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THE FRENCH

A DYNAMIC REPertoire FOR BLACK

SIMON WILLIAMS

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Introduction

One of the great attractions of chess is that the game spreads its wings to cover the whole social ladder. No matter where a person is from, what age they are, or even where they are going, chess can be shared as a tool for entertainment and knowledge. Children, adults, men, women, lawyers, politicians, prisoners, accountants, Napoleon, etc, can all enjoy a good game of chess.

When the battle commences the outside world is forgotten and the players can drift off into their own world of the imagination. The one thing that I find most intriguing about the game is the way in which a person’s personality can come across in the way that they play. My own style of play is stereotyped as being extremely attacking and rather gung-ho. A classic opposite is that of the English Grandmaster Keith Arkell. Keith is known for his love of the endgame and the ‘nibble’. Indeed, Danny Gormally described Keith as the ‘Grinder’ and myself as the ‘Gambler’ in his entertaining book, Play Chess like the Pros.

To me this is what makes the game of chess so exciting. Two equally strong players can have two completely different ways of looking at the same position. Individual personality really does come through when you’re playing the game.

Now you may be wondering what on earth has this to do with the French Defence? Well, let me try to explain. Throughout the history of chess, the French Defence has had the reputation of being a rather solid opening where White has most of the attacking opportunities. It has been considered to be a fairly safe and solid reply to 1 e4, with Black often relying on his solid pawn formation to push the advantage through in the middlegame or even the ending.

Wilhelm Steinitz once said of the opening: ‘I have never in my life played the French Defence, which is the dullest of all openings!’

This is where I beg to differ. I have always considered the French to be an exciting opening that offers Black very good counterattacking possibilities. Steinitz had obviously not looked at the opening in the same way that I have!
Indeed, in the context of chess, I am not even sure if the word ‘Defence’ is appropriate when muttering the word ‘French’! The title of this book rather gives away what we are going to be aiming for. I have tried to pick the most aggressive, exciting and sound variations that are playable for Black in the French Defence. I have personally played most of these variations mentioned and they have often led to some great encounters.

If you really want to get to grips with the French Defence then I would recommend that after studying this book you also take a look to see what the top grandmasters are playing in the French, such as Berg, Korchnoi, Lputian and Morozevich. This will help you obtain an even better understanding of the opening as a whole. You must also try to get into the habit of working out what typical middlegame plans you should be aiming to execute and even what type of endgame structures benefit Black and White. Saying that, this book is hardly geared towards reaching an endgame!

I often think that the most important thing when learning any opening is to understand the main concepts behind the moves that both sides play. Thus unlike certain books we won’t be diving head first into the variations. Instead we will begin by considering various key concepts, aiming to understand the various plans and aims on offer to both sides.

### The French from Black’s Perspective

#### 1. The ...c5 pawn break
You will find it very hard to play a game in the French Defence without playing this advance. The move ...c5 is often used as a lever by Black, a lever that aims to attack White’s pawn centre.

By the nature of the opening moves White normally gains a space advantage and without any pawn breaks Black would be left with a horribly passive position. This is just one reason why it is so important to chip away at White’s centre.

Here we have a typical French Advance pawn structure and in this position Black should play 3...c5! This is such an important pawn break to remember! Without this break White would have a very solid grip over the centre.

*In the French Black must do his best to keep attacking White’s centre.*

Later on we will see that the Ad-
van ce Variation of the French can often develop into a game of ping-pong. Black attacks the centre, White defends the centre, Black attacks the centre...

2. The ...f6 pawn break
You will often find that one of the main assets that White has in the French is his pawn on e5. This pawn cramps Black’s position and gives White a basis to develop an attack from. Thus it is often a good idea to attack the bridgehead with the break ...f6.

J.Hector-E.Berg
Swedish League 2005

By playing the undermining 9...f6! Black was able to generate some action in the centre and on the kingside. It is worth noting that the break ...c5 was ruled out here due to White having pawns on b4 and d4, so Black really had to rely on the ...f6 break in order to avoid being suffocated. This was a great game and I recommend that you take your time going over it later on in Chapter Three.

3. Activating Black’s light-squared bishop via d7 and e8
With the move 1...e6 Black voluntarily cages in his light-squared bishop. This minor piece can easily remain a bad one throughout the game. For this reason Black should always keep his eyes open for the chance to give it some life.

One common way of bringing a little bit of joy to this piece is by the manoeuvre ...d7-e8-g6/h5. It is worth noting that this is only possible after Black has played ...f6. Take a look at the following example:

M.Adams-V.Epishin
Tel Apel 1992

After 11...e8! Black’s light-squared bishop finds an active post on h5. From h5 the bishop puts White’s knight on f3 in an unpleasant pin and helps to increase the kingside pressure.

Just compare the two possible squares for Black’s bishop, d7 and h5. On d7 the bishop is basically a big pawn, but on h5 it obtains a whole new lease of life.
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4. Closing the position with ...c4
At a number of points throughout this book I am going to suggest plans based on ‘controlled aggression’. In a lot of cases this will mean that Black’s first aim is to stop White from gaining good attacking chances and only then will Black go on to the offensive himself. The next position is an example of this:

C.Briscoe-S.Williams
British Championship,
Great Yarmouth 2007

Blacks has to be a bit careful here as White’s light-squared bishop is positioned on an active diagonal. 9...0-0? would be a mistake as it would allow White the chance to play 10 STATICxh7+! gaining a dangerous attack through the use of the Greek Gift. For that reason I decided to first play 9...c4!. This forces White’s bishop to a passive square and closes the centre.

One word of warning though: **do be careful when playing the ...c4 advance, as Black can often lack counterplay after it.**

This case was an exception though, as after the natural sequence 10 STATICf1 STATICd7 11 g3 I was able to employ another typical French idea.

Here the pawn break 11...f6! gave me plenty of counterplay in the centre and on the kingside, as we’ll see in Chapter Five.

5. Good and bad minor pieces
Whenever you start to play an opening you should be aware of which pieces tend to be useful and which pieces can hinder you. Basically you must be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of your position.

In general the dark-squared bishop is often one of Black’s best minor pieces. This will obviously depend on the particular variation, but take the following position as an example.

J.Emms-S.Williams
British League (4NCL) 1999

This is one of main positions in the Tarrasch Variation. Black has already
played his two main breaks, ...c5 and ...

...f6.

He should now play 10...d6. This is a very good square for the bishop, taking aim at the white king and covering the all-important e5-square. In actual fact White often spends three tempi trying to exchange the dark-squared bishops with g5-h4-g3.

We have already mentioned that Black’s light-squared bishop can become a bad piece. Let’s just take one look at an example of this.

E.Alekseev-Ni Hua
Ningpo 2008

Black is getting ready to play the queenside advance ...b4 when he would be able to exchange off his passive light-squared bishop. Unfortunately for Ni Hua it was White’s move and Alekseev was able to play 15 b4!.

After the sequence 15...\(\texttt{\textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet} \)xe3+ 16 \(\texttt{\textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet} \)xe3 f6 17 \(\texttt{\textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet} \)d4 \(\texttt{\textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet} \)xd4 18 cxd4...

...

Black was left with a shockingly bad bishop on a6 and White went on to win quickly.

The French from White’s Perspective

1. Exploiting the space advantage

The nature of the opening gives White a space advantage and his pawn centre on d4 and e4/e5 is often a good basis to build an attack around. This is why it is so important in the French to play actively as Black. Black must try and attack the white pawn formation as quickly as possible. If Black fails to do this then something along the lines of the following nasty accident can happen.
In this game I had done nothing to tackle White’s strong pawn on e5. The pawn on e5 can often be the bane of a French player’s existence. In this position I tried to strike out with 17...f6, but White had already massed his forces too near to my king and was able to finish me off by playing 18 xf5 exf5 19 xf6! when I had no choice but to resign.

2. Let’s start an attack with g4!

Black’s g7-pawn will often become a target in the French. This is especially true in some of the double-edged systems that I am going to recommend. One of the best ways for White to start an attack against Black’s kingside is by playing the move g4.

J.Tomczak-E.Toth
Szeged 2008

White now played 10 g4! which is the only way that he can hope to gain an advantage from the opening. You will find that this is the case in a number of instances. White must play actively otherwise he will pass the advantage over to Black.

3. The f4-f5 breakthrough

White will often attempt to support his pawn on e5 with the move f4. This constructs a big pawn centre that Black has to keep an eye on. Take a look at the following position.

S.Williams-M.Jeanne
Uxbridge 2010

This is a fairly standard type of structure and one that we are going to come across quite often in the course of this book. Black has weakened White’s queenside by exchanging on c3, but he has also left his kingside open to attack.

Black has just played the move 12...h5.
This was a bit careless as it allowed me to play 13 f5! which began a devastating attack. Black will often leave his king in the centre of the board in the French, but this can carry some risk. For a start, Black must always watch out for any breaks that will open up his king. This is a classic example.

After 13...hxg4 14 fxg6 gxf3 15 gxf7+ xf7 16 xf3+ g8 Black’s king had been ripped clear of all protection.

There is no defence to the onslaught of White pieces flooding in. Following 17 g3+ g7 18 g5 e8 19 f4 White’s attack was overwhelming and the game was soon over.

4. Good and bad minor pieces
In general White’s best minor piece is quite clearly his light-squared bishop. This piece is often of the utmost importance when starting an attack, as we can see here.

C.Bauer-E.Berg
Internet (blitz) 2004

The opening has been a disaster for Black. He has been left with a passive and cramped position. White now played 18 g5!!, starting an attack against the black king. This is only possible due to the strength of White’s light-squared bishop. The bishop on d3 is a monster of a piece which aims directly at Black’s king.

White is often advised to try to hold on to his light-squared bishop for as long as possible. Losing the bishop will often mean losing the possibility to attack.

Acknowledgements
I would just like to say a quick thank you to everyone who has helped me
put this book together. My main praise goes to John Emms for his continued patience and generosity in handing out extended deadlines.

If you ever get around to reading this book, Gary O'Grady, you will have an opening that you can play. No more playing the Alekhine!

Simon Williams,
Farnham,
March 2011
Chapter 1
The Advance Variation

The Advance Variation is the ideal place to start our investigation into the French. The pawn structure that is reached after 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 is the most important in the French to understand.

That is because this structure can be reached in a number of variations that are analysed in this book: for example, 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ¿d2 ¿f6 4 e5 or 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ¿c3 ¿b4 4 e5. Thus by starting with the Advance Variation, the reader can be introduced, slowly, into the intricacies of the French.

I am going to recommend a plan against the Advance where Black plays both the ...c5 and ...f6 breaks. This often leads to some very interesting and double-edged positions. Black will often castle queenside, whilst White will castle kingside.

Let’s take a look at some of the basic plans in more detail.

The Advance from Black’s Perspective

1. Advancing on the kingside with ...h6, ...f5 and ...g5

Once both kings have settled on opposite sides of the board, Black needs to decide how to attack on the kingside. One typical way of doing this is by advancing the pawns with ...h6, ...f5 and ...g5.

A.Grischuk-N.Short
Reykjavik 2000

(see following diagram)

With 9...h6! Black prepares a kingside pawn storm. I have noticed that
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this idea of ...h6, ...f5 and ...g5 occurs quite often so it is well worth remembering.

In this case it offered Black a very good game after 10 b4 c4 11 c2 f5!, carrying out stage two of the plan. Black was now ready to advance with ...g5 and after 12 h4 e8! 13 f4 e7 the opening had clearly been a success for him.

Black is all set to play the powerful advance ...g5, obtaining a strong initiative on the kingside. White, on the other hand, has no sensible plan to mount a successful attack on the queenside.

2. Closing the queenside with ...c4!
Black is advised to keep the queenside as closed as possible. This is because his king is normally positioned over there. For this reason the move ...c4 is often worth considering. It can be especially effective once White has played a3.

Y.Afek-S.Williams
Hastings 2007/08

White has just played 12 a3, preparing to advance with b4 on the queenside. I now decided to play 12...c4! which takes the sting out of b4 and holds up White’s counterplay. Now if White ever plays b4, Black will play ....cxb3, spitting his queenside pawns. Advancing with ...c4 also has the drawback of opening up the a7-g1 diagonal towards White’s king.

3. Meeting the natural f4 with ...h6, ...f7 and ...g5
White will often try to support his pawn on e5 with the natural advance f4. Black then has to be careful not to fall into a passive position.
White has played f4 so Black needs to think of a way to gain counterplay. Ogaard comes up with a good plan here, one that is worth remembering.

With 11...\textit{h6!} it may look like the knight is heading for f5, but once White has played f4, then f7 actually tends to be a better square for the knight. The game continued 12 \textit{f3 e7} 13 \textit{e3 f7!} 14 \textit{b4 g5}. 

By playing ...\textit{h6}, ...\textit{f7} and ...\textit{g5} Black has managed to create some attacking chances on the kingside.

\textbf{The Advance from White’s Perspective}

\textit{1. Opening the position with c4}

White must also play actively, since otherwise he will find himself on the defensive. One typical way for White to open the centre up is with c4.

\textbf{J.Timman-S.Brynell}

German League 2001

This is an important position in our main line. White is now advised to play 10 \textit{c4!}, attempting to open up the position. If Black replies with ...d4 then White has gained control of the e4-square. This can be put to good use by the manoeuvre \textit{d2} and then \textit{e4}.

\textit{2. Opening things up with b4}

Another common plan for White is the b4 pawn break. This is another attempt at opening lines on the queenside, towards Black’s king. This is especially effective once the moves c4 and ...d4 have been played because Black cannot then meet b4 with ...c4.
Black needs only a couple of moves to start an attack on the kingside so White must act quickly, which she did: 12 a3! (preparing b4!) 12...f7 13 f4 e7. Black’s attack is coming quickly, but White should have playing b4 around here in order to generate some counterplay.

In our first illustrative game we are going to analyse what happens when White avoids 6 e2 and instead plays the inferior 6 a3?! This move makes little sense as Black can still play 6...f6!, opening up the centre while White is yet to develop his light-squared bishop. I honestly believe that Black is better after the sequence 6 a3?! f6!.

This is the move order that I am going to suggest and this game demonstrates why I prefer playing this move to 5...b6 which is the other main line. I like leaving my queen on d8 for the time being as it is often better placed on c7 compared to b6. Most of the time this is the case when Black is planning to play ...f6. In other words, 5...d7 is a much more flexible move.

6 a3?!

White, Michael Adams, one of the strongest players in the world, makes a common error. This move is a waste of time! Against 5...b6 then 6 a3 is the main line as White has time to advance with b4 at some stage, but in this variation with 5...d7 going 6 a3?! just wastes an important tempo.

6...f6!

Aiming to punish White for wasting a tempo in the opening. Black wants to open up the centre, castle queenside and then attack on the kingside.

6...c4 is another good move, with the following plan in mind: 7...a5,
8...c6!, 9...d7 and 10...a4 which brings Black’s worst piece, his light-squared bishop, into the game. If you are set on entering a closed position then this might be the plan for you, but 6...f6! is really a better move.

7.d3

This is the standard response from White. He gets ready to castle kingside. There are some other important possibilities, though; one involving a very promising piece sacrifice from Black:

a) 7 b4 would seem to be the logical follow-up to White’s previous move, but I am very confident about Black’s position after 7...fxe5!

The whole point of 6...f6! is to chip away at White’s pawn centre, so capturing on e5 is the right way to proceed. White now has a number of options:

a1) I cannot find any examples of 8 bxc5, but it is hardly worrying for Black: 8...e4 (sensible and good) 9 g5 f6 and Black has a small advantage due to his central pawn majority. He will continue with ...e7 and ...0-0, after which he can consider playing the break ...e5! at the correct moment.

a2) 8 dxc5 captures away from the centre and cannot cause Black any problems: 8...e4 (this worked out well in M.Popchev-S.Dolmatov, Polanica Zdroj 1987, but another sensible option is 8...f6 and only after White plays 9 b5 advancing with 9...e4 when I have a lot of faith in Black’s centre; he must have a slight advantage and here 9...c7!? also looks good) 9 d4 f6 (I would already prefer to be playing Black as his centre is something to behold) 10 f4 e7 11 b5 0-0 12 xc6 bxc6 13 0-0 e8! 14 g3 f6! saw Dolmatov take control of the e5-square and prepare to play ...e5 himself. Black should have a small advantage in this position.

a3) 8 b5 is the logical follow-up to White’s play, trying to wrestle the e5-square away from Black’s control: for example, if Black now plays 8...a5?! then White can get a decent game with 9 xe5. Instead 8...xd4! turns the tables on White. By capturing on d4
Black gains an extremely dangerous pawn mass in the centre of the board. It is certainly worth a piece.

Now:

a31) 9 cxd4 is the obvious capture, but after 9...exd4 just look at those pawns! Black does not need to rush matters; it is better if he just develops and castles. Here 10 f4 f6 11 bd2 e7 12 g3 (12 b1 was preferred in E.Muratovic-S.Atalik, Zenica 2006, which continued 12...0-0 13 g3 c4!? – Black’s pawns are too much too handle! – 14 h3 e5!? 15 xd7 xd7 16 xe5 d6 when Black had a good game and went on to win; for better or worse White had to try 14 xd4, although Black would have had a very pleasant initiative after 14...c5 15 e3 b6 16 b2 g4) 12...0-0 13 h3xb5 14 g5 d6 worked out very well for Black in S.Buchal-T.Luther, Groningen 1998. He certainly has the advantage.

a32) 9 xe5 is a bit tricky as White wants to cause some mischief by playing Wh5+, but why not now capture another pawn with 9...xb5? Admittedly 10 Wh5+ looks a bit daunting, but Black can gain an advantage by keeping his cool:

10...g6 11 xg6 f6 12 Wh4 g8 (this has yet to be seen in practice, but it looks like Black has the advantage after it; instead 12...hxg6!? was played in K.Engstrom-J.Eriksson, Swedish Championship, Gothenburg 2005, and is an entertaining sacrifice that also offers Black a decent game: 13 Wh8 f7 – I would say that the position is roughly equal; Black is the exchange down, but he has a strong pawn centre – 14 h6 c7 15 xf8?! e5+ 16 e2 xf8 17 Wh3 and now Black should have played 17...g7 with a good game) 13 xf8 (or 13 e5 d6! and the knight is heading for f5, which is a very good square for it) 13...xf8 14 g5 e5 and Black is better.

b) 7 exf6 has also been played, but Black gets a good version of the Tarrasch French. If you compare this position to Chapter Eight, you will see that Black is much better off here. For a
start he has far better development than in the Tarrasch. Play could continue 7...\( \text{c}6 \) 8 \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{c}4 \) which reveals another major difference between this variation and the Tarrasch. In the main line Tarrasch Black has already exchanged the c-pawns so this move is not possible. It works well here, though, as Black closes the position and makes it harder for White to achieve any counterplay.

Black's main idea in this type of structure is to play the move \( \text{e}5 \) and just look how well it works in the following game: 9 \( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{d}6 \) (Black is already a bit better, since his pieces can develop at a much faster pace than White's) 10 \( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 11 \( \text{bd}2 \) 0-0-0 12 \( \text{h}4 \) e5! 13 dxe5 \( \text{xe}5 \) 14 \( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 15 \( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{de}8 \+ \) 16 \( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{hf}8 \) saw Black's last piece enter the game after which White's king came under serious pressure down the f-file in S.Voelker-M.Ulibin, Bad Wiessee 2001.

Returning to the position after 7 \( \text{d}3 \): 7...\( \text{c}7 \)!

In my opinion this is the best way to continue. Black places the e5-pawn under further pressure and prepares to castle queenside. He has also been known to try:

a) 7...\( \text{f}xe5 \) \( \text{xe}5 \) 9 dxe5 \( \text{e}7 \) (another idea that has been played is 9...\( \text{g}6 \) when the position looks roughly equal, such as after 10 0-0 \( \text{c}7 \) 11 f4 \( \text{c}4 \) 12 \( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{c}5 \+ \) 13 \( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 14 \( \text{d}2 \) 0-0-0 15 b4 cxb3 16 \( \text{xb}3 \) \( \text{b}5 \) in Y.Afek-J.Hebert, Paris 1995) 10 0-0 \( \text{c}7 \) when the position is similar to our main game, except that Black has committed his knight to e7. The position is about equal.

b) However, I am not a fan of 7...\( \text{c}xd4 \)?! as it gives White the c3-square for his knight. The c-file also becomes open and as Black normally castles queenside this seems a bit unnecessary. Play could continue 8 cxd4 \( \text{h}6 \) (this is a typical theme; the knight moves around to f7 to increase the
pressure against White’s pawn on e5) 9 0-0 ��f7 10 ��e1 ��e7 11 ��c3 0-0 12 ��c2 f5 13 ��xd5!? exd5 14 e6 by when White had a small advantage in J.Hodgson-M.Sharif, Linares 1995.

8 0-0

White has also tried.

a) 8 exf6, like 7 exf6, is nothing to fear. Black gets a good version of the Tarrasch: for example, 8...gxf6!? (another interesting possibility, giving Black a very strong centre; of course, 8...��xf6 is also fine) 9 0-0 0-0-0 (9 ... c4!? before castling was also worth considering; I would have probably have chosen this move as it keeps the queenside more closed) 10 dxc5 ��xc5 11 b4 ��d6 12 h3 ��ge7 (12...e5!? would have been a bit better for Black) 13 ��d4 ��xd4 14 cxd4 e5 15 ��a2 ��b8 16 b5 e4 17 ��c2 ��b6 and Black has a big advantage.

