THE MOST FLEXIBLE

Sicilian

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The Most Flexible Sicilian
A Black Repertoire with 1.e4 c5 2.\textit{\textbf{f}}3 e6

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Chess Today
This book offers a double repertoire for Black based on the moves 1.e4 c5 2.\textit{\v C}f3 e6!. It is divided in several parts: playing against \textit{\v C}e2; against f4; g3; the third rank set-up \textit{\v C}e3+\textit{\v C}d3; the English Attack; the hedgehog structures.

After 3.d4 cxd4 4.\textit{\v C}xd4, I analyse in separate chapters the Taimanov move order with 4...\textit{\v C}c6, and the Kan with 4...a6. Every part begins with a chapter “Main Ideas” which discusses the pros and cons of the two approaches and offers advice which one works better against White’s particular set-up. The next chapters, called “Taimanov – Step by Step” and “Kan – Step by Step”, present detailed theory. Finally, a “Complete Games” chapter offers additional annotations.

This structure should allow you to better understand the typical ideas which are similar in many aspects:

Black’s pawn often remains on d7 allowing an early activation of the dark-squared bishop through b4, c5 or even d6 in some lines, the ...d5 break is without loss of tempo on ...d6;

The pressure on the e4-pawn with ...b5, ...\textit{\v C}b7, ...\textit{\v C}f6 is common for both systems;

The queen goes early to c7 to control the central dark squares and support the bishop when it goes to b4 or d6;

We often change the pawn structure by recapturing ...dxc6 followed by ...e6-e5.

The hedgehog structures share the same main plan – to achieve the break ...d5.

The concluding parts present a repertoire against the Anti-Sicilians like the Alapin with c3, the King’s Indian Reversed with d3, and the modern fianchetto with 3.g3.

It is difficult to make a repertoire which would satisfy every taste. I would recommend the Kan to readers who: understand positional play and prophylaxis; are not theoreticians; defend calmly and unabashedly.

If you like early clashes and sharp theoretical disputes (and have good memory!), the Taimanov is the better choice.

The ultimate goal should be to master both systems. Then you'll be really unpredictable to your opponents!

\textit{Alexander Delchev}

\textit{April 2014}
The Taimanov System which arises after the moves 1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{\textit{f}}\text{3}\) e6! 3.d4 cxd4 4.\(\text{\textit{e}}\text{xd4} \text{\textit{c}}\text{6}\) 5.\(\text{\textit{c}}\text{3} \text{\textit{c}}\text{7}\) was my main weapon against 1.e4 until 2008.

It suits well my style and it brought me good practical results. Another cause of my successes was that my opponents lacked clear models to follow since the variation was not popular at top level. I was able to play my own schemes and I only had to make minor improvements on my previous games. It was sufficient to keep in store a few alternatives which aimed to escape home preparation and assured me of the psychological edge. I had always the feeling that the battle was fought on my land. However, the second edition of *The safest Sicilian* brought about a burst of popularity of my pet system. The first players developed many new plans, the engines also improved dramatically. Some of my back-up alternatives were refuted. There was no more ground for retreat and I had to accept deep theoretical disputes in every game. It became practically unrewarding to keep my repertoire in full swing all the time.

So I decided to reserve the Taimanov for rapid games where there is no time for targeted home preparation and good understanding is often more important than the objective evaluation of the position. Thus I was able to experiment with new ideas without spending too much time on them.

At the same time I began my migration toward the Kan. I was extremely impressed by its flexibility and the variety of plans it offers. The move order 1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{\textit{f}}\text{3}\) e6! 3.d4 cxd4 4.\(\text{\textit{e}}\text{xd4} \text{\textit{a}}\text{6}\) is outwardly so modest and unobtrusive that White could choose virtually any developing scheme at his liking. The play is not forced and both sides have tons of options on every move. This greatly reduces the chance of being caught on a home preparation.
Introduction

The wide choice also means an ample ground for strategic mistakes. Even good grandmasters often mix up the move order and allow an easy equalisation. Look at the following variation: 1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.cxd4 a6 5.c4 d6 6.d3 c6 7.e3?!

White played a natural developing move, but Black suddenly leaps forward: 7...e5! 8.h3 – another natural move which occurred in 5 games (8.c3 d4; 8.0-0 d4 9.e5 g5!) 8...b6! and Black already has an initiative – 9.b3 (9.a3 b2 10.b2 d4+ 11.d3 e5 12.d2 c7; 9.b5 e5+) 9...c6! (9...b4+ 10.c3 d6 11.d4 d3+ 12.d3 e5 13.0-0-0!)

White must give up the c4-pawn with a dubious compensation.

The best way to exploit the weaknesses of your opponents’ repertoires is to master the whole range of systems with 2...e6. That would allow you to choose the most unpleasant set-up against any particular opponent. For instance, if the White player is narrowly specialised in the English Attack, you may choose to delay ...c6. This approach effectively discourages White’s set-up with e3. It is also very good against the fans of an early f4, the fianchetto with g3 and the Classical system with e2. On the contrary, if your opponent is a practical player who avoids main lines, then the Taimanov move order would be more unpleasant as it narrows White’s safe paths in the opening.

I would choose the Kan against any player who treats it with 5.c3, and the Taimanov against fans of the Maróczy Bind. The Kan may also be the better option if your opponent tried to outwit you by the move order 1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d3. The knight is committed to c3 so 3...a6!? would be an excellent choice.

Keep in mind that the Taimanov is a self-sufficient system while in some Kan lines it is best to develop the knight on c6 switching over to the Taimanov. One such example is 1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.d4 a6 5.e2!?
Perhaps the best option here is 5...\texttt{c7} (or 5...\texttt{f6} first) 6.0-0 \texttt{f6} 7.\texttt{c3} \texttt{c6}.

Undoubtedly, the move order with 5.\texttt{d3} is the most challenging system against the Kan. White hopes to build up the Maroczy Bind with c4 and keep a firm grip on the centre. A partial consolation for Black is that he is spared of direct attacks against his king. I offer two anti-dotes. If you hate long manoeuvring in hedgehog pawn structures, you can play 5...g6!? followed by ...\texttt{e7} and ...d7-d5.

Thus you will be able to eliminate the centre and gradually neutralise White’s lead in development. This line is not popular among top players. That means your opponents will lack a model game to follow and will have to play over the board with their own capacity.

A more complex approach is 5...\texttt{f6} 6.0-0 \texttt{c7} 7.\texttt{e2} d6 8.c4. Again, I propose 8...g6.

Ivanchuk often plays it with the fresh positional idea of ...\texttt{h5}, ...\texttt{g7xc3} followed up by a blockade on the dark squares.

The most dangerous plan against the Taimanov has always been the English Attack – 1.e4 c5 2.\texttt{f3} e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{c6} 5.\texttt{c3} \texttt{c7} 6.\texttt{e3} a6 7.\texttt{d2} \texttt{f6}

In 2013, Black has developed a new way of meeting it – 8.0-0-0
\textit{I wrote this book in first person, but it is a collaborative work.}

Every line has been checked and discussed by both authors. I play these systems with both colours while Semko Semkov defends exclusively Black's side – first as a practical player, then as a theoretician.

We tried to answer for you all the questions we thought important.

\textit{Alexander Delchev}

\textit{April 2014}
In this part, I consider the always popular system with $e2$ and short castling. This is my favourite plan when I defend White's side. No matter what is currently in vogue, this positional system will always be one of the most testing set-ups against Taimanov/Kan structures. It stakes on natural development and firm control of the centre, which allows White to choose between a wide range of plans on both flanks.

While some typical Black's set-ups with White's pawn wedge on e5 look outwardly cramped, this very pawn could also be White's biggest weakness. A lot of games witness a sudden turn of events caused by the undermining move f7-f6.

The secret of Black's vitality on so little space is the excellent efficiency of his long-range pieces. His bishops often operate on the important diagonals g1-a7 and h1-a8.
Part 1. The Classical System with $\triangle e2$

Main Ideas

In the Taimanov, White aims for the position on the following diagram:

\[
\begin{array}{l}
1.e4\ c5\ 2.e3\ e6\ 3.d4\ cxd4\ 4.exd4\ \triangle c6\ 5.e3\ \underline{\text{c7}}\ 6.\triangle e2\ a6\ 7.0-0\ \underline{\text{f6}}\ 8.\triangle e3
\end{array}
\]

Taimanov 1

This is the favourite approach of players who love the Scheveningen with White. Sometimes they use the refined move order 6.e3 a6 7.e2, aiming to avoid the Scheveningen without ...a6 which might arise after 6.e2 \underline{\text{f6}} 7.0-0 \underline{\text{e7}}. However, it also has a counter-strategy – Black can refrain from ...a6 by 6.e3 \underline{\text{f6}}, inviting the opponent to a theoretical duel in the sharp line 7.f4 \underline{\text{b4}} which is, however, dubious – see Part 2.

Our main line in the Kan arises after

\[
\begin{array}{l}
1.e4\ c5\ 2.e3\ e6\ 3.d4\ cxd4\ 4.exd4\ a6\ 5.e3\ \underline{\text{c7}}\ 6.\triangle e2\ b5\ 7.0-0\ \underline{\text{b7}}
\end{array}
\]

Kan 1

Black will also play here ...\underline{\text{c6}} but first he’ll gain an important tempo by hitting the e4-pawn. Now 8.\underline{\text{f3}} is not very impressive: 8... \underline{\text{c6}}! 9.\underline{\text{xc6}} dxc6 10.e2 \underline{\text{d6}}!? 11.g3 \underline{\text{f6}} or 10.e5 \underline{\text{xe5}} 11.e1 \underline{\text{c7}} \underline{\text{h5}} \underline{\text{e7}} 13.\underline{\text{xe6}} g6. Thus the only way to stay in the battle for the opening advantage is:

\[
\begin{array}{l}
8.\underline{\text{e1}}\ \underline{\text{c6}}\ 9.\underline{\text{xc6}}\ dxc6\ 10.e5\ \underline{\text{d8}}\ 11.\underline{\text{d3}}\ c5
\end{array}
\]

Kan 1

The current status of this position is roughly equal. Black’s rook
is very active on the d-file, the e5-pawn is a double-edged asset as it needs protection.

Let's see what happens if we try to employ the same development in the Taimanov. In line 1, Black can play 7...b5?! 8.\textit{\&}xc6 dxc6 9.a4!

It turns out that we missed one tempo for ...\textit{\&}d8 so 9...\textit{\&}b7? loses owing to the knight's sac on b5. The only way to keep the queenside closed is 9...b4, but then White obtains long-term pressure on the weak c- and a-pawns by occupying c5: 10.\textit{\&}b1 \textit{\&}f6 11.\textit{\&}d2 \textit{\&}c5 12.\textit{\&}d3 e5 13.\textit{\&}b3 \textit{\&}a7 14.h3 a5 15.\textit{\&}e2 0-0 16.\textit{\&}e3.

A plus for the Kan: the plan with ...b5 works better.

In Taimanov 1, Black should opt for the Scheveningen, or for 8...\textit{\&}b4 when White's most challenging idea is to thrust his knight toward b6 by 9.\textit{\&}a4 \textit{\&}e7

Here, the pawn sacrifice 10.c4 \textit{\&}xe4 11.c5 0-0 12.\textit{\&}c1 has faded out of fashion since Black successfully frees himself with ...d6, for instance:

12...\textit{\&}b8! 13.g3 \textit{\&}f6 14.\textit{\&}f3 g6!
15.\textit{\&}b6 e5 (or 15...\textit{\&}d8)

The most topical line is 10.\textit{\&}xc6 bxc6 11.\textit{\&}b6 \textit{\&}b8 12.\textit{\&}xc8 \textit{\&}xc8 13.\textit{\&}d4

Taimanov 2

Currently, 13...c5 looks a bit more accurate than 13...\textit{\&}c7. White still preserves an initiative, but practice has shown that Black does not experience serious problems.

Do not try 6...\textit{\&}f6 7.0-0 \textit{\&}b4 in the Kan!
It may look that Black has a favourable version compared to the Taimanov, because he directly threatens to win a pawn. In my opinion, the opposite is true because White has not committed his bishop to e3 yet. Thus 8...g5! xc3?! (8...e7! is a wiser decision, but if Black wanted to play the Scheveningen, he could have done it anyway) 9.xf6 gxf6 10.bxc3 xc3 11.b1 is dubious for Black since his king will never find a safe haven.

A plus for the Taimanov: the plan with ...c4 is more solid.

It seems that many White players prefer to avoid the Kan with c3. That can explain the burst of popularity of the tricky move order 5.e2! (instead of 5.c3). Then 5...b5 6.a4! is unpleasant for Black so he should play 5...f6?! 6.c3, when objectively best is the Scheveningen or the transition to the Taimanov with 6...c7 7.0-0 c6.

The only way for Black to refrain from ...c6 is 6...b4

7.e5! 7...d5 (7...e4 8.0-0) 8.0-0 xc3 9.bxc3 xc3 10.a3 a5 (10...b6 11.f3 a5 12.d6 c6, but 13.ab1 xe5 14.xe5 xe5 15.d2 gives White a very unpleasant initiative) 11.d6 c6 12.xc6 dxc6 13.d3!.

The move order with 5.e2 shows why Black should have in his repertoire not only the Kan, but also the Taimanov or the Scheveningen.

**Weapon of Choice**

I tend to prefer the Kan (compare positions Kan 1 to Taimanov 2). It can be learned virtually in 2 hours and Black’s play is fairly simple and straightforward. On the other hand, the same is true for White, too! The pawn structure is symmetric and it is relatively easy to exchange everything and make a draw. The Taimanov’s strategically unbalanced game should offer more chances against much weaker opponents.
Part 1. The Classical System with $\textsf{\textit{a}e2}$

Taimanov – Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.\textsf{\textit{d}f3} e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\textsf{\textit{d}xd4} $\textsf{\textit{c}c6}$ 5.\textsf{\textit{d}c3} $\textsf{\textit{w}c7}$ 6.\textsf{\textit{a}e2}

6.\textsf{\textit{a}e3} a6 7.\textsf{\textit{a}e2} is the better move order unless White is planning 8.a3 or 8.\textsf{\textit{h}h1}. After 6.\textsf{\textit{a}e2}, Black may choose the Scheveningen without ...a6, e.g. 6...\textsf{\textit{f}f6} 7.0-0 \textsf{\textit{e}e7} which is a worthy alternative to the Taimanov. If Black tries to reach the same position after 6.\textsf{\textit{a}e3} \textsf{\textit{f}f6}, he must reckon with 7.\textsf{\textit{d}db5} $\textsf{\textit{w}b8}$ 8.f4 or 7.f4. Most experts avoid these possibilities in favour of 6.\textsf{\textit{a}e3} a6, when 7.\textsf{\textit{a}e2} leads to our main line.

6...a6 7.0-0

7.f4 b5 is considered in Part 4 while 7...\textsf{\textit{c}xd4} 8.\textsf{\textit{w}xd4} b5 is possible as well.

White can also play 7.\textsf{\textit{a}e3} \textsf{\textit{f}f6} 8.a3 having in mind to attack 8...\textsf{\textit{e}e7} by 9.g4 or 9.f4 d6 10.g4. This prophylactic move is certainly not dangerous for players who have a good command of the whole Taimanov/Kan arsenal. For instance, we’ll see below that 7.0-0 b5 is best met by 8.\textsf{\textit{d}xc6} dxc6 9.a4! So the most natural retort to 8.a3 is:

8...b5

The only flaw of this move is perhaps the possible draw after:

9.\textsf{\textit{d}xc6} dxc6 10.f4

10.0-0 \textsf{\textit{b}b7} 11.f4 \textsf{\textit{e}e7} 12.e5 $\textsf{\textit{d}d8}$ 13.\textsf{\textit{w}e1} \textsf{\textit{d}d7} leads to the same structure: 14.\textsf{\textit{g}g3} 0-0 15.\textsf{\textit{a}a1} c5 16.\textsf{\textit{f}f3} \textsf{\textit{xf}3} 17.\textsf{\textit{xf}3} $\textsf{\textit{c}c6}$=, Baramidze-Ribli, Austria 2006.

10...\textsf{\textit{b}b7} 11.e5 $\textsf{\textit{d}d8}$ 12.\textsf{\textit{a}d3} $\textsf{\textit{d}d7}$ (12...\textsf{\textit{d}d5} 13.\textsf{\textit{c}xd5} cxd5 14.\textsf{\textit{d}d4} \textsf{\textit{c}c5} 15.c3 0-0 16.\textsf{\textit{w}e2}) 13.\textsf{\textit{g}g4} c5 14.0-0 g6

![Diagram](image-url)
15.\textit{\textbf{Wh}}h3 (or Black will advance his queenside pawns) 15...\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{e}}}}e7 16.\textit{\textbf{Wh}}h6 \textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{f}}}}f8 17.\textit{\textbf{Wh}}h3.

\textit{\textbf{7...\textbf{Qf6}}}

\textit{\textbf{7...b5}} is an attempt to get a position from the Kan. However, White has a straightforward way of obtaining the initiative: 8.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xc6! dxc6 9.a4!

The only way to avoid serious trouble now is to keep the play closed with:

9...b4

9...\textit{\textbf{Q}}b7? loses owing to the knight's sac on b5.

9...\textit{\textbf{Q}}b8 10.e5! is also awkward. Against I. Sokolov, I replied 10...\textit{\textbf{Q}}e7 and went on to draw after 11.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xf4 f5 12.exf6 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xf4, but 11.axb5! is very unpleasant. White opens the a-file and the endgame after 11...axb5 12.\textit{\textbf{Q}}d6! is difficult. 12...\textit{\textbf{Q}}b7 13.\textit{\textbf{Q}}d3 \textit{\textbf{Q}}g6 14.\textit{\textbf{Q}}e4! is even lost.

The other recapture 11...\textit{\textbf{Q}}xb5 does not save the day either: 12.\textit{\textbf{Q}}e4 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d5 13.\textit{\textbf{Q}}d4 with domination in the centre.

10.\textit{\textbf{Q}}b1 \textit{\textbf{Q}}f6 11.\textit{\textbf{Q}}d2 \textit{\textbf{Q}}c5

White carries on the same plan after 11...a5, e.g. 12.\textit{\textbf{Q}}d3 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e7 13.\textit{\textbf{Q}}e2.

12.\textit{\textbf{Q}}d3 e5

Alternatively:

12...0-0 13.\textit{\textbf{Q}}e2 e5 14.\textit{\textbf{Q}}b3 \textit{\textbf{Q}}g4 15.\textit{\textbf{Q}}e1 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e7 16.\textit{\textbf{Q}}c4 c5 17.f3=, Heberla-Zhigalko, Istanbul 2005.

12...h5 13.\textit{\textbf{Q}}e2 \textit{\textbf{Q}}g4 14.\textit{\textbf{Q}}f3 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d6 15.h3=, Abu Sufian-Hossain, Doha 2013.

13.\textit{\textbf{Q}}b3 \textit{\textbf{Q}}a7 14.h3 a5 15.\textit{\textbf{Q}}e2 0-0 16.\textit{\textbf{Q}}e3

This set-up promises White lasting pressure because Black's queenside pawns will be a permanent cause of concern. The game Heberla-Firman, Warsaw 2006, went 16...\textit{\textbf{Q}}e6 17.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xa7 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xa7 18.\textit{\textbf{Q}}c4 \textit{\textbf{Q}}fe8 (18...\textit{\textbf{Q}}h5 19.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xe6 \textit{\textbf{Q}}f4 20.\textit{\textbf{Q}}c4) 19.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xe6 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xe6 20.\textit{\textbf{Q}}ad1=.
The Classical System with $\text{c}e2$

After 7...b6, White has three main continuations: A. 8.a3; B. 8.$\text{c}h1$; C. 8.$\text{c}e3$

8.$\text{c}g5$ is inconsistent. Apart from 8...$\text{c}e7$, Black can equalise with typical Taimanov means: 8...$\text{d}6$ 9.$\text{c}h1$ $\text{x}d4$ 10.$\text{w}x$ $\text{d}x4$ $\text{e}e5$ 11.$\text{w}d3$ b5 12.f4 $\text{xc}3$ 13.$\text{xc}3$ $\text{b}7$ or the minimalist 8...$\text{x}d4$ 9.$\text{w}x$ $\text{x}d4$ $\text{c}5$ 10.$\text{w}d2$ b5 11.$\text{f}4$ e5 12.$\text{d}5$ $\text{x}d4$ 13.$\text{w}x$ $\text{xd}5$ $\text{b}7$ 14.$\text{w}x$ $\text{e}5+$ $\text{w}x$ $\text{e}5$ 15.$\text{w}x$ $\text{e}5$ 0-0, Brkic-Smirin, Rijeka 2010.

10.$\text{e}5$ 11.$\text{w}d3$ 0-0! 12.$f4$ $\text{xc}3$ 13.$\text{b}x$ $\text{c}3$ d5 14.$\text{ex}d5$

Stein-Suetin, Moscow 1964 saw 14.$e5$ $\text{e}4$ 15.$c4$ $\text{w}x$ $\text{c}4$ 16.$\text{w}x$ $\text{c}4$ $\text{dxc}4$ 17.$\text{xe}c4$ $\text{x}d7$+. Black could aspire to an edge with 15...b5!? 16.cxd5 exd5 17.$\text{w}x$ $\text{xd}5$ $\text{f}5$+

A. 8.a3

Sometimes White opts for this move in order to avoid 8.$\text{c}e3$ $\text{b}4$. Of course, this is a meager reason for playing second rate variations. Any system against 8.$\text{c}h1$ is even better against 8.a3. In many Taimanov set-ups, a3 could prove to be a superfluous move. Also in the Scheveningen, Black faces more problems when defending against a4 instead of a3.

8...$\text{x}d4$ 9.$\text{w}x$ $\text{d}4$ $\text{d}6$

10.$\text{h}1$

B. 8.$\text{c}h1$ $\text{x}d4$

Black can transpose to the Scheveningen by 8.$\text{e}2$ 9.f4 d6, having won a small opening victory. The point is that by having commit-
ted his king to h1, White deprived himself of one the most dangerous system against the Scheveningen which is based on the quick manouevre \( \texttt{W}d1-e1-g3 \) and \( \texttt{E}ae1 \) while the king remains on g1.

I suggest to stay in the Taimanov waters. Our first task will be to find an active occupation to the dark-squared bishop. Besides the text, we often see 8...\( \texttt{b}4 \). Then 9.\( \texttt{W}d3 \texttt{d}d6 \) 10.\( \texttt{Q}xc6 \texttt{W}xd3 \) 11.\( \texttt{c}xd3 \texttt{d}xc6 \) leads to an equal endgame, but 9.\( \texttt{g}5 \) is more testing. Then 9...\( \texttt{W}d6 \) 10.\( \texttt{Q}xc6 \texttt{W}xd1 \) 11.\( \texttt{Q}xd1 \texttt{d}xc6 \) 12.e5 \( \texttt{d}d7 \) 13.f4 as in Smislov-Razuvaev, USSR 1975, leaves Black in a cramped albeit solid position.

### 9.\( \texttt{W}xd4 \texttt{c}5 \) 10.\( \texttt{W}d3 \)

Alternatives:

10.\( \texttt{f}4 \texttt{xd}4 \) 11.\( \texttt{c}xc7 \texttt{x}c3 \) 12.\( \texttt{b}xc3 \texttt{xe}4 \) 13.c4 \( \texttt{d}5 \).=.

10.\( \texttt{d}2 \) 0-0 (Black should not provide the opponent with a lever for an attack with 10...h6) 11.\( \texttt{g}5 \) \( \texttt{d}6 \) (11...\( \texttt{d}4 \) 12.\( \texttt{d}3 \texttt{xc}3 \)!? 13.bxc3 \( \texttt{d}6 \) 14.f4 \( \texttt{d}5 \) is more ambitious, but risky.) 12.\( \texttt{d}3 \texttt{d}7 \) (12...\( \texttt{b}5 \) 13.\( \texttt{g}3 \) \( \texttt{b}7 \) 14.\( \texttt{h}6 \texttt{e}8= \) , Jakovenko-Lautier, France 2007) 13.f4 (13.\( \texttt{g}3 \texttt{b}5 \) 14.\( \texttt{e}2 \texttt{e}5 \) 15.f4 \( \texttt{d}xd3 \) 16.\( \texttt{c}xd3 \) f5) 13...\( \texttt{d}4= \), Van Oosterom-Giri, Enschede 2009.

### 10...b5

10...h5 is too committing. You could opt for such plans if you desperately needed a win.
The Classical System with \( \texttt{e}2 \texttt{e}2 \)

13.\( \texttt{e}5 \)

13.\( \texttt{\textit{d}}2 \ \texttt{g}4 \) 14.\( \texttt{\textit{e}}2 \texttt{d}6 \) restricts White's activity in the centre.

13.\( \texttt{\textit{e}}3 \) ? \( \texttt{\textit{e}}3 \) 14.\( \texttt{\textit{e}}3 \) aims to weaken Black's dark squares (d6, c5, b6). Therefore, 14...\( \texttt{d}6 \) ! is called for. (14...\( \texttt{b}4 \) ?! 15.\( \texttt{\textit{a}}4 \texttt{d}6 \) 16.c3) 15.\( \texttt{\textit{a}}d1 \) (or 15.a3 \( \texttt{c}c5 \) 16.\( \texttt{\textit{a}}d2 \texttt{h}4 \) 17.\( \texttt{\textit{a}}d1 \) 0-0-0!) 15...b4! 16.\( \texttt{\textit{a}}4 \) (16.\( \texttt{\textit{e}}2 \) 0-0) 16...0-0 17.\( \texttt{\textit{d}}4 \) (17.c3 \( \texttt{\textit{c}}6 \)) 17...a5! 18.\( \texttt{\textit{f}}e1 \texttt{f}d8 \) ! = (Gross).

13...\( \texttt{\textit{g}}4 \) 14.\( \texttt{\textit{b}}7 \)

White does not get an advantage by 14.\( \texttt{\textit{e}}4 \) \( \texttt{x}e4 \) (14...\( \texttt{e}7 \) 15.\( \texttt{d}6 \) +; 14...\( \texttt{b}8 \) ?!) 15.\( \texttt{x}e4 \) \( \texttt{c}c8 \) 16.\( \texttt{\textit{e}}2 \) \( \texttt{h}6 \) 17.\( \texttt{a}4 \) \( \texttt{f}5 \) 18.axb5 axb5 19.\( \texttt{\textit{d}}2 \) \( \texttt{h}4 \) 20.\( \texttt{\textit{g}}4 \) \( \texttt{c}6 \) ! =.

14...\( \texttt{b}7 \) 15.\( \texttt{e}4 \)

In several games White scored well with 15.a4!? \( \texttt{b}4 \) 16.\( \texttt{\textit{e}}4 \) \( \texttt{c}8 \) 17.c4. After fixing the queenside, he could turn his attention to Black's king. I suppose that the best answer is 15...0-0!? 16.\( \texttt{e}4 \) \( \texttt{e}7 \) 17.\( \texttt{h}3 \) \( \texttt{h}6 \) ! =, maintaining tension all over the board.

15...\( \texttt{c}8 \) ?!

Black recognises 16.\( \texttt{e}3 \) as the main positional threat of the opponent. Database statistics show 61% in Black's favour after 15...\( \texttt{c}8 \) !?

Let's ponder over the frequently seen 15...\( \texttt{e}7 \).

White has two reasonable plans: to break through the queenside by pushing b3-c4, or to blockade it by c3-b4, trying to organise an attack on the other wing. The latter is rather annoying for Black.

16.\( \texttt{e}3 \)

16.b3 is well met by 16...\( \texttt{c}8 \) ! (Black is trying to dissuade the opponent from pushing 17.c4. In that event 17...0-0 would find White undeveloped for active play.) 17.\( \texttt{\textit{b}}2 \) \( \texttt{h}6 \) 18.\( \texttt{\textit{f}}3 \) \( \texttt{b}8 \) 19.\( \texttt{f}2 \) \( \texttt{f}5 \). Black accomplished the thematic knight's manoeuvre-see game 1 Lutz-Grabliauskas, Pula 1997.

16...\( \texttt{c}8 \) 17.\( \texttt{d}4 \)!

In the majority of games White chooses 17.c3. Then the march of the h-pawn is very efficient: 17...\( \texttt{h}4 \) ! 18.\( \texttt{h}3 \) (18.\( \texttt{d}4 \) ?! \( \texttt{h}3 \) ! 19.\( \texttt{g}3 \) \( \texttt{f}5 \) ! 20.exf6 \( \texttt{x}f6 \) ! 21.\( \texttt{xf6} \) \( \texttt{gxf6} \) !) 18...\( \texttt{h}6 \) 19.\( \texttt{\textit{a}}d1 \) \( \texttt{f}5 \) 20.\( \texttt{\textit{f}}2 \) 0-0. White's pawn chain on the kingside is paralysed for good and could be attacked, e.g. 21.\( \texttt{\textit{f}}3 \) \( \texttt{c}7 \) 22.\( \texttt{\textit{d}}3 \) \( \texttt{f}6 \)!

17...\( \texttt{h}6 \) (17...\( \texttt{h}4 \) 18.\( \texttt{\textit{f}}3 \) \( \texttt{c}6 \) 19.\( \texttt{g}4 \) \( \texttt{e}4 \) 20.c3±) 18.c3! \( \texttt{h}4 \) (18...\( \texttt{f}5 \) 19.\( \texttt{f}3 ! \) \( \texttt{c}6 \) 20.\( \texttt{\textit{d}}1 \) ±) 19.\( \texttt{f}3 \) ±. White can follow up by \( \texttt{b}4 \), \( \texttt{e}5 \).

Now that White cannot play 16.\( \texttt{e}3 \), he probably should continue with:
16...d2

16.a4 is inconsistent. When the queenside is opened, Black can safely castle, because he can easily organise counterplay should the opponent attempt to assault his king. I propose 16...e7!? 17.axb5 axb5 18.a5 (or 18.h3 h6 19.e3 0-0 20.g3 c6=, Tirard-Delchev, Cappelle la Grande 2006) 18...b4 19.e2 c7 20.f1 c6!=. f4-f5 is no longer a threat.

16...e7! 17.ae1

Alternatively: 17.a3 c6! 18.b4 f5=, Delchev-De la Riva, Benasque 1997; 17.b3 d5.

17...0-0∞.

According to my analysis, Black holds firmly in this position. The biggest danger for him is 18.f5, but 18...xe5 19.g3 f6 20.c3 c4 neutralises the pressure.

Black has successfully tested in practice 17...c6!? 18.f3 f5=!?, Yu Shaoteng-Ye Jiangchuan, Yongchuan 2003. Other options after 17...c6!? are:

18.c3 h6! 19.f5 d5 20.xf5 exf5 21.d6 xg6 22.exd6 d8 23.e7 h6 24.f5 f6 25.xd7 (25.xd7 g6) 25...xd7 26.xd7 xxc3 27.bxc3 f5!=;
18.c4 h6 19.e5 f5 20.d4 h4 21.f3 0-0 22.d1 d8.

B2. 11.g5 b7 12.f4 b4!

White gets an edge after 12...b4?! 13.e5 d5 14.xd5 xg6 15.xf6 xf3 16.xf3 d6 17.f1, as in Berg-Brynell, Gothenburg 2006.

13.f3

13.xf6 defines White's plans too early. In Dolezal-El Debs, Sao Jose do Rio Preto 2007, Black put his rook to g8 and stood well: 13...gxf6 14.a4 xc3 15.bxc3 g8 16.g3 f5 17.f3 fxe4 18.xe4 xxe4 19.xe4 c6=.

13...xc3 14.bxc3 c8 15.xf6

15.a4?! xc3 16.axb5 d3 17.cxd3 axb5 18.f1 c6 was good for Black in Zezulkin-Tregubov, Krasnodar 1998.
The Classical System with $\text{b}2$

15...gxf6 16.$\text{ad}1=$.

Black can gain space on the kingside by 16...h5 and hope to use White's split pawn structure on the other wing.

C. 8.$\text{e}3 \text{b}4$

![Diagram](image)

Black attacks the e4-pawn. If White defends it, he loses the initiative and could become worse:

a) 9.$\text{f}3?! \text{e}5 10.$\text{f}4 \text{xc}3 11.bxc3 d6=. 

b) 9.$\text{d}3?! \text{e}5 leads to positions from Part 3 with an extra tempo for Black. After 10.$\text{de}2$, he can try to punish immediately the opponent by 10...$\text{fg}4$ (10...$\text{xc}3$ 11.bxc3 d5=) 11.$\text{f}4$ g5 12.$\text{g}3$ h5∞, but probably the best way is to continue development by 10...0-0!? 11.h3 d6.

c) 9.$\text{f}3?!$ Black carries on ...d7-d5 with excellent play. This plan could be executed in different settings: 9...$\text{xc}3$ 10.bxc3 d5 or 9...d5 10.exd5 exd5. Most players prefer 9...0-0 as more flexible. Depending on White’s response, Black will choose whether to give firstly his bishop for the c3-knight or push d7-d5 and retreat to d6 in future.

Obviously White should ignore the threat to e4 and counter-attack, but how?

The straightforward approach:

d) 9.$\text{f}4 \text{xc}3$ 10.bxc3 $\text{xe}4$ 11.$\text{d}3$ proves to be insufficient after 11...d5! (11...$\text{f}6$ 12.$\text{e}1$ is not so clear). Black’s knight on e4 is a good defender.

e) 9.$\text{xc}6$ bxc6 10.$\text{f}4 \text{xc}3$ 11.bxc3 is more testing.

![Diagram](image)

Now after 11...$\text{xe}4$ (In Rantanen-P. Cramling, Helsinki 1991, Black chose the modest: 11...c5 12.$\text{e}5 \text{d}5$ 13.$\text{d}2$ c4 14.$\text{b}1$ 0-0=.) 12.$\text{f}3$ [12.$\text{d}3$ $\text{f}6$ 13.$\text{f}3$ (13.$\text{d}4$ c5 14.$\text{f}6$ gxf6 gxf6 15.$\text{f}5$ $\text{e}5$) 13...d6 14.$\text{d}4$ $\text{b}8$ 15.$\text{g}3$ $\text{f}8$ 16.c4 c5 17.$\text{c}3$ $\text{e}8$ 18.$\text{xe}1$ $\text{f}5$, Oleksienko-Swapnil, Kolkata 2012], Black is forced to cover the critical diagonal a3-f8 by 12...$\text{d}6$ (12...$\text{f}6$ 13.$\text{c}5$ d5 14.$\text{d}4$). The game Pulkkinen-Suetin, Espoo 1989, went 13.$\text{b}1$ $\text{b}8$ 14.$\text{xb}8$ $\text{xb}8$ 15.$\text{c}5$ $\text{b}7$, when White’s initiative is bound to evaporate: 16.$\text{d}4$ (16.$\text{b}1$ $\text{c}7$ 17.$\text{b}6$ $\text{d}6$) 16...$\text{xc}5$ 17.$\text{xc}5$ $\text{b}5$ 18.$\text{d}6$ f6!.
Part 1

f) 9...\texttt{cx}c6 \texttt{bxc}6 \texttt{10.d}d4 (10...\texttt{d}d5 \texttt{b}d5=; \texttt{10.c}c4 \texttt{d}5 11...\texttt{d}d5=) 10...\texttt{c}c4 has always been a sideline.

That accounts for the fact that Black has not established yet his best defence.

I faced it in Delgado Crespo-Delchev, Sort 2008 and chose the natural 11...\texttt{b}b7?! 12.a3 (12...\texttt{f}f3 \texttt{e}e5= or \texttt{12.e}e5=) 12...\texttt{d}d5

12...\texttt{exc}3 is more popular, but I'm afraid that the position after 13...\texttt{exc}3 is in White's favour. The renowned Taimanov expert Pia Cramling chooses here 13...0-0 which is quite safe, but leaves the opponent with a small edge after 14.f3 \texttt{c}c8 15...\texttt{g}g5 \texttt{e}e8 16...\texttt{e}e1 (16...\texttt{e}e5) 16...\texttt{c}c6 17...\texttt{d}ad1 \texttt{d}5 18...\texttt{d}exd5 \texttt{d}exd5, De la Villa-Cramling Coro
doba 1995. Taking on \texttt{e}4 is outright dubious: 13...\texttt{xe}4 (13...\texttt{xe}4 14...\texttt{g}g7 0-0-0 15.f3 \texttt{h}h8 16...\texttt{f}f7 \texttt{d}df8 17...\texttt{e}e7) 14.f3 \texttt{g}g6 15...\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{xc}5 16...\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{xc}2 17...\texttt{d}ac1 \texttt{a}a4

18...\texttt{d}d6 \texttt{d}d8 19...\texttt{c}c5 \texttt{e}e8 20...\texttt{g}g3 \texttt{c}c6 21...\texttt{a}a5=, Shtyrenkov-Eljanov, Novi Sad 1989.

13...\texttt{exd}5 \texttt{d}exd5 14...\texttt{f}f4

Black’s pawn centre is dangerous with queens: 14...\texttt{h}h4 \texttt{xc}3 15...\texttt{xc}3 0-0 16...\texttt{d}d3 (16...\texttt{ab}1 \texttt{f}f8 17...\texttt{d}d3 \texttt{xc}6 18...\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{xc}5, Cawdery-Gret
tarsson, Reykjavik 2014; \texttt{17...c}c4?)\texttt{16...\texttt{xc}6 17...f}f3, Garbisu-G. Herna
dez, Villalba 1993, 17...c4=.

14...\texttt{xf}f4 15...\texttt{xf}f4 \texttt{xc}3 16...\texttt{xc}3 0-0. Here my opponent chose the straightforward 17...\texttt{ab}1 \texttt{c}c6 18...\texttt{b}b6 \texttt{b}b5 19...\texttt{x}xb5 \texttt{xb}5 20...\texttt{xb}5 \texttt{e}e4=.

However, 17...\texttt{c}c4! would have given White somewhat preferable chances because of the weakness of the \texttt{c}c5-pawn.

I think that Black should look for improvements earlier:

11...0-0! 12...\texttt{f}f3 \texttt{d}6

Black is behind in development so it is logical to keep the centre closed. He had no problems in Nakar-Roiz, Acre 2013, which went 13...\texttt{a}a5 (13...\texttt{xc}3 14...\texttt{xc}3 \texttt{b}b7=) 14...\texttt{b}b4 14...\texttt{e}e5 \texttt{d}d5 15...\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{d}d7 14...\texttt{cxb}4 15...\texttt{xc}7 \texttt{xc}7 16...\texttt{axb}4 \texttt{b}b7=.

9...\texttt{a}a4

White discovers the sore point in Black’s position-b6, and the central dark squares in general. Note that the move order 9...\texttt{xc}6 \texttt{bxc}6 10...\texttt{a}a4 is probably inaccurate, because it offers Black additional op-
The Classical System with $\text{N}e2$

tions as $10...d6$ $11.b6\text{ b}b8$ $12.g3!$ looks better for White) $11.b6\text{ b}b8$ $12.xc8\text{ fxc8}$ $13.xc6$ $\text{d}d8$ $14.xd3\text{ d}d6$. This line was popular in the 70s, then it has faded out of fashion. It is considered satisfactory for Black, e.g. $15.f4$ e5 $16.b3$ exf4 $17.xd4$ f3 $18.e5\text{ xe}5$.

$9...\text{e}7!$

White was threatening $c4-c5$. Unfortunately, $9...b5$ runs into $10.xc6\ fxc6$ $11.c5!\text{ xe}5$ ($11...\text{bxa}4$ $12.b4\text{ c}5$ $13.xa3!\text{ xe}4$ $14.xf3\text{ b}7$ $15.e1\text{ d}6$ $16.e5\pm$) $12.xc5\pm$.

The old move $9...0-0?!$ gives White a terrible initiative after $10.c4!\text{ xe}4$ ($10...d6$ $11.g3\text{ xe}4$ $12.f3\text{ f}5$ $13.c5\text{ xe}5$ $14.xb6\text{ b}8$ $15.xc1\text{ xe}5$) $11.c5\text{ d}5$ ($11...d6$ $12.c6\text{ xc}6$ $13.cx\text{xd}6$ $\text{xd}6$ $14.c2\text{ f}5$ $15.xd1\text{ e}7$ $16.xb6\text{ b}8$ $17.xd1\pm$) $12.xc6\text{ f}7$ $13.xb6\text{ b}8$ $14.xc1\text{ a}5$ ($14...\text{d}7$ $15.xd7\text{ wd}7$ $16.e4\pm$) $15.xf4\pm$.

10.b6 should be answered by $10...\text{b}8$. Then White can try to surprise us with the tricky move order: $11.xc6\text{ bc}6$ $12.xc8\text{ wc}8$ $13.c4\text{ xe}4$ $14.xd4\text{ af}6$ $15.c5$, but this position is good for Black. For instance, he can prepare $...\text{b}8-\text{b}4$ by $15...a5$ $16.xc4\text{ d}5$ $17.xd7\text{ af}6$ $18.xg3\text{ b}4$.

C1. $10.c4\text{ xe}4$ $11.c5$

$11.xc6\text{ bc}6$ $12.xd4\text{ af}6$ $13.b6\text{ b}8$ $14.c5$ is a decent alternative.

Black must free himself immediately because after $14...e5$ $15.xc4 0-0$ $16.xf1$, White has a bind – $16...\text{d}5$ ($16...d5$ $17.cx\text{xd}6$ $\text{xd}6$ $18.xd1\pm$) $17.xd5\text{ xd}5$ $18.xd5\text{ xb}2$ $19.xc4\text{ h}8$ $20.xb3\text{ f}5$ $21.xd3\pm$. So he follows up with:

$14...d6$ $15.cx\text{xd}6$ $\text{xd}6$ $16.xc4\text{ xh}2+$ $17.xh1\text{ c}5$ $18.xxc5\text{ xc}5$ $19.xxc5\text{ cc}7$ ($19...\text{f}4$ is more risky and materially unbalanced after $20.xf3\text{ b}7$ $21.xd6\text{ xf}3$ $22.xxb8\text{ xg}2+$ $23.xg2\text{ xb}8$ $24.xc1\text{ af}4$ $25.xc3\text{ e}7\infty$) $20.xd1\text{ de}4$ and White cannot extract much from the a3-f8 diagonal, e.g. $21.xa3\text{ b}7$ $22.xg1\text{ f}5$ $23.xd1\text{ d}8\neq$.

$11...0-0$ $12.xc1$

$12.xf3$ is countered by $12...\text{g}5!$
12...\textit{\texttt{b8}!} 13.g3 (preparing a retreat square in the event of \texttt{f3 g5}) 13...\texttt{f6} 14.\texttt{f3 g6}!

Black aims for ...e6-e5 so he takes f5 under control. White has been unable to find gaps in Black's armour. His compensation is only sufficient for equality.

15.\texttt{b6}

Alternatively:

15.\texttt{e1} (15.\texttt{b3 e5!;} 15.\texttt{d3 d8=} ) 15...e5 16.\texttt{b3 d6} 17.cd6 \texttt{d6} 18.a7 a8 19.\texttt{b6 e7} 20.\texttt{c6 bc6} 21.e6 \texttt{b4} 22.c5 \texttt{c5} 23.\texttt{bc5 d8} 24.\texttt{b3 h3} with active play;

15.\texttt{g5 d8} 16.\texttt{b6 h6!?} 17.\texttt{xe6} d5 18.e1 e5 19.\texttt{c6 bxc6} 20.\texttt{e2 d7} 21.\texttt{xd5 xxc5} 22.\texttt{xc8 xd5} 23.\texttt{xe7+ de7} 24.ed1, Brenjo-Sarenac, Belgrade 2009, 24...e4!=.

15...e5

Karpov introduced 15...\texttt{d8!?} when 16.\texttt{g5 h6} is the above-mentioned game Brenjo-Sarenac. 16.a4 e5 17.\texttt{b3 d5} 18.cxd6 dxd6 19.a5 \texttt{h3} 20.efe1 e4 is also fine.

The text move is more straightforward.

16.\texttt{b3} d6 17.cxd6 \texttt{xd6} 18.\texttt{c4}

White attempted to improve with 18.\texttt{xc6 bxc6} 19.\texttt{f3} in Kamsky-Nisipeanu, Sofia 2007, whereas John Emms suggests 19...\texttt{d8}!? 20.\texttt{c8 e4}.

18...\texttt{e7} 19.\texttt{b6 d7} 20.\texttt{c5}

It is dangerous for White to keep on queens with 20.\texttt{e2 e4} 21.\texttt{xe4 xxe4} 22.e4 \texttt{h3} =, Polzin-Heissler, Germany 1999.

The play is balanced. Black can trade queens or aim for complica-
The Classical System with $\texttt{a}e2$

tions with $20...\texttt{Wh}3$ $21.a2g2$ $\texttt{Wh}6$ $22.\texttt{Fe}1 \texttt{Ag}4$.

C2. 10.$\texttt{Axc}6$ $\texttt{bxc}6$ 11.$\texttt{Ab}6$ $\texttt{Ab}8$ 12.$\texttt{Cc}8$ $\texttt{Cc}8$

The position is very unbalanced strategically. Black has more pawns in the centre and the semi-open b-file for his rook. He only needs a couple of moves to consolidate ($...0-0$, $...\texttt{Cc}7$, $...d5$) and his pieces will be perfectly co-ordinated. White bases his hopes on a kingside attack. For the moment, he has some spatial advantage and the initiative, so he must play actively.

13.$\texttt{Ad}4$

a) 13.$e5$ is less popular because after $13...\texttt{Dd}5$ the bishop has to retreat to its initial place:

14.$\texttt{Cc}1$ (the difference with the main line is that after 14.$\texttt{Ad}4$ $c5$ White has not the e5-square for the bishop and has to play 15.$c4$ $\texttt{Cxd}4$ $16.\texttt{Cxd}4$ $\texttt{Cc}5$! 17.$\texttt{Ff}3$ $\texttt{Ag}5$! 18.$\texttt{Bb}1$ $\texttt{Exd}5!= or 17.$d6$ $\texttt{Af}8!$.

14...$\texttt{Cf}5$!
open the centre by 18...efd8 19...b2 d5 (or 19...d6 20...d3 dxe5 21...xe5 d6 22...c2 g6!=) 20...f3 d5!.

b) 13...d4 is rarely seen. I answered it with 13...c7!? 14.e5 d5 15.b3, Asrian-Delchev, Evry 2008, when 15...c5! would have seized the initiative.

13...c5

13...c7 is Miladinovic's pet line. This variation is very flexible, but with accurate play White can get a small, but lasting edge due to his better pawn structure. See game 2 Adams-Banikas, Porto Carras 2011 for more details.

14.e5 b6

15.d3

Alternatively, 15.b3 e4 (White is slightly better after 15...0-0 16.d3 d6 17.b2.) 16.xg7 g8 17.b2 17...f6!?

17...d6 18.d3 c4 19.bc4 c6 20.g3 g5 stumbles into 21.f3 h5 22.h1! Instead, a member of the chesspublishing.com forum proposed to play 17...c4! immediately. Capturing on c4 is bad, due to 18.xc4? c6 19.g3 c5 20.d4 g5; 18.f3 g5; 18.d4? d6; 18.h5 c6 19.f3 f6 20.c6 c6 21.f3 d5 are not dangerous either. However, White should be slightly better with a sound central strategy: 18.d4 c3 19.c1 c6 (19...b4 20.d3 c5 21.h3 c6 22.a3 d4 23.b4 b6 24.e3 d2 25.xd4 xd4 26.g3=) 20.f3 d5 21.e3 b4 22.d3 g5 23.e2.

It is safer to abandon the attacking plans and opt for the good positional idea of exchanging the dark-squared bishops: 18.xf6 xf6 as in game 3 Balinov-Sommerbauer, Tweng 2007.

15.d6 16.c3 0-0 17.b3

Sadvakasov played against me 17.g3. It was a novelty in 2004. I answered 17...c6 18.f1?! xe4!
The Classical System with e2

and won. Ribli suggested 18.f3 e5 19.fe1 c4=. Later games featured
17...d5 18.exd5 exd5 19.b3 c6=.

17...c6!?

This move keeps more tension

than:

17...d5 18.ed5

Or 18.e5 d7 19.f4 c4 20.bxc4 c6 21.h3 b6 22.d3 g6 23.h3 (23.f5 exf5 24.xf5 xc4 25.e6 fx6

is a desperate attack without seri­

ous chances to succeed.) 23...e8∞.

Black can be optimistic about his

position, Nisipeanu-Delchev, Beni­

dorm 2005.

18...xd5 19.e5

19.d2 b4 20.c4 d6 (or 20...

b8=) is equal: 21.c3 (21.xb4 cxb4

22.xb4 xc2 23.xa6 xa6 24.xe7

xa2 25.xe2 xa2, draw, Kasparov­

Anand, Frankfurt 2000) 21.d8= 22.fc1, Arizmendi-De la Riva, Se­

ville 2004, when Black should either

activate his passive dark-squared

bishop with 22...g5 or bar the long

diagonal with 22...c6 23.d3 d4.

19.f6

19...d8 does not solve all the

problems: 20.h3 g3 (Black is intend­
ing to double his rooks on the d­
file so White must hinder this plan.

20.ad1 leads to simplification fol­

lowing 20...f6 21.g3 f4 22.f3
dxe2+ 23.xe2 c4=; 20.h3 loses con­trol over d6 – 20...f6 21.xf6
dxf6 22.ad1 bd6=)

White is slightly better after ei­

ther 20...f6 21.xf6! xf6 22.ad1 or 20...f6 21.b2 d6 22.f3 c7
g3 d5 24.e5 25.d4, Bar­


20.xf6 xf6 21.ad1 c7

This position occurred in sev­

eral games. White commonly trip­

pled his heavy pieces on the d-file

and Black kept the balance by ex­

changing one of his weak queenside

pawns with ...a6-a5-a4 or ...c5-c4.

However, in one of my games as
White I carried on the manoeuvre 22.\( \text{Wd}2 \text{! h6 23.}\text{Wa}5\text{!} \) which maintains some pull.

**18.\( \text{Af}3 \)**

The endgames after 18.e5 \( \text{Qd}5 \) 19.exd6 \( \text{Qxd}6 \) 20.\( \text{Af}3 \) \( \text{Qb}5 \) 21.\( \text{Qad}1 \) \( \text{Qxd}3 \) 22.\( \text{Qxd}3 \) \( \text{Qb}4 \) 23.\( \text{Qxb}4 \) \( \text{Qxb}4 \) or 19.\( \text{Af}3 \) \( \text{Qb}5 \) 20.\( \text{Qxb}5 \) axb5 21.\( \text{Qb}2 \) \( \text{Qb}4 \) 22.exd6 \( \text{Qxd}6 \) 23.\( \text{Qd}1 \) \( \text{Qf}6 \) are equal.

18...\( \text{Qd}7 \)

18...c4 is also interesting. Then 19.bxc4 \( \text{Qd}7 \) 20.e5 \( \text{Wa}4 \) 21.\( \text{Qe}4 \) g6 22.exd6 \( \text{Qxd}6 \) 23.\( \text{We}2 \) \( \text{Qf}6 \) 24.\( \text{Wf}6 \) \( \text{Qxf}6 \) 25.\( \text{Qd}3 \) \( \text{Qd}7 \) gives Black good counterplay so White should probably try 19.\( \text{We}3 \) e5 with sufficient counterplay on the queenside.

19.\( \text{Qad}1 \)

19.\( \text{We}3 \) leads to similar positions after 19...\( \text{Cc}8 \) 20.\( \text{Qad}1 \) (20.\( \text{Qe}2 \) \( \text{Qf}6 \)) 20...c4 21.\( \text{Qd}4 \) (21.b4 \( \text{Wa}4\text{=} \) 21...\( \text{Ob}7 \) 22.\( \text{Qe}2 \) \( \text{Qxb}3 \) 23.\( \text{Qxb}3 \) \( \text{Qbc}7 \). Black can also keeps the queenside closed with 19...h6 20.\( \text{Qad}1 \) \( \text{Qg}5 \) 21.\( \text{We}2 \) \( \text{Qe}5 \).

19...c4

Or 19...\( \text{Cc}8 \) 20.\( \text{We}3 \) c4 21.b4 (21.\( \text{Qe}2 \) \( \text{Qxb}3 \) 22.\( \text{Qxb}3 \) \( \text{Qb}7 \) 23.\( \text{Qc}4 \) \( \text{Qbc}6 \) 24.\( \text{Qg}3 \) g6 25.\( \text{Qa}1 \) \( \text{Qb}6 \) 26.\( \text{Qd}3 \) \( \text{Qd}7\text{=} \) 21...\( \text{Wa}4! \).

**20.\( \text{We}3 \)**

20...\( \text{Cc}8 \) 21.\( \text{Qd}4 \) \( \text{Qb}7 \) 22.\( \text{Qe}2 \) \( \text{Qxb}3 \) 23.\( \text{Qxb}3 \) \( \text{Qbc}7 \).

**21.\( \text{Qxb}3 \)**

Black has no serious problems here as long as he keeps control over the c-file. His play is not based on forced variations so you can choose other moves, too. For example: 21...\( \text{Qg}5 \) 22.\( \text{Wxg}5 \) \( \text{Qxc}3 \) 23.\( \text{Qc}1 \) \( \text{Qb}4 \) 24.\( \text{We}3 \) \( \text{Qa}5 \) 25.\( \text{Qc}2 \) \( \text{Qe}5 \) 26.\( \text{Qe}2 \) \( \text{Qc}6 \) 27.\( \text{Qxc}6 \) \( \text{Qxc}6 \) 28.\( \text{Qd}1 \) \( \text{Qd}8\text{=} \).

After the text, the game may continue with either 22.\( \text{Qb}2 \) \( \text{Qc}8 \) 23.\( \text{Qc}1 \) \( \text{Qbc}6 \) 24.\( \text{Qxc}6 \) \( \text{Qxc}6 \) 25.\( \text{Qc}1 \) \( \text{Qxc}1+ \) 26.\( \text{Qxc}1\text{=} \) (26.\( \text{Qxc}1 \) \( \text{Qe}5 \)), or 22.\( \text{Wd}4 \) \( \text{Qe}5 \) 23.\( \text{Qe}2 \) \( \text{Qf}6 \) 24.\( \text{We}3 \) \( \text{Qc}6 \) 25.\( \text{Qa}1 \) \( \text{Qc}7 \) 26.\( \text{Qc}1 \) \( \text{Qe}8 \) 27.\( \text{Qxc}6 \) \( \text{Qxc}6 \) 28.f4 \( \text{Qd}7 \) 29.e5 \( \text{Qd}8\text{=} \).
Part 1. The Classical System with $\text{\texttt{\&}e2}$

Kan – Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.$\text{\texttt{\&}f3}$ e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.$\text{\texttt{\&}xd4}$ a6 5.$\text{\texttt{\&}c3}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}c7}$ 6.$\text{\texttt{\&}e2}$

If White aims to get the Scheveningen or the Taimanov, he should use the move order with 5.$\text{\texttt{\&}e2}$!.

Black’s normal options here are 5...$\text{\texttt{\&}c7}$ 6.0-0 $\text{\texttt{\&}f6}$ 7.$\text{\texttt{\&}c3}$ d6 or 7...$\text{\texttt{\&}c6}$ – see the Taimanov chapter. A more sophisticated version of the Scheveningen – without ...$\text{\texttt{\&}c7}$, may be reached after 5...$\text{\texttt{\&}f6}$ 6.$\text{\texttt{\&}c3}$ d6. White can try to be original with 6.$\text{\texttt{\&}f3}$, but Black can benefit here from having saved ...d6, e.g. 6...$\text{\texttt{\&}c7}$ 7.0-0 $\text{\texttt{\&}e7}$ 8.$\text{\texttt{\&}c3}$ 0-0 9.$\text{\texttt{\&}g4}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}c6}$ 10.$\text{\texttt{\&}e5}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}e8}$ 11.$\text{\texttt{\&}g2}$ f6! It is nice to have e6 defended.

Black can remain in Kan waters with 5...$\text{\texttt{\&}f6}$, but let’s also consider:

a) 5...b5?! 6.a4!

The point of White’s tricky move order. His queen’s knight will reach d2 in one move (compare it to variations with $\text{\texttt{\&}b1}$-c3-b1-d2!). Thus he will be able to save $\text{\texttt{\&}f3}$ which is not too active.

The mundane 6.0-0 is less challenging:

6...$\text{\texttt{\&}b7}$ 7.$\text{\texttt{\&}f3}$ (7.$\text{\texttt{\&}d3}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}c7}$ 8.f4 $\text{\texttt{\&}f6}$ 9.$\text{\texttt{\&}f3}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}c6}$ 10.$\text{\texttt{\&}xc6}$ dxc6 11.$\text{\texttt{\&}e5}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}d8}$ 12.$\text{\texttt{\&}e2}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}d5}=, A.$Sokolov-Ivanchuk, Asnieres sur Seine 2006) 7...$\text{\texttt{\&}c6}$

It is already late for 7...d6 due to 8.a4! b4 9.$\text{\texttt{\&}d2}$, when 9...d5 loses to 10.$\text{\texttt{\&}d1}$ dxe4 11.$\text{\texttt{\&}xe6}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}xd2}$ 12.$\text{\texttt{\&}c7}+$ $\text{\texttt{\&}d7}$ 13.$\text{\texttt{\&}xd4}$. However, 7...$\text{\texttt{\&}c7}$ is a good alternative: 8.a4 (8.$\text{\texttt{\&}e1}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}c6}$! 9.$\text{\texttt{\&}xc6}$ dxc6 10.$\text{\texttt{\&}e5}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}d8}$ 11.$\text{\texttt{\&}e2}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}e7}$ 12.$\text{\texttt{\&}d2}$ c5=) 8...b4 9.$\text{\texttt{\&}e1}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}e7}$ 10.$\text{\texttt{\&}bc6}$.

8.$\text{\texttt{\&}e1}$ (after 8.a4 b4, White has to exchange the knights with an equal game after 9.$\text{\texttt{\&}xc6}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}xc6}$ 10.$\text{\texttt{\&}d2}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}f6}$) 8...$\text{\texttt{\&}ge7}$ 9.$\text{\texttt{\&}c3}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}xd4}$ 10.$\text{\texttt{\&}xd4}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}c6}$ 11.$\text{\texttt{\&}e3}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}e5}=, TosiGolfin, Vrnjacka Banja 1998.

6...b4 7.0-0!

7.e5 $\text{\texttt{\&}c7}$ 8.$\text{\texttt{\&}f4}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}b7}$ 9.$\text{\texttt{\&}f3}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}c6}$ equalises: 10.$\text{\texttt{\&}xc6}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}xc6}$ 11.0-0 $\text{\texttt{\&}e7}$ 12.$\text{\texttt{\&}d2}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}c8}$ 13.$\text{\texttt{\&}xc6}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}xc6}$ 14.$\text{\texttt{\&}e1}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}g6}$ 15.$\text{\texttt{\&}g3}$ $\text{\texttt{\&}e7}$ 16.$\text{\texttt{\&}e4}$
Part 1

\[ \text{xc2 17.d6+ xxd6 18.xd6 a5, Petrik-Oral, Czechia 2006; 7.xf3 } \text{c7 8.0-0 b7 9.e1 e7! gives Black his typical play, Volokitin-Markowski, Moscow 2004.} \]

7...b7 8.d2 c7

Or 8...e7 9.c4†; 8...d6 9.c3 bxc3 10.b3 c7 11.xc3 xc3 12.bxc3. White’s big lead in development secures him an advantage: 12.d7 13.b1 c5 14.f3 f6 15.a3 fd7 16.e3+.

9.e1

I cannot find a good way of defending the b4-pawn. White’s main positional threat is to play d2-b3, d2. Eventually, he may open up the queenside with c2-c3. I have analysed:

9...d6 10.f3 d7

Or: 10...f6 11.2b3 e7 12.d2 a5 13.c3; the same plan works well after 10.e7 11.2b3 bc6 12.d2 g6 13.xc6 xc6 14.c3† g7 15.xb4 xb2 16.xb1 g7 17.c1 e7 (17...d8 18.c3 0-0 19.xg7 xg7 20.e5†) 18.b5 axb5 19.axb5 e5 20.b6†.

11.2b3 gf6 12.d2 c5 13.xb4 cxe4 14.a5 d7 15.c4 e7 16.c2 c5 17.xc5 dxc5 18.b3 xf3 19.xf3 0-0 20.e5 with domination;

9...e7 10.c4 d5 11.exd5 xxd5 12.b3†.

b) 5...f6!? 6.c3 b4?!

This attack is rather risky. You should be ready to defend a very passive position after 7.e5!.

The Scheveningen after 6...d6 is a sound and more complex approach. Another decent option is 6...c7 7.0-0 c6 (Caruana bet Anand with 7...c5 8.g5 c6 9.xc6 bxc6 in a rapid game, Zurich 2014.) which transposes to the Taimanov while 7.b4 (7...b5 8.f3†) may amazingly lead to ... the Scheveningen after 8.g5!. Now Black has nothing better but return to e7: 8.e7!, when the paradoxical 9.e3!? looks best.

Note that the popular line 8.xc3 9.xf6 gxf6 10.bxc3 xxc3 11.xb1 is rather dubious for Black:

11.c6 12.xc6 bxc6 13.b3 e5 14.f4 c5+ 15.h1=. Black is running out of useful moves: 15...h5 16.d2 h4 17.h3 a5 18.xc3 b4 19.a3 e7 20.b1.
7.e5!

Alternatively:

b1) 7.\textit{d}d3 may transpose to the Taimanov after 7...\textit{c}c7 8.0-0 \textit{c}c6 9.\textit{h}h1 \textit{xd}4 10.\textit{xd}4 \textit{d}c5. I like more:

7...d6 8.0-0 0-0 which is considered below. 8...\textit{bd}7 9.\textit{b}3 \textit{e}5 is also possible.

b2) 7.0-0 d6! [7 ... \textit{xc}3?! 8.\textit{b}xc3 \textit{d}xe4 9.\textit{f}3\dagger d5 10.\textit{xe}4 dxe4 11.\textit{a}3 is difficult to defend, for instance: 11...e5 12.\textit{e}2 f5 (12...\textit{xd}4 13.\textit{xe}4+ \textit{e}6 14.\textit{xb}7 \textit{d}7 15.\textit{xd}4\dagger) 13.f3\# 8.\textit{d}3 0-0 9.\textit{d}1

The attack on g7 is harmless: 9.\textit{g}3 \textit{bd}7 10.\textit{h}6 \textit{e}8 11.\textit{fd}1 (11.\textit{g}5 \textit{df}6) 11...\textit{xc}3 12.\textit{xc}3 \textit{w}c7 13.\textit{c}4 \textit{c}5=. Other options are: 9.\textit{g}5 \textit{bd}7 10.\textit{b}3 \textit{xc}3 11.\textit{xc}3 \textit{w}c7 12.\textit{ad}1 \textit{b}5=; 9.\textit{d}2 e5 10.\textit{b}3 \textit{e}6 11.a3 \textit{xc}3 12.\textit{xc}3 \textit{c}6=.

9...\textit{bd}7 10.\textit{b}3 \textit{e}5 11.\textit{d}4 (11.\textit{e}3 b5 12.a4 \textit{c}4) 11...\textit{c}6 12.\textit{e}3 \textit{w}c7 13.\textit{d}2 d5\#, Fedorchuk-Hillarp Persson, Budva 2009.

7...\textit{d}5 (7...\textit{e}4 8.0-0) 8.0-0 (8.\textit{d}2 \textit{xc}3 9.\textit{b}xc3 \textit{e}7 10.0-0 \textit{w}c7 11.f4 d6) 8...\textit{xc}3 9.\textit{b}xc3 \textit{xc}3 10.\textit{a}3

10...\textit{a}5

Hellsten recommends 10...\textit{b}6
11.\textit{f}3 \textit{a}5 12.\textit{d}6 \textit{c}6, but 13.\textit{ab}1 \textit{xe}5 14.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 15.\textit{d}2 gives White a very unpleasant initiative.

11.\textit{d}6 \textit{c}6 12.\textit{xc}6 dxc6 13.\textit{d}3!

The stem game Giri-Vitiugov, Reggio Emilia 2012, went 13.f4 \textit{xa}1 13...\textit{d}5!? 14.\textit{b}1 \textit{xd}1 15.\textit{fxd}1 \textit{a}5 looks enough for a draw: 16.a4 (16.a3 a4 17.\textit{f}2 \textit{a}5 18.c4 \textit{d}8 19.c5 \textit{e}7 20.\textit{b}4 \textit{f}8\#) 16...\textit{b}4=, Ramnath Bhuvanesh-Arutinian, Dubai 2012.

14.\textit{xa}1 \textit{wd}2 15.\textit{d}3 \textit{e}3+ 16.\textit{h}1 \textit{d}7 17.\textit{b}2 b5 18.a4 \textit{c}8 19.f5, when Stohl suggests 19...h5 intending ...\textit{h}6, exf5.

13.\textit{xe}5 14.\textit{ad}1 \textit{f}6 15.\textit{e}3 \textit{e}7 16.\textit{xe}7 \textit{xe}7 17.\textit{d}3 \textit{e}8 18.\textit{e}4

White has full compensation for the two missing pawns.

6...\textit{b}5 7.0-0

7.f4 \textit{b}7 8.\textit{f}3 is considered in Part 4.

7...\textit{b}7 8.\textit{e}1
8...\textit{\texttt{f3}} could be justified only if White is planning to sac a pawn after 8...\textit{\texttt{c6}} 9.\textit{\texttt{x}}c6 dxc6 10.e5

10.\textit{\texttt{e2}} offers Black a pleasant choice. At the Olympiad 2012 against Martinez Reyez, I decided to play solidly and opted for a symmetric position with 10...e5 11.a4 \textit{\texttt{f6}} 12.\textit{\texttt{e}}d1 (It is better to exchange on b5 immediately 12.axb5 cxb5 although the position after 13.\textit{\texttt{g5}} \textit{\texttt{e7}} 14.\textit{\texttt{x}}f6 \textit{\texttt{x}}f6 15.\textit{\texttt{d}}5 \textit{\texttt{xd}}5 16.\textit{\texttt{exd}}5 \textit{\texttt{wd}}6 17.\textit{\texttt{c}}4 bxc4 18.\textit{\texttt{f}}fc1 0-0 19.\textit{\texttt{xc}}4 a5 should be impossible to crack.) 12...\textit{\texttt{e7}} 13.\textit{\texttt{e3}} (13.axb5 cxb5 is already totally equal) 13...0-0 14.\textit{\texttt{g}}3 \textit{\texttt{ad}}8 15.\textit{\texttt{g}}2, when 15...\textit{\texttt{c8}} or 15...b4 16.\textit{\texttt{a}}2 a5 is fine for Black.

Much more interesting is 10.\textit{\texttt{e2}} \textit{\texttt{d6}}!? 11.\textit{\texttt{g}}3 \textit{\texttt{f6}} (or 11...\textit{\texttt{e7}} 12.\textit{\texttt{g}}2 c5 13.\textit{\texttt{f4}}) 12.\textit{\texttt{g}}2 0-0 13.\textit{\texttt{f4}} e5 14.\textit{\texttt{f5}}

White hopes for a kingside pawn storm, but Black is the first to start active actions: 14...a5 15.\textit{\texttt{f3}} b4 16.\textit{\texttt{d}}1 \textit{\texttt{c5+}} 17.\textit{\texttt{e3}} \textit{\texttt{xe3}}+ 18.\textit{\texttt{xe3}} \textit{\texttt{a6}} 19.\textit{\texttt{e1}} \textit{\texttt{fd8}} 20.\textit{\texttt{f2}} c5 21.\textit{\texttt{ed1}} h6\textsuperscript{+}, Hecht-Ravikumar, La Valetta 1980.

10...\textit{\texttt{xe5}} 11.\textit{\texttt{e1}} \textit{\texttt{c7}}

This variation had its five minutes of glory when 15-years old Kasparov crushed Polugaevsky at the Soviet championship in 1978:

\begin{center}
\textbf{8...\textit{\texttt{c6}} 9.\textit{\texttt{xc6}} dxc6 10.e5}
\end{center}

Compared to the Taimanov with an early ...b5, Black has inserted here 7...\textit{\texttt{b7}} 8.\textit{\texttt{e1}}. That takes the sting of 10.a4 due to 10...\textit{\texttt{d8}} (10...\textit{\texttt{d6}} 11.\textit{\texttt{g}}3 \textit{\texttt{e5}} 12.\textit{\texttt{d}}3 \textit{\texttt{f6}} 13.\textit{\texttt{e3}} 0-0 14.\textit{\texttt{e5}} \textit{\texttt{fd8}} 15.f4, Arshavin-Milov, Groningen 1998, 15...\textit{\texttt{xc3}} 16.bxc3 \textit{\texttt{d7}} 17.\textit{\texttt{e3}} 15.\textit{\texttt{d3}} \textit{\texttt{e7}}! (White gets a strong attack after 11...\textit{\texttt{d6}}? 12.e5 \textit{\texttt{xe5}} 13.\textit{\texttt{wh5}} \textit{\texttt{xc3}} 14.bxc3 \textit{\texttt{e7}} 15.\textit{\texttt{b1}} \textit{\texttt{d5}} 16.\textit{\texttt{wh3}}) 12.e5 \textit{\texttt{g6}} 13.\textit{\texttt{e4}} \textit{\texttt{d5}}.

10...\textit{\texttt{d8}} 11.\textit{\texttt{d3}} c5
The Classical System with \( \mathcal{e}2 \)

In this position, White usually transfers the queen to the kingside:

A. 12.\( \mathcal{w}h5 \); B. 12.\( \mathcal{w}g4 \)

12.\( \mathcal{w}e2 \) is a minor option: 12...\( \mathcal{d}e7 \) 13.a4 (13.\( \mathcal{g}5 \) h6 14.\( \mathcal{w}h5 \) \( \mathcal{d}d4 \) 15.\( \mathcal{e}3 \) \( \mathcal{d}d7 \) 16.\( \mathcal{f}f4 \) c4 17.\( \mathcal{e}4 \) b4! 18.\( \mathcal{d}d1 \) \( \mathcal{d}d5 \), V.Dimitrov-Vyzmanavin, Burgas 1993) 13...b4 14.\( \mathcal{e}4 \) \( \mathcal{c}c6 \) 15.b3 (15.\( \mathcal{w}h5 \) \( \mathcal{g}6 \) 16.\( \mathcal{f}f1 \) \( \mathcal{d}d4 \) 17.\( \mathcal{f}3 \) \( \mathcal{d}d5 \)) 15...\( \mathcal{g}6 \) (15...f5 16.\( \mathcal{g}5 \) \( \mathcal{d}d5 \) 17.\( \mathcal{d}d1 \) h6! 18.\( \mathcal{f}4 \) \( \mathcal{e}7 \) is also possible, but I want to provoke f4 in order to limit White’s dark-squared bishop’s scope) 16.\( \mathcal{f}4 \) \( \mathcal{e}7 \) 17.\( \mathcal{e}3 \) \( \mathcal{h}4 \). It is unclear how White should improve his position from here. For instance, the attack on c5 by 18.\( \mathcal{w}f2 \) is neutralised with 18...\( \mathcal{d}d5 \).

A. 12.\( \mathcal{w}h5 \) g6

12...c4 13.\( \mathcal{e}4 \) \( \mathcal{e}7 \) 14.\( \mathcal{x}b7 \) \( \mathcal{x}b7 \) 15.\( \mathcal{g}5 \) \( \mathcal{d}d4 \) 16.\( \mathcal{d}d1 \) \( \mathcal{d}d1 \) 17.\( \mathcal{x}d1 \) h6 18.\( \mathcal{h}4 \), S.J.Solomon-Miezis, Melbourne 2013, is pleasant for White.

13.\( \mathcal{w}h3 \)

T.Horvath chose against me in Varna 2012 13.\( \mathcal{g}5 \) with the obvious idea to provoke further weakening of my castling position. However, the inclusion of 13...h6 is in Black’s favour. After 14.\( \mathcal{g}3 \), I could have expanded on the kingside by 14...\( \mathcal{c}4 \) 15.\( \mathcal{e}4 \) \( \mathcal{e}7 \) 16.\( \mathcal{f}3 \) c6 17.\( \mathcal{f}4 \) g5 18.\( \mathcal{g}3 \) \( \mathcal{d}d4 \) 19.\( \mathcal{e}3 \) \( \mathcal{b}4 \) 20.\( \mathcal{e}d1 \) \( \mathcal{x}e4 \) 21.\( \mathcal{x}e4 \) \( \mathcal{x}c3 \) 22.\( \mathcal{b}xc3 \) \( \mathcal{d}f5 \) with complex play. I opted for the common 14...\( \mathcal{g}7 \). This is not a bad move, of course, but it gives White more options, for instance, 15.\( \mathcal{f}4 \) \( \mathcal{e}7 \) 16.\( \mathcal{f}2 \) \( \mathcal{f}5 \) (16...0-0 17.\( \mathcal{e}3 \) 17.\( \mathcal{e}4 \) b4 18.\( \mathcal{x}b7 \) \( \mathcal{b}c3 \) 19.\( \mathcal{e}4 \) \( \mathcal{c}xb2 \) 20.\( \mathcal{b}2 \) 0-0=. My opponent erred with 15.\( \mathcal{f}4 \) ? \( \mathcal{e}7 \) 16.\( \mathcal{a}4 \) and was lost after 16...\( \mathcal{c}4 \) 17.\( \mathcal{e}4 \) b4 18.\( \mathcal{x}b7 \) \( \mathcal{b}c3 \) 19.\( \mathcal{x}a6 \) \( \mathcal{c}b2 \) 20.\( \mathcal{b}5+ \) \( \mathcal{f}8 \). Whenever White’s bishop leaves c1, the idea with ...\( \mathcal{c}4 \), followed by ...b4 becomes effective.

13.\( \mathcal{w}e2 \) \( \mathcal{g}7 \) is rarely seen. Then 14.\( \mathcal{f}4 \) \( \mathcal{e}7 \) 15.\( \mathcal{e}4 \) \( \mathcal{d}5 \), and 14.\( \mathcal{g}5 \) \( \mathcal{e}7 \) 15.\( \mathcal{a}4 \) b4 16.\( \mathcal{b}1 \) \( \mathcal{d}7 \) 17.\( \mathcal{d}2 \) 0-0 are roughly equal. The most principled continuation is 14.\( \mathcal{a}4 \) b4 15.\( \mathcal{e}4 \), but 15...\( \mathcal{w}xe5 \) 16.\( \mathcal{g}3 \) \( \mathcal{f}6 \) equalises.

13...\( \mathcal{g}7 \) 14.\( \mathcal{g}5 \)

Sacrificing the central pawn by 14.\( \mathcal{a}4 \) b4 15.\( \mathcal{e}4 \) is a mistake (15...\( \mathcal{x}e5 \) 16.\( \mathcal{g}5 \) \( \mathcal{d}7 \)), but White has two decent alternatives to the main line:

a) 14.\( \mathcal{f}4 \) ? is a solid and unpleasant approach. Black has not anything better but to hold the oppo-
Part 1

nent to a draw in the line 14...\textit{d}e7 (14...h6?! preserves more pieces on the board, but 15.a4 b4 16.\textit{d}e4 \textit{exe}4 17.\textit{exe}4 a5 18.\textit{d}d1 \textit{f}8 19.\textit{f}3 \textit{f}e7 20.\textit{f}e1 \textit{g}8 21.h4 is obviously better for White.) 15.a4 b4 (Hellsten's recommendation 15...c4? 16.f1 b4 17.\textit{f}e4 \textit{f}5 loses the c4-pawn after 18.c3! bxc3 19.bxc3 0-0 20.g4 \textit{exe}4 21.\textit{exe}4 \textit{e}7 22.\textit{ex}c4) 16.\textit{f}e4 \textit{exe}4 17.\textit{exe}4 \textit{c}6 18.\textit{g}5 \textit{d}7 19.\textit{exe}7 \textit{exe}7.

b) 14.\textit{f}e4 creates the strong positional threat of taking full control over the dark squares, for example, after 14...\textit{d}e7? (Hellsten) 15.\textit{b}7 \textit{b}7 16.\textit{h}b7 \textit{e}7. It is clear that Black should hinder this plan. I see two sensible ways:

14...\textit{exe}4 15.\textit{exe}4. \textit{exe}5 16.\textit{g}5 \textit{d}7 17.\textit{ad}1 h6 18.\textit{xd}7 \textit{xd}7 19.\textit{xc}5 \textit{d}6 20.\textit{e}7 21.\textit{d}3 \textit{d}4 22.\textit{d}1 \textit{exe}3 23.\textit{exe}3 \textit{d}5;

14...b4 15.\textit{xb}7 \textit{xb}7 16.\textit{a}4 (16.\textit{e}4?? \textit{exe}4!; 16.\textit{g}5 \textit{d}4 17.\textit{a}4 \textit{c}6 18.\textit{e}3 \textit{d}5 19.\textit{xc}5 \textit{xc}5 20.\textit{xc}5 \textit{xc}5 leads to very unbalanced position where Black's chances should not be worse, in my opinion: 21.a3 \textit{e}7 22.axb4 \textit{xb}4 23.\textit{a}3 \textit{xa}3 24.\textit{xa}3 0-0 25.\textit{xa}6 \textit{b}8 26.b3 \textit{c}8 27.c4 \textit{b}8=) 16.\textit{e}7 17.\textit{xc}5 \textit{c}7 18.\textit{d}3 h6 19.\textit{f}3 0-0. Black has compensation for the pawn, for example, 20.\textit{d}1 \textit{c}6 21.\textit{d}2 \textit{exe}5 22.\textit{exe}5 \textit{f}xe5 23.\textit{xc}1 \textit{g}5 24.h3 \textit{d}4f or 20.\textit{e}3 b3 21.axb3 \textit{xc}2 22.\textit{b}4 \textit{xb}3 23.\textit{c}5 \textit{xf}3 24.gxf3 \textit{d}7 25.\textit{xa}6 \textit{c}8 26.\textit{exe}7 \textit{exe}7.

14...\textit{e}7?

This move is less explored than 14...\textit{d}e7 which has a good reputation, too:

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

a) 15.\textit{f}6 0-0 equalises easily: 16.a4 (16.\textit{e}4 \textit{exe}4 17.\textit{exe}4 \textit{d}4) 16...b4 17.\textit{e}4 \textit{exe}4 18.\textit{exe}4 \textit{xf}6 19.exf6 \textit{d}5 20.\textit{xa}6 \textit{xf}6.

b) 15.a4 b4 16.\textit{e}4 \textit{exe}4 17.\textit{exe}4 \textit{exe}5 18.\textit{xa}6 \textit{xb}2=.

c) 15.\textit{xb}5+ \textit{xb}5 16.\textit{xb}5 \textit{wb}6 17.\textit{d}6+ \textit{xd}6 18.exd6 \textit{xd}6 19.\textit{ad}1 \textit{wc}6 20.\textit{g}3 h6 21.\textit{b}8+ \textit{wc}8 22.\textit{xc}8+ \textit{xc}8 23.\textit{e}3 \textit{xb}2 24.\textit{xc}5 f5 25.a4 at first sight looks promising for White, but Black can set up coordination of his pieces and take over the initiative, e.g. 25...\textit{f}7 26.\textit{d}6 \textit{e}8 27.c4 \textit{c}3 28.\textit{ed}1 e5 29.\textit{c}1 \textit{a}5 30.\textit{b}6 \textit{b}4 31.c5
The Classical System with $\text{c}e2$

d) $15.\text{c}e4 \text{d}4 16.\text{cxb7}$

16.\text{c}d1?! $\text{cxd1} 17.\text{cxd1} \text{cxe5}$

18.\text{cxb7} $\text{cxb7} 19.\text{c}e3 \text{d}4 20.\text{c}e4

\text{cxe4} 21.\text{c}xe4 f5 gives Black a slight initiative; 16.\text{c}e3 $\text{c}d5$.

16.\text{cxb7} 17.\text{f}3 $\text{h}6$

Hellsten suggests as an alternative 17...$\text{d}5$?! 18.\text{c}e4 $\text{cxe5}$.

18.\text{c}e3 $\text{c}c4$ 19.\text{c}e4 $\text{cxe5} 20.\text{c}c3 $\text{d}5$.

This position was reached in the game Rosito-Hellsten, Mendoza 2005. White chose here 21.\text{b}3?

\text{cxc3} 22.\text{cxc3} $\text{c}xe5$ 23.\text{c}xc3 $\text{c}xe3$ 24.\text{c}xc3 $\text{c}c7$.

Hellsten gives as best 21.\text{c}ad1 $\text{c}c6$ 22.\text{b}3 $\text{cxc3}$! 23.\text{c}xc3 $\text{c}xe3$ 24.\text{c}d2 $\text{d}4+$.

15.\text{c}e4

a) $15.\text{a}4 \text{b}4 16.\text{c}e4 $\text{cxe5}$.

b) $15.\text{f}4 \text{c}4 16.\text{c}e4 \text{b}4 17.\text{c}xb7$ does not work (17.\text{c}d1 is the only move) due to 17...\text{bxc3}.

15...$\text{h}6$

16.\text{c}f4

16.\text{h}4 $\text{c}xe4$ 17.\text{c}xe4 $\text{c}xe5$

18.\text{c}ad1 is not dangerous. Black only has to avoid Hellsten’s recommendation 18...g5? which stumbles into 19.\text{c}xd7! $\text{c}xd7 20.\text{c}g3 $\text{d}5 21.\text{c}xe5

\text{cxe5} 22.\text{c}a3. Instead, he can opt for a drawish endgame after 18...f5

19.\text{c}xd7 $\text{c}xd7 20.\text{c}d2 $\text{f}6 21.\text{c}e3 $\text{g}4 22.\text{c}d3+ $\text{d}6 23.\text{c}h3 $\text{c}xd3

24.\text{c}xd3 $\text{c}xb2 25.\text{c}xg4 $\text{c}c3 26.\text{c}e2

\text{c}xd2 27.\text{c}xd2 $\text{fxg}4$ or for attractive complications after 18...\text{c}d1?!

19.\text{c}xd1 $\text{f}8 20.\text{c}d8 (20.\text{c}a3 \text{b}4) 20...\text{c}c6 21.\text{c}e3 $\text{d}4 22.\text{c}e1 $\text{f}5$.

16...\text{b}4 17.\text{c}xb7 $\text{bxc3}$ 18.\text{c}a6 $\text{c}a5 19.\text{c}c4 $\text{cxb2}$ 20.\text{c}c5 $\text{c}e7 (20...g5? 21.\text{c}b3) 21.\text{c}d1 0-0$

Black has finally castled and his pieces are very active, for instance, 22.\text{c}b5 $\text{c}c7 23.\text{c}c2 $\text{g}5 24.\text{c}g3 \text{c}f5

25.\text{c}f4 $\text{c}fd8 26.\text{c}d3 $\text{c}xg5 27.\text{c}xg5

\text{c}xgxf4 28.\text{c}xf4 c4+.

B. 12.\text{c}g4!? $\text{d}4$

Black should resist the temptation to harass the queen by 12...h5 because this move seriously weakens his kingside. White has the better chances after 13.\text{c}e2! [13. $\text{c}h3 $\text{c}e7 14.\text{b}3 (14.\text{c}f4 \text{g}5 15.\text{c}c1

\text{b}4 16.\text{c}e4 $\text{c}xe5) 14...\text{c}f8 15.\text{a}4 \text{c}4

16.\text{bxc4} $\text{bxc4} 17.\text{c}f1 $\text{h}6$] 13...

$\text{c}4 (13...\text{c}e7 14.\text{c}g5) 14.\text{c}e4 $\text{c}xe4

15.\text{c}xe4 $\text{c}c5 16.\text{c}g5 $\text{c}e7 17.\text{a}3.$.

12...\text{c}e7, on the contrary, is a fair alternative to our main line. 13.\text{c}g5

$\text{d}4 14.\text{c}g3 $\text{g}6$
15.\texttt{e}ad1

15.\texttt{e}e2 \texttt{d}d7 16.\texttt{e}ad1 does not change the structure. Black may grab space on the queenside by 16... c4 [16...h6 17.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{e}e7 18.c4! bxc4 19.\texttt{e}c2 g6 20.\texttt{e}c3 (20.\texttt{e}xd7 \texttt{e}xd7 21.\texttt{w}f4 \texttt{d}f5) 20...\texttt{d}f5 21.\texttt{e}xd7 \texttt{e}xd7 22.\texttt{e}xf5. \texttt{g}xf5 leads to an interesting position where Black's king is perfectly safe on the queenside.] 17.\texttt{x}g6 \texttt{x}g6 18.\texttt{e}xd7 \texttt{w}xd7 19.\texttt{d}c3, Danin-Bocharov, Taganrog 2011, 19...b4!? 20.\texttt{d}d1 \texttt{w}c7 21.\texttt{a}a4 \texttt{d}d5 22.b3 \texttt{e}e7 23.\texttt{e}xe7 \texttt{e}xe7 24.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{b}b8 25.h3 \texttt{h}b5=.

15...\texttt{e}e7 16.\texttt{x}xb5!

The critical variation. Alternatively:

16.\texttt{e}e2 \texttt{d}d8 17.\texttt{x}g6 \texttt{x}g6=, Zelcic-Lanka, Graz 2009.

16.\texttt{x}xe7 \texttt{w}xe7 17.\texttt{e}e4 \texttt{x}xe4 18.\texttt{e}xe4 \texttt{d}d5 was balanced in Efimenko-Svidler, Fuegen 2006.

16...axb5 17.\texttt{e}xb5, Polivanov-Zakhartsov, Lviv 2012, 17...\texttt{w}b6 18.\texttt{d}xd4 cxd4 19.\texttt{x}xe7 \texttt{e}xe7 20.\texttt{w}b3 \texttt{w}c6 21.f3 \texttt{d}f5. In Chess Informant 116, Zakhartsov assesses this position as equal. I would say, it is unclear. The game might continue:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{c}
\textbf{Part 1}
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

22.c3 dxc3 23.\texttt{w}b4 c2 24.\texttt{c}c1 \texttt{e}e7 25.\texttt{e}e2 \texttt{d}d5 26.\texttt{d}d4 0-0 27.\texttt{e}exc2 \texttt{w}a6 or 22.\texttt{w}b4 \texttt{e}e3 (22...g5!?) 23.\texttt{x}xe3 dxe3 24.\texttt{d}d6 \texttt{c}c7 25.\texttt{b}b5+ \texttt{e}e7 26.\texttt{b}b4 \texttt{e}e8=.

13.\texttt{w}g3

White has an alternative:

13.\texttt{e}e4 \texttt{x}xe4 14.\texttt{e}xe4 \texttt{x}xe5 15.c3 \texttt{d}d3 [Hellsten suggests 15...\texttt{a}a4, but the endgame after 16.\texttt{w}e2 (16.b3 \texttt{d}f6 17.\texttt{x}xf6+ \texttt{g}xf6 18.\texttt{d}d1 \texttt{e}e4 19.\texttt{x}xe4 \texttt{x}xe4 20.a4 \texttt{g}g7 21.\texttt{e}e3 0-0=) 16...\texttt{d}f6 17.\texttt{x}xf6+ \texttt{g}xf6 18.\texttt{w}xe5 \texttt{x}xe5 19.\texttt{x}xe5 is slightly better for White since the \texttt{h}7- and \texttt{c}5-pawns are weak.] 16.\texttt{x}f4 \texttt{c}f6 17.\texttt{x}xf6+ \texttt{x}xf6 18.a4 (18.\texttt{g}g5 \texttt{w}g6 19.\texttt{e}ad1 c4 20.\texttt{x}xd3 cxd3 21.\texttt{g}g3 \texttt{f}6=) 18...\texttt{e}e7 19.axb5 axb5 20.\texttt{a}a8+ \texttt{e}d8 21.\texttt{e}e5 \texttt{g}g5 22.\texttt{x}g5= with mass elimination.

13...\texttt{h}5!?
The Classical System with $\textit{\&}e2$

I criticized this advance on the previous turn, but here it has attacking purpose and allows Black to seize the initiative:

14.h3

Or 14.f3 h4 15.$\textit{\&}f2$ h3 16.$g3\textit{\&}e7$
17.$\textit{\&}e4\textit{\&}c6$; 14.$\textit{\&}e4\textit{\&}e7$ 15.$\textit{\&}e3\textit{\&}c6$; 14.f4 h4 15.$\textit{\&}f2$ $\textit{\&}h6$ 16.$\textit{\&}e4$

14...h4 15.$\textit{\&}e3\textit{\&}e7$ 16.b3 $\textit{\&}c6$
17.$\textit{\&}b2\textit{\&}d7$ 18.$\textit{\&}ad1\textit{\&}e7$ 19.$\textit{\&}e2$
$\textit{\&}d4$ 20.$\textit{\&}g4$ 0-0

The game might continue 21.$\textit{\&}c1$
$\textit{\&}f5$ 22.$\textit{\&}xf5$ $\textit{\&}xd1$ 23.$\textit{\&}xd1$ exf5
24.$\textit{\&}xf5$ $\textit{\&}c8$ 25.$\textit{\&}f4$ $\textit{\&}d8$ 26.$\textit{\&}c3$
$\textit{\&}e6$ 27.a3 b4 28.$\textit{\&}e4$ $\textit{\&}d5$. 

37
1.e4 c5 2.\( \text{d}f3 \) e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\( \text{d}x\text{d}4 \) \( \text{c}c6 \) 5.\( \text{d}e3 \) \( \text{c}c7 \) 6.\( \text{e}2 \) a6 7.0-0 \( \text{d}f6 \) 8.\( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{d}x\text{d}4 \) 9.\( \text{d}x\text{d}4 \) \( \text{c}c5 \) 10.\( \text{d}d\text{d}3 \) b5 11.f4 \( \text{b}7 \) 12.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{h}5 \) 13.e5 \( \text{d}g4 \) 14.\( \text{a}x\text{b}7 \) \( \text{w}x\text{b}7 \) 15.\( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{c}7 \)

I recommend 15...\( \text{c}8 \) in order to avoid 15...\( \text{e}7 \) 16.\( \text{e}3 \). Anyway, 15...\( \text{c}8 \) 16.b3 \( \text{e}7 \) would have transposed to the game.

16.b3 \( \text{c}8 \) 17.\( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{h}6 \) 18.\( \text{f}3 \)

18...\( \text{w}b8 \)!

White was threatening to win the queen, so we must retreat. In my opinion, 18...\( \text{w}b6 \), which has been designed as an improvement on 18...\( \text{w}b8 \), is not so good in view of 19.\( \text{x}h5 \). The other option 18...\( \text{c}6 \) puts the queen on a file which is going to be opened soon. That gives White the initiative, 19.\( \text{xc}1 \) 0-0 20.\( \text{fe}1 \) \( \text{h}4 \) 21.g4 \( \text{h}g3 \) 22.\( \text{h}g3 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 23.c4, Tischbierek-Michaelsen, 1996.

19.\( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{f}5 \) 20.\( \text{xd}1 \) \( \text{h}4 \)

The opening stage is over. Black regrouped successfully and leveled the game. His aim is to organise some play on the queenside after which he will castle.

21.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 22.\( \text{fd}2 \)

22...\( \text{b}4 \)?
The Classical System with $\text{c}e2$

Ribli assesses positively this move, but Black is still not ready for it. $22...\text{b}7$ (or $22...\text{a}7$) $23.a3\text{a}5=\text{f}$ would have been better.

23. $\text{h}g1$?

Now White misses his chance for $23.c4!\text{ bxc3} 24.\text{xc}3\text{a}5$ and Black's pawn is unable to reach $a4$.  

23...$\text{a}7$ 24. $\text{f}2\text{ b}7$ 25. $\text{f}3\text{ a}5$ 26. $\text{c}4\text{ bxc3} 27.\text{xc}3\text{ a}4=? 28. $\text{c}1$?

With this humble move, White acquiesces in being worse. $28.b4!$ was better, when $28...\text{xb}4$ leads to a draw by perpetual after $29.\text{b}2\text{a}7$ 30. $\text{f}2\text{a}6$ 31. $\text{xb}4\text{ xd}3$ 32. $\text{b}8+\text{e}7$ 33. $\text{xe}8\text{xc}3$ (33... $\text{xe}4??$ 34. $\text{b}6$) 34. $\text{xc}3\text{ xc}3=35.\text{h}3\text{c}1\text{ 36.}\text{h}2\text{ g}3\text{ 37.}\text{h}4\text{ f}1$.

28...0-0 29. $\text{e}1$ (29.$\text{xa}4\text{a}7$) 29...$\text{xb}3$ 30. $\text{xb}3\text{ a}8$ 31. $\text{f}2\text{a}2$ 32. $\text{g}4\text{ h}x\text{g}3$ 33. $\text{hxg}3\text{ h}6$ 34. $\text{c}3\text{ xf}3$ 35. $\text{xf}3$

35...$\text{b}2$

After this move, Black's advantage dissipates and White gradually seizes the initiative. $35...\text{c}2!??$ 36. $\text{e}4\text{ g}4\text{ 37.}\text{d}4\text{ f}6$ would have kept the active rook alive.

36. $\text{a}4\text{ e}2$ 37. $\text{e}3\text{ a}2$ 38. $\text{c}3\text{ xc}3$ 39. $\text{c}3\text{ b}2$ 40. $\text{d}7\text{ b}3$ 41. $\text{e}4!\text{ a}3$ 42. $\text{g}5$

Despite the limited material and pawns on one wing, Black still has some difficulties because his pieces are cramped.

42...$\text{b}8$ 43. $\text{a}7\text{ e}8$ 44. $\text{g}2\text{ e}7$ 45. $\text{e}4\text{ g}4$ 46. $\text{h}3\text{ f}5?!$ 47. $\text{exf}6$ draw.

At this moment the opponents signed the draw. White had chances for torturing the opponent for many moves ahead. He should aim for a position like that:

For instance after 47.$\text{d}2\text{f}8$ 48. $\text{d}4\text{ e}7$ 49. $\text{f}3\text{ f}8$ 50. $\text{c}7\text{ b}8$ 51. $\text{g}1\text{ b}1$ 52. $\text{g}2\text{ b}2$ 53. $\text{h}1$.

The vulnerability of the e6-pawn makes the difference.

The play could continue with 53...$\text{a}2$ 54. $\text{d}4\text{ a}6$ 55. $\text{c}6\text{ a}3$ 56. $\text{g}2\text{ e}8$ 57. $\text{b}8$ and Black is still struggling.
Part 1

2. Adams-Banikas
Porto Carras 04.11.2011

1.e4 c5 2.d3 f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.\(d\)xd4 \(f\)c6 5.\(c\)c3 \(e\)c7 6.\(e\)e2 a6 7.0-0 \(d\)f6 8.\(c\)cxe4 \(e\)e7 10.\(d\)xe6 bxc6 11.\(b\)b6 \(b\)b8 12.\(d\)xc8 \(d\)xc8 13.\(d\)d4 \(c\)c7 14.e5 \(d\)d5

15.c4!

This looks stronger than 15.b3 a5!

It is better to delay ...c6-c5. In some variations Black can use the c5-square for a piece. Another argument in favour of 15...a5 is seen in the line 16.\(d\)d3 0-0 17.\(h\)h5 g6 18.\(h\)h6 f5, when 19.c4 \(b\)b4 is equal, due to the threat of \(c\)c2, while 19.\(f\)f6 \(f\)f6 20.\(g\)g6? fails to 20...d6!.

16.g3

If White takes the f4-square under control with 16.\(d\)d2!? 0-0 (after 16...\(d\)b4!? 17.\(g\)g5 0-0 18.c4 \(e\)e7 19.\(d\)d3 \(g\)f6 20.\(e\)e3 a4, Moreno Carretero-Raijmaekers, ICCF email 2009, White could not prove any substantial advantage) 17.c4, the *zwischenzug* 17...\(b\)b4? stumbles into 18.\(e\)c1!, but 17...\(d\)d4 18.\(c\)c3 c5 19.\(f\)f3 (19.f4 d6) 19...d6 (19...d5?) 20.exd6 (20.\(e\)e2 dxe5) 20...\(d\)xd6 21.g3 \(e\)e5 22.\(d\)d1 \(d\)c3 23.\(c\)c3 a4 equalised in Moreno Carnero-Valles Moreno, Madrid 2009.

16...c5 17.\(b\)b2 0-0

The play is balanced. It would be interesting to try 18.a4 \(d\)d8, but my game Magem-Delchev, France 2009, finished here in a draw. In *The Safest Sicilian* I analysed in detail:

18.\(d\)d2 a4! 19.\(f\)f3 \(b\)b4 20.\(d\)d1 \(d\)d8 21.\(e\)e2=. White attempted to improve by 20.\(e\)f1 axb3 21.axb3 c4 22.\(e\)ed1 cxb3 23.\(c\)xb3 \(e\)d8 24.\(e\)e2 \(c\)c6 25.\(e\)d3 \(b\)b4 26.\(c\)c3 \(c\)c6=, Garcia Corada-Van Unen, ICCF email 2009.

15...\(d\)f4 16.g3

16.\(f\)f3 is more popular. Black meets it by 16...0-0! 17.\(e\)e1

17.g3 \(g\)g6 18.\(e\)e2 (18.\(e\)e4 \(d\)xe5! 19.\(x\)hxh7+ \(x\)hxh7 20.\(h\)h5+ \(g\)g8 21.\(x\)xe5 \(a\)a5 22.\(e\)e2 d6 23.\(c\)c3 \(f\)f5=) 18...f6 19.\(e\)xf6 \(x\)xf6 20.\(x\)f6 \(x\)xf6 21.b3 a5=, Duda-M.Andersen, Chotowa 2010.

17...\(x\)g6! 18.c5. (18.g3 \(b\)b4=)
This position first occurred (after a different move order) in the game Kasparov-Anand, Linares 2002. 18...f6 19.ef6 \( \text{xf6} \) 20.e4 and here I proposed the novelty 20...,\( \text{xd4}! \)? 21.xd4 \( \text{f4} \) 22.ad1 d5 with mutual chances. The play may continue with 23.d3 (23.a3 a5 24.g3 d8 25.d3 f6 26.e5 g5=) 23...xb2 24.xh7 dh8 25.g6 xf4 26.e2 xe2 27.xe2 g5 28.h5 xh5 29.xh5 b8=. 16..c5! 17.ac3 (17.gxf4 cxd4 18.xd4 0-0=) 17...dh3! 18.g2 g5

Black's knight is heading for f7. It is the ideal place for it. The knight will control from there the critical squares e5 and d6, protecting at the same time Black's castling position. 19.b3!

This novelty of Adams allows White to consolidate while retaining the better pawn structure. 19.d3 c6+ 20.f3 f6 21.ad1 f7 22.exf6 xf6 23.xf6 gxf6 24.xc3 e7 25.d2 h5, Mastrovasilis-Miladinovic, Valjevo 2011, or 19.f3 f6 20.exf6 xf6 21.d2 xc3 22.xc3 e5 lead to complex play. After the text, 19...f6 is dubious owing to 20.h5+. 19...c6+ 20.f3 f6 21.exf6 xf6 22.d3 ef7 23.ad1 dh6

Black can take on c3 on move 22 or 23, but I do not like his position.

24.xf6 gx6 25.c3 0-0 26.d3±

White's rooks are much more active while the bishop restricts Black's knight and is ready to eat it should it reach f5 or c6. Black will have to struggle for the draw.

26.c7 27.f2 bd8 28.fd2 f5 29.e2 f4 30.d3 d6 31.e4 d5 32.xf5 xf5 33.g4 xf7 34.d3 h8 35.h4 e7 36.h5?! h6 37.a3 a5 38.e1 (38.b4?) 38..h6 39.h3 e5 40.e4 h8

Black has not any counterplay.
It looks incredible that he could hold this position.

41.\(\text{Ed}d5\) e\(\text{b}8\) 42.\(\text{Ed}d3\) g\(\text{g}7\)
43.\(\text{Ec}3\) e\(\text{e}8\) 44.\(\text{Ed}d5\) \(\text{h}8\) 45.b\(\text{b}4\)
a\(\text{xb}4\) 46.axb4 cxb4 47.\(\text{Ec}b4\)
\(\text{Cc}6\) (47...\(\text{a}7\)!) 48.\(\text{Ed}d5\) \(\text{g}8\)
49.\(\text{Bb}3\) \(\text{h}8\) 50.\(\text{Ec}3\) \(\text{a}6\) 51.c\(\text{c}5\)
\(\text{We}2\) 52.\(\text{Ed}5\) \(\text{Ec}3\) \(\text{a}6\) 51.\(\text{c}5\)
\(\text{Wc}2\) 52.\(\text{Ed}5\) \(\text{Ec}3\) \(\text{a}6\) 51.\(\text{c}5\)
\(\text{We}2\) 52.\(\text{Ed}5\) \(\text{Ec}3\) \(\text{a}6\) 51.\(\text{c}5\)
\(\text{We}2\) 52.\(\text{Ed}5\) \(\text{Ec}3\) \(\text{a}6\) 51.\(\text{c}5\)
\(\text{We}2\) 52.\(\text{Ed}5\) \(\text{Ec}3\) \(\text{a}6\) 51.\(\text{c}5\)
\(\text{We}2\) 52.\(\text{Ed}5\) \(\text{Ec}3\) \(\text{a}6\) 51.\(\text{c}5\)
\(\text{We}2\) 52.\(\text{Ed}5\) \(\text{Ec}3\) \(\text{a}6\) 51.\(\text{c}5\)
\(\text{We}2\) 52.\(\text{Ed}5\) \(\text{Ec}3\) \(\text{a}6\) 51.\(\text{c}5\)
\(\text{We}2\) 52.\(\text{Ed}5\) \(\text{Ec}3\) \(\text{a}6\) 51.\(\text{c}5\)
\(\text{We}2\) 52.\(\text{Ed}5\) \(\text{Ec}3\) \(\text{a}6\) 51.\(\text{c}5\)
\(\text{We}2\) 52.\(\text{Ed}5\) \(\text{Ec}3\) \(\text{a}6\) 51.\(\text{c}5\)
\(\text{We}2\) 52.\(\text{Ed}5\) \(\text{Ec}3\) \(\text{a}6\) 51.\(\text{c}5\)

3. Balinov-Sommerbauer
Tweng 2007

1.e\(\text{e}4\) c\(\text{c}5\) 2.d\(\text{f}3\) e\(\text{e}6\) 3.d\(\text{d}4\) cxd\(\text{d}4\)
4.\(\text{x}d\(\text{d}4\) c\(\text{c}6\) 5.d\(\text{c}3\) a\(\text{a}6\) 6.e\(\text{e}2\)
\(\text{Cc}7\) 7.0-0 \(\text{f}f6\) 8.\(\text{Cc}e\) 3 \(\text{b}4\) 9.\(\text{d}a\) 4
\(\text{Cc}7\) 10.\(\text{x}c\) 6 bxc\(\text{c}6\) 11.\(\text{b}b\) 6 \(\text{b}8\)
12.\(\text{x}c\) 8 \(\text{Cc}8\) 13.\(\text{d}d\) 4 c\(\text{c}5\) 14.\(\text{e}e\) 5
\(\text{Cc}6\) 15.b\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{xe}4\) 16.\(\text{x}g\) 7 \(\text{g}8\)
17.\(\text{h}b\) 2 \(\text{f}6\)!

This might be Black’s best option. It seems appealing to attack on the g-file, but apparently White has adequate defence even against 17...c4?! By exchanging the dark-squared bishops, Black ensures the safety of his king in the centre. It is extremely difficult for White to find a target, because the central pawn cluster keeps his pieces at a bay. Black has plenty of dark squares to manoeuvre on them. It is important first to exchange a pair of rooks to reduce White’s attacking resources.

18.\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{xf}6\) 19.\(\text{xf}3\)

This allows the manoeuvre ...\(\text{g}5\)-e5 which removes the only flaw of Black’s set-up – unconnected rooks. I have investigated the more challenging move:

19.\(\text{d}d2\)! \(\text{e}7\) 20.\(\text{ad}1\)

20.\(\text{fe}1\) \(\text{d}6\) 21.\(\text{e}c3\) \(\text{c}7\) 22.\(\text{ad}1\)
\(\text{xd}1\) 23.\(\text{xd}1\) d\(\text{5}\) 24.g\(\text{3}\) a\(\text{5}\).

