Attack with Black

Valery Aveskulov

A Ukrainian Champion provides a blockbuster repertoire with the Benko and Blumenfeld Gambits
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Introduction

The aim of this book is to present a complete repertoire for Black against 1 d4. The cornerstones of the repertoire are two gambits that are aggressive but positionally motivated: the Benko Gambit and the Blumenfeld Gambit. While seeking out lines that give Black attacking chances, I have also striven to recommend only those variations which are theoretically sound and reliable. Throughout the book, I have attempted to explain the most relevant strategic concepts for both players, cater for tricky move-orders, and to analyse new moves and ideas for both sides. I hope that by covering logical but untested ideas for White, I have to some degree ‘future-proofed’ the book.

But why did I decide to write this book on this topic, and at this point in time? Allow me a brief digression.

Our generation has the honour to live in the computer era. Besides the obvious advantages, it also puts certain duties on us; this applies to practically all aspects of life, and chess is no exception. In the 1960s and 1970s, top chess-players spent months studying an opening to find new ideas, and just to gather relevant material they had to subscribe to many chess magazines and manually assimilate all the data. If somebody played a strong novelty, even in a major event, it could take months before it became well-known to the chess community. Nowadays we can learn the main line of any opening in an hour using a database (though this does not mean we can play it well!!). If a novelty is played in a top tournament, a good chess-player watching it live online can figure out even before the game has ended whether it is a really strong idea or if it’s just a one-time bomb to surprise an opponent. The speed at which information travels is amazing and we need to take this into account when choosing our openings. I feel it makes sense to have some lines that are special to us, that we have prepared in ways that cannot be replicated by our opponents working with their computer in the few hours before they face us.

But which sort of openings should we study: sharp and fashionable or rare and half-correct? Poor opening choices can ruin your efforts in chess. If you like to play quiet positions with pawn-chains, then the Sicilian Dragon shouldn’t be in your repertoire. And if you are a good tactical player, forget about defending the Queen’s Gambit Declined with Black; learn the King’s Indian or Benko Gambit! It will immediately help you to get better results.

From my experiences as a coach of players of a wide variety of ages, I have discovered that many players have little notion of how to study a new opening
variation. They have a limited grasp of ChessBase, don’t know how to use an engine effectively and as a result their repertoire barely gets them to move 10 without a mishap. I assisted them first with advice about which opening lines to choose, and then I offered some brief lines of that or another variation. Later I wrote some opening articles that started to appear in chess magazines. Eventually, the idea formed: “Maybe I could write a book on the opening to assist even more players.”

The question “Which opening should it be about?” was solved very quickly. When I was 7 or 8, a coach presented me with a handwritten 170-page monograph that unfortunately has never been published. It was dedicated to the Benko Gambit! If I had been asked at that point to explain why I should sacrifice my b-pawn, I could hardly have done so, but I started to sacrifice it and I loved the games I got. Later when I began to face stronger opponents, my Benko games became more difficult. I took up openings like the Nimzo-Indian and Queen’s Gambit Declined in order to resist against solid players, but against weaker players I still preferred to play the opening from my childhood. As I became stronger, I began to understand more and more about the Benko, but there was never time to devote serious study to my favourite opening. But my students often asked about Benko lines, and I found myself increasingly drawn into the subject. Gradually, more and more Benko analysis appeared on my computer. When I asked Graham Burgess (Editorial Director of Gambit Publications Ltd) whether a Benko guide might be of interest, he asked me if I could extend it into a complete opening repertoire against 1 d4. I readily agreed with his idea since most of the other variations were also worked out on my computer and I already had many interesting ideas for how to complete the repertoire. That is how the idea of this book was born.

So, if you feel at home with aggressive gambit chess, this book is for you! The last three chapters of the book feature instructive material on the Benko Gambit: positions you should aim for, ones to avoid, and positions for solving (both strategic and tactical). If you are new to the Benko, you may wish to study these chapters before anything else – the more detailed discussion should make more sense then!

I sought to make this book interesting for both professional players and amateurs. There are a great many new ideas that should be viable in high-level games, while there are also plenty of verbal explanations. I very much hope you will like the results of my work. Also I shall be very thankful if you send me your feedback, ideas, questions or even complaints to me by email: vdaveskulov@gmail.com.

Finally, I would like to thank Graham Burgess, who professionally and cooperatively assisted me throughout the whole process of writing this book; and Alexander Moiseenko, who helped me to believe that I can analyse openings at a high level.
And many thanks to my darling wife Irina who gave us a boy, Ivan, on 9th March 2012 and made me unbelievably happy!

Valery Aveskulov
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Symbols

x capture
+ check
++ double check
# checkmate
!! brilliant move
! good move
!? interesting move
?! dubious move
? bad move
?? blunder
+- White is winning
± White is much better
± White is slightly better
= the game is equal
☆ Black is slightly better
★ Black is much better
→ Black is winning
Ch championship
tt team event
1-0 the game ends in a win for White
½-½ the game ends in draw
0-1 the game ends in a win for Black
(n) nth match game
(D) see next diagram
1 Diemer, Veresov and Trompowsky

1 d4 \( \text{d6} \) \((D)\)

Our main lines in this book start after 2 \( \text{c3} \) and especially 2 \( \text{c4} \). However, White can direct the game in a very different direction on his second move, and this chapter is devoted to these lines. In increasing order of importance, we have:

A: 2 \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{d5} \) 3 e4? 7

B: 2 \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{d5} \) 3 \( \text{g5} \) 8

C: 2 \( \text{g5} \) 12

Given our repertoire preferences, the move-order 2 c3 gives us no problems as we simply meet it with 2...d5. After the rare 2 g3, Black can reply 2...c5 3 d5 b5 4 \( \text{g2} \) d6, with active play.

A)

2 \( \text{c3} \) d5 3 e4?

This is a form of the Blackmar-Diemer Gambit, a very rare opening at higher levels but it has many adherents among club-level players. An objective evaluation of this gambit is 'not correct'. Its general idea is to give up a pawn for rapid development – a laudable enough aim, but right here this idea can hardly be recommended. Black takes the pawn practically for free.

3...\( \text{xe4} \) 4 \( \text{xe4} \) dxe4 \((D)\)

None of White’s continuations give him sufficient compensation.

5 \( \text{c4} \)

Or:
a) 5 \( \text{\&}e3 \text{\&}f5 6 \text{\&}g4 \text{\&}g6 7 \text{\&}e2 \) (Ferreira-Chauca, Rio de Janeiro 2008)
7...\( \text{\&}c6 8 \text{\&}f4 \text{\&}d6 \mp \) intending ...0-0-0 and ...e5.

b) 5 \( \text{\&}f4 \text{\&}c6 6 \text{\&}c3 \text{\&}e6 7 \text{\&}\text{\&}c2 \text{\&}f5 8 0-0-0 \text{\&}d6 \mp \) M. Pfeifer-Neckar, Czech Team Ch 2001/2.

c) With 5 \( \text{\&}f3 \text{\&}e5 \) Black gives the pawn back in order to get a development advantage. 6 \text{dxe}5 (6 \text{exe}5? \text{\&}h4+ \mp ; 6 \text{\&}e3 \text{exd}4 7 \text{\&}xd4 \text{\&}xd4 8 \text{\&}xd4 \text{\&}c6 9 \text{\&}b5 \text{\&}d7 10 \text{\&}c3 \text{exf}3 11 \text{\&}xf3 0-0-0 12 0-0-0 \text{f}6 \mp \) Helin-Yurenok, Caleta 2012) 6...\text{\&}xd1+ 7 \text{\&}xd1 \text{\&}f5 8 \text{\&}f4 \text{\&}c6 9 \text{\&}c3 0-0-0+ 10 \text{\&}e1 \text{\&}c5 \mp.

5...\text{\&}c6 6 d5 8 a5!

This new move improves over Abbasifar-Tanaka, Istanbul Olympiad 2000, and forces the exchange of the light-squared bishop. 7 \text{\&}e2 (7 \text{\&}e2? \text{\&}e6 \mp ; 7 \text{\&}b5+? \text{\&}c6 8 \text{\&}xc6 \text{\&}xd1+ 9 \text{\&}xd1 \text{\&}xc6 \mp ) 7...\text{\&}xc4 8 \text{\&}xc4 \text{\&}e6 9 \text{dxe}6 \text{\&}xe6 10 \text{\&}xe4 \text{\&}d5! 11 \text{\&}xd5 \text{\&}xd5 \mp gives Black a very pleasant endgame with the bishop-pair.

B)

2 \text{\&}c3 d5 3 \text{\&}g5 (D)

This is the most common move-order to reach the Richter-Veresov Attack (we shall call it the ‘Veresov’ for short). Other versions are 1 \text{d}4 \text{d}5 2 \text{\&}c3 \text{\&}f6 3 \text{\&}g5, 1 \text{d}4 \text{\&}f6 2 \text{\&}g5 \text{d}5 3 \text{\&}c3 and 1 \text{\&}c3 \text{\&}f6 2 \text{d}4 \text{d}5 3 \text{\&}g5.

The opening was named after the German International Master Kurt Richter (who played it from the 1920s to the 1940s) and later the Soviet master Gavriil Veresov (1950s-1970s).

The Veresov has never been popular at the highest levels, though some top players have employed it on occasion. It has appealed mostly to maverick players such as Spassky, Tal, Larsen, Bronstein, Miles, Alburt and Morozevich, who have never objected to irregular play on the board. Nowadays you can find this variation in games of such GMs as Hector, Chernyshov, Khachian and Miladinovic.

White has two main ideas: the first is to damage Black’s pawn-structure with \text{\&}xf6 (not considered so dangerous nowadays) and the second is to make a pawn advance in the centre with \text{f}3 and \text{e}4 (often after 0-0-0).

3...\text{\&}bd7 (D)

This is the most popular response to the Veresov, as Black prepares a strong response to the \text{e}4 plan, while also avoiding doubled \text{f}-pawns. Now:

B1: 4 \text{\&}d3 9

B2: 4 \text{e}3 10

B3: 4 \text{f}3 10

B4: 4 \text{\&}f3 12

The third of these, preparing the \text{e}4 advance, is the most consistent with White’s aims in the Veresov, but
doesn’t work very well if Black plays precisely. The fourth is the most popular move.

There are a few alternatives:

a) White can sacrifice a pawn with 4 e4?! \( \text{\SF dxe4} \ 5 \text{\SF xe4} \text{dxe4} \ 6 \text{f3} \) but this clearly can’t work out well. 6...h6 and now:

a1) 7 \( \text{\SF h4} \) loses control of the e3-square: 7...c5! 8 dxc5 (8 d5? \( \text{\SF b6} \ 9 \text{\SF b1} \text{g5} \ 10 \text{\SF g3} \text{g7} \ 11 \text{c3} \text{g6} \mp \) Gomes-Epishin, Las Palmas 1997; Black has kept the extra pawn) 8...e3 9 \( \text{\SF d4} \) e5! \( \mp \).

a2) 7 \( \text{\SF f4} \) (Lodi-G.Kovacs, Hungarian Team Ch 1999/00) 7...c6 (as is often the case, the simplest reply to a gambit is to give back the pawn for rapid development) 8 fxe4 e5! (and Black can even sacrifice one of his own) 9 dxe5 \( \text{\SF a5}+ \) 10 \( \text{\SF d2} \text{xd2}+ \) 11 \( \text{\SF xd2} \text{c5} \) 12 \( \text{\SF d3} \text{e6} \) 13 \( \text{\SF f3} \) 0-0-0 with ideas of ...\( \text{\SF xe4}+ \) and ...\( \text{\SF a4} \).

b) White can also play 4 \( \text{\SF d2} \) intending 0-0-0, f3 and e4 – a delayed form of the idea we see in Line B3. 4...h6 and now:

b1) 5 \( \text{\SF f4} \) c6 6 f3 b5 7 a3 transposes to note ‘b’ to White’s 5th move in Line B3.

b2) 5 \( \text{\SF h4} \) c6 6 f3 e6! (this quiet move prevents White’s e4 advance) 7 e3 (7 e4? \( \text{\SF dxe4} \mp \) Misanović-D.Ivanisević, Belgrade {women} 1990) 7...b5 (Black starts an attack on the queenside that is effective since White hasn’t created any tension in the centre) 8 \( \text{\SF f2} \) a6 (Black adopts a French Defence plan that is especially good with white pawns on e3 and f3) 9 \( \text{\SF ge2} \) c5 10 g4 \( \text{\SF b7} \) 11 \( \text{\SF g2} \text{c8} \mp \) Morozevich-Ehlvest, Podolsk 1993.

B1)

4 \( \text{\SF d3} \)

White prepares the e4 advance, but Black has a nice way to hinder this thrust:

4...h6 5 \( \text{\SF h4} \) c6! (D)

6 \( \text{\SF f3} \)

Or:

a) 6 e4? is not good now because of a geometric idea: 6...\( \text{\SF dxe4} \) 7 \( \text{\SF dxe4} \text{dxe4} \) 8 \( \text{\SF xe4} ? \) (it’s better not to take
this pawn, even though 8 \( \text{d}2 \text{b}6 \) leaves Black with a clear extra pawn) 8...g5 9 \( \text{a}3 \text{a}5+ \) 10 c3 f5 11 \( \text{f}3 \text{f}4 \) \( \text{b}5 \) and Black wins a bishop.

b) 6 0-0-0?! invites a quick attack on the white king: 6...b5! 7 \( \text{d}3 \) (Gelashvili-Halkias, Erevan Zonal 2000) 7...b4! 8 \( \text{b}1 \) (8 \( \text{a}4 \text{a}5 \) 9 \( \text{b}3 \text{b}6 \) 10 \( \text{d}3 \text{b}5 \) \( \text{f}5 \) 8...\( \text{a}5 \) 9 a3 e6.

6...\( \text{a}5 \) 7 \( \text{d}2 \)

7 0-0-0? \( \text{b}4 \) \( \text{b}6 \). The c3-knight is tied to the defence of a2.

7 a3 e6 8 \( \text{d}2 \) (Sengupta-N.Mamedov, Hastings 2007/8) 8...\( \text{b}6 \)? (a new move) 9 0-0-0 e5! 10 e3 \( \text{d}6 \).

7...\( \text{b}6 \) 8 0-0-0 e5! 9 dxe5 \( \text{x}e5 \)

10 \( \text{g}3 \)

Now:

a) Giannakoulopoulos-Dvoirys, Ano Liosia 2000 featured 10...\( \text{g}6 \)?! 11 \( \text{xf}6 \) \( \text{gxf}6 \), but now 12 \( \text{b}3 \)?! (intending e4) 12...f5 13 e3 \( \text{d}6 \) would have led to a position with a weird pawn-structure for Black.

b) It is safer to avoid the doubling of the pawns: 10...\( \text{fd}7 \)?! 11 f4 \( \text{g}6 \) 12 e4 \( \text{d}4 \) (the natural 12...\( \text{d}xh4 \) leads to problems due to 13 exd5!; e.g., 13...\( \text{f}5 \) 14 \( \text{e}1+ \text{d}8 \) 15 \( \text{c}4 \text{c}7 \) 16 dxc6! with a very strong attack) 13 \( \text{e}2 \) c5. Black has the ...\( \text{d}xh4 \) idea in hand and has avoided problems with the king in the centre.

B2)

4 e3 c6! 5 f4?! 5 \( \text{f}3 \) h6 6 \( \text{h}4 \) transposes to Line B4.

With the text-move, White seeks slow manoeuvring play in the Stonewall style. However, the difference is that there is no guard on the queenside – the bishop is on the other side of the wall.

5...\( \text{b}6 \) 6 \( \text{b}1 \)

White can't defend the b2-pawn indirectly by 6 a3? because of 6...\( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{g}4 \) 8 \( \text{c}1 \) g5! 9 \( \text{g}3 \) (9 \( \text{fxg}5 \) \( \text{hxg}5 \) 10 \( \text{xg}5 \) \( \text{xh}2 \) (intending to play ...\( \text{f}3 \)?) 11 \( \text{d}1 \) e5 \( \text{b}5 \) with a strong initiative) 9...\( \text{df}6 \) 10 \( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{h}5 \) 11 \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{g}7 \) \( \text{b}5 \) intending to take on f4 and then on d4.

6...e6 7 \( \text{f}3 \) (D)

Now I recommend 7...\( \text{b}4 \)! (a new move, improving over Napoli-Mršević, Niš 2008) 8 \( \text{d}3 \) c5 9 0-0 c4! 10 \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{xc}3 \) 11 bxc3 \( \text{a}5 \) 12 \( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{d}6 \).

B3)

4 f3

This aggressive interpretation of the Veresov turns out not to work well.

4...c6!

This move is important, as it prepares a strong reply to White's e4 advance.

5 e4?!
White pushes on regardless. This leads to the most interesting play, but it is objectively better to delay this advance with 5 \( \text{d}2 \). Then \( 5...b5! \) is a strong and typical idea. Black starts queenside play thanks to the fact that White has created no tension in the centre. Besides the obvious idea of playing \( ...b4 \), Black prepares an outpost on \( c4 \). Then:

\begin{enumerate}
  \item \( 6 \text{e}4 \) involves a pawn sacrifice:
    \begin{enumerate}
      \item \( 6...b4 \ 7 \text{d}1 \text{dxe}4 \ 8 \text{f}2 \ (8 \text{xb}4 \text{e}5 \ 9 \text{a}4 \text{exd}4 \ 10 \text{xc}6 \text{b}8 \ 11 \text{xf}6 \text{xf}6 \ 12 \text{xe}4+ \text{d}8! \) Summer-scale-Miezis, Cappelle la Grande 1999; Black intends to play \( ...\text{b}4+ \) and \( ...\text{e}8 \) \( 8...\text{e}3! \) (disrupting White’s development) \( 9 \text{xe}3 \text{e}6 \ 10 \text{d}3 \text{e}7 \ 11 \text{e}4 \text{d}5 \ 12 \text{g}5 0-0 \ 13 \text{e}2 \text{c}5 = \) Heyken-Kengis, Hamburg 1995. Black has comfortable play; the \( f3 \)-pawn looks ugly.
      
      \item \( 6 \text{a}3 \text{h}6 \ 7 \text{f}4 \text{e}6 \ 8 \text{e}4 \text{b}6 \ 9 \text{h}3 \text{e}7 \ 10 \text{f}2 \text{a}5 \) is equal, Ochoa-Rivas, Medina del Campo 1980. Black has a good version of the French Defence.
    \end{enumerate}

\end{enumerate}

\( 5...\text{dxe}4 \) \( 6 \text{f}xe4 \ (D) \)

\( 6...\text{e}5! \)

Black grabs dark squares in the centre.

\( 7 \text{dxe}5 \)

White can’t hold the dark squares by \( 7 \text{f}3 \) because of \( 7...\text{b}6 \ 8 \text{dxe}5 \text{xb}2 \ 9 \text{d}2 \ (9 \text{b}1 \text{xc}3+ \ 10 \text{d}2 \text{c}5 \ 11 \text{exf}6 \text{xf}6 \) \( \mp \) Berges-Prie, Fouesnant 1997; White has no compensation for the pawn) \( 9...\text{g}4 \ 10 \text{b}1 \text{a}3 \ 11 \text{e}6 \text{fxe}6 \ 12 \text{g}5 \text{de}5 \) \( \mp \), when Black is a pawn up.

\( 7...\text{a}5! \)

This is the main point of Black’s play.

\( 8 \text{xf}6 \)

Or:

\begin{enumerate}
  \item White can win a pawn by \( 8 \text{exf}6 \text{g}5 \ 9 \text{fxg}7 \text{g}7 \), but Black’s total control of the dark squares promises him the better chances. For example, \( 10 \text{d}2 \text{xd}2+ \ 11 \text{xd}2 \text{c}5 \ 12 \text{d}3 \text{e}6 \ 13 \text{f}3 0-0-0 \ 14 \text{e}2 \text{b}5 \ 15 \text{a}3 \text{a}5 \) \( \mp \) Alburt-Tal, USSR Ch, Baku 1972.
  
  \item \( 8 \text{d}2 \text{xe}5 \ 9 0-0-0 \text{e}6 \ 10 \text{f}3 \) (Vooremaa-Bronstein, Tallinn 1981) \( 10...\text{b}4 \mp \). White’s pawn-structure will be terrible after \( ...\text{xc}3 \).
\end{enumerate}

\( 8...\text{gxf}6 \)

White is fighting to avoid a very serious disadvantage:

\begin{enumerate}
  \item \( 9 \text{e}6 \text{fxe}6 \ 10 \text{c}4 \text{a}3! \) (a typical tactic) \( 11 \text{c}1 \) (Vallierres-Lesiege, Quebec City 2004) \( 11...\text{xc}3+! \) \( 12 \text{bxc}3 \text{xc}1 \text{b} 13 \text{xc}1 \text{d}5 \) \( 14 \text{d}3 \text{g}8 \ 15 \text{f}2 \text{e}5 \mp \) intending \( ...\text{xc}6 \).
  
  \item \( 9 \text{exf}6 \text{a}3! \) (the strongest move, again emphasizing the weakness of White’s dark squares) \( 10 \text{c}1 \text{xf}6 \ 11 \text{d}3 \text{g}4! \) (intending a double attack by \( ...\text{b}6 \)) \( 12 \text{h}3 \) \( 12 \text{bxa}3? \) allows
Black a very strong attack: 12...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{xc}c3+} 13 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{he}2 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{d}d4} 14 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{h}h3 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{g}g8} ± Brauer-Crosa Coll, Mendoza 2004) 12...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{b}b6!} 13 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{d}d1 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{b}b4+} 14 c3 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{e}e5} 15 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{e}e2 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{e}e7} leaves White's position badly damaged.

\textbf{B4)}

4 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{f}f3}

This is the number one choice for White although it does not fit with the word ‘Attack’ in the name of the opening: White plays solid but passive chess. Naturally, this type of development doesn’t put much pressure on Black.

4...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{h}h6}

Black immediately determines the position of White’s bishop.

5 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{h}h4}

5 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{f}f4 e6 (5...c6 allows White to support the e4 advance with 6 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{d}d3}) 6 e3 (now 6 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{d}d3 can be met by 6...c5! =) and now 6...a6! is the most aggressive. Black prevents \texttt{\textcolor{red}{b}b5 and prepares to seize space on the queenside. 7 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{d}d3 c5 8 0-0 b5 9 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{e}e1 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{e}e7} 10 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{e}e5 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{b}b7} 11 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{x}xd7 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{x}xd7} 12 dxe5 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{x}xe5} 13 e5 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{e}e7 = Meštrović-A.Kovačević, Nova Gorica 2004. Black has solved all his problems.

5...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{c}c6}

5...e6 can lead to a strange position: 6 e4 g5 7 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{g}g3 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{x}xe4} 8 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{x}xe4 dxe4} 9 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{e}e5 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{g}g7} 10 h4 with complicated play.

6 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{e}e3}

6 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{d}d3 transposes to Line B1.

6...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{e}e6} 7 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{d}d3 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{e}e7} 8 0-0 0-0 (D)

Black has fully equalized. For example:

\textbf{C)}

2 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{g}g5 (D)}

This move defines the Trompowsky Attack. It is named after the Brazilian player Octavio Trompowsky, who played it in the 1930s and 1940s. In modern times, the opening received more widespread popularity on account of the efforts of players such as Lev Alburt, Vlastimil Hort, Konstantin Chernyshov, Igor Miladinović and especially Julian Hodgson.
The primary idea of 2 \(\text{g}5\) is to take on f6, doubling Black's pawns. White will then seek a slow manoeuvring game: he will restrict Black's dark-squared bishop with pawns on c3, d4 and e3, and put his bishop on d3, and his knights on d2 and e2. The plan is that the knights will prove more nimble than the black bishops in this scenario. Although Black has reliable ways to handle this set-up, it is more in keeping with the aim of our repertoire to cut across White's designs with an active move:

\[2...\text{e}4\]

This leads to concrete positions. White will seek to gain time by attacking this knight, but Black aims to make use of its influence in the centre. Now:

**C1:** 3 \(\text{h}4\) 13

**C2:** 3 \(\text{f}4\) 15

The bishop retreat to f4 is the main move, but in addition to the alternative of dropping it back to h4, White can also support it with his h-pawn, odd though 3 h4 appears. Then 3...d5 is the easiest way to get a safe position, rather than opening the h-file for White. Black will methodically complete his development while the h-pawn's advance looks irrelevant. 4 \(\text{d}2\) \(\text{xd}2\) 5 \(\text{W}xd2\) \(\text{f}5\) 6 e3 h6 7 \(\text{f}4\) e6 8 \(\text{f}3\) \(\text{d}6\) 9 \(\text{d}3\) \(\text{xd}3\) 10 \(\text{W}xd3\) \(\text{c}6\) 11 c3 \(\text{e}7\) = Galego-Züger, European Team Ch, Haifa 1989.

**C1)**

3 \(\text{h}4\) c5

Naturally, Black attacks the centre.

4 \(\text{f}3\)

Or:

a) 4 \(\text{d}2\) \(\text{a}5\) 5 c3 \(\text{xd}2\) 6 \(\text{W}xd2\) cxd4 7 cxd4 \(\text{W}xd2+\) 8 \(\text{W}xd2\) d5 offers White absolutely nothing: 9 e3 \(\text{c}6\) 10 \(\text{e}2\) e6 11 \(\text{c}3\) \(\text{d}7\) 12 \(\text{e}2\) \(\text{d}6\) 13 \(\text{hc}1\) 0-0 14 \(\text{b}5\) \(\text{b}8\) = Rausis-Inkio, Gausdal 1989.

b) 4 dxc5 \(\text{xc}5\) 5 \(\text{c}3\) \(\text{c}6\) 6 \(\text{f}3\) (6 e4?! reaches a kind of Sicilian, but the bishop on h4 appears awkward: 6...\(\text{g}6\) 7 \(\text{b}5\) \(\text{g}7\) 8 \(\text{ge}2\) a6 9 \(\text{xc}6\) bxc6, and Black was slightly better in the game Sazhinov-Bocharov, Tomsk 2006) 6...\(\text{g}6\) 7 \(\text{d}5\) \(\text{g}7\) 8 c3 d6 9 e3 0-0 10 \(\text{b}5\) \(\text{e}8\) = Black has no problems.

c) 4 d5?! is dubious due to the striking manoeuvre 4...\(\text{b}6\) 5 \(\text{c}1\) g5! 6 \(\text{g}3\) \(\text{g}7\) 7 c3 \(\text{h}6\)! (a key move: Black exchanges off the g3-bishop in excellent circumstances) 8 \(\text{xb}8\) (8 \(\text{h}3\) d6 9 \(\text{d}2\) \(\text{xg}3\) 10 fxg3 \(\text{g}6\) ‡ Rossetto-Sanguinetti, Buenos Aires 1975) 8...\(\text{xb}8\) 9 \(\text{d}2\) \(\text{f}6\) 10 e4 0-0 11 \(\text{d}3\) d6 ‡ Glek-Kharitonov, Vilnius 1984.

4...\(\text{g}5\) 5 \(\text{fxe}4\) \(\text{gxh}4\) (D)
6 e3?!

I am giving this as the main line only due to its great popularity. In fact, I think it’s a poor move that lets Black seize the advantage. Other moves:

a) 6 c3? allows Black to isolate White’s e2- and e4-pawns. 6...cxd4 7 wxd4 g8 8 e5 c6 9 xh4 xe5 10 0-0-0 (Teske-Kocwin, Guben 2008) 10...b6! + intending to exchange queens by ...h6+. White’s isolated e-pawn provides Black with a long-lasting advantage.

b) 6 c3!? is not the most popular move, but it looks clearly the most logical. White avoids isolated pawns on the e-file and does not weaken any new squares. There is limited practical experience here; the main line so far is 6...b6, but I prefer to offer something new and interesting. One idea is 6...h6?!, but I’ll focus on 6...d5?!, blowing open the centre to provide more lines for his bishops. Then:

b1) 7 e5? is an attempt to keep the game closed, but it doesn’t work well. 7...c6 8 f3 b6 9 b3 (9 b3?! h6 + gives Black a strong initiative thanks to the absence of a pawn on f2) 9...cxd4 10 xb6 axb6 11 cxd4 h6 12 c3 b4 13 d1 e3 + leaves White cramped.

b2) 7 dxc5 dxe4 8 a4+ (in case of 8 xd8+?! xd8 9 d2 f5 Black is slightly better) 8...d7 9 xe4 g7 (9...xc5? leads to a lost position as a result of a long and practically forced line: 10 e5! a5 11 xh8 b3 12 xxb3 xal 13 xh7 f5 14 g6+ d8 15 f2 xb1 16 g8 e8 17 f3 +--) 10 xh4 c5 11 d2 and in this irregular position it is useful for Black to exchange queens to get more power for his bishops: 11...b6!? 12 c4 h6 13 xh6 h6 with obvious compensation for the pawn.

b3) 7 exd5 xd5 8 f3 c6. As this position has never been played in practice, I shall show just an example line. Hopefully, new games will shed more light on this position. 9 b3 c4 10 c2 f5 11 e4! (this tactical motif enables White to avoid coming under pressure) 11...xe4 12 xc4 f5 13 e2 xf3 14 gxf3 h6 is somewhat unclear, but Black should be fine.

6...h6! 7 f2

This has been the main move so far, but such play definitely can’t be correct. Other moves:

a) 7 h5?! is a dubious pawn offer: 7...b6! 8 d2 cxd4 + Bellon-Dončević, Benidorm 1988.

b) 7 d2?! is an attempt to make a positional sacrifice. White gets some compensation, but the whole idea can’t be recommended. 7...xe3 8 d5 d6 9 c4 d4 10 c3 f6 11 a4 d7 12 h5 f8! (a key manoeuvre – the
This healthy move guarantees Black good play. I like this continuation more than 3...c5, which is positionally risky because it does not help Black to develop his pieces.

This healthy move guarantees Black good play. I like this continuation more than 3...c5, which is positionally risky because it does not help Black to develop his pieces.

Now:

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4 f3 d2 allows Black active play after 4...c5! 5 exd4 (5 e3 transposes to note ‘c’ to White’s 5th move in Line C23) 5...dxe4 6 dxc5 w.a5+ 7 c3 w.xc5, and now:

a) Black is even slightly better in the endgame after 8 w.a4+ w.c6 9 w.xc6+ w.xc6 10 f3 (10 e3 e5 11 w.g3 w.e6 12 f3 exf3 13 w.xf3 f6 w.f5 Barbero-Pelletier, Swiss Team Ch 1998) 10...e5 11 w.a3 w.f5 12 g4 w.e6 13 w.h3 f6 14 w.f2 exf3 15 exf3 (Tunik-Avrukh, Beersheba 1996) 15...0-0-0 w.f5.

b) 8 w.d4 w.xd4 9 cxd4 w.c6 10 0-0-0 e5! (opening lines for the bishops) 11 dxe5 w.e6 12 w.b1 e3! (Black cleans up the b1-h7 diagonal) 13 w.xe3...
\( \text{b4} 14 \text{c1} \) (14 a3 \( f5+ \) 15 \( a1 \) \( c2+ \) 16 \( a2 \) \( xe3 \) 17 \( fxe3 \) \( c5 \) leads to a promising endgame for Black) 14...\( f5+ \) 15 \( a1 \) \( c2+ \) 16 \( xc2 \) \( xc2 \) was OK for Black in V. Mikha­levskii-Ma. Tseitlin, Beersheba 1996.

**C21)**

4 \( f3 \)

White opts for a slow approach, but there is a danger that Black’s knight, now securely placed on e4, will simply turn out to generate useful activity. That is not exactly the outcome White had in mind when provoking this piece forward!

4...\( c5 \) 5 \( c3 \)

5 \( e3?! \) is dubious due to 5...\( b6! \). Then:

- a) 6 \( d3?! \) \( a5! \) and now:
  - a1) 7 \( xb8 \) \( xc3 \) 8 \( d2 \) \( xb8 \) 9 \( bc3 \) \( c4?! \) (a new move; 9...\( e6 \) was chosen in the game Zaja-Berebora, Croatian Team Ch, Šibenik 2005) 10 \( g3 \) \( e6 \) 11 \( g2 \) \( d6 \) 12 0-0 0-0 \( f \) with...b5-b4 to follow.
  - a2) 7 \( xc5 \) \( xc3 \) 8 \( d2 \) f6 9 \( bc3 \) \( e5 \) 10 \( g3 \) \( d7! \).
- b) 6 \( bd2?! \) is not a correct pawn sacrifice: 6...\( xd2 \) 7 \( xd2 \) \( xb2 \) 8 \( c1 \) c4 9 \( e2 \) \( e6 \) 10 0-0 \( b4 \) 11 \( d1 \) \( d7 \) 12 \( e4 \) 0-0 \( f \) Berend-Kappler, Dijon 1994.
- c) 6 \( c1 \) \( cxd4 \) 7 \( xd4 \) \( c6 \) 8 \( c3 \) \( f5 \) 9 \( e2 \) \( e6 \) 10 0-0 \( e7 \) 11 \( bd2 \) \( c8 \) is objectively equal, but Black is more active, Okrajek-Magerramov, Bad Wörishofen 1993.

5...\( cxd4 \) 6 \( cxd4 \) \( c6 \) (D)

Note the similarity to the Exchange Slav, an opening in which White is often happy to spend a move playing his knight into e5. That means White needs to take some action here, as routine play could leave him effectively playing the black side of that opening.

7 \( e3 \)

7 \( e3?! \) lets Black start a strong attack by 7...\( e5! \). Then:

- a) 8 \( dxe5 \) \( b4+ \) 9 \( f2 \) (9 \( bd2?? \) \( g4! \) \( f \) 9...\( g5 \) 10 \( g3 \) h5 11 \( f3 \) \( xg3 \) 12 \( xg3 \) \( b6 \) \( f \)
  - b) 8 \( xe5 \) \( b4+ \) 9 \( f2 \) (after 9 \( bd2?? \) White again loses a piece to 9...\( g4! \) \( f \) 9...\( x5 \) 10 \( dxe5 \) 0-0 11 \( a3 \) \( e5 \) 12 \( d3! \) (12 \( e2? \) d4! 13 \( b3 \) \( f2 \) 14 \( xf2 \) \( xe3+ \) 15 \( f1 \), McDonald-Wells, Southend 2008, and now 15...\( d4! \) wins right away: 16 \( a2 \) \( e6 \) 17 \( c2 \) \( f8 \) 18 \( bxa5 \) \( b3 \) \( f \) 12...\( g5 \) 13 0-0 \( g4 \) 14 \( e2 \) \( h3 \) 15 \( f3 \) \( c7! \).

7...\( xc3 \)

Or:

- a) 7...\( f5?! \) is unconvincing due to an immediate attack on the b7-square: 8 \( b3 \) \( xc3 \) (d5 was also hanging) 9 \( bc3 \) \( d7 \) 10 \( e5 \) \( xe5 \) 11 \( xe5 \) (intending e4 and \( b5 \) 11...a6 12 \( e3 \) and
Black should play ...f6 at some moment to develop the f8-bishop. Later White will play c4, exposing Black’s vulnerability on the a2-g8 diagonal.

b) But Black can start with 7...f6!? This covers the e5-square and amongst other things prevents $\text{Q}e5$. The c6-knight is useful in these positions – it avoids unpleasant checks on the a4-e8 diagonal, attacks d4 and is ready to move to b4 or a5 to attack on the queenside; on the other hand, the f3-knight only defends d4. Black’s next few moves could be ...$\text{Q}f5$, ...e6, ...$\text{Q}d6$, ...0-0, etc., or the same but leaving the bishop on c8.