b) 8 ��f4 is another surprisingly popular move and it makes a lot of sense to line the bishop up against Black’s queen. After 8...c4 (if in doubt play this move; 8...��ge7 has also been played and it led to a nice advantage for Black after 9 ��g3 ��b6 10 b3 cxd4 11 cxd4 f5 – the position is roughly equal around here and now White should have played 12 ��c3 – 12 ��e2 g6 13 ��f4 h6 14 h4 ��c8 15 b4 ��d8 16 0-0 ��f7 17 ��d2 ��d8 18 ��c3 g5! 19 hxg5 ��g6 20 ��b5 ��xf4 21 ��xf4 hxg5 22 ��g3 g4 in K.Thapa-S.Reefat, Dhaka 2004) 9 ��c2 0-0-0 we have:

```

b1) 10 ��c1 guards the bishop on f4 and thereby prepares to capture on f6. Here 10...f5 is the safest move and the plan that I am going to recommend in this book. Black wants to continue with ...��e8, ...��h5, ...��e7, ...��h6, ...��f7 and eventually ...h6 and ...g5! One game went on 11 h4 (11 ��g5!? was worth considering, although after 11...��h6 12 ��d2 perhaps Black could play 12...��e7!? with the idea of ...��g6) 11...��h6 12 ��bd2 ��e7 13 ��f1 ��f7 (the position is equal; Black is aiming to play ...g5 and White is going to do eve-```

V.Andrejchuk-V.Kudin, Evpatoria 2005, continued 18 ��e2 ��hg8 19 ��h1 ��f5 20 ��c3 ��xd4 21 ��xd5 ��e6 22 ��f4 ��e5 and Black should really have won.

b) 8 ��f4 is another surprisingly popular move and it makes a lot of
rything in his power to stop this pawn break) 14 \( \text{Qg5} \text{Qdf8} \) 15 \( \text{Qh2} \text{Qfd8} \) 16 \( \text{Qf1} \) g6 17 \( \text{Qf3} \text{Qf7} \) 18 \( \text{Qg5} \text{Qfd8} \) 19 \( \text{Qf3} \text{Qf7} \) ½-½, H.Vatter-A.Barsov, Untergrombach 1995.

b2) With 10 \( \text{Qbd2} \) White develops his last piece. Now 10...\( \text{Qe8} \) is a standard plan, since the bishop is often well placed on h5. Black can also play 10...h6!? , which is the plan we will see in the main game, preparing the break ...g5 which will be followed up by ...f5. After 10...\( \text{Qe8} \) 11 \( \text{Qvb1} \text{Qh5} \) 12 \( \text{Qg3} \text{Qf7} \) (unfortunately 12...f5? does not work due to 13 \( \text{exf5!} \) when White picks up a clear pawn) 13 exf6 gxf6 14 0-0 \( \text{Qg6} \) 15 b3 cxb3 16 \( \text{Qxb3} \text{Qxc2} \) 17 \( \text{Qxc2} \) the position is roughly equal. Black has a strong pawn centre, but his king is slightly exposed, A.Giacco-P.Soln, Elista Olympiad 1998.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
8...0-0-0 \\
\end{array}
\]

This is sensible and good. Black can also play 8...c4 first if he so wishes: 9 \( \text{c2} \) 0-0-0 10 \( \text{f4} \) h6! (this is the plan that I want to reinforce in your mind; with ...h6 Black prepares a pawn storm on the kingside) 11 \( \text{g3} \) f5 12 h4 \( \text{e8!} \) (this is the other typical plan; Black’s light-squared bishop is ideally placed on h5) 13 \( \text{bd2} \text{h5} \) 14 \( \text{wb1} \text{wb8} \) 15 b3 cxb3 16 \( \text{xb3} \) and now by playing 16...\( \text{a5} \) Black makes it harder for White to achieve the c4 pawn advance.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{White has also tried:} \\
a) 9 \( \text{we2} \) was played in a high-level encounter, but again Black continued with the standard idea: 9...h6! (preparing to play ...f5 and ...g5; such a simple yet effective plan!) 10 b4 c4 11 \( \text{c2} \) f5!
\end{array}
\]
12 \( \text{c4} \) (against 12 \text{h4} you should really know that Black should play 12...\text{e8}!) 12...\text{e8}! 13 \text{f4}\text{e7} and here, not being happy with the way that the opening had gone, White decided to lash out with 14 \( \text{xf5} \)?! (14 \( \text{f3} \) was more restrained, but still Black must be happy with his position after 14...\text{h5} 15 \( \text{bd2} \text{g5} \), which only helped Black: 14...\text{exf5} 15 \( \text{xf5}+ \text{b8} \text{g4} \text{g5} \) 17 \text{fxg5}\text{hxg5} 18 \( \text{hxg5} \text{h5} \text{g3} \text{xe5} \text{f5} \text{d2} \text{g8} \text{e3} \text{xf5} \text{xe5} \text{h7} \) 0-1, A.Grischuk-N.Short, Reykjavik 2000.

b) 9 \text{e1} reinforces the e5-pawn. Black should now continue in standard fashion with 9...\text{h6}!.

\[ 
\begin{tikzpicture}
  % Chessboard setup
  % Diagram
  % End of diagram
\end{tikzpicture}
\]

Again Black just wants to play ...f5 and then ...\text{g5} when he has the makings of a pawn storm on the kingside. Following 10 \text{b4} \text{c4} (Black should always aim to meet b4 in this way, so as to keep the queenside as closed as possible) 11 \( \text{c2} \text{f5}! \) 12 \text{h4} (White decides to try and stop Black from playing ...\text{g5}, but Black has another standard plan available) 12...\text{e8}! 13 \( \text{f4} \text{h5} \text{bd2} \text{g5}?! \) (Black plays it anyway!) 15 \text{hxg5}\text{hxg5} 16 \( \text{xe5} \text{h7} \text{f1} \text{ce7} \text{xe5} \text{g5} \) Black had a strong attack in A.Crut-T.Luther, French League 2005.

9...\text{c4}

One plan worth avoiding is 9...\text{g5}?, which is really only worth considering when Black has prepared it with ...\text{h6}. After 10 \( \text{g3} \text{g4} \) (if Black had a pawn on h6 then 10...f5 would be playable; unfortunately this is not possible here as White would just play 11 \( \text{xf5} \) 11 \text{exf6} White has a large advantage.

10 \( \text{c2} \text{h6}! \)

This move is the focus of this game and I hope that by the end of it you will have the key ideas firmly implanted in your brain! As stated before, Black’s plan is:

1. Play ...f5.
2. If possible follow up with ...\text{g5}.
3. Meet \text{h4} with ...\text{e8} and ...\text{h5}.

11 \text{h4}

White aims to hold up the move ...\text{g5} for as long as possible. Other moves that have been played include:

a) 11 \( \text{g3} \text{f5} \) 12 \text{h4} \text{xe8} 13 \text{bd2}
\( \text{\&} h_5 \) transposes to the notes to Black’s 8th move, above.

b) 11 b3 g5 12 \( \text{\&} e_3 \) (12 \( \text{\&} g_3 \) leaves the bishop in a sad state after 12...f5 13 h3 f4 14 \( \text{\&} h_2 \)) 12...fxe5 (now that Black has managed to force White’s dark-squared bishop away from the defence of the e5-pawn, he starts to gang up on it) 13 bxc4 dxc4 14 \( \text{\&} bd2 \) \( \text{\&} g_7 \) 15 \( \text{\&} b_1 \) \( \text{\&} e_8 \) 16 \( \text{\&} e_2 \) \( \text{\&} g_7 \) 17 \( \text{\&} x c_4 \) \( \text{\&} d_5 \) 18 \( \text{\&} e_4 \) exd4 19 cxd4 g4 and Black had the initiative in R.Valet-G.Pap, Budapest 2005.

11...\( \text{\&} e_8 \)

The standard manoeuvre. It was worth avoiding 11...f5 12 h5 which holds up Black’s play on the kingside.

12 b3

If White does not play this move at some point, he will find it very hard to ever create any counterplay. For example, 12 \( \text{\&} bd2 \) \( \text{\&} h_5 \) 13 \( \text{\&} e_1 \) f5 when it is clear what Black is trying to achieve, but what exactly is White doing?

12...cxb3 13 \( \text{\&} x b_3 \) \( \text{\&} h_5 \)

This is a very unpleasant pin. The opening has been a complete success for Black who already holds a small advantage.

14 \( \text{\&} b d_2 \)

Another way for White to try to get out of the pin was by playing 14 \( \text{\&} d_3 \), but this does not help matters: for example, 14...g5 15 \( \text{\&} g_3 \) (or 15 hxg5 hxg5 16 \( \text{\&} f_3 \) \( \text{\&} f_3 \) when 17 \( \text{\&} f_3 \) \( \text{\&} h_7 \) or 17 \( \text{\&} e_5 \) \( \text{\&} f_7 \) 18 \( \text{\&} f_3 \) \( \text{\&} h_7 \) leads to checkmate to along the h-file) 15...f5 and Black has a devastating attack.

14...fxe5

This is good for Black, but there was no reason to change plan. Black could have stuck with his original intention of playing 14...g5 when White is also in trouble: for instance, 15 \( \text{\&} g_3 \) (15 \( \text{\&} e_3 \) does not help matters and White would still be struggling after 15...f5) 15...f5 with a big advantage to Black.

15 dxe5

Or 15 \( \text{\&} x e_5 \) \( \text{\&} x e_5 \) 16 dxe5 g5 when Black is clearly better.

15...c5?

Black should have played the advance 15...g5! which could have ended the game even quicker: 16 hxg5 hxg5 17 \( \text{\&} x g_5 \) \( \text{\&} h_7 \) (a plan that we saw earlier and it works out very effectively here!) 18 \( \text{\&} h_4 \) \( \text{\&} e_7 \) and Black is completely winning.

16 \( \text{\&} b_1 \)

Removing the queen from the pin. Another option was 16 \( \text{\&} e_1 \), but this does not greatly improve matters, since Black can just continue 16...\( \text{\&} g_7 \) 17 \( \text{\&} e_3 \) \( \text{\&} x e_3 \) 18 \( \text{\&} x e_3 \) \( \text{\&} f_5 \).

16...\( \text{\&} g_7 \)
17 c4
A desperate punt. White should probably have tried 17 h2 Hf8 18 d1! which at least defends the kingside a bit better, although Black still has the advantage.

17...Hf8
It was worth considering 17...d4! which aims to keep lines closed. I expect that Black was worried about 18 e4 which creates a bit of confusion.

18 h2?
White should have grabbed his chance to open some lines by playing 18 cxd5 which creates some confusion. After 18...cxd5 19 g3 White has the e4-square available for his knight, so the game goes on.

18...xf3 19 xf3 xf3!
This sacrifice rips the white kingside to shreds.

20 gxf3 d4 21 g2 ef5
This is just the kind of position that you want when playing the French!

22 g3 f7
The queen enters the attack.

23 f4
White could have offered more resistance by playing 23 d1!, but Black is in control on both sides of the board after 23...dxc4.

23...g5!?
Another option was 23...hxh4+ 24 xh4 xf4 when White’s position collapses after, say, 25 g3 xf3+ 26 h2 xb3 27 a2 dxc4.

24 cxd5
Or 24 hxg5 hxg5 25 fxg5 d4+! with a winning attack, in view of 26 xh4 xf3+ 27 h2 h8.

24...gxf4 25 dxe6
Other moves lose as well:
   a) 25 xf4 xh4+ 26 h3 xf4.
   b) 25 c1 fxg3 26 xc5+ b8 when the combination of queen and two knights attacking is too much for White to handle.

25...h5 26 e7
26 d1 might have lasted a bit longer, albeit with the same result after 26...f3! 27 h3 (27 h1 g4) 27...xe6! (one threat is 28 f4+) 28 c1 xh4 29 xh4 d4! and checkmate follows.
26...\texttt{\textbullet{xh4+ 0-1}}

It’s checkmate in five: 27 \texttt{\textbullet{xh4}} \texttt{\textbullet{g4+ 28 \textbullet{g3 f3+ 29 \textbullet{g1 e2+ 30 h1}}\texttt{\textbullet{h2 g2 mate.}}}

A very impressive game and one that shows the potential of 5...\texttt{\textbullet{d7}. The main thing to remember is Black’s plan of playing ...h6, following up with ...e8-h5 and depending on the position, either ...f5 and ...g5, or ...fxe5.

We’ve just seen one game where 6...f6! worked out perfectly. Now it’s time to look at another prime example of this move. With this pawn break Black wants to undermine White’s pawn centre and gain active play for his pieces. White has to play very actively against this plan, otherwise he can easily drift into an inferior position. This is what happens in the following game; White plays slightly passively and ends up on the back foot from an early stage.

\texttt{Game 2}

\texttt{Y.Afek-S.Williams}

\texttt{Hastings 2007/08}

\begin{enumerate}
\item e4 e6 \texttt{2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 c6 5 f3 d7 6 e2}
\end{enumerate}

White has tried a couple of other moves here, as we’ll see in Game 6, but this developing move must be his best option. White aims to castle as quickly as possible, which is a definite improvement on Adams’ 6 a3?!.

6...f6!?

The move that we are going to concentrate on in this book. I picked this variation because it fits in perfectly with the title. 6...f6 is the most aggressive move and it leads to some fascinating positions. Now White must often be willing to sacrifice a pawn in order to gain an initiative, as we’ll see in the next game.

\begin{enumerate}
\item 0-0
\end{enumerate}

This is the best move. White should avoid giving up his grip on the e5-square as this would lead to a position where Black has an improved Tarrasch structure: for example, 7 exf6?! \texttt{\textbullet{xf6 8 0-0 d6 (Black is already very active and if you compare this to Chapter Eight, it is clear that Black is doing well)} 9 d3 0-0 10 e1 c7 11 h3 and now 11...e5! which is a typical push in this type of structure. Black already has the advantage.

\begin{enumerate}
\item fxe5
\end{enumerate}

This simplifies the position and gives White a chance to go wrong. Another interesting option is 7...\texttt{\textbullet{c7!!?}}
which could be used as an effective surprise weapon. This move is less common, but it seems just as good.

I will take a look at some variations so that you are reasonably well prepared to play 7...\textit{c}c7:

a) 8 c4!? is a typical idea for this variation. White is trying to open up the centre and this would be the only approach that I would be slightly afraid of:

a1) 8...cxd4 was played in a game between two strong English grandmasters. That continued 9 cxd5 exd5 10 \textit{d}xd4 \textit{d}xd4 11 \textit{w}xd4 \textit{w}xe5 12 \textit{d}d1 \textit{c}c5 13 \textit{e}e1 0-0-0 14 \textit{f}f3 \textit{w}d6 15 \textit{c}c3 and White had good compensation for the pawn in J.Nunn-M.Chandler, German League 1993.

a2) 8...\textit{d}xd4!? is a new idea and according to my analysis it is perfectly playable for Black. Here 9 \textit{c}c3?! \textit{xf}3+ 10 \textit{xf}3 d4 11 \textit{b}b5 \textit{xb}5 12 \textit{xb}5 \textit{fxe}5 must be good for Black, so 9 cxd5 must be the critical test, aiming to open the centre as quickly as possible, trying to take advantage of the position of the black king. Black now has two options: should he capture the pawn on e5 or the one on d5?

9...\textit{fxe}5 looks best, since by taking this pawn Black reinforces the knight on d4 and frees up the f6-square for his other knight. Then 10 \textit{c}c3 (10 \textit{dx}e6 will probably transpose after 10...\textit{xe}6 11 \textit{c}c3 \textit{f}6 12 \textit{b}b5+) 10...\textit{f}6 11 \textit{dx}e6 (11 \textit{c}c4 0-0-0 is good for Black) 11...\textit{xe}6 12 \textit{b}b5+! (the best way to try and fight for an advantage; if 12 \textit{b}b5 \textit{b}b6 13 \textit{bd}4 \textit{dx}d4 and again Black is doing well) 12...\textit{d}7 (12...\textit{xb}5 13 \textit{xb}5 \textit{wc}6 14 a4 may be playable, but looks very risky for Black; the text attempts to exchange some pieces, making it easier to defend against any attack that White might launch) 13 \textit{xd}7+ (13 \textit{e}e1?) 13...\textit{xd}7 14 \textit{e}e1 0-0-0 reaches an unclear middlegame. Black has a strong knight on d4, but there are also a number of holes in his position. If pushed, I would slightly prefer to play with the white pieces as he has the initiative, but there is still a lot to be explored in this variation.
b) 8 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\textsc{e}}1} fxe5 (8...0-0-0!?) is a way to try and reach an original position; in S.Erenburg-N.Zukova, Internet (blitz) 2004, 9 \texttt{\textsc{d}a3!} a6 10 dxc5 fxe5 11 b4 e4 12 \texttt{\textsc{d}d4} e5 reached a pretty messy position, but Black’s king was the one far more likely to come under attack) 9 \texttt{\textsc{d}xe5} \texttt{\textsc{x}xe5} 10 dxe5 0-0-0 11 c4 and play has transposed to the main line of the 7...fxe5 variation – see the next game, Jonkman-Smeets.

c) 8 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\textsc{f}}4} seems inferior compared to some of White’s other options, but it is not without logic, so it might well appear on your board. After 8...\texttt{\textsc{g}ge7}! (the knight prepares to move to either g6 or f5) 9 \texttt{\textsc{d}d3} f5 (I like this simple way of playing; Black closes the centre and prepares a pawn storm on the kingside) 10 \texttt{\textsc{e}1} c4 11 \texttt{\textsc{c}c2} \texttt{\textsc{g}g6} (11...h6?) 12 \texttt{\textsc{g}g3} \texttt{\textsc{e}7} Black was doing fine in S.Galdunts-D.Komarov, Kherson 1991.

8 dxe5?!

This capture is inferior compared to 8 \texttt{\textsc{d}xe5} which we will examine next. The reason for this is that White’s knight on f3 can become a target to attack. Indeed, Black will often later be able to play ...h6 and ...g5 when White has to watch out for ...g4. The knight also gets in the way of White’s other pieces and pawns. He would like to place his light-squared bishop on f3 and his f-pawn on f4, which is clearly now a lot harder to achieve.

8...\texttt{\textsc{c}7}

I was feeling happy here as my plan is very simple. Black wants to castle queenside, put pressure on e5 and advance the pawns on the kingside.

9 \texttt{\textsc{e}1}

White has to defend e5.

9...0-0-0

Black nearly always castles queenside in his variation which is another reason why the variation attracts me!

10 \texttt{\textsc{d}3}

White’s plan seems a bit slow. What exactly is he trying to achieve? When players have castled on opposite sides of the board, the play usually revolves around who can get their attack in first. Let’s just take a moment to consider how both ‘sides are going to achieve this:

White must open up some lines on the queenside, although it is not so clear how he will ever achieve this. If White ever breaks with b4, Black can always keep lines closed on the queenside with ...c4.

Black, on the other hand, has a number of ways to proceed on the kingside. For a start he already has the half-open f-file. This file can be used to
generate pressure against f2, as happens in the game. Black can also aim to advance with ...h6 and ...g5.

Overall, this position is much easier to play with the black pieces and for this reason I suspect that Black is just better.

**10...h6!**

The knight is planning to move around to f7 where it is well placed. On f7 the knight adds pressure to e5 and supports ...g5. You may have noticed that in the French Advance Black often just has to attack d4 or e5 with as many pieces as possible!

**11 f4?!**

This is rather passive and the bishop is not well placed on f4 where it may become a target to attack.

White would have been better advised to have tried to open the queenside by playing 11 c4! (11 hxh6?! gxh6 must be fine for Black as he now has the half-open g-file and can target White’s e-pawn with ...g7) 11...d4 (normally the safest way to respond to c4) 12 a3!? when he intends to continue with b4. At least if White had played in this manner he would still have been in the game.

**11...e7**

Finishing development and giving Black the option of playing ...f8 at some point, putting pressure down the f-file. Another good option was 11...f7.

**12 a3**

Preparing counterplay on the queenside.

**12...c4!**

Again this move takes the sting out of b4.

**13 c2 d8**

Black is doing very well here and his attack is clearly going to be the first to land.

**14 g3 b6!**

The queen had done its job on c7 and the pawn on e5 is well defended, so it is time to look for some new targets. From b6 the queen targets b2 and f2.

**15 a2**

A sad move to play. 15 b3 should
have been preferred, since White badly needs to open some lines on the queenside.

15...g5!

Black's position pretty much plays itself, which is one of the main attractions of this early ...f6 variation. Black has a big advantage here and it is not long before White has to give up.

16 b4

White tries to create some counterplay, but Black is much quicker on the other flank.

16...cxb3 17.axb3 f5

The knight jumps into its ideal square, exploiting the fact that it never needed to retreat to f7. Now the h-pawn is ready if needed to roll down the board.

18.c2

White is lacking any meaningful plan, whereas the f2-square is now Black's main target.

18...xBg3

Another strong plan was 18...h5 with the simple idea of trapping White's dark-squared bishop with ...h4.

19 hxg3 g4 20.d4

The only way to stop ...xf2+.

20...c5

Black's position is overwhelming. There is no way that White can hold the d4-square together and once that collapses so does his whole position.

21 a4

This little pawn is not going to achieve much on its own.

21...xd4 22 a5 f3+!

The simplest way to win. I wanted to avoid 22...c7? 23 cxd4 when White has managed to gain a grip in the centre.

23 gxf3 xf2+ 0-1

White resigned as his kingside is falling apart.

I obviously enjoyed playing this game and think that it clearly demonstrates just how dangerous Black's plan is. If White does not do something immediate in the opening then he is in danger of suffering a violent death on the kingside. This is why I believe it is so important for White to play an early c4.
At tacking Chess: The French

Game 3
H. Jonkman-J. Smeets
Groningen 2002

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 dxc6 5 f3 d6 6 e2 f6 7 0-0 fxe5 8 dx e5!

As we have noted before, I believe this move is clearly White’s best choice. 8...dx e5 9 dx e5 c7

Black’s main move. Now White should act quickly otherwise Black will have time to arrange his ideal set-up with ...0-0-0, ...h6, ...f7, ...e7 and ...g5.

10 c4!

White aims to take immediate action in the centre and on the queenside. This is unsurprisingly the critical choice.

10...d4

We will take a deeper look at the alternatives, 10...0-0-0 and 10...x e5, in the next game, Timman-Brynell.

10...d4 is very sensible. Black aims to keep the position blocked so that he can continue with his plan. On the downside, he has conceded the e4-square which may become available to a white knight and the pawn break b2-b4 also gains in force. Overall, though, I quite like this plan as it keeps things simple and Black’s ideas are pretty easy to understand.

Black has also tried 10...e7 which likewise tries to keep the centre closed. This makes a good deal of sense, but it seems to give White a number of ways to gain a dangerous attack. G. Milos-A. Rodriguez, Santos 2003, continued 11 c3 d4 12 e4 (12 b5!? is interesting: for example, 12...x b5 13 cxb5 x e5 14 e1 when White has a number of open lines to attack down) 12...x e5 13 e1 0-0-0 14 f3 e8 (14...c6!? may be an improvement, but White still has good chances to gain a dangerous initiative by playing the simple 15 d2 with b4 to follow) 15 b4! This is a typical break in this type of position, giving White a large attack and a very pleasant position.

11 f4

The most obvious choice. White de-
velops a piece and lines up the bishop against Black’s queen. White does have some other options, though:

a) 11 \( \f6 \) has only been played once, but by a high-rated player. The game R.Vasquez-L.Rojas, Santiago 2005, continued 11...0-0-0 (11...\( \f5 \) may be possible, but in general White always gets good counterplay along the open e-file: for example, 12 \( \f1 \) \( \f6 \) 13 \( \f2 \) and with the knight coming to e4, Black has a fair bit of defending to do) 12 f4 (12 \( f4 \) \( c6 \) could transpose to the main game) 12...\( \f7 \) (12...\( h6 \)! is an interesting and possibly better idea; the knight is more flexibly placed on h6 from where it may move to f7 when the break ...g5! becomes possible, such as with 13 \( d2 \) \( f7 \)? 14 \( e4 \) g5?!, reaching an interesting and unbalanced position) 13 \( d2 \) \( f5 \) 14 \( e4 \) \( e7 \) 15 \( e2 \) when the position looked a bit more comfortable for White, but Black had no serious worries.

b) 11 \( e1 \) is another sensible approach,

although there is now no reason why Black should divert from his normal plan: 11...0-0-0 12 \( d3 \) \( e7 \) (aiming to target White’s pawn on e5) 13 \( a3 \) a6 14 \( c2 \) \( c6 \) 15 \( f4 \) \( e7 \) 16 \( d2 \) and in K.Pedersen-L.Stark, Aarhus 2005, a draw was agreed.

The Advance Variation

Although there is now no reason why Black should divert from his normal plan: 11...0-0-0 12 \( d3 \) \( e7 \) (aiming to target White’s pawn on e5) 13 \( a3 \) a6 14 \( c2 \) \( c6 \) 15 \( f4 \) \( e7 \) 16 \( d2 \) and in K.Pedersen-L.Stark, Aarhus 2005, a draw was agreed.

However, the position looks quite promising for Black, since he can continue with 16...\( e8 \), with the idea of then playing ...h6, ...g5, etc.

c) 11 f4 is quite logical too. White takes a firm hold of the e5-square and prepares to bring a knight to e4. Black now has two ways of playing:

1. Put the knight on f5 and the bishop on e7. This is a quiet way of playing, but I expect that White should have a small advantage due to his space advantage.

2. Aim for the break ...g5. Unsurprisingly I prefer this combative way of playing as it fights for the advantage.

Let’s take a look at an example: 11...0-0-0 12 \( f3 \)?! (or 12 \( d3 \) \( h6 \) 13 \( d2 \) 14 \( e4 \) g5 with a complicated position and here 12...g5?! is also inter-
At tacking Chess: The French

interesting, intending 13 fxg5 ♖g7 with good play) 12...g5!? 13 b4 gxf4 14 ♖xf4 ♖h6 and I like Black’s position. There is certainly an exciting game ahead for both sides.

11...0-0-0

In this variation it is always worth castling before turning to kingside operations.

12 ♖d2 ♖c6

The bishop is well placed on c6, controlling the e4-square and placing a bit of pressure on g2.

13 ♖d3?!

This is an error which allows Black a chance to start an attack on the kingside.

The critical choice would have been 13 ♖f3!, since the exchange of lightsquared bishops must help White. Black’s bishop is doing a good job of defending his king, so by exchanging it White leaves Black’s king slightly exposed. White will also avoid any potential problems on g2 once the bishops have been exchanged. Play could continue 13...h6!? (...g5 is coming!) 14 ♖e4
g5 15 ♖g3 ♖xe4!? (giving up a strong piece, but gaining time on the kingside) 16 ♖xe4 h5 and Black has a good game.

13...g5!

Black gets his attack in first! Now g2 will become a major target.

14 ♗g3

14 ♖xg5 may be possible, but it would take a brave man to play this move. After 14...♗g7 15 ♖g4! (this is the only chance) 15...♖e7 (15...h6 16 ♖xe6+ ♕d7 17 ♖f6 ♖xe6 18 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 19 f4 looks like good play for White, since his e- and f-pawns are pretty scary) White faces a slightly suboptimal choice:

a) 16 f4 h6 17 ♖xe6+ ♕c7 18 ♖g6 ♖xg6 19 ♖xg6 hxg5 20 f5 ♖h6! holds up White’s f-pawn when Black is doing well; one sensible plan being ...♖f8 followed by ...♖e7.

b) 16 ♖e4! looks best, although 16...♖d7!? (after 16...♖e4 17 ♖xe4 ♖xg5 18 ♖xe6+ ♕c7 19 f4 ♖h6 20 ♖f7! Black’s pieces are a bit too congested)
17 ♖xe6 ♖xg5 18 ♖xc5 ♖e7 still looks
better for Black.

c) 16 \( \text{Wxe6+ \text{d7} } \) leads to a draw with best play (17 \( \text{f6 \text{h6} } 18 \text{d5 \text{c6} } 19 \text{e6+ \text{d7} } 20 \text{d5 \text{c6} } \)), but here 16...\( \text{c7}! \) 17 \( \text{f4 \text{h6} } \) transposes to variation 'a', above.

14...\( \text{h5} \)

Black has the advantage.

15 \( \text{h3} \)

Or 15 \( \text{h4?! \text{gxf4} } 16 \text{\text{xe7 \text{xe7} } } \) and due to the open g-file White must be clearly worse.

15...\( \text{g4} \)

Opening up lines on the kingside.

16 \( \text{hxg4} \)

Earlier Smeets had been caught on the white side and had tried 16 \( \text{h4} \) in J.Smeets-I.Rogers, Dutch League 2001. That game also turned out to be very good for Black after 16...\( \text{h6} \) 17 \( \text{e4 \text{f5} } 18 \text{\text{g5 \text{xe7} } } 19 \text{\text{xe7 \text{xe7} } } \) and due to the open g-file Black must be clearly worse.

15...\( \text{g4} \)

The h-pawn battering ram will blast open the kingside.

17 \( \text{h2} \)

Another option was 17 \( \text{f4} \), but

Black is better after 17...\( \text{xf7! \text{g3 \text{h6} } } \) when White’s position is falling apart.

17...\( \text{h3} \) 18 \( \text{f4} \)

White had a bad position anyway, but he should have tried 18 \( \text{f3} \) which at least blunts Black’s light-squared bishop. Play could proceed 18...\( \text{xf2} \) (or 19 \( \text{xe2 \text{h6} } \) with ...\( \text{xe4} \) to follow) 19...\( \text{h6} \) 20 \( \text{xe2 \text{e3} } \) with a big advantage for Black.

18...\( \text{xf2} \) 19 \( \text{f2 \text{g7} } \)

Here they come!

20 \( \text{xe2} \)

20 \( \text{e4 \text{f1} } 21 \text{\text{h2} } \text{h7+ } 22 \text{\text{xe4+ } } 23 \text{\text{xe4 \text{xe4} } } 24 \text{\text{f3 \text{h6} } 25 \text{f5 \text{g7} } } \) when Black is practically winning.

20...\( \text{xe2} \) 21 \( \text{xe2 \text{h6} } \)

The rest is easy.

22 \( \text{g3} \)

22 \( \text{f1 \text{h3} } 23 \text{\text{g1 \text{h6} } } \) is winning for Black.

22...\( \text{h3+ } 23 \text{\text{f2 \text{h6} } 24 \text{\text{e2 \text{e7} } } 25 \text{\text{e4 \text{h4} } 26 \text{g5 \text{xe4+ } 27 \text{xe4 \text{h2+} } 28 \text{\text{f3 \text{f5} } } \) } \)

28...\( \text{f7} \) was even quicker with the threat of...\( \text{xe4} \): for example, 29 \( \text{ed3} \)
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\( \text{xg5+! 30 fxg5 fdf8+ 31 e4 f4+ 32 g4 } \text{xg4 mate.} \\
29 f1 h3+ 30 e4 d3! 0-1 \\

A pretty finish. Mate on d4 is hard to stop, so White called it a day.

In this game we looked at a fairly safe way for Black to meet 10 c4, namely with 10...d4, which keeps the position fairly closed. This is easier to learn than Black’s other options, but we should also examine them. That said, 10...0-0-0 is a pretty risky choice, as we’ll see in the following model game from White’s perspective.

Game 4

J. Timman-S. Brynell
German League 2001

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 c6 5 f3 d7 6 e2 f6!? 7 0-0 fxe5 8 xex5

This move has only been played in about half a dozen games, so it has great surprise value.

Black is advised to capture on e5 before White has a chance to play h5+ or f4. That said, 8...f6!? may be worth exploring just a little bit further.

After 9 g5 d6 10 h5+! g6 11 xd7 xd7 the black king was misplaced and there was a target on e6 so White had the advantage in A. Kharlov-J. Kjeldsen, Gausdal 1992. Here 9...e7!? is an improvement and was tried in K. Holmgren-J. Engsner, Swedish League 1993, where 10 xf6 xf6 11 xd7 xd7 12 dxc5 saw White win a pawn, but Black had dynamic compensation. The game saw 12...e7 (12...0-0!?) 13 g4 d8 (with the idea of playing ...e5) 14 a3 0-0 15 b5 h8 with an acceptable position. Food for thought.

9 dxe5 c7 10 c4! 0-0-0!

It should be noted that White has scored very well after this risky choice. I suspect this is because the position is harder for Black to handle compared to White. White just develops and attacks, whereas Black must proceed with caution. Thus if you are brave enough to enter this variation, then you need to be well prepared.
We looked at the safer 10...d4 in the previous game, Jonkman-Smeets, but an important question is: what happens if Black captures on e5? Well, let’s take a look!

After 10...\texttt{wx}xe5 White has tried a number of moves:

\begin{itemize}
  \item[a)] 11 \texttt{cx}d5 looks very sensible. White wants to open up the centre. After 11...0-0-0 (11...\texttt{ax}d6?! 12 g3 \texttt{wx}xd5 13 \texttt{xf}3 \texttt{wx}d1 14 \texttt{x}d1 \texttt{xe}5 looked a bit better for White in P.Buecker-I.Naumkin, Münster 1989; I expect that White should now have played 15 \texttt{ca}3 and even though he is a pawn down, his pieces are very well placed and his position is much the easier to play) 12 \texttt{cc}3 Black can consider:
    \begin{itemize}
      \item[a1)] 12...\texttt{ex}d5 is the simplest and likely the best response: 13 \texttt{wx}xd5 (bail out into a roughly equal position) 13...\texttt{ad}6 14 \texttt{we}xe5 \texttt{xe}5 15 \texttt{e}4 b6 16 \texttt{ae}1 \texttt{ae}8 17 \texttt{a}a6+ \texttt{d}d8 18 \texttt{gg}5+ \texttt{f}6 19 \texttt{ad}1 \texttt{c}7 20 \texttt{cc}3 \texttt{d}4 21 \texttt{f}4+ \texttt{d}8 22 \texttt{b}5 and 1/2-1/2 was the high-level encounter G.Sax-R.Vaganian, Tallinn 1979.
      \end{itemize}
  \item[a2)] 12...\texttt{ff}6 keeps more tension, but does look quite dangerous for Black if White follows up actively: for example, 13 \texttt{f}3 (13 \texttt{dx}e6 \texttt{xe}6 must be fine for Black) 13...\texttt{ex}d5 14 \texttt{ee}1 \texttt{f}5 15 b4!? \texttt{c}xb4 16 \texttt{e}2 and White has a dangerous attack, with the bishop coming to f4 and the rook to c1. This is just the type of position that I would to steer clear of as Black.
  \item[b)] 11 \texttt{hh}5+ forces Black to play 11...g6 which White claims is going to be a weakness after retreating with 12 \texttt{ff}3.
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item[35] Here the slightly mysterious 12...0-0-0? 13 \texttt{ee}1 \texttt{wd}6 14 \texttt{cc}3 \texttt{dx}c4 15 \texttt{we}2 \texttt{ff}6 16 \texttt{wc}c4 was something of a disaster for Black in O.Romanishin-V.Ivanchuk, Irkutsk 1986. Only two years earlier Ivanchuk had reached the same position and in that game he played the correct move, 12...d4!, returning the pawn to stabilize the centre. Black has a fine position here: for instance, 13 \texttt{xb}7 \texttt{bb}8 14 \texttt{f}3 \texttt{g}7 15 \texttt{ee}1 \texttt{wd}6 16 \texttt{cc}3 \texttt{ff}6 with a roughly equal game.
\end{itemize}
c) 11 \( \textsf{\texttt{f3}} \) will often transpose to the main game after 11...0-0-0 12 \( \textsf{cxd5} \) exd5 13 \( \textsf{e1} \) \( \textsf{d6} \), but here Black can also consider:

11 \( \textsf{e1} \)

This move can be considered the main line, but there are some other interesting possibilities. This is just one of the reasons why you have to be well prepared in order to enter this variation as Black:

a) 11 \( \textsf{cxd5} \) \( \textsf{xe5} \) (11...exd5?! doesn't give Black enough compensation after 12 \( \textsf{xd5} \) \( \textsf{e7} \) 13 \( \textsf{xe4} \) \( \textsf{c6} \) 14 \( \textsf{g4+} \) 12 \( \textsf{f3} \) exd5 13 \( \textsf{e1} \) \( \textsf{d6} \) and we have transposed back to the main game.

b) 11 \( \textsf{f3} \) \( \textsf{e7} \)! (the safer 11...d4 would transpose back into Jonkman-Smeets) 12 \( \textsf{c3} \) d4 13 \( \textsf{e4} \) \( \textsf{xe5} \) 14 \( \textsf{g5} \) \( \textsf{c6} \)! (after 14...\( \textsf{f6} \) with best play the position is probably a draw: 15 \( \textsf{e4} \) \( \textsf{e5} \) 16 \( \textsf{g5} \), etc), and now in the game D.Moskovic-N.Pert, British League 1996, White played 15 \( \textsf{e1} \)? which made little sense. He should have grabbed the exchange with 15 \( \textsf{f7} \) \( \textsf{f6} \) 16 \( \textsf{xd8} \) \( \textsf{xd8} \), reaching an interesting
position. Black has long-term compensation in the form of his strong centre, active pieces and play along the f-file, but I wonder whether White can play 17 b4!?, opening up the queenside in Benko style and after 17...cxb4 18 a3 I would prefer to have the white pieces.

c) 11 c3!? was played with success in G.Seul-U.Schulze, German League 1999, but I am not entirely convinced by this move as Black is allowed to play ...d4 with tempo. Rather than grabbing the pawn as Schulze did, 11...d4! looks a lot more sensible: for example, 12 b5 (12 e4!?) 12...xb5 13 cxb5 wxe5 (and why not?) 14 e1 c7 15 g4 d6 16 xe6+ b8 17 h3 f6 with a roughly equal position.

11...wxe5

Taking the bait. This is clearly critical, although Black does have two other options:

a) 11...e7 makes a lot of sense. Black develops a piece and by doing so keeps the tension in the centre. After 12 g4 b8 (12...h5!?) 13 c3 dxc4 14 e2 c6 15 g5 e8 16 xc4 h6 17 d2 a6 the position is roughly equal, I.Yagupov-R.Astrom, Polanica Zdroj 1993.

b) 11...d4! would be my preferred approach. Black stabilizes the centre and prepares to play ...c6. The position is very similar to Jonkman-Smeets, except that White has already committed himself to playing e1.

Let’s see how play could develop: 12 f3 e7 13 f4?! (the bishop becomes a bit of a target on this square: it is open to attack from ...h6 and ...g5, as well as by a well-placed rook on the f-file) 13...h6! (a typical and effective plan!) 14 d2 f5 15 e4 and at this point in D.Prasad-D.Neelotpal, New Delhi 2001, Black should have gone 15...g5 with a slight advantage.

12 f3

Other moves are very likely to transpose to variations that we have already looked at above.

12...d6

Black always seems to place his queen on this odd square. I am not entirely sure why, though, and surely an-
At tacking Chess: The French

other option worth considering is 12...\textit{\underline{\textbf{W}}f5}!? which has yet to be tried. It is not easy to attack the black queen on this square and \textit{\underline{\textbf{d6}}} is left open for the dark-squared bishop. This move would certainly be worth a try.

Play might continue 13 \textit{\underline{\textbf{c3}}} (13 \textit{\underline{\textbf{cxd5}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{exd5}}} 14 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Wxd5}}} is harmless for Black – see note ‘c’ to White’s 14th move in our main game) 13...\textit{\underline{\textbf{f6}}} (Black is preparing to play ...\textit{\underline{\textbf{c6}}} when all his pieces will be well placed) 14 \textit{\underline{\textbf{cxd5}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{exd5}}} 15 \textit{\underline{\textbf{xd5}}} (this cannot be right, but I cannot see what else White should be trying to do, since 15 \textit{\underline{\textbf{cxd5}}? \textit{\underline{\textbf{c6}}} wins material for Black) 15...\textit{\underline{\textbf{c3}}} 16 \textit{\underline{\textbf{wxd5}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Wxd5}}} 17 \textit{\underline{\textbf{xd5}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{xc6}}} with a dream position for Black. The two bishops that Black has should rule the open board and he certainly has the advantage.

Practical tests of 12...\textit{\underline{\textbf{Wf5}}} are needed, but it is well worth investigating and I just hope that I am given a chance to give this line a go!

\textbf{13 \textit{\underline{\textbf{cxd5}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{exd5}}} 14 \textit{\underline{\textbf{b4}}}!?}

The most interesting option. White blows the queenside open to get at Black’s king. He has also tried:

\begin{itemize}
  \item a) 14 \textit{\underline{\textbf{c3}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{f6}}} 15 \textit{\underline{\textbf{b4}}}!? (in a similar spirit to the main game; instead after 15 \textit{\underline{\textbf{cxd5}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{cxd5}}} 16 \textit{\underline{\textbf{wxd5}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Wxd5}}} 17 \textit{\underline{\textbf{xd5}}} Black has nothing to fear, S.Movsesian - A.Shirov, Istanbul Olympiad 2000) 15...\textit{\underline{\textbf{c6}}} (the bishop is well placed on \textit{\underline{\textbf{c6}}}, defending \textit{\underline{\textbf{d5}} and \underline{\textbf{b7}}}) 16 \textit{\underline{\textbf{bxc5}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{xc5}}} 17 \textit{\underline{\textbf{d2}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{b8}}} 18 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Cc1}}} gave White compensation for the pawn as his pieces were very active, but Black’s position was still a challenge to break down in the earlier J.Timman - P.Nikolic, Dutch Championship, Rotterdam 1997.
  \item b) 14 \textit{\underline{\textbf{g3}}}!? aims to place the dark-squared bishop on f4. After 14...\textit{\underline{\textbf{f6}}} 15 \textit{\underline{\textbf{f4}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{a6}}} 16 \textit{\underline{\textbf{c3}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{d4}}} 17 \textit{\underline{\textbf{e4}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{xe4}}} 18 \textit{\underline{\textbf{xe4}}} again White has compensation for the invested material, E.Sveshnikov - A.Vaisser, Sochi 1984.
  \item c) 14 \textit{\underline{\textbf{wxd5}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Wxd5}}} 15 \textit{\underline{\textbf{xd5}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{f6}}} looks fairly equal.
\end{itemize}

\textbf{14...\textit{\underline{\textbf{f6}}}}

Black sensibly develops a piece. There are two other critical options, one of which seems to lead to a draw with best play:
a) 14...cxb4 gives up the d4-square and opens the c-file. This move looks very risky to me and I am sure that White has all the winning chances after 15 a3!? cxf6 16 axb4.

b) 14...h6!? seems to be a draw, but things can become very complicated!

Now:

b1) 15 a3 hxa1 will most likely lead to a draw after 16 hxd5 c6 17 e6+ d7 18 d5 c6 19 e6+, etc. Instead the brave winning attempt 15...e7!? was tried in H. Jonkman-L. Cheparinov, Amsterdam 2005, and after 16 b1 c6 17 bxc5 xc5 18 b3 (18 xd5! makes a lot more sense, when White can claim a small advantage) 18..b6 19 b5 White still had good compensation for the pawn, with the position roughly equal.

b2) 15 d2!? is an interesting approach. White is preparing to play b2, so Black should go 15...hxa1 and then:

b21) 16 hxd5 c6 17 e6+ d7 18 d5 c6 19 e6+ c7 will still lead to a draw: for example, 20 f4+ d6 21 f7+ c8 22 e6+ c7 23 f7+, but now not 23 b6? 24 bxc5+ xc5 25 e3+ when the black king is not going to last long.

b22) 16 c3?! is a crazy winning attempt. After 16 d4 17 d5 (and not 17 b2? dxc3 18 xc3 c6 19 g4+ c7 20 f4+ d6 21 f7+ d7! 22 xd7 xc3 when Black wins) 17...c6 White’s best chance is 18 e2! I would now recommend that Black play 18 xc1 19 xc1 xd5 when he should have the advantage, but the material unbalance makes things very messy.

15 bxc5

Opening up the c-file.

15...xc5 16 e3 a5 17 d2

White finishes his development. He is now ready to bring his rooks into the game on the c- and b-files.

17 c6

This position was later reached in another top-level game. In that encounter Black decided to try and move his king to safety with the sensible-looking 17 b8. After 18 b3 (the knight brings itself into the mix) 18 a4 19 b1 (White does not have
to rush; rather he can slowly build up pressure against Black’s king) 19...\(\text{f5}\) 20 \(\text{b2 a3}\) (it seems like Black is making progress as he is developing and pushing White’s pieces to some passive squares) 21 \(\text{d2 d7}\) (21...\(\text{he8}\)?) 22 \(\text{xd5 xd5}\) 23 \(\text{xd5 xd5}\) 24 \(\text{xd5}\) is a lot better for White) 22 \(\text{d4 he8}\) 23 \(\text{d2}\) the position was roughly equal in S.Movsesian-R.Jedynak, Panormo 2001.

Thus Black may be okay in this variation, but his position is the harder to play and it is a lot easier for him to go wrong. White will just play natural developing moves, but Black has to play very precisely. This is why I would suggest that you seriously consider playing either 11...\(\text{d4!}\) or 12...\(\text{f5!}\) if tempted to castle on move 10.

18 \(\text{a4}\)

This is a useful move as the a-pawn can be used as a battering ram against the black king.

18...\(\text{d6}\) 19 \(\text{b3 c7}\) 20 \(\text{g3}\) \(\text{he8}\)

Black is playing some very sensible moves, but his position remains uncomfortable.

21 \(\text{c1}\)

Lining up on the c-file. Maybe White could also have tried 21 \(\text{xa7}\)!, winning back the pawn. The position remains quite random after 21...\(\text{b6}\) 22 \(\text{d4 d7}\), as Black can always meet \(\text{c1}\) with ...\(\text{c5}\). Obviously the bishop on a7 is in danger, so it is easy to see why Timman chose to avoid this variation.

21...\(\text{b8}\) 22 \(\text{a5}\)

White wants to use the a-pawn to create some weaknesses on the queenside. By now he has a pleasant advantage and it is not so clear where Black went wrong.

22...\(\text{c8}\)

This looks like a mistake, but I am struggling to suggest an alternative.

23 \(\text{d4!}\)

Simple and good.

23...\(\text{b6}\) 24 axb6 axb6 25 \(\text{a5!}\)

A nice touch. Now Black’s queenside quickly falls apart.

25...\(\text{xe3}\)

25...\(\text{c5}\) does not help, since after 26 \(\text{xc5}\) bxc5 27 \(\text{b1+ a8}\) (or 27...\(\text{b7}\)
28 \(\text{b}2\) 28 \(\text{b}xc5\) \(\text{e}4\) 29 \(\text{d}4\) White’s initiative is too strong.
26 \(\text{xc}6+\) \(\text{xc}6\) 27 \(\text{xe}3\)
Simple and good. White is the exchange up and Black’s king remains exposed. The rest is easy.
27...\(\text{c}5\) 28 \(\text{e}5+\) \(\text{b}7\) 29 \(\text{cd}1\)
Targeting the d5-pawn.
29...\(\text{f}8\) 30 \(\text{e}2\)
This move safeguards f2 before starting any tactics, but White could have also played 30 \(\text{x}d5\) which seems to win: for example, 30...\(\text{x}f2+\) 31 \(\text{g}2!\) (31 \(\text{x}f2?? \text{g}4+\) would have turned the tables) 31...\(\text{x}e1\) 32 \(\text{e}7+\) \(\text{a}6\) 33 \(\text{e}2+\).
30...\(\text{d}6\) 31 \(\text{e}6\) \(\text{c}5\) 32 \(\text{e}5\) \(\text{d}6\) 33 \(\text{f}5\)
Black can only dream of a draw.
33...\(\text{b}8\) 34 \(\text{e}6\)
 Tightening the screw.
34...\(\text{c}5\) 35 \(\text{d}3\) \(\text{e}4\) 36 \(\text{x}e4\) 1-0

In the next game we will take a look at what happens if White avoids playing the critical move, 10 c4. Black still has to be on his guard and choose the right way to proceed, though, and that is exactly what Brynell does in this game!

Game 5
A.Matros-S.Brynell
Swedish League 2000

1 d4 e6
We reach the French via a different move order. This is what I often play against 1 d4 as I am happy to enter the Dutch after 2 c4 f5.
2 e4 d5
Back to the French.
3 e5 c5 4 c3 \(\text{c}6\) 5 \(\text{f}3\) \(\text{d}7\) 6 \(\text{e}2\) f6 7 0-0 \(\text{f}xe5\) 8 \(\text{x}e5!\) \(\text{x}e5\) 9 \(\text{d}xe5\) \(\text{c}7\)

10 \(\text{e}1\)
As well as 10 c4, White has also played:
a) 10 f4 is a very logical move. White sets up a strong centre and hopes to build around it. I believe that Black has to act quite quickly against this approach, otherwise White will obtain a slight advantage. The plan that I am going to recommend is one based on...g5. Again I like this plan; it is aggressive and aims to start an attack on the kingside. Black should begin with 10...0-0-0, leading to:
a1) 11 \(\text{d}2\) \(\text{h}6!\) is an important idea to remember. It looks like the knight is heading for f5, but often it is actually better placed on f7 from where it supports the ...g5 break and puts pressure on White’s e5-pawn: 12 \(\text{f}3\)
\( \text{\textit{Attacking Chess: The French}} \)

\( \text{\textit{At tacking Chess: The French}} \text{. The French (Black sensibly develops the bishop before deciding where the knight on h6 should be deployed to) 13 \textit{\&e}3 \textit{\&f}7! (preparing \ldots \textit{g}5; this is better than 13 \textit{\&f}5 which looks very tempting, but White can consolidate his position after 14 \textit{\&f}2 as now Black always has to be on his guard for \textit{g}4) 14 \textit{b}4 \textit{g}5! and Black has managed to drum up enough play on the kingside. We have been following E.Gausel-L.Ogaard, Norwegian Championship, Gausdal 1985, which continued 15 \textit{g}3 \textit{\&d}g8 16 \textit{\&h}1 \textit{gxf}4 17 \textit{\&xf}4 \textit{\&h}6 18 \textit{bxc}5 \textit{\&f}5 19 \textit{\&f}2 \textit{\&xc}5 20 \textit{\&d}4 \textit{\&xd}4 21 \textit{\&xd}4 \textit{\&c}6 22 \textit{\&d}2 \textit{\&g}7 and Black was doing well.}

\( \text{\textit{a2}) 11 \textit{\&a}3 \text{is another sensible way to develop the knight, but Black should still aim to play \ldots \textit{g}5 and 11 \ldots \textit{\&e}7 12 \textit{\&c}2 \textit{g}5! did just that in A.Wallart-Nguyen Chi Minh, French League 2003.}

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

This is such an important move to make as Black must play actively. After 13 \textit{c}4 \textit{gxf}4 14 \textit{\&xf}4 \textit{\&g}8 15 \textit{\&e}3 \textit{d}4 16 \textit{\&g}4 \textit{\&c}6 Black had enough play due to the opening of the g-file.

\( \text{\textit{b}) 10 \textit{\&f}4 is logical enough too, but the bishop can again become a target on \textit{f}4. It is especially susceptible here to the pawn advance \ldots \textit{g}5. W.Hendriks-M.Socco, Hastings 2004/05, continued with the very interesting 10 \ldots \textit{0-0-0} 11 \textit{\&d}2 \textit{\&c}6 (I am not sure if this is best; I would have preferred to have developed my knight with 11 \ldots \textit{\&e}7 12 \textit{\&f}3 \textit{h}6! 13 \textit{h}4, as in P.Cumbers-K.Mah, Marlborough 1994, when an interesting option was 13 \ldots \textit{g}5!?, sacrificing a pawn to open some lines on the kingside and I quite like Black’s position after 14 \textit{h}xg5 \textit{\&g}6! 15 \textit{\&g}3 \textit{\&e}8!? 12 \textit{b}4! (a typical way to start an attack on the queenside) 12 \ldots \textit{\&e}7! (instead of grabbing the pawn, Black starts her own attack on the kingside; instead 12\ldots\textit{cxb}4 13 \textit{cxb}4 \textit{\&xb}4 14 \textit{\&c}1 looks very risky, since White has got his attack in first and therefore has the initiative) 13 \textit{\&b}3 \textit{g}5! (you must remember this important pawn break!) 14 \textit{\&g}3? (a bad square for the bishop; White should have played 14 \textit{\&e}3!) 14 \ldots \textit{\&f}5 and by now Black was better.}

\( \text{\textit{10 \ldots \textit{0-0-0}}}

\( \text{\textit{It is often worth castling queenside before deciding how to continue.}}

\( \text{\textit{11 \textit{\&f}4}}

\( \text{\textit{The most logical and probably best the move.}}

\( \text{\textit{11 \&f}4 \text{ makes less sense now that White has played \textit{\&e}1. M.Labra-A.Rodriguez, San Copiapo 1992, continued 11 \ldots \textit{\&h}6 12 \textit{a}3 \textit{\&c}6 (12 \ldots \textit{g}5!? is well worth considering too; as you may have guessed by now, I am quite fond}
of this plan!) 13 b4 d4!? with an interesting game ahead.

11...c6!?  
I partly chose this game because Black plays an interesting plan which we haven’t yet come across.

There is another very decent idea available in 11...h6 which gets straight to the point. Black just wants to expand on the kingside and once he does so his position will become very comfortable. For example, 12 d2 g5 13 g3 g7 14 d3 h5 and Black had a very nice position in the game R.Otomo Nieves-F.Sanchez Aller, Burgas 2001.

12 a3 f7!?  
Black’s queen swings over to the kingside and in the meantime attacks White’s bishop on f4.

13 d2 e7  
Black is not worried about his dark-squared bishop, as after ...h6 and ...g5 it will find a nice home on g7.

14 ac1 h6!

It is time to get moving on the kingside!

15 g3 f5  
Black is now better, as his pawns are ready to run down the kingside and White’s bishop on g3 has become a major target.

16 b4 g5 17 b5 e8 18 c4  
White is trying to make some progress on the queenside, but Black’s position is solid enough there.

18...h5  
Tempting, but an even better possibility was 18...d4! which aims to keep the centre and queenside closed.

19 cxd5 cxd5  
19...h4?! 20 d6 hxg3 21 xc5+ b8 22 fxg3 is a bit risky for Black. White has managed to get an attack going and there is no need to allow this.

20 a5

The position becomes a bit random which is why I think Black should have played 18...d4!.

20...b6!  
Again Black does not grab the piece with 20...h4. Instead he tries to keep things under control on the queenside, partly because 20...h4 21xa7 hxg3 22
fxg3 is a mess, but also a mess where Black will have to do a fair bit of defending and that is one thing I am trying to avoid in this book!

21 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\texti{a}4}?}}}

This is a major mistake after which Black pretty much has a winning position. White should have tried 21 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{a}6}}}. After 21...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{b}}7} 22 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{x}b}}7+ \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{x}}b}}7 I prefer Black’s position, but White is still in the game after something like 23 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{h}3}} 24 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{x}g}}3 25 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{d}2}} 25 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{c}4}}.}}

21...h4

Black wins a clear piece and with it the game.

22 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{c}4 \textbf{\textit{\texti{b}8}}}}

There is also nothing much wrong with 22...hxg3, since 23 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{x}b}}6+ is nothing to worry about: 23...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{x}b}}6 24 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{a}8+}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{d}7}} 25 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{b}7+}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{d}8}} 26 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{x}b}}6+ \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{c}7}} and the two extra pieces should be enough to win.

23 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{f}3}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{x}g3}} 24 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{x}g3}} 25 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{d}4}} 25 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{d}5}} exd5 26 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{e}3}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{h}5}} 27 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{d}5}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{x}b}5}} 28 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{d}1}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{e}2}} 29 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{a}4}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{b}5}} 30 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{d}1}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{e}2+}} 31 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{f}2}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{c}1}} 32 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{c}1}} c4 33 g4 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{x}g4}} 34 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{g}1}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{c}5}}+ 0-1}

In the final game of this chapter we take a look at what happens if White avoids the main line with 6 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{e}2}}. One popular variation amongst club players is the Milner-Barry Gambit. Here I am going to show you an interesting way of playing against that variation. Instead of accepting the sacrifice, we are going to sacrifice ourselves, something which is much more fun!

\textbf{Game 6}

\textbf{M.Pap-Nguyen Chi Minh}

\textbf{Creon 2008}

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5

4 c3

White is advised to try and hold his pawn formation in the centre. Other moves have been tried, but they give up the centre without a fight, although they might tempt a strict adherent of Nimzowitsch’s teachings:

\textbf{a}) 4 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{f}3}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{c}6}} (I am going to recommend this simple developing move against most of White’s 4th move alternatives; Black develops a piece and places d4 under pressure) 5 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{d}3}} (5 c3 would, of course, transpose to normal lines) 5...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{c}5}} 6-0 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{f}7}} (6...f6!? is also very thematic and leads to a fine position for Black: for example, 7 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{f}6}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{x}f6}} 8 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{e}1}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{d}6}} and Black has the advantage) 7 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{f}4}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{g}6}} 8 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{g}3 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{e}7}} 9 a3 a5 10 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{e}1}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texti{d}7}} and Black is better, as it is not even clear how White wins back the pawn on d4.}
b) 4 dxc5 cannot be good for White as Black is a tempo up on a line of the Caro-Kann, 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 dxc5 e6, which is known to be okay for him! After 4...cxd5 5 f3 xc5 6 a3 (this looks a bit slow, but White wants to place his bishop on b2; instead 6 f4 is well met by 6...b6!) 6...f6! 7 b4 e7 8 a2 h6 the chances were equal in C.Crouch-J.Speelman, British League 1998.

c) 4 g4!? is quite a tricky move. As we will see throughout this book, the queen is often well placed on g4 in the French. Following 4...c6 5 f3 a clever move well worth remembering is 5...a5+!

The Advance Variation

The critical variation sees White grab the pawn on c5, but after 6 exf6 xf6 7 dxc5 e5 (7...e7 is also sensible: for example, 8 b4 0-0 9 e2 e5 when Black has compensation for the pawn due to his strong centre) 8 b4 e7 Black must have good compensation for the pawn. This type of structure reminds me of the Slav when Black decides to capture on c4. White often just ignores this and continues expanding in the centre. Black also has an open f-file here. Play could continue 9 f3 g4!? (another crazy line runs 9...0-0 10 b5 e4 11 bxc6 exf3 12 cxb7 fxg2 13 bxa8 gxf1 which looks like a lot of fun and probably only for Black!) 10

4...c6 5 f3

Usual, but 5 e3 has been tried on a number of occasions. There is nothing wrong with Black playing in standard fashion with ...b6 or ...e7 here, but I am going to suggest another option which is in keeping with the philosophy of this book: 5...f6!? sees Black aiming to immediately create some dynamic play in the centre.
At tacking Chess: The French

\[ \text{b5 0-0 11 0-0 e4 12 } \text{d4 } \text{c7 when Black has a promising attack.} \]

5...\text{d7 6 \text{d3}}

This indicates that White wants to enter the Milner-Barry Gambit, which can be reached after the moves 6...\text{cxd4 7 cxd4 } \text{b6 8 0-0 } \text{xd4 9 } \text{xd4 } \text{xd4.}

First, though, let’s quickly examine the remaining possibilities that White might try:

a) I do not really trust 6 \text{e3}. Black can strike out against the white centre with 6...f6!, our standard break. Play could continue 7 exf6 \text{xf6 8 dxc5 when White has won a pawn, but Black has a strong centre and 8...\text{g4!} shows that Black would love to eliminate White’s dark-squared bishop. This move also appears to be a novelty which adds to its effect. Let’s take a look at how White might respond:}

a1) 9 \text{g5 } \text{c7 (or 9...\text{e7!}) 10 } \text{xe7 } \text{xe7 11 b4 0-0 when it looks like Black has good compensation for the pawn; he will continue with ...b6 and ...a5, breaking up White’s queenside pawn structure, and Black also has pressure along the f-file) 10 b4 (obviously White must try to hold on to his main asset, the extra pawn on c5) 10...a5! (a typical way to break down a c3, b4 and c5 pawn formation) 11 \text{b5 axb4 12 } \text{xc6 } \text{xc6 13 cxb4 } \text{g6! (the dark-squared bishop is ideally placed on g7 and clearly Black has good compensation for the pawn) 14 } \text{d4 e5 15 } \text{b2 } \text{g7 16 h3?! } \text{xf2! (violence is the key!) 17 } \text{xf2 0-0 and Black will play ...e4 at the right moment with a significant plus.}

a2) 9 \text{d2 } \text{e7 aims to castle as quickly as possible. White can now play:}

a21) 10 h3 \text{xe3 11 } \text{xe3 0-0 and Black has a good initiative for the pawn. The plan is to play ...e5: for instance, 12 \text{b5 e5! (12... } \text{wa5!?) 13 0-0 e4 14 } \text{xc6 } \text{xc6 15 } \text{e5 } \text{g5! which is an important idea in a number of positions. Black is doing well.}

a22) 10 \text{b5 0-0 11 } \text{xc6 } \text{xc6 12 } \text{d4 aims to get a grip on the dark squares, but White’s king is still stuck in the centre, so Black has 12...e5! which leads to a very good position.}
For example, 13 \( \square \times e 5 \) \( \heartsuit \times g 5 \) 14 \( \clubsuit \times e 2 \) \( \heartsuit \times e 8 \) (White has serious difficulties on the e-file) 15 \( g 3 \) (to guard the f4-square; instead 15 0-0? \( \heartsuit \times f 4 \) is winning for Black) 15...\( \square \times e 5 \) 16 \( \heartsuit \times e 5 \) \( \heartsuit \times e 5 ! \) (a bolt from the blue!) 17 \( \heartsuit \times e 5 \) \( \heartsuit \times f 8 \) 18 \( \heartsuit \times g 5 \) (or 18 0-0 \( \heartsuit \times f 3 \) and with ...\( \heartsuit \times h 3 \) to follow White is lost) 18...\( \heartsuit \times f 3 \) and Black has a winning attack.

b) 6 \( \heartsuit \times c 5 \) seems a bit premature to me, since White concedes some of his control of the centre. He places all his hopes on being able to maintain a blockade on the e5-square, but after 6...\( \heartsuit \times c 5 \) Black should not be unhappy:

- b1) 7 \( b 4 \) was the move chosen in A.Kharlov-P.Svidler, Novosibirsk 1995: 7...\( \heartsuit \times b 6 \) 8 \( b 5 \) (this advance of the b-pawn makes it harder for Black to attack White’s pawn on e5, but White has also weakened his queenside by throwing the b-pawn up the board) 8...\( \square \times a 5 \) (the c4-square is one weakness that White has created) 9 \( \heartsuit \times d 3 \) \( \heartsuit \times c 4 \) 10 \( a 4 \) \( \heartsuit \times c 7 \) 11 \( \heartsuit \times e 2 \) a6! 12 \( \heartsuit \times a 6 \) \( \heartsuit \times a 6 \) by when Black’s position had to be slightly preferred.

- b2) 7 \( \heartsuit \times d 3 \) f6! is the typical way that Black should break down White’s pawn centre. It is rather dangerous leaving the pawn on e5 and 7...\( \heartsuit \times g 7 \) 8 0-0 0-0? 9 \( \heartsuit \times h 7 + ! \) is just one trick that Black should avoid. After 7...f6 White has:

  b21) With 8 \( \heartsuit \times e 2 \) White tries to maintain his hold on the e5-square, but after 8...\( \heartsuit \times e 5 \) 9 \( \heartsuit \times e 5 \) \( \heartsuit \times e 5 \) 10 \( \heartsuit \times e 5 \) \( \heartsuit \times f 6 \) 11 0-0 0-0 12 \( \heartsuit \times e 3 \) \( \heartsuit \times b 6 ! \) Black gained the advantage in D.Campora-J.Speelman, Spanish Team Championship 1994. The plan is to play ...\( \heartsuit \times c 7 \) and then ...\( e 5 \).

  b22) 8 \( \heartsuit \times f 4 \) is another option, when I recommend that Black increases the pressure on e5 by playing 8...\( f x e 5 \) 9 \( \heartsuit \times e 5 \) \( \heartsuit \times e 5 \) 10 \( \heartsuit \times e 5 \) \( \heartsuit \times f 6 \) 11 0-0 0-0 12 \( \heartsuit \times e 3 \) \( \heartsuit \times b 6 ! \) with a good game, since White is losing control of the key e5-square.

Returning to 6 \( \heartsuit \times d 3 \):

6...\( \heartsuit \times c 8 ! ? \)

This is an interesting idea that might well take White by surprise. The general idea is to play ...\( \heartsuit \times c 4 ; c x d 4 \) and then ...\( \heartsuit \times b 4 \) which would eliminate White’s strong light-squared bishop.
There is also a very interesting attacking idea for Black coming up.

Instead 6...cxd4 7 cxd4 $\textit{b}6 8 0-0 (8 $\textit{c}2?! is a beginner’s mistake; White defends the pawn on d4, but Black is able to play 8...$\textit{b}4 which eliminates White’s strong light-squared bishop, since 9 $\textit{b}3? $\textit{b}5! only makes matters worse for White) 8...$\textit{xd}4 leads to the Milner-Barry Gambit, which should be fine for Black, but in this book we are going to try and avoid defending if we can; hence the plan chosen in this game!

\textbf{7 a3}

This looks like White’s best option. It makes sense to try and stop Black’s plan of ...cxd4 and ...$\textit{b}4. White has tried some other options too:

a) 7 dxc5 concedes the centre, but Black still has to play precisely. In general once White has played dxc5 Black should respond with ...$f6 or ...$f5 at some point. The move ...$f6 tries to gain control of the centre, whilst the move ...$f5 blocks off White’s light-squared bishop and so makes it much safer to castle kingside. After 7...$\textit{xc}5 8 0-0 $f5!? (blocking the b1-h7 diagonal; 8...$f6 is another idea, but generally I always play ...$f5 in these types of position) 9 $\textit{g}5 (this is an interesting idea; otherwise Black would have continued with ...$\textit{ge}7, ...0-0 and ...$\textit{g}6, putting pressure on White’s e5-pawn) 9...$\textit{xe}5 10 $\textit{xf}5 $\textit{f}6 11 $\textit{c}2 $\textit{e}7 Black has completed his development and if he can castle then he will have the advantage.

Here 12 $\textit{xh}7 is critical when Black can play either 12...$\textit{xh}7! 13 $\textit{h}7 $\textit{b}5 or 12...$\textit{h}4 which both look pretty dangerous for White. Instead 12 $\textit{h}1 $h6 (pushing White’s pieces away so that Black can castle) 13 $\textit{h}3 0-0 gave Black a comfortable advantage in K.Lie-V.Akobian, Turin Olympiad 2006. He has a strong central pawn formation and active pieces. This is just the type of position that a French Defence player should be happy with!

b) 7 0-0 ignores Black’s plan, but Black has no worries at all after 7...cxd4 8 cxd4 $\textit{b}4!. Following 9 $\textit{c}3 $\textit{xd}3 10 $\textit{xd}3 the position is equal. White has a space advantage, but his pawn on d4 can become a target to attack. I always find that these types of middlegames are very comfortable for Black, since as soon as White loses his light-squared bishop Black is no longer in any danger of being checkmated. Certainly 10...$\textit{e}7 11 $g5 $h6 12 $e3 $f5 was pretty pleasant for Black in D.Smerdon-A.Korobov, Beijing (blitz) 2008.

\textbf{7...cxd4}
Only now does Black try and win White’s pawn on d4. This makes sense as the moves ...\texttt{c8} and a3 should be in his favour.

\textbf{8 cxd4 \texttt{b6} 9 \texttt{c2}}

The most logical move. White has played the move a3 in order to stop ...\texttt{b4} and so retains his light-squared bishop. Indeed, other possibilities make little sense: for example, 9 0-0 leads to a bad version of the Milner-Barry Gambit, as after 9...\texttt{xd4} 10 \texttt{xd4 \texttt{xd4} 11 \texttt{c3} the move ...\texttt{c8} is clearly more useful than that of a3. One safe option for Black would now be 11...a6, stopping any tricks with \texttt{b5}. Play could continue 12 \texttt{e1} \texttt{e7} 13 \texttt{e2} \texttt{g6} which must be clearly better for Black.

\textbf{9...g5!}

A shocking move! Black aims to undermine White’s pawn on d4 by attacking the knight on f3. Imagine being in the white player’s shoes. He was expecting to gain the initiative by sacrificing a pawn and now he is faced with a complete mess where he can easily go wrong. In practice this idea has scored remarkably well for Black, with something like a 90% win rate!

\textbf{10 h3}

Aiming to keep things under control. White can also try:

\textbf{a}) 10 \texttt{xg5?} leaves White in a lot of trouble after 10...\texttt{xd4}, since 11 \texttt{a4 (11 d3 lets Black hop into the b3-square: 11...\texttt{b3} 12 \texttt{e3 \texttt{xd1+} 13 \texttt{xd1 a4+!} 14 \texttt{e1 b3 15 a2 d4 and wins) 11...a4} 12 \texttt{xa4+ c6 13 \texttt{xd4 xc1+} 14 \texttt{d1 \texttt{xg5} wins a piece.}}}

\textbf{b}) 10 \texttt{xg5?!} is also very comfortable for Black after 10...\texttt{xb2} 11 \texttt{bd2 \texttt{xd4} 12 \texttt{d3 c2+} 13 \texttt{xc2 xc2. He has netted a safe pawn and as soon as the queens are exchanged, White faces a tough job saving the game.}}

\textbf{c}) 10 g4 is a drastic way of trying to prevent ...g4.

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

Black should now continue in aggressive style by playing 10...h5!, trying to force though the move ...g4 one way or another. This was played in A.Berbecea-D.Popescu, Romania 1999, which continued 11 \texttt{g1} (11 gxh5? g4
is winning for Black) 11...hxg4 12 fxg4 e7 13 c3 h6 by when Black had a very good game.

10...xd4!?

An amazing idea! Black just tries to blow White away. Of course this is a very double-edged plan, but as I mentioned before it has scored very highly for Black.

11 xd4

This reply looks pretty much forced, especially as the bishop on c2 is hanging in a number of other variations.

White might try 11 xd4 which was an attempt to bail out in W.Temich, Montecatini Terme 1994, which continued 11...xc2 12 xb6 axb6 13 c3 (Black’s rook is in a bit of trouble, but he has enough active counterplay) 13...c5 and now after 14 d1 the position would have been balanced after either 14...d4 or 14...f6.

11...c5

The point behind Black’s play. White cannot hold the d4-square, which means he has to allow Black to capture on f2.

12 0-0?

This is a rather poor defensive plan, but perhaps White was in a state of shock. He really has to try and hold on to his extra piece, otherwise he will simply be left with an inferior game. That is exactly what happens here. Some better attempts include:

a) 12 e2! is the most critical try. White holds on to his piece at the cost of putting his king in danger after 12...xf2+ 13 f1 (13 d2?? e3 mate would not be advisable) 13...f6! (a typical pawn break that every French Defence player should be familiar with; Black needs to open lines towards White’s king) 14 bc3! (this looks best; after 14 a4 xa4 15 xa4+ c6 Black has good counterplay, since the f-file will shortly become open) 14...fxe5 when he can chose between:

14...a4 is the most frequently-played move when 15...c6!? was played in S.Pakosta-J.Obsivac, Czech League 1996. Now instead of Pakosta’s 16 b3, 16 c3! is an improvement when play could continue 16...d4
\( \text{\textbf{The Advance Variation}} \)

\( \text{xg5 } \text{xe7 18 } \text{Wh5+ } \text{d8 19 } \text{f7 and it looks like White has the better of it, although the game very much goes on after 19...Wd6. Instead 15...\text{xa4! looks like another, earlier improvement: for example, 16 } \text{xa4+ } \text{d8 17 } \text{xg5+ } \text{e7 and with...} \text{xf8 to follow Black has great practical chances.} \)

\( \text{a2) 15 } \text{a4! looks critical, but is yet to be played in a serious game. Now 15...c5 (unfortunately 15...e7? loses to 16 } \text{xd7+ } \text{d7 17 } \text{a4!) 16 } \text{xg5 e7 looks interesting, but White may be better after 17 } \text{xd7+ } \text{d7 18 } \text{a4+ } \text{d8. So what does this mean for the whole variation? Well, you have to be brave to play it and with correct defence White may have the advantage, but defending so is very tricky, especially in a practical game. This is why Black’s results have been so good in this line.} \)

\( \text{b) 12 } \text{e3?! is another bad try. Black will gain a large advantage after 12...Wxb2 13 } \text{b3 (instead 13 0-0 } \text{xd4 14 } \text{a2 } \text{xa2 15 } \text{b3 } \text{xe3 16 } \text{xa2 } \text{f4 17 } \text{e2 f6 18 exf6 } \text{xf6 leads to an unbalanced position where Black’s chances are to be preferred) 13... } \text{xa1 14 0-0 } \text{e7 15 } \text{e1 } \text{c6 16 } \text{xe6 } \text{xe3 17 } \text{g7+ } \text{f8 18 } \text{xd5 } \text{xe5 19 } \text{xe3 and in this complicated position in J.Hodgson-A.Yusupov, Groningen 1994, Black could have got away with playing 19...} \text{g7 which should be winning for him, such as after 20 } \text{xe5 } \text{hf8 21 } \text{xg5+ } \text{h8.} \)

\( \text{c) 12 } \text{f3?! is not as strong as placing the knight on e2, because Black can now land his bishop on g3: for example, 12...xf2+ 13 } \text{e2 (13 } \text{f1? } \text{b5+ 14 } \text{d3 } \text{xd3+ 15 } \text{xd3 } \text{xc1+ is winning for Black) 13...g3! left Black doing well in N.Vulicevic-I.Subasic, Bela Crkva 1986. With 14...b5+ the main threat, White should have tried 14 a4! and after 14...f6!? 15 } \text{f1 (15 exf6? frees up Black’s e-pawn and it is checkmate in five after 15...Wf2+ 16 } \text{d3 e5) 15...e4 the position is a mess, but Black does have plenty of play for the piece and White has the harder task of defending.} \)

\( 12...\text{xd4} \)

Black now has a large and safe advantage, and White’s position has fallen apart.

\( 13 \text{c3 } \text{xe5} \)

\( \text{The rest of the game really requires little comment. Black is material up with a strong centre, which should be enough to win and it was!} \)

\( 14 \text{a4 } \text{f6 15 } \text{g5 } \text{g8 16 } \text{xf6 } \text{xf6} \)

Black’s dark-squared bishop con-
Black would have been forced to have played 25...\texttt{axg4}+ with a mess.  
\texttt{25...\texttt{b8} 26 \texttt{e2} e5}
Black is back in the driving seat. He has made his king safe and his strong centre should decide matters.  
\texttt{27 \texttt{ab1} \texttt{a8} 28 \texttt{e3} \texttt{xe3} 29 fxe3 \texttt{h6} 30 \texttt{g2} d4+ 31 \texttt{g3} d3 32 \texttt{g1} e4}
White’s knight is looking rather embarrassed on g1.  
\texttt{33 \texttt{b2} \texttt{d8} 34 \texttt{d2} \texttt{d5} 35 \texttt{e2}??}
This is just crazy. 35 g5 made a lot more sense when there would still have been everything to play for after 35...\texttt{a6} 36 h4.  
\texttt{35...dxe2 36 \texttt{xd5} e1\texttt{w}+!}
White must have missed this tactic.  
\texttt{37 \texttt{f4} \texttt{w2}+ 0-1}
What can we learn from this game? You have to be brave to play this line, but it does fit the philosophy of this book and turns a defensive opening into an aggressive one which can completely throw your opponent off guard.

\section*{Conclusion}

Many people meet the Advance Variation with 5...\texttt{b6}, but 5...\texttt{d7} produces exciting, double-edged positions and I have always done well with it! That said, one can go too far in the quest for excitement and I suspect that in the critical main line Black does better from a practical perspective with Smeets’ 10...d4 compared to Brynell’s ambitious pawn-grabbing approach.
Chapter 2
The Exchange Variation

We now come to the dreaded Exchange Variation, 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 exd5.

This line has a reputation of being very boring, but it does occur regularly at club level. Both sides are advised to be well prepared and in my experience it is actually quite rare that a draw occurs over the board.

I am going to take a look at some unusual variations here with which Black disturbs the equilibrium from an early stage. I do not think that all of these lines are the best way for Black to play, such as 3...Nx xd5, but they do hold great surprise value and fit into the aggressive ethos of this book. It is also well worth remembering that the standard position we reach in the Exchange French is so symmetrical that the stronger player will normally win. This is because there are fewer chances to unbalance the position, so the game often comes down to outmanoeuvring the opponent.

To start with let's take a quick look at some concepts that both sides should bear in mind.

1. Good and bad piece exchanges

I have taken a typical position here so we can see which pieces Black should be aiming to exchange and which ones to keep on.

1. An exchange of the light-squared
bishops should benefit Black. This is because White’s bishop on d3 is very active and controls a strong diagonal, b1-h7. Black will often aim to exchange this bishop by playing ...\texttt{d6}, ...\texttt{g7} and then ...\texttt{f5}.

2. On the other hand, Black should try to maintain his dark-squared bishop, usually on d6, as this is slightly superior to White’s dark-squared bishop.

2. The \texttt{\ldots g4} pin

\begin{center}
\textbf{A.Cabrera-F.Pons Vallejo}
Spanish Championship, Palma de Mallorca 2009
\end{center}

Once White has played \texttt{d3} Black should always consider pinning the knight with \texttt{\ldots g4?!}. This is often a double-edged move, but it does unbalance the position and increases both sides’ winning chances.

3. Going for glory as Black!
If you are in desperate need of a win, there are some ways that you can unbalance the position:

\begin{center}
\textbf{Game 7}
\textbf{N.Vitiugov-G.Meier}
European Championship, Dresden (rapid play-off) 2007
\end{center}

1 \texttt{d4 e6 2 e4 d5 3 exd5 \texttt{\ldots xd5?!}}

Maybe I should award this move a ‘?!’ mark. It is an interesting reply that keeps more tension in the position and it certainly holds surprise value, but on
the other hand Black probably does obtain a slightly inferior version of the Scandinavian (1 e4 d5 2 exd5 \(\text{\#xd5}\)), so why play it if you can just go ...d5 on move 1?

Well, it is a bold move that aims to teach the player playing White that he cannot just get away with keeping a symmetrical position in the hope of an easy game and an easy draw. Black is basically saying: ‘Right, take that! Now let’s play a game; on my terms.’

4 \(\text{\#f3}\)

White sensibly develops a piece and keep his options open with this flexible move. Let’s take a look at the alternatives:

a) 4 \(\text{\#c3}\) immediately attacks Black’s queen. Black now has two choices:

a1) 4...\(\text{\#b4?!}\) reveals the main difference between this opening and the Scandinavian. This move is not possible after 1 e4 d5 2 exd5 \(\text{\#xd5}\) 3 \(\text{\#c3}\). Saying that, I am not sure how strongly I should recommend it:

\[\text{Diagram}\]

a11) 5 \(\text{\#f3}\) \(\text{\#f6}\) gives Black some ideas based on ...\(\text{\#e4}\). This position can also be reached via the move orders 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 \(\text{\#c3}\) \(\text{\#b4}\) 4 exd5 \(\text{\#xd5}\) 5 \(\text{\#f3}\) \(\text{\#f6}\) and 3...dxe4 4 \(\text{\#xe4}\) \(\text{\#d5}\) 5 \(\text{\#c3}\) \(\text{\#b4}\) 6 \(\text{\#f3}\) \(\text{\#f6}\). One example, R. Ziatdinov- I. Rogers, Biel 1992, continued 6 \(\text{\#d3}\) (6 \(\text{\#g5}\) \(\text{\#e4}\) cannot be right for White, who must go in for 7 \(\text{\#d2}\) \(\text{\#xc3}\) 8 \(\text{\#xc3}\) \(\text{\#a3}\)) 6...b6 (Black often develops in this fashion when playing this variation; the bishop can be developed to b7 or sometimes even to a6) 7 0-0 \(\text{\#c3}\) 8 \(\text{\#xc3}\) 0-0 9 \(\text{\#e1}\) \(\text{\#bd7}\). It’s time to take stock. White has two bishops and a space advantage, but on the other hand, his doubled c-pawns could become a liability later on. Saying that, I think that White should have an advantage here: he has plans based on c4 or \(\text{\#f4}\) and his position is certainly the easier to play. However, after the inaccurate 10 \(\text{\#g5}\) (10 c4 or 10 \(\text{\#f4}\) looked a bit more to the point) 10...\(\text{\#b7}\) 11 \(\text{\#e2}\) h6 12 \(\text{\#f4}\) c5 13 \(\text{\#e5}\) \(\text{\#ac8}\) 14 c4 \(\text{\#c6}\) 15 \(\text{\#xf6}\) \(\text{\#xf6}\) only Rogers had chances to be better.

a12) 5 \(\text{\#g4}\) is another possibility when Black should probably continue 5...\(\text{\#c6}\) 6 \(\text{\#f3}\) \(\text{\#ge7?!}\) which is an interesting sacrifice. This is certainly not the kind of thing that you would normally find in the Exchange French! E. Can-D.Schuh, Pardubice 2007, continued 7 \(\text{\#xg7}\) \(\text{\#g8}\) 8 \(\text{\#xh7}\) e5?! 9 \(\text{\#d2}\) (9 dxe5 \(\text{\#xe5}\) leaves Black very active) 9...\(\text{\#xc3}\) 10 \(\text{\#xc3}\) \(\text{\#f5}\) (Black has enough activity and his position is to be preferred) 11 \(\text{\#h6}\) exd4 12 0-0-0 \(\text{\#xa2}\) 13 \(\text{\#xd4}\) 0-0-0
14...\texttt{f}4? \texttt{g}4 15 \texttt{e}3 \texttt{e}4 16 \texttt{g}5 \texttt{xd}4 17 \texttt{d}3 + 0-1. What a game!

\textit{a2)} The solid Rubinstein-like 4...\texttt{d}8 is also possible, intending 5 \texttt{f}3 \texttt{f}6 6 \texttt{d}3 \texttt{bd}7 when Black’s plan of development is ...b6, ...\texttt{b}7, ...\texttt{e}7, ...0-0, etc.

\textit{b)} I am not a great fan of 4 c4?! as it is too early to commit White’s c-pawn. In some positions White would like to play c3 and this is no longer possible. On top of this White’s pawn on d4 can become weak. I.Pitelin-R.Shikalov, Kimry 2004, continued 4...\texttt{d}8 5 \texttt{c}3 \texttt{f}6 6 g3 c5 (striking out against White’s slightly weak pawn on d4) 7 d5 \texttt{exd}5 8 cxd5 \texttt{d}6 and Black had a very comfortable position. I bet that no one would be able to guess that this position was reached through an Exchange French! After 9 \texttt{g}2 0-0 10 \texttt{ge}2 \texttt{h}6 11 0-0 a6 12 a4 b6 a roughly equal fight lay ahead.

\textit{c)} 4 \texttt{e}3?! also looks a bit odd. It does not make much sense to commit the bishop at such an early stage. After 4...\texttt{f}6 (4...\texttt{e}7!?, with the idea of playing ...\texttt{f}5 to take advantage of the position of White’s bishop on e3, also makes a lot of sense) 5 h3?! c5 6 c4 \texttt{d}8 7 \texttt{f}3 cxd4 8 \texttt{xd}4 \texttt{b}4+ 9 \texttt{c}3 \texttt{xd}4 10 \texttt{xd}4 \texttt{c}6 Black was at least equal in P.Regis Venter-J.Neves, Internet (blitz) 2003, but obviously White’s play can be improved.

Returning to 4 \texttt{f}3:

4...\texttt{f}6

A sensible developing move. Black basically has two main plans available to him here:

1. The ...c5 break, played to attack White’s centre.
2. A queenside fianchetto followed by finishing development. This is an
easy plan to follow.

Often, of course, a combination of the two will be required.

5 \( \text{e}2 \)

White has tried some other options too:

a) I was not too surprised to find that Nakamura had played this line with Black, which is typical of his uncompromising approach. His game continued 5 \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 6 \( \text{e}2 \) 0-0 7 0-0 \( \text{d}8 \). Black has castled and now he preempts c4 or \( \text{c}3 \). This is a typical position for this variation. Black should just aim to finish his development with ...b6, ...\( \text{b}7 \) and at some point the break ...c5 looks logical. That said, with 8 c4 b6 9 \( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{b}7 \) 10 \( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{c}8 \) 11 \( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 12 \( \text{c}6 \), White had gained a small advantage before going on to be ground down in R.Gonzalez-H.Nakamura, Miami 2007.

b) 5 \( \text{d}3 \) is the most aggressive square for the light-squared bishop.

After 5...\( \text{c}6 \) (the knight is normally developed to d7 in this variation, but there is no reason why it cannot find a home on c6) 6 0-0 \( \text{e}7 \) 7 \( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 8 \( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{b}4 \), Black would be very happy if he could manage to swap off his knight for White’s light-squared bishop. In the majority of games in the French Defence, White’s light squared bishop is his best minor piece.

Of course, White does not oblige and after 9 \( \text{xf}6+! \) \( \text{xf}6 \) 10 \( \text{e}4 \) 0-0 11 \( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{d}5 \), Black was very solid and had managed to unbalance the pawn structure, yet White had a space advantage which maybe gave him a slight advantage in M.Narciso Dublan-J.Pomes Marcat, Barcelona (rapid) 1996.

5...\( \text{c}5!? \)

As I mentioned in the notes to Black’s last move, Black has two ways to play this position. He can go for a quick ...c5, as he does here, or he can first finish his development. In either case the position looks pretty equal to me.

6 0-0 \( \text{a}6 \)

Cutting out any issues with \( \text{b}5+ \).

7 \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 8 \( \text{c}3 \) cxd4 9 \( \text{xd}4 \)

This type of structure is quite typi-
cal for the French, but it does not often arise from the Exchange Variation! Black has no problems in this position.

9...\textit{bd7}

The best square for the knight.

10 a3 \textit{c7} 11 b4 \textit{b6}!

The only problem piece that Black has is his light-squared bishop, but by playing this move Black finds a good square for it. Saying that White has more space and easy development, so perhaps his position is slightly to be preferred.

12 \textit{f3} \textit{b7} 13 \textit{f4}!

This is the best way for White to cause Black a few problems.

13...\textit{e5}?

A risky approach. Black should have played 13...\textit{xf4} 14 \textit{xb7} \textit{a7} 15 \textit{c6} \textit{e7} when is ready to castle and within reach of full equality.

14 \textit{g3}

A more dynamic idea was 14 \textit{xe5}! when White has a dangerous initiative: for example, 14...\textit{xe5} 15 \textit{xb7} \textit{xb7} 16 \textit{e2} with \textit{f4} or \textit{fe1} to follow.

14...0-0-0

Risky stuff indeed!

15 \textit{xb7}+

White was obviously in Exchange French mode. This is still good, but a much more proactive idea would have been 15 \textit{d5}! when White would have been better.

For example, 15...\textit{d6} (15...\textit{xd5} 16 \textit{cx}5 is just winning for White) 16 \textit{c2} \textit{b8} 17 \textit{b5} and White’s attack looks pretty fearsome!

15...\textit{xb7} 16 \textit{f3} \textit{h5}

White is still better here, but at least Black is trying to stir something up on the kingside!

17 \textit{e2} \textit{h4}

Opening the h-file at the cost of a pawn.

18 \textit{h4} \textit{d6} 19 \textit{f5} \textit{c7} 20 \textit{c5} \textit{e5} 1/2-1/2

Black is still in a lot of trouble here, but White only needed a draw for qualification.

We are now going to look at another risky approach that Black can try. The line I am about to demonstrate is probably not entirely sound, but it does
give Black decent practical chances. It might be a good choice if you are forced to win the game at any cost or if you just fancy having a punt!

**Game 8**

**A.Cherniaev-S.Williams**

London 2009

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5

I have to admit that my heart sank here, since I assumed that my opponent was happy to play for a draw. On the other hand, I wanted to make a game of it and complicate matters; hence the variation that I played.

3...exd5 4 f3 g4

I knew that this was supposed to be the most aggressive way of meeting f3 and I had played it a couple of times before. It might be the best way to play for a win, but I suspect that 4...c6 is a simpler and better way to equalize.

5 h3 h5 6 e2+

The Exchange Variation

e2 disrupts Black’s development. Other moves are of lesser consequence.

6...e7?!

A very risky way of playing. Black sacrifices a pawn in the hope that he will gain some counterplay in the form of good development. The main line is 6...e7 which has been tested at the highest level. Let’s take a look at that and another option:

a) No lesser game than G.Kasparov-N.Short, Tilburg 1991, saw 6...e7 7 e3 (of course any exchange of queens would greatly increase Black’s chances of reaching full equality) 7...c6 8 c3 0-0-0 9 g4 g6 10 0-0-0 f6 11 a3 d7 12 d2 and White had a slight advantage. He has ideas of b3-c5 and f4-f5.

b) 6...e7 7 g4 g6 8 e5 may be worth investigating, but it seems like Black will find it hard to unravel: for example, 8...c6 9 g2 d7 10 f4 xe5 11 dx5 and things are looking pretty bad for Black with f5 to follow.

7 b5+

White has to accept the pawn, otherwise his queen just looks stupid on e2.

7...d7

7...c6!? 8 xb7 b4 is a bit tricky for White and might be worth investigating deeper. After, for example, 9 b5+ f8 10 e2 xf3 11 gxf3 c5 Black has some counterplay. Moreover, White’s king is stuck in the centre for the time being and his kingside is mangled, but I still believe that he is better.
8 \( \text{Q} \text{xd}5! \)

This is the correct pawn to capture. 8 \( \text{Q} \text{xb}7 \) leaves Black with more activity and the chance to double White’s pawns with 8...\( \text{N} \times f3 \) 9 \( g \times f3 \) when 9...\( \text{N} \text{gf6} \) gives Black decent play. He is going to castle quickly, apply some pressure on the e-file and try to blow up the position with ...\( c5 \).

8...\( \text{N} \text{gf6} \)

9 \( \text{Q} \text{b3} \)

This is the safest way to continue. White’s queen keeps an eye on the knight on f3 and now he is ready to finish his development. Black does have a development advantage, but it is hard to use it as White has no weaknesses.

9 \( \text{Q} \text{xb}7 \) may be playable and I am sure that most computer engines would approve of this move, but Black can obtain decent chances after 9...\( \text{N} \text{b8} \), sacrificing another pawn: 10 \( \text{Q} \text{xa7} \) \( \text{N} \times f3 \) 9 \( g \times f3 \) 0-0 and even though Black is three pawns down (!), he has good practical chances. I would have been much, much happier with this position than the one I got in the game!

9...\( c5 \)

