The Modern French

Dejan Antic & Branimir Maksimovic

A Complete Guide for Black

NEW IN CHESS
The Modern French
A Complete Guide for Black

This book will change your view of one of the most popular chess openings of all time. The Modern French presents the ambitious black player with an innovative and reliable repertoire, based on sound strategy with a sharp sting.

In their long practice as chess professionals Grandmaster Dejan Antic and International Master Branimir Maksimovic have developed many unconventional ideas in the French. Now they have teamed up to present their findings in a complete and up-to-date guide for players of all levels.

The authors explain strategic concepts and attacking plans, present new concepts and reveal numerous novelties in topical main lines. They also turn various sidelines into deadly surprise weapons.

The Modern French will give you a better understanding of the subtleties of this ever popular opening, while showing you how it can be used as a fighting weapon for Black.

Dejan Antic is a grandmaster who was born in Serbia. He now lives and works as a trainer in Kavala, Greece. He has won many tournaments in his career, and has written a range of opening articles in Chess Informant and the New In Chess Yearbooks.

International Master Branimir Maksimovic was also born in Serbia. He has worked as a chess coach for 30 years. Maksimovic has played the French Defence all his life and has gained a reputation as an expert in the opening.
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New In Chess 2012
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An important question that all chess players have to answer is how to select the right openings for their repertoire. This book examines the pros and cons of one of the richest openings you can ever play, the French Defence.

The French Defence combines subtle strategic ideas with tactical motifs. After the introductory opening moves, it is clear that his relative lack of space is something that Black will have to deal with. He compensates for this by undermining White's central pawns. The position is delicately balanced, and a slight error by either White or Black is often all it takes to end up in major trouble.

As evidenced by multitudes of games, a lack of understanding of the key strategic ideas can easily lead to a swift collapse of the black position. Likewise, we have seen countless brilliant victories by leaders of the black pieces. Once you master the secrets of the French Defence you will have a powerful weapon at your disposal, offering strong counterplay and plenty of winning chances.

Still, for most players the opening of choice against 1.e4 remains the Sicilian Defence. Does the Sicilian ultimately offer the best chances for Black? This is a matter of opinion, but what we do know for certain is that in French Defence battles many more subtleties lie hidden under the surface, requiring a deeper understanding and a more strategic approach compared to the typically straightforward Sicilian plans.

The French has been an integral part of many top players' repertoires, and it was the key weapon in the hands of old masters such as Botvinnik and contemporary stars such as Carlsen and Morozevich. When you look at their tournament results, it becomes clear that they choose the French Defence in important games, when they need to secure a win with the black pieces.

Over the intensive two-year effort of writing this book, the aim of the authors has been to present you with more than the traditional bone-dry analysis of all possible variations. To this aim, apart from explaining the essential strategies and plans pertinent to this opening, we also cover a multitude of complex plans and theoretical novelties as part of our new strategic approach.

All the popular and topical variations are covered in detail. We have omitted some rarely-seen sidelines such as 2.b3 or 2.f4 that are of little value, and pose no threat to Black. Through the extensive analysis of strategic plans from the basic to the most complex, we aim to address the needs of players ranging from the ranks of chess enthusiasts up to the level of professional grandmasters.

For example, the King's Indian Attack with 2.d3 has always been a weapon of choice of white players who want to avoid theoretical duels. We are offering an array of excellent possibilities that are on Black's disposal.
In the **Exchange Variation**, a seemingly drawish and symmetrical system, we have analysed a line with a very active approach for Black.

The **Advance Variation** is becoming increasingly popular thanks to the new ideas implemented by Grischuk, Movsesian, and of course Sveshnikov. Therefore, we have dedicated lots of space to an investigation of 5...\textit{d7}, instead of the 'standard' 5...\textit{b6}, which seems slightly shaken after the efforts of the above-mentioned aces.

In the **Tarrasch Variation** we propose Morozevich’s line 3...\textit{e7}. Although 3...\textit{c5} is more common in the tournament arena, we believe that Morozevich’s idea offers lots of scope for exploring new possibilities.

In the **Steinitz Variation** we have devoted equal attention to the lines 7...\textit{e7} and 7...\textit{a6}, as these two share some frequent strategic plans for the further course of the game. These lines are the most popular with black players and we believe that our contribution, filled with new ideas, cements their reputation as the best responses in the given position.

We are particularly proud of the ideas we have developed in the **McCutcheon Variation**. We believe that 4...\textit{b4} is a dynamic move in the full spirit of the French Defence. It is not our intention to downgrade the value of 4...\textit{dxe4}, with which Black goes for a certain amount of simplification. But perhaps this is a good place to quote our older colleague grandmaster Vladimir Raicevic, a great expert on the French Defence, who once said: ‘The key to a successful French Defence is in holding the pawn on d5 and not giving way in the centre!’

Through the extensive analysis of strategic plans, from the basics to the most complex, we have aimed to address the needs of players from the ranks of chess enthusiasts up to the level of professional grandmaster.

We’d like to relay an anecdote that took place while we were working on the book. After receiving the materials and going through them, one of the translators was so taken by what he saw that he exclaimed, ‘This is so incredibly well-explained that I cannot wait to start playing the French Defence!’

At a time when commercial aspects dominate the chess books publishing industry, the authors' **primary aim** has been to give you an evergreen work of art which at the same time **will make** you enjoy better winning chances as Black than ever before.

We thank all the people who have generously helped in the creation of this book: translators International Master Dr. Aleksandar Davidovic and Goran Urosevic, the editor of the Chessdom website, and the New in Chess editors for their active support and participation.

April 2012,
Dejan Antic
Branimir Maksimovic
Your French Repertoire in a Bird’s-Eye View

King’s Indian Attack

1.e4 e6 2.d3 d5 3.\textit{d}2 \textit{f}6 4.\textit{gf}3 b6

The Exchange Variation

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5

The Advance Variation

3.e5 c5 4.c3 c6 5.f3 d7

The Tarrasch Variation

3.\textit{d}2 \textit{e}7

The Steinitz Variation

3.\textit{c}3 f6 4.e5 \textit{fd}7 5.f4 c5 6.f3 c6

The McCutcheon Variation

3.\textit{c}3 f6 4.g5 b4
Chapter 1 – King’s Indian Attack

1.e2-e4 e7-e6 2.d2-d3

The introduction to a possible King’s Indian Attack set-up. This is one of the possibilities which allows Black a wide choice of typical positions.

2. ... d7-d5

Black continues with his favourite move, though transposition to the Closed Sicilian, with 2...c5, is a possible choice as well. White has two logical continuations: 3.Qd2 and 3.We2.

3. Qb1-d2

3.We2 This looks unusual, but after 3.Qd2 it is the most frequently played move. White keeps his knight at b1 in reserve and may eventually manoeuvre it to another square than d2, whilst the blocked bishop at f1 will surely be fianchettoed.

As in the positions with a knight at d2, White will also here tend to build a typical set-up as in the King's Indian Attack. However, the premature commitment of the white queen gives Black plenty of opportunities to choose the type of position he wants to play, where he has good play and real chances to equalise:

A) 3...Qf6 (see p.11)

B) 3...dxe4 (see p.18)

C) 3...Qc6 (see p.22)

A) 3...Qf6
A natural and good move, which is at the same time the most frequently played one. Black, as in the Steinitz and Tarrasch Variations, allows White to create a space advantage by advancing the e-pawn. In that case the familiar French scenario would follow: an attack on the centre with all means, usually supported by action on the queenside. Generally speaking, in this concrete variation with the white queen at e2 and the white pawn at d3, Black finds it easier to realise his typical plans and achieve equal and promising play.

A1) 4...f3 is a natural developing move.

\[ \text{\#xd6 14...c3 wxe5 15...c2 0-0 16...ad1 and White has certain compensation, but it suffices only to make a draw, Bricard-Chernuschevich, Belfort 2010) 10...d4! (10...g5?! 11...xg5 f+! 11...xd4 cxd4 12.h4...c5 13.0-0 0-0 with the idea ...d8 and ...d7. Black can also try the immediate 12...0-0 and then ...c5; or 12...b4+?! 13.d2 a5 14.0-0 (14.a3 f+! 14...xd2 15.xd2 wxe5 16.wd3 0-0 (≥ 16...w6) 17.b4 w, Bellini-Efimov, Senigallia 2009. 7...b5!}

A11) 4...e7 and now:

A111) First we look at the fianchetto 5.g3, with which White postpones the push of his e-pawn and develops his kingside first:

A1111) 5...c5 Or first 5...0-0. 6.g2 c6 6...b5+! - it is possible to reach this position also with castling instead of ...c7-c5. In this variation the strategical key of the battle is very often the critical c4-square. 7.0-0 If immediately 7.e5 with the idea on 7...d7 to play 8.c4, preventing the thematic ...b7-b5, Black creates counterplay by creating a passed d-pawn with 8...dxc4 9.dxc4 wxc7 10.f4 (10.0-0...cxe5 11.f4 xxf3+ 12.xf3 d6 13.xd6

Black doesn’t allow White to play the above-mentioned variation with 9.c2-c4.

If 7...0-0 8.e5 and now on both knight moves 8...d7 (or 8...e8) White has a definite space advantage after 9.c4!.

The concrete feature of this variation with 3.w2 is the fact that White has not developed his b1 knight, which
suits him, as he has possibilities to develop his knight to c3 and a3. It should also be mentioned that white players play this variation with 3.\textit{\textit{W}e2} or 3.\textit{\textit{D}d2}, expecting exactly this position, because it’s very easy for White to play; he has a clear standard plan to attack the black king.

Certainly, the situation is not so bad for Black, of course, as he has no weaknesses, his position is very resilient and the action on the queenside is usually enough counterplay for White’s activity on the kingside. Besides, Black has the possibility to play 7...b5 before castling and to prevent the most unpleasant continuation c2-c4.

It also useful to know that the variation 3.\textit{\textit{W}e2} makes the action of the black pawns on the queenside easier, especially the move ...c5-c4, because of the strong pressure of the black light-squared bishop on the f1-a6 diagonal. 

\textbf{8.e5} The move 8.\textit{\textit{F}e1} and the continuation with e4-e5 are usually different only by move order, transposing into the same positions: 8...0-0 9.\textit{\textit{D}bd2} a5 10.e5 (White has no better plan because of the potential black possibility ...b4, ...de4 and ...\textit{\textit{R}a6}; 10.\textit{\textit{D}f1} b4 11.\textit{\textit{D}f4} dxe4 12.dxe4 \textit{\textit{L}a6} = Khasangat-Likavsky, Slovakia 2004) 10...\textit{\textit{D}d7} 11.\textit{\textit{D}f1} \textit{\textit{L}a6} 12.h4 b4.

One of the most critical positions of the entire variation 3.\textit{\textit{W}e2} \textit{\textit{D}f6}. 13.\textit{\textit{D}g5} is usually a useful exchange, but here it allows the opening of White’s queenside and the activation of the black pieces (13.\textit{\textit{D}g5} is analysed under 10.\textit{\textit{W}e1}): 13...c4 14.dxc4 \textit{\textit{L}xg5} 15.hxg5 \textit{\textit{L}xc4} with excellent play for Black, Vasiukov-Uhlmann, Gmünden 2007. 8...\textit{\textit{D}d7} 9.\textit{\textit{F}h4} 9.c3 a5 10.a4 bxa4 (10...b4 11.c4) 11.c4 \textit{\textit{L}b6} 12.\textit{\textit{D}c3} 0-0 13.\textit{\textit{D}xa4} \textit{\textit{L}xa4} (this knight exchange is usually convenient for Black) 14.\textit{\textit{B}xa4} \textit{\textit{L}b8} (White has played c2-c4 but his queenside remains full of weaknesses, especially on the b-file) 15.h4 h6 16.\textit{\textit{D}f4} (White will have to move his bishop back because the b2 pawn is weak) 16...\textit{\textit{B}b3} 17.\textit{\textit{L}c2} \textit{\textit{B}b6} 18.\textit{\textit{L}c1} \textit{\textit{L}d8} 19.\textit{\textit{W}e1} dxc4 20.\textit{\textit{W}xc4} (20.dxc4 \textit{\textit{L}b7} 20...d4 21.\textit{\textit{D}d2}? \textit{\textit{D}xf3}+ 22.\textit{\textit{L}xf3} \textit{\textit{D}d4} 0-1 A. Popovic-Pikula, Kragujevac 2009. 9...a5 Or 9...0-0 and then ...a7-a5. 10.\textit{\textit{W}e1} if 10.a4

10...b4 (it is possible to play 10...bxa4, although after 11.\textit{\textit{B}xa4} c4 White has an interesting possibility to sacrifice the exchange with 12.d4?! c3 13.\textit{\textit{L}xc3} \textit{\textit{L}a6} 14.\textit{\textit{W}d1} \textit{\textit{L}xf1} 15.\textit{\textit{L}xf1} \textit{\textit{L}g} (Psakhis) 15...h6 16.\textit{\textit{D}h2} \textit{\textit{B}b8} 17.\textit{\textit{L}a1} (17.\textit{\textit{D}g4} \textit{\textit{D}a1} Psakhis) 17...\textit{\textit{W}b6} 18.\textit{\textit{D}b5} \textit{\textit{L}a7} 19.\textit{\textit{D}xa7} \textit{\textit{L}xa7} 20.c3 \textit{\textit{B}b6} 21.b3
\[ \text{c7} 22. \text{c4} \text{ and Black will have to defend for the rest of the game, Zviagintsev-Riazantsev, Kazan 2005) 11.c4 (White wants to stop Black's quick action with ...c5-c4 and ...\text{a6}. Nothing significant is changed by 11.\text{e1} \text{a6} 12.\text{bd2} 0-0 13.\text{f1} c4 \text{ (we can see that White's plan with a2-a4 is just a loss of time, because Black certainly intended to play ...b5-b4) 14.dxc4 \text{xc4} 15.\text{d1} \text{c5} 16.b3 \text{a6} 17.\text{b2} \text{e4} 18.\text{d4} \text{b6} 19.\text{xe4} \text{dxe4} 20.\text{b5} \text{c5} 21.\text{e3} \text{xb5} 22.axb5 \text{xb5} and White is a pawn down in an inferior position, Gild. Garcia-Matamoros Franco, Guayaquil 2003) 11...bxc3 12.bxc3 \text{b6} 13.\text{f4} c4 14.d4 \text{d7} 15.h5 h6 with a very complex position. It is a big question if White will have sufficient compensation by attacking the black king, because of the weak a4 pawn, which probably will be lost soon. 16.g4 \text{a7} 17.\text{c2} \text{c6} 18.\text{g3} \text{d7} 19.\text{h2} (19.\text{bd2}) 19...\text{xa4} \text{ (16.\text{ab1} – White must forget his attacking plans and organise his defence) 16...a3 17.h5 \text{b2} 18.\text{c2} \text{c7} 19.h6 g6 20.\text{d1} \text{f8} 21.\text{e3} \text{c8} 22.\text{xc2} \text{c4} 23.\text{h3} \text{b2} 24.\text{c1} \text{d8} 25.\text{d2} g5 26.\text{xb2} \text{axb2} 27.\text{xb2} \text{gxh6} 28.\text{gxf4} \text{xd3} 29.\text{b7} \text{a5} 30.\text{a7} \text{xb8} 31.\text{g5} \text{bc6} 0-1 Gierse-Uhlmann, Dresden 1995. 14.dxc4 \text{xc4} with good play for Black, Glek-Chernuschevich, Switzerland 2009; A1112) It is also interesting to play immediately 5...b5!? and on 6.\text{g2} quickly take action on the f1-a6 diagonal: 6...dxe4 7.dxe4 b4 8.\text{bd2} \text{c4} 8.c4 9.bxc3 \text{a6} 10.c4 \text{c6} 11.e5! (the best chance to fight for the advantage) 11...\text{d7}! 12.0-0 0-0 13.\text{d1} \text{c8} 14.\text{f4} (or 14.\text{c3} \text{b8} 15.\text{e4} 15.\text{b5} \text{b7} with the idea ...a6) 15...\text{b7} 16.\text{b1} \text{a5} 14...\text{b6} 15.\text{bd2} \text{d5} with excellent play for Black, Bokros-Galyas, Hungary 2010.} \]
have an opportunity after $5...\text{c}fd7$ $6.g3$ $c5$ $7.g2$ $\text{c}6$ $8.0-0$ to choose between the aggressive $8...g5$ and the positional $8...b5$. Safer is $8.h4$ $b5$ $9.0-0$ $0-0$, transposing to lines covered under $5.g3$.

$8...g5$?

Both players should always have in mind this very typical strike in various positions of the French Defence. In this concrete position, with the white queen on e2, Black has more possibilities for action.
The quieter $8...b5$ was analysed under $5.g3$.

A1121) $9.c4$! is probably the only right reaction to Black's flank attack, for example: $9...g4$ $9...dxc4$ $10.dxc4$ $g4$ $11.ee1$ $\text{c}dx\text{e}5$ $12.e3\text{c}e8$; $9...d4$ $10.h3$ $h5$ $11.ee4$? with mutual chances. White has problems with the e5 pawn, but after ...d5-d4, the white bishop becomes master of the central diagonal and the white pieces control the powerful square e4.

A112) White has no reason to hurry with the thematic $5.e5$. Now Black will
A1122) 9.h3 h5 10.g4 hxg4 11.hxg4 f6!N

12.exf6 hxg5 and White is in danger because of the practically unbearable threat of ...\(\text{N}xg4\): 13.\(\text{N}e1\) \(\text{N}xg4\) 14.\(\text{N}c3\) e5 and White is in a critical position; 13.\(\text{N}xg5?!\) \(\text{N}d4\) 14.\(\text{N}d1\) \(\text{N}xg4\); or 13.\(\text{N}xg5?!\) \(\text{N}xg4\).

A12) 4...c5 5.g3 \(\text{N}c6\) 6.\(\text{N}g2\) g6?! In the 3.\(\text{N}d2\) variation, the fianchetto of Black's dark-squared bishop is a pretty good plan, but here White has kept open the path for his dark-squared bishop and the simple \(\text{Ng}5\) brings him an advantage: 7.0-0 \(\text{N}g7\) 8.\(\text{N}g5!\) dxe4 9.dxe4 \(\text{N}c7\) 10.\(\text{N}c3\) 0-0 11.\(\text{N}ad1\) a6 12.\(\text{N}fe1\) 12.e5! \(\text{N}d7\) 13.\(\text{N}e4\) \(\text{N}dx e5\) 14.\(\text{N}xe5\) \(\text{N}xe5\) (14...\(\text{N}x e5\) 15.c3\(±\)) 15.\(\text{N}f6+\) \(\text{N}h8\) 16.\(\text{N}e4!\) +--

This plan is best played immediately after 3.\(\text{N}e2\), because with the knights developed on f3 and f6, Black cannot successfully play ...e6-e5, which is the main element in his somewhat difficult fight for equality:

A131) 6.e5 \(\text{N}a6\) 7.c4 \(\text{N}d7\) 8.\(\text{N}e4\) \(\text{N}c3\) \(\text{N}b7\) (8...\(\text{N}b4\) 9.\(\text{N}c2\) \(\text{N}c6\) 10.\(\text{N}e2\) 0-0 11.\(\text{N}f4\) f6 12.\(\text{N}d1\) 9.\(\text{N}f4\) \(\text{N}b4\) 10.\(\text{N}c1\) \(\text{N}c6\) 11.a3 \(\text{N}xc3+\) 12.\(\text{N}xc3\) 0-0 13.\(\text{N}c2\) h6 (13...\(\text{N}e7?!\)) 14.b4?!. The c5-square is important, but White will now be late with his development, so Black opens up the position with 14...f6 (also good is 14...a5 15.b5 \(\text{N}e7\) 15.exf6 (15.\(\text{N}xh6\) \(\text{N}xf7\!\)) 15...\(\text{N}xf6\) (15...\(\text{N}x f6\) followed by ...e6-e5) 16.\(\text{N}e2\) (16.\(\text{N}x h6!\) \(\text{N}d4\) (16...\(\text{N}x h6?\) 17.\(\text{N}g6+\) \(\text{N}h8\) 18.\(\text{N}g5!+\)) 17.\(\text{N}xd4\) \(\text{N}xd4\) 16...e5! 17.\(\text{N}xe5\) \(\text{N}d4\) 18.\(\text{N}g6?\) \(\text{N}e4\) 19.\(\text{N}g3\) \(\text{N}xe2\) 20.\(\text{N}xe2\) \(\text{N}h5\) 0-1 Strikovic-Volkov, Internet blitz 2004.

8.\(\text{N}b4\+\) 9.\(\text{N}d2\) 9.\(\text{N}bd2\) \(\text{N}c5\) 10.\(\text{N}e3\) \(\text{N}b7\) 11.a3 \(\text{N}x d2+\) 12.\(\text{N}x d2\) a5 13.b3 0-0 14.\(\text{N}ad1\) \(\text{N}e7\) 15.\(\text{N}e2\) \(\text{N}d8\) 16.0-0

16
$\text{d}6$ $17.b4$ with slightly better play for White, due to his space advantage and bishop pair, Beshukov-Hoffman, Buenos Aires 1998. $9...\text{c}5!$ 10.\text{w}e3 10.\text{w}xa8 $\text{b}7$ 11.\text{w}xa7 $\text{xf}3$ 12.\text{gx}f3 $\text{c}6+$ 10...$\text{c}6$ 11.a3 $\text{xd}2+$ 12.bx$\text{d}2$ $\text{b}7$ 13.e2 $\text{b}4$ $\text{d}7$ 14.e2 0-0 15.0-0 $\text{a}5$ 16.b5 $\text{e}7$ 17.e4 $\text{c}5$? with slightly better play for White, due to his space advantage and bishop pair, Beshukov-Hoffman, Buenos Aires 1998. 9...tbc5! 10.a3 $\text{xf}3$ 12.gxf3 tbc6 10...tbc6 11.a3 $\text{xd}2+$ 12.bx$\text{d}2$ $\text{b}7$ 13.e2 13.b4 $\text{d}7$ 14.e4 0-0 15.0-0 $\text{c}5$ 16.b5 $\text{e}7$ 17.e4 $\text{c}5$? with equal chances: 18.bxc6 $\text{xc}6$ 19.\text{f}2 $\text{d}4$ 20.\text{xd}4 $\text{c}7$ 21.f4. 13...a5 14.0-0 0-0 with an excellent position for Black: 15.\text{fe}1 $\text{e}7$ 16.\text{f}1 \text{ad}8 with equal play in Rodriguez Vila-Zarnicki, Villa Gesell 1997; A132) An important alternative is 6.\text{bd}2 $\text{a}6$ 7.\text{c}4.

Despite the pinned knight, White has chances to achieve an advantage, because of the thematic moves e4-e5 and $\text{we}4$. 7...$\text{c}6$ and now:

A1321) 8.e5 $\text{d}7$ 9.\text{f}4 Weaker is 9.c3 because after $9...\text{xc}4$ 10.\text{xc}4 $\text{cxe}5$ 11.\text{exe}5 $\text{exe}5$ 12.b5+ $\text{d}7$ White doesn’t have sufficient compensation for the pawn: 13.\text{wa}4 (13.g3 $\text{d}6$ 14.\text{g}2 0-0 15.0-0 $\text{b}8$) 13...$\text{d}6$ 14.\text{b}5 a5 (14...$\text{e}7$!? 15.0-0 $\text{d}8$ 16.\text{xa}7 0-0 and Black will have the initiative on the kingside, because the white pieces are misplaced) 15.\text{f}4 $\text{e}7$ 16.\text{xd}6 cxd6 17.\text{d}1 d5 18.0-0 $\text{d}8$ 19.\text{fe}1 $\text{d}6$ 20.c4 0-0 21.cxd5 exd5 22.\text{d}4 $\text{f}6$ Svetushkin-Murariu, Bucharest 2002. 9...\text{e}7 9...\text{a}5!? 10.\text{fd}2 (10.\text{d}6+ $\text{xd}6$ 11.\text{xa}6 $\text{d}5$ 12.a3 $\text{c}5$ and now 13.\text{b}5+ $\text{d}7=$; or 13.\text{b}5+ $\text{e}7=$+) 10...\text{xc}4 11.\text{xc}4 $\text{b}7$ 12.0-0-0 $\text{e}7$ and Black will castle queenside and will have approximately equal chances in the forthcoming battle, for example 13.h4 0-0-0 14.\text{h}3 $\text{c}5$. 10.0-0-0 $\text{e}8$ 11.c3 0-0-0 12.\text{c}2 $\text{d}8$ 13.h4 $\text{f}8$ 14.\text{d}3 $\text{b}7$ 15.\text{g}5 $\text{g}6$ 16.\text{xe}6 $\text{d}1+$ 17.\text{xd}1 $\text{fxg}6$ 18.\text{e}3 $\text{d}8$ 19.\text{wd}7 $\text{c}6$ 20.\text{e}8+ and Black is helpless, Rodriguez Vila-Lemos Sarro, Santos 2007. A1322) 8.c3 $\text{e}7$ 9.e5 and now:

A13221) 9...\text{d}7 10.\text{e}4 $\text{b}7$ 11.\text{g}4 $\text{g}6$ 12.\text{h}6± $\text{b}5$ 13.\text{e}3 $\text{dxe}5$ 14.\text{xe}5 $\text{xe}5$ 15.\text{xb}5+ $\text{c}6$ 16.\text{e}4 ≥ 16.\text{g}3 $\text{f}6$ 17.\text{e}2 with better chances for White, for instance 17...\text{f}7 18.\text{d}1 $\text{c}8$ 19.\text{h}3. 16...\text{c}7 17.\text{e}2 $\text{f}5$ 18.\text{a}4 To 18.\text{f}4 Black can respond with 18...0-0-0 19.\text{c}4 (19.0-0 $\text{f}7$) 19...\text{d}3+ 20.\text{xd}3 $\text{xf}4$ 21.\text{xf}4 $\text{xd}3$ with good play for Black. 18...\text{f}7 19.\text{f}4 $\text{e}5$ and White is in a very difficult position, Morozevich-Lputian, Wijk aan Zee 2000; A13222) 9...\text{d}5!?N Black gives up the pressure on e5 and the possibility of
...dxc5, in favour of centralisation. Although the black knight on d5 isn't mobile at the moment, it controls a considerable part of the board:

10.\textit{We}4 10.\textit{Wc}2 \textit{b}7 11.\textit{De}2 a6! 12.0-0 b5; 10.\textit{Dd}6+ \textit{xd}6 11.\textit{exd}6 \textit{exe}2 12.\textit{exe}2 \textit{xd}6 13.\textit{b}5 \textit{e}7 14.\textit{Dd}4 \textit{d}7. 10...\textit{b}7 11.\textit{De}2 11.\textit{d}3 \textit{d}7 12.0-0 0-0-0. 11...\textit{w}d7 12.0-0 0-0-0 13.a4 a5 14.\textit{De}3 f5 15.\textit{exf}6 gxf6;

A133) In the event of 6.g3 \textit{a}6 7.c4 \textit{xc}6 8.e5 \textit{d}7 (8...\textit{d}5?! 9.\textit{We}4±) Black has an extra tempo over the game Morozevich-Rozentalis, Moscow 1994, analysed under 3.\textit{d}2.

Back to the position after 3...\textit{d}f6.

A2) 4.e5 is the only alternative, which after 4...\textit{fd}7 5.f4 can lead us into a rarely-played unclear position. 5...c5 6.\textit{f}3 \textit{fc}6 7.g3 \textit{e}7 8.\textit{g}2 0-0 9.0-0 b5

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Black realises a typical plan as in the positions where the white pawn stands at f2, as we will see a little later. At this moment, maybe it is easier to evaluate f2-f4. It is obvious that the white pawn being at f4 has its good and bad sides. As good sides, we consider gaining space, maintaining the pawn chain and supporting the white pawn at e5, and also a possible attack with f4-f5. As bad sides, we mean restricting the white dark-squared bishop, which usually plays the main role in the attack on the black king. Also, a useful strategical exchanging operation of the dark-squared bishops via g5 is not possible anymore. 10.\textit{Cc}3?! An interesting idea. White wants to transfer his knight to f2 to support the advance of his pawns on the kingside. On 10.\textit{bd}2 Black continues with typical play: 10...a5 11.\textit{De}1 b4 12.\textit{f}1 a4 13.a3 bxa3 14.bxa3 \textit{b}8 (desperately trying to create some kind of action because of the growing initiative of the opponent on the queenside, White begins a suicide action with the f-pawn) 15.f5?! exf5 16.e6 \textit{f}6 17.exf7+ \textit{xf}7 18.\textit{g}5 \textit{d}4 19.\textit{f}2 \textit{f}8=, Marusenko-Kiriakov, Port Erin 1999. 10...b4 11.\textit{d}1 \textit{c}7 Black has better continuations, but his wish is to render the f-pawn advance useless, by constantly pressurising the e5 pawn. 12.\textit{f}2 a5 13.\textit{He}1 \textit{a}6 14.c4 \textit{xc}3 15.\textit{xc}3 \textit{b}6 16.h4 \textit{f}6?! 16...\textit{a}6 17.f5?! 17.exf6 \textit{xf}6 18.\textit{g}5 \textit{d}8 with complex play and mutual chances, Vasiukov-Gulko, Moscow 1981.

B) 3...dxe4

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Many players find this move to be solid and the simplest reply to the enigmatic move 3.\textit{We}2. Black plans to transpose
the game into a more open type of position with ...e6–e5 and activating the light-squared bishop on the diagonals f1–a6 and h1–a8.

4.dxe4 and now:

B1) 4...b6 5.Qf3 5.Qd2 Qa6 6.Qc4 Qf6 7.Qf3 Qc6 8.c3 Qe7 9.e5 is analysed under 3.Qe2 Qf6 4.Qf3 dxe4 5.dxe4 b6. 5...Qa6

B11) After 6.Wd2 Black can play an endgame without queens with approximately equal chances: 6...Qxd2+ 7.Qxd2 Qf6 8.Qc3 Qxf1 9.Qxf1 Qc6 10.0–0–0 Qb4 Also possible is 10...Qd6 with minimal problems for Black. 11.Qb5 Qxd2+ 12.Qxd2 Qe7 13.Qe1 Qhc8 14.e5 Qd5 15.c4 Qf4 16.Qe4 Qg6 17.h4 h5 18.g3 ½–½ Fedorov-Dya chkov, Saratov 2006;

B12) 6.c4

We have reached one of the critical positions, which determines the destiny of the continuation 4...b6. Now we have an important question: can Black use the tempo gained by not playing the move ...Qf6 (which would transpose into the positions that were analysed under 3.Qe2 Qf6)? There are 4 acceptable continuations: ...Qc6, ...Qd7, ...Qb4 and ...Qb7.

6...Qd7 6...Qb4+ 7.Qbd2 (7.Qc3!?) 7...Qc6 8.a3 Qe7 9.b4 Qd4 10.Qxd4 Qxd4 11.Qb1 (≥ 11.Qa2) 11...Qg5


7.Qc3 Qb7?N

Black's bishop has finished its work on the diagonal f1–a6, so it continues its activity on the long diagonal, while Black's minor pieces on the kingside are waiting to choose their formation, which depends on White's plan. It is interesting that to almost every move of the white bishop, Black must react with his dark-squared bishop.

Also worth considering is 7...Qe7 8.Qc2 Qc6 9.Qe2 Qe7 10.0–0 0–0 11.a3 (11.Qf4±) 11...Qb7 (≥ 11...Qf6) 12.b3?! Qf6 13.Qd1 We7 14.Qb2 Qde5! and Black has gained the initiative, because he will soon conquer the central d4-square: 15.Qa4 Qxf3+ 16.Qxf3 Qxb2 17.Qxb2 e5 18.g3 Qd4= Hoffman-Comas Fabrego, Havana 1999.

And now:

B121) 8.Qd2 Qb4 9.0–0–0 9.e5 Qe7 and Black doesn't have any problems, for example 9...Qgf6 10.e5 Qxc3 11.Qxc3 Qe4;

B122) In the case of the fianchetto 8.g3 Black has easier play after 8...Qgf6 9.Qg2 (9.e5? Qxe5) 9...Qc5;
B123) 8.\c2 6gf6 9.\e2 \d6? 10.0-0 0-0 with mutual chances;
B124) 8.\g5 \e7 9.\f4 9.h4 h6 10.\d2. 9...\b4 10.\c2 6gf6 11.\d3 6c5 with good play for Black;
B125) 8.\f4 \b4 9.0-0-0 6xc3 10.bxc3 \f6 11.\e3 \e7 12.6xc7 \d3+ 13.\b1 6gf6 14.\d6 \d5 15.\d4 \xe4+ 16.\d3 \xd3+ 17.\xd3 \d4 18.6xc5 bxc5 19.\xe6 \dxe6 20.\xe6 6f8 and White should give perpetual check;
B126) 8.\e3 6gf6 9.e5 \d4 10.\f4 \d5 11.\g3 \e7 12.0-0-0 12.\h4? 6xf3 13.\xf3 \d4 14.\e6+ 15.\e3 16.\d4 6xe6 20.\xe6+ 6f8 and White should give perpetual check;

B2) 4...6e5 We have already seen that Black can also play this continuation in the variation with 3...\c6, and he doesn't need to exchange the d-pawns.
B21) 5.\f3 \c6 5...6d7 6.\bd2 \c5 7.g3 \gf6 8.\h3!

The logical reaction to ...\d7. The usual 8.\g2 gives more free space to the black pieces and equal chances. 8...0-0 9.0-0 c6 10.\b3 \d6 11.\g5 h6 12.\d2 \c7 13.\h4 \e8 14.a4 a5 15.\f6 \f8 16.\d1 g6 17.\g2 \g7 18.\e3 b6 19.\c4 \a6 20.\f1 D Popovic-Bodirolga, Valjevo 2011. 6.c3 \f6 7.\c2

This position, but with pawns at d3 and d5, we have already analysed under 3...\c6. Certainly, the presence of these two pawns is convenient for Black, because he usually chooses when he will exchange on e4 or play ...d5-d4. White doesn't often exchange on d5, when the d3 pawn becomes weaker because of the opened d-file. Therefore we recommend, if Black wants to play this type of position with ...6e6-e5, to keep the d-pawns on the board. However in this concrete position, where the diagonal f1-a6 is opened for the light-squared bishop, Black has real possibilities to achieve good play.
7.g3 a5 8.\g2 \c5 9.0-0 0-0 10.\bd2 b6 leads to a well-known typical position, where Black has good play, analysed under 4.g3.

After the text move 7.\c2 Black has the following options:
B211) 7.\d6 Black is ready to give up his bishop pair after \d2-\c4-\d6 and to create a weak isolated pawn at d6. However, this is only the first impression. The problems with the d5-square practically don't exist, especially because there is no white knight at c3, and the d6 pawn is easy to defend. Even White has to be cautious because of Black's plan with ...d6-d5.
Surely we have to be objective and admit the value of White's bishop pair
and his healthy pawn structure. All these facts indicate that a very complex and complicated strategic and tactical battle will follow, with approximately equal chances.

8.\(\text{d}2\) 8.\(\text{e}2\) 0-0 9.0-0 \(\text{h}5\) 10.\(\text{bd}2\) \(\text{f}4\) 11.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{xe}2+\) 12.\(\text{xe}2\) \(\text{e}6\) 13.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{e}7\) 14.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{f}8\) 15.\(\text{b}2\) \(\text{f}6\) 16.\(\text{xd}6\) \(\text{xd}6\) 17.\(\text{xd}6\) \(\text{xd}6\) 18.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{c}5\) with excellent play for Black, Vescovi-Rychagov, Moscow 2002. 8...0-0 9.\(\text{c}4\)

9.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{e}8\) 10.0-0 \(\text{h}5\) 11.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{h}3\) 12.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{f}6\) 13.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{f}4\) 14.\(\text{xf}4\) exf4 with good play for Black, Fedorov-B. Socko, Batumi 2002. 9...\(\text{h}6\) 10.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{b}8\) 11.a4 \(\text{b}6\) 12.0-0 \(\text{b}7\) 13.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{a}5\) 14.\(\text{xd}6\) cxd6 15.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{b}7\) 16.\(\text{b}4\) \(\text{c}6\) 17.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{d}8\) 18.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{d}6\) 19.\(\text{ad}1\) \(\text{fd}8\) 20.\(\text{b}2\) \(\text{bc}8\) =, Zhang Zhong-Speelman, Bled 2002;

B212) Weaker is 7...\(\text{c}5\) 8.\(\text{b}4\) \(\text{b}6\) 9.\(\text{e}2\) 0-0 10.0-0 \(\text{a}6\) 11.\(\text{bd}2\) \(\text{e}7\) 12.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{a}7\) 13.a4 \(\text{d}8\) 14.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{h}6\) 15.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{g}5\) 16.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{h}5\) 17.\(\text{b}5\)± Strikovic-Guerra Bastida, Orense 1996;

B213) Worth attention is 7...\(\text{a}6\)!

Now we can clearly see the value and importance of this plan and the importance of the move 7...\(\text{a}6\). White is facing the very strong strategic threat ...d6-d5. It is interesting that the ‘weak’ pawn on d6 becomes Black’s main attacking strength. We would also like to mention that the premature, over-ambitious move b2-b4 has only helped Black to realise his plan. 16.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{fc}8\) Black shows another bad side of the move b2-b4 and activates his rook with tempo. 17.\(\text{b}2\) 17.axb5 axb5 18.\(\text{xa}8\) \(\text{xa}8\) =. 17...\(\text{d}5\) 18.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 19.\(\text{f}5\)?! This move leads to problems. White should have admitted that Black’s strategy is completely sound and transposed the game into an approximately equal endgame with 19.\(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{xb}4\) 20.\(\text{xb}4\) \(\text{xc}2\) 21.\(\text{xc}2\) \(\text{xc}2\) 22.\(\text{d}3\); or perhaps have played 19.axb5 axb5 20.\(\text{xa}8\) \(\text{xa}8\) 21.\(\text{xb}5\) \(\text{e}4\) 22.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{e}5\) =. 19...\(\text{f}4\)?
The Modern French

19...\texttt{e}e8. 20.axb5 axb5 21.\texttt{xc}8 \texttt{xc}8 22.\texttt{xa}8 \texttt{xa}8 23.\texttt{a}1?! 23.\texttt{xe}5 \texttt{x}g2! 23...\texttt{e}e4! with mighty compensation, Svetushkin-Kruppa, Kiev 2000.

C) With 3...\texttt{c}6 Black uses the position of the white queen to change the type of position.

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\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
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4.\texttt{f}3 & 4.c3 usually transposes into the main line: 4...e5 5.b4 \texttt{f}6 6.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{d}6 & 7.\texttt{c}2 \texttt{e}7 & 8.exd5 \texttt{exd}5 & 9.a3 \texttt{c}6 (Black frees the c7-square for his d6 bishop in case of c4-c5) & 10.c4 \texttt{e}7 11.\texttt{b}2 \texttt{g}6 12.\texttt{c}3 0-0 13.g3 \texttt{f}5. \\
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\hline
\texttt{f}d8 & 19.\texttt{f}1 \texttt{b}6 & 20.c5 \texttt{xe}4 & 21.cxb6 \texttt{f}5 & 22.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{d}7 & 23.h4 \texttt{g}4 & 24.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{a}6\texttt{f} \texttt{Strikovic-Stojanovic, Valjevo 2011.} 4...e5 5.c3 White can gain the bishop pair with 5.exd5 \texttt{xd}5 6.\texttt{c}3 \texttt{b}4 & 7.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{xc}3 & 8.\texttt{xc}3. However after 8...\texttt{g}4 9.\texttt{e}4 \texttt{xf}3 & 10.\texttt{xf}3 \texttt{xf}3 & 11.gxf3 \texttt{f}6 practice has shown that activating it can be very problematic. 5...\texttt{e}4 and now: C1) 6.\texttt{c}2 \\
\hline
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\hline
\texttt{f}6 & 4...e5 & 5.c3 & 4...e5 & 5.c3 & 4...e5 & 5.c3 \\
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Black is the first to finish his development, and for this reason White's pawn action on the queenside will be counterproductive. 14.\texttt{e}4 a5\texttt{f} (after he has finished his development, Black hits the weakest spot in the white position) 15.bxa5\texttt{f} (15.c5 \texttt{c}7) 15...\texttt{c}7 16.\texttt{g}2 \texttt{xa}5+ 17.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{e}7 18.\texttt{hd}1
is a move that makes it harder for White to realise his most dangerous plan of advancing the queenside pawns.

10.**b3** White finishes his development and prepares to advance his mobile pawns on the queenside.

In case of 10.**e1** Black replies with 10...c5, and now 11.e5f1 h6 12.g3 g6 13.b3 e6 14.a3 d7 with mutual chances, Mrva-Ilincic, Hungary 2006/07; or 11.e1f1 g6 (11...a4! Black should not hesitate to play this useful move, especially when he has finished his development) 12.b3 g7 13.b2 h6 14.a3 e6 15.b4 d7 16.exd5 exd5 17.b5 e7 18.c4 xf3 19.xf3 f5∞, Csom-Averbakh, Budapest 1970.

10...g4 11.e1 e8 12.a3 h6 13.b2 d7 14.b4

A typical plan for this type of position and a very dangerous one, because the white pawns on the queenside gain space and create pressure on the white centre.

There can follow: 14.axb4 15.cxb4 d6 16.b3 h5 17.h4 xe2

18. xe2 dxe4 19.dxe4 d4 20.exd4 exd4 21.f3 e5 22.ad1 b6 23.d3

½-½ D. Popovic-Hoang Thanh Trang, Hungary 2007/08.

C112) 7...a4!? This move was played in a blitz game.

It prevents the most dangerous white plan with b2-b3, b2-a2-a3, and, at a convenient moment, b3-b4. 8.0-0 e7 9.e1 0-0 10.bd2 e8 11.df1 With 11.e1 White forces the usual plan, even if it means giving up the a-file. 11...f8 12.b4 axb3 13.axb3 d4 14.b4 (14.cxd4 exd4) 14...dxc3 (14...b5? 15.b2 dxc3 16.xc3 e6 17.b2 d7 with mutual chances) 15.xc3 d4 with approximately equal chances, Day-Leveille, Scarborough 1991.

11...h6 12.g3 e6 13.f1 e8 14.h3 d7 with excellent play for Black. The white bishop can hardly come to b2 and gaining space with ...d5-d4 is Black’s next step, Yu Shaoteng-Rustemov, Dos Hermanas 2004;

C113) It is also possible to play 7...h6, a useful move in this type of position, which prevents the eventual pinning of the black knight with g5, and gives more freedom to Black’s dark-squared bishop. In addition, it enables the other black bishop to go to its usual position – the e6-square. 8.0-0 d6 Grandmaster Bareev’s favourite position for the dark-squared bishop, as it gives more freedom to the c6 knight (for example to travel to g6 via e7), especially since this knight has limited activity due to the white pawn at c5. 9.bd2 0-0 10.ad1 e8 11.df1 e6 12.g3 c8 13.h3 a4 14.e3 e7 15.e1 c5!
Certainly the unemployed pawn should take part in the battle for the centre and for space. 16.exd5 ∅fxd5

and Black is slightly better, Zhang Zhong-Bareev, Wijk aan Zee 2004.

C114) More active is 7...∅c5, imitating White's play in the Philidor Defence after ∅c4. 8.0-0 0-0 9.∅g5 dxe4 10.dxe4 h6 11.∅h4 ∅d6?! 12.∅bd2 12.∅d1 ∅e6 13.∅bd2 ∅h5. 12...∅h5 13.∅c4 ∅e6 14.∅fe1?! ∅f4 15.∅f1 ∅xg2!

Keeping the bishop on the diagonal where it has the greatest activity. Although White has played his favourite b2-b4 and practically has an extra tempo, because he plays a type of Philidor Defence with reversed colours, a clear way for White to achieve advantage cannot be seen. For example:

C131) 8.∅e2 0-0 9.0-0 9.b5 ∅b8 10.0-0 (10.∅xe5?! ∅e8 and now 11.∅f4 dxe4 12.d4 c5! ∅; or 11.d4 ∅xe4 12.0-0 c5! with excellent play for Black) 10...a6?! 11.bxa6 ∅xa6 12.∅xe5 dxe4 13.dxe4 ∅c5 14.∅d2 ∅e8 15.∅ec4 ∅a7 16.e5 g6! ∅ with the idea ...∅f5. 9...a6 10.∅bd2 10.∅g5 d4. 10...∅e8 11.∅e1 11.∅b2 ∅h5 with mutual chances; 11.h3 ∅h5. 11...∅g4 12.∅f1 ∅f6

and Black wins a pawn, Aleksic-Korneev, Assisi 2003.

Back to the position after 6.∅c2.

C12) Possible is 6...∅d6?! when after 7.b4 (7.∅g5 dxe4 8.dxe4) there follows 7...∅e7, transposing into the game Strikovic-Stojanovic, 2011 which was analysed under 4.c3 e5 5.b4;

C13) Or 6...∅c5 and after the eventual 7.b4 (7.∅e2 0-0 8.0-0 a5 trans-
but he cannot achieve the usual re-grouping with \( \text{Re1} \) and \( \text{Qf1} \), without the move \( h2-h3 \). However, that move will increase the strength of the typical manoeuvre of the black knight with \( ...\text{Nh5} \);

C132) 8.b5 \( \text{Qe7} \) 9.\( \text{Qxe5} \) \( \text{Qg6} \) 10.\( \text{Qxg6} \) \( \text{hxg6} \) 11.\( \text{Qd2} \) 12.\( \text{Qxe4} \) 12.d4 \( \text{Qf5} \) with excellent play for Black; 12.dxe4? \( \text{Qg4} \). 12...\( \text{Qxe4} \) 13.dxe4 \( \text{Qf6}! \).

C133) 8.\( \text{Qg5} \) h6 9.\( \text{Qh4} \) 9.\( \text{Qxf6}?! \) \( \text{Qxf6} \) 10.exd5 \( \text{Qe7} \) 11.\( \text{Qd4} \) \( \text{Qf4} \). 9...0-0 10.\( \text{Qxe2} \) 10.b5 \( \text{Qe7} \) 11.\( \text{Qxe5} \) (11.\( \text{Qxf6} \) \( \text{gxf6} \) 12.\( \text{Qd2} \) \( \text{Qg6} \) and despite his spoiled pawn structure, Black has easier play) 11...\( \text{Qe8} \) 12.\( \text{Qxf6} \) \( \text{gxf6} \) 13.\( \text{Qf3} \) \( \text{Qg6} \). 10...\( \text{Qd6} \) with the idea \( ...\text{Nh5} \) and satisfactory play.

C2) If 6.\( \text{g3} \)

the simplest way to equality is 6...\( \text{dxe4} \). Since White has decided to fianchetto his bishop, Black transposes the game into a position where the main battle will be on the f1-a6 diagonal. Also possible is 6...\( \text{g6} \) 7.\( \text{g2} \) \( \text{g7} \) 8.0-0 0-0 9.a4 a5 10.\( \text{bxa3} \) h6 11.\( \text{b5} \) \( \text{e8} \) 12.\( \text{e1} \) \( \text{b8} \) 13.exd5 \( \text{xd5} \) 14.d4 c6 15.\( \text{a3} \) \( \text{g4} \) 16.dxe5 \( \text{d7} \) 17.\( \text{f1} \) ½-½ Zviagintsev-Shulman, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005. 7.\( \text{dxe4} \) a5 8.\( \text{g2} \) \( \text{c5} \) 9.0-0 0-0 10.\( \text{bd2} \) b6

A well-known typical position, with good play for Black, which is analysed under 4.\( \text{g3} \);

C3) Or 6.\( \text{bd2} \) \( \text{e7} \) Or the slightly more active 6...\( \text{d6} \) 7.\( \text{g3} \) (it is very risky to open the position with 7.d4?; while the white queen and king are on the e-file: 7...0-0 8.dxe5 \( \text{Qxe5} \) 9.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 10.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{g4} \) 11.\( \text{c2} \) \( \text{d6} \) 12.exd5 \( \text{e8} \) 13.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{xf3} \) 14.\( \text{gxf3} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 15.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{h4} \) 16.\( \text{f5} \) \( \text{c5} \) 0-1 Scheerer-Schlosser, Altenkirchen 2005) 7...0-0 8.\( \text{g2} \) \( \text{e8} \) 9.0-0 \( \text{f8} \) and now we have a position that was analysed under 6...\( \text{e7} \). 7.\( \text{g3} \) 0-0 8.\( \text{g2} \) \( \text{e8} \) Also possible is 8...a5 9.0-0 \( \text{dxe4} \) 10.dxe4 (10.\( \text{xe4} \)=) 10...\( \text{c5} \) 11.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{e7} \) with the idea \( ...\text{b6} \). Black is one tempo short compared with the previously-mentioned typical position (under 6.\( \text{g3} \)), so he doesn’t have time to play \( ...\text{b7} - \text{b6} \) and \( ...\text{a6} \), because the e5 pawn is hanging. Despite this fact, the chances are approximately equal. 9.0-0 \( \text{f8} \) 10.\( \text{e1} \) 10.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{e6} \) 11.\( \text{b4} \) a6 12.\( \text{b2} \) \( \text{c8} \) 13.a3 \( \text{h3} \) 14.a4 \( \text{xe2} \) 15.\( \text{xe2} \) b5 16.\( \text{e1} \) \( \text{b7} \) 17.\( \text{b3} \) ½-½ Mainka-I. Farago, Saarlouis 2000. 10...a5?! 10...\( \text{e6} \)!! 11.exd5 (11.\( \text{g5} \) \( \text{g4} \)!). 11...\( \text{xd5} \) with mutual chances; 10...\( \text{d4} \)!! 11.mixd4 \( \text{xd4} \) 12.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 13.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{b6} \) 14.\( \text{e3} \) c5=. 11.exd5 \( \text{xd5} \) 12.\( \text{c4} \) 12.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{g4} \)
(12...e4 13...dxe4 f5 13...d5 14...h5 14...xe4 15...xe4 fxe4 16...xd8 ...xd8 17...g5 d6 18...xe4 dxe4 19...xe4 with approximately equal chances, although White’s position looks preferable) 13.h3 ...h5 14...b5!± Gaspar-Soares, Brazil 1998.

12...f6 13.a4 ...d7 13...c6 14.h4?! ...d7 15...h2 ...ad8± 16...e4 ...c5 17...f1 ...f5 18...g2 f4 19.gxf4 exf4 with a strong attack for Black, Vasiukov-Vaganian, Dubna 1973;

C4) 6...g5 ...e7 7...c2 0-0 8...bd2 ...e6 9...e2 h6 10...h4 ...d7 ½-½ Filipovic-I. Farago, Zadar 1999.

A typical position, which can arise from various move orders. Practice has confirmed it as good for Black.

A) 10...c2 and now:

A1) 10...b6 11...b3 The move 11...c4?! leads to problems: 11...a6 12...e7 13...e3 ...ad8 14...d5 ...xd5 15.exd5 e4! 16...e1 (or 16...g5?! ...d3 17...xd3? (17...xe4 f5 18...h4 ...xh4 19...xh4 ...g4 20...d2 ...e8 21...f3 ...c4) 17...axb4 18.cxb4 ...xb4 19...xe4 f5 20...e3? ...c5 21...g5 ...xf2+± ½-½ Mvosziszian-Kanmazalp, Izmir 2011. 11...d6 12.a4 ...a6 13...d1 ...c8 14...e4 ...e6 15...f5 ...ad8
White's best choice here is 16.\textit{\text{h3}} (16.\textit{\text{e3}}?! \textit{\text{g4}} 17.\textit{\text{g5}} \textit{\text{f6}} 18.\textit{\text{d2}}?! (18.\textit{\text{c1}}) 18...\textit{\text{c4}} 19.\textit{\text{c1}} \textit{\text{c5}} with better chances for Black, Aagaard-McDonald, London 1997). This possibility of activating the usually passive light-squared bishop is usually the reason why some authors prefer 10...\textit{\text{e6}}. Let's mention one of the greatest 'Frenchmen', grandmaster Lev Psakhis, who in his book French Defence: Steinitz, Classical and Other Systems considers this continuation as the main line.

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

16...\textit{\text{h8}} 17.\textit{\text{g5}}

The position seems to be very dangerous for Black, because of the great activity of the white pieces on the kingside. However, Black has ways to reply adequately to his opponent's threats and to stop his initiative: 17...\textit{\text{e7}}! 17...\textit{\text{g6}}? 18.\textit{\text{h6}} \textit{\text{w}}\textit{\text{xh3}} 19.\textit{\text{xf6}}+; 17...\textit{\text{h6}}? 18.\textit{\text{xg7}}!±. 18.\textit{\text{f3}} After this prophylactic move Black organises a counter-attack. 18.\textit{\text{g2}} \textit{\text{c8}} 19.\textit{\text{g1}} \textit{\text{a6}}. 18...\textit{\text{c4}} 19.\textit{\text{xd8}} \textit{\text{xd8}} 20.\textit{\text{xe7}} \textit{\text{w}}\textit{\text{xe7}} 21.\textit{\text{d1}} \textit{\text{xd1+}} 22.\textit{\text{xd1}} \textit{\text{h6}} 23.\textit{\text{e3}};

A2) 10...\textit{\text{e6}} On this square, the black bishop seems to be more effective, because it controls two important diagonals:

A21) 11.\textit{\text{g5}} \textit{\text{d7}} 12.\textit{\text{c4}} \textit{\text{h6}} 13.\textit{\text{f3}} \textit{\text{w}}\textit{\text{e7}} 14.\textit{\text{e3}} \textit{\text{e6}} The black bishop is dominant on both diagonals. It seems that in the 10.\textit{\text{c2}} variation he is better placed on \textit{\text{e6}}, than on \textit{\text{a6}}. 15.\textit{\text{h4}} \textit{\text{xf8}} 16.\textit{\text{xf6}} \textit{\text{w}}\textit{\text{f8}} 17.\textit{\text{w}}\textit{\text{e2}} \textit{\text{e7}} with good play for Black, Rodriguez Guerrero-Rustemov, Dos Hermanas 2002;

A22) 11.\textit{\text{b3}}?! This continuation doesn't leave a good impression at all, because in this variation Black hasn't played ...\textit{\text{b7}}-\textit{\text{b6}}, and his dark-squared bishop can stay on the important diagonal. 11...\textit{\text{b6}}=;

A23) 11.\textit{\text{h3}} \textit{\text{h6}} 12.\textit{\text{h4}} \textit{\text{w}}\textit{\text{d7}} 13.\textit{\text{f5}} \textit{\text{e7}} 14.\textit{\text{b3}} \textit{\text{xb3}} 15.\textit{\text{xb3}} \textit{\text{e7}} 16.\textit{\text{c6}} 17.\textit{\text{g4}} with approximately equal chances. 17...\textit{\text{fe8}} 18.\textit{\text{w}}\textit{\text{e2}} \textit{\text{e4}} 19.\textit{\text{w}}\textit{\text{e1}} \textit{\text{c7}} 20.\textit{\text{g5}}?! \textit{\text{d5}} (20...\textit{\text{e3}}) with better chances for Black, Amin-G. Meier, Martuni 2008.

B) Risky is 10.\textit{\text{w}}\textit{\text{e2}} \textit{\text{b6}} and White will have his knight at \textit{\text{c4}} pinned:

B1) 11.\textit{\text{d1}}?! \textit{\text{a6}} 12.\textit{\text{c4}}?? \textit{\text{xc4+-}}, B. Savchenko-Drozdovskij, Internet 2006;
B2) 11.\(\text{c4}\) \(\text{a6}\) and now: 12.b3 \(\text{c8}\) 13.\(\text{h4}\) \(\text{d6}\) 14.\(\text{f5}\) \(\text{xc4}\) 15.bxc4 \(\text{g6}\) (15...\(\text{xf6}\)?) 16.\(\text{h6}\) + \(\text{h8}\) 17.\(\text{a4}\) \(\text{e7}\) 18.\(\text{d1}\) \(\text{e6}\), Movsziszian-Rustemov, Villa de Albox 2002; 12.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{e7}\) with the idea ...
\(\text{xe6}\) 13.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{h6}\) 14.\(\text{xf6}\) \(\text{xf6}\); 12.a4 \(\text{e8}\) 13.b3 \(\text{d6}\) 14.\(\text{fd2}\) \(\text{e7}\) 15.\(\text{b2}\) \(\text{e6}\) 16.\(\text{fd1}\) \(\text{xc4}\) 17.\(\text{xc4}\) \(\text{xc4}\) 18.\(\text{bxc4}\) \(\text{ad8}\) with better
chances for Black, Mahjoob-Erdős, Beijing 2008.

\(\text{b6}\) Also possible is 4.e5 \(\text{fd7}\) 5.f4 c5 6.g3 \(\text{c6}\) 7.g3 b5

Without the pawn at d4, Black is advancing undisturbed on the queenside. On 7...f6 8.exf6 \(\text{xf6}\) 9.\(\text{g2}\) \(\text{d6}\) 10.0-0 0-0 11.\(\text{e1}\) \(\text{c7}\) 12.\(\text{e2}\) White has a minimal advantage due to the weak pawn at e6. 8.\(\text{g2}\) \(\text{b6}\)!!? 9.c3
White strengthens his control over the d4-square, and wants to decrease the weakness of the g1-a7 diagonal after the early f2-f4, but in this way, he makes Black's activity easier after ...
\(\text{b5-b4}\). 9...\(\text{e7}\) 10.0-0 0-0 11.\(\text{h1}\) \(\text{b7}\) 12.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{ae8}\) 13.\(\text{b3}\) a5 14.\(\text{e3}\) a4 15.\(\text{bd2}\) f5 16.\(\text{xf6}\) \(\text{xf6}\) 17.\(\text{d4}\) b4
with good play for Black, Kamsky-Bareev, Tilburg 1991 (35).

4. \(\text{g1-f3}\)
with 6...g6 and 7...\(\text{g7}\) (see p.29) and the classical 6...\(\text{xe7}\) (see p.31) are the most acceptable ones:

A) 6...g6

A very popular system lately. Black develops his forces and activates his bishop on the central diagonal. On the possible central advance e4-e5 he plans a counterattack with ...\(\text{g4}\) and ...f7-f6.

7.0-0 \(\text{g7}\) 8.e1 0-0 9.c3 If White wants to create more space and to advance his central pawns, he has to play this preparatory move.

In this critical position Black has several acceptable possibilities: 9...b6, the most frequently played continuation; 9...\(\text{e8}\) a continuation which has been analysed by grandmaster Nikita Vitiugov in his book French Defence; and 9...a5, the recommendation of the authors of the present book.

9...a5

The most active move, which fits into Black’s plans on the queenside, where the main battle will be fought. Naturally, when White advances with his central pawns, the battle begins in the centre and on the kingside. Regarding the black a-pawn, it is best for it to advance as far as possible, in order to weaken the white pawn chain. Naturally, the opponent can stop this action with a2-a4, but he must keep in mind that when he uses the plan with the central advance e4-e5 and d2-d4, he will remain with a weak b4-square, after the exchange on d4. The weak b4-square will be more useful for Black, because of the difference in activity and the position of the knights on the queenside.

Despite all these factors, it seems that White will have to play his a-pawn, because without the central pawn advance he doesn’t have any chance to fight for the advantage. The pawn at a4 protects the important b3-square (i.e. by stopping Black playing ...a5-a4), which is necessary for the white knight to support White’s centre.

A1) 10.e5?! It seems that White is not yet ready for this typical advance.

10...\(\text{g4}\) This is more active than the usual 10...\(\text{d7}\). As well as putting additional pressure on f2, Black also has the possibility to play the manoeuvre ...\(\text{h6}\) and ...\(\text{f7}\) or ...\(\text{f5}\).

11.d4 cxd4 12.cxd4 f6! This typical strike has been seen so many times that it doesn’t need a comment anymore. It’s interesting that after this magical move, White is already in serious trouble:

A11) 13.h3 \(\text{xf2}\) 14.\(\text{xf2}\) \(\text{exe5}\)

15.\(\text{g1}\) More stubborn is 15.dxe5 \(\text{b6+}\) 16.\(\text{f1}\) \(\text{exe5}\) 17.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{xb3}\) 18.axb3 \(\text{d3}\) with the idea ...e6-e5 and a difficult position for White.
16.\texttt{c}f1 e5 17.\texttt{g}g5 \texttt{d}d6 17...\texttt{b}6+.
18.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{x}h3 with the superior position, Rathnakaran-Kurnosov, Bhubanestwar 2009;

A12) 13.\texttt{h}h3 \texttt{h}5 14.\texttt{x}g4 \texttt{hxg4}
15.\texttt{h}h4 \texttt{fxe}5 16.\texttt{x}g6 \texttt{xd}4 17.\texttt{x}f8 \texttt{wx}f8 18.b3? 18.\texttt{x}g4 e4! with the idea ...\texttt{c}c2 and ...\texttt{e}6-\texttt{e}5 and a difficult position for White.
Gaining material instead of the strong 18...e4! significantly changes the evaluation of the position! 18...\texttt{c}c2?!

19.\texttt{x}e5 \texttt{dxa}1 20.\texttt{x}f3 \texttt{a}7 21.\texttt{h}6 \texttt{b}6 22.\texttt{g}5 \texttt{c}7 23.\texttt{e}5 \texttt{c}2 24.\texttt{w}h5± and Black remains with an extra piece but in a critical position. 18...\texttt{f}5\textsuperscript{f},
Malachi-Reutsky, Rijeka 2010;

A13) 13.\texttt{xf}6 \texttt{xf}6\textsuperscript{f} This position shows us one of the ideas of the variation with the fianchetto of the black bishop. Its value is more significant if White is left without the possibility to maintain his centre. 14.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{a}4 And this move is one of the ideas of the variation with ...\texttt{a}7-\texttt{a}5.

A2) 10.\texttt{a}4 \texttt{b}6 11.e5
11.\texttt{f}f1 \texttt{dxe}4 (11...\texttt{d}4?!?) 12.\texttt{d}xe4 \texttt{wx}d1 13.\texttt{xd}1 \texttt{a}6 14.\texttt{e}1 \texttt{ac}8= 15.h3 \texttt{d}7 16.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{h}6 17.\texttt{d}6 \texttt{fd}8 18.\texttt{e}5 \texttt{c}4 19.g4 \texttt{c}5! 20.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{bxc}5 with better chances for Black due to the weak pawns at b2 and e5, Adu-Shabalov, Washington DC 2006;

and nothing is given by 11.\texttt{ex}d5 \texttt{ex}d5 12.\texttt{f}f1 \texttt{a}6 (12...\texttt{a}7?!) 13.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{xe}7=) 13.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{d}4 (13...\texttt{h}5=) 14.\texttt{e}5 \texttt{xe}5 15.\texttt{xe}5 \texttt{d}x\texttt{c}3 16.\texttt{bxc}3 \texttt{c}8 17.\texttt{c}4± Heissler-Cu. Hansen, Germany Bundesliga 1998/99. 11...\texttt{g}4
11...\texttt{d}7?! 12.d4 \texttt{a}6∞. 12.d4 \texttt{cxd}4 13.\texttt{cxd}4 \texttt{b}4
13...\texttt{f}6?! N
14.\texttt{xf}6 \texttt{xf}6 15.\texttt{b}3. White has managed to hold the centre, but he has had to move his knight to a passive position. Nevertheless, Black also has his typical minuses on the e-file, which gives the two opponents mutual chances in the forthcoming battle: 15...\texttt{b}4! 16.h3 \texttt{h}6 17.\texttt{g}5 (17.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{a}6 18.\texttt{d}6 (18.\texttt{f}1 \texttt{f}1 \texttt{f}5 19.\texttt{d}3 19.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{xb}2 20.\texttt{c}1 \texttt{c}4 21.\texttt{xf}8 \texttt{xf}8 22.\texttt{e}1 \texttt{f}5\textsuperscript{f}) 17...\texttt{f}7 18.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{c}5 19.\texttt{e}5 \texttt{e}8 20.\texttt{f}1 \texttt{d}6 with good play for Black.
14.\texttt{b}1 14.h3 \texttt{h}6 15.\texttt{b}1 \texttt{f}5.
14...\texttt{a}6 14...\texttt{f}6 15.h3 \texttt{h}6 (15...\texttt{xf}2±) 16.\texttt{xf}6 \texttt{xf}6 17.\texttt{g}5 (17.\texttt{c}3 \texttt{f}7=) 17...\texttt{f}7 18.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{f}5 19.\texttt{c}3 \texttt{d}7 with complex play.
15.\texttt{f}1?! 15.h3! \texttt{h}6 16.g4± (16.\texttt{g}5? \texttt{d}7 17.\texttt{d}2 (≥ 17.g4 \texttt{fc}8 18.\texttt{c}3 \texttt{h}8 19.\texttt{f}1 \texttt{xf}1 20.\texttt{xf}1 \texttt{g}8 21.\texttt{b}5=) 17...\texttt{f}5 18.g4 \texttt{e}7 19.\texttt{f}6 \texttt{fc}8 20.\texttt{c}3±, Rathnakaran-Maheswaran, Bhiwani
2010. 15...\textbf{xf1} 16.\textbf{xf1} f6 17.\textbf{c3}! \geq 17.exf6 \textbf{xf}6†. 17...\textbf{fxe}5 18.\textbf{g5} \textbf{xf}2 19.\textbf{xf}2 \textbf{xf}2 20.\textbf{xf}2 \textbf{f}6+ 21.\textbf{g}2 \textbf{exd}4\textbf{f}, Adu-Stripunsky, Ledyard 2008.

B) 6...\textbf{e}7

Natural and definitely the most frequent. 7.0-0 0-0 7...b6 is a significantly more quiet but also a more passive system compared to the main line with ...b7-b5. 8.\textbf{e}1 (it’s too early for 8.e5?! \textbf{d}7 9.\textbf{e}1 \textbf{c}7 10.\textbf{e}2 \textbf{g}5\textbf{f}; the alternative 10...\textbf{b}7 is analysed under 4.\textbf{gf}3 b6 5.g3 \textbf{b}7) 8...\textbf{b}7 9.c3 (9.e5 \textbf{d}7 10.\textbf{f}1 (10.e4?! 10...\textbf{c}7 11.\textbf{e}2 h6 is analysed under 4.\textbf{gf}3 b6) 9...\textbf{c}7 10.\textbf{f}1 \textbf{dx}e4 11.\textbf{xe}4 \textbf{d}8 12.\textbf{e}2 0-0 13.e5 \textbf{d}7 14.\textbf{f}4 a6 15.\textbf{e}3 \textbf{b}5 16.\textbf{g}4 \textbf{c}8 17.h4 (as we can see, White can build a typical King’s Indian Attack set-up also in the position where the d-pawns are exchanged) 17...\textbf{xe}8 18.\textbf{g}5 \textbf{f}8 19.h5 \textbf{h}6 20.\textbf{e}4 with a space advantage and good chances for a successful attack for White, Morozevich-Mitenkov, Moscow 1998. 8.\textbf{e}1 \textbf{b}5! 8...b6. 9.e5 \textbf{d}7 10.\textbf{f}1

White players who choose 2.d3 usually want to play this type of position, with a clear, standard plan, and to achieve easy play with very little risk. White will continue with the simple moves h2-h4, \textbf{f}4, \textbf{h}2, \textbf{g}5, and start to threaten his opponent with a mating attack.

Despite the fact that Black has solid defensive possibilities and enough counterplay on the queenside with ...a5-a4 and ...\textbf{a}6, we didn’t give this system as the first choice because of the psychological reasons which follow from the previous comment. Besides, it is not clever to allow the opponent to play a position where he can easily regroup his pieces on the kingside and organise a mating attack, especially if he has prepared the variation in the quiet at home and can easily play about 30 moves from his home preparation. However, we believe that the great Wolfgang Uhlmann would not agree with this comment, because he never gave up developing the black bishop on e7, regarding it as the most natural and the principal continuation.

10...a5 11.h4 b4 12.\textbf{f}4 Or 12.\textbf{h}2 and then 13.\textbf{f}4. 12...\textbf{a}6 Or ...a5-a4 and then ...\textbf{a}6. 13.\textbf{h}2 a4

This is one of the most important critical positions of the classic variation with the bishop on the e7-square. As we can see, both opponents are preparing their armies to the maximum for the forthcoming battle. White is re-
grouping his pieces on the kingside, with the clear idea to checkmate the opponent’s king. On the other side, Black is carrying out a bayonet attack with the idea of opening or weakening the white queenside, and creating enough counterplay, as a balance to the white domination on the opposite side. In this concrete position, White can either attack with 14.\textit{g}5 or first block the advancing black pawn with 14.a3. Naturally, there are more interesting continuations in this position, but these are beyond the scope of this book. We have decided to cover the two most frequent continuations, because they can show us in the best way the essence of the position.

B1) \textit{14.g5 d4}

A rarely seen, but very good and clever alternative to the main continuation 14...\textit{e}8. The centralised black knight creates maximum pressure on the white position and, more importantly, it is ready to jump and defend the black position against White’s threat \textit{h}5 (14...\textit{e}8 15.\textit{h}5 \textit{x}g5 16.hxg5 f5 is the idea of the move 14...\textit{e}8 and the main line).

15.\textit{h}5? Naturally Black is well prepared for this attack, which is why he has played 14...\textit{d}4, and because of the importance of this typical attack, we will continue our analysis. The variations arising are full of wonderful tactical strikes

White’s alternatives are not very promising either: 15.\textit{c}1 b3 16.axb3 axb3 17.c3 \textit{c}2 18.\textit{f}1 \textit{b}6\textit{f}, Romanov-T. Kosintseva, Moscow 2009; or 15.\textit{f}1? b3 16.axb3 axb3 17.c3 \textit{c}2 18.\textit{h}5 \textit{x}g5 19.hxg5 \textit{xe}1\textit{--}, Fenollar Jorda-Moskalenko, Cullera 2001.

15...\textit{h}6 16.\textit{g}4 A typical position for White’s attacking constellation on the kingside in this type of position. This is one of the most dangerous set-ups for the attack on the black king, with which White intends to annihilate the defence around the king with sacrifices.

16.\textit{hxg5} Now it is too late for 16...\textit{e}8? 17.\textit{x}h6+! gxh6 18.\textit{x}h6 \textit{x}g5 19.\textit{x}g5+ \textit{h}7 20.\textit{h}5+ \textit{g}8 21.\textit{h}6 \textit{f}5 22.\textit{g}5+ \textit{h}8 23.\textit{x}f8 \textit{xf}8 24.\textit{xd}5\textit{±}, Spiridonov-Csorn, Athens 1969. 17.\textit{hxg5} \textit{g}6 and due to the defensive possibility ...\textit{f}5, Black will easily win the game. It seems that 17...\textit{xc}2 also wins. This latter opinion is also supported by the engines. But if we make one beautiful move, which contains two important tactical ideas at the same time (blocking of the diagonal and liberating a square), the computer will very quickly and shamefully change its evaluation: 18.\textit{e}4!!+-
The rest we will let the true admirers of chess tactics discover.

B2) 14.a3 and now:

B2.1) We have already pointed out that 14...c4?! makes more sense in the position with the white queen at e2: 15.d4 c3 16.bxc3 bxc3 17.Qg5 Qb6? Black plays this cold-blooded move, as if his opponent had no attack at all. We have already mentioned that the best way to meet the threat Whh5 is 17...Qe8! 18.Qh5 Qxg5 with the idea of ...f7-f5. 18.Qh5 Qxg5 If 18...h6 19.Qg4 hxg5 20.hxg5 Qxd4 Black is one move late compared to our analysis of this idea; see under line B1 14.Qg5 Qd4 above: 21.Qf6+!

21...Qxf6 22.Qxf6 Qxf6 23.exf6 Whxf6 24.Qe5+–.

19.Qxg5 Qe8 20.Qf6±

with a clear edge for White in Kaidanov-Nijboer, Elista 1998;

B22) 14...bxa3 15.bxa3 A8b8 16.Qg5 Qd4 Nothing has changed in White’s favour after the exchange of b-pawns, so there is no reason not to react again with this beautiful active move against the opponent’s attack with Qg5. Admittedly, also good is the standard 14...Qe8. 17.a2 h6 18.Qh3 A8b6 19.Qg4 Qf5 and Black has the better chances in the forthcoming battle, Adu-Jussupow, Minneapolis 2005.

Back to the position after 4.Qg5.


A) 5...a5 and now:

A1) 6.Qe2 e5 Black enters into a reversed Philidor Defence with two tempi less, but thanks to his space advantage, he has a satisfactory position: 7.0-0 Qe7 8.Qc2 0-0 9.Qe1 Qe8 10.b3 and now:

A11) 10...Qb6? 11.a3 Qd6 12.Qf1 h6 13.Qg3 Qb7 14.Qb1 Qe7∞ Genocchio-Stojanovic, Verona 2008;

A12) 10...Qf8 11.a3 Qg4 12.Qb2 Qd7 13.Qf1 Qad8 14.b4! White uses
The Modern French

his mobile queenside pawns to realise his typical plan and seize the initiative on the queen side. 14...axb4 15.cxb4 d4 16...a2 c8 17.h3 h6 18...h4± Areschenko-Rychagov, Moscow 2009;

A13) 10...c5!? This is also a motif in the Philidor system, with a small difference; with reversed colours we get a similar position with the white bishop on c4!

A2) In case of 6.e5 dxe3 7.d4 c6 8.b5 fxe5 9.dxe5 e7 10.0-0-0-0

Black has an extra tempo compared to the Guimard Variation. The extra tempo ...a7-a5 can be useful because of the thematic ...c5, but the position is highly complex and requires practical examination at a higher level;

A3) 6.g3 dxe4 7.dxe4 e5 8.g2 c5 9.0-0 0-0, with an equal game, is analysed under 4.g3.

B) Another interesting idea is 5...d6 6.e2 f4 Usual is 6...0-0 or 6...a5. 7.0-0 0-0 8.g3 dxd2 9.dxd2 e5 10.e1 e6 11.wc2 a5 12.exd5 dxd5 13.f1 h6 14.e4 d7 15.b3 f5 and Black had a good position, Teterev-Andreikin, Minsk 2008.

C) 5...e5 6.b4 d6!? Most common is 6...a6. 7.b2 0-0 8.e2 e8 9.0-0 b6 10.a4 a5 11.b5 d8 12.e1 b7 13.f1 bd7 14.wc1 c6 Tiller-Drozdosvij, Tromsö 2009.

● 4...e7 is a continuation which usually leads to positions covered under 4...c5. 5.g3 b6

At this point, Black can combine different move orders, such as 5...0-0 or 5...c5, but they all lead to the typical positions with the general ideas of playing either ...b7-b6 or ...b7-b5 afterwards. Generally speaking, positions with ...b7-b6 are quieter and a little passive. The main line is connected with double-edged positions, playing ...b7-b5 and quick action on the queenside. That line is covered under 4...c5.

6.g2 b7 7.0-0 c5 8.e1 c6 9.a3 White has the idea of covering the square b4 and preparing the thematic b2-b4, if Black castles queenside. However, it’s better to play c2-c3 first, giving the necessary support to the typical e4-e5 advance. In addition, Black is not obliged to castle queenside, so passive moves give Black enough time to build a proper set-up (9.e5 is covered under 4....f3 b6). 9...c7 10.c3 0-0 10...0-0-0 11.b4† is very risky for Black, and it is obvious that White is faster with his attack.

A) 11.e5 d7 is the main idea of White’s strategy, but it is not recommended with an early a2-a3 and c2-c3 (a much more useful plan is f1 and h2-h4 instead), where Black is just
faster, getting very active play on the queenside, as the following examples show:

A) 1) 1.d4 b5 2.e4 c6 3.d5 f6 4.e5 b4 5.a3 d5 6.e6 fxe6 7.Qf3 e5 8.Qc4 a5 9.b3 bxc3 10.bxc3 Qa5 11.Qf4 Qb6 12.a4 Qb7 13.e5 dxe5 14.Qxe5 Qa5 15.Qxe7 Qc6 16.f3 b6 17.Qe2 Qh5 18.Qd4 Qe6 19.Qf5 Qh8 20.Qe2 Qg7 21.Qxg7 Qxg7 22.Qh4 Qe6 23.Qf5 Qf5 24.Qxf5 Qxf5 25.Qg4 Qh5 26.Qf3 Qe6 27.Qd4 Qf7 28.Qf5 Qg8 29.Qg4 Qf7 30.Qf5 Qg8 31.Qd4 Qf7 32.Qf5 Qg8 33.Qd4 Qf7 34.Qf5 Qg8 35.Qd4 Qf7

A2) 12.Qf2 b5 13.e4 b4 14.Qf1 bxc3 15.bxc3 Qa6 16.Qd1 h2 Qb8 17.Qf4 Qe3 18.Qac1 Qxa3 19.Qg5 Qa5±, Prevot-Chuchelov, Bourbon Lancy 1999;

B) II.Qe2 dxe4 With his last move, White has prepared the conditions for the typical e4-e5 advance, so just in time, Black opens the centre, in order to create counterplay on the d-file.

12.dxe4 Qfd8

Usually, the other rook goes to this square. Having the king’s rook on the open file has another advantage, namely freeing the useful f8-square; after the e4-e5 advance and the knight retreat to d7, it has additional possibilities.

13.e5 Qd7 14.h4 Qf8 15.h5 h6 16.Qf1!? White wants to activate and to transfer the queen to the kingside. That is why he takes under control the important f1-a6 diagonal, and especially the d3-square. However, White should stay focused on his basic plan and, using his space advantage, play Qc4 fol-

ewed by Qf4 followed by a possible knight jump to d6: 16.Qc4! Qa5 (16...Qa6 17.Qf4 Qa5 18.Qfd2 Qab8 (18...Qxd2!? 19.Qxd2 Qes 20.Qg4 Qxc4 21.Qxh6 g6) 19.Qg4 Qh8 20.Qd6±) 17.Qxa5 bxa5. Black has a ruined pawn structure, but in the meantime the active white knight has been eliminated and there is additional play on the open b-file. After 18.Qf4 Qab8 Black has an active position, particularly after transferring his knight to the b6-square. 16...Qd7 Simple and strong. Black reinforces his position by doubling rooks on the only open file. 17.Qc4 Qh7 18.Qe2 White probably gave up on 18.Qg4 because of 18...Qg5!. 18...Qad8 19.a4 Qa5 20.Qg2 It seems as though White has skipped his last four moves, as he had the same position after the 16th move. In the meantime, Black has activated his pieces and got them perfectly coordinated. 20...Qc6 20...Qg5±. 21.b3 Qd3 22.c4 Qd7—+ Pancevski-Kosic, Porto Carras 2011.

4. ... b7-b6

The introduction to a very popular system. With d2-d3, White has limited the activity of his light-squared bishop, therefore Black increases the activity of his own!
Now White has three alternatives:
- 5.e5 (see p.36)
- 5.c3 (see p.36)
- the main move 5.g3 (see p.39)

**• 5.e5 ♘fd7 6.d4 c5 7.c3 ♘e7!**

Black will have an extra tempo compared to the standard position of the Tarrasch line 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 ♗f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.♗g5 c5 6.c3 b6, because White has moved his d-pawn twice. 8.♗b5 8.♗d3 ♗a6 9.♕xa6 ♘xa6= 10.♗a4 ♕c7 11.dxc5 bxc5 12.♗g4 0-0 13.♗f1 ♕f5 14.♗g3 ♘b8 15.b3 ♘b5 16.♗d2 ♕f4 17.♗xf4 ♘xc3 18.♗d2 ♘e4 19.♗g4 ♘f5 20.♗h6 ♘f8 21.♗d2 ♘e5 22.♗xe5 ♘xf2 0-1 Malachi-A. Grigorian, Rijeka 2010. 8...♗a6 9.a4 ♗xd4 10.cxd4 ♘c8 10...0-0 11.0-0 ♘c8 12.♗e1 ♘c6 13.♗e3 ♘xb5 14.axb5 ♘b4 15.♗c3 ♘b7 16.♗f1 a6= Adams-Bareev, Frankfurt rapid 2000. 11.♗e2 ♗b7 12.0-0 ♘xb5 13.axb5 ♘a6 14.♗e1 axb5 15.♗xa8 ♘xa8 16.♗g4 White plays for compensation, because in the endgame with 16.♗xb5, he has absolutely nothing: 16...♗c6 17.♗xc6 ♘xc6 with easier play for Black in this typical French endgame. 16...0-0 17.♗d3 ♘h8 17...♖c8 18.♗h6 ♘f8 with better chances for Black. 18.♗d3 ♘c6 19.♗f4 ♗e8 19...♖c8!? 20.♗d2 with definite compensation for the pawn, Andriasian-Hou Yifan, Moscow 2010.

**Important:** With the early 5.e5, all that White can achieve is the exchange of the light-squared bishops, which is exactly what Black wants! 5...♘fd7 6.d4 c5 7.c3 ♘e7! (purposely waiting for the white bishop to move first, and preparing castling in the meantime), after which follows ...♗a6 with at least equal play for Black.

**• 5.c3** A very frequent continuation, next to 5.g3. White controls the important d4- and b4-squares and frees the typical c2 square for his queen. Black has objectively three acceptable continuations to achieve good play:

A) **5...c5** and now:

A1) 6.♗e2 ♘c7 Black wants to have an active bishop at d6. Also very popular is 6...♗e7 7.0-0 0-0 8.♗e1 ♗c6 9.♗c2 ♘c7 10.♗f1 (10.♗f1 ♘b7 11.a3 a5 12.a4 ½-½ Kindermann-Klinger, Munich 1987) 10...♗d8 11.♗g5 ♘b7 12.♗g3 ♘h6 13.♕d2 ♘ac8 14.♕ad1 ♘f8 with an excellent game for Black, Klinova-Rogers, Wijk aan Zee 2002. 7.0-0 7.e5 ♘fd7 8.d4 ♗xd4 9.cxd4 ♗a6 10.♗f1 ♘xe2 11.♗xe2 ♘b7 12.♗d2 ♗a6 13.♗c1 ♘e7 14.♗g3 0-0 15.0-0 ♗xe2 16.♗xe2 ♘a6 17.♖c6 ♘ac8 18.♗fc1 ♖xc6
19.\textit{\textbf{hx}}c6 \textit{\textbf{d}}d8 20.a3 \textit{\textbf{Q}}db8 21.\textit{\textbf{Cc}}1 \textit{\textbf{d}}d7= Stevic-D. Petrosian, Rijeka 2010. 7...\textit{\textbf{Cc}}6 8.\textit{\textbf{Me}}1 With 8.\textit{\textbf{Wa}}a4 White wants to distract the black light-squared bishop from the vital squares b7 and a6: 8...\textit{\textbf{d}}d7 9.\textit{\textbf{Cc}}2 \textit{\textbf{d}}d6 10.\textit{\textbf{Me}}1 0-0 11.\textit{\textbf{C}}f1 (11.\textit{\textbf{C}}f1 is a flexible position for the bishop. White will have the possibility to create a King's Indian type of position with g3 and \textit{\textbf{g}}2, since the black bishop is placed on the more passive square d7: 11...\textit{\textbf{Ac}}a8?! 12.g3 b5?! 13.\textit{\textbf{g}}2 d4 14.c4 a6 15.a3 e5, Areschenko-Vojinovic, Budva 2009) 11...h6 12.\textit{\textbf{Cd}}d2 \textit{\textbf{C}}e7 (this transfer of the black knight is more effective when White chooses a plan with \textit{\textbf{f}}f1) 13.\textit{\textbf{Ac}}a1 dxe4 14.dxe4 \textit{\textbf{Cc}}6 15.\textit{\textbf{D}}d3 \textit{\textbf{g}}6 16.\textit{\textbf{Cd}}d1 \textit{\textbf{d}}d8\texttt{?}, Hall-Bareev, Germany Bundesliga 2000/01. 8...\textit{\textbf{C}}d6 and now:
A11) 9.\textit{\textbf{f}}f10-0 10.g3 10...\textit{\textbf{b}}b7 Black has good control of the centre and develops his pieces ideally. Certainly, this is possible because of his opponent's passive play, which began with 2.d3. 10...\textit{\textbf{a}}a6?! 11.e5! \textit{\textbf{xe}}5 (11...\textit{\textbf{xe}}5 12.\textit{\textbf{xe}}5 \textit{\textbf{xe}}5 13.d4±) 12.d4 cxd4 13.cxd4 \textit{\textbf{xd}}4 14.\textit{\textbf{xd}}4±. 11.\textit{\textbf{h}}h4?! White has thought up an extravagant but not effective plan with the transfer of his knight to g2, because 11.\textit{\textbf{g}}2 probably looks to him like a loss of two tempi compared to the standard King's Indian Attack. 11...\textit{\textbf{e}}e7 12.\textit{\textbf{g}}2± 12.exd5 \textit{\textbf{xd}}5 13.\textit{\textbf{h}}h3. 12...\textit{\textbf{Ad}}d8 13.\textit{\textbf{Cc}}2 \textit{\textbf{dx}}e4 14.\textit{\textbf{dx}}e4 \textit{\textbf{De}}5 15.\textit{\textbf{e}}e2 c4 Black's position is already strategically won. 16.\textit{\textbf{f}}f1 \textit{\textbf{d}}d3 17.f3 \textit{\textbf{c}}c5+ with a superior position for Black, Kr. Georgiev-Nguyen Chi Minh, Paris 2003;
A12) The loss of time with 9.a3 0-0 10.b4?! doesn't work well in this concrete position, because of the weaknesses of the pawns h2 and c3. 10...dxe4 11.\textit{\textbf{dx}}e4 \textit{\textbf{De}}5\texttt{?} 12.\textit{\textbf{Cc}}4 \textit{\textbf{xc}}4 12...\textit{\textbf{xf}}3+! 13.\textit{\textbf{xf}}3 \textit{\textbf{xh}}2+ 14.\textit{\textbf{g}}1 \textit{\textbf{a}}6\texttt{?}. 13.\textit{\textbf{Ac}}a4 \textit{\textbf{g}}4 14.\textit{\textbf{h}}3 \textit{\textbf{h}}2+ 15.\textit{\textbf{f}}f1 \textit{\textbf{xb}}4 16.\textit{\textbf{W}}b3 \textit{\textbf{De}}5 17.\textit{\textbf{xe}}5 \textit{\textbf{xe}}5\texttt{?}, Hall-Akopian, Gothenburg 2005;
A13) 9.\textit{\textbf{Cc}}2 0-0 transposes into the position analysed under 6.\textit{\textbf{a}}a4 \textit{\textbf{d}}d7 7.\textit{\textbf{c}}c2.
A2) 6.\textit{\textbf{a}}a4+ White wants to disrupt the coordination of Black's minor pieces, before he puts his queen on c2. 6...\textit{\textbf{d}}d7 6...\textit{\textbf{d}}d7 7.\textit{\textbf{c}}c2 and the black bishop has moved away from the natural squares for this type of position, b7 and a6. 7.\textit{\textbf{c}}c2 \textit{\textbf{c}}c7 8.\textit{\textbf{e}}e2 \textit{\textbf{c}}c6 9.0-0 \textit{\textbf{d}}d6 10.\textit{\textbf{e}}e1 0-0:
A21) 11.b3 \textit{\textbf{b}}b7 12.\textit{\textbf{b}}b2 \textit{\textbf{fe}}8 13.a3 \textit{\textbf{Ad}}d8 With an ideally-placed army,
Black has nice prospects in the forthcoming battle, Managadze-Al Modiahki, Athens 2006;

A22) 11.\text{\textit{f1}} h6 12.\textit{g3} dxe4 13.dxe4 \textit{b7} 14.a2 \textit{d8} 15.a1 \textit{e7}! We have already seen a similar plan of Bareev in his game with Hall, analysed under 8.\text{\textit{f4}}. 16.a1 \textit{g6}+, Bauer-Bareev, Cannes rapid 2001;

A23) 11.a1 \textit{f1} \textit{b7} with an excellent position for Black.

A3) 6.g3

6...\textit{b7}

Another Bareev move worth attention is 6...\textit{a6}?! 7.c4 (7.exd5 \textit{x}xd5 (7...exd5?!)) 8.a4+ c6 9.e5 \textit{d7} 10.a1 \textit{d6} 11.a2 \textit{c8} 12.a1 \textit{d6} 13.a2 b6 14.a4+ d7 15.a2 \textit{d7} 16.a1 \textit{f1} \textit{c7} 17.a1 \textit{d8} 18.a1 \textit{d7} 19.a2 \textit{d7} with the initiative for White due to the bishop pair, Short-Bareev, Sarajevo 1999) 7...dxe4 8.dxe4 \textit{b7} 9.a4+ c6 10.e5 \textit{g4} 11.0-0 \textit{c6} 12.a4 \textit{d8} 13.a4+ \textit{d7} 14.a5 \textit{a0}+ \textit{d5}?! (14...d4!?) 15.a1+ Shirov-Bareev, Novgorod 1994. 7.e5 7.a4+ dxe4=; 7.a4+ \textit{d7} 8.a4+ \textit{c7} 9.a4+ c6 10.e5 \textit{d6} 11.a1 \textit{d6} 0-0 with mutual chances. 7...\textit{fd7} 8.d4 \textit{e7} 9.a6 10.a1 \textit{e2} \textit{d3} 11.a1 \textit{d3} \textit{c6} 12.0-0 0-0 with a promising endgame for Black, Jeran-Lenic, Ljubljana 2008.

B) 5...\textit{e7} 6.a4+ c6 7.e5 \textit{fd7} 8.d4 Not dangerous for Black is the active 8.g4 0-0 9.d4 c5 with the idea ...f5 and ...a6. 8.a5 9.h4 9.a3 \textit{a6} 10.axb6 \textit{axb6} 11.a6 \textit{a6} 0-0 12.a7 \textit{a7} 10.a4 \textit{g7} 11.a5 b5 a5 12.cxb5\textit{g}4 21.cxd4 \textit{c4}

And Black constantly holds the initiative in a typical French endgame, Bosboom-Knaak, Bad Wörishofen 1993;

C) 5...\textit{a6}

A nice idea. Black uses the last leisurely move of White to develop his pieces effectively and stop the white plan with e4-e5 and d3-d4. 6.a2 6.a2 \textit{e7} 7.a4+ c6 8.e4 \textit{d7} 7.a4+ c6 8.e5 \textit{f7} 9.a4+ c6 0-0. 6...\textit{e7} 7.0-0 7.b4! dxe4 8.dxe4 \textit{b7} 9.a4+ \textit{d7} 10.a1 \textit{d1} axb4 12.cxb4 c5 13.b5 \textit{a7} 14.a3 c4!?
15.\( \mathsf{wx}c4 \mathsf{wa}8 16.e5 \mathsf{c}d5 17.0-0 0-0 \)
18.\( \mathsf{d}d4 \mathsf{c}c5 19.\mathsf{h}h4 \mathsf{a}4 20.\mathsf{c}c4 \)
\( \mathsf{c}c3 21.\mathsf{d}d3 \mathsf{e}4 22.\mathsf{xe}4 \mathsf{xe}4 \)
23.\( \mathsf{b}b2 \mathsf{x}xa3 \mp 24.\mathsf{d}d1? \mathsf{xf}3 \mp 25.\mathsf{gx}f3 \mathsf{xe}5 \) with more than enough compensation, Bologan-Sutovsky, Kragujevac 2009.

7 ... 0-0 8.e4xd5 8.e5 \( \mathsf{fd}7 9.d4 \mathsf{xe}2 \) 10.\( \mathsf{xe}2= \)

8 ... \( \mathsf{xd}5 \)
9.d4 c5 With 9...\( \mathsf{b}b7 !? = \) Black can transpose the game into an Exchange Variation with 3...dxe4, since the white bishop is on the more passive e2-square.

10.\( \mathsf{xe}4 10.\mathsf{xc}5 ? . \) 10...\( \mathsf{xe}2 \)
11.\( \mathsf{xe}2 \mathsf{d}d7 12.\mathsf{d}d1 \mathsf{wd}7 13.\mathsf{c}c4 \)
\( 14.\mathsf{c}c3 \mathsf{xd}4 15.\mathsf{xd}4 \mathsf{a}6 = \)

**Important:** In the positions where White mirrors the Old Indian Defence, Black achieves excellent play by means of the simple developing move 6...\( \mathsf{e}e7 \) (or with a more active deployment of the bishop like in the main line with 6...\( \mathsf{wc}7, 7...\mathsf{dc}6, 8...\mathsf{dd}6 \) etc.) 7.0-0 0-0 8.\( \mathsf{we}1 \mathsf{dc}6 9.\mathsf{wc}2 \mathsf{wd}7 \) followed by...\( \mathsf{b}b7. \)

5. \( \mathsf{g}2-\mathsf{g}3 \)

White continues with the main plan of establishing a firm and elastic King's Indian Attack set-up, which he started with 2.d3.

5. ... \( \mathsf{d}5xe4 \)

and White's play on the queenside looks dangerous.

B) 6.e5 \( \mathsf{fd}7 7.\mathsf{g}2 \mathsf{c}5 \)
7...\( \mathsf{g}5 !? . \)
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Since the white king is at e1, Black can try to attack the central pawn at e5:
8.0-0 \(\text{c}6\) 9.\(\text{b}3\) (\(\geq 9.\text{e}1\) g4 10.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{dxe}5\) 11.d4 \(\text{d}7\) 9.g4 10.\(\text{fd}2\) \(\text{dxe}5\) 11.d4 \(\text{g}6\) 12.\(\text{wxg}4\) \(\text{g}7\) 13.\(\text{e}1\) h5 14.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{xd}4\) 15.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{xd}4\) 16.c4 c5 (\(\geq 16...\text{wd}7\) 17.\(\text{xd}5\) 0-0-0) 17.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{f}6\) 18.\(\text{cxd}5\) \(\text{fxe}6\) 20.\(\text{wx}d1\) \(\text{xe}2\) 21.\(\text{wx}g2\) fxe6 22.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{d}8\) with an equal endgame, Hamdouchi-Bareev, France 2001. 8.0-0 \(\text{c}6\) 9.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{c}7\)

But 10.c4! \(\pm\) is a typical blow that underlines Black’s lack of development and makes the flank strike ...g7-g5 ineffective. 10.\(\text{we}2\) \(\text{e}7\) Also good is 10...h6 11.h4 g5 11.\(\text{f}1\) h6 12.h4 g5 13.hxg5 hxg5 14.\(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{xe}5\) 15.\(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{dxe}5\) 16.f4 \(\text{e}7\) 17.\(\text{xd}5\) 

and Black had a winning advantage in Matikozian-Akobian, Burbank 2003;

C) 6.\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{dxe}4\) 7.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{bd}7\) 8.0-0 8.\(\text{gxe}4\) \(\text{x}e4\) 9.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{c}5\) 10.0-0 \(\text{xe}4\) 11.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{xe}4\) 12.dxe4 ½-½ Hennings-Uhlmann, Leipzig 1973.

8...\(\text{e}7\) 9.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{c}8\) =, Black has no problems, Looshnikov-Andre, Pardubice 2011.

6. \(\text{d}3\text{xe}4\) \(\text{c}8\)-\(\text{b}7\)

7. \(\text{wd}1\)-\(\text{e}2\)

\(\bullet\) A blank shot is 7.\(\text{b}5?\) \(\text{bd}7\) 8.\(\text{e}5\) 8.0-0 a6 9.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{c}5\) 8...a6 9.\(\text{xd}7\) 9.\(\text{c}6\) \(\text{xc}6\) 10.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{wc}8\) 11.0-0 \(\text{wb}7\) 9...\(\text{xd}7\) 10.\(\text{xe}2\) \(\text{c}5\) 11.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{e}5\) 12.\(\text{g}2\) h5? 13.\(\text{b}3\) 13.0-0 h4 14.\(\text{b}3\) 13...\(\text{xd}1\) 14.\(\text{xd}1\) \(\text{e}7\) \(\pm\), Makarov-Dreev, Novosibirsk 1995 (Knaak).

In King’s Indian Attack positions where Black does not castle kingside, he obtains good play against White’s e5 pawn with the flank strike ...g7-g5. It’s too early for an immediate 9...g5?! see: 10.h3?! \(\text{g}7\) 11.\(\text{f}1\) h6 12.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{dxe}5\) 13.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{exd}5\) 14.\(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{xe}5\) 15.f4 \(\text{xf}4\) 16.f4 \(\text{h}4\) 17.fxe5 \(\text{g}8\) 18.\(\text{f}1\) d4 19.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{d}8\)

0-1 Tringov-Maksimovic, Nis 1979.
White has no compensation for the pawn after 7. \( \text{g2}?! \) \( \text{xe4} \) 8. \( \text{e5} \) \( \text{c3}! \).

Also possible is 7... \( \text{a6} \) 8. \( \text{c4} \). This is a bad position for the c-pawn because of the obvious weakness of three important squares: d4, d3, and b4. Better is 8. \( \text{c4}! \).

Despite the pinned knight, White has real chances for an advantage.
8... \( \text{c6} \) 9.e5 On 9. \( \text{g2} \) Black plays 9...e5 and takes profit from the c-pawn's move. 9...d7 10. \( \text{g2} \) \( \text{c5} \) 11.0-0 \( \text{b7} \) 12.\( \text{d1} \) 12. \( \text{e1} \) \( \text{d7} \)
(12... \( \text{d4}?! \) 13. \( \text{d1} \) \( \text{xe2} \) 14. \( \text{xg2} \) \( \text{c6=} \) 13. \( \text{f4}?! \) 0-0-0 (13... \( \text{d4}! \) 14. \( \text{d1} \) 0-0-0 \( \text{d4} \) ) 14. \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{d4} \)) 15. \( \text{xg4} \) \( \text{xe2} \) 16. \( \text{xg4} \) \( \text{d3} \) 17. \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{e4} \) 18. \( \text{f3} \) Morozevich-Rozentalis, Moscow 1994. 12. \( \text{d3} \)

With the idea ... \( \text{c5} \) and ... \( \text{a6} \), Ibragimova-Vojinovic, Kemer 2009;

Also deserving attention is the flexible 7... \( \text{bd7}?! \) and on 8. \( \text{g2} \) (8.e5?! \( \text{g4} \)):
A) 8...e5, with real chances to equalise: 9.0-0 \( \text{c5} \) 10.h3?! is a prophylactic move that gives Black time and a good position. Alternatives are 10. \( \text{h4}?!; \) 10.b3?!; 10. \( \text{c4} \) 0-0 11. \( \text{xh5} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 12. \( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{e8=} \); and 10. \( \text{b3} \) 0-0 11. \( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{xc5} \) =. 10.0-0 11.\( \text{c3} \) White continues with prophylactic moves, giving his opponent extra time and the possibility to ideally place his pieces and create a better position. In addition, the move c2-c3 is effective when the black knight stands at c6. But in this case, after the thematic moves ... \( \text{e8} \), ...\( \text{f8} \), ...a7-a5, \( \text{a6} \) and ...\( \text{c5} \), the weak square d3 will be crucial for the evaluation of the position, and naturally in Black’s favour.

Better is 11.b3 followed by the development of the bishop on b2.
11...a5 12.\( \text{e1} \) \( \text{e8} \) 13.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{f8} \)
thematic e4-e5, with the initiative:
9.e5! a6 10.c4 g4 10...d3+ 11.f1 g4 12.e1!

with better chances for White.
11.0-0 b7 12.d1?! b4 12..d3 (12..d3 13.d1!) 13.e4 xc1 14.axc1 xb4 15.fg5 with strong compensation; 12.e1 xg2 13..xg2! 12...d3! 13.e1 d8 with better chances for Black, Nestorovic-Kostic, Zlatibor 2008. Or the simple 13...0-0-0 with a promising position.

8. c2-c3

White controls the important squares d4 and b4, but he weakens the d3-square and this will help Black to create counterplay. 8..g2?! b4! 9.0-0 xc2 10.e5 d5 11.b1 c4 12.a3 a2 13.e4 xc1 14.bxc1 e7 15.d4 d7 16.fd1 0-0 and Black is a pawn up with healthy development and in the forthcoming battle, he has excellent chances. On the other side White has a small space advantage, great piece activity and a certain compensation for the pawn, although it should not suffice for more than a draw (Yuldashev-Girinath, Hyderabad 2005).

8. ... a7-a5
9. f1-g2 b7-a6

White has an unpleasant choice; to weaken the central d4-square by playing c3-c4 or to continue the game with a pinned knight on c4.

10. d2-c4
10.c4 e5 11.0-0 c5 12.b3 d6 13.g5 h6 14.e3 a4 15.bd2 g4 and without the white bishop and with a weakness at d4, White will be inferior, Koroglou-A. Grigorian, Banske 2010.

10. ... e6-e5
11. 0-0 f8-c5
12. f3-h4

The most unpleasant move for Black. The active f5 knight will give a new impulse to the white attack. However, the temporarily inactive bishop at g2 and the pinned knight at c4 will enable Black to achieve sufficient counterplay:
A) 12.a4 e7 13.h3 0-0 14.h4 g6 15.g5 g7 16.a1 h6 17.c1 a8 18.b3 c4 19.xc4 d6 20.e3 xe3 ½-½ Quesada Perez-Nogueiras Santiago, Holguin 2002.
C) 12.g5 h6=.
12. ... 0-0
13. \( \text{h}4-\text{f}5 \quad \text{f}6-\text{e}8 \)
14. \( \text{f}1-\text{d}1 \quad \text{d}8-\text{f}6 \)
15. \( \text{g}2-\text{f}1 \)

15. b3 \( \text{e}7 \quad 16. \text{e}3 \quad \text{xe}3 \quad 17. \text{fxe}3 \quad \text{d}6 \) with equal chances in the endgame.

15. ... \( \text{a}6xc4 \)
16. \( \text{e}2xc4 \quad \text{e}8-d6 \)
17. \( \text{c}4-e2 \)

After 17. \( \text{xd}6?! \) Black was slightly better in the game Gajewski-B. Socko, Warsaw 2001.

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

with a good game for Black.

**Conclusion**

White's wish to develop the bishop in King's Indian fashion is understandable, particularly since he has an extra tempo with reversed colours. But who will control the equally important a6-f1 diagonal, which can be easily opened after the trade on e4? Of course, it will be Black, since White can't grab two apples with one hand.

This is the reason why we propose the simple system 5...dxe4 6.dxe4 \( \text{b}7 \) (to attract the white queen to a vulnerable diagonal) 7.\( \text{e}2 \quad \text{c}6! \)? (flexible development with 7...\( \text{bd}7 \) is also good, but from c6 the knight is directly influencing the important squares b4 and d4 and White is forced to weaken the diagonal further) 8.c3 a5 9.\( \text{g}2 \quad \text{a}6 \). Now the idea becomes crystal-clear: White must either weaken his centre by pushing his c-pawn or comply to an unpleasant pin.
Chapter 2 – The Exchange Variation

1.e2-e4 e7-e6 2.d2-d4 d7-d5 3.e4xd5 e6xd5

The Exchange Variation. For many players who prefer the French Defence as Black, this continuation limits their chances to play for a win, mainly because of the symmetrical pawn structure. But even so, the fact that Black has solved his main problem in this opening, namely the bishop on c8, gives him sufficient play in all variations.

It is hard to say that it is an anti-positional continuation, because there are a lot of strong, even top grandmasters who have used it as White. In principle, there is no problem if White is a strong player who plays for the advantage, but the difficulties can occur if on the opposite side of the board, we have a weaker player than us, who plays strictly for a draw! I consider that in all lines Black has a lot of promising possibilities, no matter who is our opponent!

In the diagram we see the first critical position. I believe that if White is not playing for an advantage, the most unpleasant continuation for Black might be 4.c3. The reason for this is that Black, if he wants to achieve active play, should play with his pawn on c5 in most variations. Then the pawn symmetry doesn't exist anymore and Black can achieve a position with an isolated d5 pawn.

With the move 4.c3 White has a good option to play b5+, practically the strongest manoeuvre in this type of position. White can also continue to play flexibly, depending on Black's plan, for example if 4.c3 c6 (preparing the plan with queenside castling) 5.d3 d6 6.f3! followed by f4/e2, massive exchanges and queenside castling.

In principle White will castle on the same side as Black, giving little scope for a real chess battle, but even there, with the right move order, Black has a very good game.
Let us consider all the possibilities, starting with the most active ones.

In the position after 3...exd5 White has three possibilities:
- 4.\(\text{d}3\) (see p.46)
- 4.c3 (see p.51)
- the main move 4.\(\text{f}3\) (see p.51)

\(\textbf{4.}\,\text{d}3\)

Certainly the most convenient move order for Black and the most unpleasant for White.

Considering the fact that White has revealed his plans with his light-squared bishop, there is no reason for postponing the central strike, and Black should immediately react with 4...c5!. As I have already mentioned, in this variation after Black's reaction in the centre, White loses the possibility to play the unpleasant move \(\text{b}5+\), transposing into a convenient position from the Tarrasch Variation.

Now three reactions are possible:
A) 4...c5 (see p.46)
B) 4...\(\text{c}6\) (see p.50)
C) 4...\(\text{d}6\) (see p.50)

A) 4...c5 and now:
A1) 5.\(\text{dxc}5\) \(\text{xc}5\) 6.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{f}6\) \text{0-0-0}

A11) 8.\(\text{g}5\) h6 9.\(\text{h}4\) g5 10.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{e}4\) 11.\(\text{bd}2\) The attempt to open the centre didn't bring success to White in the following game: 11.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{xc}3\) 12.\(\text{hx}g3\) dxc4 13.\(\text{xc}4\) \(\text{xd}1\) 14.\(\text{xd}1\) \(\text{c}6\) 15.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{g}4\) 16.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{e}7\) 17.\(\text{f}2\) \(\text{ad}8\) 18.\(\text{ad}1\) \(\text{xd}2\) 19.\(\text{xd}2\) \(\text{g}7\) 20.\(\text{xf}1\) \(\text{c}8\). The bishop pair, space advantage and a better piece coordination brought success to Black, Kulke-Luther, Chemnitz 2009.

11...\(\text{xc}3\) 12.\(\text{hx}g3\) \(\text{c}6\) 13.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{b}6\) 14.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{g}4\) 15.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{e}8\) 16.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{xf}3\)
17.\(\text{gx}f3\) \(\text{e}5\) 18.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{c}4\) Black stands slightly better. 19.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{e}7\) 19...\(\text{c}7\)!? 20.\(\text{ae}1\) \(\text{d}7\) 21.\(\text{a}5\)? \(\text{xa}5\)
22.\(\text{xa}5\)

22...\(\text{h}3\) 23.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{xe}3\)+ 24.\(\text{h}1\) \(\text{h}3\)+ 25.\(\text{g}1\) \(\text{c}7\) 26.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{xf}4\)
27.\(\text{xe}8\)+ \(\text{xe}8\) 28.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{e}3\)+ 29.\(\text{f}2\)
\(\text{b}6\) 30.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{xa}5\) 31.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{e}7\) 0-1
Bogut-Atalik, Teslic 2006;
A12) Another plan is: 8.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{c}6\).
It is also worth considering trying to directly exploit the weakening of the h3- and g3-squares with the move 8..\textit{\#d6!}. 9.a3? (9.\textit{\#c3?!}) 9..\textit{\#g3!} 10.\textit{\#g5} h6 11.\textit{\#h1} \textit{\#xf2} 12.\textit{\#f3} \textit{\#xf3} 13.\textit{\#xf3} \textit{\#b6} with material advantage for Black, without any compensation for White, Bromann-E. Berg, Denmark 2008/09.

After 8..\textit{\#c6} White can play:

\textbf{A121) 9.\textit{\#bd2} \textit{\#d6} 10.\textit{\#b3} \textit{\#b6} 11.\textit{\#h1} h6 12.c3 \textit{\#e8} 13.a4 \textit{\#e4} 14.\textit{\#xe4} \textit{\#xe4} 15.\textit{\#bd4} \textit{\#xd4} 16.\textit{\#xd4} \textit{\#c7} 17.f4 a6 18.\textit{\#d2} \textit{\#d7} The bishop pair, weakened white kingside and control over the e-file give Black an indisputable advantage, Fernandez Romero-Arizmendi Martinez, Malaga 2008;}

\textbf{A122) 9.c3 \textit{\#d6} This is a standard idea in this type of position. The bishop on c5 is dominant and the g3-square is constantly exposed! Black’s pieces are dominating the board and one little imprecise move by the player of the white pieces can lead directly to disaster: 10.\textit{\#bd2}?}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess.png}
\caption{Diagram 1}
\end{figure}

\textit{Only this way! Black has the initiative and positional pressure on White’s game! 12.\textit{\#e5} \textit{\#xe5} 13.\textit{\#c2} \textit{\#e8} 13.\textit{\#xe5} \textit{\#xe5} with initiative. 11...h6 12.\textit{\#b3} \textit{\#f6} 13.\textit{\#d2} \textit{\#d7} 14.\textit{\#bd4} \textit{\#f8} 15.\textit{\#xc6} bxc6 16.\textit{\#ad1} \textit{\#ad8} 17.\textit{\#a4} c5 18.\textit{\#b5} \textit{\#xb5} 19.\textit{\#xb5} c4 with advantage for Black, Bromann-Su. Be Hansen, Hillerod 2010;}

\textbf{A13) 8.\textit{\#bd2} \textit{\#c6} 9.c3 \textit{\#b6} 10.\textit{\#a4} \textit{\#g4!! Since White hasn’t played h2-h3, Black uses this in a very original way. 11.\textit{\#c2} 11.h3 \textit{\#ge5} 12.\textit{\#c2} \textit{\#e8} 13.\textit{\#xe5} \textit{\#xe5} with initiative. 11...h6 12.\textit{\#b3} \textit{\#f6} 13.\textit{\#d2} \textit{\#d7} 14.\textit{\#bd4} \textit{\#f8} 15.\textit{\#xc6} bxc6 16.\textit{\#ad1} \textit{\#ad8} 17.\textit{\#a4} c5 18.\textit{\#b5} \textit{\#xb5} 19.\textit{\#xb5} c4 with advantage for Black, Bromann-Su. Be Hansen, Hillerod 2010;}

\textbf{A14) 8.\textit{\#c3} \textit{\#c6} 9.\textit{\#g5} h6 10.\textit{\#h4} g5}

\textbf{A15) 8.\textit{\#c3} h6 9.h3 \textit{\#c6} 10.\textit{\#f4} Not allowing the potential \ldots \textit{\#d6}. 10...\textit{\#e6} 11.\textit{\#a4} \textit{\#e7} 12.\textit{\#e3} With his knight on the edge of the board, instead of the}
move in the game, White should have been directly punished! 12...\texttt{wa5}
12...\texttt{e4}!N The best answer to a flank action is central strategy! 13.\texttt{d4} \texttt{xd4}
14.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{f6} with better play for Black. 13.\texttt{c3} \texttt{d8} 14.\texttt{d4} \texttt{e8}
15.\texttt{e2} \texttt{d6} 16.\texttt{c3} with complex play and mutual chances, M. de Jong-Li Shilong, Groningen 2007.

Naturally there are also other options on move 5 that we will consider:

\textbf{A2) 5.\texttt{f3}}

An attempt to maintain the tension in the centre. 5...\texttt{c6} Only this way! Black should strengthen his pressure on the central pawn and force White to develop the enemy dark-squared bishop at c5, without its losing a tempo. Now:

\textbf{6.dxc5} An attempt to make a temporary pawn sacrifice with the idea to control the d4-square in the next stage of the game led to a total destruction of White's position: 6.0-0 cxd4 7.\texttt{e1}+ \texttt{e7} 8.\texttt{bd2} \texttt{f6} 9.\texttt{b3} \texttt{g4} 10.h3
\texttt{h5} 11.g4 \texttt{g6} 12.\texttt{bxd4} 0-0 0-0 13.\texttt{xc6} \texttt{bxc6} 14.\texttt{e5} \texttt{c5} 15.\texttt{xe6}
\texttt{fxg6} 16.\texttt{e3} \texttt{d7} 17.\texttt{d2} \texttt{e5} 18.\texttt{e2} \texttt{d4} 19.\texttt{g5} \texttt{d5} 20.\texttt{f1} \texttt{f3}+ 21.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{xf3} 22.\texttt{h2} \texttt{d6}+ 0-1, Teloudis-Graf, Kavala 2010; whereas
6.c3 is a transposition into the other variation that we will consider in our further analyses. 6...\texttt{xc5} 7.0-0 \texttt{f6}! I am deeply convinced that only a knight placed on f6 can give the position the necessary dynamism, especially because of the fact that it controls critical squares in the centre. The black knight on e4 and bishop at c5 control all the critical squares and they represent an ideal set-up for Black:

\textbf{A21) 8.\texttt{c3}} As we shall see, White has also difficulties to maintain control over the d4-square with the classical 8.\texttt{bd2}, which is why he uses this move order. With his next move \texttt{g5} White plans to exert direct pressure on the isolated pawn. We consider that this move represents a serious alternative.

6...0-0 9.\texttt{g5} \texttt{e6} 10.\texttt{d2} \texttt{e8} 11.\texttt{e1} \texttt{h6} 12.\texttt{h4} \texttt{a6} 13.\texttt{e2} White still achieves control over the d4-square by a non-standard knight manoeuvre but he also weakens the control over the e4-square! 13...\texttt{e7} 14.\texttt{fd4} \texttt{d7} 15.\texttt{f5} \texttt{xf5} 16.\texttt{xf5} \texttt{e4} 17.\texttt{xe4}
\texttt{dxe4} 18.\texttt{f4} 18.\texttt{xd8} \texttt{axd8} 19.\texttt{xe7} \texttt{xe7} followed by ...\texttt{f7-f5/}
...\texttt{g7} and slightly better play in the endgame. 18...\texttt{b6} 19.\texttt{xe7} \texttt{xe7}
20.b3 \texttt{ae8} with complex play and better chances for Black, Moskovic-Short, England 2001/02;
9.\textit{xf5} 0-0 10.\textit{xe6} fxe6 11.\textit{e3} \textit{xe3} 12.\textit{xe3} \textit{wd6} followed by \ldots \textit{e6-e5}, with full control of the centre and better play. 9...0-0! 10.\textit{e3} Black has a large development advantage and therefore the attempt to win a pawn can lead to a quick end. Considering the weakness of the f2-square, the bishop on c5 should probably be neutralised:

10.\textit{xe6} fxe6 11.\textit{e3} 11.\textit{xf2}+ 12.\textit{h1} (12.\textit{xe4+ 13.\textit{g1 \textit{b6+}}}) 12...\textit{d4}, winning material.

10...\textit{xe3} N There is no need to lose time with 10...\textit{d6}, Black just has to use his space advantage.

11.\textit{xe3} \textit{g4} 12.\textit{f3} \textit{b6} 13.\textit{d2} \textit{e8} 14.\textit{xe8+} \textit{xe8} 15.\textit{b3} \textit{e4} with an advantage to Black;

A23) 8.\textit{bd2} A standard idea against the isolated pawn in the Tarrasch Variation, but here White is too slow. Black takes complete control over the d4-square in front of the isolated pawn!

8...0-0 9.\textit{b3} \textit{b6} 10.c3 \textit{e8} 11.\textit{g5} \textit{g4} 12.\textit{bd2} \textit{h6} 13.\textit{h4} g5 14.\textit{g3} \textit{e4} 15.\textit{h1} h5! with initiative for Black, Torres Ventosa-Matamoros Franco, Espartinas 2007.

A3) 5.\textit{w2+}

A continuation that only temporarily wins a pawn, but also disturbs the coordination of the black pieces. In the further phase of the game, the white queen on e2 will be very exposed to the activity of the black pieces, since the first player has opened the e-file.

5...\textit{e7}

6.d\textit{xc5} \textit{c6} 7.c3 7.\textit{f3} 0-0 8.0-0 \textit{xc5} 9.\textit{c4} h6 10.\textit{h4} \textit{c6} 11.\textit{c3} (11.c3 \textit{g4} 12.\textit{bd2} g5 13.\textit{g3} \textit{e8} 14.\textit{d1 \textit{d4}} with initiative for Black) 11...g5 12.\textit{g3} \textit{e8} 13.\textit{d1 \textit{e4}} 14.\textit{xe4} dxe4 15.\textit{xd8}. All this was played in the game Efmanov-Ovetchkin, Ekaterinburg 2008. Now, instead of the move 15...\textit{xd8} in that game, after which White got the better prospects with 16.\textit{d2} f5 17.\textit{d5}, Black should have reacted with 15...\textit{xd8}! 16.\textit{xe4 \textit{e7}}. A pawn sacrifice for the initiative in the endgame. The domination of Black's bishop pair is obvious and with the unstoppable threat ...f5-f4 and the shutting of White's dark-squared bishop out of play, Black has more than enough compensation, for example 17.c3 f5 18.h4 f4 19.\textit{h2} \textit{f5}. 7...0-0 8.\textit{g5} h6 9.\textit{xf6} \textit{xf6} 10.\textit{d2} \textit{d7} 11.\textit{g2} \textit{xc5} 12.0-0 \textit{e6} 13.\textit{g3} \textit{b6} 14.\textit{ab1} \textit{ad8} Domination in the centre, supported by the bishop pair, and the suspicious white conception has been successfully punished, Melekhina-Izoria, Las Vegas 2009;
A4) 5. c3 Considering that White has already revealed his cards with his bishop at d3, this continuation is harmless. Black develops his pieces naturally. 5...c6 6. f3 This is the transposition into the other variation that we will consider in our further analyses. 6...d6 7. e3

If you want to understand this continuation properly, I will remind you of one line of the Sicilian Alapin Variation: 1. e4 c5 2. c3 e6 3. d4 d5 4. exd5 exd5 5. f3 d6 6. c4 with unclear play. Compared with this variation, Black here has at his disposal the tempo move...c5-c4, with an attack on the enemy light-squared bishop, and therefore comfortable play: 7...c4 8. e2 8. c2 f6 9. 0-0 0-0 10. b3 cxb3 11. axb3 e4 12. c4 f5! 8...g7 8...f6!? 9. b3 cxb3 10. axb3 0-0 11. a3 a6 12. 0-0 f5 13. c4 d7 14. h4 e6 15. d3 b4 with better prospects for Black, Privitera-Hoffmann, Vlissingen 2009.

Back to the position after 4. d3.

B) 4...c6 Imprecise. Certainly, the right answer is 4...c5, but we should look at this position, too, because by another move-order, we come to a position that is the subject of our analysis. 5. c3 d6

6. f3 As I have already mentioned, if White plays without big ambitions to achieve an advantage, then the 4.c3 move can be the most unpleasant choice for Black to face, if he doesn’t take care over his move order. With the move 5. f3, White, as in the game we analyse, starts a series of exchanges which bring simplifications which, together with the symmetrical pawn structure, do not leave much scope for Black to fight for an advantage. 6. e6 7. f4 d7 8. e2 g6 9. xd6 xd6 10. h4 h5 11. xg6 fxg6 12. g3 0-0 13. xd6 xd6 14. f3 e5 15. d2 f5 16. f2 f8 17. g3 c4 18. xc4 dxc4 19. ad1 a6 20. a3 with an approximately equal position, E. Hansen-Shulman, Las Vegas 2008;

C) 4...d6 5. c3 e7 6. c2

An attempt based on the idea of queenside castling. 6...bc6 Certainly, a
very serious alternative worth considering is 6...c5!?. Black reacts actively and uses the possibility to undermine the white centre, even if it means he could end up in a position with an isolated central pawn. However, as we have already seen, in such positions, Black has excellent control of d4 and very active pieces: 7.dxc5 ±xc5 8.±f3 ±bc6 9.±g5 h6 10.±h4 0-0 (10...f5!? 11.h3 ±d6 12.±bd2 ±f4 13.±xe7 ±xe7+ with excellent play for Black) 11.±bd2 f5 12.0-0-0 g5 13.±xg5 hgx5 14.±xg5 ±d6 15.h4 with complex play and a material advantage for Black, Stransky-Kozak, Teplice 2010. 7.±e2 7.±g5 ±g4 8.±d2 h6 9.±h4 ±d7 10.f3 ±f5 11.±e2 0-0 12.0-0-0 (opposite-side castling allows dynamic play with active options for Black to fight for the advantage; 12.0-0 ±e6!?) 12...b5! 13.g4 ±xd3 14.±xd3 b4 15.c4 with better prospects for Black, Vahtra-Gunina, Kemer 2007. 7...±g6 7...±g4 8.±g5 h6 9.±h4 ±d7 10.±g3 0-0-0 (10...0-0?) 11.±d2 ±he8 12.0-0-0 ±xg3 13.hxg3 ±b8 14.±b3 b6 15.±e1 ±d6 16.±d2 g5 with an approximately equal position, Hapuarachchi-Rathnakaran, New Delhi 2009. 8.±e3 ±ce7 9.h4 h5 10.±d2 ±e6 11.±f1 ±d7 12.±fg3 0-0-0 13.0-0-0 ±df8 14.±d2 ±f5 15.±xf5 ±xf5

Chances are even, Michna-Kengis, Koszalin 1998.

- 4.c3 ±d6 5.±d3 ±e7 6.±f3 ±d7

and now:

A) 7.±e2 c6 8.±g3 0-0 9.±f6 10.c4 ±f6 11.cxd5 ±xd5 12.±c3 ±e4 13.±e2 a6 14.±c2 ±e6 15.±d3 ±c8 16.±d3 ±xc3 ≥ 16...±f7N 17.±f4 (17.±f3 ±xc3 18.±xc3 ±d6 19.±e3 ±e8 20.±f2 ±a5!? 21.±xf5 ±xb3 22.axb3 ±b6=) 17...±xf4 18.±xf4 ±d6 19.g3 b5 20.f3 ±xc3 21.bxc3 ±c7 and Black has excellent play. 17.±xc3 f4∞, Barua-Rozentalis, Antwerp 1993;

B) 7.±f4 ±f6:

B1) 8.±e2 0-0 9.0-0 ±g4 10.±g3 ±xe2 11.±xe2 ±e4= 12.±f3 ±xf4 13.±xf4 ±g6 14.±f3 f5 15.±d3= ±g5 16.f3?? ±f4 17.±e3 ±xg2+ 0-1 Shanava-Biriuokov, Gagra 2008;


4. ±g1-f3

4. ... ±f8-d6

4..±c6 is a dubious move. One of the reasons why I consider this to be so is that Black should avoid the continua-
The Modern French

tion in the following game: 5.\texttt{b5} \texttt{d6} 6.c4 dxc4 7.d5 a6 8.\texttt{a4} b5 9.dxc6 bxa4 10.0-0 \texttt{e7} 11.\texttt{x}ax4 0-0 12.\texttt{bd2} \texttt{b}8 13.a3 c3 14.bxc3 \texttt{f5} 15.\texttt{c4} \texttt{e4} 16.\texttt{fe}5 \texttt{xe}5 17.\texttt{xe}5 with better play for White, Zozulia-Antic, Kavala 2002.

5. \texttt{c2-c4}

An active approach. White is ready to play a position with an isolated pawn himself. In return, he gets active positions for his other pieces. In this chapter we will analyse the positions where Black postpones the capture on c4 and intends to make this move later, which would make White lose a tempo when he moves his light-squared bishop.

5.\texttt{d3} \texttt{c6} 6.\texttt{c3} 6.0-0 \texttt{g}4 6.\texttt{h}4 \texttt{g}4 9.c3 \texttt{d}7 10.\texttt{bd2} 0-0-0 11.b4 \texttt{f}5 12.\texttt{a}4 \texttt{xh}4 13.\texttt{xh}4 \texttt{b}8 14.\texttt{xb}5 a6 15.\texttt{xc}6 \texttt{x}c6 16.\texttt{xc}6 bxc6 17.h3 \texttt{c}8 18.\texttt{b}3 c5 19.\texttt{f}3 h5 - the bishop pair and pressure on the kingside eventually brought victory to Black, Ynojosa Aponte-Pert, Liverpool 2008.

6...\texttt{g}4

And again, with a reversed move order, we come to the position that is the key for our analyses in this chapter:

A) 7.0-0 Naturally, here Black has plenty of possibilities. He can also try queenside castling: 7...\texttt{g4} and now:

A1) 8.\texttt{e1} \texttt{d}7

This is the critical position of the variation, where the player of the white pieces should determine his plan. Black is still very flexible regarding castling:

A11) 9.\texttt{bd2} 0-0-0 10.\texttt{b}4 \texttt{g}6

The position reached is the dream of every black player against the Exchange Variation! 11.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{e}8 12.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{h}4 13.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{f}5 13...\texttt{xf}3+ 14.\texttt{xf}3 \texttt{h}5 15.\texttt{h}3 \texttt{xf}3 16.\texttt{xf}3 f6 17.\texttt{d}2. 14.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{xe}2 15.\texttt{xe}2 \texttt{h}4 16.\texttt{b}5 \texttt{b}4 17.\texttt{e}5 \texttt{xe}2 18.\texttt{xd}7 \texttt{c}2 19.\texttt{xe}2 \texttt{a}1 20.\texttt{dc}5 \texttt{xb}3 21.axb3 \texttt{f}5 22.\texttt{h}3 b6 23.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{d}7 24.\texttt{e}5+ \texttt{xe}5 25.\texttt{xe}5 \texttt{e}7 26.\texttt{f}1 a6 The transposition into the endgame with White's weakened pawn structure brought success to Black in the rest of the game, Ong-E. Berg, Stockholm 2004/05;
A12) 9.b4 0-0-0 White is here very fast in advancing, and it is surely very risky to castle queenside, but the flexibility in Black's play brings other possibilities. White's pawn advances will result in a serious weakening of the queenside.