8 bxc3 g6

This is a simple solution to Black’s problems, leaving him a tempo up compared to a position that can arise from the Exchange Slav or a quiet form of Grünfeld (e.g., Portisch-Kramnik, Biel Interzonal 1993). After 9 e3 $\text{Q}g7$ 10 $\text{Q}e2$ 0-0 11 0-0 $\text{Q}f5$ Black is comfortably equal.

C22)

4 f3 $\text{Q}f6$ 5 $\text{Q}c3$

Or:

a) 5 e3?! doesn’t fit in with White’s previous play (i.e. f3), and 5...c5! exploits this. Black has a development advantage after 6 c3 $\text{Q}c6$ 7 $\text{Q}d2$ e6 8 $\text{Q}g5$ e5 9 dxe5 $\text{Q}xe5$ 10 e4 $\text{Q}e7$ $\mp$ M.Gurevich-Cvitan, Vršac 1985.

b) 5 e4 is an interesting pawn sacrifice. After 5...dxe4 6 $\text{Q}c3$ (following 6 fxe4 $\text{Q}xe4$ 7 $\text{Q}d3$, as in R.Leyva-Vazquez Igarza, Cuba 1997, Black can simply continue 7...$\text{Q}f6$ 8 $\text{Q}c3$ $\text{Q}c6$ 9 0-0-0 $\text{Q}d5$ $\mp$, when White has only partial compensation for the pawn). 6...$\text{Q}d5$! is a key move for Black, avoiding any complications related to accepting the gambit pawn. Now:

b1) 7 $\text{Q}d2$ $\text{Q}xf4$ 8 $\text{Q}xf4$ $\text{Q}xd4$ 9 $\text{Q}d1$ e5! (forcing a favourable liquidation) 10 $\text{Q}xd4$ (10 $\text{Q}g5$? h6 is much better for Black) 10...exf4 11 $\text{Q}xe4+$ $\text{Q}d8$ 12 $\text{Q}xf4$ (12 $\text{Q}c4$, Dunworth-D.Buckley, Monmouth 2000, 12...f5! 13 $\text{Q}xf4$ $\text{Q}c6$ $\mp$ intending ...$g5$ or ...$\text{Q}d6$) 12...$\text{Q}e6$ $\mp$. Black’s bishop-pair will be powerful in the endgame.

b2) 7 $\text{Q}xd5$ $\text{Q}xd5$ 8 $\text{Q}xc7$ (8 $\text{Q}d2$? yields nothing good: 8...$\text{Q}c6$ 9 $\text{Q}e3$ e5! 10 fxe4 $\text{Q}xe4$ 11 $\text{Q}d3$ $\text{Q}h4+$ 12 g3 $\text{Q}h5$ 13 d5, Kanep-Nureev, Internet blitz 2003, 13...$\text{Q}b4$ $\mp$) 8...$\text{Q}c6$ 9 c3 $\text{Q}f5$ 10 $\text{Q}e2$ (Djurhuus-Elsness, Gausdal 1995) 10...e6 11 fxe4 $\text{Q}xe4$ 12 $\text{Q}f3$ $\text{Q}c8$ 13 $\text{Q}g3$ $\text{Q}d6$ $\mp$. Black is fine here.

c) 5 c4 e6 6 $\text{Q}c3$ c5! (D).

Again Black attacks his opponent’s awkward pawn-structure in the centre – the pawn on f3 looks disharmonious. Now:
c1) With the continuation 7 \( \square b5 \) \( \square a6 \) 8 e4 (Devereaux-Gallagher, British League (4NCL) 2004/5) White tries to get some initiative but his pieces are unprepared for such play. Here I recommend the new move 8...cxd4! – as is often the case in complicated positions, the most important thing is to castle; after that everything becomes clear. 9 cxd5 \( \spadeheartsuit b4 \)+ 10 \( \spadeheartsuit f2 \) 0-0 \( \blacklozenge \) gives Black an obvious advantage.

c2) 7 e3 cxd4 8 exd4 \( \spadeheartsuit c6 \) 9 c5 \( \spadeclub e7 \) was equal in the game Santacruz-Pineda, Thessaloniki Olympiad 1988. Everything would be quite typical if White’s pawn weren’t on f3. It just gets in the way of White’s plans, while Black has no such problems.

5...e6 6 e4

After 6 \( \spadeheartsuit d2 \) c5! (with a pawn on c5 it’s very hard for White to arrange his planned e4 advance) 7 e3 Black can advance his queenside pawns in much the same way that we saw in a couple of Veresov lines: 7...a6 8 \( \spadeclubsuit e2 \) \( \spadeclubsuit c6 \) 9 g4 b5 10 \( \spadeclub g2 \) \( \spadesuit e7 \) 11 0-0 b4 12 \( \spadeheartsuit d1 \) a5 13 c3 \( \spadeheartsuit a6 \) \( \blacklozenge \) Rusanov-Emelin, St Petersburg 1998.

6...c5! 7 \( \diamond b5 \) \( \diamond a6 \) 8 e5

8 c4 transposes to note ‘c1’ to White’s 5th move above.

8...\( \spadesuit d7 \) 9 c3 \( \spadesuit ab8 \)

Improving the worst piece. Now:

a) 10 c4? a6 11 \( \spadeclubsuit d6+ \) \( \spadesuit xd6 \) 12 exd6 (Treppner-Assmann, 2nd Bundesliga 1998/9) 12...exd4! 13 \( \spadesuit xd4 \) e5! 14 \( \spadesuit e3 \) (14 \( \spadesuit xe5? \) \( \spadeclubsuit c6 \) costs White his bishop) 14...d4 15 \( \spadesuit e4 \) 0-0 \( \blacklozenge \).

b) 10 dxc5 \( \spadesuit xc5 \) 11 b4 \( \spadeclub e7 \) 12 \( \spadeclub g3 \) 0-0 13 f4 \( \spadeheartsuit c6 \) 14 \( \spadeheartsuit f3 \) (Vatter-Blauert, Germany 1989) 14...a6 15 \( \spadeclubsuit bd4 \) \( \spadeclubsuit xd4 \) 16 \( \spadeclubsuit xd4 \) a5 17 a3 \( \spadeclubsuit b6 \) \( \blacklozenge \) followed by ...\( \spadeclubsuit d7 \), ...\( \spadesuit c7 \) and ...\( \spadesuit fc8 \). White’s play on the kingside can be stopped with ...g6.

C23)

4 e3

This is the most popular move.

4...c5 (D)

Black immediately puts pressure on White’s centre.

5 \( \spadeclubsuit d3 \)

There are plenty of alternatives at this point:

a) 5 \( \spadeclubsuit f3 \)? transposes to the note to White’s 5th move in Line C21.

b) 5 c3 \( \spadeheartsuit c6 \) (Black creates the positional threat of gaining the bishop-pair by ...g5; the immediate 5...g5 is met by 6 \( \spadeclub e5! \) 6 \( \spadeclubsuit f3 \) (6 \( \spadeheartsuit d2 \) \( \spadeheartsuit f5 \) 7 \( \spadeheartsuit g3 \) \( \spadesuit xg3 \) 8 hxg3, as in Budrewicz-Shishkin, Wroclaw 2009, when V.Mikhalevski recommends 8...\( \spadesuit b6 \) 9 \( \spadesuit b3 \) \( h6= \); Black has the bishop-pair and faces no problems) 6...\( \spadesuit f5 \) 7 \( \spadeclubsuit bd2 \) e6
8 9xe4 9xe4 9 d3 9xd3 10 wxd3 and now:

b1) It’s important for Black to avoid taking on d4 for the time being, as this would give White nice attacking prospects on the kingside since the e-file and 3rd rank prove very useful. Just take a look at how easily White won the following game: 10...cxd4?! 11 exd4 9d6 12 9g3 a6 13 0-0 h6 (although 13...0-0? looks scary for Black because of 14 9xd6 wxd6 15 9g5, in fact it’s not fatal for him yet: 15...g6 16 9h3 h5 keeps a fighting position) 14 9ae1 0-0 15 9d2! (preparing a pawn-storm) 15...9xg3 16 9xg3 9e7 17 9e2 9f5 18 9h3 9a5?! 19 9f3 9xa2? (Black wins a pawn but gives White time to pursue his attack) 20 g4 9e7 21 9e5 9a5 22 f4 9d8? (the black queen does not get back in time; 22...9b5?!) 23 f5 9c6 24 f6 9xe5 25 dxe5 9b6+ 26 9ef2 9c7 27 9h5 with a winning position for White, Miladinovic- Ftačnik, Croatian Team Ch, Šibenik 2007. Black could have defended better in this game, but there is nothing to be gained from inviting White to attack in this way.

b2) 10...9e7 11 0-0 0-0 leaves Black fine; e.g., 12 dxc5 (12 9e5 9c8 13 a3 9f6 14 9f3 {White has just wasted two tempi} 14...a6 = Schubert-Navara, 2nd Bundesliga 2001/2) 12...9xc5 13 e4 dxe4 14 9xe4 9e7 15 9fe1 h6 = Shimirn-Uhlmann, Leutersdorf 2001.

c) 5 9d2 and now:

c1) The popular 5...9b6 does not equalize because of 6 9xe4 dxe4 7 dxc5! 9xb2 8 9d4 9a3 (White is better in the endgame after 8...9xd4 9 exd4 9c6 10 9b5 ± 9xb8 9a5+ (forced) 10 c3 9xb8 (Mesias Rojas- Lopez Silva, Chilean Ch, Fenach 2007) 11 9d1! (a new move) 11...9f5 12 f3 ± with a strong initiative – Black’s king is in big trouble.

c2) 5...9xd2 6 9xd2 9c6 7 9f3 and here:

c21) Black can’t develop his queen’s bishop because 7...9f5? is answered by 8 dxc5!. Then 8...e6 9 9d4! 9g6 (9...9xc5 10 9xf5 exf5 11 0-0-0 ± and the d5-pawn drops as 11...9e7? fails to 12 9c3 ++) 10 9c3 ± gives White a clear extra pawn. 8...f6 looks a better try but still does not help to win the pawn back: 9 9d4 9d7 10 9b3 e5 11 9g3 9e6 12 9d1 ± leaves White a pawn up.

c22) 7...e6 8 c3 9d6 9 9b5 0-0 10 0-0 9e7 (a new move; 10...9xf4?! strengthens White’s control of the e5-square: 11 exf4 cxd4 12 cxd4 9d7 13 9fc1 ± Pelletier-Vogt, Swiss Team Ch 1998) 11 9ac1 9d7 with an equal position.

5...cxd4 (D)
6 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texttt{x}}}}\textit{e4}}

This is the most critical reply – White creates a target on e4 that he will attack in the near future; fortunately, Black can defend it or in some cases successfully give it up.

If White wants to avoid risk he can simply take on d4. 6 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texttt{x}}}}\textit{d4}} \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texttt{c}}}}\textit{\texttt{c6}}}

a) Black feels OK in the case of 7 \textit{\texttt{c3 \textit{\texttt{f}}}}\textit{\texttt{5}} (D). Now:

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image1}
\end{center}

\begin{itemize}
  \item a1) 8 \textit{\texttt{d2}} e6 9 f3 \textit{\texttt{d6}} 10 \textit{\texttt{x}}\textit{d6}?
  \end{itemize}

(10 0-0 = is more solid) 10...\textit{\texttt{x}}\textit{d6}!

(unexpectedly for White, his opponent is not scared by the doubling of his pawns, since in return Black gets an open file and weak squares to target on e3 and e4) 11 \textit{\texttt{xf5}} \textit{\texttt{xf5}} 12 f4 0-0 13 0-0 \textit{\texttt{e8}} 14 \textit{\texttt{d2}} \textit{\texttt{c7}} 15 g3 \textit{\texttt{a5}} 16 \textit{\texttt{f2}} \textit{\texttt{c4}} \mp Vitiugov-Kariakin, Russian Ch, Moscow 2010. Black’s advantage is obvious.

\begin{itemize}
  \item a2) 8 \textit{\texttt{e2}} e6 9 \textit{\texttt{d2}} \textit{\texttt{d6}} 10 \textit{\texttt{gf3}}
\end{itemize}

\textit{\texttt{x}}\textit{d3} 11 \textit{\texttt{xd3}} \textit{\texttt{f5}} 12 g4 \textit{\texttt{fe7}} 13 h4
\textit{\texttt{g6}} 14 \textit{\texttt{g5}} \textit{\texttt{c7}} 15 h5 \textit{\texttt{f4}} 16 \textit{\texttt{xf4}}\textit{\texttt{xf4}} 17 \textit{\texttt{g1}} h6 18 0-0-0 \textit{\texttt{e7}} =


b) 7 \textit{\texttt{xe4}} \textit{\texttt{dxe4}} 8 \textit{\texttt{e2}} (the aggressive 8 d5 is met by a typical opening counterbreak: 8...\textit{\texttt{e5}}! 9 \textit{\texttt{g3}} \textit{\texttt{e7}} 10 \textit{\texttt{c3}} \textit{\texttt{g6}} and in Stefanova-Kurajica, Solin 2007 Black was even slightly better considering that the e4-pawn is indirectly defended: 11 \textit{\texttt{xe4}}? f5 12 \textit{\texttt{c3}} f4 \mp) 8...\textit{\texttt{g4}} 9 \textit{\texttt{bc3}} \textit{\texttt{b6}}

poses to line ‘c’ of the next note.

\begin{itemize}
  \item c) 7 \textit{\texttt{e2}} \textit{\texttt{f5}} 8 0-0 (8 f3 \textit{\texttt{d6}} 9 \textit{\texttt{xd6}} \textit{\texttt{xd3}} 10 \textit{\texttt{xd6}} \textit{\texttt{xd6}} =) 8...\textit{\texttt{e6}} 9 \textit{\texttt{c3}} \textit{\texttt{g6}} 10 \textit{\texttt{c1}} \textit{\texttt{d6}} 11 \textit{\texttt{xd6}} \textit{\texttt{xd6}} =
\end{itemize}

A.Smirnov-Iordachescu, Paleochora 2010.

\textit{\texttt{dxe4}} 7 \textit{\texttt{xd4}}

White can also take on d4 with the pawn. 7 \textit{\texttt{xd4}} \textit{\texttt{b6}} 8 \textit{\texttt{c3}} \textit{\texttt{c6}} (D) (8...\textit{\texttt{xb2}}?! 9 \textit{\texttt{ge2}} gives White the initiative) and now:

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image2}
\end{center}

\begin{itemize}
  \item a) After 9 \textit{\texttt{d2}}? Black can take the pawn: 9...\textit{\texttt{xd4}}! 10 \textit{\texttt{b5}} \textit{\texttt{xd2}}+ 11 \textit{\texttt{xd2}} \textit{\texttt{b8}}! \mp Stefanova-Mamedyarov, Wijk aan Zee 2005.
\end{itemize}

b) 9 d5 \textit{\texttt{e5}}! (again we see this typical counterblow – it is worth memorizing it!) 10 \textit{\texttt{e3}} \textit{\texttt{xb2}} (this is forced, but there doesn’t appear to be any way
to punish Black for his greed; instead, 10...\(\triangle d4\)? loses a pawn with no compensation: 11 \(\triangle ge2\) \(\triangle g4\) 12 \(\triangle xd4\) exd4 13 \(\text{\textdollar}xd4\) \(\text{\textdollar}xd4\) 14 \(\triangle xd4\) \(\pm\) R.Janssen-Visser, Dutch Ch, Rotterdam 1999) 11 \(\triangle ge2\) (the only move) 11...\(\triangle b4\)! 12 0-0 \(\text{\textdollar}xc2\) (the white queen cannot avoid exchange) 13 \(\triangle b5\) \(\triangle g4\) 14 \(\text{\textdollar}xc2\) \(\triangle xc2\) 15 \(\triangle g3\) \(\triangle b4\)! \(\mp\).

c) 9 \(\triangle ge2\)!? \(\triangle g4\) 10 0-0 (a new move, improving over 10 h3? \(\triangle xe2\) 11 \(\triangle xe2\) \(\text{\textdollar}d8\) 12 c3 e5! \(\mp\) Laurie-Tsesarsky, Tel Aviv 1997) 10...\(\text{\textdollar}d8\) 11 d5 e6!? is unclear. Black’s king is still uncastled but his bishop-pair and well-coordinated pieces don’t allow White to exploit this fact.

7...\(\triangle c6\)!

7...\(\text{\textdollar}xd4\)? is in my opinion not advisable: 8 exd4 \(\triangle c6\) 9 c3 f5 (9...g5? 10 \(\triangle xg5\) \(\text{\textdollar}g8\) 11 \(\triangle f4\) \(\pm\) and 11...\(\triangle xg2\)? 12 \(\triangle g3\) traps the rook) 10 \(\triangle d2\) \(\pm\). Once White plays f3, Black will have problems on the e-file.

8 \(\text{\textdollar}xd8\+)

8 \(\text{\textdollar}xe4\)? is not good because of 8...\(\text{\textdollar}a5+\) 9 c3 \(\triangle f5\) 10 \(\text{\textdollar}f3\) (10 \(\text{\textdollar}c4\)? e5 11 \(\triangle g3\) \(\triangle b4\)! 12 cxb4 \(\triangle xb4+\) and ...\(\text{\textdollar}c8\) wins) 10...e5 11 \(\triangle g3\) \(\text{\textdollar}b5\)! 12 b3 \(\triangle c2\) \(\mp\) followed by ...\(\text{\textdollar}d8\), when White is in trouble.

8...\(\triangle xd8\)? (D)

With this new move (varying from the game Stefanova-Mongontuul, Russian Women’s Team Ch, Sochi 2006), Black preserves his right to castle and doesn’t experience any problems with the king on e8.

9 \(\triangle c3\) f6!

That’s the point behind Black’s 8th move. He temporarily sacrifices a pawn in order to get a pleasant pawn-structure.

10 \(\triangle d5\)

Attacking c7 and delaying ...e5 for a while. If White decides to take the pawn by 10 \(\triangle xe4\) he should be prepared for 10...e5 11 \(\triangle g3\) \(\triangle f5\) 12 f3 \(\triangle f7\) with ...\(\triangle xe4\) and ...\(\triangle g5xe4\) coming next; Black is preferable due to his better pawn-structure. 10 0-0-0 also does not change the character of the play; after 10...e5 11 \(\triangle g3\) \(\triangle f5\) the pawn is defended and the g3-bishop is out of play. Black is OK.

10...\(\triangle e6\) 11 \(\triangle e2\) \(\triangle d7\) 12 \(\triangle ec3\) \(\text{\textdollar}c8\) 13 0-0-0 \(\triangle c5\)

Next Black will play ...e5 (probably after ...e6 to push the d5-knight back). Considering that Black has the bishop-pair and the white bishop will be bad on g3, Black’s chances are even preferable.
These four opening systems have no main concrete order of moves; that’s why they are called ‘systems’. The common thread is that White plays d4 and an early \( \text{Qf3} \), and meets our \( \ldots \text{c5} \) by supporting his pawn with c3 and/or e3. The defining features are as follows:

Colle: e3 and c3, with \( \text{Qd3} \)
Zukertort: e3 intending a later b3
London: \( \text{Qf4} \)
Torre: \( \text{Qg5} \)

Let’s note that against the Zukertort, we shall be adopting a set-up with \( \ldots \text{g6} \), which may discourage White from playing b3. In other lines we need to be careful that White can’t play an early dxc5 to good effect, so in most cases we shall be occupying the centre with \( \ldots \text{e6} \) and \( \ldots \text{d5} \). Each system has its own unique themes, so let’s move on to a discussion of each of them:

A: Colle 22
B: Zukertort 27
C: London 30
D: Torre 34

A) Colle
The first notable master to adopt this opening (including a game against Capablanca in 1929) was the Belgian player Edgar Colle. This variation is characterized by the following moves for White, in one order or another: \( \text{d4}, \text{e3}, \text{Qf3}, \text{Qd3}, \text{0-0}, \text{c3} \) and \( \text{Qbd2} \). This is similar to Black’s set-up in the Semi-Slav, and therefore it’s no surprise that one of White’s main ideas in the Colle is to make the e4 advance. The main advantage of the Colle is its solidity, and there is the practical advantage that White can save a lot of time in the opening making these automatic moves. The main disadvantage is that White practically ignores his opponent’s replies, and Black has a wide choice and can direct the game towards the kind of position he wants. Also, while the Semi-Slav works well as a counterpunching opening, the reversed form proves less effective for taking the initiative. That’s why you rarely see games with this system at GM level. So, let’s see our way to respond to the Colle system!

1 \( \text{d4} \quad \text{Qf6} \quad 2 \quad \text{Qf3} \quad \text{c5} \quad 3 \quad \text{c3} \)

We shall discuss the consequences of 3 e3, which we shall meet with 3...g6, in Section B of this chapter.

3...e6
Here 3...g6 can be met by 4 dxc5!?, after which Black has no simple way
to take his pawn back (...\texttt{\textbackslash w}a\texttt{\textbackslash a}5 is not check any more). Usually Black sacrifices a pawn by ...\texttt{b}6, but it does not look very convincing to me.

4 \texttt{e}3 \texttt{d}5

Black captures space in the centre, and we now see the contours of a Semi-Slav with reversed colours.

Another popular continuation for Black is 4...\texttt{b}6, planning ...\texttt{\textbackslash b}7, ...\texttt{d}6, ...\texttt{\textbackslash b}d7, ...\texttt{e}7, ...0-0, etc. The disadvantage of this arrangement is that White can make the \texttt{e}4 advance: 5 \texttt{\textbackslash b}d2 \texttt{\textbackslash b}7 6 \texttt{\textbackslash d}3 \texttt{e}7 (Black also can switch back to the idea we recommend in the main line by 6...\texttt{d}5, but if Black wanted to play ...\texttt{d}5 it was better to do so on move 4 as now it lets White proceed with another typical Colle idea: 7 \texttt{\textbackslash e}5 \texttt{\textbackslash b}d7 8 f4 \texttt{\textbackslash e}7 9 0-0 0-0 10 \texttt{\textbackslash f}3 with attacking chances on the kingside) 7 \texttt{e}4 \texttt{cxd}4 8 cxd4 \texttt{\textbackslash c}6 9 a3 0-0 10 0-0 \texttt{d}6 11 b4 with a space advantage for White, Bricard-Bischoff, Bissen 1995.

5 \texttt{\textbackslash d}3

Of course, White can make other moves in this position, but this move is logical, and is a basic part of the Colle set-up. Having played \texttt{c}3, there is little point in playing \texttt{b}3 and \texttt{\textbackslash b}2, while dxc5 is premature before Black has moved his king’s bishop.

5 \texttt{\textbackslash b}d2 \texttt{\textbackslash c}6 6 \texttt{\textbackslash d}3 \texttt{e}7 7 0-0 would lead to the same position.

5...\texttt{\textbackslash c}6 6 0-0

White can also try to get a space advantage with 6 \texttt{\textbackslash e}5 \texttt{\textbackslash x}e5 7 dxe5 \texttt{\textbackslash d}7 8 f4. However, Black easily obtains interesting active play: 8...c4 9 \texttt{\textbackslash c}2 (this position was reached in the game Kemeny-P.Richardson, New York 1894) 9...\texttt{\textbackslash w}h4+! 10 g3 \texttt{\textbackslash w}h3 11 \texttt{\textbackslash d}2. Black has prevented White from castling kingside and now it’s time to start play on the queenside: 11...\texttt{b}5 (a new move, deviating from Atanaskovic-Lajthajm, Serbian Ch, Leskovac 2002) 12 \texttt{\textbackslash f}3 \texttt{b}b8 with an unclear position.

6...\texttt{\textbackslash e}7 7 \texttt{\textbackslash b}d2 0-0 (D)

Black continues developing and is ready for play in the centre.

8 \texttt{dxc}5

Besides this exchanging operation, which is also a standard theme in the Semi-Slav, White can continue playing slowly:

a) After 8 \texttt{\textbackslash w}e2 \texttt{b}6 White has plenty of possibilities but none of them should scare Black too much, as he is ready to meet all White’s active ideas such as \texttt{\textbackslash e}5 or \texttt{e}4:

a1) 9 dxc5?! (giving up control of the centre does not look good) 9...bxc5 10 e4 \texttt{\textbackslash c}7 11 e5 (11 \texttt{\textbackslash d}1 does not change too much – Black is still preferable: 11...\texttt{\textbackslash b}7 12 e5 \texttt{\textbackslash d}7 13 \texttt{\textbackslash f}1,
Sydor-Smejkal, Sandomierz 1976, 13...c4! 14 \( \text{c2 a6} \) intending to occupy the d3-square with ...\( \text{c5-d3} \)
14...\( \text{g4 e1 c4} \) 13 \( \text{c2 c5} \)!
(Black simply ignores the scare tactics) 14 \( \text{xh7+ h8} \)!
(now White needs to defend f2; 14...\( \text{xh7} \) leads to an unclear position after 15 \( \text{g5+ g8} \) 16 \( \text{xg4 f6} \))
15 \( \text{d4 xe5} \)...

Guimard-Granda, Porto Velho 1988. Black is better since he has exchanged a rook's pawn for a central pawn.

a2) 9 e4?! is another self-destructive idea. 9...cxd4 10 e5 (10 cxd4 can lead to the same position after 10...\( \text{b4} \) 11 e5 \( \text{d7} \))
10...\( \text{d7} \) 11 cxd4 \( \text{b4} \) 12 \( \text{b5} \) a6 13 \( \text{a4} \) (D) and now:

\[ \text{B} \]

a21) 13...a5?! allows the white bishop to return to the a6-f1 diagonal:
14 \( \text{b5} \) (14 a3 happened in F.Cruz-C.Cruz, Sabadell 2009) 14...\( \text{a6} \) 15 \( \text{xa6} \) \( \text{xa6} \) 16 \( \text{b1} \)!
and Black certainly isn't better.

a22) I prefer 13...b5!. With this new move, Black temporarily blocks the a6-f1 diagonal in order to open it with greater effect later. 14 \( \text{d1} \) (14 \( \text{b3} \)
\( \text{b6} \) 15 \( \text{b1} \) a5 followed by ...a4, ...\( \text{a6} \), etc., gives Black an advantage) 14...\( \text{b6} \) 15 \( \text{b1} \) a5 with the same plan: ...\( \text{a6} \), ...\( \text{c6} \), ...b4, etc.

a3) White again gets nothing with 9 \( \text{e5 xe5} \) 10 dxe5 \( \text{d7} \) 11 f4 c4 12 \( \text{c2 c5} \) 13 \( \text{f3} \) (Muse-Kritz, German Ch, Hoeckendorf 2004) 13...\( \text{a6} \)!
(intending ...\( \text{d3} \) (to block the c2-bishop) and then ...f6)

a4) 9 b3 is the most solid move for White since, as we have seen, all the active options rebound on him. After 9...\( \text{b7} \) 10 \( \text{b2} \) the natural 10...\( \text{c7} \) followed by ...\( \text{ad8} \) leads to simple and equal play, while in Bruno-Gyimesi, European Team Ch, Gothenburg 2005 Black played a somewhat fussy but still viable plan: 10...\( \text{c8} \) 11 \( \text{ac1} \)
\( \text{c7} \) 12 \( \text{fd1} \) \( \text{a8} \), after which 13 \( \text{dx5} \) \( \text{bxc5} \) 14 c4! d4 15 \( \text{exe4} \) cxd4 16 a3 a5 led to a very complex and unclear position.

b) White can again try to attack with 8 \( \text{e5} \). Then:

b1) Black gets a strategically risky pawn-structure after 8...\( \text{xe5} \) 9 dxe5 \( \text{d7} \) 10 f4 f5 11 \( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 12 e4!, although he is not worse at the moment, Bareev-Tukmakov, Tilburg 1994. But anyway I prefer to recommend something clearer.

b2) Black has a typical way to stop White's \( \text{e5-based} \) attack: 8...\( \text{d7} \)!. After 9 f4 Black plays 9...f5! = Araya-Vazquez Igarza, Asuncion 1991. Now Black is ready to take on e5 since \( \text{fxe5} \) does not create any attacking potential for White any more. If White takes a risk with 10 c4?!, Black gets the better game thanks to his more harmonious
pieces: 10...cxd4 11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 exd4 c5! 13 exd5 ♘f6! †.

8...♘xc5

Now:

A1: 9 e4 25
A2: 9 b4 26

A1)

9 e4

This is a logical continuation, but after the following natural move, using the queen to prevent e5, Black gets a very promising position in all variations.

9...♗c7 (D)

10 ♗e2

After 10 exd5 exd5 Black has more than enough activity to compensate for the isolated pawn. 11 ♙b3 ♙b6 and then:

a) 12 ♙g5 is met by 12...♕e4!, with pressure.

b) 12 ♙bd4 ♙g4 gives Black the initiative; his ideas include ...♕e4, ...♕e5 and ...♗fe8.

c) 12 h3?! can lead to a forced line where Black has a choice between giving perpetual check or continuing the game with three pawns for a piece.

   c1) In his book *A Rock-Solid Chess Opening Repertoire for Black*, Ein-gorn suggests 12...♕e4 13 ♙bd4 ♙xd4 14 ♙xd4 ♘d6 intending ...♘c7, which “maintains the tension and keeps the initiative”.

   c2) 12...♘xh3!? 13 gxh3 ♘g3+ 14 ♙h1 ♘xh3+ and then:

      c21) 15 ♙h2? ♙e5 16 ♙e2 ♙f3! (that’s the point!) 17 ♙f4 (the only move; 17 ♙xf3?? ♘c7 leads to mate) 17...♖h4 18 ♙f3 (18 ♙g1?? ♙e4 --) 18...♖h5 19 ♙d6 (19 ♙g3?? ♗xg3! += Lhagvasuren-Ulybin, Cheliabinsk 1991) 19...♖ad8 20 ♙e5 f6 21 ♙g3 ♙xg3+ 22 fxg3 ♙f5 23 ♙xd5+ ♙h8 24 ♙xf5 ♙xf5 25 c4 ♖fe8 †.

      c22) 15 ♙g1! ♘g3+ 16 ♙h1 ♙xf2!? (16...♖h3+ repeats) 17 ♙h2 ♙e5 18 ♙f5 ♙h4 19 ♙g5 ♙xg5 20 ♙xf2 ♙ae8 with an unclear position.

10...♗b6!?

This is just a useful move to avoid ♙b3 or ♙xe4 gaining a tempo. White has ideas with ♙xh7+ but Black has enough resources.

Black also scores very well with 10...h6, removing the ♙xh7+ sacrifice ideas:

   a) 11 h3?! ♙h5! 12 ♙b3 ♙g3 13 ♙c2 dxe4 14 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 15 ♙xe4 ♙d6 was slightly better for Black in Ostrowski-S.Ivanov, Polish Team Ch, Mikolajki 1991. Black has the bishop-pair and a mobile pawn-centre.

   b) 11 e5?! leads to a relatively forced line ending with problems for White: 11...♕g4 12 ♙b3 ♙b6 13 ♙bd4 ♙gxe5 14 ♙xe5 ♙xe5 15 ♙f4
f6 16 \textit{\texttt{A}}e1 a6!? (covering the b5-square to keep the knight out; 16...g5?! is less convincing: 17 \textit{\texttt{B}}xe5 fxe5 18 \textit{\texttt{W}}xe5 \textit{\texttt{W}}xe5 19 \textit{\texttt{B}}c7 20 \textit{\texttt{B}}e2 e5 21 \textit{\texttt{Q}}b5 \textit{\texttt{B}}b8 22 c4! = Fenollor Jordabrynell, Barbera del Valles 2011) 17 \textit{\texttt{B}}b1 g5 18 \textit{\texttt{B}}xe5 (18 \textit{\texttt{B}}g3 \textit{\texttt{W}}g7 \texttt{=}) 18...fxe5 19 \textit{\texttt{W}}xe5 \textit{\texttt{W}}xe5 20 \textit{\texttt{B}}xe5 \textit{\texttt{B}}f6 21 \textit{\texttt{Q}}f1 \textit{\texttt{D}}d7 \texttt{=} Ferrufino-Leitão, Mar del Plata 2009.

c) 11 \textit{\texttt{Q}}c2!? \textit{\texttt{B}}b6 12 a4 a6 13 h3!? (suggested by Finkel as an improvement over 13 g3?! \textit{\texttt{D}}d7 14 \textit{\texttt{B}}g2 \textit{\texttt{D}}d8 15 h3 e5 \texttt{=} Mamedyarov-Volokitin, Calvia Olympiad 2004) 13...\textit{\texttt{Q}}h5 14 \textit{\texttt{D}}d1 \textit{\texttt{Q}}f4 15 \textit{\texttt{W}}f1 (White must control the d3-square; 15 \textit{\texttt{W}}e1?? \textit{\texttt{B}}b4! 16 cxb4 \textit{\texttt{W}}xc2 \texttt{=} and ...\textit{\texttt{Q}}d3) 15...\textit{\texttt{D}}d7 leaves Black fine.

11 e5 \textit{\texttt{Q}}d7!

After this accurate move, White is virtually forced to sacrifice his bishop even though it leads to nothing clear.

11...\textit{\texttt{Q}}g4?! is worse in view of 12 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xh7+ \textit{\texttt{Q}}xh7 13 \textit{\texttt{Q}}g5+ \textit{\texttt{Q}}g8 14 \textit{\texttt{W}}xg4 \textit{\texttt{B}}xe5 15 \textit{\texttt{B}}h5 \textit{\texttt{W}}f5 (forced) 16 \textit{\texttt{Q}}d3! intending \textit{\texttt{Q}}h4 and then to push the black queen away from the h7-square. As Eingorn indicates, Black has nothing better than 16...\textit{\texttt{Q}}d8!? (White is better in the endgame after 16...\textit{\texttt{W}}g6?! 17 \textit{\texttt{W}}xg6 fxg6 18 \textit{\texttt{Q}}e3 \textit{\texttt{Q}}c7 19 \textit{\texttt{D}}d1, as in Ahues-Engels, Bad Nauheim 1935) 17 \textit{\texttt{Q}}e3 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xg5 18 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xg5 \textit{\texttt{Q}}e5 19 f4 \textit{\texttt{W}}g6 20 \textit{\texttt{W}}e2 \textit{\texttt{Q}}c6 21 \textit{\texttt{D}}d1 with a somewhat better position for White.

12 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xh7+

12 \textit{\texttt{Q}}e1? f6! 13 exf6 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xf6 \texttt{=} . Thanks to the weakness of f2, Black plays ...e5 with an obvious advantage.

12...\textit{\texttt{Q}}xh7 13 \textit{\texttt{Q}}g5+ \textit{\texttt{W}}g6

It appears that White has been making the running, but he has no especially convincing follow-up:

a) 14 \textit{\texttt{W}}g4? f5! is winning for Black if he continues accurately: 15 \textit{\texttt{W}}g3 f4! (not 15...\textit{\texttt{Q}}xe5? 16 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xe6+ \textit{\texttt{W}}xg3 17 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xf8+ \textit{\texttt{Q}}xf8 18 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xg3 \texttt{=} ) 16 \textit{\texttt{Q}}h4 \textit{\texttt{D}}xe5 \texttt{=} or 15 \textit{\texttt{W}}h4 \textit{\texttt{D}}xe5 16 \textit{\texttt{W}}h7+ \textit{\texttt{Q}}f6 \texttt{=} (16...\textit{\texttt{Q}}xg5?? allows 17 \textit{\texttt{Q}}e4++ \textit{\texttt{Q}}g4 18 h3!).

b) 14 \textit{\texttt{W}}d3++ f5 15 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xe6 \textit{\texttt{W}}xe5 16 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xf8+ \textit{\texttt{Q}}xf8 reaches a complex position with chances for both sides.