20...\(\text{c}7\)

White has no weaknesses and his pieces are much more compact. Nevertheless, Black’s game is very easy! It is a widely know fact that \(\text{w}+\text{c}\) often dominate \(\text{w}+\text{k}\). If he can trade one ore both pairs of rooks, he would become clearly better. The a6-pawn will move out of the bishop's range to a5, and the knight will be seeking to land on a central dark square.
The Classical System with $\text{d}e2$

21.$\text{d}h1$

Alternatives are:

21.$\text{W}e3$ $\text{d}d6$ 22.$\text{W}xd6$ $\text{W}xd6$
23.$\text{d}d1$ $\text{W}c7$ 24.c4 (24.$\text{W}xa6$ $\text{d}a8$);
21.c4 $\text{d}d6$ 22.$\text{W}e3$ $\text{xd}1$ 23.$\text{xd}1$

h5;

21.$\text{f}3$ $\text{d}d6$ 22.$\text{W}f4$ $\text{c}8$ 23.$\text{W}a4$
$\text{xd}1$ 24.$\text{xd}1$ a5 25.c4 h5 26.h3 h4
27.$\text{W}a3$ $\text{b}8$ 28.$\text{W}c1$ a4 29.$\text{W}e3$ $\text{xb}3$
30.$\text{xb}3$ $\text{a}5$ 31.$\text{g}5$ $\text{xb}3$ 32.$\text{W}xh4$
$\text{b}4$ 33.$\text{h}2$ $\text{b}2$ 34.$\text{g}3$ $\text{d}2$;

21...$\text{d}d6$ (or 21...$\text{e}5$ 22.$\text{fe1}$
$\text{g}5$) 22.$\text{W}e3$

Or 22.$\text{W}f4$ $\text{c}6$ 23.$\text{f}3$ $\text{xd}1$
24.$\text{xd}1$ d5 25.$\text{d}d3$ $\text{d}6$ 26.$\text{W}h4$
$\text{e}5$ 27.$\text{W}a4$ (27.$\text{e}1$ $\text{d}4$) 27...$\text{h}5$
28.$\text{xa}6$ $\text{f}4$ 29.$\text{f}1$ $\text{e}3$.

22...$\text{d}4$ 23.$\text{f}3$ (23.c3 $\text{d}5$;
23.$\text{xd}4$ $\text{xd}4$ 24.$\text{xd}4$ $\text{xc}2$) 23...
$\text{g}4$ 24.$\text{xg}4$ $\text{gg}4$ 25.$\text{c}3$ $\text{de}4$
26.$\text{W}d2$ $\text{e}5$ 27.$\text{f}3$ (27.$\text{f}4$ $\text{d}5$) 27...
$\text{h}4$ 28.$\text{h}3$ d5 29.$\text{W}f2$ $\text{f}4$.

19...$\text{g}5$ 20.$\text{e}1$ $\text{c}7$ 21.$\text{W}d2$

$\text{e}5$ 22.$\text{W}c3$ $\text{xe}1+$ 23.$\text{xe}1$ $\text{e}7$
24.$\text{a}3$ $\text{b}8$ 25.$\text{g}3$ a5 26.$\text{d}1$ $\text{c}8$
27.$\text{W}c4$ $\text{e}5$ 28.$\text{a}6$ $\text{c}7$ 29.$\text{g}2$
$\text{b}8$ 30.$\text{d}3$

30...$\text{d}5$

Sommerbauer has shown that he could simply stay and wait. Now he demonstrates that Black is able to shift forward his defence line.

31.$\text{d}d2$ $\text{b}6$ 32.$\text{e}2$ $\text{d}8$
33.$\text{e}5$ $\text{d}6$ 34.$\text{c}3$ $\text{b}6$ 35.$\text{e}5$
$\text{d}6$ 36.$\text{c}3$ $\text{b}6$ 37.$\text{e}2$ $\text{c}7$
38.$\text{g}1$ $\text{b}6$ 39.$\text{e}1$ $\text{c}7$ 40.$\text{e}2$
$\text{b}6$ 41.$\text{e}1$ draw.
Part 2

The English Attack

This part is devoted to the Taimanov move order 1.e4 c5 2.\hspace{0.1cm}f3 e6
3.d4 cxd4 4.\hspace{0.1cm}xd4 \hspace{0.1cm}c6\hspace{0.1cm}5.\hspace{0.1cm}c3 \hspace{0.1cm}c7\hspace{0.1cm}6.a3 a6\hspace{0.1cm}7.d2 \hspace{0.1cm}f6

I allocated only one page to the Kan since 1.e4 c5 2.\hspace{0.1cm}f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.\hspace{0.1cm}xd4 a6 5.\hspace{0.1cm}c3 \hspace{0.1cm}c7\hspace{0.1cm}6.a3?! is simply dubious due to 6...\hspace{0.1cm}f6!

White is living through a crisis in the English Attack with f3. I expect to see the focus of investigations shifting toward set-ups with an early f4.
Part 2. The English Attack

Main Ideas

1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{d}f3\) e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\(\text{d}x\text{d}4\) \(\text{d}c6\) 5.\(\text{d}c3\) \(\text{w}c7\) 6.\(\text{e}3\)

6...a6! 7.\(\text{w}d2\)

This set-up has no analogue in the Kan because after 4...a6 5.\(\text{d}c3\) \(\text{w}c7\) 6.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{f}6\) 7.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{b}4!\) 8.\(\text{w}d2\) \(\text{d}5\) gives Black an initiative.

Thus the whole chapter deals exclusively with the Taimanov move order.

The plan with 0-0-0, \(\text{f}3\), \(\text{g}2-\text{g}4\) used to be White's main weapon against the Taimanov, but in the last 2 years White is struggling to get break-even. His latest attempt is 7.\(\text{w}f3\) and I'm sure we'll be seeing more of it in the coming months. Do not miss to look at game 5 Vallejo-Spraggett, Catalunya 2013 where I suggest 7...\(\text{f}6!\) 8.0-0-0 \(\text{e}7\) 9.\(\text{e}2\) 0-0.

7...\(\text{f}6\) 8.0-0-0

Black has greater choice against 8.\(\text{f}3\). Perhaps the most practical re-tort is to transpose to the main line with 8...b5 9.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{b}7\) 10.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{d}4!\).

8.\(\text{f}4!?\) \(\text{b}4\) 9.\(\text{d}3\) 0-0 10.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{e}7\) leads to complex play with mutual chances.

8...\(\text{e}7!\)

8...\(\text{b}4\) had been the main move for a decade. It is not refuted, but White has found several variations where he could play slightly better endgames without any risk. Only in 2013 did the second players devised a totally new approach. It is bringing amazing results so far. White still cannot recover from the shock and seems unable to generate any sensible ideas. Let's investigate the position after
The English Attack

9.\( f3 \) b5 10.\( g4 \) (10.\( \texttt{b1} \) 0-0!)
11.\( g4 \) \( \texttt{xd4} \) 12.\( \texttt{xd4} \) \( \texttt{b7} \) 10...
\( \texttt{xd4}! \)

The point of Black’s new plan. He intends to attack the centre with ...\( \texttt{b7} \) and ...d5 or ...e5 followed up by ...d5.

The trick is to trade knights before castling!

Before, Black played 10...0-0 11.g5 \( \texttt{h5} \), when 12.\( \texttt{ce2} \) \( \texttt{xd4} \) 13.\( \texttt{xd4} \) \( \texttt{b7} \) would drop the d7-pawn. That forced Black to opt for flank counterplay with 13...f5, but White is somewhat better after 14.\( \texttt{g3} \) \( \texttt{f4} \) 15.\( \texttt{exf5} \) \( \texttt{xe5} \) 16.\( \texttt{e4} \) \( \texttt{c5} \) 17.\( \texttt{d6} \), Shirov-Munoz Santana, Istanbul 2012. Of course, Black could try to enable ...d5 by 12...\( \texttt{d8} \), but this tempo gives White the initiative. He may choose, for example, 13.\( \texttt{g3} \) \( \texttt{xd4} \) 14.\( \texttt{xe5} \) \( \texttt{xf3} \) 15.\( \texttt{xf2} \) \( \texttt{e5} \) 16.\( \texttt{e5} \), although his extra exchange does not automatically guarantee him an advantage.

The timely exchange on d4, followed by ...\( \texttt{b7} \), keeps the d7-pawn protected and enables fast development of the queenside with ...\( \texttt{c8} \), ...d5. We castle only when we are forced to do it or if White gives us a tempo by playing some quite move like \( \texttt{b1} \). Next, I will show the main scenarios from the diagram position.

1. 11.\( \texttt{xd4} \) \( \texttt{b7} \) 12.\( g5 \) \( \texttt{h5} \) 13.\( \texttt{h3} \)

13...\( \texttt{c8} \)! 14.\( \texttt{g4} \) b4 15.\( \texttt{xe5} \) bxc3 16.\( \texttt{xe5} \) cxb2+ 17.\( \texttt{xb2} \) \( \texttt{h5} \). See game 8 Demetrio-Schiendorfer, ICCF email 2009.

2. 11.\( \texttt{xd4} \) \( \texttt{b7} \) 12.\( g5 \) \( \texttt{h5} \) 13.\( \texttt{e2} \) (Taking f4 and g3 under control. 13.\( \texttt{e5} \) \( \texttt{xe5} \); 13.\( \texttt{h4} \) \( \texttt{g3} \!))

13...\( \texttt{c8} \) (threatening 14...\( \texttt{xe5} \)!) 14.\( \texttt{g1} \) 0-0 15.\( \texttt{h3} \) g6 (or 15...d5 16.e5 g6) 16.\( \texttt{b1} \) d5 17.\( \texttt{e5} \) \( \texttt{g7} \). Black has a good game. He will push his pawns to a4 and b4.
We see that White’s most straightforward plans, which are typical for the English Attack, do not set serious problems. White may also turn to natural development and central play with:

3. 11.\textbf{a}xd4 \textbf{b}7 12.\textbf{d}3

Then the play is not forced and Black has various decent options. I analyse the most consistent one – to limit the bishop’s scope with:

\textbf{12...e}5 13.\textbf{f}2 0-0 14.g5 \textbf{h}5!
15.\textbf{d}5 (stopping ...d5) 15...\textbf{xd}5
16.exd5 \textbf{f}4 17.h4 (17.\textbf{x}h7! \textbf{x}h7 18.d6 \textbf{xd}6 19.\textbf{xd}6 \textbf{ac}8 is roughly equal)

17...f5!, when 18.gxf6? \textbf{xd}3+ would be in Black’s favour.

Latest games show that White is disappointed from the above-mentioned courses and looks for more flexible move orders with \textbf{b}1, waiting for Black to define his plans first. The ensuing play is not forced and offers both sides rich possibilities of playing chess. I suggest to meet \textbf{b}1 with ...0-0 and then ...\textbf{c}8 or ...d5.

Here are some examples of the break ...d5.

\begin{center}
\textbf{14.e}2 d5
\end{center}

Watch out if White played 14.\textbf{a}4 d5 15.\textbf{b}6.

\begin{center}
\textbf{15...dxe}4! – never allow e4-e5 when White’s knight is on b6. This pawn structure would be pleasant for White in the event of 15...\textbf{ab}8?! 16.e5 \textbf{d}7 17.\textbf{xd}7. We need the knight for counterplay from c5.
\end{center}
If White has already played g5, we can boldly trade our light-squared bishop for the enemy knight since the possession of the f4-square fully balances White’s bishop pair: 15...b4 16.a4 xd5 17.b6 ad8.

If we delay too much the break, trying to combine it with ...e5 first, White may get additional options:

**Analysis**

17.g4 d4 18.xf4 exf4 19.e5! xe5 20.d4↑.

OK, we have achieved ...d5. what’s next? The short answer is: we aim for ...d4!.

**Bauer-Lopez Martinez Linares 2013**

15...d4! 16.d4 0-0 17.d3 fd8 18.b1 g6 19.hf1 xe5.

**Game 6 Volokitin-Najer Muelheim 2013**

16...d4! 17.xd4 0-0 18.e2 fd8 19.c1 g6 20.he1 xe5.

A more sophisticated example:

**Analysis**

17...d4! 18.xd4 0-0 19.xh5 gxh5 20.he1 fd8 21.f2 (21.f4 xf3). White’s king lacks defenders so we can even ignore the e5-pawn: 21...a5! (21...xe5 22.b1=) 22.b1 a4→.
Even if we cannot activate our bishop, White has not any attack. We easily defend the 7th rank: 26.hxg6 fxg6 27.\(\text{\textipa{d}h} \text{\textipa{i}}\) 4f5.

Keep in mind the following typical trap White often overlooks:

15.g5? 4xe4! 16.fxe4 hg5!, winning the queen because of the mate on c2.; it also works after 15.4b6 4xe4! 16.fxe4 4g5!.

Going deeper into the middlegame, I would like to bring your attention to the possibility of sacrificing the exchange for a pawn. This is a good way to neutralise the enemy attack.

Black will be threatening to build up a \(\text{\textipa{w}}+\text{\textipa{r}}\) battery on the main diagonal. Moreover, the f3 and h2-pawns are weak.

Even without queens, Black’s bishop pair and an active rook commonly balance the game:

The position is unclear.

Game 7 Robson-Wang, Yue rapid, Ningbo 2013

22...\(\text{\textipa{f}}\)4. Black is better due to his domination on the dark squares.
Part 2. The English Attack

Taimanov – Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.\(\Delta f3\) e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\(\Delta xd4\) \(\Delta c6\) 5.\(\Delta c3\) \(\text{w}c7\) 6.\(\Delta e3\)

6...a6

6...\(\Delta f6\) practically eliminates the English attack as a choice for White, but why to jump out of the frying pan into the fire?! The arising unexplored positions bring White much better results than the English attack itself! Although there is a vast field for improvements and investigation, I do not see any reason to deviate from the main lines.

Let me note two important games after 6...\(\Delta f6\).

Giri-Bauer, Leon 2012: 7.f4 \(\text{w}b4\) 8.\(\Delta db5\) \(\text{w}a5\) 9.e5 \(\text{\Delta}d5\) 10.\(\text{\Delta}d2\) \(\text{\Delta}xc3\) 11.\(\text{\Delta}xc3\) 0-0 12.\(\text{\Delta}d2\)

12...f6 (12...\(\text{\Delta}xc3\) 13.\(\text{\Delta}xc3\) f6 14.exf6 \(\text{\Delta}xf6\) 15.0-0-0 d5 16.g3, Motylev-Shimanov, Aix-les-Bains 2011) 13.exf6 \(\text{\Delta}xf6\) 14.g3 d5 15.\(\text{\Delta}xb4\) \(\text{\Delta}xb4\) 16.\(\text{\Delta}d4\) \(\text{w}b6\) 17.c3 \(\text{\Delta}c6\) 18.0-0-0. White has a stable positional edge.

Another possible argument in favour of 6...\(\Delta f6\) would be to avoid the 7.\(\text{\Delta}d3\) main line with 7...\(\text{b}6\) or 7...\(\text{\Delta}xd4\) 8.\(\text{\Delta}xd4\) \(\text{\Delta}c5\) 9.\(\text{\Delta}xc5\) \(\text{\Delta}xc5\) 10.\(\text{\Delta}e2\). Again, I doubt the soundness of these deviations.

Summing up, by delaying ...a6 Black hardly improves his chances in the main lines while the additional options of White, especially 7.f4, look really unpleasant.

7.\(\text{\Delta}d2\)

7.\(\text{\Delta}e2\), 7.\(\text{\Delta}d3\) and 7.f4 are subject
of other parts of the book, I will consider here two rare alternatives:

a) 7.a3 is a particular move order, which throws us out of our repertoire. Black’s biggest problem is his enormous choice. Virtually all conceivable plans are playable, but I understand that such a statement has no practical value. Scheveningen fans will be especially happy to face this innocuous move. I propose to adopt a typical Taimanov set-up for consistency sake:

7...b5

8.a3

Or 8.a2 b5 9.a3 c6 10.a3 c8 11.a3 (Anticipating 11...c6 11.a3 b6 12.e5 d5 would be OK for Black) 11...h5 12.h3 h4 13.0-0 d6∞.

8...c6 9.a3

9.a3 b5 10.a3 c6 11.a3 d5 12.e5 should be met by 12...b6. The trick is that 13.a3 is not dangerous in view of 13...xe3 14.xe3 c7 15.axb4AXB 16.0-0 b4 17.axb4 xb4 18.e4 c5 19.d6 c6.

9...b7 10.a3 c7 11.0-0 d6 12...f6 13.a3 e5 with complex play.

b) 7.a3 d6! (7...b5 8.a3 c6 9.b3 d5 10...f6 11...b7 12.g4 8.d4 c5 9.g3, Cheparinov-Swiercz, Yerevan 2014, are pleasant for White) 8.0-0-0 is trendy.

The Scheveningen approach 8...e7 (8...d6 is less accurate as it allows 9.xc6!? bxc6 10.g4) 9.a3 (9.xc6 bxc6 10.g4 is already unimpressive due to 10...d5) 9...f6 10.d4 [10.g4 f4 11.a3 (11.d4 b5 12.g5 d6 13.h1 d5 14.b1 c5 15.d3 f5 16.gxf6 dxf6 17.xf6 xf6 18.e2 e7) 11...d5 12.exd5 f5 10...f6!] seems the most logical retort to White’s set-up, because his queen hampers the march of the g-pawn. After 11.f4, Black will complete development with ...d7-e8 keeping the tension in the centre. See more details in the annotations to game 5 Vallejo-Spraggett, Catalunya 2013.

7...d6

7...b5 contradicts the spirit of this book and my own understanding of the Taimanov. I think that Black should seek active piece play and the knight on c6 has an impor-
The English Attack

tant role in that design. So I have a
good reason to avoid 7...b5 8.cb6.

8.0-0-0

In the early days of the English
Attack, White used to play:

a) 8.f3

It was aimed against 8...g4,
bu t it is already clear that the
knight jump after 8.0-0-0 is bad
due to 9.f4 ge5 (9...e5?! is even
worse, 10.d5 w.d8 11.h3!±) 10.g3
d4 11.gxd4 f6 12.f4 c5 13.w.d2
f7 14.e5†, Grischuk-Needleman,
Khan ty Mansyisk 2005.

8...b5 g4

9.cb6 dxc6 is similar to
10.cb6; 9.0-0-0 transposes to the
main line.

9...b7

9.h6 10.cb6! [10.0-0-0 cb5
(intending ...d5) 11.h4 b4 12.cb4
d5 13.e2 counts on the trick 13...
dxe4 14.cb6 wb6 15.cb6 (15.e6
d8a5 16.xf8 cb7). However, Black
has the counter-blow 15...d3+
16.xd3 wb7 17.f4 e3! ] sets some
problems since 10...dxc6 might be
slightly better for White because
...h6 has provided him with a le­
ver on the kingside. Perhaps Black
should try 10...xb6 and follow up
by ...b7,wb7, w.e7, d5.

10.g5 cb6! transposing to the
main line. (In the event of 10...h5
11.cb6, our knight would be mis­
placed on h5.)

b) 8.f4!?

This line enjoys a burst of pop­
ularity. However, it might be short­
lived if White does not find some­
thing substantial against the rather
forced endgame which arises after:

8...cb4!

Karjakin-Svidler, 2014, saw 8...
b5, but I believe that it is important
to provoke a3 in order to have a le­
ver for our attack on the queenside.
The game went 9.e5 cb4 10.cb1 cb7
11.0-0-0 cbxd4 12.xd4 cb7 13.c3
d5 14.h3 cb6 15.hg1 0-0 16.w.e3 (16.
g4 g6 17 cb1 cb3 18.y.d1 cb6 19.g5
c7 20.h4 is better for White) 16...
cb8 17.cb1 cb6 18.cb2 cb5 19.g4
g6 20.b3 y.b7 21.y.d1 a5 22.cb3
c4 23.y.e4 cb5 24.y.d3 draw.

9.cb3

9.ya5

This is a critical line for White's
eighth move, but I prefer the dou­
ble-edged: 9...0-0! Now 10.cb6
c6 11.e5 cb4 12.cb1 d5 cannot be
of any concern to us. The only prin­
cipl ed retort is 10.a3 y.e7! 11.0-0-0
b5 12.e5 cb4 13.cb1 cb7 with com­
plex play.
We can undermine the enemy centre with ...f6 or push ...b4. For instance, 14.\texttt{a}b3 b4 15.axb4 \texttt{a}xb4, or 14.\texttt{a}e2 \texttt{a}h6. Unfortunately, I do not know of any practical example yet.

10.a3

In the event of 10.\texttt{a}de2 \texttt{a}c4 11.\texttt{a}xc4 \texttt{a}xc4 12.e5 \texttt{a}e4 13.\texttt{a}d3, Black completes development with either 13...b5 or 13...d5.

10...\texttt{a}xc3 11.\texttt{a}xc3 \texttt{a}xc3+ 12.bxc3 d5 (In Shomoev-Grigoriants, Taganrog 2014, Black tested 12...d6, but 13.\texttt{a}b3 is pleasant for White who has pressure on the queenside with \texttt{a}d2, a4, \texttt{a}b1.) 13.e5! (13.exd5 \texttt{a}xd5 14.\texttt{a}d2 \texttt{a}b6 15.0-0 \texttt{a}bc4=, Ziaziulkina-Zhigalko, Minsk 2014) 13...\texttt{a}e4 14.\texttt{a}b3! \texttt{a}c4 15.\texttt{a}xc4 dxc4 16.\texttt{a}a5

16...\texttt{a}d7!

16...b5?! 17.\texttt{a}d4 f5 18.exf6 gxf6 19.0-0, Edouard-Javakhishvili, Calletta 2014, may be defendable, but I see no fun for Black.

17.\texttt{a}d4 \texttt{a}c8 18.\texttt{a}xb7 \texttt{a}c6 19.\texttt{a}a5 \texttt{a}d5 20.\texttt{a}b1 f5!. White's knight might remain stranded on a5, his doubled extra pawn is not worth much. White also has to worry about possible ...\texttt{a}g8, ...g5. 21.\texttt{a}b6 is not a threat due to 21...\texttt{a}d7. Perhaps best is 21.\texttt{a}b7 g5= with counterplay.

8...\texttt{a}e7

8...b5 is less accurate due to 9.\texttt{a}f4 \texttt{a}b6 when 10.\texttt{a}b3! \texttt{a}g4 11.\texttt{a}e2! \texttt{a}ge5 12.\texttt{a}e3 assures White of the edge. 10.\texttt{a}xc6 \texttt{a}xc6 11.f3 also deserves attention.

9.f3

9.f4 forces the play so it demands memorisation: 9...b5! (9...d6 10.\texttt{a}e2 0-0 is a sharp Scheveningen position) 10.e5

10.\texttt{a}d3 gives Black time to repel the c3-knight: 10...b4 11.\texttt{a}a4 \texttt{a}b8.

The game Gashimov-Movsesian, Reggio Emilia 2010, went further 12.\texttt{a}b1 d6! 13.b3 (13.e5 dxe5 14.\texttt{a}xc6 \texttt{a}xc6 15.fxe5 \texttt{a}d5) 13...0-0 14.\texttt{a}xc6 \texttt{a}xc6 15.\texttt{a}he1 \texttt{a}c7 16.\texttt{a}e2 \texttt{a}d7 with mutual chances.

10...b4!

This move provokes the following interesting sacrifice:
The English Attack

11...cxb5

11.exf6 bxc3 12.\(\text{bxc}\)3 a6xf6 13.g4 h6 14.h4 (14.a.g2 a.b7 15.a.hg1 4.e8 16.a.b1 a.xd4 17.a.xc7 a.xc7 18.dxd4 is at least equal if not slightly better for Black, Hracek-Akesson, Pardubice 2013) 14...b7 15.a.h2 4.e8 16.a.d2. Black has a wide choice here. Perhaps safest is 16...xd4 17.a.xd4 a.xd4 18.a.xd4 0-0 19.g5 h5 20.a.f2 d5! =, Guseinov-Macieja, Istanbul 2012. In Wijk aan Zee 2014, Saric tried to contest this assessment against Yu Yangyi. Instead of attacking on the kingside, he tried to exploit Black’s “bad” bishop with 21.a.e1 g6 22.a.e3 a5 23.a.b3. However, the Chinese GM found a good way to obtain counterplay with the pawn sac 23...a4! 24.a.xa4 a.c5 25.a.g2 (25.a.bf3 d4 26.a.a3 d3) 25...a.a8 26.a.b4 a.xb4 27.a.xb4 a.xa2. Black has no problems in this endgame.

11...axb5 12.a.b5 a.a5

12.a.b8 might be the only way to play for a win, but it is risky as White has good compensation for the pawn after 13.exf6 gxf6 14.a.d6+ (14.a.b1 d5 15.a.f2 a.a6 16.a.b6 a.xb5 17.a.xb5 a.b7 18.f5 a.b8) 14...a.xd6 15.a.xd6 a.xd6 16.a.xa2 17.a.b1 a.a5 18.a.e2.

13.exf6 gxf6. White has a forced way to equality, see game 4 Wei Yi-Stukopin, Kocaeli 2013.

9...b5 10.g4

a) 10.a.xc6 dxc6 brings about a symmetric pawn structure where the chances are roughly equal.

10...a.xc6 11.g4 d6 is often seen in the Scheveningen, but I believe that White is better prepared for an attack.

11.g4 e5 12.h4 a.e6

White may claim some space advantage on the kingside, but he has no real threats. For instance, after: 13.g5, Black can exchange a pair of rooks with 13...a.d8, or he can preserve more pieces with 13...a.d7 followed up by 0-0-0. 13...a.h5!? is good, too. At the same time, White’s king’s bishop lacks prospects. Therefore,

13.a.h3 looks consistent. Motylev-Fominyh, Ubeda 2001, went 13...a.d8 14.a.h2 a.xd1+ 15.a.xd1 0-0?! 16.g5 a.h5 17.a.xe6 fxe6 18.a.h3, but 13...a.d7 evens the chances.
Then 14.g5 would not make much sense in view of 14...\textit{\&}xh3 15.\textit{\&}xh3 0-0-0=, but 14.\textit{\&}d5 cxd5 15.\textit{\&}xd5 \textit{\&}xh3 16.\textit{\&}xg5 \textit{\&}d8 17.\textit{\&}d3 \textit{\&}b6 is also fine for Black.

White may wait to see where the black king castles:

13.\textit{\&}b1. Perhaps castling is not necessary at all. 13...\textit{\&}d8 14.\textit{\&}h2 \textit{\&}xd1+ 15.\textit{\&}xd1 h6 16.\textit{\&}h3 \textit{\&}a5 17.b3 \textit{\&}d7 gives counterplay on the dark squares.

Eliseev chose twice 13.\textit{\&}f2. Potkin answered 13...a5 (I do not understand this move) 14.\textit{\&}c5 0-0 15.h5 \textit{\&}xc5 16.\textit{\&}xc5 \textit{\&}d7 17.\textit{\&}d6 \textit{\&}xd6 18.\textit{\&}d6 \textit{\&}fc8=. Dragun opted for 13...\textit{\&}b4, but after 14.a3, he suddenly changed his mind with 14...\textit{\&}e7?. I would rather try to trade a pair of rooks with 13...\textit{\&}d8 (13...\textit{\&}d7 is probably less accurate due to 14.\textit{\&}d5) and decide later whether to castle at all.

b) 10.\textit{\&}b1!? is a tricky waiting move which is not deprived of venom. My recommendation is to transpose to line A2 with 10...0-0! 11.g4 \textit{\&}xd4 12.\textit{\&}xd4 \textit{\&}b7.

Black would be nastily surprised if he tried to transpose to the main line with 10...\textit{\&}d4?! 11.\textit{\&}d4 \textit{\&}b7 (11...b4 12.\textit{\&}a4 \textit{\&}b8 13.\textit{\&}f2) 12.\textit{\&}g5! when 12...0-0 loses to 13.e5=+. In the blitz game Ivanchuk-Wang Yue, Beijing 2013, Black played 12...b4 13.\textit{\&}a4 0-0 14.\textit{\&}b6 \textit{\&}ae8 15.\textit{\&}g3 d6 16.\textit{\&}c4 e5 17.\textit{\&}b6± when 17...\textit{\&}b8 would have hold on, but I do not like such static positions with a clear plan for White.

The other obvious alternative is 10...\textit{\&}b7 hoping for 11.g4 \textit{\&}xd4. Instead, White can set serious practical problems with the still untested 11.\textit{\&}f4!? e5 12.\textit{\&}f5 exf4 13.\textit{\&}d5.

Without the inclusion of 10.\textit{\&}b1 \textit{\&}b7, Black would have 13...\textit{\&}e5!, but now the b7-bishop is hanging. 13...\textit{\&}b8?! keeps the extra piece, but 14.\textit{\&}xg7+ \textit{\&}f8 15.\textit{\&}f5 is a mess. Still, I would take White without any hesitation. Look at the variation 15...\textit{\&}d8 16.\textit{\&}xf4 h5 17.g3!. It is unclear how to get rid of the dominating knight on f5. To be sure, 17...\textit{\&}e7 fails to 18.\textit{\&}d6 \textit{\&}c7 19.e5+. It is better to eliminate to a nearly equal endgame with 13...\textit{\&}xd5! 14.exd5 \textit{\&}b4 15.d6 \textit{\&}xc2+ 16.\textit{\&}xc2 \textit{\&}xc2 17.\textit{\&}g7+ \textit{\&}f8 18.dxe7+ \textit{\&}xg7 19.\textit{\&}xc2 \textit{\&}ac8+ 20.\textit{\&}b1 \textit{\&}c6 21.\textit{\&}d4 \textit{\&}he8 22.\textit{\&}xf4 \textit{\&}xe7 23.\textit{\&}d3 h6. Black will be staying with his rooks on the e-file, avoiding exchanges.

10...\textit{\&}e5 returns to the older treatment of the Taimanov. Perhaps Black should check the position after 11.g4 (11.\textit{\&}b3 \textit{\&}b8 12.\textit{\&}f2 \textit{\&}c4 13.\textit{\&}xc4 bxc4 is fine for Black) 11...0-0 12.g5 \textit{\&}h5 13.f4 \textit{\&}g4 14.e5
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b4 15.\( \text{Q}e4 \text{b}7 \) 16.\( \text{Q}g2 \text{d}6 \) 17.\( \text{Q}f6+ \text{xf6} \) 18.\( \text{Q}x\text{b}7 \text{wxb7} \), but so far White has won both games where it was tested.

\[ 10\ldots \text{Q}x\text{d}4! \]

A. 11.\( \text{Q}x\text{d}4 \); B. 11.\( \text{w}x\text{d}4 \)

A. 11.\( \text{Q}x\text{d}4 \) \( \text{b}7 \)

The immediate attack in the centre with 11...\( \text{b}4 \) 12.\( \text{Q}a4 \text{b}8 \), planning ...\( \text{d}5 \), seems a plausible alternative. This branch is still unexplored, maybe because Black obtains more than satisfactory results in the main line. A possible continuation is 13.\( \text{Q}b1 \) 0-0 14.\( \text{w}f2 \text{d}5 \) 15.g5 \( \text{Q}h5 \) 16.exd5 exd5 17.h4 \( \text{e}4 \).

An important juncture. White should decide whether to continue his initial plan, or focus on the centre:

A1. 12.g5; A2. 12.\( \text{Q}b1 \); A3. 12.\( \text{Q}d3 \)

Minor alternatives are:

a) 12.h4. White aims to play h5 first, but this idea is too slow and does not hamper the break 12...\( \text{d}5 \) since 13.g5 \( \text{Q}h5 \) 14.exd5 is met by 14...\( \text{b}4 \) 15.\( \text{Q}e4 \text{xd}5 \). White’s knight stands well on e4, but we can always exchange it. The game Dambrauskas-Schiendorfer, ICCF email 2010, went 16.\( \text{we}3 \text{c}8 \) 17.\( \text{d}2 \text{ae}4 \) 18.fxe4 0-0 19.\( \text{hh}2 \text{e}5 \) 20.\( \text{b}6 \text{c}6 \) 21.\( \text{d}5 \text{f}4 \) 22.\( \text{a}5 \text{h}6 \) with an initiative on the kingside.

b) 12.\( \text{w}f2 \) 0-0 13.\( \text{d}3 \) (13.\( \text{Q}b6 \text{w}c6 \) ! 14.g5 \( \text{Q}h5 \) 13...\( \text{b}4 \) ?) Topalov chose against Karjakin in Beijing 2013 the more flexible 13.\( \text{e}8 \text{c}8 \) 14.\( \text{Q}e2 \text{d}6 \) 15.\( \text{Q}g3 \text{d}7 \) 16.\( \text{he}1 \text{c}5 \) 17.\( \text{b}1 \text{fd}8 \) 18.\( \text{b}3 \text{e}5 \) 19.\( \text{b}2 \text{h}4 \) ! 20.\( \text{e}1 \text{g}6 \), with the better game.

14.\( \text{Q}e2 \) (14.\( \text{a}4 \text{d}5 \) 15.g5 \( \text{Q}d7 \); 15.\( \text{b}6 \text{dxe}4 \)! – never allow e4-e5 when White’s knight is on \( \text{b}6 \) and
can take ours on d7. We need the knight for counterplay from e5.)
14...d5 15.e5 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) d7 16.f4 a5 17.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) b1
(17.f5 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) xe5) 17...a4↑.

**A1. 12.g5 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) h5 13.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) e2**

a) 13.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) b1 gives a tempo for castling: 13...0-0

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Diagram}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
a1) 14.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) e2 f5 15.gxf6 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) xf6
16.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) xf6 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) xf6 17.h4 with a balanced
game. Black's pressure down the f-file neutralises the open g-file. The
e-mail game Salvador Marques-Schiendorfer 2010 went 17...\( \text{\textcopyright} \) f7
(17...\( \text{\textcopyright} \) ac8 18.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) g1 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) h5) 18.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) g1 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) h2
19.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) e3 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) c8 20.a3 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) h5 21.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) g4 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) c7
22.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) d2 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) c5 23.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) d4 e5 24.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) b3 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) cf8
25.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) g5 g6 26.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) f5 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) h8 27.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) e2 gxf5
28.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) xh5 fxe4 draw.

\[
a2) 14.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) e3 does not hamper 14...d5. After 15.exd5 b4 16.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) a4 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) xd5
17.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) b6 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) ad8 18.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) xd5 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) xd5 19.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) c1
\( \text{\textcopyright} \) xd1 20.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) xd1 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) f4, Black seized the
initiative, Bauer-Ganguly Linares 2013.

\[
a3) 14.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) g1 takes control of g3 and
prepares h4, \( \text{\textcopyright} \) h3. It seems that 14...
d5 is bad due to 15.exd5 b4? 16.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) e4
\( \text{\textcopyright} \) xd5 17.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) f6+, but in fact the the-
\]

matic break is still possible. Only
instead of 15...b4, Black should play
15...\( \text{\textcopyright} \) f4!, recovering the pawn with
a satisfactory position. However,
White has no immediate threats so
why not keep the tension for a while
with 14...\( \text{\textcopyright} \) ac8. White has not any-
thing better than 15.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) e3 (15.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) g4 g6;
15.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) h3 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) f4), when 15...d5 16.exd5
b4 is already possible.

\[
a4) 14.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) d3 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) f4 (14...e5!? 15.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) f2
\( \text{\textcopyright} \) f4, intending to capture the g5-
pawn on 16.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) e2, may be stronger)
15.h4 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) ac8 16.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) e2 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) xd3 17.cxd3 e5
18.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) e3
\]

Here 18...d5 19.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) g3 d4 20.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) f2
g6 21.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) c1 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) d7 22.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) e2 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) (or 22.f4!?)
might be dangerous so Morozevich
opted for the forced line 18...\( \text{\textcopyright} \) b4!
19.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) xb4 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) c2+ 20.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) a1 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) xe2=

\[
b) 13.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) e5 leads to a sharp end-
game after:
13...\( \text{\textcopyright} \) xe5!
\]

It is dangerous to avoid simplifi-
cation by 13...\( \text{\textcopyright} \) c6 since 14.a3 will
retain White's grip on the centre:
14...0-0 15.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) h3 f5 16.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) he1 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) ae8
17.exf5 exf5 18.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) g2±;
14...\( \text{\textcopyright} \) d8 15.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) b1 (15.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) h3 \( \text{\textcopyright} \) c5
16.f4 h6) 15...0-0 16.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) e2 or 16.\( \text{\textcopyright} \) h3
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whereas Black’s queen does not control the critical square f4.

14.\textit{x}d7+ \textit{xf}8 15.\textit{xb}7 \textit{gg}5+ 16.\textit{b}1 \textit{b}8

17.\textit{d}7

17.\textit{c}6 g6!? would be double-edged while 17...\textit{c}8 18.\textit{xc}8+ (18. \textit{b}6 \textit{f}6 19.\textit{e}2 \textit{e}5 20.\textit{g}1 g6) does not change this assessment.

17...\textit{xb}7 18.\textit{xc}7 \textit{f}6 19.a4 (19. \textit{e}2 g5) 19...\textit{xc}3 20.\textit{xc}3 bxa4 21.\textit{xa}6 g5 22.\textit{b}5 \textit{g}7 23.\textit{d}1, Ter Sahakyan-J. Polgar, Yerevan 2014. Black must keep both rooks here or White's c-pawn will run forward quickly. Perhaps safest is 23...\textit{d}4 24.c4 \textit{xc}8!, since 24...\textit{g}6!? 25.c5 \textit{e}5 26.c6 \textit{xf}3 27.c7 \textit{d}2 is rather unclear.

c) 13.h4!? counts on the trick 13...0-0?! 14.\textit{h}3 \textit{f}4 (14...b4 15.\textit{e}2 e5 16.\textit{f}2 d5 17.\textit{g}4 \textit{f}4 18.\textit{xf}4 exf4 19.e5) 15.\textit{e}3! \textit{d}3 16.\textit{xd}7\textit{g}3, Muzchuk-Galajon, Belgrade 2013. Black should kill the \textit{f}1 with 13...\textit{g}3! 14.\textit{g}1 \textit{xf}1 15.\textit{gxf}1 0-0, killing two birds with one shot – he has solved the problem of his knight at the edge of the board removing a dangerous attacking piece at the same time. The game might continue 16.\textit{b}1 b4 17.\textit{a}4 (17. \textit{e}2 e5 18.\textit{xf}2 d5 19.\textit{g}3 \textit{d}8) 17...d5 (or 17...\textit{c}6 18.\textit{c}5 a5 19.\textit{d}3 d5 20.\textit{e}3 a4) 18.\textit{xd}5 (18.e5 a5 19.\textit{xf}2 \textit{c}6 20.\textit{c}5 a4?) 18...\textit{xd}5 19.\textit{b}6 \textit{ad}8 20.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5=.

d) 13.\textit{d}3 is an arguable idea, because Black can always equalise by trading the bishop after ...\textit{h}5-\textit{f}4\textit{x}d. 13...0-0 14.\textit{e}2 e5 15.\textit{e}3 g6 (15...\textit{c}5 16.\textit{xc}5 \textit{xc}5 17.\textit{b}1 \textit{ac}8 18.\textit{h}f1=) 16.\textit{g}3 \textit{f}4 17.h4

17...\textit{ac}8 (17...\textit{xd}3+ 18.\textit{xd}3 \textit{ad}8=) 18.\textit{xf}4 exf4 19.\textit{e}2 d5 20.\textit{xf}4 (20.\textit{xf}4 \textit{d}6 21.\textit{e}2 \textit{fe}8!) 20...\textit{d}6 21.e5 (21.\textit{g}4 dxe4 22.\textit{xe}4 \textit{d}5) 21...\textit{xe}5 22.\textit{d}2 \textit{g}7 23.f4 \textit{f}8 24.\textit{b}1. Dominguez-Potkin, Havana 2012 saw here 24...\textit{e}4? 25.\textit{xe}4\textit{+}. Instead, 24...d4 25.\textit{h}2 \textit{e}3\textit{=} would have given Black an initiative.

13...\textit{c}8 14.\textit{g}1

14.h4 might prove superfluous if Black defended with ...f6 or ...f5. For instance: 14...0-0 15.\textit{h}3 f5 16.\textit{gf}6 (16.\textit{xf}5 \textit{xf}3 17.\textit{xf}6 d5 winning the exchange) 16...\textit{xf}6.

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14...0-0 15.\textit{h}3 \textit{g}6 (or 15...d5 16.e5 \textit{g}6) 16.\textit{b}1 d5 17.e5 \textit{g}7

Black has a good game. He will push his pawns to a4 and b4 keeping the tension. White’s only plan is h2-h4-h5xg6, but then Black recaptures by ...fxg6 and easily defends the h7-pawn along the seventh rank with ...\textit{f}5. This suggests that Black should leave his rook on f8 in order to ensure the possibility of taking ...\textit{x}f5 after \textit{x}f5. Almasi-Movsesian, Warsaw 2013, went further 18.f4 b4 19.\textit{g}4 a5 20.\textit{c}1 (or 20.h4 a4 21.\textit{g}3 \textit{c}5) 20...\textit{a}6 21.\textit{g}2 a4 22.h4 \textit{c}5 (clearing the 7th rank) 23.\textit{x}c5 \textit{xc}5 24.\textit{h}2 \textit{c}7 (24...\textit{a}3 25.b3 \textit{c}3) 25.h5. Here 25...\textit{b}6 26.hxg6 fxg6 27.\textit{dh}1 \textit{f}5 would have been promising.

A2. 12.\textit{b}1 0-0 13.\textit{f}2

13.\textit{e}3 does not prevent 13...b4 14.\textit{e}2 d5;

13.h4 \textit{ac}8 14.\textit{d}3 turned out badly for White after 14...e5 15.\textit{e}3 \textit{b}4, Kurayan-Stukopin, Kocaeli 2013.

13.\textit{d}3 b4 14.\textit{e}2 e5 15.g5 exd4 was pleasant for Black in Yu-Nepomniachtchi, St. Petersburg 2012. Amonatov-Saiyn, Moscow 2014, showed that even if White achieved everything he wanted, Black would still be fine – 13...\textit{ac}8 14.\textit{f}2 d6 15.h4 \textit{d}7 16.g5 b4 17.\textit{e}2 d5 18.exd5 \textit{xd}5.

The text move deserves attention if for no other reason than because it was played at highest level.

13...d5!

I suppose that this novelty is the best retort to White’s tricky last move.

Alternatively:

13...\textit{ac}8 14.\textit{g}1 \textit{c}6 (14...b4 15.g5 \textit{h}5 16.\textit{a}4) 15.\textit{d}3 b4∞ occurred in game 9 Caruana-Svidler, Rhodes 2013;

13...b4 14.\textit{a}4! (14.g5 \textit{h}5 15.\textit{a}4 d5 16.exd5 \textit{xd}5 17.\textit{b}6 \textit{ad}8=) 14...d5 is positionally dubious since White trades his awkward knight for an important black piece. 15.\textit{b}6 \textit{ad}8 16.\textit{e}5 \textit{d}7 17.\textit{xd}7. Black has no counterplay here.
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14.g5 d7 15.exd5 b4 16.\(d\)e4

16.dxe6 fxe6 17.\(w\)e2 e5 is roughly equal: 18.\(w\)c4+ \(x\)xc4 19.\(d\)xe4+ \(h\)h8 20.\(d\)d5 \(x\)xg5 21.\(f\)f2=.

16...\(d\)xd5 17.\(d\)d3 \(f\)fd8

White's pieces look daunting, but Black can quickly trade a couple of minor pieces, for instance, ...\(c\)xe4 followed up by ...\(c\)c5.

18.\(h\)hg1 e5 defends everything. Then Black can thrust forward his own a-pawn.

18.\(w\)h4 g6 19.\(f\)fd2 \(x\)ac8 20.\(h\)h4 \(c\)c5 also neutralises the attack because 21.\(d\)f6+? loses to 21...\(x\)xf6 22.\(x\)xf6 \(h\)xa2+! 23.\(h\)xa2 b3+ while 21.\(d\)xc5 \(x\)xc5 22.\(d\)f6+ \(g\)g7 23.\(w\)e2 \(e\)e7 (or 23...\(f\)f4) is roughly balanced.

Remains 18.\(h\)h4 \(x\)ac8 19.\(h\)h5, but this drops the g5-pawn after 19...\(x\)xe4! 20.\(x\)xe4 \(x\)xg5.

A3. 12.\(d\)d3 e5

It is positionally sound to restrict the d3-bishop. Of course, 12...0-0 cannot be bad either, for instance, 13.h4 b4 14.\(d\)e2 e5 15.\(f\)f2 d5; 13.\(d\)e2 d5 14.e5 \(e\)e4 15.\(w\)e3 \(c\)c5.

13.\(f\)f2 0-0 14.g5 \(h\)h5!

Svetushkin-Negi, Linares 2013, saw 14...b4? 15.\(a\)a4 \(h\)h5 16.\(b\)b6 \(x\)ab8 17.\(c\)c4 \(c\)c6 18.\(d\)d5 \(d\)xd5 19.\(d\)xd5 a5, but White's bishop is at least theoretically better than Black's one.

15.\(d\)d5 \(d\)xd5 16.exd5 \(f\)f4 17.\(h\)h4 (17.\(x\)xh7! \(x\)xh7 18.d6 \(d\)xd6 19.\(x\)xd6 \(x\)ac8 is roughly equal)

17...f5!

This move assures Black of a good game since 18.gxf6? \(d\)d3+ would give him pressure down the f-file.

B. 11.\(x\)xd4 \(b\)b7 12.\(g\)5

12.\(d\)b1 \(c\)c8 13.\(d\)d2 fails to 13...b4 14.\(a\)a4 \(x\)xe4 15.fxe4 \(x\)xe4 16.\(a\)xa6 \(x\)xc2+.

12.\(g\)1 \(c\)c8 13.\(g\)2 (13.g5 will transpose to the main line) makes some sense, but White abandons
the dangerous manoeuvre $\text{f1-h3-g4}$. Black should not worry about this attack anymore so he can prepare short castling with $13...\text{c6}$ (but not $13...\text{b4}?!$). $14.\text{a4 c6} 15.\text{b6 b8} 16.\text{g5 h5} 17.\text{g2! e5 18.d4 xe6 19.xd7+, Pruijssers-Zwirs, Dieren 2013}$. $14.g5 \text{e5} 15.\text{f2 0-0. Now 16.f4?!} f6 or 16.\text{h3 d4 17.g4 xg5 are clearly better for Black, so White should probably continue with 16.e5, but then the simplest 16...\text{f8} 17.e4 xe4 18.\text{xe4} d6 19.exd6 \text{exd6} equalises.}$

12...\text{h5} 13.\text{h3}

This is the only way to prevent the freeing ...d7-d5. Alternatively:

a) $13.\text{d2 c8} 14.\text{xb5}$ is only good for a draw.

14.\text{g1} is innocuous due to $14...e5$ (or $14...c5 15.\text{xc5 xe5} 16.xc5 \text{ex5}= 17.a4 b4 18.a2 a5 19.b5 \text{c6} 20.xc6 \text{xc6}) 15.\text{d3} (15.\text{a7 d4 16.b6 c6 17.d5 d6 18.f2 \text{xd5} =) 15...\text{d4}$. $14...\text{xb5} 15.\text{xb5}$

15...\text{c6} (15...\text{d8} does not lose, but White's heavy pieces are better after $16.a7 0-0 17.\text{xb7 xg5}$

18.\text{xg5 xg5 19.c3! e3 20.b4 xf3 21.g1+) 16.a7 c7 (some commentators claim that $16...e5?!$ $17.\text{xe5 c7}$ is unclear, but in my opinion, the endgame is obviously pleasant for White, e.g. $18.d4 \text{e8} 19.b5 c6 20.d6+ xdx6 21.xd6 \text{xd6} 22.xd6 0-0 23.b4 f5 24.xf6 xf6 25.c5 c6 26.c4+) 17.b5=, Dominguez-Caruana, Paris 2013.$)

b) $13.h1 c8 puts the question to White: what is he going to do with his queen? 14.\text{d3}$ is unesthetic. To be sure, $14...b4 15.a4 d5 16.exd5 \text{xd5} 17.b6 d4 (the thematic 17...\text{d8} fails here to 18.\text{xa6}) 18.\text{xd5} \text{xd5} 19.b1 would be pleasant for him, but the immediate $14...d5! 15.exd5 \text{d8}$ solves all the problems.

14.\text{d2} admits that capturing on d4 by queen was pointless. That does not mean it is a bad move, but it is certainly not the most principled opening idea. We have the usual choice between $...c6, ...0-0$ or the ...d5-break. For consistency with the previous examples, let's check the most straightforward plan: $14...b4 15.e2$

15.a4 d5 16.exd5 \text{xd5} 17.b6 \text{d8} 18.\text{xd5 xd5} 19.d3 0-0
The English Attack

leads to a typical position with comfortable play for Black. The bishop pair is inefficient due to the weakness of f4. Black will be trying to trade dark-squared bishops in order to bring his knight into play.

15...d5 16.e5 d4!. After this deep counter-sac Black seized the initiative in game 6 Volokitin-Najer, Muelheim 2013.

c) 13.a3 e8 14.b1 prevents the ...d5 break, but gives Black time to castle and undermine the centre with ...f5: 14...e5 15.d2 xe3 16.dxe3 0-0 17.d2 (17.g1 f4 18.h4 dfd8 revives the plan with ...d5, e.g. 19.d2 d5! 20.e5? d4! 21.exd4 cd5) 17...f5!. The pressure down the f-file assures Black of the initiative.

d) 13.e2 e8 14.d2 (14.d2?! d5 was tested in Inarkiev-Schlosser, Yerevan 2014 – 15.exd5 cd5 16.cf4 xf4 17.xf4 wa5 18.xg7 f8 19.exd5 wa4 20.ed2 xf4= 21.h4? cd8 22.d3 b4 23.hd1 when 23...xd2+ 24.xd2 cd7 would have been difficult for White) 14...d5 15.e5 d4! is considered in the annotations to game 6. The play is very similar to line b.

13...e8!

13...f6 is inconsistent since our main plan is to break in the centre with ...d5. White can maintain the tension on the kingside with 14.g4 (14.b1 fxg5 15.g4 f6=) 14...f4 15.d2 or 15.h4?.

13...b4? 14.a4 d5 fails to 15.g4.

The rook’s move gains a crucial tempo because besides targeting c2, it also enables ...c5. The trade of dark-squared bishops becomes Black’s primary strategic goal when his knight reaches h5. Thus, 14.d2?! c5! would be excellent for him.

14.g4

The only way to protect c2 while evading ...c5 is 14.d2?! , but this retreat completely takes the sting of g4 since Black can answer it with ...g6. So he can already push:

14...b4 15.e2

15.a4?! d5! (15...c6 is also good – see game 7 Robson-Wang Yue, Ningbo 2013) 16.exd5? (16. b1 dxe4 17.g4 h6! 18.f4 hxg5 19.fxg5 g6=) 16...xd5 17.g4

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15...\textit{\texttt{\textbf{xa2}}}!! 18.\texttt{\textbf{b6}} (18.\texttt{\textbf{xe5}} 0-0+) 18...0-0 19.\texttt{\textbf{xc8}} \texttt{\textbf{xc8}}. It turns out that White has no defence against 20...\texttt{\textbf{b3}}++.

15...d5 16.\texttt{\textbf{g4}} g6 17.e5 d4!. Do not allow the opponent to blockade the centre! 18.\texttt{\textbf{xe4}} 0-0 19.\texttt{\textbf{xe5}} gxe5 20.\texttt{\textbf{he1}} (White did not last long after 20.\texttt{\textbf{hg1}} \texttt{\textbf{fd8}} 21.\texttt{\textbf{f2}} a5 22.\texttt{\textbf{d2}} a4 23.g6 hxg6 24.\texttt{\textbf{xe6}} \texttt{\textbf{xd2}} 25.\texttt{\textbf{xd2}} \texttt{\textbf{xe5}}++, Espinosa-Hevia, Merida 2013) 20...\texttt{\textbf{fd8}} 21.\texttt{\textbf{f2}} (21.\texttt{\textbf{f4}} \texttt{\textbf{f3}}) 21...a5! (21...\texttt{\textbf{xe5}} 22.\texttt{\textbf{b1}}=) 22.\texttt{\textbf{b1}} a4--.

14...\texttt{b4} 15.\texttt{\textbf{xh5}} bxc3 16.\texttt{\textbf{xd7}}

Browne-Van Kampen, Reykjavik 2014, introduced the novelty 16.b3?! I guess it was an improvisation since 16...0-0 would be strong. Then 17.\texttt{\textbf{xd7}} fails to 17...\texttt{\textbf{c5}}! and White's dark squares around his king gape wide.

16...\texttt{\textbf{xb2}}+ 17.\texttt{\textbf{xb2}} \texttt{\textbf{f8}}

White is better co-ordinated, but his unsheltered king allows Black to maintain the balance. See game 8 Demetrio-Schiendorfer, ICCF email 2009.
Part 2. The English Attack

Kan – Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.\f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\xd4 a6 5.\c3 \c7 6.\e3

This set-up is only a faint attempt to reach the English Attack since Black attacks first with ...\b4 and seizes the initiative. He only has to start with:

6...\f6!

Hellsten recommends 6...\b4 7.\de2 \f6 8.a3 \a5 (8...\e7 9.\a4!?=) 9.b4 \b6, but instead of 10.\xb6, White can gain space by 10.\f4= \d8 11.e5.

7.\d3

7.f3 does not hold the centre due to 7...\b4 8.\d2 (or 8.f3) 8...d5.

7.a3 b5 8.\d3 \b7 9.0-0 \c6 is a dream Sicilian.

After the text, Black has a wide, but pleasant choice:

A. 7...\b4 8.\de2

8.0-0?! \xc3 9.bxc d6! (9...d5? 10.exd5 \xd5 11.d2 0-0 12.\h5 \g6 13.\h4=) 10.\f3 \e5 11.\f5 \xf5 12.exf5 \bd7 13.\ab1 d5.

8...d6

8...d5 9.a3! is not too clear.

9.0-0 \g4=.

B. 7...\c5 8.\e2

Or 8.0-0 d6 9.\e2 \bd7

8...d6 9.0-0-0 0-0.

C. 8...\b5 9.0-0 \b7 10.a3 \e7

Miladinovic played 10...h5!? 11.h3 \c6.

11.\f4 h5 ?.
Part 2. The English Attack

Complete Games

4. Wei,Yi-Stukopin
Wch U20 Kocaeli 22.09.2013

1.e4 c5 2.d4 f6 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4 d6 5.e3 c7 6.e5 a6
7.d2 f6 8.0-0-0 d7 9.f4 b5 10.e5 b4 11.\textit{a}c5 axb5 12.\textit{b}xb5
\textit{a}a5 13.exf6\textit{gxf6}

14.\textit{d}d6+

White's king is the more vulnerable one after 14.c4 bxc3 15.\textit{xc}3
0-0.

14...\textit{xd}6 15.\textit{xd}6 \textit{xa}2
16.\textit{d}d3 (16.\textit{b}5 \textit{a}1+ 17.\textit{d}d2
\textit{xb}2) 16...\textit{a}1+

It is better to play for attack. The passive defence 16...f5 17.\textit{c}5 \textit{a}1+

18.\textit{d}2 \textit{xb}2 19.\textit{e}2 \textit{f}6? 20.\textit{f}3
would be a terrible mistake.

17.\textit{d}2

17...\textit{a}2!

17...\textit{xb}2?! 18.\textit{b}3 is in White's
favour: 18...\textit{a}1 19.\textit{c}5\pm or 18...
\textit{a}2 19.\textit{b}5.

18.\textit{b}3 \textit{xb}2

This move lets the white bishop
to b5. It would be simpler to keep
White passive by 18...\textit{b}1! 19.\textit{g}1
\textit{xb}2. The difference is obvious af­
fer 20.\textit{d}3 \textit{a}2 21.\textit{xb}2 \textit{xb}2. This
position is unclear, with mutual
chances: 22.\textit{c}5 (22.\textit{c}5 \textit{b}7) 22...
\textit{c}3+ 23.\textit{e}2 b3 (23...f5 24.\textit{e}1 f6
The English Attack

25.\( \text{\texttt{xf2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xf7}} \) 26.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{xe3}}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{d2}}+ \) 27.\( \text{\texttt{e2}}= \)
24.\( \text{\texttt{cxb3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xb3}} \) 25.\( \text{\texttt{e3}} \)

19.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{b5}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\texttt{xa2}}?!} \)

Perhaps Black did not notice that he had perpetual check after 19...\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{xh1}}} \) 20.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{xc6}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{dxc6}} \) 21.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{xe6+}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{f8}} \) 22.\( \text{\texttt{d4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xe4+}} \) 23.\( \text{\texttt{xe8+}} \) \( \text{\texttt{g7}} \) 24.\( \text{\texttt{xf6+}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xf6}} \) 25.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{xe8+}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{e7}} \) 26.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{xb3}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{dg6}} \)

20.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{xb3}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xb3}} \) 21.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{c5}}?!} \)

White misses the strong redeployment 21.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{xc6}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{c3}}+ \) 22.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{xe2}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{g8}} \) 23.g3 e5 24.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{f2}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{h5}} \) 25.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{d1}}} \) with an initiative, e.g. 25...\( \text{\texttt{h4}} \) 26.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{a4}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{hxg3+}} \) 27.\( \text{\texttt{hxg3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{e4}} \) 28.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{d5}}} \). After the text, the game is balanced.

21...\( \text{\texttt{c3}}+ \) 22.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{d1}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{a6}} \) 23.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{xax6}}} \) (23.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{xc6}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{wa1}}+ \) 24.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{d2}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{c3+}}= \) ) 23...\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{wa1+}}} \) 24.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{d2}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xa6}} \) 25.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{d4}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{g8}} \) 26.g3 \( \text{\texttt{wb7}} \) 27.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{c5}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{b8}} \) 28.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{xb8+}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xb8}} \) 29.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{xa1}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xc6}} \) 30.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{a8+}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{d8}} \) 31.\( \text{\texttt{f5}} \) \( \text{\texttt{e4f5}} \) 32.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{xb4}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{f4}} \) 33.\( \text{\texttt{gf4}} \) draw.

5. Vallejo Pons-Spraggett
Catalunya 02.02.2013

1.e4 c5 2.\( \text{\texttt{d3}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{e6}} \) 3.d4 cxd4 4.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{xd4}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xc6}} \) 5.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{c3}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{wc7}} \) 6.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{e3}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\texttt{xf6}}} \) 7.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{xf3}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{a6}} \)

I have also analysed the new move 7...\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{a3}}?!} \). It leads to crazy complications, but White’s initiative is rather dangerous after 8.0-0-0 or 8.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{db5}}} \).

8.0-0-0

8...d6

In my opinion, 8...\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{e7}}} \) is the better move order, having in mind 9.\( \text{\texttt{xc6}} \) \( \text{\texttt{bxc6}} \) 10.g4 d5. Let’s consider other alternatives:

a) 8...\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{b4}}}?! \) 9.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{xc6}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xc6}} \) (9...\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{xc6}}} \) 10.d4 \( \text{\texttt{b4}} \) 11.\( \text{\texttt{f4}} \) 10.d4 \( \text{\texttt{xc6}} \) 11.\( \text{\texttt{xc3}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xe4}} \) 12.\( \text{\texttt{xe4}} \)±.

b) 8...b5 9.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{xc6}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xc6}} \) 10.e5±.

c) The central approach 8...\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{xd4}}} \) 9.\( \text{\texttt{xd4}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{e5}} \) 10.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{e3}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{d6}} \)

looks reasonable, but White has a clear plan: he pushes his pawns to g5 and h5 and gains space with \( \text{\texttt{\texttt{d5}}} \) followed by \( \text{\texttt{exd5}} \). Black lacks counterplay. For instance:

11.h3!

11.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{e2}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{g4}} \) 12.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{d5}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\texttt{xd5}}} \)

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13.\(\texttt{wxg4}\) \(\texttt{xc8}\) 14.\(\texttt{ed2}\) \(\texttt{h5}\) 15.\(\texttt{h3}\) \(\texttt{c3}\) 16.\(\texttt{b6}\) \(\texttt{xe2+}\) 17.\(\texttt{xe2}\) \(\texttt{d7=}\).

11...\(\texttt{b5}\) 12.\(\texttt{a3!}\) (12.\(\texttt{d3}\) \(\texttt{e7}\) 13.\(\texttt{g4}\) \(\texttt{b4}\) 14.\(\texttt{d5}\) \(\texttt{xd5}\) 15.\(\texttt{exd5}\) a5 is unclear) 12...\(\texttt{b7}\) 13.\(\texttt{g4}\) \(\texttt{e7}\) 14.\(\texttt{xb1}\) (14.\(\texttt{g5}\) \(\texttt{xe4}\) 15.\(\texttt{xe4}\) \(\texttt{d5}\) 16.\(\texttt{d3}\) \(\texttt{xc8}\)=)

Now 14...\(\texttt{xe4}\) 15.\(\texttt{xe4}\) \(\texttt{d5}\) 16.\(\texttt{c3}\) \(\texttt{d4}\) 17.\(\texttt{d5}\) \(\texttt{xd5}\) 18.\(\texttt{xd5}\) \(\texttt{d8}\) leaves Black a pawn down after either 19.\(\texttt{xb5+}\) \(\texttt{xb5}\) 20.\(\texttt{xb5+}\) \(\texttt{d7}\) 21.\(\texttt{c1}\) 0-0 22.\(\texttt{e1}\), or 19.\(\texttt{e4}\) \(\texttt{dxe3}\) 20.\(\texttt{xd8+}\) \(\texttt{xd8}\) 21.\(\texttt{xe3}\) 0-0 22.\(\texttt{d3}\) \(\texttt{g6}\) 23.\(\texttt{xe5}\).

The queenside attack with 14...\(\texttt{d7}\) 15.\(\texttt{h4}\) \(\texttt{xb8}\) 16.\(\texttt{h5}\) 0-0 17.\(\texttt{g5}\) \(\texttt{c6}\) is not too efficient due to 18.\(\texttt{d5!}\) \(\texttt{xd5}\) 19.\(\texttt{exd5}\) \(\texttt{b4}\) 20.\(\texttt{a4}\) \(\texttt{b3}\) 21.\(\texttt{c3}\) and White's threats are much more tangible, e.g. 21...\(\texttt{f5}\) 22.\(\texttt{xf6}\) \(\texttt{xf6}\) 23.\(\texttt{xf5}\).

10.\(\texttt{g3}\) 0-0 11.\(\texttt{f4}\)

11...\(\texttt{h8}\)

The first critical moment of the game. Black should decide how to finish his development. The engines propose 11...\(\texttt{d5}\) 12.\(\texttt{exd5}\) \(\texttt{xd5}\) 13.\(\texttt{xd5}\) \(\texttt{exd5}\) 14.\(\texttt{f3}\) \(\texttt{d8}\) 15.\(\texttt{he1}\) \(\texttt{f6}\), but it is difficult to defend such a position over the board. White has a lasting pull, for instance: 16.\(\texttt{c3}\) \(\texttt{h6}\) (16...\(\texttt{g6}\) 17.\(\texttt{f5}\) \(\texttt{wg3}\) 18.\(\texttt{hxg3}\) \(\texttt{xd4}\) 19.\(\texttt{xd4}\) \(\texttt{xf5}\) 20.\(\texttt{b6}\) \(\texttt{e8}\) 21.\(\texttt{xd5}\) \(\texttt{g4}\) 22.\(\texttt{f1}\) 17.\(\texttt{b1}\).

Still, I do not approve of Black’s last move either. This prophylaxis was not obligatory at all. Perhaps Spragget did not like 11...\(\texttt{d7!}\) in view of 12.\(\texttt{e5}\), but then 12...\(\texttt{e8}\) 13.\(\texttt{b1}\) (13.\(\texttt{he1}\) \(\texttt{b8}\) 14.\(\texttt{d3}\) \(\texttt{b4}\) 15.\(\texttt{b1}\) \(\texttt{d3}\) 16.\(\texttt{ed3}\), Wang Jue-Lei Tingjie, Xinghua 2014, 16...\(\texttt{b5}\) 13...\(\texttt{c8}\) is quite solid. The play may continue with 14.\(\texttt{d3}\) \(\texttt{b5}\) 15.\(\texttt{a3}\) \(\texttt{b4}\) 16.\(\texttt{axb4}\) (16.\(\texttt{xc6}\) \(\texttt{xc6}\) 17.\(\texttt{xb4}\) \(\texttt{b8}\) 16...\(\texttt{xb4}\) 17.\(\texttt{e2}\) \(\texttt{b8}\) or 14.\(\texttt{he1}\) \(\texttt{b5}\) 15.\(\texttt{d3}\) (15.\(\texttt{a3}\) \(\texttt{b4}\) 15...\(\texttt{g6}\). White’s space advantage remains, but he has not a pawn lever on the kingside to use.

12.\(\texttt{he1}\)
I doubt that White's rook's best place is on f1. It might be more useful from e1 or even from its current stand. A waiting approach like 12...b1 d7 (12...b5 13...xc6 wxc6 14...f3) 13...f3 looks more unpleasant. Note that the plan with e4-e5 is risky, because it releases Black's pieces: 13...f3 ac8 (13...e5 14...xe5 dxe5 15...d4 b5 16...e5 dxe6 17...f5 dxe4 18...xe4 xf5 19...xe7 wxe7 20...xd6 g6 21...d2 f6 22...hd1) 14.e5 d5 15...xd5 exd5 16.c3 b5 17...xd5 dxe5 18...xe5 e6†.

12...d7 13.e5

Vallejo should have kept the tension with 13...b1 ac8 14...b3. [14...f3 b4 15...d2 (15...d2 wa5) 15...a4 16...c1 wa5 17.a3 xc3 18.bxc3 ac6=]

White is threatening e4-e5, e.g. 14...b5 15.e5. It is tempting to stop it with 14...e5, but this pawn structure is dangerous with opposite castles. White answers 15...f2 b5 16.f5 b4 17...d5 0xd5 18.exd5 a5 19...xa5 wa5 20.g4 and he is way ahead in the race, e.g. 20...f6 21.h4 0xb5 22.g5 wxc7 23...d2 xe2 24...xe2 wd7 25.g6.

It is preferable to avoid direct clashes in dynamic positions when you are lagging behind in development. I would vacate the d7-square with:

14...e8!? Then White will need to redeploy his pieces which will give Black time to launch his own attack: 15...f3 b5 16.a3 (16...f2 b4 17...a4 0xd4 18...xd4 xa4= 19.e5 0d7) 16...b8 17...f2 a5 with mutual chances.

13...dxe5 14...xe5 wxe5 15...f4 wc5 16...b3

It was better to play for a repetition with 16...e3 wc5 (16...xd4 17...xd4 wc6=). Now White has not full compensation for the pawn.

16...wa7 17...e3 b6 18...f2 ab8 19.g4 e8 (19...b4!? ) 20.g5 0d7 21.h4 f5 22...b1 f4 23...c1 e5 24.h5 0c5 25.h6 0g6 26.hxg7+ xg7 27...f3 0b4 28...a1 xg5 29...g1 h6 30.a3 a5 31...e1 fe8 32...b5 wc7 33.axb4 axb4 34...xb4 e4 35...e2 ea8 36...d6 we5 37...d2 ea4 38.wc3 wc3 39...xc3 e3 40...xa4 exd4 41...c3 Draw.


1.e4 c5 2...f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4...xd4 oc6 5...c3 wc7 6...e3 a6 7...d2 f6 8.0-0-0 e7 9.f3 b5 10.g4 0xd4 11...xd4 0b7

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12.g5 \( \text{\text{\text{h5}}} \) 13.\text{\text{b1 \text{\text{c8}}} 14.\text{\text{d2 \text{\text{b4}}} 15.\text{\text{e2}}} \)

Or 15.\text{\text{a4 \text{d5}}} 16.exd5 \text{\text{xd5}}

15...d5 16.e5

16...\text{\text{d4!}}

Life is brighter for Black with an active light-squared bishop!

16...\text{\text{xe5?}} 17.\text{\text{g3 \text{\text{e3}}}} 18.\text{\text{f4 \text{\text{f4}}} 19.\text{\text{h2}}} opens lines to White’s long-range pieces.

The idea for the counter-sacrifice was not new to Najer. For instance, in September, Lopez Martinez introduced it against Bauer in a slightly different setting: 13.\text{\text{e2 \text{\text{c8}}} 14.\text{\text{d2 d5}}} 15.e5

\[ \text{15...d4!} \]

White’s king is still on c1 here. This gives Black a tempo in some lines where he attacks the a2-

pawn with ...\text{\text{d5}} or ...\text{\text{c4}}. 16.\text{\text{xd4 \text{\text{0-0}}} 17.\text{\text{d3 \text{\text{fd8}})}}

It looks tempting to leave the rook on f8 and open the f-file with 17...\text{\text{d5!?}} 18.\text{\text{b1 \text{\text{g6}}} 19.\text{\text{h1 \text{\text{xe5}}} 20.f4 \text{\text{c7}}} 21.\text{\text{b3}}} f6?!. However, this decision is risky from a practical standpoint as it weakens the castling position. White can sac a piece, for instance: 22.gxf6 \text{\text{xf6} 23.f5 \text{\text{exf5}} 24.\text{\text{xf5}}} \text{\text{xf5} 25.\text{\text{xe5}}} \text{\text{xb3} 26.axb3 \text{\text{gf5}}} 27.\text{\text{d5+ \text{\text{h8}}} 28.\text{\text{xf5}}} \text{\text{g7} 29.\text{\text{d4=)}} whereas Black is unable to untie his pieces.

The source game Bauer-Lopez Martinez went 18.\text{\text{b1 \text{\text{g6}}} 19.\text{\text{h1 \text{\text{xe5}}} 20.f4 \text{\text{c7}}} 21.\text{\text{g2 \text{\text{g8} 22.h3 \text{\text{d5}}} 23.\text{\text{b6 \text{\text{d6=}})}}

Kurmann-Berkes, Bad Wiessee 2013, did not improve anything: 17.\text{\text{g2 \text{\text{d8}}} 18.f4 \text{\text{g2}}} 19.\text{\text{c4! 20.b1 \text{\text{xf4}}} 21.\text{\text{xf4 \text{\text{xd4}}} 22.\text{\text{xd4 \text{\text{xd4+}}}}. Black’s combination became possible due to the hit on a2 so we must recheck White’s idea with the insertion of \text{\text{b1 b4}}.

17.\text{\text{xd4 \text{\text{0-0}}} 18.\text{\text{e2}}} \)

Analysis confirms that 18.\text{\text{g2 \text{\text{c5}}} 20.\text{\text{g1 \text{\text{d8}}} 20.\text{\text{f2}}} does not
leave White a pawn up (although even then the game is even, since the \( \text{w}+\text{b} \) is at least a match to a queen+bad bishop), due to 20... \( \text{w}b6 \) 21.f4 \( \text{w}xg2 \) 22.\( \text{w}xg2 \) \( \text{d}5 \) 23.f5 \( \text{cd}8 \) 24.\( \text{f}xe6 \) \( \text{fxe6} \) 25.\( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{xe}5 \).

18...\( \text{f}d8 \) 19.\( \text{c}1 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 20.\( \text{he}1 \) \( \text{xe}5 \) 21.f4 \( \text{wc}7 \)

22.f5!?

Black came out of the opening with the better pawn structure so White must attempt to alter it. 22.\( \text{h}xh5 \) \( \text{gxh5} \) would leave the b7-bishop without an opponent on the light squares so Volokitin’s decision is understandable. His other option was really grim: 22.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{g}7 \) 23.\( \text{xd}8+ \) \( \text{xd}8 \) 24.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{c}5 \).

22...\( \text{e}5 \) 23.\( \text{fxg}6 \)

23.f6 \( \text{f}8 \) 24.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{f}4 \) 25.\( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{a}8 \) 26.\( \text{xf}4 \) \( \text{exf}4 \) 27.\( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{xd}1 \) 28.\( \text{xd}1 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 29.\( \text{c}1 \) \( \text{d}6 \) gives Black a passed pawn up and the bishop pair.

23...\( \text{hxg}6 \) 24.\( \text{hxh}5 \) \( \text{gxh}5 \) 25.\( \text{f}5 \) \( \text{e}4 \)

25...\( \text{xd}1 \) 26.\( \text{xd}1 \) \( \text{e}4 \) 27.\( \text{xe}7 \) \( \text{xe}7 \) 28.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{a}5 \) is probably slightly more accurate. In the game Black also achieves an opposite-coloured bishops attack. White’s defence is quite difficult.

26.\( \text{xe}7+ \) \( \text{xe}7 \) 27.\( \text{xd}8+ \) \( \text{xd}8 \) 28.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{g}6 \)

White failed to hold this extremely unpleasant position.

29.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{a}5 \) 30.\( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{d}5 \) 31.\( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{a}4 \) (31...\( \text{h}4 \) ! 32.\( \text{axh}4 \) \( \text{a}4+\) ) 32.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{f}3 \) 33.\( \text{bxa}4 \) \( \text{b}3 \) 34.\( \text{AXB}3 \) \( \text{xb}3+ \) 35.\( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{xa}4 \) 36.\( \text{xe}5 \) \( \text{h}7 \) 37.\( \text{c}1 \) \( \text{e}4 \) 38.\( \text{f}6 \) \( \text{e}1+ \) 39.\( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{e}3+ \) 40.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{g}1+ \) 41.\( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{xdh}2 \) 42.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{g}1+ \) 43.\( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{e}3+ \) 44.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{xc}2+ \) 45.\( \text{xc}2 \) \( \text{xc}2 \) 46.\( \text{xc}2 \) \( \text{h}4 \) 47.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{e}4 \) 48.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{g}2+ \) 49.\( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 50.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{f}2+ \) 51.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{h}2+ \) 52.\( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{h}3 \) 53.\( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{e}2+ \) 54.\( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{g}2+ \) 55.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{h}2 \) 56.\( \text{hxh}2 \) \( \text{e}2+ \) 57.\( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{xdh}2 \) 0-1

7. Robson-Wang,Yue
Rapid Ningbo (1.1), 25.07.2013

1.\( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{c}5 \) 2.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{e}6 \) 3.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{cxd}4 \) 4.\( \text{xd}4 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 5.\( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{w}c7 \) 6.\( \text{e}3 \)
Part 2

a6 7...d2 8.0-0-0 e7 9.f3
b5 10.g4 xd4 11.xd4 b7
12.g5 h5 13.h3 c8 14.d2
b4 15.a4

15...c6!?

This game is not too important for the opening theory since Black has yet another good option in his possession – 15...d5. However, it sets a milestone in the understanding of the Taimanov pawn structures.

16.b6 b8 17.g4 xb6!!
18.xb6xb6 h5 19.xh5 a5
20.b1 xg5 21.xg5 xg5
22.g4 f4

It turns out that White has to struggle for the draw despite being an exchange up. His kingside pawns are vulnerable and the rooks are passive. The subsequent play is so logical and straightforward that it does not need comments.

23.h3 e7 24.f1 a5 25.d3
h5 26.h3 h4 27.hg1 g5 28.de1
b8 29.g4 f6

30.hg1

White is looking for a way to return the exchange. 30.hg1 is also murky due to the possible raid of Black’s king to f4 (after ...g3) followed up by ...d5. White will be unable to defend both the h3- and f3-pawns.

30...e3 31.e1 f2 32.f1
g3 33.c1 d6 34.d2 e5
35.g1 d5 36.e2 d4 37.g2 h8
38.g1 h5 39.g2 f5–+ 40.exf5
exf5 41.xg3 hxg3 42.xg3 f4 43.f2 d5 44.b3 h8
45.e2 e8 46.g1 c8 47.d3
xf3 48.xf5 xf5 49.xf3
xc2 50.g4 c3+ 51.f2
xh3 52.xd4 h2+ 53.f3
e5 54.e4+ d5 55.g4 h5
56.g2 d4 57.g4 h8 58.c2
e8 59.xg5 e5+ 60.f4
d3 61.h2 e2 62.h3+ d4
63.h8 f2+ 0-1
The English Attack

8. Demetrio-Schiendorfer
ICCF email, 10.09.2009

1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{\textasciitilde}f3\) e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.\(\text{\textasciitilde}xd4\) \(\text{\textasciitilde}c6\) 5.\(\text{\textasciitilde}c3\) \(\text{\textasciitilde}c7\) 6.\(\text{\textasciitilde}e3\)
a6 7.\(\text{\textasciitilde}d2\) \(\text{\textasciitilde}f6\) 8.0-0-0 \(\text{\textasciitilde}e7\) 9.\(\text{\textasciitilde}f3\)
b5 10.g4 \(\text{\textasciitilde}xd4\) 11.\(\text{\textasciitilde}fxd4\) \(\text{\textasciitilde}b7\)
12.g5 \(\text{\textasciitilde}h5\) 13.\(\text{\textasciitilde}h3\) \(\text{\textasciitilde}e8\) 14.\(\text{\textasciitilde}g4\)
b4 15.\(\text{\textasciitilde}xh5\) bxc3 16.\(\text{\textasciitilde}xg7\) cxb2+ 17.\(\text{\textasciitilde}xb2\) \(\text{\textasciitilde}f8\)

This forced line is critical for Black's set-up. At first sight it looks rather messy, but in fact the game is completely balanced and it is even White who should find a couple of accurate moves. Black has only one tangible target - the f7-pawn and his pieces are more compact. This is clearly seen in the line 18.\(\text{\textasciitilde}d4\) \(\text{\textasciitilde}c5\) (McDonald-Brunello, London 2013 saw 18...d5 when 19.\(\text{\textasciitilde}a1\)! would have been equal) 19.\(\text{\textasciitilde}xc5\) \(\text{\textasciitilde}xc5\)
20.\(\text{\textasciitilde}xe5\) \(\text{\textasciitilde}xc5\) 21.h4 h6\(\text{\textasciitilde}f5\), Rasik-Miton, Slovakia 2014.

18.c3 seemingly defends the c-pawn, but 18...\(\text{\textasciitilde}d6\) (18...d5 19.\(\text{\textasciitilde}d4\) \(\text{\textasciitilde}d6\) 20.\(\text{\textasciitilde}f6\) \(\text{\textasciitilde}e7=\) is a repetition of moves) would force 19.\(\text{\textasciitilde}xd6\) since 19.\(\text{\textasciitilde}d4\)? e5 cuts the g7-queen off from its king.

18.\(\text{\textasciitilde}a1\) d5?!?

18...\(\text{\textasciitilde}xc2\)! would give White tempi for \(\text{\textasciitilde}b1\) and \(\text{\textasciitilde}h1\), but 18...\(\text{\textasciitilde}b4\)! 19.\(\text{\textasciitilde}d4\) \(\text{\textasciitilde}c3+\) 20.\(\text{\textasciitilde}xc3\) \(\text{\textasciitilde}xc3+\)
21.\(\text{\textasciitilde}xc3\) \(\text{\textasciitilde}xc3\) is a decent alternative.

OTB, I would choose this endgame because I would have a lasting initiative without any risk. White's extra pawn would be irrelevant as Black's rooks are very active. He can play later ...f5 or ...h6 gxh6 \(\text{\textasciitilde}h8\).

In a correspondence game, however, Black can boldly aim for more tangled play. His idea to take on e4 is double edged as it opens the f-file and weakens the e8-king. This might tell if White succeeded in shifting his queen to the queenside. For instance, he has the interesting counter-strike 19.c4 \(\text{\textasciitilde}xc4\) (19...dxe4 20.fxe4 \(\text{\textasciitilde}xe4\) 21.\(\text{\textasciitilde}hf1\) \(\text{\textasciitilde}g6\) 22.\(\text{\textasciitilde}xg6\)
fxg6=) 20.\(\text{\textasciitilde}c1\) \(\text{\textasciitilde}d3\) 21.\(\text{\textasciitilde}xc8+\) \(\text{\textasciitilde}xc8\)
22.\(\text{\textasciitilde}f4\) dxe4 23.\(\text{\textasciitilde}c1\) \(\text{\textasciitilde}b7\) 24.\(\text{\textasciitilde}e5\) with an initiative, although 24...\(\text{\textasciitilde}d5\) defends everything. Demetrio opts for the most solid continuation:

19.\(\text{\textasciitilde}d4\)!
19.c4 dxe4 20.fxe4 dxe4 21.\textit{h}hf1 g6 22.\textit{x}g6 fxg6 is equal.

19...dxe4 20.fxe4 dxe4 21.\textit{h}hf1 g6

22.\textit{e}e2

This move obstructs the second rank. 22.\textit{f}f3! is more unpleasant. The reason behind it is the manoeuvre 22...\textit{a}5 23.c3 \textit{x}g5 24.\textit{f}f2, aiming for the b-file. White's activity would be very unpleasant. Instead, he assumes a passive stand which costs him the initiative.

22...\textit{a}5 23.\textit{b}b2 \textit{c}7 24.\textit{h}4 \textit{x}c2 25.\textit{h}5! \textit{x}d1 26.\textit{f}f7+ \textit{d}8 27.\textit{x}d1+ \textit{d}7 28.\textit{c}c1 \textit{d}d2 29.\textit{e}e5 \textit{d}6 30.\textit{f}f6+ \textit{e}7 31.\textit{f}f3 \textit{xc}1+ draw.

13...\textit{e}ac8

Caruana's last move was obviously aimed against Black's thematic idea 13...b4 14.\textit{a}a4 d5 when 15.\textit{b}b6! \textit{ad}8 (the exchange sacrifice 15...dxe4 is in White's favour) 16.e5 \textit{d}7 17.\textit{x}d7 would face Black with unpleasant position without counterplay. However, 13...d5! right away is possible – 14.g5 \textit{d}7 15.exd5 b4.

14.\textit{h}gl \textit{c}6 15.\textit{d}d3 b4 16.\textit{e}e2

16.e5 would be well met by 16...\textit{e}8!.

The knight is very important for the defence as I already mentioned in the previous note. 16...\textit{d}5 17.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 18.f4 d6 19.g5 \textit{d}xe5 20.\textit{xe}5 \textit{c}6 21.f5 offers White the initiative, although Black's position is quite resilient. After the knight's retreat, the manoeuvre \textit{e}2-g3 is slow. Black will trade the active d3-bishop with 17...\textit{b}5 and then...d6 will neutralise the opponent's spatial advantage. Obviously White should seek a quick conclusion:

17.\textit{e}e4 f6 18.exf6 \textit{xf}6 19.\textit{xf}6
The English Attack

$\texttt{xf}6$ 20.$g5$ $\texttt{xe}5$ 21.$\texttt{Qf}6+$, but 21...

$\texttt{xf}6!$ 22.$gxf6$ $\texttt{xf}6$ offers us another example where Black's bishop +
pawn hold their own against a rook.

Black will always be threatening to build up a $\texttt{w}+$ battery on the main diagonal. Moreover, the $f3$ and $h2$-pawns are weak.

16...$d5$ 17.$g5$

The pawn structure after 17.$e5$ is good for White only if his knight is on b6. Otherwise the d7-knight has good prospects from c5: 17...

$\texttt{Qd}7$ 18.$f4$ $\texttt{a}4$ 19.$\texttt{Qd}2$ $\texttt{c}5$ 20.$\texttt{Qc}1$
a5 setting up the trap 21.$f5$? $\texttt{g}5$

22.$\texttt{e}2$ $\texttt{xd}3$ 23.$\texttt{xd}3$ $\texttt{h}4$! with an

initiative, for example, 24.$\texttt{w}g2$ $\texttt{wc}4$

25.$\texttt{c}5$ $\texttt{xc}5$ 26.$b3$ $\texttt{wc}3$ 27.$\texttt{xc}5$

$\texttt{b}5$ 28.$\texttt{d}3$ $a4$!.

17...$d5$ 18.$\texttt{ex}d5$ $\texttt{xd}5$

This position illustrates Black's strategic aim in the English Attack. If White has not anything forced, he is even slightly worse. Black has an open file against the enemy king and an extra pawn in the centre. The pawn storm ...a5-a4, ...b4-b3 is not easy to stop. An important factor in Black's favour is that queens trade would underline the weakness of White's kingside pawns. For instance, 19.$f4$ $\texttt{ce}5$ 20.$f5$ $g6$ 21.$\texttt{xc}5$

$\texttt{wc}5$. Caruana attempts to take $f4$ under control.

19.$\texttt{g}4$?! $e5$! 20.$\texttt{e}3$ $\texttt{wc}6$

20...$g6$! was more cunning. White has not an active continuation as 21.$\texttt{g}3$ could be met by 21...

$f5$ or 21...$\texttt{f}4$. The text does not actually threaten $f3$ and it wastes time. White could exploit it with 21.$\texttt{g}3$

when 21...$\texttt{xf}3$? fails to 22.$\texttt{g}3$ $\texttt{ce}8$

23.$\texttt{c}4$.

21.$\texttt{fl}1$ $g6$ 22.$\texttt{c}1$

A good move, but Black may have technical problems to convert his advantage due to his weak-

75
ened king. He had more solid options: 22...\textit{d}d6! 23.\textit{e}e4 \textit{f}f4 24.\textit{xf}f4 \textit{xe}4 25.\textit{fxe}4 \textit{e}xf4. Then 26.e5 \textit{xe}5 27.\textit{d}d3 \textit{d}d6 28.\textit{xf}f4 does not help owing to 28...f5! 29.\textit{h}h4 \textit{e}e7 30.\textit{d}d3 a5 with domination.

23.gxf6 \textit{xf}f6 24.\textit{gg}1 \textit{h}h5 25.\textit{d}2 \textit{xf}3 26.\textit{b}3

Black has won a pawn, but White set up co-ordination between his pieces. Eventually, Svidler failed to bring the point home.

26...\textit{fd}8 27.\textit{df}2 \textit{f}8 28.\textit{h}h6 \textit{f}7 29.\textit{e}3 e4 30.\textit{d}d4 \textit{d}5 31.\textit{xf}3 \textit{exd}3 32.\textit{xd}3 \textit{xd}3 33.\textit{cxd}3 \textit{xf}8 34.\textit{d}2 \textit{d}6 35.\textit{g}5 \textit{xf}1+ 36.\textit{xf}1 \textit{xh}2 37.\textit{xb}4 \textit{e}5 38.\textit{e}6 \textit{g}7 39.\textit{e}1 \textit{g}3 40.\textit{e}4 \textit{e}8 41.\textit{c}5 \textit{h}5 42.\textit{c}3 \textit{xe}4 43.\textit{xe}4 \textit{f}4 44.\textit{c}2 \textit{f}5 45.\textit{d}1 \textit{f}7 46.\textit{d}2 \textit{e}5 47.b4 \textit{e}6 48.a4 \textit{g}3 49.\textit{g}xg3 \textit{xg}3 50.b5 axb5 51.axb5 \textit{d}5 52.\textit{e}3 \textit{d}6 53.\textit{e}2 \textit{e}5 54.\textit{g}5 \textit{b}6 55.\textit{f}3 \textit{c}5 56.\textit{e}4 \textit{c}7 57.d4+ \textit{xb}5 58.\textit{d}5 \textit{g}3 59.\textit{e}3 \textit{b}4 60.\textit{e}6 \textit{h}4 61.d5 \textit{c}4 62.d6 \textit{xd}6 63.\textit{x}d6 \textit{d}3 64.\textit{g}1 \textit{e}4 65.\textit{e}6 g5 66.\textit{f}6 \textit{f}4 67.\textit{h}2+ \textit{g}4 68.\textit{g}6 \textit{h}3 69.\textit{x}g5 \textit{xh}2 70.\textit{h}4 draw.
Part 3

The Third Rank Set-Up

I consider here set-ups with c3, d3, 0-0. White often follows up with e3, f4, f3, but I also analyse e2+d2 in the Kan. Plans with f4 and long castling are covered in Part 4.

The big flaw of White’s set-up is that d3 cuts the queen’s support for the d4-knight and leaves the g4-square without control. The Taimanov way to exploit that is a direct attack with ...b8-c6-e5-g4 while the bishop goes to c5. The Kan fans prefer the flexible development ...b8-d7-c5 planning to swap the d3-bishop.
Part 3. The Third Rank Set-Up

Main Ideas

1.e4 c5 2.c3 e6 3.d4 cxd4

You may have noted that I did not even mention possible long castling. It is rarely seen since Black obtains a good game after 8.e2 \( \text{d6}\)? 9.0-0-0 \( \text{e5} \) 10.\( \text{xc6} \) bxc6.

A plus for the Taimanov: Black avoids plans with \( \text{e}2 \), 0-0-0.

In the diagram position, Black can choose 8...\( \text{d}4 \) 9.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{c}5 \), followed up by ...\( \text{d}6 \), ...\( \text{e}5 \), ...\( \text{e}6 \). This is a solid plan where White enjoys a temporary initiative. However, I think that Black should exploit the biggest flaw of the opponent's set-up – the g4-square:

8...\( \text{e}5 \)! 9.h3

9.f3 \( \text{f}4 \) 10.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{xe3} \) 11.\( \text{h}5 \)! is analysed up to a draw endgame. I'd like to recommend 9...\( \text{eg}4\)?? 10.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{d}6 \) with a solid position and mutual chances.

9...\( \text{c}5 \)

At this point, White must decide the further pace of the game.

White is playing “by the book”. He leads out the knights first, then the bishops. That ensures him a lead in development which could easily grow into a crushing kingside attack. For instance, the Scheveningen set-ups with 8...\( \text{d}6 \) are very risky, so Black should better look for concrete play on the central dark squares.

A plus for the Taimanov: in order to develop the bishop on d3, White has to play first \( \text{e}3 \) which rules out set-ups with \( \text{d}2 \).

A plus for the Taimanov: 7...b5 is dubious due to 8.\( \text{xc6} \)
The oldest approach is to push e4-e5: 10.\textit{\textbar{e}2} d6 11.f4 \textit{\textbar{g}6} 12.\textit{\textbar{b}3} \textit{\textbar{x}e}3 13.\textit{\textbar{x}e}3 0-0 14.\textit{\textbar{a}e}1 b5 15.e5 dxe5 16.\textit{\textbar{x}g}6 hxg6 17.fxe5 \textit{\textbar{d}7} 18.\textit{\textbar{d}4} \textit{\textbar{b}7}, but practice has proved that Black is fine. White's hopes for reviving this line have been connected lately with the extremely sharp line:

10.\textit{\textbar{h}1} d6 11.f4 \textit{\textbar{g}6} 12.\textit{\textbar{e}1} 0-0!? 13.f5 \textit{\textbar{e}5} 14.\textit{\textbar{h}4} b5

15.\textit{\textbar{f}3} exf5 16.exf5 \textit{\textbar{x}f}3 17.gxf3 \textit{\textbar{b}7} 18.\textit{\textbar{g}1} \textit{\textbar{x}f}3 19.\textit{\textbar{x}f}3 \textit{\textbar{e}3} 20.\textit{\textbar{f}6} \textit{\textbar{x}g}1 21.\textit{\textbar{g}5}

Practical experience has seen Black gradually improving his defence in this position. The second players also learned how to counter-attack.

The current state of theory is in Black's favour.

In the Kan, Black refrains from ...\textit{\textbar{c}6} in favour of ...\textit{\textbar{bd}7}:

1.e4 c5 2.\textit{\textbar{f}3} e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\textit{\textbar{d}4} a6 5.\textit{\textbar{c}3} \textit{\textbar{c}7} 6.\textit{\textbar{d}3}

Black has sidestepped the allegedly dangerous English Attack so he might be tempted to enter the Taimanov now. However, 6...\textit{\textbar{c}6} can be met by 7.\textit{\textbar{x}c}6 \textit{\textbar{x}c}6! 8.0-0 which looks balanced, but it is a leap in the unknown.

6...\textit{\textbar{f}6} 7.0-0 (7.\textit{\textbar{e}2} \textit{\textbar{d}6}!? ) 7...d6

Black's next moves are 8...\textit{\textbar{bd}7}, 9...\textit{\textbar{e}7} (only to 8.a4 he plays 8...b6
first) waiting for White to define his plan. Delay ...b5 in order to rule out queenside activity with a2-a4, c2-c3.

A plus for the Kan: Black’s set-up is very flexible. It offers the opponent a wide choice and an ample ground for positional mistakes.

White has 4 main set-ups:

1. 8.f4.bd7 9.Wf3.e7 10.e3

The third rank set-up is inefficient against ...bd7. It is only dangerous if Black submits himself to an attack with 10...0-0?! 11.g4. Instead, we should fianchetto the bishop to b7 and restrict the opponent’s pawn advance by ...g6, aiming for this position:

or for ...h7-h5-h4 as in the following example:


2. 8.f4.bd7 9.f3 b5! 10.Wh1 (10.We1 b7 11.d2 e7) 10...b7 11.We1

A good option here is 11...b4 12.d1 d5 or 12...c5 13.f2 d5.

3. 8.We2 bd7 9.Wh1 e7 10.d2! 0-0 11.f4 c5 12.eae1
The Third Rank Set-Up

Objectively best here is 12...b5 which, however, assumes a draw in the variation 13.e5 \( \text{Qd} \text{f}d7 \) 14.\( \text{Q} \text{x}h7+ \) \( \text{Q} \text{x}h7 \) 15.\( \text{Q} \text{h}5+ \) \( \text{Q} \text{g}8 \) 16.\( \text{Q} \text{f}3 \) dxe5 17.\( \text{Q} \text{h}3 \) f5 18.\( \text{Q} \text{h}7+ \).

12...\( \text{Q} \text{x}d3 \) 13.cxd3 b5 is passive, but at least Black will be playing for all three results.

4. 8.a4 b6 9.f4 \( \text{Q} \text{b}7 \) 10.\( \text{Q} \text{f}3 \) \( \text{Q} \text{bd}7 \) 11.\( \text{Q} \text{d}2 \)

A plus for the Kan: There is little theory and the play is not forced. You do not have to constantly watch for new developments.

Weapon of Choice

If you feel confident in your home preparation and regularly check modern practice for new developments in position Taimanov 2, then the Taimanov should be your weapon of choice. It leads to very sharp play with a lot of calculations and offers Black considerable winning chances. If you started with the Kan move order, you should try to steer the game into the Taimanov with 6...\( \text{Q} \text{c}6 \). The only sensible White deviation would be 7.\( \text{Q} \text{xc}6 \) \( \text{Q} \text{xc}6 \) !?.

If you are much stronger than your opponent, you may want to choose the Kan. It allows many different move orders and the cost of every move in the opening is much lower than in the Taimanov. You could always outplay your opponent in the middlegame. It would be enough to kill his d3-bishop with ...\( \text{Q} \text{d}7 \)-c5xd3 in order to secure your king, and patiently wait for an opportunity to open the main diagonal for you b7-bishop.
1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{\textit{\text{d}}3\text{e}}\) e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\(\text{\textit{\text{d}}4\text{c}}\) e6 5.\(\text{\textit{\text{d}}c}\) c6 6.\(\text{\textit{\text{e}}3\text{a}}\) a6 7.\(\text{\textit{\text{d}}3\text{a}}\) a6

7...\(\text{\textit{\text{f}}6\text{a}}\)

The other popular move is 7...b5. It scores well and Emms recommends it in his repertoire book, but I definitely do not like the position after 8.\(\text{\textit{\text{c}}xc6!\text{\textit{\text{d}}6\text{a}}\) 9.0-0 \(\text{\textit{\text{d}}7\text{a}}\) 10.a3 \(\text{\textit{\text{f}}6\text{a}}\) 11.\(\text{\textit{\text{e}}1\text{a}}\)!

Black lacks a sensible plan. The common 11...\(\text{\textit{\text{e}}7\text{a}}\) 12.\(\text{\textit{\text{f}}3\text{d}}\) d6 13.\(\text{\textit{\text{ad}}}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{\text{h}}}\) h6 15.\(\text{\textit{\text{g}}5\text{a}}\) h6 16.\(\text{\textit{\text{e}}3\text{c}}\) c5 17.\(\text{\textit{\text{d}}5\text{a}}\) 18.\(\text{\textit{\text{xf}}}\text{f}\) g8 19.h4 h5 20.\(\text{\textit{\text{d}}}\) d5 \(\text{\textit{\text{xf}}}\text{f}\) 21.exd5 d6 22.c4 is by no means fun for Black, but 14.a4! b4 15.\(\text{\textit{\text{d}}5\text{a}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{xf}}}\text{f}\) 16.exd5 \(\text{\textit{\text{xf}}}\text{f}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{\text{g}}}\) g4 is a real disaster: 17...0-0 18.\(\text{\textit{\text{xc}}}\) c5 \(\text{\textit{\text{xc}}}\) c5 19.\(\text{\textit{\text{e}}}\) e4→ (or 19.c3).

8.0-0

Castling is by far the most fashionable continuation nowadays, but White has also tried:

a) 8.\(\text{\textit{\text{b}}}\) b3. This retreat is aimed against 8.0-0 \(\text{\textit{\text{xf}}}\text{f}\) 9.\(\text{\textit{\text{xf}}}\text{f}\) 4.\(\text{\textit{\text{c}}5\text{a}}\) which is quite safe for Black. White’s idea is to organise a Scheveningen-style attack with 0-0, f4, \(\text{\textit{\text{f}}}\) f3. Still, wasting a tempo in a sharp position (even two tempi, since White needs his knight for the attack and often brings it back to d4 \textit{en route to f3}), reduces his chances of get-
The Third Rank Set-Up

Black should develop by 8...b5 9.f4 d6 10.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{b7}\) and trade his c6-knight for the d3-bishop.

b) 8.\(\text{e2}\), intending to castle long, is seldom seen lately. Black's most testing answer is 8...\(\text{d6!}\) 9.0-0 (9.g3 \(\text{e5}\) 10.\(\text{b3}\) d5!) 9...\(\text{e5}\), when after 10.\(\text{xc6}\) both captures are fine for him:

10...\(\text{xc6}\) 11.\(\text{a4}\) \(\text{d7}\) 12.\(\text{d2}\) \(\text{e6}\) (12...\(\text{f6!}\) – Miladinovic) 13.f4 \(\text{e5}\) 14.\(\text{c4}\) \(\text{e7}\) 15.\(\text{f2!}\) =, Sax-Miladinovic, Ano Liosia 1999;

10...\(\text{xc6!}\) 11.\(\text{a4}\) \(\text{b8}\) 12.b3 (12.c3!? ) 12...d5 13.\(\text{c5}\) \(\text{d6!}\), Rodin-Hasangatin, Voronezh 2003.

Black has a number of alternatives here. Note that the Scheveningen set-up with 8...d6 is very risky against 7.\(\text{d3}\). White often obtains a crushing attack with simple developing moves like f4, \(\text{f3-h3}\), \(\text{ae1}\).

A. 8...\(\text{xd4}\); B. 8...\(\text{e5}\)

8...\(\text{d6!}\) is an inferior alternative because White quickly launches a kingside attack – 9.\(\text{xc6}\)!

bxc6 (9...\(\text{xc6}\) 10.f4 \(\text{e5}\) 11.\(\text{f5}\) \(\text{b5}\) 12.a4!) 10.f4 \(\text{e5}\) 11.\(\text{f5!}\) \(\text{e7}\) 12.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{b7}\) (12...0-0 13.g4 \(\text{h6}\) 14.h4 \(\text{h7}\) 15.g5!+) 13.\(\text{g3}\) 0-0 14.\(\text{h6}\).

A. 8...\(\text{xd4!}\) 9.\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{c5}\)

Black's strategy is simple and straightforward. He wants to complete development and play in the centre. Black's next steps are: ...d6, ...\(\text{e5}\), ...\(\text{e6}\) and castling when possible.

Remember! We refrain from ...\(\text{b5}\) in the opening. Thus we gain time for development and deprive the opponent of a target on the queenside.

White has three main plans from this point:

1. He doubles or triples on the d-file. Then we move our king to e7.

2. White splits our kingside pawns by: 10.\(\text{xf6}\) \(\text{gf6}\) 11.\(\text{g4}\) \(\text{f8}\). We can leave our pawn on d7 in order to have ...\(\text{d6}\) or defend it by ...\(\text{c6}\). There is nothing to worry about as we gradually connect our
rooks and display activity on the kingside.

3. White plays f4. We answer it by ...e5, ...xe6, exf4 before castling.

A1. 10.\(\text{xe}2!?)\; A2. 10.\text{xf}6; A3. 10.\text{xc}5

A1. 10.\(\text{xe}2!?)

This position occurred in the very first game played in this variation. At the Black side was the Godfather Taimanov. White hopes to use the weakness of d6.

10...d6

Many strong players prefer 10...e5, but I have strong doubts about the soundness of this choice. After 11.\text{xc}5 \text{xc}5 12.\text{d}3 b5 (12...d6 13.\text{ad}1 \text{e}7 14.\text{g}3\text{+}), the novelty 13.\text{fb}1! assures White of a lasting edge. For example: 13...\text{b}7 14.b4\text{c}6 (14...\text{c}7 15.a4 \text{c}8 16.a\text{xb}5\text{+}) 15.a4 bxa4 16.\text{d}1 0-0 17.\text{d}5 \text{xd}5 18.\text{exd}5.

11.\text{fd}3

White scores poorly after 11.\text{xf}6!? , but this is his most principled continuation. The comparison with line A2 is in White’s favour here because of the weak d6-pawn. Black must defend very accurately: 11...gx\text{f}6 12.\text{d}2 \text{d}7 13.\text{ad}1 \text{g}8 14.\text{h}6 [14.\text{f}4 \text{e}7 15.\text{d}3 \text{c}6 16.a3 (16.\text{h}5 \text{af}8 17.\text{fd}1 \text{g}5) 16...\text{g}5 17.g3 a5!] 14.\text{e}7 15.\text{h}5 \text{af}8 16.\text{h}1 \text{b}6.

11...\text{xd}4 12.\text{xd}4 e5 13.\text{b}4 \text{e}6

14.\text{ad}1

White might need his rook on the queenside so 14.\text{fd}1 is a logical alternative. Black can answer with either 14...\text{e}7!? when 15.f4 is not dangerous in view of 15...a5 16.\text{b}5 (16.a3 \text{b}6\text{+} 17.\text{f}1 \text{b}4 18.\text{xe}5 \text{dxe}5) 16...\text{hc}8, or 14...\text{c}5 15.a3 \text{xb}4 16.a\text{xb}4 \text{e}7 17.\text{a}5 \text{hc}8 18.f3 \text{c}4=, Dembo-V.Schneider, Plovdiv 2008.

14...\text{c}5 (14...\text{e}7) 15.a3

15.\text{xb}7 0-0 16.a3 \text{fb}8 17.\text{e}7 \text{d}8\text{=} (threatening \text{d}7\text{+}) leads to a repetition.

15...0-0-0!? 

Hector-Haba, Hamburg 2004, saw 15...\text{b}4 16.ab4 \text{e}7 17.\text{d}2 \text{hc}8 18.f3 \text{c}4= . I decided to face the opponent with more complex problems.
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16.\textit{\$d}2 \textit{\$b}4 17.\textit{\$b}4 \textit{d}5=.

Black has even some slight initiative, Mamedov-Delchev, Benasque 2005.

A2. 10.\textit{\$x}f6 \textit{gxf}6 11.\textit{\$g}4!

This is more precise than 11.\textit{\$h}1 \textit{h}5 and Black follows the scheme ...\textit{b}5, ...\textit{b}7, ...\textit{e}7, ...\textit{ag}8, ...\textit{f}5 like in the game Morozevic-Poluljahov, Orel 1992.

The text is an attempt to drag Black’s king to f8 instead of the better place e7.

11...\textit{\$f}8

This is not obligatory at all. Black has perfect compensation for the pawn after 11...\textit{e}5 12.\textit{\$g}7 (perhaps 12.\textit{\$h}1 is more solid, 12...\textit{g}5 13.\textit{e}2 \textit{h}5 14.\textit{f}4 \textit{g}4=) 12...\textit{f}8 13.\textit{h}1 \textit{g}5 14.\textit{h}7 \textit{g}8 15.\textit{h}3 \textit{b}5 16.\textit{f}4 \textit{g}7 17.\textit{f}3 \textit{h}8 18.\textit{g}3 \textit{f}8 19.\textit{g}4 \textit{b}7. If White plays h3, \textit{h}2, Black can shift his dark-squared bishop to the h2-b8 diagonal.

12.\textit{\$h}1

Or 12.\textit{\$h}4 \textit{e}5 13.\textit{\$h}6 \textit{g}8 14.\textit{h}1 \textit{g}5 15.\textit{h}3 \textit{h}5=.

12...\textit{h}5 13.\textit{\$h}4

13.\textit{\$h}3 \textit{f}4 14.\textit{e}2 \textit{b}5 15.\textit{\$ad}1 should be met by 15...\textit{d}6. (15...\textit{e}7 lost a pawn after 16.\textit{\$d}5 \textit{d}6 17.\textit{h}5, Balashov-Tregubov, Katowice 1992.)

13...\textit{e}7 14.\textit{f}4 \textit{b}5

Black’s game is easy. He wants to complete development and play ...\textit{g}7, ...\textit{ag}8, ...\textit{f}8. White cannot wait.

15.\textit{f}5!

In Tzeitlin-Soffer, Tel Aviv 1994, White delayed this thrust – 15.\textit{\$ae}1 and Black achieved the redeployment following 15...\textit{b}7 16.\textit{f}5 \textit{e}5! 17.\textit{a}4 \textit{c}6!

The pawn structure in the centre is identical with The Poisoned pawn variation in the Najdorf. Black should keep control of c4 to avoid the manoeuvre \textit{d}1-e3-c4. In Fedorov-Miezis, Istanbul 2000, White
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chose 17...\(\text{d1}\) at once, but could not even equalise after 17...\(\text{g7}\) 18.\(\text{f3 ag8}\) 19.\(\text{c3 f8}\) 20.\(\text{e3 g5}\) 21.\(\text{e2 h8}\) 22.\(\text{c2 c5}\) 23.\(\text{f1 d5}\).