I believed that I had to open up the position in order to obtain some play against White’s position.

9...0-0 should transpose.

10 \( \text{e}2 \)

White is getting ready to castle and now 10...\( \text{N} \times f3 \) 11 \( \text{N} \times f3 \) cxd4 12 \( \text{Q} \text{xb7} \) would be good for him.

10...0-0

11 \( c3?! \)

This is a slight error as now White’s queen does not have room to move along the third rank. White should have simply castled. Indeed, 11 0-0! is clearly the best move and was preferred in S.Rublevsky-R.Kasimdzhanov, Moscow (blitz) 2007, which continued 11...\( \text{cxd}4 \) 12 \( \text{Q} \times d4 \) \( \text{c}5 \) 13 \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 14 \( \text{c}3?! \) (14 \( d1 \) is probably the strongest move when Black is lacking any real compensation for the sacrificed pawn) 14...\( \text{c}8 \) 15 \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{e}4 \) 16 \( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{x}3 \) 17 \( \text{bxc}3 \) and all of a sudden Black’s position was fine.
11...d6

The bishop moves to a more aggressive square and clears the e-file. I thought that I had decent compensation at the time and maybe this is so.

12 e3

White blocks the e-file, which takes the sting out of ...e8.

Cherniaev could have tried 12 0-0 which was obviously logical, but I was then planning to play 12...e8 13 e3 xe3?! which looked like fun, but it may not be quite enough compensation: for example, 14 fx3 e7 15 c4 cxd4 (perhaps 15...e4!? with some pressure: g3 is very weak and so are the dark squares around White's king) 16 exd4! (this is the only way that White can claim an advantage; instead 16 cxd4 c5 17 c3 e5 is actually better for Black, as White's kingside is under enormous pressure) 16...xe2?! 17 e1 xf3 18 xe2 xe2 19 c3 h5 20 xb7 b8 21 xa7 when White is winning, as his queen is very active and Black's minor pieces are not coordinating too well.

12...

The Exchange Variation

13 bd2

Alternatively:

a) 13 0-0 transposes back into the notes to White's 12th move.

b) 13 xb7 is a bit greedy and I cannot see many humans venturing this move. After 13...b8 14 xa7 xb2 (14...d5!? is also interesting) 15 bd2 cxd4 16 cxd4 b4! White's position is under considerable pressure. Indeed, Black has the advantage.

13...xe3?!

An interesting exchange sacrifice. The idea was to give long-term pressure on the dark squares, mainly g3, and it may have offered enough play if I had followed up correctly.

14 fx3 e7?!

A stupid choice. I should have stopped White from being able to execute his next move by playing 14...g3+, which would have meant that White's king would have had to remain in the centre and therefore his rook on a1 would have taken a while to get into the game. It is likely that with correct play White is doing well, but Black has plenty of practical chances.

Let's take a look at a possible variation: 15 d1 e7 16 xb7 b8 17 xa7 xe3 18 f1 f2 19 xg3 and White has to be very careful here as Black has ideas of playing ...e4, ...d5, ...xb2 or ...g6. Certainly an interesting position!

15 0-0-0

Such a simple move and one that I should have stopped.
15...\textit{\texttt{wxe3}} 16 \textit{\texttt{b5}}

Planning \texttt{he1}. White can always grab on b7, but this is a silly risk to take as then Black gains the open b-file.

16...\textit{\texttt{g6}}

Things go quickly downhill after this move, but I believe that my position was pretty bad anyway. Perhaps 16...\texttt{xd4} would have offered some chances, but with 17 \texttt{xd4 e8+} 18 \textit{\texttt{b1}} \textit{\texttt{g6+}} 19 \textit{\texttt{a1}} White shuffles his king over to safety and his material advantage will be the deciding factor.

17 \textit{\texttt{de1}} \textit{\texttt{f4}} 18 \textit{\texttt{hf1}}

Simple chess. My position is pretty hopeless. So much for ‘who dares wins’!

18...\texttt{xd4} 19 \textit{\texttt{e5}}!

A nice tactic! Now my queen is in trouble!

19...\textit{\texttt{xe5}}

This is the best chance, but White had everything under control.

20 \textit{\texttt{xe5}} \textit{\texttt{xe5}}?!

I am not sure why I played this move and not 20...\texttt{xe5} which was a lot more logical: for example, 21 \texttt{xd4 e8+} 22 \textit{\texttt{c4}} \textit{\texttt{d3+}} 23 \textit{\texttt{d1}} \textit{\texttt{b8}} and White is still doing well, but at least Black has a dangerous knight on d3.

21 \textit{\texttt{xd7}}

When you are material up, swapping pieces is very sensible.

21...\textit{\texttt{xd7}} 22 \textit{\texttt{d5}}

White is winning. The rest requires little comment.

22...\texttt{d8}

23 \text{\texttt{cxd4}}?! 

Still winning, but 23 \textit{\texttt{e1}} was a lot more clinical, with the idea of 23...\texttt{f6} 24 \textit{\texttt{xd7}}! \textit{\texttt{xd7}} 25 \textit{\texttt{e8}} mate.

23...\textit{\texttt{f6}} 24 \textit{\texttt{xf6}}

White is just demonstrating that he has a number of ways to win!

24...\texttt{c8+} 25 \textit{\texttt{d1}} \textit{\texttt{xf6}} 26 \textit{\texttt{xb7}} \textit{\texttt{c2+}} 27 \textit{\texttt{e2}} \textit{\texttt{e8+}} 28 \textit{\texttt{f2}} \textit{\texttt{d3}} 29 \textit{\texttt{b3}} \textit{\texttt{a6}} 30 \textit{\texttt{c4}}

Queen and knight are a notorious combination!

30...\texttt{e4+} 31 \textit{\texttt{g1}} \textit{\texttt{h5}} 32 \textit{\texttt{e5}} \textit{\texttt{e6}} 33 \textit{\texttt{f3}} \textit{\texttt{f6}} 34 \textit{\texttt{a8+}} \textit{\texttt{h7}} 35 \textit{\texttt{xa7}} \textit{\texttt{d6}} 36 \textit{\texttt{a4}} \textit{\texttt{e4}} 37 \textit{\texttt{xf7}} \textit{\texttt{g3}} 38 \textit{\texttt{d7}} \textit{\texttt{d3}} 39 \textit{\texttt{f2}} \textit{\texttt{e4+}} 40 \textit{\texttt{e3}} \textit{\texttt{c2}} 41 \textit{\texttt{hx5+}} \textit{\texttt{g8}} 42 \textit{\texttt{e8+}} \textit{\texttt{h7}} 43 \textit{\texttt{f8+}} \textit{\texttt{h6}} 44 \textit{\texttt{g4}} \textit{\texttt{f6}} 1-0
Game 9
A.Cabrera-F.Vallejo Pons
Spanish Championship,
Palma de Mallorca 2009

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 exd5 4 .gf3

White basically has three main ways of playing the Exchange French. 4 .gf3 is the most common approach, but White can also try 4 0.d3 and 4 c4, as we’ll see later in this chapter.

4...c6

In my opinion this is the easiest way that Black can equalize. 4...c6 makes a lot of sense. Black just wants to develop his pieces in standard fashion: for example, with ...d6, ...g4, ...d7 and ...gf6. I cannot imagine how White can hope to gain any real advantage against this set-up.

4...g4 is Black’s most aggressive approach, but I feel that White may have a slight advantage in that variation, as we saw in the last game.

5 0.d3 g4!

An interesting approach, but I am not sure that it is the best. Admittedly g4 is the best square for Black’s light-squared bishop as it creates an annoying pin on White’s knight. On the other hand, Black is ignoring the development of his kingside, thereby making it harder to castle kingside. Moreover, if Black does manage to castle kingside, the bishop on g4 may become a target for some tricks based on xh7+ followed by g5+ and xg4.

A more solid approach is 5...d6 which should give Black full equality: for example, 6 0-0 0.e7 7 g5 0-0 8 bd2 f6 9 h4 f5 10 b3 d7 was equal in V.Ivanchuk-A.Dreev, London (rapid) 1995.

6 0-0 d6

After Black plays ...c6 the dark-squared bishop is always developed to d6, which is a much more active square than e7.

7 c4

White tries to create some play, since if anything Black’s pieces are developed on better squares than his.

The dull alternative is 7 e1+ e7 8 bd2, but after 8...h6 (to stop any tricks on h7; if 8...0-0? 9 xh7+ xh7 10 g5+ and White is winning) 9 f1 0-0 10 h3 Black can go 10...f5, since it is normally a good idea for him to swap the light-squared bishops. As I mentioned earlier, the better player will often win in the Exchange French. This position is a good example of that. There are still a fair number of pieces left on the board and the better player...
will generally make more progress from this position, unexciting though it may be.

7...\texttt{e}e7

Blocking the e-file in order to avoid \texttt{e}e1+. Instead 7...dxc4 8 \texttt{xc}4 \texttt{e}e7? is a mistake due to 9 \texttt{xf}7+! \texttt{xf}7 10 \texttt{g}5+ \texttt{e}8 11 \texttt{w}xg4.

\textbf{8 \texttt{d}c3?!}

A more testing idea would have been 8 \texttt{c}5!. At the moment Black’s bishop on d6 is defending e7, but when it retreats to c7 White will be able to pile up along the e-file, making it a bit difficult for Black to castle. In general Black does not have to fear this idea, as he can often attack White’s pawn on c5 with ...b6, but things are a bit different here as Black has not castled. Play might continue 8...\texttt{c}7 9 \texttt{e}e1 h6 (again not 9...0-0? 10 \texttt{h}xh7+ \texttt{h}xh7 11 \texttt{g}5+ \texttt{g}8 12 \texttt{w}xg4) 10 \texttt{w}e2 when White’s position is slightly to be preferred, as Black may have to play 10...\texttt{e}6 in order to castle and if that is the case then ...\texttt{g}4 has been a waste of time.

8...dxc4!

Black is okay now as he can castle and play against White’s isolated d-pawn.

\textbf{9 \texttt{xc}4 0-0 10 \texttt{h}3 \texttt{h}5 11 g4!}

This is often what White aims to do after the sequence c4 dxc4; \texttt{xc}4. He wants to land his knight on e5 and then follow up with f4-f5. Black has to very wary of this plan and passive defence is not recommended.

\textbf{11...\texttt{g}6 12 \texttt{e}5 b5}

Black aims to push White’s light-squared bishop off the a2-g8 diagonal where it is clearly well placed.

\textbf{13 \texttt{b}3 a5}

\textbf{14 \texttt{g}5}

Continuing aggressively, but this was by no means the only option:

a) 14 f4 looks slightly premature: 14...a4 15 \texttt{w}xg6 (15 \texttt{c}2 would allow Black to play 15...\texttt{xc}2, swapping off the bishop which was in danger; White’s position now looks overextended, since 16 \texttt{w}xc2 f6 forces the strong knight away from e5 and after 17 \texttt{d}d3 f5!? I prefer Black’s position) 15...\texttt{xc}6 16 \texttt{c}2 \texttt{e}7 with equal
chances. The bishop is en route to f6, preventing f5-f6 and putting d4 under some pressure.

b) 14 a4!? was also worth considering. At least this way White keeps his bishop on the strong diagonal. The problem is that after 14...b4 15 ëe2 White has lost control of the e4-square, so Black can now play 15...ëe4!? with the idea of playing ...ëd5 next.

14...a4 15 ëxg6 hxg6 16 ëc2 ëa6

White has gained the advantage of the two bishops, but he has weakened his kingside by playing the advance g4. As the famous saying goes: 'Pawns cannot move backwards!'

17 d5!

White rids himself of his weak d-pawn and in the meantime he aims to open up the position for his two bishops.

17...b4 18 ëxa4

Another option was 18 ëe4 cxd5 19 ëxd6 ëxd6 20 ëxa4 when White has two bishops, but in this position Black’s knights are actually doing a very good job: for example, 20...ëc5 21 ëc2 ëe6! when the downsides to White’s early g4 are beginning to tell. Now Black can aim to land a knight on f4 and 22 ëxe7 ëxe7 23 ëxd5 ëh4 sees him beginning an attack.

The knight heads for e6 and then over towards White’s kingside. For a start White’s f4-square is very weak.

20 ëe3 ëe6! 21 f4

Guarding the f4-square, but creating some holes behind the f4/g4 pawn formation.

21...d4 22 ëd2

Or 22 ëxd4 ëxf4 (22...ëxf4!? 23 ëxe6 fxe6 24 ëc5 ëc7 25 ëb3 ëf6 also looks quite promising for Black) 23 ëf3 g5 and Black is planning to bring his other knight into the game via g6-h4.

22...d3

One idea that this move creates is that of ...ëd4.

23 ëf3?!

23 ëf3 may have been slightly better, but Black can start to destroy White’s kingside pawn formation after 23...ëb8! 24 ëxd3 ëxf4 when White’s king is looking very bare!

23...ëd4 24 ëe4

Maybe only now did White realize that 24 ëxd3? was not possible due to 24...ëxb3 25 ëxb3 (25 axb3? ëc5+) 25...ëxa4 26 ëxa4 ëc5+ 27 ëg2
\( \text{\textit{At tacking Chess: The French}} \)

\[ \text{\textit{\textbf{Exd2+ which is winning for Black.}}\]

\[ \text{\textbf{24...\textit{\textbf{Ec6}}} \]

Bringing the knight into the game and making ...\textit{\textbf{Ee8 possible.}}

\[ \text{\textbf{25 \textit{\textbf{Aae1 Aa5?!}}} \]

Now ...\textit{\textbf{Wa8}} is a possibility that White has to consider.

\[ \text{\textbf{26 \textit{\textbf{Gg2?!}}} \]

A bad square for the king as it is always going to be open to attack along the a8-h1 diagonal after ...\textit{\textbf{Wa8}}. White should have tried 26 \textit{\textbf{Xxd3}}, picking off the annoying pawn on d3, although it is clear that Black has good play after 26...\textit{\textbf{Qxb3}} 27 \textit{\textbf{Xxb3}} (and not 27 \textit{\textbf{axb3}}? \textit{\textbf{Xxa4!}} 28 \textit{\textbf{bxa4 Cc5+}} 29 \textit{\textbf{Gg2 Xxd3}} 27...\textit{\textbf{Wa8}}.

\[ \text{\textbf{26...\textit{\textbf{Cc7}}} \]

Indirectly guarding the pawn on d3. Black now has a big advantage.

\[ \text{\textbf{27 \textit{\textbf{Ee3}}}} \]

If 27 \textit{\textbf{Xxd3}}? \textit{\textbf{Qxb3}} wins a piece.

\[ \text{\textbf{27...\textit{\textbf{Dd2!}}} \]

White’s position has collapsed. Black is winning.

\[ \text{\textbf{28 \textbf{Ee1 Ee8}} 29 \textbf{Xxg6}} \]

Desperation.

\[ \text{\textbf{29...\textit{\textbf{Dd5?!}}} \]

Rather flashy. Black could just have played 29...\textit{\textbf{Qxb3}} 30 \textit{\textbf{Xxc6 Exe3}} 31 \textit{\textbf{axb3 Hh4!}} when we can really appreciate some of the weaknesses that the moves g4 and f4 have created.

\[ \text{\textbf{30 \textbf{Xd3 Qxb3 31 Xxb3 Cc3}}} \]

No comment needed!

\[ \text{\textbf{32 \textbf{Exd2 Xxd2+ 33 Cxd2 Ee2+ 0-1}}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{\textbf{Game 10}}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{S.Kasparov-M.Gurevich}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{Vlissingen 2002}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 exd5 4 Cc3}}} \]

We covered 4 \textit{\textbf{Cf3}} in the last couple of games, so it is now time to move on to another of White’s main options, 4 \textit{\textbf{Cc3}}. This is logical as the bishop is best developed on the b1-h7 diagonal. Black has a number of ways to play against this move, but I am going to suggest a plan based on ...\textit{\textbf{Cc6}}, ...\textit{\textbf{Cd6}} and ...\textit{\textbf{Qge7}}. This is a simple way of playing and should be equal for Black.

\[ \text{\textit{\textbf{4...Cc6}}} \]
Black attacks White’s d-pawn, forcing White to take some action, but how should White respond?

5 c3

This is normally played, but on occasion White has tried:

a) The problem with 5 e2?! is that Black can play 5...b4! which eliminates White’s strong light-squared bishop. Black cannot have any difficulties after this: for example, G.Nindl-J.Klinger, Werfen 1989, continued 6 0-0 dxc3 7 bxc3 f6 8 bc3 e7 9 e1 0-0 10 g5 h6 11 xf4 c6 12 g3 b4 13 a3 a5 14 e2 g4 15 f3 e6 with an equal position.

b) 5 f3 is White’s other main option when Black can choose between two moves:

b1) 5...d6 was Kramnik’s choice in J.Polgar-V.Kramnik, Dos Hermanas 1997. Black played a very interesting idea in this game which is well worth taking a look at: 6 0-0 g7 (this is the basic way that Black develops in this variation; he intends to play ...0-0 and then ...f5, swapping off White’s strong bishop on d3) 7 c4 dxc4 8 xc4 0-0 9 h3 e6!? 10 xe6 fxe6 with an interesting and roughly equal position.

Although 9...e6 has created a weakness on e6, it has a number of positive effects:

1. Black swaps off White’s active bishop.
2. Opening the f-file for the rook.
3. It prevents White’s isolated pawn on d4 from moving.

b2) 5...g4 also looks logical as the pin on the knight on f3 is always a bit uncomfortable for White. Then 6 e3 d6 7 bd2 g7 8 0-0 h6 (again beware 8...0-0?) 9 a3 0-0 led to an equal position in S.Conquest-I.Glek, German League 1996.

5...d6

Standard development.

6 f3

White can also play 6 f3 which is another standard plan. The queen aims to pressure Black’s kingside, but on the downside the queen can become a target on f3. Black now has two interesting plans:
a) 6...c6f6 and then:
   a1) 7 a5 is very boring but equal. V.Okhotnik-T.Luther, Arvier 2007, continued 7...a5 8 b4 cxd5 9 cxd5
   a2) 7 h3 0-0 8 c5 when Black can choose between:
   a21) 8...e5 (Black is planning to play ...c4 on his next move) 9 a5! (again preparing to play ...c4)
       10 e6 e5! 11 d2 b6 12 g4 a6 13 e6 a6 14 g5 c4 15 e4 dxe4 16 xe4 a4!? with an interesting position in V.Malaniuk-T.Luther, Sverdlovsk 1989.
   a22) I have seen former World Junior Champion Nick Pert play 8...dxe5?! on a number of occasions, but it looks a bit suspect if White plays accurately. V.Malaniuk-L.Psakhis, Tallinn (rapid) 1988, continued 9 xe5 (otherwise Black will have time to reinforce the knight on e4 with ...e8 or ..f5) 9...dxe5 10 xe5 e8 11 f3 h4!? 12 e3 (if 12 0-0 g4 13 xg4 xg4 14 hxg4 e2 and Black has the advantage; he is a pawn down, but his control of the seventh rank is very annoying for White) 12...e6 13 d2 when White had covered all the entry squares and had the advantage.

b) Defending d5 with 6...e6 is a solid option. Black will often just play ...f6 next with an equal game, although he can also try the more aggressive ...d7, as we’ll see in our next game. V.Sikula-B.Socko, Austrian League 2008, continued 7 c2 f6 8 xf6 (8 f4 0-0-0 is equal) 8...xf6 9 f4 0-0-0 10 xd6 xd6 with a dead equal position, but the higher-rated black player eventually managed to grind White down.

6...g4

The standard plan of pinning White’s knight on f3 looks good here.

7 0-0 e7

This position is equal. Black has developed all of his pieces to active squares and he shouldn’t have any worries.

8 g5

Or 8 e1 when Black can play
8...\texttt{d}d7!? (again not 8...0-0?, although 8...\texttt{h}6 is a solid option with ...0-0 to follow) 9 \texttt{\texttt{b}}d2 0-0-0 with a double-edged game.

8...\texttt{f}6

Not just attacking the bishop on g5, but also taking control of the e5-square.

9 \texttt{\texttt{f}}4 \texttt{f}4!?

This is a very interesting idea that I would never have considered. Black is trying to stop White from playing \texttt{bd}2.

10 \texttt{g}3

Or 10 \texttt{bd}2? \texttt{xd}2 11 \texttt{xd}2 \texttt{xf}3 12 \texttt{gxf}3 \texttt{g}5 13 \texttt{g}3 \texttt{h}5 which is very good for Black.

10...\texttt{d}6

Clearing the back rank.

11 \texttt{a}3

11 \texttt{xf}4 \texttt{xf}4 12 \texttt{bd}2 was also possible, but Black has no problems at all after 12...0-0-0.

11...\texttt{g}5!?

Black makes his intentions clear! He is going to castle queenside and attack on the kingside.

11...\texttt{x}g3 12 \texttt{fxg}3 0-0-0 is another way of playing, with equal chances.

12 \texttt{c}2?!

This seems a bit passive. A slightly better idea was 12 \texttt{h}3, although Black’s position looks fine after 12...\texttt{h}5 13 \texttt{b}5 \texttt{d}7 14 \texttt{xf}4 \texttt{gxf}4 when the open g-file should offer him good attacking chances.

12...\texttt{h}5

Here they come!

13 \texttt{xf}4 \texttt{gxf}4!?

Opening the g-file.

14 \texttt{e}2 0-0-0

Black’s attacking plan is the more clear-cut as he has an open file to attack along, but the position should still be close to equal.

15 \texttt{d}2 \texttt{dg}8 16 \texttt{h}1 \texttt{f}5

Or 16...\texttt{g}7 which makes a lot of sense, increasing the pressure on the g-file.

17 \texttt{ce}1 \texttt{d}8!

The knight was not doing much on c6, so Black moves it around to greener pastures. This is a typical plan that you will often see strong players use. They
will look at all their pieces and try to improve the worst-placed ones. Take note if you want to improve!

18 \( \texttt{d3} \texttt{e6} \quad 19 \texttt{ae1} \texttt{b6} \)

Gurevich is not in any rush so he slowly improves his position.

\[ \text{20} \texttt{g1}?! \]

White cracks as this allows Black’s next move. He should have aimed to try and get some play going over on the queenside: for example, with 20 \( a4 \)? when \( b4 \) and \( a5 \) become ideas. Then \( 20\ldots\texttt{xf3} \quad 21 \texttt{xf3} \quad \texttt{h4} \quad 22 \texttt{we2} \quad \texttt{g5} \) still looks a bit uncomfortable for White, but he can hold on with 23 \( \texttt{g1} \).

\[ \begin{array}{c}
20\ldots\texttt{h4}!
\end{array} \]

Targeting g2.

\[ \begin{array}{c}
21 \texttt{g3}
\end{array} \]

This is forced as 21 \( f3 \)? fails to 21\ldots\texttt{xf3}! 22 \texttt{xf3} \texttt{h3}+! 23 \texttt{xh3} when 23\ldots\texttt{h4}! is the quickest win. After 24 \texttt{f2} \texttt{d7}! White is not going to survive for long.

\[ \begin{array}{c}
21\ldots\texttt{g6}
\end{array} \]

By moving a pawn on the kingside, White has created some more weaknesses.

\[ \begin{array}{c}
22 \texttt{f3}
\end{array} \]

Trying to cover the light squares.

\[ \begin{array}{c}
22\ldots\texttt{g5}!
\end{array} \]

Black now has a big advantage and it has been interesting to see how Gurevich has managed to bring all his pieces over to the kingside.

\[ \begin{array}{c}
23 \texttt{xg4+} \texttt{hxg4}
\end{array} \]

The open h-file is now the deciding factor.

\[ \begin{array}{c}
24 \texttt{xf4} \texttt{e4} \quad 25 \texttt{xe4}
\end{array} \]

The best chance, since 25 \texttt{we3} fails to 25\ldots\texttt{xf4} 26 \texttt{xf4} \texttt{xf4} 27 \texttt{xf4} \texttt{g3} which is winning for Black.

\[ \begin{array}{c}
25\ldots\texttt{dxe4} \quad 26 \texttt{ge2}
\end{array} \]

Black still has a fair amount of work to do in order to win the game as White does have good control of the f4-square. The pawn structure is also quite closed, which should favour the player who has the knights. At the end of the day though, Black is the exchange for a pawn up and that is the deciding factor.

\[ \begin{array}{c}
26\ldots\texttt{e5}!?
\end{array} \]

The f3-square will be a nice outpost for Black’s knight.
A lot of jostling has gone on, but Black's rook is clearly stronger than White's knight.

Black has lost his way somewhat, but remains the only side going to win the game.

White could have tried 46 f3, but Black is still doing well after 46...f5! (46...\textit{A}xg3+ 47 \textit{A}h2 \textit{A}h5 48 \textit{A}xh6 \textit{A}xf4 looks fine for White; after 49 \textit{A}g3 Black is even in danger of being worse) 47 \textit{A}xh6 \textit{A}f2+ 48 \textit{A}h2 \textit{A}xd1 49 \textit{A}xf5 \textit{A}xb2 50 \textit{A}xh3 \textit{A}xa4 and his a-pawn will decide matters.

At last Black makes some progress!

Gurevich's rooks now dominate the board.

Now Black just has to round up some pawns and the game is over.

Outside passed pawns are very hard to stop, especially if you only have a knight.

At last Black makes some progress!
6...\textit{\textsf{e}}6 7 \textit{\textsf{\textsf{e}}}2

We saw all this in the notes to our last game, but with Black playing $7...\textit{\textsf{\textsf{f}}}6$ here which does lead to equality, but is a bit dry. Let’s take a look at another plan.

7...\textit{\textsf{d}}7!?

Black decides to keep the queens on the board. This idea is quite common in the Exchange Variation if Black wants to try and unbalance things. He will often castle queenside and then start pushing the kingside pawns. Of course, this plan does not come without some risks.

8 \textit{\textsf{f}}4

A sensible move. White swaps off Black’s strong dark-squared bishop.

8...\textit{\textsf{f}}6

There are a number of other ways to play, but this plan is very sensible.

9 \textit{\textsf{\textsf{xd}}6\textsf{ cxd}}6!?

An interesting idea! Black voluntarily doubles his pawns. His reasoning is that the doubled d-pawns control more central squares. For example, it is now more difficult for White to control the e5-square. This is a controversial decision, but it does work out well in this game. Often it is worth thinking outside the box.

10 \textit{\textsf{d}}2 0-0-0

Black can castle kingside as well, but this is more dynamic.

11 \textit{\textsf{h}}3

Putting a stop to any ...\textit{\textsf{g}}4 ideas.

11...\textit{\textsf{b}}8

Another positive point behind ...\textit{\textsf{xd}}6 is that it takes some of the sting out of a queenside advance by White. If White now plays \textit{\textsf{b}}4, he weakens his c-pawn. This would not be a major factor if Black still had a pawn on the c-file, but now Black can pressure c3 by playing ...\textit{\textsf{c}}8.

12 0-0-0

White plays it safe and decides to castle on the same wing as Black.

12 0-0 was another, likely superior option, at least stopping ...\textit{\textsf{e}}4. Play could continue 12...\textit{\textsf{e}}8 (Black wants to roll the kingside pawns and this plan is impossible with a knight on \textsf{f}6; the knight may also relocate to \textsf{c}7 and then
later to e6 and maybe g5 or f4) 13 \( \Box f4! \? \Box c7 \) (13...g5 14 \( \Box xd5 \) is just an extra pawn for White) 14 \( \Box fe1 \) g5 15 \( \Box h5 \) f5 when Black has managed to create some play on the kingside.

12...\( \Box e4! \)

Black takes the opportunity to play this move, which works because White’s a-pawn is attacked in some variations.

13 g4

White tries to take the sting out of ...f5 which would have reinforced the knight on e4.

13 \( \Box xe4 \) dxe4 14 \( \Box xe4 \) \( \Box xa2 \) is playable for White, but he does have to watch out for ideas based on ...\( \Box a5 \) and then ...\( \Box b3+ \).

13...f5!

Black plays this advance anyway. The open f-file is going to prove to be very useful for him.

14 gxf5 \( \Box xf5 \) 15 \( \Box xe4 \)

White wins a pawn, but he has a number of weaknesses in this position.

15...dxe4 16 \( \Box xe4 \) \( \Box hf8 \)

I suspect that the position is pretty equal, but again Black has managed to unbalance the position.

17 \( \Box df1 \)

Defending the f-pawn. A better plan may have been 17 \( \Box h2 \), which leaves the d1-rook free to move to a more aggressive square. Play could continue 17...\( \Box xe4 \) 18 \( \Box xe4 \) \( \Box fe8! \) (it looks very odd to move the king’s rook to this square, but the rook on d8 is needed there to defend the d6-square, as will soon become clear) 19 \( \Box d3 \) \( \Box e6! \) (attacki ng e2 and a2) 20 \( \Box g3 \) (20 d5 \( \Box xe2 \) 21 dxc6 shows why Black was advised to leave his rook on d8; the d-pawn is defended and now 21...\( \Box xd3 \) 22 c7+ \( \Box xc7 \) 23 \( \Box xd3 \) \( \Box e4 \) leads to a slightly better endgame for Black) 20...\( \Box xa2 \) and with ...\( \Box a5 \) to follow, the position is fine for Black, albeit maybe not much more than fine.

17...\( \Box xe4 \) 18 \( \Box xe4 \) \( \Box de8 \) 19 \( \Box d3 \)

Black’s pieces are all actively placed and with his next move he gets his pawn back.

19...\( \Box e6! \)

Attacking e2 and a2.
At tacking Chess: The French

20 ³g3 ³xa2
Black now has the advantage. The material balance has been restored, but Black’s pieces remain the more active.

21 ³e4 ³d5
A good central square for the queen.

22 ³e1?! This is an error as Black can now move his knight to the strong f3-square. White should have tried 22 ³d2 when Black only has a small advantage after 22...g6.

22...³e5! 23 ³c2 ³f3
A very strong outpost for the black knight.

24 ³e3 ³a2
The queen has done its duty on d5, so now it pops back to a2 to annoy White’s king.

25 ³d1 d5 26 ³c5 ³xe3 27 fxe3 ³a1+
Black decides to enter a very favourable endgame.

28 ³b1 ³xb1+ 29 ³xb1 ³e8

Black has good winning chances, since the knight on f3 controls a lot of squares and White has a number of weak pawns, in particular e3 and h3. Black, being a 2600+ Russian Grandmaster, did not have too much trouble finishing things off.

30 ³d3
Eventually moving around to attack Black’s pawn on d5.

30...³c7 31 ³f4 ³d6 32 ³g2
White has managed to defend his e-pawn, but in the process he has placed his knight on a very passive square.

32...³e6 33 ³c2 ³g6 34 ³f4 ³g3
Black has made considerable progress. Now all three of his pieces are active.

35 ³h1 ³h4 36 ³d2 ³f5 37 ³e1 ³h4 38 ³h1 g5! 39 ³e2 ³f3 40 b3 ³f5 41 ³a1 ³xe3 42 ³xa7 ³c6
White’s pieces are too passive and the h-pawn will surely eventually drop.

43 ³g1 ³g3 44 ³a1 ³d6!

Finding a new home on e4.

45 ³c1 b5
Slowly improving the position and now White can forget about ever playing c4.

46 ³e2 h6
Slowly does it!

47  ♔f1  ♔d7 48  ♔c2  ♔e4 49  c4  b4

The b3-pawn is now Black’s main target. White is lost.

50  exd5  ♖xb3  51  ♖c6  h5  52  ♖e6  ♖e3  53  ♖g2  b3  54  ♖b6  ♖g3+  55  ♖f1  ♖c7  56  ♖b4  h4  57  ♖e2  ♖xh3  58  ♖g2  ♖d3  59  ♖c1  ♖d2+  60  ♖f3  b2  61  ♖a2  h3  0-1

An impressive game from Volkov. An interesting idea in the opening and then a well-played endgame.

Game 12

N. Miezis-A. Shirov

Istanbul Olympiad 2000

1  c4
In this game we reach a version of the Exchange French via the English Opening. It is always important to be aware of certain move order tricks at the beginning of the game – if you are not careful, it is very easy to drift into unfamiliar territory.

1...  e6  2  e4  d5  3  exd5  exd5  4  d4

This is one of the most aggressive ways that White can play against the French and Black has to be on his guard, otherwise he can easily land up in a passive and undesirable position. Miezis is the leading practitioner of this variation for White, but his results have not been that impressive.

4...  ♖f6

I am going to recommend a plan based on ...♖f6 and ...♖e7. This is a solid set-up where Black aims to play against White’s isolated d-pawn.

5  ♖f3  ♖e7

5...  ♖b4+ is also possible and a pretty decent move, but in some variations the bishop can become exposed on b4. It is more solidly positioned on e7. Overall, the text is quite a simple way for Black to gain equality. He will generally aim to play against White’s d-pawn, while White will aim to compensate for this with active piece play.

6  ♖e2

White concentrates on getting castled. In general most moves will lead to the same thing here. White can also play 6  ♖c3  0-0 when he has a choice of two squares for his light-squared bishop:

a)  7  ♖e2  ♖c6  8  0-0  ♖e6  9  cxd5  ♖xd5  was equal in N. Miezis-N. Short, European Team Championship, Leon 2001.

b)  7  ♖d3  is the most active square for White’s bishop. Again Black does not have any problems, although after 7...  ♖c6  8  cxd5  ♖xd5  9  0-0  ♖g4!? (this leads to some interesting complica-
tions, although I cannot see anything wrong with 9...\texttt{e6}) 10 \texttt{h3} \texttt{\texttt{h5}} 11 \texttt{\texttt{xh7+}} \texttt{\texttt{xh7}} 12 \texttt{\texttt{g5+}} \texttt{\texttt{g8}} 13 \texttt{\texttt{xh5}} \texttt{\texttt{f6}} 14 \texttt{\texttt{h4}} \texttt{\texttt{xd4}} 15 \texttt{\texttt{ce4}} White's position is slightly the easier to play, so maybe Black should prefer 9...\texttt{e6}.

6...\texttt{0-0} 7 \texttt{0-0} \texttt{\texttt{e6}!}

This is an interesting and simple way to play. It has also only been played on six occasions, so it contains some surprise value. The bishop is well placed on e6, securing the centre and putting pressure on White's c-pawn.

8 \texttt{xd5}

In a later game Miezis played 8 \texttt{c3} here, so we should look at that and White's other options:

a) 8 \texttt{c3} \texttt{bd7} occurred in N.Miezis-A.Smirnov, Tallinn 2001, but I wonder why Black did not capture the pawn on c4? Let's concentrate on this move, since I cannot see a problem with 8...\texttt{dxc4}. Here 9 \texttt{g5} is the only way that White can play for the initiative, but Black is fine after 9...\texttt{d5} (trying to secure the d5-square) 10 \texttt{c2} (this looks a bit tricky as White is to try to make something happen on h7; instead 10 \texttt{xd5} \texttt{xd5} is a bit better for Black) 10...\texttt{c6}.

b) 8 \texttt{b3} is also possible when one solution is 8...\texttt{dxc4} 9 \texttt{xb7} \texttt{d5} 10 \texttt{b5} \texttt{c6}, after which Black is very active and has good pressure against White's pawn on d4.

c) 8 \texttt{g5}! looks critical, trying to show that bishop may not be so well placed on e6.

Black has a number of interesting ideas here:

c1) 8...\texttt{f5} was played in K.Podravec-E.Muslic, Pula 2002, and is a simple solution. The bishop moves away when it's Black's turn to claim that White's knight is misplaced on g5. That game continued 9 \texttt{d3}?! (this looks wrong to me, since in general when you have the isolated pawn you want to keep pieces on the board; instead 9 \texttt{c3} \texttt{c6} should be equal) 9...\texttt{xd3} 10 \texttt{xd3} \texttt{c6} 11 \texttt{c5} and now Black should have played 11...\texttt{b6}, which is a typical way of meeting \texttt{c5} in such positions. After 12 \texttt{xb6} \texttt{axb6}
Black is slightly better due to his superior pawn formation.

c2) 8...dxc4?! is the most straightforward approach, but Black’s e-pawn is too weak after 9 ȳxe6 fxe6 10 ȳxc4 ȳd5 11 ȳe2 when White has a nice advantage.

c3) 8...ȳd7!? is interesting, though. For example, 9 ȳxe6 (or 9 ȳc3 ȳc6) 9...fxe6 10 ȳc3 ȳc6 when the position resembles the Tarrasch French, as Black has a backward e-pawn but an open f-file and here he has managed to swap off his light-squared bishop.

8... ȳxd5 9 ȳc3 ȳd7?!

With this move Black is aiming to take control of the d5-square. The knight on d7 is moving around to f6. I cannot see any hint of an advantage for White; if anything Black has the advantage.

10 ȳe4

White aims to keep pieces on.

10...ȳ7f6

![Diagram 1](image1.png)

Black could have considered 10...c6, controlling d5, as after 11 ȳeg5 ȳg4 12 ȳc2 ȳ7f6 he has achieved his aim of controlling the d5-square while activating his pieces.

11 ȳeg5 ȳf5

There is no need to allow White any fun by capturing the bishop on e6. If anything the white knight on g5 is now misplaced.

12 ȳe5 ȳd7?!

As I mentioned before, when you are playing against the isolated pawn, exchanging pieces is normally good, making it easier to target the weak pawn.

13 ȳgf3

Playing into Black’s hands. Even though White was facing the master of craziness, Shirov, he could have mixed things up by playing 13 ȳgx7?!: for example, 13...xf7 14 xf7 xf7 15 ȳh5+ ȳg8?! 16 ȳf3 ȳe6 17 ȳe1 is good for White, although here the superior 15... ȳg6 16 ȳxg6+ hxg6 17 ȳb3 ȳ7b6 does look good for Black.

13...ȳb4 14 ȳd3?!

Playing into Black’s hands. White should avoid exchanging pieces and 14 ȳd2 was better.

14... ȳxd3 15 ȳxd3 ȳxd3 16 ȳxd3 ȳb6

![Diagram 2](image2.png)
Black has a pleasant advantage. One thing that a number of players do not realize is that Shirov is very good at the technical stage of the game. People just imagine him to be a tactical player, but that is not true.

17 \( \text{e}4 \text{c}6 18 \text{\textit{e}1} \text{\textit{e}8}?! \)

I am not convinced that this natural move is the best plan, as now White can begin to move his pieces over to the kingside.

A better idea may have been 18...\( \text{d}5 \), which is a strong post for Black’s knight and it may be needed over on the kingside. Play could continue 19 \( \text{g}4 \text{d}6! \) which is an interesting way to defend the black kingside. The queen defends some important squares along the sixth rank and it may be possible to play ...\( \text{g}6 \) at some point when an exchange of queens would certainly help Black. I would prefer to be Black in this position.

19 \( \text{g}4! \)

Creating some pressure against Black’s king.

19...\( \text{f}8 20 \text{\textit{g}5} \text{d}5 21 \text{h}4?! \)

Sacrificing a pawn for activity and some kingside pressure. This is a good practical chance as otherwise White faced a difficult defensive job.

21...\( \text{xe}1+ 22 \text{\textit{xe}1} \text{\textit{xa}2} \)

A free pawn? White is hoping that his \( h \)-pawn can cause Black some difficulties, but this won’t be so easy as Black’s bishop on \( f8 \) is doing a very good defensive job.

23 \( \text{h}5 \text{d}5 \)

Recentralizing to a good square.

24 \( \text{h}4 \)

White aims to land the knight on \( f5 \).

24...\( \text{g}6 \)

No thank you!

25 \( \text{hxg}6 \text{hxg}6 26 \text{\textit{e}5} \)

White has a number of pieces around Black’s king, but there is no obvious way through.

26...\( \text{a}2 27 \text{\textit{f}5} \text{d}5 \)

A strong square for the Black knight. How will White now continue to attack?

Instead 27...gxf5 is far too risky: for example, 28 \( \text{xf5} \text{h}7 29 \text{\textit{h}5+ \textit{g}8 30 \text{\textit{f}6} \) and Black’s king is defenceless.
28 \( \texttt{h2} \)?

White should have tried 28 \( \texttt{h6} \)! which is the best plan and it actually causes Black some difficulties. White needs to swap off Black’s main defensive piece, the bishop on f8. After 28...\( \texttt{xb2} \) 29 \( \texttt{xf8} \) \( \texttt{xf8} \) 30 \( \texttt{g5} \) \( \texttt{b1+} \) 31 \( \texttt{h2} \) \( \texttt{d1} \) the black queen aims for h5, but White can now play 32 f3! when he actually has a strong attack!

28...\( \texttt{xb2} \)

Not so much capturing another pawn as attacking f2 and d4.

29 \( \texttt{h4} \)

This was the plan that White was relying on. \( \texttt{f6} \) is the main threat, so Black is pretty much forced to continue in the manner that he does.

29...\( \texttt{gxf5} \) 30 \( \texttt{xd5}! \)

Now f6 is undefended. White still has a dangerous attack and Black must proceed with extreme caution.

30...\( \texttt{g7} \)

Again Black’s only option. 30...\( \texttt{cxd5?} \) fails to 31 \( \texttt{f6} \) \( \texttt{g7} \) 32 \( \texttt{g5} \) \( \texttt{f8} \) 33 \( \texttt{xg7+} \) \( \texttt{e8} \) 34 \( \texttt{g8+} \) \( \texttt{d7} \) 35 \( \texttt{xa8} \) and White is winning.

31 \( \texttt{d6?!} \)

This is very dangerous, but White did have another, more natural plan in 31 \( \texttt{xf5} \) which removes another defender from the black king. The position is very unclear after this move, but White’s position is a lot easier to play for example, 31...\( \texttt{xd4} \) 32 \( \texttt{g3} \) \( \texttt{f8} \)(if 32...\( \texttt{c3} \) 33 \( \texttt{f3} \) \( \texttt{h7} \) 34 \( \texttt{f6!} \) \( \texttt{xf6} \) 35 \( \texttt{xf6} \) \( \texttt{xf6} \) 36 \( \texttt{c7} \) and White is better) 33 \( \texttt{c7} \) \( \texttt{f6} \) 34 \( \texttt{xb7} \) (34 \( \texttt{xf6?!} \) \( \texttt{xf6} \) 35 \( \texttt{f4} \) \( \texttt{c3} \) 36 \( \texttt{f3} \) \( \texttt{e8}! \) 37 \( \texttt{xc3} \) \( \texttt{e5+} \) is winning for Black) 34...\( \texttt{d8} \) 35 \( \texttt{xc6} \) when White has the advantage. The black king is still weak and material equality has been reached.

31...\( \texttt{b4} \) 32 \( \texttt{g3} \)

Perhaps 32 \( \texttt{d7?!} \) was worth a try.

32...\( \texttt{f8!} \)

The black king must sidestep the g-file.

33 \( \texttt{d7} \) \( \texttt{e8} \)

Bringing all of Black’s pieces as near to his king as possible.

34 \( \texttt{c7} \)

There were a number of other options:

a) 34 \( \texttt{f4!} \) threatens \( \texttt{d6+} \) and looks like White’s best plan. After 34...\( \texttt{e1} \) 35 \( \texttt{d6+} \) \( \texttt{g8} \) 36 \( \texttt{e5} \) \( \texttt{xe5} \) 37 dxe5 \( \texttt{xe5} \) 38 \( \texttt{xb7} \) White is better.

b) 34 \( \texttt{h3} \) \( \texttt{c4} \) 35 \( \texttt{xf5} \) \( \texttt{e6} \) 36 \( \texttt{c5+} \) \( \texttt{g8} \) 37 \( \texttt{xb7} \) may just about be okay for Black.

34...\( \texttt{b3} \)

Black is holding on, as Shirov continues to defend well.

35 \( \texttt{f4?} \)
35...\textit{e6} 36 \textit{xb7} \textit{a5}

Black’s pieces are now well positioned to defend, so he may even be able to claim an advantage.

37 \textit{f3}?

This move just helps Black. Better would have been 37 \textit{g3} which at least stops ...\textit{c5}.

37...\textit{c5}!

Black now has a big advantage and Shirov does not give White another chance.

38 \textit{b5}

38 dxc5?? \textit{e5} was, of course, Black’s point.

38...\textit{xd4} 39 \textit{h3} \textit{g7}

White is now the side who has king trouble, on top of which he is two pawns down.

40 \textit{h4} \textit{e3} 41 \textit{g3+} \textit{h7} 42 \textit{f4}

42 \textit{xa5} \textit{f4+} 43 \textit{g4} \textit{c8} is hopeless for White, since there is no way to stop the c-pawn.

42...\textit{h6} 43 \textit{b7} \textit{h5} 44 \textit{g5} \textit{xg5} 45 \textit{xg5} \textit{g6}

The rest is easy.

46 \textit{a7} \textit{d2} 47 \textit{c7} \textit{e3+} 48 \textit{g3} \textit{b4} 49 \textit{e7} \textit{a4} 50 \textit{d6}

Or 50 \textit{xc5} \textit{c3} 51 \textit{d6} \textit{xc7} 52 \textit{xc7} a3 53 \textit{e5} a2 54 \textit{g2} \textit{e7+} with ...\textit{f6} to follow.

50...\textit{e1} 51 \textit{xc5} \textit{g3+} 52 \textit{h2} \textit{d3} 53 \textit{c6} \textit{h5} 54 \textit{g2} \textit{g4} 55 \textit{f1} \textit{e3} 56 \textit{c4} \textit{f3} 57 \textit{c5} \textit{c3} 0-1

\textbf{Conclusion}

We’ve seen a number of unexpected ideas in this chapter which should shock even quite experienced Exchange players. I can’t guarantee that both 3...\textit{xd5} and 3...\textit{exd5} 4 \textit{f3} \textit{g4} 5 \textit{h3} \textit{h5} 6 \textit{we2+} \textit{e7} are wholly sound, but they certainly lead to anything but a dull and dour struggle! Instead of 4 \textit{f3}, 4 \textit{d3} doesn’t pose any problems and often allows Black to go long, but 4 \textit{c4} deserves our respect and forces Black into a calmer, more-positional approach than I’m advocating elsewhere.
Chapter 3
The Winawer Variation: White’s 4th Move Alternatives

It is now time to take a look at the Winawer Variation, 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 c3 b4.

There is a lot of material to digest with the Winawer, so we will take it bit by bit. To start with let’s take a look at White’s 4th move alternatives to the main line, 4 e5. In general there is little for Black to worry about here. White will only normally play one of these lines to avoid learning the theory that is associated with the main lines. Saying that, this chapter is a good warm-up for what is to come later in this book!

Game 13
A.Anastasian-S.Lputian
Armenian Championship,
Yerevan 2008

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 c3 b4

3...f6 is also interesting, but 3...b4 tends to lead to more double-edged positions. Now White has a number of options and we will cover them one by one. To start with we will look at one of White’s most popular choices, 4 ge2.

4 ge2

With this move White avoids having his pawns doubled.

4...c6!?

This is an interesting choice and one which keeps a number of pieces on the board, increasing both sides’ winning chances. One of the typical ideas behind this move is to meet e5 with the undermining ...f6, which will often give Black very good play in the centre and on the kingside.
The other option is 4...dxe4 when after 5 a3 White will generally win his pawn back, such as with 5...♘xc3+ 6 ♘xc3 ♘f6 7 ♗g5. This line is very playable for Black, but the structure is a bit dull and dry, which is why I prefer 4...♗c6.

5 a3
White generally throws this move in as it gives Black a decision to make: where should the bishop move to?

5...♗a5
This makes the most sense. The bishop keeps White’s knight on c3 pinned and sometimes, as in this game, it can drop back to b6 which can put White’s centre under a lot of pressure. There are problems associated with this move as well, though. The bishop can become locked out of the game after the sequence b4, ...♗b6 and Black will often have to sacrifice material to bring the bishop back into the game.

6 ♗e3
The main alternative is 6 e5. This and White’s other options will be looked at in the next game.

6...dxe4!?
Before this game Black generally played either 6...♗f6 or 6...♗de7, trying to tempt White into playing e5 when Black will hit out with ...f6, attacking White’s pawn centre. 6...dxe4!? has a different idea in mind. Black wants to open up the position.

7 b4
White has to break the pin in order in win back the pawn on e4.

7...♗b6 8 ♗xe4 e5

The main idea behind the delayed exchange on d4. Black counterattacks in the centre. This is a double-edged move as White is ahead in development and he is advised to try and open up lines in order to exploit that lead.

9 d5
This is a very logical advance. White aims to use his queenside pawn mass to cause Black some problems.

9...♗ce7
Another option which has been played on a couple of occasions is 9...♗xe3?! This looks logical enough,
but White has two ways of gaining an advantage: the simple 10 fxe3 c7 11 d2c3 and the sharper 10 dxc6! which may well offer White very good chances, as shown by, for example, 10...\texttt{xd1}+ 11 \texttt{xd1} b6 (this looks risky as the bishop may become snuffed out of the game, but after 11...\texttt{h6} 12 cxb7 \texttt{xb7} 13 c5! b6 14 c3 Black has a bad position in any case) 12 c4 a5 13 c5 a7 14 cxb7 \texttt{xb7} 15 d2c3 and Black has a pretty grim position.

\textbf{10 d6}

This is the most critical choice, trying to cut Black’s position in two.

White can also play 10 \texttt{xb6}!? which could offer him a small advantage. That said, 10...\texttt{axb6} 11 d2c3 g6 (it would be nice if Black could get away with playing 11...f5, but this looks a bit reckless as White can take control of the e6-square with 12 b5+ d7 13 g5) 12 b5+ (12 b5!? may be better: for example, 12...f5 13 d3 xe4 14 xe4 f6 15 xg6 hxg6 16 e2 0-0 17 d1 looks slightly better for White)

10...d7 13 0-0 (if 13 d6 c6) 10...h6 does not look too bad for Black. He is ready to castle and then he will be in a position to play ...f5.

\textbf{10...f5}

An interesting alternative is 10...\texttt{xe3} which could be worth investigating further, although after 11 fxe3 (this is better than 11 dxe7 which can only favour Black after 11...\texttt{xd1}+ 12 \texttt{xd1} b6 13 c4 f5! 14 c3 c6) 11 f5 12 dxc7 \texttt{xc7} 13 d2c3!? I would prefer to be in White’s shoes.

11 \texttt{xb6} axb6 12 dxc7 \texttt{xc7} 13 g4!?

This looks very risky as it creates a lot of weaknesses on the kingside, but if White follows up correctly it might not be that bad. White did have a much stronger move though in 13 c2c3!. This move keeps cropping up in this variation and it will often give White the advantage, with the ideas of b5+ and b5. On the other hand, White does give away control of the d4-square.

Let’s have a look at two options here. One where Black takes immediate
control of d4 and another where he just aims to castle. The latter seems to be the more promising:

a) 13...\(\text{cxd4}\) 14 \(\text{\text{b}5+!}\) looks dangerous for Black: for example, 14...\(\text{cxf8}\) (unfortunately Black has to move his king, as 14...\(\text{cxd7}\) 15 \(\text{\text{d}5 \text{\text{d}8}\) 16 \text{\text{xd7+}}\) is winning for White) 15 0-0 f5 16 f4! opening up the f-file. The black king is not going to be a happy bunny and White is clearly better.

b) 13...\(\text{\text{g}7+?}\) is the most interesting option, but there is a fair amount of risk attached to this move as White can plonk a knight on d6.

That said, after 14 \(\text{\text{b}5}\) (14 \(\text{\text{b}5+}\) is also possible, but after 14...\(\text{c6}\) 15 0-0 0-0 16 \(\text{\text{d}5 \text{\text{d}8}\) Black has no real worries as he has got his king to safety) 14...\(\text{\text{c}6}\) 15 \(\text{\text{ed}6+}\) (White must play this before Black gets a chance to castle; 15 \(\text{\text{bd}6+}\) allows 15...\(\text{\text{xd6}}\) 16 \(\text{\text{xd6+ \text{f}8}\) when with ...g6 and ...\(\text{g}7\) to follow Black’s position looks fine) 15...\(\text{f8}\) (this position looks fine for Black; however, 15...\(\text{\text{xd6}}\) is not really possible as White can play 16 \(\text{\text{xd6}}\)

\(\text{\text{xd6}}\) 17 \(\text{\text{d}6+ \text{f}8\) 18 \(\text{\text{c}4\) which is good for him) 16 \(\text{\text{xc}8 \text{xc8}\) 17 \text{c4 \text{e}4+?}\) 18 \(\text{\text{e}2 \text{h}4\) 19 \text{f3 \text{e}3\) I would prefer to be Black.

13...\(\text{h4}\)
With a nasty little threat on f3.

14 \(\text{\text{c}3}\)
This is really the only sensible move.

14...\(\text{f6}\)!

Black is not too concerned about his structure. We have reached a very doubled-edged position where both kings are in trouble.

15 \(\text{\text{b}5+}\)!

White should have played 15 \(\text{\text{x}f6+}\) which leads to an interesting position: 15...\(\text{\text{xf6}\) 16 \(\text{\text{d}5 \text{\text{d}6}\) (be careful that you don’t fall for the old trick 16...\(\text{\text{c}6}\)?? 17 \(\text{\text{b}5}\) 17 \(\text{\text{b}5+ \text{f}8\) 18 \text{c4 is yet to see the light of day, but it looks pretty unbalanced with chances for both sides. An attractive-looking move for Black here is 18...e4 when ...\(\text{f3+}\) is going to cause the white king some discomfort.

15...\(\text{f8}\) 16 \text{f3}

Or 16 \(\text{g1 \text{h}5\) which looks promis-
The Winning Variation: White’s 4th Move Alternatives

16...h5!

Breaking up the white kingside. Black now has the advantage.

17 g5 \text{xe}4 18 \text{xe}4 \text{h}3

Catching the white king in the centre and creating the threat of \text{g}2.

19 \text{g}1

Other options included:

a) 19 \text{d}6+?! goes for a dodgy endgame and 19...\text{xd}6 20 \text{xd}6 \text{xf}3+ 21 \text{f}2 \text{xg}5 is going to be winning for Black.

b) 19 \text{f}1 \text{d}8 20 \text{e}2 \text{f}5 and with White’s king gasping for air, Black is clearly better.

c) 19 \text{f}2 \text{g}2 20 \text{e}1 \text{xf}3 is again better for Black.

19...\text{g}2 20 \text{e}2?!

The final error. White could have held on a bit longer by playing 20 \text{d}3, but his position is still pretty hopeless after 20...\text{xf}3 21 \text{c}1 \text{d}7! when the queen will infiltrate via d4 or h3.

20...\text{d}8 0-1

White resigned as the end is nigh after 21 \text{d}2 e4 22 fxe4 \text{xh}2. An impressive game and an interesting opening! There are certainly a number of tactical chances available to both sides in this very unbalanced line.

Game 14

J. Hector - E. Berg
Swedish League 2005

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 \text{c}3 \text{b}4 4 \text{ge}2 \text{c}6?! 

The Swedish Grandmaster Emanuel Berg is one of the World’s leading experts on the 4 \text{ge}2 variation, as he plays it as White and faces it as Black. For this reason it is interesting to see that he plays 4...\text{c}6.

5 a3 \text{a}5

White fixes the pawn structure which makes both sides’ plans more straightforward to follow. In general the following is what they are trying to achieve:
White has a space advantage which he will try and use to gradually squash Black by advancing on the queenside and kingside.

Black will aim to break out with ...f6 at the correct point. Then he can develop in the following manner: ...\( \text{Qe}7 \) (or ...\( \text{h}6 \) after White plays f4), ...0-0, ...\( \text{Qd}7 \) and then ...\( \text{Qe}8 \) or ...\( \text{Qe}8 \).

As well as Anastasian’s 6 \( \text{Qe}3 \), here White has also played:

a) 6 b4 is interesting and hopes to suffocate Black’s dark-squared bishop, even at the price of a pawn. After 6...\( \text{Qb}6 \) White has:

a1) After 7 \( \text{Qa}4!\) dxe4 8 \( \text{Qb}2 \) \( \text{Qf}6 \) 9 c4 Black has won a pawn, but his bishop is well and truly stranded. It does seem that Black can hold the balance though, and after 9...a6 10 g3 0-0 11 \( \text{Qg}2 \) \( \text{a}7 \) 12 0-0 \( \text{We}7 \) 13 \( \text{Qa}2 \) \( \text{Qd}8 \) 14 \( \text{Wa}1 \) b5 he had actually gained the advantage in G.Guseinov-C.Bauer, European Team Championship, Crete 2007. The stranded bishop was never a major issue here; in fact it was actually quite well placed on a7 from where it put pressure on d4.

a2) 7 e5 transposes back into Hector-Berg.

a3) 7 \( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{Qe}7 \) 8 e5 0-0 9 \( \text{Qa}4 \) f6! saw Black get in the standard break and equalize in S.Brenjo-N.Sedlak, Herceg Novi 2008.

b) I faced 6 \( \text{Wd}3 \) in L.Nisipeanu-S.Williams, European Championship, Dresden 2007. The idea is to swing the white queen over to g3 to pressurize the g7-pawn. This is a sensible plan, but Black should not have any difficulties equalizing after 6...dxe4 (the simplest solution; White’s queen will be quite exposed to attack on e4) 7 \( \text{Wg}3! \) (risky, but 7 \( \text{Wxe}4 \) \( \text{Qf}6 \) 8 \( \text{Wh}4 \) \( \text{Qe}7 \) is only equal; the knight will land on g6 or f5, again attacking white’s queen) 7...\( \text{Qf}6 \) which was fine for me in the game.

Another option was 7...\( \text{Qxd}4! \), although after the accurate 8 \( \text{Qxd}4 \) \( \text{Wxd}4 \) 9 b4! (if 9 \( \text{Qf}4 \) e3! 10 \( \text{Wxe}3 \) \( \text{Wxe}3+ \) 11 \( \text{Qxe}3 \) Black is just a pawn up) 9...\( \text{b}6 \) 10 \( \text{b}2 \) White has good compensation for the sacrificed material.

6...\( \text{Qge}7 \)

Black should avoid playing 6...f6 immediately as White would then be able to play 7 \( \text{Qf}4! \) which starts an early attack against Black’s king. Black needs to develop his kingside first and only then go ...f6.

7 b4

White generally plays this advance at some moment. 7 b4 aims to force
Black's dark-squared bishop into a passive role. Black has to be careful to avoid this, but as we will see in this game he does have possibilities to use his dark-squared bishop in various devastating ways.

**7...b6 8 a4**

Another standard idea which performs two main roles:

1. White can now support his central formation by playing c3.

2. Black now has to think twice about playing ...a5 as White will often just capture the bishop on b6, gaining a nice pawn centre.

**8...0-0**

Black is now in a position to play ...f6. This move is often so important in the French and without it here Black would be left hopelessly passive.

**9 c3**

At the time this was a new idea by Hector, but I guess that after this game he won’t be in a hurry to repeat it! White is aiming to build an impregnable pawn fortress that Black will not be able to break down.

White has also played:

a) 9 b1!? worked out well for Hector in a previous game, but that is only because Black played 9...f5?! After 10 xb6 axb6 11 b5 a5 12 g3 White was undoubtedly better. Instead 9...f6! may be the reason why Hector has given up on 9 b1.

**After 10 exf6 xf6 (10...gxf6!? is also interesting ad I have gone in for this type of pawn structure on a number of occasions; Black relies on his big pawn centre to offer him counterplay in return for his weakened king position, although here it does seem that White can gain a promising position with 11 xb6 axb6 12 b5 a5 13 g3 e5 14 dxe5 fxe5 15 g5 e6 16 c4!) 11 xb6 axb6 12 b5 a5 13 g3 given time White may have a small advantage as he has the two bishops and some of Black’s pieces are offside. For that reason Black is advised to immediately put some pressure on White’s position. He has two ways of doing this:**

a1) After 13...f8 it’s now White who has a choice:
a11) 14 g5 xf2! offers Black very good play in return for the pawn, such as after 15 xe7 xf1+ 16 xf1 xe7 when his knight is coming to c4 and White has a number of pawn weaknesses.

a12) 14 e2!? ignores Black’s threat of capturing on f2. This is interesting, but Black should be fine after 14...g6 15 h5 f7 16 0-0 d6 which leads to a roughly equal position. Instead 14...xf2!? is obviously the critical choice, although White may have the better of it after 15 f3 xf3 16 xf3 xf3 17 gxf3 c4 18 xf2, not that this is especially clear.

a2) 13...d6!? is also interesting with the idea of playing ...g6 and then ...f4. After 14 h5! (the best way for White to counter Black’s plan) 14...g6 15 d3 (White has indirectly put pressure on h7 which stops Black’s knight from moving) 15...e5 16 dx5 xe5+ 17 xe5 xe5 18 f4 xd3+ 19 cxd3 White has the advantage thanks to his dark-squared bishop, which will quickly come into the game.

b) 9 b5?! is a bit premature because Black now has the chance to improve the position of his dark-squared bishop, while White’s pawn on b5 is a little stranded and can become a weakness. Black should play 9...a5+! 10 c3 b8 when he is ready to play ...a6, ...c6 or even ...c5 when his chances are to be preferred.

Returning to 9 c3:

9...f6!

Black has two main pawn breaks in the French and now that ...c5 has been ruled out, he switches to the second plan of playing ...f6.

10 f4

White had a major decision to make at this point. Should he capture the dark-squared bishop on b6 or leave it alone?

In the game Hector decides not to capture the bishop, but instead to try and re-route the knight on a4 around to the centre via b2. He will then rely on his pawn formation to suffocate Black’s counterattacking chances. For this plan to work the white centre must stand firm, but as we will see in the game it crumbles away after an ingenious piece sacrifice from Black. Thus perhaps it was better to exchange on b6.

10...d7

Another standard French plan. The bishop is ready to spring into action on g6 or h5. Or at least that is what I thought when I first saw this move.

11 h4?!

This seems a bit slow to me. An-
other pawn does join the attack and ideally White would love to push it all the way to h6, but he is neglecting his development and the white king will now have no safe protection on either side of the board.

11 \( \texttt{g3} \) is a bit more refrained when at least White can aim to castle. Play could continue 11...\( \texttt{e8} \) 12 \( \texttt{d3} \) fxe5 13 fxe5 \( \texttt{g6} \) with equality.

11...\( \texttt{e8}! \)

A very nice idea! The queen vacates the d8-square to allow the knight to manoeuvre to f7 via d8. On top of this Black’s bishop can now enter the game via b5.

12 h5

White continues with his plan, but Black’s following manoeuvre is very effective.

12...\( \texttt{d8}! \) 13 \( \texttt{b2} \)

The black knight on d8 is now heading to g4 or f5 via f7 and then h6. Black can also consider aiming for the break ...c5 at some point. This can be arranged by playing ...c6, ...\( \texttt{c7} \), ...b6 and finally ...c5.

13...\( \texttt{f7} \)

White launches another pawn towards the black king. Such a tactic is very risky; if it works Black will be trapped against the wall, but trapped animals can be the most dangerous...

14...fxe5

It is time to open up some lines.

15 fxe5 a5

This is a useful move to play as now Black’s rook on a8 has some opportunities to enter the game.

16 \( \texttt{f4} \) \( \texttt{b5}! \)

As most of White’s pawns are on dark squares, there are a number of holes on the light squares and this move takes advantage of that. White’s opening has not worked out well: he is overextended and his king is rather exposed behind the advanced pawns.

17 \( \texttt{g1}?! \)

The rook becomes a target here as it is on the same diagonal as Black’s dark-squared bishop. It is, however, hard to suggest an alternative plan for White.

17...\( \texttt{c6} \)

17...axb4 was another strong idea,
intending 18 axb4 \(a1\) 19 \(xa1\) \(c6\) and there is sacrifice on e5 coming up: 20 \(g2\) \(fxe5\)! 21 \(xe5\) \(xe5\) 22 dxe5 \(f7\) and Black is winning.

18 \(g2\)

The critical moment. Black has stationed his pieces on their best squares so it is time for some action!

18...\(fxe5!!\)

An explosive break out! This type of sacrifice is quite typical in the French and Black will often accept a cramped position in the hope of breaking out with a move like this. White will now regret not capturing that dark-squared bishop on b6 when he had the chance!

19 \(xe5\)
The only try. 19 dxe5 \(xe2\) 20 \(xe2\) \(xf4\) would have been hopeless.

19...\(xe5\) 20 dxe5

The combination of two raking bishops and the open f-file leaves Black with some great attacking options.

20...\(xf1+\)!

20...\(f7\) was also good, but Black wanted to finish in style!

21 \(xf1\) \(f7+\) 22 \(e1\) \(f3\)!

The black queen creeps into White’s position. White is defenceless.

23 c4

23 \(h2\) \(e3\!) cuts off the White king’s escape route to d2 when Black will just continue \(\ldots f8\) with an overwhelming position.

23...\(xg2\) 24 c5 \(f8\) 25 \(d2\) \(f2\)

The most precise way to win and not 25...\(xe2\) which would have allowed 26 \(g1\)!

26 \(d3\) \(xd3\) 27 \(xd3\) \(f3+\) 28 \(d2\) \(d4\) 0-1

White cannot defend against all of Black’s threats. A very good attacking game from Berg who demonstrated the latent potential in Black’s position. Even though Berg was slightly cramped, his pieces were ready to spring out at any moment.

**Game 15**

A.Arríbas Lopez-V.Bhat

San Sebastian 2009

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 \(c3\) \(b4\) 4 \(xd5\)
This line is something of a pain for Black. White is aiming for an improved version of the Exchange Variation and hopes to prove that Black’s bishop is misplaced on b4. Igor Glek used to be the master of this variation for White. He would often force Black into exchanging his dark-squared bishop, even at the cost of allowing his pawns to be doubled. Glek would then try to prove that Black’s king was lacking the necessary protection by starting a kingside attack.

I am going to recommend a line where Black avoids exchanging his dark-squared bishop. The line that I am going to suggest is also very simple for Black to learn, making it a good practical choice. We have also looked at a similar plan in the previous chapter.

4...exd5

Fans of 3...Bxd5 against the Exchange Variation may well prefer 4...Bxd5!? here, transposing to a position we considered there in note ‘a1’ to White’s 4th move in Vitiugov-Meier.

5...c6!? This is my recommendation. This simple move gives Black a strong pawn centre and he can now retreat his bishop back to d6. The loss of tempo that is required to carry out this plan is not that important because Black can argue that White’s knight on c3 is misplaced.

Black’s basic plan of development from here is ...d6, ...e7, ...h6, ...0-0 and at some point ...f5. It is important to try and swap off the light-squared bishop as this is White’s best minor piece.

6 a3?! This move probably just helps Black as the bishop wants to retreat to d6 anyway. Let’s take a look at some of
White’s other options:

a) 6  \texttt{Wf3} will be seen in the next game, Alekseev-Ivanchuk.

b) 6  \texttt{Qge2} is very logical, but it does not promise White anything. L.Oll-N.Short, Parnu 1996, continued 6...\texttt{Qe7} (the standard plan; there is no point in playing ...\texttt{d6} until the bishop is attacked) 7 0-0 \texttt{Qf5}! 8 \texttt{Qg3} \texttt{Qxd3} 9 \texttt{Wxd3} 0-0 10 \texttt{Qce2} \texttt{Qa6}!? (this is an interesting way to develop the knight; Short brings it round to e6) 11 c3 \texttt{Qd6} 12 \texttt{Qf4} \texttt{Qc7} 13 \texttt{Qae1} \texttt{Qe6} and here a draw was agreed as the position was dead equal.

c) 6 \texttt{Qf4}!? makes some sense.

d) 6 \texttt{Qf3} cannot be ignored either. I now like the way that Black played in Xie Jun-Wu Wenjin, Suzhou 2006: 6...\texttt{Qe7} 7 0-0 \texttt{Qg4} (there was also nothing wrong with the simple 7...0-0, since 8 \texttt{Qxh7}+ does not work due to 8...\texttt{Qxh7} 9 \texttt{Qg5}+ \texttt{Qg8} 10 \texttt{Wh5} \texttt{Qf5}, covering the light squares) 8 \texttt{Qe1} \texttt{Qd7} 9 \texttt{Qf4} \texttt{Qf8}! (the knight is rerouted to the attractive e6-square) 10 h3 \texttt{Qe6}! 11 \texttt{Qh2} \texttt{Qxf3} 12 \texttt{Qxf3} \texttt{Qd6}! with equality, but not here 12...\texttt{Qxd4} which is very risky on account of 13 \texttt{Qg4} with pressure for White.

6...\texttt{Qd6}

One of the main points behind ...\texttt{c6}.

White prepares to meet ...\texttt{d6} by exchanging the bishop. Now 6...\texttt{Qe7} 7 \texttt{Wh5}! posed a few problems in a clash between two leading French experts, V.Korchnoi-R.Vaganian, Skelleftea 1989. I prefer 6...\texttt{Qf6}!? which makes sense now that a pinning \texttt{Qg5} will cost White a tempo.

d) 6 \texttt{Qf3} cannot be ignored either. I now like the way that Black played in Xie Jun-Wu Wenjin, Suzhou 2006: 6...\texttt{Qe7} 7 0-0 \texttt{Qg4} (there was also nothing wrong with the simple 7...0-0, since 8 \texttt{Qxh7}+ does not work due to 8...\texttt{Qxh7} 9 \texttt{Qg5}+ \texttt{Qg8} 10 \texttt{Wh5} \texttt{Qf5}, covering the light squares) 8 \texttt{Qe1} \texttt{Qd7} 9 \texttt{Qf4} \texttt{Qf8}! (the knight is rerouted to the attractive e6-square) 10 h3 \texttt{Qe6}! 11 \texttt{Qh2} \texttt{Qxf3} 12 \texttt{Qxf3} \texttt{Qd6}! with equality, but not here 12...\texttt{Qxd4} which is very risky on account of 13 \texttt{Qg4} with pressure for White.

7 \texttt{Qge2}

Or 7 \texttt{Qf3} \texttt{Qe7} 8 0-0 0-0 which is equal.

7...\texttt{Qe7}

White does not even have a sniff of an advantage and Black, the higher-rated player, quickly outplays his opponent.

8 \texttt{Qg3}

Stopping ...\texttt{f5} which would only benefit Black.

8...0-0 9 \texttt{Wh5}

A standard plan, but Black is in a good position to deal with it.

9...\texttt{f5}!
This is far stronger than ...g6 which would weaken too many dark squares.

10...\(\text{c}e2\)

White aims to manoeuvre a piece to the f4-square.

10...\(\text{d}7!\)

Black finds a good square for his knight.

11...\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{f}6\) 12...\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{g}6\)

Black is better now. White’s early queen advance was actually mistimed as it allowed Black to gain some tempi for his development by attacking the queen.

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

The best try:

a) 13...\(\text{x}f5?!\) is bad due to 13...\(\text{x}f4\) 14...\(\text{x}f4\) \(\text{e}4!\) when White has some serious problems along the f-file: 15...\(\text{x}g6\) \(\text{x}f5\) 16...\(\text{e}3\) ...\(\text{x}g6\) 17...\(\text{f}3\) ...\(\text{h}4+\) 18...\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{d}6\) and Black has a winning position.

b) 13...\(\text{x}f5?\) loses to 13...\(\text{h}4!\), attacking that exposed queen again! After 14...\(\text{b}3\) ...\(\text{g}2+\) 15...\(\text{d}1\) ...\(\text{x}f4\) Black has won a piece.

13...\(\text{a}5+!\)

A good move. The queen removes itself from the pin, allowing the f6-knight to jump into e4.

14...\(\text{c}3\)

14...\(\text{d}2\) would make matters even worse as Black could play 14...\(\text{b}6\) with a good position.

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

We can see just how successful the move ...f5 has been. Black is doing very well.

15...\(\text{h}4\)

Maybe White should have played 15...\(\text{h}5?!\) which might not be so bad for him, but Black does have an advantage after the simple 15...\(\text{d}7\) with ...\(\text{e}8\) to follow, again indirectly attacking the white queen.

15...\(\text{d}7\)

Black finishes his development. There cannot be much amiss with such a plan!

16...\(\text{c}1\)

White was running out of constructive plans and at least he is now trying to put his h-pawn to use.

16...\(\text{ae}8\)
The last black piece lines up against White’s king.

17 h5 \( \text{h8} \)

Not an ideal square for the knight, but it can quickly come back into the game via f7 and g5.

18 0-0 \( \text{\textit{d8}} \! \)

I like this plan. The queen has done its job on a5, so it moves back round towards the kingside.

19 \( \text{f4?} \)

White is lost after this move. He really had to go passive, but his position was very depressing anyway. 19 h6 must have been worth throwing in when play could continue 19...g6 20 c4 \( \text{f7} \) and White still has a fair bit more grovelling to do.

19...\( \text{g5!} \) 20 \( \text{\textit{xg5}} \) \text{\textit{xg5}}

Black’s dark-squared bishop is a monster of a piece and with ..f4 coming up White has minimum chances to survive.

21 \( \text{c2} \) \( \text{f4!} \) 22 \( \text{\textit{d3}} \)

One last punt.

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

Avoiding 22...\( \text{fxg3?} \) 23 \( \text{\textit{xh7+ \textit{f7}} \!} \)

24 \( \text{\textit{xg3}} \) which gives White a glimmer of hope and there was certainly no need to complicate matters.

23 \( \text{\textit{h1 \textit{xe2! 0-1}} \!} \)

White resigned as 24 \( \text{\textit{xe2}} \) will be met with 24...f3.

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**Game 16**

E.Alekseev-V.Ivanchuk

Biel 2009

When you are playing Black, equalizing easily often counts as an opening victory. Here Ivanchuk equalizes and draws with ease, although I have also covered a more aggressive method in the notes.

1 \( \text{e4 \textit{e6}} \) 2 \( \text{d4 \textit{d5}} \) 3 \( \text{\textit{c3 \textit{c3}} \!} \) 4 \( \text{\textit{exd5 \textit{exd5}} \!} \)

5 \( \text{\textit{d3}} \)

I will briefly mention White’s other options:

a) 5 \( \text{\textit{f3}} \) is pretty uninspiring. White should really avoid committing this knight until later. V.Smyslov-R.Vaganian, Rostov on Don 1993, continued 5...\( \text{\textit{e7}} \) 6 \( \text{\textit{d3}} \) \( \text{\textit{g4}} \! \)
(the position is already equal) 7 h3 \( \text{\textit{h5}} \) 8 a3 \( \text{\textit{d6?!}} \) 9 \( \text{\textit{b5 \textit{bc6}} \!} \) 10 \( \text{\textit{e3 \textit{a6}} \!} \) 11 \( \text{\textit{xd6+ \textit{xd6}} \!} \)
12 \( \text{\textit{d2?! \textit{xf3}} \!} \) 13 \( \text{\textit{xf3 \textit{xf6}} \!} \) and Black had gained the advantage.

b) 5 \( \text{\textit{f3}} \) is a typical idea, but gives Black a decent choice:

b1) 5...\( \text{\textit{c6}} \!} \) 6 \( \text{\textit{b5 \textit{ge7}} \!} \) 7 \( \text{\textit{ge2 \textit{f5}} \!} \)
8 \( \text{\textit{d3}} \) was equal and boring in A.Tukhaev-M.Bartel, Warsaw (rapid) 2007. Instead 7 \( \text{\textit{f4 0-0}} \) 8 0-0-0! \( \text{\textit{a5}} \!} \)
9 \( \text{\textit{ge2 \textit{c6}} \!} \) 10 \( \text{\textit{d3 \textit{b5}} \!} \) 11 \( \text{\textit{h4}} \) wasn’t totally
clear, but saw White sounding the charge in B.Larsen-L.Portisch, Amsterdam 1964, so I wonder about
10...\texttt{Qg6}!, chasing down the bishop-pair: 11 \texttt{Qg3 Qg5+ 12 Qb1?} \texttt{Qg4} is awkward for White, but after 11 \texttt{Qe3 Qh4 12 Qg3 Qf5} Black will exchange off a bishop after all.

b2) 5...\texttt{Qe7}! is a more interesting idea. Then:

b21) 6 \texttt{Qe3 Qf6 7 Qd3}? (7 \texttt{Qge2} was better, but I am not sure how White will then develop his light-squared bishop) 7...c5! 8 \texttt{Qf1 Qxc3 9 bxc3 c4} was seen in Z.Mestrovic-R.Maric, Yugoslav Championship, Kraljevo 1967.

Here Black was clearly better due to his superior pawn structure and the position of White’s king.

b22) 6 \texttt{Qge2}!? was recommended by John Watson in his \textit{Dangerous Weapons} book. White aims to keep everything under control, hoping to prove that Black’s queen and dark-squared bishop could be badly placed, but I would still be happy enough as Black after 6...\texttt{Qc6}!.

Now:

b221) 7 \texttt{Wxd5} suits Black down to the ground as after 7...\texttt{Qf6} he is well ahead in development and most of White’s pieces are pinned. White may be okay, but it would take a brave soul to play in this manner! After 8 \texttt{Wb5!} (the queen is annoyingly placed here, putting some pressure on b7; instead 8 \texttt{Cc4 Qe6 9 Qd3 0-0-0} is just the kind of position that any attacking French player would wish for and in I.Saric-M.Drasko, Herceg Novi 2008, after 10 \texttt{Qe3} Black should have played 10...\texttt{Qhe8} 11 0-0-0 \texttt{Qe5!} with the advantage) 8...0-0 (Black should look to improve here: 8...\texttt{Qd7} 9 \texttt{Qd3} 0-0-0 10 \texttt{Qe3 Qhe8} 11 0-0-0 \texttt{Qxc3} 12 \texttt{Qxc3 Qb4} 13 \texttt{Qc4 Qg4} leads to an unclear position, while the creative 8...a6!? 9 \texttt{Qd3 Qc5! ? has the idea of 10 dxc5? Qb4 11 Qd1 Qf5 when Black is winning) 9 Qe3 Qg4 10 Qd3 Qf6 11 Qg3 Qe8 12 Qe2 \texttt{Qxe3} 13 fxe3 was slightly better for White in A.Damia-S.Pestov, Brno 2006.

b222) 7 \texttt{Wd3} was awarded an exclamation mark by Watson. White
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guards the d4-pawn and prepares a3, aiming to gain the two bishops. Here 7...\( \text{\textit{h6}} \) is an active and logical response, and I was surprised to see that this move was not mentioned in Watson’s generally excellent article.

Play could continue 8 a3 \( \text{\textit{xc3+}} \) 9 \( \text{\textit{xc3 \textit{e4}} \) 10 \( \text{\textit{e3 \textit{d5}} \) when White has the two bishops, but his c-pawn could become weak. For example, 11 f3 \( \text{\textit{d6}} \) 12 \( \text{\textit{xe7+ \textit{xe7}} \) 13 \( \text{\textit{f4 0-0-0}} \) 14 0-0-0 \( \text{\textit{g6}} \) when White will find it hard to hold on to his bishops, as 15 \( \text{\textit{g3}} \) runs into 15...h5.

c) 5 a3 attempts to force Black into capturing on c3 which is not in our repertoire. For that reason I am going to suggest 5...\( \text{\textit{e7}} \) when G.Ciolac-D.Contin, Marostica 1997, continued 6 \( \text{\textit{f4 c6}} \) 7 \( \text{\textit{d2 \textit{f6}} \) 8 0-0-0!? (at least White is showing some ambition) 8...0-0 9 f3 b5 10 \( \text{\textit{d3 a5}} \) 11 \( \text{\textit{ge2 \textit{bd7}} \) 12 g4 \( \text{\textit{b6}} \) and Black’s attack looked like it was going to land first. Here 5...\( \text{\textit{e7+!}} \) may also be good, since White does not have his bishop on d3 and so 6 \( \text{\textit{ge2}} \) is not a very effective way of blocking the check. After, for example, 6 \( \text{\textit{e2 \textit{xc3+}} \) 7 bxc3 \( \text{\textit{f6}} \) 8 \( \text{\textit{f3 \textit{e4!}} \) Black is at least equal.

5...c6!? 6 \( \text{\textit{f3}} \)

Quite a standard and fairly aggressive approach.

6...\( \text{\textit{f6}} \)

The simplest solution, after which White cannot really count on gaining any advantage. The position can become a bit dull, but that is White’s fault, not Black’s!

If you really need to play for a win then you can try 6...\( \text{\textit{f6}} \) which keeps the queens on the board. L.Fressinet-Y.Pelletier, Istanbul Olympiad 2000, continued 7 \( \text{\textit{g5 \textit{bd7}} \) 8 \( \text{\textit{ge2 0-0}} \) 9 0-0-0 \( \text{\textit{e7}} \) (9...\( \text{\textit{a5!}} \)?) 10 \( \text{\textit{g3}} \) with a small advantage for White.

7 \( \text{\textit{xf6}} \)

Or 7 \( \text{\textit{f4}} \) which was played in another one of Ivanchuk’s games, J.Moreno Carnero-V.Ivanchuk, Calvia Olympiad 2004: 7...\( \text{\textit{e7}} \) 8 \( \text{\textit{g3?! \textit{d7}} \) (Black had to stop 9 \( \text{\textit{e5}} \) 9 \( \text{\textit{ge2 0-0}} \) 10 0-0-0 \( \text{\textit{g6}} \) 11 \( \text{\textit{g5 \textit{d6}} \) 12 \( \text{\textit{xd6 \textit{xd6}} \) 13 h4 h6 with equal chances.

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

With an equal game and already a draw is a very likely result between two players of similar strength.

8 \( \text{ge2} \text{bd7} \)

It is a good idea to stop White from expanding on the kingside with g4. One thing that you generally want to avoid doing in an equal position is conceding space to your opponent.

9 a3 \( \text{e7} \)

10 f3 \( h5 \)

This line has a reputation of being a little dubious and it should allow Black to equalize without too many problems. As a general rule of thumb it is often correct for Black to meet an early \( \text{wg4} \) (when White still has a pawn on e4) with...\( \text{f6} \). Black will then counter \( \text{wg7} \) with...\( \text{g8} \) and normally...\( \text{dxe4} \), taking control of the centre.

4...\( \text{f6} \)

Other options are simply just bad. Black is advised to play actively.

5 \( \text{xg7} \text{g8} \) 6 \( \text{wh6} \) c5?

This is an interesting and aggressive counterattacking idea. White has been playing on the wing which has left his centre weak and this is where Black strikes. In practice this line has scored very favourably for Black.

7 e5

Or:

a) 7 \( \text{ge2} \) is an attempt to hold the d4-square, but it falls short. Black had a big advantage in M.Bartel-M.Szelag, Brzeg Dolny 2001, after 7...\( \text{cxd4} \) 8 \( \text{xd4} \) e5! (simple and good) 9 \( \text{b5}+ \text{d7} \) 10 \( \text{xd7+} \text{bxd7} \) 11 \( \text{f5} \) d4 12 \( \text{g7+} \) (not
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12 a3?  \( \text{Qf8} \), winning a piece) 12...\( \text{Qxg7} \) 13 \( \text{Qxg7 dxc3} \) and went on to win in under 30 moves.

b) 7 a3!? is a very sensible move. White is trying to force the sequence ....\( \text{Qxc3} \); bxc3 when he has reinforced his d4-pawn.

\[ \text{Diagram} \]

Black quickly got the upper hand in M.Seibold-F.Kunert, correspondence 1928, which continued 7...\( \text{cxd4} \) 8 e5 (8 \( \text{Qb5 Qg4?!} \) 9 \( \text{Qxh7 Qxd2+} \) 10 \( \text{Qxd2 Qf6!} \) 11 \( \text{Wh6 Qxe4+} \) is very good for Black) 8...\( \text{dxc3} \) 9 bxc3 and now he should have played 9...\( \text{gg6} \) 10 \( \text{Wh4 Qc5} \) 11 exf6 \( \text{Whx6} \) with the advantage.

7...\( \text{cxd4} \) 8 a3

Or 8 exf6 dxc3 9 b3 \( \text{Qd7} \) 10 \( \text{Qxh7} \) \( \text{Qxf6} \) 11 \( \text{Qd3 Qd7} \) when Black is better.

8...\( \text{Qf8} \)

Now:

b1) Black normally plays 7...\( \text{gg6} \) and after 8 \( \text{Qe3} \) (or 8 \( \text{Qh3?! e5} \) 9 \( \text{Qd3 c4} \) 10 \( \text{Qd1 Qxc3+} \) 11 bxc3 \( \text{Qxe4} \) and Black was better in F.Wuts-L.Oberbarscheidt, Ruhrgebiet 1999)

8...\( \text{Qxc3+} \) 9 bxc3 \( \text{Qxe4} \) 10 \( \text{Qf3 Qc6} \) the opening was clearly a success for him in A.Nikouline-S.Lipnowski, Winnipeg 2005.

b2) 7...\( \text{Qxc3+} \)!? is another option. This has only been played on one occasion and in A.Polivanov-V.Eschenko, Swidnica 2000, after 8 bxc3 \( \text{dxe4} \) 9 \( \text{Qe2 Qg6} \) 10 \( \text{Qe3 Qc6} \) 11 \( \text{Qb2} \) Black should have played 11...\( \text{Qa5} \)! with quite an active position.

c) 7 \( \text{exd5} \)? is just a blunder. After 7...\( \text{cxd4} \) 8 a3 \( \text{Qf8} \) Black wins a piece.

d) 7 \( \text{Qd2} \)? is another weak move. This is a typical theme in this variation. Black holds on to his dark-squared bishop and at the same time either forces the white queen away or a queen exchange.

9 \( \text{Qxf6} \)

9 \( \text{Wh4} \) is also good for Black, such as after 9...\( \text{dxc3} \) 10 \( \text{exf6 Qd7} \) 11 \( \text{Qxh7 Qxf6} \) 12 \( \text{Qd3 Qe4} \) 13 bxc3 \( \text{Qd7} \). 9...\( \text{Qxf6} \) 10 \( \text{exf6 dxc3} \) 11 \( \text{Qe2} \)

White is the one who has to be careful to keep the balance since Black’s pawns in the centre may become a powerful force in the forthcoming endgame.
Here 11 bxc3 d7 is just good for Black: for example, 12 b2 b6 13 f3 b7 with ...c8 to follow.

11...d7

Rustemov aims to win White’s pawn on f6 when his central pawn mass will guarantee him the advantage.

11...cxb2!? is also interesting: for instance, 12 xb2 b6 13 g3?! (this is illogical; better would have been 13 d4) 13 a6 14 d4 xf1 15 xf1 d7 and Black was clearly better in K.Birk-R.Ludwig, German League 1995.

12 xc3

12...a6

Black is not in a rush to win the pawn on f6. First he decides to prevent any ideas of b5 or b5.

Another good option is 12...d6, since Black can always meet b5 with ...b8. After 13 g3 xf6 White has tried:

a) 14 g2 d7 15 0-0 0-0 16 e3 b8 17 h3 c6 was equal in R.Antoniewski-T.Shaked, Zagan 1997.

b) 14 e3 d7 15 0-0-0 a6 (again stopping a white piece from landing on b5) 16 g2 c6 17 d4 (the position is pretty equal as White’s pieces are doing a good job of stopping Black’s central pawns from rolling down the board) 17...d7 18 e2 and now in H.Zanolin-J.Negri, correspondence 2001, 18...e5! would have made a lot of sense.

13 e3

White places the bishop here to try and put a bit of pressure on the b6-square. The other option was 13 f4, but again Black is obviously fine after something like 13...xf6 14 g3 b5 15 g2 b7 16 0-0 c5.

13...xf6

14 a4

The idea behind e3. White is trying to play b6 and he may also play c4 at some point.

14...d7

Controlling b6, but 14...b5 was also interesting: for example, 15 b6 b8 16 a4 bxa4 17 xa4 g4 and the position is becoming a bit messy, but Black’s chances are certainly no worse.
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15 0-0-0

White could have continued his plan with 15 \( \text{b6} \), but as Black can now exchange this piece, it achieves little:

15...\( \text{xb6} \) 16 \( \text{xb6} \) e5 17 c3 \( \text{e6} \) and I prefer Black’s position.

15...b5 16 \( \text{b6} \) \( \text{b8} \)?

This invites White to trade his knight for the inactive bishop.

17 \( \text{xc8} \)?!

This looks a bit dubious to me. I would have thought that Black’s knight on d7 is a stronger piece than his bishop on c8. For a start the knight now has a number of good squares that it can reach, with c4 standing out.

17 \( \text{xd7} \) was the correct exchange when the position is roughly equal after, say, 17...\( \text{xd7} \) 18 g3 \( \text{c6} \) 19 \( \text{d4} \) \( \text{g7} \) 20 \( \text{g2} \).

17...\( \text{xc8} \) 18 f4?!

Another slight error. Bishops are strong in open positions and for that reason White would have been advised to have tried 18 a4! which aims to give the light-squared bishop some more room: for example, 18...\( \text{bxa4} \) 19 \( \text{xa6} \)

\( \text{xb8} \) 20 g3 a3 21 \( \text{bxa3} \) \( \text{xa3}+ \) 22 \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{c5} \) 23 \( \text{a1} \) and White has managed to open up some lines, so his position is not too bad.

18...\( \text{c5} \)

Simple and good. White’s dark-squared bishop has the potential to blockade Black’s central pawns, so Black wisely exchanges it.

19 \( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{xc5} \) 20 g3 \( \text{e7} \)

Black has a safe advantage. He has play down the c-file, pressure on the g-file, a solid pawn formation and a strong knight. White’s defensive task is not so simple.

21 \( \text{e2} \) f5 22 \( \text{hg1} \) \( \text{e4} \)

What a piece! White will never be able to budge this knight. His only chance is to exchange it off for his light-squared bishop, but this will then give Black a strong passed pawn on e4.

23 \( \text{g2} \)

Or 23 \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{f6} \) 24 \( \text{xe4 fxe4} \) when White has removed the knight, but now has to deal with Black’s well-supported passed e-pawn.

23...\( \text{d6} \) 24 \( \text{dg1} \) \( \text{g6} \)
Black targets White’s g3-pawn. The main plan is to push ...h5-h4 at some stage, so first Rustemov prepares to double rooks on the g-file.

25...h5

Maybe White should have tried 25 g4!? which is an attempt to break out. The way things go in the game is rather depressing for White, so this was certainly worth considering, although after 25...fxg4 26 hxg4 f8 27 xg6 hxg6 White’s position is hardly all that great.

25...g7 26 f3 a5

Aiming to create a second weakness on the queenside.

27 g4?!  

In some positions the best way to defend is just to do nothing, since active play may give your opponent targets to play against. This position is a very typical one in that sense, but I can still understand why White played this move. The main problem is that now his pawn on f4 is very weak.

27...gc7

Black decides to keep pieces on the board for now.

28 gxf5 exf5 29 b1 b4!

Rustemov now enjoys a large advantage.

30 a4

30 axb4 does not help matters as Black then has the a-file to play down. After 30...axb4 31 d1 a7 32 xe4 fxe4 33 g5 c5 34 e5 ca5 he should be winning with care.

30...c4

Targeting White’s weak pawn on f4.

31 d1 d4 32 g7 f2 33 h5 c4 34 xh7 e4 35 e2

If 35 g6+ e5 36 e7+ d4 and Black’s king runs to e3. Note how his knight on e4 does a great job of defending its king.

35...f2

Black’s king may look exposed, but it can always hide behind the f-pawn or knight.

36 d3 c5 37 b5 e4 38 d3 e5 39 h4

White could also try 39 e7+ d4 40 d1, but again the black king is pretty safe after 40...e3.

39...b3!
This breakthrough weakens the position of White’s king and adds needed momentum to Black’s attack. The rest of the game is pretty easy for Rustemov.

40 c3?!

White could have tried 40 cxb3 which is more resilient, but Black should still win after 40...\(\text{d}2\) 41 \(\text{xe}4\) dxe4 (those pawns are far too strong!) 42 \(\text{e}7+r \text{d}6\) 43 \(\text{f}7\) e3.

40...\(\text{d}2\)

Black could have won more clinically by playing 40...\(\text{xc}3\)!, a pleasing little tactic. Then 41 \(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{g}3\)! exploits to the full White’s back-rank weakness.

41 \(\text{a}6\) \(\text{g}8\) 0-1

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**Game 18**

A.Ker-F.Berkes

Calvia Olympiad 2004

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 \(\text{c}3\) \(\text{b}4\) 4 a3?!

A slightly strange variation, but one which I believe has been rather underrated. For that reason I will cover it quite deeply in this game. At this stage White has also been known to try:

a) 4 \(\text{wd}3\) is a rather strange-looking move, but it does have some sense behind it. White wants to transfer the queen over to h4 after the sequence 4...dxe4 5 \(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{f}6\) 6 \(\text{h}4\) when the queen can create some pressure against Black’s king. However, 4...\(\text{e}7\)! is a simple solution that avoids White’s plan.

b) With 4 \(\text{d}3\) White is basically saying: ‘I happy to play an equal position so long as I can avoid theory and just play chess.’ Now 4...c5 is the most aggressive approach, hence why it is

Black just gets on with his development and after 5 \(\text{d}2\) (or 5 \(\text{g}5\) 0-0 6 \(\text{f}3\) b6 with ...\(\text{a}6\) to follow; this is just one problem that White faces in this line) 5...0-0 White has tried:

a1) After 6 a3 \(\text{xc}3\) 7 \(\text{xc}3\) b6! Black was doing fine in M.Levitt-J.Nogueiras, Bled Olympiad 2002. In 99% of cases in the Winawer, an exchange of light-squared bishops helps Black and here there is little that White can do to stop ...\(\text{a}6\). The game continued 8 0-0-0? \(\text{a}6\) 9 \(\text{f}3\) \(\text{xf}1\) 10 \(\text{xf}1\) \(\text{bc}6\) 11 \(\text{e}2\) a5! and with ...b5-b4 to follow Black had the advantage. In chess it is often all about who gets their attack in first and here Black is well ahead!

a2) 6 0-0-0 can lead to an interesting game after 6...c5 7 dxc5 \(\text{bc}6\) with ...\(\text{c}5\) to follow. Dynamic equality is a fare assessment.

b) With 4 \(\text{d}3\) White is basically saying: ‘I happy to play an equal position so long as I can avoid theory and just play chess.’ Now 4...c5 is the most aggressive approach, hence why it is
If 4...dxe4 is a simple way to equalize, or Black can be more adventurous and play 8...\texttt{Wxg2}\_? 9 \texttt{Wf3} (9 \texttt{Wd2}\_? \texttt{Wxh1} 10 0-0-0 is something of a mess) 9...\texttt{Wxf3} 10 \texttt{Qxf3} when White has good compensation for the pawn as he has the two bishops and some open lines to attack along.

c) 4 \texttt{Qd2} is a semi-waiting move:

c1) White's idea is to meet 4...dxe4 with 5 \texttt{Qg4} \texttt{Qxd4} 6 0-0-0 which is just the kind of thing that I would try and avoid as Black, since White has a very dangerous attack brewing and Black will have to defend for a long time.

c2) 4...\texttt{Qe7}\_! is a good reply. In actual fact this is often a good reply to any non-forcing 4th move that White may try. Black is meeting a waiting move with a useful waiting move.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics{image1.png}
\end{center}

V.Ivanchuk-R.Vaganian, Mainz (rapid) 2007, continued 5 a3 (5 \texttt{Qd3} \texttt{Qd7} 6 \texttt{Qf3} \texttt{Qxc3} 7 \texttt{Qxc3} dxe4 8 \texttt{Qxe4} \texttt{Qf6} 9 \texttt{Qd3} 0-0 was roughly equal in I.Kurnosov-K. Asrian, Istanbul 2003) 5...\texttt{Qxc3} 6 \texttt{Qxc3} dxe4 7 \texttt{Qg4} 0-0 8 \texttt{Qxe4}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics{image2.png}
\end{center}
Returning to the gambit, 4 a3:

4...\texttt{x}c3+ 5 bxc3 dxe4 6 \texttt{g}4

This is the point behind White's play. Black will lose his g-pawn when his kingside becomes weakened.

6 f3!? is another possibility. White would gain very good activity for his pieces if Black decided to capture on f3, so this is not advised. Instead Black should counter in the centre with 6...e5! which is nice response to White's dangerous opening gambit.