10.b5 a5 11.b4d2 g6 12.a4 c4! 12...b6 13.a3 f4 14.f1 xa3 15.xa3 xf3 16.xf3 g4 17.h1 e8 18.e5 f5 with excellent play for Black. 13.xc4 dxc4 14.xc4 a5 with great compensation. The rest of the game confirmed this assessment: 15.e3 f4 16.a3 x3 17.fx3 x3+ 18.h1 e8 19.wf1 x2 20.xd2 e2 21.f3 and Black gained the initiative, Z. Szabo-Berkes, Hungary 2006/07;

A13) 9.h3 Weakening the kingside, as a result of which opposite-side castling is favourable for Black. 9...h5 10.bd2 0-0-0 11.b4 d8 12.c2 f6 13.xf1 g5 14.xg1 g6 15.b3 g4 16.h4 g3 17.f3 x3+ 18.xd3 f5 with an unstoppable attack, Achirei-Malakhatko, Bucharest 2008.

Let's have a look at some other options for White:

A2) 8.g5 d7 9.bd2 0-0-0 10.h4 d8 11.g3 g6 12.xd6 wxd6 13.d2 f6 14.xe1 f4 15.xe8+ x8 16.e1 x1+ 17.xe1 h5 18.df3 h4 19.h3 h5 with a small space advantage in the endgame, Zozulia-Antic, Korinthos 2002;

A3) 8.a4 d7 9.a6 10.c2:

A31) 10...f5 Although it looks like a tempo loss in the opening, this move is logical in view of White's next move e3. After all, as I have already mentioned, Black doesn't plan queenside castling, and the exchange of lightsquared bishops represents a standard way of playing in this type of position with kings on the same flank. 11.g5 x3 12.xd3 0-0 13.e3 e8 14.xe1 f6 15.h4 f4 16.g3 x3 17.xe3 g6 18.e1 f7 19.w2 with slightly better play for White, although Black eventually won the game, Postny-Khenkin, Moscow 2004;

A32) 10.0-0-0 Here is a very risky version of queenside castling. 11.b4 With the initiative, as White is faster;

A33) 10-0-0 11.e3

11...f5!? This aggressive approach deserves attention and resembles a similar position in the Petroff Defence. After all, the centre isn't under pressure, the white pawn is on c3, so the flank action is a very logical plan. A possible continuation would be 12.e2 h5 13.e5 xe5 14.xh5 g5 15.g3 f4 16.g4 wc6 17.g2 h8 with very complicated play in the middlegame.
B) 7...g5 f6 8...h4 g4 and now:

B1) 9.h3 h5 And now the weakening of the pawn structure should be used by redirecting the black bishop: 9...f5!N 10.0-0 d7 11.e1 0-0-0

and Black has the better play and a clear plan of advancing his pawns on the kingside: 10.bd2 d7 11.f1 0-0-0 12.e3 g5 13.g3 f5 14...xd6 cxd6 15.c2 f4 16.f5 xf3 17.gxf3 df8 18.xe7+ xe7+ 19.d2 Black's plan turned out to be unsuccessful in Ynojosa Aponte-S. Williams, England 2008/09, which ended in a draw;

B2) 9.bd2 d7 10.c2

10...e6+! The key move in Black's strategy! White has problems finishing the mobilisation of his pieces. 11.e2 11.f1 0-0-0 12.e1 f7 (12...d7! 13.g3 h5 14...xd6 xd6 15.b4 de8 16.h3 d7 with great attacking potential on the king's flank) 13.g3 h5 14...xd6 cxd6?! (14...xd6 15.h3 d7 16.b4∞) 15.h3 d7 and thanks to his pawn structure, White held his position, Kajmakoski-Jacimovic, Struga 2005. 11...0-0 12.h3 f5 13.d1 g5 14.g3 g6 15...xd6 xd6 16.f1 h5 with initiative for Black, Ghabadi Baigvand-R. Bagirov, Dubai 2001;

B3) 9.g3 d7 10.bd2 0-0-0 11.c2 e6+ 12.f1 h5 13.e1 d7 14.b4 de8 15...xd6 xd6 16.h3 d7 with great attacking potential on the kingside: 17.b3 b8 18.c5 c8 19.e3 g5 With a clear plan of pressure on the kingside, Khademi-Sengupta, Teheran 2004.

5. ... g8-f6
6. b1-c3 0-0

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A very important moment. Black doesn't allow White to develop his lightsquared bishop without loss of tempo, even if it costs him a temporary pawn sacrifice. White is in a dilemma and faces a real crossroads of possibilities.

Here are the alternatives:
- 7.h3 (see p.55)
- 7.g5 (see p.55)
- 7.e2 (see p.55)
- 7.c5 (see p.55)
- the main move 7.cxd5 (see p.56)
7. h3 Avoiding the unpleasant pin with ... g4 followed by ... c6, with pressure on the central pawn in the next phase, although this precaution costs White time in the opening. 7... e8+ 8. e2 dxc4 9.0-0 c6 10. xc4 h6 11. a3 a5 An interesting idea, although I prefer here the logical developing move 11... f5! 12. e3∞ Thanks to the move 7.h3, suddenly many tactical motifs appear for Black. Black has an excellent and very active position! A possible continuation would be 12... d7∞ and now: 13. c1 ad8 14. e1 a6 15.b4 e7 with complicated play and mutual chances, or 13. e1

13... xh3!? 14.gxh3 xh3 15. c1 g4 16. f1 h2+ 17. h1 xh5 18. g2 xe3+ 19. xe3 f4 20. xe8+ xe8 followed by xe6, with more than sufficient compensation for the material. 12. a2 b6 13. d3 b7 14. xh6! e4

7. g5 dxc4 7... e8+!? surely deserves attention. 8. xc4 e8+ 9. e2 h6 10. h4 c6 11.0-0 g4 The attempt to win a pawn by 11... g5 could turn out to be risky: 12. g3 xg3 13.fxg3 g4 14. h4 xd4+ 15. xd4 xg4 16. d3 g7 17. f4 with compensation. 12. a4 12.d5 xf3 13. xf3 e5 14. e2 g6 15. g3 xg3 16.xg3 a6 17. e1 xd6 with excellent play on the dark squares.

7. e2 dxc4 8.0-0 g4 A very serious alternative is the attempt to defend the extra pawn, gaining time and disrupting the coordination of the white pieces, with 8... e6 9. g5 f5 10. xc4 d7 11.h3 h6 12. f3 c6 13. e3 ad8 14. e1 a6 15.a3 b5 16. a2 e8. Similar to previous variations, Black has extra tactical motifs with a potential bishop sacrifice on h3, but generally all pieces are centralised and the position remains complex. 9. h3 h5 10. e5 xe2 11. xe2 bd7 12. xc4 b6 13. g5 h6 14. h4 e8 15. e5 c5 16. e4 bd5 17. c4 xe5 18. dxe5 xe5 19. xc5 e7= 20. g3? b6 21. d4 d5 and Black won the game, Lomako-M. Socko, Rijeka 2010.

7.c5 White tries to take space on the queenside, but at the same time it
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means that he abandons the tension in the centre. 7...\textit{e7} There is no need for 7...\textit{e8+} because White is planning to develop his bishop on the next move 8.\textit{e2} \textit{b6} 9.\textit{cxb6} axb6 10.0-0

10...\textit{e6} There is no need for passive play. The reaction in the centre with the move ...c5! is a serious alternative and therefore the light-squared bishop will play an active role on b7, from where it will support the e4 stronghold to the maximum extent. After exchanges in the centre, White should also pay attention to the black d5 pawn, because it can turn from a weakness into a real strength. It could become a passed pawn, rather than an isolated d5 pawn! 10...\textit{b7} 11.\textit{g5} (11.\textit{e1} c5 12.\textit{g5} \textit{h6} 13.\textit{h4} \textit{c6} 14.\textit{b5} \textit{e4} 15.\textit{xe7} \textit{xe7} 11...\textit{h6} 12.\textit{h4} \textit{e4} 13.\textit{xe7} \textit{xe7} 14.\textit{e1} \textit{d7} 15.\textit{c1} with excellent play in the centre, planning the further ...f7-f5, mounting pressure on the white position for example: 15...c6 16.\textit{xe4} dxe4 17.\textit{d3} (17.\textit{c4} b5 18.\textit{b3} c5!) 17...f5 18.\textit{b3}+ \textit{h7} 11.\textit{f4} c6 12.\textit{e1} \textit{h6} 13.\textit{d3} \textit{bd7} 14.\textit{d2}

White has a slightly preferable position, but in the next stage of the game he pushed too hard and finally lost the game. 14...\textit{e8} 15.\textit{e5} \textit{xe5} 16.\textit{dxe5} \textit{d7} 17.\textit{xh6} \textit{d4} 18.\textit{e2} \textit{xe5}

Certainly the most principled decision.

7. \textit{c4xd5}

The black plan includes taking the central pawn with the knight and capturing the central stronghold d5, and also preventing \textit{g5}. A serious alternative is 7...\textit{bd7} 8.\textit{g5} \textit{h6} 9.\textit{h4} and now:

- 9...\textit{b6} 10.\textit{e5} 10.\textit{e2} \textit{e7} 11.0-0 (11.\textit{xf6}!\textit{xf6} 12.\textit{b3} \textit{g4} 13.0-0 \textit{e8} 14.\textit{fe1} \textit{e4} 15.\textit{xf3} \textit{e3} 16.\textit{xe1} \textit{xd4} 17.\textit{d6} cxd6 18.\textit{xb7} \textit{b8} 19.\textit{f3} \textit{d7} 20.\textit{c2} \textit{e5} 21.\textit{d5} \textit{f6} 22.\textit{e2} \textit{c8} 23.\textit{g3} \textit{h5} 24.\textit{g2} \textit{h4} 25.\textit{f4} with advantage for White, Heberla-Yu Shaoteng, Cappelle-la-Grande 2002) 11...\textit{fxd5} 12.\textit{xe7} \textit{xe7} 13.\textit{e1} \textit{e6} 14.\textit{d2} \textit{ad8} with excellent central play.

10...\textit{e8}+ 11.\textit{e2} \textit{b6} 11.0-0 \textit{g5} 12.\textit{g3} \textit{bd5} 13.\textit{e5} \textit{e6} 14.\textit{c2} \textit{c6} 15.\textit{h4} and the pawn weaknesses can be very unpleasant for White in the next phase of the game!
8. \( \text{\texttt{e1-e2}} \)

\[ \text{\texttt{h3 : Se8+ 9\texttt{e2 \texttt{bd7 10.0-0 \texttt{b6}}} \texttt{11.\texttt{c6 \texttt{e4 \texttt{f6}}} \texttt{14.\texttt{d3 \texttt{d6}} \texttt{cxd6}}} \texttt{16.\texttt{d1 \texttt{e3 \texttt{f6}}} \texttt{18.\texttt{e1 \texttt{e7}}} \texttt{19.\texttt{d2 \texttt{ae8}}} \texttt{20.\texttt{xe4 \texttt{xe4}}} \texttt{21.\texttt{f1}}} \]

\[ \text{\texttt{d6 \texttt{c2}}} \texttt{22.\texttt{d2 \texttt{d5}}} \texttt{23.\texttt{ac1 \texttt{g6}}} \texttt{24.\texttt{d3 \texttt{f5}}} \texttt{Every original black plan turned out to be very successful. The pressure on White's central d4 pawn and the pressure on the e-file and kingside gave an excellent result in the game Karalkin-Lysyj, Tomsk 2006.} \]

\[ \text{\texttt{8.\texttt{d3 \texttt{e8+}}} \texttt{9.\texttt{e3 \texttt{bd7}}} \texttt{10.0-0 \texttt{b6}}} \texttt{11.\texttt{b3 \texttt{fxd5}}} \texttt{12.\texttt{ae1 \texttt{e6}}} \texttt{13.\texttt{d1 \texttt{b4}}} \texttt{14.\texttt{e2 \texttt{f5}}} \texttt{15.\texttt{d2 \texttt{d5}}} \texttt{16.\texttt{d3 \texttt{f6}}} \texttt{17.\texttt{e5 \texttt{d8}}} \texttt{18.f4} \]

\[ \text{\texttt{18...\texttt{b4}}} \texttt{Black's strategy has succeeded completely. After this move Black should simply have exchanged light-}

squared bishops, simplifying the position and achieving domination across the central d5 stronghold. 18...\( \texttt{xd3!} \)

\[ \text{\texttt{19.\texttt{xd3 \texttt{xc3}}} \texttt{20.\texttt{xc3 \texttt{d5}}} \texttt{21.\texttt{b3 \texttt{b4}}} \texttt{22.\texttt{d1 \texttt{b6}}} \texttt{Black stands slightly better.} \texttt{19.\texttt{e4 \texttt{xe4}}} \texttt{20.\texttt{xe4 \texttt{e4}}} \texttt{21.a3 \texttt{e6}}} \texttt{22.\texttt{c2 \texttt{c6}}} \texttt{23.\texttt{f5 \texttt{f6}}} \texttt{24.\texttt{d2}}} \texttt{Although he faces particular realisation problems, Black managed to convert his advantage into the full point, Thesing-Gleizerov, Predeal 2007.} \]

\[ \text{\texttt{8. ... \texttt{b8-d7}}} \]

\[ \text{\texttt{9. \texttt{0-0}}} \texttt{d7-b6} \]

\[ \text{\texttt{10. \texttt{f3-e5}}} \texttt{b6xd5} \]

\[ \text{\texttt{11. \texttt{c3xd5}}} \texttt{f6xd5} \]

\[ \text{\texttt{12. \texttt{e2-c4}}} \texttt{d5-b6} \]

\[ \text{\texttt{13. \texttt{c4-b3}}} \]

\[ \text{\texttt{Black has carried out his plan logically and now he uses an original idea, to exchange the light-squared bishops, even if it means spoiling his pawn structure!} \texttt{13. ... \texttt{c8-e6!}}} \]

\[ \text{\texttt{14. \texttt{b3xe6}}} \texttt{f7xe6} \]

\[ \text{\texttt{15. \texttt{d1-g4}}} \texttt{d8-f6} \]

\[ \text{\texttt{16. \texttt{e5-f3}}} \texttt{f6-f5} \]

\[ \text{\texttt{Now we also see the positional pluses of Black's idea: the domination on the light squares, the central stronghold d5 and the simplified position. Black takes the initiative slowly and surely.}} \]
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17. h2-h3  h8-f6
18. f1-e1  f5-d5
19. g4-e4  a7-a5
20. a2-a4  d5xe4
21. e1xe4  b6-d5
22. c1-d2  a8-a6
23. a1-e1  a6-b6
24. d2xa5  b6xb2
25. e4-e2  25...xe6  26.xe6  f7  27.e1  a2±.

25. ...  b2-b3
25...xe2  26.xe2  f8!  27.e1
(27.xe6  f7  28.e2  a8±)  27...a8
28.a5  f7  29.b2  b6  30.axb6  cxb6±.

26. a5-d2  b3-a3


**Conclusion**
The Exchange Variation sometimes constitutes a problem for Black because of the risk of reaching 'bloodless' positions which are perceived as leading to a draw. However, we believe that this line digresses from the main strategic principle in the fight against the French Defence – the play against the bishop on c8.

We have devoted lots of attention to the development of a dynamic response for Black and hopefully we have proved that in this seemingly simple opening system Black has plenty of possibilities to play for a win!
Here we give a theoretical overview of the Advance Variation after the introductory moves:

1.e2-e4 e7-e6 2.d2-d4 d7-d5 3.e4-e5

3.e5 is regarded as the third strongest move, after 3.\( \Box_c3 \) and 3.\( \Box_d2 \). The recent tournament practice confirms this assessment. Historically, the number of proponents of this variation is significantly larger than the number of players criticising it.

When it comes to old masters, the biggest fans of the Advance Variation, Nimzowitsch and Paulsen, provided the biggest theoretical advances. Later on, a number of top players adopted this variation as part of their regular repertoire, the best-known of whom is Evgeny Sveshnikov. Sveshnikov’s book *Beating the French Defence 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5!* is a testament to his liking of this system. Two other big proponents of this system, Grischuk and Movsesian, have also scored fantastic results with this approach.

The key strategy in the Advance Variation is crystal clear: similar to the Steinitz Variation, White’s aim is to occupy the centre and the kingside, in preparation for an all-out attack. By playing e4-e5 White secures the important b1-h7 diagonal, amplifying the value of his light-squared bishop in comparison with the typically weak \( \Box_c8 \). With this in mind, some of the best-known plans for Black in this variation involve the exchange of the light-squared bishops. Obviously, Black is bound to have problems developing his \( \Box_g8 \) since the brave pawn on e5 prevents the natural ...\( \Box_g8-f6 \). Instead, the knight is destined for f5 or g6, neither of which represents a safe outpost. White’s g- and h-pawns always pose a danger.
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The black strategy comprises two standard plans:

1. Undermining the white centre with \( \ldots c7-c5 \) and \( \ldots f7-f6 \). Of all the plans in the French Defence, this one is among the richest and most complex. Most often, Black’s development is aimed at exerting pressure on the white central formation.

An often-seen template involves placing the knights on \( c6 \) and \( f5 \) in combination with \( \ldots \text{b6} \), all aiming at the pawn on \( d4 \). Occasionally the black bishop joins the attack after \( \ldots \text{f8-e7} \) and \( \ldots f7-f6 \).

The siege of the centre usually stretches well into the late middlegame or even endgame. In a great many games White always has to allocate some of his forces to the defence of the \( d4 \) pawn. The constant pressure against it gives Black the much-needed counterplay and slows down White’s aggression.

2. The exchange of light-squared bishops. This way, White’s dominance over the light squares dissipates and the pawn advances lose their crucial support, allowing Black to take over the initiative. Even without putting this plan into place, the aggressive pawn storm by White is typically laden with risk. Despite its lack of space, the black position is very resilient and free of weaknesses, with great piece coordination. Chasing the knight from its powerful \( f5 \) outpost weakens White’s pawn structure, amplifying the risk for his king.

3. \( \ldots \text{c7-c5} \)

Without delay, Black starts pressuring the white central pawns, as part of realizing his key strategy.

4. \( \text{c2-c3} \quad \text{\&b8-c6} \)

This move has a double purpose: it develops a piece and aims at the main target in White’s position, the pawn on \( d4 \).

Relatively popular is \( 4 \ldots \text{\&b6} \) with the idea to exchange the light-squared bishops with \( \ldots \text{\&d7} \) and \( \ldots \text{\&b5} \). However, Black loses too much time with this and White’s lead in development is more significant: \( 5. \text{\&f3} \quad \text{\&d7} \) In the resulting position White has several solid continuations at his disposal:

- \( 6. \text{\&d3} \quad \text{\&b5} \) \( 6 \ldots \text{cxd4} \) allows \( 7. \text{\&xd4!} \quad \text{\&c6} \) \( 8. \text{\&xc6} \quad \text{\&xc6} \) \( 9. \text{a4} \) and White prevents \( \ldots \text{\&b5} \).

- \( 6. \text{a3?!} \quad \text{cxd4} \) \( 6 \ldots \text{a5?!} \); in case of \( 6 \ldots \text{\&b5?!} \) White justifies the idea of 6.
a3: 7. c4 \(\triangleleftxc4\) 8. \(\triangleleftxc4\) and Black does not have the useful check on b4:
8...dxc4 9. d5! exd5 10. \(\triangleleftxd5\) c6 11. \(\triangleleftxc4\) d7 12. \(\triangleleftc3\) \(\triangleleftf6\) 13.0-0 \(\triangleleftbd6\) 14. \(\trianglelefte2\) \(\trianglelefted5\) 15. \(\trianglelefte4\) with a powerful initiative.

7. cxd4 \(\triangleleftb5\) 8. \(\triangleleftxb5\)+ \(\triangleleftxb5\) 9. \(\triangleleftc3\) \(\trianglelefta6\) 10. \(\trianglelefte2\) \(\trianglelefte7\) 11.0-0 \(\triangleleftbc6\) 12. \(\triangleleftd2\) \(\triangleleftf5\) 13. \(\triangleleftc3\) \(\trianglelefte7\) 14. \(\triangleleftd2\) 0-0 15. \(\triangleleftac1\) \(\triangleleftfc8\) 16. g4 \(\trianglelefth4\) 17. \(\triangleleftxh4\) \(\triangleleftxh4\) 18. f4 \(\triangleleftd7\) 19. \(\triangleleftf3\) b5 20. \(\triangleleftf1\) \(\trianglelefte7\) 21. \(\triangleleftg1\) a5= Maximov-Laznicka, Pardubice 2011;

6. \(\trianglelefte2\) \(\triangleleftb5\) 6...cxd4 prevents White's possibility dxc5, but gives White's knight the natural square c3:
7. cxd4 \(\triangleleftb5\) (7...c6 8.0-0 \(\triangleleftge7\) 9. \(\triangleleftc3\) - 9. \(\trianglelefta3\) is analysed under 4...c6 5. \(\triangleleftf3\) \(\triangleleftd7\) 6. \(\trianglelefte2\) \(\triangleleftge7\) 7.0-0 cxd4 8.cxd4 \(\triangleleftb6\) 9. \(\triangleleftc3\) - 9...\(\triangleleftf5\) 10. \(\trianglelefta4\) 8. \(\triangleleftc3\) \(\triangleleftxe2\) 9. \(\triangleleftxe2\) \(\trianglelefte7\) 10.0-0 \(\triangleleftec6\) (more natural but probably weaker is 10...\(\triangleleftbc6\) 11. \(\triangleleftb1\) and the black knight on e7 doesn't have a good square. On f5 it can be attacked by the white g-pawn and on the g6-square by the white h-pawn) 11. \(\triangleleftb1\) a5= with double-edged play. After the text White can play:

5. \(\triangleleftg1\)-f3 \(\triangleleftc8\)-d7

Despite the growing popularity of 5...\(\triangleleftb6\) 6.a3, many authors, including former world champions Mikhail Botvinnik and Max Euwe, suggest this developing move as the simplest and most natural. 5...\(\triangleleftd7\) results in simpler positions that are easier to play, keeping in mind that d7 is almost always a good square for the black bishop, whereas the queen is not obliged to occupy b6 early in the game.

Here the lines fork:

A) 7. dxc5 \(\triangleleftxc5\) 8.0-0 Worth considering is 8.b4 \(\triangleleftxf2\) + (8...\(\trianglelefte7\) 9. \(\trianglelefte3\) \(\trianglelefta6\) 10. \(\triangleleftxb5\)+ \(\triangleleftxb5\) 11. \(\trianglelefta3\) \(\triangleleftd7\) 12.0-0\(\triangleleftf1\) 9. \(\triangleleftd7\) 10. \(\triangleleftd2\)
6.\textit{e}3 is an unnecessary move, allowing the black knight to exert pressure from f5 or c4. Besides, it helps Black to develop all of his forces harmoniously and put in place the key \ldots f7-f6 advance.

A) An option is 6...cxd4 7.\textit{xd}4?!.

Giving an important bishop is one of the ideas which cannot be recommended for White. 7.cxd4 \textit{b}6 (7...\textit{ge}7 8.\textit{c}3) 8.\textit{d}2 is covered under the move-order 6...\textit{b}6 7.\textit{d}2 cxd4 8.cxd4. 7...\textit{ge}7 7...\textit{xd}4 8.\textit{xd}4 (8.\textit{xd}4!?\ ) 8...\textit{e}7 9.\textit{d}3 \textit{c}6 10.\textit{g}4 f5 11.\textit{f}4 h6= 12.g4?! \textit{b}6 13.\textit{bd}2 g5 14.\textit{g}3 \textit{xb}2 15.\textit{b}1 \textit{xc}3= Zeller-Luther, Germany Bundesliga 1995/96. 8.\textit{d}3 \textit{xd}4=N 8...\textit{g}6. 9.\textit{cx}d4 9.\textit{xd}4 \textit{c}6 10.\textit{xc}6 bxc6 11.0-0 \textit{b}8 12.\textit{b}3 g6 13.\textit{d}2 \textit{g}7 14.\textit{f}4 0-0 15.\textit{f}3 a5 16.\textit{e}2 c5= 9...\textit{b}6 10.\textit{d}2 \textit{c}6 11.\textit{e}2

11...\textit{xd}4! 11...\textit{e}7 12.0-0 0-0 13.\textit{c}3 f6\uparrow. 12.\textit{xd}4 12.\textit{xd}4 \textit{c}5 13.\textit{d}1 (13.\textit{d}2 \textit{xf}2+ 14.\textit{f}1 \textit{c}8

15.\textit{a}3 \textit{e}3 16.\textit{d}3 \textit{xb}2 17.\textit{d}1 \textit{b}6 18.\textit{b}3 \textit{xb}3 19.axb3 \textit{e}7\uparrow\ ) 13...\textit{xf}2+ 14.\textit{f}1 \textit{xb}2 15.\textit{bd}2 \textit{b}6 16.\textit{b}1 \textit{a}3 17.\textit{b}5 \textit{c}8 18.\textit{xd}7+ \textit{xd}7 19.g3 g5\uparrow. 12...\textit{c}5 13.\textit{b}3 \textit{xf}2+ 14.\textit{f}1 \textit{e}3 15.\textit{d}3 f6

16.exf6 0-0→

B) 6...\textit{b}6 Certainly, the most principled continuation. 7.\textit{d}2

The main line. The other option 7.\textit{b}3 is more drawish and Black doesn't have problems at all; the only question is how Black can get more than a draw?!

Let us see some examples.

7.\textit{b}3 \textit{xb}3 (7...\textit{xd}4 8.\textit{xb}6 axb6 9.\textit{xd}4 \textit{xd}4 10.\textit{xd}4 \textit{e}7 11.\textit{c}3 \textit{f}5 12.\textit{d}3 \textit{xe}3 13.\textit{xe}3 \textit{c}6 14.\textit{b}5 \textit{a}5 15.a4 \textit{b}4+ 16.\textit{e}2 \textit{e}7= \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} (37) Delchev-Milov, Batumi 2002) 8.axb3 \textit{xd}4 9.\textit{xd}4 (9.\textit{xd}4 \textit{ge}7 10.\textit{c}3 \textit{f}5 11.\textit{d}3
\( \text{\&xe3} \text{\&xe3} \text{\&e7} \text{\&e2} 0-0 \text{\&hc1 \f6} \text{\&xf6} \text{\&xf6}. \)

In the following endgame, thanks to the bishop pair, Black’s chances are preferable. 9...\text{\&xe5} (9...\text{\&xd4} 10.\text{\&xd4} \text{\&e7} 11.\text{\&xa7} \text{\&xa7} 12.\text{\&xa7} \text{\&c6} 13.\text{\&d4} \text{\&xd4} 14.\text{\&c3= Krivokapic-Govedarica, Vrnjacka Banja 2006}) 10.\text{\&b5} \text{\&xb5} 11.\text{\&xb5+} \text{\&c6} 12.\text{\&xa7} \text{\&xa7} 13.\text{\&xa7} \text{\&d6} 14.\text{\&b6} \text{\&f6} 15.\text{\&e2 \&e7.}

Black has better development and excellent control of the centre. Even without the bishop pair, his position is very playable. 16.\text{\&a3} \text{\&a8} 17.\text{\&e3?!} (17.\text{\&a1} \text{\&e4=} \Delta 18.\text{\&c2} \text{\&xa1} 19.\text{\&xa1} \text{\&xh2} 20.\text{\&g3} \text{h5} 21.\text{\&f3} \text{h4} 22.\text{\&g2} \text{hxg3} 23.\text{\&d3} \text{\&e5} 24.\text{\&xe4} \text{\&xe4} 25.\text{\&xg3} \text{\&f3} 26.\text{\&b4} \text{f5} 27.\text{\&b3} \text{g5} with very sharp play in the endgame, but it seems that Black might be faster in the subsequent pawn race) 17...\text{\&e4}

18.\text{\&c2} \text{\&a2=} Galuschecka-Klos, Germany tt 1994/95.
7...\text{\&c8!}

The most precise order of moves. It is important to prevent White’s favourable set-up, \text{\&d3} and \text{\&e2}.

7...\text{\&xd4} 8.\text{\&xd4} \text{\&b4} 9.\text{\&c3} \text{\&ge7} 10.\text{\&d3} \text{\&a5} 11.0-0 \text{\&c8} 12.\text{\&e2} \text{\&c40} 13.\text{\&d1?!} (13.a3?! \text{\&xc3} 14.\text{\&xc3} \text{\&xe3} 15.\text{\&xe3} \text{h6} 16.\text{\&ab1=}) 13...\text{\&f5} 14.g4?!
\text{\&fxe3} 15.\text{\&xe3} \text{\&e7} 16.h4 \text{f6=} Pridorozhni-Ni Hua, Plovdiv 2010.

Now White can play:

B1) 8.\text{\&xc5} \text{\&xc5} 9.\text{\&xc5} \text{\&xc5}:
B11) 10.\text{\&g5} \text{\&f8} 11.\text{\&d3} 11.\text{\&bd2} \text{f6} 12.\text{\&g3} \text{\&h6} 13.\text{\&d3} \text{\&xe5} 14.\text{\&xe5?!} (14.0-0-0 \text{\&f6} 15.\text{\&he1} \text{\&f7} 16.\text{\&b5}

16...e4!N 17.\text{\&g1} \text{\&h6=} instead of the earlier played 16...0-0 17.\text{\&xc6} \text{\&xc6} 18.\text{\&xe5} \text{\&xe5} 19.\text{\&xe5} \text{\&xf2} 20.\text{\&f3} \text{\&xg3} 21.\text{\&xg3} \text{\&f6} 22.\text{\&g4} \text{\&c8}
23.b4 4f4 24..d4 Prié-Anand, France 1993) 14..xe5 15..xe5 xf2+. 11..f6 12..e3 h6 13.h3 f7 13..exe5 14..xe5 15..xe5 xf6=. 14..xf6 gxf6 15..bd2 h6∞ 16.a3 xe3+ 17..xe3 cce5

And Black has excellent play, Thavandiran-Hebert, Guelph 2009;

B12) 10..a3 f6 11..f4 h6 12..xf6 0-0 13..e3 xe3+ 14..xe3 xxe6 15..b5 g4 16..c2 e8 17..h3 cge5 18..xe6 xf3+ 19..xf3 bxc6= Rmus-Drasko, Herceg Novi 2007;

B13) 10..b4 e7 11..d3 f6 12..xf6 xf6 13..b5 e5 14..xe5 xe5+ 15..e2 xe2+ 16..xe2 xe2 e5 17..f3 f6=. 16..f6 17.0-0 c5 18.a4 e7= Cole-Izoria, Kings Island 2006.

B2) 8..d3?! cxd4 9..xd4 9.cxd4? b4 10.0-0 xd3 11..xd3 b6++. Sahu-Barua, New Delhi 2007. 9..xd4 10..d4 c5 11..b3 e7 12.0-0 f6= 13..xf6 xf6 14..e3?

16..a6 16..f5!N 17.a3 e7. 17.a3 a5 18...g5 f6 19..d2 c7∞ Jonkman-Tibensky, Linz 1996.

Important: 6..e3 is a developing move which can only bring trouble to White. The main reason is that the bishop will come under fire after the standard manoeuvre ...e7-f5 or ...e5-c4. Besides, the white king remains in the centre a bit longer, and there are dangers of pressure along the a5-e1 diagonal after the exchange of the c-pawns.

6..a3! White aims at a space grab on the queenside, and the lifting of the pressure against his pawn on d4. This is probably more effective after ...b6. As it is, the opponent has more promising alternatives to choose from:

A) 6..e7 (see p.64)
B) 6.c4 (see p.71)
C) 6..f6 (see p.74)
D) 6..b6 (see p.75)

A) 6..e7 This move fits our repertoire recommendations. Black conti-
ues developing his pieces harmoniously, ignoring White's space grab on the queenside. 7.b4 With a pawn on a3 there is no sense in playing 7.dxc5?!  
\[ \square g6 8.\square e3 \square cxe5 9.\square xe5 \square xe5 10.\square e2 \square c7 11.b4 b6 12.f4 \square d4?! 13.\square xc4 dxc4 14.cxb6 axb6 15.\square f3?! \square c6 16.\square f2 b5 17.0-0 \square d7 18.\square d4 0-0 19.\square d2 \square f6 20.\square fe1 \square d5 \text{Lavrov-Kiriacov, Kemerovo 2007.} \]

7...cxd4 8.cxd4 \square f5 9.\square e3! The main alternative, 9.\square e3, loses even more of its impact when the black queen is not on b6.

Besides, White's strategy involving a2-a3 and b2-b4 cannot work without the support of the \square b2.

Black has a pleasant choice between two excellent plans: the standard ...\textit{f7-f6} or ...\textit{b7-b5}. 9...b5 is the simplest solution, giving Black the better chances (if 9...
\[ \square c8 10.\square d3 \square xe3 11.\square xe3 \text{f5} 12.\square xf6 \square xf6 13.0-0 \square d6 14.\square bd2 0-0 15.\square e2 \square h6 with an excellent position for Black, Krapivin-Nikolenko, Moscow 2010) 10.\square bd2 (10.\square c3 \text{a5} 11.\square xb5 axb4 12.a4 \square e7 13.\square d3 0-0 14.0-0 \square a7! (14...\square xe3 15.\square xe3 \square a7 16.\square d6 \square c8= 17.\square b7 \square b6 18.\square c5 \square xc5? 19.\square xh7++--) 15.\square xf5 \square xf5 16.\square d6 \square c8 17.\square f4 \square e6 18.\square b7 \square b6 19.\square c5 \square xc5 20.dxc5 \square xc5 with an excellent position, Langner-

Lipka, Czechia 2010) 10...a5 11.\square xb5 axb4 12.a4 \square e7 13.0-0 0-0 14.\square e2 \square a5?\text{ Casper-Dizdar, Germany Bundesliga 1991/92.} 

\text{A1) } 9...b5!?

The simplest solution!

\begin{itemize}
\item \text{A11) } 10.\square c3 \text{a5} 10...\text{a6.} 11.\square xb5 \text{11.\square xb5 axb4 12.axb4 \square xb4 13.0-0 0-0=} 11...\text{axb4 12.a4} \text{The move 12.g4 only creates more problems for White. With the bishop on b2, the aggression lacks support, for example 12...\square h6.} 12...\text{\square e7 13.\square d3 0-0} 14.0-0 \square a5 14...\square a7 15.\square e2 \square c8 ½-½ Saltaev-Glek, Germany Bundesliga 2005/06. 
\item \text{15.\square c1} 15.g4 \square h4 16.\square xh4 \square xh4 \text{White remains with a lot of weaknesses; 15.\square d2?! (protects the square c4 but abandons control of the more important d4-square) 15...\square b6 (White has problems with the d4 pawn) 16.g4?! \text{\squarexb5 17.axb5 \square d4= Lavrik-Glek, Moscow 2009.} 15...\square b6 \text{15...\square c4?!} 16.\text{\square xc4} dxc4 17.\text{\square xc4 \square b6!} 18.\square c1 \square x a4=; 
\item \text{A12) Nothing is given by 10.\square xb5 \square xe5 11.\square xd7+ 11.\square xe5 \square xb5 12.\square c3 \text{\square d7} (12...\square b6 13.\square xb5 \square xb5 14.\square e2 \square xe2+= 15.\square xe2= Rakhimgaliev-Turutin, Moscow 2011) 13.0-0 \text{\square e7 14.\text{\square a4 0-0} 15.\text{\square c5 \square e8} 16.a4 \text{\square xc5 ½-½ Kalezic-Cabrilo, Herceg Novi 2001.} 11...\text{\square xd7 12.0-0} 
\end{itemize}
\[ \text{A13) 10.} \text{\&d3 a5 11.} \text{bxa5} 11.0-0 \text{axb4 12.axb4} \text{\&xa1 13.} \text{\&xa1 \&xb4 14.} \text{\&xf5 exf5 15.} \text{\&b3 \&a5 (15...0-0! 16.} \text{\&xd5 \&e7\text{=} 16.\&c3 \&e6 17.\&xd5 0-0 18.} \text{\&g5 \&xd5 19.} \text{\&xd5=} \text{Frey-Drozdovskij, Internet blitz 2004. 11...} \text{\&xa5 12.0-0} \text{\&c4 13.} \text{\&e2 White will have a big problem with the pawn a3 if he plays 13.} \text{\&c1?! \&e7 14.\&xf5 exf5 15.} \text{\&c3 \&c6 16.\&b1 \&d7 17.\&b3} \text{\&xa3=, Berzina-Sumets, Warsaw 2007. 13...} \text{\&h4?! 14.} \text{\&e1 \&e7 15.g3 \&g6 16.} \text{\&f3 0-0 with an excellent position for Black, Naer-Drozdovskij, Internet blitz 2004.} \text{A2) Black is getting ready to play ...a7-a5, simplifying the position and equalizing the chances. 9...\&e7 or 9...\&c8 are not as good due to the fact that White has the active 10.\&d3, having in mind that the d4 pawn is well-protected. Of course, Black can opt for the more complex variation (particularly popular among top players) 9...\&b6?!:} \\
\text{A21) 10.g4!} \]

Black has more activity and a better pawn structure. Even the seemingly strong passed pawn on a4 is under threat due to the weak d4 pawn, Yilmaz-Drasko, Budva 2009;

The main line. Without it, White would have experienced problems developing his \text{\&b1. 10...\&fe7 11.} \text{\&c1 13.a4?! \&c6 14.b5 \&c7 15.} \text{\&c1 \&d8 16.\&d3 \&xc1 17.\&xc1 \&g6 18.\&f3 \&c4 19.\&xc4 dxc4 20.\&xc4 a6 21.\&c3 axb5 22.\&b3 \&f4=} \text{Relange-Antic, Sabac 1998. 13...\&g6 14.h4 14.\&b5 \&c6 15.\&b3 a6 1/2-1/2 Savic-Antic, Leskovac 2002. 14...\&e7 15.g5 0-0} \]
nesses induced by the advances of the white pawns.
Another possibility is 15...h6?.
A22) 10.\(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{c2}}}}}}\)

is the main alternative to 10.g4, with two effective plans for Black: the common one with ...f7-f6, completing the development with ...\(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{e7}}}}}\), ...\(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{c8}}}}}\) and ...0-0 and aggression with the pawn storm ...h7-h5 and ...g7-g5 on the kingside after the preparatory ...\(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{e7}}}}}\) and ...\(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{c8}}}}}\). 10...\(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{e7}}}}}\) 11.0-0

A221) 11...\(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{c8}}}}}\) ...\(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{c8}}}}}\) and ...\(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{e7}}}}}\) are often played interchangeably. Black delays castling to deny White the opportunity to develop his bishop on d3:
A2211) 12.\(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{d2}}}}}\)

The most commonly played move! White had two aims: a) to strengthen the central d4 pawn with \(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{d1}}}}}\), thus completing the development with \(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{c3}}}}}\), and b) to undermine Black’s main plan of ...f7-f6 by playing g2-g4, having in mind that the queen controls the essential h6- and g5-squares. This second plan does not work well, because Black has the opportunity to sacrifice the exchange on f3 with excellent chances:
A22111) 12...0-0
A221111) 13.\(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{d1}}}}}\) f6! All of Black’s problems are behind him. The common plan involving the pressure on the white centre combined with the activation of the light-squared bishop is working flawlessly. 14.\(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{c3}}}}}\) 14.g4 \(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{h6}}}}}\) 15.exf6 \(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{x6}}}}}\) 16.g5

16...\(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{x3}}}}}\)! – a thematic sacrifice that has been seen many times. 17.\(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{x3}}}}}\) \(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{f5}}}}}\) 18.\(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{g4}}}}}\) \(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{f8}}}}}\) 19.\(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{c3}}}}}\) \(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{d8}}}}}\) (19...\(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{cxd4}}}}}\)? 20.\(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{xd5}}}}}\)±) 20.\(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{x5}}}}}\) \(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{f5}}}}}\) Daulyte-Brynell, Cappelle-la-Grande 2011. White’s weakened pawns and the unsafe position of his king give Black a clear advantage. 14...f\(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{xe5}}}}}\) 15.dxe5 \(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{e8}}}}}\) 16.\(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{c1}}}}}\) \(\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{h5}}}}}\)=

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A typical set-up for the Advance Variation. In the forthcoming struggle Black has excellent chances. 17.\textgreek{a}a4 \textw{d}8 18.\textgreek{c}c5 \textx{xc}5! The well-positioned white knight on c5 must be eliminated, but this does not mean that White is going to enjoy the advantage of the bishop pair for long. 19.\textx{xc}5 \texth{h}4!

Another thematic move that exchanges good white pieces. 20.\textgreek{x}h4 \textx{xe}2 21.\textw{xe}2 \textw{x}h4 22.\texte{d}c1 a6=S Sveshnikov-Lputian, Podolsk 1990. All the black forces are fully mobilised, and the knight is not inferior to \texth{b}2;

A221112) White can try to prevent his opponent's main plan with ...f7-f6 by playing 13.\textgreek{d}d3?! , which is an unpleasant move for the 'Frenchman' because it undermines the simple and logical plans linked to the ...f7-f6 advance. Black can play: 13...\textgreek{h}4 14.\textgreek{x}h4 \textgreek{x}h4 15.\textw{e}3 (15.\textgreek{c}3!? \textgreek{xd}4 16.\textw{f}4! with slightly better chances) 15...f5 (\geq 15...\textgreek{e}7) 16.\textgreek{d}d2 and White again has slightly better chances, Mukhametov-Rychagov, Moscow 1996; or \geq 13...h6!? with the idea ...\textgreek{h}4, for example 14.\textgreek{xf}5 (as previously mentioned, this type of position favours White if he succeeds in exchanging the dark-squared bishops. 14.\texte{d}1 \texth{h}4=) 14...exf5 15.\textgreek{c}3 \texte{6}=. or 13...\textgreek{h}8!? Savic-Sas. Martinovic, Zupanja 2008.

A221113) White hasn't finished his development, so the action 13.g4?! is not sound. Black can reply 13...\textgreek{h}4+=;

A221114) On 13.\textgreek{h}1 there is 13...f6! 14.g4 \textgreek{h}6 15.exf6 \textx{xf}6 16.g5 \texte{f}3. Despite the fact that this is the only move, this typical sacrifice is often seen in the Advance Variation. 17.\texte{f}3 \textf{5} 18.\texte{d}1 \textf{8}

with more than adequate compensation. Black's forces are more active and better placed, while White's position suffers from the weakened pawn structure and the unsafe king.

A22112) 12...h5!? The introductory move to the second active and promising plan. White is powerless to prevent ...g7-g5, so the pressure on his central squares contin-
ues unabated. 13.\(\text{d}1\) 13.\(\text{c}1\)? with the idea 13...0-0 (13...g5 14.\(\text{d}xg5\) \(\text{c}xd4\) 15.\(\text{d}xc8+\) \(\text{d}xc8\) 16.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{d}d7=\)) 14.\(\text{d}d1\) 13...g5 14.\(\text{c}3\) 14.\(\text{d}xg5?!\) \(\text{c}xd4\) 14.\(\text{d}1\) g4 15.\(\text{c}3\) (15.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{a}5!\)) 15...a6 16.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{g}8\) 17.a4 \(\text{g}5\) 18.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{c}e7\) 19.b5 axb5 20.a5 \(\text{c}7\) 21.\(\text{c}a3\) \(\text{f}8\) 22.\(\text{b}4?\) – White overlooked the pin on the diagonal. Now instead of 22...f6, which was played in Savic-Kosic, Vrsac 2000, Black has the strong tactical resource 22...\(\text{c}xd4!\). 14...g4 15.\(\text{e}1\)

15...\(\text{d}8\) 15...\(\text{c}xd4!\) 15.\(\text{d}xh8\) \(\text{e}2+\) 17.\(\text{h}xh2\) \(\text{c}xd5\) 18.e6 \(\text{e}6\) 19.\(\text{e}6\) \(\text{e}xh8\) 20.\(\text{e}xh8\) \(f6\) 21.\(\text{e}c1\) \(\text{d}7\) 17.\(\text{b}6\) \(\text{d}8\) (22...\(\text{e}7\) 23.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{h}8\) 24.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{d}4\) 25.\(\text{d}d3\) \(\text{d}2\)) 23.\(\text{d}c1\) \(\text{d}4\) and Black is clearly better.

16.\(\text{e}3\) 17.\(\text{e}7\) 15.\(\text{d}e7\) Simpler is 17...0-0?! with excellent chances in the forthcoming battle. 18.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{h}4\) 19.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{e}6\) 20.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{x}b5\) 21.\(\text{x}b5+\) \(\text{f}8\) 22.\(\text{a}c1\) \(\text{a}c1\) 23.\(\text{a}c1\) \(\text{g}7\) 24.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{c}5\) 25.\(\text{e}c3\) \(\text{f}4\) 26.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{a}5\) 27.\(\text{c}e1\) \(\text{b}8\) 28.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{b}6\) 29.\(\text{e}6\) \(\text{f}3\) 30.\(\text{fx}e6\) \(\text{h}7\) 31.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{h}xh4\) 32.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{c}c1\) 33.\(\text{e}c1\) \(\text{g}5\) 34.\(\text{c}7+\) \(\text{h}6\) 35.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{f}4\) 36.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{f}5\) 37.\(\text{h}2\) \(\text{g}3\) 38.\(\text{fx}g3\) \(\text{x}g3\) 39.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{f}1+\) 40.\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{d}2+\) 0-1 Grosar-Tukmakov, Bled 2001.

Back to the position after 11...\(\text{c}8\).
White's aim is to develop his knight via tactical means, so he avoids the checks on f3 and e2. Besides, placing the king on h1 is usually a good idea if g- and f-pawns start advancing. The downside is the loss of time, allowing Black to reach a solid position with ...a5, for example:


A22132) The wing activity is now laden with risk because White succeeds in planting his knight on the optimal c5 square: 12...h5 13.c3 White's king is not in danger of checks and the next variation isn't favourable for Black: 13..cxd4?! (or 13..fxd4? 14.a4+) 14.cxd5 exd5 15.cxd4 with a clear advantage; or 13...g5 14.a4 d8 15.c5 g4 16.e1 xc5 17.dxc5 - White's position looks healthy and with the bishop pair he has the better chances, Adams-Polzin, Germany Bundesliga 2009/10.

It is probably best to give up the idea of pawn-storming the opponent on the kingside and go for the standard 13.f5?.

As previously noted, this move is generally to be avoided, but it fits this particular position. White bishop's has no control over the c1-h6 diagonal, and Black's pressure along the c-file and especially the c4-square is more than sufficient to compensate for the weakened pawn structure if the exchange on f5 takes place. 15.e2 15.xf5 xf5 16.d3 h8 with good prospects for Black. 15..c4 15..b3?! 16.ad1

14.a4 c6 15.c5 c4 16.c1 b6 17.c7 Weaker is 17..b3?! a5 18.bxa5 bxa5=, Formanek-Kortchnoi, Beer-Sheva 1978. 17.c7 18.d3 g6 19.xf5 xf5 20.h4 b5 21.g5 Both opponents have aces up their sleeves, but the possibility of transferring the white knight to f4 gives Black cause for concern, Kojović-Raicevic, Belgrade 2006.

After 11.0-0 Black has another option: A222) 11...0-0 12.d3!
12...h6 12...dxc8 13.e1 (≥ 13.c3
dxd4 14.exd4 exd4 15.exd5 exd5 16.dxd4±) 13...a5 14.xf5 exf5
15.c3 e6 16.a4 w5 17.c3
w6 18.a4 w5 ½-½ lordanescu-
Itkis, Bucharest 1999; and the type of
position after 12...f6 isn’t pleasant for
Black: 13.xf5± exf5 14.c3 e6
15.e1 fxe5 16.e5 ae8 17.a4
w7 18.c5 w8 19.b3 w6 20.f4
½-½ Sax-Erdöös, Zalakaros 2006. 13.c3
f6 14.a4 w8 15.c5 White can
safely open the e-file, since Black is
bound to give away his bishop for the
strong c5. 15.exf6! xf6 16.c5 b6
(16...c8 17.e1±) 17.xd7 w xd7
18.c1±. 15...fxe5 16.xd7 16.b5.
16...wxd7 17.dxe5 xf5 While Black
was moving the knight, White used this
time to build a promising position with
the advantage of the bishop pair. 18.c1
with better chances for White with his
bishop pair, Petrov-Zojer, Lienz 2011;
A223) 11...h5!? 12.d2 Or 12.d3
g5 13.d1 g4 14.e1 f6 15.b5 a5
16.exf6 xf6 17.a4 was played recently
in the game Motylev-Liu Qingnan, Chi-
nese League 2011, and now 17...c4
(17...a6 18.a3∞ was played in the
game) 18.c3 a6∞ with an edge for
Black. 12.g5 13.d1 13.xg5
dxd4∞. 13...g4 14.e1 g8 15.b5?
15.c2 g5 16.d3 c8 with mutual
chances, but we cannot avoid noticing
the activity and perfect coordination of
all the black pieces. 15...a5 16.d3
c4 17.c3 xxd5 Savic-Perunovic,

Now for Black’s second option after 6.a3.
B) 6...c4!? Black is first to win space on the
queenside, cutting down on White’s
options in that part of the board. This
quiet move completely changes the na-
ture of the position compared to ex-
changing pawns on d4. At first glance it
seems inconsistent that Black gives up
on the siege of the d4 pawn, focusing
his attention on the weakened b3-
square. However, the move is in the
spirit of Black’s general strategy.
The opponents will be castling on the
opposite sides of the board, and the
game is usually decided by violent
pawn storms. On the queenside, any
potential pawn storm loses its punch
because of the weak b3-square, so the
kingside is to serve as the main battle-
field. In this line the black queen would
not be well-positioned on b6. This
square is better kept for the knight, sup-
porting the ...a4 threat. Furthermore,
from d7 the queen supports the ...f7-f6
advance, attacking the central e5 pawn.
7.d2 Or 7.f4 a5 8.d2 c6
9.e2 w7 10.0-0 a4

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11.\( \text{wc1} \) \( \text{d}e7 \) 12.\( \text{xe1} \) \( \text{g6} \) 13.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{e7} \) 14.\( \text{b1} \) h5 15.h3 h4 16.h2 0-0-0 17.\( \text{f1} \) f5 18.exf6 gxf6 19.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{xd1} \) 20.\( \text{wx}d1 \) \( \text{d}6 \) 21.\( \text{d}3d2 \) \( \text{d}h2+ \) 22.\( \text{d}xh2 \) \( \text{d}f4 \) 23.\( \text{d}d3 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 24.\( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{Ag8} \) 25.b3 \( \text{cx}b3 \) \( \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} \) Arencibia Rodriguez-Psakhis, Andorra 1995.

7...\( \text{a5} \) This move is crucial for Black's strategy. 8.g3 8.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{c}6 \) (8...\( \text{e7} \) is covered under 7.a3 \( \text{c4} \) 9.0-0 \( \text{d}7 \).

As we see, Black realises most efficiently the typical plan with the queen on d7. 10.\( \text{e1} \) (10.g3 \( \text{a4} \) 11.\( \text{e1} \) \( \text{e7} \) 12.h4 0-0-0 13.\( \text{g2} \) f5 14.\( \text{g5} \) \( \text{xg5} \) 15.hxg5 \( \text{d}7 \) 16.\( \text{h1} \) f4! 17.\( \text{xg4} \) \( \text{Ag8} \) 18.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{b3} \) Nunn-King, Kilkenny 1997) 10...\( \text{a4} \) 11.\( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{e7} \) 12.\( \text{x}a4 \) \( \text{wa}4 \) 13.\( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{xd}1 \) 14.\( \text{x}d1 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 15.\( \text{b1} \) f6 16.\( \text{f1} \) fxe5 17.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{xe}5 \) 18.dxe5 \( \text{e}7 \) 19.\( \text{e3} \) 0-0 20.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{c}6 \) with excellent play for Black, Hussein-Buhmann, Dresden 2008.

Now Black can play:

B1) 8...\( \text{e7} \)

B11) 9.\( \text{g}2 \) \( \text{c}8 \) Black has two ways to support the activation of his bishop via a4: by taking the knight to b6, and with his queen on d7 after ...\( \text{c}6 \). Nevertheless, it's a good idea to keep the knight on e7, overseeing the kingside for the time being. 9...\( \text{c}6 \)!

10.0-0 \( \text{d}7 \) 11.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{a}4 \) 12.h4 h6 13.h5 0-0-0 14.\( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{d}6 \) (as mentioned previously, keeping the pawn on h4 is risky for White because of the possibility of the g-file being opened; so perhaps 14...\( \text{Ag8} \)!? 15.f4 \( \text{g}6 \) 15.f4 \( \text{c}2 \) with chances for both sides, Leitao-Cubas, Santiago de Chile 2004. 10.0-0 \( \text{b6} \) 11.\( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 12.f4 h5 12...0-0-0 13.\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{b}8 \) 14.\( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{g}6 \)? is the thematic way to slow down White's plan and undermine f2-f4. Black blocks the f-pawn by keeping f5 for his knight,
whereas the weakening of the dark square complex has no practical significance due to the inactive dark-squared bishop. 15.\(d_e3\) \(a4\) 16.\(w_e2\) \(h5\) with an advantageous position for Black, Sikorova-Pcoca, Pardubice 1998. 13.\(c2\) 0-0-0 14.\(d_e3\) and now:

B111) 14...\(f5\) This is another way to fight against White's main strategy. \(\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}\), Peng Xiaomin-Zhang Zhong, Beijing 2000;

B112) If Black wants a protracted combat, he can play the preventive 14...\(g6\)!?, keeping f5 for his knight. White’s attempt to break through on the kingside with f4-f5 is always linked to a risky opening of the position;

B113) White’s set-up also allows the unpleasant 14...\(h4\)!?

and as we can see, all the fighting is around the white goal.

B12) White also has nothing after 9.\(h4\) \(c8\) 10.\(h3\) \(b6\) 11.0-0 It is always risky for White to play 11.a4 \(c7\) (11...\(e7\)!? 12.0-0 0-0 followed by ...\(w_e8\)) 12.\(h5\) \(w_c6\) (\(\geq 12...h6\)) 13.\(h6\) gxh6 14.\(h2\) \(\infty\) Andreikin-Volkov, Warsaw 2005. 11...\(a4\) 12.\(w_e2\) \(e7\) 13.\(e1\) \(h5\) 14.\(f4\) \(g6\) By advancing the h-pawn, White is forever giving up on his only active plan with f4-f5. Black now has a free hand to prepare the breakthrough on the queenside with ...b5-b4. However, this depends on his fighting spirit too! 15.\(d_f3\) \(b3\) 16.\(b1\) \(xc1\) 17.\(xc1\) \(d7\) 18.\(g5\) \(w_g8\) 19.\(e3\) \(h7\) ½-½ Kalezic-Dimitrov, Nis 1997;

B13) 9.\(h3\) \(c8\) 10.0-0 \(b6\) 11.\(e1\) \(h5\)!? with similar ideas as in the positions with the bishop on g2.

B2) Another effective plan after White's 8.g3 is to use the queen to support the bishop on the critical a4-square, and keep the knight on the kingside. 8...\(c6\)!? and now:

B21) 9.\(g2\) \(w_d7\) 10.0-0 10.a4 \(e7\) 11.0-0 \(c8\). 10...\(a4\) 11.\(w_e2\) \(h6\)!? Black does not have to waste time on this prophylactic move. However, the position is blocked and there is no danger for his king, so there is no harm in waiting before revealing all the cards. An alternative is 11...0-0-0 12.\(g5\) \(h6\) 13.\(h3\) \(g6\) 14.\(f4\) \(e7\) with an excellent position for Black. 12.\(e1\) \(e7\) 13.\(f4\) \(h5\) 14.\(f2\) \(f5\) Straightforward play, typical for this type of position. 15.\(d_f3\) \(e7\) All the black pieces are well positioned. 16.\(h3\) \(g6\) 17.\(g2\) 0-0-0 18.\(e3\) \(b8\) and Black has the initiative on both wings, Krapivin-Akselrod, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010;

B22) 9.\(h3\) \(w_d7\) 10.0-0 After 10.a4 White has a dilemma:
To keep the weak a4 pawn, or allow the activation of the light-squared bishop.

10...\e7? 11.0-0 h5 with an excellent position; or he can go for the grab of
the a4 pawn with 10...\e7?! 11.0-0
\c8 intending ...\b6. 10...\a4
11.\e2 0-0-0 11...\c2? 12.\xc4!
\b3? (12...\xc4 13.\xc2±) 13.\d6+
\xd6 14.\xd6 \xa1 15.\e5 \a4
(15...\d8 16.\b5+ \f8 17.\xb7\b7
\g6 18.\c6+-)

16.\xf7! \xf7 17.\xe6+! \f8
18.\f3+ \f6 19.\h6 1-0 Vea-
Eliassen, Gibraltar 2004. 12.\e1 \b8
13.\f6 It is easy for Black to thwart
White’s key plans. 14.\g2 \h5 15.\e3
\h6 with a clear advantage for Black;

B23) 9.\h4 This logical move takes
space on the kingside, but its downside
is the reduced mobility of the pawns in
front of the king. For instance, to
...h7-h5 White can no longer respond
with h2-h3 and g3-g4. In other words,
the advance of the h-pawn makes it
harder to execute f4-f5. If White goes
for the h4-h5 advance, Black can re-
respond with ...h7-h6 and ...g7-g6, pre-
paring to open the f-file. 9...\d7
10.\h3 \a4 11.\e2 0-0-0 11...\c2?
12.\xc4±. 12.0-0 \h6 For now, \h6 is a
good square for the pawn. Not
12...\c2? 13.\xc4. 13.\e1 \e7
14.\h5 If White advances \f2-\f4, Black
can respond with the pre-emptive
...g7-g6 and ...h6-h5, taking full con-
tral. If 14.\f4 \g6. 14...\b8 15.\f4 \g8
16.\d3 \b3 17.\b1 \xc1! Naturally,
Black swaps his sidelined knight for
the bishop, especially having in mind that
the kingside is about to be opened with
...g7-g6. 18.\xc1 \g6

with better chances for Black, Lavrov-
Temirbaev, Tomsk 2007.

C) For risk-takers, it is also possible to
go for the formerly very popular and
rather aggressive 6...\f6!? 7.\b4 7.\d3
\c7 8.0-0 0-0-0 9.\e1 (or 9.\e2
\ge7 10.\e1 \g6 11.\h4 \e7 with
double-edged play, Haba-Ponkratov,
Plovdiv 2010) 9...\c 10.\c2 \ge7
11.\bd2 fxe5 12.\xe5 \xe5 13.\xe5
\c6 14.\f3 \h6 15.\e3 \g5 0-1 (68)
Panarin-Riazantsev, Dagomys 2010.
7...\fxe5 7...\c4 8.\e2 \c7 9.\f4 a5?! (9...\c4!?)
- S. Atalik; 9...\( \texttt{h6}?! \) 10.\( \texttt{c4!} \) d4 11.\( b5\pm \)
10.\( b5 \) \( \texttt{c7e7} \) 11.\( c4! \) \( \texttt{g6} \) 12.\( \texttt{g3} \pm \)
Stany-Sethuraman, Chennai 2011;
8.\( \texttt{exe5} \) \( \texttt{exe5} \) 9.\( \texttt{exe5} \) \( \texttt{c7f6} \).
8...\( \texttt{xd4}?! \)

9.\( \texttt{xd4} \) \( \texttt{exd4} \) 10.\( \texttt{xf4} \) \( \texttt{f6} \) 11.\( \texttt{bd2} \) \( \texttt{e7} \)
12.\( \texttt{b1}?! \) 0-0 13.\( \texttt{g3} \) c4 14.\( \texttt{h3}?! \) e5!
Muratovic-Atalik, Zenica 2006;

D) 6...\( \texttt{b6}?! \) This continuation is not 100% to our liking, but no ‘French Story’
is complete without it. 7.\( \texttt{b4} \) \( \texttt{xd4} \) 8.\( \texttt{cxd4} \) \( \texttt{c8}! \)
At this stage it is not accurate to transfer the knight to \( f5 \) after ...\( \texttt{d7} \) has
been played: 8...\( \texttt{ge7} \) 9.\( \texttt{c3} \) \( \texttt{f5} \)
10.\( \texttt{a4} \pm \) 9.\( \texttt{b2} \) The main variation is
also possible with the white bishop on\( e3 \): 9.\( \texttt{h6}?! \) \( \texttt{d7} \) 10.\( \texttt{d3} \) \( \texttt{g4} \) 11.0-0
\( \texttt{e7} \) 12.\( \texttt{bd2} \) \( \texttt{exe3} \) 13.\( \texttt{fxe3} \) \( \texttt{b8} \)
14.\( \texttt{e2} \) \( \texttt{a4} \) 15.e4 (15.\( \texttt{ac1} \) \( \texttt{xc1} \)
16.\( \texttt{xc1} 0-0= \) 15...0-0 16.\( \texttt{xd5} \) \( \texttt{d5} \)
Krisztiansson-Rajlich, Budapest 2006.
9...\( \texttt{h6} \) 10.\( \texttt{c3} \) \( \texttt{a5} \) 11.\( \texttt{a4} \) \( \texttt{c6} \)
12.\( \texttt{c5} \) 12.\( \texttt{bxa5} \) \( \texttt{xa4} \) 13.\( \texttt{xa4} \) \( \texttt{xa4} \)
14.\( \texttt{d3} \) \( \texttt{e7} \) 15.\( \texttt{d2} \) f5 16.\( \texttt{hc1} \) \( \texttt{d7} \=
Orton-Vojinovic, Stillwater 2011; 12.\( \texttt{c1} \)
\( \texttt{c4} \) 13.\( \texttt{xc4} \) dxc4 14.\( \texttt{c3} \) \( \texttt{f5} \) 15.0-0
\( \texttt{e7} \) 16.d5 \( \texttt{exd5} \) 17.\( \texttt{xd5} \) \( 1/2-1/2 \)
Khainullin-Dyachkov, Dagomys 2008.
12...\( \texttt{c4} \) 13.\( \texttt{c1} \) 13.\( \texttt{c3} \) b6 14.\( \texttt{xd7} \)
\( \texttt{xd7} \) 15.\( \texttt{d3} \) \( \texttt{f5} \) 16.0-0 \( 1/2-1/2 \)
13...\( \texttt{f5} \) 14.\( \texttt{d3} \) b6 15.\( \texttt{xd7} \) \( \texttt{xd7} \)
16.\( \texttt{h4} \) h5 17.\( \texttt{xf5} \) exf5 18.0-0 \( \texttt{g6} \)

19.\( \texttt{a2} \) \( \texttt{g7} \) 20.\( \texttt{g5} \) 0-0 21.\( \texttt{e1} \) \( \texttt{f8} \)
22.\( \texttt{ae2} \) with some initiative for White,
Zherebukh-Vitiugov, Aix-les-Bains 2011.

Important: As we have seen, 6.a3, with the
idea of gaining space on the queenside, is a
slow and a risky solution. Black now enjoys a
greater choice of possible plans and set-ups.
He can choose the blockading and positional
B) 6...c4, or the sharper C) 6...f6 or D)
6...\( \texttt{b6} \), but we are attracted by the simplici­
ity and the logic behind the plan with A)
6...\( \texttt{ge7} \) 7.\( \texttt{b4} \) \( \texttt{xd4} \) 8.\( \texttt{cxd4} \) \( \texttt{f5} \)
9.\( \texttt{b2} \) \( 5?! \),
with ...a7-a5 next. This is possible thanks to
Black’s flexible development with the move
order 5...\( \texttt{d7} \).

\( \bullet 6.\texttt{d3}?! \)

The key to White’s strategy in this type
of position is the strong \( \texttt{d3} \). From
there the bishop controls the b1-h7 di­
agonal, and if need be can be easily swapped for the knight, which is typi­
cally positioned on \( f5 \) or \( g6 \). The main
point behind 5...\( \texttt{d7} \) is preventing
White from utilizing d3 for his bishop
– the d4 pawn will be attacked. How­
ever, White is often prepared to sacri­
ifice this pawn in exchange for placing
his bishop on the best square. The na­
ture of the position sharpens due to the
wealth of tactical possibilities, and ac­
curate calculation is of utmost impor­
tance. It is clear that this continuation is the choice of tactical players who enjoy attacking, but it should be noted that this variation poses no problems for Black, who can choose between several set-ups:

A) 6...cxd4 7.cxd4 \(\text{b}6\) (see p.76)
B) 6...\(\text{c}8\) (see p.85)
C) 6...\(\text{b}6\) (see p.85)

A) 6...cxd4 7.cxd4 \(\text{b}6\) and now:

A1) 8.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{xd}4\) 9.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{xd}4\) 10.0-0 a6!

With the king in the centre, the square b5 must be protected. Weaker is 10...\(\text{xe}5\) 11.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{d}6\) (11...\(\text{b}8\)?)
12.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{d}6\) 13.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{f}8\) 14.\(\text{d}2\)\(\text{c}5\) 12.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{b}6\) 13.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{a}5\) 14.\(\text{d}2\)
\(\text{b}6\) 15.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{a}5\) (½-½, Adorjan-I. Farago, Hastings 1976/77) 16.\(\text{b}3\) a6!.

A11) 11.\(\text{g}2\) The most popular continuation. White defends e5 and prepares the active \(\text{d}1\) or \(\text{h}1\) followed by f2-f4. 11...\(\text{e}7\)! This is a natural developing move, aimed at increasing the pressure on the central e5 pawn. Also good is the recommendation by grandmaster Moskalenko to prepare to transfer the bishop to c5 with 11...\(\text{c}8\)!

A111) 12.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{c}6\) Now White is practically forced to enter a slightly worse endgame. 13.\(\text{a}6\) \(\text{xe}5\)
14.\(\text{xb}7\) Weaker is 14.\(\text{xe}5\)?! \(\text{xe}5\)
15.\(\text{xb}7\) \(\text{a}7\) 16.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{d}5\) 17.\(\text{d}1\) f6 18.\(f4\) \(\text{c}5\) 19.\(\text{h}1\) d4! 20.\(\text{b}1\) 0-0 21.\(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{f}5\) Crepan-Sebenik, Lucija 2006. 14...\(\text{xe}2\) 15.\(\text{xe}2\) and now:

A1111) Possible is 15...\(\text{a}7\)!

16.\(\text{c}6\) \(\text{c}6\) 17.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{a}6\) Now the bishop pair should be maintained with ≥ 17...\(\text{d}7\) 18.\(\text{d}4\) (18.\(\text{d}2\) e5?!?) and now 18...\(\text{a}4\) 19.\(\text{d}7\) \(\text{f}7\); or 18...\(\text{d}7\) 19.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{a}4\) (or 19...\(\text{d}6\)
20.\(\text{d}2\) with the idea \(\text{c}5\): 20...\(\text{c}7\) 21.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{c}8\) 22.\(\text{d}4\) 0-0 23.\(\text{b}6\) \(\text{c}4\)
24.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{a}6\) 25.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{b}4\) 26.\(\text{a}5\) \(\text{b}8\)
27.\(\text{c}6\) \(\text{d}7\) \(\text{f}4\) 22.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{c}5\) 23.\(\text{c}5\) with an approximately equal position. 18.\(\text{d}4\)
\(\text{d}7\) Black cannot retain his bishop pair: 18...\(\text{d}7\) 19.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{a}4\) 20.\(\text{d}3\)
\(\text{c}5\) 21.\(\text{c}5\) =. 19.\(\text{a}3\) It is better to put the pawns on the light squares: 19.a4 \(\text{d}6\) 20.\(\text{c}6\) \(\text{c}6\) 21.b3=.

19...\(\text{d}6\) 20.\(\text{b}4\) \(\text{a}4\) Smolin-Iakemov, Alushta 2010;

A1112) Or 15...\(\text{b}8\) 16.\(\text{c}6\) \(\text{c}6\) 17.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{d}7\) 18.\(\text{f}4\) White continues in gambit style. He sacrifices a pawn again, because he is trying to use Black’s lag in development. 18.b3 \(\text{f}6\); 18.a4 \(\text{f}6\). 18...\(\text{b}7\) Black can take 18...\(\text{xb}2\) but after 19.\(\text{db}1\) \(\text{xb}1\) + 20.\(\text{xb}1\) he has increased White’s chances to equalise
the game: 20...f6 21.a6 b8+ Ke7 (if Black wants to fight for the advantage he has to play this ugly move) 22.d2 e5 23.b5 d4 (23...xb5 24.axb5=) 24.a4 Ke. 19.a4 f6= 

Black keeps the bishop pair and has good chances to increase his small advantage, Pinson-Denoyelle, France 1998/99.

A112) Another possibility is 12.h1 c6 13.f4. However, in this variation too, Black has time to complete his development harmoniously with good play: 13...b4 Risky is 13...c5?! because after 14.a3 b5 the black queen is exposed in the centre of the board, for example 14...0-0? 15.c2! with the double threat of e2 and h7. 14.d1 (14.b1 c4=). Now Black has a choice of two good ways to obtain better play:

A1121) 14...xb3 15.xd3 b6 16.e3 c5 17.xc5 wxc5.

A continuation without complications, especially because of the queen exchange: 15.xa6 w2f2 16.wxf2 xxf2 17.b5 (17.e2 0-0 18.a3 a6 19.g3 c5 20.g2 b3 21.b1 d4 22.b5 b6= Rhodes-Mercky, ICCF email 2010) 17...xb5 18.xb5 xa2 19.xa2 xa2 20.d2 d7 21.a1 c8 22.a3 c5 23.xa2 b4 24.c3 d4 25.b5 dxc3 26.bxc3. The best and almost forced variation. Black has the more promising endgame in two ways: 26...xc3=, or 26...c5 27.b2 xb5 28.cxb4 d5 29.g3 c6
30.\texttt{Wg2} \texttt{Wb5?=} Toufighi-Gonzalez Garcia, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010.

A12) 11.\texttt{Re1} \texttt{Re7} Worth attention is 11...\texttt{Re6}!? with the idea to postpone White's active \texttt{Re3}: 12.\texttt{Wc2} (12.\texttt{Re3}?! \texttt{Re5=} and now there is no compensation; after 13.\texttt{Re5}?! \texttt{Wf6} Black is much better) 12...\texttt{Re7} ($\geq$ 12...\texttt{Re7}) 13.\texttt{Rd2} \texttt{Wb7} 14.\texttt{Ad1} (14.\texttt{Ac1}?! \texttt{Re5} 15.\texttt{Cd1} \texttt{Ac4} 16.\texttt{Ab4=}) 14...\texttt{Re5} 15.\texttt{Gd5} \texttt{Re7=} Au-Erdős, Vlissingen 2010.

12.\texttt{Re3} \texttt{Re5}

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

13.\texttt{Cc1} 13.\texttt{Cc5} \texttt{Cc7} 14.\texttt{Bb4} \texttt{Cc6}!?N ($\geq$ 14...\texttt{b6} 15.\texttt{Ad4} \texttt{Wf4} 16.\texttt{Af1=})
15.\texttt{Cc1} (15.\texttt{b5} \texttt{Ab5} 16.\texttt{Ac5} \texttt{Ba5} 17.\texttt{Cc5} \texttt{Re7} 18.\texttt{Wxd5} \texttt{Re7} 19.\texttt{Re5} \texttt{Exd5} 20.\texttt{Ad6+} \texttt{Re7} 21.\texttt{Cc7} \texttt{Cc6=} 15...\texttt{Gg6} 16.\texttt{Cc5} (16.\texttt{Cc4} \texttt{Re7=} 16...\texttt{Wd8=}.
13...\texttt{Cc6} 13...\texttt{Cc6} 14.\texttt{Cc5} \texttt{Wb8} ($\geq$ 14...\texttt{Wg5} 15.\texttt{Cc3} \texttt{We5} 16.\texttt{Cc5=} )
15.\texttt{Bd5} 15.\texttt{Cc5} \texttt{Wd6} 17.\texttt{Cc1=}. 14.\texttt{Ak1} \texttt{Ag6} 15.\texttt{Gd3} \texttt{Wd6}
16.\texttt{Hh4} d4?! Black doesn't want to calculate a lot, and takes the game into a better endgame with a pawn up.
16...\texttt{Re7=}.
17.\texttt{Wxd4} \texttt{Cc5} 18.\texttt{Wxd6} \texttt{Bx6d} 19.\texttt{Bx6} 0-0-0 20.\texttt{Bx6} \texttt{Ac7}
21.\texttt{Cc6} \texttt{Cc6=} and White had insufficient compensation for the pawn in the game Brooks-Kraai, Saint Louis 2011.

A13) 11.\texttt{Fl1}

Of all the continuations we suggest, this is the weakest – but still a very dangerous one. White gives away his second central pawn in order to maximise the power of his pieces. He also takes into account the time that his opponent is spending on queen moves.

Black is now at a crossroads: he can either take the second central pawn with ...
\texttt{Wxe5} or continue developing with...
\texttt{Be7}, for instance. The first option brings Black closer to victory, but some defensive manoeuvring will be necessary.

The second option only gives a token advantage to Black, but might be better suited to players who do not like defensive positions. 11...\texttt{Wxe5} Snatch the central pawn every time you can! It's an old adage, and very applicable in this position. Generally, gambits involving wing pawns are more dangerous, because they are less valuable than the central pawns.

11...\texttt{Cc8} is a good alternative for players who do not like defending. Black is satisfied with one extra pawn, and even more with the prospect of more active play: 12.f4 \texttt{Bh6} 13.\texttt{We2} ($\geq$ 13.\texttt{Wf3} \texttt{Cc5} 14.\texttt{Cc2} \texttt{Bb4=} 13...\texttt{Cc6} 14.\texttt{Bd2} \texttt{Ba4}?(15...\texttt{h5=} 16.\texttt{Cc3}
(16.\texttt{Cc3}! \texttt{Bx6d} 17.\texttt{Bx6} \texttt{Bf2=} 18.\texttt{Bd1 \texttt{Bh3=} 16...\texttt{Cc4} 17.\texttt{Bd1}

\texttt{h5=} Crepan-Sebenik, Ljubljana 2010.
12.\texttt{Bx1} 12.f4 \texttt{Wd6} 13.\texttt{Cc3} \texttt{Cf6}
14.\texttt{Bd4 \texttt{Be7=} 12...\texttt{Wb6}
Black is two central pawns up, with a healthy position and unimpeded development. For these reasons, Viktor Moskalenko, a great fan of the French Defence, gives Black a clear advantage in this position. Nevertheless, the forthcoming struggle is not without challenges for Black, who can easily find his centre under pressure:

13. \( \text{W}f3! \) The fastest and most efficient way to develop the remaining forces.

13... \( \text{Q}e7 \) Black cannot regroup with 13... \( \text{Q}c6! ? \) 14. \( \text{Q}f4 \) \( \text{W}d7 \) 15. \( \text{W}g3 \) \( \text{Q}f6 \) 16. \( \text{Q}e5 \) \( \text{Q}e7 \) 17. \( \text{H}ad1. \)

After sacrificing two pawns, White has managed to build an ideal attacking set-up. It is intimidating to have all of your opponent’s pieces facing your defences, including rooks on central files and bishops on important diagonals, despite the fact that the black position is healthy. It is necessary to keep a cool head when playing materially advantageous but psychologically unpleasant positions, because defeat is never far away when your opponent has serious activity and attacking chances against the king as compensation.

For example: 17...0-0 18. \( \text{W}h3 \) h6 (weaker is 18...g6 19. \( \text{W}h6 \) \( \text{W}d8 \) 20. \( \text{A}e3 \) \( \text{Q}h5 \) 21. \( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{e}8 \) 22. \( \text{h}3 \) (22. \( \text{x}h5 \) \( \text{x}h5 \) 23. \( \text{g}3+ \) \( \text{g}5 \) 24. \( \text{x}g5+ \) \( \text{f}8 \) \( \text{f}8 \) 22... \( \text{f}8 \) 23. \( \text{x}h5 \) \( \text{x}h5 \) 24. \( \text{g}3+ \) \( \text{g}7 \) 25. \( \text{x}g7+ \) \( \text{f}8 \) 26. \( \text{h}x7\text{Q} \)

and with ...f7-f6 or ...\( \text{Q}e7 \) Black emerges from a complex position with slightly better chances) 19. \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{h}8 \)? (as a rule, it is dangerous to keep your king in the corner when the pressure is on. Better is 19...\( \text{f}c8 \)! 20. \( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{f}8 \) 21. \( \text{b}1 \) \( \text{d}8 \) with the idea \( \text{d}6 \) 20. \( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{g}8 \)! 21. \( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 22. \( \text{d}4+ \) \( \text{f}8 \) 23. \( \text{h}4 \) (the key elements of chess strategy are activity and piece coordination, both of which are beautifully illustrated in this position) 23...\( \text{d}8 \)
24.\textit{f4} \textit{b6} and now 15.\textit{e5} The freed square is being used by the white bishop to maximum effect. 15.\textit{g3} \textit{f6} 16.\textit{e5} and now: 16...\textit{f8}?! (it is not easy to castle considering the great activity of the white pieces) 17.\textit{ac1} \textit{c8} (17...\textit{h5}?! \textit{f}) 18.\textit{e2} \textit{xc1} 19.\textit{xc1} \textit{e8} 20.\textit{c7} \textit{b5} 21.\textit{c8} \textit{f6} 22.\textit{d4} \textit{a5} 23.\textit{c3} \textit{xa2}? (23...\textit{a4}?! \textit{f}) 24.\textit{xb5} \textit{a1}+ 25.\textit{g1} axb5 26.\textit{c7} \textit{a6}? (26...\textit{f7}?) 27.\textit{b4} 1-0 Brinck Claussen-Sorensen, Copenhagen 1989; 16...0-0 17.\textit{ad1} \textit{g6}; or 16...\textit{h5} \textit{f} 17.\textit{xc7} \textit{g8} 18.\textit{xd5} exd5 19.\textit{xf6} \textit{xf6} 20.\textit{d4}+ \textit{e6}. 15...\textit{f6} 16.\textit{ad1}+ 

16...0-0 The king is safe in the centre, so before castling Black has time for useful moves such as ...\textit{c8} and ...\textit{c6}, significantly reducing White's attacking chances. For example 16...\textit{c8}?! \textit{f} 17.\textit{h3} 0-0 and White no longer has the option of playing \textit{h3}. 17.\textit{h3}! This is a typical move to undermine the squares around the opponent's king.

A131) 17...\textit{g6}? It is interesting that after this natural move Black can forget about any advantage, and must seek a way to get out of trouble. 18.\textit{h6}! Black has to remain focused. White has a strong and very concrete threat with 19.\textit{e3}!. 18...\textit{f8} Black's plan is to transfer the bishop to \textit{g7}. The best defence is probably to bring the queen to help: 18...\textit{d8} 19.\textit{e3} \textit{h5} 20.\textit{f4} \textit{e8} 21.\textit{h5} gxh5 22.\textit{g3}+ \textit{f8}= It is hard to admit to yourself that despite having two extra central pawns, you have to fight for a draw. 19.\textit{e3}!

White is turning up the heat: his forces are active and well-coordinated, forcing Black to calculate all the variations accurately, or risk losing after some seemingly logical continuation. Let's consider the possibilities:

A1311) 19...\textit{f8} 20.\textit{h4} \textit{e8} 20...\textit{h5} 21.\textit{g4}. 21.\textit{h3} \textit{h5} 22.\textit{g3} \textit{g7} 23.\textit{xg6}!
23...fxg6 24.hxg6 w8d8 25.h6 e8 26.wxh5 w7f7 27.wxh6 e8 28.wxg3

When he manages to get his rook on d1 into play. White's attack is probably unstoppable;

A1312) 19...d8 20.wxh3 w8f8
21.wxh4 w7g7 21...d8 22.wxg6 fxg6 23.wxg6 fxg6 24.wxh7+ w8f8 25.wxh3 w8e8 26.wxg8+ w8f7 27.g4+–.
22.wxh8+ w8e8 23.hxh3 w8d8 24.wxh8+ w8f7 25.g4+–.

A wonderful tactical blow that includes several ideas. 25.wxd6 25...wxg6 26.xd5+ w8e6 26.wxg6+! No wonder attacking players love gambits, even if they are not 100% justified. Stunning fireworks displays like this are only seen in gambits. 26.wxh5 26...dxe4 27.wxg5 w8f8 28.wxh5+ w8b4 29.wxg6+ w8e8 25.h5 w8f8 26.wxg6+ w8f7 27.g4+–.

With the idea of w3f3. As we can see, White successfully uses the squares where previously central pawns were standing;

A1313) 19...w8h5 Black wants to stop White's attack with ...w8f8. 20.wxh3

White has a double threat: mate in 3 and also taking the knight on h5. 20.w8f8 w8h5 21.wxh5 w8f8 22.wxh5 w8f8 24.wxh5 w8f8 26.wxh5+ w8d8 27.wxg6+ w8e8 28.wxg6+ w8d7 28.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8d7 29.wxg6+ w8e8 29.w8h5+ w8d8 30.wxg6+ w8e8 30.wxg6+ w8f8 31.wxg6+ w8g8 32.wxg6+ w8h8 28.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8d7 29.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8f8 30.wxg6+ w8g8 31.wxg6+ w8h8 28.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8d7 29.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8f8 30.wxg6+ w8g8 31.wxg6+ w8h8 28.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8d7 29.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8f8 30.wxg6+ w8g8 31.wxg6+ w8h8 28.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8d7 29.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8f8 30.wxg6+ w8g8 31.wxg6+ w8h8 28.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8d7 29.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8f8 30.wxg6+ w8g8 31.wxg6+ w8h8 28.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8d7 29.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8f8 30.wxg6+ w8g8 31.wxg6+ w8h8 28.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8d7 29.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8f8 30.wxg6+ w8g8 31.wxg6+ w8h8 28.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8d7 29.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8f8 30.wxg6+ w8g8 31.wxg6+ w8h8 28.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8d7 29.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8f8 30.wxg6+ w8g8 31.wxg6+ w8h8 28.w8h5+ w8e8 29.w8h5+ w8f8 30.wxg6+ w8g8 31.wxg6+ w8h8 28.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8d7 29.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8f8 30.wxg6+ w8g8 31.wxg6+ w8h8 28.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8d7 29.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8f8 30.wxg6+ w8g8 31.wxg6+ w8h8 28.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8d7 29.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8f8 30.wxg6+ w8g8 31.wxg6+ w8h8 28.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8d7 29.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8f8 30.wxg6+ w8g8 31.wxg6+ w8h8 28.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8d7 29.wxg6+ w8e8 29.wxg6+ w8f8 30.wxg6+ w8g8 31.wxg6+. 25.w8f6+!!

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and White wins!

27.w8e5+ w8d8

White can secure a draw with 28.w8f6+, but he can also continue the attack with
28.\( \text{g5} \)→ or 28.\( \text{xf7} \)→, with excellent chances for success. Without over-analysing the position, it should be noted that sacrificing central pawns for the activity and attack deserves the full attention of players and theoreticians. For a long time chess will continue to be an ocean of ideas to be discovered, so it will not be a surprise if 11.\( \text{h1} \) becomes the main variation of the Advance Variation.

A132) Correct, instead of 17...g6?, is 17...h6!\( \text{f} \) and now:

18.\( \text{e3} \) 18.\( \text{xf6} \) 18.\( \text{xf6} \) 19.\( \text{xd5} \) exd5 20.\( \text{xd7} \) aad8 21.\( \text{f5} \) g6\( \text{f} \). Now not mechanically 18...aad8? This leads to a quick loss (also not 18...\( \text{c6} \)? 19.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{h8} \) 20.\( \text{xg7} \)\( \text{=f} \); but the variation 18...\( \text{fd8} \) 19.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{f8} \)\( \text{=f} \) shows that Black doesn't need to hurry with kingside castling). 19.\( \text{g3} \)→

Black didn't make any ‘obvious’ mistake and he is already lost on the 19th move. 19...\( \text{h8} \) 20.\( \text{xg7} \)! 20.\( \text{e4} \) dxe4 21.\( \text{xd7} \) xg7 22.\( \text{g4} + \) \( \text{h8} \) 23.\( \text{xf6} + \) \( \text{xf6} \) 24.\( \text{xe4} \). 20...\( \text{xg7} \) 21.\( \text{g4} + \) \( \text{h8} \) 22.\( \text{h4} \) \( \text{g7} \) 23.\( \text{e4} \)!

White is winning the critical e4-square, thanks to the pinning of the knight on f6. 23...dxe4 24.\( \text{g4} + \) \( \text{h7} \) 24...\( \text{h8} \) 25.\( \text{xf6} + \) \( \text{xf6} \) 26.\( \text{xe4} \). 25.\( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{g8} \) 26.\( \text{xe4} + \text{=} \).

A14) 11.\( \text{f3} \)

11...\( \text{e7} \)! Black wants to gain a tempo before he takes on e5. If 11...\( \text{xe5} \) 12.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{f6} \) White plays 13.\( \text{e1} \) immediately and keeps an extra tempo: 13...\( \text{e7} \) 14.\( \text{g3} \). 12.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 13.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{f6} \) 14.\( \text{e1} \) \( \text{c6} \) Watson suggests 14...g5!? 15.\( \text{e5} \) \( \text{xf3} \) 16.\( \text{gx} \text{f3} \) \( \text{g8} \) 17.\( \text{xh7} \) \( \text{g7} \) 18.\( \text{d3} \) f5 19.\( \text{xg7} \) \( \text{xg7} \) 15.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{c8} \) 15...\( \text{g6} \)\( \text{=} \) 16.\( \text{g5} \) \( \text{d4} \) 17.\( \text{ad1} \)

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\[ \text{c5 18.h3 \textit{e7} (18...d4!\textsuperscript{f}) 19.g4 \textit{g6? 20.xg6 hgx6} } \]

21.xxe6++-- Perez Mitjans-Merino Araguas, Madrid 2010. 16.e5 \textit{h6} 17.ad1 \textit{g8 18.e2 \textit{d7?! 19.d4 \textit{d6 20.f4 \textit{e7 21.f3 21.f5!\textsuperscript{f}. 21...d6} } } \]

A2) 8.0-0 \textit{xd4 9.bd2?! This move could be the main line for the 7.d3 variation, but for some reason it does not enjoy much popularity – perhaps because the knight does not go to the natural c3-square.

A typical position has been reached: White has no tangible advantage, but enjoys an easy game with harmoniously developed pieces. For the pawn White has full compensation in his actively placed forces and spatial advantage. Even though Black’s position is without visible weaknesses, it is hard to find a good plan. Besides, the king can easily come under attack. Thanks to his stronger bishop, White controls the important b1-h7 diagonal, denying the black king the safety of castling. Queenside castling is not without risks either, which means that Black has to remain in the potentially dangerous centre. In a nutshell, this happens in many games

Nevertheless, in this particular position with the black knight on d4 and the likely exchange on f3, placing the knight on d2 is fully justified. The same strategic idea can be seen in the variations with ...\textit{h4}. It should be noted that c3 is not a particularly active square for the knight in the main lines either, since Black curtails its activity with the preventive ...a7-a6! How to proceed? The exchange on f3 brings White’s \textit{d2} into play, and retreating allows White to occupy b3, another good place for the knight.

Note that 9.xd4 \textit{xd4 10.c3 a6 transposes into the main position analysed under 8.c3.}

A21) 9...\textit{e7 It’s logical to continue with development, but unexpectedly, with almost forced moves White gets a favourable position: 10.xd4 \textit{xd4 11.f3 \textit{b6 12.e3 \textit{c7 13.e1 c6 14.a3 \textit{e7 15.e1} } } } }
following the flexible $\mathcal{d}d2$ line.  
16...\textit{b}1 White does not have to commit his bishop with 16.b4?! a6 17.h3 with chances for both sides. 16...g5 Black decides to remain active and keep pressure against e5. However, without sufficient piece support, this is likely to undermine Black's position. 17.\textit{d}4 17.h3?! 17...a6 18.\textit{b}3 e8 19.\textit{h}5 \textit{x}e5 20.\textit{h}7 \textit{h}8 21.\textit{d}4\# Lie-Pacheco, Turin 2006;

A22) 9...\textit{c}6 This move leads to positions with even greater advantages for White. 10.\textit{b}3 The white knight controls the important d4- and c5-squares. This is another important idea behind the $\mathcal{d}d2$ line. 10...\textit{g}7 11.\textit{e}3 \textit{c}7 12.\textit{c}1 \textit{g}6 13.\textit{c}5

Another typical set-up for this variation. For the pawn, White enjoys rapid development and a strong initiative, for example:

A221) 13...\textit{g}xe5?! 14.\textit{x}e5 \textit{xe}5 14...\textit{xe}5? 15.\textit{xe}6\#-. 15.\textit{xb}7 d4 16.\textit{d}2 \textit{b}8 17.\textit{e}1 \textit{c}7 18.\textit{a}5 \textit{b}6 19.\textit{xc}6 \textit{xc}6 20.\textit{h}5 \textit{d}7 21.\textit{a}5 \textit{w}d6 22.\textit{c}7+- Leon Hoyo-G. Meier, Merida 2008;

A222) 13...\textit{e}7 14.\textit{b}4 \textit{xc}5 15.\textit{xc}5 \textit{g}xe5 16.b5 \textit{xd}3 17.\textit{xd}3 \textit{a}5 18.\textit{f}e1 \textit{b}6 19.\textit{b}4 \textit{b}7 20.\textit{d}4 \textit{g}6 21.\textit{f}3 1-0 Nun-Brodsky, Pardubice 1994;

A223) 13...\textit{xc}5 14.\textit{xc}5 \textit{g}xe5 15.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 15...\textit{xe}5 16.\textit{d}4\#. 16.\textit{xb}3 \textit{b}6 16...\textit{f}6 17.\textit{f}e1 \textit{c}7 18.\textit{xd}5 \textit{e}5 19.\textit{d}4 \textit{xd}3 20.\textit{xd}3 Kadric-Kalezic, Cetinje 2009. 17.\textit{a}3 \textit{f}4 18.\textit{fe}1\# Pap-Kosic, Bosnjaci 2005.

A23) Our recommendation is 9...\textit{c}5!. This developing move represents the best reaction to White's plan.

A231) 10.\textit{b}4  

10...\textit{wb}4 Better is 10...\textit{xf}3+! (White will achieve greater activity if Black allows him to exchange on d4) 11.\textit{xf}3 \textit{wb}4! 12.\textit{b}1 (12.\textit{g}5 \textit{a}4! (tempting but risky is 12...\textit{d}4 13.\textit{e}3 \textit{xe}5 14.\textit{xf}7 \textit{xf}7 15.\textit{xc}5 \textit{f}6 16.\textit{e}1\# when White's pieces are fully active and beautifully coordinated. The dark-squared bishop is particularly dangerous) 13.\textit{h}5 \textit{h}6 (Black protects the f7-square and is threatening to exchange queens on g4) 14.\textit{xb}7 \textit{b}b7 (14...\textit{b}5! 15.\textit{xb}5+ (15.\textit{d}1 \textit{f}5 16.\textit{xa}4 \textit{xa}4\# or 16.\textit{g}5 \textit{xf}2+!-+) 15...\textit{xb}5 16.\textit{g}5 0-0\#) 15.\textit{h}7 \textit{g}4 16.\textit{h}3 \textit{h}3 17.\textit{g}3 \textit{c}6 18.\textit{b}1 \textit{d}7 19.\textit{b}3 \textit{h}8 20.\textit{d}3 \textit{f}5\# Smerdon-Zhao Zong Yuan, Queenstown 2006) 12...\textit{a}4 13.\textit{xa}4 \textit{xa}4 14.\textit{xb}7 \textit{e}7=.

11.\textit{xd}4! 11.\textit{b}1 \textit{a}4 12.\textit{b}3 \textit{xf}3+ 13.\textit{xf}3 \textit{b}6 14.\textit{g}3 \textit{e}7
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B) After 6...Ec8 White has:


B2) 7.dxc5 Exc5 8.0-0;


C) It is not in Black’s interest to allow his opponent to get rid of the potentially weak d4 pawn with 6...Eb6?!

7.dxc5 Edc5 8.0-0.

Black has parted with his important dark-squared bishop, but the centralised queen and the pressure against the e5 pawn give him excellent chances. 14.Edc3 White sacrifices another pawn to infiltrate the dark squares. It is hard to find a better plan, for instance after 14.Ed2 0-0 15.Ed2 Black can again take 15...Edxe5+ 14...Exe5 15.Ed2 Now everything is forced. 15...Ed4! 15...Ed6 16.Edc1 b6 (16...Ed4?)
This leads to an advantage for White due to his faster development and command over the centre. Undermining the centre with ...f7-f6 often allows White to occupy the key squares with his pieces; for example:

C1) 8...a5 Black is forced to play this prophylactic move in order to develop his knight to e7:

C11) 9.\(\text{\texttt{bd2}} \) f6 Black achieves nothing with 9...\(a4?! \) 10.\(\text{\texttt{b1}} \) \(\text{\texttt{c7}} \) 11.\(\text{\texttt{e2}} \) \(\text{\texttt{ge7}} \) 12.b4 axb3 13.\(\text{\texttt{xb3}} \) \(\text{\texttt{b6}} \) 14.\(\text{\texttt{bd4}} \) \(\text{\texttt{xd4}} \) 15.cxd4 \(\text{\texttt{c6}} \) 16.\(\text{\texttt{e3}} \) \(\text{\texttt{a5}} \) (\(\geq 16...h6 \)) 17.\(\text{\texttt{g5}} \). White has a strong centre and better development, while Black's kingside is rather unprotected and the dark-squared bishop is placed on an unimportant diagonal. Therefore it is no wonder that White's attack runs quickly and efficiently: 17...h6 18.\(\text{\texttt{h5}} \) (it is all easy now) 18...\(\text{\texttt{c8}} \) (18...0-0 19.\(\text{\texttt{h7}}!\)\(= \)) 19.\(\text{\texttt{xf7}} \) 0-0 20.\(\text{\texttt{xe6}} \) gxe6 21.\(\text{\texttt{xe6}} \) \(\text{\texttt{f7}} \) 22.\(\text{\texttt{b3}} \) \(\text{\texttt{b4}} \)

11...\(\text{\texttt{xe5}} \) 11...\(\text{\texttt{f6}} \)? (Black has no reason to leave his king in the centre. It is better to exchange White's best blocking piece) 12.\(\text{\texttt{xd7}} \) \(\text{\texttt{xd7}} \) 13.\(\text{\texttt{a3}} \) \(\text{\texttt{xa3}} \) 14.\(\text{\texttt{xa3}} \) \(\text{\texttt{c7}} \) 15.\(\text{\texttt{b3}} \) \(\text{\texttt{ab8}} \) 16.\(\text{\texttt{e3}} \) \(\text{\texttt{e5}} \) 17.\(\text{\texttt{f4}} \) \(\text{\texttt{f3}}+ \) 18.\(\text{\texttt{xf3}} \) e5 19.\(\text{\texttt{b5}}+ \) 1-0 Parligras-Goutioudi, Kavala 2004. 12.\(\text{\texttt{xe5}} \) \(\text{\texttt{xf6}} \)

Black has excellent play because White is unable to maintain the blockade of Black's central pawns, for example: 13.\(\text{\texttt{e3}} \) Practically the only move. White takes care to avoid the potential danger by transposing to an even endgame. 13.\(\text{\texttt{d2}} \) \(\text{\texttt{xf2}}+ \)\(= \); 13.\(\text{\texttt{e2}} \) 0-0 14.\(\text{\texttt{d2}} \) (White would like to use e5 as an outpost, but is running out of time) 14...e5!\(= \) and the mobile centre gives Black a clear advantage. 13...\(\text{\texttt{xe3}} \) 14.\(\text{\texttt{xe3}} \) \(\text{\texttt{xe3}} \) 15.\(\text{\texttt{fxe3}} \)\(= \);
C13) Also solid is 9.\(\text{We2}\) f6 10.\(\text{Af4}\) fxe5. Complicated positions arise after 10...\(\text{Ag7}\)? 11.\(\text{Abd2}\) \(\text{Ag6}\) 12.\(\text{Ag3}\) 0-0 13.\(\text{Ab3}\) \(\text{Ae7}\) 14.\(\text{Exf6}\) \(\text{Exf6}\) 15.\(\text{Abd4}\) \(\text{Bxd4}\) 16.\(\text{cxd4}\) \(\text{Bf4}\) 17.\(\text{Bxf4}\) \(\text{Bxf4}\) 18.\(\text{Ag3}\) \(\text{Bf8}\) 19.\(\text{Ae5}\) \(\text{Ae8}\) 20.\(\text{Ab1}\) \(\text{Axe5}\) 21.\(\text{Ag2}\) \(\text{Ac8}\) 22.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{Ah8}\) 23.\(\text{Af2}\) \(\text{Ac7}\) 24.\(\text{Bb1}\) \(\text{Bxe5}\) ½-½ Rubinetti-Ivkov, Palma de Mallorca izt 1970. 11.\(\text{Ax e5}\) \(\text{Bxe5}\) 12.\(\text{Bxe5}\) \(\text{Af6}\) 13.\(\text{Ad2}\) 0-0 14.\(\text{Af3}\) \(\text{Bae8}\) 15.\(\text{Ad1}\) ½-½ Maciejewski-Suetin, Warsaw 1991.

C2) 8...\(\text{Bge7}\)? 9.b4++; C3) 8...f6?!

With this move we enter a well-known and much-analysed game. It is of major theoretical importance for the Advance Variation, and the wider middlegame strategy. 9.b4! With this move White takes control over the important d4-square. The weakening of the queenside pawns is of no significance because the king is still in the centre. 9...\(\text{Bge7}\) 10.\(\text{Bf4}\) fxe5 Black concedes the e5-square, in order to develop his pieces. 11.\(\text{Bxe5}\) \(\text{Bxe5}\) 12.\(\text{Bxe5}\) \(\text{Af6}\) 13.\(\text{Ad2}\) 0-0 14.\(\text{Af3}\) \(\text{Ad6}\) 15.\(\text{Ac2}\) White now controls the centre with his minor pieces. The black pawns have lost their mobility and are potentially weak. 15...\(\text{Ac8}\) 16.\(\text{Ad4}\) \(\text{Cc7}\) 17.\(\text{Ce5}\)

The squares e5 and d4 are great outposts for the white pieces, actively preparing for the next phase: the assault on the black king. 17...\(\text{Be8}\) 18.\(\text{Bae1}\) \(\text{Bxe5}\) 19.\(\text{Bxe5}\) \(\text{Cc6}\) 20.\(\text{Bd4}\) \(\text{Ad7}\) 21.\(\text{Cc2}\) \(\text{Bf7}\) 22.\(\text{Bd3}\) ± b6 23.\(\text{Bg3}\) 23.\(\text{Bxe1}\) 23...\(\text{Bh8}\)? 23...\(\text{Bd4}\). 24.\(\text{Bxh7}\)++ (Nimzowitsch-Salwe, Carlsbad 1911) 24...\(\text{Bh7}\) 25.\(\text{Bf6}\)!

**Important:** In this line White places his bishop on an optimal square for the attack on the enemy king, from where it also obstructs the transfer of the black knight via f5 or g6. However, the d4 pawn becomes more vulnerable, as it loses the support of the queen. For White it is best to simply sacrifice this pawn and continue with active play. In the resulting position White enjoys a certain compensation for the material, but Black has possibilities to neutralise the threats and even in some cases to takeover the initiative.

* 6.dxc5
The best explanation of this move is probably in the realm of chess psychology, starting with the avoidance of the main theoretical lines, as well as forcing the opponent into playing a specific type of position. Otherwise, it is hard to explain why White would want to build the centre, only to demolish it by bringing his opponent's bishop to the ideal diagonal. Only with the black knight on e7 or the queen on b6 (after b2-b4 the bishop can no longer reach b6, as seen in the game Nimzowitsch-Salwe, covered under 6...d3 b6 7.dxc5), the exchange on c5 makes sense. It is therefore not surprising that Black has more than one way to obtain good play here. 6...\texttt{xc5} and now:

A) 7.b4 \texttt{b6} 8.b5 By choosing this variation White weakened his central e5 pawn, so minimizing the impact that the black knight has on the centre is crucial if White is to fight for an advantage. The developing move 8.d3 gives Black a pleasant position with 8...f6! 9.b5 (9.f4 fxe5 10...xe5 f6 11.xd7 xf2+! 12.xf2 xf4+ 13.xf3 xf3+ 14.gxf3 xd7+ Moccero-Fiorito, Mar del Plata 1991) 9...xe5 10...xe5 fxe5 11.h5+ xf8 12...xe5 (nothing comes from 12.a3+ e7 13...xe5 g8 14.d2 g6 15.g3 f6 16.0-0 xc3 17.b3 e5 18.f3 f6\texttt{f6} and White has insufficient compensation for the pawn) 12.f6 13.0-0 c8 14.g5 f7 15.d2 c7 16.xc7 (16.xf6 gxf6 17.h5+ e7 18.c4 f4 19.ad1 dxc4 20.g3 g5 21.xg5 fxg5 22.xc4 d4 23.a4 e5 24.de3 xe3 25.fxe3 h3 26.f2? (26.fe1=) 26...d8 27.fd2 g4 0-1, Wall-Matlak, Salzburg 2004) 16.xc7 (\ge 16...xc7 17.c4 g4 18.h3 h6 19.e3 xe3 20.fxe3+ e7\texttt{f6}) 17.c4= Wall-Summerscale, Torquay 2002.

8...a5 9.d3 c7 In this set-up, the queen is ideally positioned on c7. From here it attacks the central e5 pawn and controls the important c-file. Or also 9...e7 10.0-0 c7 10.0-0 e7 11.a4 g6 12.e1 c4 Black strengthens the position and piles pressure on the central pawn. Also good is 12...0-0!? 13.a3 c5 14.xc5 xc5 with a good position for Black, Dunworth-Martin, London 1994. 13...e2

The critical position! White defends the central e5 pawn and aims for the favourable strategic exchange on c4. This way, the weak c3 pawn is covered, and the ideal e4-square becomes an outpost for the inactive b1, which otherwise does not have much of a future.
Black has a pleasant choice between two plans: ...Cc8, ...0-0, and ...f7-f6, continuing the struggle in a strategically better position, or ...a7-a6, opening the queenside with the unavoidable exchanges and an equal endgame:

A1) 13...Cc8! Black has a healthy position and well-positioned pieces, matching the resulting pawn structure. All he needs to do to accomplish all his goals is to play ...0-0 and ...f7-f6. By comparison, his opponent has not achieved anything of significance with his odd strategy, except to position his pawns 'originally' on the queenside and weaken the central e5 pawn.

A11) 14.h4 f6! 15.Bxg6+ White can open the position in the centre and split up the black pawns, but he will lose control over the e5-square: 15.exf6 gxf6 16.Bd4 Cce5! with an excellent position for Black. 15...hxg6 16.Bd3 f5 17.Cf4 a6 17...h5!? Black has everything under control and has the better chances. The next phase is ...a7-a6!, activating the light-squared bishop. 18.Bxa6 Bxa6 19.Ba2 @a5? 19...h5±. 20.exf6!

What a lightning-fast change in the position thanks to just one piece!

B) 7.Bd3 f6:

B1) 8.Bf4? fxe5 9.Bxe5 Ef6 10.Bxd7 Bxf2+! and Black has a clear positional advantage. The extra space that White has grabbed is counterproductive because of the weakened squares (c4, c5) and pawns (e5, c3), as well as the poorly coordinated pieces: 16.Bc4 White does not want to end up in an inferior defensive position, and sacrifices a pawn for activity. 16...dxSc4+, Schakel-Myers, ICCF email 2006; 16.Bc2 @b3++; or 16.Bd2 @b3±.

A2) Black can give up his strategic advantages along the c-file and enter an equal endgame by playing 13...a6?! 14.Bxa6 Bxa6 15.Bc4 and here the opponents agreed to a draw in the game Grosar-Rogulj, Slovenian tt 2003;

A3) Not good is 13...f6?! 14.exf6 gxf6 15.Bxc4! Wxc4 15...dxSc4 16.Bh6 0-0-0 17.Bd2± 16.Wxc4 dxSc4 17.Bd2±. The passive @b1 suddenly finds its value enhanced, thanks to winning the important e4-square, and to the weak c4 pawn. White now enjoys better play. 17...Cc8? 18.Bf4+-

We have already mentioned that the queen is not a good blocking piece.

8...fxe5 9...xe5 10...xe5 12...e3
11.0-0 0-0 12...e3 (12...d2?! 12...xe3
13...xe3 13...xe3 14...xe3=)
14...d2? 12...d2 12...b6
13...g4 14...h5 15...h1
12...b6 13...d4 13...d2 14...c7
14...g5 15...e5 13...c7 14...g5 16...h4 e5 16...c5 e4 17...e2 18...f6
Campora-Speelman, Cala Galdana 1994;

B3) 8.exf6?! By exchanging at f6
White loses control over the e5-square,
so that the mobile centre gives Black
better play. 8...xf6 9.0-0 0-0 10.c4!
10...g5 h6?! 11...h4 g5 12...g3
13...bd2 14...g3 14...hxg3 16...f6;
10...e7 16...d7 Black threatens
11...g4! 11...a3 11...d4 12...c3
(12.cxd5 exd5 13...c3 14...xd3 +)
12...d3 13...xd3 14...xc4 11...dxc4
12...xc4 12...d4 14...h3
14...c6-+ 14...xf3 15...xf3
16...h4 16...h3+ Kosanski-Dizdar,
Pula 1998.

B4) 8.b4 12...b6 transposes into 7.b4.

**Important:** This is another line where
Black obtains good play. The active bishop on
the a7-g1 diagonal and the possibility of trading off White's central e-pawn with the typi-
cal ...f7-f6 can often bring more than mere
counterplay. We should highlight the weakened pawn structure on the white queenside,
where he often pushes b2-b4 in order to jus-
tify the self-destruction of his central forma-
thon.

6. ...  

A natural developing move, which, de-
spite its modest appearance, reflects
White's intention of quick castling,
maintaining his stable centre, and eventu-
ally working on an initiative on the kingside.

6. ...  

Black continues with his development.
The ultimate destination for the black knight is the ideal f5-square (or alterna-
tively, g6), from where it will act ac-
cording to Plan #1 and attack the white
centre.
The knight can be well-placed via h6 as
well, still leaving the c5 pawn pro-
tected, or preventing the variation with
8.a3 — however, there is no need for
that. We do not favour such a plan, es-
pecially because it leads to unwarranted
complications, which may lead to posi-
tions with a damaged pawn structure
after 7...xh6?. Besides, in response to
White castling 7.0-0, Black gives up the
solid continuation 7...g6.
6...\( \text{Nh}6 \) 7.\( \text{Nh}xh6 \)? 7.0-0 is the main line. 7...g\( xh6 \) 8.0-0 \( \text{wb}6 \) 9.\( \text{wd}2 \) \( \text{g}7 \) 10.\( \text{Aa}3 \) 0-0 11.\( \text{Ac}2 \) a5?! Black prevents the thematic b2-b4-b5 with the idea of driving Black's knight from the defence of the e5-square. If 11...cxd4 12.cxd4 f6 13.exf6 \( \text{xf6} \) 14.b4!\%

The critical position for the 6...\( \text{Nh}6 \) continuation, where White also has the initiative. Despite the fact that Black's bishop pair compensates for the spoiled pawn structure, practice shows that White enjoys better prospects because by playing \( \text{Ne}5 \) and f2-f4 at the right moment, he neutralises the activity of the strong dark-squared bishop.

![Diagram](image)

12.\( \text{Ne}3 \) h5 13.\( \text{Aa}1 \) cxd4 14.cxd4 f6 15.exf6 \( \text{xf6} \) 16.\( \text{Ne}5 \) \( \text{e}8 \) 17.f4 \( \text{x}e5 \) 18.dxe5 \( \text{f}8 \) 19.\( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{h}6 \) 20.g3 \( \text{g}6 \) 21.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{a}8 \) 22.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 23.\( \text{g}2 \) \( \text{f}8 \) 24.f5\%


After 6...\( \text{Nh}e7 \) White's alternatives are:

- 7.dxc5 (see p.91)
- 7.0-0 (see p.92)
- 7.a3 (see p.112)
- the main move 7.\( \text{Aa}3 \) (see p.116)


\( 7.\text{dxc5} \) \( \text{g}6 \) 8.\( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{g}xe5 \) 9.\( \text{x}e5 \) \( \text{xe}5= \) 10.0-0 \( \text{e}7 \) 11.b4 0-0 12.\( \text{d}2 \) b6 13.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 14.\( \text{b}3 \) 15.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 16.\( \text{xb}6 \) 16.\( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{xb}3 \) 17.\( \text{xb}6 \) axb6 18.axb6 \( \text{xf}6 \) 19.\( \text{x}a8 \) \( \text{x}a8 \) 20.c4 dxc4 21.bxc4 \( \text{g}7 \) 22.c5 bxc5 23.\( \text{xc}5 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 24.\( \text{c}1 \) \( \text{f}5= \)

White has a passed pawn but his exposed king gives Black enough counterplay. 16...axb6 17.\( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 18.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 19.\( \text{xe}5 \) \( \text{xe}5 \) 19...\( \text{xe}5= \) 20.\( \text{xf}6 ! \) \( \text{gxf}6 \) 21.\( \text{h}6 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 21...\( \text{x}b3 ? \) 22.\( \text{x}d3 ! + - \) 22.\( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{S} \) Smerson-Wang Chen, Kuala Lumpur 2010.

Important: In this particular position, abandoning the centre by trading the central d4 pawn has some sense. For some time White will be able to keep the now-mobile black pawns d5 and e6 under control. Besides, White will try to occupy the cleared central squares with his pieces, all in accordance with Nimzowitsch's old recipe.

However, despite this temporary obstruction, Black's central pawns do have dynamic
power and his pieces are assuming the more active posts. This set-up is rare in practice, but promises rich play and unexplored positions.

- **7.0-0**

The natural move, continuing his development without committing the queen's knight.

Now there is a major crossroads:

- A) 7...\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{\textdagger}}}\)f5 (see p.92)
- B) 7...\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)c8 (see p.98)
- C) 7...\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)b6 (see p.99)
- D) 7...\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)xd4 (see p.100)
- E) 7...\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)g6 (see p.110)

A) 7...\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)f5!?  
A1) 8.\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)d3

Curiously enough, this is the most frequent continuation, but it gives White absolutely nothing. White will give his light-squared bishop for the strong black knight and spoil Black's pawn structure, but he will also leave his light squares weak, with no chances of an attack on the black king. Overall, the position in the centre indicates to us the great importance of the light-squared bishop. We have already defined a strategic rule that this exchange only has sense if White can exchange dark-squared bishops as well, because after the mere exchange of White's bishop for the black knight Black's remaining bishop pair becomes a great danger for White. 8...\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)xd4 9.\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)xf5 exf5  
White can now choose between two types of centre: 10.\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)xd4 and 10.\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)xd4. However as we have already mentioned, with two bishops, Black has easy and good play in both cases:

A11) 10.\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)xd4 With his knight White has blocked the weak d5 pawn, hoping for a good middlegame.

A111) Good is 10...\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)c5!? and now:

A1111) 11.\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)d3!? 0-0! Black sacrifices a pawn for better development.

12.\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)xf5 12.\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)xc6 \(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)xc6! 13.\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)e3 (13.\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)xf5 d4\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\) 13...d4 14.\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)xd4 f4\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\); or 14.\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)xd4 \(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)d5 15.\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)f3 (15.f3 \(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)b5\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\) 15...\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)xf3 16.gxf3 \(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)xd4 17.\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)xd4 \(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)ad8 18.\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)d1 \(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)xf3 19.\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)d3 \(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)e4 20.\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)d1 f6\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\). 12.\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)e8 13.\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}}\)f4
\( \text{Axe5} 14. \text{Wxd5} \text{xf2+} 14... \text{b5!!+} 15. \text{xc5} \text{xf1} 16. \text{xe5} \text{g5} 17. \text{g3} \text{d3.} 15. \text{xf2} \text{xf5} 16. \text{Wxd8} \text{axd8} 17. \text{xe5} \text{d1}+ 18. \text{gf1} \text{xf1}+ 19. \text{xf1} \text{xe5} \text{†} \) 14. \text{g7} 14. \text{xe5} \text{d6} 15. \text{xc6} \text{bxc6} 16. \text{xe5} \text{d6} 17. \text{g5} \text{dxe5} 18. \text{gf4} \text{g7} 19. \text{gxf7} \text{xe5} 20. \text{xf6} \text{gxf6} 21. \text{g1} \text{h4} 22. \text{h3} \text{g6} 20. \text{Wxe2} \text{He6} 21. \text{g3} \text{g6} 22. \text{gf1} \text{h5} 23. \text{Wf2} \text{h4} 24. \text{h3} \text{g3} 25. \text{h2} \text{He8} 26. \text{Mael} \text{He6} 27. \text{Wd2} \text{Mg6}

Now the threat is 11...\text{dxe5}.

\( \text{A112) } \text{gxe5}! \) with mutual chances; 11...\text{c5} 12. \text{xf5} \text{xe3} 13. \text{c6} \text{e6} 14. \text{e3} 0-0 15. \text{c2} \text{±};

11...\text{b6} 12. \text{xc6} \text{bxc6} (12... \text{xe3}?! 13. \text{b4} \text{±} 13. \text{xc5} \text{xc5} \text{±}.

\( \text{A112) } 10... \text{c5} \)

and Black was clearly better in Ramos Aguilar-Romero Sanchez, AEAC email 2000.

14. \text{c6} 14. \text{c6} \text{b6}±. 14... \text{bxc6} 15. \text{f3} \text{b6} 16. \text{c2} \text{a5} 17. \text{e3} \text{xe3} 18. \text{xe3} \text{c5} 19. \text{d1} \text{e6} 20. \text{h4} \text{ad8} 21. \text{ed3} \text{h6} \text{=} 22. \text{Maki} \text{movic-Gleizerov, Skopje 1993;}

\( \text{A1122)} 11. \text{b3} \text{xd4} 12. \text{cxd4} \text{b6}! 13. \text{xb6} 13. \text{c3} \text{e6} 14. \text{a4} \text{+d7} 15. \text{b3} \text{e6} 16. \text{a4} \text{+d7} \text{½-½}

Stevic-Dizdar, Medulin 2002. 13... \text{xb6} = Black has spoiled his structure on the queenside, but despite that, he has no problems. 14. \text{c3} \text{e6} 15. \text{d2} 15. \text{a3} \text{d7} 16. \text{f4} \text{hc8} 17. \text{f3} \text{c4!} (the absence of the light-squared bishop is a bigger disadvantage than the spoiled black pawn structure) 18. \text{d3} \text{h6} 19. \text{d2} \text{g5} 20. \text{f1} \text{g8} 21. \text{f2} \text{f6} 22. \text{e3} \text{gc8=} 23. \text{Reefat-Barsov, Dhaka 2001. 15... \text{d7} 16. \text{a3} \text{hc8} 17. \text{a2} \text{c4!}

The weak light squares make Black's play easier. 18. \text{c3} \text{f4} 19. \text{fd1}

White should prevent the activation of Black's bishop. Better was 19. \text{b4.}

19. \text{d5} 20. \text{d2} \text{b5} 21. \text{d1} \text{a6} 22. \text{bxa3} \text{xa3} 23. \text{b2} \text{dd1} \text{ca4} \text{=} 23. \text{b4} \text{xa2} 24. \text{xa2} \text{xb4} 25. \text{f3} \text{c4} 26. \text{b2} \text{b4} 27. \text{dd2} \text{=}

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23...\textbf{B}b3 24.\textbf{b}d2 \textbf{c}c2 25.\textbf{c}c3 \textbf{B}xb2 26.\textbf{c}xd5 \textbf{b}1+ 27.\textbf{x}xb1 \textbf{x}xb1 28.\textbf{b}6+ \textbf{c}7 29.\textbf{x}c4 \textbf{x}c4 30.\textbf{b}2? 30.d5 c3 31.\textbf{d}d1 \textbf{f}5 32.\textbf{c}c1 c2 33.\textbf{f}f1+ 30...\textbf{d}3 31.d5 c3++; Romero Holmes-Ulibin, Mesa 1992;

A1123) 11.\textbf{f}f3 \textbf{e}6 12.\textbf{e}e3 And now we have two different but good continuations. The first ...g7-g5 provides sharp, and the other ...\textbf{W}c7, quiet play. 12...0-0 12...g5?! 13.\textbf{a}a3 \textbf{f}4 14.\textbf{d}d4 \textbf{g}8 is unclear (14....\textbf{x}a3?! 15.bxa3 \textbf{W}e7 16.a4 \textbf{c}c8 17.\textbf{b}b1 b6++) Romanishin-Hort, Biel 1987. 13.\textbf{b}d2 \textbf{W}c7= Qin Kanying-Ulibin, Beijing 1996.

A12) 10.cxd4 \textbf{e}7 11.\textbf{c}c3 \textbf{e}e6

A very important typical position, which we reach more often from the following move order – 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 \textbf{c}c6 5.\textbf{f}f3 \textbf{g}e7 6.\textbf{d}d3 cxd4 7.cxd4 \textbf{f}5 8.\textbf{f}f5 ef 9.\textbf{c}c3 \textbf{e}e6. This is the better way to reach this position for White, because he can now play probably the best plan with 10.h4! (instead of 10.0-0) followed by the transfer of the white knight from c3 to f4. All other alternatives lead White to inferior positions:

A121) 12.\textbf{e}e2 A typical manoeuvre for this central structure. White wants to transfer his knight to f4, from where it has the most effective influence on the black position. However it doesn't work in this position, because White doesn't have the h4 pawn, so the white knight on e2 has to restrict itself to the defence of the d4 pawn. 12...g5?! Black also has a more promising position after the developing 12...0-0 13.\textbf{f}f4?! g5 14.\textbf{h}h5 \textbf{f}4 15.\textbf{h}h3 \textbf{f}f5++. 13.\textbf{b}b3 \textbf{B}b8 14.\textbf{d}d1 \textbf{f}4 15.\textbf{e}e1 \textbf{W}b6 16.\textbf{x}xb6 axb6

We have already seen a similar type of position in one game of grandmaster Ulibin. Also very instructive is the endgame between Reefat and Barsov, where White has already played f2-f4 to prevent the activation of Black's light-squared bishop, but even there Black had an excellent position (the games were analysed under 10.\textbf{d}d4) 17.\textbf{d}d2 \textbf{f}6= Degraeve-Ulibin, Mamaia 1991;

A122) 12.a3 0-0 13.b4 This ambitious plan looks suspicious without White's light-squared bishop. However 13.\textbf{e}e3 leaves Black the choice between an active plan with 13...g5?! 14.g3 \textbf{f}6 or peacefully 13...\textbf{c}c8 14.\textbf{c}c1 \textbf{a}a5 with more promising play. 13...\textbf{c}c8 14.\textbf{b}b2 \textbf{f}4+? Or alternatively, 14...\textbf{d}d7 15.\textbf{d}d2 b6 16.h4 \textbf{h}6 17.\textbf{e}e2= with typical mutual chances, S. Nikolic-F. Portisch, Zalaegerszeg 1969.
The thematic text move gives Black’s position very good prospects. By activating the black bishop, real problems are coming for White. 15...e1 f6!
There is no reason for waiting, Black is activating his rook at f8 and by opening the centre he increases the strength of his bishop pair. 16.e2 g5 16...fxe5! 17.dxe5 d4=+. 17.f3 d7 ≥ 17...b6 18.h1 a5=. 18.d3 b6 19.e1 f5 20.c1 d8! 21.exf6 xf6 22.e5 xc1 23.xc1 xe5 24.dxe5 d6 25.b3 c8 26.e2 w6 27.d4 ½-½
Savic-Maksimovic, Senta 2008;
A2) 8.e3

This makes sense when the black knight stands on g6. But here, Black has good extra possibilities. (i.e., to take the bishop on e3 and remain with two bishops). 8...b6 8...e7 also leads to an excellent position. 9.d2 xe3 10.fxe3 xe7 11.d3 0-0 12.h1 f6=+

Simple and easy play. Black opens the position because he has two bishops and better developed pieces. 13.e4?! cxd4 14.exd5 xe5 15.xe5 fxe5 16.e1 exd5 17.xe5 w6 18.e1 d6 19.cxd4 wh4 20.g3 xg3 0-1, Kagramanov-Shirov, Edmonton 2009;
A3) 8.xc5?!

A very unpleasant variation, despite the fact that it looks illogical and unprincipled. Ilogical because the black bishop comes to an excellent diagonal, and unprincipled because White destroys his pawn chain, which was his main asset. However, we shall see that under the
surface, a very dangerous idea is hidden. The main sense or value of the d-pawn exchange is to decrease the value of the $f5$. Its position doesn't threaten the white centre and from being a dangerous and mighty knight, it becomes a somewhat problematic piece. $8...\text{xc}5 9.\text{d}3$

The idea of the variation. White now has a concrete threat to capture on f5 and to win the d5 pawn. The only reasonable solution for Black is to prepare his king's knight for another adventure. Probably this variation is the main reason why most of the top players prefer $7...\text{g}6$ instead of $7...\text{f}5$. $9...\text{h}4$ There is no other reasonable move. $9...\text{e}7$?! $10.\text{xf}5$ ($10.\text{bd}2$) $10...\text{xf}5$ $11.\text{xd}5\pm \text{b}6$ $12.\text{e}1 \text{e}6$ $13.\text{b}5 \text{e}8$ $14.\text{a}3 \text{d}5$ $15.\text{b}3 \text{h}6$ $16.\text{f}1 (16.\text{e}3\pm) 16...\text{a}5$ $17.\text{b}4 \text{a}4$ $18.\text{b}5 \text{b}5$ $19.\text{xb}5 \text{e}7$ $20.\text{d}6\pm$ Nyvlt-Sergel, ICCF email 2002. $10.\text{bd}2$

A3 1) $10...\text{g}6$ $11.\text{b}3 \text{b}6$

We have reached a typical position which is known from the Nimzowitsch school (control of the centre with pieces), where the black knight has moved four times instead of twice, in order to go to the right square g6. This is the leitmotif for this central structure. It's true that the white bishop needed two moves to occupy the d3-square, but White still has gained one tempo:

A3 11) $12...\text{c}7$ A logical move, but Black now gets a passive position. $13.\text{g}5 \text{b}8$ $13...\text{c}8$ $14.\text{x}g6$ ($14.\text{c}5 \text{gxe}5$ $15.\text{x}e5 \text{xe}5$ $16.\text{xd}7 \text{xd}7\pm)$ $14...\text{fxg}6$ ($14...\text{hxg}6!? 15.\text{c}1\pm) 15.\text{c}1$ $0-0$ $16.\text{c}4\pm$. $14.\text{c}5! \text{c}8$ $14...\text{gxe}5$ $15.\text{xe}5 \text{xe}5$ $16.\text{xd}7 \text{xd}7$
Chapter 3 - The Advance Variation

11.\(\text{\textcopyright b}5\) 15.\(\text{\textcopyright g}6 \text{\textcopyright xg}6 \geq 15.\text{hxg}6
16.\(\text{\textcopyright e}2\) 16.\(\text{\textcopyright d}4 \text{\textcopyright xd}4 17.\text{cxd}4 0-0
18.\(\text{\textcopyright c}1\) Schlawin-Visser, Germany tt 2005/06;
A312) 12...0-0 13.\(\text{\textcopyright d}4\) 13.h4?! \(\text{\textcopyright c}7\) (13...\(\text{\textcopyright xh}4\) 14.\(\text{\textcopyright xh}7\)+++)
14.\(\text{\textcopyright g}5 \text{\textcopyright e}8\) 15.\(\text{\textcopyright gx}6 \text{\textcopyright f}xg6\)++; 13...\(\text{f}6\)
14.\(\text{\textcopyright f}6\) \(\text{\textcopyright f}6\) 15.\(\text{\textcopyright g}5 \text{\textcopyright f}7\) 16.\(\text{\textcopyright c}6\)
\(\text{\textcopyright x}c6 17.\text{\textcopyright e}3 \text{\textcopyright xe}3 18.\text{\textcopyright xe}3\;
A313) 12...\(\text{\textcopyright b}8\) Just recently tried at the very highest level! 13.\(\text{\textcopyright e}2 \text{\textcopyright c}7\)
14.\(\text{\textcopyright g}6 \text{\textcopyright h}xg6\) 15.\(\text{h}4\) 15.\(\text{\textcopyright c}5\)?!N.
15...\(\text{\textcopyright h}5\) 16.\(\text{\textcopyright g}5 \text{\textcopyright xe}5\) 17.\(\text{\textcopyright xe}5 \text{\textcopyright xe}5\)
18.\(\text{\textcopyright xe}5 \text{\textcopyright xe}5\) 19.\(\text{\textcopyright xe}5 \text{\textcopyright f}6\) 20.\(\text{\textcopyright e}3\)
\(\text{f}xg5 21.\text{hxg5} \text{\textcopyright g}5\) 22.\(\text{\textcopyright c}5\) Grischuk-Ivanchuk, Khanty-Mansiysk
2011.
A32) 10...\(\text{h}6\) 11.\(\text{\textcopyright e}2 \text{\textcopyright f}3++\)
12.\(\text{\textcopyright f}3 \text{\textcopyright g}5\) 13.b4 \(\text{\textcopyright e}7\) 14.a3 \(\text{\textcopyright c}7\)
15.\(\text{\textcopyright e}1 0-0-0\) 16.\(\text{\textcopyright d}2 \text{\textcopyright b}8\) 17.\(\text{\textcopyright a}1\)
\(\text{\textcopyright a}8?! 17...\(\text{f}5?!\) 18.a4 \(\text{\textcopyright c}8\) 19.\(\text{\textcopyright d}4\) \(\text{\textcopyright xd}4\)
20.\(\text{\textcopyright c}6\) \(\text{\textcopyright b}6\) 21.a5! \(\text{\textcopyright d}4\)
22.\(\text{\textcopyright c}3 \text{\textcopyright h}4\) 23.g3 \(\text{\textcopyright h}3\) 24.a6 \(\text{b}6\)
25.\(\text{\textcopyright d}4 \text{\textcopyright d}7\) 26.\(\text{\textcopyright b}5 \text{\textcopyright f}5\) 1-0
Rozentalis-Zakharevich, St Petersburg 1996;
A33) 10...0-0

11.\(\text{\textcopyright b}3\) Here a forced variation can follow: 11.\(\text{\textcopyright xh}4?! \text{\textcopyright xh}4\) 12.\(\text{\textcopyright f}3 \text{\textcopyright h}5\)
13.\(\text{\textcopyright e}1 \text{\textcopyright f}6\) 14.\(\text{\textcopyright e}3\) (14.\(\text{\textcopyright f}6\) \(\text{\textcopyright xf}6\)
15.\(\text{\textcopyright e}3 \text{\textcopyright d}6\)++) and White manages to cover the central squares with his pieces. 11...\(\text{\textcopyright xf}3++\) 12.\(\text{\textcopyright xf}3 \text{\textcopyright xe}5\)

The only move that justifies Black's strategical plan. He prevents 11.\(\text{\textcopyright b}3\) and 11.\(\text{\textcopyright e}1\) gives him an important tempo because of the unprotected pawn at \(f2\).