18.a5 \(\text{e8}\) 19.\(\text{d1 d8}\) 20.\(\text{c3 g7}\) 21.\(\text{b4 eg8}\).

15...\(\text{e5}\) 16.\(\text{f3}\)

16.\(\text{ab1 b7}\) 17.\(\text{e2 d6}\) 18.\(\text{g3 e7}\).

16...\(\text{b7}\) 17.\(\text{af1 h6}\)!

White seems unable to improve his position. We can continue with ...\(\text{d6}\), ...\(\text{e7}\), or ...\(\text{g7-h8}\).

A3. 10.\(\text{xc5 xc5}\)

11.\(\text{h1}\)

The plan with f4 is currently acknowledged to be the only real danger for Black. Other options are:

a) 11.a4 White prevents b7-b5, but we were not too eager to play it anyway! 11...d6 12.a5 0-0 13.\(\text{d2 d7}\) 14.\(\text{f1 f6}\) 15.\(\text{a4 xa4}\) 16.\(\text{xa4 g4}\) 17.c3 \(\text{d8}\) 18.\(\text{f1 e5}\) Mitkov-Zapata, Mexico City 2007.

b) 11.\(\text{e4 c7}\) 12.c4 \(\text{d6}\) 13.\(\text{c1 d7}\)

Now the typical hedgehog formation after 14.\(\text{c3 0-0}\) is fine for Black since two minor pieces have been exchanged and he has plenty of room for manoeuvring. White can open the centre with:

14.c5 0-0 15.\(\text{xd6 xd6}\) 16.\(\text{c5 c6}\) 17.\(\text{e2 ac8}\) =. See game 12 Zaragatski-Delchev, Bad Wiessee 2005.

c) 11.\(\text{d2 d6}\)

You should remember to refrain from ...b7-b5 before castling safely. Although the variation 11...b5 12.\(\text{e1 g4}\) 13.e5 \(\text{xe5}\) 14.\(\text{e4 c7}\)
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15.\textit{\textbf{b}}b4 d5 16.\textit{\textbf{d}}d6+ \textit{\textbf{d}}d7 17.\textit{\textbf{e}}xe5 \textit{\textbf{w}}xd6 18.\textit{\textbf{d}}d4 \textit{\textbf{b}}b7 19.a4 bxa4 20.\textit{\textbf{e}}e3 is not clear, in a practical game White's game is much easier.

12.\textit{\textbf{a}}ad1

Solak's rook lift 12.\textit{\textbf{a}}ae1 (having in mind \textit{\textbf{e}}e3-f3xf6) sets concrete problems. For instance, 12...0-0 13.\textit{\textbf{e}}e3 e5 14.\textit{\textbf{f}}f3 \textit{\textbf{h}}h8 15.\textit{\textbf{xf}}f6 \textit{\textbf{g}}xf6 16.\textit{\textbf{h}}h6 \textit{\textbf{g}}g8 17.\textit{\textbf{d}}d5, Solak-Safarli, Baku 2013, gives White an initiative: 17...\textit{\textbf{g}}g7 (17...\textit{\textbf{g}}g6 18.\textit{\textbf{f}}f8+ \textit{\textbf{h}}h8 19.\textit{\textbf{xf}}f7) 18.\textit{\textbf{xf}}f6 \textit{\textbf{e}}e6 19.\textit{\textbf{e}}e1 \textit{\textbf{w}}b4 20.\textit{\textbf{e}}e3 \textit{\textbf{d}}d2 21.h3, when Black is deprived of any counterplay. I think that it would be wiser to refrain from castling: 12...e5! 13.\textit{\textbf{e}}e3 \textit{\textbf{e}}e6 14.\textit{\textbf{f}}f3 h6?! 15.\textit{\textbf{e}}e2 \textit{\textbf{e}}e7 16.\textit{\textbf{e}}e1 \textit{\textbf{w}}b4= 17.\textit{\textbf{d}}d3 \textit{\textbf{h}}hd8. White stays pretty, but I do not see any threat to Black in near future.

12.\textit{\textbf{f}}fe1 is inconsistent. Besides 12...\textit{\textbf{d}}d7, Black gets time to castle: 12...0-0 13.\textit{\textbf{a}}d1 e5 14.\textit{\textbf{e}}e3 (14.\textit{\textbf{f}}f1 \textit{\textbf{d}}d8=) 14...\textit{\textbf{e}}e6 15.\textit{\textbf{e}}e2 \textit{\textbf{g}}f8 16.\textit{\textbf{e}}e3 \textit{\textbf{e}}e8 17.\textit{\textbf{d}}d5 (17.\textit{\textbf{g}}g3 \textit{\textbf{h}}h8) 17...\textit{\textbf{b}}b5= (preventing any ideas with c2-c4). White can switch over to plans with f4, for example: 12.\textit{\textbf{h}}h1 e5! 13.\textit{\textbf{a}}e1 0-0 14.\textit{\textbf{f}}f4 \textit{\textbf{h}}h8!? anticipating 15.\textit{\textbf{d}}d5 \textit{\textbf{d}}d5 16.\textit{\textbf{e}}e4 \textit{\textbf{c}}c5 as in Kotronias-Pelletier, Athens 2005.

12...\textit{\textbf{d}}d7

White would get a slight pull in the endgame in the event of 12...0-0 13.\textit{\textbf{e}}e2 \textit{\textbf{d}}d8 14.\textit{\textbf{d}}d4 \textit{\textbf{w}}xd4 15.\textit{\textbf{d}}xd4 e5 16.\textit{\textbf{b}}b4

13.\textit{\textbf{e}}e2 \textit{\textbf{e}}e7 Black is just in time to regroup successfully:

14.\textit{\textbf{f}}fe1 \textit{\textbf{h}}hd8 15.\textit{\textbf{f}}f3 \textit{\textbf{c}}c6 16.\textit{\textbf{e}}e3 \textit{\textbf{d}}d7=.

11...\textit{\textbf{d}}d6!

11...b5 is often seen, but it is connected with a wrong plan.

Black obtains a good game with a central strategy.

1. His first aim is to prevent e4-e5. It is best achieved by ...e6-e5.
2. Then he should castle.
3. He must evade some tactical tricks, connected with a sacrifice on f6. Moves like ...\textit{\textbf{h}}h8 or ...\textit{\textbf{e}}e5 serve well this cause.
4. The next stage is to organise counterplay in the centre by exchanging on f4 and activate the rooks – to e8 and c8.

12.f4

Berg advocated 12.\textit{\textbf{f}}f3, but I do not see any reason behind this move. After 12...0-0 13.\textit{\textbf{w}}e1 e5, he did not find anything better than 14.f4 (14.\textit{\textbf{h}}h4 \textit{\textbf{e}}e6) 14...\textit{\textbf{e}}xf4 15.\textit{\textbf{xf}}f4 \textit{\textbf{e}}e6 16.\textit{\textbf{w}}d2 \textit{\textbf{g}}g5=, Berg-Pelletier, Crete 2007.

12.\textit{\textbf{w}}e1 e5 13.\textit{\textbf{a}}a4 \textit{\textbf{w}}c6 14.\textit{\textbf{b}}b4 is a provocation to 14...b5?! when
15...c3 followed up by a4 will be in White's favour. Instead, 14...e6 is equal.

12...e5! 13...e1

13...e2 g4! 14...e1 e6 is similar to the main line.

13.d5 xd5 14.exd5 deserves attention.

Now safest is 14...0-0= 15.fxe5 (15...d2 f5 16...e2 a5! 17...f3 d7) 15...dxe5, when 16...h5?! f5 17.xxf5 xxf5 18.xf5 xd5 19.xe5 walks into 19...a2+.

14...xd5 is risky because after 15...h5 Black will have to castle long: 15...e6!? 16...a3 0-0-0, but this line is also more challenging.

13...e6

Black is ready to take on f4 so White should do something about it. Waiting moves like 14.a3 do not work: 14...exf4 15.xf4 e5 16.xf3 g4f.

It would be logical to close the centre by 14.f5 d7 15.g3, (or 15.h4 c5 16.xf3 h6 17.g3 f8 18.a3 b5 19.xf1 b4 20.b1 b8f1, Kotronias-Filip, Eforie Nord 2008)

but then Black's king would feel fine in the middle: 15...g8! 16.a4 c6 17.ad1 b4f2.

14...d1 exf4 15.d5

White must cut Black's queen from e5. He would be struggling after 15.xf4 e5 16...d2 0-0 17...d1 a8c8.

15...xd5 16.exd5 xd5 17.xf4 g5 18...d4 0-0 19.xd6 aad8=.

B. 8...e5

Black's knight strives to reach g4, for example, 9.f4 e4 10.xd2 c5 11...e2 e5 (11...d6 12.h3 e5 is also possible) 12.xe5 d5!! (only move!) 13.f4 xe5 14.exd5 xd5=, SPIKE-HIARCS, IPCCC, Paderborn 2007.

Our general plan is to carry on a dark-squared strategy by ...c5, ...d6, ...g6 and possibly ...e5. In contrast to line A, Black keeps both knights. That makes play more tangled and double-edged.

Now our main line branches to:
B1. 9.xf3; B2. 9. h3

Sometimes White tries to surprise the opponent with 9...e2. I propose you to follow the usual plan:

9...c5 10.f4 d6 11...h1 0-0 12...e1 g6 (12...eg4!? has been successfully tested in practice) 13.g3
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Black has two interesting possibilities:

a) 13...a3 14.e5 (14.d1 c5=) 14...dxe5 15.bxa3 c3 16.fxe5 d7;

b) 13...b4! with complications that look to be to his advantage:
14.f5 (or 14.d3 cxc3 15.bxc3 e5 16.f5 exd4 17.cxd4 e7 18.a6 b5 19.gxf5 f6 20.xh5 gxh5 21.xh5xc3 22.ad1 d7 23.f3 h6 14...cxc3 15.fxg6 xg6 16.gxf6 h8 17.ab1 dxe4! 18.xh4 xd4 19.xd4 f5=.

B1. 9.d3 ceg4?!

The text is a more complex version of the natural set-up with:

a) 9...d6!? 10.cxe5 dxe5=. Even here, the possession of the b6-square does not give White a substantial advantage: 11.a4 d7

12.c4

The position is rather closed so Black’s lag in development cannot be punished by 12.b6 b8 13.a4 c5 14.xd7 x7 15.g4 g8 16.h1 f6 17.g4 f5=.

12...c6 13.c2 a5

The most straightforward way to swap the dark-squared bishops. In Zaragatski-Perunovic, Balatonllele 2001, Black successfully realised the idea of obtaining a strong knight against a bad bishop after 13...d7 14.a3?! xa4 15.xa4 c5 16.xc5 dxc5 17.b4 c7 18.c5 0-0 19.f6b1 b8! 20.b3 c6 21.a3 d4, with an initiative. However, White could prevent it by 14.f6d1! xa4 (14...d8 15.c3 c5 16.exc5 dxc5 17.g1) 15.xa4 e7 16.c5.


b) 9...c5 has been the main line. It’s status is still OK, but Black has no chances to win the endgame after 10.cxe5 xxe3 11.h5 g6 12.xf3 xe5 13.fxex3 f6 14.xf6 xf6 15.xf6 g7 16.f3 b5 17.a2! 89
White’s idea is to meet 17...\(\text{f8(?)}\) with 18.\(\text{h3}\).

17...\(\text{b7}\) 18.\(\text{f7}\)

If White retreats his knight to a passive square, Black can already swap one pair of rooks: 18.\(\text{d1 f8}\) 19.\(\text{h3 xf1+}\) 20.\(\text{xf1}\) h6 21.\(\text{g3 f7}\) 22.\(\text{f3 e7}\) 23.\(\text{e2 e5}\), Li Shilong-Wen,Yang, Shandong zt 2007. The fine point is that White is left without a plan, whereas we can proceed with a typical Sicilian queenside attack.

18...\(\text{e5}\) 19.\(\text{e2}\)

Or 19.\(\text{d1 c6}\) 20.\(\text{c3 a5}\), Kotrotsos-Mastrovasilis, Kavala 2007. Only Black can play for a win in this position.

19...\(\text{xb2}\) 20.\(\text{d4}\) 0-0-0 21.\(\text{c4}\)

21.\(\text{g7 d8}\) was good for Black in Pilgaard-Bui Vinh, Budapest 2007.

21...\(\text{bxc4}\) 22.\(\text{xc4 d4}\) 23.\(\text{exd4 e4}\) 24.\(\text{e1 b8}\) 25.\(\text{a6 h5=}\), Persson-Coleman, ICCF 2007.

10.\(\text{d2 d6}\) 

\(\text{a4}\)

White has never tried the seemingly most consistent continuation 11.\(\text{h3}\) 12.\(\text{xe5}\) dxe5 13.\(\text{f4}\) 14.\(\text{h1}\) 15.f5. I suppose that he does not like the possibility for long castling, e.g. 15...\(\text{xf5}\) 16.\(\text{exf5}\) \(\text{d7}\) 17.\(\text{e4 c6}\) 18.\(\text{e1}\) 0-0=.

The first top-level game in this line, Carlsen-Ivanchuk, Skanderborg 2005, saw 11.\(\text{e2}\) 12.\(\text{c4}\) (White’s knight has no business on the kingside: 12.\(\text{h3}\) 13.\(\text{xe5}\) dxe5 14.\(\text{g3}\) 0-0 15.\(\text{h5}\) \(\text{e8}\)!) 16.\(\text{e2}\) b6 17.\(\text{ac1}\) \(\text{b7}\) 18.\(\text{c4 d8}\) 19.\(\text{f1}\) f5t, Möller-Petukhov, ICCF 2010) 12...0-0 13.\(\text{c1}\) b6 14.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{b7}\) 15.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{d7}\) =.

11...\(\text{b6}\)

The game Sanner-Tosi, ICCF 2009, suggests that Black can allow \(\text{a4-a5} = 11...\(\text{e7}\)!?. This move may be even more accurate since it discourages 12.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{e5}\) 13.\(\text{xe5}\) dxe5 14.f4 due to 14...\(\text{xf4}\)!? 15.\(\text{xf4}\) e5 16.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{e6}\) =. Sanner chose 12.a5 \(\text{d7}\) 13.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{e5}\) 14.\(\text{xe5}\) dxe5 15.\(\text{f3}\) 0-0 16.\(\text{fd1}\) \(\text{c6}\) 17.\(\text{a4}\) \(\text{d8}\) with a comfortable game for Black.

12.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{e7}\) 13.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{e5}\) 14.\(\text{xe5}\)

14.\(\text{d4}\) 0-0 15.f4 \(\text{g6}\) is similar to line B2. Instead, 15...\(\text{xd3}\) 16.cxd3 e5 17.\(\text{c2}\) left White with a slight pull after 17...\(\text{e6}\) 18.\(\text{ac1}\) \(\text{e4}\) 19.\(\text{xf4}\) \(\text{b7}\) 20.\(\text{d4}\) \(\text{ac8}\) 21.\(\text{g5}\), Mueller-Ribli, Germany 2007.
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14...dxe5 15.f4 0-0 16.\textbf{Aae1}

The game is balanced. It is possible to meet f4-f5 by ...exf5, for instance, 16...\textbf{c5}?! 17.\textbf{h1} \textbf{d4} 18.f5 exf5 19.exf5 \textbf{b7} 20.\textbf{g5} \textbf{xc3} 21.bxc3 \textbf{fe8} 22.\textbf{xf6} \textbf{xf6}=

In Dembo-Delchev, Cappelle la Grande 2006, I refrained from this exchange: 16...\textbf{b7} 17.f5 \textbf{fe8} 18.\textbf{fxe6} \textbf{fxe6} 19.\textbf{g5} \textbf{d7} 20.\textbf{xe7} \textbf{xe7} 21.\textbf{c4}, but the e6-pawn is a permanent weakness.

\textbf{B2. 9. h3 \textbf{c5}}

Taimanov's pet line 9...b5 has faded out of fashion. The famous game Fischer-Petrosian, Santa Monica 1966, went 10.\textbf{f4} \textbf{c4} 11.\textbf{c4} \textbf{wc4} 12.\textbf{d3} d5 13.e5 \textbf{d7} 14.\textbf{xc4} \textbf{xc4} 15.\textbf{f5} \textbf{xe5} 16.\textbf{fxe6} \textbf{fxe6} 17.\textbf{ae1} with a pull in the endgame, e.g. 17...\textbf{d7} 18.a4 b4 19.\textbf{d5}.

10.\textbf{d2} d6 11.f4 \textbf{g6} 12.\textbf{f2} sets the positional trap 12...0-0 13.e5 dxe5 14.\textbf{xe6} (which is far from clear after 14...\textbf{xe6} 15.\textbf{xc5} \textbf{xf4} 16.\textbf{xf8} \textbf{xf8} ). Perhaps Black should neutralise it by 12...b6 and it is unclear what plan White actually had in mind.

Womacka-Zakhartsov, Guben 2011, went further 13.\textbf{ce2} 0-0 14.c3 e5 15.\textbf{b3} (15.f5 exd4 16.cxd4 \textbf{ae5}) 15...\textbf{xe3} 16.\textbf{xe3} exf4 with an excellent game for Black.

In my game Eggleston-Delchev, Bad Wiessee 2013, White imitated activity by 13.g4?! , but 13...\textbf{e5} 14.\textbf{de2} (14.\textbf{fxe5} dxe5 15.\textbf{de2} \textbf{e6} 16.\textbf{xc5} bxc5 17.b3 0-0 18.\textbf{c4} \textbf{xc4} 19.bxc4 \textbf{wa5} 20.\textbf{xf3} \textbf{ab8} 21.\textbf{d5} \textbf{b2} 22.\textbf{xf6}+ \textbf{gf6} 23.\textbf{xf6} \textbf{d2}) 14...\textbf{exf4} 15.\textbf{xf4} \textbf{xf4} 16.\textbf{xf4} \textbf{ae6} 17.\textbf{ae1} 0-0 18.\textbf{d5} \textbf{xd5} 19.exd5 \textbf{d7}! gave me a typical Sicilian structure with a better knight and a safer king.

\textbf{B21. 10.\textbf{a4} \textbf{a7} 11.\textbf{c4}}

According to Taimanov, the whole variation with 9...\textbf{c5} gives Black a restrained position due
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to the possibility of 11.c4. This understanding ensues from the old passive treatment of the hedgehog structures by Black. If the second player aimlessly manoeuvred on the last two ranks, he undoubtedly would risks to get under a kingside attack. On the contrary, active play on the dark squares with the breakthrough b7-b5 in mind, ensures him a comfortable game.

Here, 11...0-0 12.\textit{c}1 \textit{d}8 seems the most concrete continuation. It counts on luring the opponent into c4-c5. Then Black would obtain excellent counterplay by ...d6. However, White can calmly pursue his main plan for consolidation, when the rook move to d8 could prove to be inaccurate since ...\textit{fc}8 or ...\textit{fe}8 could be better. Even more important consideration is that Black may be able to carry out ...b7-b5 or ...e5 without moving his rook at all.

11...\textit{d}6 12.\textit{c}1 \textit{d}7 13.\textit{c}3 0-0 14.\textit{b}3 \textit{a}5!?

The queen is eying the knight on c3, making \textit{c}2 impossible.

15.\textit{e}2

15.a4 only weakens the b3-pawn. Black continues with 15...\textit{c}5 intending to meet 16.\textit{e}2 or 16.\textit{e}2 by ...\textit{b}6.

In the game Astaneh-Vl. Dimitrov, Vila de Marin 2005, White chose 15.\textit{e}2. This move has at least two drawbacks. The bishop is too passive there because it is not aimed at the enemy king, and it is hindering the protection of the e3-bishop by \textit{e}1 or \textit{e}2. Black followed up with 15...\textit{c}5 16.a4 \textit{fc}8 17.\textit{f}4 \textit{g}6 (17...\textit{c}6!? ) 18.\textit{d}2, when 18...e5!? 19.fe5 \textit{de}5\# would have seized the initiative. Dark-squared strategy was also good, e.g. 16...\textit{b}6 17.\textit{e}1 \textit{c}6=.

15...\textit{fe}8

Black’s rook stands up in opposition to the enemy queen. It is clear that White is unable to generate any threat, see game 13 Varga-Almasi, Budapest 2004.
The Third Rank Set-Up

B22. 10.\textit{we}2

This is the oldest set-up. It was tested at highest level in the World title match Spassky-Petrosian, Moscow 1969.

The reason behind the text move is to protect the bishop on e3 and expand in the centre without further prophylaxis. White's next moves are f4, \textit{b}3 and a quick e5. The exchange of the dark-squared bishops exposes two critical points in Black's position – d6 and c5, but the biggest danger usually comes from the kingside and the f6-square.

With time, Black has learnt to neutralise the enemy's threats. All he needs to know is a couple of accurate moves in order to finish development.

10...d6

10...\textit{g}6 has no positive sides after 11.\textit{b}3. However, White could try to exploit the unnecessary retreat by 11.\textit{a}4 followed by \textit{c}4.

11.f4

White can prevent ...b5, but Black has good places for his pieces anyway: 11.a4 b6 12.\textit{b}3 \textit{xe}3 13.\textit{exe}3 0-0 14.\textit{ae}1 \textit{b}7 15.f4 \textit{g}6 16.\textit{d}2 \textit{d}7 17.\textit{c}4 \textit{ad}8 18.\textit{f}2 d5!, Cuenca Jimenez-Zakhartsov, Benasque 2010.

11...\textit{g}6

The game Spassky-Petrosian, showed that 11...\textit{d}7 leaves Black's castling position shaky under the impact of the d3-bishop. Capturing on d3 is sad, because we would have to struggle without counterplay against a possible queenside activity of the opponent.

12.\textit{b}3 \textit{xe}3 13.\textit{exe}3 0-0

Black can also choose 13...b5 since the only attempt to punish this move order would be 14.a4, but then 14...b4 15.\textit{ce}2 0-0 16.a5 \textit{b}8 (preventing \textit{b}6) would be fine for him. 13...b5 also provokes 14.e5 dxe5 15.\textit{xe}5 hxg6 16.fxe5 \textit{d}7 17.\textit{xf}7? which loses after 17...\textit{xf}7 18.\textit{f}3+ \textit{f}6! 19.\textit{xa}8 \textit{b}6+ 20.\textit{f}1 \textit{h}5!.

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14.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{ae1}}}

14.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{ad1 b5 15.e5 dxe5 16.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{exg6}}}}}}
is not dangerous due to 16...hxg6
17.fxe5 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d7}} 18.\texttt{\texttt{d6 b4}}, equalising.
14.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d1 b5 15.a4 b4 16.e2 e5}}}.

14...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b5 15.e5}}}

15.a3 loses momentum. Black
was fine in the game Exizoglou-Vl.
Dimitrov, Thessaloniki 2004: 15...
\texttt{\texttt{b7 16.\texttt{\texttt{d4 e8}} 17.\texttt{\texttt{f2 e5 18.de2}}}}
(18.fxe5 \texttt{\texttt{e5}}) 18...ef4 19.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d4 f4}}}
20.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f4 e5}}.}

15...\texttt{\texttt{dxe5 16.\texttt{\texttt{exg6 hxg6}}}}
17.fxe5 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d7}} 18.\texttt{\texttt{d4 b7}} 19.\texttt{\texttt{d1}}}

\begin{center}
\textbf{19...\texttt{\texttt{ad8!}}}
\end{center}

With this final touch, Black
solves the opening problems. He
is threatening \ldots\texttt{\texttt{xe5}}! In Radulov-
Suetin, Budapest 1970, White an-
swered 20.c3 \texttt{\texttt{b6}} 21.\texttt{\texttt{f2 c4}} and
Black already had an edge.

\textbf{B23. 10.\texttt{\texttt{d1}}}

This is another straightforward
plan. In distinction to B22 which
is a positional line aimed basically
at obtaining a spatial advantage by
e4-e5, here White is trying to pre-
serve his dark-squared bishop for a
kingside attack. Black’s counterplay
is directed toward the knight on d4.
He should also open the e-file. Pract-
ICE has seen long castling too, but
that is really playing with fire.

10...\texttt{\texttt{d6 11.f4 \texttt{\texttt{g6}}}}

12.\texttt{\texttt{e1}}

A multi-purpose move. The
queen defends the e3-bishop, en-
abling the plan with \texttt{\texttt{b3}}. At the
same time it is eying the square h4
which is its ideal attacking posi-
tion. Black is at a critical juncture
and I will examine his options in
detail, but let us also see some oth-
er White’s options:

\begin{itemize}
  \item a) 12.\texttt{\texttt{d2 0-0 13.\texttt{\texttt{ae1}} (13.\texttt{\texttt{f2}}}}
    \texttt{\texttt{e8}}) 13...b5 14.a3 \texttt{\texttt{e8}}. Black got
    precious time for development and
    stands well, see \textit{game 14 Onis-
    chuk-Salov, Elista 1998}.
  \item b) 12.\texttt{\texttt{f3}} leads to similar po-
sitions after 12...0-0 (12...b5?)
\end{itemize}
13...\text{a}e1 b5. 13...\text{d}7 is also playable, but be sure to avoid the typical mistake, seen in the game Reinaldo Castineira-Comas Fabrego, Andorra 2001: 14.\text{b}3 \text{xe}3 15.\text{xe}3 e5?! (15...\text{c}6 is essential!) 16.fxe5 dxe5 17.\text{xf}6! gxf6, when 18.\text{d}5! \text{d}6 (18...\text{d}8 19.\text{e}1 f5 20.\text{xf}5 \text{xf}5 21.\text{xf}5 \text{d}5 22.\text{h}6 \text{h}5 23.\text{d}2+) 19.\text{a}5! \text{c}6 20.\text{c}4 \text{d}8 21.\text{b}6 \text{xd}5 22.\text{ex}d5± would have been unpleasant for Black.

c) 12.f5 \text{e}5 13.\text{ce}2 (13.\text{e}1 is well met by 13...\text{d}7) 13...exf5 14.\text{xf}5 0-0 15.\text{g}5 \text{ed}7.

It seems that Black is safe in this position. White is unable to break through his defence until he is holding the critical squares f6 and h6. At the same time, the open e-file and the weak square e4 ensure sufficient counterplay. See game 15 Kotronias-De la Riva, Bled 2002.

12...0-0!?

12...\text{d}7 is a decent alternative.

Then 13.f5 (13.\text{b}3 \text{xe}3+ 14.\text{xe}3 0-0 15.\text{ad}1 \text{ad}8 is a calm, typical Sicilian game.) 13...\text{e}5 14.\text{h}4 0-0 15.\text{f}3 \text{exf}5 16.\text{xf}5 \text{xf}5 17.\text{xf}5 \text{c}6 is a better version of the main line, because Black’s queenside has not weaknesses, see game 10 Vatter-Zakhartsov, Bad Wiessee 2011.

In this line, Black can also castle long: 14...\text{b}6 15.\text{ce}2 0-0-0. White has failed to meet it adequately so far:

16.\text{g}1 \text{exf}5 17.b4 \text{xb}4 18.\text{ab}1 \text{a}4 19.\text{ef}5 \text{he}8+, Haznedaroglu-Ribli, Saint Vincent 2005, or 16.b4 \text{xb}4 17.\text{ab}1 \text{a}4 18.\text{b}3 \text{xd}3 19.cxd3 e5 20.\text{c}3 \text{a}5 21.\text{c}2 \text{c}6+, Stoumbos-Javakhishvili, Linares 2005.

Perhaps after 13.f5 \text{e}5, White should opt for the more restrained:

14.\text{ce}2 \text{b}6 (14...\text{exf}5 15.\text{exf}5 0-0-0 16.b4 \text{he}8 is unclear) 15.\text{g}3 0-0 16.b4 \text{xb}4 17.c3! \text{b}6 18.\text{h}6 \text{fg}4c4.

13.\text{f}5 \text{e}5 14.\text{h}4

14.\text{g}3 is harmless in view of 14...\text{h}8. Or 14.g4? d5!

14...\text{b}5
I'm still unsure what sign to tack onto this move but it is undoubtedly the most challenging continuation. Macedonian GM Mitkov's idea (it was first employed against the set-up with ...b5 by Nedev) is truly amazing and it faces Black with considerable practical problems. Computers think that the exchange sacrifice is not entirely correct, but over the board humans do not cope very well with the heavy calculations that are vital to survive the attack.

Lately White began to try other moves, too:

15.\textit{D}ce2 exf5

\textit{Houdini} 4 suggests 15...\textit{W}a7 (Hector-Rasmussen, team ch. DEN 2008, saw 15...\textit{W}b6?! 16.b4! \textit{\Delta}xb4, when 17.fxe6 fxe6 18.\textit{\Delta}xe6 \textit{\Delta}xe3 19.\textit{\Delta}xf8 \textit{\Delta}xf8 20.\textit{\Delta}xf6+ gxf6 21.\textit{\Delta}f4! would have torn Black apart) preparing to meet 16.b4 by 16...\textit{\Delta}b6, but I do not like to distract my strongest piece from the kingside in such a crucial moment of the game. White might get a somewhat better version of the main line with 16.\textit{\Delta}f3 exf5 17.exf5 \textit{\Delta}xf3 18.gxf3 \textit{\Delta}e7 19.\textit{\Delta}h6 \textit{\Delta}b7 20.\textit{\Delta}g1 \textit{\Delta}xf3+ 21.\textit{\Delta}xf3.

16.exf5 \textit{\Delta}e8! (Belov-Volkov, Moscow 2009 saw 16...\textit{\Delta}b7 and here 17.\textit{\Delta}h6 keeps the initiative) 17.\textit{\Delta}h6 \textit{\Delta}e7 18.\textit{\Delta}g5 \textit{\Delta}f8 19.\textit{\Delta}xf6 gxf6 20.\textit{\Delta}xf8 \textit{\Delta}xf8=.

15...\textit{\Delta}xf3 16.gxf3 \textit{\Delta}e8 is little explored. Perhaps Black fears the closed centre which facilitates the opponent's attack. A possible line is 17.\textit{\Delta}g1 g6 18.\textit{\Delta}g4 \textit{\Delta}b7 19.\textit{\Delta}h6 \textit{\Delta}a7! 20.b4= \textit{\Delta}xb4 21.\textit{\Delta}h4 f6 22.\textit{\Delta}xf6 \textit{\Delta}g7 23.\textit{\Delta}c6 \textit{\Delta}c7 24.\textit{\Delta}xh7+ \textit{\Delta}h8 25.\textit{\Delta}xb4 \textit{\Delta}xc3 26.\textit{\Delta}g4 \textit{\Delta}xh6 27.\textit{\Delta}xh6 \textit{\Delta}f7 28.\textit{\Delta}d2 \textit{\Delta}xd3 29.cxd3 \textit{\Delta}xh7.

16.exf5 \textit{\Delta}xf3 17.gxf5 \textit{\Delta}b7

Adla and Glavina suggest 17...d5? which offers White an edge after 18.\textit{\Delta}g1 \textit{\Delta}e5 19.\textit{\Delta}d1 \textit{\Delta}d7 20.\textit{\Delta}c3±.

18.\textit{\Delta}g1 \textit{\Delta}xf3 19.\textit{\Delta}xf3

19.\textit{\Delta}h2 loses to 19...\textit{\Delta}e7 20.\textit{\Delta}g3 \textit{\Delta}e5 21.\textit{\Delta}f4 \textit{\Delta}g4+.

19...\textit{\Delta}e3 20.\textit{\Delta}f6 \textit{\Delta}xg1 21.\textit{\Delta}g5

This crazy position first arose in Stojanovski-Jovanic, Sarajevo 2006, but it gained popularity after the game 11 Carlsen-Vacher Lagrange, Cap d'Agde 2006. It went 21...\textit{\Delta}c6 22.\textit{\Delta}e4 f6 23.\textit{\Delta}xg1. In The Safest Sicilian I proposed the novelty 23...\textit{\Delta}d5!. It was tested in the
The Third Rank Set-Up

game Hamilton-Foulds, ICCF 2010. Apparently, Black is only slightly better after it. Perhaps he should try to play for a win by:

21...\texttt{c5} 22.\texttt{xg1}

22.\texttt{xg1} \texttt{xg1}+ 23.\texttt{xg1} \texttt{fc8} should be in Black’s favour because White’s knights have not access to the e6-square. Besides, Black can also play 22...\texttt{fe8} or 22...\texttt{h8} as shown below.

22...\texttt{ae8}!?

I borrowed this set-up from game 10 Vatter-Zakhartsov, Bad Wiessee 2011 (where the pawn is on b7). Its idea is to refrain from ...f6 as long as possible. Instead, Evans-Veen, ICCF 2007, went 22...f6 23.\texttt{g4} d5 24.\texttt{f3} \texttt{fe8} 25.\texttt{g2} \texttt{ad8} 26.a3 \texttt{d7} 27.\texttt{d4} \texttt{e5} 28.\texttt{e6} \texttt{e3} 29.\texttt{d1} \texttt{e1} 30.\texttt{f2} \texttt{e7} 31.\texttt{d4} \texttt{xe6}, draw.

After the text, Black has more chances to convert his material advantage. His plan is to give up a rook for a knight and play with a rook+2 pawns vs. 2 minor pieces in an open position, for example: 23.\texttt{h4} (23.\texttt{e4} \texttt{d5}) 23...\texttt{e5} 24.\texttt{f3} \texttt{xf5} 25.\texttt{g4} \texttt{h5}+. 

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Part 3. The Third Rank Set-Up

Kan – Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\(\text{\textit{x}}\)xd4 a6 5.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)3 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)7 6.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)3

White has defined his set-up and we should make our choice right now. The Taimanov is a tempting option against \(\text{\textit{d}}\)3 so we can answer:

a) 6...\(\text{\textit{c}}\)6. White’s only reasonable deviation is 7.\(\text{\textit{x}}\)xc6, when all three recaptures are possible.

7...\(\text{\textit{d}}\)xc6 8.0-0 e5 9.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)4 \(\text{\textit{f}}\)6 10.\(\text{\textit{g}}\)1 \(\text{\textit{d}}\)6 11.f5 is a bit cramped for my taste.

7...\(\text{\textit{x}}\)xc6 8.0-0 \(\text{\textit{x}}\)f6 9.\(\text{\textit{e}}\)2 \(\text{\textit{f}}\)7 is a popular set-up. White’s game is too straightforward and easy. Moreover, Black has practically lost a tempo on ...a6, compared to the pure Taimanov move order with 4...\(\text{\textit{c}}\)6 5.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)3 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)7 6.\(\text{\textit{x}}\)xc6. Thus my vote goes for the unexplored and flexible continuation:

7...\(\text{\textit{x}}\)xc6!? 8.0-0

b) 6...b5 is beyond the scope of our repertoire. I advocate to delay the fianchetto in favour of ...d6, ...\(\text{\textit{d}}\)7.

Grischuk tried in a blitz game 8...\(\text{\textit{e}}\)7!? 9.\(\text{\textit{e}}\)1 \(\text{\textit{g}}\)6 10.e5 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)7 11.\(\text{\textit{h}}\)5 b5 with mutual chances.

9.\(\text{\textit{e}}\)2 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)7!? (9...\(\text{\textit{b}}\)7 10.a4 \(\text{\textit{b}}\)4 11.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)5 \(\text{\textit{f}}\)6 12.\(\text{\textit{x}}\)xf6+ \(\text{\textit{g}}\)xf6 should be slightly better for White) After the text, \(\text{\textit{d}}\)5 is no longer a threat. Both opponents are on their own – I do not know of any practical example.

8...b5
The Third Rank Set-Up

A. 7.\text{\textbackslash e}2; B. 7.0-0; C. 7.f4

7.f4 b5! is considered in Part 4.

7.\text{\textbackslash e}3?! is totally innocuous here. Black leads out his bishop to b4 or c5 and obtains a good game:

7...\text{\textbackslash b}4 8.0-0 \text{\textbackslash x}c3 9.bxc3 d6! (9...d5? 10.exd5 \text{\textbackslash x}xd5 11.\text{\textbackslash d}2 0-0 12.\text{\textbackslash h}5 g6 13.\text{\textbackslash h}4+) 10.\text{\textbackslash f}3 e5 11.\text{\textbackslash f}5 \text{\textbackslash x}f5 12.\text{\textbackslash x}f5 \text{\textbackslash b}d7 13.\text{\textbackslash a}b1 d5;

7...\text{\textbackslash c}5 8.\text{\textbackslash w}e2 (8.0-0 d6 9.\text{\textbackslash w}e2 \text{\textbackslash b}d7) 8...d6 9.0-0-0 0-0.

7...b5 is also possible, but the play is very sharp after 8.f4 \text{\textbackslash b}7 (8...b4? stumbles into a very interesting new idea: 9.\text{\textbackslash d}4 \text{\textbackslash b}7 10.\text{\textbackslash w}f3 d6 11.0-0 \text{\textbackslash b}d7 12.a3! bxa3 13.\text{\textbackslash x}a3! e5 14.\text{\textbackslash x}e5 dxe5 15.\text{\textbackslash f}5 with a strong attack) 9.\text{\textbackslash w}f3 \text{\textbackslash c}6 10.0-0-0 b4 11.\text{\textbackslash c}e2 h5.

A.7.\text{\textbackslash w}e2 \text{\textbackslash d}6!

7...d6 offers White very sharp Scheveningen type options as 8.f4 or 8.g4. The text is familiar to the Taimanov players. It significantly narrows the opponent’s choice.

\textbf{8.\text{\textbackslash d}2}

a) Fortunately, 8.\text{\textbackslash d}b5? axb5 9.\text{\textbackslash d}xb5 is not winning. In fact, Black is better after 9...\text{\textbackslash w}a5+ 10.\text{\textbackslash d}2 \text{\textbackslash b}4 11.\text{\textbackslash x}b4 \text{\textbackslash x}b4+ 12.\text{\textbackslash c}3 \text{\textbackslash c}5 13.e5 \text{\textbackslash d}5 14.\text{\textbackslash d}6+ \text{\textbackslash f}8 15.\text{\textbackslash w}h5 (15.\text{\textbackslash f}3 f5 16.\text{\textbackslash x}f5 \text{\textbackslash f}6 17.0-0 \text{\textbackslash w}xe5) 15...g6

\begin{center}
\text{\textbackslash image}
\end{center}

Somewhere Black’s king escapes and White has not even a draw:

16.\text{\textbackslash w}h6+

Or 16.\text{\textbackslash x}g6 fxg6 17.\text{\textbackslash f}3+ \text{\textbackslash e}7 18.\text{\textbackslash f}7+ \text{\textbackslash d}8 19.\text{\textbackslash g}7 \text{\textbackslash e}8 20.\text{\textbackslash f}7 \text{\textbackslash c}6!! 21.\text{\textbackslash w}xe8+ \text{\textbackslash c}7 22.0-0 (22.\text{\textbackslash w}h8 \text{\textbackslash f}4 23.0-0 \text{\textbackslash x}e5 24.\text{\textbackslash e}4 \text{\textbackslash d}5 25.f3 b6+) 22...\text{\textbackslash w}xe5 23.\text{\textbackslash e}4 \text{\textbackslash w}c6+.

16...\text{\textbackslash g}8 17.h4 (Black’s minor pieces are very strong following 17.\text{\textbackslash e}4 \text{\textbackslash a}6 18.\text{\textbackslash g}5 \text{\textbackslash x}d6 19.exd6 b5, e.g. 20.\text{\textbackslash x}d5 \text{\textbackslash b}7 21.\text{\textbackslash d}8+ \text{\textbackslash g}7 22.\text{\textbackslash x}h8+ \text{\textbackslash x}h8 23.\text{\textbackslash x}b7 \text{\textbackslash w}e5+) 17...\text{\textbackslash c}6 18.h5 \text{\textbackslash x}e5 and White resigned in the blitz game Kasimdzhanov-Rublevsky, Moscow 2007.

Alternatively:

b) 8.\text{\textbackslash f}3 \text{\textbackslash d}6 9.0-0 0-0 10.h3 \text{\textbackslash e}5 11.\text{\textbackslash x}e5 \text{\textbackslash x}e5=.

c) 8.h3 \text{\textbackslash c}6 9.\text{\textbackslash x}c6 (9.\text{\textbackslash f}3 b6 10.0-0 \text{\textbackslash b}7 11.\text{\textbackslash d}2 \text{\textbackslash e}5) 9...\text{\textbackslash x}c6 10.0-0 0-0 11.f4 e5.
Part 3

8...\(\text{c6}\) 9.\(\text{f3}\) (9...\(\text{xc6}\) dxc6 10.g3 b5) 9...0-0 10.0-0

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{White} \\
\text{Black}
\end{array}
\]

10...b5 11.\(\text{ae1}\) \(\text{g4}\) 12.h3 \(\text{ge5}\) 13.\(\text{xe5}\) \(\text{xe5}\) 14.f4 \(\text{xd3}\) 15.cxd3 f5!

There is no reason to allow 15...b4 16.\(\text{a4}\). The text addresses Black’s main problem – the passive light-squared bishop. The play might continue 16.\(\text{c1}\) \(\text{b7}\) 17.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{d8}\).

B. 7.0-0 d6

The majority of players prefer:

a) 7...\(\text{c6}\), but then 8.\(\text{xc6}\) bxc6 or 8...dxc6 are too easy to play with White. There is nothing wrong with these lines, but I would like to put the opponent in a situation where he would have tougher decisions to make.

I would like to forewarn you about the popular line:

b) 7...\(\text{c5?!}\) 8.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{e7}\). Hellsten devotes a whole chapter on it in his book, but I believe that White’s attack is very strong after:

9.f4 d6 10.e5!? dxe5

10...\(\text{xd7}\) 11.\(\text{exd6}\) \(\text{xd6}\) 12.\(\text{e4}\) (Topalov beat Svidler with 12.\(\text{e3?!}\)) 12...\(\text{b6+}\) 13.\(\text{h1}\) \(\text{f6}\) 14.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{bd7}\) 15.\(\text{e3}\)†.

11.\(\text{fxe5}\) \(\text{f6}\)

11...\(\text{xe5}\) 12.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{h5}\) 13.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{g6}\) (13...\(\text{h4}\) was refuted in the game Kryvoruchko-Smirin, Plovdiv 2008, which went 14.g3 \(\text{h3}\) 15.\(\text{e4}\) e5 16.\(\text{d6+!}\) 14.h4 (Stohl suggests 14.\(\text{f3}\)) 14...h5 15.\(\text{g5}\) and Black is helpless against the threat of \(\text{d3}\), for example: 15...\(\text{g4}\) 16.\(\text{xe7}\) \(\text{xe7}\) 17.\(\text{d4+}\) or 15...\(\text{g8}\) 16.\(\text{d3}\) f5 17.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{c6}\) 18.\(\text{a4+}\), Paragua-Bilguun, Jakarta 2013.

12.\(\text{g4}\) g6

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{White} \\
\text{Black}
\end{array}
\]

13.\(\text{h6!}\) \(\text{xe5}\) 14.\(\text{g3}\) \(\text{bd7}\)

White also has full domination in the event of 14...\(\text{bc6}\) 15.\(\text{e4}\) \(\text{d8}\) 16.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{f6}\) 17.\(\text{xc6+}\) bxc6 18.\(\text{e4}\) 0-0 19.\(\text{h1}\), e.g. 19...\(\text{g7}\) 20.\(\text{xe5}\) fxe5 21.\(\text{xf8+}\) \(\text{xf8}\) 22.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{b8}\) 23.\(\text{f1}\) \(\text{e7}\) 24.\(\text{d2+\text{--}}\).

15.\(\text{ae1}\) \(\text{f8}\) 16.\(\text{xf8}\) \(\text{xf8}\) 17.\(\text{h1}\) \(\text{g7}\) 18.\(\text{e4}\) \(\text{f8}\) 19.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{d6}\) 20.\(\text{d4+-\text{--}}\), Zinchenko-Filip, Paleochora 2010.
Main branches now are:
B1. 8.a4, B2. 8.\textit{We}2, and B3. 8.f4 followed up by \textit{Wf}3 or \textit{Qf}3.

\textbf{B1. 8.a4 b6 9.f4}

9.\textit{Wf}3 \textit{Qbd}7 10.\textit{Ad}2 \textit{Ab}7 11.\textit{Wg}3 \textit{g}6 12.\textit{Efe}1 counts on the trap 12... \textit{g}7? 13.\textit{Wdb}5 \textit{Axb}5 14.\textit{Wxb}5 \textit{Wb}8 15.\textit{Wxd}6+ \textit{Efd}8 16.\textit{Ab}4 \textit{Ag}8 17.\textit{Ab}5\textit{g}6 18.\textit{Bb}5. Black can parry the threat with 12... \textit{\&}h5!. A more sophisticated version of the same idea is 11.\textit{Efe}1. Then after 11...\textit{g}6, White can put his queen on \textit{h}3, followed up by \textit{\&}h6. Kozul answered this move order with 11... \textit{\&}e5?! 12.\textit{Wh}3 (12.\textit{Wg}3 \textit{h}5!?) 12... \textit{h}5 (12...\textit{e}7?!=) and quickly seized the initiative after 13.\textit{Ab}3 (13.a5! \textit{\&}e7 14.\textit{Axb}6 \textit{Wxb}6 15.\textit{Ab}3 \textit{Af}4 16.\textit{Axe}3 \textit{Axe}3 17.\textit{Wxe}3 \textit{Wxe}3 18.\textit{Wxe}3 \textit{\&}xd3--) 13...\textit{\&e}7 14.f4 \textit{\&}eg4 15.\textit{Wg}2 \textit{\&}d5. You should remember to ignore a4-a5 since ...\textit{b}5?! provokes dangerous sacrifices.

9...\textit{Ab}7 10.\textit{Wf}3

a) 10.f5 \textit{e}5 11.\textit{Axb}3 demands precision from Black. He must anticipate the pawn storm with \textit{g}4-\textit{g}5 which would be possible after 11...\textit{\&e}7 12.\textit{\&e}3 \textit{\&bd}7 13.\textit{Wf}3 0-0 14.\textit{Ab}ad 1 [14.g4? \textit{d}5 15.\textit{Ax}d5 (15.\textit{ex}d5 \textit{h}6 16.\textit{h}4 \textit{e}4) 15...\textit{\&xd}5 16.\textit{ex}d5 \textit{Wf}6] 14...\textit{c}6?! 15.g4 \textit{h}6 16.h4 \textit{\&h}7 17.g5! \textit{hxg}5 18.\textit{hxg}5 \textit{\&xg}5 19.\textit{\&xg}5 \textit{\&xg}5 20.\textit{Wg}3 \textit{\&h}7 21.\textit{Wh}2. Since this is the only serious threat of White, it would be wise to neutralise it in advance by 14...\textit{h}6!.

Then 15.h4 will be met by 15...\textit{h}5 while 15.\textit{\&e}2 \textit{\&c}6 16.\textit{g}4 could be answered with 16...\textit{\&h}7 17.\textit{Wg}3 \textit{\&d}8. In a blitz game, Ivanchuk even denied \textit{g}2-\textit{g}4 altogether by playing \textit{h}7-\textit{h}5 himself, but this plan abandons short castling and involves more difficult decisions from Black in future.

b) 10.\textit{Wg}2 \textit{\&bd}7 11.\textit{Ab}d2 \textit{\&e}7 12.\textit{\&ae}1 is somewhat underestimated.

Now it is rather risky to castle under the fire of all White's pieces: 12...0-0 13.e5 \textit{dxe}5 [13...\textit{\&d}5?! 14.\textit{\&xd}5! (14.\textit{\&xe}6 \textit{fxe}6 15.\textit{\&h}5 \textit{g}6 16.\textit{\&x}g\textit{e}6 \textit{\&f}7 17.exf6 \textit{\&xf}6 18.\textit{\&h}6 \textit{hx}g\textit{e}6 19.\textit{\&x}g\textit{e}6+ \textit{\&h}8 is roughly equal: 20.\textit{\&e}4 \textit{\&xe}4 21.\textit{\&xe}4 \textit{\&xe}4=, or 20.\textit{\&xe}6 \textit{\&g}8 21.\textit{\&h}6+ \textit{\&h}7 22.\textit{\&f}2 (\textit{\&f}8\textit{\&}) 14...\textit{\&xd}5 15.\textit{c}4 \textit{\&b}7 16.f5!] 14.\textit{\&xe}5 \textit{\&c}5 15.\textit{\&f}4 \textit{g}6 16.\textit{\&h}4 \textit{\&h}5 17.\textit{\&h}1 \textit{\&g}7 18.\textit{\&h}6 \textit{\&e}7 19.\textit{\&h}3. Black can unload the tension with 19...\textit{\&xe}5 20.\textit{\&xe}5 \textit{\&xe}5 21.\textit{\&xe}5 \textit{\&f}6 22.\textit{\&f}4 \textit{\&xe}5 23.\textit{\&xe}5 \textit{\&f}6 24.\textit{\&c}7 \textit{b}5 25.\textit{\&b}3?, but the two minor pieces might soon take control of the board.

I suppose that it would be safer to kill the d3-bishop:
Part 3

12...d5 13.b4 dxe3 14.cxd3 0-0 15.\#e1 \#d7. I discuss this pawn structure in the annotations to game 16 Cubas-Hellsten. The difference is that White's queen is on e2 here. This is perhaps in White's favour as his queen is not under the X-ray of the b7-bishop, and the d4-knight has a retreat square on f3. In result, Black lacks the counterplay with ...\#e7-f6xd4, followed up by ...f7-f5. However, White also has not a clear plan. For instance, 16.g4 \#e8 (threatening with 17...d5) 17.\#b1 \#f6. If White opts for a waiting game with 16.\#h1 \#fc8 17.\#e3, we can adopt the same set-up I recommend against 10.\#f3: 17...\#e8 (planning ...\#d7, ...\#f6) 18.f5 e5 19.\#f3 b5 20.axb5 axb5 21.\#fd1 \#f6=.

10...\#bd7 11.\#d2

a) 11.\#e3 has no advantages over 11.\#d2. The bishop only hampers the break e4-e5 and it does not defend the c3-knight in the event of b2-b4. Black should follow the same plan as in the main line:

11...\#e7 12.\#ae1 0-0 13.\#h3 (13.\#g4 \#c5 14.g5 \#fd7) 13...\#c5 14.\#f2 (14.e5? fails to 14...dxe5 15.\#xe5 \#xe5) 14...\#e8 15.\#h1. The play is balanced. Black has several ways of manoeuvring further.

One straightforward plan is to swap the d3-bishop. For instance: 15.\#d7 16.\#b3 \#xd3 17.cxd3 e5= 18.\#xb6 \#xb6 19.\#xh3 \#c8 20.f5 \#b8 21.a5 \#d8.

b) 11.\#h1 is a bit slow. Black can follow the main plan with 11...\#e7 12.d2 0-0 13.\#h3 \#c5 14.b4 \#d3 (14...\#xe4 15.\#xe6 is slightly better for White) 15.cxd3 \#fc8.

11...g6!? is also possible. Queens-Arencibia, Santa Clara 2007, continued 12.\#d2 \#g7 13.\#ae1 0-0 14.\#h3 \#ae8 15.\#f3 \#c5 with mutual chances.

11...\#e7

Black has another, much sharper set-up which was tested only in the game Antal-Wallner, Austria 2003:

11...g6!? 12.\#h3 \#g7 13.a5

Black's main idea is seen in the variations 13.f5 gxf5! 14.exf5 e5 followed up by long castling, or 13.\#f3 0-0 14.f5 gxf5!? 15.exf5 e5 16.\#g3 \#h8 where the open g-file might be in Black's favour. The text conceals a trap – 13...b5? 14.\#xb5! so we castle:

13...0-0, and if 14.axb5 \#xb5! 15.\#e3 \#g4=. Critical is:

14.f5 gxf5 (14...exf5 15.exf5 \#e5) 15.exf5 e5 17.\#b3 b5
The Third Rank Set-Up

17.g4 b4 18.d1 e4 19.e2 d5
20.g5 e5! (20...h8 21.f6 dxf6 22.gxf6 xf6 23.xf6 g8+ 24.f2 dxf6 25.e3±). Black has an initiative, e.g. 21.c4 bxc3 22.xc3 e3.

12.ael 0-0

12...c5 13.b4xd3 is also playable, but the text is more ambitious. Black waits for White to play 13.h3 before putting 13...c5. I explain the subtleties of this position in the annotations to game 16 Cubas-Hellsten, Buenos Aires 2006.

B2. 8.e2 bd7

8...b5?! is a mistake before White has committed himself with f4. After 9.a4! b4 10.a2, followed up by c2-c3, White opens up the queenside to his favour.

9.h1?!

9.f4 b6!? is a tough nut to crack. The complications after 10.e3 xb2 11.db5 axb5 12.xb5 a5 13.fb1 xb5 14.xb2 xb2∞ might lead to a drawish position following 15.d2 c5 16.d4 b6 17.a5 fd7 18.xc5 dxc5 19.b5 xb5 20.xb5 d6 21.e5 c7 22.h4. It is true that Black cannot disentangle his minor pieces, but on the other hand, White also is unable to break the fortress.

The other alternative to the main line with ...e7 is the set-up with 9...b5?! 10.d2 b7 11.h1 (11.ael e7 12.h1! b4!) 11.e7

White gets an edge with 12.b4! 0-0 13.a4 bxa4 14.xa4 b6 15.ea1, when 15.d5 16.e5 e4 17.xe4 dxe4 18.xe4 xe4 19.xe4 wc4 20.c3 retains a healthy extra pawn.

The delay of f2-f4 aims to discourage both ...b5 and ...b6. 9.d2 achieves the same effect, for instance: 9...b5?! 10.b4 b7 11.a4. However, the set-up with 9...g6 is quite possible since the bishop would be passive on d2.

9.e7

9...e7

9...b5 (9...e7 10.d2 transposes to the main line) 10.a4 b4 11.a2 b7 12.d2 a5 13.c3 bxc3 14.xc3 c5 15.b5±.
9...g6 10.f4 \(\text{g7}\) 11.f5 \(\text{c6}\) 12.\(\text{d3}\) is slightly better for White who has a clear plan on the dark squares, for example, 12...\(\text{c6}\) 13.\(\text{d7}\) 14.\(\text{h4}^\uparrow\) or 12...\(\text{h5}\) 13.\(\text{f2}\) \(\text{xf3}\) 14.\(\text{xf3}\) \(\text{xe5}\) 15.\(\text{h6}^\uparrow\).

10.\(\text{d2}\)!? 0-0

10...\(\text{c5}\) 11.f4 b5? loses to 12.e5. See game 17 Delchev-Castellanos Rodriguez, Leon 2012.

11.f4 \(\text{c5}\) 12.\(\text{e1}\)

Or 12.e5 \(\text{fd7}\) 13.\(\text{ae1}\) \(\text{xd3}\) 14.cxd3 dxe5 15.fxe5 \(\text{h4}^\uparrow\)

Black is at a crossroads. Perhaps his strongest move is:

12...b5 which, however, accepts a draw in the variation 13.e5 \(\text{fd7}\) 14.\(\text{xh7}^+\) (14.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{xd3}\) 15.cxd3 dxe5! 16.fxe5 \(\text{h4}^\uparrow\)) 14...\(\text{h7}^+\) 15.\(\text{h5}^+\) \(\text{g8}\) 16.\(\text{f3}\) dxe5 17.\(\text{f3}\) f5 18.\(\text{h7}^+\).

Instead, 13.b4 \(\text{xd3}\) 14.cxd3 \(\text{b7}\) 15.\(\text{c1}\) \(\text{d7}\) is fine for Black. See game 19 Moen-Topalov, ECC Rhodes 2013, about this structure.

b) 12...\(\text{xd3}\) is passive, but at least Black will be playing for all three results.

13.cxd3 b5

The life-long Kan player, GM Velikov, chose 13...\(\text{d8}\) 14.g4 \(\text{h6}\), but this is really too provocative. White has a serious initiative after 15.g5 hxg5 16.fxe5 \(\text{d7}\) (16...\(\text{h7}\)) 17.h4.

14.g4

Alternatives are:

14.e5 dxe5 15.fxe5 \(\text{d7}\) 16.\(\text{c1}\) \(\text{b6}\) 17.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{b7}\) 18.\(\text{f5}\) \(\text{d8}^=\); 14.\(\text{f2}\) b4 15.\(\text{ce2}\) a5 16.\(\text{c1}\) (16. \(\text{g1}\) e5 17.\(\text{f5}\) \(\text{xf5}\) 18.\(\text{xf5}\) \(\text{c2}^+=\)) 16...\(\text{d7}\) 17.\(\text{c6}\) \(\text{b7}\) 18.\(\text{xe7}^+\) \(\text{xe7}^=\); 14.\(\text{c1}\) \(\text{d7}\) 15.a3 \(\text{b7}\).

14...b4 15.\(\text{d1}\) d5 16.e5 \(\text{d7}\)
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The continuation of White's attack is not trivial. Our defence is based on the potential power of the b7-bishop: 17.f5 \( \text{b7} \) 18.\( \text{f3} \) (18.g5 exf5 19.\( \text{xf5} \) d4+ 20.\( \text{g1 c5} \) 18... \( \text{h4} \) 19.\( \text{f2} \) \( \text{b6} \) 20.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{e7} \).

The same defensive set-up could be employed against 14.a3 \( \text{b7} \) 15.g4 (15.b4 \( \text{fc8} \) 16.g4? d5 17.e5 \( \text{b6}!) \) 15...d5 16.e5 \( \text{d7} \) 17.b4 (17.\( \text{c1 ac8} \) 17...\( \text{b6} \) 18.\( \text{e3} \) f6\+)

Note that Black's counterplay is often based on ...\( \text{b6} \) when White cannot find a decent way to protect his knight on d4. Shift the queen to f3, and the same structure would be better for White due to the possibility of b4, \( \text{c3-e2} \). Black would risk to remain without any plan.

B3. 8.f4

This move is not too flexible as White commits himself on the kingside. That rules out plans on the other wing so Black can safely answer with 8...b5. We saw in line B2 that the early fianchetto was dubious due to a4, but after f4 this break is no longer effective. However, I recommend to follow the same move order as in line B2 for consistency sake.

8...\( \text{bd7} \) 9.\( \text{h1} \)

The most popular follow up although White should not worry about ...\( \text{b6} \). Thus he could play:

a) 9.\( \text{f3} \), when 9...\( \text{b6} \) 10.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{xb2} \) is dubious: 11.\( \text{cb5} \) axb5 12.\( \text{xb5} \) \( \text{b4} \) (12...\( \text{a5} \) 13.\( \text{ab1} \) \( \text{xb5} \) 14.\( \text{xb5} \) \( \text{c3} \) 15.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{c7} \) 16.\( \text{d4} \)\+) 13.\( \text{c7+} \) \( \text{d8} \) 14.\( \text{xa8} \) \( \text{a5} \) 15.\( \text{ad1} \) \( \text{xa8} \) 16.e5 \( \text{d5} \) 17.\( \text{d4} \)\+. Instead, Black follows his main plan:

9...\( \text{e7} \) 10.\( \text{e3} \) (...\( \text{b6} \) was already an option: 10.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{b6} \) 11.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{xb2} \) 12.\( \text{de2} \) \( \text{a3} \) 13.\( \text{xg7} \) \( \text{g8} \) 14.\( \text{h6} \) b5\+; 10.g4 \( \text{b6} \) 11.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{xb2} \) 12.\( \text{ce2} \) \( \text{c5} \)\)

10...b5!

Do not castle under attack in this set-up! The queen on f3 and the bishop on e3 do not generate any threats in the centre, but they are well set for 10...0-0?! 11.g4. Therefore, we should complete development and safeguard the kingside before moving our king there.

11.a3

11.g4? is neutralised by 11...h6. The same defence works well in the event of 11.\( \text{ae1} \) \( \text{b7} \) 12.g4? (or 12.f5 e5 13.\( \text{b3} \) h5) 12...h6.

More interesting is 12.\( \text{h1} \), when 12...g6 13.a3 \( \text{c5} \) transposes to 11.a3.

Another very interesting plan is to push ...h5-h4, for instance:

\text{Diagram}
12...h5!? 13.\textit{g}1 h4 14.\textit{h}3 \textit{h}5

It is unclear how White could display activity here while Black has plenty of useful moves as ...\textit{c}8/\textit{d}8, ...\textit{f}8, ...\textit{g}6 or ...\textit{h}6. See game 18 Kerekes-A.Kovacs, Hungary 2007.

11...\textit{b}7 12.\textit{ae}1 \textit{g}6

Simple and good. Now f5 is impossible, 13.g4 is still bad due to 13...\textit{h}6, so White has nothing better than wait.

13.\textit{h}1

13...\textit{c}5

The combination of ...\textit{g}6 + ...\textit{h}5 is not perfect, but it is playable: 13...\textit{h}5 14.\textit{g}1 h4 15.h3 \textit{h}5 16.\textit{de}2, Saltaev-Ilinicic, Elista 1998. At this point 16...\textit{c}8 (instead of 17...e5? 18.\textit{d}d5\pm) 17.\textit{d}4 0-0 would have been unclear.

14.\textit{g}1 0-0

Black’s king is absolutely safe and nothing can stop the break ...e5, e.g. 15.\textit{g}3 e5; 15.\textit{h}3 e5. Suess-Spassky, Dortmund 1973 went:

15.\textit{e}2 e5 16.\textit{b}3 (16.fxe5 dxe5 17.\textit{b}3 \textit{e}6) 16...\textit{xb}3 (16...exf4?! 17.\textit{xf}4 \textit{ae}8) 17.cxb3 exf4 18.\textit{xf}4 \textit{d}7=.

b) 9.\textit{f}3 has been out of fashion for quite a while. It was designed to provoke ...e5?! and use the opened f-file to sac the exchange on f6, e.g. 9...\textit{e}7 10.\textit{e}1 e5?! 11.\textit{h}1 0-0 12.fxe5 \textit{xe}5 13.\textit{xe}5 dxe5 14.\textit{g}5 \textit{e}6 15.\textit{h}4 \textit{fe}8 16.\textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 17.\textit{xf}6 gxf6 18.\textit{f}1. Although 18...\textit{d}8! would tame the first attacking wave, White keeps an initiative. I think that Black has various promising plans provided he refrains from ...e5. I would also avoid an early ...\textit{c}5 since Black’s position after b4 \textit{xd}3 is solid, but passive. The most straightforward retort to White’s scheme is:

9...b5! 10.\textit{h}1 (10.\textit{e}1 \textit{b}7 11.d2 \textit{e}7) 10...\textit{b}7 11.\textit{e}1

11...\textit{b}4 12.\textit{d}1 \textit{d}5 or 12...\textit{c}5 13.\textit{f}2 \textit{d}5 14.e5 \textit{fe}4 15.\textit{e}3 \textit{e}7
The Third Rank Set-Up

16.\text{\textit{d}4} 0-0 17.\text{\textit{\textit{e}3}}, Arnason-Pliester, New York 1989, 17...\textit{\textit{\textit{e}ac8}}=.

Black can also keep the centre fluid by 11...\textit{\textit{\textit{e}7}} 12.\text{\textit{\textit{d}2}}

12.e5 dxe5 13.fxe5 \textit{\textit{g}4} is good for Black: 14.\text{\textit{g}3} \text{\textit{h}5} 15.\text{\textit{h}3} \textit{\textit{g}xe5} 16.\text{\textit{\textit{e}4}} (16.\textit{\textit{\textit{x}g}7} 0-0-0) 16...\textit{\textit{h}4} 17.\text{\textit{\textit{x}g}7} 0-0-0 or 14.\textit{\textit{e}e} 4 \textit{\textit{g}xe5} 15.\text{\textit{\textit{g}3}} \text{f}5 16.\text{\textit{\textit{x}g}7} 0-0-0 17.\text{\textit{\textit{x}e}7} \textit{\textit{fxe}4} 18.\textit{f}xe5 \textit{\textit{exd}3}=.

12...0-0 (12...\textit{\textit{c}c}5 13.b4 \textit{\textit{x}d}3 14.\textit{\textit{x}d}3 0-0 15.\textit{\textit{c}c}1 \textit{\textit{d}7} 16.a3 \textit{\textit{f}c8}=) 13.b4 (13.\textit{\textit{d}d}1 \textit{\textit{c}5} 14.\textit{\textit{f}f}2 \textit{\textit{a}c}8; 13.e5 dxe5 14.fxe5 \textit{\textit{g}4} 15.\text{\textit{\textit{g}3}} \text{f}5) 13...\textit{\textit{b}6} followed up by ...\textit{\textit{c}c}4.

9...\textit{\textit{e}7} 10.\text{\textit{\textit{f}3}}

10.\textit{\textit{f}e}2 0-0 11.\textit{\textit{d}d}2 \textit{\textit{c}c}5 is considered in line B2.

10...\textit{\textit{b}5} 11.\textit{\textit{d}d}2 \textit{\textit{b}7} 12.\text{\textit{\textit{e}a}1}

Black has counterplay after 12.b4 0-0 13.a4 bxa4 14.\textit{\textit{\textit{a}a}4} \textit{\textit{f}c8} 15.\textit{\textit{a}a}1 \textit{\textit{b}6} 16.\text{\textit{\textit{h}3}} \textit{\textit{c}c}4.

If White retreats his knight to b3 now, or on the next move, we follow the main scheme with ...0-0, ...\textit{\textit{e}8}.

12...0-0

13.\text{\textit{\textit{h}3}}

In Thipsay-Lomineishvili, Kishinev 1995, White chose 13.b4 \textit{\textit{f}e}8 14.\text{\textit{\textit{h}3}}, when the thematic 14...\textit{\textit{e}5} 15.\textit{\textit{f}f}5 \textit{\textit{f}8} solved the opening problems.

After the text, 13...\textit{\textit{c}c}5 14.b4 \textit{\textit{d}x}3 15.\textit{\textit{c}x}d3 \textit{\textit{f}c}8 is a solid, but passive approach. A more straightforward attempt is 13...b4 14.\textit{\textit{a}a}4 (14.\textit{\textit{d}d}1 \textit{\textit{c}c}5) 14...\textit{d}5 15.e5 \textit{\textit{e}4}, but White retains some pull with 16.c4 \textit{\textit{g}6} 17.\textit{\textit{\textit{x}e}4} \textit{\textit{dxe}4} 18.b3.

I like the flexible 13...\textit{\textit{f}e}8!?. It prepares...e5 so Whites should anticipate it with 14.e5 dxe5 15.fxe5 \textit{\textit{\textit{e}e}5} 16.\textit{\textit{f}f}4 \textit{\textit{d}d}6 17.\textit{\textit{d}x}b5 axb5 18.\textit{\textit{b}x}b5 \textit{\textit{d}x}d3 19.\textit{\textit{x}c}7 \textit{\textit{f}x}4 20.\textit{\textit{x}e}8 \textit{\textit{x}h}3 21.\textit{\textit{d}x}d6 \textit{\textit{c}c}6 22.\textit{\textit{e}e}3 \textit{\textit{g}5} 23.\textit{\textit{c}c}3 \textit{\textit{a}a}6 24.b4 \textit{\textit{d}d}7. The long forced sequence is over. In such sharp unbalanced positions, it is easier to play with the two minor pieces.

C. 7.f4 \textit{\textit{b}5}

7...d6 might turn into a loss of tempo if Black later plays ...b4 followed up by ...d6-d5. It also rules
out the active development ...\text{c}5.
The only drawback of 7...b5 is that it allows e4-e5, but we'll see that the arising positions are entirely acceptable.

\textbf{8.e5}

Alternatives may lead to the Taimanov:

a) 8.\text{f}3 \text{b}7 9.\text{e}3 \text{c}6 transposes to the Taimanov with f4 – see Part 4.

Only 9.g4 is of independent significance. The game may continue 9...\text{c}6! (9...b4 10.\text{c}e2 \text{d}5 11.e5 \text{e}4 12.f5! is rather unclear: 12...\text{f}5 13.e6 \text{d}6) 10.\text{e}3 (10.\text{xc}6 \text{xc}6 11.e5 \text{b}4 12.d2 \text{xc}3 13.\text{xc}3 \text{xe}4 14.\text{g}7 \text{g}8 15.d4 \text{xc}5) 10...h5 which is again a Taimanov side line.

b) for 8.\text{e}2 \text{b}7, see Part 4, game 26 An.Martin-Delchev, Benasque 2013.

\textbf{8...b4 9.\text{a}4!}\?

a) 9.\text{c}e2 \text{d}5 10.\text{e}4 \text{b}7 is not popular.

At first White tried 11.\text{d}3, but maybe Iordachescu's suggestion 11...\text{d}6 (11...\text{e}7!? 12.0-0 \text{c}6=) 12.\text{ex}6 \text{d}xe6 13.f5 \text{d}7 14.\text{xe}1 \text{a}6 15.\text{f}3 0-0! scared him. Indeed, Black has serious initiative. Lately, White tested:

11.0-0 which is aimed against 11...d6, e.g. 12.\text{ex}d6 \text{a}6 13.f5 e5 14.\text{b}3= Indeed, Black may experiment with 11...a5 12.\text{h}1 \text{a}6 13.\text{g}3 \text{c}5 14.\text{f}3 \text{g}6 15.a3 h5, intending to meet 16.f5 by 16...\text{h}4 17.\text{fx}g6 h\text{x}g6 (17...\text{fx}g6 18.\text{ge}2\infty) 18.\text{g}7+ \text{d}8 19.\text{e}1 \text{x}h2+ 20.\text{g}1 \text{h}8 21.\text{x}g6. However, it is more natural to complete development with:

11...\text{c}5 12.\text{h}1 0-0 13.\text{d}3 \text{f}5 14.\text{f}3 with mutual chances.

In the game Edouard-Iturriza-ga, Benasque 2009, Black even intercepted the initiative after 14...\text{g}6 15.a3 \text{c}8 16.d2 \text{bxa}3 17.\text{bxa}3 \text{b}6 18.\text{xb}7 \text{xb}7, but 14...a5 15.\text{b}1 \text{a}6 also deserves attention.

b) 9.\text{cb}5 \text{axb}5 10.\text{fx}b5 \text{g}6 11.\text{xb}5 (11.\text{e}2 \text{c}5) 11...\text{b}6 12.\text{f}3 \text{b}7!? (12...\text{a}5 13.\text{e}3 \text{c}5=) 13.\text{e}3 \text{xb}5.

c) 9.\text{e}4 \text{xe}4 10.\text{xe}4 \text{a}7 11.\text{f}3 \text{xe}4 12.\text{xe}4 \text{c}6 13.\text{xc}6

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This position is equal:

13...\texttt{b}7 (hoping to keep an asymmetric pawn structure with \texttt{...c}8)
14.\texttt{e}3 (14.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{dxc}6 15.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{e}7 16.0-0=; 14.c4 \texttt{bxc}3 15.\texttt{xc}3 \texttt{c}5 16.\texttt{b}1 \texttt{xc}6 17.\texttt{xc}6 \texttt{dxc}6 18.\texttt{e}2 0-0-0=) \texttt{c}8 15.0-0-0 \texttt{xc}6 16.\texttt{xc}6 \texttt{dxc}6 17.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{e}7 18.\texttt{hd}1 \texttt{c}7 19.\texttt{d}4 \texttt{f}6 with typical counterplay;

13...\texttt{xc}6 14.\texttt{xc}6 \texttt{dxc}6 15.\texttt{e}2 0-0-0=;

13...\texttt{xc}6 14.\texttt{xc}6 \texttt{dxc}6 15.\texttt{e}2 16.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{e}7 15.0-0-0 0-0 16.\texttt{xc}6 \texttt{c}5 17.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{c}6 18.\texttt{hd}1 \texttt{e}8=. Black has counterplay on the queenside.

9...\texttt{d}5 10.\texttt{e}4 \texttt{b}7 11.0-0

11...\texttt{c}3!

In practice, Black has been struggling so far. He has tried 11...\texttt{e}7? 12.\texttt{f}5± and:

11...g6

This is Houdini's first line at depth 23. Rublevsky also put his fate in it against Bologan. In my opinion, such a development is too slow. I tried to refute it by opening the queenside with 12.\texttt{c}4, but Black holds on after 12...\texttt{xc}4 13.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{c}7 14.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{c}6 15.\texttt{b}2 \texttt{c}8 16.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{dxc}4 17.\texttt{xd}4 \texttt{xd}5 18.\texttt{f}2 \texttt{c}6 19.\texttt{b}6 \texttt{c}7 20.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{b}7=. The most unpleasant retort is probably:

12.\texttt{f}2! (preparing to occupy the c-file by \texttt{c}4, \texttt{c}2) 12...\texttt{e}7 13.\texttt{xd}5 \texttt{dxc}4 14.\texttt{c}4 \texttt{bxc}3 15.\texttt{xc}3 \texttt{b}7 16.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{c}6 17.\texttt{c}1 \texttt{d}4 18.\texttt{xd}4. White has lasting pressure on the queenside, for example: 18...\texttt{c}6 19.\texttt{a}4 0-0 20.\texttt{b}6 \texttt{eb}8 21.\texttt{fc}2 \texttt{d}8 22.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{b}7 23.\texttt{b}3.

It is better to trade quickly White's active pieces:

12.\texttt{xc}3

Or 12.\texttt{bxc}3 \texttt{xe}4 13.\texttt{xb}4 \texttt{c}6 14.c3 \texttt{xd}4 15.\texttt{xd}4 \texttt{g}2 16.\texttt{g}2 \texttt{c}6+ 17.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{xa}4∞.

12...\texttt{bxc}3 13.\texttt{f}3

13.\texttt{xb}7 \texttt{xb}2 14.\texttt{xb}2 (14.\texttt{b}1 \texttt{bxc}1 15.\texttt{xc}1 \texttt{a}7 16.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{c}5 17.\texttt{d}1 0-0=) 14...\texttt{xb}7 15.\texttt{b}1 \texttt{c}6 16.\texttt{h}1 (16.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{e}7 17.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{c}7 18.\texttt{xc}6 \texttt{xc}6 19.\texttt{d}4 0-0=) 16...\texttt{e}7 17.\texttt{f}5 (17.\texttt{a}3 \texttt{c}7) looks dangerous, but Black has sufficient defence:
Part 3

17...\text{\#}xd4 18.\text{\#}xd4 \text{\#}e4 19.\text{\#}d3
(19.f6 gxf6 20.exf6 \text{\#}g8 21.\text{\#}d2
\text{\#}d8=0) 19...\text{\#}xd3 20.cxd3 with
equal endgame:

20...h5 21.g3 \text{\#}c8 22.\text{\#}b6 0-0
23.\text{\#}xa6 \text{\#}a8 24.\text{\#}xa8 \text{\#}xa8=
25.fxe6 dxe6 26.\text{\#}a1 \text{\#}a3 27.\text{\#}b2?
\text{\#}xd3 28.a4 \text{\#}b4;

20...exf5 21.\text{\#}xf5 0-0 22.\text{\#}b7
\text{\#}fd8 23.\text{\#}f1 \text{\#}f8=.

Black has no problems here:
19.\text{\#}e3 \text{\#}d5 20.c4 (20.\text{\#}fb1 \text{\#}c5=)
20...\text{\#}d3 21.\text{\#}f2 \text{\#}e7 22.\text{\#}fb1 \text{\#}hd8
23.\text{\#}b3 \text{\#}xb3 24.axb3 \text{\#}d3=.

13...\text{\#}xe4 14.\text{\#}xe4 cxb2
15.\text{\#}xb2 \text{\#}c6 16.\text{\#}xc6 \text{\#}xc6
17.\text{\#}xc6 dxc6 18.\text{\#}d4 0-0-0
Part 3. The Third Rank Set-Up

Complete Games

10. Vatter-Zakhartsov
Bad Wiessee, 04.11.2011

1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4 d6 5.c3 c7 6.e3 a6
7.d3 f6 8.0-0 e5 9.h3 c5 10.h1 d6 11.f4 g6 12.e1 d7

25...e8

It is logical to open the g-file for the rooks instead of playing 25...g6, but why not take on f6 with the same goal. The endgame after 25...gxf6!? 26.xf6 w2+ is difficult for White since his knights have not any stable outposts. In this line the pawn is probably better on b7 than on b5 – Black has no weaknesses.

26.f3?

26...g5 was the only move. Then 26...e5 27.fxg7+ xg7 28.d8+ g8 29.f6+ is a draw so Black should play 26...xg5 27.xg5 xg6 28.xf7+ g7 29.xd6 e1. Without the d-pawn, Black can hardly
win this endgame though.

26...\textit{e}6 27.fxg7+ \textit{x}g7 28.\textit{a}e2

This position is won for Black. Strongest is 28...\textit{w}xa2, but Zakhartsov's decision to leave the queen in the centre is more practical.

28...\textit{w}e5 29.\textit{f}f4 \textit{w}xb2 30.\textit{h}h2 \textit{w}xa2 31.\textit{c}xd6 \textit{d}d5 32.\textit{b}xf7+? \textit{x}xf7 0-1

11. Carlsen-Vachier Lagrave Cap d'Agde 2006

1.e4 c5 2.\textit{f}f3 e6 3.\textit{d}c3 \textit{c}c6 4.d4 cxd4 5.\textit{d}xd4 \textit{w}c7 6.\textit{c}e3 a6 7.\textit{d}d3 \textit{f}f6 8.0-0 \textit{c}e5 9.h3 \textit{c}c5 10.\textit{h}h1 d6 11.f4 \textit{g}g6 12.\textit{e}e1 0-0 13.f5 \textit{e}e5 14.\textit{h}h4 b5 15.\textit{f}f3 exf5 16.exf5 \textit{x}f3 17.gxf3 \textit{b}b7 18.\textit{g}g1 \textit{xf}xf3+ 19.\textit{xf}xf3 \textit{x}xe3 20.\textit{x}xf6 \textit{x}xg1 21.\textit{w}g5

This was one of the first games that reached this crazy position. I mention it since it gives an excellent idea of White's possibilities. Later Black found improvements, as 21...

\textit{c}5, but Carlsen's play is nonetheless impressive.

21...\textit{w}c6 22.\textit{a}e4

22.\textit{a}e4 \textit{w}c5 23.\textit{a}a8 fails to 23...

22...f6 23.\textit{w}xg1 \textit{a}e8?

In \textit{The Safest Sicilian}, I proposed to centralise the queen with 23...\textit{w}d5! White should defend the f5-pawn with 24.\textit{d}d4 \textit{f}f7 25.\textit{e}e6 \textit{a}e8 26.\textit{g}g2 \textit{h}h8 and Black is somewhat better. The modern understanding is that Black should not weaken the e6-square.

24.\textit{w}d4 d5 25.\textit{c}c5 \textit{e}7 26.\textit{g}g2 g6 27.\textit{e}e6 \textit{x}xe6 28.fx\textit{e}6 \textit{w}xe6 29.a4!

Black's queenside pawns are weak, his queen is passive. Still, nothing terrible has happened yet.

29...\textit{b}xa4 30.\textit{w}xa4 \textit{b}b8 31.b3 \textit{b}6 32.\textit{w}a5 \textit{g}g7 33.\textit{d}d4 \textit{d}d6 34.c3 h5?

This natural move turns out to be dubious. 34...\textit{f}f7 35.b4 f5 was a better set-up. White stands im-
pressively, but everything in Black’s camp is protected.

35.h4 \( \text{gh} 6 \) 36.b4 \( \text{gb} 8 ? \)

Humans hate to stay passively and too often lose because they strive to force events instead of miserably repeating aimless moves. Now 36...\( g7 \) was holding the position, but Vachier-Lagrave had a counter-attack in mind.

37.\( a6 \) \( f4 ? \) 38.\( f5 ! \)

A beautiful mating combination out of the blue. Black resigned.

12. Zaragatski-Delchev
Bad Wiessee 2005

1.e4 c5 2.\( f3 \) e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.\( xd4 \) c6 5.\( c3 \) \( w7 \) 6.\( e3 \) a6
7.\( d3 \) f6 8.0-0 \( xd4 \) 9.\( xd4 \)
\( x5 \) 10.\( xc5 \) \( wc5 \) 11.\( a4 \) \( wc7 \)
12.c4 d6 13.\( c1 \) 0-0 14.c5 \( d7 \)
15.cxd6 \( xd6 \) 16.\( c5 \) \( c6 \)
17.\( w2 \) \( ac8 \)

\( w4 \) 20.\( f2 \) \( xf2 \) 21.\( xf2= \), J. Moreno-Tregubov, France 2000. This endgame might be White’s best option though. Zaragatski relies on the symmetric structure and avoids taking any committing decisions, but this is always a dubious approach.

18.\( fd1 \) \( e5 \) 19.f3 \( fd8 \)
20.\( f2 \) h5!

In such pawn structures, Black has two major plans. One is to push g5. This is a good defensive set-up. I chose to gain space on the kingside by \( ...h5-h4 \). White should have prevented it by playing h4 himself.

21.\( f1 \) \( wg5 \) 22.b4?! h4 23.\( \text{d8} \)
\( \text{d8} \) 24.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{h5} \)

It is amazing how quickly one can get into trouble in a seemingly simple and safe position. White would not have had problems without rooks, but he cannot exchange them.

25.\( c5 \) e5 26.\( d4 \) \( f4 \) 27.\( h1 \)
\( x4 \) 28.\( f5 \) \( d1 \) 29.g3 \( d3 \)
30.\( e8+ \) \( h7 \) 31.\( e2 \) \( c1 \) 32.\( f2 \)
\( b5 \) 33.\( e3 \) \( d3 \) 34.\( g1 \) \( e1 \)
35.a4 7xa4 36.f4 exf4 37.7g2 7a1 38.gxf4 7xf4 39.7c5 7g4 40.7xf4 7f3+ 0-1

13. Varga-Almasi
Budapest 2004

1.e4 c5 2.7f3 7c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.7xd4 7c7 5.7c3 e6 6.7e3 7f6 7.7d3 a6 8.0-0 7e5 9.h3 7c5 10.7a4 7a7 11.c4 d6 12.7c1 7d7 13.7c3 0-0 14.b3 7a5 15.7e2 7fe8=

16.7f3 7xe3 17.7xe3 7xf3+ 18.7xf3 b5?

A good idea at a wrong time. Black is still slightly unco-ordinated, so 18...7ad8!? would have been better.

19.cxb5?

White misses his tactical chance 19.e5! dxe5 20.7e4 with a very annoying initiative. The c-pawn suddenly becomes dreadful. Neither 20...7d8 21.c5+, nor 20...7e4 21.7e4 g6 22.7e5 7a2 23.7e4 7ac8 24.7xb7 7b8 25.7c7 bxc4 26.bxc4= suits Black.

19...axb5 20.7c2 b4 21.7e2 7b6! 22.7d1?! (The rook is better on the open file: 22.7fc1+) 22...7a5! 23.7c2 7c6 24.7b1 7f5! 25.7g3 7e4 26.7d6 7a5 27.7e3 7xb1 28.7xb1 7d5 29.7d4 7xa2 30.7e1 h6

Black could have taken another pawn: 30...7xb3! since 31.7g3 7g5 32.7e4 7xg2! 33.7xg2 7f4+ 34.7g1 7f3 35.7f6 gxf6 36.7e4 7h3 37.7h2 7g5 38.7e3 7c8-- loses at once. It is incredible, but Black went on to lose from the diagram position. 1:0 on move 76.

14. Onischuk-Salov
Elista 1998

1.e4 c5 2.7f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.7xd4 7c6 5.7c3 7c7 6.7e3 a6 7.7d3 7f6 8.0-0 7e5 9.h3 7c5 10.7h1 d6 11.f4 7g6 12.7d2 0-0 13.7ae1 b5 14.a3
The Third Rank Set-Up

14...\textit{\textipa{e}e8}

14...\textit{\textipa{e}e5} 15.\textit{\textipa{f}xe5} dxe5 16.\textit{\textipa{g}f5} \textit{\textipa{xe}3} 17.\textit{\textipa{d}xe3} is slightly better for White. 14...\textit{\textipa{b}7} fails to 15.\textit{\textipa{f}5} so Black defends the e-pawn.

14...\textit{\textipa{d}b7}!? is a good alternative: 15.e5 \textit{\textipa{h}5} 16.\textit{\textipa{f}f2} \textit{\textipa{h}f4} 17.b4 \textit{\textipa{x}d}4 18.\textit{\textipa{x}d}4 \textit{\textipa{x}d}3 19.cxd3 \textit{\textipa{c}e}6 20.\textit{\textipa{d}6}∞.

15.\textit{\textipa{b}3} \textit{\textipa{x}e}3 16.\textit{\textipa{x}e}3 \textit{\textipa{b}7} 17.e5

This is the main plan. 17.\textit{\textipa{f}5} exf5 18.\textit{\textipa{e}5} d5 or 17.\textit{\textipa{e}2} e5 18.\textit{\textipa{f}5} \textit{\textipa{e}7} transform the centre in Black’s favour.

17...\textit{\textipa{d}xe}5 18.\textit{\textipa{f}xe}5 \textit{\textipa{d}7} 19.\textit{\textipa{x}g}6 \textit{\textipa{x}g}6 20.\textit{\textipa{e}e2}!

A flexible move which makes way for the other rook to d1.

20...\textit{\textipa{b}6}

A critical moment of the game. Salov plays very well endgames so he gladly allows the trade of queens. I think that 20...\textit{\textipa{a}c}8 maintains a dynamic balance without much risk, because Black’s pawn structure on the kingside is nearly unassailable: 21.\textit{\textipa{d}d}4 (21.\textit{\textipa{d}1} \textit{\textipa{b}6}++; 21.\textit{\textipa{d}4} \textit{\textipa{b}6} 22.\textit{\textipa{d}2} \textit{\textipa{c}d}8=) 21...\textit{\textipa{b}6} 22.\textit{\textipa{d}1}=.

21.\textit{\textipa{c}5} \textit{\textipa{a}c}8 22.\textit{\textipa{x}c}7 \textit{\textipa{x}c}7 23.\textit{\textipa{a}5} \textit{\textipa{a}8} 24.\textit{\textipa{g}1} \textit{\textipa{d}8} 25.\textit{\textipa{d}1} \textit{\textipa{x}d}1+ 26.\textit{\textipa{d}x}d1 \textit{\textipa{f}7} 27.\textit{\textipa{f}2} \textit{\textipa{c}4} 28.\textit{\textipa{x}c}4 \textit{\textipa{x}c}4 29.c3 g5 30.\textit{\textipa{d}2}

\textit{\textipa{c}7} 31.\textit{\textipa{d}6} \textit{\textipa{c}6} 32.\textit{\textipa{d}4} \textit{\textipa{d}5}

33.\textit{\textipa{d}3}

Sooner or later White should swap the rooks and the arising endgame should be drawn: 33.\textit{\textipa{x}c}4 bxc4 34.\textit{\textipa{d}1} \textit{\textipa{d}7} 35.\textit{\textipa{e}3} \textit{\textipa{c}6} 36.\textit{\textipa{f}2} \textit{\textipa{c}5}=. In the game, White has been stubbornly avoiding this decision until it became too late.

33...a5 34.\textit{\textipa{f}2} \textit{\textipa{d}7} 35.\textit{\textipa{e}1} \textit{\textipa{c}6} 36.\textit{\textipa{e}3} h6 37.g3 \textit{\textipa{b}6} 38.\textit{\textipa{d}3} \textit{\textipa{c}8} 39.a4 \textit{\textipa{f}8} 40.axb5 \textit{\textipa{x}b}5 41.\textit{\textipa{e}2} \textit{\textipa{f}5} 42.g4 \textit{\textipa{f}7} 43.\textit{\textipa{e}1} \textit{\textipa{f}4} 44.\textit{\textipa{e}3} \textit{\textipa{f}1} 45.\textit{\textipa{c}2} \textit{\textipa{f}3}+ 46.\textit{\textipa{d}2} \textit{\textipa{b}3} 47.\textit{\textipa{b}4}+ axb4 48.\textit{\textipa{d}4}+ \textit{\textipa{c}4} 49.\textit{\textipa{x}f}3 bxc3+ 50.bxc3 \textit{\textipa{d}5} 51.\textit{\textipa{e}3} \textit{\textipa{c}4} 52.h4 gxh4 53.\textit{\textipa{x}h}4 \textit{\textipa{x}e}5 54.\textit{\textipa{f}3}+ \textit{\textipa{d}5} 55.\textit{\textipa{d}2} \textit{\textipa{b}5} 56.\textit{\textipa{f}3} \textit{\textipa{a}4} 57.g5 h5 58.\textit{\textipa{f}4} \textit{\textipa{c}2} 59.\textit{\textipa{e}5} \textit{\textipa{f}5} 60.\textit{\textipa{f}3} \textit{\textipa{c}4} 61.\textit{\textipa{h}4} \textit{\textipa{g}4} 62.g6 \textit{\textipa{x}c}3 63.\textit{\textipa{e}5} \textit{\textipa{d}3} 64.\textit{\textipa{d}6} \textit{\textipa{e}4} 65.\textit{\textipa{e}7} \textit{\textipa{f}4} 0-1

15. Kotronias-De la Riva

Bled ol 2002

1.e4 c5 2.\textit{\textipa{f}3} \textit{\textipa{c}6} 3.d4 cxd4 4.\textit{\textipa{x}d}4 e6 5.\textit{\textipa{c}3} \textit{\textipa{c}7} 6.\textit{\textipa{e}3} a6

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7.\textit{d3} \textit{d6} 8.0-0 \textit{e5} 9.\textit{h3} \textit{c5} 10.\textit{h1} \textit{d6} 11.\textit{f4} \textit{g6} 12.\textit{f5} \textit{e5} 13.\textit{ce2} \textit{exf5} 14.\textit{exf5} 0-0 15.\textit{g5} \textit{ed7}

16.\textit{e1}

Or 16.c3 \textit{d5}, in order to keep the bishop on the f8-a3 diagonal in the event of \textit{b4}.

16...\textit{h6} 17.\textit{d2} \textit{d5} 18.\textit{wh4}

White stakes all on the kingside attack. A more positional approach is to trade dark-squared bishops, trying to underline the awkward stand of the bishop on c8. Still, he has enough weaknesses on the queenside to worry about: 18.\textit{f4} \textit{d6} (18...\textit{e5} 19.\textit{h4} \textit{e7} 20.\textit{a1}) 19.\textit{g3} \textit{xf4} 20.\textit{xf4} \textit{b6} 21.\textit{b3} \textit{e8} 22.\textit{ae1} \textit{e5} 23.\textit{ed4} \textit{dx3} 24.\textit{xe8} \textit{exe8} 25.\textit{cxd3} \textit{d7}=

18...\textit{e8} 19.\textit{ae1} \textit{b5}

Black must be very careful about his king. e.g. 19...\textit{e7} 20.\textit{c3} \textit{c5} is likely to lose to 21.\textit{hx6} \textit{gxh6} 22.\textit{wh6} \textit{dx3} 23.\textit{cxd3}=. Instead, Black has an interesting way to re-group with 19...\textit{e4}!? 20.\textit{f4} \textit{wb6}, for example 21.\textit{xe4} \textit{exe4} 22.\textit{b3}=

20.\textit{f3}

20...\textit{f8}!?

Black anticipates \textit{g3} - 20...\textit{b7}? 21.\textit{g3} \textit{d6} (21...\textit{h5} 22.\textit{h5} \textit{d4} 23.\textit{g4} \textit{b2} 24.\textit{c3}→) 22.\textit{g7}! \textit{g7} 23.\textit{h6} \textit{h8} 24.\textit{f3} with a crushing attack.

21.\textit{f4} \textit{wb6} 22.\textit{ae3} (22.\textit{g3} \textit{h8}) 22...\textit{c}7 23.\textit{f4}?! (23.\textit{f4} looks more realistic.) 23...\textit{e4} 24.\textit{b4} \textit{d5} 24.\textit{d5} \textit{d5} 25.\textit{d5} \textit{d5} 26.\textit{d4} \textit{d4} 27.\textit{a3} \textit{a3} \textit{ed8} draw.
The Third Rank Set-Up

Kan Games

16. Cubas-Hellsten
Buenos Aires (7), 09.10.2006

1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.Qxd4 a6 5.a3 Qc7 6.d3
df6 7.0-0 d6 8.a4 b6 9.f4 dc7
10.Qf3 Qbd7 11.Qd2 fe7 12.fae1

12...Qc5

The idea of killing the most dangerous white piece, the d3-bishop, cannot be wrong. I believe that the ensuing position, where Black has the bishop pair and no apparent weaknesses, is roughly equal. Still, 12...0-0 13.Qh3 Qc5 is perhaps the more accurate move order. Black has made an obligatory move while in the symmetric pawn structure after ...Qxd3 the queen is in no way better placed on h3 than on f3. It even hampers a possible plan with g2-g4-g5, h2-h4. Black only has to watch out for sacrifices on e6. The critical question is: can Black exchange the d3-bishop at all? Let's check 14.e5 Qxd3 15.exf6
dxe1 16.fxe7 Qxg2 17.exf8Q 18.Qg3 Qxf1 19.Qxe1 Qc4 20.b3

Qd5 21.Qxd5 exd5 22.Qf5 f6=. At a second glance, 14...dxe5!? 15.Qxe5
Qxd3 16.exf6 Qxe1 17.Qxe7 Qxe7
18.Qxe1∞ may be even more attractive. So let's focus on:
14.b4 Qxd3 15.cxd3 Qfc8

Black's b7-bishop is currently without prospects. On the other hand, the c3-knight is also not particularly impressive. The evaluation of this position depends on White's ability to gain space on the kingside. If he achieves g4-g5, he would get some initiative. However, 16.g4 would let in the blow 16...d5 17.e5
dxb4. The inclusion of 16.Qh1 Qd7 does not enable 17.g4 d5 18.e5 due to 18...Qe4!. We see that the control of b4 is vital for White's setup. Therefore, the most logical move is:

16.Qb1 Qd7

This is the ideal place for Black's queen in this structure – it is eyeing the a4-pawn while protecting e6 and c6. Again, 17.g4 Qe8 18.g5 is well met by 18...d5! 19.e5 g6 and White cannot generate any active idea. On contrast, Black has plenty of play. For instance, 20.Qfc1 Qc6, when White is unable to keep the queenside closed anymore because of the hanging pawns on the fourth
rank. 20.\textit{b}3 \textit{g}7 21.\textit{a}1 is useless due to 21...\textit{f}5! 22.\textit{x}f5 \textit{ex}f5 23.\textit{d}4 \textit{c}4 24.\textit{e}2 \textit{c}6 – the dozing bishop enters the play with a great effect. Obviously, White should postpone active plans:

17.\textit{f}c1 \textit{e}8 18.\textit{h}1 \textit{f}6

We see a reliable set-up for Black. After 19.\textit{e}3 \textit{b}5! 20.a5 (20.\textit{ax}b5 \textit{ax}b5 21.\textit{d}xb5? \textit{a}6), he can activate the b7-bishop by 20...\textit{xd}4 21.\textit{xd}4 \textit{f}5, or delay this plan in favour of doubling on the c-file first.

To take stock, 12...0-0 looks fine for Black.

13.b4 \textit{xd}3 14.cxd3 0-0

15.g4

15...\textit{d}7

In my explanations to move 12, I recommended the set-up with ...\textit{d}7, ...\textit{e}8. It is quite good here, too, despite the rook being still on f8: 15...\textit{e}8!? when 16.g5? would be a mistake due to 16...\textit{d}5. After 16.\textit{c}1 \textit{d}7, White also lacks a good continuation. Perhaps White should defend the b4-pawn: 16.\textit{b}1 \textit{f}6 17.\textit{ce}2 \textit{d}7 with sufficient counterplay.

Black can even unbalance the position by the interesting queen sacrifice: 15...\textit{d}5!? 16.e5 \textit{xb}4 17.\textit{cb}5 \textit{c}5 18.\textit{c}1 \textit{xb}5 19.\textit{xc}5 \textit{xc}5 20.\textit{e}3 \textit{d}7 21.\textit{xb}5 \textit{a}3 22.\textit{d}1 \textit{fa}8∞.

16.\textit{c}1 \textit{d}8 17.\textit{ce}2 \textit{c}8?!

Hellsten is constantly avoiding concrete decisions. 17...a5 18.b5 \textit{c}5 19.\textit{c}6 \textit{xc}6 20.\textit{xc}6 \textit{xa}4 21.d4 \textit{b}5 would have been much more enterprising.

18.g5 \textit{xc}1 19.\textit{xc}1 \textit{g}6 20.h4

20...\textit{e}5?!

Despite his mundane play so far, Black still has a good game. He had to secure the c5-square for his knight by 20...a5!. After 21.b5?! \textit{c}5 22.\textit{c}3 \textit{f}6, White would have
The Third Rank Set-Up

too many pawns hanging. Instead, Black hands the opponent the d5-square for his knight.

21...\textit{c}6 22.\textit{xc}6 \textit{exf}4 23.d4 \textit{e}8?!

It is amazing how passively Hellsten treats this position. He had to seek counterplay with 23...f6. After the text, White is already much better and he went on to win (not without mistakes though).

24.\textit{xf}4 \textit{b}8 25.\textit{c}1 \textit{f}8 26.\textit{d}5 \textit{g}7 27.\textit{c}7 \textit{f}8 28.\textit{f}4 \textit{xd}4+ 29.\textit{e}3 \textit{e}5 30.\textit{g}4+-

30...\textit{b}5 31.\textit{a}5 (31.axb5 axb5 32.h5+-) 31...\textit{e}8 32.\textit{e}7+ \textit{h}8 33.\textit{f}4 \textit{d}4+ 34.\textit{g}2 \textit{d}8 35.\textit{d}5 \textit{g}7 36.\textit{d}2? (36.h5!) 36...\textit{f}5?? (36...\textit{e}8) 37.\textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 38.\textit{h}6 \textit{g}8 39.\textit{e}6 \textit{e}5 40.\textit{f}7 \textit{g}7 41.\textit{xg}7+

30...\textit{b}5 31.\textit{a}5 (31.axb5 axb5 32.h5+-) 31...\textit{e}8 32.\textit{e}7+ \textit{h}8 33.\textit{f}4 \textit{d}4+ 34.\textit{g}2 \textit{d}8 35.\textit{d}5 \textit{g}7 36.\textit{d}2? (36.h5!) 36...\textit{f}5?? (36...\textit{e}8) 37.\textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 38.\textit{h}6 \textit{g}8 39.\textit{e}6 \textit{e}5 40.\textit{f}7 \textit{g}7 41.\textit{xg}7+

30...\textit{b}5 31.\textit{a}5 (31.axb5 axb5 32.h5+-) 31...\textit{e}8 32.\textit{e}7+ \textit{h}8 33.\textit{f}4 \textit{d}4+ 34.\textit{g}2 \textit{d}8 35.\textit{d}5 \textit{g}7 36.\textit{d}2? (36.h5!) 36...\textit{f}5?? (36...\textit{e}8) 37.\textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 38.\textit{h}6 \textit{g}8 39.\textit{e}6 \textit{e}5 40.\textit{f}7 \textit{g}7 41.\textit{xg}7+

9.\textit{d}2

By delaying f4, I discourage an early ...\textit{b}5 which I would attack by a4. However, an ever more sophisticated move order is probably 9.\textit{h}1 which is also aimed against 9...\textit{g}6.

9...\textit{e}7 10.\textit{h}1! \textit{c}5 11.\textit{f}4 \textit{b}5?

This move should be played after \textit{ae}1, e.g. 11...0-0 12.\textit{ae}1 \textit{b}5. Now I could have achieved a decisive attack with 12.e5 \textit{fd}7 (12...\textit{dxe}5 13.\textit{xe}5 \textit{fd}7 14.\textit{xf}7 \textit{xf}7 15.\textit{g}5 \textit{g}6 16.\textit{xg}6+ \textit{hxg}6 17.\textit{eh}8 \textit{f}8 18.\textit{f}1+ \textit{e}8 19.\textit{g}7 \textit{d}7 20.\textit{g}5 \textit{b}7 21.\textit{f}7) 13.\textit{d}5!!, but I was following the general principle which assumes that ...\textit{b}5 should be exploited by a break on the queenside. Here is another example from my practice:

\textbf{Delchev-Rasulov Edirne 2013}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Delchev-Castellanos Rodriguez}
Leon 06.11.2012
\end{center}

\begin{center}
1.e4 c5 2.\textit{f}3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\textit{xd}4 \textit{a}6 5.\textit{c}3 \textit{c}7 6.\textit{d}3 \textit{f}6 7.0-0 \textit{d}6 8.\textit{e}2 \textit{bd}7
\end{center}
10.b4! \( \text{\L}e7 \) 11.a4 bxa4 12.\( \text{\L}xa4+ \) \( \text{\L}c8 \) 13.\( \text{\L}e5 \) \( \text{\L}c7 \) 14.\( \text{\L}c4 \) d6 15.\( \text{\L}a5 \) \( \text{\L}c8 \) 16.\( \text{\L}e3 \) \( \text{\L}f6 \) 17.\( \text{\L}a4 \) \( \text{\L}fd7 \) 18.\( \text{\L}c3 \) \( \text{\L}d8 \) 19.\( \text{\L}e3 \) \( \text{\L}f6 \) 20.\( \text{\L}e4 \) 0-0 21.\( \text{\L}f4 \) \( \text{\L}e7 \) 22.\( \text{\L}e1 \) e5 23.f5 \( \text{\L}g5 \) 24.\( \text{\L}f2 \) \( \text{\L}d8 \) 25.\( \text{\L}f1 \). Black is totally strangled and he cannot prevent 26.\( \text{\L}d5 \).

12.b4 \( \text{\L}xd3 \) 13.\( \text{\L}xd3 \) \( \text{\L}b7 \) 14.\( \text{\L}fc1 \)!

I seize the initiative. Black should be able to hold on, but he must endure a lasting pull.

14...\( \text{\L}d8 \) 15.a4! bxa4 16.\( \text{\L}xa4 \) \( \text{\L}c8 \) 17.\( \text{\L}xc8 \) \( \text{\L}xc8 \) 18.\( \text{\L}c1 \) \( \text{\L}d7 \)

18...\( \text{\L}b8 \) 19.\( \text{\L}e3 \) 0-0 20.\( \text{\L}b6 \) \( \text{\L}e8 \) was preferable.

19.\( \text{\L}b6 \) \( \text{\L}d8 \) 20.\( \text{\L}c4 \) 0-0

21.\( \text{\L}a5 \)

Perhaps 21.\( \text{\L}e3 \) was more unpleasant. Black cannot find good places for his pieces.

21...\( \text{\L}d7 \) 22.\( \text{\L}xb7 \)!

In this pawn structure, Black's only concern is his light-squared bishop which has not bright prospects. I decided to exchange it in order to gain full control over the c-file, but it does not bring substantial dividends. Instead, I should have produced a second weakness in the opponent's camp by 22.f5!, when 22...e5 23.\( \text{\L}xb7 \) \( \text{\L}xb7 \) 24.\( \text{\L}c6 \) \( \text{\L}d8 \) 25.\( \text{\L}g5 \) would give me a clear positional edge.

22...\( \text{\L}xb7 \) 23.\( \text{\L}c6 \) \( \text{\L}e8 \) 24.\( \text{\L}e1 \) \( \text{\L}d8 \)!

24...\( \text{\L}f8 \) 25.\( \text{\L}c2 \) d5! 26.e5 \( \text{\L}g4 \) would have equalised. After the text, Black cannot easily unpin his knight:

25.\( \text{\L}h4 \) e5 26.fxe5

It was better to play 26.\( \text{\L}f3 \) immediately. The f4-pawn is important since it prevents ...h6, ...g5

26...dxe5 27.\( \text{\L}f3 \) \( \text{\L}d7 \) 28.h3 \( \text{\L}e6 \)?! (28...h6!) 29.\( \text{\L}xd8 \) \( \text{\L}xd8 \)

30.d4!!

It turns out that 30...exd4 31.e5 \( \text{\L}xe5 \) 32.\( \text{\L}xf6 \) gxf6 33.\( \text{\L}g4+ \) \( \text{\L}g5 \) 34.\( \text{\L}c8 \) wins a rook.
The Third Rank Set-Up

30...\(\text{d7}\) 31.d5 \(\text{b6}\) 32.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{e8}\) 33.\(\text{xf6}\) \(\text{xf6}\) 34.\(\text{c7}\) \(\text{h5}\) 35.d6 1-0

18. Kerekes-A.Kovacs
Hungary, 09.12.2007

1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{f3}\) e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\(\text{xd4}\) a6 5.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{f6}\) 6.0-0 d6 7.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{bd7}\) 8.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{c7}\) 9.\(\text{h1}\) \(\text{e7}\) 10.f4 b5 11.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{b7}\) 12.\(\text{ae1}\) \(\text{h5}\)

White’s set-up is entirely g4-g5 oriented. Now he has to revise his strategy and think up a way to exploit the weakness of the h-pawn.