\textbf{A2)}

9 b4 \textit{\texttt{A}}d6 10 \textit{\texttt{A}}b2 (D)

Or:

a) Black gets easy equality after 10 b5 \textit{\texttt{Q}}a5 11 c4 dxc4 12 \textit{\texttt{D}}xc4 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xc4 13 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xc4 b6!? (this new move varies from Jirovsky-Vesselovsky, Czech Team Ch 2002/3) 14 \textit{\texttt{A}}b2 \textit{\texttt{A}}b7 15 \textit{\texttt{W}}e2 \textit{\texttt{W}}e7 16 \textit{\texttt{A}}ac1 \textit{\texttt{A}}ac8 17 \textit{\texttt{Q}}fd1 \textit{\texttt{Q}}fd8.

b) 10 a3 a5 11 b5 \textit{\texttt{Q}}e5 12 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xe5 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xe5 13 \textit{\texttt{B}}b2 \textit{\texttt{A}}d7 14 a4 \textit{\texttt{Q}}c8 15 \textit{\texttt{C}}c1 \textit{\texttt{W}}e7 16 \textit{\texttt{W}}e2 \textit{\texttt{Q}}fe8 is also even, Djerfitodorović, Serbian Team Ch, Vrnjačka Banja 2010.
10...\texttt{\textit{g}4}!? 

Though this move has been used just once, and in a game between un­titled players, it looks good. Black wants to place one of his knights on e5, disrupting White’s plans of playing either e4 or c4.

White gets some pressure in the case of both 10...\texttt{d}7?! 11 b5 \texttt{e}5 12 \texttt{xe}5 \texttt{xe}5 13 \texttt{f}3 \texttt{d}6 14 c4 ± and 10...\texttt{c}7?! 11 b5 \texttt{a}5 12 c4! \texttt{xc}4 13 \texttt{c}1 ± Z.Rahman-Ganguly, Kolkata 2009.

10...\texttt{e}7?! (Soln-Jelen, Slovenian Ch, Skofja Loka 2000) could be a good alternative.

11 h3

Inserting 11 a3 a5 does not change too much.

11...\texttt{ge}5 12 \texttt{e}2 \texttt{xf}3+ 13 \texttt{xf}3 \texttt{e}5!

Black seeks simplifications.

14 \texttt{d}4

14 \texttt{xe}5 \texttt{xe}5 15 \texttt{b}3 \texttt{d}7 16 \texttt{fd}1 (White can play to restrict the d7-bishop by 16 b5, but this pawn becomes a target for Black’s counterplay: 16...a6 17 a4 \texttt{c}7 =) 16...b5! (fixing White’s queenside pawns and preparing ...a5) 17 e4 \texttt{f}6! 18 exd5 exd5 19 \texttt{xd}5 \texttt{c}6 20 \texttt{d}2 a5 gives Black excellent piece activity.

14...\texttt{f}6 15 \texttt{d}2 \texttt{g}6 

The position is unclear.

\section*{B) Zukertort}

1 d4 \texttt{f}6 2 \texttt{f}3 c5 3 e3

This sequence can be used to reach a standard Colle System (with c3 coming soon), but White can also play systems where the pawn remains on c2 or moves to c4. Notable among these schemes is a set-up with b3 that is named after Johannes Zukertort, one of the leading players of the late 19th century. This set-up features b3, \texttt{b}2, e3, \texttt{d}3 and 0-0, and several move-orders are possible. The Zukertort set-up is most often seen when Black plays ...d5 and ...e6. The king’s knight can move to e5, spearheading an attacking push on the kingside that may also feature f4 and \texttt{bd}2-f3 and/or a rook-lift on the third rank. White can also seek a more boardwide battle by playing c4 and \texttt{c}3. However, the move 3 e3 is somewhat committal because White can no longer develop his queen’s bishop to f4 or g5, while playing the pawn to e4 would involve a loss of time. With that in mind, I propose that Black plays...

3...\texttt{g}6 (D)
with the Zukertort plan, even though it has a lot less bite against a set-up with ...g6.

**4 â€œd3**

Or:

a) For 4 c4, see Line B of Chapter 6.

b) 4 â€œe2 â€œg7 5 0-0 0-0 and now:

b1) 6 c4 transposes to Line B2 of Chapter 6.

b2) If White really wants to fianchetto his bishop, he can play 6 b3, although this is not too effective given that the black bishop is already on g7. After 6...d5 7 â€œb2 â€œe4!? (Black emphasizes his prevalence in the centre; he could also make this move after ...â€œc6) 8 â€œbd2 â€œc6 (â€œxe4 is not a real threat, so Black simply continues developing) 9 c4 â€œf5 Black has solved his opening problems; for example, 10 cxd5 â€œxd5 11 â€œc4 â€œd8 12 â€œxe4 â€œxe4 13 â€œc1 (or 13 â€œe5?! cxd4 14 exd4 e6 15 â€œg4 â€œd5 with nice play against the isolated d-pawn, Mahmud-Hodgson, Jakarta 1996) 13...â€œxf3 14 â€œxf3 cxd4 15 â€œxd4 â€œxd4 16 exd4 â€œd7 with equal play.

c) 4 b3 â€œg7 5 â€œb2 and now 5...cxd4 6 exd4 d5 7 â€œd3 â€œc6 8 0-0 0-0 transposes to the main line of this section. If Black delays this exchange, the dxc5 option becomes relevant: 5...0-0 6 dxc5!? The point is that after the natural 6...â€œa5+ White can choose the as yet unplayed 7 c3!?, intending to win the e7-pawn if Black takes on c5 immediately: 7...â€œxc5 8 â€œa3 â€œc7 9 â€œxe7 â€œe8 10 â€œd6 â€œb6. Black has some compensation but there is a strategic risk of being left with a weak isolated d-pawn.

d) 4 dxc5 deserves attention. I have seen many cases where both players ignored this capture even when it was advantageous for White. I therefore urge you to bear this idea in mind. Here Black can win the pawn back immediately by 4...â€œa5+ 5 â€œbd2 â€œg7, when White’s only active option is to advance with b4 followed by c4 and â€œb2; e.g., 6 a3 â€œxc5 7 b4 (7 c4 0-0 8 b4 â€œc7 9 â€œb2 comes to the same thing) 7...â€œc7 8 â€œb2 0-0 9 c4 (9 â€œe2 b6 10 0-0 â€œb7 11 c4 is the same) 9...b6 10 â€œe2 â€œb7 11 0-0 d6 (D), when Black has a flexible position with no problems:

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d1) 12 â€œb3 â€œbd7 13 â€œfc1 (for 13 â€œac1 see line ‘d3’) 13...â€œfc8 14 h3 a6 15 â€œc3 â€œd8 leads to an equal position, V.Kovačević-Cebalo, Croatian Ch 1992.

d2) 12 â€œd4 a6 13 â€œf3 â€œbd7 14 â€œc1 (14 â€œxb7 â€œxb7 15 â€œf3?! cannot be recommended because in the endgame Black more easily besieges the c4-pawn: 15...â€œxf3 16 â€œxf3 â€œfc8 17 â€œfc1 â€œc7 18 â€œf1 â€œac8 with better
chances for Black, Taimanov-Vagan­ian, Erevan 1994) 14...<e5 15 <xb7 <xb7 16 <e2 <ac8 17 e4 <ed7 18 <bd3 <e8 = Muse-Khalifman, Bundesliga 2000/1.
  d3) 12 <c1 <bd7 13 <b3 <ac8 14 <fd1 <b8 15 <a2 <a8 16 <a1 <c7 17 <e1 <fc8 = Abramović-Nesto­rović, Belgrade 2006.
  4...<g7 5 0-0 0-0
  Here White has a choice of set-ups.
  6 b3
  Continuing with Zukertort’s fian­chetto. While this is a popular choice among the system’s adherents, there are other options too:
  a) 6 c3 arranges the pawns in the ‘Colle’ style. Black is flexible, and can choose a variety of set-ups here. I like 6...<d6 7 <bd2 <c6 8 <e2 <c7 9 <e1 <d7 10 a4 <ac8 11 <f1 <fe8, as in Meduna-Antoniewski, Czech Team Ch 1997/8. All the black pieces are well-placed, while White still has some development problems. Black aims to play ...e5 with slightly higher chances.
  b) 6 <bd2 keeps White’s queen-side pawn-structure flexible. Then Black can seize the centre by 6...<d5 7 <c3 <c7 8 <e2 <bd7 (intending ...e5); after 8...<c6 Black needs to reckon with 9 <xc5) 9 e4 <xd4 10 <xd4 (Dau­men-Zhukova, Caleta 2011; not 10 e5? <h5 11 <xf3, attacking d4) 10...<e5!?, which should lead to simplifications and complete equality, but it is White who needs to be more accurate. 11 <xe5 <xe5 12 <xe5 <xe5 13 <f3 (13 <xd5?! <xe2 14 <xe2 <xd5 gives Black pressure against the b2-pawn) 13...<h5 14 e5 <e8 15 <f4 <g4 16 <d2! <e4 17 <xe4 <xe4 18 <g5 <xe5 19 <xe4 <ad8 20 <b4! <g7 with equality.
  6...<d5 7 <b2 <xd4! 8 <xd4 <c6 (D)

The knight eyes the b4-square.
  9 <e1
  This seems like White’s best op­tion, since now he is ready for both ...<b4 and ...<e4. Otherwise:
  a) 9 a3?! prevents ...<b4 but invites Black’s other active option: 9...<e4! 10 <e1 (after 10 <bd2, as in C.Flear­Hebden, Guernsey 1989, Black has a strong knight manoeuvre: 10...<c5! 11 <e2 <e6 12 c3 <f4 13 <xe4 <xe4 14 <xf3 13 <xf3 (13 gxf3? does not help due to 13...f5! 14 <xf3, winning back the d4-pawn and leaving White with a terrible pawn-structure) 13...<xd4 14 <xd4 <xd4 15 c3 <g7 and Black is better, Beltz­Hund, Women’s Bundesliga 1994/5.
  b) 9 <bd2?! (conversely, prevent­ing Black’s ...<e4 but ‘forgetting’ about ...<b4) 9...<b4 10 <e2 <f5 (note that this follow-up is possible
since Black has played ...g6 instead of ...
...e6) 11 \(\text{\texttt{\textbullet e1 \texttt{\textbullet c7}}}!\) (more useful than 11...
\(\text{\texttt{\textbullet c8}}\), as played in Rojas Keim-
Cruz, Mollet del Valles 2011, as the a8-rook can be developed to d8) and
Black's next plan is ...e5; e.g., 12 \(\text{\texttt{\textbullet c6 \textbullet d3 e6}}\) !
\(\text{\texttt{\textbullet f}}\) intending to take
on f5 with the e6-pawn to get an open
file and an outpost on e4. If White
does not take the bishop, ...\(\text{\texttt{\textbullet fe8}}\) and
...e5 is a plan (naturally Black should
not allow \(\text{\texttt{\textbullet xf5}}\) when he has to reply ...
gxf5 and then dxe5 would leave
weak pawns on d5, f5, f7 and h7).

9...
\(\text{\textbullet d4 \texttt{\textbullet f1 \textbullet f5 11 \textbullet a3 \textbullet e4 \texttt{\textbullet c3 \textbullet c6 13 \textbullet c2 e5! (D)}}\)

Now:

a) After 14 dxe5 \(\text{\textbullet xe5 15 \texttt{\textbullet fd4 \textbullet b6 16 \textbullet e3 \textbullet e6}}\) the active black
knights fully compensate for the iso-
lated d-pawn.

b) 14 c4 gives Black a choice be-
tween the quiet 14...
\(\text{\textbullet xd4 15 \texttt{\textbullet cxd4 \textbullet exd4 16 \textbullet xd4 \textbullet xc4 \textbullet e8}}\), with
a simple and equal position, and the
sharp 14...\(\text{\textbullet xc4 15 \texttt{\textbullet f2 \textbullet xf2 \textbullet g4 17 \texttt{\textbullet g5 \textbullet b6+ 18 \textbullet d4 \texttt{\textbullet c7}}\) with enough compensation for the
piece, Malaniuk-Todorov, Cappelle la

C) London

The London System is the name of an
opening scheme that begins with 1 d4
followed by an early \(\text{\texttt{\textbullet f4}}\). In the intro-
duction to Win with the London System,
Sverre Johnsen and Vlatko Kovačević
state: “Basically the London is a set
of solid lines where after 1 d4 White
quickly develops his dark-squared
bishop to f4 and normally bolsters his
centre with pawns on c3 and e3 rather
than expanding. Although it has the
potential for a quick kingside attack,
the white forces are generally flexible
enough to engage in a battle anywhere
on the board. Historically it developed
into a system mainly from three vari-
ations: 1 d4 d5 2 \(\text{\texttt{\textbullet f3 \texttt{\textbullet f6 3 \texttt{\textbullet f4}}}\), 1 d4
\(\text{\texttt{\textbullet f6 2 \texttt{\textbullet f3 e6 3 \texttt{\textbullet f4}}} and 1 d4 \texttt{\textbullet f6 2 \texttt{\textbullet f3 g6 3 \texttt{\textbullet f4}}}.” The London System,
like the Colle system, does not require
much knowledge of opening theory
and normally leads to solid positional
play. Its main advantage and difference
compared to the Colle System is that
White develops his bishop before play-
ing e3. But even this does not change
the character of the c3-d4-e3 arrange-
ment. In Russian-speaking countries,
players often call it a ‘pig system’ to
demonstrate that it’s as solid as a pig.
The name dates back to the London
tournament of 1922, where it was used
by Rubinstein, Maroczy and Alekhine.
Modern grandmaster adherents include
the Russian Boris Grachev. We shall
choose a solid set-up for Black that
can be used against most of White’s ‘London’ move-orders.

1 d4 \(\text{Qf6}\) 2 \(\text{Qf3}\)

White can also start with 2 \(\text{Qf4}\) but it does not affect our plans: 2...e6 3 \(\text{Qf3}\) c5 4 e3 \(\text{Qc6}\) 5 c3 d5 comes to the same thing. We can happily meet 2 c3 by 2...d5, with ...e6 and ...c5 to follow, or answering the Trompowsky-like 3 \(\text{Qg5}\) with 3...\(\text{Qe4}\).

2...c5 3 c3 e6 4 \(\text{Qf4}\) \(\text{Qc6}\) 5 e3 d5  

\(\text{D}\)

My opening philosophy says: if you are allowed to put pawns in the centre, just do it. At this point ...d5 is the most logical continuation. Black makes White’s e4 advance more complicated and less advantageous. Now Black’s plan is to exchange dark-squared bishops with ...\(\text{Qd6}\) and follow by ...e5.

6 \(\text{Qbd2}\)

White can also start with 6 \(\text{Qd3}\), but this slightly restricts his options – with the bishop on f1, there is always the possibility of playing \(\text{Qb5}\). 6...\(\text{Qd6}\) and then:

a) 7 \(\text{Qg3}\) 0-0 8 \(\text{Qbd2}\) transposes to the main line of this section.

b) The immediate attempt to establish control of the centre by 7 \(\text{Qe5}\)?! leads to trouble: 7...\(\text{Qc7}\) 8 \(\text{Qxc6}\) \(\text{Qxf4}\) 9 \(\text{Qxf4}\) bxc6 10 \(\text{Qxd4}\) cxd4 11 cxd4 \(\text{Qb6}\) 12 \(\text{Qc3}\) \(\text{Qa6}\) \(\text{T}\).

c) 7 \(\text{Qxd6}\) \(\text{Qxd6}\) 8 \(\text{Qbd2}\) 0-0 9 \(\text{Qb5}\) leads to a quiet and equal game. If White wanted to get this kind of position, it would make more sense to play 6 \(\text{Qbd2}\) and avoid wasting time on \(\text{Qd3}\) (see note 'b' to White’s 7th move below). 9...\(\text{Qd7}\) 10 a4 (10 0-0? loses a pawn to a typical tactic: 10...\(\text{Qxd4}\) ! 11 \(\text{Qxd4}\) cxd4 12 \(\text{Qxd7}\) dxe3 \(\text{T}\)) 10...a6 11 \(\text{Qxc6}\) \(\text{Qxc6}\) 12 \(\text{Qe5}\) \(\text{Qd7}\) =.

d) 7 \(\text{Qbd2}\) has an interesting strategic idea: White wants to place a pawn on f4 to stop ...e5. But there is also a disadvantage with this idea – the d4-pawn is less well defended. 7...\(\text{Qxf4}\) 8 \(\text{Qxf4}\) \(\text{Qb6}\) and now:

d1) 9 dxc5?! damages White’s pawn-structure even more: 9...\(\text{Qxb2}\) 10 \(\text{Qxc1}\) (10 0-0?! looks like a dubious sacrifice since White doesn’t get much for the pawn: 10...\(\text{Qxc3}\) 11 \(\text{Qb3}\) \(\text{Qd7}\) \(\text{T}\) Klaric-I.Novikov, Hungarian Team Ch 1993) 10...\(\text{Qxc1+}\) 11 \(\text{Qxc1}\) \(\text{Qd7}\) 12 \(\text{Qb1}\) \(\text{Qd8}\) ! 13 \(\text{Qe5}\) \(\text{Qc8}\) 14 \(\text{Qb3}\) 0-0 15 \(\text{Qd2}\) \(\text{Qc7}\) \(\text{T}\). Black is preferable due to White’s weak c-pawns.

d2) 9 \(\text{Qb3}\) is a standard reply to ...\(\text{Qb6}\) when White still has a pawn on e3, but here it allows White’s pawns to become isolated: 9...\(\text{Qxb3}\) (9...\(\text{Qxd4}\) 10 \(\text{Qxb6}\) axb6 11 \(\text{Qxd4}\) \(\text{Qxd4}\) 12 cxd4 \(\text{Qd7}\) 13 \(\text{Qe2}\), as in Rozentalis-Dreev, Tbilisi 1989, is also possible but I prefer White to
have the doubled b-pawns since the half-open file is unimportant due to the possibility of a3/...a6, whereas there are real chances to exploit the weak squares on the b-file) 10 axb3 cxd4 11 \( \text{\textit{\textsc{\textup{x}d4 \textit{\textsc{\textup{x}d4}}} \text{\textit{\textsc{\textup{x}d4}}} \text{\textit{\textsc{\textup{d7}}} \text{\textit{\textsc{\textup{e2}}} \text{\textit{\textsc{e7}}} with a preferable endgame for Black; the a-file will be blocked by ...a6, the knight will be directed to e8 and d6 to support ...\textit{\textsc{b5}} or placed on b5 itself. White’s pawn-structure is not good.}}}}} \) 6...\textit{\textsc{d6 (D)}}

Black will fight for the e5-square.

7 \textit{\textsc{g3}}

Or:

a) 7 \textit{\textsc{d3}} transposes to note ‘d’ to White’s 6th move.

b) 7 \textit{\textsc{xd6 \textit{\textsc{xd6}}} \textit{\textsc{b5}}} is a type of position we saw when analysing 6 \textit{\textsc{d3}}, but here White has saved a tempo. However, Black still solves his opening problems. 8...0-0 9 0-0 \textit{\textsc{d7}} 10 \textit{\textsc{xc6 \textit{\textsc{xc6}}} \textit{\textsc{e5}}} \textit{\textsc{d7}} 12 f4 f6 13 \textit{\textsc{xd7 \textit{\textsc{xd7}}} \textit{\textsc{xd7}}} led to equality in Schlippein-Timman, German Cup, Walldorf 1998.

c) 7 \textit{\textsc{e5}} again leads to nothing special for White. 7...\textit{\textsc{c7}} 8 \textit{\textsc{b5} 0-0 9 \textit{\textsc{xc6}}} (White wants to take total control of the dark squares but it can’t be achieved without Black’s assistance) 9...\textit{\textsc{bxc6}} 10 0-0 (10 \textit{\textsc{a4 \textit{\textsc{h5} \textit{\textsc{f5} \textit{\textsc{a6}} \textit{\textsc{e1 cxd4} 12 exd4 c5 with a fighting position where Black has good prospects due to his bishop-pair.}}}}}

7...0-0 8 \textit{\textsc{d3} \textit{\textsc{e7}}}

Black prepares ...e5.

9 \textit{\textsc{e5}}

Or:

a) The simple 9 0-0 lets Black proceed with his plan: 9...\textit{\textsc{ac3}} 10 hxc3 e5 11 dxec5 \textit{\textsc{exe5}} 12 \textit{\textsc{exe5 \textit{\textsc{ac5}}} \textit{\textsc{xe5}}} (this looks more harmonious than 14...\textit{\textsc{d7}} 15 \textit{\textsc{f4 \textit{\textsc{h5}}} \textit{\textsc{e2 \textit{\textsc{g6}}} \textit{\textsc{f3 \textit{\textsc{d8}} \textit{\textsc{e8}}} 18 \textit{\textsc{e4 dxe4}}, when the players agreed a draw in Z.Mamedyarova-Zhukova, European Women’s Team Ch., Plovdiv 2003, although White had slightly better chances due to her superior pawn-structure) 15 \textit{\textsc{f4 \textit{\textsc{ad8}}} \textit{\textsc{f3 \textit{\textsc{c8}}} =.}}}

a2) After 13 \textit{\textsc{e1 \textit{\textsc{d8}}} \textit{\textsc{a4}}, an interesting approach is 14...c4?! Black abandons the d4 square, but grabs the d3-square, which can prove more important. 15 \textit{\textsc{e2 \textit{\textsc{f5}}} \textit{\textsc{ad1 \textit{\textsc{c7}}} \textit{\textsc{b3}}} (White removes the annoying c4-pawn to free his game; after 17 \textit{\textsc{f3 \textit{\textsc{e4}}} 18 \textit{\textsc{d4 \textit{\textsc{g6}}} \textit{\textsc{f3}}} \textit{\textsc{f3}}} \textit{\textsc{g6}}} White faces the threat of ...\textit{\textsc{c5-d3}} and a queenside advance) 17...xb3 18 \textit{\textsc{xb3 \textit{\textsc{e6}}} 19 \textit{\textsc{a3 \textit{\textsc{d6}}} 20 \textit{\textsc{b1 \textit{\textsc{c6}}} 21 \textit{\textsc{e1}}} b6 \textit{\textsc{f3}}}
Appel-Sebag, Vlissingen 2007. Black has pressure on the c3-pawn.

b) 9 dxc5 ³xc5 10 e4!? and now:

b1) In Magem-de la Villa, Spanish Ch, Linares 1990 White seized a strong initiative after 10...dxe4?! 11 ³xe4 ³xe4 12 ³xe4 e5 13 0-0 ³g4 14 ³e1 ±. He has better coordination and pressure on the c6- and e5-squares.

b2) Black should keep the balance in the centre rather than giving it up for free. With the new move 10...³h5!? Black aims to exchange off the g3-bishop at the right moment. 11 ³e2 (White's best chance is to attack on the h-file, which is why Black does not rush to capture on g3; 11 ³h4 f6! 12 0-0 ³f4 13 ³c2 dxe4 14 ³xe4 ³d8 15 ³e1 ³b6 16 ³g3 ³g6 = followed by ...e5) 11...³e8 12 ³b3 ³b6 13 0-0-0 ³d7 preparing ...³ac8 with an unclear position.

9...³d7

Now:

C1: 10 ³df3!? 33

C2: 10 f4 34

C1)

10 ³df3!? (D)

This is an interesting idea. The point is to avoid exchanging the e5-knight until Black weakens his pawn-structure with ...f6.

10...c4!?

This is a new move I am proposing. Generally, it's not good to play ...c4 in this type of position since it makes the e4 advance easier for White. But considering the upcoming simplifications, Black can seemingly ignore this principle.

Here's what can happen if Black immediately pushes back the e5-knight: 10...f6 11 ³xc6 bxc6 12 ³xd6 ³xd6 and now 13 ³c2! is an important move that forces Black to make some weakening reply:

a) After 13...g6 White should avoid 14 ³xg6? f5!, when he is worse after 15 ³h5 ³f6 = or 15 dxc5 ³e7 (not 15...³xc5? 16 ³xh7+! ³xh7 17 ³g5+ ±) 16 ³h5 ³f6 =. However, he should just castle: 14 0-0!? e5 15 e4!, opening the centre in a way that promises access to the black king.

b) 13...f5 weakens the e5-square and makes Black's task more complicated: 14 0-0 a5 15 ³fd1 c4 16 ³e2 ³a6 17 b3! ³b6 18 ³e5 cxb3 19 axb3 ³xe2 20 ³xe2 ³fb8 21 ³c2 with a slight advantage for White, Elianov-Sebag, French Team Ch, Guingamp 2010.

11 ³c2

11 ³e2 leaves the b1-h7 diagonal, so Black changes plan and simply takes on e5: 11...³xe5 12 dxe5 ³c7 13 0-0 ³c5 with a good position.

11...f6 12 ³xc6
ATTACK WITH BLACK

12 \text{cxd7} also looks OK for Black: 12...\text{cxd7} 13 0-0 \text{\textit{hsxg3}} 14 \text{hxg3 b5} 15 \text{e4 b4} 16 \text{exd5 exd5} 17 \text{\textit{aaxe1}} \text{\textit{wxf7}} =.

12...\text{bxc6} 13 \text{\textit{axd6}} \text{\textit{wxd6}}

Now we can see why we played ...\text{c4} first. With the bishop on c2, the attack on h7 is not so useful: 14 \text{\textit{lb1}} f5 15 0-0 a5 =. After 14 0-0 a5 15 e4 \text{\textit{lb7}} 16 \text{\textit{aale1}} \text{flif7} =.

12...\text{\textit{bxc6}} 13 \text{\textit{axd6}} \text{\textit{wxd6}}

Now we can see why we played ...\text{c4} first. With the bishop on c2, the attack on h7 is not so useful: 14 \text{\textit{lb1}} f5 15 0-0 a5 =. After 14 0-0 a5 15 e4 \text{\textit{lb7}} 16 \text{\textit{aale1}} \text{flif7} =.

12...\text{\textit{bxc6}} 12 0-0 (D)

16 \text{e4}

The most critical continuation.

16...\text{cxd4} 17 \text{cxd4} \text{\textit{ab8}}

Black is fine; for example, 18 dxe5 \text{\textit{axe5}} 19 \text{\textit{axe5}} \text{\textit{wxe5}} 20 \text{\textit{df3}} \text{\textit{wc7}} 21 \text{exd5} cxd5 22 \text{\textit{aace1}} \text{\textit{wxb6}}+ 23 \text{\textit{af2}} \text{\textit{la6}} with a drawish endgame.

D) Torre

1 d4 \text{\textit{lb6}} 2 \text{\textit{df3}} c5 3 c3 e6 4 \text{\textit{g5}}

With this move, White opts for a form of the Torre Attack (the most standard sequence is 1 d4 \text{\textit{lb6}} 2 \text{\textit{df3}} e6 3 \text{\textit{g5}}, when 3...c5 4 c3 transposes to our position). It’s named after the famous Mexican master Carlos Torre Repetto. Compared to the London System, the key difference is that White places his bishop on g5, exerting a little more pressure on Black, but the general set-up is quite similar: c3, e3, \text{\textit{bd2}}, \text{\textit{d3}}, 0-0, etc. Against accurate play, such modest development is unlikely to produce any advantage in the opening.

4...d5

I prefer this move-order over 4...h6, since then besides 5 \text{\textit{dh4}} White can take on f6 followed by e4.

5 e3 h6 6 \text{\textit{dh4}}

Now there is no reason for White to exchange on f6.

6...\text{\textit{bd7}} 7 \text{\textit{bd2}} \text{\textit{d6}} 8 \text{\textit{d3}} 0-0

9 0-0 (D)

9...b6

This quiet-looking but actually rather ambitious move has recently been tried out in high-level chess. Black wants to play ...\text{\textit{b7}}, when he will have a stable and pleasant position, since if White then plays e4, it
will merely lead to exchanges that are by no means unfavourable for Black. So if White is going to create active play, or prove an opening advantage, he needs to take forcing measures right now.

In case of the natural 9...e5, Black must be prepared to meet the aggressive 10 dxe5 ⧖xe5 11 ⧖xe5 ⧖xe5 12 f4! Then:

a) 12... //@d6?! 13 e4 c4 14 ⧖e2 ⧔b6+ 15 ⧖f2 ⧖c5 16 e5 ⦃e4 (the alternative 16...⧖xf2+ is similar: 17 ⧔xf2 ⦃e4 18 ⦃xe4 dxe4 19 ⧔d4 ⧖xd4 20 cxd4 ⦃d8 21 ⦃d1 ⦃e6 22 f5 ⦃d5 23 ⦃f1! ± intending ⦃c2 and ⦃f2-e3) 17 ⦃xe4 dxe4 18 ⦃xc5 ⧔xc5+ 19 ⧔d4 ⧔xd4+ 20 cxd4 with a slightly better endgame for White, Morozevich-Alekseev, Moscow 2008.

b) The computer offers the cold-blooded 12...⦃c7 13 e4 g5 14 fxg5 ⦃g4 with an ‘equal’ evaluation. You may wish to investigate this further, but of course you would need to prepare it very carefully, since in such a position even the most natural move can be a fatal mistake.

10 e4
Otherwise Black plays ...⦃b7, when White’s e4 advance will evidently be less dangerous.

10...cxd4 11 cxd4
White has nothing special after 11 ⦃xf6 ⦔xf6 (11...⦃xf6? 12 e5 ±) 12 cxd4 dxe4 13 ⦃xe4 ⦔e7 =.

11...dxe4 12 ⦃xe4
Or 12 ⦃xe4 ⦔e7 =.

12...⦃b8
Black can be happy from a positional viewpoint, so from now on he can focus on simplification. White in turn tries to complicate matters.

13 ⦃c6
Another attractive-looking continuation is 13 ⦔e2 but here Black also copes with his problems: 13...⦃b7 14 ⦃xb7 ⦔xb7 15 ⦃e4 (15 ⦃c4 ⦃f4! puts the bishop on a very good square, where it controls c1; then 16 ⦃fe5 ⦔c7 is equal) 15...⦔e7 16 ⦃ac1 ⦃d5 (Black exchanges more and more pieces) and now 17 ⦃g3 ⦔f6 18 ⦔a6 ⦔d7 19 ⦃xf6+ ⦃xf6 =, 17 ⦔xe7 ⦔xe7 18 ⦃e5 ⦃xe5 19 dxe5 ⦔c7 and 17 ⦃d6 ⦔c7 18 ⦃g3 ⦃xc1 19 ⦃xc1 ⦃xd6 20 ⦃xd6 ⦔e8 21 ⦔a6 ⦔f6 22 ⦃e5 ⦔d7 all lead to equal play.

13...⦃b7 14 ⦃c1 (D)
14...⦃f4?!
Again the bishop is good on f4 since it pins the d2-knight and prepares ...⦃xc6 and ...⦃c8, which had been impossible due to ⦃xd6.

I am offering this new move as an improvement over 14...b5?!, which allows White to achieve his desired complications: 15 d5! exd5 16 ⦃xd7 ⦔xd7 17 ⦃xf6 gxf6 18 ⦃d4 with
quite an unpleasant position for Black, Andreikin-Kovchan, Moscow 2012.  
15 \( \text{Bg3} \)

This is the safest move for White. Other continuations tend to rebound on him:

a) 15 g3?! forces an exchange of Black’s annoying bishop but leaves White’s h4-bishop in a precarious situation. 15...\( \text{bxc6} \) 16 \( \text{Bxc6} \) \( \text{Bxd2} \) 17 \( \text{Bxd2} \) \( \text{bxc8} \) 18 \( \text{Bxc8} \) (18 \( \text{Bfc1} \)?! \( \text{Bxc6} \) 19 \( \text{Bxc6} \) \( \text{Bxa8} \) 20 \( \text{Bc1} \) \( \text{Bb8} \) 21 \( \text{Bc3} \) \( \text{Bd5} \) \( \text{Bf6} \) 18...\( \text{Bxc8} \) 19 \( \text{Bxf6} \) \( \text{Bxf6} \) leaves Black more comfortable.

b) 15 d5?! does not work so well now because Black’s pieces are more active than they were in Andreikin-Kovchan. 15...\( \text{exd5} \) 16 \( \text{Bxd7} \) \( \text{Bxd7} \) 17 \( \text{Bxf6} \) \( \text{gxf6} \) 18 g3 \( \text{Bxe5} \) (not allowing White to obtain the d4-square for free) 19 \( \text{Bxe5} \) \( \text{fxe5} \) 20 \( \text{Bh5} \) \( \text{Bd6} \) 21 \( \text{Bf3} \) \( \text{Be8} \) 22 \( \text{Bf1} \) e4 23 \( \text{Bd4} \) \( \text{Bg6} \) \( \text{Bf6} \). White has taken one blockade square but lost ground in all other parts of the board.

c) 15 \( \text{Bxa4} \)?! is strongly met by 15...\( \text{b5} \), gaining an important tempo for Black’s development. Then:

   c1) 16 \( \text{Bxa7} \) \( \text{Bxc6} \) 17 \( \text{Bxc6} \) \( \text{Bd8} \) and here:

   c11) 18 \( \text{Bb7} \) loses to 18...\( \text{Bxa5} \)!

   (intending ...\( \text{Bxc6} \) 19 \( \text{Bb3} \) (19 \( \text{Bxf6} \) \( \text{Bxa7} \) 20 \( \text{Bb3} \) \( \text{Bd8} \) -- is the same) 19...\( \text{Bxa4} \)!

   (defending \( \text{b5} \)) 20 \( \text{Bxf6} \) \( \text{Bxa7} \), trapping the queen. It can only be saved at the cost of a piece: 21 \( \text{Bxc5} \) \( \text{Bxc5} \) 22 \( \text{Bxb7} \) 23 \( \text{Bxa4} \) \( \text{Bxf6} \) 24 \( \text{Bxb5} \) \( \text{Bxa2} \) --.

   c12) 18 \( \text{Bxf6} \) \( \text{Bxf6} \) (18...\( \text{gxf6} \)? 19 \( \text{Bb7} \) leaves the d7-knight hanging; e.g., 19...\( \text{Bxa5} \) 20 \( \text{Bc3} \) 19 \( \text{Bc5} \) \( \text{Bxa2} \) \( \text{Bf6} \).

   c2) 16 \( \text{Bxb5} \) \( \text{Bxc6} \) 17 \( \text{Bxc6} \) \( \text{Bxd2} \) 18 \( \text{Bxd2} \) \( \text{Bxb2} \) 19 \( \text{Bc4} \) (unexpectedly Black wins a pawn since after 19 \( \text{Bc2} \), the d4-pawn drops: 19...\( \text{Bxb8} \) 20 \( \text{Bc3} \) \( \text{Bxc2} \) 21 \( \text{Bxc2} \) \( \text{Bxf4} \) \( \text{Bf6} \) 19...\( \text{Bxa2} \) 20 \( \text{Bb5} \) a5! \( \text{Bh6} \) and White needs to fight for a draw.

   c3) 16 \( \text{Bb4} \) \( \text{Bb6} \) 17 \( \text{Bxb7} \) \( \text{Bxb7} \) \( \text{Bf6} \) followed by ...\( \text{Bd5} \).

