{xd5} 13.\textit{xd5} \textit{xd7} 14.\textit{e1} \textit{e8}

The only verdict I can offer is "unclear".

8...\textit{xd4} 9.\textit{e2} \textit{d5}!
10...exd5
White should settle for the rather unchallenging text move, as after the alternative he is likely to be worse:
10...b5?! d7!
A good novelty, as 10...f8?! was less clear in Gashimov -- Gashanov, Warsaw 2005.
11.exd5 f6! 12.exd5 dxc3 13...xc3 dxe4 14...xe4 ...c3†
15...xc3 ...f6!
I prefer Black's position.

10...exd5 11.0-0-0 12.g5 e6
The position is balanced.

Conclusion
4.a4 and 4...f3 (lines A and B) are less popular than 4...c4, but are not clearly bad. In fact, the positions that result are often wildly unclear.

4.c4 (Line C) is the standard move, but in this chapter we only covered unusual variations of it. The most interesting, from Black's point of view, is 4...f6!? with the idea of meeting 5.f3 with 5...d6 when White faces the positional threat of ...g4. Thus, the rather slow 6.h3 is required. Note that if White chooses 5.ge2 then Black's move order causes no difficulties.
Variation Index

1. e4 c5 2. d4 c6 3. c4 d5 4. c4 g6 5. f3 g7 6. xd4 cxd4

7. f3! f6 8. e2 0–0 9. d3 g4! 10. b3 d6

A) 11. h3

B) 11. 0–0

C) 11. a6

   C1) 11... f6?! 348

   C2) 11... a5 12. a4 348

      C21) 12... f6

         C211) 13. h4 349

         C212) 13. 0–0 350

         C213) 13. x d4? 351

   C22) 12... b6!

            352

          349

            348

          348 347
1.e4 c5 2.d4 c6 3.d5 e6 4.c4

In this chapter we shall consider what happens if Black immediately fianchettoes:

4...g6 5.Bb5+ g7

6.Bxd4

The most direct approach.
6.0-0

This looks weaker to me. For example, after the modest
6...a6 7.Bxd4 exd4

I can't see any advantage for White.
8.Be2

8...d5 9.d3


Black is fine after this move.
10.exd5 Bxd5 11.Be1 0-0 12.Bb5 Bxe6=

Balashov – Degraeve, Germany 1999.

6...exd4 7.Bb5!

An important move, winning a tempo by threatening mate.

7...Bb6

There are two alternatives to which we need to pay attention.

7...d6!!

This simply loses a pawn after the powerful reply:
8.Bb5! 0-0

8...d5 9.exd5 Bg4 10.c3! A good novelty.

9.dxc4 d5

9...Bxe5 10.c5 e6 11.Bb3= (In the event of 11.0-0 Bxe4? 12.dxe4 d5 13.Bxe5 Bxd5 14.Bxd5 exd5 15.Bb3 it isn't easy for White to convert the extra pawn and indeed Kovalevskaya – Madl, Halle 2000, was eventually drawn.) 10.exd5 e5

10...e6 11.0-0 exd5 12.Bb3= 11.Be2

Practice has shown that Black does not have enough compensation. For example:

11.Bg4


White has an edge since his monarch will

7...e6?!  
This bad move appears regularly over the board.

8...b5!  
Now Black experiences difficulties with the weak spot at d6.

8...d6  
8...e5 9.d3 The most precise, hitting the d4-pawn. 9...b6 10.c3! Once again, the right way. 10...dxc3 11.dxc3 a6 12.a3 e6 13.f4 b5 14.c4 dxc4 15.b3 White had a fantastic position in Ni Hua – Wang Zili, Yongchuan 2003.

8...b6? 9.d4! e7 10.b3 and it’s curtains!

9...a3!  
In this position I have also played 9.c3 and 9.g3, but really I think this is the best move.

9...e7  

Or 9...e5 10.0-0 and f2-f4 is coming.

10.c3 dxc3  
11.dxc3!  
Recapturing with the other pawn is less clear.

11...a6 12.d4 e5

Or 12...c7 13.d3 d7 14.0-0 e8 15.g5 f6 16.e3 h6 17.h3 f7 18.f4 and White has the initiative, V. Chernov – F. Hassier, France 2008.

13.d3 c7 14.b3  
White retains a marked advantage, Kotronias – Moskow, Gausdal 2008.

8.dxe2  
Instead 8.d3 gives Black the extra option of 8...a5! (8...0-0 9.dxe2 transposes to the main line). 9.xh6 xh6 10.xf7 d8 11.d5 xh5 12.d5 e6 13.c6 g7 14.e5 xh6 15.exf6 g6 This ending is about equal, Zufic – V. Malakhov, Bled 2001.

8...0-0  
Black also has the following very uncommon but interesting way of playing:

8...e6 9.d3 f5 10.0-0  
10.h3 d7 11.exf5 a5†! A refinement from Gaponenko. 12.d2 h5 13.xf5 (13.g4?! c5 14.f4 b5† Vasilevich – Gaponenko, Moscow 2010) 13...gx5 14.0-0 b6 With an unclear position.

10...0-0  
10...h4 11.f4! xf4 12.xf4 c7 13.f3 b6 14.a4 Intending a4-a5; I prefer the white side here.

11.d3 c7  
Instead 11.g4 12.b3 a5 13.exf5 gxf5 14.a4 looks good for White.
12.exf5 gxh5 13...f4
This position is double-edged, but I feel that White's prospects are better.

8...d6 9.d3 0–0
This move involves a pawn sacrifice.
9...g4 10.g3 axe2 11.xe2 is slightly better for White due to the pair of bishops.
10...xd4 9g4 11.c3 dxe5 12...xe2 dxc4

A critical position. Black certainly has some compensation for the missing pawn, but I don't think it is quite enough.
15.d3 b6 16...d1 a5 17...g5 ...c7 18.f3 f4
19...h3 g5 20...f2 ...b6 21.a4 b5 22.b3=

Even though this game ended peacefully, Gashimov missed good chances to win an important game against his countryman in Gashimov – Radjabov, Astrakhan 2010.

9.d3
The text move is by far the main line, but White has at least two other options; one to avoid and one that is highly interesting:

9.h3?! is strongly met by 9...e6! 10.d3 f5!, when Black seizes the initiative.

9.c3? dxc3 10.dxc3
The rarely played 10.bxc3?! may be a better option. 10...d6 11.d4 (11.h3 c6?! I. Rogers – Reiss, Augsburg 2004) 11...g4 12.0–0 ...c7 13...b3 ...f6 14...d3 b6 15.a4 (15.f4 I don't really like this move. 15...a5∞ Zhang Zhong – Leko, Wijk aan Zee 2004) 15...b7 16.f3 This line is a less demanding approach than 15.f4, from White's standpoint. Black does not have any specific problems; the position is playable and rich in possibilities for both sides.

10...g4
After 10...d6 11.h3! I think White is slightly better because of the h6-knight on the rim.

11...xf7!
11...b3 d6 12.h3 ...f6 13.0–0 ...d7 14...c1 ...c7 With an approximately equal game.
11...xf7 12...xg4 d5 13...h4 ...f6 14...h6 14...g5 ...b6!
14...dxe4 15.0–0 ...d3 16...g3 ...f5 17...g5 ...d8
This balanced position finished in a draw, Degraeve – Gagnashvili, Plovdiv 2003.
9...g4!

An important resource, enabling the offside knight to join in the battle. For 9...d6, see 8...d6.

9...h6 10.b3 h8
10...d6 11.f4! aiming to jump to d5.
11...h8 12.g3 g4 13.d5 d8
14.0-0±

11.g3?

An interesting novelty.
After 11.h4 f5! I have failed to find any advantage. (11...f6 12.g3 d6 13.f4 De la Riva Aguado – Van Blitterswijk, Andorra 2003) 12.h5 fxe4 13.xe4 d5! An appropriate reply, as Black has to play dynamically.

b) 14.h4 f6 (14...f5 15.h2±) 15.g5 f5 16.h4 e5 17.xf6 xf6 18.f3 e6∞
c) 14.xe7 g4 15.xh6 xh6 16.hxg6 hxg6 17.e5± e6∞

11...f5

The weaker 11...d6?! allows White to launch a dangerous attack after 12.h4!

12.h4 g8
12...g4?! 13.exf5 a5† 14.d2 xf5
15.h3±
13.0-0 fxe4 14.xe4 d6 15.h4 e5 16.g3
I prefer White’s position, even though anything can still happen.

10.b3

10.xg4?! is of course bad because of 10...d5!

10...d6

Black must not retreat the knight at once:
10...e5?!

This inadequate move leaves White free to follow an easy plan...

11.g3 c6 12.h4!

The start of a ferocious assault.

12.c5

Everybody plays this move in this position, as the b3-bishop must be eliminated.

13.h5 xb3 14.axb3 e5 15.g3!

A strong novelty.

15.e8

15...f6 16.xf6 xf6 17.f4 d6 18.0±
15...d7 16.h4 f6 17.hxg6 hxg6 18.f7† h8 19.h6+--
15...f6 16.d2 g5 Black logically tries to close the position, but after 17.h6 h8 18.h4! his position is bound to collapse anyway.

18.exf6 19.xf6±

16.hxg6 fg6 17.h4 h5 18.g4! d5 19.xh5 gxh5 20.d3 g4 21.xh5 xh5 22.xh5 xh5 23.exh5 dxe4 24.dxe4 eac8 25.b3

White’s chances looks good with a sound extra pawn in the endgame.
This is the critical position of this line. White now has three main possibilities: A) 11.h3, B) 11.0-0 and C) 11.\( \text{g}3 \)

Instead 11.h4?! is wrong because after 11...h5! the g4-knight is well-anchored and White has no attacking chances.

A) 11.h3

This unusual move was recently played by Romanian Grandmaster Nevednichy, a specialist in this variation.

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

Of course not 11...\( \text{f}6 \) due to 12.\( \text{xd}4 \).

12.\( \text{g}3 \)

Black could hold with: 16...\( \text{c7} \)! 17.\( \text{h}4 \) (17.\( \text{d}1 \) d5! 18.\( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{f}5 \)!) 17.\( \text{xe}5 \) \( \text{xe}5 \) 18.\( \text{xd}4 \) \( \text{c5} \)!) 17...\( \text{d}8 \) 18.\( \text{h}2 \) \( \text{g}4 \)!

With accurate play, Black should be okay.

17.\( \text{f}5 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 18.\( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{d}6 \)

Stronger was 18...\( \text{f}6 \), for example: 19.\( \text{hxg}6 \) \( \text{fxg}6 \) 20.\( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 21.\( \text{h}4 \) h5 22.\( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 23.0-0 \( \text{xe}8 \) Black is just about hanging on.

19.\( \text{hxg}6 \) \( \text{fxg}6 \) 20.\( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{g}5 \)?

20...h5 was essential to prolong the game, but Black is still in deadly trouble after, for example, 21.\( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{c6} \) 22.\( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{xc}2 \) 23.\( \text{gxh}5 \) \( \text{gxh}5 \) 24.\( \text{h}6 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 25.\( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 26.\( \text{h}5 \).
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

21.\texttt{Wxh7}\texttt{f7} 22.\texttt{Bh6}--

A. Smirnov - J. Kick, Bad Wiessee 2009.

13.a4 d7

Black can also choose another square for his knight:
13...c6!? 14.h4?!

If 14.0-0 then 14...e5! 15.f4 \texttt{f6}!, rather than 14...d7 which allows White interesting play after 15.f4 \texttt{e6} 16.f5!?

14...\texttt{b4}!

After 14...\texttt{e6} 15.a xe6 fxe6 16.h5 \texttt{e8} 17.hxg6 \texttt{xg6} 18.a2 Black's structure allows White a slight plus.

15.h5

In many of the lines that follow, a draw is the logical result. For example: 15.a2 e6 16.axb4 axb4 17.cxb4 cxb4 18.a5 \texttt{c8} 19.hxg6 hxg6 20.\texttt{h4} \texttt{e8} 21.f4 \texttt{e2} 22.\texttt{h7}+ \texttt{f8} 23.\texttt{xg6}+ fxe6 24.b3 \texttt{c8} 25.f3+ \texttt{e6} 26.\texttt{h8}+ \texttt{f7} 27.\texttt{h7}+=

15...\texttt{e6} 16.a xe6 \texttt{xc2}+

16...\texttt{fxe6} is a better move order: 17.hxg6 \texttt{xc2}+

17.d1

Another long route to half a point is: 17.f1 fxe6 18.hxg6 \texttt{xa1} 19.\texttt{h3} hxg6 20.\texttt{h7}+ \texttt{f7} 21.h6 21.\texttt{h6} (21.\texttt{h6} \texttt{e8} 22.\texttt{h7} \texttt{f7}) 21...\texttt{e8} 22.\texttt{h7} \texttt{d7} 23.\texttt{f8} \texttt{xf8} 24.\texttt{h6} \texttt{b3} 25.\texttt{h6} \texttt{c5} 26.\texttt{h4} \texttt{f4} 27.\texttt{g3} \texttt{h2} 28.\texttt{f6} \texttt{cxd3} 29.\texttt{f5} \texttt{c1}+ 30.\texttt{f2} \texttt{d5} 31.\texttt{d4}+ \texttt{h8} 32.\texttt{h8}+ \texttt{e7} 33.\texttt{b5}+ \texttt{e6} 34.\texttt{xa8} \texttt{c4}+=

17.c4 18.bxc4 18.bxc4 is the option Black cuts out if he starts with 16...fxc6.

18...\texttt{f6}!

Black has no choice, as 18...hxg6? is hit by 19.\texttt{xc6} \texttt{fxe6} 20.\texttt{h7}+... 19.\texttt{h3} hxg6 20.\texttt{h7}+ \texttt{f7} 21.a6 \texttt{e5}!

Black would fail to equalize after 21...\texttt{e8} 22.\texttt{xg7} \texttt{c7} 23.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{b3} 24.\texttt{xb3} \texttt{b6} 25.\texttt{d4} \texttt{xb2} 26.\texttt{f3} \texttt{xf2} 27.\texttt{f8} \texttt{f8} 28.\texttt{h6}.

22.\texttt{xg7} \texttt{e6}

Now the game is level whether White opts for 23.\texttt{h3}+ \texttt{f7} 24.\texttt{f8} \texttt{xf8} 25.\texttt{f4} \texttt{f6}! 26.b3 \texttt{c6} or 23.\texttt{xg6}+ \texttt{d7} 24.\texttt{xh6} \texttt{f8} 25.\texttt{h7} \texttt{xf2} 26.\texttt{h7} \texttt{h4}=.

14.h4 c5 15.a2 \texttt{e6}
16.\textit{\texttt{ex}e6} \textit{\texttt{ex}e6}  
White has an attack after 16...\textit{\texttt{fx}e6} 17.h5.

17.h5 \textit{\texttt{g}c8}  
17...\textit{\texttt{h}c7}! is a significant improvement.  
18.hxg6 \textit{\texttt{fx}g6} 19.\textit{\texttt{h}h3} \textit{\texttt{h}f7} (19...\textit{\texttt{h}f6}?) I believe it's time to acquiesce to a draw with 20.\textit{\texttt{f}f3}  
\textit{\texttt{g}g8} 21.\textit{\texttt{h}h3}= as 20.\textit{\texttt{d}d1} is unwise due to 20...\textit{\texttt{ac}8}!.

18.hxg6 \textit{\texttt{fx}g6} 19.\textit{\texttt{h}h3} \textit{\texttt{h}f7}  
Instead 19...\textit{\texttt{h}5} is murky after 20.b3 \textit{\texttt{f}f7}  
21.\textit{\texttt{a}a2} \textit{\texttt{f}f8}∞, and White should avoid 20.\textit{\texttt{f}f4}?!  
d5! 21.exd5 \textit{\texttt{c}c7}.

20.\textit{\texttt{b}b}d1!  
This is quite to the point, and soon leaves Black in trouble because of his lack of counterplay.

20...\textit{\texttt{d}d}c5  
20...\textit{\texttt{e}e}c6 21.b3±

21.\textit{\texttt{d}d}d2 \textit{\texttt{ac}8} 22.\textit{\texttt{b}b}c1 d5 23.\textit{\texttt{e}e}5 \textit{\texttt{ex}e5}  
23...\textit{\texttt{b}b}c6 24.\textit{f}f4±

24.\textit{f}f4±  
White was much better in Nevednichy – Durarbeyli, Sarajevo 2010.

\textbf{B) 11.0–0}

11...\textit{\texttt{a}a}5  
Naturally Black has other options:

11...\textit{\texttt{e}e}5 12.\textit{\texttt{g}g}3 \textit{\texttt{d}d}7 13.\textit{\texttt{h}h}4 \textit{\texttt{f}f}6  
White has an initiative after 13...\textit{\texttt{c}c}5 14.\textit{\texttt{g}g}5  
\textit{\texttt{e}e}8 15.\textit{\texttt{f}f}4 \textit{\texttt{xb}b}3 16.axb3 \textit{\texttt{c}c}7 17.\textit{\texttt{f}f}5.  
14.\textit{\texttt{g}g}5 \textit{\texttt{x}x}g5 15.\textit{\texttt{x}x}g5 e5 16.\textit{\texttt{h}h}6  
The text move is the most accurate as the following alternatives illustrate:  
16.\textit{\texttt{g}g}3 \textit{\texttt{f}f}6 17.\textit{\texttt{f}f}4 \textit{\texttt{h}h}5 18.\textit{\texttt{f}f}3 \textit{\texttt{e}e}6 19.\textit{\texttt{f}f}5  
(19.\textit{\texttt{f}f}5 \textit{\texttt{xb}b}3 20.axb3 \textit{\texttt{c}c}8 21.\textit{\texttt{c}c}3 \textit{\texttt{b}b}6∞)  
19...\textit{\texttt{e}e}5 20.\textit{\texttt{c}c}3 \textit{\texttt{d}d}7 21.\textit{\texttt{h}h}3∞  
16.\textit{\texttt{x}x}d8 \textit{\texttt{xd}d}8 17.\textit{\texttt{f}f}4 \textit{\texttt{c}c}5 18.\textit{\texttt{d}d}5 \textit{\texttt{e}e}6=  
16...\textit{\texttt{f}f}6 17.\textit{\texttt{c}c}3 \textit{\texttt{xc}c}3 18.\textit{\texttt{xc}c}3 \textit{\texttt{e}e}6 19.\textit{\texttt{xe}e}6  
\textit{\texttt{fx}e}6 20.\textit{\texttt{h}h}3 \textit{\texttt{e}e}8 21.\textit{\texttt{e}e}3 \textit{\texttt{g}g}4  
21...\textit{\texttt{a}a}5 22.\textit{\texttt{ad}ad}1 \textit{\texttt{ac}8} 23.\textit{d}d4±  
22.\textit{\texttt{f}f}3 \textit{\texttt{f}f}6 23.\textit{\texttt{ad}ad}1 d5 24.\textit{\texttt{g}g}3±  

11...\textit{\texttt{h}h}8 12.\textit{\texttt{g}g}3 e5 13.h3 \textit{\texttt{h}h}6 14.\textit{f}f4±  

12.a4 \textit{\texttt{d}d}5  
In the event of 12...\textit{\texttt{b}b}6?!, which has been tested only once, 13.\textit{\texttt{g}g}3 would transpose to 11.\textit{\texttt{g}g}3. It is difficult to suggest a better option!

13.\textit{\texttt{g}g}3 \textit{\texttt{d}d}7  
This transposes to a variation covered in line C below, which starts with 11.\textit{\texttt{g}g}3.
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

C) 11...g3

16.axb3 e7

17.f5!

I am really fond of White's position here. For instance:

17...exf5

Or 17...f6 18.exf6 hxg6 19.h6 wxc2

20.d4 ad2 21.ad2 wxe3 22.wf1± and next ec2!.

18.exg6 hxg6

18...fxg6 19.g4 ed7 (19...e6 20.ad1 exd4 21.wxc4 ed7 22.wxc7±)

19.d4 f6

19...d6 20.wxe6 fxe6 21.wg4±

20.h6 wxb3

20...w7 21.wf3 w7 22.wf3 wxb3 23.wxb3 w7 24.wf5±

C2) 11...a5 12.a4

Now the play divides into C21) 12...f6 or C22) 12...b6!.

I don't like this move at all.

12.wg4!


12...d7

12...d5 13.exd5 ed5 14.exd4 a5 15.a3! a4 16.a2±

13.wd5 d8

13...e5†? could just transpose to the 13...e8 main line after 14.0–0 e8 or, at White's choice, head off into wildness after 14.ad7 ed1 15.xb3 16.cxb3 e6 17.wf4 ffc8 18.wxe6 fxe6∞.

14.0–0 c5 15.f4 xb3

Chapter 15 - 4. \textit{c}4 g6

4. \textit{c}4 g6

349

Now this move is interesting because Black does not have the option ...\textit{a}5 and, as we shall see, \textit{\textit{f}}4 allows Black to equalize. The lines we shall study are C211) \textit{\textit{h}}4, C212) \textit{0-0} and C213) \textit{\textit{xd}}4?.

C211) \textit{\textit{h}}4 d5!

The best defence. The alternative 13...\textit{d}7 14.\textit{g}5 \textit{e}8 15.\textit{f}4 looks dangerous for Black as the following sample line demonstrates: 15...\textit{c}5 16.\textit{xf}7+! \textit{xf}7 17.\textit{h}xh7

14.\textit{exd}5 \textit{xd}5

After 15.\textit{g}5 \textit{e}8 16.0-0 \textit{c}7 Black's position is alright.

15...\textit{b}4! 16.\textit{f}3 \textit{c}7

16...\textit{f}6 17.\textit{g}5! \textit{h}5 18.0-0

17.0-0 \textit{xc}2

17...\textit{f}6 18.\textit{g}5 \textit{e}6 19.\textit{xe}6 \textit{fxe}6 20.\textit{xf}6 \textit{exf}6 21.\textit{d}4 White has a healthy extra pawn.

18.\textit{h}1

18.\textit{f}4 e5 19.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 20.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 21.\textit{xc}2 \textit{xb}2 22.\textit{fc}1 \textit{e}6=

18.\textit{f}6!

An improvement over 18...\textit{b}4 19.\textit{h}6! \textit{\textit{d}6} (19...\textit{f}6 20.\textit{g}5 \textit{\textit{g}x}5 21.\textit{\textit{g}x}5 \textit{e}6 22.\textit{\textit{g}x}6 \textit{\textit{fx}6} 23.\textit{\textit{bc}1}+) 20.\textit{\textit{be}1} \textit{\textit{d}6} 21.\textit{g}5 (21.\textit{\textit{g}x}7 \textit{\textit{g}x}7 22.\textit{d}4 \textit{\textit{f}6} = Stripunsky - Van de Mortel, Chicago 2006) 21...\textit{h}6 22.\textit{g}x7 \textit{\textit{g}x}7 23.\textit{\textit{d}5}!

19.\textit{g}5

19.\textit{\textit{h}6} \textit{g}7 is only a repetition.

19...\textit{b}4 20.\textit{\textit{xf}6} \textit{\textit{xf}6} 21.\textit{\textit{xf}6} \textit{\textit{xd}3}

22.\textit{\textit{bd}1} \textit{\textit{e}5}

22...\textit{f}5 23.\textit{\textit{d}4} \textit{\textit{d}8} 24.\textit{\textit{xd}8} \textit{\textit{fxd}8}

25.\textit{\textit{xf}5} \textit{\textit{exf}5} 26.\textit{\textit{c}2}=

23.\textit{\textit{c}1} \textit{\textit{e}6}! 24.\textit{\textit{d}4} \textit{\textit{xb}3} 25.\textit{\textit{xb}3} \textit{b}6=
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

C212) 13.0-0 \( \text{d7} \)

One may reach this position in various ways.

14.\( g5 \)

14.f4 \( \text{c5} \) 15.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{e6} \)! 16.\( \text{xe6} \) \( \text{fxe6} \) is about level; White will find it hard to profit from his opponent's damaged pawn structure.

14...\( \text{c5} \) 15.\( \text{h4} \) \( \text{e8} \) 16.\( \text{e4} \)!

After 16.\( \text{d5} \) \( \text{e6} \) a critical position has arisen:

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
& a & b & c & d & e & f & g & h \\
\hline
1 & 8 & 7 & 6 & 5 & 4 & 3 & 2 & 1 \\
2 & & & & & & & & \\
3 & & & & & & & & \\
4 & & & & & & & & \\
5 & & & & & & & & \\
6 & & & & & & & & \\
7 & & & & & & & & \\
8 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

a) 17.\( \text{xe6} \)? \( \text{xe6} \) 18.\( \text{h6} \) \( \text{f6} \) 19.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{e8} \) (19...\( \text{b6} \) 20.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{c5} \) Sabirova - Cmilyte, Turin 2006) 20.\( \text{a}1 \) \( \text{b6} \) Svidler - Leko, Dortmund 2004.

b) 17.\( \text{h6} \)? \( \text{xd5} \) 18.\( \text{g7} \) (18.\( \text{exd5} \) \( \text{e5} \) 18...\( \text{g7} \) 19.\( \text{exd5} \) \( \text{e5} \)?)

18...\( \text{g7} \) 19.\( \text{exd5} \) \( \text{e5} \)

c) 17.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 18.\( \text{exd5} \) \( \text{f6} \) 19.\( \text{h6} \) \( \text{g5} \) And next ...\( \text{c7} \)-\( \text{e6} \).

d) 17.b3?!

This is a playable move.

17.\( \text{xd5} \)

17...\( \text{d7} \) 18.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 19.\( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{f6} \) 20.\( \text{d2} \)

I think White stands better, even if only slightly, Najer - Tiviakov, Groningen 1999.

18.\( \text{exd5} \) \( \text{b6} \)? 19.\( \text{xd4} \)

For 19.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{e4} \) ! see 17.\( \text{f4} \).

19.\( \text{h6} \) \( \text{f6} \)? 19.\( \text{h1} \) \( \text{a6} \) ! followed by \( \text{f4} \).

19...\( \text{b4} \)! 20.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{f6} \) 21.\( \text{g4} \) \( \text{g5} \) 22.\( \text{g4} \) \( \text{h5} \) 23.\( \text{h5} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 24.\( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{g7} \)

This looks messy but I believe Black has sufficient defensive resources.

c) 17.\( \text{f4} \)?

This has not been tested yet.

17.\( \text{xd5} \)

17...\( \text{e8} \) 18.\( \text{f5} \) \( \text{gxf5} \) (18...\( \text{exd5} \) 19.\( \text{exd5} \) \( \text{d7} \) 20.\( \text{f6} \) \( \text{h6} \) 21.\( \text{f6} \) 22.\( \text{xd4} \) (22.\( \text{xd4} \)) 19.\( \text{f4} \) (19.\( \text{h6} \) \( \text{f6} \) !) 19...\( \text{f6} \) 20.\( \text{exe6} \) \( \text{exe6} \) (if 20...\( \text{fxe6} \) then \( \text{f4} \)-\( \text{h5} \) is on the agenda; Black is in danger!) 21.\( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{fxe6} \) 22.\( \text{h6} \) \( \text{xb6} \) 23.\( \text{h5} \) \( \text{b4} \) 24.\( \text{xf8} \) \( \text{xf8} \) 25.\( \text{xe6} \) \( \text{f8} \) 26.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{c8} \) 27.\( \text{xe4} \)

18.\( \text{exd5} \) \( \text{b6} \) !

18...\( \text{f5} \) 19.\( \text{g4} \)! A cunning blow, which earns White a mighty attack. 19...\( \text{d7} \) (19...\( \text{fxg4} \) 20.\( \text{f5} \) \( \text{f6} \)) 20.\( \text{f6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 21.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 22.\( \text{f5} \)

19.\( \text{b3} \)

19.\( \text{f5} \) \( \text{xb2} \)!

19...\( \text{e4} \) 20.\( \text{b5} \) \( \text{f6} \)

After 20...\( \text{g5} \) 21.\( \text{f6} \) I prefer the white side; Black has to be careful about some sacrifice on \( f7 \).

21.\( \text{f5} \) \( \text{e5} \) 22.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{xc8} \) 23.\( \text{fxg6} \) \( \text{h6} \) 24.\( \text{h3} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 25.\( \text{h6} \) \( \text{h5} \)

White's attack has been repelled and the position is about equal.
Chapter 15 - 4.\&c4 g6

16...\&e6

17.\&b5! \&d7 18.f4! \&xb5 19.axb5 \&d7??

The alternatives are:

19...\&e6 20.\&h6! 20.\&f3?! \&e8! Lyell - Konnyu, Budapest 2008 20...\&f6 (20...\&b6 21.f5\酵2. And f4-f5 is imminent!