13.\(\text{g1}\) h4 14.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{h5}\) 15.\(\text{e2}\)

This is a difficult position for both sides. Black has some temporary initiative, but he must play concrete chess to keep it. For instance, 15.a3 0-0-0 is very interesting (of course, 15...\(\text{c8}\) is also possible, but the fact that it does not threaten anything worries me). After 16.\(\text{de2}\) \(\text{g3+}\) 17.\(\text{xg3}\) h\(\text{xg3}\) 18.\(\text{wg3}\) \(\text{h4}\) 19.\(\text{wg7}\) \(\text{xe1}\) 20.\(\text{xe1}\) f5, White is lucky to find 21.\(\text{xb5!}\) \(\text{xb5}\) 22.\(\text{xb5}\)

\(\text{xc2}\) 23.\(\text{xd6+}\) \(\text{c7}\) 24.\(\text{b5+}\) with a perpetual (24...\(\text{b8}\) 25.\(\text{d4}\)). It is easy to understand White’s wish to kill the h5-knight.

15...\(\text{b4}\) 16.\(\text{xe5}\) \(\text{xe5}\)

Black has active pieces. After 17.\(\text{b1}\), he could evacuate the king from the centre by 17...\(\text{f8}\) and follow up by ...g6 or ...\(\text{h6}\).

17.\(\text{a4}\) \(\text{f6}\) 18.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{a5}\)?

This mistake mars the nice game. The simple 18...\(\text{xe4}\) would have ensured a solid edge thanks to the threat of ...\(\text{h6}\), ...\(\text{g3+}\). White could have now levelled the chances with 19.\(\text{b6!}\) \(\text{b8}\) 20.\(\text{xb4}\).

19.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{xe4}\) 20.\(\text{xb4}\) \(\text{d5}\) 21.\(\text{b6}\)
21...\(\text{\(\text{\Delta}g3\)}\) + 22.hxg3 (22.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{x}}}}\)g3 hgx3\)) 22...\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{x}}}}\)g2+ 23.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{x}}}}\)g2 hgx3+ 24.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{h}}}}\)h2 \text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{x}}}}\)h2+ 25.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{g}}}}\)g1 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{x}}}}\)g2+ 26.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{h}}}}\)h1 \text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{x}}}}\)h2+ 27.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{g}}}}\)g1 \text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{h}}}}\)h1 # 0-1

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19. Moen-Topalov
ECC Rhodes 20.10.2013

1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{f}}}}\)f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{c}}}}\)xd4 a6 5.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{c}}}}\)c3 \text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{c}}}}\)c7 6.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{d}}}}\)d3 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{e}}}}\)c5 7.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{b}}}}\)b3 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{e}}}}\)e7 8.f4 b5 9.a3 \text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{b}}}}\)b7 10.0-0 d6 11.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{h}}}}\)h1 \text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{d}}}}\)d7 12.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{d}}}}\)d2 \text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{f}}}}\)gf6 13.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{e}}}}\)e2 0-0 14.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{d}}}}\)d4 \text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{a}}}}\)ac8 15.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{e}}}}\)ae1 \text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{c}}}}\)c5 16.b4 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{x}}}}\)xd3 17.cxd3

17...\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{\textbf{d}}}}\)d7 18.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{e}}}}\)e1 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{c}}}}\)f8 19.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{b}}}}\)b3 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{g}}}}\)6

The engines like 19...e5, but I suppose that Topalov did not like 20.fxe5 when the b7-bishop would be biting on granite until the rest of its days. The plans with ...f5 or ...d5-d4 are more flexible.

20.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{c}}}}\)e3 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{f}}}}\)f8 21.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{c}}}}\)c2 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{h}}}}\)5

22.f5 is already a threat. 22.g4 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{g}}}}\)7 would only add oil into the fire as ...f5 would gain in strength.

Moen decides to trade a couple of rooks along the c-file, but his move weakens the f4-pawn and enables another break in the centre:

22.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{f}}}}\)e1 d5 (22...f5 was also possible) 23.exd5 (23.e5 d4) 23...exd5 24.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{f}}}}\)f2 d4

A typical sacrifice on general considerations which unleashes all Black's pieces. Concrete calculation shows that 24...\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{\textbf{e}}}}\)e5}! 25.d4 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{d}}}}\)d3 26.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{d}}}}\)d2 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{g}}}}\)g7 was very strong. The knight arrives in the centre with a decisive effect. Anyway, Moen opts for the wrong capture on d4 and his position goes down quickly.

25.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{d}}}}\)xd4? \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{c}}}}\)cd8 26.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{e}}}}\)e4 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{e}}}}\)xe4 27.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{d}}}}\)xe4 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{e}}}}\)xe4 28.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{b}}}}\)b3 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{e}}}}\)e6 29.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{c}}}}\)c3 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{e}}}}\)e8 30.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{d}}}}\)d2 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{f}}}}\)xf4 31.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{d}}}}\)d4 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{e}}}}\)xd4 32.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{f}}}}\)xf4 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{f}}}}\)xf4 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{h}}}}\)h6 34.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{w}}}}\)xh6?? (34.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{w}}}}\)f1 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{c}}}}\)xc1 35.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{e}}}}\)e3 36.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{e}}}}\)a1 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{c}}}}\)c3 37.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{e}}}}\)c1 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{c}}}}\)xc1+ 38.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{e}}}}\)xe1 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{e}}}}\)e3\)) 34...\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{e}}}}\)e1+ 35.\(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{e}}}}\)xe1 \(\text{\(\text{\textbf{\text{e}}}}\)xe1# 0-1
The early f4 is coming into fashion in the Taimanov. White then takes on c6, castles long and tries to maintain a firm grip on the centre by a3, ehe1. Against the Kan, this plan is ineffective and it is rarely seen.
Part 4. The f4 System

Main Ideas

1.e4 c5 2.\( \text{\textit{f}}3 \) e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\( \text{\textit{x}}d4 \) a6 5.\( \text{\textit{c}}3 \) \( \text{\textit{c}}7 \) 6.f4

White's last move did not develop a piece so Black can spend time on a pawn move, too:

6...b5 7.\( \text{\textit{d}}3 \)

The absence of a knight on c6 narrows White's safe path because of the threat of ...\( \text{\textit{b}}4 \).

A plus for the Kan: easy to learn.

7...\( \text{\textit{b}}7 \) 8.\( \text{\textit{f}}3 \)

8.\( \text{\textit{e}}2 \) \( \text{\textit{f}}6 \) is fine for Black, see game 26 An.Martin-Delchev, Benasque 2013. White commonly puts his queen on e2 in order to support e4-e5. That has no sense here since the f4-pawn ensures this advance at any time. However, it is effective only in connection with an attack on h7. Therefore, the queen would be best placed on h3. Another drawback of \( \text{\textit{e}}2 \) is that the queen takes the natural retreat square of the \( \text{\textit{c}}3 \) in the event of ...\( \text{\textit{b}}4 \).

8...\( \text{\textit{f}}6 \) 9.\( \text{\textit{e}}3 \) (9.g4?! \( \text{\textit{c}}6 \)!

10.\( \text{\textit{e}}3 \) h5) 9...\( \text{\textit{c}}6 \) 10.0-0-0 (10.g4 h5!)

The play has transposed to a minor line of the Taimanov. Thus Black side-stepped the most unpleasant positions with \( \text{\textit{x}}c6 \) \( \text{\textit{x}}c6 \) where Black should practically lose a tempo on retreatting to c7 later.

A plus for the Kan: Black plays an improved Taimanov.
In the diagram position, Black can simplify with 10...\texttt{\textbackslash qxd}4 11.\texttt{\textbackslash qxd}4 \texttt{\textbackslash a}c5 or maintain the tension with:

\begin{center}
10...b4 11.\texttt{\textbackslash qe}2 \texttt{\textbackslash a}5 12.g4 d5 13.e5 \texttt{\textbackslash d}7 14.\texttt{\textbackslash b}1 \texttt{\textbackslash c}4 15.\texttt{\textbackslash c}1 \texttt{\textbackslash b}6 16.\texttt{\textbackslash h}f1 \texttt{\textbackslash c}5
\end{center}

Black has good counterplay on the queenside thanks to ...a5, ...\texttt{\textbackslash a}6.

The Taimanov theory is much more complex. White can get rid of his hanging knight on d4 by taking on c6, and then comfortably develop the rest of his pieces.

White’s main set-ups are:

\begin{enumerate}
\item 1.e4 c5 2.d\texttt{\textbackslash f}3 e6 3.d\texttt{\textbackslash d}4 cxd4 4.\texttt{\textbackslash qxd}4 \texttt{\textbackslash c}6 5.\texttt{\textbackslash c}3 \texttt{\textbackslash c}7 6.f4 \texttt{\textbackslash a}6
\end{enumerate}

A. 7.\texttt{\textbackslash f}3 \texttt{\textbackslash c}5 8.\texttt{\textbackslash d}3 b5 9.e5 d5 (9...f5!?).

B. 7.\texttt{\textbackslash e}3 b5 8.\texttt{\textbackslash d}3 \texttt{\textbackslash b}7 9.\texttt{\textbackslash b}3 \texttt{\textbackslash f}6

9...\texttt{\textbackslash a}5!? now or on the next move is easier to play, but it gives the enemy a free hand in the centre.

\begin{center}
10.0-0 d6 11.\texttt{\textbackslash f}3 \texttt{\textbackslash e}7 12.\texttt{\textbackslash h}3
\end{center}

We are familiar with this structure from the previous chapter. Commonly, Black swaps his knight for the d3-bishop with 12...\texttt{\textbackslash d}4 and gets a safe albeit passive position. I advocate a sharper way which may also lead to the same knight’s manoeuvre, but after White has committed himself with g4.

\begin{center}
12...0-0 13.g4
\end{center}

If White refrains from the pawn storm (13.\texttt{\textbackslash h}1), Black redeploy his forces with ...\texttt{\textbackslash d}7, ...\texttt{\textbackslash f}6. See game 22 Belikov-Zakhartsov, Alushta 2005.

\begin{center}
13...\texttt{\textbackslash b}4!? 14.g5
\end{center}

A critical position arises after 14.e5 \texttt{\textbackslash qxd}3 15.exf6 \texttt{\textbackslash x}b2 16.fxe7 \texttt{\textbackslash x}e8! 17.\texttt{\textbackslash d}4 \texttt{\textbackslash x}e7

\begin{center}
125
\end{center}
In my opinion, Black has good practical chances here.

14...\textit{d}d7 15.\textit{d}d4 \textit{e}ae8!?

Planning a counter-attack with ...\textit{d}d8, ...f6. The play is double-edged.

C. 7.\textit{e}e2 \textit{b}5 8.\textit{x}xc6 \textit{xc}c6 9.\textit{f}f3 \textit{b}7 10.\textit{e}e3 (10.e5 \textit{c}c7 11.\textit{e}e4 \textit{h}6) 10...\textit{c}c8

My suggestion is to keep the queens by retreating to c7 (although ...\textit{c}c4 is by all means playable) and lead out our dark-squared bishop to b4 or c5. Plans with ...d6 are passive.

11.a3

An illustration of my previous note is the variation 11.\textit{e}d3 \textit{c}7!? 12.0-0-0 \textit{f}6 13.\textit{b}b1 (13.g4 b4 14.\textit{e}e2 \textit{c}4)

13...\textit{b}b4!? 14.\textit{d}d4 0-0\textit{x}f6 gxf6 16.\textit{e}e2 \textit{fd}8 17.c3 \textit{c}c5 with double-edged game.

11...\textit{c}c7!? 12.\textit{d}d4 \textit{h}5

This is meant to enable 13...\textit{f}6. If White answers 13.h3, then we can vacate the h5-square by 13...h4 14.0-0 \textit{f}6, see game 24 Gofshtein-Tregubov, Montpellier 1998.

D. 7.\textit{x}xc6 \textit{xc}c6 8.\textit{d}d3 \textit{b}5 9.\textit{e}e2
The f4 System

This has been the main line in the Taimanov with f4 lately. The question where to develop the knight is still open. It is tempting to put it on the more active square f6, but then White will have e5. So Black should play a few waiting moves first, like 9...b7!? 10.d2 c8 11.a3 e7 12.0-0-0 f6. Now critical is 13.g4! d5 14.exd5 cxd5 15.hf1 xc3 16.xc3 0-0 17.g5 fe8! 18.xg7 xg7 19.h5 h8 20.f5 exf5 21.xf5 g6 22.g4 d6 23.xb5 e6 24.d4+ g8 25.d7 d4 26.xc8 xd4 27.xd4 xc8 28.e5 e6 29.a4 d6 30.e2 g7

I think that Black has good chances here, but it is difficult to judge without practical tests.

The plan with ...e7 is not so demanding, but it offers White a temporary initiative:

9...c5 10.d2 b7 11.0-0-0 e7 12.a3! 0-0

A topical position. I analyse it in detail in the annotations to game 21 Nepomniachtchi-Vitiugov, Nizhny Novgorod 2013. I do not see compelling reasons to avoid it with Black.

Weapon of choice

The answer is very easy, because we have an unconditional winner – the Kan move order is definitely preferable.

The f4-Kan theory is a subset of the Taimanov. Black plays ...c6 only after ...b5, ...b7. Thus he can recapture on c6 by the bishop, avoiding the loss of tempo after ...c7xc6-c7. White’s choice is narrowed to plans with queenside castling and double-edged positions.
Part 4. The f4 System

Taimanov – Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.cxd4 c6 5.d3 c7 6.f4

7.b3 b5 8.e3 transposes to line B.

A. 7.d3 c5

7...b5 first is also possible, since 8.e3 b7 9.d3 a5 suits Black, for instance, 10.0-0 c4 11.d4 xb2 12.xb2 axb5 13.xb2 f6.

8.d3

8.e5 gives Black good counterplay after 8...f5 (8...d5!?) 9.d3 b5 10.e2 a7, Hector-Zvjaginsev, Berlin 1993.

8...b5

6...a6!

6...xd4 has come into fashion lately. I do not like too much this option because it allows White to castle long and obtain some initiative, for instance, 7.xd4 a6 8.e3 b5 9.0-0-0 b7 10.d3 c8 11.b1!.

See game 20 Yemelin-Rodstein, Skopje 2013.

Commonly, White trades knights himself, but then we take by queen, putting pressure on e4.

A. 7.f3; B. 7.e3; C. 7.e2; D. 7.xc6
The f4 System

9.e5

9...e2  d4! 10. exd4  xd4 provides Black with time for completing development: 11. d1 (or 11. d2  b7 12. e5 f5!) 11... f6 12. c3  c5 13. e5  d5 14. f2  b7 (14... f5!) 15. e4 0-0 16. xc5 xc5 17. d2  c8 18. f2  xf2+ 19. xf2  f6, Dvoirys-Tregubov, Rostov 1993.

9...d5

9...f5 is positionally more unbalanced, but it brings excellent results after 10. g4  g7 or 10. e2  a7.

10. exd6

10. e2  a7 underlines the weakness of the diagonal g1-a7.

10...xd6 11.0-0  f6 12. e4  xe4 13. xe4  b7 14. e1 0-0.

B. 7. e3 b5 8. d3  b7

9. b3

This retreat looks like a second-rate move which defies the principle of quick development. Why do I pay attention on it?

Actually, this set-up conceals a lot of venom. White avoids the pin from c5 which would be strong after 0-0. He also escapes the trade of dark-squared bishops after ...xd4 followed up by ...c5. This exchange is commonly good for Black in the Taimanov/Kan since after ...d6, ...e5, the remaining  b7 is obviously more active than its white counterpart on d3. Another argument in favour of the exchange on d4 is that it reduces White’s attacking forces.

At first this system brought White good results as it deprived Black of his thematic Taimanov plans and put him in a Scheveningen structure. With time, the second players have learned to handle this set-up, but we can still face it in practice. Occasionally, White chooses it in order to avoid long theoretical lines and keep more dynamic in the position.

9. f3  f6 is the main line of our Kan chapter.

9...f6!

9...a5!? is easier to play, but this is true for both sides.

White commonly answers with 10. xa5

10...0!? c4 11. d4  b2 12. b5 ab5 13. b2  f6 14. e2 b4 15. h1 e7 16. e5  d5 17.f5 g6∞

10...xa5 11.a3!

Securing the position of the c3-knight. On g3 it would be harassed
by the h-pawn: 11.0-0 b4 12.Qe2
  13...e5 Qxc5+ 14.Qh1 Qf6
  15.Qg3 h5! (One move later this
  move would be impossible: 15...
  Castling short under the fire of all
  White’s pieces is hopeless: 16...
  0-0 17.e5 dxe5 18.fxe5 Qd7 19.Qa1+) 16.Qf3 (Here 16.e5 fails to 16...
  h4++) 16...h4 17.Qe2 Qb8!? (protec-
  ting the bishop which is hanging in the
  variation 17...h3 18.g4 d5 19.e5 and
  there is no 19...d4) 18.Ed1 h3 19.g4
d5 20.Qg3 dxe4 21.Qxe4 Qxe4
  22.Qxe4 Qxe4 23.Qxe4 Qc8=.

  10.0-0

  We see the result of 9...Qf6 –
  White is forced to renounce plans
  with queenside castling as 10.Qf3
  allows 10...d5! 11.exd5 (Or 11.e5
d4 12.exf6 dc3!, Venci Popov-
  Miladinovic, Korinthos 1999) 11...
  Qb4 12.0-0 Qbd5 13.Qxd5 Qxd5
  14.Qg3 h5!±. Black can play h4 and
  castle short, but he could also de-
  velop the bishop to d6 and hide the
  king to the other flank in the event
  of Qxg7.

  10.e5 has been tested in only
  one game: 10...b4 11.Qb5!? (11.
  Qe4 Qxe4 12.Qxe4 d5 13.exd6
  Qxd6 14.0-0 0-0 is about equal, e.g.
  15.Qc5 Qxc5 16.Qxc5 Qe7=.) 11...
  axb5 12.exf6 gxf6 13.0-0 Qe7! head-
  ing for f5, Hector-Lindberg, Orebro
  2013.

  10...d6

  Again, 10...Qa5!? is a viable op-
  tion. It leads the game into a typical
  Taimanov track: 11.Qxa5

  Or 11.e5 b4! 12.Qb5 axb5 13.exf6
  Qc4 14.Qd4 gxf6 with counterplay
  on the g-file.

  11...Qa5 12.a3!

  12.e5 is again premature due to
  12...b4 13.exf6 bx3 14.fxg7 Qxg7
  15.b4 Qd5 16.Qf2 Qg8 17.Qxh7 Qd4!
  18.Qxg8 Qxe3 19.Qd5 Qd5 20.Qh7
  f5.

  12...Qc7!

  We know already this manoeuvre
from the comments to move 9. Black keeps all his options open. He can switch over to Sheveningen structures with ...d6, or trade his dark-squared bishop through c5. Even ...b5-b4 is worth considering.

In the event of 13...h1 h5!? (aiming for ...h4-h3) 14...f3 g4 15...d4 c5, Black has some initiative.

13.e5 d5 14...xd5 xd5 15.a4 (15.b4 e7 16...d2 0-0 17.a4 fc8) 15...c5 16...e2 0-0! is also fine for him.

11...f3 e7

12...h3

12.g4?! runs into 12...h5!

12.a3 is a consistent move. However, it slows down the attack. Black should play immediately 12...b4 13.axb4 xb4 in order to keep an eye on the d3-bishop: 14...h3 (14...a5 0-0=) when 14...0-0?! allows 15.e5!. Therefore, it is better to prevent it by 14...e5 or 14...xb8!? (vacating a retreat square on a8 in the event of...a5).

12...0-0

Most players prefer to attack immediately the enemy bishop on d3 with 12...b4. You should keep in mind this move as a backup line in your repertoire. Its downside is that White’s b3-knight gets an excellent place on d4 from where it supports White’s play on both flanks. The critical position arises some moves later (on the next diagram).

13...ac1 0-0

In my game against Baklan at the Olympiad in Istanbul 2000, I underestimated the importance of the c-file and chose 13...d7?! 14.a3 xd3 15.exd3 d8 16.f5 e5, when 17...d5! xd5 18.exd5± underlined the weakness of the c6-square.

13...ac8 is a worthy alternative which often transposes to the main line.

14.a3 d3 15.cd3 d8

15...d7 deprives the f6-knight from its best retreat square, but it is playable.

16.d4 xc8

This position is roughly equal, but it is difficult to win it as Black. White is very solid in the centre and he can manoeuvre without risking
to get worse. For instance, he can double the rooks on the c-file or play $\text{Wh}3$, $\text{Wh}1$. I prefer to avoid it if possible. I will consider below the advance of the g-pawn:

17.g4

In Nedev-Lauter, Chalkidiki 2002, was 17.$\text{Af}3$ d5 18.e5 d4!? 19.$\text{Ad}x$4 $\text{Ad}5$ 20.$\text{Ad}x$5 $\text{W}x$xd5 21.$\text{W}f3$ $\text{W}d$7\text{=}.

17...$\text{Ad}7$ 18.g5

The game Negi-Mamedov, Dubai 2004, saw 18.b4 $\text{Af}6$ 19.$\text{Ae}2$ $\text{Ac}1$ 20.$\text{Ac}1$ e5!? 21.$\text{Ae}$5 $\text{e}x$f4 22.$\text{Ax}$f4=. A possible improvement is 21...

$\text{W}b8$, planning ...$\text{E}c8$, ...

18...$\text{Ac}5$ 19.$\text{Ac}d1$ $\text{E}e8$?!

Black should not admit the enemy knight to f5. The game Baklan-Tregubov, France 2003, saw 19... e5?! 20.$\text{Af}5$ $\text{Ae}6$ 21.$\text{Ae}7+$, when a draw was signed. Instead, 21.$\text{W}g3$! would have been unpleasant.

Let me add that the popular lately 12...h5 is not all roses. After 13.$\text{Ah}1$, I'm at a loss to offer a good move: 13...$\text{Ag}4$ 14.$\text{Ag}$1 $g6$ (14...g5 15.$\text{ Ae}$2++; 14...$\text{Ab}4$ 15.$\text{ Ae}$2) 15.$\text{ Ae}$2; 13...g6 14.a3!? $\text{Ag}4$ (14...$\text{Ec}8$ 15.$\text{gx}$f5 $\text{e}x$f5 e5 17.$\text{Ag}5$) 15.$\text{Ag}1$ $\text{Af}6$ 16.$\text{Ead}1$=.

13.g4

If White refrains from the pawn storm (13.$\text{Ah}1$), Black redeploy his forces with ...$\text{Ad}7$, ...$\text{Af}6$. See game 22 Belikov-Zakhartsov, Alushta 2005.

13...$\text{Ab}4$?

The stem game Kozakov-Atalik, Lvov 2000, saw another move order: 13...$\text{Ad}7$. It allows Black to avoid the piece sacrifice after 13...$\text{Ab}4$ 14.e5, but offers the enemy the option of 14.$\text{f}5$!? $\text{e}x$f5 15.$\text{Ad}$5 $\text{Wd}8$ 16.$\text{fx}$f5 $\text{Ac}e5$ with unclear play according to Atalik. I think that unless practical tests prove 13...$\text{Ab}4$ 14.e5 to be dubious, Black should delay the manoeuvre $\text{Af}6$-d7.

14.g5

The crucial question here is how to evaluate the position after 14.e5 $\text{Ax}$d3 15.$\text{e}x$f6 $\text{Ab}2$ 16.$\text{xe}$7 $\text{Fe}8$! 17.$\text{Ad}4$ $\text{Fe}$7

In my opinion, Black has good practical chances here. The gaping main diagonal and the semi-open c-file will be a constant source of concern to White. Black will soon play ...

...e5 to open the position. Add to that your opponent's surprise. He may have read annotations stating
that 14.e5 was winning, but instead finds himself faced with serious tactical problems. Summing up, an interesting struggle is ahead: 18..ae1 \(\text{xc}4\) 19..e4 e5 20..e5 \(\text{exe}5!\).

**14...\text{d}d7**

It is time to take stock. On move 12, I recommended 12...0-0 instead of 12...\text{b}4. That could cost us even a piece should the opponent braced himself for 14.e5. However, only two moves later the situation seems nearly the same as in the comments to move 12. What has Black gained by his risky move order?

Let us examine White’s options:

15.a3 is outright bad due to 15...\text{xd}3 16.cxd3 \(\text{c}5\) 17.\text{xc}5 \text{dc}5+.

After 15..\text{ac}1, instead of transposing to the game Baklan-Tregubov by 15...\text{ac}8 16.a3, we have 15...\text{c}5! 16.f5 (16.\text{xc}5 \text{dxc}5 17.\text{e}2 \text{ad}8 18.f5 \text{ef}5 19.\text{ef}5 \text{c}4\text{e}2) 16..exf5 17.exf5 \text{bxd}3 18.cxd3 \text{wd}7+, Bjerring-Plachetka, Copenhagen 1990.

In my unfortunate game against Baklan I had something like this in mind, but the untimely ...\text{d}7 allowed White to attack with the f-pawn, leaving the g-pawn on its initial square.

Another plus is that we have provoked the weakening advance g2-g4.

Another critical moment for Black’s plan is:

**15.\text{d}d4**

**15...\text{Eae}8!?**

Atalik’s recommendation.

15...\text{c}5 might finish with a repetition of moves after 16.f5 exf5 17.\text{xf}5 (17.exf5 \text{bxd}3 18.cxd3 \text{wd}7\text{t}) 17...\text{bxd}3 18.cxd3 \text{xd}3 19.\text{d}4

19.\text{g}7 is dubious since Black gets a terrible initiative after 19...\text{xd}7 20.\text{g}6 \text{hxg}6 21.\text{h}6 \text{g}8 22.\text{xf}8 \text{c}5+ 23.\text{h}1 \text{xf}8 24.\text{xd}3 \text{g}7.

19...\text{e}5 20.\text{ac}1 \text{d}8 21.\text{c}1 \text{c}7 (21..f6?! 22.\text{g}2\text{t}) 22.\text{c}1.

**16.f5**

Or 16.\text{f}3 \text{d}8 17.\text{h}5 \text{g}6 18.\text{h}6 f5! 19.\text{gxf}6 \text{xf}6\text{t}.

**16..exf5 17.\text{xf}5** (17.exf5?! \text{xd}3 18.cxd3 \text{e}5\text{t}) 17...\text{e}5\text{t}.

**C. 7.\text{e}2 b5**

If White wants to take on c6, he should do it before Black played \text{b}7.
8.\textit{\textbf{x}}c6

An alternative is 8.\textit{\textbf{e}}3 \textit{\textbf{b}}7 9.0-0 (9.\textit{a}f3 \textit{\textbf{a}}5! 10.0-0 \textit{\textbf{c}}4 11.\textit{c}1 \textit{\textbf{e}}7 12.\textit{\textbf{h}}1 \textit{\textbf{g}}6, Hou,Yfan-Movsesian, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011), but 9...\textit{\textbf{c}}5 solves all the problems: 10.\textit{\textbf{f}}3

Or 10.\textit{\textbf{f}}5 \textit{\textbf{e}}3+ (10...\textit{\textbf{c}}ce7 11.\textit{\textbf{x}}c5 \textit{\textbf{w}}xc5+ 12.\textit{\textbf{d}}d4 \textit{\textbf{w}}xd4+ 13.\textit{\textbf{d}}xd4 \textit{\textbf{b}}6+ 14.\textit{\textbf{d}}a4 \textit{\textbf{d}}xe4 15.\textit{\textbf{c}}c5 \textit{\textbf{f}}6 16.\textit{\textbf{x}}xa6 \textit{\textbf{c}}e5 17.\textit{\textbf{a}}a3 \textit{\textbf{c}}e7 18.\textit{\textbf{e}}xb4 \textit{\textbf{x}}xb4 19.axb4 \textit{\textbf{d}}d5 20.g3, draw, Nisipeanu-Grabliauskas, Berlin 1997) 11.\textit{\textbf{xe}}3 \textit{\textbf{b}}6 12.\textit{\textbf{d}}d2 d6=.

10...d6 11.\textit{\textbf{h}}1 \textit{\textbf{b}}6 12.\textit{\textbf{c}}ce2 (12.\textit{\textbf{e}}5?! \textit{\textbf{d}}d4 13.\textit{\textbf{d}}d4 \textit{\textbf{d}}d4 14.\textit{\textbf{b}}b7 \textit{\textbf{b}}b8 15.\textit{\textbf{e}}e4 \textit{\textbf{f}}5 16.\textit{\textbf{d}}d3 \textit{\textbf{d}}xe5 17.\textit{\textbf{f}}xe5 \textit{\textbf{c}}c6--) 12...\textit{\textbf{f}}6 13.\textit{\textbf{c}}c3 0-0 14.\textit{\textbf{b}}b4 \textit{\textbf{d}}d4 15.\textit{\textbf{c}}d4 (or 15.\textit{\textbf{d}}xd4 \textit{\textbf{w}}c7 16.\textit{\textbf{c}}c1 \textit{\textbf{d}}d4 17.\textit{\textbf{c}}d4 \textit{\textbf{w}}e7 18.\textit{\textbf{d}}d3 \textit{\textbf{wac}}8=) Shabalov-Rohde, Philadelphia 1996, when 15...\textit{\textbf{b}}4!? 16.\textit{\textbf{b}}b3 \textit{\textbf{a}}5 would have faced the opponent with the task of finding compensation for the pawn.

8...\textit{\textbf{w}}xc6 9.\textit{\textbf{f}}3 \textit{\textbf{b}}7 10.\textit{\textbf{e}}3

10.e5 \textit{\textbf{w}}c7 11.\textit{\textbf{e}}4 is typically met by 11...\textit{\textbf{h}}6 12.\textit{\textbf{e}}3 \textit{\textbf{f}}5 13.\textit{\textbf{f}}2 \textit{\textbf{d}}d8 with 14...d6 coming (even to 15.g4).

10...\textit{\textbf{c}}8

10...\textit{\textbf{c}}4 is a fair alternative. It commonly leads to a minimal edge for White in the endgame after 11.\textit{\textbf{d}}d3 \textit{\textbf{c}}8 12.a3

12.0-0-0 \textit{\textbf{f}}6 13.e5 is parried by 13...\textit{\textbf{x}}f3 14.\textit{\textbf{x}}f3 \textit{\textbf{d}}d3 15.\textit{\textbf{x}}d3 \textit{\textbf{b}}4=, e.g. 16.\textit{\textbf{a}}a4 \textit{\textbf{d}}d5 17.\textit{\textbf{b}}b6 \textit{\textbf{d}}xb6 18.\textit{\textbf{d}}xb6 \textit{\textbf{b}}b8 19.\textit{\textbf{c}}c7 \textit{\textbf{b}}b7 20.\textit{\textbf{d}}d6 a5, Balogh-Vitiugov, Plovdiv 2012.

12...\textit{\textbf{f}}6 13.\textit{\textbf{d}}d4! \textit{\textbf{w}}xd3 (Svidler-Hracek, Yerevan 1996, saw 13...d5? when 14.\textit{\textbf{w}}xc4! dxc4 15.e5 \textit{\textbf{d}}d5 16.\textit{\textbf{f}}f2 would have been pleasant for White.) 14.cxd3 \textit{\textbf{c}}5 15.\textit{\textbf{x}}c5 \textit{\textbf{xc}}5 and Black should gradually equalise.

11.a3

This is the most popular move, but this prophylaxis is in no way obligatory. White also chooses:

a) 11.\textit{\textbf{d}}d4 \textit{\textbf{c}}7 (This plan is consistent with the main line.) 12.0-0 h5 (enabling ...\textit{\textbf{f}}6) 13.\textit{\textbf{a}}a1 \textit{\textbf{f}}6 14.h3 \textit{\textbf{h}}4 15.\textit{\textbf{f}}2 \textit{\textbf{c}}5 16.\textit{\textbf{a}}a5 \textit{\textbf{c}}c5 17.\textit{\textbf{c}}c5 \textit{\textbf{xc}}5=.

b) 11.\textit{\textbf{d}}d3 \textit{\textbf{c}}4 is solid, but passive, as seen in the comments to 10...\textit{\textbf{c}}4. I would like to advocate for:

11...\textit{\textbf{c}}7=?. It leads to sharp play where White might easily overestimate his chances. Independent variations arise after:
The f4 System

12.0-0-0 ćf6 13.ćb1 (13.g4 b4 14.će2 ćc4)

13...ćb4!?

Zapata successfully tried 13...d6, but it cuts the scope of the dark-squared bishop.

14.đd4 0-0∞ 15.đxf6 gxf6 16.će2 ćfd8 17.ćc3 ćc5 (17...će7) 18.ćhf1 ćh8 19.g4

How to evaluate this position? If we ask Houdini, it tends to prefer White’s side. In my opinion, Black has full-fledged counterplay with his bishop pair.

19...b4 (19...d5 20.exd5 ćxd5 21.ćxd5 ćxd5 22.ćf3 ćxd1+ 23.ćxd1 a5 24.f5 e5=) 20.e5 (20.cxb4 ćxb4 21.ćd4 će7 22.ćc1 ćd6) 20...d5!

21.exf6 bxc3 22.ćxc3 a5. An important resource. The pawn is heading for a3, the b7-bishop obtains an active place on a6. Over the board, it is easier to play with Black. 23.ćc1 ćb6 24.će2 će3 25.će1 a4 26.đd3 ćxc1 27.ćxc1 a3 28.ćd2 axb2 29.ćxc8 ćxc8 30.ćxb2 će3 31.će2 će4+ 32.ća1 d4=;

21.cxb4 ćxb4 22.exf6 a5 23.đd4 (23.g5 ćd6 24.ćc1 ća6) 23...ćc5 24.ćb3 ćxf4∞

24...ćd6 25.ćc1 ćb6 26.ćxc8 ćxc8 27.će2 a4 forcibly leads to a draw endgame with opposite coloured bishops: 28.ćd4 ćc7 29.ćc1 ćc6 30.ćb5 axb3 31.ćxc6 bxa2+ 32.ća1 ćb8 33.ćxc8+ ćxc8 34.f5 ćb8 35.ćd3 će5 36.ćxe6 fxe6 37.ćg5 ća7=.

25.ćxa5 ćb4 26.ćxb7 ćxb7 27.će4 ćb8 28.ćb3 ća7 29.ćxh7 ćxb3+ 30.ćxb3 ćb8 31.ćc2 ćxb3+ 32.ćxb3 ćb6 33.g5 ćb4=.

c) Once again, 11.e5 misses the goal – 11...ćc7 12.0-0 (12.će4 ćh6 13.0-0 će7 14.a4 bxag4 15.ćxa4 0-0=) 12...će7 (12...ćh6 13.će4 će7 14.c3 0-0 15.će1 ćd5 16.ćg3 ćf3 17.ćf3 d6=, Milos-G. Hernandez, Bogota 1992) 13.ćxb7 (13.će4 ćd5) 13...ćxb7 14.ćd3 ćf5 15.ćf2
15...h5 (15...d5!? may be simpler.) 16.\textit{\textasciitilde}e4 \textit{\textasciitilde}e7 17.\textit{\textasciitilde}ad1 0-0! (it is better to avoid dark-squared blockade after 17...\textit{\textasciitilde}c6 18.c3 0-0 19.b4!) 18.\textit{\textasciitilde}f3 (18.c3 \textit{\textasciitilde}fd8=) 18...\textit{\textasciitilde}c6 (mind the check!) 19.\textit{\textasciitilde}d2 d6 20.exd6 \textit{\textasciitilde}xd6 21.\textit{\textasciitilde}xd6 \textit{\textasciitilde}xd6=, Plachetka-Doda, Novy Smokovec 1971.

d) 11.0-0 \textit{\textasciitilde}c5 12.\textit{\textasciitilde}e1 (12.\textit{\textasciitilde}d3 b4 13.\textit{\textasciitilde}e2 \textit{\textasciitilde}f6! 14.\textit{\textasciitilde}d4 \textit{\textasciitilde}b6\infty) 12...\textit{\textasciitilde}b6 (12...\textit{\textasciitilde}e7) 13.\textit{\textasciitilde}xc5 \textit{\textasciitilde}xc5+ 14.\textit{\textasciitilde}h1 \textit{\textasciitilde}e7=.

11...\textit{\textasciitilde}c7!? The queen’s retreat anticipates e4-e5 and maintains the tension.

12.\textit{\textasciitilde}d4

After 12.0-0 \textit{\textasciitilde}c5 (12...\textit{\textasciitilde}e7 might transpose, but it offers White additional options: 13.\textit{\textasciitilde}d2! \textit{\textasciitilde}g6 14.\textit{\textasciitilde}ad1 \textit{\textasciitilde}c5 15.\textit{\textasciitilde}xc5 \textit{\textasciitilde}xc5+ 16.\textit{\textasciitilde}h1 0-0!. It turns out that Black has good compensation for the pawn following 17.\textit{\textasciitilde}xd7 \textit{\textasciitilde}b6.), Black completes development unimpeded: 13.\textit{\textasciitilde}xc5 \textit{\textasciitilde}xc5+ 14.\textit{\textasciitilde}h1 \textit{\textasciitilde}e7 15.\textit{\textasciitilde}d2 when 15...\textit{\textasciitilde}g6 16.\textit{\textasciitilde}ad1 0-0 was mentioned above, but Black also has the natural 15...\textit{\textasciitilde}c7=.

12...h5

12...\textit{\textasciitilde}e7!? is worth testing, too: 13.0-0-0 (or 13.0-0 \textit{\textasciitilde}f6 14.\textit{\textasciitilde}ad1 0-0 15.e5 \textit{\textasciitilde}xf3 16.gxf3 \textit{\textasciitilde}h5 17.\textit{\textasciitilde}d7 \textit{\textasciitilde}c5\infty, Ghizdau-Matera, USA 1976) 13...\textit{\textasciitilde}f6 14.\textit{\textasciitilde}d2 (14.e5? \textit{\textasciitilde}f3 15.gxf3 \textit{\textasciitilde}d5) 14...d6\infty (In the source game Lukin-Novgorodskij, St. Petersburg 1996 there was 14...0-0?! 15.e5 \textit{\textasciitilde}xf3 16.gxf3 \textit{\textasciitilde}e8, when 17.\textit{\textasciitilde}xd7! would have been clearly better for White). 15.g4 (15.\textit{\textasciitilde}b1 0-0) 15...\textit{\textasciitilde}d7 16.\textit{\textasciitilde}hd1 e5 17.\textit{\textasciitilde}d3 exf4 18.\textit{\textasciitilde}xf4 \textit{\textasciitilde}e5 with chances for both sides.

Black’s main problem in the f4-line is how to develop his king’s knight. Its most active stand is f6, but the enemy could attack it with e4-e5. That’s why Black should prepare for the knight a square where it could jump from f6. The text move enables \textit{\textasciitilde}g8-f6-g4.

13.h3

This prophylaxis is positionally risky since the weakness of the g3-square often turns to be fatal for White. At the same time, it is the most testing continuation. Now Black must waste a tempo on h4 in order to find another place for his knight – on h5. Besides, on h4 the pawn is an easy target. The other attempts are not too convincing:

a) 13.0-0 \textit{\textasciitilde}f6 14.\textit{\textasciitilde}h1 \textit{\textasciitilde}c5 15.\textit{\textasciitilde}xc5 \textit{\textasciitilde}xc5 16.\textit{\textasciitilde}xc5 \textit{\textasciitilde}xc5=.

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b) 13.0-0-0 ėf6 14.ėd2 (14. ėe5?! ęg4 15.ėd3 ęxf3 16.ɡxf3 ęxe3 17.ţxe3 d5 is obviously better for Black.) 14...ęg4! (In Brajovic-Rajkovic, Herceg Novi 2002, was 14... ąa3? 15.e5 țxc3, when 16.ţxc3! ęxc3 17.ţxb7 ęxe3 18.exf6 ęc5 19.fxg7 ęg8 20.ţxa6 ęe4 21.ţb1 would have earned White a small edge.) 15.ţg1 e5 16.fxe5 ęxe5 17.ţd5 ęb8=.

13...h4 14.0-0 ęf6

Black has good prospects. For 15.e5 (15.ėad1 is altogether dubious due to 15... ąxa3 16.ţxb5 axb5 17.bxa3 0-0.) 15...ęh5, see game 24 Gofshtein-Tregubov, Montpellier 1998.

D. 7.ţxc6 ęxc6 8.ţd3 b5

8...ęc5 is Taimanov’s pet move. It often leads to the same positions as 8...b5. You can choose it in order to avoid variations with short castling for White. However, they look pretty harmless as you’ll see in the comments on the next move. At the same time, Black should reckon with the more dangerous answer 9.ćg4 g6 10.ţd2 (10.e5 f5 11.xef6 ęxf6 12.ţg6 ęd8! 13.ćg5 ęc7=) 10...d5! 11.exd5 exd5 12.ćg5 ęe7 13.0-0-0∞.

9.će2

9.će3 (9.0-0 ęc5!?) 9...ęb7 10.0-0 ęf6 leads to unclear play with mutual chances: 11.a3 ęc5 12.ţxc5 (12.će2 ęxe3 13.ćxe3 d5 14.exd5 ęxd5 15.ţxd5 ęxd5 16.ţf2 0-0=) 12...ęxc5 13.ţh1 d6 14.će2 e5 15.ţd5 ęxd5 16.exd5 0-0 17.ţxe5 dxe5 18.ţxe5 draw, Ni Hua-Ye Jiangchuan, Yongchuan 2003.

Black can develop his king’s knight on e7 or f6:
D1. 9...ęc5; D2. 9...ęb7

D1. 9...ęc5 10.Ďd2

9.će3 ęb7 10.0-0 b4= (10...ęf6 11.ţxc5 ęxc5 12.ţh1 b4 reaches a well known position where both knight’s retreats, to b1 or d1, lead to equality.), see game 23 Stuerzenbaum-Taimanov, Bad Zwischenahn 2003.

10...ęb7

10...ęe7 allows 11.e5 ęb7 12.će4=.

11.0-0-0

The rare a4 scores extremely well. Black’s task is not easy at all. If you are not prepared for a principled fight after 11...b4 12.Ďd5,
you may try to surprise your opponent with 11...\( \mathcal{Q} \)f6!? 12.axb5 axb5 13.\( \mathcal{X} \)xa8+ \( \mathcal{X} \)xa8 14. \( \mathcal{X} \)xb5 (14.e5 \( \mathcal{W} \)xg2) 14...\( \mathcal{W} \)b7. Black does not win a pawn here, but his pieces are excellently placed.

Let's return to 11...b4 12.\( \mathcal{Q} \)d5 \( \mathcal{W} \)d6 13.\( \mathcal{W} \)e3 \( \mathcal{W} \)xf4 14.\( \mathcal{W} \)c4

White has a certain compensation for the pawn. 14...\( \mathcal{W} \)h4+ 15.\( \mathcal{W} \)g3 \( \mathcal{W} \)e7 16.\( \mathcal{Q} \)a5 is messy. More ambitious is:

14...\( \mathcal{W} \)c7 15.\( \mathcal{W} \)g4 d5!?

15...\( \mathcal{Q} \)f8 16.\( \mathcal{Q} \)f4 is unclear.

16.exd5 f5 17.\( \mathcal{W} \)e2 \( \mathcal{X} \)xd5 18.\( \mathcal{Q} \)e3 \( \mathcal{X} \)xe3 19.\( \mathcal{W} \)xe3. This position was reached in Wang Li-Sadorra, Subic Bay 2009. Black would have had a comfortable game after 19...\( \mathcal{Q} \)f6 20.\( \mathcal{Q} \)xb4 \( \mathcal{W} \)b8 21.\( \mathcal{Q} \)c3 \( \mathcal{Q} \)e4.

11...\( \mathcal{Q} \)e7 12.a3!

The most topical continuation. White prevents ...b4 and waits to see his opponent’s plan.

12.\( \mathcal{W} \)h5 is the older approach. Black may transpose to the main line by 12...0-0 when 13.a3 seems obligatory (Papp-Szabo, Budapest 2008, saw 13.g4 b4 14.\( \mathcal{Q} \)e2 a5 15.\( \mathcal{Q} \)b1 a4 and Black is ahead in the pawn race). However, he may also choose long castling, using the awkward position of the enemy queen:

12...g6!?

13.\( \mathcal{W} \)g5

From here, the queen is eying the bishop on c5 thus making 13...b4? impossible due to 15.\( \mathcal{Q} \)a4±. In contrast, 13.\( \mathcal{W} \)h4 allows 13...b4 when White has two possibilities:

14.\( \mathcal{W} \)f6 0-0-0 15.\( \mathcal{Q} \)e2 d5 16.\( \mathcal{Q} \)g3 (16.e5 stumbles into 16...d4!) 16...\( \mathcal{W} \)a4!? 17.\( \mathcal{Q} \)b1 dxe4 18.b3 \( \mathcal{W} \)d7 19.\( \mathcal{Q} \)e4 \( \mathcal{Q} \)d4 20.\( \mathcal{W} \)h4 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xe4+;

14.\( \mathcal{Q} \)e2 f5 15.\( \mathcal{Q} \)g3 0-0-0 16.\( \mathcal{W} \)he1 \( \mathcal{W} \)b6 17.\( \mathcal{Q} \)b1 \( \mathcal{W} \)b8 18.\( \mathcal{Q} \)e2 \( \mathcal{W} \)c8+.

13...0-0-0!?

13...f5 is a worthy alternative. The game Rublevsky-Papin, Taganrog 2011, went on 14.exf5 gxf5 15.\( \mathcal{W} \)h5+ \( \mathcal{Q} \)d8 16.g4 b4 17.gxf5 exf5 18.\( \mathcal{Q} \)e2? \( \mathcal{W} \)g6+! Instead, 18.\( \mathcal{W} \)he1 was the only move when simplest is 18...\( \mathcal{Q} \)c7 19.\( \mathcal{Q} \)e2 \( \mathcal{W} \)g6=.

14.\( \mathcal{W} \)he1 f5 15.\( \mathcal{Q} \)e3 \( \mathcal{W} \)e8 16.\( \mathcal{Q} \)xc5 \( \mathcal{W} \)xc5 17.exf5 h6 18.\( \mathcal{W} \)h4 gxf5 19.g4 fxg4 with mutual chances, Rublevsky-Alekseev, Irkutsk 2010.
The f4 System

12...0-0

12...0-0-0 does not promise Black adequate counterplay. After 13..b1 g6 14..hee1 f5 15.g3, White's pieces are extremely well co-ordinated in the centre.

I suppose that this sharp position will be extensively tested in the following years. I analyse it in detail in the annotations to game 21 Nepomniachtchi-Vitiugov, Nizhny Novgorod 2013.

D2. 9...\(a\)b7!? 10.\(c\)d2

White could try to use the possibility of castling short, but practice is favourable for Black: 10.0-0 \(c\)f6! 11.a3 (11.e5 b4 12.exf6 bxc3\(^f\)) 11...\(c\)c5 12..h1 \(x\)d4! 13..a2 d6 14.a4 bxa4 15..b4 \(d\)6 16..xa4 a5! (improving on Hector-Plachetka, Gausdal, 1989, which saw 16...0-0) 17..b5 (17.c3 \(c\)c5 18..b5 \(e\)e7) 17...\(f\)f8! 18.c3 axb4 19..xa8 \(x\)xa8 20.cxd4 \(e\)e7\(f\).

10.a3 \(e\)e7 11..e3 is another rare alternative: 11...\(c\)c8 12.0-0 \(c\)f6 13.e5 \(x\)d5 14..xd5 \(x\)xd5=. The game Lanin-Vitiugov, St. Petersburg 2007, soon ended in a draw after 15.a4 \(c\)c5 16..xc5 \(x\)xc5 17..f2 \(x\)xf2+ 18..xf2 \(x\)c6 19.axb5 axb5 20..a5 b4! 21..d2 \(e\)e7 22..f2 \(e\)a8 draw.

10...\(c\)e7!? 11.a3

Or 11.0-0 b4 12..d1 \(x\)f6 13..f2 0-0\(f\).

11...\(c\)c8

It is good to make a useful move before leading out the knight. After 11...\(f\)f6 12.e5 \(d\)d5 13..e4 b4 14.axb4 \(x\)b4 15..xd5 \(x\)xd2 16..xd2 exd5 17..f3, White is a pawn up albeit in a sharp position.

12.0-0-0

12.0-0 \(f\)f6 is equal: 13..h1 0-0 14..f3 d5 15.exd5 \(x\)xd5 16..xh7+ (16..xd5 \(x\)xd5 17..h3 g6) 16...\(x\)h7 17..h3 \(g\)8 18..h5 f6= or 13.e5 \(d\)d5 14..e4 f5=.

12...\(f\)f6 13.g4!
White has a number of other options. Black always meet them with ...b4:

a) 13.\textit{b}1

This is aimed against the thematic 13...b4 14.a\textit{b}4 \textit{b}4, when 15.\textit{d}5 \textit{d}2 is without check. Naiditsch-Grigoriants, Moscow 2008, went 16.\textit{f}6 \textit{g}6 17.\textit{d}2 \textit{a}4 18.\textit{e}3 \textit{b}4 19.\textit{h}d1 \textit{c}5 and here 20.\textit{g}3!, eyeing \textit{b}8, would have been quite unpleasant. We can answer with the no less cunning:

13...\textit{b}6! which in its turn neutralises White’s main idea of 14.g4 owing to 14...b4 15.axb4 \textit{xb}4 16.g5 \textit{xc}3 17.\textit{xc}3 \textit{Exc}3 18.gxf6 gxf6∞.

b) 13.\textit{hf}1 b4 14.axb4 \textit{xb}4 15.g4 0-0 (15...d6 leads to more complex play) 16.g5 \textit{xc}3 17.\textit{xc}3 \textit{xe}4 18.\textit{xe}4 \textit{xe}4 19.\textit{xe}4 \textit{xe}4 20.\textit{xd}7 \textit{fd}8. This endgame should be a draw due to the opposite coloured bishops.

c) 13.\textit{he}1!? b4 14.axb4 \textit{xb}4 15.g4 d6

Jovanovic-Timofeev, Budva 2009, saw further 16.e5 \textit{dxe}5 17.g5 \textit{d}7 18.\textit{e}4 \textit{c}7 19.\textit{xb}7 \textit{xb}7 20.\textit{e}4 \textit{e}7 21.\textit{c}3 0-0=. Perhaps critical is 16.\textit{b}1 which is yet to be tested.

13....d5

13...b4 14.axb4 \textit{xb}4 15.g5 \textit{xc}3 16.\textit{xc}3 \textit{xe}4 17.\textit{xg}7 \textit{g}8 18.\textit{e}5 was better for White in M.Leon Hoyos-Y.Hernandez Guerrero, Toluca 2009.

14.\textit{exd}5 (14.e5 \textit{d}7) 14...\textit{xd}5 15.\textit{hf}1 \textit{xc}3 16.\textit{xc}3 0-0

\begin{center}
\textbf{Diagram}
\end{center}

Black has completed development, but there is a fair chance that White is winning by force. The good news is that the most consistent continuation of White’s play, 17.f5, is not dangerous due to 17....\textit{g}5+ (An only move. 17...\textit{fe}8? 18.f6 \textit{xa}3 is very dubious as White gets a terrible attack with 19.\textit{xe}5 \textit{c}5 20.b4 \textit{xb}4 21.\textit{fxg}7.) 18.\textit{d}2 (18.\textit{b}1 e5 is balanced: 19.\textit{h}4 \textit{hx}4 20.\textit{h}2 \textit{f}6∞ or 19.f6 e4 20.\textit{fxg}7 \textit{fe}8 21.\textit{f}2 \textit{g}6 22.\textit{e}2 e3 23.\textit{g}3 \textit{e}4 24.\textit{d}6 \textit{e}6 25.\textit{d}7 \textit{f}6=) 18...\textit{xd}2+ 19.\textit{xd}2 \textit{exf}5 20.\textit{xf}5 \textit{xc}7.

Critical is:
The f4 System

**17.g5 ̂f e8!**

Emms’ suggestion 18... ̂b6? loses at once to 18. ̂d4 ̂c5 19. ̂xg7.

18. ̂xg7 ̂xg7 19. ̂h5 ̂h8

20. ̂f5 exf5 21. ̂xf5 ̂g6 22. ̂g4 ̂d6

I think that Black has decent play here, but it all depends on the evaluation of the following hazy ending: 23. ̂xb5 (23. ̂e4 ̂b6 24. ̂xf7+ is a perpetual check after 24... ̂xf7 25. ̂f5+ ̂g8 26. ̂d5+ ̂xd5 27. ̂xd5+=) 23... ̂e6 24. ̂d4+ ̂g8 25. ̂d7 ̂c4 26. ̂xc8 ̂xd4

27. ̂xd4 ̂xc8 28. ̂e5 ̂e6 29. ̂a4 ̂d6 30. ̂e2 ̂g7

Next, Black will play 31... ̂a8 and then he will attack the enemy kingside pawns with his king and bishop pair. I believe that over the board, Black’s game is easier.
Part 4. The f4 System

Kan – Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d4 exd4 4.²xd4 a6 5.²c3 ²c7 6.f4

This move is seldom seen, because it offers Black a wide choice of good plans. It is better to await ...²f6 first as in the variation 6.²d3 ²f6 7.f4. In the diagram position, Black can transpose to the Taimanov with 6...²c6, but that would not be the best decision. It is more logical to fianchetto the bishop to b7 first. Then he could recapture on c6 by ...²xc6. As for the g8-knight, it can go to e7 in some lines.

6...b5 7.²d3

The only reasonable alternative to this development is 7.²e2 (7.a3 ²b7 8.²d3 transposes) 7...²b7 8.²f3. The simplest retort is 8...b4 (8...²c6 is also good: 9.²xc6 ²xc6; 9.²e3 ²a5 10.0-0 ²c4 11.²c1 ²c5 12.²h1 ²e7 13.²d3 ²b6 14.²c2 0-0 15.b3 ²d6 16.²b2 f6=, Rojo Huerta-Rajkovic, Madrid 1994) 9.²a4 ²f6 10.²e2 ²c6 11.²b3 ²a5! 12.0-0 ²e7.

7...²b7 8.²f3

a) 8.²e2 ²f6 is fine for Black, see game 26 An.Martin-Delchev, Benasque 2013. Of course, 8...²c6 9.²xc6 ²xc6, transposing to the Taimanov, is also possible, but it is hardly the sternest test of White’s set-up.

b) 8.0-0?! ²c5 pins the d4-knight: 9.²e3 ²c6! (there is no reason to give White an initiative after 9...²b6 10.²ce2 ²f6 11.c3! ²xe4 12.b4 ²f8 13.a4) 10.²ce2 (10.²g4 ²xd4 11.²xg7 ²xc2 12.²xc2 ²xe3+ 13.²h1 b4 14.²d1 ²b6 15.²d3 ²f6, when 16.²xh8+? loses to 16...²e7 17.²g7 ²g8 18.²h6 ²xe4=+) 10...²f6 11.c3 ²g4 12.²c1 0-0 13.²h1 e5=, Skage-Macieja, Tromso 2007.
8...\texttt{Af6} 9.\texttt{Be3}

9.g4?! is premature.

Even the most straightforward retort 9...b4 10.\texttt{Ce2} d5 11.e5 \texttt{Dxe} g4 gives Black counterplay: 12.\texttt{Dg} 3 \texttt{xc} 5 (12...\texttt{Dc} 6 13.\texttt{Dxe} 3 \texttt{Dc} 5 14.\texttt{Df} 3! \texttt{Dxe} 3 15.\texttt{Dxe} 3 \texttt{Dxc} 3 16.\texttt{hx} g3 \texttt{Dx} g3 17.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dxe} 5 18.\texttt{fx} e 5 \texttt{Dxe} 5+ 19.\texttt{Dd} 1 \texttt{Dx} h1 20.\texttt{Dxh} 1 \texttt{Dx} b 8 21.\texttt{Dxa} 3 \texttt{Dxa} 3 22.\texttt{Dxa} 3 \texttt{Dxc} 3 is a total mess) 12...\texttt{Dc} 6+ 13.\texttt{Df} 3 \texttt{Df} 6 (13...\texttt{Df} 6 14.\texttt{Dd} 1 \texttt{Dx} c 8 15.\texttt{Df} 6 \texttt{Dx} f 6 16.\texttt{g} x f 6 \texttt{Dd} 4 17.\texttt{Df} 3 \texttt{Df} 6+) 14.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 15.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Df} 6 16.\texttt{h} x f 6 \texttt{Df} 6 17.\texttt{g} x f 6 \texttt{Df} 6 18.\texttt{Df} 6\texttt{Df} 6 19.\texttt{Df} 6. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 15.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4 16.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 15.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4 16.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 15.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4 16.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 15.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4 16.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 15.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4 16.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 15.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4 16.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 15.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4 16.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 15.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4 16.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 15.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4 16.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 15.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4 16.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 15.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4 16.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 15.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4 16.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 15.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4 16.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 15.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4 16.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 15.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4 16.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 15.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4 16.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 15.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4 16.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 15.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4 16.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 15.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4 16.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 15.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4 16.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 15.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4 16.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4. After a swap of rooks on the c-file, the d3-pawn will become quite sensitive, e.g. 15.\texttt{Dg} 1 \texttt{Dg} 4.

However, I think that Black can aspire to the edge with 9...\texttt{Dc} 6! 10.\texttt{Dxe} 3 (10.\texttt{Dxe} 6 \texttt{Dxc} 6 11.g5 \texttt{Dxb} 4) 10...h5, transposing to 10.g4.

9...\texttt{Dc} 6 10.0-0-0

a) It is still early for 10.g4 due to 10...h5!

b) 10.\texttt{Df} 3 is well met by 10...d5! 11.\texttt{Dxd} 5 (11.e5 d4!) 11...\texttt{Dxb} 4 12.\texttt{Dd} 4 \texttt{Dxd} 3+ 13.\texttt{Dxd} 3 \texttt{Dxd} 5 with the bishop pair. The play may continue 14.\texttt{Dc} 5 \texttt{Dc} 8 or 14.\texttt{Dxd} 5 \texttt{Dxd} 5 15.0-0 \texttt{Dd} 6.

c) 10.0-0 \texttt{Dxd} 4 11.\texttt{Dxd} 4 \texttt{Dc} 5 12.\texttt{Dxc} 5 \texttt{Dxc} 5+ 13.\texttt{Dh} 1 b4! offers Black easy play on the central dark squares by ...d6, ...e5.

10...b4
This leads to more complex play than 10...\( \text{Nd}4 \) 11.\( \text{Nxd}4 \) \( \text{Nc}5 \). At this point, 12.\( \text{Nxc}5 \) \( \text{Nxc}5 \) 13.\( \text{Nxe}3 \) (13.a3 \( \text{b4!} \) 13...\( \text{Nc}4 \) 14.\( \text{Nc}3 \) \( \text{Nf}6 \) 14...\( \text{g}6 \) 15.\( \text{f5} \) \( \text{b4} \) 16.\( \text{Nxa}4 \) \( \text{Nc}3 \) + 17.\( \text{Nc}1 \) \( \text{Nc}6 \) is balanced.

The problem line is 12.\( \text{a}5 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 13.\( \text{Nxf}6 \) \( \text{gxf}6 \) 14.\( \text{f}3 \). Perhaps Black should answer 14...\( \text{e}5 \) followed up by ...\( \text{h}5 \), ...0-0-0. This Rauzer structure is too static. It may be solid, but the potential appearance of opposite coloured bishops is a herald of a draw.

11.\( \text{Nc}2 \) \( \text{d}5 \) 12.\( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{d}5 \) 13.\( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{Nd}7 \) 14.\( \text{Nc}1 \) \( \text{Nc}4 \) 15.\( \text{Nc}1 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 16.\( \text{h}f1 \) \( \text{Nc}5 \)

Black has good counterplay on the queenside thanks to ...\( \text{a}5 \), ...\( \text{a}6 \) activating the passive bishop. The play may continue:

17.\( \text{Wf}2 \)

Or 17.\( \text{b}3 \) a5 18.\( \text{Nxc}5 \) \( \text{Nxc}5 \) 19.\( \text{Wf}2 \) \( \text{a}6 \) 20.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{b}8 \) 21.\( \text{Nxc}4 \) \( \text{dxc}4 \) 22.\( \text{Nxe}3 \) \( \text{cxb}3 \) 23.\( \text{cxb}3 \) \( \text{Wc}6 \).

17...\( \text{a}5 \) 18.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{a}3 \) + 19.\( \text{Nxa}3 \) \( \text{bxa}3 \) 20.\( \text{f}5 \) 0-0-0 21.\( \text{Wc}3 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 22.\( \text{fxe}6 \) \( \text{fxe}6 \) 23.\( \text{a}1 \) \( \text{hf}8 \)

Both sides have fulfilled their plans and the position is balanced. White’s first rank is permanently weak so he lacks a clear plan. A possible continuation is 24.\( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{b}8 \) 25.\( \text{f}4 \) (25.\( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{xf}1 \) 26.\( \text{xf}1 \) \( \text{a}6 \) 27.\( \text{h}5 \) \( \text{c}8 \) 28.\( \text{hxg}6 \) \( \text{hxg}6 \) 29.\( \text{Nxa}6 \) \( \text{Nxa}6 \) 30.\( \text{b}1 \) \( \text{f}8 \) 31.\( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{a}8 \) 32.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{Nxd}4 \) 33.\( \text{cxd}4 \) g5=) 25...\( \text{c}8 \).

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Part 4. The f4 System

Complete Games

20. Yemelin-Rodshtein
Skopje 14.03.2013

1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.cxd4 c6 5.c3 wC7 6.f4 dxc6

This is an attempt to remedy Black’s basic problem in the main line 6...a6 7.cxb6 wxc6 when the queen often has to return to c7. The text effectively discourages plans with e2-f3 and leaves White a very narrow path to follow. Thus you can prepare a decent repertoire against the f4-system virtually for a few minutes (by reading the annotations to this game). The flip side is that White’s task is even easier. He can reach a pleasant position by making the most natural developing moves.

7.wx d4 a6 8.e3 b5 9.0-0-0

Some good players opt for 11...wC5 12.whe1 wxd4 13.wxd4 e7, but this endgame is slightly better for White after 14.a4 c6 15.f2 bxa4 16.axa4 b4 17.b6 wxd3 18.wxd3 wC7 19.f5, Shabalov-El Debs, Sao Paulo 2009.

12.e5 d5 13.e4 wxe3 14.wxe3

14...wD5

14...wF7 should not change the course of the game as 15.wF1 wD5 16.wel transposes. Instead, Andriasian-A. Horvath, Cappelle la Grande 2012, saw 15.wg3 g6 16.h4 h5 17.whe1 (17.wd6+ wxd6 18.exd6 wxd6 19.wxb5 wb5∞) 17...wD5 (17...
Part 4

\[ \text{\#xe4 18.\#xe4 \#xf8=} 18.\#f6+ \#xf6 19.\text{exf6, when 19...\#d8! would have been unclear.} \]

The text is threatening 15...\#a5.

15.\#e1 \#e7 16.\#f1 b4 17.\#e2 a5 18.c4!

This way White neutralises the enemy pawn storm on the queenside, but the weak second rank will be a constant cause for concern. Still, it is the best option. 18.\#a6 \#b8 19.\#d6+ \#xd6 20.\#xd5 \#c5 21.\#dd1 0-0 22.g4 \#d6 would have been completely balanced.

18...\#xe4

A difficult decision. Rodshtein acknowledges the fact that he is slightly worse and should struggle for the draw.

After 18...\#xc4 19.\#c1 \#xd3+ 20.\#xd3 \#b7 21.\#xc8+ \#xc8 22.\#c1 \#b7 23.\#d6+ \#xd6 24.\#xd6 \#d8 25.\#c5 \#a8 26.\#a1+ Black would be without useful moves.

18...bxc3 19.\#xc3 \#c6 20.f5 \#b8 (20...\#b4 21.\#b5 \#b6 22.\#f4\pm) 21.\#b5 \#b7 22.a4\# is also boring to defend.

19.\#xe4 g6 20.g4 \#c6 21.\#e2

21...\#c5?!

Black's counterplay is based on ...a4-a3 when any open file would be in Black’s favour. The correct move order was 21...a4! 22.f5 a3 23.b3 \#g8 as in the game.

22.f5 a4 23.\#f3?!

White misses the opportunity to activate his bishop with 23.\#c2!, e.g. 23...\#c6 24.\#f3\#.

23...a3 24.b3 \#g8? 25.fxg6

25.f6 \#d8 26.\#d2 should be a draw after 26...\#xe5 27.\#xg6 \#c7 28.\#e1 \#b2+ 29.\#xb2 axb2 30.\#h5 \#g5 31.\#xb2 h6. The opposite coloured bishops become a strong levelling factor without queens.

25...hxg6 26.\#df1

Black is right to give up the f7-pawn, but he should have done it by 26...\#d8! 27.\#xf7 \#c7 with excellent counterplay. White’s extra pawn is not worth much. On the contrary, Black will use the open
f-file to his benefit. After the text, White retains some tiny edge in the endgame which, however, should be drawn.

27.\text{f}4 \text{c}3 28.\text{f}4\text{f}3 \text{d}4 29.\text{f}4 \text{c}3 30.\text{c}1 \text{b}2+ 31.\text{b}2 \text{a}2 32.\text{c}f1 \text{c}5 (32... \text{h}8=) 33.\text{xf}7 \text{e}5 34.\text{h}7 \text{e}5 35.\text{g}x\text{g}+ 36.\text{e}f7 \text{e}x\text{g}6 37.\text{xe}7 \text{e}d3 38.\text{eg}7 \text{e}x\text{g}7 39.\text{d}x\text{g}7 \text{h}3? (39...\text{e}d1+=) 40.\text{d}x\text{b}2 (40.\text{g}5! \text{h}2 41.\text{b}5 \text{h}1+ 42.\text{d}x\text{b}2 \text{h}2+ 43.\text{d}b1 \text{h}1+ 44.\text{d}c2 \text{h}2+ 45.\text{d}d3 \text{xa}2 46.\text{d}e4±) 40...\text{e}x\text{h}2+ 41.\text{d}b1 \text{c}7 42.\text{g}5 \text{h}1+ 43.\text{d}c2 \text{h}2+ 44.\text{d}d3 \text{xa}2 45.\text{c}5 \text{d}5 46.\text{x}d6+ \text{d}x\text{d}6 47.\text{b}5 \text{g}2 48.\text{x}b4 \text{g}3+ 49.\text{e}e2 \text{e}5 50.\text{f}f2 \text{c}3 51.\text{g}2 \text{d}3 52.\text{h}2 \text{e}3 53.\text{g}2 \text{d}3 54.\text{h}2 \text{e}3 55.\text{b}5+ \text{f}f4 56.\text{g}5 \text{e}5 57.\text{g}6 \text{c}6 58.\text{g}7 \text{d}raw.

21. Nepomniachtchi-Vitiugov
Nizhny Novgorod 11.10.2013

1.e4 c5 2.\text{f}3 e6 3.d4 \text{cxd}4 4.\text{d}x\text{d}4 \text{d}c6 5.\text{d}c3 \text{c}7 6.f4 a6 7.\text{c}x\text{c}6 \text{xc}6 8.\text{d}d3 b5 9.\text{e}2 \text{b}7 10.\text{d}d2 \text{c}5 11.0-0-0 \text{e}7 12.a3 0-0

The opposite castles give Black more chances to fight for a win than 12...0-0-0. Although both White's bishops point to the kingside, it is not easy to mount an attack. For instance, 13.g4 may face a counter-attack in the centre with 13...d5. Then 14.e5 \text{c}7 (enabling ...\text{c}6, ...\text{b}4) 15.f5? \text{c}6 would favour Black.

In practice White had tried 13.\text{h}f1 f5 14.g4, when in both games Black replied with the mundane 14... \text{a}8?! and only after 15.\text{d}1, did he push 15...d5. [15...\text{d}4 16.gxf5 \text{xf}5 17.e5 \text{d}6 18.a4 looks nice for White: 18...bxa4 19.\text{c}4+ \text{h}8 20.\text{xd}6 \text{c}8 21.\text{d}3 \text{xd}6 (21...\text{b}6 22.\text{xd}4 \text{xc}4 23.\text{g}1 \text{f}7 24.\text{g}e1 \text{xe}1 25.\text{xe}1± \text{h}6) 22.\text{xa}4 \text{e}4 23.\text{b}3 \text{fd}6 24.\text{c}3 \text{xc}3 25.\text{xc}3±] Smirin continued against Soffer, Plovdiv 2012, 16.gxf5 exf5 17.e5 d4 18.\text{a}2 \text{d}5 19.\text{b}4 with a positional edge. The rook is misplaced on e8. Moreover, it may be needed on a8 to support an attack with ...\text{a}5,...\text{b}4. Thus I reached to the conclusion that Black should immediately define the centre by 14...d5! 15.gxf5 \text{xf}5 (15...d4!? may transpose to 15...\text{ex}f5).

Now 16.e5 d4 17.\text{a}2 is ineffective due to 17...\text{h}6, anticipating \text{b}4 and preventing \text{h}5. The dif-

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ference is seen in variations like $18.\text{c}4+$ $\text{h}8 19.\text{b}3 \text{f}c8$, intending $... \text{a}5$.

$16.\text{exd}5 \text{cxd}5 17.\text{cxd}5 \text{xd}5 18.\text{c}3 \text{f}e8 19.\text{e}5 \text{f}7$ is roughly balanced.

This analysis led me to the insidious move $14.\text{b}1$ (instead of $14.\text{g}4$). Then $14...\text{ae}8?!$ $15.\text{g}4$ would transpose to Smirin-Soffer so we should play $14...\text{d}5!$ $15.\text{exf}5 \text{xf}5$ when the only way to set Black problems is $16.\text{b}4$

$16...\text{d}6?! 17.\text{f}2$ (with $\text{c}3$-$\text{e}2$-$\text{d}4$ in mind) $17...\text{c}7 18.\text{e}2 \text{b}6 19.\text{e}3 \text{xe}3 20.\text{xe}3 \text{d}$ is strategically grim despite White's weakened castling position.

Fortunately, Black can employ Kasparov's favourite method of defence - a positional pawn sacrifice: $16...\text{d}4! 17.\text{x}7 \text{ae}8 18.\text{g}5 \text{xc}3 19.\text{xf}5 \text{f}6 20.\text{g}3 \text{d}4$ with excellent compensation. Here are some illustrative variations: $21.\text{f}2$ ($21.\text{b}3+ \text{c}4=; 21...\text{d}5 22.\text{xd}5+ \text{xd}5 23.\text{g}3 \text{e}2 24.\text{h}4 \text{h}2 25.\text{d}3 \text{c}4=) 21...\text{g}6 22.\text{d}3 \text{e}3!$

This rook splits White's position in two. I do not see how he could improve:

$23.\text{g}4 \text{c}8 24.\text{f}5 \text{d}5 25.\text{c}1 \text{g}7 26.\text{df}1 \text{f}7 (26...\text{xd}3 27.\text{cxd}3 \text{b}3+ 28.\text{a}1 \text{xd}3 29.\text{d}1 \text{xd}1 30.\text{xd}1 \text{xf}5=) 27.\text{h}3 \text{d}7 28.\text{f}4 (28...\text{b}2 \text{gx}5 29.\text{xf}5 \text{xf}5 30.\text{xf}5 \text{xf}5 31.\text{xf}5 \text{e}1+ 32.\text{c}1 \text{e}6=) 28...\text{xd}3 29.\text{cxd}3 \text{b}3+ 30.\text{a}1 \text{xd}3 31.\text{b}2 \text{xf}5 32.\text{f}3 \text{fx}3 33.\text{xf}3 \text{e}7 34.\text{g}4 \text{c}2 35.\text{h}4 \text{h}6=$.

Nepomniachtchi tries to improve White's play by discouraging $...\text{f}5$.

$13.\text{h}5 \text{f}6$

$13...\text{f}5?!$ is really bad after $14.\text{g}4 \text{g}6 15.\text{g}5 \text{d}5 16.\text{he}1 \text{f}7 17.\text{gx}5 \text{xf}5 18.\text{exd}5$, but $13...\text{b}4?! 14.\text{xb}4 \text{xb}4 15.\text{he}1$ is unclear. Instead, Vitiugov chooses to remain passive on the kingside.

$14.\text{g}4 \text{ac}8 15.\text{he}1 \text{wb}6 16.\text{b}1 \text{d}4 17.\text{e}2 \text{f}2 18.\text{f}1 \text{f}7$
Black’s set-up is very resilient. Nepomniachtchi admits that further pawn advances are not promising and starts a redeployment of his pieces.

19.\texttt{\textbf{Wh}3 \textbf{G}6 20.\textbf{Ac}1 \textbf{Ac}5?}

The critical moment of the game. The f2-bishop must have stayed on its place in order to bar the f-file. A possible follow up was 20...a5 21.\texttt{\textbf{Cc}3 b4 22.\textbf{Bb}5 b3 23.\texttt{Cxb3 (23. c3 \textbf{Ef8 24.a4 \textbf{Ed}8) 23...\textbf{Xc}1+!? 24.\textbf{E}xc1 \textbf{Exf}4 with fair compensation. Here is an illustrative line: 25.\texttt{\textbf{Wf}3 \textbf{C}e3 26.\textbf{E}cd1 f5 27.\textbf{Cc}2 fxe4 28.\textbf{Xe}xe4 d5 29.\textbf{Dd}3 d4 30.\textbf{Wg}3 \textbf{Aa}6 31.a4 \textbf{Axd}3 32.\textbf{Ef}7 \textbf{E}xf7 33.\textbf{Exd}3 \textbf{Ex}xb5 34.\texttt{\textbf{C}xb5 \textbf{Wxb}5=). If White shifted his bishop to b2, Black should plug the main diagonal by ...e5, e.g. 21.b3 \textbf{C}e5 22.\textbf{B}b2 e5= 23.\textbf{Wg}2 \textbf{Ae}3 24.fxe5 \textbf{C}xe5.}}

21.e5! b4

It turns out that 21...fxe5 22.fxe5 \texttt{\textbf{Exf}1 23.\textbf{Exf}1 \textbf{Ef}8 fails to 24.\textbf{Ff}4. The game is practically over now.

22.axb4 \textbf{Xxb}4

23.f5! exf5 24.\textbf{Xxf}5 \textbf{Df}8 25.exf6 g6 26.\textbf{Dd}3 \textbf{Xf}6 27.b3 \textbf{Xf}1 28.\textbf{Xf}1 \textbf{D}e6 29.\textbf{lb}2 \textbf{Df}8 30.\textbf{Dd}1 \textbf{Ff}3 31.\textbf{Wh}4 \textbf{Cc}6 32.\textbf{Ac}4 \textbf{Ab}5 33.\textbf{Dd}4 \textbf{Ff}7 34.\textbf{Xe}6 \textbf{Xc}4 35.\textbf{g}5 \textbf{Ee}7 36.\textbf{Wh}3 \textbf{Ae}2 37.\textbf{Wg}2 \textbf{Ee}8 38.\textbf{Dd}5+ 1-0

22. Belikov-Zakhartsov
Alushta 2005

1.e4 c5 2.\textbf{Dc}3 e6 3.\textbf{Df}3 \textbf{Cc}6 4.d4 cxd4 5.\textbf{Dxd}4 \textbf{Cc}7 6.\textbf{Db}3 a6 7.\textbf{Dd}3 \textbf{Ff}6 8.0-0 b5 9.f4 d6 10.\textbf{Wf}3 \textbf{Ab}7 11.\textbf{Ae}3 \textbf{Ae}7 12.\textbf{Wh}3 0-0

13.\textbf{W}h1?!

Playing on the basis of general considerations in a sharp position often implies losing the initiative. Besides, I am not sure at all that the king is better off on h1. Critical is 13.g4 \textbf{Ab}4!? which is considered in “Step by Step". This game illustrates Black’s possibilities when White is waiting without committing himself with pawn moves.

13...\texttt{\textbf{E}fe}8 14.\textbf{Ae}1 \textbf{Ab}4 15.a3
Black has consolidated his defence and could think about some activity on the queenside. The most consistent move in that sense is:

18...\texttt{a}4!.

Essentially, exchanges are in Black’s favour so he should have grasped the occasion. The point is that White’s knight cannot escape the swap because the pawn on b2 is hanging (19.\texttt{c}e2 \texttt{b}2 20.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{a}4 21.f5 e5 22.\texttt{f}3 d5). After 19.\texttt{a}4 ba4 20.\texttt{c}c1 \texttt{d}7 21.f5 e5 22.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{ac}8\texttt{d}, White’s attack would be over. Instead, Black played the non-committal move:

18...\texttt{f}6?!

I had a similar position (with the rook still on f8) in Shanava-Delchev, Kusadasi 2006. It arose following the move order 14...\texttt{b}4 15.a3 \texttt{xd}3 16.cxd3 \texttt{d}7 17.\texttt{d}4 \texttt{c}5 18.\texttt{ad}1 \texttt{f}6. My opponent chose the passive 19.\texttt{f}3 when 19...\texttt{xc}3! would have been fine for Black: 20.bxc3 \texttt{ae}8 21.f5 exf5.

19.f5! \texttt{e}7 20.\texttt{f}3

20.fxe6 fxe6 21.\texttt{ce}2! maintains the tension. White chooses a wrong setup for his knights and gradually loses ground.

20...\texttt{ac}8 21.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{xc}5 22.\texttt{d}4 \texttt{c}4 23.fxe6 \texttt{xe}6 24.\texttt{fe}1 b4 25.axb4 \texttt{xb}4 26.\texttt{e}2 g6 27.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{g}7 28.\texttt{e}1 \texttt{c}4 29.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{f}8 30.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{cc}8 31.d5 e5 32.\texttt{a}2 \texttt{f}7 33.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{f}8 34.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{h}6 35.\texttt{f}2 \texttt{h}8 36.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{d}8 37.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{c}7 38.\texttt{c}3 \texttt{c}5 39.\texttt{ff}1 \texttt{f}8 40.\texttt{a}4 \texttt{c}7 41.\texttt{c}3 a5!

Finally Black finds the decisive improvement of his position. The dozing bishop on b7 comes into play.

42.\texttt{a}1 \texttt{a}6 43.\texttt{fe}1 \texttt{b}8 44.h3 \texttt{b}4?

White is so passive, that Zakhar­
tsov loses vigilance for a moment. Now 45.\texttt{c}5!! could have turned the tables, when already Black should be careful – 45...\texttt{c}8 (45...\texttt{e}5 46.\texttt{e}5 \texttt{g}8 47.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{d}xc5 48.\texttt{f}7 \texttt{f}7 49.\texttt{a}5\texttt{d}) 46.\texttt{e}6 \texttt{xc}3 47.\texttt{xc}3 \texttt{c}4 48.\texttt{a}5 \texttt{xe}6 49.\texttt{dxe}6 \texttt{e}7 50.\texttt{d}1 \texttt{exe}6 51.\texttt{a}8 \texttt{g}7 52.\texttt{a}7 \texttt{g}8=. All that could have been prevented by the simple 44...\texttt{g}8\texttt{d}.

45.\texttt{c}6? \texttt{b}5 46.\texttt{xc}7 \texttt{xc}7 47.\texttt{c}3 \texttt{xb}2 48.\texttt{d}1 \texttt{e}2 49.\texttt{g}1 a4 50.\texttt{a}3 \texttt{ec}2 51.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{c}2 52.\texttt{xc}3 \texttt{xc}3 53.\texttt{g}4 \texttt{c}1 54.\texttt{g}5 \texttt{xg}5 0-1
The f4 System

### 23. Stuerzenbaum-Taimanov
Bad Zwischenahn 2003

1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4 c6 5.c3 c7 6.f4 a6 7.
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38.

12...a6 7...a4 6...c5 9...e2 b5 10...e3 a6 7.0-0 b7 11.0-0 b4 12...d1

12...b1 is slow. Black can attack immediately the centre – 12...f5
13.d2 (13...xc5 14.h1 fxe4 15.xe4 e4+ 16.xe4 x8) 13...f6
14...xc5 15.h1 fxe4 16.xe4 xe4+ 17.xe4 xe4 18.xe4=

12...f6 13...xc5 14...f2 0-0 15...h1 e5

A typical move of the Taimanov, performed by the guru himself! Black fixes a target on e4. Now 16.fxe5 17.g4 18.1xe5 19.d7 18x4 (20.xe1 f5) would have been the lesser evil.

16.g4?! 17.xg4 18.exf4 f5 18.e2 (18.exf5 e4+) 18...fxe4 19.xe4 d5 20.xf3 e4 21...d7 22.d6 23.a4 24.fx4 25.f1 26.b3 27.d1 28.h3 29.e3 30.xc3 31.d3 32.e1 33.f1 d4 0-1

### 24. Gofshtein-Tregubov
Montpellier 1998

1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.xd4 c6 5.c3 c7 6.f4 ixd4 7.xd4 a6 8.xe3 b5 9.xe2 b7 10.a3 c8 11.xf3 h5 12.h3

White anticipates ...f6 which would be attacked by e4-e5. Black must seek another retreat square for the knight.

12...h4 13.0-0 f6 14.e5

After 14.ad1 e7 15.a2 d6 16.f2, Black can calmly castle.

14...h5 15.a7

The enemy knight will be cramping White's kingside from g3 so Anand preferred to kill it on the spot: 15.h5 h5 16.ad1 c5 17.d3 x3 18.xe3 c5 19.d4. Black had good play after 19.f6, Anand-P. Cramling, Lugano 1988.

15...b7 16.d3 g3 17.f1 c6 18.a2 c5

Black's bishop has more prospects than its White counterpart, so
Part 4

it would be good to keep it. Tregubov recommends 18...\$e5 19.\$e2 \$c4 20.\$f3 (20.\$xc4 \$xc4 21.\$e4 d5?) 20...d5+.

19.\$ad1 \$xf2 20.\$xf2 \$c5+ 21.\$e3 a5 22.\$d2 f5!

Black is consistently paralysing the kingside. Now White had to simplify to four rooks endgame with 23.exf6 gxf6 24.\$xc5 \$xc5 25.\$e4 \$xe4 26.\$xe4=, but apparently he underestimated the dangers to his own king.

23.\$d4? \$e7 24.\$g1 b4 25.axb4 axb4 26.\$a4 \$xc2 27.\$xb4 \$c4

The fewer heavy pieces on board, the more difficult is the defence of the first rank. Therefore, 27...\$b8= would have been more consistent.

28.\$xc4 \$xc4 29.\$b6 \$b4 30.\$d1 \$b8

The safe haven of Black's king makes the difference in this position. 30...\$e7! 31.\$d7 \$g6= would have underlined his advantage. The pawns are unimportant.

31.\$d7 \$b5 32.\$h2?

White misses the chance to trade queens by 32.\$a7 \$b7 33.\$c5 \$f7 34.\$b4. The ensuing endgame could be saved: 34...\$b4 35.\$c5 \$e2 36.\$f1 \$f4 37.b3=. Now all is over.

32...\$d5!-- 33.\$a7 \$d1 34.\$f6 \$d8 35.\$a8 \$e7 36.\$a7 \$d8 37.\$a8 \$c7 38.\$a7 \$c6 39.\$a6 \$c5 40.\$c8 \$b5 0-1

25. Kosanovic-Banikas
Korinthos 1999

1.e4 c5 2.\$f3 \$c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\$xd4 \$c7 5.\$c3 e6 6.\$e2 a6 7.f4 b5 8.\$xc6 \$xc6 9.\$f3 \$b7 10.\$e3 \$e8 11.a3 \$c4 12.\$d3 \$f6 13.0-0 \$c5 14.\$xc5 \$xc5 15.\$h1 e5 16.\$ae1 (16.g4 h5?) 16...0-0

17.g4 \$e8! 18.f5 \$d6! 19.\$e2 \$c4 20.\$d1 \$fd8 21.\$g2 d5=+ 22.g5 dxe4 23.\$h3 \$d2 24.g6 fxg6 25.fxg6 h6 26.\$f7 \$f3 27.\$e3 \$c6 28.\$d7 \$b6 29.\$xd8 \$xd8 30.\$g4 \$d6 31.\$f2 \$b6 0-1
The f4 System

Kan Games

26. Martin Gonzalez-Delchev
Benasque 06.07.2013

1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.cxd4 a6 5.c3 w7 6.f3 b5
7.ed3 bd7 8.e2 f6

9.a3

White prevents ...b4 followed by ...
d5 which is possible after 9.d2.
For instance, 9...b4 (9...e5 10.b3
d5 11.e5 d5 12.e4 c6 is also possible, 13.c3 0-0 14.0-0 g6, planning ...
f5. However, White retains some space advantage.) 10.d1 [10.
a4 d5 (or 10...c6!? 11.f3 d5
d.e5 d.e4=) 11.e5 d.e4 12.e3 d7
d.0-0 d.c5 14.xc5 xc5 15.b3
e=, Bologan-Rublevsky, Dort­
mund 2004] 10...c6 11.xc6 wxc6
d.f2 d.c5 13.c3 0-0 14.g4 dxe3
d.xe3 d5 16.e5 d.e4?!, Cuartas-
Kogan, Catalonia 2013.

Critical should be 9.e5 b4
t0.xf6?! [10.e4 dxe4 11.xe4
dxe4 (11...d6!?) 12.dxe4 d.c6= is
known from the w3 set-up.] 10...
bxc3 11.fg7 f.g7 12.f5 f.f6 13.b3
d.c6 14.a3 d.d4! 15.d6+ w xd6
16.xd6 dxe2 17.dxe2 g8 with a
pleasant endgame.

9...d.c6 10.f3

White's play looks normal, but
in fact this move puts him on the
defensive. 10.e3 b4 11.axb4 dxb4
12.0-0 d7 and 10.c6 w xc6 are
balanced.

10...b4! 11.a4 bx a3 12.0-0
d.b4

The computer will defend suc­
cessfully after 12...xb2! 13.xb2
d.e7 14.e5 d5, but against an oppo­
nent with a lower rating than mine,
I prefer the most solid approach.

13.bxa3 dxd3 14.cxd3 c6

15.wc2

15.c3 d.e7 16.d.d2 0-0 17.fc1
(17.d4 d5) 17...fc8 and 15.b2
c5+ 16.e3 dxe3+ 17.dxe3 b8
maintained equality.

The queen is misplaced on the
open c-file and I could try to ex­
plot it with 15.d6!? 16.e5 dxf3
17.xc7 dxc7 18.xf3 d.d5 19.d2
0-0. White has weak pawns in the centre.

15...Ec8 16.e5?

White neglects development. 16.ee3 Ed6 17.e5 Exf3 was only marginally better for Black. Now I'm in complete command.

16...Eb5 17.Exc7 Exc7 18.Eb2 Ec5+ 19.Eh1 0-0

Following the same lazy approach of avoiding concrete decisions. 19...Exe4 20.a4 Ef2+ 21.Exf2 Exf2 22.axb5 axb5 brings about a serious edge because my rooks have invasion squares. My quiet move is very unpleasant for White, too.

20.a4 Ec6 21.Exc6 Exc6

Amazingly, White is practically lost here. The only way to keep the material even would be 22.Ed1, but then 22...d5 23.e5 Ed7 or 22...Eb8 would assure me of a total domination. My opponent decided to part with a pawn right away. The rest of the game is irrelevant to the opening.


Test your self!

24...Eg3+! 25.hxg3 Exc5 produces a rare mating threat in a simple endgame. My continuation is no less effective though.

Part 5

The Fianchetto

I offer a choice in the Taimanov: 1.e4 c5 2.d4 f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4 a6 5.c3 c7 6.g3 a6 7.g2 d6, which is well tested and solid, and the more enterprising flank attack 7...h5 — see the diagram. I propose a lot of new ideas and correct some wrong suggestions of other authors.

The fianchetto has no venom against the Kan — Black can fight for the initiative.
Part 5. The Fianchetto

Main Ideas

The fianchetto system is perhaps the most universal weapon of White against the Sicilian. It is very solid, but at the same time flexible. By planting the bishop on the main diagonal, White significantly restricts Black’s counterplay. The good control of the centre allows him to choose between a large number of plans ranging from calm positional play on the queenside with a4-a5 to a pawn storm on the opposite flank. Unexperienced players underestimate the 6.g3 system because White’s wins are rarely quick and spectacular. However, the opposite is even more true. Black should be very accurate with his move order. Moreover, memorising the first 12-15 moves does not help much since decisive clashes in this system usually occur deeply in the middlegame. So second players should know typical plans of counterplay, which are illustrated with practical examples in the “Complete Games” chapter.

The first problem of Black is how to complete development.

The straightforward approach does not work:

1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{d}3\) e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.\(\text{c}4\) c6 5.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{c}7\) 6.g3 a6
7.\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{f}6\) 8.0-0 \(\text{e}7\) 9.\(\text{e}1\)

My advice is to avoid this position.

White is better after 9...0-0
10.\(\text{c}6\) dxc6 11.e5 or 9...d6
10.\(\text{c}6\) bc6 11.e5! dxe5 12.\(\text{e}5\).

So we cannot comfortably develop with ...\(\text{f}6\), ...\(\text{e}7\) and ...d6. I offer two thoroughly different solutions in the Taimanov:
A. 7...d6 8.0-0 d7

Looking at the diagram position you may ask: “OK, we have defended c6, but how do we castle?”

9.f1 e7 10.xc6 xc6 11.g4 (line A61)

We simply do not castle at all!

11.h5! 12.e2 h4 13.a4 hg3 14.hg3 f8!

Black has a good game. His only concern is how to transfer the queen to the kingside. The open h-file will be a constant source of threats against White’s king. Keep in mind the manoeuvres c7-d7-e8-g8-h7 (after g6 and g7) and c7-d7-g4 (e6) after a preliminary e6-e5.

15.a5 c8 16.e3 f6∞.


Now I’ll try to arm you against the dangerous plan of a kingside pawn storm. It has been topical lately. White’s concept is to retreat the knight from d4 to e2 or b3 and push f4, g4, g5. The key moment is that the f6-knight is deprived of its natural square d7 while on e8 it would be rather clumsy. Attempts of reviving it by f6 or f5 would only aggravate Black’s situation. My advice is to hinder White’s attack with ...h6. Then the blockade on the dark squares could be reinforced by ...h7 and even g5 or e5. The play is very sharp and interesting:

7...d6 8.0-0 d7 9.b3 b5 10.a3 f6 11.h1

Alternatives are 11.e3 e5 or 11.g4 h5!? 12.g5 g4.

11.e7 12.f4

In short, here is the general scenario against White’s knight retreats:

We answer 9...b5, then develop our kingside and put our rook on b8.
or c8 before castling. If White plays \( \text{\textit{e}3} \), we attack it with \( ...\text{\textit{e}5-c4} \). Else, we play \( ...\text{\textit{h}6} \) and only then can we castle, having in mind to meet \( g4 \) by \( ...\text{\textit{h}7} \). The break \( \text{...d5} \) may work in some variations, but if White's bishop is on e3, refrain from it! See game31 Ponomariov-Dubov and game30 Guseinov-Vasovski.

A possible continuation is \( 12...\text{\textit{b}8} \) 13.\textit{e}2 0-0 14.g4 h6

Now 15.\textit{e}3 \( \text{\textit{h}7} \) will restrain White's attack while 15.h4 d5 16.g5 (16.e5 \( \text{\textit{e}8} \)) 16...\textit{xe4}! (do not open up the h-file!) 17.\textit{xe4} dxe4 18.\textit{xe4 f5} 19.g2 \( \text{\textit{f}7} \)! 20.\textit{e3 \textit{h}8} gives good counterplay.

This should be enough to feel confident against 6.g3. Should the opponent surprise you with other plans like b3, or \( \text{\textit{c}e2} \) etc., just remember that you are playing the Sicilian! Typical counterplay on the queenside by \( ...\text{b5}, ...\text{\textit{c}8} \) even before castling should be at least a playable option.

Yet, the picture would be incomplete without mentioning the very dry positional line A62 where the draw looks the most probable result:

\[
\begin{align*}
7...&\text{\textit{d}6} 8.0-0 \text{\textit{d}7} 9.\text{\textit{xc}6} \text{\textit{xc}6} \\
10.a4 &\text{\textit{f}6} 11.a5 \text{\textit{e}7} 12.\text{\textit{e}3} 0-0
\end{align*}
\]

Black has not serious problems if he plays patiently for equalisation.

\[
\begin{align*}
13.\text{\textit{b}6} & (13.\text{\textit{e}1} \text{\textit{d}7} 14.\text{\textit{a}4} \\
& \text{\textit{ae8}}! 15.\text{\textit{b}6} \text{\textit{f}5} \text{provides counterplay.}) 13...\text{\textit{b}8} 14.\text{\textit{e}1} \\
& \text{\textit{d}7} 15.\text{\textit{d}4} \text{\textit{f}6}=.
\end{align*}
\]

If you want to force your opponent to think on his own from the very beginning, I recommend you to pay attention to the following daring variation:

B. 7...\text{\textit{h}5}!?

The early pawn raid faces White with concrete problems and seizes
the psychological initiative. If White hoped for a solid position where he could play on the queenside without any risk, he would be drastically thrown out of his zone of comfort. To be sure, an early counter-attack with Black is double-edged, but current practice is encouraging. This variation is still at an experimental stage and it offers a vast ground for innovations.

Main continuations are:

a) 8. h3 h4 9. g4 c5! 10. b3 a7 11. e2 c7 12. f4 b5 13. e3

13... g5!?

Black gains control over the dark squares.

b) 8. 0-0 h4 9. e1 hxg3 10. hxg3 d6 11. xc6 bxc6

We have seen a similar position (line A61), but Black had a bishop on c6. Here, the bishop can go to b7 while the king will feel quite safe on the queenside. The play is double-edged.

The Kan is much easier to play because Black solves the queenside development problem with:

1. e4 c5 2. f3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. xd4 a6 5. c3 c7 6. g3 b4!

A plus for the Kan: an easy queenside development.

A glance in the database reveals that White is quite far below the 50% which is certainly unusual for a modern opening. Of course, Black can confidently transpose to the Taimanov by 6... c6, but objectively, the bishop sortie is the better choice. We can then put the queen’s knight on d7 and push ...e5. This set-up is known from the Najdorf, but here our dark-squared bishop is not on e7 which is undoubtedly in our favour. For instance:

7. de2

We have seen a similar position (line A61), but Black had a bishop
12.\texttt{xc3 e5 and 9...\texttt{e7 10.0-0 0-0!}}
11.f4 (11.g4 d5 12.exd5 exd5)

11...d5! 12.exd5 \texttt{b4 with an ini-
tiative.}

7...\texttt{f6 8.g2 d6 9.0-0 \texttt{bd7}}
10.h3 \texttt{c5! 11.g4 h6}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Weapon of choice}
\end{center}

The Kan should be the weapon of choice against fianchetto fans. Without a knight on c6, Black is more flexible. By attacking the c3-knight with 6...\texttt{b4}, he practically forces the enemy to retreat his active knight from d4. As a re-
sult, White is deprived of the unpleasant option of \texttt{d4xc6} which is a cause of constant concern in the Taimanov.
Part 5. The Fianchetto

Taimanov – Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.exd4 d6 5.e3 c7 6.g3 a6

This move is not obligatory, but it is more flexible than the alternative 6...d6 which allows 7.db5 bb8 8.a4. This position is practically unexplored. The game Romero Holmes-Wolff, Palma de Mallorca 1989, continued 8...e7 9.gg2 ff6 10.0-0 0-0 11.e2 df8?! 12.e3 a6 13.a3 d5? 14.b6 dd6 15.a5±.

Black could improve with 11...a6 12.a3 b6 13.e3 cc7, when 14.g4!?∞ starts the typical attack on the kingside, but in an original set-up with a knight on a3. (White should not delay this advance since Black would be ready with ...d5! –14.f4 bb8 15.ad1 ee8 16.g4 d5!
or 14.f4 bb8 15.g4 d5 16.exd5 edx5 17.xd5 edx5 18.xd5 ee8∞).

There is one more question that still has not a definitive answer: what does Black benefit from delaying ...a6. Let’s check 7.g2 xd4 8.xd4 d7 9.0-0 ff6 10.g5 cc7

The trade of knights gave White some spatial advantage in the centre. The main battlefield will be the left wing so the queen’s rook should stay on a1 while the other one goes to d1:

11.fd1!? a6 12.ff6 gf6 13.dd2 h5 14.h4 cc8 15.ac1∞, Kaidanov-J. Horvath, Calcutta 2000. Black has active rooks, but his pawn chain is damaged. The h5-pawn would be a tangible weakness in an endgame. In my opinion, White’s game is somewhat easier.
Black has at least four different set-ups against the fianchetto. In line A. 7...d6, I offer you a well tested and flexible approach, based on the Scheveningen pawn structure. Line B. 7...h5!? introduces a rare attack which is nearly unexplored. It will face your opponent with a difficult choice, Statistics confirm that White's defence is not trivial. He scores only 41% although the sample of only 61 games is too small to be representative.

I rejected 7...f6 8.0-0 xd4 9.xd4 c5 10.f4 d6, because this is one of the most drawish variation in the opening theory! Black practically has not won a single game at a higher level. A typical position arises after 11.xd2 h6 12.ad1 e5 13.e3 e6 14.xc5 dxc5. White will then play d5 (or f4 first), recapture on d5 by the e-pawn, and occasionally will convert his tiny advantage.

7...f6 8.0-0 e7 is a playable, but passive alternative. Black's problem is that after 9.e1!

he cannot complete development without considerable concessions in space since 9...d6 runs into 10.xc6 bc6 11.e5! dx5 12.xe5. This position was topical 40 years ago. Exhaustive testing proved that Black is unable to compensate for the split queenside pawns.

A. 7...d6 8.0-0


8...d7

The only downside of this move is that the bishop occupies a square which might be useful to the king's knight. We'll discuss that issue later – see the line 8...d7 9.de2 f6 10.h3 e7 11.g4. However, the alternatives have major drawbacks.

a) 8...f6 9.e1 d7 10.xc6, when the options are: 10...xc6 11.d5 xd5 12.exd5 e5 13.f4 e7 14.e2; 10...bxc6 11.a4, fol-
The Fianchetto

followed by c4, and the bishop is misplaced on d7. Both evaluations are not final. They just reflect the current state of theory, but the play is quite tangled.

b) 8...\(\text{\text{xd4}}\). Black wants to exchange the d4-knight before it ran away! 9.\(\text{\text{ xd4+}}\)\(\text{\text{d7}}\)

\[
\text{\includegraphics{image1.png}}
\]

10.\(\text{\text{el}}\)

10.\(\text{\text{f4}}\) leads to unclear consequences after 10...\(\text{\text{c6}}\) 11.\(\text{\text{d5}}\) \text{exd5} 12.\text{exd5} \(\text{\text{d7}}\) 13.\text{\text{fe1}} \text{\text{e7}} 14.\text{\text{e3}} \text{f6} 15.\text{\text{c3}} \text{\text{d8}}\text{∞}.

10...\(\text{\text{f6}}\) (perhaps Black could delay the knight move with 10...\(\text{\text{c6}}!?)\ 11.\text{\text{g5}} \text{\text{e7}} 12.\text{\text{xf6}}\text{∞}.

The early exchange on d4 leads to a practically new branch of theory which is waiting to be explored. However, I think that White’s play is natural and easy.

\[
\text{\includegraphics{image2.png}}
\]

In the diagram position, White has tried nearly all possible moves and plans. I’ll examine the most reasonable of them:

A1. 9.\text{\text{de2}}; A2. 9.\text{\text{b3}}; A3. 9.\text{\text{e3}}; A4. 9.\text{\text{e1}}; A5. 9.a4; A6. 9.\text{\text{xc6}}

9.\text{\text{ce2}} is totally harmless in view of 9...\text{\text{f6}} 10.b3 (10.c4 \text{\text{xd4}} 11.\text{\text{xd4}} \text{\text{e7}} and Black easily achieves ...\text{b5} later) 10...\text{b5} with good play.

A1. 9.\text{\text{de2}}

White saves his knight from exchange and transfers it to g3 after a preliminary h3, g4. Practical results are quite alarming for Black. Commonly the second players do not pay due attention to White’s threats and quickly fall under attack, like in the following game:

Inkiov-Tsorbatzoglou, Chania 1994

1.e4 \text{c5} 2.\text{f3} \text{e6} 3.\text{d4} \text{cxd4} 4.\text{\text{xd4}} \text{\text{f6}} 5.\text{\text{c3}} \text{\text{c6}} 6.g3 \text{d6} 7.\text{\text{g2}} \text{\text{d7}} 8.0-0 \text{\text{e7}} 9.\text{\text{de2}} 0-0 10.h3 a6 11.g4 \text{\text{c7}} 12.\text{\text{g3}} \text{b5} 13.g5 \text{\text{e8}} 14.f4 \text{\text{d8}} 15.\text{\text{h1}} \text{b4} 16.\text{\text{ce2}} \text{f6} 17.h4\text{±}
17...fxg5 18.hxg5 hx8 19.f5 e5 20.f4 d5 21.hf5<.>

In my opinion, the whole setup with the knight residing on e8 is very passive and leaves the opponent a free hand on the kingside. The other typical approach is to meet g4 with h6 and g5. That is a double-edged plan, but Black’s king in the centre is considerably more vulnerable than his White counterpart.

I think that Black should employ a defensive design which is frequently seen in the hedgehog system (the plan with f4, g4). He prevents g4-g5 with h6 and when White plays f4, the f6 knight goes to h7! Then Black could safely castle and expand on the opposite wing. I only hesitate about the early b7-b5. It is risky, but enterprising. You must be sure to push it before White played g4, in order to force the answer a3. Otherwise the c3-knight will replace its teammate on e2.

Let’s substantiate these reflections with concrete variations:

9...b5!? 10.a3 ef6 11.h3 e7 12.g4 h6 13.f4

13.g3 0-0 14.f4 h7 leads to the same position.

13...h7!?  

Black sets a flexible defence line on the kingside.

13...0-0 14.e3 ef8 15.g5 hxg5 16.fxg5 h7 17.h4<+ gives White the initiative in view of the threat of ...f4 followed by ...g6.

After the text, it is unclear how White could expand further. The only way is apparently h3-h4, but Black is able to hinder it. For instance:

14.w/e1 0-0 15.h4 leaves c2 unguarded after 15...b4. Following 16.d1, Black could take an edge with 16...bxa3 17.g5 (17.bxa3 g5!) 17...axb2 18.xb2 hxg5 19.fxg5 e5.

The quiet 14.e3 0-0 15.g3 (15.w/e1 wd8 16.d1 ec8) 15...fd8 also looks appealing to Black who could combine his counterplay with the manoeuvre h7-f8-g6.

A2. 9.b3!?  

This has been the most topical line lately. White’s concept is similar to line A1, but the knight on b3...
The Fianchetto

is a bit distant from the kingside. On the other hand, White does not need h3 in order to push g4. White could also play a4-a5 to restrict queenside counterplay. So I propose to start with:

9...b5

I consider similar positions without the insertion of 9...b5 10.a3 in the annotations to game 31 Ponomariov-Dubov, Tromso 2013.

10.a3

10.f4 b4 11.e2 f6 12.a3 e5 should be fine. The early ...b4 is not so good against a developing move as 10.e3, since White could open the c-file in his favour with c2-c3. However, e3 also has drawbacks. It provokes 10...e5!? when 11.d2 f6 12.h3 c8 13.f4 g6 looks quite safe. 10...f6 11.f4 c8 is also possible and White will probably transpose to the main line with 12.a3 because 12.g4? could be put to the test with 12...h5! 13.h3 hxg4 14.hxg4 b4 15.a4 e5.

10...f6 11.h1

White does not seem to have more useful moves since 11.e3 will face again 11...e5. 11.g4 is committing as Black has not castled yet. The standard retort would be 11...h6 12.f4 e7 13. e2 b8, but 11...h5!? looks also very tempting: 12.g5 g4 13.h1 g6 14.f4 a7.

11.f4 e7 12.e3 c8 (I'm not sure about this move. In many variations the rook stands better on b8.) might transpose to the main line after 13.h1. An independent variation is 13.e2 b4 14.axb4 xb4, when 15.h3 0-0 16.g4? stumbled into 16...d5 in Beshukov-Tregubov, Krasnodar 1998. As a rule, we should always contemplate ...d5 against g4, even when it is a real pawn sacrifice.

11.e7 12.f4

12.b8

From this square, the rook supports the b-pawn. It also prevents possible b6 if White set the battery e3-f2, and indirectly hits the b3-knight (with the threat of ...b4, ...xb4, ...xc2).

12.c8 is a good alternative. See game 31 Ponomariov-Dubov.

Another legitimate option is immediate castling. After 12...0-0 13.g6 h6 14.h4 (14.e3 h7!) 14...d5 15.e5 c8 16.e3 b8 17.f3 f6 18.exf6 xf6, with counterplay) 15.hxg5 16.hxg5 xe4 17.xe4 dxe4 18.e5 is not dangerous as White is behind in development:
Part 5

18...g6 19.\(\text{\texttt{Wh}}\)h4 f6 20.\(\text{\texttt{f2}}\) fxg5 21.\(\text{\texttt{Wh}}\)h6 \(\text{\texttt{xf6}}\) 22.\(\text{\texttt{h2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{c8}}\) 23.\(\text{\texttt{xe4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Wh}}\)g7 24.\(\text{\texttt{xf6+}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xf6}}\) =.