After this only White's king will be in danger. B.Grabarczyk-J.Gdanski, Polish League 1993, continued 7 \texttt{e}3 (alternatively: 7 fxe4? allows 7...\texttt{h}4+ which is very good for Black; 7 \texttt{e}2 may be White's best move, but after 7...\texttt{c}6! 8 dxe5 \texttt{h}4+! 9 g3 \texttt{e}7 Black is at least equal) 7...\texttt{xd}4 8 \texttt{cx}d4 \texttt{h}6!? (this is a very interesting idea; Black's knight wants to move to either g4 or f5 and he is already better) 9 fxe4 (9 \texttt{x}h6 \texttt{h}4+! is the point, when 10 g3 \texttt{x}h6 leaves White's position in tatters) 9...\texttt{h}4+ 10 \texttt{d}2 \texttt{xe}4 11 \texttt{f}3 \texttt{f}5 by when Black had a very good position and he went on to win very convincingly.

6...\texttt{f}6! 7 \texttt{x}g7 \texttt{g}8 8 \texttt{h}6

8...\texttt{bd}7

Actually 8...c5!? may be Black's best move here, aiming to counterattack in the centre and on the queenside.

9 \texttt{e}2 b6

Theory considers this position to be good for Black, but I am not totally convinced. I think that dynamically equal is a better assessment, since Black's king can often find itself in trouble, whereas White's is very secure on the kingside.

10 \texttt{g}3!

On g3 the knight blocks the g-file and puts pressure on Black's e4-pawn.

10 \texttt{g}5 has also been tried, but Black is fine after 10...\texttt{e}7 11 \texttt{h}4 \texttt{b}7 12 \texttt{g}3 h6!? (diverting the bishop away, even at the cost of a pawn) 13 \texttt{d}2 (White refrains from capturing the pawn which looks very dangerous for him: for example, 13 \texttt{x}h6 \texttt{g}4 14 \texttt{h}3 0-0-0 15 \texttt{e}2 \texttt{gg}8 and White's queen is in trouble on h3, while Black is
ready to continue with ...h8 with a strong initiative) 13...g4!, as in the game A.Romero Holmes-C.Matamoros Franco, Elgoibar 1997. The idea of ...g4 is a common theme in this variation. Black is happy to sacrifice a pawn as he gains very good play for it. The game continued 14 wxh6 0-0-0 15 c4? (White is in trouble after this; a better move would have been 15 h3 g6 16 we3 e5 when Black has good compensation for the pawn, but the position is still very unclear) 15...g8!? 16 we3 f5 with a big attack for Black.

10...b7 11 e2

White gets ready to castle.

11...we7

Black clears the back rank so that he can get castled. After he has gone long it will be a slugfest on both sides of the board.

12 0-0

White castles into Black’s attack. However, this seems like a perfectly sensible idea to me as the white king will not rest happily either in the centre. The knight on g3 also does a great job of blocking any attack that Black might start down the g-file. Black really needs to force the knight away. One way that he can try to do this is by moving the knight on f6 and then playing ...f5-f4, but this will take a lot of time to execute.

Instead 12 a4! is interesting and may well be an improvement. This was played in J.Berkvens-M.Galyas, Budapest 2000, which continued 12...g6 13 wh4, reaching what may be the critical position for the whole assessment of the variation. Black has to proceed with care here as White has a ready-made attack on the queenside:

A) 13...e5!? is a novelty and I believe that it may be Black’s best idea, as quiet moves seem to give White very good attacking chances. Play could continue 14 0-0 (14 a3 c5 aims to shut out White’s dark-squared bishop and after 15 a5 we6 the queen is well placed and the position unclear) 14...we6!? which is an interesting plan. The queen is exposed to attack on e7 by White’s dark-squared bishop, so it
moves out of the way. The position is very messy and an exciting game is in prospect.

b) 13...0-0-0?! walks into White’s attack which is now very strong after 14 0-0 (14 a5!? is another promising idea) 14...\( \text{\#f8} \) 15 a5 \( \text{\#g7} \) 16 axb6 axb6 and now White should play 17 c4! when he has the makings of a big attack, while it is not clear how Black will ever open up lines towards White’s king.

c) Berkvens-Galyas saw 13...c5 when Black had a slightly tricky position and after 14 0-0 0-0-0?! (very risky as White now gains a big attack; a better try would have been 14...\( \text{\#c8} \) which would have offered some counterplay down the c-file, although I am not too happy here about the position of Black’s king) 15 a5 \( \text{\#d5} \) 16 \( \text{\#xe7} \) \( \text{\#xe7} \) 17 \( \text{\#h5} \) White went on to win.

This may be an error as it gives White a target to attack. I would suggest that Black should have tried 12...\( \text{\#g6} \)! 13 \( \text{\#h4} \) c5 which at least starts some counterplay. The position is then very doubled-edged after 14 a4!.

13 f3?

The start of White’s problems; there was no need to open up the kingside. Do not push pawns that are protecting your king!

A much better plan would have been 13 a4!, beginning threats on the queenside. For example, 13...\( \text{\#g6} \) 14 \( \text{\#h3} \) h5 15 a5 \( \text{\#b8} \) 16 \( \text{\#a3} \) or 13...\( \text{\#d5} \) 14 c4! \( \text{\#c3} \) 15 \( \text{\#h5} \) \( \text{\#f6} \) 16 \( \text{\#d2} \) \( \text{\#xh5} \) 17 \( \text{\#xh5} \) \( \text{\#b4} \) 18 a5 and White is clearly better in both cases.

13...\( \text{\#g6} \)

More often than not this is a useful move to play.

14 \( \text{\#h4} \) \( \text{\#xf3} \) 15 \( \text{\#xf3} \) \( \text{\#xf3} \) 16 \( \text{\#xf3} \)

White has managed to swap off Black’s light-squared bishop which was protecting its king, but he has lost time by doing so. Time that Black can now use to get his attack in first.

16...\( \text{\#d8} \)

Black is now threatening ...h5 followed by ...\( \text{\#g4} \) and then ...h4. White is already in trouble. How quickly things can change in sharp positions!
17 a4
The race is on.
17...h5 18 a3 \(\text{\textregistered}d8

19 \(\text{f2}
White could have tried to stop \(\text{\textregistered}g4 with 19 h3, but this does looks pretty horrible. Indeed, Black should be winning after 19...\(\text{\textregistered}d5! 20 \text{\textregistered}xd8+ \text{\textregistered}xd8 21 \text{\textregistered}xh5 (or 21 \text{\textregistered}h2 h4 and game over) 21...\text{\textregistered}xg2+ 22 \text{\textregistered}h1 \text{\textregistered}xc2 23 \text{\textregistered}c1 \text{\textregistered}xg2. 19...\text{\textregistered}g4 20 \text{\textregistered}h3 a5?!
Unnecessary prophylaxis. Black should have put his opponent out of his misery by playing 20...h4 which should win pretty quickly: for example, 21 \text{\textregistered}f1 \text{\textregistered}e4 22 \text{\textregistered}e2 \text{\textregistered}g5 and there are too many pieces hovering around White’s king, while the attack down the a-file is going nowhere.
21 \text{\textregistered}e1 h4 22 \text{\textregistered}f1 \text{\textregistered}e4
Black eventually finds the right plan.
23 \text{\textregistered}fe2 f5
Black is totally dominating the board and White is close to running out of moves.

24 d5?
Desperation. White should have sat tight and awaited his fate however unpleasant that would have been.
24...\text{\textregistered}xd5 25 \text{\textregistered}e3
Ker has completely collapsed.
25...\text{\textregistered}g5 0-1
White’s queen is trapped which is one of the perils of this variation for him. Saying that, the opening is very interesting if White plays 12 a4!.

Conclusion
We’ve seen a number of different systems in this chapter. 4 \text{\textregistered}ge2 \text{\textregistered}c6 leads to pretty interesting play, but after 4 \text{\textregistered}x\text{\textregistered}xd5 \text{\textregistered}xd5 Black must be prepared to roll up his sleeves and settle down for a long, manoeuvring struggle. Elsewhere, I can’t believe that people are still going 4 \text{\textregistered}g4, but 4 a3 certainly forces Black to know his stuff.
In this chapter we will start to come across some more serious ways of playing against the Winawer, beginning with the position arising after 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 c3 b4 4 e5 c5.

In particular 5 d2!? is a very popular variation and I would suggest that you spend a fair bit of time on it.

Game 19
J. Tordeur-A. Wilson
Swiss Ch’ship, Graechen 2009

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 c3 b4 4 e5 c5

5 d2!?
This is a respectable choice and it appears quite often at club level. For this reason I am going to have a deep look at it. The plan that I am going to suggest for Black is not the most popular, but it does make a lot of sense. Before we move on to it, let’s just spend a moment to try and consider what White is trying to achieve with 5 d2!?:

1. This move will often keep the queenside pawns intact, as after ... xc3 White can play xc3 instead of bxc3.

2. b5 is White’s main idea. This is a nasty little move and is one reason why 5...xd4 is not so commonly played. Indeed, Black normally moves his knight from g8 so that he can meet b5 with ...0-0.

5...h6!?
This is an interesting reply and it has been the move that I have favoured for the last decade or so. 5...e7 is Black’s other main reply and there is a lot of theory on this move. So what are
the pros and cons of 5...\( \texttt{h6} \) compared to 5...\( \texttt{e7} \)?

5...\( \texttt{h6} \) has the advantage that it is less well known. It is also the more aggressive option and in a number of cases Black’s knight will actually jump into \( \texttt{g4} \). On the downside, White does have the option of capturing on \( \texttt{h6} \).

Instead 5...\( \texttt{cxd4} \) was once actually played by that French Defence legend, Viktor Korchnoi, but it looks a bit dubious and it seems that White gains an advantage after 6 \( \texttt{b5} \). Black has a number of options here:

a) 6...\( \texttt{f8} \) would seem to be the best option. Black has to avoid exchanging the dark-square bishops as that would leave the \( \texttt{d6} \)-square far too weak. After 7 \( \texttt{g4} \)?! (7 \( \texttt{f3} \) is safer when White should have an advantage) 7...\( \texttt{h5} \) 8 \( \texttt{f4} \) \( \texttt{d7} \) 9 \( \texttt{f3} \) \( \texttt{b6} \) 10 a4 a6 11 a5 \( \texttt{xb5} \)? 12 \( \texttt{axb6} \) \( \texttt{xax1} \) 13 \( \texttt{e2} \) \( \texttt{e7} \) the position looked rather unclear in J.Grefen-V.Korchnoi, Lone Pine 1979, but I expect that with precise play White is doing well here.

b) 6...\( \texttt{xax2} \)? just looks horrible for Black. B.Spassky-C.Garcia Palermo, Cologne (rapid) 1989, continued 7 \( \texttt{xax2} \) \( \texttt{c6} \) 8 f4 \( \texttt{h6} \) 9 \( \texttt{d6} \)+ \( \texttt{f8} \) 10 \( \texttt{f3} \) \( \texttt{f5} \) 11 \( \texttt{xf5} \) \texttt{exf5} 12 \( \texttt{xd4} \) and Black was already positionally lost. This is just the type of position that you must avoid when venturing the French.

c) 6...\( \texttt{c5} \) has recently been played by the young American Ray Robson, so it might be worth investigating. After 7 \( \texttt{g4} \) (7 \( \texttt{b4} \)?) 7...g6 8 b4 \( \texttt{f8} \) 9 \( \texttt{xd4} \) \( \texttt{g7} \) 10 \( \texttt{gf3} \) \( \texttt{d7} \) 11 \( \texttt{g3} \) a6 Black’s position is not so bad, but I would still prefer to be in White’s shoes as he has good attacking chances, Y.Yangyi-R.Robson, Puerto Madryn 2009.

6 \( \texttt{b5} \)

There are a number of moves that White can try in this position, but in my experience this is the most common, partly because it is the move that White usually plays against 5...\( \texttt{e7} \).

6...\( \texttt{xd2} \)+ 7 \( \texttt{xd2} \) 0-0

Black’s general plan is to attack White’s centre with ...f6 and ...\( \texttt{c6} \). He is ahead in development so White must be a bit careful here.
White aims to hold his centre together with his pawns, but this is risky as it doesn’t help his development and in typical fashion Black can aim to destroy his centre through tactical means.

White has also tried:

a) 8 dxc5 will be analysed in the next game.

b) 8 c3 is a major alternative. Again White tries to defend the centre with his pawns, but after 8...c6 (sensibly developing) 9 f4 (9 f3 does not trouble Black at all: for example, 9...a6 10 d6 cxd4 11 cxd4 f6 and Black is actually better here, as 12...fxe5 13 dxe5 dxe5 is a hard threat to stop) 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 Black has a pleasant choice:

b1) Following 10...f6 11 f3 fxe5 (Black has also tried 11 d7 when T.Bakre-A.Barsov, Abu Dhabi 2003, continued 12 d6 w6 13 f1 and now Black should have played 13 f7 when things look about equal after 14 xf7 xf7 12 dxe5 w6 13 d1 f5 14 bd4 fx4 15 xd4 xd4 16 x4+ 17 d2 x4 18 x4 I had managed to gain a slight edge in L.Webb-S.Williams, British League 2004.

b2) 10...f5!? is also tempting: for example, 11 f3 a6 (the point behind ...f5; White has to move his knight backwards) 12 c3 h4 (White’s knight on f3 is a good piece, giving extra defence to d4 and e5, so Black decides to exchange it off) 13 xf4 x4+ 14 g3 d8 with an equal game in which Black will aim to play some of the following moves: ...w6, ...d7, ...f6, ...e8 and ...g6.

8...c6 9 f3 a6!

Forcing the knight to d6, which looks like a good square, but after it moves there White loses some control of d4.

Black also had no difficulties in P.Leko-J.De la Villa Garcia, Leon 1994, which saw 9...f6 10 c3 d7 (10...a6 would transpose back into the main game) 11 d6 cxd4 12 cxd4 w6 13 0-0-0 and now the safest way to equalize would have been 13 c7.
This is a bit too risky. A better option would have been 10...cxd4! which would have left Black with a very comfortable position. E.Perelshteyn-A.Ramirez, US Online League 2005, continued 11 \( \text{\texttt{d3}} \) (11 \( \text{\texttt{xd4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{f6}} \) is fine for Black as White’s centre is collapsing) 11...\( \text{\texttt{f6}} \) 12 0-0 \( \text{\texttt{fxe5}} \) (12...\( \text{\texttt{g4}} \)!? leaves Black with an advantage and quite a big one at that!) 13 \( \text{\texttt{fxe5}} \) \( \text{\texttt{hxe5}} \) 15 \( \text{\texttt{g3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{eg4}} \) 16 \( \text{\texttt{xc8}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xc8}} \) and Black had very good play for the exchange.

11 \( \text{\texttt{c3}} \)

White should have grabbed the chance to go 11 \( \text{\texttt{dxc5}} \)! which may even be good for him: for example, 11...\( \text{\texttt{fxe5}} \) 12 \( \text{\texttt{fxe5}} \) \( \text{\texttt{b6}} \) 13 \( \text{\texttt{wc3}} \) when Black has some counterplay, but it is doubtful whether it is enough.

11...\( \text{\texttt{fxe5}} \)

Another idea would have been 11...\( \text{\texttt{cxd4}} \), opening up some more lines, although after 12 \( \text{\texttt{cxd4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{fxe5}} \) 13 \( \text{\texttt{fxe5}} \) play transposes in any case.

12 \( \text{\texttt{fxe5}} \) \( \text{\texttt{cxd4}} \) 13 \( \text{\texttt{cxd4}} \)

Now Black has to act with some urgency, otherwise White will play \( \text{\texttt{d3}} \) and 0-0 when he should have an advantage.

13...\( \text{\texttt{xf3}} \)!

This is an interesting attempt to change the nature of the game. Black does not want to just sit back and allow White to gain a small advantage. Instead she strikes out with an interesting but probably not wholly sound sacrifice.

Another possibility would have been 13...\( \text{\texttt{d5}} \)!. After, for example, 14 \( \text{\texttt{xf5}} \) \( \text{\texttt{exf5}} \) 15 \( \text{\texttt{d3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{h6}} \) 16 0-0 \( \text{\texttt{wb6}} \) Black has a solid position, but White may claim a small advantage due to his protected passed e-pawn.

14 \( \text{\texttt{gxf3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{wh4}} \) 15 \( \text{\texttt{wf2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{f4}} \)

Black avoids an exchange of queens which would have made White’s play a lot easier, but 15...\( \text{\texttt{d4!}} \) was still interesting: 16 \( \text{\texttt{wh4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xf3+}} \) 17 \( \text{\texttt{we2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xe4}} \) 18 \( \text{\texttt{c1!}} \) \( \text{\texttt{d7}} \) 19 \( \text{\texttt{c7}} \) and White is better, but he still has to be somewhat careful.

16 \( \text{\texttt{h3}} \)!

This move loses any advantage that White had. Why give up the centre without a fight?

White should have played 16 \( \text{\texttt{d1}} \) which looks good: for example, 16...\( \text{\texttt{xe4}} \) 17 \( \text{\texttt{dxe5}} \) \( \text{\texttt{exe5}} \) 18 \( \text{\texttt{dxe4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{f7}} \) 20 \( \text{\texttt{fxe4+}} \) with a winning advantage.

16...\( \text{\texttt{xe5}} \)

Black also gets good play after 16...\( \text{\texttt{xd4}} \) 17 0-0 \( \text{\texttt{wb5}} \).

17 \( \text{\texttt{dxe5}} \) \( \text{\texttt{exe5+}} \)
Attracting Chess: The French

18 $\text{We2?!}$

White should have played 18 $\text{De4}$ when things are unclear, such as after 18...dxe4 19 0-0-0 $\text{Wf6}$ 20 $\text{Wd2}$ exf3 21 $\text{Whf1}$ $\text{Wf7}$.

18...$\text{Wxd6}$

Black now has a small edge.

19 0-0

19...$\text{d7}$

19...e5! was simple and good.

20 $\text{Wxe1}$

20 $\text{Aae1}$ makes more sense, leaving the rook on f1 to prepare f4 at some point, trying to gain control of the e5-square. Now 20...$\text{b5}$? is a mistake due to 21 $\text{Wxe6+}$ $\text{Wxe6}$ 22 $\text{Axe6+}$ $\text{Wh8}$ 23 $\text{Wf2}$.

20...$\text{We8}$

Preparing ...e5.

21 $\text{Wad1}$ $\text{Df7}$

The knight comes back round into the game.

22 $\text{Wh1}$ $\text{b5}$ 23 $\text{We3}$ e5!

At last!

24 f4

This is very risky, but White was unhappy with passive defence.

24...d4 25 $\text{Wf2}$ $\text{Wf6}$ 26 $\text{Ad2}$ exf4 27 $\text{Axex5+}$ $\text{Axex5}$

Black still has a big advantage, but unfortunately things quickly go wrong.

28 $\text{g2}$ $\text{c6}$ 29 $\text{g1}$ f3 30 $\text{f1}$ $\text{g5}$+ 31 $\text{g3}$ $\text{Wd2}??$

A blunder in time trouble. Black should have played 31...$\text{He3+}$ with a winning position: for example, 32 $\text{He2}$ (or if 32 $\text{He2}$ then 32...$\text{De5}$ when Black has control of the whole position) 32...$\text{g5}$ 33 $\text{Axd4}$ $\text{Wc1}$! when White cannot stop the dual threats of ...$\text{He3+}$ and ...$\text{De4}$.

32 $\text{Wb8+}$ $\text{Dh8}$ 33 $\text{Ac4+}$ $\text{Wf8}$ 34 $\text{Wxd8+}$ 1-0
The Winawer Variation: White’s 5th Move Alternatives

After 5...\( \text{h6!} \) the idea of 6 \( \text{b5} \) does not look too worrying for Black. Black just has to remember to develop and then to attack White’s centre in typical French style!

Let’s now take a look at a game where White captures the pawn on c5 and tries to hold on to it, which offers Black very good compensation. In this game I was Black against a fellow ginge r, Adam Hunt, who I am sure will soon be a Grandmaster.

Game 20
A.Hunt-S.Williams
Witley 1999

1 \( \text{e4 e6} \) 2 \( \text{d4 d5} \) 3 \( \text{c3 b4} \) 4 \( \text{e5 c5} \) 5 \( \text{d2 h6!} \) 6 \( \text{b5} \)

Other moves will be analysed in the next game.

6...\( \text{xd2+} \) 7 \( \text{xd2} \) 0-0 8 \( \text{dxc5} \)

This may be the most critical choice. White goes a pawn up, but his development is neglected.

8...\( \text{c6} \)

Sensibly attacking the pawn on e5.

9 \( \text{f3} \)

White has also tried 9 \( \text{f4} \) which so far has scored an impressive 4/4 for him. It seems that Black has two interesting ways to play against this move:

a) With 9...\( \text{f6} \) Black aims to open up the position in standard fashion. White can now play:

a1) 10 \( \text{exf6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 11 0-0-0 \( \text{xf4} \) (I would have been tempted to have kept the queens on the board even at the cost of not winning my pawn back; for that reason 11...\( \text{b6} \)!, attempting to open up some lines against the white king, looks interesting: for example, 12 \( \text{xb6} \) \( \text{xb6} \) 13 \( \text{b1} \) \( \text{a5} \) is good for Black, since White’s king will soon come under serious fire) 12 \( \text{xf4} \) \( \text{xf4} \) 13 \( \text{h3} \) and now Black should play 13...\( \text{f6} \) in I.Malyshev-A.Nikitin, St Petersburg 1997, which is roughly equal.

a2) 10 \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{exe5} \) 11 \( \text{fxe5} \) (11 \( \text{xex5} \) is a mistake due to 11...\( \text{exe5} \) 12 \( \text{fxe5} \) \( \text{h4+} \) 13 \( \text{d1} \) \( \text{g4} \) when White is lost), and now Black has a number of options:
a21) 11...\texttt{xf}3!? is a similar sacrifice to that in our last game, but again it is probably not quite good enough. S.Naranjo-L.Flaquer, Bogota 2006, continued 12\texttt{gxf}3 \texttt{wh}4+ 13 \texttt{d}d1 \texttt{xe}5 14 \texttt{d}d4 \texttt{h}5 15 \texttt{e}2 when Black had run out of ideas and White's material advantage looked likely to count. Saying that, Black was still able to cause some problems after 15...\texttt{c}6 16 \texttt{d}2 \texttt{f}5.

a22) 11...\texttt{g}4 12 \texttt{c}3! is better for White.

a23) 11...b6! looks like the best shot and it should offer Black some compensation: for example, 12 \texttt{c}3 (or 12\texttt{cxb}6 \texttt{xb}6 when Black has a number of open lines and it is not clear where White should put his king) 12...\texttt{bxc}5 13 \texttt{xc}5 \texttt{d}7 looks quite promising for Black. A rook is coming to c8, leaving him with good compensation.

b) 9...b6!? is the other way that Black can open the position. In this variation Black should constantly be on the look out for the pawn breaks ...b6 and ...f6. can find, J.Melero Fidalgo-S.Alanis Honrardo, Dos Hermanas 2005, and after 10...\texttt{d}d4 11 \texttt{xd}4 \texttt{f}5 12 \texttt{f}2 Black should have played 12...\texttt{bxc}5 13 \texttt{xc}5 \texttt{d}4! which creates the threat of ...\texttt{e}3. I prefer Black here as White has a problem finding a safe haven for the king.

Instead 10 \texttt{cxb}6 \texttt{xb}6 is similar to a lot of positions that are reached in our main game. White is a pawn up, but Black does have a number of open lines and diagonals to attack down.

9...b6!

This idea was first played in 1995 by the famous Russian trainer and theorician Aleksander Nikitin. It is an important idea to remember. Black sacrifices a pawn to gain some pressure against White's king.

10\texttt{cxb}6

Instead 10 \texttt{c}3 has been played on three occasions, but it should not worry Black. He will quickly try to get a rook to the c-file and a lot of tactics work in his favour after 10...\texttt{d}7.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chessboard.png}
\caption{10 \texttt{d}4 was what White played in the only example of this variation that I can find, J.Melero Fidalgo-S.Alanis Honrardo, Dos Hermanas 2005, and after 10...\texttt{d}d4 11 \texttt{xd}4 \texttt{f}5 12 \texttt{f}2 Black should have played 12...\texttt{bxc}5 13 \texttt{xc}5 \texttt{d}4! which creates the threat of ...\texttt{e}3. I prefer Black here as White has a problem finding a safe haven for the king. Instead 10 \texttt{cxb}6 \texttt{xb}6 is similar to a lot of positions that are reached in our main game. White is a pawn up, but Black does have a number of open lines and diagonals to attack down. 9...b6!

This idea was first played in 1995 by the famous Russian trainer and theorician Aleksander Nikitin. It is an important idea to remember. Black sacrifices a pawn to gain some pressure against White’s king.}
\end{figure}

White now has:

a) 11 \texttt{d}6 leads to some compli-
cated variations and no one has played this move yet. It does seem that Black will come out top at the end: for example, 11...bxc5 12 ♗b7! (12 ♖xc5? ♘g4! is good for Black) 12...♗b6 13 ♘xc5 ♞fd8 (or 13...♘g4 14 ♘xd7 ♖xf2+ 15 ♕d1 ♞fc8 16 ♖d2 and now 16...♕b8!? is a nice move when I cannot find a good reply for White!) 17 ♕c1 (if 17 ♘xb8? ♘e3+ 18 ♕c1 ♘xc2+ 19 ♘xc2 ♖xc2 mate) 17...♖xd2+ 18 ♕xd2 ♘g4! (again showing one of the advantages of placing the knight on h6) 13 ♘c3 ♘cxe5! 14 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 15 ♘xe5 ♘xb8 and Black had a slight advantage due to his strong centre in R.Kholmov-A.Nikitin, Moscow 1995.

c) 11 ♘e2 should not worry Black as he has the standard plan of winning the pawn on e5 and this is exactly what he did in A.Gutenev-D.Recuero Guerra, Herceg Novi 2006: 11...bxc5 12 ♖xc5 ♘g4 13 0-0 ♘xe5 14 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 15 ♗f4 ♘c8 16 ♖f2 ♘xc2! winning.

10...♖xb6

Black has very good play for the pawn, due to White’s weak e-pawn, the possibility of ...♘g4, attacking f2 and e5, and the half-open b-file. One simple threat is ...a6 followed by ...♖xb2.

11 0-0-0

Returning the pawn immediately. White has also tried:

a) 11 ♘d3 may seem more sensible, but in D.Tan-A.Summerscale, British Championship, Scarborough 2004, after 11...♘g4 12 ♖e2 ♖b8 13 ♘g5 ♖xe5 14 ♗h7+ ♘h8 15 ♖xe5 ♘gxe5 16 ♘d3 ♘xd3+ 17 ♗xd3 ♖b8 18 a4 a6 19 ♘c3 ♖xb2 Black was clearly better.

b) 11 c3 ♖b8 (11...♘g4 looks better; Black is fine after this knight jump as the e5-pawn will drop) 12 b3 ♘g4! (Black got there in the end!) 13 ♖e2 ♘a6 14 a4 and now in R.Delabaca-J.Plassiard, French League 2004, 14...♖c5! would have kept White tied down.

11...♘g4!

An important move to remember. It is particularly strong here as it also attacks the pawn on f2.

12 ♘bd4 ♗xe5 13 ♘xc6 ♘xc6
The dust has settled and it is clear that Black is doing very well. Material is equal, but Black has a strong centre and he also has the b- and c-files to attack along.

14 c3

White could have tried to arrange the exchange of queens, which would have taken the pressure off his king position. However, after 14 \( \text{\textit{e}}3 \) Black obviously does not oblige, going 14...\( \text{\textit{a}}5 \) 15 a3 \( \text{\textit{b}}8 \) with a big attack.

14...\( \text{\textit{b}}8 \) 15 \( \text{\textit{d}}4 \) \( \text{\textit{a}}5 \)

Keeping pieces on for the attack.

Another strong idea was 15...\( \text{\textit{d}}4 \) 16 \( \text{\textit{c}}x\text{\textit{d}}4 \) \( \text{\textit{d}}7 \) 17 \( \text{\textit{b}}1 \) \( \text{\textit{b}}7 \) when Black will triple on the b-file and then use his a-pawn as a battering ram to open up White’s queenside.

16 \( \text{\textit{f}}4 \) \( \text{\textit{a}}6 \) 17 \( \text{\textit{c}}x\text{\textit{a}}6 \) \( \text{\textit{w}}\text{\textit{a}}6 \) 18 \( \text{\textit{w}}e2 \) \( \text{\textit{c}}4 \)

White’s queenside now falls apart and I just had to be a bit careful.

19 b3 \( \text{\textit{a}}3+ \) 20 \( \text{\textit{b}}1 \) a5!

The a-pawn is put to good use.

21 \( \text{\textit{c}}2 \) \( \text{\textit{c}}5 \) 22 \( \text{\textit{c}}1 \) \( \text{\textit{d}}6 \)

The pawn on c3 is weak, so I manoeuvre my knight around to attack it.

23 \( \text{\textit{e}}1 \) \( \text{\textit{f}}8 \) 24 \( \text{\textit{d}}3 \) a4 25 \( \text{\textit{e}}2 \) \( \text{\textit{e}}4 \) 26 \( \text{\textit{c}}2 \) \( \text{\textit{c}}4 \) 27 \( \text{\textit{e}}3 \) \( \text{\textit{a}}xb3 \) 28 \( \text{\textit{a}}xb3 \) \( \text{\textit{c}}5 \) 29 \( \text{\textit{b}}4 \) \( \text{\textit{d}}3 \) 30 \( \text{\textit{f}}1 \) \( \text{\textit{x}}b4+! \) 0–1

The final blow.

We will now look at the other options that White has after 5...\( \text{\textit{h}}6 \).

Game 21

M. Bartel-B. Socko
Polish Championship,
Krakow 2006

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 \( \text{\textit{c}}3 \) \( \text{\textit{b}}4 \) 4 e5 c5 5 \( \text{\textit{d}}2 \) \( \text{\textit{h}}6 \)

6 \( \text{\textit{x}}h6 \)

This must be quite critical. White creates some weaknesses in Black’s kingside, but he does also lose control of the dark squares. Other possibilities are:

a) I found that 6 \( \text{\textit{d}}3 \) was given an exclamation mark by Peter Leko in some notes to a game that he played. For this reason alone it should be treated with respect. Black now has
two sensible moves:

a1) 6...c6 7 g3 cxd4! (7...c4 has been played as well; I am not a great fan of this move, but if you are happy playing closed positions then this might be a good choice) 8 b5 and Black now has a pleasant choice between two good options:

a11) 8...c5!? has so far scored 2/2 for Black: 9 a3 g4 (this move keeps cropping up) 10 b4 e7 11 f4 b6 12 h3 a6 13 bxd4 cxd4 14 hxg4 d7 and Black had good chances on the queenside in S.Salehian-S.Moosavian, Tehran 2008, but White had an initiative on the kingside due to the open h-file. Rough equality is a fair assessment.

a12) 8...xd2+ may also be okay as long as Black remembers to play ...f6 soon after: for example, 9 xd2 0-0 10 0-0 f6 11 exf6, as in A.Minasian-G.Hertneck, Baden-Baden 1996.

Hertneck now played 11...xf6?, but could have done better with either:

a121) 11...xf6 leads to a very pleasant position for Black after 12 bxd4 c6 13 d4 e5 14 b3 e6. In the majority of cases once Black has played ...e5 in the French he should have a slight advantage.

a122) 11...e5!? is interesting too. Black takes control of the centre, but risks losing control of his kingside. After 12 fxg7 (12 g5 xf6 13 c7 b8 14 xd5 d6 is also good for Black) 12 xg7 13 c7!? xc7 14 g5+ h8 15 xh6 g7 16 xg7+ xg7 Black is better due to his strong centre.

a2) 6...cxd4!? is also playable and at least it forces the issue. Play could continue 7 b5 xd2+ 8 xd2 0-0 9 xd4 and then the important move 9...f6! I could not find any examples of this, but Black’s position looks fine after, for example:

a21) 10 f4 fxe5 11 fxe5 c6 12 gf3 xd4 13 d4 d7 14 0-0-0 g4! with equal chances.

a22) 10 gf3 can lead to some crazy complications after 10...g4!? 11 f4 fxe5 12 xg4 exd4, with another branch:

a221) 13 h5 h6 looks dangerous
for Black, but he may be okay as he has good control of the dark squares. Indeed, 14 \( \text{g6} \) \( \text{f6} \) 15 \( \text{h7}+ \) \( \text{f7} \) is likely good for Black.

\[ \text{a222) 13} \text{\( \text{xh7}+ \)!} \] is interesting! After 13...\( \text{xh7} \) 14 \( \text{g5+} \) \( \text{h6} \) 15 \( \text{h4+} \) (if 15 \( \text{f4} \) \( \text{e8}! \) and the queen swings over to \( h5 \), protecting the king) 15...\( \text{g6} \) the only way that White can continue his attack is by sacrificing another piece with 16 \( \text{h7}+ \).

**Diagram:**

Now 16...\( \text{xg5}?! \) is very risky, although after 17 \( \text{g7+} \) \( \text{f5} \) 18 \( g4+ \) (if 18 \( f4 \) \( e5 \)! 19 \( g4+ \) \( e6 \) and the king starts to run away) 18...\( \text{f4} \) 19 0-0-0 (or 19 \( \text{xd4+} \) \( \text{g5} \) 20 \( \text{g7+} \) \( \text{f4} \) when I expect that White should take the draw; note that 20...\( \text{h4} \) is too risky on account of 21 \( f4 \)!) 19...\( \text{c6} \) Black should be okay. Safer is 16...\( \text{f6}! \) when Black is doing well after 17 \( \text{h4} \) \( \text{h8} \) 18 \( \text{f4+} \) \( \text{g6} \) 19 \( \text{f7+} \) \( \text{h6}! \), but again not 19...\( \text{xg5} \) 20 \( \text{g7+} \).

\[ \text{b) 6} \text{\( \text{f3} \) is also quite logical. Just like after 6 \( \text{d3} \), Black now has a choice between capturing on d4 and developing the knight from b8. 6...\( \text{c6} \) may be the simplest plan to remember as you can play this move against both 6 \( \text{d3} \) and 6 \( \text{f3} \), and sometimes the lines will transpose.} \]

**Diagram:**

Now:

\[ \text{b1) 7} \text{\( \text{d3} \) leads to variation `a1}'. \]

\[ \text{b2) 7} \text{\( a3 \text{xc3} \) and then:} \]

\[ \text{b21) 8} \text{\( \text{xc3} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 9} \text{\( \text{xd4} \) 0-0} \]

(9...\( \text{f5}?! \) is an interesting idea: for example, 10 \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{h4} \) 11 \( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{h4} \) looks equal to me) 10 \( \text{c5} \) \( \text{e8} \) 11 \( \text{d3} \) \( f6 \) 12 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{f7} \) 13 \( \text{b5} \) \( \text{d7} \) 14 \( \text{xc6} \) \( \text{xc6} \) 15 \( \text{d4} \) may be slightly better for White, M. Quast-B. Schmidt, German League 1996.

\[ \text{b22) 8} \text{\( \text{xc3} \) \( f5 \) 9} \text{\( \text{b5} \) \( \text{h4}! \)} \]

(instead 9...0-0 is about equal and after 10 0-0 \( \text{d7} \) leads to a typical Winawer structure; White has some queenside weaknesses, but he has more space and some chances to start an attack on the kingside) 10 \( \text{g5}?! \) and now in I. Karim-A. Dappiano, Malaga 2009, Black should have accepted the pawn on \( g2 \): 10...\( \text{gx2}+ \) 11 \( \text{f1} \) \( \text{h4} \) 12 \( \text{h5} \) \( \text{g6} \) 13 \( \text{g1} \) when White has some pressure, but Black has a solid position.
b3) 7 hxh6 can lead to an interesting position after 7...gxh6 8 b5 (White needs to take some of the pressure off d4) 8...b6 9 0-0 cxd4 10 cxd4 d7 11 axc6 bxc6, R.Saptarshi-J.De la Villa Garcia, Andorra 2006.

Black has the bishop-pair, but his pawn structure is a little weak.

c) 6 a3 is quite a logical follow-up to 5 d2, although after 6...axc3 White hasn’t always recaptured with the bishop:

C1) After 7 axc3 Black has two ways to play the position. He can either try to keep his pawn structure intact by playing 7...b6!? or he can make some exchanges in the centre:

C11) 7...b6!? would likely be my choice. After 8 b5+ (8 f3 a6! is the correct plan; Black exchanges off White’s strong light-squared bishop, with mutual chances) 8...d7 9 d3 c6 10 f3 cxd4 (10...c7!? keeps the tension for the time being with an equal game) 11 xd4 cxd4 12 xd4 f6 13 h5+ f7 14 b5 xxb5 15 xb5+ f8 16 exf6 xf6 Black was ready to play ...g6 and ...g7, and the position was equal in S.Melia-M.Bensdorp, Kusadasi 2006.

c12) 7...cxd4 may lead to a slightly better position for White: for example, after 8 xd4 0-0 9 f3 b6 10 b4 c6 11 d2 f5 12 d3 White’s position is to be preferred, J.Magem Badals-C.Barrero Garcia, Seville 1999.

Returning to the exchange on h6:

6...gxh6 7 a3

White tries to force Black to part with his dark-squared bishop. Instead 7 f3 c6 8 b5 leads to note ‘b3’ to White’s 6th move, above.

7...a5!?
An interesting move that has scored well for Black.

8 dxc5

White has also tried 8 b5+, but this makes little sense. He should not be swapping off his best minor piece. Black was doing well after 8...xd7 9 xd7+ xd7 10 dxc5 x3+ 11 bxc3 in J.Houska-P.Cumbers, British League 2005, and now he should have played 11...g8 with a nice advantage.

8...d4! 9 b4 dxc3 10 bxa5

An important position for the evaluation of the whole line. Both sides have a number of weaknesses; Black on the kingside and White on the queenside.

11 h5

White's queen moves over to the kingside to try and take advantage of Black's vulnerable pawns over there. It looks like White has a better move available to him though in 11 e2! which sees the knight target the c3-pawn and in some cases it might be able to move around to f6 via f4/g3 and h5:

a) After 11...xc5 12 d6 (12 f4?) 12...d7 13 xc5 xc5 14 xc3 White had the advantage due to his superior pawn structure in A.Leniart-B.Socko, Tromsoe 2009.

b) 11...c6!? looks like an improvement: for example, 12 f4 (or 12 d3 xe5 13 xc3 xc3+ 14 xc3 d7 with an equal position) 12...0-0!? 13 d3 f6!? with an unclear position.

11...xc5

Simple chess, although 11...d7!? was also interesting.

12 f3 d7 13 xh6 c6

Another interesting possibility would have been 13...c6!? Indeed, after 14 g7 f8! 15 g4 d7 16 d4 xf3! 17 xf3 c5 Black has a slight advantage.

14 f6 g8 15 d1

15 e7

Sacrificing the exchange. This is not entirely convincing, though.

Black would have been better advised to have played 15...xa3!. This was obviously very risky, but it looks okay for Black, such as after 16 g5
17 e7 17 e4 0-0-0 18 d6+ c7 19 f3 g5 with an unclear position.

White should be doing very well here, but the position is not so easy to play for him.

18 e3 xxa3 19 d3 c6 20 0-0 d5 21 f3

Maybe White should have gone for Black’s h-pawn with 21 h6!?. White has a clear advantage after 21 g8 22 xh7 xg2+? 23 xg2 f4+ 24 g3!.

21..e7 22 e4 c7 23 xd5 xd5 24 e3 b5 25 d4 a5

Black’s position is not so bad now. His bishop on d5 is very strong and his queenside pawns can create some problems. Saying that, I would still prefer to take the white pieces.

26 h4 b4

Black must use those pawns!

27 xh7 d7 28 a1 b7 29 h8 c6 30 h4 d5 31 e1 d7 32 h2 d4 33 g3 e4 34 xe4 xe4 35 g8

White is certainly making progress and Black does very well to survive.

35..a6 36 b8 a7 37 d6+

White wisely decides to keep the queens on the board and an exchange of queens would actually leave Black with a very dangerous pawn majority on the queenside.

37...b5 38 d1

White decides that he should keep hold of his c-pawn, although after this the game quickly peters into a draw. White had to be careful, though: for example, after 38 b8+? a4 39 g1 xc2 40 c6+ a3 Black’s position is to be preferred, as his queenside pawns are going to be very hard to stop.

38..xf2!

A brave move as now the black king is very exposed.

39 b8+ c4 40 c8+ b5 41 d7+ a6 42 d6+ a7

Not 42...b5? 43 b8+ a4 (or 43..c4 44 a6+ d4 45 a7+ winning the black queen) 44 xb4+! axb4 45 a6 mate.

43 b8+ a6

White has no way to win. Black’s bishop and queen cover some important squares.

44 d6+ a7 45 c7+ a6 46 c4+ b7 47 c7+ a6 48 c4+ b7 49 c7+ ½-½

Game 22
S.Arkhipov-S.Lputian
Dubai 2000

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 c3 b4 4 e5 c5 5 g4
This is a dangerous and double-edged move to face. White immediately attacks Black’s kingside, but in doing so he leaves his centre rather weak. The difference between this variation and the main line, 5 a3 \( \text{dx}c3 + 6 \text{bxc}3 \text{c}5 7 \text{g}4, \) is the c3-square. In the main line White has a pawn on c3 which helps protect his centre, while in this variation there is a knight on c3.

The position is roughly equal and Black should not be scared of facing this line, at least so long as he is confident in remembering his theory.

5...\( \text{d}e7 \)

This is the best way that Black can defend his rook on h8. 5...g6? would weaken too many dark squares.

6 dxc5

White’s centre is unstable, so he decides to immediately capture on c5. He has a number of other options here and it is worth covering all of them:

a) 6 a3?! is an attempt to transpose back to the main line. Black can follow suit if he wishes, but he also has the opportunity to play 6...\( \text{a}5 \!) which looks much more critical.

This reveals the main disadvantage of White playing \( \text{g}4 \) before a3. In practice this line has scored very well for Black and it does look like he may already have the advantage:

a1) 7 \( \text{d}2 \text{cxd}4 8 \text{axb}4 \) (this might be the best way to try and mix things up, even though White does not obtain quite enough play for the sacrificed material; otherwise, after 8 \( \text{b}1 \text{xd}2+ 9 \text{xd}2 \text{g}6 \) Black is better and 8 \( \text{xd}4 \text{bc}6 9 \text{g}4 \text{d}4! \) is also good for him) 8...\( \text{xa}1+ 9 \text{d}1 0-0 10 \text{f}3 \text{f}5! \) (this is often a useful move for Black to play on the kingside, trying to blunt the bishop on d3) 11 \( \text{exf}6 \) (White tries to open things up and keep his bishop active, but now Black can move his e-pawn) 11...\( \text{xf}6 12 \text{g}5 \text{e}5! 13 \text{h}5 \text{g}6 14 \text{h}4 \text{xf}3 15 \text{xf}3 (15 \text{gxf}3 \text{f}5 16 \text{h}3 \text{c}6 \) is also winning for Black; his central pawns are too strong) 15...\( \text{f}4 \) gave Black a winning position in A.Grischuk-S.Shipov, Internet (blitz) 2004.
The Winawer Variation: White’s 5th Move Alternatives

a2) 7...\textipa{ge}2 cxd4 8 axb4 (8 \textipa{wx}d4 \textipa{b}c6 9 \textipa{w}g4 \textipa{x}xc3! 10 bxc3 0-0 is very good for Black) 8...\textipa{xa}1 9 \textipa{db}5 0-0! 10 \textipa{c}7 \textipa{a}6 11 \textipa{x}a8 \textipa{d}7 12 \textipa{w}g5 \textipa{g}6 13 \textipa{x}d4 \textipa{xb}4!? (13...\textipa{x}a8 14 \textipa{x}a6 \textipa{xa}6 15 h4 \textipa{c}4 is also okay for Black) 14 \textipa{c}7 \textipa{c}8 15 \textipa{e}1 a6 16 h4 h6 17 \textipa{w}d2 \textipa{a}2 was very interesting and Black always seemed to have the better of things in N.Tomorhuyag-W.Uhlmann, Novi Sad Olympiad 1990.

a3) 7 axb4 looks rather desperate, but Black still has to take a bit of care after 7...\textipa{xa}1 8 \textipa{d}1.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chessboard.png}
\caption{Position after 7 axb4}
\end{figure}

F.Cuijpers-A.Yusupov, Dutch League 2009, continued 8...cxd4!? (Black sacrifices the exchange back to gain the initiative; 8...0-0 9 bxc5 b6 10 \textipa{f}3 \textipa{a}6 should also be good for him) 9 \textipa{b}5 0-0 10 \textipa{c}7 \textipa{d}7 11 \textipa{x}a8 and now 11...\textipa{a}6 would have been fine for Black: for example, 12 \textipa{d}3 (12 \textipa{x}a6 \textipa{wx}a6 is good for Black as White now has to worry about a check on f1) 12...\textipa{x}a8 13 \textipa{f}3 (13 \textipa{x}h7+ \textipa{x}h7 14 \textipa{h}4+ \textipa{g}8 15 \textipa{xe}7 \textipa{a}4 16 \textipa{f}3 \textipa{d}3 17 \textipa{xb}7 \textipa{b}8 18 \textipa{xa}7 \textipa{xc}2+ 19 \textipa{d}2 \textipa{a}4 leaves White’s king very exposed) 13...\textipa{xb}4 14 \textipa{x}h7+ \textipa{x}h7 15 \textipa{g}5+ does not work here and after 15...\textipa{g}8 16 \textipa{h}5 \textipa{g}6! 17 \textipa{h}7+ \textipa{f}8 Black is winning.

b) 6 \textipa{f}3 is a sensible continuation and is quite a popular choice. Here I like the straightforward 6...cxd4, consistently nibbling away at White’s pawn centre. In general one rule worth sticking to is: ‘if you can capture on d4 and force White to recapture with a piece then it is often worth doing.’ White will usually then be left with a weak e-pawn and Black sometimes has chances to take control of the d4-square. After 7 \textipa{xd}4 Black has a choice:

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chessboard2.png}
\caption{Position after 7...cxd4}
\end{figure}

b1) 7...\textipa{g}6 is the safe option. Black’s knight on g6 attacks e5 and covers the g7-pawn. Now:

b11) 8 \textipa{f}3 sees White go passive and defend his pawn on e5, but this plan is too slow and Black was doing very well after 8...\textipa{c}6 9 \textipa{d}2 d4!? (this move is often strong in the Winawer and this case is no exception) 10 \textipa{e}4 \textipa{xd}2+ 11 \textipa{ex}d2 \textipa{a}5 in G.Kuzmin-S.Dolmatov, Minsk 1982.
At tacking Chess: The French

b12) 8 b5+?! d7 9 0-0-0 0-0 10 d3 shows that White’s plan of b5+ was a waste of time. Black was better in J.Murey-G.5igu rjonsson, Brighton 1982, after 10 ... xex5 11 xh7+ xh7 12 h5+ g8 13 xex5 c6 14 xxc6 bxc6 thanks to his centre and bishop-pair.

b13) 8 d3 is maybe the trickiest move. It also used to be a favourite of the English Grandmaster Mark Hebden. After 8 ... 0-0 9 xg6 (White will be forced to play this capture at some point as his pawn on e5 is too weak) 9 ... fxg6 (9 ... xc3+ also looks equal and was after, for example, 10 bxc3 fxg6 11 0-0 c6 12 a3 f6 13 xxc6 bxc6 14 d6 a5 in M.Hebden-N.Pert, British Championship, Swansea, 1995) 10 0-0 e7 11 e3 c6 12 xxc6 bxc6 13 a4 b8 14 a3 a5 chances were balanced in J.Murey-M.Cebalo, Pula 2002.

b2) 7 ... c7?! is another good option.

Black immediately attacks e5 and c3, and after 8 b5+ (or 8 g3 bc6 9 db5 a5 10 d2 0-0 with ...d4 to follow) 8 ... d7 9 0-0 xc3 10 xd7+ xd7 11 b5 b6 12 xc3 (12 d6+ f8 13 bxc3 xe5 leaves White’s knight on d6 stranded) 12 ... 0-0 (12 ... g6?!?) 13 e1 fc8 Black was slightly better in J.Friedel-S.Mamedyarov, Chalkidiki 2003.

c) 6 xg7?! is critical, but the dark squares around White’s centre are far too weak after 6 ... g8 7 xh7 cxd4 8 a3 a5!.

Again we see this typical move and it is certainly worth remembering this plan. Now:

c1) 9 f3? (White gives up without a fight) 9 ... xc3 10 b3 bc6 11 g5 xe5 12 f4 xg5! clarified matters, leaving Black clearly better in M.Manik-A.Yusupov, Warsaw 2005.

c2) 9 axb4! at least muddies the waters: for example, 9 ... xa1 10 ce2 bc6 11 f3 d7 12 h4 when the position is a mess, although I would prefer to be Black who has decent chances on the queenside.

c3) However, 9 b1? does not save the rook, in view of 9 ... xc3 10 axb4 a2!.

Returning to 6 dxc5:
6...\textit{xc3}+

Black has tried a number of moves here, but this looks like one of the best choices. It is also fairly simple to learn which can only be good!

7 \textit{bxc3} \textit{a5}

Attacking White’s queenside.

8 \textit{b4}?!

This looks like a slight mistake. White should keep his queen on the kingside where it can keep some pressure on g7. 8 \textit{d2}! is an improvement, although Black is fine after 8...\textit{g6} when his general plan is to attack e5 after 9 \textit{f3}:

a) I can only find one example of 9...\textit{d7}!, but it seems like a good idea. The black knight is more flexibly placed here compared to on c6, as in some cases the knight can capture on c5. Indeed, this is what happened in P.Krupkova-G.Andre, German League 2000: 10 \textit{d3} \textit{xc5} 11 0-0 (if 11 c4 \textit{a4}) 11...\textit{d7} 12 \textit{d4} 0-0 13 \textit{fe1} \textit{xd3} 14 \textit{xd3} \textit{c7} 15 \textit{h5} and now I quite like the thematic 15...\textit{f6}!, whereas the players agreed a draw after 15...\textit{d8} 16 \textit{e3} \textit{h4} 17 \textit{xh4} \textit{e4} 18 \textit{b1} b6 19 g3 \textit{g6}.

b) 9...\textit{c6} 10 h4 (John Watson suggests 10 \textit{d3} which looks like an improvement; I suspect White is a little better here, although Black might try 10...\textit{xc5} 11 0-0 \textit{d7}, usefully keeping his king’s options open) 10...h5 11 \textit{g5} \textit{c7} 12 \textit{b5} \textit{d7} 13 \textit{xc6} \textit{xc6} 14 0-0 was also okay for Black in J.Geller-A.Smirnov, Tula 2002. I would have played 14...\textit{e7} here, simplifying matters, such as with 15 \textit{fb1} \textit{xg5} 16 \textit{xg5} \textit{c8}.

8...\textit{c7}!

White’s queen is now misplaced on c7. Black already has a very comfortable position.

9 \textit{f4}

After 9 \textit{f3} \textit{bc6} 10 \textit{g4} \textit{g6} White has no adequate way of defending the e5-pawn.

9...0-0 10 \textit{f3} \textit{bc6} 11 \textit{b2} f6!

A typical move in the French! Black tries to open up some lines in the hope of taking advantage of the fact that White’s king is still in the centre.
12 exf6

Another option was 12 c4 when play could continue 12...fxe5 13 fxe5 g6! with a clear advantage to Black.

12...xf6 13 d2 e5!

Opening up more lines. Black definitely now has the advantage.

14 0-0-0

Leaving the king in the centre looked far too risky.

14...e4 15 d4 xd4 16 cxd4 b6!

A thematic move. Black opens up the b-file which will be the death of White.

17 g3 Bb8 18 Wa3 g4 19 e1 bxc5 20 dxc5

Not 20 Wxc5 c6! which wins on the spot for Black.

20...f3 21 g1 c6 22 b4 Wb7 23 c3 f5

Black would love to get the move ...d4 in, which combined with a later ...d3 would rip the pawn protection from White’s king.

24 e5

Making sure that the dark-squared bishop does not get trapped in after ...d4.

24...b1+?

I would have kept the queens on the board: for example, 24...bc8 25 b3 Wf7 26 g4 e7 27 d6 Wxd6! 28 cxd6 Wxf4+ 29 e3 Wxd6 with a big attack.

25 d2 e3+ 26 xe3

This move is forced, as 26 xe3? Wd1+ 27 c3 d4+! 28 c4 Wc2+ 29 c3 e3+ 30 d4 Wd4 is a pretty checkmate.

26...xe3 27 xb1 xb1 28 xe3

Black has won the exchange, but White’s bishops are very strong, especially the dark-squared bishop on e5. It is clear that Black has gone wrong and I suspect that this position should be roughly equal.

28...c4 29 d6 h5

This move gives the black king some more space and holds up White’s kingside pawns.

29...xc2? is a mistake due to 30 g2! xg1 31 xd5+ h8 32 xc6 when White would be clearly better, as his c-pawn is just too strong.

30 a4?!

A better move would have been 30
c4! when Black would have been advised to have gone for a draw with 30...\texttt{e}e1+ (30...\texttt{a}a1? 31 \texttt{c}xd5 \texttt{a}xd5 32 \texttt{c}c4! \texttt{x}g1 33 \texttt{a}xd5+ \texttt{h}8 34 \texttt{a}xc6 is winning for White) 31 \texttt{d}d4 \texttt{a}d1+ 32 \texttt{e}e3 (if 32 \texttt{e}e5?! \texttt{g}8!) 32...\texttt{a}f7 31...\texttt{a}xg1 32 \texttt{a}xc6 \texttt{c}c1

This is a very logical move, but White could just have rammed his c-pawn down the board. 33 \texttt{d}d7! carries the simple plan of c6, c7 and c8=Q! This is actually a very hard pawn to stop! After 33...\texttt{x}xc2 34 c6 g6 (I cannot see another plan; Black needs to get his light-squared bishop around to cover the c8-square) 35 c7 (35 \texttt{d}d4?!?) 35...\texttt{f}5 36 \texttt{c}8\texttt{b}\texttt{b}8 \texttt{x}xc8 37 \texttt{b}xc8 \texttt{b}xc8 38 \texttt{d}d4 the opposite-coloured bishop endgame is clearly draw.

33...\texttt{e}e6

Now Black’s king gets back in time to stop White’s c-pawn. Lputian has the better position again.

34 \texttt{f}5+!?

A better plan would have been 34 \texttt{a}xd5+! \texttt{a}xd5 35 \texttt{f}5+ \texttt{f}5 36 \texttt{a}xd5 \texttt{x}c2 and then 37 \texttt{e}5+? when again White’s c-pawn is a tricky one to stop.

34...\texttt{x}f5 35 \texttt{d}d7+ \texttt{f}6 36 \texttt{c}6

White was relying on this little pawn, but unfortunately for him Black can just about cover it.

36...\texttt{x}c2

37 \texttt{e}5+?

A draw was still in sight here. White could have played 37 c7 \texttt{c}c4+ 38 \texttt{e}e3 \texttt{f}5 39 \texttt{c}8\texttt{b}\texttt{b}8 \texttt{x}xc8 40 \texttt{a}xc8 \texttt{a}xc8 with an easy draw due to the opposite-coloured bishops.

37...\texttt{e}7 38 \texttt{x}g7 \texttt{f}3!

A good plan. Black wants to exchange a pair of bishops by playing ...\texttt{g}4 when the position should be winning for him. Two bishops are hard to deal with, but one should be manageable.

39 \texttt{h}4?!

Yet another error. White has really fallen apart in the latter stages of this game; quite possibly time trouble played a part.

White had to try 39 \texttt{h}3 which controls g4. Saying that Black is still in the
driving seat after 39...\textbf{c}4+ 40 \textbf{e}3 \textbf{d}1.

\textbf{39...c}4+ 40 \textbf{e}5 \textbf{e}4+ 41 \textbf{f}5 \textbf{d}4

Now it’s Black’s pawn which proves an unstoppable force.

\textbf{42 f}8+ \textbf{d}8

An even cleaner way to win would have been 42...\textbf{xf}8! 43 \textbf{c}7 \textbf{e}8! 44 \textbf{xe}8 \textbf{g}4+ 45 \textbf{e}5 \textbf{xe}8 46 \textbf{xd}4 \textbf{d}7.

\textbf{43 b}4 \textbf{d}3 44 \textbf{d}2 \textbf{xa}4 45 \textbf{e}6 \textbf{c}7

0-1

\textbf{Game 23}

\textbf{M.Jadoul-V.Korchnoi}

\textbf{Brussels 1986}

1 \textbf{e}4 \textbf{e}6 2 \textbf{d}4 \textbf{d}5 3 \textbf{c}3 \textbf{b}4 4 \textbf{e}5 \textbf{c}5 5 \textbf{f}3

This move is a lot less worryi ng than a number of White’s other 5th-move options, but we should still take a look at it and who better to use for our model game than that leading French Defence expert, Viktor the Terrible!

5 \textbf{dxc}5 is another option that will often transpose. Black’s simplest response is 5...\textbf{e}7!?, making it a bit easier to defend his kingside. After 6 \textbf{f}3 \textbf{d}7! (a flexible move that aims to eliminate White’s strong light-squared bishop after the sequence \textbf{d}3, ...\textbf{xc}5) 7 \textbf{d}3 play transposes to the notes to White’s 7th move, below.

5...\textbf{e}7

This move offers a transposition back into the 7 \textbf{f}3 variant of the main line Winawer after 6 \textbf{a}3 \textbf{xc}3+ 7 \textbf{bxc}3.

\textbf{6 dxc}5

This is the main idea behind White’s play. He is aiming to play in ‘Nimzowitsch’ fashion by controlling the centre with his pieces.

\textbf{6...d}7

I like this flexible square for the knight, putting pressure on both \textbf{e}5 and \textbf{c}5. The only slight downside is that White can now swing his queen over to \textbf{g}4. However, if we compare this plan to the previous game we can see that White is losing a tempo putting his plan into motion.

\textbf{7 \textbf{d}4}

The queen swings over to \textbf{g}4.

White has also tried 7 \textbf{d}3 which makes a fair bit of sense, as the bishop is well placed on \textbf{d}3. Now:

a) 7...\textbf{c}7 brings the queen to a good square, increasing the pressure on \textbf{c}5 and \textbf{e}5. After 8 0-0 \textbf{xc}3 9 \textbf{bxc}3 \textbf{xc}5 10 \textbf{c}4 (or 10 \textbf{e}1 \textbf{d}7 11 \textbf{d}4 0-0 12 \textbf{a}3 \textbf{g}6 13 \textbf{b}3 \textbf{b}6 which very much kept White at bay in J.Gallagher-S.Kalinitschew, German League 2003)
10...$d7 11 $a3 $h6 (11...0-0? would have allowed 12 $xh7+! $xh7 13 $g5+) 12 $b1 $b6 13 $e2 0-0 Black was fine in R.Zelcic-E.Berg, Kusadasi (rapid) 2006.

b) 7...$xc5!? is also sensible: for example, 8 0-0 $xd3 9 cxd3 (Black has obtained a good version of the Advance Variation, as he has removed White’s most dangerous minor piece, the lightsquared bishop) 9...0-0 10 $a3 $xc3 11 $xc3 $g7 12 $g5 $g6 was equal in R.Zelcic-S.Kindermann, Austria League 2006.

An interesting counterattacking move. The queen increases the pressure on White’s knight and his queenside in general.

Black has also played 7...$xc5, but I am not so keen on this move as after 8 $g4 $g6 9 $d3 $e7 (9...h5!?) 10 $xg6 hxg6 11 $h4 White’s position was to be preferred in W.Watson-I.Farago, Wijk aan Zee 1987.

8 $d2

It makes sense for White to break the pin on his c3-knight.

8...$c6 9 $g4 0-0

Black has played some very sensible moves and now White has to think how best to defend his e-pawn.

10 $d3

This is fine for Black. White has also played 10 a3 when M.Jonker-J.Blaauw, Groningen 1991, continued 10...f5! (as we have seen before, this is often a good move when Black feels that his kingside is becoming a bit cramped) 11 $h4 (11 exf6 $xf6 12 $h4 e5 looks like it should be good for Black) 11...$xc5 12 $d1 $xc3 13 $xc3 $c7 with an equal game; Black will land a knight on e4 which is super square for it.

10...$cxe5 11 $xe5 $xe5 12 $xe5+ $xh7 13 $h5+ $g8 14 $xe5

After a forcing sequence it is time to take a look at the position. Black has the superior pawn structure and at the moment he has the two bishops. The one thing that he should aim to avoid is swapping off his dark-squared bishop for White’s knight. Overall, I think that it is fair to say Black has the
advantage here and Korchnoi went on to vindicate this assessment.
14...\texttt{\textbackslash{}xc5} 15 0-0-0 \texttt{\textbackslash{}d7} 16 a3 \texttt{\textbackslash{}d6!}
Avoiding 16...\texttt{\textbackslash{}xc3?! 17 \texttt{\textbackslash{}xc3}} which gives White a dominating dark-squared bishop on c3.
17 \texttt{\textbackslash{}xd6} \texttt{\textbackslash{}xd6}
The exchange of queens has helped Black. Now he has a safe and solid advantage, and he does not have to worry about too many tactics.
18 \texttt{\textbackslash{}e4}?
White aims to change the nature of the position. This was wise as he faced a pretty tough defensive job if he had continued in standard fashion: for example, 18 \texttt{\textbackslash{}he1} \texttt{\textbackslash{}fc8} 19 g3 \texttt{\textbackslash{}c4} when Black will double rooks on the c-file and then start to push his a- and b-pawns.
18...\texttt{\textbackslash{}e7}
And not 18...dxe4? 19 \texttt{\textbackslash{}e3} which would hand the advantage over to White.
19 \texttt{\textbackslash{}b4}
White figures that his defensive chances will improve after exchanging a pair of bishops and this does seem like one of his best plans.
19...\texttt{\textbackslash{}xb4} 20 axb4 \texttt{\textbackslash{}a5}
Aiming to open up the a-file for the black rooks.
21 \texttt{\textbackslash{}c5} \texttt{\textbackslash{}c6} 22 \texttt{\textbackslash{}d3}
22 bxa5 \texttt{\textbackslash{}xa5} 23 \texttt{\textbackslash{}b3} \texttt{\textbackslash{}a2} is a bit uncomfortable for White, especially with ...\texttt{\textbackslash{}a4} to follow.
22...d4!?
An interesting decision as the pawn on d4 can become a bit exposed, but it is worth taking this risk in order to increase the range of Black’s light-squared bishop.

![Chess Diagram](image)

23 f3 f6
Preparing ...e5. Black is placing his pawns on dark squares, which is often a good plan when you have a light-squared bishop.
24 \texttt{\textbackslash{}d2} e5 25 \texttt{\textbackslash{}a1} a4
Avoiding exchanges which would have made White’s defensive job a bit easier.
26 \texttt{\textbackslash{}he1} \texttt{\textbackslash{}f7}
Improving his king and allowing his rook access to the h-file.
27 \texttt{\textbackslash{}f2} \texttt{\textbackslash{}h8} 28 h3 \texttt{\textbackslash{}ac8} 29 \texttt{\textbackslash{}ac1} g5
Black is masterfully using his pawn majority in the centre. Korchnoi now makes the rest of the game look like just ‘a matter of technique’.
30 c4 dxc3+ 31 \texttt{\textbackslash{}xc3}
This leaves White’s b-pawns seriously weak, but the alternative 31 bxc3 would have given Black a dangerous passed a-pawn.
31...\texttt{\textbackslash{}d8}+ 32 \texttt{\textbackslash{}d3} \texttt{\textbackslash{}b5} 33 \texttt{\textbackslash{}xd8} \texttt{\textbackslash{}xd8}+ 34 \texttt{\textbackslash{}c3} \texttt{\textbackslash{}c8}+ 35 \texttt{\textbackslash{}d2} \texttt{\textbackslash{}c4} 36 \texttt{\textbackslash{}e4} \texttt{\textbackslash{}c8}
The Winawer Variation: White’s 5th Move Alternatives

37...e3 f1 38 g3
38 g4 would have fixed White’s pawns on light squares which is not a good idea considering that Black has a light-squared bishop.

38...c4 39 e4 e6
Black is happy to allow an exchange of rooks as White has such a large number of pawn weaknesses.

40 xc4 xc4 41 e3 d5 42 f4?!
White should have considered 42 e4 which at least tries to activate his knight.

42...exf4+ 43 gxf4 g2
Now White’s h-pawn will drop sooner or later.

44 fxg5 fxg5 45 e4 f5

46 g3+?
Passive defence is seldom a good idea and this is a prime example of that. White is slowly going to run out of moves after this bad retreat.

White should have gone in for active defence by playing 46 d6+, which would have offered some defensive chances: for example, 46...e5 47 f7+

Conclusion
5 d2 is a pretty popular system at everything but the highest level. Black is advised to be ready for it and with 5...h6 takes much of the sting out of any b5 raid. Instead both 5 g4 and 5 f3 lead to quite a messy struggle, but that is just what we want and here Black obtains good counterchances. There is a good reason why the main line is 5 a3!
Chapter 5
The Winawer Variation: White’s 7th Move Alternatives

We now move on to the most popular options that White might try in the Winawer after 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 c3 b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 x c3+ 6 bxc3 e7.

In general you will find that when you start to play the Winawer, White will often bottle out of the main line, 7 g4, in an attempt to gain an edge without learning any theory. I would say that in the majority of games that I have played this has been the case. Black should never be afraid of this, but he should still be well prepared.

In this chapter we will cover three important options that White can try:

1. 7 f3 which is very popular but not that scary.
2. 7 a4, Fischer’s choice, which contains a certain punch.
3. In my opinion 7 h4! is the best sideline and Black needs to be on his guard against this advance.

Let’s now take a quick look at each of the plans above. Within the notes to the individual games I have gone into more depth about what both sides should be trying to achieve. I will just give a quick overview here:

1. 7 f3
A simple developing move, but in my opinion 7 \( \text{f3} \) does not capture the essence of the position. Black has weakened his kingside by exchanging off his dark-squared bishop and so White should aim to attack on the kingside, especially against \( g7 \). 7 \( \text{f3} \) does nothing to attack this weakness so Black should be fine.

The basic plan that I am suggesting here, as we will see in the first game of the chapter, is \( \text{bc6} \), \( \text{a5} \), \( \text{d7} \), \( c4 \), \( 0-0-0 \) and then \( f6! \) to create some attacking chances on the kingside.

2. 7 \( a4 \)

By playing 7 \( a4 \) White is aiming to post his dark-squared bishop on \( a3 \). This makes some sense, but the move 7 \( a4 \) does lose a tempo. Black should develop and create counterplay as quickly as possible. Some things to remember are:

1. Do not castle too quickly. Black often castles queenside in this chapter anyway. It is better to first develop and then see how things turn out.

2. I am suggesting that Black plays \( \text{wc5} \), \( \text{c6} \), \( \text{d7} \) and then, given a chance, \( f6! \). This is similar to what I suggest against 7 \( \text{f3} \) so it should be easy to remember.

3. 7 \( h4 \)

This is a dangerous move. White is aiming to attack Black on his vulnerable kingside dark squares. If Black sits still his position will become uncomfortable. For this reason Black must aim to attack White’s queenside as quickly as possible. We will take a look at how to do this in the last two games of this chapter.

**Game 24**

**C.Briscoe-S.Williams**

British Championship,

Great Yarmouth 2007

In this game we will concentrate on 7 \( \text{f3} \). A number of Black’s main ideas in the Winawer are demonstrated here,
so it is well worth trying to get to grips with them; not so much the actual moves, but rather the ideas behind them.

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 c3 b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 

Black needs to prepare himself against \( \text{g4} \) and this is the most logical way of reaching the type of position that we are aiming for in this book.

6...\( \text{c7} \) is another option, but in a number of variations the black queen wants to be placed on a5 which is a more aggressive square. For example, White can now play 7 \( \text{f3} \) when Black’s queen may be slightly misplaced on c7.

7 \( \text{f3} \)

I am surprised that this is the most common move in this position in the database, as it is not all that testing.

7...\( \text{bc6} \)

Let’s have a little look at what Black should be trying to do over the next couple of moves:

1. Develop some pieces on the queenside.

2. Attack White’s weak pawn on c3, which Black will often do by playing ...\( \text{a5} \), activating the queen.

3) Sometimes Black can consider ...b6, planning ...\( \text{a6} \) to swap off his bad bishop on \( \text{c8} \).

Note that the immediate 7...\( \text{a5} \) will often lead to the same thing.

8 \( \text{d3}?! \)

This natural move may be a slight mistake as it allows Black to play ...c4 with tempo. Moreover, Black’s basic plan in any case is to play ...c4 and then ...f6!.

8 \( \text{e2} \) is slightly better and we will look at it next in Short-Timman.

8...

This is often where Black should place the queen if White avoids playing an early \( \text{g4} \). The queen is actively placed on a5 where it attacks c3 and generally puts pressure on White’s queenside.

9 \( \text{d2} \)

9 0-0 tempts Black into capturing the pawn on c3. This is one pawn that even I would advise that Black leaves well alone! For example, 9...

\( \text{xc3?!} \)
(9...\textit{d}d7!? or 9...c4 10 \textit{e}e2 f6 will lead back to positions that are very similar to the main game) 10 \textit{d}d2 \textit{b}b2 11 \textit{b}b1 \textit{x}xa3 12 \textit{b}b3! (12 \textit{a}a1 \textit{b}b2 13 \textit{b}b1 is only a draw) 12...\textit{a}a4 13 \textit{b}b5 \textit{a}a2 14 \textit{c}c1! and Black is in trouble as \textit{a}a3 will win his queen.

9...c4!

It is worth playing this before White has a chance to play c4 himself. Black must always be careful about playing this move as it does close the queenside, which makes it harder for him to attack on that side of the board and it also makes his light-squared a bad piece. However, 9...c4! is a good move here, as Black can quickly generate counterplay with ...f6. It is often important for Black to follow up the advance ...c4 with ...f6, otherwise he can easily lack any counterplay.

10 \textit{f}f1

Funnily enough this is White’s normal answer to ...c4. White wants to re-route the bishop to h3. There the bishop puts pressure on e6, making it harder for Black to play ...f6. This is not a worry here though as White’s plan is too slow.

10 \textit{e}e2 is perhaps an even worse square for White’s bishop, but let’s still take a look at an example of this move: 10...\textit{d}d7 (Black finishes his development and makes ...0-0-0 possible) 11 0-0 f6! (an important move to play) 12 \textit{e}e1 (12 exf6 gxf6 is similar to the main game; Black has a strong centre, play down the g-file and his king will safely move out of the action with ...0-0-0) 12...fxe5 13 dxe5 (by playing ...f6 Black has created a weakness on e5) 13...0-0 (13...0-0-0!? is also possible) 14 \textit{f}f1 \textit{f}f5 15 g3 \textit{a}a8 16 \textit{a}e3 \textit{g}f7 17 \textit{g}g2 \textit{c}c7 and a draw was agreed in N.De Firmian-B.Gulko, Malmo 2001. Black’s opening was clearly a success here.

10...\textit{d}d7

Now that Black has finished stage one of his plan (developing the queenside pieces), he must think about what to do next. A very simple and good plan is to castle queenside and play ...f6. The king is safer over there as the queenside is closed.

In response, White must decide whether to capture on f6. If he does, Black will open the g-file and have a strong centre. However, if White leaves the pawn alone then Black will capture on e5. This will create a target on e5 and open the a7-g1 diagonal. Basically Black is doing well in both cases!

Note too that after ...f6 Black’s light-squared bishop has a route back into the game. It can move to e8 and then
At tacking Chess: The French
to g6 or h5 in standard French fashion.
11 g3 f6!
There is no reason not to play this move immediately. I think that Black is already better, as White is lacking any kind of counterplay.
12 exf6
12 \textit{h3}? leaves White’s e-pawn too weak after 12...fxe5 13 dxe5 \textit{c7}.
12...gxf6
Black now has a good pawn formation and a half-open g-file to play down.
13 \textit{h3}?! 
With hindsight it may have been better to have developed the bishop to g2, but White has spent so much time on his plan that presumably he could not bring himself to play anything but \textit{h3}.
13...0-0-0
get a decent plan into motion. The knight is well placed on g6: it supports ...e5, helps ...h5-h4 and keeps the f4-square under control.
The immediate 14...e5 is also good. This is now my main plan, to use my central pawn formation.
15 \textit{h6}
This tries to hold up ...h5 and threatens 16 \textit{g7}, but now c3 is loose.
15...\textit{hg8} 
Simple and good. 15...e5 was also good, but again I was not in any rush.
16 a4 \textit{xc3}
I could not see anything wrong with winning this pawn, so I decided to capture it. After all, a pawn is a pawn!
17 \textit{d2} \textit{b2} 18 \textit{b1} \textit{a3}
White will never catch the queen as it can always escape back to d6 or e7.
19 \textit{e1} e5!
White now has to be on guard against ...e5. Black certainly has a sizeable advantage.
14 0-0 \textit{g6}
I decided not to rush matters as I could not see any way that White could
A good plan for two reasons.
1. An exchange of light-squared bishops can only help Black as it leaves White’s king less securely defended.
2. Black has a large central pawn mass. These pawns must be used!
The Queen comes back into the game and finds a good central square.

21...\textit{xd7+} \textit{xd7}

The queen can now swing over to h3, which would put pressure on White’s king.

22 \textit{c3 e4!}

The game is already pretty much over. Black is a pawn up and has all the attacking plans, while his king is perfectly safe.

23 \textit{e1 f5!}

The f-pawn might as well be used to open up the white king.

24 \textit{h1 f4} 25 \textit{xf4 xf4} 26 \textit{g3}

White has to try and block the g-file.

26...\textit{xg3?!}

A slight mistake. I should have played 26...\textit{h3}, hitting f2 immediately. This would have won in short order, such as after 27 \textit{e2 df8} with a winning position.

27 \textit{fxg3 h3} 28 \textit{h5 f2+} 29 \textit{g2 f8} 30 \textit{d2 f5} 31 \textit{h4 f7}

Setting up a nasty threat.

29 \textit{f4?}

Walking straight into it, but White was in trouble anyway: for example, 32 \textit{e3 e7} when the knight will move to g6, increasing the pressure on White’s king and queen.

32...\textit{h5!}

The rest was easy and requires no comment.

33 \textit{xh5 xh5} 34 \textit{xf2 xd4} 35 \textit{g2 f3+} 36 \textit{g1 e2+} 37 \textit{h1 xf4} 38 \textit{xf4 e3} 39 \textit{c3 e2} 40 \textit{g1 xc3 0-1}

\textit{Game 25}

\textbf{N.Short-J.Timman}

\textit{Brussels (blitz) 1987}

1 \textit{e4 e6} 2 \textit{d4 d5} 3 \textit{c3 c4} 4 \textit{e5 c5} 5 \textit{a3 xc3+} 6 \textit{bxc3} \textit{e7} 7 \textit{f3 bc6} 8 \textit{e2}

The bishop is better placed here compared to d3 as Black will not gain a tempo after ...\textit{c4}, but it still does not offer White any advantage. Timman plays the opening in standard fashion and quickly obtains a nice position.

8...\textit{a5} 9 0-0
Black finishes his development and keeps his options open. He can also play:

a) With 9...\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{B}}\texttt{xc3}}\)?! Black captures something which is generally a poisoned pawn early on in this variation and his queen found itself in a spot of bother after 10 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{A}}d2}\ \texttt{\textit{\textbf{B}}b2} 11 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{B}}b1} \texttt{\textit{\textbf{A}}xa3} 12 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{B}}b3!} \texttt{\textit{\textbf{A}}a4} 13 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{B}}b5} \texttt{\textit{\textbf{A}}a2} 14 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{C}}c1!} \) in U.Bönsch-R.Knaak, Leipzig 1980.

b) The immediate 9...c4 is okay though and will often transpose to lines below.

\textbf{10 a4!}

This is White’s best plan. The a-pawn makes room for \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{A}}a3}\) when White’s dark-squared bishop becomes a good piece. Ideally White would like to plonk it on d6 where it can be quite annoying for Black.

\textbf{10...h6?!}

This is a prophylactic move which stops White from ever playing \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{C}}g5}\). Black may also advance with ...g5 at a later stage. However, he does not have to play ...h6 which in my opinion may be a bit slow.

Perhaps Black should prefer 10...f6!? which is a very principled move. Black does without ...h6 and just aims to clarify some issues in the centre.

Short also faced this approach in the same event and after 11 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{A}}a3}\) (11 exf6 gxf6 12 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{A}}a3}\) c4 looks fine for Black; D. Roiz Baztan-J.Aguera Naredo, Preferente 2000, continued 13 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{B}}b1} \texttt{\textit{\textbf{A}}xc3} 14 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{C}}xb7}\) and here there was nothing much wrong with 14...\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{B}}b8!}\) 15 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{C}}c7} \texttt{\textit{\textbf{E}}c8}\) 16 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{F}}f4} \texttt{\textit{\textbf{A}}xc2} 17 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{A}}xf6?}\ \texttt{\textit{\textbf{B}}f8} 18 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{B}}h4} \texttt{\textit{\textbf{A}}xe2}\) when Black is winning) 11...fxe5 12 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{C}}xc5}\) (12 dxe5 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{A}}xc3}\) 13 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{B}}b1}\) b6 14 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{B}}b2}\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{A}}a5}\) is just good for Black) 12...e4 13 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{C}}g5}\) in N.Short-R.Hübner, Brussels (blitz) 1987, Black castled kingside, but a better plan would have been 13...h6, pushing White’s knight back. Following 14 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{B}}h3}\) b6 15 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{A}}xe7}\) (if 15 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{A}}d6}\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{B}}f5}\) and c3 will drop with a good position for Black) 15...\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{C}}xe7}\) things looks pretty good for Black in view of White’s weakened queenside, especially his c-pawns.

\textbf{11 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{A}}a3}\)}

The logical follow-up to White’s play.
11...c4

This is similar to the last game except for the fact that White has managed to get his bishop to a3. This has helped him, but the position is still okay for Black.

12 \(d2\) 0-0-0

Black is relying on ...f6 to gain kingside counterplay. This is a standard kind of scenario: which attack will be the strongest?

13 \(fb1\) \(e8\)

So that the bishop can redeploy to g6 or h5 after ...f6.

14 \(f1\)

This may be a bit slow. A more logical plan would have been 14 \(b5!\) when play could continue 14...\(c7\) (after 14...\(xa4?\) 15 \(bb1!\) White is winning as there is no way to stop the threat of 16 \(xe7) 15 \(ab1 (15 d6 xd6 exd6 xd6 is similar) 15...b6 16 d6 xd6 (16...d7? 17 a5 is winning for White: 17...bxa5? 18 b8+ xb8 19 xb8 mate) 17 exd6 xd6 with an unclear game. Black has some compensation for the sacrificed exchange and it is still quite hard for White to attack on the queenside.

14...\(g5\)

The best square for Black’s knight. Everything is now ready for ...f6.

15 \(g3\)

White is trying to reroute his light-squared bishop to a better square, but as we saw in Briscoe-Williams this is a very slow plan and it gives Black time to get his counterplay rolling.

15...f6!

Yet again Black cannot do without this move!

16 exf6 gxf6 17 \(h3 \(g6 18 e1 de8\)

It seems to me that Black has made more progress than White over the last dozen moves. He now has a strong centre, active pieces and the half-open g-file. I suspect that the position is roughly equal, but certainly Black’s position is the easier to play.

19 \(b4\)

This probably helps Black as I expect that he wanted to bring his queen over towards White’s kingside anyway. Saying that, it is quite hard to suggest a
plan for White. Maybe he should have tried doubling on the e-file, with 19 \( \text{e}2 \), and after 19...h5! (Black would love to open up the h-file towards White’s king) 20 \( \text{ae}1! \)? (White accepts that he will lose his a-pawn, but in return he hopes to gain some active play) 20...\( \text{d}8 \) 21 \( \text{b}4 \) \( \text{x}a4 \) 22 \( \text{f}4 \) White has positioned his pieces well and should have enough pressure to claim equality.

19...\( \text{c}7 \) 20 a5

There is no real threat. As we will see shortly, Black will meet the move a6 with ...b6 which keeps the queenside closed.

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

This is not really necessary. More to the point would have been 20...h5!.

21 a6 b6!

\[ \]

Black must keep his king safe!

22 \( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{c}7! \)

An exchange of queens actually helps Black. There is then less to worry about tactically and the positional factors come more into play. Black is doing well positionally, thanks to his strong centre and the weak pawns that White has (c2, c3 and even a6 can be weak in the endgame).

23 \( \text{xc}7+ \)

Or 23 \( \text{c}1 \) and now I expect Timman would have found 23...h5! which must give Black the advantage. His kingside play looks a lot more dangerous than White’s queenside play.

23...\( \text{xc}7 \)

\[ \]

24 \( \text{a}3 \)

White rightly chooses to keep his dark-squared bishop, which is one of the only positional trumps that he has.

24...\( \text{d}7 \)

Black is in no rush. First he wants to over-defend e6 then he is going to play ...\( \text{d}6! \). This will unleash the light-squared bishop against c2 and routes the knight towards a better square, e4. Black is certainly better and White has a tough defensive task ahead.

25 \( \text{c}1 \) \( \text{d}6! \) 26 \( \text{a}2 \) \( \text{e}4 \)

A very strong square for the knight. White’s pieces are now tied to the defence of his c-pawns.

27 \( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{f}7 \)
Black overprotects the e6-pawn. This is the safe approach.
27...\texttt{h7} also made a lot of sense, as the bishop is well placed on the b1-h7 diagonal.

28 \texttt{e3} \texttt{h8} 29 f3 \texttt{d6} 30 \texttt{e2} h5
Black is slowly improving the position of his pieces and pawns. There is no need to rush; he will eventually achieve the all-important break.

31 \texttt{d2} c7
Removing the king from the pin.

32 \texttt{a1} e5!

The all-important break! We saw this idea in the last game and here again it gives Black a very strong position.

33 dxe5
White could have tried 33 \texttt{ae1} when 33...\texttt{e6}! (and not 33...exd4? 34 cxd4 \texttt{xd4} 35 \texttt{e7}+! when White wins a piece) looks like a good reply. White’s light-squared bishop is a strong piece so Black swaps it off. Black is still in the driving seat here: for example, 34 \texttt{xe6} \texttt{xe6} 35 \texttt{g2}! and now 35...\texttt{e8}! is the only way to stop 36 \texttt{f4}, but it is good enough and leaves Black clearly better.

33...\texttt{fxe5} 34 \texttt{h1} d4
Here come the pawns!

35 \texttt{f5} \texttt{d5} 36 \texttt{f1} \texttt{f8} 37 \texttt{xd6} \texttt{xd6}
Black is winning positionally, as his pieces are well placed and the central pawns are going to cause White no end of problems.

38 \texttt{g2} c5 39 \texttt{g1}

39...\texttt{f7}?
This is a blunder that loses control, but we must remember that this was a blitz game so mistakes were to be expected! Black should have played 39...\texttt{b5}! when he would have simply won the pawn on a6.

40 cxd4+ \texttt{xd4}
Of course, 40...exd4?? is not possible anymore.

41 \texttt{e3}
White is back in the game!

41...\texttt{e8}?
A risky move. Black sacrifices a piece. The position has become quite messy all of a sudden.

42 c3 \texttt{xf3} 43 \texttt{d2}?!
Another option would have been 43 \( \text{Ke}f2 \) which would have entered a very interesting endgame: for example, 43...\( \text{Kd}5 \) 44 cxd4+ exd4 45 \( \text{Kxd}4+! \) \( \text{Kxd}4 \) 46 \( \text{Kd}2+ \text{Ke}3 \) 47 \( \text{Kxd}5 \) \( \text{Ke}f1+ \) 48 \( \text{Kxf}1 \) \( \text{Kc}8 \) and now White cannot be worse after 49 \( \text{Kxc}4!? \) \( \text{Kxc}4 \) 50 \( \text{Kd}7 \).

43...\( \text{Kx}g2 \) 44 \( \text{Kxf}7 \) \( \text{Kxf}7 \)

45 \( \text{Kxg}2 \)?

This throws the game away. White should have played 45 cxd4+ which would have kept things unclear, such as after 45...\( \text{Kb}4 \) 46 \( \text{Kxg}2 \) exd4 47 \( \text{Kxd}4 \) c3.

45...\( \text{Kd}7 \) 46 g4 \( \text{hx}g4 \) 47 \( \text{g}3 \) b5

Black’s queenside pawn mass decides matters.

48 \( \text{Kxg}4 \) b4 49 cxd4+ exd4 50 \( \text{g}1 \) c3 51 \( \text{d}1 \) c4 52 h4 b3 53 h5 c2 54 \( \text{c}1 \) d3 55 \( \text{e}3 \) b2 56 h6 b1\( \text{W} \) 0-1

We are now going to turn our attention to an old plan of Fischer’s, 7 a4. White will often follow up by developing his bishop to a3, which can be quite dangerous. In response, I am going to suggest that Black responds with ...

...\( \text{a}5 \), forcing White to decide how he is going to defend his c3-pawn.

Game 26
E. Safarli - S. Ganguly
Paks 2009

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 \( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 4 e5 c5 5 a3 \( \text{xc}3+ \) 6 bxc3 \( \text{e}7 \) 7 a4

So another important sideline that Black has to know fairly well. This is the problem with any main line opening – there is a fair bit to learn! Here are a few hints for how Black should aim to handle this position:

1. Do not rush into castling. In actual fact this is a general rule for most Winawer lines that we are going to look at. In this particular variation Black will often aim to castle queenside, but on the odd occasion he will even leave his king in the centre.

2. Attack White’s pawn on c3 with ...

3. I am going to suggest that Black
avoids playing ...b6 as White is now well placed to attack this pawn formation with a5.

4. Once Black has developed his pieces he will need to create some play in the centre. To do this he often relies on the standard breakout, ...f6!.

7...\textit{a5}

Attacking c3 and stopping White from playing \textit{a3}, which is why it is a good idea to play this move immediately. You will see that in general I am recommending that Black plays in this way against all of White’s alternatives to 7 \textit{g4}. This should make your job of remembering Black’s plans a lot easier.

\textbf{8 \textit{d2}}

This is the normal way that White defends the pawn on c3, but this move is not ideal for him. The bishop would ideally want to be positioned on a3. Quite often though White will now change his plan; he will aim to play c4 at the correct moment, opening up the position. This should benefit White as he has two bishops, but it is also double-edged as both kings will come under attack.

Another possibility is 8 \textit{d2} which went through a spell of popularity earlier this century. White defends c3 with his queen so that his bishop can occupy the a3-f8 diagonal.

The problem with this approach is that White’s queen is rather clumsily placed on d2 and Black can try to take advantage of this by playing a quick ...f6: for example, with 8...\textit{bc6} (creating the threat of 9...\textit{cxd4} 10 \textit{cxd4} \textit{xd2+} and then 11...\textit{xd4}, winning a pawn) 9 \textit{f3} f6! Black breaks out immediately. This is a simple and good way to meet White’s \textit{d2} plan. Now:

a) After 10 \textit{d3} White’s e-pawn is left weak and Black’s position is to be preferred: for example, R.Felgaer-V.Korchnoi, Bled Olympiad 2002, continued 10...\textit{xe5} 11 \textit{xe5} 0-0 (Black could have also considered castling queenside, but this move has the advantage of bringing the rook quickly to the f-file) 12 0-0 \textit{xf3}?! (a strong exchange sacrifice!) 13 \textit{gxf3} \textit{c4} 14 \textit{e2} \textit{xe5} 15 \textit{a3} \textit{f5} 16 \textit{f4} \textit{g6} 17 \textit{g4}
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... 

b) 10 ... b5 was later played by the Argentinean Grandmaster, but this move also does not give White any advantage:

b1) 10... cxd4 is a safe way for Black to play: for example, R.Felgaer-A.Giacco, Buenos Aires 2006, continued 11 exf6 gxf6 12 ...xd4 0-0!? 13 0-0 a6 14 ...b3 ...c7 15 ...e2 ...e5 16 ...a3 ...f7 17 f4 ...c4 18 ...xc4 ...xc4 with an equal position.

b) 10... ...d7!? is more double-edged and after 11 exf6 gxf6 12 0-0 0-0-0 13 ...a3 cxd4 14 ...xd4 e5 15 ...b3 ...c7 16 ...c5 ...hg8 the position was dynamically equal in R.Felgaer-Y.Shulman, Buenos Aires 2005. White has some attacking chances on the queenside, but Black has a strong centre and chances along the g-file.

c) 10 ...a3 is also fine for Black. P.Macintyre-Y.Shulman, Minneapolis 2005, continued 10... fxe5 11 ...xc5 e4 12 ...g5 h6 13 ...h3 e5 and Black was better with his strong centre.

d) 10 exf6 concedes the centre, but opens up the position which could benefit the two bishops. F.Sigalas-S.Halkias, Athens 2004, continued 10...gx6 11 ...a3 c4 (Black steers the position back into the same kind of structure we saw after 7 ...f3) 12 g3 ...d7 13 ...h3 ...g6 14 0-0 0-0-0 15 ...fe1 ...de8 when Black’s structure was to be preferred; it is more dynamic and compact for a start, and White always has to watch out for the pawn break ...e5.

8... ...bc6

Black wants to finish developing his queenside. Once this is done he will aim to break out with ...f6. In response White will normally play c4 and then aim to blow open the centre.

9 ...f3

White does not need to rush into playing c4; first he develops his pieces. Black should also wait until White plays c4 before he retreats his queen.

Another option is 9 ...g4. Now 9...0-0 is probably best when Black will aim to quickly break out with his f-pawn: for example, 10 ...d3 c4 (it makes sense to push White’s dangerous light-squared bishop back to a more passive square) 11 ...e2 f6! (once again this typical way to precede after ...c4; Black needs to open up the centre) 12 exf6 ...xf6 13 ...h5 was J.Dueball-P.Meyer, German League 1985. That continued 13...e5 (this is good, but another option is
13...\texttt{g6}, preparing \texttt{...e5}; Black has a very good position, as he is well developed and ready to strike) 14 \texttt{dxe5} \texttt{\texttt{xf5}} 15 \texttt{\texttt{e8f5}} 16 \texttt{h5} and here Black, being the lower-rated player, decided to repeat the position, but he would have gained a promising position after 16...\texttt{g6}!? 17 \texttt{\texttt{f3}} \texttt{\texttt{f4}} 18 \texttt{\texttt{g5}} \texttt{d7}. Black has good attacking chances here as White will find it hard to remove his king from the centre.

\begin{center}
\textbf{9...d7}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\textbf{10 b5}
\end{center}

White takes advantage of the position of his a-pawn to place his bishop on an aggressive square. Other possibilities include:

a) 10 \texttt{\texttt{e2}} is very similar to Safarli-Ganguly expect that Black’s pawn is still on \texttt{a7}. No lesser game than B.Spassky-V.Korchnoi, 4th matchgame, Belgrade 1977, continued 10...\texttt{f6} 11 \texttt{c4} \texttt{c7} 12 \texttt{exf6 gxf6} 13 \texttt{cxd5 \texttt{\texttt{x}}d5} 14 \texttt{c3} 0-0-0 15 0-0 \texttt{hg8} with mutual chances.

b) 10 \texttt{g3} 0-0-0 11 \texttt{h3} \texttt{f5} 12 \texttt{\texttt{g2}} \texttt{h6} 13 \texttt{h4} \texttt{c7} 14 \texttt{\texttt{c1}} \texttt{cxd4} 15 \texttt{cxd4 \texttt{\texttt{b4}}} 16 \texttt{d2} hardly put the fear of God into Black into L.Kavalek-V.Hort, Waddinxveen 1979.

\begin{center}
\textbf{10...a6}
\end{center}

I am sticking with this simple solution for this book. Black just kicks the bishop back and then plays \texttt{...f6}. By inducing \texttt{...a6} White hopes to prove that Black has weakened his queenside, but I am far from convinced that this is so serious.

\begin{center}
\textbf{11 e2}
\end{center}

In order to try and gain any real advantage White really must hold on to this piece:

a) 11 \texttt{xc6} is equal. S.Kindermann-Farago, Vienna 1994, continued 11...\texttt{xc6} 12 0-0 0-0 13 \texttt{e1} \texttt{cxd4} 14 \texttt{cxd4 \texttt{c7}} 15 \texttt{a3} \texttt{f6} 16 \texttt{exf6 \texttt{xf6}} 17 \texttt{g5 \texttt{f7}} when the various weaknesses roughly balanced each other out.

b) 11 \texttt{d3} is also fine for Black, who can continue in standard fashion: 11...\texttt{c4!} 12 \texttt{\texttt{e2}} \texttt{f6!} 13 \texttt{exf6 gxf6} (I prefer Black’s position; we have already discussed this type of structure in Briscoe-Williams) 14 0-0 0-0-0 15 \texttt{e1 \texttt{f5}} 16
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\[ \text{\#f1 h5 17 \#e2 \#c7 18 g3 \#d8 and Black's opening had been a success in G.Hertneck-F.Riemelmoser, Austrian League 2002.} \]

11...f6!

Yet again this break leads to a very interesting position. The centre opens up and both kings are left rather exposed. It seems that with correct play Black’s position should be okay.

12 c4!

This looks like the best way to continue but White has also tried:

a) 12 exf6 has so far scored 3/3 for White, but it is just a method of transposing to the main game after 12...gxf6 13 c4 \#c7 14 cxd5 \#xd5 15 c4 \#de7.

b) 12 0-0 is quite logical and here surprisingly no one has yet tried 12...fxe5 which is the normal way to continue after ...f6. Black’s position looks fine: for example, 13 dxe5 (13 c4 \#c7 14 dxe5 is an interesting gambit which Black can accept or decline depending on his mood: 14...\#xe5 15 \#e1 \#xf3+ 16 \#xf3 d4 does not look too scary for Black, while 14...0-0 is the safe option and I also do not see any problems for Black here) 13...c4! (stopping any c4 ideas; Black will now gang up on White’s e-pawn) 14 \#e1 0-0 15 \#f1 \#g6 and Black has the advantage.