19...\&d7 20.f5 \&xb5
20...\&d5?! 21.exd5! (21.b4?! \&xe4! O. Girya - Shlakich, Chelyabinsk 2008, would confuse matters: 22.dxe4 d3 23.\&xd3 \&xa1 24.\&xa1 axb4\酵2 21...\&xd5 (21...\&xb5 22.\&xe7\酵2; 21...\&f6 22.\&xg6 \&xg6 23.\&d2\酵2; 21...\&f5 22.\&xf4\酵2) 22.\&xe7 \&d7 23.\&f6 \&xf6 24.\&xf6 \&xc2 25.\&xd4\酵2
21.\&xe7 \&xb2
21...\&e5 22.\&xf4\酵2; 21...\&d7 22.\&f6\酵2; 22.\&f6 \&h8 23.\&g3\酵2
19...\&f6 20.\&h6 e5 (20...\&xb6 21.\&xb6 e6 22.\&f3\酵2) 21.\&xg7 \&xg7 22.\&f3 \&c8 23.\&af1 White has the initiative.

20.f5 \&c8 21.\&f2!!

The best move order as the other options illustrate:

21.\&xg6 \&xg6 22.\&xe5 \&f6 23.\&d2 \&xc2 24.\&xd4 \&xb2 25.\&e6 \&b6 26.\&xb6 (26.d4? \&c8\酵2) 26...\&xb6 27.\&xa5 \&d7 28.d4 \&h6
31.\&ac1 \&c5
20.\&f3? \&xc2 22.\&h3 \&f8\酵2
21...\&xc2

Now 21...\&f6 can be met by 22.\&d2 \&xc2 23.\&xd4 \&xb2 24.\&e1 \&b6 25.\&c3 \&xb5 26.\&h1.
22.\&xg6 \&xg6 23.\&f7\&e8 24.\&f4 \&e5 25.\&b3 \&c8 26.\&e6 b6 27.\&ac1 \&xc1 28.\&xc1 \&b8 29.\&xd4\&f6

C213) 13.\&xd4?! \&xe4 14.dxe4 \&xd4
15.h4!
order to avoid a serious nuisance for his king: 19...\texttt{\texttt{x}e3}! 20.\texttt{\texttt{x}e3} \texttt{g7} 21.\texttt{\texttt{h}h6}+ \texttt{\texttt{f}f6} 22.\texttt{\texttt{h}h3}–
20.0–0–0
20.\texttt{\texttt{h}h6}?! is too slow: 20...\texttt{\texttt{x}h6} 21.\texttt{\texttt{x}h6} \texttt{g7} and then ...\texttt{\texttt{h}h8}.
20...\texttt{\texttt{f}f8}
20...\texttt{\texttt{g}g4}! 21.\texttt{\texttt{f}f3}!
20...\texttt{\texttt{c}c6} 21.\texttt{\texttt{f}f8} 22.\texttt{\texttt{d}d5} \texttt{\texttt{c}c4} 23.\texttt{\texttt{b}xb4} \texttt{\texttt{b}b4} 24.\texttt{\texttt{b}b3} \texttt{\texttt{c}c3} 25.\texttt{\texttt{d}d2}+
21.\texttt{\texttt{d}d4}!
21.\texttt{\texttt{f}f5} \texttt{\texttt{c}c6} 22.\texttt{\texttt{c}c3} \texttt{\texttt{b}b8}+
21...\texttt{\texttt{x}d4}!
21...\texttt{\texttt{c}c6}? 22.\texttt{\texttt{x}g7} \texttt{\texttt{g}g7} 23.\texttt{\texttt{h}h7}+–
22.\texttt{\texttt{x}d4} \texttt{\texttt{g}g4} 23.\texttt{\texttt{e}e3} \texttt{\texttt{f}f5}
The position is balanced.

17...\texttt{\texttt{f}f6}
Black has various options, but one careless move can end the game:

Worthless are: 17...\texttt{\texttt{h}xg6}? 18.\texttt{\texttt{h}h3}+–, and 17.\texttt{\texttt{d}dxc2}? 18.\texttt{\texttt{h}h3}+–. Black will get mated soon!

17...\texttt{\texttt{xf}f2}+ 18.\texttt{\texttt{x}f}f2 \texttt{\texttt{f}f6} 19.\texttt{\texttt{h}h4} \texttt{\texttt{f}f7} 20.\texttt{\texttt{x}b3} \texttt{\texttt{b}b6} 21.\texttt{\texttt{g}g4}+ The white king is somewhat vulnerable but a piece is a piece!

17...\texttt{\texttt{b}b6} 18.\texttt{\texttt{g}g7}+ \texttt{\texttt{h}h8} 19.\texttt{\texttt{b}xb3} \texttt{\texttt{f}f2}+ 20.\texttt{\texttt{g}g2} \texttt{\texttt{b}b3} 21.\texttt{\texttt{b}b3}+

18.\texttt{\texttt{w}xb3}+ \texttt{\texttt{h}h8} 19.\texttt{\texttt{f}f3} \texttt{\texttt{h}h6} 20.\texttt{\texttt{x}b6} \texttt{\texttt{b}b6} 21.\texttt{\texttt{g}g5} \texttt{\texttt{f}f7} 22.0–0–0
I think White is slightly better in this endgame.

C22) 12...\texttt{\texttt{b}b6}!
The queen is well posted here in my view and it’s better to wait before retreating the knight to f6.

13.\texttt{\texttt{f}f4} \texttt{\texttt{f}f6}! 14.\texttt{h}h4 (14.0–0 \texttt{\texttt{d}d7}?) 14...\texttt{e}5
15.\texttt{d}d5 \texttt{\texttt{d}d5} 16.\texttt{\texttt{x}d5} \texttt{\texttt{e}e}6 17.\texttt{\texttt{e}e6} \texttt{\texttt{f}f6} The position is quite unclear.

13.0–0 \texttt{\texttt{f}f6}
13...\texttt{\texttt{d}d7} 14.\texttt{\texttt{g}g5}! \texttt{\texttt{f}f6}?! (14...\texttt{\texttt{f}f6} transposes to 13...\texttt{\texttt{f}f6}) 15.\texttt{\texttt{d}d2}! (15.\texttt{\texttt{x}f}f6 \texttt{\texttt{x}f6} 16.e5 [16.\texttt{\texttt{f}f4} \texttt{\texttt{d}d4} 17.\texttt{\texttt{x}e}e4 d3? 18.\texttt{\texttt{x}f}f2 \texttt{\texttt{d}d2}+ 19.\texttt{\texttt{x}e}e2 dxe2 20.\texttt{\texttt{f}f2}+] 16.\texttt{\texttt{h}h5} 17.\texttt{\texttt{g}g5} \texttt{\texttt{e}e8} 18.\texttt{\texttt{f}f4} \texttt{\texttt{g}g7} 19.\texttt{\texttt{x}x}x\texttt{g}g3 \texttt{\texttt{f}f5}?) 15...\texttt{\texttt{g}g7} (15...\texttt{h}h5 16.\texttt{\texttt{f}f4} \texttt{\texttt{h}h4} 17.\texttt{\texttt{f}f3} \texttt{\texttt{d}d5} 18.\texttt{\texttt{w}e}2 Threatening \texttt{\texttt{d}d5}. 18...\texttt{\texttt{c}c6} 19.\texttt{\texttt{h}h3} \texttt{\texttt{w}w}6 White is better as \texttt{\texttt{h}h6} and \texttt{\texttt{g}g5} are coming.) 16.\texttt{h}h3 \texttt{\texttt{f}f6} 17.\texttt{\texttt{h}h4} \texttt{\texttt{b}b8} 18.\texttt{\texttt{g}g5} \texttt{\texttt{e}e}5 19.\texttt{\texttt{f}f4} \texttt{\texttt{b}b8} Black can contemplate ...\texttt{\texttt{b}b2} now, which the passive 20.\texttt{\texttt{b}b1} would prevent for the moment. It is however not obvious
how White should continue; the chances are balanced.

14. \text{g5} \text{d7}

14...\text{e6} 15.\text{xe6 fxe6} 16.\text{f4}±

15.\text{f4}

15.\text{h1} \text{ac8} 16.\text{f4} \text{wc5} 17.\text{xf6} \text{xf6}

18.\text{d5} \text{e6}² Black had no problems in the game Vozovic – Nemcova, Ekaterinburg 2007.

15...\text{ac8} 16.\text{fe1}

16.\text{xf6} \text{xf6} 17.\text{d5} \text{wc5} 18.\text{xf6}² \text{fxf6}

Even though Black’s damaged structure makes a bad impression, I think it is solid enough.

16...\text{e5}

Probably best, since other options don’t look satisfactory:

16...\text{e5} 17.\text{h4} \text{fe8} 18.\text{e2} \text{e7} 19.\text{f3}±

16...\text{e5} 17.\text{xf6} \text{xf6} 18.\text{d5} \text{e6}² 19.\text{c3!}

\text{dxc3} 20.\text{bxc3}² Black’s lack of coordination should soon cost him an exchange.

17.\text{h4}

17.\text{xf6} \text{xf6} 18.\text{d5} \text{d8} 19.\text{f1} \text{e6}

20.\text{f4} \text{xd5} 21.\text{exd5} \text{e8}² White’s problem is that the b3-bishop is out of play.

17...\text{exf4} 18.\text{xf6} \text{xe6}² 19.\text{xe6}

19.\text{a3} \text{xf6} 20.\text{xf6} \text{b4} 21.\text{ef1} \text{xb3}

22.\text{xb3} \text{xa4} 23.\text{xb7} \text{xc2} 24.\text{xd4} \text{b8}

A draw looks the logical outcome.

19...\text{fxe6} 20.\text{gxg7} \text{xg7} 21.\text{e7}² \text{f7} 22.\text{xe6}

\text{xc2} 23.\text{e5!} \text{f3} 24.\text{xd6} \text{xd6} 25.\text{exd6} \text{xb2}

With a drawish endgame.

13...\text{h5} 14.\text{f3}

I much prefer the text move to the alternative.

14.\text{f4}

I dislike this move, even though Heberla opted for it the second time he faced this position.

14...\text{e6} 15.0-0

15.\text{h3} \text{e5}! (15...\text{e8} 16.0-0 \text{e5} 17.\text{f4}²= Bulski – Momeni, Yerevan 2007) 16.\text{f3}

15.\text{f3}² \text{e3!}

15...\text{d7} 16.\text{d2} \text{e5}!

16...\text{fe8} 17.\text{h3} \text{c5} 18.\text{g5} \text{c6}

(18...b5?! 19.axb5 \text{xb5} 20.\text{xa5}² Heberla – Calistri, France 2007)

17.\text{f3} \text{fe8}

Though this should objectively be unclear, I’d rather be Black here. Indeed, it is very difficult to find a plan for White.

14...\text{e5} 15.\text{f4} \text{e6} 16.0-0 \text{d7}

17.\text{h3}!?

Planning g2-g4 in the near future.

17.\text{d2} \text{fe8} 18.\text{h3} \text{h6} 19.\text{ad1} \text{d8}

20.\text{g3} \text{sh7} 21.\text{e2} \text{g7}² Heberla – Shirov, Warsaw 2006.

17...\text{h7}
The text move is more challenging than the alternatives:

17...hx6 18.g4 hx6 19.exf4 d5 20.exd3 e5 21.exd5 exf4 22.exh3

17...b4 18.g4 hxg4 19.fxg4 b5 20.h5 bxa4 21.hxg6 hxg6 22.exf4 23.exf4 exac8 24.f3! This position seems dangerous for Black.

18.g4!? I think this is the right way to proceed, even if it entails a significant amount of risk. The position has become very complicated, but in the game Stripunsky – Vigorito, Connecticut 2003, White won quite convincingly.

Conclusion

This chapter considers 4...g6 in reply to 2.dxc6 dxc6 3.b5 d4 4.c4. Black must avoid a lot of tricks early on, but if he does, then the critical position is reached after 5.d3 d5 6.exd4 exd4 7.xd4 8.e2 0–0 9.d3 d4 10.xb3 d6. Then the main lines are A) 11.h3, B) 11.0–0 and C) 11.xg3. The first two are interesting, but 11.xg3 is critical. If Black is accurate in reply then the result is rather unclear, but I prefer White's attacking prospects.

Overall, 4...g6 is not a bad move, but it is exceptionally difficult for Black to handle, which explains the greater popularity of the 4...e6 lines we will now study.
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.d4 c6 3.d5 d5 4.e4 e6

5.d3

A) 5...a6
B) 5....d7 6.xd4 cxd4 7.e2 c6 8.0-0
   B1) 8...c5
   B2) 8...g6
   B3) 8...e7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a6</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d7</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c5</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g6</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e7</td>
<td>362</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As mentioned above, the lines we will study in this chapter are A) 5...a6 and B) 5...e7.

A) 5...a6

With the simple idea of playing ...b5. However, 5...a6 fails to attack e4 so White can immediately get rid of the strong knight on d4.

6.exd4 cxd4 7.e2

After this retreat White can either try to push his f-pawn or play in the centre with c2-c3.
7...\textit{b5}

Black has a few alternatives:

a) 9.0-0

The logical move, which however doesn't give any advantage after the powerful reply:

9...d5! 10.exd5 \textit{cxd5} 11.c3

Also no solution is: 11.\textit{f4} \textit{xf4} 12.\textit{xf4} \textit{d6} 13.\textit{g4} (13.\textit{xd6} \textit{xd6} 14.\textit{f4} \textit{d7} 15.f5 (15.\textit{g4} 0-0?? [15...\textit{g8}?! 16.\textit{ae1} \textit{h8} Maiwald – C. Balogh, Austria 2005] 15...\textit{xf4} 16.\textit{e1} \textit{h8} 17.\textit{wh4} \textit{g8??} 18.\textit{xf4} 19.\textit{xf4} 0-0 15.\textit{a4} The position is equal).

11...\textit{exd5} 12.bxc5 \textit{bxc5} 13.\textit{xf4} \textit{d5} 14.\textit{xf4} \textit{cxd5} 15.\textit{a4} The position is equal.

b) 9.\textit{b3} d5!

In the case of 10.exd5 it's better to have castled instead of going 9.\textit{b3}.

10...\textit{g4} 11.\textit{f4}

11.\textit{f4}? \textit{h4} 12.g3 \textit{h3} 13.d2 \textit{h6} 14.\textit{g1} \textit{xe5+} Harcek – Nataf, Germany 2004.

11...\textit{f6}

11...\textit{xa5}+ 12.\textit{d2} (12.\textit{d2} \textit{xd2} 13.\textit{xd2} [13.\textit{xd2} \textit{xe5+} 13...\textit{xf2??} 12.\textit{f1} \textit{f6} 13.\textit{xf6} \textit{xf6} and the black position looks much more appealing to me!] 12...\textit{c7} 13.\textit{f4} h5 The position is double-edged.

12.\textit{xf6} \textit{xf6} 13.\textit{d2} 0-0 14.0-0 \textit{d7} 1 think Black is slightly better here.

c) 9.\textit{g5} \textit{h6}

9...\textit{d6} 10.\textit{b3} \textit{h6} 11.\textit{h4} \textit{d7} 12.c3?? \textit{dxc3} 13.bxc3 \textit{a7} (13...\textit{c8} 14.a4 0-0 15.0-0 Next a4-a5 and d3-d4. 13...\textit{g5} 14.\textit{g3} \textit{h5} 15.d4 \textit{dxe3} 16.\textit{xe3} \textit{a7} 17.a4) 14.0-0 \textit{e7} 15.a4 (15.\textit{xf6}?? \textit{xf6} 16.\textit{h1} \textit{h5} Zhao Jun – Nataf, Paris 2006) 15...0-0 (15...\textit{g5} 16.\textit{g3} \textit{h5} 17.d4 The position is balanced.) 16.a5 With an interesting middlegame in prospect.

10.\textit{h4} \textit{a5}?

10...\textit{d6} is a significant alternative:

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

a) 11.\textit{b3} transposes to 9...\textit{d6}.

b) 11.0-0 \textit{g5} 12.\textit{g3} \textit{h5}!! A valuable novelty.

(12...\textit{c7} 13.c3! [13.\textit{f4}! \textit{g4} Kornilov – Sazonova, Voronezh 2010] 13...\textit{dxc3} 14.\textit{xc3} I prefer the white position.) 13.\textit{f3}
(13.h4?! would fuel the enemy assault:
13...g4! 14.hxg5 hx4 15.f4 h3 Black holds a strong initiative. For instance:
16.gxh3 hxg1# 16.g3 hxg2 17.hxg2
hxh2 18.g1 hxh4 or 16.f2 e5 17.f3
And d7??) 13...d5! (Less convincing is:
13...h4 14.f4 The direct approach,
which however fails to reach its goal. 15.
This important defensive move saves White. [17.h3? b5!]
17...e5 18.d3 hxh2 19.gxh2 hxg2 20.h2
The attack has come to a dead end.) 14.exd5
(14.f3 dxe4 15.fxe4 g4 16.f2 h4 17.h3
hxg3 18.hxg4 d6??) 14...dxd5 15.d4
hxd4 16.e3 h4 17.e4 g6 18.f4 b4
19.dxe5 &c5 With a balanced position.

11.c3 dxc3 12.dxc3
An attempt at improving over 12.bxc3 d5!
(less effective is 12...e5? 13.d3 d6 14-0
d7 15.f3 c8 16.h1 0-0-0 Hou Yifan
Ferro Baquerer, Jermuk 2010, or 12...g5
13.g3 c5 14.f4 c3 15.d3 d6! 13.fx6
(13.exd5 0xd5 14.c2 d7??) 13...dxc4
14.exg7 &g6 15.d4 &xg7 16.dxc5 &xc5
17.0-0 &d7 18.dxe2 0-0-0 19.d7f1 In this unclear position I don't think Black is
any worse.

10...d4
White has a tricky alternative:
10...d2??
Not obvious, but it contains some venom.
8...c5 9.0-0 &e7 10.b4!
An interesting way to gain the initiative.
10...xb4
10...b6 11.a4 &b7 12.axb5 axb5 13.b2
11.cxd4 &d6!
This novelty appears more appropriate than
11...c5 12.b2 0-0 13.wh5, when I prefer
White's position, Marholev - Meynard,
Villeneuve Tolosane 2006.
12.b2 &g6
And now either 13.wh5 &b7 or 13.a4 b4
14.c3 0-0 15.cxb4 &xb4 16.f4 d6. In both
cases the position is murky and anything can
happen.

8...d2
Instead 8...b6 9.0-0 &e7 10.d3 &b7
11.wel is a flexible way to handle the position.
Indeed, White keeps the option of playing
both on the queenside (the queen is eyeing the a5-square) and on the kingside, by means of f3 (or f4) and then \( \text{g3} \) (1.f4?! is countered by 11...\( \text{f5} \)). 11...h6 12.\( \text{d} \)2 a5 13.a4 b4 14.\( \text{c} \)4 \( \text{b} \)8 15.c3! And White took the initiative in the game Cornette – Bellaiche, France 2003.

9.d3 \( \text{c} \)5
9...d5?! deserves serious attention, so let’s have a look:

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
& a & b & c & d & e & f & g & h \\
1 & 10.\text{e}5 & \text{c}5 & 11.0-0 & (11.\text{f}4 \text{\textbf{h}6}) & 11...\text{e}7 \\
& & & & (11...\text{\textbf{c}7} & 12.\text{f}4 \text{e}7 & 13.\text{g}3 \text{g}6 & 14.\text{d}2 \text{h}5\text{=} \\
2 & 12.\text{f}4? (12.\text{f}4 \text{\textbf{f}5}) & 12...0-0 & 13.\text{g}4 \text{c}7 & 14.\text{e}1 & \text{The position is unclear, but I sense that White could potentially grab the initiative.}
\end{array}
\]

a) 10.e5 \( \text{c} \)5 11.0-0 (11.\text{f}4 \text{\textbf{h}6}) 11...\text{e}7
11...\text{c}7 12.\text{f}4 \text{e}7 13.\text{g}3 \text{g}6 14.\text{d}2 \text{h}5\text{=}
12.\text{f}4? (12.\text{f}4 \text{\textbf{f}5}) 12...0-0 13.\text{g}4 \text{c}7 & 14.\text{e}1 & \text{The position is unclear, but I sense that White could potentially grab the initiative.}

b) 10.0-0 dxe4 11.dxe4 \( \text{\textbf{c}x} \)4 12.\text{d}x\text{d}4 \text{\textbf{f}6} looks okay for Black. For example: 13.\text{g}5
(13.a4 \( \text{c} \)5 14.\text{\textbf{e}3} \text{\textbf{b}6} 15.a\text{x}\text{b}5 0-0\text{=})
13...\text{c}5 14.c3 0-0 15.\text{e}1 \text{g}6=\text{c}

c) 10.\text{d}x\text{d}5 \( \text{\textbf{e}x} \)\text{d}5 11.0-0
11.\text{d}x\text{d}4 \text{\textbf{x}g}2 12.\text{\textbf{g}1} \text{\textbf{b}7} 13.\text{e}3
(13.\text{\textbf{e}x} \text{e}6? \text{f}x\text{e}6 14.\text{\textbf{h}5} \text{\textbf{d}7}) 13...\text{e}7 & \text{With a double-edged position.}
11...\text{\textbf{e}b}3
11...\text{\textbf{a}b}7 12.a4 \text{\textbf{f}6} 13.\text{axb}5 \text{axb}5 14.\text{\textbf{b}8} \text{ax}\text{a}8 15.\text{\textbf{d}2} \text{And I prefer White after the manoeuvre \textbf{g}5-h4.}
12.\text{axb}3 \text{\textbf{f}6} 13.\text{c}4 \text{dxc}3 14.\text{\textbf{b}xc}3 \text{\textbf{d}6} 15.\text{c}4
0-0 16.\text{\textbf{a}b}2
This may be slightly in White’s favour.

10.0-0
Instead, if one wishes to play c2-c3 then this is the right moment: 10.c3?! \text{dxc}3 11.\text{bxc}3 \text{\textbf{e}7} (11...\text{f}6 12.0-0 0-0 13.\text{d}4 \text{\textbf{e}7} 14.\text{f}3\text{=})
12.0-0 0-0 13.\text{d}4 \text{\textbf{b}6} 14.\text{\textbf{g}3} \text{g}8\text{=} Even though White has firm control over the centre, I think the position is balanced. Black can target the c3-pawn, and/or counter-strike with ...f7-f5 or with ...d7-d5, Glek – Kaenel, Lugano 2008.

10...\text{\textbf{e}7}
A critical position.

11.\text{\textbf{g}3}
If 11.f4 then 11...f5! is the best reaction in my opinion. (11...\text{\textbf{c}6} 12.f5 \text{\textbf{h}4} 13.\text{\textbf{f}4} \text{g}6\text{=} Smirin – Radjabov, Odessa 2007) 12.\text{g}3 0-0
13.\text{e}1 \text{\textbf{c}7} 14.\text{\textbf{d}2} a5 15.a4 b4 And the position is even better for Black.

11...0-0
Also played has been 11...\text{\textbf{g}6}? 12.\text{\textbf{h}5}\text{=} followed by f2-f4, E. Paehz – E. Jiretorn, Fuegen 2006, and 11...\text{\textbf{c}7} 12.\text{\textbf{g}4}? \text{g}6
(12...\text{\textbf{g}6} 13.\text{f}4\text{=} 13.\text{\textbf{g}5}\text{=} Iuldachev – Situru, Kuala Lumpur 2010.

12.\text{\textbf{h}5}
12.\text{\textbf{g}4} \text{\textbf{h}8} 13.a4 (13.\text{\textbf{d}2} f5 14.\text{\textbf{f}5}\text{=} 13...\text{b}4 14.\text{\textbf{h}5} \text{\textbf{g}6} 15.\text{\textbf{g}3} f5 16.\text{f}3 \text{f}x\text{e}4 17.\text{\textbf{g}5} \text{\textbf{b}8}=)
12...Ec8
The position offers mutual chances; Black will continue with ...g7-g6 and then ...f7-f5.

B) 5...Ed7

8...Ed4
Of course White makes this exchange before Black has played ...Ec6.

6...Exd4 7.De2 Ec6 8.0-0
8.d3 will usually transpose, but allows the additional possibility of 8...b5?.

Now there are three main options: B1) 8...Ec5, B2) 8...g6 and B3) 8...Ec7.

B1) 8...Ec5 9.d3 0-0
9...d5?! I think this move is simply bad when the f2-pawn is still on its initial square. Indeed, White can then use the f4-square for his bishop or his knight. 10.exd5 exd5 11.Ed3 0-0 12.Ef4 Ed7 13.Ee1† Najer - A. Kharlov, Internet 2004.

9...Da5
Black grabs the bishop pair, but that doesn't mean the end of his opening problems.
10.a3!
Threatening to save the bishop or to play b2-b4.
10...Exc4 11.dxc4 e5
11...Dc6 12.Ed3! (a sizable improvement over 12.b4 d3! as in G. Xie - J. Obst, Canberra 2006) 12...a5 (12...0-0 13.b4±) 13.c3 dxc3 14.Exc3 Followed by Ec3. In the event of the dark-squared bishops being swapped, the knight will be stronger than the c8-bishop.
12.c3
12.b4 Ec7 13.c3 a5! was O. Bitti - L. Lenic, Nova Gorica 2007.
12...dxc3

13.b4!
A good novelty! In comparison with 12.b4, White has avoided an important line.
13...\&e7 14.\&xc3 d6
14...a5 15.\&d5±
15.\&e3 0-0 16.\&d5
White enjoys a fine edge here: more space, better pieces and the possibility of going f2-f4.

10.\&d2!
In my view this is White’s best bet, completing development without allowing ...b5. For example, 10.\&b3 is also possible but then I don’t like letting Black play 10...b5?.

10...d5
Another way to fight for the centre is:
10...
This should be answered by the thematic;
11.f3!
Indeed, White will maintain his pawn on e4, and with f2-f3 he also acquires the option of transferring his queen to the kingside, via e1. After 11.exf5?! d5! 12.\&b3 \&xf5 Black had no problem in Matras – V. Georgiev, Bergen 2001.
11...h8 12.\&e1 e5 13.\&b4 \&b6 14.a4

10...\&c7 11.\&f4 d5 12.exd5 \&xd5 13.\&xd5 exd5 14.\&b3 a5 15.a4 \&e8 16.f4? Followed by f4-f5 and \&f3.

On 10...a6 White would of course reply 11.a4 in order to prevent ...b5.

11.exd5 exd5 12.\&b3 \&g4 13.h3 \&e6
Black must avoid 13...\&h5? as after 14.g4 \&g6 15.\&f4± the d5-pawn is lost.

14.\&f4 \&d7 15.\&f3
White is better because of the pressure against the d5-pawn, Najer – Strupinsky, New York 2002.

B2) 8...g6
Playing both ...e6 and ...g6 looks suspicious to me.

9.d3 \&g7 10.\&f4
The most logical in my opinion; White will play on the dark squares.

10...d6
13.\texttt{ex}c3 \texttt{a6} 14.\texttt{a4} \texttt{b6} 15.\texttt{eac}1 \texttt{b7} 16.\texttt{a2} \texttt{e7} 17.\texttt{d4}

White was clearly better in N. Kosintseva - Brodsky, Biel 2004.

12.\texttt{h6}

It is logical to exchange Black's most active piece.

12...\texttt{e8}

Or 12...\texttt{d7} 13.\texttt{xg}7 \texttt{g7} 14.\texttt{a4}, followed by b2-b4, leaves White with a small advantage.

13.\texttt{xg}7 \texttt{g7}

This excellent move wins some space.

14.\texttt{b4}

This move is my preference now. The difference between this line and 8...\texttt{c}5 is that the d4-pawn would be hanging after ...\texttt{a}5.

10.\texttt{b3}

10.f4 I don't like this move because of: 10...f5 (10...d5 11.exd5 exd5 12.\texttt{b3} f5!! also gains Black a solid position) 11.exf5 d5 12.\texttt{b3} \texttt{xf5}

In my view, the pawn is misplaced on f4.

10...\texttt{b6}

This seems the best option available for Black.

10...\texttt{d5}?! 11.exd5 exd5 12.\texttt{f4}+, Najer - Fetczer, Mainz 2008.

10...\texttt{h8} Planning to quickly play ...\texttt{f7-f5}. White can continue: 11.\texttt{d2} f5 12.\texttt{f3}? New. I think keeping the centre intact and rapidly playing ...\texttt{e}1 is White's most promising plan.

10...\texttt{b5} 11.\texttt{f4} \texttt{a5}

11...\texttt{d5}?! 12.exd5 exd5 13.\texttt{f5}+ White has good attacking chances.

11...\texttt{b4} A strange way to play. 12.\texttt{f5} \texttt{a5} 13.\texttt{a4}! \texttt{b7} 14.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{e}5 (14...\texttt{g}5 15.\texttt{h}5 \texttt{xc}1 16.\texttt{xc}1) 15.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{f}6 16.\texttt{xe}5 \texttt{xe}5 17.\texttt{g}4 White has a strong initiative, Guidarelli - Charalbashev, Opatija 2003.