13.\(\text{\texttt{We2}}\)

After 13.\(\text{\texttt{We3}}\), the most practical approach is to forestall possible g4 and h4 with 13...h6!. Then we can already castle since we would have ...\(\text{\texttt{h7}}\) to g4.

13...0-0 14.g4 h6 is more risky:

a) 15.h4 \(\text{\texttt{h7!}}\) (15...d5? fails to 16.g5! hxg5 17.hxg5 \(\text{\texttt{xe4}}\) 18.\(\text{\texttt{xe4}}\) dxe4 19.\(\text{\texttt{Wh}}\)h5, with attack) 16.g5 hxg5 17.hxg5 g6∞.

b) 15.g5 hxg5 16.fxg5 \(\text{\texttt{wh}}\)h7

is considered in game 30 Guseinov-Vasovski, Struga 2009. In this pawn structure, we push ...g6, possibly ...\(\text{\texttt{h8}}\), and seek counterplay with ...gxh5. It is important to leave our kingside pieces as they are – eyeing g5. We can even win the g5-pawn at some point with ...\(\text{\texttt{d8}}\). It would be a mistake to redeploy them in a passive defensive stand.

13...0-0

I do not see what we could gain by delaying castling any longer as White has plenty of useful moves. For example, 13...\(\text{\texttt{c8}}\) 14.g4 h6 15.\(\text{\texttt{We3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{d7}}\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{xf2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{b6}}\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{d4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xd4}}\) 18.\(\text{\texttt{xd4}}\) 0-0 19.\(\text{\texttt{Wh}}\)g3 with active pieces.

Of course, in the above line Black can refrain from ...h6, allowing the thematic plan g5, \(\text{\texttt{wh}}\)h5. However, I like too much to play it on the white side so I cannot recommend it for Black.

14.g4 h6 15.\(\text{\texttt{We3}}\)

15.h4 can be attacked with 15...d5!? 16.g5 (16.e5 \(\text{\texttt{we}}\)8), when it is extremely important to avoid opening the h-file by 16...hxg5?! 17.hxg5, because White’s game is a little better after 17...\(\text{\texttt{xe4}}\) 18.\(\text{\texttt{xe4}}\) dxe4 19.\(\text{\texttt{xe4}}\) f5 20.\(\text{\texttt{g2}}\) g6 21.\(\text{\texttt{f3}}\)!, e.g. 21...\(\text{\texttt{f7}}\) 22.\(\text{\texttt{h3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{h7}}\) 23.\(\text{\texttt{xe7}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xe7}}\) 24.\(\text{\texttt{d2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{h8}}\) 25.\(\text{\texttt{g1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{g8}}\) 26.\(\text{\texttt{e1}}\) e5 27.\(\text{\texttt{xe5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xe6}}\) 28.\(\text{\texttt{xf2}}\). Instead, Black should continue 16...\(\text{\texttt{xe4}}\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{xe4}}\) (17.\(\text{\texttt{xe4}}\) dxe4 18.gxh6 f5 19.\(\text{\texttt{g1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{f6}}\) 20.\(\text{\texttt{g2}}\) g6) 17...dxe4 18.\(\text{\texttt{xe4}}\) f5 19.\(\text{\texttt{g2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{f7}}\) 20.\(\text{\texttt{e3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{h8}}\), with counterplay.

Amazingly, I have not any prac-
tactical example with this particular position in my database. Black has two radically different approaches here. The first one is to carry on ...d5 and play in the centre:

15...b4 16.axb4 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xb4 17.d4
d5 18.e5 (18.g5 hxg5 19.fxg5 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xe4 20.\( \mathcal{Q} \)xe4 dxe4 21.\( \mathcal{Q} \)xe4 g6) 18...
\( \mathcal{Q} \)h7 19.\( \mathcal{Q} \)f2 f6. This may be not the most exact move, but it gives us immediate counterplay. 20.exf6
\( \mathcal{Q} \)xf6 21.h3 e5 22.fxe5 \( \mathcal{Q} \)e4 23.\( \mathcal{W} \)e1
\( \mathcal{Q} \)xf1+ 24.\( \mathcal{Q} \)xf1 \( \mathcal{W} \)xe5 25.\( \mathcal{Q} \)xe4 dxe4
26.\( \mathcal{Q} \)g1 \( \mathcal{Q} \)d6 27.\( \mathcal{Q} \)d1 \( \mathcal{Q} \)c7 28.\( \mathcal{Q} \)g2 \( \mathcal{Q} \)d5
29.\( \mathcal{W} \)xe4 \( \mathcal{W} \)xe4 30.\( \mathcal{Q} \)xe4 \( \mathcal{Q} \)f6=.

The other alternative is more interesting: 15...\( \mathcal{Q} \)h7!? I analyse the same position (only the rook is not on b8, but on c8) in the comments to game 31 Ponomariov-Dubov. In our case, the game may continue 16.\( \mathcal{W} \)f2 a5 17.h4 b4 (17...g5!?)
18.hxg5 hxg5 19.e5 d5 20.\( \mathcal{Q} \)c5 \( \mathcal{Q} \)c8
21.\( \mathcal{Q} \)d3\( \infty \) 18.axb4 axb4 19.\( \mathcal{Q} \)e2 e5
20.g5 exf4 (After 20...hxg5 21.fxg5
g6, we reach the same pawn structure as in game 30 Guseinov-Vasovski.) 21.\( \mathcal{Q} \)xf4 hxg5 22.\( \mathcal{Q} \)d5 \( \mathcal{W} \)d8
23.hxg5 \( \mathcal{Q} \)e6 with a complex, balanced game.

\textbf{A3. 9.\( \mathcal{Q} \)e3}

A normal developing move which keeps all the options open. However, it is too tentative for a sharp opening as the Open Sicilian. Black gets time for development. Another downside of the text is seen in the variation 9...\( \mathcal{Q} \)f6 10.f4
\( \mathcal{Q} \)e7 11.\( \mathcal{Q} \)b3 b5 12.g4 h5 13.g5, when 13...\( \mathcal{Q} \)g4 is with tempo.

9...\( \mathcal{Q} \)f6

10.\( \mathcal{W} \)e2

10.f4 \( \mathcal{Q} \)e7 11.\( \mathcal{Q} \)b3 b5 and 10. \( \mathcal{Q} \)b3
are considered in line A2.
10.\( \mathcal{Q} \)xc6 transposes to line A62.

\textbf{10...\( \mathcal{Q} \)e7 11.f4}

From the other options, only 11.a4 0-0 12.\( \mathcal{Q} \)ad1 is of independent significance. Black equalises with typical Sicilian methods: 12...\( \mathcal{Q} \)xd4
13.\( \mathcal{Q} \)xd4 e5 14.\( \mathcal{Q} \)e3 b5 15.axb5 axb5
16.\( \mathcal{Q} \)g5 \( \mathcal{Q} \)fc8 17.\( \mathcal{Q} \)d3 \( \mathcal{Q} \)e6 18.\( \mathcal{Q} \)xb5
\( \mathcal{Q} \)xc2 19.\( \mathcal{Q} \)d6 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xd3 20.\( \mathcal{Q} \)xd3 \( \mathcal{Q} \)cb8=.

11...\( \mathcal{Q} \)c8!

If you read line A2 carefully, you should have noted that we prefer to develop the queenside before castling. Do not forget that White can always retreat the knight. For instance, 12.\( \mathcal{Q} \)b3 b5 13.a3, when simplest is 13...h6 14.\( \mathcal{Q} \)h1 0-0 15.g4 \( \mathcal{Q} \)h7.

12.\( \mathcal{Q} \)ad1 b5 13.a3 0-0
A devoted Sicilian player could only dream about such a position. Black is all set up for expanding on the queenside. 14.f5 \(\text{exd}4\) 15.\(\text{exd}4\) e5 16.\(\text{e}3\) a5 17.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{c}6\) would be roughly equal. White can play \(\text{b}3\) or allow ...\(\text{xd}4\), for example:

14.\(\text{h}1\) \(\text{xd}4\) 15.\(\text{xd}4\) e5 16.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{e}6\)

The chances are even. Medina-Tal, Palma de Mallorca 1966, went 17.\(\text{fe}1\) \(\text{c}4\) 18.\(\text{d}2\) a5.

A4. 9.\(\text{e}1\)

The play usually transposes to other lines. I examine here some specific variations.

9...\(\text{e}7\) 10.\(\text{b}3\) b5? (10...\(\text{d}6\) is better)

I recommended the same active approach against the 9.\(\text{b}3\)-line. The current position hides a slight nuance – instead of a bishop on e3 White has the rook on e1. The latter supports the threat of e5, but also makes Black's counterplay with ...h5 more efficient because in that case the rook is needed on f1.

Most of the games feature 10...\(\text{f}6\), when 11.a4 follows the idea of the previous retreat. White wants to bind the left wing by a5. If now Black answers 11...b6 12.f4 0-0 13.g4 (13.\(\text{h}1\) enables another set-up: 13...\(\text{fd}8\) 14.g4 \(\text{e}8\) 15.g5 \(\text{d}7\)) 13...\(\text{c}8\) 14.g5 \(\text{d}7\), we'll have a typical Schemeningen position. However, a4-a5 is not so dreadful: 11...0-0 12.a5 \(\text{e}5\) 13.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{ac}8\) 14.g4 \(\text{h}6\) with excellent play. White is unable to break through the dark-square blockade on the kingside.

11.a3 (11.f4 fails to 11...b4 12.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{f}6\)) 11...\(\text{f}6\) 12.\(f4\)

White's strategy is a failure. Black can choose between 12...\(\text{d}8\) and the more enterprising, but risky 12...\(\text{c}8\). In both lines 13.e5 does not work. 13.g4 is not much better due to 13...h5 14.g5 (14.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{hxg}4\) 15.\(\text{hxg}4\) g5!? 16.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{h}7\). This variation would have been bad against the \(\text{e}3-\text{f}1\) setup!) 14...\(\text{g}4\).

The big difference between the two rook moves is seen in the variation 13.\(\text{e}3\). White renews the threat of g4. With the rook on d8,
The fianchettò

Black could castle 13...0-0 since 14.g4 is met by 14...c8 15.g5 d7.

12...c8 13.e3 practically forces Black to adopt the defence with 13...h6 14.g4 h7 15.gd2 (15.f2 d7) 15...g5∞ with very sharp play.

In game 27 Hoogendoorn-Lautier, Algarve 1999 Black realised a dubious mix of both plans.

A5. 9.a4

9...d6

I have noted before that the exchange 9...xd4 10.xd4 d6 11.e3 (11.g5 e7 12.fd1 c8=) e7 12.a5 leaves Black without much counterplay.

10.b3

The bad news now is that 10...b6?! 11.f4 e7 12.e3 followed by g4 leads to a known variation from the Scheveningen with a clear extra tempo for White who commonly spends time on e2-f3-g2.

Black is in a similar tempo-down situation after 10...a5?! 11.a5 d5 12.d2 c7 13.a5.

Now, here is the good news: Black can ignore the threat of a4-a5!

10...e7 11.a5 (11.f4 d5) 11...e5! 12.f4 c4

13.e2

13.g4 is risky when Black’s king is still on e8. After 13...h6 14.e2 (14.h4 b5) 14...c8 15.h1 g5, Black could try to gain the initiative counting on the excellent position of his knight on c4 (15...h7 is worth consideration too, e.g. 16.f2 0-0 17.h4 g5∞). Serper-Epishin, Tashkent 1987, saw further 16.fxg5?! (16.h3 gf4 17.hf4 h7∞) 16...hxg5 17.xg5 b2 18.e5 c3∞.

After the text move, Black should decide how to face White’s pawn storm on the kingside. I think it is good to raise a pawn barrage on the dark squares:

13...e5?!

Remember that castling and retreating the knight to e8 is clearly in White’s favour. More interesting is the old suggestion of GM Cebalo to sacrifice a pawn with ...d5. His
analysis in Informator 33/312 examines (by transposition): 13...0-0 14.g4 d5! 15.e5 (15.exd5 Qf6!) 15... Qxe4 16.Qxe4 dxe4 17.Qxe4 Qb5 18.Qd3 Qad8=. However, no one has tested it for more than twenty years already.

14.f5 Qc8

14...h6 is also possible, intending to meet 15.g4 by 15...b5 16.axb6 Qxb6 17.Qh1 Qc8.

15.g4 h6

I like Black's position. In the game Trichkov-Peschardt, Lyngby 1991, White attempted to fulfil his main strategic goal with 16.h4 Qd8= 17.g5 hxg5 18.hxg5 Qh5 19.Qg4 Qf4 20.g6, when 20...Qh4!= would have been sobering.

A6. 9.Qxc6

White often resorts to this exchange after 9.Qe1 Qe7. Perhaps such a move order is more accurate, because it enables an interesting positional sacrifice against 10.Qxc6 dxc6. White could follow up with 11.e5!? dxe5 12.Qe2 or 11.Qa4 Qb8 (11...Qd8 12.Qe2 Qc8 13.e5 d5 14.Qd4 Timman-Marjanovic, Zagreb 1985) 12.e5 dxe5 13.b3 Qf6 14.Qb2=.

9...Qxc6

9...bxc6 is probably underrated. It leads to complex play.

A61. 10.Qe1; A62. 10.a4

We have reached the key position of the g3-system. Perhaps White players like it so much because one does not need any home analysis in order to reach and play it. White has some spatial advantage, better development and no weaknesses. This is one of the safest line in the Open Sicilian! Still, Black keeps refining his defence and currently has no considerable theoretical problems.

A61. 10.Qe1

White does not renounce the a4-a5 plan. On the contrary, most of the games transpose to line A62 in the next moves. However, the text move requires from Black concrete knowledge of some sharp variations which I examine in the next lines.

10...Qe7!

10...Qf6 11.Qd5 Qxd5 12.exd5 e5 13.f4 Qe7 14.Qe2 with some pull.
The Fianchetto

Now 11.a4 leads to A62.

11...\textit{\texttt{gf4}} is an overt proposition of a draw: 11...\textit{\texttt{g6}} (you can keep some tension at your own risk by 11...e5 12.\textit{\texttt{ge3}} \textit{\texttt{gf6}} 13.\textit{\texttt{gg5}} \textit{\texttt{g8}} 14.\textit{\texttt{wd2}} h6 15.\textit{\texttt{ge7}} \textit{\texttt{xe7}} 12.e5 dxe5 13.\textit{\texttt{xe5}} \textit{\texttt{wb6}} 14.\textit{\texttt{d4}} \textit{\texttt{wc7}} 15.\textit{\texttt{ee5}}. Then 15...\textit{\texttt{wc8}} 16.\textit{\texttt{xf6}} \textit{\texttt{xf6}} 17.\textit{\texttt{xe4}} \textit{\texttt{xe4}}= looks like a dead draw, Shevelev-Lerner, Israel 2003.

White’s only hope to punish the opponent for his particular move order is:

11.\textit{\texttt{gg4}} h5! 12.\textit{\texttt{we2}} h4

12...b5?! is a serious mistake. In this system, White’s main plan is based on a queenside expansion. Black’s pseudo-activity goes half way the opponent’s intention. White will easily break-through by a4 with an edge.

13.a4 hxg3 14.hxg3

A fashionable position. I play it with both sides! White is going to push a5 and introduce a minor piece on b6. Then he will try to advance the c- and b-pawns.

Black’s counterplay is not evident. In all events he will display activity on the opposite wing. Firstly he should decide where to evacuate the king. Currently ...\textit{\texttt{gf8}}, intending ...\textit{\texttt{g6}} and ...\textit{\texttt{g7}}, looks preferable to castling.

The activation of Black’s queen is another urgent matter. On the left wing it is constantly harassed by the enemy’s bishop, rook and knight, so it has to find a way to the other half of the board. You can see in my game against Fressinet the manoeuvre \textit{\texttt{wc7-d7-e8}} having in mind \textit{\texttt{g8-h7}} after \textit{\texttt{g6}} and \textit{\texttt{g7}}. Another route for the queen is \textit{\texttt{wc7-d7-g4}} (e6) after a preliminary \textit{\texttt{e6-e5}}.

As a whole, Black has fair chances. See the annotated games 28 and 29 in the “Complete Games” section in order to better understand the options of both sides. I’ll confine myself here only to the problem of the best move order in the diagram position.

14...\textit{\texttt{gf8}}!

14...\textit{\texttt{gf6}} is a normal, frequent-
ly seen move. Its downside is that White could answer 15...f4 e5 16.g5 d7 17.xf6 xf6. Black may hold this position, but his winning prospects are null, for instance after 18.ed1 (18.b4! is better) 18...d8 19.a5.

15.a5 c8

Black should evade the trap 15...g6 16.e3 c6 17.b6 c8 18.ad1 g7 19.d5! which is based on the hanging state of the e7-bishop. Against Berescu, I answered 19...xd5 20.exd5 e5 21.c4 d8, when 22.b4! xb6 23.axb6 a5 24.c5 would have given White an initiative. 20...xd5 21.exd5 xf6 22.wf3 d7 23.d4 xd4 24.exd4 does not solve the problems either. This example explains the reason behind the otherwise awkward continuation 15...e8!? 16.e3 f6. I discuss it in game 29 Timman-V. Milov, Biel 1995.

16.e3 f6∞.

Delchev, Calvia ol 2004. See the "Complete Games" chapter.

A62. 10.a4 d6 11.a5 e7 12.e3 0-0

12...d7 gives White a tempo for c4 as in Leko-Zvjaginsev, Wijk aan Zee 1995, which went on:

13.a4 0-0 14.b6 eae8 15.c4!
The text move keeps the hit on e4, so White must include e1 before heading with the knight for b6.

13.b6

I have not seen any new ideas in this variation lately. White is very solid, but Black has no weaknesses. A popular alternative is:

13.e1 d7 14.a4 eae8!. This is is Black's only active plan. It is enough for obtaining sufficient counterplay:

15.b6 f5 16.xd7

Alternatives are:

a) 16.exf5 xg2 17.xg2 xf5;

b) 16.d4, when 16...f4!? looks
best. 16...e5 is not bad, but it offers White the d5-square – 17.e3 f4 18.d5 xd5 19.wxd5 h8 20.d2 b5! (White develops a very strong initiative after 20...fxg3 21.hxg3 xc2?! 22.ec1 xb2 23.ab1 d4 24.e3!±) 21.axb6 xb6 22 wb3 and White even has an initiative after 22...fxg3 23.axb6 gxh2+ 24.xh2 xb6 25.g3 c8 26.e3 c4 27.c1 c6=.

16...xd7 17.d3 (17.b6?! f4↑) 17...fxe4 18.xe4 xe4 19.xe4 d5=. Also equal is 19...f6 20.b4 d5 21.c3 c8 22.ad1=.

13...b8 14.e1

14.w2 is similar: 14...d7 15.d4 c7 16.fd1 ac8 17.b3 f6=, Sharafiev-Zakhartsov, Kazan 2010.

Black's position is somewhat cramped so exchanges should relieve his defence.


B. 7...h5!?

One way or another, Black will exchange a couple of minor pieces and hold the ensuing positions.

14.d7

Black aims to create tension on the kingside and hinder the enemy plan of castling short and then advancing the g-pawn. Lately, ...h5 has become very popular in the Najdorf, but in that opening it has only restrictive functions. In our case, this advance pursues much more active goals: we hope to open the h-file and use it for an attack. We may castle long or leave the king in the centre (f8 seems a safe place). Should White answer 8.h3 h4 9.g4, we'll base our play on the weakness of the squares f4 and g3.

Jeroen Bosch recommends this attack in his electronic book SOS File 2: Sicilian Taimanov, but with a totally wrong argumentation.

Main branches now are:
B1. 8.h4?!, B2. 8.h3; 8.B3. 8.0-0
8.\(f3\) and 8.\(b3\) lack any sense. 8.\(g5\) counts only on 8...\(e7\)? which is a positional mistake before White has castled short since he can exchange on e7 and follow up with \(\texttt{d}d2\), 0-0-0.

However, White’s bishop on g5 will give us a valuable tempo for ...f6 at some point. Reasonable options are:

8...\(\texttt{ge7}\) intending 9.\(\texttt{d}d2\) \(\texttt{xd}d4\) 10.\(\texttt{xd}d4\) \(\texttt{c}c6\);
8...f6 9.\(\texttt{f}f4\) e5 10.\(\texttt{c}c6\) dc6 11.\(\texttt{e}e3\) \(\texttt{g}g4\) 12.\(\texttt{f}f3\) \(\texttt{xd}8\) 13.\(\texttt{e}e2\) \(\texttt{h}h6=\);
8...\(\texttt{e}e5\) 9.\(\texttt{e}e2\)

The most principled continuation now is 9...\(\texttt{a}a3\) 10.\(\texttt{d}d1\) \(\texttt{b}b2\) 11.\(\texttt{b}b2\) \(\texttt{c}c3\) 12.\(\texttt{d}d2\) \(\texttt{xb}2\). Let the opponent prove his compensation for the pawn. 13.0-0 \(\texttt{c}c4\) 14.\(\texttt{d}d3\) \(\texttt{e}e5\) 15.\(\texttt{d}d1\) f6 16.\(\texttt{e}e3\) (16.\(\texttt{f}f4\) h4 17.\(\texttt{f}f3\) \(\texttt{f}f7\infty\)) 16...h4. In the diagram position Black can also try 9...h4?.

B1. 8.h4?! \(\texttt{f}6\)

We’ll try to prove that the insertion of h4-h5 favours Black. Let’s compare some of the main lines without these moves:

7...\(\texttt{f}f6\) 8.0-0 \(\texttt{c}c5\) 9.\(\texttt{xc}c6\) dxc6 10.\(\texttt{a}a4\) \(\texttt{a}a7\) 11.\(\texttt{c}c4\) and:
7...h5 8.h4 \(\texttt{f}f6\) 9.0-0 \(\texttt{c}c5\) 10.\(\texttt{xc}c6\) dxc6 11.\(\texttt{a}a4\) \(\texttt{a}a7\) 12.c4? \(\texttt{w}xg3\)! – the g3-square is weak.
Or 7...\(\texttt{c}c5\) 8.\(\texttt{b}b3\) \(\texttt{a}a7\) 9.\(\texttt{g}g4\) \(\texttt{f}f8\) – White has not \(\texttt{w}g4\) at all. Another argument is that White’s play is mostly based on f4, when the g4-square will become a gaping hole. Therefore, I advocate:

8...\(\texttt{f}f6\)

I do not like 8...\(\texttt{c}c5\) 9.\(\texttt{b}b3\) \(\texttt{a}a7\) 10.\(\texttt{f}f4\) \(\texttt{e}e5\) in view of 11.\(\texttt{xe}e5\) \(\texttt{w}xe5\) 12.f4 \(\texttt{w}c7\) 13.\(\texttt{e}e2\) d6 14.0-0-0\(\in\) where d6 is very weak. We need to improve this idea.

9.0-0

9...\(\texttt{c}c5\) 10.\(\texttt{xc}c6\)

10.\(\texttt{b}b3\) \(\texttt{a}a7\) 11.\(\texttt{f}f4\) \(\texttt{e}e5\) is already fine for Black. 10.\(\texttt{e}e3\) is also innocuous due to 10...\(\texttt{e}e5\). 10.\(\texttt{f}f4?\) presents another example of the dividends Black can reap from the insertion of h4-h5: 10...e5 11.\(\texttt{b}b3\) exf4 12.\(\texttt{xc}c5\) fxg3.
The Fianchetto

10...dxc6 11.\(d\)d3 \(g\)g4 12.\(a\)a4 \(a\)a7 13.c4 b5

I prefer Black here.

B2. 8.h3 h4 9.g4

9...\(c\)c5!

White's kingside dark squares are weakened. Jeroen Bosch considers only:

9...\(g\)ge7?! It looks consistent to put a knight to g6, but this development is a bit slow, and, moreover, passive. White castles long and takes the initiative:

10.\(d\)de2! \(g\)g6 11.\(e\)e3!

Bosch completely missed this idea. 11.f4 b5 (11...\(c\)c5 12.e5 d5 13.exd6 \(x\)xd6 14.\(e\)e4) 12.\(e\)e3 \(a\)a5 13.b3 \(b\)b7 14.\(d\)d2 \(c\)c8 15.0-0-0 \(c\)c6! is double-edged.

I have analysed in the diagram position:

a) 11.\(a\)a5 12.b3 b5 13.\(d\)d2 \(b\)b7 (13...\(a\)a3 14.0-0-0 0-0 15.\(a\)ad1) 14.a4! (14.0-0-0 \(c\)c8 15.f4 \(c\)c6!) 14...b4 15.\(a\)a2 \(c\)c6 16.0-0-0 \(e\)e7 17.f4. I do not see clear counterplay for Black in this position.

b) 11.\(c\)ce5 12.b3 \(a\)a3 13.f4 \(c\)c6 is rather extravagant. Black is too generously presenting tempi. White can calmly develop, or open the centre with 14.e5 d5 15.exd6 \(x\)xd6 16.\(e\)e4 \(e\)e7 17.0-0, intending f4-f5.

As a whole, White achieves in these lines comfortable and harmonious development. His bishop stays excellently on e3.

9...\(c\)c5 addresses exactly this issue since 10.\(e\)e3 \(b\)b6 would be positionally fine for Black after 11.\(a\)a4 \(a\)a5+ 12.\(c\)c3 \(x\)xd4 13.\(x\)xd4 \(x\)xd4 14.\(x\)xd4 e5 or 11.\(c\)ce2 \(x\)xd4 (11...\(x\)xb2 12.\(x\)xe6 \(b\)b4+ 13.\(c\)c3 \(d\)xe6 14.\(c\)xb4 \(x\)xb4+ 15.\(d\)d2\(\#\)) 12.\(x\)xd4 \(x\)xd4 13.\(x\)xd4 \(x\)xd4 14.\(x\)xd4 \(e\)e7 15.0-0-0 \(g\)g6 16.\(e\)e2 \(e\)e7 17.f4 d6. In both lines White remains with a "bad" light-squared bishop and kingside pawns fixed on the same colour.

10.\(b\)b3

If White's knight has to retreat, it is better to do it with tempo. 10.\(d\)de2 b5 11.0-0 \(b\)b7 12.\(f\)f4 d6
13...\textit{a}a7 11.\textit{e}e2 \textit{g}ge7 12.\textit{f}f4

12.\textit{e}e3 \textit{g}g6 13.\textit{x}xa7 \textit{b}xa7 would make a horrible hole on f4.

12...\textit{b}5

12...\textit{d}d4 13.\textit{d}xd4 \textit{xd}d4 14.\textit{d}d2 \textit{d}6 15.0-0-0 \textit{d}d7 is also possible, but I prefer to complete development.

13.\textit{e}e3

13.e5 \textit{b}7 14.\textit{e}e4 0-0 leads to a curious position where White is overextended and should be worried about possible \ldots f6. 15.\textit{d}d6 does not help in view of 15...\textit{d}d4 and 15.c3 \textit{b}4 apparently passes Black the initiative.

13...\textit{g}5!?

This is by no means the only move, but I chose it since it best illustrates Black's strategic goal in the 7...h5 variation. Now the e5-square is under his full control. The weakness of g3 is also essential. The play may continue 14.\textit{f}f1 \textit{x}xe3 15.\textit{w}xe3 \textit{g}xf4 16.\textit{w}xf4 \textit{g}g6 17.\textit{f}f2 \textit{w}g3, or 14.\textit{x}xa7 \textit{b}xa7 15.\textit{x}g5 \textit{w}g3+ 16.\textit{f}f2 \textit{w}fxf2+ 17.\textit{h}xf2 \textit{g}g8=.

\textbf{B3. 8.0-0 \textit{h}4 9.\textit{e}e1}

9.\textit{d}xc6 \textit{d}xc6 (9...\textit{b}xc6 10.\textit{a}a4 \textit{d}6 is also an option) 10.\textit{e}e3 \textit{h}xg3 11.\textit{h}xg3 \textit{d}f6 12.\textit{a}a4 \textit{d}d7 13.\textit{c}c4 \textit{b}5 14.\textit{c}c3 \textit{bxc}4 gives Black counterplay on the queenside.

9...\textit{h}xg3 10.\textit{h}xg3 \textit{d}6

I would like to lead out the bishop, but 10...\textit{c}5? (Bosch's recommendation!) 11.\textit{d}xc6! \textit{b}xc6 (11...\textit{d}xc6 12.e5) 12.e5! is horrible for Black. He is positionally lost here.

11.\textit{d}xc6!

If White misses the opportunity to trade knights, he might not have a second chance. For instance, after 11.\textit{g}5 (as Radulski played against Ivanisevic), Black has 11...\textit{e}e5 or even 11...\textit{e}e7 12.\textit{d}xe7 \textit{d}xe7!?.

The same applies to 11.a4 \textit{e}e5, although 11...\textit{f}6 is also possible. Then the thematic 12.\textit{d}xc6 \textit{b}xc6 13.e5 \textit{d}xe5 14.\textit{x}xe5 can be attacked by 14...\textit{d}xe5! 15.\textit{d}xe5+ \textit{d}7 16.\textit{a}a8 \textit{g}4 17.\textit{f}f4 \textit{w}h5 where the open h-file is a nice asset – 18.\textit{w}f3 is only move as 18.\textit{d}d2 \textit{c}5 19.\textit{d}d1 \textit{e}5 20.\textit{e}e3 \textit{w}h7!! is rather unpleasant.

11...\textit{b}xc6
to f6 has no alternative. The typical manoeuvre ...\=g8-e7-c6 leads to a passive position: 13...\=e7 14.\=b2 c5 15.\=d2 \=c6 16.\=ad1 0-0-0 (16...f6 17.\=c3 a5 18.\=b2, heading for c4) 17.c4\#. White then carries out b4.

14.c4 c5 15.\=b2 (if White delays this move, hoping to meet ...\=g6 by \=g5, then we’ll occupy the main diagonal with 15.\=e2 \=c6 16.\=c3 \=f6=, e.g. 17.\=b2 \=f8 18.\=d1 \=xb2 19.\=xb2 e5) 15...\=f6 16.\=e2 \=c6!? 17.\=c3 \=f8.

b) Another version of the same set-up was tested in the blitz game Malakhov-Grischuk, Moscow 2013: 12.\=e3 \=f6 [Black may also cover the b6-square with 12...\=b7 13.\=a4 c5 (13...\=e7? 14.\=b6 \=b8 15.e5), but then White can refrain from c4 and swing the a4-knight to that square, starting with 14.b3.] 13.\=a4 \=b8 14.c4 c5. It might seem that White has won a tempo (by having provoked ...\=b8), but the bishop is misplaced on e3 and he will probably have to redeploy it. 15.b3 \=e7 16.\=e2 \=b7 17.\=d3 \=d7 18.\=ad1 \=d8 (18...\=f8) 19.\=c1 \=e5 (19...\=f6) 20.\=b2 \=c6 21.\=b1 \=f6 22.\=xf6 gxf6\#.

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12...d5 13.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{\texttt{b}7}\)

We must prepare to take on c4 or we would risk to remain without any counterplay: 13...\(\text{e}7\) 14.c4 \(\text{f}5\) 15.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{b}8\) 16.\(\text{c}1\) \(\text{a}7\) 17.a3+.

14.c4 dxc4! 15.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{e}7\)

16.\(\text{a}4\)

16...\(\text{d}8\) 17.\(\text{x}c4\)? \(\text{f}5\) was fine for Black in Musakaev-Malakhatko, Pavlodar 2012: 18.\(\text{e}3\) [It is understandable that White does not wish to let Black’s rook to d4: 18.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{d}4\) 19.\(\text{e}2\) c5 20.\(\text{a}d1\) (20.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{e}7\) 21.\(\text{x}e7\) \(\text{x}e7\) 22.\(\text{a}c1\) \(\text{x}e4\) 23.\(\text{x}e4\) \(\text{xe5}\) 24.\(\text{x}a6=\) 20...\(\text{e}7\) 21.\(\text{x}e7\) \(\text{x}e7\) 22.\(\text{x}b7\) \(\text{x}b7\) 23.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{d}5\), with a firm grip of the centre.] 18...\(\text{xe3}\) 19.\(\text{xe3}\) \(\text{e}7\) 20.\(\text{a}d1\) \(\text{xd1+}\) (20...0-0) 21.\(\text{xd1}\) 0-0 22.\(\text{b}3\) a5 23.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{a}8\) 24.\(\text{g}4\), draw.

However, 17.\(\text{g}5!\) \(\text{d}7\) (17...\(\text{d}4\) 18.\(\text{e}3\) 18.\(\text{x}c4\) is better for White: 18...\(\text{d}5\) 19.\(\text{a}c1!\) or 18...\(\text{g}6\) 19.\(\text{a}d1!\) \(\text{xd1}\) 20.\(\text{xd1}\) \(\text{h}5\) 21.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{h}8\) 22.\(\text{f}3\); when 22...\(\text{x}e5??\) 23.\(\text{x}e5\) \(\text{xe5}\) 24.\(\text{x}c6+\) is a very economic mate.

17.\(\text{x}c4\) c5 18.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{f}5\) 19.\(\text{e}3\)

I have also analysed 19.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{d}4\) 20.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{d}5!\)

A curious position where Black cannot move his dark-haired bishop, but White cannot make progress either:

21.\(\text{c}d1\) \(\text{c}6\) 22.\(\text{x}d4\) \(\text{c}d4\) 23.\(\text{a}5\) (23.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{h}5\)) 23...\(\text{b}8\) 24.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{b}7\)

21.\(\text{a}c1\) \(\text{c}6\) 22.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{f}3\) \(\text{b}8\) 23.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{b}7\) 24.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{a}7\) 25.\(\text{c}d1\) \(\text{b}5\).

19...\(\text{d}xe3\) 20.\(\text{dxe3}\) \(\text{xe}5!?)

The most principled continuation. Sprenger-Avrukh, Sibenik 2012, went 20...\(\text{d}d4\) 21.\(\text{x}c2\) c4 22.\(\text{d}d1\) \(\text{xe5}\) 23.\(\text{x}d4\) \(\text{xd4}\). Here 24.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{gxg2}\) 25.\(\text{x}g2\) \(\text{d}5+\) 26.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{b}7\) 27.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{c}5\) 28.\(\text{x}e4\) \(\text{b}6\) may be equal, according to the computer, but perhaps it is easier to play with White whose king is more safe.

21.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{d}d4\) 22.\(\text{d}6+\) \(\text{xd6}\) 23.\(\text{x}b7+\) \(\text{d}7\) 24.\(\text{xa}6\) \(\text{e}7\) 25.\(\text{c}6\) \(\text{g}6=\)

The king returns home via the dark squares.
Part 5. The Fianchetto

Kan – Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4 a6 5.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)3 \(\text{\textit{w}}\)c7 6.g3 \(\text{\textit{b}}\)4!

The possibility for this active development makes the Kan a perfect weapon against the fianchetto fans. White has not displayed any new ideas for a long time. We can simply look at a couple of Smyslov’s 40-years-old games to set us ready for the battle.

In the diagram position, White can defend the c3-knight with:

A. 7.\(\text{\textit{t}}\)l\(\text{\textit{d}}\)e2 or B. 7.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d2

A. 7.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)de2 \(\text{\textit{f}}\)6 8.\(\text{\textit{g}}\)g2 d6 9.0-0

9.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)4 e5 10.\(\text{\textit{g}}\)5 provokes 10...\(\text{\textit{d}}\)bd7, but Black had exactly this set-up in mind anyway! Van Riemsdijk-Smyslov, Buenos Aires 1990, went further 11.0-0 h6 12.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d2 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)5 13.\(\text{\textit{a}}\)a4 \(\text{\textit{a}}\)a7 14.\(\text{\textit{b}}\)b4 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)5 15.\(\text{\textit{x}}\)xc5 when 15...\(\text{\textit{x}}\)xc5 16.\(\text{\textit{x}}\)xc5 \(\text{\textit{w}}\)xc5 17.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)c3 \(\text{\textit{e}}\)e6 18.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d5 \(\text{\textit{x}}\)xd5 would have offered Black the better prospects. In this typical pawn structure, the knight is more mobile than the bishop.

9...\(\text{\textit{d}}\)bd7

I advocate to delay castling in order to leave White without a clear plan. However, 9...0-0 is a viable option: 10.h3 \(\text{\textit{d}}\)bd7 11.g4

After this advance, Black’s main task becomes to prepare ...d5. He may use his king’s rook (...\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d8) or leave it on f8 to support a pawn break by the f-pawn as in Antonov-Donchev, Sofia 1984, which saw 11.a3 \(\text{\textit{a}}\)a5 12.\(\text{\textit{h}}\)h1 \(\text{\textit{b}}\)b8 13.g4 b5 14.f4 \(\text{\textit{b}}\)7 15.g5 \(\text{\textit{e}}\)e8 16.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)f3 (16.f5 exf5) 16...\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d8 17.\(\text{\textit{g}}\)g3 \(\text{\textit{b}}\)b8 18.b3 d5 and Black intercepted the initiative.
In Ree-Darga, Las Palmas 1973, Black played 11...\( \text{d8} \) immediately. The game continued 12.g5 \( \text{dxe8} \) 13.f4 b5 14.h4 \( \text{b7} \) 15.a3 \( \text{c5+} \) 16.h1, when 16...d5! would have made clear who was in command.

**10.h3**

White may try to harass our bishop with:

a) 10.a4 e5 11.a3 \( \text{c5} \) 12.xc5 \( \text{xc5} \) 13.c3

Similar positions arise in the Najdorf when White plays \( \text{c3-} \) \( \text{d5xe7} \). They are known to be fine for Black – all his pieces are active and he has the better control of the centre. The game Katalymov-Karasev, Naumburg 2002, went 13...e6 (13...h6!?). 14.g5 cd7 15.d2 h6 16.e3 b6 17.b3 c8=.

b) 10.d2 \( \text{c5+} \) (mind the trap 10...0-0? 11.b5) 11.a4

After 11.f4 0-0 12.e2 e5 13.ad1 b5 14.h5 \( \text{xh5} \) 15.xh5 \( \text{b7} \), Black owns the initiative, Medina-Smyslov, Las Palmas 1972.

11...a7 12.b4 \( \text{c5} \) 13.xc5 \( \text{xc5} \) 14.d2 e5 15.ad1

Here, 15...e6 16.xc5 dxc5 17.c3 d8 18.d5 xd5 19.exd5 wd6 was equal in Filippov-Steinwagen, Yerevan 2006: 20.cf1 0-0 21.c4 d7 22.f4 de8 23.fxe5 xe5 24.h3 f5=. A simpler solution is 15...g4 16.xc5 xc5 17.h3 xe2 18.xe2 0-0=.

**10...c5! 11.g4 h6**

This is the point of 9...bd7. By not castling, Black forestalls the enemy attack on the kingside. Thus he gains time to complete his queenside development and prepare a break in the centre or a counter-attack against the enemy king. White's task in the diagram position is not trivial. His main idea of pushing g5 is no longer enticing.
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while the advance of the f-pawn is at least double-edged: 12.\_h1 \_b8 13.f4 b5 14.a3 \_b7 15.f5 exf5 16.\_xf5 h5!? 17.g5 \_g4.

The stem game Micheli-Smyslov, Venice 1974, went instead:

12.a4 \_e5 13.\_h2 \_e7 (13...\_g6!?) 14.\_g3 g5

Black’s dark-squared strategy has triumphed.

B. 7.\_d2 \_f6 8.\_g2 \_c6 9.\_b3

B1. 9...0-0!?; B2. 9...\_e7

Miezis’ pet line 9...h5 10.f4 d6 11.a3 \_xc3 12.\_xc3 e5 is an inferior version of line B1. White’s bishop pair is restricted, the kingside pawn storm is stalled. Still, I do not like this set-up. It is too passive – Black’s pieces have mostly defensive functions. The game Garnelis-Miezis, Kaunas 2009, showed a good, active approach for White: 13.\_d2! a5 14.0-0-0 a4 15.fx e 5 dxe 5 16.\_c5 0-0 17.h3 \_a5 (17...\_d8 18.\_g5 \_d4 19.\_xd4 exd4 20.\_d3 \_e6 21.\_f4 \_c4 22.\_b4±) 18.\_d3 \_c4 19.\_g5. White is slightly ahead with his attack.

B1. 9...0-0!?

This move is consistent with line A. We do not waste any tempo on retreating the bishop to e7, but opt for a sound positional idea – to build up a pawn barricade on the central dark squares. Our lead in development practically rules out any White’s plan with early pawn advances since both 10.g4 or 10.f4 will be strongly met by 10...d5! 11.exd5 exd5.

10.\_e2 or 10.a3, besides 10...\_xc3 11.\_xc3 e5, could also face 10...\_e7!?, transposing to sidelines of line B2.

10.0-0 d6 11.f4

11...\_xc3

Black may not need 11...b5 at all. Guseinov-Ghaem Maghami, Fujairah City 2012, went 12.g4 \_d7 13.g5 and Black returned to the advance of the a-pawn: 13...a5 14.a3
\( \text{\textbf{\textit{Part 5}}} \)

12.\( \text{x}c3 \) e5 13.\( f5 \) a5

It is against common sense to make weaknesses on the flank your opponent will attack. Still, 13...h6 is an interesting option. The game Kudrin-Dobrov, Moscow 2004, went 14.\( \text{d}2 \) a5 15.a4 b5 (15...\( \text{d}8?! \) 16.\( g4 \) \( \text{b}4 \) intending 17...d5) 16.axb5 \( \text{b}6+ \) 17.\( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{x}b5 \) 18.\( g4 \) \( \text{b}7 \) (18...a4?! 19.\( g5 \) \( \text{x}g5 \) 20.\( \text{x}g5 \) \( \text{h}7 \) 21.\( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 22.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{x}b2 \) 23.\( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{d}4\text{+} \) 19.\( g5 \) \( \text{x}g5 \) 20.\( \text{x}g5\text{=} \)). Perhaps White should try something more energetic as 14.\( g4 \) a5 15.\( h4 \) a4 16.\( g5 \) \( \text{h}7 \) 17.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{x}g5 \) 18.\( \text{x}g5 \) \( \text{x}g5 \) 19.\( \text{h}5 \) f6 20.\( \text{f}3 \) although White’s attack is not too impressive.

Instead, I consider an immediate counter-attack with the a-pawn. Black can also start with ...13...b5. The following variations are far from being encompassing. I only aimed to show the defensive stand against White’s most direct attacking plan.

14.\( g4 \)

14.a3 gives a tempo for a break in the centre: 14...\( \text{d}8 \) 15.\( g4 \) h6 16.\( h4?! \) a4 17.\( \text{d}2 \) d5 18.exd5 \( \text{xd}5 \) 19.\( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{xd}5 \) 20.\( g5 \) \( \text{d}4\text{+} \).

14...a4 15.\( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 16.\( \text{c}1 \) a3

17.\( b3 \) b5 18.\( \text{f}3 \) b4 19.\( \text{d}2 \) a6 20.\( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{fc}8 \)

White has achieved everything he was aiming for. And still he cannot break through!

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

Or 21.f6 g6 22.\( \text{e}1 \) d4 23.\( \text{h}4 \) h5—+

21...\( \text{f}8 \) 22.\( \text{d}3 \)

22.f6 \( \text{d}8 \) 23.\( \text{f}xg7 \) \( \text{x}g7\text{+} \) or 22.g6 \( \text{f}xg6 \) 23.\( \text{f}xg6 \) \( \text{d}4\text{—++} \) favour Black.

22...\( \text{x}d3 \) 23.\( \text{x}d3 \) \( \text{d}4 \) 24.c3 \( \text{x}c3 \) 25.\( \text{x}c3 \) \( \text{b}5 \) 26.\( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{w}b7 \! \)

Black’s chances are preferable, e.g. 27.f6 \( \text{c}2 \) 28.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{ac}8 \) 29.\( \text{f}xg7 \) \( \text{x}g7 \) 30.\( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{e}8 \).

B2. 9...\( \text{e}7 \)

At first sight Black has lost a tempo with the bishop manoeuvre.
The Fianchetto

In fact, we'll see later that he might have even gained one, as in the variations where he plays ...\( \text{c6-e5-c4} \) and White retreats his bishop to \( \text{c1} \). A more important argument in favour of the inclusion of ...\( \text{b4} \) is that White has no longer the option of capturing on \( \text{c6} \), followed by \( \text{e4-e5} \). We know that this threat is the crux of the opening battle in the Taimanov. Without it, Black has green light for developing the queenside pieces while delaying his castle. In more general terms, White has one piece less in the centre and that allows more aggressive play from Black.

10. 0-0

White often connects the placement of his knight on \( \text{b3} \) with the advance of his a-pawn:

a) 10.a4. In practice Black automatically answers 10...\( \text{b6} \), ...\( \text{b7} \), ...\( \text{d6} \), ...\( \text{d7} \) and then defines the future of his king. If White has weakened his kingside, ...0-0-0 becomes a plausible option. I consider in detail this setup in game 33 Forcen-Korneev, La Roda 2012.

However, I would like also to offer you as a surprise weapon a new idea, which tries to exploit the concrete move order:

10...0-0!?

Now 11.f4 will be strongly met by 11...\( \text{d5} \) 12.exd5 \( \text{b4} \). We often meet this sacrifice in this chapter. So White should carry on his plan:

11.a5 \( \text{e5} \) 12.0-0 (12.\( \text{a4} \) \( \text{c4} \))
12...\( \text{c4} \) 13.\( \text{c1} \) d6 14.g4

14.\( \text{e2} \) looks pointless due to 14...\( \text{d7} \), when 15.g4 (15.f4 \( \text{b5} \)) could be met by 15...\( \text{d5} \) 16.exd5 \( \text{d8} \) 17.g5 (17.dxe6?! \( \text{xe6} \) 18.h3 \( \text{d8} \)) 17...\( \text{d5} \) 18.exd5 exd5 19.\( \text{xd5} \), when 19...\( \text{d8} \) 20.\( \text{d6} \) 21.f4 \( \text{xe2} \) 22.exd6 \( \text{xd6} \) 23.\( \text{b6} \) \( \text{d8} \) is roughly equal since 24.\( \text{xd7} \) \( \text{xd7} \) 25.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{c2} \) 26.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{e8} \) would be even pleasant for Black.

14.f4 leads to a position from the Taimanov where it is White to move! We can borrow the set-up from the game Bartel-Akopian, Port Erin 2006: 11...\( \text{d8} \) 12.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{b8} \) (12...\( \text{d5} \) 13.e5 \( \text{d7} \) 14.\( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{dxe5} \) is possible, but why not wait g4 while preparing typical counterplay with ...\( \text{b5} \)). 13.g4 d5!

14.g4 d5 15.exd5 \( \text{d8} \) 16.h3
I think that Black has decent counterplay here. For instance, 16...b5!? 17.axb6 axb6 18.d2 fxd5 19.exd5 cxb6 20.axb6 21.xa8 (21.e2 b7 22.e3 e6) 21...xd1 22.xd1 h5 23.d3 hxg4 24.hxg4 wxb8 25.f3 b7. The queen is powerful against the unprotected king.

b) 10.f4 0-0

10...d6 is also a good move which, however, transposes to my alternative suggestion in the annotations to game 33 Forcen-Korneev after 11.a4 b6 or game 32 Radulski-Filev after 11.0-0.

Instead, 11.g4 commits White on the kingside too early. Black has several attractive retorts. He only should not castle, for instance: 11...h6 12.h4 b5 13.g5 d7 14.e2 b4 15.a4 a5 16.e3 a6 when the a4 is a cause of concern to White, Sutovsky-Podzielski, Essen 1999, or 11...b5 12.g5 d7 13.e3 (13.h5 g6 14.e3 b6 15.e1 d7 16.0-0 0-0-0; 13.0-0 b6 14.f5 c4 15.e1 e7d7) 13...b4 14.a4 a5 15.e3 a6.

10...0-0!

Black commonly delays castling with 10...d6. Then he finishes his queenside development, prepares to carry on the break ...d5, and only at that point does he define the position of his king. See game 32 Radulski-Filev, Plovdiv 2012, for details. This game is also interesting with the French pawn structure which arose after 14...d5 15.e5. You should know what to do in it since you may get it in several different ways. My suggestion is more simple and straightforward.

11.f4 (11.g4 d5 12.exd5 exd5)

Amazingly, this sacrifice has not been tried in this particular position. However, the same idea is known as deserving attention in several other settings. Now 12.e5 d7 leads to a pawn structure which is unanimously assessed as fine for Black. For instance, 13.e2 b6 14.db4 c4 15.e1 d7 16.e3 (16.b3 xd4 17.exd4 a3) 16..ac8.

12.exd5 b4 13.dxe6

I suspect that the unassuming move 13.e1 is a wiser option: 13...bxd5 14.exd5 exd5=.

13...xe6 14.h1 ad8 15.f5 e4 16.e1 b6

Black has full compensation for the pawn, e.g. 17.f4 d6 18.exd6 xd6 19.c1 fd8.
27. Hoogendoorn-Lautier
Algarve 1999

1.e4 c5 2.\f3 \c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\xd4 \c7 5.\c3 e6 6.g3 a6 7.\g2 d6 8.0-0 \d7 9.\e1 \e7 10.\b3 b5 11.a3 \f6 12.f4 \d8 (12...\c8 13.\e3 h6 14.g4 \h7 15.\d2 g5\in) 13.g4?! 

Too optimistic. 13.\e3 is more prudent. Now Black can choose between 13...h5! 14.h3 hxg4 15.hxg4 g5\in or the more restrained 13...\c8. Instead, he mixes up ideas with:

13...h6 14.h3 \c8 15.\e3 \d7 16.\d2 \b6?! 

Black overlooks a tactical blow. It was time for 16...0-0 17.\f2 \f6 18.\d1\in.

17.\d3?! 

White misses the opportunity for 17.\d5! exd5 18.exd5 \c4 (18...\b8 19.\d4+- is a double-attack!) 19.\c3 0-0 20.dxc6±.

17...\c4 18.\c1 g5?! 

Apparently Lautier overestimated the e5-square. 18...\b6 19.\h1 \b7 20.a4 \b4\up was safer and better.

19.a4! gxf4 20.axb5 \b6 21.\h1 axb5 22.\f4 

22...\f6 

The weakness of b5 does not let Black enjoy the e5-outpost. 22...\a6 23.\g3 b4 24.\f1 h5 25.\a4 \b7 26.g5 e5 27.\c1± is double-
edged, but White's king is relatively safer.

23.\( \text{d}2 \text{c}6 \text{e}5 \) 24.\( \text{d}xc4 \text{bxc4} \)
25.\( \text{wd}2 \text{g}7 \) 26.\( \text{f}e3 \text{w}c6 \) 27.\( \text{e}5 \text{h}5 \) 28.\( \text{gxh}5 \text{exh}5 \) 29.\( \text{wd}2 \text{h}8 \) 30.\( \text{e}a1 \text{b}7 \) 31.\( \text{f}b5 \text{a}8 \)
32.\( \text{xa}8+ \text{xa}8 \) 33.\( \text{f}b6 \text{f}d7 \) 34.\( \text{b}5\pm \)

White has won the first battle. His rook is extremely mobile. However, he gradually begins losing ground in the next moves.

34...\( \text{c}6 \) 35.\( \text{a}3 \) (35.\( \text{d}4 \text{b}7 \)
36.\( \text{d}2\pm \) ) 35...\( \text{c}3 \) 36.\( \text{b}8+? \)

This is a double mistake. White exchanges his best piece instead of pushing his passed pawn: 36.\( \text{b}4\pm \).

36...\( \text{e}7 \) 37.\( \text{x}h8 \) \( \text{x}h8 \) 38.\( \text{bxc}3? \)

The turning point of the game. 38.\( \text{b}4 \text{b}7 \) 39.\( \text{b}5\pm \) would have retained some edge.

38...\( \text{b}739.\text{g}5+ \text{d}740.\text{c}1 \text{f}6 \) 41.\( \text{e}3 \text{d}8 \) 42.\( \text{e}2 \text{e}7 \)
43.\( \text{c}4 \text{g}6 \) 44.\( \text{b}5 \text{h}4 \) 45.\( \text{d}4 \text{b}1 \text{f}1? \) (46.\( \text{d}2\text{a}8 \) 47.\( \text{c}5 \text{g}2 \) 48.\( \text{c}6 \text{c}6 \) 49.\( \text{c}6 \) 50.\( \text{h}4\pm \) )
46...\( \text{h}7 \) 47.\( \text{e}3 \text{x}f1+ \) 48.\( \text{x}f1 \text{x}e4+ \) 49.\( \text{g}1 \) 50.\( \text{b}5 \text{x}c2 \)
51.\( \text{f}2 \) 52.\( \text{a}7 \) 53.\( \text{e}2 \) 54.\( \text{c}3 \) 55.\( \text{d}5 \) 56.\( \text{c}5 \)
57.\( \text{a}7 \pm \)

The moral of this game is that one good square (e5) does not compensate for bad piece co-ordination.
The Fianchetto

21...\textit{e}8! Remember this manoeuvre! The queen is heading for h7. The play might proceed with:

22.b3 Preparing \textit{d}5 and c4. 22.f4 only helps Black’s plan – 22.\textit{g}8 23.\textit{d}6 \textit{d}6 24.\textit{d}d6 \textit{d}7 25.\textit{e}3 \textit{h}7 26.\textit{f}2 \textit{h}2.

22...\textit{g}8 23.f4 \textit{h}7 24.fe5 (24.\textit{f}3 \textit{d}7 25.\textit{e}3 \textit{c}5=) 24...de5 25.\textit{f}3 (25.\textit{d}5 \textit{exd}5 26.exd5 \textit{b}4 27.\textit{d}1 \textit{h}2 28.\textit{f}1 \textit{h}5 29.\textit{f}3 \textit{e}4) 25...\textit{e}4! 26.\textit{xe}4 \textit{f}5 27.\textit{e}3 \textit{h}2 28.\textit{f}1 \textit{fxe}4 29.\textit{e}4 \textit{h}3+.

These variations illustrate Black’s hidden possibilities.

17.f4 is more dubious than it is enterprising. We blockade the centre with 17...e5 18.\textit{b}6 \textit{d}7 (18...\textit{b}8 19.\textit{ad}1 exf4 20.gxf4 \textit{d}8 21.\textit{exd}8 \textit{exd}8 22.e5 \textit{exg}2 23.\textit{hxg}2 \textit{c}5 (also good) 19.\textit{ad}1 and here 19...\textit{wg}4 20.\textit{hxg}4 is roughly equal, but the engines find a concrete way for Black to intercept the initiative: 19...exf4! 20.gxf4 \textit{h}4.

17...\textit{wd}7!

Black had played previously only 17...\textit{wb}8 which is a rather deplorable fate for the strongest piece! I have better prospects for it.

18.\textit{ad}1 \textit{we}8! 19.\textit{d}d4

Inkiov played here 19.f4 when 19...e5 is again the best retort. Then if White continue 20.f5, we can change plans with 20...\textit{d}7 21.\textit{e}3 \textit{wd}8 22.\textit{a}1 (22.b4 \textit{f}6) 22...\textit{g}5.

White’s queenside will be vulnerable.

19...\textit{e}5 20.\textit{ae}3

Black’s bishop is hardly better on b6: 20.\textit{b}6 \textit{g}6 21.f4 (21.\textit{d}5 \textit{xd}5 22.\textit{exd}5 \textit{d}8 23.\textit{d}8 \textit{wd}8=) 21...\textit{d}7 22.\textit{ae}3 \textit{wd}8! 23.b4 \textit{g}7 24.\textit{d}5 (24.\textit{f}1 \textit{g}8! 25.\textit{d}5 \textit{xd}5 26.\textit{exd}5 \textit{h}7 27.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 28.\textit{d}d4 \textit{h}2 29.\textit{f}2 \textit{h}3) 24...\textit{xd}5 25.\textit{exd}5 \textit{wc}7 26.\textit{ed}2 \textit{f}6=. As you see, Black can shift the direction of his attack, combining threats along the h-file and against the weak a5-pawn.

20...\textit{g}6

A consistent move, but the manoeuvre 20...\textit{d}7! is stronger. The point is that 21.\textit{g}5 \textit{e}6 22.\textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 23.\textit{exd}6 fails to 23...\textit{e}7 24.\textit{d}2 \textit{b}4 so Black keeps more pieces on the board.

After the text, White can reach a drawish position with 21.\textit{g}5 \textit{g}7 22.\textit{d}3 \textit{h}5 23.\textit{xf}6+ \textit{xf}6 24.\textit{d}5+. The aggressive 21.f4?! \textit{g}7 22.\textit{f}1 would allow the thematic manoeuvre 22...\textit{g}8! with counter-attack.

21.\textit{d}5 \textit{xd}5 22.\textit{exd}5 \textit{a}4!
Black's queen is extremely agile! Instead of going to h7, it hits targets on the other wing. As long as 23...\(\text{a1}\) \(\text{xc2}\) 24.\(\text{ac1}\) \(\text{f5}\) 25.\(\text{xc8}\) \(\text{xc8}\) 26.\(\text{c1}\) \(\text{d7}\) 27.\(\text{c4}\) \(\text{g7}\) 28.\(\text{c7}\) \(\text{d8}\) covers all invasion squares, White is forced to give up the a5-pawn and hope for a counter-attack against e5.

\[\text{23.c3} \text{a5} \text{24.f4}\]

A horrible mistake which might have cost me the point. The simple 24...\(\text{c7}\) 25.\(\text{xe5}\) \(\text{dxe5}\) 26.\(\text{d6}\) \(\text{xd6}\) 27.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{g7}\) 28.\(\text{xb7}\) a5 would have retained the pawn with a good position. Even more consistent is:

\[\text{24...d7!} \text{25.fxe5 [Or 25.\text{f2}\ f5! 26.\text{xe5} (26.\text{g4}\ \text{h4}) 26...\text{xe5}\ 27.\text{b6}\ \text{b5}\ 28.\text{d4}\ \text{f6+}] 25...\text{xe5}\ 26.\text{d4}\ \text{c7}\ 27.\text{xe5} (27.\text{f1}\ \text{g7}\ 28.\text{ed1}\ \text{ce8+}) 27...\text{dxe5}\ 28.\text{xe5}\ \text{c5}\ 29.\text{d4}\ \text{h5+}.}\]

The rest of the game is a desperate struggle which was eventually rewarded with a draw.

\[\text{25.fxe5}\ \text{xe2}\ 26.\text{xe2}\ \text{g4}\ 27.\text{exd6}\ \text{xd6}\ 28.\text{f4}\ \text{d8}\]

29.\(\text{xd6}\+\) \(\text{xd6}\) 30.\(\text{c4}\) \(\text{g7}\) 31.\(\text{c5}\ \text{d7}\) 32.\(\text{d6}\) \(\text{f6}\) 33.\(\text{b4}\) \(\text{h5}\) 34.\(\text{e7}\ \text{xe7}\) 35.\(\text{dxe7}\) a5 36.\(\text{xb7}\) \(\text{xb4}\) 37.\(\text{c1}\) b3 38.\(\text{c6}\) b2 39.\(\text{eb1}\) \(\text{e8}\) 40.\(\text{xb2}\) \(\text{e5}\) 41.\(\text{c8}\) \(\text{xe7}\) 42.\(\text{d7}\) \(\text{d6}\) 43.\(\text{g2}\) f5 44.\(\text{d2}\) \(\text{b5}\) 45.\(\text{d5}\) \(\text{c7}\) 46.\(\text{a5}\) \(\text{f6}\) 47.\(\text{a7}\) \(\text{b5}\) 48.\(\text{xb7}\) \(\text{d6}\) 49.\(\text{b8}\) \(\text{e2+}\) 50.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{c2}\) 51.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{e5}\) draw.

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29. \text{Timman-V. Milov}

\text{Biel 1995}

1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{d3}\) e6 3.\(\text{d4}\) cxd4
4.\(\text{xd4}\) a6 5.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{wc7}\) 6.g3 \(\text{d6}\) 7.g2 \(\text{d6}\) 8.0-0 \(\text{e7}\) 9.\(\text{e1}\) \(\text{d7}\) 10.\(\text{xc6}\) \(\text{xc6}\) 11.\(\text{g4}\) h5 12.\(\text{e2}\) h4 13.\(\text{a4}\) hgx3 14.hxg3 \(\text{f8}\) 15.a5 \(\text{f6}\) (15...\(\text{e8}\)! 16.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{f6}\) 16.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{e8}\)

This strange-looking move aims to ensure a good retreat square for the queen on \(\text{c8}\) while protecting the \(\text{e7}\)-bishop against tactical hits as \(\text{c3}\)-d5.

As a positive side effect, Black threatens to break in the centre by ...\(\text{d5}\). 17.\(\text{g5}\) or 17.\(\text{ed1}\) could be met by 17...\(\text{g8}\).
The Fianchetto

17.\textdaggerdbl d4

Timman tries to carry on e5 with tempo. Most games continue 17.\textdaggerdbl b6 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet} c8 and then:

a) 18.\textcolor{red}{\textbullet} ed1 e5 19.b4 \textdaggerdbl d7 20.\textdaggerdbl a3 g6 21.\textdaggerdbl d5 \textdaggerdbl xd5 22.exd5 \textdaggerdbl g7, Gallagher-Bosiocic, Olbia 2008;

b) 18.b3 g6 19.\textdaggerdbl a4

17...\textdaggerdbl c8 18.\textcolor{red}{\textbullet} ed1 \textdaggerdbl h7

18...e5 19.\textdaggerdbl e3 \textdaggerdbl e6 would have been better, in order to avoid the capture on f6.

19.\textdaggerdbl e3

White admits that he has no plan.

19...\textdaggerdbl d7!?

Preparing to meet 20.\textcolor{red}{\textbullet} f4 by 20...\textdaggerdbl e5

20.f4 \textdaggerdbl f6 21.\textdaggerdbl f3 g6 22.\textdaggerdbl g2 \textdaggerdbl g7 23.\textdaggerdbl h1 \textdaggerdbl h8 24.\textdaggerdbl xh7+ \textdaggerdbl xh7 25.\textdaggerdbl h1 \textdaggerdbl h1 26.\textdaggerdbl xh1 e5 27.\textdaggerdbl g2 \textdaggerdbl d7!?

White's king is weaker so Black's threats are more dangerous. Now he wants to transfer the bishop to e6.

28.\textdaggerdbl d5 \textdaggerdbl xd5 29.exd5 \textdaggerdbl b5 30.\textdaggerdbl d1 \textdaggerdbl f6 31.b3 \textdaggerdbl d7 32.c4 \textdaggerdbl h3+ 33.\textdaggerdbl f2 exf4 34.gxf4 \textdaggerdbl h8 35.\textdaggerdbl h1

Black has gained the initiative and could have played for a win with 35...\textdaggerdbl g8! threatening 35...\textdaggerdbl d4 or 35...\textdaggerdbl c3. Instead, he prefers to repeat the moves.

35...\textdaggerdbl c8 36.\textdaggerdbl d1 \textdaggerdbl h8 draw.

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30. Guseinov-Vasovski
Struga 12.08.2009

This game is a good example of what Black should not do – instead of staying active and generate constant threats, he opted for a defensive set-up on the kingside. This is rarely a good approach in the Sicilian

1.e4 c5 2.\textdaggerdbl f3 \textdaggerdbl c6 3.\textdaggerdbl c3 d6 4.d4 exd4 5.\textdaggerdbl xd4 e6 6.g3 \textdaggerdbl d7 7.\textdaggerdbl g2 \textdaggerdbl f6 8.0-0 \textdaggerdbl e7 9.\textdaggerdbl b3 a6 10.f4 \textdaggerdbl c7 11.\textdaggerdbl e3 b5 12.a3 \textdaggerdbl b8 13.\textdaggerdbl h1 0-0 14.g4 h6 15.g5 hgx5 16.fxg5 \textdaggerdbl h7 17.\textdaggerdbl g4 \textdaggerdbl e5 18.\textdaggerdbl g3
It may seem that Black has an easy game thanks to the outpost on e5. In fact, White’s plan is much more clear. He will push the h-pawn up to h5 (and even h6 sometimes) and then he will be looking for a way of swinging a knight to the kingside. Black must quickly generate concrete counterplay before it became too late. It would be a bad idea to stay passively, as the course of this game will teach us.

A logical continuation would be to target the weak pawn on c2 with 18...a5 19.h4 b4 20.axb4 axb4 21.a7 b7 22.xb7 xxb7 23.xd1 c8, with an initiative. The text move is not bad either.

18...c4 19.c1 g6 20.h4 fc8?!

Black embarks on a wrong redeployment. His kingside pieces were perfectly placed, hitting g5. For instance, h4-h5 would often cost White a pawn due to ...d8. Therefore, he should have activate his queen with 20...b6!, denying the d4-square to the b3-knight. Then the straightforward 21.h5 h8 22.f3 would be strongly countered by 22...gxh5 23.h4 e5 24.h3 g7+, when the h-file will open in Black’s favour.

21.e2

I would take the chance to centralise the knight at once with 21.d4 e5 22.f3 xf3 23.xf3 e8 24.f2. The exchange of one pair of knights underlines the fact that Black practically plays without a piece.

21...f8 22.h5 g7?! 23.h4 f8?!

Black has achieved his goal, but he will soon discover that his bishop will be useless on the long diagonal. It only takes away the g7-square to its king. He still could have reconsidered and captured on h5 to get some breathing space on the kingside.

24.bd4 a5

It is already late for 24...gxh5 25.xh5 e8 26.c3 e5 27.f4→.

25.b3 e5 26.e3?!
26.h6! \( \text{g}h8 \) 27.\( \text{e} \)e3 would have been clearly better for White as Black cannot untie himself. For instance, 27...\( \text{c} \)c6 would run into 28.h7+! \( \text{g} \)xh7 29.\( \text{a} \)xf7!. After the text, instead of 26...gxh5!, Black falls into the same trap:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
26...\text{c}6? 27.h6 \text{xd4} \quad (27...\text{h}8 \quad 28.h7+!) \quad 28.\text{xd4} \quad \text{h}7 \\
29.\text{w}f2 \text{e}8 30.\text{d}f3 \text{d}8 31.\text{a}d1 \text{c}6 32.\text{h}2 \text{e}7 33.\text{g}4 \text{e}7 34.\text{xd}6 \text{f}5 35.\text{gx}f6 \text{xd}6 36.\text{f}4 \text{w}d7 37.\text{g}3 \text{bb}7 38.\text{e}5 \text{e}8 39.\text{a}xg6 \text{f}7 40.\text{e}7+ \text{h}8 41.\text{w}g7+ 1-0
\end{array}
\]

31. Ponomariov-Dubov
FIDE World Cup, Tromso 2013

1.e4 c5 2.\( \text{f} \)f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\( \text{c} \)xd4 \( \text{c} \)c6 5.\( \text{c} \)c3 a6 6.g3 \( \text{c} \)c7 7.\( \text{g} \)g2 \( \text{d} \)d6 8.0-0 \( \text{d} \)d7 9.\( \text{b} \)b3 \( \text{f} \)f6 10.f4 \( \text{e} \)e7 11.\( \text{h} \)h1

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{w}h6+ \text{g}xh6 \text{e}7 + \text{g}h8 \text{h}7+ +
\end{array}
\]

11...0-0

Black chooses to await g4 and h4 in order to strike back in the centre with ...d5. Another popular approach is to make yet another developng move before defining the king's position. Since sooner or later Black will have to at least threaten with ...\( d \)5, it looks logical to play 11...\( \text{d} \)d8. However, on this square the rook may be awkward when White plays \( \text{e}3, \text{w}f2(g1) \) hitting b6. For instance, 12.\( \text{e} \)e3 0-0 13.g4 \( \text{h} \)h6 (13...\( \text{d} \)5 14.\( \text{e} \)e8 15.\( \text{w} \)e2) 14.h4 \( \text{d} \)5 15.\( \text{e} \)e8 16.g5 \text{hxg5} 17.\text{hxg5} \text{g}6 18.\( \text{f} \)f3 \( \text{g} \)g7 19.\( \text{h} \)h3 \( \text{h} \)h8 20.\( \text{x} \)xh8 \( \text{x} \)xh8 21.\( \text{w} \)g1, winning a crucial tempo for \( \text{w}h2+.

Let's correct this idea by 11...\( \text{c} \)c8
12.\( \text{a} \)e3

12.g4?! runs into 12...\( \text{h} \)h6 13.\( \text{w} \)e2 \( \text{e} \)5+, but 12.\( \text{w} \)e2 is a fair alternative. Perhaps this is the maximum Black can extract from the delay of 0-0 – White has to play two quiet moves like \( \text{h} \)h1 and \( \text{w} \)e2. Then and it is time to castle. In Alekseev-Rodnie, Legnica 2013, he persisted with his tricky move order, but 12...\( \text{e} \)e5 13.\( \text{e} \)e3 0-0 14.f5 put him under attack. The game went 14...b5 15.a3 b4 16.axb4 \( \text{a} \)xb4 17.\( \text{g} \)g4 \( \text{h} \)h6 18.g5 \text{hxg5} 19.\( \text{x} \)xg5 \( \text{w} \)c4 20.\( \text{w} \)d2 \( \text{xf} \)d8 21.\( \text{g} \)g1 \( \text{g} \)h7 22.\( \text{f} \)f3+-.

12...b5 13.a3 \( \text{h} \)h6 14.\( \text{w} \)e2 0-0 15.g4 \( \text{h} \)h7! 16.\( \text{w} \)f2 \&f6

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{w}h6+ \text{g}xh6 \text{e}7 + \text{g}h8 \text{h}7+ +
\end{array}
\]

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Black is OK here:
17.h4 hxg5 18.bxc3 e7 19.g5 hxg5 20.hxg5 f6!?;

Alekseev-Cordova, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010, saw 17צד1, when I think that Black should have opted for a dark-squared blockade with 17...hxg5 18.bxc3 e5 19.f5 e7. White is not ready for a serious attack. After 20.h4 e6 21.f3 (21.g5 hxg5 22.hxg5 hxg5 23.g5 hxg5 24.hxg5 h5 25.hxg5 h7 26.f6 f6+, he is clearly over-extended.

My conclusion is that 11...אc8 deserves attention.

12.g4 h6 13.אe3

Remember this position! When White has completed development and his bishop is on e3, we should take the threat of h4 very seriously and address it by 13...אh7! following the example of the previous diagram. The ...d5 break is no longer effective!

13...אac8 14.h4 d5?

It was high time for 14...אh7. The position after 15.g5 hxg5 16.hxg5 אd8 17.b6?! e5 18.h5 exf4 is sharp, but White lacks immediate threats. For instance: 19.אf4 hxg5 20.א xd6 e7 or 19.א xe7+ ה xe7 20.אf4 g6 21.אf2 אe5.

White can fight for the initiative with 17.אf3, when 17...גf6!, intending ...גg7, looks best. Instead, 17...א5 18.אg3 exf4 19.א xf4 hxg5 20.א xf5 21.א xd6 ה h7 22.א h6 אf6 23.אh2 ה e5 24.אd5 אd8 25.c3 leaves White with some edge.

15.g5!

15.exd5 אb4 is extremely demanding for White while Black’s game is much easier.


15...hxg5 16.hxg5 א xe4

17.א xe4?

17.א xe4 dxe4 18.אh5 אe8 19.אf2 gives White an overwhelming attack. After the text, Black took over the initiative.

17...dxe4 18.א xe4 גf5 19.gxf6 א xf6 20.אf2 אd4 21.אg4 אc6
The Fianchetto

22.\( \text{Bg}2 \) \( \text{Af8} \) 23.\( \text{Bxc6} \) \( \text{Bxc6} \)
24.\( \text{Bd4} \) \( \text{Bh6}+ \) 25.\( \text{Bg1} \) \( \text{Bd5} \)
26.\( \text{Ce1} \) \( \text{Ce7} \) 27.\( \text{Cd8} \) 28.\( \text{Ce3} \)
29.\( \text{Cd4} \) \( \text{Bd7} \) 30.\( \text{Bf2} \) \( \text{Bdh5} \)
31.\( \text{Beg1} \) \( \text{Bd5} \) 32.\( \text{Bf3} \) \( \text{Bh3} \) 33.\( \text{Bg3} \)
34.\( \text{Bxg3} \) 35.\( \text{Bf2} \) \( \text{Bc6} \)
36.\( \text{Bg2} \) \( \text{Bf6} \) 37.\( \text{Bgl} \) \( \text{Be5} \) 38.\( \text{Bxe4} \)
39.\( \text{Bxe3} \) 40.\( \text{Bd4} \) \( \text{Bc7} \) 41.\( \text{Bc4} \) \( \text{Bb6}+ \) 42.\( \text{Bd4} \) \( \text{Bh5} \)
43.\( \text{Bf2} \) \( \text{Bf6} \) 44.\( \text{Bxe3} \) \( \text{Bc7} \) 45.\( \text{Bxb7} \)
46.\( \text{Bd3} \) \( \text{Bh6} \) 47.\( \text{Bc2} \) \( \text{e5} \)
48.\( \text{Bd5}+ \) \( \text{Bh8} \) 49.\( \text{Bxa8}+ \) \( \text{Bh7} \)
50.\( \text{Bxe4}+ \) \( \text{Bh8} \) 51.\( \text{Bxa8}+ \) \( \text{Bh7} \)
52.\( \text{Bxe4}+ \) \( \text{Bh8} \) 53.\( \text{Bxa8}+ \) \( \text{Bh7} \)
54.\( \text{Bxe4}+ \) Draw.

Kan Games

32. Radulski-Filev
Plovdiv 04.02.2012

1.e4 c5 2.\( \text{Bf3} \) e6 3.\( \text{Bc3} \) a6
4.\( \text{d4} \) cxd4 5.\( \text{Bxd4} \) \( \text{Bc7} \) 6.g3 \( \text{Bb4} \)
7.\( \text{Bd2} \) \( \text{Bf6} \) 8.\( \text{Bg2} \) \( \text{Bc6} \) 9.\( \text{Bb3} \) \( \text{Ce7} \)
10.0-0 \( \text{d6}!? \)

This move shows that Black has put aside the idea of pushing ...\( \text{d5} \) early. Instead, he will fianchetto the bishop, put a rook on \( \text{c8} \) or \( \text{d8} \) and castle only when he is ready to meet \( \text{g4} \) by ...\( \text{d5} \). Long castling is also possible so White should think twice before flinging forward his kingside pawns. On the other hand, switching to restrictive play with 11.a4 \( \text{Bc5} \)? (11...\( \text{b6} \) is the common retort) 12.a5 \( \text{Bc4} \) 13.a4 0-0 is not very enticing for White.

11.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{b5} \) 12.\( \text{a3} \)

12.\( \text{Bxe5} \) 13.\( \text{Bxe5} \) \( \text{Bxe5} \) 14.\( \text{Bxa8} \) \( \text{Bc8}+ \) is clearly better for Black.

12...\( \text{Bb7} \) 13.\( \text{Bc2} \) 0-0

It makes sense to wait one more move before castling - 13...\( \text{Bd8} \)?.

14.\( \text{g4} \) \( \text{d5} \) 15.\( \text{e5} \)?!

The critical line is, of course, 15.exd5 \( \text{Bxd5} \) 16.\( \text{Bxd5} \) (16.\( \text{Bxd5} \) exd5 17.\( \text{Bf2} \) d4 18.\( \text{Bf2} \) \( \text{Bfe8} \) 19...exd5 17.\( \text{Bxd5} \) \( \text{Bd8} \) 18.\( \text{Bxe7}+ \) \( \text{Bxe7} \)
19.\( \text{Bxa5} \) \( \text{Bd5} \) 20.\( \text{Bf1} \)

If Black consolidated, he would have fair chances against the weakened enemy king. But he has to make a couple of accurate moves: 20...\( \text{Bc8} \) [20...\( \text{Bc8} \) 21.\( \text{Bf1} \) \( \text{Bc6} \) 22.\( \text{Bc3} \) \( \text{Bd8} \) 23.\( \text{Bf6} \)]
Part 5

22.\textit{g}f2 \textit{g}g6 23.\textit{h}3 \textit{e}e4 24.\textit{b}4 \textit{d}5 25.f5 (25.\textit{d}d4 \textit{x}xb4 26.\textit{exe}4 \textit{exe}4 27.f5 \textit{f}6 28.\textit{exe}4 \textit{xc}2=) 25...\textit{h}6 26.\textit{x}h2 \textit{xb}4 27.axb4 \textit{f}6 28.\textit{e}e2=) 21.\textit{c}3 (21.\textit{b}4 \textit{b}6+ 22.\textit{f}2 \textit{g}6 23.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xf}4 24.\textit{f}3 \textit{xd}5 25.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xc}2 26.\textit{f}3=) 21...\textit{b}6+ 22.\textit{f}2 \textit{g}6 23.\textit{h}3 \textit{a}8=)

15...\textit{d}7

16.\textit{f}3

White would be unable to hold his queenside with solid centralising moves. For instance, after 16.\textit{e}e3 \textit{b}6 17.\textit{c}5, he’ll face 17...\textit{d}4!. He also should reckon with the threat of ...\textit{g}5 at some point. Therefore, Radulski makes a right choice. He tries to attack \textit{h}7. He is not afraid of 16...\textit{g}5 since after 17.\textit{h}3 \textit{gxf}4 he may draw by 18.\textit{xf}4 \textit{c}xe5 19.\textit{g}5 \textit{f}6 20.\textit{xh}7= or gamble with 18.\textit{d}3 \textit{f}5 19.\textit{exf}6 \textit{xf}6 20.\textit{xd}5 \textit{exd}5 21.\textit{xd}5+ \textit{h}8 22.\textit{c}3 \textit{d}8=.

To be fair, in the latter line Black could neutralise the attack with 22...\textit{e}5 23.\textit{xe}5 \textit{exe}5 24.\textit{xb}7 \textit{ad}8 25.\textit{f}5 \textit{xf}5 26.\textit{gxf}5 \textit{g}8+ 27.\textit{f}1 \textit{g}4. This sharp endgame is probably balanced. Filev correctly refrains from forcing the play.

16...\textit{b}6! 17.\textit{h}3 \textit{e}4 18.\textit{g}5 \textit{g}6 19.\textit{d}1 \textit{a}5 20.\textit{c}3

20...\textit{b}6+

White’s attack has reached a dead end and Black can already launch a counter-attack. The general rule dictates to strike in the centre and, indeed, 20...\textit{a}4 21.\textit{c}1 \textit{d}4 is perhaps the best way to exploit the enemy weaknesses. The flank strike 20...\textit{b}4 is also a plausible alternative. Instead, Black takes a seemingly inexplicable decision to seal the queenside.

21.\textit{e}3 \textit{xe}3 22.\textit{exe}3 \textit{exe}3+ 23.\textit{xe}3 \textit{a}4?

A horrible move. Did Filev forget that he had a light-squared bishop?! 23...\textit{fc}8 24.\textit{g}4 \textit{b}4 would have preserved a strong pull. Now 24.\textit{c}1 followed by \textit{d}3 would have balanced the game. You could guess the reason behind Black’s actions when you knew the ratings! He is more than 200 points underdog so he just wanted to make a draw! The rest is unrelated to the opening. White was stubbornly trying to win his worse position and eventually lost.
The Fianchetto

24.\textdollar d2 \textdollar a5 25.\textdollar g4 \textdollar 57 26.\textdollar d1 \textdollar ab8 27.\textdollar f6 \textdollar h8 28.\textdollar f3 h5? 29.\textdollar f1 \textdollar c4 30.\textdollar xc4 \textdollar xc4 31.\textdollar f1 \textdollar a8 32.\textdollar d2 \textdollar b7 33.\textdollar e5 exf5 34.\textdollar xd5 \textdollar c5 35.\textdollar h4 \textdollar d7 36.\textdollar f4 \textdollar e7 37.\textdollar d5 \textdollar d7 38.\textdollar f4 \textdollar e7 39.\textdollar e2 \textdollar b8 40.\textdollar e6 \textdollar b6 41.\textdollar e5 \textdollar bxe6 42.\textdollar xe6+ \textdollar e6 43.\textdollar xc4 \textdollar xe5+ 44.\textdollar f1 \textdollar c6 45.\textdollar h4 f4 46.c4 \textdollar e3 47.\textdollar d6 \textdollar e4 48.\textdollar h3 \textdollar xg5 49.\textdollar xe3 fxe3 50.\textdollar e2 \textdollar g2+ 51.\textdollar xe3 f5 52.h4 \textdollar xb2 53.\textdollar f4 \textdollar c2 54.\textdollar d7+ \textdollar f6 55.\textdollar d6+ \textdollar f7 0-1

33. Forcen Esteban-Korneev
La Roda 07.04.2012

1.e4 c5 2.\textdollar f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\textdollar xd4 a6 5.\textdollar c3 \textdollar c7 6.g3 \textdollar b4 7.\textdollar d2 \textdollar f6 8.\textdollar g2 \textdollar c6 9.\textdollar b3 \textdollar e7 10.a4 b6

11.0-0

11.f4 d6 12.g4 h6 13.\textdollar we2 is more aggressive. White is planning long castling. The mundane 13...\textdollar b7 is hardly the best answer although 14.0-0-0 (14.h4 d5) 14...\textdollar d7 (14...\textdollar b4 15.g5 hxg5 16.fxg5 \textdollar d7 17.g6 fxg6 18.\textdollar d4 \textdollar c5 19.\textdollar g4\rightarrow) 15.\textdollar b1 \textdollar c5 16.\textdollar e3 \textdollar xb3 17.cxb3 b5 is unclear. The bishop probably stands better on c8, protecting e6 and leaving the b-file open for the rook. So I like:

13...\textdollar b8!?

Now 14.0-0 \textdollar a5 is fine for Black, e.g. 15.\textdollar ad1 \textdollar c4 16.\textdollar xa5 \textdollar xc2 17.\textdollar xe2 bxa5 18.b3 \textdollar xg4 19.h3 \textdollar f6 20.\textdollar xa5 \textdollar b7, 14.0-0-0 \textdollar d7 15.\textdollar b1 \textdollar c5 is an improved version of the above-mentioned line. The game Malisauskas-Grabliauskas, Vilnius 2009, went:

14.h4 \textdollar b4 15.0-0-0 \textdollar h5 (15...b5?) 16.gxh5, when 16...\textdollar xh5 would have been double-edged.

I recommend the more concrete move 14...\textdollar a5!? 15.g5 (15.0-0-0? \textdollar xb3+ 16.cxb3 b5) 15...hxg5 16.hxg5 \textdollar xh1+ 17.\textdollar xh1 \textdollar d7

18.\textdollar xa5 bxa5 with a tangled position, e.g. 19.b3 e5!, exploiting the hanging state of the c3-knight - 20.f5? \textdollar xg5.

11...\textdollar b7 12.f4 d6 13.g4

13.\textdollar e3 transposes to a side line of the Taimanov. Black's most natu-
ral plan is to prepare the break ...d5 with 13...cxb4. For instance, 14.e2 (14.a5 b5 15.b6 c4) 14...0-0 15.g4 d5 16.e5 d7 17.ad1 ac8 18.ad2 g5.

15.wf2 is dubious due to 15...g4 16.axb6 b8 17.e2 xe4+ 18.xe4 xb6+ 19.h1 d5.

It is safer to sit tight on the kingside with 15.fd1 d5 16.e5 d7 17.f2.

This structure is generally good for Black. He can continue simply 17.ac8 18.d4 c6=.

13...h6 14.wf3

White aims to shift the queen to an active position on h3. If he adopted a waiting game with 14.e2, Black could prepare a counterattack with ...g5, for instance: 14...d7 15.e3 g5!? 16.f5 c5 17.d4 c4∞, or 14...b4 15.a5 (15.f2 d5) 15...c8 (15...b5? 16.axb5) 16.axb6 xb6+ 17.e3 c7 18.fd1 d5 19.e5 d7 20.d2 g5†.

14...d7 15.wh3 0-0-0!

Black should be satisfied with the opening. After the inevitabler ...g5, he will control the critical square e5.

16.e3 g5 17.f5 xf6 18.a5 b5 19.fxe6 fx6 20.b6 xb6 21.xf6 e7 22.xh6

or 22.xaf1 c4 23.xf7 e8 24.xd6 d7 25.xd7 xd7+ 26.xh6 xh6 27.xh6 e7.

22...w7 23.xh8 xh8 24.wg3 c4

Black has a huge advantage thanks to the gaping dark squares in the enemy camp. The rest of the game went in a severe time trouble and at some point White even became better in the endgame.

25.d1 ae5 26.d4 g6 27.xc3 f4 28.f1 h7 29.h3 xe4 30.f2 e3 31.xb5 xc3 32.xc3 de5 33.xe2 xd7 34.g3 d5 35.b4 xc8 36.a4 xc2 37.h4 x2e2+ 38.xe2 gxf4+ 39.xh4 xe2 40.c5+ c6 41.g3 c8 42.g5 h5 43.b1 g6 44.f3 e5 45.cd3 f5+ 46.xe3 xg5 47.xc1 d7 48.xc7 xc6 49.d1 xg3+ 50.d2 d4 51.g7 e5 0-1
This part covers a huge material so I separated the Kan from the Taimanov. Actually, I analyse here both 1.e4 c5 2.\( \text{\textit{f}}3 \) e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\( \text{\textit{x}} \text{d}4 \) a6 5.c4 and 5.\( \text{\textit{d}}3 \) which aim to establish pawn control of the centre with c4.

After 5.c4 \( \text{\textit{f}}6 \) 6.\( \text{\textit{c}}3 \) \( \text{\textit{b}}4 \), Black’s dark-squared bishop is not caged behind a d6-pawn and it can split White’s queenside.

5.\( \text{\textit{d}}3 \) commonly leads to Maróczy Bind structures, but the character of play greatly depends on the move order. I offer two alternative approaches for Black:

Line B1. 5...g6 followed by ...\( \text{\textit{e}}7 \) aims to eliminate the pawn centre with ...d7-d5. This is play for equalisation.

Line B2. 5...\( \text{\textit{f}}6 \) 6.0-0 \( \text{\textit{c}}7 \) 7.\( \text{\textit{e}}2 \) d6 accepts the Maróczy Bind. I advocate to fianchetto the bishop on g7 from where it exerts pressure on White’s queenside and enables the positional threat of ...\( \text{\textit{x}} \text{c}3 \).
The previous parts taught us that Kan’s utmost flexibility brings excellent dividends in all the systems where White puts early his queen’s knight on c3. However, this flexibility has its cost – it allows White to build up the Maróczy Bind. This part should learn you to cope with White’s most cunning retort to the Kan:

1.e4 c5 2.d4 f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.cxd4 a6 5.d3

We are getting a taste of our own medicine! The enemy exploits the lack of d6 and develops in a flexible way which keeps all his options open. Depending on our set-up, he may then return to d3 and long castling, or opt for the restrictive c2-c4. Black has tried in practice at least five distinct schemes in retort.

I do not cover the 5...c5 6.b3 a7 system, because it does not suit my taste. White trades dark-squared bishops via e3 and the weakness of d6 forces Black to enter Kalashnikov-type structures with ...e5. They are too rigid and look passive to me. I have always preferred plans with ...d5 (or ...f5) in the Sicilian. Besides, White is usually well prepared against 5...c5 and we would hardly surprise him in the opening.

I will offer you instead a choice between two approaches. Both are based on the fianchetto of the dark-squared bishop, but the first one aims to quickly eliminate the centre with ...e7 and ...d7-d5 while the second one assumes a rather unusual hedgehog structure where the g7-bishop longs to split White’s queenside pawns by taking the c3-knight. I think that the surprise effect should be at your side.

In practice 5...g6 and 5...c5 bring similar results.
Let's step back a little and see what happens if White plays immediately 5.c4 d6 6.c3 b4

7.d3 d6 8.xc6 dxc6 9.e5 wa5 is equal – 10.exf6 xxc3+ 11.bxc3 wxc3+ so the top players prefer:

7.d3 d6 8.xc6 dxc6

Here both 9.wxd8+ and 9.e5 lead to balanced endgames where White has the bishop pair, but his queenside is severely crippled, for instance: 9.wxd8+ xd8 10.e5 (10. d2 e5) 10...xc3+! 11.bxc3 d7 12.f4 b6 13.e6 c5 14.d3 c7 15.f2 b7 16.0-0 f5! with counterplay.

Let's now return to the more sophisticated 5.d3. I propose to play for equalisation with:

5...g6!? 6.c4

6.c3 g7 7.e3 e7 8.wd2 should not scare us out of our main idea: 8...d5 9.b3! dxe4!? 10.xe4 0-0 11.h6 xh6! 12.wxh6 f5 13.wd2 a5!. A thematic method of seizing space on the queenside by tempo.

I give a detailed analysis of the endgame which arises after 14.0-0-0 a4 15.c4 wxd2+. Remember to avoid rook exchanges! Instead of contesting the d-file, we should put our heavy pieces on c8 and a5.

6...g7 7.b3

Alternatives do not hinder the freeing ...d7-d5 – 7.e3 (7.e2 d5! 8.exd5) 7.e7 8.c3 (8.0-0 d5 9.exd5 exd5 10.c3 0-0) 8...d5 cuts across White's plans to torture us in a Maróczy Bind structure.
Black's play is straightforward and easy – 9.exd5 exd5 10.0-0 0-0 11.e1 dc6 12.xc6 bxc6 13.g5 de6=.

7...e7 8.bc3 bc6 9.0-0 0-0

This is a very interesting position with mutual chances. White has discouraged ...d7-d5 due to the option of playing g5, but his knight left the centre (and offered us a tempo!). That gives us a free hand on the kingside. Our offensive could begin with ...f7-f5, leaving the d-pawn on d7. The c8-bishop will enter play from the queenside after ...b6, or, even better, ...b5! See game 34 Ermenkov-Kotsur, Dubai 2000, which featured 10.e2 f5!. 10.f4 will be met by 10...d5.

10.g5!? h6 11.h4 g5 12.g3 e5 13.f4 gxf4 14.xf4 g7 15.e3

Black's pieces are very active so he can afford to sacrifice a pawn with 15...b5! 16.cxb5 dx3 17.xd3 axb5.

You see that two hours of studying suffice to start playing 5...g6.

If the idea of getting a symmetric pawn structure with an early ...d5 is revolting to you, my backup solution is:

5...f6 6.0-0 c7

7.e2!

After this clever move which awaits ...d6, we cannot escape the Hedgehog. 7.c4 is a positional mistake due to 7..c6! 8.e3 (8.xc6 dxc6 9.c3 e5 – see game 35 Ehchen-Delchev, Bad Wiessee 2013) 8.e5 9.h3 b6. Fortunately, the queen move rules out the most dangerous plans with e3, wd2, d1. Even more importantly, d3 cannot retreat to f1. We should use that to trade the bishop with ...b8-d7-e5xd3.

7...d6 8.c4

We should be happy to see the double-edged 8.f4 g6 9.c3 g7.
White’s f-pawn cannot return to defend e4 anymore. The only way to justify its advance would be 10.e5 dxe5 11.Qxb5 axb5 12.Qxb5 Wxe7 13.fxe5 0-0 14.exf6 Qxf6, but our king is safe and the e- and f-pawns control the centre.

8...g6! 9.Qc3 Qg7

The fianchetto has certain pluses:

1. It limits the scope of the d3-bishop.
2. The bishop is more active on g7. It takes an active part in the battle for d4 and e5 enabling ideas like ...Qd7-e5 or ...e5 followed up by ...Qg4.
3. A very interesting positional idea is to cripple White’s queenside by ...Qxc3, followed up by ...e5, ...Qd7-b6.

Of course it has downsides, too: Black spends an extra tempo, weakens the d6-pawn and the dark squares around his king. Now White can try to put pressure on d6 or follow a typical hedgehog plan:

A. 10.Qe3 0-0 11.Qac1 Qbd7! (not 11...b6) 12.f3 Qe5!

I analyse in detail the position after 12...b6 13.Qfd1 Qb7 14.Qf2 Qac8 15.Qf1 Qfd8 (or 15...Qfe8) 16.b4 Qb8 17.Qb3 – see game 38 Simacek-Akopian, Plovdiv 2012.

My conclusion is that we should not allow it at all!

13.Qfd1 b6

Our plan is to take the bishop, but let’s give White the option of displacing it to b1! Most practical games went from this point 14.b3 Qb7 15.Qb1?! Qfc8 16.Qf2 Qab8 17.Qa4

Note the rooks on b8 (protecting b6) and c8 (hitting c4). In the “Step by Step” chapter I consider two active plans for Black. They involve shifting our queen to the kingside (the b8-rook takes over the defence
of b6!) followed up by ...g6-g5.

In the event of:

14.\texttt{d2}, we have no choice but to kill the bishop: 14...\texttt{xd3} 15.\texttt{xd3 \texttt{d7}! 16.b3 \texttt{d8} 17.\texttt{d2 \texttt{b7} 18.de2 \texttt{f8} 19.h1 \texttt{ac8} 20.g5 \texttt{e8}}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{chessboard1.png}
\end{center}

White has not a clear plan for improvement.

B. Lately, White prefers more energetic plans. He tries to pinpoint our weakness on d6 with \texttt{f3}, \texttt{d1}, \texttt{f4}. They all lead to a similar pawn structure:

10.\texttt{d1} 0-0 11.\texttt{f3} \texttt{c6} 12.h3 \texttt{d7}! (targetting the c3-knight) 13.\texttt{e3} (or 13.\texttt{f4 \texttt{xc3} 14.bxc3 e5, see game 36 Todorovic-Caruana, Rijeka 2010)

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{chessboard2.png}
\end{center}

10...\texttt{h5}! 12.\texttt{e3 \texttt{xc3}! 13.bxc3 e5}. See game 40 Grischuk-Ivanchuk, Beijing 2013.

The idea of giving up our dark-squared bishop sometimes works even without the benefit of splitting the enemy's queenside pawns:

\texttt{Simek-Kanovsky
Prague 2011}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{chessboard3.png}
\end{center}

13...\texttt{xc3} 14.bxc3 \texttt{f6}

It is easy to play this position with Black. See game 37 Leko-Ivanchuk, Mukachevo 2007, for more explanation.

Here is another version of the same plan:

10.\texttt{f3} 0-0 11.\texttt{f4}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{chessboard4.png}
\end{center}

11...\texttt{h5}! 12.\texttt{e3 \texttt{xc3}! 13.bxc3 e5}. See game 40 Grischuk-Ivanchuk, Beijing 2013.

The idea of giving up our dark-squared bishop sometimes works even without the benefit of splitting the enemy's queenside pawns:

\texttt{Simek-Kanovsky
Prague 2011}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{chessboard5.png}
\end{center}

19...\texttt{xc3} 20.\texttt{xc3 e5} 21.f5 \texttt{f4} 22.fxg6 hxg6 23.b1 \texttt{f6} 24.e3 \texttt{b5?}.
Kan – the Maróczy Bind

On a final note, Black should not be scared of 5.\texttt{d}d3. This move is not even White's first choice against the Kan. While the Maróczy Bind is rather restrictive, it is far from the true spirit of the open Sicilians. The 1.e4 players are commonly not big fans of long positional manoeuvring. Even when they choose 5.\texttt{d}d3 because it is supposed to be the “best” answer to 4...a6, they tend to treat it over-aggressively. That gives us fair chances for full-fledged counterplay.
Part 6. Kan – the Maróczy Bind

Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4 a6

This chapter deals with White’s approach based on the Maróczy Bind. He either plays A. 5.c4 immediately, or delay it by B. 5.d3.

A. 5.c4 d6 6.d3

6.d3 d6 gains control over the dark squares and White often fails to even equalise. Here are two examples:

7.dxc6 dxc6 8.d3 e5 9.e2 d5 10.g5 h6 11.h4 g4 12.f3 e6 13.0-0-0 a5 14.c2 b5 15.b3 d4 16.e1 b6++, Savchenko-Caruana, Moscow 2010;

7.e2 e5 8.0-0 c7 9.d3 b6 10.e3 b7 11.f3 d6+, Kokol-Korneev, Nova Gorica 2014

6...b4

If you aim for the Hedgehog, you should choose 6...c7 7.a3 b6 8.e3 d7 9.f3 e7 10.e2 0-0 11.c1 d6. This structure is not part of the opening, but rather of the middlegame.

In the diagram position, White has tested nearly all the legal moves. I will focus on:

A1. 7.d3; A2. 7.d3; A3. 7.c2; A4. 7.f3

Minor alternatives are:
Kan – the Maroczy Bind

a) 7.e5? dxe5 8.dxe5 dxe5 9.fxe5 f6 10.d1 xd4 11.exd4 c6; 8.c2 xc3 9.bxc3 £f7 10.e4 d6 11.e4 c5 12.d3 d7) 8...xc3 9.a3 d8 10.bxc3 xc5 (10...d6) 11.g3 d6 12.exd6 exd6 13.xd6 xc3+ 14.d1 (14.d2 xa1+ 15.e2 b2 16.e3 d7 17.b4 c1+ 18.e2 g5) 14...xa1 15.d3 d7++, Enevoldsen-Por­tisch, Munich 1958.

b) 7.d2 0-0! 8.e5! (8.d3?! dx5?) 8...xc3! 9.xc3 e4

Black’s defence is based on the exchange sacrifice 10.b4 d6! (10...xb6 11.xf8 xf8 offers Black enough material, but a bad position after 12.b1.a5+ 13.b4 xe5 14.f3 xc3+ 15.d2 xd4 16.xe4 xe4+ 17.e2 xg2 18.f3 g6 19.d6+) 11.e2 b6 12.c2 c6 13.a3 d5!. The stem game Korchnoi-Furman, Leningrad 1957, went further 14.f3 c5 15.e3 d4 16.xd4 xb4 17.axb4 xb4+=.

10.c2 xc3 11.xc3 d5! (avoiding 11...d6 12.e1!) 12.e1 (12.exd6 xd6 was thoroughly tested back in 1957!)


12...b5! White’s lag in development prompts for energetic actions. 13.c5

13.cxb5 axb5 14.axb5 xa2 15.0-0 d7 is balanced. White can try to capture the pawn later, for instance, 14.a3 d7 15.xb5 c6 16.f4 (16.e2 xe5 17.wxe5 wb5 18...xb5 a5+) 16...xh2 17.d6 f6+, or 15.xb5 xxb5 16.xb5 d6 17.f4 xc8 (17...h4+?) 18 wd2 wb6 19.d4 c5 20.0-0 e4=. 15.d3 wb6 gives Black a “free” initiative.

13...c7 14.f4 f6 15.e2 fxe5 16.fxe5 xe5 17.xb5=.

d) 7.c2 xc3+ 8.bxc3 e5 (This is the most straightforward equaliser. For more complex play, you should opt for 8...c6 9.d3 d6 10.0-0 c7 11.f4 0-0 12.e3 b6 or even 12...b5?!) 9.xd3 c6 (9...e5!? 10.f3 d5 11.d4+) 10.e2 (10.a3 d5) 10...e5 11.f3 d5 12.exd5 exd5 13.f4 dxc4!= 14.fxe5 cxd3 15.exf6 dxe2 16.fxg7 g8 17.h6 f6 18.xe2 f7.

e) 7.f3 0-0

7...c7 is often seen, but it is connected with the passive set-up
...\textit{bd}7, ...\textit{b}6. The queen move does not support the freeing ...\textit{d}7-\textit{d}5. For instance, 8.e2 0-0 9.0-0 \textit{d}5?! is not enough due to 10.cxd5 \textit{xc}3 11.bxc3 exd5 12.g5 \textit{bd}7 13.f5 dxe4 14.d4+.

8.e2 (8.e3 does not hamper 8...\textit{d}5, but Black may also consider the positional plan 8...\textit{xc}3+!? 9.bxc3 \textit{d}6. It is effective when White’s bishop took away the e3 square putting an obstacle to the manoeuvre \textit{d}4-c2-e3.) 8...\textit{c}6

9.e3 \textit{d}5. Of course, White can also play 9.xc6 bxc6 10.e5 \textit{e}8, but this is a fine version of the Taimanov. Black will get counterplay with ...f6.

\textbf{A1. 7.d3 \textit{c}6}

This is the well known equaliser. Its only apparent drawback is that it leads by force to a drawish position with opposite-coloured bishops. A reasonable alternative is:

7...\textit{c}7 8.de2 \textit{c}6 9.a3 \textit{e}7 10.f4 \textit{d}6 11.b3 \textit{e}5 12.c2 \textit{d}7 13.a4 \textit{g}6.

I have also analysed 7...e5 8.de2 (8.f5 0-0 9.e3 \textit{xc}3+

10.bxc3 \textit{d}6 11.a3 \textit{c}7 12.c2 \textit{d}8) 8...h6! (This move order aims to avoid 8...d6 9.0-0 h6 10.a4! 0-0 11.a3 \textit{a}5 12.b4 \textit{c}7. 8...\textit{c}5!? pursues the same goal.)

9.0-0 \textit{c}5?! 10.d5 \textit{d}6. The game transposed to Perunovic-Gajewski, Legnica 2013 – 11.b4 \textit{a}7 12.e3 \textit{xd}5 13.exd5 \textit{xe}3 14.fxe3 \textit{a}5! with counterplay, for example, 15.a3 0-0 16.\textit{c}1 \textit{d}7 17.\textit{d}2 (17.c5 axb4 18.axb4 dxc5 19.bxc5 \textit{a}5 20.c6 \textit{f}6=) 17...b6.

\textbf{8.xc6}

a) 8.c2 \textit{xc}3+ (8...\textit{c}5) 9.bxc3 \textit{d}6 10.0-0 (10.a3 0-0 11.f4 \textit{c}7 12.0-0 \textit{d}8 13.\textit{f}3 b5 14.cxb5 axb5 15.b2 \textit{a}5 16.d4 \textit{c}4 17.\textit{c}1 e5+, Ahmad-Ni Hua, Macau 2007) 10...\textit{c}7 11.f4 0-0 12.a3 \textit{d}8 13.\textit{e}2 b6 14.\textit{ae}1 \textit{b}7 15.\textit{e}3 \textit{ac}8.

b) 8.de2 \textit{c}5?!

The idea of this retreat is to anticipate \textit{a}4, followed by a3. 8...\textit{d}5 unloads the centre and should gradually equalise. 8...\textit{c}7?? 9.a3 \textit{e}7 was mentioned in the comments to the previous move.

9.0-0 \textit{d}6 (9...\textit{g}4!? 10.h3 \textit{e}5)
10.\( h3 \) (10.a3 0-0 11.b4 \( \text{\textit{a7}} \) 12.\( f4 \) \( \text{\textit{h5}}=\) ) 10...\( \text{\textit{e5}} \) (or 10...h6) 11.a3 \( \text{\textit{d7}} \) (Miezis' idea 11...\( \text{\textit{g8}} \) is consistent due to the pawn lever White provided with h3, but it is still a little dubious. After 12.b4 \( \text{\textit{a7}} \) 13.\( g5 \) h6 14.\( f4 \), Black has to play 14...\( \text{\textit{d7}} \), because 14...\( g5 \) 15.\( \text{\textit{xe5}} \) dxe5 16.\( c5 \) favours White.) 12.b4 \( \text{\textit{a7}} \) 13.\( \text{\textit{g4}} \) c7

c) 8.\( e3 \) \( \text{\textit{e5}} \) 9.0-0 (after 9.\( f3 \), best is perhaps 9...\( \text{\textit{xd3}}+ \) 10.\( \text{\textit{xd3}} \) b5! 11.0-0 \( \text{\textit{b7}} \), destroying the enemy centre) 9...c7 10.\( \text{\textit{c1}} \) \( \text{\textit{eg4}} \).

d) 8.a3 \( \text{\textit{xc3}}+ \) 9.\( \text{\textit{bxc3}} \) \( \text{\textit{e5}} \)

9...\( \text{\textit{a5}} \) 10.0-0 \( \text{\textit{xc3}} \) is dubious: 11.\( \text{\textit{xc6}} \) dxc6 (11...\( \text{\textit{xa1}} \) 12.\( \text{\textit{b3}} \) dxc6 13.\( \text{\textit{b2}} \) \( \text{\textit{xf1}}+ \) 14.\( \text{\textit{xf1}} \) 0-0 15.\( \text{\textit{g3}} \) \( \text{\textit{e8}} \) 16.\( \text{\textit{c5}} \)) 12.\( \text{\textit{b1}} \) e5 13.\( \text{\textit{b2}} \) \( \text{\textit{a5}} \) 14.\( \text{\textit{c1}} \) h6 15.\( \text{\textit{c3}} \) \( \text{\textit{c7}} \) 16.\( \text{\textit{f4}} \).