Let's look at Black's idea in more detail:
A341) 11.\(\text{\textcopyright xh}4 \text{\textcopyright xh}4\) 12.\(\text{\textcopyright f}3 \text{\textcopyright h}5\)
13.\(\text{\textcopyright e}1\) and now 13...\(\text{f}6!\)\(N\) 13...0-0
14.\(\text{\textcopyright e}3 \text{\textcopyright c}7\) 15.\(\text{\textcopyright c}5\)\(\text{\textcopyright f}6\) 13...\(\text{\textcopyright c}7\)
14.\(\text{\textcopyright e}2\), and now: 14...\(\text{\textcopyright xe}5\) 15.\(\text{\textcopyright xe}5\)
\(\text{\textcopyright xe}5 16.\text{\textcopyright f}3\)++; 14...\(\text{\textcopyright xe}5?\)
15.\(\text{\textcopyright f}4!\)+--; and finally, 14...\(\text{\textcopyright g}6\)
15.\(\text{\textcopyright a}6 \text{\textcopyright x}a6?\) 16.\(\text{\textcopyright h}4\) 14.\(\text{\textcopyright f}6\) \(\text{\textcopyright x}f6\)
15.\(\text{\textcopyright e}3 \text{\textcopyright xe}3\) 16.\(\text{\textcopyright xe}3 0-0-0\)++;
analyses prove to be good and Black creates enough counterplay, then the jump of the king’s knight has sense. Otherwise, we can give the move 7.dxc5 an exclamation mark and maybe also say ‘White is slightly better’. 17.\(\text{\textgreek{d}}\text{d4}\) 17.\(\text{\textgreek{e}}\text{e2}!?.\) 17...\(\text{\textgreek{w}}\text{xd1+}\) 18.\(\text{\textgreek{a}}\text{xd1}\) \(\text{\textgreek{d}}\text{xd4}\) 19.\(\text{\textgreek{c}}\text{xd4}\) \(\text{\textgreek{e}}\text{c7}\) – Black gets to d6 with his king, with an equal endgame;

A342) 11.\(\text{\textgreek{e}}\text{e1}\) 0-0 12.\(\text{\textgreek{d}}\text{xd4}\) 12.\(\text{\textgreek{b}}\text{b3}\) \(\text{\textgreek{d}}\text{xf3+}\) 13.\(\text{\textgreek{w}}\text{xf3}\) f6! (Black manages to create counterplay at the last minute)

14.\(\text{\textgreek{w}}\text{h5}\) g6 15.\(\text{\textgreek{a}}\text{xg6}\) \(\text{\textgreek{w}}\text{e7}\) 16.\(\text{\textgreek{c}}\text{c2}\) fxe5 17.\(\text{\textgreek{e}}\text{e3}\) e4!\(\text{=}t\); 12.\(\text{\textgreek{c}}\text{c2}\) \(\text{\textgreek{g}}\text{g6}\) 13.\(\text{\textgreek{b}}\text{b3}\) \(\text{\textgreek{w}}\text{c7}\) – 12...\(\text{\textgreek{w}}\text{h4}\) Now Black gets an important tempo due to the pawn at f2.

13.\(\text{\textgreek{w}}\text{e2}\) f6 14.\(\text{\textgreek{a}}\text{f3}\) \(\text{\textgreek{w}}\text{h5}\) 15.\(\text{\textgreek{e}}\text{xf6}\) 15.\(\text{\textgreek{e}}\text{e3}\) fxe5\(\text{=}t\). 15...\(\text{\textgreek{a}}\text{xf6}\) 16.\(\text{\textgreek{e}}\text{e3}\) e5!

17.\(\text{\textgreek{a}}\text{xb6}\) \(\text{\textgreek{g}}\text{g4}\)\(\text{=}t\).

A343) 11.\(\text{\textgreek{b}}\text{b3}\)? \(\text{\textgreek{d}}\text{xf3+}\) 12.\(\text{\textgreek{w}}\text{xf3}\) \(\text{\textgreek{d}}\text{xe5}\)\(–t\).

B) 7...\(\text{\textgreek{c}}\text{c8}\)? Black plays a waiting move before committing to one of his plans, ...\(\text{\textgreek{d}}\text{f5}\) or ...\(\text{\textgreek{g}}\text{g6}\). It is interesting to note that White has no practical way of fighting either of his opponent’s plans. His best choice is probably to transpose into the system with 8.\(\text{\textgreek{a}}\text{a3}\), which we have already covered. Let’s see:

B1) 8.dxc5!? An often-used method from the Nimzowitsch chess school (controlling the centre with pieces instead of pawns). 8...\(\text{\textgreek{g}}\text{g6}\) 9.\(\text{\textgreek{b}}\text{b4}\) \(\text{\textgreek{e}}\text{e7}\) 10.\(\text{\textgreek{e}}\text{e3}\) \(\text{\textgreek{d}}\text{xe5}\) 11.\(\text{\textgreek{d}}\text{xe5}\) \(\text{\textgreek{d}}\text{xe5}\) 12.\(\text{\textgreek{d}}\text{d2}\) 0-0 13.\(\text{\textgreek{f}}\text{f4}\) \(\text{\textgreek{g}}\text{g6}\) 14.\(\text{\textgreek{b}}\text{b3}\)

White’s plan is clear: he wants to obtain the advantage by the better control over the central squares and by utilising his queenside majority. The problem is that the initiative is only temporary, and the queenside pawns are not very mobile.

14...\(\text{\textgreek{w}}\text{e8}\)\(?\) 15.\(\text{\textgreek{d}}\text{d4}\) \(\text{\textgreek{d}}\text{d8}\) 16.\(\text{\textgreek{d}}\text{d3}\) \(\text{\textgreek{c}}\text{c7}\)

The black bishop has found a ‘nice’ diagonal. 17.\(\text{\textgreek{f}}\text{f5}\) \(\text{\textgreek{e}}\text{xf5}\) 18.\(\text{\textgreek{a}}\text{xf5}\) \(\text{\textgreek{a}}\text{xf5}\) 19.\(\text{\textgreek{a}}\text{xf5}\) \(\text{\textgreek{w}}\text{e4}\) 20.\(\text{\textgreek{f}}\text{f2}\) \(\text{\textgreek{f}}\text{f4}\) 21.\(\text{\textgreek{w}}\text{g4}\) \(\text{\textgreek{e}}\text{e6}\)= Peng Xiaomin-Jussupow, Elista 1998;

B2) 8.\(\text{\textgreek{a}}\text{a3}\) \(\text{\textgreek{c}}\text{xd4}\) 9.\(\text{\textgreek{c}}\text{xd4}\) \(\text{\textgreek{f}}\text{f5}\) 10.\(\text{\textgreek{c}}\text{c2}\) \(\text{\textgreek{w}}\text{b6}\) transposes into our main variation analysed under 7.\(\text{\textgreek{a}}\text{a3}\);

B3) The not very energetic 8.\(\text{\textgreek{a}}\text{3}\) gives Black several solid options:
Black is not obliged to enter into the actual variation with a2-a3 by playing ...b6.

Now: 11.g4  h4 12.b5  xf3+ 13.xf3  g7 14.a4  h5 15.gxh5  f5=; 11.b5?!  cxd4 12.xd4  xxc1! 13.xc1  xd4=; or 11.bxa5  wxa5 with excellent play for Black.


B33) Also good is 8..g6 9.d3  e7 10.e1  cxd4 11.cxd4  f6! 12.c3  fxe5 13.dxe5 0-0 14.xg6 14.d2  e8! 15.c1  f4 16.xf4  xf4 17.w2  h6 17...h5=) 18.e2  h8 19.g3?!  g7 19...xf3! 20.gxf3  g5 with a clear advantage) 20.wd1  b6 21.b1  c5 22.wc2  e7? (22...xf3!) 23.b4+- Savic-Drasko, Neum 2004. 14.hxg6 15.w3  g5 16.h3  e8 17.b5  b6 ½-½ Savic-Drasko, Herceg Novi 2006.

C) 7...b6?!
The Modern French

This typically 'French' move is an excellent choice. Unfortunately for Black, 8.dxc5 is advantageous for his opponent because it opens the position and exploits Black's slow development.

8.dxc5! 8...a3 cxd4 9.cxd4 f5 10.c2. 8...c7 It is not recommended to play positions with an open centre, with one tempo less: 8...xc5 9.c3 a5 10.c4! – Black is very late with his development. 9.b4 fxe5 10.d4!? ±;

D) 7...cxd4?! The resulting position usually transposes into variations with 7...f5 or 7...g6. Black takes away White's option to play dxc5, permanently fixing the centre as the object of his attack. With this in mind, the exchange goes well with placing the knight on f5. On the downside, White can now use the liberated c3-square as the logical outpost for his knight. The position is now distinctly 'French' and seems more appealing compared to positions after taking on c5. 8.cxd4 f5

After the disappearance of the c-pawns, the black knight no longer fears d3, but Black still has to be cautious because of the threat of g2-g4. 8...g6 9.c3 e7 9.c3

This could be the starting position of the variation 7...cxd4. How to continue? Compared to the positions with the white knight on c2, Black has more problems with his standard plans.

We will examine:

D1) 9...e7 (see p.100)
D2) 9...b6 (see p.104)
D3) 9...h5 (see p.105)
D4) 9...c8 (see p.105)
D5) 9...a6 (see p.108)

D1) 9...e7 This natural developing move doesn't give Black full equality. White has two typical, promising continuations: 10.g4!? and 10.d3!!, whereas 10.a3 and 10.e3 give Black excellent play:

D11) 10.g4!? This typical attack on the knight is more often seen when the h4-square gets occupied by the bishop after an exchange, because h4 is capable of inflicting many headaches on White. 10...h4 11.xh4 xh4

A typical position has been reached, which is worth noting: many continuations that we are covering later refer to similar positions. Both opponents often play a number of waiting moves in a bid to enter this type of position better prepared.

D111) 12.f4 f6 13.e3 0-0 transposes into line D112.

Not dangerous is 13.g5, although after 13...b6?! White netted a quick win.
with $14.\&e3$ ($14.\&h5$?! $\&e7$ $15.\&xf6+ \&xf6$ $16.\&h1$$) 14...f{xe}5$?! $15.\&a4 \&a5$ $16.f{xe}5 \&x{xd}4$ $17.\&x{xd}4$ $\&xa4$ $18.b4 1-0$ in Ulibin-Hanley, Port Erin 2001.

Better for Black is $13...0-0$! $14.g{xf}6$ ($14.\&d3$?! $fxg5$ $15.\&h{h}5$ $g6$ $16.\&x{g}6$ $\&e7$ $) - White has missed the time to open the g-file, and now this file will bring more benefit to Black: $14...g{xf}6$ $15.\&h1$ $\&h8$ $16.\&e3$ $f{xe}5$ $17.f{xe}5$ ($17.dxe5? d4--+)$.

Now there is a forced variation:
$17...\&xe5$! $18.dxe5$ $d4$ $19.\&xf8+ \&xf8$ $20.\&xd4 \&c6+$ $21.\&g1 \&g7+$ $22.\&g4 \&e7$! ($22...\&x{g}4+=\)
$23.\&x{g}4$ $\&g8$ $24.h3$ $h5$ $25.\&xa7$ $)\)
$23.\&h3$ $\&g8+$ $24.\&f1 \&f7+$ $25.\&f3$ $\&f8$ $26.\&g1$ $\&g8+$ $27.\&f1$ $\&xf3+$ $28.\&xf3 \&xf3$$

D112) $12.\&e3$ $0-0$ $13.f{f}6$ $f6$ Black has to weaken the white pawns as soon as possible, because White threatens to cuff off Black's bishop with the moves $\&d3$ and $g4-g5$ and to attack Black's king. After $13...\&e7$?! $14.\&d3$ $f6$ $15.\&c2$ $h6$ ($15...g6$? $16.\&x{g}6$ $hx{g}6$ $17.\&x{g}6+ \&h8$ $18.\&f3+-$) $16.\&g2$ $\&e8$ $17.\&ad1\&= - White has a space advantage and more piece activity, Hort-Tukmakov, Bern 1992.

D1121) $14.\&xf6$?! A better plan is to keep the strong centre with the pawn on e5. After the text, the black bishop is ideally poised to strike along the central diagonal. $14...\&xf6$ $15.\&c1$ $g6$ $16.\&d2$\

Most commentators give an advantage to White in this position, probably due to his controlling more space and his excellent piece coordination.

However, we are not convinced of this. Even though White maintains a small spatial edge thanks to his pawns on the fourth rank, they can become the targets for Black's counterplay, especially the pawn on d4. Due to the unprincipled exchange on f6, the pawn on d4 is more susceptible to attack than its traditionally weak black counterpart on e6, and White has no good use for the e5-square. Taking into consideration the quick and easy development of the black forces, their superb coordination and the multitude of squares (b6, a5,
b4, c4) and pawns (d4, f4, g4, b2, a2) that Black can direct his attention to, there is little doubt that Black has the upper hand in the forthcoming struggle.

16...\(g7\) 

17.\(\text{f3}\) 17.\(\text{a4}\)!? deserves attention, with the idea to deny \(b6\) and \(a5\) to the black queen, for example 17...\(b6\) 18.\(\text{c3}\). 17...\(\text{a5}\) 18.\(\text{g2}\) \(\text{h8}\) Black gets away from the potential \(f4-f5\) threat. 19.\(\text{h1}\) \(\text{ac8}\) 20.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{wb4}\)

Both players are fully active – but White's pawns are more sensitive, particularly the exposed \(d4\) pawn. Of course, this is a concession that White compensates for by controlling more space. 21.\(\text{fd1}\) \(\text{b6}\) 22.\(\text{f1}\) \(\text{a5}\) and as previously mentioned, Black has no shortage of squares to organise powerful counterplay, Nunn-Anand, Munich 1991;

10...\(g6\) 10...\(\text{fxd4}\)? 11.\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{xd4}\) 12.\(\text{g4}\) \(\text{c6}\) 13.\(\text{xc7}\) \(\text{xf8}\) 14.\(\text{b5}\)±; 10...\(\text{h4}\) 11.\(\text{xf4}\) \(\text{xf4}\) 12.\(\text{g4}\)±. 11.\(\text{xf5}\) \(\text{xf5}\) 12.\(\text{f4}\) If White manages to exchange dark-squared bishops, Black's strategy will be unsuccessful. 12...\(\text{b6}\) 13.\(\text{b1}\) 13...\(\text{g8}\) 14.\(\text{d2}\) \(\text{a5}\) 15.\(\text{g5}\)± Scherer-Dorner, ICCF email 2009;

D112) 14.\(\text{d2}\) \(\text{f5}\) 14...\(\text{a5}\); on 14...\(\text{e7}\) White can play either 15.\(\text{b5}\)±; 15.\(\text{g5}\); or 15.\(\text{g2}\). 15.\(\text{f5}\)± White has maintained a space advantage and a strong and stable centre. Therefore Black has a very difficult task to solve the problem of his bishops' activity. For example: 15...\(\text{xf1}\) + 16.\(\text{xf1}\) \(\text{h6}\) 16...\(\text{e7}\) 17.\(\text{b5}\)±. 17.\(\text{d3}\)! Black has weakened the b1-h7 diagonal with 16...\(\text{h6}\). Or 17.\(\text{g2}\) \(\text{g5}\) 18.\(\text{hxg5}\) \(\text{xf5}\) 19.\(\text{xf5}\) \(\text{hxg5}\) 20.\(\text{b5}\) \(\text{b8}\). 17...\(\text{g5}\) 18.\(\text{b1}\)–;

D12) 10.\(\text{d3}\)!? is another typical unpleasant reply to 9...\(\text{e7}\):
position. This resembles the variation with the early 5...\texttt{wb6} 6.a3, but here he has played the more useful 10...0-0 instead of ...\texttt{wb6}. 13.g4 13.\texttt{a}1 \texttt{e}8 14.\texttt{e}1 \texttt{f}xe5 15.dxe5 \texttt{d}8 16.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{c}7 17.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{x}c1 18.\texttt{x}c1 \texttt{b}6 19.\texttt{c}2 \texttt{g}6 20.\texttt{b}2 \texttt{gh}4+; Miljanic-Drasko, Belgrade 1987. 13...\texttt{h}6 14.\texttt{ex}f6 \texttt{xf}6+.

With a well-known type of position where Black has very mobile pieces and White has more space, which is not easy to defend;

D132) 10...\texttt{c}8!?

Black wants to prevent b2-b4, even though there is no need for it because after 10...0-0 Black has an excellent position.

D1321) 11.g4 Now this is not the best solution, since the intermediate moves ...\texttt{c}8 and a3 benefit Black because of the play on the c-file and the weak b3-square being a good target for the black knight, for example: 11...\texttt{d}4 12.\texttt{x}h4 \texttt{x}h4 13.\texttt{e}3 0-0 14.f4 f6 And now 15.\texttt{d}2 is bad because of the weak b3-square. After the self-destruction of White’s centre by 15.\texttt{ex}f6, we mentioned that Black almost always has good counterplay after 15...\texttt{xf}6=.

15...\texttt{a}5!;

D1322) 11.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{cx}d4 12.\texttt{xd}4 \texttt{xd}4 13.\texttt{g}4 \texttt{b}3 14.\texttt{x}g7 \texttt{f}8 15.\texttt{b}1 \texttt{xc}1 16.\texttt{fx}c1 \texttt{b}6?! 16...h5!N with approximately equal chances. 17.\texttt{g}4?! White prevents Black’s threat ...\texttt{d}4! with active play on the dark squares. An alternative is 17.\texttt{ex}h7=. 17...\texttt{d}8 18.\texttt{c}2 f6 19.\texttt{ex}f6 \texttt{xf}6 ≥ 19...\texttt{xf}6. 20.\texttt{e}1± Benjamin-Christiansen, Chandler 1997;

D1323) 11.\texttt{f}4?! An unusual move. White seems to challenge Black to launch a typical bayonet attack. 11...\texttt{g}5 12.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{g}4 13.\texttt{e}1 \texttt{h}5 14.\texttt{c}2 f6 15.\texttt{ex}f6 \texttt{xf}6 16.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{c}7 17.\texttt{d}2 0-0 18.\texttt{g}5 \texttt{g}6 19.\texttt{xf}6 \texttt{xf}6 20.\texttt{a}1 \texttt{h}4! Kamsky-Kasparov, New York 1989.

D14) 10.\texttt{e}3

This type of position isn’t very promising for White. 10...0-0 11.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{xe}3 12.\texttt{fx}e3 \texttt{f}5 13.\texttt{ex}f6 \texttt{xf}6 14.\texttt{c}2 \texttt{h}6 15.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{e}7 16.\texttt{ad}1 g5!? 17.h3 \texttt{g}7 with an excellent position for Black, Sandipan-Ni Hua, Beijing 2008.
Black now cannot maintain the pressure against d4, but only helps the white knight to come closer to its desired c5-square. As we will see, this typical move works well when Black has the a7-square ready for the potential retreat of his queen. 10.\texttt{a4}!± The active white knight neutralises the enemy queen easily and prevents Black's standard plan of attacking White's centre. 10...\texttt{a5} 11.\texttt{d2} and now: 11...\texttt{d8} 11...\texttt{b4} 12.\texttt{xb4} \texttt{xb4} 13.a3 \texttt{e7} 14.c1 0-0 15.c5± (the typical attacking square for the c3 knight) 15...b6? 16.\texttt{xd7} \texttt{xd7} 17.b5 \texttt{fe7} 18.d3 h6 19.c3 a5 20.f1 \texttt{fc8} 21.\texttt{c2} 1-0 Réti-Spielmann, Vienna 1928; 11...\texttt{c7} 12.c1±. 12.f4?! Also worth considering is 12.c3 or even 12.c1, although such bishops are not very photogenic. 12...\texttt{e7} 13.c1 g5

Naturally, Black wants active play, but is this pawn aggression well-prepared or does it just weaken the position? The jury is still out. 13...0-0 14.c5±.

14.e3

White is ready to exchange his bishop on e3, but it is unclear whether the attack is real or just weakness-inducing. 14...g4 15.e1 h5 16.c5±

Slow is 16.a3 \texttt{g5} (16...\texttt{xe3} 17.fx3 \texttt{g5} 18.c3 b6=) 17.c3 \texttt{xe3} (17...\texttt{xe3}⊕) 18.fx3 \texttt{g5}?! 19.c5 \texttt{c8} 20.c2± Alexeev-Akselrod, Tomsk 2001. Black also has a difficult position after 20.b5?! 0-0 21.xc6 bxc6 22.e4±. 16...\texttt{xe3}?! 16...c8 17.c3!, very probably with problems for Black's centralised king in the forthcoming battle, for instance 17...\texttt{a5} 18.xd7 xd7 19.a3. 17.fx3 \texttt{xc5} 17...\texttt{g5}? 18.xb7
\[ \text{\textbullet \textbullet \textbullet} \]

9...a6, which has been well received by many authors. It is useful because of the activity along the c-file, and non-committing because it delays the most natural continuations ...\( e7 \) or ...\( b6 \). The rook move, usually combined with ...a6, is an attempt to strengthen the position and prepare for the standard continuations. Instead of the \( e7 \), the queen now controls the h4-square, and the pressure against d4 and the well-protected e7-square make \( d3 \) impossible. Bearing in mind that placing his dark-squared bishop on e3 leads nowhere, it is hard for White to come up with an effective plan. Let's examine the examples and the analysis:

D41) 10.\( g5 \)?! White will practically have to play three moves with this bishop, so that Black has an excellent position with his rook on c8. 10...\( b6 \)
10...\( e7 \)!! 11.\( x7 \) \( x7 \) 12.\( d3 \)\( g5 \)!
13.\( b5 \) (13.\( xg5 \)? \( x4d4 \) 14.\( f4 \infty \))
13...\( g4 \infty \) Romero Holmes-Kortchnoi, Wijk aan Zee 1992. 10...\( e7 \) 11.\( d3 \)
\( x3 \) 12.\( x3 \)± A potential pawn attack would have less power, because the pawn on d4 is fortified and the f-file is open;

D4) 9...\( c8 \)!!

This is as useful as the waiting move 9...a6, which has been well received by and Black is slightly better.
The Modern French

D42) Nothing results from 10.g4
\( \text{\#h4} 11.\text{\#xh4} \text{\#xh4} 12.\text{\#e3} \) (12.f4?
\( \text{\#xd4} \rightarrow \) +)

D421) 12...\( \text{\#a5} \)!

A move that renders the black queen less exposed on the opposite flank because \( f2-f4 \) is now suspicious due to ...
\( \text{\#c4} \). 13.\( \text{\#c1} \) 13.f4? \( \text{\#c4} \). 13...\( \text{\#e7} \)
Black has a good position. 14.f4 14.\( \text{\#f4} 
0-0 15.\( \text{\#g3} \) \( \text{\#h6} \) 16.f4 \( f6 \) 17.exf6 \( \text{\#xf6} \) 18.f5 \( \text{\#h6} \) and White has more problems because of his exposed king.

D422) It is dubious to use the plan with 12...g5?!, as the game Xie Jun-Karpov, Guanzhou rapid 2000, showed: 13.\( \text{\#d2} \) \( \text{\#e7} \) 14.\( \text{\#b5} \)± In the above-mentioned game we also have the intermediate moves ...a7-a6 and a2-a3, in which case the white knight cannot jump to b5. That game and variation is covered under the line 7.0-0 cxd4 8.cxd4 \( \text{\#f5} \) 9.\( \text{\#c3} \) a6 10.a3 \( \text{\#c8} \) 11.g4 D513 on page 109.

D423) 12...f6?! It is interesting that almost all black players use this thematic move and evaluate Black's position as very promising. We have a different opinion. The reason is that the black queen has certain problems on the opponent's territory. For example: 13.f4 \( \text{\#e7} \) 14.\( \text{\#xf6} \) 14.\( \text{\#g2} \)± is also a good plan. White takes under control the h3-square, but protects his central pawn on e5 and his space advantage:

14...fxe5 (in case of 14...0-0 15.\( \text{\#f3} \)±
15...\( \text{\#xg4} \) 16.\( \text{\#g3} \)±)
16.\( \text{\#h3} \) \( \text{\#f6} \) 17.fxe5 \( \text{\#f7} \) 18.\( \text{\#d3} \) g6
19.\( \text{\#d2} \) Black has not enough counterplay for his lack of space on the queenside and the weak dark squares near his king) 15.fxe5 \( \text{\#f8} \) 16.\( \text{\#d2} \) a6
17.\( \text{\#h3} \) \( \text{\#f7} \) (Black castles by hand)
18.\( \text{\#d3} \) (18.\( \text{\#xf7} \) ? \( \text{\#xf7} \) 19.\( \text{\#a4} \) \( \text{\#b4} \)
20.\( \text{\#f1} \) + \( \text{\#g8} \) 21.\( \text{\#c1} \) \( \text{\#g8} \) 22.\( \text{\#c5} \)
\( \text{\#c8} \) 23.a3 \( \text{\#a5} \) 24.b4±, White has a space advantage and more active pieces)
18...g6 19.\( \text{\#xf7} \) (19.a3±) 19...\( \text{\#xf7} \)
20.\( \text{\#f1} \) + \( \text{\#g8} \) 21.a3 \( \text{\#d8} \) 22.\( \text{\#e2} \) \( \text{\#f7} \)
23.\( \text{\#g1} \)± Edelman-Kindermann, Münster 1993. 14...\( \text{\#xf6} \) 14.\( \text{\#xf6} \)?
15.\( \text{\#f2} \) \( \text{\#h3} \) 16.g5±. 15.\( \text{\#f3} \)!
With 15.\( \text{\#g2} \)! White controls the h3-square and prevents the destruction of his pawn structure with ...h7-h5. It is clearer now that the queen doesn't feel safe on the h4-square. 15...\( \text{\#g8} \)
(15...h5?? 16.\( \text{\#f2} \)±) 16.\( \text{\#f2} \) \( \text{\#h6} \)
17.\( \text{\#g3} \)± White threatens the very unpleasant f4-f5. 15...h5 16.\( \text{\#h5} \) \( \text{\#d6} \)
17.\( \text{\#h1} \) \( \text{\#g8} \) 18.\( \text{\#g1} \) \( \text{\#f7} \) 19.\( \text{\#xg8} \) ±
19.\( \text{\#d3} \) f5. 19...\( \text{\#xg8} \)± Gallagher-Luther, Lenk 1992.

D43) 10.\( \text{\#e3} \)
This move gives more importance to the knight on f5. The exchange of these two pieces reinforces the d4-square and opens the f-file, but Black, with his bishop pair, has easy and good play. Exchanging bishop for knight can be useful only if Black weakens his position with ...h7-h5 or ...g7-g5. 10...\textit{e7 11.d3 \textit{xe3 12.fx e3 0-0 13.c1 13.e2 f6 14.exf6 \textit{xf6 15.g6 14.e1 f5 15.exf6 \textit{xf6 16.g3 \textit{e7 with good chances for Black, Westerinen-Damljanovic, Yerevan 1996; 10.a3 White imitates his opponent! He plays a useful move and waits for Black to finally develop his bishop on e7. However, for Black the rook on the c-file is more important than the pawn being on a3 is for White, especially when you take into account the problematic and weakened b3-square. 10...\textit{e7 transposes into the position analysed under 9...\textit{e7 and 10...a6 transposes into the position analysed under 9...a6; 10.a3 White imitates his opponent! He plays a useful move and waits for Black to finally develop his bishop on e7. However, for Black the rook on the c-file is more important than the pawn being on a3 is for White, especially when you take into account the problematic and weakened b3-square. 10...\textit{e7 transposes into the position analysed under 9...\textit{e7 and 10...a6 transposes into the position analysed under 9...a6;

D45) 10.c1 One more way to wait for ...\textit{e7. Now the very important question is: can the intermediate moves \textit{h1 and ...\textit{c8 change the assessment of the position? 10...\textit{e7 10...a6 transposes into 9...a6;}

D451) 16.e7 17.e8f8+ e8f8 18.f1 a5?! Black wants to give sense to his rook move to c8, but without success, because all the white pieces are very active. If 18...h4 19.d3 h4 20.g2f6. 19.d3! c4 19...h4? 20.g5 xg4 21.e2 h3 22.f3f3. 20.f2 xh3? 20...e8 21.c1f7+ h8 22.xh7? 107
Simply $22.\text{Wh}5!$ wins the game:

$22...\text{g}6$ ($22...\text{h}6$ $23.\text{Wh}6+$ --) $23.\text{hxg6 h6}$ $24.\text{Af7} \text{g7}$ $25.\text{g5+}$. $22...\text{hxh7}$ $23.\text{Wh5+} \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ Zude-Luther, Bad Wildbad 1993;

D452) $16...\text{We7}$ $17.\text{b5}!$ Now it is clear that ...a7-a6 is necessary for Black. $17...\text{b4}$ $18...\text{xf1}+ 18.\text{xf1}$ $\text{h8}$ $19.\text{d6}$. $18.\text{d6} \text{xd2}$ $19.\text{xd2}$ $\text{xf1}+ 19...\text{xd4}?!$ $20.\text{xc8} \text{xc8}$ $21.\text{d3} \text{c6}$ $22.\text{ac1}$ Black has some compensation, but is it sufficient? This is a hard question to answer. $20.\text{xf1}$ $\text{xf8}$ $21.\text{xe3} \text{xf1+}$ $22.\text{xf1}$ $\text{h6}$ $18.\text{d3}\pm$.

D5) $9...\text{a6}?!$

This waiting move is useful in combination with ...c8 and it gives chances to employ a variation with ...cxd4 and ...f5. Black is freeing a square for his queen and keeps e7 as a potential retreat for the f5.

D51) $10.\text{a3}$ $\text{c8}$ Without this move we can hardly imagine any reasonable plan for Black. $11.\text{h1}$ Now this is the right moment for both sides to show the advantages of their waiting strategy:

D511) Still problematic is $11...\text{e7}?!$ $12.\text{g4}$! White has one more advantage, because the g-file is now free. This tempo gives him a dangerous initiative in the critical position that we have already analysed with the king on g1. $12...\text{h4}$ $13.\text{xe4} \text{hxe4}$ $14.f4$ and now:

D5111) Risky is $14...f6$ $15.\text{g5}!$ With the king on h1, this move cuts off Black's bishop, and besides it prepares the white pieces for attack and opens the g- or f-files or the diagonal d1-h5. $15...0-0$ $16.\text{gxf6}$ $16.\text{exf6}?! \text{gxf6}$ $17.\text{d3}$ (17...e3! and Black will have trouble with the bishop on h4) $17...\text{xd4}!$ and now: $18.\text{h5}$ $\text{f5}$ $19.\text{whxh4}$ $\text{b3}$ $20.\text{b1}$ $\text{d4}\ominus$; $18.\text{xh7}+; \text{or}$ $18.\text{e3}$ $\text{f5}$ $19.\text{xf5}$ $\text{exf5}$ $20.\text{d4}$ $\text{fxg5}$ $21.\text{fxg5}$. $16...\text{gxf6}$ $17.f5!$

With the idea $\text{h6}$.!

D5112) Black must lose a tempo with $14...\text{xe7}$ $15.\text{e3} 0-0$ $16.\text{d3}$. White is still not ready for $16.f5$ f6!

$16...\text{gxf6}$ $17.g5$ $\text{d4}$ $18.\text{h5}$ $\text{f5}$ $19.\text{whxh4}$ $\text{b3}$ $20.\text{b1}$ $\text{d4}\ominus$; $18.\text{xh7}+$; or $18.\text{e3}$ $\text{f5}$ $19.\text{xf5}$ $\text{exf5}$ $20.\text{d4}$ $\text{fxg5}$ $21.\text{fxg5}$. $16...\text{gxf6} 17.f5!$

with excellent play; or $16.g5$ $\text{a5}$
As we can see, the most important strategic plan for Black in the Advance Variation (Plan #1 — attacking White’s centre) now works in the variation with the knight on c3 too. As a reminder, this plan is very efficient in the system with d4xc5-dxc4, because it is combined with exchanging the light-squared bishops on b5, which is here not possible due to the more active knight on c3. 12.d4
Weak is 12.g4? dxe5! 13.g5 dxd4 14.gxf6 gxf6 15.g5 g5 16.g6 g5+ 17.g1 d8=)
13...e7
14.d3
14...dxe3 15.fxe3 0-0
(15...b5 16.c5!? dxc5 17.g5 dxe6 18.g5 c6+ 19.g1 d8=)
16.dxc5 dxe8 17.c1 with unpleasant pressure.

The opponents continue with waiting moves. 11.e3 11.g4 without his bishop on e7, Black is well prepared for this standard move. The waiting moves

Chapter 3 — The Advance Variation

Now White can play 15.b4 dxe3 16.fxe3 b6 17.b2 f5∞ with a good position for Black; or 15.xf5 exf5 16.b4 b6=. (16.d8=) 17.b3 h6 18.c3 e6 19.xd5 h8; or 15.a1 dxe3 (15...e5?!?)

D513) 11.g4 d4 12.xh4 wch4 13.e3 13.f4? xxd4+ 13...g5? 14.a4 h5 15.xh5 e5! 16.b6 f3+

D52) 10.h1 c8!
...\( \text{c8} \) and \( \text{...a7-a6} \) fit well in the resulting positions. \( \text{11...\text{\&e7}} \) (Black also has good play after the usual \( \text{11...\text{\&h4}}? \) \( \text{12.\text{\&xh4} \text{\&xh4} 13.\text{\&e3} \text{\&a5!}} \) or \( \text{13.f4 \text{\&b4??N 14.\text{\&e3} \text{\&a5}}} \) \( \text{12.\text{\&e3} \text{\&g6}} \) (also good is the thematic \( \text{12...h5!!} \) \( \text{13.\text{\&d3} \text{\&e7} 14.a3 \text{\&a5} 15.\text{\&e2} \text{\&b6} 16.b4 \text{\&c4} 17.\text{\&c1 a5} 18.\text{\&b1 axb4 19.axb4 0-0} \) with good play for Black, Conquest-Abdul Majeed, Turin 2006. \( \text{11...\text{\&e7} 12.\text{\&d3} \text{\&xe3=}} \) \( \text{13.fx e3 0-0 14.\text{\&c1 f6 15.exf6 \text{\&xf6} 16.\text{\&b1 \&e8 17.\&e2 \&d6} 18.\&f4 \text{\&c7} 19.\text{\&d3 g6 \geq 19...g5?? 20.\&e2. 20.\&d1 \&g7} \) with better chances for Black, Palleja-Dizdar, Montpellier 1997; D53) \( \text{10.\&g5 \&b6 11.\&a4} \) Black has freed the a7-square: \( \text{11...\text{\&a7! with excellent play for Black;}} \) D54) \( \text{10.\&e3 \&e7 11.\&d3 \&xe3} \) \( \text{12.fx e3 0-0 13.e4} \) \( \text{13.h4 f5 14.exf6 \&xf6 15.e4?? \&b6 (15...\text{\&xd4??}) 16.e5 \&xe5 (16...\text{\&xf3 17.\&xf3 \&xd4+ 18.\&h1 \&f8??) 17.\&hxh7+ \&xh7 18.\&xe5 \&xf1+ 19.\&xf1 \&e8+ 20.\&g1 \&e8?? Rahls-Knaak, Germany Bundesliga 1993/94. 13...\&b4 13...dxe4?} \) \( \text{14.exd5 exd5 15.\&b1 \&e6 16.\&e2 \&c6 17.\&b3 \&d7 18.\&f4 g6} \) \( \text{19.\&e3 \&ae8 20.\&c2 \&d8} \) Kharlov-Dokhoian, Moscow 1991.

Also a typical and good continuation, rich with possibilities for Black. From g6, the knight exerts pressure on the central e5 pawn, aided by the f-pawn, and with her sister on c6 places the entire white centre under siege. Generally, White has two ways to play this position: to dislodge the black knight from g6, or to continue developing. \( \text{8.g3 8.\&d3 8...\&e7 9.h4} \) Driving away the active knight with the h-pawn seems logical, although the black king feels more comfortable than in positions where White attacks the black knight with g2-g4. \( \text{9...\text{\&cxd4} \text{Black prevents the variation with dxc5, which can follow after White attacks the black knight at g6. That position just occurred in a very recent game: 9...0-0 10.h5 \&h8 11.dxc5 \&xc5 12.b4 \&e7 13.b5 \&a5}.} \)

E) \( \text{7...\&g6} \)

14.h6 (14.\&d3? f5 15.exf6 \&xf6 16.\&c2) 14...f5 (14...g6 15.\&a3 f5 16.exf6 \&xa3 17.\&xa3 \&xf6 18.c4) 15.hxg7 \&xg7 16.\&g2 \&g6 17.\&h1 \&f7 18.\&h6+ \&h8 19.\&bd2 \&c7 20.\&c1 \&g8 21.\&c4?? Grischuk-Ivanchuk, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011. \( \text{10.\text{\&cxd4 0-0 11.\&h5 \&h8 12.h6} \) Black has equal play even when White leaves his pawn on the h5-square. 12.\&c3 f6 13.exf6 \&xf6 14.\&e1 (14.\&f4 \&f7 15.\&d2 h6 16.\&e3 \&g5 17.\&xg5} \)
hxg5 18.\textit{ad}d1 \textit{e}7 19.\textit{d}3? \textit{g}4 20.\textit{f}e5 \textit{xe}5 21.dxe5 \textit{af}3\textit{f} Merk-Knödler, Markdorf 2004) 14...\textit{f}7 15.\textit{f}4 \textit{g}5! (the knight on f3 is the most important defender of the central d4 pawn, so Black logically wants to exchange it) 16.\textit{xf}5 (16.\textit{xf}5 \textit{xf}5 17.\textit{xf}5 \textit{xf}5 18.\textit{gg}4 \textit{ff}6\textit{f}) 16...\textit{xf}5 17.\textit{bb}5 \textit{ff}6 18.\textit{xc}6 bxc6 19.\textit{gg}2 \textit{ff}7 (19...\textit{ab}8 20.\textit{a}4 \textit{e}8 21.\textit{xf}5 \textit{xf}5 22.\textit{ee}5 \textit{ff}5 23.f4 \textit{hh}6\textit{f}) 20.\textit{dd}3 \textit{hh}5 (20...\textit{ff}6\textit{f} 21.\textit{ee}2) 21.\textit{hh}1 \textit{xf}3+ 22.\textit{xf}3 \textit{xf}3 23.\textit{xf}3 \textit{ff}6= Knoppert-Brenninkmeijer, Eindhoven 1992.

12...\textit{gg}6 13.\textit{cc}3

An interesting idea is to strengthen the defence of the d4 pawn, which enables the regrouping of the white minor pieces on the kingside. 13.\textit{bd}2!? \textit{f}6 14.\textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 15.\textit{bb}3 \textit{ff}7 16.\textit{hh}2 \textit{dd}6 17.\textit{gg}4 \textit{cc}8 18.\textit{ff}3 \textit{ee}4

It is not a mistake to evaluate this position as equal, but the black pieces are pretty effective and mobile, which gives more dynamic potential to his position. Both sides have their own chances in the forthcoming battle.

The wandering knight feels fantastic on the f7-square. Its function is to attack the opponent's pawn on h6, and to control the important squares e5, g5 and also d6, which gives him fine possibilities. We have the impression that Black should thank White for this resulting position.

The plan with 16.\textit{hh}2?! (16.\textit{cc}1!? \textit{dd}6\textit{f}) loses time and weakens White's position. However, it is not easy to find the right way because the pawns at d4 and h6 are vulnerable, and on the other hand, Black has the obvious plan of transferring his knight to f5, where it will exert strong pressure on White's position: 16...\textit{dd}6 17.\textit{gg}4 (prevents \textit{ff}5 but also weakens important dark squares. 17.\textit{gg}4 \textit{ff}5\textit{f}) 17...\textit{gg}5! 18.\textit{dd}2 \textit{xe}3 19.\textit{xe}3 \textit{hh}4 20.\textit{ad}1 \textit{ff}7\textit{f}. It is amazing that this knight has played almost one-third of Black's moves, and yet his position is close to winning, Lederer-Psakhis, Kfar Sava 1993. 15...\textit{ff}7 The results of White's plan are clearer now. The black knight stands in a slightly more passive but very useful position. At f7 the black
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The knight is a real virtuoso, controlling important critical squares. Besides, the h-pawn doesn’t feel safe so far in enemy territory. 16.\( \text{Wd2} \):

E1) 16...g5 17.\( \text{xe3} \) \( \text{exh6} \) 18.\( \text{axg5} \) \( \text{exg5} \) 19.\( \text{axg5} \) 19.\( \text{Wxg5+?} \) \( \text{Wxg5} \) 20.\( \text{axg5} \) \( \text{f5}\text{\textbar} \). 19...\( \text{f5} \) 20.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{Wf6=} \)

Black has easy play with active pieces and pressure on d4, Soumya-Drozdovskij, Balaguer 2010;

E2) If Black wants a more complex struggle, he can choose the plan with defending the g-pawn: 16...\( \text{h8!?} \) and now: 17.\( \text{g2} \) 17.\( \text{ac1} \) g5 18.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{g8} \) 19.\( \text{a4} \) b6 20.\( \text{b5} \) \( \text{e7} \); 17.\( \text{a4} \) g5 18.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{exh6} \) 19.\( \text{exg5} \) \( \text{f5} \). 17...g5 18.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{g8} \) 19.\( \text{h1} \) \( \text{e7} \) and Black threatens to destroy the h-pawn with \( \text{xf5} \): 20.\( \text{h5?!} \) White doubles his rooks in order to keep his material. However the destiny of the white rooks is very sad. 20.g4 \( \text{g6} \) 21.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{wb6} \) 22.\( \text{d1} \) (22.\( \text{h5} \) \( \text{af8} \) 23.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{d6} \) 24.a3 \( \text{f4} \) 25.\( \text{hl1} \) 22.\( \text{af8} \) 23.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{f4} \) 24.\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{d6} \); 20.g4 \( \text{g6} \). 20...\( \text{f5} \) 21.\( \text{ah1} \geq 21.g4 \) \( \text{xe3+\textbar} \) with more promising play for Black. At this moment, Black can achieve a clear advantage with 21...g4! 21...\( \text{e8} \) 22.\( \text{sh2} \) a6 (22...g4!) 23.\( \text{e1} \) and now 23...\( \text{d7d6\textbar} \); 23...g4\textbar; or 23...\( \text{c6} \) 24.\( \text{g4} \) \( \text{d7d6} \)

22.\( \text{h2} \) e5! 23.\( \text{dx5} \) 23.\( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{c6} \)
24.\( \text{xf5} \) \( \text{xd5+} \) 25.\( \text{f3} \) gxf3 + 26.\( \text{xf3} \) \( \text{we6} \) 27.\( \text{h5} \) \( \text{ad8\textbar} \) with clearly better piece coordination. Especially notable is the difference in rook activity. 23...d4 24.\( \text{xf5} \) \( \text{xf5} \) 25.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 26.\( \text{xe5+} \) \( \text{xe5\textbar} \).

\textbullet 7.a3

22.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{c4+\textbar} \) S. Zhigalko-Matlakov, Kirishi 2004.

This thematic move, with the idea of gaining more space on the queenside, has more real value on the sixth move, before White plays \( \text{e2} \). Now Black has a wide choice of solid continuations which lead him into excellent positions:

A) 7...c4!? A very common reaction to White's attempt to gain space on the queenside. Black gains space there instead, taking the b3-square under
control. These positions are also analysed under 6.a3.

A1) 8.0-0 0a5 9.0bd2 0c8

Another good idea is to leave the black knight on the kingside and to support the critical square a4 with the queen: 9...c6?! 10.0e1 wd7 11.0g4 (with 11.a4, White would replace the weak a4-square by a weak pawn; 11...0c8) 11...0a4 12.w2e2 0-0-0

with chances for both sides: 13.f4 (practically the only real danger for Black is the plan with f2-f4-f5. However, Black has enough possibilities to achieve active counterplay, especially because of the fact that the king's knight did not go to the usual b6-square) 13...0f5 (Black doesn't need to hurry with this jump to f5. He can easily create a wall with 13...g6!? and ...h7-h5. The weakening of the dark squares wouldn't have practical importance and a realization of the typical plan with f4-f5 would open files, which would not be pleasant for the white king) 14.0xf5 exf5 15.0df3 h6 16.0c2 0e7 17.0e3 0dg8 18.h4 0c6 19.g3 0d8 20.wf2 0e6 with chances for both sides, Kauschmann-Dokhoian, Porz 1991.

Now White has the following possibilities:

A11) 10.0e1 0b6 11.a4 11.0f1 0a4=?. 11...a6 12.wc2 0e7 13.0d1 wc7 14.wb1 f5 15.wxf6 gxf6 16.0f1 16.b4?! cxb3 17.0xb3 0bc4 18.g3 with slightly better play for White. 16...0-0-0 17.0g3 0d6! (17...h5 18.0h4 0d6 19.0g6 0hg8=?) 18.0h5 e5=? Kontic-Antic, Budva 2009;

A12) Typical ideas were used by Black in the next game: 10.0e1 0b6 11.0g4 0a4 12.w2e2 wd7 13.f4 g6 14.0h3 h5 15.wf2 0-0-0 16.0f1 wb8 17.0e3 0a8 18.g3 0c8 19.0g2 0e7 20.wf3 0h6

Black has everything under control. A typical white plan with h2-h3 and g2-g4 will open the files which will increase Black's chances to attack, Mouhamad-Dgebudze, Dieppe 2010;

A13) Weak is 10.h3?! 0b6 11.0h2 0a4= and Black conquers the c2-square, making the bad bishop into an
ideal piece. 12.\(\text{We}1\) \(\text{Wd}7\) 13.\(f4\) 0-0-0 14.\(f5\) \(\text{Ec}2\) 15.\(\text{fxe}6\) \(\text{fxe}6\) 16.\(\text{Ed}1\) \(\text{Ed}3\) 17.\(\text{Ec}2\) \(\text{Ec}6\) and Black is slightly better, Berzina-M. Socko, Stockholm 2008.

A2) Seemingly logical but very rare is 8.\(\text{Fd}4\) \(\text{Da}5\) Probably the best option is to change the standard plan for Black and to play against the prematurely-exposed white dark-square bishop: 8...\(\text{Dg}6!!\)?

9.\(\text{Dg}3\) (9.\(\text{Df}3\) \(f6!\) 10.\(\text{Exf}6\) \(\text{Wxf}6\) 11.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{Dd}6\) 12.0-0 0-0 with good play for Black) 9...\(\text{De}7\) (opening the f-file is worthy of attention: 9...f5!? 10.\(\text{Exf}6\) \(\text{Wxf}6\) 11.0-0 \(\text{Df}4\) 12.\(\text{We}1\) \(\text{De}7\) 13.\(\text{Dbd}2\) 0-0 with good play) 10.\(\text{Dbd}2\) \(\text{Dd}5\) 11.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{h}5\) with good play for Black. 9.\(\text{Dbd}2\) and now:

A21) 9...\(\text{Dg}6!!\)? 10.\(\text{Dg}3\) \(\text{De}7\) 11.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{h}5\) with a complex battle;

A22) It is too early for transferring the knight via the b6-square and activating the light-square bishop via a4: 9...\(\text{Dc}8!!\) and now:

A221) 10.0-0 \(\text{Db}6\) 11.\(\text{De}1\) 11.a4 \(\text{De}7\) 11...\(\text{De}7\) 12.\(\text{Da}4??\) A thematic move, but also overlooking the reply 12.\(\text{Dh}3\) \(\text{Da}4\) 13.\(\text{De}1\) \(\text{h}6\) (13...\(\text{Dc}7\) 14.\(\text{Dg}5\) \(\text{Dxg}5\) 15.\(\text{Dxg}5\) \(\text{h}6\) 16.\(\text{Df}3\)\=) 14.\(\text{Dh}1\) \(\text{Dc}7\) 15.\(\text{Df}1\) 0-0-0\= 12...\(\text{g}5\!\)

A222) 10.\(\text{h}4!\) \(\text{Dd}6\) 11.\(\text{h}5\) \(\text{Da}4\) 12.\(\text{Dc}1\) \(\text{h}6\) 13.\(\text{Dh}4!\) White realises a quick and efficient plan, using the fact that most of Black's pieces are on the queenside. 13...\(\text{Dd}7\) 13...\(\text{De}7\) 14.\(\text{Dg}3\) 14.\(\text{Dg}3\) \(\text{Db}3\) 14...\(\text{De}7\) 15.\(\text{f}4\); 14...0-0-0 15.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{De}7\) 16.\(\text{Dg}4\) \(\text{Db}8\) 17.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{Dg}5\) 18.\(\text{Dh}3\) \(\text{Dxd}2\)\+ 19.\(\text{Dxd}2\) \(\text{Da}8\) 20.0-0 \(\text{Dc}7\) 21.\(\text{Df}3\)\= and White has more concrete play on the kingside; 15.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{Dc}4\) 16.\(\text{Dxb}3\) \(\text{Dxb}3\) 17.\(\text{Dc}2\) 0-0-0 18.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{Dg}8\) 19.\(\text{Dxe}6\) \(\text{Dxe}6\) 20.\(\text{Dg}4\)

0-1 I. Ivanov-Gausel, Gausdal 1993.
And White was clearly better in Prié-Kosten, Paris 1994.

A23) 9...\texttt{wc7}!? 10.h4 0-0-0!?N

The knight at e7 is watching the situation on the kingside, so Black doesn't worry about the fact that his thematic square c8 is temporarily not at his disposal. 11.h5 h6= with complex, mutual play. Not dangerous now is 12.\texttt{d4?! g5} 13.hxg6 fxg6 with excellent play for Black;

A24) 9...h6!? 10.\texttt{wc2 g5} 11.\texttt{g3 f5} 12.h3 h5 13.a4 \texttt{c8} 14.\texttt{d1 e6} 15.\texttt{g1 g4} 16.h4 \texttt{c6} 17.\texttt{e2 b6} 18.\texttt{a3 c6} 19.\texttt{wc1 f8} 20.\texttt{a2 e7}

And White will lose his pawn, as happened in the game Kontic-Kosic, Tivat 2011.

A3) 8.\texttt{bd2 a5}!

An obligatory move without which Black's strategy has no sense. 8...\texttt{c7 9.b3!±}; 8...\texttt{b6?} 9.\texttt{xc4!±}. Now 9.0-0 transposes to 8.0-0.

B) 7.\texttt{f5}

The simplest way to achieve excellent play. Black uses the time he gained by White's playing a2-a3 (which is useful only if Black has played ...\texttt{b6}), develops his pieces on their best squares and gets an opportunity to realise some important strategic ideas (...f7-f6, activation of the light-squared bishop via the e8-square, etc.) 8.\texttt{b4 cxd4 9.cxd4 e7} 9...\texttt{c8!? 10.e2} (10.0-0 a5!N is analysed under 7.0-0 \texttt{c8} 8.a3) 10...\texttt{e7} 11.0-0 0-0=; 9...\texttt{b6} is analysed under 6.a3. Now:

B1) 10.e2 0-0 Since White has already played \texttt{e2}, the idea of attacking the white b4 pawn is more efficient: 10...b5!? 11.0-0 (11.\texttt{c3} a5=)
The Modern French

11...a5?!N (11...b6 - this plan does not need the queen's help: 12.g4 c5 13.h3 f6 14...c3 0-0 15...b5 (≥ 15.exf6 xf6 16.a4=, or 15...gx6?! 16...b5) 15...f5 16.g5 f7 17...xc6 (≥ 17.e2 xe5 18.xg5 xg5 19...a4) 17...c6?? Sedina-Drasko, Saint Vincent 1999) 12...b5 13.c6+ a5 14...a4 axb4
15.axb4 a4 16...xb4+ 17...xb4 a5 18.0-0 e5

Important: We have already commented on Black's possibilities after 6.a3. Nothing has really changed, Black has a pleasant choice between the blockading 7...c4!? and pressurising the d4 pawn with 7...xf5.

7. c5xd4

The most frequent guest in the tournament arena, and the one that promises the best chances for White in the resulting clash. White intends to support the centre with c2, from were the knight can also be transferred via e3 to join the kingside attack, or simply to challenge the annoying black knight on f5.

8. c5xd4 e7-f5

A logical exchange, especially because the white knight cannot reach the c3-square. Besides, Black has more good reasons for this pawn exchange: a) he opens the c-file and the diagonal for his dark-squared bishop, and b) he reduces White's options, for instance with dxc5? or the capture on d4 with the knight, as in the variation that we shall analyse under 7.0-0.

7...g6!? is the main alternative.

8. c5xd4 e7-f5

Black improves his knight's position and transfers it to a square, from where
it attacks the central pawn d4. In this way, it fits in with the knight at c6, in carrying out the most important Plan #1.

The main alternative is 8...g6!? where Black attacks another, better defended central pawn on e5 (with another typical breakthrough ...f7-f6);

9. a3-c2

We will look at the most often-played continuations:
- 9...b4 (see p.117)
- 9...c8 (see p.118)
- 9...e7 (see p.118)
- 9...a5+ (see p.121)
- the main move 9...b6 (see p.125)

9...b4?!

A continuation that could have been played ten years ago. Many authors on the French Advance Variation have analysed this move as Black's main choice. It is a bit weird, because at first glance this continuation looks antipositional. A justification could be found in the variation where White also exchanges queens with 10.Qxb4 Qxb4+ 11.Qd2 Qb6 12.Qxb4 Qxb4+ 13.Qd2, where in the resulting endgame Black has excellent chances to equalise. However, if White simply castles, the exchange of the knights will simply leave Black without counterplay, and White will be able to continue with further space expansion. This can be seen very clearly in the games of grandmaster Sergey Movsesian, who in Megabase 2011 has 5 victories out of 5 games. 10.0-0!


10...xc2 11.Qxc2 Qc8 12.Qd3! Qb6 13.h4 White continues in the spirit of the Advance Variation, taking more space and restricting the opponent's possibilities. 13...a6 14.a4! With Black's knight at c6 White could not easily prevent the exchange of light-squared bishops, because Black would have a possibility of counterplay against the weakened spots b4 or b3. The knight at c6 exerts pressure against the important central squares e5 and d4, but now the ...f7-f6 strike has lost its importance. Overall, one trivial knight exchange has significantly diminished Black's counterplay. 14...b4 At least Black gets some benefit from the b4-square. Black finally develops his bishop, leaving the e7-square for his knight. However, the bishop at b4 looks more like some picture than an active piece. 15.h5 h6 16.f4 After 16.g4?! Ce7 17.Ce3 Qc6 18.Qfc1 Le7 19.Qd1 a5 Black has only
the b4-square as compensation for a lost cause on the kingside. An enormous white space advantage on the kingside is a typical situation for the Advance French. 20.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{a}6\)!! 21.\(\text{w}xa6\) \(\text{b}xa6\) 22.\(\text{c}c1\) 0-0 23.\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{b}4\) 24.\(\text{c}7\) \(\text{f}d8\) 25.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{f}8\) 26.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{e}8\) 27.\(\text{g}b4\) \(\text{x}b4\) 28.\(\text{a}6\)± Shirov-Drozdovskij, Ohrid 2009. 16...\(\text{a}5\) 17.\(\text{f}c1\) \(\text{c}6\) 18.\(\text{g}4\)

White plays on both sides. We can say that White’s last four moves are simple and strong. Very instructive play, where we can see the main idea of the Advance French for White. 18...\(\text{e}7\) 19.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{x}c1\) + 20.\(\text{c}xc1\) \(\text{c}6\) 21.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{e}7\) 22.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{b}4\) 23.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{c}6\) 24.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{d}8\) 25.\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{c}7\) 26.\(\text{g}1\) \(\text{b}8\) 27.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{c}8\) 28.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{b}4\) 29.\(\text{c}1\) \(\text{x}c1\) 30.\(\text{xc1}\) \(\text{c}7\) 31.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{b}6\) 32.\(\text{g}3\) A typical position for the Advance Variation. White has a big space advantage and despite Black’s piece activity, White has much the better position. Now he just has to decide which breakthrough he will make: f4-f5 or g4-g5. 32...\(\text{c}8\) 33.\(\text{g}5\)± Movsesian-Berelowitsch, Mainz rapid 2008.

- 9...\(\text{c}8\) 10.0-0 \(\text{b}6\) transposes into 9...\(\text{b}6\).

- 9...\(\text{e}7\)

The most natural move. Black finishes the development of the kingside and provides a retreat for his knight on h4, in the event of the attack with the g-pawn. This is probably the simplest way to treat this position and to achieve good play.

\textbf{10.0-0} and now:

A) \textbf{10...\(\text{h}5\)!?}

Black often has doubts about this move, because he has a choice between providing an ideal position for his knight or letting White play the thematic g2-g4. Since here we have two basically different types of positions, it is useful to know Black’s idea.

Generally this move ...\(\text{h}7\)-\(\text{h}5\) is rarely good in the Advance Variation, because when White exchanges his c2 knight, or even his light-squared bishop, for Black’s knight on f5, then the h5 pawn is left in a pointless position. But even more important for the evaluation of the ...\(\text{h}7\)-\(\text{h}5\) continuation is the g5-square. If White can take it under his control, then Black has made his life complicated. If not, the move ...\(\text{h}7\)-\(\text{h}5\) has its strategic justification. Black will play ...\(\text{g}7\)-\(\text{g}5\) and if appropriate, castle queenside and have very good play. The main thing is that the bayonet attack of black pawns is not only dangerous
against the white castled king, but also against the central d4 pawn. It should be noted that the greatest expert on the Advance Variation, grandmaster Evgeny Sveshnikov, thinks that ...h7-h5?! is a dubious move and he suggests play on both flanks with 11.b4! (White takes action immediately against the most probable plan with queenside castling). However, we believe that in this concrete position, the above-mentioned black plan deserves special attention. Here are a few examples:

A1) 11.b4 \( \mathcal{B}c8?! \) 11...g5! 12.b5 \( \mathcal{D}a5 \) 13.\( \mathcal{D}e3 \) g4 14.\( \mathcal{D}e1 \) \( \mathcal{D}xe3 \) 15.\( \mathcal{D}xe3 \) \( \mathcal{D}c4= \). 12.\( \mathcal{B}b1 \) a6 13.a4 \( \mathcal{W}b6 \) 14.b5 axb5 15.\( \mathcal{D}xb5 \) \( \mathcal{W}c7 \) 16.\( \mathcal{D}e3 \) \( \mathcal{D}xe3 \) 17.\( \mathcal{D}xe3 \)±

The move ...h7-h5 has lost its sense, Sveshnikov-Fominikh, Elista 1996;

A2) 11.\( \mathcal{D}e3 \) is the most logical move. White wants to make Black's last move senseless. 11...g5 In case of 11...\( \mathcal{D}xe3 \)?! 12.\( \mathcal{D}xe3 \) g5 13.\( \mathcal{D}d2 \) White has placed his pieces very conveniently and the bayonet attack by the black pawns will probably be counterproductive. 12.\( \mathcal{D}xf5 \) exf5 13.\( \mathcal{D}e1! \) (13.h4 g4 14.\( \mathcal{D}g5 \) \( \mathcal{W}b6= \) Dolmatov-Hertneck, Tilburg 1992) White is preparing to weaken or to block the potentially dangerous black pawns. The knight will go to c2 to defend the potentially weak d4-square and to support the thematic b2-b4 advance. 13...\( \mathcal{W}b6 \) 14.\( \mathcal{D}c2 \) f4 14...h4?! 15.h3 0-0-0 16.b4 \( \mathcal{D}dg8 \) 17.b5 \( \mathcal{D}a5 \) 18.\( \mathcal{D}e3 \) e6 19.\( \mathcal{D}d2 \) \( \mathcal{W}b8 \) 20.\( \mathcal{W}a4= \). 15.\( \mathcal{W}d3 \) Black threatened \( \mathcal{D}f5 \). 15...\( \mathcal{D}d8?! \) 16.h4 Or 15...0-0-0?!

with the possible ...\( \mathcal{D}g4 \) or ...f7-f6: 16.h4 (16.b4 \( \mathcal{D}xb4 \) - better is 16...\( \mathcal{D}g4= \)). The opening of the file is very dangerous for Black. Here is one instructive variation: 17.\( \mathcal{D}xb4 \) \( \mathcal{W}xb4 \) 18.\( \mathcal{B}b1 \) \( \mathcal{W}c4 \) 19.\( \mathcal{W}d2 \) \( \mathcal{W}a4 \) 20.h4 \( \mathcal{D}b8 \) 21.\( \mathcal{B}b3 \) \( \mathcal{E}c8 \) 22.hxg5 \( \mathcal{D}xg5 \) 23.\( \mathcal{F}f3 \) \( \mathcal{E}e6 \) 24.\( \mathcal{A}a3 \) \( \mathcal{A}a8 \) 25.\( \mathcal{F}fb1 \) b6 26.\( \mathcal{D}d6= \) and all white pieces are active, with excellent coordination. Black's position is already critical) 16...\( \mathcal{B}b8 \) 17.b4 \( \mathcal{G}g4 \) 18.\( \mathcal{D}d1 \) f6! and both players have their chances.

B) 10...0-0
This is one of the critical positions for the evaluation and understanding of the Advance Variation. Black has finished his development first, because White has spent more time gaining space with the e-pawn (e2-e4-e5). The conflict of these two important strategical elements will determine the further situation on the board.

B1) 11...d3 c8 Black has finished his development, and his pieces are harmoniously placed. If White doesn’t react concretely, Black’s next move is ...f7-f6!. If immediately 11...f6!? 12.xf5 (12.g4?! xf5) 12...exf5 13.e1 e8=++; 12.g4 12...h1?! f6! 13.xf5 (White captures the black knight before the f-file is opened. 13.g4 fx5 14.dxe5 h6! 15.xh6 gxh6++; or 15...g1?! g7 16.e2 g5++;) 13...exf5 14.e1 e8++. Black’s dark-squared bishop has become a mighty piece, especially because it does not have an opponent. Black’s position is more promising, Midoux-Guliyev, Cappelle-la-Grande 2004.

B11) 12...h6?!

One of the typical positions in the Advance Variation. White increases his space advantage and that makes the white e5 pawn the main attacking outpost. Black has no weaknesses and his pieces are harmoniously developed. Both sides have their chances after, for instance, 15.e3 f6. Premature is 15.f5?! as the white pieces are not able to support such aggressive play: 15...f6=++;.

B2) 11.g4?! Without preparation this move is risky for White. 11...h4 12.xh4 xh4 There will follow ...f7-f6 with strong counterplay. 13.f4
Chapter 3 — The Advance Variation

f6 14...e3 In case of 14.exf6? xf6 15.e3 wb6 16.d2 ac8= White will have problems with his pawns on d4 and b2 but also on f4, because Black can easily transfer his bishop to the ideal square d6. By the absence of the main pawn in the Advance Variation, the pawn on e5, White's position has lost its identity. 14...fxe5 14...c8 15.d3 (15.c1) 15...fxe5 16.fxe5 (16.dxe5 g5 17.wd2). 15.fxe5 15.dxe5 xe7 16.wd2 c8 17.d3 g5?! =. 15...wb6 =;

B3) The knight exchange doesn't improve the white position: 11.e3 xe3 12.xe3 f6 13.exf6 xf6 (the place for the black bishop is the d6-square) 14.d2 wb6 15.d3 af8= followed by ...d6. 12...c8 13.c1 wb6 =.

• 9... wa5+

An unfairly neglected idea of removing White's dark-squared bishop from the main c1-h6 diagonal, as opposed to the usual 9...wb6. In the event of g2-g4, Black then has the possibility to come to h6, with the idea of ...f7-f6 and ...xf7. In such positions, Black's knight is strongly placed on f7, taking control of the main strategical squares e5, g5, d6, h6. 10.d2 wb6 11.c3

An unusual placement of the bishop. Usual here is to keep the pawn or the knight on c3. You must be very careful not to forget that it is the bishop!

A) Endings in the French Defence are often satisfactory to Black. 11...b4 is a good example of how a few exchanges can ease Black's game. Black can exchange the problematic 'French bishop' too and have a fine free game. But the activity of the other two black pieces increases significantly. White plans to exploit Black's lack of development. Let's see what happens: 11...b4?! 12.xb4 Better is 12.e3!?. Now Black is far behind in development: 12...xe3 13.fxe3 b5 14.0-0 xe2 15.xe2 xe7 16.xb4 xb4 17.f4= and White gets pressure down the c-file. 12...xb4 13.xb4 wb4+ 14.d2 xd2+ 15.xd2

Here we have the historical ending from the game Sieiro Gonzalez-M.
Gurevich, Havana 1986, which was used by many French Defence players who intended to gain a strategically quite simple position, and in this fluid situation, in Zlotnik's opinion, Black equalises in the ending. Here it is necessary to play \( ... \text{c}6 \) with the idea of \( ... \text{f}7-\text{f}6, \text{c}5-\text{c}6, \text{b}6-\text{b}8 \), to create pressure against the central squares d4 and e5. The same position was seen in the game Anand-Gurevich, except that White had the extra move a2-a3.

15...\( \text{c}e7 \) Zlotnik and Gurevich put this sign here. (15...\text{f}6 16.\text{d}3 \text{c}e7 17.\text{a}c1 \text{d}8 18.a3 \text{h}6 19.\text{h}e1 \text{c}8 20.\text{xc}8+ \frac{1}{2} \text{-.} \frac{1}{2} \text{Stevic-B. Kovacevic, Bihac 2010}) 16.\text{h}c1 \text{f}6 and in our opinion, also with the help of Anand's suggestion in his notes, White can play 17.b4, intending after Black's 17...\text{c}6 to play simply 18.\text{b}5 \text{a}5 19.\text{c}3 \text{c}e7 20.\text{b}4 and have a decisive advantage.

B) 11...\text{c}e7 12.0-0 and now:

B1) 12...0-0

Black has played naturally and completed his development. A typical position of the French Advance Variation is reached. Thanks to his brave soldier on e5 White has a space advantage and better manoeuvring abilities of his pieces. White has several plans: 1. to remove Black's active knight with g4 2. to exchange it with \( \text{c}e3 \) or \( \text{d}3 \) 3.\text{w}d3 with the idea of \( \text{b}4, \text{b}5 \) to give a greater significance to his bishop on c3. And the queen takes control over the c1-h6 diagonal and it is the best plan for White. Black's main strategic plan is provided by f6 as in many positions of the French Defence. This move is very important. The brave soldier on e5 is punished and the f-file and e8-h5 diagonal are opened for Black's rooks and often criticized French bishop. The simplest way to eliminate White's threat \( \text{b}2-\text{b}4 \) is by \( \text{a}7-\text{a}5! \):

B11) 13.\text{w}d2! \text{a}5 13...\text{f}6?! 14.g4! (this move is excellent at last) 14...\text{h}6 15.\text{xc}6 \text{f}6 16.g5 \text{xf}3 17.\text{xf}3 \text{f}6 and Black has insufficient compensation because the g5 pawn is defended. 14.a3 14.g4 \text{h}6 15.\text{e}3 \text{f}6 16.\text{xc}6 \text{xf}6! 17.g5 \text{xf}3 18.\text{xf}3 \text{g}x5 \text{f}5 19.\text{xd}5?! \text{d}8 20.\text{e}3 \text{f}4\uparrow. 14...\text{a}4 15.\text{b}1 \text{a}5 16.\text{b}4?! \text{b}5

And Black has at least an equal position. 17.\text{d}3 \text{b}3 18.\text{c}2 \text{xb}4 19.\text{xb}4 \text{c}x3 20.\text{d}3 \text{c}8 21.\text{d}1 \text{b}5 22.\text{h}3? \text{a}3 23.\text{b}xa3 \text{c}1\uparrow 24.\text{d}2 \text{xc}3 25.\text{c}2 \text{xc}2 26.\text{xc}2 \text{e}2\uparrow 0-1 McEwan-Wrba, ICCF email 1997;

B12) 13.g4?! \text{h}6 is typical for the French Defence. Black achieves rich and active play and has the initiative with the subsequent \( ... \text{f}7-\text{f}6! \). By placing the knight on h6 in this and other varia-
tions, the idea of 9...\( \text{a5} \) becomes obvious. In the event of 13.g4 Black can play \( ...\text{h4} \) as in the game Markovic-Kosanovic, Vrnjacka Banja 1998, which ended in a draw. 14.\( \text{e3} \) 14.h3 f6. 14...f6! 15.exf6 \( \text{xf6} \) 16.g5 A difficult choice. 16...\( \text{xf3} \) This is a typical sacrifice in the French Defence. 17.\( \text{xf3} \) \( \text{gx}5 \)

If you look quickly at White’s pieces and pawns, you will realise that Black has significant compensation for his minimal sacrifice of material. This typical sacrifice can be important for Black’s choice of plans against similar aggressive plans of White;

B13) 13.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{xe3} \) 14.fxe3 f6! 15.exf6 \( \text{xf6} \) Here Black strives for a position with strongly placed pieces. The other rook can come to f8, then \( ...\text{d6} \) and \( ...\text{e8} \). 16.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{af8} \) A fantastic outcome of his opening play!

B14) 13.\( \text{d3} \) f6 13...a5 14.a3 (Predojevic-Tratar, Sibenik 2007) 14...\( \text{h8} \) (14...f6! TN Maksimovic/Antic). 14.\( \text{xf5} \) 14.g4?! fxe5\( ^{\mp} \); 14.exf6 \( \text{xf6} \)\( ^{=} \). 14...\( \text{exf5} \) 15.\( \text{d1} \) f4 with rich play for Black, considering his pair of bishops.

B2) 12...a5!? A good plan is to gain a space advantage on the queenside before castling. Black wants to force White to respond quickly on the queenside. Black has the option of the strategic threat \( ...\text{b4} \) and \( ...\text{b5} \), with the exchange of his passive bishop, and White will try to retain control over the square b4 with 12.a3 or 12.a4 to define the pawn structure, which is usually in favour of Black.

B21) 13.a3 and now:

B211) 13...a4 Black’s second important strategic plan. In contrast to the plan with \( ...\text{f7-f6} \), where Black plays successfully on the kingside, here he strives for play on the queenside and gains a space advantage with his move \( ...\text{a5-a4} \). His next move, \( ...\text{a5} \), will pose many strategic threats. 14.\( \text{d2} \) The aggressive 14.g4?! is more logical now because Black has begun his play on the queenside: 14...\( \text{h6} \) (14...\( \text{h4} \) 15.\( \text{hxh4} \) \( \text{hxh4} \) 16.f4 \( \text{e7} \) 17.\( \text{g2} \) 0-0 with equal chances for both players) 15.\( \text{e3} \) f6 16.exf6 gxf6 17.\( \text{h1} \) \( \text{f7} \)\( ^{\mp} \). 14...\( \text{a5} \) 15.\( \text{xa5} \) \( \text{xa5} \) 16.\( \text{xa5} \) \( \text{xa5} \) 17.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{b5} \) and Black has solved all his problems;

B212) 13...f6?! Now the same analysis applies as for 13.a4:

B2121) 14.\( \text{d3} \) 14.\( \text{d2} \) fxe5\( ^{=} \); 14.exf6 \( \text{xf6} \) (there’s no use playing 14...gxf6 because White’s position is not weakened by g2-g4. The ideal would be to play \( ...\text{xf6} \) and to place
the bishop on d6, but we cannot expect
to achieve everything) 15.\texttt{d}3 0-0=.
14\ldots 0-0 15.\texttt{xf}5 15.g4?! fxe5\texttt{f}6; 15.exf6 \texttt{xf}6!.
15...\texttt{xf}5 16.\texttt{e}1
16.\texttt{d}2 f4! 16...f4!;
B21 B212) 14.g4 \texttt{h}6 15.exf6 gxf6
16.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{f}7 and Black has rich play.
16...\texttt{x}g4?! 17.h3 \texttt{h}5 18.hxg4 hxg4
19.\texttt{fe}1 (19.\texttt{h}2 \texttt{c}7 20.\texttt{x}g4 0-0-0
21.f4 \texttt{dg}8\texttt{f}6) 19...0-0-0\texttt{f}6.
B213) 13...0-0 14.\texttt{d}2! – we have
already analysed this position;
B214) 13...f6?!?, although there’s no
defined pawn structure on the queen-
side.

B22) 13.a4 and now:
B221) 13...0-0 14.\texttt{d}2! This move
interferes with Black’s main strategic
plan beginning with \ldots f7-f6. White’s
other moves confirm the strength of
Black’s plan with \ldots f7-f6: 14.\texttt{h}1?! f6
15.g4. Black has now worked out sev-
gerous solutions to White’s slow ap-
proach including Black’s light-squared
bishop manoeuvre with \ldots \texttt{e}8. Black
has no possession of the square h4, but
he has h6 and from that position the
ideal square f7. 15...\texttt{h}6 16.exf6 \texttt{xf}6
17.g5 and now 17...\texttt{xf}3! is the typi-
cal sacrifice and a common tactical
motif in this system, Martic-
Maksimovic, Belgrade 2008. Because
of the significance of this tactical vari-
ation, which is part of Black’s most im-
portant strategic plan, several thematic
games are provided by the authors.
14...f6?! 14...\texttt{b}4?! Ivanovic-
Stojanovic, Podgorica 1996. 15.g4!
\texttt{h}6 16.exf6 \texttt{xf}6 17.g5 \texttt{xf}3
18.\texttt{xf}3\texttt{f}6 and White is ready to
defend the pawn on g5.

B222) 13...f6?! Black continues with
his main plan. Now we again have:

B2221) 14.\texttt{d}3 0-0 15.\texttt{xf}5 15.g4?! fxe5\texttt{f}6; 15.exf6 \texttt{xf}6=.
15...\texttt{xf}5
16.\texttt{e}1 16.\texttt{d}2 f4! 17.\texttt{a}3 \texttt{f}5
18.\texttt{xf}4 \texttt{d}3\texttt{f}6. 16...f4! and Black has
extraordinary play, due to the pair of
bishops;

B2222) 14.g4?! \texttt{h}6 15.exf6 15.h3
\texttt{f}7 16.exf6 gxf6 with the idea of
...0-0-0 and \ldots h7-h5. 15...\texttt{xf}6
16.\texttt{d}2?! \texttt{x}g4 16...\texttt{f}7 is play-
table too, and after that Black’s position
is good, but why not take a pawn and
break into White’s king’s position?
17.h3 \texttt{h}5 18.hxg4 hgx4\texttt{f}6. 19.\texttt{h}2?
19.\texttt{fe}1 0-0-0\texttt{f}6. 19...\texttt{c}7 20.\texttt{x}g4
0-0-0 21.f4? 21.\texttt{g}2 \texttt{f}5\texttt{f}6. 21...\texttt{ dg}8
22.\texttt{f}2 \texttt{f}5 23.\texttt{e}5 \texttt{h}2+ 24.\texttt{e}1
\texttt{gg}2--;

B2223) 14.exf6?! Black has not cas-
tled and must take with his bishop
now, whereas normally it would be
ideal for Black to recapture with the
rook and place his bishop on d6.
Again, there is no use playing ...gxf6
here because White’s position is not
weakened by g2-g4. 14...\texttt{xf}6
15.\texttt{d}3 0-0=.
B23) 13.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{xe}3 14.\texttt{xe}3 0-0
15.\texttt{d}3 f6! 15...\texttt{b}4?! Solodovni-
chenko-Praznik, Feffernitz 2005.
16.exf6 \texttt{xf}6\texttt{f}6. 16...\texttt{xf}6 Bjarnason-
Kuemin, Baden 2002.

9. ... \texttt{d}8-b6!?
The main idea of this typical move in the French, besides the pressure on the d4 and b2 pawns, is also exchanging off the light-squared bishops at b5 (Plan #2), usually after ...\(\text{a5}\) or ...\(\text{b4}\). As we can see, the continuation 9...\(\text{b6}\) combines the two most important ideas of Black (attack on the white centre and exchange of light-squared bishops), so it fits into both black plans. By the way, the e7-square is in this variation reserved for the black knight, in the case of the thematic g2-g4.

Here White has three possibilities:
- 10.g4 (see p.125)
- 10.h4 (see p.126)
- the main move 10.0-0 (see p.130)

\(\bullet\) 10.g4?! \(\text{f7}\) 11.0-0 h5 12.h3 White keeps the f5-square under his control, and plans to utilise the opening of the h-file with \(\text{g2}\) and \(\text{h1}\). However, his plans are hampered by the weak pawn on g4. 12...\(\text{hxg4}\) 13.\(\text{hxg4}\)

A) 13.f5!N

This move directly refutes White’s plan of opening the h-file. As previously noted, Black often uses the advanced g-pawn for his strategic goals. This usually involves striking with ...h7-h5 and ...f7-f5, with the aim of opening the files or winning the ideal f5-square for the black knight. In this position, the ...f7-f5 advance is particularly powerful because of the open h-file. The ball is now in White’s court, who has to decide on the continuation that limits the damage as much as possible:

A1) 14.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{g6}\) Black is getting ready to take on g4, followed by ...\(\text{f5}\). 15.\(\text{b4}\) 15.\(\text{g2}\) \(\text{fxg4}\) 16.\(\text{xg4}\) \(\text{f5}\) 17.\(\text{xf5}\) \(\text{gxf5}\) 18.\(\text{h1}\) \(\text{xh1}\) 19.\(\text{wh1}\) White is the first to take the h-file under his control, but to what purpose? 19...0-0-0\(\text{f}\). The relative safety of the kings is here the main factor for the evaluation of the position. 15...\(\text{fxg4}\) 16.\(\text{b5}\) \(\text{a5}\)\(\text{f}\);

A2) 14.\(\text{xf6}\)? It is certainly against White’s interests to open the g-file with the pawn on g4, exchanging the important central e-pawn for Black’s sidelined g-pawn in the process. 14...\(\text{gx6}\)\(\text{f}\);

A3) 14.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{g6}\)\(\text{f}\). The g5 pawn is now the new target of Black’s attack, and the king has a safe haven on the f7-square.
B) Simply developing by 13...\( \text{g6} \)?, followed by ...\( \text{e7} \) and ...0-0-0, also leads to an excellent position for Black;  
C) 13...f6 14.\( \text{d3} \) 0-0-0 15.b4\footnote{Shirov-Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 2001.}  

\( \bullet \) 10.h4!?  

The story is a little different here compared to the dubious 10.g4?!. The push of the h-pawn in the Advance Variation usually favours the white side, because he will finally win the battle for the kingside with g2-g4 and h4-h5. The exchange of the light-squared bishops usually does not solve Black’s problems, as evidenced in the endgames by grandmaster Movsesian.  

Black has a great choice of potentially good continuations:  
A) 10...\( \text{b4} \) (see p.126)  
B) 10...\( \text{a5} \) (see p.127)  
C) 10...f6 (see p.129)  
D) 10...\( \text{c8} \) (see p.130)  

We favour playing ...\( \text{b4} \) and ...\( \text{a5} \) because they are the most consistent with Plan #2 (the exchange of the light-squared bishops):  
A) 10...\( \text{b4} \)!? This is probably the most logical continuation – since White hasn’t castled, Black gains an advantage in development.  

with an edge for White in Movsesian-Ulibin, Pula 1999. The Armenian grandmaster has won almost all games with endgames of this type (please also look at the next game Movsesian-Borovikov, Panormo 2002 under 11...\( \text{b4} \)). Grandmaster Lev Psakhis thinks that in this position Black doesn’t have significant problems. However we would not dare to recommend it. 12.\( \text{f1} \) h5! Black plays a preventive move, sacrificing the g5-square, in order to maintain his strong knight. Black can exchange the light-squared bishops but it would lead him into an endgame without prospects:  

12...\( \text{b5} \)?! 13.g4 \( \text{xe2} \) + 14.\( \text{xe2} \) \( \text{a6} \) + 15.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{xd3} \) + 16.\( \text{xd3} \) \( \text{e7} \)
White is now free to organise the breakthrough on the kingside. We must stress that White typically aims for this kind of endgame in the 10...h4 variation, for the obvious reason: the spatial advantage on the kingside, Movsesian-Borovikov, Panormo 2002.

13.a4! White plays a prophylactic move to prevent the exchange of light-squared bishops, which would have led to an inferior position. 13.g3 b5. – 13...0-0!? Black can first play 13...c8 or 13...a5, and only then castle, but this does not change anything. The great number of possible continuations and transpositions only prove that there is something wrong with the opponent’s plans. 13...a5 14.g5 0-0 15.d3 g6 (15...f8! 16.g3 d8 with good play for Black) 16.xf5 exf5 17.g1 f8 18.d2 c7

Another plus of White’s opening strategy is the control over the crucial g5-square, at the cost of the less important b4-square. Because of the weakened f5-square, White has the possibility to spoil Black’s pawn structure by exchanging on f5, but this leads nowhere because of the activity of Black’s pieces and the bishop pair in particular, and the fact that exchanging the dark-squared bishops is not an option;

B) 10...a5!? 11.g4

11.h5 h6 12.0-0 b5 13.e3 xe3
14.xe3 e7 15.b3 c6 16.e1 0-0.
There is no real need for Black to castle queenside. White's strategy has brought no fruits, whereas Black has practically achieved all of his aims: completed the development of his forces, swapped the light-squared bishops, and ended up with a healthy, weakness-free position. 17...d3 (17.f4 dxe2 18.xe2 f5!; or also 18...a5!? 19.c1 dxe2+; and if White plays 19.f5?! then 19...exf5 20.xf5 d4 21.e2 c5++
17...ac8 18.e2 xd3 19.d3 b5

White dare not play the most dangerous plan f2-f4-f5 because of Black's counterplay, Khairullin-M. Gurevich, Hoogeveen 2006.
11...e7 12.h5 and now:

B1) 12...h6 13.b3 13.gf1 b5 14.g2 ec6 15.b3 b4 16. ce1 xe2 17.xe2 ac6 18.e3 (18.a3 a6 19.d3 c7 20.b4?! a5++) 18...a5 19.a3 a6 20.d3 c7 21.c2

The threat ...g7-g6 isn't pleasant for White at all. 14.ec6 15.xf8 xf8 16.0-0 xe2 17.xe2 0-0-0

Because of the fact that the opponents have castled on opposite sides of the board, the space grab with the h- and g-pawns is likely to be counter-productive: Black can exchange or undermine
them and open a path towards the white king. On the other hand, the advance of the white pawns on the queenside is prevented by the unusual set-up of the black knights, Moskovic-Pert, England 2009/10;

B2) 12...\textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}5}} \texttt{13.\texttt{x}b5} \texttt{+ Or 13.h6?! gxh6 14.b3 \texttt{g8} and Black is slightly better. 13...\texttt{wx}b5 14.\texttt{we}2}

A critical moment: to exchange queens or not?

B21) 14...\texttt{we}2+ 15.\texttt{xe}2 \texttt{h6} Black shouldn't allow White to play h5-h6 because Black would lose control over the g5- and f6-squares, which would be the sign of positional capitulation on the kingside. 16.b3 \texttt{ac}6 16...\texttt{c}c8 17.\texttt{d}d3 \texttt{ec}6 18.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{e}7 19.\texttt{h}h4 \texttt{d}7 20.f4±. 17.\texttt{e}3 With 17.b4?! White can gain space also on the queenside: 17...b5 18.a4 \texttt{b}8 19.axb5 \texttt{xb}5 20.\texttt{d}d2±.

Due to his large space advantage, White has slightly better chances. 17.a5 18.\texttt{h}4 \texttt{d}7 19.f4 \texttt{g}6 20.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{a}4= Predojevic-B. Kovacevic, Zagreb 2007;

B22) 14...\texttt{b}6!N 15.b3 15.h6?! gxh6 16.b3 \texttt{g}8 17.\texttt{x}h6 \texttt{x}h6 18.\texttt{x}h6 \texttt{x}g4 19.\texttt{x}h7 \texttt{g}6 20.0-0-0 \texttt{c}c8→ 15...\texttt{h}6 16.0-0 \texttt{ec}6 17.\texttt{d}2 17.\texttt{f}4 0-0-0 18.\texttt{c}c1 \texttt{b}8 19.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{e}7 20.\texttt{g}2 \texttt{d}g8.

White is in greater danger because ...g7-g6! will open his king's position. 17...0-0-0 18.\texttt{ac}1 \texttt{b}8 19.\texttt{g}2 \texttt{e}7 20.\texttt{c}c3 \texttt{d}g8!?±

C) 10...f6!?

If you prefer sharp positions full of tactical possibilities, you can utilise this proven weapon to attack White's centre. 11.\texttt{g}4 11.exf6?!, giving up the centre combined with h2-h4, is inconsistent and cannot be good for White; 11...\texttt{x}f6= 11...\texttt{fx}d4?! It is safer to
play 11...\( \text{Qe7} \) 12.\( \text{h5} \) \( \text{Qd8} \)\. A plan with solid foundations. On \( f7 \) the knight covers a number of important squares. 13.a4 White prevents the exchange of light-squared bishops – but after playing ...\( f7-f6 \), this is not what Black wants either (13.h6?!). 13...\( \text{Qe6} \) 14.0-0 \( \text{Qf7} \) 15.\( \text{Qf4} \) \( \text{Qe7} \) 16.\( \text{Wd3} \) \( \text{b5} \). Black's pieces are beautifully coordinated and he enjoys an excellent position. 17.\( \text{Qfb1} \) \textit{fxe5} 18.\( \text{Qxe5} \)?! (18.\textit{dxe5} 0-0+) 18...\( \text{Qfxe5} \) 19.\textit{dxe5} 0-0+ Kiuttu-Ulibin, Stockholm 2009/10. 12.\( \text{Qxd4} \) 12.\( \text{Qxd4} \) \textit{fxe5} 12...\( \text{Qxe5} \). Taking two central pawns for a piece is not such a bad trade, especially when you consider the weakened space around the white king. 13.g5 There is an improvement here, 13.\( \text{Qg1} \), which comes from a blitz game! White wants to defend the potentially weak \( f2\)- and \( g4\)-squares with \( \text{Qg2} \): 13...\( \text{Qxf3} \) 14.\( \text{Qxf3} \) \( \text{Qc5} \) 15.\( \text{Qg2} \) 0-0 16.\( \text{Qf1} \) \( \text{Qac8} \). 

To reveal the subtleties of this position, you need some careful consideration. This is one of the positions that enrich chess, showing the full beauty of this ancient game, Movsesian-Ni Hua, Internet blitz 2006. 13...\( \text{Qc5} \) 14.0-0 \( \text{Qxf3} \) 15.\( \text{Qxf3} \) \( \text{b4} \) 16.\( \text{Qe1} \) \( \text{Qxh4} \) 17.\( \text{Qg2} \) \( \text{b4} \) 18.\( \text{Qd3} \) 0-0-0 19.a3 \( \text{Wb6} \) 20.\( \text{b4} \) \( \text{Qd4} \) 21.\( \text{Qe3} \) \( \text{Qb8} \)\( \infty \). After 21 moves the position is still unclear, Movsesian-M. Gurevich, Sarajevo 2000; D) 10...\( \text{Qc8} \)

This is a useful developing move, and we have proposed it as the main line in the 10.0-0 variation. However, Black gives up the chance to castle queenside, which often comes in handy in variations with 10.h2-h4. 11.g4 \( \text{Qfe7} \) 12.\( \text{h5} \) \( f6 \) 12...\( \text{h6} \)!. 13.\( \text{Qf1} \) \( \text{a5} \) 14.\( \text{h6} \) \( \text{Qg6} \) 15.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{b5} \)! As we mentioned previously, in the positions with ...\( f7-f6 \) Black needs to carefully consider the pros and cons of this exchange, most of all because of the weakened pawn on \textit{e6}. 16.\( \text{Qe3} \) 16.\textit{hxg7}?! \( \text{Qxg7} \) 17.\textit{exf6} \( \text{Qxf6} \) 18.\( \text{Qh6} \). 16...\( \text{Qc6} \) with a complex position, Deegens-Kiriakov, Dieren 1997.

10. 0-0 \( \text{a8-c8} \)!

Black plays a useful developing move before disclosing his intentions. The
rook on the c-file is particularly strong because of the unusual position of the $\text{c2}$. White has the choice of continuing in Advance Variation style by grabbing space and chasing the strong black knight away with the help of the typical $\text{g2-g4}$ advance, which leads to positions with chances for both players, or to emulate Black by playing a waiting move himself before committing to a direct clash. This makes sense because by playing $...\text{a5}$ or $...\text{b4}$ Black no longer presses against the central $d4$ pawn, so the thematic $\text{g2-g4}$ can be played with greater effect.

10...$\text{a5}$!?

A consistent continuation. Black proceeds with his plan that started with 9...$\text{b6}$.

White has the choice of the following moves, all of which are solid:

A) 11.$\text{g4}$ (see p.131)

B) 11.$\text{b3}$ (see p.135)

C) 11.$\text{e3}$ (see p.136)

D) 11.$\text{b4}$ (see p.137)

E) 11.$\text{fe1}$ (see p.137)

Continuations that allow Black to bring his plans to fruition are not consistent with White’s aims, because they allow Black to get rid of his main problem by exchanging the light-squared bishops. Black has a satisfactory position after 10...$\text{a5}$?, as evidenced by our analysis and the actual practice:

A) 11.$\text{g4}$ In the spirit of the Advance Variation! White chases the black knight away from the attack on $d4$, making $\text{e1-d3}$ possible and undermining his opponent’s plans. Thus, after the white knight moves from $f3$, the advance of the $f$-pawn is often an essential part of White’s strategy. 11...$\text{e7}$ 12.$\text{fe1}$ $\text{b5}$ 13.$\text{d3}$ $\text{h5}$!

There is no alternative to this standard manoeuvre. Black is ready to sacrifice a pawn to regain the $f5$-square for his knight, without which it is hard to organise any counterplay:

A1) 14.$\text{gxh5}$ $\text{f5}$

As we can see, Black’s play is very simple and logical. He plays according to elementary opening principles, which
The Modern French refer to the development of pieces and control of the centre. We can also notice that all this fits in with the two basic black plans (Plan #1 – attack on the centre and Plan #2 – exchange of the light squared-bishops). Black misses only three moves (...Ec6!, ...Ec7 and ...Ec8!) to achieve complete activity and functionality of all his pieces, and at the same time with pressure on the white centre. That is the usual way of continuing Black’s play.

However, every position has its own characteristics, so it is important to find the right plan in the upcoming middlegame, (the planning process lasts until the final move in the game) and a game without ideas is condemned to failure. So this typical position without the knight at f3 and the g-pawn gives an opportunity for the black queen to threaten the white pawn on d4 from the h4-square, and it puts the white king in an unpleasant position. For this reason Black usually avoids the closing of the diagonal (h4-d8) with the move ...Ec7, until his queen moves to that square:

A11) 15.Ce3 and now:
A111) 15...Cc6

A1111) 16.Aa4?! Cc4 17.Cb4 Dd8
17...Cb3 18.a5 Dd8 19.Cd1 Cc8

A1112) 16.Ch1! White improves his king and rook, preventing at the same time the dangerous transfer of Black’s queen via d8 to h4, where it would exert very strong pressure on the weakened kingside and the central pawn d4.

16...Dd8 16...0-0-0!? is an interesting alternative. Black has no fear of the white pawns on the queenside. Nevertheless, we still think that the black king is much safer in the centre of the board.

17.a4 Ac4 18.b4 Db8 19.a5 Dc7

17.Cg1 Cxe3?! 17...Dh4?! 18.Cg5 Dh3 19.Ce3 Cxe3 20.fx e3 Df5
21.Cg2± and Black’s queen is in some kind of cage; 17...Cc8?!. 18.fxe3 Axh3?! This is a second inaccuracy. White will benefit from the opposite-coloured bishops with a pawn up.

19.Dxd3± f5?! And this is the third dubious move. Now the light squares are even weaker. 20.exf6 gxf6 21.e4 Cxe4
22.Cxe4± Solodovnichenko-Margolin, Germany Bundesliga B 2005/06.

A112) 15...Cc4!?
Also a logical move. Black doesn’t return to c6, but plans to exchange his knight for the e3 bishop.

16.a4 אמ"ג xe3 17.fxe3 א"ב 18.א"ב? ≥ 18.א"ב2 א"ב 19.א"ב3 (19.א"ב1 א"ב7=) 19...א"ב3 20.א"ב3 א"ב8 21.א"ב4 א"ב5+ 22.א"ב1 א"ב4 23.א"ב1 (23.א"ב1 א"ב5+=) 23...א"ב2 24.א"ב2 א"ב4 25.א"ב4 א"ב4=. 18...א"ב8! Black doesn’t want to encourage the white queen to the excellent e2-square, so he plays a ‘waiting move’.

By avoiding the exchange of bishops with 18...א"ב3 Black would take unnecessary risks: 19.א"ב5+ א"ב8 20.א"ב2 א"ב2 21.א"ב5! א"ב7 22.א"ב18 סווי-נדו וולאנסקורי, נברגשניא צ’לניצ’ 1988; 18...א"ב2 19.א"ב2 א"ב8 20.א"ב1.


A12) 15.א"ב4?! By advancing the queenside pawns, White helps his opponent to put his pieces in better positions. 15...א"ב6 16.a4 א"ב4 17.א"ב5! 17.א"ב3 א"ב3 18.א"ב8 א"ב8 19.א"ב8= 17...א"ב8! The black queen usually dreams of the h4-square in this type of position. 18.א"ב3 א"ב4
the moves $\text{h1}$ for White and ...$\text{c8}$ for Black were played on the $10$th move and here on the $15$th move;

A14) 15.$\text{f4}$?!

An unprincipled move. If White wanted to exchange the light-squared bishops, then he didn’t need to make this three-move manoeuvre, transferenceing his knight from $f3$ to $f4$. 15...$\text{xe2}$ 16.$\text{xe2}$ $\text{c6}$ 16...$\text{c8}$!?! 17.$\text{e3}$ 0-0-0?! Black can also castle queenside, because the bayonet attack of the white pawns isn’t so effective, due to the fact that the light-squared bishops have been exchanged. 18.$\text{b4}$ A typical move, without which we can’t imagine an attack in this type of position. 18...$\text{b8}$! 19.$\text{a4}$ 19.$\text{d3}$?! 19...$\text{c8}$ 19...$\text{xb4}$?! (opening the file is not usually to be recommended with opposite castling. However, in this position Black can afford it, because White also has his own weaknesses) 20.$\text{xb4}$ (20.$\text{ab1}$ a5?) 20...$\text{xb4}$ 21.$\text{fb1}$ $\text{e7}$! 20.$\text{a5}$ $\text{d8}$ The best positions for the black rook and queen. Black has withstood the bayonet attack by the white pawns and he prepares a counterattack from the $h4$-square. 21.$\text{h1}$ $\text{h4}$! Sandipan-Van den Besselaar, Bad Wiessee 2005.

As we can see, Black can also castle queenside (with light-squared bishops on the board, it would be a quite different story). White’s problems are very similar in this position: a weak pawn on $d4$, the arrival of Black’s queen on $h4$, with many threats (the most dangerous is ...$\text{g7}$-$\text{g5}$), weak light squares after the bishop exchange.

A2) 14.$\text{b4}$ $\text{ac6}$ 15.$\text{a4}$ $\text{c4}$ 16.$\text{a5}$ $\text{c7}$ 17.$\text{gxh5}$ $\text{f5}$ 18.$\text{e3}$ and now:

A21) 18...$\text{d8}$! We have already seen that Shabalov had an identical position against Shirov, only with the white pawn at $a4$. 19.$\text{f4}$ With 19.$\text{d2}$?! White prevents the dangerous transfer of the black queen to the $h4$-square, however Black has the idea to continue the battle for this square with 19...$\text{g6}$? 20.$\text{g5}$ (20.$\text{hxg6}$ $\text{h4}$—+) 20...$\text{h6}$! (paradoxically, Black exchanges his bishop but also achieves his goal. Because of the weakness of the $d4$ pawn, the exchange of dark-squared bishops isn’t bad at all for him. Incidentally, after 20...$\text{e7}$ 21.$\text{e3}$ $\text{gxh5}$, Black also has a good position) 21.$\text{xb6}$ $\text{xb6}$ 22.$\text{f4}$ $\text{gxh5}$ 23.$\text{h1}$ $\text{g6}$ 24.$\text{g1}$ $\text{h4}$! 19...$\text{xe2}$ 20.$\text{xe2}$ $\text{a6}$ 21.$\text{fb1}$ $\text{a7}$ 22.$\text{a3}$ Now Black can gain the initiative with 22...$\text{g5}$+!N 22...$\text{c6}$ 23.$\text{c2}$ $\text{a7}$ 24.$\text{a3}$ $\text{c6}$ (Black could have taken the initiative with 24...$\text{g5}$+!N) 25.$\text{c2}$ $\text{a7}$, Stevic-Dizdar, Porec 1998.
23. \textit{\&h1} 23. \textit{\&f1} \textit{\&e7!\textsuperscript{f}. Thus Black harmonises his pieces and now the threat to d4 is very dangerous (23...\textit{\&h4} 24.\textit{\&h3} g5 25.\textit{\&xg6} \textit{\&h6} 26.\textit{\&g4}; 23...\textit{\&xd4} 24.\textit{\&d1}) 24.\textit{\&xd5} (24.\textit{\&c2}?! \textit{\&b5\textsuperscript{f}) 24...\textit{\&xe3}+ 25.\textit{\&xe3} \textit{\&h5\textsuperscript{f}} (25...\textit{\&d8}?!). 23...\textit{\&h4} Black already threatens to win the game with ...g7-g5!.

The analyses show that White is facing difficult problems. For example: 24.\textit{\&g1} \textit{\&xb4\textsuperscript{f}} (24...g5? 25.\textit{\&g4+}) 24.b5? g5!+-; 24.\textit{\&f3} \textit{\&c8}!+; or 24.h3 with the idea \textit{\&g4}: 24...g5 25.\textit{\&xg6} \textit{\&h6\textsuperscript{f}}.

A22) 18.\textit{\&c8} Before turning to his plan of transferring his queen to h4, Black develops his rook and creates strong pressure on the c-file. 19.\textit{\&c1} \textit{\&d8} 20.\textit{\&f4} 20.\textit{\&d2} 20...\textit{\&xe2} 20...\textit{\&h4}! 21.\textit{\&xe2} \textit{\&h4} 22.a6 b6 22...\textit{\&xa6}. 23.\textit{\&e1} \textit{\&fxd4}?! 23...g5+ 24.\textit{\&eg2} \textit{\&d8\textsuperscript{f}. 24.\textit{\&d1}\textsuperscript{f} Stevic-Bukal, Pula 1996;

A23) 18...\textit{\&b3} 19.\textit{\&b1} \textit{\&xc2} 20.\textit{\&xc2} \textit{\&d8} 21.\textit{\&c5}?! 21.\textit{\&a4}\textsuperscript{f}. 21...\textit{\&xc5} 22.\textit{\&xc5} \textit{\&c8} 23.\textit{\&b5} 0-0 24.\textit{\&ad1} \textit{\&e7} Van der Werf-L.B. Hansen, Wijk aan Zee 1993; 24...\textit{\&h4}!+-;

A24) 18...\textit{\&a6}? 19.\textit{\&b1} \textit{\&c8} Maybe now 19...\textit{\&d8}?! is more effective, similar to the analysis we gave in the game Stevic-Dizdar, Porec 1998. 20.\textit{\&d2} \textit{\&e7} 21.\textit{\&f1} \textit{\&d7\textsuperscript{f} Li Shilong-Wang Hao, Suzhou 2006.

B) 11.b3 This move allows Black to swap the light-squared bishops, with an excellent position. Numerous games confirm the power of this plan in the Advance Variation. For example: 11...\textit{\&b5}:

B1) 12.\textit{\&xb5}+ \textit{\&xb5} 13.\textit{\&e3} \textit{\&xe3} 14.\textit{\&xe3} \textit{\&e7} 15.\textit{\&g5} 15.\textit{\&g5} \textit{\&xg5} (15...\textit{\&a3}=) 16.\textit{\&xg5} h6=. 15...\textit{\&xg5} 16.\textit{\&xg5} \textit{\&c6} 17.\textit{\&c1} \textit{\&b4} 18.\textit{\&e3} 0-0=

The position is equal, but you should not neglect the fact that (psychologically) ‘Frenchmen’ like this type of endgame with the knight against White’s dark-squared bishop, Sakaev-Wang Hao, Moscow 2006;

B2) 12.g4 \textit{\&xe2} 13.\textit{\&xe2} \textit{\&e7} 14.\textit{\&a3} \textit{\&g6} 15.\textit{\&xf8} \textit{\&xf8} 16.\textit{\&e1} h5 17.\textit{\&xh5} \textit{\&e7} 18.\textit{\&g2} \textit{\&ac6} 19.\textit{\&ad1} 0-0-0 20.\textit{\&ge3} \textit{\&h8} 21.f4 \textit{\&h6} 22.f5 \textit{\&dh8} 23.\textit{\&xe6} \textit{\&xe6} 24.\textit{\&g4} \textit{\&d8} 25.\textit{\&d2} \textit{\&xh5} \textit{\&h2-\textsuperscript{f}} Hübner-Prusikin, Switzerland 2008;

B3) 12.\textit{\&b2} \textit{\&xe2} 13.\textit{\&xe2} \textit{\&c6}!? 13...\textit{\&e7} is the most logical move, but 14.g4! \textit{\&h6}! (the move 14...\textit{\&h6}?! is always an interesting alternative, especially when the white bishop does not stand on the diagonal c1-h6) 15.\textit{\&xh4} \textit{\&xh4} 16.\textit{\&a3}! can create some problems for Black. 14.\textit{\&c1} \textit{\&e7} 15.\textit{\&g4} \textit{\&h4} 15...\textit{\&h6}?! 16.\textit{\&xh4} \textit{\&xh4}
The Modern French

17.\(a3\) 17.f4 h6 18.a3 e7 19.axe7 \(\text{Qxe7}\) 20.d3 h5= 17...e7 18.axe7 \(\text{Qxe7}\) 19.f4 d8 20.d3 h5=.


C1) 13...b5 14.e4!? A risky move - but as you can see, not without its threats, and just one mistake by Black leads to tactical fireworks with multiple sacrifices. 14.xb5+ \(\text{Qxb5}\) = 14...xe2 15.e2 c6 16.h1 d8? A natural-looking move, but after this the game is probably lost for Black. The way White conducted the attack is instructive, and we analyse it in depth.

16...dxe4!?N 17.e4 0-0 18.e3 d8\(=\)

with chances for both sides. Due to the central weaknesses, White is likely to experience some degree of difficulty. On the plus side, thanks to his active pieces and to controlling the greater number of central squares, White has the potential to launch an attack on the black king. The doubling of White's rooks on the f-file, followed by the h2-h4 spatial grab, can be dangerous for Black. In fact, White has no option but to go for an all-out attack or risk finding his centre under siege.

17.g5! Who would suppose that Black doesn't have a useful move here? Let's see:

C11) 17...xg5 18.xg5 d7 19.exd5 \(\text{exd5}\) 20.xf7!

20.d7 20...xf7 21.h5+ g6 22.f3+ e8 23.f6+-. 21.xd7 \(\text{xd7}\) 22.d5! exd5 23.e6+- S. Zhigalko-Obolenskikh, Moscow 2010;

C12) 17...0-0 18.h5 xg5 19.xg5 d7 20.f6!

20...d7 20...xf7 21.f3+-- 21.f3 \(\text{xb2}\) 22.f1 \(\text{e2}\) 22...xd4 23.g3 g6 24.h3 h6 25.xg7+-. 23.exd5 exd5 24.xg7+--;

C13) 17...xd4 18.h5 g6 19.h6= with a very difficult position for Black.

C2) 13...0-0 14.d2 c4 14...c6!? followed by ...f7-f6! leads to the same position. 15.xc4 dxc4 16.c3
An unusual double-edged position has been reached, which is easy to misjudge. Black has the advantage of the bishop pair and the pawn majority on the queenside, whereas White has doubled pawns and the bishop on c3 that resembles a pawn. Seemingly all of the strategic elements of the position favour Black, and the chess software confirms his advantage.

However, the truth is just the opposite. The doubled pawns are valuable, as they strengthen White's grip on the centre. Thanks to the fact that the f2 pawn ended up on e3, White enjoys an active rook on the f-file, soon to be joined by his queen, to exert even more pressure on the kingside. The pawn-like \( \text{c}_3 \) is a valiant defender, with great long-term prospects, following the advance of the central pawns. At the same time, Black's pawn majority is not very mobile because White can undermine it with a2-a4, and the black bishop on the h1-a8 diagonal lacks support. 16...\( \text{c}6 \) 17.\( \text{c}d2 \) \( \text{w}c7 \) 18.\( \text{a}4! \) \( \text{w}d7 \) 19.\( \text{w}g3 \) \( \text{ac}8 \infty \) — not 19...\( \text{h}8?! \) 20.\( \text{a}5\infty \) Rozentalis-Peng Zhaoqin, Triessen 2007; 20.\( \text{xc}4! \) \( \text{xa}4 \) 21.\( \text{d}6\pm \); or 19...\( \text{xa}4 \) 20.\( \text{d}5! \).

D) 11.\( \text{b}4 \) A move that needlessly gives Black a strong outpost on c4. 11...\( \text{c}4 \) 12.\( \text{d}3?! \)

The critical position. This is the hidden idea behind the 11.\( \text{b}4 \) advance. At the cost of giving Black an outpost on c4 White prevents the exchange of light-squared bishops, keeping his options. 12.\( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 13.\( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{h}5\mp \); 12.\( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{x}b4\mp \). 12...\( \text{c}8! \)

It is not easy for White to find an effective plan. In the absence of black weaknesses (e.g. ...\( \text{h}7-\text{h}6 \)), exchanging on f5 has no benefits, and Black is fully prepared to meet g2-g4. Black can easily castle kingside with ...\( \text{h}7-\text{h}6 \) and ...\( \text{e}7 \), or organise play on the queenside, taking into account the strong c4 outpost. Still, the real battle is yet to begin, especially when you take into account that only two pawns have been exchanged.

The logical developing move 12...\( \text{e}7?! \) leads Black into problems. For example: 13.\( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{h}6 \) 14.\( \text{h}3\pm \) when the black knight is poorly placed on h6 without the ...\( \text{f}7-\text{f}6 \) follow-up; or 13...\( \text{h}4?! \) 14.\( \text{x}h4 \) \( \text{x}h4 \) 15.\( \text{g}5! \) (one of the important, typical motifs in the Advance French. The position of the white bishop at d3 should serve as a warning) 15...\( \text{x}g5! \) (15...\( \text{h}6 \) 16.\( \text{h}5\mp \)) 16.\( \text{x}g5 \) \( \text{b}2 \) 17.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{xd}3 \) 18.\( \text{x}d3 \) \( \text{x}b5\pm \).

E) 11.\( \text{f}e1 \) Without g2-g4, White cannot prevent the exchange of light-
squared bishops. 11...\(\text{b}5\) 12.\(\text{d}3\)!
12.\(\text{x}b5+\ \text{xb}5=\ 12...\text{c}6\!\).}

There is no need to turn over the initiative to the opponent by taking the pawn on d4. 13.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{c}7\) Black has a clear advantage. By placing his knight on d3, White keeps the light-squared bishops on the board, but weakens the d4 pawn.

Here White has a number of alternatives:
- 11.g4 (see p.138)
- 11.\(\text{d}3\) (see p.141)
- 11.b3 (see p.144)
- 11.\(\text{b}1\) (see p.144)
- 11.h4 (see p.144)
- 11.\(\text{h}3\) (see p.145)
- the main move 11.\(\text{h}1\) (see p.145)

\(\bullet\) 11.g4

We have to look closer at this characteristic position. In the Advance Variation, White gives his opponent the possibility to put his knight on f5, whereas in the Steinitz Variation of the French that knight has to go to the more passive square d7, which suits White, because of the lack of pressure on the vulnerable central pawn d4. A combination of \(\text{f}5\), together with its colleague \(\text{c}6\) and \(\text{b}6\), could be very unpleasant for the opponent’s nerves, especially if it lasts long on the board. Therefore White’s wish to play quickly the active g2-g4 is quite understandable, and this usually fits into the general white strategy (the main plans and the play on the kingside). White will chase away the strong black knight and increase his space advantage.

But every coin has its other side. With the move g2-g4, White will spoil the harmony of his kingside pawns and decrease the safety of his king (in the Steinitz Variation, the white king is usually on the opposite side from his colleague). In addition, the exposed g4 pawn will often be attacked by Black with the strikes ...h7-h5 or ...f7-f5. It is clear that such play sharpens the game greatly and both sides have their own chances. 11...\(\text{fe}7\) and now:

A) 12.\(\text{h}4\) White continues with his key strategic plan, which is hard to imagine without advancing the f-pawn. Besides, from h4 the white knight prevents its counterpart from returning to f5 after the preliminary ...h7-h5 thrust. Nevertheless, the reserve g6-square is also good for the black knight. 12...\(\text{g}6\) 13.\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{f}6\)!

Black continues with Plan #1 (undermining and attacking White’s centre) since Plan #2 (exchange of light-squared bishops) is now too slow. For example: 13...\(\text{a}5\)?! 14.f4 \(\text{b}5\)? 15.\(\text{x}b5+\ \text{xb}5\ 16.f5!\).
14. exf6 gxf6 15. f4 15. \(\text{h1 g7!}\).

As previously mentioned, Black can use the ...f7-f5 advance to strike against the exposed g-pawn, achieving his strategic goals. In this case the goal is to use the stupendous fianchettoed bishop to press along the a1-h8 diagonal against the blocked d4 pawn.

Also, there is 15...\(\text{d6}\)!? 16. \(\text{h6 g8=}\) (16...\(\text{f8} - \text{S. Atalik}\) 16.f4 f5 17.gxf5 exf5 18. \(\text{d3 c7}\) 19. b3 0-0 with an excellent position for Black, Sax-Sedlak, Sibenik 2010. 15...\(\text{d6}\) 15...\(\text{g7}\)!? 16.f5 exf5 17.gxf5 \(\text{ge7}\) 18. \(\text{h5+}\). 16. \(\text{h1}\) After ...\(\text{d6}\), playing 16.f5?! exf5 17.gxf5 \(\text{ge7}\) is not good for White – all of Black’s pieces are fully functional. 16...\(\text{c6}\) By controlling the f5-square, Black removes White’s last chance of remaining active.

17. \(\text{d3}\) Slightly better is 17. \(\text{d3 f5}\) 18. \(\text{c3 f5}\) 19. \(\text{xg4}\) 0-0 20. \(\text{d2}\), even though Black still has an advantage, Solodovnichenko-Gleizerov, Voronezh 2006. 17...\(\text{f}5\) ! After this move, it is clear that Black is taking over the initiative, thanks to the better coordination of his forces. 18.gxf5 \(\text{xf5}\) 19. \(\text{xf5}\) ! White eliminates the strong knight, but giving away his bishop in an open position can only amplify his problems. 19...exf5 20. \(\text{c1 b5}\) !, Stevic-Ulibin, Pula 1999;

B) 12. \(\text{fe1}\) This move allows the black knight to return to the best square f5 and it often transposes the game into positions that are analysed under 10...\(\text{a5}\). 12...\(\text{h5}\) 13.gxf5 \(\text{f5}\) 14. \(\text{e3}\) The only move. White can put back his knight on the f3-square, in order to defend the central pawn, but such play has no sense.

B1) 14...\(\text{a5}\)! 15. b3 15. \(\text{d3 c4}\) 16.b3 \(\text{cxe3}\) 17. \(\text{xe3}\)

17...\(\text{e7!}\).

It is also worth considering the thematic 17...\(\text{d8}\)!, with the idea of transferring the queen to the kingside, but that idea is more effective when the d4 pawn’s defence has not been reinforced by the exchange on e3. After the developing move ...\(\text{e7}\), Black has the better position with strategical (for example ...\(\text{g5}\) or ...\(\text{c3}\), with play on the dark squares and doubling on the c-file) and tactical threats (for example ...\(\text{xc2}\)).

If Black takes on c2 immediately, the game is not clear: 17...\(\text{xc2}\) 18. \(\text{xc2}\) \(\text{xe3}\) 19. \(\text{c3}\) \(\text{xf1}\) 20. \(\text{xf1}\) ! 15...\(\text{b5}\) 16. \(\text{d3 c6}\) We have reached the type of position that we have already analysed under 10...\(\text{a5}\). The difference here is that we have the intermediate moves b2-b3 and ...\(\text{c8}\) included, which suits Black. 17. \(\text{a4}\) \(\text{a6}\)
The Modern French

18. b4 \( \text{c4} \) 19. a5 \( \text{d8} \) This is also a familiar position from the game Stevic-Dizdar, Porec 1999. The only difference is that Black has a rook on c8 instead of a8 (White has played b2-b3 and then b3-b4), which is obviously in his favour. The game is analysed under 10...\( \text{a5} \). 20. \( \text{w2} \) a6 20...g6!N 21. \( \text{g5} \) h6! (we have already written in the above-mentioned game, analysed under 10...\( \text{a5} \), about the idea of exchanging the strong bishop) 22. \( \text{xd6} \) \( \text{h6} \) 23. \( \text{f6} \) 24. \( \text{xd3} \) \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{xh6} \) with much the better position.

21. \( \text{fd1} \) g6 22. \( \text{f4} \) 22. \( \text{g5} \) h6? (22...\( \text{e7} \) 23. \( \text{xe3} \) gxh6?) 23. \( \text{xd8} \) (now the white queen is defended) 23...\( \text{xd2} \) 24. \( \text{f6} \) 22...\( \text{xe2} \) 23. \( \text{xe2} \) \( \text{h4} \) 23...\( \text{g5} \) +! 24. \( \text{h1} \) \( \text{xe3} \) 25. \( \text{fxe3} \) \( \text{f5} \) \( \text{xf5} \); Black uses his extra move ...\( \text{c8} \). 24. \( \text{b5} \) axb5 25. \( \text{e1} \) \( \text{e7} \) 25...\( \text{fxd4} \) 26. \( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 27. \( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{xf4} \) 28. \( \text{xb5} \) \( \text{d8} \) 29. \( \text{b6} \) \( \text{e7} \) 30. \( \text{c5} \) +! =. 26. a6± Murariu-Foisor, Predeal 2006;

B2) If Black wants to make a draw he can capture the white b2 pawn: 14...\( \text{xb2} \) !? 15. \( \text{b1} \) \( \text{xa2} \) 16. \( \text{xb7} \) !? 16. \( \text{a1} \) = 16...\( \text{e7} \) 17. \( \text{b5} \) \( \text{b8} \) 18. \( \text{xb8} \) \( \text{xb8} \) 19. \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{b3} \) \( \text{b5} \) ½–½ Peters-Christiansen, Hastings 1978/79; B3) 14...\( \text{b4} \) !? Let us remember our previous conclusion, that it is not very useful to exchange the very mobile black queen's knight for the white c2 knight.

15. \( \text{xb4} \) \( \text{xb4} \) 16. \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{e7} \) and Black has made White's play a little easier.

C) 12. \( \text{b1} \) !?

White overprotects the sensitive b2-square, also threatening with the active b2-b4 advance to gain more space on the queenside. Playing on both wings is a motif often present in White's plans in the Advance Variation, but it rarely succeeds if his development is not complete.

C1) Usually Black's main goal is to swap the light-squared bishops: 12...\( \text{b4} \) – we have already mentioned that it is not usually the best solution to exchange these two knights, however White has played \( \text{b1} \), so that this idea isn't bad at all now. 13. \( \text{xb4} \) \( \text{xb4} \) 14. \( \text{g5} \) (White can prevent the light-squared bishops exchange, but he remains with a permanently weak b4-square. Therefore Black will have good play on both sides. For example: 14. \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{b6} \) 15. a4 \( \text{c6} \) 16. \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{e7} \) 17. \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{a5} \) !) 14...\( \text{h6} \) 15. \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{b5} \) 16. \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{e4} \) 17. \( \text{b1} \) \( \text{xc1} \) 18. \( \text{xb5} \) \( \text{e4} \) 19. \( \text{xc1} \) \( \text{c6} \) = Cori Tello-Gleizerov, La Laguna 2010.

C2) But the meek \( \text{b1} \) gives him the opportunity to obtain an advantage with a typical strike: 12...\( \text{h5} \) !N

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C21) 13.gxh5 c6 14.b4 wxf5 It appears that White’s play on the kingside helped his opponent, because he exchanged his g-pawn for Black’s h-pawn without achieving any of his goals;

C22) 13.h3 hxg4 14.hxg4 f5 15.g5 c6=;

C23) 13.g5 c5 14.b4 a5! Since he is satisfied with the situation on the kingside, Black begins active play on the queenside. 15.b5 15.a3 axb4 16.axb4 e7 17.d3 0-0=.

Only White can have problems here. 15...c4=.

● 11.d3!? and now:

A) 11...c4!

Practice has shown that in the variation with 11.b3, by exchanging the knights Black can enter into simple positions with equal chances. 12.cxb4

12.axf5 exf5 13.c3? f4 14.a3 fxe3 15.axb4 e2=+. 12...axb4 and now:

A1) With 13.b5 White finishes his development and protects his pawn on d4, but allows the exchange of light-squared bishops: 13...c5 14.xb5+ wxb5 15.wb3 a6 16.wc1 a4 w5 17.g4?! (psychologically, it is hard to cope with the unpleasant c5 but the aggressive g2-g4 permanently weakens the kingside in the position without light-squared bishops) 17...e7 18.e1 xe1 19.dxe1 c7 20.d1 c6 21.c5 (White has made a plan with play on the c-file, but it brings him to a dark tunnel, from where there is no return) 21...a6 0-0 (this thematic move is very effective here, because of the weak light squares) 23.exf6 xf6 24.wc2 h3 (a direct result of the move g2-g4) 25.wg2 h8 26.b4 (White's wish to give purpose to his pieces on the c-file is quite logical) 26...e7 Motylev-Shariyazdanov, Ekaterinburg 1996. Black's advantage would have been decisive after 26...f7=+, threatening 27...e3!, for example: 27.d2 (27.b5 xe3 28.fxe3 f3+ 29.g1 xe3+) 30.g2 xd4 31.c3 xc2=+) 27...g6 28.g5 e4 (it is not accidental that Black plays on the weakened light squares) 29.g1 h3 30.c5 c3 g4+ 31.h1 h3
And Black is winning.
16...0-0 17.a3 \( \text{\textacuten}} \text{a5} 18.\text{\textasciitilde}xb5 a\text{xb5=}
With ...f7-f6 or ...\text{\textacuten}c4 and ...\text{\textacuten}b6, Black will have active and equal play, S. Zhigalko-Van Wely, Sestao 2010;
A2) 13.\text{\textacuten}xf5 It seems very tempting to capture the knight and spoil Black's structure. However, White has nothing in the new situation, because Black remains with the bishop pair. The exchange at f5 has sense only if White can also exchange dark-squared bishops.
13...exf5 14.\text{\textasciitilde}d2 \text{\textacuten}e7 15.\text{\textasciitilde}g5

15...\text{\textasciitilde}f8!
Black has no need to give up the bishop pair: 15...\text{\textasciitilde}xg5 16.\text{\textasciitilde}xg5 0-0 17.\text{\textasciitilde}d2 \text{\textacuten}c4 18.\text{\textasciitilde}f3 \text{\textacuten}fc8 19.\text{\textacuten}fc1 \text{\textasciitilde}c7 20.\text{\textasciitilde}xc4 \text{\textasciitilde}xc4= (20...dxc4?! 21.\text{\textasciitilde}c1 b5 22.d5\textpm).

Despite the unpopular combination of minor pieces (the traditionally stronger white knight compared to the black light-squared bishop), Black can hold his position because of his control over the c-file. 16.\text{\textasciitilde}c1 \text{\textacuten}c1 17.\text{\textasciitilde}xc1 h6 18.b3 \text{\textasciitilde}e7 19.\text{\textasciitilde}d2 0-0 20.\text{\textasciitilde}b2 \text{\textasciitilde}c8\textpm (20...g5?! 21.\text{\textasciitilde}c1? g4\textpm). With the bishop pair, Black has better chances, Motylev-Van Wely, Internet blitz 2004.

B) 11...a5!? 12.\text{\textasciitilde}h1 12.g4? \text{\textasciitilde}fxd4 13.\text{\textasciitilde}fxd4 \text{\textasciitilde}xd4 14.\text{\textasciitilde}e3 \text{\textasciitilde}c5\textpm White now hasn't the motif with \text{\textasciitilde}g4, and the black pawn on a5 protects the black bishop on c5 from the tactical blow b2-b4. 12...\text{\textasciitilde}e7 Since Black doesn't have to fear any more the move g2-g4, he continues his development quietly. With 12...\text{\textasciitilde}xd4 Black can take the pawn, but he has to be prepared to grant his opponent a long-lasting initiative: 13.\text{\textasciitilde}xd4 \text{\textasciitilde}xd4 14.\text{\textasciitilde}e3 \text{\textasciitilde}c5 15.\text{\textasciitilde}xd4 \text{\textasciitilde}xd4 16.\text{\textasciitilde}g4\textpm Dvoirys-Hanley, Hoogeveen 2002. 13.a3 a4 14.\text{\textasciitilde}d2 0-0? 14...g6!?.

The moves ...g6 and ...h5 are rarely seen in the Advance Variation, because of the obvious weakening of some crucial squares. However, the move perfectly fits this particular position. Besides, rules are there to be broken! Black's threat is to munch the d4 pawn, and he also gets ready to castle, which is not possible immediately due to g2-g4! with a clear advantage for White. The
opponents agreed to a draw after 14...g6 in an unclear position that has not been analysed yet, \( \frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{2} \) Petrov-Lysyj, Plovdiv 2010. 15.g4! \( \square h6 \)
15...\( \square h4 \) 16.\( \square xh4 \) \( \square xh4 \) 17.g5±; 15...fxf4? 16.\( \square xd4 \) \( \square xd4 \) 17.\( \square e3 \) \( \square c5 \) 18.\( \square d4 \)

The Advance system obviously works in this variation. When Black cannot free his knight with ...f7-f6 or ...\( \square g8 \), his problems are serious. 16...\( \square h8 \)
17.\( \square xh6 \) gxh6 18.d2? \( \square g7 \) 19.g3!+-;

C) 11...\( \square e7 \) Black can play this logical developing move, but now White has a pleasant choice between two plans: 12.\( \square xf5 \) and 12.g4:
C1) 12.g4 \( \square h4 \) 12...\( f6 \)
13.\( \square x4 \) \( \square x4 \) 14.\( \square e3 \)±. 13.\( \square x4 \)
14.g5 \( \square h6 \) 15.\( g6 \)

Black is supposed to have good play after exchanging the light-squared bishops. However, White has managed to justify the adventurous play of his g-pawn and to get to the open g-file first. After overprotecting the central d4-pawn, White enjoys more space and can choose between several active plans, whereas it is hard to see any active strategies for Black;

C2) 12.\( \square x5 \) exf5 13.\( g5 \) and now:
C21) 13...\( \square e6 \) 14.d4 0-0 15.\( \square e7 \)
\( \square x7 \) 16.\( \square b4 \) \( \square c4 \) 16...\( \square e6 \) 17.\( \square x6 \) \( \square c6 \) 18.\( \square a \) \( \square e8 \)=; by taking the c-file Black will compensate for his weaker bishop and pawn structure. 17.\( \square d3 \)± Kramnik-Rustemov, Internet blitz 1999;
C22) 13...\( \square f8 \) Now keeping the
The Modern French

The modern French bishop pair is not the best plan. 14. \texttt{\textbf{d3}} h6 15. \texttt{\textbf{d2}} e6 15...e7? 16. e3±. 16.b4 e7 17.a4±;

C23) 13...\texttt{\textbf{g5}}!? 14. \texttt{\textbf{xg5}} Black probably doesn’t want the white knight to come near the f4-square, which is ideal for this pawn structure.