12.\texttt{h1}

White has tried various approaches in this critical position.

B3) 8...\texttt{e}7 9.\texttt{d3} 0–0
Now the d4-pawn is threatened for real.
Instead 12...\texttt{c} \texttt{c} 13.\texttt{f} \texttt{f} 14.\texttt{c} \texttt{c} 15.\texttt{e} \texttt{e}, which looks roughly equal.

12...\texttt{d} 12...\texttt{f} 13.\texttt{f} \texttt{f} 14.\texttt{g} \texttt{g}?
12...\texttt{x} \texttt{x} 13.axb3 \texttt{b} \texttt{b} 14.\texttt{c} \texttt{c} 15.\texttt{g} \texttt{g} 16.\texttt{f} \texttt{f}! This is Black's best set-up, making it difficult for his rival to continue the attack, Najer – Yuferov, Moscow 1999.

13.\texttt{d} 14.\texttt{a} \texttt{a} 15.\texttt{d} \texttt{d} 16.dxe4
Even if Black can claim some compensation, White's extra pawn is more significant.

11.\texttt{f} \texttt{f}
Najer has twice played this position.

12.\texttt{h} \texttt{h} 12...\texttt{g} 13.\texttt{a} \texttt{a}! This is Black's best set-up, making it difficult for his rival to continue the attack, Najer – Yuferov, Moscow 1999.

12...\texttt{h} 12...\texttt{h} 14.\texttt{f} \texttt{f} 15.\texttt{f} \texttt{f}! 16.\texttt{g} \texttt{g} 17.axb3.

13.\texttt{d} \texttt{d} It's time to react.

14.\texttt{x} \texttt{x} 15.\texttt{c} \texttt{c} 16.axb3 17.\texttt{f} \texttt{f} So far we have been following Najer – Rowson, Zagan 1997.

17...\texttt{c}!
An improvement on the quoted game. Following:

18.\texttt{c} 19.\texttt{x} \texttt{x} 20.\texttt{d} \texttt{d} White is a pawn up but Black has definite compensation due to his pair of bishops.

Conclusion

This chapter covers Black's minor replies to 2.\texttt{c} \texttt{c} 3.\texttt{b} \texttt{b} 4.\texttt{d} \texttt{d} 5.\texttt{f} \texttt{f}, in particular 5...\texttt{a} \texttt{a} and 5...\texttt{e} \texttt{e}. Both these lines have lesser reputations than 5...\texttt{f} \texttt{f} (which we shall study next). In the case of 5...\texttt{e} \texttt{e} this reputation appears warranted as White has good chances of gaining an advantage. However, 5...\texttt{a} \texttt{a} is a tougher proposition. White has many interesting options, but the resulting positions are merely unclear.
Matthieu Cornette

4. \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}4} e6 5. \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash f}3} – 5... \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash f}6} 6.0–0

\textbf{Variation Index}

1.e4 c5 2.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}3} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}6} 3.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash b}5} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}4} 4.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}4} e6 5.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash f}3} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash f}6}!

\begin{itemize}
  \item A) 6...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}7}!?
  \item B) 6...a6
    \begin{itemize}
      \item B1) 7.a4
      \item B2) 7.d3
        \begin{itemize}
          \item B21) 7...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}7}!?
          \item B22) 7.b5 8.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash b}3} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}b}3 9.axb3 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash b}7}10.e5! \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}5} 11.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}4}
          \item B221) 11...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash f}5}
          \item B222) 11...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}7}
        \end{itemize}
    \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

\begin{tabular}{ll}
A) & 366 \hline
B) & 367 \hline
B1) & 368 \hline
B2) & 369 \hline
B21) & 370 \hline
B22) & 372 \hline
B221) & 374 \hline
B222) & 375 \hline
\end{tabular}
Chapter 17 - 4.\textit{c}4 \textit{e}6 5.\textit{\textit{d}}\textit{f}3 - 5...\textit{\textit{g}}6 6.0-0

1.\textit{e}4 \textit{c}5 2.\textit{\textit{d}}\textit{c}3 \textit{\textit{c}}\textit{c}6 3.\textit{\textit{b}}\textit{b}5 \textit{\textit{g}}\textit{d}4 4.\textit{\textit{c}}\textit{c}4 \textit{e}6 5.\textit{\textit{d}}\textit{f}3

In this chapter we study Black's most respected reply to the 5.\textit{\textit{d}}\textit{f}3 system:

5...\textit{\textit{f}}\textit{f}6!

This move is considered best. Its idea is to discourage White from taking on d4 because the e4-pawn would be en prise.

6.0-0

The main option. Instead 6.d3 is strongly met by: 6...\textit{d}5! 7.\textit{\textit{b}}\textit{b}3 \textit{\textit{e}}\textit{e}7 I prefer this move over an immediate liquidation with ...\textit{\textit{x}}\textit{b}3(\textit{f}3) or ...\textit{x}4. 8.0-0 0-0 9.\textit{\textit{g}}\textit{g}5 \textit{\textit{x}}\textit{b}3 10.axb3 \textit{h}6 11.\textit{\textit{h}}\textit{h}4 \textit{d}4 12.\textit{\textit{e}}\textit{e}2 \textit{b}6 The position was equal in Nevednichy - Stiri, Kavala 2009.

Black now has two main ways to continue: A) 6...\textit{\textit{c}}\textit{c}7 and B) 6...\textit{a}6. But first I should mention a move Black should most certainly avoid:

6...\textit{d}5?

This logical move is in fact a big mistake. This opening trap has brought White many wins...

7.\textit{\textit{x}}\textit{d}5 \textit{\textit{x}}\textit{d}5

This all looks fine, but White has a nice combination.
A) 6... \$c7

The idea is to prevent the advance e4-e5 while still hindering the swap \$xd4. Indeed, after ...xd4 both the c3-knight and the c4-bishop would be attacked. This move isn't stupid at all, but I prefer to wait one more move before playing ...\$c7, thus limiting White's choice.

7.h3

The alternative is:

7.d3 \$g4

7...a6 will transpose into the 6...a6 and 7...\$c7 line considered below.

8.g3 \$xf3†

The aggressive 8...h5?! is misguided: 9.\$xd4 cxd4 10.\$b5! \$b6 11.a4! Black is in trouble, San Emeterio Cabanes - Garcia Garcia, Palencia 2003.

9.\$xf3 \$e5 10.\$e2

10...\$xc4

10...\$e7 11.f4 \$xc4 12.dxc4 b6 13.f5! \$b7

14.\$f4 \$c6 (after 14...e5 15.\$e3 White has an obvious plus due to the weak d5-square) And now 15.\$e5‡ improves on 15.\$d5 as played in Elliott – Charbonneau, Dresden (ol) 2008.

10...a6 11.a4 transposes to 6...a6 and 7...\$c7.

11.dxc4 d6 12.\$e4 \$c6 13.\$fd1 \$e7 14.\$d3 White exerts some pressure.

7...a6 8.a4

In the event of 8.d3 b5 9.\$b3 \$c6?! 10.\$e1 \$d6 11.\$e2 \$e5 the "white specialist" of this variation had no problem with the black pieces and eventually won in Meinhardt – Tiviakov, Vlissingen 2007.

I don't like 8.\$e1 and after 8...b5 9.\$f1 \$xf3† 10.\$xf3 \$b7 11.d3 \$d6 12.\$e3 \$e5 Black is fine, Argandona Riveiro – Narciso Dublan, Donostia 2008.

8...b6?! I am keen on this idea; soon both black bishops will be strong.

a) 8...h5 9.d3 \$xf3† 10.\$xf3 \$d6 11.\$e1 \$h2† The start of a curious plan; Black is playing with only three pieces... 12.\$h1 \$e5
13...\(\text{g}4\) 14.\(\text{g}1\) \(\text{h}2\) + 15.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{e}5\) 16.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{xc}4\) 17.\(\text{xc}4\) \(\text{e}5\) 18.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{d}6\) 19.\(\text{a}4\) Tiviakov – Scheble, Belgium 2003.

b) 8...\(\text{e}7\) The standard move, 9.\(\text{d}3\) (9.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{d}6\) 10.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{c}6\) 11.\(\text{f}4\) 0–0 12.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{b}6\) – A. Orlov – Frolyanov, Kavala 2008.) 9...0–0 10.\(\text{a}2\) \(\text{c}6\) The simplest solution in my view; Black will follow up with ...\(\text{d}6\) and then ...\(\text{d}7\). Though the position is balanced, it becomes difficult to find a constructive plan for White. Instead 10...\(\text{d}6\) 11.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{cxd}4\) 12.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{c}5\) 13.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{dxc}3\) 14.\(\text{bxc}3\) was slightly better for White in G. Jones – Zinchenko, Internet 2009.

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

10.\(\text{a}2\)

After this move White is finally ready to take on \(\text{d}4\).

a) 10.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{d}6\)! (more interesting than the tame 10...\(\text{e}7\) 11.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{xf}3\) + 12.\(\text{xf}3\) \(\text{h}2\) + 13.\(\text{h}1\) \(\text{e}5\) The game is balanced, however I would prefer to play Black in this kind of position.

b) 10.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{cxd}4\) 11.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{xe}4\)! 12.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{f}6\) 13.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{c}5\) And once again I'd rather be Black, D. Ciric – Eljanov, Biel 2004.

c) 10.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{xf}3\) + 11.\(\text{xf}3\) \(\text{d}6\)!

10...\(\text{xf}3\) + 11.\(\text{xf}3\) \(\text{e}7\)

Installing the bishop on the e5-square with 11...\(\text{d}6\)? is always very interesting to me. 12.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{e}5\) 13.\(\text{f}4\) What else? 13...\(\text{d}4\) + 14.\(\text{h}1\) 0–0 15.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{xc}3\) 16.\(\text{bxc}3\) \(\text{d}5\) 17.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 18.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{b}7\) 19.\(\text{b}2\) The position is about equal.

12.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{d}6\) 13.\(\text{e}2\)

13...0–0

With no apparent weakness in either camp, the game is about level. Instead 13...\(\text{c}6\) would allow 14.\(\text{e}5\)! For example: 14...\(\text{dxe}5\) 15.\(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{b}7\) 16.\(\text{f}4\)? Naturally followed by \(\text{f}5\).

B) 6...\(\text{a}6\)

13...0–0

With no apparent weakness in either camp, the game is about level. Instead 13...\(\text{c}6\) would allow 14.\(\text{e}5\)! For example: 14...\(\text{dxe}5\) 15.\(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{b}7\) 16.\(\text{f}4\)? Naturally followed by \(\text{f}5\).
Black is planning ...b7-b5 or ...d7-d5 if White answers with 7.a2-a4. Now the main lines are B1) 7.a4 and B2) 7.d3, but first there is a minor line to consider:

7.e5
I never trusted this move because of the reply:
7...d5! 8.exf6 dxc4 9.fxg7 hxg7 10.d3 cxd3

White has a choice to make:

a) 11.cxd3 d7 12.\textit{e}e4 c6 13.\textit{xd}d4 \textit{xd}d4!
14.\textit{g}g5
14.\textit{h}h1?! \textit{xd}5\textsuperscript{+} Shkuro – Zubarev, Evpatoria 2003.
14...\textit{xd}5 15.\textit{xc}1
15.\textit{f}f6 \textit{g}g8 16.\textit{xc}1 transposes to 15.\textit{xc}1.
15...\textit{e}g8! 16.\textit{xc}5
16.\textit{xf}xg2\textsuperscript{+} A powerful novelty. 17.\textit{g}xg2 \textit{xf}x6\textsuperscript{+} Followed by ...0–0–0 and ...d4. I strongly prefer Black's position!
16...\textit{xc}5!
This beautiful queen sacrifice is a big improvement over 16...\textit{xa}2? 17.\textit{c}c1 as in Zubarev – Aguettaz, Kharkov 2006.
17.\textit{f}f6\textsuperscript{+} d8 18.\textit{xd}d5\textsuperscript{+} \textit{g}xg5 19.\textit{f}f4 \textit{d}d6
20.\textit{xe}x6\textsuperscript{+}
What else?
20...\textit{xe}6
Black is clearly on top!

b) 11.\textit{xd}d3 \textit{d}d7

The bishop will be perfect on c6.
12.\textit{xd}d4 \textit{xd}d4!
12...\textit{xd}d4 13.\textit{g}g3! is dangerous for Black after \textit{c}c4 and/or \textit{g}g5.
13.\textit{xc}3 \textit{c}c6 14.\textit{xd}d4
14.\textit{b}b6? Followed by ...0–0–0, when I prefer Black's position, Zeidler – R. Jones, Swansea 2003.
14...\textit{xd}d4!
Black is absolutely fine.

B1) 7.a4
Stopping ...b7-b5, but now Black can safely play his central break:

7...d5!
7...\textit{c}c7 is likely to transpose to one of the lines examined under 6...\textit{c}c7.

8.exd5 exd5

9.a2
This time the sacrifice doesn't work because the b5-square is under control.
9.\textit{xd}d5?
After the sequence of moves:
9...\textit{xd}d5 10.\textit{xd}d4 \textit{xd}d4 11.\textit{h}h5 \textit{e}e6 12.\textit{e}e1 \textit{g}g4!
13.\textit{b}b5\textsuperscript{+} is now impossible, so White must go for:
13.\textit{xe}x7\textsuperscript{+} \textit{e}e7 14.\textit{xe}x7\textsuperscript{+} \textit{xe}x7 15.\textit{xe}x7 \textit{g}g6?
Instead 9...d3 would scare nobody. 9...c6! 10.e2 d4 11.d1 d6+ Iuldachev – Deepan Chakkravarthy, Mumbai 2009.

9.e1! ?? e7! 10.e2 This looks ugly but after any other move ...g4 is possible, while 10...xd5? transposes to 9...xd5.

9...g4
After 9...xf3? 10.xf3 c6 11.d3 e7 12.g5+= Black has some problems defending the d5-pawn, Turov – P. Smirnov, Internet 2004.

10.e1†
Only move.

10.e7 11.d4 cxd4 12.e2
12.h3 xh3!

12...d3!
Designed to destroy White's pawn structure.

13.cxd3 0–0=
There are 6 games in my database featuring this position. Black always enjoys good compensation for the pawn, even though the results have been mixed.

B2) 7.d3

The principled move. As practice has shown, Black could quickly get the upper hand otherwise. Before we get to the main moves, let’s revisit our favourite trap:

"...d5?"
Once again this is bad. To figure out if the combination works or not, you just have to check if ...f4 is possible at the end of the combination. Here it isn't.

8.exd5 cxd5 9.xd5 cxd5 10.xd4 cxd4 11.h5 e6
Or 11...e7, which leaves Black in a hopeless position after 12.xf7† d7 13.e1.

12.e1 e7 13.xe6 g6 14.xd5 xe6
14...xd5 15..ex7?!
15.xe6+=
White already has two pawns for the exchange while his initiative is still raging.
After 7.d3 Black has two main moves: B21) 7...c7?! and B22) 7...b5.

B21) 7...c7?!

I really like this line for Black.

8.\(\mathcal{D}\)xd4
An alternative to consider is 8.a4:

8...c6 9.g5? A very interesting idea, leaving the path free for the f-pawn. 9...h6 10.h3 d6 11.f4 b6 12.f5 White had seized the initiative in the game Carlsson – Nijboer, Wijk aan Zee 2008.

b) 8...\(\mathcal{D}\)g4
The most common move.
9.g3 \(\mathcal{D}\)xf3†
9...h5? 10.\(\mathcal{D}\)xf3

10...\(\mathcal{E}\)e5 10...h5 11.\(\mathcal{D}\)e2! (11.\(\mathcal{D}\)f4 d6 12.\(\mathcal{D}\)b3 \(\mathcal{D}\)d7 13.\(\mathcal{D}\)e2 \(\mathcal{D}\)e7 14.\(\mathcal{D}\)ad1 \(\mathcal{D}\)e5 15.\(\mathcal{D}\)e3 \(\mathcal{D}\)c6 I think Black is completely fine, T. Petrosian – Van Wely, Internet 2004) 11...\(\mathcal{D}\)e5 (11...d6 12.\(\mathcal{D}\)f4) 12.\(\mathcal{D}\)xc4 13.\(\mathcal{D}\)xc4 h4 14.g4 I prefer White since f4-f5 is coming.

11.\(\mathcal{D}\)e2 b6 11...\(\mathcal{D}\)e7 12.a2 0-0 13.\(\mathcal{D}\)e3 \(\mathcal{D}\)c6 14.f4 \(\mathcal{D}\)d4 Intending \(\mathcal{D}\)d1 and c2-c3. The game is very unclear, Kovalevskaya – Xu Yuhua, Shanghai 2001.

12.\(\mathcal{D}\)e3
12.a2 \(\mathcal{D}\)e7 13.f4 \(\mathcal{D}\)c6 14.\(\mathcal{D}\)g4 \(\mathcal{D}\)f6 (after 14...0-0 15.f5 \(\mathcal{D}\)e5 16.\(\mathcal{D}\)h5 \(\mathcal{D}\)b7 17.\(\mathcal{D}\)f4 \(\mathcal{D}\)f6 18.\(\mathcal{D}\)e2 I think White has decent attacking chances) 15.e5 h5 16.\(\mathcal{D}\)e4 \(\mathcal{D}\)e7 17.\(\mathcal{D}\)e4 \(\mathcal{D}\)b7 18.c3 f6! (18...g6?! Stavrev – Ninov, Plovdiv 2004) 19.\(\mathcal{D}\)xf6 gxf6 20.f5 \(\mathcal{D}\)e5 21.\(\mathcal{D}\)e2 c4! In this very complicated position I fancy Black’s prospects.

12.\(\mathcal{D}\)b7 13.\(\mathcal{D}\)b3 \(\mathcal{D}\)e7 14.f4 \(\mathcal{D}\)c6 15.\(\mathcal{D}\)f2
With mutual chances.

c) 8...\(\mathcal{D}\)d6? 8...\(\mathcal{D}\)d6? As seen already, this “anti-classical” move is a frequent guest in this type of position.

9.h3 9.g3 Maybe the best move... 9...b6 10.\(\mathcal{E}\)e3 (10.\(\mathcal{D}\)xd4 cxd4 11.\(\mathcal{D}\)e2 \(\mathcal{D}\)xe4! Of course) 10...\(\mathcal{D}\)xf3† 11.\(\mathcal{D}\)xf3 \(\mathcal{D}\)b7 12.\(\mathcal{D}\)e2 \(\mathcal{D}\)e5 13.\(\mathcal{D}\)f4 \(\mathcal{D}\)d4= The position is complex but Black's chances don't seem worse.
9...b6! 10...c3
10...xd4 exd4 11...e2 0xe4! As usual.

10...xd4 cxd4 11...e2 0xe4! As usual.

If 10...xd4 0xe6 11.b3 0xd6 and after ...b7-b5 Black will be fine.

10...xd4 0xe6 11.b3
11...xd4 e5?! (11...e7 12.b3 0xe7 13.b2
0-0 14.g4 f6 15.c4 b6= Guerrero Olmos
13.gel 0xe7 14.b3 0xc6 15.c4 0-0 16.a3
data=) 12...0xe4 13.a6+ 0xd6 14.gxd6 f6
15.f4 White seems to have the initiative, but
his opponent will create some threats with
his next two moves. 15...b5 16.b2 0xb7
17.a2 0xc6 18.0xc6= Anand - Ivanchuk,
Moscow 2001.

11...e7
11...d6? 12.0xd4 b5 13.a3 0xb7 14.hd1
f6 15.c4± Ni Hua - Banikas, Beijing 2008.

12.b2 0xd6
12...0c5 13.0xd4 0-0 14.c4 d6 15.b2 b6
Skripchenko - Dembo, Plovdiv 2003.

Black was fine in the game Kuling -
Venkaresh, Groningen 2008.

10...xd4 9.a2 0xe4
Quite to the point, even though 9...0d6?! was successfully employed by Avrukh against
Tissir, back in 2005.

10...xf3! 11.xf3 0xb7 12.gd1 0-0 13.b2
0xe7
13...0c5 also deserved serious
consideration.

14.a2 d5 15.exd5 exd5 16.d4 c4 17...e3
da7
Black was fine in the game Kuling -
Venkaresh, Groningen 2008.

8...xd4 9.a2 0xe4
Quite to the point, even though 9...0d6?! was successfully employed by Avrukh against
Tissir, back in 2005.

10...xf3! 11.xf3 0xb7 12.gd1 0-0 13.b2
0xe7
13...0c5 also deserved serious
consideration.

14.a2 d5 15.exd5 exd5 16.d4 c4 17...e3
da7
Black was fine in the game Kuling -
Venkaresh, Groningen 2008.

10...xd4 11.dxe4 0xd6
11...e5 12.c3 dxc3 13.bxc3 0xe6 14...e3
da7 15...a4 0d7 16...b3= Followed by 0d5
and Black will have to address the threat of
0b6, Vehi Bach - Simonet Pons, Spain 2003.

12.h3 e5 13.c3 dxc3
13...0c6 14...d3 dxc3 15.bxc3 0e6
16...d1 0-0-0 17...e3± This is of course
not so much, but I think White has chances
to be a little bit better due to the rather bad
d6-bishop. In addition his king will be safer
than its counterpart, N. Mitkov - Van Wely,
Mallorca 2004.

14...e6 0xe6 15...e3 da8 16...d5
16...a5 17...d5 0xd5 18.exd5= If

10...xc3 0xe6 15...e3 da8 16...d5
16...a5 17...d5 0xd5 18.exd5= If
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

White is compelled to take on d5 with a pawn
I don't think he can be better.

16...c4!
A refinement over 16...d7, which proved insufficient to equalize: 17.d3 0-0 (Or 17...xd5 18.xd5 b8 19.b3† when it's a case of a good bishop against a bad one. In N. Mitev - Ibarra Chami, Monterrey 2010, White won quite easily.) 18.fd1 Black should manage to defend, but not without suffering a bit.

17.g5! f6 18.xf6
18.xf6† is worse: 18...gx6 19.xf6 g8! 20.xd8 xe4 21.f3 b4† The bishop has no square to escape! Black will remain with two bishops for a rook and a pawn, but his somewhat exposed king renders the conversion of the advantage difficult. 22.a3 c5† 23.h1 exd8 24.b1 wb6†

18...gx6 19.h5† e7 20.xf6† e7
21.xg5 h6
21...e6? 22.g4† d7 23.a1 e6 24.f1† e8 25.xd8† xd8 26.g7 e8 27.xh7 The position is messy.

22.d5† e8 23.f6† b8 24.h7† e8
25.f6†=

B22) 7...b5
Black's most frequent reply.

8.b3 xb3 9.axb3
White is threatening to take the pawn on b5.

9...b7
9...b4
A very rare move. In reply to it:
10.a4? is the most logical in my view, even though nobody had tried it. Instead 10.e5 bxc3 11.exf6 xf6 12.bxc3 db7 results in a good position for Black.

10...e7
10...d6 11.e5! (11.d4?! xe4!) 11...dxe5 12.xe5 db7 13.db4† 10...db7 11.e5 db5 Transposes to 9...db7 and then 10...b4. -

11.e5 db5 12.c4
12.c4 db4 13.db4 f6! A good move, challenging the centre.

12.db3 13.db3 db7 14.db2 wa5 15.db2 dc7 16.b4 db4 17.db4 cxd4 18.xd4
I think White is slightly better here.

10.e5 db5
Heading for the centre is natural, but there is another way:
10...\(\text{Q}g4\)
This move impressed me after my friend Maze lost against it, but I finally came to the conclusion that White can play for an edge.

11.h3!
This was the novelty I found at that time.
a) 11...\(\text{Q}e4\) \(\text{W}c7\) 12...\(\text{Q}f4\) \(f5\) 13...\(\text{Q}x\text{e}2\) \(\text{W}c6\) 14.h3 g5! with a strong attack! Maze – Jankovic, Zemplinska Sirava 2004.
b) 11...\(\text{Q}e1\) \(d6\) 12...\(\text{Q}f4\) \(\text{dxe}5\) 13...\(\text{Q}x\text{e}5\) \(\text{Q}f6\) 14.Wc2 (14...\(\text{Q}g4?!\)) 14...\(\text{Q}e7\) 15...\(\text{Q}e4\) 0–0= Solak – Cheparinov, Mallorca 2004.

11...\(\text{Q}x\text{f}3\) 12.Wxf3 \(\text{Q}x\text{e}5\)

13...\(\text{Q}b7\)!
The point of White's play.

13...Wc8
13...\(\text{Q}c7\) 14...\(\text{Q}x\text{b}5\) 0–0 15.Wxa6 \(\text{B}b8\)
16.Wc4 \(\text{Q}c6\) (16...\(\text{Q}xb5\) 17.Wxe5\(\text{Q}\)) 17.c4
The position remains rather complicated but White is a pawn up... A good start towards victory!

14.Wxc8\(\text{Q}\)xc8 15.Wxa6 \(\text{Q}c6\)
15...b4 16...\(\text{Q}a4\)\(\text{Q}\)
16...\(\text{Q}x\text{b}5\) \(\text{Q}b4\) 17...\(\text{Q}a7\) \(\text{Q}x\text{c}2\) 18.Wf4
And White seizes the initiative.

10...\(\text{Q}a4\) 11.Wd5 12.d4!
It is important to bring all the pieces into the battle if White wants to profit from his lead in development.

12...\(\text{Q}x\text{d}4\)
12...\(\text{Q}x\text{d}6\) 13...\(\text{Q}x\text{d}6\) \(\text{Q}x\text{d}6\) 14.Wc5 \(\text{Q}c6\) 15.Wxd4
I think White is better after both replies: 15...\(\text{Q}x\text{d}6\) 16.Wg5 or 15...\(\text{Q}x\text{d}6\) 16...\(\text{Q}e4\) \(\text{W}c7\) 17.Wc1 \(\text{Q}b7\) 18...\(\text{Q}c3\) 19...\(\text{Q}x\text{c}3\)\(\text{Q}\)
12...\(\text{Q}x\text{c}8\) 13...\(\text{Q}x\text{c}3\) 14...\(\text{Q}x\text{d}4\) 15.Wxd4 will transpose into 12...\(\text{Q}x\text{d}4\).

13.Wx\(\text{d}4\)
This position has been tested a few times. Let's see Black's different possibilities:

a) 13...\(\text{Q}x\text{d}6\) 14.c4 \(\text{bxc}3\) 15...\(\text{Q}x\text{c}3\) \(\text{dxe}5\) 16.Wxc5 \(\text{f}6\)
17.Wd3?! I definitely prefer White's position.

b) 13...\(\text{Q}c8\) 14.c4 \(\text{bxc}3\) 15...\(\text{Q}e7\)
For 15...\(\text{W}c7\) see 13...\(\text{Q}c7\).
16...\(\text{Q}d4\)!
16...\(\text{Q}g5?! \(\text{W}c7! \) 17...\(\text{Q}c1\) \(\text{Q}x\text{f}3\) 18.gxf3 \(\text{Q}c6\)\(\text{Q}\)

16...\(\text{Q}x\text{f}3\)
16...\(\text{Q}d5\) 17.c4!
17.gxf3 \(\text{Q}x\text{f}5\) 18...\(\text{Q}b6?! \f6\)
18...\(\text{Q}e7\) 19.Wxa6\(\text{Q}\)
19.Wxd8\(\text{Q}\) 20.exf6 gxf6 21.Wb6\(\text{Q}\)
c) 13...\( \text{c7} \) 14.\( \text{c4} \) bxc3 15.bxc3 \( \text{e8} \) 16.d1! \( \text{c7} \) (16...\( \text{c7} \) 17.b6 \( \text{f5} \) 18.d3 \( \text{c8} \) 19.c4+) 17.g5? I think White has the more pleasant position, Abergel – N. Brunner, Guingamp 2010.

d) 13...f6?  
An interesting novelty.

14.c4  
14.\( \text{e7} \) 15.c5 fx5 16.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 17.\( \text{xc8} \) 18.\( \text{c7} \)  
14...bxc3 15.bxc3 \( \text{e7} \) 16.d1  
16...\( \text{b8} \)  
An important move. Black can afford to temporize because it is difficult to improve White’s position.

16...fxe5?! 17.\( \text{xe5} \) d6 18.\( \text{g4} \)  
16...0-0 17.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{b4} \) 18.\( \text{xd7} \) \( \text{xd7} \) 19.\( \text{xd7} \)  
13...\( \text{d6} \) +? 12...\( \text{b6} \)  
15.\( \text{Wh5} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 16.\( \text{g5} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 17.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{hxe5} \) 18.\( \text{h8} \) Maiwald – Maksimenko, Germany 2006.