10.0-0 (10.\( f4 \) \( \text{\textit{xd3}}+ \) 11.\( \text{\textit{xd3}} \) d5) 10...c7

11.\( f4 \) \( \text{\textit{xd3}} \) 12.\( \text{\textit{xd3}} \) d6. Black is only one move shy of castling and the pawn structure is favourable for him. The only way to generate some threats is 13.f5 e5 14.\( \text{\textit{c2}} \) b5 15.\( \text{\textit{g5}} \) bxc4 16.\( \text{\textit{e2}} \) \( \text{\textit{d7}} \) 17.\( \text{\textit{f6}} \) \( \text{\textit{xf6}} \), but both 18...\( \text{\textit{g8}} \) 19.\( \text{\textit{h5}} \) \( \text{\textit{xf6}} \) 20.\( \text{\textit{xf6}} \) \( \text{\textit{g6}} \) 21.\( \text{\textit{f2}} \) \( \text{\textit{b7}} \) and 18...\( \text{\textit{xf6}} \) 19.\( \text{\textit{xf6}} \) \( \text{\textit{e6}} \) 20.\( \text{\textit{e3}} \) \( \text{\textit{g8}} \) give Black good piece play while the extra pawn does not get in his way.

8...\( \text{\textit{dxc6}} \) 9.\( \text{\textit{e5}} \) (or Black plays ...\( e5 \) himself)

9...\( \text{\textit{a5}} \) 10.\( \text{\textit{exf6}} \) \( \text{\textit{xc3}}+ \) 11.\( \text{\textit{bxc3}} \) \( \text{\textit{xc3}}+ \)

12.\( \text{\textit{d2}} \)

12.\( \text{\textit{d2}} \)? is a good news for Black. With an extra exchange plus a couple of pawns he can always give back a part of the loot: 12...\( \text{\textit{xa1}} \) 13.0-0 \( \text{\textit{xf6}} \) 14.\( \text{\textit{c5}} \) 15.\( \text{\textit{e1}} \) (15.\( \text{\textit{b4}} \) \( \text{\textit{d8}} \) 16.\( \text{\textit{e1}} \) \( \text{\textit{c7}} \) 17.\( \text{\textit{f4}} \) \( \text{\textit{e6}} \) 18.\( \text{\textit{f5}} \) 0-0) 15...\( \text{\textit{e6}} \) 16.\( \text{\textit{d6}} \) \( \text{\textit{d8}} \) 17.\( \text{\textit{c5}} \) \( \text{\textit{xd6}} \) 14...\( e5 \) (14...\( \text{\textit{e7}} \)) 15.\( \text{\textit{e1}} \) (15.\( \text{\textit{xe5}} \) \( \text{\textit{xe5}} \) 16.\( \text{\textit{e1}} \) \( \text{\textit{xe1}}+ \) 17.\( \text{\textit{xe1}}+ \) \( \text{\textit{xe6}} \) 15...\( \text{\textit{h6}} \)).
12...\textit{\={w}}xd3 13.fxg7 \textit{\={w}}g8 14.\textit{\={w}}h6 \textit{\={w}}c3+

14...\textit{\={w}}e4+ is similar: 15.\textit{\={w}}e2 (15.\textit{\={w}}f1 \textit{\={w}}h4 16.\textit{\={w}}c1 f6 17.\textit{\={w}}g1 e5 18.\textit{\={w}}b1 \textit{\={w}}f5 19.\textit{\={w}}xb7? 0-0-0 20.\textit{\={w}}a7 \textit{\={w}}xh6–+) 15...\textit{\={w}}xe2+ 16.\textit{\={w}}xe2 e5 17.f4 (17.\textit{\={w}}c5 f6) 17...\textit{\={w}}xf4 18.\textit{\={w}}d3 \textit{\={w}}e6 19.\textit{\={w}}hf1 b5 20.\textit{\={w}}xf4 \textit{\={w}}xc4+=.

15.\textit{\={w}}f1 \textit{\={w}}f6 16.\textit{\={w}}c1 e5 17.\textit{\={w}}b1

17...\textit{\={w}}e6

17...b5 is also possible, but the text is more forced. The following mass elimination leads to a completely balanced endgame: 18.\textit{\={w}}xb7 0-0-0 19.\textit{\={w}}a7 \textit{\={w}}h4 20.\textit{\={w}}a8+ \textit{\={w}}c7 21.\textit{\={w}}xd8 \textit{\={w}}xd8 22.\textit{\={w}}h3 \textit{\={w}}xc4+ 23.\textit{\={w}}xc4 \textit{\={w}}xc4+ 24.\textit{\={w}}e1 f5=, Vandervoort-Kveinys, Charleroi 2007.

I do not like 7...0-0-0 due to 8.e5!, for instance: 8...\textit{\={w}}g4 9.\textit{\={w}}g3 \textit{\={w}}a5 10.\textit{\={w}}e2 h5!? (10...\textit{\={w}}xe5 11.\textit{\={w}}b3 \textit{\={w}}c7 12.\textit{\={w}}h6 \textit{\={w}}d3+ 13.\textit{\={w}}xd3 \textit{\={w}}xg3 14.hxg3 \textit{\={w}}xh6 15.\textit{\={w}}xh6 f5 16.\textit{\={w}}e2) 11.\textit{\={w}}xe8 \textit{\={w}}f4! d6 10.\textit{\={w}}c2 \textit{\={w}}xc3+ 11.\textit{\={w}}xc3±.

7...d5 is playing for two results only: 8.exd5 exd5 9.\textit{\={w}}e2 0-0 10.0-0 \textit{\={w}}c6! 11.\textit{\={w}}xc6 bxc6 12.\textit{\={w}}g5 a5 (Rublevsky's idea) 13.cxd5 \textit{\={w}}a6 14.\textit{\={w}}c2!±.

7...\textit{\={w}}c7 is the most popular move, but it leads to the Hedgehog after 8.a3 \textit{\={w}}e7 (8...\textit{\={w}}xc3+ 9.\textit{\={w}}xc3 \textit{\={w}}xe4 10.\textit{\={w}}b5! is the point of White's idea – 10...axb5 11.\textit{\={w}}xg7 \textit{\={w}}f8 12.\textit{\={w}}h6 \textit{\={w}}c5 13.f3!, N.Ninov-Pikula, Lazarevac 1999) 9.\textit{\={w}}e2 b6.

Black can try to stay in Taimanov waters with 9...\textit{\={w}}c6 10.0-0 \textit{\={w}}xd4 11.\textit{\={w}}xd4 \textit{\={w}}d6 12.\textit{\={w}}h1 \textit{\={w}}e5, but White retained some edge after 13.\textit{\={w}}e3 0-0 14.\textit{\={w}}a4 b5 15.\textit{\={w}}b6 \textit{\={w}}b8 16.\textit{\={w}}xc8 \textit{\={w}}xc8 17.f4 \textit{\={w}}d6 18.e5 \textit{\={w}}c5 19.\textit{\={w}}f3+, Leko-Bologan, Beijing 2012; or 9...0-0 10.0-0 \textit{\={w}}c6 11.\textit{\={w}}h1 \textit{\={w}}d8 12.f4 d5 13.cxd5 exd5 14.e5 \textit{\={w}}e4 15.\textit{\={w}}xc6 \textit{\={w}}xc6 16.f5, Giri-Landa, Eilat 2012.

\textbf{8.\textit{\={w}}xc6} (8.\textit{\={w}}d2 0-0) 8...\textit{\={w}}xc6

\textbf{A2. 7.\textit{\={w}}d3}

This is perhaps the most challenging continuation. White prepares e5, \textit{\={w}}f4, 0-0-0 and \textit{\={w}}g3.

7...\textit{\={w}}c6
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A21. 9.\textit{\texttt{w}}xd8+; A22. 9.e5

\textbf{A21. 9.\textit{\texttt{w}}xd8+ \textit{\texttt{w}}xd8 10.e5}

Or 10.\textit{\texttt{a}}d2 e5.

10...\textit{\texttt{a}}xc3+!

Black has played so far only 10...\textit{\texttt{d}}e4?! when 11.a3! \textit{\texttt{a}}xc3+ 12.bxc3 b5 13.h4! gives White strong pressure on the kingside, for instance: 13...\textit{\texttt{a}}xc3 14.\textit{\texttt{h}}h3 \textit{\texttt{a}}a4 15.\textit{\texttt{g}}g3 \textit{\texttt{g}}g8 16.\textit{\texttt{h}}h6 g6 17.\textit{\texttt{g}}g5+. This example suggests that we should try to blockade the position rather then open it against White’s bishop pair.

11.bxc3 \textit{\texttt{d}}d7 12.f4 b6 13.\textit{\texttt{e}}e3 \textit{\texttt{c}}5 14.\textit{\texttt{d}}d3 \textit{\texttt{c}}c7 15.\textit{\texttt{f}}f2

White hinders ...\textit{\texttt{d}}d8 which would be possible after 15.0-0 \textit{\texttt{d}}d8 16.\textit{\texttt{a}}ad1 \textit{\texttt{f}}f8=. After the text, Black should not wait passively because White will carry on f4-f5, for instance: 15...\textit{\texttt{g}}f8 16.0-0 \textit{\texttt{g}}g6 17.\textit{\texttt{a}}ad1 \textit{\texttt{e}}e7 18.\textit{\texttt{g}}g4 \textit{\texttt{d}}d7 19.\textit{\texttt{f}}f5 h5 20.\textit{\texttt{g}}g3 h4 21.\textit{\texttt{f}}f4=.

The solution is to blockade the centre with ...f5. White will probably not allow it, but the variation 15...\textit{\texttt{b}}b7! 16.0-0 f5! 17.exf6 \textit{\texttt{xf}}6 18.\textit{\texttt{e}}ae1 \textit{\texttt{ad}}8 19.\textit{\texttt{b}}b1 \textit{\texttt{d}}d2! is roughly equal.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image}
\end{center}

Black’s rook is so active on the second rank, that White should be careful to maintain the balance: 20.\textit{\texttt{x}}xe6 \textit{\texttt{e}}e8 21.\textit{\texttt{x}}xe8 \textit{\texttt{xe}}8 22.\textit{\texttt{e}}e1 \textit{\texttt{f}}f6! (22...\textit{\texttt{d}}d6 might be drawish, but only for computers – 23.\textit{\texttt{x}}h7 \textit{\texttt{xa}}2 24.\textit{\texttt{h}}h4 a5 25.f5 \textit{\texttt{e}}e4 26.\textit{\texttt{x}}xe4 \textit{\texttt{xe}}4 27.\textit{\texttt{f}}f6 \textit{\texttt{a}}a1+ 28.\textit{\texttt{h}}h2 \textit{\texttt{x}}xf6 29.\textit{\texttt{x}}xe4 f5 30.\textit{\texttt{x}}xf5 a4 31.h5 a3 32.h6 a2 33.\textit{\texttt{h}}h1+ 34.\textit{\texttt{x}}xh1 \textit{\texttt{a}}a1+ 35.\textit{\texttt{h}}h2 \textit{\texttt{xc}}3=) 23.h3 a5 24.\textit{\texttt{g}}g4 (24.a3 \textit{\texttt{b}}b8 25.g4 a4 26.g5 \textit{\texttt{h}}h5=) 24...\textit{\texttt{a}}a6=.

\textbf{A22. 9.e5 \textit{\texttt{w}}xd3!}

White’s spatial advantage is more substantial with queens. His centre is a bit shaky, but once he consolidated, his prospects for a kingside attack would be considerable – 9...\textit{\texttt{d}}d7?! 10.\textit{\texttt{g}}g3 (10.\textit{\texttt{f}}f4 \textit{\texttt{a}}a5) 10.\textit{\texttt{w}}a5 11.\textit{\texttt{f}}f4 \textit{\texttt{xc}}3+ (11...\textit{\texttt{g}}f8 12.\textit{\texttt{d}}d2) 12.bxc3 \textit{\texttt{f}}f8.

At the surface, it seems that Black has a good game. For example:
13...\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{g}6\) 14.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{b}6\) (14...\(\text{e}7=\)
15.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{f}5\) 16.\(\text{f}4\) 0-0 17.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{d}8\)
18.\(\text{d}1\) b5) 15.\(\text{e}2\) c5 16.\(\text{f}3\) (16-0-0 0-0 17.\(\text{f}d1\) \(\text{e}7=\)) 16...\(\text{a}7\) 17.0-0 \(\text{a}7\) 14.0-0 0-0=.

However, the stranded c8-bishop kept bothering me and a deeper analysis confirmed my fears. In the diagram position, White has the awkward manoeuvre:

13.h4! \(\text{g}6\) 14.\(\text{h}3\)! \(\text{d}7\) (14...h5
15.\(\text{e}2\) h5 16.\(\text{d}1\) c5 17.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{c}6\) 18.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{e}4\) 19.\(\text{h}1\) and he is dominating all over the board. It is better to kill the enemy's strongest pieces right away.

10.\(\text{xd}3\) \(\text{d}7\) 11.\(\text{f}4\)

11.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{a}5\) 12.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{c}7\) 13.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{f}6\)
14-0-0 \(\text{fxe}5\) 15.\(\text{fxe}5\) \(\text{xe}5\) equalises: 16.\(\text{a}e1\) \(\text{xg}3\) 17.\(\text{xe}6+\) \(\text{d}8\)
18.\(\text{xg}3\) \(\text{f}6\) 19.\(\text{ee}1\) \(\text{e}8\) 20.\(\text{e}4\)
\(\text{xe}4\) 21.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{xe}4\) 22.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{e}7\)
23.\(\text{xe}7\) \(\text{e}6\) 24.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{d}8\). Black's king will invade the queenside via the dark squares.

11...\(\text{f}6\) 12.\(\text{exf}6\) \(\text{xf}6\) 13.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{e}5\)!

Kovacevic-Miezis, Nova Gorica

2010 saw 13...0-0 14.\(\text{xf}1\) \(\text{e}5\), when instead of 15.f5, White had 15.fxe5.

14.\(\text{f}5\) 0-0 15.\(\text{xf}1\) \(\text{xc}3\)!
16.\(\text{xc}3\) \(\text{g}4\) 17.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{h}6=\)

A3. 7.\(\text{wc}2\) 0-0!

This move is dubious after 7.\(\text{wd}3\) since White can meet it by 8.e5 \(\text{g}4\) 9.\(\text{w}g3\). Against 7.\(\text{wc}2\), it is the most principled retort. It has no decent alternatives if we want to avoid the main Hedgehog lines which arise after 7...\(\text{wc}7\) 8.a3 \(\text{e}7\).

Note that 7...\(\text{c}6\) 8.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{dxc}6\) 9.e5! is dubious for Black: 9...\(\text{d}7\)
(9...\(\text{g}4\) 10.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{xe}5\) 11.0-0\(\text{e}5\); 10.a3 \(\text{c}5\) 11.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{d}4\) 12.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{wb}6\) 13.\(\text{b}1\)
\(\text{c}5\) 14.\(\text{b}4\) 0-0 15.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{xe}5\) 16.0-0\(\text{i}0\))
10.a3!

In his survey for *New in Chess Yearbook 101*, Ninov gives as a main line 10.f4 f6 11.exf6 wxf6 12.d2 0-0 13.0-0-0 c5 14.e1, but then 14...e5! takes over the initiative.

It is much stronger to play 13.d3! when 13...wh4+?! is positionally grim, but 13...g6! holds firmly, for example, 14.0-0-0 e5 (or 14...c5 15.he1 e5 16.fxe5 we7 17.a3 xc3 18.wxc3 ed8 19.e3 xd3+ 20.xd3 ed3 21.wxd3 xf5 22.we3 xe8 23.ac3 wh4 24.b3 wxh2=) 15.a3 xc3 16.wxc3 (16. wxc3 exf4 17.wxf6 xf6 18.xf4 g4 19.hf1 f5 20.e6 c3 21.xf8 xf8 22.xf5 gxf5 23.e3 xd1 24.xd1 ef7=) 16...wxf4+ 17.b1 c5 18.hf1 xf119.xf1 xf5 20.d3 xd3 21.a1 ed8 22.w2 e4 – the endgame after 23.wel xg2 24.wg1 xd1+ 25.wxd1 b3 26.wd2 c2+ 27.a2 d4 28.axd4 exd4 29.wxd4 is a draw. If White's king goes to b6, Black starts pushing his passed pawn on the g-file.

10...wa5 (10...e7 11.f4 f6 12.exf6±) 11.f4 xc3+ 12.bxc3! (12. wxc3 wxc3+ 13.bxc3 b6 14.e2 b7 15.0-0 c5=) 12...0-0 (12...b5 13.e3 b6 14.eb1±) 13.d3. White has an attack and the queen cannot help much from a5. If Black attempts to close the kingside, he lands in a difficult position – 13...f5 14.0-0 c5 15.bd1 ed8 16.e3 xd3 17.xd3 axd3 18.wxd3 b5 19.ed1±.

8...c5

All the other moves allow the break ...d5:

a) 8.e2 d5= 9.exd5 exd5 10.0-0 dxc4 11.ed1 wc7 12.g5 (12.e4 xe4 13.wxe4 b6 14.f3 d7 15.wxc4 xc4 16.xc4 c5) 12...b7=.

b) 8.d3 d5! 9.cxd5 exd5 10.e5 xe8 11.0-0 xe5 12.f3 bh5!.

8...g4 9.f4 c5

The quieter 9...d6!? is also possible – 10.f3 dxe5 11.h3 c6 12.fxe5 c5 13.a3 c7 (13...c5 14.f4 c6 15.b1 w7 16.w4 f6) 14.f4 c6 15.b1 a5 16.d3 f5, Ninov-Shchekachev, Bethune 2000.

10.b3

10.f3 c6 11.h3 c5 12.xc3 xe3 cxe3 13.g3 d5=.

10...f2+

It would be a sin to miss this check. Still, 10...a7 11.c5 (11.e2 f5) 11...b6 12.e4 (12.d3 f5 13.exf6 xf6 14.e4 bxc5 15.xf6+ xf6
16...hxh7+ h8=\#) 12...bxc5 is possible, too.

11...\$h4!? was played in Nanumarkowski, Plovdiv 2008.

12...\$h4

Vuckovic-Pikula, Zlatibor 2006 ended up badly for Black after 12...h4!? 13.c5 (13.e4 f5) 13...gxf2+ 14...d1 g3+ 15...xe3 gxe3 16.e4 xc5 17.g5 xc5 18.d3 g6 19.h4 d5 20.gf3, but the engines assure me that after 20...g7! 21.h5 c6 only Black has an attack. I do not have any reason to doubt this assessment, but common sense and my practice of Taimanov/Kan player suggest a simple and safer solution:

12...\$h6+

This is my fifty cents in the theory of this variation. Now Black’s castling position is unassailable while the enemy king in the centre is a ridiculous sight. Possible continuations are: 13.g4 c6 14.g2 (14.f5 wh4; 14.e4 a5!) 14...d6. 

A4. 7.gf3

This move has obvious pluses – Black cannot trade queens like in the 7.wd3 variation. Compared to 7.wc2, the queen is more active on the kingside. Its drawback is not so conspicuous. White releases the pressure on d6 and allows:

7...\$xc3+

Exploiting the fact that 8.wxc3 drops a pawn. 7...d6 8.d2! \$xc3+ is not enticing since the g7-pawn is already hanging.

8.bxc3 d6

9.a3

Piece attack on the kingside is ineffective. In this pawn structure, Black’s knight pair is more powerful than the bishops.

a) 9...g3 0-0 10.h6 g8, followed up by ...e5. Alsina Leal-Yangyi, Moscow 2011, saw 10.d3 e5 11.f5 xf5 12.exf5 c6 13.0-0 g8 14.d1 g8 15.a2 b5 16.e3 d5. 

b) 9.a2!? 0-0 10.a0 a67. Black has no compelling reason to define the centre at this point with 10...e5 11.f5 xf5 12.exf5 although it is possible – 12...bd7 13.xb7 c5 14.f3 b5. He can quietly complete development with natural
moves while White's play is not trivial. Perhaps he will have to return to the plan with a3.

9...0-0! 10.d1

10.eb3 e8 (escaping the pin and preparing ...d6-d5) 11.e1 (11.d3?! c6 12.0-0 e5; 11.e2 c6 12.0-0 e5 13.e3 b5 14.c5 d5 15.fd1 b7 16.f4 c4 17.xc4 bxc4) 11... d5 12.e5 e4 13.d3 g5! 14.0-0 c6 15.xe4 dxe4 16.xe4 xe5 is equal.

10...e5! 11.f5 xf5 12.exf5 c6! 13.e2 (13.xd6 d4!) 13... a5 14.xd6 d4 15.d3 xe2 16.xe2 xc3+.

Black has seized the initiative, Dominguez Perez-Ivanchuk, Nice 2010.

B. 5.d3

If you think that this move offends the basic strategic principles of chess, bear in mind that it was employed in the past by finest positional players like Smyslov, Vasiukov and recently by Kamsky, Bacrot. In contrast with the Hedgehog waiting approach, Black aims to open the centre early with ...g8-e7 and ...d7-d5 or ...f5. I would like to warn you right away that this is straightforward play for equalisation. In line B12. 6.c4, we often see mass elimination and symmetric positions where White's initiative gradually evaporates. On the other hand, there is little theory to learn and Black's play is clear and easy – he makes obvious moves and lets the opponent sweat about how to generate tangible threats.

If you want to keep more tension, you can always postpone ...d5 in favour of ...d6 and enter a non-standard hedgehog with ...e7 and ...g6. However, although practice experience has been favourable for Black, according to my database, I feel that White has the upper hand.

B11. 6.c3; B12. 6.c4

Minor alternatives are:

B1. 5...g6; B2. 5...f6

B1. 5...g6

B11. 6.c3; B12. 6.c4

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If you want to keep more tension, you can always postpone ...d5 in favour of ...d6 and enter a non-standard hedgehog with ...e7 and ...g6. However, although practice experience has been favourable for Black, according to my database, I feel that White has the upper hand.

B11. 6.c3; B12. 6.c4

Minor alternatives are:

B1. 5...g6; B2. 5...f6

B1. 5...g6
6.0-0 $\text{g}7$ will most probably transpose to the main lines, e.g. $\text{7.e}3 \text{e}7 \text{8.c}4$. Instead, the game Sevian-Stripunsky, Ledyard 2014, introduced the novelty $\text{7.f}3 \text{c}6 \text{8.c}4 \text{g}e7 \text{9.c}3 \text{0-0} \text{10.b}3$

We can follow the main plan with 10...d5! (of course, you can also create havoc on the board with 10...f5 $\text{11.e}3 \text{b}5 \text{12.cxb}5 \text{axb}5 \text{13.xb}5 \text{fxe}4 \text{14.xxe}4 \text{d}5 \text{11.cxd}5 \text{exd}5 \text{12.exd}5 \text{a}5 \text{[12...xd}5 \text{13.g}5 \text{13.xd}5 \text{f}6 \text{14.g}d1 \text{a}5=]$

B11. $\text{6.c}3 \text{g}7 \text{7.e}3$

a) Another plan is to lead out the bishop to a more active square as f4 or g5:

$\text{7.b}3 \text{c}6 \text{8.0-0}$

8.$\text{f}4$ is typically parried with 8...$\text{e}5$.

Smyslov answered 8.$\text{e}3$ with 8...d5 9.exd5 exd5 and took over the initiative after 10.$\text{c}5$?! $\text{b}6 \text{11.a}3 \text{ge}7 \text{12.0-0 0-0} \text{13.e}2 \text{c}7 \text{14.c}3 \text{e}5 \text{15.bd}4 \text{c}4$, Silman-Smyslov, Lone Pine 1976.

8...$\text{ge}7$ (8...d6 is more solid, but it allows White to stay in his comfort zone)

9.$\text{g}5$

9.$\text{f}4$ $\text{e}5$ 10.$\text{e}2$ f5! is a thematic break. Lutz-Bischoff, Essen 2001 went $\text{11.g}5 \text{f}7 \text{12.e}3 \text{xe}7 \text{xe}7 \text{13.exf}5 \text{gx}f5 \text{14.h}5 \text{0-0} \text{15.f}4 \text{b}5 \text{12...fxe}4 \text{13.xe}4 \text{d}5 \text{14.c}3 \text{f}5 \text{15.c}5 \text{b}6 \text{16.b}4 \text{e}5$ with excellent piece play.

9...0-0

Undoubtedly, this is the most flexible approach. 9...h6 weakens the g6-square although White has not much after 10.$\text{h}4$ (10.$\text{f}4$ $\text{e}5$ is familiar from the previous example. The insertion of ...$\text{h}6$ brings about new possibilities for kingside play: 11.$\text{d}2 \text{g}5 \text{12.e}3 \text{g}4 \text{13.d}4 \text{c}7 \text{14.g}3 \text{xd}4 \text{15.xd}4 \text{d}6.$) 10...d5?!

10...0-0 11.$\text{f}4$ d5 12.$\text{e}5$ is unpleasant. Houdini 4 suggests the extravagant 10...$\text{xc}3$ 11.$\text{bxc}3$ g5 12.$\text{g}3$ e5 claiming full equality. However, in this pawn structure the knight should stay on f6 so I'm a bit reserved about this line. 10...0-0 11.$\text{f}4$ f5! 12.$\text{exf}5$ (12.$\text{g}4$ $\text{fxe}4 \text{13.xe}4 \text{b}6+ \text{14.d}2 \text{c}7 \text{12...gx}f5$ is strategically highly unbalanced. Black is behind in development, but the strong pawn control of the centre should keep him safe until he
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regrouped: 13.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{f3}}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{c7}}} 14.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{d2}}} \textit{\texttt{b6}}
15.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{f2}}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{g6}}} 16.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{d1}}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{c8}}} 17.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{e2}}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{b7}}}
18.\textit{\texttt{g3}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{c6}}} 19.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{d4}}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{e7}}} 20.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{h5}}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{h7}}}.

Black has counterplay against the \textit{\texttt{f4}}-pawn and down the g-file.

11.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{exd5}}} \textit{\texttt{exd5}}. Now 12.\textit{\texttt{f4}} 0-0
13.\textit{\texttt{f5}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{b6+}}} 14.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{f2}}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{c7}}} 15.\textit{\texttt{fxg6}} \textit{\texttt{fxg6}}
gives Black a good game mostly due to the \textit{\texttt{e5}}-square for his minor pieces. On the other hand, 12.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{d2}}} 0-0
13.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{fe1}}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{e6}}} is only slightly better for White.

10.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{d2}}} (10.\textit{\texttt{f4}} \textit{\texttt{f5}}) 10...\textit{\texttt{d6}} 11.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{ad1}}}
\textit{\texttt{\texttt{c7}}} 12.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{h6}}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{hxh6}}} 13.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{xh6}}} \textit{\texttt{b5}}
14.\textit{\texttt{f4}} (14.\textit{\texttt{a3}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{e5}}}), Wiwe-Stripunsky, Copenhagen 2007. Here, 14...
\textit{\texttt{b4}} 15.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{e2}}} \textit{\texttt{f5}} assures Black of fullfledged counterplay, e.g. 16.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{h1}}}
\textit{\texttt{fxe4}} 17.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{xe4}}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{d7}}}.

b) 7.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{f3}}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{c6}}} 8.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{f4}}} \textit{\texttt{d5}} 9.\textit{\texttt{exd5}}
(9.\textit{\texttt{e5}}? \textit{\texttt{f6}} 10.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{e2}}} \textit{\texttt{fxe5}} 11.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{xe5}}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{ge7}}}
12.0-0-0 0-0+, Li Chao2-Wang Chen, Chengdu 2011) 9...\textit{\texttt{exd5}}
10.0-0 \textit{\texttt{\texttt{ge7}}}, Leko-Vyzmanavin, Leon 1993,
was extensively tested in practice and proved to be innocuous for
Black. The plan with long castling seems more dangerous:

\textbf{9.\texttt{\texttt{b3}}? \texttt{\texttt{dxe4}}?}

9...\textit{\texttt{\texttt{bc6}}} 10.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{h6}}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{hxh6}}}} 11.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{xb6}}}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{g8}}}} 12.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{g7}}} (12.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{d2}}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{f6}}}) 12...\textit{\texttt{\texttt{f6}}}
13.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{xf6}}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{xf6}}} 14.\textit{\texttt{exd5}} \textit{\texttt{exd5}} offers
White only a symbolic advantage, in my opinion. However, the text leads
to more complex play.

\textbf{10.\texttt{\texttt{xe4}}} 0-0 11.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{h6}}} \textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{hxh6}}}}!
Black has played only 11...\(\text{bc6}\) so far when 12.xg7 \(\text{hxg7}\) 13.h4 f5 14.g5? h6 was fine for him. However, 14.c3! h6 15.0-0-0 looks rather dangerous. I propose to play more concretely:

12.xh6 \(\text{f5}\) 13.d2 a5!

A thematic method of seizing space on the queenside by tempo.

14.0-0-0

14.g4 (14.a4 b6) 14...a4 15.b6 b6 16.gxf5 is strongly met by 16...exf5 17.c3 fxe4 18.xe4 d7∞.

14...a4 15.c4 \(wxd2+!\)
16.xbxd2 \(d7\)

My analysis suggests that this endgame is balanced. We only have to avoid trading ANY rook. Instead, we keep them on the queenside – c8 and a5. White cannot improve his position. For instance:

17.d3 \(\text{c6}\) 18.he1 a3 19.b3 b5 20.d3 b4;

17.f6+ \(\text{g7}\) 18.xd7 \(\text{xd7}\) 19.e4 \(\text{b6}\)! [19...e5 20.e2 a3 21.b3 \(\text{ad8}\) 22.xd8 (22.c3 \(\text{d5}\) 23.d2) 22...xd8 23.c3! (23.ed1 \(\text{d4}\) 24.f1 \(\text{ec6}\) 25.ed2 b6=) 23...h4 24.g1+ \(\text{e2}\) 25.a5! (we play a middlegame!) 21.a3 (21.d6?! a3 22.b3 \(\text{d5}\) 23.xf5+ exf5 24.c3 \(\text{c3}\) 25.e2 \(\text{e5}\) 26.f3 b5) 21...e5 22.d3 \(\text{c8}\) =.

B12. 6.c4 \(\text{g7}\) 7.b3

a) 7.e3 \(\text{e7}\) 8.c3

Or 8-0-0 d5 9.exd5 exd5 10.c3 0-0! – there is no reason to rush with taking on c4 although 10...dxc4 11.cxc4 0-0 12.e1 \(\text{d7}\)! 13.g5 \(\text{f6}\) 14.c1 h6 15.f4 b5 16.b3 \(\text{e8}\) holds on.

8...d5 (or 8...0-0 9.0-0 d5)

The plan with ...d6 may look more flexible, but in my opinion it is inferior to the text. For instance: 8...0-0 9.0-0 d6 10.wd2! \(\text{bc6}\) (10...d7 11.fd1! with pressure on d6 is clearly better for White. He has a clear plan with \(\text{ac1}\), b4, \(\text{b3}\), c5) 11.xc6! \(\text{xc6}\) 12.ad1 e5 13.d5 \(\text{d4}\) 14.f4 \(\text{xe6}\) 15.f2 \(\text{xc8}\) 16.xf1 with an initiative. Therefore, if Black wants to play a hedgehog structure, he should choose the set-up with 5...f6 – see line B2.
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9.exd5

Spassky-Panno, Manila 1976, saw 9.exd5 exd5 10.0-0 0-0 11.\uc1 \ud7!? 12.\ucxd5 (after 12.\ud3, we can choose between 12...\uxe4 13.\uxe4 \uf6 14.\uc5 \wxd1 15.\ucxd1! \ue8 16.\ufe1 \uc6 17.\uc6 \bxc6 18.\ue8+ \ue8 19.\ad4 \g4 20.\xg7 \xf3!= and 12...\uf6 13.\uc5 \ue8!=) 12...\wxd5 13.exd5 \uf6 14.\uc4 \xd5 15.\ub3 \xe3 16.\fxe3 when 16...\ue7! evens the game.

9...exd5 10.0-0 0-0 11.\uc1 (11.\uc1 \ud7!; 11.exd5 \ucxd5 12.\ucxd5 \wxd5 13.\uc1 \wa2 14.\uc4 \wb2 is very interesting. White has ample compensation for the missing pawns. Perhaps it is safer to decline the gift with 13...\ud7.) 11...\uc6 12.\uc6 \bxc6= 13.\g5 \ue6

White can grab a pawn, but he will be unable to keep it for long after 14.\cxd5 \cxd5 15.\ue7 \wxd5 16.\ue7 \ue8 17.\ua3 \wa5, e.g. 18.\we2 \wa4 19.\h3 \ab8 20.\xa6 \xa2.

b) 7.\we2 \we7 8.\uc3 0-0 09.\g5!? This is the only way to prevent ...d5. Commonly White plays 9.0-0 d5 10.\cxd5 exd5 11.\g5 dxe4, unloading the center – 12.\xe4 (12.\xe4 13.\ue1 \xc6 14.\ue1 \h6 15.\ce3 \f5=.

9...\uc6 10.0-0 h6

My analysis suggests that Black equalises after 10...\wa5 11.\wd2 d5 12.exd5 exd5 13.b4! (13.\xd5 \wxd2 14.\xd5 \xd5 15.\xd5 \we5 16.\e4 \ad4 17.\ac3 \ue8 18.\ag3 \xb2 19.\ac1 \b8 20.\xg7 \xg7 21.\ce7 \b5 22.\d6 \e6 23.\f4 \c4 24.f5 \xf5 25.\xf5 \xd6 13...\wb4 14.\xd5 \xd5 15.\wd2 16.\wd2 \bd8, but the text is more interesting. It aims to break the connection between \g5 and \wd2.

11.\h4 \wa5 12.a3 (now the queen will be pinned after 12.\wd2 d5) 12...\wh5 13.\g3

13...d5 14.exd5 exd5 15.exd5 \xd5 16.\xf6 \xf6 17.\xd5 \ag4 18.\dc3 g5. The bishop pair offers compensation for the pawn.

c) 7.\we2 d5! 8.exd5 exd5 9.\ce3 \ue7 10.\g5

10.0-0 0-0 11.\ce3 dxc4 12.\xc4 \bd6; 10.\df3?! d4 11.\we4 f5 12.\g3 \d7 13.\xd4 (13.0-0 \ac5 14.\we1 0-0 15.\f1 \c6 16.\g5 \wb6) 13...\bd6.
10...dxc4 11.\texttt{a}4+ \texttt{d}7 12.\texttt{xc}4 \texttt{bc}6 13.\texttt{xc}6 \texttt{xc}6 14.0-0 0-0 15.\texttt{ad}1 \texttt{c}7

10...\texttt{e}2. We should counter-attack the centre with 10...\texttt{f}5! – see game 34 Ermenkov-Kotsur, Dubai 2000.

10...\texttt{h}6 11.\texttt{h}4 (11.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{d}5 12.\texttt{ex}d5 \texttt{ex}d5 13.\texttt{c}5 \texttt{e}5) 11...\texttt{g}5 12.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{e}5 13.\texttt{f}4

Caruana opted for 13.\texttt{e}2 against Grandelius in Porto Carras 2011. The game went 13...\texttt{g}7\texttt{g}6 (13...\texttt{f}5?) 14.\texttt{d}6! (Seizing space. Or 14.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{b}6.) 14...\texttt{f}4 15.\texttt{x}f4 gxf4. It is difficult to understand what happens here.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics{image1}
\end{center}

7.\texttt{e}7 8.\texttt{bc}3 \texttt{bc}6 9.0-0

9.\texttt{e}2 0-0 10.0-0 \texttt{f}5 transposes to game 34 Ermenkov-Kotsur.

9...0-0

\begin{center}
\includegraphics{image2}
\end{center}

10.\texttt{g}5

White often attempts to generate pressure down the d-file with

At first sight White is much better, because the black bishop looks stuck on c8. On the other hand, the other one – on g7 – is extremely powerful and its pressure over the enemy queenside would be tangible in an endgame. Black’s main task should be to bring the sleeping bishop into play. The simplest way to achieve it is to sacrifice a pawn with ...\texttt{b}5. A finer point is the right timing for this break. I join Grandelius’ assessment that Black should not be too hasty. Anyway, White’s only way to prevent it is 16.\texttt{c}5, but then 16...\texttt{wg}5 17.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{d}8 threatening ...\texttt{f}8/\texttt{e}5, ...\texttt{d}6, easily equal-
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ises: 18.\(\text{\textcopyright h1 c6 (18..\textcopyright f8)}\) 19.\(\text{\textcopyright a4 \textcopyright e5}\) 20.\(\text{\textcopyright d3 d6}\). The same method works against 17.\(\text{\textcopyright h1 – 17..\textcopyright c6}\). Caruana decides to play on the kingside. This is a really dangerous plan as the g-file might open in White’s favour:

16.\(\text{\textcopyright d2 \textcopyright g5 (16...b5 was already possible)}\) 17.\(\text{\textcopyright h1 (17.\text{\textcopyright a4 b5 18.\textcopyright b6 \textcopyright a7)}\) 17...\(\text{\textcopyright h7 (17...b5)}\) 18.\(\text{\textcopyright g1}\)

White is fully prepared for an offensive so I think now is the best moment to distract him with:

18...b5!

Grandelius postponed it with 18...\(\text{\textcopyright g8},\) but I’m afraid that 19.\(\text{\textcopyright a4 would have been unpleasant}.\) Caruana played instead 19.\(\text{\textcopyright ad1 \textcopyright f6 (19...b5!?) 20.\textcopyright f3 \textcopyright xf3 21.\textcopyright xf3 (21. \textcopyright gxf3?)}\) when 21...\(\text{\textcopyright e5! was called for: 22.\textcopyright a4 (22.\textcopyright d3 b5 23.c5 \textcopyright a7 24.\textcopyright e2 b4 25.\textcopyright xf4 a5 26.g3 \textcopyright a6 27.\textcopyright e3 \textcopyright e7=)}\) 22...b5 23.\(\text{\textcopyright b6 \textcopyright xd6 24.\textcopyright xd6 \textcopyright a7 25.\textcopyright d2 d6 26.\textcopyright e1 \textcopyright c7 27.\textcopyright cc2 \textcopyright c6 28.\textcopyright xc8 \textcopyright ecx8=}.\)

19.cxb5 axb5

I believe that Black has full compensation for the pawn. Here is an illustration:

a) 20.\(\text{\textcopyright f3 \textcopyright h5 21.\textcopyright xe5 (21. \textcopyright g4!?) \textcopyright xg4 22.\textcopyright g2 \textcopyright f5 23.\textcopyright e5 \textcopyright a6 24.\textcopyright b4 d6 25.\textcopyright xg4 \textcopyright fxg4 26.\textcopyright xg4 \textcopyright c5 27.\textcopyright xxc5 \textcopyright dxc5 28.\textcopyright xxb5 \textcopyright b7=\) 21.\(\text{\textcopyright d4 \textcopyright h4 22.f3 \textcopyright c4\infty)}\) 21...\(\text{\textcopyright xe5 22.\textcopyright xe5 \textcopyright xe5 23.\textcopyright xb5 d6 24.\textcopyright gb1}\)

24...\(\text{\textcopyright a6}!). White is unable to hold his extra pawn due to the activity of the black long-range pieces – 25.a4 \(\text{\textcopyright fc8 26.\textcopyright xa6 \textcopyright xa6 27.\textcopyright a3 \textcopyright b6=}\).

b) 20.\(\text{\textcopyright xb5 \textcopyright g4 21.\textcopyright xg4 \textcopyright xb5 22.\textcopyright gb1 \textcopyright wb8 23.\textcopyright xb8 \textcopyright xb8 24.\textcopyright e2 \textcopyright xb2 25.\textcopyright xb2 \textcopyright xb2 26.\textcopyright b1 \textcopyright c3 27.\textcopyright f3 d5=\). 

c) 20.\(\text{\textcopyright ac1 \textcopyright a6 21.a3 b4 22.axb4 \textcopyright xe2 23.\textcopyright xe2 \textcopyright g4 24.\textcopyright gf1 \textcopyright e5 25.\textcopyright d3 \textcopyright g8 26.g3 \textcopyright h5 with an attack.}\)

13...\(\text{\textcopyright xf4 14.\textcopyright xf4 \textcopyright g7}\)

The dark-squared strategy 14...\(\text{\textcopyright c7 15.\textcopyright d2 (15.\textcopyright e3 b6 16.c5 bxc5 17.\textcopyright xc5 d6 18.\textcopyright e3 f5 19.\textcopyright c1 \textcopyright g4)}\) 15...\(\text{\textcopyright g6 16.\textcopyright e3 \textcopyright xd3 17.\textcopyright xd3 \textcopyright e5 is also possible, but we have more aggressive intentions in store.}\)

15.\(\text{\textcopyright e3}\)
15...b5!

Our bishop pair will be very efficient in an open position. Black has only tried 15...b6 and 15...c7 so far.

16.cxb5 axb5 17...xd3 exd3
16...cxb5 18.axb5 axb2 19...h6 axa1 20...xa1 b6+ 21...h1 a6 22...c3 e5

Black is fine here. He only should avoid Komodo TCEC's recommendation 23...xf8 xf8? 24.a4 g7 since White gets a strong attack with 25...d4!! exd4 26...d4 f8 27...f5+. Instead: 23...xf8! (23...xb5 24.b4 f6 25.a3 f4 is a decent alternative) 24...c7 b7 25...d5...xd5 26.exd5...b7 27...f3 f5. Black's mobile pawn centre assures him of the initiative. Perhaps 23...c7 is more realistic, when 23...ac8 24...xf8 xc7 25...xc7 xc7 26...h6 c2 is close to the draw, but still White must make it. Black maintains an attack due to the threats of ...b7, ...f5, ...h4.

B2. 5...f6 6.0-0 c7

7...e2

Here is the big difference with line B1. If White wants to put in c4, he has to move the queen first, but that rules out dangerous plans with e3, d2, d1. To be sure, 7.c4 is also possible, but I consider it as a positional mistake. We answer 7...c6! 8.e3 (8.xc6 dxc6 9.c3 e5 – see game 35 Eichhorn-Delchev, Bad Wiessee 2013) 8...e5 9.h3 b6!

9...c5!? in Taimanov-style is also possible: 10...d6 11.c1 0–0 12.e2 h6 13.f4 (13.a3 d7 14.b4 a7 15.d2 c8 16.f4 g6 17.f3 xe3+ 18.xe3 d8 19.fd1 h5) 13...g6 14.f5 e5 15.e1 d7 16.b3 exf5 17.exf5 c6.
10.f4

This attack has no venom without the light-squared bishop, but after 10...c3 b7 11.e1 (11.f4 dxc4 12.exc4 wxc4 13.e1 dxe4! 14.cb5 axb5) 11...e7 (11...c5!? ) White will have to push f4 anyway.

10...xd3 11.xd3 d6 12.c3 e7 13.ad1 (13.ac1 0-0 14.f5 d7 15.b3 ac8 16.a4 wb7=) 13...0-0 14.b3 b7 15.f5 e5 16.d3 b5 with counterplay.

7.c3 and 7.h1 d6 8.f4 bd7 9.c3 transpose to the Third Rank set-up.

7...d6 8.c4

White may keep us guessing about his queenside plans with:

a) 8.f4. Then 8...bd7!? will be met by 9.c4 g6 10.f5. An interesting reply is 8...e5 9.b3 (9.f5 xf5 10.exf5 e7; 9.g3 g4 10.c3 bd7) 9...e7 10.c3 0-0 (10...bd7 11.g4) 11.f5 b5 12.g4 b4 13.d5 xd5 14.exd5 d7 15.g5 d8=.

Perhaps it is best to fianchetto the bishop:

8...g6 9.c3

9.f5 g7 10.fxe6 fxe6 11.c4 is bad due to 11...c5 12.e3 g4 13.b4 wh5 14.h3 xe3 15.xe3 c6 16.c3 h6 17.g3 e5=.

9...g7 10.e5 (or 10.h1 0-0 11.d2 b6 12.ae1 b7 13.f3 bd7=, T.Bauer-Farago, Hungary 1993) 10...dxe5
Part 6

It is unclear what White should do from this point. The game Geller-Huebner, Wijk aan Zee 1975 went 12...c4 b6 12...c5 12...f6 12...d5=) 13...e1 b7 14...d2 c6d8, preparing ...d6-d5. 14...c6d8 would have been even better.

8...g6! 9.c3 g7

The main branching point of this line. White must define his plans. In practice, he achieves best results by attacking the weakened d6-pawn with B21. 10.d1 or B22. 10...f3 (planning ...f4). The third plan is to enter a standard hoppo with B23. 10.e3. The latter is considered not very challenging and scores close to 50%.

B21. 10.d1 0-0 11.f3 c6

Alternatively:

a) 12.f4 faces 12...e5 13.e3 g4 14.h3 d4 15...xd4 c3 16...xf3 exd4 17...d5 cxd5 18.cxd5 b6=, Svidler-Ivanchuk, Monte Carlo 2005.

b) 12...c2 is an original manoeuvre. The game Shirov-Wang, Shanghai 2010, illustrates its main idea: 12...d7 13.e3 de5 14.b3 d7 15.d2. The c4-pawn is defended while the d6-one is ripe for collection. I recommend the more active retort 13.a5! 14.b3 cxd3 15.bxc3 b6?! or 15.e5 16.d3 c5 17.cxc5 dxc5=.

12...g4, preventing ...e3, is also possible – 13.f4

Naiditch’s 13.e1 looks overly ambitious. We can take up the gauntlet – 13...g5 14.f4 d7 when the c4-pawn suddenly turns to be very weak after 15.d3 a5 16.d3 (16.b3 b6) 16...c5.

13...g5 14.b3 (14.ac1 xf3+ 15...xf3 e5 16.e3 d4) 14...d7 when Shirov’s move 15.d2 from the above-mentioned example fails to 15...xf3+ 16.gxf3 d4.

12...d7! 13.e3

13.f4 provokes ...e5, but this move is on Black’s agenda anyway. After 13...xc3 14.bxc3 e5, the pawn structure is similar to the main line. See game 36 Todorovic-Carluana, Rijeka 2010.

Only 13.d2 prevents 13...xc3 (although the engines still like this capture!). Then 13...b6 14.ac1 b7 15.e3 leads to positions from line B23 with an extra tempo for Black. He can follow up with 15...c5 16.b1 e8 17.b3 ad8, having ...f7-f5 in mind.
A critical position for this line. In my opinion, it is very easy to play it with Black. The last move is the first link of a plan which aims to ensure secure control of the dark squares. It includes ...b6 and ...c6-d8-f7 if needed. Nakamura opted for 14...b6 against Dominguez in Wijk aan Zee 2004, but 15.d2! c5 16.c2 a5 could have turned out badly after 17.b6! e8 18.f4 e5 19.f6 d6 20.h2.

See game 37 Leko-Ivanchuk, Mukachevo 2007, for more explanation.

B22. 10.f3 0-0

10...c6 is less flexible as it defines the placement of this knight too early while it would have been more useful on d7 in some lines. Black wants to seize the d4-square, but practice suggests that it might be insufficient to balance the game. For instance, 11.f4 e5 (11.h5, intending ...xc3, is possible, but after 12.d2 0-0 13.ac1, the knight would be a bit awkward on c6. By all means this continuation has no advantages over the main line.) 12.d2! (12.e3 g4 13.h3 d4!=) 12...g4 13.e3 and White can organise an offensive on either flank.

11.f4

11.h3 eliminates the idea of ...e5 followed up by ...g4, but I noted above that it was not so attractive anyway. We follow our main plan enjoying a clear extra tempo – 11...c6 12.f4 h5! 13.d2 (13.e3 xc3 14.bxc3 e5 15.c5 f4 16.f4 exf4 17.c6 d6 18.e5 c5) 13...b6 14.ac1 b7 15.e3

White is threatening with d5, but we are just in time to prevent it with 15...e5!. Then:

a) 16.xe5 dxe5 17.g3 (17.b1 f4 18.c4 xc4=; 17.a4 f4 18.ac6 19.xb6 ad8) 17...f5.

b) 16.fd1 xf3+

Or 16...xd3 17.xd3 ad8=

17.xf3 f5!. Black has seized the initiative: 18.b1 f7! 19.e2 f4 20.xd2 f3 21.gxf3 af8→.

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Part 6

11...\(\text{h5}\)!

It is already late to return to the plan with 11...\(\text{d6}\) 12.\(\text{ac1}\) e5? in view of 13.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{g4}\) 14.\(\text{d5}\).

12.\(\text{e3}\)

12.\(\text{g5}\) would give an extra tempo for ...f6 or ...\(\text{e6}\). For instance, 12...\(\text{xc3}\) 13.\(\text{bxc3}\) e5 14.\(\text{h4}\), Shirov-Ivanchuk, Motril 2008, 14...\(\text{g7}\) 15.\(\text{g3}\) \(\text{h3}\) 16.\(\text{g2}\) \(\text{e6}\) 17.\(\text{h6}\) \(\text{ed8}\) 18.\(\text{fd1}\) \(\text{xd2}\) 19.\(\text{xg2}\) \(\text{d7}\).

12.\(\text{d2}\) would mark a turn in White’s strategy. He does preserve the Maróczy Bind’s pawn structure, but his pieces need a serious regrouping. That gives us more than enough time for completing comfortably development. Black’s best set-up is perhaps 12...b6 13.\(\text{ac1}\) \(\text{b7}\) 14.\(\text{fd1}\) (Firat-Delchev, Skopje 30.03.2014, saw 12...\(\text{d7}\) 13.\(\text{ac1}\) b6 14.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{b7}\) 15.\(\text{b1}\)?! \(\text{ac8}\) 16.\(\text{e1}\) \(\text{e8}\) 17.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{f5}\)) 14...\(\text{d7}\) 15.\(\text{e3}\) (or 15.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{ac8}\) 16.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{wb8}\) 17.\(\text{b1}\) \(\text{e8}\) 18.\(\text{d2}\) \(\text{f8}\) 19.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{a8}\) 20.\(\text{h6}\) \(\text{e7}\) 21.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{hf6}\) 22.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{e5}\) =, Vavulin-Artemiev, Moscow 2014) 15...\(\text{ac8}\) 16.\(\text{b1}\) \(\text{e8}\) 17.\(\text{wd2}\) \(\text{f8}\) 18.b3 \(\text{b8}\) 19.\(\text{h6}\) \(\text{e7}\) 20.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{f8}\), Kryvoruchko-Nikolov, Rethymnon 2011. It is good to preserve the dark-squared bishop which protects the d6-pawn and the kingside. At the same time, it usually plays an important role in a counter-attack with ...d5 by hitting b4 or by going to d6.

12...\(\text{xc3}\)! 13.\(\text{bxc3}\) e5!

We have obtained the same pawn structure as in the previous line, only the knight is on h5. This “small” difference forces changes in Black’s plan since after 13...f6, the knight would have no prospects whatsoever. The text opens the c8-bishop which is assigned to kill the white knight. It is better to eat it on f3 rather on d5. See game 40 Grischuk-Ivanchuk, Beijing 2013.

B23. 10.\(\text{e3}\) 0-0

This line leads to the Hedgehog in its “nearly” best version for White. Why is it less popular then the previous two lines then? Kritz even accompanies the move 10.\(\text{e3}\)
with a question mark!! It does takes guts to stigmatise in such a way the white side of a hedgehog! In my opinion, this is the most principled and unpleasant weapon against the Kan and I can only be too happy that it is underrated. I suspect that 1.e4 players usually do not feel comfortable in these structures. They commonly prefer more straightforward plans which involve a kingside attack. In our case, Black’s king is well protected by the fianchettoed bishop so the direct assault has little chances to succeed. After 11.f4 Ʌbd7 12.Ʌac1 b6 13.Ʌh1 Ʌb7, 14.f5 would be a mistake, because it opens the e-file to Black’s favour. In practice, White turns to the thematic plan with b4, but then why had he played f4?! – 14.b4 Ʌfe8 15.Ʌb3 Ʌac8 16.a4, when the best set-up is 16...Ʌb8! 17.a5 bxa5 18.Ʌxa5 Ʌa8.

11.Ʌac1 Ʌbd7! (not 11...b6) 12.f3

White may try to counter my plan of an early ...Ʌd7-e5 by 12.Ʌfd1 Ʌe5 13.Ʌf3, but we get counterplay with 13...Ʌfg4 14.Ʌg5 b6 15.Ʌxe5 Ʌxe5 16.b3 Ʌb7 17.Ʌb1 f5.

Amazingly, but this position seems utterly unexplored. I see more than 30 games in my database, but none of them can serve us as a model to follow. Even the young Karpov looks hesitant in his actions. Look at the game Musil-Karpov, Ljubljana 1975: 12...b6 13.Ʌf2 Ʌb7 14.Ʌfd1 Ʌh5?! (What is this? Did he intend to push ...f5?) 15.Ʌf1 Ʌac8 16.Ʌc2 (16.b4!) 16...Ʌfe8 (not at all!) 17.Ʌcd2 (17.b4!) 17...Ʌf8 18.Ʌdb5?! axb5 19.Ʌxb5 Ʌb8 20.Ʌxd6 Ʌc5? 21.Ʌxe8 and Black is in very bad shape.

Shipov has written 1100 pages on the Hedgehog. A great prose, but no answers, unfortunately. Or even worse – wrong answers. He mentions only two games (where White did not even choose the best continuations) where Black is conspicuously worse.

The overwhelming majority of players choose the set-up with ...b6 and even score more than 50%, but they clearly did not know what to do against the plan with 12...b6 13.Ʌfd1 Ʌb7 14.Ʌf2 Ʌac8 15.Ʌf1 Ʌfd8 (or 15...Ʌfe8) 16.b4 Ʌb8 17.Ʌb3.

I analyse in detail this position in the annotations to game 38

![Chess Diagram]

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Simacek-Akopian, Plovdiv 2012. My conclusion is that we should not allow it at all!

I see only one possible way to exploit White’s set-up with $d3-\text{e}2$ – the bishop cannot retreat to f1. Therefore, our first task should be to play quickly ...$\text{bd}7-\text{e}5$, aiming to trade it for the bishop if White answers $\text{d}2$. So we start with:

$$12...\text{e}5! 13.\text{fd}1$$

Now we have a choice. I spent some time on:

13...$\text{d}7$. It is a logical development since the bishop would support ...b5. In practice White invariably answers:

a) 14.b3?! when, besides 14...$\text{xd}3$, we can maintain the tension with 14...$\text{a}5$!? Then 15.$\text{b}1 \text{fc}8$ 16.$\text{d}2 \text{e}8$ would allow us to push ...b5 (if White played a4, he would never achieve b4 due to the weakness of the c4-pawn). 15.$\text{d}2 \text{xd}3$ 16.$\text{xd}3 \text{fd}8$ is similar to line b, so I analysed mainly 15.$\text{b}2$ (threatening $\text{f}1$ or b4) 15...$\text{xd}3$ 16.$\text{xd}3 \text{fc}8$ 17.$\text{de}2$ (17.$\text{b}4 \text{c}7$ 18.$\text{de}2$

$\text{e}8$ 19.$\text{d}4$ e5 20.$\text{e}3 \text{xc}4$; 17.$\text{a}4 \text{e}8$) 17...b5 18.$\text{b}4 \text{d}8$ 19.$\text{xd}6 \text{xc}4$ 20.$\text{cd}1 \text{e}8$ 21.e5 $\text{d}5$

22.$\text{xd}5 \text{exd}5$ 23.$\text{e}6\text{xd}5 \text{c}6$.

b) 14.$\text{d}2$! $\text{xd}3$ 15.$\text{xd}3 \text{fd}8$!

15...$\text{fc}8$?! looks more active, but the long forced variation 16.$\text{b}3 \text{e}8$ (16...$\text{e}8$ 17.$\text{c}5$) 17.$\text{xd}6 \text{xd}6$ 18.$\text{xd}6 \text{d}7$ 19.$\text{c}5$! $\text{f}8$ 20.$\text{c}6$! $\text{xc}6$ 21.$\text{d}2$ $\text{c}5$ 22.$\text{a}4$ $\text{c}4$ 23.$\text{de}2 \text{e}5$

24.$\text{b}6 \text{xb}3$ 25.$\text{xc}8 \text{xc}8$ 26.$\text{xc}8 \text{d}3$ 27.$\text{a}1$ $\text{b}4$ 28.$\text{xb}3 \text{c}2$

29.$\text{xa}6 \text{xe}3$ 30.$\text{d}6 \text{d}7$ 31.$\text{a}7 \text{xd}6$ 32.$\text{xd}7$ faces Black with a difficult ending – the $\text{a}+$ generally perform poorly against a $\text{e}+$ passed pawn.

Here 16.$\text{b}3$ is less effective as 16...$\text{e}8$ 17.$\text{f}4 \text{b}6$+ 18.$\text{h}1 \text{d}7$!! 19.$\text{xd}6 \text{xd}6$ 20.$\text{xd}6 \text{e}5$

21.$\text{xd}8 \text{xd}8$ 22.$\text{xe}5 \text{xe}5$ offers Black full compensation for the pawn – 23.$\text{c}5$ $\text{f}5$=. Black plays on, ignoring the enemy’s extra pawn. $\text{a}5$ is always met by ...$\text{c}6$. I took my time to explore this endgame very deeply. The verdict is that only Black can win it.

So far so good. I proved that this set-up was possible. However,
returning back to move 16, my initial enthusiasm began to evaporate. I could not set up decent counterplay against best play: 16.b3 a5 17.dxe2 e8 18.f4! (to drag the bishop to c6, 18.d2 a5+ 19.h1 b5; 18.h1 b5) 18...c6 19.d2!

Black has to abandon his dream of ...b5 and consent to a waiting stand with 19...d7 20.h1 (20.d4 c8 21.a4 d8 22.xc6 xc6 23.e3) 20...d8.

This analysis made me explore the same structure with a bishop on b7.

13...b6

Most practical games went from this point 14.b3 [14.b1 xc4 is balanced – 15.a4 (15.f2 b7) 15...b5 16.b3 e5 17.bxc4 bxa4 18.c2 d7 19.d2 f8] 14.b7 15.b1?! (15.f2 could face 15...d5! 16.cxd5 f4). We politely allowed the bishop to live on and it ran away! Naturally, we could have traded on d3, but I think that Black has more chances to win if he kept both knights. My idea of playing ...d7-e5 was not so much aimed against the bishop, but against the plan with f1, b4, b3.

Having shifted the bishop to b1 gave us time for an active redeployment:

15...f8 16.f2 ab8 17.a4

Note that I propose to put the rooks on b8 (protecting b6) and c8 (hitting c4). We can already breathe freely as the enemy is left without an active plan. In contrast, we have at least two promising ideas based on kingside play with ...g5:

a) 17...d7! 18.a3 (hoping for a2, b4) 18...c5 19.c3 f7! (relocating the queen to the kingside) 20.c2 f6 (20...h8!? 21.g3 f5) 21.h3 (21.e2 g5 22.b4 cd7 23.b3 c7=) 21...g5 22.g3 h8.

b) 17.a8 18.e2 ed7 19.d3 d8 20.ac3 e5 21.e1 e7 22.d4 ed7 23.f1 (23.b4 e5)
\[ \text{Part 6} \]

\[
\text{\texttt{\textbackslash e}8 (24.\texttt{\textbackslash b}4 \texttt{\textbackslash e}5) 24.\texttt{a}3 \texttt{\textbackslash e}5 25.\texttt{b}4 \texttt{\textbackslash w}f6 26.\texttt{\textbackslash w}d2 g5 27.\texttt{\textbackslash c}e2 h6 28.\texttt{\textbackslash g}3 \texttt{\textbackslash w}g6 29.\texttt{\textbackslash d}3 \texttt{\textbackslash e}f6 with an interesting game.} \\
\text{However, we must also prepare for White's best retort:} \\
\text{14.\texttt{\textbackslash w}d2 \texttt{\textbackslash x}d3 15.\texttt{\textbackslash w}xd3 \texttt{\textbackslash d}7! 16.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{\textbackslash d}8 17.\texttt{\textbackslash w}d2 \texttt{\textbackslash b}7 18.\texttt{\textbackslash d}e2 \texttt{\textbackslash f}8 19.\texttt{\textbackslash h}1 \texttt{\textbackslash a}c8 20.\texttt{\textbackslash g}5 \texttt{\textbackslash e}8} \\
\text{White is very solid indeed, but at least he has not a clear plan for improvement. Black should be patient and wait for his chance.} \\
\text{You know what to look for – \ldots b5, or \ldots d5. He might wait with \ldots \texttt{\textbackslash w}b8, \ldots \texttt{\textbackslash a}8, \ldots \texttt{\textbackslash c}5, \ldots \texttt{\textbackslash c}7 – all that typical hedgehog jazz.} \\
\]

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This game was annotated back in 2000 for Chess Base Magazine by our friend and established Chess Stars translator, GM E. Ermenkov. He has been a devoted Sicilian player with both colours throughout his entire career so it would be interesting to compare his notes:

1.e4 c5 2.d4 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.cxd4 a6 5.d3 g6 6.c4 g7 7.db3 de7 8.dxc3 dbc6 9.0-0 0-0 10.db2

'This move is the point of White's set-up. After the bishop's retreat, White is preventing ...d5 and intends simply db4 followed by dbd2, dbd1, bab1, dbh6, etc. with a strong positional bind.' (EE) 10.g5 is certainly more dangerous for Black.

10...f5 (! - A.D.)

'I am very suspicious toward this type of “Dutch Defense” in the Sicilian.' (EE) The break ...f5 is one of the main ideas of the set-up with ...db7. Black is going to destroy the enemy centre by taking on e4 and pushing ...d5. Therefore, White's next move is consistent and popular.

11.c5

'John Nunn recommends here 11.exf5!? in his wonderful book “BTS-3”.' (EE) Well, after 11...fxe5 12.fxe5 b5! nothing will remain from the Maroczy Bind pawns. Philidor would have been happy to see firstly ...f5, then ...b5! White is walking on thin ice – 13.exb5 axb5 14.db5 dbd4 – 15.dbd4 dbd4 16.dbd6 dbxb5 17.dbxb5 dbf5 18.a4 dba6.

White can discourage ...b5 with 11.a4, but 11...fxe4 12.dbxe4 d5 solves the opening problems. (engines are fond of the more flexible 12...b6)

11.db4 fxe4 12.db6 e3! 13.fxe3 dbxf1+ 14.dbxf1 dbf5 is also pleasant for Black.

Only the paradoxical and somewhat ugly move 11.f3!? keeps control of the centre. Black should
choose the right moment for ...f4. He may play it at once and follow up by his initial idea of ...d7-d5.

11...fxe4

"11...b6 has been tried in practice, but White was a little better after 12.cxb6 axb6 13.e3 d8 14.f4." (EE)

14.d2 fxe4 15.xe4 d5 16.xc5 d6 17.g5 d6 18.e5 h6 19.f4, Psakhis-Oratovsky, Tel Aviv 1993, would have been fine for Black after 19...e5!, but Ermenkov’s proposition 14.f4? is simply bad due to 14...fxe4 15.xe4 d5. Therefore, 11...b6 is a viable alternative to the game.

12.xe4 b6

"At first sight what Black is doing seems very logical. He wants to get rid of the pawns on e4 and c5 and then using the “d” and “e” pawn tandem to prevail in the fight for the centre. This plan, however is too ambitious to succeed against the excellent development of White." (EE)

In fact, White has no advantage neither in the centre, nor in development. I would say, Black’s pieces are clearly more active which is balanced by the hole on d6.

13.d6!

"This horse is coming here to stay and graze till retirement..." (EE)

13...bxc5

14.xc5

14.e3 xb2 15.b1 xe5 16.xc5 c7 17.g3 d5 18.e4 d6 19.a3, Li,C.-Grandelius, Malmo 2012, does not look as an improvement. After 19...a5, White would have been struggling to prove sufficient compensation for the pawn.

14...d4?!

"But not 14...f5 15.xc8" (EE)

14...f5! assures Black of a fine game. Black should not delay this move as the pin from g5 would be awkward. Ermenkov's retort 15.xc8 has no venom since 15...xc8 16.xd7? loses to 16...cd4. Black rules in the centre after 16.g5 d6 17.a4 b7 18.c1 cd4 19.b3 xe2+ 20.xe2 cd4.

The possession of the d4-square ensures full-fledged counterplay in the other lines, too:

15.xf5 xf5 16.e3 d5 17.e1 cd4 18.c1 a5 19.g4 a4;

15.g4 xd6 16.xd6 e5 17.h3 c4 18.xd3 e5; 15xcc4 cd4.
It was essential to provoke weaknesses with 15.\texttt{g5!} h6 16.\texttt{h4} g5 17.\texttt{g3} \texttt{ef5} 18.\texttt{d3}.

15...\texttt{c7} 16.\texttt{ce4} \texttt{e5} (why not 16...\texttt{f5}!) 17.\texttt{e3}!

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17...\texttt{df5}

17...\texttt{ec6}! was simpler: 18.\texttt{xc8 xc8} 19.\texttt{h1} d5 20.\texttt{c5} \texttt{d6} 21.\texttt{xa6} \texttt{hx2} 22.\texttt{g4} \texttt{f4}. Also 17...\texttt{f3+} 18.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{xd6} 19.\texttt{xd6} \texttt{xd6} deserves attention.

18.\texttt{c1} \texttt{c6}?

18...\texttt{b8} was unclear. It seems that Kotsur forgot his kingside.

19.\texttt{xh5} \texttt{xf5}.

'19...\texttt{xf5} does not look attractive after 20.\texttt{g5} with the threat \texttt{h5}, check or no check with \texttt{hxh2} while 19...\texttt{xf5} 20.\texttt{g3} followed by 21.\texttt{g4} and Black will not survive this attack.' (EE)

After the text, Black’s centre is ruined and my heart is aching to watch his poor king left to the mercy of the opponent’s pieces. Although Ermenkov went for unnecessary complications, he succeeded in finishing the game in style:

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20.\texttt{f4} \texttt{g7} 21.\texttt{d6} h6 22.\texttt{g4} \texttt{h8} 23.\texttt{b1} a5 24.\texttt{f2} \texttt{a6} 25.\texttt{xf5} \texttt{f6} 26.\texttt{e4} \texttt{xf5} 27.\texttt{g3} \texttt{f6} 28.\texttt{g4} \texttt{e6} 29.\texttt{f5}?! \texttt{xe3} 30.\texttt{f6} \texttt{e5} 31.\texttt{fxg7+} \texttt{xg7} 32.\texttt{f5+}
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32...\texttt{h8}? (32...\texttt{h7} was more resilient) 33.\texttt{d1} \texttt{b6} 34.\texttt{xe3} \texttt{xe3} 35.\texttt{c3} \texttt{a7} 36.\texttt{d6} \texttt{g4} 37.\texttt{c5}! \texttt{e8} 38.\texttt{f8+} \texttt{xf8} 39.\texttt{xf8+} \texttt{h7} 40.\texttt{f7+} \texttt{h8} 41.\texttt{e8+} \texttt{g7} 42.\texttt{g6+} \texttt{f8} 43.\texttt{d6+} \texttt{f7} 44.\texttt{c7} 1-0
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\textbf{35. Eichhorn-Delchev}

\textit{Bad Wiessee 30.10.2013}
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1.\texttt{e4} c5 2.\texttt{f3} e6 3.d4 \texttt{cxd4} 4.\texttt{d4} a6 5.\texttt{d3} \texttt{f6} 6.0-0 \texttt{c7} 7.\texttt{c4}! \\
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This is a frequent positional mistake. White should delay c4 until ...d6 as now his dark squares pass under Black's control.

7...c6! 8.xc6 dxc6 9.c3 e5 10.c2!? (threatening d4) 10...c5 11.b1 a5 12.a3

White intends to push b4. Then the bishop cannot survive long on d4 in view of e2 – 12...0-0 13.b4 axb4 14.axb4 d4 15.e2 a7 16.c5 e6 17.h3 b6 18.e3. Therefore, it is important to hinder b4, at least for a while.

12...e7! 13.a4 d4 14.g5

My bishop is well established in the centre, but now I must deal with a new positional threat – 14...h6 15.xf6 xf6 16.c5 e6 17.b6. To be fair, the engines think that 17...a7 (17...d8=) would be fine for Black, but I doubt that an organic creature would voluntarily isolate his rook in such an exemplary way. It seemed to me better to keep the queenside fluid, but my idea has a serious flaw.

14...b6 15.e1

15.d2 e6 16.e3 d8! seizes the initiative, but 15.c5! b5 16.b6 b8 17.a4! b4 18.xf6= would have effectively petrified the left wing.

15...0-0 16.e3 xe3 17.e3 b8

18.b4

White deludes himself that he is the active side, but his advance only produces a weakness. The fact that my setup on the queenside is defensive does not automatically mean that White has an advantage there. He could have stayed with e2, bd1.

18.axb4 19.xb4? a7 20.wb2?

Who would believe that the game will be over in two moves?! 20.e2 e6 21.c5 would be even – 21...b5 22.b6 d7 23.xd7 wd7 24.c3 c7 25.a4 bxa4 26.xa4 b1+ 27.xf1. However, White persists with his idea of attacking b6. This leads him to a tragic end:

20...d7 21.f1? c5 0-1

36. Todorovic-Caruana
Rijeka 06.03.2010

1.e4 c5 2.f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.xd4 a6 5.d3 f6 6.e2 d6 7.0-0 g6 8.c4 g7 9.c3 0-0
10.\(\text{d1}\) \(\text{c7}\) 11.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{c6}\) 12.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{d7}\) 13.\(\text{f4}\)

13...\(\text{xc3}\)!

This exchange is perhaps the main strategic aim of Black's setup. It is possible in various settings, for instance, with a white bishop on e3, or a black knight on h5. The arising pawn structure is so static, that White practically remains without any active plan. He will push f2-f4-f5 and that is about all. Black, for his part, will seek to destroy the other enemy knight since it is a dangerous piece around his king. See also the next game.

14.\(\text{bxc3}\) e5 15.\(\text{h6}\) \(\text{e8}\)

The idea of this strange move is to keep the d8-square for the manoeuvre ...\(\text{c6-d8-f7}\).

Ivanchuk chose in an earlier game the more trivial 15...\(\text{d8}\) when Karjakin answered 16.\(\text{e3}\).

The manoeuvre \(\text{f3-h2-f1-e3-d5}\) is fairly slow and Black gets counterplay with ...b5 – 16.\(\text{h2}\) \(\text{c5}\) 17.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{f8}\) 18.\(\text{c2}\) (18.\(\text{g4}\) \(\text{xg4}\)\) 18...\(\text{e6}\) 19.\(\text{f1}\) f6 (it is safer to plug the hole on f6, but 19...\(\text{ac8}\) 20.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{a5}\) 21.\(\text{d5}\) \(\text{xd5}\) 22.\(\text{cxd5}\) b5 is also possible) 20.\(\text{cl}\) (20.\(\text{h6}\) \(\text{e8}\) 21.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{d8}\) 22.\(\text{d5}\) \(\text{xd5}\) 23.\(\text{cxd5}\) g5 24.\(\text{h4}\) \(\text{f7}\) 20...\(\text{a5}\) 21.\(\text{e3}\) b5 22.\(\text{d5}\) \(\text{xd5}\) 23.\(\text{cxd5}\) \(\text{c4}\).

16...\(\text{c5}\) 17.\(\text{c2}\) \(\text{e7}\) 18.\(\text{d2}\)

Black has some initiative, Karjakin-Ivanchuk, Amber-blindfold Nice 2008.

16.\(\text{h2}\) \(\text{c5}\) 17.\(\text{c2}\) f6

18.\(\text{f3}\)

18.\(\text{g4}\) \(\text{xg4}\)! is absolutely safe for Black. White might try to fix a little his pawn structure by trading the knight on d5 after 18.\(\text{f1}\) \(\text{d8}\)\) 19.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{e6}\) 20.\(\text{d5}\)!\), but suddenly the h6-bishop finds itself in a predicament – 20...\(\text{xd5}\) 21.\(\text{cxd5}\) g5. White falls in the same trap in the game:
18...\textit{e}7 19.\textit{f}1 \textit{e}6 20.\textit{e}3 \textit{d}8!

The threat ...\textit{g}5 is extremely annoying. Todorovic braces himself for a desperate sacrifice which has no chances to succeed.

21.\textit{f}5? \textit{gxf5} 22.\textit{xf5} \textit{d}7 23.\textit{xd6} \textit{h}8 24.\textit{ad1} \textit{c}6 25.\textit{wh5} \textit{f}7 26.\textit{x}c6 \textit{bxc6} 27.\textit{e}3 \textit{f}8 28.\textit{h}4 \textit{ad8} 29.\textit{x}c5 \textit{xd1+} 30.\textit{x}d1 \textit{xc5} 31.\textit{xf6+} \textit{g}8 32.\textit{h}5 \textit{d}6 33.\textit{g}5+ \textit{h}8 0-1

White has full compensation for the pawn and unpleasant initiative. Perhaps Black should simplify to an ending with 18...\textit{b}6 19.\textit{x}a5 \textit{bxa5} 20.\textit{ab1} \textit{b}7 21.\textit{c}4 \textit{e}7 22.\textit{d}4 \textit{e}5 23.\textit{x}d6 \textit{xd6} 24.\textit{d}6 \textit{xe}4.

This example explains why in practice Black met 15.\textit{c}2 by 15...\textit{c}5 16.\textit{h}2 (at first the engines offer 16.\textit{xc5} dxc5 17.e5, but White has not any advantage after 17...\textit{xe5} 18.\textit{xe5} \textit{xe5} 19.\textit{xe5} \textit{fxe5} 20.\textit{e}1 \textit{d}8 21.\textit{ad1} \textit{d}7 22.\textit{xe5} \textit{c}6=) when instead of 16...\textit{e}5 17.\textit{xc5} dxc5 18.\textit{f}1\textit{z}, I prefer 16...\textit{a}5 17.\textit{g}4 \textit{e}5.

15.\textit{d}2 \textit{d}8 (15...\textit{d}8 retains more tension) 16.\textit{c}2 \textit{c}5
First critical position. 17.\texttt{dx}c5 \texttt{dx}c5 18.\texttt{wx}e3 e5 19.\texttt{wx}c5 \texttt{xe}6 20.\texttt{ab}1 assures White of a tiny edge although his doubled extra pawn has little practical value. For instance: 20...\texttt{tx}xd1

Grimberg-Kveinys, Bad Wörishofen 2011, went 20...\texttt{ac}8 21.\texttt{bl}6 with a quick draw. 21.\texttt{wb}6 is more testing. After 21...\texttt{tx}xb6 22.\texttt{xb}6 \texttt{tx}xd1+ 23.\texttt{tx}d1 \texttt{td}8 24.\texttt{dd}2 \texttt{df}7, Black’s knight is passive on \texttt{d}8.

21.\texttt{tx}d1 \texttt{td}8 22.\texttt{le}2 \texttt{wa}5 23.\texttt{txa}5 \texttt{txa}5 24.\texttt{tf}1 \texttt{td}6 25.\texttt{bb}4 \texttt{b}6, planning ...\texttt{b}7.

Leko’s move is more ambitious, but it allows Black to consolidate. White loses his main trump – the initiative.

17.\texttt{dd}4 \texttt{da}5 18.\texttt{we}2 e5 19.\texttt{df}3 \texttt{e}6 20.\texttt{dd}2 \texttt{ff}7 21.\texttt{f}4

The second critical position. Black has already a clear advantage. He should take on \texttt{f}4 in order to make another target on \texttt{e}4, and then on \texttt{c}4. However, we cannot be exigent to a rapid game.

21...\texttt{ac}8 22.\texttt{ab}1 \texttt{tx}c4 23.f5 gxf5 24.exf5 \texttt{dd}5 25.\texttt{tx}c4 \texttt{xc}4 26.\texttt{wg}4+ \texttt{hh}8 27.\texttt{bb}6 \texttt{dd}5 28.\texttt{wh}4 \texttt{cc}6 29.\texttt{bb}4

The weakness on \texttt{f}6 gives White enough counterplay and the game was eventually drawn.

29...\texttt{gg}8 30.\texttt{gg}4 \texttt{ee}7 31.\texttt{wh}6 \texttt{dd}5 32.\texttt{hh}2 \texttt{dd}7 33.\texttt{bb}3

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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{game.png}
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33...\texttt{ff}7 34.\texttt{ff}2 \texttt{xx}g4 35.\texttt{hx}g4 \texttt{gg}8 36.\texttt{hh}3 \texttt{gg}7 37.\texttt{hh}4 \texttt{gg}8 38.\texttt{dd}3 \texttt{ff}8 39.\texttt{gg}3 \texttt{ee}8 40.\texttt{gg}5 \texttt{cc}5 41.\texttt{dd}1 \texttt{dd}7 42.\texttt{hh}5 \texttt{xx}f5+ 43.\texttt{hh}2 \texttt{gg}6 44.\texttt{xx}g6 \texttt{xx}g6 45.\texttt{xx}g6+ \texttt{hx}g6 46.\texttt{gg}6 \texttt{ff}7 47.\texttt{ee}3 \texttt{ee}4 48.\texttt{gg}1 \texttt{bb}5 49.\texttt{ff}1 \texttt{gg}5 50.\texttt{xx}e4 \texttt{xx}e4 51.\texttt{xx}g5 \texttt{gg}6 52.\texttt{ee}2 \texttt{ee}6 53.\texttt{ee}3 \texttt{ff}5 54.\texttt{hh}4 \texttt{gg}4 55.\texttt{ff}2 \texttt{gg}5 56.\texttt{dd}2 \texttt{xx}f6 57.\texttt{cc}5 \texttt{bb}1 58.\texttt{aa}3 \texttt{ff}5 59.\texttt{ee}3 \texttt{ee}4 60.\texttt{gg}3 \texttt{gg}2 61.\texttt{bb}4 \texttt{hh}3 62.\texttt{cc}5 \texttt{gg}4 63.\texttt{bb}4 \texttt{ee}6 64.\texttt{dd}2 \texttt{dd}7 65.\texttt{aa}5 \texttt{cc}6 66.\texttt{bb}4 \texttt{dd}4 67.\texttt{cx}d4 \texttt{ex}d4 68.\texttt{aa}5 \texttt{cc}5 69.\texttt{ee}2 \texttt{cc}4 70.\texttt{bb}2 \texttt{dd}3 71.\texttt{bb}4 \texttt{ee}2 72.\texttt{cc}1 \texttt{dd}3 73.\texttt{cc}3 \texttt{ee}6 74.\texttt{bb}4 \texttt{ff}3 75.\texttt{dd}2 \texttt{ff}5 76.\texttt{aa}5 \texttt{xx}g3 77.\texttt{bb}4 \texttt{ff}3 78.\texttt{aa}5 \texttt{ee}4 79.\texttt{cc}1 \texttt{ee}3 80.\texttt{dd}2+ \texttt{dd}4 81.\texttt{bb}2 \texttt{cc}5 82.\texttt{aa}5 \texttt{cc}4 83.\texttt{dd}2 \texttt{gg}6 84.\texttt{aa}5 Draw

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This game is an illustration of what position we should avoid at any cost in the Hedgehog.

1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{\#f}3\) e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\(\text{\#xd}4\) a6 5.\(\text{\#d}3\) \(\text{\#f}6\) 6.0-0 \(\text{\#c}7\) 7.\(\text{\#e}2\) d6 8.c4 g6 9.\(\text{\#c}3\) \(\text{\#g}7\) 10.\(\text{\#e}3\) 0-0 11.\(\text{\#fd}1\) b6 (I recommend 11...\(\text{\#bd}7\)-e5xd3!) 12.\(\text{\#ac}1\) \(\text{\#b}7\) 13.\(\text{\#f}3\) \(\text{\#bd}7\) 14.\(\text{\#f}2\)

White has achieved the most unpleasant redeployment of his pieces. They are all directed to the queenside to support b2-b4 and then c4-c5 or a2-a4-a5. Since b6 is the sore point of Black's set-up, it makes sense to defend it with 14...\(\text{\#ab}8\) 15.\(\text{\#f}1\) \(\text{\#a}8\) 16.b4 \(\text{\#fe}8\) 17.\(\text{\#b}3\) \(\text{\#f}8\). Akopian prefers to keep b8 for his queen.

14...\(\text{\#ac}8\) 15.\(\text{\#f}1\) \(\text{\#fd}8\)

Black's main active plan is ...d5 so putting the king's rook on a potentially open file is more consistent – 15...\(\text{\#fe}8\). However, after 16.b4 \(\text{\#b}8\) 17.\(\text{\#b}3\), the break-through in the centre 17...d5 does not solve the opening problems because White can simply ignore the gift with 18.exd5 exd5 19.c5!

Perhaps this is White's best way of meeting ...d5 even when grabbing the pawn is possible. It is better to have a positional rather than a material advantage. After the text, 19...bxc5 20.\(\text{\#xc}5\) \(\text{\#xc}5\) 21.bxc5 \(\text{\#f}8\) 22.\(\text{\#a}4\) \(\text{\#c}7\) 23.\(\text{\#d}4\) would open the b-file in White's favour. The pawn on a6 and the b6-square are weak.

It is more consistent to keep the flank closed and hope to use the c4-square: 19...b5 20.\(\text{\#a}5\) \(\text{\#e}5\) 21.\(\text{\#d}4\), but White is clearly on top in view of the threat a3-a4. 21...\(\text{\#c}4\)? simply drops a pawn after 22.\(\text{\#xb}7\) \(\text{\#xb}7\) 23.\(\text{\#xf}6\) \(\text{\#xf}6\) 24.\(\text{\#xd}5\)+.  

Instead of 17...d5, Eingorn played against E.Geller 17...\(\text{\#f}8\), but White could safely take on b6.

16.b4 \(\text{\#b}8\) 17.\(\text{\#b}3\) \(\text{\#a}8\)
I feel that White is clearly better. He has not a direct breakthrough since 18.c5 dxc5 19.\(\text{h}a6\) \(\text{b}7\) 20.\(\text{xb}7\) \(\text{xb}7\) 21.\(\text{xc}5\) \(\text{bxc}5\) 22.\(\text{xc}5\) \(\text{xc}5\) 23.\(\text{exc}8+\) \(\text{exc}8\) 24.\(\text{xc}5\) stumbles into 24...\(\text{g}4!=\), but he can patiently wait for the best timing, for instance, with 18.a3 \(\text{f}8\) 19.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{c}6\) 20.\(\text{b}1\) – thus he prevents counterplay with ...\(\text{b}5\). Then he can double the rooks on the d-file or win the b6-pawn by \(\text{b}4\)-\(\text{b}5\).

Note that White has another thematic plan in his disposal – to produce a passed pawn with 18.a4 \(\text{c}6\) (Johnson-West, email Argentina 1997, saw 18...d5!? when 19.\(\text{exd}5\) \(\text{exd}5\) 20.c5! is again the best retort) 19.\(\text{a}2\) \(\text{e}5\) 20.a5 bx \(\text{a}5\) 21.\(\text{xa}5\), followed by \(\text{b}4\)-\(\text{b}5\), but it would be more effective when Black’s pieces went to passive places, for instance, \(\text{f}8\).

18.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{c}6\) (18...\(\text{b}5\)? 19.\(\text{a}7\))

A critical position. The b6-pawn is doomed in view of the threat \(\text{b}4\)-\(\text{b}5\). The only question is when to take it. The immediate 19.b5 axb5 20.\(\text{xb}5\) is not accurate since 20...\(\text{xcl}\) 21.\(\text{xcl}\) d5! offers considerable counterplay. Instead, White can improve his position with 19.a3 \(\text{dc}8\) 20.\(\text{b}1\)!

More straightforward is 19.\(\text{b}1\) when neither 19...\(\text{b}5\) 20.\(\text{xb}5\) axb5 21.\(\text{a}7\) \(\text{c}7\) (21...\(\text{c}2\) 22.\(\text{xb}8\) \(\text{xf}2\) 23.\(\text{xd}8\) \(\text{f}1+\) 24.\(\text{xf}1\) \(\text{xa}4\) 25.\(\text{c}5\)) 22.\(\text{xb}5\) \(\text{c}2\) 23.\(\text{bc}1\) \(\text{xc}1\) 24.\(\text{xc}1\) \(\text{b}7\) 25.\(\text{b}6\) \(\text{b}6\) 26.\(\text{xb}6\) \(\text{b}8\) 27.a3, nor 19...\(\text{e}8\) 20.\(\text{b}5\) axb5 21.\(\text{xb}5\) \(\text{c}8\) 22.\(\text{d}4\) d5 23.\(\text{c}6\) \(\text{xc}6\) 24.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{xc}6\) 25.\(\text{b}5\) are rosy for Black.

Instead, White tries to repeat moves! That suddenly unlocks the dozing power of the black pieces.

19.\(\text{d}4\)? \(\text{c}7\) 20.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{b}5\)!

White has no longer \(\text{a}7\) so this break is already possible. In the ensuing hand-to-hand combat Akopian outplays his opponent although White should still be better. For instance, 21.\(\text{xb}5\)! axb5 22.\(\text{b}6\) \(\text{xc}1\) 23.\(\text{xc}1\) d5 24.\(\text{xd}7\) \(\text{xd}7\) 25.\(\text{exd}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 26.\(\text{d}4\) looks promising. Then 26...\(\text{a}8\) leads to a grim ending after 27.\(\text{xb}5\) (27.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{c}4!\)) 27...\(\text{xa}2\) 28.\(\text{xa}2\) \(\text{xa}2\) 29.\(\text{a}7\), but 26...\(\text{e}5!\) 27.f4 \(\text{d}6\) 28.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{f}6\) keeps Black in the game.

21.\(\text{b}6\) \(\text{bxc}4\) 22.\(\text{xc}4\) \(\text{xc}4\) 23.\(\text{xc}4\) \(\text{e}5?!\)

23...\(\text{xb}6\) or 23...d5 24.\(\text{exd}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 25.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 26.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{f}6=\) are stronger. After the text, 24.\(\text{xa}6!\) was possible: 24...\(\text{xe}4\) (24...d5 25.\(\text{xa}8\) \(\text{xa}8\) 26.b5 \(\text{dx}4\) 27.\(\text{xd}8+\) \(\text{xd}8\) 28.b6 \(\text{exe}3\) 29.gxf3
The game is equal (28.\texttt{d}d4), but White blunders and he can resign immediately:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{l}
28.\texttt{a}3?? \texttt{c}c3 29.\texttt{d}d3 \texttt{x}c5 30.\texttt{x}c5 \texttt{d}d4 31.\texttt{x}d4 \texttt{x}e2+ 32.\texttt{x}e2 \texttt{xd}d4 33.\texttt{x}xe6 \texttt{b}d6 34.\texttt{x}c5 \texttt{d}d8 35.\texttt{g}e4 \texttt{d}d4 36.\texttt{b}b7 \texttt{d}d1+ 37.\texttt{f}f2 \texttt{g}g5 38.\texttt{h}h4 \texttt{f}f6 39.\texttt{x}c5 \texttt{g}g7 40.\texttt{d}d3 \texttt{a}a1 41.\texttt{h}h5 \texttt{x}xa3 42.\texttt{e}e5 \texttt{g}xh5 43.\texttt{d}d7 \texttt{a}a2+ 44.\texttt{g}g1 \texttt{b}b2 0-1
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

39. Y. Gruenfeld - Psakhis
Tel Aviv 1991

1.e4 c5 2.\texttt{f}f3 e6 3.d4 \texttt{c}xd4 4.\texttt{x}d4 a6 5.\texttt{d}d3 \texttt{f}f6 6.0-0 \texttt{c}c7 7.\texttt{e}e2 \texttt{d}d6 8.\texttt{c}c4 \texttt{g}6 9.\texttt{d}d3 \texttt{g}7 10.\texttt{x}e3 \texttt{bd}7 11.f4

White assumes the obligation to play all over the board. It is clear that this move does not fit in well with the queenside plan \texttt{b}4, \texttt{b}b3. Moreover, the hanging e4-pawn demands the bishop to remain on d3 so White has not the usual pressure on d6. What does White gain in return? Frankly, I'm not too sure. Perhaps the advance f4-f5, but it should be supported by all White's heavy pieces to be a serious threat.

As a whole, White often turns out to be overextended and his practical results are deplorable.

11...0-0 12.\texttt{a}a1

12.\texttt{a}e1 \texttt{b}6 13.\texttt{h}h1 \texttt{b}7 14.\texttt{f}f2 was countered by 14...e5! 15.\texttt{x}e5 \texttt{x}e5, Salles-M. Nikolov, Marseille 2013.

12...\texttt{b}6 13.\texttt{h}h1 \texttt{b}7 14.\texttt{b}4 \texttt{f}fe8 15.\texttt{b}b3 \texttt{a}a8

Both sides has made the easy moves. It is time for White to define his plans. 16.c5 \texttt{d}xc5 17.bxc5 \texttt{x}c5 18.\texttt{x}c5 bxc5 19.\texttt{x}a6 \texttt{x}a6 20.\texttt{x}a6 e4 should be rejected by obvious reasons. 16.\texttt{g}g1 only weakens the f4-square. Black can exploit it with 16...\texttt{h}h5, threatening ...f5, ...d5 or ...\texttt{h}h8-h4. Even ...\texttt{x}c3 followed up by ...e5 is an interesting option. Remains the move I mentioned in the previous game:

16.\texttt{a}4 \texttt{b}b8 17.\texttt{a}5 \texttt{b}xa5 18.\texttt{x}a5 \texttt{a}8 19.\texttt{b}1

White has made some progress, but his further offensive is stalled. Black can trade a pair of knights.
with 19...\texttt{g}g4, but Psakhis opts for a more aggressive approach.

19...\texttt{h}h5 20.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{c}c7 21.\texttt{b}bd1

This natural move proves to be dubious due to the tactical possibility 21...\texttt{c}c5!? 22.\texttt{c}c2 \texttt{xc}3 23.\texttt{xc}3 \texttt{xe}4. However, Psakhis prefers to maintain the tension.

21...\texttt{b}b8 22.\texttt{a}a4

22...\texttt{f}f5

After 22...\texttt{h}f6!, White cannot retain his front line intact. He must push 23.c5 dxc5 24.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{xc}5 25.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{a}a7 where Black's bishop pair has more potential than the knights on a5 and c5. 22...\texttt{f}f5 is also consistent, though.

23.c5

23.exf5 exf5 24.c5 dxc5 25.\texttt{xc}5 (25.bxc5 \texttt{e}e3 26.\texttt{xe}e3 \texttt{xa}5 27.\texttt{e}e6+ \texttt{h}h8 28.\texttt{xd}d7 \texttt{d}d8) 25...\texttt{xc}5 26.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{h}h8 27.\texttt{xa}6 \texttt{bd}8 28.\texttt{f}f2 \texttt{xd}1 29.\texttt{xd}1 \texttt{xf}4 would be roughly equal, but White was afraid to open the e-file and the diagonal to the a8-bishop.

23...dxc5 24.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{xc}5 25.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{xe}4 26.\texttt{e}e2 \texttt{bd}8 27.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{xd}1 28.\texttt{xd}1 \texttt{f}6+ 29.\texttt{a}a4 \texttt{d}d5 30.\texttt{e}e1 \texttt{e}e8 31.\texttt{xe}4 \texttt{f}f7 32.\texttt{b}b3 \texttt{c}c3 33.\texttt{d}d4 \texttt{xd}4 34.\texttt{xd}4 \texttt{xf}4 0-1

40. Grischuk-Ivanchuk
Beijing 05.07.2013

1.e4 c5 2.\texttt{f}f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\texttt{xd}4 a6 5.\texttt{d}d3 \texttt{f}6 6.0-0 \texttt{c}7 7.\texttt{e}e2 d6 8.c4 g6 9.\texttt{c}c3 \texttt{g}7 10.\texttt{f}f3 0-0 11.\texttt{f}f4 \texttt{h}h5 12.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{xc}3 13.bxc3 e5 14.\texttt{f}d1

Compared to the previous game, this position is easier for Black. He cannot attack immediately the c4-pawn with ...\texttt{c}6-a5, but in return he is not lagging behind in development. The game now enters a manoeuvring stage where Ivanchuk's primary goal is to blockade firmly the c4-pawn and prevent any white activity on the kingside. That's why he puts his queen's rook on d8 rather than activate it from c8.

14...\texttt{g}g4 15.h3 \texttt{xf}3 16.\texttt{xf}3 \texttt{d}d7 17.\texttt{f}f1 \texttt{ad}8 18.\texttt{g}g5 f6 19.\texttt{h}h6 \texttt{g}g7 20.\texttt{e}e2 \texttt{c}c5 21.\texttt{ad}1
White is on the defensive. He must constantly think of the weak pawns on e4 and c4. For instance, 25...e2? would have lost material after 25...c7. The text, however, leaves his queenside even more vulnerable. Black should find a way of redeploying his knights from a blockading to attacking set-up. That is a delicate matter since White will also obtain chances with f4. Still, staying nicely will not win the game so he should seriously consider the manoeuvre 25...c7 26.f3 a8?! targeting the c4-pawn. The text is also consistent.

25...a4 26.f3 f7?!

The game has entered a more concrete stage. The c4-pawn looks doomed so the question is what White will be able to do on the kingside. Thus I can understand Ivanchuk’s reasoning – he evacuates the king in the centre in advance. However, his king does not find a safe haven on e7. 26...f7 was more natural.

27.h4 e7 28.c5

28.g4 xc4 29.g5 is a better way of seeking counterplay.

28...axc5 29.h5 a4 (29...a4!) 30.e3 b6 31.g4 g8 32.hxg6 hxg6

White is not without threats. Now 33.f4 would have added oil into the fire. Instead, Grischuk makes a couple of non-committal mundane moves which tip the scales back in Black's favour. The ending of the game looks heavy influenced by a mutual time trouble.

33.f3 d8 34.g2 h8 (34...g5!) 35.xg6 d8 36.f5 g7 37.g6 e8 38.f5 g7 39.g6 e8 40.f5 Draw.
Part 7

Taimanov with 5.\textit{b}b5

This part considers two different systems. Line A deals with Sveshnikov/Kalashnikov structures where White tries to build on his full control of the d5-square after 1.e4 c5 2.d\textit{f}3 e6 3.d4 cd4 4.d\textit{d}4 c6 5.b5 d6 6.f4 e5. Line B considers the Taimanov version of the Maróczy Bind: 6.c4 f6 7.\textit{d}1c3.
Part 7. Taimanov with 5.\(\Box_b5\)

Main Ideas

1.e4 c5 2.\(\Box_f3\) e6 3.d4 cd4 4.\(\Box_d4\) \(\Box_c6\) 5.\(\Box_b5\) d6 6.c4 \(\Box_f6\)

In this system, Black gets a hedgehog of a highly improved breed. In order to achieve the desired pawn structure, White’s knight undertakes a time-wasting walk along the route d4-b5-a3. These tempi are just enough for Black to complete development and counter-attack in the centre before the opponent consolidated.

There is a widely accepted opinion that in this type of positions time is not too important. We can often see games where both sides are aimlessly manoeuvring for 20+ moves without committing to any concrete action.

My first advice to Black is: Do not wait passively!

Beware this setup! The hedgehog structure is not bullet-proof. White has a clear plan for a queenside pawn storm.

In the diagram position, White has a very unpleasant idea. Beside preparing c4-c5 or a4-a5, he could capture on e5 and base his play on the clumsy bishop pair.

19.\(\Box_e5!\) dxe5 20.c5! \(\Box_d8\) 21.\(\Box_e1\) \(\Box xd1\) 22.\(\Box xd1\) \(\Box d8\) 23.\(\Box x b6\) \(\Box x b6\)

Here instead of 24.\(\Box a4\) \(\Box xd1\) 25.\(\Box x d1\) \(\Box x e4!\) with counterplay, White should have exchanged the rooks by 24.\(\Box x d8\), followed by 25.\(\Box a4\)\(\pm\).

This design works only when Black’s dark-squared bishop has left the a3-f8 diagonal. It is espe-
cially efficient if White's knight is on b3, but as we'll see later, from a3 it also could be activated via c4. In the latter case, however, White needs his queen on the g1-a7 diagonal and additional positional advantages like more active rooks.

I could add more practical evidence on this theme, but I hope you have grasped the essential – White has a dangerous plan against Black’s entrenchment. Therefore, we should hinder it.

It was supposed that Black had a universal set-up against this version of the hedgehog. In many games the second players half-automatically line up their forces by the following scheme, regardless of the opponents actions:

7.\( \Box \)c3 a6 8.\( \Box \)a3 b6 9.\( \Box \)e2 \( \Box \)b7 10.0-0 \( \Box \)b8 11.f3 \( \Box \)bd7 12.\( \Box \)e3 \( \Box \)e7 13.\( \Box \)d2 \( \Box \)c7 14.\( \Box \)fd1 0-0 15.\( \Box \)ac1 \( \Box \)ac8 16.\( \Box \)f1

16...\( \Box \)b8 17.\( \Box \)f2 \( \Box \)d8 (In his book about the hedgehog Shipov calls this move “The Saemisch manoeuvre”) 18.\( \Box \)h1 \( \Box \)e8 19.\( \Box \)c2 \( \Box \)c7 20.\( \Box \)g1 \( \Box \)h8 21.\( \Box \)cd2 \( \Box \)g8?! (see game 46 Daly-Tregubov, Cappelle la Grande 2000)

My second advice is: Forget about this plan!

There are many reasons for this verdict. The most important one is that I consider the whole idea of putting the bishop to c7 dubious. It only facilitates c4-c5.

I'd like to cheer up Black players right away – they have other good plans!

The slogan of Black’s campaign should be: ...d6-d5!

White is practically unable to prevent this break-trough. Even if Black forgot his lesson and failed to achieve it in the opening, he should be manoeuvring with this break in mind. Sometimes it could be combined also with ...b6-b5, but this queenside activity is usually less efficient and often only provides White with a juicy target.

In some positions ...d6-d5 leads to a mass elimination and probable draw. In “Step by Step” I suggest, whenever possible, more complex alternatives, at your own risk of course. In the “Complete Games” you can see examples which could
give you some insights about the possibilities of both sides.

Sometimes \( ...f7-f5\) deserves attention against passive White's play.

**Analysis**

1...\( \texttt{f8}\)? 2.\( \texttt{Wf1} \) (protecting \( \texttt{c4} \) and hoping for \( \texttt{c2-d4} \) \( 2...\texttt{f5}! \)).

**Analysis**

1...\( \texttt{g8}! \) meeting 2.\( \texttt{f3} \) or 2.\( \texttt{b3} \) by 2...\( \texttt{f5}! \).

Let's go to the variations now. For more details check "Step by Step" chapter.

**6...\texttt{f6} 7.\texttt{c1c3}**

In the event of 7.\( \texttt{c5c3} \), Black refrains from \( ...\texttt{a6} \) and follows the scheme \( ...\texttt{b6}, \texttt{b7}, \texttt{c8} \) (or \( ...\texttt{d7}, \texttt{fd8} \)).

**7...\texttt{a6} 8.\texttt{a3} \texttt{b6} 9.\texttt{e2} \texttt{b7} 10.0-0 (10.\texttt{f4 d5}) 10...\texttt{e7} 11.\texttt{e3} (11.\texttt{f4 0-0}) 11...0-0**

This is the system's "tabia". White should decide how to control the centre. \( f3 \) is solid while \( f4 \) suggests a more risky approach and possibly (but not obligatory!) a pawn storm on the kingside.

**12.\texttt{b3}** is a modification of the \( f3 \)-plan. The queen move is aimed at restricting the opponent's choice. White hinders \( ...d5 \) indeed, but Black obtains good play on the dark squares. 12...\( \texttt{d7} \) 13.\( \texttt{fd1} \) \( \texttt{c5} \) 14.\( \texttt{f2} \) \( \texttt{f6} \) 15.\( \texttt{ac1} \) \( \texttt{e7}! \)

The queen moves away from the X-ray of the d1-rook. \( ...d6-d5 \) is al-
ready on the agenda: 16.\texttt{ab}1 \texttt{ab}4! 17.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{fd}8, threatening d6-d5.

Pay attention to the modern 13.\texttt{ad}1. It demands a different approach – 13...\texttt{c}5 14.\texttt{c}c2 \texttt{c}c7! 15.\texttt{ab}1 \texttt{b}4 16.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{ad}8!

Black’s plan is \ldots d5 or \ldots f5: 17.b3 d5! 18.exd5 exd5 19.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{c}8; 17.f3 d5!.

After 12.f4 \texttt{c}8 13.\texttt{c}c1 \texttt{e}8 14.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{a}5, we reach a critical position for this line.

White aimed all his forces at preventing \ldots d5, but left c4 under-protected. Ironically, 15.\texttt{d}3 d5! is still possible while 15.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{c}7! 16.b4 \texttt{xc}4 is another sharp option.

12.f3 leaves the e3-bishop hanging so 12...\texttt{e}8! is a natural retort.

Now 13.\texttt{b}3 is the only move to hinder \ldots d6-d5. We should then aim for the following set-up: 13...\texttt{d}7 14.\texttt{ad}1 \texttt{e}8 15.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{c}7 16.\texttt{c}e1 \texttt{ce}5

The game enters a manoeuvring stage where Black’s task would be to keep the a3-knight pinned to protect the c4-pawn. A possible counterplay is \ldots \texttt{f}8 followed up by \ldots f7-f5.

After 12.\texttt{c}1, we set up our rooks to c8 and e8 and push \ldots d5: 12...\texttt{e}5 13.\texttt{d}4

13.f3 \texttt{e}8 14.\texttt{d}4 \texttt{ed}7 15.\texttt{c}2 (15.\texttt{fd}1 d5!) 15...d5!

13...\texttt{ed}7 14.\texttt{fd}1 \texttt{e}8 15.\texttt{c}2 \texttt{e}8 16.f3 d5!? 17.cxd5 \texttt{exd}5 18.exd5 \texttt{d}6!
Black plays all over the board. His main threats are ...e5 or ...b5.

These lines should be enough to arm you sufficiently against White’s attempt of imposing slow manoeuvring play in a Maróczy Bind structure.

**Sveshnikov structures**

6.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{e}5\) 7.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{a}6!?\) 8.\(\text{d}5\text{c}3\) \(\text{f}6\) is a different story.

White has provoked ...e5, but lost tempi. This may prove to be very dangerous for him in the line:

9.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{e}7\) 10.\(\text{x}f6\) \(\text{x}f6\) 11.\(\text{d}2\)

We sacrifice a pawn and seize the initiative with:

11...0-0! 12.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{e}6\) 13.\(\text{x}d6\) \(\text{e}8\)!

9.\(\text{c}4\) is perhaps the most annoying line – for both sides! White’s positional aim is to exchange 2 or 3 minor pieces through d5 and obtain a lasting edge due to the better dark-squared bishop and more active rooks. Even without any minor piece the pressure on d6 usually ensures an advantage. In this scenario Black’s situation would be aggravated if his b-pawn advanced to b5 since White could create a second weakness on the queenside by pushing a4. The best solution is to develop quickly:

9...\(\text{e}7\) 10.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{d}5\) 11.\(\text{d}5\) 0-0

Now Black threatens to trade his bad bishop with ...\(\text{g}5\).
Taimanov with $5.b5$

12. $\text{d}d2$ $\text{e}6$ 13. $\text{c}c3$ $\text{c}8$
14. 0-0 $\text{c}7$!

You should memorise the following move order:

9... $\text{e}6$ 10. $\text{c}4$ b5 11. $\text{b}6$ $\text{b}8$ 12. $\text{bd}5$ $\text{g}4$ 13. $\text{e}2$ $\text{xe}3$
14. $\text{xe}3$ $\text{e}7$ 15. $\text{cd}5$ $\text{g}5$ 16. 0-0 0-0 17.c3

This position commonly arises from the Sveshnikov. It is rarely seen as Black has a decent game.

He may play for equalisation with 17... $\text{e}7$ 18. $\text{d}3$ $\text{xe}3$ 19. $\text{xe}3$ $\text{c}7$ (Rogozenko), or seek complications with ...f5 – 17...g6 18.a4 f5 19.axb5 axb5 20.$\text{a}6$ $\text{c}8$ 21.$\text{b}6$ $\text{xb}6$ 22.$\text{xb}6$ $\text{b}8$ 23.exf5 gxf5 24.$\text{bd}5$, Shukh-Frolyanov, Nabeznye Chelny 2010, 24...$\text{b}7$!∞.

It is essential to avoid ...b7-b5 or ...f7-f5. Instead, we play ...$\text{a}5$ and patiently manœuvre on the queenside.

9.$\text{d}2$!? is White's only fresh idea in the last years.
Part 7. Taimanov with 5. \( \text{b}5 \)

**Step by Step**

1.e4 c5 2.\( \text{d}3 \) e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 5.\( \text{b}5 \) d6

A. 6.\( \text{f}4 \); B. 6.c4

**A. 6.\( \text{f}4 \) e5 7.\( \text{e}3 \)**

7.\( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{w}xg5 \) 8.\( \text{c}7+ \) \( \text{d}8 \)
9.\( \text{x}a8 \) counts on the surprise effect. If Black decides to win the knight by b6, White gets some play by taking on b6 and attacking that pawn with the queen. Perhaps Black’s best approach is to win the knight by his king, but firstly to develop with 9...\( \text{f}6!\). The game Grafl-Jansa, Fuerth 2002, continued:

10.\( \text{d}2 \)

10.\( \text{c}3 \) allows 10...\( \text{d}4 \)! 11.h4 (11.a4 d5!; 11.h3 d5!→) 11...\( \text{w}f4 \) 12.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{g}4 \) 13.\( \text{c}1 \) (13.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{x}d2+ \)) 14.\( \text{xd}2 \) g6+→) 13...\( \text{w}c1 \) 14.\( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{e}7 \)
end the endgame is in Black’s favour: 15.\( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{d}5 \) 16.ed5 g6 17.c3 \( \text{f}5+ \).