- 11.b3?! This move is slow and leaves the initiative to Black. 11...\texttt{\textbf{b4}}! Here is another position where the knight exchange works well. The reason is that there are weak squares on the c-file. 12.e3 xex3 13.xe3 fxe3 e7 14.a3 c2 15.b1 xxa3 16.xa3 e3 17.g5 e7! 18.xf7 0-0=.

13...c2 14.c1 xex3 15.xc8+ xxc8 16.xf3 e7 and Black will have the more pleasant game with his two bishops.

- 11.\texttt{\textbf{b1}}?! Black is well prepared for play on the queenside, so that this almost invisible move brings nothing to White. 11...a5 11...\texttt{\textbf{a5}}!? 12.b3 b5. 12.d3 a7 Black wants to exchange light-squared bishops.

12...e7!?N

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
13.g4 h4 14.xh4 xh4
\hline
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\end{center}

(it can be noticed that we often evaluate the positions with this sign when White plays g2-g4) 15.g5 (a typical move which tries to make profit out of the black bishop’s position on the edge of the board. However the constellation of white pieces does not fit in with that idea) 15...d8 (15...e7!? 16.f4 h6 17.gxh6 xh6. It is clear that Black has an excellent position. Here is an instructive variation: 18.d2 \texttt{\textbf{b6}} 19.h1 h8 20.c3 b4 (here we can see that the intermediate moves b1 and ...a5 are more useful for Black; 20...e7!?) 21.xb4 (≥ 21.xb4 axb4 22.d2 e7 23.fcl xc1+ 24.xc1 f8 25.g2 g6 with mutual play, although our sympathies are on Black’s side) 21...axb4 22.e3 g6 23.g4 f8 24.fcl g7 25.a3 g4 14.d1 a4 15.b3 d7 16.b2 0-0 17.d1 c6 18.h4 xfe8 19.d1 19.g4? e3 20.e3 b5. 19...e7 20.h5 b5 21.e2! 21.b5 b5 22.e5 xbe5 22...d4 23.d4 ec8 24.d4 xc1 25.c3 xc1 26.xc1 d4 27.d4 xd4 28.c7 h4+- Domont-Gleizerov, Biel 2009.

- 11.h4?!
vance Variation. Concretely, White can’t count anymore on using the g5-square. 14...\( \text{dxh5} \) 15.\( \text{g5} \) \( \text{b5} \)\( \text{f6} \), Stehno-Tibensky, Olomouc 2006.

- 11.\( \text{wd3} \)! White usually keeps this square for the bishop. 11...a6!? Black can also play 11...h5!? here because White doesn’t have \( \text{xd3} \): 12.\( \text{d2} \) a5 13.a4 \( \text{e7} \) 14.\( \text{c3} \) g5\( \text{f} \), Stookalo-Savchenko, Alushta 2000, and now:

  A) 12.g4 \( \text{fe7} \) 13.\( \text{fe1} \) \( \text{g6} \) 14.f4? 14.\( \text{e3} \)!? – Knaak. 14...\( \text{xd4} \)!

  B) 12.a4!? \( \text{b4} \) 13.\( \text{xb4} \) \( \text{xb4} \) 14.h4 h6 14...0-0? 15.g4 \( \text{e7} \) 16.\( \text{g5} \) g6 17.h5 \( \text{xe3} \) +; 14...h5!? is recommended by Savchenko. 15.h5!

15.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{b5} \) 16.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{xd4} + \) 17.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{xe3} \) + 18.\( \text{xe3} \) \( \text{c5} \)\( \text{f} \) Galdunts-Knaak, Dortmund 1992;

B) 12.a4!? \( \text{b4} \) 13.\( \text{xb4} \) \( \text{xb4} \) 14.h4 h6 14...0-0? 15.g4 \( \text{e7} \) 16.\( \text{g5} \) g6 17.h5 \( \text{xe3} \) +; 14...h5!? is recommended by Savchenko. 15.h5!

Now for the main move.

11. \( \text{g1-h1} \)

A useful move. White intends to play g2-g4.

11. ... \( \text{c6-a5} \)

- Black cannot exchange the weak bishop if he puts his knight on b4: 11...\( \text{b4} \)!! 12.\( \text{xb4} \) \( \text{xb4} \) 13.a4! White prevents Black’s plan and without a black knight at c6, the weakened b4-square will soon be in White’s hands. 13...a5 14.d2 \( \text{b6} \) 15.g4 \( \text{e7} \) 16.b4! \( \text{xb4} \) 17.a5 \( \text{c7} \) 18.\( \text{xb4} \)\( \text{f} \) Dvoirys-Gleizerov, Hoogeveen 2000.

In this complex position, both sides have their chances. One should take into consideration that White has the upper hand on the kingside (it is very risky for Black to castle), and that he has also succeeded in preventing the exchange of light-squared bishops. 15.\( \text{xe7} \)\( \text{f} \) Sveshnikov-Dizdar, Cejle 2003. In this complicated position, both sides have their chances. You should not forget that White is much stronger on the kingside (kingside castling has become very risky for Black) and that he has succeeded in preventing the exchange of light-squared bishops (sacrificing the b4-square).
11...a5 12.g4 \fe7 13.\fh4 \gg6 14.\fg2 We have already reached this position under 11.g4. Here we have the intermediate moves \fh1 and ...\fa7-a5 included, which suits White better.

12. g2-g4

Black has removed his knight from the centre, so White believes that this is the right moment for g2-g4. Besides, without attacking the knight on f5, it is not possible to prevent the light-coloured bishops' exchange. For example: 12.\fe1?! \fb5 13.\fd3? \fxc2! 14.\fxc2 \fxd4+ Borisek-Ulibin, Bled 2002.

12. ... \ff5-e7 13.\ff3-e1 \fh7-h5!

We have already mentioned that Black uses the white g-pawn to achieve his strategical goals. Here it is the obvious idea of getting the black knight back to its ideal f5-square.

14. g4xh5 \fd7-b5 15.\fe1-d3 \fe7-f5 16.\fc1-e3 16.\fd2?! \fc4 17.\fc3 a5 18.\fe1 \fe7 19.\ff1 a4 20.\fb1 \ff5, Thipsay-Murshed, Amsterdam 2011. But on move 17 Black can play 17...\fa4!N

18. \ff2xe3

18.b3 (or 18.\fg1) 18...\fa3?! 16. ... \fa5-c4 17. b2-b3 17.\fc1? \fxb2 18.\fxb2 \fxe2 19.\fxe2 \fxb2 \ff5, B. Grabarczyk-Fiebig, Germany Bundesliga 2010/11.

17. ... \fc4xe3

Even though Black has not been able to exchange the light-squared bishops, he has weakened the position around the white king and enjoys the bishop pair advantage, which fully compensates for the slight material minus.

18. f2xe3

Black has several solid continuations here.

18. ... a7-a5

• Black can recover the pawn, with a solid position. 18...\gg6!N and now:
A) 19.\textit{c}c1 \textit{g}xh5 20.\textit{f}4 \textit{xe}2 21.\textit{w}xe2 \textit{w}c6\Longrightarrow;

B) White achieves nothing with the bayonet attack by the queenside pawns: 19.a4?! \textit{a}6 20.b4 \textit{c}4 21.\textit{d}2 \textit{d}8 22.\textit{c}c5? \textit{xe}2 23.\textit{w}xe2 \textit{xc}5 24.\textit{b}xc5 \textit{h}xh5\textsuperscript{±} Jonkman-Giaccio, Pinamar 2006;

C) 19.hxg6 \textit{g}3+ 20.\textit{g}g2 \textit{xf}1 21.gxf7+ \textit{xf}7 22.\textit{f}f1 + \textit{e}8\textsuperscript{±}.

It is logical to play on the weak dark squares with 18...\textit{c}3!? 19.\textit{d}2

19.\textit{d}2 19.\textit{c}1. 19...\textit{c}7 20.\textit{fc}1 20.\textit{ac}1 \textit{h}xh5\textsuperscript{±}. 20...\textit{xd}3 21.\textit{xd}3 \textit{h}xh5 with excellent play for Black.

19. \textit{d}1-d2 \textit{f}8-e7
20. \textit{f}1-g1 \textit{b}6-d8
20...\textit{c}6!? 21.\textit{ac}1 \textit{c}7.

21. \textit{a}1-f1 0-0

Better may be 21...\textit{xc}2!? 22.\textit{xc}2 \textit{xe}3 23.\textit{c}c1 \textit{xf}1 24.\textit{xf}1 \textit{h}8 (24...\textit{xd}3 25.\textit{xd}3 \textit{g}5=) 25.\textit{c}1 \textit{c}6, but Black cannot maintain the two bishops.

22. \textit{d}3-c5

22.\textit{f}4!?.

22. ... \textit{b}5-c6?

Black must capture the bishop on e2: 22...\textit{xe}2 23.\textit{xe}2 \textit{h}8 (23...\textit{h}7 24.e4; 23...\textit{xc}5? 24.\textit{g}2!) 24.e4 \textit{d}xe4 25.\textit{xe}4 \textit{d}5 26.\textit{g}2 \textit{g}8 and Black has a good position.

23. \textit{e}2-d3\textsuperscript{±}

Areschenko-Danin, Moscow 2009. White won on move 34.

\textbf{Conclusion}

We are convinced that the early blockade with 3.e5 is not the strongest weapon in White’s arsenal. White is obviously winning space, but as we have said many times, his central pawns will be exposed to attacks from the side.

This strategy of grabbing space is also common in other opening systems, where it usually happens with gain of tempo by attacking one of the opponent’s pieces (the Mar del Plata Variation of the King’s Indian, for example), where Black, just like in the Advance French, gets counterplay by undermining White’s and over-stretched centre.
In the theoretical part, where we advocated 5...\textit{d}d7 instead of the more common 5...\textit{b}b6 or the highly popular 5...\textit{e}ge7, we have shown some additional options for Black, particularly in connection with a quick b-pawn advance (unobstructed by the queen on b6), when ...b5-b4 undermines the base of White's pawn chain. We have also seen that the black queen has greater flexibility here, the excursion to h4 being very annoying for White.
Chapter 4 – The Tarrasch Variation

1.e2-e4 e7-e6 2.d2-d4 d7-d5 3.\( \text{d}1\text{b}2 \text{d}2 \text{f}8\text{e}7 \)

The most frequent and best responses to the Tarrasch Variation 3.\( \text{d}2 \) are 3...\( \text{f}6 \) and 3...c5, which do not commit the black bishop to e7, but the text aims to transpose into one of these positions.

The basic idea is that White’s next move cannot meet the needs of both systems, so Black can choose the most appropriate continuation. For example, with the natural 4.\( \text{g}f3 \), White has lost the possibility of the ideal knight set-up with \( \text{ge}2 \) and \( \text{df}3 \), which occurs in the Tarrasch Variation with 3.\( \text{d}2 \text{f}6 \), while 4.\( \text{d}3 \) or 4.c3 do not fit into the main variation of the Tarrasch with 3.\( \text{d}2 \) c5.

The main disadvantage of this development lies in the early commitment of the black bishop and additional opportunities for White to play 4.e5 and try to take advantage of the difficult development of Black’s kingside.

White has four important choices on move 4:

- 4.c3 (see p.149)
- 4.\( \text{d}3 \) (see p.152)
- 4.e5 (see p.185)
- 4.\( \text{gf}3 \) (see p.195)

\* 4.c3

This calm move gives White less chances in the struggle for the advantage.

4...c5!
Black takes play into a system with ...c5, where White’s tepid fourth move is less effective. Of course it is possible to transpose into theRubinstein system with 4...dxe4, but that is another story.

5.dxc5 5.e5 transposes into 4.e5.
5...bxc5 6.b3 b6 7.exd5 exd5
8.f3 f6

Now White usually selects one of three squares for his bishop:

A) 9.b5+ c6 10.0-0 Nothing comes from 10.e2+ e4 11.fd4 0-0 12.0-0 d7, and White has put his queen on the e-file without any necessity. 10...0-0 11.g5 11.f4? is a routine move that quickly gives Black the initiative: 11.e4 12.bd4 f6 13.e3 c7 (logical and better is 13...g4!)

\[\text{Diagram 1}\]

14.e2 ffe8 15.e1 ad8 when it is obvious that the initiative is on Black’s side) 14.c2 a6 15.d3 e8 16.fe1

An important move for continuing the typical play with ...h7-h6, ...g7-g5 and ...e4. After the immediate 11...h6?! 12.xf6 xf6 13.xd5 Black does not have enough compensation for the pawn.

A1) 12.xc6 bxc6 13.e1 g4 14.d3 d6 15.e5 (15.c4 ffe8). and now:

A11) One practical example saw 15.h5?! 16.e3 (16.xf6?! xf6 (16...xf6? 17.g3++) 17.d4± c5? 18.d7++ ) 16 xe3 17.e3 ffe8 18.f3!? (18.c5±) 18...a5? (18...d7! 19.f4 f6 20.hh3 fxe5++) 19.e2? (19.c5! – both opponents persistently ignore the important strategic square c5) 19...a4± Strikovic-Arsovic, Vrnjacka Banja 2010.

A12) But Black also has 15...e4!
16.\( \text{\Delta}xg4 \) (16.\( \text{\Delta}xe4?! \) 1\( \text{\Delta}f5+ \))
16...\( \text{\Delta}xg5 \) 17.\( \text{\Delta}d4 \) \( \text{\Delta}e4 \) 18.\( \text{\Delta}f5 \) \( \text{\Delta}e6 \)
19.\( \text{\Delta}ge3 \) \( g6 \).

A2) 12.\( \text{\Delta}e2 \) \( \text{\Delta}e8 \).

By activating the rook on e8, Black indirectly defends the pawn on d5 and finally he is ready for his standard plan with ...\( h6 \):

A21) 13.\( \text{\Delta}d3 \) \( h6 \) 14.\( \text{\Delta}h4 \) \( g5 \) 15.\( \text{\Delta}g3 \) \( \text{\Delta}e4 \)

A typical plan that gives Black excellent play, Mezentsev-Atalik, Reno 2005.
16.\( \text{\Delta}fd4 \) \( \text{\Delta}xd4 \) 17.\( \text{\Delta}xd4 \) \( \text{\Delta}xd4 \)
18.\( \text{\Delta}xd4 \) \( \text{\Delta}f5 \) 19.\( \text{\Delta}fe1 \) \( \text{\Delta}b6 \) 20.\( \text{\Delta}e5 \) \( \text{\Delta}xe5 \) 21.\( \text{\Delta}xe5 \) \( \text{\Delta}xf2+ \) 22.\( \text{\Delta}h1 \)

22...\( \text{\Delta}xe1+ \) 0-1 Stamnov-Shulman, Sioux Falls 2002;

A22) 13.\( \text{\Delta}bd4 \) \( \text{\Delta}d6 \) 14.\( \text{\Delta}xf6?! \) \( \text{\Delta}xf6 \)
15.\( \text{\Delta}e1 \) \( \text{\Delta}g4 \) 16.\( \text{\Delta}d2 \) \( \text{\Delta}c7 \).

Shaw-Miezis, Reykjavik 2007. Or 16...\( \text{\Delta}xd4?! \)
17.\( \text{\Delta}xd4 \) (17.\( \text{\Delta}xd4 \) \( \text{\Delta}e4 \)) 17...\( \text{\Delta}xe2 \)
18.\( \text{\Delta}xe2 \) \( \text{\Delta}xe2 \) 19.\( \text{\Delta}xe2 \) \( \text{\Delta}xd4 \) 20.\( \text{\Delta}xd4 \) \( \text{\Delta}xd4 \);

A23) Or 13.\( \text{\Delta}h4 \) \( h6 \) 14.\( \text{\Delta}e1 \) \( g5 \)
15.\( \text{\Delta}g3 \) \( \text{\Delta}e4 \) 16.\( \text{\Delta}fd4 \) \( f5 \)


B) 9.\( \text{\Delta}d3 \) 0-0 10.0-0 \( \text{\Delta}c6 \) 11.\( \text{\Delta}g5 \)
11.h3 \( \text{\Delta}e4 \) 12.\( \text{\Delta}h4 \) \( g5 \)
13.\( \text{\Delta}g3 \) \( \text{\Delta}e4 \) 14.\( \text{\Delta}fd4 \) \( f5 \)

with a typical plan and a good position, Miralles-Pelletier, France 2003;

C) 9.\( \text{\Delta}e2 \) 0-0 10.0-0 \( \text{\Delta}c6 \) 11.\( \text{\Delta}g5 \) Or
11.\( \text{\Delta}fd4 \) \( \text{\Delta}e8 \) 12.\( \text{\Delta}e3 \) \( \text{\Delta}e5 \) 13.\( \text{\Delta}e1 \) \( h6 \)
14.\( \text{\Delta}c2 \) \( \text{\Delta}d7 \) 15.\( \text{\Delta}ad1 \) \( \text{\Delta}c7 \) \( \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} \),
11...\( \text{\Delta}e8 \) 12.\( \text{\Delta}fd4 \) On 12.\( \text{\Delta}h4 \) there is the typical plan with 12...\( h6 \) 13.\( \text{\Delta}e1 \) \( g5 \)
14.\( \text{\Delta}g3 \) \( \text{\Delta}e4 \) 15.\( \text{\Delta}fd4 \) \( \text{\Delta}f6 \) with good play for Black, V. Agzamov-I. Farago,
Arco 2010.
12...\( \text{\Delta}d6 \) 13.\( \text{\Delta}f3 \) \( \text{\Delta}e4 \)
14.\( \text{\Delta}e3 \) \( \text{\Delta}e5 \) 15.\( \text{\Delta}b5 \) \( \text{\Delta}c6 \) 16.\( \text{\Delta}xb6 \)
\( \text{\Delta}xb5 \) 17.\( \text{\Delta}e3 \) \( \text{\Delta}xf3+ \) 18.\( \text{\Delta}xf3 \) \( a5 \) \( \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} \),
Stevens-Shipov, Guelph 2005.
Important: In reply to the less ambitious continuation 4.c3 Black can choose the solid line 4...c5! (which is also possible in Tarrasch after the move order 3.Qd2 c5) 5.dxc5 Qxc5 6.Qb3 Qb6 7.exd5 exd5 8.Qf3 Qf6 etc., when the isolated d5 pawn is compensated for by the excellent activity of Black's pieces, particularly the strong bishop on b6 and the possibility to jump to e4 with the knight.

4.Qd3

Next to 4.Qgf3, this is the most common continuation. White copies his opponent, also delaying the development of the king's knight, and perhaps also hoping for Black to play ...Qf6?! But now he plays instead 4...c5! We know that without this move, for the French player, there is no happy life. 4...Qf6?! leads after 5.e5 Qf6d7 6.Qe2 c5 7.c3 Qc6 8.0-0 0-0 9.Qf3 cxd4 10.cxd4 f6 11.exf6 Qxf6
to the main variation of the Tarrasch, but with a passive bishop on e7 instead of d6.

A) 5.Qgf3 Qf6 6.e5 transposes into positions under 4.Qgf3. 6.dxc5 transposes to 5.dxc5;
B) 5.c3 cxd4 6.cxd4 dxe4 7.Qxe4 Qf6 8.Qf3 Qc6 9.0-0 0-0=;
C) Or 5.exd5?! Qxd5 gives a good version compared to the theoretical positions that occur in the move-order 3.Qd2 c5 4.exd5 Qxd5, where White's bishop almost always goes to c4;
D) 5.dxc5! The only move for White which can allow him to fight for the advantage. Other alternatives give easy play for Black. 5...Qf6 Since there is no longer an enemy d-pawn, Black is back to his usual development.

Here White has four main moves:
D1) 6.Qe2 (see p.152)
D2) 6.Qgf3 (see p.181)
D3) 6.exd5 (see p.183)
D4) 6.b4 (see p.185)

D1) 6.Qe2
White avoids the exchange of queens and prepares for play on the kingside with e4-e5:
D11) 6...0-0 7.Qgf3
D111) 7.a5! With the idea ...Qa6-Qc5.
Introduction to the most popular and probably the best plan in the fight for equality. Other moves leads Black into more or less problematic positions. White can choose a continuation that leaves the possibility of castling on both sides:

D1111) Now in case of 8.c3 Black can choose between three solid jumps:

D11111) 8...a6 9.e5 d7 10.b3

It is now clear that White already planned queenside castling when he played 8.c3. 10.0-0 transposes to the main variation, dealt with under 8.0-0 10...axc5 11.bxc5 xc5 12.c2.

D111111) 12...b6

The main idea of this standard move is the activation of Black's dark-squared bishop. But the speed of this pawn is of influence to where White will place his king, and can be crucial for the evaluation of the position. Therefore, 12...b5 is probably more logical here. 13.f4

f5 Black activates his bishop, but the move has a defect, because the centre is problematic due to its poor mobility. After 13...a6 14.e3 f5 (14...c7 15.d5 h6 16.h7 f6 17.0-0-0†) Black is slow acting on the queenside, so he could compensate for the inferior centre that occurs after the exchange of pawns: 15.exf6 xf6 16.0-0 c8 17.9f6†
White did not have to declare the position of his knight, especially as there are other good squares for it. In particular, it can be dangerous on the d4-square after queenside castling and $\text{He}h1$, because of the weak black e-pawn. More precise is $15.\text{We}3 \text{a}6 16.0-0-0 \text{Cc}8 17.\text{He}h1 \text{b}5?! 18.\text{d}4!$ with the superior position. If $15.0-0-0? \text{xc}3; 15...\text{xe}5?!$ Black has seen a tactical variation, but the final position is unfavourable for him. Sharp play with mutual chances comes from early action on the queenside: $15...\text{a}6!N$ $16.\text{We}3 (16.\text{Wh}5?! \text{g}6=) 17.\text{xg}6?! \text{e}8!$ $16...\text{Cc}8 17.0-0-0 \text{b}5$. Black has fewer problems with the e6 pawn, because of the position of the white knight, and calmly continues action on the queenside. $18.\text{g}4 (18.\text{b}1 \text{b}4) 18...\text{b}4 19.\text{xf}6+ \text{xf}6 20.\text{xb}4 \text{xb}4 21.\text{h}6 \text{f}7=) 16.\text{xe}5 16.\text{we}5 \text{h}4 17.\text{g}3 \text{c}4. 16...\text{g}5 17.\text{f}4 \text{xf}4 18.\text{xf}4 \text{xf}4 19.\text{f}1 \text{wh}2 20.\text{f}3= $ Panchanathan-Ramirez, Richardson 2011;

D111112) $12...\text{b}5?!N$

Black rushes to open the files, so he can compromise the white king position as soon as possible. White has a lot of continuations, but only $13.\text{h}4$ and $13.\text{d}4$ have real power and offer large space for chess creativity, especially in the field of combinational play:

$13.\text{h}4?!$ On this continuation may depend the fate of the variation with $12...\text{b}5$. A serious mistake is $13.\text{xb}5? \text{a}6 14.\text{c}6 \text{c}8=+$

and the white queen is trapped; in case of $13.\text{f}4? \text{b}4=+$. White must give up queenside castling; $13.0-0?! \text{b}4 14.\text{e}3 \text{bxc}3 15.\text{xc}3 (15.\text{xc}3 \text{e}4=+) 15...\text{a}6 16.\text{d}1 \text{c}7=; 13.\text{a}3 \text{a}6 14.\text{b}4 \text{e}4 15.\text{xe}4 (15.\text{d}2 \text{c}7=) 16.\text{xe}4 \text{dxe}4 17.\text{b}2 (17.\text{xe}4? \text{g}6 18.0-0 \text{b}7= followed by ...\text{axb}4) 17...\text{b}7 18.\text{xe}4 \text{xb}4=) 15...\text{dxe}4 16.\text{xe}4 \text{c}7 17.0-0 \text{b}7=; 13.\text{d}4?! \text{b}4 14.\text{c}6 \text{d}7 15.\text{xe}7+ \text{xe}7=.) 13...\text{c}7 13...\text{b}4? 14.\text{xh}7=+. 14.\text{f}4?! (14.\text{g}5 \text{h}6 15.\text{h}7 \text{d}8=) with the idea to play $\text{h}7$.

As we can see, the idea of queenside castling gives a very complex, sharp and uncompromising fight. Good analysis and preparation are necessary to get out of this labyrinth of variations. However, Black can choose the quieter continuations $8...\text{d}7$ or $8...\text{c}6$, according to what kind of fight he is ready for:

D11112) Black can transpose with $8...\text{c}6?! 9.0-0 \text{d}7$ into a variation dealt with under $8...\text{a}5 9...\text{e}8$, see the game Carlsen-Drasko there;
D11113) Also possible is 8...\(\texttt{Qf}d7!\)

9.0-0 Nothing is given by 9.exd5 \(\texttt{Qxc}5\) 10.\(\texttt{b}5\) exd5 11.0-0 \(\texttt{Qc}6\) 12.\(\texttt{d}4\) \(\texttt{d}7\) 13.2f3 \(\texttt{f}6\) 14.\(\texttt{e}3\) \(\texttt{e}8=\) \(\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}\) Almasi-Radjabov, Pamplona 2001/02.

9...\(\texttt{Qxc}5\) 10.\(\texttt{c}2\) b6!? 10...\(\texttt{c}6\)

11.exd5 exd5 is dealt with under

9.... a5.

II... \(\texttt{a}6\) 12.\(\texttt{W}e3\) 

\(\texttt{d}7\) 13.\(\texttt{e}5\) \(\texttt{wc}7=\) 11... \(\texttt{a}6\) 12.\(\texttt{W}e3\) 

\(\texttt{c}6\) 12... \(\texttt{a}7\) 13.exd5 \(\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}\) Yemel-Yevgeni-Vitiugov, St Petersburg 2006. 13.\(\texttt{f}1\) 

\(\texttt{a}7\) 14.exd5 \(\texttt{d}7=\)

Erenburg-Ramirez, Washington DC

D1112) 8.0-0!? \(\texttt{a}6\) 9.e5. The exchange 9.exd5?! is usually the end of any hope in the fight for a white advantage: 9...exd5! Of course! By taking with the pawn, Black receives the gift, in one move, of the ability to activate his light-squared bishop and to put his rook on e8. 10.\(\texttt{b}3\) (nothing can be changed in the evaluation of the position by playing 10.\(\texttt{e}1\) \(\texttt{e}8\) 11.\(\texttt{b}3\) \(\texttt{xc}5\) 12.\(\texttt{b}5\) \(\texttt{d}7\) 13.\(\texttt{e}3\) \(\texttt{a}4\) 14.\(\texttt{xd}7\) \(\texttt{xd}7\) 15.\(\texttt{xc}5\) axb3 (15...\(\texttt{xc}5\)! 16.\(\texttt{xc}5\) \(\texttt{c}6=\) 17.\(\texttt{d}3\) \(\texttt{xc}5\) 18.\(\texttt{c}3\) \(\texttt{e}4!\) a move which shows that an isolated pawn also has significance in the endgame. Doubling of rooks on the e-file will bring Black easy play) 16.\(\texttt{xe}7\) \(\texttt{xa}2\) 17.\(\texttt{ac}1\) ± Naiditsch-De la Riva Aguado, Pamplona 2004) 10...a4

11.\(\texttt{bd}4\) \(\texttt{xc}5\) 12.a3!? (White does not allow his opponent to play a4-a3 and weaken his queenside. A similar position to the one after 12.\(\texttt{b}5\)

\(\texttt{d}7\) 11... \(\texttt{xc}5\) 12.\(\texttt{f}1\) 

\(\texttt{a}7\) 14.exd5 \(\texttt{d}7=\)

with the idea ...\(\texttt{ce}4\), with great play. For example: 13.b3 \(\texttt{de}4!?\) 14.c4 \(\texttt{g}4\) 13.\(\texttt{f}4\) \(\texttt{e}8\) 14.\(\texttt{xd}7\) \(\texttt{xd}7\) 15.\(\texttt{b}5\) \(\texttt{xb}5\) 16.\(\texttt{xb}5\) \(\texttt{de}6\) 17.\(\texttt{e}5\)
\[ \text{HeC8 18.aac1 a5 19.aebd4 ad7 20.aef5 af8 with equal play, Malakhov-Del Rio Angelis, Chalkidiki 2002) 12...e8 13.h3 ed6 14.ad1.} \]

White is playing a typical position, which may occur in the 3.ad2 c5 move-order, with two tempi less. The queen does not belong on the e-file in this type of position, so the idea of exchanging the pawn does not make sense. 14...exd3!? (Black has other continuations that promise a nice game, thanks to the active pieces and the strategic square e4 – for example 14...ed4 15.cxd3 (15.ad3) 15...ed7 16.aed3 0c5 17.ad1 ad7 and Black has a promising position, Petrik-Cvek, Slovakia 2009. 9...ed7 Now White has several continuations, but only keeping his light-squared bishop with 10.c3 or 10.c4 has true value: D11121) 10.c3 axc5 11.ad2

Of course, White avoids the exchange of his strongest minor piece. In this type of position, Black usually continues to play with his b-pawn to activate his passive bishop, or with the typical break ...f7-f6, in order to create more freedom for his pieces. As to the first plan, it is not easy to decide whether to play ...b7-b6, or to fight for space on the queenside with ...b7-b5-b4, and then activate his light-squared bishop:

D111211) 11...b6 is the most-played continuation. The games and analyses show rich and complex play with lots of unclear and dangerous lines. 12.ad1 White removes the rook from the vulnerable diagonal and prepares for the fight on the e-file. Also possible is 12.ad1 f6 13.exf6 xf6 14.adf1 (it is better to exchange one black knight which operates in the centre, thus increasing his mobility and dynamic force: 14.ad3! ad6 15.ad3 ed8 (15...ed7!? ) 16.axc5 axc5

Via another order, we have come to the game Kotronias-Ni Hua, Khanty-Mansiyisk 2005, which is dealt with under 11...f6) 14...ad7!? – Black has completed development and intends to move his e-pawn. Both sides have chances in the upcoming fight, Sax-Goh Wei Ming, Kecskemet 2011. 12...ad6 Black can change the order of
his two most important plans, playing first 12...f6 13.exf6 (nothing comes from 13.b4 axb4 14.cxb4 a6 15.exf6 Qxf6 16.b5 Qc5 (a good intermediate move is 16...Qc7!? N 17.Qxh7+ Qxh7 18.bxa6 Qc5 19.Qe2 Qf4 with good play for Black) 17.Qb2, with a complex struggle. White has strong activity and good coordination of his pieces, thereby controlling the important central squares e5 and d4, which directly affect the mobility of the black pawn centre. But Black also controls many important squares and files, and the weak white pawns on a2 and b5 are additional bases for counterplay: 17...Qe8 18.Qe5 Qb7 19.f3 Qd6 20.Qd3?! Qxb5 Lu Shanglei-Ding Liren, Xinghua Jiangsu 2010) 13...Qxf6 (here, the knight capture deserves attention: 13...Qxf6!? 14.b3 (14.Qb3!?) 14...Qd6 15.Qb2 Qb7 16.c4 Qc7 17.a3 Qae8∞ Morais-Champion, ICCF email 2006) 14.Qb3 Qa6 15.Qd1 Qb7 16.Qxc5 Qxc5 17.Qe3 Qe4 18.Qxe4?!.

13.Qe3 f6 The stereotyped 13...Qc8 leads Black into a risky position after 14.Qd4 Qb8 15.Qh3 g6 16.f4 (16.Qf3? with a strong initiative on the kingside: 16...Qd3!! (16...Qd3? 17.Qxd3 Qxd3 18.Qh6+ with the idea Qg5) 17.Qh6 Qxc2 18.Qg5±) 16...Qc6 17.Qf3 Qxd3 18.Qxd4 Qe4 19.Qe3 Qc5 20.Qf3 Qe7 21.Qad1 1-0 Kotronias-Lopez Martinez, Kusadası 2006. Now:

14.b4

This is marked by grandmaster Vitiugov as an excellent move. But maybe it is better to play the usual 14.exf6!? Qxf6 15.Qb3 with good prospects for advantage, as White will have the pair of bishops in the coming fight. In this position Black has chosen three lines: 15...e5 (in case of 15...Qe8 16.Qxc5 Qxc5 17.Qe5? Qxe5 18.Qxe5 Qd3, White continues to fight for the advantage with 19.Qd1!; or 15...Qc7 16.Qg5 Qxg5 17.Qxg5± when the bishop pair give White the more promising play, Haslinger-Nijs, Vlissingen 2010) 16.Qxc5 bxc5 17.Qg5! (White uses the double attack to win the bishop pair) 17...Qxg5 18.Qxg5± and regardless of the trio in the centre, White has the better chances, for example: 18...Qe8 19.Qe3 Qf7 20.Qh4±
Kudrin-Perelshteyn, Tulsa 2008, or 18...\( \text{xf6} \) 19.\( \text{xf6} \) gxf6 20.\( \text{c5} \) (20.\( \text{h6!} \)?) 20...\( \text{b6} \) 21.\( \text{b3} \) (21.\( \text{e3?!} \) d4 22.\( \text{cxd4} \) \( \text{cxd4} \) 23.\( \text{h6} \) \( \text{fe8} \) 24.\( \text{ac1} \)?) 21...\( \text{c8} \) 22.\( \text{c2} \) \( \text{b7} \) 23.\( \text{xf5} \) \( \text{c8} \) 24.\( \text{c2} \) \( \text{b7} \) \( \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} \) O. Wegener-Jackelen, Germany Bundesliga 2005/06.

14...\( \text{fxe5} \) The principled reaction, which leads to great complications.

15.\( \text{exf5} \) 16.\( \text{bxc5} \) \( \text{xc5} \) 17.\( \text{xe5} \)

Black can take the f2 pawn in two ways:

D1112111) 17...\( \text{xf2} \) + 18.\( \text{h1} \) \( \text{xe1} \) 19.\( \text{xe1} \)

Or 19.\( \text{xe6}+ \) \( \text{h8} \) 20.\( \text{xe1} \) d4 21.\( \text{b2?} \) (21.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{b7!} \)?) 21...d3? (21...\( \text{e8} \) ?!) 22.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{g5} \) 23.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{ae8} \) 24.\( \text{f2?} \) (24.\( \text{g1} \)?) 24...d2 ? (we will give this entire game because of the beautiful tactical strikes) 25.\( \text{a4} \) \( \text{e2} \) 26.\( \text{g1} \) \( \text{e7} \) 27.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{b7} \) 28.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{e1} \) 29.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{xf3} \) 30.\( \text{gxh3} \) \( \text{xd1} \) 0-1 Kristjansson-Caruana, Reykjavik 2008.

An alternative for Black on move 20 may be 20...\( \text{xf6} \) !?N 21.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{ae8} \) 22.\( \text{e3} \) d4 23.\( \text{cxd4} \) (23...\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{e7} \) 24.\( \text{f5} \) \( \text{xf5} \) 23...\( \text{c6} \) ?).

19...\( \text{f6} \) After 19...\( \text{d6} \), weak is 20.\( \text{f3} \) (20.a4! with the idea \( \text{a3} \), Vitiugov) 20...e5! with great play for Black, Motyczakova-Vojnic, Pardubice 2009.

Black's idea is to open as soon as possible a second file for the a8 rook, before White moves his pieces. 21.\( \text{g5} \) Nothing is given by 21.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{b7} \) 22.\( \text{a3} \) a4! 23.\( \text{xf8} \) \( \text{axb3} \) ? 21...\( \text{e6} \) !? 21...\( \text{f7} \) 22.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{ae8} \) 23.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{e2} \) 24.\( \text{d2} \) Juhnke-Renner, Germany tt 2006/07. 22.\( \text{e5} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 23.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{ae8} \) 24.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{h6} \) ! Black is using his minor pieces to create, with tempo, direct threats: 25.\( \text{d2} \) 25.\( \text{h4} \) g5 26.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{e3} \) ; 25.\( \text{c1?} \) \( \text{e1} \) +.

25...\( \text{e2} \) 26.\( \text{ad1} \) \( \text{c4} \)

27.\( \text{b3} \) 27.a4 d4! 28.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{d5} \)=. 27...\( \text{xb3} \) 28.\( \text{xb3} \) \( \text{b5} \) 29.\( \text{a4} \) \( \text{a4} \)=.

D1112112) We can see the wealth of chess ideas if Black takes with the rook on f2: 17...\( \text{xf2} \)? 18.\( \text{h1} \) There is no need to take the pawn with 18.\( \text{xe6} \) because after 18...\( \text{f8} \) (18...\( \text{f8} \) 19.\( \text{h1} \) \( \text{g5} \)=) 19.\( \text{h1} \) \( \text{h4} \) 20.\( \text{f3} \) (for White now there is no defence by moving the bishop from f3: 20.\( \text{d1} \)?)
20...\texttt{xf6}+; 22.\texttt{a3} \texttt{xf3} 23.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{xf8} 24.\texttt{xc5} \texttt{bxc5} 25.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{xf8} 26.\texttt{xc5} \texttt{h6} = 27.\texttt{xa5}? \texttt{g2}! --

18...\texttt{Wh4}! Forward! Black cannot change the rhythm by playing passively: 18...\texttt{e7} 19.\texttt{d1}! (19.\texttt{xe6}+? \texttt{xe6} 20.\texttt{xe6} \texttt{f1}+ ++) 19...\texttt{af8} 20.\texttt{f3} with a clear advantage for White. 19.\texttt{d1} White has no better defensive manoeuvre than to take the bishop to f3. 19...\texttt{af8} 20.\texttt{f3}

Or 20.\texttt{xe6}+ \texttt{h8} 21.\texttt{f3} \texttt{e2}!.

Fantastic! Black is applying the well-known tactical ideas of interference on the file and diverting pieces from the diagonal: 22.\texttt{xe2} (22.\texttt{xe2}? \texttt{xf6}+; this is the consequence of taking the pawn on e6) 20...\texttt{xf6} 21.\texttt{xf6} \texttt{e3}? (after 22.\texttt{e8}+ \texttt{f8} 23.\texttt{e3} \texttt{xc2} 24.\texttt{a3} \texttt{d4} 25.\texttt{xd4 b7} Black may have enough compensation to secure equality, but no more than that) 22...\texttt{xf6}+ 23.\texttt{g1} \texttt{f1}+- Durarbeyli-Yemelin, Budva 2009.

20...\texttt{Wh4}!

Black has established the maximum activity and harmony of his pieces:

21.\texttt{b8}+ White has a material advantage, but his pieces are still underdeveloped and tied to the defence. There is no clear plan in sight, and tactical strikes are looming after each move. 21.\texttt{h5} \texttt{hxh5} 22.\texttt{h5} \texttt{f1} 23.\texttt{f3} \texttt{xf3} -- 21.\texttt{a4} \texttt{d3}!; 21.\texttt{b3}? \texttt{e6}+ 22.\texttt{gxf3} \texttt{f2}+! with mate soon. 21...\texttt{f8} Black now threatens 22...\texttt{g2}! Alternately, 21...\texttt{f8} 22.\texttt{g3} \texttt{f6} (22...\texttt{xf3} 23.\texttt{hxg3} \texttt{f6} 24.\texttt{b3} \texttt{xc3} 24.\texttt{d4}) 23.\texttt{b3} \texttt{xc3} 24.\texttt{f4}.

22.\texttt{g1} 22.\texttt{g3}?? \texttt{xf3} -- 23.\texttt{hxg3} \texttt{h6}+ 24.\texttt{d5} \texttt{c5} with mate soon; 22.\texttt{d1}+? \texttt{e2}! 23.\texttt{g1} \texttt{xf3} 24.\texttt{gf3} \texttt{h3} 25.\texttt{g3} \texttt{xh2}+! = with a well-known perpetual check; 22...\texttt{d3}! Takes the square b1 from the white rook and intends ...\texttt{g7}--\texttt{g5}--\texttt{g4}; 22...\texttt{a4}

23.\texttt{b1}. 23.\texttt{a4}! 23.\texttt{b3}? \texttt{e6}+ 24.\texttt{gxf3} \texttt{e4}+--; 23.\texttt{xb6}?! \texttt{g5} In
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case of 23...\textit{d}8 a4! 24.a3 (White releases the a2-square for the rook, as a desperate last resort) 24...b5 25.a2\textit{h}6\textit{c} 26.\textit{w}xh4 \textit{h}xh4 27.\textit{e}el \textit{a}c5 28.h3 (28.\textit{x}e6? \textit{e}4!) 28...\textit{h}6 29.\textit{a}1 \textit{f}6.

White is in a strange zugzwang: 30.\textit{g}4?! \textit{e}5\textit{f} 23...\textit{g}5 24.\textit{b}3 And now the variation is almost forced: 24...\textit{g}4 25.\textit{e}3 \textit{b}2 26.\textit{d}4 \textit{g}6 26...\textit{g}xf3 27.\textit{g}xf3+ \textit{g}6 28.\textit{g}5 \textit{h}5 29.\textit{e}7 \textit{x}h2\textit{f} 27.\textit{e}2 27...\textit{d}1 \textit{e}4 28.\textit{e}2 \textit{h}3 29.\textit{e}5 (29.\textit{f}4? \textit{g}3 30.\textit{x}g3 \textit{w}xg2+ 31.\textit{x}g2 \textit{f}1+ 32.\textit{g}1 \textit{x}g2+; or 29.\textit{g}3 \textit{f}5 30.\textit{c}1 \textit{d}6 31.\textit{x}h3 \textit{gxh}3 32.\textit{x}b2 \textit{e}2\textit{e} 27...\textit{g}6 28.\textit{x}g3 \textit{x}g3 29.\textit{h}xg3 \textit{e}5 30.\textit{c}1 \textit{e}4 31.\textit{e}1 \textit{e}d4 32.\textit{x}b2 \textit{h}6+ 33.\textit{g}1 \textit{d}xc3 34.\textit{a}3 \textit{g}7 35.\textit{d}1 \textit{c}2 36.\textit{d}2 \textit{c}3 37.\textit{c}1\textit{f} To chess imagination and fantasy there is no end. Of course, we show this variation because of its beauty, although improvements are possible in various places.

D1112121) 12...\textit{x}xf6 13.\textit{b}3 \textit{b}6 14.\textit{x}c5 \textit{x}c5 15.\textit{d}1 Also possible is 15.\textit{e}1, but after 15...\textit{a}6 16.\textit{e}3 \textit{d}6 Thematic 17.\textit{e}5 \textit{xe}5 18.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 19.\textit{xe}5 loses its strength due to the weak d3 square 19...\textit{x}d3! with chances for equal play. 20.\textit{xf}d3 (White can continue fighting for the advantage with 20.\textit{d}1) 20...\textit{x}d3= \textit{b} 1/2 (58) Chevelevitch-Breuer, Hamburg 2006. 15...\textit{a}6 16.\textit{e}3 \textit{e}8 17.\textit{g}5 It is better to play 17.\textit{e}5 \textit{h}5 18.\textit{e}1 \textit{e}8 19.\textit{d}4 \textit{d}7 20.\textit{f}4 \textit{e}2 21.\textit{d}2 \textit{xe}5 22.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 23.\textit{xe}2 \textit{xe}2 24.\textit{xe}2 \textit{c}4 25.\textit{d}3 17...\textit{g}6 Although White keeps the initiative after 17...\textit{x}g5?! 18.\textit{xe}5= 1-0 (35) Kotronias-Ni Hua, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005 18.\textit{g}3;

D1112122) Black can temporarily ignore the important central square e5 and play 12...\textit{x}xf6!?N

D11121212) 11...\textit{f}6 Giving priority to this attack on the centre, rather than developing the passive bishop on c8, is not recommended. 12.\textit{xf}6 White usually prefers to play against the centre,
13.\(\text{\textbf{b}}3\) \(b6\) 14.\(\text{\textbf{xc}}5\) With tempo White brings the black bishop to a good location. White has more chances for advantage with 14.\(\text{\textbf{xe}}1!\) \(\text{\textbf{a}}6\) 15.\(\text{\textbf{wd}}1!\). 14.\(\text{\textbf{xc}}5\) 15.\(\text{\textbf{d}}3\) White should not so easily allow the exchange of light-squared bishops after 15.\(\text{\textbf{e}}3\) \(\text{\textbf{a}}6\) 16.\(\text{\textbf{d}}3\) \(\text{\textbf{xd}}3\) 17.\(\text{\textbf{wd}}3\) \(\text{\textbf{d}}6\)\(=\). Idea is ...\(\text{\textbf{g}}4\) or ...e5. 15.\(\text{\textbf{wd}}6!\) Apart from the direct threat ...\(\text{\textbf{g}}4\), Black begins the fight for the square e5. 16.h3 16.\(\text{\textbf{e}}3?!\) \(\text{\textbf{xe}}3\) 17.\(\text{\textbf{fxe}}3\) e5; 16.\(\text{\textbf{e}}5\) \(\text{\textbf{e}}4\)=; 16.\(\text{\textbf{we}}5\) \(\text{\textbf{e}}7\)= – the queen does not belong on the blockading square e5; 16...\(\text{\textbf{h}}5!\)!

With an attack on the weak squares g3 and f4. The move breaks normal strategic rules, because Black is playing his knight to the edge of the board, while still not having completed his development. But this moment is exactly suited to the manoeuvre of the black knight. 16...\(\text{\textbf{a}}7\)!±. 17.\(\text{\textbf{d}}4\) 17.\(\text{\textbf{xe}}7+?!\) \(\text{\textbf{xe}}7\) 18.\(\text{\textbf{g}}5+\) \(\text{\textbf{g}}6\) 19.\(\text{\textbf{wd}}3+\) \(\text{\textbf{f}}5\) 20.\(\text{\textbf{g}}4\) \(\text{\textbf{a}}6\)=. 17...\(\text{\textbf{g}}6!\) 17...\(\text{\textbf{f}}4\) 18.\(\text{\textbf{xf}}4\) \(\text{\textbf{exe}}4\) 19.g3! There will follow f2-f4, with the better position regardless of Black's bishop pair. Black has insufficient compensation after 19...\(\text{\textbf{xd}}4\) 20.cxd4 \(\text{\textbf{exe}}4\) because of the simple tactical blow 21.\(\text{\textbf{xe}}7+\)!±. 18.\(\text{\textbf{h}}6\) \(\text{\textbf{f}}4\) 18...\(\text{\textbf{d}}7?!\) 19.\(\text{\textbf{xf}}8\) \(\text{\textbf{exe}}4\)=. 19.\(\text{\textbf{d}}2\) Now the exchange on f4 gives Black good play: 19.\(\text{\textbf{xf}}4\) \(\text{\textbf{exe}}4\) 20.\(\text{\textbf{g}}3\) \(\text{\textbf{exe}}4\) 21.cxd4 \(\text{\textbf{exe}}4\) (White now has no tactical blow with \(\text{\textbf{h}}7\)) 22.\(\text{\textbf{g}}2\) \(\text{\textbf{e}}5\).

Black's dominant bishops and fantastic centre guarantee him sufficient compensation and good play. 19...\(\text{\textbf{f}}6\) 20.\(\text{\textbf{g}}5\) \(\text{\textbf{e}}5\)=; D111213) 11...b5

An active move that gives Black good play: D1112131) 12.a3
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The logical reaction to Black's idea of...

12...\texttt{c7} 12...\texttt{a6}?!\texttt{N} 13.b4 White is shutting the black bishop in a cage, but he also weakens his position on the a- and c-files. 13...\texttt{a4} 14.\texttt{d3} (giving away the light-squared bishop with 14.\texttt{xa4} usually ends White's fight for the advantage: 14...\texttt{xa4} 15.b5 \texttt{b7} 16.\texttt{b2} \texttt{b6} – Black can place his pieces in a different way, because the unusual structure of the white pawns has produced many weaknesses on the queenside; 17.\texttt{d4} \texttt{c8} with good play for Black) 14...g6 15.\texttt{b3} (15.\texttt{xa4} \texttt{xa4} 16.b5 \texttt{c5} 17.\texttt{e2} \texttt{b7} with an excellent position for Black, for example: 18.\texttt{d4} \texttt{c8} 19.\texttt{b2} \texttt{e4}! 15...\texttt{xb4} 16.\texttt{xb4} \texttt{c7} 17.\texttt{e1} (17.\texttt{f4} \texttt{b2}!) 17...\texttt{fc8} 18.\texttt{bd4}.

13...\texttt{b3}?! A move which also allows Black to carry out his most important plan. 12...\texttt{b4} 13.\texttt{xc5} \texttt{xc5} 14.\texttt{xb4} \texttt{xb4}

The key position for the fate of the variation 11...\texttt{b5}. The 'Steinitz pawn' on e5 and the active pieces indicate White's play on the kingside, while Black's counterplay is on the open c-file and the half-open a-file, against the backward a3 pawn. Moving the knight to the excellent post on c4 will be Black's main idea. Depending on how ambitious he is feeling, Black can offer the exchange of queens on c3 or continue more complex play with all the pieces on the board. For example:

18...\texttt{c3} (18...\texttt{ab6} 19.\texttt{h4} \texttt{c4} 20.\texttt{f4} \texttt{b6} 21.\texttt{h5} \texttt{b7} with a doubling on the a-file and an attack on the weak a3 pawn) 19.\texttt{xc3} \texttt{xc3} 20.\texttt{d2} \texttt{cc8}. With the exchange of queens, Black has reduced the risk of an attack on his king, while moving his knight to c4 will ensure equal play in the ensuing endgame. 13.\texttt{e1} \texttt{b7}?! It is better to play 13...\texttt{a6}!N which leads to the positions dealt with under 12...\texttt{a6}. 14.\texttt{d4}± White moves his knights and achieves maximum activity of his minor pieces. His chances on the kingside are increased, while the intended counterplay of Black with ...\texttt{b5}-\texttt{b4} is not working. 14...\texttt{b4}?! 15.\texttt{xb4} \texttt{xb4} 16.\texttt{xa8} \texttt{xa8} 17.\texttt{xb4} \texttt{a6} 18.\texttt{b5} Black is left with a pawn less and with a passive light-squared bishop, Parligras-Jackelen, Germany Bundesliga 2007/08;

D1112132) 12.\texttt{d4}?! with promising play for Black, Wang Yu A-Guo Qi, Xinghua Jiangsu 2011. It may be noticed that the pawn on b4 has a more active role than in positions where it stands on b6;

D1112133) 12.\texttt{b3}?!
This move is very attractive, but it does not interfere with Black's main plans, related to the activation of the bishop on a6 and a typical attack with the f-pawn. 12...\(\text{c7}\) 13.\(\text{xe1}\) 13.f4 \(\text{a6}\) (more precise is 13...b4N with the idea ...\(\text{a6}\) and strong counterplay on the queenside. The white attack with \(\text{f3}\) or with \(\text{h5}\) can easily be defended with ...g6!, for example, 14.\(\text{f3}\) and now 14...g6 15.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{a6}\) 16.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{fc8}\) with excellent play on the queenside, or 14...\(\text{a6}\)?! 15.\(\text{h7+}\) \(\text{h6}\) 16.\(\text{h3+}\) \(\text{g8}\) 17.\(\text{h5}\) f5 (17...f6 18.f5) 18.\(\text{g6}\) 14.b4 axb4 15.cxb4 \(\text{a4}\)∞ Mauro-Rakhorst, ICCF email 2003. 13.b4 14.cxb4 axb4 15.\(\text{e3}\) f5 16.exf6 \(\text{xf6}\) 17.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{d7}\)

Black has already created the strategically better position, which is reflected in the better development and excellent harmony of his pieces. This is one position that shows the dynamic power of this type of centre, but in conjunction with other strategic factors, such as active and harmonious pieces, or active play on the queenside. We have said more on this subject in the variations under 11...f6. 18.\(\text{b3}\) 18.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{ce4}\) 18...\(\text{ce4}\) 19.\(\text{xe4}\) \(\text{xe4}\) 20.f3 \(\text{g5}\) The idea is ...\(\text{g3}\). 21.\(\text{e5}\) \(\text{xe5}\) It is possible to play more aggressively with 21...\(\text{xe3}\) 22.\(\text{xe3}\) \(\text{xh3}\) 23.\(\text{h5}\) e5 with more than enough compensation. 22.\(\text{xe5}\) \(\text{f7}\)

The bishop pair and mobile centre give better play for Black, Sjugirov-Naer, Olginka 2011.

Back to the position after 9...\(\text{d7}\).

D11122) Surrendering his lightsquared bishop leads White into an inferior position: 10.\(\text{b5}\)?! \(\text{c7}\) 11.\(\text{xd7}\) \(\text{xd7}\) 12.\(\text{d4}\) \(\text{a6}\) 13.c4 \(\text{xc5}\) 14.\(\text{f3}\) dxc4 15.\(\text{xc4}\) \(\text{c8}\)
16.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbb{c}4}} \textit{\textbb{b}4} 17.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbb{e}2}} \textit{\textbb{d}5} 18.\textit{\textbb{f}d1} \textit{\textbb{a}4} 19.\textit{\textbb{d}d1} \textit{\textbb{c}xe3} 20.\textit{\textbb{e}3} \textit{\textbb{b}6}=

Radulski-Vernay, Cappelle-la-Grande 2011;

D11123) 10.\textit{\textbb{d}4} is also a very principled continuation, even though it allows the exchange of the strong light-squared bishop for the black knight. White implements the well-known strategy of Nimzowitsch by centralizing the knight on the freshly-liberated square d4. The strength of the fantastic blockading knight on d4 should neutralise the importance of Black's bishop pair, which usually occurs in this variation. But experience has shown that Black can solve his minor problems in the opening. 10...\textit{\textbb{d}xc5} Of course, Black takes with this knight, because with the blockade of the d5 pawn, the future of Black's light-squared bishop is now on the square d7. White now has two logical possibilities. 11.\textit{\textbb{e}f3} 11.f4 \textit{\textbb{b}6} 12.\textit{\textbb{f}2f3} \textit{\textbb{d}7} 13.a3 \textit{\textbb{e}4} (it is also good to play 13...\textit{\textbb{xd}d3} 14.cxd3 \textit{\textbb{c}5} 15.\textit{\textbb{e}e3} \textit{\textbb{a}6} 16.\textit{\textbb{a}d}1 \textit{\textbb{ac}8} with an excellent position for Black) 14.\textit{\textbb{a}2} (White wants to put his bishop on e3. But with this unusual defensive strategy, White cannot count on an advantage. 14.\textit{\textbb{xe}4} dxe4 15.\textit{\textbb{xe}4} \textit{\textbb{c}6} 16.\textit{\textbb{e}3} (16.\textit{\textbb{d}3} \textit{\textbb{ad}8} 16...\textit{\textbb{c}5} 17.c3 \textit{\textbb{ad}8} \textit{\textbb{c}5}) 14...\textit{\textbb{ac}5} 15.\textit{\textbb{e}e3} a4 16.\textit{\textbb{h}1} f6 17.exf6 \textit{\textbb{xf}6} with good play for Black, Kotronias-Barsov, Montreal 2002. 11...\textit{\textbb{xd}3} 12.cxd3 \textit{\textbb{d}6} 13.\textit{\textbb{e}e3} a4 14.\textit{\textbb{a}3} \textit{\textbb{c}5} 15.\textit{\textbb{ac}1} \textit{\textbb{c}8} with a good position for Black, Kir. Georgiev-Kornev, Warsaw 2005;)

D11124) 10.\textit{\textbb{c}4} and now:

D111241) 10...\textit{\textbb{xc}c5} 11.\textit{\textbb{c}2} b6 12.b3 \textit{\textbb{b}7} 13.\textit{\textbb{b}2}

We can now clearly see the idea of the move 10.c4. White is developing and harmonizing his pieces very easily. In addition, White will keep his space advantage for longer, because with a bishop on b2, the exchange of the f-pawn for the e5-pawn is usually not recommended. But Black has benefits too from the position of the pawn on c4. Now the often bad bishop will have the opportunity to operate on the important central diagonal a8-h1 and the black rooks are easily activated on the d- and c-files, because the exchange of the c- and d-pawns is just a question of finding the right moment. Black selected a suspicious plan in the next game:

13...\textit{\textbb{c}7} Black regroups his heavy pieces. After 13...a4?! 14.\textit{\textbb{d}4} axb3 15.axb3 \textit{\textbb{c}8} 16.f4 \textit{\textbb{xa}1} 17.\textit{\textbb{xa}1} dxc4 18.\textit{\textbb{xc}c4} \textit{\textbb{d}5} 19.f5=, thanks to the extra time he has been granted, White was the first to establish a strong initiative, Papp-Sedlak, Zadar 2010; we have said that the bishop on b2 reduces the effectiveness of the typical plan with 13...f6?! 14.\textit{\textbb{ad}1}±. It is also possible for the black queen not to step into the X-ray of the white rook on the c-file by playing 13...\textit{\textbb{b}8}?! 14.\textit{\textbb{ad}1} \textit{\textbb{c}8} 15.\textit{\textbb{fe}f} \textit{\textbb{f}8} 16.\textit{\textbb{b}1} a4 17.\textit{\textbb{e}3} axb3 18.axb3 \textit{\textbb{g}6} 19.h4=. 164
Already it is clear to us that this move has become standard in this line with 10.c4. 19...h6 20.h5 g5 21.f4 (21.g3±) 21...g5 22.f4 (22.g3±) 22...h4 23.f1 and White’s significant space advantage and the reduced scope of the black queen give White the better chances, Kaplan-Rodshtein, Biel 2007. 14.0-0 14.f3 15.d4 g5 16.d5 c6!?N (16...d7 17.a1 dxc4 18.bxc4 c6 19.f3 (a better plan is to move the white knight to e4 with 19.f3! g6 20.e4± xxe4 (20...f4 21.e3±) 21.xe4 c8 22.xd8+ xd8 23.a3±) 19...g6 20.b4 e8 21.e3 (21.h4!?) 21...a6=, Jens-Cvek, Pardubice 2009) 17.f3 dxc4 with a good position and active counterplay for Black.Doubling on the d-file or...g6 may be the next steps for Black. 14...fd8 15.fd1 g8

Obviously, the best set-up for the pieces in this type of position. Since the bishop on b2 discourages play with the f-pawn, Black moves his passive knight from d7 to f8, from where it is defending the critical square h7, and has the option to activate via the square g6. 16.a3 16.h4!? 16...dxc4 17.xc4 xxc1+ 18.xc1 a6?! Moving the bishop from the central diagonal and exchanging on c4 makes sense only if the white pawn structure is damaged. Here, it is more logical to put the rook on the open file: 18...d8!? 19.c2 g6= 19.e3 e8 20.e2 b8 21.h4! A typical plan for this type of position. White’s conquest of space continues to interfere with the activity of the enemy knight via the g6-square, while the invasion of the white knight on d6 is only a matter of time, Can-Bliibbaum, Aix-les-Bains 2011;

D111242) It is also good to take with the other knight: 10...dxc5?! 11.b1 c7 Unlike the previous line 10...ac5, where the prospects for the other knight consisted of ...d7-f5-f6-g6, here the black knight from the square c7 has good chances to jump directly to the central square d5, after an exchange of the c- and d-pawns. 12.xd1 12.exd5 exd5 (Black wants new squares, for example g4 for the bishop, e6 for the knight, for the activity of his own pieces, without any fear of an isolated pawn on d5 which controls the important square e4, and thus significantly reduces the activity and coordination of the white pieces. Consistent with the idea of the variation with ...c7, and another chance for equality, is 12.exd5 13.e4 b6= 14.d1 (14.e5 a6 15.xh7+ g8 16.d1 b4=±, or also 16...xf1?! 17.xf1= with the idea g2-g4 and h3) 14.a6 15.c2 g6 16.h6 e8 with play for both
sides) 13...b3 b6 14...xc5?! (instead of strengthening Black's centre, it is more logical to play 14...d1 with mutual chances) 14...bxc5 15.h3 a6 16.c2 g6 17.d1 d4 18.h6 e8 19.a3 b7 20.d3 d5 21.c2 e6 with better chances for Black, Wang Puchen-Ramirez, Richardson 2010.

12...b6 13.b3
13.e4 a6=, Hess-Bercys, Wheeling 2011; also played is 13.b3 b7 (13...a6) 14.cxd5 a6= (consistent and good is 14...xd5 15.xc5 bxc5=). The black pawns on the queenside are separated but certainly not weak. The active and harmonious black pieces easily compensate for this structural deficiency. A special role in this is played by the fantastic knight centralised on d5. After all this was the idea of the variation with ...c7) 15.xc5 bxc5 16.e3

However, we have to point out that for Black it is better to have a knight on the central square d5. This passive position for the knight on c7 reduces the dynamic power of the pawns on c5 and a5, which in turns gives White a promising position, Ponizil-Cvek, Ostrava 2010.

13...f5?! Black uses this moment to play this blockading move, but it is quite possible to continue in the spirit of the variation with 13...b7 14.b2 d7 15.c2 b5=. However, we have to note that the black queen on d7 and knight on c7 have taken up unnatural positions. The possibility of an exchange of c- and d-pawns directly influences their scope and thus the entire variation. Perhaps we should caution that the natural continuation 10...ac5 is more solid. 14.b2 Better is 14.exf6! xf6 15.e5 b7 16.b2 and the white pieces have become very dangerous to the black king. 14.a6 15.d4 e8 16.a3 b5

and Black takes the initiative, Warakomski-Berger, Germany Bundesliga B 2009/10.

D112) 7.c6 goes into the positions dealt with under 6...c6;
D113) 7.bd7 8.e5=;
D114) 7.a6? 8.e5 d7 9.xa6 bxa6 10.b4=;
D115) 7.xc5?!
In this type of position the bishop is usually useful on the e7-square, since the main plan for White is e4-e5, when the square g5 becomes critical for the attack on the black king. In addition, Black will now have to play the position with a tempo less (he has taken on c5 in two moves), compared with the different order where White applies the 'Nimzowitsch' strategy with dxc5 (for example, variations in the Tarrasch with 3.\(\text{\textbf{d}}d2\) c5). But because of the potential power of Black's centre and the active bishop on the diagonal g1-a7, this tempo is not enough to drive the variation out of tournament practice. 8.0-0 \(\text{\textbf{c}}c6\) 9.e5 Without this move White's plan with \(\text{\textbf{d}}d3\) does not usually make sense. Creating an isolated pawn with exd5?! would activate Black's light-squared bishop and his rook on the e-file, which would give nice play for Black. 9...\(\text{\textbf{d}}d7\) 10.\(\text{\textbf{b}}b3\) and now:

D1151) 10...\(\text{\textbf{e}}e7\) This bishop is again posted on an important defensive diagonal, but at the same time Black has lost two tempi, which gives the opponent time to create a strong initiative. 11.\(\text{\textbf{c}}3\)±

Also logical is 11.c4?!, striking at the centre and seizing the initiative: 11...\(\text{\textbf{d}}xc4\) 12.\(\text{\textbf{x}}x\!c4\) b6 (or 12...\(\text{\textbf{w}}\!c7\) 13.\(\text{\textbf{f}}f4\) \(\text{\textbf{b}}b6\) 14.\(\text{\textbf{d}}d3\) \(\text{\textbf{d}}d5\) 15.\(\text{\textbf{e}}e4\) g6 16.\(\text{\textbf{h}}h6\) \(\text{\textbf{d}}d8\) 17.\(\text{\textbf{a}}a1\) with a more active position for White: 17...\(\text{\textbf{d}}d7\) 18.\(\text{\textbf{f}}e1\) \(\text{\textbf{b}}b6\) 19.\(\text{\textbf{g}}5\) \(\text{\textbf{a}}a8\) 20.\(\text{\textbf{h}}h4\) 13.\(\text{\textbf{d}}d1\) \(\text{\textbf{b}}b7\) 14.\(\text{\textbf{b}}d4\) \(\text{\textbf{xd}}4\) 15.\(\text{\textbf{xd}}4\) \(\text{\textbf{c}}c5\) 16.\(\text{\textbf{f}}f4!\)N (16.\(\text{\textbf{x}}\!e6?!\) fxe6 17.\(\text{\textbf{xe}}6+\) \(\text{\textbf{h}}h8\) 18.\(\text{\textbf{e}}3\) \(\text{\textbf{e}}8\) 19.\(\text{\textbf{d}}x\!e7\) \(\text{\textbf{w}}\!e5\) 20.\(\text{\textbf{d}}d2\) \(\text{\textbf{d}}d6\) 21.\(\text{\textbf{f}}4\) \(\text{\textbf{x}}f4\) 22.\(\text{\textbf{x}}f4\) \(\text{\textbf{w}}xf4\) 23.\(\text{\textbf{x}}x\!d6\) \(\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}\) Bashkov-Hausner, Policia 1993) 16...\(\text{\textbf{w}}\!e7\) 17.\(\text{\textbf{a}}a1\)±.

D11511) 11...\(\text{\textbf{e}}e8\) Of course this is not the only move for Black, but with more active pieces and better control of the centre, White has a promising position in any case. For example, 12.\(\text{\textbf{b}}d4\) \(\text{\textbf{c}}5\) Or 12...\(\text{\textbf{f}}f8\) 13.\(\text{\textbf{e}}1\) \(\text{\textbf{d}}d7\) 14.g3 \(\text{\textbf{c}}8\) 15.h4 f6 16.\(\text{\textbf{f}}4\)± 1-0 (46) Kryvoruchko-Halldorsson, Reykjavik 2009; even after the exchange, things are difficult: 12...\(\text{\textbf{xd}}4\) 13.\(\text{\textbf{xd}}4\) \(\text{\textbf{b}}b8\) 14.\(\text{\textbf{h}}5\)→ Tiviakov-Ionescu, Eforie Nord 2011. 13.\(\text{\textbf{c}}2\) f5 Black wishes to close the diagonal for the white bishop, which is quite understandable, or to create some counterplay by exchanging the e-pawn, in a position where White has more space and his minor pieces are pointing at a fairly unprotected black king. 14.\(\text{\textbf{e}}6\) \(\text{\textbf{f}}6\) 15.\(\text{\textbf{c}}3\) \(\text{\textbf{e}}7\) 16.\(\text{\textbf{d}}d1\) \(\text{\textbf{d}}7\) 17.\(\text{\textbf{e}}1\) \(\text{\textbf{d}}8\) 18.\(\text{\textbf{f}}4\)
A typical and instructive example of Nimzowitschian strategy, whose essence is controlling the central squares with pieces. This strategy is particularly dangerous for the central pawn duo e6 and d5 in the French Defence, when the blockade of the white minor pieces devalues them. This is an example that shows the lack of mobility of Black’s centre and therefore the positional inferiority of Black. We will elaborate later on the conditions necessary for the centre to possess dynamic force. 18...\(\text{dxe4}\) 19.\(\text{cxd4}\) 18...\(\text{dxe4}\) It is instructive to see how GM Kudrin uses the advantages he has obtained from the opening. 20.\(\text{e5}\) \(\text{g5}\) 21.\(\text{a3}\) \(\text{c8}\) 22.\(\text{c1}\) Also easily winning is 22.\(\text{xg5}\) \(\text{xg5}\) 23.\(\text{h5}\). 22...\(\text{g6}\) 23.\(\text{h4}\) \(\text{xg6}\) \(\text{c8}\) 22...\(\text{xg6}\) Kudrin - Taylor, Reno 2004; 
\(\text{D11512})\) 11...\(\text{b6}\) 11...\(\text{c7}\) 12.\(\text{f4}\) 13.\(\text{xf6}\) 14.\(\text{xf6}\) 15.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{a5}\) 16.\(\text{ac1}\) and White has the better chances with more active pieces and a space advantage. 
In this line, Black’s position is more risky after 12...\(\text{dxe4}\)?! 13.\(\text{cxd4}\). White can no longer put his pieces on the square d4, but he has strengthened his
centre and taken away from the black knight the important square c5: 13...\(\text{d8}\) 14.\(\text{h4}\)! 14.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{a5}\) 15.\(\text{ac1}\) \(\text{a6}\).

Of course White is better even with simple developing moves like \(\text{e3}\), \(\text{ac1}\), and so on. However his powerful centre and active pieces allow him to launch an immediate attack on the black king: 14...\(\text{xh4}\) 15.\(\text{g3}\) \(\text{e7}\) 16.\(\text{g2}\) \(\text{f5}\) 17.\(\text{exf6}\) \(\text{xf6}\) 18.\(\text{h1}\) \(\text{g6}\) 19.\(\text{h6}\) \(\text{f7}\) 20.\(\text{ac1}\) What simple and strong play! White is in control of all the important squares, files and diagonals. Chances for the defence are practically zero. 20...\(\text{d7}\) 21.\(\text{e5}\) \(\text{e7}\) 22.\(\text{g4}\) Simonov - Obolenskikh, Novokuznetsk 2008.

\(\text{D1152)})\) 10...\(\text{b6}\)!

with a typical advantage, due to the low mobility of Black’s centre. 12.\(\text{bd4}\) \(\text{b7}\) 13.\(\text{xc6}\) \(\text{xc6}\) 14.\(\text{d4}\) and White has the better chances with more active pieces and a space advantage. 
In this line, Black’s position is more risky after 12...\(\text{dxe4}\)?! 13.\(\text{cxd4}\). White can no longer put his pieces on the square d4, but he has strengthened his

Because of the danger of a sacrifice on h7 and the undefended square g5, in
practice this active move is not usually possible. In addition, in the theoretical positions of this type, Black has usually already played ...f7-f6 and his knight is on f6 after the exchange of pawns. But regardless of the absence of games played with this continuation and with the tempo less, White must not underestimate this position, because after ...f7-f6 it will be dangerous for both sides. Since the typical sacrifice on h7 does not give anything, it is probably best for White to immediately hit the opponent’s centre with c2-c4:

D11521) 11.c4!? Doubtful is 11...f4?! 11...f6 12.exf6 13.gxf6 12...e6 12...xf6 13.gxf6! 13...e6 14.g5 15.d6! 16.xf6+ xf6 17.g5+ xe5 18.dxe5 g4=.

D11522) We have already said that White does not achieve anything with 11.g5+ g6 12.d3+ f5 13.g3 e7 14.xf6 15.dxe6+ 16.xf8+ xf8 17.xg7+ e4 18.g5 e3 19.fxe3 e5=.

D11523) 11.c3 This standard move here is not as effective in combat with Black’s centre, because of tactical possibilities thanks to the active position of the bishop on b6: 11...f6 11...g7? is covered under 8...c7. 12.exf6 xf6 Even the central pawns have additional energy, because Black’s bishop is not on the passive e7-square. For example: 13.b4 13.f4 g4 14.g3 e5=.

Back to the position after 6...e2.

D12) 6...\( \mathcal{c}6 \) Black develops this piece, planning its exchange for the strong bishop on d3. 7.\( \mathcal{g}f3 \).

Now 7...a5 8.0-0 0-0 transposes into a variation from 7...0-0. Independent lines are:

D121) 7...\( \mathcal{b}4 \) and now:

\[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{D1211)} \text{Worth attention is:} 8.\textbf{b}5+ \text{White agrees to exchange his strong light-squared bishop because he will gain a significant advantage in development.} 8...\textbf{d}7 9.0-0 \textbf{c}2 10.\textbf{b}1 \textbf{x}b5 10...\text{dxe4} 11.\textbf{xe4} \textbf{xb5} 12.\textbf{w}xb5+ \textbf{d}7 13.\textbf{xf6}+ \textbf{xf6} 14.\textbf{b}3 \textbf{d}4 15.\textbf{xd}4 \textbf{xd}4 16.\textbf{f}4! \uparrow \textbf{xc}5? 17.\textbf{bc}1... \text{with pleasant play in the endgame, Amonato-Obolenskikh, Moscow 2011.} \\\n11.\textbf{wb}5+ \textbf{d}7 12.\textbf{e}2 \text{dxe4} 13.\textbf{xe}4 \textbf{d}4 14.\textbf{xd}4 \textbf{xd}4 15.\textbf{xf}6+ 15.\textbf{d}6+ \textbf{xd}6 16.\textbf{b}5+ \textbf{f}8. 15...\textbf{xf}6 16.b4 \textbf{d}8 16...0-0 17.\textbf{b}2 \textbf{f}4 18.g3 \textbf{f}5 19.\textbf{xf}6 \textbf{xf}6 20.\textbf{fd}1 \pm. 17.\textbf{e}3 \textbf{e}4 18.\textbf{w}b5+ \text{with pleasant play in the endgame, Amonato-Obolenskikh, Moscow 2011;} \\
10.\textbf{g}5 Or 10.a4 \text{dxe4} (10...\text{b}6 11.e5 \textbf{d}7 12.c6 \textbf{c}5 13.\textbf{bd}4 \textbf{a}6 14.\textbf{b}5 \textbf{b}3 15.\textbf{b}1 \textbf{b}4+ 16.\textbf{f}1 0-0 17.d4 \textbf{f}6) 11.\textbf{dxe}4 0-0 12.0-0 \textbf{b}6. 10...\textbf{a}4 11.\textbf{bd}2 \textbf{h}6 12.\textbf{xf}6 \textbf{xf}6 13.\textbf{ex}d5 13.e5 \textbf{e}7 14.\textbf{c}1 \textbf{a}5 (14...\textbf{a}5 15.\textbf{e}3 0-0 16.0-0 \textbf{d}7 17.\textbf{c}2 \textbf{a}8 18.\textbf{f}c1 \textbf{c}8 19.\textbf{f}1 \textbf{a}7 20.d4 \textbf{a}6 21.\textbf{g}3 \textbf{b}6 22.c6 \textbf{e}8 23.\textbf{h}5 \textbf{b}5 24.g4 \textbf{a}7 25.g5 \textbf{hxg}5 26.\textbf{xf}5 \textbf{ac}7 27.\textbf{h}1 \textbf{xc}6 28.\textbf{xc}6 \textbf{xc}6 29.\textbf{g}1 \textbf{xb}2 30.\textbf{xf}5 \textbf{c}3 31.\textbf{x}e8 1-0 Adams-Morozevich, Sarajevo 2000) with active play and adequate compensation for the pawn, for example 15.\textbf{e}3 \textbf{d}7 (15...b6\textbf{e}) 16.0-0 0-0 17.\textbf{c}2 \textbf{fc}8 18.\textbf{fc}1 \textbf{c}7 \\
\text{and, with active play for all her pieces, Black had enough compensation for the pawn in Pogonina-Matveeva, Elista 2002.} 13.\textbf{xd}5 14.\textbf{e}4 \textbf{d}7 15.0-0 \textbf{c}6 16.\textbf{a}1 \textbf{d}8 17.\textbf{d}6+ \textbf{f}8 18.\textbf{b}4 \textbf{xb}3 19.\textbf{x}b3 \textbf{xb}3 20.\textbf{e}5 \textbf{xe}5 21.\textbf{xe}5 \textbf{xd}3 22.\textbf{f}4? \textbf{wd}2 0-1 Kotronias-Nepomniachtchi, Moscow 2007; \\
13...\text{d}5 14.\textbf{e}4 \textbf{d}7 15.0-0 \textbf{c}6 16.\textbf{a}1 \textbf{d}8 17.\textbf{d}6+ \textbf{f}8 18.\textbf{b}4 \textbf{xb}3 19.\textbf{x}b3 \textbf{xb}3 20.\textbf{e}5 \textbf{xe}5 21.\textbf{xe}5 \textbf{xd}3 22.\textbf{f}4? \textbf{wd}2 0-1 Kotronias-Nepomniachtchi, Moscow 2007; \\
12.\textbf{h}4 \end{array} \]

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The critical position for the continuation 6...\(\text{c}c6\). White has finished his development, but he already plans to exchange his dark-squared bishop after e4-e5, and head for an endgame in which his opponent will have the more passive minor piece. Practice and analysis has shown that Black does not manage to solve all his problems:

\section{D12131)} 12...\(\text{bd}7\)

\section{D121311)} 13.\(\text{bd}6\) Practice has demonstrated that this logical move does not give anything tangible to White. 13...\(\text{dxe}4\) Weaker is 13...0-0 14.e5 \(\text{bh}7\) 15.\(\text{xe}7\) \(\text{xe}7\) 16.\(\text{c}5\)\(=\).

14.\(\text{dxe}4\) \(\text{wb}6\) 15.\(\text{fd}1\) \(\text{a}4\) Black has also played 15...\(\text{b}5\) 16.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{c}6\) 17.e5 (17.\(\text{e}5\)\! 17...0-0 (17...\(\text{xe}4\)? 18.\(\text{c}8\)\(=\)++) 18.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{xc}6\) 19.e5 (19.\(\text{wc}6\) \(\text{wc}6\) 20.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{fd}8\) 21.\(\text{xd}8+\) \(\text{xd}8\) 22.\(\text{f}1\) g5=) 19...\(\text{c}5\) 20.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{dh}4\) 21.\(\text{c}5\) \(\text{g}5\) 22.\(\text{xc}6\)\(=\) 17...\(\text{c}5\) 18.\(\text{fd}4\) 0-0 19.\(\text{wc}5\) \(\text{fe}8\)

Regardless of the delay in developing, Black has managed to create play on the queenside and realistic chances for equality.

Now, 16.\(\text{e}5\) 16.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{d}8\) (16...0-0? 17.e5\(=\)++) 17.\(\text{xd}8+\) (17.\(\text{xc}1\) 0-0=) 17...\(\text{xd}8\) 18.\(\text{c}5\) \(\text{c}6\) 19.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{xc}5\) 20.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{bc}6\) 21.\(\text{xc}5\) g5 22.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{xe}4\) 23.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{cg}3\) 24.\(\text{hx}8\) 0-0= Zhang Pengxiang-Pert, Liverpool 2007; 16.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{xb}3\) 17.\(\text{axb}3\) 0-0 18.\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{xf}6\) 19.e5 \(\text{g}5\) 20.\(\text{d}6\) \(\text{wa}5\) 21.b4 \(\text{wa}4\) 22.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{hx}g5\) 23.g3 \(\text{ac}8\)= Ponomariov-Morozevich, Istanbul 2000.

The knight jump is appealing, but Black holds the balance after 16...0-0 17.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{xb}3\) 18.\(\text{xb}3\) \(\text{fd}8\)! Weak is 18...\(\text{wb}3\)? because after 19.\(\text{c}7\)! Black is facing insoluble problems: 19...\(\text{fd}8\) (19...\(\text{d}8\) 20.\(\text{xf}6++\)) 20.\(\text{dc}1\) \(\text{d}5\) (20...\(\text{g}4\) 21.\(\text{xe}7++\)) 21.\(\text{ex}d\) 21.\(\text{xe}7+\) 22.\(\text{g}4\) 23.\(\text{ex}d\) 24.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{g}xh6\) 26.\(\text{g}xh4\) \(\text{g}xh4\) 27.\(\text{xb}7\) \(\text{g}4+\) 28.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{g}7\) \(\text{f}5\)= Brynell-Johannessen, Gothenburg 2003. 19.\(\text{xf}6+\) \(\text{xf}6\) 20.\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{xf}6\) 21.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{xd}1+\) 22.\(\text{wd}1\) \(\text{d}8\) 23.\(\text{h}5\) \(\text{wd}4\) 24.\(\text{g}3+\) \(\text{f}8\) 25.\(\text{xf}6+\) \(\text{e}7\) 26.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{f}5\)= Parligras-Johannessen, Athens 2003.

\section{D121312)} Instead of the rook move to c1, White can use the same plan as in the variation with 12...\(\text{wb}6\): 13.\(\text{e}5\)\! \(\text{g}8\) 14.\(\text{g}3\) For Black, it is not easy to complete his development. For example:

\section{D1213121)} 14...\(\text{h}5\)?! With the obvious idea to develop the knight via h6 to square f5. But in this type of position, this usually entails a further weakening of Black's kingside. Besides getting a
new object of attack in the pawn on h5. White has a good chance to force a useful strategic exchange of dark-squared bishops on the weakened square g5.

15.\textit{Q}fd4 g6 16.\textit{Q}ac1 b6 It is hard to know which square is more important: c5 or c6. 16...\textit{Q}h6 17.\textit{Q}f4 \textit{Q}f5 18.\textit{Q}xf5 gxf5 19.\textit{Q}e3 b6 20.\textit{Q}d4±.

White has a healthier pawn structure and the exchange of dark-squared bishops is only a matter of time. White should not rush into taking the passive light-squared bishop. It is best first to improve his bishop position: 17.\textit{Q}f4!?N 17.\textit{Q}c6 White takes control of the c-file, but this does not seem to benefit him practically. 17...\textit{Q}xc6 18.\textit{Q}xc6 \textit{Q}h6 19.\textit{Q}f4 \textit{Q}f5 20.\textit{Q}fc1 0-0 21.d4 \textit{Q}g5 22.\textit{Q}d2 \textit{Q}xf4 23.\textit{Q}xf4 \textit{Q}d7 24.\textit{Q}c2 \textit{Q}c8 25.\textit{Q}c1 \textit{Q}e7 26.\textit{Q}c7 \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} Cheparinov-Riazantsev, Hoogeveen 2002.

17...\textit{Q}c8 17...\textit{Q}h6 18.\textit{Q}xh6 \textit{Q}xh6 19.\textit{Q}c6 \textit{Q}xc6 20.\textit{Q}xc6± – with additional strategic minuses, Black runs out of active play; the pawn rush 17...g5, without good development, usually just results in the creation of new weaknesses, for example 18.\textit{Q}e3±. 18.\textit{Q}x8 \textit{Q}xc8 19.\textit{Q}c1 \textit{Q}b7 20.\textit{Q}e3± In addition to control of the only open file, White has established improved coordination of his pieces. The black knight is still on the eighth rank and the exchange of dark-squared bishops is closer. Chances are clearly better for White in the forthcoming battle;

D1213122) 14...a5 Black wants to free the square c5 for his bishop to complete development. But White can use the extra time even here. 15.\textit{Q}ac1 15.\textit{Q}f4!? a4 16.\textit{Q}bd4 \textit{Q}c5 17.\textit{Q}e3 \textit{Q}b6 (17...b6 18.\textit{Q}c2 and Black still has not solved all his problems) and now instead of 18.\textit{Q}fc1 \textit{Q}e7 19.\textit{Q}c2 0-0 20.\textit{Q}ac1 \textit{Q}g6 0-1 (56), Hossain-Johannessen, Dhaka 2002), interestingly, White gets better chances on the b-file with 18.b3!

18...\textit{Q}e7 (risky is 18...a3 19.\textit{Q}c1 \textit{Q}e7 20.\textit{Q}c2 0-0 21.\textit{Q}xa3±; and after 18...axb3 19.\textit{Q}fb1!± all the white pieces are working and his play on the b-file gives him a strong initiative) 19.bxa4 and White will have a strong initiative on the b-file.
15...a4 16.\( \text{dc5} \) \( \text{axc5} \) 16...\( \text{c6?!} \) 17.\( \text{d4} \)±; 16...\( \text{b6?!} \) 17.\( \text{xd7} \) \( \text{xd7} \) 18.\( \text{xf4} \) \( \text{d8} \) 19.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{a6} \) 20.\( \text{c5} \) \( \text{e7} \) 21.\( \text{d4} \) with a difficult position for Black, Womacka-Seifert, Bad Wiessee 2002. It is not so terrible to give up the dark-squared bishop for the active white knight, especially if Black reaches an opposite-coloured bishops endgame and with tempo frees a square for his knight. 17.\( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{e7} \) 18.\( \text{f4} \) 0-0 19.\( \text{fc1} \) \( \text{c6} \) Black is a little passive, but there are real chances to draw, because White has no practical benefit from the control over the c-file.

\[ \text{D12132) So as to give his knight a square after e4-e5 and to activate his light-squared bishop, Black needs to make the exchange 12...\( \text{dxe4?!} \). But White is rather better developed, so it is not yet the right time to open the position in the centre. 13.\( \text{dxe4} \) \( \text{d7} \) 17.\( \text{d6?!} \) – White exchanges his knight for the inferior bishop, but has in mind control of the c-file and the passive position of the knight on h7: 17...\( \text{xc6} \) 18.\( \text{xc6} \)± 16...\( \text{d7} \) 17.\( \text{c3} \) (17.\( \text{d6}?! \)?) 17...\( \text{fc8} \) 18.\( \text{ac1} \) a5 19.a3 \( \text{xc3} \) 20.\( \text{xc3} \) \( \text{c8} \) and Black is very close to equalizing but he will continue to have problems on the c-file, Azarov-Cobb, Izmir 2004. 14.\( \text{xe7} \) \( \text{xe7} \) 15.\( \text{fd4} \) The set-up with 15.\( \text{ac1?!} \)\( \text{b8} \) 16.\( \text{fd4} \) \( \text{d7} \) 17.\( \text{f4} \) seems more logical, with better chances for White. 15...a5 16.\( \text{f4} \) a4 17.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{c5} \) 18.\( \text{f3} \) b6 19.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{b4} \) 20.\( \text{ad1} \) \( \text{ae8} \) 21.b4 \( \text{a5} \) 22.a5 \( \text{wd7} \) 23.\( \text{h3} \)± 23.\( \text{b4} \) \( \text{a4} \) 24.\( \text{a1} \)± 23...\( \text{f5} ? \) 24.\( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{gxf6} \) 25.b4 \( \text{a4} \) 26.\( \text{f5} \)± Nguyen Ngoc Truongson-Nepomniachtchi, Moscow 2007;

\[ \text{D12134) Black has problems with his development, even after the popular 12...\( \text{b6} \) 13.e5 \( \text{g8} \) 14.\( \text{g3} \)!!} \]

13...\( \text{b6} \) 13...\( \text{d7} \) 14.\( \text{e5} \)±; after 13...0-0 Black is prepared for the advance e4-e5 but the newly-opened d-file causes him additional problems: 14.\( \text{fd1} \)±. 14.e5 \( \text{d5} \) 15.\( \text{xe7} \) \( \text{xe7} \) 16.\( \text{fd2} \) 0-0 17.\( \text{c4} \)±;

\[ \text{D12133) 12...0-0?! 13.e5 \( \text{d7} \) 13...\( \text{h7} \) 14.\( \text{xe7} \) \( \text{xe7} \) 15.\( \text{fc1} \) b6 (15...\( \text{d7} \) 16.\( \text{c5}?! \) b6 17.\( \text{b7} \)±) 16.\( \text{fd4} \) (more logical is 16.\( \text{bd4} \) An excellent idea. White has greater chances for an advantage by leaving the black pieces to stumble over each other. Bringing the bishop to e3 and the rook to c1, White will remain more active, with better harmony of his pieces, and thus will have the better chances in the forthcoming battle. Consistent, but not yielding anything, is 14.\( \text{xe7} \) \( \text{xe7} \) 15.\( \text{fd4} \) \( \text{d7} \) 16.\( \text{ac1} \) 0-0 17.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{fc8} \).} \]
Black has no problems and has equal play, Leko-Morozevich, Sarajevo 1999. 14...a5 15.\(\text{\textit{e}}\)f4 a4 16.\(\text{\textit{e}}\)e3 \(\text{\textit{a}}\)a6
17.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)c5! A real hit on the target. It is attractive to centralise the knight but the position calls for inventive play. Weaker is 17.\(\text{\textit{b}}\)bd4 \(\text{\textit{d}}\)d8 18.\(\text{\textit{e}}\)e2 \(\text{\textit{e}}\)e7 19.\(\text{\textit{b}}\)b4 0-0 20.\(\text{\textit{a}}\)ac1 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)c8 21.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)c3 \(\text{\textit{d}}\)d7 22.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)fc1 \(\text{\textit{e}}\)c8 23.\(\text{\textit{a}}\)xc8 \(\text{\textit{d}}\)xc8 24.\(\text{\textit{h}}\)h3 \(\text{\textit{a}}\)a7 25.\(\text{\textit{g}}\)g3 \(\frac{1}{2}\)-\(\frac{1}{2}\), Ye Jiangchuan-Barsov, Moscow 2001. A nice example of how a little hesitation allows Black to consolidate.

17...\(\text{\textit{a}}\)a5 18.\(\text{\textit{b}}\)b4! White should not drop the initiative, which his better development gives him. A little hesitation would give the opponent time to consolidate his kingside and to activate his bishop pair. 18...\(\text{\textit{a}}\)xb3 18...\(\text{\textit{a}}\)a4?!
19.\(\text{\textit{a}}\)ab1 and White will regain his pawn, with entry deep into enemy territory. 19.\(\text{\textit{a}}\)xb3 \(\text{\textit{a}}\)a4 20.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)c5 20.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d1!

D122) 7...0-0 8.0-0. Now 8...\(\text{\textit{a}}\)xc5 is covered under 7...\(\text{\textit{a}}\)c5. Other alternatives are:

D1221) 8...\(\text{\textit{a}}\)b4 9.\(\text{\textit{b}}\)b3 \(\text{\textit{a}}\)a5 A continuation often seen in this variation, since usually the black counterplay is on the queenside. Or 9...\(\text{\textit{d}}\)xd3 10.\(\text{\textit{e}}\)exd3 \(\text{\textit{a}}\)a5 11.\(\text{\textit{g}}\)g5 a4 12.\(\text{\textit{b}}\)bd2 \(\text{\textit{h}}\)h6 13.\(\text{\textit{a}}\)xf6 \(\text{\textit{a}}\)xf6 14.e5 \(\text{\textit{e}}\)e7 15.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)fc1 \(\text{\textit{a}}\)a5 16.\(\text{\textit{e}}\)e3 \(\text{\textit{a}}\)a7 with some (questionable) compensation, Kudrin-Strugatsky, Reno 2002. Now:

D12211) 10.\(\text{\textit{g}}\)g5 10.\(\text{\textit{e}}\)exd5 \(\text{\textit{a}}\)xd3 11.\(\text{\textit{a}}\)xd3 12.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d1 a4 13.\(\text{\textit{b}}\)bd4 \(\text{\textit{a}}\)xc5 14.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)c4 \(\text{\textit{a}}\)f6 15.\(\text{\textit{a}}\)e2?! \(\text{\textit{b}}\)b6 16.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)f4 \(\text{\textit{d}}\)d7 17.\(\text{\textit{h}}\)h3 \(\text{\textit{f}}\)fd8 18.\(\text{\textit{e}}\)e1

with clearly better chances for White, who already has a concrete threat in
19.\texttt{e}5 \texttt{d}7 20.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{f}8 and Black, with his pair of bishops, has a promising position, Savicevic-Antic, Leskovac 2002. \textit{10...a4!} After 10...h6 11.\texttt{x}xf6 \texttt{x}xf6 12.e5 \texttt{e}7 13.a4! White restrains Black's play on the queenside, without compromising his important squares as in the variation with 10.a4?!. It is revealing to notice that this move would have been undesirable in the previous variation because White has not exchanged his bishop for the knight on f6. 13...b6 14.c6 (14.cxb6?! \texttt{x}xd3 15.cxd3 \texttt{w}xb6 with typical compensation) 14...\texttt{x}xc6 15.c3 \texttt{d}7 16.\texttt{c}c2 \texttt{c}8 (16...f6 17.exf6 \texttt{x}xf6) 17.\texttt{fe}1 \texttt{e}8 18.\texttt{ad}1 g6 19.\texttt{bd}4 and without the possibility of ...f7-f6 and action on the queenside Black will have a passive position regardless of the bishop pair, Lane-Antic, Canberra 2007.

With full compensation due to the bishop pair, which will soon act on the open diagonals;

\textbf{D12212)} \textit{10.a4?!} This move stops the further advance of the black a-pawn, but permanently weakens the queenside. Now Black has two ways to carry through the planned ...b7-b6 and activate play on the queenside: \textit{10...b6}

\textbf{Chapter 4 - The Tarrasch Variation}

11.\texttt{bd}2 11.\texttt{bd}4 h6 12.\texttt{xf}6 \texttt{xf}6 13.e5 \texttt{e}7=. 11...h6 An interesting idea is 11...\texttt{a}5?! 12.exd5 (12.e5?! \texttt{d}7 13.\texttt{xe}7 \texttt{xe}7 14.a3 \texttt{x}xd3 15.cxd3 with slightly better chances for White, because Black needs more time to activate his bishop and to regroup his pieces on the queenside) 12...exd5 13.\texttt{fe}1 (13.c3 \texttt{xd}3 14.\texttt{xd}3 \texttt{xc}5) 13...\texttt{x}c5= \textfrac{1}{2}-\textfrac{1}{2} (33) Hindermann-A. David, Orsay 2009. 12.\texttt{xf}6 \texttt{xf}6 13.c3 \texttt{xd}3 14.\texttt{xd}3 b6!N

The main idea of this variation. Black gives a pawn for active play on the queenside.
If 10...\texttt{xd}3 11.cxd3 dxe4 12.dxe4 b6 13.\texttt{d}1 \texttt{c}7 14.\texttt{g}5 (14.cxb6 \texttt{xb}6 \texttt{c}6; worthy of attention is 14.\texttt{fd}4?! bxc5 15.\texttt{b}5 \texttt{c}6 (15...\texttt{e}5?! 16.f3 \texttt{d}7) 16.f3 e5 17.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{e}6 18.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{d}7 19.\texttt{c}4 \texttt{fb}8 20.b3 \texttt{xc}4 21.\texttt{xc}4 \texttt{b}6 22.\texttt{c}2 c4 23.\texttt{ac}1 \texttt{c}5 24.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{xe}3+ 25.\texttt{xe}3 \texttt{d}8 26.\texttt{e}1 \texttt{ac}8 27.\texttt{a}7 1-0 Stojanovic-Kosic, Jahorina 2003) 14...bxc5 15.\texttt{ac}1 \texttt{a}6 16.\texttt{c}2
The Modern French

10...exd4; it is obvious that White has many weaknesses and problems on the queenside. Black has full compensation for the pawn less, Kotenko-Popov, St. Petersburg 2008.

12...c6 It is risky to play without the pawn: 12...c5?! 13.b5 xb3 14.cxb3 c7 15.g5± Kotronias-Picard, Maastricht 2008. 13.d1 Not good is 13.bxd4?! because of the nice tactical blow 13...dxe5! 14.xe5 xd4 15.h5 f5 ½-½ (27) Lane-Antic, Canberra 2007; and Black solves all his problems after the tepid 13.c3 c5 14.exd5 bxc5 15.h5 c7! Black will now easily exchange his passive bishop: 15...h6 16.f4 a6 17.xa6 xa6= Bellia-Drasko, Ancona 2009. 13...c7 Passive is 13...b7 14.b4 c5 15.exd5 cxd6 16.d4 d7 17...b5 f6 18.f4 with slightly better chances for White, Lefebvre-Vojinovic, Caen 2009. 14.f4 b4 14...c5?!N 15.b4 (15.exd5 bxc5=) 15...xd3 16.xd3 (16.cxd5 xd4 17.xd4 a6=) 16...a6= 15.b5 xc2 16.xc2 xc2 17.a1 b4 18.xc8 xc8 19.xd7 c2 20.d2 xd2 21.xd2 d3 22.c3 b4 23.d4 c5 24.exd5 bxc5 25.c3 b8∞

With a difficult ending for both sides, Kotronias-Drasko, Cuto 2004;

D1222) Also often played is 8...a5 when White has the following acceptable continuations:

D12221) A direct attack in the centre with 9.c4 is perhaps the best way to get an advantage. 9...a4 Black secures the square c5 for his dark-squared bishop. White achieved the better play after 9...xc5 10.e5 d7 11.b3 e7 12.d1 a4 13.b4 c5 (13...dxe5 14.xe5 xd4 15.xh7+±) 14.c2 d7 15.cxd5 exd5 16.e3 g6 17.ac1 e6 18.b5±


10.d1 Worthy of attention is 10.e1!? xc5 11.h3 g6? 12.e5 d7 13.a3 b6? (13...e8?!?) 14.cxd5 exd5 15.b4 axb3 16.axb3 e7 17.xd4 xd4?! (Black has no need to exchange
his important knight for the white knight on b3. Better was 17...a4 18.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)b5 \(\text{\textit{d}}\text{e}8=\) 18.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)xd4 \(\text{\textit{a}}\)a4 (18...\(\text{\textit{c}}\)e8?) 19.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)b5 \(\text{\textit{e}}\)e6?! 20.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)h6 \(\text{\textit{d}}\text{e}8 21.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)d6 \(\text{\textit{e}}\)xd6 22.exd6± Rozentalis-B. Socko, Ustron 2007. 10...\(\text{\textit{c}}\)xc5 11.exd5 exd5 12.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)xd5 \(\text{\textit{b}}\)b4 13.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)e4 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)xd3 14.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)xd3 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)xd3 15.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)xe4 \(\text{\textit{d}}\text{e}8 16.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)f4 \(\text{\textit{b}}\)b6 17.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)e3 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)xb2= ½-½ Marinkovic-Drasko, Vrnjacka Banja 1999. 14...\(\text{\textit{f}}\)f5 15.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)xf6+ \(\text{\textit{c}}\)xf6 16.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)d5 b6 17.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)e3 17.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)g5 \(\text{\textit{g}}\)g6 18.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)e3 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)xe3 19.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)h4 \(\text{\textit{d}}\)f6 20.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)x\(\text{\textit{d}}\) f5 \(\text{\textit{d}}\)f2+= Asrian-S. Lputian, Yerevan 2000. 17...\(\text{\textit{e}}\)a5 18.\(\text{\textit{e}}\)e2 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)xe3 19.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)xe3 a3 20.\(\text{\textit{e}}\)e3 axb2 21.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)a1 \(\text{\textit{d}}\)e7 ½-½ (25) Rublevsky-Pelletier, Poikovsky 2003; D12222) 9.a4 Grandmaster Tiviakov thought that this continuation gives White a slight advantage. However, our analysis does not confirm this. 9...\(\text{\textit{c}}\)b4! goes into positions covered under 7...0-0 8.0-0 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)b4; D12223) The quiet move 9.c3 brings equal and easy play for Black after 9...\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d7!.

9...\(\text{\textit{d}}\)e8 is grandmaster Drasko's favourite continuation, thanks to his successful score in previous games. However this continuation allows White to occupy the centre with typical manoeuvres, such as the e4-e5 advance and

\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{e}2-\text{b}3-\text{d}4: 10.e5 \(\text{\textit{d}}\)d7 11.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)b3 a4 12.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)bd4 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)xc5 13.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)c2 \(\text{\textit{d}}\)d7 14.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)f4 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)e8 15.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)fd1 \(\text{\textit{b}}\)h6 16.b4± Carlsson-Drasko, Porto Carras 2011. 10.exd5 Nothing is changed by 10.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)e1 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)xc5 11.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)c2 and now 11...\(\text{\textit{c}}\)b6 12.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d4 \(\text{\textit{d}}\)xd4 13.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)xd4 \(\text{\textit{a}}\)a6 14.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)e3 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)xe4 15.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)xe4 dxe4 16.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)xe4 g6= was Korneev-Romero Holmes, Mislata 2001. Also possible is 11...a4 although the b3-square is not that important when the black bishop is not on c5: 12.exd5 exd5 13.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)f1 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)f6 14.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)e3 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)e8 15.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)d1 and White aims at the pawn on a4, D. Popovic-Hoffmann, Zurich 2010. 10...exd5 11.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)c2 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)xc5 12.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)b3 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)e8 13.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)xc5 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)xc5 14.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d3 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)g6 15.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)g5 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)b6 16.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)b3 \(\text{\textit{d}}\)d4 17.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)xd4 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)xd4 18.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)xd4 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)xd4 19.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)d1 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)xb2 20.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)f3 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)e6 21.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)b1 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)c5 22.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)xe6 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)xe6 23.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)e3 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)d4 24.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)xb7 ½-½ Cu. Hansen-Lputian, Istanbul 2000.

Back to the position after 6...\(\text{\textit{c}}\)c6 7.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)gf3.

D123) 7...\(\text{\textit{c}}\)xc5 8.0-0 Worth consideration is 8.exd5 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)xd5 9.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)e4 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)e7 10.0-0 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)c7 11.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)f4 12.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)xf4 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)xf4 13.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)c5 0-0 14.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)d1 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)d8 (14...\(\text{\textit{c}}\)e5) 15.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)b5 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)d7 16.g3 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)c7 17.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)d6 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)e8 18.\(\text{\textit{c}}\)xe8 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)xe8 19.b4 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)ed8= Panchanathan-Antic, Kalamaria 2009. 8...\(\text{\textit{c}}\)c7!?
Black takes his queen to the ideal square for this type of position, whilst also retaining the possibility of kingside castling. The potential power of this set-up of the black pieces is known in other openings, such as the Queen’s Gambit or the Paulsen Variation of the Sicilian Defence. White has a choice between different plans and types of positions, but the practice and analysis show that there is no visible path to a realistic advantage. More inferior continuations, such as 9.a3 or 9.c3, can even easily lead to problematic positions for White.

D1231) 9.e5

D12311) 9...d7 10.b3 e7 Very risky is the active 10...d6?! 11.e1± and now with the preventive 11...h6, Black actually admits strategic defeat in the opening. White has several ways to achieve better play, the simplest being 12.c4?! If 11...0-0? 12.xh7+--; or 11...f6 12.exf6 xf6 13.c4 0-0 14.c5. 11.e1 b6 12.c3 c5 13.c2 a6 14.d1 d7 15.bd4± (Vysochin-B. Socko, Polanica Zdroj 2000)

15...dxe5? 16.xe5 xe5
17.h5++;

D12312) A complex position occurs after the more active 9...g4!?N.

10.b3 b6 11.a4 f6 12.c4! fxe5 13.g3 f7 and now 14.c5!? may be an idea; or 14.exd5 exd5 15.xe5 (15.xe5 0-0++; 15.h3 0-0!) 15...dxe5 16.xe5 0-0 17.d4 f4 18.g3 h6 19.h4 xh4 20.xd4 b6++; or 14.h3 e4 15.hxg4 exd3 16.xd3 dxc4 17.xc4 e5 18.e4 0-0.

D1232) 9.exd5 d5 10.e4 e7 11.c4 e5!± 11...f4 12.xf4 xf4= transposes into a game shown under 8.exd5;

D1233) An option is to hit the centre immediately with 9.c4 dxc4 10.xc4 (or 10.xc4 e5!) with a position which may occur in the Queen’s Gambit Accepted: 10...g4?! 10...0-0!N 11.e5 (11.b3 d6 12.g5 g4 13.h3 h2 14.gxh2 xh2+ 15.h1 f4 16.xf4 xf4=) 11...g4 12.e4 cxe5=. 11.h3 h5 11...ge5 12.xe5±; 11...d4 12.d3 e5 13.xe5 xe5 14.b4 b6 15.b2 with a clear advantage. 12.b4!
12...\(\texttt{\#d4}\) 12...\(\texttt{\#xb4}\) 13.\(\texttt{\#b2}\)!
12...\(\texttt{\#xb4}\)?! 13.\(\texttt{\#b5+} \texttt{\#c6} 14.\(\texttt{\#b2}\)
with more than enough compensation.
13.\(\texttt{\#b1} \texttt{\#d7} 14.\(\texttt{\#b5} \texttt{\#e7} 15.\(\texttt{\#e5!+-}\)
\(\texttt{\#b6} 16.\(\texttt{\#a3} \texttt{\#f5} 17.\(\texttt{\#e4} f6 18.\(\texttt{\#d6+}\)
\(\texttt{\#xd6} 19.\(\texttt{\#exd6} \texttt{\#d8} 20.\(\texttt{\#xe6} 1-0 (31)\)
Efimenko-Morozevich, Dresden 2008; D1234) 9.c3

Even this standard multi-purpose move
(it controls the important squares \(d4\) and \(b4\), and releases the important \(b1-h7\) diagonal for White’s light-
squared bishop and queen) does not
give White enough in the fight for an
advantage. Important NOTE: this posi-
tion can also arise from the following or-
der of moves: 3...\(\texttt{\#e7} 4.c3 c5 5.dxc5
\(\texttt{\#c5} 6.\(\texttt{\#d3} \texttt{\#f6} 7.\(\texttt{\#e2} \texttt{\#c6} 8.\(\texttt{\#gf3}
\(\texttt{\#c7}?! 9.0-0 0-0. 9...0-0! Weak is
9...\(\texttt{\#d7}?!). This is a popular move, but
with this strategy Black cannot achieve
anything good. By taking away the
square \(d7\) from his knight, and with the
king still in the centre, White’s main
idea of \(e4-e5\) gains in strength: 10.e5
\(\texttt{\#g4} 11.\(\texttt{\#b3} \texttt{\#b6}\) (we believe that the
passive 11...\(\texttt{\#e7}?! gives White the ad-
antage, which in this position is larger
than usual because Black did not man-
age to castle, in two simple ways with
12.\(\texttt{\#e1)! or 12.\(\texttt{\#f4})! 12.\(\texttt{\#fd4}?!\) (White
should play the usual 12.\(\texttt{\#f4} f6\) and
now the simple 13.\(\texttt{\#bd4}!\) gives
White a tremendous initiative. Because
of the king in the centre, in many vari-
tions Black will have a problem with the
check from the white queen on \(h5\)
12...\(\texttt{\#xe5} 13.\(\texttt{\#f4} g5 14.\(\texttt{\#g3} h5=\)
10.e5 \(\texttt{\#d7} 11.\(\texttt{\#b3} 11.\(\texttt{\#xh7+} \texttt{\#xh7N}\)
(11...\(\texttt{\#h8} 12.\(\texttt{\#c2} \texttt{\#xe5} 13.\(\texttt{\#b3}
\(\texttt{\#xf3}+ 14.\(\texttt{\#xf3} f5 15.\(\texttt{\#e1} – with a
different order of moves we have the
same position which appeared in the
game Kosten-Seknicka, Austria
2009/10) 12.\(\texttt{\#g5+} \texttt{\#g6} 13.\(\texttt{\#d3}+ f5
14.\(\texttt{\#xe6} (14.\(\texttt{\#xf6}+ \texttt{\#xf6} 15.\(\texttt{\#h7}
\(\texttt{\#de5} 16.\(\texttt{\#ge4+ dx4} 17.\(\texttt{\#xe4+} \texttt{\#f7}
18.\(\texttt{\#xc5} \texttt{\#g6} 19.\(\texttt{\#h6} \texttt{\#e5} 20.\(\texttt{\#fe1}
\(\texttt{\#h8} 21.\(\texttt{\#xh8} \texttt{\#xh8} 22.\(\texttt{\#xe5} \texttt{\#xe5}
with a material advantage for Black)
14...\(\texttt{\#xe5} 15.\(\texttt{\#xf8+} \texttt{\#xf8}! 16.\(\texttt{\#f3}
\(\texttt{\#e4 with good chances for Black.}
11...\(\texttt{\#b6 The passive 11...\(\texttt{\#e7}?! gives
the opponent a typical advantage
('Nimzowischian' control of the centre
with pieces) with 12.\(\texttt{\#e1}\) (or with
12.\(\texttt{\#f4} f6? 13.\(\texttt{\#xf6}+--) 12...f6
13.\(\texttt{\#xf6} \texttt{\#xf6} 14.\(\texttt{\#bd4}+ Korneev-
Peric, Orense 2000 with a typical ad-
antage because of the passive bishop
on \(e7\).
12.\(\texttt{\#e1} White can do nothing with the
charming sacrifice 12.\(\texttt{\#xh7+} \texttt{\#xh7}
13.\(\texttt{\#g5+} \texttt{\#g6} 14.\(\texttt{\#d3}+ f5 and Black
has enough defensive resources, as well
as extra material: 15.\(\texttt{\#g3} (15.\(\texttt{\#xf6+}
\texttt{\#xf6} 16.\(\texttt{\#h3} \texttt{\#de5} 17.\(\texttt{\#h7+} \texttt{\#f7}
18.\(\texttt{\#xf8} \texttt{\#xf8} 19.\(\texttt{\#h8+} \texttt{\#f7} 20.\(\texttt{\#e3}
\texttt{\#g6} 21.\(\texttt{\#h5} \texttt{\#d7=} 15...\(\texttt{\#xe5}
16.\(\texttt{\#f4} \texttt{\#e2} 17.\(\texttt{\#xe6+} \texttt{\#g4; in case
of 12.\(\texttt{\#f4} f6=\) White will probably
have to exchange his dark-squared
bishop in the flight for the key square
e5, which will give Black a mobile cen-
tre and promising play. 12...\(\texttt{\#f6} 13.\(\texttt{\#xf6}
\texttt{\#xf6} 14.\(\texttt{\#bd4 e5!}
The e-pawn often becomes expendable when the black pieces are in active positions. 15...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{Qxe5 Qxd4}} Risky is 15...\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{Oxe5?!}} because of 16.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{Wxe5 Be8}} 17.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{Wxe8+ Qxe8}} 18.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{Mxe8+ Wf7}} 19.\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{Mh8\textasciitilde}}. \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{Cxd4 Qxd4=}}. D1235) 9.a3

This multi-purpose move, praised by many authors, in our opinion does not give the best chance for advantage. Moreover, there is no pleasure for White anywhere. The main idea lies in the standard action with b2-b4 and the placing of the bishop on b2, where it can support White’s main plan with e4-e5:

9...0-0 9...a6?! 10.e5 (stronger than 10.b4 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{Qd4}} 11.\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{Oxd4 Qxd4}} 12.\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{Ma2}} \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} Jaracz-B. Socko, Plock 2000) 10...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{Od7}} (10...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{Qg4}} is answered by 11.b4, followed by \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{Bb2}}, with advantage) 11.\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{Ee1 b5}} 12.\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{Bb3 Be7}} 13.\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{Ff4 Qb6}} 14.\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{Qfd4 Qd7}} 15.\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{C3 a4}} 16.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{Qxc6 Qxc6}} 17.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{Qd4=}} Tiviakov-Art. Minasian, Ohrid 2001; 9...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{Od7?!}} 10.e5 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{Gg4}} 11.b4 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{Qd4}} 12.\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{Wd1 Bb6}} 13.\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{Bb2 Qxf3+}} 14.\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{Qxf3=}} Kotronias-Barsov, Patras 2001. 10.e5 White gives excellent play to his opponent with 10.exd5?! exd5= White has probably lost more whilst he was creating the isolated pawn for his opponent. This exchange makes more sense when Black cannot take on d5 with the pawn. The white queen does not belong on the newly-opened e-file and the black light-squared bishop has a new life on the diagonal c8-h3. 11.\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{b3 Bb6}} (good is 11...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{Qd6=}}) 12.\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{e3 Gg4}} 13.\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{xb6 Wxb6}} 14.\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{We3 Wxe3}} 15.\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{fxe3 Fe8=}} \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} (37) Rogic-Kritz, Paks 2000. 10...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{Qd7}} Weaker is 10...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{Qg4?!}} 11.b4 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{Be7}} 12.\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{Bb2}}. Now, natural but risky is: 11.\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{b3}} 11.b4 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{Qd4!}} (11...\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{Qd4}} 12.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{Wd1 Qxf3+}} 13.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{Qxf3 Be7}} 14.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{b2}} a5 15.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{Wd2 axb4}} \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} Kurmann-Riff, Mulhouse 2010) 12.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{Qxh7+}} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{Qxh7}} 13.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{Wd3+}} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{Qg8}} 14.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{Qxd4 Qxd4}} 15.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{Wxd4 Wxe5}} \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} Shytaj-Erdös, Deizisau 2011. After 11...\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{Bb6!}}

there is not a good plan for White against the threat of creating a mobile centre with ...f7-f6. By contrast, the passive 11...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{Qe7?!}} allows the opponent to consolidate the central pawns with 12.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{Qf4}} and gain the better chances: 12...f6? 13.exf6+-.
12.\text{\texttt{f4}} f6 13.c4! (a typical blow to weaken the black centre) 13...fxe5 14.e3 d8 15.\text{\texttt{xe5}} dxe5 16.\text{\texttt{xe5}} \text{\texttt{xe5}} 17.\text{\texttt{xe5}} (White has reduced the power of Black’s centre with c2-c4, but he has had to give up the important dark-squared bishop) 17...\text{\texttt{f6}} 18.\text{\texttt{xf6}} \text{\texttt{xf6}}. In the upcoming battle Black will have the better chances, thanks to his pair of bishops. Also questionable is 12.\text{\texttt{xe7}}+?! \text{\texttt{xh7}} 13.\text{\texttt{g5+}} \text{\texttt{g6}} 14.\text{\texttt{d3+}} f5 15.\text{\texttt{g3}} \text{\texttt{xe5}} 16.\text{\texttt{f4}} \text{\texttt{e2}} 17.\text{\texttt{xe6+}} \text{\texttt{g4+}}. 12...f6! 13.exf6 \text{\texttt{xf6}}

One of the examples of the dynamic power of Black’s centre, because White failed to establish control of the central squares d4 and e5. It is also obvious that the activity of the black pieces, in particular of the dark-squared bishop, directly affects the strength of the central pawns. An active black bishop on b6, in cooperation (coordination) with other active pieces, increases the tactical options (for example ...e6-e5), and can often make the pawn on e6 turn into a most dangerous soldier. 14.\text{\texttt{xe3}} e5 15.\text{\texttt{xb6}} \text{\texttt{xb6}} 16.\text{\texttt{b5}} e4 17.\text{\texttt{fd2}} \text{\texttt{g4}} 18.\text{\texttt{f1}} \text{\texttt{ce5}} 18...\text{\texttt{xf2}} 19.\text{\texttt{xf2}} \text{\texttt{g4+}}. 19.h3 \text{\texttt{h6}} with a superior position for Black, primarily because of the vulnerable location of the bishop on b5, Kotronias-Banikas, Rhodes 2008.

Important: In the critical position which arises after 4...c5! 5.dxc5 \text{\texttt{d6}} 6.\text{\texttt{e2}} 0-0 (it is worth considering the alternative 6...\text{\texttt{c6}} 7.\text{\texttt{gf3}} \text{\texttt{c5}} 8.0-0 \text{\texttt{c7}} 9.c3 0-0 10.e5 \text{\texttt{de7}} 11.\text{\texttt{b3}} and now the surprising 11...\text{\texttt{b6}}!?. Black doesn’t care for the weakened g5-square but instead keeps the bishop on the central diagonal. The seemingly dangerous 12.\text{\texttt{xe7}}+?! gives nothing as Black calmly continues with the typical ..\text{\texttt{f7-f6}}! 7.\text{\texttt{gf3}} a5! 8.0-0 (against the popular and apparently dangerous White’s plan of queenside castling, which starts with 8.c3, Black can choose between the solid alternatives 8...\text{\texttt{d7}}! or 8...\text{\texttt{c6}}!? 8...\text{\texttt{a6}} 9.e5 \text{\texttt{d7}} 10.c3 \text{\texttt{ac5}} 11.\text{\texttt{c2}} b6 12.\text{\texttt{a1}} \text{\texttt{a6}}! 13.\text{\texttt{e3}} f6 After the tactical attempt 14.b4!? (on the quiet 14.exf6, 14...\text{\texttt{xf6}} 15.b3 \text{\texttt{e8}} is good, with mutual chances) Black should continue 14...\text{\texttt{xe5}} 15.c5 \text{\texttt{dxe5}} 16.bxc5 \text{\texttt{xc5}} 17.\text{\texttt{xe5}} \text{\texttt{xf2+}} (on 17...\text{\texttt{xf2}}! we could write a separate book!) 18.\text{\texttt{h1}} \text{\texttt{xe1}} 19.\text{\texttt{xe1}} \text{\texttt{xf6}} 20.\text{\texttt{xf3}} e5! 21.\text{\texttt{g5}}, when a new deployment for the queen, 21...\text{\texttt{e6}}!, refreshes Black’s position, who now has easy play in the endgame which bears rather more risks for White.

D2) If 6.\text{\texttt{gf3}} Black can go into an easy and equal endgame with 6...\text{\texttt{dxe4}} 7.\text{\texttt{xe4}} \text{\texttt{xe4}} 8.\text{\texttt{xe4}} \text{\texttt{xd1+}} 9.\text{\texttt{xd1}} \text{\texttt{xc5}} 10.\text{\texttt{e2}} \text{\texttt{d7}}.

White has a lot of opportunities but all of them are leading quite peacefully
into draws. Let's look at the most widely-played:

D21) 11.\(\text{b}3\) The most played continuation, but not the best one. White will have his king closer to the centre, but after exchange of the dark-squared bishops Black will have no problems in the bishop versus knight endgame. 

11...\(\text{fxe3}\) 12.\(\text{fxe3}\) \(\text{c}5=\)

The black knight will exchange itself for the strong white bishop, with an equal endgame: 13.\(\text{cxd1}\) 13.\(\text{c}5\) \(\text{d}xe4\) 14.\(\text{b}x e4\) \(\text{b}6\) 15.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{b}7+\) 16.\(\text{f}e3\) \(\text{c}8\) 17.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{f}6\) 18.\(\text{d}f3\) \(\text{e}7\)

19.\(\text{ad1}\) \(\text{hd8=}\) Solomon-Antic, Parramatta 2008. 13...\(\text{xe4}\) 14.\(\text{xe4}\) \(\text{b}6\) Or 14...\(\text{e}7!\) with equal chances. 15.\(\text{f}e3\) \(\text{b}7\) 16.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{e}7\) 17.\(\text{ad1}\) \(\text{h}d8\) 18.\(\text{xd8}\) \(\text{xd8}\) 19.\(\text{xd8}\) \(\text{xd8}\) 20.\(\text{f}e5\) \(\text{f}6\) 21.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{e}7\) 21...\(\text{xe2}\) 22.\(\text{d}f4\) \(\text{d}5\) 23.\(\text{xd5}\) \(\text{exd5}\) 24.\(\text{d}d4=\).

22.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{e}5\) 23.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{d}6\) 24.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{f}5\) with slightly better chances for Black, Haydon-Pert, Canterbury 2010;

D22) 11.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{f}5\) 12.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{c}5\)

13.\(\text{b}5+\) \(\text{d}7\) 13...\(\text{f}7\) 14.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{b}6\) 15.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{a}6\) 16.\(\text{xe5}\) \(\text{xb5}\) 17.\(\text{hd1}\) \(\text{d}8\) 18.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{d}7\) 19.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{c}6\) 20.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{e}8\) 21.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{c}6=\) Kobalia-Shipov, Moscow 2006. 14.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{a}6\) 14...\(\text{xb5}\) \(\text{c}8\) 16.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{g}4\) 17.\(\text{h}3\).

15.\(\text{xd7}\) \(\text{xd7}\) 15...\(\text{xd7}\) 16.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{e}8\) 17.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{e}7\) 18.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{c}8\)

19.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{d7}\) 20.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{f}6\) (better is 20...\(\text{b}6\) 21.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{f}7\) with equal play) 21.\(\text{xf6}\) \(\text{xf6}\) 22.\(\text{c}3\) with the more pleasant position for White, Panchanathan-Bercy, Richardson 2011. 16.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{b}6\) Play for Black is easier after 16...\(\text{c}8!?\)
A reasonable move. White is developing without allowing Black to exchange his knight for the strong white light-squared bishop. 11...\(\text{Qf6}\) or 11...\(\text{Qe7}\) 12.c4 \(\text{Qf6}\) 13.\(\text{Qc2}\) b6 14.b3 \(\text{Qb7}\) 15.\(\text{Qb2}\) \(\text{Qhd8}\) 16.\(\text{Qe5}\) h5 17.f3 \(\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}\) Akopian-Kortchnoi, Kolkata 2000.

12.\(\text{Qd3}\) 0-0 13.\(\text{Qe5}\) b6 14.g4 \(\text{Qb7}\) 15.g5 \(\text{Qd5}\) 16.\(\text{Qd7}\) \(\text{Qfc8}\) 17.\(\text{Qxc5}\) \(\text{Qxc5}\) 18.c4 \(\text{Qb4}\) 19.\(\text{Qe3}\) \(\text{Qcc8}\) Simpler is 19...\(\text{Qxd3}\) =. 20.b3 \(\text{Qd8}\) 21.\(\text{Qd2}\) \(\text{Qxd3}\) 22.\(\text{Qxd3}\) \(\text{Qf3+}\) White has a small initiative but the opposite-coloured bishops give realistic chances for Black to play for a draw, Kobalia-Morozevich, Elista 1998.

D3) Black has equal chances after 6.exd5

6...\(\text{Wxd5}\). Certainly, there is another possibility which should be seriously considered, namely 6...exd5 7.\(\text{Qgf3}\) 0-0 8.0-0 \(\text{Qxc5}\) 9.h3 \(\text{Qc6}\) 10.\(\text{Qb3}\) \(\text{Qb6}\) 11.\(\text{Qg5}\) h6 12.\(\text{Qh4}\) g5 13.\(\text{Qg3}\) \(\text{Qe4}\) 14.\(\text{Qxe4}\) dxe4 15.\(\text{Qe5}\) \(\text{Wxd1}\) 16.\(\text{Qfxd1}\) \(\text{Qxe5}\) 17.\(\text{Qxe5}\) \(\text{Qxe8}\) 18.\(\text{Qd6}\) f5 19.\(\text{Qc5}\) \(\text{Qc7}\) 20.\(\text{Qd6}\) \(\text{Qd8}\)!. Black has the advantage, thanks to the bishop pair, Carnic-Antic, Vrnjacka Banja 2010.

After 7.\(\text{Qgf3}\) Black is at a crossroads:

D31) 7...\(\text{Qbd7!}\) 8.b4 After 8.\(\text{Qb3}\) and exchanges with 8...\(\text{Qxc5}\) 9.\(\text{Qxc5}\) \(\text{Wxc5}\) 10.0-0 0-0= White has run out of chances to fight for the advantage; or 8.0-0 \(\text{Qxc5}\) 9.\(\text{Qc4}\) \(\text{Wd6}\) 10.\(\text{Qe2}\) 0-0 11.\(\text{Qb3}\) b6 with easy and good play for Black. 8...\(\text{a5}\) 9.\(\text{Qc4}\) \(\text{Wh5}\) 10.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{Qd5}\) 11.\(\text{Qxd5}\) 11.\(\text{Qb3?!}\) \(\text{Qxc3!}\)\(\text{\#}\).

11...\(\text{Qxd5}\)

\[\text{Diagram}\]
Despite Black's separated pawns on the queenside, he still has the more promising position thanks to the bishop pair and the fantastic Nimzowitschian blockader on b6, Naiditsch-Edouard, Mulhouse 2011.

D32) Possible but more complex is 7...\texttt{wxc5} 8.0-0 White can choose a plan with queenside castling: 8.\texttt{we2} \texttt{bd7} 9.\texttt{b3} \texttt{c7} 10.\texttt{g5} 0-0 11.0-0-0 and Black has an unpleasant position to play, Rublevsky-Ni Hua, Ningbo 2010:

D321) 8...0-0 9.\texttt{we2} \texttt{bd7} 10.\texttt{e4} \texttt{w7} 11.\texttt{g5} An interesting and dangerous idea is to put a bishop on f4: 11.g3 \texttt{xex} 12.\texttt{wxe4} g6?! (12...\texttt{f6}) 13.\texttt{we2} b6 14.\texttt{f4} \texttt{d6} 15.\texttt{xd6} \texttt{xd6} 16.\texttt{f1} \texttt{c7} 17.\texttt{e5} \texttt{d8}?! 18.\texttt{g5} \texttt{b8}?! (18...\texttt{f8}) 19.\texttt{xex} 2-- Rublevsky-Zhou Jianchao, Ningbo 2010. 11...\texttt{b6} 12.\texttt{xf6}+ 12.\texttt{ad1} \texttt{b7} 13.\texttt{h4} \texttt{c5} 14.\texttt{xc5} \texttt{xc5} 15.\texttt{e5} \texttt{ad8} 16.\texttt{c4} g6 17.a3 a5 18.\texttt{we3} (18.\texttt{c2} \texttt{d4} 19.\texttt{xf6}?! \texttt{xf6} 20.\texttt{d7} \texttt{xd7} 21.\texttt{xd7} \texttt{c6}) 18...\texttt{g7}= Cs. Balogh-Vitiugov, Ningbo 2011. 12...\texttt{xf6}

In the resulting position White has played the following continuations, but there was no advantage: 13.\texttt{e5} \texttt{b7} 14.\texttt{fe1} \texttt{ad8} 15.\texttt{ad1} \texttt{d6} 16.\texttt{f4} \texttt{c8} 17.\texttt{g4} 1/2-1/2 Kobalia-Vitiugov, Dagomys 2010; 13.\texttt{fe1} 1/2-1/2 Mamedov-Vitiugov, Aix-les-Bains 2011; 13.\texttt{e5} \texttt{xe5} 14.\texttt{xe5} \texttt{b7} 15.\texttt{d7} \texttt{f8} 16.\texttt{xf6}+ \texttt{xf6} 17.\texttt{e3} \texttt{f5}= Zhao Jun-Wang Li, Ho Chi Minh City 2011.