B221) 11...\( \text{f5} \)  
The majority opt for this move, but it contains a fair amount of risk.

12.\( \text{exf6} \) \( \text{fxe6} \) 13.\( \text{f5} \)
gxf6 16...AXB7 &d6 17.g3 Wh8= I don't think White has an advantage here: 18.Wf3 Wf7 19.&e3 We8 Followed by ...Wf5.

14...d5
14...Wh7 15.&e1 Whf7 (15...g5??) 16.&f4 &xg4 17.&xe4 We7 18.&d6 0-0 19.&f3
Gharamian – A. Muller, La Fere 2005.

15.&g3
This looks better than the exchange:
15...Wh6 16.&e1 Whf7 (16...g5 17.&g3 Whf5 18.&h5+ &d7 19.&ae1 Wh7=) 16...&d6 17.&g4 e5 18.&h5+ &f7 19.&xf7 Wh7+ 20.&f3
Even though White eventually won, there is no doubt Black was in the ascendancy here, Hamdouchi – S. Ledger, Gibraltar 2003.

15...&d6 16.&f4 &f7
16...&d7 17.&e1 Wf8 18.&g6+

17.&e1 e5 18.&f5 g6
18...Wxf5 19.&xf5 Wh7 20.f4–

19.f4!
White needs to be dynamic

19...Wxf5
In the event of 19...exf4 20.Wxf4 Wh7 21.d4 Wf8 22.&f1 White has some initiative.

20.Wf5 Wh8
20...Whxh5 21.Wxe7 Wxe5 22.Wc7 Wh6 24.Wd4 Wh5+ 25.Wf6

21.f5! Whxh5 22...Wf6

And the game ends in perpetual check!

B222) 11...&e7

I think this is the simplest way to play for Black.

12.&g5
12.c4 &b4 13.&e3 (13.We2 0-0 14.&d2 Wh7 is unclear) 13...Wh8 14.&c1 Wh2 15.We2
(14...0-0?! looks totally alright for Black, but
in the game he was satisfied with making a draw) 15.\( \text{R}a1 \) \( \text{Q}b4 \) 16.\( \text{B}c1 \) \( \text{Q}a2 \) 17.\( \text{R}a1 \) \( \text{Q}b4 \) Solak – Kutuzovic, Sibenik 2005.

12.d4 cxd4 13.\( \text{W}x\text{xd4} \) 0–0 14.\( \text{Q}d6 \)

14.\( \text{Q}d2?! \) f6! After this move I couldn't find any way for White to equalize! (14...f5?! 15.\( \text{Q}d6! \) \( \text{Q}x\text{d6} \) 16.\( \text{R}c8 \) 17.e4 \( \text{Tissir – Bengafer, Dubai 2005} \) 15.\( \text{Q}d6 \) (15.\( \text{R}e1 \) \( \text{f}x\text{e}5 \) 16.\( \text{R}x\text{e}5 \) \( \text{d}f6 \) 15...\( \text{R}f5 \) \( \text{Q}x\text{f5} \) 16.\( \text{Q}x\text{f5} \) \( \text{Q}x\text{f5} \) \( \text{Q}x\text{f5} \) 17.\( \text{Q}x\text{f5} \) \( \text{H}x\text{f5} \) With a balanced position. 14...\( \text{c}c6 \)

14...\( \text{Q}x\text{d6} \) 15.\( \text{exd6} \) \( \text{g}g8 \) 16.c3 \( \text{f}6\! \)

15.\( \text{c}b4 \) \( \text{W}c3 \) \( \text{Q}d6 \) 17.\( \text{exd6} \) \( \text{Q}x\text{f3} \) 18.\( \text{W}x\text{b4} \) \( \text{Q}b7\! \)

12...f6!

13.\( \text{Q}x\text{f6} \) \( \text{Q}x\text{f6} \)

13...\( \text{g}x\text{f6} \) would be a mistake: 14.\( \text{Q}e5! \) 0–0 (14...h5 15.\( \text{Q}g6! \) \( \text{f}x\text{g5} \) 16.\( \text{Q}x\text{h8}+ \) 15.\( \text{W}h6 \) \( \text{f}x\text{e}5 \) 16.\( \text{W}g4+ \) \( \text{f}f7 \) 17.\( \text{f}4+\! \)

14.\( \text{e}e1 \)

Instead Hou Yifan – Ushenina, Krasnoturinsk 2007, continued 14.\( \text{W}x\text{f6} \) \( \text{gxf6} \) 15.\( \text{e}e1 \) 0–0 16.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{cxd4} \) 17.\( \text{xd4} \) and now I suggest 17...\( \text{e}7\!? \). I recall thinking that only Black could be better here. When I saw the surprising result (1–0) I didn't change my mind...

14...0–0 15.\( \text{W}d2 \) \( h6 \) 16.\( \text{Q}x\text{f6} \)

Degraeve – P. Popovic, Germany 2004, continued 16.\( \text{W}f4 \) \( d6 \) 17.\( \text{Q}h5 \) 18.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{Q}x\text{g}3 \) 19.\( \text{hxg}3 \) \( \text{cxd4} \) 20.\( \text{Q}x\text{d4} \) \( \text{d}7 \) 21.\( \text{e}ad1 \!\!+ \) and, as in the Hou Yifan-game, I prefer Black's position.

16.\( \text{Q}x\text{f6} \)

There is plenty of fight left in the position; I would assess the chances as balanced.

Conclusion

In this chapter we studied what is commonly regarded as the main line of the 2.\( \text{c}c3 \) \( \text{c}c6 \)

3.\( \text{b}5 \) system, that is 3...\( \text{d}d4 \) 4.\( \text{c}c4 \) \( e6 \) 5.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{d}f6 \) 6.0–0 when Black's main options are 6...\( \text{W}c7 \) and 6...\( a \text{a}6 \). After the latter play most often continues 7.\( d3 \) \( b5 \), which can lead to sharp and roughly balanced positions. However, I find the early queen move fascinating, although as I remarked, 6...\( a \text{a}6 \) 7.\( d3 \) \( c7 \) may be Black's most accurate move order. Black's chances in these lines reinforces my view that the 5.\( \text{e}g2 \) system (which we shall study next) is White's most promising line.

I will mention the famous ...\( \text{d}7–\text{d}5 \) trap one more time. It has made various appearances throughout this chapter, but players with Black continue to fall into it, so one more repetition seems wise!
1.e4 c5 2.d3 c6 3.e5 d4 4.d4 e6
5.Qe2!? What I like about this move, compared with 5.Qf3, is that Black has fewer options.

5...Qe7
This move isn't common with the knight on e2; the idea of course is to prevent Qxd4.

5...Qe7 6.Qxd4 cxd4 7.Qe2 transposes to the 5.Qf3 line and then 5...Qe7.

5...a6 6.Qxd4 cxd4 7.Qe2 transposes to the 5.Qf3 line and then 5...a6.

5...Qxe2 6.Qxe2 After this exchange White is certainly better; his plan is easy: d3 and f4.

6.d3 Qf6
After other moves White could take on d4.

7.Qxd4 cxd4 8.Qb5!!

8...Qb6
8...Qa5+ 9.Qd2 Qb6 10.a4! After a4-a5 Black will have some problems.

9.c3!
An important move.

9...dxc3
If 9...d5 then 10.exd5 exd5 11.Qc3 Qxc3 12.0-0! followed by Qe1 with a strong initiative!
Conclusion

In reply to 5. \( \text{Qg}e2 \) the move 5... \( \text{Wc7} \) is rare and likely to remain so, as White has a rather straightforward path to the advantage. Black's more critical replies to 5. \( \text{Qg}e2 \) will be covered in the next two chapters.

10. \( \text{Qxc3!?} \)

And I think White has the better prospects due to his easier development, Lyell – Szalanczy, Budapest 2010.
4. \texttt{c4} e6 5. \texttt{ge2} – 5... \texttt{f6} 6.0–0 a6 7.a4

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.\texttt{c3} \texttt{c6} 3.\texttt{b5} \texttt{d4} 4.\texttt{c4} e6 5.\texttt{ge2} \texttt{f6} 6.0–0 7.a4 d5!

8.exd5 exd5 9.a2

A) 9... \texttt{d6} 382
B) 9... \texttt{xe2}†?? 384
C) 9... \texttt{e6}†?? 385
D) 9... \texttt{g4} 386
5. Nge2 Nf6 6.0-0

6... a6

The text move is normal, but we should note a slight twist on an old trap:
6... d5?
As in the 5. d3 line, this move is severely punished.
7. exd5 exd5 8. Bxd5! Bf3
8... Bxd5 9. Bxd4 would transpose directly into the 5. d3 line.

9. Bh1!
I really like this move!
9... Bxd5 10. Bc3! Bd4
10... Bxc3 11. Bxf3+- Threatening mate and the c3-knight. Also no good is 10... Bxh2

11. Bxd5+ White is a sound pawn up.

7. a4
This is the move we shall study in this chapter (the critical 7. d3 will be covered in the next chapter). With 7. a4 White clamps down on the intended ... b7-b5, but now Black can hit back in the centre.

7... d5!
Now this move is possible. One can see many similarities with lines where the knight is on f3. We should also consider 7... Bxe4!? and 7... Bc7:

7... Bxe4!?
An interesting attempt to benefit from the knight being on e2.
8. Bxe4 d5 9. d3!
Tiviakov recently played this move.

From the diagram position Black has various options:

a) 9... dxe4 seems illogical to me, since Black refrains from grabbing the pair of bishops and lets his opponent have a healthy pawn structure. 10. dxe4 Be7 (after 10... Bg6 11. Bf4 Bc7 12. Be3 Bxe2+ 13. Bxe2 White's position
is more pleasant) 11.\(\text{cxd4} \text{cxd4} 12.\text{\textg4} \text{\textf6}
13.\text{\textg3!} \text{\texte5} 14.\text{\textf4!} (14.\text{\textb4} \text{\texte5} 15.\text{\textxe5} \\
\text{\textxe5} 16.\text{\textb2} 0-0 17.\text{\textf4} \text{\textd6} 18.\text{\textxd4} \\
\text{\textxb4} 19.\text{\textfd1=} \text{\textjovanovic - \textkreisl, \textrieka 2010}) \text{Good advice for Black is expensive} \\
\text{here...} 14...\text{\textc5} (14...\text{\texte5} 15.\text{\textg5} \text{\textxg5} \\
16.\text{\textxg5} 0-0 17.\text{\texte7z} 15.\text{\texte5!} \text{\textg5} 16.\text{\textxf6} \\
\text{\textxf6} 17.\text{\textxf6!} \text{\textd7} \text{The c4-bishop was taboo} \\
because of \text{\textd6}. 18.\text{\textd3=} \\
\text{b) After the computer's suggestion of 9...\text{\textc6},} \\
\text{the simplest is: 10.\text{\texte3} \text{\textdxc4} (or 10...\text{\textdxe4} \\
11.\text{\textdxe4} and \text{White has better development})} \\
11.\text{\textdxc4 \text\textxd1 12.\text{\textfd1} b6 13.\text{\textd6}=} \\
\text{c) 9...\text{\texte7} 10.\text{\textdxc4} \text{\textdxc4} 11.\text{\textg4!} and \text{White} \\
seizes the initiative.} \\
\text{d) 9...\text{\textdxc4} 10.\text{\textdxc4} \text{\texte7} \\
10...b6 11.\text{\text\textxd4 \textdxc4} (11...\text{\textxd4}? \\
12.\text{\textf3}! \text{\textf3}! 12.\text{\textf3} \text{\textxe7} (12...\text{\textb713.\text{\textf6=} and then \text{\textxe7})} 13.\text{\texte1=} \text{I do think \text{White} \\
is better here, in few of the looming a4-a5} \\
and \text{\textg5}. \\
11.\text{\textf4} \\
\text{Tiviakov's novelty.} \\
11.\text{\texte3} \text{\texte5!} 12.\text{\textf4!?} (12.\text{\textc3} \text{\textxe2=} 13.\text{\textxe2} \\
\text{\textc7} 14.\text{\textf4} \text{\textf5}! 15.\text{\textg5} \text{\texte4=}) \text{and:} \\
a) 12...\text{\texte6} 13.\text{\textf5} (13.\text{\textb3} \text{\textf5} 14.\text{\textc4} \text{\texte4=} \\
\text{\textc7} \text{\textheberla - \textmakarow, \textpardubice 2005}) \\
13...\text{\textc4} 14.\text{\text\textxd4 \textdxc4} 15.\text{\textf2} \text{\textxe2} \\
(15...0-0 16.\text{\text\textxd4 \textxe2} 17.\text{\text\textxd8 \textdxd8} \\
18.\text{\textxe2=} 16.\text{\text\textxe2} 0-0 17.\text{\text\textd1} \text{\textb6} \\
18.\text{\textg4=} \\
b) 12...\text{\textg4!} 13.\text{\text\textxd4 \textdxc4} 14.\text{\textf5}! 0-0 15.\text{\texth3} \\
\text{\textxe2} 16.\text{\text\textxe2} \text{\texte8} 17.\text{\textg4} \text{\textf6} 18.\text{\text\textae1} \\
\text{\textc8} \text{The position looks around equal to me.} \\
11...\text{\textf6} \\
11...0-0 12.\text{\text\textxd4 \textdxc4} (after 12...\text{\textxd4} \\
13.\text{\text\textxd4 \textdxc4} 14.\text{\texte5=} \text{the d4-pawn is} \\
bound to fall) 13.\text{\textc5} \text{\textf6} 14.\text{\text\textxd4 \textc7} \\
15.\text{\text\textxe2} \text{\texte5} 16.\text{\text\textc3} \text{\textc6} 17.\text{\textf3=} \text{White is a} \\
pawn up for insufficient compensation. \\
12.\text{\textc3} \text{\textxe2=} 13.\text{\textxe2} 0-0-0! \\
13...\text{\texte5=} \text{was best: 14.\text{\texte3} (or 14.\text{\texth5= \textg6} \\
15.\text{\text\texthe6 \textf7 and \text{Black seems safe enough})} \\
14...\text{\textc7} (14...\text{\textb6=?)} 15.\text{\text\textfd1 \textc7} 16.\text{\text\texthe5= \\
\text{\textg8} 17.\text{\texta5=} \text{15.\text\texthe5= (15.\text\textf5= \text{and next} \\
...\text{\texte5-e4) 15...\text{\textg6} 16.\text{\text\texthe6 \textf7!} \text{After this} \\
judicious move I don't think \text{Black is any} \\
worse. 17.\text{\text\textfd1} (17.\text{\textf4 \textf5!} \text{An important} \\
move! 18.\text{\textg3 \textd3} 19.\text{\text\textf2 \textf5=} 17...\text{\textf5} \\
18.\text{\textf3} \text{\text\textad8 19.\text\texted5 With a complicated} \\
position. \\
14.\text{\text\textfd1 \textd7} \\
14...\text{\texta5} 15.\text{\textd6=} \\
15.\text{\textd6=} \text{Black's position is very difficult, \texttiviakov -} \\
\text{\textmoiseenko, \textmoncton 2009.} \\
7...\text{\textc7} \\
\text{Here this move is less effective. Indeed,} \\
...\text{\textg4 is never a threat and the white f-pawn} \\
is free to advance. \\
8.\text{\textd3 \textc7}
9.f4! d6
Black is obviously reluctant to allow e4–e5. 9...h5 10.d2 (10.h3?! weakens the kingside for no reason, Le Roux – Titrò, Marseille 2010; 10.e5? d6) 10...h4 11.e5! dxe5 12.dxe5 cxd4 13.dxe7 I clearly prefer White's position.

10.e3?
An interesting novelty in place of 10.dxe5, which the Polish GM Heberla played twice. 10...cxd4 11.e2 dxe5 12.dxe5 and now:

a) 12...fxe6 13.dxe4 0–0 (13...e5 14.c3 ♗g4 15.cxd4 ♗c4 16.♗e2 0–0 17.♗f3) 14.dxe5 e5 15.♗e2 ♗g4 16.h3 ♗h5 17.♗d3 Heberla – Kraemer, Pardubice 2005.

b) 12...♗xe6 13.dxe4 ♗g4! 14.♗d3 ♗xe2 15.♗xe2 0–0 16.♗xe2 ♗xe8 17.♗f4 ♗f6 18.b3 ♗c3 19.♗xb1 ♗e4?! (19...♖xd3 20.cxd3 ♗c3 21.♗d2 ♚c6 [after 21...♖xd3 22.♖f1 followed by ♔e2, the rook is trapped and Black loses the exchange] 22.♖c1± Heberla – Kir. Georgiev, Warsaw 2005) 20.♖f1 ♚c3 And now there is nothing better than: 10...♗g4

11.♗d2
♖xd4 constitutes a threat because the g4-knight is hanging. I think Black has to withdraw one of his horses.

11...♗f6
11...♖c6 12.♗g3 ♗f6 13.f5 I'd rather be White in this unclear position.

12.f5 exf5 13.♖xd4 cxd4 14.♗d5 ♖xd5 15.♖xd5
Next will be exf5; I believe White can claim a slight plus.

8.exd5 exd5 9.♗a2
A critical position has arisen. Grandmaster Heberla has often had this position on the board, and he has been quite successful. At this point Black has several possibilities with the main ones being A) 9...♗d6, B) 9...♕xe2??, C) 9...♕e6?? and D) 9...♕g4. Before we get to them there are a couple of very minor lines to consider:

9...♕c6 is met by 10.d4! ♕e7 11.♗g5 cxd4 12.♖xd4± when White is better due to the weakness on d5.

9...♕e7 10.d3 0–0 I dislike this line for Black (for 10...♕xe2? see 9...♕xe2!). 11.♖xd4 cxd4 12.♕e2 ♖b6 13.♗f4 ♖d8?? (After 13...♗xb2?? 14.♗b3! the queen is trapped! Or 13...♗c5 14.♕g5± and White has the better structure and therefore the better prospects.) 14.♗e5 ♕c5 15.♕xg4! Heberla – Dinger, Dresden 2007.

A) 9...♕d6

The most common move.
10. d3
10. d3?! cxd4 11. e1+  
11. e2? would be disastrous because of the thematic: 11... exd2+ 12. cxd2 g4+ 13. g3 (13. g1 h4 14. e1 xf2+ 15. h1 h4+ 16. g1 0-0! White doesn't have any counterplay. 17. d3 h4+ 18. f1 h1+ 19. g1 h4=) 13... h5! 14. e1 (14. f4 h4+ 15. f3 e7 Threatening mate. 16. c3 dxc3 17. e1 e6 18. dxc3 0-0=) 14... h4 15. h3 e3+ 16. h2 dxc2 17. xd1 xa1+  
11... e6 12. e2  
12. d3?! Now this move doesn't work. 13. e2 h4 14. g1 h4 15. e3 12... d3 is also very interesting: 13. cxd3 0-0 Black has good compensation for the pawn.  
13. g7 e6 14. f4 xf2 15. e2  
15. e2 xf4 16. xf2 e5 17. e2 ac7 18. axd5 d3pp  
15... g7 16. ab3 gf4 17. axd5 b6=  
Keosidi – Maletin, Russia 2007.  

10... e6  
I prefer not to allow d1xd4.  

10... d3
10... e6  
I prefer not to allow d1xd4.
annihilating the threat of g4-g5. 14.\(\text{c}e4\) \(\text{d}xe4\) 15.\(\text{d}xe4\) \(\text{d}d7\) And next ...\(\text{c}6\) when Black has no problems.) 13...\(\text{d}d6\) Followed by ...\(\text{d}7\) when the position is equal.

12...\(0-0\)

12...\(\text{d}4\) 13.\(\text{c}e4\) \(\text{d}xe4\) 14.\(\text{d}xe4\) \(\text{e}7\) 15.\(\text{h}5\) \(\text{d}7\) 16.\(\text{d}5\)±

13.\(\text{h}3\)

13.\(\text{a}5\) This thrust prevents ...\(\text{b}7\)-\(\text{b}6\), while 13...\(\text{w}xa5?!\) 14.\(\text{x}f6\) \(\text{gx}f6\) 15.\(\text{c}x\text{d}5\) looks perilous for Black. 13...\(\text{d}4\) (I prefer the text move to 13...\(\text{h}6\) 14.\(\text{a}d2\) \(\text{c}d4\) 15.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{e}6\) 16.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{h}7\) 17.\(\text{a}4\)± as in Heberla – Wang Yue, Istanbul 2005) 14.\(\text{c}e2\) \(\text{d}7\) 15.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{e}8\) 16.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{c}6\) 17.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{d}5\) 18.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{c}7\) 19.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{e}6\)±

13.\(\text{b}6\) 14.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{d}4\) 15.\(\text{c}e2\) \(\text{d}5\) 16.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{b}7\) 17.\(\text{a}d2\) \(\text{c}7\) 18.\(\text{c}5\)

Though the position is unclear, White easily decided the outcome in his favour in Zhang Zhong – Zhao Jun, Wuxi 2006.

\[\text{B) 9... \(\text{c}x\text{e}2\)!}\]

This is the move I was intending to play as Black when I studied this position some years ago.

10.\(\text{w}xe2\) \(\text{c}7\) 11.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{e}6\) 12.\(\text{g}5\) \(0-0\)
Chapter 19 - 4.\textit{c}4 \textit{e}6 5.\textit{\&}ge2 - 5...\textit{\&}f6 6.0-0 \textit{a}6 7.\textit{a}4

C) 9...\textit{\&}e6?  
This unusual move is worthy of consideration.

10.d4  

10...\textit{c}4! 11.f4?  
I think this novelty is best! Previously everybody has played:  
11.b3  
which runs into  
11...\textit{\&}b5!  
A new move.

11...\textit{\&}xb3 12.\textit{\&}xb3 \textit{\&}d6 (12...\textit{\&}c7) 13.\textit{\&}xd5!  
(13.\textit{\&}g3 0-0 14.f4 \textit{\&}c7 15.\textit{\&}ce2 \textit{\&}d8!  
[15...\textit{\&}e8 16.f5 \textit{\&}f8 17.\textit{\&}f4\# Laffonte - Koneru, Kochin 2004] 16.f5 \textit{\&}c6 17.\textit{\&}g5  
\textit{\&}c4 18.\textit{\&}f4\# 13...\textit{\&}xd5 14.\textit{\&}xd5 \textit{\&}xh2\#  
15.\textit{\&}xh2 \textit{\&}xh5 16.\textit{\&}a3 \textit{\&}d7 17.\textit{\&}d3 \textit{\&}c6  
18.f3\#  
12.axb5  
12.\textit{\&}e1 \textit{\&}c7 (not 12...\textit{\&}b4?! 13.\textit{\&}xd5! \textit{\&}xd5  
14.f4 followed by d4-d5) 13.\textit{\&}g3 \textit{\&}b4  
14.\textit{\&}b3 0-0 15.\textit{\&}f5 with mutual chances.

12.f4 \textit{\&}b4? 13.f5 (13.\textit{\&}b1 \textit{\&}c5\#) 13...\textit{\&}c7  
14.bxc4 bxc3 15.\textit{\&}xc3 \textit{\&}b4\# I don't believe White has enough compensation for the sacrificed piece.

12...axb5

15.\textit{\&}g5  
The position is very complicated, for example:

15...\textit{\&}b4  
15...\textit{h}6 16.\textit{\&}b4 \textit{\&}c7 17.\textit{\&}ac1 \textit{\&}e8 18.\textit{\&}e5\#  
16.\textit{\&}ce2
16.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{G}h}5}\texttt{!?} is interesting, but perhaps Black can equalize with precise play: 16...\texttt{\textipa{\textit{D}e}7} 17.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{F}x}f6}\texttt{\textipa{\textit{D}f}6} 18.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{X}x}f6} \texttt{\textipa{\textit{W}x}f6} 19.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{G}x}d}5 \texttt{\textipa{\textit{X}x}d}4\texttt{!} 20.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{G}e}3} \texttt{\textipa{\textit{W}e}8} 21.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{W}f}e}1 \texttt{\textipa{\textit{D}b}7}\texttt{!} 22.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{W}x}b}7 \texttt{\textipa{\textit{X}x}e}3 23.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{X}x}e}3 \texttt{\textipa{\textit{W}x}e}3\texttt{!} 24.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{W}h}1} \texttt{\textipa{\textit{W}c}5}\texttt{=}

16...\texttt{\textipa{\textit{D}d}7} 17.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{G}f}4}

In my opinion, White has good chances of gaining an advantage.

D) 9...\texttt{\textipa{\textit{D}g}4}

Carlsen's move, to which White can reply with three different moves:

10.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{F}f}3}

Radjabov's move, which is also the most common.

10.h3

This was recently GM Iordachescu's choice.

10...\texttt{\textipa{\textit{X}x}e}2\texttt{\textipa{\textit{D}f}4}\texttt{+}

The alternatives offer White chances for an edge:

a) 10...\texttt{\textipa{\textit{G}h}5} 11.d3 \texttt{\textipa{\textit{D}d}6} 12.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{F}f}3}\texttt{!?} After g2-g4 the h5-bishop will be forced out of play on g6.

b) 10...\texttt{\textipa{\textit{X}x}e}2 11.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{X}x}e}2 \texttt{\textipa{\textit{D}e}6} 12.d4! (this move is more to my taste than 12.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{W}e}1} as in Macieja - Nedev, Antalya 2004) and now:

b1) 12...c4 13.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{F}f}4} \texttt{\textipa{\textit{X}x}f}4 14.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{X}x}f}4 \texttt{\textipa{\textit{G}e}7}

b2) 12...d3 13.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{X}x}d}5 \texttt{\textipa{\textit{G}x}c}5 14.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{F}f}4} \texttt{\textipa{\textit{X}x}f}4 15.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{X}x}f}4 0-0 16.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{W}f}3}\texttt{=} White's position is preferable due to his bishop pair and Black's isolated pawn.

b3) 12...\texttt{\textipa{\textit{X}x}d}4 13.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{X}x}d}4 \texttt{\textipa{\textit{G}c}5}14.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{G}e}3}\texttt{=} Again White has play against Black's isolated pawn.

11.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{X}x}e}2 \texttt{\textipa{\textit{D}e}6} 12.d3

12.d4 \texttt{\textipa{\textit{D}d}6} 13.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{F}f}4} 0-0= The main difference with the 10...\texttt{\textipa{\textit{X}x}e}2 line is that here the e6-bishop covers the d5-pawn very well.

12...\texttt{\textipa{\textit{D}d}6} 13.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{F}f}4}

The dubious 13.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{F}f}4}\texttt{!?} results in a bad position for White after 13...0-0 14.f5 \texttt{\textipa{\textit{G}e}5} 15.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{D}x}e}6 16.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{F}f}4} \texttt{\textipa{\textit{G}e}5}.

13...0-0 14.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{W}e}1} \texttt{\textipa{\textit{D}d}7} 15.a5

15.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{X}x}e}6 \texttt{\textipa{\textit{X}x}e}6 Black is fine; ...\texttt{\textipa{\textit{W}e}8} and ...\texttt{\textipa{\textit{W}f}7} are next on the agenda.

15...\texttt{\textipa{\textit{W}e}8} 16.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{D}d}2} 16.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{F}f}4}?

The simplest way to equalize.

17.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{X}x}f}4 d4! 18.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{X}x}e}6 \texttt{\textipa{\textit{X}x}e}6 19.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{X}x}e}6 \texttt{\textipa{\textit{W}x}e}6 20.\texttt{\textipa{\textit{W}f}3} \texttt{\textipa{\textit{W}d}5}\texttt{=}


10.d3

Only Tiviakov has played this move.
Chapter 19 – 4...c4 e6 5...ge2 – 5...f6 6.0–0 a6 7...a4

11...\*xe2† 12...xe2† e6 13...g5† (13. f4 is tempting, but not enough to gain an advantage. 13...0–0 14.f5 d7 15...xd5 xdx5 [15...c6? 16...xf6+ xf6 17...g4 e5 18...h3 c4=] 16...d5 xhx2†! [16...h4 17.g4 xe8 18.g2e3] 17...h2h2 h4† 18...g1 xd4† 19...e3 xd5 With equality.) 13...0–0 14.f4! c7 (14...h6 15...h4 e8 16...f3±) 15.f5 d7 16...xf6 xf6 17...xd5± White is a pawn up.

12...xd4† cxd4 13...e2 b6 14...d2 e8
14...xb2? 15...b3 followed by 16.a2, catching the unconscious queen.

15...b3±
White really seems slightly better here. He can contemplate xe1 and then xe2, or even better xe1 followed by xe2 or e3, aiming to exchange Black's good bishop. Tiviakov – Bogner, Gausdal 2005.

b) 10...\*xh7†
The appropriate moment to take on e2 because White can't take back with the queen.

11...\*xe2 e7
And the position looks "normal", for example:
12.h3 d7 13.e1 0–0 14...g3 e8=

10...e6

11.d3
Capturing immediately on d4 has a downside:
11...xd4 cxd4 12...e2 d3!
1 like this move which disturbs White's harmony.