15...\( \text{Bxe3} \) 16 \( \text{Bxe3} \) \( \text{Bxc6} \) 17 \( \text{Bc8} \)

Black has solved his opening problems; for example, 18 \( \text{Bxa4} \) \( \text{Bxc6} \) 19 \( \text{Bxc6} \) \( \text{Bb8} \) 20 \( \text{Bb7} \) \( \text{Bd7} \) 21 \( \text{Bxd7} \) \( \text{Bxd7} \) 22 \( \text{Bc1} \) \( \text{Bd5} \) =. White has captured the only open file but Black has safely blockaded the d4-pawn and taken control of the only dangerous square on the c-file – c7. The position is equal.
3 Anti-Benoni 4 \( \text{\text{c3}} \)

1 d4 \( \text{\text{f6}} \) 2 \( \text{\text{f3}} \) c5 3 d5 (D)

White gains ground in the centre, and shows that he is in an uncompromising mood.

3...e6

This move is my recommendation for Black. After White’s main reply, 4 c4, our repertoire choice is to reach the Blumenfeld Gambit by playing 4...b5. In this chapter we look at White’s alternative options, most notably 4 \( \text{\text{c3}} \).

Many Benko players choose 3...g6 or 3...b5, hoping to transpose to a Benko. In practice, White rarely cooperates, and some of his alternatives are by no means easy to face. Also, some of our repertoire choices in the Benko are based on an early ...e6 rather than ...g6, so opting for 3...g6 would require additional preparation. A few specific thoughts on these possibilities:

a) 3...g6 and now:
   a1) 4 c4 b5 5 cxb5 takes us outside our Benko repertoire if White meets 5...a6 with 6 b6 or 6 e3.
   a2) I don’t like 4 \( \text{\text{c3}} \) \( \text{\text{g7}} \) 5 e4 d6 (a form of Schmid Benoni) for Black, since the positions that arise are of a completely different character from the Benko. Black’s position is cramped and if there is a good technical player on the white side, it is usually very hard to get a comfortable game. There is little scope for activity for Black unless White is particularly careless. Of course, it’s possible for Black to play this way, but I think when you examine the lines after 3...e6 you will agree that they offer Black far better winning chances.

b) 3...b5 transposes to a Benko Declined if White replies 4 c4. But 4 \( \text{\text{g5}} \) is a popular alternative that leads to a play of a different nature. Then you may wish to investigate 4...\( \text{\text{b6}} \), which leads to interesting irregular positions.

4 \( \text{\text{c3}} \)

This is White’s last chance to avoid serious complications. White seeks to control the d5-square with his pieces and hopes to establish this as an outpost that gives him a long-lasting edge. Other moves:
a) 4 c4 is the main move, when our choice is 4...b5, the Blumenfeld Gambit. See the next two chapters.

b) 4 dxe6 fxe6 5 c4 is a rare sequence in practice, as it allows Black easy play in a variety of ways. If you are really keen on the Blumenfeld, then you can choose 5...b5, transposing to Line C of Chapter 4, but there are safe and very satisfactory alternatives such as 5...d5, while 5...e7 and 5...c6, with ...d5 often coming soon, have achieved solid plus scores for Black.

c) Black has several good answers to 4 g5, but I recommend 4...b6!, which immediately attacks two pawns - b2 and d5. Black is OK; e.g., 5 dxe6 dxe6 6 c1 c6 7 e3 e7 8 bd2 0-0 9 c4 w d8 =.

4...exd5
It doesn’t make any real difference if Black takes with pawn or knight, as they both lead to the same position: 4...d5 5 x d5 exd5 6 x d5. If you were hoping for coverage of the Pseudo-Blumenfeld, 4...b5?!, then I'm sorry, but I consider the text-move to be objectively better.

5 x d5 x d5 6 x d5 (D)
White’s queen has taken up an influential but exposed central post. If White can establish firm control of e4 and d5, then Black will come under strong pressure. His main mission is therefore to push the queen back in the quickest possible way, which is ...c6, ...d6 and ...e6.

6...c6!
This move appears to invite an immediate attack on the f7-square, but careful analysis shows that there is no real problem.

In case of 6...e7 Black needs to be ready to face 7 f4 c6 8 0-0 0-0 9 d6!? (a new move), which leaves Black rather cramped. I don’t enjoy such positions, and won’t recommend them to my readers.

Now:
A: 7 g5 39
B: 7 e4 39

Or:

a) Now White does not have time to blockade the d7-pawn with 7 f4 because of 7...d6 (Rakhmangulov-Efimenko, Ukrainian Team Ch, Alushta 2002) 8 e3 e6 9 d2 e7 10 d1 0-0 with an equal position because the pawn is indirectly defended: 11 x d6? x d6 12 x d6 a5+! 13 x d2 xa2 =.

b) 7 d2 d6! (again the priority is to push the white queen back; the next move is ...e6 with a comfortable position; Black can also play 7...e7 8 e4 0-0 9 c4 d6, which proved unclear in P.H.Nielsen-Jobava, European Team Ch, Khersonissos 2007, but I don’t see
any reason to allow White to arrange his pieces in this way) 8  desteği e7 9 e4 h6 10 @g5! (this is the only way for White to keep the balance; 10 ɗf3? g6 11 w’d3 $f5! T costs him the e4-pawn) 10...$d7 11 ɗf3 (Fodor-Paschall, Paks 2005) 11...a6 12 g2 $d3 g5! (intending ...$g4 or ...$g7) 14 ɗc3 $g8 15 0-0-0 0-0-0 = followed by ...$g7.

c) 7 c3 is a prophylactic move – White stops ...@b4. Then 7...d6 8 ɗg5 w’e7 $f4(D) was played in Rombaldoni-Vezzosi, Arvier 2009.

Here I would like to offer a new move, 9...$f5!. This cuts off the white queen from defending the g5-knight and prevents $e4. The idea is simple: ...h6 and ...$e6 (the immediate 9...h6? allows 10 ɗe4 ±). After 10 0-0-0 h6 11 ɗf3 $e6 12 w’xd6 w’xd6 13 $xd6 $xa2 = Black is OK.

8...ɗxe5 9 wxe5+ w’e6 10 $c7!

White threatens mate in one. The endgame after 10 wxe6+ dxe6 11 g3 $f6 12 $e3 $d7 13 $g2 0-0-0 14 0-0-0 $e7 is approximately equal.

10...$b6!?

This is a new move (varying from Berkes-Wojtaszek, Balatonlelle 2002). Black’s safest path is to move towards an endgame.

11 w’xb6

11 w’e5+ w’e6 leads to a repetition.

11...axb6 12 e4 $e7 13 $f4

It’s useful for White to keep the dark-squared bishops on the board since his bishop is going to be more active than Black’s. After 13 $xe7?! $xe7 14 a4 $d6 15 b3 $e6 intending ...$c4 Black is comfortably equal.

13...$d6

White retains some pressure in the endgame, but Black has sufficient resources to hold the balance, and White can easily get in trouble if he is careless. Here are some sample lines: 14 a3 $d7 15 0-0-0 0-0-0, and now:

a) 16 $xd6? $g4 17 f3 $xd6 18 $e5 (18 fxg4?? $f4+ 19 $b1 $xd1+ --) 18...$xe5 19 $xd8+ $xd8 20 fxg4 $f4+ 21 $b1 $d1+ 22 $a2 $c7 ±.

b) 16 $c4 $e6 17 $d5 $c7 18 $d3 $he8 19 $hd1 $f6 is rather unclear. White may enjoy slightly better chances, but Black’s position is very solid.

B)

7 e4 $d6

As we know, it’s important to prepare a quick ...$e6 to prevent White
from establishing control over the a2-g8 diagonal.

8 \( \texttt{\text{c}g5} \)

After 8 \( \texttt{\text{c}c4} \ \text{\text{e}6} \) 9 \( \texttt{\text{d}3} \ \texttt{\text{b}4} \) 10 \( \texttt{\text{e}2} \ \texttt{\text{x}c4} \) 11 \( \texttt{\text{xc}4} \) d5! Black exchanges his backward pawn. 12 exd5 \( \texttt{\text{xd}5} \) and here:

a) 13 \( \texttt{\text{xd}5} \ \texttt{\text{xd}5} \) 14 \( \texttt{\text{d}2} \) (Martinez Rodriguez-Veingold, Alicante 2000) 14...f6! (an important restricting move) 15 0-0-0 0-0-0 is equal. Of course, it would be much better for Black if the pawn were back on c7, but thanks to the good location of the black knight, his pawn-structure should not be a big problem.

b) Black should not be scared of the check 13 \( \texttt{\text{e}2} \) (D).

b1) 13...\( \texttt{\text{e}6} \)?! 14 \( \texttt{\text{xe}6} \) fxe6 creates a weakness on e6 that White will exploit later. 15 \( \texttt{\text{d}1} \) and now:

b11) 15...\( \texttt{\text{d}8} \) 16 \( \texttt{\text{d}2} \ \texttt{\text{e}7} \) 17 \( \texttt{\text{e}1} \ \texttt{\text{d}6} \) 18 a3 \( \texttt{\text{c}6} \) 19 \( \texttt{\text{e}4} \ \texttt{\text{f}6} \) 20 c3 \( \texttt{\text{f}7} \) 21 \( \texttt{\text{c}2} \ \texttt{\text{d}8} \) 22 \( \texttt{\text{ae}1} \) ± Epishin-Lubeke, Deizisau 2011.

b12) 15...0-0-0+ doesn’t change matters much. 16 \( \texttt{\text{d}2} \ \texttt{\text{e}7} \) 17 \( \texttt{\text{e}1} \)

b2) I prefer the untried 13...\( \texttt{\text{e}7} \).

b21) After 14 0-0, 14...\( \texttt{\text{e}6} \) now works well because White has problems with the c2-pawn. 15 \( \texttt{\text{xe}6} \) fxe6 16 c3 \( \texttt{\text{d}3} \) is equal.

b22) 14 \( \texttt{\text{g}5} \) f6 15 a3 (retreating the bishop is worse: 15 \( \texttt{\text{f}4} \) \( \texttt{\text{f}5} \) \( \texttt{\text{f}4} \) or 15 \( \texttt{\text{h}4} \)?! 0-0-0 16 0-0 {16 a3? \( \texttt{\text{he}8} \) 17 0-0 \( \texttt{\text{d}6} \) \( \texttt{\text{f}4} \) or 16...\( \texttt{\text{d}6} \) \( \texttt{\text{e}8} \) and ...\( \texttt{\text{he}8} \) 15...\( \texttt{\text{f}5} \) 16 axb4 g4 17 \( \texttt{\text{e}5} \) 0-0 18 0-0 cxb4 19 \( \texttt{\text{xe}4} \) \( \texttt{\text{c}5} \) 0). Black has solved his problems.

8...\( \texttt{\text{e}7} \) (D)

9 \( \texttt{\text{c}4} \)

Another interesting idea for White is to start with 9 \( \texttt{\text{b}5} \), forcing 9...\( \texttt{\text{d}7} \), and then drop the bishop back:

a) After 10 \( \texttt{\text{f}4} \)?! h6 11 \( \texttt{\text{f}3} \) a6 12 \( \texttt{\text{e}2} \), as in McDonald-Kaufman, Budapest 2006, Black can win material by 12...\( \texttt{\text{b}4} \)! 13 \( \texttt{\text{d}2} \) \( \texttt{\text{e}4} \), when I don’t see full compensation for White; e.g., 14 0-0-0 (14 0-0 \( \texttt{\text{xc}2} \) 15 ...\( \texttt{\text{e}3} \)
\( \text{e6 16 } \text{ad1 } \text{d8 } \pm ) 14...\text{xa2+ 15 } \text{b1 } \text{e6 16 } \text{he1 0-0-0! } \mp \text{ followed by ...a4.} \\
\text{b) 10 } \text{c4!? (this untried move looks more critical to me) 10...d8 (Black retreats for the time being, but plans to return soon; the point of White inserting b5 is revealed by 10...f6? 11 f7 b4 12 xxb7 {with the bishop on c8, this capture was impossible!}) 12 c6 13 xxe7+ xxe7 14 f4! xc2+ 15 d2 xa1 16 xh8 } \pm 11 0-0 h6 12 f3 c6 13 f4 e6 14 xd3 xc4 15 xc4 e6 16 b5 0-0-0 with an unclear position. \\
9...f6! (D) \\
\text{Black pushes White’s pieces back.} \\
\text{10 f7+} \\
\text{The over-ambitious 10 e6?? can be punished by 10...b4 11 b5+ f7 and Black simply takes the knight after 12 g5++ g6 13 h4 h5 -- or 12 d8++ g6 13 h4! h5 -- (not 13...xd5?? 14 h5#, with a spectacular checkmate). White must also avoid 10 f7? b4 11 b5+ d7 12 xxb7} \\
\text{xb5 13 xd6+ xd6 14 xb5+ f7 } \mp . \\
\text{10...d7!} \\
\text{Black gives up his castling rights. If White could keep the queens on, this would be a real problem, but since the queens are going to be exchanged, the black king can feel quite secure.} \\
\text{11 xe7+} \\
11 e6+?! c7 12 xc8 fg5 13 xxe7+ xe7 14 e6 d4 15 b3 f6 16 d1 xb3 17 axb3 he8 18 e1 a6 } \mp \text{ Hebden-Plaskett, British League (4NCL) 1998/9. Next Black will double on the e-file.} \\
\text{11 xe7 12 e6} \\
\text{Black has no problems after 12 f3 (S.Muhammad-Plaskett, Internet blitz 2000) 12...f5! 13 exf5 c7 =.} \\
\text{12...b4! (D)}
We have now reached the basic position of the Blumenfeld Gambit. It's named after the Russian master Benjamin Blumenfeld. The greatest adherent of the gambit in its early years was Rudolf Spielmann (author of the famous book *The Art of Sacrifice in Chess*), who used it successfully in numerous games. Later on, Lev Alburt (who has played almost all the variations featured in this book) scored some high-profile victories with the gambit that considerably increased its popularity. Nowadays you can find the Blumenfeld Gambit in games by Ehsan Ghaem Maghami, Yuri Krivoruchko, Liviu Dieter Nisipeanu, Francisco Vallejo Pons, Andrei Volokitin and other strong grandmasters. It's notable that scrutiny with modern computer engines has, it seems, suggested that this speculative-looking gambit has a good deal more substance than tended to be thought for much of its earlier history.

In common with the Benko Gambit, Black sacrifices a pawn by ...b5. But in the Blumenfeld it is more common for White to refuse this gift and focus on securing his central foothold. Also, the aims of Black's pawn sacrifice are different. In the Benko, Black seeks play on the half-open a- and b-files using the power of the g7-bishop; in the Blumenfeld Gambit, if White accepts the gambit pawn, Black plays in the centre, setting up a powerful pawn-centre. Thus, the inclusion of the moves ♖f3 and ...e6 (compared with the Benko Gambit) changes a lot; most significantly, the fact that Black has played ...e6 means that there is far more tension in the centre, and this can work for or against either side, depending on the specific features of each position.

The next chapter deals with the main line, 5 ♖g5, which aims to exert positional pressure on Black. In this chapter we shall analyse all the rare moves White can play on move 5, together with lines where he accepts the
gambit pawn. This chapter therefore divides into the following sections:

A: 5 a4 43
B: 5 c3 44
C: 5 dxe6 47

Other moves can be dealt with more briefly:

a) The odd-looking 5 cxb5 can be met by the natural 5...cxd5 or 5...exd5 6 g5, transposing to the note to White’s 6th move in Chapter 5.

b) 5 c2?! does not look like a correct pawn sacrifice. 5...bxc4 6 e4 exd5 (D) and then:

b1) 7 e5?! g8 8 c3 b7 9 g5 (Braga-Ward, London 1987) 9...b6 †. White’s main target here is the d5-pawn, so Black should think first of it. For now, Black has two defensive ideas: to push back the g5-bishop by ...h6 and ...g5 and to play ...e7 or ...a6-b4. Two pawns look like too large a sacrifice for White’s relatively modest compensation.

b2) 7 exd5 cxd5 8 xc4 e7+!? (this unpleasant check disrupts White’s plans) 9 d1 (or 9 e2 b4 10 d1 a6 11 e3 d6 †) 9...c7! 10 e1 e6 †. The knight on e6 looks like a great defensive piece; Black is still a pawn up and White needs to prove he has sufficient compensation.

c) 5 e4 cxe4 and now:

c1) 6 d3 f6 7 dxe6 fxe6 transposes to line ‘c3’.

c2) In the case of 6 cxb5 b7 7 dxe6 fxe6 8 d Black needs to be precise. 8...e7!? allows White an advantage after 9 c2 f6 10 g5! †, so 8...a6! is best. Now 9 c2 f6 10 g5 can be met by 10...axb5 11 xh7 (11 xh7? c7! †) 11...c7 with a complicated and unclear position.

c3) 6 dxe6 fxe6 7 d3 f6 and then:

c31) The aggressive 8 g5 bxc4 9 xh7 (D.Paulsen-Krause, 2nd Bundesliga 2001/2; 9 x4? c6 †) can be met with 9...c7! (a new move) 10 g6+ e7 11 f3 c6 12 0-0 b7, which is somewhat unclear but Black is too well centralized for him to be worse.

A)

5 a4

This is a reasonable choice if White simply wants to reach an interesting position with little theory.

5...bxc4 6 c3 exd5 7 cxd5 (D)
This is a new move that I am proposing. Black always used to play 7...b7 but after 8 e4 cxd5 9 exd5 it’s not clear to me what the bishop is doing on b7. In Pham Minh-L. Vajda, Budapest 2002 Black won the d5-pawn by 9...e7 10 e2 e4 11 0-0 cxd5 12 c2 e7 but I don’t like the position that appears after 13 e1!?, when 13...0-0? is no good because of 14 xc4 d6 15 e5! ± with multiple threats. That’s why I propose another natural developing move that also allows Black to hold on to the c4-pawn (temporarily, but usefully).

8 e4 a6 9 c3!

White creates the threat of e5. The slow 9 e2?! e7 10 0-0 0-0 ?? leaves Black better.

9...b8!

A nice square for the queen – it stops White’s e5 advance and controls important squares on the b-file. Also, on c7 it could be attacked by c5.

Black is OK here; for example, 10 b3! (the most critical; otherwise Black plays ...e7 and ...0-0) 10...xb3! 11 xb3 cxb3 12 xa6 xb4 (a double attack on a6 and c2) 13 e5 g8 14 b1 xa6 15 xb3 (White is a pawn down, but Black needs to hurry with his kingside development) 15...c4 16 b5 b4 17 d2 c8! (supporting the c4-pawn) 18 d5 (18 e4?! c3 19 e3 c4! 20 d4 e7 ?? and ...0-0) 18...xd2+ 19 xd2 e7 20 e4 xd5 21 d6+ e7 22 xc8+ xc8 23 xd5 c3 and, with his strong passed pawn, Black is fine.

Although this move strikes me as ugly, some care is needed, so we should examine at least one way for Black to get a comfortable position. In some of the practical examples, White has failed to make the most of his chances, so we need to go well beyond ‘preparation by database’ here!

5 a4

Here the knight can easily find itself out of play. White’s main active idea is to attack the b4-pawn by playing a3, and in order to reply correctly, Black needs to respect the possibilities that the queenside pawn-tension will introduce.

Retreating by 6 bl ?? does not appear to have much logic, although proving an advantage for Black is not quite as simple as one might expect, as the knight can quickly be ‘recycled’ if a promising post opens up:

a) 6...exd5?! is not too good since it gives the white knight the important c4-square, and White can make good use of this; e.g., 7 cxd5 b7 8 g5 h6
Black has the simple plan of ...\(\text{c}7\), ...0-0, ...\(\text{b}d7\), etc. However, White is able to seize the initiative by 9 e4! (improving over 9 \(\text{g}5\)!, as played in Kekki-Postny, Caleta 2005), a move that my editor Graham Burgess brought to my attention. Now none of the moves we analysed helped us to find a safe position for Black:

a) 9...\(\text{xe}4\)! is met by 10 \(\text{b}5\)+. Then 10...\(\text{d}7\)?! 11 \(\text{e}2\) f5 (11...\(\text{e}7\) 12 \(\text{b}6\) \(\text{b}8\) 13 \(\text{c}x\text{c}\) \(\text{c}8\) 14 \(\text{a}4\) and \(\text{axb}4\) fails to 15 \(\text{d}7\)++-) 12 \(\text{g}5\) gives White a decisive attack, while 10...\(\text{d}7\) 11 \(\text{d}7\) \(\text{d}7\) 12 \(\text{e}2\) \(\text{e}7\) (or 12...f5 13 \(\text{g}5\) \(\text{e}7\) 14 \(\text{e}6\) with excellent compensation) 13 \(\text{0-0}\) ± gives White more than enough compensation due to Black's uncastled king.

b) 9...g6 does not help to evacuate the king: 10 e5! dxe5 11 \(\text{xe}5\) and then:

b1) 11...\(\text{g}7\)? 12 \(\text{b}5\)+ \(\text{d}7\) (or 12...\(\text{b}d7\) 13 \(\text{c}6\) \(\text{c}7\) 14 \(\text{d}6\) \(\text{b}7\) 15 \(\text{e}2\)+ \(\text{f}8\) 16 \(\text{e}7\)+ \(\text{g}8\) 17 \(\text{d}8\)+ \(\text{f}8\) 18 \(\text{h}6\) ++) 13 \(\text{b}d7\) \(\text{b}x\text{d}7\) 14 \(\text{e}2\)+ \(\text{f}8\) (14...\(\text{e}7\) 15 \(\text{x}c5\) --) 15 0-0 ++-

b2) 11...\(\text{d}6\) 12 \(\text{b}5\)+ \(\text{f}8\) 13 \(\text{h}6\)+ \(\text{g}8\) 14 \(\text{c}4\) ± with a poor position for Black.

c) 9...\(\text{e}7\) 10 \(\text{b}5\)+ (causing a traffic-jam for Black over the d7-square) 10...\(\text{d}7\) (the knight wants this square, but 10...\(\text{b}d7\) fails to 11 e5! dxe5 12 d6 \(\text{f}8\) 13 \(\text{e}5\) ++) 11 \(\text{d}3\) 0-0 12 0-0 ± intending moves like \(\text{f}4\), h3 and \(\text{d}2\), with a normal sort of position where White has pleasant prospects.
Thanks to these variations, we understand that Black needs to leave the white pawn on c4, as it blocks lines that White could otherwise put to good use.

7 g5

7 d6?! is too self-confident. I recommend 7...a5! 8 f4 e4 (intending ...b3+) 9 b3 c6 f with threats of ...xa4 and ...b3+ or ...f6 and ...e5 winning the d6-pawn. 7 e4?! as played in Rossetto-R.Garcia, Buenos Aires 1972, is less convincing because White can exploit the vulnerability of the c5-pawn by 8 d2!.

7 dxe6 fxe6 8 g5 (after 8 e3, as seen in Orzech-Shilov, Katy Rybackie 2009, 8...e7!? intending ...d6 and ...c6-e5 deserves attention; e.g., 9 b3 d6 10 b2 0-0, when Black’s pieces are ready for kingside action) 8...a5 9 b3 (D) (9 e3 c6 10 b3 transposes to line ‘b2’) and now:

\[\text{Diagram:} \]

a) 9...e4 was tried in Gokhale-Zhang Pengxiang, Mumbai 2003 but it seems that ...xg5 is not much of a problem for White, who could have simply ignored this ‘threat’ by 10 e3!?, since the exchange on g5 leaves the black king in trouble because most of his pieces are on the queenside. As 10...xg5 11 xg5 gives White the initiative, Black should try 10...c7!?, with unclear play.

b) 9...c6!? attacks a different white piece, aiming to destroy his pawn-structure. Then:

b1) 10 b2?! makes 10...e4 more effective: 11 c2 (11 e3 is now met by 11...a3! 12 c5 13 xg5 e7 14 f4 f6 15 b1 h6 16 f3 with a useful extra pawn) 11...g6 f intending ...g7.

b2) 10 e3 xa4 11 bxa4 d6 followed by ...e7, ...0-0 and ...d5, when Black’s chances are higher.

7...h6 8 xf6

According to my database White has never tried 8 h4, presumably scared of losing the d5-pawn, but in fact it’s not a reason to avoid this move. Then:

a) 8...g5 9 g3 exd5 10 cxd5xd5 11 h4 gives White good compensation since Black’s position has become vulnerable. That’s why I propose to refuse this gift.

b) The main idea of 8...d6!? is slowly to create a threat of capturing on d5 without playing ...g5. White will then be forced to do something himself, i.e. take on e6 or on f6. After 9 a3 a5 10 e3 e7 (the d5-pawn is attacked) 11 dxe6 fxe6 the a4-knight is out of play, while Black has a quantitative advantage in the centre and all his pieces have good prospects.

8...xf6 9 e4 d6 10 a3 (D)
Black can either give the b4-pawn additional support or ignore his opponent’s last move:

a) 10...\textsc{d}d7 gives rise to a complicated situation: 11 axb4 cxb4 12 \textsc{w}d2 a5 was unclear in Bönsch-Votava, Mitropa Cup, Bad Wörishofen 1993.

b) 10...a5! is a solid move strengthening Black’s pawn-chain. Then 11 \textsc{b}d3 \textsc{d}d7 12 0-0 \textsc{e}e7 leaves Black better, while after 11 axb4 axb4 12 \textsc{b}6 \textsc{x}a1 13 \textsc{w}xa1 \textsc{d}d7 the lone white queen can’t create many problems for Black on the queenside:

b1) 14 \textsc{w}a4?! \textsc{d}8 \textsc{f}3.

b2) 14 \textsc{c}xd7?! is natural but ineffective: 14...\textsc{w}xd7 15 \textsc{x}d3 (15 \textsc{w}a4+? \textsc{c}7 16 \textsc{a}a5+ \textsc{c}8 \textsc{f}; the b2-pawn is undefended) 15...\textsc{e}e7 \textsc{f}3 followed by...\textsc{a}8.

b3) 14 \textsc{w}a7 \textsc{d}8 15 \textsc{w}xb7 \textsc{w}xb6 16 \textsc{c}8+ \textsc{e}7 intending...g5 and...\textsc{g}7 gives Black a pleasant game.

C)

5 dxe6 fxe6 6 cxb5

White accepts the gambit pawn. This is obviously a critical test of the Blumenfeld, and quite often occurs in practice. But as mentioned earlier, White more often declines the gambit, since Black’s basic compensation is rather obvious – he gets total control of the centre. However, it would be a big lie to say that Black easily proves his compensation. Precision is as important here as it is in the main lines of the Benko Gambit.

6...d5 (D)

Black has taken control of the centre. A standard plan here is...\textsc{d}d6, ...0-0 and ...a6. Then the queen’s knight moves to c6 or d7, and the queen’s bishop is deployed to b7 or a6. Meanwhile, White has plenty of set-ups to choose from. The most crucial idea that Black should watch out for is the e4 advance.

Now:

C1: 7 \textsc{f}4 48
C2: 7 e3 49
C3: 7 \textsc{c}c3 50
C4: 7 \textsc{g}3 52

Or:
a) There are no problems for Black if White plays 7 a4 a6 8 e3 (Rodkin-E.Rotstein, World Seniors Ch, Glad­enbach 1999) 8...c4?! (a new move, sealing in White’s king’s bishop) 9 c3 axb5 10 cxb5 c4! intending ...a4+. Black has good compensation.

b) 7 g5 e7 (7...d6 invites 8 e4!, when 8...dxe4? is strongly met by 9 fd2 b7 10 c3 ±; in my opinion it’s better to play more slowly in this case) 8 e3 0-0 9 c3 (9 d3? is a poor square for the bishop because of Black’s tempo-gaining ...c4 advance: 9...a6 10 bxa6 c4 11 e2 b6 12 c1 b4+ 13 c3 e4 ± Vasilev-Mirosh­nichenko, Izmir 2006) 9...a6 10 a4 b7 11 e2 axb5 12 xbx5 (12 axb5? xa1 13 xxa1 d4! gives Black a strong initiative, while in the case of 12 cxb5 c4 13 xe7 xe7 14 0-0 c6 15 d3 c6 his compensation is clear) and then:

b1) An instructive miscalculation occurred in Matuszewski-Olszewski, Grodzisk Mazowiecki 2007: 12 bd7 13 0-0 g4?! 14 f4 d4?. White could now have exploited the weakness of e6 and d7 by 15 xd4! cxd4 16 xg4 f6 (16...xc3?! 17 xe6+ h8 18 c1 ±) 17 fd1 g6 18 e2 xg2+ 19 f1 ±.

b2) Now is a good moment for 12...d6. After 13 0-0 c6 14 e2 b6 Black has arranged his pieces well for the ensuing middlegame struggle.

C1) 7 f4 d6

It makes sense to exchange off the f4-bishop since otherwise it exerts too much pressure on Black’s position.

8 xd6 xd6 (D)

9 bd2

Or:

a) 9 c3 0-0 10 e4 should not scare Black since he is better developed. 10...bd7 11 c4?! (Dreev-Volokitin, Internet blitz 2004) 11...e5! ±.

b) 9 e3 0-0 10 c3 bd7 11 e2 b7 12 0-0 e5 13 a4 occurred in Milov-Tregubov, Ajaccio rapid 2008 (they even played two games from this position). After the natural (but untried) 13...d4!? 14 c4+ h8 Black’s compensation looks good.

9...0-0 10 e3 bd7 11 e2 e5 12 xe5 xe5 13 c2 a6?!

This is a new move (deviating from Andreikin-Alekseev, Russian Team Ch, Dagomys 2008). Black’s main idea is to distract the e2-bishop from the g4-square to weaken the opponent’s kingside. Then:

a) 14 bxa6?! xa6 15 xa6 xa6 and 16 0-0?! is not good because of
16...\( \text{g4} \) 17 \( \text{g3 c4} \) \( \text{\ tops} \) with ideas such as ...\( \text{h5} \), ...\( \text{e5-d3} \) or ...\( \text{b6} \) and ...\( \text{fb8} \).

b) 14 \( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{xb2} \) 15 \( \text{d4} \) (15 \( \text{c1? axb5} \) \( \text{\ tops} \) 15...\( \text{xd4} \) 16 \( \text{exd4 axb5} \) 17 \( \text{xb5 a6} \)=. Due to the weakness on a2, White’s extra pawn is not valuable at all.

c) After 14 0-0 axb5 15 \( \text{x} \text{b5} \) (15 \( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{xb2} \) =) 15...\( \text{g4} \) 16 g3 \( \text{h5} \) 17 h4 g5 18 \( \text{xc5} \) gxh4 Black clearly has enough activity.

C2)

7 e3 \( \text{d6} \) 8 \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{bd7} \)

Now it’s time for White to decide on a square for his king’s bishop. In practice he has tried all the possibilities: d3, e2 and g2.

9 \( \text{d3} \)

Or:

a) 9 \( \text{e2} \) 0-0 10 0-0 \( \text{b7} \) 11 b3 \( \text{e7} \) 12 \( \text{b2} \) e5, Vitiugov-Nemtsev, St Petersburg 2002. Black has built up a strong centre and has obvious compensation for the pawn.

b) 9 g3 is possible, but frankly, I don’t believe that a pawn-structure such as e3-f2-g3-h2 can be good, especially considering Black’s prospects on the a6-f1 diagonal. That’s why I propose a variation based on ...\( \text{a6} \): 9...0-0 10 \( \text{g2} \) a6!? (I like this new move; I could not find a direct way to blow up Black’s centre in case of 10...\( \text{b7} \) 11 0-0 \( \text{e7} \) 12 a4 e5 13 a5 a6 14 \( \text{bxa6 c6} \), as in A.Brown-Smerdon, Rotorua Zonal 2011, but I nevertheless find it a bit risky to stake everything on such a centre) 11 0-0 axb5 12 \( \text{xb5} \) and now the unhurried 12...\( \text{e7} \) (\( D \)) promises Black good compensation.

The idea is ...\( \text{a6} \). Then:

b1) 13 \( \text{g5} \) seeks a tactical hole in Black’s set-up, but it is not really dangerous: 13...\( \text{b6} \) 14 \( \text{c3} \) h6 15 \( \text{xd5} \)? (15 \( \text{xe6} \) \( \text{xe6} \) 16 \( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{b8} \) \( \text{\ tops} \); 15 \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{a6} \) 16 \( \text{e1} \) c4!? intending ...\( \text{c5-d3} \) gives Black a nice position) 15...\( \text{exd5} \) 16 \( \text{xd5+} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 17 \( \text{xd5+} \) \( \text{h8} \) and now both 18 \( \text{xa8} \) \( \text{g5} \) and 18 \( \text{f7+} \) \( \text{xf7} \) 19 \( \text{xf7} \) \( \text{d6} \) are unclear.

b2) 13 a4 \( \text{a6} \) 14 \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{e4} \) 15 \( \text{h3} \) \( \text{f6} \) should be fine for Black. The crazy 16 \( \text{a5!} \) \( \text{xa5} \) 17 \( \text{xe6+} \) \( \text{xe6} \) 18 \( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{f8} \) 19 \( \text{xa8} \) \( \text{f6} \) leads to an unclear situation.

9...\( \text{b7} \) 10 e4

An instructive attack was executed by Black in the following game: 10 0-0 0-0 11 \( \text{e1} \) \( \text{c7} \) 12 h3 \( \text{e4} \) 13 \( \text{c2?!} \) \( \text{xf3} \)? 14 gxf3 \( \text{g5} \) 15 \( \text{g2} \) \( \text{e5} \) 16 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{f8} \) 17 f4 d4+ 18 e4 d3?! (18...\( \text{f7} \)! -+ would win even faster) 19 fxe5? (19 \( \text{xd3} \) \( \text{xf3} \) ? and ...\( \text{d4} \)) 19...\( \text{dxc2} \) 20 exd6 \( \text{f7} \) and Black wins, G.Orlov-Sawyer, Seattle 1993.

10...0-0
10...dxe4? 11 \( \texttt{\textit{x}e4} \) \( \texttt{\textit{x}e4} \) 12 \( \texttt{\textit{x}e4} \) \( \texttt{\textit{x}e4} \) 13 \( \texttt{\textit{w}xd6} \) leaves Black with no real compensation for the pawn.

**11 \( \texttt{\textit{w}e2} \)**

Black has great attacking chances after 11 exd5 exd5 12 0-0 d4.

**11...d4!**

This is a new move (improving over the 11...c4 played in Boersma-Rogers, Amsterdam 1985). After 12 \( \texttt{\textit{b}1} \) \( \texttt{\textit{g}4} \)? intending ...\( \texttt{\textit{d}e5} \), Black seizes a strong initiative.

**C3)**

7 \( \texttt{\textit{c}3} \)

White prepares the e4 advance. A precise response from Black is essential, as some of the tactical lines that now follow are rather intricate.

7...\( \texttt{\textit{b}d7} \) (D)

Black prepares an active response to White’s intended pawn-thrust. He avoids 7...\( \texttt{\textit{d}6} \)? 8 e4!.