D322) 8...\texttt{bd7} is rarely played. Now: 9.a4 \texttt{we2} \texttt{c7} 10.c3 0-0 11.\texttt{e4} b6 12.\texttt{g5} \texttt{b7} 1/2-1/2 (53) Hou Yifan-Chen, Hangzhou 2011; 9.\texttt{b3} \texttt{c7} 10.a4 \texttt{b6} 11.a5 \texttt{b7} 12.axb6 axb6 13.\texttt{xa8}+ 14.\texttt{e2} 0-0 15.\texttt{d2} \texttt{g4} (15...\texttt{d8}?) 16.\texttt{bd4} \texttt{c5} 17.\texttt{e5}?! \texttt{f6}+ Rogic-Palac, Stari Mikonovci 2011. 9...\texttt{d7} 10.\texttt{d4} 10.\texttt{e2} \texttt{c5} 11.\texttt{b5}+ \texttt{d7} 12.\texttt{e5} a6 13.\texttt{xd7} \texttt{xd7} 14.\texttt{xc4} (14.\texttt{d3} \texttt{e5}) 14...\texttt{d8} 15.\texttt{b3} \texttt{e5} 16.\texttt{xe5} \texttt{xe5}=. 10...\texttt{a6} 11.\texttt{e1} \texttt{e5} 11...\texttt{c5} 12.\texttt{f1} (12.\texttt{c4} 0-0 13.a5 \texttt{d5} 14.\texttt{f1} \texttt{f6} 15.g3 \texttt{d8}) 12...b6. 12.\texttt{g1} 0-0 13.\texttt{we2} \texttt{eg4} Also good is 13...\texttt{g6} 14.\texttt{f3} (14.\texttt{c4} \texttt{d8} (14...\texttt{e5}) 15.c3 \texttt{c5} 16.b4 \texttt{a7} 17.\texttt{d2} \texttt{b8} 18.g3 \texttt{e5} 19.\texttt{b3} \texttt{h4} 20.h3 \texttt{e6}+ 21.\texttt{xc5} 15.c3 e5 16.\texttt{f5} \texttt{f4} (16...\texttt{e6} 17.\texttt{e4} \texttt{xe4} 18.\texttt{xe4} \texttt{ad8} with an excel-
lent position for Black) 17.\(\text{Q}e3?!\) (17.\(\text{Q}c4\) 17...\(\text{Q}e6\) 18.\(\text{Q}c4?!\) \(\text{Q}xe3\) \(\text{A. Popovic-Markidis, Sunny Beach 2010}.

D4) 6.b4

This is a very uncomfortable continuation for Black. White prevents the development of the king's flank, choosing an original version of the Advance Variation with \(\text{Q}d2\) and ...\(\text{Q}e7\) inserted.

A) After 5.\(\text{Q}g4\) Black has to defend g7:
   A1) 5...\(\text{Q}f8\) and now:
      A11) 6.dxc5 \(\text{Q}c6\) In this position White has three acceptable continuations:
      A111) On 7.\(\text{Q}gf3\)

\[6...a5 7.c3 \(\text{Q}c6\) 8.\(\text{Q}b1\) 8.\(\text{Q}b3\) axb4 9.cxb4 dxe4 10.\(\text{Q}xe4 \text{Q}xe4\) 11.\(\text{Q}xe4 \text{W}d4\) 12.\(\text{Q}c3 \text{W}xb4\) 8...axb4 9.cxb4 dxe4 10.\(\text{Q}xe4 \text{Q}xe4\) 11.\(\text{Q}xe4 \text{W}xd1+\) 12.\(\text{Q}xd1 \text{M}xa2\) 13.\(\text{Q}e2\) 0-0 14.\(\text{Q}c3 \text{M}d8+\) 15.\(\text{Q}e1\) \(\text{M}a7\) 16.h4 \(\text{Q}d4\) 17.g3 f5 18.\(\text{Q}g2\) \(\text{Q}d7\) 19.\(\text{Q}f1 \text{Q}f7\) 20.\(\text{Q}e3 \text{Q}f6\) 21.\(\text{Q}g1\) h6 22.h5 22.\(\text{Q}d1 \text{Q}b5\); 22.\(\text{Q}e2\) 22...\(\text{Q}c2\) 23.\(\text{Q}d1 \text{Q}b5\); or 23.\(\text{Q}e2\) \(\text{Q}b5\) 24.\(\text{Q}f4 \text{Q}xe3\) 25.fxe3 \(\text{M}d2\) 26.\(\text{M}h2\) 26.\(\text{M}h3\) e5 26...\(\text{M}aa2\).

\[\text{\bullet 4.e5}

Black replies 7...h5:
   A1111) 8.\(\text{Q}g3\) and now Black can expand on the kingside in two different ways:
   A11111) 8.h4 9.\(\text{Q}f4\) g5:
   Possible is 10.\(\text{Q}e3\). 10.\(\text{Q}g4?!\) \(\text{Q}h6\) 11.\(\text{W}h5\) f5 12.exf6 \(\text{Q}xf6\) and White is in trouble. 10.\(\text{W}a4 \text{Q}d7\) 11.\(\text{Q}b5\) a6 12.\(\text{Q}xc6\) \(\text{Q}xc6\) 13.\(\text{W}d4 \text{Q}h6\) 14.\(\text{Q}b3\) (14.h3?! Vitiugov) 14...\(\text{Q}f5\) 15.\(\text{W}d3\) (15.\(\text{Q}g4\) h3! 16.0-0 hXg2 with great play for Black, Kunzelmann-Evans, ICCF email 2001, or 16.g3 \(\text{d4}+\)) and now: 15...d4!.

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An important strategic move that avoids a potential blockade on the d4-square by the opponent, at the same time allowing Black active play on the light squares.

(15...&b5!? (weaker is 15...h3?! because of 16.g4) 16.&g1 &c7 with the idea ...&f3; for example 17.&fxd4 (17.&bxd4?! &d8 with the idea ...g5-g4; 17.&xg5?! &xg5 18.&xg5 &xe5+ 19.&e2 &xh2 20.0-0-0 &f4+ 21.&d2 &xd2+ 22.&xd2 &e7+ with the idea ...&ag8) 17...&xe5+ 18.&e3 &xh2 (18...&xe3!? 19.fx e3 (19.&xe3 &xh2) 19...&e4 20.&c3 &h6) 19.0-0-0 &xd4 (19...&xe3!?)

20.&xd4 &h6 21.&g4 &e5 22.&d4 &f6 23.c3 &e4 24.&e2 &a4 25.b3 &e8=, Adams-Morozovich, Sarajevo 1999.

13.&b3 &g8 14.0-0 &gxe5 15.&d2 &xd3 16.&xd3 (16.cxd3 h3 17.g3 e5=) 16...&g6 17.&f1 g4 18.&fd4 &xd4 19.&xd4 &xc5= P. Popovic-Kosic, Banja Koviljaca 2002. 11...&f5 12.&c3 f6!? 13.&b5 &xe5 14.&xe5 &xe5 15.&xe5 &f6= and the white queen would have to go to the passive square h2, because on 16.&e2! &d4 17.&d3 e5= Black has a strong initiative.

A11112) Worth attention is 8...&h6!? 9.&b3. White has no need to reclaim the pawn on c5 after 9.&d3 h4 10.&f4 g5 11.&e3 &g4 (possible is 11...&f5 12.&xf5 exf5 13.&b3 f4 14.&c3 h3 15.g3 d4 16.&fxd4 &d5= Zhang Zhong-Shipov, ICC INT 2007) 12.&e2 &xc5=)

On e3 the queen can be attacked by the black knight after 10...&h6 11.h3 White shouldn't abandon the e5 pawn

with 11.&d3 &g4 12.&e2 &c7! (with 12...&xc5 Black can transpose into a position dealt with under 8...&h6)
13.\( \texttt{xf1} \) (risky for both sides is 13.0-0 \( \texttt{xf2} \) 14.\( \texttt{xf2} \) g4 15.\( \texttt{h1} \) \( \texttt{xf2} \) 16.\( \texttt{xf2} \) gxf3 17.\( \texttt{xf3} \) when White has not more than reasonable compensation for the exchange) 13...\( \texttt{c7} \) 14.\( \texttt{b3} \) \( \texttt{e7} \) 15.\( \texttt{xg5} \) \( \texttt{xg5} \) 16.\( \texttt{xf3} \) \( \texttt{xf3} \) when White has not more than reasonable compensation for the exchange) 13...\( \texttt{c7} \) 14.\( \texttt{lb3} \) \( \texttt{e7} \) 15.\( \texttt{xb3} \) \( \texttt{e5} \) 16.\( \texttt{xf3} \) \( \texttt{xe5} \)\? N Weaker is 9...\( \texttt{a5} \) 10.\( \texttt{c3} \) a4 11.\( \texttt{bd4} \) \( \texttt{xc5} \) 12.\( \texttt{d3} \) \( \texttt{b6} \) 13.0-0 \( \texttt{d7} \) 14.\( \texttt{e3} \) with a difficult position for Black, Kobalia-Se. Ivanov, Togliatti 2003. 10.\( \texttt{xf4} \) 10.\( \texttt{h3} \)?! \( \texttt{a5} \) 11.\( \texttt{a4} \) \( \texttt{b6} \) 12.\( \texttt{cxb6} \) \( \texttt{b4} \) N 10...\( \texttt{f6} \) 11.\( \texttt{h3} \)\? 11.\( \texttt{exf6} \) \( \texttt{xf6} \) 12.\( \texttt{b5} \) e5 13.\( \texttt{d2} \) e4 14.\( \texttt{xc6} \) exf3 15.\( \texttt{xd5} \) \( \texttt{e7} \) 16.\( \texttt{f1} \) fxg2+ 17.\( \texttt{xf2} \) \( \texttt{e6} \)\?; or 11.\( \texttt{h4} \) fxe5 12.\( \texttt{xe5} \) \( \texttt{xe5} \) 13.\( \texttt{xe5} \) h4 14.\( \texttt{e2} \) a5 with the following possibilities: 15.\( \texttt{a4} \) g6 16.\( \texttt{xf4} \) \( \texttt{xf6} \) 17.\( \texttt{e5} \) \( \texttt{g7} \) 18.0-0-0 \( \texttt{d7} \) 19.\( \texttt{b1} \) \( \texttt{e7} \); 15.c3 e5 16.\( \texttt{xe5} \) (16.g3 \( \texttt{a4} \) 16...\( \texttt{f7} \) 17.\( \texttt{h5} \) a4 18.\( \texttt{d4} \) \( \texttt{f6} \) 19.\( \texttt{e2} \) \( \texttt{xd4} \) 20.cxd4 \( \texttt{xd4} \) 21.\( \texttt{d3} \) \( \texttt{xb5} \) 22.\( \texttt{xb5} \) d4; 15.g3 a4 16.gxh4 axb3 17.cxb3 \( \texttt{d4} \) 18.\( \texttt{d1} \) e5 19.\( \texttt{g2} \) \( \texttt{a5} \) 20.\( \texttt{d2} \) \( \texttt{xc5} \) 21.0-0. 16.0-0 (16.\( \texttt{xb6} \) \( \texttt{xb6} \) with more than enough compensation) 16...\( \texttt{bxc5} \) and regardless of the position of the black king, Black has excellent play, thanks to his powerful centre and bishop pair. 

With 11.h3! White secures the square h2 for the queen, from where she controls an important diagonal, and retains slightly better chances. For example: 11...\( \texttt{fxe5} \) 12.\( \texttt{xe5} \) \( \texttt{xe5} \) 13.\( \texttt{xe5} \) \( \texttt{f6} \) 14.\( \texttt{h2} \); 11...\( \texttt{g5} \) 12.\( \texttt{h2} \); or 11...\( \texttt{f7} \)?.

10.\( \texttt{e4} \) Openings where the queen plays almost half of the moves are very rare. 10.\( \texttt{b3} \)\? g4 11.\( \texttt{g1} \) \( \texttt{xe5} \)
12.\(\text{\#e4?!} \quad (12.\text{h3} \text{\#f6}) \quad 12...\text{b6} \quad 13.\text{f4?!} \quad \text{\#b7} \quad 14.\text{\#d6} \quad \text{\#d5} \quad 15.\text{\#a4} \quad \text{\#d7-+} \quad \text{Dembo-E. Pähtz, Novi Sad 2009;} \quad 10.\text{\#e2} \quad \text{g4} \quad 11.\text{\#g1} \quad \text{\#d5} \quad \text{and Black will recover the pawn with good play.} \quad 10...\text{g4} \quad 11.\text{\#g1} \quad \text{f5!} \quad 12.\text{\#xf6} \quad 12.\text{\#e2} \quad \text{\#d5 with excellent play for Black.} \quad 12...\text{\#xf6} \quad \text{The white queen will have to move for the fifth time.} \quad 13.\text{\#e2} \quad 13.\text{\#d3} \quad \text{\#xc5 also with a great position for Black.} \quad 13...\text{e5} \quad 14.\text{h3} \quad \text{\#a5} \quad 15.\text{hxg4} \quad \text{\#xg4} \quad 16.\text{\#c4} \quad \text{\#xc5} \quad 17.\text{\#xc5} \quad \text{\#xc5}\uparrow \quad 18.\text{\#d3} \quad \text{\#b4} \quad 19.\text{f3} \quad \text{\#e6} \quad 20.\text{\#e4} \quad \text{\#e7} \quad 21.\text{\#d2} \quad \text{\#xd3}\uparrow \quad 22.\text{\#xd3} \quad \text{\#c8}\uparrow \quad \text{Lupulescu-Kindermann, Novi Sad 2009.} \quad \text{A1113) Possible is 8.\text{\#a4} \quad \text{\#c7}.} \quad \text{Weaker is 8...\#xc5 9.\#b3 \quad \#e7 10.\#f4 \quad \#h6 11.\#d3 \quad \#f5 12.\#xf5 \quad \text{exf5} \quad 13.\#e3 \quad \#e6 14.0-0-0 with a clear advantage for White, Ivanchuk-Mkrtchian, Yerevan 2004.} \quad 9.\text{\#f4} \quad \text{f6=} \quad \text{; A112) 7.\#g3 and now:} \quad 11.\#b3 \quad \text{Black also has good play after 11.0-0 \quad e5 12.\#h4 \quad e4 13.\#xe4 \quad dxe4} \quad 14.\#xe4 \quad \#d4 \quad (14...\#xc5! 15.\#f5
16...\textit{e}5 17.\textit{b}5 \textit{e}4?! There is no need to give the opponent such an important square. It is better to play 12...\textit{g}g8

13.\textit{h}4 \textit{g}7 14.0-0 \textit{g}g8 with good play for Black. 13.\textit{d}d4 13.\textit{x}c6! exf3 (13...bxc6 14.\textit{d}d4\pm) 14.\textit{b}5 fxg2 15.\textit{x}g2 \textit{g}8 16.\textit{f}3 \textit{g}4 17.\textit{c}3\pm. 13...\textit{x}d4 14.\textit{x}d4 \textit{c}5\pm \frac{1}{2} (22) Dembo-Kryvoruchko, Rethymnon 2009;

\textbf{A1122)} The alternative is 7...\textit{h}6 8.\textit{d}d3 \textit{h}4 9.\textit{f}4 \textit{g}5 10.\textit{g}3 If he wants to continue fighting, White must play 10.\textit{a}4 \textit{xe}5 11.\textit{g}3 \textit{xd}3+ (Black takes the strong bishop but at the same time improves White’s pawn structure. Maybe it is better to take 11...\textit{xf}3+!?) 12.\textit{f}3 \textit{xc}1 13.\textit{xc}1 with the idea 13...e5!? 14.\textit{xe}5 \textit{g}5\pm) 12.cxd3 \textit{e}7 13.b4 (13.\textit{b}3 \textit{f}5 14.0-0\pm Postny) 13...\textit{f}6 (\geq 13...\textit{d}7 14.\textit{b}3 a5 =) 14.0-0 \textit{f}5 15.\textit{b}2 h5 16.\textit{ad}1 \textit{d}7 17.\textit{b}3 \textit{c}8 18.\textit{d}4 \textit{xd}4 19.\textit{xd}4 1-0 (73) Svidler-Nepomniachtchi, Moscow 2006. 10...\textit{h}4 11.\textit{f}4 \textit{g}5 12.\textit{g}3 \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} Adams-Short, Liverpool 2008.

\textbf{A113)} 7.\textit{d}f3

White opens up his dark-squared bishop and prevents the thematic ...\textit{h}6, but takes away the natural square from his other knight. 7...\textit{f}6 8.\textit{g}3 \textit{xc}5 9.\textit{d}3 \textit{xe}5 10.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 11.\textit{xe}5 \textit{f}6 12.\textit{g}5 On 12.\textit{f}3 Black gets an equal game thanks to the tactical blow 12...\textit{xf}2+! 13.\textit{d}1 \textit{c}5 14.\textit{fl} \textit{d}6 (14...\textit{g}8) 15.\textit{e}2 \textit{c}7 16.\textit{d}4\pm (16.e4?) 16...\textit{e}5 17.\textit{b}5 \textit{e}7 18.\textit{f}5 h6 19.g4 a6 20.\textit{c}3?! \textit{xf}5 21.\textit{xf}5 \textit{e}6 with a superior position for Black, Akopian-Pelletier, Aubervilliers 2002.

\textbf{A12)} White cannot hold the centre with the queen on g4: 6.c3?! \textit{c}6

and White already has problems because of the weakness of the d4- and b4-squares;

\textbf{A13)} 6.\textit{gf}3?! h5 7.\textit{g}3 \textit{h}4 8.\textit{f}4 \textit{g}5 9.\textit{g}4 \textit{e}3 \textit{g}4\pm. 9...\textit{h}6 10.\textit{h}5

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$\text{g}7$ 11.dxc5 $\text{f}5$ 12.$\text{w}g4$ $\text{h}6$ 13.$\text{w}h5$ $\text{f}5=$;

A14) A dangerous alternative is $6.\text{d}f3$?

White chooses a plan with rapid development in which the central $d4$ and $e5$ pawns do not interest him at first. Let's look at some characteristic games:

$6...c6$ 6...cxd4 7.$\text{d}d3$ $\text{c}6$ 8.$\text{e}2$.

7.$\text{d}3$:

A141) 7...h5 8.$\text{f}4$ 8.$\text{g}3$? c4 9.$\text{e}2$ $\text{h}6$. 8...c4 9.$\text{e}2$ $\text{h}6$ 10.$\text{d}1$ $\text{f}5$ 11.$\text{e}2$ takes us into a game dealt with under 7...c4;

A142) Probably a good idea is 7...c7!?N

where Black plays a useful move, preserving all the options (...cxd4, ...c5-c4, ...h7-h5). In addition, in some variations Black threatens ...$\text{b}4$ followed by ...c5-c4 or ...$\text{d}4$ with the idea ...$\text{e}5$.

A2) 5...g6 6.dxc5 $\text{d}7$;

A3) A well-known idea, but rarely used here, is 5...$\text{f}8$!?
Black keeps the possibility of castling, but his troops are again back in their starting positions. But the position is unusual, because of the white queen's early entry into the game and the disintegration of White's centre, which will be used to further Black's play, as compensation for his lost time. The general idea of retreating the bishop to f8 is known in the Winawer Variation, 3.\textit{\text{\text{c}}3} \textit{\text{b}4}. 6.\textit{\text{dxc}5} \textit{\text{c}7} 7.\textit{\text{gf}3} Weaker is 7.\textit{\text{g}3} \textit{\text{d}7} 8.\textit{\text{gf}3} \textit{\text{e}7} 9.\textit{\text{d}3} \textit{\text{xc}5} 10.\textit{\text{d}4} \textit{\text{xd}3+} 11.\textit{\text{cx}d}3 \textit{\text{g}6} 12.\textit{\text{e}2f} \textit{\text{f}6} 13.\textit{\text{xf}4} \textit{\text{xf}4} 14.\textit{\text{xf}4} \textit{\text{b}4+} ½-½ Lupulescu-Drasko, Pleven 2010. 7...\textit{\text{d}7} Less good is 7...\textit{\text{c}6}?! 8.\textit{\text{b}5} \textit{\text{f}6} 9.0-0 (9.\textit{\text{b}3\text{±}}) 9...\textit{\text{xc}5} 10.\textit{\text{c}4} (10.\textit{\text{b}3\text{±}}) 10...\textit{\text{f}xe}5 11.\textit{\text{h}5+\text{±}} Nevednichy-Antic, Herceg Novi 2001. 8.\textit{\text{b}5}! White does not achieve anything with 8.\textit{\text{b}3} \textit{\text{xe}5} 9.\textit{\text{xe}5} \textit{\text{xe}5}\text{+} 10.\textit{\text{e}3} \textit{\text{f}6} (or first 10...\textit{\text{d}7} 11.0-0-0 \textit{\text{f}6} 12.\textit{\text{b}4} b6 13.\textit{\text{d}4} \textit{\text{c}7} 14.\textit{\text{cx}b}6 axb6 15.\textit{\text{b}1} b5 16.f3 \textit{\text{d}6} 17.\textit{\text{b}6} \textit{\text{xb}6} 18.\textit{\text{xb}6} \textit{\text{b}4+}, Khamrakulov-Lopez Martinez, Ayamonte 2007) 11.\textit{\text{b}5+}\text{ }\textit{\text{d}7} 12.\textit{\text{xd}7+} \textit{\text{xd}7} 13.0-0-0 \textit{\text{e}7} 14.\textit{\text{h}4} 0-0 15.\textit{\text{d}4} \textit{\text{f}5} 16.\textit{\text{xf}3} \textit{\text{e}4} 17.\textit{\text{g}3} \textit{\text{e}5} 18.\textit{\text{f}3} \textit{\text{f}4} 19.\textit{\text{h}3} \textit{\text{f}5} 20.\textit{\text{xf}5} \textit{\text{xf}5} 21.\textit{\text{f}2} d4 22.c3= ½-½ Todorovic-Drasko, Subotica 2008.

A31) 8...\textit{\text{xc}5} 9.\textit{\text{d}3} It is also good to play 9.\textit{\text{c}4} a6 (9...\textit{\text{dx}c}4 10.\textit{\text{xd}7}\text{+} (10.\textit{\text{xc}4}?! a6 11.\textit{\text{xc}5} \textit{\text{xc}5} 12.\textit{\text{e}2} \textit{\text{e}7} 13.0-0 \textit{\text{c}6} 14.\textit{\text{e}4} \textit{\text{e}7}) 10...\textit{\text{xd}7} 11.\textit{\text{d}e}4 \textit{\text{wd}5} 12.0-0 \textit{\text{f}5}! 13.\textit{\text{ex}f}6 \textit{\text{xf}6} 14.\textit{\text{xf}6+} \textit{\text{g}x}f6 15.\textit{\text{e}3} \textit{\text{e}5} 16.\textit{\text{h}4} \textit{\text{e}7} (16...\textit{\text{g}8\text{±}}) 17.\textit{\text{f}d}1 \textit{\text{d}7} 18.\textit{\text{ac}1} \textit{\text{e}6\text{±}} Popadic-Drasko, Herceg Novi 2008) 10.\textit{\text{b}3} \textit{\text{c}7} 11.\textit{\text{xd}7+} \textit{\text{wd}7} (11...\textit{\text{xd}7} 12.\textit{\text{cx}d}5 \textit{\text{ex}d}5 13.\textit{\text{wd}4\text{±}}) 12.0-0 \textit{\text{dx}c}4 13.\textit{\text{xc}4} \textit{\text{e}7} 14.\textit{\text{c}5} (14.\textit{\text{e}3} \textit{\text{d}5} 15.\textit{\text{ac}1} \textit{\text{e}7} 16.\textit{\text{g}4\text{±}}) 14...\textit{\text{d}5} 15.\textit{\text{c}2} \textit{\text{c}6} 16.\textit{\text{e}3} (16.\textit{\text{a}4}?) 16...\textit{\text{exe}5} 17.\textit{\text{exe}5} \textit{\text{exe}5} 18.\textit{\text{ad}1} \textit{\text{e}7} 19.\textit{\text{d}4} \textit{\text{g}5} 20.\textit{\text{e}4} \textit{\text{g}6} 21.\textit{\text{f}e}1 \textit{\text{g}7} Khamrakulov-Lopez Martinez, Ayamonte 2007.

9...\textit{\text{g}6} Black wants to castle by fianchettoing his bishop, but also justifies the early emergence of the white queen into play. It is hard to play with such a pawn structure around the black king, when the opposing pieces can easily be activated and attack the weakened dark squares. Things are also hard for Black after 9...\textit{\text{e}7} 10.0-0 \textit{\text{g}6} 11.\textit{\text{e}1} \textit{\text{c}7} (11...\textit{\text{e}7} 12.\textit{\text{b}3} \textit{\text{c}7} 13.\textit{\text{h}4}! with superior play) 12.\textit{\text{c}4}! with a strong initiative (12.\textit{\text{g}3\text{±}}). 10.0-0 \textit{\text{g}7} 11.\textit{\text{e}1} \textit{\text{e}7} 12.\textit{\text{c}4} 12.\textit{\text{b}3}! \textit{\text{c}7} 13.\textit{\text{bd}4} 0-0 (13...\textit{\text{xe}5}? 14.\textit{\text{xe}5} \textit{\text{xe}5} 15.\textit{\text{b}5} \textit{\text{b}8} 16.\textit{\text{xe}5} \textit{\text{xe}5} 17.\textit{\text{f}4\text{±}}) 14.\textit{\text{wh}4} \textit{\text{c}5} (14...\textit{\text{c}6}? 15.\textit{\text{xg}6\text{±}}) 15.\textit{\text{h}6\text{±}} with typical play on the weakened dark squares. 12...0-0 13.\textit{\text{wh}4} \textit{\text{f}5} 14.\textit{\text{xf}5} \textit{\text{exf}5} 15.\textit{\text{b}3} \textit{\text{e}8} 16.\textit{\text{cx}d}5 \textit{\text{b}5} 17.\textit{\text{b}2} \textit{\text{xd}5} 18.\textit{\text{ad}1} \textit{\text{b}7} 19.\textit{\text{f}1} \textit{\text{f}8} 20.\textit{\text{e}3} \textit{\text{e}6\text{±}} G. Szabo-Drasko, Pleven 2010; A32) Probably best is 8...\textit{\text{a}6}?!N
9.\textbf{\textit{x}d7}+ After 9.\textbf{\textit{a}4}!? the bishop is away from the d3-square, but White still has an advantage in development: 9...\textbf{\textit{w}xc5} 10.c3 \textbf{\textit{w}c7} 11.0-0\textsuperscript{f}.
9...\textbf{\textit{x}d7} 10.\textbf{\textit{b}3} \textbf{\textit{h}5}?! 11.\textbf{\textit{g}5}?! Here the queen is threatened by black knight jumps. 11.\textbf{\textit{f}4} \textbf{\textit{x}c5} 12.0-0 \textbf{\textit{e}7} 13.\textbf{\textit{xc}5} \textbf{\textit{xc}5} = 14.c3 \textbf{\textit{g}6}. 11...\textbf{\textit{e}7} and Black has good chances of equalizing, since he will regain the pawn on c5 and probably obtain opposite-coloured bishops.

A4) Weak is 5...\textbf{\textit{g}5}

because White will not allow the rush of the h-pawn: 6.\textbf{\textit{h}5}! \textbf{\textit{c}xd4} 7.\textbf{\textit{g}f3} \textbf{\textit{c}6} 8.\textbf{\textit{b}5}± The black pawn on g5 has achieved nothing but the weakening of his position.

B) 5.c3 \textbf{\textit{c}6} 6.\textbf{\textit{df}3} Weaker is 6.\textbf{\textit{gf}3} because after 6...\textbf{\textit{c}xd4} 7.\textbf{\textit{c}xd4} \textbf{\textit{b}6}, due to problems with the central d4 pawn, in a few moves White will either have to move his king or give up a pawn. 8.\textbf{\textit{b}3} a5 9.a4 \textbf{\textit{b}4}+ 10.\textbf{\textit{d}2} \textbf{\textit{xd}2}+ 11.\textbf{\textit{xd}2} \textbf{\textit{ge}7} 12.\textbf{\textit{c}2} 0-0 13.\textbf{\textit{b}5} f6 14.\textbf{\textit{xf}6} \textbf{\textit{xf}6} \textbf{\textit{f}} Hort-Pert, Hoogeveen 2003.

B1) 6...\textbf{\textit{c}xd4} 7.\textbf{\textit{c}xd4} \textbf{\textit{b}4}+ 8.\textbf{\textit{d}2}

Now Black has the choice between 8...\textbf{\textit{b}6} and ...\textbf{\textit{a}5}, although both continuations lead to the same position after 9.\textbf{\textit{xb}4} \textbf{\textit{xb}4}+. But there are important differences when it comes to other continuations:

B11) 8...\textbf{\textit{a}5} and now: 9.\textbf{\textit{d}3} The pawn on d4 is now not under attack, as in the variation with ...\textbf{\textit{b}6}, and White continues with his standard development. Weaker is 9.\textbf{\textit{e}2} \textbf{\textit{xd}2}+ 10.\textbf{\textit{xd}2} \textbf{\textit{xd}2}+ 11.\textbf{\textit{xd}2} f6 12.\textbf{\textit{xf}6} \textbf{\textit{gxf}6} 13.\textbf{\textit{f}4} \textbf{\textit{ge}7} 14.\textbf{\textit{e}1} \textbf{\textit{f}7} 15.\textbf{\textit{d}3} \textbf{\textit{d}7} 16.\textbf{\textit{g}4} \textbf{\textit{xd}4} 17.\textbf{\textit{xd}4} e5 18.\textbf{\textit{xd}5} \textbf{\textit{h}3} Kortchnoi-Short, Wijk aan Zee 2000; 9.\textbf{\textit{xb}4} \textbf{\textit{xb}4}+ transposes into 8...\textbf{\textit{b}6} 9...\textbf{\textit{xb}4} 10.\textbf{\textit{d}2}! 9...\textbf{\textit{f}6} 10.\textbf{\textit{e}2} \textbf{\textit{xd}2}+ To avoid a possible \textbf{\textit{c}3}, Black takes on d2, but it is a tempo loss compared to positions where White exchanges on b4. 10...\textbf{\textit{ge}7} 11.\textbf{\textit{xf}6} \textbf{\textit{xd}2}+ (11...\textbf{\textit{xf}6} 12.\textbf{\textit{c}3}±) 12.\textbf{\textit{xd}2} \textbf{\textit{gxf}6} 13.0-0±. 11.\textbf{\textit{xd}2} \textbf{\textit{xd}2}+ 12.\textbf{\textit{xd}2} \textbf{\textit{ge}7} 13.\textbf{\textit{e}1} \textbf{\textit{d}7} 14.\textbf{\textit{h}4}? White increases the space advantage on the kingside and, more importantly, prepares to pre-
vent the possible exchange of the black bishop on the square g6 with h4-h5. 14...0-0 15.\(\text{\textit{e3}}\) Strengthens the position of the king, supporting at the same time the sensitive points d4 and f2. 15...\(\text{\textit{fxe5}}\) Since White has prevented counterplay for Black on the f-file and thwarted the exchange of Black's light-squared bishop, Black looks for opportunities in an attractive tactical variation. But it turns out that this is just a new weakening. 16.\(\text{\textit{dxe5}}\) d4+ 17.\(\text{\textit{d2}}\) 17...\(\text{\textit{ad8}}\) 18.\(\text{\textit{h5}}\) \(\text{\textit{e8}}\) 19.\(\text{\textit{h4}}\)± Ni Hua-Ding Liren, Xinghua Jiangsu 2010;

B12) 8...\(\text{\textit{b6}}\)!

Black will earn a tempo compared to the variation ...\(\text{\textit{a5}}\) because White will now be virtually forced to take on b4 if he wants to continue the struggle for an advantage: 9.\(\text{\textit{xb4}}\) 9.\(\text{\textit{d3}}\) \(\text{\textit{xd4}}\) 10.\(\text{\textit{xd4}}\) \(\text{\textit{xd4}}\) 11.\(\text{\textit{a4}}\) (or 11.\(\text{\textit{b5}}\) + \(\text{\textit{e7}}\) 12.\(\text{\textit{f3}}\) \(\text{\textit{xd2}}\) + 13.\(\text{\textit{xd2}}\) \(\text{\textit{xd2}}\) + 14.\(\text{\textit{xd2}}\) \(\text{\textit{d7}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{d3}}\) f6 16.\(\text{\textit{ac1}}\) \(\text{\textit{fxe5}}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{xe5}}\) \(\text{\textit{d6}}\) 18.\(\text{\textit{f4}}\) \(\text{\textit{ac8}}\) Ni Hua-Vitiug, Ningbo rapid 2010, with some compensation for White but only enough for a draw) 11...\(\text{\textit{d7}}\) 12.\(\text{\textit{xb4}}\) \(\text{\textit{xd3}}\) =; 9.\(\text{\textit{e2}}\) \(\text{\textit{ge7}}\) 10.g3 (White cannot expect an advantage without the bishop on d3) 10...0-0-0; 9.a3 \(\text{\textit{xd2}}\) + 10.\(\text{\textit{xd2}}\) \(\text{\textit{a5}}\) 11.\(\text{\textit{b4}}\) \(\text{\textit{d7}}\) 12.\(\text{\textit{ac1}}\) \(\text{\textit{e7}}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{c5}}\)!

White has more space and the more mobile pawn structure. In addition, Black's dark-squared bishop is inferior to the knight in this type of position, Ni Hua-Sadorra, Manila 2007:

B121) 12.\(\text{\textit{c1}}\) \(\text{\textit{xd2}}\) + 12...f6?!. 13.\(\text{\textit{xd2}}\) 0-0 14.\(\text{\textit{e2}}\) f6 15.\(\text{\textit{he1}}\)

A natural move, but it does not prevent Black's plan to exchange the weak
bishop. 15.h4!? fxe5 16.dxe5 c5?f5!=. 15...fxe5 16.dxe5 e8 17.g5 17.ed4 xd4 18.xd4 xf2+ 19.e2 xe2+ 20.xe2 c6 21.xe6 b8=. 17...h6 18.xe6 xf2 19.f1 e1 f1 20.xf1 g6 21.xg6 xg6 22.xc3 e8 23.xc7 xe5=. Baklan-Ellers, Germany Bundesliga 1997/98;

B122) 12.e2 and now:

B1221) 12...e8 13.a3?! This move is often a typical error in this type of position, because it gives Black time to organise the exchange of light-squared bishops and counterplay in the centre with ...f7-f6.

13.c1 xd2+ (13...0-0 14.c3!± and the black king is suddenly in danger) 14.xd2 (this is a real plan and a chance for an advantage. White activates his king for a possible fight in the centre, where e3 will be an important option in the control of the sensitive points d4 and f2, after Black attacks with ...f7-f6) 14...f6 15.h4 (15.exf6 gxf6 16.e1 e5=) 15...0-0 16.e3± and compared to the rapid game Ni Hua-Ding Liren, Ningbo 2010, Black now has a clear tempo more than in the game Ni Hua-Ding, Ningbo 2010, and can carry out an important manoeuvre with his knight. 15...f5= 16.dxe5 c5= Black prevents the important strategic move e3 and retains activity with his knights by ...h6 and ...g4. There is no way in which White can increase his play, primarily due to the sensitive pawn on e5.

B2) 6...b6 7.d3 cxd4 8.cxd4

8...b4+ An interesting idea is 8...d7 but after 9.e2 b4 10.b1 a6...
11...c3 (11.0-0 $\texttt{b5}$ 12.$\texttt{e1}$ $\texttt{d3}$
13.$\texttt{xd3}$ $\texttt{xd3}$ 11...c8 12.a3 $\texttt{e8}$
13.$\texttt{e3}$ $h6$ 14.h4 $\texttt{e7}$ 15.h5 $\texttt{bc6}$
16.$\texttt{d3}$ $\texttt{b6}$ 17.$\texttt{a4}$± Black ended up
in a passive position in Cs. Balogh-Rap­
port, Szombathely 2011. 9.$\texttt{f1}$! 9.$\texttt{d2}$
$\texttt{xd4}$ transposes into positions dealt
with under 6...cxd4. 9...$\texttt{d7}$ 10.$\texttt{e2}$±
White will find it easier to harmonise
his pieces, with a strong centre and
better chances in the forthcoming fight,
Adams-Sarkar, Wheeling 2010;

B3) Also worth attention is 6...$\texttt{a5}$
7.dxc5 $\texttt{c7}$ 8.$\texttt{e3}$ $f6$ 9.$\texttt{xf6}$ $\texttt{xf6}$
10.$\texttt{f3}$ $e5$ 11.$\texttt{b5}$ $\texttt{d8}$ 12.$\texttt{e2}$ 0-0
13.$\texttt{d3}$ $a6$ 14.$\texttt{d6}$ $\texttt{xd6}$ 15.$\texttt{xd6}$
$\texttt{xd6}$ 16.$\texttt{h3}$ $\texttt{e6}$ 17.0-0 $\texttt{ad8}$±.

Both sides have come up with some
aces. White has a pair of bishops and
Black a well-supported mobile centre,
Ni Hua-Bartel, Beijing 2008.

Important: In these double-edged posi­
tions, White's $5.$ $\texttt{g4}$ practically forces Black
to play the defensive $5...\texttt{f8}$ ($5...\texttt{f8}$ is pos­
sible, but the lost tempi are probably a greater
risk for Black than the broken centre is for
White). However, the early queen adventure
is accompanied by the destruction of White's
centre and a loss of space on the kingside after
the thematic $...\texttt{h7}$-$\texttt{h5}$ and $...\texttt{g7}$-$\texttt{g5}$. Obviously
these are non-standard positions in which
both sides have their chances.

4. $\texttt{g1-f3}$

In the main line, which arises after $4...c5$
5.$\texttt{g4}$ (if White tries to preserve the centre
with $5.c3$ Black can enter an equal endgame
after $5...\texttt{c6}$ 6.$\texttt{d3}$ $\texttt{xd4}$ 7.$\texttt{xd4}$ $\texttt{b4}$
8.$\texttt{d2}$ $\texttt{b6}$!) 5...$\texttt{f8}$ 6.$\texttt{xc5}$ (against the
gambit attempt 6.$\texttt{d3}$ $\texttt{c6}$ 7.$\texttt{d3}$ a new
idea deserves attention: $7...\texttt{c7}$!?, where
Black exerts pressure against the e5 pawn
while keeping the options open for the
c-pawn to go $...\texttt{cxd4}$ or $...\texttt{c4}$) 6...$\texttt{c6}$
7.$\texttt{g3}$ $h5$ 8.$\texttt{g3}$ $h4$ 9.$\texttt{f4}$ $g5$ 10.$\texttt{a4}$
$\texttt{d7}$ 11.$\texttt{b5}$ $a6$ 12.$\texttt{xc6}$ $\texttt{xc6}$ 13.$\texttt{d4}$. It
is important that after 13...$\texttt{h6}$ 14.$\texttt{b3}$
$\texttt{f5}$ 15.$\texttt{d3}$ Black can activate his light­
squared bishop just in time with $15...\texttt{d4}$!
and create dynamic play with sufficient
compensation.

4. $\texttt{g8-f6}$
5. $\texttt{e4-e5}$ $\texttt{f6-d7}$

The most natural and probably the best
continuation.

We will examine:

- 6.c4 (see p.195)
- 6.$\texttt{e2}$ (see p.197)
- the main move 6.$\texttt{d3}$ (see p.199)

6.c4
This premature attack on Black's centre is usually not effective because it helps activate the problematic black light-squared bishop, either on the h3-c8 or h1-a8 diagonal:

A) 6...c5 7.cxd5 exd5 8.d3 d6 9.0-0 cxd4 10.e1 c5 11.b5 and now:

A1) 11...b6 12.xd4 0-0 13.d2f3 d7 Black can play 13...xd4?! 14.xd4 e6 15.e3 xdx4 16.a4 c5 17.b4 xbd4 18.xd4 and the question is whether White has enough compensation for the pawn. 14.a4 a6 $\frac{1}{2}$-$\frac{1}{2}$ Nevednichy-Antic, Vrnjacka Banja 2010;

A2) Also worthy of attention is 11.g4 12.h3 h5 13.g4 g6 14.xd4 b6 15.df1?! 15.d2b3. 15...d6 16.xc6+ bxc6 17.f5 c5 18.e3 0-0 18...d4 18...c1?! 19.xc5 19.d4 19.d4 L. Vajda-Goh Wei Ming, Budapest 2011;

A3) Or 11...0-0 12.xc6 bxc6 13.xd4 b6 with a promising position for Black.

B) Also possible is 6...dxc4 with the idea of creating a stronghold on the square d5 and activating the light-squared bishop on a central diagonal. The disadvantage of this plan lies in Black's lack of space, since the attack on the white centre with ...c5 is very risky. 7.xc4 7.xc4 b6 8.b3 d7 9.0-0 c6 (9.c5? 10.xc5 xc5 11.e4 $\pm$) 10.e2 d5 11.c2 c6 12.d1 d7 13.a3 a5 (13...0-0-0?) 14.b4 f5 $\Rightarrow$ 14.d3 a6 (15...0-0-0? with the idea ...f7-f5) 16.b2 d7 17.c3 d6 with mutual play, Stojanovic-Vojinovic, Budva 2002.
13...\texttt{b}5 14.\texttt{d}d3. Black has a strong-
hold on the square d5, but White has a
space advantage and slightly the better
chances. 13...\texttt{exd}5 14.\texttt{wb}3 \texttt{c}c6 15.\texttt{d}d2
\texttt{a}5 16.\texttt{fc}1 0-0 17.\texttt{c}c3 \texttt{e}e8 18.\texttt{ac}1
\texttt{a}6 19.\texttt{ac}2 \texttt{d}d7 20.\texttt{wb}3 \texttt{c}c6 21.\texttt{wc}2
\texttt{d}d7 22.\texttt{wb}3 \texttt{c}c6 \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} Antoniewski-
Bosiocic, Austria 2008/09;
C) 6...0-0 7.\texttt{cx}d5 \texttt{exd}5 8.\texttt{d}d3 \texttt{c}5
transposes into positions dealt with un-
der 6...\texttt{c}5.

\textbf{6.\texttt{e}e}2

White puts his bishop in a more passive
position, but has the additional possi-
bility of \texttt{b}3 to defend the central d4
pawn, since there will not be a fork af-
fter ...\texttt{c}5-\texttt{c}4, as is the case in positions
where the bishop is on d3. 6...\texttt{c}5 7.\texttt{c}3
\texttt{c}c6 8.0-0 Black goes back to the plan
with ...\texttt{f}7-\texttt{f}6 since there is no white
bishop on the square d3:
A) 8...0-0!

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12.\texttt{ex}f6 \texttt{xf}6 with the idea ...\texttt{d}6. Black goes back to the plan with ...
\texttt{f}7-\texttt{f}6, pressurising the e5 pawn, since the
central d4 pawn is now more stable,
thanks to the position of the bishop on
e2 and the possibility of \texttt{b}3. 9.\texttt{e}e1
Now the idea 9.\texttt{b}3?! is less effective
because the black queen is not on b6,
and Black quickly gets play on the
queenside: 9...\texttt{c}4 10.\texttt{bd}2 \texttt{b}5 11.\texttt{a}3 \texttt{a}5
(possible is the thematic 11...\texttt{f}6?! N

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\texttt{A}\texttt{e}1 \texttt{b}6 13.\texttt{af}1 \texttt{d}d7
14.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{b}4Erenburg-Kuraszkiewicz,
Warsaw 2005. 9...f6 10.\texttt{xf}6 \texttt{xf}6;
For White it is risky to play 11.\texttt{xc}5?!
\texttt{xc}5 12.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{b}6!
with excellent chances for Black due to his mobile centre and powerful bishop on b6. This position, but with a white bishop at d3, is covered under 6...d3; Also risky is 11...b3?! because after 11...c4! 12.b3 d6! Black is first to control the central square e5. After the main move 11.b1 we have:

\[
\text{A1) 11...b6 A typical 'French' move which creates the most problems for the opponent. 12.d3 cxd4 13.cxd4 d7 13...d6 goes into a variation dealt with under 11...cxd4. 14.a3 a5 15.b3 ac8 16.g5?! This continuation does not usually work with the knight on f1. Better is 16.b2 with mutual chances. For example, 16...d6 17.g3 transposes into the game Caruana-Ponomariov 2011 covered under 11...cxd4 (except that there is a black rook on e8, which essentially does not damage the position). 16...d6 17.h4}
\]

17...h8 With 17...g6! 18.b1 e8! Black plans the typical, and hard to defend, sacrifice on f3. Otherwise the knight is rarely seen on e8 in the French, although it is very useful there, especially because of the possibility ...g7, from where it defends his weak pawn on e6 and can jump to the active square f5. 18.b1 e7 19.e5 e8 20.e3 h5= Erenburg-Holt, Berkeley 2011;

A2) 11.cxd4 12.cxd4 e4 The usual move is 12...b6 13.d3?! and now, if Black wants, with 13...d6, he can enter into a theoretical position of the Tarrasch Variation, resulting from the move order 3.d2 f6. Here are two recent games of top players which started with that move order: 13...d6 14.g3 (14.b1 b4 15.a3 d3 16.xd3 d7 17.g3 b5 18.d1 ae8 with good play for Black. Carlsen-Ponomariov, Moscow Wch Blitz 2010) 14...d7 15.b3 a5 16.a3 e8 17.b2 f4 18.c2 e7 19.c1 b8 20.g5 e8

with a typical fight in this variation, Caruana-Ponomariov, Moscow 2010. 13.d3 d6 14.e3 d7 15.g4 f5 16.ge5± c8 17.f4 fxg4?! 18.xd4 xf4? 18...xd4 19.xh7+ xh7 20.xd4 g8±. 19.xc6 xc6 20.h5 g6 21.xg6 1-0 Erenburg-Timman, Reykjavik 2006;
A3) Worthy of attention is 11...\textit{c}7?! with the idea of keeping the c-pawn and fighting for the square e5. 12...g5 \textit{d}6 12...\textit{cxd}4?! 13.\textit{cxd}4 \textit{b}4 14.\textit{d}2 \textit{d}6=+. 13...h4 \textit{d}7 14...g3 b6 White threatened 14.dxc5. 15...d3 \textit{ae}8 16.e5 \textit{e}7 17.c1 \textit{e}8 and here Black has a tempo more than in the position that we have examined under 6...d3 c5 7...c6 8.0-0 0-0 9.e1 f6.

B) Weaker is 8...g5?! because after 9.dxc5 we reach a more favourable version for White compared to the position seen under 6...d3. The white bishop is now on e2, so after White takes the black knight on e5 or c5, it is not under attack. Also possible is 9.b3! c4 10.b2, when White has sacrificed two tempi and a bit of space, but has retained the pawn chain, by reducing the value of the g-pawn;

C) 8...\textit{cxd}4 9.cxd4 \textit{b}6 10.b3 a5 10...f6 11.exf6 \textit{xf}6 12.f4 0-0 13.h3 \textit{h}5 14.h2 \textit{f}4 15.e1 \textit{b}4 16.f1 \textit{d}6 17.c1 a5 18.a4 \textit{xe}2+ 19.xe2 \textit{xe}2 20.xh2 \textit{xb}3 0-1 Smagin-Glek, Moscow 1999. 11.a4 0-0 12.g5 \textit{f}6 13.exf6 \textit{xf}6 14.c1 \textit{d}6 15.b5

A smart move. White does not play the stereotyped \textit{d}3, but struggles for dominance over the central square e5. 15.h6 16.h4 \textit{e}4 17.g3 \textit{xc}3 18.xh3 \textit{d}7 19.e5 \textit{ad}8 20.e1 \textit{f}6 21.b3 \textit{c}8 22.xc6 bxc6 23.e5

with a strategic dominance for White, Spasov-Wintzer, Salou 2005;

D) 8...\textit{b}6 9.b3! We have already said that this is the main idea of the continuation 7.e2. 9...\textit{cxd}4 9...c4?! 10.b2 White has lost two tempi but keeps his pawn chain in the centre and has the possibility of undermining Black’s pawn chain: 10...c7 11.b3 b5 12.a4!±. Now, 10...\textit{cxd}4 goes into 8...\textit{cxd}4.

6. \textit{f}1-d3

The ideal position for the white bishop. Alternatives give fewer chances in the fight for an advantage.
6. ... c7-c5
7. c2-c3


As we can see, White has built a powerful pawn chain in the centre, with the tip, the e5 pawn, in the opponent’s camp, and with it he has a space advantage. The white bishop has taken up an excellent position on the square d3, and White’s entire development is almost complete. It only remains to play e1 and f1, and almost all the white pieces will be active and thus will be more easily coordinated.

With Black it is a completely different story – the opposite, in fact. The main characteristics of the position are less space in the centre and generally more passive pieces, especially the light-squared bishop.

Perhaps we should immediately ask: why play such a difficult variation, indeed, why play the French Defence in general, where Black in the main variations has the same problems? This is why we would remind the reader of some essential ideas and key features of this opening, because they are applicable also in this variation with 3...e7. Black, with his first move 1...e6, allows and accepts the possibility of his opponent creating a strong centre and getting more active pieces. By its nature, the centre in the opening confers more space, better development and more active pieces, limiting all of these for the opponent. But it also has its flaws. We know that building a strong centre requires time and the support of its own pieces, which carries risks and obligations. In addition, the centre is an attractive object for destruction, sensitive and vulnerable to attack and undermining, of course depending on its type. Many openings are based on play against the opposing centre.

Let’s return to the concrete position created after White’s eighth move, in the main line of the variation 3...e7. Black has a number of continuations, but almost all of them are a variation of two typical plans:

a) undermining the centre with ...f7-f6; or
b) attacking the central pawn d4.
Unfortunately, our favourite first plan, with the undermining, is not recommended here, because Black’s bishop on e7 is more passive, compared with the Tarrasch Variation with 3...\(\text{Q}f6\), where Black has the more active bishop on the square d6.

We will investigate the following moves:
- 8...\(\text{B}b6\) (see p.201)
- 8...0-0 (see p.202)
- 8...\(\text{cxd}4\) (see p.205)
- 8...a5 (see p.205)
- the main move 8...g5 (see p.211)

This is one of the few positions where the standard ‘French’ move 8...\(\text{B}b6?!\) does not work: 9.d\(\text{xc}5\)! and now:

A) 9...\(\text{c}7\) Alternatives bring bigger problems for Black. For example:
10.\(\text{b}3\):
10...\(\text{dxe}5\) 11.\(\text{f}4!\) 11.\(\text{xe}5?!\) \(\text{xe}5\) (11...\(\text{xe}5?!\) 12.\(\text{f}4\)) 12.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{c}7\) 13.\(\text{e}3\) with easier play for White, thanks to slightly more space and activity. 13...\(\text{d}7\) 14.\(\text{h}1\) 0-0 15.\(\text{d}4\) g6 16.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{xc}6\) 17.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{ac}8\) 18.\(\text{we}2\) \(\text{f}8\) 19.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{d}7\) 20.b4 \(\text{f}8\) 21.\(\text{af}1\) (Birarov-Prokopp, ICCF email 2001).

A1) 11...\(\text{xf}3+\) 12.\(\text{xf}3\) e5 13.\(\text{g}3\)

Regardless of the more active position of the knight on c6 instead of f7, as in

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the previous variation, White has the better chances, because of his strong pressure on the centre. For example:
A11) 13...\(\text{e}6\) 14.\(\text{f}e1\) f6 15.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{f}7\) 16.\(\text{f}5\) 0-0 17.\(\text{b}4\) \(\text{f}d8\) 18.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{f}8\) 19.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{a}5\) 20.\(\text{e}5!\)

A12) 13...\(\text{d}8\) 14.\(\text{d}1\) 0-0 15.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{f}6\) 16.\(\text{b}5\) Also good is 16.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{e}6\) 17.c4 d4 18.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{bxc}6\) 19.\(\text{xe}5\) with a clearly better position. 16...\(\text{e}8\)
17.\(\text{f}e1\) a6 18.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{f}5\) 19.\(\text{d}2\) and White will remain with a pawn more, Ulibin-Ghane Gardeh, Dubai 2002;
A13) The evaluation of the position is not changed by inserting 13...\(\text{h}5\) 14.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{h}4\) 15.\(\text{h}2\) \(\text{e}6\).

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Simples and probably the best plan is 16.\(\text{e}2\)± 16.\(\text{ae}1\) 0-0? (16...e4 17.\(\text{xc}7\) \(\text{xf}3\)) 17.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{f}6\) 18.\(\text{h}5++\) Smerdon-Barua, Canberra 2010; 16.\(\text{f}e1\) e4 17.\(\text{xc}7\) \(\text{xf}3\) 18.\(\text{ad}1\).

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16...f6 Now White just needs to choose between two good continuations, \( \text{\texttt{d4}} \) or \( \text{\texttt{f2-f4}} \).

A2) 10...\( \text{\texttt{cxe5}} \) 11.\( \text{\texttt{f4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xf3+}} \) 12.\( \text{\texttt{xf3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{e5}} \) 12...\( \text{\texttt{d8}} \) 13.\( \text{\texttt{g3}} \) 0-0 14.\( \text{\texttt{c7}} \) \( \text{\texttt{e8}} \) 15.\( \text{\texttt{b5±}} \) 13.\( \text{\texttt{g3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{c6}} \) 14.\( \text{\texttt{e1}} \) and now: 14...\( \text{\texttt{e4}} \) 14...f6? 15.\( \text{\texttt{d4+}} \); 14...\( \text{\texttt{f6}} \) 15.\( \text{\texttt{f5}} \) 0-0 16.\( \text{\texttt{xd7}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xd7}} \) 17.\( \text{\texttt{xe5}} \) \( \text{\texttt{±}} \) 15.\( \text{\texttt{xe4}}! \)

21.\( \text{\texttt{g4}} \) with a superior strategic position for White, Delchev-Markovic, Valjevo 2011;

C) 9...\( \text{\texttt{xc5}} \) 10.\( \text{\texttt{c2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{c7}} \) Black is losing time, because his queen does not belong on the b6-square in this type of position. 11.\( \text{\texttt{e1}} \) \( \text{\texttt{b6}} \) 12.\( \text{\texttt{b3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{b7}} \) 13.\( \text{\texttt{bd4}} \) with a typical set-up for White, and with better chances, A. Ivanov-V. Gaprindashvili, New Hampshire 2000.

- We have said that we do not recommend the plan with 8...0-0 9.\( \text{\texttt{e1}} \) \( \text{\texttt{f6}} \) in view of the following:

B) 9...\( \text{\texttt{xc5?!}} \) 10.\( \text{\texttt{e2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{c7}} \) 11.\( \text{\texttt{b3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{e7}} \) 12.\( \text{\texttt{f4}} \)

with a superior position for White, due to his advantage in development and space. Black is playing a certain theoretical position with two tempi less (the bishop and queen have each lost one tempo). 12...\( \text{\texttt{c5}} \) 13.\( \text{\texttt{xc5}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xc5}} \) 14.\( \text{\texttt{b4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{e7}} \) 15.\( \text{\texttt{ac1}} \) \( \text{\texttt{d7}} \) 16.\( \text{\texttt{a3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{a5}} \) 17.\( \text{\texttt{b5}} \) \( \text{\texttt{d8}} \) 18.\( \text{\texttt{a4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{c5}} \) 19.\( \text{\texttt{c4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{b6}} \) 20.\( \text{\texttt{d2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{a7}} \)

A) 10.\( \text{\texttt{xf6}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xf6}} \):

A1) 11.\( \text{\texttt{f1+}} \) \( \text{\texttt{c7}} \) 12.\( \text{\texttt{g5}} \) There is no reason for any great confidence in the plan of not moving the bishop to g3: 12.\( \text{\texttt{g3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{d7}} \) 13.\( \text{\texttt{g5}} \) \( \text{\texttt{ae8}} \) (\( \geq 13...\text{\texttt{d6}} \) ) 14.\( \text{\texttt{c2}} \) (14.\( \text{\texttt{e5?!}} \) ) 14...\( \text{\texttt{d6}} \) 15.\( \text{\texttt{wd3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{c8?!}} \) (15...\( \text{\texttt{c4?!}} \) with the idea ....\( \text{\texttt{g4}} \) and ...e6-e5, with mutual chances) 16.a3? (16.\( \text{\texttt{xc5?!}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xc5}} \) 17.\( \text{\texttt{h5f}} \) ) 16...\( \text{\texttt{c4}} \) 17.\( \text{\texttt{e2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{d4}} \) with the idea ...e6-e5: 18.\( \text{\texttt{b3}} \) e5? (18...\text{\texttt{h6}}! 19.\( \text{\texttt{d2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{cxb3}} \) 20.\( \text{\texttt{xb3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{a5}} \) 21.\( \text{\texttt{c2}} \) (21.\( \text{\texttt{a4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{e7}} \) ) 21...\( \text{\texttt{c4}} \) and Black takes the initiative) 19.\( \text{\texttt{xc4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{e4}} \) 20.\( \text{\texttt{cxd5?!}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xd5?!}} \) (\( \geq 20...\text{\texttt{exf3}} \) ) 21.\( \text{\texttt{hxg3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{exf3}} \) 22.\( \text{\texttt{xe8}} \) \( \text{\texttt{e8}} \) 23.\( \text{\texttt{xe8}} \) \( \text{\texttt{f7}} \) 24.\( \text{\texttt{a1++}} \) Lastin-Nakhapetian, Olginka 2011. 12...\( \text{\texttt{d6}} \)
Black has practically reached a position from the line 3.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{f}6, but with a tempo less. But there is another difference that is convenient for Black. He doesn't have to exchange the c5 pawn. All in all, White still has acceptable play, thanks to the control of the e5-square and the passive black light-squared bishop. 13.\texttt{h}4 \texttt{d}d7 14.\texttt{g}3 This is a typical path for the white bishop, aiming for a useful strategic exchange. Without it Black would simply play ....\texttt{ae}8, break with ...e6-e5, and thanks to his c5 pawn he would have a strong centre and a promising position.

14...b6 The threat was 15.\texttt{xc}5. Weaker is 14...\texttt{ae}8!? 15.\texttt{e}2 (15.\texttt{xc}5! \texttt{xg}3 16.\texttt{xg}3 e5 17.\texttt{f}5±) 15...b6 16.\texttt{e}5 \texttt{e}7 17.\texttt{ac}1 \texttt{e}8 18.b4 (18.\texttt{d}d2±) 18...\texttt{xe}5 19.\texttt{xe}5 \texttt{xe}5 20.\texttt{xe}5 \texttt{xe}5 21.dxe5 (more principled is 21.\texttt{xe}5) 21...\texttt{d}7 with an excellent position for Black: 22.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{g}6 (better is 22...g5!? with the idea ....\texttt{g}7 and ....\texttt{g}6) 23.\texttt{xg}6 hxg6 24.\texttt{f}3 with approximately equal chances, because Black has unnecessary broken his pawn structure on the kingside, Ghaem Maghami-Rakhmanov, Pardubice 2010.

15.\texttt{c}1 \texttt{ae}8 16.\texttt{e}5 Or 16.\texttt{xd}6 \texttt{xd}6 17.\texttt{e}5±. 16...\texttt{e}7 17.\texttt{b}4 \texttt{c}4 18.\texttt{c}2 \texttt{e}8 19.\texttt{xc}6 19.b5!?±. 19...\texttt{xc}6 20.\texttt{c}3 \texttt{h}5 21.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{xg}3 22.hxg3 \texttt{e}8± Deviatkin-Rakhmanov, Voronezh 2011. Black will be able to exchange his light-squared bishop, getting closer to an equal endgame. But he will remain with small problems on the e-file;

A2) A possible plan is 11.\texttt{xc}5!? \texttt{xc}5 12.\texttt{b}3

with the idea of moving the knight to the ideal square d4. However it must be recognised that it requires great courage and an inclination for combinative play to allow the bishop on the a7-g1 diagonal after weakening the pawn on f2 with \texttt{e}1. (12.b4? \texttt{xg}2++; 12.\texttt{c}4?! \texttt{g}4 13.\texttt{f}1 \texttt{b}6 14.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{c}7 and Black's initiative is tremendously powerful: 15.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{ce}5 16.\texttt{xe}5 \texttt{xe}5). Now:

A2.1) 12...\texttt{d}6 13.\texttt{bd}4 \texttt{e}8 Of course, Black would like to play the magic move ...e6-e5 but it is risky to go into the tactical positions with 13...e5 14.\texttt{xc}6 bxc6 15.\texttt{xe}5 \texttt{xe}5 16.\texttt{xe}5 \texttt{g}4 17.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{d}6 (in case of 17...\texttt{h}4?! White emerges with the better position after18.h3 \texttt{xf}2 19.\texttt{e}1±) 18.g3 \texttt{e}5 19.f4 \texttt{xd}3 20.\texttt{xd}3±; Black does not have enough for the exchange. 14.\texttt{xc}6 bxc6 15.\texttt{e}5! White has picked the first fruits of his strategy in the opening. 15...\texttt{c}7 16.\texttt{f}4 c5 17.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{b}7 18.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{e}7 19.\texttt{f}3!? Of course, this
strategically favourable swap of bishops is always attractive. 19...\(\mathbb{N}f8\) 20.\(\mathbb{Q}xd6\) \(\mathbb{W}xd6\) 21.\(\mathbb{Q}e5\) g6 22.\(\mathbb{Q}ad1\), Svidler-Ponomariov, Moscow 2010; A22) 12...\(\mathbb{Q}b6\)?

We dealt with this type of position in the line with 4.\(\mathbb{Q}d3\), except that here White has a rook on e1 instead of a queen on e2, which has both good and bad sides. Evaluating this position is very difficult and unrewarding, because long-term analysis does not greatly help.

In the main line with 13.\(\mathbb{Q}bd4\) White can obtain a small advantage, but it is necessary to check through the games of the chess elite. However, we can clearly see that players would find it very difficult to follow the right course in such a sea of variations, as we have in this line. Maybe 'unclear' is the best judgment in this position:

13.\(\mathbb{Q}bd4!\) This is the most reasonable move for White. He centralises the knight, attacks the e6 pawn and closes the dangerous a7-g1 diagonal. Other moves lead White more or less into problems: 13.\(\mathbb{Q}e3?!\) e5! 14.\(\mathbb{Q}xb6\) \(\mathbb{W}xb6\) 15.\(\mathbb{Q}xe5?\) \(\mathbb{Q}xe5\) 16.\(\mathbb{Q}xe5\) \(\mathbb{Q}g4+-; 13.\(\mathbb{Q}f4?!\) \(\mathbb{Q}xf2+!\) 14.\(\mathbb{Q}xf2\) \(\mathbb{Q}g4+\) 15.\(\mathbb{Q}g3\) e5 16.\(\mathbb{Q}g5\) \(\mathbb{W}c7\) with obvious compensation; 13.\(\mathbb{Q}g5\) e5 14.\(\mathbb{Q}xe5\) \(\mathbb{Q}xe5\) 15.\(\mathbb{Q}xe5\) h6! (15...\(\mathbb{W}d6\)

16.\(\mathbb{Q}f4\) \(\mathbb{Q}xf2+\) 17.\(\mathbb{Q}h1=) 16.\(\mathbb{Q}h4\) \(\mathbb{W}d6\) 17.\(\mathbb{Q}xf6\) (17.\(\mathbb{Q}g3\) \(\mathbb{Q}xf2+!\) 18.\(\mathbb{Q}xf2\) \(\mathbb{Q}g4+\)) 17...\(\mathbb{W}xf6\) 18.\(\mathbb{Q}xd5\) \(\mathbb{Q}e6\) 19.\(\mathbb{Q}d6\) \(\mathbb{Q}xf2+\) 20.\(\mathbb{Q}h1\) \(\mathbb{W}e5\) and Black has good compensation for the pawn; 13.c4 e5 (13...\(\mathbb{Q}xc4\) 14.\(\mathbb{Q}xc4\) \(\mathbb{W}xd1\) 15.\(\mathbb{Q}xd1\) \(\mathbb{Q}g4=\) ) 14.cxd5 \(\mathbb{W}xd5\) with a good position for Black: 15.\(\mathbb{Q}e3\) e4 16.\(\mathbb{Q}xe4\) \(\mathbb{W}xd1\) 17.\(\mathbb{Q}axd1\) \(\mathbb{Q}xe4\) 18.\(\mathbb{Q}xb6\) axb6 19.\(\mathbb{Q}xe4\) \(\mathbb{Q}xa2\) 20.\(\mathbb{Q}d2\). 13...\(\mathbb{W}d6\) 13...e5?! 14.\(\mathbb{Q}xc6\) \(\mathbb{Q}xc6\) 15.\(\mathbb{Q}xe5\) \(\mathbb{Q}xf2+?\) 16.\(\mathbb{Q}xf2\) \(\mathbb{W}b6+\) 17.\(\mathbb{Q}e3\) \(\mathbb{Q}g4+\) 18.\(\mathbb{Q}g1\) \(\mathbb{Q}xe3\) 19.\(\mathbb{W}b3+-\). 14.\(\mathbb{Q}e3\) After 14.h3 e5 15.\(\mathbb{Q}xe6\) e4 16.\(\mathbb{Q}cd4\) \(\mathbb{Q}xf3\) 17.\(\mathbb{Q}xf3\) there is a difference between the above mentioned variation and 4.\(\mathbb{Q}d3\), where White took with his queen, because the rook defended the pawn on f2: 17...\(\mathbb{Q}xf3!\)
It seems that only this risky move, based on the strategic threat of checkmate, gives White chances in the struggle for an advantage. 16.\(c2\) e5 17.\(\text{c6} \hspace{1em} \text{xe3}\) 18.\(\text{f3} \hspace{1em} \text{bxc6}\) 19.\(\text{d2} \hspace{1em} \text{e3}\) 20.\(\text{f1} \hspace{1em} \text{e4}\) 21.\(\text{g4} \hspace{1em} \text{exf3}\) 22.\(\text{gxf3} \hspace{1em} \text{bxf3}\) 23.\(\text{h2}+ \hspace{1em} \text{xh2}\) 24.\(\text{h2} \hspace{1em} \text{xg4}\).

A very frequent and popular continuation. Black prepares to win the white central pawn with ...\(\text{cxd4}\) and ...\(\text{g7-g5}\) or ...\(\text{b6}\), when after the key white defensive move \(\text{b3}\), he could drive the knight away with ...\(a5-a4\). In addition, the a-pawn is the main actor in many plans for play on the queenside. However, it is obvious that this continuation weakens the important square b5. White has two acceptable ways to play \(9.\text{e1}\) and \(9.\text{a4}\):

A) \(9.\text{a4}\) White is fighting for space on the queenside, accepting in his turn a weak square on the b-file. He is satisfied with this because his main plans are for the kingside, where he already has a space advantage, thanks to his powerful centre. In addition, this continuation reduces the value of unpleasant and aggressive variations with ...\(\text{g7-g5}\). The main downside of the move a2-a4 is that it makes it easy for Black to activate or exchange his light-squared bishop,
but still White will retain a small, but stable advantage. 9...\textit{cxd4} 9...g5?! 10.dxc5± is a more favourable version for White compared to the main line, because Black has weakened his queeside by playing ...a7-a5. 10.\textit{cxd4}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Diagram 1}
\end{center}

\textbf{10...\textit{b4}} Now it makes no sense to play 10...g5?! 11.\textit{b3} g4 12.\textit{e1} and White is left with a strong centre and Black with a weak king's flank. \textbf{11.\textit{b5} 0-0} Or 11...b6 12.\textit{b1} \textit{a6} 13.\textit{c3} 0-0 14.\textit{e2} \textit{xb5} 15.axb5 \textit{c8} 16.\textit{d2} \textit{c7} 17.\textit{b3} \textit{b7} 18.\textit{ac1} \textit{fe8} 19.\textit{h4} \textit{f8} 20.\textit{h5± with a similar plan as in the previous game of Adams. White has a small but long-term advantage, due to his extra space, Ni Hua-Cvek, Ohrid 2009. 12.\textit{b1} \textit{b6} 13.\textit{c3} \textit{d7} 14.\textit{b3} \textit{c8} 15.\textit{d2} \textit{xb5} 16.axb5± Adams-Carluca, Zafra 2009. Despite the exchange of light-squared bishops, White has kept a small but stable advantage, due to his greater control of space;

B) 9.\textit{e1} \textit{cxd4} Weaker is 9...c4?! because after 10.\textit{c2} b5 11.\textit{b3} \textit{b6} 12.bxc4 bxc4 13.a4! Black does not have sufficient counterplay on the queenside, to offset the upcoming action of White on the kingside: 13...\textit{d7} 14.\textit{f1} \textit{a7} 15.\textit{g3} h5 16.h4! (by winning the square g5, White would completely rule on the kingside) 16...\textit{hx4} (Black has to fight for the important square g5 and accepts the temporary pawn sacrifice) 17.\textit{xh4} \textit{xh4} 18.\textit{e3} \textit{d8} 19.\textit{xh5} \textit{h4} 20.g4± Delchev-Apicella, Port Barcares 2005. 10.\textit{cxd4}
White will exchange the d-pawn for the g-pawn, and his more effective and coordinated pieces will provide slightly better chances. For example: 14...\(\text{\texttt{b4}}\) 15.\(\text{\texttt{e3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{h4}}\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{g3}}\) with the advantage: 16...f5 17.exf6 \(\text{\texttt{xf6}}\) (17...\(\text{\texttt{d6}}\) 18.\(\text{\texttt{xg4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xg4}}\) (18...\(\text{\texttt{xg3}}\)?! 19.\(\text{\texttt{g6+}}\) \(\text{\texttt{d8}}\) 20.fgx3 \(\text{\texttt{xd4+}}\) 21.\(\text{\texttt{e3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xb2}}\) 22.\(\text{\texttt{c1}}\)±) 19.\(\text{\texttt{hxg3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xf6}}\) 20.\(\text{\texttt{g6±}}\) 18.\(\text{\texttt{f4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e7}}\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{c1!}}\) \(\text{\texttt{g8}}\) (19...\(\text{\texttt{h5}}\) 20.\(\text{\texttt{f3±}}\) 20.a3 \(\text{\texttt{d6}}\) 21.\(\text{\texttt{xd6+}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xd6}}\) 22.\(\text{\texttt{f4+}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e7}}\) 23.\(\text{\texttt{b5?!}}\) (23.\(\text{\texttt{e1!}}\) \(\text{\texttt{d7}}\) 24.\(\text{\texttt{e3±}}\) 23...\(\text{\texttt{d7=}}\) 0-1 Fernandez Garcia-Arizmendi Martinez, Burgos 2003.

15.\(\text{\texttt{hxg4}}\) Also possible is 15.\(\text{\texttt{xg4}}\) with slightly better chances for White, due to his mobile pieces and greater space. 15...\(\text{\texttt{c5}}\) and now:

16.\(\text{\texttt{g5!}}\) Weaker is 16.\(\text{\texttt{e3?!}}\) because it allows the queen swap with 16...\(\text{\texttt{h4!}}\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{xh4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{hxh4}}\) with an excellent position for Black: 18.f4 b6 19.\(\text{\texttt{ad1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{b7}}\) (19...\(\text{\texttt{xf4}}\)!N 20.\(\text{\texttt{g3}}\) (20.\(\text{\texttt{xf4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e2+}}\) 21.\(\text{\texttt{h1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xf4+}}\) 20...\(\text{\texttt{f3}}\) 21.\(\text{\texttt{g2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xe3}}\) 22.\(\text{\texttt{xe3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{exe5}}\) with more than enough compensation for Black) 20.\(\text{\texttt{b1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{c6=}}\), Chernov-Feygin, Germany Bundesliga 2009/10; 18.\(\text{\texttt{g5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{h5}}\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{f4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e7}}\) 20.\(\text{\texttt{ac1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{c5}}\) 21.\(\text{\texttt{b1}}\) b6; 18.g3 \(\text{\texttt{h8}}\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{ad1}}\) b6 20.\(\text{\texttt{g2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{b7}}\).

16...\(\text{\texttt{b6}}\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{e3}}\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{f4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{c6}}\) 18.\(\text{\texttt{e2}}\) (18.\(\text{\texttt{g4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xb2}}\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{f6+}}\) ? \(\text{\texttt{xf6}}\) 20.\(\text{\texttt{xf6}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xf6}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xf6}}\) 21.\(\text{\texttt{xf1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{d4+}}\) 22.\(\text{\texttt{f4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e5}}\) 23.\(\text{\texttt{a1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e6}}\) 24.\(\text{\texttt{f6}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xf6}}\) 25.\(\text{\texttt{xf6}}\) \(\text{\texttt{h6}}\) 26.\(\text{\texttt{xe5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e6}}\) 27.\(\text{\texttt{f3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xe5}}\) 28.\(\text{\texttt{xe5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{f6=}}\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{g3∞}}\) Halasz-Knaak, Kecskemet 1985. 17...\(\text{\texttt{xb2}}\)

18.\(\text{\texttt{g7}}\) \(\text{\texttt{f8}}\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{g4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{b6}}\) 20.\(\text{\texttt{g3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{a6}}\) 21.\(\text{\texttt{xa6}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xa6}}\) 22.\(\text{\texttt{f6+}}\) 22.\(\text{\texttt{h5}}\) 22...\(\text{\texttt{xf6}}\) 23.\(\text{\texttt{xf6}}\) \(\text{\texttt{a8}}\) 24.\(\text{\texttt{g4±}}\) Petraitis-Albrecht, ICCF email 2007.

B2) 10...\(\text{\texttt{a4}}\) Usually transposes into positions covered under 10...\(\text{\texttt{b6}}\);

B3) 10...\(\text{\texttt{b6}}\) Due to the a-pawn, Black is on the verge of winning the central pawn on d4. But White has a good plan to play for compensation, using the activity of his own pieces and the weakened square b5:

B31) It is not good to burden the queen with the defence of the pawn by 11.\(\text{\texttt{wa4?!}}\). Black now has a choice between two good continuations: the aggressive 11...g5 and the quieter 11...\(\text{\texttt{b4}}\):

B311) After the peaceful 11...\(\text{\texttt{b4}}\) 12.\(\text{\texttt{xb4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xb4}}\) 13.\(\text{\texttt{b1 a4}}\)!

Black occupies space on the queenside, and over the next few moves, he adopts a typical set-up for his pieces: 14.\(\text{\texttt{a3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{c6}}\) 15.\(\text{\texttt{d3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{b6}}\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{b1 a5}}\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{c3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{b3}}\) 18.\(\text{\texttt{b1 d7}}\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{e3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{c8}}\) 20.\(\text{\texttt{d2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xd2}}\) 21.\(\text{\texttt{xd2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{c4}}\) 22.\(\text{\texttt{xc4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xc4}}\) 23.\(\text{\texttt{e3 f6=}}\) – an instructive example of how to play in this type of position, Netzer-Barsov, France 2002;

B312) 11...g5!? 12.h3 It is bad to shut in the queen with 12.\(\text{\texttt{b3}}\) g4 13.\(\text{\texttt{g5}}\) (13.\(\text{\texttt{fd2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{c7+-}}\) with the idea ...\(\text{\texttt{b6}}\) 13...\(\text{\texttt{d8+-}}\) with the idea
The Modern French

...\text{g}5 \text{ and } ...\text{b}6 14.\text{b}5 \text{b}6 15.\text{xc}6+ \text{bxc}6 16.\text{xc}6+ \text{d}7++. 12.\text{h}5 13.\text{g}4 \text{hxg}4 14.\text{hxg}4 \text{f}8 It is possible to play sharply with 14...\text{f}5?!.

15.\text{f}1 \text{d}7 Now it is obvious that a4 is not the place for the white queen.

16.\text{e}3 \text{b}4 17.\text{d}1 \text{xd}3 18.\text{xd}3 \text{b}5 19.\text{c}2 \text{g}6 with great play, Erenburg-S. Williams, Hastings 2005/06.

B32) 11.\text{b}1!

The introduction to a typical plan, seen in similar positions, of the Blockade Variant. White improves his knight’s position and counts on the weak square b5. 11...\text{xd}4 12.\text{xd}4 \text{xd}4 13.\text{c}3 \text{b}6 Dubious is 13...\text{c}5 due to

14.\text{b}5 \text{xf}2+ 15.\text{h}1 0-0 16.\text{g}5! (with the idea \text{e}2) 16...\text{b}4 (16...\text{b}6 17.\text{h}5 \text{g}6 18.\text{h}6 \text{d}8 19.\text{xd}8 \text{xd}8 20.\text{f}1 \text{xb}2 21.\text{ae}1 (21.\text{xf}7!++) 21...\text{f}8 22.\text{c}7?

White has played 20 excellent moves but now has turned the game into defeat with two inaccurate moves; 22.\text{e}2!\text{b}e. 22...\text{xe}5f Ris-De Jager, Netherlands 2008/09) 17.\text{f}1 \text{xb}2 (17...\text{b}6? 18.\text{h}5++-) 18.a3 \text{c}5 19.\text{f}4! White combines an attack on the black king with the capture of the black queen. The apparent disharmony of the black pieces increases White’s possibilities and gives him more than adequate compensation. 19...\text{xe}5 Black of course has other continuations, but all of them lead to poor results. 20.\text{xe}5+!++-

20...\text{xf}7 21.\text{h}5+ \text{g}8 22.\text{xe}5 \text{xb}5 23.\text{xg}7! White sacrifices another bishop and crowns this wonderful game. An instructive example of the many areas of chess strategy and tactics in particular. 23...f5 24.\text{e}5 \text{d}8 25.\text{f}3 \text{f}8 26.\text{g}3 1-0 Sutovsky-Vavrak, Plovdiv 2008. 14.\text{g}4\text{f}
White moves immediately into action since his opponent has neglected his development, spending time on taking the pawn on d4. Black has three possibilities, none of which gives a peaceful life:

B321) 14...0-0 Black sacrifices the exchange, relying on the bishop pair and on his control of the dark squares. But Black has insufficient compensation for the material because White has no problem with the set-up and coordination of his pieces. 15.\texttt{h}6 g6 16.\texttt{xf}8 \texttt{xf}8 17.b5!

A simple and excellent plan. White will close play on the queenside before activating his pieces, thanks to the weakened square b5. Without counterplay on that side Black can only await developments. 17...\texttt{c}5 18.a4 \texttt{e}7 19.\texttt{ad}1± \texttt{c}7 20.h4→ White is ready for action and a further weakening of the black king position. The active white pieces can be easily moved to the desired destination. 20...h5 Moving pawns around the king is usually weakening, but to allow the opening of the h-file is probably worse, because White can easily move his rook via the square e3 to the h-file. 21.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{d}7 22.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{c}6 23.\texttt{e}2! Of course, White has other good moves, but the practically inevitable sacrifice on h5 is the quickest way to victory. 23...\texttt{d}7 24.\texttt{b}5 \texttt{d}8 Nothing changes in the evaluation of the position after 24...\texttt{xb}5 25.\texttt{xb}5±. 25.\texttt{xh}5!

The crowning of White’s successful strategy, or Black’s unsuccessful strategy. 25...\texttt{xb}5 26...gxh5? 26.\texttt{g}3+ \texttt{f}8 27.\texttt{f}3+- 26.\texttt{xb}5 \texttt{xh}4 26...gxh5 27.\texttt{g}3+ \texttt{f}8 28.\texttt{f}3+- 27.\texttt{h}3± and Black will have a difficult defence with a material deficit, Nedev-Bauer, Bled 2002;

B322) 14...g6

This weakens the black position. White has a choice between two good continuations: 15.\texttt{b}5 15.\texttt{b}5 0-0 16.\texttt{xd}7 \texttt{xd}7 17.\texttt{xd}5 exd5 18.\texttt{xd}7=; but also strong is 15.\texttt{h}6 \texttt{c}5 16.\texttt{b}5+ \texttt{d}7 17.a4 \texttt{c}6 18.\texttt{ac}1 0-0-0 (18...\texttt{xb}5 19.\texttt{xb}5±) 19.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{c}7 20.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{xb}5 21.axb5 b6 22.\texttt{d}4± \texttt{exe}5?! 23.\texttt{c}6 \texttt{c}7 24.\texttt{b}4!+–
Caruana-Vavrak, Rogaska Slatina 2009.
15...0-0 16.h6 c5 16...d8 17.a c1 c5 18.d4 goes into the main line. 17.d4 d8 18.a c1 a6?!
19.e3± xd3 20.wxd3 d4 21.xd4 c5 22.xc5 xd3 23.xb6 d7 24.xd8 xb5 25.c8 g7 26.f6+ h6 27.h4 c4 28.f3 g5 29.g4

1-0, Smirin-Ulibin, Pula 2000.
B323) 14.. ef8 Black does minimum damage to his position with this move, but he still has long-term problems with his development. 15.b5 c5 16.e3 d7 17.d6?! White sacrifices another pawn for active play on the dark squares. 17...xd6 18.exd6 xd6 19.g3 c6 20.a c1 b6 21.c3 h5 22.h4 c8 23.d4 f6 24.g6 e8? 24...e5 25.xe5! fxe5 26.xe5 g8 27.f7 +!.

White has insufficient compensation for the pawn, Sutovsky-Short, Port Erin 1999. 11.d7 12.xc3 a4:
B41) 13.h4!? After moving the knight to the natural square c3, White continues with his main plan, with play on the kingside. The arrival of the pawn on h5 usually predicts a raid by the white army on that side. 13.. b4 Black would give his opponent a strong initiative after 13.. xh4 14.xh4 xh4 15.b5 0-0 16.e3 e5 14.b1 h6 15.h5 c6 Nor is the following any help: 15.. a3 16.b3 c7 17.e3 0-0 18.e1 f5 19.exf6 xf6 20.f3±, Wunderlich--
Atakisi, ICCF email 2004. 16.a3 Qa6 17.Qh2 Bd7 18.Qg4 Qf8 19.f4 Qc4 20.f5 Qc7 and White was a little better in Smirin-Bauer, Saint Vincent 2000;


14...Qc6 15.Qg4 g6 16.Qb1 Bd7 17.Qf3 h6 18.h4 0-0-0 19.g3?! with the idea b2-b3. 19...Qbc4= Maksimovic-Drasko, Pljevlja 1989;


Back to the position after 8.0-0.

8. ... g7-g5!?

Black has no chances of organising meaningful counterplay without this move.

9. d4xc5!

White has no better solution against the threat ...g5-g4, so he breaks his pawn chain.

• 9.Qe1?? g4--.

• White gets nothing after 9.Qh1 h5 9...g4 10.Qe1 h5 11.Qc2 Qh5 (11...Qxd4 12.Qxd4 Qb6 13.Qb3±) 12.f4 Qxd4 13.Qxd4 Qxd4 14.Qxd4 Qb6 15.Qb3±. 10.dxc5 Qxc5 11.Qb5 Qb6 12.a4 a6 13.Qxc6+ Qxc6 14.b4 Qd7 14...Qd3?! 15.Qb3 g4 16.Qe3 Qc7 17.Qe1 Qxe5 18.Qd4 f6 19.f4 Qg6 ≥ 19...Qxf3 20.Qxf3 Qg4 with the better position for Black. 20.Qd3 a5 20...e5? 21.fxe5 fxe5 22.Qxe5 Qxe5 23.Qe2 -- White will return the material and will have a clear advantage: 21.b5= Smith-Antic, Plovdiv 2011.

• It is not good to open the h-file for the black rook with 9.Qh3?! because of 9...h5 10.g4 hxg4 11.hxg4 Qb6= 12.Qa4 Here the thematic 12.dxc5! does not work any more, because of 12...Qc7= 13.Qe1 Qxe5 and White has additional problems because of his weakened castled position: 14.Qxe5 Qxe5 15.Qb3?! Qh3 16.Qe3 Qf3+ 17.Qg2 Qh2+ 18.Qxf3 Qf4+ 19.Qe2 Qxf2+ 0-1 Jaenig-Kindermann, Bad Wiessee 2004. 12.Qxd4 13.Qxd4 a6 Good is 13...f6= 14.Qb3 Qc7 15.Qe1 f5!++ with the double threat ...fxg4 and ...Qb6: 16.Qbd2 (16.Qxf5 Qb6 17.Qb5 a6++) 16...fxg4 17.Qh2 Qh4 18.Qdf1 Qxd4 (18...Qg3?!) 19.Qxd4 g3= Paavilainen-Vaissier, Tallinn 1986. 14.a3 Qa7= with the idea ...b7-b5.

• 9.b4!? White sacrifices a pawn to preserve his centre. 9...Qxb4 10.Qxb4 Qxb4 11.Qb1 g4 12.Qe1 h5 13.Qb3 Qb6 14.f3 g3! 15.hxg3 with mutual chances in a complex position.

9. ... Qd7xc5

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The former sideline 9...g4 (Black takes the less important pawn) seriously aspires to become the main line in this critical position, because White has no clear way to obtain an advantage.

- 9...\(\text{dx}e5?!\) 10.\(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{xe}5\) 11.\(\text{b}3\)!

Typical for this type of position. White's search for an advantage is based on the rapid development, resulting from Black's moving of the impatient g-pawn.

11...\(\text{wc}7\) 11...\(\text{xd}3\) 12.\(\text{wd}3\) e5 (12...\(\text{d}7\) 13.\(\text{f}4\)\(\text{f}\)++) 13.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{c}7\) 14.\(\text{e}1\) e4 15.c4 \(\text{e}6\) 16.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{xc}5\) 17.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 18.\(\text{b}5\)+ \(\text{c}8\) 19.\(\text{e}3\)\(\text{e}\) Pavasovic-Bartel, Portoroz 2005. Possible is 19.\(\text{c}xg5?!\) \(\text{b}6\) 20.\(\text{g}d1\). 12.f4 \(\text{xc}5\) 13.\(\text{xc}5\) \(\text{xc}5\)+ 14.\(\text{f}2\) \(\text{xd}3\)

15.\(\text{wd}3\) \(\text{c}6\) 16.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{c}4\) 17.\(\text{xc}4\) \(\text{xc}4\) dxc4 18.\(\text{fxg}5\) \(\text{e}5\) 19.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{g}8\) 20.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{b}6\)

21.\(\text{d}6\) e4 22.\(\text{e}5\) with a clearly better position for White, Mamedov-Bartel, Novi Sad 2009.

- 9...g4 10.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{dx}e5\) 11.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{d}7\)

11...\(\text{xc}5?!\) 12.f4! with a strong initiative for the pawn. Now White plays 12.\(\text{b}3\). A multipurpose move. Alternatives bring White less: 12.f4 \(\text{xd}4\) 13.\(\text{xd}7\)+ \(\text{xd}7\)++; 12.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{bxc}6\) 13.f4 \(\text{d}3\) (there is no need to open the position with 13...\(\text{gx}f3\) 14.\(\text{xf}3\) \(\text{g}6\) 15.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{c}7\) 16.\(\text{g}5\)

(16.\(\text{h}6\)!\)) 16...\(\text{e}5\) 17.\(\text{h}5\)?

(17.\(\text{f}2\)=) 17...\(\text{xc}5\) (17...\(\text{h}6\)±) 18.\(\text{d}2\) (18.\(\text{h}6\)!\) 18...\(\text{h}6\)--+ Oratovsky-Vitiugov, Israel 2010) 14.b4 a5 15.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{c}1\) 16.\(\text{xc}1\) \(\text{xc}1\) 17.cxb4 \(\text{a}4\) (Black prevents a2-a4 by attacking the b4 pawn; 17...\(\text{f}6\)?) 18.\(\text{f}5\) (18.\(\text{a}5\) \(\text{c}7\) 19.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{f}6\)=) 18...0-0 19.\(\text{f}4\)?! (19.\(\text{a}5\)) 19...e5 (it may be better to give the g-pawn instead of the e-pawn: 19...\(\text{f}6\)!\) 20.\(\text{xf}4++\) \(\text{h}8\) and Black has good compensation for the pawn) 20.\(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{f}6\) Smirin-Akobian, Philadelphia 2004; 12.\(\text{b}4\) a5?!\) 12...\(\text{h}5\)

Weaker is 12...\(\text{g}8\) 13.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{c}4\) 14.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{xd}4\) 15.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{c}8\) 16.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{a}3\) 17.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{xc}5\) 18.\(\text{xh}7\)± Smirin-Akobian, Minneapolis 2005.

And now:

A) 13.\(\text{e}1\)

A1) 13...\(\text{xd}4\) Now White has a choice between two good continuations: 14. \(\text{xd}7\) + and 14. \(\text{d}4\).
14. \( \mathcal{D}xd4 \) Or 14. \( \mathcal{D}xd7+ \mathcal{W}xd7 \) 15. \( \mathcal{C}xd4 \) and now: 15... \( \mathcal{G}g6 \) 16. \( \mathcal{D}d2 \) \( \mathcal{F}f6 \) 17. \( \mathcal{C}c1 \) 0-0 18. \( \mathcal{F}f3 \) \( \mathcal{E}e5 \) 19. \( \mathcal{D}xe5 \) \( \mathcal{D}xe5 \) 20. \( \mathcal{F}xg4 \) \( \mathcal{H}xg4 \) 21. \( \mathcal{C}c3 \) \( \mathcal{X}xc3 \) 22. \( \mathcal{D}xc3 \) \( \mathcal{A}ae8 \) 23. \( \mathcal{F}f1 \) \( f5 \) 24. \( \mathcal{H}h3 \)± \( \mathcal{E}e4 \)?! 25. \( \mathcal{C}c6 ! \) \( \mathcal{X}xc6 \) 26. \( \mathcal{C}c5 \)± — Rublevsky-Vysochin, Olginka 2011; or 15... \( \mathcal{D}c4 \) 16. \( \mathcal{D}d2 \) \( \mathcal{F}f6 \) 17. \( \mathcal{F}f1 \) with slightly better chances for White, due to his mobile majority on the queenside. For example: 17...0-0-0 18. \( \mathcal{B}b1 ! \) \( \mathcal{D}dg8 \) 19. \( \mathcal{B}b3 \) \( \mathcal{A}a5 \) 20. \( \mathcal{B}b4 \) \( \mathcal{C}c4 \) 21. \( \mathcal{F}f4 \) \( h4 \) 22. \( \mathcal{C}c5 \)±; 15... \( \mathcal{D}c6 \) 16. \( \mathcal{F}f4 \),

14... \( \mathcal{X}xb5 \) 15. \( \mathcal{F}f6 \) Also worth attention is 15. \( \mathcal{D}xb5 \) \( \mathcal{G}g6 \) 16. \( \mathcal{C}c4 \) \( \mathcal{X}xc5 \) 17. \( \mathcal{C}xd5 \) \( \mathcal{W}b6 \) 18. \( \mathcal{W}e2 \) 0-0 19. \( \mathcal{D}xe6 \) \( \mathcal{F}xe6 \) 20. \( \mathcal{E}e3 \) \( \mathcal{X}xe3 \) 21. \( \mathcal{F}xe3 \),

15... \( \mathcal{W}c7 \) 15... \( \mathcal{D}d7 \) 16. \( \mathcal{B}b4 \) \( \mathcal{F}f6 \) 17. \( \mathcal{E}e1 \) \( \mathcal{W}c7 \) (\( \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} \) Emms-Lalic, Southend 2001) 18. \( \mathcal{F}f5 \) 0-0 19. \( \mathcal{G}g3 \) \( \mathcal{X}xc3 \) 20. \( \mathcal{X}xh5 \) \( f5 \) 15... \( \mathcal{F}f6 \) 16. \( \mathcal{F}f4 \) \( \mathcal{W}c5 \)

One of the most important positions for evaluating the alternative with \( \ldots \mathcal{G}5-\mathcal{G}4 \). Black has successfully completed his positionally risky mission with his g-pawn storm, winning the central pawn at e5. Of course, he has paid for this by weakening his kingside, and with time, which White has used to create more active and harmonious piece play. Despite the fact that Black can be satisfied with the outcome, in the resulting position there still lies great danger for him, because of the dynamic potential of White's pieces. For example: 17. \( \mathcal{E}e1 ! \) \( \mathcal{N} \) Black is safe after 17... \( \mathcal{E}e3 \) \( \mathcal{W}c4 \) 18. \( \mathcal{B}b3 \) \( \mathcal{W}d3 \) 19. \( \mathcal{X}xb5 \) \( \mathcal{X}xb5 \) 20. \( \mathcal{D}d4 \) \( \mathcal{W}d7 \) 21. \( \mathcal{W}d3 \) \( \mathcal{H}h4 \)±, Kolar-Boukal, ICCF email 2004; and passive is 17. \( \mathcal{E}e1 \) \( \mathcal{W}d7 \) 18. \( \mathcal{E}e5 \) \( \mathcal{G}g8 \) and White has insufficient compensation for the pawn. Now: 17... \( \mathcal{F}f6 \) (17... \( \mathcal{W}c4 \)? 18. \( \mathcal{B}b3 \) \( \mathcal{W}d3 \) 19. \( \mathcal{W}e1 \)±; 17... \( \mathcal{C}c6 \) 18. \( \mathcal{C}f4 \) With the move c3-c4 White will establish maximum activity and excellent harmony between his pieces. The position is still very tricky and requires maximum caution, as can be seen from the following almost forced line: 18. \( \mathcal{C}c4 \) \( \mathcal{X}xc4 \) 19. \( \mathcal{B}b3 \) \( \mathcal{X}xe5 \) 20. \( \mathcal{X}xe5 \) \( \mathcal{G}g8 \) 21. \( \mathcal{B}xc4 \) \( \mathcal{D}xc4 \) 22. \( \mathcal{W}e2 \) \( \mathcal{C}c8 \) 22... \( b5 \) 23. \( \mathcal{W}e4 \)± 23. \( \mathcal{C}f5 ! \) \( \mathcal{D}d8 \) And now White has a choice between two jumps: 24. \( \mathcal{G}g3 \) 24. \( \mathcal{G}g7 \) \( \mathcal{G}f8 \) 25. \( \mathcal{X}xh5 \) \( \mathcal{G}5 \) 26. \( \mathcal{F}f6 \) \( \mathcal{X}xh5 \) 27. \( \mathcal{X}xd8 \) \( \mathcal{W}d6 \)±. 24... \( \mathcal{H}h4 \)

with a complex position that is closer to a draw, due to the reduced material: 25. \( \mathcal{W}xc4 \) \( \mathcal{W}b5 \) 26. \( \mathcal{F}f1 \) \( \mathcal{G}g6 \) 27. \( \mathcal{A}a4 \) \( \mathcal{W}d5 \) 28. \( \mathcal{D}d4 \) \( b5 \) 29. \( \mathcal{X}xb5 \) \( \mathcal{H}h3 \) 30. \( \mathcal{G}e3 \)

A2) Solid is 13... \( \mathcal{G}6 \) so as not to allow the opponent to fix the pawn structure, as in the variation with 13... \( \mathcal{X}xd4 \). 14. \( \mathcal{X}xc6 \) \( \mathcal{X}xc6 \) This seems logical, but now e6 becomes critical. Black can strengthen the centre, but not his overall position, by 14... \( \mathcal{B}xc6 \) 15. \( \mathcal{D}d3 \) \( \mathcal{G}g8 \) 16. \( \mathcal{C}c4 ! \) \( \mathcal{W}c7 \) 17. \( \mathcal{X}xd5 \) \( \mathcal{X}xd5 \) 18. \( \mathcal{X}xg6 \)
(worthy of attention is 18.\textit{\textsubscript{f}e3!} \textit{\textsubscript{f}f6} 19.\textit{\textsubscript{w}d2} and Black’s position is not easy with the king in the centre) 18...\textit{\textsubscript{f}xg6} 19.\textit{\textsubscript{w}d4} \textit{\textsubscript{f}6?!} (19...\textit{\textsubscript{f}e6}?! 20.\textit{\textsubscript{w}xd5} \textit{\textsubscript{e}c6\textsubscript{g}e}) 20.\textit{\textsubscript{f}f4\textsubscript{f}+} Naroditsky-Stopa, Wheeling 2011. 15.\textit{\textsubscript{d}d3} \textit{\textsubscript{g}g8} 16.\textit{\textsubscript{w}e2}?!N 16.\textit{\textsubscript{x}xg6}?! \textit{\textsubscript{x}xg6\textsubscript{g}f}, Korneev-Stopa, Forni di Sopra 2011.

With this novelty White has the idea \textit{\textsubscript{d}d4}!. It is not easy for Black to find a reasonable plan. For example:

**16...\textit{\textsubscript{w}c7} 17.\textit{\textsubscript{d}d4}**! White increases the pressure on e6, and frees his b-pawn for a storm. 17...\textit{\textsubscript{f}f4} (17...\textit{\textsubscript{f}xc5}? 18.\textit{\textsubscript{x}xe6+\textsubscript{f})} and now:

A21) 18.\textit{\textsubscript{x}xf4} \textit{\textsubscript{w}xf4} 19.b4 and White’s initiative is tremendously powerful: 19...0-0-0 20.b5 \textit{\textsubscript{e}e8};

A22) 16...\textit{\textsubscript{w}d7} 17.\textit{\textsubscript{d}d2} 0-0-0 18.\textit{\textsubscript{x}d4}! \textit{\textsubscript{e}xc5} 19.b4 \textit{\textsubscript{w}xd4} 20.cxd4 \textit{\textsubscript{w}d6} 21.g3 \textit{\textsubscript{w}f8} 22.b5 with more than enough compensation for the pawn;

A23) 16...\textit{\textsubscript{h}h4} 17.\textit{\textsubscript{d}d4} \textit{\textsubscript{f}f3+} 17...\textit{\textsubscript{f}xe5} 18.\textit{\textsubscript{x}xe6+\textsubscript{f})} 18.\textit{\textsubscript{x}xf3} \textit{\textsubscript{x}xf3}±.

B) An idea which deserves attention is to make it harder for Black to exchange on the d4-square with 13.\textit{\textsubscript{w}e2}?! \textit{\textsubscript{a}a6} 13...\textit{\textsubscript{d}xd4}? 14.\textit{\textsubscript{w}xe5} \textit{\textsubscript{f}f6} 15.\textit{\textsubscript{w}xd7\textsubscript{f}+}±, Erenburg-Peek, Port Erin 2005; 13...\textit{\textsubscript{w}c7}?! 14.\textit{\textsubscript{f}f4} \textit{\textsubscript{f}f3++.} 15.\textit{\textsubscript{w}xf3+-).

Now:

B1) 14.\textit{\textsubscript{x}xc6} \textit{\textsubscript{x}xc6} With the idea ...\textit{\textsubscript{d}d4}. 15.\textit{\textsubscript{e}e1} 15.\textit{\textsubscript{x}f4}?! \textit{\textsubscript{d}xd4} 16.\textit{\textsubscript{w}xd4} \textit{\textsubscript{g}xc5}. 15...\textit{\textsubscript{w}c7} 16.g3?

With the idea \textit{\textsubscript{f}f4}, and White still has a chance to fight for the initiative;

B2) 14.\textit{\textsubscript{a}a4};

B3) White obtains nothing by keeping his light-squared bishop with 14.\textit{\textsubscript{x}xc6} \textit{\textsubscript{x}xc6} 15.\textit{\textsubscript{d}d3} \textit{\textsubscript{w}c7}, with the idea ...0-0-0 or ...e6-e5. Both sides have chances in the upcoming fight.

10. \textit{\textsubscript{d}d3-b5}

More passive is 10.\textit{\textsubscript{c}c2}, for example:

A) 10...\textit{\textsubscript{d}d7} 11.\textit{\textsubscript{e}e1} and now:

A1) 11...\textit{\textsubscript{g}g4} 12.\textit{\textsubscript{d}d4} \textit{\textsubscript{d}dxe5} 13.\textit{\textsubscript{x}xc6} \textit{\textsubscript{x}xc6} 14.\textit{\textsubscript{w}xg4} h5 15.\textit{\textsubscript{d}d1\textsubscript{f}3} e5 (15...\textit{\textsubscript{d}d7} 16.\textit{\textsubscript{d}f3}\pm) The central pawns and queenside castling are usually Black’s aces in these positions, but it seems that here, he lags too much in time:
A11) 16.c4 \( \text{g4} \) 17.f3 \( \text{e6} \) 18.cxd5 \( \text{xd5} \) (Dzhumaev-Volkov, Tashkent 2009)

Black will castle queenside and have excellent chances in the forthcoming battle;

A12) 16.\( \text{f3} \) is a simple but powerful move. White wants to use his opponent's centre and delay in development in order to maximally activate his pieces, and create new targets. 16...\( \text{d6} \)

On 16...e4?! White has a good tactical solution due to the opponent's centrally-located king in 17.c4!

17...\text{exf3} 18.cxd5 and Black faces insoluble problems.

17.\( \text{a4} \) \text{f6} 17...e4?! 18.c4!±; 17...\text{g4} 18.h3±. 18.\( \text{h4} \)± White has better chances despite the fact that he has no central pawns and has two pieces on the edge of the board. They are not weak because they are performing active functions (the white knight threatens to remove Black's bishop pair via the newly-weakened square g6) and the central black pawns lose strength due to the uncastled king;

A2) Better for Black is 11...\text{h5}!?

12.\( \text{a4} \) Risky is 12.\( \text{b3} \) g4 13.\( \text{f4} \) dxe5 The white pawn was sacrificed to keep the opponent’s king in the centre, however White does not have enough for the exchange, because Black has kept a healthy pawn structure and with it a relatively healthy position, Zacharov-Bonehill, LSS email 2009. 12...\text{b6} 13.\( \text{x} \text{c6+} \)

17...\text{exf3} 18.cxd5 and Black faces insoluble problems.

And Black has justified the pawn storm on the kingside, winning the bishop pair and with it obtaining sufficient counterplay;
B) Risky is 10...g4 11.Qd4 Qxe5 12.f4 gxf3 13.Qxf3 Qg6 14.We2, for instance:
   B1) 14...f5 15.c4 Now no danger is posed by 15.Qe5 Qxe5 16.Wxe5 Qf6. 15...dxc4 16.Qxc4 with obvious compensation for the pawn, De graeve-Touzane, France 2004;
   B2) 14...0-0?! 15.Qh6 Qe8 16.Qxg6+ with Qe5 next;
   B3) 14...Qd7 15.Qe5! with a clear advantage: 15...0-0 16.Qh6.

10. ... Qc5-d7

Black plays in accordance with the idea of the variation with ...g7-g5 and brings back his knight into the fight against e5, because the pressure on the centre is the main compensation for the weakened black kingside.

- 10...Qb6 11.Qd4 a6 Probably a better version of the swap is 11...Qd7!!N, but after 12.Qxc6 (White has the additional possibility 12.Qxc6?! bxc6 (after 12...Qxc6 13.Qxc6+ bxc6 14.Qb3 Black has traded his weak light-squared bishop but it is not clear what purpose the move ...g7-g5 serves here) 13.Qe2 Qc7 14.b4 Qb7 15.a6= - also here the weak pawn on g5 is crucial for the evaluation of the position) 12...bxc6 13.b4 Qd3 14.Qb3 and Black faces similar problems. 12.Qxc6+ Qxc6 13.Qd4?!E Before White goes for an attack on the weakened kingside, he prevents Black's counterplay with ...c6-c5 (13.Wh5 Qd3 14.Qf3 c5E). 13...Qd3 Or 13...Qd7 14.Qh5 Qxe5 15.Qf3 (also good is 15.Qb3±) 15...Qg6 16.Qxg5 with a clear advantage for White in Arizmendi Martinez-Herraiz Hidalgo, Sant Luis 2005. 14.Qb3 Qxe5 14...Qxc1 15.Qxc1 h5 16.Qd2± with the idea f2-f4. 15.Wh5 White will win the pawn back and have the better chances in the upcoming position.

- 10...Qh6 A move that has defensive characteristics. White has a choice of attractive continuations:

The bishop pair compensates for the weaker black pawn structure. Both sides have roughly equal chances;
B) Possible is 11.\(\texttt{d}4\) \(\texttt{c}7\) (11...\(\texttt{d}7\)) 12.\(\texttt{f}4\) \(\texttt{gxf}4\) 13.\(\texttt{b}4\) \(\texttt{d}7\)
14.\(\texttt{c}2\,\texttt{f}3\) a6 15.\(\texttt{d}xc6\) bxc6 16.\(\texttt{a}4\) a5
17.\(\texttt{d}4\) axb4 18.\(\texttt{b}xc6\) \(\texttt{b}7\) 19.\(\texttt{x}b7\)
\(\texttt{w}xb7\) 20.\(\texttt{c}xb4\) \(\texttt{dxe}5\) 21.\(\texttt{f}4\) \(\texttt{f}6\) 22.\(\texttt{f}3\) \(\texttt{g}6\)
23.\(\texttt{a}4\) 24.a4? 0-0 25.b5\(=\). 24...\(\texttt{x}a1\) 1/2-1/2
Kleinman-Thavandiran, Guelph 2011.

C) White gained the better chances with 11.\(\texttt{b}3\)!? \(\texttt{d}7\) 12.\(\texttt{d}xc5\) \(\texttt{xc}5\)
13.\(\texttt{e}2\) \(\texttt{b}6\) 14.\(\texttt{e}3\) a6 15.\(\texttt{xc}6\) bxc6
16.\(\texttt{x}b6\) \(\texttt{w}xb6\) 17.b4 c5 18.\(\texttt{e}3\) \(\texttt{c}8\)
19.\(\texttt{fc}1\) \(\texttt{c}7\) 20.h3\(=\) in Christiansen-
Nakamura, Saint Louis 2010.

11. \(\texttt{f}1\)-\(\texttt{e}1\)

The most logical continuation. However, White has two more attractive continuations:

- 11.\(\texttt{b}3\) a6 11...\(\texttt{h}6\) 12.\(\texttt{c}4\) dxc4.
- 12.\(\texttt{xc}6\) bxc6 13.\(\texttt{bd}4\) 13.\(\texttt{fd}4\) \(\texttt{b}7\)
- 13...\(\texttt{b}7\) 14.\(\texttt{b}4\) 14.\(\texttt{g}5\) \(\texttt{x}g5\)
- 15.\(\texttt{xe}6\) \(\texttt{f}xe6\) 16.\(\texttt{w}h}5\. 14...\(\texttt{g}4\)
- 15.\(\texttt{e}1\) \(\texttt{xe}5\) 16.\(\texttt{f}4\) \(\texttt{c}4\) 17.\(\texttt{f}5\)
- 17.\(\texttt{w}x}4\) h5. 17...\(\texttt{e}5\) 18.\(\texttt{f}6\) \(\texttt{xf}6\)
- 19.\(\texttt{f}5\) h5 20.\(\texttt{d}3\) e4 20...\(\texttt{c}8\)
- 21.\(\texttt{h}6\) e4 22.\(\texttt{xf}7\) \(\texttt{xf}7\) 23.\(\texttt{g}5\)
\(\texttt{h}6\) (23...\(\texttt{ex}d3\) 24.\(\texttt{xf}6\) \(\texttt{xf}6\)
- 25.\(\texttt{w}x}3\) \(\texttt{d}7\) 26.\(\texttt{xf}6\) \(\texttt{xf}6\)
- 27.\(\texttt{f}1\) + \(\texttt{e}7\) 24.\(\texttt{hh}6\) \(\texttt{g}6\) 25.\(\texttt{f}8\)
\(\texttt{xf}8\) 26.\(\texttt{xf}4\) \(\texttt{hh}6\) 27.\(\texttt{ex}d5\) \(\texttt{xd}5\)
- 28.\(\texttt{w}x}3\) \(\texttt{b}6\) 29.\(\texttt{c}6\) \(\texttt{g}6\) 30.\(\texttt{xb}6\)
\(\texttt{f}5\). 21.\(\texttt{c}5\) \(\texttt{xc}3\) 22.\(\texttt{xb}7\) \(\texttt{b}6\)+

As opposed to Nakamura's continuation (11...\(\texttt{c}7\)), here White does not have a breathing-space to play 12.\(\texttt{b}3\)!

We believe that this rarely-played line with 10...\(\texttt{d}7\) and in particular the continuation of 11...\(\texttt{b}6\)! will be used
more and more in the future.

An alternative for Black is 11...\(\texttt{c}7\) 12.\(\texttt{b}3\) White should wait a bit with
the typical blow 12.\(\texttt{c}4\) g4 13.\(\texttt{cx}d5\) exd5 14.\(\texttt{e}6\) \(\texttt{fx}e5\) 15.\(\texttt{xc}6\) bxc6
16.\(\texttt{d}4\) \(\texttt{d}f}6\) 17.\(\texttt{d}x}6\) \(\texttt{d}x}6\) 18.\(\texttt{d}x}6\)
\(\texttt{f}7\) 19.\(\texttt{e}2\) \(\texttt{d}6\) 20.\(\texttt{f}1\) \(\texttt{ae}8\)
21.\(\texttt{g}5\) \(\texttt{xe}2\) 22.\(\texttt{xe}2\) \(\texttt{e}8\) 23.\(\texttt{c}2\)
\(\texttt{e}4\) 24.\(\texttt{g}3\) \(\texttt{x}g3\) 25.\(\texttt{hx}g3\) \(\texttt{e}6\)=
(riskier, but probably leading to a draw is 25...\(\texttt{g}5\) 26.\(\texttt{f}5\)+ \(\texttt{g}8\)

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27.\textit{W}xg5+ \textit{W}g7 28.\textit{W}d2. Black has a realistic chance to draw, thanks to the free d-pawn, but White has easier play due to his less exposed king, and better pawn structure).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure.png}
\caption{Diagram for the Modern French}
\end{figure}

Black has an insecure king, but his active pieces and free d-pawn provide an equal game.

12...h6 and now:

- 13.\textit{W}e2 a6 14.\textit{R}xc6 bxc6 15.c4 a5 16.cxd5 16.c2 16...cxd5 17.a4 a6 18.\textit{W}d1 c4 19.h3 b8 20.\textit{Q}bd4 \textit{Q}c5 \Rightarrow (Karjakin-Nakamura, Moscow 2010)

- 13.\textit{W}e2 a6 14.\textit{R}xc6 bxc6 15.c4 a5 16.cxd5 16.c2 16...cxd5 17.a4 a6 18.\textit{W}d1 c4 19.h3 b8 20.\textit{Q}bd4 \textit{Q}c5 \Rightarrow (Karjakin-Nakamura, Moscow 2010)

With obvious compensation, thanks to White's active and harmonious pieces and Black's weakness caused by ...g7-g5 (the possibilities \textit{W}h5 and \textit{Q}c3 are a direct consequence).

12. \textit{Q}b5xc6

- 12.a4 g4 13.\textit{R}xc6 13.\textit{Q}d4 \textit{Q}xd4 14.cxd4 \textit{W}xd4 15.a5. 13...\textit{B}xc6 14.\textit{Q}d4 c5 15.\textit{Q}b5 h5 15...f5 16.\textit{Q}d6+ \textit{Q}xd6 17.exd6 f7 18.b4 \textit{W}xd6 19.\textit{Q}b3 cxb4 20.cxb4 e5 21.b5 d4 22.f4 \Rightarrow. 16.c4! a6 17.\textit{Q}d6+ \textit{Q}xd6 18.exd6 \textit{W}c6 \Rightarrow 18...\textit{Q}b7!? 19.cxd5 \textit{Q}xd5 20.\textit{Q}e4 \textit{W}c6 21.\textit{W}d3 \Rightarrow.
White has certain compensation for the pawn, because it is not easy for Black to find a safe position for his king:

B) 13.a4?! g4 14.d4 xd4

with the double aim of activating the light-squared bishop and keeping the c-pawn, so as to control the important central square d4: 15.bxa5 wxa5 16.b3 wxc3 17.xg5 a6 18.d1 c5±. 14...c5±;

C) 13.a4?! g4 14.d4 xd4

15.cxd4 wxd4 16.c2 c5

12. b2-b4 a7-a5!

15...c7 15.c4 a6 (15...g4 16.d4 xe5 17.cxd5) 16.cxd5 cxd5 17.b3±.

15. d2-b3 a5xc3


16. c1xg5 c6-c5±

Conclusion

When applying the move order with the bishop development on the third move, f3 is exactly the place where Black wants to see White’s king’s knight. Compared to the ‘regular’ Tarrasch Variation White is deprived of many useful knight manoeuvres here, as the d2 knight can’t go to f3 and the g1 cannot go to e2.

Thanks to the inflexibility of the white pieces, Black has an attractive continuation at his disposal – 4...e6 5.e5 dxe5 6.d3 c5 7.c3 Qc6 8.0-0 g5!? when after the probably best 9.dxe5 Qxe5? (the alternatives 9...dx5 and 9...g4 deserve serious attention as well) 10.b5 d7 11.e1, the new idea with 11...b6!? takes us into uncharted waters, where both sides have mutual chances.

Of course, Black can play the calmer 8...a5!? instead of the double-edged 8...g5, followed by 9...cxd4, 10...b6 and 11...d7, after which a protracted positional struggle with approximately equal chances ensues.
Chapter 5 – The Steinitz Variation

1.e2-e4 e7-e6 2.d2-d4 d7-d5 3.Qb1-c3 Qg8-f6 4.e4-e5

The most logical continuation. In comparison with the Advance Variation 3.e5, White is pushing the black knight and gains space with tempo. The move was commonly seen in the games of the first World Champion Wilhelm Steinitz, after whom it was eventually named.

4. ... Qf6-d7

4...Qe4?! is a risky adventure.

Black is counting on the fact that the knight is more active in the centre, and in the case of an exchange, the e4 pawn will take away the best squares for the development of White’s pieces – d3 and f3. In addition, the d-file will be cleared and the white d4 pawn might become the object of an attack. However, Black is not ready for such an intrusion just yet. The e4 pawn will be much weaker than its opponent on d4 because it obviously doesn’t have adequate support from its pieces. 5.Qxe4 The simplest and strongest. The lonely pawn will be endangered. 5...dxe4 6.Qc4! The best way to achieve an advantage – White is developing a piece and effectively kills Black’s main idea connected with the ...c7-c5 push. 6...c5?! 6...a6 7.Qe2?! (7.a4±) 7...c5 8.c3 Qc6 9.a3?! (on
9.0-0 Black can obtain the pair of bishops after 9...cxd4 10.cxd4 \( \text{c4} \) 11.\( \text{d3} \) 12.\( \text{x} \) to 3, but White retains the advantage, thanks to his better development and Black's troubles with castling, for example 12...b5 13.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{b7} \) 14.\( \text{fc} \) 1 \( \text{e7} \) 15.\( \text{d3} \) g3! 9...b5 10.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{b7} \) 11.0-0 \( \text{c7} \) 12.\( \text{c2} \) \( \text{d8} \) 13.\( \text{e3} \) cxd4 14.cxd4 \( \text{c4} \) 15.\( \text{g3} \) ± (Black's e-pawn is weaker than the white pawn on d4. Besides, White's pieces easily pierce the unprotected kingside)

15...\( \text{d5} \)?! 16.\( \text{g4} \) \( \text{c4} \) 17.\( \text{h5} \) +–, Kritz-Westerinen, Heraklio 2007.

7.d5 \( \text{d7} \) 7...exd5 8.\( \text{x} \) d5 (8.\( \text{c} \) d5±)
8...\( \text{x} \) d5 9.\( \text{c} \) d5 \( \text{c6} \) (9...\( \text{d7} \) 10.\( \text{f} \) 4±) 10.\( \text{xe} \) e4 \( \text{xe} \) 5 11.\( \text{f} \) 4 \( \text{g6} \) 12.\( \text{e} \) 3 \( \text{e} \) 7 13.0-0 0-0 14.\( \text{f} \) 3±.

8.dxe6 \( \text{xe} \) 9.\( \text{h} \) 3! 9.f4 exf3 10.\( \text{x} \) f3 \( \text{b6} \) 11.\( \text{x} \) d8+ \( \text{x} \) d8 12.\( \text{d} \) 3 c4 13.\( \text{e} \) 4 \( \text{c7} \) 14.\( \text{g} \) 5 h6 15.\( \text{f} \) 7 \( \text{b4} \) + 16.c3 \( \text{f} \) 8 17.\( \text{x} \) xh6 \( \text{c} \) 5 18.\( \text{g} \) 4 \( \text{d} \) 7 19.\( \text{d} \) 2 \( \text{c} \) 6 20.\( \text{x} \) x6 \( \text{x} \) x6 21.0-0-0 \( \text{d} \) 5±. The centralised pieces and the mobility of the queenside pawns secure a solid endgame for Black, Matulovic-Maksimovic, Bjelovar 1979.

9...\( \text{b6} \) 10.\( \text{x} \) d8+ \( \text{x} \) d8 11.\( \text{e} \) e7 12.\( \text{g} \) 5 \( \text{x} \) g5 13.\( \text{x} \) g5+ \( \text{e} \) 8 14.\( \text{e} \) 3 \( \text{d} \) 7 15.0-0-0±

With the pair of bishops and better development, White's position is dominant, Kr. Georgiev-Maksimovic, Hania 1992.

5. f2-f4

Gaining further space and supporting the most important central pawn on e5. Of course, White can also immediately develop the pieces and use them to control the central squares.

- One line is 5.\( \text{c} \) e2 c5 6.c3 \( \text{c} \) 6 Also good is 6...cxd4!? 7.cxd4 f6. 7.f4 b5!? 7...\( \text{b} \) 6!? 8.\( \text{f} \) 3 f6. 8.\( \text{f} \) 3 b4 This is covered (by transposition) under 5.f4.

- Another version of this 'piece method' was preached by grandmaster Aaron Nimzowitsch. 5.\( \text{f} \) 3?? c5 6.dxc5 White's strategy here is completely different from what he does in the line with 5.f4, where he is striving to hold the centre. The idea behind 6.dxc5 is to trade the central pawns, in order to place the pieces on the vacated squares. 6...\( \text{c} \) 6 7.\( \text{f} \) 4

White is holding the central square e5 with his pieces – the famous Nimzowitsch concept of 'over-protecting' the important squares. The ultimate objective of this strategy is clear – the exchanged pieces are being replaced by new ones. Obviously, besides the very effective blockade of the enemy pawns, such pieces also develop
huge influence and activity. 7...\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{x}}}c5}\) Sometimes it's a good idea to hold off for a moment until White brings out the bishop: 7...a6!? 8.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}3}\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{x}}}c5}\) 9.0-0 \(\texttt{e7}\) 10.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}2}\) 0-0 11.a3 f5 12.exf6 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{x}}}f6}\) 13.ae1 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{b}}}6}\) 14.cd6 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{x}}}d3}\) 15.cxd3 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}8}\) 16.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{g}}}3}\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}7}\) and Black had a good game in I. Schneider-Ivanchuk, Ohrid 2009. 8.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}3}\) f6 9.exf6 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{x}}}f6}\) The alternative 9...\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{e}}}f6}\)!? is also good. 10.0-0 0-0

One of the typical positions of the French Defence, where Black has carried out both standard strikes against the white centre. White has traded the pawns, to move his pieces to the newly liberated squares.

It is very important to bear in mind that the beloved French destroyers \...c7-c5 and \...f7-f6 can have some drawbacks, which are not only limited to the greater activity of White pieces, but are also connected with the weakness of the backward e6 pawn.

Of course, the open f-file and the possibility to move the centre forward at some later stage are some of the benefits enjoyed by Black. Therefore, it is essential to carefully consider all pluses and minuses before embarking on action in the centre. Sometimes even a minor detail can turn the evaluation upside down. 11.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{e}}}5}\) The most common move. If White can maintain the central control, his position will be better. However, by combining the possession of the open f-file and with a little help from tactics, Black has interesting possibilities to prevent the blockade of the central pawns or to compensate with the newly established strongholds in the white camp.

\(11\ldots\texttt{g6}\)!

Usually this move is avoided in similar structures because it weakens the whole complex of dark squares around the king. But on the positive side, it shortens the diagonal of White's \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}3}\) and has the healthy idea to secure the knight's jump to h5, which combined with the open f-file, can create unpleasant threats.

The same idea lies behind the move 11...\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{e}}}e8}\)!, for example: 12.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{b}}}5}\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{e}}}7}\) 13.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{e}}}2}\) a6 14.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{c}}}c3}\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}7}\) 15.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{a}}}e1}\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{a}}}e8}\) 16.a3 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}4}\) 17.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}2}\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{x}}}e5}\) 18.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{x}}}e5}\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{x}}}e5}\) 19.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{x}}}e5}\) (the rook is a poor blocker when the opponent has a knight) 19...\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}6}\) 20.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{e}}}2}\) g6! and the blockade collapses. Black threatens \...\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{e}}}e4}\). 21.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{e}}}1}\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{e}}}4}\), Asik-Maksimovic, Sombor 2009.

12.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}}2}\) 12.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{e}}}2}\) ?! \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{h}}}5}\) 13.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{h}}}6}\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{f}}}4}\). 14.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{e}}}1}\)? \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{h}}}4}\). 15.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{x}}}f8}\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{g}}}5}\), Marwan-Al Huwar, Dubai 2008. 12...\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{h}}}5}\) ! 13.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{g}}}5}\) 13.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{\textit{x}}}c6}\)! bxc6
14. \( \text{\textit{xe}}5 \) \( \text{\textit{d}}6 \)=. 13...\( \text{\textit{e}}7 \)! This exchange is also unusual for such a structure, but all this fits into Black's plan. 
14. \( \text{\textit{xe}}7 \) \( \text{\textit{xe}}7 \) and now:

A) 15.\( \text{\textit{xc}}6 \) \( \text{\textit{xc}}6 \) 16.\( \text{\textit{f}}4 \) \( \text{\textit{b}}4 \) 17.\( \text{\textit{g}}3 \) \( \text{\textit{e}}5 \) !? 18.\( \text{\textit{fxe}}5 \) \( \text{\textit{h}}3 \) 19.\( \text{\textit{xf}}8 \) \( \text{\textit{xf}}8 \) 20.\( \text{\textit{e}}4 \) \( \text{\textit{xb}}2 \) 21.\( \text{\textit{xc}}3 \) \( \text{\textit{xc}}3 \) 22.\( \text{\textit{xc}}3 \) \( \text{\textit{xe}}8 \) 23.\( \text{\textit{e}}1 \) \( \text{\textit{f}}6 \)= and the e5 pawn will fall;

B) 15.\( \text{\textit{f}}4 \) \( \text{\textit{xf}}4 \) 16.\( \text{\textit{xc}}6 \) \( \text{\textit{c}}5 \)+ 17.\( \text{\textit{h}}1 \) \( \text{\textit{xd}}3 \) 18.\( \text{\textit{cx}}d3 \) \( \text{\textit{bxc}}6 \) 19.\( \text{\textit{d}}4 \) \( \text{\textit{e}}7 \) 20.\( \text{\textit{xf}}8 \) 21.\( \text{\textit{a}}4 \) \( \text{\textit{b}}8 \) 22.\( \text{\textit{c}}3 \) 22.\( \text{\textit{c}}5 \)? \( \text{\textit{e}}5 \) !. 22...\( \text{\textit{b}}7 \)
23.\( \text{\textit{c}}5 \) 23.\( \text{\textit{xc}}6 \) \( \text{\textit{f}}7 \) 24.\( \text{\textit{h}}3 \) \( \text{\textit{d}}7 \)=. 23...\( \text{\textit{f}}7 \)=;

C) 15.\( \text{\textit{ae}}1 \) White is struggling to justify the blockading strategy and is even ready to place the rook on e5. 15...\( \text{\textit{f}}4 \) A new but very important square. 16.\( \text{\textit{e}}3 \) \( \text{\textit{g}}5 \) 17.\( \text{\textit{g}}3 \) Now White is bound to be surprised. 17.\( \text{\textit{g}}3 \)? \( \text{\textit{d}}4 \) !+

17...\( \text{\textit{xe}}5 \)! Black is using tactical means to execute his strategic plan. 
18.\( \text{\textit{xg}}5 \) \( \text{\textit{f}}3 \)+ A beautiful and unusual image. 19.\( \text{\textit{gx}}f3 \) \( \text{\textit{h}}3 \)+ 20.\( \text{\textit{g}}2 \) \( \text{\textit{xe}}5 \), Black has carried out his idea, the blockade is removed and furthermore White's kingside pawn structure is ruined. Black has excellent prospects to increase his advantage, Drozdov-Morozevich, Krasnodar 1997.

**Important:** In the Steinitz Variation, White can't really hope for the advantage if the centre is not supported by his f-pawn. The chain will fall apart after the thematic \( \ldots \text{c}5 \) and \( \ldots \text{f}6 \).