12...c5 13.d3 0–0 14...d2 xe8 15...b3 d7 16...e1 b6 17...f2 a5 18...e1± Even though Black's position is quite solid, I think White can achieve a small advantage.

13.cxd3

13...d6
13...c5?! is not so good because after 14...xd4† 15...xd4 b6 16...e2 xd4† 17...e3 White has the upper hand. For instance: 17...xa4 18.b3 a5 (18...b4 19...b1 with the idea e3, secures White a strong initiative.) 19...b2 0–0 20...xf6 xf6 21...b1 d8 22...f4 The position is a little unpleasant for Black.

14...e4 0–0 15.d3 e8 16...e1
16...g5 h6 17...h4 xhx2†! This enables Black to seize the initiative. 18...xh2 g4† 19.fxg4 xhx4† 20...g1 xg4 21...f2 h5 22...b3 xe2†

16...h5
Followed by ...h4 or ...h6; the a2-bishop will be out of the game for a while, so Black has good compensation for the pawn.

11...c6?! An interesting novelty by the Norwegian
prodigy. Formerly Black had experimented with 11...d6; see 10.d3 d6 11.f3 e6.

11...d7?! 12.exd4 cxd4 13.e2 c5 14.f4 d8 15.e5 b6 16.d2± Tristan – Fabian, Villa Martelli 2010.

11...xe2+ 12.xe2 c7 13.f4! looks more pleasant for White.

12.gf4
12.g5 is the other logical reply. 12...e7 13.f4 0–0 14.e1 d6 15.e2?? (after 15.d2 b8 Black is fine) 15...d4 16.d2 b8 17.xf6 xf6 18.xd5 d8! Black gives up a pawn and gains nice piece-play in return.

15.c3 b5
The position was balanced in Radjabov – Carlsen, Baku 2010.

Conclusion

In the position after 3...d4 4.e4 e6 5.ge2 f5 6.0–0 a6 7.a4 the break 7...d5! no longer walks into a nasty trap. This is undeniably a major achievement for Black, but even so after 8.exd5 exd5 9.a2 the position still contains a lot of tricks. If Black is careful and well prepared he should be able to level the game. In particular, 9...xe2+!! and 9...g4 are reliable choices.
Variation Index

1. e4 c5 2. c3 c6 3. b5 d6 4. c4 e6 5. ge2 f6 6.0–0 a6 7. d3

A) 10. g5
   A1) 10...d6 391
   A2) 10...c7 392
   A3) 10...h6!? 394

B) 10. g3? 394

C) 10. f4 d5 11. e5 d4 12. exf6 dxc3 395
   C1) 13. f5!? 396
   C2) 13. fxg7 399
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{d}c3\) \(\text{d}c6\) 3.\(\text{b}b5\) \(\text{d}d4\) 4.\(\text{c}c4\) e6 5.\(\text{g}e2\) \(\text{f}f6\) 6.0-0 a6 7.d3?!

A fashionable position.

7...b5
7...d5?

Once again this walks into the trap:
8.exd5 exd5 9.\(\text{f}f3\) !\(\text{f}f3\)!
For 9...\(\text{d}x\text{d}5\) 10.\(\text{d}x\text{d}5\) \(\text{c}xd5\) see the 5.\(\text{f}f3\) line in Chapter 17.

10.\(\text{h}h1\)!
This funny move represents the simplest path.
10...\(\text{d}x\text{d}5\) 11.\(\text{c}c3!\) \(\text{xc}3\)
11...\(\text{f}f6\) 12.\(\text{xf}3\)± E. Nahtz - Kochetkova, Dresden 2007.

A rare but very interesting move.
10.\(\text{b}b1\)
10.\(\text{a}a4??!!\) No one has tried this. 10...d6
11.\(\text{f}3\) (11.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{e}7\) [11...\(\text{b}7\) 12.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{e}7\)
13.\(\text{h}5\) \(\text{x}h5\) 14.\(\text{x}e7\) \(\text{xe}7\) 15.\(\text{x}h5=\)]
12.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{h}6\) 13.\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{xf}6\) 14.\(\text{h}5\) \(\text{b}8=\)
Black should be doing fine here because of the stranded knight on a4.) 11...\(\text{c}7\) 12.d4 \(\text{c}7\)!
White has some problems bringing the a4-knight into the game.
10...d5
10...\(\text{c}7\) 11.f4 0-0 12.\(\text{g}3\) d5 13.e5
11.\(\text{g}3\)
11.e5 I don't think this is the best idea.
11...\(\text{d}7\) 12.f4 \(\text{e}7\) 13.\(\text{g}3\) 0-0 14.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{f}5\) (14...\(\text{f}6\)? Fierro Baquero - Krush, Beijing 2008) 15.\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{xf}6\) 16.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{d}6\) 17.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{c}7\) 18.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{b}7\) 19.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{a}8\) 20.\(\text{ae}1\) \(\text{d}7\)!
White had finished his development but lacked a constructive plan in Schmitz - Yemelin, Bad Wiessee 2009.
11...h5?!
11...\(\text{c}7\) 12.\(\text{f}4\) I think White should place his bishop at f4 rather than a pawn. 12...0-0
13.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{b}7\) 14.\(\text{e}1\) a5 15.e5 \(\text{d}7\) 16.\(\text{f}4\)
White has the better prospects. He can continue with \(\text{c}3\), \(\text{h}5\) and so on.
12.\(\text{g}5\)
In the event of 12.e5 \(\text{d}7\) 13.f4 \(\text{h}4\) 14.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{h}3\) 15.g3 Black has the better prospects due
to the vulnerability of the white king. After a subsequent ...d5-d4 the weakness of the long diagonal may tell.

After 12.exd5 h4 13.\(\text{Qe}4\) exd5 14.\(\text{Qg}5\) h3 15.\(\text{Re}1\) \(\text{h}7\) 16.g3 0-0 I don’t like White’s position.

12...h4 13.\(\text{Qe}2\) \(\text{Wc}7\)!

Black should keep the central tension. Instead 13...\(\text{dxe}4\) 14.\(\text{dxe}4\) \(\text{Wc}7\) 15.\(\text{Qd}2\) is advantageous for White: 15...h3 16.g3 \(\text{Ab}7\) 17.f3 \(\text{h}7\) (17...c4?! 18.\(\text{Qxc}4\) \(\text{Ac}5\)† 19.\(\text{Qe}3\) \(\text{Axe}3\)† 20.\(\text{Qxe}3\) \(\text{Ed}8\) 21.\(\text{Qe}1\) \(\text{Ec}5\) 22.\(\text{Qf}2\)† Harikrishna – Gallagher, Hastings 2002) 18.\(\text{Qc}4\)±

14.\(\text{Qd}2\) \(\text{Ab}6\) 15.h3 \(\text{Ab}7\) 16.exd5 \(\text{Qxd}5\)
16...exd5 17.\(\text{Qf}3\) looks good for White as the h4-pawn is doomed.

17.\(\text{Ac}4\) \(\text{f}6\) 18.\(\text{Ad}2\)∞

With a very unclear position.

At this point White has numerous possibilities. The main lines are A) 10.\(\text{Ag}5\), B) 10.\(\text{Ag}3\)† and C) 10.\(\text{f}4\), but first one minor line requires a quick look:

10.e5 \(\text{Qg}4\) A valuable improvement, I think. (After 10...b4 11.\(\text{fxe}6\)! \(\text{bxe}3\) 12.\(\text{fxg}7\) \(\text{Agxg}7\) 13.\(\text{Qxe}3\) Black has some compensation for the pawn, but probably not enough.) 11.\(\text{f}4\) (11.d4 \(\text{Wc}7\) 12.\(\text{Qe}1\) \(\text{exd}4\) 13.\(\text{Qxd}4\) \(\text{Qxe}5\) 14.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{f}5\)†) 11...\(\text{Wb}6\)?: 12.h3 (12.\(\text{Qg}3\) \(\text{h}5\)?)

12...c4†? 13.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{Wc}6\) 14.\(\text{Qf}3\) \(\text{h}6\) With an unclear position.

A) 10.\(\text{Ag}5\)

I recently used this move. The line now splits into three possibilities: A1) 10...\(\text{d}6\), A2) 10...\(\text{Ag}7\) and A3) 10...\(\text{h}6\)?:

A1) 10...\(\text{d}6\) 11.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{Ag}7\)
11...\(\text{h}6\) 12.\(\text{xf}6\)!

An improvement over: 12.\(\text{Ag}4\) \(\text{g}5\) (12...\(\text{Ag}7\)) 13.\(\text{Ag}3\) (13.\(\text{fxg}5\) \(\text{Ad}7\) 14.\(\text{Qd}2\) \(\text{Ag}7\) 15.\(\text{Qf}4\) \(\text{Qe}5\)†) 13...\(\text{Ag}7\) 14.\(\text{Qd}2\) \(\text{Ah}5\) Black is fine, G. Jones – Werle, London 2007.

12...\(\text{xf}6\)

12...\(\text{gx}f\text{6} \text{f}3\)!

13.\(\text{f}5\) e5
13...\(\text{Ag}7\) 14.\(\text{fxe}6\) \(\text{Wxe}6\) 15.\(\text{Qf}4\) \(\text{Wxe}5\) 16.\(\text{Qd}5\) \(\text{Ad}8\) 17.\(\text{Qh}1\)±
13...\(\text{Wf}5\)†? 14.\(\text{fxe}6\) \(\text{fxe}6\) 15.\(\text{Qf}4\)±
14.\(\text{Ag}3\) \(\text{Ag}7\) 15.\(\text{Qd}5\) \(\text{Qxd}5\) 16.\(\text{exd}5\)

Then \(\text{Qe}4\). In this closed position the knight certainly feels more at ease than Black’s bishop.

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

Black has a wide choice here:
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

a) 12...exf5!? 13.\( \text{B} \)xf5
13.\( \text{B} \)g3?! I tested this move in a rapid tournament. 13...h6! (13...fxe4 14.\( \text{B} \)f5 0-0 15.\( \text{B} \)xe4 \( \text{B} \)xe4 16.\( \text{B} \)xe4) 14.\( \text{B} \)f4 (14.\( \text{B} \)xf6 \( \text{B} \)xf6 15.\( \text{B} \)xf5 g6! 16.\( \text{B} \)c3 \( \text{B} \)d4 17.\( \text{B} \)h1 0-0 18.\( \text{B} \)e2 \( \text{B} \)f5 19.\( \text{B} \)f4 \( \text{B} \)xe4; 14.\( \text{B} \)e3?! fxe4 15.\( \text{B} \)xe4 0-0 16.\( \text{B} \)f5 \( \text{B} \)xe8 17.\( \text{B} \)f3 \( \text{B} \)f4) 14...b4! 15.\( \text{B} \)d5 \( \text{B} \)xd5 16.exd5 g6
13...0-0 14.\( \text{B} \)g3
The position is complex but if White succeeds in bringing a knight to f5, this could prove dangerous for Black.

d) 12...\( \text{B} \)xe4?! 13.\( \text{B} \)xe7 \( \text{B} \)xc3 14.\( \text{B} \)xd8 \( \text{B} \)xd1 15.\( \text{B} \)g5 \( \text{B} \)xb2 16.\( \text{B} \)c1 \( \text{B} \)xd3 17.exd3 Aronian – Vallejo Pons, Monte Carlo 2006.

c) 12...0-0 13.\( \text{B} \)g3 h6 14.\( \text{B} \)d2 \( \text{B} \)h7? (14...b4 15.\( \text{B} \)a4 \( \text{B} \)c7 16.\( \text{B} \)h5 In this unclear position White has reasonable attacking chances.) 15.\( \text{B} \)xe5 fxe6 16.\( \text{B} \)g4± Vallejo Pons – Sprenger, Germany 2007.

d) 12...e5 13.\( \text{B} \)xf6 \( \text{B} \)xf6 14.\( \text{B} \)g3 \( \text{B} \)h4?! (14...0-0 15.\( \text{B} \)d5) 15.\( \text{B} \)h5! G. Jones – Sarkar, Gibraltar 2007.

13.\( \text{B} \)g3 0-0-0?!

13.\( \text{B} \)g3
A very interesting way to fight for the advantage. Instead 14.\( \text{B} \)h5 \( \text{B} \)xh5 15.\( \text{B} \)xe7 \( \text{B} \)xe7 16.\( \text{B} \)xe7 g6\footnote{In this position, \( \text{B} \)xe7 } is a mess.

14...d5
14...\( \text{B} \)c7 15.dxc5 dxc5 16.\( \text{B} \)e2±. But 14...h6! was best, but even so after 15.\( \text{B} \)h4 (15.\( \text{B} \)c3 h5!) 15...d5 16.e5 \( \text{B} \)e4 17.\( \text{B} \)xe6 fxe6 18.\( \text{B} \)xe7 \( \text{B} \)xe7 19.\( \text{B} \)ge2 \( \text{B} \)h8 20.\( \text{B} \)d3 ± I fancy the white position due to the bad bishop on b7.

15.e5 \( \text{B} \)e4 16.\( \text{B} \)xe6 \( \text{B} \)xe6 17.\( \text{B} \)xe4
17.\( \text{B} \)xe7? \( \text{B} \)xe7 18.\( \text{B} \)d3±

17.\( \text{B} \)xe4 18.\( \text{B} \)f7! \( \text{B} \)e8
18...\( \text{B} \)xg5 19.\( \text{B} \)xd7 \( \text{B} \)xd7 20.\( \text{B} \)g4±

19.d5!
After this strong move, Black found himself in trouble in Cornette – Génzling, France 2009.

A2) 10...\( \text{B} \)c7

14.d4
A very interesting way to fight for the advantage. Instead 14.\( \text{B} \)h5 \( \text{B} \)xh5 15.\( \text{B} \)xe7 \( \text{B} \)xe7 16.\( \text{B} \)xe7 g6\footnote{In this position, \( \text{B} \)xe7 } is a mess.

14...d5
14...\( \text{B} \)c7 15.dxc5 dxc5 16.\( \text{B} \)e2±. But 14...h6! was best, but even so after 15.\( \text{B} \)h4 (15.\( \text{B} \)c3 h5!) 15...d5 16.e5 \( \text{B} \)e4 17.\( \text{B} \)xe6 fxe6 18.\( \text{B} \)xe7 \( \text{B} \)xe7 19.\( \text{B} \)ge2 \( \text{B} \)h8 20.\( \text{B} \)d3 ± I fancy the white position due to the bad bishop on b7.

15.e5 \( \text{B} \)e4 16.\( \text{B} \)xe6 \( \text{B} \)xe6 17.\( \text{B} \)xe4
17.\( \text{B} \)xe7? \( \text{B} \)xe7 18.\( \text{B} \)d3±

17.\( \text{B} \)xe4 18.\( \text{B} \)f7! \( \text{B} \)e8
18...\( \text{B} \)xg5 19.\( \text{B} \)xd7 \( \text{B} \)xd7 20.\( \text{B} \)g4±

19.d5!
After this strong move, Black found himself in trouble in Cornette – Génzling, France 2009.

A2) 10...\( \text{B} \)c7

14.d4
A very interesting way to fight for the
11...d5
11...h6 12...xf6! and

a) 12...gx6 13.f5! (13.g3 h5 14.wf3 h4 15.gxe2 f5? Thesing – Handke, Muelheim 2010) 13...d6 14.f4 c7 15.g3 0-0 0 16. Wh5#

b) 12...xf6 13.e5 c7 14.g3 (if 14.f5 then 14...c7! would underline the fragility of e5) 14...g6 (if 14...d6 then White seizes the initiative with 15.f5! dxe5 16.xe6 Whd4† 17. Whh1 fxe6 18.gxe4) 15.gxe4 c7 16.gxe2 0-0 0 17.gf3

12.gxf6
12.exd5 cxd5 13.xe7 c7 (13...cxe7 14.gxd5 5.xd5 14.gxe4) c7 15.c3 c8 16.c2 c7 17.c2g3 is roughly equal.

12...xf6

13.e5
13.exd5?! cxd5 14.d4 0-0 15.f5 Whd6 16. Whh1 Wha8†

13...c7 14.d4
It is logical to bury the b7-bishop. 14.f5 exf5 15.Bxf5 d4! 16.Bxe4 Axe4 17.dxe4 0-0†

14...c4 15.f5 exf5
20.\textbf{B}e1 \textbf{B}e8 21.\textbf{Q}f4 g6! 22.\textbf{Q}xg6! \textbf{hxg6} 23.\textbf{W}h6 \textbf{We}7 24.\textbf{W}xg6† 24.\textbf{B}xd5 \textbf{B}xd5 25.\textbf{W}xg6† \textbf{W}g7 26.\textbf{W}xg7† \textbf{B}xg7 27.\textbf{B}xd5†

24...\textbf{W}g7 25.\textbf{W}h5
White will soon take on d5 and have three pawns for the piece. In addition, the naked black king remains a permanent concern.

A3) 10...\textbf{h}6?
This seems best.

11.\textbf{B}xf6
Of course the other way is to retreat, but then Black can seize the initiative:
11.\textbf{h}4 \textbf{B}e7 12.\textbf{f}4
After 12.\textbf{e}5 \textbf{Q}g4 13.\textbf{Q}g3 \textbf{Q}xe5 14.\textbf{B}xe7 \textbf{B}xe7 15.\textbf{B}e1 \textbf{d}6 16.\textbf{f}4 \textbf{Q}g6 I don't think White has enough compensation for the pawn. 12.\textbf{f}3 \textbf{d}6 13.\textbf{f}2 0-0 14.\textbf{d}4 \textbf{B}e7 Black doesn't have any particular problems here and his bishops are a long-term trump.

12...g5! 13.\textbf{Q}g3
13.\textbf{Q}xg5 \textbf{Q}g4! 14.\textbf{Q}g3 (14.\textbf{Q}d2? \textbf{Q}h2! 15.\textbf{B}h4 [15.\textbf{Q}g6 \textbf{Q}xf1 16.\textbf{g}xf7\textbf{Q}xf7 17.\textbf{B}xf1\textbf{Q}g7+] 15...\textbf{Q}xf1 16.\textbf{B}xf1 \textbf{B}f8 17.\textbf{g}6 \textbf{Q}xg6 18.\textbf{B}xh6 \textbf{B}xf1† 19.\textbf{B}xf1 \textbf{B}xh6— Shkuro – Y. Vovk, Alushra 2009) 14...\textbf{h}xg5 15.\textbf{W}xg4 \textbf{B}xh4 16.\textbf{Q}h3 \textbf{f}5?

13...\textbf{d}5
13...\textbf{d}6 14.\textbf{f}5 e5 15.\textbf{Q}h1 \textbf{h}5 16.\textbf{Q}f2 \textbf{h}4 17.\textbf{h}3= Mogranzini – Steingrimsson, Beijing 2008.
14.\textbf{e}5d5
Or 14.\textbf{e}5 \textbf{Q}g4 15.\textbf{Q}d2 \textbf{d}4≠ followed by \textbf{Q}e3.
14...\textbf{Q}xd5 15.\textbf{Q}xd5
15.\textbf{Q}d2 \textbf{f}5!! 16.\textbf{B}ae1 \textbf{Q}b4≠
15...\textbf{Q}xd5 16.\textbf{Q}f2 0-0-0
Black is undoubtedly fine here.

11...\textbf{xf}6 12.\textbf{f}4

12...0-0-0
12...\textbf{Q}e7??
This novelty may appear rather risky at first sight, but I failed to find a way to embarrass the black queen. For example:
13.\textbf{Q}f2
13...\textbf{Q}g3 \textbf{Q}d4† 14.\textbf{Q}h1 0-0 15.\textbf{f}5 \textbf{g}6!
13.\textbf{e}5 \textbf{Q}g6 14.\textbf{Q}g3 \textbf{f}5! 13.\textbf{f}5 \textbf{Q}e5!
13...0-0 14.\textbf{e}5
14.\textbf{Q}g3 \textbf{Q}d4 15.\textbf{Q}e2 \textbf{Q}xb2! Without fear! 16.\textbf{e}5 (16.\textbf{b}1 \textbf{Q}f6) 16...\textbf{Q}d5 17.\textbf{b}1 \textbf{Q}a3≠
14...\textbf{Q}g6 15.\textbf{Q}g3
15.\textbf{f}5 \textbf{Q}xf5 16.\textbf{Q}d4 \textbf{Q}g5 17.\textbf{Q}d5 \textbf{Q}d8≠
15...\textbf{f}5!
After ...\textbf{d}7-\textbf{d}6 Black is fine.

13.\textbf{Q}h1 \textbf{d}5 14.\textbf{e}5d5
After 14.e5 \textbf{Q}g6 15.\textbf{Q}g3 \textbf{h}5 I prefer Black’s position, as his hopes of getting to the rival king are more realistic than White’s.

14...\textbf{e}5d5 15.\textbf{d}4 \textbf{Q}d6 16.\textbf{Q}d2 \textbf{Q}e8
In G. Jones – Eames, Hastings 2006, White eventually took home the full point, but I think it is Black who has an advantage here.

B) 10.\textbf{Q}g3??
Rather frequently played, but not the smartest idea.
10...d6 11.f4 h5!

A powerful move!

12.\textbf{h1}

12.h3 h4 13.\textbf{h1} \textit{e7} (13...\texttt{b6} 14.\texttt{e3} d5 15.exd5 \texttt{xd5} 16.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{xd5} 17.\texttt{e2} \texttt{c7} = Devereaux - Gourlay, Hereford 2006) 14.\texttt{f2} b4 15.\texttt{e2} \texttt{b6} Followed by ...\texttt{c6}; I really believe in Black's position here.

12...d5! 13.e5

13.exd5 b4! 14.\texttt{e4} \texttt{xd5} 15.\texttt{h2} 0-0-0 I'd rather be Black in this lively position. For example after 16.\texttt{c7} \texttt{e7} 17.\texttt{e3} \texttt{g4}! he would have seized the initiative.

13...d4 14.\texttt{e2} \texttt{d5}!

A good intermediate move, centralizing Her Majesty with gain of tempo.

15.\texttt{f3} \texttt{g4} 16.h3 \texttt{h6} 17.\texttt{g3} \texttt{f5} 18.\texttt{e4} \texttt{c7} 19.\texttt{hg3} 0-0-0 20.\texttt{e2} f6!

Black won a convincing game in Tiviakov - Kotronias, France 2007.

C) 10.f4

Tiviakov's latest attempt at extracting an opening edge.

10...d5

10...b4 11.\texttt{a4} h5 (11...\texttt{c7} 12.f5 \texttt{c7} 13.\texttt{g3} 0-0 14.\texttt{h5} \texttt{h5} 15.\texttt{hxh5} 12.f5) (12.e5 \texttt{d5} 13.\texttt{c4} \texttt{bxc3} 14.bxc3 h4 15.\texttt{h3} \texttt{c7} 16.d4) 12...e5 13.\texttt{g5} d5 14.\texttt{e1} \texttt{e7} 15.\texttt{d1} \texttt{d6} 16.\texttt{f2} d4 17.\texttt{h4} 0-0-0 18.\texttt{h3} \texttt{b8} 19.\texttt{f3} \texttt{a7} 20.\texttt{g3} \texttt{c8} 21.\texttt{f1} \texttt{c6} 22.\texttt{a1} \texttt{b5} 23.\texttt{d2} \texttt{c8} 24.\texttt{c4} \texttt{xh4} 25.bxc4= Simonian - Kovchan, Kiev 2008.

10...d6 11.\texttt{e1}!? \texttt{c7} 12.\texttt{g3} \texttt{d7} 13.f5= Lane - Illingworth, Canberra 2007.

11.e5

11...d4

11...\texttt{g4} 12.h3 \texttt{h6} 13.\texttt{g3} White should be better because of the silly knight on h6.
11...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash d7 12.d4!} As often in this line, the b7-bishop will find it hard to get into play after this move. 12...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash cxd4 (12...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e7 13.\texttt{\textbackslash e3}} g6 14.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e1}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e7 15.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash f2}}} Cherniaev – R. Pert, Hinckley Island 2009) 13.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash cxd4}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e5 14.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e3}} 0-0 15.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash h5}} Next will be \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash c5}}. This position, which is akin to a French, offers mutual chances.}

12.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e1}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash d5}} (simpler than 12...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash g4}} as in Movsesian – Eljanov, Sarajevo 2005) 13.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash g3}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash d7}} (13...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e7 14.f5 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e7 15.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e2}} 0-0-0 16.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash g2}}}) 14.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e2}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e7 15.f5 0-0-0}} Next will be ...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash b8}} and ...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e8}}. I don't think White has a real chance to go for the black king's throat here. On the other hand, the b7-bishop has significant potential.

12...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash dxc3}}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Diagram 1}
\end{center}

In this wild position White has two options: C1) 13.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash f5?!}} and C2) 13.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash fxg7}}.

\textbf{C1) 13.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash f5?!}}}

Tigran Petrosian (the young modern-day version) played this move twice, scoring two victories. Things aren't that clear-cut however...

13...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash xf6}}!

14.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e6}}

Less to the point are 14.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash c3}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash exf5}}! and 14.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash bx c3}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash exf5}} 15.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash g3}} g6 16.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e1}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash d7?!} 17.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash d4}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash cxd4}} 18.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e3}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash c5}}.

14...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash cxb2}}!

The testing move.

14...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash xex6}} 15.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash f4}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash f6}}

15...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash d7}} 16.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e1}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash d8}} 17.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e2}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash f8}} 18.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash bxc3}}

16.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e2}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e7}} 17.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash bx c3}}

17.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash h5}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash g6?!; 17.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e1}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash d7}} 18.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash h5}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e6}}

19.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e2}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash g6}} 20.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash g3}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash f6}} 21.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e5}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash f8}} 22.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash g3}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash g6}}

17...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash c3}} 18.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash a3?!}}

The position is not easy to assess. White has good compensation for the pawn but his opponent may be able to defend.

18...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash d4}}!

18...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e8}} 19.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash b1}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash d4}} 20.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash f2}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash d7}} 21.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e1}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash d8}} 22.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash b2}}

18...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash b4}} 19.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e1}} 0-0-0 20.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash x b4}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash cxb4}}

21.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash x e7}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e8}} 22.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash x e7}} 23.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash x e8}} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash d7}} 24.\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e2}}
Chapter 20 - 4.\c 4 e 6. \d 8 e 2 - 5. \d 6. 0 - 0 a 6. 7. d 3

19.\h 1 e 8
19...b 4 20. \a e 1 0 - 0 - 0 21. \x b 4 \e d 8
22. \d a 5 ±
20. \d h 5 \d d 8
20...\c 6 21. c 3! \c d 7 22. \x g 7 \d f 8
23. \c f 5 ±

This looks more natural than: 15...\d d 8
16. \c b 2 \x b 2 17. d 4? \c 4 (after 17...\c 4
18. \e 1 ± the threat of \h 4 is strong;
17...\c d 4 18. \d 3 \e 8 19. \f b 1 \c x c 2
20. \x d 4 \d e 7 21. \d e 5 + -) 18. \c x c 4 \d b 4
19. c 5 The position remains messy, but I prefer
White.

16. \c b 2! \x b 2 17. c 3!

With the king on the d 7 -square, 17. d 4 \e 4
seems fine for Black, for example: 18. \c x c 5
\d c 7 19. \e 1 \d x c 5 ± 20. \h 1 \d c 6 ±

21. c 3!
I like this move which highlights Black's
difficulties in coordinating his pieces.
21...\x c 3
21...\d d 5 22. c 4 \e 6 23. \d e 1 ±
22. \d b 1 \d g 5 23. \d f 2 \d d 2 24. \g 4 ±

We have been following T.L. Petrosian -
Kotanjian, Dubai 2007. I think, especially in a
practical game, Black is in trouble here!

15. \c x f 7 ±

A crucial position to check the validity of
White's concept. The black queen is out of
play and the black king is exposed, but Black
is a piece up!

17...g 5 !
The best in my view, denying White the
option of \d f 4 followed by \g 4. Other tries
are:

17...\c c 7? 18. \h b 1 \d a 2 19. \f 4!

After this move White seems to be on top.
19...\c c 7
No better is: 19...g 5 20. \f 2 \d a 3 (20...\d a 5
21. \g 4 \d c 7 22. b 4 \d a 3 23. \d e 6 \d b 6
24. \d d 4 \d x d 4 25. \d x d 4 \d c 7 26. \e 1 and
White is winning) 21. \g 4 \d c 7 22. \e 2
\d d 6 (22...\f 6 23. \d f 5!) 23. \d x g 5 \d c 6
24.\textit{Wf6} The black position is under immense pressure.