12...\#c7

White has a number of captures available to him; the game continuation being the most common.

13 cxd5

13 exf6 gxf6 14 cxd5 \#xd5 15 c3 looks rather passive. J.Roos-M.Galyas, Budapest 2004, continued 15...0-0-0 16 0-0 \#hg8 17 \#e1 e5? 18 c4 \#h3 19 \#f1 \#f4 20 \#xf4 exf4 21 d5 with a double-edged game.

13...\#xd5!

This looks like the best way to proceed.

The alternative 13...exd5 has only been played once before in A.Felsberger-T.Poeltl, Austrian League 1993, where things looked pretty grim for Black after 14 exf6 gxf6 15 dxc5.

14 c4

White can also capture on f6 first, but it comes to the same thing.
Instead 14 dxc5 lets Black capture the centre after 14...\(\text{dxe5}\) with an equal game. J.Radovanovic-F.Misiano, Milan 1993, continued 15 0-0 \(g6\) 16 g3 \(\text{wxc5}\) 17 c4 \(\text{de7}\) 18 \(\text{b1}\) \(\text{c7}\) when White was lacking any play for his pawn deficit.

**14...\(\text{de7}\) 15 \(\text{exf6}\)**

Otherwise White’s e-pawn would most likely drop.

**15...gxf6**

This is quite a critical position for the assessment of this variation. White’s king will go short and Black’s to the queenside. The position is fairly balanced and also quite exciting, so it fits in perfectly with the ethos of this book! White now has two main options: 16 \(\text{ds}\), as in the game, and 16 dxc5. Black is advised to know the basic plans against both these moves as play can become very sharp.

**16 \(\text{d5}\)!**

An interesting pawn sacrifice and it seems to be the ‘in’ move at the moment. White wants to make sure that he will have enough lines to attack the black king down, so by playing d5 he opens up the d- and c-files.

The other option is 16 dxc5 which grabs a pawn, but now Black’s e- and f-pawns grow in strength and this should be okay for him: for example, after 16...e5 (Black’s takes advantage of the fact that White has moved his pawn away from d4) 17 \(\text{c3}\) (White opens up the d-file so that his queen can plonk itself on d6) 17...0-0-0 18 \(\text{d6}\) which reaches a critical position.

Black now has two main moves:

a) 18...\(\text{f5}\)!? is the most aggressive choice. Now I suspect that the only way that White can aim to get an advantage is to capture Black’s pawn on f6, but this is not without risk: 19 \(\text{wxc7}\) (or 19 \(\text{wxf6}\) \(\text{h8}\) 20 \(\text{h6}\) \(\text{g6}\) with an interesting position in which Black’s pieces are very well placed and White’s king is certainly in the greater danger; in practical play you would have to take Black’s position) 19...\(\text{xc7}\) 20 \(\text{c1}\) \(\text{g6}\) 21 g3 \(\text{f8}\) 22 \(\text{h4}\) \(\text{c8}\)! (removing the bishop from harm’s way) 23 f4 \(\text{e6}\) was fine if not even better for Black in a
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clash between two leading French players, N. Short-Y. Pelletier, Leon 2001.

b) 18...\texttt{\textmove{f}5} is a safer option, but Black’s knight is generally better placed on g6 in this variation (from where it can jump to f4 or via f8 and e6 to c5 as in the Short-Pelletier game), and after 19 \texttt{\textmove{xc}7+} \texttt{\textmove{xc}7} 20 0-0 (20 0-0-0 was played in Zhang Zhong-F. Berkes, Calvia Olympiad 2004, where Black held his own after 20...\texttt{\textmove{h}g8} 21 g3 a5!? 22 \texttt{\textmove{b}2} \texttt{\textmove{b}4} 23 \texttt{\textmove{h}g1} \texttt{\textmove{x}a4} 24 \texttt{\textmove{xd}8} \texttt{\textmove{xd}8} 25 g4 \texttt{\textmove{d}4} with a roughly equal position) 20...\texttt{\textmove{f}d}4 (consistent after ...\texttt{\textmove{f}5}) 21 \texttt{\textmove{xd}4} \texttt{\textmove{xd}4} 22 \texttt{\textmove{xd}4} \texttt{\textmove{x}d4} 23 ...\texttt{\textmove{d}3} White should be a little better due to his slight pressure along the b-file.

16...\texttt{\textmove{ex}d5}

Black has to accept the pawn, otherwise he simply has a bad position.

17 \texttt{\textmove{cxd}5} \texttt{\textmove{xd}5}

Another very important position has arisen because we have come to the end of a forced sequence. I will bravely say that the position is dynamically equal and that any result is possible.

18 \texttt{\textmove{wc}2}

White attacks Black’s pawn on c5 and in some positions \texttt{\textmove{e}4+} becomes possible.

A sensible alternative is 18 0-0, as played in Emanuel Berg, who is something of a trail-blazer in the French Defence. Now:

a) 18...0-0-0 19 \texttt{\textmove{wc}2} \texttt{\textmove{d}4}?! is a mistake. After 20 \texttt{\textmove{xd}4} \texttt{\textmove{xd}4} 21 \texttt{\textmove{b}2} White was better in E. Berg-J. Akesson, Swedish Championship, Gothenburg 2004. The exchange on d4 has weakened Black’s king position, as the c-file is now open and White can quickly place a rook on c1. A good rule of thumb is to always meet \texttt{\textmove{c}2} with ...\texttt{\textmove{cb}4}! and here 19...\texttt{\textmove{cb}4}! is, indeed, an improvement. After 20 \texttt{\textmove{b}3} \texttt{\textmove{b}8} 21 \texttt{\textmove{ac}1} Black has the pleasant choice of playing either 21...\texttt{\textmove{h}g8} or 21...\texttt{\textmove{he}8} and in both cases he has little to worry about.

b) The immediate 18...\texttt{\textmove{cb}4}?! is suggested by Deep Rybka. Black’s plan is to simply castle queenside and then play ...\texttt{\textmove{c}6}.

It does not look like White can claim
any advantage here: for example, 19 \( \text{c4} 0-0-0 \) 20 \( \text{wb3} \text{c6} 21 \text{ac1} \text{b8} \) when Black’s pieces are holding themselves together very well on the queenside and at some moment he will obtain attacking chances along the a8-h1 diagonal. His chances are to be preferred.

c) 18...\( \text{dce7?!} \) is also possible, but it is a more passive idea and here Black can quickly find himself in trouble, such as after 19 \( \text{wxb3! c6?!} \) 20 \( \text{lal} \text{c5} \) when White is doing very well.

18...\( \text{cbb4} \)

Ganguly decides to force the issue. Another possibility was 18...\( \text{dce7?!} \), which is better than it is after 18 0-0. As a general rule, ...\( \text{dce7} \) is a good move after the sequence d5, ...\( \text{exd5} \). The knight blocks the e-file and in some cases prepares the move ...\( \text{c6} \). Here play could continue 19 0-0 \( \text{f5} \) (there are a number of other possibilities, but this looks fairly sensible) 20 \( \text{wa2 g8} \) when Black will castle queenside next with an unclear game.

19 \( \text{wxe4+} \)

This move is slightly annoying for Black as he has to move his king, but he still has things under control.

19...\( \text{d8} \) 20 \( \text{xb4 cxb4} \)

Black’s king looks pretty exposed and in a practical game I would rather take the white pieces here. Saying that Black never looks to be in serious danger in this game.

21 0-0 \( \text{c3!} \)

A very nice square for the knight, making it very hard for either white rook to find a good square.

22 \( \text{xb4?!} \)

White sacrifices a piece in the hope that he will gain enough play against Black’s king. This is a very inventive and interesting way to play, but I doubt the soundness of this plan.

Other options like 22 \( \text{d3} \) are more restrained, but also more dangerous. The problem is that Black’s king will always feel a little bit exposed. Here after 22...\( \text{a5?!} \) 23 \( \text{d4!} \) (White needs to exchange off Black’s knight on c3) 23...\( \text{a6?!} \) 24 \( \text{b5!} \) White is doing well.

22...\( \text{dxe2+} \) 23 \( \text{h1 c8} \)

23...\( \text{e8?!} \) was also worthy of consideration. White is beginning to drift into trouble.

24 \( \text{fe1 e8} \) 25 \( \text{b2 f4} \) 26 \( \text{xe8+ xe8} \) 27 \( \text{c1 c6} \) 28 \( \text{xf6 b8} \) 29 a5

White had the chance to play 29 \( \text{xc6} \), but this is not quite good enough either: 29...\( \text{xc6!} \) (29...\( \text{bxc6} \) is not so clear as after 30 \( \text{f8+ b7} \) 31 \( \text{b4+ c8} \) 32 \( \text{f8+ d8} \) 33 \( \text{xf4 d1+} \) 34 \( \text{g1} \) Black’s king is a bit exposed and
White has some drawing chances) 30 \( \textsf{\text{xf4}}+ \textsf{\text{a7}} \) when Black has very good winning chances. The rook is normally stronger than the knight...

So far Black has played well and he has a clear advantage here. It is just surprising that a player of Ganguly’s strength did not go on to win.

30 \( \textsf{\text{c3}} \textsf{\text{xf2}}+ \) 31 \( \textsf{\text{g1}} \textsf{\text{h3}}+ \) 32 \( \textsf{\text{gxh3}} \)

White decides that he needs to do something out of the blue to have any chances and this move creates a fair amount of chaos on the board.

33...\( \textsf{\text{bxc6}} \) 34 \( \textsf{\text{e5}} \textsf{\text{c7}} \) 35 \( \textsf{\text{xc6}}+ \textsf{\text{b7}} \) 36 \( \textsf{\text{a5}}+! \textsf{\text{xa5}} \) 37 \( \textsf{\text{f3}}+ \textsf{\text{c7}} \)

The only try, but even now Black won’t be able to escape the checks.

38 \( \textsf{\text{f7}}+ \textsf{\text{c8}} \) 39 \( \textsf{\text{e6}}+ \textsf{\text{d8}} \) 40 \( \textsf{\text{g8}}+ \textsf{\text{d7}} \)

40...\( \textsf{\text{e7}} \) is also a draw after 41 \( \textsf{\text{xh7}}+ \textsf{\text{d6}} \) 42 \( \textsf{\text{g6}}+. \)

41 \( \textsf{\text{f7}}+ \textsf{\text{c8}} \) 42 \( \textsf{\text{e6}}+ \textsf{\text{b8}} \) 43 \( \textsf{\text{e8}}+ \textsf{\text{a7}} \) 44 \( \textsf{\text{d7}}+ \textsf{\text{b6}} \) 45 \( \textsf{\text{e6}}+ \textsf{\text{b7}} \) 46 \( \textsf{\text{e4}}+ \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} \)

A very interesting game.

It is now time to have a look at a game which really highlights some of the problems that an early \( \textsf{\text{h4}} \) can cause. The following game seems to be theoretically very important. 11 \( \textsf{\text{b1}}! \) looks like a strong idea and Black is certainly the player who needs to find an improvement in this variation. He has chances to do so, but still I am surprised that theory has so far rather ignored this game.

**Game 27**

**A.Morozevich-S. Lputian**

Russian Team Championship 2007

1 \( \textsf{\text{e4}} \) 2 \( \textsf{\text{e6}} \) 3 \( \textsf{\text{c3}} \) 4 \( \textsf{\text{b4}} \) 5 \( \textsf{\text{e5}} \) 6 \( \textsf{\text{xc3}}+ \) 7 \( \textsf{\text{c5}} \) 8 \( \textsf{\text{h4}}! ?

White’s general plan behind this move is:

1. Use the h-pawn as a battering ram to create some pawn weaknesses in Black’s kingside.

2. If the pawn can reach h6 and Black replies with ...\( \textsf{\text{g6}} \), then his dark
squares on the kingside are left horribly weak.

3) White’s rook on h1 can now enter the game. The rook often joins the action via h3 and then g3 or in some cases h4.

On the downside, White is wasting time pushing his h-pawn and it was thought in the past that Black could exploit this by ignoring the h-pawn and creating counterplay on the queenside.

7...\(\text{bc6}\)

Black basically has three ways to play against the early h4: he can ignore it and try to create play on the queenside, which is what Lputian does here; he can stop the pawn in its tracks by playing ...h6, as in the next game; or he can grab a hot pawn on d4 by playing ...\(\text{wa5}\) and ...\(\text{wa4}\), which is risky and leads to a fair bit of defending.

8 h5 \(\text{wa5}\)

The most active square for the queen, attacking White’s queenside pawns.

9 \(\text{d2} \text{d7}\)

This is the main line, but White’s plan in this game puts doubt into my head about the whole soundness of Black’s set-up. The general idea is to ignore everything on the kingside, castle queenside and then to try to open things up with ...\(\text{g8}\) and ...f6, which will hopefully lead to an attack against the white king.

Both 9...h6 and 9...xd4 will be examined in the next game.

10 h6 gxh6

Black’s kingside is now a mess: he has a big hole on f6 and White’s rook on h1 has free range down the h-file.

11 \(\text{b1}\)!

This is a very logical novelty from Morozevich. The white rook takes control of the b-file and more importantly \(\text{b5}\) becomes something of a nuisance.

White used to play 11 \(\text{f3}\) in this position, but this move lacks the punch of the text and Black is able to obtain good counterplay. For example:

a) 11...0-0-0 and then:

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{a1) 12 \(\text{xh6} \text{g8!}\) (the standard idea; Black must aim to play ...f6) 13}
\end{array}\]
Atacking Chess: The French

\[ \text{\textbf{H4 f6 14 } \textit{d3 fxe5 15 } \textit{dxe5 } \textit{dxe5 16 dx5 } \textit{e7 17 } \textit{g4 (with this move White is trying to take control of the kingside; the game now becomes a bit crazy!) 17...d8} 18 \textit{h3 e6!} 19 \textit{xh7 xh7 20 } \textit{xh7 xh8 21 } \textit{xxg6 f1+ 22 } \textit{f1 b5 23 c4 b2 24 } \textit{d1 xe5+ 25 e3 c3+ 26 e2 xc4+ 27 f3 xf1 and fairly soon play ended in perpetual in K.Spraggett-C.Matamoros Franco, Bled Olympiad 2002.}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{a2) 12 } \textit{d3 c4 13 } \textit{e2 g8! (again we see this important under-developing move) 14 } \textit{f1 f6 15 } \textit{e1 fxe5 16 dxe5 dxe5 17 dx5 e7 18 xh6 h8 19 f3 e8! gave Black very active play in N.Short-L.Psakhis, Port Erin 1999.}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{b) 11...g8!? 12 c4 c7 13 cxd5 exd5 14 dxc5 0-0-0 was unbalanced in N.Short-S.Lputian, Taiyuan 2004.}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{11...0-0-0}} \]

Black has also tried:

\[ \text{\textbf{a) 11...c4?! 12 bx7 0-0 (really?) 13 b1 x3 14 b2 and in D.Vocaturo-R.Di Paolo, Italian Championship, Arvier 2010, Black’s position looked horrible, with weakness on both sides.}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{b) 11...c7!? looks like the most sensible idea to me. The queen removes itself from potential attacks and prepares to put extra pressure on e5 after ...f6.}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{After 12 f3 g8 (yet again!) 13 h4 0-0-0 14 f4 e8 15 b5 c4 16 b1 c7 Black’s plan had been a success, as he was ready to break out with ...g6 and then ...f6 in L.Couso-J.Akesson, Stockholm 2007.}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{12 b5!}} \]

The logical follow-up to White’s play. The rook is well placed on b5, attacking the black queen, facilitating the doubling b1 and placing unpleasant pressure on the c5-pawn.

\[ \text{\textbf{12...a4}} \]

Black already has to be on guard as 12...xa3 looks pretty bad for him, especially after my new idea, 13 b1!. After 13...cxd4 (there isn’t an adequate way of defending b7 so Black aims for counterplay in the centre) 14 cxd4 xd4 15 xb7 xc2+ 16 d1 White should be winning.}
A more interesting option is 12...\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{W}}c7}!? and in general the queen is quite well placed on c7. Now:

\textbf{a) 13 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}f3} c4 14 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{B}}b1} (play resembles the 11 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}f3} lines and Black should be okay) 14...\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}g8}! (you must remember this idea!) 15 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{W}}c1} f6 (15...\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}ce7}!? is interesting; Black wants to play \ldots\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}g6} which takes the sting out of \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}f4}) 16 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}f4} and now in D.Vocaturo-E.Stromboli, Italian Championship, Senigallia 2009, 16...f5 was likely best. Black aims to build some play on the kingside with \ldots\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}ce7}, \ldots\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}g6}, \ldots\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}e8}, etc.

\textbf{b) 13 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{A}}xc5}!? is the most critical choice and after, for example, 13...b6 14 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{A}}a6+} (14 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{A}}b5} \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}xe5} 15 dxe5 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{W}}xe5}+ 16 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{W}}e2} \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{A}}xe2}+ 17 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}xe2} \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{A}}xb5} 18 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{A}}xb5} is better for White too) 14...\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}b8} 15 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{A}}b5} \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{A}}h8} 16 g3 the position looks better for White.

\textbf{13 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{W}}b1}}

Increasing the pressure along the b-file.

\textbf{13...\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{A}}a5}}

Other options include:

\textbf{a) After 13...\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}xd4} White is in good shape with 14 cxd4 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{A}}xb5} 15 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{A}}xb5} \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{W}}xd4} 16 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}f3} \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{W}}e4}+ 17 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}f1} when he will continue with \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{A}}h4}! and then possibly \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{A}}a4}, after which Black’s king will come under attack.

\textbf{b) 13...b6!? attempts to hold things together on the queenside, while preparing a counterattack in the centre.}

This is an interesting plan which requires further investigation. However, after, for example, 14 dxc5 (14 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{B}}b2} is a safe way of playing, leading to a standard kind of position after 14...c4 15 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}f3}) 14...\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{W}}e4}+ (if 14...\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}xe5} 15 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{A}}b4} with cxb6 to follow) 15 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}d1}! (the white king should be quite safe here; instead 15 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{A}}e3} \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}f5} 16 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{A}}h3}? \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}b7}!? 17 cxb6 a6 18 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{B}}b3} \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}xe5} is very unclear and certainly a lot of fun) 15...\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}xe5} 16 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{A}}xb6}!? (16 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{A}}b4} is also possible, but after 16...\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Q}}c4} 17 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{F}}3} \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{W}}e5} 18 cxb6 axb6 Black should be okay, as his knight on c4 is well placed and if White swaps it off, the d-file opens up) 16...\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{A}}c6} (16...axb6?? cannot be recommended: it is checkmate in three after 17 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{A}}a6+} 17 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{F}}3} \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{W}}g6} 18 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{A}}b8}+ (18 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{A}}xh6} \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{W}}g3} is
again pretty unclear) 18...\texttt{d7} 19 \texttt{b7}+!? \texttt{xb7} 20 \texttt{xb7}+ \texttt{e8} 21 \texttt{b5}+ \texttt{d7} 22 g4! wins. Black clearly needs to find an improvement somewhere if he wants to make 13...b6 viable.

14 \texttt{xc5}+

The rook may look trapped here, but it is surprisingly difficult for Black to trap it. Black will also now find it a lot harder to attack White’s pawn formation, c3, d4 and e5. Normally Black would rely on ...\texttt{xd4} to make this happen, but the c-pawn has disappeared!

14...\texttt{b8} 15 \texttt{h3}?!  

White makes active use of his rook. The basic idea is to play \texttt{f3}, attacking f7. This seems like the best option: for example, 15 c4?! is not as strong as the game continuation because after 15...\texttt{xc4} 16 \texttt{xc4} dxc4 17 \texttt{b4} \texttt{d5} Black is doing fine as he has good control of the light squares.

15...\texttt{b6}  

Black should have considered playing 15...\texttt{c4}! which does not look too bad for him: for example, 16 \texttt{c1} (16 \texttt{xc4} dxc4 should be okay for Black, as he can play ...\texttt{c6} next with good control of some key squares; certainly 17 \texttt{xh6} \texttt{dg8} 18 g3 b6 looks fine for Black) 16...b6 17 \texttt{f3} \texttt{f5} 18 g4 \texttt{hg8}! with an equal position.

16 \texttt{f3}?!  

16 \texttt{b5}! might have been more accurate. White likely has a large advantage and play would have been very similar to the way the game turned out.

16...\texttt{a8}?  

Black had to play 16...\texttt{f5}! which would have been fairly unclear, such as after 17 \texttt{e2} (alternatively, 17 g4 \texttt{hg8} looks good for Black and 17 \texttt{b5}?! is a lot less clear than in the game, as Black now has the option of capturing the rook, while his queen has an escape route back via e7 or f8; indeed, after 17...\texttt{xb5} 18 \texttt{xb5} \texttt{xa3} 19 \texttt{e7} 20 \texttt{xa5} bxa5 Black is better as White has to watch out for a check on b4) 17...\texttt{b7} 18 \texttt{xf5} \texttt{xc5} 19 \texttt{xf7} \texttt{e4} with a complicated position but about equal chances.

17 \texttt{b5}!
Morozevich does not give Black another chance.

17...\(c4\) 18 \(\text{b4}\)

This leads to a very advantageous endgame for White. Black has too many pawn weaknesses.

18...\(\text{xa3}\) 19 \(\text{xa4}\) \(\text{xb1}\) 20 \(\text{a1}\) \(\text{xd2}\) 21 \(\text{xd2}\)

Black is now left with the difficult job of defending his weak kingside. Morozevich makes the rest of the game look very easy.

21...\(\text{df8}\) 22 \(\text{d3}\) \(\text{hg8}\) 23 \(\text{g3}\) \(\text{h5}\) 24 \(\text{e2}\) \(\text{h4}\) 25 \(\text{h1!}\)

White does not capture the first pawn available to him. Instead he brings his rook over to the h-file, which was the most accurate way to continue.

25...\(\text{hxg3}\) 26 \(\text{gxg3}\) \(\text{h8}\) 27 \(\text{h5}\)

The white knight aims to land on the f6-square.

27...\(\text{g8}\)

A sad way to have to defend!

28 \(\text{g1!}\)

The rook now finds it way into Black’s position.

28...\(\text{f5}\) 29 \(\text{g7}\) \(\text{c8}\)

Black can barely move a piece and his position is lost.

30 \(\text{f4}\) \(\text{h6}\) 31 \(\text{c4}\) \(\text{dxc4}\) 32 \(\text{xc4}\) \(\text{d8}\) 33 \(\text{c3}\) \(\text{g4}\) 34 \(\text{e2}\) \(\text{he8}\) 35 \(\text{h3}\) \(\text{d7}\) 36 \(\text{xd7}\) \(\text{xd7}\) 37 \(\text{exh7}\) \(\text{b5}\) 38 \(\text{b3}\) \(\text{c8}\) 39 \(\text{f3}\) \(\text{a5}\) 40 \(\text{fxg4}\) 1-0

We now look at what happens if Black aims to stop White’s h-pawn in its tracks with 9...\(\text{h6}\). This is an interesting line and meeting 10 \(\text{g4}\) with 10...\(\text{xd4}\)!? should especially be looked at in more detail.

**Game 28**

J. Tomczak - E. Toth

Szeged 2008

1 \(\text{e4}\) \(\text{e6}\) 2 \(\text{d4}\) \(\text{d5}\) 3 \(\text{c3}\) \(\text{b4}\) 4 \(\text{e5}\) \(\text{c5}\) 5 \(\text{a3}\) \(\text{xc3+}\) 6 \(\text{bxc3}\) \(\text{e7}\) 7 \(\text{h4}\) \(\text{a5}\) 8 \(\text{d2}\) \(\text{bc6}\) 9 \(\text{h5}\) \(\text{h6}\)

This looks logical enough, although I am not entirely convinced by Black’s chances after 10 \(\text{g4}\)! Overall, I think that Black’s most logical and principled
idea is $9...\text{\underline{\text{d}}7}$ followed by playing on the queenside, as we analysed in the last game.

A principled alternative is $9...\text{cxd4}$ which wins a pawn, but White gets very good counterplay. If you are happy to defend then this may be the variation for you and it has been tested at the highest level. After $10\text{cxd4}\text{a4}$ White has tried a number of moves:

a) The pawn sacrifice $11\text{\underline{\text{f}}3}$ was first played by Kasparov against Anand and it certainly leads to lively play after $11...\text{\underline{\text{d}}4}$ $12\text{\underline{\text{d}}3}$ when Black has tried several ideas:

  a1) $12...\text{\underline{\text{ec}}6}$ (the standard response) $13\text{\underline{\text{f}}1}$ sees White prepare to play the highly annoying $\text{\underline{\text{h}}4}$. Does Black now exchange the knights or keep them on the board?

  a11) $13...\text{\underline{\text{xf}}3}$ $14\text{\underline{\text{x}}f3}\text{\underline{\text{d}}4}$ (the most testing idea; $14...\text{\underline{\text{b}}6}?!$ $15\text{\text{h}}6\text{\underline{\text{a}}6}$ $16\text{hxg7}\text{\underline{\text{g}}8}$ $17\text{\underline{\text{x}}a6}\text{\underline{\text{a}}6+}$ $18\text{\underline{\text{g}}1}\text{\underline{\text{x}}g7}$ $19\text{\underline{\text{f}}6}$ was pretty good for White in the stem game, G.Kasparov-V.Anand, Linares 1992) $15\text{\underline{\text{e}}1}\text{\underline{\text{xe}}5}$! (critical; instead $15...\text{\underline{\text{f}}5}?!$ $16\text{exf6}\text{\underline{\text{xf6}}}$ $17\text{\underline{\text{xd}}5}$ $0-0\text{18\underline{\text{e}}5}\text{e5}19\text{h6}\text{g6}20\text{\underline{\text{e}}4}$ is a bit better for White) $16\text{\underline{\text{g}}3}\text{\underline{\text{xd}}3}$ $17\text{\underline{\text{cxd}}3}$ gives White pressure on the dark squares, but Black is two pawns up. Chances are likely roughly balanced here, J.Fedorowicz-L.Filatov, Las Vegas, 1995.

a12) $13...\text{\underline{\text{f}}5}$ with a further divide:

  a121) $14\text{\underline{\text{x}}f5}\text{exf5}$ $15\text{\text{h}}6\text{\underline{\text{g}}8}!16\text{\underline{\text{g}}5}\text{\underline{\text{e}}6}17\text{\underline{\text{h}}4}\text{\underline{\text{a}}6+}$ $18\text{\underline{\text{g}}1}\text{\underline{\text{gxh}}6}19\text{\underline{\text{f}}6}\text{\underline{\text{g}}4}$ was okay for Black in F.Hellers-B.Gulko, Biel 1993.

  a122) $14\text{\text{h}}6?!\text{gxh}615\text{\underline{\text{x}}f5}\text{exf5}$ $16\text{\underline{\text{x}}h6}\text{\underline{\text{e}}6}17\text{\underline{\text{g}}5}\text{h}618\text{\underline{\text{g}}1}\text{d}4$ and the position was pretty equal in D.Vocaturo-F.Caruan, Italian Championship, Cremona 2006.

a123) After $14\text{\underline{\text{g}}1}\text{\underline{\text{g}}4}$! the queen is well placed.

On one idea is to always meet $\text{h}6$ with $...\text{\underline{\text{g}}8}$ with pressure along the g-file. A.Fedorov-B.Gulko, Las Vegas 1999, continued $15\text{\underline{\text{e}}2}\text{f}616\text{\text{h}}6\text{fxe}517\text{\underline{\text{x}}g7}\text{\underline{\text{g}}8}18\text{\underline{\text{x}}h7}$ and now the safest option would have been $18...\text{\underline{\text{x}}g7}$ which looks quite promising for Black: for example, $19\text{\underline{\text{x}}g7}\text{\underline{\text{x}}g7}20\text{\underline{\text{c}}3}$ (20
...\text{xf5 e4!}) 20...\text{fd4 21 \text{xd4 exd4 and}
Black is ready to play \ldots\text{d7 and \ldots0-0-0.}

a2) However, after 12...\text{ef5 13 \text{b1}
\text{c6 14 \text{f1 b6 15 \text{g1 a6 16 \text{xf5}
exf5 17 \text{b4 Black’s king was in danger
in D. Sadvakasov-J. Rohl Montes, Curacao 2003.}

b) I can only find four examples of
11 h6?!, but it is a logical way to open
up Black’s kingside. Black has now tried
both ways to capture on d4:

\text{b1) 11...\textxd4 12 hxg7 \text{g8 13 \text{c3}
\text{ec6 14 \text{xh7 \textxc2 15 \textd3 and Black
had real difficulties stopping the threat
of \text{h8 in B. Savchenko-Y. Shulman,
Khanty-Mansiysk 2009.}

b2) 11...\text{xd4 12 \text{f3 \text{e4+ 13 \text{e2}
\text{xe5 14 \text{c3 f6 15 hxg7 \text{g8 16 \text{xe5}
fexe5 17 \text{d3 \text{xd3 18 \text{d4 d4 19 \text{b4}
\text{xg7 20 \text{xh7 \texthxh7 21 \text{xh7 was quite}
unbalanced in K. Miton-A. Shabalov,
Stratton Mountain 1999. I think a fair
assessment of this position is dynamically
equal.

c) 11 c3 should not scare Black, as
the exchange of queens will generally
help him in the Winawer: 11...\text{xd1+}
12 \text{xd1 h6 (it is a good idea to stop
White from advancing with h6) 13 \text{d3}
\text{d7 14 \text{e2 (14 \text{h4! was more to the
point; the rook swinging over to g4,
placing g7 under pressure, is a typical
move in this variation) 14...\text{a5! sees
Black gaining counterplay on the
queenside. This position was roughly
equal in Xu Yuhua-N. Hryhorenko, Bei­
ing (rapid) 2008.

d) 11 \text{c3 is a rather clumsy square
for the bishop and after 11...b6! 12 \text{f3}
\text{a6 13 \textxa6 \textxa6 the position was
equal in N. Short-V. Ivanchuk, Tilburg
1990.}

10 \text{g4!}

White has also tried:

a) 10 \text{h4?! is another invention
from Morozevich, but this one did not
turn out too well in A. Morozevich-
Y. Pelletier, Biel 2003: 10...\text{d7 11 \text{g4
\textc7! (the queen is surprisingly well
placed here due to some tactical
points) 12 \text{f3 (12 \text{xg7? \textxe5 13 \text{f4
\textd3+ 14 \text{xd3 \textxf4 is good for Black)
12...g5! (the white rook now looks
rather stupid) 13 hxg6 fxg6 14 \text{b1 g5

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15 dxc5 and now Black should have played 15...\(\text{c}\times e 5\) which would have given him a good position.

b) 10 \(\text{d}\times f 3?!\) is another move that does not test Black’s opening plan. D.Neelotpal-S.Ganguly, Cebu City 2007, continued 10...\(\text{d}\times d 7\) 11 \(\text{b}\times b 1\) \(\text{c}\times c 7\) 12 \(\text{d}\times d 3\) 0-0-0 13 \(\text{c}\times c 1\) (this seems to be a standard way of preparing to meet the break ...\(f 6\); White is planning \(\text{f}\times f 4\)) 13...\(\text{d}\times f 8\) 14 \(\text{f}\times f 4\) c4 15 \(\text{e}\times e 2\) \(\text{b}\times b 8\) 16 a4? (the pawn becomes a target on this square; White should have kept it on \(a 3\)) 16...\(\text{a}\times a 8\) 17 g3 \(\text{c}\times c 8!\) (Black will find it hard to play ...\(f 6\), so he goes after White’s a-pawn) 18 \(\text{a}\times a 8\) \(\text{a}\times a 5\) 19 0-0 \(\text{b}\times b 8\) 20 \(\text{a}\times a 1\) \(\text{b}\times b 6\) 21 \(\text{b}\times b 1\) \(\text{a}\times a 6\) 22 \(\text{h}\times h 4\) \(\text{w}\times a 4\) when Black had bravely grabbed a pawn and he went on to win.

10...\(\text{d}\times d 7?!\)

This move involves sacrificing material and I doubt that it will stand the test of time, but if you are intent on going for a hack attack you can certainly consider it.

10...\(\text{c}\times d 4?!\) is a more interesting possibility:

a) 11 \(\text{w}\times g 7!\) was what White should have played in I.Rogers-I.Farago, Wijk aan Zee 1987. An interesting continuation is 11...\(\text{g}\times g 8\) 12 \(\text{w}\times f 6\) (12 \(\text{xh}\times h 6?!\) dxc3 13 \(\text{f}\times f 4\) is a worse version of the main line) 12...dxc3 13 \(\text{xh}\times h 6\), reaching a critical variation for the evaluation of 10...cxd4. Black has two possibilities here:

[Diagram]

a1) After 13...\(\text{w}\times a 4\) I am still worried about the strength of White’s h-pawn. Black really needs to get a quick attack in. Let’s take a look at one possible line: 14 \(\text{d}\times d 3\) (defending c2 and developing a piece) 14...\(d 4\) (14...\(\text{xg}\times g 2\) 15 \(\text{e}\times e 2\) must be good for White too), and now 15 \(\text{g}\times g 7!\) contains a very clear plan: \(h 6\), \(h 7\) and \(h 8\text{w}\). After 15...\(\text{b}\times b 4\) 16 \(h 6\) \(\text{c}\times c 2+\) 17 \(\text{e}\times e 2!\) \(\text{x}\times a 1\) 18 \(h 7\) White is winning.

a2) 13...\(\text{b}\times b 4\) 14 \(\text{c}\times c 1\) (14 \(\text{d}\times d 1\) is rather risky as it allows Black to play 14...\(\text{x}\times c 2!\) 15 \(\text{c}\times c 2\) \(\text{a}\times a 4+\) 16 \(\text{c}\times c 1\) \(\text{b}\times b 3\) 17 \(\text{b}\times b 1\) \(\text{x}\times a 3+\) 18 \(\text{c}\times c 2\) \(\text{a}\times a 2+\) when Black has at least a draw and maybe more) 14...\(\text{x}\times a 3\) 15 \(\text{g}\times g 5!\) (the knight on b4 is really needed back on c6) 15...\(\text{xg}\times g 5\) 16 \(\text{xg}\times g 5\) \(\text{d}\times d 7\) and again
White’s h-pawn is going to be too strong.

b) However, 11 cxd4 should not be too worrying for Black: 11...a4 12 c3 g8 with an equal position. Black has enough counterplay on the queenside with ...a5-b3/c4 to follow.

11 wxg7

White must grab the material. Again the problem for Black is that the h-pawn will be far too strong in a number of positions.

11...0-0-0

White, on the other hand, is trying to finish his development and then drum up an attack against White’s king.

12 d3

A strong alternative would have been 12 f6!. The queen removes itself from the g-file and stops any breaks that Black might have tried to achieve with the f-pawn. I do not see much compensation for Black. T.Shaked-A.Stein, Reno 1994, continued 12...a4 13 d1 cxd4 14 h4 f5 15 f4 d6? (a desperate attempt at gaining some counterplay) 16 exd6 e5 17 h4 e4 18 h3 and White was winning.

12...a4

Black is planning to play ...c4 and then ...c2. Another possibility is 12...f5!? which is yet to be tried in practice, but having a pawn on f5 benefits Black. Play could continue 13 f3 (13 exf6 should lead to a draw after 13...g8 14 f7 f8 15 g7 f8 16 f7 f8; here 17 xf8+!? is a winning attempt, but Black is okay after 17...xf8 18 fx7 h8 19 c4 c7) 13...a4 with complicated play, although even here I suspect that White is doing well.

13 dxc5

There were a number of other possibilities, but this looks strong enough.

13...hg8 14 xh6

White has a big advantage thanks to the strength of the h-pawn.

14...xe5 15 f4

A stronger square for the queen would have been 15 f6! which ties the black knights down. White should be winning here after 15...7c6 16 h6 h8 17 f3.
15...\texttt{Qxd3+} 16 \texttt{cx}d3 \texttt{c}c2

The black queen should only be a slight annoyance to White.

17 \texttt{f}f3 \texttt{xd}3 18 \texttt{e}5 \texttt{h}7 19 \texttt{xf}f7 \texttt{d}f\texttt{8} 20 \texttt{d}d\texttt{6+} \texttt{b}8 21 \texttt{h}6 \texttt{d}3

Black has to avoid exchanging queens as his is the only piece that can cause White any problems.

22 \texttt{h}3 \texttt{c}2 23 \texttt{c}1 \texttt{a}4 24 \texttt{b}1 \texttt{c}6 25 \texttt{g}3

There was nothing wrong with 25 \texttt{xe}6! \texttt{x}g2 26 \texttt{xe}7 \texttt{xf}2 27 \texttt{e}3 \texttt{f}1+ 28 \texttt{d}2 when White is winning.

25...\texttt{h}4 26 \texttt{b}4 \texttt{d}4!

Black is doing his best to complicate matters. This is often a good idea when your position is bad.

27 \texttt{g}8?

White should have played 27 \texttt{cx}d4 when he should remain in control: for example, 27...\texttt{xf}2 (or 27...\texttt{d}5 28 \texttt{bb}3 \texttt{xd}4 29 \texttt{bf}3 \texttt{a}1+ 30 \texttt{e}2 \texttt{e}5+ 31 \texttt{f}1 \texttt{a}1+ 32 \texttt{e}1) 28 \texttt{x}g8+ \texttt{f}8+ 29 \texttt{d}1 \texttt{g}8 30 \texttt{xe}6 \texttt{hx}5+ 31 \texttt{c}1 which is winning for White.

27...\texttt{xf}2+

Black is back in the game!

28 \texttt{d}1 \texttt{xf}8

Another option was 28...\texttt{f}1+ which becomes very complicated after 29 \texttt{c}2 \texttt{d}3+ 30 \texttt{b}2 \texttt{x}g8 31 \texttt{x}b7 \texttt{d}5 32 \texttt{we}6 \texttt{x}g2.

29 \texttt{f}4?!

White should have captured on d4 and matters are unclear after 29 \texttt{cx}d4 \texttt{x}g2 30 \texttt{c}1.

29...\texttt{g}1+ 30 \texttt{c}2 \texttt{d}5 31 \texttt{xd}4 \texttt{xb}4+ 32 \texttt{ax}b4 \texttt{a}4+ 33 \texttt{b}2 \texttt{d}1

The position is obviously very complicated and the game ends as a draw which seems like a fair result.

34 \texttt{c}4 \texttt{a}8?

34...\texttt{c}2+ was much better. After 35 \texttt{a}1 \texttt{b}3 White would have been in trouble.

35 \texttt{h}6 \texttt{c}2+ 36 \texttt{a}1 \texttt{b}3

Black has lost a tempo by not employing this plan on move 34.

37 \texttt{b}2 \texttt{f}8 38 \texttt{d}3 \texttt{xd}3 39 \texttt{d}3 \texttt{d}8

But not 41 \texttt{h}7? \texttt{ad}1+ 42 \texttt{b}2 \texttt{h}1.

41...\texttt{g}3

Not 41...\texttt{ad}1? because 42 \texttt{xb}3 \texttt{h}1 43 \texttt{g}3 \texttt{h}5 44 \texttt{g}4! is winning for White.
42 \textit{f6} \textit{d5} 43 \textit{h7} \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}

\textbf{Conclusion}

Against White’s older, more positional approaches, 7 \textit{f3} and 7 \textit{a4}, Black can obtain a good game by deploying his queen to a5, often followed by going long. Somewhat more dangerous is 7 \textit{h4} when, if anything, the ball is in Black’s court. Materialistic souls can grab the pawn on d4, but I will continue to explore the various alternatives analysed in both Morozevich-Lputian and Tomczak-Toth. It would certainly be nice to make 10...\textit{cxd4} playable in the latter and quite likely both 11...\textit{c7} and 12...\textit{c7} are in the former.
Chapter 6
The Winawer Variation: The Main Line, 7 ♘g4

We are now ready to take the plunge into the dark depths of the main line, 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♘b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♘xc3+ 6 bxc3 c5 7 ♘g4.

A word of warning before we proceed.

Everything I am about to recommend is very double-edged, complicated and unclear. I have tried to cover the best and most exciting ways for Black to continue. As well as this, I am going to suggest a line (12...♗f5!?) which I am about the only person in the world who plays, for better or worse!

So take a deep breath and let’s enter the murky world of the Winawer Poisoned Pawn Variation...

Game 29
C.Briscoe-S.Williams
British Championship, Liverpool 2008

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♘b4 4 e5 ♘e7 5 ♘g4

A rather strange move order which I should have punished. We looked at this in Chapter Four. 5 a3 is, of course, the best way of reaching the main line. 5...c5 6 a3?!

White wants to reach the main line, but this is a mistake. He should play 6 ♘f3 here.

6...♘xc3+?!

I was quite happy playing into my preparation, so I chose this move, but the best move is 6...♕a5!, as we have seen.

7 bxc3

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We have found our way back into the main line. Let’s take a look at what is happening for both sides.

From White’s perspective:

1. Black has weakened his kingside by exchanging his dark-squared bishop, so White will aim to attack him in that area.

2. The main target is g7, but White is also hoping to make Black play ...g6 when there would be some big dark-square holes on h6, g7 and f6.

3. White will often advance his h-pawn to try and create some more weaknesses, as well as to let his rook on h1 enter the game.

4. Sometimes White will play a3-a4 and \( \text{a3} \) after all, letting the dark-squared bishop into the game.

From Black’s perspective:

1. White has weakened his queenside, so Black will aim to attack there.

2. Black’s light-squared bishop is a bad piece, whereas White’s light-squared bishop is a good piece. For this reason Black will often aim to exchange it with ...b6 and ...\( \text{a6} \). (This is not so relevant in the line I am going to suggest, but it is still worth bearing in mind.)

3. Black will deploy his queen to a square where it targets c3 (c7 or a5).

4. Black’s knights will aim to take up active roles on f5 and c6.

After 7 \( \text{g4} \) Black has two ways to continue. He can either try to guard his kingside and aim to slowly attack White on the queenside, or he can leave his kingside alone and aim to start a counterattack immediately on the queenside. We will concentrate on the latter as it is a much more fun and aggressive way to play!

7...\( \text{c7} \)!

Aiming for counterplay along the c-file and already starting to attack!

8 \( \text{xg7} \)

This is the only logical way for White to continue, otherwise why did he play 7 \( \text{g4} \)? Sometimes 8 \( \text{d3} \) is seen, though, and we will consider it towards the end of this chapter.

8...\( \text{g8} \) 9 \( \text{xh7} \) \( \text{xd4} \)

We can now get an idea about what
Black is planning to do. He mainly wants to attack down the c-file, especially on the c3-square.

After a semi-forced sequence, we’ve reached the starting point for thousands of games. It is time to take another look at what both sides are trying to achieve.

White’s ideas:
1. The h-pawn is White’s biggest trump. One simple plan is just to push it all the way down the board.
2. White will be a pawn up once c3 has dropped and with the two bishops, so any endgame will often be good for him.
3. White’s light-squared bishop will often be developed to g2.
4. White may well play $b1 to take over the b-file.
5. Sometimes White will aim with $g1 to play g4. This can be especially effective when Black has played ...$f5.

Black’s plans:
1. White’s king is rather exposed, so Black will try to attack it.
2. ...d4 is often a move that Black wants to play. This opens up the a8-h1 diagonal and give Black two potential outposts on c3 and e3.
3. Black wants to take advantage of the half-open c-file and ...Cc8 will add pressure on that file.
4. Black’s knights can often become active. One can go to f5 and sometimes to d4, as in this game.
5. The main idea in the variation that I am going to suggest is ...b6 and ...$b7. This is not the normal plan, but I think it is a good idea, as the bishop is placed much better on b7. For a start it
The Winawer Variation: The Main Line, 7 \( \text{g4} \)

has chances to play along the long diagonal after ...d4.

All in all, the position is very messy and an exciting game is guaranteed.

12...\( \text{\texttt{d5}} \)!

An interesting move! The main move is 12...\( \text{\texttt{d7}} \), but I don’t really like this as the bishop is not doing anything on d7. It has no potential.

After 12...\( \text{\texttt{d5}} \) Black normally develops his light-squared bishop to b7 where it has great potential along the long diagonal. This could be a useful weapon for you as White will often be badly prepared against this idea. Moreover, if he wishes, Black can often transpose back into the main theoretical waters by preferring ...\( \text{\texttt{d7}} \) after all.

13 \( \text{\texttt{xc3}} \)

In this game we will concentrate on this move. White’s other main option is 13 \( \text{\texttt{xc3}} \) which will be looked at later.

13 \( \text{\texttt{g1}} \) looks a bit passive, but again we will look at his move in a later game, Luther-Pert.

13...\( \text{\texttt{cd4}} \)!

Black’s most interesting option. The knight jumps into a dangerous square and now the c-file is open. Black’s basic plan here is no longer ...\( \text{\texttt{b6}} \), but to play ...\( \text{\texttt{d7}} \) and ...\( \text{\texttt{c8}} \) with pressure.

14 \( \text{\texttt{b2}} \)

I have faced this on four occasions now. I lost the first two times, but have won the last two times! Other options will be looked at in the next game.

14...\( \text{\texttt{d7}} \)

This idea is correct as now the most important plan is to place White under pressure down the c-file as quickly as possible. Black also has:

a) The very flashy 14...\( \text{\texttt{e3?!}} \) which I tried once against Andrew Greet. Unfortunately my opponent then played 15 \( \text{\texttt{b5}} \) which is a very good response. Black should now try 15...\( \text{\texttt{exc2+}} \) 16 \( \text{\texttt{d1}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xb5}} \), but White is better after 17 \( \text{\texttt{c1}} \)!

b) 14...\( \text{\texttt{b6?!}} \) could do with a test or two.

15 0-0-0 \( \text{\texttt{c8}} \) 16 \( \text{\texttt{d2}} \)

White overprotects c2 which was under indirect attack.

Instead 16 \( \text{\texttt{g3?!}} \) allows 16...\( \text{\texttt{xc2?!}} \) (an
Attacking Chess: The French

idea worth remembering) 17 \( \text{x}c2 \) d4 when Black has sufficient play.

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

Opening up the rook to target c3 and now the a3-pawn may fall in some lines.

17 g3!

This looks like the best plan. White wants to play \( \text{h}3 \) and then exchange on f5, which will get rid of one of the dangerous black knights.

Alternatively:

a) 17 \( \text{bl}!? \) is also quite logical, but has not been tried yet. Play could continue 17...a6!? , preparing \( \text{b}5 \) with counterplay, and then:

1a1) 18 \( \text{xd}5 \) exd5 (18...\( \text{b}5 \) leads to a mess as well!) 19 \( \text{xd}4 \) \( \text{xd}4 \) 20 \( \text{xd}4 \) g6! and now White has to find 21 e6!, as otherwise his position collapses. The position is roughly equal after 21...\( \text{xe}6 \) 22 \( \text{e}2 \) (the point behind White’s play; he must exchange Black’s rook off) 22...\( \text{c}3! \) 23 \( \text{b}4 \) \( \text{xa}3 \) 24 \( \text{xa}3 \) \( \text{xa}3 \) when the endgame should be okay for Black.

a2) 18 g3 \( \text{b}5 \) 19 \( \text{xb}5 \) \( \text{xb}5 \) 20 \( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{c}3! \) 21 \( \text{xc}3 \) \( \text{xc}3+ \) 22 \( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{b}6+! \) is at least a draw for Black, with 23 \( \text{a}1 \) \( \text{a}5 \), but more if White falls for 23 \( \text{xc}3? \) d4+ 24 \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{b}5 \) mate.

b) 17 \( \text{xd}5? \) looks quite clever, but backfires after 17...\( \text{b}5 \), as we’ll see in our next game.

17...\( \text{c}5! \)

This prepares ...\( \text{b}5 \), which is an important way to gain counterplay. There are some other possibilities:

a) Another interesting, untried idea is 17...\( \text{c}4!? \), with the idea of playing ...\( \text{e}7 \) and ...\( \text{gc}8 \). This plan needs to be tested in practice.

b) The first time I had this position I
tried 17...b5?, but White gets too much material for the queen: 18 axb5 axc2+ 19 bxc2! (but not 19 ecx2? ec1+ 20 d1 b3+ when Black wins) 19...ecx2 20 c3 a4 21 ecx2 and White had a clear advantage in J.Dworakowska-S.Williams, Port Erin 2006.

18 h3
White continues with his plan. This all looks very critical.

18...b5
The most obvious move.
Black could consider playing 18...e7!? , but I am not entirely happy about his king position after 19 g4! gc8 20 gxf5 ecx3 21 xd4 xh3. White should be a bit better here, although the position is a complete mess.

19 axb5
Forced.

19...xb5

This is another critical moment. Black’s pieces may look rather insecure, but they are also dangerously placed, ready to attack White’s king.

20 c3!
This move might not be as bad as it looks. White loses his queen, but he does get a fair number of pieces in return for it. Let’s also take a look at some of White’s other options:

a) 20 xf5 is fine for Black, as he has enough pressure against White’s king: for example, 20...xf5 21 c3 b6! (now ...d7 and ...c8 are coming) 22 c8+ e7 23 xg8xb2 leaves Black with a winning attack.

b) 20 b1 is the kind of move that a number of players would be tempted to play, but yet again Black is doing well after 20...a4 21 c3 b3 22 e2 c5 when White’s king is under a lot of pressure.

c) 20 a4!? may be White’s (Fritz’s!) best move, but how many humans would find this possibility? Now:

c1) 20...xa4 leads to a draw in a number of variations after 21 g4, reaching a pretty fascinating position. For example:

   c11) 21...b3+! 22 xb3 xb3 23 c2 (23 gxf5 xd3 24 xd3 xf4+ is
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unclear) 23...@c3! 24 @c8+ (24 @d4 @a2 25 @c8+ @e7 26 @c7+ is a draw) 24...@e7 25 @c7+ (25 @xg8?! @xb2! is at least a draw for Black after 26 @xb2 @a1+ 27 @d2 @c4+ 28 @e2 @xb2+) 25...@f8 gives Black compensation for the sacrificed piece and the position seems to be dynamically equal! For example, 26 @f1 (to stop ...@c4; 26 @d8+ @g7 27 @f6+ would repeat moves) 26...@g7 27 @d3 @b6! and now White is now advised to head towards a draw by playing 28 @e7 @a2 29 @f6+ @f8 30 @d8+ @g7 31 @f6+, etc.

c12) 21...@b3!? is completely bonkers!

Now:

C121) 22 cxb3 @xb3+ 23 @b1 @xd2+ 24 @xd2 @e4+ with a draw by perpetual: 25 @a2 @a4+ 26 @b1 @e4+, etc.

C122) 22 c3 @c6! 23 @xf5 @b4 24 cxb4 (this is forced as 24 @d4 @a2+ 25 @b1 @xc3+ 26 @c1 @xd4 27 @xd4 @e2+ 28 @c2 @xd4+ 29 @xd4 @xh3 is winning for Black) 24...@d3 25 @xd3 and here I think an assessment of ‘un-
clear’ is fair. I would not like to comment on who is better!

c2) 20...@b4!? might be the best move. Going on the evidence of Rybka, Black is doing well: for example, 21 g4 @xa4 (threatening 22...@a1+ with mate to follow) 22 @dd1 @c5! 23 @xf5 @xc2 24 @d2 (24 @xc2 @c4 is good for Black) 24...@c4! and Black’s attack looks too strong. Indeed, after 25 @h1 (in order to stop 25...@f2+) 25...@b4! Black is winning, as White cannot deal with the dual threats of 26...@c2+ and 26...@xd3. 20...@b3+

The only option, but hardly a bad one.

21 cxb3 @c5 22 @c2

White can also try 22 @xc5 @xc5+ 23 @b1 (23 @c2 @e3+ 24 @b1 @e4 is annoying for White: for example, 25 @g2 @d3 26 @f1 @d1+ 27 @c1 @f3 and Black is slightly better) 23...@e3 24 @hd1 when 24...@e7!? holds on to the knight. The position is roughly equal.

22...@xc3 23 @xc3?!

It may have been better to have captured with the rook, 23 @xc3. I am sure
that I was intending 23...\(\text{Qd4}\) here when 24 \(\text{Qc8+}\) \(\text{Qd7}\) 25 \(\text{Qxg8}\) \(\text{Qc5+}\) 26 \(\text{Qb1}\) (not 26 \(\text{Qd2}\)? \(\text{Qc2+}\) 27 \(\text{Qe3}\) \(\text{We2+}\) 28 \(\text{Qxd4}\) \(\text{Qd2+}\) 29 \(\text{Qc5}\) \(\text{b6+}\) 30 \(\text{Qb5}\) \(\text{Qa5}\) mate) 26...\(\text{Qc2+}\) 27 \(\text{Qa1}\) \(\text{Qxb3+}\) 28 \(\text{Qa2}\) gives Black a draw with 28...\(\text{Qc4}\), but in the game I was mainly looking at 28...\(\text{Qd2}\). After, for example, 29 \(\text{Qc1}\) \(\text{Qb3+}\) 30 \(\text{Qa1}\) \(\text{Qc4}\) the position is unclear.

\(\text{23...Qxa3+ 24 Qb2 Qxb3}\)

Black should now be doing very well, but the game carries on in roller-coaster fashion, which is pretty typical for this variation!

25 \(\text{Qc3}\) \(\text{Qb6}\) 26 \(\text{Qxf5}\) \(\text{exf5}\) 27 \(\text{Qd1}\)

27...\(\text{Qe6}\)!

An awful move which lets White back into the game.

I should have played 27...\(\text{Qg6!}\), aiming to swap one pair of rooks with ...\(\text{Qc6}\). An exchange of rooks would leave White’s remaining rook and bishop rather uncoordinated and Black should be winning here: for example, 28 \(\text{Qxd5}\) \(\text{Qc6}\) 29 \(\text{Qc2}\) \(\text{a5}\) when the a- and b-pawns will eventually win the game.

28 \(\text{Qcd3}\) \(\text{Qf8}\) 29 \(\text{Qxd5}\) \(\text{Qg7}\)

The position is unclear again! White’s pieces coordinate very well, but around this point ‘the Briscoe kid’ was getting very short of time which clearly made life difficult for him.

30 \(\text{Qb1}\) \(\text{Qh7}\) 31 \(\text{Qd7}\) \(\text{Qe8}\)

Aiming to bring this rook over to the queenside.

32 \(\text{Qd6}\) \(\text{Qc4}\) 33 \(\text{Qd4}\) \(\text{Qe2}\)!

I desperately wanted to win this game, which is why I took so many risks. I always had a perpetual check with my queen, but this is not what I wanted.

34 \(\text{Qxf7+}\) \(\text{Qg6}\)!

Again very risky. I could have taken a draw with 34...\(\text{Qg8}\) 35 \(\text{Qxf5}\) \(\text{Qf1+}\) 36 \(\text{Qc2}\) \(\text{Qe2+}\) 37 \(\text{Qb3}\) \(\text{Qb5+}\) 38 \(\text{Qa3}\) \(\text{Qa6+}\).

35 \(\text{Qdd7}\)?

35 \(\text{Qf6+}\) was better with a very unclear game: for example, 35...\(\text{Qh5}\) 36 \(\text{Qxf5+}\) \(\text{Qg4}\) 37 \(\text{Qg5+}\) \(\text{Qh3}\) 38 \(\text{Qg7}\) \(\text{Qe6}\) with a mess worthy of a diagram!

Who knows what is happening?

35...\(\text{Qe6}\)!

Now White is in trouble again as
the rook is coming over to a6 or b6, and Black's king can just about escape.

36 $h7? $e4+! 37 $c1 $c6+ 38 $d1 $c2+ 39 $e1 $b1+ 40 $f2 $c2+ 41 $e3 $e1+ 42 $d3 $e4 mate (0-1)

A very complicated game with chances for both sides, but that is the nature of this variation. It is really only a possibility for brave players, but it can be a lot of fun!

**Game 30**

T.Ringoir-S.Williams
EU Championship, Liverpool 2008

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 li'lC3 J.b4 4 e5 li'le7 5 a3 J.xc3+ 6 bxc3 c5 7 $g4 $c7 8 $xg7 $g8 9 $xh7 cxd4 10 $e2 $bc6 11 f4 dxc3 12 $d3 $f5 13 $xc3

We take a final look at this move in this game.

13 $xc3 might well be a better option as it stops ...$cd4 – see Vitiugov-Pert, below.

13...$cd4

14 $b2

Practically everyone has played 14 $b2 here, but White can also try:

a) 14 $b1 is a sensible enough move. Now:

a1) 14...b6!? 15 $b2 (15 $d2 keeps an eye on c3 which stops ...$a6 for the time being, but following 15...$c5 16 a4 a5!? Black will continue with ...$a6 after all with good play) 15...$a6 16 $xa6 (an interesting counter is 16 $xd5!? , but after 16...exd5 17 $xa6 $xc2+ 18 $d1 $ce3+ 19 $xe3 $xe3+ 20 $d2 $f8!? Black removes his king from the danger zone, while White’s king is very exposed) 16...$xc3+ 17 $d1 $h8!? (with ideas of playing ...$g3) 18 h4 $g3 19 $d2 $g4+ 20 $c1 $f8.

This results in a dynamically equal game and do remember this idea of ...$a6!

a2) 14...$d7 should also be okay for Black, but it does give White the option of taking a draw: 15 $b4 $c6 16 $b2 $cd4 17 $d2!? (17 $b4 would lead to a draw) 17...0-0-0 with an unbalanced
The Winner Variation: The Main Line, 7 \[\text{g4}\]

position in which Black is well developed. One plan he can consider is ...a6 followed by ...\[\text{b5}\].

b) 14 g3 \[\text{d7}\] (in this variation when Black has played \[\text{c4}\], it is often correct to play \[\text{d7}\] instead of \[\text{b6}\] and \[\text{b7}\]; this is because it is important to get a rook to the c-file and Black also has ideas of playing \[\text{b5}\]) 15 \[\text{h3}\] \[\text{c5}\] 16 \[\text{a2}\] \[\text{h8}\] 17 \[\text{xf5}\] \[\text{xf5}\] 18 g4 \[\text{h4}\] (18...\[\text{c8}\]!) 19 a4 a6 20 \[\text{a3}\] \[\text{a7}\] with a roughly equal game. Black plans on playing \[\text{c8}\] and then \[\text{c4}\].

c) 14 \[\text{h3}\]? is a mistake which leaves a gaping hole on g3. Black can now play 14...\[\text{g3}\] with a good position.

14...\[\text{d7}\] 15 0-0-0 \[\text{c8}\] 16 \[\text{d2}\]

Like in the last game, White guards against any tricks that Black might have with \[\text{c2}\] and \[\text{d4}\].

16...\[\text{a5}\] 17 \[\text{xd5}\]?

This tempting move is a mistake and Black has two good responses.

17...\[\text{b5}\]!

This looked very logical at the time, but an even stronger move is 17...\[\text{xc2}\]! which leaves Black with a very good position: for example, 18 \[\text{xc2}\] (this looks like the only sensible reply; after 18 \[\text{xc2}\] \[\text{e1+}\] 19 \[\text{d1}\] \[\text{b3+}\] 20 \[\text{b1}\] \[\text{xd1+}\] it's game over) 18...\[\text{c2}\] 19 \[\text{f6+}\] (or 19 \[\text{c3}\] \[\text{xa3+}\] 20 \[\text{b2}\] \[\text{a5}\] 21 \[\text{c3}\] \[\text{b4}\]! and yet again Black is winning) 19...\[\text{f8}\] 20 \[\text{xc2}\] (after 20 \[\text{xd7}\]?! \[\text{g7}\] 21 \[\text{xc2}\] \[\text{e3+}\]! 22 \[\text{d3}\] \[\text{xf1}\] 23 \[\text{xf1}\] \[\text{a6}\] White is running out of pieces) 20...\[\text{a4+}\] 21 \[\text{c1}\] \[\text{h8}\] and Black is clearly better; he has a material advantage and White’s king is fairly exposed.

18 \[\text{c3}\]?

This is a further mistake which leaves Black with a winning position.

18 \[\text{f6+}\]? is also very good for Black after 18...\[\text{f8}\] 19 \[\text{xd4}\] \[\text{xd4}\] 20 \[\text{xd4}\] \[\text{h8}\] 21 \[\text{xb5}\] \[\text{xb5}\].

White’s best chance was 18 \[\text{c3}\]! when play, like so often in this variation, can become very complicated after 18...\[\text{xa3+}\] 19 \[\text{b2}\]:

a) 19...\[\text{xd3}\]! looks like the best option: 20 \[\text{xf6+}\] \[\text{d8}\]! (20...\[\text{f8}\] 21 \[\text{xd3}\] \[\text{b3+}\] 22 \[\text{d1}\] \[\text{xd2}\] 23 \[\text{a3+}\] \[\text{g7}\] 24 \[\text{xg8}\] \[\text{xd3}\] 25 \[\text{cxd3}\] \[\text{b3}\] 26 \[\text{f6}\] \[\text{c3}\] is
also slightly better for Black) 21 \text{b}xd3 \text{c}b3+! 22 \text{d}d1 \text{e}e3+! 23 \text{e}e1 (23 \text{e}e2 \text{x}g2+ 24 \text{x}e3 \text{x}d2 is good for Black too) 23...\text{x}g2+ 24 \text{f}f2 \text{xd}2 25 \text{x}g8 \text{x}d3 26 \text{c}xd3 \text{h}4 and Black is a bit better.

b) 19...\text{x}d3 is also at least okay for Black: for example, 20 \text{f}f6+ \text{d}8 21 \text{a}a3 \text{b}3+ 22 \text{d}d1 \text{xd}2 23 \text{xd}2 \text{xf}1 24 \text{x}g8 \text{x}g2 25 \text{g}1 \text{d}4 and Black is better.

c) 19...\text{b}3!? is pretty interesting too: 20 \text{f}6+ \text{f}8 21 \text{e}4 \text{a}4 22 \text{c}4 (22 \text{d}3!?) 22...\text{c}6! and the position remains very unclear.

d) However, 19...\text{a}5? is a mistake now as now White can use the a3-square: 20 \text{f}6+! \text{f}8 21 \text{a}3+! and White is better.

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

\begin{itemize}
\item \text{xc}3
\end{itemize}

There goes the queen and with it the game!

19 \text{xc}3 \text{xa}3+ 20 \text{b}2 \text{c}5

This reply is simple and good. As well as being material up, Black’s pieces control some important central squares.

\begin{itemize}
\item \text{xc}3
\end{itemize}

21 \text{f}6+ \text{f}8 22 \text{b}1

22...\text{b}3+ was the threat, so White sidesteps that idea.

22...\text{g}7

This forces simplification.

Another option was 22...\text{h}8 which would have also been good, as after 23 \text{xb}5 \text{xb}5 White’s king is exposed.

23 \text{g}8

Or 23 \text{xb}5 \text{xb}5 24 \text{x}g8 \text{x}g8 25 \text{h}4 \text{e}3! and with ...\text{c}4 coming up next, White will soon be checkmated.

23...\text{x}g8 24 \text{g}4 \text{e}3 25 \text{xb}5 \text{xb}5 26 \text{h}4 \text{b}4 0-1

This game just goes to demonstrate the perils that can face White. One mistake and it is game over!

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

\textbf{Game 31}

\textbf{T.Luther-N.Pert}

EU Championship,
Liverpool 2006

Former World Under-18 Champion, Nick Pert, is a good friend of mine and we looked at this variation before the
current tournament. Nick had enough faith to try it out.

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 c3 b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 xc3+ 6 bxc3 e7 7 g4 c7 8 xg7 g8 9 xh7 cxd4 10 e2 bc6 11 f4 dxc3 12 wd3 f5

13 g1

This is often a useful move in this variation, but I do not believe that it should worry Black. White’s basic plan is to play g4, forcing Black’s knight away from f5, but delaying capturing on c3 has its downsides; for a start White now has to watch out for ...d4.

13 xc3 will be seen in the next two games. Other options include:

a) 13 g4?! looks far too compliant to me. White’s main advantage is his extra material so he should be careful when returning it. N.Ondersteijn-C.Kleijn, Dutch League 2009, continued 13...xg4 14 h3 g6 15 xf5 exf5 16 xc3 e6 17 e3 c8 18 g1 e7! and Black was doing well.

b) 13 g3 should not scare Black either so long as he continues 13...xg3!

(13...d7 was played in V.Tseshkovsky-D.Vasiljevic, Yugoslav Team Championship 1993, but this looks suspect; the game continued 14 xf5 exf5 15 xc3 and White was better) 14 hxg3 d4!. A rule worth remembering is that if you have the chance to play ...d4, guarding the pawn on c3, then it is often worth doing so. I do not believe that Black should have any difficulties here; his centre gives him a good position.

c) 13 h4!? is often a logical move in this variation. White just ignores everything that Black is doing and tries to push his pawn all the way to h8! I now recommend that Black takes his chance to play 13...d4.

Play could continue 14 h5 b6!? (14...d7 is a rather passive square for the bishop; R.Ivanov-P.Martynov, St Petersburg 2009, continued 15 h6 0-0-0 16 h7 h8 17 g4 and White was better as Black’s pieces were being pushed back; however, 14...a5!?, with the idea of ...b4, is worth considering) 15 h6 b7 16 h7 h8 17 g4xe5!? (17...fe7 is safer, with an interesting
At tacking Chess: The French

struggle ahead) 18 fxe5 \( \text{h}xh1 \) 19 gxf5 \( \text{w}xe5 \) 20 fxe6 \( \text{w}xe6 \) 21 \( \text{g}g5! ? \) by when the position looks better for White. Two pieces in exchange for a rook and pawn is often a very good deal and Black’s king looks pretty exposed here. 13... \( \text{w}b6! ? \)

Nick finds an interesting idea. The queen is well placed on b6 from where it achieves the following:

1. Places some pressure on White’s rook on g1.
2. Prepares ...\( \text{d}d4 \) in some cases.
3. Stops \( \text{b}1 \).
4. In some cases if White’s bishop moves from c1, the queen may be able to enter White’s position via b2.

However, there are some other interesting possibilities which are worth researching, especially if 17 \( \text{d}d1 \) turns out to be a good move:

a) I have tried 13...\( \text{e}7 \) online. We can now see another reason why it may be worth delaying the development of Black’s light-squared bishop: the black queen can now move to e7 when ...\( \text{h}4+ \) becomes an idea.

No one has tried this in a real game yet, but some of the variations can become very exciting: for example, 14 h3 (14 g4? \( \text{h}4+ \) 15 \( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{x}g4 \) is good for Black) 14...d4 15 g4 \( \text{h}4+ \) (15...\( \text{h}4+ \) 16 \( \text{g}3 \) is annoying for Black as \( \text{h}7 \) is a rather unpleasant threat; White is doing very well here, since 16...\( \text{c}5 \) drops a piece to 17 \( \text{h}7 \) 16 \( \text{g}3 ! ? \) (16 \( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{f}2 \) 17 \( \text{g}2 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 18 \( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{xf}3 \) 19 \( \text{xf}3 \) \( \text{h}4 \) 20 \( \text{e}e4 \) 0-0-0 21 \( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{e}7 ! \) 22 \( \text{b}1 \) \( \text{c}6 \) looks okay for Black) 16...\( \text{f}e7 \), although it looks like White is doing well here. Black has some active pieces and is ready to play ...\( b6 \), ...

b) 13...\( \text{d}8 ! ? \) is quite a bizarre idea! Black is preparing both ...\( \text{h}4+ \) and ...d4 when the queen supports the d-pawn. In some cases the queen also prepares to move into White’s position with ...\( \text{d}5 \). Play could continue 14 h3 d4 15 g4 \( \text{f}e7 \) (the knight moves here in order to meet \( \text{g}3 \) with ...\( \text{d}5 \)) 16 \( \text{g}2 \) and again it looks like White has the advantage.

14 \( \text{g}4 \)

This is the logical follow-up to 13 \( \text{g}1 \), but it may have been the correct moment to have captured on c3, with 14 \( \text{x}c3 \), as now any ideas with ...\( b6 \) are not possible and White’s rook is still quite well placed on g1. Play could continue 14...\( \text{d}4 ! \) (you may have noticed
that I am quite fond of this move; at some point White will be advised to return his rook to h1) 15 \( \texttt{Qxd4} \) \( \texttt{Qxd4} \) 16 \( \texttt{Qh1} \) (16 \( \texttt{Qxe3} \) is an error due to 16...\( \texttt{Qxc2+} \) when Black is doing well) 16...\( \texttt{Qd7} \) 17 \( \texttt{Qb2} \) \( \texttt{Qf5} \) with an unclear game. It looks like Black has fairly decent compensation for the pawn here. The e3-square is weak and ...\( \texttt{Qc8} \) is coming, but yet again practical examples of this variation are badly required.

14...\( \texttt{Qfd4} \)

One of the main ideas behind 13...\( \texttt{Qb6} \) is to land the knight on d4. White now has to watch out for the threat of ...\( \texttt{Qxe2} \) and then ...\( \texttt{Qxg1} \). At some point the rook on g1 will have to move.

15 \( \texttt{Qxd4} \)

White could also have tried 15 \( \texttt{Qg2} \) when play might continue 15...\( \texttt{Qxe2} \) 16 \( \texttt{Qxe2} \) \( \texttt{Qc5} \) (this leaves the d4-square vacant for the remaining knight; also possible is the thematic 16...d4!? ) 17 h4 \( \texttt{Qd7} \) 18 h5?! \( \texttt{Qd4} \) when Black is planning to play ...\( \texttt{Qb5} \) next move with very good play.

15...\( \texttt{Qxd4} \) 16 \( \texttt{Qg3} \)

The rook removes itself from the danger zone and now \( \texttt{Qe3} \) is an idea. Again the immediate 16 \( \texttt{Qe3} \) is a blunder due to 16...\( \texttt{Qxc2+} \) which should be winning for Black: for example, 17 \( \texttt{Qf2} \) \( \texttt{Qxe3} \) 18 \( \texttt{Qxe3} \) d4 19 \( \texttt{Qd3} \) \( \texttt{Qd7} \) and White is certainly struggling.

16...\( \texttt{Qd7} \)

Black needs to finish his development, but the main point behind this move is the potential to play ...\( \texttt{Qb5} \).

17 \( \texttt{a4} \)

White has some other options available here, including:

a) 17 \( \texttt{Qd1} \) looks rather strange and I doubt that the average human would ever think of it at the board, but it does make some sense. White wants to set up \( \texttt{Qxc3} \) and in some cases \( \texttt{Qd3} \) and \( \texttt{Qe3} \). I even suspect that White has the advantage after this move: for example, 17...\( \texttt{Qa4} \) 18 \( \texttt{Qxc3} \) \( \texttt{Qb5} \) 19 \( \texttt{Qxb5+} \) \( \texttt{Qxb5} \) 20 \( \texttt{Qe3} \) \( \texttt{Qa5} \) 21 \( \texttt{Qd2} \) and White is better.

b) 17 \( \texttt{Qe3} \) looks natural, but it al-
lows 17...\texttt{wb}2 when Black is fine after 18 \texttt{xc}1 \texttt{b}5 since the a-pawn is going to drop.

c) 17 \texttt{xc}3? \texttt{c}8 and White will lose material.

17...\texttt{h}8!

The rook had run out of things to do on g8, so it moves to h8. The position is dynamically equal.

18 \texttt{h}3

18 h3 was the other possibility when Black should continue 18...\texttt{b}4! with good play: for example, 19 \texttt{e}3 (if 19 \texttt{a}3 \texttt{xa}4) 19...\texttt{c}6 20 \texttt{b}5 \texttt{e}4 and the black queen is very actively placed.

18...\texttt{x}h3 19 \texttt{x}h3 \texttt{b}4!

Black has gained a dangerous initiative. This demonstrates one of the strengths of this variation: White has to play very accurately, otherwise Black’s attack just gains in momentum. I guess in theory that this line and quite possibly the whole of the Poisoned Pawn Variation is better for White, but in practical play Black certainly has very good chances.

20 \texttt{e}3

Black was simply threatening 20...\texttt{xa}4, so White needed to play with some urgency.

20...\texttt{b}2 21 \texttt{c}1 \texttt{f}3+ 22 \texttt{f}2 d4 \texttt{f}-\texttt{f}

The position should be draw after 23 \texttt{xf}3 dxe3 24 \texttt{d}1! when White has some tricks on the d-file.

In the next game we are going to have a look at some of the dangers that Black faces after the critical 13 \texttt{xc}3.

\textit{Game 32}

\textbf{N.Vitiugov-N.Pert}

European Championship, Dresden 2007

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 \texttt{c}3 \texttt{b}4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 \texttt{x}c3+ 6 bxc3 \texttt{e}7 7 \texttt{g}4 \texttt{c}7 8 \texttt{x}g7 \texttt{g}8 9 \texttt{x}h7 cxd4 10 \texttt{e}2 \texttt{bc}6 11 f4 dxc3 12 \texttt{d}3 \texttt{f}5 13 \texttt{xc}3!

Going on the evidence of this game, this move seems to be the most testing for Black. With \texttt{xc}3 White keeps control of the d4-square, which stops any
ideas of ...\( \text{d}4 \). Black has two ways of playing against this idea:

1. Transpose back into main line theory with 13...\( \text{d}7 \). This has been studied extensively, but is very messy.

2. Keep the opening in unique territory with ...\( \text{b}6 \) or ...\( \text{d}4 \). This is what I would like to do, but does Black have enough compensation?

Originally, I just assumed that Black would be able to get good play in this position with a plan based on ...\( \text{d}4 \), ...\( \text{b}6 \) and ...\( \text{b}7 \). This is what he tries in this game. It is quite dangerous for White, but with accurate play it looks like he should be able to tame Black’s attack.

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

13...\( \text{d}7 \) will be seen in our next game. Other ideas include:

a) 13...\( \text{b}6 \) retains the possibility of playing ...\( \text{d}4 \) at a later moment.

b) 13...\( \text{b}6 \)!? is an interesting idea that has only been played once before. It is similar in spirit to the previous game. By playing ...\( \text{b}6 \) Black makes it harder for White to play either \( \text{b}1 \) or \( \text{g}1 \).

\[ \text{b1)} \] F.Canneva-R.Deschamps, French League 2003, continued 14 \( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{c}5 \) 15 \( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 16 \( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{a}5 \) 17 \( \text{a}3 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 18 \( \text{b}4 \) \( \text{a}4 \) 19 \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 20 \( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{e}3 \) and Black had obtained a promising position.

\[ \text{b2)} \] However, if White continues with 14 \( \text{h}4 \), the position does look better for him: 14...\( \text{d}7 \) (Black plans on playing ...\( \text{c}4 \) and ...\( \text{c}8 \)) 15 \( \text{h}5 \) \( \text{cd}4 \) 16 \( \text{xd}4 \) \( \text{xd}4 \) 17 \( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{f}5 \) 18 \( \text{h}3 \)! (controlling the \( \text{g}3 \)-square) 18...\( \text{c}8 \) 19 \( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{g}1 \) 20 0-0-0 and White has a large advantage.

14 \( \text{d}3 \)

This has been White’s main option in this position. The queen is fairly se-
curely placed on d3. He can also try 14 \textit{c4!} à la Kulaots which looks pretty sensible. Having the queen on c4 ties down some of Black’s pieces and it looks like White should be better here:

a) 14...\textit{d7} 15 \textit{g3} \textit{xg3} 16 \textit{hxg3 c8} 17 \textit{g4? wb6} 18 \textit{g5 xe5} 19 \textit{wb4 g6} 20 \textit{xb6 axb6} and White has a pleasant advantage.

b) 14...\textit{b6} 15 \textit{g3} transposes to note ‘a’ to Black’s 13th move, above.

c) 14...\textit{e7} removes the queen from the pin and sets up \textit{h4+} in some positions, but after 15 \textit{g3 d7} 16 \textit{h3! 0-0-0} and then the simple 17 0-0 White’s position is to be preferred.

14...\textit{b6}

The bishop is best placed on b7, but it does take two moves to get there, as opposed to only one to reach d7.

15 \textit{g1}!

A strong reply. White’s rook is well placed on g1, supporting g4 which will push Black’s knight away to a passive square. This is one reason why I am not entirely convinced by Black’s set-up, although he still has quite good practi-

\textbf{15...\textit{b7}}

In a later game I tried 15...\textit{we7!?}, but lost to a player rated well below me. My 17th move was a mistake, but this does show the dangers associated with this line. After 16 \textit{h3 b7} 17 \textit{g4} we have:

a) 17...\textit{h4?} 18 \textit{g3 0-0-0} 19 \textit{b2 f6} 20 \textit{exf6 xf6} 21 0-0-0 was messy but better for White in I.Snape-S.Williams, Hastings 2009/10.

b) 17...\textit{h4+} 18 \textit{g3 ce7!?} keeps the game alive.

Now:

b1) 19 \textit{xf5?} is actually a mistake due to 19...\textit{xf5} 20 \textit{f2 xg3} 21 \textit{xg3 c8!} when White cannot stop the dual threats of ...\textit{xc3} and ...\textit{xc2+!}. After, for example, 22 \textit{d2 xc2} Black is winning.

b2) However, after 19 \textit{d2! e3} (19...0-0-0 allows 20 0-0-0! when White is clearly better) 20 \textit{xe3 dx3} 21 0-0-0 White is doing very well and I would fully expect him to go on to win.

16 \textit{g4 h4}
Black has some tricks based on ...\textsuperscript{7}x\textsuperscript{5}e and ...f\textsuperscript{3}+ at some point, but White’s next move stops such ideas. 

17 \texttt{g3}!

Taking control of the f3-square. 

17...0-0-0 18 d2?! 

Instead 18 b2! is quite a lot better for White as Black has to be concerned about his d-pawn. 

18...b8 

Other options are also better for White: for example, 18...f6 19 exf6 e5 20 0-0-0 is rather unconvincing and 18...e7 19 0-0-0 f6 is very similar to Snape-Williams, above, which was just bad for Black. 

19 b4 g6 

The knight had nothing to do on h4, so Black takes it back round and into the mix. 

20 d2 cxe5?!

Nick lashes out with a slightly dubious sacrifice. This is totally understandable, though, as Black was lacking any other active option. Vitiugov has managed to tame Black’s attacking chances. 

21 fxe5 x\textsuperscript{5}e5 

Black is relying on ideas based on ...f\textsuperscript{3}+ and ...d3, but unfortunately White defends with a cool clarity. 

22 f4! 

Lining up a nasty pin on the h2-b8 diagonal, as an exchange of queens would be terminal for Black. 

22...a8 23 e7?! 

I am not totally sure that this was the best way to continue. A more clinical option would have been 23 d2, defending the queen so that the knight can try to move around to d3 via c1. Black must try 23...d3, but White can stay well on top of things by playing 24 d4 dxc2 25 b5 b8 26 c3. 

23 d5? 

Black’s last chance was 23...e7 24 x\textsuperscript{e}5 d5 25 f4 e5 26 d2 h4 which would have left him with some hope, even though White still holds the advantage. 

24 f6 

The rest is easy. 

24...xc2 25 x\textsuperscript{e}5 d3 26 d1! dxe2 27 xe2 e8d 28 x\textsuperscript{d}5 x\textsuperscript{d}5 29 c3
White’s pieces are coordinating very well.

29...\(\text{Wh7}\) 30 \(\text{Af3}\) \(\text{Wh4+}\) 31 \(\text{Af1}\) \(\text{Wh3+}\) 32 
\(\text{Af2}\) \(\text{Wh4+}\) 33 \(\text{Ag2}\) \(\text{We1}\) 34 \(\text{Ax}\text{xd5}\) \(\text{Ax}\text{xd5+}\)
35 \(\text{Wh3}\) 1-0

Thus it seems that Black’s plan of
... b6, ... d4 and ... \(\text{Ab7}\) does not have quite enough punch if White responds with g4 and \(\text{Ag}\text{1-g3}\). For this reason in the next game we will look at Black’s other option, 13... \(\text{Ad7}\), taking play back into the main line.

Game 33
P. Smirnov-S. Arslanov
Russian Team Championship 2009

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 \(\text{Ac3}\) \(\text{Ab4}\) 4 e5 c5 5 a3
\(\text{Ax}\text{c3+}\) 6 bxc3 \(\text{Ae7}\) 7 \(\text{Ag4}\) \(\text{Ac7}\) 8 \(\text{Axg7}\)
\(\text{Ag8}\) 9 \(\text{Whxh7}\) cxd4 10 \(\text{Ae2}\) \(\text{Bc6}\) 11 f4 dx\text{c3} 12 \(\text{Dd3}\) \(\text{Ad7}\) 13 \(\text{Wxc3}\) \(\text{Df5}\)

Our move order would be 12... \(\text{Af5}\)
13 \(\text{Wxc3}\) and only then 13... \(\text{Ad7}\). Here Black aims for quick development and there have been some interesting developments in this line of late which we will look at now. To be honest I am not sure whether Black has definite equality in this variation, but White certainly has to be very careful and in a practical game Black has good chances.

14 \(\text{Bb1}\)

This is the main move, but there are some other options:

a) 14 \(\text{Ad2}\) \(\text{Bb6}\) 15 \(\text{Cc1}\) \(\text{Cc8}\) 16 \(\text{Bb3}\) \(\text{Cc7}\)! (or 16... \(\text{Cc5}\) 17 \(\text{Bb2}\) and now in V. Hort-V. Priehoda, Smperk 1984, Black should have played the simple 17... \(\text{Cc7}\) when he would have had a decent game) 17 \(\text{Dd3}\) a6 with equal chances in C. Hartman-W. Uhlmann, Budapest 1986.

b) 14 \(\text{Cg1}\)! looks very logical and I am surprised that it has not been played more often. An interesting reply, trying to take advantage of the fact that White has not played \(\text{Bb1}\), is 14... \(\text{Bb6!}\) 15 g4 \(\text{Dfd4}\) 16 \(\text{Cg3}\) \(\text{Cc8}\)! with which Black quickly gained a good position in W. Groenegess-M. Panic, Bad Wildbad 1998.

14... \(\text{0-0-0}\)

14... \(\text{d4}\) 15 \(\text{Dd3}\) will most probably lead to the same thing, but 15 \(\text{Cc4}\) is interesting. Black should probably now play 15... \(\text{0-0-0}\) 16 \(\text{Cg1}\) \(\text{f6}\)! (creating play in the centre) 17 exf6 \(\text{Cg6}\) 18 g4 \(\text{Cd6}\) 19 \(\text{Dd3}\) \(\text{xf6}\) with an interesting position.

15 \(\text{Cg1}\!\)

As we have seen, this is a standard idea in the Poisoned Pawn Variation.
15 g3 is another idea, but it hardly tests Black’s set-up. A. Demchenko-R. Skomorokhin, Vladimir 2008, continued 15...d4 16 ♗c5 b6 17 ♗c4 ♗b8 18 ♗g2 ♗c8 19 ♗d2 ♗ce7!? 20 ♗xc7+ ♗xc7 21 ♗e4 ♗c6 22 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 23 ♗c3 ♗d8 when Black had retained the better minor pieces and White had managed to exchange the queens. I guess an assessment of unbalanced equality is fair.

15...d4 16 ♗d3 ♗a5?!

This is Black’s latest try. He is aiming to play either ...♗a4 or ...♗c4, but he used to prefer plans based on ...f6, with which he is willing to risk everything in the hope of opening up the centre towards White’s king.

Thus we should examine the alternatives in some detail:

a) The risky 16...f6!? allows White to gain four passed pawns on the kingside, but on the other hand, Black gains some chances against the white king. If you need to win then this must be the variation to play! I do have my doubts about the soundness of this plan, though, and there seem to be a number of ways that White can gain an advantage:

a1) It seems logical to play 17 g4 before capturing on f6 as now Black cannot retreat his knight to d6. Saying that the position still demands close analysis.

Here 17...♗h4! (17...♗e3!? has also been tried, but White should be better after 18 ♗xe3 dxe3 19 exf6 e5 20 f5, blunting Black’s potentially powerful light-squared bishop) 18 exf6 e5 reminds us that Black has not got any time to waste. Now:

a11) 19 f7! seems to be the simplest way for White to gain an advantage and leads to a further divide:

a111) 19...♗g7!? 20 f5 (again this obvious move is critical) 20...♗xf7 21 ♗g5! (this is an annoying move that ties the black knight on h4 down) 21...♗h8 22 ♗d1?! was played in M. Gebigke-S. Cruceli, Bern 1996, but an improvement is 22 ♗g3!. Again we see this useful move and after 22...♗xf5! 23 gxf5 ♗xf5 24 ♗c4 Black lacks
enough counterplay for the invested material.

a12) 19...\texttt{hxg4} has been far more common. Play can continue 20 \texttt{hxg4} \texttt{hxg4} 21 \texttt{h3} \texttt{wd7} 22 \texttt{b3}! which looks like a good plan; White aims to swap the queens off which will ease his defence.

After 22...\texttt{f8} (Black could have tried 22...\texttt{hxh3} 23 \texttt{whh3} \texttt{xf5} which aims to keep the queens on, but not for long as White can play 24 \texttt{fxe5} \texttt{xe5} 25 \texttt{g3}! with the advantage) 23 \texttt{hxg4} \texttt{hxg4} 24 \texttt{whh3}! White was clearly better in A.Shomoev-A.Goganov, St Petersburg 2009.

a13) 19 \texttt{he6}! (Black needs to make activate his bishop) 20 \texttt{g5} (20 \texttt{g3}?) 20...e4! 21 \texttt{we4} \texttt{xf5} 22 \texttt{wh1} \texttt{ge8} is actually very dangerous for White, even though he is three pawns up! For example, 23 \texttt{g3} \texttt{xc2} 24 \texttt{h3+} \texttt{b8} 25 \texttt{b2} d3! and Black has a big advantage.

a14) 19 \texttt{h3}?! \texttt{ge8} 20 \texttt{wg3}?! d3! 21 \texttt{cxd3} \texttt{da4} 22 \texttt{f5} \texttt{hf3+} 23 \texttt{f1} \texttt{c2} and Black has good chances due to the activity of his pieces.

a14) 19 \texttt{f5}?! looks critical, but I expect that 19 \texttt{f7} is a better move. By playing 19 \texttt{f5} White keeps his pawns intact and also stops the Black bishop on d7 from entering the game.

White has to play accurately here, but there is no obvious way through for Black, even with 19...e4! (this looks very dangerous for White, but as he shows in this game, he seems to be defending) 20 \texttt{we4}! (White must accept the challenge as 20 \texttt{wh3} \texttt{f3+} 21 \texttt{f2} \texttt{h8} 22 \texttt{g3} \texttt{ce5} 23 \texttt{f4} \texttt{xg1} 24 \texttt{xg1} \texttt{f3+} 25 \texttt{g2} \texttt{wh2+} was curtains for him in C.Boo Martin-E.Grande Berdayes, Spain 1997) 20...\texttt{ge8} 21 \texttt{f4} (21 \texttt{h1}?! makes little sense; K.Tong Soen-H.Prokopp, correspondence 2003, continued 21...d3 22 \texttt{cxd3} \texttt{e5} 23 \texttt{xb7}+ \texttt{xb7} 24 \texttt{xb7} \texttt{xf7} 25 \texttt{f7} \texttt{f8} 26 \texttt{g3} \texttt{f3+} 27 \texttt{f2} \texttt{xh2} and was good for Black) 21...\texttt{e5} (21...\texttt{xf4} may win the exchange, but White's kingside pawn mass is far too strong, such as after 22 \texttt{xf4} \texttt{f3+} 23 \texttt{f2} \texttt{g1} 24 \texttt{g1}). Now:

\begin{center}
\includegraphics{chessboard.png}
\end{center}
a141) 22 f7? allows 22...\textbf{wx}c2 (now mate on d3 is a major threat) 23 g3 g2+!! (a beautiful winning move!) 24 \textbf{hx}g2 (or 24 \textbf{hx}g2 d3 mate) 24...d3+ 25 \textbf{f}c1 \textbf{d}d1 mate which graphically shows some of the dangers that White has to avoid in this variation, J.Vollert-M.Taus, Moravka 1994.

a142) 22 g3! (another common theme in this variation; by placing the rook on g3 White defends against a number of threats, mainly ...f3+ and ...d3) 22...\textbf{wx}c2 (Black is again hoping to play 23...g2+!!) 23 \textbf{b}b2 and now Black has tried several moves. The best seems to be 23...c5!, keeping his options open. There is no need to rush into winning material and Black may even be better here. After 24 f7 \textbf{qx}f7 a premature draw was agreed in A.Goloshchapov-H.Svane, Esbjerg 2005, since Black has the advantage and a big one at that: for example, 25 \textbf{d}d2 \textbf{c}c6 26 \textbf{b}b4 \textbf{c}c4 27 \textbf{f}f2 \textbf{e}e4! when Black has a winning attack.

b) 16...\textbf{h}h8!? is an interesting and rarely-played move. It may be worth investigating if you want to avoid too much theory, but it seems that White should be better in all variations.

After 20 \textbf{b}b3 Black has tried three moves, of which the most sensible seems to be the 20...\textbf{b}b8 of A.Brenkel-Farago, Lippstadt 1994.
Atacking Chess: The French

L. Sanchez-B. Sebestyen, Budapest 2006, continued 17 g4 (again the critical choice) 17...\texttt{h}4 18 \texttt{g}3! (and again this important defensive move!) 18...f6 19 exf6 e5 20 \texttt{d}1 (20 \texttt{f}2!? looked more sensible) 20...\texttt{e}6 21 fxe5 \texttt{x}e5 22 \texttt{f}4! \texttt{d}5 23 g5 \texttt{h}8 24 \texttt{h}3+ \texttt{b}8 25 \texttt{b}4 \texttt{h}f3 26 g6 by when White had a large advantage.

After that important interlude, we can return to the modern choice, 16...\texttt{a}5!?

17 g4

This leads to a very messy and complicated battle.

More recently White has tried to keep things under control by playing 17 \texttt{b}4!? which stops both ...\texttt{c}4 and ...\texttt{a}4. I would not be surprised if we start to see this replacing the complications of 17 g4 in practice. Now:

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

a) 17...\texttt{a}6!? sets up possibilities of \ldots\texttt{b}5 and after 18 g4 Black has:

a1) 18...\texttt{e}3 19 \texttt{x}e3 (19 \texttt{xd}4!?)
19...\texttt{b}5 20 \texttt{x}b5 \texttt{d}xe3 21 \texttt{x}e3? (an improvement would have been 21 \texttt{xb}7!: for example, 21...\texttt{xb}7 22 \texttt{d}4!

\texttt{b}6 23 \texttt{c}3 when the position is still very complicated, but it looks like White should have some sort of advantage) 21...\texttt{c}4 22 \texttt{a}7 \texttt{xb}5 23 \texttt{g}3 and now in Y. Berthelot-D. Dvirnyy, Andorra 2009, 23...\texttt{d}2 would have resulted in an unbalanced position which is very hard to assess.

a2) 18...\texttt{h}4 19 \texttt{a}4 (controlling the b5-square; otherwise, 19 \texttt{xd}4 \texttt{b}5 20 \texttt{xb}5 \texttt{xb}5 21 \texttt{e}4 \texttt{c}3+ 22 \texttt{f}2 \texttt{d}1 gave Black a strong attack in G. Von Buelow-D. Poldauf, German League 2002, while 19 \texttt{g}3 \texttt{b}5 20 \texttt{xb}5 \texttt{xb}5 21 \texttt{xb}5 \texttt{c}4 22 \texttt{h}3 \texttt{b}8 looked good for Black in B. Voekler-D. Poldauf, German League 2002) 19...f6 20 exf6 e5 21 f7 \texttt{g}f8 22 \texttt{g}3 \texttt{xf}7 23 \texttt{h}3? \texttt{c}6! was better for Black in E. Steflitsch-D. Poldauf, Halkidiki 2002, as 24 \texttt{h}4 would now fail to 24...\texttt{e}7!.

b) However, 17...\texttt{c}6 18 \texttt{c}4 \texttt{e}8 19 \texttt{g}4 \texttt{h}4 20 \texttt{g}3 f6 21 exf6 \texttt{g}6 22 \texttt{xc}6 \texttt{xc}6 23 \texttt{xd}4 \texttt{wh}1 24 f5 led to a great, typically Shirovian attack in A. Shirov-S. Ganguly, Edmonton 2009.

17...\texttt{a}4!
This was the crafty idea behind Black’s last move.

18 gxf5

Best.

After 18 b2 dxe3! 19 dxe4 dxc2+ 20 dxc2 dxc2 21 dxc2 dxc4 Black wins material, giving him an edge.

Instead 18 c3 dxc3! (18 ... dxe3 22 dxe3 dxc4 23 dxc3 d2+ 24 d1 d2 was also good for Black in J.Hjartarson-J.Nogueiras, Belfort 1988) 19 gxf5 dxc1 20 dxc1 dXc3 21 dxe3 (21 c2 c5 22 dxc3 d3+ 23 dxd3 dxd3 24 dxe3 dxe3 is winning for Black) 21 ... d1+! (a very pretty tactic) 22 d2 (22 d1 c2+) 22 ... c2 23 dxb3 dxb3 24 fxe6 dxe6 is still pretty messy, but Black’s pawn on c2 should give him the better chances.

18 ... dxc2 19 d5 dxc1 20 dxc1

We have reached a critical position for the evaluation of the whole variation. Black has tried a number of moves here and we will examine some of his most interesting possibilities.

20 ... a6

I am going to concentrate on this move and 20 ... dxf5, which are both Deep Rybka’s first choices.

20 ... dxf5? is very calm, but there is no way that White can save the rook on b1. This is yet to be played in practice, but Black’s chances look pretty decent to me. For example:

a) 21 d2! dxb1 22 dxa5 (this is better than 22 dxb1 c4 23 d3 d2 24 dxd2 d3+ 25 dxc3 dxc3+ 26 d1 d2 27 d2 c7 which should be good for Black due to the passive position of White’s minor pieces) 22 ... b6 23 b4 d4 24 d2 reaches a very interesting position which needs some practical outings.

I am not sure I’m brave enough to offer a judgement on who is better! Let’s just take a look at one possible variation: 24 ... d5? (Black doesn’t have to enter an endgame and 24 ... d7? 25 h4 c6 26 c4 b7 is another possibility) 25 h4 (this is one pawn that Black should be concerned about!) 25 ... c6 26 h5 (26 d3?) 26 ... d5 27 h6 d3 28 c3 d3 and any result is possible!
b) After 21 \( \mathcal{d} \)d3 a6! White cannot hold onto his bishop on d3 and Black is winning.

c) 21 \( \mathcal{d} \)f3 \( \mathcal{d} \)xb1 22 \( \mathcal{w} \)xb1 \( \mathcal{w} \)c3+ 23 \( \mathcal{d} \)d2 (23 \( \mathcal{d} \)f2? \( \mathcal{d} \)b3 is winning for Black)

23...\( \mathcal{w} \)xf3 24 \( \mathcal{d} \)xa5 \( \mathcal{w} \)e3+ 25 \( \mathcal{d} \)d1 \( \mathcal{h} \)h8!

shows that Black needs to use the rook as well! The position is still unclear, but Black is certainly not worse.

21 \( \mathcal{w} \)lb6 \( \mathcal{d} \)xb1 22 \( \mathcal{w} \)xb1 \( \mathcal{d} \)b3 23 \( \mathcal{d} \)d1 \( \mathcal{w} \)c3

Black should avoid exchanging queens and this is one thing that this move encourages. Saying that, it might not be too bad if followed up correctly.

Another option was 23...\( \mathcal{d} \)c5 when play might have continued 24 \( \mathcal{d} \)d2 \( \mathcal{c} \)c6 25 fxe6 fxe6 26 \( \mathcal{w} \)c2 and I would slightly prefer to be in White’s shoes, but the game is still very unclear.

24 fxe6 fxe6 25 \( \mathcal{w} \)c2!

An exchange of queens will help White as his king is in the greater danger.

25...\( \mathcal{d} \)a1 26 \( \mathcal{w} \)d3 \( \mathcal{d} \)b3 27 \( \mathcal{w} \)c2 \( \mathcal{d} \)a1 28 \( \mathcal{w} \)b2!

28...\( \mathcal{w} \)c7?

Black should have played 28...\( \mathcal{w} \)d7 which guards b7 and allows the rook to move to c7 in some positions. Let’s take a look at what could happen here: 29 \( \mathcal{h} \)h3 \( \mathcal{d} \)d3+ (29...\( \mathcal{d} \)b8!? ) 30 \( \mathcal{w} \)d2 \( \mathcal{w} \)b3+ 31 \( \mathcal{d} \)e1 \( \mathcal{g} \)g7 32 \( \mathcal{f} \)f2 \( \mathcal{c} \)c7! and Black is doing well.