By quickly developing his pieces White has something different in mind. He wants to see his pieces on the places of the central pawns \( \text{d}4 \) and \( \text{e}5 \). In the critical position which arrives after the nearly forced sequence 5.\( \text{\textit{f}}3 \) \( \text{c}5 \) 6.\( \text{\textit{xc}}5 \) \( \text{\textit{xc}}6 \) 7.\( \text{\textit{xf}}6 \) \( \text{\textit{xf}}6 \) 8.\( \text{\textit{d}}3 \) \( \text{\textit{f}}6 \) 9.\( \text{\textit{xf}}6 \) \( \text{\textit{xf}}6 \) 10.x0 . 0-0 11.\( \text{\textit{e}}5 \) it looks as if White will succeed in his attempt to centralise the pieces while blocking the black pawn mass (at least on the \( \text{e}5 \)-square).

But we have seen that this is just daydreaming. Besides the classical plan with the simple development 11...\( \text{\textit{d}}7 \) (it is actually good to start with 11...\( \text{\textit{e}}8 \)!! first), Black has an interesting, although at first sight counter-intuitive, idea of exchanging the dark-squared bishops with 11...\( \text{\textit{g}}6 \)!! 12.\( \text{\textit{d}}2 \) \( \text{\textit{h}}5 \)! 13.\( \text{\textit{g}}5 \) \( \text{\textit{e}}7 \)! 14.\( \text{\textit{e}}7 \) \( \text{\textit{e}}7 \). Now it becomes clear that White will have trouble with the \( \text{f}4 \)-square.

A logical developing move, which supports the central pawn and covers the diagonal which has been slightly weakened after the \( \text{f}2 \)-f4 advance.

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5. \( \ldots \) \( \text{c}7 \)-c5
6. \( \text{\textit{g}}1 \)-f3 \( \text{\textit{b}}8 \)-c6
7. \( \text{\textit{c}}1 \)-e3
7.\(\text{\texttt{\texttt{e}}\texttt{e}2}\) First White must cover the diagonal that has been weakened after the f2-f4 advance. 7...\(\text{cxd4}\) The variations clearly demonstrate the sensitivity of the central diagonal. 8.\(\text{\texttt{\texttt{d}}\texttt{xd4}}\) 8.\(\text{\texttt{b}}\texttt{b5}\) \(\text{\texttt{c}}\texttt{c5}\) 9.\(\text{\texttt{f}}\texttt{fxd4}\) (9.\(\text{\texttt{b}}\texttt{bxd4}\) \(\text{\texttt{d}}\texttt{dxe5}\)) 9...\(\text{\texttt{d}}\texttt{dxe5}\) 8...\(\text{\texttt{d}}\texttt{dxe5}\) Besides, White entertains the option of castling queenside.

7.\(\text{\texttt{\texttt{d}}\texttt{e}2}\)

Practically the only alternative to 7.\(\text{\texttt{\texttt{e}}\texttt{e}3}\), although seldom used at the top level. White’s intentions are more than clear – he wants to play c2-c3 and create a long and powerful pawn chain. However, the knight is not ideally placed on e2 and all the manoeuvring takes valuable time.

Black has several good plans at his disposal. The knight’s retreat permits quick action on the queenside and the strategically useful exchange of the problematic bishop (on a6). In addition, Black can calmly complete his development and then ponder whether to start sharp play with ...f7-f6 or to continue positional play on the other flank.

A) 7...\(\text{b}5\) (see p.225)
B) 7...\(\text{\texttt{w}}\texttt{b6}\) (see p.226)
C) 7...\(\text{\texttt{e}}\texttt{e}7\) (see p.227)

A) 7...\(\text{b}5\)? Black is immediately taking advantage of the knight’s retreat to make this multi-purpose move. He is gaining space on the queenside, sets to undermine White’s pawn base with ...b5-b4 and ...bxc4 and, probably most important, to exchange the traditionally bad bishop via the a6-square.

8.\(\text{a}3!\) This has become standard in Steinitz positions where Black pushes ...b7-b5. After 8...\(\text{\texttt{b}}\texttt{b8} 9.\text{g}3 \text{\texttt{\texttt{w}}\texttt{b6} 10.\text{c}3 \text{\texttt{a}5 11.g}2 \text{\texttt{b}4 12.axb4 axb4 13.0-0 \texttt{a}6}\)

Black has successfully solved one of the most important strategical issues of his position – activation and exchange of the troublesome \(\text{\texttt{c}}\texttt{c8}, \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}\), Tiviakov-Nava, Sibenik 2009;

A2) 8.\(\text{c}3\) Here it is easier for Black to solve his opening problems, because after the exchange of the b-pawns, the bishop will be able to come out to a6.

8...\(\text{\texttt{b}}\texttt{4} 9.\text{g}3 \text{\texttt{g}3 \text{\texttt{w}}\texttt{b6} 10.\texttt{e}2?! \texttt{bxc3}\)
11.bxc3 cxd4 12.cxd4 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#b4+}}, Cornette-Belov, Moscow 2008; 9.cxb4 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#xb4}} 10.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#c3}} cxd4 11.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#xd4 \texttt{\#c5}}} 12.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#e3}} 0-0 13.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#b5 \texttt{\#a6}}= E. Pähtz-Maric, Gothenburg 2005. 9...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#c3}} 10.bxc3

Black profits from the exchange of the b-pawns. His pieces will be activated with ease (...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#a6}}, ...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#b8}}, ...\texttt{\#a5}), and the c3 pawn, worrying about the fellow on d4, becomes a burden.

B) Of course, the typical French move 7...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#b6?!}} is the most common reply. This move is for players who prefer a complex and active battle. The resulting positions are rich with tactical blows. Quite often Black sacrifices a knight in the centre in order to take advantage of the white king left in the middle of the board. 8.c3 $f6$

Black is refraining from ...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#e7}}, saving the tempo for a possible check on b4 after exchanging on d4. 9.g3 9.a3 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#e7}} 10.h4 (10.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#g3?!}} cxd4 11.cxd4 0-0 12.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#d3}} fxe5 13.fxe5 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#xf3}} 14.gxf3

14...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#xd4}}!N 15.f4 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#b3}} 16.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#b1 \#xc1}} 17.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#xc1}} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#c5}} 18.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#c2}} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#d7}} 19.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#e3 \texttt{\#b5}}} 20.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#d1 \texttt{\#c8}}} Velimirovic-Antic, Herceg Novi 2001) 10...0-0 11.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#h3}} a5?!; Anand-Shirov, New Delhi/Tehran 2000. 9...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#xd4}} 10.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#xd4}} 10.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#xd4}} \texttt{\#xd4} (10...f6e5) 11.cxd4 (11.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#xd4 \texttt{\#c5}}}; or 11...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#e7}} 12.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#g4}}+ as in Chigorin-Maroczy, Carlsbad 1907) 11...f6e5 12.fxe5 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#b4}}+ 13.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#f2 \texttt{\#e7}}}?!N (Black is planning queenside castling) 14.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#g2}} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#b8}} 15.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#d3 \texttt{\#c6}}} 16.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#f1 \texttt{\#d7}}} 17.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#f2}} 0-0-0 18.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#e3 \#df8}} 19.a3 g5 with mutual chances, N. Kosintseva-Edouard, Cap d’Agde 2010.

And now:

B1) 10...f6e5?! 11.fxe5 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#b4}}+ 12.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#c3}} 12.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#d2}} 0-0 13.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#g2}} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#dxe5}}! 14.dxe5 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#xe5}}→. 12...0-0 13.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#f4}} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{\#dxe5}}!
A typical blow in such structures. Black is harassing the king in order to easily force transposition into a drawn endgame by tactical means.

13...\(\text{e7}\) 14.a3! \(\text{g5}\) (otherwise White plays \(h2-h4\)) 15.\(\text{a4}\) \(\text{d8}\) 16.\(\text{d3}\) 14 (16...\(\text{h8}\)?) 17.\(\text{h4}\) \(g4\) 18.\(\text{g5}\)±, Lupulescu-Jeremic, Balatonlelle 2002)

17.\(\text{h4}\)!± \(\text{dxe5}\) 18.\(\text{dxe5}\) \(\text{xe5}\) 19.\(\text{d4}\) \(\text{f3}\)+ 20.\(\text{xf3}\) \(gxf3\) 21.\(\text{d3}\) (21.\(\text{c3}\)?)±, Lupulescu-Pert, Patras 2001) 21...\(\text{d6}\) 22.0-0 \(\text{e5}\) 23.\(\text{xf3}\) \(\text{exd4}\) 24.\(\text{xf8}\)+ \(\text{xf8}\) 25.\(\text{h5}\) \(\text{e7}\) 26.\(\text{c5}\) \(\text{e3}\)+ 27.\(\text{h1}\) \(\text{h6}\) 28.\(\text{xd5}\)+ \(\text{h8}\) 29.\(\text{xb7}\) (29.\(\text{xd4}\)+ \(\text{g7}\) 30.\(\text{e4}\)±) 29...\(\text{e6}\) 30.\(\text{e4}\)± Grover-Swayams, Puri 2010.

14.\(\text{exe5}\) 14.\(\text{dxe5}\) \(\text{d4}\) 15.a3 \(\text{dxc3}\) 16.\(\text{bxc3}\) \(\text{cxb4}\) 17.\(\text{b1}\) \(\text{xb4}\)+ 18.\(\text{f2}\) \(\text{a5}\)=; 14.\(\text{exe5}\) \(\text{exe5}\) 15.\(\text{exe5}\) \(\text{xc3}\)+ 16.\(\text{bxc3}\) \(\text{b2}\). 14...\(\text{exe5}\) 15.\(\text{exe5}\) \(\text{xc3}\)+ 16.\(\text{bxc3}\) \(\text{wb2}\) 17.\(\text{wc1}\) \(\text{f2}\)+ 18.\(\text{d1}\) \(\text{xf1}\)+!= White’s strong knight compensates for the missing pawn, but this is sufficient only for a draw, Robson-G. Meier, Lubbeck 2010.

B2) 10...\(\text{d4}\)+ 11.\(\text{d3}\) 11.\(\text{d2}\)?! \(\text{fxe5}\) 12.\(\text{fxe5}\) 0-0 13.\(\text{g2}\) \(\text{dxe5}\)! 14.\(\text{dxe5}\) \(\text{dxe5}\) = 11...\(\text{fxe5}\) 11...0-0 12.a3 \(\text{e7}\) 13.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{h8}\) 14.\(\text{a4}\) \(\text{a6}\) 15.\(\text{f1}\) \(\text{b5}\) 16.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{b6}\)!N (16...\(\text{fxe5}\) 17.\(\text{xb5}\) \(\text{xb6}\) 18.\(\text{xc6}\) \(\text{xc6}\) 19.\(\text{e5}\) \(\text{a6}\) 20.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{ab8}\)= Sznapik-Knaak, Bratislava 1983)

17.\(\text{xb5}\) \(\text{a6}\) 18.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{xb5}\) 19.\(\text{xb5}\) \(\text{c7}\) 20.0-0 \(\text{ab8}\) 21.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{fxe5}\) 22.\(\text{dxe5}\) \(\text{c5}\) 23.\(\text{g2}\) \(\text{d3}\) Sarenac-Maksimovic, Vrnjacka Banja 2010.

12.\(\text{fxe5}\) 0-0 13.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{dxe5}\)=

B3) 10...\(\text{e7}\) 11.\(\text{h3}\) 0-0 is covered under the move order 7...\(\text{e7}\).

C) 7...\(\text{e7}\)! is a simple and logical move. Black finishes his development whilst keeping his choice of future plans flexible. 8.\(\text{c3}\) 8.\(\text{g3}\) 0-0 9.\(\text{g2}\) (9.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{cxd4}\) 10.\(\text{exd4}\) \(\text{c5}\) ) 9...\(\text{b5}\) 10.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{a5}\)+ 11.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{f6}\) 12.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{b4}\)± 13.\(\text{e1}\) \(\text{bxc3}\) 14.\(\text{xc3}\) \(\text{a6}\) 15.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{f5}\) 16.\(\text{d2}\) \(\text{b6}\) 17.\(\text{g4}\) \(\text{c4}\) 18.\(\text{gxf5}\) \(\text{exf5}\) 19.\(\text{g1}\) \(\text{ab8}\) (this is a dream position for Black. All his pieces are perfectly coordinated) 20.\(\text{g3}\)?! \(\text{d8}\) (20...\(\text{cxd4}\) 21.\(\text{cxd4}\) \(\text{xd2}\) 22.\(\text{xd2}\) \(\text{xd2}\) 23.\(\text{gxd2}\) \(\text{b2}\) 24.\(\text{g1}\) \(\text{h4}\)+) 21.\(\text{b1}\) \(\text{b2}\)+ Movsesian-G. Meier, Porto Carras 2011.

White usually chooses between the following continuations:

C1) 9.\(\text{g3}\) The bishop would love to jump over the knight and settle on \(d3\).

C11) 9...\(\text{cxd4}\) 10.\(\text{cxd4}\) 10.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{f5}\) 11.\(\text{g2}\) \(\text{f5}\) 12.\(\text{exf6}\) \(\text{xf6}\) 13.0-0 0-0 14.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{b6}\) 15.\(\text{f2}\) \(\text{d7}\) 16.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{a6}\) \(\text{h4}\)+ Atlas-Hertneck, Austria 2003/04.

C111) 10...\(\text{b6}\) 11.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{f6}\)

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Chapter 5 - The Steinitz Variation
Players who fare better in complex and dynamic play will certainly appreciate this plan.

12.\textit{xf1!?} 12.\textit{xe6+ h8} and now 13.\textit{xf6 xf6} 14.\textit{xc8 xc8}; 13.\textit{xd5? fxe5} 14.\textit{fxe5 dxe5} 15.\textit{xe5 dxe5} 16.\textit{f4} (16.\textit{dxe5 b4+}) 16...\textit{g4+}; or 13.\textit{xd7 xd7} 12...\textit{h8}

C1111) 13.\textit{f2} (13.\textit{xe6? dxe5}) White wants to move the king to a safe haven while keeping his powerful centre intact. 13...\textit{f5} 14.\textit{f5} dxe5 15.dxe5 b4+ 16.c3 dxe5 17.a3 c5 18.f1 xf3+ 19.xf3 d7 20.f4 c6 21.e5?! f2+

...f7-f6 and then trade the queens after only two moves?! 14.d2 b6 15.c3 d7?, Black has an excellent position, Bogdanovich-Yakimov, Yuzhny 2010;

C1113) 13.c3! fxe5 13...\textit{db8}?! (Fernandez Romero-Fluvia Poyatos, Seville 1999). Black probably has to make this move. White will need some time to secure the king and then the fight can start all over again. 14.xe5 dxe5 15.xf3 xd4 (½-½ Pavlov-Polivanov, Yuzhny 2009) 16.f2! The strongest (16.f7 d8++; 16.h5 d8 17.d1? c6+ 18.xe6 d4! 19.d5 dxe5 20.xc8 xd5++; Krupkova-Gleizerov, Aaland-Stockholm 1997). White covers c2 and would gladly exchange the queens after ...\textit{c6}.

16...\textit{c5} (16...h6? 17.f7 d8 18.h5 f8 19.f7! g8 20.f4+--; 16...\textit{c6}). The text is a suggestion of grandmaster Emanuel Berg, however White has the simple 17.f7! d8 18.g5 g8 19.xg8+ xg8 20.f4 and without the queens, Black's position is critical.

C112) 10...f6 11.g2 11.h3 b6!? transposes into the lines with 10...b6 given under C111. As we see, Black can play these positions with the queen on b6 and without the check on b4. This has some advantages, as the b4-square is vacant and can be very useful for the knight or the queen later on. 11...b6 12.a3 a5 13.b3 a4 Black wants to secure the c4-square for his passive knight from d7. If 13...\textit{xe5} 14.\textit{xe5}, 14...\textit{dxe5} is the typical sacrifice in similar set-ups, however here it won't provide sufficient compensation: 15.dxe5 dxe5 16.f1 xf3+ 17.xf3 xf3 18.xf3± Anand-Batchuluun, Turin 2006. 14.b4 c7 It is more pre-
cise to retreat the queen to d8, because Black will be the first to claim the c-file:
14...\texttt{d}d8?! 15.0-0 \texttt{d}b6 16.\texttt{g}e3 \texttt{d}d7 17.\texttt{f}c1 (17.exf6 \texttt{x}xf6 18.\texttt{d}e5 \texttt{c}c8 19.\texttt{f}c1 \texttt{e}7) 17...\texttt{f}5 18.\texttt{w}d2 \texttt{a}7. 15.0-0 \texttt{d}b6 16.\texttt{g}e3 \texttt{d}d7 17.\texttt{d}d3 \geq 17.\texttt{f}c1 \texttt{d}c4?! (17...\texttt{w}d8 18.exf6 \texttt{xf}6 19.\texttt{d}e5) 18.\texttt{d}xc4! dxc4 19.d5\texttt{c}c8. 17.\texttt{e}e8 \geq 17...\texttt{d}c4. 18.\texttt{h}h3 \geq 18.f5 exf5 19.\texttt{a}ac1 \texttt{w}d7 20.exf6 \texttt{xf}6 21.\texttt{e}e5\texttt{c}c8. 18...\texttt{f}5 19.g4?! \texttt{x}g4 20.\texttt{x}g4 \texttt{w}d7 21.\texttt{g}g3 \texttt{g}6 22.\texttt{w}e2 \texttt{c}c4.

with an edge for Black, Robson-Kraai, Saint Louis 2011.

C113) 10.\texttt{c}b6

A solid plan for players who prefer a calm and positional approach. 11.\texttt{g}2
The plan 11.\texttt{h}3, with a quick f4-f5, looks logical, but it is actually very dangerous for White. The main reason for this is the fantastic coordination of the black pieces and the fact that the bishop on c8 becomes very valuable without any effort: 11...\texttt{d}d7 12.0-0 \texttt{c}c8 13.g4 f6! 14.exf6 \texttt{xf}6 15.\texttt{g}5 \texttt{e}e7 16.\texttt{h}1 \texttt{c}c4 (Black rushes to the weakened f5-square in order to neutralise White's only active piece) 17.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{b}4 18.\texttt{w}e2 \texttt{e}e8 19.\texttt{d}d3 \texttt{d}d6 (19...\texttt{e}7?) 20.f5? \texttt{xf}5\texttt{=} Maroczy-Lasker, New York 1924. 11...a5 12.0-0\texttt{a}4

Black is unobstructed in his play on the queenside, whilst it is not obvious how White can develop an active plan on the other side of the board. There is the advance with g2-g4 and f4-f5, but White is missing a bishop on the b1-h7 diagonal for this idea to be effective. 13.g4 It is obvious that White should seek activity on the kingside. 13...a3 14.\texttt{b}xa3 \geq 14.b3 \texttt{d}d7 15.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{b}b4. 14...\texttt{c}c4\texttt{=} 15.\texttt{b}1 \texttt{xe}3 16.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{xc}1 17.\texttt{xc}1 \texttt{b}6 18.\texttt{w}c2 \texttt{f}6\texttt{=} After the exchange of the bishops, the f4-square becomes vulnerable and Black is undermining the white centre at the right moment. 19.\texttt{w}f2 \texttt{xe}5 20.\texttt{xe}5 \texttt{d}d7 21.\texttt{d}d1 \texttt{w}e7 22.\texttt{f}1 \texttt{f}4 23.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{a}8 with a clear edge for Black in B. Socko-M. Gurevich, Venaco rapid 2005.

C12) 9...b5 and now:

C121) 10.\texttt{h}4 \texttt{b}4 11.\texttt{h}3 \texttt{bxc}3 12.\texttt{bxc}3 \texttt{cxd}4 13.\texttt{cx}d4 \texttt{b}4+ 229
Transferring the knight to b6 gives Black the better play without any complications: 13...\texttt{b6}!\textsc{N}

14.0-0 \texttt{c4}!, preventing the all-important move \texttt{e3}, and White still has to carry out further preparation for his main attacking idea f4-f5. Now the Black pieces are flooding the queenside, with a strong initiative.

14...\texttt{a6} 15...\texttt{b6} 16...\texttt{c4} 17...\texttt{b6}. \texttt{a6} 18...\texttt{c4} 19...\texttt{a6} 20...\texttt{b6}+?

20...\texttt{a6}. 21...\texttt{b6} and White can still salvage the game, Mateo-Dgebuedze, San Sebastian 2011;

C122) 10...a3 b4 11.0-0 11...bxc3 12.bxc3 \texttt{c6} 13.\texttt{cxd4} exf5 14.xxf5 \texttt{dxe5} 15...\texttt{bxc3} 12...\texttt{bxc3} \texttt{b6}?!;

C123) 10.a3 a5 11...h3 \texttt{a6} 12...f5 12.0-0 \texttt{b5} with ...b5-b4 next.

12...\texttt{xf5} 13...\texttt{xf5} b4 14.axb4 axb4 15...\texttt{xh7}+ \texttt{h8}! 15...\texttt{xh7}!\textsc{N}

With the practically forced variation 16...\texttt{xa6} \texttt{cxe5}! 17...\texttt{xe5} \texttt{xa6} 18...\texttt{d3}+ \texttt{g6} 19...\texttt{xg6} fxg6 20...\texttt{f4} \texttt{e8} 21.0-0 \texttt{bxc3} 22.bxc3 \texttt{cxd4} 23...\texttt{g5} 24...\texttt{e3} \texttt{xf4} 25...\texttt{xf4} \texttt{f6}=

16...\texttt{d3}±, Matsuura-Pimentel, Brasilia 2005.

C2) 9...\texttt{e3} White makes a logical developing move, but his king remains that much longer in the centre. Black has several paths to organising active play.

9...\texttt{f6} 10...\texttt{g3} \texttt{b6} It is simpler to start with 10...\texttt{fxe5}!? 11.dxe5 b5!.

20...\texttt{c5}+? 20...\texttt{xe5} 21...\texttt{xe5} \texttt{xf5}+? 21...\texttt{g2} and White can still
Against the Steinitz Variation, Black is usually grabbing space on the queenside, looking for targets to attack. Therefore it is necessary to first open files and diagonals on that side of the board. 12.h4 \( \text{b6} \) 13.\( \text{f} \)h3 \( \text{h6} \) 14.\( \text{f2} \) \( \text{d7} \) 15.\( \text{h5} \) \( \text{w} \)e8 16.\( \text{b} \)3 a5 17.\( \text{g} \)4 b4 18.\( \text{c} \)c1 \( \text{xc} \)x3 19.\( \text{xc} \)x3 a4\( \text{f} \), Serner-Zebre, ICCF email 2009. 11.\( \text{d} \)d2 \( \text{fxe} \)e5 12.\( \text{d} \)xe5 \( \text{d} \)d8 13.\( \text{h} \)h3 \( \text{d} \)4 14.\( \text{f} \)f2 d3 15.\( \text{c} \)c1 \( \text{f} \)f8 16.\( \text{b} \)3 \( \text{a} \)a6 17.a4 b5 18.0-0 \( \text{b} \)7 19.\( \text{a} \)a2! 19.\( \text{g} \)g2\( \text{f} \). 19...b4

A courageous move which rips White’s centre apart, highlighting the weakness of the king in the middle of the board. 14.b5 \( \text{a} \)a5 15.\( \text{d} \)d4 \( \text{c} \)c5!N A simple developing move which hampers all White’s attacking plans. Known was 15...gxf4 16.\( \text{a} \)a4 \( \text{c} \)c7 (16...\( \text{d} \)d8? 17.\( \text{g} \)g4+ \( \text{h} \)h8 18.\( \text{xe} \)xe6) 17.\( \text{g} \)g4+ \( \text{h} \)h8 18.\( \text{g} \)g7+ \( \text{x} \)xg7 19.\( \text{xe} \)xe6+ \( \text{g} \)g8 20.\( \text{xc} \)xc7 with a wild position and mutual chances in the game Yu Yangyi-Gomez, Moscow 2011.

with an unclear position, Kamsky-Ding Liren, Moscow 2011;

C3) 9.a3 \( \text{cxd} \)d4 10.\( \text{cxd} \)d4 \( \text{f} \)6 11.b4

This advance is usually beneficial for White, but in this particular position such an adventure could be risky with the king stuck in the centre. 11...\( \text{w} \)b6 12.\( \text{c} \)c3 \( \text{fxe} \)e5 13.\( \text{dxe} \)e5 g5!

And now: 16.\( \text{d} \)d3 \( \text{xd} \)d3+ 17.\( \text{w} \)xd3 \( \text{c} \)c4 18.0-0 \( \text{c} \)c5 19.\( \text{e} \)e2 \( \text{d} \)d7 20.a4 a6\( \text{f} \); 16.\( \text{e} \)e2 gxf4\( \text{f} \); or 16.\( \text{a} \)a4 \( \text{xa} \)a4 17.\( \text{w} \)xa4 \( \text{c} \)c4\( \text{f} \).

C4) 9.\( \text{g} \)g3?! Clears the way for the bishop, but this square is usually not a good place for the knight. 9...\( \text{f} \)6! 10.\( \text{d} \)d3 \( \text{cxd} \)d4 11.\( \text{cxd} \)d4 \( \text{fxe} \)e5 12.\( \text{dxe} \)e5 In case of 12.\( \text{f} \)xe5 \( \text{b} \)b6\( \text{f} \)
White is also facing difficulties. 12...\( \textbf{a}b4+ \) and with the weak pawn on f4, White is losing the right to castle, Musakaev-Hou Yifan, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009.

Now we have come to the big crossroads for Black...

7. \( \textbf{f}8-e7 \)

The most popular continuation in recent times. Black is first completing his kingside development, leaving an open choice between action on that flank with \( ...f7-f6 \), or the usual activity on the queenside with \( ...a7-a6 \) and \( ...b7-b5 \). Compared with the line 7...\( \text{cxd4} \) 8.\( \text{cxd4} \) \( \text{c}c5 \), Black maintains the tension in the centre and keeps the option of bringing the knight, for now poorly placed on d7, to c5.

7...\( \text{a}6 \) gives the priority to quick action on the queenside. 8.\( \text{d}2 \) A simple and good move. Besides the possibility of queenside castling, White is also providing support for the \( \text{c}e3 \) and holds in mind the typical manoeuvre \( \text{d}2-f2 \). From f2 the queen increases the pressure on the most important central diagonal g1-a7 and has the option of transferring to the kingside.

8.\( \text{e}2! \) 9.\( \text{b}6 \) 10.\( \text{c}1 \) \( \text{e}7 \) (9...\( g5! \) is typical of Morozevich’s style, but, we must admit, a very interesting approach in this situation: 10.\( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{cxd4} \) 11.\( \text{c}xd4 \) \( \text{b}4+ \) 12.\( \text{f}2 \) \( f6 \) 13.\( g3 \) \( g4 \) 14.\( h4 \) \( fxe5 \) 15.\( fxe5 \) \( dxe5! \) 16.\( dxe5 \) \( d4 \) 17.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{f}8 \) 18.\( \text{g}2 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 19.\( h3 \) \( d3 \) 20.\( \text{x}g4 \) \( dxe2 \) 21.\( \text{x}e2 \) \( \text{c}d4 \)

Predojevic-Morozevich, Sarajevo 2008)

10.\( \text{c}3 \) (10.\( g3 \) \( \text{cxd4} \) 11.\( \text{d}xd4 \) \( \text{c}c5 \) 12.\( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{a}5+ \) 13.\( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 14.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{e}4+ \) 15.\( \text{g}2 \) \( \text{c}7 \)) Shirov-Potkin, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011) 10...\( 0-0 \) 11.\( g3 \) \( f6 \) 12.\( \text{g}2 \) \( \text{cxd4} \) 13.\( \text{cxd4} \) \( \text{a}5+ \) 14.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{d}8 \) (14...\( \text{b}5!? \) ) 15.0-0 \( \text{b}6 \) 16.\( \text{exf6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) (16...\( \text{xf6}!? \) ) 17.b3 \( \text{d}7 \) 18.\( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{c}8 \) (18...\( \text{c}8 \) 19.\( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{e}8 \)) 19.\( f5 \) ± Vallejo Pons-Danielsen, Porto Carras 2011.

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

By grabbing space on the queenside, Black is thinking about solving the following strategical tasks:

1 – After the further advance with the a- and b-pawns, to activate or exchange the light-squared bishop via a6;
2 – By placing the queen on b6 (which is now protected from harassment by the white knight on a4), to increase the pressure on the key central point d4;

3 – To transfer the passive Qd7 to c5 and e4 (of course, after exchanging the c5 and d4 pawns) and support it with ...<br><br>Naturally, White will fight to obstruct all of the above-mentioned plans.

For this purpose, he has the following options:

A) 9.a3 (see p.233)
B) 9.dxc5 (see p.242)
C) 9.g3 (see p.243)
D) 9.<br><br>F) 9.<br><br>A) 9.a3!

Stopping the Black b-pawn is White’s most important duty at the present. This way, Black’s idea of trading the bishop on a6 is now significantly harder to achieve. Of course, Black can push ...b5-b4, but this exchange is now clearly in White’s favour, because he gains the semi-open a-file and better pawn structure.

A1) 9...<br><br>A11) 10.c4 The character of the position is now changing, White cannot use the d4-square for his pieces, but Black is also losing the important transit point on c5. In the mutual pawn charge White’s chances will be better because the e5-spike provides him a spatial advantage. 11.g4! White is not afraid of ...h7-h5, because his pieces develop tremendous activity. 11...h5 12.<br><br>A112) 14.f5 <br><br>This move is critical for the evaluation of the whole line with 9...<br><br>This move is critical for the evaluation of the whole line with 9...b6. White is preparing, after the exchange of c5 and d4 pawns, to install and fortify one of his knights on d4:

A11) 10...c4 The character of the position is now changing, White cannot use the d4-square for his pieces, but Black is also losing the important transit point on c5. In the mutual pawn charge White’s chances will be better because the e5-spike provides him a spatial advantage. 11.g4! White is not afraid of ...h7-h5, because his pieces develop tremendous activity. 11...h5 12.<br><br>A111) 14.h4!

14...b4 15.axb4 <br><br>Kryakvin-Elizarov, Armavir 2010;
21.\texttt{\texttt{g5}} \texttt{d7} 22.0-0 f6 23.\texttt{xf6} gxf6 24.\texttt{f3} \texttt{g6} 25.\texttt{h2} ½-½ Kurnosov-Looshnikov, Satka 2008. 18...\texttt{e7} 19.\texttt{g5} 0-0-0 20.\texttt{xe6\pm} Kasparov-Radjabov, Linares 2003 – by the way, Radjabov won this game;

A113) 14.\texttt{g2?!} g6 15.h4 \texttt{e7} 16.h5± Gaponenko-Rudolf, Ohrid 2009.

A12) 10.a5 11.c3 \texttt{a6} 12.f4!

12...\texttt{e7} 12...b4 13.f4 \texttt{xf1} 14.fxe6 fxe6 15.\texttt{xf1} bxc3 16.bxc3 \texttt{d8} 17.f5± (17.c4±). 13.\texttt{f4} \texttt{d8} 14.\texttt{d3} with a clear edge for White in Kokarev-Fadeev, Tomsk 2009;

A13) 10...\texttt{b7} 11.d1?! 11.dxc5! \texttt{xc5} 12.\texttt{ed4\pm}.

The black queen is not feeling comfortable on b6, because of the influence from the \texttt{e3}. In addition, Black cannot use the c5-square to transfer the knight to e4.

12...\texttt{xd4} 13.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{c7} 14.d3 \texttt{e7} 15.f3 (this was not necessary, the knight was better placed on d4 than the bishop. Better was 15.0-0, when quality development and a dominant knight grant better chances to White) 15...\texttt{c5} 16.d4 \texttt{c4=}, Yemelin-Rychagov, Moscow 2007. 11...\texttt{e7?!} 11...c4?! 12.dxc5! \texttt{xc5} 13.\texttt{ed4\pm} Geller-Dimukhametov, Naberezhnie Chelni 2010;

A14) 10.b4

The ultimate hit and an attempt to liven up Black’s play after White has fortified the d4-square. The idea to play on the b-file belongs to grandmaster Nikita Vitiugov, who extensively analysed this position. In general, White is happy to exchange these two pawns, but since nothing can be done on the a7-g1 diagonal, this is the only chance for Black to start active play. 11.axb4 \texttt{xb4} 12.c3 12.\texttt{xb4?!} (sometimes the simple solutions are the best) 12...\texttt{xb4} 13.d2± and Black’s play on the b-file cannot compensate for his lack of space and deficiencies in pawn structure. 12...\texttt{b7} 13.g3N \texttt{xd4} 13...\texttt{b8?!} 14.b1 h5 15.d3 cxd4 16.d4 \texttt{xd4} 17.\texttt{xd4} c5 18.0-0 \texttt{xd3} 19.\texttt{xd3} h4 20.e2 \texttt{e7=}; 13...h5! 14.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{xd4} 15.\texttt{xd4} c5 16.c2 \texttt{b3}
with chances to equalise, S. Zhigalko-Stupak, Minsk 2011;

A15) 10...cxd4 11.\(\triangle\)xd4 \(\triangle\)xd4 12.\(\triangle\)xd4\(^{\pm}\);

A16) 10...\(\triangle\)a5!? A prophylactic move, which anticipates dxc5 and intends to recapture with the knight, thus moving the queen away from the possible pin: 11.\(\triangle\)g3 11.dxc5 \(\triangle\)xc5\(^=\); 11.c3 \(\triangle\)a5\(^=\). 11...\(\triangle\)b7 12.\(\triangle\)e2 12.\(\triangle\)d3 h5!? 13.h4 cxd4 14.\(\triangle\)xd4 \(\triangle\)xd4 15.\(\triangle\)xd4 g6 16.0-0-0 \(\triangle\)c5 17.\(\triangle\)b1 \(\triangle\)e7\(^=\). 12...g6 12...h5!N.

11.c3 11.\(\triangle\)xa5 \(\triangle\)xa5 (Black's task of reaching equality becomes easier without the queens on the board) 12.b3 \(\triangle\)c6. 11...b4 12.f5 12.dxc5 \(\triangle\)xc5

Black should take advantage of the clumsy position of the \(\triangle\)g3 and weaken the opponent's pawn structure on the kingside. 13.h4 cxd4 14.\(\triangle\)xd4 \(\triangle\)xd4 15.\(\triangle\)xd4 g6\(^=\). Since White has pushed h2-h4, the move ...g7-g6 looks healthy and Black's position is very

\[\text{Diagram} 12...bxc3 13.\(\triangle\)xc3 \(\triangle\)xc3\(^+\) 14.bxc3 \(\triangle\)b8 15.\(\triangle\)f4 cxd4 16.cxd4 \(\triangle\)b3 17.\(\triangle\)f2 \(\geq\) 17.\(\triangle\)d3 17...\(\triangle\)a3 18.fxe6 fxe6 19.\(\triangle\)xe6 \(\triangle\)xe5 20.\(\triangle\)xg7+ \(\triangle\)f7 21.\(\triangle\)xe5+ \(\triangle\)xe5 22.dxe5 \(\triangle\)xg7\(^=\) Krupko-Yakimov, Alushta 2011; A17) 10...\(\triangle\)c7!? 12...\(\triangle\)xg3 11.\(\triangle\)xc5 \(\triangle\)xc5 11.\(\triangle\)c3 \(\triangle\)b4 12.f5 12.dxc5 \(\triangle\)xc5

13.\(\triangle\)d1 bxa3 14.b4 \(\triangle\)xb4 15.cxb4 \(\triangle\)xb4+ 16.\(\triangle\)f2 \(\triangle\)b8\(^{\uparrow}\). 235
solid. 13.0-0 \textit{e}7 14.dxc5 \textit{xc}5 15.b4 \textit{a}4 16.a3 \textit{b}2 17.\textit{c}3 \textit{a}4 18.\textit{d}2 \textit{b}2 19.\textit{f}2 \textit{c}8 20.\textit{ab}1 \textit{xd}3 21.cxd3 d4 22.\textit{d}2 22.\textit{xd}4 \textit{xd}4 23.\textit{xd}4 0-0 24.\textit{e}4=.

22...\textit{d}7 23.\textit{d}xe4+= Huschenbeth-Sebenik, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010.

A2) 9...\textit{b}7!?

A natural developing move, which also fits into the most effective plan connected with the transfer of the knight to e4. In addition, since the queen is sometimes feeling uncomfortable on b6, Black is keeping the option of putting the queen on c7.

A21) 10.\textit{e}2 and now:

A211) 10...\textit{b}6

The fight for the d4-square is culminating. For now the forces are balanced – three pieces from each side are eyeing this point. However, Black is threaten-
with somewhat better play for White, for example: 14...0-0 15.\(\text{b}2\) \(\text{xd}4\) 16.\(\text{cxd}4\) \(\text{a}5\) 17.\(\text{wd}3\) \(\text{f}5\) 18.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{c}6\) 19.\(\text{h}1\) \(\text{e}7\) 20.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{g}6\) 21.\(\text{h}1\) \(\text{c}4\) 22.\(\text{gxf}5\) \(\text{exf}5\) 23.\(\text{ag}1\) \(\text{c}5\) 24.\(\text{wd}1\) \(\text{e}6\) 25.\(\text{ag}2\) \(\text{h}8\) 26.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{f}8\) 27.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{b}4\) 28.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{a}5\) 29.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{f}8\) 30.\(\text{g}1\) \(\text{c}7\) 31.\(\text{h}5\) \(\text{a}6\) 32.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{xd}3\) 33.\(\text{xd}3\) \(\text{c}6\) 34.\(\text{hxg}6\) \(\text{hxg}6\) 35.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{h}4\) 36.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{c}2\) 37.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{g}7\) 38.\(\text{wc}1\) \(\text{c}8\) 39.\(\text{g}7\) 40.\(\text{xc}2\) \(\text{xc}2\) 41.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{f}7\) 42.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{b}2\) 43.\(\text{g}1\) \(\text{g}6\) 44.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{h}6\) 45.\(\text{g}1\) \(\text{e}7\) 46.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{c}6\) 47.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{c}2\) 48.\(\text{g}1\) \(\text{c}3\) 49.\(\text{xc}3\) \(\text{bxc}3\) 50.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{g}6\) 51.\(\text{h}4\) 52.\(\text{xf}5\) \(\text{g}4\) 53.\(\text{h}6\) 54.\(\text{c}1\) \(\text{xd}4\) 55.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{xe}5\) 56.\(\text{f}6\) \(\text{e}6\) 57.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{d}4\) 58.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{xf}7\) 59.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{xf}7\) 60-1 Karjakin-Wang Hao, Taiyuan 2005.

Chapter 5 - The Steinitz Variation

Shirov's beautiful idea, combined with Morozevich's ... \(\text{g}7\)-\(\text{g}5\).

14.\(\text{wc}2\) 14.\(\text{wd}3\) \(\text{b}6\) 14.\(\text{c}6\) 15.\(\text{wd}3\) 15.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{a}5\) 15.g5! 16.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{xc}6\) 17.\(\text{xf}2\) \(\text{xe}3\) 18.\(\text{xe}3\) \(\text{wb}6\) 18...\(\text{xf}4\) 19.\(\text{xf}4\) \(\text{wc}7\) 20.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{c}4\) 21.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{e}4\) 22.\(\text{f}2\) \(\text{a}4\) 23.b4±. 19.\(\text{xb}6\) \(\text{xb}6\) 20.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{xf}4\) 21.0-0 \(\text{g}8\) 22.\(\text{f}2\) \(\text{g}5\) 23.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{g}3\) 24.\(\text{f}3\)!! 24.\(\text{xf}4\) \(\text{e}3\) 24.\(\text{c}6\) \(\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}\) (58) Topalov-Shirov, Wijk aan Zee 1999.

A213) 10...\(\text{cxd}4\) Black wants to exchange on d4 before White can move the pawn to c3, to support the outpost.

11.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{xd}4\) 12.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{c}5\) 13.0-0 \(\text{b}6\) 14.\(\text{ad}1\) \(\text{xd}4\) 15.\(\text{wd}4\) \(\text{c}8\) 16.\(\text{f}2\) 0-0 17.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{c}7\) 18.\(\text{a}2\) \(\text{xd}4\) 19.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{c}5\) 20.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{h}6\) 21.g3 \(\text{fc}8\) 22.\(\text{fd}2\) \(\text{f}8\) 23.\(\text{f}2\) \(\text{e}7\)= Alexeev-Rakhmanov, Moscow 2011.

A22) 10.\(\text{d}3!\) Of course! After ...\(\text{b}7\) the base on d4 is not endangered and White is placing the bishop on the most effective square. Perhaps this is the shortcoming of this move order. Let us remind ourselves that the move order 7...\(\text{e}7\) forces White to put the bishop on e2 because of the quick ...\(\text{f}7\)-\(\text{f}6\):

A221) 10...\(\text{e}7!\)

We return to the positions covered under the early 7...\(\text{e}7\). We have already
highlighted that it is quite often possible to reach the same typical position with various move orders. Therefore, for a good understanding of the opening, it is necessary to grasp the advantages and drawbacks of different transpositions. \[11.0-0\ 0-0\ 12.\textit{\textbf{f}2}\]

\[12.\textit{\textbf{h}1}\ \textit{\textbf{f}6}\ 13.\textit{\textbf{e}xf6}\ \textit{\textbf{xf6}}\ 14.\textit{\textbf{e}2}.\]

A similar position was reached in the game Bologan-Andreikin, Olginka 2011, with one small difference – the white king stood on g1. That game is covered under 7...\textit{\textbf{e}7} on page 277. 14...\textit{\textbf{cxd4}} (Black can still maintain the tension with 14...\textit{\textbf{we7}}?!N 15.\textit{\textbf{ad1}} \textit{\textbf{ac8}} with equal chances) 15.\textit{\textbf{xd4}} \textit{\textbf{xd4}} 16.\textit{\textbf{xd4}} \textit{\textbf{xd4}} (16...\textit{\textbf{e}5}?! 17.\textit{\textbf{xe5}} \textit{\textbf{xe5}} and the isolated pawn is compensated for by the threat of ...\textit{\textbf{dc4}}) 17.\textit{\textbf{xd4}} \textit{\textbf{b6}} 18.\textit{\textbf{xb6}} \textit{\textbf{xb6}}=.

The white king is far from the centre, while the open c-file and the activity of the knight, which will go to c4, are sufficient counterplay for the weak e6 pawn and the passive \textit{\textbf{b}7}, So-Gomez, Mashhad 2011.

\[12...\textit{\textbf{f}6}?!N\]

This typical kick was already seen in the positions with the white bishop on e2. That bishop is more active here, but Black also has an extra pawn in the centre. 13.\textit{\textbf{h}4} 13.\textit{\textbf{exf6}} \textit{\textbf{xf6}} 14.\textit{\textbf{g}3} (14.\textit{\textbf{xc5}}? \textit{\textbf{d4}}! 15.\textit{\textbf{xd4}} \textit{\textbf{g}4} 16.\textit{\textbf{g}3} \textit{\textbf{xd4}} 17.\textit{\textbf{w}xg4} \textit{\textbf{xf3}} 18.\textit{\textbf{g}xf3} \textit{\textbf{xc5+}}) 14...\textit{\textbf{b}6} (14...\textit{\textbf{c}4} 15.\textit{\textbf{e}2} \textit{\textbf{e}4} 16.\textit{\textbf{h}3} \textit{\textbf{c}8} 17.\textit{\textbf{e}5=} 15.\textit{\textbf{xc5}} \textit{\textbf{xc5}} 16.\textit{\textbf{xc5}} \textit{\textbf{xc5+}} 17.\textit{\textbf{h}1} \textit{\textbf{b}4}?! Black wants to achieve active play but like this he is only weakening his own pawn structure, because White is not forced to take on b4. After 18.\textit{\textbf{e}2} White was a little better in Gao Rui-Gomez, Mashhad 2011. Instead, after 17...\textit{\textbf{ae8}}?!
18.\~ae1 b4 White is forced to activate the enemy knight as otherwise the a3 pawn would be hanging: 19.axb4 \~xb4 20.\~e5 d4; or 20.\~g5?! \~d6 21.\~h3 \~xd3 22.cxd3 \_c8. 13...f5 14.\~f2 c4 15.\~e2 Black has used the tempo to close the centre. This should secure him sufficient counterplay on the queenside when White attempts to open the g-file. This kind of pawn structure is analysed in greater detail under the 10...f7-f5 line below. 15...\~b6 16.h3 a5\infty Bologan-Drozdosvskij, Ohrid 2009;
A222) 10...\~b6 11.\~f2!

We've already talked about White's favourite move as he is challenging the supremacy over the central diagonal. Black is faced with an unpleasant choice - to enter an inferior endgame, where the white pieces are ideally placed, including the already mentioned knight on d4, or lose all the dynamic potential after the blocking ...c5-c4:

A2221) 11.cxd4 12.\~xd4 \_c5 13.\~ce2 b4 White is ruling the diagonal and the central d4-square, so Black seeks activity on the b-file. However, the exchange of the b-pawn for the a-pawn is not to the taste of many players. 14.axb4 \~xb4 15.0-0 0-0 16.\~c1? f6 17.\~xf6 \~xf6 17...\~xf6?! 18.c3 \~xd3 19.\~xd3 e5 20.\~xc5 \~xc5 21.\~f3 21.\~f5?\f6 21...\~c7 22.\~xe5 \_xe5 23.\~d4 \_xf3\f6= Hou Yifan-So, Subic Bay 2009;
A2222) 11...c4 We shouldn't forget that the e5 pawn is more valuable than its counterpart on c4, and that this throws the advantage into White's hands. 12.\~e2 b4 12...\_e7 13.0-0 (13.\~h4!\f6 13...g6 14.g4) 14.\~xf5 \~xf5 15.\_f2 \_e7 16.\~d2 \_b8 17.\~d1 \_c6 18.\_c5 \_a5 19.\_b3 \_b3 20.\~e1 a5 21.\~e3 \_xe3 22.\~xe3 b4 23.axb4 axb4 24.\~d2 \~xd2 25.\_xd2 \_a2 26.f5 \~xf5 27.\~xf5 \_c8 28.\~f1 \_g4 29.\~xg4 h_xg4 30.\~g3 \_g6 31.cxb4 \_h4 32.\_f4 0-0 33.\_c3 \~f8 34.\_g3 \_e7 35.\~d2\infty, Luther-Volkov, Moscow 2001. 13.axb4 \~xb4 14.\_c1 h\_ 15.\_g5 g6 16.g4 h_xg4 17.\_xg4\f6 P. Smirnov-Filippov, Rethymnon 2003;
A2223) 11.\~c8 12.0-0 cxd4 13.\~xd4 \~xd4 14.\~xd4 \~xd4 15.\~xd4 \_c5 16.\_e2 White is in time to entrench the wonderful knight on d4. 16...g6 17.c3 \_xd4\f6 18.\_xd4\f6 (or 18.\_xd4\f6), T. Kosintseva-Huang Qian, Sochi 2009.
A223) 10...\~c7

The black queen does not go to b6, under the x-ray of \_e3, particularly be-
cause White has $\text{W}f2$ at his disposal. But the queen is also doing fine on c7. The pressure along the semi-open c-file after the exchange of the central pawns, and having an eye on the white pawn on e5, justify the placement of the queen. Usually, moving the queen before completing the kingside development is a sign of the wish to castle queenside.

11...0-0!? Simple and strong. White is ahead in development. 11.dxc5 frees the d4-square but also increases the activity of Black’s pieces: 11...$\text{B}xc5$ (11...$\text{B}xc5$!? with excellent chances to equalise) 12.$\text{W}f2$ $\text{B}xd3+ 13.cxd3 b4 14.$a6 $\text{W}b8 15.$a4 $\text{e}7 16.0-0 0-0 17.$c5±, Vitiiug-Ding Liren, Sochi 2009.

A2231) 11...0-0-0!? Brave, but also risky. Not many people decide to enter such double-edged positions, particularly as the white set-up looks better suited for a quick charge against the king.

Now:

12.$\text{B}d1$!? 12.$\text{W}f2$ $\text{c}xd4$ (12...c4 13.$\text{B}e2$ $\text{b}6$ 14.b4 (White can even open the file with 14.b3!?±) 14...h6 15.$\text{B}f1$ $\text{e}7$ 16.a4± Girya-Matveeva, Moscow 2007) 13.$\text{B}xd4$ g5 14.$\text{B}xc6$ $\text{W}xc6$ 15.$\text{B}xg5$ $\text{B}xe5$ 16.$\text{B}d4$±; 12.$\text{B}h1$!? g5 13.dxc5 $\text{gx}f4$ 14.$\text{B}xf4$±

Gharamian-Malakhatko, Differdange 2007; or 12.dxc5!? $\text{B}xc5$ (12...$\text{B}xc5$ 13.$\text{B}xc5$ $\text{B}xc5$ 14.$\text{W}f2$ $\text{W}b6$ 15.b4± Konguvel-Shyam, New Delhi 2010; 15.$\text{B}g5$! $\text{d}7$ 16.b4 $\text{B}a4$ 17.$\text{B}xa4$ $\text{W}xf2+ 18.$xf2 $\text{B}xa4$ 19.$\text{B}xh7$±) 13.$\text{B}e2$ $\text{B}e4$ 14.$\text{W}e1$ g5 15.$\text{B}xg5$ $\text{B}g7$ 16.a4 b4 17.a5 $\text{B}xe5$ 18.$\text{W}xb4$± Bobras-Piorun, Warsaw 2010.

12...$\text{c}xd4$ 13.$\text{B}xd4$ g5 14.$\text{B}xc6$ $\text{W}xc6$ 15.$\text{B}d4$ $\text{g}x$ 16.$\text{W}xf4$ $\text{g}8$ 17.$\text{B}e3$ f6 18.$\text{W}f6$? 18.$\text{B}g4$±. 18...$\text{e}5$? 19.$\text{f}7$? 19.$\text{W}h4$. 19...$\text{B}g2$+ 0-1 Svidler-Morozevich, Monaco blind 2007.

A2232) The safer alternative is 11...$\text{B}e7$ 12.$\text{c}xc5$ 12.$\text{B}ae1$± c4 13.$\text{B}e2$ f5 14.$\text{g}4$ g6 (14...$\text{f}xg4$ 15.$\text{B}g5$±) 15.$\text{B}xf5$ $\text{g}xf5$± Neuer-Garscha, ICCF email 2007. 12...$\text{B}xc5$ 13.$\text{B}d4$ $\text{d}7$ 14.$\text{W}f2$!N 14.$\text{B}e2$ $\text{b}6$ 15.$\text{B}e4$ $\text{c}4$ 16.$\text{W}e1$ $\text{B}xe3$ 17.$\text{W}xe3$ g6 18.c3 0-0 19.$\text{g}4$ $\text{B}xd4$ 20.$\text{B}xd4$ $\text{B}b6$ (20...$\text{W}c8$! 21.$\text{B}c1$ $\text{h}8$ with chances to defend; or 21.$\text{f}5$ $\text{W}c3$ 22.$\text{f}6$ $\text{f}8$; or 22.$\text{f}xe6$ $\text{c}4$! 23.$\text{e}xf7+$ $\text{h}8$ 24.$\text{B}c1$ $\text{xd}4$ 25.$\text{W}xd4$ $\text{B}d7$ 26.$\text{B}c7$ $\text{f}8$? 27.$\text{f}5$ $\text{ex}f5$ 22.$\text{g}xf5$ $\text{g}xf5$ 23.$\text{B}h1$ $\text{h}8$ 24.$\text{B}f5$ f6 25.$\text{e}6$ $\text{g}8$ 26.$\text{h}5$ 1-0 S. Zhigalko-Rakhmanov, Moscow 2011.

14...$\text{B}xe5$? 15.$\text{f}xe5$ $\text{W}xc3$ 16.$\text{B}g5$!+; or 14...$\text{B}xb4$ 15.$\text{ax}b4$ $\text{W}xc3$ 16.$\text{f}5$! (the consequence of White’s better development) 16...$\text{B}xe5$
17.\ texd5 18.\ texd4=\textpm. 15.\ texe2=\textpm. White dreams about such a position, despite the apparent weakening on the c-file. Black cannot even use the c4 outpost, because ...\ texb6 is not possible. White is taking away the important c5-square and tightens the squeeze around the bad French bishop on b7.

A3) 9...g5!?  

The favourite move of grandmaster Alexander Morozevich. This typical strike against White's centre is also common in the Tarrasch Variation 3.\ texd2. The idea is obvious – White's most important pawn on e5 is supported by the pawns on d4 and f4 and it is therefore logical to attack the cornerstones. The disadvantage of such an adventure is the newly-weakened complex of squares on the kingside, where h5 is particularly sensitive and a target for the white bishop or knight.

A31) 10.\ texg5?! White keeps the base on f4 but loses the battle for the central diagonal. 10...\ texd4 11.\ texd4 \ texd4 12.\ texd4 \ texc5 13.\ texd2 \ texb6\textpm 14.\ texd1 White has protected the dark squares somehow, but he is still going to be surprised: 14...f6\textpm. 15.\ texf6 \ texxf6 16.\ texd3 0-0 17.\ texf1 17.\ texf3 \ texa7 18.g3 \ texe7 19.b4 \ texd6 20.\ texf2 \ texb8 21.0-0 \ texg4 22.\ texg2 \ texg7 23.\ texh1

23.g4 Black threatened 23...\ texg4 with huge activity. 23...\ texh8 24.\ texd1 d4 25.\ texd2 \ texf2=\textpm, Macieja-Nakamura, Turin 2006. One of the wonderful examples of the dynamics in this opening. Sometimes even the slightest error allows Black to develop a terrible initiative;

A32) 10.\ texe2?! g4 11.\ texg1 f6! Without the support from the \ texf3, White's centre is also shaking. 12.f5? It's as though White is suddenly disgusted with the awful placement of his minor pieces and embarks on the suicidal f4-f5. 12...\ texf5 13.\ texf6 \ texf6 14.\ texf5 \ texe4=\textpm, Fuchs-Vojinovic, Rijeka 2010;  

A33) 10.\ texf5! \ texd4 11.\ texd4 \ texxe5 Black leaves the knight on d7, in order to control the c5-square. For example 11...\ texxe5 12.\ texd3 \ texg7 13.\ texc6 \ texc6 14.\ texc5=\textpm Tischbierek-Müller, Germany Bundesliga 2006/07. 12.\ texd3! Now that the f-file is open, it is quite common to place

\textb7 24.\ texd4 \ texf6 25.\ texf2 \ texe3 26.\ texh3 e5\textpm, Kazhgaleev-Malakhatko, Pontoise 2006, is also a good example on this topic. 17...\ texa7! The fastest way to mobilise the full forces. 18.\ texf3 \ texg4 19.g3 e5! With the king stuck on e1, this blow comes in with great force. 20.\ texf5 \ texe3 21.\ texe3 \ texxe3 22.\ texg2 \ texaf7

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\textb7 23.g4 Black threatened 23...\ texg4 with huge activity. 23...\ texh8 24.\ texd1 d4 25.\ texd2 \ texf2=\textpm, Macieja-Nakamura, Turin 2006. One of the wonderful examples of the dynamics in this opening. Sometimes even the slightest error allows Black to develop a terrible initiative;

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A33) 10.\ texf5! \ texd4 11.\ texd4 \ texxe5 Black leaves the knight on d7, in order to control the c5-square. For example 11...\ texxe5 12.\ texd3 \ texg7 13.\ texc6 \ texc6 14.\ texc5=\textpm Tischbierek-Müller, Germany Bundesliga 2006/07. 12.\ texd3! Now that the f-file is open, it is quite common to place
this bishop on e2, with the idea of moving to h5 and pressing against f7. However, \( \text{h}d3 \) is slightly better, because e2 is free for the knight's transfer to h5, from where it exerts greater influence on the black kingside. 12...\( \text{b}7 \) 12...\( \text{g}7 \) 13.0-0 0-0 14.\( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{b}7 \) 15.\( \text{ce}2!+ \), Timoshenko-Sengupta, Bhubaneswar 2009. The knight goes to h5. 13.0-0 \( \text{g}7 \) 14.\( \text{ce}2 \) \( \text{g}4? \) 15.\( \text{g}6! \) (15.\( \text{h}1? \) \( \text{xe}3 \) 16.\( \text{xe}3 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 17.\( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 18.\( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{g}8 \) 19.\( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{h}6! \) with excellent play on the dark squares, Carlsen-Nakamura, Moscow 2010. It should be noted that this was a blitz game)

The text is a beautiful tactical idea that is rarely seen in practical games. White improves Black's structure and opens the h-file, but now the points e6 and g6 come under fire: 15...\( \text{xg}6 \) 16.\( \text{xe}6! \) \( \text{e}5 \) Not so commonly lately, probably because Black has no problems in gaining space and exchanging the light-squared bishop. 9...\( \text{xc}5 \) 9...\( \text{xc}5 \) 10.\( \text{f}2 \pm \). 10.\( \text{xc}5 \) \( \text{xc}5 \) 11.\( \text{f}2 \) The best square for the queen – it controls the most important central diagonal and has the option of joining the kingside attack via \( \text{h}4 \) or \( \text{g}3 \) (11.0-0-0). 11...\( \text{b}6 \) 12.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{b}4! \) 12...\( \text{b}8 \) 13.0-0 \pm Khalifman-Bareev, Moscow 1992. 13.\( \text{e}2 \) a5 14.0-0 \( \text{a}6 \) 14...\( \text{g}6? \) 15.\( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{a}6 \) 16.\( \text{ed}4? \) (16.\( \text{ac}1! \) 0-0 17.\( \text{xa}6 \) \( \text{xa}6 \) 18.\( \text{c}4 \) with mutual chances) 16...\( \text{xd}4 \) 17.\( \text{xd}4 \) 0-0= 18.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{f}8 \) 19.\( \text{xc}5 \) \( \text{xc}5 \) 20.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{c}7 \) and Black was the first to obtain the initiative, Hajnal-Stojanovic, Lugano 2011. 15.\( \text{h}1 \) (the aggressive approach brings nothing: 15.f5 \( \text{exf}5 \) 16.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 17.\( \text{e}6 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 18.\( \text{xa}6 \) \( \text{xa}6 \) 19.\( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{xe}6 \) 20.\( \text{xb}6 \) \( \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} \) D. Mastrovasilis-Jeremic, Leros 2010)
One of the best-known and previously most popular positions of the Steinitz Variation. Black has expanded on the queenside and solved the problem of his bishop. Besides, there is an option of going into the endgame by exchanging the queens after $\mathsf{Da4}$, and of an attack on the b2 pawn.

On the other hand, White also has rich play, thanks to his control over d4 and the possibility to attack on the kingside. Practice has shown that the position is dynamically balanced.

15...$\mathsf{De7}$ An important defensive move which solves the remaining dangers in the position, for example: 15...0-0? 16.$\mathsf{Dxh7+!} \mathsf{xh7}$ 17.$\mathsf{Wh4+} \mathsf{g8}$ 18.$\mathsf{Dg5} \mathsf{Mfc8}$ 19.$\mathsf{f5!} \mathsf{Dxe5}$ 20.$\mathsf{f6}$ gxf6 21.$\mathsf{Dxf6} \mathsf{g8}$ 22.$\mathsf{Df4!}$ (22.$\mathsf{Dxf1+\text{--}}$) 22...$\mathsf{Ee8}$ 23.$\mathsf{Wh5} \mathsf{d7}$ 24.$\mathsf{Dxf7} \mathsf{Dxf7}$ 25.$\mathsf{Dxf7+} \mathsf{d6}$ 26.$\mathsf{Dxe6+}$ 1-0 Nijboer-Goormachigh, Netherlands 1996. 16.$\mathsf{Dad1}$ 16.$\mathsf{Dfd1}$ h6 17.$\mathsf{Ded4}$ 0-0 18.$\mathsf{Wh4} \mathsf{Da7}$ 19.$\mathsf{g4?!}$ $\mathsf{g6!}$ 20.$\mathsf{Dxg6}$ fxg6 21.$\mathsf{f5} \mathsf{Daf7!}$ Mainka-Glek, Recklinghausen 1995. 16...$\mathsf{Da4!}$ 17.$\mathsf{Wxb6}$ $\mathsf{xxb6}$ 18.$\mathsf{Ded4}$ $\mathsf{Da4}$ 19.$\mathsf{b3} \mathsf{Cc3}$ 0-1 Pruess-Perelshtein, Tulsa 2008;

C) 9.$\mathsf{g3}$ is not a very common continuation, but it can become very dangerous if Black reacts poorly. 9...$\mathsf{b4}$ Black now easily solves the problem of his bishop. 10.$\mathsf{De2}$ $\mathsf{g6}$!

First it is necessary to prevent the often dangerous f4-f5. Black should always be cautious about this advance.

10...a5 11.f5! $\mathsf{cxd4}$ (11...$\mathsf{exf5}$ 12.$\mathsf{Df4!}$) 12.$\mathsf{Dxd4}$ $\mathsf{Dxd4}$ 13.$\mathsf{Dxd4}$ $\mathsf{Dxe5}$ 14.0-0-0 $\mathsf{Dd7}$ 15.$\mathsf{Df4\pm}$ Inarkiev-Vitiugov, Dagomys 2008. 11.$\mathsf{Dg2}$ a5 12.0-0 $\mathsf{Da6}$ and Black has excellent play 0-1 (38) Richards-Kiriakov, England 2004/05;

D) 9.$\mathsf{Df2}$

The favourite line of the former World Junior Champion Igor Miladinovic. Just as Black has typical squares for the queen (b6 and c7), its white counterpart is usually very comfortable on f2. 9...$\mathsf{Wa5?!}$ Much more common is 9...$\mathsf{Wb6}$, but the game move tries to prove that perhaps the white queen's excursion to f2 has been premature. 9...$\mathsf{Wb6}$ 10.$\mathsf{Dd3}$ and now the line is pretty straightforward until the exchange sacrifice: 10...$\mathsf{cxd4}$ 11.$\mathsf{Dxd4}$
The Modern French

\( \text{\&c5 12.\text{\&}e2 b4 13.c3 a5 14.0-0 \text{\&a6} 15.\text{\&}xa6 \text{\&}xa6 16.\text{\&}ac1 0-0 17.cxb4 \text{\&}xb4} \)

18.\text{\&}xc5= (a favourite position of GM Miladinovic) 18...\text{\&}xc5 (18...\text{\&}d3?! is less convenient for Black because there will be pawns on the a-file, the rook will be less active and the a2 pawn a constant source of worry: 19.\text{\&}c6 \text{\&}xf2 20.\text{\&}xb6 \text{\&}xb6 21.\text{\&}xf2 \text{\&}xb2 22.\text{\&}c3 \text{\&}xf2 23.\text{\&}xf2\pm Miladinovic-Frendzas, Kavala 1997) 19.\text{\&}b3 (again everything is almost forced!) 19...\text{\&}bd3 20.\text{\&}xc5 \text{\&}xf2 21.\text{\&}xb6 \text{\&}xb6 22.\text{\&}xf2 a4 23.\text{\&}c5 \text{\&}xb2 24.\text{\&}xa4 \text{\&}xa2 25.\text{\&}c3 \text{\&}a3 26.\text{\&}e3 \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} Miladinovic-Kosic, Niksic 1997.

After the other queen move we have 10.a4 10.\text{\&}d1 b4 11.\text{\&}d1 b3+ 12.c3 cxd4 13.\text{\&}xd4 \text{\&}c5 14.\text{\&}b1 \text{\&}xd4 15.\text{\&}xd4 \text{\&}b5 16.\text{\&}e2 \text{\&}d7 17.\text{\&}f2 \text{\&}xe2+ 18.\text{\&}xe2 \text{\&}b5+ 19.\text{\&}d3 \text{\&}xd3 20.\text{\&}xd3 bxa2 21.\text{\&}xa2 g5! 22.fxg5 h6 \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} D. Mastrovassilis-Nisipeanu, Dresden 2007; 10.dxc5?! b4 11.\text{\&}d1 \text{\&}xc5= 10...\text{\&}e7!? 10...cxd4 11.\text{\&}xd4 \text{\&}xd4 12.\text{\&}xd4 b4 13.\text{\&}b1 \text{\&}c5 14.\text{\&}d2 \text{\&}xd4 15.\text{\&}xd4 0-0 0-0 16.\text{\&}d3 f6 17.exf6 \text{\&}xf6 18.\text{\&}b3 \text{\&}b6 19.\text{\&}xb6 \text{\&}xb6 20.g3 Miladinovic-Cebalo, Reggio Emilia 2004/05. 11.\text{\&}e2 0-0 12.0-0 b4 13.\text{\&}b1 f6!? Black judges that it is better to allow the establishment of the pawn chain than to trade on d4 and centralise some 'Nimzowitsch' piece. He also believes that the chain will be weakened after the exchange on c3 and looks forward to potential counterplay on the b-file. 14.c3 \text{\&}b8 \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} Miladinovic-Drazic, Kragujevac 2009;

E) 9.\text{\&}d3 b4

E1) 10.\text{\&}d1 \text{\&}b6 Grandmaster Dreev successfully employed the following set-up: 10...c4!? 11.\text{\&}e2 \text{\&}b6 12.0-0 \text{\&}e7. 11.\text{\&}f2 a5 12.0-0 \text{\&}a6 13.\text{\&}xa6 \text{\&}xa6 14.c3 g6 14...\text{\&}e7 15.f5?! (15.\text{\&}c1 0-0 16.c4 \text{\&}xd4 17.\text{\&}xd4 \text{\&}b7!=) 15...\text{\&}xf5 16.\text{\&}f4 \text{\&}xd4 17.cxd4 0-0=, Shaposhnikov-Volkov, Samara 2000. 15.\text{\&}c1 c4 16.g4 \text{\&}e7 17.f5 \text{\&}xf5 18.gxf5 \text{\&}xf5 19.\text{\&}f4 bxc3 20.bxc3 \text{\&}a3 21.\text{\&}c2 \text{\&}e7 22.\text{\&}e3\pm, Nakhapetyan-Vysochin, Olginka 2011;

E2) 10.\text{\&}a4 c4! In the position with the white bishop on e2, this advance was ineffective, but here Black will manage to ruin White's pawn structure on the queenside and compensate for the strong centre. 11.\text{\&}e2 c3

12.\text{\&}d1 12.bxc3? \text{\&}a5! (12...bxc3? 13.\text{\&}xc3 \text{\&}b4 14.\text{\&}d3\pm) 13.\text{\&}c5 bxc3\pm. 12...\text{\&}xb2 13.\text{\&}xb2 \text{\&}e7!? First of all complete the development and only then exchange the bishop. This is
nowadays regarded as the correct order for the execution of Black's plans. Earlier we have seen 13...\texttt{b6} 14.0-0 \texttt{e7} 15.\texttt{d3} \texttt{d7} 16.\texttt{g5} \texttt{g6} 17.\texttt{f3} \texttt{a5} 18.\texttt{h3} \texttt{bc4} 19.\texttt{xc4} \texttt{xc4} 20.\texttt{c1} \texttt{c4} 21.\texttt{e1} \texttt{b6} 22.\texttt{f2} \texttt{a3} 23.\texttt{b2} \texttt{c4} 24.\texttt{c1} \texttt{a3} 25.\texttt{b2} \texttt{c4} ½-½ Nakamura-Wang Hao, Moscow 2010. 14.0-0 0-0 15.\texttt{d3} \texttt{a5} 16.\texttt{g5} \texttt{xg5} 17.\texttt{fxg5} \texttt{e7} 17...\texttt{a6}?! 18.\texttt{xh7+} \texttt{xh7} 19.\texttt{h5+} \texttt{g8} 20.\texttt{f4} →. 18.\texttt{a3} \texttt{a6} ½-½ (54) Motylev-Wang Hao, China 2010.

F) 9.\texttt{e2} This is usually met by placing the queen on b6. Black can also transpose into positions covered under 7...\texttt{e7} or push the intended ...b5-b4:

F1) 9...\texttt{b6}?! Huge tension is accumulating on the d4-square. White needs to come up with the right plan if he wants to struggle for the advantage. Logical moves like 10.0-0 or 10.a3 are taking him only into an equal endgame.

F11) 10.0-0

White has made two logical developing moves, but these actually fit perfectly with Black's plan of early action on the queenside connected with ...\texttt{b6}.

The fight is culminating on the central point d4. The fact that e2 and f2 are not available for the white pieces favours Black, who can now reach a pleasant endgame after the mass exchanges. An additional plus is that Black hasn't castled yet and the king can move to the ideal e7-square in one move.

10...\texttt{cxd4} 11.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{c5} 12.\texttt{d1} \texttt{b7}

Black is using the pin for the best possible preparation for the coming endgame. 13.\texttt{f2} \texttt{xd4} 14.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{xd4}+ 15.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{xc8} 16.a3 16.\texttt{xb6} \texttt{xb6} 17.\texttt{d3} (there is no time for White to make the ideal set-up) 17...\texttt{c4}!

18.\texttt{xc4} \texttt{xc4} 19.\texttt{d2} \texttt{e7} 20.\texttt{e2} \texttt{e4}?! (also good is 20...\texttt{c8} 21.\texttt{d4} \texttt{d7}) 21.\texttt{d4} (21.\texttt{c3} \texttt{c4=}) 21...\texttt{b4} 22.g3 \texttt{c8} 23.\texttt{f2} \texttt{f6=}. 16...\texttt{e7} 17.\texttt{f2} \texttt{xd4} 18.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{b6}!

One of the typical endgames resulting from the Steinitz Variation. Black's set-up is ideal, with excellent coordination of the knight and the rook on the c-file. The king is wonderful on e7, from where it supports the ...f7-f6 break. White would enjoy a slightly better endgame if we were to allow him to make four moves – \texttt{dd1}, \texttt{d3}, \texttt{e2} and \texttt{d4}. This is the ideal arrangement of White's pieces, not only in this particular game, but also in most of the similar ones. The set-up would highlight all the pluses in White's structure - control of the central point d4, the better bishop, the Steinitz pawn on e5.

For the sake of beauty and practical importance, we will follow this game to the
One of the reasons is that we can clearly follow the natural flow of the game as it passes through all three stages.

The second is to pay respects to the great theoretician and French Defence ambassador – grandmaster Vlado Kovacevic.

19.a4 White wants to justify the placing of his rook. 19...Rx4 20.Rxa4 bxa4 21.h4 c6 22.h6 d7 23.Rxa6 b8 24.Rxb8 Rxb8 25.c3

At first sight, it seems that White enjoys a pleasant endgame, because Black’s bishop is passive and many pawns are on the squares of the same colour. But things are quite different, and soon we will see how the white pawns are more fragile.

25...h6 26.d2 h3 27.c2 g5! 28.g3 gxf4 29.gxf4 a3! 30.bxa4 Rxa4 31.e2 a4 32.c1 a2 33.e1 a2 34.e1 a2 35.d2 g6+ 36.e3 c6 37.h4 c5=, Minic-Vl. Kovacevic, Zagreb 1977;

F12) 10.Rd1! White does not want any trouble on the central diagonal and thus liberates the sleeping c-pawn to support the d4-square. Now:

F121) 10...cxd4? appears logical. Black is preventing White from establishing a powerful pawn chain: 11.Rxd4 Rxd4 12.Rxd4 c5 13.c3 0-0 14.0-0 a5! (14...f6 15.exf6 gxf6?! (15...Rxf6=) 16.e3= Kurnosov-Akselrod, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010)

Since White still can’t play the thematic f4-f5, Black uses the opportunity to start his own action on the other side.

15.We3 a3 b7 16.Rf2 b4, Black will activate the bishop via a6, Karjakin-Potkin, Moscow 2010. 15...b4 16.Rf2 bxc3?! 17.bxc3 a6= Li Chao B-Ding Liren, Dangzhou 2011; or 16.f5 exf5 17.Rxf5 e8! 18.Wf2 Rxd4 19.cxd4 Rd6!.

F122) 10...b4 11.0-0 and now:

F1221) 11...e7 Black wants to first complete the development of the kingside, but White’s active play does not allow him breathing time. 12.c4=!
the c-file. 14...cxd4 15...xd4  xd4 16...xd4  c5 17...xc5  xc5+ 18...h1  b6± If Black can't avoid reaching such a position, then the continuation 11...e7 has no future. The difference in the value of the minor pieces is obvious and White is also grabbing the c-file. Not many people would like to have this position in their black repertoire. 19...ac1↑ (Kurnosov-Lysyj, Dagomys 2010)

White takes the c-file and has a dangerous initiative;
F1222) 11...cxd4 12...xd4  xd4 13...xd4  xd4+ 13...c5 14.c3±. 14...xd4  c5 15.c3±;
F1223) 11...a5 Rushing to solve the problem of the passive bishop. 12...c1!N A simple move that threatens to destroy everything that Black has built up to now. The strike c2-c4 will not only break up the centre, but it also exerts terrible pressure along the c-file, highlighting Black's poor development. Black can prevent this idea by advancing ...c5-c4, but without counterplay his fate will be a slow death. 12...b7 Black must fight against c2-c4 by providing additional support for the base on d5. If 12...a6 13...xa6  xa6 14.c4?! The previously inactive pawn is becoming the main actor in the show. 14...dxc4?! 15.d5!±. 13.c3 Nevertheless, White is happy even with this 'small' achievement. Connecting the pawn mass gives him a spatial advantage and thus better possibilities for an attack. If 13.c4  xd4 14...xd4  cxd4 15...xd4  c5 16...xc5  xc5= 17...d4. 13...cxd4 14...d4  xd4 15.cxd4 f5 Black is attempting to prevent the typical attack in the Steinitz Variation, but it does not count for much, as White continues to probe the Black kingside relentlessly. If 15...e7 16.f5±. 16.g4!?

with a clear advantage, Andreikin-Shimanov, Dagomys 2010.

F2) 9...e7!? 10.0-0 0-0 11...d1 b4 is covered under 7...e7.

As we can see, many positions are connected, intercepting each other and commonly blending together into one and the same. Therefore it is very useful to be familiar with the various move
orders that can lead us into the same, or, as chess players like to say, typical positions;

F3) 9...b4!? 10.a4!?

Probably an underestimated sequence, because the knight goes to the edge of the board. However, from here it exerts control over one of the critical squares – c5, and, combined with the faster development, White enjoys better prospects.

If 10.d1 a5 11.0-0 g6?! (11...e7 12.d2 (12.c3 0-0 13.f2 a6= is covered under 7...e7; 12.c4! bxc3 13.xc3 0-0 14.a1=) 12...0-0= is covered under 7...e7) 12.c4! bxc3 13.xc3 a6 14.a1 xe2 15.wxe2 c4 16.g4→ Svetushkin-Iliushin, Moscow 2010.

F31) 10...wa5 11.b3 b7 12.0-0 e7? (12...xd4 13.a4 14.xd4 a6 15.a3 xa4 16.axb4 xb4 17.c3 a5 18.xa4= 0-1 (60) Reutsky-Maslak, Pardubice 2005)

13.a3 13.wf1! cxd4 14.xd4 xc5 15.c3 White's pieces are more active and they cooperate better. 13...xd4 14.xd4 bxa3 15.wxa5 xa5 16.f1 c6∞ Inarkiev-Rychagov, Irkutsk 2010;

F32) 10...xd4 11.xd4 f4 12.xd4 e7 12...wa5?! 13.b3=.

13.0-0 0-0 14.wc3 a5 15.c4 Or 15.f3?± and White will push the typical f4-f5 with a strong initiative. 15.dxc4 15...bxc3 16.bxc3 (16.xxc3 a6=) 16...a6 17.a1= 16.a4 a6 17.xa6 b6= 18.a1= w8

19.wd3 wb7 20.wc4 a8 21.wc6 wb8 22.xd1 g5 23.g3 xf4 24.xf4 w6 25.xf2 wc6 26.xc6 wd8 27.xe3 g6 28.c4 fx8 29.xh1 xc8 30.xc8 xc8= 31.c5= xc5 32.xc5 xc5 33.c1 a6 0-1 Reetat-Bareev, Yerevan 1996;

F33) 10...c4?!

This move works when there is a white bishop on d3 and the tempo is being used to crack White’s pawn structure on the queenside. Here it’s merely a punch into thin air. White retains a powerful centre and the a4 continues to patrol the important c5-square.

In the position after 7...e7 White has the following options:
– 8.dxc5 (see p.249)
– 8.a3 (see p.250)
– 8.wd2 (see p.253)
8.dxc5 usually transposes to the positions covered under 9.dxc5:
A) 8...dxc5 9.dxc5 dxc5 10.d3
10.d2 transposes into the line covered under 8.d2. 10...b6! 10...0-0?

B) Black can also wait until White shows how he will deploy his pieces, with 8...0-0 and now:

B1) 9.e2 The passive bishop on e2 usually hinders White’s attempts to fight for the advantage. 9...xc5:

B11) 10.d2 xe3 11.xe3 f6!

12.exf6 xf6 and White is experiencing problems: 13.d4 13.0-0-0 g4 14.g3 hxg4+ 13.e5!

14.fxe5 g4 15.xg4?! 15.d2. 15...xg4 16.xc6 bxc6 17.d1 d4!— 18.g3 a5+ 19.c3 ae8 20.d2 20.xg4 xe5+ 21.d2 f4 22.d7 e2+ 23.xc1 d3—+. 20...h5 21.e1 d8 22.xc2 g6+ 23.xc1 a4 24.b3 a3+ 0-1 Shomoev-Riazantsev, Moscow 2007;

B12) 10.xc5 dxc5 11.d2 a6 The simple development 11...d7?! is an excellent waiting move, which works perfectly wherever White decides to castle. 12.0-0-0 12.0-0? b6+.

12...b5 Black is faster with his action on the queenside. 13.d4 b7 14.xc6 xc6 15.e3? b6 16.d4 b4 17.b1 xe8+ 18.d2 a4 19.b3 c6 20.b1 b5 21.f3 a5 22.c1 a4

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The Modern French

23.\text{c4 bxc3} 24.\text{\textalpha}x\text{c3 axb3} 25.\text{\textalpha}h\text{c1} 25.axb3 \text{\textomega}a6--; 25.\text{\textalpha}xb3 \text{\textomega}xb3.--.

25...\text{\textomega}a6 26.a4 \text{\textalpha}d3+ 27.\text{\textalpha}x\text{d3} \text{\textalpha}x\text{d3} 0-1 Makarichev-Raicevic, Amsterdam 1975.

B2) 9.\text{\textomega}d2 transposes into the line covered below under 8.\text{\textomega}d2 0-0 9.\text{dc5};

B3) On the more active 9.\text{\textalpha}d3 Black should strike with the thematic 9...f6?! Of course, it is not a good moment to recapture on c5 because of the typical bishop sacrifice 9...\text{\textalpha}xc5? 10.\text{\textomega}xh7++; or 9...\text{\textalpha}xc5? 10.\text{\textalpha}xc5 \text{\textalpha}xc5 11.\text{\textomega}xh7++.

Such a basic position, but even here we have a brand new line, an attempt from the latest games played by top grandmasters: 8.a3

White wants to put his bishop on d3, which is the most active position. This line definitely requires further investigation in practice, but for now let's see some options:

A) 8...\text{\textomega}b6?! 9.\text{\textalpha}a4 Maybe White could try 9.\text{\textomega}e2!\text{N} 0-0 10.0-0 (10.\text{\textomega}d2; 10.\text{\textalpha}a4!! \text{\textomega}a5+ 11.c3 c4 12.b4 cxb3 13.\text{\textomega}xb3 \text{\textomega}b8 14.0-0 b5 15.\text{\textalpha}b2 with a complex middlegame and still a space advantage for White, e.g. 15...\text{\textomega}c7 16.\text{\textomega}c2 h6 17.a4 b4 18.cxb4 \text{\textomega}xb4 19.\text{\textalpha}d3=) 10...f6?! (10...\text{\textomega}d4! 11.\text{\textalpha}xd4 \text{\textomega}c5 12.\text{\textalpha}a4 \text{\textomega}x\text{d4} 13.\text{\textalpha}xb6 \text{\textomega}e3+ 14.\text{\textomega}h1 \text{\textomega}xb6) 11.\text{\textomega}xf6 \text{\textomega}xf6 12.\text{\textomega}a4±.

9...\text{\textomega}a5+ 10.\text{\textomega}d2 Now 10.c3 doesn't work: 10...\text{\textomega}c4 11.b4 \text{\textomega}xb3 12.\text{\textomega}xb3 \text{\textomega}b8 13.\text{\textomega}e2 b5 14.\text{\textomega}b2 b4!? 15.\text{\textomega}xb4 \text{\textomega}xb4+. 10...\text{\textomega}c7 11.\text{\textomega}xc5 \text{\textomega}xc5 12.\text{\textomega}xc5 \text{\textomega}xc5 13.\text{\textomega}b4 \text{\textomega}b6 14.\text{\textomega}c4 \text{\textomega}xc4 15.\text{\textomega}c1 \text{\textomega}d8 16.\text{\textomega}xc4 \text{\textomega}h6 17.a4 a6 18.\text{\textomega}c2 \text{\textomega}d7 19.\text{\textomega}e4 \text{\textomega}b8∞ Shirov-Vitiugov, Saratov 2011;

B) 8...\text{\textomega}b6 9.\text{\textomega}d3 0-0 10.0-0 and now:

B1) 10...\text{\textomega}a6 11.\text{\textomega}e2!? \text{c4} 11...\text{f5} 12.c4. 12.\text{\textomega}xh7+ \text{\textomega}xh7 13.\text{\textomega}g5+ \text{\textomega}xg5 13...\text{\textomega}g8 14.\text{\textomega}e1 (14.\text{\textomega}g3 \text{\textomega}xg5!? (14...\text{\textomega}g6 15.\text{\textomega}g4+) 15.\text{\textomega}xg5 \text{\textomega}dxe5!? (15...\text{\textomega}dxe5 16.\text{\textomega}dxe5 \text{\textomega}xe5 17.\text{\textomega}d4 \text{\textomega}g6 (17...\text{\textomega}c6 18.\text{\textomega}h4=) 18.\text{\textomega}d1\text{=} 14...\text{\textomega}xg5 15.\text{\textomega}xg5\text{=} \text{\textomega}e7 (15...\text{\textomega}dxe5 16.\text{\textomega}dxe5 \text{\textomega}xe5 17.\text{\textomega}g3 \text{\textomega}g6 18.\text{\textomega}f4) 16.\text{\textomega}f3 \text{\textomega}f5 17.\text{\textomega}h3 \text{\textomega}e8 18.\text{\textomega}g4 \text{\textomega}xe4 19.\text{\textomega}h4 \text{\textomega}f8 20.\text{\textomega}xe3. 14.\text{\textomega}fxg5 \text{\textomega}h8 14...\text{\textomega}e7 15.\text{\textomega}g3 (15.\text{\textomega}f3=) 15...\text{\textomega}b7 16.\text{\textomega}h5+ \text{\textomega}g8 17.\text{\textomega}f3\text{=} 15.\text{\textomega}xf7 \text{\textomega}g8 16.\text{\textomega}g6 \text{\textomega}f8 17.\text{\textomega}f4 \text{\textomega}a7 17...\text{\textomega}xg6 18.\text{\textomega}xf6 \text{\textomega}xf6 19.\text{\textomega}g4 \text{\textomega}g8 (19...\text{\textomega}g8 20.\text{\textomega}h5) 20.\text{\textomega}xh8 \text{\textomega}xh8 21.\text{\textomega}h5+ \text{\textomega}g8 22.\text{\textomega}f1 \text{\textomega}d7 23.\text{\textomega}f3 with a decisive attack: 23...\text{\textomega}b7 24.\text{\textomega}h3 \text{\textomega}e8 25.\text{\textomega}h7+ \text{\textomega}f7 26.\text{\textomega}f3+ \text{\textomega}e7 27.\text{\textomega}xg7+ \text{\textomega}d8 28.\text{\textomega}xb7. 18.\text{\textomega}f3\text{=} \text{\textomega}e8 19.\text{\textomega}xd5 \text{\textomega}xg6 19...\text{\textomega}exd5 20.\text{\textomega}xf8\text{+}; 19...\text{\textomega}xf7
20. gx f7 21. hx f7+ bx f7
22. Qxb 6 Qb 7 23. Qxc 4.

20...Qxa 7 21. Qxb 6 Qd 7

Chapter 5 - The Steinitz Variation

22. Qb 7 22. d 5! Qh 4 (22...Qxe 5
23. Qg 3 Qh 5 24. Qd 4 exd 5 25. Qxd 5)
23. Qg 4 Qf 5 24. Qxd 7 Qd 7 25. dx e 6
Qxe 6 26. f 1. 22...Qc 6 23. Qxa 7 Qh 4
and the game ended in a draw Shirov-Morozevich, Saratov 2011;

B2) 10...f 5 11. ex f6 Qxf 6 11...Qxf 6!?
12. Qe 5 (12. Qb 5 Qb 7) 12...Qxd 4
13. Qxd 4 cxd 4 14. Qh 5 g 6 15. Qg 6
Qe 7 (15...hxg 6) 16. Qx h 7+ Qxh 7
17. Qg 4+ Qg 7 (17...Qh 8 18. Qg 6+
Qg 7 19. Qe 5+ Qh 8 20. Qg 6#)
18. Qxe 6+ Qh 7 19. Qf 5+ Qg 8=.
12. Qe 5 Qb 7 12...Qxd 4 13. Qxd 4 cxd 4
13. Qf 3 Qd 6 13...Qxd 4 14. Qxd 4 cxd 4
15. Qh 3 Qc 8 16. Qe 2# - not
15...dx c 3?? 16. Qxh 7+ Qxh 7
17. Qxe 6+. 14. Qb 5#
The Modern French

14...e4 15...e1 (15...xe4? dxe4 16...e5 (16...g5 cd4) 16...cd4) 15...f6 16.dxc5 (16...d1) 16...xc3 17.bxc3 e5 18...xd7 ...xd7 19.cxb6 e4 20...d4 axb6 21...b5 ...e7 22.a4 (22...d4 ...h3 23...f2 ...c8 24...d2 ...xd4) 22...h3 23...xb6 ...f5 24...f2 e3++. 14...cd4 14...h5!? 15...e2 ...e8 16.0-0 ...g6 17...h2 ...f6 18...g5 h6 19...xe6 ...xe6 20.f5 ...xf5 21...xf5 ...h5= 15...d4 e5 16...c6 ...c6

17...xe5 d4 18...f6 ...f6 19.0-0 dxc3 20...xd8 ...xd8 21...xd8 ...xd8 22.b3 ...e8 and Black has the initiative, Ivanchuk-Carlsen, Sao Paulo/Bilbao 2011.

C12) 10...e2 (10...d3!? and now:

10...b7 10...f6 11.dxc5 fxe5
12...xd5 ...xc5 13.0-0-0 ...xe3
14...xe3 exf4 15...d6 ...db8
16...c4 ...e1 11.0-0 ...f6 12...xf6 12.f5

cxd4 13...xf6 dxc3 14...xe7 ...xe7

15...xc3 ...xf5 12...xf6∞ 13...h1
13...g5? cd4. 13...e4

C121) After 14...xe4 dxe4 15...e5 ...d4 16...xd4 ...xd4 Black is clearly better, for example: 17...xd4 cxd4
18...ad1 ...ad8 19...c4 ...d6 20.f5 ...d5
21...xd4 ...xc4 22...xd6 ...xf1 with a winning advantage;

C122) 14...d1 cxd4 15...d4 ...d4
16...d4 ...f6 17...g4 17...xe4 dxe4 18...xf6 ...xf6 (or 18...xf6 19...xd8+ (19...c4 ...c7 20...e2...af8 21.f5 ...d5 22...xd5 exd5 23.g4 ...e5 is better for Black) 19...xd8 20...ad1 ...ad1 21...xf4 22...g1...af8 23...d7 ...f7 24...xf7+ ...xf7 25.g3 e3 with equality) 19.c3 ...ad8 20...a4? ...d2 21...xa7 ...d5 22.c4 (22...ae1 ...xb2 23.c4 ...xe2 24...xe2...xc4 25...ee1 ...xf1 26...xf1 ...d4 27...e7 ...d5 28...b4 ...xf4 29...b1 ...e2 30...xb6 e3 31...b8+ ...f8 32...b2 ...d3 33.h3 e2) 22...xe2 23.cxd5 exd5 and Black wins.

17...e7 18...xe4 dxe4 19...xf6 ...xf6 20.c3 ...ad8 21...b3 21...a4 e5 22...xa7 (22.f5 ...ad2 23...ad1 e3 24...xd2 exd2 25...d7 ...a6 26...d1 ...d8 27...xa7 ...c4 28...a4 b5 29...c2 ...h4 30.h3 ...e1+ 31...h2 ...d3 32.b3 ...g3+ 33...h1 ...d5)
22...c6 23...e6+ ...h8 24.c4 e3; 21...e2 e5 22.f5 ...g5 23...ad1 e3†.
21...\text{B}d2 22.\text{W}xe6+ \text{G}h8 with an edge for Black;

C123) 14.\text{W}e1 cxd4 15.\text{Q}xd4 \text{Q}xd4 16.\text{Q}xd4 \text{Q}f6 17.\text{Q}d1 \text{Q}xd4 18.\text{W}xd4 \text{W}f6 19.\text{W}d1 If 19.\text{Q}d3 \text{Q}d6 with mutual chances. 19...\text{Q}xc3 20.\text{B}xc3 \text{B}ac8

21.\text{B}a4 21.c4 \text{Q}a6. 21...a5 22.\text{W}b1 \text{B}xc3 23.\text{W}xb6 \text{B}xc2 24.\text{W}xb7 24.\text{Q}d3 \text{B}b2 25.\text{B}xa5 d4++; 24.\text{Q}g4 \text{Q}c6 25.\text{B}xa5 d4. 24...\text{B}xe2 and Black is winning.

C2) 9.\text{Q}d3 f6!?N

This typical advance certainly deserves to be tested in the future! Here are some sample lines:

C21) 10.h4! cxd4 11.\text{Q}xh7+ 11.\text{Q}xd4 \text{Q}xd4 12.\text{W}xe5+ \text{G}h8 13.\text{W}h5 e4 14.\text{Q}xe4 dxe4 15.\text{B}xe4 \text{B}f5 16.\text{B}xf5 exf5 17.\text{W}xe5 \text{Q}c5 18.\text{W}e5 \text{Q}d3+ 19.\text{C}xd3 \text{B}f6. 11...\text{B}xh7 12.\text{Q}g5+ \text{B}xg5 13.\text{W}h5+ \text{B}g8 14.hxg5

And now the well-known counter-sacrifice 14...\text{B}dxe5! 15.\text{fxe}5 15.\text{B}h7+? loses to 15...\text{Q}f7 16.\text{fxe}5 \text{dxe}3 17.\text{B}h5+ \text{g}6 18.\text{B}h7+ \text{B}e8. 15...\text{Q}f5

16.\text{B}g4 16.\text{B}h7+ \text{Q}f7 17.\text{g}6+ \text{B}e8 18.\text{W}xg7 \text{dxc}3 19.\text{B}h8+ \text{B}f8 20.\text{W}xf8+ \text{B}xf8 21.\text{g}7 \text{B}f7++; 16...\text{B}xe5 17.\text{B}h8+ 17.\text{B}h7+ \text{B}f7++; 17...\text{Q}f7 18.0-0+ 18.\text{B}f1+ \text{Q}f6 19.\text{B}h7 \text{B}e3+ 20.\text{B}d1 \text{B}e8. 18...\text{Q}f6 19.\text{B}h7 19.\text{B}xf6+ \text{g}xf6 20.\text{B}h7+ \text{B}e8 21.\text{g}6 \text{B}e7 22.\text{W}xd4 \text{B}d7 23.\text{B}f1 \text{G}g5 24.\text{B}xf6 \text{B}g4++ 25.\text{B}h1 \text{B}f8++. 19...\text{B}e8 20.\text{B}xf6 \text{g}xf6 21.\text{B}xb5 \text{dxe}3 22.\text{B}c7+ \text{B}f8 23.\text{B}xa8 e2 24.\text{B}h8+ \text{B}f7 24...\text{B}e7 25.\text{B}xf6+ \text{B}d7 26.\text{W}xd8+ \text{B}xd8. 25.\text{B}h7+ \text{B}e8 26.\text{B}c7+ \text{B}f8 27.\text{B}h8+ \text{B}e7 28.\text{W}xf6+ \text{B}d7 and Black is winning;

C22) 10.\text{B}xf6?! \text{B}xf6+ 11.\text{d}xc5 11.\text{B}e5? cxd4 12.\text{B}h5 \text{h}6 13.\text{W}g6 \text{B}dxe5++; 11...d4 12.\text{B}xd4 \text{B}xd4

13.\text{B}xd4 \text{B}xd4 14.\text{B}xh7+ \text{B}xh7 15.\text{W}xd4 \text{B}c7;

C23) 10.\text{d}xc5 \text{B}xe5 11.\text{f}xe5 11.\text{B}xe5? \text{B}xh7 12.\text{B}xg5+ \text{B}xg5 13.\text{B}g5+ \text{B}xg5 14.\text{B}xg5 \text{B}h6 15.\text{B}xe7 \text{B}xh7 16.\text{B}h5 \text{B}xe5 17.\text{B}xe5 \text{B}xe7 18.\text{W}g4 \text{e}5 19.0-0-0 \text{B}e6 with mutual chances;

C3) 9.\text{d}xc5?! \text{B}xc5 9...\text{B}xc5 10.\text{B}d3 h6 12...\text{f}6 13.0-0 \text{B}f5 14.\text{B}xh7+ \text{B}xh7 15.\text{g}5+ \text{B}g8 16.\text{B}xe6+ 13.0-0 a5 14.\text{B}d1 \text{B}c7∞.

Back to the position after 7...\text{B}e7.

8. \text{W}d1-d2
The queen also joins in the struggle for dominance over the most important diagonal. For this purpose White often plays \( \mathcal{f}2 \). \( 8.\mathcal{e}2 \quad 0-0 \quad 9.0-0 \quad \mathcal{b}6 \quad 10.\mathcal{d}2 \quad \mathcal{f}6 \) transposes into the line with \( 8.\mathcal{d}2 \).

\[ 8.\ldots \quad 0-0 \]

Now White has four possibilities:

- \( 9.\mathcal{d}3 \) (see p. 254)
- \( 9.0-0-0 \) (see p. 254)
- \( 9.dxc5 \) (see p. 255)
- the main move \( 9.\mathcal{e}2 \) (see p. 264)

\*\*\* 9.\mathcal{d}3 \*\*

Placing the bishop on the more active d3-square brings absolutely nothing, because White is losing control over the key d4-square, which is the cornerstone of his position. It is useful to mention that \( \mathcal{d}3 \) is possible in a different move order. For example, in the lines with an early \( \ldots a7-a6 \) and \( \ldots b7-b5 \), developing the bishop on d3 has a good reputation. \( 9...f6! \quad 10.exf6 \quad 10.0-0? \quad \mathcal{x}e5 \quad 11.fxe5 \quad \mathcal{d}f3!N \quad 12.\mathcal{xf}3 \quad \mathcal{cxd}4 \iota \).

\[ 10...\mathcal{x}f6! \] and White’s centre is falling apart. Here is a recent example: \( 11.\mathcal{e}2 \quad 11.dxc5? \quad d4 \quad 11...\mathcal{cxd}4 \quad 12.\mathcal{cxd}4 \quad \mathcal{d}xd4! \quad 13.\mathcal{cxd}4 \quad e5! \quad 14.\mathcal{xe}5 \quad 14.fxe5?? \quad \mathcal{w}h4+\iota \).

\[ 14...\mathcal{dxe}5 \quad 15.fxe5 \quad d4 \quad 16.\mathcal{b}5 \quad \mathcal{e}6 \quad 17.0-0-0 \quad \mathcal{w}d5 \quad 18.b3 \] In case of \( 18.c4 \) a draw was reached after \( 18...\mathcal{w}xe5 \quad 19.\mathbf{h}1 \quad \mathcal{c}5 \quad 20.\mathcal{cxd}4= \) in

Black is more concrete with his attack, because the rook is quickly placed on an open file:

A) \( 11.f6 \quad \mathcal{gxf}6 \quad 12.exf6 \quad \mathcal{d}xf6 \) Black has also tested \( 12...\mathcal{g}6?! \quad 13.\mathcal{c}3 \quad \mathcal{b}6 \quad 15.\mathcal{b}3 \quad \mathcal{a}5 \quad 16.\mathcal{b}1 \quad \mathcal{c}5 \quad 17.\mathcal{c}dxd5 \quad 18.\mathcal{w}a5 \quad 19.dxc5 \quad \mathcal{cxb}3 \quad 20.axb3 \quad \mathcal{g}b3\iota \quad \mathbf{ Brenj o-Antic, Subotica 2008.} \quad 13.\mathcal{h}6 \quad (\text{Wewers-Becker, Oberhausen 2008}) \quad 13...\mathcal{g}4! \quad 14.\mathcal{g}8 \quad \mathcal{xf}8\iota \quad \mathbf{ and Black is firing from all sides, Vovk-Martinez Martin, Internet blitz 2009;\quad 18...\mathcal{w}xe5 \quad 254}
Black has excellent play on the queenside, as compared to the positions with the queen on f6. For example, 13.\( \text{Wf}2 \) (13.\( \text{Wh}1 \) f6 transposes back to 11...f6) 13...f6 14.exf6 \( \text{Wxf6} \) 15.g3 \( \text{d}e8 \) 16.\( \text{Rae}1 \) \( \text{h}5 \) 17.\( \text{g}e5 \) \( \text{Bc}8 \). - 12.0-0 \( \geq \) 12.exf6 \( \text{Wxf6} \) 13.g3 \( \text{d}d7 \) 14.0-0.

\[ \text{White wants to castle queenside and therefore takes the black c-pawn, which would be a leading charger in the avalanche. Black mostly recaptures with the bishop (see p.255), but 9...\( \text{Bxc}5 \) (see p.262) also deserves attention:} \]

A) 9...\( \text{Bxc}5 \) and now:

A1) 10.\( \text{Bxc}5 \) \( \text{Bxc}5 \) 11.\( \text{d}d3 \) f6 Again this is a good moment for the excellent waiting move 11...\( \text{d}d7 \)! 12.0-0 (12.0-0-0 \( \text{Bxa}5 \) \text{f} and Black is the first to start an attack. The poorly placed \( \text{d}d3 \) provides various motifs, for example ...\( \text{d}5-\text{d}4 \) or ...\( \text{Bb}4 \)) 12...\( \text{Wb}6 )?N

with an excellent position for Black.

French devotees are happy with such a
central structure because it avoids all trouble connected with the e-file and knight jump to e5. 14.exf6 \textit{xf6} 15.e5! \textit{xe5} 16.dxe5 \textit{xf6} 17.xf6+ \textit{xf6} 18.xc5 \textit{xc5} 19.bxc3 \textit{fxe5} 20.dxe5 \textit{xd3} 21.dxe5+ \textit{h8} 22.cxd3 \textit{b5+}

White will see trouble with the wandering knight, Velimirovic-Maksimovic, Valjevo 2011;

A2) \textit{0-0-0} \textit{a5} Black activates the queen, having in mind before anything else the unpleasant pin with ...\textit{b4}. The opponent has several ideas of his own:

A21) 11.xc5 \textit{xc5}

White is at a critical juncture. He will either launch an immediate offensive with h2-h4 or first consolidate the king with \textit{b1}. Both lines have their pros and cons and quite often transpose into each other. From Black's perspective, he has three valid ideas:

i) \textit{...d7} with \textit{...ac8} or \textit{...fc8} (the simplest and probably the best);

ii) \textit{...fd8} with the ...d5-d4 push or the ...\textit{e4} jump. This is often preceded by \textit{...d7-e8};

iii) \textit{...b8} with the b-pawn advance. A211) 12.h4

Leaves the king on the c-file to start an immediate attack. Besides the usual 12...\textit{d7}, Black has other solid responses.

A2111) 12...\textit{d7}; A21111) 13.a3 is the multipurpose move which will endanger the black king from g3 and also defend his own king position along the third rank. A211111) 13...\textit{ac8}

A critical position. Black is already threatening 14...\textit{b4}.

14.Rg3 With f4-f5 in mind. Both sides are chasing after the kings. One lost tempo can easily decide the final outcome.
White can also prevent the aggressive...

14...\textcircled{b}4 With the clear threat of \textcircled{a}2 and then \textcircled{b}3. The idea 14...\textcircled{e}7!? to increase the control over the \textcircled{f}5-square is also interesting: 15.\textcircled{b}1 (15.\textcircled{b}d4 \textcircled{b}5) 15...\textcircled{a}4 (15...\textcircled{f}5! 16.\textcircled{h}3 \textcircled{f}d8 17.\textcircled{d}4 (17.g4?! d4) 17...\textcircled{xd}4 18.\textcircled{w}xd4 and now the typical 18...\textcircled{e}4 (18...\textcircled{e}8) 19.\textcircled{x}e4 \textcircled{d}xe4 20.\textcircled{x}e4 \textcircled{c}6= 16.\textcircled{d}xa4 \textcircled{w}xd2 17.\textcircled{x}xd2 \textcircled{xa}4 18.\textcircled{d}4 and White is just a bit better, Bobras-I. Farago, Dresden 2009.

15.\textcircled{d}4 It is interesting that White has to build on the protection of the \textcircled{b}3-square, otherwise the game would end quickly, for example 15.a3? \textcircled{a}2+ 16.\textcircled{xa}2 \textcircled{b}3+--; or 15.\textcircled{b}1? \textcircled{e}4++. 15...f5!? 16.\textcircled{w}xf6 \textcircled{x}f6

A beautiful image – all the Black pieces are in place. 17.a3 17.f5! c7 18.\textcircled{g}5 a4 19.a3 \textcircled{xc}2 20.\textcircled{xe}6 \textcircled{xe}6 21.\textcircled{w}xf6 (21.fxe6? \textcircled{xa}3--+) 21...\textcircled{f}4+ 22.\textcircled{b}1 e8 23.\textcircled{xa}4 \textcircled{w}xg3 24.\textcircled{w}c3 \textcircled{xc}3 25.\textcircled{xc}3 \textcircled{e}3 26.\textcircled{b}5 \textcircled{xd}1 27.\textcircled{xc}d1 \textcircled{c}7 28.\textcircled{xe}8 \textcircled{xe}8 with slightly the better endgame for Black. 17...\textcircled{xc}2!

18.\textcircled{w}xc2 e4 19.\textcircled{f}3 \textcircled{xf}4 19...\textcircled{a}4!N 20.\textcircled{b}3 \textcircled{b}6=. 20.\textcircled{f}xe4 \textcircled{xc}3 21.\textcircled{bxc}3 \textcircled{x}c3= (Amonatov-Nikolenko, Ulan Ude 2009) 22.\textcircled{f}3 \textcircled{xc}2+ 23.\textcircled{xc}2;

A211112) 13...b5?! White is now well prepared to meet this premature advance and transpose into a better ending. Compare with 13.h5 b5. 14.f5 The simple 14.\textcircled{x}xb5!? would also work: 14...\textcircled{a}4 15.\textcircled{xc}3 \textcircled{xc}2+ 16.\textcircled{xa}2 \textcircled{xa}2 17.\textcircled{b}4 \textcircled{xd}7 18.\textcircled{d}4 with better chances in the endgame. 14...exf5 14...b4? 15.f6+-; 15.\textcircled{g}3 15.\textcircled{xb}5? 15...\textcircled{e}7 16.\textcircled{b}1? 16.h5 \textcircled{e}6 17.\textcircled{xd}5 \textcircled{xd}2+ 18.\textcircled{xd}2 \textcircled{xd}5 19.\textcircled{xd}5 \textcircled{c}6= 16.b4 17.\textcircled{xd}5 \textcircled{e}4? 17...\textcircled{xd}5 18.\textcircled{g}7+ \textcircled{g}7 19.\textcircled{g}5+ \textcircled{h}8 20.\textcircled{xe}5 \textcircled{g}8 21.\textcircled{f}6+ \textcircled{g}7= 18.\textcircled{h}6 \textcircircled{g}6 19.\textcircled{a}xg6 \textcircled{x}g6 20.\textcircled{e}7+ \textcircled{f}7

21.\textcircled{e}7? 21.\textcircled{c}4+! was winning.

21...\textcircled{d}8+= Munguntuul-Danielian, Doha 2011;
A211113) Preparing the b-pawn advance also deserves attention: 13...\(\text{a}8\) 14.\(\text{e}3\) Or 14.\(h5\) h6 15.\(\text{h}e3\) (15.\(\text{f}5\) exf5 16.\(\text{h}g3\) \(\text{h}8\)) 15...\(\text{e}8\) 16.\(d4\) b5! 17.\(\text{a}xb5?\) (≥ 17.\(\text{xc}6\) ) 17...\(\text{b}4\) 18.a3 \(\text{xc}2\) 19.\(\text{xc}2\) \(\text{xb}5\) 20.\(\text{xb}5\) \(\text{e}4\+-\), Smith-Berczes, Stockholm 2008/09; or 14.\(\text{f}5\) exf5 15.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{e}7\) 16.\(h5\) \(\text{e}6\) 17.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{xd}2\)+ 18.\(\text{xd}2\) \(\text{xd}5\) 19.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{c}6\)-. 14...f5 Taking a moment to prevent the dangerous \(\text{f}4\)-\(f5\)
15.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{f}c8\) 16.\(\text{b}1\) \(\text{xd}4\) 17.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{c}7\) 18.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{e}8\) 19.\(\text{e}3\) b5†, Frolyanov-Lysyj, Serpukhov 2008;

A21112) 13.\(h5\) \(\text{a}c8\) With the devastating threat of 14...\(\text{b}4\).

An alternative is 13...b5†.

Black is exploiting the fact that White has pushed h4-h5 instead of playing \(\text{h}3\), thus 14.\(\text{xb}5\) won't work. Compare with the line 13.\(\text{h}3\) b5 14.\(\text{xb}5\).
14.\(\text{b}1\) (14.\(\text{xb}5?!\) \(\text{b}4\) 15.\(\text{xd}7\) \(\text{xa}2\)+ 16.\(\text{xa}2\) + \(\text{xa}2\))
14...\(\text{b}4\) 15.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{e}4\) (obviously Black's play is developing smoothly and without obstacles)
16.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{a}8\) 17.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{xd}2\)+ 18.\(\text{xd}2\) \(\text{c}5\) 19.\(\text{c}1\) a5 20.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{e}7\) 21.\(g4\) a4 22.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{f}c8\) and Black is that bit better prepared for the action, Kurnosov-Naer, Olginka 2011.
14.\(h6\)?! 14.a3 h6 15.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{fd}8\) 16.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{xd}4\) 17.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{e}8\) 18.\(\text{e}2\) 19.\(g4\) \(\text{e}8\) 20.\(\text{b}2\) a6 21.\(\text{x}c1\) \(\text{e}7\) 22.a3 a5 23.\(\text{b}x\text{a}5\) \(\text{c}5\) 24.\(\text{xc}5\) \(\text{d}5\) 25.\(\text{d}1\) d4 26.\(\text{a}2\) \(\text{f}8\) 27.\(\text{b}4\) \(\text{a}8\) 28.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{xa}5\) 29.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{e}4\) 30.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{e}7\) 31.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{c}3\) 32.\(f5\) 33.\(f6\)+ \(\text{xf6}\) 34.\(\text{xf6}\)+ \(\text{d}6\) 35.\(\text{f}4\) e5 36.\(\text{f}2\) \(\text{d}7\) 37.\(\text{xf}7\) \(\text{x}g4\) 38.\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{f}3\) 39.\(\text{g}7\) \(\text{f}8\) 40.\(\text{h}7\) e4 41.\(\text{g}1\) \(\text{x}h5\) 42.\(\text{h}xh5\) \(\text{x}h5\) 43.\(\text{b}x\text{b}7\) \(\text{xf}6\) 44.\(\text{b}6\)+ \(\text{e}5\) 45.\(\text{c}6\)+ \(\text{f}4\) 46.\(\text{f}1\)+ \(\text{e}3\) 47.\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{a}4\)+ 48.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{a}6\) 49.a4 \(\text{d}7\) 50.\(\text{d}6\) \(\text{c}5\)+ 51.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{b}7\) 52.\(\text{e}6\) \(\text{c}5\)+ 53.\(\text{b}4\) \(\text{xc}2\) 54.\(\text{hxh}6\) d3 55.\(\text{h}3\)+ \(\text{f}2\) 56.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{g}2\) 57.\(\text{h}7\) d2 58.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{f}3\) 59.\(\text{h}2\)+ \(\text{f}4\) 60.\(\text{f}7\)+ \(\text{e}5\) 0-1 Van Haastert-Kasimdzhanov, Vlissingen 2007. 14...\(\text{b}4\) White is still charging but Black is much more efficient with his own attack. This is an understandable outcome if we take a note of how many pieces are already menacing over the white king's head. 15.\(\text{hxg}7\) \(\text{f}d8\) 16.a3 16.\(\text{c}4\)? \(\text{dxc}4+-\) Gaponenko-Rajlich, Germany Bundesliga W 2009; 16.\(\text{b}1\)? \(\text{e}4+-\).
16...\(\text{a}2\)+ 17.\(\text{b}1\) \(\text{c}3\)+ 18.\(\text{xc}3\) \(\text{xc}3\) 19.\(\text{bxc}3\) \(\text{e}4\) ?

A2112) 12...\(\text{b}8\)?
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A211) 12...\texttt{d}d4 13...\texttt{d}d7 14...\texttt{b}b1 \texttt{c}c4 15...\texttt{d}d4 \texttt{f}c8= with a solid position similar to the main line. Black's plan is the same, exchanging the minor pieces on a4 and b5 and playing on the c-file;

A212) 12...\texttt{b}b1 \texttt{d}d7! Black shouldn't lead a charge before completing his development. It is useful to note here that Black couldn't develop this piece without the exchange of the dark-squared bishops on c5 - otherwise White has the \texttt{c}c5! strike. See the game A. Zhigalko-Li Shilong, Cappelle-la-Grande 2006, covered under 9...\texttt{d}d5. It is also possible to push 12...a6, But after 13...\texttt{h}h3!? Black must develop with 13...\texttt{b}b4 (because if 13...\texttt{b}b5 White can sacrifice on h7: 14...\texttt{h}h7+! \texttt{h}h7 15...\texttt{g}g5+ \texttt{g}g8 16...\texttt{f}f2! with excellent prospects in the attack, for example 16...\texttt{a}a4 17...\texttt{e}e4 18...\texttt{h}h4 \texttt{e}e8 19...\texttt{d}d3!, see diagram)

A213) With 12...\texttt{d}d8!? Black is threatening d5-d4: 13...\texttt{e}e4 13...\texttt{b}b1 \texttt{c}c4!\texttt{f}; 13...\texttt{a}a4; 13...\texttt{h}h5 \texttt{d}d4=+. With 13...\texttt{a}a4 14...\texttt{a}a4 15...\texttt{b}b1 \texttt{d}d7 16...\texttt{c}c8 17...\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{h}h6 18...\texttt{e}e2 \texttt{e}e4 19...\texttt{f}f2 19...\texttt{e}e4 \texttt{d}d4 20...\texttt{h}h4 \texttt{e}e8 21...\texttt{d}d1 \texttt{x}xh2 22...\texttt{x}xh2 \texttt{f}f8=.

Back to the position after 11...\texttt{c}c5.
14.\(\text{\textit{e}}\)\text{e}3 \text{\textit{f}}\text{d}8 15.a3 (again it is possible to sacrifice 15.\textit{\textit{x}}\text{h}7+? \textit{\textit{x}}\text{h}7 16.\textit{\textit{g}}\text{5}+ \textit{\textit{g}}\text{8} 17.\textit{\textit{h}}\text{3} \textit{\textit{e}}8 18.\textit{\textit{h}}\text{7}+ \textit{\textit{f}}\text{8} 19.f5 \textit{\textit{e}}\text{f}5 20.\textit{\textit{h}}\text{8}+ \textit{\textit{e}}\text{7} 21.\textit{\textit{x}}\text{g}7 \text{d}4 22.\textit{\textit{xe}}\text{1} with a strong attack) 15...\text{\textit{e}}8 16.\text{\textit{d}}\text{d}4 \text{\textit{\textit{d}}}\text{d}4 17.\textit{\textit{c}}\text{c}4 \text{\textit{d}}\text{d}4 18.\textit{\textit{d}}\text{d}4 \text{\textit{d}}\text{d}4= Heimann-Kortchnoi, Switzerland 2010.

Now:

A2131) 13.h4 White must hurry with the action, because the enemy pieces are already closing in on his king. Black has a pleasant choice between three continuations:

A21311) 13...\text{\textit{f}}\text{c}8

White is feeling uncomfortable with this many hostile pieces clustered on the queenside and ready to storm against his king in any given moment. 14.\text{\textit{d}}\text{d}4 White is not taking any risks with moves like 14.\text{\textit{h}}\text{3}, but instead decides to trade off one of the potential attackers. 14...\text{\textit{g}}\text{d}4 15.\text{\textit{f}}\text{d}4 \text{\textit{a}}\text{a}4! And now the pleasant ending is the best way to go.

16.\text{\textit{g}}\text{c}4 \text{\textit{g}}\text{g}4 17.\text{\textit{d}}\text{d}3 \text{\textit{b}}\text{b}5= 18.h5 18.f5 \text{\textit{g}}\text{d}3 19.\text{\textit{f}}\text{d}3 \text{\textit{c}}\text{c}7 1/2-1/2 Diermair-Neubauer, Leoben 2008.

18...\text{\textit{f}}\text{d}3 19.\text{\textit{c}}\text{c}3 \text{\textit{c}}\text{c}5 19...\text{\textit{c}}\text{c}7=. 20.\text{\textit{c}}\text{c}5 \text{\textit{c}}\text{c}5= 1/2-1/2 (32) Volokitin-A. Kovacevic, Vrnjacka Banja 2010;

A21312) It is also possible to play 13...\text{\textit{f}}\text{d}8!? with the idea ...\text{\textit{e}}\text{e}8 and ...\text{\textit{c}}\text{c}4. 14.\text{\textit{h}}\text{3} \text{\textit{e}}8 15.\text{\textit{d}}\text{d}4 \text{\textit{c}}\text{c}8

16.\text{\textit{c}}\text{c}2 16.\text{\textit{b}}\text{b}3!? \text{\textit{e}}\text{b}3 17.\text{\textit{c}}\text{b}3 \text{\textit{f}}6! 18.\text{\textit{e}}\text{f}6 \text{\textit{d}}\text{d}4 19.\text{\textit{f}}\text{f}5 (19.\text{\textit{d}}\text{d}4 \text{\textit{d}}\text{d}4) 19...\text{\textit{d}}\text{d}4 20.\text{\textit{g}}\text{g}5 \text{\textit{h}}\text{c}7 21.\text{\textit{f}}\text{f}7+ \text{\textit{e}}\text{f}7 22.a3 \text{\textit{c}}\text{c}6 23.\text{\textit{f}}\text{f}6 \text{\textit{f}}\text{f}5 24.b4 dxc3 0-1 Solodovnichenko-A. Grigorian, Belgorod 2008.
13...\texttt{a}c8 14.h4?! (this is already too late, Black’s attack quickly becomes overwhelming; 14.a3) 14...\texttt{c}b4! 15.\texttt{d}d4 \texttt{a}a4\texttt{f} and White is faced with insoluble problems, Melia-Kuljasevic, Kavala 2008. Another possibility is the immediate 13...\texttt{b}4?! 14.\texttt{d}d4 (on 14.a3 Black obtains better play with 14...\texttt{b}xd3 15.cxd3 \texttt{b}b3 16.\texttt{w}c2 \texttt{b}6\texttt{f} because White has many weaknesses, Vila Gazquez-Berczes, Szeged 2008) 14...\texttt{f}c8 15.\texttt{g}4 \texttt{a}a4\texttt{f}, Saric-M. Gurevich, Cannes 2007. 14.\texttt{e}e2 It is better to play 14.a3 although after 14...\texttt{b}6\texttt{f} Black retains the initiative, because the earlier weakness of the b4-square simply passed to b3. 15.\texttt{w}f2 14...\texttt{w}b6 15.\texttt{e}d4 \texttt{xd}4 15...\texttt{b}4\texttt{f}!N 16.a3 (16.\texttt{e}e3? \texttt{d}a4\texttt{f}!-+) 16...\texttt{b}xd3\texttt{f}; or also 16...a5?! 17.axb4 axb4 18.\texttt{w}e2 b3! 19.c3 \texttt{a}2\texttt{f}, White is facing a devastating attack. 16.\texttt{xd}4 \texttt{a}a4 17.\texttt{b}b3 \texttt{b}b5 18.\texttt{h}f1 \texttt{f}3-3 Pedersen-Schlosser, Pardubice 2008.

Back to the position after 10...\texttt{w}a5.

A22) 11.a3?!

White prevents the pin but makes an unwelcome push of the pawn in front of his castled king:

A221) 11...\texttt{a}6 probably the best plan is to push ...b5-b4 and take advantage of the unprincipled a3. 12.\texttt{b}1 b5?! Black should first exchange the bishops: 12...\texttt{xe}3?!N 13.\texttt{w}xe3 b5 14.\texttt{d}d3 h6! (14...b4? 15.\texttt{x}h7++-; 14...f6? 15.\texttt{g}5! \texttt{f}xg5 16.\texttt{h}3+-) and on the account of the a3 pawn Black will open the b-file and achieve solid counterplay: 15.f5!? b4 16.axb4 \texttt{w}xb4 17.\texttt{f}6 \texttt{b}b8. 13.\texttt{d}d4?! 13.\texttt{xc}5! \texttt{xc}5 14.b4 \texttt{w}xa3 (14...\texttt{xb}4 15.\texttt{xd}5+-) 15.bxc5 \texttt{b}4+ 16.\texttt{a}a1 \texttt{xc}5\texttt{f} and Black doesn’t have sufficient compensation. 13...\texttt{w}b6 14.\texttt{h}4 \texttt{b}7 15.\texttt{e}e2 \texttt{xd}4 16.\texttt{xd}4 \texttt{c}6 17.\texttt{h}3 \texttt{fb}8 18.\texttt{a}a2 a5\texttt{f}, Black is better prepared for an attack, Kislik-Kosic, Budapest 2010.

A222) 11...\texttt{d}d8?! 12.h4 \texttt{b}b8 Black wants to play ...b7-b5 but White is able to tackle the idea: 13.\texttt{d}d4?! 13.\texttt{d}b5 \texttt{xd}2+ 14.\texttt{xd}2 with some prospects of an endgame advantage, thanks to White’s strong control of the central d4-square; 13.\texttt{xc}5? \texttt{xc}5 14.\texttt{w}e3\texttt{f}; Black lags with his development and is still not able to advance ...b7-b5.

13...\texttt{xd}4 ≥ 13...\texttt{xd}4!N 14.\texttt{xd}4 b5 15.\texttt{h}3 (15.\texttt{a}a2 b4 16.\texttt{b}b1 bxa3 17.\texttt{w}xa5 \texttt{xa5f}) 15...b4 16.\texttt{a}a2 \texttt{a}6\texttt{f} with a strong initiative. 14.\texttt{xd}4 b5 15.\texttt{h}3 b4 16.\texttt{a}a2 \texttt{a}6 17.\texttt{xa}6?! On 17.\texttt{xc}5 we have an almost forced line: 17...\texttt{xc}5 18.axb4 \texttt{xa}2 19.\texttt{a}a3 \texttt{dc}8 20.\texttt{c}3 \texttt{b}3+ 21.\texttt{xb}3 \texttt{wb}3
The activity and excellent coordination of Black's pieces more than compensate for the small material deficit;

A223) 11...\textit{b8} does not equalise because of 12.\textit{xc5} \textit{xc5} (12...\textit{xc5} 13.\textit{e3} \textit{d7} 14.f5=) 13.\textit{d3}± (Saric-Dizdar, Marija Bistrica 2011) and White is already threatening the typical \textit{xh7} sacrifice.

A23) 11.\textit{b1} \textit{b4}!

12.a3 \textit{xc3} 13.\textit{xc3} \textit{xc3} 14.bxc3 \textit{b6}! 15.\textit{xb6} axb6 16.\textit{a2} \textit{a4} 17.g3 \textit{d7} 18.\textit{b1} \textit{a8}= Gharamian-Ni Hua, Cappelle-la-Grande 2007;

A24) In case of 11.\textit{d4} White falls under a strong attack: 11...\textit{xd4}

12.\textit{xd4} \textit{b8} 13.\textit{b1} b5 14.\textit{e2} b4 15.\textit{e3} \textit{a6} 16.\textit{d4} \textit{f8} 17.\textit{b3} \textit{a4} 18.g4 \textit{b7} 18...\textit{xf1} 19.\textit{hxh1} 19.\textit{g2} \textit{bc7} 20.\textit{f2} \textit{a5} 20...\textit{cxe5}?! 21.\textit{exe5} \textit{xc2}→ 21.\textit{d4} \textit{xc2} 22.\textit{xc2} \textit{c4} 23.b3? Better is 23.\textit{xb4}.


\textbf{Important:} In the set-ups where White takes on c5 with the idea of castling queenside (otherwise this castling move would be met by the unpleasant ...c5-c4), and then in the critical position arising after 9...\textit{c5} 10.0-0-0 \textit{a5} 11.\textit{xc5} \textit{xc5} 12.h4, Black has a choice between two plans. The main variation 12...\textit{d7} with 13...\textit{ac8} and 14...\textit{d4} offers good perspectives in attacking the white king. But there is also the simpler, solid 12...\textit{f8}?! , with unpleasant ideas of ...d5-d4 or ...\textit{e4} or first ...\textit{d7-e8} and then ...\textit{d4}.

B) 9...\textit{xc5}??
This alternative should be seriously considered as it offers a plethora of possibilities for Black. 10...0-0 10.a3 b6 11...b5 (11.b4?! ı4e4 12...exe4 dxe4 13...d4 ıxd4 14...xd4 ıxb7 15...e2 ıh4+ 16...f1 f6) 11...b7 12...d1 f6 (this was played in the game that continues below, but another move, which keeps the black position flexible and without weaknesses, should be looked at: 12...wc7!? 13.0-0 ıfd8 14...d4 ıxd4 15...xd4 ıe4 16...exe4 dxe4 17.c3 ıd5 18...e2 ıad8 19...e3) 13.exf6 ıxf6 14...xc6 ıxc6 15...d4 ıe4 16...e3 ıc8 (16...xc3 17...xc3 ıxc3+ 18...xc3 ıd6 19...d4) 17.0-0 ıxc3 18...xc3 ıe8 19...xc8 ıxc8 20.c3 ıh5 21...d2 ıxf3 22...xf3 ıc4 23...f6 ıxf6 24.f5 exf5 25...xd5 g6 26...d7 ıf7 27...f3 ıc7 28...xc7 ıxc7 29...f2 ıf7 ½-½ Kovchan-Ponomariov, Dagomys 2010.

B1) 10...wa5 11...b1 and now:

B11) The most logical move 11...d7?! fails because of 12...xd5!±

B12) 11...exd5 12...xa5 ıxa5 14...xc5 ıxc5 15...xd5, A. Zhigalko-Li Shilong, Cappelle-la-Grande 2006;

B12) 11...d8 12...d4!± ıh8?! Black couldn't come up with a decent plan and makes a slow, prophylactic move. However it is still not a good time for 12...d7? 13...xd5!± 13.h4

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12...exd5 13...xa5 ıxa5 14...xc5 ıxc5 15...xd5, A. Zhigalko-Li Shilong, Cappelle-la-Grande 2006;

B2) 10...a6! 11...b1 Another possible continuation is 11...a5 12...b7 ıd7 13.f5 (13.h4 ıxc8 14...e7 ıa7 15...e1 (15.h6?! 15...b5→) 15...c7 with excellent prospects for Black) 13...f6?! (13...exf5 14...xd5 14...d4 15...xe7+ ıxe7 16...e1 ıxe1 17...xe1 ıc6 with an unclear position) 14...e4! 15...xa5 ıxf2 16...d5 ıxh1 17...xd7 ıb4 with complicated play and mutual chances) 14...xf5 ıxf5 15...xe6 ıxe6 16...xd5 ıxd5 17...xd5 ıb4 18...c4 ıxd5 19...xd5+ ıe6 20...d1 ıh8† 11...b5

B21) 12...f2 ıa4?!

Black is spoiling his pawn structure but in return he gets an open file for the attack against White's king. 13...xa4 13...e2 ıc7 14...ed4 ıa5 15.c3 ıd7†. 13...bx4 14.a3 A logical move which prevents the advance of Black's pawns. 14...b6 gives nothing: 14...d7 15.c4 ıb8 (15...a3! 16.b3 a5†) 16.h4 (≥ 16.a3) 16...f6 (16...a3!)
17.exf6 ∆xf6∞, Ohme-Sedina, Rogaska Slatina 2009. 14...b8 With excellent play on the b-file, for example 15.∆c5 ∆a5! 16.∆xe7 ∆c3 17.∆b4 ∆xb4 18.axb4 ∆xb4 19.∆c1 ∆xb2+ 20.∆d2 a3 21.∆d3 a2±.