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7
\texttt{\textit{d}d7}
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8 e4!?

This is the most logical follow-up to 7 \( \texttt{\textit{c}3} \), but there are of course other moves:

a) 8 e3 \( \texttt{\textit{d}6} \) transposes to Line C2.

b) 8 \( \texttt{\textit{f}4} \)?! does not make any sense here. 8...d4 9 \( \texttt{\textit{b}1} \) \( \texttt{\textit{d}5} \) 10 \( \texttt{\textit{g}3} \) a6 11 e4 \( \texttt{\textit{x}e3} \) 12 \( \texttt{\textit{f}xe3} \) (Milo-Var-Erdogan, Ajaccio rapid 2005) 12...\( \texttt{\textit{a}5} \)! (White gets unpleasant compensation if Black takes on e3: 12...\( \texttt{\textit{x}e3} \)?! 13 \( \texttt{\textit{b}3} \) \( \texttt{\textit{f}1} \) 14 \( \texttt{\textit{x}f1} \) 13 \( \texttt{\textit{c}3} \) \( \texttt{\textit{x}c3} \) 14 \( \texttt{\textit{d}2} \) \( \texttt{\textit{a}5} \) 15 \( \texttt{\textit{x}c3} \) \( \texttt{\textit{g}6} \) \( \texttt{\textit{f}6} \) followed by ...\( \texttt{\textit{e}7} \), ...

...\( \texttt{\textit{d}5} \) and ...\( \texttt{\textit{f}6} \).

...\( \texttt{\textit{g}3} \) is an idea that was first used by Turkish GM Suat Atalik, but no strong players have tried it since. White provokes Black into the variation 8...d4 9 \( \texttt{\textit{a}4} \) \( \texttt{\textit{a}5} \)! 10 \( \texttt{\textit{d}2} \) \( \texttt{\textit{b}5} \) 11 \( \texttt{\textit{g}2} \) \( \texttt{\textit{g}7} \), when 12 b4! reveals the point of Atalik’s idea: White tries to make use of his superior development. Then I recommend 12...\( \texttt{\textit{a}6} \)! (rather than 12...\( \texttt{\textit{e}4} \), which was played in Atalik-Erdogan, Turkish Ch, Istanbul 2006), sidestepping the attack on the queen by \( \texttt{\textit{x}d4} \). After 13 0-0 (13 \( \texttt{\textit{x}c5} \) \( \texttt{\textit{x}c5} \) 14 \( \texttt{\textit{x}c5} \) \( \texttt{\textit{xc5} \) 15 0-0 is also equal; Black has no problems in this middlegame) 13...\( \texttt{\textit{b}4} \) 14 \( \texttt{\textit{xd4} \) \( \texttt{\textit{x}g2} \) 15 \( \texttt{\textit{x}g2} \) \( \texttt{\textit{c}5} \) 16 \( \texttt{\textit{xc5} \) \( \texttt{\textit{xc5} \) 17 \( \texttt{\textit{b}3} \) \( \texttt{\textit{e}7} \) = Black’s piece activity compensates for his greater number of pawn-islands.

8...d4 9 e5

That’s the point! The e-pawn can look after itself.

9...\( \texttt{\textit{g}4} \) 10 \( \texttt{\textit{g}5} \)

Attacking the g4-knight and the e6-pawn. This is better than 10 \( \texttt{\textit{e}4} \)?! \( \texttt{\textit{b}7} \), as the following lines demonstrate:

a) Black gets the better position after 11 h3 \( \texttt{\textit{g}xe5} \) 12 \( \texttt{\textit{xe5} \) \( \texttt{\textit{xe5} \) 13

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b) 11 \(\text{Q}g5\) \(\text{Q}dxe5\) 12 \(f4\) \(\text{Q}xe4\) (a typical idea – Black brings an undefended knight to \(e4\) in order to win a tempo) 13 \(\text{Q}xe4\) \(\text{W}d5\) and then:

b1) 14 \(\text{Q}g5?\) \(c4!\) (Black simply ignores the \(f4\)-pawn) 15 \(\text{Q}d2\) \(d3!\) Malakhatko-Babujian, St Petersburg 2009.

b2) 14 \(\text{Q}g3?\) is a poor retreat, as 14...\(c4!\) 15 \(fxe5\) \(\text{Q}b4+\) 16 \(\text{Q}d2\) \(\text{W}xe5+\) is a strong reply. 17 \(\text{W}e2?\) loses by force to 17...\(\text{Q}xd2+\) 18 \(\text{Q}xd2\) \(\text{W}f4+\) 19 \(\text{Q}e1\) (19 \(\text{Q}d1\) 0-0 and ...\(\text{Q}f2\) is coming soon) 19...0-0 –+, while 17 \(\text{Q}e2\) \(\text{Q}e3\) 18 \(\text{Q}h5+\) \(g6\) 19 \(\text{W}f3\) \(\text{Q}xd2+\) 20 \(\text{Q}xd2\) \(\text{B}b8\) \(\text{f}+\) greatly favours Black.

b3) 14 \(\text{Q}f2\) \(\text{Q}xf2\) 15 \(\text{Q}xf2\) \(\text{Q}e7\)? (simply ignoring the threat of \(fxe5\); White’s pieces are unprepared for the ensuing complications) 16 \(fxe5\) 0-0+ 17 \(\text{Q}g1\) \(c4!\) leaves Black a whole piece down but just look at the state of the white army! Only the king has relocated, while the others are still on their starting blocks.

10...\(\text{Q}dxe5\) 11 \(f4\)

After 11 \(\text{Q}ce4?\) \(h6!\) 12 \(\text{Q}f3\) \(\text{W}d5\) Black gets a position that is analogous to the lines after 10 \(\text{Q}ce4\) but without any material sacrifice. 13 \(\text{Q}fd2\) \(\text{B}b7\) 14 \(h3\) \(\text{Q}f6\) 15 \(\text{Q}xf6+\) \(gx6\) 16 \(f4?!\) \(\text{Q}d3+!\) 17 \(\text{Q}xd3\) \(\text{W}xg2\) 18 \(\text{W}h5+\) \(\text{Q}d7\) \(+\) Malakhatko-Vallejo Pons, Caleta 2010.

11...\(\text{Q}e7\) (D)

12 \(\text{Q}xe5\)

12 \(\text{Q}ce4?!\) and now:

a) In case of 12...\(\text{W}d5?\) 13 \(fxe5\) \(\text{Q}xe5\) 14 \(\text{W}h5+\) \(g6\) 15 \(\text{W}h3\) White gets an advantage: 15...\(\text{Q}f7\) 16 \(\text{Q}xf7\) \(\text{W}xe4+\) 17 \(\text{Q}e2\) 0-0 18 \(\text{W}f3\) \(\text{B}b7\) 19 0-0 \(d3\) 20 \(\text{W}xe4\) \(\text{Q}xe4\) 21 \(\text{Q}f3\) \(\text{Q}xf3\) 22 \(\text{Q}h6+\) \(\text{Q}g7\) 23 \(\text{gx}f3\) \(\text{B}fd8\) 24 \(\text{Q}d2\) \(\pm\) M.Pavlovic-Paligras, Kavala 2008.

b) With the new move 12...0-0!, Black continues developing rather than worrying about material. His initiative will prove to be worth the investment:

b1) The natural 13 \(fxe5\) allows Black sufficient compensation after 13...\(\text{Q}xe5\):

b11) 14 \(\text{W}h5?\) \(h6\) 15 \(\text{Q}f3\) (the alluring 15 \(\text{Q}xe6?\) loses the queen after 15...\(\text{W}d5!\) 16 \(\text{Q}xf8\) \(\text{Q}g4!\) 17 \(\text{W}xe5\) \(\text{W}xe5\) 18 \(\text{Q}c4+\) \(\text{Q}xf8\) 19 0-0+ \(\text{Q}e8\) 20 \(\text{Q}e1\) \(d3!\) \(\pm\) without gaining enough in return) 15...\(\text{Q}f5\) 16 \(\text{W}h3\) \(\text{W}d5\) gives Black strong compensation.

b12) 14 \(\text{B}b3\) \(\text{W}d5!\) (intending ...\(c4;\) Black’s activity is so pronounced that he can even exchange the queens) 15 \(\text{W}xd5\) \(\text{exd5}\) 16 \(\text{Q}g3\) \(\text{Q}g4\) and Black’s pieces are extremely active.
b2) 13 h3 $\text{xf6}!$ and then:

b21) White can try to attack by 14 $\text{xf6}+$ $\text{xf6} 15 \text{h4}!!$ but Black halts these ambitions with another knight sacrifice: 15...$\text{g5}!$ 16 $\text{hxg5} \text{d5}!$ (only forward! Retreating by 16...$\text{f7}$? 17 $\text{h5} \text{h6}$ 18 $\text{d3}$ gives White a crushing attack) 17 $\text{xe5} \text{xe5}+ 18 \text{e2} \text{g3}+ 19 \text{d1} \text{e5}$ and now it is Black’s attack that should be close to winning.

b22) After 14 $\text{xe5} \text{xe4} 15 \text{xe4} \text{d5} 16 \text{g4} \text{b7}$ Black is a whole piece down but since the white pieces are mostly undeveloped, he has sufficient compensation.

12...$\text{xe5}$

Now:

a) 13 $\text{ce4}?!$ 0-0 transposes to line ‘b1’ of the previous note.

b) 13 $\text{ge4}?!$ is ugly and bad: 13...0-0 (13...$\text{xc3}?!$ is not good at all: 14 $\text{xd8}+ \text{xd8} 15 \text{bxc3} 0-0$ with unclear play) 14 $\text{e2} \text{b7} 15 \text{g3}$ $\text{xe4}!$ 16 $\text{xe4} \text{h4}!!$ 17 $\text{g3}$ (17 $\text{g3}$ loses to 17...$\text{f3}+$ 18 $\text{e2} \text{d5}$ —+) and here Black has a choice between many ways of getting a huge advantage. 17...c4?! —+ may be best since it increases the number of threats, while 17...$\text{f6}$ (Kazhgaleev-Kvon, Tashkent Zonal 2011) is a strong alternative.

c) 13 $\text{f3}!!$ $\text{xf3}+ 14 \text{xf3} \text{dxc3} 15 \text{bxc3} (15 \text{xa8}?? \text{cxb2} 16 \text{xb2} \text{a5}+ 17 \text{d1} \text{a4}+ —) 15...\text{f6}!$ with an unclear position.

C4)

7 $\text{g3} \text{a6} 8 \text{bxa6}$

This capture is practically forced. White can’t defend the pawn by $\text{c3}? because after the simple 8...$\text{axb5}$ the pawn is untouchable since 9 $\text{xb5}?$ fails to 9...$\text{a5}+ 10 \text{c3} \text{d4} \equiv$.

8...$\text{d6} 9 \text{g2} 0-0 10 0-0 \text{xa6}$

(D)

Black has captured the centre and secured good squares for his pieces.

11 $\text{c3}$

Or:

a) Black doesn’t object to getting the bishop-pair after 11 $\text{g5}?! \text{bd7} 12 \text{c3} \text{h6} 13 \text{xf6} \text{xf6} 14 \text{c2} \text{e7}$, when his position is favourable, A.Shneider-Krivoruchko, Cappelle la Grande 2011.

b) An attempt to attack $\text{e6}$ does not pose any danger to Black: 11 $\text{g5} \text{e7} 12 \text{h3} \text{c8}! 13 \text{c3} \text{c6} 14 \text{b5} \text{b8} 15 \text{a4} \text{e5} 16 \text{xc8} \text{xc8} 17 \text{e4} \text{d4} 18 \text{xd4} \text{exd4} 19 \text{exd5} \text{h6} 20 \text{f3} \text{f7}$ and Black’s central pawns provide sufficient compensation, Shulman-Cordova, Merida 2008.

c) 11 $\text{bd2}?!$ is definitely the wrong place for the knight. By 11...$\text{c6} 12 \text{e1} \text{c4}!$ Black prevents $\text{b3}$ and opens the a7-g1 diagonal for his bishop and
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queen. So far, only two games have been played from this position, but neither was a real test as White made a mistake right away. However, Black’s compensation is obvious:

c1) 13 e4? \(\text{c}5\)! 14 exd5?! (Odnorozhenko-Oleksienko, Alushta 2011) 14...\(\text{xf}2+\)! 15 \(\text{h}1\) (15 \(\text{xf}2\)? \(\text{g}4+\)
16 \(\text{f}1\) c3+ --+) 15...\(\text{exd}5\) +.

c2) 13 b3? c3 14 \(\text{bl}\) \(\text{e}4\) 15 \(\text{e}3\)
\(\text{a}5\) is much better for Black, Černoušek-Navara, Czech Team Ch 2008/9.

c3) The attempt to undermine the black centre by 13 \(\text{g}5\) \(\text{e}8\) 14 e4!? is the most critical reply. Black can safely answer 14...h6 15 exd5 exd5 16 \(\text{x}e8+\)
\(\text{x}e8\) 17 \(\text{gf}3\) \(\text{f}7\), when he is still a pawn down but his centre and better piece coordination provide him with pleasant prospects.

11...\(\text{c}6\) (D)

\[ W \]

\[ B \]

\(12 \text{g}5\)

For some reason, this move is the most popular in my database. But the idea of exchanging one of the bishops in so open a position looks weird to me. Other moves:

a) 12 \(\text{e}1\) \(\text{b}8\)?? (this untried move looks the most useful, especially considering that e4 does not give White any advantage; 12...\(\text{c}7\) was played in Babula-Krejči, Czech Ch, Pardubice 2011) 13 e4 d4 and then:

a1) 14 e5 \(\text{xe}5\)! 15 \(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{xe}5\) 16 \(\text{b}5\)!
(this surprising move aims to avoid ...\(\text{dx}c3\) followed by a further advance of the pawn towards promotion; not 16 \(\text{xe}5?? \text{dx}c3\), when Black is winning after both 17 \(\text{c}2\) \(\text{g}4\) and 17 \(\text{x}d\text{8} \text{fx}d8\), threatening ...\(\text{cx}b2\) and ...\(\text{d}1+\)) 16...\(\text{xb}5\) 17 \(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{d}6\)
+. The material balance is restored and now Black just has a powerful centre for free.

a2) 14 \(\text{w}4\) \(\text{b}6\) 15 e5 (after 15 \(\text{bl}\) ? \(\text{g}4\) + Black dominates the board) 15...\(\text{x}e5\) 16 \(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{dx}c3\) 17
\(\text{bxc3} \text{xe}5\) 18 \(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{b}5\) 19 \(\text{w}2\)
\(\text{g}4\) 20 \(\text{e}1\) \(\text{xf}2\) 21 \(\text{e}4\) \(\text{h}5\) is unclear but probably roughly balanced. Just a few variations to show this:

a21) 22 \(\text{e}3\) \(\text{g}2+\)! 23 \(\text{xg}2\)
\(\text{c}6\) 24 \(\text{d}2\) \(\text{f}6\) (intending ...\(\text{f}3\))
25 \(\text{f}1\) \(\text{e}5\) 26 \(\text{d}8+\) \(\text{h}7\) 27 \(\text{d}3+\)
\(\text{e}4\) 28 \(\text{e}2\) (28 \(\text{d}2\)? \(\text{b}8\) + intending ...\(\text{b}2\)) 28...\(\text{d}5\) 29 \(\text{d}3+\) \(\text{e}4\) =.

a22) 22 h3 \(\text{d}3\) 23 \(\text{a}8\) \(\text{b}8\) 24
\(\text{c}6\) \(\text{b}6\) 25 \(\text{a}8\) (25 \(\text{a}4\) \(\text{d}6\) with an attack) 25...\(\text{b}8\) =.

b) 12 a4 has a similar strategic idea to those we see in the Benko Gambit – White prepares an outpost on b5. But in the Blumenfeld Gambit it’s often connected with a pawn sacrifice in order to exchange the a6-bishop and get the bishop-pair. 12...\(\text{b}4\) (a perfect outpost for the black knight – it defends the d5-pawn and prepares ...e5) 13 \(\text{a}3\)
\[\text{\$we8 14 $\text{\&b5 (completing the idea) 14...$\text{\&xb5 15 axb5 $\text{\&b8! (15...$\text{\&xb5?! lets White grab the initiative by 16 $\text{\&h3 $\text{\&ae8 17 $\text{\&g5 $\text{\&e7 18 $\text{\&xe6+ $\text{\&h8 19 e4!) 16 $\text{\&h3!? (White gets nowhere with 16 $\text{\&g5? h6 17 $\text{\&e4 $\text{\&xe4 18 $\text{\&xe4, Nikolić-Volokitin, Bundesliga 2004/5, 18...$\text{\&xb5! 19 $\text{\&g2 $\text{\&f7 \$+) 16...e5 17 $\text{\&a4 $\text{\&xb5 18 $\text{\&xb5 $\text{\&xb5 19 $\text{\&e6+ $\text{\&h8 20 $\text{\&g5 $\text{\&b7 =.}}}}\]

\[c) 12 $\text{\&g5 (D) is an attempt to trap Black with some unexpected tactics.}\]

Now:

\[c1) After 12...$\text{\&c7? (Akhmadeev-A.Zhigalko, Saratov 2006) White wins too many pawns with a combination you should memorize: 13 $\text{\&xd5! exd5 14 $\text{\&xd5+ $\text{\&d8 15 $\text{\&xd5+ $\text{\&h8 16 $\text{\&xc6 $\text{\&b7 17 $\text{\&b5 \pm. Of course, Black has some positional compensation for the material damage, but three pawns is too much.}}}\]

\[c2) 12...$\text{\&d7!? (this new move defends c6 in order to avoid the tactic we have just seen) 13 $\text{\&h3 $\text{\&fe8 and now:}}\]

\[c21) The point is that 14 $\text{\&xd5? does not work so well now due to 14...$\text{\&xd5 15 $\text{\&xe6+ (after 15 $\text{\&xd5?! $\text{\&d4! \$) followed by ...$\text{\&b7, ...h6, etc., Black seizes quite a dangerous initiative) 15...$\text{\&xe6 16 $\text{\&xd5 $\text{\&ae8 17 $\text{\&xe6 $\text{\&xe6 18 $\text{\&e3 $\text{\&b4 \$), capturing the long light-square diagonal.}}\]

\[c22) 14 $\text{\&e1 (intending e4) 14...h6 15 $\text{\&xe6! (with a rook on e1, this line is more attractive for White) 15...$\text{\&xe6 16 $\text{\&xd5 $\text{\&xd5 17 $\text{\&xd5 $\text{\&ae8 18 $\text{\&xe6+ $\text{\&xe6 is somewhat unclear but I think Black should be fine.}}\]

\[12...h6! 13 $\text{\&xf6 $\text{\&xf6 14 $\text{\&c1}\]

The alluring but untried 14 $\text{\&xd5 leads to equality after 14...exd5 15 $\text{\&xd5+ $\text{\&h8 16 $\text{\&xc6 $\text{\&xe2 17 $\text{\&h4! $\text{\&xf1 18 $\text{\&xf1 g5 (the easiest way for Black) 19 $\text{\&f5! (19 $\text{\&f3? $\text{\&xa2 \$) 19...$\text{\&xf5 20 $\text{\&xd6 $\text{\&f6 =.}}\]

\[14...$\text{\&h8\]

Avoiding $\text{\&xd5 tactics. Black has the bishop-pair and a powerful centre; his compensation is obvious.}\]

\[15 b3\]

Now:

\[a) Not 15...c4? 16 bxc4 $\text{\&xc4 17 $\text{\&d2! (a crushing move) 17...$\text{\&b4 (or 17...$\text{\&a6 18 $\text{\&ce4! and White is much better) 18 $\text{\&xc4 $\text{\&xc3 19 $\text{\&b6 $\text{\&a7 20 $\text{\&a4! +– Lputian-Babujian, Armenian Ch, Erevan 2008.}}\]

\[b) 15...$\text{\&ab8!? is a new move that keeps an eye on the b5-square and evacuates the rook from the a8-h1 diagonal. After 16 $\text{\&a4 $\text{\&e7 17 $\text{\&e1, 17...c4! works well. Black has a strong initiative for the pawn.}}\]
5 Blumenfeld Gambit: 5 g5

1 d4 ♗f6 2 ♗f3 c5 3 d5 e6 4 c4 b5 5 g5 (D)

This is the most popular continuation and the most dangerous for Black. White strengthens his centre (by pinning a piece that attacks d5) and claims that the ...b5 advance has weakened Black’s queenside. Often White gets pressure thanks to his control of the c4-square. Note that having played ...e6, Black cannot revert to Benko-style play: the central tension ensures that there will be a hand-to-hand fight for the central squares in the near future.

5...exd5 6 cxd5

For some reason, 6 cxb5 is very rarely played, though it is by no means bad, and leads to interesting positions after 6...♗b7 7 e3. Then:

a) 7...d6 8 ♗c3 ♗e7 (this new move covers d5 indirectly; in Khurtsidze-Schuurman, European Clubs Cup (women), Saint Vincent 2005 Black played 8...♗bd7) 9 ♗e2 (9 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 10 ♗xd5 ♗xb2 11 ♗b1 ♗a5+ 12 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 13 ♗xd2 ♗xd5 14 ♗xb2 ♗d7 leads to an equal endgame) 9...0-0 10 0-0 a6 with unclear play. Now it’s clear why the knight stayed on b8; from here it has much better prospects now.

b) 7...a6 8 ♗c3 ♗e7 (D) and now:

b1) 9 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 10 ♗xd5 is natural, taking the d5-pawn without further ado. But 10...♗xb2 11 ♗b1 ♗a5+ 12 ♗d2 axb5! works out fine for Black:

b11) After 13 ♗xa5?! ♗xa5 14 ♗c7+ ♗d8 15 ♗xb5 ♗f6 Black has preserved the bishop-pair and feels
good; e.g., 16 Ñc4 (after 16 Ñd6 Ñxf3 17 gxf3 Ñc7 18 Ñxf7 Ñf8 19 Ñc4 Ña4! 20 Ñd5 Ñc6 White is a little worse due to his badly placed knight) 16...Ñe7 ‡ Breier-Feigin, Bundesliga 2011/12. Black’s bishops are too good.

a2) 13 Ñxb2 Ñxd5 14 Ñxb5 Ñxd2+ 15 Ñxd2 Ñxf3!? 16 gxf3 Ñe7 with an equal endgame.

b2) 9 a4!? is untried but logical. White does not have to take on d5 right away and plays this useful standard move instead. 9...0-0 10 Ñe2 axb5 11 axb5 (the b5-pawn plays an important role by restricting the b8-knight but here Black can break through in the centre) 11...Ñxa1 12 Ñxa1 d4! (Black has to play aggressively while White has not completed his development; otherwise, he is liable to end up cramped) 13 exd4 Ñxf3 14 Ñxf3 cxd4 15 Ñxf6! (in the case of 15 Ñe2?! Ñb4+ 16 Ñf1 h6 17 Ñxf6 Ñxf6 18 Ñd1 Ñe8 ‡ Black solves his problems and now it’s White’s turn to solve his own) 15...Ñxf6 16 Ñe4 Ñb6 17 Ñxf6+ gxf6! (Black’s main target is the b5-pawn) 18 Ñe2 Ñe8 19 Ñf1 Ñxe2!? 20 Ñxe2 Ñxb5+ gives Black compensation. His well-coordinated queen, knight and d4-pawn should enable Black to maintain the balance.

6...d6 (D)

Now we examine the following lines for White:

A: 7 e3!? 56
B: 7 a4 58
C: 7 e4 58

But why are Lines A and B important at all, given that 7 e4 a6 8 a4 looks so natural? The reason is that Black is not then forced to play 8...b4, but can instead choose 8...Ñe7, based on tactical ideas of ...Ñxd5 or ...Ñxe4. In Lines A and B, White does succeed in forcing ...b4, but at the cost of a little time.

A)

7 e3!?

The point of this move is to force Black to play ...b4 to weaken the c4-square. Unlike Line B, he forces Black to spend a tempo playing ...a6, but at the cost of the white e-pawn advancing rather modestly.

7...a6 8 a4 b4

Mission accomplished. Now White needs to decide which piece will occupy c4.

9 Ñbd2

Although the knight is the most natural piece to use the c4-square, 9 Ñc4 is interesting too, and Black needs to play carefully to maintain the balance. 9...Ñe7 and then:

a) 10 Ñbd2 0-0 11 e4 (11 0-0 transposes to line ‘b2’) lets Black start active play in the centre by 11...Ñg4!
(improving over Janković-Sarić, Sarajevo 2006). This idea is worth memorizing since the e7-bishop is usually Black’s worst piece, which is why we are generally happy to trade it off. After 12 \( \square x e 7 \) (12 \( \square f 4 \) f5! gives Black a good game) 12...\( \square x e 7 \) 13 0-0 \( \square d 7 \) 14 \( \square c 2 \) \( \square e 8 \) = Black has no problems.

b) 10 0-0 0-0 and now it is still important for Black to exchange his dark-squared bishop:

b1) 11 a5 has not yet been tried. Black can then exploit the absence of White’s knight from d2 by 11...\( \square e 4 \) 12 \( \square f 4 \) g5?! 13 \( \square c 2 \) f5 14 \( \square g 3 \) h5, with a complicated position.

b2) 11 \( \square b d 2 \) h6 12 \( \square h 4 \) was tried in Jianu-Barnaure, Romanian Ch, Amara 2007. Black has the ...\( \square h 5 \) manoeuvre in hand, but first he should solve his problems on the queenside:

b21) 12...\( \square b d 7 \)?! is unconvincing because of 13 a5!. This move is definitely to White’s advantage because it restricts the d7-knight, fixes a weakness on a6 and opens the way for White’s bishop to transfer to a4 (via b3). After 13...\( \square h 5 \) 14 \( \square x e 7 \) \( \square x e 7 \) 15 \( \square c 2 \) \( \square b 7 \) 16 \( \square b 3 \) = White’s chances are better.

b22) 12...a5! gives up control of the b5-square but in return Black gets the b6-square for the knight and the a6-square for the bishop; also, it removes the a6-pawn from pressure on the f1-a6 diagonal. 13 \( \square c 2 \) \( \square b d 7 \) = followed by ...\( \square b 6 \) and ...\( \square h 5 \) leaves Black fine.

9...\( \square e 7 \) (D)

The d5-pawn is hanging and White has no time to play a5.

10 \( \square c 4 \)

The alternative is 10 \( \square x f 6 \), but it leads to much the same type of position. After 10...\( \square x f 6 \) 11 \( \square c 4 \) White has brought his knight to a highly desirable square, but at the cost of Black controlling the dark squares. 11...a5! (as we already know, White is better if he is allowed to play a5) 12 \( \square e 2 \) 0-0 13 0-0 and then:

a) 13...\( \square a 6 \)?! is an instructive mistake – the bishop is doing nothing on a6 since it’s strategically wrong to exchange off White’s minor pieces. The c4-knight dominates the f6-bishop after 14 \( \square f d 2 \) \( \square c 7 \) 15 \( \square c 2 \) \( \square d 7 \) 16 \( \square a d 1 \) \( \square b 6 \)?! (16...\( \square f e 8 \) is better) 17 \( \square x b 6 \) \( \square x e 2 \) 18 \( \square x a 8 \) \( \square x d 1 \) 19 \( \square x d 1 \) \( \square x a 8 \) 20 \( \square c 4 \) = Kožul-Cebalo, Stari Mikanovci 2008.

b) 13...\( \square b 7 \) is correct. Since more than one of White’s minor pieces would like to use the c4-square, it is better to let them tread on each other’s toes. The term ‘the superfluous piece’ has been coined by Dvoretzky for this important concept. 14 \( \square c 2 \) \( \square c 7 \) 15 \( \square a d 1 \) \( \square d 7 \) =.
10...a5!
For the reasons described above, Black prevents White from playing a5. 11 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash d}3} 0-0 12 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash c}2} h6 (12...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash d}bd7}?! is not so good because after 13 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash d}d1} h6 14 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash x}xf6} Black has to take on f6 with the knight, when his pieces appear misplaced because the bishop belongs on this square, Delchev-Ovechkin, European Ch, Plovdiv 2008) 13 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash x}xf6} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash x}xf6} 14 0-0 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash c}7} 15 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash d}ad1} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash d}d7} 16 b3 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash b}7} = Rusev-Lilov, Bulgarian Ch, Blagoevgrad 2009.

B)

7 a4
As explained above, the idea is to force Black to play ...b4 (unlike in the line 7 e4 a6 8 a4 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e}7}!), and follow up immediately with e4. Thus White’s e-pawn advances more aggressively than in Line A, but Black has not needed to make the move ...a6. Let’s see how these pluses and minuses play out.

7...b4 8 e4
8 e3?! definitely does not make sense because White has played the not-so-useful move ...a6 (see Line A). Here 8...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e}7} is more logical and gives Black comfortable equality.

8...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e}7}
For a while I analysed 8...h6?! , a move that has never been played before. Though it seems very logical, as Black exploits the fact that the e4-pawn is undefended and forces White to take on f6, it leads to a very unpleasant position after 9 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash b}5+} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash b}d7} 10 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash x}xf6} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash x}xf6} 11 e5! dxe5 12 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash d}bd2}.

That’s why I came to the conclusion that it’s better to complete development.

9 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash b}5+} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash d}7} 10 0-0
Or:

a) 10 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash x}xf6}?! (a strange decision, giving up the dark-squared bishop with no real necessity) 10...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash x}xf6} 11 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash b}3} 0-0 12 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash b}d2} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash g}4} 13 0-0 a6 14 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash c}4} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash d}7} 15 a5 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e}8} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash x}xf6} Krasenkow-Tregubov, Nancy 2009. Black is better, even though White managed to win this game.

b) 10 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash w}d3} 0-0 11 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash b}d2} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash x}xb5}! (a new move, varying from Neverov-Ghaem Maghami, Dubai 2009) 12 axb5 (12 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash w}xb5}? \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash x}d5}! ?) 12...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash b}d7} followed by ...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash b}6}, ...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash f}d7} and ...\texttt{\textit{\textbackslash f}6}; Black’s position seems solid.

10...0-0 11 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e}1} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash x}xb5}!
This typical idea is worth memorizing: Black is not worried about the backward pawn on a7 because he gets good squares for his pieces. 12 axb5 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash b}d7} 13 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash b}d2} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash b}6} 14 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash f}4} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash w}d7} 15 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash w}e2} \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash h}5} 16 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash e}3} f5! gave Black good play in Avrukh-Volokitin, Greek Team Ch, Ermioni Argolidas 2005.

C)

7 e4 a6 (D)

8 a4
White immediately attacks the b5-pawn. Besides this, he has a lot of other moves:

a) 8 \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash f}d2} has the idea of allowing the queen’s knight to develop actively to c3. But now Black need not be scared by the e5 advance (as there is little support for it) and can much more safely play ...c4 because \texttt{\textit{\textbackslash d}4-c6}
BLUMENFELD GAMBIT: 5 \( \text{g}3 \)

is out of the picture for now. Together with the fact that White would very much like to put a knight on c4, it makes sense for Black to keep his pawn on b5: 8...\( \text{e}7 \) 9 \( \text{f}4 \) (complications starting with 9 a4?! \( \text{xe}4 \) 10 \( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{xe}5 \) 11 axb5 0-0 leave Black comfortable) 9...\( \text{bd}7 \)! (this new move has the idea of defending b5 with the rook, and improves over the 9...0-0 played in Gofsstein-Sarić, Oberwart 2007) 10 a4 \( \text{b}8 \) (White’s set-up with knights on b1 and d2 now looks a bit awkward, as Black has managed to avoid providing them with convenient outposts) 11 axb5 axb5 12 \( \text{e}2 \) 0-0 13 0-0 c4 14 \( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{c}5 \) 15 \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{e}8 \) with an unclear position.

b) 8 \( \text{c}2 \) is another interesting idea, defending e4 and preparing a4. But for each new approach for White, there is a new idea for Black in reply. Here Black makes use of tactics on the e-file. After 8...\( \text{e}7 \) 9 \( \text{f}4 \) (White avoids tactics on the h4-d8 diagonal and completes his preparation for the a4 advance) 9...0-0 (in Zawadzki-Gajewski, Calvia 2006, 9...\( \text{h}5 \)! intended wing play with ...\( \text{f}5 \) but this looks insufficiently prepared, and White could have replied 10 \( \text{e}3 \) 0-0 11 a4 \( \text{f}5 \) 12 axb5 \( \text{xe}4 \) 13 \( \text{xe}4 \) ± 10 a4 \( \text{e}8 \) 11 axb5 (11 \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{f}8 \) is unclear) 12 \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 13 0-0 \( \text{bd}7 \), intending ...\( \text{b}6 \), Black maintains the balance; e.g., 14 bx\( \text{a}6 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 15 \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{b}8 \) 16 \( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 17 b4 \( \text{a}6 \) 18 \( \text{xc}5 \) (only move) 18...\( \text{b}7 \) ± and ...\( \text{xd}5 \) with unclear play.

c) 8 \( \text{bd}2 \) \( \text{e}7 \) (intending ...\( \text{xd}5 \)) 9 \( \text{f}4 \) (9 a4 transposes to Line C1) is a typical idea for White, avoiding tactics with ...\( \text{xd}5 \) or ...\( \text{xe}4 \), while also supporting the e5 advance. 9...0-0 10 a4 bx\( \text{a}4 \) 11 \( \text{d}3 \) and now:

c1) In Ivanchuk-Nisipeanu, World Cup, Khanty-Mansiisk 2007 Black played 11...\( \text{d}7 \), defending the a4-pawn, but after 12 0-0 \( \text{b}5 \) 13 \( \text{e}2 \) was forced to give it back with a worse position: 13...\( \text{bd}7 \) 14 \( \text{xb}5 \) axb5 15 \( \text{xb}5 \) \( \text{b}8 \) 16 \( \text{d}3 \)! \( \text{b}4 \) 17 \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 18 \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 19 \( \text{f}1 \) ±. The e7-bishop is too passive.

c2) I propose 11...\( \text{a}5 \)!, whose main idea is to provide the a6-square for the queen’s bishop and knight. After 12 0-0 \( \text{a}6 \) (first the knight goes to b4...) 13 \( \text{xa}4 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 14 \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{a}6 \) (and now the bishop uses this square) 15 \( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 16 \( \text{a}3 \) \( \text{xd}3 \) 17 \( \text{xd}3 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 18 \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{f}6 \) the bishop is activated, and Black should get sufficient counterplay.

d) 8 \( \text{d}3 \) and here:

d1) 8...\( \text{e}7 \) 9 0-0 0-0 (the immediate 9...\( \text{xd}5 \)! is dubious because of 10 exd5 \( \text{xd}5 \) 11 \( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{g}5 \) 12 \( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 13 \( \text{c}3 \), when White has a strong initiative for the pawn) 10 a4
transposes to Line C2 (where Black continues 10...\(\text{\&}x\text{d}5\)).

d2) With 8...h6, Black makes use of the fact that there is no tension on the queenside yet, and captures space on the kingside. Then:

   d21) 9 \(\text{\&}h4?!\) (on h4, the bishop will be at risk of being exchanged at any moment) 9...\(\text{\&}bd7\) 10 0-0 c4 11 \(\text{\&}c2\) g5 12 \(\text{\&}g3\) \(\text{\&}h5\) 13 \(\text{\&}d4\) \(\text{\&}xg3\) 14 hxg3 \(\text{\&}g7\) leaves Black’s position preferable. The weakness of the c6-square is not so important because Black has advantages of his own: the long diagonal, the c5- and e5-squares for the d7-knight, and the bad bishop on c2.

   d22) After 9 \(\text{\&}f4\) g5!? 10 \(\text{\&}e3\) \(\text{\&}g4\) 11 \(\text{\&}c1\) \(\text{\&}d7\) 12 a4 \(\text{\&}a5+!\) (this important check allows Black to avoid weakening the c4-square for even longer) 13 \(\text{\&}bd2\) \(\text{\&}ge5\) 14 \(\text{\&}e2\) \(\text{\&}xf3+\) 15 \(\text{\&}xf3\) \(\text{\&}g7\) Black is OK.