29 \( \mathcal{e} \)e2 b5?

The last mistake. Black had to try 29...\( \mathcal{c} \)c6 which would have offered some chances.

30 \( \mathcal{f} \)f3

Now White is close to winning as he has managed to coordinate all of his pieces, while Black’s knight is still stuck on a1.

30...\( \mathcal{c} \)c6 31 \( \mathcal{d} \)d2 d3 32 \( \mathcal{a} \)a5+!

The rest is easy and requires no comment.

32...\( \mathcal{c} \)c8 33 \( \mathcal{d} \)d8 dxe2+ 34 \( \mathcal{e} \)xe2 \( \mathcal{d} \)c2 35 \( \mathcal{g} \)g5 \( \mathcal{c} \)c5 36 \( \mathcal{b} \)b3 1-0

It’s hard to know what to say after such a game, but certainly this variation is pretty risky for both sides. Perhaps White will find a route to an advantage, but in a practical game Black has excellent chances and 16...\( \mathcal{a} \)a5 currently looks to be in good health. I just hope that we will see more games with it soon!

So far we have covered the most critical variations after the move 7...\( \mathcal{c} \)c7. In this game and the next we will take a look at some of White’s less critical attempts at gaining an advantage.
The Winawer Variation: The Main Line, 7 \textit{\tiny{\textcopyright}}

Game 34
B.
Stein-I.
Farago
Lugano 1985

1 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} c3 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} b4 4 e5 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} e7 5 a3 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} xc3+ 6 bxc3 c5 7 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} g4 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} c7 8 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} xg7 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} g8 9 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} xh7 cxd4 10 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} d1

Quite a rare choice these days and it’s hard to believe that it’s a better way than 10 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} e2 to meet the threat on c3.

10... \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} bc6

11 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} f3

Concentrating on quick development. This must be White’s most promising idea, but he has also tried 11 f4 when the position is similar to the main line except that White has committed his king to d1. Now:

a) 11... \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} d7 is perhaps not quite the best move order, although after 12 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} f3?! (attempting to hang on to the extra pawn with 12 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} d3! looks much more sensible, although if you compare the resulting positions to the main line you will see that Black has an improved version) 12...dxc3 13 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} g5 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} f8 (a sensible reply, but I am not sure whether my brain would have had time to stop me from lashing out with 13...\textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} xg5?! 14 fxg5 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} xe5) Black still has a good game:

\begin{itemize}
  \item a1) K.Akshayraj-B.Bitan, Parsvnath 2008, continued 14 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} e2? (a strange square for the bishop) 14...\textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} d4! (this jump is so often the platform for starting an attack and things are no different here) 15 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} xf7 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} a4! (Black does not waste any time!) 16 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} d6+ \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} d7 17 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} a2 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} b6! and with ...\textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} b1 to follow, White was lost.
  \item a2) 14 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} d3 looks a bit passive in this particular position, allowing Black to castle. D.Minic-V.Korchnoi, Bucharest 1966, continued 14...0-0-0 15 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} xc3 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} b8 16 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} b1 d4 17 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} c5 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} d5 18 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} e4 f6!, opening up the centre, which was especially good here as White’s king could not run away to the kingside.
  \item a3) White should play 14 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} d3!, keeping control of the c2-square. Now Neil McDonald has recommended 14...\textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} b6 15 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} e1 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} d4! which seems to give Black good play: for example, 16 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} e3 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} a4 17 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} c1?! \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} ef5 18 \textit{\textit{\textcopyright}} xf5 exf5
\end{itemize}
and c2 comes under extreme pressure.

b) After the more precise 11...dxc3
White does not have the option of holding on to his c-pawn. Then play will likely transpose into the above lines after 12 f3 d7. An independent try is 12 e2, but this did not work out well for White in V.Onoprienko-M.Kravtsiv, Pardubice 2007. After 12... d7 13 d3 d4 comparing the position to the main line, you can clearly see that White’s play has not helped him here. He would never play d1 in the standard position!

The game thematically continued
14 g3 0-0-0 15 e4 f5 16 h3 xe5!
(a typical sacrifice in this type of position to destroy White’s centre) 17 fxe5 xe5 (with ... c6 to follow, White is in serious trouble) 18 c4+ c6 19 d3 xg2 20 e1 h2! 21 xc3 dxc3 22 f4 d2+ 23 c1 f2 0-1.

11...dxc3 12 g5
An interesting alternative is 12 h4!? when, as well as bringing the h-pawn one step nearer to queening, White gives his knight a home on g5. I now recommend that Black considers 12... d7 (12...a6 also threatens the simple 13... xe5, but 12... d7 does this too and at the same time develops a piece) 13 g5 xe5 14 f4 f6 15 h5+ g6 16 d3 0-0-0 which was fine for him in D.Smerdon-J.Tan, Sydney 2003.

12... xe5
This is the most critical try. Black takes a pawn in the centre and in the meantime tries to hold on to his f7-pawn. One word of warning, though: the position does become very complicated and even though results have tended to favour Black, I suspect that White should be on top in a number of the following variations.

A decent alternative to avoid the complications of the main game is 12... xe5?.

This may even be a better move than 12... xe5. Play continues 13 xf7+ d7 when Black’s king is actually quite safe. Now 14 f4 (14 h4!? d4+ 15 d3 was preferred in H.Johnsen-T.Nilssen, Varturnering 1999, when Black should have
pushed his e-pawn) 14...\texttt{\textbackslash w}d4+ 15 \texttt{\textbackslash w}e1 (15 \texttt{\textbackslash w}d3? loses to 15...\texttt{\textbackslash w}xg5 16 \texttt{\textbackslash w}xg5 \texttt{\textbackslash w}g4+) 15...\texttt{\textbackslash e}5 reaches a crazy position! This line is great fun for Black, though, and he will often get a chance to make good use of his pawn centre: for example, 16 \texttt{\textbackslash e}e3 \texttt{\textbackslash w}g4 17 \texttt{\textbackslash e}e2 (after 17 \texttt{\textbackslash h}h7 \texttt{\textbackslash d}6! 18 \texttt{\textbackslash f}f6 \texttt{\textbackslash w}g6 19 \texttt{\textbackslash w}xg6 \texttt{\textbackslash g}xg6 Black is clearly better) 17...\texttt{\textbackslash f}f5 (Black does not have to fear the endgame as he has such a strong centre) 18 g4 \texttt{\textbackslash w}xc2 19 \texttt{\textbackslash h}h7 \texttt{\textbackslash c}7 and Black had the advantage in L.Busquets-l.Ivanov, Irvine 1997.

13 \texttt{\textbackslash f}4

This leads to some very sharp positions.

Instead after 13 \texttt{\textbackslash f}4 \texttt{\textbackslash w}b6 14 \texttt{\textbackslash x}xe5 \texttt{\textbackslash g}xg5 15 \texttt{\textbackslash w}h4 \texttt{\textbackslash f}f5 16 \texttt{\textbackslash d}4? (16 \texttt{\textbackslash w}h8+ was better with some complicated tactics, but tactics where Black's chances seem no worse: for example, 16...\texttt{\textbackslash d}d7 17 \texttt{\textbackslash d}d4 \texttt{\textbackslash w}d6 18 \texttt{\textbackslash d}d3 \texttt{\textbackslash f}4! 19 \texttt{\textbackslash e}e3 \texttt{\textbackslash w}g4+ 20 \texttt{\textbackslash c}c1 \texttt{\textbackslash w}xg2 21 \texttt{\textbackslash d}d1 \texttt{\textbackslash f}3 22 \texttt{\textbackslash e}e4 \texttt{\textbackslash w}h3! 23 \texttt{\textbackslash w}xc3 \texttt{\textbackslash e}xf2 and Black is doing quite well) 16...\texttt{\textbackslash g}g6 White is in trouble. We have been following A.Dekker-G.Quillan, Gibraltar 2007, where White's position quickly collapsed with 17 \texttt{\textbackslash x}xb6 \texttt{\textbackslash a}xb4 18 \texttt{\textbackslash d}d4 e5 19 \texttt{\textbackslash x}xc3 \texttt{\textbackslash e}xf2 20 \texttt{\textbackslash x}xe5 \texttt{\textbackslash g}4+ 21 \texttt{\textbackslash c}c1 \texttt{\textbackslash c}8.

13...\texttt{\textbackslash g}xg5

This is a move that I would enjoy playing. Black eliminates White's strongest piece. His strong centre will always offer him decent counterplay, but is the counterplay worth the invested material?

14 fxg5

Black now has to decide which knight he should move to g6. Both moves have their merits and keep White's queen in the corner for the time being.

14...\texttt{\textbackslash e}5g6

By moving the knight from e5, Black is able to advance his e-pawn, but his knight on e7 is quite passively placed. In practice this move has proven to be a lot more popular than 14...\texttt{\textbackslash g}g7g6!? However, that choice deserves attention, keeping an active knight on e5 and at a later point ...\texttt{\textbackslash g}g4 might become a threat. The downside is that Black's e-pawn cannot move. Now:

a) 15 h4 would seem to be the most active solution. Play could continue 15...\texttt{\textbackslash w}c5 (the black queen enters the game) 16 h5 \texttt{\textbackslash w}d4+ 17 \texttt{\textbackslash e}1 and now in M.Hudec-M.Webersberger, Vienna, 2006, Black should have taken the draw with 17...\texttt{\textbackslash g}g4! 18 \texttt{\textbackslash b}5+ \texttt{\textbackslash d}7 19 \texttt{\textbackslash x}d7+ \texttt{\textbackslash e}7! when White cannot avoid perpetual check: 20 hxg6 \texttt{\textbackslash w}e4+ 21 \texttt{\textbackslash f}1 \texttt{\textbackslash w}c4+ 22 \texttt{\textbackslash e}1 \texttt{\textbackslash w}e4+ 23 \texttt{\textbackslash f}1 \texttt{\textbackslash w}c4+ and if 24 \texttt{\textbackslash g}1?? \texttt{\textbackslash d}4+ 25 \texttt{\textbackslash f}1 \texttt{\textbackslash f}2 mate.
b2) With 15 ♕e2!? White stops any plans that Black has of...♕g4, but after 15...♖c5 16 ♕e1 (to prevent ...♗f2) 16...♖d4! Black sets up ideas of ...♗g4 and he may also have time to play ...b6. Practical examples are required!

15 h4

This is White’s most brutal attempt, but he can also play relatively quietly with 15 ♕e2. This has previously been annotated as dubious, but without any fair reason. In actual fact it may be more accurate than 15 h4, as Black no longer has the option of playing 15...♗g3. With 15...♖e5 Black prepares to develop his light-squared bishop and White has:

a) 16 ♖f1?! ♕e6 (Black is just concentrating on developing quickly) 17 ♖b5+ (17 h4 would have been my preferred move, but it is still rather slow as Black can now continue 17...0-0-0 18 h5 ♖f4! 19 ♖xf4 exf4 when he has great attacking chances; by exchanging his dark-squared bishop, White has been left with serious weaknesses on e3 and d2, and one strong plan is ...♖f5-e3)

17...♖d8 (the position is still roughly equal, but White has to proceed with extreme caution) 18 ♕e3 (aiming to prevent ...♖c5, but allowing Black’s pawns to advance; 18 ♖b1 was a sensible alternative, but Black is fine after 18...♖c5 19 ♕d3 ♕c7) 18...d4 19 ♕g1 ♖c5 and in M.Matulovic-S.Tatai, Venice 1969, Black had a strong initiative and he went on to win convincingly.

b) White does better with 16 h4!, transposing to the notes to his next move in our main game.

15...♖e5

Black has another interesting possibility in 15...♗g3?!, White has to be very careful here and this queen lunge may well be worth trying.

One word of warning, though: with best play from both sides the game is likely to end in an early draw. Now:

a) 16 h5 e5! is yet to be played, but White should probably take the draw here: 17 hxg6 ♖g4+ 18 ♕e2 ♖xe2+ 19 ♕xe2 ♖xg2+ 20 ♕d1 ♖f3+ 21 ♕e1 ♖e4+ 22 ♕f2 ♖xc2+ and there’s no escape from the checks.
b) 16...h3!? is an attempt to play for more, but after 16...g4+ 17 f3 (17 e2? d4+ 18 e1 e5 gave Black good play in Dietzel-W. Housch, correspondence 1972) 17...f5 (17...e5?? loses a piece to 18 h8+! 18 h5 f8! (and not 18...gh4? 19 h8+ e7 20 f6+ f8 21 g6 when Black can resign) 19 b5+ d7 20 xd7+ xd7 21 g6 0-0-0 Black has a dangerous initiative. I might even go so far as to say that he is on the verge of winning.

16 h5

Another sensible idea is 16 e2, covering g4. F. Von Semmern-U. Skorna, correspondence 1983, saw 16...e6 17 h5 f8 (a rather passive square for the knight, but Black still has a strong centre) 18 d3 0-0-0 (Black would seem to have pretty good chances here, but he must always be slightly concerned about White’s h-pawn) 19 a4 f5 20 f3 e6! (Black’s pieces are starting to jump into action) 21 a3 d4 22 g4 e4 23 h3 h7 and with ...d3 being a serious threat, White was in trouble.

16...f8

17 g7

White has two other options, of which the second looks especially dangerous and is yet another reason to prefer 15...g3. Here:

a) 17 d3 f5! reveals why White should have played b5+ first. This move would not be possible then. After 18 g3 0-0-0 Black has good compensation for the exchange.

b) 17 b5+! develops a piece and aims to swap off one of Black’s attacking pieces. After 17...c6 (or 17...d7?! 18 xd7+ xd7 19 d3 e4 20 h3 a4 when in A. Cullinane-G. Botterill, Bristol 1980, White should have played 21 xc3 with the advantage), with the obvious novelty 18 d3! White obtains a good game. His queen no longer obstructs the kingside pawns and can be used to defend his king: for example, 18...g4+ 19 e1 d4 20 h6 and White is in the driving seat, yet again thanks to his h-pawn.

17...g4+ 18 e1 0-0-0

Developing à tempo.

19 xf7 f5
At tacking Chess: The French

Cutting the white queen off, but the position is really everything or bust as White’s g- and f-pawns are very dangerous.

20\( \text{h4?} \)

A mistake, albeit in a complicated position. Now the game should be a draw. Instead:

a) 20\( g6 \) \( \text{e6} \) may just about be okay for Black.

b) 20\( \text{e2} \) looks like the simplest solution, but things are again not so clear after 20...d4 21\( g6 \) e4 22\( \text{c4} \) c6 23\( \text{b5} \) \( \text{d7} \) with roughly equal chances.

c) However, 20\( g4! \) looks very dangerous for Black. Indeed, 20...\( \text{xc2} \) (20...\( \text{wg4} \) 21\( h6 \) \( \text{fg6} \) 22\( h7 \) should also be good for White) 21\( g6 \) just looks better for White. I do not believe that Black can generate enough counterplay here: for example, 21...e4, with the idea of playing ...\( \text{wg3} \)+, does not seem to help Black after 22\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{d7} \) 23\( \text{c1} \) when he can resign.

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

21\( g4 \)

A sensible follow-up to White’s last move, but he should have employed the same plan without wasting time on \( \text{h4} \).

21...\( \text{e4?} \)

Instead 21...\( \text{f8} \) allows 22\( \text{xf8+!} \) \( \text{xf8} \) 23\( \text{gx} \) 24\( \text{h3!} \) which is a very important move. Perhaps not surprisingly the computer likes White in this position.

22\( \text{f2?} \)

An error. White had to bravely go 22\( \text{gf} \) when a draw should be the correct result:

a) 22...\( \text{g3+} \) 23\( \text{d1} \) d4 24\( \text{h3!} \) (24\( \text{f4} \) looks too risky after 24...e3! when Black is better) 24...\( \text{f2} \) 25\( \text{xc3+} \) \( \text{ec6} \) 26\( \text{a6!} \) is an amazing move and Black is now advised to accept the repetition with 26...\( \text{g1} \) and 27...\( \text{f2} \+.

b) 22...\( \text{xc5?} \) is an interesting winning attempt: for example, 23\( \text{f4} \) (23\( \text{f6!} \?) 23...\( \text{xf7} \) 24\( \text{xc7} \) \( \text{xc7} \) 25\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{xf5} \) 26\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{h6} \) with a complicated game in which both sides have winning chances.

22...\( \text{f8} \)
Black now has a decisive advantage, as White always has to watch out for ...\textit{h2}+ and in some cases ...\textit{g3}+.

23 \textit{xf8}+ \textit{xf8} 24 \textit{gxf5} \textit{xf5} 25 \textit{f4}

White is losing after this, but 25 \textit{h3} would have allowed 25...\textit{g3}+.

25...\textit{e5} 26 \textit{h3} e3+ 27 \textit{f3} \textit{e6}! 28 \textit{xf5} \textit{d4}+ 29 \textit{g2} \textit{xf5} 30 \textit{xf5}+ \textit{xf5} 31 \textit{xe3} d4! 0-1

White gave up in view of 32 \textit{xd4} (or 32 \textit{f2} \textit{xg5}+) 32...\textit{e4}+.

\textbf{Game 35}

\textit{J.Schauer-U.Droessler}

\textit{Correspondence 2000}

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 \textit{c3} \textit{b4} 4 e5 c5 5 a3 \textit{xc3}+ 6 bxc3 \textit{e7} 7 \textit{g4} \textit{c7} 8 \textit{d3}

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

White’s only real alternative to capturing on g7. He aims to finish his development before targeting Black’s pawns on the kingside. This is a sensible way of playing, but it would seem that Black has a couple of ways to equalize.

8...\textit{xd4}

This move is the critical test of the variation. Black can also keep things closed by playing 8...\textit{c4}, but that is not really in keeping with the theme of the Poisoned Pawn Variation.

9 \textit{e2} \textit{dxc3}

In this case greed is most certainly good!

10 \textit{xg7} \textit{g8} 11 \textit{hx7} \textit{xe5}

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

This eliminates a strong central pawn and later on Black will ideally play ...\textit{e5} himself, creating a dangerous central pawn mass. White’s compensation mainly revolves around his strong h-pawn. This is an interesting position and I would say both sides have mutual chances. One word of advice: Black should avoid exchanging queens as then White’s h-pawn would be very hard to stop.

12 \textit{f4} \textit{f6}

Indeed, a typical mistake would be 12...\textit{g7}? 13 \textit{xg7} \textit{xg7} 14 h4 when the h-pawn is odds on to become a queen.

13 h4

White starts to use his main trump.
13...\texttt{Nxg2}!?

Black shows no fear and captures another pawn. This is a risky approach as the rook on g2 will often become trapped, so Black has to be willing to sacrifice the exchange, but by capturing on g2 Black ensures that the white king has no safe hiding place.

Another option is 13...\texttt{Qd7}!?, but this looks a bit suspect to me. Black goes for a queen exchange in the hope that his strong centre will give him enough counterplay. Personally I would avoid playing in this manner, but it is possible that I am being a bit pessimistic. Indeed, after 14 \texttt{Qg5} \texttt{Wg7} 15 \texttt{Wxg7 Exg7} 16 \texttt{Qxc3} a6 (stopping \texttt{Qb5}) 17 \texttt{Qf1} f6 18 \texttt{Qd2 Qc5} 19 f3 (19 h5! looks a lot more logical!) 19...\texttt{e5}! Black’s position seemed okay in E.Van den Doel-M.Peek, Amsterdam 2004.

14 \texttt{Qf1}

This forces Black to make a decision over his rook.

14...\texttt{e5}

Black immediately sacrifices the exchange in order to gain active play for his remaining minor pieces.

Another interesting and rarely played option is 14...\texttt{Qg4}!? which aims to hold on to the rook for a while longer. I have to admit that this is the move that I would be tempted to try in a game. M.Pavlovic-M.Drasko, Yugoslavia 1997, continued 15 \texttt{Qg5 Wf3} (in this variation Black’s queen is very active; he just has to be a bit careful not to lose it!) 16 \texttt{Wh8+ Qd7} 17 \texttt{Qh2 Qbc6} 18 \texttt{Qg1 Exg1+} 19 \texttt{Qxg1} and now Black should have played 19...\texttt{e5}! which is very logical and would seem to give him good counterplay: for example, 20 h5 \texttt{d6}!? 21 \texttt{Wf6+ Wxf6} 22 \texttt{Qxf6 Qg5} 23 \texttt{Qxf5 Qxf5} 24 h6 \texttt{Qe6} 25 h7 \texttt{Qxf6} 26 h8\texttt{W+ Qxh8} 27 \texttt{Qxh8 Qcd4} when I prefer Black with his strong pawn formation.

15 \texttt{Qxg2 exf4} 16 \texttt{Wh5}

White tried 16 \texttt{Qf1} in A.Shabalov-J.Arnason, Reykjavik 1994. This seems sensible enough, but Black has sufficient counterplay after a number of moves:

a) 16...\texttt{Qg4} was played in the game which continued 17 \texttt{Qg1 Qh3+} 18 \texttt{Qe1} f3 19 \texttt{Qg3} fxe2 20 \texttt{Qxh3 Qbc6} 21 \texttt{Qxe2} 0-0-0 when White could claim a slight advantage.

b) 16...\texttt{Qd7}!? is an interesting possibility. The black knight has a number of squares that it might like to move to: f8, e5 or even c5. For example, 17 h5 f3 18 \texttt{Qg3 Qf8} 19 \texttt{Qb5+ Qd7} 20 \texttt{Qxd7+ Qxd7} 21 \texttt{Wd3 Qe6} with an unclear position.
c) 16...\texttt{bc6} looks like the most sensible way for Black to continue, as in J.Vidarsson-A.Blees, Hafnarfjordur 1995, where 17 \texttt{h5 f3 18 g1 d4 19 g5 h8 20 e1 e6} resulted in dynamic equality.

\textbf{16...bc6}

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

\textbf{17 f3}

By playing f3 White keeps the queen on an active square.

17 \texttt{f3} was tried in R.Milu-D.Popescu, Bucharest 1992, which saw 17...\texttt{g6 18 xg6? (18 f1 was better)} 18...\texttt{xg6+ 19 f1 g4! 20 xc3 e4} when Black had a good position.

\textbf{17...e6}

Black has also tried 17...\texttt{f5 18 g5} and now in A.Gara-J.Gonczi, Hungarian League 1999, he should have gone 18...\texttt{e5} which is very unclear: for example, 19 \texttt{xf4 (19 ae1 xd3 20 xe5 xe5 21 xc3! f6 22 cxd3 f7 23 d4 g8+ 24 f1 is unclear, but Black's knights look very dangerous) 19...xd3 20 xe5 xe5 21 cxd3 c2 22 ac1 ac8 23 d4 xc3 24 xc2 xa3 25 h5 leaves White with a typically strong passed h-pawn, but the position is still very messy.}

\textbf{18 g5 h8}

In this instance Black most certainly must avoid exchanging queens. Indeed, 18...\texttt{xg5+ 19 hxg5 is pretty hopeless for Black, as the f-pawn is going to drop and White’s rook has become active on the h-file.}

\textbf{19 f2 0-0-0}

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

This position is very hard to assess. White has a strong h-pawn, but he must be careful about his king. I guess an assessment of dynamically equal would be about right, but I would not stake my life on it!

\textbf{20 ab1}

Another plan would have been the straightforward 20 h5!. Moreover, after 20...\texttt{d4 21 h6 g8 22 c5} I am beginning to prefer White’s position.

\textbf{20...d4 21 xf4 d5 22 xe6 fxe6 23 g6 e5 24 be1 e3}

This is a very strong square for the knight. If only White did not have the h-pawn!

\textbf{25 h5 h8 26 c4 c7}
Black could have considered 26...\( \text{d}8 \), but White’s h-pawn still looks strong after 27 h6.

27 \( \text{f}7+ \text{d}8 28 \text{h}6 \text{e}7 29 \text{h}7 \\

The problem Black has is that his pieces have to remain passive in order to deal with the h-pawn. This means that he has no time available to start an attack against White’s king.

29...\( \text{f}5 30 \text{g}6 \text{e}7 31 \text{h}6 \text{f}5 \\

32 \text{h}5??

An amazing blunder if the score-sheet is to be believed. Black can now force checkmate in three moves!

White should have played 32 \( \text{g}5 \), as he needs to keep control of the g3-square. It is not clear how Black should continue here: for instance, 32...\( \text{c}5 33 \text{d}3! \) (White’s task will become easier once he is able to swap off one of Black’s knights) 33...b6 34 \( \text{xf}5 \text{exf}5 35 \text{xe}3 \text{dxe}3+ 36 \text{xe}3+ \text{xe}3+ 37 \text{xe}3 and White has a winning endgame.

32...\( \text{c}6?? \\

Double blindness or an input error?

32...\( \text{g}3+ 33 \text{e}2 \text{g}2+ 34 \text{d}3 \text{xc}2 mate was somewhat more to the point!

33 \( \text{d}3?? \text{b}6?? 34 \text{g}6 \\

At last White spots the threat of 34...\( \text{g}3+. The rest of the game is relatively easy for Schauer.

34...\( \text{d}6 35 \text{xf}5! \text{xf}5 36 \text{g}3+ \text{d}5 37 \text{g}7 \text{e}5 38 \text{xe}5+ \text{xe}5 39 \text{g}1 \text{xc}2 40 \text{h}5+ \text{d}6 41 \text{g}8 \text{h}7 42 \text{h}7 \text{xa}3 43 \text{xa}7 1-0 \\

It did seem that White’s h-pawn was too strong in this game and Black’s attack never really got going. One move that should be investigated more is 14...\( \text{g}4! ?

Conclusion

This has been quite a long and theoretical chapter, but for a good reason: 7 \( \text{g}4 \) is White’s most dangerous choice against the Winawer and after 7...\( \text{c}7 \) the position quickly becomes very unclear. I’m pleased to say that my favourite move, 12...\( \text{f}5 \), looks to be in good health, although after 13 \( \text{xc}3 \) I’m afraid that Black likely has to prepared to transpose to the main line after all.
Chapter 7
The Tarrasch Variation: White Plays 5 f4

Moving on to the Tarrasch, \texttt{1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 \od d2}, in this chapter we will begin by taking a look at what I would consider to be the most critical variation of it, \texttt{3...\od f6 4 e5 \od fd7 5 f4 c5 6 c3}. This is not currently the most popular variation, but it is the most logical and Black has to be on his guard to avoid being suffocated. White is simply trying to hold his centre together with pawns, aiming to keep his space advantage. If he can maintain his centre then he will be able to develop his pieces harmoniously behind his pawns which will often lead to a good attack for him.

This plan is not without certain risks, though: White rather neglects his piece development and king safety and, as we will see in the first game of the chapter, Black will sometimes have the opportunity to destroy White’s centre through a series of piece sacrifices.

There is one move/plan which I used to slightly fear as Black, namely \texttt{6...\od c6 7 \od df3 \od b6 8 a3}, which we will concentrate on towards the end of this chapter. Then Black can no longer play \texttt{...\od b4+} and in a lot of variations White will just continue with \texttt{b4}, gaining more space. However, I’m confident that I have found a solution.

To start with though, let’s take a look at some typical ideas for Black in this variation.

1. Better to sacrifice material than be suffocated
We will see a great example of this in our first illustrative game, Saltaev-Gurevich. Black breaks out with the standard freeing move \texttt{13...\od xd4!}. You
must stay alert for chances to break out in this system, otherwise White might be able to consolidate his space advantage. Basically, keep your eyes open and if you have a chance to break out, take it!

V.Kotrotsos-K.Moutousis
Athens 2004

White has just played 14 \( \mathcal{Q}f4 \). Black now replied \( 14...\mathcal{Q}xe5!? \) which is a typical way to open up the centre towards White’s king. Play continued \( 15 \text{dxe5 } \mathcal{Q}c5 \) \( 16 \text{xc5 }\mathcal{Q}xc5 \) when Black had good attacking chances.

2. Black must be willing to change tactics
This is especially true when White plays the most dangerous plan 8 a3!. When I first faced this move I was constantly looking for ways to open up the centre, but unfortunately it seems that none of the aggressive moves work.

In a number of cases Black must be willing to knuckle down and prepare himself for a long grind. To be able to do this, he will rely on gaining play on the queenside.

D.Howell-R.Robson
Puerto Madryn 2009

White has just played 11 h4. Black must come up with an active plan, otherwise he will be squeezed to death. Moreover, as there are no sacrifices available in the centre, Black must turn his attention to the queenside. Here \( 11...\mathcal{Q}c7! \) began a good plan. Black is intending to play \( ...b5, \text{...b6, ...c4 and then ...a5, opening up the queenside. By playing in this manner Black was able to generate enough counter-chances to give him an equal game.}

Game 36
M.Saltaev-M.Gurevich
Cappelle la Grande 2001

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 \( \mathcal{Q}d2 \)
White wishes to keep the tension in the centre. He can now support his centre with c3, but he has blocked in his
his dark-squared bishop and in a number of cases his knight is clumsy on d2.

3...\(\text{\textit{c}}\text{f}6\)

Putting pressure on White’s centre and exploiting the fact that a pinning \(\text{\textit{g}}\text{g}5\) isn’t possible.

4 e5 \(\text{\textit{d}}\text{d}7\) 5 c3 c5 6 f4

White creates an imposing pawn structure that Black will find hard to break down.

White’s basic plan is as follows:

1. Ensure that d4 is well defended. White can do this by playing, \(\text{\textit{d}}\text{f}3\), \(\text{\textit{d}}\text{d}3\) (if possible!) and finally \(\text{\textit{g}}\text{e}2\).

2. Remove the king to safety. Castling is ideal, but the white king often takes a more adventurous route via f2.

3. Gain even more space. This can be done by playing the pawn advances h4 and sometimes a3 and b4.

4. Start an attack against Black’s king. If Black has castled then White has ideas of \(\text{\textit{h}}\text{h}3\) and \(\text{\textit{g}}\text{g}3\), as well as Greek gifts on h7. However, if Black has played ...f5, trying to block things up on the kingside, White will often use the pawn break g4 to open up some lines over there.

Black’s basic plans:

1. To pressure d4. He does this by playing ...\(\text{\textit{c}}\text{c}6\) and ...\(\text{\textit{b}}\text{b}6\).

2. Quick development. Given a chance Black should often play ...\(\text{\textit{b}}\text{b}4+\), gaining a tempo to develop.

3. Open up the centre as much as possible. This is done with the standard pawn break ...f6 and in some cases, as in this game, a knight sacrifice on d4 or e5.

4. Black can consider playing ...a5, ...a4 and ...a3. This is a slower plan, but the idea is to create some weaknesses on the queenside.

5. In some cases Black plays the preventive move ...f5. This can become a target though for White’s g-pawn.

6. When White plays the modern 8 a3, Black should always consider trying to take advantage of the weakened b3-square, such as with ...\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{a}5\)-b3.

6...\(\text{\textit{c}}\text{c}6\)

Developing and attacking White’s pawn on d4.

7 \(\text{\textit{d}}\text{f}3\)
At tacking Chess: The French

The most logical continuation. The knight makes way for the white queen to give extra protection to d4. Other options will be looked at later on in this chapter.

7...\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{b6}}}

More pressure against d4. The only downside to this aggressive move is the future of Black’s knight on d7, which can no longer move to b6. Do, however, observe where this knight lands up – yes, being sacrificed on g4!

8 \textit{\textbf{h4}}

This used to be a very popular choice, but then it was found that Black could obtain enough counterplay by countering aggressively.

8...\textit{\textbf{xd4}}

Black takes his chance to play ...\textit{\textbf{b4+}}.

9 \textit{\textbf{xd4 b4+!}}

Forcing the white king to move which ensures that Black will always have some attacking chances.

10 \textit{\textbf{f2}}

The move that White would like to play is 10 \textit{\textbf{d2?}}, but this simply loses a pawn to 10...\textit{\textbf{xd4}}.

\textbf{10...f6!}

Black opens the position up and this typical move leaves him with ample chances. I, for one, would not be too happy playing White in this position. After all, who would want to have their king on f2 when the f-file is about to open?

11 \textit{\textbf{e3}}

This has been White’s main choice in this position. Another brilliant Gurevich win was demonstrated as far back as 1991! I have given that game in full below.

After 11 \textit{\textbf{g3}} 0-0 White has tried:

a) 12 \textit{\textbf{d3?}} is just asking for Black’s next: 12...\textit{\textbf{xd4!}} 13 \textit{\textbf{xd4 fxe5}} 14 fxe5 \textit{\textbf{xe5}} 15 \textit{\textbf{c2 g6}} 16 \textit{\textbf{xg6 hxg6}} 17 \textit{\textbf{dxe2 f2+}} 18 \textit{\textbf{h3 d6}} 19 \textit{\textbf{b3 e5+}} 20 \textit{\textbf{h2 xh4+}} 21 \textit{\textbf{h3 xh3}} 0-1 L.Ljubojevic-M.Gurevich, Linares 1991.

b) 12 \textit{\textbf{h3}} also looks good for Black after 12...\textit{\textbf{fxe5}}, forcing White to make a decision:

b1) 13 \textit{\textbf{dxe5}} (Black cannot be worse after this move, as he now has access to
c5 and then e4) 13...d5 14 h2 e4 15 g5 h6 16 dxe4 dxe4 17 w2 d7 18 e3 a5 19 a3 e7 20 g3 a4! and in G.Sax-T.Luther, Bad Zwesten 2002, Black was planning to play ...a5, ...b3 and ...c6, with good play on the queenside and the light squares.

b2) 13 fxe5 leaves Black with two main choices. One wacky and one sensible!

b21) 13...xf3+!? is the wacky choice. After 14 gxf3 (14 xf3? dxc5 15 w1 d1 cxe5 is very good for Black) 14...dxc5 15 f4 f5+ (15...e7!? 16 h2 xh4 Black had good compensation in S.Fedorchuk-A.Shemeakin, Alushta 1998. 

b22) The untried 13...e7 is the sensible option. For example, 14 h2 f5 15 g4 dxc4! 16 dxc4 dxe5 when Black also has good compensation. 

11...fxe5 12 fxe5

Not 12 dxe5? c5 which is just good for Black. 

12...0-0

Setting up something nasty...

13 d3

White has also tried:

a) 13 e2 reinforces the d4-square which is a useful precaution. After 13...a5 (this is often a useful move in this variation and 13...e7 14 d2 d8! is another good plan; in some cases Black wants to capture on h4, but his main idea is to play ...b6 and then ...c4) 14 f4 cxe5!? (yet more fireworks!) 15 dxe5 c5 16 xc5 xc5 Black had very good play in V.Kotrotsos-K.Moutousis, Athens 2004.

b) 13 a3 looks a bit odd to me as Black’s bishop will often want to drop back to e7 anyway. White’s plan, though, is to advance on the queenside with b4.

Now:

b1) 13...dxe5?! is very tempting, but it does not give Black enough counterplay in this position. M.Ferguson-D.Mason, British Championship, Swansea 1995, continued 14 dxe5 c5 15 xc5 wc5+ 16 g3 dxe5 17 d4 when White had the advantage.

b2) 13...e7! 14 b4 d8 (14...a5!? 15 b5 a7 looks a bit better for White) 15
\( \textbf{At tacking Chess: The French} \)

\( \text{\textit{13...\texttt{xd4}!}} \)

Crash, bang, wallop! This is one of the reasons that I enjoy playing this variation so much! You must always keep an eye open for this possibility. In this position it simply seems good for Black.

\( \text{\textit{14 \texttt{e2}}} \)

This is White’s idea – he will win the knight on d4. However, somewhat more importantly, Black will win the white king!

\( \text{\textit{14...\texttt{xe5}!?}} \)

An interesting follow-up to Black’s last move.

Black has also tried 14...\texttt{c5} which also looks okay. Y.Zinchenko-O.Gavrjushin, Perm 2007, continued 15 \texttt{exd4 \texttt{xe5}!} (not 15...\texttt{xd4?} 16 \texttt{\texttt{xe7+ \texttt{eh7} 17 \texttt{xd4} when White has an edge}) 16 \texttt{\texttt{e2 \texttt{xf3} 17 \texttt{gxf3 e5 18 \texttt{c2 e4!?} (18...\texttt{e6!?) 19 \texttt{xe4 dxe4 20 \texttt{d5+ \texttt{e6} 21 \texttt{xc5} when the position was messy, but Black’s chances would have been no worse if he had played 21...\texttt{exf3+!}, continuing to open lines towards White’s king.}}}}}

\( \text{\textit{15 \texttt{xd4 \texttt{g4+}}} \)

This is a strong square for Black’s knight. White’s position now quickly falls apart, but it is always difficult defending such positions.

\( \text{\textit{16 \texttt{g3}}} \)

White could have also tried 16 \texttt{g1}, but now 16...\texttt{c5}! is a strong move when Black is better, such as after 17 \texttt{b3 \texttt{xb3} 18 axb3 \texttt{xd4+} 19 \texttt{exd4 e5}.}

\( \text{\textit{16...\texttt{d6+}}} \)

White is not given time to breathe.

\( \text{\textit{17 \texttt{xg4 e5+ 18 \texttt{g3 exd4+} 19 \texttt{f2 \texttt{g4}}} \)

Bringing the last black piece into the attack and it is fair to say that he has full compensation for the piece here.

\( \text{\textit{20 \texttt{c1?}}} \)

After making several pretty forced moves, White blunders. He could have
kept the balance with 20 \textit{b3}. Play might have continued 20...\textit{ae}8 (20...\textit{e}6? 21 \textit{xb}4 \textit{e}3+ 22 \textit{e}1 \textit{xf}3 23 \textit{xd}4 looks good for White) 21 \textit{af}1 \textit{c}5 when Black is ready to play ...\textit{e}3 with pressure.

\textbf{20...\textit{ae}8?!}

Black makes an error as well! He should have played 20...\textit{e}5! when the queen will invade on e3 with devastating effect: for example, 21 a3 \textit{e}3+ 22 \textit{f}1 \textit{xf}3 and it’s all over.

\textbf{21 \textit{exd}4 \textit{a}5}

Black is in no rush, but 21...\textit{c}5!? also seems very sensible.

\textbf{22 b4 \textit{xb}4 23 \textit{g}3 h5}

White cannot defend, as his king is just too weak.

\textbf{24 \textit{b}1 \textit{c}7+ 0-1}

This game just goes to show just how careful White has to be in this variation.

We will now take a look at the other possibilities that White might try instead of 8 h4, although we will save the most dangerous move, 8 a3, until the next game.

\textbf{Game 37}

A.Shirov-F.Vallejo Pons
Spanish Team Championship 2008

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 \textit{d}2 \textit{f}6 4 e5 \textit{fd}7 5 \textit{f}4 c5 6 c3

White has also tried 6 \textit{gf}3, aiming to control d4 with a knight. If Black captures on d4, White is planning to play \textit{b}3 and then recapture with a knight on d4. Let’s take a look at some possible variations after 6...\textit{c}6:

\textbf{a)} 7 \textit{b}3!? was played last year by Malakhov. White is trying to tempt Black to close the centre with 7...c4 when he will have a free hand on the kingside. However, after 7...\textit{f}6! (I like this active solution; Black fights on dark squares and in the centre) 8 \textit{xf}6 (8 c4!? \textit{xe}5 9 \textit{dxe}5 \textit{b}6 is roughly equal) 8...\textit{xf}6 9 \textit{e}3 \textit{d}6 10 g3 \textit{cxd}4 11 \textit{b}xd4 e5! Black is fighting for the initiative and 12 \textit{fxe}5 \textit{exe}5 leaves him very actively placed.

\textbf{b)} 7 c3 a5! is a useful prophylactic device against White’s plan of \textit{b}3. S.Smagin-S.Kindermann, German League 1997, continued 8 \textit{b}5 \textit{b}6 9 \textit{a}4 \textit{cxd}4 10 \textit{cxd}4 \textit{db}8 11 \textit{b}3 \textit{d}7 12 \textit{xc}6 \textit{xc}6 and Black had a comfortable game.

\textbf{c)} 7 \textit{d}3 \textit{b}6 8 \textit{xc}5 (8 c4 \textit{cxd}4 9 \textit{cxd}5 \textit{c}5 looks good for Black) 8...\textit{xc}5 9 \textit{b}3 \textit{xd}3+ 10 \textit{xd}3 \textit{b}4 11 \textit{e}2

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\( \text{\textit{a6}} \) gave Black safe equality in R. Forster-G. Hertneck, Pula 2000. He can continue with \(... \text{\textit{d7}} \) and \(... \text{\textit{c8}} \).

6...\text{\textit{c6}} 7 \text{\textit{df3}} \text{\textit{b6}} 8 \text{\textit{g3}}

This used to be the main line and I faced this move a number of times when I was younger. White prepares to play \textit{\textit{h3}} and he will often move his king around to \textit{g2}.

8 \textit{\textit{e2}} is similar and after, for example, 8...\textit{\textit{e7}} 9 \text{\textit{g3}} 0-0 10 \textit{\textit{h3}} \text{\textit{cxd4}} 11 \text{\textit{cxd4}} \textit{\textit{f6}}! play has transposed to the notes to White’s 11th move, below.

8...\textit{\textit{e7}} 9 \textit{\textit{h3}}

This may well be the best square for White’s bishop. At least from \textit{h3} the bishop places \textit{e6} under some pressure.

9 \textit{\textit{h4}} seems a bit slow and after 9...\textit{\textit{cxd4}} 10 \text{\textit{cxd4}} \textit{\textit{f6}}! Black gained very good play in S. Sulsis-D. Saiboulativ, Cappelle la Grande 2005. That continued 11 a3 0-0 12 b4? (this is taking White’s plan too far; White has not got time for this, although it is still interesting to see how Black punishes him) 12...\textit{\textit{fxe5}} 13 \text{\textit{dxe5}} a5 14 b5 \textit{\textit{cxe5}}! 15 \textit{\textit{fxe5}} \textit{\textit{dxe5}} 16 \textit{\textit{a2}} \textit{\textit{c5}} and White was already in some trouble.

9...\textit{\textit{xd4}} 10 \text{\textit{cxd4}} 0-0

Black has finished his development. He is now ready to continue with \(... \textit{\textit{f6}} \), aiming to blow open the centre.

11 \textit{\textit{f2}}

This looks a bit odd, but this idea in general is far from unknown in this variation.

White has also tried the more natural-looking 11 \textit{\textit{e2}}, but with 11...\textit{\textit{f6}}! Black opens up the centre, even at the cost of material. White now has a choice:

a) 12 \textit{\textit{xe6+}} \textit{\textit{h8}} and then:

a1) 13 \textit{\textit{exf6}} \textit{\textit{xf6}} 14 \textit{\textit{xc8}} \textit{\textit{b4+}} (this move causes White the most problems) 15 \textit{\textit{d2}} \textit{\textit{xd2+}} 16 \textit{\textit{xd2}} \textit{\textit{e4}} 17 \textit{\textit{d3}} and here in V. Malakhov-S. Williams, Tallinn 1997, I should have tried 17... \textit{\textit{b4+}}! with a complicated game where Black’s compensation should be worth a pawn.

a2) 13 \textit{\textit{xd5}} is a move that I have faced in a number of 3-minute games online! Black can now obtain a good position by playing 13...\textit{\textit{fxe5}} 14 \textit{\textit{fxe5}}
\( \square x e 5! 15 \text{dxe5 } \square x e 5, \) bringing his position to life.

Note that White cannot play 16 \( \square x e 5? \) here as 16...\( \text{b4+ 17 } \square c 3 \text{ f2} \) mate would be pretty terminal. However, things would be somewhat different if White had a pawn on a3, which is just another argument for 8 a3 I guess!

b) 12 0-0? is just an error here. P.Amiri-E.Gleizerov, Tehran 2005, continued 12...fxe5 13 \( \text{xe6+ } \text{h8} \) 14 fxe5 \( \square x e 5! 15 \text{xd5 h3} \) (White’s position quickly falls apart) 16 \( \text{xe5 } \text{xf1 17 f7+ xf7} \) 18 \( \text{xe2 x e2 19 } \text{f2 e f8} \) 20 \( \text{b3 x d4! 21 x e7 e2+ 22 g2 f2+ 23 h3 g1+ 24 h4 x h2+ 0-1.} \) An impressive game from Black.

c) 12 \( \text{f1} \) is White’s best option, aiming to cover all the threats, especially against f2. The untried 12...\( \text{b4!?} \) deserves serious attention here: for example, 13 \( \text{c3 a6! 14 f2 } \text{d3+ 15 g1 f5} \) when Black plans to play ...\( \text{b6} \) and ...\( \text{d7} \) with good chances on the queenside.

11...f6!

Black cannot do much without this move!

12 \( \text{g2} \)

White tried 12 \( \text{xe6+} \) in one game, but it is very risky. Even though White wins a pawn, he opens a number of lines for Black. C.Linner-O.Bleiziffer, German League 1995, continued 12...\( \text{h8} 13 \text{xd5 fxe5 14 fxe5 } \square x e 5 \) (Black already has the better chances) 15 \( \text{g2 g4 16 e2 b4 17 e4 e6 18 c3 a d8} \) when all of Black’s pieces were active and he went on to win quickly.

12...\( \text{h8}!? \)

A interesting waiting move. Black waits until White commits his knight on g1 and only then does he go in for the typical sacrifice.

It may also be possible to play 12...fxe5 13 fxe5 \( \square x e 5!?, \) but it looks like White had the better chances after 14 dxe5 \( \square x e 5 \) 15 \( \text{e2} \) in G.Dorenberg-P.Huiberg, Ghent 1999.

13 \( \text{e2 fxe5 14 fxe5 } \square x e 5! \)

This is a brilliant idea which gives Black a good game. It actually turns out
that White’s knight is worse placed on e2 compared to g1!

15 dxe5 dxe5 16 d4

Defending f3 and blocking the Black queen’s route to f2.

16...xf3 17 xf3 e5!

This was Vallejo’s plan. He is aiming to start a quick attack against White’s position.

18 xd5

White has to play this at some point, otherwise Black’s central pawns are just too strong.

18...xh3+ 19 xh3 f2!

Black is not worse here.

20 xe5

White decides that he should force Black to take the draw.

Instead 20 g5 xg5 21 h1f1 (21 xg5 w5+ 22 h4? h6 is winning for Black) 21...we2 22 xe5 xe5 23 xe5 f6 is equal as well.

20...f5+ 21 g2

White could have tried 21 g4?! This is a bit risky, although it seems that, yet again, the game should end in a draw by perpetual after 21...f2 22 d3 h4+ 23 g2 f2+, unless Black can make 23...f6!? work.

21...f2+ 22 h3 f5+ 23 g2 f2+ ½-½

It’s not often that you see Shirov on the back foot and happy to make such an early draw as White!

Let’s now move on to the critical 8 a3. Even though our next game is only a blitz game, it does show some of the dangers that Black faces in this variation. He has to play very carefully in the opening, as stereotyped moves can easily lead him into trouble.

Game 38
C.Bauer-E.Berg
Internet (blitz) 2004

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 d2 f6 4 e5 fd7 5 f4 c6 3 d2 7 x6 8 d6 a3!

White hopes to make ...b6 look rather silly, because Black will now
struggle to open the centre and so may find it hard to untangle his pieces. It’s not all doom and gloom, though, as Black can aim to take advantage of the weakened b3-square by:

1. Moving the knight on c6 to this square, via a5.
2. Clamping down on this square with ...a5, ...a4.

This is the plan which Black puts into action in the final game of this chapter. Here, however, Berg plays as Black does against White’s less-critical 8th moves.

8...cxd4

Logical enough, but 8...e7 seems to be a useful waiting move. We will take a look at this in Howell-L’Ami.

9 cxd4

We now see another useful point behind 8 a3: Black can no longer play ...b4+. Thus White does not have to worry about his king position so much and may even be able to castle kingside.

9...f6

Black can also try 9...a5 which will be analysed in the next game.

10 e3

Another good possibility that White has is 10 b4, and yet again Luke McShane gave a model performance of White’s strategy in L.McShane-M.Schmitz, Gibraltar 2003: 10...e7 11 e3! (as soon as Black has played ...f6 this move is possible and it will often lead to an ideal set-up for White) 11...0-0 12 e2 h8 13 h4! (another standard idea; now that White has developed his pieces, he can start an attack on Black’s king) 13...fxe5 14 dxe5 a5 15 b5 cb8 16 b1! (preparing d3) 16...c5 17 e3 (17 g5!? 17...xb5 18 xc5 xc5 19 d3 g6 20 h5 and Black’s position quickly fell apart.

10...e7

I really do not like Black’s position here. White can just build up his forces against Black’s kingside, whilst it is hard to find a plan for Black. The usual sacrifices just don’t work.

11 h4

This is nearly always a decent plan,
but I would have preferred to have played 11 ąe2 first, finishing White’s development. For example, 11...0-0 12 b4 fxe5 13 dxe5 (I have noticed that McShane likes capturing this way in this type of position) 13...h6 14 ąb1 ąf7 15 ąg6 ąf8 16 ąd3 and now in L.McShane-H.Karabalis, Kuppenheim (blitz) 2003, Black, sensing the impending build-up of forces against his king, decided to lash out with 16...ąxb4+?, but White was winning after 17 axb4 ąxb4 18 ąd2 ąc5 19 ąb1.

11...0-0

I once found myself on the black side of this depressing position. I was lucky that my opponent agreed to a draw after 11...a5 12 ąe2 f5 (trying to close the kingside, but this plan is usually short-lived as White always has the move g4 up his sleeve) 13 h5 a4 14 ąh3 ąd8 15 ąe3 ąb6 16 ąf2 ąd7 17 ąg1! ąa5 18 g4 0-0 (casting into impending doom) 19 gxf5 exf5 20 ąg2 ąe6 ½-½, J.Naylor-S.Williams, Hampstead 1998. Phew!

12 ąe2

12...ąf7

Black is too passive and cramped. This plan of placing the knight on f8 just shows that his opening has gone wrong.

Another high-level encounter continued 12...h6 (stopping any tricks with ąxh7+ and ąg5+, but weakening the light squares around the Black’s king) 13 b4 ąh8 14 ąb1 f5 15 ąd3 ąd8 16 h5 ąb6 17 ąf2 ąd7 and now 18 ąg1! saw White prepare g4, starting an attack against Black’s king. Black has a miserable position and he lost convincingly in B.Spassky-A.Yusupov, Belfort 1998.

13 b4 a6 14 ąh3

This is another standard idea in this variation. The rook is well placed on h3 where it has potential at some point to move to g3.

14...ąf8

Black is overprotecting everything, but his position is lacking any real spark.

15 ąc3 ąh8 16 ąa4

White can also play on the queenside! He basically has control of both sides of the board.

16...ąa7 17 ąe3 ąd7 18 ąg5!?

White decides that it is time to take some action. This is one move that Black is always threatened with.

18...fxg5 19 hxg5 ąf5

This does little to help Black’s position, but things were difficult anyway. For example:

a) 19...g6 20 ąxg6 ąg7 21 ąd3
when White can attack h7 at his leisure.

b) 19...f8?! 20 g6 f5 21 g4 and White is winning.

20 g4

White does not even have to rush the attack. Black is lost here, but as the game was a 5-minute encounter the battle drags on for a while.

20...f8 21 gxf5 exf5 22 f2 b6 23 c2

White is the exchange up with the attack!

23...d7? 24 xxb6

Whoops! Black could really have resigned here. The game finished:

24...e6 25 xxa8 d8 26 c1 e7 27 c7 b6 28 c5 b8 29 d6 d7 30 xa6 a8 31 b5 eg6 32 a4 e7 33 b6 e8 34 c7 f7 35 a5 c8 36 a6 d8 37 c5 d7 38 d6 e7 39 xd5 f8 40 a7 xg5 41 a8xb6 b6 42 d6 e7 43 xb6 d8 44 xg6 h4+ 45 xh4 xh4+ 46 g3 d8 47 b8 h5 48 e6 d5 49 xc8+ h7 50 xg7 mate (1-0)

Having graphically seen the dangers that Black faces in this variation, let’s now take a look at some other ways in which Black can aim to fight against White’s set-up.

Game 39
L.McShane-B.Addison
British Championship, Torquay 2002

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 d2 f6 4 e5 fd7 5 f4 c5 6 c3 c6 7 df3 b6 8 a3 cxd4

Black has a number of options here and we should really take a look at all of them to get a good understanding of the position:

a) 8...c4 has never really appealed to me.

This may be a playable option, but I always prefer attacking my opponent’s king rather than his queenside. Basically White will aim to play f5 at some point in this position, while Black will aim to get ...b5-b4 in. I suppose that this way of playing could be suited to players who enjoy slow, positional
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S. Dolmatov-S. Volkov, Russian Team Championship 2001, continued 9 h4 h5 10 e2 a5 11 d2 e7 12 g3 f8 13 g5 h7 14 f2 g6 15 b1 d7 16 c2 c8 17 f3 b5 18 d1 c6 with a very blocked position which was soon agreed drawn.

b) 8...e7 is what I would consider to be Black’s best move and we will look at this in the next game.

(c) Advancing with 8...a5 has been my choice on a couple of occasions.

However, I doubt whether Black can claim equality, as White has chances to build up a fierce and direct attack in several lines. In other words I would not recommend playing this variation!

Now:

Cl) 9 g3 has been the choice of a number of strong players. However, after 9...e7 10 h3 cxd4 11 cxd4 0-0 12 e2 again 12...f6! is pretty dangerous for White! Following 13 xe6+ (this would seem to be the only way for White to try and refute Black’s plan, but Black has some tricks up his sleeve) 13...h8 14 xd5 fxe5 15 fxe5 Black can sacrifice despite White’s control of the b4-square (compare note ‘a2’ to White’s 11th move in Shirow-Vallejo), with 15...dxe5! 16 dxe5 g4!

White certainly has to be on guard here and if you knew that your opponent was going to play down this line, it would be tempting to give it a go: for example, 17 f1? (this obvious move is a mistake; 17 xc6! is Deep Rybka’s recommendation, but it looks very unhumanlike and Black obtains good control of the light squares with 17...c6 18 ed4 e4+ 19 e2 d5 20 0-0 c5 21 e3 xd4 22 xd4 xf3 23 f2, even if this is objectively slightly better for White) 17...ad8 18 f4?! (another obvious move that looks like an error; instead 18 f4! c5!? 19 c3 xf4 20 gxf4 h4+ is very interesting) 18...xe5! 19 e2 de8 looks quite good for Black and possibly even winning!

c2) McShane, for one, has switched to 9 b3! which makes the most sense as it denies Black the b3-square and now White can always meet ...a4 with b4.
tried 9...e7 against the master of this variation, but after 10 h4 f5 11 h5 cxd4 12 cxd4 ddb8 (I could not see any other way to develop my queenside pieces) 13 d3 d7 14 e2 a4 15 b4 White was slightly better in L.McShane-S.Williams, Liverpool 2006. He has a space advantage and the chance to play g4 later on, although things turned round with 15...a7 16 c3 d5 (sacrificing a pawn for a bit of counterplay) 17 dxa4 c7 18 c5 d3 19 c2 e4 (this piece is my main hope) 20 h6?! (a mistake as the opening of the g-file actually benefits Black) 20...g8 21 hxg7 xg5 22 dxg5 a4 23 b2 xg7 when all of a sudden I had managed to obtain decent counterplay.

Returning to the immediate exchange on d4:
9 cxd4 a5

This is a very sensible plan. White has weakened the b3-square, so Black aims to take advantage by placing his knight there.
10 e2

This has been the choice of a num-

ber of top players and it would seem to give White a small advantage.

There is another possibility in the more direct 10 b4!?. After 10...c4 (the only consistent move) 11 xc4 dxc4 12 e2 the position is quite interesting and in need of further tests. Black is going to rely on the power of his lightsquared bishop, while White has some dangerous tactical ideas based around the pawn break d5: for example, 12 c6 (if Black can play ...c5 and then ...d7, he would have a great position but White has other ideas; 12...a5!? was worth considering) 13 d5! (White starts an immediate attack) 13 xd5 (Black wisely aims to exchange the queens; the other option was 13...xd5 which is unclear: for example, 14 c3 b6 15 d4 g6 16 0-0 when White has some compensation for the pawn) 14 xd5 exd5 15 c3 and now in A.Delchev-S.Kunosic, Bosnian Team Championship 1999, 15...b6 16 b5 d7!? would have led to an unbalanced and very interesting position.

10...b3
Black can also try 10...\(\text{e7}!\) first, which was the choice of French Defence expert Volkov in A.Pridorozhni-S.Volkov, Russian Team Championship 2002. That game continued 11 \(\text{c3}\) \(\text{xb3}\) 12 \(\text{d3}\) 0-0 13 \(\text{h4}\) \(\text{f5}\) 14 \(\text{g4}\)!? \(\text{fxg4}\) 15 \(\text{g5}\) \(\text{g6}\) 16 \(\text{e2}\) \(\text{xg5}\) 17 \(\text{hxg5}\) \(\text{f7}\) 18 \(\text{xe4}\) \(\text{b6}\) 19 \(\text{h3}\) \(\text{bc4}\) 20 \(\text{xe6}\) \(\text{xe6}\) 21 \(\text{xe6}\) \(\text{b5}\) 22 \(\text{h3}\) \(\text{ac4}\) 23 \(\text{xd5}\) \(\text{c2}\) 24 \(\text{e4}\) \(\text{xa3}\) with a very messy position! It did seem that Black was able to gain a lot of counterplay in this game, although I suspect that White can improve somewhere along the way.

11 \(\text{d2}\)

White has two options here. Does he keep the queens on or swap them off? In both instances he will rely on his space advantage to give him an edge:

- a) 11 \(\text{d2}\) is the most aggressive choice and White still has the option of swapping the queens off at a later stage. I actually prepared to play this line as White once. Now:
  - a1) 11...\(\text{b6}\) 12 \(\text{c3}\) \(\text{c4}\) 13 \(\text{d1}\)! (the simplest and best plan; White is trying to prove that that last couple of moves have actually helped him) 13...\(\text{xd1}\)+ 14 \(\text{xd1}\) \(\text{a6}\) and now the typical advance 15 \(\text{f5}\) gave White a slight advantage in J.Van der Wiel-Y.Visser, Dutch Championship, Leeuwarden 2004.
  - a2) 11...\(\text{c4}\) 12 \(\text{c3}\) \(\text{xc3}\)+ 13 \(\text{xc3}\) was played in S.Mannion-W.Wright, Port Erin 2007, where White had a small advantage due to his extra space. Black must also always watch out for \(\text{f5}\) and on top of that White can keep the black pieces at bay on the queenside by playing \(\text{b3}\).
  - a3) 11...\(\text{b6}\)!? makes some sense, but again I slightly prefer White’s position after 12 \(\text{d2}\).

- b) 11 \(\text{c3}\)! does not seem quite as accurate as some of White’s other options, though: for example, 11...\(\text{xd1}\)+ 12 \(\text{xd1}\) \(\text{a6}\) 13 \(\text{c2}\) \(\text{b5}\) 14 \(\text{b3}\) shouldn’t suffice for an advantage after 14...\(\text{b8}\)! according to Psakhis. Black is planning ...\(\text{c6}\) and ...\(\text{b4}\) when he will obtain the initiative on the queenside.

11...\(\text{xd1}\)+ 12 \(\text{xd1}\) \(\text{b5}\) 13 \(\text{b3}\)

White wants to stop any active ideas that Black might try on the queenside. When he has done this, he can concentrate on the kingside where he has a space advantage. A fair assessment would be very slightly better for White.

13...\(\text{e7}\) 14 \(\text{b2}\) \(\text{b7}\)?

Luke states in his annotations that Black’s bishop should go to \(\text{d7}\). Then Black should have played for \(\text{a5-a4}\) in order to get control of the \(\text{c4}\)-square.
For example, 14...\texttt{b6} 15 \texttt{c1}\texttt{?} \texttt{d7} 16 \texttt{d3}, although White’s knight on d3 should still give him a small edge; at some point it may slide into c5.

\textbf{15 \texttt{g1}}!

Luke is very good at manoeuvring in a slow manner, just like another great English Grandmaster, Mickey Adams, and over the next ten moves or so, he shows his class in rearranging his minor pieces to their best squares.

\textbf{15...a6} 16 \texttt{gf3} 0-0

Black could have tried to gain some activity by playing 16...f6\texttt{?}, but it is not clear what his follow-up should be after 17 \texttt{d3} 0-0 18 \texttt{e2}.

\textbf{17 \texttt{d3} \texttt{b6} 18 g4!}

White’s real advantage is on the kingside, where he has more space. Now 19 f5 is a nasty threat.

\textbf{18...f5}

Black decides to stop White from advancing with f5. The problem with this move is that he will now be left with problems along the g-file and White will always have a potentially dangerous passed e-pawn.

\textbf{19 gxf5 \texttt{exf5} 20 \texttt{e2}}

Making room for the white rooks.

\textbf{20...\texttt{c6}}

Black is lacking any counterplay, so he sends his knight to e6.

\textbf{21 h4 \texttt{d8} 22 h5 \texttt{e6} 23 \texttt{e3} \texttt{f7}}

Maybe Black could have tried 23...\texttt{c6}: for example, 24 \texttt{f1} \texttt{f7} 25 \texttt{g3} \texttt{af8}, although now 26 \texttt{c3}\texttt{!} would be a good move. White wants to play \texttt{a5} and Black is slowly running out of moves.

\textbf{24 \texttt{ag1} \texttt{d7} 25 \texttt{g5} \texttt{xg5}}

Or 25...\texttt{xg5} 26 \texttt{fxg5} and Black cannot stop both e6 and g6.

\textbf{26 \texttt{fxg5}}

White wants to play g6 next.

\textbf{26...g6} 27 \texttt{f3}

This knight does a great job here, covering g5 and d4, and blocking Black’s f-pawn.

\textbf{27...\texttt{d8} 28 \texttt{c3}!}

As soon as the bishop lands on a5, Black will no longer be able to gain any counterplay with the advance ...a5-a4.

\textbf{28...\texttt{c7} 29 \texttt{a5} \texttt{c6} 30 \texttt{b1}}

There’s no need to rush! White
wants to create a second weakness on the queenside by playing a4.

30...\textbf{c}c8 31 \textbf{a}a4 \textbf{b}b8?

Black best defensive try was 31...\textbf{d}d7, but after the simple 32 \textbf{a}a1 he would still have been struggling.

32 \textbf{a}xb5 \textbf{a}xb5 33 \textbf{b}b4

White has won control of the a-file and with it the game.

33...\textbf{a}a6 34 \textbf{a}a1 \textbf{x}xa1

34...\textbf{b}ba8 would have allowed 35 \textbf{xa}6 \textbf{xa}6 36 \textbf{xf}8 \textbf{xf}8 37 \textbf{xb}5, winning a vital pawn.

35 \textbf{xa}1 \textbf{d}7

35...f4+ does not achieve much, but it may have been Black’s best chance to gain any counterplay, bad though matters still are after 36 \textbf{d}d2 \textbf{g}xh5 37 \textbf{d}d6 \textbf{b}b7 38 \textbf{a}a8 \textbf{d}d7 39 \textbf{h}h4!?.

36 h6!

Favourably locking up the kingside pawn formation.

36...\textbf{f}7 37 \textbf{d}d6 \textbf{b}b7 38 \textbf{a}a8 \textbf{e}e8 39 \textbf{d}d2 \textbf{d}d7 40 \textbf{c}c3 \textbf{f}f4 41 \textbf{f}f1 \textbf{b}b6 42 \textbf{a}a6 \textbf{c}c8 43 \textbf{b}b4 \textbf{a}a7 44 e6+!

\textbf{44...\textbf{xe}6 45 \textbf{e}e5+ \textbf{g}g8 46 \textbf{g}g2 \textbf{f}f4

Or 46...\textbf{c}c7 47 \textbf{xc}c7 \textbf{xc}c7 48 \textbf{f}f6!, pouring through the floodgates.

47 \textbf{f}f3

White has complete control. He has been winning for a while and he now quickly wraps things up.

47...\textbf{c}c8 48 \textbf{c}c5

Just compare the minor pieces! White’s completely dominate Black’s.

48...\textbf{c}c7 49 \textbf{a}a8 \textbf{c}c6 50 \textbf{xc}c6 \textbf{xc}c6 51 \textbf{xb}b5 1-0

Black had had enough! A very impressive grind from White and this is just the type of thing that I would like to avoid.

Despite the outcome, Addison’s idea of ...\textbf{a}a5 and then ...\textbf{b}b3 is quite interesting and in the next game we will see what I would consider to be an improved version of this plan for Black.

\textbf{Game 40}

\textbf{D.Howell-E.L’Ami}

Wijk aan Zee 2010

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 \textbf{d}d2 \textbf{f}f6 4 e5 \textbf{fd}7 5 \textbf{f}4 \textbf{c}c5 6 c3 \textbf{c}c6 7 \textbf{df}3 \textbf{b}b6 8 a3 \textbf{e}e7!

This is a flexible idea, Black basically keeps his options open. Most of the time he wants to continue with ...\textbf{a}a5, but in some cases he may decide to change his plan. It is worth noting too that in this variation Black wants to keep the pressure up against d4 as this prevents White from arranging his
The Tarrasch Variation: White Plays 5 f4

ideal set-up with d3 and then ge2.

9 h4

White adopts waiting tactics. He wants Black to commit himself to playing a move like ...f6, as then he can develop his bishop to d3 because the pawn on d4 will be indirectly protected. 9 h4 is also a useful space-gaining move.

Instead 9 b4 is quite possibly the most critical move and is the logical follow-up to 8 a3. White gains space on the queenside and goes about his general goal of aiming to suffocate Black. After 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 what should Black do?

Let’s look at some options:

a) 10...f6?! is a move that I would try to avoid as this allows White to play 11 d3!, achieving his ideal set-up. J.Van der Wiel-E.Van Haastert, Leeuwarden 2001, continued 11...0-0 12 b2 (even better is the immediate 12 ge2!) 12...f7 13 e2 f8 (Black is playing too passively) 14 c3 d7 15 a4 d8 16 0-0 b6 17 c3 f5 18 a6 when White had just the kind of stable advantage that he is aiming for in this variation.

b) 10...0-0?! is another typical error. Again this is because White can now play 11 d3! and after 11...f6 (not, of course, 11...xd4? 12 xd4 xd4? 13 xh7+) 12 b2 f7 (always a bad sign!) 13 e2 f8 14 0-0 d7 15 h1 c8 16 d2 f5 17 g1 a6 18 g4 White was rocking and rolling in standard fashion on the kingside in J.Van der Wiel-Y.Visser, Leeuwarden 2002.

c) 10...a6!? is a useful waiting move, as played by the American talent, Ray Robson.

White cannot now play 11 d3 and
Black wants to advance with ...b5 at a later point. Here:

1) 11 h4 is standard stuff and was Howell’s previous choice, but with 11...c7! Black comes up with an attractive way of attacking on the queenside. The basic way that he will proceed is ...b5, ...b6, ...c4 and at the correct moment ...a5, opening up the a-file. This will at least ensure some counterplay for Black. Ray Robson played this idea to perfection in the following game and it is well worth following it the whole way through: 12 e2 b5 13 e2 b6 (stage 2) 14 c1 c4 (stage 3) 15 d3 a5 (and, finally, stage 4; it seems that Black may even have a slight edge here, as he has generated play on the queenside before White has been given a chance to attack on the kingside) 16 d5 0-0 17 d3 h6 18 c3 f6! (only now that Black’s pieces are well positioned does he break) 19 e2 b8 20 c2 f5

(26 x4 dxc4 27 x4 c6 leaves Black with very good compensation on the light squares) 26 c6 27 h3 x3 28 x3 a6 29 x6 x6 30 x4 dxc4 31 x3 b4 (the rest is easy) 32 f2 a4 33 c6 c8 34 d5 exd5 35 d2 x6 36 e6 a2 37 g3 c5+ 38 f3 c3 39 e1 cxb2 40 x7+ x7 41 e5+ g8 0-1, D.Hoowell-R.Robson, Puerto Madryn 2009.

c2) After 11 b2 the bishop may become a target, especially to ideas of ...b6 and then ...c4. I would now recommend that Black changes set-up with 11...d8, as the loss of time can be rectified with ...b5, ...b6 and then ...c4.

With 12 d3 b6 (12...b5!? 13 e2 h5 Black aims to put a stop to g4. White may have a small advantage here to due to his extra space, but there is everything to play for. S.Kindermann-D.Donchev, Plovdiv 1984, continued 14 0-0 d7 15 c3 c8 16 d2 f8! (16...g6 would have been my preference, not allowing White to play f5) 17 f5 exf5 18 xf5 xf5 19 x5 d7
when White was slightly better.

9...cxd4

Only now does Black go in for the plan based on ...a5. L’Ami figures that the inclusion of the moves ...e7 and h4 has helped him.

10 cxd4 a5!

This plan has scored very well for Black and it looks like there is little to fear in this position.

11 h3

White has also tried:

a) 11 b4 c4 12 axc4 (12 d3 a5! worked out well for Black in A.Prihotko-A.Polivanov, Donetsk 2008, after 13 bxa5 axa5+ 14 f2 b5) 12...dxc4 (if you compare this position to the notes to White’s 10th move in McShane-Addison, it is clear that the moves h4 and ...e7 have helped Black) 13 e2 wC6 14 d5 exd5 15 c3 b6 16 e3 g4 17 b5 wC7 18 xd5 axd5 19 wxd5 d8 20 w4 and Black had a big advantage in Z.Stanojoski-V.Popov, Struga 2008. He has the two bishops, control of the d-file and a dangerous passed c-pawn.

b) 11 e2 is a move that White often plays in response to ...a5, but Black is better developed here, so he should be fine after 11...b3 12 b1 0-0 when he can even consider playing a quick ...f6.

11...b3

Simply and good. Black eliminates White’s dark-squared bishop. He is certainly not worse in the ensuing struggle.

12 b1 c1 13 xc1 a5+?

An interesting idea. Black wants to force White to go b4 as then Black has a target to attack. Black can aim to attack the pawn on b4 with ...a5 which, he hopes, will bring his dark-squared bishop to life.

14 d2

After 14 b4 w8 15 d3 a5 16 b5 a4 Black’s position is fine. He is ready to continue with ...b6 and then ...xd7 and ...c8 with good play on the queenside. White in the meantime has to generate some action on the kingside.

14...b6
Simple development. Black’s queen is now actually well placed on a5 where it puts pressure on White’s queenside. I would consider this position to be roughly equal, but saying that it does seem that Black’s middlegame plan is the easier to follow.

Instead 14...b5 allows 15 wc6 when White gets control of the c-file, which is a bit annoying for Black.

15 wc3 0-0

Black refuses the temptation of the h-pawn. It was possible to capture it with 15...hxh4+, but White obtains decent enough activity after 16 g3 e7 17 wc2 0-0 18 d3 and later in the game Black might regret opening the h-file.

16 db3 wa4 17 df3 we8

Black wants to chase the white rook on c3 away with ...da4.

18 dc5 da4

20 f6!

This standard idea yet again! Even in the middlegame and endgame you must stay aware to the possibility of playing this break. All of a sudden White’s king will start to look quite exposed on e1 and Black is better.

21 g3? de7?

Black missed his chance to play 21...wg6! when the queen controls the d3-square, making it hard for White to play ed3. On top of that, White also has to defend the g-pawn in some way. He would have been really struggling after this: for example, 22 ff2 ed7 23 b4 fx e5 24 de5 x f4+! (here come the tactics) 25 gxf4 xh4+ 26 we2 we4+ 27 ed2 xf4+ 28 ec3 xe5+ and Black has a winning position.

22 ed3

Stopping ...wg6.
22...b5

Black is still fine as he can swap off White’s strong light-squared bishop.

23 axb5 axb5 24 e3 fxe5 25 dxe5 f6 26 f2 e8 27 b4 a5 28 g2 dxe5 29 bxe5 c6 30 cb2 axb4 31 xb4 xc5 32 xb7 c2+ 33 h3 g6

Black has gone astray and he was lucky to now go on and score a win in the game.

34 d7?

Why not 34 h5?

The ending looks horrible for Black: for example, 34...f5+ 35 xf5 xf5 36 a7! c8 37 bb7 xh5+ 38 g4 g6 and White is well in control of the situation.

34...h5!

Stopping White from advancing with h5.

35 g5

White is still better due to his piece activity, but he must be careful as Black is solid and the a-pawn can become a weakness.

35...h7 36 bb7 g8

Black grimly holds on.

37 a7 c1 38 xg6+ xg6 39 a4 f5!

L’ami is fine after this as his king escapes the danger zone and his d-pawn proves to be more dangerous than White’s a-pawn. He still does very well to win the game though!

40 ab7

40 xg7 xg7 41 xg7 e4 is very dangerous for White as he will struggle to stop Black’s d-pawn.

40...a8!? 41 g4 d3 45 e5+ d4

46 b2

White should have considered 46 b4+ c3 47 c5+ xb4 48 xc1 xa4 49 h5 b3 50 f5 which is very close to being drawn.

46...c3 47 f2 d2 48 c5+ d3 49 xd2+ xd2 50 xc1 xc1 51 h5?

The superior 51 f5! exf5+ 52 xf5 d2 53 h5 looks like a draw to me.

51...d2 52 g5 e3 53 f6 f3 54 xe6?!”

After this move White is completely
lost. He should have tried 54 h6!, although Black should still win after 54...\textdaggerdbl}g4 55 h7 \textdaggerdbl}h5 56 \textdaggerdbl}g7 \textdaggerdbl}d7+ 57 \textdaggerdbl}g8 \textdaggerdbl}g6!.

54...\textdaggerdbl}g4! 55 f5 \textdaggerdbl}xh5 56 \textdaggerdbl}g4+ \textdaggerdbl}g5 57 \textdaggerdbl}f7 \textdaggerdbl}a8 58 \textdaggerdbl}g7 \textdaggerdbl}a7+ 59 \textdaggerdbl}g8 \textdaggerdbl}xa4 60 \textdaggerdbl}g7 \textdaggerdbl}a7+ 61 \textdaggerdbl}g8 \textdaggerdbl}b7 0-1

**Conclusion**

I always used to enjoy playing against this ambitious variation. Certainly after 8 h4 cxd4 9 cxd4 \textdaggerdbl}b4+ 10 \textdaggerdbl}f2 f6 Black’s position is fairly easy to play and pretty dangerous to boot! Then along came 8 a3 which caused me a few sleepless nights for a while. At club level White will do well to keep his position together playing right across the board after 8 a3, but at grandmaster level things can quickly become quite unpleasant for Black. However, 8...\textdaggerdbl}e7 looks like a good response, no matter who you are playing! Black will meet 9 h4 with 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 \textdaggerdbl}a5! and 9 b4 with 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 a6!? I, for one, am certainly no longer intimidated by 8 a3.
Chapter 8
The Tarrasch Variation: White’s Plays  ♖d3 and  ♘e2

It is now time to take a look at one of the most popular variations in the whole French, 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3  ♖d2 ♗f6 4 e5  ♗fd7 5  ♖d3 c5 6 c3 ♗c6 7  ♘e2.

I have come across this set-up on a regular basis and it is important to have a deep look at the following variations. After 7...cxd4 8 cxd4 f6 9 exf6 ♗xf6 10 0-0 ♗d6 11 ♘f3 I like 11...♗c7 which is the most aggressive move and offers Black attacking chances.

I am going to discuss some of the common strategic ideas during the course of each game, but I will give a quick mention here to some of the more important things to remember.

The  ♖d3 and  ♘ge2 Tarrasch from Black’s Perspective

1. Avoid the exchange of dark-squared bishops by playing ...♗h5
Black should aim to avoid exchanging the dark-squared bishops as this would leave him with a number of weaknesses. Indeed, White will often aim to trade these pieces by playing the manoeuvre ♘g5, ♘h4 and then ♘g3. I am going to almost exclusively suggest that Black always meets ♘h4 with ...♗h5.

J.Emms-S.Williams
British League (4NCL) 1999

(see following diagram)

White has just played 13 ♘h4 and Black responded with 13...♗h5!. Remember, as a general rule, when White
At tacking Ch ess: Th e Fre nc h

plays \( \text{h}4 \), intending \( \text{g}3 \), Black should play \( \text{h}5 \). This makes it tricky for White to exchange bishops and Black also opens the f-file for his rook on f8, which brings us on to the next theme...

Now with 16...\( \text{xf}3 \) I was able to generate enough counterplay.

3. The prophylactic ...a6

White will quite often aim to take control of the e5-square. One standard way that White does this is by playing \( \text{b}5 \) and then \( \text{xc}6 \), eliminating Black’s knight on c6. However, Black can stop this plan by playing ...a6.

A.Perrson-E.Berg
Stockholm 2006/07

White was possibly threatening to play \( \text{b}5 \), so Berg took a time-out to stop this move. After 14...a6! White found it a lot harder to gain control of the e5-square.

4. Rerouting the Queen

Black can often play the strong idea ...g6 followed by ...\( \text{g}7 \). The black queen is very well placed on g7 where it places pressure on d4 and avoids any pins on the c-file. The queen also supports a later kingside pawn advance starting with ...g5.
The exchange sacrifice on f3 is not entirely satisfactory here because White can recapture with his queen, but Black needs to find a way to increase the pressure on White’s position, which I did with 15...g6! 16 c1 g7!. My position has improved over the last couple of moves and I quickly gained a winning position, as we will see below.

The d3 and ge2 Tarrasch from White’s Perspective
I have already mentioned some of the ideas that White is trying to achieve:

1. The exchange of dark-squared bishops.
2. Gaining control of the e5-square by playing b5 and xc6.

What else is there to look out for?

The knight hop c3, a4 and then b6
This tends to only work once Black has played ...g7, but it is worth mentioning anyway.

I had just played 16...g7 which allowed 17 a4!. The knight heads towards the weakened b6-square, which is an idea worth keeping an eye open for. The game continued 17...b8? (a pathetic move; it was time for the thematic 17...xf3!) and now White should have played 18 b6 with an edge.

Game 41
J.Emms-S. Williams
British League (4NCL) 1999
1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 d2 d6 4 d3
This move gives Black some extra options. 4 e5 is a more common approach when we are back in the game after 4...fd7 5 d3 c5.
4...c5
I prefer to keep things simple by playing this move. This keeps the number of variations that I have to learn to a minimum.
5 e5 \( \text{d2} \)f7

We have arrived back at the main line.

6 c3

Both sides are basically following typical French strategies. White will try and hold his pawn formation together, whilst Black will aim to attack it. Here rather than use his f-pawn to support e5, White will support it with his pieces.

6...\( \text{c} \)c6

Attacking d4.

7 \( \text{e} \)e2

Defending d4. This is the main line and White’s most popular move. White now plans on bringing his other knight from d2 to f3.

7 \( \text{g} \)g3, the ever-increasingly popular, so-called Universal System, will be the subject of the next chapter.

7...\( \text{cxd} \)4

It is important to capture here before playing ...f6.

The immediate 7...\( \text{f} \)6?! is actually a mistake as White can play 8 \( \text{d} \)f4!. If Black had exchanged on d4 he would now be able to play ...\( \text{xd} \)4, but this is not possible here. Thus Black is forced to play a move like 8...\( \text{e} \)7 which is not ideal as it blocks in the dark-squared bishop.

8 \( \text{cxd} \)4 \( \text{f} \)6!

As so often, Black must attack White’s strong pawn formation.

9 \( \text{exf} \)6

White can also play 9 \( \text{d} \)f4!? which leads to an interesting battle where Black has good compensation for the exchange after 9...\( \text{d} \)xd4 10 \( \text{h} \)h5+ \( \text{e} \)7 11 exf6+ \( \text{x} \)xf6 12 \( \text{g} \)g6+ hxg6 13 \( \text{x} \)xh8 \( \text{f} \)7, as we’ll see later in Rublevsky-Volkov.
9...\texttt{xf6}

The exchange on f6 has helped Black. For a start he now has more space for manoeuvre and in the long run the half-open f-file can also come in useful. Just look how the game develops!

10 \texttt{f3}

The natural square for White’s knight.

10...\texttt{d6}

The best square for Black’s dark-squared bishop. On d6 it covers e5 which could become a weakness and the bishop also looks over at h2. It is worth pointing out that when White castles Black can often start an attack against h2, as, indeed, I was quick to do here.

11 \texttt{0-0}

This has been the starting point for a large number of games. We should now take a time-out to have a look at what both sides are planning here.

White’s aims:

1. Black’s pawn formation is somewhat damaged and White would like to take control of e5 at a later point. The e5-square is especially important if White is able to anchor a piece there. Black won’t be able to kick it away with a pawn, ...\texttt{d6} or ...\texttt{f6}, as those pawns have gone.

2. White will often try to attack Black’s backward pawn on e6, such as with \texttt{e1}.

3. White will try to exchange the dark-squared bishops. The next few moves often revolve around this plan. If White can achieve this he has more control of the e5-square and Black will lose one of his best pieces.

4. Sometimes White will play \texttt{b5} and swap on c6. Again this gives White more control of the e5-square.

5. White may aim to control the c-file.

Black’s plans:

1. Black often aims to go all-out with an attack against White’s king.

2. To attack White’s king Black will often aim to sacrifice the exchange on f3. This shatters White’s pawn formation and opens up his king.

3. Black’s knight on f6 sometimes tries to relocate to f4 via h5. This performs two roles: it opens up the rook on f8 and f4 is a more aggressive square for the knight.

4. Black’s light-squared bishop often takes the path d7-e8-h5 to enter the attack.

5. Sometimes Black plays ...\texttt{e5} to free up his pieces, although you should not be in a rush to play this move.
6. ...g6 and ...\textit{g}7 is another good plan. Let's move on to the game.

\textbf{11...c7}

I am quite a fan of this move. Black stops White from exchanging the dark-squared bishops and piles up the pressure on h2.

\textbf{12 g5}

This is White's main move and is played in the majority of games. White will often continue with h4 and g3, aiming to swap off the bishops.

Other options will be analysed later on in this chapter.

\textbf{12...0-0}

The rook gets ready to attack f3. Once upon a time I took a quick look at 12...d7?! with the idea of castling queenside! This seems to be the speciality of one Thomas Clarke. I certainly cannot recommend playing like this though: for example, 13 c1 0-0-0!? (here we go!) 14 a3 b8 15 b4 b6 16 d2 and White's position was to be preferred in S.Collins-T.Clarke, Kilkenny 1998. White has the simple plan of playing c3 and then a4!.

\textbf{13 h4}

Again White has some other options which will be looked at later on. After 13 h4 White is intending to play g3, exchanging the bishops which would clearly help him. How can Black stop this plan?

The main alternative is 13 c1, as we'll see in our next but one game, Persson-Berg.

\textbf{13...h5!}

This is a critical idea and one well worth remembering. Black aims to meet g3 with ...xg3, keeping his best minor piece, and prepares an exchange sacrifice on f3.
The Tarrasch Variation: White Plays $d3$ and $e2$

14 $\text{c2}$

Attacking Black on the light squares.

14...h6

14...g6? is the move that Black would like to play, but is a blunder here as White can play 15 $\text{xg6! hxg6 16}\text{w}\text{xg6+ g7 17 g5}$ when he is winning.

15 $\text{h7+}$

This forces Black's king to h8 which is a worse square for it to be on. This might not be apparent now, but at a later point the king on g8 does a good job of defending the f-file. Black also loses the option of meeting $\text{g6}$ with ...$\text{d6}$; $\text{w}\text{xg6 f7}$ which can sometimes be a favourable exchange of queens for him.

An important alternative is 15 $\text{g6}$ when White may be able to play $\text{h7+}$ later on, which could get his bishop out of danger. Black should respond in a similar fashion to the game and play 15...$\text{xf3!}$ with good play:

![Chess Diagram]

a) 16 $\text{gx}\text{f3}$ $\text{xh2+ 17 h1 f4 18 g3 e5?!}$ was recently tried by Emanuel Berg. His name will pop up a lot in the course of this chapter and Berg is probably the World’s leading exponent of this variation. For that reason alone it is well worth studying his games. This will ensure that you get a better feel for how Black should play these positions. Here:

   a1) 19 $\text{ad1?!}$ was seen in H. Groetz-E. Berg, Tromsø 2009, which continued, 19...e4 20 $\text{xe4 dx}\text{e4 21 fxe4 h3}$ 22 $\text{b3+ h8 23 xh2 g5 24 g1 gxh4}$ 25 e5 $\text{e6}$, leaving Black with a winning position.

   a2) 19 $\text{xh2!}$ is the critical test of Black’s plan: 19...$\text{d6}$ 20 $\text{h7+}$ (here we see an occasion where it is useful for White to have saved $\text{h7+}$ until later – just compare this to our main game) 20...$\text{h8 21 ad1}$ (21 dxe5 $\text{xe5}$ 22 $\text{f5}\text{xf5}$ 23 $\text{xf5}\text{e6}$ is very good for Black, even though he is temporarily a rook down; after 24 $\text{g3 c8 25 xc8+ xc8}$ 26 $\text{xf4 xf5}$ 27 $\text{xe5 xe5+}$ Black should have really gone on to win this position in M. Ulibin-E. Berg, Bajada de la Virgen 2005) 21...g6! and it seems that Black has a fine position. S. Fedorchuk-P. Cech, Prague 2003, continued 22 $\text{h5?!}$ (22 $\text{e2}$ may have been better) and now Black should have grasped the opportunity to have played 22...$\text{f5!}$ which would have left him with a large advantage: for example, 23 dxe5 $\text{xe5}$ 24 $\text{b3 xh5}$ 25 $\text{g3 d8}$ when Black will shortly pick up White’s bishop on h7 which will leave him with a big advantage.
At tacking Chess: The French

a3) Note too that 19 \( \text{h}7+ \text{h}8 \) does not help White here.

b) 16 \( \text{x}h5?! \) is not as strong here as when the black king is on h8. After 16...\( \text{x}h2+ \) 17 \( \text{h}1 \text{f}8! \) (even this is now possible; 17...\( \text{x}f5 \) 18 \( \text{g}6 \text{d}6 \) 19 \( \text{x}f5 \) exf5 is also an improved position for Black, as in this case his back rank is less vulnerable compared to when his king is on h8) the main difference between this position and the position where Black has his king on h8 is that with the king on h8, White is able to play 18 f4 which is practically winning due to a pin against Black's rook on f8. That is not possible here as Black's rook on f8 is defended by its king!

15...\( \text{h}8 \) 16 \( \text{g}6 \text{xf}3! \)

Black must play as aggressively as possible and this standard idea is pretty strong here.

17 \( \text{gx}f3 \)

17 \( \text{x}h5?! \) is what White often plays nowadays, aiming to gain a small but steady advantage, as we'll see in our next game.

17...\( \text{x}h2+ \) 18 \( \text{h}1 \text{f}4 \)

The position is very complex, but I prefer Black's chances.

19 \( \text{g}3 \)

White can also try 19 \( \text{x}h2 \) even though I cannot find any examples in the database of this move. A sensible idea here would be 19...\( \text{g}6+! \) 20 \( \text{g}3 \text{f}7 \) and again Black has good attacking chances on the kingside. There is no rush, so Black should play ...\( \text{d}7 \) and ...\( \text{f}8 \) before attacking, and I like Black's position here.

Instead 19 \( \text{xf}4 \text{xf}4 \) offers Black
very good chances: for example, 20 
\[\text{Ad1 d7 21 a3 f8 22 g1 d6}\]
and Black is definitely better.

19...d6!

At the time this move was a novelty and it is still a strong move. The position cannot easily be explained with words, only by pure calculation. Let's just say that this move allows the black knight on c6 to move (now the queen is unpinned) and it also threatens ...e5.

19...b6!? may also be good for Black, but I prefer having my queen nearer to the kingside.

20 \[\text{Ad1}\]

Trying to defend everything.

The most critical response is 20 \[\text{xh2}\]. White accepts the sacrificed material but he is in serious trouble after 20...\[\text{xd4}\]: for example, 21 \[\text{d1 xg6}\] (the simplest way to proceed; 21...e5!? is also possible) 22 \[\text{xd4 e5}\] 23 \[\text{a4 d7}\] and when White's bishop on h4 drops, he will be left with a horrible position.

20...\[e5!\]

This move frees up more of Black's pieces and was the main idea behind my novelty.

21 \[f5\]

This is the best try as 21 \[\text{xh2 xg6}\] is clearly winning for Black.

21...\[xf5\] 22 \[xf5\]

The only move. 22 \[xf5? g6\] is again easily winning for Black.

22...\[f8\]

Black is still doing well after this, but I had a better move in 22...\[\text{xd4!}\] which would have left me with a great position: for example, 23 \[\text{xd4 exd4 24 xh2 f8 25 b1}\] (or 25 \[g4 g5\] 26 \[xg5 hxg5\] 27 \[xg5 f6\] 28 \[xf6+ xf6\] 29 \[d1 d3\] and Black's d-pawn will decide the day) 25...\[e6!\] when White is powerless to prevent checkmate.

23 \[g4\]

23...\[xg3?!\]

Another mistake and White is fine after this move. I should have played 23...g5! when all the lines work out in Black's favour: for example, 24 \[\text{xh2 gxh4 25 xh4 xd4}\] with a winning attack.

24 \[fxg3 e6\]
I was relying on the fact that White’s bishop on h4 would be trapped, but Emms finds a way out.

25 dxe5 \textit{dx}e5 26 \textit{wh}5

This stops the bishop-winning ...g5.

26...d4 27 \textit{e}7! \textit{wx}e7 28 \textit{xe}5

White is over the worst and he could even be better if I am not careful.

28...\textit{d}7 29 \textit{g}4 \textit{d}3 ½-½

Here a draw was agreed in a fairly equal position; not a bad result for me at the time. We can certainly see that this variation offers some very interesting attacking chances for Black, but it is complicated. I would recommend that the reader goes over this game a couple of times to get to grips with some of the key ideas.

\textit{Game 42}

\textit{G.Antal-J.Michielsen}

Pardubice 2007

1 \textit{e}4 \textit{e}6 2 \textit{d}4 \textit{d}5 3 \textit{d}d2 \textit{xf}6 4 \textit{e}5 \textit{fd}7 5 \textit{d}d3 \textit{c}5 6 \textit{c}3 \textit{c}6 7 \textit{e}2 \textit{xd}4 8 \textit{xd}4 \textit{f}6 9 \textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 10 0-0 \textit{d}6 11 \textit{f}3 \textit{c}7 12 \textit{g}5 0-0 13 \textit{h}4 \textit{h}5

As we saw in the previous game, this is the only way for Black to fight for the initiative.

Instead after 13...\textit{e}5 14 dxe5 \textit{xe}5 15 \textit{dx}e5 \textit{xe}5 16 \textit{g}3 White has a small but lasting advantage.

14 \textit{xc}2 \textit{h}6 15 \textit{h}7+ \textit{h}8 16 \textit{g}6 \textit{xf}3!

As per Emms-Williams, but in this game we are going to concentrate on White’s most recent attempt at gaining an advantage.

17 \textit{hx}h5

With this move White is hoping to get a long-term edge after all following 17...\textit{f}8 18 \textit{g}3. The exchange of dark-squared bishop will obviously help White and this variation would leave Black with few winning chances.

17...\textit{xh}2+!?

This is the move that I am going to recommend – yet again Black sacrifices the exchange! If you need to play for a win, then this is the move to play.

The text is a much more dynamic choice than 17...\textit{f}8 which should admittedly be okay for Black, but there are just not that many winning chances left in the position: for example, 18 \textit{g}3 \textit{d}7 19 \textit{ad}1 \textit{xg}3 20 \textit{hxg}3 \textit{f}6 21 \textit{ff}4 \textit{c}8 22 \textit{g}4 \textit{xf}4!? 23 \textit{gxf}4 \textit{xf}4 24 \textit{h}3 \textit{xd}4 25 \textit{wd}2 \textit{wd}2 26 \textit{xd}2 \textit{c}6 with an equal game, M.Goden-A.Berescu, Warsaw 2005.

18 \textit{h}1 \textit{f}5

With the black king on h8 this is forced as 18...\textit{f}8? runs into trouble after 19 \textit{f}4! (19 \textit{g}3? allows 19...\textit{g}5 with