10...\( \text{e}7 \) 11.b4

11.c3 \( \text{e}6 \) 12.\( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 13.h4 \( \text{g}6 \)
14.\( \text{b}5 \) (14.h5 \( \text{g}5 \) 15.\( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{c}8+ \)) 14...\( \text{c}8+ \) is not appealing either.

11...\( \text{g}4 \) 12.f3 \( \text{e}6 \) 13.b5 \( \text{d}4 \)
14.b6 \( \text{e}3 \) 15.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{h}5-= \).

**7...a6 8.\( \text{d}5 \text{c}3 \) \( \text{f}6 \)**

A1. 9.\( \text{c}4 \); A2. 9.\( \text{g}5 \); A3. 9.\( \text{d}2 \)

9.\( \text{a}3?! \) is well met by 9...\( \text{b}8! \)
10.\( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{x}d5 \) 11.exd5 \( \text{e}7 \) 12.c3 \( \text{f}5= \).

9.\( \text{e}2 \) probably aims to transpose to the Sveshnikov with 7.\( \text{d}5 \)
Taimanov with 5.\( \Box b5 \)

after 9...\( \Box e7 \) 10.\( \Box d5 \) \( \Box xd5 \) 11.\( exd5 \) \( \Box b8 \) 12.0-0 0-0 13.\( c4 \) \( \Box d7 \) 14.\( \Box c3 \) f5 where Black is actually fine. We can also choose the independent line 9...\( \Box e6 \)!? 10.0-0 (10.\( \Box d5 \) \( \Box xd5 \) 11.\( exd5 \) \( \Box a5+ \) 12.\( \Box c3 \) \( \Box e7 \) 13.0-0 \( \Box exd5 \) 14.\( \Box xd5 \) \( \Box xd5 \) 15.\( \Box xd5 \) 16.\( \Box f3 \) \( \Box xe3 \) 17.\( fxe3 \) \( \Box b8 \) 10...\( \Box c8 \) 11.\( \Box f3 \) (11.\( \Box d2 \) \( \Box e7 \)!?) 11...\( \Box e7 \) 12.\( \Box e1 \) (12.\( \Box d2 \) d5) 12...\( \Box g6 \) 13.\( \Box d2 \) \( \Box e7 \) with mutual chances.

9.\( \Box d5 \) does not fit in with the move \( \Box e3 \) since White will lose a tempo after 9...\( \Box xd5 \) 10.\( exd5 \) \( \Box e7 \) 11.c4 \( \Box f5= \), for instance, 12.\( \Box d2 \) \( \Box e7 \) 13.\( \Box d3 \) 0-0 14.0-0 \( \Box h4 \).

A1. 9.\( \Box c4 \) \( \Box e7 \)!

Black solves the opening problems with natural, typical Sicilian methods. 9...\( \Box e6 \) 10.\( \Box d5 \) \( \Box xe4 \) 11.\( \Box b6 \) \( \Box g5 \) 12.0-0! \( \Box xd5 \) 13.f4 exe4 14.\( \Box xd5 \) is dangerous for him.

10.\( \Box d5 \) \( \Box d5 \) 11.\( \Box d5 \) 0-0

[Diagram]

Black would be happy to trade his bad bishop with ...\( \Box g5 \). That would be possible after:

12.\( \Box c3 \) \( \Box g5 \) 13.\( \Box g5 \) \( \Box g5 \) 14.0-0 \( \Box h3 \) 15.\( \Box f3 \) \( \Box e6 \) 16.\( \Box ac1 \) \( \Box ac8 \) 17.\( \Box h1 \) h6 18.a3 \( \Box a5 \) 19.\( \Box d3 \) \( \Box e7 \) 20.\( \Box fd1 \) \( \Box fd8= \), Sulskis-Tregubov, Koszalin 1999;

12.0-0 \( \Box g5 \) 13.\( \Box e1 \) \( \Box e6 \) 14.\( \Box a3 \) \( \Box xe3 \) 15.\( \Box xe3 \) \( \Box c8 \) 16.c3 (16.\( \Box d3 \) \( \Box c7 \) 17.\( \Box xe6 \) fxe6 18.\( \Box xd6? \) \( \Box d4 \)), J.Geller-Grachev, Moscow 2014, when simplest is 16...\( \Box c7 \);

12.\( \Box a3 \) \( \Box g5 \) (12...\( \Box h8! \)? 13.0-0 f5 is sharper) 13.\( \Box c4 \) \( \Box xe3 \) 14.\( \Box xe3 \) \( \Box e7 \).

Therefore, White should take g5 under control.

12.\( \Box d2 \) \( \Box e6 \) 13.\( \Box c3 \) \( \Box c8 \) 14.0-0 \( \Box c7 \)!

[Diagram]

It is essential to avoid b7-b5 as it only provides White with a lever on the queenside, e.g. 14...b5?! 15.a4 b4 16.\( \Box a2! \) a5 17.\( \Box c1 \) \( \Box xd5 \) 18.\( \Box x d5 \) \( \Box d4 \) 19.\( \Box xd4 \) exd4 20.\( \Box d3= \).

After the text, Black has no problems:

15.\( \Box a4 \) \( \Box a5= \), Bacrot-Tajmanov, Cannes 1998;

15.\( \Box ac1 \) \( \Box a5= \) 16.\( \Box fd1 \) \( \Box c4 \) 17.\( \Box xe4 \) \( \Box xc4 \) 18.a3 \( \Box c6 \) 19.\( \Box d5 \) \( \Box xd5 \) 20.\( \Box xd5 \) \( \Box fc8 \) 21.c3 g6 22.f3
Part 7

A2. 9.\texttt{g5} \texttt{e7} 10.\texttt{xf6}

It is very tempting to keep the bishop for a while with 10.\texttt{d2}?! intending to play \texttt{c4} first and only then exchange on \texttt{f6}. That would allow White to achieve the \texttt{d5-e3} set-up. However, 10... \texttt{g4}! 11.\texttt{e2} \texttt{e2} 12.\texttt{e2} \texttt{d5}= spoils this plan – see \textbf{game 41}.

10...\texttt{f6} 11.\texttt{d2}

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

11...0-0! 12.\texttt{c4} \texttt{e6} 13.\texttt{xd6}

13.\texttt{xd6} \texttt{e7}\uparrow is dubious for White.

White’s setup does not make much sense if he does not take the pawn at all: 13.\texttt{d5} \texttt{b5} 14.\texttt{ce3} (14.\texttt{xd6} \texttt{xd5} 15.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{c7}) 14...\texttt{g5} 15.\texttt{e2}, Ponomariov-Dubov, Tromsø 2013. This is the same position as in line C, but it is Black to move!

13.\texttt{e3} \texttt{b6} 14.\texttt{b1} \texttt{d4} (14...\texttt{g5}?! 16.\texttt{cd5} \texttt{a5}\uparrow 17.b4 \texttt{d8}) 15.\texttt{d3} \texttt{b4} gave Black an initiative in Hartman-Shulman, Stockholm 1998.

13...\texttt{e8}!

I faced this idea as White many years ago in my game Delchev-Bernal Moro, Hyeres 2001, which went 14.\texttt{d5} \texttt{xd5} 15.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{d8} 16.\texttt{c5} \texttt{d4}?! 17.\texttt{d3} \texttt{e6}=. I underestimated it at that time, but later I returned to it and my wife tested it on the Black side in 2006. White immediately erred – 14.\texttt{e3}?! \texttt{d8} 15.\texttt{c7} \texttt{d7} 16.\texttt{b6} \texttt{d8} 17.\texttt{c5} \texttt{e7} 18.\texttt{b6} \texttt{b4}\uparrow and went on to lose, Lillo Castan-Djingarova, Illes Medes 2007. Since no one seems to have entered this position ever since, here is our “family” analysis:

14.\texttt{d5}

14.\texttt{d2} \texttt{d8} 15.\texttt{d5} (15.\texttt{c1} \texttt{e7}) 15...\texttt{d4} 16.\texttt{ce3} (16.\texttt{xf6}\uparrow+ \texttt{gxf6} 17.\texttt{c3} \texttt{c6}) 16...\texttt{g5} 17.\texttt{c3} (17.\texttt{h4} \texttt{h6}) 17...\texttt{xd5} 18.\texttt{exd5} \texttt{xd5}\uparrow.

14...\texttt{xd5} 15.\texttt{xd5}

15.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{d4} 16.\texttt{e3} \texttt{g5} 17.\texttt{d1} (17.\texttt{d3} \texttt{e4}) 17...\texttt{f5} 18.\texttt{c3} \texttt{f6}.

15...\texttt{d8} 16.\texttt{c5}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_board2.png}
\end{center}
Taimanov with 5.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{b}}}\text{5}\)

16...\(\text{\textsf{\textit{e}}}\text{7!}\)

16...\(\text{\textsf{\textit{w}}}\text{e6}\) 17.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{d}}}\text{e3}\) (17.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{d}}}\text{3} \text{\textsf{\textit{d}}}\text{4!}\); 17.c3 \(\text{\textsf{\textit{g}}}\text{4}\) 17...\(\text{\textsf{\textit{e}}}\text{d4}\) 18.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{c}}}\text{4} \text{\textsf{\textit{c}}}\text{8}\) 19.c3 \(\text{\textsf{\textit{e}}}\text{7}\) is roughly equal.

17.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{w}}}\text{b6}\)

17.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{w}}}\text{e3}? \text{b5}\) 18.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{d}}}\text{d2}\) (18.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{a}}}\text{3} f5\) 18...\(\text{\textsf{\textit{b}}}\text{4}--\).

17...\(\text{\textsf{\textit{d}}}\text{b4}\) 18.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{d}}}\text{d3}\) (18.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{c}}}\text{1} f5\) 19.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{e}}}\text{3} \text{\textsf{\textit{a}}}\text{4}\); 18.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{e}}}\text{3} \text{\textsf{\textit{d}}}\text{7}--\) 18...\(\text{\textsf{\textit{e}}}\text{xd3!}\)

18...\(\text{\textsf{\textit{e}}}\text{d4}\) wins the queen, but White holds on: 19.0-0 \(\text{\textsf{\textit{w}}}\text{b8}\) 20.a3 (20.c3 \(\text{\textsf{\textit{e}}}\text{xd3}\) 21.cx\(\text{\textsf{\textit{b}}}\)4 \(\text{\textsf{\textit{d}}}\text{4}\) 20...\(\text{\textsf{\textit{c}}}\text{8}\) 21.ax\(\text{\textsf{\textit{b}}}\)4 \(\text{\textsf{\textit{d}}}\text{8}\) 22.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{c}}}\text{5} \text{\textsf{\textit{e}}}\text{xc5}\) 23.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{x}}}\text{xc5}\)\=.

19.cxd3 \(\text{\textsf{\textit{e}}}\text{xd3}\) + 20.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{e}}}\text{e2}\)

Only move. 20.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{f}}}\text{1} \text{\textsf{\textit{c}}}\text{5}\) 21.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{w}}}\text{c7}\) (21.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{x}}}\text{xb7}\) \(\text{\textsf{\textit{d}}}\text{8}\) 21...\(\text{\textsf{\textit{b}}}\text{5}\); 20.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{d}}}\text{2}\) \(\text{\textsf{\textit{d}}}\text{7}\) 21.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{h}}}\text{d1}\) \(\text{\textsf{\textit{c}}}\text{8}\).

20...\(\text{\textsf{\textit{c}}}\text{5}\) 21.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{x}}}\text{xb7}\)

21.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{c}}}\text{7}\) loses to 21...\(\text{\textsf{\textit{f}}}\text{4}++\) 22.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{f}}}\text{1}\) (22.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{f}}}\text{3} f5\); 22.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{d}}}\text{2} \text{\textsf{\textit{b}}}\text{5}\)) 22...\(\text{\textsf{\textit{e}}}\text{6}\) 23.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{x}}}\text{xc5} \text{\textsf{\textit{e}}}\text{8}\) 24.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{d}}}\text{1} \text{\textsf{\textit{h}}}\text{6}\) 25.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{b}}}\text{4} \text{\textsf{\textit{e}}}\text{c4}\).

21...\(\text{\textsf{\textit{w}}}\text{d8}\)

Black has a strong initiative. His queen is eyeing both d4 and h4, f2 is cracking. White can stay in the game with best defence only. It seems that he has a wide choice, but this impression is deceptive:

22.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{h}}}\text{d1} \text{\textsf{\textit{f}}}\text{4}+\) 23.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{f}}}\text{1} \text{\textsf{\textit{h}}}\text{4}\); 22.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{b}}}\text{3} \text{\textsf{\textit{xf}}}\text{2}\) 23.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{h}}}\text{f1} \text{\textsf{\textit{e}}}\text{4}\); 22.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{e}}}\text{3} \text{\textsf{\textit{f}}}\text{4}+\) 23.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{f}}}\text{3} \text{\textsf{\textit{h}}}\text{4}\) 24.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{h}}}\text{3}\) \(\text{\textsf{\textit{g}}}\text{e3}\) 25.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{x}}}\text{e3}\) (25.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{f}}}\text{e3} \text{\textsf{\textit{h}}}\text{5}\) 25...\(\text{\textsf{\textit{g}}}\text{xg2}\).

Only 22.g3 \(\text{\textsf{\textit{xf}}}\text{2}\) 23.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{d}}}\text{5}\) allows White to consolidate – 23...\(\text{\textsf{\textit{c}}}\text{8}\) 24.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{xe}}}\text{5} \text{\textsf{\textit{hx}}}\text{1}\) 25.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{hx}}}\text{1} \text{\textsf{\textit{b}}}\text{6}\) 26.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{c}}}\text{6}\) \(\text{\textsf{\textit{h}}}\text{3}\) 27.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{f}}}\text{3} \text{\textsf{\textit{d}}}\text{4}\) 28.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{d}}}\text{7} \text{\textsf{\textit{h}}}\text{5}+\). Black regains the material while the enemy king will remain in the draught for long.

A3. 9.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{d}}}\text{2}!?\)

I guess that this move owes its current popularity to the variation 9...\(\text{\textsf{\textit{g}}}\text{4}?!\) 10.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{e}}}\text{2}\) \(\text{\textsf{\textit{xe}}}\text{2}\) 11.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{xe}}}\text{2} d5\) 12.exd5 \(\text{\textsf{\textit{d}}}\text{5}\) 13.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{xe}}}\text{d5}\) \(\text{\textsf{\textit{d}}}\text{5}\) 14.0-0 \(\text{\textsf{\textit{e}}}\text{7}\) 15.\(\text{\textsf{\textit{g}}}\text{4}\) which is slightly better for White. We'll disillusion the opponent with:

9...\(\text{\textsf{\textit{e}}}\text{6}!?\)
This move is based on the pawn sac 10...\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{c}e7\) 11.\(\text{c}c4\) 0-0! as in line A2.

I suppose that 9...\(\text{g}4\) 10.\(\text{d}d5\) \(\text{x}e3\) 11.\(\text{x}e3\) \(\text{c}e7\)! also equalises – 12.\(\text{c}c4\) 0-0 13.0-0 \(\text{g}5\) 14.\(\text{d}d5\) \(\text{x}e3\) 15.\(\text{x}e3\) \(\text{c}c7\) 16.\(\text{c}c4\) (16.\(\text{h}5\) \(\text{b}4\) 17.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{e}6\)) 16...\(\text{e}7\) 17.\(\text{d}x6\) \(\text{c}e6\) 18.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{a}xf5\) 19.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{w}c5\).

10.\(\text{c}c4\) \(\text{b}5\) 11.\(\text{b}b6\) \(\text{b}8\)
12.\(\text{d}d5\) \(\text{g}4\) (12...\(\text{c}c7\) 13.a4!)

13.\(\text{e}2\)

White cannot exploit our move ...\(\text{b}5\) by 13.a4 since 13...\(\text{b}4\) 14.\(\text{c}c1\) \(\text{x}e3\) 15.\(\text{x}e3\) \(\text{c}c7\) 16.\(\text{d}d2\) \(\text{c}e7\) 17.\(\text{c}c3\) 0-0 was nice for Black in Eid-Al Modiahki, Casablanca 2002.

13.\(\text{c}c3\) may be questioned by 13...\(\text{e}7\) 14.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{f}6\). White’s bishop might be more active on d3, moreover, we have sidestepped the variation 12...\(\text{c}c7\) 13.a4!.

13...\(\text{x}e3\) 14.\(\text{x}e3\) \(\text{e}7\)
15.\(\text{d}d5\) \(\text{g}5\) 16.0-0 0-0 17.\(\text{c}c3\)

This position commonly arises from the Sveshnikov. It is rarely seen as Black has a decent game.

He may play for equalisation with 17...\(\text{e}7\) 18.\(\text{d}d3\) \(\text{e}3\) 19.\(\text{x}e3\) \(\text{w}c7\) (Rogozenko), or seek complications with the thematic break ...f5 – 17...g6 18.a4 f5 19.axb5 axb5 20.\(\text{a}6\) (20.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{f}5\) 21.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{d}f4\) 22.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{h}8\)) 20...\(\text{c}8\) 21.\(\text{b}6\) \(\text{xb6}\) 22.\(\text{a}b6\) \(\text{b}8\) 23.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{f}5\) 24.\(\text{d}b5\), Shukh-Frolyanov, Nizhny Novgorod 2010, 24...\(\text{w}b7\)! (in the game, Black answered 24...\(\text{h}8\) which left the f8-rook undefended in the line 25.\(\text{a}b5\) \(\text{w}b5\) 26.\(\text{c}c7\) \(\text{b}3\) 27.\(\text{xd}6\)).

B. 6.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{f}6\)

6...\(\text{a}6\)?! is not outright bad, but it is certainly inaccurate. In some variations this move is not necessary, for example after 7.\(\text{b}5\)c3, as noted in the next paragraph.

7.\(\text{d}1\)c3

7.\(\text{b}5\)c3 is rarely seen. Black usually saves a tempo on a6 and obtains a good game. White is unable to employ efficiently his b1-knight – 7...\(\text{e}7\) 8.\(\text{e}2\) 0-0 9.0-0 \(\text{b}6\) 10.\(\text{f}4\) (or 10...\(\text{e}3\) 11.\(\text{d}2\) d5= 12.\(\text{e}5\) exd5 13.\(\text{c}d5\) \(\text{b}4\)) 10...\(\text{b}7\) 11.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{c}8\) (11...\(\text{d}7\) 12.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{e}8\) 13.\(\text{c}1\) \(\text{ac}8\) 14.a3 \(\text{h}6\) 15.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{h}7\) 16.\(\text{h}1\) \(\text{d}4\) 17.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{f}8\) 18.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{g}6\) is another interesting set-up) 12.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{e}5\), see game 42 Kavalek-Liberzon, Amsterdam 1977.

The rematch Fischer-Spassky 1992, drew attention to 7.\(\text{b}5\)c3 \(\text{e}7\) 8.g3. Black chose the logical plan of
Taimanov with $5.b5$

preparing $\ldots b5$ by $\ldots a6$, $\ldots d7$, but it is a bit passive. Perhaps the attack on c4 is more effective: $8 \ldots b6! \ 9.g2 b7 10.0-0 0-0 11.b3 (11.f4\ldots \text{ex}c8 12.b3 a6 13.\text{ed}7 14.\text{ed}2 \text{sf6} 15.\text{dc1} \text{dc5}) 11...\text{ex}c8 (11...\text{d}d7?! 12.\text{b}2 \text{c}5 13.\text{a}3 \text{e}5 is an original idea. Black was slightly better after 14.\text{w}e2 \text{ed}3 15.\text{ad}1 \text{xb}2 16.\text{wb}2 \text{a}6, \text{Nemeth-Markus, Szombathely 2003}) 12.\text{b}2 \text{c}7$

13.\text{d}d2 \text{wb}8 14.\text{ec}1 \text{a}6 15.\text{we}2 \text{d}d7 16.\text{fd}1 (16.a3 \text{b}5!) 16...\text{c}5 17.\text{f}1 \text{b}5!

7...a6 8.\text{a}3

8.\text{d}4 is completely innocuous as Black can equalise at once with $8 \ldots d5 9.\text{ex}d5 \text{ex}d5 10.\text{cx}d5 \text{xd5} 11.\text{xc}6 \text{bxc}6 12.\text{xd}5 \text{xd}5. However, I would recommend $8 \ldots d7$, aiming to push $\ldots b5 - 9.\text{dc2} [9.\text{de2} \text{c}8 10.0-0 (10.\text{dc2} \text{de5} 11.\text{de3} \text{g}5 12.\text{b}3 \text{b}5 13.\text{a}3 \text{wb}6 14.\text{b}1 \text{c}6 15.\text{f}3 \text{g}4) 10...\text{a}5 11.\text{b}3 \text{b}5] 9...\text{c}7 10.\text{e}2 0-0 11.\text{f}4 (11.0-0 \text{c}8 12.\text{f}4 \text{b}5 13.\text{cx}b5 \text{ax}b5 14.\text{xb}5 \text{xe}4 15.\text{xe}4 \text{wb}6+ 16.\text{de3} \text{wb}5 17.\text{xd}6 \text{xd}6 18.\text{xd}6 \text{fd}8) 11...\text{e}5 12.0-0 \text{c}8 13.\text{e}3 \text{b}5! 14.\text{cx}b5 \text{ax}b5 15.a3 \text{wb}6, \text{Palac-Rublevsky, Aix-les-Bains 2011}$

8...b6

This move order is hardly better than $8 \ldots \text{e}7$ followed by $9...0-0$. I chose it for the main line because it is more popular lately. Initially it was designed to counter f4-plans with an early $\ldots d5$. Black was afraid that otherwise White would achieve $9.\text{de2}, 10.\text{f}4 and 11.\text{f}3$. The text move allows to meet $9.\text{de2} \text{b}7 10.\text{f}4 by 10...\text{d}5! with initiative, e.g. $11.\text{cx}d5 \text{ex}d5 12.\text{e}5 \text{d}4 13.\text{xf}6 \text{dxc}3 14.\text{xd}8 \text{xd}8$.

Let's suppose, however, that Black played $8 \ldots \text{e}7$ instead of $8 \ldots b6$. After $9.\text{de2} 0-0 10.0-0 b6 11.\text{f}4$, my analysis proves that $11...\text{d}5$ is perfectly possible:

a) $12.\text{e}5 \text{de}4!$ (this is better than $12...\text{c}5?! 13.\text{h}1 \text{e}4 14.\text{f}3 \text{xc}3 15.\text{xc}3 \text{e}7 16.\text{cx}d5 \text{ex}d5 17.\text{c}2 \text{f}5 18.\text{d}4 \text{e}4 19.\text{f}5$) or $14...\text{f}2 15.\text{xf}2 \text{xf}2 16.\text{cx}d5 \text{ex}d5 17.\text{xd}5 \text{b}7 18.\text{c}4 \text{c}5 19.\text{e}3\uparrow, \text{Vallejo Pons-Shavtvaladze, Wch U16 Oropesa del Mar 1998}) 13.\text{xe}4 \text{dxe4}$ with initiative.

b) $12.\text{cx}d5 \text{ex}d5 13.\text{ex}d5 (13.\text{e}5 \text{c}5 14.\text{h}1 \text{e}4 15.\text{d}5 \text{f}2 16.\text{f}2 \text{d}5 17.\text{d}5 \text{f}2\uparrow) 13...\text{d}4\uparrow.$

c) $12.\text{ex}d5 \text{c}5+ 13.\text{h}1 \text{d}4$
14.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e}3}} \textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbf{c}xe2}} 15.\textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbf{w}x}e2} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e}xd}5} 16.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{a}xc5}} \textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbf{b}xc5}} 17.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c}xd}5} \textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbf{d}d}5=}

In the game A. Karpov-G. Kasparov, World Championship Moscow (12) 1985, the young challenger surprised the chess world with 8...d5?! which was proclaimed “novelty of the year”. The game went on with 9.exd5 exd5 10.cxd5 \textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbf{b}b4}}

Kasparov scored 1,5 out of two with this move and created a memorable evergreen, but the initial enthusiasm quickly evaporated. White discovered that he could continue developing by 11.\textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbf{c}e2}}. Then neither 11...\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c}c5}} 12.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{a}e3}}! \textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbf{e}e3}} 13.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{w}a}4} \textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbf{c}d}7} 14.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{w}xb}4} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c}c5}} 15.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{w}e}4\pm} nor 11...\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{cfxd}5}} 12.0-0 \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c}e}6} 13.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{w}a}4} b5 14.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{a}axb}5}?! axb5 15.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{a}xb}5} is enticing for Black.

\textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbf{9.e}2}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{a}b}7} 10.0-0 (10.f4 d5!)

10...\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{b}b8}?!} aims to draw the sting of plans with f2-f4 or \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{w}b}3} (which is met by ...\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{a}bd}7}). I do not recommend this manoeuvre because of three reasons:

1. I think that White's most dangerous plan is based on f2-f3 so every effort of Black should be aimed against it;

2. I find the manoeuvre ...\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c}c6-b}8-d}7 over-prophylactic. I prefer a more concrete approach with ...d7-d5 in mind. Black should redeploy his c6-knight indeed, but e5 is a better place to go than b8. Then in some variations Black can find a better use of his centralised knight than retreating it to d7. In some variations, especially when White places his queen on b3, Black has ...\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{b}b}4} (after ...\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c}c5}} first) and ...d5.

3. In fact Black is unable to avoid f4-plans. Moreover, he obtains a passive version of them after 10...\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{b}b8}?!} 11.f3 \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{b}b}d}7

\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{11.a}e3}}

a) 11.f4 0-0 (11...d5 12.cxd5 exd5 13.e5 \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c}c}5+} 14.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{h}h}1} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e}e}4} 15.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{xe}4\pm}}
12.\text{f3} \text{\textit{c8}} 13.\text{e3} transposes to the main line.

Another plan for White is:

b) 11.\text{c2} 0-0 12.\text{e3}

This setup is aimed against the freeing break ...\textit{d6-d5}. White hopes to regroup his forces later by the scheme \textit{b3, \textit{e3-c2-d4}, \textit{e3}}, returning to the usual queenside plans. Black should not get lulled by the seemingly unambitious play of the opponent. Perhaps his best set-up includes the following moves: 12...\text{\textit{w}}\textit{c7} 13.\text{\textit{w}}\textit{d2} \textit{\textit{ad8}} 14.\textit{\textit{dec1}} \textit{\textit{fe8}} 15.\textit{\textit{b3}} (15.\text{f3} \textit{d5}) 15...\textit{e5} and if 16.f3, then 16...\textit{d5!} 17.exd5 \textit{g6}!.

11...0-0

B1. 12.f4; B2. 12.\text{\textit{w}}\textit{b3}; B3. 12.f3; B4. 12.\text{\textit{c1}}

12.\text{\textit{w}}\textit{d2} is an innocuous alternative. Black answers 12...\textit{\textit{e5}} 13.f3, when 13...\textit{d5?!} 14.exd5 exd5 15.cxd5 \textit{\textit{xd5}} 16.f4 \textit{\textit{c6}} 17.\textit{\textit{ad1}} \textit{\textit{b4}} 18.\textit{\textit{d5}} \textit{\textit{fd5}} or 18.\textit{\textit{d4}} \textit{\textit{e8}} is equal. More tangled is 13...\textit{e8}!? – see game 47 Rabrenovic-Delchev, 2005.

White has three major plans in the diagram position. The attempt for a kingside attack with f4 faces an energetic counterplay in the centre. I propose to attack \textit{c4} after preliminary ...\textit{\textit{c8}} and ...\textit{\textit{e8}}. In most cases Black solves his problems with the help of the break ...\textit{d6-d5}, followed by ...\textit{\textit{e7xa3}}. This exchange ensures an excellent outpost on c4 to the a5-knight. The variations are very sharp and nearly untested.

12.\text{\textit{w}}\textit{b3} has been Karpov's favourite choice. He used to win this position with both sides against any opposition, including Kasparov. I propose a modern set-up which gives Black comfortable play.

White's most dangerous plan is examined in lines B3 and B4. It is aimed at bolstering up the centre with f3 and rooks on c1 and d1. Then both bishops retreat to safer places while the king goes to h1. Finally, with all possible prophylaxis done, White plays b4 and looks for possibilities to expand on the queenside by a4-a5 or c4-c5. Although the position is dynamically balanced, if Black misses the right moment to generate counterplay, he risks to get in a murky situation.

It is difficult to show a clear-cut counter-plan for Black because the position allows many different move orders. I’ll try to provide you with concrete variations where Black equalises by pushing ...\textit{d5} at the right moment. However, you should be acquainted with the main plans of Black in the event you land in a position which requires long and patient manoeuvring.
In the early days of the hedgehog structures, White believed that he should punish the opponent for his “passive” play by mating him. Practice has shown that Black has enough counter-chances due to the unstable centre and weaknesses on c4 and e4. However, if White consolidated and brought his knight to the centre by the manoeuvre \( \text{h}a3-b1-d2 \), he would have the better chances. Then he would be able to choose pawn storms on the queenside by \( \text{b}4-a4-a5 \) or on the opposite wing by \( \text{g}4-g5 \).

Another possible design is to redeploy the c6-knight to d7 via b8 and adopt a waiting strategy, but I’m against such an approach whenever we have another clear plan.

13.\( \text{Ec}1 \)

13.\( \text{f}3 \) is less accurate due to 13...\( \text{a}5 \) 14.\( \text{d}3 \) (or 14.\( \text{e}2 \) d5 15.exd5 \( \text{xa}3 \) 16.bxa3 \( \text{xc}4+\) ) 14...d5! (A good idea of Cramling. 14...\( \text{c}7 \)! stumbles into 15.\( \text{ac}1 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 16.b4! when Black must retreat under the blow 17.\( \text{d}5! \pm \) 15.cxd5 b5 16.\( \text{e}2 \) exd5 17.e5 \( \text{e}4= \).

Black can also transpose to the main line with 13...\( \text{e}8 \) 14.\( \text{c}1 \). Instead, 14.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{a}5 \) was balanced in game 43 Radulski-Iotov, Sunny Beach 2009. I also consider in the annotations 14.\( \text{e}2 \) e5?!.

13...\( \text{e}8 \) 14.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{a}5 \)

Black scores well without forcing the events, e.g. 14...\( \text{d}7 \) (or 14...\( \text{f}8 \) ) 15.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 16.\( \text{fd}1 \) \( \text{b}8 \). The downside of this approach is that White is controlling firmly the centre and can gradually build a kingside attack with \( \text{g}4 \).

A crucial position for this line. White is unable to prevent a clash in the centre:

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

Alternatively:

a) 15.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 16.b4 (The game Mannion-Lautier, Barcelona 1993, went 16.\( \text{a}4?! \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 17.\( \text{xb}6 \) \( \text{c}6 \) and Black has a pleasant game. The
Taimanov with 5.\( \text{d}b5 \)

exchange of the central pawn for \( b6 \) is good for White only without queens. Karpov proved that against Kasparov in a famous game from the World title K-K series. 16.\( \text{w}f2 \) is also harmless - 16...\( \text{w}b8! \) 17.\( \text{d}xb6 \) \( \text{dxc}4 \) 18.\( \text{dxc}4 \) \( \text{bxc}4 \). 16...\( \text{dxc}4 \) 17.\( \text{dxc}4 \) 18.\( \text{dxc}4 \) 19.\( \text{dxb6} \) \( \text{dxe}4 \) 20.\( \text{e}fd1 \) \( \text{xc}3 \) 21.\( \text{exc}3 \) \( \text{xc}3 \).

I proposed this queens sac in *The Safest Sicilian*, but there are no candidates to test it.

b) 15.\( \text{d}a4 \) \( \text{d}d7 \) 16.\( \text{d}d2 \) (16.\( \text{b}4 \) \( d5 \) 16...\( \text{c}c5 \) 17.\( \text{c}c3 \) \( \text{d}d7 \) 18.\( \text{e}e2 \) (18.\( \text{e}e2 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 18...\( \text{c}c7 \) 19.\( \text{f}d1 \) \( \text{xc}4 \) 20.\( \text{d}cb5 \) axb5 21.\( \text{d}xb5 \) \( \text{b}8 \) 22.\( \text{xc}4 \) \( \text{xc}4 \) 23.\( \text{xc}4 \) \( \text{c}8 \).

15...\( \text{d}5 \)! 16.\( \text{c}xd5 \) (16.\( \text{ex}d5 \) \( \text{ixa}3 \) 17.\( \text{bxa}3 \) \( \text{xc}4 \)) 16...\( \text{b}5 \) 17.\( \text{e}5 \)

17.\( \text{d}xb5 \)?! axb5 18.\( \text{wb}5 \) \( \text{b}8 \) 19.\( \text{b}6 \) \( \text{wd}7 \); 17.\( \text{d}d4 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 18.\( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{xd}5 \) 19.\( \text{d}xd5 \) \( \text{xd}5 \) 20.\( \text{xc}8 \) \( \text{xc}8 \) 21.\( \text{d}xd5 \) \( \text{bxa}3 \)\( \uparrow \).

17...\( \text{ixa}3 \) 18.\( \text{bxa}3 \) \( \text{d}d5 \) 19.\( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{xd}5 \) 20.\( \text{xc}8 \) \( \text{xc}8 \) 21.\( \text{d}d5 \) \( \text{ex}d5 \) 22.\( \text{xb}d5 \) \( \text{d}c4 \) 23.\( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{ixa}3 \) 24.\( \text{d}d1 \) \( \text{d}c4 \) 25.\( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{we}6 \).
Black answered 15...\textit{\texttt{efe}}8 (15...\texttt{\texttt{ad}}8?!?) 16.\texttt{\texttt{c}}c2 \texttt{\texttt{ad}}8 17.b4 \texttt{\texttt{d}}d7 18.\texttt{\texttt{c}}c1. The knight does have more prospects on c2, but it also hinders the rook to defend the c4-pawn. Ribli could have exploited that with the thematic 18...\texttt{\texttt{ce}}5 19.\texttt{\texttt{d}}d4 \texttt{f}f6 20.f3 d5! with an initiative.

15...\texttt{\texttt{b}}b4 16.\texttt{\texttt{d}}d2 \texttt{\texttt{ad}}8!

Now 17.a3? fails to 17...\texttt{\texttt{b}}b3, the other moves allow ...d5, for instance: 17.b3 d5! 18.exd5 exd5 19.\texttt{\texttt{f}}f4 \texttt{\texttt{c}}c8; 17.f3 d5!. The only way to hinder the break is:

17.\texttt{\texttt{f}}f4, but then we can attack the centre with ...f5 – 17...\texttt{\texttt{h}}h8 18.b3 (18.f3 f5) 18...f5 19.exf5 \texttt{\texttt{xf}}5 20.\texttt{\texttt{g}}g4 \texttt{\texttt{f}}f6 21.\texttt{\texttt{g}}3 \texttt{\texttt{g}}g6 22.\texttt{\texttt{e}}e2 \texttt{\texttt{f}}f6\infty.

c) 13.\texttt{\texttt{ac}}1 \texttt{\texttt{c}}c5 14.\texttt{\texttt{c}}c2 \texttt{\texttt{f}}f6 15.\texttt{\texttt{fd}}1 transposes to the main line.

13...\texttt{\texttt{c}}c5

In reserve, Black has another good set-up: 13...\texttt{\texttt{e}}e8 14.\texttt{\texttt{d}}d2 \texttt{\texttt{c}}c8. If White persists with his initial idea, he could quickly find himself lost as in Prié-Semkov, BUL-FRA m. Sofia 1990: 15.\texttt{\texttt{d}}d1 \texttt{\texttt{c}}c7 16.\texttt{\texttt{f}}f1 \texttt{\texttt{ce}}5 17.\texttt{\texttt{ad}}1 \texttt{\texttt{f}}f6 18.f3, when 18...d5! 19.exd5 \texttt{\texttt{xa}}3 20.d6 \texttt{\texttt{xd}}6 21.\texttt{\texttt{xd}}6 \texttt{\texttt{d}}d5\infty would have crowned Black’s strategy.

More accurate is 15.\texttt{\texttt{ac}}1 \texttt{\texttt{ce}}5 16.\texttt{\texttt{d}}d1 \texttt{\texttt{g}}g6! (16...\texttt{\texttt{c}}c7? 17.f4 \texttt{\texttt{g}}g6 18.e5±) 17.\texttt{\texttt{f}}f1 (17.f4 \texttt{\texttt{c}}c7 18.e5 d5 19.cxd5 \texttt{\texttt{c}}c5) 17...\texttt{\texttt{c}}c7 18.\texttt{\texttt{dd}}1.

White protects the c1-rook against central breaks. The game Psakhis-Romanishin, Szirak 1986, went 18...\texttt{\texttt{b}}b8 19.f3 \texttt{\texttt{f}}f6 20.\texttt{\texttt{ab}}1 \texttt{\texttt{d}}d8 21.\texttt{\texttt{h}}h1 draw, but Black could have played more actively – 18...\texttt{\texttt{f}}f6 19.f3 \texttt{\texttt{b}}b8? 20.\texttt{\texttt{f}}f2 d5 21.cxd5 \texttt{\texttt{d}}d6\infty.

14.\texttt{\texttt{c}}c2 (14.\texttt{\texttt{xc}}5?! bxc5 15.\texttt{\texttt{b}}b7?? \texttt{\texttt{a}}a5) 14...\texttt{\texttt{f}}f6! 15.\texttt{\texttt{ac}}1

a) With the rook still on a1, 15.\texttt{\texttt{ab}}1 is dubious. Black could counter-attack with 15...\texttt{\texttt{b}}b4! 16.\texttt{\texttt{d}}d2 a5 (16...\texttt{\texttt{c}}c8?!) 17.f3 \texttt{\texttt{e}}e7 18.\texttt{\texttt{f}}f4 \texttt{\texttt{e}}e5
Taimanov with 5...b5

19...g5, Gajsin-Zakharstov, St. Petersburg 2002, 19...f6!? 20.e3 f5 21.exf5 exf5.

b) Another dubious alternative is 15.f3 e5 16.d2 h4 17.g3 f6.?

c) 15.ab1 creates the threat of b4 so Black has to blockade the pawn: 15...b4 16.d2 e5! (it is good to provoke f4. In Averbakh-Poturgayevsky, Palma de Mallorca 1972 was 16...xc3? 17.bc3=) 17.f4 c3 18.bc3 e4 19.b2 c6=.

15...e7!

The queen feels superbly here. This set-up faces White with problems. The more provocative 15...e5 16.ab1 h4 17.g3 f6 18.d2 g6 19.f4 xe4 20.xe4 xe4 21.f2 f5 22.g4 f6 23.g5 f5 24.e1 e4 25.axe5 h1+ 26.f1 xe5 27.f2 b5! also gave Black good chances in Ivanchuk-Wang, Beijing 2013.

16.ab1

Alternatives are:
16.f3 fd8 17.d2 b4 leads to similar positions – 18.ab1 (18.e1 d5?) 18...d5.


16...b4! 17.d2 fd8

Threatening ...d6-d5. Black gains the initiative after:

18.d4


18.e5!

18...xd4 19.xd4 g5 is good, too: 20.d2 h6 21.xg5 hxg5 22.a3 c6 23.d2 d4 24.f1 db3 25.xb3 xb3 26.b1 f8 27.f3 e7+; 20.f3 db3 21.xd3 e5 22.f2 xd3.

19.e3 c6 20.xe5 dxex
Black has a clear edge. Svetushkin-Ducarmon, Roquetas de Mar 2014, went further 21.\texttt{Qd}2 \texttt{Qd}4 (21...a5) 22.\texttt{Qf}3 \texttt{Qad}8 23.\texttt{Qf}1 f6.

\textbf{B3. 12.f3}

White starts building the ideal set-up against the Hedgehog. However, Black is able to hinder his plan.

\textbf{12...\texttt{Qxe}8!}

The rook's X-ray along the e-file cocks the trigger of the break ...d6-d5. Instead, 12...\texttt{Qb}4 13.\texttt{Wb}3! d5 leaves Black lagging behind in development - 14.cxd5 exd5 15.\texttt{Qfd}1 \texttt{Qc}7 16.\texttt{Qac}1! \texttt{Qc}5 17.\texttt{Qa}4 \texttt{Qe}3 18.\texttt{Qe}3±.

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\end{center}

\textbf{13.\texttt{Wb}3}

The alternatives run into ...d6-d5 with a strong initiative:

13.\texttt{Wf}1?! d5!\textcolor{red}{+};

13.\texttt{Qc}1?! is even worse: 13...d5! 14.cxd5 exd5 15.\texttt{Qxd}5 \texttt{Qxd}5 16.exd5 \texttt{Qb}4\textcolor{red}{+};

13.\texttt{Qd}2 could also be met by 13...d5!= 14.cxd5 exd5 15.exd5 \texttt{Qb}4.

Black's knight has found a more active stand than e5! We see here one more reason to delay the manoeuvre...\texttt{Qc}6-e5. 16.d6! (16.\texttt{Qc}4 \texttt{Qfd}5\textcolor{red}{+}) 16...\texttt{Wxd}6 17.\texttt{Wxd}6 \texttt{Qxd}6 18.\texttt{Qc}4 \texttt{Qf}8 19.\texttt{Qf}2 \texttt{Qbd}5 20.\texttt{Qfe}1, Rindlisbacher-Huber, Legnica 2013, b5!=;

13.\texttt{Qa}4?! was invented by a computer: 13...\texttt{Qd}7 14.\texttt{Qxb}6 \texttt{Qxb}6 15.\texttt{Wb}3, Comp Mephisto Genius – Loeffler, The Hague 1997. Here the human missed 15...\texttt{Qd}7! 16.\texttt{Wb}7 \texttt{Qc}5 17.\texttt{Wc}6 (17.\texttt{Qxc}5 dxc5 18.\texttt{Wxc}6 \texttt{Qd}4+ 19.\texttt{Qfe}2 \texttt{Qb}2\textcolor{red}{+}) 17...\texttt{Qc}8\textcolor{red}{+}.

\textbf{13...\texttt{Qd}7 14.\texttt{Qad}1}

The classic book on the Scheveningen by Kasparov/Nikitin, 1984, mentions this as the best move, without any analysis though. It took several decades to the mere mortals to reach to the same conclusion.

14.\texttt{Qfd}1 was the old main line - 14...\texttt{Qc}5 15.\texttt{Qc}2 \texttt{Qf}6 16.\texttt{Wd}2!

16.\texttt{Qac}1 \texttt{Qe}5 17.\texttt{Wd}2 \texttt{Wh}4 18.g3 \texttt{Qxg}3 19.hxg3 \texttt{Qxg}3+ is a draw by perpetual, but Black can play on with 16...\texttt{Qb}4 17.\texttt{Wd}2 d5=.

16.\texttt{Qab}1 \texttt{Qb}4 17.\texttt{Wd}2 \texttt{Qe}5! (intending...\texttt{Wh}4) 18.f4 \texttt{Qxc}3 19.bxc3 \texttt{Qxe}4 20.\texttt{Wb}2 \texttt{Qc}6\textcolor{red}{=}.

\begin{center}
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\end{center}

260
16...\textit{A}e5! 17.\textit{D}c2 (17.\textit{E}ac1 \textit{W}h4! 18.g3 \textit{A}xg3 19.hxg3 \textit{W}xg3+=) 17... \textit{W}h4 18.g3 \textit{A}xg3=.

14...\textit{E}c8

White hopes to revive his a3-knight with \textit{D}ab1 so we must tie it up with the defence of the c4-pawn.

14...\textit{D}c5 15.\textit{W}c2 \textit{D}b4 16.\textit{W}d2 \textit{W}b8 (16...\textit{D}c7 17.\textit{D}ab5) is acceptable, but a bit passive. White could continue 17.\textit{D}ab1 (17.\textit{D}c2 \textit{D}xc2 18.\textit{W}xc2 \textit{D}c6 19.\textit{D}d2 b5=

17.\textit{D}f2! (threatening a3) 18...\textit{D}f6 (18...d5 19.exd5 exd5 20.a3 \textit{D}b3 21.\textit{W}e3 \textit{D}c5 22.\textit{W}g5 \textit{D}c2 23.\textit{D}xd5=) 19.a3 \textit{D}c6 20.\textit{W}c2 (20.\textit{D}b4?! \textit{D}b3 21.\textit{W}d3 \textit{D}bd4) 20...a5 21.\textit{D}b5 a4 22.\textit{D}1c3 \textit{D}a7.

15.\textit{D}d2

15.\textit{W}c2 should be met by 15...\textit{D}ce5 (15...d5 looks good only at a cursory glance. After 16.exd5 exd5 17.\textit{D}xd5 \textit{A}xa3 18.bxa3 \textit{B}b4 19.\textit{W}xc8!, White has a nasty initiative – 19...\textit{W}xc8 20.axb4 b5 21.\textit{D}c1 \textit{W}b8 22.\textit{F}fd1 f5 23.\textit{D}c7 \textit{E}e7 24.\textit{D}e6 fxe4 25.f4 \textit{E}xe6 26.\textit{E}xd7 \textit{A}c6 27.\textit{E}a7 \textit{E}d6 28.\textit{E}xa6 \textit{A}e8 29.\textit{E}a7 \textit{E}d7 30.\textit{E}a5=) 16.\textit{W}d2 \textit{D}f6.

15...\textit{W}c7

15...\textit{D}a5!? targets the c4-pawn – 16.\textit{W}d1 (16.\textit{W}c2 d5! 17.\textit{F}fd1 \textit{A}xa3 18.bxa3 \textit{A}xc4) 16...\textit{W}c7. White has not a rook on c1 to defend c4 if the a3-knight headed to the centre.

17.\textit{A}c2!? – the only way to untie the a3-knight. Alternatives are:

17.b4 d5 (17...\textit{D}c6 18.b5 \textit{D}a7 19.c5 bxc5 20.\textit{B}xa6 \textit{A}c6 21.\textit{D}ab5 \textit{D}xb5 22.\textit{D}xb5 \textit{B}xb5 23.\textit{D}xb5 \textit{D}ed8) 18.\textit{D}ab5 (18.c5 \textit{D}f6) 18...\textit{A}xb5 19.\textit{D}xb5 \textit{W}b8 20.bxa5 bxa5;

17.b3 \textit{D}ed8 18.\textit{D}ab1 \textit{D}f6 19.\textit{D}c2 \textit{W}b8 20.\textit{W}d2 \textit{D}c6 21.\textit{D}d1 \textit{D}c5;

17.\textit{A}h1 \textit{D}ed8 (17...\textit{D}e5 18.\textit{D}a4 \textit{D}d7 19.b4 \textit{D}c6 20.b5 \textit{D}ce5 21.bxa6 \textit{A}xa6 22.\textit{D}c3 \textit{A}xc4 23.\textit{A}xc4 \textit{A}xc4 24.\textit{E}cb5 \textit{A}xb5 25.\textit{D}xb5 \textit{W}c4 26.\textit{D}d6 \textit{A}xd6 27.\textit{E}xd6 \textit{A}e5) 18.b4 (18.b3 d5) 18...\textit{D}c6 19.\textit{W}b3 \textit{D}ce5 20.\textit{E}c1 \textit{D}f6.

17...\textit{W}b8! 18.\textit{E}c1 (18.\textit{W}d2 \textit{D}c6! 19.\textit{D}a4 \textit{A}a8 20.b4 d5!\rightarrow) 18...\textit{D}c6 19.\textit{W}d2 (19.\textit{D}c2 \textit{D}ce5! 20.b3 b5; 19.\textit{D}ab1 \textit{D}ce5 20.\textit{D}d2 \textit{A}c6 21.f4 \textit{D}g6 22.b4 \textit{D}f6 23.\textit{W}b3 b5) 19... \textit{D}ce5 and it is unclear how White can improve from this point.
We have mobilised our forces while the enemy’s pieces are still tangled on the queenside. Or next task is to prepare an active plan on the kingside, but not to rush with it! We should patiently manouevre and await the best timing for ..f5 or even g5. Of course, White should also hinder ...d5.

16...\textit{c1}!?

16...\textit{d1} – anticipating 16...\textit{ce5}? 17.f4. 16...\textit{ed8} and 17.\textit{c2} does not help in view of 17...\textit{a5} while 17.\textit{ab1} is passive – 17...\textit{ce5} 18.b3 \textit{f6}.

16...\textit{ce5} 17.\textit{d1} \textit{f6} 18.\textit{dc2} \textit{b8} 19.\textit{h1} \textit{a8} 20.\textit{g1} \textit{fd7} 21.\textit{d2} \textit{f8}

I do not see how White can make any progress. If he defends the c4-pawn with 22.\textit{f1}, we can make a sortie out of the trench – 22...f5!? 23.exf5 \textit{xf5}.

You should remember Black’s primary aim – the break ...d6-d5. If it is impossible, we keep pressure on c4.

B4. 12. ...\textit{c1}!? 

The old Kasparov/Nikitin book gives this as White’s main option. Although it has drifted out of fashion, this move greatly restricts Black’s options. By delaying f3, White deprives the opponent of tactical tricks along the e-file.

16...\textit{c1}!

12...\textit{e5}

...\textit{e8} is not an obligatory move! The text is more straightforward – by hitting e4 Black is trying to drag the pawn to f3. Then he could try to carry on ...d6-d5.

13.\textit{d4}

In the event of 13.f3, we should activate the rook – 13...\textit{e8} and White can hardly prevent a break in the centre:

14.\textit{d4} \textit{d7} 15.\textit{c2} (15.\textit{fd1} d5!) 15...d5! 16.cxd5 exd5 17.exd5 \textit{d6} 18.\textit{fd1} b5!;

14.\textit{d4} \textit{d6} 15.\textit{f2} d5 16.cxd5 exd5 17.exd5 \textit{b4}=, Beliaevsky - Liberson, Baden 1980.

Only 14.\textit{b3} hinders ...d5, but after 14...\textit{fd7} 15.\textit{fd1} \textit{c7} 16.\textit{c2}
Taimanov with 5.\(\text{d}b5\)

\(\text{ac}8 17.\text{d}2 \text{ed}8\), White is still facing the problem of how to activate the a3-knight.

13...\(\text{ed}7\) 14.\(\text{fd}1\)

14.f3 is attacked with 14...d5!= 15.exd5 exd5! (15...\(\text{c}5\)?) 16.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{e}3\) 17.\(\text{e}3\) ed5 18.\(\text{fd}1\)! Karpov-Tukmakov, URS-ch 1971) 16.cxd5 (18.\(\text{fd}1?\) \(\text{e}8\)! 19.\(\text{d}2\) dc4=) 16...\(\text{c}5\) 17.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{e}3\) 18.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{e}8\) 19.\(\text{f}2\) \(\text{d}5\) 20.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{d}5\) draw, Tseshkovsky-Geller, Las Palmas 1976.

14.b4 is also premature due to 14...a5.

14...\(\text{e}8\)

It is possible that 14...\(\text{c}7\) is more precise. The text move aims for 15.f3 d5!

15.\(\text{c}2\)

White has prevented ...d6-d5 and preserves his spatial advantage. This does not implicitly mean that he has an edge, but at least Black should switch to defence. His main task is to hinder b4, \(\text{a}1\)-b3 and eventually \(\text{d}2\). In the game, I managed to keep the balance with 18...\(\text{c}7\) 19.\(\text{a}1\) \(\text{e}8\) 20.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{c}5\) 21.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{e}8\) 22.\(\text{e}3\) h6 23.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{g}5\) 24.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{c}6\) 25.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{e}3\) 26.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{a}4\) 27.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{a}4\) 28.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{d}7\) 29.\(\text{c}d1\) b5 30.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{a}7\) 31.\(\text{a}7\) draw.

16.f3

White should not delay this move much longer. 16.b4 \(\text{c}7\) 17.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{b}8\) 18.\(\text{a}1\) \(\text{e}5\) 19.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{c}6\) 20.\(\text{xb}6\) e5 21.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{d}4\) 22.\(\text{a}5\) \(\text{e}4\) was in Black's favour, Tseshkovsky-Ribli, Riga 1979.

Instead of 17.\(\text{a}3\), White had 17.f3. Then 17...d5!? (17...\(\text{b}8\)?) equalises after 18.exd5 exd5 19.\(\text{f}4\) (19.\(\text{xd}5?\) \(\text{xd}5\) 20.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{f}6\) 21.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{xb}2\)=) 19...\(\text{d}8\) 20.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{xc}4\) 21.\(\text{g}1\) \(\text{xc}4\)=.

16...d5!?

16...\(\text{c}7\) transposes to the above game Morovic Fernandez –Delchev.
17. cxd5 exd5 18. exd5

18. cxd5?! exd5 19. exd5 ef6 20. wd2 e4 21. b1 xc3 22. wd3 a5.  

18... d6!

This position is unanimously assessed as promising for Black. The game played between Leningrad Chess Club-Central Chess Club in 1971 seems to prove that evaluation: 19. d2 b5 20. a3 c7 21. h1 (21. f4 c5 is equal) 21... b8 22. g3 a8 23. g2 e5.

The e-mail game Nasybullin - Bern, ICCF 2006, saw 19. h4 b5 20. d3 e5 21. f4 (21. e4 xe4 is equal) 22. xd8 xd8 23. fxe4 c5 24. f4 xd3 25. xd3 xe4 26. xd6 xd6 27. e3 d7 = 21... h5 22. g3 b6+ 23. h1 xf4 24. xf4 xd5 25. xd5 xd5 26. b4 xc1 27. xc1 d6 28. h3 f6 =.
Part 7. Taimanov with 5. \( \text{b}5 \)

**Complete Games**

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41. Almasi-Ivanchuk
Polanica Zdroj 2000

1.e4 c5 2.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 3.d4 cxd4 4.\( \text{xd}4 \) e6 5.\( \text{b}5 \) d6 6.\( \text{f}4 \) e5 7.e3 \( \text{f}6 \) 8.\( \text{g}5 \) a6 9.\( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 10.d2 \( \text{g}4 \) 11.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{xe}2 \) 12.\( \text{e}2 \)

12.\( \text{e}2 \)? \( \text{xe}4 \) 13.\( \text{dxe}4 \) \( \text{g}5+ \)
loses a pawn.

12...d5=

13.\( \text{xf}6 \) \( \text{xf}6 \) 14.0-0

In a later game, White played 14.\( \text{c}3 \) dxe4 15.\( \text{dxe}4 \) \( \text{e}7 \) draw, Fontaine-Lautier, FRA-ch 2004.

14...0-0 15.c4?!

White overestimates his position and makes an active move while he had to think about how to equalise, probably with 15.\( \text{c}3 \)!?

15...dxe4 16.\( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 17.c5

Following the same risky strategy.

17...\( \text{c}7 \) 18.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{ad}8 \) 19.\( \text{fd}1 \) g6 20.\( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{a}5 \) 21.\( \text{b}4 \) \( \text{g}7 \) 22.\( \text{c}3 \)?

According to Chess Stars book *Super Tournaments 2000*, White could have maintained the balance by 22.\( \text{d}6 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 23.\( \text{a}3 \) b6 24.\( \text{a}6 \)=. 22...\( \text{c}6 \)! 23.\( \text{c}4 \) f5 24.\( \text{d}6 \) \( \text{xd}6 \) 25.\( \text{xd}6 \) 26.\( \text{xd}6 \) \( \text{xd}6 \) 27.\( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{d}4 \) 28.f4 b5 29.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 30.\( \text{h}1 \) b4!

The knight endgame is won.

31.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{b}5 \)! 32.\( \text{xd}6 \) \( \text{xd}6 \) 33.\( \text{xd}6 \) \( \text{xd}6 \) 34.\( \text{fxe}5 \) \( \text{c}4 \) 35.b3 \( \text{xe}5 \) 36.\( \text{f}4 \) a5 37.h4 \( \text{f}6 \) 38.\( \text{g}1 \) \( \text{g}4 \) 39.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{e}6 \) 40.\( \text{c}5+ \) \( \text{d}6 \)! 41.\( \text{b}7+ \) \( \text{c}7 \) 0-1
42. Kavalek-Liberzon
Amsterdam 1977

1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.exd4 dc6 5.db5 d6 6.c4 d5
7.0-0 e7 8.d2 0-0 9.0-0 b6
10.d4 b7 11.e1 c8 12.f1
e5

White’s plan is c1, a3, b4, then
g3 and f4 in order to remove the
restraining pressure on c4. Sprag­
get got an edge in two of his games
following this scenario. Our task
should be to safeguard the e5­
knights with ...g7-g5. 13.a3 would
have been passive, for instance, 13...
w7 14.c1 w8 15.h3 wa8 16.w2
e6 17.cb5 b7 18.w3=.

13...wd7! 14.g3

Or 14.c1 a6 15.g3 g5 16.f3
h8.

14...g5!

This plan is positionally sound
with a white bishop on g3. Stayed
it on e3, White would have the awk­
ward plan d4 followed up by b4,
c4-c5. It is the main reason I do not
recommend the stand with ...g5 in
the hedgehog. I prefer ...f5 or even
...h5-h4 instead. Of course, White
can try to redeploy his bishop, but
that costs tempi.

15.c1 a6

In the game Lopez Martinez-Flu­
via Poyatos, Barcelona 2012, Black
opted for a waiting game with:

15...c7. This is possible, but
practice shows that White does not
defend well in the Hedgehog. It is
better to attack him even if that in­
volves taking risks. The above game
went:

16.b4 w8 17.a3 w8 18.w6
g6 19.h3

19.f3!? w6 20.xg5 was a bet­
ter try, (20.w6 g4=) but Black
has sufficient counterplay after
20...xe4 21.w6 g3 22.hxg3 d5!

19...g7 20.w1 d5 21.b5
e6 22.b3

Black could wait further with
22...f4, but he decided to throw
more forces against the enemy king:

22...h5! 23.f3 (White obviously
panicked. 23.wxh5? loses to 23...g4,
but he should not have made weaknesses. 23.\textit{d}d2 was unclear.) 23...\textit{c}c6 24.\textit{d}d5\textit{d}d4 \textit{a}a4 25.\textit{h}h1

25.\textit{d}d2 \textit{x}xb3 26.\textit{x}xb3 d5!, planning ...\textit{xf}3+, is also better for Black. After the text, 25...g4! 26.hxg4 (26.\textit{f}4 \textit{h}4! 27.\textit{h}2 g3) 26...\textit{g}5 would have given a decisive attack.

\textbf{16.f3 \textit{h}h8 17.\textit{f}2 \textit{g}8}

Black has some prospects for an attack, but White's position is very solid. The advance ...g4 is not an imminent threat – yet. After 18.b4 \textit{f}8! 19.\textit{e}3 \textit{f}6, the play would be unclear. Instead, Kavalek considerably weakens his castling position:

\textbf{18.h3 \textit{g}7}

Another interesting resource was 18...\textit{f}8 19.b4 f5 when 20.exf5 exf5 21.d5 is dubious due to 21...\textit{xd}5 22.cxd5 \textit{x}c1 23.\textit{xc}1 g4! 24.f4 gxh3 25.fxe5 hxg2.

\textbf{19.b4 \textit{h}5 20.a3 \textit{g}8 21.\textit{e}3 \textit{h}7 (21...g4 22.f4 \textit{g}6 23.\textit{e}2 e5 24.f5 \textit{f}4) 22.\textit{e}2 \textit{g}8! (22...g4 was premature due to 23.f4 \textit{f}3+ 24.\textit{x}f3 gxf3 25.\textit{x}f3 \textit{xe}4) 23.\textit{cc}3}

\textbf{23...\textit{g}6}

Black's pieces are very menacing, but 23...g4 is still ineffective in view of 24.f4. He had to bring more power to the attack with ...\textit{wh}6 or ...f5. Liberzon's move is not bad either. Apparently Kavalek understood that passive waiting was doomed and he made a desperate attempt to free his pieces with:

\textbf{24.f4 \textit{gxf}4 25.\textit{xf}4 \textit{h}6 26.\textit{g}3 \textit{xg}3}

26...\textit{f}8! 27.d4 f5 would have kept more tension, but Liberzon simply grabs a pawn.

\textbf{27.\textit{x}g3 h4 28.\textit{f}2 \textit{xe}4 29.c5? \textit{dxc}5 30.\textit{bxc}5 \textit{xc}5 31.\textit{xc}5\textit{bxc}532.\textit{c}4\textit{w}f533.\textit{d}d2 \textit{f}6 34.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 35.\textit{d}d8+ \textit{g}7 36.\textit{g}3 \textit{f}3+ 37.\textit{xf}3 \textit{xf}3 38.\textit{d}3 \textit{e}5 0-1}

---

\textbf{43. Radulski-lotov}

\textbf{Sunny Beach 10.06.2009}

\textbf{1.e4 c5 2.\textit{f}3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\textit{xd}4 \textit{c}6 5.\textit{b}5 d6 6.\textit{c}4 \textit{f}6}
7.\texttt{d}5c3 a6 8.\texttt{d}a3 \texttt{e}7 9.\texttt{e}2 b6 10.0-0 \texttt{b}7 11.f4 0-0 12.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{c}8 13.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{e}8

14.\texttt{f}d2

14.\texttt{c}c1 is a more natural move since it protects White’s most sensitive point – the c4-pawn.

14...\texttt{a}5 15.\texttt{f}2

15.\texttt{ac}1 is already late – 15...d5 16.cxd5 \texttt{x}a3 17.bxa3 \texttt{c}4 18.\texttt{f}2 exd5 19.\texttt{fd}1 \texttt{d}7 20.e5 \texttt{g}4?

15...\texttt{d}7!?

15...\texttt{xc}4 16.\texttt{xc}4 \texttt{xc}4 17.e5 \texttt{e}4 18.\texttt{xe}4 \texttt{xe}4 19.\texttt{xb}6 \texttt{d}7 20.\texttt{xe}4 \texttt{xe}4 is roughly equal, but Iotov decides to maintain the tension.

16.\texttt{e}2

White is already on the defensive. 16.\texttt{a}4 \texttt{xc}4 17.\texttt{xc}4 \texttt{xc}4 18.\texttt{xb}6 \texttt{xb}6 19.\texttt{xb}6 \texttt{a}8 gives Black an initiative – 20.\texttt{fe}1 \texttt{ec}8 21.b3 \texttt{ec}2 22.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{c}1+ 23.\texttt{xc}1 \texttt{xc}1+ 24.\texttt{e}1 \texttt{c}8→.

16...d5! 17.exd5

White cannot justify the placement of his queen on f2 by 17.f5 because he has only one check after 17...\texttt{xa}3 18.fxe6 fxe6 19.bxa3 \texttt{xc}4 20.\texttt{f}7+ \texttt{h}8 with an edge.

After the text, Black would be on top after 17...\texttt{xa}3! 18.bxa3 \texttt{xc}4 19.\texttt{xc}4 \texttt{xc}4 20.dxe6 \texttt{xe}6 21.\texttt{d}4 \texttt{g}6 22.g3 \texttt{c}8.

17...exd5?! 18.\texttt{ad}1

18.\texttt{xd}5 simplifies to a nearly equal position although Black retains some initiative after 18...\texttt{xa}3 19.bxa3 \texttt{xc}4 20.\texttt{xc}4 \texttt{xc}4 21.bxb6 \texttt{ce}4 22.\texttt{xd}7 \texttt{xd}7!?.

18...\texttt{xa}3 19.bxa3 \texttt{xc}4 20.\texttt{d}4

White hopes to win the d5-pawn. 20.\texttt{xc}4 dxc4 21.bxc4 \texttt{xb}6 22.\texttt{d}7 \texttt{a}5 23.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{a}8 was rather dull for him.

20...\texttt{d}6?! (20...\texttt{f}8?) 21.f5?

21.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{c}5 22.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{xc}5 23.\texttt{xd}5 \texttt{xd}5 24.\texttt{xd}5 \texttt{e}4 25.\texttt{b}2
kept White in the game. Instead, he blunders material.

\[
21...\text{Bxc3} 22.\text{Bxc3} e4 23.\text{d4} \text{Bxc3} 24.\text{Bxc3} \text{Bxe2}++ 25.\text{d2} \text{Bxd2} 26.\text{Bxd2} \text{Bxe7} 27.\text{Bxe1} \text{Bc5}+ 28.\text{Bf2} d8 29.\text{h3} \text{c6} 30.\text{Bb1} \text{Bb5} 31.\text{Bb4} \text{Bxf2}+ 32.\text{Bxf2} \text{Bc4} 33.\text{Bb2} d8 34.\text{Bc3} \text{d6} 35.\text{Bd4} b5 36.a4 \text{Bb8} 37.axb5 axb5 38.\text{Bc3} \text{c6} 39.\text{Bf4} d4 40.g4 \text{Bd5} 41.f6 gxf6 0-1
\]

44. Sandu-Potkin
Sautron 27.10.2007

1.e4 c5 2.\text{Bf3} e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\text{Bxd4} \text{c6} 5.\text{Bb5} d6 6.c4 \text{Bf6} 7.\text{Bc3} a6 8.\text{Ba3} \text{Bxe7} 9.\text{Bxe2} 0-0 (9...b6 10.0-0 \text{Bb7} 11.f4 d5) 10.0-0 b6 11.f4 \text{Bb7} 12.\text{Bf3} \text{Bc8} 13.\text{Be3} \text{Bxe8}! 14.\text{Be2}

We saw in the previous game that 14.\text{Bd2} \text{a5} was awkward for White so \text{Be2} looks logical. It has two major drawbacks, however. The queen falls under the X-ray of the e8-rook, and the d4-square remains without control. Potkin pins points both with his excellent move:

\[
14...e5!? 15.\text{Bf2}
\]

White cannot keep the centre closed since 15.f5 \text{Bd4} 16.\text{Bd3} stumbles into 16...b5! 17.cxb5 d5+. Alternatively, 15.\text{Bd5} \text{Bd4} 16.\text{Bxd4} (16.\text{Bf2} \text{Bxf3}+ 17.\text{Bxf3} \text{Bxd5} 18.cxd5 \text{exf4} 19.\text{Bxf4} b5) 16...\text{exd4} 17.\text{Bfd1} \text{Bxd5} 18.\text{Bxd5} \text{Bf6} is balanced. Black can play for a win though with 17...\text{Bf8}!? 18.\text{Bxd4} \text{Bxd5} 19.cxd5 b5 20.\text{Bd2} g6. His dark-squared bishop has no opponent.

\[
15...\text{Bd4}! (15...\text{exf4} 16.\text{Bxb6} \text{Bd7} 17.\text{Be2} g5) 16.\text{Bd1}
\]

16.\text{Bxd4} exd4 17.\text{Bd5} (17.\text{Bxd4}? d5) 17...\text{Bxd5} 18.cxd5 \text{Bf6} is equal, but Black can also sacrifice a pawn with full compensation – 17...d3 18.\text{Bfd1} b5 19.cxb5 \text{Bxd5} 20.exd5 axb5 21.\text{Bxd3} \text{Bwa5} 22.\text{Bc2} \text{Bd8} 23.\text{Ba3} \text{Bb6} 24.\text{Bd4} \text{Bf6} 25.\text{Bd3} \text{Bc4}+

\[
16...\text{Bxf3}+ 17.\text{Bxf3} \text{exf4} 18.\text{Bxf4}
\]

\[
18...\text{Bc7}
\]

Black has won the opening battle. This open Sicilian would have
been satisfactory for him even with White's pawn on c2 and a knight on d4 instead of a3. Now 18...\texttt{Wd7}, heading for e6, would be in his favour (19.\texttt{Qd5 Qd8 20.Qe1 b5}), but the text is also good enough.

19.\texttt{Wh1 Wf8} (19...\texttt{Wd7}!) 20.\texttt{Qd5 Qxd5 21.exd5 Wd7 22.Wd3 g6 23.b3

23...f5?

It seems that Potkin could not find an active plan. Had Black a knight to occupy e5, this move would have been normal, but here it only weakens the e6-square. He should have displayed activity on the queenside with 23...b5 and then ...\texttt{Ec5}, targeting the c4-pawn.

24.\texttt{Qe1 Wg7?! 25.Qc2} (25.\texttt{Wg3!}) 25...\texttt{Wb2?} (25...b5=) 26.\texttt{Qd4?} (26.\texttt{Qe3}!+-) \texttt{Qxe1+ 27.Qxe1 Qe8 28.Qg1

It was more natural to trade rooks in order to invade Black's camp through the e-file – 28.\texttt{Qg3 Qxe1+ 29.Qxe1 Wc1 30.Qe2. After the text, Black is OK, e.g. 28...\texttt{Qe4. He only must control the e-file. The rest of the game is full of mistakes and is irrelevant to the opening.

28...\texttt{Wf2} 29.\texttt{Qg3} \texttt{Qe3? 30.Qxf2 Qxd3 31.Qf3?} (31.\texttt{Qe1}) 31...b5 32.Qe1 \texttt{Qh6 33.Qb1 Qc3 34.Qg1 Qf7 35.Qf1 bxc4 36.Qxc4 \texttt{Qc8 37.Qd4? Qxc4+ 38.Qb6 Qf8 39.Qe2 Qe7 40.Qd3 Qa4 41.Qb2 Qxa2 42.Qb8 Qd7 43.Qb7 Qc8 44.Qb8 f4 45.Qc4 Qg4 46.Qd4 Qa5 47.h3 Qc5+ 48.Qd3 Qf5+ 49.Qe2 Qe4 50.Qe6 Qxd5 0-1

45. Brodsky-Kruszynski
Pardubice 1993

1.e4 c5 2.Qf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Qxd4 Qc6 Qb5 d6 6.Qe6 Qf6 7.Qb1 c6 a6 8.Qa3 b6 9.Qe2 Qb7 10.0-0 Qb8 11.Qf3 Qbd7 12.Qf4 Qe5 13.Qd2 Qe7 14.Qd1 Qc7 15.Qa1 0-0 16.Qh1 Qac8 17.Qg3

White opts for f4, but 18.\texttt{Wf1} intending \texttt{Qg1, Qe3, Qc1-c2-d2} and finally b4 is also promising.

17.\texttt{Wfd8} 18.f4 Qg6 19.Qf3

19...\texttt{Wb8} 20.Qe2 Qd7 21.Qab1
Taimanov with 5.\(\text{b}5\)

\[
\text{\texttt{af6 22.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{c}6 23.b4 a5 24.a3 \texttt{wa8 25.\texttt{d}b1 \texttt{e}7 26.\texttt{g}4 \texttt{gf}8 27.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{g}6 28.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{b}8 29.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{wa8 30.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{b}8 31.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{a}8 32.\texttt{c}2 \texttt{b}8 33.\texttt{e}a2 \texttt{f}6 34.\texttt{f}3 axb4 35.axb4 b5?}}}
\]

Black is the first to lose patience.

\[
\text{36.cxb5 \texttt{xb}5 37.e5 \texttt{d}5 38.\texttt{xd}5 \texttt{exd}5 39.e6 \texttt{c}4 40.ef7+ \texttt{xf7 41.\texttt{e}a7 \texttt{f}8 42.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{d}4 43.\texttt{xd}4 \texttt{f}6 44.g1 \texttt{xb}4 45.\texttt{xc}4 \texttt{xc}4 46.\texttt{de}5 \texttt{d}4 47.ef7+ \texttt{e}8 48.\texttt{xf}6 \texttt{xd}5 49.\texttt{e}e1+ \texttt{e}5 50.\texttt{f}5 \texttt{g}6 51.\texttt{f}6 1-0}}
\]

46. Daly-Tregu bov
Cappelle la Grande 2000

\[
\text{1.e4 c5 2.\texttt{f}3 e6 3.\texttt{d}4 cxd4 4.\texttt{xd}4 \texttt{c}6 5.\texttt{b}5 \texttt{d}6 6.\texttt{c}4 \texttt{f}6 7.\texttt{d}1c3 a6 8.\texttt{a}3 b6 9.\texttt{e}e2 \texttt{b}7 10.0-0 \texttt{b}8 11.f3 \texttt{bd}7 12.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{e}7 13.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{wc}7 14.\texttt{f}d1 0-0 15.\texttt{ac}1 \texttt{ac}8 16.\texttt{f}1 \texttt{wb}8 17.\texttt{f}2 \texttt{d}8 18.\texttt{h}1 \texttt{e}8 19.\texttt{c}2 \texttt{ac}7 20.\texttt{g}1 \texttt{h}8 21.\texttt{cd}2 \texttt{g}8 22.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{e}5 23.\texttt{xe}5! \texttt{dxe}5}
\]

Let's compare this typical position to another model game:

Lupulescu-Perunovic
Kavala 2004

\[
\text{24.\texttt{b}1 \texttt{d}4 25.b5 a5 26.c5! \texttt{f}8? 27.cxb6 \texttt{xb}6 28.\texttt{c}4 \texttt{c}5 29.\texttt{c}1 \texttt{wd}8 30.\texttt{b}6 \texttt{h}5 31.\texttt{xa}5 \texttt{ed}2 32.\texttt{e}2 1-0}
\]

Let's return now to our main game. White can obtain the better chances even without \texttt{b}4. That is possible thanks to the breakthrough 24.c5! \texttt{bxc}5 25.\texttt{c}4 \texttt{gd}8 26.\texttt{xc}5. In the game, White missed this opportunity and played too tentatively to lose in the end:

\[
\text{24.\texttt{c}2 \texttt{gd}8 25.\texttt{b}4 \texttt{ed}2 26.\texttt{ed}2 \texttt{ad}8!}
\]

Black's first step is correct. The bishop should control the squares \texttt{b}4-\texttt{c}5.

\[
27.a3 \texttt{wc}7 28.\texttt{a}1?! \texttt{g}5?!
\]

It is useless to discuss the pros and cons of this plan. If so many players like it, apparently it has some value, but to me it is only producing weaknesses around Black's king. The game will be decided in the centre so 28...\texttt{d}7 29.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{g}5 30.\texttt{d}1 \texttt{f}5 looks more adequate.
29. \( \text{b3} \text{g4} \) 30. \( \text{e3} \text{e7} \) 31. \( \text{d3} \)?

White is lingering again. 31. \( \text{a4} \) \( \text{gxf3} \) 32. \( \text{gf3} \) \( \text{d7} \) 33. \( \text{c5} \) was called for – 33... \( \text{bxc5} \) 34. \( \text{axc5} \) \( \text{xc5} \) 35. \( \text{xc5} \).

31... \( \text{g8} \) 32. \( \text{a4} \) \( \text{d7} \) 33. \( \text{c2} \) \( \text{f6} \) 34. \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{gxf3} \) 35. \( \text{xf3} \) \( \text{f6} \) 36. \( \text{f1} \) \( \text{f4} \) 37. \( \text{d2} \) (37.c5! \( \text{bxc5} \) 38. \( \text{a5} \) 39. \( \text{b2} \) \( \text{gf6} \) 39. \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{g4} \) 40. \( \text{b1} \) \( \text{xb4} \) 41. \( \text{axb4} \) \( \text{e8} \) 42. \( \text{d1} \) \( \text{h5} \) 43. \( \text{c5} \) \( \text{bxc5} \) 44. \( \text{bxc5} \) \( \text{dxc5} \) 45. \( \text{h3} \) \( \text{c8} \) 46. \( \text{c2} \) \( \text{e3} \) 47. \( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{xd1} \) 48. \( \text{b8} \) \( \text{d7} \) 49. \( \text{b7} \) \( \text{d8} \) 50. \( \text{a7} \) \( \text{a8} \) 51. \( \text{a4} \) \( \text{f7} \) 52. \( \text{a2} \) \( \text{g7} \) 53. \( \text{xe6} \) \( \text{f2} \) 54. \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{xe6} \) 0-1

47. Rabrenovic-Delchev
Bijelo Polje 2005

1.e4 \( \text{c5} \) 2.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{e6} \) 3.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{cxd4} \) 4.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{c6} \) 5.\( \text{b5} \) \( \text{d6} \) 6.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 7.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{a6} \) 8.\( \text{a3} \) \( \text{b6} \) 9.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{b7} \) 10.0-0 \( \text{e7} \) 11.\( \text{e3} \) 0-0 12.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{e5} \) 13.\( \text{f3} \)

I knew that now 13...d5 was roughly equal, but I decided to maintain the tension.

13...\( \text{e8} \) 14.\( \text{fd1} \) \( \text{e8} \) 15.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{d7} \) 16.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{c7} \) 17.\( \text{ac1} \) \( \text{b8} \) 18.\( \text{ab1} \) \( \text{cd8} \) 19.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{h5} \)?

This flank assault is usually better than g5. It targets the g3 square.

20.\( \text{f2} \) d5!

Eventually, I discovered that beating about the bush was not getting me any closer to the point.

21.\( \text{exd5} \) \( \text{exd5} \) 22.\( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 23.\( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{d6} \) 24.\( \text{xb6} \) ?

The abrupt change of the game course clearly confused my opponent and he commits a decisive mistake. 24.g3 h4! 25.\( \text{g2} \) \( \text{hxg3} \) 26.hxg3 is more resilient although it would be difficult to defend after 26...\( \text{xe3} \)? 27.\( \text{xe3} \) \( \text{g3} \) threatening...\( \text{f6} \)-h5, or 26...\( \text{f6} \) 27.\( \text{c3} \) b5.

24...\( \text{xf2} \) 25.\( \text{h1} \) \( \text{g3} \) 26.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{xb6} \) 27.\( \text{xb6} \) \( \text{d6} \)

27...\( \text{f4} \) 28.\( \text{c2} \) \( \text{e5} \) was winning at once.

28.\( \text{b4} \)? \( \text{d8} \) 29.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{f5} \) 30.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{g5} \) 0-1
Part 8

Rare Lines on 5th and 6th move
Part 8. Rare Lines on 5th and 6th Move

Main Ideas

1.e4 c5 2.�f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.�xd4 �c6

A. 5.�xc6

Great ideas are simple, they say. This one might have been too, but when put to the practical test, it just does not work. Black has different ways of defending against the attack. When White’s opening initiative begins to fade, it becomes clear that Black’s powerful pawn centre is a weighty factor in the ensuing struggle.

5...bxc6 6.�d3 �f6 7.0-0

7...d5

When you choose this move, you should know how to survive against a direct kingside attack. Black has at least two other setups which are
probably not worse than the main line. One of them is connected with ...e6-e5, the other one – with ...d6. The latter is calm and safe, but not too popular. Black embraces the philosophy of the hedgehog structures. Hidden behind the pawn wall along the sixth rank, he is awaiting for the best moment to determine his plan. It could be an advance of any one of the three central pawns.

Our defence after 7...d5 is based on two main principles:
1. We destroy the most dangerous enemy piece which is the d3-bishop. That could be done in some variations by ...c8-a6, but we often have a better solution – the manoeuvre ...f6-d7-c5xd3:

2. If White attempted to secure his bishop with c3, we either take control of the centre with ...c7, ...d6, ...e6-e5, or trade our main enemy with ...a6.

Position after 11...c5.
Should your opponent allow it, take the bishop and push a- and c-pawns. That will ensure excellent counterplay.

More practical examples:

**Martin-Illeseca**
Dos Hermanas 2004

The attack a5-a4xb3 creates a weakness on b3:
18...axb3 19.axb3 a2+. 

**Analysis**
If White tries to stop the march of the a-pawn with a knight, Black should counter that by ...\d7-b6.

**B. 5.\d3 \c7 6.xc6 bxc6 7.d3 f6**

Everything said about the move 5.xc6 is valid here, too. Having committed his knight to c3, White has not a wide choice.

There is one important tactical nuance which you should take into account. The queen on c7 could be attacked by b5! That’s why you should refrain from d5 before developing the bishop to e7:

*In the diagram position, 8.e2 is not just a transposition (compared to 8.0-0 \e7):*

Black has a number of interesting options here except of 8...d5? in view of 9.exd5! cxd5 10.b5! b8 11.g3

**C. 5.xc3 c7 6.d3**

This move has occurred in only one game, Vallejo Pons-Adhiban, Caleta 2014. I propose:

6...f6 7.db5 b8 8.g3 d6 9.e3 (9.f4 \h5) 9.a6 10.d4 e5 11.b3 \e6 with a normal Sicilian position.

**D. 6.db5 b8 7.e3**

There is some mystification about this system. It has the reputation of “very” interesting, probably even better for White, but it is seldom seen. I suppose that common sense reminds us that a queen,
even together with a pawn, is usually inferior to 3 pieces.

7...a6! 8.b6 axb5 9.xb5 b4 10.c3 a5 11.c7 xc7!
12.xc7 xc7 13.g4 e5!?

Protecting indirectly g7 and providing Black with time to castle. Most importantly, we avoid weakening f6, which is a major downside of 13...g6.

14.f4 d6 15.f3 c7

Black has full compensation for the queen. His only concern is how to activate the light-squared bishop. That could be achieved by either ...b6, ...b7 (beware the X-ray of the queen from f3!) or ...d7 after advancing the d-pawn.
Part 8. Rare Lines on 5th and 6th Move

Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.xd4 c6

A. 5.xc6;
B. 5.c3 w7 6.xc6;
C. 5.c3 w7 6.db5;
D. 5.c3 w7 6.wd3
For 5.c4 w6 see Part 11/C1

A. 5.xc6 bxc6 6.d3

6.c4 is not flexible. It offers Black an ample choice. Perhaps simplest is 6..f6 7.d3 d5=, but 6..c5 7.d3 e5 8.0-0 f6 is also a good option. Black has clear play on the dark squares.

6..f6 7.0-0

Sometimes Black chooses plans with e6-e5, but this set-up does not provide many possibilities for advancing the central pawns. On the contrary, the c6-d5-e6 wedge is quite mobile. Black could play c6-c5, d5-d4 or undermine White's e5-pawn with ...f6.

If you do not like the type of positions arising in the main line, I propose you to consider:

7..d6

The play is calmer and Black is running less risks of getting mated than after 7..d5. I have not chosen it for the main line mostly because it is significantly less popular.
Rare Lines on 5th and 6th Move

**Game 50** Diez del Corral-Korchnoi, Palma de Mallorca 1968, is a typical example:

8.b3 \_e7 9.\_b2 e5 (White was threatening 10.e5\(=\)) 10.\_d2 0-0 11.\_c4 \_e6 12.\_e2 \_d7. See the rest in the “Complete Games” section.

If White plays c4, Black should follow the plan with ...e5, ...\_e6. The other common set-up with ...\_f6-d7-e5-c6 is a bit passive:

8.c4 \_e7 9.\_c3 0-0 10.\_e2 e5 11.h3 \_e6 12.f4 \_xf4 13.\_xf4 \_d7;

8.c4 \_d7 9.\_c3 \_e7 10.\_c2 \_e5 11.\_e2 c5 12.\_e3 0-0 13.\_ad1 \_b6 14.f4 \_c6, Meijers-Ksieski, Leutersdorf 2001.

The game Kholmov-Korchnoi, Riga 1970, shows the flexibility of 7...d6. Black can always return to the ...d5-plan in proper circumstances:

8.\_e2 \_e7 9.\_d2 \_d7 10.f4 \_c5 11.\_f3 0-0 12.\_e3 d5=.

Perhaps the most testing plan is 8.f4 \_e7

9.\_h1

White’s best set-up was shown in the game Lein-Tal, Kiev 1964: 9.\_d2 0-0 10.\_h1 e5 11.fxe5 dxe5 12.\_c4 \_c7 13.\_f3 \_e6 14.\_d2 \_d7 15.\_c3 f6 16.\_e3 \_fe8 17.\_c4\(=\). Note that the bishop goes to c3 in order to bind Black with the defence of the e5-pawn and then White trades the light-squared bishops. However, 9.\_d2 is inaccurate due to 9...e5! 10.fxe5 (or 10.\_c4 d5! 11.exd5 e4; 10.\_f3 0-0! and White cannot achieve the set-up of the game Lein-Tal.) 10...\_g4 11.\_f3 \_b6 12.\_h1 \_f2 13.\_f2 \_f2 14.exd6 \_xd6 15.\_xb5 cxb5 16.\_xd6 \_f1 17.\_g1 \_c4 18.\_e5 \_e6. After the text, Black has to prevent 10.e5. If he plays 9...e5 himself, then 10.fxe5 dxe5 11.\_d2 \_e6 12.\_f3 will probably transpose to the game Lein-Tal which is not too appealing. Remains:

9...\_c7 10.\_d2 0-0 11.\_e1 \_d7 with unclear play.

Let’s return to 7...d5:

8.\_d2

White often plays 8.e5, nurturing hopes for a kingside attack. This is a lost cause, since Black can easily eliminate the bishop on d3. Without it, any direct attack should fail – 8...
Part 8

\( \text{\texttt{\textcolor{red}{d7}} \, 9.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{w}e2}} \) (9.f4 limits the scope of the c1-bishop. We'll trade the other one with 9...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{a}a6} or 9...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{c}c5}, followed by ...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{e}e7}, ...g6 and ...f5) 9...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{e}e7} 10.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{d}d2} 0-0 11.f4 (11.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{f}f3}!? is more realistic, when Black follows the same design – with 11...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{c}c5}) 11...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{c}c5} 12.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{h}h1} a5= 13.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{f}f3} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{x}d3} 14.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{x}d3} c5 15.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{e}e3} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{a}a6} 16.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{f}fc1} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{b}b6} 17.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{c}c2} a4\textsuperscript{+}, Burger-Alburt, Philadelphia 1989.

8.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{c}c3} is possible, but inconsistent. It leads to positions that commonly arise after another move order – 1.e4 c5 2.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{d}f3} e6 3.d4 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{x}d4} 4.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{d}d4} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{f}f6} 5.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{c}c3} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{c}c6} 6.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{x}c6}. The knight is misplaced on c3, because it has no prospects there and should be redeployed, probably to a4. This plan is harmless for Black. He could oppose it by the manoeuvre ...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{f}f6-d7-b6} which is Black’s universal retort to \texttt{\textcolor{red}{c}c4}.

Let’s see some typical examples:

8.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{c}c3} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e}e7}}

9.e5 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{d}d7}} 10.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{g}g4} (10.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e}e1}} 0-0 11.f4 f5) 10...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{x}e5}} 11.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{x}g7}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{g}g8} 12.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{h}h6}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{b}b8} 13.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e}e2}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{b}b4}.

9.b3 0-0 10.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{f}f4}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{d}d7} 11.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{a}a4}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{b}b6}=, Hector-Lautier, Malmo 1998.

9.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e}e1}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{d}d7}?!} (avoiding \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{g}g5}} or the variation 9...0-0 10.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{f}f4}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{d}d7} 11.\texttt{\texttt{e}xd5} \texttt{\texttt{c}xd5} 12.\texttt{\texttt{b}b5=} 10.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{f}f4}} (10.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{h}h5}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{c}c5}}) 10...d4

In normal circumstances, this set-up is not too flexible, but here it is with tempo.

11.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{a}a4}} e5 12.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{g}g3}} h5 (12...0-0) 13.h3 h4 14.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{h}h2}} 0-0 15.c3 dc3 16.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{c}c3}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{c}c5}} 17.\texttt{\texttt{f}f1} \texttt{\texttt{d}d4} 18.\texttt{\texttt{c}c2} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{c}c5}} 19.\texttt{\texttt{c}c4}= Delgado-Jobava, Havana 2005.

After 8.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{d}d2}}, we reach a position which might be familiar to the French-playing people – 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{d}d2} c5 4.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{g}gf3} \texttt{\texttt{c}cxd4} 5.\texttt{\texttt{f}f3} \texttt{\texttt{c}c6} 6.\texttt{\texttt{c}cxd4} bxc6 7.\texttt{\texttt{d}d3} \texttt{\texttt{d}d6} 8.0-0. White is trying to be too clever and keep all his options open. However, it has its cost – he cannot play e5 without the help of his f-pawn after:

8...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{c}c7}!}

8...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e}e7}} is less principled. 9.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e}e2}}

Alternatively, White can choose to maintain the central tension with b3 and c4, where Black pushes his pawns to a4 (and even to a3 in some situations), and c5. Another possible setup is based on b3 and a4 which allows Black to trade the light-squared bishops through a6. These plans are less dangerous, because White plays on the wing where Black is stronger – 9.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e}e2}} 0-0 10.b3 a5 11.a4 \texttt{\texttt{e}e8} 12.\texttt{\texttt{b}b2} \texttt{\texttt{b}b6} 13.\texttt{\texttt{a}ad1} \texttt{\texttt{a}a6} 14.\texttt{\texttt{f}f1} \texttt{\texttt{d}d3} 15.\texttt{\texttt{x}xd3} \texttt{\texttt{c}c7} 16.e5 \texttt{\texttt{d}d7} 17.\texttt{\texttt{e}e3}=, Kofidis-Semkov, Heraklio 1993.

9.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e}e1}} 0-0
Rare Lines on 5th and 6th Move

10.c3!

10.e5 \( d7 \) 11.c3 f5! is excellent for Black – 12.exf6 \( xxf6! \) 13.\( wh5 \) g6 14.\( xg6 \) hxg6 15.\( xg6+ \) \( g7 \) 16.\( xe6+ \) \( f7 \) 17.\( xc6 \) \( b8 \) 18.\( xd5 \) \( b7 \) 19.\( d3 \) \( b6 \) with a strong attack, Senff-Nielsen, Germany 2008.

10...\( d7 \) 11.\( c2! \) with unclear play.

9.f4

9.c4 abandons the centre – 9... \( d6 \) 10.h3 0-0 11.\( we2 \) \( b7 \) 12.b3 \( h2+ \) 13.\( h1 \) \( e5 \) 14.\( b1 \) c5 15.exd5 exd5 16.\( f3 \), Kofidis-Ehlvest, Komotini 1992, 16...\( d6! \) with initiative.

9...\( a6 \) 10.e5 \( d7 \) 11.\( f3 \) \( e7 \)

White does not have any active plan, see game 48 Hou,Yifan-Dzhumaev, Kuala Lumpur 2010.

B. 5.\( c3 \) \( c7 \) 6.\( xc6 \)

This exchange has a bad reputation, because the knight on c3 has not clear prospects. Sometimes White even returns it back to b1 in order to redirect it to d2-f3, or moves it to a4 in order to enable c4.

6...\( bxc6 \)

6...\( dxc6 \) has its adepts, but I do not like such symmetric pawn formations in the Sicilian. They are difficult to win.

7.\( d3 \) \( f6 \) 8.0-0

Attention! 8.\( e2 \) is not just a transposition:
Black has a number of interesting options here except of 8...d5?

This move has never been punished in practice, but it is inferior to 8...e7, 8...d6, 8...d6 or 8...e5. The reason is:

9.exd5! cxd5 (or 9...exd5 10.0-0 d6 11.g3 c3 12.bxc3 0-0 13.£d1) 10.b5! £b8 11.g3 e5 12.f4 where I have not a good advice for Black: 12...£e4 13.fxe4 dxe4 14.£c4 exf4 15.£c7 £e7 16.0-0-0+ or 12...£d7 13.0-0 (13.0-0-0+) 13...£e7 14.£fe1.

Perhaps 8...£e7!? is best, since 9.e5 £d5 10.0-0 0-0 is good for Black.

More challenging is 8...£d6!? using the fact that White has not castled. This continuation has passed the test in a couple of games.

8...£e7

There is not a single reason to play d7-d5 unless White threatens e5. 8...d5 9.ed5 is not dangerous, but why to hand the opponent additional options connected with the exchange on d5. Still, in Stenzel-Sofia Polgar, Kona 1998, Black completed development after 9...exd5 (9...cxd5 10.£b5 with initiative) 10.£e1 £e7 11.£f3, when 11...0-0= would have been safe enough.

9.£e2

Black should be only happy to face a head-on “attack” of the type of 9.f4 d5 10.£h1 0-0 11.e5 £d7 12.£f3. He could parry it by 12...f5 13.exf6 £xf6 or by the typical 12...£c5, since 13.£xh7 £xh7 14.£h3 £g8 15.£h5 f5 is not really a threat. Note that I do not recommend to trade light-squared bishops by preparing £a6. It is better to kill White's bishop by the knight (...£f6-d7-c5), when £b7 will rule along the main diagonal after ...c6-c5 and ...d5-d4.

Black's most flexible answer to 9.£e1 is 9...d6. Then 10.f4 0-0 11.e5 £d5 12.£e4 dxe5 13.fxe5, Kacakadze-Schlosser, Baden-Baden 1993, is better for Black due to 13...£d8!.

9...d5

9...d6 10.f4 £d7 offers Black nice statistics in the database.

10.b3

Black can meet 10.f4 0-0 11.£h1 with the typical setup 11...£e8 12.£d2 £b7 13.£ae1 £d7 14.e5 (14.£a4 £b6) 14...£c5.

10...0-0 11.£b2 £e8 12.£ae1 £b7 13.e5 £d7

I prefer Black's chances in this typical position, in view of his mo-
Rare Lines on 5th and 6th Move

bile pawn centre. See game 49

C. 5.\textit{\textbf{c}3} \textit{\textbf{c}7} 6.\textit{\textbf{d}3}

This move has occurred in only one game, Vallejo Pons-Adhiban, Caleta 2014, but when a 2700 player employs it, we should pay attention. There followed 6...a6 7.\textit{\textbf{e}xc6} \textit{\textbf{d}xc6} 8.\textit{\textbf{g}3} b5 9.\textit{a}3 \textit{\textbf{b}7} 10.\textit{\textbf{d}3} \textit{\textbf{e}6} 11.0-0 with a solid edge. Where went Black so wrong?! First of all, capturing by queen on c6 is dubious. In the event of 7...bxc6 8.\textit{\textbf{g}3}, White has a clear extra tempo (spent on ...a6) in comparison to line B. That does not automatically promise him an edge. In fact, this position often arises following another move order. It is even considered to be roughly equal after 8...\textit{\textbf{w}xg3} 9.hxg3 \textit{\textbf{e}b8}. We should not avoid such a structure at all costs, but I propose to get a better version of it by:

6...\textit{\textbf{f}6}

Now 7.\textit{\textbf{g}5} a6 (7...\textit{\textbf{e}xd4} 8.\textit{\textbf{w}xd4} \textit{\textbf{c}5} 9.\textit{\textbf{w}d2} a6 10.0-0-0 b5 11.e5! \textit{\textbf{g}4} 12.\textit{\textbf{e}e}4 \textit{\textbf{w}xe5} 13.\textit{\textbf{e}e}1 is really dangerous for Black.) 8.\textit{\textbf{e}xc6} bxc6 is a blank spot in theory, but g5 is hardly the best place for the enemy bishop. For instance, White cannot trade queens with 9.\textit{\textbf{g}3} due to 9...\textit{\textbf{d}6} – the g5-bishop “protects” the g7-pawn. Of course, White can castle first, but 8.0-0-0 \textit{\textbf{f}7} 9.\textit{w}g3 \textit{\textbf{w}xg3} 10.hxg3 \textit{\textbf{c}xd4} 11.\textit{\textbf{d}xd4} \textit{\textbf{c}5} 12.\textit{\textbf{d}d}2 \textit{\textbf{g}4} 13.f3 f6 14.\textit{\textbf{f}4} \textit{\textbf{e}e}5 is balanced. Perhaps White should try:

7.\textit{\textbf{d}b}5 \textit{\textbf{b}8} 8.\textit{\textbf{g}3} \textit{\textbf{d}6}

We know that the g3-queen is an obstacle to a kingside pawn storm with g4-g5:

9.\textit{\textbf{e}3} (9.\textit{\textbf{f}4} \textit{\textbf{h}5}) 9...a6 10.\textit{\textbf{d}d}4 \textit{\textbf{e}5} 11.\textit{\textbf{b}3}

11.\textit{\textbf{c}c}6 bxc6 12.0-0-0 \textit{\textbf{e}6} 13.\textit{\textbf{e}e}2 \textit{\textbf{w}b}4 14.a3 \textit{\textbf{w}b}7 15.\textit{\textbf{b}1} \textit{\textbf{e}7} 16.f4 \textit{\textbf{b}8} 17.\textit{\textbf{c}1} 0-0 18.f5 \textit{\textbf{d}7}.

11...\textit{\textbf{e}6} 12.0-0-0 (12.\textit{\textbf{e}e}2 \textit{\textbf{b}4} 13.\textit{\textbf{c}1} d5) 12...\textit{\textbf{e}7} 13.\textit{\textbf{e}e}2 0-0 14.\textit{\textbf{h}6} \textit{\textbf{e}8} 15.\textit{\textbf{d}5} \textit{\textbf{h}8}=. 283
Part 8

D. 6.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}db5 \texttt{\texttt{W}}b8

![Chess Diagram]

7.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}e3

White can try to substantiate his sixth move by 7.a4, making room for the knight on a3. This variation is seldom seen, so the arising positions are unexplored. I think that Black’s safest way is to restrict White’s knight with 7...\texttt{\texttt{Q}}f6 8.d3 (note the trap 8.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}g5 a6 9.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}a3? \texttt{\texttt{Q}}xe4 10.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}xe4 \texttt{\texttt{W}}e5+) 8...a6 9.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}a3 d5 10.0-0 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}e7 11.exd5 exd5=.

7...a6 is also playable, but I do not see any reason to avoid the text move.

8.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}b6

It is shameful to retreat back with 8.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}d4, but this might be a realistic approach. Then Black plays normal Taimanov, enjoying an extra “half tempo”. If the queen returns to c7, we’ll have the usual variations, but Black should try to benefit from the tempo with 8...\texttt{\texttt{Q}}f6.

8...axb5 9.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}xb5 \texttt{\texttt{W}}b4 10.c3 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}a5 11.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}c7+ \texttt{\texttt{W}}xc7! 12.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}xc7 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}xc7 13.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}g4

13...\texttt{\texttt{Q}}e5!?

This move casts a shadow of doubt on the whole White’s set-up.

13...\texttt{\texttt{Q}}f8 hampers the normal development of Black’s pieces, but it also has enough fans. The game Kornev-J. Geller, Moscow 2007 saw further 14.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}d3 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}f6 15.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}e2 h5 16.0-0 g5 17.a4 b6 18.b4 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}b7 with a lively game.

14.f4 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}f6 15.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}f3

15.\texttt{\texttt{W}}xg7? fails to 15...\texttt{\texttt{Q}}g8 16.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}h6 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}g6 (16...\texttt{\texttt{Q}}g4) 17.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}h4 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}g4 18.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}h6 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}xf4 19.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}d3 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}f2!+.

15...\texttt{\texttt{Q}}c7 16.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}d3

16.e5 opens up the main diagonal in Black’s favour: 16...\texttt{\texttt{Q}}d5 17.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}c4 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}ce7 (18.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}d3 0-0 19.0-0 b5 20.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}xb5 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}b8 21.a4 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}b6+ 22.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}h1
Rare Lines on 5th and 6th Move

16...e5!

In the current situation 16...b6 runs into 17.e5 d5 18.e4 while 16...d5 17.e5 d7 18.0-0 0-0 19.a4 is unclear.

17.f5 0-0 18.g4?!

White can prevent d7-d5 by 18.0-0 d8 19.c4?, but then 19... b6+ 20.h1 d4 gives Black a total domination on the dark squares.

18...d5 19.g5 dxe4 20.xe4 xe4 21.xe4 g6?

The bishop pair enters the play with decisive effect. White certainly can improve some variations in this analysis, but I like Black's position.
Part 8. Rare Lines on 5th and 6th Move

Complete Games

48. Hou, Yifan-Dzhumaev
Lumpur 11.04.2010

1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.exd4 f3 6.d6 e6 6.e6
bxc6 7.0-0 d5 8.d2 ec7 9.f4

Black can allow c2-c4 – 9...e7
10.e5 d7 11.c4 a5 12.h1 g6 13.b3
a4 14.b2 0-0 15.c1 b6+, Yap-Andersson, Rome 1985, but the text
is perhaps more accurate.

9...a6 10.e5 d7 11.f3 e5

12.b3

White will have to play this move
anyway so 12.e3 b7 would not
change the character of the game.
Besides, Black may trade the sec-
ond bishop, too, with 12...c5.

12...xd3 13.cxd3 0-0
14.b2?!

Hou is still hoping for an at-
tack with f4-f5. To be sure, 14.e3
c5 15.c1 b7 followed up by ...a5-
a4 is pleasant for Black, but at least
the bishop is not on the semi-open
b-file. It is instructive to watch how
helpless White looks in this struc-
ture.

14...c5 15.h1 a5 16.e2 b6
17.d2 a4

White has made all the “pro-
grammed” moves ... and has land-
ed in a gloom position. The follow-
ing display of activity is just a de-
speration. Dzhumaev does not give
his very talented opponent any tac-
tical chances.
18.f5 exf5 19.\textit{Exf5} a3! 20.\textit{c1}
\textit{We6}! 21.\textit{Wh5} g6 22.\textit{Wh3} \textit{We5}.
The rest is agony. 23.\textit{Exe5} \textit{Exe5} 24.\textit{Of1} \textit{Of6} 25.\textit{Wh1} \textit{He8} 26.\textit{Od2}
\textit{Gg4} 27.\textit{Fh3} \textit{Dd4} 28.\textit{Hh4} \textit{He2} 29.\textit{b4} \textit{Bb8} 30.\textit{b5} \textit{Ab2} 31.\textit{d4}
\textit{C4} 32.\textit{Ab4} \textit{Ff2}+ 33.\textit{Hh2} \textit{Xd4} 34.\textit{Exa3} \textit{Ee5}+ 35.\textit{Gg1} \textit{Dd3}
36.\textit{Dd2} \textit{Dd4}+ 37.\textit{Hh2} \textit{He4} 38.\textit{Gg3} \textit{Gf2}+ 39.\textit{Hh3} \textit{Xh4} 40.\textit{g3} \textit{Gh7} 41.\textit{Ba7} \textit{Ac5} 42.\textit{Ba6}
\textit{Dh5}+ 43.\textit{Gg2} \textit{Ee2}+ 44.\textit{Hh3} \textit{Ff3} 45.\textit{Bb4} \textit{Ag1}+ 46.\textit{Hh4} \textit{Ee4}+
47.\textit{Gg4} \textit{Ff2}+ 48.\textit{Gg3} h5 49.\textit{Exg1}
\textit{Exg4}+ 50.\textit{Hh3} \textit{Xg1} 51.\textit{a4} \textit{He8} 52.\textit{Dd6} c3 53.\textit{Ec6} \textit{Ec4} 54.\textit{Exc4}
dxc4 55.a5 c2 56.\textit{Af4} \textit{Ee3} 0-1

49. Martin Perez-Illlescas
Dos Hermanas 2004

1.e4 c5 2.\textit{Ff3} \textit{Ac6} 3.d4 cd4
4.\textit{Dd4} e6 5.\textit{Cc3} \textit{Wc7} 6.\textit{Cc6} bc6
7.\textit{Dd3} \textit{Df6} 8.\textit{We2} d5?

Black’s last move is an instructive mistake. All other reasonable continuations are better, for instance 8...\textit{Ee7}?? 9.e5 (or 9.0-0 transposing to the game) 9...\textit{Dd5} 10.0-0 0-0; 8...\textit{Dd6}?! using that White cannot answer 9.f4.

9.0-0? 9.exd5! cxd5 10.\textit{Db5}!
\textit{Bb8} 11.g3 e5 12.\textit{Df4} \textup{†}. 9...\textit{He7}
10.b3

This set-up is sluggish and gives Black clear counterplay with a5-a4. 10.f4 0-0 11.\textit{Wh1} \textit{Ee8} 12.\textit{Dd2} \textit{Ab7} 13.\textit{Eae1} is more natural, although the same plan as in the game works fine: 13...\textit{Dd7} 14.e5 (14.\textit{Da4} \textit{Bb6}) 14...\textit{Dc5}.

10...0-0 11.\textit{Ab2} \textit{Ee8} 12.\textit{Eae1}
\textit{Ab7} 13.e5 \textit{Dd7} 14.\textit{Db1}?! 

White is playing as if time in chess were for nothing. b3 is commonly connected with 14.\textit{Da4}, when Black responds with 14...\textit{Db6}!

14...\textit{Dc5} 15.\textit{Dd2} \textit{Xxd3}
16.\textit{Xxd3} (16.cxd3 a5!) 16...a5
17.c4 a4 18.\textit{Ee3} axb3 19.axb3
\textit{Ea2} \textup{†}

Black’s game is developing by itself. Mundane play led White to a hopeless position thus early in the battle.