20.\textit{Wf2} \textit{Wxa5} 21.\textit{Pe2} \\
21.\textit{De6\+} \textit{Wb8} 22.\textit{f8=W\+} \textit{Wxf8} 23.\textit{De8} \textit{Wxa7} \\
24.\textit{De6} \textit{Wb6\+} is not at all clear. \\
21...\textit{Wd6} 22.\textit{De6\+} \textit{Wb8} 23.\textit{Wc3}!

White is aiming to ensure that the black king does not reach a safe haven on a7. \\
23...\textit{Wxc3} 24.\textit{De1} \textit{Wxe5} \\
24...\textit{Wxa5} 25.\textit{Dxc5\+} \textit{Wd8} 26.\textit{De6\+} \\
25.\textit{Wxe5} \textit{Dxe5} 26.\textit{f8=W\+} \textit{Wxf8} 27.\textit{Wxf8\+} \textit{Wxa7} \\
28.\textit{Wxa8\+} \textit{Wxa8} 29.\textit{Wxc5}

Although White may face some technical difficulties, the extra exchange gives him excellent winning chances.

17...c4? A strange silicon move. 18.\textit{dxc4} \textit{Dc7} \\
(18...\textit{Dc8} 19.\textit{Df1} \textit{Wxa2} 20.\textit{Wf2} is promising for White) 19.\textit{Df2} bx\textit{c4}

20.\textit{Wc1\+} This nudge of the queen makes \textit{Dd4} a devastating threat. 20...\textit{Dc5} (20...\textit{Wxb3} \\
21.\textit{Dd4} \textit{Wb6} 22.\textit{Dh1} \textit{Wd6} 23.\textit{Dh6\+} \textit{Dc8} \\
24.\textit{Dd2} \textit{Dd5} 25.\textit{Dg5\+} 21.\textit{Dd4} \textit{Wxd4} \\
22.cxd4 \textit{Wxd4} 23.\textit{Dh1} \textit{Wc5} 24.\textit{b4!} Black is defenceless.

17...\textit{Dd5??} \\
The human move.

18.\textit{Df4!} \\
This is stronger than: 18.\textit{Dh1} \textit{Dxb3}! 19.\textit{Wb1} \textit{Wc2}! 20.\textit{Wb2} (It is safer for White to go for 20.\textit{c4} \textit{Dd6} 21.\textit{Df4} \textit{Dxf4} 22.\textit{Dxf4} \textit{Wxd3} \\
23.\textit{Dh4} \textit{Dc2} 24.\textit{Dh2\+} \textit{Dc6} 25.\textit{Dh6\+} \textit{Dd7} with a perpetual check.) 20...\textit{Dd6} 21.\textit{Dg3}

21.\textit{Wae8!!} Not an obvious move... \\
22.\textit{fxc6} \textit{Dxc6} 23.\textit{Wxe8} \textit{Dxe8} 24.\textit{Dxc2} \\
\textit{Wxc2} 25.\textit{Df1} \textit{Dxc3} 26.\textit{Dxa6} \textit{Dc4} Black looks to being doing fine in this endgame.

18...\textit{Wxb3} \\
18...\textit{Dxf7} 19.\textit{Dxf7} \textit{Df7} 20.\textit{Wxa6} \textit{Dxa6} 21.\textit{Dh7\+} \textit{Dh8} 22.\textit{Dxa6} and Black is in trouble.

19.\textit{Wg4\+} \textit{Dc7} 20.\textit{Dc4}\+ \\
It is not obvious how Black should defend, for example: \\
20...\textit{Dd4\+} 21.\textit{Dh1} \textit{Dd6} 22.\textit{Df1}

White seems likely to win back the sacrificed material while retaining an attack.

18.\textit{Df5} \\
Likewise after 18.\textit{Df2} \textit{Dc7} or 18.\textit{d4} \textit{Dc7}, White is well-advised to force a repetition of moves by 19.\textit{Df1} \textit{Dc2} 20.\textit{Dc1}. \\

![Chess diagram](image_url)
18...e7 19.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bb1}}} a2 20.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Ba1}}}=

It's time to take the draw! After 20.d4 c4!
21.d5 \textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{c5}}}† 22.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bh1}}} cxb3 23.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxb3}}} a4
Black's king is safe.

C2) 13.fgx7 \textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxg7}}} 14.bxc3 \textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bg8}}}

15.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxf2}}} \textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxc3}}}

15...\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bf6}}} 16.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bb2}}} \textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bh4}}} 17.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bg3}}} And now there is a choice:

17...\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxg3}}} 18.hxg3 \textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxg3}}} 19.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bh5}}}∞ See the annotations to 17...\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxg3}}}. If play persists in an endgame, a draw will be likely. Otherwise, with queens on the board, the attacking side may just crush his opponent.

Or 17...\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxg3}}} 18.hxg3 \textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxg3}}} 19.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bg4}}} \textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxf2}†}} 20.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxf2}}} a6 21.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bh1}†}} and White is a little better since the h7-pawn is very weak. That said, even if it drops for nothing, the presence of opposite-coloured bishops may foil White's winning ambitions.

16.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxc3}}} d4 17.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bf1}}}

17.g3? would weaken the white king.

17...\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxc3}}} 18.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bd4}}} 19.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bh5}}}∞

19.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bc2}} 0-0-0} 20.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bd5}}} 21.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bf6}}} \textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bd7}}} looks pleasant for Black.

19...c4

19...\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bd8}}} 20.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bc2}}} Threatening \textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxe6}†}}.
20...\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bd5}}} (20...\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bf6}}} 21.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxh7}†}}; 20...\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bf7}}} 21.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Be3}}}! \textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxg2}†}} 22.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bf2}}} \textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bf6}}} 23.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxa6}}} \textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bd5}}} 24.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxh7}†}} 21.f3! \textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxg2}}} 22.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bc4}}} \textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxd3}}} (22...\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bhx2}}} 23.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bhx2}}} \textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxd3}†}} 24.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bf2}†}}-+) 23.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bd2}}}+

19...\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bd5}†}} 20.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxd5}}} exd5 21.d4! White should be slightly better.

20.bxc4 bxc4 21.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Ba4}}}

In the event of 21.f5 e5 22.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bsh7}}} \textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bg4}}}! 23.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Be1}}} \textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxg2}}} 24.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxa5}}} f6 25.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bc3}}} \textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bg7}}} 26.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bh6}}} \textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bb8}}} White is in trouble.

Or if 21.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bd2}}} then Black equalizes with:
21...\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bd5}†}} (rather than 21...\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bf3}}} 22.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Ba1}}}! or
21...c3 22.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bd3}}} 22.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bb5}}} \textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxh5}}} 23.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxh5}}} cxd3 24.\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bxd3}}} \textbf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{Bd8}}}∞
21...d5
21...Bg7 22.Bxc4 Bxg2† 23.Bf2!† Followed by Bc7. White's king is not so bad in the centre. (23.Bf1 Ba1 24.Bd1 Bb5 25.Bc7 Bg1† 26.Be2 e5!)

22.g3

An interesting attempt to improve on the duel Tiviakov - Shirow, Wijk aan Zee 2010, which Black won rather quickly: 22.f5 e5 23.Bxh7? (After 23.f6 0–0–0 the position is murky but objectively I don't think Black is worse.) 23...Bd7†! After this move, Black has the initiative. 24.Bh6?! Bxg2†! With a large advantage to Black.

22.Be5 Bxe5 23.fxe5 Bb8=

22.Bb8! 23.Be2 Bb1

The natural try, but Black's other moves also require a careful look:

23...Bb5 24.f5! Bg7 25.Bf1 Ba1 26.Be2 cxd3 27.cxd3=*

23...Bg6 24.Be1

24.Be5 Bxe5 25.Bxe5 cxd3 26.cxd3 Bb3 27.Bxa6 Bxd3 28.Bc2 This may look better for White but Black can escape: 28...Bd1†! 29.Bc2 Bh1 30.Bh3 Bf1† 31.Bd1 Bg4 32.Bc8† Bd7 33.Bc5 Bc4†! An important move. 34.Bxc4 Bxd2† 35.Bxd2 Bxc4 36.Ba7† The endgame should be drawn.

24...Bc3 25.Bc5
25.Be2 cxd3 26.cxd3 Bc6=*

25...Bxe5
25...Bxc2? 26.Bxd5! (26.Bxb8† Bxd7=) 26...Bxa4 27.f5 White has a tremendous initiative here!

26.fxe5 cxd3 27.cxd3 Bb6
27...Bb3 28.Bc2 Bb7 29.Bh4 Bg7 30.Bd2=

26.Bh4†
I think White has some pull in the endgame due to his more active rooks.

24.Bf1

Intending to enter a slightly better ending with 25.Bc5, which becomes a distant dream after Black's reply.

24...Bc5!

24...Bc3 25.Bc5 Bxe5 (25...Bxc2 26.Bxd5 Bxc1 27.Bxc4) 26.fxe5 cxd3 27.cxd3 Even though this looks fairly drawish, White is better because the a6- and h7-pawns are weak.


26.Bxa6? cxd3=*

26.Bh5
Chapter 20 – 4.\textit{\textbf{c}4} e6 5.\textit{\textbf{d}ge2} – 5...\textit{\textbf{f}6} 6.0–0 a6 7.d3

Black cannot avoid a perpetual check. This is an interesting example of how the position can progress. I think both sides can find some fresh ideas in a totally new and interesting middlegame.

Conclusion

This chapter covers what I believe is the critical line of the entire 1.e4 c5 2.\textit{\textbf{c}3} \textit{\textbf{c}6} 3.\textit{\textbf{b}5} complex. The key position is reached after 3...\textit{\textbf{d}d4} 4.\textit{\textbf{c}4} e6 5.\textit{\textbf{d}ge2} \textit{\textbf{f}6} 6.0–0 a6 7.d3 b5 8.\textit{\textbf{b}3} \textit{\textbf{x}b}3 9.axb3 \textit{\textbf{b}7} when White has three main options: 10.\textit{\textbf{g}5}, 10.\textit{\textbf{g}3}?! and 10.f4. My view of 10.\textit{\textbf{g}3}?! is obvious. 10.\textit{\textbf{g}5} is more of a challenge, but even so after 10...h6 Black should feel very confident. That leaves the ambitious player with White looking at 10.f4. The resulting positions are very sharp and for the moment appear balanced. However, there is plenty of scope for new ideas, including testing some of the novelties I have suggested.

Overall Conclusion

1.e4 c5 2.\textit{\textbf{c}3} \textit{\textbf{c}6} 3.\textit{\textbf{b}5} has gained a lot of popularity recently, which is quite understandable. Indeed, after only three moves one avoids mainstream theory. White can try to implement simple positional plans, even though Black, of course, is not without resources. In the critical lines, both sides can play for a win in a very complicated and exciting middlegame.
Beating 2.a3 with 2...g6

1.e4 c5 2.a3
This queenside pawn-nudge, aiming for a sort of Wing Gambit, continues to be fashionable, and is dangerous enough that Black should have a clear idea of how he intends to counter it.

2...g6
White has telegraphed his intention to continue with b2-b4, so it is an eminently sensible response for Black to fianchetto his king's bishop and then irritate White by attacking the a1-rook. Black does, of course, have many other options at his disposal, but since the text move seems entirely satisfactory, I shall mention the alternatives only very briefly:

2...Cc6 3.b4 cxb4 4.axb4 Cxb4 5.d4
Objectively, I think Black is okay here, but White has definite compensation for the pawn and has scored well from this position in practice.

2...e6 3.b4 cxb4 (3...b6? seems a good way for Black to decline the sacrifice) 4.axb4 Cxb4 5.c3 Cc7 6.d4 In this position, which can also arise from a 'normal' Wing Gambit (after 2.b4 cxb4 3.a3 e6 etc.) Black should be fine, but the position is easier for White to play.

3.b4
The consistent follow-up, although White has many alternatives:

3.Cc4 Cg7 4.Cf3 Ce6 5.Ce3 d6 6.0-0 e6
7.b4 Cge7 8.bxc5 dxc5 9.Cb1 0-0 10.Cb2 a6

Black had the more comfortable position in W. Mack – Hillarp Persson, Guernsey 2010.

3.c3 d5 4.exd5 \(\text{\textit{xd5}}\) 5.d4 cxd4  
Black has a safe alternative in 5...\(\text{\textit{g7}}\) 6.\(\text{\textit{f3}}\) \(\text{\textit{c6}}\) 7.dxc5 \(\text{\textit{xc5}}\) 8.\(\text{\textit{e3}}\) \(\text{\textit{a5}}\) 9.\(\text{\textit{c4}}\) \(\text{\textit{f6}}\) 10.\(\text{\textit{bd2}}\) 0–0 with equality, Grabner – Gysi, e-mail 2005.

6.cxd4 \(\text{\textit{g7}}\) 7.\(\text{\textit{e3}}\) \(\text{\textit{d6}}\)!

In an analogous position in the c3-Sicilian (with White’s knight on f3 and his a-pawn unmoved), this is a well-known blunder, but in this instance matters are not so clear.

8.\(\text{\textit{c1}}\) \(\text{\textit{c6}}\) 9.\(\text{\textit{xh6}}\)!!

White should prefer 9.\(\text{\textit{xc3}}\) \(\text{\textit{h5}}\) 10.\(\text{\textit{d5}}\) \(\text{\textit{xd4}}\) 11.\(\text{\textit{xd4}}\) \(\text{\textit{xd4}}\) 12.\(\text{\textit{b5}}\) \(\text{\textit{f8}}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{f3}}\) \(\text{\textit{f6}}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{h3}}\) with an unclear position.

9...

K. Lutz – Murdza, Germany 2009, was agreed drawn here, but Black looks to be doing very well after, for example:

11.\(\text{\textit{bd2}}\) \(\text{\textit{e4}}\)† 12.\(\text{\textit{d1}}\) \(\text{\textit{xb3}}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{f3}}\)

13.\(\text{\textit{xb5}}\)† \(\text{\textit{f8}}\) doesn’t help White.

13...\(\text{\textit{xe5}}\)†

3.h4 h5 4.\(\text{\textit{c3}}\)

4.d4 \(\text{\textit{xd4}}\) 5.c3 \(\text{\textit{xc3}}\) 6.\(\text{\textit{xc3}}\) \(\text{\textit{g7}}\) 7.\(\text{\textit{c4}}\) \(\text{\textit{c6}}\) 8.\(\text{\textit{f3}}\) \(\text{\textit{f6}}\) 9.\(\text{\textit{d4}}\) \(\text{\textit{d6}}\) 10.\(\text{\textit{g5}}\) 0–0 11.0–0 \(\text{\textit{a6}}\)

12.\(\text{\textit{xd2}}\) \(\text{\textit{h7}}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{d5}}\) \(\text{\textit{gxg5}}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{hxg5}}\) \(\text{\textit{xe6}}\)  
White did not have enough for the pawn in K. Lie – Djurhuus, Norway (ch) 2005.

4...\(\text{\textit{dxc3}}\)
Black should be happy to go into a Morra Gambit in which a2-a3 looks like a waste of a tempo.

5...Qxc3 Qg7 6.Qc4 Qc6 7.Qf3 Qf6 8.e5 8.0-0 0-0 9.h3 d6 10.Qe3 a6† Phadke – Konguvel, New Delhi 2009.

8...Qg4 9.Qxf7† Qxf7 10.Qg5† Qg8 11.Qxg4 Qxe5 12.0-0

This was played in Knoeppel – Bocanegra, e-mail 2005, and now simplest is:

12...Qg7

White does not have enough for the pawn.

3...Qg7

4.Qc3

The alternatives do not look convincing:

4.Qa2 d5 5.Qb5† Qc6 6.Qf3 Qf6 7.e5 Qd7 8.f4 exb4 9.Qf3 Qb6 10.Qf2 a6 11.Qxc6 bx6

Black was much better in E. Tate – A. Chow, Chicago 2008.


4...b6

This seems to me to give White fewer options than 4...d6, although that has scored well for Black too.

5.Qc4

The most aggressive square for the bishop, but perhaps not best. Other options are:

5.g3 The fianchetto looks to be White’s best chance of securing equality. 5...e5 6.Qg2 Qe7 7.Qge2 Qc6 8.Qb1 0-0 9.d3 d6 10.0-0 Qd4

The position is approximately level, Collas – Nataf, Noyon 2005.

5.Qb1 Qc6 6.g3 also leads to approximate equality: 6...e6 7.Qg2 Qge7 8.Qge2 0-0 9.0-0

We have transposed into Murey – Kharlov, given in the note to White’s third move.


Chapter 21 – Beating 2.a3 with 2...g6

5...c6 6.a3 b6 7.d3
Developing the kingside looks more to the point: 7...a5 0–0 8.bxc5 bxc5 9.exd5 cxd5 10.d3 d5 11.exd5 exd5 12.b5 e7 Black is just a little better.

7...0–0 8.d2 e6 9.f4?
With ...d5 coming, Black was clearly doing well, but this just weakens the white position.

9...d5 10.a2 dxe4 11.dxe4 b7 12.h3 cxb4 13.axb4 c8 14.0–0 d4† 15.f2 ffd8

Black’s pressure is overwhelming.

16.e1 xd1 17.cxd1 d4 18.e5 e2†
19.h1 xf4 20.exf6 xg2

Conclusion
The logical 2...g6 has proved to be a worthy answer to 2.a3. White is denied the type of position he was hoping for, and Black can look forward to entering the middlegame on at least level terms.
Beating 2.f4 with 2...d5

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.f4

2...d5!

A) 3.©c3

B) 3.exd5 ©f6 4.©b5†

B1) 4...©bd7

B2) 4...©d7 5.©xd7† ©xd7 6.e4 e6

B21) 7.©e2

B22) 7.dxe6

408

410

410

412

412

415
Chapter 22 – Beating 2.f4 with 2...d5

1.e4 c5 2.f4 d5!

When the Grand Prix Attack first came to prominence, 2.f4 was the standard way to play into it. However, this counter in the centre has persuaded the majority of White players to prefer the move order 2.Qc3 and 3.f4. We shall see if this is justified.

White’s main options are A) 3.Qc3 and B) 3.exd5, but we shall look at a few sidelines first.

3.c5?! is surprisingly common, but not very good. Black has an easy development, and it is already White who should be looking for a way to equalize. P. Dimitrov – G. Szabo, Sunny Beach 2009, continued: 3...Qc6 4.Qf3 Qg4 5.c3 e6 6.Qb5 Qge7 7.0-0 a6 8.Qa4 Qc7 9.d3 Qf5 10.Qe1 Qxf3 11.Qxf3 h5 12.Qd2 Qe7 13.Qf1 b5 14.Qc2 Qb6 Black has the more comfortable position.

3.d3 does not look very scary, but it has been the choice of some highly-rated players: 3...Qc6 4.Qf3 dxe4 (in Grischuk – Svidler, Moscow [blitz] 2006, Black opted to avoid simplification with 4...Qg4 5.c3 e6 6.h3 Qxf3 7.Qxf3 g6 8.Qxe2 Qg7 9.0-0 Qge7 10.Qa3 a6 11.Qf2 Qc8 12.Qc2 0-0 13.e5 d4 14.c4 f6 15.exf6 Qxf6=) 5.dxe4 Qxd1† 6.Qxd1 Qg4 7.a3 0-0-0† 8.Qbd2 e5 9.Qxe5 Qxe5 10.Qc2 Qxf3 11.gxf3 Qe6 12.Qd3 Qf6 13.Qc2 Qd7 14.f4 g6 15.Qag1 Be8 16.Qg3 Qd6 Although Black was eventually ground down in McShane – Sedlak, Bundesliga 2005, the position looks equal at this stage.

3.Qf3!!

This is a dubious gambit.

3...dxe4 4.Qg5 Qf5

I consider this to be the safest route to an edge for Black. The main (only?) point of White’s third move seems to be to lure Black into the variation: 4...Qf6 5.Qc4 Qg4

This certainly looks tempting for Black, but White’s idea is to sacrifice his queen: 6.Qxf7†?? Qd7 7.Qxg4† Qxg4 8.Qe6† Qc6 9.Qxg4 Although White only has two pieces for the queen, the exposed black king provides real compensation. I believe that Black stands better objectively, but practice has shown that it is not a trivial matter to prove this.

5.Qc4 5.g4 Qd7 6.Qc4 e6 7.Qe2† Qf6 8.Qc3 Qc6 9.Qxe4 Qd4 10.Qd1 Qxe4 11.Qxe4 Qc6 and Black was already winning in Saenz Zabala – Inkirov, San Sebastian 2008.

5...e6 6.Qb5† 6.g4 h6 7.Qxf5 hxg5 8.Qxe6 f5 is also good for Black.

6...Qc6 7.Qxc6† bxc6 8.Qc3 Qf6 9.Qe2 Qd4
White has a couple of ways to avoid blocking his light-squared bishop:

4. \( \text{c}1 \text{c}7? \) ?

This is not the last time that I shall recommend this useful little queen move. The threat to the f-pawn can disrupt White's natural development. Another option for Black, utilizing the same idea, is:

4... \( \text{e}6 \) ?

5. \( \text{b}5\text{t} \) ?

Sacrificing the f-pawn with 5. \( \text{c}6 \) ?

5. \( \text{xc}6\text{t} \)

Sacrificing the f-pawn with 6. \( \text{c}6\text{f}6 \)

6. \( \text{xc}6\text{f}7 \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}5? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)

Straightforward development, for example 7... \( \text{e}6 \) 8. \( \text{f}3 \) 9. \( \text{g}7 \)

6. \( \text{f}6? \)
Chapter 22 – Beating 2.f4 with 2...d5

8.\(\text{c6}\)! \(\text{xe4}\) 9.\(\text{dxe5}\) \(\text{f6}\)
9...\(\text{d5}\)! 10.c4! is rather tricky.
10.dxe4 \(\text{d6}\) 11.\(\text{wd3}\)
11.\(\text{ xd2}\) \(\text{g6}\)
12.\(\text{xd3}\) \(\text{cxd3}\) \(\text{g6}\)

White's strong centre is balanced by Black's bishop pair, and the position is roughly level.

4.\(\text{xb7}\)\(\text{d7}\) 5.\(\text{xd7}\)\(\text{xd7}\) 6.\(\text{ec2}\) (6.\(\text{b1}\) \(\text{d3}\)
7.\(\text{xd3}\) \(\text{bd6}\)! also looks at least equal for Black)
6...\(\text{d3}\) 7.\(\text{xd3}\) \(\text{xd3}\) 8.\(\text{d6}\) (White displayed unjustified aggression in Waddingham – Kuczynski, Oakham 1986: 8.\(\text{b4}\)! \(\text{xe4}\)
9.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{xb4}\) 10.a3 \(\text{e4}\)!) 8...\(\text{c6}\) 9.\(\text{ge2}\) \(\text{e6}\)N
(9...\(\text{d4}\) 10.\(\text{a4}\) \(\text{b5}\) 11.\(\text{a6}\) was very messy in Cubas – Matsuura, Brasilia 2002) 10.0-0 0-0-0! The position is somewhat unclear, but with his control over the centre, I would rather be Black.

4...\(\text{c6}\) 5.\(\text{f3}\)

If White wants to avoid the possibility of
5...\(\text{g4}\) given in the following note, he may prefer the move order 5.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{g6}\) 6.\(\text{c1}\).

5...\(\text{g6}\)?
I like this move, which is not just a routine fianchetto, but also has the aggressive idea of attacking the f4-pawn. Another interesting idea is:

5...\(\text{g4}\) 6.\(\text{c1}\) \(\text{c7}\)N
6...\(\text{e5}\) 7.\(\text{f5}\) \(\text{h5}\) 8.\(\text{c4}\) (or 8.\(\text{b5}\) \(\text{a6}\)?)
8...\(\text{g6}\) 9.0-0 \(\text{f7}\) = M. Larsson – Pescharrdt, e-mail 2004.

7.\(\text{d3}\)
The alternatives cannot be recommended:
7.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{xe4}\) 8.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{xf3}\) Black wins a pawn.
7.\(\text{e5}\) \(\text{g5}\) 8.\(\text{fxg5}\) \(\text{h6}\) 9.\(\text{b5}\) 0-0-0 Black has a dangerous initiative.
7...\(\text{e5}\) 8.\(\text{xe5}\) \(\text{h5}\)
Black has good play on the kingside.

6.\(\text{d3}\)
6.\(\text{g3}\)! is much more common, but it has the drawback of weakening the f-pawn:
6...\(\text{h6}\)!

7.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{f6}\) 8.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{e6}\) 9.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{c7}\) 10.\(\text{e5}\) (10.\(\text{d2}\) looks awkward, but it would at least avoid losing a pawn) 10...\(\text{d5}\)\(\text{+}\) Tamashiro – Altea. e-mail 2000.

6...\(\text{f6}\) 7.\(\text{g3}\)
Other options are:
7.\(\text{g3}\)! \(\text{h6}\) transposes to Tamashiro – Altea above.

7.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{g7}\) 8.\(\text{g4}\) 0-0 Khramkov – Tokarev, e-mail 2010, and now 9.\(\text{g2}\) \(\text{b6}\) 10.0-0 \(\text{b7}\) is unclear.

7...\(\text{g4}\) 8.\(\text{g2}\) \(\text{g7}\) 9.0-0 \(\text{b6}\)
Black has decent play in this complicated position.

**B) 3.exd5 \( \textbf{\text{xf6}} \) 4.b5†**

The alternatives should not trouble Black:

4.c3 is not the most ambitious of moves:
4...\( \text{exd5} \) 5.f3 (both 5.exd5 \( \text{xd5} \) 6.f3 \( \text{e6} \)† and 5.b5† \( \text{d7} \) 6.xd7† \( \text{xd7} \) 7.xd5 \( \text{xd5} \) 8.xf3 \( \text{d7} \) are very level) 5...c3 (or 5...e6 6.e5 \( \text{d7} \) 7.b5 \( \text{d6} \) 8.0-0 0-0 9.xd7 xxd7 10.e2 \( \text{c7} \) 11.d3 \( \text{e7} \) with a balanced position, Plaskett - Yrjola, Sochi 1984) 6.bxc3 g6 7.b5† \( \text{d7} \) 8.e2 \( \text{g7} \) 9.a3 0-0?! 10.xd7 xxd7 11.xc5 \( \text{f5} \) Black had good compensation for the pawn in Neuman - Kalod, Czech Republic 2001.

4.c4 holds onto the extra pawn, but leads to White's light-squared bishop being rather passive: 4...e6 5.dxe6 xxe6 6.f3 c6 7.e2 \( \text{e7} \) 8.0-0 0-0 9.d3 \( \text{c7} \) 10.e3 \( \text{ad8} \)

Simple development has given Black compensation in the form of pressure down the d-file. 11.b3 a6 12.h1 b5 Black had more than enough for the pawn in Smolovic - Dobos, Budapest 1994.

Black has two ways to block the check, **B1) 4...\( \text{bd7} \) and B2) 4...\( \text{d7} \).**
Chapter 22 – Beating 2.f4 with 2...d5

7.\(\triangle f3\)

Or 7.\(\triangle e2\) g6 8.\(\triangle f3\) \(\triangle g7\) 9.0-0 0-0 and Black will play 10...e6 next, with good compensation for the pawn.

7...e6 8.dxe6

8.\(\triangle e2\) \(\triangle c7\) 9.dxe6 \(\triangle xe6\) 10.0-0 0-0 11.d3 \(\triangle f5\) 12.\(\triangle d1\) \(\triangle e8\) 13.\(\triangle c3\) \(\triangle d6\) 14.\(\triangle b2\) \(\triangle c7\) 15.\(\triangle h4\) \(\triangle g4\) 16.\(\triangle f1\) \(\triangle e6\) 17.\(\triangle d2\) \(\triangle ad8\)


8...\(\triangle xe6\) 9.d3 \(\triangle c7\) 10.0-0 0-0 11.\(\triangle c3\) \(\triangle e8\) 12.\(\triangle e5\) \(\triangle d4\)† 13.\(\triangle h1\) \(\triangle ad8\)

Black clearly has compensation for the pawn.

14.\(\triangle df3\)

14.\(\triangle e2\) \(\triangle d7\) 15.\(\triangle e3\) would have maintained approximate equality.

14...\(\triangle d7\)! 15.\(\triangle xd7\) \(\triangle xd7\) 16.\(\triangle e3\)

Black also has an advantage after 16.\(\triangle xb7\) \(\triangle xd3\) 17.\(\triangle f3\) \(\triangle xc4\).

16...\(\triangle xd3\) 17.\(\triangle ad1\) \(\triangle xc4\) 18.\(\triangle xb7\) \(\triangle g4\) 19.\(\triangle d1\) \(\triangle b4\) 20.\(\triangle g3\) \(\triangle xe3\) 21.\(\triangle xh4\) \(\triangle xe1\)

16...\(\triangle xe1\) \(\triangle xf4\) 23.\(\triangle xe7\) \(\triangle f3\)† 24.\(\triangle g1\) \(\triangle g4\)† 25.\(\triangle f2\) \(\triangle d2\)†

0–1 Janse – Wang Hao, Taby 2007.