The Tarrasch Variation: White Plays $d3$ and $e2$

an unclear position) $19...\text{xf4}$ $20\text{xf4}$
$\text{xf4}$ $21\text{g3} \text{xf1+} 22\text{xf1} \text{wd8} 23\text{xf7}$ when White has a winning attack,

$19 \text{g6 d6 20 xf5 xf5}$

After a rather forced sequence we arrive at what I would consider to be the starting point of this variation. Let’s take a look at what both sides are trying to achieve here.

Black:
1. Wants to pressurize White on the kingside. He can do this by playing $...\text{f7}$, $...\text{g5}$ and $...\text{g4}$.
2. Ideally Black wants to develop his remaining pieces by playing $...\text{d7}$ and $...\text{e8}$.
3. Sometimes the dark-squared bishop can move around to b6 or f6 from where it would place extra pressure on White’s d-pawn.

White:
1. Will try to take control of the open e- and c-files. He has an extra rook so he needs to use it.
2. Attack Black’s d-pawn. This will tie Black down to defence when he would rather be attacking!
3. Exchange the dark-squared bishops by playing $\text{g3}$. At the moment White’s bishop is in danger of being suffocated by $...\text{g5}$ and $...\text{f4}$, so it would benefit White if he could exchange it.

All in all, I suspect that the position is dynamically equal.

$21 \text{ae1!}$

This would seem to be White’s best move in the position. Through tactical means White stops Black from playing $...\text{g5}$ and $...\text{f4}$. He also wants to force the exchange of dark-squared bishops by playing $\text{g3}$.

Others:

a) $21 \text{f4}$ has been played on a number of occasions and you should be well prepared for this move as it would seem to be White’s most obvious choice. After $21...\text{f7!}$ the queen does a great job, defending d5 and threatening to jump over to h5.

Now:

a1) $22 \text{f3 d7}$ (it is worth noting that both bishops, on d7 and d6, con-
Attacking Chess: The French

trol all the possible entry points that White’s rooks may later want to take)
23 \(\text{Qf2} \text{Be8} 24 \text{Cc3} \) looks about equal and was later drawn in Pan Qian-N.Zhukova, Xiapu 2005.

a2) 22 \(\text{Qg1} \) is also very logical when V.Rasulov-J.Timman, Baku 2008, provides a good demonstration of Black’s plans: 22...\(\text{Qd7} 23 \text{Qd2} \text{Be8} \) (given a chance this rook would love to land on e4) 24 \(\text{Cc3} \text{Wh5} 25 \text{Qg3} \text{Qe7?!} \) (one of Black’s ideas at a later point is to transfer this knight to e4; it could take the route via g8 and f6) 26 \(\text{Qae1} \text{Qc8} 27 \text{Qe3} \text{Wf7} 28 \text{We2} \text{a6} \) (White has no entry points into Black’s position; on the other hand, Black can slowly improve his position) 29 \(\text{Wf3} \text{Qc6} 30 \text{b3} \text{Qg6} \) (also possible is 30...\(\text{Qg8}?!\)) 31 \(\text{Qe1} \text{Wh7} 32 \text{Da4} \text{Qxa4} 33 \text{bxa4} \text{Qc4} 34 \text{Wd1} \text{Qb4} 35 \text{Qf1} \text{Cc3} 36 \text{Qd3} \text{Wf6} 37 \text{Qh1} \text{Qxd4} \) and Black had won a pawn and with it the game.

b) 21 \(\text{Qe1} \) is another possibility. After all, it is not obvious which rook White would like to place on e1. There was an interesting story behind the game we will see here. It was played at the World Junior in 2010. I was selected to be the coach of the English team and the player of the black pieces was the English female Under-18 representative, Sheila Dines. I spent a couple of hours on the morning of the game trying to teach Sheila the French, which is a lot to learn! She then showed amazing memory and talent to completely destroy her opponent in what can only be classed as a brilliant game.

M.Motycakova-S.Dines, Belfort 2010, continued 21...\(\text{Wf7} 22 \text{Qg3} \text{Qb4}! \) We had even got this far in the morning, but now Sheila was playing on her own:

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

23 \(\text{Qed1} \text{Qd7} 24 \text{f3} \text{Be8} 25 \text{Qg1} \text{g5}! \) (Sheila is an aggressive player and she does not hesitate in starting a kingside attack) 26 \(\text{Cc4} 27 \text{Qf2} \text{g4}! \) (no messing about!) 28 \(\text{fxg4} \text{Qg8} 29 \text{Qf1} \text{Qxg4} \) (Black has played the opening and early middlegame perfectly and now goes on to win in style) 30 \(\text{Qe3} \text{Qd6} 31 \text{Qad1} \text{Wh5} \) (getting that little bit nearer to White’s king...) 32 \(\text{Cc1} \text{f3}! 33 \text{Qxf3} \text{Wh2}+ 34 \text{Qf1} \text{Wh1}+ 35 \text{Qe2} \text{Qxg2}+ 36 \text{Qe3} \text{Qf4}+!! \) (a beautiful way to win material; White is lost after this) 37 \(\text{Qxf4} \text{Wh3}+ 38 \text{Qf3} \text{We6}+ 39 \text{Qe4} \text{dxe4} 40 \text{d5} \text{We7} 41 \text{Qf4} \text{Qb4} 42 \text{Qxe4} \text{We5} 43 \text{Qf3} \text{Qg4}+ 44 \text{Qxg2} \text{Qxd1} 45 \text{Qf2} \text{Qxd5}+ 46 \text{Qg1} \text{Qd3} 47 \text{Qxd3} \text{Qxd3} 48 \text{Qf2} \text{Qg3}+ 49 \text{Qf1} \text{h5} 50 \text{Qd2} \text{Qf3} 51 \text{Qc3}+ \text{Qh7} 52 \text{Qd2} \text{h4} 53 \text{Qd7}+ \text{Qh6} 0-1.

Instructive stuff!

Returning to 21 \(\text{Qae1}:

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The Tarrasch Variation: White Plays $d3$ and $e2$

21... $f7$!

This is Black’s best move. The queen is well placed on $h5$ from where it defends $d5$ and the $e8$-square. It may also be able to swing over to $h5$ at a later moment.

Black actually has to be careful here as there are a number of ways that he can go wrong. For example:

a) 21... $d7$?! cuts the queen off: 22 $c3$! (with this move White takes the advantage; we can now see why I would like my queen to be positioned on $f7$) 22...$b6$ (22...$a5$ is a bad square for the queen; White can now play 23 $g3$! when 23...$f4$? fails to 24 $g6$! $f3$ 25 $b3$ with a big advantage) 23 $d2$ $f4$ (alternatively, 23...$xd4$ 24 $d4$ $xd4$ 25 $e7$! is very good for White, or 23...$g5$ 24 $xg5$ $hxg5$ 25 $xg5$ with a decisive attack) 24 $d5$ $b5$ 25 $xf4$ $b4$ 26 $d1$ $xe1$ 27 $xe1$. White has played perfectly here. He has a big advantage and went on to win in D.Navara-D.Stellwagen, Wijk aan Zee 2006.

b) The obvious move, 21...$g5$?, is a mistake due to 22 $g3$ $f4$ 23 $g6$! $xf3$ (23...$f8$ does not help: 24 $xf4$! $gxf4$ 25 $e8$ is winning for White) 24 $xg3$ (Black cannot successfully prevent $f7$) 24...$g7$ 25 $xd6$ when White is winning.

c) However, 21...$g8$?! is interesting. The idea behind this move is that the black king now has the $f7$-square to escape to. Play could continue 22 $g3$ $f4$ 23 $xf4$?! (entering a complicated variation) 23...$xf4$ 24 $e8+$ $f7$ 25 $h8$ with a very complicated game, which I would suggest needs some serious computer analysis.

22 $g3$

White would really like to exchange the bishops and Black has to avoid this. 22...$b4$!

This is an important move to remember to play. The bishop hits the white rook and has plans to move around to $b6$. This also keeps threats of $f4$ in the air.

Instead 22...$f4$? is a blunder and this move demonstrates one of the reasons why White has moved his rook to $e1$: 23
\( \text{xf4! wins a pawn and the game.} \)

22...\( \text{xf3} \) 23 \( \text{fxg3!} \) is also better for White who has unpleasant pressure down the e- and f-files.

23 \( \text{d1} \)

White should move the rook as 23 \( \text{c3?!} \) allows 23...f4!, forcing the bishop to a passive square: 24 \( \text{h2} \) (24 \( \text{xf4?} \) does not work anymore due to 24...\( \text{xf4} \) 25 \( \text{e8}+ \) \( \text{f8} \) which is good for Black) 24...f3!? with attacking chances.

23...\( \text{d7} \)

I would say this position is about equal and practical results in tournaments have tended to justify that assessment.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_diagram.png}
\caption{Position after 23...d7}
\end{figure}

24 a3

White has also tried 24 \( \text{d3} \), but Black can now play 24...f4!? which simplifies matters after 25 \( \text{xf4} \) f5 26 \( \text{d1} \) g5!? 27 \( \text{e2} \) xd3 28 \( \text{xd3} \) e8 29 \( \text{c3} \) and now 29...f8!? manoeuvred the bishop around to g7 to place d4 under pressure in S.Erenburg-Li Shilong, Vlissingen 2006.

24...\( \text{e7}?! \)

The bishop moves around to f6 which is a good square. On f6 the bishop attacks d4 and covers the e5- and e7-squares. Later on it may be important to cover these squares as White may try to plant one of his rooks on either e5 or e7. The problem, however, is that White has a strong plan based on \( \text{f4} \).

Here the alternative 24...a5!? looks better.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_diagram2.png}
\caption{Position after 24...a5!}
\end{figure}

Indeed, I would prefer this move: for example, 25 b4!? \( \text{b6} \) 26 \( \text{a2} \) (this would seem to be White's best plan) 26...e8 27 \( \text{f4} \) e7 when Black is threatening to play ...g5 and then ...f4. The position remains dynamically equal.

25 \( \text{fe1} \) f6 26 \( \text{b3} \)!

This is the best way to cause Black some annoyance.

26...b6

26...a5!? looks better.

27 \( \text{f4} \) xd4

Or 27...e7 28 \( \text{d3} \) when White will take control of the e5 square with a sizeable advantage.
The Tarrasch Variation: White Plays \( d3 \) and \( e2 \)

28 \( \text{Wxd5} \)

Black is in serious trouble now and he did very well to survive.

28...\( \text{Wxd5} \) \( \text{Qxd5} \) \( \text{Qxb2} \) 30 \( \text{Bb4?!} \)

This is still good, but 30 \( \text{Qxb6} \) was a lot clearer: for example, 30...\( \text{axb6} \) 31 \( \text{Qxd7} \) with a winning position.

30...\( \text{Qe8} \)

31 \( \text{Qf1?!} \)

This, however, is a clear mistake. Has White not heard of the phrase: ‘When you are material up you should aim to swap pieces off?’

White should have played the simple 31 \( \text{Qxe8+} \) \( \text{Qxe8} \) 32 \( \text{Qe1} \) \( \text{Qd7} \) 33 \( \text{Qxc6} \) \( \text{Qxc6} \) 34 \( \text{Qe7} \) with good winning chances.

31...\( \text{Qd4!} \)

The game is equal again now!

32 \( \text{Qxd4?!} \)

White decides to head for a drawn endgame, which is a bit unambitious.

32...\( \text{Qxd4} \) 33 \( \text{Qd1} \) \( \text{f4} \) 34 \( \text{Qh4} \) \( \text{Qc8} \) 35 \( \text{Qxd4} \) \( \text{g5} \) 36 \( \text{Qc6} \) \( \text{gxh4} \) 37 \( \text{Qxa7} \) \( \text{h3} \) 38 \( \text{Qxc8} \) \( \text{hxg2+} \) 39 \( \text{Qxg2} \) \( \text{Qxc8} \) 40 \( \text{Qd6} \)

The game has simplified. There is not much play left in the position.

40...\( \text{a8} \) 41 \( \text{Qhx6+} \) \( \text{g7} \) 42 \( \text{h3} \) \( \text{Qf6} \) 43 \( \text{Qb3} \) \( \text{f5} \) 44 \( \text{Qb5+} \) \( \text{g4} \) 45 \( \text{Qb3} \) \( \text{a5} \) 46 \( \text{Qc3} \) \( \text{y2-y2} \)

In the next game we will look at what I would consider to be the ‘modern variation’, 13 \( \text{Qc1} \). I have faced this move a couple of times and to start with I struggled to find a good response. Step forward Mr Berg. I mentioned Emanuel Berg earlier on in this chapter and he really does understand 11...\( \text{Qc7} \) very well. In this game he just responds with 13...\( \text{h6} \), which seems to be a simple and good solution to 13 \( \text{Qc1} \).

Game 43
A.Peresson-E.Berg
Stockholm 2006/07

1 \( \text{e4} \) \( \text{e6} \) 2 \( \text{d4} \) \( \text{d5} \) 3 \( \text{Qd2} \) \( \text{Qf6} \) 4 \( \text{e5} \) \( \text{Qfd7} \) 5 \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{c5} \) 6 \( \text{Qd3} \) \( \text{Qc6} \) 7 \( \text{Qe2} \) \( \text{cx}d4 \) 8 \( \text{cx}d4 \) \( \text{f6} \) 9 \( \text{exf6} \) \( \text{Qxf6} \) 10 0-0 \( \text{Qd6} \) 11 \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{Qc7} \) 12 \( \text{g5} \) 0-0 13 \( \text{Qc1} \)

This move makes a lot of sense.
White moves his rook to the open file, placing the black knight in a pin.

13 \( \text{c}3 \) is another option that we should consider. This may even be a slightly underrated move as it is hardly ever played at top level, but it seems to score pretty well. Having a knight on \( g3 \) can be quite useful for White. For a start it stops \( ...\text{h}5 \) and the white knight may threaten to jump into \( h5 \) at a later point. Now:

a) 13...\( h6 \) is the most forcing response, but it does create a lot of long-term weaknesses on the light squares around the black king. E.Dervishi-E.Berg, Yerevan 1999, continued 14 \( \text{xf}6 \) (14 \( \text{d}2)!? looks quite good for White as it is hard to find a constructive plan for Black: for instance, 14...\( g5 \)?! 15 \( \text{c}1 \) \( \text{g}7 \) 16 \( \text{c}3! \) \( \text{d}7 \) 17 \( \text{e}5 \) was better for White in A.Ogleznevo-D.Arutyunova, Illichivshk 2007) 14...\( \text{xf}6 \) 15 \( \text{c}1 \) \( \text{f}7 \) 16 \( \text{b}1 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 17 a3 (17 \( \text{e}5 \) is okay for Black after 17...\( \text{xe}5 \) 18 \( \text{dxe}5 \) \( \text{xe}5 \) 19 \( \text{h}5 \) when White will win the exchange, but Black is left with a strong dark-squared bishop: for example, 19...\( \text{c}6 \) 20 \( \text{xf}6+ \) \( \text{xf}6 \) 21 b3 \( \text{f}4 \) 22 \( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{d}6 \) when Black is ready to advance with \( ...\text{e}5 \) and has good compensation) 17...\( \text{f}8 \) 18 \( \text{d}3 \) and now Black should have played 18...\( g6 \) with a roughly equal position.

b) 13...\( \text{d}7 \) is another option if you are concerned about the possibility of 13...\( h6 \) 14 \( \text{d}2 \). Here 14 \( \text{c}1 \) \( \text{b}6! \) is a good plan now that White has moved his knight away from e2; on b6 the queen puts pressure on b2 and d4.

A.Maksimenko-A.Nosenko, Alushta 1999, continued 15 \( \text{xf}6 \) \( \text{xf}6 \) (15...\( \text{xf}6 \)! is possible too) 16 \( \text{h}7+! \) (the critical test and things become very complicated after this, but Black seems to be doing okay) 16... \( \text{h}8 \) 17 \( \text{g}5+ \) \( \text{h}8 \) 18 \( \text{d}3 \) \( g6 \) 19 \( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{g}7 \) 20 \( \text{dx}d6 \) \( \text{d}4 \) 21 \( \text{f}1 \)? (Black should have tried 21 \( \text{e}3! \) with a equal position after 21...\( \text{xd}6 \) 22 \( \text{d}4 \) \( e5 \) 23 \( \text{d}2 \) 21...\( \text{e}5 \) 22 \( \text{xe}5 \) \( \text{xd}6 \) 23 \( \text{e}7+ \) \( \text{g}8 \) 24 \( \text{e}1 \) \( f8 \) 25 \( \text{e}6 \) \( f5 \) 26 \( \text{xd}7 \) \( \text{xd}7 \) 27 \( \text{xf}8 \) \( \text{xf}8 \) 28 \( g4 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 0-1.

13...\( h6 \)

Immediately asking the white bishop what it is going to do. I like this simple approach and a number of the resulting positions give Black the opportunity to sacrifice on f3 once again.

Other options include:

a) 13...\( \text{h}5?! \) is interesting and fits in well with our approach against 13 \( \text{h}4 \). Here 14 \( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{f}4 \) 15 \( \text{b}1 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 16 \( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 17 \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{f}4 \) 18 \( \text{c}2 \) \( g6 \)?! 19 \( \text{h}6 \) \( \text{h}3+! \) 20 \( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{f}3 \) 21 \( \text{xf}3 \) \( \text{d}8 \) left Black with the initiative in F.Holzke-
D. Stellwagen, Amsterdam 2005.

b) 13...\textcolor{red}{g4}?! used to be the main line, but this is now realized to be bad due to 14 \textcolor{red}{\textit{g3}}! \textcolor{red}{h6} 15 \textcolor{red}{\textit{d2}} when Black’s knight is rather misplaced on g4.

14 \textcolor{red}{\textit{d2}}

White cannot hope for a real advantage after this move, as the bishop is too passive on d2. However, after 14 \textcolor{red}{h4} we can revert to the move 14...\textcolor{red}{h5}!, securing the exchange of White’s important dark-squared bishop.

Now:

a) 15 \textcolor{red}{g6} must be the most critical move. What should you play now? If you cannot guess the next move then, I am afraid, there is little hope for you...

Correct and necessary is 15...\textcolor{red}{\textit{xf3}}!, the standard exchange sacrifice. After 16 gxf3 \textcolor{red}{\textit{xh2+}} 17 \textcolor{red}{\textit{g2}} (17 \textcolor{red}{\textit{h1 f4}} is very similar to the position we saw in Emms-Williams, the only difference being that in this variation White has a rook on c1 instead of a queen on c2; I do not see why this should make a big difference to the assessment of the position – Black has a handy initiative) 17...\textcolor{red}{\textit{f4+}} 18 \textcolor{red}{\textit{xf4}} Black played 18...\textcolor{red}{xf4} in R. Jedynal-D. Gumula, Polanica Zdroj 2005, but I would have stuck to 18...\textcolor{red}{\textit{xf4}} which offers Black good play; e.g. if 19 Rh1 (as given by Tzermiadianos) then 19...\textcolor{red}{\textit{e6}}! with ...\textcolor{red}{e5}, ...\textcolor{red}{f8} and ...\textcolor{red}{e8} ideas.

b) With his pawn on h6 rather than h7, Black can answer 15 \textcolor{red}{c2} with 15...\textcolor{red}{g5}!.

c) After 15 \textcolor{red}{\textit{b1}} Black should force White to part with his dark-squared bishop by playing 15...\textcolor{red}{g5} 16 \textcolor{red}{\textit{g3}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{xg3}} 17 \textcolor{red}{\textit{xg3}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{f4}} 18 \textcolor{red}{\textit{d3}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{d7}}, with a roughly equal position in C. Balogh-O. Moor, Zurich 2005.

d) 15 \textcolor{red}{\textit{g3}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{xg3}} 16 \textcolor{red}{\textit{g3}} \textcolor{red}{a6}! (preventing White from gaining control of the e5-square with the general scheme of \textcolor{red}{b5}, \textcolor{red}{\textit{xc6}}, \textcolor{red}{e1} and \textcolor{red}{e5}, when the value of the bishop on d6 would be diminished; 16...\textcolor{red}{\textit{f7}}? should also be okay for Black, but I have bad memories of this move after losing a game with it to Tiviakov) 17 \textcolor{red}{\textit{b1}} g5! 18 \textcolor{red}{\textit{d3}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{f7}} (the careless 18...\textcolor{red}{\textit{g7}} would allow White to activate his knight on g3 with 19 \textcolor{red}{\textit{h5}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{f7}} 20 \textcolor{red}{\textit{f6+!}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{h8}} 21 \textcolor{red}{\textit{g4}} when the knight is attacking h6 and is in touch with the key e5-square) 19 \textcolor{red}{\textit{ce1}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{d7}} 20 a3 \textcolor{red}{\textit{h8}} 21 \textcolor{red}{\textit{e2}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{g8}} 22 \textcolor{red}{\textit{f1}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{g7}} 23 b4 \textcolor{red}{\textit{f8}} 24 \textcolor{red}{\textit{b2}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{b8}} 25 \textcolor{red}{\textit{e3}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{f4}} 26 \textcolor{red}{\textit{d3}} g4 27 \textcolor{red}{\textit{e5}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{xe5}} 28 \textcolor{red}{\textit{dxe5}} h5 29 \textcolor{red}{\textit{d4}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{h6}} 30 \textcolor{red}{\textit{d3}} h4 and Black gradually wore down his opponent in Y. Bruned-V. Bhat, Andorra 2006.

14...\textcolor{red}{a6}
At tacking Chess: The French

This is a great prophylactic move. Black takes control of the b5-square, stopping White from playing $\text{b}_5$, which is one of his main ideas after 13 $\text{c}_1$. Having prevented White’s plans, Black is now ready to start some action on the kingside.

15 $\text{g}_3$ $\text{g}_5$?

This is a typical advance that gains space on the kingside. It is rather double-edged though, as Black does create some weaknesses around his king.

16 $\text{e}_1$ $\text{g}_7$?!

The black queen finds a safe square away from the attention of the white rook on the c-file. On $\text{g}_7$ she also puts pressure on $\text{d}_4$ and bolsters the squares that the kingside pawns have left undefended in their advance. The only problem with this move, though, is that White is now given a chance to occupy the e5-square. That is why I would recommend 16...$\text{g}_4$! instead. This takes immediate control of the e5-square and after 17 $\text{b}_1$ $\text{g}_7$ play has transposed to the game, except that this way Black has prevented 17 $\text{e}_5$.

17 $\text{b}_1$?

A mistake. Control of the e5-square is the most important concept in this position and White can actually play 17 $\text{e}_5$! immediately as 17...$\text{xe}_5$! allows 18 $\text{g}_6$! for example, 18...$\text{f}_7$ 19 $\text{c}_3$ $\text{x}_g3$ (19...$\text{c}_6$?! 20 $\text{h}_5$ wins material) 20 $\text{x}_d4$ $\text{d}_6$ when White has very good positional compensation for the pawn. For a start e5 is firmly under White’s control and I expect that White is better here.

17...$\text{g}_4$!

Another tricky move. Black increases the pressure against $\text{f}_2$.

18 $\text{c}_2$

Another possibility was 18 $\text{h}_3$, but this allows 18...$\text{xf}_2$! 19 $\text{xf}_2$ $\text{xd}_4+$ 20 $\text{e}_2$ (after 20 $\text{e}_3$ $\text{h}_4$ Black wins back the piece) 20...$\text{xb}_2$ 21 $\text{h}_5$ $\text{e}_5$ when Black is better.

18...$\text{x}_g3$?!

This exchange may seem surprising in view of what we have said about the importance of Black’s dark-squared bishop. However, it does have some interesting plus points here:
1. After White recaptures with 19 hxg3, he can no longer use his h-pawn to drive back the black knight from g4. The knight is thus cemented on a post that hangs over the white king’s defences.

2. The removal of the h2-pawn increases Black’s attacking options – the move ...\( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_5 \) might be on the cards in the future.

3. More generally speaking, in the Bruned-Bhat extract, above, you may recall that Black avoided ...\( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_7 \) due to the reply \( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_5 \). Here Berg has put the queen on the ideal g7-square and for her comfort it is helpful that the white knight is eliminated before it can think about going to h5.

There was an even stronger idea, though: 18...\( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_3 ! \) when after 19 gxf3 \( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_4 \) 20 \( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_1 \) (20 \( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_3 ? \) \( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_5 \) 21 \( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_5 \) is winning for Black) 20...\( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_5 \) 21 \( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_3 \) \( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_8 ! \) Black has the advantage.

19 hxg3 \( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_7 

It is not clear what White can do in this position. On the other hand, Black’s plan is a lot more straightforward. He has \( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \) under control and he can slowly improve his position by doubling rooks on the f-file.

20 b4 \( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_6 

Again 20...\( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_3 ! ? \) was interesting: for example, 21 gxf3 \( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_4 \) 22 \( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_7 \) (if 22 \( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_3 \) \( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_5 ! \) 22...\( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_5 \) and Black’s position is to be preferred.

21 a4 b5!

Here, as so often in the 3...\( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_6 \) Tarrasch, the c6-square is a fine post for the black knight.

22 axb5 axb5 23 \( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_5 

White activates his queen, but Black’s kingside pressure should prove to be too strong after this.

23...\( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_7 ! \)

Black prepares to play both ...\( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \)\( \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_5 \) and ...\( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \)\( \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_8 \).

24 \( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_6 ? \)

This seems a bit pointless. White would have been better advised to have overprotected the f3-square by playing 24 \( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_3 ! \) \( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \)\( \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_5 \) 25 \( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_1 \) \( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \)\( \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_8 \) 26 \( \text{\textit{\texttt{\textbar{}}}} \)\( \text{\texttt{\textbar{}}}_1 \). He has then guarded against all of Black’s threats and the position remains quite balanced.
24...\texttt{f8?}

Black misses his chance to force a win. He should have played 24...\texttt{h5!}, exploiting that open h-file. Suddenly White has no defence to 25...\texttt{xf3}. For example:

a) 25 \texttt{e3} attempts to give extra protection to f2, but Black still has a monster attack after 25...\texttt{xf3} (25...\texttt{e5!?}) 26 \texttt{gxf3} \texttt{h2+} 27 \texttt{f1} \texttt{xe3+} 28 \texttt{fxe3} (after 28 \texttt{xe3} \texttt{h1+} 29 \texttt{e2} \texttt{xc1} Black is a clear piece up) 28...\texttt{e5!} with a winning position.

b) 25 \texttt{c3} \texttt{af8} sees Black again threatening ...\texttt{xf3} and there is no adequate way with which White can stop this: for example, 26 \texttt{e3} \texttt{xf3}! 27 \texttt{gxf3} \texttt{xf3} (Black is threatening ...\texttt{h2+} and ...\texttt{xf2+} with mate to follow) 28 \texttt{c2} \texttt{h2+} 29 \texttt{f1} \texttt{e8!} (Black’s bishop takes its normal route around to the kingside; Black is completely winning) 30 \texttt{a2} \texttt{h5} 31 \texttt{a8+} \texttt{g7} 32 \texttt{xc6} \texttt{xf2+} 33 \texttt{xf2} \texttt{xf2mate}.

c) 25 \texttt{xc6}? loses to 25...\texttt{xf3} 26 \texttt{gxf3} \texttt{h2+} 27 \texttt{f1} \texttt{xf2} mate.

25 \texttt{e3?}

I am not sure what was going on around here as White should have played 25 \texttt{xc6}! which keeps the game balanced: for example, 25...\texttt{h5!} 26 \texttt{e3} \texttt{xc6} 27 \texttt{xc6} \texttt{xf3} 28 \texttt{gx} 29 \texttt{g2} \texttt{f6} 30 \texttt{f4} \texttt{h2+} when anything would have been possible!

25...\texttt{xf3} 26 \texttt{gxf3} \texttt{xf3}
33...exf3 34 dxd8+ fxf8 35 bxf8+ xf8 36 $d8+$

There is no perpetual check.

36...xf7 37 $d7+ f6 38 $d8+ f7 39 $d7+ f6 40 $d8+ e5 41 $h8+ e4 42 $h7+ f5 43 g4 $f4 44 gxf5 $g4+ 45 $f1 $h3+ 46 $e2 $d3+ 47 $e1 $f3! 0-1

It’s mate on e2.

Our next game is not theoretically all that important, but it does highlight the type of ideas and concepts that Black should be thinking of when playing this variation.

**Game 44**

**J. Adair - S. Williams**

**Berkshire League**

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 $d2 $f6 4 e5 $fd7 5 $d3 c5 6 c3 $c6 7 $e2 cxd4 8 cxd4 f6 9 exf6 $xf6 10 0-0 $d6 11 $f3 $c7 12 $c3

This is a very sensible move. White’s knight was rather passively placed on e2, so he moves it around to the queenside with tempo. Moreover, on the plus side the knight can be quite annoying to Black on the queenside, especially when Black has played the moves ...a6 and ...$g7. In this instant Black always has to keep his eyes open to the possibility of $a4!, aiming to jump into the b6-square. I can remember losing a 5-minute game to Mickey Adams in this way.

However, there is a drawback to $c3: the knight can no longer be used on the kingside and so Black doesn’t have to be wary of the manoeuvre $g3-h5.

12...a6

Black must avoid $b5. Clearly he needs to retain his dark-squared bishop.

13 $g5

This is almost universally played and this position can also arise via 12 $g5 0-0 13 $c3.

Instead 13 h3 was played in A.Sokolov-J.Timman, Bugojno 1986, but this just seems like a waste of time to me. That game continued 13...0-0 14 $e3 $d7 15 $c1 $e8! 16 $g5 $e7 17 f4 h6 18 $f3 $h5 19 $e5 $g3 20 $f2 $f5 21 $xf5 $xf5!? with an equal position.

13...0-0 14 $h4

White’s standard plan in this position and by now Black’s next move should be second nature to the reader.

14...$h5!

Black must fight for control of the dark squares.
At tacking Chess: The French

I was originally going to award this move a dubious mark, but then I saw that Karpov had played it, so it cannot be that bad after all! White is aiming to land his knight on e5, but Black can now play a thematic plan.

White has some other options here:

a) 15 g3 falls a little too easily into Black’s hands. Black has no worries after 15...hxg3 16 hxg3 g6 and then:
   a1) With 17 c1 g7! 18 b1 g5! Black wants to play ...g4, forcing the knight on f3 to move away as then he can win the d4-pawn. Black was slightly better here in E.Rudenko-S.Ljukin, Simferopol 2003.
   a2) 17 c2 is a nothing move. White is hardly going to checkmate Black on h7 anymore! After 17...g7 18 a4 d7 (18...b5!? is again possible and after 19 b6 b8 20 xc8 bxc8 I slightly prefer Black’s position) 19 b6 ad8 20 xd7 xd7 21 e1 e7 22 a4 d8 23 e3 g5 Black’s position was to be preferred in M.Magomedov-M.Ulibin, Cheliabinsk 1991.

b) 15 c2 is quite different to 14 c2 (when the white knight is on e2), as Black can now play 15...g6!, obtaining a good position.

Now 16 xg6? is met by 16...f4!, winning a piece after 17 d3 b4.

c) 15 c1 is a useful waiting move. Now 15...g6! prepares to play ...g7 at the right moment when the typical idea 16 a4!? hopes to annoy Black. White is waiting for Black to play ...g7 because then he can continue b6, as Adams has done a number of times. A very interesting plan is 16...b5!? which is one way to ensure that Black no longer has a weak b6-square!
Now:

1) 17...\(\Box c5\) is the logical continuation to White's play, but Black can now spice things up by playing 17...\(\Box x f3\)! which is a strong exchange sacrifice: 18 \(\Box x f3\) (18 gxf3 \(\Box x h2+\) 19 \(\Box h1\) \(\Box f4\) is good for Black) 18...\(\Box x h2+\) 19 \(\Box h1\) \(\Box f4\) is a bit better for Black. R. Mamedov-M. Ulibin, Moscow 2004, continued 20 \(\Box b3\) \(\Box x c1\) (20...\(\Box x d4\)?) 21 \(\Box x c7\) \(\Box x f3\) 22 \(\Box x c8+\) \(\Box x c8\) 23 gxf3 might also be investigated; Black seems to have enough positional compensation for the piece) 21 \(\Box x c1\) \(\Box d7\) with an equal position where White has compensation for the pawn in the form of dark-square control and pressure down the c-file.

2) 17...\(\Box c3\) has only been played once. M. Matulovic-S. Marinkovic, Yugoslav Championship, Kladovo 1994, continued 17...\(\Box b6\) 18 \(\Box b1\) \(\Box a7\)!? 19 \(\Box g5\) \(\Box f4\) 20 \(\Box x f4\) \(\Box x f4\) 21 \(\Box e1\) \(\Box a f8\) with a very satisfactory game for Black.

15...\(g6!\)

The standard plan of ...\(\Box g7\) works well here. It is worth noting that Black finds it a lot harder to play ...\(g6\) when White's dark-squared bishop is still on \(g5\), as then \(\Box h6\) is rather annoying.

16 \(\Box c1\)

Ivanchuk once tried 16 \(\Box g5\), but this plan is too slow to gain any advantage: 16...\(\Box g7\) (16...\(\Box f4\)?) 17 \(\Box e3\) \(\Box d7\) 18 \(\Box f1\) \(h6\) 19 \(g3\) \(\Box f7\) 20 \(\Box g2\) \(\Box a f8\) 21 \(\Box c1\) \(\Box f6\) with an equal game, V. Ivanchuk-J. Gdanski, Adelaide 1988.

16...\(\Box g7\)!

Placing pressure on \(d4\) and covering some of the squares around Black's kingside.

17 \(\Box b1\)!

The bishop does not do much here.

Karpov chose to play 17 \(\Box f1\) which seems to be a slightly better square, as the light-squared bishop can add a bit of extra protection to White's king. Here:

a) 17...\(\Box d7\) 18 \(\Box g5\) \(h6\) 19 \(\Box e3\) \(\Box f7\) 20 g3 was played in A. Karpov-J. Mestel, London 1984, with a likely transposition to the line we considered in the notes to White's 16th, above.

b) 17...\(h6\)?? may be an even better idea, angling to trade the knight on \(h5\) for White's dark-squared bishop. After 18 \(\Box a4\) a fairly safe move is 18...\(\Box c7\), leading to a decent position for Black. Another idea is 18...\(\Box x f3\)?? which is similar to Adair-Williams. Again Black should obtain pretty decent counterplay: for example, 19 gxf3 (19 \(\Box x f3\)? \(\Box x d4\) forks the knight and bishop when Black is winning) 19...\(\Box x d4\) (19...\(\Box x d4\)?? loses a piece to 20 \(\Box b6\)) 20...
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\[ \text{\textit{17...d7}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{18.a4?}} \]

This is an error due to my reply, but other moves fail to impress too: for example, A.Mista-D.Navara, Czech League 2005, continued 18.c2xf3! 19.gxf3\textit{xd4} 20.d2 c5 21.g3 f8 when Black’s pieces were coordinating well. He has a clear advantage and went on to win a model game: 22.d3 f6 23.g2 xf4 24.xf4 xf4 25.e4 b6 26.g3 e5 27.de3 h8 28.d3 e4 29.c3 f6 30.xe4 dxe4 31.xe4 c7 32.h1 b5 33.h4 e2 34.c5 g3 35.xb7 xh1 0-1.

\[ \text{\textit{18...xf3!}} \]

A thematic sacrifice. It is amazing just how often this sacrifice works in this chapter.

\[ \text{\textit{19.xf3?}} \]

I had expected this move and I now banged out...

\[ \text{\textit{19...xd4?}} \]

...which is okay for Black, but I had totally missed 19...\textit{xd4}! which simply wins a piece! White cannot defend the knight on a4 and the bishop on h4.

\[ \text{\textit{20.d1 xa4}} \]

At the time I thought that it made sense to eliminate White’s knight on a4 for my slightly passive bishop.

\[ \text{\textit{21.xa4 f4}} \]

Both black knights have taken up dominating roles. I expect the position is roughly equal, but it is a lot easier for Black to play this type of position as White has to constantly be on his guard for various tactics.

\[ \text{\textit{22.d1?}} \]

Another mistake. White should have tried 22.h1! when the game could have continued 22...f2e2 23.cd1 f8 and Black has very active play. However, 23.b5?! looks a bit too much due to 24.a5 h6 25.b6 xh4 26.xd6 xf2 27.f1 when White is clearly better.

\[ \text{\textit{22...h6!}} \]

Setting up dual threats against h2 and c1. White is now in trouble once again.
The Tarrasch Variation: White Plays d³ and e²

23 g⁴
23 xd⁴ would have lost to 23...e²+ 24 xe² xc¹+ with mate to follow.
23...fe²+ 24 h¹ f⁸
Bringing my last piece into the game. It is hard to suggest a solution for White.
25 cd¹?
Another mistake, but 25 g³ would have also have been bad due to 25...xg³ 26 fxg³ xc¹! 27 xd⁴ e²! 28 d³ f² when Black has a large advantage.
25...f⁴
Winning a piece and the game.
26 g⁵ xh⁴ 27 xh⁶ xh⁶ 28 h³ b⁴
29 f¹ g⁵ 30 a³ c⁵ 31 b⁴ b⁶
Covering the c⁷-square as White might try to get a rook around there later.
32 d³ f⁴ 33 fe¹ g⁴ 34 f¹ f⁷!

I was enjoying myself here. The only piece that is not doing much is the king, so I bring it around to d⁶.
35 c¹ f⁵ 36 c² e⁷ 37 a⁴ d⁶ 38 a⁵ d⁴ 39 b¹

Desperately trying to gain some counterplay with b⁵. The only problem is that my minor pieces control the whole board!
39...g³ 40 f³ e³ 41 c⁸ xf¹ 42 xf¹ xh³+ 0-1

Game 45
G.Meier-D.Navara
Mainz (rapid) 2009

1 e⁴ e⁶ 2 d⁴ d⁵ 3 d² f⁶ 4 e⁵ fd⁷ 5 c³ c⁵ 6 d³ c⁶ 7 e² cxd⁴ 8 cxd⁴ f⁶ 9 exf⁶ xf⁶ 10 f³ d⁶ 11 0-0 c⁷ 12 g³

An attempt at gaining a safe advantage through f⁴. As we have already seen, the exchange of dark-squared bishops is something White wants to achieve. However, playing 12 g³ does have its downsides as well. The main one being that it weakens the light squares around White’s king.

I am going to recommend (surprise, surprise!) the most aggressive line I know against this plan. One word of
warning though: if White knows what he is doing then the line can lead to a draw by perpetual check, so if you need to win, I would suggest that you play 12...0-0 followed up with 13...d7.

12...0-0 13 f4 g4

I have always been a fan of this move. Black is again planning to sacrifice the exchange, albeit this time on f4.

13...d7 is the move that avoids a forced draw and leads to a complex, manoeuvring struggle. A.Zapata-S.Ganguly, Philadelphia 2010, continued 14 c1 e4!? 15 xe4 dxe4 16 e5 xe5 17 dxe5 e8 18 a4 b6 19 xe4 g6 20 c4 xb2 21 c3 f5 when Black’s light-square bishop was looking far superior compared to White’s dark-squared bishop. For this reason Black had the advantage.

14 xd6

The only way to try for an advantage.

White’s main alternative can lead to a draw after 14 c1 xf4 15 xf4 xf4! 16 gxf4 xf4 when Black is simply planning to capture on d4 and bring his remaining pieces into play with ...d7 and ...f8. He has decent compensation and the position looks dynamically equal.

Now:

a) 17 b5! is the safest move when play heads towards a draw after 17...d7 (17...xd4? wins material, but at a very high cost: 18 xd4 xf3 19 c3 and White has a large advantage):

a1) 18 xc6 xc6 with a further divide:

a11) 19 h3 f8 20 c3 b5 21 e1 xf2 22 xf2 h2+ 23 e3 f4+ with perpetual check! To my annoyance an opponent rated 300 points lower once prepared this line to draw with me. Be warned! Thus if you really need to win then you may have to find an alternative to this variation.

a12) 19 c3 f8! (otherwise, 19...b5? 20 c1! is much better for White and 19...e5!? looks like it should be slightly better for White after 20 dxe5 xe5 21 xe5 xe5, although at least this way his king will always be
exposed) 20 \(\text{wc1}\) (20 h3!? is another version of the drawing theme: for example, 20...\(\text{b5}\) 21 \(\text{e1 xf2}\) 22 \(\text{xf2 wh2+}\) 23 \(\text{e3 xf4+}\) 24 \(\text{f2 wh2+}, etc\)
20...\(\text{d6}\) 21 \(\text{g5}\) reaches one of the critical positions for the evaluation of the whole variation.

Here 21...\(\text{xf4}\)? was a blunder that went unpunished in T.Polak-J.Gokhale, Oakham 1992, but White had the chance to play 22 \(\text{e5!}\), winning material and the game. 21...\(\text{xf3}\)! is an improvement. Play could continue 22 \(\text{wxd4 xf4}\) 23 \(\text{g3 h5}\) 24 f3 e5?! when position is dynamically equal.

a2) The immediate 18 \(\text{c3}\) has also been played. Play will often transpose after 18...\(\text{f8}\) 19 \(\text{xc6}\) to variation ‘a12’, but White can play it a bit differently with 19 \(\text{xd2 wd6}\), although here his position is a little shaky as he always has to watch out for tricks like ...\(\text{xf3}\). Indeed, it looks like Black has the better chances: for example, 20 \(\text{e5}\)? (White cracks under the pressure; 20 \(\text{g2!}\) is a better defence) 20...\(\text{cxe5}\) 21 \(\text{dxe5 xe5}\) 22 \(\text{xd7\(\text{xd7}\)} 23 \(\text{f4}\) and now in L.Milman-V.Bhat, Berkeley 2008, the most dynamic move would have been 23...\(\text{d4}\) with a large advantage to Black, such as after 24 \(\text{fxe5 xf1+}\) 25 \(\text{xf1 f7+}\) and 26...\(\text{xc3}\).

b) 17 \(\text{e2}\) makes a lot of sense. The bishop overprotects White’s knight on f3. After 17...\(\text{xf6}\) (the knight is heading for e4, which is its ideal square) 18 \(\text{h1}\) (18 \(\text{d2}\) 19 \(\text{xd2 xd4}\) is always going to be at least okay for Black) 18...\(\text{e4}\) 19 \(\text{c2}\) White prepares to play \(\text{c1}\). The position is dynamically equal and practical results have reinforced this assessment.

Here:

b1) After 19...e5!? 20 \(\text{c1 xc1}\) 21 \(\text{xfxc1 xf2+}\) 22 \(\text{g2 g4}\) 23 \(\text{xe5}\)? (Black is slightly better after this; White should have tried 23 \(\text{xc6! bx6}\) 24 \(\text{dxe5}\) which would have kept the balance) 23...\(\text{e3+}\) 24 \(\text{g3 xc2}\) 25 \(\text{xc6 bx6}\) 26 \(\text{xc2 xd7}\) 27 \(\text{g4 xg4}\) 28 \(\text{h4 xc8}\) Black was a pawn up, but he had some weaknesses and White was very active, so a draw was a fair result.

b2) 19...\texttt{\textsf{d7}}! looks even stronger, avoiding the exchange of queens which should benefit White. After 20 \texttt{\textsf{c1}} \texttt{\textsf{f5}} Black must be better. He is ready to continue with ...\texttt{f8}, ...\texttt{f6}, ...\texttt{h6}, etc. In any case, he will always have a dangerous initiative on the kingside.

c) I can only find one example of 17 \texttt{h3}, but \textit{Rybka} seems to like it. 17...e5!? is the most active answer when play could continue 18 h\texttt{xg4} \texttt{\textsf{xg4}} 19 \texttt{\textsf{e2}} \texttt{h3} 20 \texttt{\textsf{xg5}} \texttt{\textsf{f8}} 21 \texttt{\textsf{c3}} \texttt{\textsf{xf1}} 22 \texttt{\textsf{xf1}} \texttt{\textsf{xd4}} with a messy position that looks okay for Black.

14...\texttt{\textsf{xh6}} 15 \texttt{\textsf{c3}}

This seems to be one of White's safest lines, but Black still obtains an active and equal position.

Instead 15 \texttt{\textsf{f4}} \texttt{\textsf{xf4}} transposes to the notes to White’s 14th move.

15...e5!

Activating the light-squared bishop which can aim to take advantage of the weakened light squares around White’s king.

16 dxe5 \texttt{\textsf{wh6}}!?

With the crude idea of playing 17...\texttt{\textsf{xf3}} and then 18...\texttt{\textsf{wh2}} mate.

17 h4 \texttt{\textsf{gxe5}} 18 \texttt{\textsf{xe5}}

White has also tried 18 \texttt{\textsf{g5}}!? in a high-level encounter, which seems to be a bit more testing, although after 18...d4 19 \texttt{\textsf{d5}} (White could have made a little prayer and then played 19 \texttt{\textsf{\textsf{xh7}}+!} which is interesting and obviously very double-edged, but it may be okay for White: for example, 19...\texttt{\textsf{h8}} 20 \texttt{\textsf{ce4}} \texttt{\textsf{g4}} 21 \texttt{\textsf{wa4}} \texttt{\textsf{ae8}} – in view of what follows, 21...\texttt{\textsf{e2}}!? should be investigated – 22 f4! \texttt{\textsf{f3}}+ 23 \texttt{\textsf{xf3}} \texttt{\textsf{wh7}} 24 \texttt{\textsf{eg5}} \texttt{\textsf{f5}} and White should even be better here as he is a pawn up with a very powerful knight on g5) 19...\texttt{\textsf{g4}} 20 f3 \texttt{\textsf{xd3}} 21 \texttt{\textsf{\textsf{xd3}} \textsf{f5}} 22 \texttt{\textsf{b3}} \texttt{\textsf{h8}} 23 \texttt{\textsf{xb7}} \texttt{\textsf{d6}} 24 \texttt{\textsf{\textsf{f4}} \textsf{e5}} 25 \texttt{\textsf{ae1}} \texttt{\textsf{ab8}} 26 \texttt{\textsf{d5}} \texttt{\textsf{xd5}} 27 \texttt{\textsf{\textsf{xd5}} \textsf{d3}} Black had little to concern him in M.Vachier Lagrange-E.Berg, Liverpool 2008.

18...\texttt{\textsf{xe5}} 19 \texttt{\textsf{e2}} \texttt{\textsf{e6}}

The position is about equal. White’s kingside weaknesses balance Black’s isolated d-pawn.

20 \texttt{\textsf{b5}}
Aiming to clamp down on d4.

20...\( \text{Rad8} \) 21 \( \text{\text{\text{\text{\text{d4}}}h3} \) 22 \( \text{\text{\text{\text{\text{e1}}}f6} \) 23 \( \text{f4} \)

This creates more weaknesses, but it was hard to defend f2.

23...\( \text{c6} \)

Perhaps 23...\( \text{c4} \)? was worth a try.

24 \( \text{\text{\text{\text{\text{xc6}}}bxc6} \) 25 \( \text{\text{\text{\text{\text{d2}}}f5} \) 26 \( \text{\text{\text{\text{\text{f3}}}e4} \)

Simplifying towards a likely draw.

27 \( \text{\text{\text{\text{\text{xe4}}}dxe4} \) 28 \( \text{\text{\text{\text{\text{g2}}}d4+} \) 29 \( \text{\text{\text{\text{\text{f2}}}e3+} \) 30 \( \text{\text{\text{\text{\text{xe3}}}d2+} \) 33 \( \text{\text{\text{\text{\text{f3}}}xe3+} \) 34 \( \text{\text{\text{\text{\text{xe3}}}xb2} \) 35 \( \text{\text{\text{\text{\text{c1}}}1/2}} \)

In the penultimate game of this chapter we will take a look at a forgotten line that White used to play with regularity. 11 \( \text{\text{\text{\text{\text{f4}}}+} \) makes a lot of positional sense as White wants to exchange the dark-squared bishops. The only downside to this plan is the possibility of Black playing 11...\( \text{\text{\text{\text{\text{c4}}}d4+} \) which certainly causes White some disruption.

11...\( \text{\text{\text{\text{\text{b4}}}f4} \) 12 \( \text{\text{\text{\text{\text{xf4}}}a5+} \)

This was the reason why White stopped playing this variation. Black reaches an endgame which is equal.

13 \( \text{\text{\text{\text{\text{d2}}}d2} \)

This is the only logical move. White can hardly claim an advantage after 13 \( \text{\text{\text{\text{\text{f1}}}d2} \) because Black would have good attacking chances after 13...0-0 when White has to watch out for 13...\( \text{\text{\text{\text{\text{e4}}}d6} \) ideas.

13...\( \text{\text{\text{\text{\text{xd2}}}d2} \) 14 \( \text{\text{\text{\text{\text{xd2}}}d2} \)

White has to capture this way as 14 \( \text{\text{\text{\text{\text{xd2}}}d2} \) drops the d-pawn.

14...0-0

This can be regarded as the starting point of this variation. White has a positional advantage due to his control of the e5-square and Black’s backward e-pawn. Black, on the other hand, has
good tactical chances based on the move ...\(\text{e}4\), but must stop White from consolidating his positional pluses.

15 \(\text{e}1\)

This has been White’s standard move, but he can also try 15 \(\text{e}2\) in order to move the knight out of the range of Black’s rook on f8 and to overdefend the d4-pawn. The main problem with it, however, is that the knight is very passive on e2, so Black is under no real danger. After 15...\(\text{d}7\) (15...\(\text{g}4\) 16 \(\text{h}f1\) e5 17 dxe5 \(\text{g}xe5\) 18 \(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{xe}5\) is also equal due to the nature of White’s king position; he would like it to be on g1 here when he would have a small advantage) 16 \(\text{c}3\) \(\text{h}5!\)? 17 \(\text{ac}1\) \(\text{f}4\) the game is equal. White does not have time to build up pressure along the e-file.

15...\(\text{e}4+!\)

Black must play this important move, otherwise he will simply have a worse position.

16 \(\text{x}e4\) \(\text{xf}4\) 17 \(\text{d}3\)

We have reached another important position. White has a pawn on d4 that Black can win, but should he capture this pawn?

17...\(\text{d}7\)

This is Black’s simplest solution to his opening problems. By playing ...\(\text{d}7\) Black intends to develop with ...\(\text{af}8\), keeping the pressure up against White’s kingside.

Alternatively:

a) I would consider 17...\(\text{x}d4\)? to be a mistake and it is precisely what White is hoping for when playing this line. He will be able to place his king on e5 with very good compensation for the pawn: for example, 18 \(\text{e}3\) \(\text{xf}3\) 19 \(\text{xf}4\) \(\text{xe}1\) 20 \(\text{xe}1\) \(\text{d}7\) 21 \(\text{e}5\).
Black is a pawn up in the endgame, but White has complete control of the dark squares in the centre of the board. I, for one, would feel uncomfortable defending this endgame. Let's have a look at how Tal, usually the master of complications, ground down his world-class opponent from this position:

21...a6 22.d6 b5 23.xb5 axb5 24.xe6 d4 25.e2 d3 26.d2 c8 27.b4 c2 28.xd3 xa2 29.f3 c2 30.f5 b6 31.h4 c4 32.xb5 xh4 33.g3 x4+ 34.c7 f7 35.xb6 f6 36.f4 h6 37.a5 d3 38.g4 a3+ 39.b6 f3 40.f5+ e6 41.b5 g6 42.c5 xf4 43.c6+ f7 44.c7 1-0, M. Tal -J. Timman, Montpellier 1985.

b) 17...g4!? is interesting. Black wants to avoid the fork after ...xh4; e3. Play could continue 18.g3 xd4 19.e5 g5 20.c3! c6 (or 20...exe5 21.xd4) 21.xc6 bxc6 22.d4 and yet again White has good compensation for the pawn due to his control over the central dark squares.

18.e3

White could have also tried the positionally well founded 18.b5!? White wants to capture on c6 when he is aiming for a good knight versus bad bishop position: 18...af8 19.xc6 xc6 20.h3!? (stopping ...g4; 20.xe6 g4 is okay for Black) 20...e8! (without this move I would start to feel doubtful about Black's position, but now the threat is ...h5 with an equal game) 21.xe6 h5 22.e7 xf3 23.gxf3 xf3 24.f1 and Black actually has a slight advantage here in view of White’s broken kingside pawns.

18...af8

The position is equal.

19.e2 e8!

A typical manoeuvre.

Another strong possibility was 19.h6!? which intends ...e8, but without allowing g5.

20.d2

Black gains the upper hand after this. He could have tried 20.g5, but Black will still have a small advantage after 20...xd4 21.xh7! xe2 22.xf8 xf8 23.xe2.

20...g4?
Black should have played 20...e5! with a big advantage, such as after 21 \( \text{c}x\text{e}5 \) (after 21 dxe5 \( \text{g}h5 \) 22 \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{b}4 \)! White hasn’t an adequate way to stop the threat of mate on e4) 21...\( \text{c}x\text{e}5 \) 22 dxe5 d4+ 23 \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{xf}2+ \).

\[ 21 \text{g}3 \text{h}5 22 \text{f}1? \]

A blunder which walks into Black’s next move.

Black was threatening ...\( \text{x}g3 \), so maybe White should have played the prophylactic move 22 \( \text{g}1! \), aiming to meet 22...\( \text{x}g3 \) with 23 \( \text{x}g3 \). The position looks about equal here.

\[ 22...\text{e}5! \]

Black should be winning now.

\[ 23 \text{dxe}5 \]

23 \( \text{c}x\text{e}5 \) leads to mate after 23...\( \text{c}x\text{e}5 \) 24 dxe5 d4+.

\[ 23...\text{d}4+? \]

Another mistake! Black should have played 23...\( \text{c}x\text{e}5 \)! which wins on the spot! For example, 24 \( \text{c}x\text{e}5 \) d4+ 25 \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{e}4 \) mate.

\[ 24 \text{cxd}4 \text{xd}4 25 \text{h}7+ \text{h}7 26 \text{xd}4 \text{f}3+ 27 \text{e}4 \text{xd}4 28 \text{xd}4 \text{e}8 \]

Black should be winning this end-game as his bishop is superior to White’s pawns. It is also hard for White to gain a useful passed pawn.

\[ 29 \text{e}6 \text{b}5 30 \text{c}1 \text{xf}2 31 \text{c}7 \text{c}6 32 \text{e}7 \text{e}2 33 \text{b}4 \text{a}6 34 \text{a}4 \text{xa}4 35 \text{xb}7 \text{b}5 36 \text{h}4 \text{g}6 37 \text{g}4 \text{f}6 38 \text{h}5 \text{e}8 39 \text{a}7 \text{g}5 40 \text{xa}6 \text{xe}7 41 \text{b}5 \text{c}4 42 \text{h}6 \text{g}5 43 \text{b}6 \text{c}6 44 \text{a}2 \text{h}7 45 \text{e}5 \text{f}3 46 \text{a}7 \text{h}6 47 \text{b}7 \text{h}8 0-1 \]

**Game 47**

S.Rublevsky-S.Volkov

Russian Team Championship 2009

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 4 \( \text{d}3 \) c5 5 e5 \( \text{fd}7 \) 6 c3 \( \text{c}6 \) 7 \( \text{e}2 \)

White has also tried 7 \( \text{df}3! \). Play can easily transpose back into normal territory, but it does have some independent significance if White continues by developing his king’s knight to f3. I would suggest that Black now plays 7...\( \text{wa}5! \) (this move aims to take advantage of the fact that White has moved a piece away from the e1-a5 diagonal; I prefer this to 7...cxd4 8 cxd4 f6 9 exf6 \( \text{xf}6 \) 10 \( \text{h}3! \) which would be walking into White’s preparation) 8 \( \text{d}2 \) (otherwise Black will play 8...cxd4 and if 8 \( \text{f}1 \) I don’t see any reason why Black should object to the original position arising after 8...cxd4 9 cxd4 f6 10 \( \text{we}2 \) fxe5 11 \( \text{xe}5 \) \( \text{dxe}5 \) 12 fxe5 \( \text{d}7 \); he is quite active on the queenside and may obtain typical play down the f-file too, while 13 \( \text{h}5+? \) g6! 14 \( \text{xe}6+ \)
8...\textit{hxg6} 15 \textit{\frak{h}xh8} \textit{\frak{b}b5+} gives Black a very strong attack) 8...\textit{\frak{b}b6} when Black will win a pawn as White cannot defend both \textit{d4} and \textit{b2}.

White does receive some compensation, but I doubt whether it is quite enough: for example, L.Oll-M.Gurevich, Moscow (rapid) 1992, continued 9 \textit{\frak{d}e2} (I’m grateful to John Emms for pointing out the possibility of 9 \textit{\frak{c}2} \textit{\frak{e}7}!; now 10 \textit{\frak{e}2}? \textit{\frak{c}4} 11 \textit{\frak{x}h7} \textit{\frak{f}8} costs White a piece and after 10 \textit{\frak{c}1} \textit{\frak{h}6} 11 \textit{\frak{a}3} Black can either fight on the queenside with 11...\textit{\frak{a}5} or perhaps even try 11...\textit{g5}?) 9...\textit{\frak{w}b2} 10 \textit{\frak{b}1} (White may do better with 10 0-0, as endorsed by John Watson, when the situation after 10...\textit{\frak{c}4} 11 \textit{\frak{c}2} \textit{\frak{e}7} is pretty unclear; White has definite compensation for the pawn, but Black is quite solidly placed) 10...\textit{\frak{w}a3} 11 0-0 \textit{\frak{c}4} 12 \textit{\frak{c}2} \textit{\frak{e}7} 13 \textit{\frak{c}1} \textit{\frak{a}5} 14 \textit{\frak{g}5} \textit{\frak{x}g5} 15 \textit{\frak{x}g5} \textit{\frak{h}6} 16 \textit{\frak{h}3} \textit{\frak{d}8} 17 \textit{\frak{f}4} 18 \textit{\frak{g}6} when Black is ready to castle and is two pawns up, which is not a bad way to start a game!

As well as the text and 9 \textit{\frak{e}x\frak{f}6}, note that 9 \textit{\frak{f}4}? is a mistake as Black has a combination that nets him a pawn: 9...\textit{\frak{f}xe5} 10 \textit{\frak{f}xe5} (10 \textit{\frak{d}xe5} \textit{\frak{c}5} looks very comfortable for Black) 10...\textit{\frak{d}xd4}! 11 0-0 (this is the trickiest variation, White wants to make it difficult for Black to castle; 11 \textit{\frak{d}xd4}?! \textit{\frak{h}4+} is clearly better for Black, as he will capture back on \textit{d4} and be a clear pawn up) 11...\textit{\frak{w}b6} 12 \textit{\frak{h}1} \textit{\frak{d}xe5} (and why not? Black’s central pawns are doing a good job of defending his king at the moment) 13 \textit{\frak{f}4} 14 \textit{\frak{b}3} \textit{\frak{xb}3} 15 \textit{\frak{a}xb3} \textit{\frak{a}d6} when Black is ready to castle and is two pawns up, which is not a bad way to start a game!

\textit{7...\textit{cxd4} 8 \textit{\frak{d}xd4} \textit{\frak{f}6} 9 \textit{\frak{f}4}}

This is a tricky little move, that is somewhat underrated. Black is practically forced to sacrifice the exchange in this variation which can lead to some very interesting middlegame positions. There are no top grandmasters who play this line regularly as White any more, which shows that Black is in good theoretical health, but he still has to play accurately to avoid stumbling into a bad position.

\textit{9...\textit{\frak{d}xd4}!}
Black has to play without any fear. The play now takes on a forcing nature.  
**10 \( \text{Wh5} + \text{Re7} \)**  
**11 \( \text{exf6} + \)**  
This is the correct move order. It is a slight error to play **11 \( \text{Qg6} + ?! \)** as this gives Black more options: for example, **11...hxg6 12 exf6+** and now instead of the standard **12...\( \text{Qxf6} \)**, Black can consider playing **12...gxf6!?** **13 \( \text{Wh}8 \text{Qe5} \)** when the king is currently quite safe hiding behind the black pawn centre. There have been six games with this: three white wins, two wins for Black and a lone draw. Let’s take a slightly deeper look:  

a) After **14 \( \text{Wh7} + \text{Qd6} \)** **15 \( \text{b}1 \) !?** is untried but interesting as White keeps control of the light squares. Play could continue **15...\( \text{Wa5} \! \)** **16 0-0 \( \text{Qd7} \)** not **16...\( \text{Qe2} + ? \)** **17 \( \text{Wh}1 \text{ Qxc1} \)** **18 \( \text{Qxc1} \)** **\( \text{Qxd2} \! \)** **19 \( \text{Wc}7 \) mate) **17 \( \text{Qd1} \)** with a very interesting position that is hard to assess.  

b) **14 \( \text{Qxg6} \)** is also possible when I like the look of **14...\( \text{Qxg6} \)** **15 \( \text{Wh7} + \text{Qd6} \)** **16 \( \text{Qxg6 e5} \! \)**.

Black is a whole exchange down, but he is ready to break out with moves like **...\( \text{Qf5} \)**: for example, **17 0-0 \( \text{Qf5} \)** **18 \( \text{Wh5} \) \( \text{We8} \! \)** **(18...\( \text{d}3 \) should win the exchange back and has been played before, but the text keeps up the pressure)** **19 \( \text{Qxe8} \text{ Qxe8} \)** **20 \( \text{b}3 \text{ Qe2} + \)** **21 \( \text{Qh1 d4} \)** with a very interesting middlegame. Black’s d-pawn, active pieces and control of c1, which stops a white rook moving there, give him good compensation.  
**11...\( \text{Qxf6} \)**  
This is supposed to be the best option. There is another interesting possibility, though, in **11...gxf6!?** which has only been played twice and looks a lot more interesting than it is supposed to be.

For example:  

a) After **12 \( \text{Qg6} + \text{hxg6} \)** **13 \( \text{Wh8 Qe5} \)** we have transposed to the notes to White’s 11th move, above, which should be okay for Black.  

b) **12 0-0** might be the move that Black should be more concerned about. **White is a pawn down, but he will have a lasting initiative against the black**
king: for example, 12...\textit{b}e5 13 \textit{b}b3! \textit{x}b3 14 axb3 \textit{w}e8 15 \textit{w}h3 when White has some play and Black has some defending to do. Saying that, it is very likely that your opponent will avoid this variation and just continue with his plan of playing 12 \textit{g}g6+ anyway.

\textbf{12 \textit{g}g6+}

White wins the rook on h8. Another sideline that has caught me out in some 3-minute online games has been 12 \textit{w}e5?!. Rather than capturing material, White is looking for some long-term chances against the black king. This is not a very scary line, though, and Black should be somewhat better after 12...\textit{c}c6! 13 \textit{w}e3 e5 14 0-0 \textit{f}7 15 \textit{e}2 \textit{e}6. His king will shortly retreat to g8.

\textbf{12...hxg6 13 \textit{w}xh8 \textit{f}7}

In this critical position, Black compensation revolves around the following points:

1. A strong centre.
3. Quick development with ...e5 and ...\textit{f}5.

4. The offside position of White’s queen.

This is enough for the exchange, but I would recommend that you make sure that you know the following variations pretty well.

\textbf{14 \textit{w}h4}

This is the main move, but White does have another option in 14 0-0?!. I am actually surprised that this move is not played more. I recently faced it and it does make a lot of sense. You will see in the main game White playing \textit{f}3 and allowing his f-pawns to be doubled, but here White is preparing to play \textit{b}3 which will keep his pawn structure much more intact. Recently the top Chinese Grandmaster Ni Hua has played this plan on two occasions. For this reason alone the idea should be treated with respect.

Black bases his counterplay on 14...e5. He is hoping that his strong centre will justify the material imbalance. With 15 \textit{b}3! White aims to simplify matters, whilst keeping his material plus. Black now has three options:
Atta cking Ch es: Th e Fr ench

a) 15...fxb3 is the simplest solution: 16 axb3 e6! (I prefer this to exchanging bishops, as now Black has plans of playing ...e4; 16...f5 is a more popular option: for example, 17 xf5 gxf5 18 g5 c5 19 wh3 w d7 20 xf6 xf6 and now in E.Limayo-A.Demetrio, correspondence 2003, White should have placed a rook on the c-file, such as with 21 f c1 b6 22 c3! with the idea of playing f3 or g3 when the position is fairly equal, but Black has to be on his guard) 17 g5 e4 18 e2 w b6 19 fc1 xb3 20 c7+ (if 20 xf6 xf6!) 20...d7 21 ac1 xb2 22 xd7+! xd7 23 c7 e8 with an unclear game where the computer likes Black.

b) 15...f5?! looks a bit better for White after 16 g5 (16 xf5 gxf5 is fine for Black) 16...h6!? (trying to trap the white queen) 17 ac1 d7 18 c5 c6 19 b4 and White’s queen looks pretty safe, leaving him with the advantage.

c) 15...e6!? prevents g5 ideas.

Moreover, Black avoids swapping knights as he is hoping to prove that White’s knight is badly placed on b3. The position looks dynamically equal: for example, 16 d2 d7 17 fe1 e4!? (keeping the queens on; 17...d6!? also merits attention, but after 18 xd8 xd8 19 c3! Black has to move one of his central pawns and is likely slightly worse after 19...d4) 18 e2 b8!? when Black is planning to play ...e5 and ...d6. Practical examples of 15...e6 are needed!

14...e5 15 f3

This is White’s main idea. He forces the exchange of knights in the hope that his rooks will prove to be more powerful in the following middlegame.

15 xf3+ 16 gxf3 f5!

Black has to keep the pressure off g6. This should lead to a fairly equal middlegame.

17 xf5 gxf5 18 g5

This is the only way that White can try to gain an advantage.

18...a5+ 19 f1 g6!?

Black prepares to play ...h8 and ...h8. The position becomes more sim-
simplified, but the combination of Black's strong d-pawn and White's damaged kingside pawn formation leaves Black with an equal game.

20 \( \text{h8} \)!

This is White's trickiest possibility. He has also tried 20 \( \text{xf6 a6+ 21 g2 xf6} \) and then:

\begin{center}
\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{diagram}
\end{figure}
\end{center}

\begin{enumerate}[a)]
\item 22 \( \text{a4 c6 23 b3 h6 24 ad1 d8 25 d3 f6 26 c3 d7 27 c2 d4 28 c7 d5 29 d1 f4} \) looked good for Black in Ni Hua-H. Wang, Singapore 2006.
\item 22 \( \text{xf6+} \) is an ending in which Black should be feeling very comfortable: for example 22...\( \text{xf6} \) 23 \( \text{ac1 d6} \) (Black must stop a white rook from entering his position via c7) 24 \( \text{hd1 e6 25 c3 g5 26 dc1} \) (White wants to exchange rooks with \( \text{c8} \) which would give him the advantage) 26...\( \text{d7!} \) (preventing White's plan) 27 \( \text{b3 b6 28 d3 d4} \) with a good position for Black, J.Van der Wiel-J. Timman, Brussels 1986.
\end{enumerate}

20...\( \text{a6+ 21 g2 e8} \)

Black's rook moves to e8 so that his dark-squared bishop can move.

22 \( \text{ac1} \)

Again threatening to play \( \text{c7} \).

22...\( \text{e7 23 h6} \)

23...\( \text{d6} \)

This looks logical to stop \( \text{c7} \), but there are some other possibilities. For example:

\begin{enumerate}[a)]
\item 23...\( \text{xa2}?! \) looks very risky, but it might just about be okay for Black: for instance, 24 \( \text{c7 xb2 25 xf6! xf6 26 h4+ e6 27 h7 e4} \) (the black queen needs to move back to f6 to keep the king protected) 28 fxe4 fxe4 and now 29 \( \text{g6+} \text{f6} \) is about equal, while after 29 \( \text{b1!} \text{f6} \) (29...\( \text{xb1? 30 xg6+ wins the rook on e8} \) 30 \( \text{xb7 f3+ 31 f1 d1} \) Black should take the draw by perpetual check. This is a line that is worth investigating more, but on the evidence of this variation it looks like a draw.
\item 23...\( \text{d6?!} \) is the move that Black would like to play, but after 24 h4! \( \text{g8} \) (Black must aim to stop White's plan of playing h5) 25 \( \text{xf6 xf6 26 f4! exf4 27 he1} \) White has a large advan-
tage as Black’s king is too weak.

c) 23...\textit{b6}!? is similar to the game.
\textbf{24} \textit{c2!}

White is playing very accurately and is keeping a fair amount pressure on Black’s position. He now threatens to double rooks and then penetrate Black’s position via the seventh or eighth rank. If White can get a rook into Black’s position, then Black will be in trouble. I suspect that White has a small advantage here, which is why Black should consider deviating on move 23 or, much earlier, with 11...gxf6?.

\textbf{24}...\textit{f8}

Black could try to use his d-pawn by playing 24...d4, but his position is still a bit tricky after 25 \textit{hc1} \textit{d8} 26 \textit{c7} \textit{d7} 27 \textit{c8} d3 28 \textit{h8} when things are looking a bit grim.

\textbf{25} \textit{h4} \textit{g7}?!?

Black should have tried 25...\textit{h5}, but White still has a small advantage after 26 \textit{hc1}: for example, 26...d4 27 \textit{c7+} \textit{g8} 28 \textit{xb7} e4 29 \textit{g1}! and it seems that only White can be better.

\textbf{26} \textit{hc1} \textit{e7} 27 \textit{xf6}

An even stronger plan would have been 27 \textit{a4}! a6 28 \textit{a5}! with \textit{c7} to follow.

\textbf{27}...\textit{xf6} 28 \textit{h7+} \textit{g7} 29 \textit{c8}

This type of position is always going to be good for White. Black’s king remains in constant danger and his d-pawn is of little threat to White.

\textbf{29}...\textit{e4} 30 \textit{g8}?

This is a mistake. Instead 30 \textit{g1}! has the idea of moving the white king away, thereby attacking g6. White would have had a big advantage here.

\textbf{30}...\textit{f6}?

Black misses his chance to play 30...\textit{f6}! which looks about equal, such as after 31 \textit{h4+} g5 32 \textit{g3} exf3+ 33 \textit{xf3} g4 34 \textit{d3} d4.

\textbf{31} \textit{cc8} exf3+ 32 \textit{xf3} \textit{d4}

Black is aiming to obtain a draw through perpetual check, but it is too slow. White gets his attack in first.

\textbf{33} \textit{cf8+}! \textit{e6} 34 \textit{xf6} \textit{d6} 35 \textit{h3}!

This creates an escape route for the black king.

\textbf{35}...\textit{e4+} 36 \textit{g3} \textit{e5+} 37 \textit{g2} \textit{e4+}
I am amazed that Rublevsky, who played a great game so far, missed move 41 \( \text{e}3+! \) which wins on the spot, in view of 41...\( \text{e}5+ \) 42 \( \text{xe}5+ \text{e}5 \) 43 \( \text{xf}7 \).

\[ \text{...d}7 \ 42 \text{e}3 \text{e}7 \ 43 \text{a}8 \text{d}6+ \ 44 \text{g}2 \text{e}7 \ 45 \text{d}3 \]

White is still winning pretty easily. Black’s king is too weak. This is one of the main dangers that Black faces in this variation. If he allows White’s pieces into his position, he will often struggle to defend his king.

\[ \text{...e}5 \ 46 \text{b}5+ \text{c}7 \ 47 \text{a}5+ \text{b}6 \ 48 \text{xa}7+ \text{c}6 \ 49 \text{c}8+ \text{b}5 \ 50 \text{a}4+ \text{b}4 \ 51 \text{xb}6+ \text{1-0} \]

You can see why I believe this variation is rather underrated for White. At said, there is 11...gxf6! and 23...\( \text{x}a2 \) seems okay according to my analysis, although I would suggest that you always check things first for yourself!

**Conclusion**

This has been quite a theoretical chapter, but the system with \( \text{d}3 \) and \( \text{e}2 \) is quite popular amongst positional players, so you will likely face it quite often. Black is okay in the main line, although he should remember the ideas of meeting \( \text{h}4 \) with \( \text{h}5 \) and of the exchange sacrifice on f3.

White can force the desired exchange of dark-squared bishops with an early \( \text{f}4 \), but here too we can develop enough counterplay. A rather different approach is the bold and materialistic 9 \( \text{f}4! \) which must not be neglected in your preparation!
Chapter 9
The Tarrasch Variation: The Universal System

In this chapter, the last to deal with the Tarrasch, I am going to concentrate on the increasingly popular Universal Variation, 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.d2 f6 4.e5 fd7 5.d3 c5 6.c3 c6 7.gf3.

This is a dangerous system which has been adopted by a number of top grandmasters. I have even noticed that England’s no.1 player, Michael Adams, has stopped playing the other Tarrasch variations in favour of this. Incidentally, the system has obtained its ‘Universal’ name tag because White can play in a similar manner and try to engineer a transposition after both 3...c5 and 3...e7.

White’s knight is aggressively placed on f3 and Black can often find himself on the receiving end of a nasty attack. In keeping with the nature of this book I will be recommending the super-aggressive move 7...e7 8.0-0 g5!?. This used to be a favourite of mine, but then I stopped playing it after a couple of bad results. However, after a fair amount of new analysis, I am expecting a rebirth of this variation in my future games!

In this variation I believe that it is more important for Black to be aware of White’s main ideas and that is what I am going to concentrate on here. In general Black’s plan is fairly straightforward – he simply wants to destroy White’s centre. The main problem that Black faces is his king position. After playing the move 8...g5 Black will find it hard to ever castle kingside. Thus he will often have to play the game with his king in the centre or attempt queenside castling.
1. White opens things up with f4!
White will often lose a pawn in the centre, but this is of little concern to him as he normally obtains good attacking chances in return. White will often start his attack with the move f4.

Z. Veroci - L. Gyorkos
Budapest 2007

He now played 10 f1!. As well as bringing the knight around towards Black’s king, this move also releases White’s dark-squared bishop which will shortly play an important role. After 10... a6 11 a4 xB5 12 axb5 e8 13 g3! f8 14 h5! the knight had reached a very dangerous attacking square.

Here 12 f4! was an obvious and dangerous way to start the attack when the position after 12... c6 13 xc6 bxc6 14 xg4 was pretty unclear.

2. The white knight dance: f1-g3-h5!
In the Universal System this can be an extremely effective plan as White’s knight is already on d2. If White is given time, he can move this knight around to a more effective square. Take a look at the following game:

G. Kasparov - N. Short
(Churh rapid) 2001

Kasparov gave a model display of the attacking possibilities that White has available in the French.

Indeed, Black’s position quickly went downhill: 14... bd7 15 g3 g6 16 h4 df8 17 g2 d7 18 h6!! and Black’s king did not last much longer.

This is one reason why I am suggesting that Black plays 8... g5!? He un-
balances the position from an early stage and White is not given time to pull off such extravagant knight manoeuvres.

**Game 48**

**S.Rublevsky-S.Volkov**

European Championship, Ohrid 2001

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 c2 d7

We reach the Universal System via an interesting move order. Our usual move order would be 3...f6 4 e5 d7 e5 d3 c5 c3 d6 c6 7 g3 e7.

4 g3 g6 5 e5 d7 6 d3 c5 7 c3 d6

This is the starting point of the opening. The first thing you should notice is that Black does not play the move ...f6 in this particular line. This is due to the aggressive placement of White’s knight on f3. The problem is that ...f6 can often run into tactics based around the move g5.

8 0-0

How should Black continue now? The move 8...0-0 looks very risky as White’s bishop on d3 is ideally lined up against the h7-pawn and White has a number of ways that he would be able to start an attack against Black’s king.

Let’s first think about what is wrong with White’s set-up. The main thing that we notice is the position of his knight on f3. At the moment it is blocking in the dark-squared bishop and it will take a while to get this knight into the game. Having a knight on d2 will also make it harder for White to defend his d4-pawn, so it makes sense for Black to aim for White’s d-pawn.

There are two main ways that Black can do this: one is by playing 8...b6 and the other is the approach chosen here. The main problem with the immediate 8...b6 is that White gains an attack after 9 e1 cxd4 10 cxd4 d4 11 d4 xxd4 12 d3 b6 13 a4. I do not enjoy defending such positions, which is why I have gone for a more counterattacking option in this book.

8...g5!

By playing this move Black plans to chase White’s knight on c3 away with...g5-g4. It will then be possible to capture the pawn on d4. However, this is a very double-edged approach as Black cannot really consider castling kingside anymore because his g-pawn has marched up the board. Indeed, the game can become very wild and messy after this aggressive lunge.

9 dxc5!
This is White’s best response to Black’s pawn push. He wants to open up the centre as much as possible, so that he can try to exploit the slightly exposed nature of Black’s king.

Other options will be looked at in Giplis-Savchenko towards the end of the chapter.

9...\(\text{\textit{dx}xe5}\)

The knight grabs a central pawn. This makes sense, but it can leave the black king open to attack along the e-file.

Black actually has a number of options here and we will look at 9...g4 and 9...\(\text{\textit{xc}xc5}\) later on.

10 \(\text{\textit{b}b5}\)!

Black should be fine after this move. White should play 10 \(\text{\textit{xe}xe5}\) which we will look at next in Rublevsky-Morozevich.

10...\(\text{\textit{d}d7}\)

A move that I used to experiment with was 10...\(\text{\textit{g}g6}\)!, My plan was to give some extra protection to my king so that I could castle kingside. I also wanted to combine this with ...e5.

I still think that this move is underrated here. For example:

a) 11 b4 0-0 (11...a5!? 12 \(\text{\textit{d}d4}\) \(\text{\textit{d}d7}\) 13 a4 and now in A.Holst-S.Williams, Aarhus 1998, I now played 13...e5, which was okay, but even better would have been 13...a5! when Black is slightly better.

b) 11 c4 0-0 12 cxd5 \(\text{\textit{xd}xd5}\) 13 \(\text{\textit{b}b3}\) g4 14 \(\text{\textit{xd}xd5}\) exd5 15 \(\text{\textit{xc}xc6}\) bxc6 16 \(\text{\textit{f}fd4}\) \(\text{\textit{d}d7}\) was fine for Black in K.Zalkind-S.Williams, Witley 1999. The two bishops should come into their own later on in the game.

11 \(\text{\textit{we}2}\)!

Too passive. White had a second chance to capture on e5 and he should have played 11 \(\text{\textit{xe}xe5}\)!, transposing to our next game.

11...\(\text{\textit{c}c7}\)

Black is getting ready to castle queenside when his strong centre and advanced g-pawn will give him very good chances.

12 \(\text{\textit{xe}e1}\)

This may also be a slight waste of time.
12...\(\text{Ng6}\)

I prefer Black's position. He has ideas such as ...g4, ...\(\text{f4}\) and ...e5 all ready to happen.

13 \(\text{Bb3} \text{g4} 14 \text{Bfd4} \text{e5}\)

The opening has gone very well for Volkov. He has a massive pawn centre, whilst White is lacking any way to attack on the queenside. If only we could get this position every time we played the French!

15 \(\text{Cc2}\)

White could have tried 15 \(\text{Bxc6} \text{bxc6} 16 \text{Ba6}\), but now Black can castle the other way, 16...0-0, when he is ready to launch another pawn up the board, this time the f-pawn, with a good position.

15...\(\text{a6}\) 16 \(\text{Ba4}\)

A rather strange square for the bishop, but the white pawn on c5 will always make it hard for Black to ever achieve ...b5.

16...\(\text{h5}\) 17 \(\text{Bd1} 0-0-0!\)

Black relies on a little tactical point to defend his centre.

Instead 17...\(\text{e6}\) 18 \(\text{Bb4} \text{Bd8}\) 19 \(\text{Bxc6} \text{bxc6} 20 \text{Bxa6} \text{Cc8}\) would have left Black with some compensation for the sacrificed pawn; he just needs to get either his f- or h-pawn moving quickly up the board. I expect that White is better though, as he can generate good play on the queenside with \(\text{Ba5}\) and then b4.

18 \(\text{Bxd5}\)

18...\(\text{Bxd5}\)

This is pretty much forced as otherwise Black has time to play ...\(\text{e6}\) on his next move with a good position.

18...\(\text{Bd4}\)

Another option was 18...\(\text{f5!}\)? which should give Black pretty decent compensation: for example, 19 \(\text{Bxd8+ Bxd8}\) 20 \(\text{Bb4 Bxb4}\) 21 \(\text{cxb4 Bd3}\) 22 \(\text{Be3 Bf4}\) with a complicated game ahead.

19 \(\text{Bxd7+ Bxd7}\) 20 \(\text{cxd4?!}\)

This is a mistake. White should have played 20 \(\text{Bxd4}\) which would have led to a roughly equal position after 20...\(\text{exd4}\) 21 \(\text{cxd4 Bf6}\). If White can ever manage to play d5 then he will be doing well, but in the meantime Black has ideas of playing ...h4, ...\(\text{e7}\) and ...\(\text{f4}\)
with counterplay against White’s king. This is certainly an interesting position.

20...\texttt{exd}5 21 \texttt{cxb}4 \texttt{dd}8 22 d5

White was relying on this move to give him good chances. The main problem is...

22...\texttt{a}5!

...which favourably liquidates the position for Black.

23 d6

Otherwise d5 drops.

23...\texttt{xd}6 24 \texttt{cxd}6 \texttt{xd}6 25 \texttt{g}5

This is pretty much forced as 25 \texttt{c}2 allows 25...\texttt{d}1+ with a winning position for Black.

25...\texttt{axb}4 26 \texttt{xd}8 \texttt{xd}8

The dust has settled and Black is a pawn up. Just as important is his control over the d-file. Moreover, if Black can manage to exchange queens then White will have a hopeless defensive task ahead.

27 g3 \texttt{b}8

Another option was the immediate 27...\texttt{d}3 which would force White’s queen to a bad square with 28 \texttt{c}1+ \texttt{b}8 29 \texttt{e}1.

28 \texttt{b}5?

This is another error. White’s queen is needed around the centre and kingside in order to defend the light squares.

28...h4!

Black is simply threatening to play ...h3 and then ...\texttt{d}5.

29 \texttt{e}2

29 \texttt{c}5 allows a number of exchanges after 29...\texttt{d}1+ 30 \texttt{xd}1 \texttt{xd}1+ 31 \texttt{f}1 (not 31 \texttt{g}2?? h3 mate) 31...\texttt{f}1+ 32 \texttt{xf}1 when White would have had a tough job to hold the ending.

29...f5

The rest is pretty easy for Black.

30 \texttt{e}1 \texttt{d}5 31 \texttt{f}1 \texttt{f}3

Black decides to take no risks. A typically Russian way of finishing off the game!

32 \texttt{xf}3 \texttt{gxf}3

The ending is easily winning for Black. His central pawn formation will prove to be too strong for White.

33 \texttt{e}1 e4 34 \texttt{f}1 \texttt{e}5 35 \texttt{h}4 \texttt{d}3 36 \texttt{d}1 \texttt{g}8 37 \texttt{d}4 \texttt{g}2 38 \texttt{d}2 \texttt{f}4 39 \texttt{c}2 \texttt{xh}2 40 \texttt{e}1 \texttt{d}3+ 0-1
At tacking Chess: The French

**Game 49**

*S.Rublevsky-A.Morozevich*

Russian Team Championship 2003

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 d3 c5 4 c4 e7 4 g3 g6 5 e5 cxd5 6 cxd5 e5 7 c3 c6 8 0-0 g5 9 dxc5 dxc5 10 xxe5!

This is better than Rublevsky’s earlier 10 b5. An exchange of knights helps White for two main reasons:

1. His f-pawn is now free to move.
2. He removes a piece that could come to the aid of the black king.

10... xxe5

11 b5+

This is a simple but dangerous move. White just wants to eliminate some pieces in the centre so that he can open the position with his two main pawn breaks, c4 and f4.

Another dangerous move that Black has to face in this position is 11 b3!?. The knight defends c5 and opens the way for White’s dark-squared bishop. Sometimes you have to think outside the box in chess! Normally Black would be overjoyed to be able to exchange off White’s light-squared bishop, but that is no longer so important now due to the half open d- and e-files which White can attack along.

Here Black has tried:

a) I was sitting next to the following game with 11... xdx3, J.Degraeve-N.Pert, Montpellier 2003, which ended very badly for Black: 12 xdx3 e5 13 wxe2 f6 14 wh5+ xf8 15 h4 xg7 16 hxg5 fxg5 17 xe1 xf6 18 xe5 xe5 19 xg5 xe8 20 xh6+ xg6 21 g5+ xg7 22 xe1 and White was winning. In all truth I suggested the morning before this game that Nick Pert should give this risky variation a try. We were sharing an apartment and I had to buy him a few beers afterwards due to the guilt factor!

b) 11... xg6 aims to hold up f4 and protect the kingside, but White still has a good deal of pressure after 12 wh5 e5 13 xed1! (after the move ...e5 Black’s d-pawn will often become a target and that is certainly the case here) 13... xe6
14 c4! when I quite like White’s position.

c) 11...d7 12 f4! sees White enabling his king’s rook to enter the fray.

After 12...exd3 (Black can also try 12...gxf4 13 exf4 exd3 14 wxd3 f6, trying to hold things together with ...e5, but his king is just too weak after 15 h6! when White threatens 16 g7, which is really hard to stop) 13 wxd3 h6 (Black can attempt to bring some life to his pieces by playing 13...b6, but White now has the pleasant choice of keeping everything under control with 14 e3 or going all out with 14 fxg5 bxc5 15 fxg5; instead 13...g4 aims to block some lines, but it is only very temporary after 14 f5!) 14 e3 wC7 15 d4 White has what I would call a strong bishop. He was undoubtedly better here in Z.Hracek-D.Stellwagen, German League 2005.

11...d7 12 exd7+ wxd7

This does not turn out well for Morozevich. There is another option, 12...wxd7, but again I expect that White has the easier game, especially after 13 f3!. White wants to exchange knights and then he can consider playing h5 with f4 to follow. Here 13...xf3+ 14 xf3 reaches an important position for the evaluation of this position.

I expect that White has a small advantage here as Black’s king is rather exposed and White has the simple plan of placing his rooks on d1 and e1:

a) 14...e5 15 e3 wE6 and now in G.Meier-B.Socko, Bastia (rapid) 2005, after 16 fe1! I prefer White’s position. Black does have a large pawn centre, but it seems to be more of a target than an asset in this position: for example, 16...e4 17 wH5 g4 18 ad1 d8 19 d4 and Black’s position just looks horrible.

b) 14...h5!? was an interesting try in the game D.Saiboulatov-P.Claesen, Belgian Championship, Namur 2007. The idea of this move is to stop wH5. Play continued 15 e3 g4 16 e2 a6 (16...0-0-0?) 17 b4 wB5 (an exchange of queens would help Black as it is his king that is in the greater danger).
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\[ \text{f2 f6, but again I would prefer to be playing White here; Black's position just seems a bit too loose.} \]

13 b4!

Vigorous and dangerous.

13...b6

Black aims to attack White's queenside pawns with this move. The problem is that White can now open things up in the centre.

14 c4!

This is a typical break in this type of position. It is more important to try and open the position than to worry about material concerns.

14...dxc4?!

Perhaps Black should have tried accepting the pawn with 14...bxc5 15 cxd5 exd5, but White does have good compensation after 16 b3 cxb4 17 a3?!. Black's king is always going to be feeling a bit exposed due to his playing ...g5, but his position might not be that bad for him.

15 dxc4!

White could have also tried 15 c6 \( \text{f6} \) 16 dxc4, but maybe he wanted to avoid the exchange of queens that could have occurred after 16...\( \text{xd1} \) (16...\( \text{d5} \) 17 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{xb4} \) looks very risky!) 17 \( \text{xd1} \) \( \text{d5} \). Black might be a little worse here, but his knight on d5 is a very strong piece and at least he no longer has to fear being checkmated!

15...bxc5 16 d6+!

Simple and good. Black is left with a horrible position after a somewhat suspect opening.

16...\( \text{xd6} \) 17 \( \text{xd6} \) \( \text{b6} \) 18 \( \text{g3} \)!

Targeting the dark squares. Black's king has no safe place to hide and his position quickly falls apart.

18...\( \text{xc6} \) 19 \( \text{xg5} \)

The white queen comes just that little bit nearer to the black king. The rest of the game is instructive, but very unpleasant for Black. His king has no real chance of survival.

19...c5

Desperately trying to swap the queens off.

20 \( \text{g3} \)

No thank you!

20...\( \text{b6} \)
Heading for the d5-square which Black hopes will block some files towards his king.

21 \textit{e3} \textit{e7} 22 \textit{ac1} \textit{d5} 23 \textit{c5} \textit{d7} 24 \textit{g7} 0-0-0

Black did not have a choice, but the rest is easy after this.

25 \textit{f8+!} \textit{b7} 26 \textit{xf8} \textit{e8} 27 \textit{xf7} \textit{xf8} 28 \textit{fd1} a5 29 h4 \textit{b6} 30 \textit{d3} \textit{h8} 31 g3 \textit{b2} 32 a4 1-0

Based on the evidence of this game, it would seem that \textit{ldxe5} is too risky. However, I thought that it was worth covering \textit{ldxe5} because some bold players may wish to search for improvements after it and because it demonstrates what White is trying to achieve and what Black should try to avoid!

We will now look at other ways that Black can try to reach a decent, unbalanced middlegame, beginning with the solid \textit{ldxc5}.

\textbf{Game 50}

\textbf{M.Dzhumaev-S.Volkov}

\textit{Tashkent 2009}

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 \textit{d2} \textit{f6} 4 e5 \textit{fd7} 5 c3 c5 6 \textit{d3} \textit{c6} 7 \textit{gf3}

Finally we see an example of ‘our’ move order! Here Black can choose between \textit{7...e7}, \textit{7...b6} and \textit{7...g6}. I have never been a fan of \textit{7...g6} because it immediately gives White a target to attack with the move 8 h4!. 7...\textit{e7} is a much more flexible approach with which Black delays his intentions for another move.

\textit{7...e7} 8 0-0 g5 9 \textit{xc5} \textit{xxc5}

A very sensible move. Black captures the pawn on c5 and by doing so gains a tempo on White’s bishop. In the last game White managed to gain a large initiative by retaining his pawn on c5, so here Black tries a different tactic. He first captures the c-pawn and only then does he gang up on the e-pawn. Nakamura has played this idea recently with decent results.

10 \textit{c2}

White has a major alternative in 10 \textit{b5} which would no doubt have been Nimzowitsch’s choice. White is aiming to over-defend the e5-pawn, which can turn out to be a serious thorn in Black’s side. Now:

\textbf{a) 10...h6!?} has been the choice of Nakamura on two occasions. This is a useful prophylactic move and it does make sense to overprotect the g-pawn. Here 11 \textit{b3} (11 \textit{e2} \textit{c7} 12 c4 \textit{d7} 13 cxd5 exd5 14 \textit{b3} \textit{e6} 15 \textit{d1} a6)
\textbf{At tacking Chess: The French}

At \textit{tacking Chess: The French}  \(\text{xc6 bxc6 17 \text{e}3 \text{g}4 18 \text{f}d4 \text{xe}5 19 \text{xg}4 \text{h}5 20 \text{g}3 \text{xg}3 21 \text{hxg}3 \text{h}4\) looked fine for Black in D.Howell-H.Nakamura, London 2009) 11...\text{d}7!? is a new possibility that is worth investigating.

For example, 12 \text{bd}4 \text{c}7 (increasing the pressure on White’s e5-pawn) 13 \text{a}4!? \text{c}xe5 (13...0-0?!) 14 \text{xe}5 \text{xe}5 15 \text{f}4 \text{c}7 16 \text{d}3 and White has obvious pressure for his pawn, but Black does nevertheless have a very strong centre. This type of position resembles a Sicilian as much as a French. I suspect that it is dynamically equal, but I would very much like to see some practical tests before I really put my neck on the line!

b) 10...\text{b}6 forces White to make a decision. However, after 11 \text{d}4! (11 \text{e}2 a6 12 \text{xc}6+ \text{bxc}6 with a later ...a5 and ...\text{a}6 to follow is pretty good for Black: for example, 13 c4 a5 14 \text{e}3 \text{d}7! 15 \text{xb}6 \text{xb}6 16 \text{d}4 \text{b}7 and Black position is to be preferred slightly) I cannot find an entirely adequate move for Black.

For example,

\begin{itemize}
  \item[b1)] 11...0-0?! looks risky as Black has a pawn on g5, but can White actually take advantage of this fact? White’s position at least looks the easier to play after 12 \text{xc}6 (12 \text{f}3 can lead to some very murky positions: for example, 12...\text{g}4 13 \text{xc}6 \text{xf}3 14 \text{xf}3 \text{bc}6 15 \text{h}6 \text{f}5 16 \text{g}3+ \text{f}7 17 \text{g}7+ \text{e}8 18 \text{xh}7 \text{f}7 19 \text{g}8+ \text{f}8 when White obviously has counterplay, but there is no immediate threat to Black’s king) 12...\text{bxc}6 13 \text{h}5! placing his queen on a very aggressive square. He is simply threatening to play either \text{f}3 or in some cases \text{f}4! Following 13...\text{a}6 14 \text{b}4! (14 \text{f}3!? is also pretty dangerous for Black, such as after 14...\text{xf}1 15 \text{xg}5 \text{f}6 16 \text{exf}6 \text{xf}6 17 \text{xf}1 when White has a dangerous initiative for the exchange) 14...\text{d}3 15 \text{f}3 \text{xc}1 16 \text{g}5 White has won a safe pawn and Black’s king still remains in danger. This is just one of perils that Black faces if he castles kingside!
  \item[b2)] 11...\text{d}7 12 \text{xc}6 \text{xc}6 (Black should try and swap the light-squared
bishops in this position; 12...bxc6 13 \( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{e2}}}}}} \) leaves him with a very passive bishop on d7) 13 \( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{xc6+ bxc6 14 \texttt{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{b3}}}}}}}}}} \) (White just wants to simplify the position, which will always leave Black under a certain amount of pressure) 14...\( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{d7}}}}}} \) 15 \( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{wh5!}}}}}} \) (this move is often a pain in Black’s side) 15...\( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{xe5}}}}}} \) 16 \( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{xd5}}}}}} \) \( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{xg5}}}}}} \) 17 \( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{wh5}}}}}} \) and White is clearly better due to the exposed nature of Black’s king.