8...\(\text{\&}e7\)! (D)

\[ \]

From previous lines we already know that Black has ideas of ...\(\text{\&}x\text{d}5\) (or ...\(\text{\&}x\text{e}4\)). Now we examine:

C1: 9 \(\text{\&}bd2\) \(\text{\&}xd5\)! (D)

10 \(\text{\&}xe7\)

Or:

a) 10 \(\text{\&}c4?!\) is a spectacular (and untried) move that gives White nothing: 10...bxc4 11 \(\text{\&}xd5\) \(\text{\&}a7\) 12 \(\text{\&}xc4\) (12 \(\text{\&}xe7?\) \(\text{\&}x\text{e}7\) \(+\)) 12...\(\text{\&}e6\) 13 \(\text{\&}xe7\) (forced) 13...\(\text{\&}a5+!\) 14 \(\text{\&}d2\) \(\text{\&}xd2+\) 15 \(\text{\&}xd2\) \(\text{\&}xe7\) \(\mp\) followed by doubling rooks on the b-file and pressure on the b2-pawn.
b) 10 exd5? \(\text{\textcolor{red}{x}}\)g5 11 axb5 0-0 12 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{e}}\)e2 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{b}}\)7 and here:

b1) 13 bxa6?! allows Black’s knight to occupy the excellent square b4:
13...\(\text{\textcolor{red}{c}}\)xa6 14 0-0 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{b}}\)4 15 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{e}}\)xa8 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)xa8 16 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{c}}\)c4 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{e}}\)f6! (this new move improves over 16...\(\text{\textcolor{red}{d}}\)xd5?, which squanders Black’s advantage: 17 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{c}}\)g5 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{g}}\)xg5 18 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{e}}\)e4 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{f}}\)f5 19 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{g}}\)g3 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{e}}\)e5 20 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{e}}\)e1 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{d}}\)d4 21 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{d}}\)xd4 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)xd4 22 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)xd5 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{d}}\)xd5 23 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{c}}\)f5 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{e}}\)e6 1/2-1/2 Sisatto-Markos, European Clubs Cup, Rogășka Slatina 2011) 17 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{b}}\)b3 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{g}}\)6.\n
b2) 13 0-0 axb5 14 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)xa8 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)xa8 15 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{b}}\)xb5 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{d}}\)xd5 16 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{c}}\)c4 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{e}}\)xc4 17 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{e}}\)xc4 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)f6\(\text{\textcolor{red}{f}}\) Tishin-Ovechkin, Alushta 2004. Black has a clear extra pawn.

c) 10 axb5?! is an interesting new move, but Black is fine: 10...\(\text{\textcolor{red}{x}}\)g5 11 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{c}}\)c4! (another spectacular knight jump; White does not take the knight and hopes to achieve more) 11...\(\text{\textcolor{red}{b}}\)6! (White’s main idea is 11...\(\text{\textcolor{red}{e}}\)e7?! 12 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)xd5 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)a7 13 e5! with the initiative) 12 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{d}}\)xg5 (12 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{b}}\)xb6 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{w}}\)xb6 13 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{b}}\)xg5 0-0 14 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{c}}\)c4 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)a7 is equal, while after 12 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{d}}\)xd6+ \(\text{\textcolor{red}{e}}\)8 13 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{d}}\)xg5 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)g5 14 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{e}}\)xc8 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)xc8 15 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{b}}\)6! \(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)xb6 16 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{d}}\)d6+ \(\text{\textcolor{red}{e}}\)7 17 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{w}}\)xb6 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{w}}\)xe4+ 18 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{e}}\)e2 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{d}}\)d7 19 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{d}}\)d6+ \(\text{\textcolor{red}{w}}\)e7 = Black is a pawn up but White will definitely take one pawn back) 12...\(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)xc4 13 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{d}}\)d5 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)a7 14 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)xc4 0-0 = followed by ...h6 and ...\(\text{\textcolor{red}{e}}\)e6.

10...\(\text{\textcolor{red}{w}}\)xe7 11 axb5 0-0 (D)

\[\text{\textcolor{red}{c}}4\]

Or:

a) 12 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{e}}\)e2?! (Bernal-Sanz, Villa Martelli 2004) gives White nothing special: 12...\(\text{\textcolor{red}{f}}\)f4 13 0-0 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{w}}\)xe2+ 14 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{w}}\)xe2 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{b}}\)7 15 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{f}}\)e1 axb5 16 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)xa8 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)xa8 17 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{w}}\)xb5 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{c}}\)6=.

b) 12 bxa6?! is also dubious: after 12...\(\text{\textcolor{red}{b}}\)4 13 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{e}}\)e2 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{f}}\)5! (a strong move that emphasizes Black’s development advantage) 14 exf5 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)a6! (catching White’s king in the centre) 15 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)xa6 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)a6 16 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{f}}\)f1 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{x}}\)f5! (after the natural 16...\(\text{\textcolor{red}{b}}\)7?! White holds the pawn by 17 g4!, Wu Li-Aagaard, British Ch, Great Yarmouth 2007) 17 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)xa6 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)xa6 Black has a small but obvious advantage.

12...\(\text{\textcolor{red}{b}}\)4 13 0-0 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{b}}\)7

Black is totally OK; e.g., 14 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{e}}\)e1 (or 14 bxa6 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{b}}\)8xa6 15 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)a1 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{c}}\)7 16 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\)a3
\[ \text{62 ATTACK WITH BLACK} \]

\text{f6 17 b3 e6 = Dautov-Volokitin, Bundesliga 2003/4) 14...axb5 15 \text{xa8 xa8 16 xb5 c6 = ½-½ Beliavsky-Cvitan, Slovenian Team Ch, Celje 2004.} \]

\text{C2) 9 d3!}?

So far, this is only White's 4th most popular move, but a lot of new games can be expected here since it's both logical and quite promising.

9 ... 0-0

9 ... \text{xd5? does not work because of 10 exd5 \text{xe5 11 e2+ e7 12 axb5 0-0 0-0 ½ with an obvious advantage since Black's queenside can't be developed well.} \]

10 0-0 \text{xd5! 11 xe7!?} \]

This new move varies from 11 exd5 \text{xe5 12 xe5 \text{xe5 13 axb5 \text{b7 14 c3 axb5 15 xa8 xa8 16 xb5 b7 17 d3 e7 = followed by ...d7, Cori Tello-A.Muzychuk, World Girls Ch, Chotowa 2010.} \]

11 ... \text{xe7 12 axb5 b7 13 c3 (D) Or:} \]

a) 13...axb5?! is premature due to 14 \text{xa8 xa8 15 xb5 bc6 16 d2 and d1.} \]

b) First, I thought that 13...b6?! should help Black to get good play but my editor Graham Burgess pointed out that White has the unexpected 14 e5!: \]

b1) 14...axb5 15 \text{xe7+! xe7 16 g5+ h6 17 g4 is close to lost for Black.} \]

b2) 14...d5? 15 a4 leaves Black unable to defend the c5-pawn because 15 ...c7? loses to 16 xh7+! \text{xe7 17 g5+ h6 (17...g6 18 g4 +-, etc.) 18 d3! intending \text{h7+.}} \]

b3) 14...xe5 is the best of a bad bunch. After 15 a4 c7 16 b6 c6 17 e1 = followed by e4 White has a very pleasant game.

The line 13...b6?! 14 e5! helped me to find the text-move, which eliminates White's tactical motifs: now \text{xe7+ ideas are ruled out.} \]

14 d2

Here 14 e5 does not have a similar effect because after 14...d5 White has no a4 idea.

14 ... b6 15 fd1

Eyeing the d6-pawn.

15 ... axb5 16 xa8 xa8 17 xb5 d5!

Black removes a weakness and thus solves all his problems; e.g., 18 exd5 \text{xd5 19 c4 xc3 20 xc3 xf3 21 xf3 xb2 =.} \]

\text{C3) 9 xf6 xf6 (D) 10 axb5}
BLUMENFELD GAMBIT: 5 \( \text{	extbullet} \text{g}5 \)

Or:

a) With 10 \( \text{w}c2?! \) White tries to force \( ... \text{b}4 \) so that he can occupy the c4-square, but Black has an alternative: 10 \( \text{w}a5+! \) (Black pins the a4-pawn and defends b5 a second time) 11 \( \text{c}bd2 \text{b}7 \) (Black’s primary task is to solve his problems on the queenside) 12 \( \text{e}2 \) (in the case of 12 \( \text{w}b1 \), Black simply moves back: 12...\( \text{w}b6 \) with a great position) 12...\( \text{c}d7 \) 13 0-0 \( \text{w}b6 \) (right in time; White again can’t force Black to move the b5-pawn) 14 \( \text{a}3 \) (intending \( \text{b}3 \) and \( \text{c}4 \)) 14...\( \text{c}4 \! \! \text{f} \) Shalimov-Aveskulov, Kharkov 2005. The spectacular line 15 axb5 axb5 16 \( \text{xa}8+ \text{xa}8 \) 17 \( \text{xc}4 \)! gives White nothing: after 17...\( \text{bx}c4 \) 18 \( \text{xc}4 \text{wb}8 \) 19 \( \text{xb}6+ \text{xb}6 \) 20 \( \text{c}8+ \text{d}8 \) 21 \( \text{xa}8 \) 0-0 \( \text{w} \) Black’s bishop is stronger than the three white pawns.

b) 10 \( \text{a}2 \)! is another attempt to force \( ... \text{b}4 \), but again it does not work due to 10...\( \text{a}5+! \) (this novelty improves over Barlov-Djorić, Mataruska Banja 1997):

b1) After 11 \( \text{d}2 \), any ideas of playing \( \text{b}2\text{c}4 \) are too long-winded, so Black can happily play 11...\( \text{b}4 \) 12 \( \text{e}2 \) (12 \( \text{a}3 ? \text{xa}4 \? \! \) 12...0-0 13 \( \text{d}7 \) 14 \( \text{b}3 \text{c}7 \) 15 \( \text{f}4 \text{e}5 \) 16 \( \text{bd}2 \text{e}7 \), with a preferable position.

b2) 11 \( \text{b}2 \) 0-0 and then:

b21) After 12 \( \text{d}3 \text{g}4 \) 13 0-0 \( \text{d}7 \), only White can have problems.

b22) 12 \( \text{b}1 \)? threatens \( \text{xb}5 \), but after 12...\( \text{bx}a4 \) 13 \( \text{d}3 \) (13 \( \text{c}2 \text{d}7 \) \( \text{w} \) and ...\( \text{b}5 \)!) 13...\( \text{d}7 \) 14 0-0 \( \text{b}6 \) \( \text{w} \) White can’t take back on a4.

b23) 12 \( \text{a}1 \) also threatens \( \text{xb}5 \), and now 12...\( \text{xa}4 \) will be met by 13 \( \text{xa}4 \). Thus Black should acquiesce by 12...\( \text{b}4 \), but White is in no position to take advantage of this concession because his pieces have taken up some very strange squares in the process. 13 \( \text{d}3 \text{g}4 \) 14 0-0 \( \text{d}7 \) gives Black a comfortable position where his dark-squared bishop dominates the long diagonal.

10...\( \text{xb}2 \) 11 \( \text{a}2 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 12 \( \text{d}3 \)

Instead, 12 \( \text{b}2 \) 0-0 13 \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{b}7 \) 14 0-0 and 12 \( \text{e}2 \) 0-0 13 0-0 \( \text{b}7 \) 14 \( \text{bd}2 \) \( \text{xb}5 \) 15 \( \text{xa}8 \) \( \text{xa}8 \) 16 \( \text{xb}5 \) lead to the main line.

Or 12 \( \text{ba}6 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 13 \( \text{b}2 \), and now:

a) 13...\( \text{xa}6 \) looks fine. 14 \( \text{a}4+ \text{e}7 \) 15 \( \text{e}2 \)?! (15 \( \text{c}2 ? \! \) 15...\( \text{b}7 \) 16 \( \text{c}4 \text{xa}2 \) 17 \( \text{xa}2 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 18 0-0 \( \text{a}8 \) 19 \( \text{c}2 \text{b}2 \) 20 \( \text{xb}2 \) \( \text{xb}2 \) 21 \( \text{c}4 \text{a}6 \) 22 \( \text{b}1 \) and now 22...\( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{w} \) intending ...\( \text{b}4 \) is an improvement over 22...\( \text{xc}4 \)\! \! \text{f} 23 \( \text{xc}4 \) \( \text{a}1 = \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} \) Jobava-Ghaem Maghami, Istanbul 2004.

b) I propose 13...0-0, aiming to take on a6 with the knight, with ...\( \text{b}4 \) in prospect. After 14 \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{xa}6 \) 15 0-0 \( \text{b}7 \) 16 \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{d}8 \)! (16...\( \text{c}7 ? \! \) 17 \( \text{e}5 \)
dxe5 18 d6 d8 19 fxe5 ±) 17 a5 d7 the game is objectively equal, but Black can even hope for an advantage.

12...0-0 13 0-0

13 bd2 b7 14 0-0 comes to the same thing.

13...b7 14 bd2 axb5 15 xxa8 xa8

From now on, the a8-bishop is the main problem that Black must solve.

16 xb5

Black should hurry to develop his queenside.

16...d7!

16...b7?? lets White seize the initiative: 17 a4! (keeping the knight on b8) 17...e7 18 a7 a6 19 xe7 xe7 20 b1 xb5 21 xb5 ± Naumkin-Salvador, Cutro 2008.

17 a4

17 c4 b6 18 e3 c7 =.

17...b6 18 a5

18 a7 b8 19 xb8 xb8 20 b1 d8!= defending b6 and preparing ...b7.

18...c7 19 c4 b8 20 b1 (D)

This new move makes use of an important tactical motif, and enables Black to defend actively.

20...d8 is passive but also sufficient to maintain equality. 21 xb6 xb6 22 xb6 and now:

a) 22 xb6?! 23 d2 f5!? (not 23...c7? 24 c6 a6 25 xa8 xa8 26 b7 ± Van Wely-Feigin, Dutch Team Ch 2008/9) 24 f3 fxe4 25 fxe4 c7 26 f2 ± Black’s pieces are too cramped on the queenside.

b) 22...xb6! was mentioned by Boris Alterman in his book The Alterman Gambit Guide: Black Gambits 1. The analysis runs 23 c6 xc6 24 dxc6 xa8! 25 f1 a6 26 e2 c7 27 d3 xc6 28 c4 f8 29 d5 b6 30 xb6 xb6 31 d2 c4 32 xc4 xf2 33 xd6 =.

21 exd5 xa5 22 xa5 xd5

Black intends ...a2 or ...d8. His bishop-pair and central pawns give him enough compensation; e.g., 23 d2 (only move) 23...a2 24 c6 (after 24 e1 c6 Black has ideas of taking on b5 or playing ...c3; then 25 b1 a2 repeats) 24...b6 25 e1 g6! and now:

a) White even has a chance to get a worse position: 26 e4 g7! and now not 27 xd6? f8! 28 c4 (28 e8? g7 +=) 28...xc6 29 xa2 xd6, but 27 a4 a6 28 b5 b6 =.

b) 26 e8+ g7 27 b8 xb8 28 xb8 d5 29 c6 c3 (29...c4? allows White to blockade the black pawns and gradually capture them after 30 b4 c3 31 xa2 xd2 32 c6! c3 33 b4 d4 34 b5 +- ) 30 f3 f6 =. Black is fine since it is very hard for White to make any sort of progress.
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5: 3 e3 

The possibilities from this position shall be our topic for the rest of the book. The most important is the natural 3 d5, which we shall meet with 3...b5, the Benko Gambit. Another important move is 3 ♙f3, when we shall place our faith in the Vaganian Gambit, 3...cxd4 4 ♙xd4 e5 5 ♘b5 d5 6 cxd5 ♘c5.

In the present chapter, we shall take a look at two less ambitious moves for White:

A: 3 dxc5

B: 3 e3

A)

3 dxc5

The capture on c5 is an attempt to lead the game into quiet channels, but Black’s rapid piece development can lead to some interesting possibilities.

3...e6

3...♘a6 is also playable.

4 ♙f3 ♘xc5 (D)

Black will make the ...d5 advance and thanks to his better development will enjoy good play.

5 e3

5 ♙g5? of course fails to 5...♗xf2+.

5 a3 0-0 6 b4?! (6 e3 d5 transposes to the main line, and 6 ♙c3 d5 7 e3 to note ‘b’ to Black’s 7th move) is too provocative: 6...♗e7 7 ♙c3 a5 8 b5 d5 gives Black the initiative.

After 5 ♙c3 d5 both 6 e3 and 6 cxd5 exd5 7 e3 ♙c6 lead to the next note.

5...d5 6 a3

Sooner or later White will play a3 to defend the b4-square.

Or 6 ♙c3 ♙c6 7 cxd5 exd5, and now:

a) 8 a3 0-0 9 b4?! (playing b4 so early usually leads to problems for White since his pieces are not yet ready for a battle on the queenside after Black plays ...a5) 9...♗d6 10 ♙b5 ♙b8 11 ♙b2 a5 12 bxa5 ♕e4! † Van Wely-J.Polgar, Hoogeveen 1997.

b) 8 ♙e2 0-0 9 0-0 a6! (an important move – Black’s bishop will be
well-placed on a7) 10 a3 \(a/a7\) 11 b4 d4 (without b4, this breakthrough was possible but less effective) 12 exd4 \(\textit{exd4}\) 13 \(\textit{exd4}\) \(\textit{exd4}\) 14 \(\textit{b2}\) \(\textit{e6}\) 15 \(\textit{f3}\) (½/½ Hort-Kindermann, Zurich 1984) 15...\(\textit{c8}\) 16 \(\textit{c1}\) b5 with a comfortable position for Black.

6...0-0 (D)

\[\text{Diagram} W\]

7 \(\textit{bd2}\)

Or:

a) Again 7 b4?! leads to trouble: 7...\(\textit{e7}\) 8 \(\textit{b2}\) (8 \(\textit{bd2}\) a5 9 b5 b6 10 \(\textit{b2}\) \(\textit{b7}\) 11 \(\textit{e2}\) \(\textit{bd7}\) 12 0-0 \(\textit{c8}\) 13 \(\textit{c1}\) \(\textit{c5}\) 14 \(\textit{c2}\) \(\textit{fe4}\) and Black is the first to create pressure, Galkin-Savchenko, Turkish Team Ch, Konya 2011) 8...\(\textit{xc4}\)! (Black moves into a queenless middlegame where he gets the advantage thanks to the ...a5 option) 9 \(\textit{xd8}\) (9 \(\textit{xc4}\) \(\textit{xd1+}\) 10 \(\textit{xd1}\) a5 11 b5 \(\textit{bd7}\) 12 a4, Ratkovich-Lutsko, Belarusian Ch, Minsk 2002, 12...b6 \(\textit{f}\) and ...\(\textit{c5}\), ...\(\textit{b7}\), ...\(\textit{fd8}\), ...\(\textit{ac8}\), etc.) 9...\(\textit{xd8}\) 10 \(\textit{xc4}\) b6 11 \(\textit{bd2}\) \(\textit{b7}\) 12 \(\textit{e2}\) \(\textit{bd7}\) 13 \(\textit{hd1}\) a5 \(\textit{f}\) T.Sørensen-P.H.Nielsen, Aalborg 1993.

b) 7 \(\textit{c3}\) \(\textit{xc4}\)! and then:

b1) 8 \(\textit{xd8}\)?! \(\textit{xd8}\) 9 \(\textit{xc4}\) b6 10 \(\textit{e2}\) (compared to line ‘b2’, White has lost a tempo; or 10 0-0 \(\textit{b7}\) 11 b4 \(\textit{e7}\) 12 \(\textit{b2}\) a5 13 \(\textit{bxa5}\) \(\textit{xa5}\) 14 \(\textit{fd1}\) \(\textit{c8}\) 15 \(\textit{e2}\) \(\textit{bd7}\) with the better chances for Black) 10...\(\textit{b7}\) 11 \(\textit{d2}\) (11 b3? \(\textit{c6}\)! (intending ...\(\textit{a5}\)) 12 \(\textit{d3}\) \(\textit{g4}\) \(\text{\(\textit{f}\)}\) intending ...\(\textit{ce5}\) or ...\(\textit{ge5}\); 11 b4 \(\textit{e7}\) 12 \(\textit{b2}\) \(\textit{bd7}\) 13 \(\textit{hd1}\) \(\textit{ac8}\) 14 \(\textit{b3}\) a5 \(\textit{f}\)) 11...\(\textit{bd7}\) 12 b4 \(\textit{e7}\) 13 \(\textit{hc1}\) (Galego-Svetushkin, Panormo rapid 2001) 13...\(\textit{g4}\)! \(\textit{f}\) intending ...\(\textit{de5}\) or ...\(\textit{ge5}\) gives Black a strong initiative.

b2) 8 \(\textit{xc4}\) \(\textit{xd1+}\) 9 \(\textit{xd1}\) \(\textit{d8+}\) 10 \(\textit{e2}\) \(\textit{bd7}\) 11 \(\textit{d1}\) b6 and now:

b21) 12 b4?! again leads to problems: 12...\(\textit{e7}\) 13 \(\textit{b2}\) \(\textit{b7}\) followed by ...a5 with a very comfortable position for Black.

b22) The modest 12 b3 enables White to hold the balance: 12...\(\textit{b7}\) 13 \(\textit{b2}\) a6 14 \(\textit{ac1}\) \(\textit{e7} = \text{Tunik-Yakovich, Moscow Ch 1996.}

7...a6!?

Black intends to take on c4 and play ...b5.

8 b4

Here how Black’s idea works: 8 \(\textit{e2?!}\) \(\textit{xc4}\) 9 \(\textit{xc4}\) b5 10 \(\textit{xd8}\) \(\textit{xd8}\) 11 \(\textit{ce5}\) \(\textit{b7}\) \(\textit{f}.\)

8...\(\textit{e7}\) 9 \(\textit{b2}\) a5

Even with the loss of a tempo (...a6-a5) this idea is still effective. After 10 b5 \(\textit{bd7}\) 11 \(\textit{e2}\) b6 12 0-0 \(\textit{b7}\) = Black is fine, Franić-Sedlak, Bizovac 2009.

B)

3 e3
This solid continuation is sometimes chosen when White doesn’t want to compete in a theoretical battle in the Benko Gambit or Modern Benoni. But a modest choice also tends to lead to modest results.

3...g6

Black is not scared of White playing d5 since this will lead to a Benoni with an extra tempo for Black due to White playing e3-e4 (to which there isn’t much alternative).

Another common scenario is for White to develop 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5: 3.e3 and 0-0, allowing Black to exchange pawns on d4. If he recaptures with exd4, then Black will normally play ...d5, when White may end up with an isolated d-pawn. It is possible for Black to reach this structure immediately by 3.cxd4 exd4 d5, but this transposes to the Caro-Kann Panov Attack, where White gets a great deal of piece activity to compensate for his structural liability. By delaying the exchange on d4 until White has developed more modestly, Black hopes to enjoy the structural plus without facing such a strong initiative.

4.△c3

Or:

a) White can also start with 4.△f3 g7 5.△c3, reaching Line B2.

b) 4.d5 and now 4...g7 5.△c3 transposes to Line B1. 4...b5 is feasible, but then 5.cxb5 a6 transposes to a line of the Benko that I am not recommending for Black in this book, i.e. 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5 4.cxb5 a6 5.e3 g6. Also you should remember that after 4.△c3 g7 5.d5, 5...b5 is impossible in any case, so there Black is forced to adopt the Benoni set-up.

c) White can take on c5 on this move as well. After 4.dxc5 △a6 White has two main options: to advance with b4 or simply to develop:

c1) 5.a3 △xc5 6.b4 △e6 7.b2 g7 8.△f3 0-0 9.△e2 b6 10.0-0.△b7 11.△bd2 d6?! (11...d5?! helps White deploy his pieces: 12.△b3 dxc4 13.△xc4 ± Mateuta-A.Szabo, Felix Spa 2007) 12.△b3 c8 leads to an equal position.

c2) 5.△c3 g7 6.△f3 △xc5 7.△e2 0-0 8.0-0 b6 9.△d4 △b7 10.b4 (Black got a nice position with the bishop-pair in Airapetian-Y.Vovk, Ukrainian Team Ch, Alushta 2005: 10.△f3?! d5! 11.b4 △ce4 12.△xe4 △xe4 13.△xe4 dxe4 14.△b2 △c8 15.△b3 6d8 16.△fd1 a6 17.△ac1 e5 18.△e2 6e6 ǂ) 10...△e4 11.△xe4 △xe4 12.△b2 d5 = Hertneck-Groszpeter, Kecskemét 1990. Black has solved his opening problems.

4...g7 (D)
68 AITACK WITH BLACK

B1: 5 d5  68
B2: 5 d5  71

For 5 dxc5 a6, see note ‘c2’ to White’s 4th move above.

B1)

5 d5

This is the most appropriate moment to make this advance since ...b5 is now impossible. As we have already noted, we now have a Benoni position, where White will be a tempo down compared to standard lines if he plays e4. But it’s important to understand these positions since it’s a hard task to play a strange opening even with an extra tempo if you know nothing about it. Even Kramnik could not solve his opening problems against Morozevich, when he unexpectedly ended up in a Benoni structure without his normal level of preparation. Playing Black’s position successfully requires you to be familiar with some typical Benoni ideas and themes, which is why I shall be stressing the most relevant ones throughout this section.

5...0-0 6 d5

After 6 e4 e6 Black should not be scared by the aggressive 7 e5 (7 d5 transposes to the note to White’s 7th move below) as White’s overextended central pawns will soon come under attack. 7...d5 and then:

a) 8 f4? d6! (blowing up the centre!) 9 d5 exd5 10 cxd5 (10 cxd5 d6 11 a3 b6 gives Black control of the centre) 10...g4 11...d7; White is unable to hold his pawn-centre.

b) 8 d6 9 g5 (9 f4?! exd5 10 xd5 b6 allows Black the initiative) 9...d7 gives Black easy equality.

6...e6 (D)

7 d2

White avoids a quick e4 advance in order to reach little-studied positions where Black will find it harder to implement ready-made plans.

The alternative is simply to acquiesce to the loss of a tempo immediately by 7 e4 exd5. Then:

a) 8 axd5 d6 9 d3 a6 10 a4 g4 11 h3 xf3 12 xf3 b7 13 ef2 reaches a position that is quite common with White to move. Here Black has an extra tempo and can play 13...h5!?, seeking play on the dark squares. 14 0-0 (14 g4 e3+! 15 bxc3 xf3 gives Black the initiative) 14...d4 15 c2 (15 c2 e5 16 c2 xf6! intending ...f4 leaves Black better since 17 f4? is simply bad: 17...h4! 18 fxe5 g3+ 19 h1 xe5 20 g1 h2+ 21 f2 f5 ++) 15...e8 16 e2 c8! with a strong initiative for Black. His ideas include ...e5 and ...h4.
1 d4 d6 2 c4 c5: 3 e3 AND 3 dxc5

b) 8 exd5 d6 9 e2 e5 10 0-0 e4 (Black uses the ...e4 exchanging manoeuvre to get more space for his pieces – we shall see this idea again) 11 cxe4 cxe4 12 g5 f5 = Moracchini-Montheard, Clichy 1998. Black has no problems.

7...exd5 8 cxd5

8 cxd5?! is worse because the exchange of knights uncovers the g7-bishop and gains nothing in return. 8...cxd5 9 xd5 (9 cxd5 d6=) 9...d6 10 0-0 c6 11 d1 e6 12 xd6 12 d2 is more solid, but passive; after 12...e8= it’s not clear how White should complete his development) 12 d4! (that’s the point: Black has managed to defend the d6-pawn indirectly) 13 xd4 13 xd5? e2+ 14 f1 xd5 15 xd5 dxc4 16 e2 xd5= 17 e1 b5= 13...xd4 14 xd4 e2 15 xd4 dxc4 16 exd4 d4=.

8...d6 9 0-0 e8

Stopping e4 and thinking of playing ...e4 himself. From now on, the e4-square becomes critical and keeping this idea in mind should help you to orientate yourself in this variation.

Despite the high pedigree of the move 9...g4?! I cannot see any point in exchanging off the light-squared bishop, since after 10 h3 xf3 11 xf3 White has the plan of playing on the queenside by b4, while Black can only defend. For example, 11...bd7 12 a4 a6 and now:

a) 13 g4?! is not too convincing: 13...c4! 14 e2 (Morozevich-Kramnik, World Ch, Mexico City 2007) 14 e5! (Marin’s idea) 15 f4 d3 16 xd3 cxd3 17 xd3 d7 intending ...e8, ...b6, ...e7, ...ae8, ...c5, etc., with a comfortable position for the pawn.

b) 13 c2 c4 14 e2 c7 15 d1 c5 16 a5 fc8 and now is the right time for 17 e4 ±, as in Jovanič-Dorić, Croatian Team Ch, Šibenik 2010. White aims to play e3, a4 or a4.

10 d2

Very good play was demonstrated by Black in Gombac-Šolak, Nova Gorica 2011: 10 e1 a6 (planning ...d7, ...b8 and then {after White plays a4} ...b4) 11 f1 e4! (White wanted to play e4 but Black easily stops this) 12 cxe4 cxe4 13 d3 e8 14 h3 (first, White prevents ...g4) 14...d7 (intending ...b5, which White should prevent) 15 a4 b4 (now the knight is comfortably placed on b4) 16 b1 a5!. An interesting move to fix the a4-pawn and prepare ...b5 with an initiative on the queenside.

10...a6 (D)
a) 11 $\underline{\text{e}}\text{e}1 \square c7$ (attacking d5) 12 e4 $\underline{\text{b}}\text{b}8$ (preparing ...b5) 13 a4 a6 and now:

a1) 14 $\underline{\text{b}}\text{b}1$?? unwisely allows the reply 14...b5. The point is that 15 b4 cxb4 16 $\underline{\text{b}}\text{b}4$ fails to 16...$\mathbb{N}$g4! (even stronger than the simple win of the exchange by 16...a5 17 $\underline{\text{x}}\text{x}b5$ $\underline{\text{c}}\text{xb}5$ 18 $\underline{\text{d}}\text{d}4$ $\underline{\text{b}}\text{b}3$ $\underline{\text{d}}\text{d}7$ † Ibragimov-Khalifman, St Petersburg 1994) 17 $\underline{\text{b}}\text{b}3$ (17 $\underline{\text{x}}\text{g}4$ $\underline{\text{x}}\text{c}3$ 18 $\underline{\text{b}}\text{b}3$ $\underline{\text{x}}\text{g}4$ 19 $\underline{\text{b}}\text{b}3$ $\underline{\text{x}}\text{d}5$ 20 $\underline{\text{d}}\text{d}1$ $\underline{\text{e}}\text{e}7$ †) 17...$\underline{\text{x}}\text{h}5$! 18 axb5 axb5 † with a useful extra pawn.

a2) 14 a5 $\underline{\text{d}}\text{d}7$ = intending ...$\mathbb{N}$b5 or ...$\mathbb{N}$b5 leaves Black fine.

b) 11 e4 and here it’s important to keep the knight on a6 for a while, since it makes a4 less attractive for White, as the knight can hop into b4. Thus:

b1) 11...$\mathbb{N}$c7?! is premature. 12 a4 and then:

b11) 12...b6, as chosen in Tihonov-Marin, Solsones 2004, does not solve Black’s problems. Then 13 f3! $\underline{\text{d}}\text{d}7$ 14 $\underline{\text{c}}\text{c}4$ $\underline{\text{e}}\text{e}5$ 15 $\underline{\text{e}}\text{e}3$?! † is a typical manoeuvre for White in the Benoni. He avoids exchanges since Black’s pieces lack space to regroup. The e5-knight will be pushed back by f4 and the e3-knight will return to c4, leaving Black cramped.

b12) 12...$\underline{\text{b}}\text{b}8$ 13 f3! (preparing $\underline{\text{c}}\text{c}4$) 13...$\underline{\text{d}}\text{d}7$ (13...a6 14 a5 $\underline{\text{d}}\text{d}7$ 15 $\underline{\text{c}}\text{c}4$ $\underline{\text{b}}\text{b}5$ 16 $\underline{\text{e}}\text{e}3$ †) 14 $\underline{\text{c}}\text{c}4$ $\underline{\text{e}}\text{e}5$ 15 $\underline{\text{a}}\text{a}3$ f5 16 $\underline{\text{f}}\text{f}4$ † followed by $\underline{\text{d}}\text{d}2$ and $\underline{\text{a}}\text{a}1$.

b2) 11...$\underline{\text{b}}\text{b}8$! 12 f3 (12 $\underline{\text{e}}\text{e}1$ $\square c7$ transposes to line ‘a’) 12...$\underline{\text{h}}\text{h}5$?! (intending...$\underline{\text{f}}\text{f}4$) 13 f4 (Black can be happy with the complications arising after 13 $\underline{\text{c}}\text{c}4$ b5 14 $\underline{\text{x}}\text{xb}5$ $\underline{\text{xb}}\text{b}5$ 15 $\underline{\text{d}}\text{d}6$ $\underline{\text{b}}\text{b}6$ 16 $\underline{\text{x}}\text{e}8$ $\underline{\text{d}}\text{d}4$+ 17 $\underline{\text{h}}\text{h}1$ $\underline{\text{w}}\text{e}8$) 13...f6 14 $\underline{\text{f}}\text{f}3$ b6!?? (after 14...b5 Black should be prepared for 15 a4?!) Now it’s not clear what White should do since 15 $\underline{\text{c}}\text{c}4$ will be met by 15...b5!. Otherwise, Black can simply play ...$\mathbb{N}$c7 and ...$\mathbb{N}$a6 with a comfortable position.

11...$\mathbb{N}$e4!?

I recommend this new move. Black exchanges one pair of knights before White can play f3 and e4.

If Black plays the slow 11...$\mathbb{N}$c7 12 a4 b6 (Lobron-Wojtkiewicz, Frankfurt rapid 2000) then 13 f3?! intending e4 appears to give White everything he could dream about after such a modest opening choice.