6...b5 7.\(\triangle xb5\) \(\triangle d5\) 8.\(\triangle f3\)

It is sensible to prepare to castle. Both 8.\(\triangle xa6\) \(\triangle b4\) and 8.\(\triangle c3\) \(\triangle b4\) are promising for Black.

8...c4!N

8...g6 has been the most popular move here, and although it has scored highly for Black, I am not totally convinced by it. For example:

9.\(\triangle c3\) \(\triangle b6\) 10.\(\triangle c2\) \(\triangle g7\) 11.\(\triangle e4\) \(\triangle b8\) 12.\(\triangle a4\) \(\triangle c4\) 13.\(\triangle e2\) \(\triangle d6\) 14.\(\triangle c6\) 0-0 15.0-0 \(\triangle xb5\) 16.\(\triangle x b5\) \(\triangle f3\) 17.\(\triangle e7\) \(\triangle f6\)

Tsyhanchuk – Grandelius, Porto Carras 2010. White should now play 18.\(\triangle e5\) \(\triangle b6\) 19.\(\triangle f c7\) \(\triangle xc7\) 20.\(\triangle xc7\), when Black has some compensation for the pawn, but perhaps not enough.

9.\(\triangle c3\)

9.0-0? \(\triangle xb5\)† demonstrates one point of Black's 8th move.

A more sensible alternative for White is:

9.d3 \(\triangle xb5\) 10.\(\triangle d4\) \(\triangle xa4\) 11.\(\triangle xd5\) \(\triangle xc4\) I slightly prefer Black in this somewhat unclear position.

9...\(\triangle xf4\) 10.0-0 0 1d3 11.bxa6

A safer approach for White is to challenge the d3-knight: 11.\(\triangle h1\) e6 12.\(\triangle e1\) \(\triangle xe1\) 13.\(\triangle xe1\) \(\triangle d6\) The position is roughly equal.

11...e6!

Black should not forget about completing his development. Here is an example of what can happen if he neglects it: 11...\(\triangle xa6\)† 12.\(\triangle b5\) \(\triangle b6\)† 13.\(\triangle h1\) \(\triangle f2\)† 14.\(\triangle x f2\) \(\triangle x f2\)
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

15.d4! exd4 (15...cxd3 16.cxd3 cd6 17.c4 de8 18.f4++) 16.g5 f6 17.a4! White will attack the c8-bishop (by xc4 or xa8), after which the black king is in deep trouble.

12.h1 c5
More ambitious than 12...e7=.

13.e4
White can play 13.c6, hoping for 13...xa6 14.b5??, but instead 13...a7?? thwarts his plans.

13...0-0!

Black's grip on the d3-square gives him the better chances.

B2) 4...d7 5.exd7† xd7 6.c4
6.f3 xd5 7.e5 xe6 8.0-0 c6 is level.

6...e6

White now chooses between pinning the e-pawn and capturing it straight away: B21) 7.e2 and B22) 7.dxe6.

A rarer option is: 7.f3 exd5 8.e5 f5?? 9.0-0 d6 10.c3 0-0 11.g4? (11.b5 e8=) 11...e6 12.g5 d4 13.gxf6 dxc3 14.fxe7 e8 Chances are approximately equal, Genocchio – Caruana, Siena 2010.

B21) 7.e2 d6 8.d3
8.dxe6 fxe6 9.d3 0-0 transposes into the main line.

8.f5??

White nets a second pawn, but it looks suicidal.
8...0-0 9.fxe6 fxe6 10.dxe6
After 10...fxe6? fxe6 11.dxe6 Qc6 Black has more than enough for the two pawns.
Never mind that the queens have come off
10...Qc7 11.Qc3
11.Qc3 Qc6 (11...Qxe2? is too risky; after 12.Qc3 Qg3t 13.d4 Qc6 14.d3 Qad8 15.Qg5 White was doing well in Sulskis – Ringoir, Dresden 2007) 12.Qb5 Qe7 13.Qf3 a6 14.Qc3 (14.Qxd6 Qxd6 is no better; Black threatens ...Qae8, and after 15.0-0 Qg4! he has a winning attack) 14...Qd4 15.Qxd4 cxd4 16.d1 Qh5!! 17.Qxh5 Qxe6?? 18.Qe3 (18.Qe2 Qg6++) 18...dxe5 19.Qd5 exd2t 20.Qxd2 Qxd5t 21.cxd5 Qf5 Black retains a serious initiative in this endgame.
11...Qc6 12.Qc3
12.0-0 Qd4 13.Qxd4 Qxh2t 14.Qh1 cxd4 gives Black an edge.
12...Qae8 13.d3
13.0-0 Qd4 14.Qxd4 cxd4 15.Qb5 Qxh2t 16.Qh1 Qb8 17.Qh3 was played in Kahn – And. Horvath, Budapest 2008, and now 17...Qe4!! (or 17...Qh5!) leaves White defenceless.
White should prefer 19.Qc7 Qd5 20.Qxb6 Qf2t 21.Qc1 Qxb6, although Black is still slightly better.
19...Qe4t! 20.Qc2
20...Qf2t 21.Qc1 Qc5 22.b4 22.Qb1 Qxd3 23.Qxd3 Qe2t
22...Qxd3t 23.Qxd3 Qe2 24.Qd1 Qf6 25.Qd5t
25.Qb1 Qf1t 0-1 Suta – Schoen, Budapest 1994.
25.Qd4! is the best defence: 25...Qd2t 26.Qxd2 Qxa1t 27.Qc1 Qxa2 28.Qc3 Qb3t 29.Qe1 Qc2 30.Qe3 Qxc3t 31.Qxc3 Qxc3 32.Qf2 Qxc4 33.Qb5 Qb4 34.Qa1 White has some chances of saving the endgame.
25...Qh8 26.Qc1
We have been following Wheeler – Emms, West Bromwich 2005. Black could now have finished it off most efficiently with:
26.Qxa2 N 27.Qc1 Qf1t
8...0-0 9.dxe6 fxe6 10.Qf3 Qc6 11.0-0 Qae8 12.Qc3 e5

13.f5
13...Qd4 14.Qd1 Qf5 15.Qg5 Qg4

16.Bd2


16...e4?

Also possible is 16...d4 17.Qe4 Be7 with equality.

17.dxe4!


17...Qd4 18.h3!?

After 18.Qh1 Qb8 Black has good play for the pawn, for example: 19.h3 (or 19.Qd5 Bxe4 20.Qxd4 Qxf1+ 21.Bxf1 cxd4+) 19...h6 20.Qh4 (20.Qxg4 Qxg4#) 20...Qxf3! 21.Qxf3 (21.gxf3 Qe3#) 21...Qc7 22.Qg3 (22.Qg3 Qxf3 23.Bd5+)

(21.gxf3 Qe3#) 21...Qc7 22.Qg3 (22.Qg3 Qxf3 23.Bd5+)

18.Qf3+ 19.Qxf3 Qxf3 20.gxf3 Qe5 21.Qd5+ Qh8 22.Qg2

23...Qh6!! 24.e5 Qxe5! 25.Qxe5 Qgxe5 26.Qe1 Qcx4--+ 22...Qf6 23.Qe1 Qe5 Black’s pressure down the b8-h2 diagonal compensates for the sacrificed material.

18...Qg3 19.Qxf3 Qxf3 20.Qg3 Qe5 21.Qd5+ Qh8 22.Qg2

23...Qxf3+ 24.Qe2 Qh2+ 25.Qd3 h6

This looks very risky for White, but I can find no more than a draw for Black.

22...Qxf3!

Otherwise White will have time to consolidate.

23.Qxf3 Qe5

23...Qxh3+ 24.Qe2 Qh2+ 25.Qd3 h6

Otherwise White will have time to consolidate.
26.\texttt{\textsc{c}e3} \texttt{\textsc{d}d8} 27.\texttt{\textsc{e}f1} \texttt{\textsc{c}c7} 28.\texttt{\textsc{x}xd8\texttt{\textsc{d}xd8}} 29.\texttt{\textsc{h}h8\texttt{\textsc{h}h7}} 30.\texttt{\textsc{x}xd8} ends up in White's favour.

24.\texttt{\textsc{d}d2} \texttt{\textsc{x}xh3\texttt{\textsc{t}}} 25.\texttt{\textsc{e}e1} \texttt{\textsc{h}h2\texttt{\textsc{t}}} 26.\texttt{\textsc{x}xe5\texttt{\textsc{h}h5\texttt{\textsc{t}}}} 27.\texttt{\textsc{e}e2}

This is the critical try.

7...\texttt{\textsc{x}xe6\texttt{\textsc{t}}}

After 7...\texttt{\textsc{f}xe6} 8.\texttt{\textsc{d}f3} \texttt{\textsc{c}c6} 9.\texttt{\textsc{e}e5\texttt{\textsc{t}}} it is not clear that Black can equalize, for example: 9...\texttt{\textsc{c}c7} 10.\texttt{\textsc{c}c6} \texttt{\textsc{xc6}} 11.0-0 \texttt{\textsc{d}d6} 12.\texttt{\textsc{f}f3}
Now $16.\text{c}b5 \text{e}8$ was good for Black in Llados Peiro – Ayas Fernandez, Barcelona 1994, but instead $16.\text{c}c2$, bringing the knight to e3, would put the onus on Black to demonstrate sufficient compensation.

11...$\text{d}5$ 12.$\text{e}2$ $0-0-0$ 13.$\text{c}2$ $\text{e}5$ 14.$\text{f}xe5$ $\text{dxe5}$ 15.$\text{b}3$ $\text{d}6$ 16.$\text{b}2$ $\text{f}8$ 17.$\text{f}3$ $\text{g}4$

18.$\text{g}3$

18.$\text{f}d1$ $\text{c}6$ is fine for Black.
18...$\text{f}e3$ 19.$\text{d}xe3$ $\text{g}4$ 20.$\text{f}f3$ $\text{dxe3}$ .
20...$\text{h}5$ 21.$\text{a}e1$ $\text{e}5$ 22.$\text{c}1$ Kharlov – Senff, Amsterdam 2005.
21.$\text{f}e1$

14...$\text{b}8$ The simpler 14...$\text{f}f4$N 15.$\text{d}6$+$ $\text{d}6$
16.$\text{f}4$ $\text{d}3$ is also equal.

15.$\text{f}xe5$ $\text{dxe5}$ 16.$\text{d}xe5$ $\text{f}xe5$ 17.$\text{f}f4$ $\text{e}2$
18.$\text{c}3$
18...$\text{g}5$ $\text{d}3$ 19.$\text{a}e1$ $\text{f}x1$ 20.$\text{x}e1$ $a6$
21.$\text{c}3$ $\text{d}6+$

18...$\text{x}b2$ 19.$\text{a}a4$ $\text{e}2$ 20.$\text{x}b2$ $\text{x}b2$ 21.$\text{a}c5$ $\text{c}e5$ 22.$\text{x}e4$ $\text{d}xe4$ 23.$\text{xe}4$ 24.$\text{f}f7$ $\text{f}x4$ 25.$\text{x}g7$ $\text{x}g7$
26.$\text{x}e7$ $\text{d}xe7$
27.$\text{c}1+$ $\text{b}6$ $\frac{1}{2}$–$\frac{1}{2}$

Conclusion

The evidence is that Black can continue to play this system with confidence – in both lines B1 and B2 he obtains good long-term compensation for the sacrificed pawn. Indeed, in many of the variations in this chapter it is White who must play accurately in order to maintain the balance.
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.d4 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4 e6 5.f3

5...e5

A) 6.b5† b7 7.f5 d5 8.exd5 a6
   A1) 9.a4
   A2) 9.xd7†

B) 6.b3

419
419
421
422
Since White has played 3.d4 and 4...xd4, some might argue that this is not a true Anti-Sicilian. However, White's 5th move clearly sidesteps the main theoretical lines, and so the system deserves its place in this book.

By avoiding 5.c3, White indicates his intention to play c2-c4 and head for a Maroczy Bind structure. Rather than meekly allow this, it makes sense for Black to deny White the necessary time to complete such a set-up by immediately harassing the white knight.

5...e5

The main moves here are A) 6...b5 and B) 6.c3, but we shall look at a couple of rarer options first:

6.d5 is rare for good reason; after 6...d5 Black is already slightly better. Lin Chen – Xu Jun, Suzhou 2006, continued rather erratically: 7.g5 c6 8.xf6 xf6 9.xd5 xf5 10.exf5

10...xh4† 11.g3 b4† 12.c3 xb2 13.b3 c1† (13...xa1 14.xb7 is somewhat messy) 14.h2 0-0-0? (14...c5† 15.g2 0-0 is clearly better for Black) 15.a6 d2† 16.xd2 xxd2† 17.xf1 bx6 18.xd1 xe3 19.d5 The game has completely turned, and now White has a dangerous initiative.

6.b5 a6 7.c3 e6

8.d5

This seems to be the logical follow-up to
White's play so far, but he has some other options:

a) 8.\texttt{e}d2 b5 9.\texttt{c}h3 \texttt{c}bd7 10.a4 b4 11.\texttt{c}d5 \texttt{c}xd5 (if Black is not up for a fight, he can force a draw by 11...\texttt{c}xe4 12.\texttt{f}xe4 \texttt{c}h4 13.\texttt{c}d2 \texttt{c}xd5 14.\texttt{e}xd5 \texttt{c}f4 15.\texttt{c}e1 \texttt{c}h4) 12.\texttt{e}xd5 \texttt{c}e7. The position looks quite like a normal Najdorf. 13.\texttt{a}5 \texttt{c}7 14.\texttt{c}e3 (White could try 14.\texttt{a}a4 \texttt{c}5? 15.\texttt{b}xb4 \texttt{c}xb3 16.\texttt{b}xb3 \texttt{c}xa5 17.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{c}xd5 18.\texttt{f}d5 \texttt{c}xd5 19.\texttt{c}c7 and his active rook provides reasonable compensation for the pawn) 14...0-0 15.\texttt{c}d2 \texttt{c}e7 16.0-0-0? \texttt{c}xd5! Black had snatched an important pawn in Feller – Edouard, Lyon (rapid) 2008.

b) 8.\texttt{g}5 \texttt{c}bd7 9.\texttt{c}d2 \texttt{c}c8 10.\texttt{d}d5 \texttt{c}xd5 11.\texttt{e}xd5 \texttt{c}e7 12.\texttt{c}b3 \texttt{c}e7 13.\texttt{c}c1 (This looks odd, but White had no wholly satisfactory way of dealing with the threat of \texttt{c}xd5.) 13...0-0 14.\texttt{c}4 \texttt{c}e8 The opening had obviously been a success for Black in Semina – Schiffer, Germany 2006.

8...\texttt{c}xd5 9.\texttt{e}xd5 \texttt{c}f5 10.\texttt{d}d3 \texttt{c}f6

The simple 10...\texttt{d}xd3 11.\texttt{c}cxd3 \texttt{c}e7 is also equal.

11.0-0 \texttt{c}e7 12.\texttt{c}c4 \texttt{d}d7 13.\texttt{c}c3 0-0 14.\texttt{c}e3 \texttt{g}5 15.\texttt{c}xg5 \texttt{c}xg5 16.\texttt{c}xg6 \texttt{c}xg6

This level position was soon agreed drawn in Fine – Eliskases, Semmering 1937.

A) 6.\texttt{b}b5+

6...\texttt{c}bd7

An example of what Black should avoid is:

6...\texttt{d}d7 7.\texttt{c}xd7+ \texttt{c}xd7 8.\texttt{f}f5 d5 9.\texttt{g}5! \texttt{dxe4} 10.\texttt{c}xf6 \texttt{c}xh1+ 11.\texttt{c}xd1 \texttt{c}xf6 12.\texttt{f}xe4 This endgame is no fun to defend.

7.\texttt{f}f5 d5 8.\texttt{c}xd5 a6

Putting the question to the bishop, which chooses between A1) 9.\texttt{a}a4 and A2) 9.\texttt{c}xd7+.

A1) 9.\texttt{a}a4 b5 10.\texttt{b}b3

10...a5!

This has only been played in three out of nearly two hundred games, but I believe it to be the best move. Black prepares to kick the
bishops again, while keeping options open for his queen’s knight.

That said, Black’s usual choice also looks entirely acceptable: 10...\(\texttt{\textit{c6}}\) 11...\(\texttt{\textit{c3}}\) \(\texttt{\textit{c5}}\) 12...\(\texttt{\textit{c3}}\) 0–0 13.\(0-0\) (or 13...\(\texttt{\textit{d3}}\) \(\texttt{\textit{b4}}\) 14...\(\texttt{\textit{a4}}\) \(\texttt{\textit{a4}}\) 15...\(\texttt{\textit{a4}}\) \(\texttt{\textit{b7}}\) 16...\(\texttt{\textit{d2}}\) \(\texttt{\textit{c7}}\) 17.0–0–0 \(\texttt{\textit{f8}}\) and Black is regaining the pawn with a fine position, Sitnikov – Areshchenko, Evpatoria 2007) 13...\(\texttt{\textit{f5}}\) 14...\(\texttt{\textit{b1}}\) \(\texttt{\textit{g6}}\) Objectively, this position is probably balanced, but in practice Black has a great score from here.

11...\(\texttt{\textit{c3}}\)

Other ways of saving the bishop are no better:

11...\(\texttt{\textit{c3}}\) \(\texttt{\textit{c5}}\) 12...\(\texttt{\textit{c3}}\) \(\texttt{\textit{a4}}\) \(\texttt{\textit{b3}}\) 13...\(\texttt{\textit{cxb3}}\) \(\texttt{b4}\)

11...\(\texttt{\textit{d6}}\) \(\texttt{\textit{a4}}\) 12...\(\texttt{\textit{d5}}\) \(\texttt{\textit{a6}}\) and Black has good compensation for the pawn.

11...\(\texttt{\textit{b6}}\)

12...\(\texttt{\textit{c3}}\)

12...\(\texttt{\textit{d3}}\) is probably best, aiming for equality: 12...\(\texttt{\textit{a4}}\) 13...\(\texttt{\textit{c2}}\) \(\texttt{\textit{bxd5}}\) (Black insists on making the pawn sacrifice permanent; instead 13...\(\texttt{\textit{bxd5}}\) would be level) 14...\(\texttt{\textit{b5}}\) \(\texttt{\textit{d7}}\) 15...\(\texttt{\textit{e2}}\) \(\texttt{\textit{c7}}\) 16.0–0 \(\texttt{\textit{c5}}\) 17...\(\texttt{\textit{b1}}\) 0–0 Black has sufficient compensation for the pawn.

12...\(\texttt{\textit{a4}}\) 13...\(\texttt{\textit{c2}}\) \(\texttt{\textit{c5}}\) 14...\(\texttt{\textit{e2}}\) 0–0

Black is now set to regain the pawn, with an edge.

15...\(\texttt{\textit{d2}}\)

15...\(\texttt{\textit{b5}}\) \(\texttt{\textit{xe3}}\) (or 15...\(\texttt{\textit{b7}}\) 16...\(\texttt{\textit{xe3}}\) \(\texttt{\textit{bxd5}}\) 17...\(\texttt{\textit{g5}}\) \(\texttt{\textit{a6}}\) is good for Black.

15...\(\texttt{\textit{bxd5}}\) 16...\(\texttt{\textit{xd5}}\) \(\texttt{\textit{xd5}}\) 17...\(\texttt{\textit{e4}}\) \(\texttt{\textit{b6}}\)

18...\(\texttt{\textit{f2}}\) \(\texttt{\textit{a6}}\) 19.0–0 \(\texttt{\textit{a3}}\)!
Black had a big advantage in Stoppel-Huebner, Athens 1969.

A2) 9...d7 10.e3 b5

White has tried a wide variety of moves at this point:

11.a4 b7 12.axb5 axb5 13.exa8† axa8 14.e2 (14.0–0 15. b1 ♘xd5 16. ♘xd5 ♗xd5= Horne – B.H. Wood, Hastings 1949) 14...e7 (the natural 14... ♘xd5= seems simplest) 15.0–0 0–0 16. ♘d1 ♗c5 17. ♘c3 b4 18. ♘e4 ♗xe3† 19. ♘xe3 ♘xd5 20. ♘xe4 ♘xc3 21. ♘xc3 ♘xc3 22. ♘xc3 ♗xe6 23. ♘c4 e4 ½–½ Bodnar – Andreev, Alushta 2005.

11.0–0  c5 (Black develops solidly, but targeting the d-pawn more quickly by 11...b7 12.e3 b4 [or 12...d8] looks okay as well) 12. ♘c3 0–0 13. ♘h1 ♗xe4 14. ♘xe4 b4 15. ♘e4 ♘xd5= Isoliani – Womacka, Germany 2000.

11...e2  a5 12.c4 0–0 13. c3 bxc4 looks uncomfortable for White: 14. ♘d2 ♘d4! 15.0–0–0?  ♘b8 16. ♘e1 ♘b7 17. ♘xc4 ♘xd5 18. ♘xd5 ♘xd5 19. ♘c3 ♘e6 20. ♘b3 ♘e8 21. ♘xd4 ♘xd4 22. ♘d2 ♘d6 0–1 De Graaf – Cipolli, e-mail 2002.

11.c4 ♘c5 12. c3 0–0 13.0–0 (more popular, but also riskier, is 13. ♘e4 ♘xe4 14. fxe4 f5?? 15. ♘xf5 ♘d8 16. ♘g4 ♘xf5 17. exf5 bxc4 18. exd4 ♘d4 19. d6† ♘h8 20. ♘d5 ♘h8 21. ♘h4 ♘c8 22. ♘d7 ♘c2 and White was in trouble in Leiros Vila – D. Popovic, e-mail 1999) 13...bxc4 14. ♘h1 ♘xe3 15. ♘xe3 ♘b7 16. ♘d2 ♘d8 17. ♘b6 ♘e8 18. ♘c7 e4 19. ♘xe4 ♘xe4 20. ♘xe4 ♘xe4 21. ♘d2 ♘e8 22. ♘e1 h5 23. ♘g1 ♘xe1 ½–½ Chattarjee – Suvrajit, New Delhi 2010.

11...b7 12.0–0

Perhaps White should be looking to secure equality with one of the alternatives:


12. a3 0–0–0 (taking the king to the queenside seems strange to me; 12...d8 13. ♘e2  a5 looks a safer route to equality) 13. ♘d3 (I think 13. ♘e2? is more dangerous) 13... ♘xd5 14. ♘exd5 ½–½ Ghaem Maghami – Moradiabadi, Dresden 2005.

12. ♘d4 13. ♘e4 ♘xd5

12. ♘d4 13. ♘e4 ♘xd5

14. ♘xd5

Other options are:

14.c4 bxc3 15. ♘xd5 ♘xd5 16. ♘xc3 ♘c5†

14.\c4 \e7 15.\we2 was played in Gamsa – Soffer, Tel Aviv 1990, and now simply 15...\e7N is at least equal.

14.\we3? (intending \d1) 14...\xe3 15.\xe3 \wx\d3 16.\edx3 \d8 17.\e3 16.\e3 was roughly level in Schuster – Kosmol, e-mail 2002.

14...\xd5 15.\xf2
15.\e3 is natural, but it does not seem to quite equalize, for example: 15...\e7 16.\f2 (16.\e5 \xe4 17.\wx\d7+ \wx\d7 18.\xe7 \xe7 19.\fxe4 \h8 gives Black a very pleasant rook ending) 16.\we6 17.\e4? \xe4! 18.\fxe4 \e8 19.\edx5 \wx\d5 20.\edx5 \e4f7

15...\e5 16.\wx\e2 0-0 17.\e3 \e7
The two bishops give Black a lasting edge.

18.\e3 16.\wx\e2 0-0 17.\e3 \e7 20.\e5 \w7 21.\we2 \e8 22.\e3 \w7

An aggressive idea, albeit one with positional aims. Black wants to play ...\a4 and ...\wa5, then later activate his king's bishop with ...\d8-b6.

8.\e3
8.\e3 leaves the dark squares looking very weak: 8...\e6 9.\e3 0-0 10.\e3 \d7 11.\d5 \b6 (or 11...\g4 12.\e2 \b6=) 12.\e2 \e5 With equality, Nyzhnyk – Hamitevici, Chotowa 2010.
Chapter 23 – Beating 5.f3 with 5...e5

8...a4

Also possible is 8...0-0 9.\&c2 a4 10.\&d2 and now:

\[ \text{Diagram 1} \]

a) 10...\&a5 11.0-0 \&d8 is similar to our main line: 12.c5 (otherwise Black will play ...\&b6 with equality) 12...d5 13.exd5 \&xd5. Chances are balanced, Szczepkowska – Wojtaszek, Wroclaw 2010.

b) Black can switch his attention to the kingside with: 10.\&h5?!N 11.\&c3 (the computer points out the possibility 11.g3 \&d4?? with the idea 12.gxf4 \&h4† 13.\&f2 \&xf2† 14.\&xf2 \&b6† and 15...\&xb2) 11...\&g5 12.\&xg5 (after 12.\&f2 \&d4 13.0-0 \&c6 Black has good play) 12...\&xg5 13.g3 \&c6. Black looks to be at least equal. Note that 14.f4 fails to 14...exf4 15.\&xh5 fxg3 and the white position falls apart.

9.\&d2

9...\&d8

Other moves lead to similar play:

10.\&c2 \&c6 11.\&a3 \&c6 11...\&d3 \&h5 12.\&e2 \&g5 13.\&f2 \&a5† 14.\&c3 \&f4 15.0-0 0-0 was approximately equal in Lima – L. Dominguez, Merida 2000.

9...\&c8 10.\&c2

\[ \text{Diagram 2} \]

12...\&d4!

This assures Black of satisfactory play. The alternatives are less convincing:

12...\&a5! 13.\&b3 \&b4 14.\&b1! axb2 15.\&d2

This is a bit risky for Black; his queen is not well placed.

If Black carries out his standard plan by 12...\&d8!! 13.\&h1 \&b6 then the weakness of his a-pawn comes into play: 14.\&xb6 \&xb6 15.\&xa4 \&b4 16.b3 Black does not have enough compensation.
13.\textit{d3} $\text{wb4}$ 14.\textit{b1} \textit{d7} 15.\textit{h1} \textit{d8} 16.f4
This looks a bit loosening; instead 16.c5 $\textit{cxd5}$ 17.cxd5 would be equal.

16...\textit{a3}

17.\textit{c1N=}
We have been following the game Z. Varga – Berkes, Hungary (ch) 2005, which instead continued 17.\textit{xe5} dxe5 and only then 18.c1. The exchange of f4 for d6 favours Black who could now have claimed an edge with: 18...\textit{g4N} 19.bxa3 (After 19.\textit{g1}? \textit{a5}! White would lose one of his knights, while 19.\textit{c5} axb2 20.\textit{xb2} \textit{a3} is also promising for Black.) 19...\textit{xa3}=

After the text move many moves are possible with one bizarre illustrative line being:

17...\textit{g4} 18.\textit{xd4} exd4 19.\textit{d5} axb2 20.\textit{xb2} \textit{a3} 21.\textit{b1} \textit{c6} 22.\textit{f3} \textit{a5} 23.e5
Of course there were alternatives before this, but now one forcing line is:

23...\textit{xc3} 24.\textit{xh7}+ \textit{h8} 25.c2 \textit{xd5} 26.cxd5 \textit{g6} 27.e\textit{g6} \textit{hxg6} 28.\textit{xc3} dxc3 29.\textit{xc3}=

\textbf{Conclusion}

5...\textit{e5} remains a fully viable response to 5.f3. In line A with 6.\textit{b5+}, Black obtains full compensation for the sacrificed pawn, and it is often White who must take care to maintain equality. In the more strategical play of line B, Black's long-term plan of activating his dark-squared bishop tends to result in a balanced middlegame.
John Shaw

2.d3 – A Black Repertoire

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.d3 ♙c6 3.f4

3...g6 4.f3 ♙g7

A) 5.♗e2 d6 6.0–0 f5!? 7.c3 e6
   A1) 8.♕a3
   A2) 8.exf5 gxf5 9.♕g5 ♙f6!N 10.♗h5+ ♙xh5 11.♕xh5+ ♙d7
       12.♗e1 ♙e8 13.♕e2 ♙g6

B) 5.g3 d6 6.♕g2 e5
   B1) 7.c3
   B2) 7.0–0
1.e4 c5 2.d3
This tricky move can be difficult to meet, especially if Black is not well prepared. White's play may look slow, but his dream is to build up on the kingside and swamp Black with an eventual f4-f5. While scanning through the database I saw a ridiculous number of games where Black lost to a bog-standard attack: pawn to f5, bishop to h6, knight to g5, major pieces to the h-file, announce mate. By studying this chapter the reader will avoid this ignominious fate.