20.\textit{Wh3} h6 21.\textit{Cc3} \textit{Ed8} 22.\textit{Wb1}
\textit{Ea8} 23.\textit{Ff3} c5 24.\textit{Dd2} dxc4–
+ 25.\textit{Wh6} \textit{Aa1} 26.\textit{Wc2} cxb3
27.\textit{Xxb3} \textit{Exf1} 28.\textit{Exf1} \textit{gxh6}
29.\textit{Xh6} \textit{Aa1} 30.\textit{Ee2} \textit{Aa6} 0-1
50. Diez del Corral-Korchnoi
Palma de Mallorca 1968

1.e4 c5 2.df3 dc6 3.d4 cxd4
4.cxd4 e6 5.xc6 bxc6 6.0-0
df6 7.0-0 d6

This move is no better than 7...
d5, but I suspect that it may be more
unpleasant to the opponent. Indeed,
White usually takes on c6 in order
to have a clear-cut plan of a kingside attack. Instead, he will have to brace himself for a positional fight in the centre with the d6-pawn as the prime target.

8.b3 dc7 9.b2 e5

Against other setups, Black could arrange his pawns differently, for instance he could play ...c5, followed by the manoeuvre df6-d7-b8-c6. Another possibility for Black is to delay disclosing his plans and complete development first. Then ...d6-d5 could be on the agenda again if meanwhile White undertook some dubious manoeuvre.

10.d2 0-0 11.c4 xe6
12.wxe2 dd7 13.ad1 ee8 14.wd2

c5 15.xe1 f6

By bolstering e5, Black prepares
d5.

16.xa5 wc7 17.xe4 xe4

17...xad8! 18.xe6 xxe6 would have been fine for Black since 19.c4?! runs into 19...d5 20.cxd5 cxd5 21.exd5 df4+.

18.xc4

Now Black solves the problem of his “bad bishop” with a little tactical trick:

18...xe4 19.ee4 d5 20.ge4
dxc4 21.wh6 xc5 22.wf6 cxb3
23.axb3 xe7 24.wg5?

White would have had sufficient counterplay with 24.xf3 xf8 25.xe2 ef2 26.h1=. Black has an extra pawn, but the need of defending it makes his major pieces too passive. Instead, White suddenly crumbles down.

24...xf8 25.xf1 wd7 26.wc4
xf2 27.h1 ef7 28.wh5 wd2
29.xec6 xb6 0-1
Part 9

Alapin 3.c3 d5
Main Ideas

Sveshnikov's pet line with c3 is deservedly considered to be rather timid. You'll hardly see a top-level GM playing it regularly. The main lines are depressively equal and deeply explored. I have always had this problem — how to beat 2200-2300 rated opponents after:

\[1.e4\;c5\;2.\textit{\textalpha}_f3\;e6\;3.c3\]

If White played 2.c3, then both 2...\textit{\textalpha}f6 and 2...d5 3.exd5 \textit{\textalpha}xd5 4.d4 \textit{\textalpha}f6 5.\textit{\textalpha}f3 \textit{\textalpha}g4 would have offered more chances to complicate White's life. In the German league I even played 2...b6 and 2...d6. On both occasions I failed to equalise in the opening, but I went on to win easily very instructive games.

In The Safest Sicilian, I proposed my main repertoire with ...\textit{\textalpha}f6. It is still a fine choice. After 2008, I developed for my 1900-2300 students a repertoire, based on ...d5. It is easy to play against an isolated pawn. You can learn the basics very quickly. True, there are a number of drawish lines, but winning with Black is not always obligatory...

\[3...d5\;4.exd5\]

4.e5 \textit{\textalpha}c6 5.d4 is a sideline of the French Defence. I analyse in "Step by Step" 4...d4 5.\textit{\textalpha}d3 \textit{\textalpha}d7, planning ...\textit{\textalpha}c6

\[4...\textit{\textalpha}xd5\;5.d4\;\textit{\textalpha}f6\]

White has many different move orders from this point. You should remember several important points:

1. When to take on d4;
2. When to play ...\textit{\textalpha}c6 instead of ...\textit{\textalpha}e7;
3. When and where to retreat the queen from d5;
4. Where to develop the dark-squared bishop.
Alapin: 3.c3 d5

The following short lines answer these questions:

A. 6.\texttt{\textalpha a3 \textc c6! 7.\textc b5 (7.\texte e2 \textw d8!; 7.\texte e3 cxd4!) 7...\textw d8 8.dxc5 \textxc5}

B. 6.\texte e3 cxd4 7.cxd4 \textb b4+! 8.\textc c3 0-0 9.\textd d3 b6

C. 6.\textd d3 \texte7! 7.0-0 0-0! 8.\texte e3 cxd4 9.cxd4 b6

D. 6.\texte e2 \textc c6 7.0-0 cxd4! 8.cxd4 \texte7 9.\textc c3 \textw d6

I would like to bring your attention to the following important line:
10.\textb b5 \textw d8 11.\textf f4 \textd d5 12.\textg g3 0-0 13.\textc c4 a6 14.\textxdxd5 exd5 15.\textc c7 \textb b8 16.\texte e5 (which is allegedly better for White according to Sveshnikov)

16...\textf f5!=.

I did my best to keep the “Step by Step” chapter as succinct as possible. It will provide you with more details on the plans of both sides. Playing 3.c3 d5 does not demand a lot of theory, but you must be prepared for long endgames or IQP positions. In short, the better players are likely to prevail since it is rare to meet crushing novelties.
Part 9. 3.c3 d5

Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{\&}f3\) e6 3.c3 d5

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{chess-board.png}
\end{center}

4.exd5

I suggest to meet 4.e5 by 4...d4 since the rare French which arises after 4...c6 5.d4 might be unfamiliar to you.

Our pawn on d4 is immune since 5.cxd4 cxd4 6.\(\text{\&}b5+\) \(\text{\&}d7\) 7.\(\text{\&}xd4?!\) \(\text{\&}xb5\) 8.\(\text{\&}xb5\) a6 9.\(\text{\&}c3\) \(\text{\&}c6\) regains the pawn with an edge – 10.0-0 (10. \(\text{\&}e2\) \(\text{\&}d4\); 10.f4? \(\text{\&}h4+\) 11.g3 \(\text{\&}h3\)) 10...\(\text{\&}ge7\) 11.\(\text{\&}a3\) \(\text{\&}xe5\) 12.d4 \(\text{\&}c6\) 13.\(\text{\&}c2\) \(g6!\).

Or 5.\(\text{\&}a3\) \(\text{\&}e7!\) 6.\(\text{\&}d3\) \(\text{\&}g6\) 7.0-0 \(\text{\&}d7\). So White plays:

5.\(\text{\&}d3\), hoping for \(\text{\&}e4\). I advocate to anticipate this idea with:

5...\(\text{\&}d7!\) when 6.cxd4 cxd4 7.\(\text{\&}xd4?!\) (7.0-0! \(\text{\&}c6\) 8.\(\text{\&}a3\) \(\text{\&}e7\) 9.\(\text{\&}c2\) \(\text{\&}d7\) 10.\(\text{\&}cxd4\) \(\text{\&}xe5\) 11.\(\text{\&}xc6\) \(\text{\&} xf3+\) 12.\(\text{\&}xf3\) \(\text{\&}xc6\) 13.\(\text{\&}e4\) \(\text{\&}c8\)=) 7...\(\text{\&}c6\) 8.\(\text{\&}f3\) \(\text{\&}c7\) 9.\(\text{\&}e2?!\) does not keep the extra pawn because the c1-bishop is hanging – 9...\(\text{\&}xe5!\).

Even more interesting is 6...\(\text{\&}c6!\) (instead of 6...cxd4). The \(\text{\&}d3\) is hanging so White has nothing better than 7.0-0=.

6.\(\text{\&}e4\) \(\text{\&}c6\)

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{chess-board2.png}
\end{center}

7.d3

7.\(\text{\&}e2\) gives a tempo for development – 7...\(\text{\&}e7\) 8.d3 (8.0-0 \(\text{\&}xe4\) 9.\(\text{\&}xe4\) \(\text{\&}d5\)! 10.\(\text{\&}xd5\) \(\text{\&}xd5\) 11.cxd4 cxd4! 12.\(\text{\&}xd4\) \(\text{\&}b4\) 13.\(\text{\&}c3\) \(\text{\&}d3\)=) 8...\(\text{\&}xe4\) 9.\(\text{\&}xe4\) dxc3 10.bxc3 \(\text{\&}bc6\).

7...\(\text{\&}e7\) 8.0-0. Black has two interesting options here which need testing:

a) 8...\(\text{\&}g6\) 9.cxd4 (9.\(\text{\&}g5\) \(\text{\&}d7\) 10.cxd4 \(\text{\&}d4\) 11.\(\text{\&}bd2\) h6 12.\(\text{\&}xg6\) \(\text{\&}xg6\) 13.\(\text{\&}h4\) \(\text{\&}a6\) 14.a3 g5 15.\(\text{\&}g3\) \(\text{\&}c5\)) 9...cxd4 10.\(\text{\&}e1\) \(\text{\&}e7\) 11.\(\text{\&}bd2\)
0-0 12.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b3}}} \texttt{\texttt{xe4}} 13.\texttt{\texttt{xe4}} \texttt{\texttt{c6}}
14.\texttt{\texttt{we2}} \texttt{\texttt{c8}!}?

We’ll sacrifice a pawn. The control of the c-file and our active pieces ensure sufficient compensation – 15.\texttt{\texttt{f4}} \texttt{\texttt{b6}} 16.\texttt{\texttt{bxd4}} (16.\texttt{\texttt{g3}} \texttt{\texttt{fd8}} 17.\texttt{\texttt{h4}} a5 18.\texttt{\texttt{h5}} \texttt{\texttt{f8}}) 16...\texttt{\texttt{xf4}} 17.\texttt{\texttt{xf4}} \texttt{\texttt{b4}} 18.\texttt{\texttt{a3}} \texttt{\texttt{d5}} (18...\texttt{\texttt{a6}} 19.\texttt{\texttt{e1}} \texttt{\texttt{c7}} 20.\texttt{\texttt{d1}} \texttt{\texttt{d5}} 21.\texttt{\texttt{g4}} \texttt{\texttt{fc8}+) 19.\texttt{\texttt{e4}} \texttt{\texttt{c7}} 20.\texttt{\texttt{d2}} \texttt{\texttt{fc8}.}

b) 8...\texttt{\texttt{xe4}} 9.\texttt{\texttt{dxe4}} \texttt{\texttt{bc6}} 10.\texttt{\texttt{wb3}} \texttt{\texttt{d7}} 11.\texttt{\texttt{bd2}} \texttt{\texttt{g6}} 12.\texttt{\texttt{c4}} \texttt{\texttt{e7}} 13.\texttt{\texttt{d1}} 0-0 14.\texttt{\texttt{e3}} is difficult to assess.

Both 14...d3!? and 14...\texttt{\texttt{h4}} lead to dynamically balanced positions.

4...\texttt{\texttt{wdxd5}} 5.d4

5.\texttt{\texttt{a3}} \texttt{\texttt{f6}} 6.d4 transposes. 6.\texttt{\texttt{b5}} is dubious – 6...\texttt{\texttt{d8}} 7.d4 a6.

Sveshnikov mentions that the delay of d4 “might” be in White’s favour after 6.\texttt{\texttt{e2}} \texttt{\texttt{e7}} 7.0-0 0-0 8.\texttt{\texttt{b5}}, but in fact it is the opposite. Following 8...\texttt{\texttt{d8}}, White has no other way to justify his strategy, but play 9.a4 \texttt{\texttt{c6}} and, again, 10.d4 is the only sensible continuation.

5...\texttt{\texttt{f6}}

White cannot prove in practice any advantage in this system so he has tried nearly all legal moves. I will focus on:
A. 6.\texttt{\texttt{a3}}; B. 6.\texttt{\texttt{e3}}; C. 6.\texttt{\texttt{d3}} D. 6.\texttt{\texttt{e2}}

Rozentalis also employs 6.a3 which is best met by 6...\texttt{\texttt{c6}} 7.\texttt{\texttt{e3}} \texttt{\texttt{e7}} 8.\texttt{\texttt{d3}} (8.dxc5 \texttt{\texttt{xd1+}} 9.\texttt{\texttt{xd1}} \texttt{\texttt{g4}}) 8...0-0 9.0-0 b6 10.\texttt{\texttt{e2}} \texttt{\texttt{b7}}, Rozentalis-Volokitin, AUT 2014. After 11.\texttt{\texttt{d1}}, Black can isolate the d4-pawn and follow the tested plans, or keep on the tension with 11...\texttt{\texttt{fd8}.}

A. 6.\texttt{\texttt{a3}} \texttt{\texttt{c6}!} 7.\texttt{\texttt{b5}}

Less popular alternatives are:
\begin{itemize}
\item a) 7.\texttt{\texttt{e3}} cxd4
Part 9

7...\(\text{g}4\) is less explored. White commonly prefers to keep the bishop - 8.\(\text{g}5\) [8.\(\text{c}4!?\) \(\text{xe}3\) 9.\(\text{fxe}3\) \(\text{wd}8\) 10.0-0 \(\text{e}7\); 8.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{xe}3\) 9.\(\text{fxe}3\) \(\text{wd}8\) 10.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{exd}5\) 11.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{e}6\) 12.\(\text{xd}8+\) \(\text{xd}8\) 13.0-0-0+ \(\text{c}8\) 14.\(\text{g}5\), Iordachescu-Potkin, Sershukov 2008, 14...\(\text{xa}2!\) 15.\(\text{b}3\) 16.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{e}7\) 8...\(\text{d}7\) 9.\(\text{b}5\) (9.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{xf}6\) 10.\(\text{d}3\) cxd4 11.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{e}8\) 12.0-0 dxc3 13.\(\text{xc}3\) \(\text{a}5\) 14.\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{gxf}6\) 15.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{e}7\); 9.\(\text{e}2\) cxd4 10.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{c}8\) 11.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{b}4+\) 12.\(\text{c}3\) 0-0 13.0-0 \(\text{c}6\) =) 9...\(\text{c}8\) 10.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{xf}6\). Here 11.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{e}4+\) 12.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{xd}4\) 13.\(\text{b}xd4\) cxd4 14.0-0 was equal in Tiviakov-Lenic, Trieste 2008. 11.\(\text{dxc}5\) \(\text{xc}5\) 12.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{xe}3\) 13.\(\text{d}6+\) \(\text{f}8\) 14.\(\text{xe}3\) deserves attention although Black neutralises the initiative with 14...\(\text{d}8\).

8.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{d}8\) 9.\(\text{b}xd4\)

9...\(\text{d}5!\) (9...\(\text{xd}4\) 10.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{e}7\) 11.\(\text{d}3\) is dangerous) 10.\(\text{g}5\)

10.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{bxc}6\) 11.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{f}6\) 12.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{d}6\) 13.0-0 0-0 14.\(\text{e}1\) - Black controls the centre. He has a number of good options: 14...\(\text{h}8!\)! 15.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{c}7\) 16.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{d}8\); 14...\(\text{c}7\) 15.\(\text{b}3\) (15.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{h}8\) 16.\(\text{ad}1\) e5 17.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{e}6\) 18.\(\text{c}1\) \(\text{ad}8\)!) 15...\(\text{d}8\) 16.\(\text{e}2\) e5; 14...e5 15.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{e}6\).

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

I do not like 10...\(\text{f}6\), but 10...\(\text{b}6\) is a solid alternative. However, the position after 11.\(\text{c}4!\) \(\text{c}5\) 12.0-0 \(\text{xd}4\) 13.\(\text{xd}4\) 0-0 (13...\(\text{xd}4\) 14.\(\text{xd}5\) 14.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{exd}5\) 15.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{e}6\) 16.\(\text{xc}5\) \(\text{xc}5\) 17.\(\text{e}3\), albeit drawish, leaves Black zero winning chances.

11.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{bxc}6\) 12.\(\text{xe}7\) \(\text{xe}7\) 13.\(\text{d}3\) (13.\(\text{c}4\) 0-0 14.0-0 \(\text{b}7\) 15.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{ad}8\) 16.\(\text{c}2\) c5=) 13...0-0 14.0-0

Black has a good centre and an excellent knight. He can follow up with 14...\(\text{d}8\) (14...\(\text{f}4!?\)) 15.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{b}8\) 16.\(\text{ab}1\) c5 when all his pieces will be active.

b) 7.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{d}8\)! 8.\(\text{c}2\)

8.0-0 \(\text{cxd}4\) 9.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{dxc}3\)! (The most testing. 9...\(\text{c}5\) is balanced
Alapin: 3.c3 d5

- 10...bxd4  cxd4 11...xd4 0-0.
10...xd8+  xxd8 11...g5  xe7
12.bxc3  h6 13...d3+ (13...d1  d7
14...f3  a6) 13...e8 14...c7+  xd8
15...xa8  hxg5.

8...xe7 9.0-0 0-0 10.dxc5
10...g5  cxd4 11...xd4  d7
12.e1  xd4 13...xd4  xc6=.

10...xc5 11...xd8 (11...g5  e5)
11...xd8 12...e3  xe3 13...xe3  b6=.

7...d8 8.dxc5 xc5 9...xd8+
10.f4

a) 10.b4  b6 11...d6 (11...f4
...e4) 11...e7 12...c4  e4! 13...xb6
axb6

14.b5 (14...b2  d8! 15.a3  f6 was
slightly better for Black in Lastin
-Krasenkov, Dagomys 2008)
14...b8 15.a4  d7 16...d2  xd2
17...xd2  d8 18...c2  c5 19...e3
a5 20...e2  e5=, Grekh-Kononenko,
Odessa 2008.

b) 10...g5  e7 11.d1  h6 12...xf6+
(12...f4  e4) 12...gxf6+, Landenberg-
gue-Matlakov, Rhodes 2013.

10...e4!

Sveshnikov wrote in 2010: 'White
has not found an advantage yet'. In
2014, that is all the more true. The
latest top level game is Predojevic-
Carlsen, Lillehammer 2013. It went:

11...g5

Or 11...d1+  d7
11...e7 12...bd4  xd4 13...xd4
d8 14...d3  f6 15...b3  d6=.

12...e3 (12...bd4  xd4 13...xd4
e5) 12...xe3 13...xe3  e7 [13...a6
14...bd4  e7 15...d3  f6 (15...d6=)
16.0-0  h8 17.e4  g4 18...f1  f6=,
Sveshnikov-Balogh, Warsaw 2005]
14...d3  c5 (14...f6  15.0-0  g4
16...f1  c5 17...f1  xb5 18...xb5
h8=, Schellmann-Kempinski,
Dresden 2008) 15...c2  e5=.

11...xg5 12...xg5+  f6 13...e3
xe3 14...f3  e7 15.0-0  e5
16...e2  d7

Predojevic has ben following
in the footsteps of Baklan (against
Sutovsky, Plovdiv 2003). In both
games White could not hold the bal-
ance!
B. 6.\textit{d}e3 cxd4 7.cxd4 \textit{b}b4+!

8.\textit{c}c3 0-0

9.\textit{d}d3

\textbf{a) 9.\textit{d}e2} is passive – 9...\textit{w}a5!

10.\textit{w}b3 b6 11.\textit{e}e5 (11.0-0 \textit{a}a6
12.\textit{xa}6 \textit{xa}6 13.a3 \textit{xc}3 14.bxc3
\textit{ac}8 15.\textit{c}4 \textit{db}8 is similar) 11...\textit{a}a6
12.\textit{xa}6 \textit{xc}3+ 13.bxc3 \textit{w}xa6. The
hanging pawns are not dangerous
because Black has traded two minor
pieces. Thus White’s chances for an
attack are minimal. Radjabov-Iv-
anchuk, Amber-rapid Nice 2009,
went further 14.c4 \textit{ec}8 (14...\textit{w}b7
15.0-0 \textit{dc}6=) 15.0-0 \textit{dc}6 16.\textit{ff}d1=.

\textbf{b) 9.a3?! \textit{xc}3+ 10.bxc3 \textit{w}a5
11.\textit{w}c2 (11.\textit{w}b3 b6 12.\textit{e}e5 \textit{a}a6
13.\textit{w}b4 \textit{xb}4 14.axb4 \textit{xf}1 15.\textit{xf}1
\textit{ec}8 16.\textit{dd}2 \textit{dc}6) 11...b6 12.\textit{dd}2!
(12.\textit{dd}3 \textit{a}6) 12...\textit{bb}7 is more tangle-
led, but White cannot complete
development without concessions:
13.\textit{dd}3 \textit{xf}3 14.\textit{gx}f3 \textit{dc}6 15.0-0
\textit{ee}5; 13.c4 \textit{wh}5 14.\textit{w}a2 \textit{wg}6! 15.\textit{wx}g6
hxg6 16.0-0 \textit{dc}6=.

9...\textit{b}b6 10.0-0

White can prevent ...\textit{a}a6 with
10.\textit{wa}4, but the queen will be mis-
placed on the left flanc. After 10...
\textit{xc}3+ 11.bxc3 \textit{w}b7 12.0-0 \textit{wd}7
13.\textit{w}f1 \textit{ec}8 14.\textit{wc}2 \textit{wa}5 15.\textit{dd}2
\textit{xf}3 16.\textit{gf}x3, Black obtained an at-
tack. His knight pair completes well
the queen – 16...\textit{wh}5 17.\textit{g}g2 \textit{dd}5
18.\textit{a}a6 \textit{ec}7 19.\textit{c}4 \textit{df}6 20.a4 \textit{de}7,
Vlassov-Sutovsky, playchess.com
2003.

10...\textit{xc}3 11.bxc3 \textit{a}a6 12.\textit{xa}6
\textit{xa}6

It is easy to play as Black here.
White’s pawn structure is really
“hanging”. He should squeeze some
dynamic resources out of his piec-
es while we have the obligatory ma-
noeuvre ...\textit{a}a6-b8-c6 and pressure
on the c-pawn. Although the en-
gines assess the position as rough-
ly equal, practical experience is in
Black’s favour. Here are two exam-
pl es:

13.\textit{w}e2 \textit{db}8 14.c4 \textit{we}4 15.\textit{de}5
\textit{bd}7 (15...\textit{dc}6=) 16.\textit{f}3 \textit{b}7 17.\textit{dd}7
\textit{xd}7 18.a4 \textit{fc}8 19.a5 \textit{h}6 20.\textit{fc}1
\textit{wc}6 21.\textit{dd}2 \textit{fd}6 22.\textit{ff}4 \textit{e}5=, Ste-
vic-Grachev, Biel 2011;
13.\textit{wa}4 \textit{db}8 14.c4 \textit{dd}7 15.\textit{xd}7
\textit{bd}7 16.a4 \textit{ac}8 17.\textit{dd}2 \textit{e}5 18.a5
\textit{exd}4 19.\textit{xd}4 \textit{fe}8 20.axb6 \textit{ab}6
21...\textit{\textbf{\textbar{e}1}}, Stević-Wojtaszek, Porto Carras 2011.

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

C. 6.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{d}3}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{e}7}}! 7.0-0 0-0!

Note that our best move order here is slightly different from the other sixth moves. White develops his pieces more aggressively so we must castle quickly. We are not afraid of the endgame after 8.c4 \textit{\textbf{\textbar{d}7}}! 9.dxc5 \textit{\textbf{\textbar{d}8}} 10.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{c}2}} (10.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{e}5}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{d}4}} 11.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{e}2}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{bd}7}} 12.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{x}d7}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{x}d7}}
13.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{e}3}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{e}5}} 14.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{c}3}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{xc}5}}=) 10...
\textit{\textbf{\textbar{x}d1}} 11.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{x}d1}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{xd1}+}} 12.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{xd1}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{bd}7}}!}
13.c6 (13.b4 a5) 13...\textit{\textbf{\textbar{x}c6}} 14.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{xc3}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{b}7}} 15.b3 c5=. Potapov-Hammer, Aix-les-Bains 2011, went on 16.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{f}4}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{f}4}} 17.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{xe}4}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{xe}4}} 18.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{e}2}} f6 19.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{d}1 c6}}.

8.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{e}3}} cxd4 9.cxd4 b6!
10.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{c}3}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{d}8}}!

Another difference! We are planning ...\textit{\textbf{\textbar{d}5}} so we should not present a tempo on \textit{\textbf{\textbar{e}4}} by retreating to d6.

11.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{c}1}}

11.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{e}2}} planning \textit{\textbf{\textbar{ad}1}}, \textit{\textbf{\textbar{c}1}} is more popular, but Black gets comfortable play against the isolated pawn – 11...\textit{\textbf{\textbar{b}7}} 12.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{ad}1}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{d}5}} 13.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{c}1}}
\textit{\textbf{\textbar{d}7}} 14.a3 (14.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{b}1}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{f}6}} 15.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{e}4}} a5
16.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{e}5}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{a}6}} 17.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{xf}6+}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{xf}6}} 18.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{d}3}}
\textit{\textbf{\textbar{xd}3}} 19.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{xd}3}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{c}8}}=, Pap-Zubarev, Paleochora 2010) 14.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{c}8}} 15.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{e}4}}
h6 16.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{g}3}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{e}8}} 17.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{e}f1}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{f}8}} 18.h4
\textit{\textbf{\textbar{d}6}} 19.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{a}6}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{xa}6}} 20.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{xa}6}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{gx}3}}
21.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{xf}3}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{c}7}} 22.g4 \textit{\textbf{\textbar{e}4}}=, Kalezic-Malakhov, Budva 2009.

11.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{e}5}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{b}7}} 12.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{e}2}} is a modification of the above line – 12...\textit{\textbf{\textbar{c}6}}
13.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{ad}1}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{b}4}} 14.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{c}4}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{bd}5}} 15.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{e}f1}}
\textit{\textbf{\textbar{c}8}}=.

11...\textit{\textbf{\textbar{b}7}} 12.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{b}1}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{bd}7}} 13.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{e}2}}

Or 13.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{d}3}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{xf}3}} 14.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{gxf}3}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{b}8}}.

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

13...\textit{\textbf{\textbar{d}5}} 14.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{d}2}} \textit{\textbf{\textbar{c}8}} 15.\textit{\textbf{\textbar{e}1}}

We have reached an IQP position. The firm control of d5 and comfortable development assure Black of an easy game. Sooner or later we'll have to define the pawn structure with ...\textit{\textbf{\textbar{xc}3}}. Perhaps we should not delay this exchange – 15...\textit{\textbf{\textbar{xc}3}}!? The only game in my database saw in-
10. \( \texttt{b5} \)

a) 10. \( \texttt{g5} \) is a typical development when White has a bishop on d3. 10...0-0 11. \( \texttt{c1} \) (11. \( \texttt{xf6} \) \( \texttt{xf6} \) 12. \( \texttt{e4} \) \( \texttt{f4} \) 13. \( \texttt{xf6}+ \) \( \texttt{xf6} \) 14. \( \texttt{c1} \) \( \texttt{d8} \) 15. \( \texttt{c4} \) \( \texttt{d7=} \) 11... \( \texttt{d5} \) 12. \( \texttt{e4} \) (12. \( \texttt{xe7} \) \( \texttt{cxe7} \) 13. \( \texttt{d3} \) \( \texttt{b6} \) 14. \( \texttt{e5} \) \( \texttt{b7} \) 15. \( \texttt{e4} \) \( \texttt{d8} \) 16. \( \texttt{e1} \) \( \texttt{f4} \) 17. \( \texttt{f1} \) \( \texttt{f5} \) 18. \( \texttt{g4} \) \( \texttt{g6=} \) 12... \( \texttt{d8} \) 13. \( \texttt{xe7} \) \( \texttt{cxe7} \) 14. \( \texttt{e5} \) \( \texttt{b6=} \).

b) 10. \( \texttt{e3} \) 0-0 11. \( \texttt{c1} \) \( \texttt{d8} \)

White’s bishops are not impressive. That gives us time to complete development with... \( \texttt{d7-e8} \) or... \( \texttt{b6}, \) ... \( \texttt{b7} \):

b1) 12. \( \texttt{a3} \) \( \texttt{b6} \) 13. \( \texttt{b5} \) (13. \( \texttt{a4} \) \( \texttt{b7} \) 14. \( \texttt{fd1} \) \( \texttt{ac8} \) 15. \( \texttt{e5} \) \( \texttt{b8} \) 16. \( \texttt{f4} \) \( \texttt{a8} \) 17. \( \texttt{f1} \) \( \texttt{xe5} \) 18. \( \texttt{xe5} \) \( \texttt{d5} \) 19. \( \texttt{xd5} \) \( \texttt{xd5=} \) 13... \( \texttt{d7} \) 14. \( \texttt{e5} \) \( \texttt{xe5} \) 15. \( \texttt{dxe5} \) \( \texttt{d5} \) 16. \( \texttt{d2} \) \( \texttt{b7=} \).

b2) 12. \( \texttt{d2} \) \( \texttt{d5}! \) 13. \( \texttt{e4} \) (13. \( \texttt{xd5} \) \( \texttt{xd5} \) 14. \( \texttt{c4} \) \( \texttt{a5} \) 15. \( \texttt{e2} \) \( \texttt{d7} \) 16. \( \texttt{fd1} \) \( \texttt{e8} \) 17. \( \texttt{a3} \) \( \texttt{ac8} \) 18. \( \texttt{a2} \) \( \texttt{f6=} \); 13. \( \texttt{fd1} \) \( \texttt{d7} \) 14. \( \texttt{e4} \) \( \texttt{b8} \) 15. \( \texttt{c5} \) \( \texttt{e8} \) 16. \( \texttt{a3} \) \( \texttt{b6} \) 17. \( \texttt{e4} \) \( \texttt{a5} \) 18. \( \texttt{c2} \) \( \texttt{c8} \) 19. \( \texttt{d3} \) \( \texttt{xc1} \) 20. \( \texttt{xc1} \) \( \texttt{b5} \) 13... \( \texttt{b4} \) 14. \( \texttt{c2} \), Benjamin-Yermolinsky, Parsippany 1996, 14... \( \texttt{b6}! \) threatening... \( \texttt{e5=} \).
10...d8 11...f4

11.e5 is an older move which has drifted out of fashion. Black can be only glad to see its knight swapped because exchanges decrease White’s attacking potential and the pawn on c6 would bolster the blockade of the isolated pawn. 11...0-0 12.f3 (12.xc6 bxc6 13.c3 b8 14.a4 d5 15.c2 d6 16.g3 f6 17.d1 e5 18.dxe5 dxe5) 12...b6 13.xc6 (13.a4 a6 14.xc6 bxc6 15.a3 b7 16.c4 c7 17.e3 d5 18.c1 f8 19.e2 c5=) 13...bxc6 14.c3 a6 15.e1 ad8 16.a4 xd4 17.xc6 xc6 18.xc6 c8†.

11...d5 12.g3 0-0!

In my younger years, I played against E. Sveshnikov 12...a6 13.c3 0-0, but there is no urgent need to flap the knight away – yet!

13.c4

13.c1 b6 14.d2 (14.c4 d7 15.e1 fd8 16.c3 f6 17.a4 w5 18.c5 w6) 14...d8 15.fd1 d7 16.c3 (16.d6 xd6 17.xd6 d4) 16...ac8=;

13.e5 f5!? 14.h3 f4 with an initiative.

13...a6! 14.xd5 (14.c3 xc3 15.bxc3 b5 16.b3 b7) 14...exd5

Entering a drawish line. 14...

axb5 15.e4 has been extensively tested. It retains more pieces indeed, but the hole on e5 after 15...b4 16.w2 f5 17.b1 d5 18.e5 d7 19.c2 c6 20.b3 d7 is not to everyone’s taste.

15.c7 (15.c3 g4) 15...b8

The c7-knight can also be saved with 16.b3 d6 17.xd5 xg3 18.xd8 xd8 19.xg3 xd4 and 16.c1 g4 17.h3 xf3 18.xf3 d6 19.xd5 xg3 20.xg3 d4=

Sveshnikov writes that Black is bound to struggle after the text, but the position is a dead draw, with opposite-coloured bishops:

16...f5! 17.xa6


17...c8 18.xc6 xc6 19.c5 xc5 20.dxc5 xc5 21.e5=.
Part 10

King’s Indian Reversed

1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d3 d6 4.g3

The idea of 3.d3 is to meet 3...d5 by 4.bbd2. This move order allows White to build a King’s Indian set-up. In contrast, 3.g3 d5 forces White to take on d5 and play against an isolated pawn. I consider this trendy line in Part 11.
The typical reasoning behind 1.e4 c5 2.d3 f3 e6 3.d3 c6 4.g3 is: “I’m playing the King’s Indian Defence where the pawn should stay on e4 instead of e3. So I’ll have practically two extra tempi”. It is completely wrong, because we’ll not comply and will choose a Sicilian set-up! If White stubbornly persists in delaying d4, he could easily end up with an inferior position right in the opening.

Black’s general aim is to get hold of the centre by ...e6-e5 and proceed further with ...f7-f5. At the same time, he has not discarded yet plans with ...d7-d5 which is keeping the enemy in haze. White can expand on the queenside by a3-b4 or gain space in the centre by pushing d4:

A. 8.e1 (threatening e5) 8... e5 9.a3 d6 10.b4 a6!

4...ge7 5.g2 g6 6.0-0

Black commonly meets h2-h4 by ...h6. This insertion is in Black’s favour.

6...g7 7.c3 0-0
Do not allow b4-b5! It will be difficult to win such a position as White can blockade the kingside, too. For instance, when we push ...f7-f5-f4, he will defend with h3, g4, \( \text{\#} \)h2.

11.\( \text{\#} \)bd2 h6 12.\( \text{\#} \)b1 \( \text{\#} \)e6!?

Black has completed development and stands well in the centre.

B. 8.d4 d5!?

The point here is to delay 8... cxd4 in order to keep c3 unavailable to White’s knight.

9.exd5

Or 9.e5 \( \text{\#} \)b6 10.\( \text{\#} \)a3 (10.dxc5 \( \text{\#} \)c7!) 10...cxd4 11.cxd4 f6 12.\( \text{\#} \)e1 \( \text{\#} \)d7, see game 52 Bologan-Ivanchuk, Moscow 1996.

9...\( \text{\#} \)xd5 10.dxc5 \( \text{\#} \)a5 11.\( \text{\#} \)bd2 \( \text{\#} \)xc5 12.\( \text{\#} \)e4

12...\( \text{\#} \)e7 13.c4 \( \text{\#} \)b6 14.c5 \( \text{\#} \)d5 15.\( \text{\#} \)e1 \( \text{\#} \)c7 16.\( \text{\#} \)b1 b6=. 
Part 10. King’s Indian Reversed

Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.f3 e6 3.d3 c6 4.g3

4...d5

White’s insipid play also allows early flank activity like 4...b5 5.g2 b7, but such treatment is not in the spirit of this book. Common sense and practical experience show that central strategy brings better results, moreover, it is easier to implement on the board.

4...d5 looks consistent. This setup has numerous adherents, but I do not approve of it. In my opinion, White’s play is too easy and straightforward after 5.bd2, followed by g2, 0-0, e1, e5, f1, f4, h4, h2(e3)-g4. It is safer to restrict enemy’s options in the centre and on the kingside by fianchettoing the dark-squared bishop.

4...g6 is a reliable move order which commonly transposes to our main line. It allows two variations of independent significance though:

5.d4 cxd4 6.cxd4 g7! 7.b5 d5 8.exd5 exd5 9.xd5 e7+ 10.e2 g4 with full compensation for the pawn;

5.g5 c7 6.g2 g7 7.c3 g7 8.0-0 0-0 9.d4 (9.d2 d5 10.e1 f6 11.exd5 cxd5 12.h6 d8 with a good control of the centre) 9...cxd4 10.cxd4 d5 11.e5 h6 12.f6 xf6 13.exf6 f5 14.g4 d6 15.c1 c8=

5.g2

White may prevent 5...g6 with 5.b3?!, but on b2 the bishop stands worse than on c1 – 5...d5 6.e2 (6.b2 d4 7.bd2 e5) 6...g6 7.b2 d4 when 8.e5 g7 9.bd2 0-0 10.a4 loses a pawn to 10...d5 11.c4 xe5.

5...g6 6.0-0
6.d4 cxd4 7.\f6xd4 \f7 8.\f2xc6 bxc6 9.\f2d6 is dubious owing to 9...f5!

According to Dvoretsky, it is still early for 6.c3 \f7 7.d4 cxd4 8.cxd4 due to 8...\f6b6=.

6.c3 \f7 7.\f3e3!? is an interesting move order. Perhaps Black should accept the challenge by playing 7...b6. Black is threatening ...d7-d5, so White must follow up with 8.d4 cxd4 (8...d5!? ) 9.\f2xd4. This position is still unclear:

Black has considerable counterplay after 9...\f2b7 – see game53 Grigore-Itkis, Bucharest 2000.

6.h4 is commonly met by 6...h6 which is a useful move anyway.

6...\f2ge7

7.\f2c3

7.\f2e1 d6 (or 7...e5!? ) 8.c3 e5! commits White's rook to e1 too early. Basically it is better placed on f1. 7.\f2bd2 0-0 8.\f2h4?! d5 9.f4 can quickly turn the tables in Black's favour because the only threat of White, g4, is easily parried by ...f5, while the queenside activity of Black (...b6, ...a5, ...\f2a6, ...\f2a7 or ...\f2b8, ...b5) should gradually prevail.

7...0-0

Black's general aim is to get hold of the centre by ...e6-e5 and proceed further with ...f7-f5 or... d6-d5. That would be possible if White delayed d3-d4, which is not dangerous, but significantly changes the character of play. Black is unable to prevent the central break-through, but it is up to him to decide what type of position to get after it.

If you are looking for clear play with less risks, you better choose:

7...e5!? . Then 8.\f2e3 d6 9.d4 exd4 10.cxd4 \f2g4 reduces the tension to a roughly equal position:

11.dxc5 (11.d5 \f2xf3 12.\f2xf3 \f2d4=, Filipovic-Markus, Zadar
Part 10

2003) 11...dxc5 12.\textcolor{red}{\textit{d}}bd2 (12.\textcolor{red}{\textit{c}}c3 \textcolor{red}{\textit{d}}d4! =, e.g. 13.\textcolor{red}{\textit{a}}4 \textcolor{red}{\textit{dec}}6 14.\textcolor{red}{\textit{xd}}4 cxd4 15.e5 dxe3 16.\textcolor{red}{\textit{g}}4 \textcolor{red}{\textit{exf}}2+ 17.\textcolor{red}{\textit{xf}}2 0-0=) 12...b6 13.\textcolor{red}{\textit{b}}b1 0-0 14.a3 \textcolor{red}{\textit{d}}d4!? 15.\textcolor{red}{\textit{d}}d4 (15.b4? \textcolor{red}{\textit{b}}b5??) 15...\textcolor{red}{\textit{cd}}4?? Koskela-Zhukova, Istanbul 2003.

In his book \textit{How to Beat the Sicilian Defence}, G. Jones actually shows how White can fight for equality in this line. He suggests:

8.a3 (instead of 8.\textcolor{red}{\textit{ie}}3) 8...d6 9.b4 a6 10.\textcolor{red}{\textit{e}}e3 b6 11.\textcolor{red}{\textit{bd}}2 0-0 12.\textcolor{red}{\textit{b}}b1 h6 13.bxc5 7...0-0 is flexible, but allows White to seize and hold the centre. The resulting positions are double-edged, with plenty of chances for the better player. White’s main continuations are:

A. 8.\textcolor{red}{\textit{ae}}1; B. 8.d4

He has also tried:

a) 8.\textcolor{red}{\textit{ae}}3 b6 9.d4 is another version of the plan of line B. White wins a tempo on \textcolor{red}{\textit{ae}}3, but on the other hand, the bishop is not well placed there. After ...\textcolor{red}{\textit{d}}f5, it should move elsewhere because Black would solve all his problems if he managed to trade it. Then ...b7-b6 could turn to be just a present from White’s side. 9...d5 10.e5 \textcolor{red}{\textit{f}}f5 11.\textcolor{red}{\textit{g}}g5 f6??.

b) 8.\textcolor{red}{\textit{da}}3 e5 9.\textcolor{red}{\textit{dc}}4 d6! 10.a4 h6 11.\textcolor{red}{\textit{ad}}2 is extremely passive. In the game Sakaev-Rublevsky, St. Petersburg 2001, Black had the initiative after 11...f5 12.\textcolor{red}{\textit{xf}}5 \textcolor{red}{\textit{xf}}5 13.\textcolor{red}{\textit{we}}2 \textcolor{red}{\textit{wd}}7 14.\textcolor{red}{\textit{h}}h4 \textcolor{red}{\textit{gg}}4 15.f3 \textcolor{red}{\textit{ae}}6 16.f4 \textcolor{red}{\textit{exf}}4 17.\textcolor{red}{\textit{xf}}4 d5. Moutousis-Rogozenko, Debrecen 1992, also developed in Black’s favour after 11...
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.c4 cxd4 6.cxd4 d6 7.c3 e5 8.b3

A. 8...e5

9.a3

9...e5

10.b4 a6!? 10...b6 allows 11.b5 a5 12.c4 with a closed position which would be difficult to break. In the game Grischuk-Najer, Moscow 2014, White chose the double-edged 11...d2 a6 12.g5 d7 13.c4 h6 14.f3 e6 15.d2 b5 16.e3 when 16...b8 would have equalised.

11.d2 h6

We can try a little provocation – 11...e6!. Then 12.g5 c8 13.c4 b5 14.e3 h6 15.f3 e6 would be fine – 16.d2 a5. However, White can transpose to the main line with 12.b1 h6!?.

12.b1 e6!? prevent it with 11...g4 12.h3 xf3 13.xf3 d7 14.g2 f5 15.exf5 gxf5 with unclear position. All Black’s pieces are well placed and co-ordinated. The more conservative 11...f5 yields good results, though.

9...bd2 d6 often transposes to the other lines. In the game Udovcic-T. Petrosian, Zagreb 1970, White attempted to hinder plans with ...f5 by 10.f1 h6 11.e3 e6 12.h4, when 12...d5! 13.f3 d4† allowed Black to gain space in the centre.

9...d6

Another good plan is to prevent b4 by 9...a5. White answers 10.a4 d6 11.a3 h6 and Black is ready for d5 or f5, for example, 12.b5 d5=.

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11.d2 h6

We can try a little provocation – 11...e6!. Then 12.g5 c8 13.c4 b5 14.e3 h6 15.f3 e6 would be fine – 16.d2 a5. However, White can transpose to the main line with 12.b1 h6!?.
After this novelty, I do not see any sensible plan for White. 13...b2 (preparing d4) 13...b5 14.b3 w.b6 was pleasant for Black in Torre-Gheorghiu, Manila 1973. 13.b3 c4 gives a good version of an open Sicilian while 13.c2 l:b8 (or 13...b6) again passes the move to White.

B. 8.d4 d5!

Practical experience has seen Black struggling after 8...cxd4 9.cxd4 d5 10.e5 f6 11.e1. White’s knight finds a good stand on c3, parrying enemy counterplay on the c-file. The text is aimed against that possibility.

9.exd5

9.d5 w:b6 hinders the normal development of the enemy queenside. White has tried without success three moves here:

10.dxc5 w:c7! 11.f4 dxe5 12.dxe5 lxe5 13.lxe5 wxe5=;

Mladenov, Schwaebisch Gmueden 2014;
10.a3 cxd4 11.cxd4 f6 12.e1 d7 13.b1 (13.exf6 xf6) 13...eac8 14.lf4 fx5 15.dxe5 f4!? 16.gxf4 w:b4 17.wb3 d8=c, see game 52 Bologan-Ivanchuk, Moscow 1996.

9...exd5 10.dxc5 w:a5 11.bd2

11.c4 runs into 11...d:b4 12.w:e2 d8 13.ed3 c:d3 14.c3 c22!

11.wxc5 12.de4

12...we7

My suggestion from The Safest Sicilian, 2008 – 12...w:a5 is still valid:

a) 13.w:e2 c7 14.ed1 (14.c4 d6 15.d3 c5 16.g5 d6=) 14...b6 15.b1 (15.a4 b7) 15...h6 16.c4 a6 17.b3 d8 leads to double-edged play (18.b2 e5).

In 2014, I can add that 13...c7 could be saved – 13...b6!? 14.c4 a6 15.d2 w:a4 16.b3 w:a3 17.c1 e7 18.b2 e5 19.ad1 d8=∞.

b) 13.g5 h6 14.d2 c7 15.c4 d7 16.c3 a6! 17.e1 d8 18.e1
G. Jones offers as an improvement 17.\textit{\texttt{c1}} \textit{\texttt{h7}} 18.\textit{\texttt{c2}} \textit{\texttt{d8}} 19.\textit{\texttt{ad1}} \textit{\texttt{d7}} 20.\textit{\texttt{e4}} 'and White can return to attacking on the kingside'.

Jones' statement must be a joke since Black has more pawns on the kingside and only he can attack there. After 20...\textit{\texttt{e8}} (ensuring the \textit{\texttt{d4}}-square), White's alleged attack might be launched (and stopped) with 21.\textit{\texttt{wh4}} \textit{\texttt{f5}}, or 21.\textit{\texttt{h4}} \textit{\texttt{g8}} (21...\textit{\texttt{ac8}}!? wins a pawn – 22.\textit{\texttt{h5}} \textit{\texttt{a5}} 23.\textit{\texttt{hxg6+}} \textit{\texttt{xg6?}}).

Black has active play in this line. In many variations, the queen returns home so it may be a better idea to put it there at once. The game might continue:

13.\textit{\texttt{c4}} \textit{\texttt{b6}} 14.\textit{\texttt{c5}} \textit{\texttt{d5}} 15.\textit{\texttt{e1}} \textit{\texttt{c7}} 16.\textit{\texttt{b1}} \textit{\texttt{b6}}=.
Part 10. King's Indian Reversed

Complete Games

51. Kindermann-Volokitin
Bundesliga 2003

1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d3 d6 4.g3 dge7 5.g2 g6 6.h4 h6 7.c3 dg7

8.0-0

The combination of 6.h4 with 8.0-0 looks strange. White only weakens the g4-square and his castling position. I do not see what he achieves in return. Black commonly plays ...h6 anyway. 8.d2 d4! 9.d2 is a more consistent attempt to draw benefits from 6.h4, but 9...e5 10.h3 b6 11.d3 d6 12.c4 d5 was slightly better for Black in Maze-Navara, Caleta 2014.

8...e5


9.a3


9...0-0 10.b4 b6 11.b5 a5 12.c4 d6 13.h2!

The break ...f7-f5 is looming so White tries to organise his king-
side's defence. The march of the black f-pawn should be prevented at all costs.

13...\textit{e}6 14.h5

Every coach warns his pupils against hasty decisions and premature attacks. Black needed only one tempo to finish his preparation for a direct action. After 14...\textit{e}b8!? 15.\textit{c}c3 \textit{f}5 16.\textit{hxg}6 \textit{f}4→, his position would have been very promising. Instead, he sacrifices the exchange. The problem is that White's castling position cannot be seized by an assault on the weakened light squares. Black needs open files and rooks to use them.

15.exf5 gxf5 16.\textit{dx}a8 \textit{wa}8 17.\textit{de}b2 \textit{d}5?!?

Black is nervous because the opponent is already threatening f4. However, this move only deprives Volokitin of future counterplay against the c4-pawn (and weakens e5), so he should have kept it for reserve. 17...\textit{we}8 18.f4 \textit{ff}7 19.\textit{d}d2 \textit{hh}5 20.\textit{we}1± is in White’s favour, too. Perhaps 17...f4 18.g4, counting on the closed character of the position, is the best practical chance, but it is difficult to admit a mistake...

18.\textit{we}1 \textit{d}4 19.\textit{dd}2 \textit{ff}7 20.g4!± \textit{hh}8

White launched a counter-attack and his chances are clearly better. Now 21.\textit{wh}3?! \textit{we}8 22.\textit{wg}3 \textit{gg}8 23.\textit{we}5 would have been promising. The rest of the game is entertaining, but irrelevant to the opening.

21.gxf5 \textit{we}8 22.\textit{wg}4 \textit{hh}5 23.\textit{wh}3 \textit{ff}5= 24.\textit{de}4 \textit{gg}6 25.\textit{gg}3 \textit{ff}7 26.\textit{ed}1 \textit{ff}5 27.\textit{de}4 \textit{we}7 28.\textit{ac}1? \textit{hh}4= 29.f4 \textit{hh}5 (Or 29...\textit{exf}4 30.\textit{gg}4 \textit{xc}4! 31.\textit{d}xc4 \textit{xe}4 32.\textit{xe}4 \textit{xe}4 33.\textit{wg}4 \textit{gg}6 34.\textit{hh}1 \textit{f}3±.) 30.\textit{ed}2 \textit{exf}4 31.\textit{ff}2 \textit{f}3? 32.\textit{ad}2 \textit{wd}8 33.\textit{dx}a8 \textit{bxa}5 34.\textit{cc}5± \textit{gg}5 35.\textit{hh}1 \textit{ff}5 36.\textit{ee}4 \textit{wh}4 37.\textit{wh}4 \textit{dxh}4 38.c5 \textit{gg}6 39.c6 \textit{ee}5 40.\textit{gg}4 \textit{ff}4 41.\textit{ec}2 \textit{gg}2 42.\textit{exg}2 \textit{fxf}2+ 43.\textit{axg}2 \textit{gg}7 44.\textit{ff}3 \textit{ff}7 45.\textit{gg}2 Suddenly White starts repeating the moves. 45.\textit{de}f6 \textit{ee}3 46.\textit{gg}3 is probably winning, without risks at that.

45...\textit{gg}7 46.\textit{ff}3 \textit{ff}7 47.\textit{gg}2 \textbf{Draw.}
52. Bologan-Ivanchuk
Moscow 1996

1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d3 d6 4.g3 g6 5.d3 g7 6.f8f5 7.c3 0-0 8.d4 d5! 9.e5 dxe5 10.c3 a6 (10.dxc5 is met by 10...c7) 10...cxd4 11.exd4

11...f6

Ivanchuk is persistently rashing at the enemy centre. If he chose a flank strategy like 11...b4, ...a5, ...d7, he would risk to see his initiative evaporate at some point. Then White's supremacy on the kingside might prevail. Ivanchuk prefers to fight for every inch of the centre. The mere fact that Black is able to choose between two tempting plans shows that he has solved the opening problems.

12.e1 d7 13.b1 a8 14.f4 fxe5 15.dxe5 fxe4!

15...d4 16.d2 a5 (16...dxa2? 17.a1 h4 18.gxf4+) was a good option too, but Ivanchuk grasps the chance of annihilating the enemy central pawns.

16.gxf4 b4 17.b3 d8

18.abc1?!

White is already on the defensive. He should have avoided doubled pawns by 18.e3. From now on Black is in total control and does not leave any chance to the opponent.

18...xb3 19.axb3 xf4+ and Black went on to win 50 moves later 0-1

53. Grigore-Itkis
Bucharest 2000

1.e4 e6 2.d3 c5 3.g3 d6 4.d3 g7 5.c3 g7 6.e3 b6 7.f3 d7 8.d4 cxd4 9.dxe4 dxe4 b7

After 9...a6 10.a4, the bishop should retreat to b7 anyway.
10.f4

White could try to hinder the opponent's development with 10.0-0 0-0 11.\(\triangle\)xc6 \(\triangle\)xc6 12.\(\varnothing\)d6. Then 12...\(\varnothing\)e8 13.\(\varnothing\)d2 \(\varnothing\)b8 14.\(\varnothing\)c4± maintains White's spatial advantage. In Nijboer-Sakaev, Elista 1998, Black came to the plan with f7-f5, but started with 12...\(\varnothing\)e8. It may turn to be a waste of time since after 13.\(\varnothing\)d2 f5 14.f3 Sakaev found nothing better than repelling the queen by 14...\(\varnothing\)c8. I suppose that 12...\(\varnothing\)c8 13.\(\varnothing\)d2 f5± should be better. If White's leave the d2-square free for his knight with 13.\(\varnothing\)d3, then 13...d5 equalises.

10...0-0 11.0-0 \(\varnothing\)c8

Black is playing by "general considerations". That is not \textit{a priori} bad, but he had a more concrete approach like 11...\(\varnothing\)xd4!? 12.\(\varnothing\)xd4 e5 (or perhaps 12...\(\varnothing\)xd4 13.\(\varnothing\)xd4 d5 14.e5 \(\varnothing\)f5=) 13.\(\varnothing\)xe5 \(\varnothing\)xe5 14.fxe5 \(\varnothing\)c6. The arising position is tangled and double-edged. 15.\(\varnothing\)d6 \(\varnothing\)e8 16.\(\varnothing\)a3 \(\varnothing\)a6 17.\(\varnothing\)f2 \(\varnothing\)xe5∞.

12.\(\varnothing\)a3 d6 13.\(\varnothing\)d2 \(\varnothing\)xd4

12.\(\varnothing\)a3 d6 13.\(\varnothing\)d2 \(\varnothing\)xd4

14.\(\varnothing\)xd4 e5 15.fxe5 would have been equal.

14...f5+ 15.e5 \(\varnothing\)xg2 16.\(\varnothing\)xg2 \(\varnothing\)d5 17.\(\varnothing\)f2 dx5 18.dxe5 \(\varnothing\)d7 19.\(\varnothing\)ac1 \(\varnothing\)a4 20.\(\varnothing\)f3 g5 21.fxg5 \(\varnothing\)xe5 22.\(\varnothing\)e2 \(\varnothing\)e4 23.\(\varnothing\)xe4 fxe4 24.\(\varnothing\)c4 \(\varnothing\)g7 25.a4 \(\varnothing\)b4 26.b3 \(\varnothing\)d5 27.\(\varnothing\)e3 0-1
Part 11

Rare Lines on Move 3

1.e4 c5 2.Qf3 e6

A. 3.b4
B. 3.b3
C. 3.c4
D. 3.Qc3
E. 3.Qe2
F. 3.g3
In this chapter, I'll try to arm you against different “rare” lines which are not that rare at lower level. I'm sure that any devoted Sicilian player is only too happy to see White deviating from the main lines. Still, some variations could be tricky and quite embarrassing if you do not know how to face them. Another problem when studying them is that most of the games in the database are between low rated players and only tend to obscure things instead of providing a clue. I think that it is unproductive to spend much time on rare lines, so I'll choose for you some essential information which should be enough. Have in mind that in most variations Black has other good options (unlike in the main lines where many moves are critical!). If you are used to another line and like it, stay with it.

I examine six different systems in one chapter, but the only thing that they have in common is that Black is fine without too much effort. Otherwise they should be treated separately.

**A. 3.b4 cxb4**

If you feel unhappy to defend with an extra pawn for some initiative, you should look at game 57 S.Williams-Delchev, London 2013 which featured 3...b6!?. I recommend you to grab the gift, because this version of the Sicilian Gambit is not too dangerous for Black. White has committed his knight to f3 and that deprives him of two important attacking plans. The one is linked with the exchange sacrifice $\text{a}a3$ which is pointless here. He knight is barring the third rank, it is pointless. The knight on f3 is impeding also his queen in its longing for the kingside and especially the square g4.
Rare Lines on Move 3

4.a3 d5 5.e5 ∑c6 6.axb4

You must watch out here for c3-c4, for instance, meet 11...∂bd2 by 11...∂a5!.

B. 3.b3

White hopes to gain a spatial advantage by pushing e5. Another idea is to swap the light-squared bishop via b5 and play a hedgehog structure after c4. In that event White’s position would be very solid. I propose to deprive the opponent of both positional “threats”. At least he will feel unhappy...

3...a6!? 4.∂b2 ∑c6 5.c4?! 5.d4 cxd4 6.∂xd4 stumbles into

6...∂f6! 7.c3 ∑c5 pinning the d4-knight.

5...∂c7 6.g3 ∑f6 7.e5 (7.∂c3 ∑b8!? 8.∂g2 b5=) 7...∂g4 8.∂e2

11...b5! 12.0-0 bxc4 13.∂xc4 a5=.

C. 3.c4 ∑c6

White’s “secret” thought is to enter hedgehog structures without having to lose tempi on manoeuvres like ∑f3-d4-b5-a3 as considered in Part 7. His “little” problem is that if he does not push d4 at once, he’ll never be able to achieve it, because we’ll close the centre with 4...e5! And if he does play 4.d4, the pressure on the e4-pawn will force him
to fetch another black pawn toward the centre: 4.d4 cd4 5.\(\Delta\)d4 \(\Delta\)f6 6.\(\Delta\)c3 \(\Delta\)b4 7.\(\Delta\)c6 bc6 8.\(\Delta\)d3 e5! followed up by ...\(\Delta\)xc3 and ...d6.

4.\(\Delta\)c3 e5!

This move challenges the fundamental principle of quick development in the opening. It is all the more provoking when played by the second player who practically lags two tempi behind the enemy. Yet most good players prefer it! There are two reasons for that:
1. 4...\(\Delta\)f6 5.\(\Delta\)e2! gives White some initiative.
2. 4...e5 is not dubious at all! In positions with closed centre the only reasonable plan is a flank break-through and White’s knight on f3 is an obstacle before the f-pawn. That allows Black to fight for the initiative with an early ...f7-f5. The arising positions are strategic and the better player usually outplays the opponent.

5.d3 d6

Black pushes ...f5 and gets good counterplay. He can develop the dark-squared bishop to e7 or g7. See game 56 Leventic-Delchev, Zadar 2004.

D. 3.\(\Delta\)c3

This continuation is often used by White to sidestep rare move orders, for instance 3.d4 cxd4 4.\(\Delta\)xd4 \(\Delta\)b6.

3...\(\Delta\)c6 4.\(\Delta\)b5

White’s last move initiates a strange hybrid between different systems, which is amazingly popular lately.

4...\(\Delta\)d4!

5.0-0

Or 5.\(\Delta\)c4 \(\Delta\)f6! 6.0-0 a6! 7.a4 \(\bullet\)c7. Black is following the normal Sicilian ways of development. When White plays d3, he retreats the knight to c6 with good play.

5...a6 6.\(\Delta\)d3 \(\Delta\)c6?!

A funny position. Both sides have lost tempi aiming mostly at hindering enemy’s plans. It seems to me that White is outwitted. He cannot
even transpose to the main open Sicilian lines because 7.Ae2 could be challenged again by 7...Ad4!?.

7.Ae1 g5!

The flank attack is perfectly grounded here. The rook move prepared Af1 and d4, but deprived the f3-knight of any retreat square. Black comfortably finishes development after 8.g3 d6 9.b3 Ag7 10.Ab2 h6 11.Af1 Ag7=, Souleidis-Bousios, Halkidiki 2002.

E. 3.Ae2 Ac6 4.c3 d5! 5.d3 Af6 6.g3 Ae7 7.Ag2 0-0 8.0-0 b5=.

The c3-pawn provides a good target to attack.

F. 3.g3!? 

This is a very trendy line. I also choose it occasionally. It is still at an early stage of development and there is not written theory so Black is at his own. The only serious way to exploit White's tricky move order is:

3...d5!? 4.exd5 (4.d3 dxe4) 4...exd5 5.d4 (5.Ag2 Ae7+!) 5...Af6! 6.Ag2 Ae7 7.0-0 0-0 8.Ac3

8.Ae3 cxd4 (8...Ag4?! 9.dxc5) 9.Axd4 Ag4!

8...Ac6 9.Ae3

9...Ag4! 10.h3 cxd4 11.Axd4 Ae6 12.Ae1 Ac8=, Chadaev-Ivanchuk, Olginka 2011.
Part 11. Rare Lines on Move 3

Step by Step

1.e4 c5 2.\( \mathcal{N} \)f3 e6

A. 3.b4
B. 3.b3
C. 3.c4
D. 3.\( \mathcal{D} \)c3
E. 3.\( \mathcal{W} \)e2
F. 3.g3

A. 3.b4 cb4

What can White really count on by giving up a pawn? He does take the opening initiative and he reduces Black’s control of the centre.

Chess Stars recently published the 550 pages-thick Soloviov’s investigations on the Sicilian Gambit, The Modern Anti-Sicilian (via the move order 2.a3!?). The author summarised his opinion for the readers of this book in the following way: ‘My feeling is that White has compensation for the pawn, but not more. For engines, Black has a nice position. Over the board, it is the opposite. Perhaps it is a matter of taste. Defenders like Black, attackers prefer White.’ A few months ago, when I faced 3.b4 for the first time in my practice, I decided to question White’s strategy by 3...b6!?.

See my annotations to game 57 S.Williams-Delchev, London 2013.

After the game, I took my time to make my homework and eventually came up with the following suggestion for more principled readers:

4.a3

4.d4 (4.\( \mathcal{A} \)b2 \( \mathcal{D} \)f6) gives Black additional possibilities as 4...\( \mathcal{D} \)f6
Rare Lines on Move 3

5...d3 d5 6.e5 De4. The knight hinders White’s development, for example, 7.0-0 Dc6 8.a3 (8.Dbd2 Dc3 9.Ke1 Dd7) 8...f5 9.exf6 Dxf6 10.de3 Dd7 11.axb4 Dxb4 12.c3 Dxc3 13.Dxc3 Dxc3 14.Db1 Dd4 15.de5 a5=, Zvjaginsev-Neverov, St. Petersburg 2010.

GM Zvjaginsev is the only top level GM who plays the gambit in classical time controls on a regular basis. He is some sort of the last of the Mohicans.

4...d5 5.e5 Dc6 6.axb4 Dxb4 7.c3 De7 8.d4 Dd7 9.de3 Ec8 10.0-0 a6

Black should be able to reach this position against any White’s move order.

11.Dbd2

a) 11.Dfd2 Dh6 12.Db3 Df5 13.a3 a3 14.exa3 Ec7 15.We2 Da7! 16.c5 Db5 – I do not see enough compensation after the exchange of the light-squared bishops.

b) 11.a3 Da7 12.Dxe7 Dxe7+.

c) 11.de1 Da7 12.f4 Dh6 13.g4 Db5 14.f5 Dg5 and it is unclear how to develop the attack. White should not forget that his king is also in danger. Look at the funny variation 15.f6 Dxf6 16.Dxg5 fxg5 17.De3 Dxc3 18.Dh3 Db6 19.Df3

We’ll wait for an opportunity to develop our knight to h6. The centre is closed so we can leave our king there for a while and attack the c3-pawn.


11...Da5!

It is essential to prevent c3-c4! which would follow after 11...Da7.

12.Dc2


12...Dc7 13.Db2

13.Dxh7? Dxc3 14.Db1 Db4 15.Db2 Dh6 16.Dc2 0-0 was hop-
less for White in Zvjaginsev-Rod­shtein, Moscow 2012.

13...\( \text{h6} \) 14.\( \text{fcl} \) \( \text{b5} \) 15.\( \text{xb5}+ \) axb5 16.\( \text{a3} \) \( \text{xa3} \) 17.\( \text{xa3} \) 0-0 18.\( \text{wb2} \) \( \text{c4} \) 19.\( \text{xc4} \) bxc4 20.\( \text{ca1} \)

It will be difficult to convert the extra pawn due to the activity of White’s heavy pieces.

B. 3.b3

\[ \text{3...a6!?} \]

Alternatively, Black might explore 3...\( \text{c6} \) 4.\( \text{b2} \) \( \text{f6} \).

I used to play before 3...b6, but then 4.d4 cxd4 5.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{f6} \) is quite risky. The text move is more useful.

4.\( \text{b2} \) \( \text{c6} \)

White must define his plans. Main continuations are:

B1. 5.d4?!; B2. 5.c4!

Other minor options:

a) 5.\( \text{e2}! \) d6 6.g3 \( \text{f6} \) 7.\( \text{g2} \) \( \text{e7} \) 8.0-0 0-0 9.d4 cxd4 10.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{d7} \) with a pleasant open Sicilian.

b) 5.\( \text{e2} \) d5!? Black enters a fa­vourable position with an isolated pawn. Another decent solution is 5...\( \text{f6} \) 6.e5 \( \text{d5} \) 7.0-0 \( \text{f4}! \) 8.\( \text{e1} \) d5 9.exd6 (9.\( \text{f1} \) g5!?->) 9...\( \text{xd6} \) 10.\( \text{f1} \) 0-0=. 6.exd5 exd5 7.d4 \( \text{f6} \) 8.0-0 \( \text{e7} \) 9.dxc5. \( \text{xc5}=- \). Black’s plan is ...0-0, ...\( \text{e8} \), ...\( \text{g4} \), ...\( \text{e4} \). He should only avoid exchanges.

c) 5.g3?! (if White wanted to fianchetto the bishop, 3.g3! would have been the better choice) 5...d5! 6.exd5 exd5 7.\( \text{g2} \) (7.d4 \( \text{f6} \) 8.\( \text{g2} \) \( \text{e7}+ \)) 7...\( \text{e7}+ \) 8.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{xe2}+ \) 9.\( \text{xe2} \) \( \text{f5} \)

B1. 5.d4?! cxd4 6.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{f6} \)

By this original move, Black pins the d4-knight along the main diagonal. Soon the bishop will crucify it on the other diagonal, f2-c5, forcing c3. Evidently, White’s strategy is a failure.

7.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{c5} \) 8.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{ge7} \)

This is a good and safe developing move. However, if you feel like grabbing a pawn, you can follow in my footsteps: 8...\( \text{g6}! ? \) 9.0-0 \( \text{xe4} \) 10.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{f4} \) 11.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{c7} \) 12.\( \text{xc6} \) dxc6
Rare Lines on Move 3

13.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)e4 \(\text{\textit{f}}\)7 14.\(\text{c}\)4 \(\text{\textit{g}}\)6 15.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)xf6 \(\text{\textit{h}}\)6
16.\(\text{\textit{x}}\)xf6 gxf6, Rivas Pastor-Delchev, Benasque 2005. However, White has probably enough long-term compensation. I encountered later 9.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)3?! \(\text{\textit{e}}\)5 10.0-0 \(\text{\textit{g}}\)6 11.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d2 0-0=, Paljusaj-Delchev, Sibenik 2007.

9.0-0 0-0

The game is balanced, but White should still make a couple of accurate moves. For instance, 10.\(\text{\textit{a}}\)a3?! is not enough, owing to 10...d5 11.exd5 exd5=.

B2. 5.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)4!? \(\text{\textit{w}}\)c7 (discouraging 6.d4? in view of 6...cxd4 7.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)xd4 \(\text{\textit{w}}\)e5)

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6.\(\text{\textit{g}}\)3

6.\(\text{\textit{e}}\)2 \(\text{\textit{f}}\)6 7.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)c3 \(\text{\textit{d}}\)d4 8.d3 is too modest. Perhaps simplest would be 8...\(\text{\textit{x}}\)xe2 9.\(\text{\textit{w}}\)xe2 d6=.

6.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)c3 \(\text{\textit{g}}\)6 7.\(\text{\textit{g}}\)3 (7.d4 cxd4 8.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)xd4 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)c5) 7...\(\text{\textit{b}}\)8?! 8.\(\text{\textit{g}}\)2 b5 9.d3 \(\text{\textit{e}}\)7 10.0-0 0-0 11.\(\text{\textit{e}}\)1 d6=.

6...\(\text{\textit{f}}\)6 7.\(\text{\textit{e}}\)5

Alternatively: 7.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)c3 \(\text{\textit{b}}\)8!? 8.\(\text{\textit{g}}\)2 b5=; 7.\(\text{\textit{w}}\)e2 e5= (7...d6!?).

7...\(\text{\textit{g}}\)4 8.\(\text{\textit{w}}\)e2 \(\text{\textit{h}}\)6

I’m following the game Romanov-Svidler, Sochi 2012, where Black had a comfortable game. Another option is 8...\(\text{\textit{e}}\)7 9.\(\text{\textit{g}}\)2 0-0 10.0-0 f6.

9.\(\text{\textit{a}}\)a3 \(\text{\textit{e}}\)7 10.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)c2 0-0 11.\(\text{\textit{g}}\)2

\begin{center}
\begin{figure}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_board}
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11...b5! 12.0-0 bxc4 13.\(\text{\textit{w}}\)xc4 a5=.

C. 3.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)4 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)c6

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\begin{figure}
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C1. 4.d4; C2. 4.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)c3
C1. 4.d4 cxd4 5.\textit{\&}xd4 \textit{\&}f6
6.\textit{\&}c3

6.\textit{\&}xc6 dxc6!? (6...bxc6=) is good for Black

6...\textit{\&}b4 7.\textit{\&}xc6

Black can answer 7.f3?! or 7.\textit{\&}d3?! by 7...0-0, while 7.\textit{\&}b5 could be faced by 7...a6!? 8.\textit{\&}d6 \textit{\&}e7 9.\textit{\&}f4 e5 10.\textit{\&}f5 \textit{\&}f8 11.\textit{\&}g5 d5 12.exd5 \textit{\&}f5=, Lilov-Drenchev, Sunny Beach 2007.

7...bxc6

It is widely believed that 7...dxc6 8.\textit{\&}xd8+ \textit{\&}d8 is equal, but in my opinion 9.e5!? gives White a lasting initiative on the kingside. It could be developed with h4 and \textit{\&}h3.

8.\textit{\&}d3

Or 8.e5?! \textit{\&}e4 9.\textit{\&}g4 \textit{\&}xc3 10.a3, when 10...\textit{\&}f8!? is the safest way to get an edge: 11.bxc3 \textit{\&}a5 12.\textit{\&}g3 g6 13.\textit{\&}f4 \textit{\&}g7=, Alburt-Sunye Neto, Wijk aan Zee 1980.

8...e5! 9.0-0 0-0

9...\textit{\&}xc3 is overoptimistic. White can seize the initiative with 10.bxc3 d6 11.\textit{\&}a4 \textit{\&}c7 12.c5 d5 13.exd5 \textit{\&}xd5 14.c4 \textit{\&}e7 15.\textit{\&}b2 0-0 16.\textit{\&}ae1 f6 17.\textit{\&}c2 h6 18.f4\textdagger.

10.\textit{\&}e3

Here is the best place for the bishop. After 10.\textit{\&}g5 h6 11.\textit{\&}h4 \textit{\&}c5! Black seizes the g1-a7 diagonal. In the game Christiansen-Ribli, Deutschland 1992 White tried to attack firstly on the queenside with 12.a3?! a5 13.\textit{\&}d2 d6 14.\textit{\&}h1 \textit{\&}e6, and then on the other wing –15.f4?! exf4 16.\textit{\&}xf4 g5 17.\textit{\&}af1, but 17...\textit{\&}d4! 18.\textit{\&}4f3 \textit{\&}g4! 19.\textit{\&}g3 \textit{\&}e5 20.\textit{\&}e5 \textit{\&}e5\textdagger proved to be in Black’s favour.

This example shows that 10.\textit{\&}d2 could turn out to be a waste of time. Black answers ...\textit{\&}c5, ...d6, ...\textit{\&}e6.

10...\textit{\&}xc3

In his game against Kramnik, Kramnik-Kasparov, New York 1994, Kasparov played 10...d6?! 11.\textit{\&}a4!. In his comments he wrote that Black should double the opponent’s pawns to achieve equality.

11.bxc3 d6 12.h3 \textit{\&}e6
Rare Lines on Move 3

13.f4∞

**Game 54** Chandler-Emms, Hastings 2000 (see "Complete Games") confirmed Kasparov's evaluation. Black had everything under control.

C2. 4.\textit{c}c3

4...\textit{e}5!?

Any move which hinders \textit{d}4 should be a fair alternative. Still, 4...b6, played by Swiercz, Sakaev, Movsesian, looks a bit too extravagant to me.

4...\textit{d}d4!? is more logical as it solves the problem altogether! Its main advantage is that the arising positions are nearly unexplored.

5.\textit{x}d4

If White delays this exchange, we'll get the possibility to save ...e6-e5

- 5.d3 \textit{e}7 6.\textit{x}d4 cxd4 7.e2 \textit{c}6 8.g3 b5!? with an initiative, Dolzhikova-Muzychuk, Kharkov 2012.

- 5...cxd4 6.e2 e5 7.g3 g6 8.e2 h5

I did not like 9.0-0! h4 (9...\textit{h}6 10.d3) 10.\textit{h}1 \textit{h}6 11.d3 d6 12.f4 (12.\textit{x}xh6 \textit{x}xh6 13.f4 \textit{d}7) 12...\textit{x}f4 13.\textit{x}f4 \textit{xf}4 14.\textit{xf}4 \textit{g}5 15.\textit{f}f1 \textit{e}6 16.\textit{f}2 0-0-0 17.\textit{f}1 h3 18.g3 \textit{e}5. White's pawn structure is more flexible.

4...\textit{e}5 is a solid option which brings excellent practical results. Black is two tempi behind in a symmetric position, but he can push ...f5 without any preparation.

White can develop his bishop to \textit{e}2 or \textit{g}2. The same is valid for Black.

White's play on the queenside can be slowed down with ...a5. Look at the game Naiditsch-Perunovic, Paks 2014:

- 5.a3 a5 6.e2 d6 7.d3 a7 8.\textit{d}5 f5 9.exf5 \textit{xf}5 10.0-0 \textit{f}6 11.\textit{h}4 \textit{e}6 12.\textit{xe}7 \textit{xe}7 13.f4 0-0 14.fxe5 dxe5

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Black's game is already slightly better.

5.d3 d6 6.e2 e7 7.0-0 f5 8.exf5 xf5 9.e3 d6 10.g5 0-0 11.f3 d7 12.ge4 ab8 13.xf6+ xf6 14.e4 (Pridorozhni-Jakovenko, Aix-les-Bains 2011) 14...g4 15.f3 f5 16.e4 h8=, Zhigalko-Roiz, Olginka 2011 (16...g4 17.f3 draw, Solak-Nikolov, Albena 2012).

White can also fianchetto his bishop – 5.d3 d6 6.g3 e7 7.g2 f5, see game 56 Leven tic-Delchev, Zadar 2004.

D. 3.c3

This continuation is often used by White to sidestep rare move orders of the opponent, for instance 3.d4 cxd4 4.cxd4 c6. Nothing unusual so far, we play:

3...c6

If your repertoire includes the Kan, you should choose 3...a6! when 4.d4 would lead to the most pleasant version of the Kan – with c3 – while 4.g3 b5 is double-edged and in any case not worse for Black.

4.b5

White's last move leads to an amazingly popular lately hybrid between different systems.

4...d4!
Rare Lines on Move 3

7...d5 8.exd5 exd5 9.\(\text{\texttt{axa2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{g4}}\) 10.\(\text{\texttt{e1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e7}}\) 11.\(\text{\texttt{xd4}}\) cxd4 12.\(\text{\texttt{e2}}\) d3?! gives Black full compensation for the pawn after 13.cx\(\text{\texttt{d3}}\) 0-0 14.d4 \(\text{\texttt{e8}}\) 15.f3 \(\text{\texttt{f5}}\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{b1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xb1}}\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{xb1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{wc7}}\) 18.\(\text{\texttt{d1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{d6}}\) 19.g3 \(\text{\texttt{e6}}\).

Perhaps the simplest solution has been demonstrated by Kiril Georgiev against Tissir, Gibraltar 2005: 7...\(\text{\texttt{wc7}}\)!? 8.h3 (8.d3 \(\text{\texttt{c6}}\)!? is similar) 8...\(\text{\texttt{e7}}\) 9.d3 \(\text{\texttt{c6}}\)!? White defended his bishop and the knight retreats back.

Black has many good plans after 5.a4. I propose 5...a6 6.\(\text{\texttt{d3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{c6}}\) 6...\(\text{\texttt{f6}}\) 7.\(\text{\texttt{xd4}}\) cxd4 8.\(\text{\texttt{e2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{g6}}\). Black's play is clear and easy. 9.g3 h5 10.\(\text{\texttt{d3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{f6}}\) 11.h4 (11.d3 \(\text{\texttt{b4}}\)) 11...\(\text{\texttt{d6}}\) 12.d3 \(\text{\texttt{g4}}\) 13.\(\text{\texttt{f4}}\). This position occurred in Dragojlovic-Papp Zoltan, Szeged 1998. Black could have gained the edge with 13...\(\text{\texttt{b4}}\)!

The most consistent response to 5.\(\text{\texttt{d3}}\) is 5...\(\text{\texttt{xf3?!}}\) (5...\(\text{\texttt{e7}}\) 6.\(\text{\texttt{xd4}}\) cxd4 7.\(\text{\texttt{e2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{c6}}\) is a worthy alternative) 6.\(\text{\texttt{xf3}}\) a6 7.0-0 (or 7.b3 \(\text{\texttt{d6}}\) 8.\(\text{\texttt{b2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e5=?}}\)) 7...\(\text{\texttt{wc7}}\) 8.\(\text{\texttt{xe1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{d6}}\)! 9.g3 \(\text{\texttt{f6}}\) 10.\(\text{\texttt{f1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e5=?}}\) 11.\(\text{\texttt{g2}}\) b5 12.a4?! b4\(\textsuperscript{\texttt{\textdagger}}\), Iordachescu-Rublevsky, FIDE-Wch k.o. Tripoli 2004. Black's play in this game was clear and straightforward.

5...a6 6.\(\text{\texttt{d3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{c6}}\)!

A funny position. Both sides have lost tempi aiming mostly at hindering the opponent's plans. It seems to me that White has been outwitted. He cannot even transpose to the main open Sicilian lines:

**D1. 7.\(\text{\texttt{e2}}\); D2. 7.\(\text{\texttt{e1}}\)**

**D1. 7.\(\text{\texttt{e2}}\)**

In mathematics, you just write: 7...\(\text{\texttt{c7}}\) (or 7...\(\text{\texttt{f6}}\)) 8.d4, transposing to our main line 'Taimanov' and move on to other pending problems.

You should also consider 7...b5?! 8.d4 cxd4 9.\(\text{\texttt{xd4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{b7}}\) 10.\(\text{\texttt{xc6}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xc6}}\), Andreikin-Caruana, Biel 2010.

Finally, 7...\(\text{\texttt{d4?!}}\) is a capital way of preventing d4. Perhaps it is enough for equality, but you risk to be summoned by the chief arbiter for a booze control...

**D2. 7.\(\text{\texttt{e1}}\) g5!**
Part 11

The flank assault is perfectly grounded here. The rook move to e1 prepared h1f1 and d4, but deprived the f3-knight of retreat squares. In practice White has tried:

8.h1f1 hg7 9.b3 g4 10.hh1 e5 11.b2 d5 (it is better to keep the centre closed – 11...d6!) 12.exd5 exd5 13.e4 eg6 14.hxg6 eg8∞ Safarli-Brunello, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010.

8.h3 h5 9.eg2 d6 10.b3 (10. eg2? gh4 11.gg3 f4–+ Fruteau-Skripchenko, Chartres 2005, 10.g3? gh7) 10...g4 11.eg2 eg5!

8.g3 d6 9.b3 eg7 10.eg2, Souleidis-Bousios, Halkidiki 2002, 10...g4 11.eg4 h5;

8.eg1 – see game 55 Mark Tseitlin-Avrukh, Tel Aviv 2002.

E. 3.eg2 eg6 4.c3

White’s queen does not fit in to the g3-design: 4.g3 eg7 5.ge2 g6 6.0-0 eg7 7.c3 0-0 8.ed1 e5=.

4...d5! 5.d3 eg6 6.g3 eg7 7.ge2 0-0 8.0-0 b5=.

The c3-pawn provides a good target to attack. The Skripchenko-Koneru, blitz Moscow 2010, went on 9.e5 eg7 10.h4 b4 11.g4 bxc3 12.bxc3 aa6 13.be2 ab5 14.ge1 ab8 15.g1f1, when best would have been 15...aa3 with a clear advantage.

F. 3.g3!?  

White avoids the risks of the open Sicilian and all the theoretical overhead it involves. The play takes a manoeuvring course without tactical complications. This allows the strategically-oriented players to impose their style which would be impossible after the sharp 3.d4. Sometimes the surprise effect can bring quick dividends. Look at my game Delchev-Bagaturov, Edirne 2013: 3...eg6?! 4.e5 eg5 5.g2 d6 6.0-0 eg6 7.exd6 eg6 8.d4 0-0 9.dxc6 eg8 10.eg2 eg7 11.c4 eg7 12.g4 eg6 13.exd6 eg6 14.ed1 eg7 15.c3 a6 16.exd2 ed7 17.ge5 ad8 18.ed1 h6 19.ge4 e5. I made all the most natural moves and already my advantage is decisive – 20.exd7! exd7 21.g6+ gxf6 22.ge4+ was winning.
Black can prevent e5 with 3... \( \text{c6} \) 4.\( \text{g2} \) \( \text{f6} \) which I analyse as line F1, or he can attempt to exploit White’s tricky move order with 3... d5 which is line F2. The choice depends entirely on your taste. Line F1 is closer to the spirit of the Sicilian while line F2 offers active piece play.

**F1. 3...\( \text{c6} \) 4.\( \text{g2} \) \( \text{f6} \)**

5.\( \text{e2} \)

a) 5.\( \text{c3} \) indicates that White intends to push d4, having side-stepped the Kan and a number of other lines. The principled answer is 5...d5 6.exd5 exd5 7.d4 cxd4 8.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{g4} \)!. I got this position against Malakhov. He chose 9.\( \text{xc6} \) bxc6 10.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{e7} \) 11.0-0 0-0 12.\( \text{a4} \) when best is 12...\( \text{e8} \) with an excellent position.

Similar is 9.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{c5} \) 10.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{b6} \) 11.\( \text{xc6} \) bxc6 12.\( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{xc5} \) 13.0-0 0-0.

The latest attempt to improve White’s play was 9.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{d7} \) 10.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{e7} \) 11.0-0 0-0 12.\( \text{e1} \) \( \text{e8} \) 13.\( \text{b3} \), Safarli-Tregubov, Loo 2013, when 13...\( \text{b4} \) deserves attention.

b) 5.d3 d6 6.0-0 \( \text{e7} \)

Both sides have an enormous choice here. For instance:

7.c4 0-0 8.\( \text{c3} \) a6 9.d4 cxd4 10.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{d7} \) followed up by ...\( \text{b5} \);
7.\( \text{e1} \) 0-0 8.c3 \( \text{d7} \) 9.\( \text{bd2} \) \( \text{c7} \)!

(aimed against e4-e5) 10.a3 \( \text{ac8} \) 11.d4 cxd4 12.cxd4 e5 13.d5 \( \text{b8} \) 14.\( \text{f1} \) a5=, Van der Weide-Kempinski, Groningen 1996;
7.\( \text{g5} \) h6 8.\( \text{h3} \) e5 9.f4 \( \text{g4} \) 10.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{d4} \) 11.\( \text{f2} \) \( \text{f3} \).

5...\( \text{e5} \)

Fighting for every inch of the centre. Black can also allow e4-e5 after 5...d6 6.0-0 \( \text{e7} \) 7.c3 (7.\( \text{d1} \) 0-0 8.d4 cxd4 9.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 10.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{d7} \) 11.\( \text{c4} \) a6 12.\( \text{c3} \) b5=) 7...0-0 8.d4 (8.\( \text{d1} \) d5! 9.e5 \( \text{d7} \) 10.d4 a5 11.\( \text{e3} \) b6=) 8...d5 9.e5 \( \text{d7} \)
This is the favourite set-up for Black of my club teammate Ganguly. He is Anand’s second and one of the world’s most erudite opening experts. He always puts his queenside pawns on b6 and a5:

10.\texttt{\textbf{f}e3} a5 11.a4 b6 12.\texttt{\textbf{c}c1} a6 13.\texttt{\textbf{d}d1}, E.Hansen-Ganguly, Linares 2013, 13...b5! 14.axb5 \texttt{\textbf{x}b5} 15.\texttt{\textbf{b}d2} \texttt{\textbf{b}b8};

10.\texttt{\textbf{h}4} b6 11.\texttt{\textbf{g}5} (11.\texttt{\textbf{f}4} a5 12.\texttt{\textbf{e}e1} a6 13.\texttt{\textbf{d}d1} \texttt{\textbf{c}c8} 14.\texttt{\textbf{f}f1} \texttt{\textbf{x}f1} 15.\texttt{\textbf{x}f1} b5 16.\texttt{\textbf{a}3} \texttt{\textbf{b}b6} 17.\texttt{\textbf{h}5} b4 18.\texttt{\textbf{c}c2} bxc3 19.bxc3 \texttt{\textbf{b}b2} 20.h6 g6 21.\texttt{\textbf{d}d2} cxd4 22.\texttt{\textbf{c}xd4} \texttt{\textbf{x}d2} 23.\texttt{\textbf{x}d2} \texttt{\textbf{c}c5+}, Vea-Ganguly, Caleta 2014) 11...a5 12.\texttt{\textbf{c}c1} a6 13.\texttt{\textbf{e}e3} \texttt{\textbf{c}c8!} (13...

10.\texttt{\textbf{h}4} b6 11.\texttt{\textbf{g}5} (11.\texttt{\textbf{f}4} a5 12.\texttt{\textbf{e}e1} a6 13.\texttt{\textbf{d}d1} \texttt{\textbf{c}c8} 14.\texttt{\textbf{f}f1} \texttt{\textbf{x}f1} 15.\texttt{\textbf{x}f1} b5 16.\texttt{\textbf{a}3} \texttt{\textbf{b}b6} 17.\texttt{\textbf{h}5} b4 18.\texttt{\textbf{c}c2} bxc3 19.bxc3 \texttt{\textbf{b}b2} 20.h6 g6 21.\texttt{\textbf{d}d2} cxd4 22.\texttt{\textbf{c}xd4} \texttt{\textbf{x}d2} 23.\texttt{\textbf{x}d2} \texttt{\textbf{c}c5+}, Vea-Ganguly, Caleta 2014) 11...a5 12.\texttt{\textbf{c}c1} a6 13.\texttt{\textbf{e}e3} \texttt{\textbf{c}c8!} (13...

6.0-0 \texttt{\textbf{e}e7}

White has not shown a convincing plan here. The most natural try is 7.c3 0-0 8.d4, but 8...cxd4 9.cxd4 exd4 10.e5 \texttt{\textbf{e}e8} 11.\texttt{\textbf{d}d1} \texttt{\textbf{b}b6} is good for Black. Therefore, White should develop in the King’s Indian manner:

7.\texttt{\textbf{a}a3} 0-0 8.\texttt{\textbf{c}c3} \texttt{\textbf{d}d6} 9.\texttt{\textbf{d}d3} \texttt{\textbf{e}e8} 10.\texttt{\textbf{c}c4} \texttt{\textbf{f}f8} 11.\texttt{\textbf{e}e3} \texttt{\textbf{h}6}

I’m following the game Naiditsch-E.Hansen, Reykjavik 2014. I’m not sure about Black’s last move. 11...\texttt{\textbf{b}b8} planning ...\texttt{\textbf{b}7-b5-b4} is worth considering

12.\texttt{\textbf{h}4} g6 13.\texttt{\textbf{h}1} \texttt{\textbf{g}7} 14.\texttt{\textbf{d}d2} \texttt{\textbf{g}8} = 15.\texttt{\textbf{a}e1}

Obviously White’s plan is f4 so it would be good before moving the b-pawn to defend the c6-knight with 15...\texttt{\textbf{d}7!}. Then 16.f4 would drop a pawn after 16...\texttt{\textbf{e}f}4 17.gxf4 \texttt{\textbf{x}e4}.

F2. 3...d5?!

The point is that White cannot enter King’s Indian structure with 4.d3 since 4...dxe4 5.dxe4 \texttt{\textbf{x}d1+} 6.\texttt{\textbf{x}d1} \texttt{\textbf{f}6} can be only in Black’s favour.

4.\texttt{\textbf{e}x}xd5 \texttt{\textbf{e}x}xd5 5.d4 (5.\texttt{\textbf{g}2} \texttt{\textbf{e}7+}) 5...\texttt{\textbf{f}6}!

It is better to castle quickly than display activity with 5...\texttt{\textbf{c}c6} 6.\texttt{\textbf{g}2}
Rare Lines on Move 3

\[ \text{g}4 7.0-0 \text{e}7 \text{ in view of } 8.\text{dxc}5! \]

6.\text{g}2 \text{e}7

6...\text{we}7+ is a mistake. In Rabineau-Delchev, Fourmies 2013, was 7.\text{we}2?! \text{xe}2+ 8.\text{xe}2 \text{c}6 and I was already better.

7.\text{e}5 \text{xd}4 8.0-0 \text{xe}5 9.\text{e}1 \text{e}4 10.\text{f}4 \text{f}6 11.\text{f}3 \text{e}7 \text{is also pleasant. White should answer:}

7.\text{e}3! \text{g}4 8.0-0 \text{xe}3 9.\text{xe}3 \text{c}6 10.c4! and Black’s centre is crumbling down.

7.0-0 0-0 8.\text{c}3

8.\text{e}3 \text{xd}4 (8...\text{g}4?! 9.\text{dxc}5) 9.\text{d}4 \text{g}4! (9...\text{c}6 10.h3! was slightly better for White in Adams-Kryvoruchko, Tromso 2013, since Black’s bishop could not find an active stand) 10.\text{d}3 \text{d}7 11.c4 (11.\text{c}3 \text{c}6 12.\text{f}e1 \text{f}e8=) 11...\text{c}6 12.\text{xc}6 \text{bxc}6 13.\text{c}3=. If White attempts to trick us with the move order - 8.h3, we’ll not take on d4 – 8...\text{c}6! 9.\text{e}3 \text{b}6 10.\text{c}3 \text{xb}2 11.\text{a}4 \text{a}3 12.\text{xc}5 b6=.

8.\text{dxc}5 \text{xc}5 9.\text{g}5 \text{c}6 10.\text{c}3 \text{e}6= 11.\text{d}2?! h6.

8...\text{c}6 9.\text{xe}3

9.\text{g}5 h6 10.\text{xf}6 \text{xf}6 11.\text{dxc}5 \text{xc}3 12.\text{bxc}3 \text{a}5=;

9.\text{dxc}5 \text{xc}5 is equal (9...d4 is a dubious attempt to play in the Tarrasch style – 10.\text{a}4 \text{g}4 11.\text{h}3 \text{f}5 12.a3) 10.\text{g}5 d4 11.\text{e}4 \text{e}7 12.\text{xf}6+ \text{xf}6 13.\text{xf}6 \text{xf}6 14.\text{e}1 \text{f}5 15.\text{d}3 \text{e}5 16.\text{xe}5 \text{xe}5=, Balogh-So, Saint Louis 2012.

9...\text{g}4! 10.\text{h}3 \text{cxd}4 11.\text{xd}4 \text{e}6 12.\text{e}1 \text{c}8=)

12...h6 13.\text{e}2 \text{d}6 14.\text{xf}6 \text{xf}6 15.\text{ed}4 \text{c}5 16.c3 \text{ad}8 was also balanced in Sadvakasov-Khalifman, Liepaja 2001.

13.\text{e}2 \text{f}5 14.\text{c}3 \text{e}8 15.\text{e}3 \text{e}4 16.\text{ed}4 \text{d}7 17.\text{d}2 \text{g}6

Ivanchuk follows the rule to keep more pieces when playing with an isolated pawn, but 17...\text{xg}2 was also good. The game went on 18.\text{xc}6 (18.\text{a}4 a6) 18...\text{bxc}6 19.\text{a}4 \text{d}6 with mutual chances, Chadaev-Ivanchuk, Olginka 2011.
Part 11. Rare Lines on Move 3

Complete Games

54. Chandler-Emms
Hastings 2000

1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.Qxd4 Qc6 5.c4 Qf6 6.Qc3 Qb4
7.Qxc6 bxc6! 8.Qd3 e5 9.0-0 0-0
10.Qe3 Qxc3 (10...d6?! 11.tLla 4!) 11.bxc3 d6= 12.h3 Qe6

13.f4

If White seeks initiative on the queenside, the pawn on c4 could fall quickly, as in the game Van Weersel-Nill, Chisinau 2005, 13.b1 Qc7 14.Qd2 (14.Qa4 Qd7) 14...Qd7
15.Qfd1 Qfd8 16.Qb4? c5 17.Qb2 Qb6

13...exf4 14.Qxf4 Qb6 15.Qh1 Qc5

White failed to achieve substantial compensation for the split pawn structure. Still, the bishop pair helps him to hold on.

16.Qc2 Qad8 17.Qf3 Qfe8!

Black improves his rooks before eating the enemy pawns. 17...Qxc4 is about equal: 18.Qe3 Qh5 (18...Qa5?) 19.Qxf6 gxf6 20.Qg4 Qh8 21.Qd4)

18.Qd2 Qc4?!

Black has achieved perfect coordination between his pieces. He could have displayed that by opening up the centre: 18...d5! Instead,
he inexplicably decides to sacrifice the exchange accepting an inferior position.

19.\textit{\texttt{g5}} \texttt{e4} 20.\texttt{e4} \texttt{e4}
21.\texttt{d8} \texttt{d8}=

The a7-pawn is weak, but apparently Black should be able to hold the enemy to a draw.

22.\texttt{d3} \texttt{d5} 23.\texttt{e1} \texttt{h4}
24.\texttt{d4} \texttt{c7} 25.\texttt{d3} \texttt{a3} 26.\texttt{c2}
\texttt{b8} 27.\texttt{a4} \texttt{c5} 28.\texttt{d2} \texttt{e7}?
29.\texttt{d4} \texttt{b6} 30.\texttt{e5}?

White misses his chance to reach a clear edge by 30.\texttt{b6}! ab6 31.\texttt{a8}
\texttt{f8} 32.\texttt{a8} \texttt{f8} 33.\texttt{a4}±. Now Black gradually becomes better.

30...\texttt{h6} 31.\texttt{e3} \texttt{h7} 32.\texttt{g3} \texttt{f6}
33.\texttt{e3} \texttt{d7} 34.\texttt{c5} \texttt{f5} 35.\texttt{a5}
\texttt{b7} 36.\texttt{a4} \texttt{e4} 37.\texttt{xb7} \texttt{xb7}
38.\texttt{d8} \texttt{c5} 39.\texttt{d6} \texttt{c4} 40.\texttt{h2}
a6 41.a3 a5 42.\texttt{h1} a4 43.\texttt{h2}
\texttt{f7} 44.\texttt{e3} \texttt{f5} 45.\texttt{e5} \texttt{f8} 46.\texttt{e2}
\texttt{xa3} 47.\texttt{xe4} \texttt{fxe4} 48.\texttt{f5}+ \texttt{h8}
49.\texttt{c8}+ \texttt{h7} 50.\texttt{f5}+ g6 51.\texttt{f7}+ \texttt{h8} 52.\texttt{f6}+ \texttt{h7} 53.\texttt{f7}+ \texttt{h8} 54.\texttt{f6}+ \texttt{g8} 55.\texttt{g6}+ \texttt{f8} 56.\texttt{xe6}+ \texttt{e7} 57.\texttt{g5}+ \texttt{e6}
58.\texttt{g6}+ \texttt{d7} 59.\texttt{f5}+ \texttt{c7}
60.\texttt{f7}+ \texttt{c8} 61.\texttt{e8}+ \texttt{c7} Draw.

5...\texttt{a6} 6.\texttt{d3} \texttt{c6}!? 7.\texttt{e1} \texttt{g5}!
8.\texttt{h1}

8...\texttt{g7}

Avrukh should have tried to develop his initiative by 8...\texttt{g4}! 9.\texttt{g1}
h5 10.\texttt{f1} (10.f4 \texttt{h6}!), when 10...
\texttt{d6}! best fits in the spirit of the Taimanov. Black's design is certainly not to mate the opponent, but to cramp him and prevent the freeing d2-d4

9.\texttt{f1} \texttt{h6} 10.\texttt{d3} \texttt{ge7} 11.\texttt{e2}
d5?!

Black is inconsistent. Firstly he refrained from g4, now he suddenly opens up the centre. 11...\texttt{g6} 12.\texttt{g3} 0-0 13.\texttt{h5} \texttt{h8}= looks preferable to me.

12.\texttt{c3} \texttt{dxe4} 13.\texttt{dxe4} \texttt{xd1}
14.\texttt{xd1} b6 15.\texttt{g3} \texttt{g8}

15...\texttt{g6}! 16.\texttt{h5} 0-0 would be roughly equal.

16.\texttt{d2}

Black's awkward break-trough in the centre only lost his tempo-
rary initiative and activated the enemy pieces. Now 16.\( \text{h}5 \text{h}8 \) 17.\( \text{h}4 \pm \) would have underlined this fact, but White sticks to routine manoeuvring and again falls under pressure. This time he gets into trouble because of his weak light squares.

16...\( \text{d}e5 \) 17.\( \text{c}c4 \text{xc}4 \)
18.\( \text{xc}4 \text{b}7 \) 19.\( \text{g}g1?! \text{e}5 \)
20.f3 \( \text{c}8 \) 21.\( \text{h}5 \text{e}7 \) 22.\( \text{e}3 \text{d}6 \) 23.\( \text{f}1 \text{c}6 \) 24.\( \text{d}2 \text{b}5 \pm \)
25.\( \text{ad}1 \text{a}7 \)

26.b3?

Avrukh suggests 26.\( \text{d}3 \) as the only move (26...\( \text{c}4 \) 27.\( \text{c}4 \text{c}4 \) 28.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{b}5 \) 29.a4 \( \text{c}6 \) 30.a5\( \pm \)), but 26...\( \text{d}3 \) 27.\( \text{ad}3 \) \( \text{d}7 \pm \) still leaves Black with the better game because of the ridiculous knight at the edge.

26...\( \text{f}1 \) 27.\( \text{f}1 \text{f}5 \)! (winning a pawn) 28.\( \text{ef}5 \text{xf}5 \) 29.\( \text{d}3 \text{xh}2 \) 30.\( \text{f}2 \text{g}4 \) 31.\( \text{f}4 \text{f}7 \) 32.\( \text{g}3 \text{g}6 \) 33.\( \text{g}2 \text{hxh}5 \) 34.\( \text{hxh}2 \text{e}7 \)
35.\( \text{d}8 \text{xd}8 \) 36.\( \text{xd}8 \text{e}6 \) 37.\( \text{a}4 \text{a}5 \) 38.\( \text{b}8 \text{g}6 \) 39.\( \text{g}8 \pm \text{f}7 \)
40.\( \text{b}8 \text{b}6 \) 41.\( \text{b}7 \pm \text{g}6 \) 42.\( \text{g}2 \text{h}5 \) 43.\( \text{b}8 \text{f}7 \) 44.\( \text{b}7 \pm \text{f}6 \)
45.\( \text{b}8 \text{d}2 \) 46.\( \text{f}1 \text{d}3 \) 47.\( \text{xb}6 \text{g}xg3 \) 48.\( \text{g}2 \text{h}4 \) 49.\( \text{xc}5 \text{d}2 + \)
50.\( \text{g}1 \text{f}5 \) 51.\( \text{b}8 \text{h}3 \) 52.\( \text{h}8 \text{d}1 + \) 53.\( \text{f}2 \text{h}2 \) 0-1

56. Leventic-Delchev
Zadar 2004

1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.c4 \( \text{c}6 \)
4.d3 e5 5.d3 d6 6.g3 \( \text{e}7 \) 7.\( \text{g}2 \text{f}5 \)

Black is behind in development indeed, but the closed centre saves him from trouble. Practice has shown that White is unable to refute Black's design.

8.exf5 \( \text{xf}5 \) 9.0-0 \( \text{d}7 \) 10.\( \text{d}5 \text{f}6 \) 11.\( \text{g}5 \text{xd}5 \) 12.\( \text{xd}5 \text{g}5 \)

12...\( \text{h}6 \) 13.\( \text{f}7 \pm \) fails to 13...\( \text{f}8 \pm \), but 13.\( \text{e}4 \) is probably equal.

13.\( \text{xg}5 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 14.\( \text{xe}4 \) 0-0
15.\( \text{e}3 \) a5?!?

We all know the ABC book, but somehow tend to forget about it in the heat of the battle. 15...\( \text{xe}4 \)!
16.dxe4 \( \text{xe}4 \) would have fixed the pawns in my favour because my knight would be more mobile. Perhaps subconsciously I wanted to keep more pieces on the board.

16.a3 (16.f4?!) 16...\( \text{c}6 \)
17.\( \text{d}5 \pm \text{h}8 \) 18.f4
Rare Lines on Move 3

18...â6

It would have been better to open lines: 18...exf4! 19.h4 f6 20.exf4 ef5 21.e4 ef7 22.ea1 h3 23.e2 e8 24.e3

24.d1 would have kept the balance because 24...g4 (24...ef8=; 24...ef8=) fails to 25.xc6! xe1 26.xe1 xc6 27.e4±.

24...xf2 25.xxf2 xef7 26.d1 e5 27.d5 f6 28.d4? (28. d2=) 28...f8+ 29.e3 g4 30.f4 g5 31.g2 xf4 32.xh3 fxg3 0-1

57. S.Williams-Delchev

1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.b4

My first reaction to this move was that I felt a bit scandalised and my ego was offended. Then I came to my senses and pondered rationally over the situation. The truth was that I was not prepared against the Sicilian Gambit. So finally I replied:

3...b6!?

This move was proposed by David Bronstein in his book *David Against Goliath*. It may not be the most principled retort, but it is an effective antidote to White’s idea. Black keeps control of the centre.

My wife, WGM Djingarovà, played 3...b6 back in 2005 so I can say that I was still in my preparation!

4.bxc5 bxc5 5.d3

White had tried 12 (!) different moves, but the text seems to be a novelty. The knight is heading for c4-d6. Muzychuk-Djingarovà, Nova Gorica 2005, saw the most logical 5.c3 c6 6.d1 e7 7.c4 f6 8.0-0 0-0 9.e1 d6 10.d4 cxd4 11.xd4 e5 12.f1 d7= and Black can be satisfied with his position. She achieved a Scheveningen formation where white has weakened considerably his queenside.

5...b7! 6.e5 e7 7.h4?!

I could not understand this move. Instead of developing quickly in this semi-open position, White loses a tempo and weakens his
Part 11

kingside. The natural continuation is 7...\textit{b1} \textit{d5} (7...\textit{e4}!? 8.d3 \textit{xf3}) 8...\textit{c4} a6 (preventing \textit{b5}) 9.0-0 \textit{bc6}.

7...\textit{d5} 8...\textit{d3}

I didn't want to close the diagonal to the bishop although 8...\textit{c6} 9.b1 b8 10...\textit{d4} a6\textsuperscript{1+} would have been fine. Another forcing continuation is 8...\textit{d4} (removing a defender of the e5-pawn and prolonging the scope of my bishop) 9...\textit{xd4} \textit{cxd4} 10.g4 g4 11...\textit{a5} 11...\textit{c4} \textit{d5}.

9.c4

White creates a gaping hole on d4 and restricts his own pieces \textit{a3} and \textit{f1}. Perhaps 9...\textit{xf5} maintained the balance.

9...\textit{xf3} 10...\textit{xf3} \textit{c6} 11...\textit{b2}?! It was simpler to trade pieces with 11...\textit{xf5} \textit{d4} 12...\textit{b7} \textit{b8} 13...\textit{xa7} exf5 14...\textit{b5}=

11...\textit{fd4} 12...\textit{xd4} \textit{cxd4} 13...\textit{e4} \textit{c8} 14...\textit{xc6} dxc6 White's set-up is a total mess. He has not any co-ordination between pawns and pieces. The a3-knight is exceptionally useless. With my next moves I convert my strategic advantage into a pawn.

15...\textit{c2} d3 16...\textit{e3} \textit{d4} 17.0-0 \textit{xe5} 18...\textit{e1}

Or 18...\textit{g4} \textit{d4} 19...\textit{ae1} \textit{d6} 20...\textit{e4} \textit{b2} 21...\textit{xd3} \textit{d8} 22...\textit{e2} 0-0\textsuperscript{+}.

18...\textit{d6} 19...\textit{g4}?! This is a step in a wrong direction. It was better to try 19.g3 0-0 20...\textit{c2} \textit{a5} 21...\textit{xd3} \textit{fd8}\textsuperscript{+} – the pawns are equal, but all my pieces are active.

19...\textit{d4} 20.c5 \textit{xc5} 21...\textit{a1} \textit{d6} 22...\textit{e4} \textit{b2} 23...\textit{e1} 0-0 (Game over) 24...\textit{xd3} \textit{fd8} 25...\textit{c4} \textit{xd2} 26...h5 \textit{d5} 27...\textit{e2} f5 28...\textit{xe6} fxg4 29...\textit{xd4} \textit{f8} 30...h6 \textit{e7} 31...\textit{e65} \textit{xa2} 32...\textit{g5} \textit{b8} 33...\textit{e8} \textit{xe8} 34...\textit{xe8} \textit{a1}+ 0-1
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Alexander Delchev is the European Grand Prix winner in 2004. He has played in many Olympiads for Bulgaria. His best Elo was 2669, current rating – 2638. Delchev is the author of The Safest Sicilian, The Safest Grünfeld and The Modern Reti.

Semko Semkov played for Bulgaria in one Olympiad. He is a chess journalist and theorist. He has authored Kill K.I.D. and three other books.

This book offers a double Taimanov/Kan repertoire for Black based on the moves 1.e4 c5 2.â3f3 e6!. It is divided in several parts: playing against â3e2; against f4; g3; the third rank set-up â3e3+â3d3; the English Attack; the hedgehog structures. There are separate chapters for the Taimanov move order with 4...â3c6, and for the Kan with 4...a6. Another section of the book deals with the anti-Sicilian variations 3.d3, 3.c3, 3.g3, 3.c4, 3.b4, 3.â3c3.

The Most Flexible Sicilian is also available in the electronic format Forwardchess – www.ForwardChess.com

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