12 $\underline{\text{b}}\text{b}5$

Black copes with the complications after 12 $\underline{\text{x}}\text{e}4$ $\underline{\text{x}}\text{e}4$ 13 $\underline{\text{d}}\text{d}2$ (13 a4 is still met by 13...$\mathbb{N}$b4 =) 13...b5 14 $\underline{\text{a}}\text{a}5$ (14 $\underline{\text{a}}\text{a}5$? $\underline{\text{e}}\text{e}7$ 15 $\underline{\text{d}}\text{d}2$ $\underline{\text{a}}\text{a}4$! (an unusual but effective square for the rook) 16 $\underline{\text{c}}\text{c}3$ $\underline{\text{x}}\text{c}3$ 17 bxc3 $\underline{\text{d}}\text{d}7$ †) 14...$\underline{\text{e}}\text{e}8$! Black is fine; e.g., 15 $\underline{\text{c}}\text{c}6$ $\underline{\text{c}}\text{c}7$ 16 $\underline{\text{a}}\text{a}5$ $\underline{\text{x}}\text{d}5$! and then:

a) 17 $\underline{\text{d}}\text{d}8$? $\underline{\text{b}}\text{b}6$! 18 $\underline{\text{f}}\text{f}3$ (or 18 $\underline{\text{x}}\text{d}6$?! $\underline{\text{g}}\text{g}4$! 19 $\underline{\text{x}}\text{g}4$ $\underline{\text{x}}\text{d}8$ 20 $\underline{\text{g}}\text{g}3$ $\underline{\text{x}}\text{b}2$ † with an extra pawn) 18...$\underline{\text{a}}\text{a}4$! 19 $\underline{\text{x}}\text{b}6$ (19 $\underline{\text{xa}}\text{a}8$? $\underline{\text{xa}}\text{a}8$ and Black wins) 19...$\underline{\text{b}}\text{b}6$ 20 $\underline{\text{x}}\text{d}6$ (20 $\underline{\text{xa}}\text{a}8$ $\underline{\text{xa}}\text{a}8$ 21 $\underline{\text{x}}\text{d}6$ $\underline{\text{d}}\text{d}7$ 22 $\underline{\text{b}}\text{b}7$ $\underline{\text{c}}\text{c}6$ 23 $\underline{\text{c}}\text{c}7$ $\underline{\text{a}}\text{a}7$ †) 20...$\underline{\text{d}}\text{d}7$ 21 $\underline{\text{b}}\text{b}7$ $\underline{\text{e}}\text{e}5$ 22 $\underline{\text{x}}\text{b}6$ c4 †.

b) 17 $\underline{\text{x}}\text{d}5$ $\underline{\text{b}}\text{b}7$ 18 $\underline{\text{x}}\text{b}5$ a6 19 $\underline{\text{e}}\text{e}2$ $\underline{\text{e}}\text{e}6$ (first defending d6) 20 $\underline{\text{f}}\text{f}3$ $\underline{\text{c}}\text{c}8$ =.

12...$\underline{\text{c}}\text{c}7$ 13 a4 $\underline{\text{xb}}\text{b}5$ 14 axb5 f5
Thanks to his control of the e4-square (which means the c1-bishop is blocked in) and the exchange of one pair of knights, Black’s position is absolutely safe and he has no problem pieces. A possible plan is ...b6, ...c7, ...d7, etc.

B2)

5 \( \triangle f3 \) 0-0 6 \( \triangle e2 \)

Other moves lead to positions we have already looked at:

a) For 6 d5, see Line B1.

b) 6 dxc5 \( \triangle a6 \) 7 \( \triangle e2 \) \( \triangle xc5 \) is discussed in note ‘c2’ to White’s 4th move in Line B.

6...cxd4

There is nothing to be gained by delaying this exchange any longer.

7 exd4

7 \( \triangle xd4 \) \( \triangle c6 \) (Black can also play the immediate 7...d5 8 cxd5 \( \triangle xd5 \) 9 0-0, when he can either take on c3 or transpose to line ‘b’ by 9...\( \triangle c6 \) and now:

a) 8 \( \triangle c2 \) prevents ...d5. White aims for a position akin to a Maroczy Bind (1 e4 c5 2 \( \triangle f3 \) \( \triangle c6 \) 3 d4 cxd4 4 \( \triangle xd4 \) g6 5 c4 \( \triangle g7 \) 6 \( \triangle e3 \) \( \triangle f6 \) 7 \( \triangle c3 \) 0-0 8 \( \triangle e2 \) d6 9 \( \triangle c2 \) ), but his slow play so far makes it unlikely to be effective. 8...d6 9 0-0 (9 e4 leaves White a tempo down on the Maroczy Bind; then 9...\( \triangle d7 \) 10 0-0 \( \triangle c5 \) 11 f3 f5! 12 exf5 \( \triangle xf5 \) gave Black a perfect arrangement of his minor pieces in In- kiov-Vaganian, European Team Ch, Plovdiv 1983) 9...\( \triangle e6 \) (intending ...d5) 10 e4 (we are again in a kind of Maroczy; although now ...f5 is not so powerful since it gives the extra tempo back due to ...\( \triangle e6xf5 \), it still remains one of Black’s main ideas) 10...\( \triangle d7 \) and then:

a1) 11 \( \triangle d5 \) \( \triangle c5 \) 12 f3 f5 13 exf5 \( \triangle xf5 \)? (preventing activity based on the b4 advance; 13...gxf5?! 14 \( \triangle b1! \) intending b4 gave White the initiative in Kholmov-Beliavsky, Vilnius Zonal 1975) 14 \( \triangle ce3 \) \( \triangle d7 \) and Black’s ideas of ...e6 or ...\( \triangle d4 \) grant him the initiative.

a2) 11 \( \triangle d2 \) \( \triangle c5 \) 12 f3 a5 was equal in P.Clarke-Eliskases, Leipzig Olympiad 1960. Black intends ...a4 in order to weaken the defence of the c4-pawn; also, ...f5 remains a worthy option.

b) 8 0-0 d5! 9 cxd5 (White’s c1-bishop remains a problem after 9 \( \triangle xc6 \) bxc6 10 \( \triangle a4 \) \( \triangle b6 \) = Teich-Rustemov, Bad Wiessee 1999) 9...\( \triangle d5 \) (D) and then:

\[ \text{Diagram} \]

b1) 10 \( \triangle xc6 \) bxc6 11 \( \triangle a4 \) looks natural, but the weakness of c6 plays no role since Black’s pieces are more active – just look at the c1-bishop and the rooks on f1 and a1. 11...\( \triangle f5 \) 12
\( \text{\#d2} \) (or 12 f3 \( \text{\#b6} \) 13 \( \text{\#c5} \) \( \text{\#d6} \) 14 \( \text{\#b3} \) c5 with the initiative) 12...\( \text{\#b8} \) 13 \( \text{\#c1} \) \( \text{\#d6} \) 14 \( \text{\#d1} \) \( \text{\#e5}! \) (14...\( \text{\#f6} \) ?, Landa-Atalik, Bad Wiessee 2003, 15 \( \text{\#f3} \) \( \pm \) gives the initiative back to White) 15 f4 (after 15 g3 \( \text{\#f6} \) \( \mp \) Black creates pressure on the b2-pawn) and now both sides have weak pawns but Black’s pieces are obviously more active:

b11) 15...\( \text{\#g7}?! \) 16 \( \text{\#f3} \), and now 16...\( \text{\#xf4}?! \) does not work due to 17 \( \text{\#c3} \) \( \text{\#d3} \) 18 \( \text{\#xg7}! \) (here we see why the bishop is better on f6) 18...\( \text{\#xg7} \) 19 \( \text{\#c3}+ \) \( \pm \) and e4 wins material.

b12) 15...\( \text{\#f6}! \) \( \mp \) is promising for Black. Now 16 \( \text{\#f3}?! \) is bad because after 16...\( \text{\#xf4}! \) 17 \( \text{\#c3} \) (17 exf4 \( \text{\#d4}+ \) and ...\( \text{\#xa4} \)) 17...\( \text{\#d3} \) \( \mp \) the knight stays alive.

b2) 10 \( \text{\#xd5} \) \( \text{\#xd5} \) 11 \( \text{\#f3} \) \( \text{\#c5} \) 12 \( \text{\#xc6} \) bxc6 13 \( \text{\#a4} \) \( \text{\#b8} \) is equal:

b21) 14 \( \text{\#xc6} \) \( \text{\#c6} \) 15 \( \text{\#xc6} \) \( \text{\#e6} \) 16 \( \text{\#a4} \) \( \text{\#f8} \) 16...\( \text{\#xb2} \) 17 \( \text{\#xb2} \) \( \text{\#xb2} \) 18 \( \text{\#b3} \) 1/2-1/2 Barcza-Korchnoi, Budapest-Leningrad match 1959; the ending is indeed equal, although in Schnitzspan-Krivoshei, Germany tt 2001/2 Black managed to win from this position) and now 17 \( \text{\#b3}! \) = is the easiest way for White to liquidate to a drawn ending. After 17 h3?! \( \text{\#c7}! \) (Hort-Timman, Wijk aan Zee 1982), 18 \( \text{\#b3}?! \) is already not good since the a7-pawn is defended, so Black has chances to get something real.

b22) 14 \( \text{\#b1} \) \( \text{\#e6} \) 15 b3 \( \text{\#b5} \) 16 \( \text{\#a3} \) \( \text{\#xa4} \) 17 bxa4 \( \text{\#f6} \) 18 \( \text{\#xc6} \) \( \text{\#xa2} \) 19 \( \text{\#bc1} \) a6 = Nogueiras-Kotsur, Istanbul Olympiad 2000.

7...d5 (D)

It quite often happens that the same position can arise from two totally different sequences. If White now castles, we shall have a position that can be reached via a sideline of the Grünfeld, namely 1 d4 \( \text{\#f6} \) 2 c4 g6 3 \( \text{\#c3} \) d5 4 \( \text{\#f3} \) \( \text{\#g7} \) 5 e3 0-0 6 \( \text{\#e2} \) c5 7 0-0 \( \text{cxd4} \) 8 exd4. Of course, this line is not the most critical choice against the Grünfeld. Perhaps a more illuminating parallel is with the Tarrasch QGD (1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 \( \text{\#c3} \) c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 \( \text{\#f3} \) \( \text{\#c6} \) 6 g3 \( \text{\#f6} \) 7 \( \text{\#g2} \) \( \text{\#e7} \) 8 0-0 0-0) – White is playing the black side of this opening with an extra tempo (I would like to thank my editor, Graham Burgess, for highlighting this to me). The problem for him is how to put that extra tempo to use, as Black can tailor his set-up depending on White’s play. The most important thing is that Black understands the basic strategic plans and chooses one where White’s extra move is not very useful.

The most common structure is for White to get an isolated pawn on d4. Black’s main ideas are play against the d4-pawn and on the light squares on
the queenside (...\(D)a5, ...\(e)e6, ...c8, etc.). If White does not want to play a position with an isolated pawn, he can opt for c5 at some point.

Now:

**B21:** 8 cxd5 73

**B22:** 8 c5 74

**B23:** 8 0-0 76

8 h3 \(D)c6 9 0-0 transposes to Line B23.

**B21)**

8 cxd5

There is little sense in taking on d5 yet because it just helps Black to improve his pieces.

8...\(D)xd5 9 0-0

It is safer and more consistent to push back the d5-knight first: 9 \(W)b3!? \(D)b6 10 0-0 \(e)e6 11 \(W)a3 \(D)c6 12 \(D)d1 \(D)d5 13 \(e)e3 (13 \(g)g5 h6 14 \(e)e3 \(W)a5 15 \(W)xa5 \(D)xa5 is equal, Gelashvili-Chadaev, Kavala 2008) 13...\(c)c4 14 \(D)x3 15 fxe3 \(D)d5 16 \(D)x5 \(D)x5 = Gelashvili-Kuljašević, Kavala 2008.

9...\(D)c6 (D)

Here the contours of the reversed Tarrasch are very clear.

10 \(W)e1

This is often a useful move in the reversed position, but here Black can avoid putting his bishop on g4, and choose a square that makes it harder to demonstrate why the rook is useful on e1. Other moves:

a) 10 \(g)g5 h6 11 \(e)e3 (there is nothing for the bishop to do on h4: 11 \(h)h4?! \(e)e6 \(\not= Denker-Lehmann, Wijk aan Zee 1972) 11...\(e)e6 12 \(W)d2 \(h)h7 13 \(D)e4 (the knight moves to c5 to attack e6 and b7 but thanks to his harmonious development, Black can ignore this) 13...\(c)c8!? 14 \(D)c5 \(g)g4 15 \(D)xb7 \(W)b6 16 \(D)c5 \(D)fd8 17 \(a)a4 \(W)b4 18 \(c)c3 \(c)b6 with active play to compensate for the small material deficit, Plaskett-Bellon, Bahrain 1990.

b) Now it is too late to push the knight back: 10 \(W)b3?! \(e)e6 11 \(W)b7 \(D)xd4 12 \(D)xd4 \(D)xd4 13 \(h)h6 (13 \(D)d1 \(D)c3 14 bxc3 \(W)c8? \(\not= Barle-Lalić, Yugoslav Team Ch, Brezovica 1988) 13...\(b)b8 14 \(W)a6 \(W)xb2! 15 \(D)xd5 \(W)xd5 16 \(W)xf8 \(W)xf8 \(\not= Kliuner-Siebrecht, Duisburg 1999. Black’s domination of the board is worth more than the sacrificed material.

c) 10 h3?! \(e)e6 (D) is instructive because, without making any blatantly tempo-losing moves, White has ended up playing the black side of a main-line Tarrasch QGD, without being a move up.

How has this happened? In the regular Tarrasch line, 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 \(D)c3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 \(f)f3 \(D)c6 6 g3 \(f)f6 7 \(g)g2 \(e)e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 \(g)g5 cxd4
10 \(\text{cxd4} \text{h6}\) 11 \(\text{xe3}\), the white bishop has reached e3 via g5 (where it moved to provoke Black to resolve the central tension). Here, the black bishop has moved directly to e6 after White exchanged voluntarily on d5. It’s unlikely that even the most ardent fan of the Tarrasch will choose to reach this position as White, but you may find some opponents stumbling into it by accident. Rather than repeating heavy-duty Tarrasch theory, I shall just mention a few interesting lines that keep pressure on White:

- c1) 11 \(\text{e4} \text{b6}\) 12 \(\text{c5} \text{xf5}\) 13 \(\text{a4} \text{c7}\).
- c2) 11 \(\text{e3} \text{c8}\) 12 \(\text{wd2} \text{b6}\) 13 \(\text{fd1} \text{fd8}\).
- c3) 11 \(\text{g5} \text{a5}\)! 12 \(\text{a4}\) (12 \(\text{wd2} \text{cxd4}\)! 13 \(\text{cxd4} \text{xd4}\)) gave Black an extra pawn in Masić-Pap, European Ch, Budva 2009) 12...\(\text{fd8}\) 13 \(\text{c5} \text{c8}\) 14 \(\text{b3} \text{b6}\).
- c4) 11 \(\text{e1} \text{a5}\)?? 12 \(\text{d2} \text{ac8}\)?? 13 \(\text{a4}\) (13 \(\text{c4} \text{e3}\)) and either queen retreat leads to interesting play:
- c41) 13...\(\text{c7}\) 14 \(\text{c1}\) (14 \(\text{c5} \text{cxd4}\) 15 \(\text{cxd4} \text{xd4}\) 16 \(\text{xe6} \text{fxe6}\)

\(\text{c42}\) 13...\(\text{d8}\) 14 \(\text{c5} \text{cxd4}\) 15 \(\text{cxd4} \text{xe6}\) 16 \(\text{c3} \text{f3} \text{d6}\).

\(\text{c4}\text{f4}\) 18...\(\text{xf3}\)! 19 \(\text{xf3} \text{d6}\) followed by ...\(\text{xb2}\) provides nice play for Black.

10...\(\text{xf5}\)

10...\(\text{e6}\)!! also deserves attention.

11 \(\text{g5}\)

11 \(\text{wb3}\) (D.Allan-Fishbein, Chicago 1989) 11...\(\text{e6}\)! 12 \(\text{xb7} \text{cxd4}\) 13 \(\text{cxd4} \text{xd4}\) is similar to note ‘b’ to White’s 10th move. The fact that the rook is on e1 instead of f1 does not amount to much.

11...\(\text{h6}\)

Now:

- a) 12 \(\text{h4}\) (Akatova-Gunina, Russian Women’s Team Ch, Dagomys 2010) allows Black to put pressure on d4. There is nothing to defend it, so White needs to take some action, ready or not: 12...\(\text{d4}!\) 13 \(\text{d5} \text{xe3}\) 14 \(\text{bxc3} \text{xd5}\) with an extra pawn.

- b) 12 \(\text{e3} \text{xe3}\) 13 \(\text{exe3}\) (Vidarte Morales-Peralta, La Bordeta 2010) 13...\(\text{e5}\)! (a new move) 14 \(\text{d5} \text{e4}\) 15 \(\text{dxc6} \text{exf3}\) 16 \(\text{exe3} \text{bxc6}\) 17 \(\text{exe6} \text{b8}\).

The two bishops have great prospects.

B22)

8 \(\text{c5}\)

This advance gives Black new possibilities thanks to the lack of pressure on the d5-pawn.

8...\(\text{c6}\) 9 0-0 \(\text{e4}\) (D)

Now Black has two main ideas. The first is to attack the c5-pawn by ...b6
and play on the queenside; the second is to play in the centre and on the kingside, with a possible advance of the e-, f- and g-pawns.

10...\textit{\textbf{f4}}

Or:

a) After 10 h3 Black can initiate play against White's pawn-centre by 10...b6!?, seeking to target the d4-pawn. 11 cxb6 (in case of 11 \textit{\textbf{b5}}, as in Bachmayr-Wendt, 2nd Bundesliga 1991/2, Black can defend the knight from b7 with an advantage: 11...\textit{\textbf{b7}}! 12 \textit{\textbf{e3}} \textit{\textbf{a4}} 13 cxb6 \textit{\textbf{axb6}} +) 11...\textit{\textbf{axb6}} 12 \textit{\textbf{e3}} \textit{\textbf{b7}} with a comfortably equal position for Black.

b) 10 \textit{\textbf{e3}} b6!? (more aggressive than 10...\textit{\textbf{xc5}}, which simply leads to equal play: 11 dxc5 d4 12 \textit{\textbf{xd4}} \textit{\textbf{xd4}} 13 \textit{\textbf{c1}} \textit{\textbf{e6}} = Petrov-Guidarelli, Pula 2003) and now:

b1) 11 cxb6 \textit{\textbf{xc3}} 12 bxc3 axb6 looks preferable for Black, since the a2- and c3-pawns are not good at all.

b2) White does not equalize by 11 \textit{\textbf{a4}} \textit{\textbf{d7}} 12 \textit{\textbf{b3}} (Black gets an advantage in case of the inaccurate 12 \textit{\textbf{b5}}?! \textit{\textbf{xc3}} 13 bxc3 \textit{\textbf{c7}} 14 \textit{\textbf{a3}} \textit{\textbf{xd4}}! 15 \textit{\textbf{xd4}} bxc5 16 \textit{\textbf{d3}} cxd4 17 cxd4 e5 \textit{\textbf{a7}} with a useful extra pawn) 12...bxc5 13 \textit{\textbf{xd5}} cxd4 14 \textit{\textbf{xd4}} \textit{\textbf{xc3}} 15 bxc3 \textit{\textbf{c8}}. This looks better for Black thanks to the weak c3-pawn.

b3) 11 \textit{\textbf{b5}} \textit{\textbf{b7}} 12 \textit{\textbf{c1}} bxc5 13 dxc5 \textit{\textbf{xc3}} 14 bxc3 e5 is unclear, but Black has a comfortable game.

10...\textit{\textbf{g4}} (D)

11 \textit{\textbf{e3}}

Now this move does not allow tactics with ...\textit{\textbf{xc5}}. Instead:

a) 11 \textit{\textbf{e5}}? simply loses a pawn to 11...\textit{\textbf{xe5}}! (11...\textit{\textbf{xe2}}?, as in Hruška-Z.ILIĆ, Prague 1980, misses a zwischenzug: 12 \textit{\textbf{xc6}}! \textit{\textbf{xd1}} 13 \textit{\textbf{xd8}} \textit{\textbf{xc3}} 14 bxc3 \textit{\textbf{e2}} 15 \textit{\textbf{xb7}} \textit{\textbf{xf1}} 16 \textit{\textbf{xf1}} with an unclear endgame) 12 \textit{\textbf{xe5}} \textit{\textbf{xe2}} 13 \textit{\textbf{xe2}} \textit{\textbf{xe5}} 14 dxe5 \textit{\textbf{xc5}} c7 +.

b) 11 \textit{\textbf{c1}} e6!? (intending ...\textit{\textbf{f6}}) 12 \textit{\textbf{e1}} (Black need not fear the more solid 12 \textit{\textbf{d2}} \textit{\textbf{xe2}} 13 \textit{\textbf{xe2}} \textit{\textbf{a5}} =) and now Black has the interesting plan of advancing his kingside pawns: 12...\textit{\textbf{xe2}} (this new move varies from Nei-Jansa, Tallinn 1983) 13 \textit{\textbf{xe2}} g5!? 14 \textit{\textbf{e3}} f5 with the initiative.
11...b6!?
Here 11...♗xc5?! does not work since the g4-bishop is loose: 12 dxc5 ♖xf3 (the problem is 12...d4? 13 ♗xd4 +–) 13 ♖xf3 d4 14 ♗b3 ± with pressure.

12 ♗a4
Or:

a) Black has the better position in case of 12 cxb6?! ♗xc3 13 bxc3 axb6 ⊕ thanks to the weaknesses on the a- and c-files.

b) 12 h3?! ♖xf3 13 ♖xf3 bxc5 14 dxc5 (14 ♗xe4? loses a pawn after 14...cxd4! ⊕) 14...♗xc3 15 bxc3 e6. Although White has the bishop-pair, Black’s pawn-structure is far superior and Black even has slightly the better chances; e.g.:

   b1) The exchange sacrifice 16 c4? can be answered by the cold-blooded 16...♗e5! 17 cxd5 ♖xf3+ 18 gxf3 (18 ♗xf3? doesn’t give full compensation without the queen on the a1-h8 diagonal: 18...♖xa1 19 ♖xa1 ♖xd5 20 ♖f6 ♖f5 ⊕) 18...exd5 ⊕.

   b2) 16 ♗a4 ♖c8 17 ♖ac1 ♗a5! 18 ♖xa5 ♖xa5 ⊕.

12...♗d7 13 ♕ad1
13 ♕b5?! lets Black destroy White’s pawn-structure: 13...♖xc3 14 bxc3 ♖xf3 15 gxf3 (15 ♖xc6?? ♖g4 16 g3 ♖h3 +–) 15...♖xc8 ⊕.

13...bxc5
Now:

a) Not 14 ♗xe4? ♗xd4! 15 ♖xd7 ♖xe2+ 16 ♕h1 ♖xd7 17 ♕xc5 ♕b5 18 a4 (18 ♖xd5?? ♖g3+) 18...♕c4 19 ♖3 ♖c3! 20 bxc4 ♖xd1 21 ♖xd1 dxc4 ⊕ and...c3.

b) 14 ♕b5 ♖xc3 15 bxc3 ♖fc8 ⊕.

c) 14 ♕xd5! (thanks to this combination, White holds the balance) 14...♖xd5 15 dxc5 ♖e6 16 ♕c4 ♖f5 (16...♖f6 17 ♖d5 ♖xf3 18 gxf3 ♗xc5! =) 17 ♖xc6 ♗xf3 18 gxf3 ♖xf3 19 ♖e2 ♖xe2 20 ♖xe4 ♖ad8 =.

B23)
8 0-0 ♕c6 (D)

White now has a huge range of possibilities. The points to bear in mind are that Black’s principal plans are 9...♖g4, putting pressure on d4 and encouraging White to release the tension by 10 cxd5 or 10 c5, and 9...dxc4, opening up a direct attack on d4. Against the latter plan, it is possible for White to make a pawn sacrifice of it by answering with 10 d5. With his next move, White can try to be ready for either plan, but most moves are committal in some way, and give Black a hint as to which plan works best.

9 h3
White prevents ...♖g4, but this move is less useful against the ...dxc4 plan. Other moves:
a) 9 c5 transposes to Line B22.

b) 9 cxd5 cxd5 is covered in Line B21.

c) 9 e5?! is poor: 9...dxc4 10 e6 bxc6 11 exf7+ \(=\) Ruiz Vinals-Lalić, Dos Hermanas 1998. The c6-pawn is less weak than the d4-pawn.

d) 9 a3 prepares to meet 9...dxc4 with 10 a4 a5 11 a2, but is much less relevant if Black replies 9...g4.

e) 9 g5 dxc4 10 a4 a5 11 a2 (forcing White to advance the pawn) 11 d5 a4 12 a5 13 e5 14 e2 a4 15 g4 and now 15...d7 = is more precise than 15...g7?! (Jelen-Dizdarević, European Clubs Cup, Portorož 1993), which can be met by 16 a1! intending d6, a5 and e5.

f) 9 a4 dxc4 and now:

f1) 10 d5 a5 11 \(=\) e5 (11 d6?! exd6 12 a6 a8 13 b5! a5 14 a7 xe2! 15 xe2 c8 = Adly-Ivanchuk, World Team Ch, Ningbo 2011) 11...g4 12 d4 a4 13 d4 a4 14 e1 f6 15 g3 e5! 16 d2 d6 is unclear, Raičević-Velimirović, Yugoslav Ch, Belgrade 1978.

f2) 10 a4 a5?! (again this idea; 10...g4 11 d5 a5 12 e2 c8 is also possible) 11 a2 a6 12 c1 c8 13 a4 a6 = Nei-Velimirović, Tallinn 1977.

g) 9 a1 a4 (this seems to work out well enough, despite arguably being a little obliging; there may be a strong case for 9...f5?!), challenging White to find a way to make use of the move a1; as Giddins points out in *How to Build Your Chess Opening Repertoire*, there are even lines where the rook is vulnerable after ...e4 and then:

g1) 10 c5 e4 11 d3 gives us a position from Line B22 except for White’s extra move a1. However, even this does not give him an advantage. 11...b6 (11...f5?! is also interesting) 12 a4 c3 13 bxc3 (S. Ernst-L’Ami, Dutch Team Ch 2005/6) 13...d7?! (intending ...d4) 14 b5 a6! 15 b2 (15 xb6?? a8 =) 15...xc5 16 dxc5 e6 with a comfortably equal position for Black.

g2) After 10 cxd5 a1xd5 11 h3 a6 Black has fixed the isolated pawn and has serious ambitions. This is a reversed Tarrasch where White has the extra move a1, which ought to be of some use, but in fact White has scored rather badly from this position, so it may not actually change the nature of the play in any marked fashion. Now:

g21) 12 f1 c8 13 g5 h6 14 e3 and here I like 14...d6!? intending ...f8. Black should not rush to help White reconnect his pawns: 14...c3 15 bxc3 a5 16 d2 h7 17 f4 = Elianov-Strelnikov, Ukrainian Junior Ch, Kharkov 2000.

g22) 12 g5 h6 13 e3 (Kindl-Milos, Groningen 1994) and again it’s good to place the queen on d6: 13...d6!? 14 d2 e3 15 fxe3 f5! intending ...f4 with the initiative.

h) 10 e3 dxc4 and here:

h1) 10 d5 needs study: 10...a5 11 b4 (11 d2?! is too passive and lets Black complete his development and
keep the extra material: 11...b6 12 ad1, Darga-Hort, Bundesliga 1981/2, 12... b7 11) 11... cxb3 12 axb3 and then:

h11) 12... axd5!? leads to complications. Let me show you the main line I found: 13 axd5 axal 14 dxal (14 b4 g7 15 bxa5 e6 12 l:b6 and ... dxal with an advantage) 14... dxal 15 h6 f6 16 ad1 c5 17 b4! (opening the diagonal to give check) 17... wb4 18 wa2+ b3 19 xf8 xf8 20 ed8+ g7 21 d1! (not 21 e8? e6! 22 xa8 d4 and Black wins, Inkoiv-Gharamian, French Team Ch 2008/9) 21... b6!? 13 b4 b7, followed by ... d6 and ... b7, leads to an unclear position. White’s pieces are more harmonious, but Black has an extra pawn.

h2) 10 xxc4 da5! (a typical manoeuvre one should remember: Black pushes the c4-bishop back so he can place his own bishop on e6) 11 e2 xe6 12 wa4 (12 e5 d5 13 xd5 xd5 14 wa4 c6 15 f6d1 e6 = Kavalek-Matulovic, Havana Olympiad 1966) 12... d5 13 xd5 xd5 14 aac1 a6 15 e5 e6 intending... c6 is fine for Black. White should then avoid 16 d7? c6 17 xc6 wxd7! (better than 17... xc6? 18 xf8, when according to my database Black resigned in Bregadze-Pavlidis, World Under-16 Ch, Kemer 2007, but it can’t be true since the position is equal after, e.g., 18... xd4 19 xd4 wxd4 20 wxd4 xd4 21 d1 d8) 18 c4 b5 19 wa5 bxc4 12...

9... dxc4 10 xc4 da5! (D)

We have already seen this idea. The c4-bishop is pushed back so that Black can place his own bishop on e6.

11 xe2

Usually the bishop is worse placed on d3 but in this situation it makes sense in order to have the option of a later xe6 sacrifice. 11 d3 xe6 12 xe1 c8 (if Black is really scared of xe6, he can continue 12... wd7 or 12... wd6) and now:

a) 13 g5 c4 (an exchange of light-squared bishops will leave c4 and d5 less well defended) 14 c2 a6 15 c1 (15 e4 c4 16 b1 xe4 17 xe4 d6 18 d3 xd3 19 xd3 xe8 gave Black a pleasant position in Morchishvili-Milanovic, Kavala 2007) 15... c4 16 b3 b6 17 e4 xe4 18 xe4 wd7 19 xc8 xc8 and again Black has no problems, Epishin-Zviagintsev, Russia Cup, St Petersburg 2009.

b) 13 xe6!? is an absolutely correct exchange sacrifice, but White gets merely sufficient compensation. 13... fxe6 14 ye2 (Black's e6-pawn is doomed, and the white knight heads
1 d4 \( \mathcal{Q} \)f6 2 c4 c5: 3 e3 AND 3 dxc5

for a nice outpost on e6; however, Black has counterplans) 14...\( \mathcal{Q} \)h8 15 \( \mathcal{Q} \)g5 \( \mathcal{Q} \)c6! 16 \( \mathcal{Q} \)b5?! (16 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xe6? \( \mathcal{Q} \)xd4 \( \mathcal{Q} \)) 16...e5! (this is the most convincing move, and improves over the l6...a6 chosen in Lputian-Magerramov, Daugavpils 1978) 17 \( \mathcal{Q} \)e6 \( \mathcal{Q} \)d5 18 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xf8 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xf8! (it’s important to take with the bishop in order to control c2 and c3; not 18...\( \mathcal{Q} \)xf8? 19 dxe5 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xe5 20 \( \mathcal{Q} \)c2 \( \mathcal{Q} \)) and then:

b1) 19 dxe5? \( \mathcal{Q} \)xe5 (the d3-bishop has nowhere good to move) 20 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xa7 (20 \( \mathcal{Q} \)c3 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xc3 21 bxc3 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xd3 and 20 \( \mathcal{Q} \)c2 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xc2 21 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xc2 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xb5 22 \( \mathcal{Q} \)c8 \( \mathcal{Q} \)g8 23 \( \mathcal{Q} \)h6 \( \mathcal{Q} \)ed7 are both much better for Black) 20...\( \mathcal{Q} \)xc1+ 21 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xc1 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xd3 22 \( \mathcal{Q} \)c8 \( \mathcal{Q} \)g7 gives Black a slight advantage.

b2) After 19 \( \mathcal{Q} \)c3 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xd4 20 \( \mathcal{Q} \)e3 \( \mathcal{Q} \)a5 = Black is fine.

11...\( \mathcal{Q} \)e6 12 \( \mathcal{Q} \)e1

12 \( \mathcal{Q} \)g5 \( \mathcal{Q} \)c8 13 \( \mathcal{Q} \)e1 leads to the main line.

12 \( \mathcal{Q} \)e5?! \( \mathcal{Q} \)c8 13 \( \mathcal{Q} \)a4 (this doesn’t make much sense since it just helps Black to strengthen his control of the light squares; 13 \( \mathcal{Q} \)e1 transposes to note ‘b’ to White’s 13th move) 13...a6! 14 \( \mathcal{Q} \)d1 b5 15 \( \mathcal{Q} \)a3 \( \mathcal{Q} \)b6 gives Black a comfortable position; e.g., 16 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xe7 \( \mathcal{Q} \)fe8 17 \( \mathcal{Q} \)b4 (17 \( \mathcal{Q} \)a3?? b4 18 \( \mathcal{Q} \)a4 bxa3 19 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xb6 axb2 20 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xb2 \( \mathcal{Q} \)c2 ++ Polak-Ftačnik, Pribram rapid 1997) 17...\( \mathcal{Q} \)f8 18 \( \mathcal{Q} \)a4 (forced) 18...\( \mathcal{Q} \)c7 19 \( \mathcal{Q} \)c5 \( \mathcal{Q} \)f5! (White’s pieces are in danger but there is a way to save them) 20 \( \mathcal{Q} \)f3! \( \mathcal{Q} \)xc5 21 dxc5 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xe5 22 \( \mathcal{Q} \)f4 \( \mathcal{Q} \)c4 23 b3 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xc5 24 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xc5 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xc5 25 bxc4 \( \mathcal{Q} \)e4 =.

12...\( \mathcal{Q} \)c8 (D)

\[ \text{13 \( \mathcal{Q} \)g5} \]

Or:

a) 13 \( \mathcal{Q} \)g5?! (there is nothing for the knight to do on g5) 13...\( \mathcal{Q} \)c4 14 \( \mathcal{Q} \)f3 (Rausis-Fominykh, Cairo 2001) 14...e6 15 \( \mathcal{Q} \)e3 \( \mathcal{Q} \)d5 \( \mathcal{Q} \). Black makes desirable exchanges and gains total control of the light squares.

b) Also there is no reason to activate the knight to e5: 13 \( \mathcal{Q} \)e5?! \( \mathcal{Q} \)d5 14 \( \mathcal{Q} \)d2 (or 14 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xd5 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xd5 15 \( \mathcal{Q} \)a4 \( \mathcal{Q} \)c6 \( \mathcal{Q} \) Beutel-Mahdi, Aschach 1995) 14...\( \mathcal{Q} \)c6! (as everyone knows, the side facing an isolated pawn welcomes exchanges since they reduce counterplay and make the weakness more vulnerable) 15 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xc6 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xc6 16 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xd5 (16 \( \mathcal{Q} \)f3 \( \mathcal{Q} \)c4 17 \( \mathcal{Q} \)e2 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xd4 \( \mathcal{Q} \) Zhukova-Beshukov, Berlin 1995) 16...\( \mathcal{Q} \)xd5 17 \( \mathcal{Q} \)b4 \( \mathcal{Q} \)f6 \( \mathcal{Q} \) Slogar-Sermek, Pula 1993.