Note that my anti-2.d3 repertoire is compatible with Milos Pavlovic's anti-Closed Sicilian recommendations of Chapter 12; thus if White decides to transpose with a later c3 it should cause no confusion.

2...c6 3.f4
The early advance of the f-pawn is White's only truly independent choice here, as other moves tend to lead into either the Closed Sicilian or the King's Indian Attack. However, the move order 3.g3 g6 4.g2 g7 5.f4 d6 6.c3f3 is often used to reach line B below.

3...g6 4.c3 g7

Now we have a split depending on whether White wishes his king's bishop on e2 or g2: A) 5.c2 or B) 5.g3.

A) 5.c2 d6 6.0-0
Against the less common 6.c3 Black can also react with 6.f5? (as in the main line) because White does not have any way of taking advantage of the alleged weakening of Black's kingside: 7.exf5 (7.0-0 e6 returns to our main line) 7...gx5 8.h5 c6 9.b3 (9.h5 c4 10.hxg5+ may look scary for a moment, but after 10...d7 11.h4 c5 it is quite promising for Black) 9...d5 10.0-0 d5 This looks okay for Black.

6...f5??
An unusual move, but none the worse for that. The moves that White will expect are 6...f6, 6...e6 or 6...e5.

7.c3
7.c3 c6 8.e3 0-0 9.b3 b5 10.c2 b5 was fine for Black in Mujika Lizaso – Nava Pereda, San Sebastian 1999.

7...e6

The main moves now are A1) 8.c3 and the critical and forcing A2) 8.exf5.

A1) 8.c3
This was IM Seul's choice the second time he had this position; no doubt he varied fearing
an improvement. With 8.\texttt{c}a3 White does not force the pace, so the following moves are typical rather than forced.

8...\texttt{d}e7 9.\texttt{c}c3 0–0 10.\texttt{d}c2 b6 11.\texttt{d}d2
\texttt{d}d7 12.\texttt{e}a1 \texttt{b}b7 13.\texttt{f}2 \texttt{a}e8
13...e5?

14.exf5

Curiously, all four recaptures are viable, with the symmetrical 14...exf5 very safe indeed. For example, 15.d4 \texttt{c}d5 is about level.

15.d4 \texttt{c}d5 16.dxc5 bxc5 17.\texttt{b}5

This following manoeuvre is misguided. Instead 17.\texttt{d}d1 followed by \texttt{c}e1 is messy but roughly level.

17...a6 18.\texttt{a}4?! \texttt{b}6 19.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{a}5 20.\texttt{e}2
\texttt{x}b3 21.axb3 \texttt{d}d3 22.\texttt{c}e3 \texttt{f}e7 23.\texttt{c}c1
\texttt{b}6 24.\texttt{e}4 \texttt{a}5

Black had a clear plus in Seul – Kasimdzhanov, Mainz (rapid) 2010.

\textbf{A2) 8.exf5 gxf5 9.\texttt{g}5}

This is the line that tries to refute 6...f5. Now Black must be precise, but the correct answers are available...

9...\texttt{f}6!N

I reckon that this must be the improvement that Kasimdzhanov had prepared.

In Seul – Mestrom, Gent 1998, Black simply lost material for no compensation: 9...\texttt{f}6:
10.\texttt{b}5+ \texttt{f}d8 11.\texttt{f}f7+ \texttt{c}c7 12.\texttt{a}3 \texttt{a}6
13.\texttt{x}xh8 \texttt{x}h8 14.\texttt{e}3+-

10.\texttt{b}5+ \texttt{x}xh5 11.\texttt{x}xh5+ \texttt{d}7

The other tries allow mate-in-one, so this only move is easy to find. Black’s play may look eccentric, but unless White can find something tangible then Black’s bishop pair will be the real power in the position.

12.\texttt{e}1
White must try to target the e6-pawn before Black can complete his development.

12...e8 13.e2
13...c7 14.a3 a6∞ shows what might happen if White plays slowly. Black's position will improve every move with ideas such as ...d7, ...g6 and ...e(either)g8.

13...g6

We have a further split: A21) 14.xe6† and A22) 14.a3.

A21) 14.xe6† xe6 15.xe6

15...d4?!  

Of course 15...h6? fails to 16.g6, but after the tricky text move the g7-bishop will no longer be a target.

15...b6 is a fine alternative. For example, 16.e3 a6 17.a3 e8 transposes to line A22 below and is thus highly promising for Black.

16.cxd4 xd4† 17.h1 h6 18.xd6† xd6 19.f7† e6 20.xh8

Black's rooks are often the fall guys in this line, while the minor pieces are the stars.

20...xh8 21.c3 e6  

Or 21...b6?? planning ...a6.

22.e3 d8 23.e2 b6

Black has obvious compensation for the pawn.

A22) 14.a3 b6

I love this nonchalant move. The dull 14...e8 is also legal, but I think it's inferior. Black should avoid this defensive move if possible; and it is possible.

15.xe6† xe6

The other capture looks too risky:
16.\texttt{bxc6?!} \texttt{e8} 17.\texttt{b5} \texttt{bxc6}!

Refusing to be bluffed.

18.\texttt{bxc6} \texttt{cxb6} 19.\texttt{c7}+ \texttt{d7} 20.\texttt{xa8}

\textbf{Diagram 2}

20...\texttt{a6}!

The a8-knight is going nowhere, so the key is to collapse White's centre before reinforcements arrive.

The clumsy 20...\texttt{b5}?! is better for White after 21.\texttt{xb6}+ \texttt{xb6} 22.\texttt{e2} \texttt{a6} 23.\texttt{e2} and the vital d3-pawn survives.

21.\texttt{d2}

21.\texttt{c4?} \texttt{b4} is a fiasco.

21...\texttt{xd3} 22.\texttt{e1} \texttt{e4+}

Black will collect the knight simply by moving his own; then his minor pieces will dominate the rook.

16...\texttt{a6} 17.\texttt{e3} \texttt{a8}

With two bishops, superior development and pressure on the d3-pawn, Black has ample compensation for the pawn.

\textbf{B) 5.g3 d6 6.\texttt{g2} e5}

Now the main moves are B1) 7.c3 and B2) 7.0-0. We should also consider a few lesser lines:

7.\texttt{c3} transposes to a Closed Sicilian, see Chapter 12.

7.fx e5 is rather tame. For example: 7...\texttt{dxe5} 8.0-0 \texttt{ge7} 9.\texttt{c3} 0-0 10.\texttt{e3} \texttt{b6} 11.\texttt{d2}

\texttt{d4} 12.\texttt{d5} \texttt{xd5} 13.\texttt{exd5} \texttt{fxd5}+ 14.\texttt{xh3} \texttt{f6} 15.\texttt{c4} \texttt{e4} 16.\texttt{dxe4} \texttt{xb2} 17.\texttt{e7} \texttt{a6} 18.\texttt{b3} \texttt{c3} 19.\texttt{e2} \texttt{d7} 20.\texttt{g2} - Bibiloni - Mecking, Sao Paulo 2009.

7.f5 \texttt{gx5} 8.0-0 \texttt{f4} (8...\texttt{ge7}?! transposes to the note to Black's 7th move in line B2) 9.\texttt{exe5} \texttt{e6} 10.\texttt{a3} \texttt{a6} 11.c3 \texttt{d7} 12.\texttt{h4} \texttt{g5} 13.\texttt{d3} 0-0 14.\texttt{a4} \texttt{b8} 15.\texttt{e4} White has just enough for the pawn, Klinger - M. Schlosser, Austria 1993

\textbf{B1) 7.c3 \texttt{g7} 8.0-0 h6?}

This is a useful little move; among other things Black will be able to play ...\texttt{e6} without worrying about \texttt{g5}.

\textbf{Diagram 3}

9.\texttt{e3}

J.R. Koch - Nataf, Senat 2003, instead continued: 9.\texttt{a3} \texttt{d6} 10.\texttt{c2} \texttt{xf4} 11.\texttt{xf4} \texttt{d5} 12.\texttt{c1} \texttt{g5} 13.\texttt{exd5} \texttt{xd5} 14.\texttt{e3} \texttt{e5} 15.\texttt{exf5} 0-0 16.\texttt{xex5} \texttt{xd3} 17.\texttt{dxd4} This move doesn't work, but Black was already a little better anyway due to his bishop pair. 17...\texttt{xd4} 18.\texttt{xd4} Black should now have played: 18...\texttt{xc8}?? 19.\texttt{b4} a5 20.\texttt{xb7} \texttt{ab8} 21.\texttt{xe4} \texttt{xe4} 22.\texttt{xe4} \texttt{xb2} 23.\texttt{exe6} \texttt{fxe6} Despite the opposite-coloured bishops, Black has good chances of winning this endgame.
9...exf4 10.gxf4 f5 11.gxf3
Aiming to disrupt Black's development. The move restrained 11...a6 12...xe2 w.d7 13...ae1 was played in Maiwald – Danner, Vienna 1998, and now 13...0–0 would be level.

11...e5 12...a3 0–0 13.e5
More solid is 13...a6 b6 14.b4 ac6 15...b3+ h7 16...ad1 but Black is still fine.

13...b6 14.b4 ac6 15.d4 e6 16.bxc5 bxc5 17.exd6 d5 18.d2

18...wxd6
This is strong, but I like 18...cx4 even more. For example: 19...e1 e3 20...x3 dxe3 21...c5 (21...xe3 w.b6 22...c1 w.d8 is good for Black) 21...e8 22...xe3 e8 23...d2 f8 24...d1 b6+ 25...f2 e8 26.b3 Black wins back the d6-pawn with a clear advantage.

19...e5 dxe5
This leads to an unclear exchange sacrifice. I prefer 19...e6f8! for example: 20...e1 eac8 21...c5 e8 22...f6 23...h4 w.d5+

20...dxe5 w.c7 21.c4 b6 22.a8 axa8 23.e3 ac4 24...xc5
Black has compensation, but now it's a bit messy, Zatonskikh – Natat, Canada 2003.

7...exf4
There is a good case for Black making this pawn exchange at an early stage, certainly before castling kingside, as the f4-f5 advance may give White dangerous attacking chances. However, Black can safely delay the exchange for one further move:

7...e7 8.f5 gxf5 9...h4 f4 10...e6 w.d7
Black is looking to defuse White's initiative by an exchange of queens.
Chapter 24 – 2.d3 – A Black Repertoire

11...\texttt{g}g4 12.\texttt{w}xg4 \texttt{hxg}4 13.\texttt{c}c3 \texttt{d}d4 14.\texttt{f}xe5 \texttt{xe}5 15.\texttt{f}f\texttt{f}2

This was Welling – Miezis, Isle of Man 2002, and now 15...\texttt{g}g8 16.\texttt{h}h1 \texttt{d}d7 17.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{a}a8 gives Black full equality.

8.gxf4 \texttt{g}g7 9.c3 0–0 10.e3 b6

15.\texttt{d}d4?

15.cxd4 e6 16.\texttt{c}c3 \texttt{d}d7 is approximately level.

15...\texttt{h}h4 16.\texttt{h}h1 \texttt{h}h3 17.\texttt{e}e1 \texttt{h}h6 18.e3 \texttt{f}f5 19.\texttt{f}f3 \texttt{x}xe3 20.\texttt{x}xe3 \texttt{x}f4 21.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{g}g5† 22.\texttt{f}f2 \texttt{x}xe3† 23.\texttt{x}xe3 \texttt{f}f5† 24.\texttt{g}g3 \texttt{a}a8

Black was much better in Movsziszian – Genov, Solsones 2004.

Conclusion

I am confident the anti-2.d3 repertoire outlined in this chapter, although brief, will be effective.

Against 5.\texttt{e}e2 d6 6.0–0 the unusual 6...f5?! leads to fascinating play. In particular, Black must be ready for 7.c3 e6 8.exf5 gxf5 9.\texttt{g}g5, but 9...\texttt{f}f6!N is a fine answer.

After 5.g3 the play is more orthodox, but still full of fight. The lines and move orders recommended for Black in this chapter ensure that f4–f5 is never dangerous; without this plan, White has little hope of an advantage.
2. b3 g6!? 

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.b3 g6!? 3.a3 b2

3... g6!

A) 4.d3?
   A1) 4... g7!? N
   A2) 4... c6!?
B) 4. d3
C) 4.e5 d5
   C1) 5. d4
   C2) 5.e6

435
435
436
437
439
439
441
1.e4 c5 2.b3

This offbeat line has been tried by many GMs as a surprise weapon, including Mamedyarov, Aronian and Short, while the Georgian GM Gelashvili has relied on it for years as his answer to the Sicilian. I will suggest an effective and unusual antidote for Black.

2...g6!

I always liked this move, mainly for its obvious naivety; Black challenges White to a race for the a1-h8 diagonal.

Actually, for those who prefer to cut out some (non-dangerous) sidelines, there is no problem with the move order: 1.e4 c5 2.b3 \( \text{c6} \)? 3.e5 \( \text{d5} \) 4.\( \text{b2} \)

Now 4...g6 transposes. Still, I prefer 2...g6 not just for its humour, but also because the above line is by far White's most challenging option. Thus, the 2...\( \text{c6} \) move order steers White towards the line he should choose.

3.\( \text{b2} \)

So White did get there first after all.

3...\( \text{c6} \)!

Not even threatening to take on e4, as \( \text{h8} \) would hang, but claiming that Black can go ...\( \text{g7} \) and ...\( \text{0-0} \) next, and there is no way for White to harm Black's suspicious-looking position.

4.\( \text{xf6} \)!!

This gives Black an easy game.

4...\( \text{xf6} \)

5.e5 \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{g7} \)

Here the main tries are: A) 4.\( \text{xf6} \)!! B) 4.\( \text{c3} \) and C) 4.e5. But there is also a weaker move that at first sight demands attention.
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

Despite the hole on d5, which will soon be occupied by a white knight, Black has dynamic possibilities with ...0-0 followed by ...f6-f5. Opening up the position for his bishops will outweigh White's plusses; Black already has a pleasant position.

6...c4 0-0 7.ge2 c6 8.0-0 d6
Threatening ...f5, and if:

9.g3

Then the engines correctly recommend the crafty:

9...h5!
With excellent counterplay for Black.

A) 4.Wf3??

This is an interesting attempt by Paichadze. It threatens e4-e5, as Black no longer has the d5-square available for his knight. In fact, as we shall see, this threat is hardly deadly.

Here Black has two sensible options to choose between, A1) 4...g7??N and A2) 4...c6??N. It shows how little explored the 2...g6 variation is that both sensible moves are still novelties! Before we study these moves a weaker alternative must be dismissed:

4...d6?!
The only move to have been tried in practice.

5.h4t bd7 6.xf6 e6 7.wd3 a6 8.xd7t Paichadze has been successful here, scoring 1½/2 against significantly higher rated opponents. It is not as though the position is unplayable for Black, but White's side did seem a bit more pleasant in both games after:

8...xh7
Or 8...xd7 9.c3 e6 10.ge2 g7 11.0-0 0-0 12.h4± was Paichadze - Pantsulaia, Tbilisi 2010, which was quickly agreed drawn.

9.c3 g7 10.ge2 0-0 11.0-0 f5 12.g3± White won convincingly in Paichadze - Yakovich, Kavala 2010.

A1) 4...g7??N 5.e5 dg8

This is not as stupid as it looks; if White does not react aggressively then the e5-pawn will simply be weak.
Chapter 25 – Beating 2.b3 with 2...g6

6.e6
An alternate try for White is:
6...\(\texttt{\{f4\}}\) d5?!?
In general, Black has a sound structure, as
the critical 6...c6 7.d3 c6 8.e3 d6 0-0
also looks playable.
7.e6?!
This is easily parried by:
7...\(\texttt{\{f6\}}\) 8.exf7t \(\texttt{\{xf7\}}\)
Black will artificially castle by \(\texttt{\{f8\}}\) and
...\(\texttt{\{g8\}}\), with an excellent position.

6...\(\texttt{\{f6\}}\) 7.exf7t \(\texttt{\{xf7\}}\)
The evaluation of 4...\(\texttt{\{g7\}}\) depends on this
position, and I think Black should be fine.
He has a firm grip of the centre and easy
development for his pieces. White might have
the better pawn structure and some attacking
chances against Black's king, but the only
realistic chance of fighting for the initiative
seems to be the engines' suggestion of:

8.g4?! h6
With a messy position; note that White's
direct attempt at a refutation is insufficient:

9.h4

9...\(\texttt{\{c6\}}\)?!
The safer option, compared to: 9...d5 10.g5

\(\texttt{\{g4\}}\) 11.gxf6 \(\texttt{\{xf3\}}\) 12.fxg7 \(\texttt{\{e8\}}\) 13.dxc3 c5!
Despite the fact that the engines prefer Black,
White could create a huge attack here.

10.g5 hxg5 11.hxg5

11...\(\texttt{\{xh1\}}\) 12.gxh1
12.gxf6 \(\texttt{\{xf6\}}\) was the point.

12...\(\texttt{\{h5\}}\)
Black is fine, as White's structure has been
compromised on the kingside; in fact, Black
could well already be better.

A2) 4...\(\texttt{\{c6\}}\)? 5.e5 \(\texttt{\{h5\}}\)!

Magnus Carlsen would obviously approve
of this manoeuvre; it's hard to see how White
can punish Black's provocative play or, indeed, how he can even develop normally.

6.\textit{\textbf{}} e3!?

The engines suggest this is White's best try and, by preparing 7.\textit{\textbf{}} f3 and attacking c5, it does create a healthy impression. Let's see a few alternatives:

6.e6?! f6 As usual this leads nowhere and just gives Black the centre.

6.\textit{\textbf{}} /c4!!

This does indeed provoke:

6...e6!

But this is not at all a weakening of Black's position. White lacks a logical move and Black is ready for ...\textit{\textbf{}} g7 attacking e5, with enough counterplay to ensure that g2-g4 will never be a threat.

7.g4 \textit{\textbf{}} g7 8.\textit{\textbf{}} g2 h5 9.h3 \textit{\textbf{}} d4

This led to chaos in Reefat - Neelotpal, New Delhi 2009, a game where all four rooks were captured on their original squares! The game continued:

10.\textit{\textbf{}} c3 \textit{\textbf{}} x2\textbf{t} 11.\textit{\textbf{}} d1 \textit{\textbf{}} x1 12.\textit{\textbf{}} e4 \textit{\textbf{}} a5 13.\textit{\textbf{}} x1 \textit{\textbf{}} xa2 14.\textit{\textbf{}} c3 b5 15.\textit{\textbf{}} f6\textbf{t} \textit{\textbf{}} d8 16.\textit{\textbf{}} xa8 bxc4 17.\textit{\textbf{}} e2 \textit{\textbf{}} a6 18.\textit{\textbf{}} f3 cxb3\textbf{t} 19.d3 \textit{\textbf{}} b7 20.\textit{\textbf{}} x7 \textit{\textbf{}} x7 21.\textit{\textbf{}} g5 \textit{\textbf{}} x1

22.\textit{\textbf{}} x/f7\textbf{t} \textit{\textbf{}} c8 23.\textit{\textbf{}} xh8 c4!

With a big advantage for Black, who later won. Note that this game was reached via a 4.e5 move order (see variation C. below).

6...b6?!

To me Black's position looks fine: ...\textit{\textbf{}} g7-f5 is on the agenda and if White stops this with \textit{\textbf{}} d3, then \textit{\textbf{}} b4 or just \textit{\textbf{}} e6 and \textit{\textbf{}} g7 seems okay for Black.

\textbf{B) 4.\textit{\textbf{}} c3 \textit{\textbf{}} g7}

Kicking the knight immediately is more critical than trying to exploit the pin with 5...d5?! This move has scared quite a few players away from this line, but it's completely harmless.

5...0-0 6.\texttt{fxf6}†

Or 6...\texttt{xf6} followed by a well-timed ...f5 is again excellent for Black.

6...\texttt{exf6}

Again White cannot stop his opponent from freeing his position with ...f5 and ...d5. The other recapture is also playable: 6...\texttt{xf6}?! The engines suggest this amazing move, and it does actually look perfectly reasonable, as after 7.\texttt{xf6} \texttt{exf6} then ...\texttt{f5} followed by ...d5 and ...d5 is hard to stop.

7.\texttt{c4} f5

This works tactically for Black, as after:

8.\texttt{xg7} \texttt{xg7} 9.exf5 d5 10.d3 \texttt{c6}

Black has no problems.

5...\texttt{h5}!

An excellent square for the knight, but mainly Black is undermining the weak pawn on e5; White is already quite a lot worse.

6.\texttt{f3} \texttt{c6} 7.\texttt{e4} d6!

8.\texttt{b5} \texttt{d7} 9.\texttt{xc6} \texttt{xc6} 10.d3 \texttt{c7}!!

This is typical of Ivanchuk – he is aiming for the absolute maximum rather than just be happy with his pair of bishops and the more pleasant position.

11.exd6

11...\texttt{a5}†! 12.c3 \texttt{xe4} 13.d7† \texttt{f8} 14.dxe4 \texttt{xc3}† 15.\texttt{xc3} \texttt{xc3}† 16.\texttt{f1} \texttt{d8} 17.g3 \texttt{f6} 18.\texttt{g2} \texttt{xd7} 19.\texttt{e2} \texttt{d3}†
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

Black is simply a pawn up, and won the ending in 35 moves, Vila Gazgue - Ivanchuk, Benidorm 2008.

C) 4.e5 \( \text{\&}d5 \)

The text is the obvious move but there is another option: 4...\( \text{\&}h5 \)?? Why not play this move? I don't see a way for White to place his pieces harmoniously and e5 could simply be weak. The engines prefer 5.\( \text{\&}f3 \), but after 5...\( \text{\&}c6 \) that would transpose to a position discussed in the previous game. This additional option, which has only been tried in practice by Neelotpal, is another argument for 2...g6 being the correct move order.

5.d4?! 

This move has been tried by 2.b3 specialist Gelashvili, as well as Paichadze.

5...\( \text{\&}a5 \)!!

This line forces Black to make three “only moves” in a row, but White ends up a piece down.

6.c3

6.\( \text{\&}d2 \) seems no better. 6...\( \text{\&}xd2 \)† 7.\( \text{\&}xd2 \)\( \text{\&}xd4 \) 8.\( \text{\&}g3 \) \( \text{\&}g7 \) 9.\( \text{\&}xd4 \) \( \text{\&}c6 \) 10.\( \text{\&}b2 \) \( \text{\&}db4 \)?? When White either has to dubiously sacrifice a pawn with 11.0-0-0 or settle for the \( \text{\&}xf1 \) 11.\( \text{\&}xf1 \) line.

6...\( \text{\&}xd4 \) 7.\( \text{\&}xd4 \) \( \text{\&}c6 \) 8.\( \text{\&}e4 \)

Or 8.\( \text{\&}d2 \) \( \text{\&}c7 \) 9.\( f4 \) \( \text{\&}h6 \)?? also gives Black a very pleasant position.

8...f5 9.exf6 \( \text{\&}xf6 \) 10.\( \text{\&}c2 \) \( \text{\&}g7 \)

Black was already very happy in Paichadze - Miroshnichenko, Baku 2006.

C1) 5.\( \text{\&}c4 \)

This logical move looks like the obvious refutation, but the tactics work for Black, which has led White to look elsewhere to challenge Black’s concept.

5...\( \text{\&}b6 \)!

Instead 5...\( \text{\&}c4 \) or 5...\( \text{\&}c6 \) 6.\( \text{\&}d2 \) e6 7.\( \text{\&}f3 \) \( \text{\&}g7 \) 8.\( \text{\&}c3 \) 0-0 9.\( \text{\&}b5 \) gave White a huge advantage in Gelashvili – Jalabadze, Tbilisi 2010.
Chapter 25 – Beating 2.b3 with 2...g6

6.e6 f6 7.b5 g7 8.f3 0–0 9.exd7 xd7 10.xd7 xd7 11.0–0 e5

With comfortable equality; I drew effortlessly in Short – P.H. Nielsen, Internet (blitz) 2004.

C2) 5.e6

Logical, as neither of the aggressive alternatives are impressive, and after quiet play Black would just complete his development with a comfortable position.

5...f6 6.exd7†

6...edx7

6...xd7?! also makes a lot of sense. It's hard to see how White can stop his opponent from occupying the centre with ...e5 and Black then has an easy game after following up with natural moves such as ...g7, ...0–0, ...e6 and ...b6. I think Black is already slightly better.

7.c4?!

This is logical as if White plays slowly then Black will, in similar style to the previous note, get a comfortable position simply by making natural moves.

7...f4?!

Maybe overly ambitious, especially as solid moves such as 7...b6 or 7...e6 should definitely be fine for Black, but the spirit of 2...g6, at least for me, is to try and punish White for his illogical play. I will show more of the game as it demonstrates some interesting ideas, however, the line I recommend for Black is:

7...c6?! 8.f3 xd7?!

With ...f4 to follow, this seems simply excellent for Black.

8.g3!

Not fearing any ghosts, Narciso plays the only critical response.

8...c6 9.b5 b5 10.f1!

Again very much up to the task; now I'm forced to retreat.

10...d5 11.d4
11...\( \text{g}2 \)?? e5 12.0-0 \( \text{g}7 \) is again fine for Black, due to his space advantage.

11...\( \text{b}6 \) 12.\( \text{c}3 \)??

Not ideal; once again White could consider a move such as 12.\( \text{g}2 \), but due to Black’s improvement on move 7 this position is not relevant to our opening analysis.

12...e5!

Black’s strategy has triumphed. White’s bishop is not exactly enjoying life on the a1-h8 diagonal, while on the other hand the bishop on c6 is not only well placed but also creates tactical possibilities that allow Black to undermine White’s centre.

13.\( \text{g}2 \) e4

13...\( \text{cxd}4 \) 14.\( \text{cxd}4 \) \( \text{b}4 \) is simple and good.

14.\( \text{f}d2 \) f5!

Giving up an exchange, but Black’s compensation is tremendous.

15.\( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{xd}5 \) 16.\( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{g}8 \) 17.\( \text{xe}8 \)

Now White does win the exchange, but Black’s compensation is overwhelming.

As is so often the case, the initiative overrules material, and White should have fought for the initiative with: 17.\( \text{xb}5 \) \( \text{xb}5 \) 18.\( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 19.\( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 20.\( \text{xe}8 \) e3 21.0-0! \( \text{xe}2 \)!

When in a complex position, White’s chances are by no means worse.

17...\( \text{xd}8 \) 18.\( \text{a}3 \) b4 19.\( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{g}7 \) 20.\( \text{b}1 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 21.0-0 0-0-0

With an overwhelming position for Black, which I managed to convert into a full point, Narciso Dublan – P.H. Nielsen, Spanish Team Championship 2004.

The move order of this game actually meant that it was not a Sicilian at all; it was only on the third move that I managed to squeeze my way into this book! The game went: 1.b3 g6 2.\( \text{b}2 \) Black is late again! 2...\( \text{f}6 \) 3.e4 c5?!

Conclusion

After 2.b3 g6?! is Black, as I almost claim, already better? No, but he is definitely not worse either. Also, in the anti-Sicilians Black is normally looking for a way to achieve a complex battle where he has winning chances, and I think 2...g6 definitely serves that purpose well, by being strategically very ambitious while still being based on sound principles.
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

Experts on the Anti-Sicilian includes articles from many writers, all but one of them grandmasters and all of them experts on their chosen topic. The anti-Sicilian lines, defined as 1.e4 c5 (but not the Open variations) are highly popular but rarely analysed in depth by very strong players. With Experts on the Anti-Sicilian we aim to put that right.

The authors and their articles are:

- GM Boris Avrukh: 3...e6 versus the Grand Prix Attack
- GM Jacob Aagaard: A Classical Repertoire against 2.c3
- GM Tiger Hillarp Persson: Beating 2.c3 c6 3.b5 \& Beating 2.f3 d6 3.b5
- IM Andrew Greet: Moscow Variation with 5.c4
  - GM Christian Bauer: 2.f3 d6 3.c4, 2.f3 d6 3.c3 c5 4.h3, The King's Indian Attack \& 2.f3 e6 3.c3 d5 4.e5 d4
- GM Milos Pavlovic: A 10-minute repertoire against the Closed Sicilian
- GM Matthieu Cornette: Tiviakov Grand Prix Attack: 2.c3 c6 3.b5
- GM Colin McNab: 2.a3 g6, 2.f4 d5 \& 2.f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.cxd4 \& f6 5.f3
- GM John Shaw: 2.d3 \& A Black Repertoire
- GM Peter Heine Nielsen: Beating 2.b3 with 2...g6

ISBN 978-1906552-80-0
www.qualitychess.co.uk