b3) White’s best continuation after 11...a6!? 12 \( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{xc6+ bxc6}}}}}} \) is 13 b4!. Black should try 13...\( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{d3}}}}}} \), but White still retains an advantage after 14 \( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{b2b3}}}}}} \) \( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{xe5}}}}}} \) 15 \( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{wh5!}}}}}} \) (yet again) 15...h5 16 \( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{xd5!}}}}}} \) \( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{xg5}}}}}} \) 17 f4! when Black’s position is starting to collapse.

10...\( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{d7}}}}}} \)!

This was a new move at the time of this game and it seems to lead to a roughly equal position.

Another interesting idea is the untested 10...h5!? This is often a useful move because when Black plays ...g4 his pawn will now always be defended.

Play could continue 11 \( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{e1}}}}}} \) \( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{d7}}}}}} \)!

(Black’s plan is simple: play ...g4 and capture the e5-pawn) 12 \( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{b3 g4 13 \texttt{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{fd4 dxe5 (13...\texttt{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{dxe5!}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}} \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{xf3 15 \texttt{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{xf3}}}}}}}}}} \) with a position that is fairly typical for this variation. Black is a pawn up with a strong centre, but on the other hand White has a strong initiative. The game could swing either way here!

11 \( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{e1 g4}}}}}} \)

This is an interesting choice. Black has the option of winning a pawn in a number of variations, but instead he aims for active play.

11...h5 would transpose into the notes to Black’s 10th move above.

12 \( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{d4 dxe5}}}}}} \)

If Black had wanted to hold on to his pawn then he could have considered 12...\( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{cxe5}}}}}} \), but after 13 f4! (this is the move to remember if you are playing with the white pieces!) 13...\( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{xf3}}}}}} \) 14 \( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{2xf3}}}}}} \) White has a very dangerous attack and Black’s king is a long way from safety.

13 \( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{xc6 dxc6 14 \texttt{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{gxh5}}}}}}}}}} \) 15 \( \texttt{\text{\textsf{\textcolor{red}{\textsf{\texttt{wh1 e5}}}}}} \)

The dust is starting to settle and it is
time to try and evaluate the position. Black obviously has a strong centre, but his king is a long way from the comfort of a reliable hiding place. In a practical game I would be tempted by the white side here, but if you are looking for an exciting way to play the French then this could be the variation for you!

16 c4

This is one of the only cases in this chapter when c4 does not turn out to be the optimal move.

An improvement would have been 16 f3! which brings the white pieces to life: for example, 16...d6 17 g5 e6 18 xe7 xe7 19 e2 e4 20 d2 ag8 with a very messy position where it looks like Black’s attacking chances are just as promising as White’s.

16...g4!

Black wants to tempt White into playing...

17 f3

...which Black figures will weaken the white kingside. This is true as now Black will always have a check on the a7-g1 diagonal.

17...e6 18 cxd5 xd5 19 b3 c5+ 20 h1 0-0-0

The position is equal, but far from dead. Opposite-side castling will often lead to some exciting encounters and that is certainly the case here.

21 xe6+ fxe6 22 f1 b5

The black queen sidesteps a white knight move that may attack it. However, Volkov should have considered 22...h4!, aiming to create more weaknesses around the white king. For example, 23 h3 (the g3-square is now weak) 23...b8 24 e1 b4 25 e4 with mutual chances.
Black does not want to allow White the chance to cement his knight on e4. It would be very difficult for Black to ever remove it from that outpost.

24 a3 \=a5

Or 24...\=xd2 25 \=xd2 \=xb2 26 \=c3 \=b5 27 \=b1 \=d5 28 \=h4 when White has good compensation for the lost b-pawn.

25 axb4!?

A decent try. White’s minor pieces will obtain some very good squares after this exchange sacrifice.

25...\=xa1 26 b5 \=d4 27 \=xe5 \=a5?! 27...\=a4! would have been a better square for the queen.

28 \=c5+

28...\=c7?!

Very risky!

29 \=xa7 \=xb5 30 \=a8+ \=b8 31 \=a5

Another decent plan was 31 \=a4!? \=c7 32 \=c2, aiming to cause Black some headaches through a series of pins on his knight on c7.

31...\=d6 32 \=b3

Black has taken too many risks. He should have never given up his pawn on a7, which has left his king in a state of permanent nakedness. The other major problem is the fact that White has a dark-squared bishop. This piece has two very strong posts available to it, f4 and e3.

32...\=c7 33 \=a8+ \=d7

Time to run away!

34 \=a4+

34 \=a3! was even stronger. From a3 the queen keeps up the pressure on Black’s knight on d6.

34...\=c6 35 \=c5+ \=e8

36 \=xc6+?

A crazy decision. The black king has no protection so why enter an endgame?

White should have kept the queens on the board: for example, 36 \=d4 \=f7 37 \=b4 \=d5 38 \=e3 \=g8 39 \=a1 when his attack rages on. Black would have done well to have survived here.

36...\=bxc6 37 \=xe6 \=d7 38 \=f4

White is still better, but Black must have breathed a sigh of relief as soon as the queens were exchanged.

38...\=b5!
Black is starting to get coordinated.

39 h4 \( \text{g7} \) 40 \( \text{g5+} \) \( \text{g6} \) 41 \( \text{e1} \) \( \text{d4} \) 42 \( \text{e4} \) \( \text{c5} \) 43 \( \text{e5} \) \( \text{f8} \) 44 \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{f5} \) 45 \( \text{e8} \) \( \text{fd5} \) 46 \( \text{e4} \)

White should not lose this position as his knight has a number of good squares that it can occupy.

46...\( \text{d8} \) 47 \( \text{e7} \) \( \text{b7} \) 48 \( \text{xd7} \)

I am not convinced, however, that White should be trying to win this position. You have to admire him for his courage though!

48...\( \text{xd7} \) 49 \( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{d5} \) 50 \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{e2} \) 51 \( \text{b4} \) \( \text{b5} \) 52 \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{b8} \) 53 \( \text{h2} \) \( \text{d8} \) 54 \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{b8} \) 55 \( \text{c5} \) \( \text{b5} \) 56 \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{b3} \) 57 \( \text{e5+} \) \( \text{f5} \) 58 \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{e6} \) 59 \( \text{a3} \)

Black’s pieces are too active to allow White any serious winning chances.

59...\( \text{d3} \) 60 \( \text{d6} \) \( \text{d2} \) 61 \( \text{e4} \) \( \text{c2} \) 62 \( \text{h1} \) \( \text{c1+} \) 63 \( \text{h2} \) \( \text{c2} \) 64 \( \text{h1} \) \( \text{f5}!\)

Now Black decides to have a try!

65 g3

Stopping the black king from advancing any further.

65...\( \text{d4} \) 66 \( \text{g5} \) \( \text{e5} \) 67 \( \text{g1} \) \( \text{e2+} \) 68 \( \text{f2} \) \( \text{f4+} \) 69 \( \text{e1} \) \( \text{g2+} \) 70 \( \text{d1} \) \( \text{e3+} \)

It certainly seems that Black has made progress over the last ten moves or so.

71 \( \text{e1} \) \( \text{d5} \)

A better winning attempt would have been 71...\( \text{c4}! \).

72 \( \text{h3} \) \( \text{d4} \) 73 \( \text{f4} \) \( \text{d5} \) 74 \( \text{d1} \) \( \text{e3+} \) 75 \( \text{e1} \) \( \text{c4} \) 76 \( \text{c1} \) \( \text{h2} \) ½-½

A bit of a strange time to agree a draw, as it would seem that Black has one of the best positions that he has seen all game.

Game 51

S.Fedorchuk-J.Carron
Zurich 2009

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{e7} \) 4 \( \text{gf3} \) \( \text{f6} \) 5 e5 \( \text{fd7} \) 6 c3 \( \text{c5} \) 7 \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{c6} \) 8 0-0 g5 9 dxc5 g4!? 

This is an interesting try to push White’s knight to an inferior square. Black is also trying to keep more pieces on the board than he does with 9...\( \text{dxe5} \) so that his king is better protected. This currently seems to be the most popular choice amongst high-rated French Defence players. I would recommend that you either consider playing this move or the 9...\( \text{dxe5} \) of the previous game.
Black has also tried 10...\(\text{\&}cxe5\)! with the simple plan of capturing White’s pawn on c5. This is a very interesting choice.

Now:

a) 11 \(\text{\&}c2\) is an interesting response. White realizes that he must sacrifice a pawn and he figures that his bishop is best placed on c2. Having a bishop on c2 practically makes it impossible for Black to castle kingside and White will always have attacking chances based on f4. Black should now play 11...\(\text{\&}xc5\)! when White has to act quickly with 12 f4, although after 12...\(\text{\&}c6\) 13 \(\text{\&}xg4\) (or 13 \(\text{\&}xc6\) bxc6 14 \(\text{\&}xg4\) e5) 13...e5 14 \(\text{\&}f5\) e4 15 \(\text{\&}h5\) \(\text{\&}xf5\) (Black should eliminate this attacking piece while he has the chance) 16 \(\text{\&}xf5\) \(\text{\&}d7\)! Black has the better position. He is ready to castle queenside and his centre looks very menacing.

b) 11 \(\text{\&}e2\) blocks the white queen’s route to g4. Black obtained a good position in R.Loncar-I.Efimov, Trieste 2005, after 11...\(\text{\&}xc5\) 12 \(\text{\&}xg4\) \(\text{\&}d7\) 13 \(\text{\&}h3\) \(\text{\&}c7\) 14 \(\text{\&}h5\) \(\text{\&}g6\)! (a good move; the knight indirectly defends f7 and prepares ...e5, as well as ...f4) 15 g3 0-0-0 when he had the better attacking chances.

c) 11 \(\text{\&}b5\) is an important choice as it seems to be White’s most obvious move and now it’s Black who has a choice:

   c1) After 11...\(\text{\&}xc5\) White has a number of options:

   c11) 12 f4! looks like the most obvious and dangerous move. Z.Veroci-L.Gyorkos, Budapest 2007, continued 12...\(\text{\&}c6\) 13 \(\text{\&}xc6\) bxc6 14 \(\text{\&}xg4\) \(\text{\&}f6\) 15 \(\text{\&}f3\) and here Black should have tried 15...\(\text{\&}b7\), intending to castle queenside and then play ...\(\text{\&}d8\). This would have led to a very exciting and interesting game.

   c12) 12 \(\text{\&}b3\)?! looks fairly logical, but it gives Black time to consolidate his position and extra pawn: 12...\(\text{\&}d6\) 13 \(\text{\&}h1\) a6 14 \(\text{\&}xd7+\) \(\text{\&}xd7\) 15 f4 (White has to try something) 15...\(\text{\&}xf3\) 16 \(\text{\&}xf3\) h5!? 17 \(\text{\&}xe5\) \(\text{\&}xe5\) 18 \(\text{\&}f3\) \(\text{\&}e7\) and Black had a big advantage in P.Kuehn-P.Pelling, Dresden 2008. He
simply played ...f6 and ...0-0-0 when as well as being a pawn up, he had the two bishops and an open g-file to attack White down.

c13) 12 c61 is another obvious choice: 12...d6 (12...0-0!? 13 f4 gxf3 14 cxd3 cxd3+ 15 wxf3 was M.Hebden-A.Summerscale, Bradford (rapid) 2001, where Black now played the powerful 15...c6! which led to a very exciting and decent position for him after 16 f1 (16 c6h2? allows 16...c4+, picking up the rook on e1) 16...c4 17 e3 0-0 18 f2 c4 19 g3 c6 20 g2 e4 21 e3 g6 22 cxh2 e5!. Black might be down a piece, but he certainly has a strong attack.

c2) 11...a6!? is an interesting alternative: for example, 12 cxd7+ (12 c4 cxd5 is similar to the immediate capture on c5) 12...cxd7 13 f4 (if 13 b4 a5) 13...d3 14 b4 cxd3 15 cxd3 h5 looks okay for Black.

Returning to 10...c6:

11 b5!

This is the critical test of Black’s opening play. Alternatively:

a) 11 cxd7+? simply helped Black’s position after 11...cxd7 12 b3 cxd3 13 wxf3 e5 in M.Mader-D.Berczes, Szeged 2008. Black has everything that he wishes when entering this variation: a strong centre, two bishops and active play.

b) 11 c2b3 has scored well for Black so far, but it does look like a very sensible plan, just as it is after 9...c6 10 cxe5 cxe5. Here 11...cxd3 12 wxf3 e5! (Black might as well use his main asset, the strong centre) 13 cxc6 bxc6 (compared to the aforementioned analogous position, Black has a pawn on b7 instead of c6; it clearly helps him to have a pawn on c6 as it bolsters the defence of the d5-pawn) 14 c6h6 f6 15 f3 gxf3 16 c6f3 c8 17 c6h5+ c8 18 c6e3 (this makes more sense than 18 c6f4? when after 18...c7d7! Black threatens to play ...c4 next with a good position and she had a large advantage in E.Korbut-S.Matveeva, Moscow 2005) 18...c7d7! (again a good move; Black has a slight advantage here) 19 h3 (White has to stop ...c4) 19...c8d8! 20 c6a1 c8f7 was seen in E.Gasanov-Z.Izoria, Baku 2002. Black has successfully defended his king and is now ready to finish his development, while his centre offers him a nice advantage.

c) 11 c6e2 is a rather passive square for the bishop. A simple approach for Black is 11...cxc5 (11...h5!?) 12 c2b3 a6 13 c4 c4 14 c4c4 c6 15 cxc6 bxc6 when his position looked
promising in L.McShane-M.Bartel, Internet (blitz) 2004.

11...\texttt{d7}

Black has also tried 11...\texttt{xc5}, but he got in a bit of a tangle in P.Carlsson-E.Berg, Swedish Championship, Gothenburg 2005. That game continued 12 f4! (this seems to be the most popular option amongst high-rated players; 12 \texttt{e1}!? is also possible) and here:

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

a) After 12...gxf3 13 \texttt{xf3 d7} 14 \texttt{xc6 xc6} 15 \texttt{g5} White has a good position. For example:

a1) 15...\texttt{f8}? was the move Berg played, but he was in some trouble after 16 \texttt{xh7}.

a2) 15...\texttt{b6}!? was a better option, but again White is on top of events after 16 \texttt{xf7}: for example, 16...\texttt{xd4} 17 \texttt{xh8 c2+} 18 \texttt{h1 xa1} 19 \texttt{g5} when Black’s king is stuck in a mating net.

b) 12...\texttt{b6} 13 \texttt{xe5 xb5} 14 \texttt{xg4 d3} 15 \texttt{g7} is better for White too.

c) 12...\texttt{g6}!? 13 \texttt{b3 b6} was Chen Jing-Gong Qingyun, Jinan 2005, where after 14 \texttt{h1} (14 \texttt{xg4}?)

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

White has tried a number of moves here, but this looks like his best way of gaining something from the opening. Others:

a) 12 b4 is another sensible plan. White aims to build up a rather formidable pawn formation on the queenside. Now:

a1) 12...\texttt{xd4}?! 13 \texttt{x7+ xd7} 14 \texttt{x4 c6} 15 \texttt{xg4 xb4} 16 \texttt{f3} was clearly better for White in A.Timofeev-J.Moreno Carnero, Internet (blitz) 2004. Black’s king is stuck in an uncomfortable position and White has great attacking chances with moves like \texttt{e5} and \texttt{g7} on the cards.
a2) 12...a5!? looks like an improvement: for example, 13 f4 \( \square \times d 4 \) 14 \( \triangle \times d 7+ \) \( \mathcal{W} \times d 7 \) 15 cxd4 (or 15 fxe5 \( \square \times f 5 \) 16 \( \triangle \times b 3 \) axb4 17 cxb4 \( \mathcal{W} \times b 5!? \) 18 \( \mathcal{W} \times g 4 \) b6 with an unclear game) 15...\( \triangle \times c 6 \) 16 \( \mathcal{W} \times g 4 \) \( \f 6 \) 17 \( \mathcal{B} \times b 2 \) \( h 5 \) 18 \( \mathcal{W} \times d 1 \) axb4 with an equal position.

b) 12 \( \square \times c 6 \) is yet another move that can prove to be quite dangerous for Black if he is careless. Here 12...bxc6 13 f4! is another example of this typical break. Generally in this opening White obtains good attacking chances, while Black has a solid structure that he hopes can be put to good use at some stage.

Now:

b1) With 13...\( \triangle \times d 3 \) 14 b4 a5 15 \( \triangle \times b 3 \) \( \triangle \times c 1 \) 16 \( \mathcal{W} \times c 1 \) axb4 17 cxb4 we have been following I.Smirin-V.Akobian, Philadelphia 2004, when an interesting move for Black would have been 17...\( \triangle \times f 6! \), which aims to meet 18 f5 with 18...e5 when Black has a good game.

b2) 13...gxf3! was the choice of the French Defence expert Nikita Vitiugov in M.Oratovsky-N.Vitiugov, Israeli League 2010. That game continued 14 \( \triangle \times f 3 \) \( \mathcal{G} \times g 6 \) (we have already seen that I like this square for Black’s knight; he is preparing to play ...e5 and can even consider castling kingside in some positions) 15 \( \mathcal{W} \times e 2! \) \( \mathcal{W} \times c 7! \) (15...\( \triangle \times c 5 \) is quite dangerous as White can play 16 \( \mathcal{G} \times g 5 \) with a big attack; it is certainly worth avoiding this variation) 16 \( \mathcal{G} \times g 5 \) (starting an attack against f7) 16...\( \mathcal{W} \times e 5 \) (an exchange of queens will nearly always help Black in this variation) 17 \( \mathcal{W} \times h 5 \) (17 \( \mathcal{W} \times f 2!? \)!) 17...\( \triangle \times c 5 \) 18 \( \mathcal{D} \times d 2 \) \( h 6 \) 19 \( \mathcal{A} \times f 7 \) \( h x g 5 \) 20 \( \mathcal{W} \times g 6 \) \( \mathcal{W} \times h 2+ \) 21 \( \mathcal{F} \times f 2 \) 0-0-0 by when Black had a winning position.

c) 12 f4 \( \square \times d 4 \) 13 \( \triangle \times d 7+ \) \( \mathcal{W} \times d 7 \) 14 cxd4 \( \triangle \times c 6 \) 15 \( \mathcal{W} \times g 4 \) \( \f 6 \) 16 \( \mathcal{F} \times f 3 \) \( \square \times d 4 \) 17 \( \triangle \times e 5 \) \( \mathcal{C} \times c 7 \) 18 \( \mathcal{D} \times d 2 \) \( h 5 \) 19 \( \mathcal{D} \times d 1 \) \( \triangle \times e 5 \) 20 fxe5 \( \mathcal{F} \times f 5 \) was about equal in I.Smirin-T.Radjabov, Sarajevo 2000.

d) 12 \( \mathcal{W} \times e 2 \) left Black with a better position in A.Murariu-M.Bartel, Balatonlelle 2003, after 12...\( \triangle \times c 5 \) 13 \( \square \times c 6 \) \( \triangle \times c 6 \) 14 \( \mathcal{W} \times g 4 \) \( \f 6 \).

12...\( h 5! \)
Black has also tried 12...g8, but 13 e1 c4 (13...xd4 14 xd4 xb5 15 xe5 wc7 16 f4 xc5 17 h5 f6 18 xh7 is rather complicated, but I prefer White’s position as the black king is still unsure about where it will make its home) 14 f4 xd4 15 xd4 was good for White in I.Smirin-V.Akobian, Minneapolis 2005.

13 e1

Or 13 e2 when 13...a6 forces the issue. Black position seems okay after 14 xc6 xc6 15 e1 (15 f3?! xd4 16 xd4 xc5 17 fxg4 b5 18 e5 h7 19 e1 hgx4 is slightly better for Black) 15...wc7 16 a4 xd4 17 cxd4 a6, although White may have a very small advantage after 18 g3! when he can play f4 or e5 with some pressure on the dark squares.

13...xd4

Another possibility is 13...c4, but I do not fully trust this move. I expect that White should continue 14 f4! which is a good square for the bishop. It seems that Black’s king is caught in crossfire here. Play could continue 14...c8 15 xc4 dxc4 16 d2 xd4 17 cxd4 c6 18 xc4 wd5 19 e3 we4 20 d6 when Black may have some compensation for his pawn in the form of his strong light-squared bishop, but I doubt that it is enough.

14 xd4

Another option was 14 xd4!? when play could continue 14...xb5 (J.Emms-B.Lalic, Southend 2001) 15 xb5! and White has the better chances: for example, 15 g6 16 b4 0-0!? 17 h6 e8 18 wd3! when xe6 is a nasty threat and White must be better here.

14...xb5

Black can also try 14...f6!? which tries to consolidate the knight on the e5-square, while the king can now consider moving to f7. Play could continue 15 xd7+ xd7 16 xe5!? (otherwise Black would have played ...f7 with a fine position) 16...f5 17 xe5 f7 18 g5 xg5 19 xg5 we7 20 d2 with a dynamically equal position. White has pressure on the dark squares, but Black is the exchange up.

15 xe5

After 15 xe5 f6 16 f4 (keeping the pressure up on Black’s dark-squared bishop) 16...e7 17 e3 I prefer White’s position, but he can only claim a small advantage. Now 17...0-0-0!? looks risky, but the king has to go somewhere! At least Black has intentions of playing ...e5 and after 18 a5 e5 19 b4 d7 an interesting middlegame lies ahead.
15...\f6?

This very logical move is a mistake here as it allows White to the exchange dark-squared bishops. After White has exchanged these bishops Black's position will be riddled with holes.

15...\w d7! is a much better approach. Play could continue 16 \a x d5 \w x d5 17 \w x h 8+ \w d 7 18 \w d 4 \a c 6 19 \f 4 \e 8 20 \w x d 5 (20 \w h 8+!? \f 8 21 f 3 \h 8? 22 \e 3 g x f 3 23 \h f 1! \x c 5 24 \x c 5+ \w x c 5 25 \a x c 5 \w x h 8 is a drawn opposite-coloured bishop ending) 20...\w x d 5 when Black has good compensation for the pawn, as his light-squared bishop is a very strong piece and White has a weak c-pawn.

16 \g 5!

This is White's only real option, but it does promise him a very good position.

16...\x g 5 17 \x g 5 \f 6 18 \g 7

18 \e 1!? is also good for White, but a lot more complicated: for example, 18...\f 7 (after 18...e 5 19 \e x e 5+ f x e 5 20 \w x e 5+ \d 7 21 \d 4! White is winning) 19 \f 4 \b 8 20 \w e 5! (this is a computer move if ever there was one; I doubt that any human in their right mind would place both his rooks in such strange positions, but White is doing very well though as \d 4 is coming next) 20...\d 7 21 \d 4 and Black has a lot of defending to do.

18...\f 8?!

Black had to try 18...e 5. This forces White to sacrifice the exchange, which at least gives Black some hope: 19 \w b 4 \f 8 20 \a x b 7 \c 6 21 \a a 5 \a x b 7 22 \a x b 7 (this is stronger than 22 c 6+ \g 7 23 c x b 7 \b 8 24 \c 6? \w c 7 25 \a x b 8 \a x b 8 which is fine for Black) 22...\w c 7 23 \e d 1 \h 7 24 c 6+ \g 7 25 \w c 5 and White is a lot better as d 5 is about to drop.

19 \a x b 7 \c 6 20 \w b 4

White has a large advantage now and he went on to win the game very convincingly.

20...\f 7 21 \w d 3 e 5 22 \f 1!
The Tarrasch Variation: The Universal System

23 cxd4  \( \mathcal{W}d5 \) 24 f3  \( \mathcal{G}ag8 \) 25 \( \mathcal{D}d2 \) a5 26 \( \mathcal{W}b6 \) gxf3 27 \( \mathcal{D}xf3 \)

Black has not managed to cause White any serious problems and his position quickly crumbles.
27...e4 28 \( \mathcal{D}e5+ \) \( \mathcal{W}e8 \) 29 \( \mathcal{W}b8+ \) \( \mathcal{W}e7 \) 30 \( \mathcal{D}xc6+ \) \( \mathcal{W}xc6 \) 31 \( \mathcal{W}b5 \) \( \mathcal{W}d5 \) 32 \( \mathcal{W}b7+ \) \( \mathcal{W}d8 \) 33 \( \mathcal{W}xa5+ \) 1-0

In the final game of this chapter we will take a look at some of the other options that White might try in the Universal System. 9 dxc5 is clearly White’s best move, but you should also be prepared against his other options.

Game 52
A.Gipslis-S.Savchenko
Alushta 1993

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 \( \mathcal{D}d2 \) c5 4 \( \mathcal{G}gf3 \) \( \mathcal{D}f6 \) 5 e5 \( \mathcal{D}fd7 \) 6 c3 \( \mathcal{D}c6 \) 7 \( \mathcal{D}d3 \) \( \mathcal{E}e7 \) 8 0-0 g5

A rather crazy move! White is aiming to break the position open so that the black king will never find a safe home. This is an interesting idea, but there is not really any need for White to take such risks because he often obtains attacking chances in the main line with 9 dxc5.

Here practice has also seen:
a) 9 \( \mathcal{D}b5 \)!? is a move that I recently faced in an important game at the 2010 London Chess Classic. My opponent was the talented Grandmaster Gawain Jones. At the time I was leading the tournament with 6/6, but unfortunately this move threw me and I lost rather horribly. The game continued 9...\( \mathcal{W}b6 \) 10 \( \mathcal{A}a4 \)!? (Black should be fine after 10 \( \mathcal{D}xc6 \) bxc6, with \( ...\mathcal{A}a6 \) to follow) 10...cxd4 11 \( \mathcal{D}xd4 \) \( \mathcal{D}xd4 \) 12 cxd4 \( \mathcal{W}xd4 \) (I am a pawn up with what should be a good position) 13 \( \mathcal{W}c2 \) g4! (stopping \( \mathcal{D}f3 \)) 14 \( \mathcal{E}e1 \), but now I played 14...\( \mathcal{D}d8 \)? which was a really bad move. I should have played either:
a1) 14...f6!? is a bit risky as it does open the position, but Black still seems to have a good position: for example, 15 exf6 \( \mathcal{W}xf6 \) 16 \( \mathcal{W}d1 \) \( \mathcal{F}f8 \) when I prefer Black.
a2) 14...a6! is the simplest solution. Black threatens to play 15...b5, breaking the pin on the knight. The annoying thing was that as soon as I played 14...\( \mathcal{D}d8 \)? I started to consider this move! Play could continue 15 \( \mathcal{D}f1 \) b5 16 \( \mathcal{A}b3 \) \( \mathcal{A}b7 \) when Black must be better. He is a pawn up and this way he

So what else can White try in this position?
9 b4!?
has also finished his queenside development. If only I had played this way...

b) 9 a3 is a rather arrogant-looking move. It seems that White is saying: ‘You’re doing nothing on the kingside, so I am just going to make a little queenside push, fool!’ This is far from the entire truth though, as White is trying to expand on the queenside with b4.

Here:

b1) 9...h5 has been Volkov’s choice on more than one occasion: 10 b4 g4 11 b5 a5 (11...dxc4?! 12 cxd4 gxf3 13 cxf3 c4 14 c2 was better for White in L.Nisipeanu-S.Volkov, Saint Vincent 2003) 12 e1 b6 13 a4 c4 14 a2 led to quite a blocked position in J.Gallagher-S.Volkov, Port Erin 2004.

b2) 9...cxd4 immediately attacks White’s centre. After 10 cxd4 g4 11 e1 a suggestion of Neil McDonald’s is 11...f5!? which looks like fun: for example, 12 exf6 xf6 13 b3 c7, although White may have a slight advantage here as Black’s position does contain some holes.

b3) 9...a5!? also makes a lot of sense as this is often a useful move for Black anyway. Play could continue 10 b3 (10 dxc5 leads back into the main line with one difference: the moves a3 and ...a5 have been inserted – it is unclear whom this benefits) 10...h5 and this could really do with a test.

c) 9 g4? led to a quick win for Black in A.Lipecki-S.Dolmatov, Bern 1994: 9...h5 10 h3 b6 11 c4 hxg4 12 hxg4 cxd4 13 cxd5 cxe5 14 c4 xc4 15 xc4 e5 16 g2 h6 17 h1 h1+ 18 xh1 xh1 19 xh1 f6 0-1.

d) 9 b1 is another move that does not cause any threat to Black’s set-up. H.Hamdouchi-M.Bartel, French League 2008, continued 9...b6 10 h3 h5 11 b3 a6 12 e1 g4 13 hxg4 hxg4 14 h2.

Now Black should have played 14...cxd4! which looks pretty good for him: for example, 15 xg4 dxc3 16 bxc3 c7 17 f4 0-0-0 and Black has good chances to attack White along the open g- and h-files.

e) 9 h3 h5 10 e1 (10 g4 transposes to variation ‘c’ above) 10...g4 11 hxg4
The Tarrasch Variation: The Universal System

hxg4 12 h2 g3 13 fxg3 cxd4 14 cxd4 
\( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)xd4 15 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)b3 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)xb3 16 \( \texttt{\textit{W}} \)xb3 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)c5 17 \( \texttt{\textit{W}} \)c2 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)d7 18 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)e3 \( \texttt{\textit{W}} \)c8 19 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)ac1 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)g5 was better for Black in S.Mannion-J.Hodgson, Grangemouth 2001.

f) Finally, the equally instructive 9 b3 cxd4 10 cxd4 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)c6 11 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)b2 h5 12 h3 g4 13 hxg4 hxg4 14 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)h2 g3 15 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)hf3? \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)dxe5! 16 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)xe5 (16 dxe5 \( \texttt{\textit{W}} \)c5) 16...\( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)xe5 17 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)e2 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)c6 was practically winning for Black in S.Beshukov-V.Potkin, Krasnodar 2002.

Returning to 9 b4:

\( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)...cxb4 10 cxb4 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)xb4

This move makes the most sense as Black gains a tempo by attacking the white bishop on d3.

Instead 10...\( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)xb4?! 11 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)b3 g4?! (11...h6) 12 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)g5 h6 13 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)xe6 fxe6 14 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)g6+ \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)e7 15 \( \texttt{\textit{W}} \)xg4 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)b6 16 a3 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)c3 17 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)c5 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)xe5 18 dxe5 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)xe5 19 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)d2 was winning for White in V.Rasik-V.Borovikov, Sas van Gent 1992. This game certainly demonstrates some of dangers that Black needs to avoid.

11 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)e2

From e2 the bishop keeps some control of the f1-a6 diagonal.

The other option 11 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)b1!? is also playable. J.Degraeve-A.Barsov, Montreal 2002, continued 11...\( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)b6 (Black can also try 11...h5!? 12 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)e1 b5!? when is planning on playing ...\( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)b6 and then ...\( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)c4, with a promising position) 12 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)b3 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)c4 (this is one of the problems that White has after sacrificing the b-pawn: he can no longer play b3, kicking Black's knight on c4 away) 13 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)bd2 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)b6 14 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)b3 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)c4 15 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)bd2 and the game was prematurely agreed drawn. I, however, would have been tempted to continue, with 15...g4!? 16 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)e1 h5 one tempting possibility available to Black.

11...\( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)f8

This is quite a common theme when Black has a pawn on g5. The knight moves around to g6 from where it gives extra protection to Black’s kingside.

12 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)b3 b6

Black has also played 12...\( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)g6 13 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)e3 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)f8 14 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)d2 h6, but White managed to obtain some attacking chances after 15 h4! gxh4 16 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)xh6+ \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)g8 17 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)e3 which was pretty messy in the earlier A.Gipsis-M.Ulibin, Moscow 1992. That is one thing that is common to this variation: the position can quickly spiral out of control with chances for both sides.

13 \( \texttt{\textit{D}} \)d2 h6 14 h4!

This is a typical way for White to attack the h6/g5 pawn structure. The position is dynamically equal here.
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14...gxh4

Black could also have tried 14...g4!?.

The problem with this move is that White might be able to play f3 at a later moment, aiming to break open the f-file. Black should always aim to keep the f-file closed, of course, and after 15 h2 h5 16 g3 (White is intending to play f3 on his next move) 16...a5 17 f3 gxh4!? 18 gxf4 hxg4 he indirectly succeeds and has a very dangerous attack.

15 h2!?

I have a lot of respect for the way that the experienced grandmaster is playing. He is showing a complete lack of respect for material and just continuing with his own plan. The intention behind h2 is to play g4 and then f6 at the correct moment. There is no messing about with this guy!

A safer option would have been 15 hxg4 with mutual chances.

15...a5

Black could have also aimed to cause White some difficulties on the kingside by playing 15...h5!? (for the moment g4 is prevented) 16 hxh5 a6! (Black’s bishop springs to life) 17 f3 g6 18 h1c1 c4 when the position is unclear.

16 g4 h5

Black might have considered 16...h3?!, again aiming to expose the white king. Play could continue 17 gxh3 h5 18 e3 g6 with a very double-edged position.

17 h2!?

This does look a bit odd. Was it really worth wasting two tempi just to force Black to play ...h5? I doubt it. The knight would have been better placed on e3: for example, 17 e3 g6 18 f4! (having a knight on e3 supports the f4-f5 pawn break) 18...a4 19 c1 h3! 20 gxh3 h4, although even here I’d slightly prefer to take Black.

17 g6 18 hxh5 f8

Black is focussed on the kingside, but he should have taken the chance to flick in 18...a6!.

19 e2 g7 20 g4

There that knight goes again!

20...d7?!
I suspect that Black should always be playing ...a6 around here in order to swap off White’s light-squared bishop. Savchenko also had the chance to play 20...h3!. This pawn could prove to be a bit of a thorn in White’s side: for example, 21 g3 a6 22 f4?! xe2 23 xex2 a4 24 xb4 xeb4 25 d2 c3 is a lot better for Black, although White did not have to play f4 in such a rush. 21 a3 c6

Another idea was 21...a6 with the idea of relocating the knight via c7 to e8, as then ...f5 becomes an option. 22 e3 a4 23 d2 a5 24 f4!

If White can ever achieve the f5 break, Black’s king could be in trouble. 24...c8 25 d3

Building up more support for f5. 25...c3 26 b1 c7?!

I am not sure why Black did not keep his rook active by playing 26...b3! which would keep some of White’s pieces tied down. Moreover, if the rook ever gets in danger than Black can always sacrifice the exchange. I suspect that Black has an advantage here: for example, 27 c2 c8!?! 28 xxb3 axb3 29 f2 h3 30 g3 c4 and Black has good compensation for the exchange. 27 a2

White had the chance to play 27 f5! and I am not sure why he did not take it! After 27...exf5 28 xf5 c4 29 xd7 xd7 30 f3 White has some pressure against Black’s kingside and the position is roughly equal. 27...c4 28 c1 f5?!

Black decides that the threat of White playing f5 is very dangerous, so he plays the advance himself first. 29 exf6+ xf6

30 e5

Another option was 30 xg6!? xg6 31 e5+ g7! (31...xe5??) 32 g4+ f8 33 g6+ f7 34 xh8+ (if 34 e5+ e7 35 g6+ d6 36 f5 exf5 37 f4+ c6 and Black’s king is able to run away to the queenside) 34...xh8 35 h2 xd4 36 f3 f6 when Black has very good compensation for the exchange. 30...e7 31 g4+ f8 32 e2 d6 33
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\[ d2 \text{ df5 } 34 \text{ b4 e8 } 35 \text{ xf5 h5 } 36 \text{ h3 } \]

White can also try 36 \text{ xh5! } \text{ xh5 } 37 \text{ xe6}, but Black should be better after 37 ... \text{ g7 } 38 \text{ c3 } \text{ c6 }.

\[ 36 \text{ xxe2 } 37 \text{ e1 h5 } \]

Black could have played 37 ... \text{ exf5} which is very complicated: for example, 38 \text{ xf5 } \text{ g7 } 39 \text{ xe7 xxe7 } 40 \text{ g6+ f8 } 41 \text{ xe2 g8 } 42 \text{ f5 d6 } when the position is a complete mess. White obviously has good compensation for the exchange with his strong knight on e5 and in practice his position is the easier to play. Clearly things have gone wrong for Savchenko.

\[ 38 \text{ xe6 } \]

White now has the better chances in this still complex position.

\[ 38 \text{ g7 } 39 \text{ c3 h6 } 40 \text{ b5 c2 } \]

\[ 41 \text{ f5 } \]

Perhaps White should have tried 41 \text{ d6! } which looks like a better winning try.

\[ 41 \text{ c6 } \]

Black wants to swap off some of White’s attacking pieces.

\[ 42 \text{ d6 xd4 } 43 \text{ xd4 xd6 } 44 \text{ xc2 xe5 } 45 \text{ e3 f6 } \]

Black is over the worst and now his dark-squared bishop does a good job of defending his king.

\[ 46 \text{ b4 d4 } 47 \text{ e4 d3 } \]

A better move would have been 47 ... h3 which attempts to open up White’s king.

\[ 48 \text{ xd3 d4+ } 49 \text{ h2 } \]

The position is clarifying to an equal endgame.

\[ 49 \text{ h8 } 50 \text{ f4 e8 } 51 \text{ d5 c6 } 52 \text{ xd4 xd4 } 53 \text{ e4 c5 } 54 \text{ g4+ f8 } 55 \text{ f6 e8 } 56 \text{ h3 f7 } \]

56 ... \text{ xa3? } would have been a big mistake, as White would have been winning after 57 \text{ c7! b2 } 58 \text{ xe8 xxe8 } 59 \text{ g8+! xg8 } 60 \text{ f7+ when his f-pawn wins the day.}

\[ 57 \text{ c7 } \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} \]

This is still an unbalanced if now equal position.

Conclusion

The Universal System has soared in popularity over the past decade and I imagine that nowadays it is pretty common not just amongst grandmasters but also at club level. On the current evidence 9 ... \text{ dxe5} appears too risky, but Black has a relatively solid alternative in 9 ... \text{ xc5}. If pushed I would likely choose 9 ... g4 myself and am looking forward to trying the idea of meeting 10 \text{ d4} with 10 ... \text{ cxe5?!}. This looks a bit illogical, but it seems to offer Black an active and interesting game.
Chapter 10
The King’s Indian Attack

We now move on to the King’s Indian Attack, 1 e4 e6 2 d3.

This is quite a passive way to begin the game, but White is relying on having a better understanding of the resulting structures compared to his opponent and hopes to be able to build up a powerful attack on the kingside.

Black has a number of ways to reach equality, but I have found that if Black adopts a Botvinnik set-up he will often lead White out of his comfort zone. Botvinnik popularized the idea in the English Opening of playing the moves c4, c3, g3, g2, e4, ge2, d3 and 0-0. Here we will put this plan into action in reverse by playing ...c5, fianchettoing on the kingside and pushing the e-pawn to e5. Black’s idea in this opening is often to advance with ...f5 which will give him an attack.

Let’s now have a look at some high-level encounters. These will explain both sides’ plans better.

Game 53
A.Minasian-M.Gurevich
FIDE World Championship,
New Delhi
(rapid play-off) 2000

1 e4 e6 2 d3

Fischer played this on a number of occasions and it is quite popular at club level because White does not have to learn a great deal of theory. White is hoping for something like 2...d5 3 d2 f6 4 gf3 c5 5 g3 ge2 6 ge2 e7 7 0-0 b5 8 e1 0-0 9 e5 and this is just the type of thing that I would like to avoid with the black pieces.

White is going to start an attack on the kingside, while Black is relying on a successful attack on the queenside.

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The problem is that White’s moves are very straightforward: he will just continue with $\text{d}f1$, $h4$, $\text{we}2$, $\text{d}h2$, $\text{g}4$, etc. This is why it is a good idea not to allow White his ideal set-up. Let’s take a look at a game between two strong grandmasters that demonstrates the dangers that Black faces here: 9 ... $\text{d}e8$ 10 $\text{d}f1$ $b4$ 11 $h4$ $\text{c}c7$ 12 $\text{g}5$ $\text{d}b5$ 13 $\text{d}h2$ $\text{d}bd4$ 14 $c3$ $\text{x}f3+$ 15 $\text{d}xh2$ $h6$ 16 $\text{f}4$ $\text{bxc3}$ 17 $\text{bxc3}$ $\text{b}8$ 18 $\text{h}2$ $\text{a}5$ 19 $\text{g}4$ $\text{a}d8$ 20 $\text{x}h6+$ $\text{g}xh6$ 21 $\text{x}h6$ $f5$ 22 $\text{h}5$ and White had a strong attack in P.Harikrishna-A.Naiditsch, Wijk aan Zee 2010.

Black takes control of the d4-square which is a key concept in this variation. Black will follow up by fianchettoing his dark-squared bishop, keeping up the pressure on the long diagonal.

3 $\text{f}3$ $\text{c}6$ 4 $g3$ $\text{ge}7$!

This is an interesting move order. Black is trying to avoid 4 ... $g6$ 5 $g5$! (5 $g2$ will normally transpose back to the main line after 5 ... $g7$ 6 0-0 $\text{ge}7$ 7 $c3$ $e5$), which is an interesting way for White to try and disrupt Black’s development.

Black has a number of ways to reply to this move:

a) 5 ... $f6$ is a simple reply: 6 $\text{e}3$ $d5$ 7 exd5 exd5 8 $\text{d}4$ $\text{ge}7$ 9 $\text{g}2$ $\text{f}5$ 10 0-0 $\text{x}e3$ 11 $\text{xe}3$ $h6$ 12 dxc5 $\text{xe}3+$ 13 $h1$ 0-0 was fine for Black in V.Ivanchuk-P.Svidler, Monaco (blindfold) 2005.

b) 5 ... $\text{b}6$!? often requires White to sacrifice a pawn, but he will obtain ample compensation. For example, 6 $\text{bd}2$ $\text{x}b2$ 7 $\text{c}4$ $\text{g}7$ 8 $\text{b}1$ $d5$ 9 exd5 exd5 10 $\text{e}2+$ $\text{e}7$ 11 $\text{d}6+$ $\text{f}8$ 12 $\text{xc}8$ $\text{xg}5$ 13 $\text{h}3$ with a messy position where White had the initiative and the safer king in L.McShane-A.Volokitin, German League 2008. That said, 8 ... $f6$!? may well be an improvement and after 9 $\text{d}2$ (or 9 $\text{f}4$ $e5$) 9 ... $\text{e}7$ 10 $\text{g}2$ $d5$ 11 $\text{e}3$ $d4$ 12 $\text{c}4$ $e5$ White was lacking any real compensation for his pawn in D.Bojkov-E.Berg, Kalamaria 2008.

c) 5 ... $\text{c}7$ looks like the safest option that Black has available. Black wants to
continue in standard fashion and by throwing in the move ...h6 he forces White to move his active bishop away. Now 6 c3 (or 6 g2 g7 7 c3 ge7 8 0-0 a6 9 d2 h6 10 e3 d4 11 d1 d6 12 d1 e5 13 f4 e6 14 fxe5 dxe5 15 c3 b5 16 f2 c8 17 a4 d6 with an equal position in E.Miroshnichenko-J.Polgar, European Championship, Ohrid 2001) 6...g7 7 d2 a6 8 g2 b5 9 0-0 b7 10 a4 b4 11 d1 ge7 12 c3 bxc3 13 bxc3 0-0 14 d4 d6 15 b1 a5 led to an equal middlegame in a battle between two well-prepared and talented English Grandmasters, G.Jones-S.Gordon, British League 2008.

5 g2 g6

6 h4

Tempting, but this move will often just weaken White’s position as later on g4 will become available to a black piece. The standard way of meeting the move h4 is ...h6 and this is precisely what Black does here.

6 d4!? is another way that White can try and prevent Black from obtaining his ideal set-up. Again White is trying to take advantage of the weakened dark squares in Black’s position.

R.Gonzalez-A.Onischuk, US Championship, San Diego 2004, continued 6...cxd4 7 xd4 g7 8 b3 (if 8 b5 d5) 8...d5 9 exd5 xd5 10 0-0 0-0 with an equal game.

6...h6!

An important concept. Black wants to meet h5 with ...g5.

7 c3 g7 8 0-0

White can also try 8 d4 which was Kamsky’s choice in G.Kamsky-M.Kobalija, Moscow 2010. That continued 8...cxd4 9 cxd4 wb6!? (the most critical test of White’s opening play; Black immediately puts White’s centre under attack) 10 d5 (10 e5 f5 should be good for Black) 10...wb4+ (10...exd5!? was worth considering, although 11 exd5 xb2 12 xb2 xb2 13 bd2 xd5 14 0-0 0-0 15 cc4 wb5 16 dd6 wa5 offers White good compensation for the sacrificed material) 11 bd2 (11 fd2 xb2 12 xb2 xb2 13 b3 b4 looks like it should be better for Black; a pawn is a pawn

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after all! 11...exd5 12 exd5 ʁxd5 13 0-0 0-0 14 ʁe1 ʁf6 15 a3 ʁb5 16 ʁf1 ʁh5 and White was lacking any obvious play for the sacrificed pawn.

8...e5

This is the correct move order. Black should try to make it as hard as possible for White to play d4.

9 ʁe3 d6

Black has managed to construct his ideal set-up. Let’s now have a quick think about what both sides are trying to achieve here.

White has two pawn breaks that he is relying on:

1. Gaining space on the queenside with b4, which is usually prepared with the move a3. Black should often allow White to achieve this break, as halting it with ...a5 allows a4 when White gets a good grip on the b5-square.

2) The central break, d4, is quite hard to achieve, but Black must constantly keep an eye open for this possibility.

Black normally relies on two pawn breaks as well:

1. After ...f5 Black would like to continue with ...f4 which often leads to a strong kingside attack for him.

2. Instead ...d5 tries to open the d-file in order to take advantage of White’s weak d3-pawn.

10 a3

White puts his plan into action.

10...0-0

As noted above, Black normally allows White the luxury of advancing with b4. That said, 10...a5 might not be that bad. White’s standard response to this is 11 a4 when he can continue with ʁa3 and sometimes ʁb5. The position is roughly equal here as Black still has the strong plan of starting a kingside attack with ...f5, such as with 11...0-0 12 ʁa3 f5.

11 b4 b6

Black consolidates his queenside pawn formation.

12 b5

I was always of the opinion that this move helps Black. By playing b5 White takes pressure off the centre, so Black can turn his intentions to the kingside
and the \ldots .f5 push in particular.  
12...\textit{a}5 13 \textit{c}4  
Closing the centre down. This must be an error as now White will be lacking any active plan. Saying that, it was not easy to suggest a good alternative: for example, 13 \textit{f}fd2 (White is trying to play f4 himself) 13...d5! (this promises Black a good game) 14 exd5 \textit{x}d5 15 c4 \textit{x}e3 16 fxe3 e4 17 \textit{xe}4 \textit{xa}1 18 \textit{xa}8 \textit{xd}3 when Black has a big advantage.  
13...\textit{e}6  
Black could have also considered playing 13...f5 immediately. I guess that he was worried about his rook on a8, but without good reason as 14 exf5?! allows 14...e4! which wins material.  
14 \textit{c}3 f5

Black has a slight advantage, as he has been able to advance with some pressure on the kingside.  
15 \textit{h}2  
Or 15 h5 f4! 16 \textit{d}2 g5 and only Black can win this position.  
15...\textit{c}8  

Black could also have continued in standard fashion with 15...f4 16 \textit{d}2 a6! when he would have had a slight initiative on both sides of the board.  
16 \textit{d}2 \textit{d}7 17 \textit{b}1 fxe4!?  
This is an interesting decision. I guess that Gurevich was worried that after 17...f4 the position would become too blocked for him to achieve any winning chances. The problem, though, is that after 17...fxe4 Black has difficulties defending both his g6- and h6-pawns.  
18 \textit{xe}4 \textit{b}7  
Black’s knight was not doing anything on a5, so it is brought back into play.  
19 \textit{c}1!  
Black would normally just continue with \ldots \textit{h}7 in this type of structure. The problem is that after this move here White can just play h5, attacking the g6-pawn.  
19...\textit{f}5  
Instead 19...\textit{h}7 20 h5 \textit{f}5 21 hxg6+ \textit{x}g6 looks roughly equal.  
20 \textit{d}5 \textit{d}4 21 \textit{e}1
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21...\textit{f5}?! 

This is very risky. Black sacrifices his \( \text{h} \)-pawn and in the meantime he will rely on his control of the central squares, especially \( \text{d}4 \), to give him enough counterplay. This plan is not entirely convincing though.

A safer option would have been 21...\textit{w}f7 22 \textit{f}3 \textit{h}7 23 \textit{h}5 \textit{f}5 24 h\textit{x}g6+ \textit{x}g6 when Black has some pressure against White’s kingside, especially the \( \text{g}3 \)-pawn.

22 \textit{x}h6 \textit{d}8 23 \textit{g}5 \textit{f}7 24 \textit{b}2 \textit{e}8\textit{e}6 25 \textit{e}3 \textit{c}f8

Black has managed to place all his pieces on their best squares, but it is not clear how he proceeds. White must have an advantage here.

26 \textit{w}d1 \textit{h}8 27 \textit{c}3 \textit{f}4? 

Black goes all in. I suspect that Gurevich figured his position was a bit tough anyway, so he decided to roll the dice. Not a bad plan in a rapid game!

28 \textit{gxf}4 \textit{exf}4 29 \textit{xd}4 \textit{xd}4 30 \textit{c}2 \textit{xe}4 31 \textit{xe}4 \textit{f}3 32 \textit{g}5

It is rather doubtful whether Black has enough counterplay, but White does have to defend with some care.

32...\textit{f}4

\begin{center}
\textbf{Diagram}
\end{center}

33 \textit{e}4

White sensibly aims to trade some pieces. Other options included:

\begin{enumerate}
\item[a)] 33 \textit{e}6!? \textit{e}5!? 34 \textit{xf}4 \textit{xf}4 looks very dangerous for White as Black is planning ...\textit{xd}h4 as well as ...\textit{xd}h4. It does seem that White can defend, however, by playing 35 \textit{e}3! when he should be winning, such as after 35...\textit{xd}h4 36 \textit{xe}5 \textit{g}4+ 37 \textit{xf}1 \textit{dxe}5 38 \textit{xf}3.

\item[b)] 33 \textit{e}6 would have been very similar to the game after 33...\textit{g}7 and here White should probably play 34 \textit{e}4.
\end{enumerate}

33...\textit{d}5 34 \textit{cxd}5 \textit{xd}5 35 \textit{f}1

This does not spoil anything, but a better defence would have been 35 \textit{xf}4!. After all, when you are material up, you should be aiming to swap pieces! Following 35...\textit{xf}4 36 \textit{hxf}3 \textit{g}4+ 37 \textit{f}1 White is simply a piece up.

35...\textit{f}5

Black takes his chance to keep an-
other pair of pieces on the board. This at least keeps the position complicated.

**36 \( \text{g}4 \)**

White’s kingside is now fully protected.

**36...\( \text{g}7 \) 37 \( \text{c}1 \) \( \text{e}8 \) 38 \( \text{e}1? \) \( \text{e}2? \)**

Black misses his chance to play 38...\( \text{x}f2+ \) which would have got him right back into the game. After 39 \( \text{x}f2 \) (not 39 \( \text{x}f2 \) \( \text{a}2+ \) 40 \( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{x}e1 \) 41 \( \text{x}e1 \) \( \text{g}2 \) mate) 39...\( \text{x}e1+ \) 40 \( \text{x}e1 \) \( \text{f}2+ \) 41 \( \text{x}f2 \) \( \text{x}f2 \) 42 \( \text{x}f2 \) White is still better, but at least Black has complicated matters.

**39 \( \text{e}4 \)**

White now had another opportunity to simplify matters by playing 39 \( \text{xd}4! \) when 39...\( \text{xd}4 \) 40 \( \text{xf}3 \) \( \text{g}4+ \) 41 \( \text{h}2 \) \( \text{xg}5 \) 42 \( \text{hxg}5 \) would have been winning for him.

**39...\( \text{e}6 \)**

Black has managed to generate some pressure. White has clearly gone a bit wrong, but it still requires some skill in order to lose the game.

**40 \( \text{g}3?? \)**

A horrible blunder.

40 \( \text{h}1 \) was a lot more sensible. The king removes itself from the range of Black’s bishop and White should still be winning here.

**40...\( \text{x}f2+! \)**

A bolt from the blue that completely changes the assessment of the position. Black is now winning!

**41 \( \text{x}f2 \)**

White has no choice as 41 \( \text{xf}2 \) \( \text{xe}1 \) would have been even worse.

**41...\( \text{xf}2 \) 42 \( \text{xf}2 \) \( \text{a}2+ \) 43 \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{xh}2 \)**

Black has won a huge amount of material and he now goes on to win in simple fashion.

**44 \( \text{xf}3 \) \( \text{xf}3+ \) 45 \( \text{xf}3 \) \( \text{h}4 \) 46 \( \text{g}1 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 47 \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{d}4 \) 48 \( \text{c}1 \) \( \text{b}2+ \) 49 \( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{xb}5 \) 50 \( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{b}1+ \) 51 \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{b}2+ \) 52 \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{a}1 \) 53 \( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{f}7 \) 54 \( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{g}7 \) 55 \( \text{d}5 \) 56 \( \text{c}6 \) 57 \( \text{b}7 \) 58 \( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{h}1 \) 59 \( \text{xa}7 \) \( \text{g}2 \) 60 \( \text{xg}2+ \) \( \text{xe}2 \) 61 \( \text{xb}6 \) \( \text{c}4 \) 0-1**

This must have been a devastating game for Minasian, who really threw the game away. It was an interesting opening, but I suspect that Black should just be playing ...\( \text{f}5 \) and then ...\( \text{f}4 \) in the middlegame, whereas ...\( \text{fxe}4 \) was a rather risky approach.

In the next game we will take a look at a typical mistake that White can make in the main line of our system. I have faced 9 \( \text{d}4 \) on three occasions and each time I have reached a very favourable position. It is quite an obvious advance, but White is not well enough placed to be able to justify it.
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Game 54
W.Hug-V.Hort
Petropolis Interzonal 1973

1 e4 c5
In this game we reach our typical position through a Sicilian move order.
2 d4 f6 3 d3 c6 4 g3 g6 5 g2 g7 6
0-0 \(\text{\textit{ge7}}\) 7 c3 e5

It is always worth playing this move as soon as White advances with c3. Black should try and stop White from playing d4, which would give him a strong centre.

8 e3
With this move White is readying himself to play d4. The problem is that this move will bring him more trouble than it is worth.

The alternative is 8 a3 when 8...d6 would transpose to our next game.

8...d6 9 d4?!
This is a very common move here, but due to the following continuation it leaves Black with the better position.

Black uses his bishop on g7 to exert pressure along the long diagonal; d4 and b2 are particularly vulnerable points for White.

10 cxd4 \(\text{\textit{g4}}\)!

Increasing the pressure on d4. Black’s main aim is to take control of the d4-square.

11 dxc5
The other option that White has available is 11 d5, as I once faced:

a) 11...\(\text{\textit{e5}}\) 12 \(\text{\textit{b}d2}\) (12 \(\text{\textit{wa4!}}\) might be worth trying, although after 12...\(\text{\textit{d7}}\) 13 \(\text{\textit{c3}}\) 0-0 Black has a fine position; he will continue with ...a6 and then ...b5) 12...0-0 13 \(\text{\textit{c2}}\) \(\text{\textit{xf3+}}\) 14 \(\text{\textit{xf3}}\) \(\text{\textit{d7}}\) (Black’s position resembles a good Benoni) 15 \(\text{\textit{ad1}}\) \(\text{\textit{ae8}}\) (preparing to advance with ...f5 which creates some chances on the kingside; Black is better) 16 \(\text{\textit{fe1}}\) f5 17 e5 (White decides to try and mix things up, but he does not get enough counterplay) 17...\(\text{\textit{dxex5}}\) 18 \(\text{\textit{xc5}}\) e4 19 \(\text{\textit{g5}}\) \(\text{\textit{xd1}}\) 20 \(\text{\textit{xd1}}\) \(\text{\textit{c8}}\) 21 \(\text{\textit{b4}}\) \(\text{\textit{c6}}\) 22 \(\text{\textit{b3}}\) \(\text{\textit{a5}}\) 23 \(\text{\textit{b4}}\) \(\text{\textit{c4}}\) and Black was winning in T.Pym-S. Williams, Coventry 2005.
b) 11...xf3!? has the intention of capturing on b2. This is also possible, but the position can become rather messy: for example, 12 xf3 xb2 13 dxc6 xa1 14 a3 e5 15 cxb7 b8 16 c4 when White has some compensation for the exchange. There is no real reason to play this way as Black has a slight advantage by playing in a quieter manner.

11...dxc5

11...xb2 may be possible, but again there is no need to complicate matters. In the game Black gets a very good position simply because of his control of the d4-square.

12 wc1

The queen moves out of the pin. Other options include:

a) After 12 bd2 b6 13 b1 0-0 14 h3 e6 15 a3 h6 16 e2 d7 17 h2 fd8 Black has control of the d-file and no apparent weaknesses, which must offer him a slight advantage, D.Lobzhanidze-G.Sax, Dresden 2002.

b) 12 c3 is another possibility. With this move White wants to take control of the d5-square, but the problem is that c3 does little to control the d4-square.

Now:

b1) The simple 12...b6 is fine for Black.

b2) 12...d4!? is another viable option: for example, 13 xd4 cxd4 14 d5 xd5 15 exd5 0-0 16 h3 xf3 17 xf3 when the position looks very equal.

b3) However, 12...xd1?! is one of Black’s weaker options: 13 axd1 d4 14 xd4 xd1 15 db5! looks good for White.

c) 12 db3 has also been played. Black should continue with the simple 12...b6 when he should have a slight advantage, such as after 13 xb6 axb6 14 c3 d4 15 xd4 cxd4 16 d5 xd5 exd5 17 d7 12...0-0?

Black offers the pawn on c5 in return for the initiative.

Another option is 12...wb6 which should be slightly better for Black: for example, 13 c3 d4 14 d2 0-0
when it is becoming obvious that Black has a small advantage.

13 Bd2

White plays it safe, but it was probably worth capturing on c5: 13 Bxc5 Qc8 and even though the position looks very dangerous for White, he can just about keep the balance by playing 14 Bc3! Bxf3 15 Bxe7! (the best move; 15 Bxf3 Be5 16 Bxe7 dxe7+ 17 g2 Bxe7 18 Bxf3 Bfd8 is better for Black) 15...Bxe7 16 Bxf3 Bd4 17 g4 Bc5 when the position is about equal. White is a pawn up, but Black’s pieces are very active.

13...b6

Now Black has a fine position. I expect that he has a slight advantage due to his control of the d4-square.

14 h3 Be6 15 Bd1

15 Bg5!? was worth considering.

15...Bc8

Another good idea was 15...Bb4 with the simple idea of playing ...Bd3. This would have left Black with a slight advantage, such as after 16 f1 d3 17 c2 Bxb2 18 Bdb1 c4.

16 Bg5 Bd8 17 f1 Be5

Or 17...d4 18 g2 Bc6 when Black is slightly better.

18 Bc2 B7c6 19 a3 Bd4

The opening has been a success for Black. He has a slight positional advantage and went on to win.

20 Bxd4 cxd4 21 Bxc8 Bxc8 22 f4 h6 23 Bg3 Bxf3+ 24 Bxf3 d3

This works out okay in the game, but it may have been worth trying 24...Bb7!? 25 Bxd3 f5 26 Bd2 fxe4 27 Bxe4 Bc8.

25 e5 Bf8

26 Bxd3?

An important mistake. Black’s bishops are always going to be strong in the endgame.

White did not have to rush into capturing this pawn. Instead he could have played 26 g2 when the king defends the h3-pawn, whilst Black’s pawn on d3 remains weak. White is doing fine here: for example, 26...Bc6 27 Bc1 Bd5 28 Bc7 Bb5 29 Bh4!? a5 30 e6! and it is clear that Black’s d-pawn is more of a weakness than a strength.
26...xd3 27 xd3 xh3 28 xc1 d8 29 e4 e6

Black now makes use of some impressive technique to win.

30 f2 c5+ 31 e2 a5 32 c2 g4 33 c3 d4

Hort has positioned his pieces very actively and White is somewhat tied down. White's knight on f3 is especially fragile.

34 e6 f8 35 e1 d8 36 e4 e7 37 c2 e6 38 d3

The exchange of rooks actually makes Whites defensive task even more difficult.

38...xd3 39 xd3 e3 40 d2

White should have considered playing 40 b4, since an exchange of pawns always helps the defender and after 40...a4 White can play 41 b5 b3 with the possibility of entering an opposite-coloured bishop ending.

40...d4 41 b3 c3 42 e2 xd2 43 xd2 xb3

Black wins a pawn and the rest is 'a matter of technique'.

44 c3 e6 45 d4 d7 46 b5+ c7 47 e8 c8 48 c6 d8 49 b5 c7 50 e8 d8 51 b5 e7 52 d3 f5 53 exf6+ xf6 54 e2 f7 55 e4 e6 56 b5 d6 57 d4 e6 58 e8 f5 59 c4 g5 60 fxg5 hxg5 61 d4 d7 62 g6 b5 63 c2 e6 64 d3 c6 65 e4+ b6 66 e5 g8 67 g4 c5 68 d3 a4 69 c2 b3 70 b1 b4 71 axb4+ xb4 72 d4 a3 73 d3 e6 74 c2 a2 0-1

We'll now see two legends fighting it out in what must be the most important variation, with Hort now on the white side.

Game 55

V. Hort-U. Andersson
Linares 1983

1 e4 c5 2 f3 e6 3 d3

Yet again the game starts with a Sicilian. 1 e4 e6 2 d3 c5 3 f3 would, of course, be the French move order.

3...c6 4 g3 d6?

This is another interesting move or-
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der. Black again avoids the difficulties that can arise after 4...g6 5 g5.

I haven’t always feared such possibilities and let’s take a quick look at a game where I went 4...g6 and then tried ...a5 in order to stop b4. This is not meant to be all that good, but Black is only giving away one square, b5, so it must be playable. S.Berry-S.Williams, British League 1997, continued 5 g2 g7 6 0-0 ge7 7 c3 e5 8 a4 (this advance does not achieve much) 8...d6 9 a3 0-0 10 b1 a5!? (I am relying on ...f5 to give me enough counterplay on the kingside) 11 h3 h6 (it is always worth playing this in order to avoid the sequence ...f5; b3+! h8; g5) 12 b5 f5 13 e1 f4 14 d4 cxd4 15 cxd4 b6 16 h2 g5 17 gxf4 exf4 18 b3 g4 by when I had gained a useful initiative, which led to a devastating attack.

5 g2

Can White take advantage of Black’s move order? One untried idea is 5 h4!? White is aiming to stop 5...g6, as now this would be answered with 6 h5, which could be a bit annoying for Black. Thus Black should probably change plans here. After 5...f6 6 g2 e7 7 0-0 e5!? Black’s dark-squared bishop is not ideally placed on e7, but his position remains solid.

5...g6 6 0-0

6 h4 can now be met with the standard 6...h6 7 h5 g5.

6...g7

We are back in the normal set-up.

7 c3

As a rule whenever White plays c3, Black should respond with...

7...e5! 8 a3

We saw this plan in Minasian-Gurevich. White wants to gain some extra space by playing b4.

Instead 8 a4 ge7 would transpose to Berry-Williams, above.

8...ge7 9 b4 0-0

The game concluded 19 h4 xg4 20 b2 g6 21 h3 ce5 22 xg4 xg4+ 23 g2 d5 24 exd5 d8 25 h1 xd5 26 c2 ac8!? 27 xg6 f5 28 c3 xc3 29 xc3 g5 30 xg5 hxg5 31 h5 f6 32 a1 f5 33 bh1 c2 0-1.

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Andersson decides to ignore White’s
plan. At the moment there is no obvious follow-up for White.

10 \( \text{bd2} \) h6

This move performs a dual role:

1. It prepares ...f5 without Black needing to worry about \( \text{b3} + \) and then \( \text{g5} \).

2. ...h6 also prepares \( \text{e6} \) without any fear of White playing the rather annoying \( \text{g5} \).

This advance works out well here. Black can consider playing ...a5 in the future when he will have the initiative on the queenside.

11 \( \text{c4} \)

White has tried a number of plans here, including too:

a) 11 \( \text{b1} \) makes some sense. White is trying to delay Black’s light-squared bishop from moving. Now:

a1) 11...b6 is often a safe and reliable move in this system. After 12 \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{e6} \) 13 a4 d5! (this standard advance gives Black a good game) 14 exd5 \( \text{xd5} \) 15 \( \text{d2} \) e4! 16 dxe4 \( \text{xc3} \) 17 \( \text{xc3} \) \( \text{xc3} \) Black had a slight advantage in J.Timman-R.Kasimdzhanov, Dordrecht (blitz) 2000.

a2) 11...\( \text{e6} !? \) is actually still possible! 12 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{d7} \) 13 \( \text{d1} \) b6 14 \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{ac8} \) 15 \( \text{b2} \) b5 16 \( \text{e3} \) was fine for Black in J.Koch-S.Feller, French League 2010.

b) 11 \( \text{b3} \) has the idea of playing d4 at some point, but after 11...b6 12 b5 \( \text{b8} \) 13 a4 (13 d4 a6!? reveals one of the drawbacks of b5; here 14 bxa6 \( \text{xa6} \) is slightly better for Black) 13...a6!? 14 \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{d7} \) 15 bxa6 \( \text{xa6} \) Black had good pressure on the queenside in V.Komliakov-L.Gofshtein, Internet (blitz) 2000.

11...b5!
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this a move earlier, which would have left White with a weak pawn on a3.

15 bxa5 Bxa5 16 Bb1 d7

A rather passive move. Black could have tried 16...d5, although after 17 exd5 cxd5 18 e4 e8 White’s pieces are quite active and Black does have some weaknesses in his position.

Instead 16...d7 looks like the most sensible way to improve Black’s position.

17 Bb3 a8 18 d2 c8 19 a1

The position is equal and quickly ends in a draw.

19...Bb8 20 Bb2 h7 21 ac2 d8 22 e2 e6 23 d5 xd5 24 exd5 c5 25 b4 f5 26 fb1 ½-½

Conclusion

Even when Black is well prepared with 2...d5, he can easily run into trouble against the King’s Indian Attack. That is rarely the case if he goes 2...c5. Admittedly Black does have to know the possibility of 3 f3 c6 4 g3 g6 5 g5!?.

That is, however, hardly earth-shattering and it can always be avoided by 4...ge7 or 4...d6. Moreover, I have tended to find that white players often become a little despondent after 2...c5, generally not being entirely ready for, or comfortable with, the forthcoming manoeuvring battle.
Chapter 11
Minor Lines

We have covered all White’s main ideas against the French and in this chapter we will take a look at some other possibilities that he might try after 1 e4 e6.

White’s unusual ideas that we see in this chapter include: 2 b3?; 2 f3 d5 3 e5 c5 4 b4!?; 2 f3 d5 3 c3; and, finally, 2 d4 d5 3 e3?!.

Each of White’s ideas in this chapter has its merits and they are all quite popular at club level. The problem is that they have all failed to stand up to the test of time. Indeed, if Black is well prepared for these tricky lines then he should find himself with at least an equal position out of the opening.

Game 56
E.Paehtz-N.Zhukova
European Women’s Team Ch’ship, Gothenburg 2005

1 e4 e6 2 b3!

I am not entirely sure what the name of this variation should be, but it is an interesting little move. White figures that now that Black has played 1...e6, he can no longer block the a1-h8 diagonal with ...e5. For that reason White wants to place his bishop on b2 as then it will be a good piece. There is some logic to this way of thinking, but
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Black has a number of ways to gain equality.

2...d5 3 b2

Offering Black the option of capturing on e4, which creates a situation where I have tried to stick to a common policy throughout this book. When White plays a rather strange move, I have nearly always suggested that Black does not go for the most obvious reply. Instead I have tried to pick a sound variation that White might not be quite ready for. That is the principle behind Black’s next move.

3...f6!

This move keeps the structure similar to what a French Defence player is used to. White is now forced to decide what he should do with his e-pawn: should he advance or capture on d5?

3...dxe4 is very playable, but White will be well prepared for this and he can gain an early initiative after 4 c3 f6 (4...f5 5 f3 allows White to gain a lot of piece activity) 5 e2 when White will castle queenside and continue with g4.

4 e5

White has also tried 4 exd5 which in some ways makes more sense, as now the bishop on b2 is not blocked in. I was surprised to find that a former World Champion once lost against this move, but that was not the opening’s fault.

O.Castro Rojas-T.Petrosian, Biel Interzonal 1976, continued 4...exd5 5 f3 e7 6 e2 0-0 7 0-0 f5 (7...g4 was later played by the French Defence expert Mikhail Ulibin and he obtained a good position after 8 d4 d6 9 bd2 bd7 when White’s bishop on b2 now looked rather useless; after 10 e5 xe2 11 xe2 e8 12 b5 b8 13 xd7 xd7 14 xd7 White’s play had been so uninspiring that he deserved to go on to lose in Yu Shaoteng-M.Ulibin, Beijing 1996) 8 e1 (the position is equal) 8...c5 (this does lead to an isolated pawn position for Black, so it is a rather double-edged possibility; 8...bd7 was the safe option) 9 d4 c6 10 bd2 c8 11 d3!? xd3 12 cxd3 xd6 13 a3 e8 14 c1 b4 15 xb4 xb4 and Black had a slight advantage.

4...fd7 5 g4

White is aiming to make sense of 4 e5. I am not sure that this move achieves much though as g7 is well defended. In some cases the queen may even become a target on g4.

Instead 5 d4!? resembles a very odd Advance Variation. A.Sharafiev-E.Gleizerov, Kazan 2006, continued 5...c5 6 f3 cxd4 (6...c6!? stops the queen
Manoeuvre that White now executes) 7 \( \text{W}xd4 \text{c}3 8 \text{W}f4 \text{c}7 9 \text{c}3 \text{a}6 10 \text{g}3 \text{d}4!? 11 \text{e}4 \text{b}4 12 \text{d}6+ \text{xd}6 13 \text{exd}6 \text{W}xc2 14 \text{W}xg7 \text{xb}2 15 \text{W}xh8+ \text{f}8 16 \text{b}5+! (this is the only way to get the white king to safety) 16...\text{xb}5 17 0-0 \text{c}6 18 \text{a}c1 \text{a}3?! 19 \text{xd}4 \text{b}2 20 \text{fd}1 \text{xd}4 21 \text{h}1! and the game was rather prematurely agreed drawn. Black must be better after the simple 21... \text{d}7.

5...\text{c}5

Black logically gains space on the queenside.

6 \text{f}4 \text{c}6

The position is equal. Black has more space on the queenside, whilst White has that extra bit of room on the kingside.

7 \text{f}3 \text{g}6

This is a sensible approach. The one move that Black needs to watch out for in this variation is f5 and now this advance will always be hard to achieve.

8 \text{h}3

I guess that White is preparing to play g4 at some point. This does seem a bit strange though. Alternatively:

a) 8 c3 \text{b}6 9 c4?! (White plays c3 and then c4; maybe his hand lacked strength on the first attempt?) 9...d4 (the bishop on b2 now looks like a boxed sardine) 10 a3 \text{b}4 11 \text{e}2 \text{xa}2! (a cute tactic that nets a pawn) 12 \text{xa}2 \text{xb}3 13 \text{a}1 \text{xb}2 14 0-0 \text{b}6 and Black was two pawns up with a good position in P.Garcia Castro-F.Fibiszewski, Montcada 2009.

b) 8 \text{e}2 looks like the most sensible move: 8...\text{b}6! (this is a good way to develop; instead 8...h5 9 \text{g}3 \text{h}6?! 10 0-0 \text{e}7 11 \text{h}4 \text{f}8 12 d4 \text{c}7 13 a3 \text{d}7 14 c4! was better for White in J.Houska-J.Levitt, London 2004, although Black did play some eccentric moves here) 9 0-0 h5 10 \text{g}3 \text{e}7 11 \text{h}4 \text{b}7 12 \text{c}3 \text{a}6 with an equal game, E.Repkova-F.Boric, Croatian Team Championship 2008.

8...\text{g}7

Black’s main idea now is to simply develop and, if given the chance, play ...f6, blowing the centre open.

9 \text{d}4?!
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This does not fit into White’s system of development, but Black was fine anyway.

9...\e7 10 a3 cxd4

It is amazing to see just how quickly White’s centre falls apart.

11 \bd2?

A better move would have been 11 \xd4 when 11...\xd4 12 \xd4 f6 13 exf6 \xf6 is slightly better for Black.

11...f6!

Yet again this move tips the game in Black’s favour.

12 exf6

White already has major problems: for example, 12 \xd4 \xd4 13 \xd4 fxe5 wins a pawn for free.

12...\xf6 13 0-0-0

Black is clearly better, as she is a pawn up with a strong centre. The game did not get any better for Paehtz.

13...\c5 14 \b5 0-0 15 \xc6 bxc6 16 \e5 \xe5 17 fxe5 d3!

A strong pawn break that destroys the defences around White’s king.

18 cxd3?

This is very obliging. In actual fact White has been most kind to her opponent throughout the game. A better try would have been 18 \hf1, but Black still has a large advantage after 18...\a6!.

18...\a6!

Did I mention that Black’s light-squared bishop was her worst minor piece?

19 d4 \d3+ 20 \b1 \f2

White could have resigned here, but the game finished:

21 \g3 \ab8 22 \a2 \xd1 23 \xd1 \f7 24 \c1 \f2 25 \f3 \e2 26 \h3 \xb3 27 \xe6+ \h8 28 \b1 \c4 0-1

Game 57
E.Najer-V.Moskalenko
Moscow 1995

1 e4 e6 2 \f3 d5 3 e5 c5 4 b4!

I have even played this idea myself. White’s idea is, at the cost of a pawn, to obtain a strong grip on the centre by diverting Black’s c-pawn away from its defence of d4.
4...c4!?  
This is an interesting idea with a specific idea in mind. Black can, of course, capture the extra pawn, but I prefer to avoid my opponent’s preparation.

5 c3  
This seems to be White’s best option.

5 a3?! looks inferior and gives Black a pleasant choice between the following:
  a) 5...a5! looks like the best way to meet White’s last: 6 b5 ♕c5 7 d4 cxd3 8 ♖xd3 ♗d7 9 0-0 ♗e7 10 ♗c3 ♗g6 11 ♗e2 ♗c7 12 ♗a4 b6 with an equal game, D.Chuprov-G.Tunik, Internet (rapid) 2004.
  b) 5...b5!? is possible now that Black does not have to fear a4. If White had played c3 on his last move then 6 a4 would now be a lot stronger. A.Stripunsky-V.Moskalenko, Ukrainian Championship, Simferopol 1990, continued 6 a4 (White plays the advance anyway!) 6...♖xb4 7 axb5 ♗b6 8 ♗a3 and now an interesting option would have been 8...♕xb5!? After, for example, 9 ♗d4 ♗b6 10 ♖xb4 ♖xb4 11 ♗c3 White does have compensation for the pawn, with ♗g4 to follow, but Black’s pawns are also quite imposing.

5...a5!

Black plays this move in order to take control of the c5-square.

6 b5  
6 d3 cxd3 7 b5 ♗d7 will lead to the same thing.

6...♖d7!  
From d7 the knight places pressure on e5 and in some cases prepares to move to c5.

7 d3  
White needs to move the d-pawn in order to defend e5 and develop the light-squared bishop.

7...cxd3 8 ♖xd3 f6  
This is the main idea. Black aims to start an immediate attack against White’s centre. This leads to some interesting positions with active play for Black.
Black accepts the challenge. After this move he will gain a big centre in exchange for a weakened kingside.

10 \( \text{dxe5} \) fxe5 11 \( \text{dxe5} \)

9 \( \text{c2!} \)

White starts an immediate attack on the light squares around Black’s kingside. Alternatively:

a) 9 \( \text{dxe5} \) fxe5 10 \( \text{dxe5} \) \( \text{dxe5} \) 11 \( \text{dxe5} \) \( \text{f6} \) (Black is ready to play \( \text{d6} \) and White may also find that he has overextended himself by playing the advance \( \text{b5} \)) 12 \( \text{dxa3} \) \( \text{dxa3} \) 13 \( \text{xaxa3} \) 0-0 with an equal game. D.Zakarian-D.Antic, Kalamaria 2009.

b) 9 \( \text{d4} \) fxe5 10 \( \text{dxe5} \) (10 \( \text{d5} \) is very enterprising, but also bad; after 10... \( \text{d6} \) the queen comes over to defend some crucial squares and 11 \( \text{d3} \) e4 gives Black a big advantage) 10... \( \text{f6} \) (this is an important move for this variation; Black needs to take control of the e5-square) 11 \( \text{xxd7} \) \( \text{xxd7} \) 12 \( \text{g3} \) \( \text{g6} \) (preparing \( \text{g7} \) with pressure along the long diagonal) 13 0-0 \( \text{h6} \) (the knight is moving around to \( f7 \) from where it controls the e5-square; 13... \( \text{g7} \) allows 14 \( \text{d6} \) which could be slightly annoying) 14 \( \text{e1} \) \( \text{f7} \) 15 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{g7} \) and I prefer Black’s position.

9... \( \text{dxe5} \)

11... \( \text{e5} \)

11... \( \text{f6} \) is a decent alternative: for example, 12 \( \text{g6}+ \) \( \text{d8} \) (Black will now continue his development with \( \text{e4} \), \( \text{c5} \) and \( \text{e7} \) when his centre looks very impressive) 13 \( \text{d3} \) (otherwise the light-squared bishop is in trouble after \( \text{e4} \)) 13...\( \text{e4} \) 14 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{c5} \) and Black has a big initiative.

12 \( \text{xh8} \) \( \text{xh8} \) 13 \( \text{c4} \)

White must attempt to break up Black’s strong centre.

13... \( \text{c7} \)

An improvement seems to be 13... \( \text{e4} \) when Black has a small advantage and is planning \( \text{e5} \). White’s king is in just as much danger as Black’s.

14 \( \text{a3} \)

Now Black must exchange his dark-squared bishop, which is a bit unfortunate.

14... \( \text{b4}+ \) 15 \( \text{xb4} \) axb4 16 \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{e4} \) 17
†b2
White may have a slight edge here, but the game soon fizzes out.

17...h8

18 g3
White should have played 18 d4!, taking control of the centre. Now 18...hxh2 is suspect due to 19 hxh2 Whxh2 20 Whxg7 when Black's king is very exposed.

18...e3 19 fxe3 Wha3 20 0-0 Wxe3 21 Whf3 dxc4 22 Whf2 Whd3 23 Whg5 b6
Instead 23...d5! would have left White struggling. The assessment of this game keeps changing!

24 Wha1 Whc5 25 Whxc5 bxc5 26 Whf7 Whh5 27 Whg7 c3 28 Wha4 ¥½-

Game 58
A.Morozevich-E.Bareev
Sarajevo 1999

1 e4 e6 2 Whf3
The game actually began via the move order 2 d4 d5 3 Whc3 Whf6 4 e5 Whfd7 5 Whf3.

2...d5 3 Whc3
A somewhat safer choice than gambiting a pawn with 3 e5.

3...Wf6 4 e5 Whd7 5 d4 c5 6 dxc5
In this variation White guards his centre with his pieces, not his pawns, which is a hypermodern way of playing.

Instead 6 Whb5 Whc6 7 0-0 Whe7 8 dxc5 0-0 9 Whf4 Wxc5 is equal according to John Watson.

6...Whc6 7 Whf4

7...Wxc5
This is the most popular way for Black to continue, but there is something to be said for 7...Wxc5!? which does avoid a certain amount of theory. After 8 Wh2 a6 9 0-0 Wh7 10 a3 0-0 11 Wh1 f5! (this is a good plan; by playing ...f5 Black will either take control of the e4-square for his knight or gain a lot of activity for his pieces after the exchange on f6) 12 exf6 Whxf6 13 Whg3 Whc4! Black had the initiative and the better position in V.Golod-V.Akobian, Philadelphia 2004.

8 Whd3
White is playing in the style of Nimzowitsch. He is over-defending his pawn on e5 which he hopes will be the basis for an attack. His pieces are also well placed for an attack if Black castles kingside, especially the light-squared bishop. Black, for his part, must aim to remove the strong pawn on e5. This is precisely what Bareev does next.

8...f6!

Black relies on this move so often in the French and most certainly must do so here.

9 exf6 \(\text{xf6!}\)?

I am going to concentrate on this rather unusual way of recapturing on f6. Black normally captures with the knight, but 9...\(\text{xf6}\) does have its advantages. The main idea is to give extra protection to the dark squares in the centre of the board.

9...\(\text{xf6}\) is, of course, possible. I.Schneider-M.Ulibin, Biel 2004, continued 10 0-0 0-0 11 \(\text{e5}\) \(\text{d7}\) 12 \(\text{e2}\) (White’s main aim is to fight for control of the e5-square) 12...\(\text{e7}\) 13 \(\text{ae1}\) \(\text{ae8}\) 14 a3 a6 15 \(\text{g3}\) \(\text{xe5}\) 16 \(\text{xe5}\) \(\text{c6}\) and now White went wrong by playing b4. An improvement would have been 17 \(\text{h1}\) which prepares the advance f4. I suspect that White can claim a small advantage in this case.

10 \(\text{g5}\) \(\text{f7}\) 11 \(\text{e2}\)

White decides to try and take control of the centre, especially the e5-square. He has also played:

a) 11 0-0 0-0 12 \(\text{h4}\) is a standard manoeuvre in this variation. The bishop vacates the g5-square so that the white knight can threaten to move there.

Now:

a1) 12...\(\text{h5}\) 13 \(\text{g3}\) \(\text{f6}\) (this is more active than the overly-defensive 13...a6) 14 \(\text{e2}\) (perhaps 14 a3 is better; White can consider playing b4 and a3 stops any possibilities of Black using the b4-square) 14...\(\text{d7}\) 15 \(\text{ae1}\) \(\text{ae8}\) 16 \(\text{e5}\) \(\text{xe5}\) 17 \(\text{h5}\) \(\text{hxh5}\) 18 \(\text{xe5}\) \(\text{e7}\) 19 \(\text{e2}\) \(\text{f6}\) 20 \(\text{d4}\) and now 20...\(\text{g4!}\) was a common idea in Z.Zsekov-D.Kontic, Burgas 1991. When White’s bishop reaches e5 Black will often try to attack it with this knight,
either on g4 or d7.

a2) 12...h6 13 g3 f6 14 e5 xe5 15 xe5 d7 16 h1 c6 was seen in N.Andreescu-M.Bobrowska, Bucharest 1997. White is controlling the e5-square, but Black is preparing to play ...d7! which aims to win back control of that square. The position is roughly equal.

b) 11 h4 immediately seems to be a slight error as Black can play 11...de5! when he is fine: for example, 12 xe5 xe5 13 b5+ c6 (13...d7!? ) 14 d2 0-0 15 0-0 d4 16 g3 xb5 17 xb5 d7 18 d4 f6 with a good game for Black in I.Mosionzhik-I.Nei, USSR Team Championship 1962.

11...0-0 12 0-0-0!?

Unsurprisingly Morozevich chooses the most interesting continuation. The position is very unbalanced now with chances for both sides.

Instead 12 d2 seems a rather passive square for White’s bishop. After 12...d4 Black gains good control of the e5-square, which is always useful, and 13 xd4 xd4 14 0-0-0 c5 15 f3 a6 16 e3 xe3+ 17 xe3 was equal in P.Marcoli-W.Cazzaniga, Corsico 1997.

12...h6 13 h4 a6

Black prepares a pawn storm on the queenside.

14 g3 b6

Another very sensible option was 14...b5 when Black is planning to play ...b6 and then ...c4. Bareev might have been concerned about 15 e4!? here, but he would have been okay after the simple 15...b6: for example, 16 d6 f6 17 he1 e5 18 xc8 xc8 19 xe5 dx5 20 xe5 xe5 21 xe5 xe5 22 xe5 xf2 when the position is equal.

15 b1 d7 16 hf1 h5 17 a3 ac8 18 de1 f6 19 d2 f7

20 e5!?

Both sides have been manoeuvring, trying to improve the positioning of their pieces. With this move Morozevich attempts to put a plan into motion. He could have held tight as well. For example:
a) 20 h4?! "xf3 (20...f4 21 g3 f6 is equal) 21 gxf3 d4 22 e2 c4 gives Black a dangerous initiative for the exchange.

b) 20 h3!? has the idea of playing h2!? and then g4. Here 20...xf3!? is a typical sacrifice with unclear play: for example, 21 gxf3 d4 22 d1 xf3 23 e3! f8 24 e2 d4 25 d6 xe2 26 xc5 xc3+ 27 xc3 a4 and Black retains enough for the exchange.

20...

21 xe5?

This is a hard move to understand as it seems to just blunder away the pawn on f2. I guess it just goes to show that even top grandmasters can make simple errors.

Instead 21 xe5 d6 22 ee1 xg3 23 hxg3 c6 24 f4 looks to be slightly better for White.

21...xf2 22 d1 e7 23 xf2 xf2

Black is a pawn up. Winning the game demands some hard work, but White will always be on the back foot from now on.

24 f1 c5 25 h5

Or 25 g4 g5 26 xg5 hxg5 with the better ending for Black.

25...f8

The more pieces that Black can exchange, the better his winning chances become.

26 e1

26 xf8+ xf8! (26...xf8 27 g6 is worth avoiding) 27 g6 e8 holds everything together for Black.

26...g5 27 xg5 hxg5

Bareev has played well so far and he must have been glad to have swapped the queens off. His pawn advantage should eventually win the game.

28 b4 e7 29 e2 c8 30 d4

White is doing his best to create a blockade in the centre.

30...c4!

Black has some squares available to him as well.

31 xc4 xc4 32 b2 f7

The position has simplified and Black has a large advantage.

33 c3 f6 34 g3 c8!

Black brings his rook around to the open h-file. This will exert some more
pressure on White’s position.  
35 \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{h}8 \) 36 \( \text{d}6 \) g4!

This is a good plan. Black intends to play ...\( \text{h}5 \) and then ...e5 which will remove the blockade that White has set up. As soon as the black central pawns start to roll, White will be defenceless.  
37 \( \text{b}3 \)

White pre-empts Black’s plan, but to little avail.  
37...e5

Black could also have tried to have kept White’s knight out of the game by playing 37...b6, but this does leave the b6-pawn a bit weak, even if the immediate 38 \( \text{c}7 \)! can be met by 38...\( \text{c}8 \) 39 \( \text{xb}6 \) \( \text{xc}3 \).

38 \( \text{c}5 \) \( \text{b}5 \) 39 \( \text{f}2 \) b6 40 a4 \( \text{c}4 \)!

Black correctly decides to hold on to the advantage of the two bishops.  
The other option, 40...\( \text{xc}5 \), was also good, but slightly more unclear: for example, 41 axb5 cb4 42 bxa6 \( \text{e}6 \)! and Black should still win, but White has some chances to hold after 43 \( \text{xb}4 \).

41 \( \text{d}7 \) \( \text{e}6 \) 42 \( \text{x}f6 \) gxf6

We now find out that not all opposite-coloured bishop endings are drawn! Black’s central pawns are far too strong here.  
43 \( \text{c}7 \) b5 44 a5 \( \text{d}3 \)?

Manoeuvring the bishop to \( f3 \) which supports the d-pawn’s advance.  
45 \( \text{b}6 \) \( \text{e}4 \) 46 \( \text{d}2 \) f5 47 \( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{h}3 \) 48 \( \text{c}7 \) \( \text{f}3 \) 49 \( \text{c}2 \) h7!

Black now finds the correct plan: to advance with ...f4.

50 \( \text{b}6 \) f4

Black is winning and the rest is easy.  
51 gxf4 exf4 52 \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 53 \( \text{d}4+ \) \( \text{f}5 \)
54 \( \text{b}6 \) \( \text{h}6 \) 55 \( \text{a}7 \) \( \text{e}6 \) 56 \( \text{d}2?! \) \( \text{e}4 \)
57 \( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{h}6 \) 58 \( \text{g}1 \) \( \text{f}5 \) 59 \( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{e}4 \) 60 \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{h}3 \) 61 \( \text{d}4 \) g3 62 hgx3 fxg3 63 \( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{h}2+ \) 64 \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{f}2 \) 65 \( \text{g}7 \) \( \text{g}4 \) 66 \( \text{g}1 \) \( \text{f}7 \) 67 \( \text{d}4 \) g2 68 \( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{f}1 \) 69 \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{h}3 \) 70 \( \text{g}1 \) \( \text{f}3+ \) 0-1

Game 59
T.Bullockus-U.Droessler  
Correspondence 2000

1 e4 e6 2 d4

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I should also mention 2 e5!? , the
Steinitz variation. If White ever plays
this move, his intentions must be clear.
He just wants to play chess without
entering any theory. 2...d6 is the stan-
dard way of meeting this move when
White obtains a slight space advantage
after 3 exd6 cxd6 4 d4, but Black’s po-
sition is very solid and French-like.
M.Avdić-V. Kostić, Stara Pazova 2009,
continued 4...f6 5 f3 0-0 6 d3 c6
7 0-0 e5! (this is the simplest way to
equalize) 8 dx5 e5 9 e5 x5 10 d2 h6 with an equal game.

2...d5

3 e3?!
This can be a tricky little gambit,
but if Black plays actively he quickly
obtains a good game.
Others:
a) 3 d3 has gained in popularity in
England of late thanks to the efforts of
FM Andy Mack. Here:
a1) 3...dxe4 is a simple way to
equalize and 4 xe4 f6 5 f3 c5 6
e2 c6 7 e3 wb6 8 bc3 xdx4 9
d4 c5 10 xc6+ bxc6 was fine for
Black in M.Bluvshtein-S.Volkov, Inter-
a2) 3...c5 will often lead back into a
line of the Exchange French after 4
exd5 (4 c3 c6 5 e2 xdx4 6 xdx4 b4!
is at least equal for Black) 4...exd5. This
is quite a lively position for Black, often
leading to an IQP situation, but does
take play outside our repertoire.
b) 3 c4!? does have a few admirers. I
am not sure why though, as White gets
a very bad version of the Marshall
Gambit (1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 d3 e6 4 e4
dxe4 5 xex4 b4+ 6 d2 xd4). I did
actually see that Marshall had played
this as well though! It was not a gambit
that caught on and after 3...dxe4 4 c3
f6 5 e3 e7 6 e2 b6 7 a3 b7 8 b4
0-0 9 h4 e8 10 g3 d6 11 c2 a5 12
b5 f5 Black was already doing pretty
well in P.Orlov-V.Kostić, Valjevo 2005.
3...dxe4 4 d2 f6 5 f3 d5!

This causes the maximum nuisance
to White which is often a good tactic.
5...exf3 is possible, but it does give
White exactly the type of initiative that
he is looking for after 6 gxf3 with
.d3 and 0-0 to follow.

\[ \text{e2} \text{c6!} \]

This move gains a tempo by attacking the pawn on d4.

\[ \text{c3} \text{exf3} \]

Only now does Black decide to capture here as he figures that his development is in just as fine a shape as White’s.

\[ \text{gxf3} \text{d6} \]

Taking control of the f4-square.

\[ \text{f2} \]

An improvement might have been 9 \text{e4}, but Black is still better after the move 9...0-0 10 \text{g5} f6 11 \text{d2} e5!.

\[ 0-0 10 0-0-0 \text{a6} 11 \text{g3} \text{b5!} \]

White is not the only player who is in attack in this variation! Black decides to fight fire with fire, which is just the kind of thing that we approve of in this book!

\[ \text{e2} \text{g2} \text{e7} 13 \text{de1} \text{b7} 14 \text{hf1} \text{a5} \]

The knight moves out of the pawn’s way and it may also have the opportunity to jump into c4 later.

\[ 15 \text{g1} \]

White is making no progress with his attack. Who can be scared by such a move as \text{g1}?

\[ 15...\text{ac8} 16 \text{e4} \text{c4} 17 \text{fd2} \]

White decides that he needs to exchange pieces, even though he is a pawn down.

\[ 17...\text{xd2} 18 \text{xd2} \text{a8} 19 \text{c2} \text{b6} \]

\[ 20 \text{e3} \text{f5} 21 \text{g5} \text{d7} 22 \text{c5} \text{xc5} 23 \text{dxc5} \text{gxg2} 24 \text{wg2} \text{d5} \]

A good outpost for the knight.

\[ 25 \text{e5} \]

White should have tried 25 g4!, as he needs to try and get some action going on the kingside. It seems that throughout this game White was not playing with enough aggression. The gambit life does not seem to suit him!

\[ 25...\text{ce8} 26 \text{e2} \text{h6} 27 \text{d2} \text{f6} 0-1 \]

I guess White had run out of stamp money.

**Conclusion**

None of the lines we’ve seen in this chapter should really worry Black. On the contrary, he should welcome the chance to play against them! Both 2 \text{b3} and the dubious gambit 2 \text{d4} d5 3 \text{e3} give Black excellent chances to emerge from the opening with the upper hand and even the sensible 2 \text{f3} d5 3 \text{c3} shouldn’t hold too many fears for a well-prepared player.
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