B22) 12.f5!N This aggressive move is usually unpleasant in the eyes of the leader of the black pieces. 12...dxe4! 12...∆a4!? deserves attention: 13.fxe6 (≥ 13.∆xa4) 13...∆xe6 (Black has completed his development and achieved a harmonious piece arrangement. Now the attempt to grab a pawn is refuted by tactical means) 14.∆xd5?? ∆a3!!; or 12...b4?! 13.f6! bxc3 14.∆xc3 gxf6 15.exf6 ∆xf6 16.∆xc5±.


9. ∆f1-e2

The critical continuation.

Black can choose between three solid plans.

9. ... b7-b6

This idea to support the c5 pawn and maintain tension in the centre has been very popular lately.

- In the spirit of Steinitz is: 9...f6?! Deploying the ‘French bomb’ this early on would be just a bit premature; 10.exf6 ∆xf6 11.dxe5±;

- 9...a6 The beginning of the natural plan. The expansion on the queenside secures greater manœuvring ability for the black pieces, which is always a useful strategical gain. Black, meanwhile, has not given up the undermining of the white centre with ...f7-f6, he only delays it until a more convenient moment. Transpositions from the various move orders are quite common, which is perfectly understandable as ...a7-a6/...b7-b5 and ...f7-f6 are standard ideas in many lines of the French Defence. 10.0-0 b5

Here the lines fork:

A) 11.a3 (see p.265)
B) 11.∆h1 (see p.278)
C) 11.∆d1 (see p.281)
A) 11.a3!? This has become a necessary move in this line. Hindering the movement of the b-pawn and preventing the bishops' exchange via a6 is the best method to fight for the advantage. Sergei Movsesian commented on his game against Borki Preojevic that ...b5-b4 is not a real threat and that a2-a3 might be of suspicious value.

A1) 11...b6

Just as in the variation with 9..b6, Black can choose between undermining the centre with ...f7-f6 or blocking the advance of the white f-pawn. It seems that this is a good moment for the blocking attempt, as after \( \text{d1} \) White has reduced his control over the d4-square. Therefore, the usual 12..f5 13.exf6 \( \text{xf6}! \) gives excellent play. A good counter-example is the game Bologan-Rychagov, Moscow 2010 (see below), where Black's ...f7-f5 failed because it was played two moves later.

It is curious that nobody has ever tried the blockade in this particular position and that only a few chess engines suggest it as an option. If the analysis holds, the continuation 11...b6! might be revived entirely.

13.c3 13.exf6?! \( \text{xf6} \) 14.c3 (14.f2 \( \text{e4?!} \) 14...\( \text{e4} \) 15.\text{f2} \( \text{b7} \) 16.\text{f2} \( \text{c8f} \); or 13.dxc5 \( \text{xc5} \) 14.c3 (14.\text{xc5} \( \text{c5} \) 15.\text{e3} \( \text{b8=} \) 16.\text{f2?! d4! 17.\text{d4} \( \text{a4 with better chances for Black) 14...\text{xe3+ 15.\text{xe3} } \text{xe3+ 16.\text{xe3} c5 17.\text{c2 } d7= and Black has a solid set-up and nothing} \)

One of the most important ideas connected with the ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5 advance. Black is threatening the unpleasant pinning after ...\text{xd4} and ...\text{c5}, usually after completing his development with ...\text{b7} and ...\text{c8}. The main battle is on the central diagonal a7-g1 and the outcome usually determines who will be better off from the opening. The soldiers on c5 and d4 are eying each other, sometimes for a longer period, and sometimes one of them is eager to quickly jump into the action. In general, both White and Black would prefer to maintain this tension until they successfully complete their development.

A11) 12.\( \text{d1} \) transfers the knight to f2 and prepares to boost the centre with c2-c3. Now things are getting into perspective. Black realises that the magical 'French' square b6 might not be that great for the queen when c2-c3 is on the menu. Especially if it doesn't facilitate the standard plan of exchanging the bishop with ...a7-a5, ...\text{a6} and ...b5-b4, the queen will feel embarrassed and retreat to c7:
to worry about. White dominates the central square but his position also contains certain weaknesses. 13...cxd4 Black can also maintain a closed position with 13...c4!? 14.cxd4 14...xd4 c5! 15.b4 (after 15.b2 xd4 16.exd4 c7 17.f2 d7= Black is fully developed and has no problems. b2-b4 is not an issue as the knight can always land on e4) 15.e4 16.b2 xd4 17.exd4 c7 18.f2 d7=.

14...a5 Now that White's f-pawn is blocked, Black can calmly continue with the plan of activating the lightsquared bishop. If 14...a5!? 15.xd3 b7 16.d2 ac8∞

we have reached a position similar to the game Karjakin-Wang Hao, Taiyuan 2005. The difference is that here we have e7 and f3 on the board. 15.c3 a6= and White can't stop ...b5-b4.

A112) 12...f6!!

We should always consider this advance. However, when White can maintain the full centre, the idea might well be counter-productive. 13.c3 Now the proportion is four pawns against four and White easily maintains the centre, thus gaining the advantage. 13...fxe5?! This is one of the examples when the exchange of the f-pawns favours White. The f7-f6-strike is usually effective when White has a knight on c3. 14.fxe5 a5 15.b2 c4 16.d3! h6

17.xh6!! gxh6 18.h7+ h8 19.g6 (1-0 Teran Alvarez-Dizdar, Seville 2011), for example 19...d8 20.g8++; 19...f6 20.exf6 xfx6 21.h4++; or 19...d8 20.g5++;

A113) 12...a5!? 13.c3 and now:

A1131) 13...a6 Black wants to push ...b5-b4 and exchange the troubled bishop. White, however, has a simple tool to prevent it: 14.dxc5 xc5 15.b4!
15...\textit{\texttt{\textit{\texttt{x}e3+}}} 16.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{x}e3 f6}} (16...f5) Black was probably hoping that the activity of the other pieces will compensate for the ugly bishop. But Grandmaster Alexeev finds a good plan. 17.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{d}d4!}} 17.exf6?! \textit{\texttt{\texttt{x}f6}} 17...\textit{\texttt{\texttt{x}d4}} 17...\textit{\texttt{x}e5} 18.\textit{\texttt{x}e6 \textit{\texttt{f}e8}} 19.f5 (19.\textit{\texttt{h}1!} 19...\textit{\texttt{x}e6} 20.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{x}d5 \textit{\texttt{e}8}} 21.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{g}4 \textit{\texttt{c}b8}}} 22.\textit{\texttt{bxa5 \textit{\texttt{\texttt{w}c6}}} 23.\textit{\texttt{x}e6+ \textit{\texttt{\texttt{w}xe6}}} 24.\textit{\texttt{fxe5 \pm}} Black will have a difficult endgame without the queens on the board) 19...\textit{\texttt{f}f6} 20.\textit{\texttt{h}1\pm} Wen Yang-Kayumov, Al Ain 2008 18.\textit{\texttt{cxd4 \textit{\texttt{f}e5}}} 19.\textit{\texttt{fxe5 \textit{\texttt{d}e5}}} 20.\textit{\texttt{dxe5 \textit{\texttt{d}4}}} 21.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{x}d5! \textit{\texttt{exd5}}} 22.\textit{\texttt{bxa5 \textit{\texttt{w}c5}}} 23.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{a}c1 \textit{\texttt{w}a3}}} 24.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{w}xd4+--}} The better placed pieces and the passer on e6 quickly decide the outcome of the game. 24...\textit{\texttt{\texttt{w}a5}} 25.e6 \textit{\texttt{b7}} 26.e7 \textit{\texttt{\texttt{x}f1+}} 27.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}f1}} \textit{\texttt{b4}}} 28.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{w}f2}} 1-0 Alexeev-Ni Hua, Ningbo 2008; A1132) 13...a4

As we saw in the game Alexeev-Ni Hua above, the idea of trading the bishop does not work well, so Black tries at least to claim more space on the queenside. The b3-square is not very relevant for the evaluation of the position, but this is the most that Black can gain from the knight's retreat to d1. Black will take some counterplay on the weakened squares b3 and c4, but in our opinion this is not enough, and the following game convincingly proves this claim. 14.\textit{\texttt{d}d3!} If White can move the bishop to this diagonal, and Black doesn't have anything quick on the queenside, it usually signals trouble. 14.\textit{\texttt{f}f2} may be just that bit too slow, and Black fights on with 14...\textit{\texttt{\texttt{a}a5!}} 14...f5 If Black now continues with the logical 14...\textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}a5}}}, trying to claim the light squares, he is up for a tough challenge on the other side of the board: 15.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{w}e2 \textit{\texttt{\texttt{c}c4}}} 16.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{f}f2 \textit{\texttt{cxd4}}} (or 16...f5) 17.\textit{\texttt{exf6 \textit{\texttt{\texttt{x}f6}}} 18.\textit{\texttt{dxc5 \textit{\texttt{\texttt{x}c5}}} 19.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}c5}}} 19.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{w}c5+}} 20.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{f}f2 \textit{\texttt{d7}}} 21.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{a}e1}}} and Black failed to equalise because of the central weakness and passive bishop, Djukic-Kalezić, Tivat 2011) 17.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{cxd4 \textit{\texttt{\texttt{c}c5}}} 18.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{g}5 \textit{\texttt{h}6}}} 19.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{h}7 \textit{\texttt{d8}}} 20.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}f3 \textit{\texttt{b7}}}}} 21.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{g}3 \textit{\texttt{h}8}}} 22.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{h}5}}

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and White's attack is crushing, Guerra Mendez-Ramirez Garcia, Moratalaz 2010. 15.exf6! Qxf6 16.dxc5!± A simple yet extremely efficient plan. White enters a wonderful endgame, where the opponent suffers from the weak bishop and a backward e6 pawn. 16...dx5 17.ex5 wxc5+ 18.wd3 wxe5+ 19.Qxe5 Qb8 20.Aae1 Aa4 21.Bc2 Qc4 22.Qd4 Qd7 23.Afe1 Ab6 24.Qd1±

Both have made the solidifying moves that were possible in this position. The knight looks nice on c4 but nothing more. White has the better pawn structure and Black is not able to coordinate his pieces. And nobody is even thinking about the b3-square! 24...Ae8 25.Qf2 g6 26.Bb1 Ac8 27.g3 Qg7 28.h3 Qd7 29.Qg2 Ac8 30.g4 Qd7 31.Qd3± White manoeuvres with ease and strengthens his position. 31...Ae4 32.Qe5 Ac8 33.Bxe4 dxe4 34.Qg3 g5?! 35.Qxe4+ h6 36.fxg5 hxg5 37.Qxc4 Axc4 38.1e2 Qf6 39.Qf2+ Qg6 40.Qf3 Ab7 41.Qe5+ 1-0 Bologan-Rychagov, Moscow 2010. A very instructive and theoretically important game; A1133) 13...cxd4?N

14.Qxd4 14.cxd4 b4!= and Black gets to activate the bishop on a6. 14...Qc5! Black takes advantage of the tactical nuances to activate the knight. 15.uc2! 15.Qxb5 Qa6 16.a4 (on 16.d4 we have the forced 16...Qxd4 17.Qxd4 Qb3 18.Qxb6 Qxd2 19.Ae1 Qb3 20.Bb1 Qd2= and the knight perpetually attacks the rook: 21.Ac1 Qb3 22.Bo2 Qa4 23.Bd2 Qb3) 16...Qf6 17.Qxb6 Qxd2 18.Qf2 Qb3 19.Qa2 Qc1 20.Aa1 Qxe2+ 21.Qxe2 Qb8= 15...a4!? 16.Qf2 16.Qxb5 Qa5 17.Qd4 g6! – White can't renew the threat of f4-f5 by pushing the g-pawn because Black would exchange the light-squared bishops and the white king would be vulnerable in the open. 18.Qf2 Ac6 and Black has good compensation because he will take a grip on the light squares and constantly press the backward b2 pawn. 16...Ac5 17.Qd3 (17.Qxb5 Ac6 18.Axa6 Qxa6 19.Bb1 Ac4 20.Afe1 Ab8=) with a slightly better position for White (passive Ac8).
A114) 12...cxd4

Black prevents the establishment of the powerful pawn chain with c2-c3.
13.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)xd4 c4d4 14.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)xd4 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)xd4+?! On 14...\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)c5, 15.c3 is exactly the idea behind the earlier knight's retreat. White is claiming d4 once and forever! 15...\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)b8 (15...\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)xd4+?! 16.cxd4 f6 17.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)f2?!±) 16.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)xc5 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)xc5+ 17.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)e3 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)xe3+ 18.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)xe3± and White has a better endgame because he controls the d4-square and has the better bishop, Rasmusen-Kosic, Novi Sad 2009. 15.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)xd4 
\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)c5 16.c3±, White will have a powerful centre and more active minor pieces, Quesada Perez-Barsov, Dresden 2008.

A12) 12.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)ad1 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)b7 Both sides are completing their development and the time is coming to release the tension on the central diagonal:

A121) 13.dxc5 Attempting to delay this capture won't yield an advantage either. 13...\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)xc5 14.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)xc5 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)xc5+! Black saves on time and keeps the knight on d7 in order to continue ...\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)b6-c4. 14...\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)xc5 is the 'regular' recapture, but White can set up his ideal position with 15.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)e3 (the move 15.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)h1?! forfeits the central diagonal into Black's hands: 15...\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)e4! 16.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)xe4?! dxe4 17.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)g5 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)ad8±) 15.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)ac8 16.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)d3 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)a4 17.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)xb6 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)xb6 18.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)e2 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)c4 19.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)xc4 

dxc4 20.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)d7± Mekhitarian-Rodriguez Vila, Campinas 2010. 15.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)h1 15.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)d4 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)ac8 16.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)e3 d4d4 17.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)xd4 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)b6=. 15...\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)h6 15...\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)e7!N.

The knight on e7 controls the important squares on the kingside, simultaneously allowing the queen's retreat to c7 in case of b2-b4. Now the standard manoeuvre ...\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)b6-c4 will be even more effective, for example 16.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)d3 (16.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)d4 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)b6) 16...\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)b6 17.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)e2 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)c4. 16.b4 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)b6 17.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)d3 f6 18.exf6 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)xf6 19.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)d1 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)ae8 20.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)g6 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)e7 21.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)d3 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)c7 22.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)h4 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)c8 23.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)g3 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)d7 24.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)d3 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)c8 ½-½ Kharlamov-Talpak, ICCF email 2009;

A122) 13.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)e1 f6! Whilst developing the play on the queenside, Black never actually abandoned the useful undermining from the other side of the chain. 14.exf6 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)xf6 15.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)h1 cxd4 16.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)xd4 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)c5 17.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)d2 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)ad8 18.\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)g1 \(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)xd4 18...\(\texttt{\textcopyright}\)e4!?
19.\textit{c}xe4 \textit{d}xe4 20.c3 \textit{\textbf{c}xd4} 21.cxd4 \textit{\textbf{c}e7} 22.\textit{\textbf{c}e3} \textit{\textbf{c}f5}. 19.\textit{\textbf{c}xd4} \textit{\textbf{c}xd4} 20.\textit{\textbf{w}xd4} \textit{\textbf{w}xd4} 21.\textit{\textbf{c}xd4} \textit{\textbf{c}e4} 22.\textit{\textbf{c}xe4} \textit{dxe4} 23.\textit{\textbf{c}xd8} \textit{\textbf{c}xd8} 24.\textit{\textbf{d}d1} \textit{\textbf{c}xd1+} $\frac{1}{2}$-$\frac{1}{2}$ Rogulj-Dizdar, Sibenik 2008;

A123) 13.\textit{\textbf{h}1} and now:

A1231) 13...\textit{\textbf{c}xd4} 14.\textit{\textbf{c}xd4} \textit{\textbf{c}c5} Usually these positions lead into equal endgames after mass exchanges on d4. 15.\textit{\textbf{c}f3} The best way to release the knight from the pin; not 15.b4? \textit{\textbf{c}xd4} 16.\textit{\textbf{c}xd4} \textit{\textbf{c}d4} 17.\textit{\textbf{w}xd4} \textit{\textbf{w}xd4} 18.\textit{\textbf{c}xd4} \textit{\textbf{c}ac8}\textbf{f\textcircled{1}}. 15...\textit{\textbf{c}xd4} 16.\textit{\textbf{c}xd4} \textit{\textbf{c}xd4} 17.\textit{\textbf{w}xd4} \textit{\textbf{w}xd4} 18.\textit{\textbf{c}xd4} f6 18...\textit{\textbf{c}xc8}! 19.\textit{\textbf{c}g1} (19.a4?! bxa4 20.\textit{\textbf{d}d1} (20.\textit{\textbf{c}xa4} d4\textbf{f\textcircled{1}}) 20...a3 21.bxa3 \textit{\textbf{c}ab8}\textbf{f\textcircled{1}}) 19...\textit{\textbf{c}b6}= is also a good set-up for the ending. Besides ...f7-f6, White also has to worry about the c-file and a possible knight’s jump to c4. 19.\textit{\textbf{e}xf6} gxf6= Naer-Maslak, Novokuznetsk 2008;

A1232) But now our favourite move 13...f6?! would lead us straight into trouble: 14.f5! The king has escaped the pin, the queen is still reinforcing d4 and the black pawns on e6 and d5 can also be wobbly. 14...\textit{\textbf{c}xd4} 14...\textit{\textbf{d}xe5} 15.dxe5 d4 16.exf6 \textit{\textbf{c}xf6} 17.fxe6\textbf{f\textcircled{1}}. 15.\textit{\textbf{c}xd4} \textit{\textbf{c}xd4} 16.\textit{\textbf{c}xd4} ±;

A1233) On 13...\textit{\textbf{c}ac8} White can successfully regroup with 14.\textit{\textbf{d}d3} g6 A typical defensive, and, in this fashion, useful move. It closes the diagonal and impedes the f4-f5 advance. But many French Defence devotees hesitate to push the g-pawn because it doesn’t fit in the spirit of this opening. Not only does it weaken the dark-square complex around the king, but it also takes the sting from the natural ...f7-f6. If Black is forced to make such a move, then something has gone wrong in his opening play. 13...\textit{\textbf{c}ac8} is obviously the culprit.

The plan with 14...\textit{\textbf{c}xd4} now makes no sense, because after 15.\textit{\textbf{c}xd4} \textit{\textbf{c}xd4} 16.\textit{\textbf{c}xd4} \textit{\textbf{c}c5} 17.\textit{\textbf{c}e2} White’s most efficient blockading piece lands on d4. 15.\textit{\textbf{w}f3}! and White obviously enjoys the better chances, mostly because he can organise a successful kingside attack, Potkin-Glek, Mainz rapid 2008.

A124) 13.f5? is a direct and usually the most dangerous attempt, but here it is simply premature:

13...\textit{\textbf{c}xd4} 14.\textit{\textbf{c}xd4} \textit{\textbf{c}c5} 15.\textit{\textbf{f}xe6} 15.f6? \textit{\textbf{c}xd4} 16.\textit{\textbf{c}xd4} \textit{\textbf{c}xd4}+ 17.\textit{\textbf{w}xd4} \textit{\textbf{w}xd4}+ 18.\textit{\textbf{c}xe5}--. 15...\textit{\textbf{c}xe6} 16.\textit{\textbf{g}g4} \textit{\textbf{c}xd4} 17.\textit{\textbf{c}xd4} \textit{\textbf{c}xd4} 18.\textit{\textbf{w}xd4} \textit{\textbf{w}xd4}+ 19.\textit{\textbf{c}xd4} \textit{\textbf{c}xf1}+ 20.\textit{\textbf{w}xf1} \textit{\textbf{e}e8} 21.\textit{\textbf{e}e4} \textit{\textbf{c}xe5} 22.\textit{\textbf{c}d6} \textit{\textbf{c}f8}+ 23.\textit{\textbf{w}e2} \textit{\textbf{x}g4} 24.\textit{\textbf{c}xb7} \textit{\textbf{f}f2}+ 25.\textit{\textbf{d}d3} \textit{\textbf{x}g2} 26.\textit{\textbf{d}d8} \textit{\textbf{c}e5}+ 27.\textit{\textbf{c}c3} \textit{\textbf{x}h2} 28.\textit{\textbf{b}b4} \textit{\textbf{c}xc2} 29.\textit{\textbf{b}b3} \textit{\textbf{c}e2} 0-1 A. Horvath-Berczes, Hungary 2007/08.

A13) 12.\textit{\textbf{d}xc5} \textit{\textbf{c}xc5} 13.\textit{\textbf{c}xc5} \textit{\textbf{c}xc5} 13...\textit{\textbf{w}xc5}+ 14.\textit{\textbf{w}h1} \textit{\textbf{b}7} 15.\textit{\textbf{d}d3} \textit{\textbf{c}e7}?! (15...\textit{\textbf{b}6}? 16.\textit{\textbf{c}xh7}+!!++) 16.\textit{\textbf{c}e2} (16.\textit{\textbf{c}xh7}+ \textit{\textbf{c}xh7} 17.\textit{\textbf{g}g5}+ \textit{\textbf{c}g8} 18.\textit{\textbf{d}d3} \textit{\textbf{c}f5} 19.\textit{\textbf{h}h3}) 16...\textit{\textbf{b}6} 17.\textit{\textbf{c}ed4} \textit{\textbf{h}6} (White was threatening 17...\textit{\textbf{c}c4}? 18.\textit{\textbf{x}xh7}+!!++) 18.c3±.
White has succeeded in regrouping and establishing a prominent blockading piece on the d4-square.

14.\textit{We3} We have already noted that a lazy move like 14.\textit{Wh1}?! plays into Black's hands: 14...d4! Wang Li-Gleizerov, Dubai 2008.

A131) 14...\textit{Ab8}!?

Allowing a greater mobility of the knight from c5.

15.\textit{Afd1} 15.\textit{Rh1}?! \textit{Ad4}↑ 16.\textit{Wxb6 Ab6} 17.\textit{Axe4}?! dx4 18.\textit{Ag5} \textit{Ad4} 19.\textit{Ad1} e3?! 15.\textit{Ad3} \textit{Aa4} (15...d4 16.\textit{Ah7}+) 16.\textit{Wxb6 Ab6} 17.\textit{Axa4} bxa4 18.\textit{Ab1} \textit{Ad7} 19.b3 \textit{Af8} 20.b4; 15.\textit{Aa4}!? \textit{Ad7} 16.\textit{Wf2} \textit{Ae8} 17.b4 \textit{Ad7}. 15...\textit{Ad7}?!\textit{N}

15...\textit{Ab7} 16.\textit{Aa2}?! (16.\textit{Wf2} \textit{Afc8} 17.\textit{Ab1} h6=) 16...\textit{Afc8} 17.\textit{Ab4} \textit{Aa5} 18.b3 \textit{Ac6} 19.\textit{Axc6} \textit{Axc6} 20.\textit{Ad3} \textit{Ab8} 21.\textit{Axd4} \textit{Mc7}= Talpak-Loeschnauer, ICCF email 2008.

16.\textit{Wf2} With the idea b2-b4. If 16.b4 \textit{Aa4} 17.\textit{Wxb6} \textit{Ab6} 18.\textit{Ad3} f6! 19.\textit{Ge1} (19.exf6 gxf6!) 19...\textit{fxe5} 20.\textit{fxe5} \textit{Abc8}. 16...\textit{Ae8} Clears the d7-square for the knight, intending at the same time to activate the bishop on another diagonal after ...\textit{f7-f6}. In case of 16...\textit{Aa4}!? 17.\textit{Axa4} bxa4 18.\textit{Ab1} \textit{Afc8} 19.Ac4 \textit{Ae7}

Black has good activity to compensate for the damaged pawn structure: 17.\textit{Ad2} f6 18.\textit{Axf6} \textit{Axf6}=, Black can be active on the kingside too; or 17.g3 f6 18.\textit{exf6} \textit{Axf6}=; or 17.b4 \textit{Ad7} 18.\textit{Ad3} \textit{Wxf2}+ 19.\textit{Wxf2} \textit{Afc8} 20.\textit{Ae2} f6 21.\textit{exf6} \textit{Af6}.

A132) 14...\textit{Aa4} 15.\textit{Wxb6} \textit{Ab6} 16.\textit{Ad3} \textit{Ad7} 16...\textit{Ab7} 17.\textit{Aa2}. 17.\textit{Ae2} f6 18.b3= \textit{fxe5} 19.\textit{fxe5} \textit{Ac4} 20.bxc4 \textit{bxc4} 21.\textit{Axh7}+ 21.\textit{Axh4}=.

21...\textit{Axc4} 22.\textit{Aed4}= Rasmussen-Rudolf, Athens 2008;

A133) 14...\textit{Ab7} 15.b4 \textit{Aa4} 16.\textit{Wxb6} \textit{Ab6} 17.\textit{Ad3} \textit{Afc8} 18.\textit{Ae2}
The bishop will be better placed on d7, having in mind that the probable denouement will be the exchange of the queens, with White establishing a knight on d4. 15.b4?! 15...e7 transposes into the line covered under 14...e7. 15...a4 16...x6 17...d3 17...f6! 17...f6 18...e2 a5?! and Black is near to equalizing. 18...e2 fxe5 19.fxe5 19...xe5 20.fxe5 21.exf1 21...c8= 19...ac8= with sufficient counterplay for Black.

A2) 11...b7!?

Since the usual ...f6 cannot facilitate the exchange of the bishops on a6, Black has recently developed a different plan. The idea is to activate the passive knight via c5, after the exchange of the central pawns, and jump to e4. The bishop provides necessary support from b7. The queen goes to c7, from where it can influence the play on the c-file and help the assault against White's e5-pawn with ...f7-f6. The rooks will be placed on c8 and d8, creating perfect harmony amongst the pieces. White's superiority on the a7-g1 diagonal is parried by Black's control on the a8-h1 diagonal, and the play on the f-file can be countered with activity on the c-file.

A21) 12.xd1 The critical continuation, just as in the line with 11...f6. Only here Black might feel better as his queen will not be under the x-ray of ...e3. 12...xd4 Of course, this is the right moment to trade on d4, before White establishes a rock-solid chain with c2-c3. 13...xd4 and now:

A211) 13...c7 14...f2 ac8 15.c3: A2111) 15...c5

The critical position of the modern plan. Black's minor pieces are active, the queen is wonderfully placed on c7 and the immediate threat is to trade on d4 and grab the exchange with ...b3. The timely exchange on d4 prevented White from connecting the pawns and freed the transit square c5.
It is also very important that Black keeps an eye on the e5 pawn and disallows the thematic charge f4-f5. Besides, ...f7-f6 is always at hand and White has a complex of weak dark squares which can be attractive for the black cavalry.

White enjoys greater space, a stronghold on d4 and better manoeuvring possibilities. One of his ideas would be to transfer the light-squared bishop to the b1-h7 diagonal and attack the enemy king or support the f4-f5 advance.

Taking into account all the pros and cons, the position is finely balanced.

16...\textit{e}d1 After 16\textit{e}l!? \textit{e}xd4 Black apparently strengthens the white centre, but he is hoping to benefit from the play on the open c-file. 17\textit{c}xd4 \textit{e}e4

Jumping to b3 is also possible, but the central square is always more attractive. (after 17...\textit{d}b3 18\textit{b}b1∞ the control of the c-file is only specious because Black cannot really benefit much, while it is unclear how he would parry White's play on the kingside) 18\textit{d}d3 (18\textit{e}xc4 \textit{e}xe4 19\textit{f}5 \textit{exf}5 20\textit{f}5 \textit{dxc}5\textit{c}2\textit{f}1) 18...\textit{b}b6 19\textit{b}4 \textit{e}c3! 20\textit{f}3 \textit{f}c8 21\textit{c}c5 \textit{exe}3! 22\textit{xe}3 \textit{dxc}5 23\textit{dxc}5 \textit{xc}5 24\textit{h}1 \textit{c}7 25\textit{c}1 \textit{d}7 and the huge question is whether Black has sufficient compensation for the material. This is one of those positions that could be analysed for days, without reaching a definite conclusion. And that's the real beauty of chess.

26\textit{d}2∞ Hou Yifan-Ding Liren, Xinghua Jiangsu 2009.

16...\textit{e}e4!N 16...\textit{xd}4 17\textit{xd}4 (17\textit{cxd}4 \textit{f}b3 (17...\textit{e}e4! 18\textit{xe}e4 \textit{dxe}4 19\textit{f}5 \textit{exf}5 20\textit{f}xf5 \textit{d}5) 18\textit{d}d3 \textit{a}5 19\textit{f}5 \textit{exf}5 20\textit{f}xf5 \textit{c}4 21\textit{c}c1–; or also 17\textit{xd}4!?) 17...\textit{b}b3 17...\textit{e}e4 18\textit{xe}4 \textit{dxe}4 19\textit{e}3 with a minimal advantage) 18\textit{e}3 \textit{xe}d4 19\textit{c}xd4 \textit{b}6 20\textit{d}d3 \textit{c}4 (Black sacrifices an exchange to open the long diagonal but he cannot reach full equality; 20...\textit{f}5 21\textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 22\textit{g}4± 23\textit{e}xh7+ 24\textit{d}d4) 21\textit{xe}4 \textit{xc}4 22\textit{g}4∞ (22\textit{e}e4! \textit{c}6 23\textit{e}e1 \textit{d}8 24\textit{f}2±) 22...\textit{h}5 23\textit{f}5 \textit{exf}5 24\textit{f}6 \textit{xf}6 25\textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 26\textit{d}d5 \textit{d}8 27\textit{d}d4 \textit{xd}4+ 28\textit{e}xh4 \textit{g}6 29\textit{e}e1 \textit{f}8 30\textit{e}e5 \textit{d}6 31\textit{f}2 \textit{g}7 32\textit{e}7 \textit{a}8 33\textit{e}8 \textit{b}7 34\textit{e}7 \textit{a}8 35\textit{e}8 \textit{b}7 36\textit{e}5 \textit{f}8 ½–½ Vescovi-Cordova, Bogota 2010; 16...\textit{xd}8 17\textit{c}2 \textit{e}e4 18\textit{b}3±.

17\textit{xe}4 \textit{dxe}4= 18\textit{g}4 18\textit{xc}6 \textit{xc}6 19\textit{d}7 \textit{xc}5 20\textit{xe}5 \textit{xc}5+ 21\textit{d}d4 \textit{c}7=. We repeat once again that in this set-up, with bishop on b7 and pawn on e4, Black should avoid the queens' exchange. 18...\textit{xd}4 19\textit{xd}4 \textit{g}6 20\textit{e}3 \textit{c}4 21\textit{f}e1 \textit{f}d8 22\textit{d}2

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A typical pawn sacrifice that allows White to develop tremendous activity along the open files and diagonals. 21...exf5 22...xf5! ece8 22...gxf5 23...xf5 ed8 24...h6--; 23.e6 23...d7? ed8 24...e6± f5 25...d3±. 23...c5 24...g4 24...exf7+?! xf7 25.b4 xf5 26.bxc5 g6 (26...xc5? 27...g4++) 27...d3 with a superior position for White. 24...d6 24...h8 25...h6. 25...h6 dxf5 26.dxf5+- Vocaturo-Robson, Wijk aan Zee 2010;

A21132) After 18...d4?! White has the following options: 19...h5! g6 20.h6 c5 21.g4--; 19...d1 g6 20.d3--; or 19...c1 cxb2 20...xb2 dxc4 21.wxc4 wxc3 22.dxc3 xc3 23.c1 ffc8 24.fxc3 xc3++; 22...e4?! 19...d4?! dxe4 20...xc4 xc4 21...g4 c5 (21...g6 22.f5 exf5 23...xf5++) 22.f5--; 19...dxe4 20...c1 h4! 21.g3 21.d1 xf2+ 21...e3 22...xe3 e7++;

A21133) 18...e4?! 19...xe4?! 19...xe4! dxe4 20...xc4 xc4 21...g4 c5 (21...g6 22.f5 exf5 23...xf5++) 22.f5--; 19...dxe4 20...c1 e4! 21.g3 21.d1 xf2+ 21...e3 22...xe3 e7++;

A21134) 18...f5?! 19.exf6 xf6∞ with a very complicated position;

A21135) Black can trade the opponent's bishops: 18...d3 19...d3 xe3 20...xe3 and after the obligatory 20...g6

suffer in an inferior position against the dominant knights.
Chapter 5 – The Steinitz Variation

A212) 13...\textit{c}c5?! 14.\textit{f}f2 14..\textit{xc}6! 
\textit{xc}6 15.\textit{c}3 d4 16.\textit{xd}4±.  
14...\textit{c}c8 15.\textit{ad}1 \textit{c}7 16.\textit{f}3 \textit{a}4  
17.c3 \textit{b}6 18.\textit{d}3 \textit{c}4 19.\textit{c}1 \textit{b}6  
20.\textit{e}2 a5 with counterplay, Cmilyte-  
Skripchenko, Antakya 2010;  
A213) 13...\textit{c}c8  

Perhaps the best move in the given po-  
tion. Black is still not committing the  
queen, but wants to activate the \textit{d}7  
first. 14.\textit{f}2 \textit{xd}4 15.\textit{xd}4 \textit{b}8!?  
16.c3 16..\textit{d}3?! \textit{c}6 17.\textit{f}2.  
16...\textit{c}6 17.\textit{g}4 17..\textit{e}3 \textit{a}5.  
17...\textit{xd}4 18..\textit{xd}4 b4 19.axb4 \textit{b}6  
and the queen has reached an ideal  
square, Brkic-Dizdar, Marija Bistrica  
2011.

Back to the position after 11...\textit{b}7.  
A22) 12.dxc5  

Killing the tension and freeing the  
d4-square for his pieces was an option  
for White from move eight, the only  
question is when this is the most ration-  
Al decision.  
A221) If 12...\textit{xc}5 13.\textit{xc}5 \textit{xc}5  
14.\textit{d}4 and now:  
A2211) 14...\textit{e}4= 15.\textit{xe}4 dxe4  
16.\textit{ad}1 \textit{c}7 16..\textit{xd}4! 17.\textit{xd}4 \textit{c}7= – Black should keep the queens  
on the board. 17.\textit{c}3 \textit{ac}8 18.\textit{xc}6  
\textit{xc}6 (½–½ Hracek-Riazantsev, France  
2008) 18...\textit{b}6+! 19.\textit{d}4 \textit{xc}6=;  
with the queens on, Black can get more  
from the bishop and the e4 pawn. On  
the contrary, if the queens are ex-  
changed, the white king can nest nicely  
on e3 and maintain a slight but lasting  
advantage. 19.\textit{xc}6 \textit{xc}6 20.c3±  
20.\textit{d}7 \textit{c}8 21.\textit{d}2 e3 22.\textit{f}3 \textit{c}4  
23.\textit{e}2 \textit{xf}4=;  
A2212) Black doesn’t have to rush  
with the knight jump: the move  
14...\textit{b}6! is very effective when the  
dark-squared bishops are off and the  
queen is not under the threat from  
\textit{e}3: 15.\textit{ad}1 \textit{ac}8 16.\textit{e}3 \textit{xd}4  
17.\textit{xd}4 \textit{d}7! Excellent timing to  
switch into the endgame. 18.\textit{xb}6  
\textit{xb}6  

We have already examined this end-  
game, stating that every detail is impor-  
tant for the evaluation. Here White has  
wasted some moves with his queen,  
and the rook is not ideally placed on d1;
it is better to be on a1 to support a possible a3-a4. In addition, White cannot achieve the perfect set-up with the knight on d4.

19. \textit{d}d3 Preparing the transfer \textit{c}c3-e2-d4, however with 19...\textit{c}c4! 20.\textit{x}xc4 \textit{xc}c4↑ Black gains the initiative and threatens...d5-d4. 21.\textit{f}f2 \textit{fc}8

22.\textit{dd}2 \textit{f}f8 Calmly introducing the king into play. 23.g3 \textit{e}7↑;

A222) 12...\textit{xc}c5

Recapturing with the knight is the basic idea of the set-up with 10...\textit{e}7. The dynamic potential of the black pieces is wonderful, particularly after \textit{wc}7, \textit{ac}8, ...f7-f6 or ...\textit{e}e4.

13.\textit{ad}1 13.\textit{d}d3? d4--+ 13...\textit{wc}7

14.\textit{we}1 White wants to transfer the queen to the kingside 14...\textit{ac}8

15.\textit{wg}3 \textit{fd}8 And now Black is ready to jump to e4:

A2221) 16.f5 \textit{xf}5 Black can still achieve good play by continuing with the initial plan, for example: 16...\textit{e}4!? 17.e4 dx4 18.f6 \textit{xf}6 19.\textit{xf}6 \textit{wg}3 20.hxg3 \textit{ex}f3 21.gxf3 (if 21.\textit{x}xf3 \textit{xf}6 22.\textit{xc}6 \textit{xc}6 23.\textit{xd}8+ \textit{xd}8 24.\textit{xf}6 \textit{e}4, Black is slightly better) 21...\textit{xf}6 and it is unclear whether the pair of bishops provides sufficient compensation for the pawn. 17.\textit{xd}5

17...\textit{xd}5! 18.\textit{xd}5 \textit{e}4 19.\textit{f}f4 \textit{db}4

20.axb4 \textit{xd}5 21.\textit{xf}5 \textit{xc}2

21...\textit{xb}4!? 22.c3 (22.\textit{d}d3 \textit{g}6=) 22...\textit{c}5 23.\textit{xc}5 \textit{xc}5+ 24.\textit{d}d4 b4

25.\textit{hd}1 \textit{xc}3 26.bxc3 \textit{g}6 27.\textit{d}7 \textit{xf}8

28.\textit{xa}6 \textit{xc}3 29.\textit{e}2 \textit{c}4 30.\textit{xc}4 \textit{xc}4 31.\textit{g}3 \textit{e}4 32.\textit{d}d1 \textit{g}3+ 33.hxg3 \textit{e}8↑ 22.\textit{d}d4 \textit{c}7 23.e6 \textit{f}6 24.\textit{f}3↑ Corrales Jimenez-Granda Zuniga, Sao Paulo 2009;

A2222) 16.\textit{d}d4 \textit{xd}4 17.\textit{xd}4 \textit{e}4

18.\textit{xe}4 \textit{dx}e4 19.\textit{c}3 \textit{c}5 20.\textit{we}3 \textit{xd}4 21.\textit{xd}4 \textit{xd}4 22.\textit{xd}4 \textit{md}8

23.\textit{e}3 \textit{h}6= We have already established that this set-up is perfectly fine for Black, as long as he enters it with the queens on the board;

A2223) 16.\textit{f}f2↑? would admit the fallacy of the \textit{g}3 idea, but there are some new possibilities connected with the control of the a7-g1 diagonal: 16...\textit{d}7!? 16...\textit{e}4 17.\textit{xe}4 \textit{dx}e4 18.\textit{b}6 \textit{wb}8 19.\textit{d}d2 (19.\textit{xd}8 \textit{xf}3↑) 19...\textit{d}4 20.\textit{xd}8 \textit{c}5 21.\textit{h}1 \textit{f}5 22.\textit{e}1 \textit{xd}8 23.\textit{b}4 \textit{a}7 24.\textit{c}4 \textit{e}3 25.\textit{c}5 \textit{c}7∞.

A23) 12.\textit{d}d3 White can hardly even think about pushing f4-f5 without the bishop on d3. Besides, White can conveniently regroup with \textit{f}2 or \textit{xc}5 and the typical \textit{c}3-e2-d4. Of course, it all depends on how the other side responds:
Black is closing the critical diagonal and increases control over the e4-square, everything in line with the plan of transferring the passive knight to the centre. But White has a wide selection of counter-ideas: 13.exf6 White is not obliged to take on f6, particularly since he can prevent Black’s main idea of transferring the knight to e4: 13...f2!? 13...cxd4 (or 13...c4, which takes us into the game Bologan-Drozdovskij, Ohrid 2009, covered under the move order with 7...a6 on page 239) 14...cxd4 cxd4 15...c8 16.b4 with better prospects for White: 16...b8 17...e2 c6 18...b6± (Bologan) 13...xf6 The pressure against d4 forces White to move the bishop to a less active diagonal: 14...e2 and now:

A2311) 14...c7?! 15.dxc5 ead8 16..f2 16.b4?! d4! 17...xd4? cxd4 18...xd4 cxc5—+. 16...e7 17...g5 17.b4 xf4 18.wxf4 xf4 17...xg5 18.fgx5 d4 19...e4 cce5 20...d6 20...xd4! c6 21...d3 cxd4 22.cxd3...f6 23.gxf6! xxd4 24...xd4 and Black will have to fight hard to earn a draw. 20...xc5 21...xb7 e4 22.wel wb7 23...d3 xd3 ½-½ Bologan-Andreikin, Olginka 2011;

15.dxc5 e=.

On move 12 Black also has a new possibility:

A2312) It is much simpler to play 14...cxd4?!N 15...xd4 cxd4 16...xd4 e5 17.fxe5 e5

and the weaker pawn structure is offset by the threat of...c4;
A principled reaction against the active $\&d3$, as already seen in the variation 7...$\&e7$ 8.$\&d2$ 0-0 9.$\&d3$ f6! Black takes advantage of the loose control over the d4-square to activate his forces, practically forcing the next 13.exf6 $\&xf6$, which transposes back into the main game;

A233) Or 12...$\&e8$ 13.f5!?→

A24) 12.$\&ad1$ $\&c8$ 13.$\&xc5$ $\&xc5$ 14.$\&xc5$ $\&xc5$ 15.$\&d4$ $\&xd4$ 15...$\&b6$!?N 16.$\&e3$ $\&xd4$ 17.$\&xd4$ (17.$\&xd4$ $\&d7$=) 17...$\&d7$ 18.$\&xb6$ $\&xb6$=.

In this type of position, without the blockading knight on d4 and bishop on d3, White can't count on an advantage, particularly since Black is intending $\&c4$. For example, 19.$\&d3$ $\&c4$ 20.$\&xc4$ $\&xc4$ 21.$\&d2$ $\&fc8$. 16.$\&xd4$ f6 On 16...$\&c6$ White can achieve the ideal set-up with 17.$\&d3$! $\&d7$ 18.$\&e2$±. 17.$\&d3$ $\&c7$ 18.$\&de1$ $\&d7$

19.exf6 $\&xf6$ 20.g3 $\&c8$ 21.f5 $\&c6$ 22.fxe6 $\&xe6$ 23.$\&xe6$ $\&xf1$+ 24.$\&xf1$ $\text{½-½}$ Quesada Perez-Cordova, Havana 2010.

A3) 11...f6?! 12.exf6 $\&xf6$ 13.$\&xc5$ $\&xc5$ 13...$\&xc5$? 14.$\&xd5$!±. 14.$\&d4$

with central domination.

B) 11.$\&h1$ Sergey Karjakin apparently agrees with Movsesian that a2-a3 is not yet obligatory. 11...$\&c7$

Now ...b5-b4 is a genuine threat. The trade of the bishops is still possible and therefore Black chooses this move order. He is not happy with ...$\&b6$ because White has the reasonable continuation $\&d1$. The advantage of placing the queen on c7 is that it can actively work on the c-file as well as coordinate with ...f7-f6 and a strike against the white anchor on e5.
11...b4 might be too hasty, because after 12.\( \text{a4} \) cxd4 13.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 14.\( \text{xd4} \) a5?! (14...\( \text{b7} \) 15.f5?! exf5 16.\( \text{xf5} \) \( \text{xc6} \) 17.b3 \( \text{xa4} \) 18.\( \text{bxa4} \) \( \text{xc5} \) 19.\( \text{af1} \), Nijboer-M. Gurevich, Amsterdam 2000) 15.\( \text{ac1} \) \( \text{a6} \) Black achieves his basic strategical aim, but the activity and excellent coordination of the white pieces, combined with the idea of pushing f4-f5, grants the advantage to White: 16.\( \text{xa6} \) \( \text{xa6} \) 17.c4!

17...bxc3 (17...dxc4 18.\( \text{xc4} \pm \)) 18.\( \text{xc3} \) \( \text{a3} \) 12.\( \text{ad1} \) b4 13.\( \text{a4} \) cxd4 14.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 15.\( \text{xd4} \) (15.\( \text{xd4} \)? \( \text{xc2} \)−+) 15...a5 16.c3 \( \text{a6} = \) 12...\( \text{b7} \) 13.\( \text{ad1} \) \( \text{ac8} ! = \)

Black's pieces are ideally placed. The other rook will remain on f8 and wait for a good moment to push ...f7-f6. This is a logical decision, since White gave up supporting the d4 pawn with \( \text{d1} \) and c3, so we will have four black pawns in the centre battling against three white ones.

It is also an interesting idea to put the rook on the d-file and strengthen the d5 pawn for a future ...f7-f6: 13...\( \text{ad8} \) 14.\( \text{we1} \) b4 15.\( \text{xb4} \) \( \text{xb4} \) 16.\( \text{c1} \) f6 17.\( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 18.\( \text{a4} \) cxd4 19.\( \text{xd4} \) e5 20.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 21.\( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 22.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{d6} \) 23.\( \text{g1} \) \( \text{e4} \) 24.\( \text{g4} \) \( \text{f8} \) 25.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{e8} \) 26.\( \text{b3} \) h5 27.\( \text{h3} \) g5 28.\( \text{d4} \) g4 29.\( \text{g4} \) hgx4 30.\( \text{h4} \) gxf3 31.\( \text{h8} + \text{f7} \) 0-1 Lamoureux-Antic, Budva 2009.

B1) With 14.\( \text{xc5} \) White liberates the d4-square for his pieces, but Black's \( \text{d7} \) and \( \text{b7} \) now also gain in value. White should always be cautious about the tremendous power of the \( \text{b7} \) which can be unleashed if the diagonal ever opens. 14...\( \text{xc5} \) After 14...\( \text{xc5} \)? the position resembles a Sicilian Defence where Black has managed to push ...d6-d5. 15.\( \text{d4} \) 15.\( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{xc5} \) 16.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{e7} ! \) 17.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{e4} \), and 17.\( \text{d3} \) meets with the same reply.

15...\( \text{b4} ! \) Strategically, this exchange usually favours White, as he is trading the pawn which is further away from the centre. Now that White has spent a move to trade on c5, and having in mind the fact that the king went one step away from the centre, Black can
transpose into the variations with 15...\textit{b}b6! and play this pleasant endgame. We have already explored this endgame in detail with the game Minic–Kovacevic in the lines starting with 7...a6. It is useful to make a distinction when the queen is more effective on c7 and when it should take a perch on b6. 16.\textit{f}f3 \textit{c}xd4 17.\textit{x}xd4 \textit{x}xd4 18.\textit{e}xd4 \textit{e}xd4 19.\textit{h}xd4 \textit{b}6=.

16.axb4 \textit{b}xb4 17.\textit{c}xc6 \textit{c}xc6 18.\textit{g}d4 \textit{c}5 19.\textit{e}e3, Danin–Vasilevich, Zvenigorod 2008

B2) 14.\textit{e}e1

White’s pieces are also fully developed and now he wants to find a better place for the queen. The plan is logical but not very dangerous. The black pieces, although appearing slightly passive, actually contain wonderful potential, especially after the pending ...f7–f6. It is not a rare phenomenon that White suddenly finds himself in trouble, without realising where he went wrong. A couple of small concessions can mount up into something greater. White did waste some time on moves such as \textit{h}1, \textit{e}1 and the unattractive placement of the bishop on e2.

We should point out once again that in the move order when Black first plays a quick ...a7–a6/...b7–b5, White has the valuable option of developing the bishop to d3.

14...\textit{c}xd4 15.\textit{c}xd4 \textit{x}xd4 16.\textit{c}xd4 \textit{c}c5!= In case of 16...\textit{c}c5 17.\textit{g}4 g6 (17...\textit{e}e4?! 18.f5–+) 18.\textit{f}3 White has more space and therefore a slight advantage; or 16...f6 17.exf6 \textit{xf}6 (17...\textit{xf}6) 18.\textit{g}4.

B21) 17.\textit{h}4 White was aiming to reach this position, where the queen is active, the d4-square still blocked and the king out of harm’s way on h1. But let’s see what can happen next.

17...\textit{x}xd4 18.\textit{x}d4 We know that the rook is not the best blockader, but is this a reason for White to feel bad?

18...f6! 19.\textit{d}3 19.\textit{g}4. 19...h6 20.exf6 \textit{xf}6!

This rook activation is possible because the dark-squared bishops are off. White’s pieces look active and nicely placed, but this is a mirage. The black
pieces are perfectly coordinated and the sleeping rooks will now develop tremendous activity. The f4 pawn is weak, rather than the one on e6. Remember the picture after \[ \text{h4?} \] What went wrong? Well, the white rooks are tragically misplaced. Should the rook be on e1 and the knight on d4, we would observe the 'ordinary' story – Black would struggle for a draw. 21.\text{f5 } \text{\textit{E}cf8} 22.\text{\textit{E}g1} \text{\textit{c}c5} 23.\text{\textit{f}xe6} \text{\textit{xe6}} 24.\text{\textit{E}g4} \text{\textit{f}f4} 25.\text{\textit{E}g3} \text{\textit{e}7}

The material is equal but White is completely lost. The threat of \[ \ldots \text{d5-d4} \] is looming large: 26.\text{\textit{E}xf4} White is giving away the exchange to fight the imminent threats. If 26.\text{\textit{E}e1} \text{\textit{d}xd3} ++; or 26.\text{\textit{h}3} \text{d4} ++. 26...\text{\textit{E}xf4} ++ Karjakin-Carlsen, Wijk aan Zee 2010;

B22) 17.\text{\textit{f}f2} \text{\textit{xd}4} If 17...f6 18.\text{\textit{e}xf6} \text{\textit{xf6}} White is experiencing problems with the f4 pawn, similar to what happens in the game below, for example 19.\text{\textit{g}4} \text{\textit{E}cf8}\text{\textit{f}f}. 18.\text{\textit{xd4}} \text{\textit{b}6}=

B23) 17.\text{\textit{xc}5}?! is certainly a way to simplify matters, but the black pieces develop activity: 17...\text{\textit{xc}5} 17...\text{\textit{xc}5} 18.\text{\textit{d}d3} f6 (18...g6 19.\text{\textit{e}e2} \text{\textit{b}6} 20.\text{\textit{h}4} \text{\textit{a}4} 21.f5 \text{\textit{xb}2} 22.\text{\textit{h}6} \text{\textit{exf}5} 23.\text{\textit{f}3} \text{\textit{xd}1} 24.\text{\textit{h}3}) 19.\text{\textit{xf}6} \text{\textit{xf}6} 20.\text{\textit{e}e2} g6 21.\text{c}3. 18.\text{\textit{g}4} \text{\textit{e}4} Without the bishop on d4 this move is even more effective. If 18...f5 19.\text{\textit{exf}6} \text{\textit{xf}6}. 19.\text{\textit{xe}4} \text{\textit{xe}4} 20.\text{c}3 \text{\textit{d}d8} 21.\text{\textit{e}e3} \text{\textit{c}4} 22.\text{\textit{g}1} \text{\textit{d}5} 23.\text{\textit{xd}5} \text{\textit{xd}5} 24.\text{\textit{f}2} \text{\textit{a}2} 25.\text{h}4 \text{\textit{b}1} + 26.\text{\textit{h}2} \text{g6} 27.\text{h}5.

C) 11.\text{\textit{d}1} White connects the pawns, but Black is on time to trade the bad bishop and reach full equality: 11...b4

Since White has refrained from a2-a3, it is only logical to continue with the plan and exchange the bishop on a6:

C1) 12.\text{c}3 White connects the pawns but Black is in time to trade the bad Bishop and reach full equality: 12...\text{a}5 13.\text{\textit{f}f2} 13.\text{\textit{f}f2} \text{\textit{a}6} 14.\text{\textit{xa}6} \text{\textit{xa}6}= A.Kovacevic-B.Kovacevic, Borovo 2005. 13...\text{\textit{xc}3} 13...\text{f}5?! 14.\text{\textit{c}4}!++ Gromarioan-Rychagov, Moscow 2010; 13...\text{\textit{a}6} 14.\text{\textit{xa}6} \text{\textit{xa}6}= Milliet-Ding Liren, Villandry 2009. 14.\text{\textit{bc}3} \text{\textit{a}4}?! 15.\text{\textit{b}1} \text{\textit{a}5} 16.\text{\textit{b}5} \text{\textit{c}7} 17.\text{f}5 \text{\textit{a}6} 18.\text{\textit{b}2} a3 19.\text{\textit{c}2} \text{\textit{a}5} 20.\text{\textit{xa}6} \text{\textit{xa}6} 21.\text{\textit{f}4} \text{f}6= Predojevic-Kotsur, Moscow 2011;

C2) 12.\text{c}4 This kick is more effective when the black queen sits on b6. 12...\text{\textit{xc}4} 13.\text{d}5 \text{\textit{exd}5} 14.\text{\textit{xd}5} \text{\textit{b}7} 15.\text{\textit{xc}4} \text{\textit{b}6} 16.\text{\textit{c}2} \text{\textit{d}4} with an excellent position for Black;

C3) 12.\text{\textit{f}2} \text{\textit{b}6} 12...\text{a}5?
A serious alternative to the game move and our recommended continuation. The idea is a quick ...\textit{a}6. 13.d3 (13.dxc5 \textit{xc}5 (13...\textit{xc}5) 14..\textit{xc}5 \textit{xc}5 15.d3 \textit{a}6= and Black had no problems whatsoever in Kamsky-Morozevich, Amsterdam 1996) 13...c4! 14.tbd3 \textit{a}6 15.c3 a4 16.a3 bxa3 17.bxa3 \textit{b}8 18..\textit{d}1 \textit{b}3! (Yakovenko-Ni Hua, Ergun 2006)

19...\textit{e}7?
Here Black missed a beautiful tactical shot: 19...\textit{d}5!N 20..\textit{d}5 (20..\textit{xd}5 \textit{xf}3+ 21..\textit{xf}3 \textit{xd}4+) 20...\textit{xe}5 21..\textit{xe}5 \textit{d}6 22..\textit{xf}5 (22..\textit{xb}4 \textit{xb}4 23..\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 24..\textit{c}5 \textit{xc}5 25..\textit{xc}5 \textit{xe}2 26..\textit{fe}1 \textit{fc}8 27..\textit{xb}4+) 22...\textit{xd}5 23..\textit{xe}5 (23..\textit{xa}6 \textit{f}3+ 24..\textit{xf}3 \textit{xa}6 with a superior pawn structure for Black) 23...\textit{d}6 with excellent play for Black. 20.a3 \textit{fc}8 21..\textit{a}4± Arakhamia-Grant-E. Pahtz, Dagomys 2010.

**Important:** In this line White intends to castle kingside, but Black has an interesting possibility to 'connect' two set-ups:

\ a) the system with 7..\textit{e}7; and
\ b) the system with an early 7..\textit{a}6 by transposition, by applying 9..\textit{a}6!? here. In the critical position after 10.0-0 \textit{b}5 11.a3 \textit{b}6 12..\textit{d}1 Black has the new idea 12..\textit{f}5!?

10. 0-0
In order to regroup the pieces and to stabilise the centre with c2-c3, White can also try the following continuation: 10..\textit{d}1 a5! Beside gaining space on the queenside, this is the most principled, logical and active continuation, exchanging light-squared bishops! There is another try, but it is probably only enough for equality: 10..\textit{xd}4 11..\textit{xd}4 \textit{xd}4 12..\textit{xd}4 \textit{b}8 13.c3 \textit{c}6 14..\textit{e}3 \textit{xd}4
15. cxd4  \( \varepsilon_d7 \) 16. 0-0  \( b5= \) 17. f5?!  \( f6 \)
18. \( \varepsilon_h1 \)  \( \varepsilon_b6 \) 19. \( \varepsilon_ad1 \) (19. fxe6  \( \varepsilon_xe6 \)
20. \( \varepsilon_f5 \)  \( \varepsilon_xf5 \) 21. \( \varepsilon_xf5= \)) 19... \( \varepsilon_ad8 \)
20. exf6  \( \varepsilon_xf6 \) 21. \( \varepsilon_f3 \)  \( \varepsilon_d6< \)
Paikidze-Gleizerov, Biel 2011.

11. cxd4  \( \varepsilon_d7 \) 16. 0-0  \( b5= \) 17. f5?!  \( f6 \)

Here Black has three alternatives:

- 10...f5 (see p.283)
- 10... \( \varepsilon_b7 \) (see p.286)
- the main move 10...f6 (see p.287)

\( \bullet \) 10...f5!?
The Modern French

should counter this in a different fashion: 11...cxd4 11...a5?! 12.c3 a6 13...xa6 bxa6 14.c4! cxd4 15...xd4 16...xd5±. 12...xd4 12...d4 13...xd4 14.e3 Nothing really changes after 14...f2 a5 15...d1 a6 Jerez Perez-Anton Guijarro, Barbera del Valles 2009, Black trades the bad bishop and has an excellent position. 14...e4 15...d7 (Bobras-Nae, Germany Bundesliga 2010/11) 15...b7 is also good: 16...d1 (16.c4?! dxc4 17...d1 b5 18...xa7...c7 19...d4...xa2+) 16...e8! 17.c4...xc4 18...xc4...g6. 16.c4 dxc4 17...xc4...h8 18...d1...e8 19...e2...d8 20.a3...g6.

B) 11...d1!?:

B1) 11...a6 Now it is not a good moment to transfer the knight to e4 because White gets a small advantage thanks to his better development. For example: 12.a3...c7! 12...cxd4 13...xd4...xd4 14...xd4...b7 (14...c5?! 15.b4...e4 16...xe4 dxe4 17...e3±) 15.b4;

B2) 11...cxd4?! 12...xd4...xd4 13...xd4...c5 14.b4...e4 15...xe4 fxe4 15...dxe4 16.a4±. 16.c4...a6 17...xd5...xe2 18...xe2 exd5 19...b5± – also the deployment of the bishop on b7 might be premature. In similar structures the bishop is often better standing on d7;

B3) 11...b7 12.a3 a6 13...d5...c5 14.b4...e4 15...xe4 fxe4 15...dxe4 16...d7±. 16...d4...xd4 17...xd4 b5 18.a4±;

C) 11...d1 a6 12.a3...c7! It is better to keep the bishop on c8 for now. The e4-square is already firmly in Black’s hands. When he pushes ...f7-f5, the bishop does more from the d7-square, as it guards the rear e6 pawn and keeps an eye on the b5-square. 13...d5...c5 14.b4...e4 15...xe4 fxe4 16...d4...xd4 17...xd4 b5=;

D) 11.a3 This doesn’t hinder Black’s plans. 11...cxd4 12.a3...d4 13...xd4...c5 14.b4...e4 15...xe4 dxe4 16...d1...c7 17.a4 a5 18.c3...d8 19...e3...b8 20...db1...d7= As already established, the best square for the bishop;

E) 11...h1! N

White can go with the standard idea of preparing the g2-g4 advance. It does appear to be a little risky because of the ongoing tension in the centre. But White exerts sufficient control of the key d4-square:

E1) 11...a6 12...g1:

E11) 12...b5 It is very dangerous for Black to delay the exchange of the central pawns. This was probably the last moment to take on d4. 13.g4...xg4
14...\texttt{exg}4 \texttt{hxh}8 15.\texttt{ag}1 \texttt{g}6 15...\texttt{ff}7 16.\texttt{d}3! \texttt{cxd}4 17.\texttt{g}2! \texttt{ff}8 18.\texttt{exd}4\pm. 16.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{gg}8 16...\texttt{cxd}4? 17.\texttt{xg}6! \texttt{hxg}6 18.\texttt{g}2!+--. 17.\texttt{g}2 \texttt{we}8 18.\texttt{h}3 \texttt{ff}8 Black cannot even play in the centre. The terrible pressure on the files and diagonals is already costing him a pawn. 19.\texttt{dxc}5++ It has been proven that the white attack is quick and real. Furthermore, White is profiting from the blockading \ldots f7-f5, in the sense that he opens the g-file before Black achieves something with the control of the e4-square. The positions are relatively unexplored and rich in tactical possibilities. Even the far-reaching computer analysis cannot give a definite conclusion, but we can state that the attack on the g-file is the most attractive plan for White;

E12) 12...\texttt{cxd}4 13.\texttt{d}xd4 \texttt{cxd}4 14.\texttt{d}xd4 \texttt{c}5 15.g4 \texttt{fxg}4 16.\texttt{exg}4

The open file is an important achievement for the attacking side. It is not easy for Black to organise a defence, as the Steinitz e5 pawn is limiting his space and manoeuvring capabilities, and the beautiful \texttt{d}d4 is preventing any counterplay on the central diagonal. 16...\texttt{b}7 17.\texttt{ag}1 \texttt{g}6 18.\texttt{we}3 18.\texttt{d}3!? \texttt{cxd}3 19.\texttt{xd}3 (19.\texttt{cxd}3 \texttt{ff}7 20.\texttt{g}2 \texttt{gg}7 and Black has solved all of his problems) 19...\texttt{ff}5 20.\texttt{d}1 (20.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{ff}8 (20...\texttt{h}8? 21.\texttt{g}3+- \texttt{ff}7 22.f5+--; or 21...\texttt{ff}8 22.f5+- \texttt{gxf}5 23.\texttt{x}f5 \texttt{x}f5 24.\texttt{x}f5) 21.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{xf}4 22.\texttt{x}g6+ \texttt{hh}8 23.\texttt{xe}6 \texttt{exd}4 24.\texttt{xd}4+ \texttt{c}5 25.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{ff}7 26.\texttt{f}6 d4+ 27.\texttt{g}2 \texttt{xc}2=) 20...\texttt{ff}8 21.\texttt{d}e3 \texttt{xf}4 22.\texttt{x}g6+ \texttt{hh}8= 23.\texttt{f}6 \texttt{xf}6 24.exf6 \texttt{exd}4 25.\texttt{xd}4 \texttt{c}5 26.\texttt{xc}5 d4+ 27.\texttt{d}5 exd5 28.\texttt{g}7 dxe3 29.\texttt{xb}7= 18...\texttt{c}8 18...\texttt{ff}7! 19.\texttt{h}3 \texttt{ff}8! is probably the only correct defensive set-up. The 7th rank is cleared and both bishop and rook can move to \texttt{g}7 in case of need: 20.\texttt{h}4 \texttt{gg}7 21.\texttt{b}4 \texttt{d}7 22.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{xc}5 23.\texttt{g}4 \texttt{e}8 24.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{cxd}4 25.\texttt{xd}4 \texttt{c}8 and Black is holding. 19.\texttt{h}3 White can lead a successful assault thanks to the perfect blockade on the central diagonals. 19...\texttt{gg}7 19...\texttt{ff}8? 20.\texttt{h}6+-. 20.\texttt{d}1! Switching the knight to e3 to threaten the devastating \texttt{f}4-f5. 20...\texttt{e}4 21.c3 \texttt{we}8 22.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{b}5 23.\texttt{xe}4 \texttt{dxe}4 24.\texttt{e}3\rightarrow \texttt{b}4 25.\texttt{h}5 \texttt{bxc}3 26.\texttt{xc}3 \texttt{c}7 26...\texttt{f}5 27.\texttt{xf}5+ \texttt{exf}5 28.e6+ \texttt{ff}6 29.\texttt{b}1+--; 26...\texttt{ff}7? 27.f5+-. 27.\texttt{h}1 g3!±

With multiple threats like \texttt{f}4-f5 or \texttt{h}3. The analysis confirms the huge attacking potential — a strong argument against the blockade with \ldots f7-f5. If 27.f5 \texttt{xf}5 28.\texttt{xf}5+ \texttt{exf}5 29.\texttt{xf}5 e3+\texttt{f}.
E2) If 11...cxd4 12.\( \text{exd4} \) \( \text{cxd4} \)
13.\( \text{exd4} \) \( \text{cxd4} \) White can still return to the play on the queenside: 14.\( \text{b4}\) \( \text{e4} \)
15.\( \text{exf5} \) \( \text{dxe4} \) 15...\( \text{fxe4} \) 16.\( \text{a4}\)
E3) 11...\( \text{b7} \) 12.\( \text{g1} \)

12...\( \text{c8} \) A logical but probably imprecise move. Black should swiftly react in the centre before White gets a chance to build play on the g-file: 12...cxd4!
13.\( \text{exd4} \) \( \text{c5} \) 14.\( \text{g4} \) \( \text{fxg4} \) 15.\( \text{exg4} \) \( \text{cxd4} \) 16.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{e4} \) 17.\( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{dxe4} \)
18.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{c8} \) 19.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{c5} \) 20.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{e7} \) - the queen cannot be a good blocker of the e4 pawn: 13.\( \text{g4} \) 13.\( \text{d1} \) cxd4 14.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{d4} \) 15.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{c5} \) and Black is on time with his counterplay, Kislik-Rajlich, Budapest 2010.
13.\( \text{fxg4} \) 14.\( \text{cxd4} \) \( \text{cxd4} \) 15.\( \text{exd4} \) \( \text{d6} \) 16.\( \text{g1} \) with a strong attack, for example 16...\( \text{g6} \) 16...\( \text{e7} \) 17.\( \text{b5} \) ! \( \text{d7} \) 18.\( \text{f3} \) with the idea \( \text{g2} \) !. 17.\( \text{b5} \) !? with the idea \( \text{e6} \) !.
E31) 17...\( \text{a6} \) 17...\( \text{e8} \) 18.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{d4} \) 19.\( \text{fxd4} \) \( \text{f7} \) 20.\( \text{g2}\) -; 17...\( \text{e4} \)
18.\( \text{e1} \) \( \text{d7} \) 19.\( \text{xg6} \) + \( \text{hxg6} \) 20.\( \text{e6} \) + \( \text{h7} \) (20...\( \text{f7} \) ?
21.\( \text{h5} \) + ) 21.\( \text{g1} \) \( \text{g8} \) 22.\( \text{f5}\) -
18.\( \text{xg6} \) + \( \text{hxg6} \) 19.\( \text{xg6} \) + \( \text{f7} \)
19...\( \text{f7} \) ? 20.\( \text{h5} \) and White wins.
20.\( \text{xe6} \)!

E32) 20...\( \text{d4} \) 20...\( \text{xe6} \) 21.\( \text{d3} \) ! -
20...\( \text{xc5} \) ! 21.\( \text{g7} \) + \( \text{h8} \) 22.\( \text{xd8} \) \( \text{xd8} \) + 23.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{dxe3} \)
24.\( \text{xe3} \) \( \text{g2} \) + 25.\( \text{xe2} \) \( \text{xe6} \) ≥
25...\( \text{axb5} \) 26.\( \text{h3} \) + \( \text{g7} \) 27.\( \text{xc8} \) ±.

• Here, we have to pay attention to the new plan used by grandmaster Volkov in the game which he played in very impressive style. 10...\( \text{b7} \) 11.\( \text{d1} \) a5!? Even though it costs Black a tempo, exchanging light squared bishops remains the main strategical idea! 12.\( \text{f2} \) \( \text{a6} \) 13.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{b4} \) 14.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{xd3} \) 15.\( \text{xd3} \) \( \text{c8} \) 16.\( \text{g4} \) ! \( \text{xd3} \)
17.\( \text{xd3} \) \( \text{f5} \) 18.\( \text{gxf5} \) \( \text{c4} \) 19.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{xf5} \) 20.\( \text{f2} \) \( \text{f8} \) 21.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{g6} \)
22.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{h4} \) 23.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{f7} \) 24.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{b5} \) 25.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{g6} \) 26.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{f8} \) 27.\( \text{ab1} \) \( \text{b8} \)
28.\( \text{h1} \) \( \text{f5} \) and Black has a strong initiative, Georgiadis-Volkov, Vrachati 2011.
10. ... f7-f6
11. e5xf6

White can apply Nimzowitsch's strategy and secure the d4-square for his own pieces with 11.dxc5? because at this moment Black cannot recapture with the b-pawn: 11...bxc5 is the best. On 11...bxc5 White has the victorious 12.\textit{xd5}+–; 11...\textit{xc5} 12.\textit{xd5}± (12.\textit{xc5} \textit{xc5} (12...bxc5 13.\textit{xd5}!) 13.\textit{b5} \textit{b7} 14.\textit{xc6} \textit{xc6} 15.\textit{d4}± Solodovnichenko-Kosic, Sombor 2010; 11...fxe5 12.\textit{xd5}±. 12.exf6 12.\textit{d4} \textit{d7} 13.exf6 \textit{xf6} 14.\textit{ae1} (with 14.\textit{ad1}?!± White should first fortify the d4-square and the other rook can move to e1 when the time comes) 14...\textit{xd4} 15.\textit{xd4} \textit{xd4}+ 16.\textit{xd4} \textit{xf6} 17.\textit{xf6} (17.\textit{d1} \textit{ac8} 18.g3 \textit{h8} 19.\textit{fe1} \textit{f5} ½-½ Laurent-Feygin, Belgium 2010/11) 17...\textit{xf6} (17...\textit{xf6} 18.f5?!±) 18.g4 with a slightly better position for White, Filev-Antic, Plovdiv 2011. 12...\textit{xf6} 12...\textit{xf6} 13.\textit{ad1}±. 13.\textit{b5} White is also happy after 13.\textit{d4}?! \textit{xd4} 14.\textit{xd4} \textit{xb7} 15.\textit{ad1} \textit{d4}+ (15...\textit{c8} 16.g4 \textit{h8} 17.\textit{e3} \textit{xd4} 18.\textit{xd4} \textit{f6} 19.\textit{e1}± Brkic-Sas. Martinovic, Zagreb 2011) 16.\textit{xd4} \textit{xf6} 17.\textit{xf6} \textit{xf6} 18.g3 a5 19.\textit{fe1}±

Many French Defence devotees do not fancy the positions where White can employ the Nimzowitsch idea, and tend to prefer 10...f5 instead of 10...f6.

11. ... \textit{d7xf6}∞

One of the most important positions in the entire Steinitz Variation, on which depends the assessment of placing the bishop on e2. White's key pawn on e5 has been traded and he has forfeited some of the spatial advantage that he boasted of earlier. The remaining pawns on d4 and f4 are not that dangerous anymore, moreover they have become vulnerable, because the black pieces enjoy greater freedom of movement. Some weak squares have also been revealed, in particular e4.
Hence White should keep both of his bishops on the board. For example, the idea of trading the light-squared bishop for the knight on c6 is futile, which can be seen in many practical games. There would appear a whole complex of freshly weakened light squares and White gets nothing by jumping to e5 because the knight can be neutralised with ...\textit{\texttt{d7}}.

A similar story goes for the \textit{\texttt{e3}}. Although it is apparently locked behind its own pawns, White should guard this piece, as it provides much-needed support for the crucial d4-square. For this reason, White commonly continues with \textit{\texttt{h1}} and only then introduces the rook from a1 to d1 or e1.

The structure in the centre resembles the Tarrasch Variation when White plays f2-f4. But in that line the c-pawns are exchanged, while here Black has a very important option of trading the d4 pawn. White cannot even attempt to use Nimzowitsch’s plan, because Black will recapture with the b-pawn and seize control over d4.

Moving the knight from c3, with the idea of strengthening the centre with c2-c3, is very problematic because the black knight would land on e4 with great effect. Besides, the black pawns have better mobility, c5-c4-a7-a6-b6-b5 looks healthier than g2-g4-g5, which weakens the f4 pawn. Of course, White has also earned some pluses. His development is completed, and the exchange of the e5 pawn clears the square for the knight and opens the e-file, with the possibility to press the backward e6 pawn. The position is finely balanced. This variation is relatively new and there are still many ideas and plans waiting to be uncovered.

\textbf{12. \textit{\texttt{g1-h1}}}

Clears the g1-square for the bishop.

We have already explained why the exchange with 12.\textit{\texttt{b5}} is not the best solution in the position. 12...\textit{\texttt{b7}} Black is not afraid of the backward e6 pawn and goes with an active move. The ...\textit{\texttt{e4}} jump gains in power: 13.\textit{\texttt{xc6}} We have also highlighted why White should be very careful about the d4-square: 13.\textit{\texttt{g5}}? cxd4! ; 13.\textit{\texttt{ae1}} 13...\textit{\texttt{xc6}}

\begin{itemize}
  \item A) 14.\textit{\texttt{ae1}} \textit{\texttt{d6}} 14...b5 15.dxc5 b4; 14...\textit{\texttt{g4}} 15.h3 \textit{\texttt{xe3}} 16.\textit{\texttt{xe3 f6}} (16...\textit{\texttt{d7}}? 17.\textit{\texttt{xd5±}}) 17.f5 \textit{\texttt{d6}} 18.fxe6 \textit{\texttt{e7}} 19.dxc5 bxc5 20.\textit{\texttt{d3 c4}} 21.\textit{\texttt{d2 c5+}} 22.\textit{\texttt{h1 d8}} 23.\textit{\texttt{d4}} \textit{\texttt{xf1+}} 24.\textit{\texttt{xf1 xd4}} 25.\textit{\texttt{xd4 xe6}} 26.b3 cxb3 27.axb3±. 15.\textit{\texttt{e2}} 15.\textit{\texttt{g5}} \textit{\texttt{d7}}. 15...\textit{\texttt{c7∞}} with mutual chances;
  \item B) 14.\textit{\texttt{e5}} \textit{\texttt{c7}} 14...\textit{\texttt{b7}}
\end{itemize}
Keeping the bishop is also a good idea, particularly now that its white counterpart is gone. This is one of the many positions in the French Defence when the traditionally weak bishop is not inferior to the white knight. If Black feels bothered by the $\text{c}e5$, he can always exchange it with $\ldots\text{c}f6$-$d7$. The white knight is his best piece, which exerts great influence from the central outpost. But the drawback is that the knight is covering the file and hinders the attack against Black’s backward pawn on $e6$. That’s why Black shouldn’t rush to expel or trade the $\text{c}e5$. Instead, he can calmly improve the position by playing for example $\ldots\text{a}7$-$a6$, $\ldots\text{c}7$, $\ldots\text{d}d6$ and $\ldots\text{ae}8$. Black can also advance the queenside pawns, while White’s g-pawn push can horribly weaken the f4 pawn. White’s knight is prettier on $e5$, but more effective on $f3$ because the e-file is open and he can always play $\text{g}g5$ to further press on the e6 pawn. 15.$\text{ae}1$ 15.$\text{xc}6$?! $\text{xc}6$ to what has White achieved by trading the minor pieces? Absolutely nothing! Actually, he has even forfeited lots of his flexibility and provided Black with new options. Now the genuine threat is $\ldots\text{g}4$. Besides, the queenside avalanche can also be dangerous because the black knight will get to jump to $e4$. 15.$\text{d}d6$ with an excellent position for Black;

C) 14.$\text{ad}1$ $\text{d}d6$.

We will examine the following alternatives after 12.$\text{h}1$:
- 12...$\text{e}4$ (see p.289)
- 12...$\text{b}7$ (see p.289)
- 12...$\text{d}7$ (see p.292)
- 12...$\text{c}7$ (see p.292)

\begin{itemize}
\item 12...$\text{e}4$ Black should not hurry to simplify the play, particularly as the $e4$-square is under his control. 13.$\text{d}xe4$ In the game Klein-Pötsch, Rhein Main Open 2010, there followed 13.$\text{we}1$?! $\text{f}6$ (13...$\text{d}d6$?) 14.$\text{xd}1$ $\text{cxd}4$ 15.$\text{d}xd4$ $\text{xd}4$ 16.$\text{xd}4$ $\text{xd}4$ 17.$\text{xd}4$ $\text{f}6$ with an excellent position. 13...$\text{d}xe4$ 14.$\text{b}5$ $\text{b}7$ 14...$\text{exf}3$ 15.$\text{xc}6$ $\text{fxg}2$+ 16.$\text{wxg}2$ $\text{b}8$ 17.$\text{g}1$+. 15.$\text{xc}6$ $\text{xc}6$ 16.$\text{e}5$ $\text{b}7$ 17.$\text{ad}1$ $\text{cxd}4$ 18.$\text{xd}4$ with a pleasant position for White.
\item 12...$\text{b}7$
\end{itemize}

Completing the development and grabbing the important diagonal for future $\text{d}e4$ jumps. It is very important to have the $e4$ pawn defended after the exchange of the knights. Besides, the $d5$-square might serve as a strong base for the bishop. Black is not afraid of the backward $e6$ pawn, as long as the white bishops are obstructing the e-file:

A) 13.$\text{ae}1$ White is commonly in a dilemma where to put the rook from a1. Is it better on d1 or e1? From d1 the rook is obviously in the function of supporting the d4-point and possibly plotting the opening of the central files with dxc5 and f4-f5. The rook on e1 serves more attacking purposes, and since the black bishop abandoned the
The Modern French

13...e4 is, of course, a very attractive move in the mind of some players. Why else did we place our bishop on b7? White can’t exchange on e4 because he would drop the d4 pawn and retreating the queen to c1 or d1 spoils the pawn structure. But is the structural concession really worth exchanging the very dynamic black knight? Another French puzzle...

A1) 14...c4! 22.h5 c6 23.g5 a4 24.f2 c3

A2) In the game Caruana-Kazhgaleev, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010, Black unexpectedly continued: 13...h8!? A weird, difficult, unclear (and many other adjectives) move. Fire up all the chess engines that you want, but we probably couldn’t fully grasp Black’s idea. Is it a waiting move? Or is the king stepping away from some later check on e6? Or perhaps it is vacating the g8-square for the knight to transfer to h6 and f5? It is best to ask grandmaster Kazhgaleev himself! All in all, his virtuoso play held the balance against another world-class player—grandmaster Fabiano Caruana. We savour this game as a wonderful contribution and great challenge in this variation. 14.b5 a6 15.xc6 xc6 16.g5 d7 17.a3 c8 18.d1 d6 19.e2 d8 20.d1 c7 21.f2 h6 22.h4 g8 23.f3 b7 ½-½.
B) 13.\(\text{Ad}1\) This was played in the game Zelicic-Sedlak, Zadar 2010. With the rook on d1, White is planning to open the centre (f4-f5 and dxc5) and develop greater piece activity:

B1) 13...\(\text{c4}\)

We have already mentioned that the black queenside pawns are very flexible and this idea of gaining space is very logical. Besides, the b4-square becomes available and the pin would be very unpleasant in conjunction with ...\(\text{Qf6-e4}\). The downside is that the pressure on the d4 pawn has disappeared and White's \(\text{Qe5}\) jump grows in strength:

B11) 14.\(\text{We1?! a6}\) 14...\(\text{b4!}\) 15.\(\text{Wg3}\) \(\text{Qb4}\) 16.\(\text{Qb1?!}\) 16.\(\text{Wh3}\) \(\text{Qxc3}\) 17.\(\text{bxc3}\) \(\text{Wd6}\) 18.\(\text{Qb1}\) 16...\(\text{Qe7}\) 17.\(\text{Wh3}\) \(\text{Qf5}\) 18.\(\text{Qc1?!}\) 18.\(\text{c3?!}\) \(\text{Qe7}\) 19.\(\text{Qbd2}\) \(\text{We8}\) 20.\(\text{Qe5}\) 18...\(\text{Qd4}\) 19.\(\text{Qf5}\) \(\text{Qf6!}--\);

B12) 14.\(\text{a3!}\) It is necessary to prevent the pin and slow down the advance of the enemy pawns. Only then is White ready to jump into e5. 14...\(\text{a6}\) 15.\(\text{Qe5}\) Of course, White isn't even thinking about trading on c6, but wants to force Black to exchange on e5 instead. In that way, White reinstates the pawn on e5 and completely shuts in the French bishop. With the black pawn on c5, this would be an entirely different story. 15...\(\text{Qd6}\) 15...\(\text{Qxe5}\) 16.\(\text{dxe5}\) (16.\(\text{fxe5}\) \(\text{Qe8}\) 17.\(\text{Qg4}±\) ) 16...\(\text{Qe8}\) 17.\(\text{Qg4}\) \(\text{Wd7}\)

18.\(\text{Qxb6+!;}\) 15...\(\text{b5}\) 16.\(\text{Qf2}\) \(\text{b4}\) 17.\(\text{axb4}\) \(\text{Qxb4}\) 18.\(\text{Qf3}±\) 16.\(\text{Qf2}\) \(\text{Qe7}\) 17.\(\text{Qf3}\) \(\text{c7}\) 18.\(\text{Qd1}\) \(±\) White's plan to redeploy the pieces is completely logical. Now that there is no pressure against d4, he has installed the knight on e5, removed the bishops from the e-file and placed the rook on e1. He definitely enjoys the better position.

B2) 13...\(\text{Wcl!}\) ? 14.\(\text{Qb5}\) 14.\(\text{Qg5}\) \(\text{Wc8}\) 15.\(\text{Qf3}\) \(\text{Wc7=}\) 14...\(\text{Wd7}\) 15.\(\text{Qc4}\) \(\text{Qd8}\) 16.\(\text{cxd5}\) \(\text{Qxd5}\) 17.\(\text{dxc5}\) \(\text{Qxc5}\) 18.\(\text{Qxc5}\) \(\text{bxc5}\) 19.\(\text{Qc3}\) \(\text{Wd6∞}\) Thanks to his active pieces and good central control, Black has excellent play:

B3) 13...\(\text{a6!}\) 14.\(\text{f5}\) is preferable for White: 14...\(\text{exf5}\) 15.\(\text{Qd5}\) \(\text{Qxc5}\) 15...\(\text{bxc5}\) 16.\(\text{Qxd5}\) \(\text{Wxd5}\) 17.\(\text{Wxd5}\) \(\text{Qxd5}\) 18.\(\text{Qxc5}\) \(\text{bxc5}\) 17.\(\text{Qxd5}\) ±;

B4) 13...\(\text{Qe4!?}\) and now:

14.\(\text{Qxe4}\) 14.\(\text{We1?!}\) \(\text{Qb4?!}\) 15.\(\text{Qc1}\) \(\text{Wc7∞}\); 14.\(\text{Qc1}\) \(\text{Qxc3}\) 15.\(\text{bxc3}\) \(\text{Wc7}\) and now: 16.\(\text{Qe5}\) \(\text{Wac8}\) 17.\(\text{Qd3}\) \(\text{xd4}\) 18.\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{Qb4}\); 16.\(\text{Qg5}\) \(\text{Qxg5}\) (16...\(\text{Qf6}\) ) 17.\(\text{fxg5}\); or 16.\(\text{Qd2}\) \(\text{h6}\) 17.\(\text{Qe5}\) \(\text{Qxe5}\) 18.\(\text{fxe5}\) \(\text{Qxf1+}\) 19.\(\text{Qxf1}\) \(\text{Wf8}\) 20.\(\text{Qxf8+}\) \(\text{Qxf8}\) 21.\(\text{Qd3}\) \(\text{Wf7}\) 22.\(\text{Qg1}\) \(\text{c4}\) 23.\(\text{Qe2}\) \(\text{Qc6}\); 14.\(\text{Qc1!}\) \(\text{Qxc3}\) 15.\(\text{bxc3}\) \(\text{Wc7∞}\). Black has a good ending after the exchange: 14...\(\text{dxe4}\) 15.\(\text{Qe5}\) 15.\(\text{Qg5}\) \(\text{Qxg5}\) 16.\(\text{fxg5}\) \(\text{xd4}\) 17.\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{Qxd4}\) 18.\(\text{Qxf8+}\) \(\text{Qxf8}\)
19. $\text{Wxd4}$ $\text{Wxd4}$ 20. $\text{Bxd4}$ $\text{Be7}$
21. $\text{Bg1}$=. 15...$\text{a3}$ 16...$\text{a3}$ cx$d4$
17. $\text{Wxd4}$ $\text{Wxd4}$ 18. $\text{Axd4}$ $\text{Ba8}$
19. $\text{Bfd1}$ $\text{Bxd4}$ 20. $\text{Bxd4}$ $\text{Bxf4}$ 21. $\text{Bd7}$
$\text{g6}$ 22. $\text{g4}$ $\text{d5}$ 23. $\text{c4}$ $\text{c6}$ 24. $\text{c7}$
$\text{e8}$ 25. $\text{g3}$ $\text{f5}$ 26. $\text{Bxf6+}$ $\text{xf6}$
27. $\text{g1}$ e3 28. $\text{Bxa7}$ $\text{Bf2}$ 29. $\text{Bgb4}$ $\text{Bxb2}$
30. $\text{Bxa3}$=. 

C) 13. $\text{Bd3}$ was played in the game
T.Kosintseva-Rajlich, Novi Sad 2009.
The bishop goes to the more active
square, takes the e4-square under con­
trol and steps away from the e-file.
However, similar to the 13. $\text{Bb5}$ line,
White cannot achieve much. Black can
still set up the ideal formation $\text{a6}$, $\text{c7}$,
$\text{d6}$ and $\text{Bae8}$. This is an economical
way to support the e6 pawn. Black also
maintains the tension on the d4- and
e4-squares, and the battery is eyeing the
f4 pawn. The backup plan of advancing
the queenside pawns can also be un­
pleasant for White. 13...$\text{a6}$!

C1) 14. $\text{a3}$ Kosintseva mentioned
that... ‘14.a3?! is a loss of time. During
the game, it seemed to me important to
prevent the possibility of a black piece
jumping to b4, for example after $\text{c4}$,
$\text{e2}$ and $\text{b4}$, but now White does not
manage to create pressure on the e6
pawn, which is more important.’ She
nails the point. White’s play should be
directed against the e6 pawn. But we
should also highlight that the pin with
$\text{Bb4}$ would be very unpleasant for
White. We will extend Kosintseva’s
analysis, which starts with 14...$\text{Wc7}$
15. $\text{Bae1}$ $\text{Bae8}$ 16. $\text{Bgl}$ $\text{Bd6}$
and Black achieves the ideal set-up. It is
interesting to observe how White has
played all the natural moves and still
runs into trouble. The apparently logi­
cal $\text{Bd3}$ might be the culprit, as logic is
not the only thing to rely on in chess.
15...$\text{c4}$ 15...$\text{Bae8}$? with slightly the
better position. Black saw that she can
grab the f4 pawn, but the consequences
are unclear. Black should stick to her
guns and maintain the pressure against
the centre. 16. $\text{Bae2}$ $\text{Bb4}$ 17. $\text{Bgl}$ $\text{Bxf4}$
18. $\text{h3}$ $\text{g6}$? 18...$\text{f6}$ 19. $\text{Bh2}$ $\text{Bd6}$
is the correct plan, for example 20. $\text{Bxf4}$
$\text{Bxf4}$ $\text{Bxf4}$ 19. $\text{Bh2}$ $\text{Baf8}$ 20. $\text{Bxc4}$
$\text{xc4}$ 21. $\text{Wxe6+}$ $\text{Bh8}$ 22. $\text{d5}$ $\text{Bxf3}$ 23. $\text{xc7}$
$\text{Bxf1+}$ 24. $\text{Bxf1}$ $\text{Bxf1+}$ 25. $\text{Bh2}$ $\text{Bf2}$
26. $\text{Bgl}$ $\text{Bxc2}$;

C2) 14. $\text{Bae1}$ $\text{c4}$ 15. $\text{Bb4}$ $\text{b5}$ 15...$\text{Bb4}$
16. $\text{Wc1}$ $\text{b5}$ 17. $\text{a3}$ $\text{a5}$ $\text{Bd6}$ 16. $\text{Bd6}$
In our opinion Black is doing great after
16...$\text{b4}$ 17.ax$b4$ $\text{Bxb4}$, for example
18. $\text{Bc1}$ a$5$?! and suddenly the a-pawn
becomes a very valuable asset. Its ad­
advance to a3 will cause a serious head­
ache for White: 19. $\text{Bd1}$ $\text{Bxc3}$ 20. $\text{Bxc3}$
$\text{Bf7}$; or 18. $\text{Bg1}$ $\text{Bf4}$ 19. $\text{Bf3}$ $\text{Bf7}$;
or 18. $\text{Bb5}$ $\text{Bd7}$;

C3) 14. $\text{Bgl}$.

● Another move should be considered
here: 12...$\text{Bd7}$ 13. $\text{Bae1}$ $\text{Bf8}$ 14. $\text{Bf8}$
$\text{Bc8}$ 14...$\text{Bf4}$? 15. $\text{Bb5}$ $\text{d6}$ 16.f$5$
16.dxc$5$ $\pm$. 16...$\text{exf5}$ 17.dxc$5$ $\text{Bxc5}$
18. $\text{Bxd5}$ $\text{Bxe4}$ 19. $\text{Wd3}$ $\text{Bh8}$ 20.c$3$
$\text{Bb8}$ $\pm$, Kokarev-Alavkin, Togliatti 2011.

12. ... $\text{Bd8-c7}$!
Probably the best move order and the best square for the queen. Black reintroduces the threat of ...\texttt{g4}, because the bishop cannot retreat to g1, leaving the f4 pawn unprotected. Black is remaining flexible with the light-squared bishop, which is puzzling White as to where to place the rook from a1. The e1-square is not attractive as long as the bishop can support the e6-pawn.

13. \texttt{f3-e5}?! \\
White jumps to the dominant square and at the same time prevents ...\texttt{g4}. Having in mind the central tension, the two knights will obviously be exchanged. In that way, White loses the piece which could have been used to attack the e6 pawn. We have already stated that the knight is prettier on e5, but more effective on f3. The same goes for the other side. Although ...\texttt{e4} is often tempting for Black, he should carefully consider whether the wonderful \texttt{f6} should be traded for the \texttt{c3}. Let us remind ourselves of the old rule – the threat is stronger than the execution!

- 13.\texttt{ad1} White’s idea is to open the position with dxc5 and f4-f5...
  A) 13...\texttt{a6}?! 14.f5 \texttt{h8}=; 
  B) 13...\texttt{g4} 14.\texttt{b5} 14.\texttt{g1 xf4} 15.\texttt{xf4 xf4} 16.h3 \texttt{h6}++; 14.g3?! \texttt{xe3} 15.\texttt{xe3 xd4} 16.\texttt{xd4 cxd4} 17.\texttt{xd4 f6}\texttt{f6}.

17.\texttt{xd4} and Black is slightly better.

- White gets nowhere with 13.\texttt{b5} \texttt{d8} 14.\texttt{ad1 c4} 15.a3 \texttt{e4} 16.\texttt{e1 d7} 17.\texttt{c3 xc3} 17...\texttt{d6}?!.
  18.\texttt{xc3 xe8} 19.\texttt{e5 xe5} 20.\texttt{exe5 g6}, Quesada Perez-Alvarez Pedraza, Barcelona 2011.

13. ... \texttt{c8-b7} \\
The bishop goes to b7, in order to increase the influence on the central squares and support the advance of the queenside pawns after the likely exchange on c6.

14. \texttt{a1-d1} \texttt{a7-a6} \\
Taking control over the b5-square and preparing to storm the pawns. White still has to worry about the d4- and e4-squares.
15. \( \text{d5} \text{xe5} \text{xc6} \)

15. \( \text{d3} \text{xd4} \) 16. \( \text{xd4 cxd4} \) is also good for Black.

15. ... \( \text{b7} \text{xc6} \)

16. \( \text{d2} \text{e1} \)

White is having difficulties coming up with a meaningful plan. Perhaps there is none in this position!

16. ... \( \text{c5} \text{c4} \)

After the exchange of the knights, when the pressure on d4 significantly drops, and without problems concerning the e6 pawn, Black is calmly gaining space and prepares to oust the \( \text{c3} \), in order to seize full control over the e4-square.

17. \( \text{g2} \text{g4}? \)

Here is a typical mistake. Although it must be painful to watch the opponent freely expanding on the queenside, this impulsive charge is completely uncalled for. The f4 pawn loses support and the white position finally becomes clearly inferior.

17. ... \( \text{b6} \text{b5}? \)

17... \( \text{d7} \) was better, because Black is not forced to spoil the pawn structure with the exchange on e4: 18. \( \text{g5} \text{e8} \) 19. \( \text{g4} \text{d6} \) and Black maintains the full flexibility of his position.

18. \( \text{g4} \text{g5} \)

18... \( \text{d7} \) 19. \( \text{d5} \text{c8} \) 20. \( \text{d2} \text{d7} \) 21. \( \text{f5} \) and the tide is turning.

19. \( \text{e2} \text{g4} \)

White finally attacks the e6 pawn, but it is not much use.

19. ... \( \text{c7} \text{d7} \)

19... \( \text{d6} \) was better because it avoids a neat tactical operation that could have saved White.

20. \( \text{c3} \text{xe4} \)

21. \( \text{d4} \text{d5}! \)

Thanks to the pin against \( \text{d7} \), White is salvaging the position and even grabs the initiative. The motif with the exchange sacrifice and play on the light squares changes the perception of the position.

21. ... \( \text{c6} \text{xd5} \)

22. \( \text{e1} \text{g3} \)

22. \( \text{d7} \text{c6} \)

A) 22... \( \text{a6} \) 23. \( \text{h3} \text{f5} \) 24. \( \text{c3} \text{g6} \) 25. \( \text{d2} \text{c6} \) 26. \( \text{fd1} \text{d1} \) 27. \( \text{xf5} \text{xf5} \)=;

B) 22... \( \text{c3} \) 23. \( \text{h3} \text{c6} \) 24. \( \text{xd5} \text{exd5} \) 25. \( \text{e6}+ \text{f7} \) 26. \( \text{f5} \text{g5} \) 27. \( \text{xf7}+ \text{xf7} \) 28. \( \text{h5}+ \text{g8} \) 29. \( \text{xg5}+- \).
23. h2-h4?

This hasty move takes White to the brink of defeat. Better was 23.\( \text{h3!} \) \( \text{h7} \) 23...\( \text{a7} \) 24.\( \text{xd5} \) exd5 25.\( \text{e6} \) \( \text{c5} \) 25...\( \text{f8} \) 26.\( \text{d1!} \) (26.\( \text{f5?} \) \( \text{x6}+-) 26...\( \text{d4} \) 27.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{c5} \) 28.\( \text{f5!} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 29.\( \text{g6} \) \( \text{d8} \) (29...\( \text{hxg6} \) 30.\( \text{fxg6}+-) 30.\( \text{xd8} \) \( \text{f7} \) 31.\( \text{gxf7} \) \( \text{xe3} \) 32.\( \text{h8+} \) \( \text{e7} \) 33.\( \text{h4+} \) \( \text{g5} \) 34.\( \text{fxg6+} \) \( \text{xe6} \) 35.\( \text{xd8} \) \( \text{h6} \) 36.\( \text{e8+} \) \( \text{d5} \) 37.\( \text{g7} \) \( \text{xe7} \) 38.\( \text{g8} \) \( \text{e3} \) 39.\( \text{g7} \) \( \text{e2} \) 40.\( \text{g2}+ \) \( \text{e5} \) 41.\( \text{xc6} \) \( \text{e1} \) 42.\( \text{g2} \) \( \text{d2}+ \) 43.\( \text{h3} \) \( \text{e3}+ \) 44.\( \text{h4} \) \( \text{f4}+ \) 45.\( \text{h5} \) \( \text{xf7}+ \) 46.\( \text{g6} \) \( \text{f3+} \) 47.\( \text{h6} \) \( \text{h1} \) 48.\( \text{g5+} \) \( \text{e6} \) 49.\( \text{h4}+- \) 26.\( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{xc5} \) 27.\( \text{f5+-} \)

23. ... \( \text{e7-c5} \)


**Conclusion**

Grabbing space while simultaneously attacking the knight with 4.e5 is White's most logical, and certainly best attempt to seize the advantage. The black knight retreats to the passive square d7, because jumping to e4 would be premature, while 4...\( \text{g8} \) is not to be taken seriously.

White uses the won tempo to fortify his centre with 5.f2-f4. Of course, the natural 5.\( \text{f3} \) is also possible, when White attempts to control the centre with his minor pieces. However, we have seen that in the resulting positions the d4-e5 block usually falls apart if Black timely plays ...\( \text{c7-c5!} \) and ...\( \text{f7-f6!} \). In such cases, it is Black who boasts a mobile central pawn mass. Besides, the black pieces enjoy greater activity, which altogether grants him rich and dynamic play. This is probably the reason why White's early knight development is rarely seen in practice.

However, even after the strongest 5.f4, with the practically forced sequence 5...\( \text{c5} \) 6.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{c6} \) 7.\( \text{e3} \), Black has a wide choice between different strategic set-ups. We decided to endorse the simplest possible systems with plans which are easy to remember and characteristic of the French Defence.

We have covered the positions with quick, natural development and play on the kingside after 7...\( \text{e7} \), 8...\( \text{0-0} \) and the standard ...\( \text{f7-f6} \), and the positions with active play on the queenside after 7...\( \text{a6} \) and 8...\( \text{b5} \).

We are especially pleased that it was possible to 'connect' these two different set-ups, playing on opposite sides of the board, into a new and flexible system which gives Black satisfactory play.
Chapter 6 – The McCutcheon Variation

1.e2-e4 e7-e6 2.d2-d4 d7-d5 3.\textit{b1-c3 g8-f6} 4.\textit{c1-g5}

The most popular continuation for White. He still doesn't want to determine the central structure, but instead develops a piece while pinning the black knight. The advance e4-e5 or the exchange exd5 now looks more dangerous. Black can choose between three solid lines that lead into three entirely different types of position: 4...dxe4, trading the dangerous e-pawn, the classical 4...\textit{e7}, or 4...\textit{b4}, which is also the basis of our repertoire.

4...\textit{f8-b4}

The move famously named after John Lindsay McCutcheon (1857-1905). The basic idea behind the system is active play on the queenside and in the centre. This counterplay should compensate for White's kingside activity and it can turn out to be very dangerous and even devastating, because Black is not only playing against the pawn structure, but also against the king stuck in the centre.

We will examine:
- 5.\textit{e2} (see p.297)
- 5.\textit{d3} (see p.298)
- 5.exd5 (see p.299)
- the main move 5.e5 (see p.301)

\bullet 5.\textit{e2}
5...h6!? Taking advantage of White's lack of ambition to slip in this little move that forces a useful exchange. 5...dxe4 also leads to equality: 6.a3 \( \textit{dxe} \) 7.\( \textit{exf6} \) \( \textit{xf6} \) 8.\( \textit{exe4} \) 0-0 9.\( \textit{d3} \) (9.\( \textit{f2} \) e5?! = 10.0-0 \( \textit{exd4} \) 11.\( \textit{exf6} \) \( \textit{xf6} \) 12.\( \textit{xd4} \) \( \textit{d7} \) 13.\( \textit{c3} \) \( \textit{xd4} \) 14.\( \textit{xd4} \) \( \textit{f6} \) 15.\( \textit{c4} \) \( \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} \) Di Berardino-Ikonnikov, Hoogeveen 2008) 9...e5= . 6.\( \textit{xf6} \) \( \textit{xf6} \) 7.a3 \( \textit{a5} \) and now:

A) 8.\( \textit{exd5} \) 0-0 8...\( \textit{exd5} \) 9.b4 \( \textit{b6} \) 10.\( \textit{xd5} \)±. 9.\( \textit{f2} \) \( \textit{d8} \) 10.\( \textit{dxe6N} \) 10.\( \textit{f4} \) = . 10...\( \textit{xe6} \) 11.\( \textit{e3} \) \( \textit{c6} \) 12.0-0 \( \textit{xc3} \) 13.\( \textit{xc3} \) Ruining the pawn structure in order to keep the extra material with 13.\( \textit{bxc3} \) ! leads White into an inferior position: 13...\( \textit{c4} \) 14.\( \textit{g3} \) \( \textit{a5} \)! Simple and strong! Black takes the important c4-square into possession. 15.\( \textit{e5} \) \( \textit{xe5} \) 16.dxe5 \( \textit{xd1} \) + 17.\( \textit{xf1} \) \( \textit{f6} \) 18.\( \textit{xf1} \) \( \textit{d8} \) 19.\( \textit{c1} \) \( \textit{c4} \) 20.\( \textit{e1} \) \( \textit{d5} \) 21.e6 \( \textit{f6} \) 22.\( \textit{xe6} \) \( \textit{a3} \) 23.\( \textit{e7} \) \( \textit{c5} \) 24.\( \textit{e4} \) \( \textit{c6} \) 25.\( \textit{b2} \) \( \textit{c4} \) + 26.\( \textit{b3} \) \( \textit{f8} \) 27.\( \textit{d7} \) \( \textit{a5} \)± . 13...\( \textit{xd4} \) 14.\( \textit{d3} \) \( \textit{c5} \) 15.\( \textit{d2} \) 15.\( \textit{e4} \) \( \textit{f5} \) 16.\( \textit{xb7} \) (16.\( \textit{f4} \) \( \textit{g5} \) 17.\( \textit{g3} \) \( \textit{g6} \) 18.\( \textit{xf5} \) \( \textit{xf5} \)=) 16...\( \textit{xd4} \) 17.\( \textit{xd4} \) \( \textit{xf2} \) - . 15.\( \textit{b6} \) \( \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} \) Mamedov-Antic, Kavala 2010;

B) 8.b4 \( \textit{b6} \) 9.e5 \( \textit{we7} \) 10.\( \textit{a4} \) \( \textit{d7} \) and now:

B1) 11.\( \textit{xb6} \)! There is no greater gift for a rook than an open file. 12...\( \textit{xb6} \) 12.\( \textit{f4} \) 12.c3 \( \textit{c5} \) with an excellent position: 13.g3 0-0=. 12...\( \textit{xa3} \) 0-1 (40) Paveliev-R. Bagirov, Moscow 2008 – a sample of the tactical blow facilitated with the opening of the a-file;

B2) 11.c3 0-0 12.\( \textit{b2} \) Black also enjoys fine play after 12.\( \textit{f4} \) \( \textit{xa4} \) 13.\( \textit{xa4} \) \( \textit{d7} \) (finishing the development and planning to open the f-file next) 14.\( \textit{d3} \) g5 15.\( \textit{h5} \) f6 16.\( \textit{xf6} + \) \( \textit{xf6} \) 17.\( \textit{xf6} \) \( \textit{xf6} \) (17.\( \textit{xf6} \) 18.0-0 \( \textit{c6} \) 19.\( \textit{ae1} \) \( \textit{ae8=} \) 20.\( \textit{e5} \) \( \textit{c7} \) 21.\( \textit{e3} \) 18.0-0 \( \textit{af8} \) 19.\( \textit{ae1} \) c6= Jacobs-Jones, ICCF corr 2000. 12...\( \textit{a5} \) It is more effective to immediately open the f-file because the king is still in the centre: 12...\( \textit{f6} \) 13.\( \textit{d3} \) \( \textit{c6} \) ± and Black is clearly better. 13.\( \textit{d3} \) \( \textit{b5} \) 14.\( \textit{ef4} \) \( \textit{d7} \) 15.\( \textit{h4} \) \( \textit{a7} \) 16.\( \textit{c1} \) \( \textit{xb4} \) 17.\( \textit{xb4} \) \( \textit{fa8} \) Saptarshi-Sengupta, New Delhi 2010;

B3) 11.\( \textit{c5} \)! Black obtains the better pawn structure on the kingside 11...\( \textit{xc5} \) 12.\( \textit{xc5} \) 0-0± followed by ...\( \textit{b7} \)-\( \textit{b6} \) ! or ...\( \textit{f7} \)-\( \textit{f6} \) !.

\( \textbf{5.\( \textit{d3} \) \( \textit{c5} \)!} \)

Using the pin against the knight and lack of support for the d4 pawn to immediately strike in the centre. 6.e5 \( \textit{xd4} \) 7.\( \textit{exf6} \) 7.a3 \( \textit{dxc3} \) 8.axb4 \( \textit{xb2} \) 9.\( \textit{b1} \) h6 10.exf6 \( \textit{xf5} \) 11.\( \textit{f5} \) \( \textit{g8} \) 7...\( \textit{dxc3} \) 8.\( \textit{fxg7} \) \( \textit{xb2} \)+ 9.\( \textit{f1} \) \( \textit{c3} ! \)
10. gxh8\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\text{\textsf{\textsf{w}}}}} + \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{hxh8}}} 11. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{b1}}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{w}}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{xg5}}}= \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{f}}} \; \text{with better chances for Black.}

\*5. exd5 w xd5! 5...exd5?! – it is a little strange that such a natural 'French' move should lead Black into an inferior position: 6. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{f}}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{f3}}! (this non-dogmatic move exerts maximum pressure on the black position. It eyes the d5 pawn, the c6 and clears the way for queenside castling) 6...\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{bd7}}} 7.0-0-0 \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{e7}}} (7...\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{xc3}}} 8. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{e3}}}+! \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{e7}}} 9. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{xc3}}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{d4}}} 10. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{xf6}}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{xc3}}} 11. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{e1}}}= Kornyukov-

Gutsko, Dombai 2010) 8. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{d3}}} 0-0 9. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{ge2}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{e8}}} 10. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{g3}}}±

Now both players have a damaged pawn structure, but also a pair of minor pieces got traded in the process, forcing a change of the plans. Despite the opposite castling, direct attacks on the kings will be out of the picture and we will observe manoeuvres aimed at exploiting structural weaknesses. 8. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{d2}}} and now:

A) 8...e5!?

10...h6 11. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{f4}}} with better development and easier play for White, for example: 11...\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{b6}}} 12. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{h5}}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{b5}}} 13. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{wh5}}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{e6}}} 14.g4! \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{g5}}} (14...\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{d6}}} 15. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{xf6}}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{e4}}}+ 16. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{d2}}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{e5}}} 17. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{g4}}}±) 16.h4= Tombette-

Deneuville, cr 2008) 15. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{xc3}}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{g5}}}+ 16. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{xc3}}} hxg5 17.f3= and White will obtain play on the h-file. 6. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{xf6}}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{xc3}}}+! An attempt to preserve the bishop allows White to maintain the fluid pawn structure. 6...gx6 7. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{e2}}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{c6}}} 8. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{d2}}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{g5}}} 9.f4 \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{g6}}} 10.a3 \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{a5}}} 11.g3 \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{d7}}} 12. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{g2}}} 0-0-0 13.b4 \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{b6}}} 14. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{a4}}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{e7}}} 15. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{xb6}}}+ axb6 and Black was still forced to exchange the bishop, only in less convenient circumstances, Rabiega-Hübner, Altenkirchen 2001. 7. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{xc3}}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{gf6}}}=

A simple no-nonsense solution according to Viktor Kortchnoi. Black is mirroring the pawn chains and opens the way for the light-squared bishop. A check on e4 can also be unpleasant...:

A1) 9. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{h6}}}?! This allows Black to obtain a better endgame. 9... \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{e4}}}+

10. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{d2}}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{g6}}} 11. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{xc6}}} hxg6 12. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{e1}}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{c6}}} 12... \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{e6}}} 13. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{d3}}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{d7}}} 14. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{xe5}}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{f6}}} 15. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{xe5}}} 0-0-0 16. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{d3}}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{xa2}}}±. 13. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{xe5}}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{f6}}} 14. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{b5}}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{h5}}}

14. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{e6}}}!! 15. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{xc6}}}+ bxc6 16. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{xe5}}} 0-0-0+ 17. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{e1}}} \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{xa2}}}=. 15. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{f3}}} 15. \textcolor{red}{\textsf{\textsf{xc6}}}+

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bxc6 16.\(\text{c}f3\) f6=. 15...\(\text{d}7\) 16.g4 \(\text{xg4}\) 17.\(\text{xc}6+\) bxc6 18.\(\text{xe}5\) 0-0-0+ 19.\(\text{c}1\) \(\text{e}6\) 20.\(\text{xg6}\) \(\text{xa}2\) 21.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{h}4\) 22.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{d}5=\n
A.Sokolov-Kortchnoi, Switzerland 2002;

A2) 9.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{c}6\) 10.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{g}4\) 10...\(\text{f}5!?\) 11.c4 (11.0-0 \(\text{g}8\) with mutual chances) 11...\(\text{we}4\) 12.d5 0-0-0 13.0-0-0 \(\text{b}4=\infty\). 11.h3 11.c4 (it is not easy for White to solve the issues with his king. Queenside castling was not possible because the a2 pawn would be hanging, and kingside castling exposes the monarch to threats along the open g-file) 11...\(\text{wa}5\) 12.\(\text{xa}5\) \(\text{xa}5\) 13.dxe5 fxe5 14.\(\text{x}e5\) \(\text{xe}2\) 15.\(\text{xe}2\) 0-0-0 16.\(\text{he}1\) \(\text{hg}8=\) with ...f7-f6 next; 11.0-0?! \(\text{g}8\) 12.\(\text{h}1\) 0-0-0=\n
9.\(\text{d}3\) The following game sets a typical middlegame example: 9.g3 \(\text{d}7\) 10.\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{c}6\) 11.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{d}7\) 12.0-0 0-0-0 13.\(\text{fd}1\) \(\text{b}6\) 14.\(\text{wh}6\).

As we mentioned earlier, the main motif for both sides will be play against the weak pawns. 14...\(\text{xc}3\) 15.\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{hf}8\) 16.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{g}2\) 17.\(\text{x}2\) \(\text{d}5\) 18.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{d}6\) 19.\(\text{xc}3\) \(\text{xc}3\) 20.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{c}6=\infty\) and White’s pawns turned out to be more exposed to attack, Van der Wiel-Glek, Germany Bundesliga B 1999/00.

9...\(\text{d}7!\) The most efficient set-up for Black. He is planning to bring the knight to b6 in order to exploit the weakened squares on the white queenside. 10.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{c}6\) 11.f3 \(\text{d}7\) 12.0-0 0-0-0=\infty with normal development and mutual chances in the later stages of the game, King-McDonald, England 2008/09.

5. \(\text{e}4-e5\)

The most principled and thus the strongest move, providing White with the best opportunity to fight for an advantage. With e4-e5 White chases the knight, grabs space and sets the conditions to attack the enemy king. But this is exactly what Black is expecting, hoping to exploit the darker side of the pawn’s advance.
In the French Defence White usually pushes the pawn to e5, on the 3rd move (Advance Variation), 4th move (Steinitz Variation) or 5th move (McCutcheon). But what is its destiny later? Black can play ...f7-f6, exchange the central pawn and open the f-file. How many moves would otherwise be needed to introduce the king’s rook into play? The structure itself is demanding the white pieces be grouped on the kingside, leaving the other flank somewhat exposed to counterattack. This is the very idea behind the McCutcheon system. Shattered pawns and the threatening black queen on a5 are White’s constant sources of worry. No wonder that sometimes White gives up on the e4-e5 advance altogether.

5. ... h7-h6

Here we will examine:
- 6.\(\text{\textsection}e3\) (see p.301)
- 6.exf6 (see p.305)
- 6.\(\text{\textsection}h4\) (see p.306)
- 6.\(\text{\textsection}c1\) (see p.308)
- the main move 6.\(\text{\textsection}d2\) (see p.314)

\(\text{-} 6.\text{\textsection}e3\) The best alternative to the main line. White wants to preserve the bishop even at the cost of a pawn. The battle will be sharp and uncompromising. 6 ...\(\text{\textsection}e4\) and now:

\(\text{A}) 7.\text{\textsection}e2\)

When White is forced onto the defensive in the French, he quickly loses the initiative granted by the first opening move. Now Black can strike in the centre and preserve the bishop, which guarantees him equal play: 7...c5 8.dxc5 8.a3 cxd4 9.\(\text{\textsection}xd4\) 8xc5 9.\(\text{\textsection}xe5\) 8e7 11.\(\text{\textsection}g4\) 0-0 12.\(\text{\textsection}h4\)!! (without the dark-squared bishop White is simply worse. 12.\(\text{\textsection}e3\) f5! with an excellent position for Black 13.\(\text{\textsection}g6\) \(\text{\textsection}c7\) (13...\(\text{\textsection}c6\)! 14.\(\text{\textsection}xh6\) \(\text{\textsection}f7\) 15.f4 (15.\(\text{\textsection}f4\) \(\text{\textsection}a5\)) 15...\(\text{\textsection}b6\) 16.0-0 \(\text{\textsection}e3+\) 17.\(\text{\textsection}b1\) \(\text{\textsection}xe5\) 18.fxe5 \(\text{\textsection}xh6\) 19.\(\text{\textsection}xh6\) gxh6\(\text{\textsection}f\) 14.f4 \(\text{\textsection}c5\) 15.\(\text{\textsection}xc5\) \(\text{\textsection}xc5\) 16.\(\text{\textsection}d3\) \(\text{\textsection}e3\) 17.\(\text{\textsection}e2\) \(\text{\textsection}c6\) 18.\(\text{\textsection}g3\) with a slight advantage for White, Nunn-Beaton, Walsall 1992) 12...\(\text{\textsection}c6\) 13.0-0-0 \(\text{\textsection}xd4\) 14.\(\text{\textsection}xd4\) \(\text{\textsection}d7\) Thorsteinsson-Gunnarsson, Reykjavik 2001. 8...\(\text{\textsection}d7\)! A typical move in a wide range of positions when White takes on c5. 9.f4 0-0 10.a3 Without this White cannot complete his development. 10...\(\text{\textsection}xc3\)+ 11.\(\text{\textsection}xc3\) 11.bxc3\(\text{\textsection}x\) 12.bxc3 \(\text{\textsection}c7\) 13.\(\text{\textsection}d4\) b6\(\text{\textsection}b\) Black opens two files and the bishop. At the same time White’s pawn structure is in ruins. 14.cxb6 axb6 15.c4 15.\(\text{\textsection}d3\) \(\text{\textsection}c5\) 16.a4 \(\text{\textsection}a6\)=. 15...\(\text{\textsection}a4\) 16.\(\text{\textsection}b2\) dxc4 17.\(\text{\textsection}b5\) \(\text{\textsection}a5\) 18.\(\text{\textsection}xc4\) \(\text{\textsection}c5\)= Rensch-Kuljasevic, Lubbock 2010.

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B) 7.\textit{Wg4} Principled and strong. Moving the queen to g4 is White's trademark in this and similar structures, otherwise why would he advance e4-e5 and chase the black knight?

B1) 7...g6

This strategically 'ugly' move became popular after Black discovered the plan connected with the attack on the white queen, which will become clear a few moves further on. In the resulting positions, the weaknesses created by this advance will be totally irrelevant.

B11) 8.a3 White should not postpone this move because after 7.\textit{Be3} the c3-point is very vulnerable. 8...\textit{xc3}+ 9.bxc3 c5 9...\textit{xc3} 10.d\textit{d3} \textit{c6}! (a very common idea is to transfer the knight to help the kingside defense. 10...c5 11.dxc5 \textit{a5} (11...\textit{c6} 12.f3\textpm is covered under 10...\textit{xc3}) 12.b4 \textit{xb4} 13.axb4 \textit{c6} 14.a3!\textpm and Black will experience problems in the ending - his dark squares are weak and he is still under-developed) 11.h4 \textit{d}7 12.h5 g5 13.e2 (13.f3\textpm) 13...\textit{xe2} 14.\textit{xe2} Hamdouchi-Libiszewski, Condom 2010. The pair of bishops and extra space provide full compensation for the pawn. 10.\textit{d3} The key position for this line. White has offered the c3 pawn ever since he retreated the bishop to e3 and he still doesn’t care to defend it. 10...\textit{h5}!

This is the above-mentioned attack on the white queen, very popular in recent years. The idea is to chase the piece away from the defence of the d4 pawn. 10...\textit{xc3} 11.dxc5 \textit{c6} 12.f3 d4 (12...\textit{a5} 13.0-0 \textit{a4} 14.\textit{xa4} (with 14.\textit{h3}\textpm better development and many black weaknesses would grant the advantage to White) 14...\textit{xa4} 15.\textit{bab1}\textpm 13.\textit{d2}?! (13.\textit{xd4} \textit{d4} 14.\textit{xd4} \textit{xd4} 15.\textit{xd4} \textit{d7} 16.a4! \textit{c8} 17.\textit{d2} \textit{xc5} 18.\textit{a3} \textit{d5} 19.\textit{b1} b6 20.a5\textpm) 13...\textit{a5} (13...\textit{d5} 14.f4\textpm) 14.0-0 \textit{xc5} 15.\textit{h4} (15.\textit{e1f}) 15...\textit{xe5} 16.\textit{xe5} \textit{xe5} 17.f4 \textit{g7} 18.\textit{d6} Chirila-R. Schmidt, Timisoara 2008. Now:

B111) 11.\textit{f4} \textit{g5}! 11...\textit{xc3} 12.dxc5! and the queen still controls the d4-square! 12.f3 \textit{xc3} 13.dxc5 After 13.e2?! \textit{xe2} 14.\textit{xe2} cxd4 15.\textit{xd4} \textit{c6} White doesn’t have compensation for the pawn. 13...\textit{d4}! And thanks to the kingside advance Black obtains solid counterplay in the centre. Black needs the ...d5-d4 advance in order to parry the activity of the white pieces, particularly the pair of bishops. 14.e2 \textit{c6} 15.\textit{f6} If White doesn’t want to forfeit the bishop pair with \textit{xc3}, this is the only way to protect the
e5 pawn. But Black will still be able to force the much-desired exchange in a few moves.

15...\(\text{¢xc3}\) is weaker: 15...dxc3 16.\(\text{£d1}\) (16.\(\text{We3}\) \(\text{d5}\)? 17.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{g4}\) 18.\(\text{e4}\) \(\text{wC4}\) 19.\(\text{xc6}\) bxc6 20.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{a6}\) 21.\(\text{e4}\)± D. Ledger-Cumbers, England 2009/10, but better is 16...\(\text{wD4}\)!

17.\(\text{Wxd4}\) (17.\(\text{Wxg5}\) \(\text{Wxe5}\)± 18.\(\text{We5}\) \(\text{Exe5}\) 19.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{d7}\)=) 17...\(\text{xd4}\) 18.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{c6}\) 19.\(\text{xc3}\) \(\text{xe5}\)=) 16...\(\text{c7}\) 17.\(\text{e4}\) \(\text{xe5}\) 18.\(\text{we3}\) \(\text{e7}\) 19.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{f4}\) 20.\(\text{xc6}\) \(\text{xe3}\)+ 21.\(\text{exe3}\) bxc6 22.\(\text{e5}\) \(\text{f6}\) 23.\(\text{xc6}\) \(\text{a6}\) 24.\(\text{d6}\) \(\text{hce8}\)= 15...\(\text{xf6}\) 16.\(\text{exf6}\) \(\text{a4}\)!

The climax of Black’s strategy. White cannot avoid a position with opposite-coloured bishops, which won’t be in his favour because of the shattered pawn structure. Grandmaster Vitiugov didn’t want to part with the pawn and played 16.g4 17.\(\text{xc3}\) dxc3 18.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{e5}\) 19.\(\text{e4}\) (White can simply take on c3: 19.\(\text{xc3}\)! \(\text{d7}\) 20.\(\text{e2}\)=) 19...\(\text{b8}\) 20.h3 \(\text{d8}\) 21.\(\text{xc3}\) \(\text{d7}\) 22.a4 \(\text{c8}\) with excellent chances to equalize, Yakovenko-Vitiugov, Moscow 2007. 17.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{xc5}\) 18.\(\text{f3}\) It is not good to attempt to control the e5-square with the pawn: 18.f4?! \(\text{xd3}\)+ (18...\(\text{e5}\)! 19.\(\text{exe5}\) \(\text{xe5}\)) 19.cxd3 \(\text{e5}\)! 20.\(\text{f3}\) exf4 21.\(\text{xf4}\)± Nestorovic-Piorun, Bucharest 2010.

18...\(\text{xd3}\)± 19.cxd3 \(\text{b6}\) 20.\(\text{c1}\) 20.0-0 \(\text{b7}\) 21.h4 \(\text{d8}\) 22.\(\text{ac1}\) \(\text{d5}\)± Nestorovic-Maksimovic, Internet 2010. Black has a simple plan to play against the weak pawns on d3 and a4. Besides, the dark-squared bishop, which White tried to preserve from the start, didn’t live up to expectations.

20...\(\text{b7}\) 21.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{d8}\) 22.\(\text{c4}\) \(\text{d5}\) 23.\(\text{hcl}\) \(\text{d7}\) 24.h4 \(\text{c8}\)= Erdogdu-Moskalenko, Ankara 2010; B112) 11.\(\text{d1}\) \(\text{xc3}\) 12.\(\text{d2}\) cxd4

13.\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{e4}\) 14.\(\text{xe4}\) dxe4 15.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{c6}\) 16.\(\text{d1}\) b6\!N

Black shouldn’t be in a rush to take the bishop: 16...\(\text{xd4}\) 17.\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{d7}\) 18.0-0 \(\text{c7}\)= Erdogdu-Gofshtein, Ankara 2010. It is difficult to believe that White has sufficient compensation for the pawn. The material is reduced and he can hardly count on attacking on the
dark squares. 17.\textit{\textbf{f4}} \textbf{c7} 18.\textit{\textbf{f6}}
18.\textit{\textbf{b2}} \textit{\textbf{a6+}}. 18...0-0\textbf{=} The complex
of weak dark squares has no significa­
cance because other pieces cannot assist
the queen in the attack.

B12) \textbf{8.d3?!} \textit{\textbf{xc3}} 9.a3 \textit{\textbf{a5}}
10.\textit{\textbf{d2}} Now Black has a pleasant
choice. 10...\textit{\textbf{a4}}! 10...c5!? 11.bxc3
\textit{\textbf{c6}} 12.\textit{\textbf{f3}} \textbf{cxd4} 13.\textit{\textbf{xd4}} \textit{\textbf{xd2+}}
14.\textit{\textbf{xd2}} \textit{\textbf{a5+}}!N 15.\textit{\textbf{c3}} b6 16.\textit{\textbf{f4}}
\textit{\textbf{a6\text{\textasciicircum}}} 11.\textit{\textbf{xa5}} \textit{\textbf{xb2}} 12.\textit{\textbf{b5+}}
12.\textit{\textbf{e2}} b6 13.\textit{\textbf{c3}} (13.\textit{\textbf{d2}} \textit{\textbf{a6\text{\textasciicircum}}} 13...	extit{\textbf{a4}} 14.\textit{\textbf{d2}} c5 15.\textit{\textbf{f3}} \textit{\textbf{a6\text{\textasciicircum}}} 12...	extit{\textbf{d7}} 13.\textit{\textbf{e2}} \textit{\textbf{c6}} 14.\textit{\textbf{c3}} \textit{\textbf{a4}}
15.\textit{\textbf{d2}} \textbf{e7} 16.\textit{\textbf{f3}} 0-0-0\textbf{=} 0-1 (32)
Huerga Leache-Granda Zuniga, Pamplona 2009;

B13) \textbf{8.e2?!} c5 9.a3 \textit{\textbf{a5}} 10.\textit{\textbf{d1}}
\textit{\textbf{xc3+}} 11.\textit{\textbf{xc3}} \textit{\textbf{c6}} 12.\textit{\textbf{xc5}} \textit{\textbf{xc3}}
13.bxc3 \textit{\textbf{xc3+}} 14.\textit{\textbf{d2}} \textit{\textbf{xe5}} 15.\textit{\textbf{b5}}
\textit{\textbf{a1+}} 16.\textit{\textbf{d1}} \textit{\textbf{c3+}} 17.\textit{\textbf{d2}} \textit{\textbf{a1+}}
18.\textit{\textbf{d1}} \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} Tringov-Fuchs, Kienbaum
Berlin m-3 1958;

B2) \textbf{7.g5?!} is a risky move which
weakens the position more than
...g7-g6. Besides, White gets the extra
possibility of advancing the h-pawn.

8.a3 With 8.h4 White can immediately
open the file and play for compensa­
tion, but the best he will get is a draw:
8...h5 9.hxg5?! (9.\textit{\textbf{d1}} c5=)

White's weak pawns and the opposite­
coloured bishops provide enough com­
pensation for Black.

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

9...hxg4 10.\textit{\textbf{hxh8+}} \textit{\textbf{f8}} 11.\textit{\textbf{xe4}} dxe4
12.\textit{\textbf{e2}} c5 (12...\textit{\textbf{d7}} 13.0-0-0 c6
14.\textit{\textbf{g3}} \textit{\textbf{e7}} 15.\textit{\textbf{xe4}} \textit{\textbf{c7}} 16.\textit{\textbf{h7}}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
9...hxg4 10.\textit{\textbf{hxh8+}} \textit{\textbf{f8}} 11.\textit{\textbf{xe4}} dxe4
12.\textit{\textbf{e2}} c5 (12...\textit{\textbf{d7}} 13.0-0-0 c6
14.\textit{\textbf{g3}} \textit{\textbf{e7}} 15.\textit{\textbf{xe4}} \textit{\textbf{c7}} 16.\textit{\textbf{h7}}
\end{center}


\( \text{Q}d7? \) 17.g6 \( \text{W}e8+- \) Ganguly-Nakamura, Internet blitz 2006)

13.0-0-0 \( \text{W}a5 \) 14.\( \text{Q}c3 \) cxd4 15.\( \text{Q}xd4 \) c6 16.\( \text{Q}xe4 \) \( \text{Q}xd4 \) (\( \text{c}1/2-1/2 \) Shirov-Volkov, Rethymnon 2003) 17.\( \text{Q}f6+ \) \( \text{e}7 \) 18.\( \text{Q}xd4 \) \( \text{W}xe5 \) 19.\( \text{Q}g8+ \) = d

8...h5 9.\( \text{W}d1 \) \( \text{W}f3? \) \( \text{Q}xc3+ \) 10.bxc3 \( \text{Q}xc3 \) (10...c5! 11.\( \text{Q}d3 \) \( \text{Q}xc3 \) 12.dxc5 d4 13.\( \text{Q}d2 \) \( \text{Q}c6 \) – this position is covered under 7...g6) 11.\( \text{Q}xg5 \) \( \text{W}xg5 \) 12.\( \text{W}xc3 \pm \) Istratescu-Karountzos, Kalamata 2010. 9...\( \text{Q}xc3 \) 9...\( \text{Q}xc3+ \) 10.bxc3 c5 11.\( \text{Q}d3 \) \( \text{Q}xc3 \) 12.\( \text{W}d2 \) cxd4 13.\( \text{Q}xd4 \) \( \text{Q}e4 \) 14.\( \text{Q}xe4 \) dx4 15.\( \text{Q}e2 \) c6 16.\( \text{Q}d1 \pm \) Comparing the position with the proposed line 7...g6, we notice that the g5 pawn is a serious burden. For example, Black now cannot play ...\( \text{W}c7 \), which should normally solve all the problems. 10.\( \text{W}d2 \pm \)

We must emphasise that this position is very complex and still unexplored;

B3) 7...\( \text{Q}f8!? \) Of course, this subtle move is also possible in this position.

**Important:** Certainly the e3-square is a better choice than the c1-square if White wants to preserve this bishop. However, Black can obtain sufficient counterplay thanks to the weakened a5-e1 diagonal by an unusual operation with his g- and h-pawns.

6...\( \text{Q}e4 \) 7.\( \text{W}g4 \) g6 (7...\( \text{Q}f8 \), with which Volkov played dozens of games, is a valid alternative) 8.a3 \( \text{Q}xc3+ \) 9.bxc3 c5 10.\( \text{Q}d3 \) h5! (now 10...cxd4 11.cxd4 \( \text{W}a5 \) is not as effective as in the line where White has played \( \text{Q}c1 \), because the d4 pawn is protected and with 12.\( \text{Q}e2 \) White retains better chances)

11.\( \text{W}f4 \) g5! etc.

\( \text{6.exf6} \) is a rarely played move. White can’t count on the advantage if he trades the bishop and the central e-pawn for the h-pawn so soon. 6...hxg5 7.fxg7 \( \text{Q}g8 \):

![Diagram](image)

A) 8.\( \text{Q}f3 \) \( \text{W}f6 \) 9.h4 gxh4 10.\( \text{Q}xh4 \) \( \text{W}xg7 \) Excellent play for Black is given by 10...\( \text{Q}c6! \) 11.\( \text{Q}d3 \) (11.\( \text{Q}b5 \) \( \text{Q}d7 \) 12.\( \text{W}d3 \) 0-0-0 13.\( \text{Q}xc6 \) \( \text{Q}xc6 \) 14.\( \text{Q}e5 \) \( \text{Q}e8 \) 11...\( \text{Q}d7 \) 12.\( \text{W}h7 \) 0-0-0 13.\( \text{Q}g4? \) e5+.. 11.\( \text{Q}d3 \) \( \text{Q}c6 \) 12.\( \text{Q}d6 \) 12...\( \text{Q}a5 \) deserves attention: 13.0-0-0 \( \text{Q}d7 \) 14.\( \text{W}h7 \) \( \text{W}f6 \) 15.\( \text{Q}b1 \) 0-0-0 16.\( \text{Q}a4 \) \( \text{Q}b6 \) 17.\( \text{Q}xb6+ \) axb6 18.\( \text{W}e3 \) \( \text{Q}h8 \) 19.\( \text{W}xh8 \) \( \text{Q}xh8 \) with equal play. 13.\( \text{Q}h7 \) \( \text{W}f6 \) 14.\( \text{Q}b5 \) \( \text{Q}d7 \) 15.\( \text{Q}xd6+ \) cxd6 16.0-0-0 0-0-0 The position is roughly equal but still demands some precision from White’s side. The reason is the possible pressure on the f- and g-files. 17.\( \text{W}e3 \) \( \text{Q}g4 \) 18.\( \text{W}h6 \) \( \text{W}f4+ \) 19.\( \text{W}xf4 \) \( \text{Q}xf4 \) 20.\( \text{Q}h4 \) \( \text{Q}f6 \) 21.\( \text{Q}e2 \) \( \text{Q}g8 \) 22.\( \text{Q}f1 \) 22.g3 e5 23.dxe5 dxe5 24.\( \text{Q}xd5 \) \( \text{Q}g4 \) 25.\( \text{Q}xg4 \) \( \text{Q}xg4 \) 26.\( \text{Q}xe5 \) \( \text{Q}xe5 \) 27.\( \text{Q}xe5 \) \( \text{Q}g8 \) 28...\( \text{Q}c7 \) 23.b3 a6 24.a4 \( \text{Q}e8 \) 25.\( \text{Q}d2 \)
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e5 26.\textit{\textit{b}}b2 26.dxe5 dxe5 27.\textit{\textit{c}}xd5? 
\textit{\textit{e}}4\textsuperscript{f} 26...\textit{\textit{e}}4 27.\textit{\textit{h}}h2 \textit{\textit{g}}6 28.\textit{\textit{c}}c4 \textit{\textit{f}}5\textsuperscript{k} Dorfanis-Antic, Kavala 2010, and Black seized the initiative;

B) 8.\textit{\textit{h}}h4 gxh4 and now:

B1) 9.\textit{\textit{d}}d3 \textit{\textit{c}}c6 12.0-0-0 \textit{\textit{d}}d7 13.\textit{\textit{c}}c7 \textit{\textit{f}}6 14.\textit{\textit{e}}3 0-0-0;

B2) 9.\textit{\textit{h}}h5 \textit{\textit{f}}6 10.\textit{\textit{x}}xh4 With 10.\textit{\textit{x}}xh4 White can easily run into trouble: 10...\textit{\textit{x}}xg7 11.\textit{\textit{d}}f3 \textit{\textit{d}}d7\textsuperscript{k}.

10...\textit{\textit{x}}xg7 11.\textit{\textit{f}}f3 \textit{\textit{c}}c6 12.0-0-0 12.\textit{\textit{b}}b5 \textit{\textit{d}}d7 13.\textit{\textit{x}}xc6 \textit{\textit{x}}xc6 14.\textit{\textit{e}}e5 \textit{\textit{x}}g2 15.0-0-0 \textit{\textit{g}}5+ 16.\textit{\textit{x}}xg5 \textit{\textit{e}}g5 17.\textit{\textit{h}}h7 \textit{\textit{f}}f5\textsuperscript{f}. 12...\textit{\textit{d}}d7 13.\textit{\textit{b}}b5 \textit{\textit{a}}5

14.c3 a6!\textsuperscript{a}N 15.\textit{\textit{e}}e3 \textit{\textit{f}}6 16.\textit{\textit{h}}h5+ \textit{\textit{e}}e7 17.\textit{\textit{h}}h7 \textit{\textit{a}}af8 18.\textit{\textit{g}}g3 \textit{\textit{x}}xh7 19.\textit{\textit{x}}xh7+ \textit{\textit{f}}f7 20.\textit{\textit{h}}h6 \textit{\textit{g}}g7= Black has no problems but White must be cautious about a possible activation of the bishop pair;

B3) 9.\textit{\textit{g}}g4 \textit{\textit{f}}6 10.\textit{\textit{x}}xh4 \textit{\textit{x}}g7 10...\textit{\textit{x}}g7 allows White to develop the initiative after 11.\textit{\textit{h}}h8+ \textit{\textit{e}}e7 12.\textit{\textit{h}}h3 \textit{\textit{c}}c6 13.0-0-0\textsuperscript{t}. 11.\textit{\textit{x}}xg7 \textit{\textit{e}}xg7 12.\textit{\textit{h}}h8+:

B31) 12...\textit{\textit{d}}d7?! 13.\textit{\textit{f}}f3 \textit{\textit{c}}c6 14.\textit{\textit{b}}b5 \textit{\textit{x}}g2!N

15.\textit{\textit{f}}f1 \textit{\textit{g}}g7 16.\textit{\textit{e}}e5+ \textit{\textit{e}}e7 17.\textit{\textit{x}}xc6 \textit{\textit{x}}xc3 18.\textit{\textit{b}}xc3 \geq 18.\textit{\textit{e}}e8+ \textit{\textit{f}}f6 19.bxc3 \textit{\textit{x}}xc6 20.\textit{\textit{c}}c4\textsuperscript{f}. 18...\textit{\textit{b}}xc6 19.\textit{\textit{d}}d3 19.\textit{\textit{e}}e6+? \textit{\textit{d}}d6\textsuperscript{t}. 19...\textit{\textit{c}}c5!

20.\textit{\textit{b}}b1 20.\textit{\textit{d}}xc5 \textit{\textit{b}}b+ 20...\textit{\textit{c}}xd4 21.\textit{\textit{c}}xd4 \textit{\textit{g}}g4\textsuperscript{t}.

B32) 12...\textit{\textit{f}}f8 13.0-0-0 13.\textit{\textit{b}}b5 \textit{\textit{a}}6 14.0-0-0 \textit{\textit{d}}d7 15.\textit{\textit{f}}f3 \textit{\textit{e}}e7 16.\textit{\textit{c}}c3 \textit{\textit{e}}e8 17.\textit{\textit{x}}xa6 (17.\textit{\textit{b}}b5 \textit{\textit{f}}6) 17...\textit{b}xa6 18.\textit{\textit{g}}g6 19.\textit{\textit{h}}h7 \textit{\textit{h}}h6 20.\textit{\textit{x}}xh6 \textit{\textit{x}}xh6+ 21.\textit{\textit{b}}b1 \textit{\textit{h}}h8 22.\textit{\textit{e}}e1 \textit{\textit{d}}d6 23.\textit{\textit{e}}e5 \textit{\textit{e}}e8 24.\textit{\textit{d}}d3 (24.\textit{\textit{e}}e2 c5 25.\textit{\textit{f}}f4 \textit{\textit{g}}g7 26.\textit{\textit{c}}c3 \textit{\textit{c}}c2 \textit{\textit{x}}xd4 28.\textit{\textit{c}}xd4 \textit{\textit{f}}6) 24...\textit{\textit{g}}g7 25.\textit{\textit{e}}e2 \textit{\textit{b}}b5. 13...\textit{\textit{d}}d7 13...\textit{\textit{g}}g6!. 14.\textit{\textit{e}}e1 \textit{\textit{c}}c6 and now 15.\textit{\textit{b}}b3 \textit{\textit{d}}d7=; 15.\textit{\textit{b}}b5 \textit{\textit{b}}b5 16.\textit{\textit{b}}b5+ \textit{\textit{c}}c6 17.\textit{\textit{f}}f1 \textit{\textit{d}}d7 18.\textit{\textit{f}}f3 \textit{\textit{g}}g6 19.\textit{\textit{c}}c3 \textit{\textit{h}}h6 20.\textit{\textit{x}}xh6 \textit{\textit{x}}xh6+ 21.\textit{\textit{c}}c2 \textit{\textit{e}}e7 22.\textit{\textit{e}}e5 \textit{\textit{h}}h8 23.\textit{\textit{x}}xd7 \textit{\textit{x}}xd7 24.\textit{\textit{e}}e2 \textit{\textit{g}}g5 25.\textit{\textit{f}}f3 \textit{\textit{d}}d6; or 15.\textit{\textit{f}}f4 \textit{\textit{d}}d7 16.\textit{\textit{f}}f5 \textit{\textit{e}}e7 17.\textit{\textit{f}}f3 \textit{\textit{e}}e8 18.\textit{\textit{b}}b4 \textit{\textit{d}}d8.

Important: With this exchange on \textit{\textit{f}}6 White concedes the bishop pair and ends up in an inferior position: 6...hxg5 7.\textit{\textit{x}}xg5 \textit{\textit{x}}xg8 8.\textit{\textit{f}}f4 (on 8.\textit{\textit{f}}f3 there is also the simple 8...\textit{\textit{x}}x\textit{f}6) 8...\textit{\textit{g}}g4 9.\textit{\textit{h}}h5 \textit{\textit{f}}f6 and now after either 10.\textit{\textit{x}}x\textit{h}4 or 10.\textit{\textit{x}}x\textit{h}4 Black regains the pawn while keeping the pair of bishops, and better prospects.

$\bullet$ 6.\textit{\textit{h}}h4?!

This retreat is marked as suspicious. g3 is not the place for the dark-squared bishop. 6...\textit{\textit{g}}g5 7.\textit{\textit{g}}g3 \textit{\textit{e}}e4 8.\textit{\textit{e}}e2 \textit{\textit{f}}5! The queen on \textit{\textit{f}}6 will exert strong pressure on the white position. The thematic strike 8...\textit{c}5 is wonderful in many positions of the French Defence, but
Chapter 6 - The McCutcheon Variation

here White would be happy to see it: 9.a3 6xc3+ 10.xc3 5a5 (10...6xc3
11.bxc3 5a5 12.d2 6c6 13.dxc5
6xc5 14.h4 (after 14.6d3! 6d7
15.0= Black's king can't find a safe
haven) 14...6g8 15.hxg5 hxg5 16.6d3
6d7 17.6h7 0-0= and here the
white king is lacking safety and thus
Black obtains good counterplay,
Gutsko-Kiselev, Lugansk 2010) 11.6d3
6c6 12.dxc5 6d7 13.0-0 6xc3
14.6xc3 6xc3 15.bxc3 6c8 16.h4=.
9.exf6 6xf6 10.a3 10.6d3?! 6c6
11.0-0 6xf2 12.6xf2 6xf2?? De la
Riva Aguado-Vallejo Pons, Cala Galdana
1999. 10...6xg3 11.hxg3 11.6xg3?! –
with the h-file remaining closed, the
...g7-g5 advance can hardly count as
weakening: 11...0-0 12.f3 6xc3+ 13.bxc3
6e5! 14.6e2 6c6 15.dxe5
6xe5 16.0-0 6e6 17.6d2 d4 ½-½
Galkin-Belozero, Tomsk 2004. Now
11...6e7!N

White has problems. Black can choose
between several good ideas to proceed.
The compact pawn structure, his active
pieces and pair of bishops allow the
possibility of attacking the f4 pawn
with ...6d6, or transferring the knight
to d6, or playing on the c-file with 6b8
and ...c7-c5.

Important: Stepping away from the c1-h6
diagonal with the bishop allows Black to keep
the bishop pair and enjoy nice prospects.

With 6...g5 Black weakens his structure, but

Black keeps his pair of bishops and pro-
ceeds with a simple plan – quick de-
velopment of the queenside and then
queenside castling. 11...6f8?! 12.6c1?!
(12.6b1! 6d7 13.6d2 6c6 14.c3
0-0-0 15.f4 6d6= 16.fxg5? hxg5++
17.6xh8 6xh8 18.g4 e5 Deutsch-
Volkov, Internet blitz 2006) 12...6c6
13.6b3 6g7 14.6h5+ 6f7
15.6xf7+ 6xf7 16.0-0-0 with a diffi-
cult struggle for equality; 11...6d6
12.6b5! 6d7 13.6xd6+ 6xd6
14.6d2 6c6 15.f3 0-0-0 16.0-0-0
6b8 17.6c3 a6 18.6b1 ½-½ G.
Kuzmin-Shtyrenkov, Alushta 2004.

12.6b5 12.6d2 6c6 13.f3 (13.6b5
0-0 14.f3 a6 15.6bc3 6d6 16.0-0-0
b6 17.6b1 6a5?? with a dangerous
initiative. Black is also better after
13...6d8!? 14.f3 a6 15.6bc3 6e7
16.0-0 6d7 17.6b1 0-0-0=)
13...6d7 14.g4 0-0-0= 12...6a6
13.6d2 c6 14.6bc3 6c7 15.f4 6d7
16.6d1 White is trying to transfer the
knight to e5 and improve his strategi-
cally bad position. In case of 16.0-0-0
0-0-0 17.6g1 6df8??...

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his plan is very efficient: 7...g3 £e4 8...£e2 f5! (the key move) 9.exf6 £xf6 10.a3 £xg3 11.hxg3 £e7!N etc.

- 6...c1?!

This is the move that has lately been causing a headache for Black. 6...£e4 7...£g4 After the retreat to c1, which leaves the c3 and d4 pawns somewhat more exposed, Black can successfully play either 7...£f8 (see p.308) or 7...g6 (see p.310):

A) 7...£f8!?

8...£e2 8.a3 £xc3+ (8...£a5 9...£e2 c5 is covered under 8...£ge2) 9.bxc3 c5 10...d3 cxd4 11...xe4 (11...xd4? is equally weak as in the line with 7...g6, for example 11...£a5+ 12...£f1 £c3 13...£b1 £xd4=) 11...dxe4 12...xe4 £c6 13...£e2 dxc3=. Here Black has preserved the kingside structure, which is a great relief for the upcoming battle.

8...c5 We've already highlighted how important this move is for Black's counterplay. 9.a3 and now:

A) 9...£a5:

A1) 10...xc5 £d7 11.b4 £xc3?!

11...£xe5 12...£h5 (12...£h3, £c7 13...£d4 £c6 14...£xc6 £f6 15...£f3 £xc6 (15...£xf3 16...£xf3 £xc3 17...£d2 17...£xc6 18...£xc3 £e5= or 17...£d4 £e5 18...£b5 £xb5 19...£xb5 £h3=) 16...£xf6 £xf6 17...£d3 £e5= B. Savchenko-Volkov, Serpukhov 2008)

12...£c7 13...£xe4 £xe4 14...£b2 (14...£c3 £a5 15...£b1 £xb4 16...£xb4 or 14...£d4 15...£b2 £e3 16...£xe3 £xe3+ 17...£e2 £c4 18...£b5 £g3+ 19...£xg3 £xg3+) 14...£g5 15...£g5 £hx5 16...£c3 £e3. Black obtains sufficient counterplay here: 17...£xe3 £g4 18...£e2 (18...£b5 £g3+ 19...£e2 £xh2 20...£xh2 £xh2 21...£d6 £b6= or 21...£d1 £b6=) 18...£g3+ 19...£d2 £f2 20...£hg1 £xh2= Bruzon Batista-Short, Havana 2010. 12...£xc3 £xe5 13...£g3 £c7 14...£b5 £b8 15...£b2 £f6 16...£f4=;

A2) 10...£f5 Black wants to fortify the knight in the centre, however White has a tricky retreat. In case of 10...£xc3 there follows 11...bx5 (11...£xc3 £xb4= Hector-Jepson, Copenhagen 2001)

11...£e4 (11...£xe2 12...£xe2 £xd4 13...0-0 £xa5 14...£a4?! (14...£xd4 £c6 15...£f4 £c7 16...£b2 £a5) 14...£c6
15...a3+ ♘g8 16.♘d6 ♙d2+ 17...♘d3 h5 18...♘h4 g5 19...♘h3 ♘f4 20.g3 ♘f3 21...a1e1 h4 22...e2 ♘e4 (22...♗f5†) 23...d3 ♘f3 24...e2 ♘e4 25...d3 ½–½ Decoster-Michiels, Belgium 2006/07) 12.f3 ♗xa5+ 13.c3 cxd4 14...xe4 d3 15...d2 dxe4 16...xe4 dxе2 17...xe2 ♗d7 18.0–0 ♗xe5 19...f3.

A21) 10...cxd4 11.cxd4 ♗a5+ In case of 11...♗c7 12.f3 ♘c3 13...d2 ♘xe2 we get one of the typical positions where Black is worse because of his poor development: 14...♗f6 (14...b6 would be good if Black could exchange the passive bishop, but this also fails on account of his bad development: 15...c1 ♗a6 16.c4 ♗xc4 17...xc4 dxc4 18...e4 ♗xc6 19...xc4 ♗xe4+ 20...xe4± with a clear advantage) 15...d3 f5? 16...f6± Latorre-Zacarias, Asuncion 2010. 12.c3 ♗c6 13...e3 White threatens f2–f3.

13...♗e7 Tactics won't help: 13...b5 14...c1 ♗xa3 15.f3 h5 16...h3 ♘b4 17...xb4 ♗xb4+ 18...c3 ♘xc3 19...d2 ♗xd4 20...xc3 ♗e3+ 21...d1±. 14...h3 and now: 14...f5 15.g4 ♘xe3 16...xe3 ♗d7 17.f3 ♗g5 18.h4± – Black's disconnected pieces are a bigger problem than the weak pawns on a3 and c3; 14...b5 15...c1 ♘f5 16.g4 ♘xe3 17...xe3 ♗xa3 18.f3 ♗g5 19.h4 – Black's pieces are poorly coordinated; 14...f6 15.f3 ♗g5 16...h5 g6 17...g4± – this line works better when the king is on e8, because then in one of the critical positions he has the option to castle.

A22) 10...♗a5?!

11...♗xh1 is the regular retreat: 11...♗g6 ♘xc3 12...xc3 (12...xa5 ♘e4†) 12...cxd4 (12...xb4?!N 13...b5 b3+†) 13...b5 ♗c7 14.f4 ♘c6 15...b2 yields equal play, Gengler-Libiszewski, Nice 2003; 11...e6?!

(White should not exchange the e-pawn, the pillar of his position) 11...♗xf6 and now 12...f4 cxb4 13.axb4 ♘xb4; 12...f3 cxb4 13.axb4 ♘xb4†; or 12...h4.

11...cxb4 11...♗xc3 12...xc3!± is the point behind 11...♗h1! 12...dxe4 dxe4 12...fxe4 13.axb4 ♘xb4+ 14.c3 ♘e7 15...f4±. 13.axb4 ♘xb4+ 14.c3 ♘e7 14...a5 15.g4±; 15...f4 ♘c6!. 15...f4 ♘e8 16...c4± Rauzer-Belavenets, Leningrad 1937.

A2) 9...♗xc3+! is the regular solution which leads to a position with mutual chances. Black has a solid pawn structure on the kingside which promises easier play on the other flank. After 10.bxc3:
centre, particularly in the structures with doubled pawns. 11.f3 11.dxc5?! 
\[ \square c6 \] 12.f3  (12.\[ \square f4?! \] \[ \square d4+?? \]) 12...\[ \square x c5=\] 11...\[ \square x c3 \] 12.\[ \square d2 \] \[ \square x d4 \] 13.\[ \square x d4 \] with the idea of seeking compensation based on the pair of bishops and better development: 13...\[ \square x e 2 \] 14.\[ \square x e 2 \] \[ \square c6 \] 15.\[ \square e 3 \] \[ \square a 4 \] 16.\[ \square f 4 \] \[ \square d 7 \] 15.\[ \square a 4 \] In the event of 15.\[ \square d 3?! \] \[ \square g 8 \] 16.0-0 \[ \square a 6 \] 17.\[ \square e 3 \] \[ \square c 8=\] Black has an extra pawn and solid play on the queenside, based on the open c-file and strong knight on c3, but also a problematic rook. Greater activity provides White with compensation, but only sufficient for a draw: 18.f4 \[ \square c 5 \] (18...\[ \square e 4?! \] 19.\[ \square x e 4 \] \[ \square d x e 4 \] 20.\[ \square x e 4 \] \[ \square c 5 \] 21.\[ \square e 3 \] \[ \square h 7=\] 19.\[ \square x c 3 \] \[ \square x d 3 \] 20.\[ \square x d 3 \] \[ \square x c 3 \] 21.\[ \square b 5 \] \[ \square c 5 \] 22.\[ \square x c 5 \] \[ \square x c 5 \] 23.\[ \square d 6 \] \[ \square h 7=\] 15...\[ \square g 8 \] 16.\[ \square b 5?! \] White follows a faulty plan. 16.\[ \square b 5 \] is better: 16...\[ \square x b 5 \] 17.\[ \square x b 5 \] \[ \square e 8 \] 18.\[ \square d 4 \] \[ \square d 7\Rightarrow \] 16...\[ \square a 6 \] 17.\[ \square x d 7 \] \[ \square x d 7 \] 18.\[ \square f 2 \] \[ \square c 4 \] 19.\[ \square b 3 \] \[ \square x f 4 \] 20.\[ \square x f 4 \] \[ \square h 7 \] 21.\[ \square d 2 \] \[ \square h c 8\Rightarrow \] (Nabaty-Jorczik, Kemer 2009)

White has the concrete threat of f2-f3. 11.f3 \[ \square g 5 \] 12.\[ \square h 4 \] \[ \square h 7\pm \] Fressinet-Kortchnoi, Villandry 2007. The black knight is chased away and misplaced.

B) After 7...\[ \square g 6?! \] we have:

B1) 8.\[ \square e 2 \]

This ugly move usually works fine when Black has played ...\[ \square f 8 \] instead of ...\[ \square g 7-\square g 6 \]. 10...\[ \square c 7 \]! (As the bishop is on a5, this becomes the best square for the queen. Besides, Black is saving the option of playing ...\[ \square d 7 \]. 10...\[ \square c 6 \] 11.\[ \square b 4 \] \[ \square x e 5 \] 12.\[ \square h 3 \] \[ \square c 7 \] 13.\[ \square x e 4 \] \[ \square d x e 4 \] 14.\[ \square b 2 \] \[ \square f 6 \] 15.\[ \square c 3 \] \[ \square d 7 \] 16.\[ \square x e 4 \] \[ \square f 3=\] 17.\[ \square x f 3 \] \[ \square x b 2 \] 18.\[ \square f 6 \] \[ \square x f 6 \] 19.\[ \square x f 6 \] \[ \square e 7 \] 20.\[ \square x d 7 \] \[ \square x d 7 \] 21.0-0-0= with good chances to increase the advantage, Van Oosterom-Kraai, Hoogeveen 2009) 11.\[ \square f 4 \] (11.\[ \square b 4?! \] \[ \square x c 3=\] 11...\[ \square x c 3 \] (Black gets

Black has achieved everything. He has finished his development and reached a winning position;

A23) The natural developing move 10...\[ \square c 6?! \] is a failure here because
nowhere with 11...g5 12.\textit{We}3 \textit{We}xe5? 13.b4 \textit{Ac}d8 14.f3± 12.\textit{O}xc3 \textit{O}xc3+ (in case of 12...\textit{We}xc5?! 13.\textit{O}d2± White's pawn structure remains intact) 13.bxc3 \textit{O}d7 (13...\textit{We}xc5 14.\textit{O}d2 \textit{O}d7∞ with a complex struggle, Bergmann-Rey, LSS email 2008) 14.\textit{O}b5 \textit{O}xc5 15.\textit{O}xd7+ \textit{O}xd7∞ with a complicated position. White has weak pawns and Black has weak squares. 16.0-0 0-0-0?! (16...\textit{We}xc3?! 17.\textit{O}d2 \textit{O}c7 18.\textit{W}f6 \textit{H}h7 19.\textit{O}xh6∞) 17.\textit{O}e3± Spraggett-Vernay, La Massana 2010.

After 9...\textit{O}xc3+ White has a choice:

B11) 10.\textit{O}xc3 \textit{O}xc3 11.bxc3 \textit{W}a5 12.\textit{O}d2 \textit{W}a4 and now:

B111) 13.\textit{C}c4 \textit{O}c6 14.\textit{d}xc5 \textit{W}xc2 15.\textit{W}f4 d4 15...g5!

Practically forced. In the variations with \textit{W}f8 instead of g6, we have seen that this set-up is acceptable, but here the weakened dark squares tip the balance in White's favour.

11.\textit{c}xd4 \textit{W}a5+ 12.\textit{c}c3 \textit{O}c6 13.\textit{O}e3 (13.\textit{W}f3 b6!)
White protects the d4 pawn by putting the bishop on e3, already the third move with this piece. This fact might help in arguing that the 6.\textit{c1} retreat is not the best:

B121) \textbf{13...h5?!} Black has a complex tactical idea in mind, but at the end of our lengthy analysis White comes out with the slightly better position. The drawback of the \ldots h7-h5 advance is that Black loses the retreat square for his knight after the expected f2-f3. 14.\textit{h3} \textit{b5} Black threatens \ldots b5-b4. 15.\textit{c1} 15.f3 \textit{xc3} 16.\textit{d2} b4\textit{f}. 15...\textit{xa3} 16.f3 \textit{b4?!} These are tactically very unpleasant variations for White.

B1211) 17.fxe4?! \textit{d3+} 18.\textit{d2} dxe4! 19.\textit{c2} b4 and now: 20.cxb4 \textit{xb4} 21.\textit{c3} \textit{b2+} 22.\textit{d1} \textit{a6} 23.\textit{c1} \textit{a1} 24.\textit{d2} \textit{d8} and Black has a strong attack for the piece; or 20.\textit{g3} bxc3+ 21.\textit{xc3} (21.\textit{e2} \textit{a6}; 21.\textit{d1} \textit{b8} 22.\textit{e4} \textit{b1}+ 23.\textit{e2} \textit{a4} 24.\textit{d6}+ \textit{d7}) 21...\textit{b2+} 22.\textit{c2} \textit{b4+};

B1212) 17.cxb4 \textit{xb4}+ 18.\textit{c3}! 18.\textit{d1} \textit{b3+} 19.\textit{e1} (19.\textit{c2} \textit{d3+} 20.\textit{c2} \textit{b1+} 21.\textit{c1} \textit{c3+}) 19...\textit{b4+=}. 18...\textit{xc3} 19.\textit{d2} \textit{xd4} 20.\textit{xc3} \textit{e3+} 21.\textit{d1} \textit{b4} 22.\textit{d2} \textit{d4} 23.f4 a5 24.\textit{e3} And the active

B122) \textbf{14.f6!} 14...\textit{e7}! 14.\textit{h3} \textit{f6}! If 14...\textit{f5}?! 15.g4 \textit{xe3} 16.\textit{xe3}± the black knight will soon be chased to the edge of the board.

14...f6! secures the knight's retreat via g5 to the wonderful post on f7. 15.f3 15.exf6?! \textit{xf6} – by trading the central pawn White has lost his space advantage and released the e6 pawn. Black is already threatening \ldots e6-e5, for example: 16.\textit{g5} e5 17.\textit{f3} 0-0 18.\textit{xf6} (18.\textit{h6f7}! 18...e4 19.\textit{f4} \textit{b6}+. 15...\textit{g5} 16.\textit{g4} 16.\textit{xg5}?! \textit{fxg5}! \textit{fxg5} and now:

B1221) 16...\textit{f7}! 17.\textit{f4} 17.exf6 e5 18.\textit{g3} \textit{f5} 19.\textit{f2} 0-0 20.g4 (20.\textit{d2} \textit{e8} 21.g4 \textit{d6} 22.\textit{g2} \textit{c4}++) 20...\textit{xe3} 21.\textit{xe3} \textit{b6} 22.\textit{g2} \textit{xf6} 23.0-0 \textit{d7=} and now: 17...\textit{fxe5} 18.\textit{fxe5} \textit{h5} 19.\textit{h3} \textit{d7}; 17...\textit{a4} 18.\textit{h3}; or 17...\textit{b6}?! 18.exf6 e5 or 18.\textit{c1} f5 19.\textit{f3} \textit{a7} 20.a4 \textit{c8}++;

B1222) 16...\textit{f5} 17.\textit{f2} 17.\textit{d2}? \textit{h5} 18.\textit{f4} \textit{h3}+; 17.\textit{c1}?! Now Black can play 17...\textit{g8}!\textit{g8}!
In this unusual and wild position, Black has the better chances. By securing the knight on f7, Black has all the critical squares covered, while White is still struggling with the c3 pawn and his king in the centre. 17...\textit{d}7 18.\textit{exf6} \textit{e5} 19.\textit{dxe5} \textit{\textsc{w}b4} (19.\textit{\textsc{w}xg6} h5) 19...\textit{\textsc{wb}4} 20.\textit{axb4} \textit{\textsc{g}xe5}=. 18.\textit{\textsc{exf6}} After 18.\textit{\textsc{w}f4} fxe5 19.\textit{dxe5} \textit{\textsc{f}f7} White should probably seek salvation in the queenless endgame: 20.\textit{\textsc{w}b4} \textit{\textsc{w}xb4} 21.\textit{axb4} \textit{\textsc{g}xe5} 22.\textit{\textsc{xa}7}= 18...\textit{e5}\textsc{c};

B2) The move 8.a3 is harmless here, as the d4 pawn is not protected as in the line 6.\textit{\textsc{e}e3}. 8...\textit{\textsc{x}c3}+ 9.\textit{bxc}3 \textit{c5} 10.\textit{\textsc{d}d}3 and now:

B21) 10...\textit{\textsc{h}5} The authors’ idea to chase the queen to a less active square is interesting. 11.\textit{\textsc{w}f4} \textit{g5} This plan has already been suggested in the line 6.\textit{\textsc{e}e3}. 12.\textit{\textsc{e}e3}! Unfortunately, it looks as though the queen is very comfortable on the square that is usually reserved for the bishop! 12...\textit{\textsc{a}5} 13.\textit{\textsc{a}xe4} \textit{cxd}4 14.\textit{\textsc{d}d}2! \textit{\textsc{d}xe4} 15.\textit{\textsc{c}d}4= Baghdasaryan-Antic, Kavala 2010;

B22) 10...\textit{\textsc{c}d}4! 11.\textit{\textsc{a}xe4} 11.\textit{\textsc{c}d}4 \textit{\textsc{a}5}+ 12.\textit{\textsc{f}f1} \textit{\textsc{c}3} – this is the problem we mentioned before: the bishop is not on e3 and the d4 pawn falls. 13.\textit{\textsc{b}b1} \textit{\textsc{w}xd}4\textsc{f}; 11...\textit{\textsc{d}xe4} 12.\textit{\textsc{d}xe4} \textit{\textsc{d}d}7! 12...\textit{\textsc{d}xc3} 13.\textit{\textsc{d}e}2 \textit{\textsc{w}d}5 14.\textit{\textsc{w}xd5} \textit{\textsc{e}xd5} 15.\textit{\textsc{d}xc3} \textit{\textsc{c}e}6 16.0-0 \textit{\textsc{c}c}6 17.\textit{\textsc{f}f}0-0 18.\textit{\textsc{d}b}5. 13.\textit{\textsc{w}xd}4 13.\textit{\textsc{c}d}4?! \textit{\textsc{d}c}6 14.\textit{\textsc{w}g}4 \textit{h}5 15.\textit{\textsc{w}g}3 \textit{\textsc{w}xd}4 16.\textit{\textsc{b}b}1 \textit{\textsc{h}h}3 17.\textit{\textsc{e}e}4+ 18.\textit{\textsc{d}e}2 \textit{\textsc{d}d}7\textsc{f}. 13...\textit{\textsc{a}5} 14.\textit{\textsc{d}e}2 \textit{\textsc{d}6} 15.\textit{\textsc{h}4} \textit{\textsc{w}xe}5 16.\textit{\textsc{c}e}3 \textit{g}5 17.\textit{\textsc{c}c}4 \textit{\textsc{a}5} 18.0-0 \textit{e}5 with a good position;

B23) 10...\textit{\textsc{d}xc}3 11.\textit{\textsc{d}xc}5 \textit{\textsc{w}a}5 12.\textit{\textsc{w}b}4\textsc{f} \textit{\textsc{w}xb}4 13.\textit{\textsc{a}xb}4 \textit{\textsc{d}c}6 14.\textit{\textsc{\textsc{c}c}2} \geq 14.\textit{\textsc{d}d}2 \textit{\textsc{d}4} 15.\textit{\textsc{d}f}3 \textit{\textsc{d}xb}4 16.\textit{\textsc{\textsc{d}d}4} \textit{\textsc{d}xd}3+ 17.\textit{\textsc{c}d}3 \textit{\textsc{d}d}5 18.\textit{\textsc{d}b}5\textsc{f} \textit{a}6 19.\textit{\textsc{\textsc{d}d}6+} \textit{\textsc{e}e}7 20.\textit{\textsc{e}e}2 \textit{f}6. 14...\textit{\textsc{d}4} 15.\textit{\textsc{\textsc{d}c}3}?! \textit{\textsc{d}c}3 16.\textit{\textsc{b}b}5 \textit{\textsc{d}d}7 17.\textit{\textsc{\textsc{d}c}6} \textit{\textsc{d}c}6\textsc{f} Hector-Brynell, Lidköping 1999.

\textbf{Important:} In the lines where White removes the bishop and avoids its exchange, Black usually creates counterplay on the weakened diagonal a5-e1 with ...\textit{\textsc{a}a}5. 6...\textit{\textsc{e}e}4 7.\textit{\textsc{g}g}4 \textit{g}6 (7...\textit{\textsc{f}f}8 does not work so well in the system that we propose) 8.\textit{\textsc{f}f}2 (the direct consequence of placing the bishop on c1. White is practically forced to make this defensive move because of the weakness on c3. If he tries 8.a3, seeking for compensation, Black has the simple 8...\textit{\textsc{x}c}3+ 9.\textit{\textsc{b}x}3 \textit{c}5 10.\textit{\textsc{d}d}3 \textit{\textsc{d}xe}4! 11.\textit{\textsc{\textsc{d}d}4} \textit{\textsc{a}a}5+ and White must play the king, after which there follows 12...\textit{\textsc{d}c}3 and Black wins a pawn) 8...\textit{\textsc{c}5} 9.\textit{a}3 \textit{\textsc{d}c}3+ 10.\textit{\textsc{b}x}3 \textit{\textsc{c}d}4 11.\textit{\textsc{\textsc{d}d}4} \textit{\textsc{a}a}5.

Now we come to the most common continuation.
The Modern French

6. \( \text{g5-d2} \)

7. \( \text{b2xc3} \)

7.\( \text{bxc3} \) is a rarely-played move. White wants to preserve the pawn structure, but without the bishop on the c1-h6 diagonal there is no attack because Black will simply castle. 7...\( \text{e4} \) and now:

A) 8.\( \text{b4} \) c5! 9.\( \text{xc5} \) 9.\( \text{dxc5}?! \) \( \text{xf2} \). 9...\( \text{xc5} \) 10.\( \text{dxc5} \):

A1) 10.\( \text{c7} \) 11.\( \text{f3} \) 11.f4 \( \text{d7} \) (11...\( \text{xc5} \)=) 12.\( \text{f3} \) (12.b4?! is a terrible weakening of the pawn structure; 12...b6↑) 12...\( \text{xc5} \) 13.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{d7} \)= 14.\( \text{d3} \) 0-0 15.0-0-0 \( \text{ac8} \). Grund-Reefschläger, Vienheim 1999. 11...\( \text{d7} \) 12.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{xc5} \)= There are no problems either after 12...\( \text{xc5} \). 13.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{d7} \) 14.0-0 \( \text{c8} \) 15.\( \text{f1} \) There can be no attack without the dark-squared bishop:

15.\( \text{g4}?! \) 0-0\( \text{f} \) and White must take care of the c-file and the pawns on b2 and e5. 15...\( \text{b6} \) with equality, Spielmann-Nimzowitsch, Gothenburg 1920. 15...0-0 is also equal.

A2) Or with a different move order 10...\( \text{d7} \) 11.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{c7} \) 12.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{xc5} \) 13.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{d7} \);

A3) 10...\( \text{c6} \) 11.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{c7} \) 12.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{a5} \) 13.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{xc5} \) 14.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{d7} \) 15.0-0 0-0 16.\( \text{f1} \) b5 17.\( \text{ac1} \) b4 18.\( \text{c4} \)= D. Mastrovasilis-Antic, Valjevo 2011;

A4) 10...\( \text{a5} \) 11.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{xc5} \) 12.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{c6} \) 13.\( \text{f3} \) a5 14.\( \text{d3} \) b6 15.c3 \( \text{a6} \) 16.\( \text{xa6} \) \( \text{xa6} \) 17.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{a7} \) 18.0-0 0-0 19.\( \text{ad1} \) \( \text{c7} \) = Guseinov-Nepomniachtchi, Porto Carras 2011.

B) 8.\( \text{d3} \)??! Who would say that such a normal developing move can be of suspect value? The reason is simple, White cannot attack without the dark-squared bishop and thus the pawn structure is damaged without compensation. 8...\( \text{xc3} \) 9.\( \text{bxc3} \) c5 10.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{a5} \) 11.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{c6} \)

A typical position which can also be reached through a different move order, for example 7.\( \text{bxc3} \) \( \text{e4} \) 8.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{d2} \) 9.\( \text{xd2} \) c5 10.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{a5} \). White has nothing to compensate for his ruined structure: 11...c4 is another good plan for Black. He blocks the weak pawn and

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then storms with \( \ldots \triangle d7-b6-a4 \). We have already seen this manoeuvre in the game Somoff-Volkov, 2010;

C) 8.\( \triangle e2 \)!

An ingenious manoeuvre introduced by grandmaster Emil Sutovsky. White is aiming for the positions similar to the Classical Variation 4.\( \triangle g5 \triangle e7 \), where he can fight for a small but stable advantage.

8...c5 Since the bishop is clearly misplaced on c3, Black can develop the knight first with 8...\( \triangle c6 \)!! and only later prepare \( \ldots c7-c5 \), for example 9.\( \triangle g3 \triangle xc3 \) 10.bxc3 g6 11.h4 \( \triangle e7 \) 12.\( \triangle e2 \) c5 13.0-0 c4 (13...\( \triangle Wa5 \)!!) 14.h5 \( \triangle a5 \) 15.\( \triangle d2 \triangle d7 \).

The regular scheme is to recapture with the queen and place the knight on the natural c6-square, with approximately equal play. However, since we will have opposite castling on the board, the authors recommend a slightly more aggressive set-up. It is better to have an effective knight on c5 than the 'natural' one on c6. 12.f4 \( \triangle xc5 \) 13.\( \triangle d3 \triangle d7 \) 14.0-0-0 b5!

There is no reason to hesitate. The normal order of events is to line up the heavy pieces on the c-file and prepare this advance with \( \ldots a7-a6 \). However, Black earlier pushed \( \ldots h7-h6 \) which will only speed up the contact in front of his king after White flicks in g4-g5.

By opting for the McCutcheon system we should always be prepared for a sharp and uncompromising struggle:

C1) 15.\( \triangle b1 \) b4 16.\( \triangle e2 \) a5 17.g4 \( \triangle b6 \) b6 is a good square for the queen, however Black can also connect the rooks with the prophylactic but less principled 17.\( \triangle h4 \)!!.

18.h4 a4 Black also has the initiative after 18...b3!! 19.cxb3 a4 20.b4 \( \triangle xd3 \) 21.\( \triangle xd3 \) \( \triangle xb4 \) 22.\( \triangle d4 \) a3 23.b3 \( \triangle ac8 \) 24.\( \triangle c1 \) \( \triangle c4 \) 25.\( \triangle h d1 \) (25.\( \triangle xc4 \) dxc4 26.\( \triangle x c4 \) \( \triangle d2 \) 27.\( \triangle c2 \) \( \triangle c8-+ \) ) 25...\( \triangle fc8 \) 26.\( \triangle c2 \) \( \triangle b6 \) 19.g5 h5 20.g6 b3+;

C2) 15.\( \triangle xb5 \) \( \triangle xb5 \) 16.\( \triangle xb5 \) \( \triangle e4 \) 17.\( \triangle e1 \) With the open files and the dominant knight on e4 Black clearly has compensation for the pawn. 17...\( \triangle b6 \)!!?

18.\( \triangle c3 \triangle c5 \) 19.f5 \( \triangle ab8 \) 20.b3 \( \triangle fc8 \) 21.\( \triangle d2 \) 21.f6? d4++ 21...\( \triangle a5 \) 22.\( \triangle a4 \) 22.\( \triangle b2 \) \( \triangle xc3+ \) 23.\( \triangle xc3 \)
7. \( ... \quad \text{f6-e4} \)

Now 8.\( d3?! \) is a logical developing move, but unprincipled. If White recaptures with the bishop with the obvious desire to keep his pawn structure intact. After 7...\( \text{f}4 \) 8.\( \text{b}4 \) c5! 9.\( \text{xc}5 \) \( \text{xc}5 \) 10.dxc5 it is best for Black to recapture on c5 with the knight: 10...\( \text{d}7 \) 11.\( \text{d}7 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 12.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{xc}5 \).

\( \text{g}b3+ \text{f} \). 22...\( \text{xd}2+ \) 23.\( \text{xa}4 \) 24.bxa4 \( \text{c}4 \) 23.

C3) 15.\( \text{xb}5 \) \( \text{xb}5 \) 16.\( \text{xb}5 \) \( \text{b}8 \) 17.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 18.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{c}8 \) with nearly decisive threats;

D) 8.\( \text{g}4?! \) 0-0 9.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{xc}3 \) 10.bxc3 c5

White is the one who is faced with problems. There is no trace of an attack and the pawns will be needing protection.

**Important:** White recaptures with the bishop with the obvious desire to keep his pawn structure intact. After 7...\( \text{f}4 \) 8.\( \text{b}4 \) c5! 9.\( \text{xc}5 \) \( \text{xc}5 \) 10.dxc5 it is best for Black to recapture on c5 with the knight: 10...\( \text{d}7 \) 11.\( \text{d}7 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 12.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{xc}5 \).

Now 8.\( \text{d}3?! \) is a logical developing move, but unprincipled. If White recaptures with the bishop with the obvious desire to keep his pawn structure intact. After 7...\( \text{f}4 \) 8.\( \text{b}4 \) c5! 9.\( \text{xc}5 \) \( \text{xc}5 \) 10.dxc5 it is best for Black to recapture on c5 with the knight: 10...\( \text{d}7 \) 11.\( \text{d}7 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 12.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{xc}5 \).

A) 10.\( \text{f}4 \) is also weak: 10...\( \text{a}5 \) 11.\( \text{f}3 \) and now:

A1) 11...\( \text{c}4 \) There is still no need for Black to block the position when the natural ...\( \text{c}6 \) offers more possibilities. 12.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 13.0-0 \( \text{b}6 \) Following Volkov's recipe. 14.\( \text{b}4 \) \( \text{a}4 \) 15.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{c}8 \) Gesos-Markidis, Peristeri 2010;

A2) 11...\( \text{c}6 \)!

Now White has to solve issues connected with the weakened pawns on c3 and d4:

A21) 12.dxc5 \( \text{xc}5 \) 13.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 14.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 15.\( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{f}2 \) 16.\( \text{xf}2 \) \( \text{c}8 \) 17.\( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 18.\( \text{ab}1 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 19.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{a}5 \) 20.\( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 21.\( \text{xf}6+ \) \( \text{xf}6 \) 22.\( \text{ff}1 \) \( \text{g}8 \) 23.\( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{g}8 \) Deshpande-Cruz, Badalona 2009. Exemplary and instructional play from Cristhian Cruz;
A22) 12...c4 $\text{xd2}+ 13...\text{xd2} $\text{dxc4}
14...\text{xc4} $\text{xd4} 15...\text{xd4} $\text{cxd4} 16...\text{d3} 
\text{d7} 17...\text{xd4} \text{c6=} Sai-Murshed, New
Delhi 2010, and the better queenside 
pawns tip the balance in Black's favour;
A23) 12...\text{b1?!} simply drops a pawn to 
12...c4 13...\text{e2} $\text{xa2} 14.0-0 $\text{a3=} and White has no compensation what­
soever;
A24) 12.0-0? $\text{cxd4} 13...\text{d2} $\text{xd2} 14...\text{d2} $\text{xd4} $\text{f}.$

B) 10...\text{f3} $\text{a5} 11.0-0$

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

This is a very instructive position. White is better developed, has the more 
active bishop, holds extra space and a 
solid pawn chain in the centre. Black 
has developed only his queen and his 
other pieces are sitting on the back 
rank. According to common chess 
sense, White should be better.
But the first glance is deceptive, and ac­
tually Black is better! There is one single 
strategic element that outweighs all 
White's pluses, and this is the pawn 
structure. Black can choose between 
two plans based on the play against the 
weak pawns, either to continue ...\text{c6} 
and press against d4, or to block the 
centre with ...c5-c4 and attack the weak 
pawns on the c-file.
11...c4 The most solid plan. Closing the 
position dilutes the value of White's de-
velopment lead, and meanwhile, Black 
fixes the weak pawns on the c-file. The 
next stage is to attack them. (Black also 
obtains solid play with the developing 
11...\text{c6}?)
12...\text{e2} \text{d7?!} Now White must rush to 
open the front: 13...\text{h4} 13.g3? \text{b6} 
14...\text{fb1} (White can give the a-pawn in 
order to save the one on c3: 14.a4 \text{xa4} 
15...\text{b5=} 14...\text{a3} and a pawn will 
be lost (14...\text{a4} 15...\text{b4}): 15...\text{c1} 
\text{xc1}+ 16...\text{xc1} \text{a4=} (Somoff-
Volkov, Dubai 2010); or 13...\text{a3?! with} 
the idea of preventing \text{a3}. 13...\text{b6} 
13...g5!? 14...\text{f4} \text{a4} 15...\text{f3} $\text{f}.$

8. \text{d1-g4}
The queen on g4 and pawn on e5 are 
the basic prerequisite to even think 
about the kingside attack. White must 
be very energetic in order to compen­
sate for the spoiled structure on the 
other flank. After 8...\text{g4} the opponent 
has left us with a choice between two 
'bad' options: 

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.2\textwidth]{chess_board2.png}
\end{center}
either we will weaken the structure by 
pushing the g-pawn, or we will forfeit 
the right to castle and have our king 
further away from the safe position on 
the queenside. Regardless of the popu-
larity of 8...g6 (see p.318), we prefer to 
keep the structure flexible and enthusi­
astically advocate 8...\text{f8} (see p.325).
By the way, 8...g5?! is weak on account of 9.h4!± h5?! 10.hxg5±.

8...g6!? is more popular than 8...f8, although it is only a matter of taste. Both continuations obviously have some drawbacks.

The pawn on g6 allows White to break or alter the kingside structure with a simple h4-h5 advance. If Black then responds with ...g6-g5, White can prepare the f2-f4 advance. Black can avoid all this by pushing ...h6-h5, but then the g5-square becomes horribly weak. The weakened squares f6 and h6 are commonly a target for the white pieces. The biggest advantage of such a set-up is that Black can castle queenside and connect the rooks. We should add that Viktor Kortchnoi early in his career played 8...g6 but later switched to 8...f8, while Alexander Morozevich prefers 8...g6 more, which also suits his style because this line is more dynamic. 9.\(\text{d3} \)\(\text{xd2} \) 10.\(\text{xd2} \) c5

Immediately highlighting the drawbacks of White’s queenside structure. The possibilities of opening the game with ...cxd4 or closing the flank with ...c5-c4 are important strategic pluses for Black.

The plan 10...b6?!, with the light-squared bishop exchange, is slow and causes huge problems on the kingside: 11.h4 a6 12.h5

The typical h-pawn advance, aimed at demolishing the kingside structure. 12...\(\text{xd3} \) 13.cxd3 g8 (13...g5 14.f4! gxf4 15.\(g7 \) f8 16.\(h6 \)±) 14.hxg6 \(xg6 \) 15.\(f4 \) \(xg2 \) 16.\(h6 \) \(d7 \) 17.\(e2 \) g8 18.\(h7 \) with a strong initiative, Fercec-Zelic, Pula 2000.

After 10...c5 White has the following possibilities:
A) 11.\( \Box f3 \) (see p.319)  
B) 11.h4 (see p.324)  
C) 11.dxc5 (see p.324)  

A) 11.\( \Box f3 \)  
A1) 11...\( \Box c6 \)  

The most natural move and the most acceptable strategy for most French players. Black is simply developing without revealing his trumps on the queenside:  
A11) 12.h4  

Here Black can choose between several solid continuations:  
A111) 12...\( \Box a5 \) 13.\( \Box f4 \) White hasn't got a better move. He's eyeing the weaknesses created after the ...g7-g6 advance.  13...\( \Box xd4 \) If Black wants to avoid the unpleasant intermediate move 14.h5, he can take on d4 with the knight and head for a roughly equal endgame: 13...\( \Box xd4?! \) 14.\( \Box xd4 \) cxd4  

In comparison with the line 8...\( \Box f8 \), Black doesn't have this elegant move because there is a queen check on b4 and the b7 pawn falls. 14.h5?!

A typical advance when the black pawn is on g6. White gives up the centre in exchange for a strong attack or a passed pawn. 14...\( \Box g5 \) 15.\( \Box f6 \) White is exploiting the weaknesses created after 8...g6.  
15...\( \Box f8 \) 15...\( \Box g8?! \) 16.\( \Box xh6 \) g4?! (\( \geq \) 16...\( \Box xc3+ \) 17.\( \Box e2 \) g4 18.\( \Box g5 \) \( \Box xe5\)\( \Box f6 \), for example: 19.\( \Box h7 \) \( \Box d7 \) (19...\( \Box d7?! \) 20.\( \Box f6+ \) \( \Box e7 \)) 20.\( \Box f6+ \) \( \Box xf6 \) 21.\( \Box xf6 \) \( \Box d8 \) 22.\( \Box xd4! \)\( \Box xd4?! \)) 18.\( \Box f6+- \); the
h-pawn decides the game. 16.\textit{Wh}xh6 g4 17.\textit{W}g5 \textit{W}xe5 18.\textit{W}h7 \textit{Wh}8 19.\textit{W}e2 \textit{W}xd3 20.\textit{W}xd3 \textit{W}d7 21.\textit{W}f6+ \textit{W}e7 22.\textit{W}g5† And White is the first to create dangerous threats, Anand-Shirov, Bilbao 2010;

A112) Black can trade the bishop after the early exchange on d4: 12...\textit{W}xd4!? 13.\textit{W}xd4 \textit{W}a5+ 14.c3 14.\textit{W}e2 is weaker: 14...b6 15.\textit{W}f4 \textit{W}a6 16.\textit{W}hc1 \textit{W}a3 17.\textit{W}e3 (17.\textit{W}f6 \textit{W}g8) 17...\textit{W}c8 18.\textit{W}f1 \textit{W}xd3+ (18...\textit{W}b4! 19.\textit{W}g1 \textit{W}c3=) 19.\textit{W}xd3 \textit{W}d7= Feygin-Gharamian, Belgium 2007/08.

A113) 12...c4!? As we will see in the system with 8..\textit{W}f8, the blockade is Viktor Kortchnoi’s favourite plan. 13.\textit{W}e2 \textit{W}d7 14.\textit{W}f4 \textit{W}e7

19.\textit{W}hc1 \textit{W}c8= 20.\textit{W}g5 \textit{W}c7 21.\textit{W}c2 (21.\textit{W}f6?! 0-0= 22.g4? \textit{W}fc8 23.gxh5 \textit{W}xd4!–+) 21...0-0 22.g4 (22.\textit{W}ac1 \textit{W}fc8 23.\textit{W}e1 \textit{W}e7=) the plan has worked perfectly; the white rooks are passive and Black obtains the better chances) 22...hxg4 23.h5 \textit{W}e7 24.\textit{W}h1 f6 25.\textit{W}xe6 \textit{W}xe6 26.hxg6 \textit{W}xe5! (26...\textit{W}xe5? 27.\textit{W}h8+!=) 27.\textit{W}h6 \textit{W}xg6 28.\textit{W}xg6+ \textit{W}g7 29.\textit{W}h5 f5 30.\textit{W}cc1 \textit{W}g6= 19.\textit{W}g5 \textit{W}c7 20.\textit{W}h3 \textit{W}a5 21.\textit{W}e1= Bringing the last piece into play via d1. The white king is safer and his attack is more dangerous.

14...b6 15.\textit{W}f4 \textit{W}a6 16.\textit{W}xa6 \textit{W}xa6= Black managed to trade the weak bishop and gain control over an entire complex of squares. The chances are balanced. 17.\textit{W}h2 A fine example of the typical manoeuvre aimed at weakening the kingside. 17.h5 g5 18.\textit{W}f6 \textit{W}h7 19.\textit{W}h2 \textit{a}5=. 17...h5 Black would rather surrender g5 than f6. 17...\textit{a}5!? 18.\textit{W}g4 \textit{W}c4+ 19.\textit{W}e1 \textit{W}b2= Das-Murshed, Dhaka 2010. 18.\textit{W}f3 \textit{W}c8 18...\textit{W}a3=, with the idea of tying the white rooks down to defence, comes into consideration:

19.\textit{W}hc1 \textit{W}c8= 20.\textit{W}g5 \textit{W}c7 21.\textit{W}c2 (21.\textit{W}f6?! 0-0= 22.g4? \textit{W}fc8 23.gxh5 \textit{W}xd4!–+) 21...0-0 22.g4 (22.\textit{W}ac1 \textit{W}fc8 23.\textit{W}e1 \textit{W}e7=) the plan has worked perfectly; the white rooks are
Black should refrain from trading the queens as this would clear the central e5-square: 15...\textit{xf6} 16.exf6 0-0-0 17.\textit{ae1} (17.\textit{e5}!? \textit{xe5} 18.\textit{dxe5} \textit{a4} – the engines are puzzled by this position but we believe that White has slightly better chances) 17...c7 18.d1.

Planning to recapture with the rook after the knights' exchange on e5. White's structure is bad but he has more space and control over the dark squares. It is curious that engines evaluate the position as better for Black, but for now we still believe the human logic that here White holds a definite advantage. 16.h5 g5 17.\textit{xe7} \textit{xe7} 18.\textit{h2} g8 19.\textit{g4} \textit{f8} 20.\textit{f6} 20.f4 gxf4 21.\textit{af1} f5 22.\textit{f2} \textit{e7} 23.\textit{h3} \textit{h8} 24.\textit{xf4} b5 25.\textit{f3} a5 26.a3 \textit{c7} 27.\textit{h1} \textit{g3} 28.\textit{e2} \textit{g5} 29.\textit{f4} ½-½ Zurakhov-Kortchnoi, Tbilisi 1956. 20...\textit{xf6} 21.\textit{xf6} e5!

With equality, Panov-Kortchnoi, Leningrad 1953.

A12) 12.\textit{f4} Often a threatening position for the queen in the McCutcheon system, particularly since Black has pushed ...g7-g6: 12...\textit{cxd4} 12...c4 13.\textit{e2} \textit{e7} 14.\textit{f6} \textit{xf6} 15.exf6 \textit{d7} 16.e5+ \textit{xe5} 17.dxe5 \textit{c6} 18.e3 \textit{c5} 19.h4 \textit{d7} 20.\textit{ab1} b6 with approximately equal chances, Guseinov-Rodshtein, Moscow 2008; Black can also play 12...\textit{a5}!? 13.\textit{ab1} cxd4 14.\textit{xd4} \textit{xd4} 15.\textit{xd4} \textit{c7}!=. 13.\textit{cxd4} \textit{a5}+ 14.c3 \textit{b6} Black trades his passive bishop, while White can't do much without the h2-h4-h5 advance;

A13) White can't hope for much with 12.dxc5 \textit{a5} 13.\textit{f4} \textit{xc5} 14.\textit{d4} \textit{xd4} 15.\textit{cxd4} \textit{xd4} 15.\textit{xd4} \textit{c7}!= 15...\textit{a5}+ = followed by ...b7-b6 and ...\textit{a6};

A14) 12.\textit{ab1} cxd4
The simplest way to equalize. Black can also set to block the centre with ...c5-c4. White's rooks are not effective on the b-file in this type of position. With 8...g6 Black reserves the right to castle and the king will easily find safety on the queenside. The issue with the weak f6-square will be solved by pushing ...f7-f6.

If Black plays 12...c4!? there can follow: 13.\texttt{\textbackslash e}2 b6 14.\texttt{\textbackslash f}4 \texttt{\textbackslash d}7 15.\texttt{h}4 \texttt{\textbackslash e}7 16.\texttt{h}5 g5 17.\texttt{\textbackslash f}6 0-0-0 (Black's activity will be reduced if he exchanges on f6 and clears the e5-square for White's knight: 17...\texttt{\textbackslash w}xf6 18.\texttt{\textbackslash e}xef6 0-0-0 19.\texttt{\textbackslash d}1 \texttt{\textbackslash c}7 20.\texttt{\textbackslash e}1 \texttt{\textbackslash d}6 21.\texttt{\textbackslash e}5 \texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash x}e5 22.\texttt{\textbackslash x}e5\texttt{\textbackslash i} with a complicated struggle) 18.\texttt{\textbackslash w}xe7 \texttt{\textbackslash d}xe7= Black will easily solve the problem of the f6-square and gain equal play. 19.\texttt{\textbackslash h}2 \texttt{\textbackslash g}8!

20.f4 (after 20.\texttt{\textbackslash g}4!? \texttt{\textbackslash f}8 21.\texttt{\textbackslash f}6 \texttt{\textbackslash x}f6 22.\texttt{\textbackslash e}xf6 e5 23.dxe5 \texttt{\textbackslash e}8= the position is almost identical to the game Panov-Kortchnoi, examined under 12.h4, with one small irrelevant difference that here \texttt{\textbackslash b}1 and ...b7-b6 are inserted) 20...f5 21.\texttt{\textbackslash g}4 \texttt{\textbackslash c}e7 with an equal position, Spraggett-Ree, Wijk aan Zee 1985. 13.\texttt{\textbackslash c}xd4 \texttt{\textbackslash a}5+ with ...\texttt{\textbackslash b}7-b6 and ...\texttt{\textbackslash a}6 to come next;

A15) 12.\texttt{\textbackslash h}1b1 c4!

The blockade now works better than 12...\texttt{\textbackslash c}xd4 13.\texttt{\textbackslash c}xd4 \texttt{\textbackslash a}5+ 14.\texttt{c}3 b6, because here White has the unpleasant 15.a4! \texttt{\textbackslash a}6 16.\texttt{\textbackslash b}5\texttt{\textbackslash i}. 13.\texttt{\textbackslash e}2 b6= The white rooks can't do much on the flank where usually Black is developing play. 13...0-0!?

Now that the white rooks are 'busy' on the other side, Black can even castle kingside! 14.\texttt{\textbackslash h}4 \texttt{\textbackslash g}7 15.\texttt{f}1 f6 16.\texttt{\textbackslash g}3 \texttt{\textbackslash d}7 17.\texttt{\textbackslash a}e1 b5 (17...f5!?) 18.\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash d}f6+ \texttt{\textbackslash x}f6 (≥ 18...\texttt{\textbackslash w}xf6 with a wonderful position) 19.\texttt{\textbackslash e}5 \texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash x}e5
20...\textit{xe5} Gowda-Murshed, Delhi 2010. 14.\textit{h4} A7 15.A7h2 15.f4 \textit{e7} 16.f6 0-0-0 17.a4. The pawn on a4 is a favourite prey of the light-squared bishop and now Black can even afford to surrender the central e5-square: 17...\textit{x}f6 18.exf6 \textit{e}c7 19.e5 \textit{xe}5 20.dxe5 a5 21.e3 h5 22.d4 Aa8 (preparing to create a passer...) 23.f4 b5 24.axb5 \textit{b}6\textit{+} Castella-Moskalenko, Ampola rapid 2006 15...\textit{e7} 16.h5 16.g3 0-0-0 17.a4 (17.g4 h5 18.f6 \textit{a}3\textit{=}) 17...h5 18.f3 \textit{d}f8\textit{=}. 16...0-0-0! 16.g5 17.f3\textit{=}, preparing to install the knight on f6. 17.hxg6 f6?! 17...h5!N.

Black does not want to open the centre and free the d4-square for the white pieces, but instead continues with the standard plan of pressing the queenside with \textit{a}3. 18.g3 \textit{x}g6 19.d3 \textit{a}3 20.g5 (20.xg6 \textit{h}g8 21.xh5 \textit{x}g2 22.h4 \textit{e}7?!\textit{=}) 20...\textit{d}f8 21.e3 \textit{b}7\textit{=}, with rich play for Black. 18.f3 \textit{ex}e5 19.dxe5 \textit{xe}5 20.dxe5 h5 21.d4 \textit{dg}8 22.a4 c6 22...\textit{e}8?! 23.a5 b5 24.h1 \textit{g}6\textit{=}. 23.a5 b5 24.h1 h4 25.h3 \textit{g}6 26.g3\textit{=} Sutovsky-Daly, Port Erin 1999;

A2) 11...\textit{a}5?! Usually Black continues like this when he wants to develop the knight to d7. 12.h4 \textit{d}7?! Black wants an active position for the knight. From c5 this piece controls e4 and a4, and overprotects b7, which is commonly under pressure on the open b-file. 13.hb1 13.xg6?! \textit{b}6 (13...hxg6?! 14.xe6+ \textit{d}8 15.xd5\textit{=} 14.a4 15.dxc5?! \textit{xc}3+ 16.e2 \textit{d}7 17.ab1 xc5 18.b4 \textit{xb}4 19.xb4 \textit{c}8 20.g4 b6 21.d4 \textit{e}7 22.f4 f6\textit{=}

The black pieces are on their natural positions, while the \textit{b}4 is slightly off-side, Dudukovic-Maksimovic, Subotica 2008. 13.cxd4 14.xd4 a6 15.b4 \textit{c}7 16.c4 a5 17.b3 dxc4 18.xc4 \textit{c}5!

The knight from c5 is attacking and defending at the same time. 19.c3 b6 20.f4 \textit{b}7\textit{=} Leko-Morozevich, Morelia/Linares 2007;

A3) 11...\textit{d}7?! Black intends to leave the knight on d7 in order to control the
f6-square and therefore develops the bishop to c6 first. It might look odd but it works like a charm. 12.h4 and now:

A31) 12...a6 13.a4 13.axg6 fxg6 (13...hxg6? 14.h5+) 14.h5+ e7 (14...fxe8? 15.hxh7+) 15.hxh7+= 15...d8 16.e6+=. 13...c4 14.e2 a5!? Immediately blocking the pawn on a4 because the bishop is on c6 and that pawn can be attacked later. 15.f4 b7 16.a2 e7 17.h2 g5 18.e3 0-0 0 19.h5 f5 20.exf6 exf6 21.g4 f5 22.f3 e8 with an excellent position for Black, Wang Zili-Wang Hao, Hefei 2010;

A32) A more common move order is 12...h7 13.f4 a6 14.h2 d7 15.g4 0-0-0.

The key position for the 11...d7 line: 16.f6 16.xh6 f5!; 16.xb1 c4 17.e2 h5 18.f6 e3+=. 16...b6 A logical idea. By keeping the knights on the board Black maintains his dynamic potential on the queenside. 16...c4!? 17.e2 a3 (the queen’s favourite square in such a pawn structure) 18.xd7 (otherwise Black transfers the knight to a4) 18...e7=; 16...xd4!? 17.cxd4 b4+ 18.e3 b6∞ Psakhis. 17.a4!? a4 18.xc5 xc5 19.xa7 e4+ 20.e4 xe4+ 21.xc1 xc5 22.e3 xe5 23.g4 d5 23...b8!=. 24.f4± Maze-A. Grigorian, Moscow 2009;

B) 11.h4 a6 12.h3?! In the system with 8...g6 this move does not work well for White. 12.f3 transposes into 11.f3; and without a stable centre White can’t achieve anything with the charge 12.h5 g5 13.f4 cxd4± with dangerous counterplay. 12...cxd4 In comparison with the 8...f8 system, here White would have 13.g3! with a strong attack. 13.xd4 b6! 14.f3 14.f2 b4+ 15.d1 xe5=. 14...d7= and White can only retreat the rook to h1;

C) 11.xc5 clears the central square for the pieces but further weakens the structure: 11...d7?! Black can also continue with the regular 11...c6 12.f3 a5 13.f4 xc5= with equal chances.

In the system with 8...f8 we will see the advantages of this move and the beautiful knight placement on c5. However, here White can exchange the bishop for the knight and remain with a powerful minor piece. But he won’t be without problems; the weak pawns and open c-file provide tremendous activity for Black. 12.b5 12.f3 xc5 13.d4 (13.e1 d7 14.e3 c7 15.b1 0-0-0 with an excellent position for Black, Lasker-Marshall, USA
m-4 1907) 13...d7 14.h4 c7 (14...c8 is also good for Black)
15.f4 0-0-0 (Black threatens...
.f7-f5 or...
.f7-f6) 16.f6 (16.e3
b8
16...b8 17.a1 c8. We
have the impression that the knight on
c5 controls the entire board. 12...c7
13.d4 13.f3 xc5 14.xd7+
xd7 15.d4 c8 changes nothing,
Black has excellent play on the c-file.
13...0-0 14.xd7 xd7 15.f3 fc8:
C1) 16.e3?! xc5 17.d4 c7
18.h4 Everything looks nice, except
the c-pawns...
18.ac8+ 19.h3
b6 19...a3? 20.b1 a4+ with
perfect coordination: 20.e2?!
20.xh6? xc3!--; 20.f4?! b2
21.d1 xc3 (eventually White's bad
structure decides the outcome)
22.xc3 xc3 23.e1 c4 24.f1
xc2 25.d2 c1+ 26.e2 h5 27.f3
g1 28.g4 b5 Sl. Martinovic-
Padevsky, Kragujevac 1984;
20...xe3+ 20...b2 21.xh6...;
21.xe3 h5 22.d4 c5 23.b1 b6 with excellent play;
C2) 16.hb1 ab8 17.b3 xc5
18.xc5 xc5 19.d4 b6=

White can't make the typical a4-a5
advance;
C3) 16.ab1 b6?!

Now we return to the move we enthusi-
astically advocate.

8. ...
e8-f8

9. f1-d3 e4xd2
t-e1xd2 c7-c5

The position aimed for by both sides.
Black has the healthier pawn structure
while White is holding a space advan-
tage and boasts better development.
These strategic factors will determine
the main plans of both players. Instead
of 10...c5, Black can force the queens'
exchange with:
10...g5+ 11.xg5 hxg5

The knight is prettier than the bishop
but White's queenside pawns are shat-
tered. Had the white pawn been on b2,
he would have had a better ending. As it
is, Black is equal, particularly since

However, this endgame should not be
to Black's taste. The culprit is the appar-
ently good g5 pawn, which White can use to open the f- or h-file and grab the initiative:

A) 12.f4!? gxf4 12...g4?! 13...e2 g3 14.h4± and White will win the pawn. 13...f1 c5 14...h3 It is probably more precise to develop the knight on f3: 14...xf4?! e7 (14...d7? 15...h3 e7 16...f1 e8 17...g5 xh2 18...xf7+!+- Bohatirchuk-Zubarev, Moscow 1925) 15...f3 c4 16...e2 c6 17.h4 ...d7 18.g4 f6 19.h5 e8f 20.g5 fxe 21...xf8 xf8 22...xe5 e5 23.dxe5±. 14...c6 15...xf4 e7 16...f1 d8 16...f5 17.exf6+ gxf6 18...xf6 cxd4 19.cxd4 xdx4 20...f7+ d6 21...h7! d7 22...g5±. 17...g4 c4 18...e2 g6?!

Black should always try to refrain from such weakening moves and keep the possibility of undermining the centre with ...f7-f6. Better was 18...f8 19...f4 d7 20...g5 e8 21.h4 c8 22.h5 c6 23...c1 a6 24...b2 c6 25...a1 h6 26.g4 e7 27...h3 f6 28.exf6+ gxf6 29.g5 fxg5 30...xg5 with approximately equal chances. The most likely reason why Black can easily maintain the draw is the fact that White has exchanged his f-pawn for the opponent's h-pawn. True, White obtained some initiative on the f-file, but this is slowly fading away and there is no f-pawn to threaten the nasty f2-f4-f5 advance. Possibly the safer way to maintain the advantage is to block the enemy g-pawn with g2-g4, and then open the h-file with h2-h4, thus preserving the powerful pawn chain. 19...xf4 d7 20...g5± and now White has better chances to increase the advantage, Wang Jue-Zhang Xiaowen, China 2010.

B) 12.g4?! f6 12...c5 13...f3 c6 14.dxc5! f6 15.h4 xe5 16.dxe5 fxe5 17.hxg5 xh1 18.xh1 g8 19...b5± Leko-ENSAM, Paris 2005, and Black is a pawn down and confined to the 8th rank. 13.h4! White's idea is to exchange the 'less valuable' pawn and open the h-file. Of course, the evaluation scale can be changed as the endgame is approaching, when the distant pawns can be worth more than their central counterparts. Nevertheless, we are still far from this stage and keeping the f-pawn on the board is probably a good idea. 13...xf4 After 13...fxe 14.dxe5 c6 15...f3 gxh4 16...e1 h3 17...h2 d7 18...e1 e7 19...x3 xh3 20...h3± Black has a solid but passive position. Besides, White can significantly improve his standing if he executes the f2-f4 advance: 20...g8 21...e3 a5 22...h7 c5 23...h4 c4 24...g6 c6 25.f4 f8 26.h5 e8 27...xe8 xex8 28...f3 f7 29.f5 exf5 30.gxf5 e8 31...f4 g8 32.h5 b5 33...g5 h7 34...g6 e7 35...d6 b8 36...d4 g8 37...g5 1-0 Gdanski-Dittmar, St Vincent 2000. 14...fxg4 xh4 15.f4± White will recapture the pawn and keep the spatial advantage, thus a better endgame;

C) 12...h3 allows Black to obtain good play: 12...g4 13...f4 g5 14...e2 c5 15...g3 c6 16...e3 d7= Groszpeter-Yu Lie, Kecskemet 2010.
There are several ramifications in this key position:
- 11.dxc5 (see p.327)
- 11.f4 (see p.328)
- 11.Qf3 (see p.329)
- the main move 11.h4 (see p.334)

11.dxc5?! This temporary pawn grab, which also clears the d4-square for the white pieces, is a viable alternative in many French set-ups, but here the b8 knight is still not developed and Black has the possibility to recapture the pawn after ...Qd7. In the Steinitz Variation White’s pawn structure is compact, and therefore dxc5 is justified in many lines. White appears to be ignoring one of the most important strategic factors – the pawn structure. Of course, the idea behind this capture is to centralise the pieces on d4 and face Black with an unpleasant choice: to trade the strong pieces on d4 and realign White’s structure or to avoid the exchanges. In the former case, Black would head into a passive endgame and in the latter for a passive middlegame.

This would all be fine if Black didn’t have the possibility to recapture on c5 with his knight. This piece is splendidly placed, for both attacking and defensive purposes. It protects the b7 pawn and Black is not forced to push ...b7-b6, which would expose him to the a2-a4-a5 charge. The knight also controls the important squares a4 and e4, and this is a fact that gains in significance because the c3 pawn is weak. In the later games we will learn that the dxc5 capture is an important resource for White, but only after the black knight is already developed to c6.

A) 11...Qc6 12.Qf3 Qa5 and now:

A1) 13.Qhe1 White wants to centralise the knight and is using the rook to protect the e5 pawn. However, it is better to use the queen and move the h1 rook to the semi-open b-file.

   13...wxc5 14.Qd4 Qd7 15.Qab1 Qa5
   16.Qb5 Qc8 17.Qd4 Qxb5 18.Qxb5
   Qxd4 19.cxd4 b6=

This is one of the endgames that French devotees are delighted to play;

A2) ≥ 13.Qf4 wxc5 14.Qd4 Qd7 In case of 14...Qxd4 15.Qxd4 w xd4
16.Qxd4 Qe7 17.Qhb1 Qd8 18.a4 Qd7
19.\text{\textit{Ma}}3 \text{\textit{Mc}}7 20.\text{\textit{Ma}}ab3 \text{\textit{Ma}}6 (20...\text{\textit{Mb}}8
21.\text{\textit{Ma}}5 \text{\textit{Md}}7 22.\text{\textit{Ma}}6 \text{\textit{Mc}}6 23.f4\uparrow, or
22.\text{\textit{Mb}}c8 23.\text{\textit{Ma}}xb7 \text{\textit{Mx}}c2+ 24.\text{\textit{Me}}e3±)
21.\text{\textit{Ma}}5 \text{\textit{Ma}}7 22.f4 \text{\textit{Md}}7 23.\text{\textit{Mf}}b6\uparrow (Black
has the better structure, but White has
the initiative thanks to his spatial advan­
tage and more active pieces) 23...\text{\textit{Me}}c6
24.g4 \text{\textit{Ma}}8 25.f5 1-0 Barrientos
Chavarriaga-Podolchenko, Khanty-
Mansiysk 2010. \textbf{15.\text{\textit{Mb}}b1} and now:
A21) 15...\text{\textit{Mb}}6 16.\text{\textit{Ma}}\text{\textit{Ma}}5 17.\text{\textit{Ma}}6
\text{\textit{Wf}}7\uparrow. 17...\text{\textit{Mc}}8 18.\text{\textit{Mb}}5 \text{\textit{Wf}}7\uparrow. 19.\text{\textit{Mc}}6
\text{\textit{Mc}}x6 20.\text{\textit{Mc}}x6 \text{\textit{Mb}}8 21.\text{\textit{Ma}}5± 1-0 Leko-
Hübner, Dortmund 2000 18.\text{\textit{Mb}}3
\text{\textit{Mc}}b3+ 19.\text{\textit{Mb}}3 \text{\textit{Wg}}5 20.\text{\textit{Wxg}}5 \text{\textit{hxg}}5=,
Lecroq-Raupp, ICCF corr 2002;
A22) 15...\text{\textit{Mc}}c5 \text{\textit{Bx}}d4 Black can exchange
the pieces and repair White's structure.
The resulting endgame is very close to a
draw. 16.\text{\textit{Wx}}c4 \text{\textit{Wx}}4 16...\text{\textit{Wf}}7
17.\text{\textit{Mc}}b4±. 17.\text{\textit{Bx}}d4 \text{\textit{Mc}}8 The greater
activity grants White some initiative.
17...\text{\textit{Mb}}6 18.\text{\textit{Ma}}4\uparrow.

After a4-a5 Black will have a weak pawn
or weak complex of dark squares. 18.\text{\textit{Ma}}4
\text{\textit{Wf}}7 19.\text{\textit{Ma}}5 \text{\textit{Mc}}6 20.\text{\textit{Ma}}3 \text{\textit{Mc}}b8 21.\text{\textit{Mc}}3
\text{\textit{Md}}7 22.\text{\textit{Mc}}c5 \text{\textit{Mc}}7 23.\text{\textit{Mb}}3 f5 24.\text{\textit{Mb}}c3
\text{\textit{Mc}}b8 25.\text{\textit{Mf}}4± and White has more space
but the black structure is solid,
Brynell-V. Bagirov, Leningrad 1989;
A23) 15...\text{\textit{Mc}}d8 16.\text{\textit{Ma}}4 \text{\textit{Mc}}8 17.\text{\textit{Mf}}b3 \text{\textit{Ma}}6
18.\text{\textit{Mc}}4±, Morozevich-Vallejo Pons,
Pamplona 1998/99. The white pieces
are more active and better coordinated.
His pawn weaknesses practically don't count;
A24) 15...\text{\textit{Mf}}5 16.\text{\textit{Ma}}b3 \text{\textit{Mc}}b3+ 17.\text{\textit{Mc}}b3 \text{\textit{Mc}}b3!?.
17...\text{\textit{Mc}}7 18.\text{\textit{Mc}}d4
18.\text{\textit{Mb}}h4\uparrow! g5 19.\text{\textit{Mc}}d4=, 18...\text{\textit{Mc}}c8
with an approximately equal endgame,
Voloshin-Gieritz, Guben 2003.
B) 11...\text{\textit{Mc}}d7!

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

\textbf{12.\text{\textit{Mc}}f3} \text{\textit{Mc}}c5 The knight is ideally
placed on c5. 13.\text{\textit{Ma}}h1 \text{\textit{Md}}7 13...\text{\textit{Mc}}7\uparrow. 14.\text{\textit{Mc}}e2
\text{\textit{Mc}}c8 Black is already slightly
better. 15.\text{\textit{Mc}}d4\uparrow! 15.\text{\textit{Wd}}4 \text{\textit{Ma}}5 16.a4
(16.\text{\textit{Mc}}b4?! \text{\textit{Mc}}7 17.\text{\textit{Mc}}f1 b5 18.\text{\textit{Mc}}a3 \text{\textit{Ma}}6
19.\text{\textit{Mc}}b4 \text{\textit{Mc}}g8 20.\text{\textit{Mb}}1 \text{\textit{Mc}}a4= A sad pic­
ture for White. Now all three queenside
pawns are weak and blocked) 16...\text{\textit{Mc}}a6
The weak pawn structure and the pow­
erful c5 knight render the dxc5 capture
useless. 15...\text{\textit{Mc}}a5 White has cen­
tralised the knight but nevertheless he is in
trouble. The weak pawn on c3 is about
to fall and then the white position is col­
lapsing.

\textbf{11.f4?!} The strengthening of
the white centre is only an illusion, actually
this move leads into an inferior posi­
tion. 11...\text{\textit{Mc}}c6 12.\text{\textit{Mc}}f3 \text{\textit{Mc}}a5= And
White is already in trouble. His weak c3
pawn and exposed king in the centre
are common issues in the McCutcheon.
13.\text{\textit{Mc}}5? After 13.dxc5 \text{\textit{Mc}}c5= White is
busted. 13...cxd4+ 0-1, Ferreira-Abdalla, Sao Jose dos Pinhais 2010.
13...exf5 14. dxe5 fxe5 15. e6? fxe6+ 16. e2 fxe3-+-.

- 11. d3

White develops the knight to the most natural place. But is this the best place for the knight in this variation? This difficult question is open for debate. One thing is certain, White commonly plays 11.h4 first, shifting the rook to the third rank, and keeping the option of a different manoeuvre, for example g1-e2-f4-h5. Quick and efficient attack is White's main plan. The drawback of placing the knight on f3 is that it takes away the rook’s attacking square and interrupts the important prophylactic reinforcement of the c3 pawn. In addition, the knight has less effective attacking routes – either to jump to h4 or take the time to move the h-pawn to shift via h2 and g4. Of course, there are some benefits of such development. The knight can jump onto the central square after White plays dxc5, unless Black blocks with ...c5-c4 first, of course. Besides, the knight can support the g-pawn advance (after f4) with the idea of opening the position on the kingside:

Black is blocking the weak queenside pawns with gain of tempo and eliminates White’s possibility of opening the centre with dxc5. Black’s main manoeuvres will obviously take place on the queenside, and his biggest trump will be the ...b5-b4 break with the idea of endangering the white king and pressing the pawn chain. This suggests a sharp and uncompromising fight on both flanks. The counterplay against the white king is one of the reasons why many French Defence players fancy including the McCutcheon Variation in their repertoire.

A) 11... c4 (see p.329)
B) 11... a5 (see p.332)
A) 11...c4!
unusual position with mutual chances. The white king is feeling much safer after the disappearance of the b-pawn, but on the other hand, Black practically has an extra passed pawn:

A1) 13.a4

White is slowing down Black’s action before fully devoting himself to the attack on the kingside. We believe this is not a principled decision. Besides, the pawn is weaker on a4 than on a2, and Black can modify his plan. It is not necessary to play ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5 to trade the a-pawn, because it is much simpler to modestly push ...b7-b6 and leave the a4 pawn as a permanent weakness in the endgame. 13...\textit{d7} 14.h4

Black carried out his plan in the following game: 14.\textit{f4} \textit{e7} 15.g4 \textit{e8} 16.g5 hgx5 17.xg5 \textit{f8} 18.g4 \textit{h4} 19.g3 \textit{h6} 20.h4 b6 with equal play, Shomoev-Kortchnoi, Copenhagen 2005:

A11) 14...\textit{e8}! Black is preparing to move the king via d7 to a safer position on the queenside. 15.h3 15.f4 \textit{e7} 16.h3 \textit{d7} 17.g3 \textit{g8} 18.h5 \textit{a5} 19.h2 \textit{e7} (19...b5! 20.g4 (20.axb5 \textit{xa1} 21.bxc6+ \textit{xc6}+) 20...\textit{e7} and White will lose the pawn, see 21.b1 \textit{xa4}+ 20.d1 \textit{d8} (Black completes the transfer of the king without even considering taking the a4 pawn: 20...b5!? 21.c1 bxa4 22.a3 \textit{d8} 23.b1 \textit{c7} 21.c1 \textit{c8} 22.a3 \textit{c7}+ with rich play for both sides, Asrian-Volkov, Warsaw 2005. 15...g8 16.h5 \textit{e7} 16...\textit{a5} 17.h4 \textit{e7}. 17.h4 \textit{a5} Again we note that the placement of the a4 pawn provides Black with multiple choices. He keeps the option of pushing ...b5-b4, but can also consider winning that pawn. 18.c1 \textit{d8} But why not 18...b5!

19.f4 (19.f4 \textit{b8} 20.d1 b4 (20...d8?!) 21.cx b4) 19...b8 20.f5 b4+ and White is facing difficult problems. 19.f4 \textit{d7} 20.f5! – White sacrificed a pawn to be the first to grab the initiative, T.L. Petrosian-Volkov, Moscow 2006;

A12) 14...a6 15.f4 \textit{b5} 16.g4 b4 16...\textit{b8}!?; or 16...\textit{xa4}?!
is that the c3 pawn stays on the board to provide the white king and the d4 pawn with strong cover. However, Black could have reached the same position with an extra tempo had he played 12...b5 and White responded with 13.a4. 17.cxb4 cxb4 18.c3 c6 Black has forced the exchange of his b-pawn for White's c2 pawn. This has slightly weakened the white king and the b3-square. White will have to switch the play to the queenside but he will still be able to retain a small advantage. 19.hb1 19.g5 a5 20.d1 b8=!. 19...b8 20.d1+ Short-Morozevich, Germany Bundesliga 1998/99.

A13) 14...e7 15.h5 b6 Black is changing his plan on the queenside because the a4 pawn is now exposed to attack. 16.h4 g5+ 17.f4 xg4 18.xg4 e7 with equal chances, Akopian-Volkov, Port Erin 2006.

A2) 13.h4 White's best chances are on the kingside where he has more space. A quick opening of the files is his primary task. 13...b5 14.a3 a5 15.h5 15.f4 b8 16.hb1 e7; 15.h3?! Here the 'regular' rook lift gives nothing because the f3 knight is obstructing the coordination of the queen and the rook. 15...d7 16.g3 g8 and White has nothing to counter the inevitable ...b5-b4. 15...d7 16.f4 Clearing the way for the g-pawn whose purpose is to open a file for the rook. 16...e8! The computer persistently suggests the g8-square, but the king will be much safer on the queenside. 17.g4 e7 After the pawn exchanges on b4 Black usually wants to recapture with the queen, in order to harass the enemy king, hence this thematic move. However, the immediate ...b5-b4 break was working to Black's advantage.

17...b4! 18.axb4 axb4 19.cxb4 cxb4 20.c3 (20.hb1 a2!?) 20...b8!!

21.axa8 wxa8 22.c1 (22.cxb4? a2+ 23.e1 a1+ 24.d1 c3—+) 22...a2!+. 18.g5 hxg5 19.xg5 f6 20.f3 f8 21.exf6 xf6 with equal play, Matinian-Volkov, Jermuk 2010; A3) 13.hb1

The files are always attractive in the rooks' eyes, but this particular piece won't fire many shots. We have already highlighted that White's involvement on the queenside is not principled. The white rook should be on the kingside with the aim of opening the g- or h-file(s). 13...b8 14.a4:

A31) 14...b6 Grandmaster Ivanchuk also chooses the set-up which highlights the weakness of the a4 pawn. A similar idea was seen in another one of his games: 15.h4 b7! Black is calmly regrouping. The rook will be activated
through the 7th rank and after securing the g7 pawn, the black king will walk to the queenside. 16.\textit{ wg4 we7 17.g4 \textit{ wf8} 18.\textit{ wg1} Anyhow, the white rook belongs on the g- or h-file. 18...\textit{ wdd8} 19.g5 \textit{ we7} 20.h5 \textit{ wd7} Each black piece is performing a useful function. White is also very active and enjoys greater space on the kingside, but the a4 pawn is probably ruining his mood. 21.\textit{ wxf4} \textit{ wxe8} 22.gxh6 \textit{ wxe6} 23.\textit{ wgg4} 23.a5?! b5 – again White will see trouble with the a-pawn in the endgame. 23...\textit{ whe7} 24.\textit{ wgh2} \textit{ wce8} \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} Lutz-Ivanchuk, Gothenburg 2005;

A32) 14...\textit{ wgg8}!? 15.\textit{ wff4} \textit{ wwe7} 16.g4 \textit{ b6} 17.g5 \textit{ hxg5} 18.\textit{ wxe5} \textit{ whe8} 19.\textit{ wgg1} \textit{ wde8} 20.\textit{ wgg4} \textit{ wbb7}\infty Leko-Ivanchuk, Monaco blind 2005;

A33) 14...\textit{ waa6} Executing the main idea of the ...\textit{ b5-b4} advance is the simplest way to equalise the position. 15.\textit{ h4} \textit{ b5} 16.axb5 \textit{ axb5}! 16...axb5= 17.\textit{ wff4} \textit{ wde7} 18.\textit{ wee3} \textit{ wde8} 19.\textit{ h5} \textit{ wdd8} 20.\textit{ wgg1} \textit{ b4} 21.\textit{ f4} \textit{ wdd7} 22.\textit{ cxb4} \textit{ axb4} 23.\textit{ axb4} \textit{ wxb4}+ 24.\textit{ wbc3} \textit{ wxc3}+ 25.\textit{ cxc3} \textit{ wce7} Khalifman-Short, Merida 2001.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chess_board.png}
\caption{Position after 25.\textit{ cxc3} \textit{ wce7}}
\end{figure}

This position is critical for the evaluation of Black's plan to block and attack the weak pawns on the queenside. At first glance, the impression is that Black shows no respect for the development of his pieces. The white pieces are fully mobilized and the rooks are connected, while Black is only moving the queen and the pawns. But having in mind the closed nature of the position, the quick development loses its significance. Be-
sides, the knight on f3 is obstructing its own pieces in forming the attacking set-up and closes the third rank. By placing the queen on a3, Black has practically secured the pawn’s advance to b4. White can’t think of defence, which doesn’t even exist with such a damaged pawn structure. His main focus should be on attack on the enemy king:

14.\textit{\textbf{Bh3}}

White is moving onto the attack. Alternatively, 14.\textit{\textbf{h}b1}  \textit{\textbf{c}6} (or 14...\textit{\textbf{d}d7}?) – the knight will be wonderfully placed on a4: 15.\textit{\textbf{g}1}  \textit{\textbf{b}6} 16.\textit{\textbf{w}g3}  \textit{\textbf{a}4} 17.\textit{\textbf{g}4}  \textit{\textbf{b}8} with excellent play for Black) 15.\textit{\textbf{w}f4}  \textit{\textbf{b}8} 16.\textit{\textbf{w}e3} b5 17.\textit{\textbf{w}e1} a5 18.h5  \textit{\textbf{d}d7} 19.g4  \textit{\textbf{w}e7} 20.\textit{\textbf{d}d2} b4 21.\textit{\textbf{c}xb4}  \textit{\textbf{w}xe3}+ 22.\textit{\textbf{f}xe3} axb4 23.a3 (23.c3  \textit{\textbf{b}xc3}+ 24.\textit{\textbf{w}xc3} \textit{\textbf{x}b1} 25.\textit{\textbf{w}xb1} \textit{\textbf{a}8} 26.\textit{\textbf{b}b2} f6 27.\textit{\textbf{m}a1} \textit{\textbf{a}7} 28.\textit{\textbf{g}g1} \textit{\textbf{e}e8}?) 23...b3 gives Black an edge.

Or 14.\textit{\textbf{w}f4}  \textit{\textbf{c}6} 15.\textit{\textbf{g}4} b5 16.\textit{\textbf{g}5} b4 17.\textit{\textbf{w}e3} e5 18.gxh6 (18.h5  hxg5 19.\textit{\textbf{d}xg5} \textit{\textbf{h}6} 20.\textit{\textbf{h}g1} \textit{\textbf{b}8} 21.\textit{\textbf{g}b1} \textit{\textbf{d}d7} 22.\textit{\textbf{c}xb4}  \textit{\textbf{w}xe3}+ 23.\textit{\textbf{f}xe3} axb4 24.c3 f6 25.exf6 gxf6 26.\textit{\textbf{f}f3} bxc3 + 27.\textit{\textbf{x}xc3} \textit{\textbf{x}b1} 28.\textit{\textbf{x}b1} \textit{\textbf{a}8} 29.\textit{\textbf{e}e5} \textit{\textbf{h}7} 30.\textit{\textbf{x}xd7}+  \textit{\textbf{x}xd7} 31.\textit{\textbf{x}b6} \textit{\textbf{c}c7=}) 18...\textit{\textbf{x}h6} 19.\textit{\textbf{h}g1} (19.h5  \textit{\textbf{d}d7} 20.\textit{\textbf{h}h4}  \textit{\textbf{a}7} 21.\textit{\textbf{c}xb4} (21.\textit{\textbf{h}b1}  \textit{\textbf{b}5} 22.\textit{\textbf{c}xb4} axb4 23.\textit{\textbf{w}xa3} \textit{\textbf{x}a3} 24.\textit{\textbf{x}b4} \textit{\textbf{c}c4=}) 21...\textit{\textbf{x}b4}+ 22.\textit{\textbf{c}c3} \textit{\textbf{b}b5=}) 19...\textit{\textbf{e}e7} 20.\textit{\textbf{x}xb4} axb4 21.\textit{\textbf{w}xa3} \textit{\textbf{x}a3} 22.\textit{\textbf{g}b1} \textit{\textbf{c}c6=}, Alexakis-Markidis, Kavala 2010.

14...b5!

It is very risky to continue play without developing the pieces. But each rule can have its exceptions. Or 14...\textit{\textbf{c}c6} and now: 15.\textit{\textbf{w}f4}  \textit{\textbf{d}d7} 16.\textit{\textbf{h}h2}  \textit{\textbf{b}b2} 17.\textit{\textbf{h}h5} \textit{\textbf{e}e8} 18.\textit{\textbf{c}c1} \textit{\textbf{d}d8} 19.\textit{\textbf{f}f3} \textit{\textbf{d}d7=}; 15.\textit{\textbf{g}g3} \textit{\textbf{g}g8} 16.\textit{\textbf{w}f4}  \textit{\textbf{d}d7} 17.\textit{\textbf{h}h2} \textit{\textbf{e}e7} 18.\textit{\textbf{f}f3} (18.\textit{\textbf{h}h5} \textit{\textbf{f}f5})
threat of ...b4-b3: 19...g6 20...d1 (20...e2 b3 21...xb3 cxb3 22...d2 ...c6 23...g4 ...b8 24...f6+ ...d8=) 20...h5 21...xb4 ...xb4+ 22...c3 ...b2 23...c1 ...c6 24...f3 ...e7 25...g5 ...f5 26...h3 ...b8 27...g4 hxg4 28...xg4= and now: 19...g6 19...c6 20...xg7 ...xc3 21...b1 ...xd4 22...xd4 ...xd4 23...xb4 ...c6 24...b1 ...xe5 25...h7 ...e7 26...f4 ...d7 27...g4 ...a6 28...c3 ...d6 29...xf7 h5 30...e5 ...xe5 31...xe5+ ...xe5=. 20...e2 h5:

B23) 12...xc5:
B31) 12...c6 13...f4 ...xc5 14...d4 ...d7 15...b1 This position is covered under the move order with 9...xc5;
B32) 12...d7?!N and now:

B321) 13...b4 ...xc5 14...e1 ...e7 15...xe7+ ...xe7 16...d4 ...c5=;
B322) 13...c6 ...xc6 14...b4+ ...xb4 15...xb4 a5=;
B323) 13...d4!? ...xe5 14...f4 f6 15...e1 ...g8 16...xe5?! ...xe5 17...xe5 ...xc5 18...e1 ...e7 19...f4 ...f6 20...d6 ...f8 21...c7 ...f7=.

Important: With his knight on f3 it is more difficult for White to develop a kingside attack. In addition, the c3 pawn is more vulnerable as the third rank is interrupted and the rook from h3 can't support it. Black can assume the initiative with a swift charge of his b-pawn: 11...c4 12...e2 ...c6 13...h4 b5 14...a3 a5 15...d7 16...f4 ...e8 17...g4 b4!.

Now finally we arrive at the main line.

11...h2-h4

Practically the best possibility to fight for an advantage. White has to be aggressive in order to compensate for the damaged pawn structure. More space and the fact that the black king's defenders, the bishop and the knight, have been exchanged, are naturally calling
for an attack. The white rook will join the action by climbing to the third rank.

What can Black do to neutralize these plans? We will examine two lines. 11...\(\texttt{a}5\) is a rarely used move containing two ideas. The first is a direct threat against the central d4 pawn and the second is blocking the weakened pawns with ...c5-c4 and ...\(\texttt{a}3\):

A) 12.\(\texttt{f}3\)? \(\texttt{c}6\) 12...c4 is covered under the move order with 11.\(\texttt{f}3\). 13.\(\texttt{f}4\)!

This is the best square for the queen and White is ready to meet both ...\(\texttt{c}xd4\) and ...c5-c4. Besides, the queen is clearing the way for the g-pawn:

A1) 13...\(\texttt{c}xd4\) 14.\(\texttt{x}d4\) \(\texttt{x}d4\) 15.\(\texttt{w}d4\) \(\texttt{d}7\) 16.\(\texttt{h}b1\) \(\texttt{b}6\) 16...\(\texttt{c}6\) 17.\(\texttt{b}5\)±. 17.\(\texttt{w}b4\) + 17.a4±. 17...\(\texttt{w}b4\) 18.\(\texttt{w}b4\) \(\texttt{e}7\) 19.\(\texttt{a}4\) when White is slightly more active in the endgame, but the final outcome is leaning towards a draw;

A2) 13...\(\texttt{d}7\) 14.\(\texttt{h}b1\) \(\texttt{b}6\) 15.\(\texttt{a}4\)±;

A3) 13...\(\texttt{b}6\)? It looks tempting to support the c-pawn and try to exchange the bad bishop from a6. However, White is fully developed and it won't come as a surprise that he has a tactical refutation of Black's slow play. 14.\(\texttt{g}5\)!

14.h\(\texttt{x}g5\) 15.h\(\texttt{x}g5\) \(\texttt{h}h1\) 16.g\(\texttt{h}6\) \(\texttt{e}7\) 17.\(\texttt{h}h1\) \(\texttt{d}8\) 18.\(\texttt{h}h7\) \(\texttt{c}xd4\) 19.\(\texttt{g}xf7\) \(\texttt{d}3\)+ 20.\(\texttt{d}1\) \(\texttt{x}f7\) 21.\(\texttt{x}g7\) 1-0 Shabanov-Mnatsakanian, Soviet Union 1971.

B) 12.\(\texttt{d}c5\)?

B1) 12...\(\texttt{d}7\)! 13.\(\texttt{w}b4\) 13.\(\texttt{e}1\) \(\texttt{x}c5\)=. With the knight on c5 Black has nothing to worry about: 14.\(\texttt{h}h3\) \(\texttt{a}4\) (heading into the better endgame) 15.\(\texttt{g}3\) \(\texttt{x}g4\) 16.\(\texttt{x}g4\) \(\texttt{b}6\) 17.\(\texttt{h}h3\) \(\texttt{a}6\) 18.\(\texttt{f}4\) \(\texttt{c}8\) 19.\(\texttt{h}5\) g\(\texttt{g}6\) 20.\(\texttt{f}6\)
C) 12...\texttt{h}3!? White can also speed up the attack and stop counting the pawns. 12...cxd4 12...c4? 13...\texttt{g}3+--; 13...\texttt{g}3 \texttt{wx}c3+ 13...\texttt{g}6?? sets a trap but objectively worsens the position: 14...\texttt{xd}4 (14...\texttt{x}g6? \texttt{g}8 15...\texttt{f}3 \texttt{x}g6 16...\texttt{x}g6 \texttt{wx}c3+++) 14...\texttt{c}6 15...\texttt{f}4 d4 16...\texttt{x}g6 \texttt{xe}5 17...\texttt{h}5 \texttt{d}7 18...\texttt{d}1 \texttt{e}8 19...\texttt{e}2 dxc3 20...\texttt{e}1 f5 (20...\texttt{c}d3?? 21...\texttt{c}d3 \texttt{wh}5 22...\texttt{d}6+) 21...\texttt{e}3 \texttt{wh}5 22...\texttt{xe}5=. 14...\texttt{e}2 \texttt{g}8 15...\texttt{e}1!? Alternatives: 15...\texttt{b}1 \texttt{c}6 16...\texttt{f}3 b6 17...\texttt{f}1 \texttt{e}7 18...\texttt{g}1 \texttt{d}7 19...\texttt{h}7 \texttt{c}4 20...\texttt{x}g8 \texttt{g}8 21...\texttt{d}1 \texttt{xa}2 22...\texttt{xd}4 \texttt{xd}4 23...\texttt{xd}4 \texttt{xc}2++ Jansa-Padevsky, Havana 1966; 15...\texttt{h}7? d3+--.

Now:

C1) 15...\texttt{c}6 16...\texttt{f}1 with a very complex position;

C2) 15...b6 Exchanging the bishop won't solve Black's problems entirely. 16...\texttt{f}1! \texttt{c}7 17...\texttt{f}3 \texttt{a}6 18...\texttt{x}d4 \texttt{xd}3+ 18...\texttt{d}7?? 19...\texttt{c}4! \texttt{xc}4 20...\texttt{xc}4 \texttt{xc}4 21...\texttt{f}3 \texttt{xd}4 22...\texttt{xa}8 \texttt{e}7 23...\texttt{xa}7+ \texttt{d}7 24...\texttt{a}3+=. 19...\texttt{c}d3++;

C3) 15...\texttt{d}7?? 16...\texttt{f}1 \texttt{f}5? 16...\texttt{c}5 17...\texttt{e}2 \texttt{b}2 18...\texttt{h}7= Keres-Keller, Zurich 1968. 17...\texttt{f}5+!;
There are two viable options:

12.\(\text{\underline{f}}\)1

White is obviously guarding the e2-square for the knight’s development. But the knight can also reach f4 via h3, with the same pieces’ deployment on the kingside, as we will see below in the game Savanovic-Kortchnoi, Banja Luka 2007. Retreating the bishop to the starting square, from where it also disconnects the rooks, is probably the weaker of the two possibilities. 12...\(\text{\underline{c}}\)6 13.\(\text{\underline{e}}\)2 Or first 13.\(\text{\underline{h}}\)3 and then 14.\(\text{\underline{e}}\)2. 13...\(\text{\underline{b}}\)5 14.\(\text{\underline{h}}\)3 \(\text{\underline{a}}\)5 14...\(\text{\underline{b}}\)8!?

A new idea and probably the quickest and most efficient route to equalizing the position. Black is planning to recapture with the rook on b4, to keep the control of the open file while the knight is eying the new weakness on d4. If White tries to prevent this with a2-a3, Black will use the poor placement of the white bishop and continue with ...\(\text{\underline{a}}\)5! renewing the threat of ...b5-b4.

15.a3 \(\text{\underline{a}}\)5 16.\(\text{\underline{f}}\)3 \(\text{\underline{d}}\)7 (Black is improving his pieces before carrying out the thematic break) 17.g4 \(\text{\underline{e}}\)7 18.\(\text{\underline{g}}\)2 b4 19.cx\(\text{\underline{b}}\)4 \(\text{\underline{x}}\)b4 20.axb4 \(\text{\underline{w}}\)xa1 21.a3 \(\text{\underline{w}}\)xa3 22.\(\text{\underline{x}}\)xa3 \(\text{\underline{x}}\)xb4 23.\(\text{\underline{x}}\)a7 \(\text{\underline{b}}\)8 24.f4 \(\text{\underline{c}}\)6 25.\(\text{\underline{a}}\)1 \(\text{\underline{f}}\)6 26.h5 ½-½ Volokitin-Vallejo Pons, Wijk aan Zee 2009.

15.a3 \(\text{\underline{d}}\)7 16.\(\text{\underline{f}}\)4

This is the set-up that White was aiming for. He is already threatening 17.\(\text{\underline{f}}\)3 followed by a double attack on e6 or g6. In the lines with the white bishop on e2, we will also see that the black knight is wonderfully placed on f5, from where it defends the weakest points on f7 and g7, and also controls the squares, h4, d4, g3, which are then taken away from the white rook. This set-up also works well with the bishop on f1.

The main drawback of this plan is that the kingside rook is staying very passive and for a long time. Viktor Kortchnoi introduced a different plan, trying to maximise the functionality of all pieces. He defended the g7-square with his rook, and transferred the king to a safer place on the queenside. The knight remains on c6 to exert influence over b4 and the white centre.
A) 16...\&e7!? 17.\&h5 \&f5!? 18.\&f4 b4:

A1) 19.\&e2 bxc3+ 20.\&xc3 \&b6?!

The queen should stay on d8 for the time being, to control two important diagonals, the attacking d8-a5 and the defending d8-h4. Black is now threatening on the b-file and retains the important defensive manoeuvre ...\&h4 should White try pushing g2-g4.

21.\&h1 a4 (threatening checkmate on a5) 22.\&h1 (22.\&ab1?! \&a5+ 23.\&xb4 \&xb4 24.axb4 \&b6 25.g4 \&e7\#) 22...\&a5+ 23.\&b4 \&h7! (23...\&e7? 24.\&xg7\#) and now the knight, after successfully defending the king, is going back to his old place to collect the exchange. 24.\&b1 \&e7\#.

21.\&h1 and White will capture the b-file, Fressinet-Belozero, Izmir 2004.

A2) White should not activate the enemy queen by opening the a-file. 19.axb4?! axb4 20.\&xa8 bxc3+ 20...\&xa8! 21.g4? (21.cxb4 \&a1\#) 21...b3!+- A. Hunt-Cobb, England 2008/09. 21.\&xc3 \&xa8\# and White has many weak squares;

A3) 19.g4? bxc3+ 20.\&xc3 \&h4\#.

B) 16...\&g8?!

17.\&f3 \&e7 18.\&h5 18.\&b1 is not helping much: 18...\&b8 19.\&h5 b4. Now White has to start exchanging on b4 because of the threat 20...bxc3+. 20.axb4 axb4 21.cxb4 \&xb4 22.\&xb4 \&xb4 23.\&f4 \&e8 24.\&a3 \&b6 25.\&d1 \&c6 (Black could have won instantly with some beautiful tactical shots: 25...\&xc2! 26.\&xc2 \&a4+ 27.\&xa4 \&b8=+) 26.c3 \&b2 27.\&c1 \&xf2 28.\&e2 \&xg2? (28...\&f6\#) 29.\&a7+= A. Kovacevic-Plischki, Dos Hermanas blitz 2003.

18.b4 19.\&f4 bxc3+ 20.\&e1 \&e8 21.\&xc3 a4?! 21...\&b6!.
This is the logical move. The ...b5-b4 break has weakened the d4 pawn and cleared the b-file, and Black's most powerful piece can exploit such concessions. 22.\(\text{d}d\)1 \(\text{b}2\) 23.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{xc}2\) 24.\(\text{d}xg7\) \(\text{b}8\) (Black pays no attention to material and instead is using the open file to launch a counter-attack) 25.\(\text{f}5\) exf5 26.\(\text{d}xg8\) \(\text{b}2\) 27.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{d}8\) 28.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{e}4\) 29.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{a}4\) 30.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{xe}4\) 31.\(\text{c}1\) \(\text{e}6\) with more than sufficient compensation.

16...b4? It is still too early for this break because White will be the first to create real threats. 17.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{b}8\) 24.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{b}3\) 25.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{g}6\) 26.\(\text{f}6\) \(\text{h}8\) 27.\(\text{d}1\) Leko-Kortchnoi, Essen 2002. White has managed to improve his position over the last couple of moves, particularly the knight is sitting beautifully on f6 and the bishop has also moved to a better place;

C) 16...b4? It is still too early for this break because White will be the first to create real threats. 17.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{b}3\) 18.\(\text{d}1\)!

18...h5 18...\(\text{x}d4\) 19.\(\text{h}5\) ! 19.\(\text{h}5\) ! 19.\(\text{h}5\) ! 19.\(\text{h}5\) ! 19.\(\text{h}5\) ! 19.\(\text{h}5\) !

19.\(\text{x}h5\) \(\text{g}8\) 20.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{b}6\) 21.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{e}7\) 22.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{f}5\) 23.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{h}6\) 24.\(\text{f}6\) Lutz-Kortchnoi, Essen 2002.

\textbf{Important:} The move 12.\(\text{f}1\) allows Black to choose between various alternatives. Vallejo Pons' idea to use the queen to support a quick b-pawn advance is very interesting: 12...\(\text{c}6\) 13.\(\text{e}2\) b5 14.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{b}8\) (the principled and more complex 14...a5 is covered in the main line) 15.a3 \(\text{a}5\) ! 16.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{d}7\) 17.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{e}7\) 18.\(\text{g}2\) b4 when after numerous exchanges an equal endgame is reached.

12. 12.\(\text{d}3\)-e2 12.\(\text{d}3\)-e2 12.\(\text{d}3\)-e2 12.\(\text{d}3\)-e2

It is also possible to play 12...b5 first. However, we prefer the 'normal' move order, which also gives greater flexibility in choosing plans and was regularly employed by the great Viktor Kortchnoi. The point is that Black does not have to rely exclusively on the break ...b5-b4. There are other ways to exploit White's pawn weaknesses, and the black king would certainly feel safer on the queenside, with the pawns on their initial squares. A complex manoeuvring battle lies ahead, and both players would have to be patient and ready to invest huge energy.

13. 13.\(\text{h}1\)-h3 13.\(\text{h}1\)-h3 13.\(\text{h}1\)-h3 13.\(\text{h}1\)-h3 13.\(\text{h}1\)-h3 13.\(\text{h}1\)-h3

13.\(\text{h}3\) b5 14.a3 a5 15.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{g}8\) We are already familiar with this plan. The rook is protecting g7 and freeing the king to walk to the queenside. The other plan, invented by Kortchnoi in similar positions, to use the queen and the rook to defend the 7th rank, is not applicable in this particular game be-
cause White is concentrating on pressing on g7 and not on f7. 16.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{e}7\)!

It is important to first neutralise the effects of the rook lift and generally slow up White's offensive on the kingside. It is still too early to evacuate the king: 16...\(\text{e}8\)?! 17.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{e}7\) 18.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{d}8\)? 19.\(\text{h}5\)\#. 17.\(\text{h}5\) \(\text{b}8\) 18.\(\text{d}1\) 18.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{f}5\) Black has wonderful play on both flanks. 18...\(\text{e}8\) 19.\(\text{e}2\) White realizes that the attack has failed and is trying to organise the defence. 19...\(\text{c}6\) 20.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{e}7\) 21.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{d}8\) 22.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{c}7\) 23.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{b}4\)\# 0-1 (49) Savanovic-Kortchnoi, Banja Luka 2007.

With such deployment of White's pieces it is very efficient to establish the knight on f5. 16.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{f}5\) 17.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{b}5\) (it is difficult to resist this move, particularly as the knight is not protecting c3 and d4) 18.\(\text{h}5\) a5 19.a3 \(\text{b}4\) and Black is gaining the advantage, Rios-Santos Flores, Medellin 2009. 14...\(\text{g}8\) Protecting the pawn in order to free the king. 15.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{e}7\) 16.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{e}8\) 17.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{d}8\) 18.\(\text{h}5\) \(\text{c}7\) 19.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{f}8\) 20.a4 The pawn on a4 is usually facing grim prospects. 20...\(\text{d}8\) 21.a\# 21.a\# 22.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{e}8\) 22.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{e}7\) 23.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{b}8\) The idea of this plan is simple and requires no comment. 24.\(\text{g}3\) a\# 25.f\# 26.\(\text{f}3\) 26.\(\text{g}4\) f5!\#. 26...\(\text{e}7\) 27.\(\text{b}1\) \(\text{c}7\)

13. \(...\) b7-b5

13...\(\text{d}7\)\#? Here is one instructive example of what can happen if Black decides to go for long manoeuvring instead of the b-pawn advance. 14.\(\text{f}3\) 14.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{g}8\) 15.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{e}7\)!

With mutual chances, Nguyen Ngoc Truongson-Volkov, Moscow 2008. However, the threat of ...\(\text{a}5\) is in the air and the a4 pawn will drop sooner or later.
Important: On 11.h4, the most frequently played and possibly best continuation, Black has a simple and solid plan, based on the blockade of the weakened white pawns on the queenside: 11...c4! 12.\textit{a}2 \textit{c}6 13.\textit{h}3 (on 13.\textit{h}3 Black can continue with the same idea) 13...\textit{d}7!? – the charge 13...b5 is covered in the main line below.

Black wants to first transfer his king to a safer place on the queenside, and only then decide on how to employ his pawns on that flank. This plan is typical for many lines of the French Defence and is fairly unpleasant for the opponent. Black does not rush with active play, as after ...b5-b4 White can straighten out his doubled pawns, and he can also save some time on the clock when confronted with quick play based on a clear concept.

14. \textit{g}4-f4

White is concentrating on f7 and clears the way for the g-pawn charge.

- \textit{14.\textit{g}3 \textit{g}8} This rook switch to the g-file essentially changes nothing, but it can even help Black in some lines because the g7 pawn is protected:
  A) The attempt to transfer the knight to h5 with 15.\textit{h}3!? is slow and ineffective. Black has several ideas to achieve better play: 15...\textit{e}7!? It is also good to play 15...b4! 16.\textit{x}b4 \textit{b}6 (a well-known motif of breaking through) 17.c3 a5=\textit{f}. 16.\textit{f}4 \textit{f}5 17.\textit{h}3 a5=\textit{f} Gundavaa-Batchuluun, Novokuznetsk 2008;
  B) 15.\textit{f}4 This rook switch to the g-file essentially changes nothing, but it can even help Black in some lines because the g7 pawn is protected.

15...\textit{d}7 15...\textit{e}7!? and now Kortchnoi’s method of the 7th-rank defence can be applied once again: 16.\textit{h}5 \textit{e}8 17.\textit{e}2 a5 18.a3 \textit{a}7= with mutual chances. 16.\textit{h}5 \textit{e}8 17.\textit{f}3 f5! 18.\textit{x}e8 \textit{x}e8= Black has managed to exchange another piece and successfully close one of the attacking files. The position is now practically harmless. 19.\textit{h}5 19.\textit{g}3 g5 20.\textit{h}3 b4 21.\textit{x}g5 bxc3+ 22.\textit{d}1 \textit{b}6= Antonio-Reesat, Bled 2002. 19...a5 20.\textit{g}4 20.\textit{e}2 b4; 20.\textit{g}3 \textit{d}7 21.\textit{e}2 b4, also with excellent play for Black. 20...\textit{f}8 21.\textit{h}3!? 21.\textit{e}2. 21...b4= Shukh-Naer, Dagomys 2010. Black is controlling events on both flanks.

- \textit{14.a3} Inserting a2-a3 allows Black to use the previously mentioned Kortchnoi method of defending the f7-square. 14...a5!? 15.\textit{f}4 \textit{a}7 16.\textit{h}5 \textit{e}7

17.\textit{g}3 \textit{h}7!? 17...\textit{g}8 is more natural, but Black is intending to push ...g7-g6 at some later stage and for this he needs the rook on h7. This rook might be on the edge of the world but the black position is just that good that he can afford such eccentric behaviour! 18.\textit{f}3 \textit{e}8 19.\textit{g}3 g6 20.\textit{f}6 b4 21.\textit{d}1 21.axb4? axb4 22.\textit{x}a7 \textit{a}7 23.\textit{x}g6 bxc3+--. 21...\textit{h}5 22.\textit{h}3
14. \textit{...} \textit{\texttt{c8-d7}}

We can absorb a wealth of ideas by going through Kortchnoi's games. In this position he chose to leave the bishop on the starting square and instead to align the heavy pieces on the 7th rank to protect the f7-square. Then the king will be ready to evacuate to the queenside. After establishing the coordination, Black will push \textit{...b5-b4}.  

14.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash, e7!?}} 15.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash, h5 \texttt{\textbackslash, e8!}}} It is important to step away from the f-file before continuing with the plan. 15.\textit{\texttt{...a5?!}} 16.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash, f3 \texttt{\textbackslash, a7?}}} (16.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash, d8\pm}}) 17.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash, xf7!+--}} 16.\textit{\texttt{a3 \texttt{\textbackslash, g8}}}

Kortchnoi's favourite set-up. 19.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash, h2 \texttt{\textbackslash, d8}}} 20.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash, e2 \texttt{\textbackslash, b4}}} 21.\textit{\texttt{axb4 axb4}} 22.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash, x a7 \texttt{\textbackslash, x a7}}} 23.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash, x b 4 \texttt{\textbackslash, x d 4}}} 24.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash, w e 3 \texttt{\textbackslash, a 1}}} 25.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash, w a 3 \texttt{\textbackslash, b 3+}}} 26.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash, x b 3 \texttt{\textbackslash, d 4+}}} 27.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash, c 1 \texttt{\textbackslash, x b 3}}} 28.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash, w a 5+==}} Volokitin-Kortchnoi, Igualada 2005, and White was forced to give perpetual check.

15. \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash, e2-h5}}

15.\textit{\texttt{g4}} This move doesn't have many believers. Black's pieces are not tied to defence and he can immediately jump into action. 15.\textit{\texttt{b4?!}} 16.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash, x b 4 \texttt{\textbackslash, b 6}}} 17.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash, b 1}} 17.\textit{\texttt{c3? \texttt{a5}}} 17.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash, x d 4 \texttt{\textbackslash, c 3}}} 20.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash, g 3}} White can't see how to continue the attack and starts regrouping. His pieces are shuffling around more than threatening the black king. 20.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash, h 7}} 21.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash, f 3 \texttt{\textbackslash, f 8}}} 22.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash, g 4}} The heavy pieces have switched to the g-file, but what is the difference? Black is grabbing the initiative after the ...f7-f6 strike. This game is a good indication that Black has more options at his disposal and shouldn't limit himself only to pushing ...b5-b4. ...f7-f6 should be seriously considered because it also includes Black's worst piece, the rook from h8, into play. In the lines where
the white knight is on e2, this idea is even more effective because the e5 pawn could also be in danger. 22...f5! 23.exf6 \(\text{Wxf6} \) 24.\( g4 \text{b7} \) Now all Black’s pieces are enjoying maximum activity. The white king is stuck on e1 so Black shouldn’t worry about the e6 pawn. 25.\( \text{ Axe6} \) White lacks a good plan. 25.\( \text{ Ae2} \text{ g6}! \) 26.\( \text{ d2} \text{ b4}++ \).

25..\( \text{le7} \) 26.\( \text{f3} \text{xe6} \) 27.\( \text{xe6} \text{xf6} \) 28.\( \text{d1} \text{h5}! \)

A beautiful tactical blow to crown Black’s strategy and conclude this instructive game. 29.\( \text{xb5} \text{h5} \) 30.\( \text{e2} \text{xe6} \) 31.\( \text{b1} \text{xd4} \) 0-1 Das-A. David, Kolkata 2008.

16. \( \text{g1-e2} \) \( \text{a7-a5} \)

Preparing \( ...b5-b4 \) and clearing the a7-square for the rook if protection of f7 is needed.

17. \( \text{g2-g4} \)

Black is economically protecting all critical points and White’s piece pressure is not sufficient to break through the gates. That is why White throws the g-pawn forward.

17. \( ... \) \( \text{b5-b4} \)

18. \( \text{g4-g5} \)

Mutual charges, but Black seems to be that little bit faster to the white king.

18. \( ... \) \( \text{h6xg5}! \)

Black doesn’t have to rush to open the h-file. He can be the first to take the initiative with 18...\( \text{bxc3}+! \)

19.\( \text{xc3} \) 19.\( \text{xc3} \text{b6} \) 20.a3 (20.\( \text{d2} \text{c3}+! \) transposes into the line with 19.\( \text{c3} \) 20...\( \text{b8} \) 21.\( \text{d2} \text{c3}+! \) 22.\( \text{xc3} \) 22.\( \text{xc3} \text{hxg5} \) 23.\( \text{xd4} \text{xd4} \) 24.\( \text{g1} \text{h7} \) – Black has a better structure and the white king has lost two important protectors – the pawns from c3 and d4) 22...\( \text{xd4}+ \) 23.\( \text{xd4} \text{xd4} \). The white pawns are randomly thrown on the board and his pieces are disconnected. 19...\( \text{b6} \) 20.\( \text{e2} \) 20.g6?! \( \text{xd4}+ \) 21.\( \text{xd4} \text{xd4} \) 20...\( \text{c3}+! \) 20...\( \text{b2}?! \) 21.\( \text{c1} \text{b4} \).

The thematic strike, with the idea of ruining the coordination of the white pieces. Afterwards, the opening of the
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h-file will be to Black's benefit. Besides, the diagonal has been cleared and the bad French bishop might even join the attack soon.

Now there can follow:

- 21.\text{\textit{x}}c3 Now is the moment to open the h-file. 21...hxg5 22.\text{\textit{w}}xg5 \text{\textit{d}}xd4 23.\text{\textit{g}}1 \text{\textit{h}}7++. White's attack is fading and his king is weakened after the disappearance of the d-pawn. Black remains with the better pawn structure and the healthier position;

- 21.\text{\textit{c}}e3 \text{\textit{w}}b2 22.\text{\textit{c}}c1 \text{\textit{g}}8!++ 23.\text{\textit{g}}3 \text{\textit{e}}7! and White has lost many important squares;

- 21.\text{\textit{e}}l hxg5 22.hxg5 g6++;

- 21.\text{\textit{d}}1 hxg5 22.hxg5 g6 23.\text{\textit{g}}4 \text{\textit{x}}h3 24.\text{\textit{x}}h3 \text{\textit{b}}4!++ and the terrible threats are impossible to counter.

19. h4xg5 \text{\textit{f}}8-e7

Now the idea with 19...bxc3+ 20.\text{\textit{x}}xc3 \text{\textit{w}}b6? is not working because of 21.\text{\textit{x}}f7!++ when White takes advantage of the open h-file with a beautiful tactical shot.

19...g6?! is also dangerous because White is quickly coordinating for a strong attack with 20.\text{\textit{a}}h1!.

20. \text{\textit{a}}a1-h1 b4xc3+
21. \text{\textit{e}}2xc3 \text{\textit{w}}d8-b6
22. \text{\textit{h}}3-h4 \text{\textit{a}}8-b8= 


Conclusion

It is obvious that pinning the c3 knight awards Black with richer and more active play compared to the classical 4...\text{\textit{e}}7 or 4...dxe4, which commonly lead to massive exchanges, leaving the second player few possibilities to play for a win. In the main line of the McCutcheon, Black is left without the dark-squared bishop, but he has the better pawn structure, which will be his beacon later for the rest of the game.

In the most frequent line 5.e5 (5.exd5 is not in the spirit of fighting for the opening advantage and grants Black good play after 5...\text{\textit{w}}xd5) 5...h6 6.\text{\textit{d}}2 \text{\textit{x}}c3 7.bxc3 \text{\textit{d}}e4 8.\text{\textit{w}}g4 \text{\textit{f}}8 9.\text{\textit{d}}3 \text{\textit{d}}xd2 10.\text{\textit{w}}xd2 c5, and now after 11.h4 or 11.\text{\textit{f}}3 (opening the position with 11.dxc5?! intensifies White’s troubles after the typical 11...\text{\textit{d}}d7!), Black has a very efficient plan based on the blockade of the doubled pawns on the queenside by ...c5-c4.
White's pawns become fragile, not only owing to the black queen's intrusion to a5 or a3, but also because of the swift advance of the pawn mass with ...b7-b5, ...a7-a5 and ...b5-b4.

Of course, White will aim to build an attack on the kingside, but as we have seen Black can easily parry the threats.

In the lines where White preserves the dark-squared bishop with 6...e3 or 6...c1, Black builds strong counterplay on the a5-e1 diagonal and against the weak c3 pawn.

The bishop retreat to h4 can only cause White trouble, while the line 6.exf6 can only be good for Black.
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About the Authors

Grandmaster Dejan Antic


In the period 2004-2008 he was a resident in Australia where he has worked as a chess coach. From 2009 until nowadays works as first trainer of chess club Kavala in Kavala, Greece. For many years a co-operator and author of well-known articles in Chess Informant and New in Chess Yearbook.

International Master Branimir Maksimovic

Born in Serbia in 1955, Branimir Maksimovic is a renowned International Master who has been playing the French from his junior days up until the present day.

Always a proponent of this great opening, he often goes for rarely-played variations which are, however, rich in possibilities. His first win of many against top grandmasters was against Efim Geller at the grandmasters’ tournament in Nis, Serbia, less than two weeks after Geller won the USSR Championship in 1977.

An unusual idea in the Tarrasch Variation that Maksimovic has played with great success (1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Qd2 Qf6 4.e5 Qe4!? ) prompted U.S. grandmaster Edmar Mednis to declare, ‘The 4...Qe4!? variation should be named after young Maksimovic.’

Grandmaster Igor Stohl wrote in ChessBase Magazine, issue #119, ‘When it comes to the rarely-seen Winawer Variation 1.e4 e4 2.d4 d5 3.Qc3 Qb4 4.e5 c5 6.a3 Qxc3 7.bxc3 Qc6!, only Yugoslav IM B. Maksimovic is using it regularly and quite successfully.’

For the past 30 years Branimir Maksimovic has been working as a chess coach in the Serbian city of Nis. His most popular book to-date is Strategy and Tactics in 1,000 Miniature Games.