13...\( \mathcal{Q} \)c4 14 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xc4 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xc4 15 \( \mathcal{Q} \)d2

\( \mathcal{Q} \)e8 16 \( \mathcal{Q} \)h6 \( \mathcal{Q} \)d5

The game is equal, Čabrilović-Leskur, Serbian Team Ch, Kragujevac 2009. Although White still has an isolated pawn, it’s hard for Black to attack it – the bishop being on d5 disturbs rather than helps in this respect.
7 Vagyanian Gambit

1 d4 \( \mathcal{f}6 \) 2 c4 c5 3 \( \mathcal{f}3 \)

This is a popular way to avoid both the Benko Gambit and the Modern Benoni. In the theory books, you will find it classified as a Symmetrical English, with masses of theory on lines where Black develops with \(...\)e6, etc. But there is no need for Black to play so slowly, as he can proceed instead in gambit style. Moreover, it is a gambit with an excellent theoretical reputation and an unusually good record in practice.

3...cxd4 4 \( \mathcal{d}xd4 \)

For 4 \( \mathcal{w}xd4 \text{ e6} \) 5 \( \mathcal{dd}1 \text{ e5} \) see note 'c' to White's 5th move.

4...e5 \( (D) \)

This is the most natural reply, eyeing the weakness on d6. White seemingly stops 5...d5 (due to a double capture on d5 and \( \mathcal{dd}c7+ \)). Before we examine the main line, let's see the other possibilities for the knight:

a) 5 \( \mathcal{d}b3?! \) d5! already affords Black an advantage in the centre:

a1) 6 e3 \( \mathcal{d}c6 \) 7 \( \mathcal{e}e2 \) (7 cxd5 \( \mathcal{w}xd5 \)
8 \( \mathcal{w}xd5 \text{ cxd5} \text{ a3 e6} \text{ 10 d1d2 e8} \)
\( \mp \) Oll-Westerinen, Oviedo rapid 1992)
7...\( \mathcal{e}e6 \) (attacking c4 and obliging White to take on d5) 8 cxd5 \( \mathcal{w}xd5 \text{ 9 0-0 d8} \text{ 10 c3 wxd1} \text{ 11 xdx1 wdx1+} \text{ 12 xdx1 b4} \mp \) followed by \( \text{...}0-0 \) and \( \text{...}d8 \) gives Black the better position.

a2) 6 cxd5 \( \mathcal{w}xd5 \) (6...\( \mathcal{w}xd5 \) is also possible but then White has fewer problems activating his pieces: 7 e4!
\( \mathcal{d}b4 \) 8 \( \mathcal{b}5+ \text{ c8c6} \text{ 9 e2 a6} \text{ 10 xcx6+} \text{ c6x6} \text{ 11 d3 =} \) 7 \( \mathcal{w}xd5 \text{ cxd5} \) (now the c2-square is weakened and the black knight heads there) 8 e4 (8 a3 prevents \( \mathcal{d}b4 \) but leaves the b3-knight vulnerable; after 8...\( \mathcal{d}c6 \text{ 9 e4 f6} \text{ 10 c3 e6} \text{ 11 d2 c5} \mp \) Black's pieces are more active) 8...\( \mathcal{b}4 \text{ 9 a3 e6} \text{ 10 b5+ c8c6} \text{ 11 0-0} \) (Popelka-Pacher, Teplice 2011) 11...\( \text{a6} \) (this new move is better than 11...\( \text{xa2?} \) 12 a5! with an unclear position) 12 \( \text{c4} \) (12 \( \text{e2?} \)
\( \text{xa2!} \mp \) costs White a pawn, while after 12 \( \text{xc6+} \text{ cxc6} \) Black is better

Black weakens the d5-square but it's only temporary.

5 \( \mathcal{d}b5 \)
due to the bishop-pair) $12...\Box c2!$ and then:

a21) $13 \Box xe6?$ simply loses to $13...\Box xa1 \mp$.

a22) Black needs to be precise in the case of $13 \Box xa6!?$ $\Box xa3!$ (the only move that gives an advantage) $14 \Box x b7 \Box d7!$ (a critical move!) $15 \Box xa8 \Box xa8$ $16 \Box xa3$ ($16 \Box b1? \Box x d6 \mp$) $16...\Box x b3$ $17 \Box b1 \Box e6 \mp$ ($17...\Box xa2?$ leads to a pawn-down endgame after $18 \Box b2! \Box c4$ $19 \Box xc2 \Box xf1$ $20 \Box xf1 \mp$).

a23) $13 \Box xc2 \Box xc4$ $14 \Box d1 \Box d8 \mp$. Black has the bishop-pair.

b) $5 \Box c2$ $d5$ and now:

b1) After $6 e3 \Box c6$ $7 \Box e2$ ($7 \Box c3?$ $d4!$) $8 \Box xd4$ $\Box xd4$ $9 \Box b5 \Box c5 \mp$ followed by $...a6$ gives Black an advantage, Vasina-Melnichuk, Kiev 2006) $7...\Box e6$ $8 \Box xd5$ $\Box xd5$ $9 0-0 \Box c5 \mp$ Kopnicky-V.Sergeev, Tatranske Zruby 2002. Black is better because of his more active pieces.

b2) $6 \Box xd5 \Box xd5$ $7 \Box xd5 \Box d5$ and here:

b21) $8 g3?!$ is too modest; White should fight for the centre more radically. $8...\Box c6$ $9 \Box g2 \Box e6$ $10 0-0 0-0-0!?$ (an interesting way to develop the rook faster) $11 \Box d2 \Box b8$ $12 \Box c3?!$ (relatively best is $12 \Box c1!? \Box e7 \mp$) $12...\Box db4!$ $13 \Box xb4 \Box xb4$ $14 \Box g5 f6$ $15 \Box xc6$ (to avoid $...\Box d4$) $15...\Box xg5$ $16 \Box g2 \Box d2 \mp$ Andersson-Gelfand, Tilburg 1990.

b22) $8 e4 \Box b4$ $9 \Box xb4 \Box xb4+ 10 \Box d2 \Box c6$ is totally equal; e.g., $11 \Box b5 \Box d7$ $12 \Box xc6 \Box x d2+ 13 \Box x d2 \Box xc6$ $14 \Box c3 0-0-0+ 15 \Box e3 \Box d6$ $16 \Box ad1 \Box hd8$ $17 \Box xd6 \Box xd6$ $18 \Box ad1 \Box xd1$ $19 \Box x d1 = \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ G.Mohr-A.Grosar, Portorož 1993.

c) $5 \Box f3$ attacks the e5-pawn, but after $5...\Box c6$ Black’s plan remains the same: $...d5$. $6 \Box c3$ ($6 g3?! d5 7 \Box cd5 \Box xd5 \mp$) $6...\Box b4$ (renewing the $...d5$ threat) $7 \Box d2$ (after $7 a3? \Box xc3+ 8 \Box x c3$, as in Krasnopeev-Kron, Siberian Ch, Irkutsk 2009, $8...d6! \mp$ prepares to besiege White’s doubled c-pawns by $...0-0$, $...\Box e6$, $...\Box c8$, $...\Box a5$, etc.) $7...0-0$ and now:

$c1) 8 e3$ $e4$ $9 \Box g5 \Box e8$ $10 a3$ (T.Balogh-Rachela, Slovakian Team Ch 2000/1) $10...\Box xc3$ $11 \Box xc3$ $d6$ (intending $...h6$, meeting $\Box h3$ with $...\Box x h3$) $12 h4$ (in order to take on h3 with the rook) $12...\Box e5$ (Black is in no hurry to chase the g5-knight back, instead developing his own pieces) $13 \Box e2 \Box f5$ $14 \Box d4 \Box c8$ $15 \Box d1 b6 \mp$. White can’t take on d6: $16 \Box xd6? \Box d3+ \mp$.

c2) $8 a3 \Box xc3$ $9 \Box xc3 \Box e4!$ $10 \Box c2 \Box xc3$ $11 \Box xc3$ $d6$ $12 \Box d1 \Box e7$ = Munkhgal-Brandenburg, Shenzhen 2011.

$5...d5!$

Black will not be left with a backward pawn, and opens lines so he can develop his pieces rapidly and aggressively.

$6 \Box cd5 \Box c5$ ($D$)

Not $6...\Box xd5?? 7 \Box xd5! \Box xd5$ $8 \Box c7+ \Box d8$ $9 \Box d5 \mp$.

This move defines the Vaganian Gambit. Though the Armenian grandmaster did not invent the $4...e5 5 \Box b5 d5$ gambit as a whole, he did introduce this vital follow-up which was essential to make it respectable.
Black sacrifices a pawn for long-lasting compensation in the form of free piece development while White suffers from a lack of space and slow development, and can face a strong attack on the kingside (after ...e4 is played). The extra pawn on d5 is hard to defend, though it can sometimes become a strength or be given back for positional dividends.

Before delving into specific variations, we should talk about Black’s plan. Considering that White can’t play a quick e4 to support the d5-pawn because of ...\textit{g4}, Black will shortly play ...e4 himself. This keeps the d5-pawn cut off and provides the black pieces with a natural deployment: e5 is a good square for a knight, f5 for the bishop, e7 for the queen, e8 and d8 for his rooks, while the c5-bishop often moves back to d6. Once this arrangement is achieved, Black starts to create serious threats: attacking d5, entering on d3 or – the most dangerous for White – attacking on the kingside. For a while, Black will simply ignore the d5-pawn since it cannot go anywhere.

White has a choice between two main schemes: he can play e3 and \textit{e2}, or fianchetto this bishop on g2. In this chapter we shall look at the g3 plan and a variety of other set-ups for White. The next chapter focuses on 7 e3.

Our coverage divides into two main moves here:

\textbf{A: } 7 \textit{d1c3} 83
\textbf{B: } 7 \textit{d5c3} 85

In both cases, we only deal with lines that don’t transpose to the next chapter; that is, White doesn’t follow up with 8 e3.

A few other moves are worth mentioning too:

a) After 7 \textit{w}c2 \textit{d}a6 it’s important to point out that White can’t defend the d5-pawn with the e-pawn. White should certainly avoid 8 e4? \textit{g}4 \textit{t}, but he also has trouble after 8 \textit{d}1c3 \textit{d}b4 9 \textit{w}a4 0-0 10 \textit{e}3 (this looks odd but it’s an absolutely required step; 10 e3? \textit{f}5 11 \textit{a}3 \textit{f}xd5 \textit{t}; 10 \textit{d}2? a6 11 \textit{a}3 \textit{b}xd5 \textit{t}) 10...\textit{xe}3 11 \textit{w}xb4 \textit{b}6 12 \textit{d}d1 \textit{a}5 13 \textit{w}b3 \textit{f}5. Black has a firm grip on the position thanks to his better development, while White’s extra pawn means nothing in such circumstances.

b) 7 d6?! is a tricky move. White supports \textit{c}7+, which at first sight appears quite dangerous for Black. However, the natural 7...0-0 demonstrates that this threat can be ignored. Then 8 \textit{d}c7 (after 8 \textit{d}1c3 \textit{d}c6 \textit{t}, White no longer threatens \textit{c}7 and Black will gradually surround the d6-pawn, after which he will have an
advantage due to his better development) 8...\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{e4!}}}\) (threatening instant mate) 9 e3 (9 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{e3? \textit{xe3}}}\) 10 fxe3 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f6}}}\) 11 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d5}}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f2+}}}\) 12 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d1}}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xe3}}}\) followed by ...\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f2+}}}\) is hopeless for White) 9...\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{b4+}}}\) (D) leaves White no good defence against Black’s activity.

b1) After 10 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d2?}}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xd6}}}\) 11 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xa8}}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d8--+}}}\), Black will first win the d2-knight, and then capture the other white knight, securing a material advantage.

b2) 10 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d2}}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xd2}}}\) 11 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xd2}}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xd6}}}\) 12 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{b5}}}\) (after 12 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xa8?}}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d8--}}\) Black wins both white knights) 12...\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{g6?!}}}\) (keeping an eye on the g2-pawn) 13 a3 (or else Black plays ...\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d8}}}\) 13...\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xd2+}}}\) 14 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{wd2}}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c6}}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f}}}\) followed by ...\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d8}}}\) and ...\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{e6}}}\).

b3) 10 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c3}}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xc3}}}\) 11 bxc3 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xc3+}}}\) 12 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d2}}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xa1}}}\) 13 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xal}}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xd6}}}\) 14 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xa8}}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{e6}}}\) (intending ...\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d7}}}\) or ...\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c6}}}\), when Black keeps an extra pawn) 15 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{bb2}}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c6}}}\) 16 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xb7?!}}}\) (it is better to give up the knight) 16...\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{b8}}}\) 17 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{a6}}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{b1+}}}\) 18 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{e2}}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d4+}}}\) and the white queen is lost.

c) If White wishes to reach Line B2, then he can also start with 7 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{g3}}}\) because Black can’t land any tactics based on f2 and b5. 7...0-0 (the tactic 7...\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xf2+??}}}\) does not work because after 8 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xf2}}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{b6+}}}\) White can defend king and knight by 9 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{e3 +--}}}\) and now:

c1) 8 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{g2?}}}\) does not work well because the b5-knight and f2-pawn can’t be defended simultaneously after 8...\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{b6}}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f}}}\).

c2) 8 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c1c3}}}\) transposes to Line A.

c3) For 8 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c5c3}}}\) see Line B2.

A) 7 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c1c3}}}\)

This is not a good idea because the b5-knight will be pushed back to a3, after which the knights will be awkward on a3 and c3. They are better placed on c3 and d2.

7...0-0 8 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{g3}}}\)

Not 8 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{e4?}}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{g4}}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f}}}\).

For 8 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d6?!}}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c6}}}\), see note ‘b’ to White’s 7th move above.

8 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{e3}}}\) transposes to note ‘b’ to White’s 8th move in Chapter 8.

8...\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{a6}}}\) 9 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{a3}}}\) (D)
9...\textcolor{black}{\textbf{b6}}!

It’s extremely important for Black to provoke e3 to gain access to f3 and d3.

\textbf{10 e3}

Now we examine two moves for Black:

\textbf{A1: 10...e4!?} \textbf{84}

\textbf{A2: 10...\textbf{xa3}!?} \textbf{85}

\textbf{A1)}

\textbf{10...e4}!?

This typical thrust is appropriate here since it is in keeping with all the main ideas of the gambit: the e4-pawn stakes out Black’s space advantage while the pawns on e3 and g3 leave weaknesses on f3 and d3.

\textbf{11 c4 \textbf{c7} 12 a4}!?

We shall take this as the main line here, even though it is not White’s objectively best option. He should first look after his king and only then think about the queenside. After 12 g2 e8 13 0-0 b5 14 d2 f5 followed by ...bd7, ...ad8, ...d6, ...c5, etc., Black has sufficient compensation.

\textbf{12...d8 13 \textbf{b3} \textbf{xd5}}!

This is better than 13...\textbf{g4}!?, as played in Inneman-Prymula, Czech Team Ch 1997/8.

With the text-move, Black recaptures the gambit pawn, but White can immediately take another pawn:

\textbf{14 xxe4}

White can’t win the exchange by 14 xd5? xd5 15 b6 because of 15...d8!. Then:

\textbf{a)} \textcolor{black}{16 axa8? \textbf{a5}+ 17 e2 (17 \textbf{c3 b4} --+) 17...g4+ 18 f3 exf3+ 19 f2 d2+ leads to checkmate.}

\textbf{b)} After 16 xc8 a5+ 17 e2 (D) Black gets a decisive advantage by unexpected means:

![Diagram](image-url)

17...b4!! (the idea is ...\textbf{h5}+; the simple 17...xex8? leads to White’s advantage after 18 g2 \pm). Then:

\textbf{b1)} 18 h3 \textbf{c5} (intending ...d3) 19 b6 c6! (Black brings his pieces into the battle as quickly as possible; 19...d3? 20 c4 xb6 21 g2 is unclear, while 19...xb6?! 20 g2 d7 \pm is advantageous but less convincing) 20 c4 d3 21 c2 ad8 --.

\textbf{b2)} 18 g2 \textbf{h5}+ 19 f3 c6 20 b6 (otherwise Black takes the knight with a winning position) 20...e5 (20...d3 is also good) 21 g4 h4 gives Black a decisive attack; e.g., 22 d5 exf3+ 23 xf3 xg4 --.

\textbf{14...e7}!

Leaving the b4-square for the knight. White’s main problem is that he can’t easily castle: 15 g2?! b4 16 0-0? d3 17 c3 e6 --. After 15 e2 h3! \pm, preventing 0-0, Black’s compensation is beyond doubt.
A2)

10...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}a3!}}}}?

This new move is a concrete and straightforward continuation.

11 \texttt{x}a3 \texttt{g}4 12 \texttt{f}3 (D)

An ambitious but risky move. Otherwise:

a) 12 \texttt{e}2?! \texttt{xe}2 13 \texttt{xe}2 \texttt{a}5 14 \texttt{d}2 (in case of 14 \texttt{d}2 Black plays 14...\texttt{bd}7 15 \texttt{b}2 \texttt{ac}8 16 0-0 \texttt{b}6 17 \texttt{ac}1 \texttt{c}4 18 \texttt{e}2 \texttt{xd}5 with some advantage thanks to the power of the c4-knight) 14...\texttt{xd}5 15 \texttt{xd}5 \texttt{xd}5 16 0-0 \texttt{c}6 17 \texttt{fd}1 \texttt{fd}8 18 \texttt{e}1 \texttt{e}6 and Black is somewhat preferable thanks to White’s light-square weaknesses, which might prove especially sensitive after ...e4, ...b5 and ...\texttt{e}5.

b) 12 \texttt{b}3 is safer: 12...\texttt{xb}3 13 \texttt{xb}3 \texttt{f}3 14 \texttt{g}1 \texttt{xd}5 15 \texttt{xd}5 \texttt{xd}5 16 \texttt{b}2 with an equal endgame.

(14 \texttt{g}5 \texttt{e}4 15 \texttt{d}3 \texttt{xg}5 16 0-0 \texttt{d}7 17 \texttt{b}1 \texttt{c}5 \pm followed by ...e4 and ...\texttt{e}5) 14...\texttt{xe}3+!?! (14...\texttt{yg}4 leads to a draw by repetition after 15 \texttt{yg}4 \texttt{xc}1+ 16 \texttt{xc}1 \texttt{xe}3+ 17 \texttt{d}1 \texttt{d}3+ 18 \texttt{e}1 \texttt{e}3+) 15 \texttt{xe}3 \texttt{xe}3+ 16 \texttt{f}1 \texttt{bd}7 with powerful play for the exchange.

13...\texttt{a}5+ 14 \texttt{d}2 \texttt{xd}5 15 \texttt{b}6 \texttt{xf}3 16 \texttt{xf}3 \texttt{xf}3 17 \texttt{g}1 \texttt{bd}7 18 \texttt{xa}8 \texttt{xa}8

Black has sufficient compensation for the exchange thanks to White’s complex of weak squares.

B)

7 \texttt{5c}3 0-0 (D)

B1: 8 \texttt{h}3 85

B2: 8 \texttt{g}3 88

8 \texttt{e}3 is analysed in Chapter 8.

8 \texttt{e}4? is impossible, as usual, due to 8...\texttt{g}4 \pm.

B1)

8 \texttt{h}3
This rare line brings White good results in practice, so I urge you to examine it carefully.

8...f5! (D)

The point of White’s 8th move is revealed by the line 8...e4?! 9 g4!, when Black can’t play ...f5 and so the e4-pawn is in danger. For example, 9...e7 10 g2 (intending g5 and 0xe4) 10...e3 11 0xe3 0xe3 12 fxe3 0xe3 13 0d3! 0c1+ 14 0f2 0xb2 15 0d2 = Dorfman-Degraeve, French Ch, Val d’Isère 2002. White has managed to develop all his pieces and now he has the better chances. That’s why Black should start with 8...f5.

9 e3

The natural 9 g4 gives Black an opportunity to play 9...e4! with quite pleasant variations:

a) 10 f3? (Sulava-Guidarelli, Montecatini Terme 2006) allows Black to execute a pleasing geometrical idea: 10...0xd5! 11 h4 (11 fxe4? 0h4+ 12 0d2 0e3 13 0b3 0c6 with a crushing attack against the white king; 11 0xd5? 0h4+ 12 0d2 0xd5 =; 11 0xe4? 0h4+ 12 0d2 0d8! 13 0xc5 0e3+ 14 0d3 0xd1 15 0xd1 0a6 =; 11 g5?! is less solid, and after 11...0xc3 12 0xd8 0xd8 13 0xc3 0f5 Black is better) 11...0xc3 12 0xd8 0xd8 13 0xc3 0c6 with a slight advantage for Black.

b) After 10 0xe4?! 0xe4 11 e3 Black gets a strong attack by 11...0h4 12 0c2 f5! (the only move, but good) 13 0g2 0a6 14 gxf5 (not 14 0c3?? 0b4 15 0e2 0d3+ 16 0xd3 0xf2+ 17 0d1 0xg2 = Anton-Salem, World Under-18 Ch, Kemer 2009) 14...0d6 15 0-0 0xf5 16 0c3 0g5.

c) 10 0h2 is definitely White’s best response. 10...0g6 11 g5!? (White should continue with his plan of advancing his pawns; after 11 0g5?! 0bd7 12 0d2 0c8 Black had the better chances due to the awkwardly placed white pieces in Raetsky-Kaenkel, Lenk 1995) 11...0h5 (11...0e8?! is less convincing due to 12 h4 0d6 13 0d2 intending h5, e4 and 0c4; White is preferable since he is still a pawn up and it’s not clear how Black is going to gain compensation) 12 0d2 (Black can meet 12 e4 with 12...0d7 intending ...0c8, ...0b4, ...0c5 or ...f5, opening the f-file for more counterplay; with the knight on h5, Black clearly has more options) 12...0b4 is a rather unclear position where the white pieces look awkwardly placed for the coming battle. Black’s next moves could be ...0d7, ...0c8, ...f6 and ...e4.

9...0bd7 10 g4

10 0f3 0g6 11 e4 allows Black to initiate play against the e4-pawn: 11...0d4! (intending ...0c5) 12 0d3
\( \mathcal{C}c5 13 \mathcal{A}c2 (13 0-0? \mathcal{C}xd3 14 \mathcal{W}xd3 \mathcal{C}xd5 \mp \text{Palus-Vaulin, Polanica Zdroj 1998}) 13...b5 \text{ and now:} \\
\text{a}) 14 \mathcal{D}d2?! \mathcal{A}xc3! \text{ (a draw was agreed in an unclear position after} 14...b4?! 15 \mathcal{D}e2 \mathcal{C}xd5 \text{ in Papaioannou-Stefanopoulos, Greek Ch, Athens 1998)} 15 bxc3 \mathcal{C}xd5 \mp \text{ followed by} \ldots \mathcal{C}c8, \ldots \mathcal{C}f4, \text{ etc.} \\
\text{b}) 14 a3 \text{ has not so far been tried. Then} 14...a5 \text{ (renewing the} ...b4 \text{ threat)} 15 0-0-0! \text{ (this tricky idea helps White to maintain the balance)} 15...b4 16 axb4 axb4 17 \mathcal{A}xa8 \mathcal{W}xa8 18 \mathcal{D}d2! \text{ (a key move: the d4-bishop is going to be trapped)} 18...bxc3 19 bxc3 \mathcal{A}xf2+ 20 \mathcal{W}xf2 (20 \mathcal{W}xf2? \mathcal{C}xd5 \mp) 20...\mathcal{D}f4 21 \mathcal{A}xe4 \mathcal{D}xe4 22 \mathcal{D}xe4 \mathcal{A}xe4 23 \mathcal{D}d2 \mp \text{ reaches an equal endgame.} \\
\text{10...\mathcal{G}g6 (D)} \\
\text{Now:} \\
\text{a) 11 g5?! \mathcal{A}e4 12 h4 looks like a dubious continuation of the pawn advance:} \\
\text{a1) 12...f6?! leads to problems:} \\
\text{a11) In the only practical example,} 13 \mathcal{A}g2?! \mathcal{D}d6 14 h5 \text{ gave Black a chance to maintain the balance. After} 14...\mathcal{A}e8?! \text{ he is a pawn down but his pieces are better prepared for the coming battle. Instead, after} 14...\mathcal{A}xb1?! \text{ (the light-squared bishop is too important to exchange, especially after} ...f6) 15 \mathcal{A}xb1 \mathcal{X}xg5 16 \mathcal{W}g4 \text{ a draw was agreed in Polak-A.Rotstein, Austrian Team Ch 1996/7, despite White obviously having the better chances.} \\
\text{a12) 13 h5! \mathcal{A}f5 14 g6! \text{ (White cracks open the light squares around Black’s king; at first glance} 14 \mathcal{W}f3?! \text{ should win but Black has a strong defensive resource that leads to crazy positions:} 14...\mathcal{D}d6 15 e4 \mathcal{A}xe4! 16 \mathcal{A}xe4 \mathcal{X}xg5 17 \mathcal{W}g4 \mathcal{A}xe4 18 \mathcal{W}xe4 \mathcal{A}xf2+ 19 \mathcal{D}d1 \mathcal{A}d4 \text{ intending} \ldots \mathcal{D}f6; \text{ the position is very complicated and hard to evaluate without any practical tests)} 14...\mathcal{X}xg6 \text{ (the natural} 14...h6? \text{ simply loses a piece to} 15 \mathcal{W}f3 +- \text{ since there is no play connected with} ...\mathcal{X}xg5 \text{ any more)} 15 \mathcal{X}xe4 \mathcal{X}xe4 16 \mathcal{X}xe4 \mathcal{X}xg6! \mathcal{X}xg6! (16...\mathcal{X}xh1?? 17 \mathcal{W}h5 \mathcal{A}e8 18 d6! +- \text{ intending} \mathcal{A}c4+) 17 \mathcal{W}g4 \text{ gives White a strong attack.} \\
\text{a2) I think} 12...\mathcal{D}d6?! \text{ is the right approach, keeping the pawns together. White has weakened his kingside but achieved nothing concrete, so it’s time for Black to fight back. For example,} 13 \mathcal{A}g2 \text{ (the instinctive} 13 h5?! \mathcal{A}f5 \mp \text{ increases White’s problems – now he needs to take care of the g5-pawn)} 13...\mathcal{A}c8 14 \mathcal{D}d2 \mathcal{A}b4 15 0-0 \mathcal{D}c5 \mp \text{ followed by} \ldots \mathcal{D}d3. \\
\text{b) 11 \mathcal{A}g2?! \text{ (this untried move is more solid than} 11 g5) 11...\mathcal{A}c8 12 0-0 h6 \text{ (Black prevents} g5 \text{ and makes some} \text{ luft} \text{ for his king)} 13 e4 a6. Black}
prepares ...b5 and frees the a7-square for his bishop. Although White has a protected passed pawn on d5, Black still has good compensation thanks to the d6-square for the knight (...\(\text{e}8\)-d6), control of the a7-g1 diagonal and the c-file, weak dark squares on White’s kingside (thanks to the g4 advance) and simply better development.

B2)  
8 g3 (D)

White’s plan is to fianchetto his king’s bishop, castle, and then gradually develop his queenside. And indeed things would look grim for Black if he could not weaken White’s pawn-structure by the following move:

8...\(\text{b}6\)! 9 e3

Now the light squares in White’s camp are vulnerable and Black has positional advantages to compensate for the gambit pawn.

9...\(\text{f}5\)!

Another critical move. It’s actually very rarely chosen, but in my opinion it should give Black sufficient compensation.

The most popular continuation is 9...\(\text{g}4\)! but after 10 \(\text{e}2\) \(\text{xe}2\) 11 \(\text{xe}2\) e4 (otherwise White plays e4 with advantage) 12 a3! White gets very good results. 12...\(\text{bd}7\) 13 \(\text{d}2\) \(\text{fe}8\) 14 b4 \(\text{f}8\) 15 0-0 ± Aronian-Sutovsky, European Team Ch, Kersonissos 2007. Black’s pieces are too far from White’s weakened kingside. Lines like this forced me to seek another way to get counterplay.

Actually, 9...e4 also leads to the main line after 10 \(\text{g}2\) \(\text{f}5\).

10 \(\text{g}2\) (D)

10...e4

Black gives White no chance to support the d5-pawn with his e-pawn.

11 0-0 \(\text{bd}7\)

Black slowly completes his development while White suffers from an obvious space problem.

12 \(\text{d}2\)

Sooner or later White will make this move anyway.

12...\(\text{fe}8\) (D)
VAGANIAN GAMBIT

White has prevented a frontal assault on his king, but this has not been cost-free: his king’s bishop is out of play on g2, and his queenside is somewhat vulnerable. Also, White’s d5-pawn is still weak.

I have found just three games played from this position, so most of what follows is the result of pure analysis. Now we examine:

B21: 13  \texttt{c4}  90
B22: 13  \texttt{b3}  91

Or:

a) After 13  \texttt{a4}?! (as played in the game Francsics-G.Feher, Budapest rapid 1996) 13...\texttt{b4}! followed by ...\texttt{c5} or ...\texttt{x}c3 and ...\texttt{x}d5, Black has sufficient pressure for the pawn.

b) 13  \texttt{a4}?! doesn’t make much sense. Allowing the black knight into d3 is too large a price to pay for exchanging off the c5-bishop. After 13...\texttt{a6} 14  \texttt{x}c5 \texttt{x}c5 the d5-pawn is going to fall, and Black has pleasant prospects.

c) 13  \texttt{c2} threatens to take on e4, but with the smart 13...\texttt{ac8}!, Black shows that he can ignore this idea. 14  \texttt{dxe4}  \texttt{xe4} 15  \texttt{xe4}  \texttt{g6}! 16  \texttt{a4} (the only move, eyeing the d7-knight) 16...\texttt{b6} 17  \texttt{xe8+}  \texttt{xe8} 18  \texttt{xc5}  \texttt{xd5}! (Black is in time to take an important pawn) 19  \texttt{xd5}  \texttt{d6} 20  \texttt{xb7}  \texttt{xc5} =.

d) 13  \texttt{h3} intends slower play, but Black can create threats right away: 13...\texttt{b4}! (threatening to take on c3 and d5) 14  \texttt{b1} (defending the pawn but now Black has new ideas) 14...\texttt{d6} 15  \texttt{g4}  \texttt{g6} 16  \texttt{c4}  \texttt{a6} 17  \texttt{b3}  \texttt{x}c3 18  \texttt{bxc3}  \texttt{ac8} 19  \texttt{a3}  \texttt{c5} 20  \texttt{c4}  \texttt{xc4} 21  \texttt{xc4}  \texttt{ed8} (21...\texttt{xd5}? 22  \texttt{d6}  \texttt{xc3} 23  \texttt{b2} ±) 22  \texttt{a5} (White will win a pawn to compensate for the one on d5, but Black’s initiative grows) 22...\texttt{xd5} 23  \texttt{xb7} h5! 24  \texttt{g5}  \texttt{hxh5} intending ...\texttt{g5} and ...\texttt{e}2-d3, etc. Black is OK.

e) 13  \texttt{a3} intends \texttt{b4}, and 13...\texttt{ac8} prevents it. Now:

e1) 14  \texttt{b4}?! would be met with 14...\texttt{xe3}, discovering an attack on the c3-knight.

e2) After 14  \texttt{a4}, Black can’t play ...\texttt{b4} to free the c5-square for the knight, but there is another square-vacating move: with 14...\texttt{c7}! Black prepares ...\texttt{b6} while playing \texttt{b4} still does not give White any advantage:

e21) 15  \texttt{dxe4}?  \texttt{xe4} 16  \texttt{xe4}  \texttt{b5}! 17  \texttt{c2}  \texttt{e5}! --.

e22) 15  \texttt{b4}?! \texttt{xe3}! 16  \texttt{dxe4}  \texttt{xe4} 17  \texttt{xe4} (17  \texttt{dxe4}?  \texttt{xc1} 18  \texttt{xc1} 19  \texttt{d6}  \texttt{g5} ⊕) 17...\texttt{b6} 18  \texttt{d1} (after 18  \texttt{xa7}  \texttt{a8} 19  \texttt{b5}  \texttt{e5} 20  \texttt{xb7}  \texttt{xe4} 21  \texttt{xe3}  \texttt{xd5} the white king is in danger) 18...\texttt{xf2}+ 19  \texttt{xf2}  \texttt{xe4} 20  \texttt{xe4}  \texttt{xe4} ⊕.
e23) 15 \textit{Wc2} \textit{Af8} gives Black many possibilities, such as ...\textit{Ce5}-d3, ...\textit{Cc5}-d3 and ...\textit{Cb6}xd5; White’s position is cramped and Black can be happy with the results of the opening.

e3) 14 \textit{Bb1} prepares \textit{b4} but Black again easily stops it: 14...\textit{Cd6} 15 \textit{h3} (preventing ...\textit{Cg4}) 15...\textit{Cb6} gives Black a very comfortable position.

\textbf{B21)}

13 \textit{Cc4} \textit{Wa6} 14 \textit{Bb3} \textit{Ad8}!?

14...\textit{Af8} (as played in Khetsuriani-Pountzas, Greek Team Ch, Ermioni Argolidas 2005) leaves the c5-square vacant for the d7-knight, and also deserves attention. The text-move brings a piece into play, which is why I prefer it.

15 \textit{Ad1}

15 a4?! weakens the b3-square, which Black can exploit immediately by 15...\textit{Af8}! (much more effective than it was a move ago) with more than enough compensation.

15...\textit{Cg4} 16 \textit{Cd2} (D)

Black unexpectedly starts the sort of kingside attack that we shall see in the next chapter, even though the bishop is on g2 here.

17 \textit{Dxe5} \textit{Dxe5} 18 \textit{Bf1}

This is the most natural.

After 18 a3 \textit{b6}! Black prepares ...\textit{Wc8} followed by ...\textit{Cf3} or ...\textit{Ch3}, with a dangerous initiative; e.g., 19 \textit{Bb1} \textit{Wc8} 20 \textit{Wc4} \textit{Dh3} (D) and now:

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

\textbf{a)} 21 \textit{b4} \textit{Dh5}! throws all Black’s pieces into the attack:

\textbf{a1)} 22 \textit{Dc2} \textit{Dxg2} 23 \textit{Df4} \textit{Dh6} 24 \textit{Bxc5} (24 \textit{Dxg2} \textit{g5} \textit{D}) 24...\textit{Df3} intending ...\textit{g5} and ...\textit{Wh3}. White is in trouble.

\textbf{a2)} 22 \textit{Dxe4} \textit{Dxe4} and then:

\textbf{a21)} 23 \textit{Dxe4}?! \textit{Wf5} 24 \textit{Wc3} \textit{Df8}! (preventing 25 \textit{Wc4} while intending ...\textit{Wf3} with mate threats) 25 \textit{Wf4} \textit{Wxe3}!! 26 \textit{Df1} (26 \textit{fxe3} \textit{Dxe3+} 27 \textit{Df2} \textit{Dxf4} 28 \textit{Dxf4} \textit{Dd3} \textit{D}) 26...\textit{Dxf4} 27 \textit{gxf4} \textit{Dxc3} 28 \textit{Bxc5} \textit{Dxc5} 29 \textit{d6} \textit{Dhd5} 30 \textit{Dxe3} \textit{Df5} \textit{D} followed by ...	extit{Df8-e8-d7}.

\textbf{a22)} 23 \textit{Wxe4} \textit{Wf5} 24 \textit{Wf3} \textit{Dxe3}! 25 \textit{fxe3} (25 \textit{Dxe3}? \textit{Df8} 26 \textit{Dxe8}+...
\[\text{VAGANIAN GAMBIT}\]

18 \( \text{b6}\) 19 \( \text{xb6} \) \( \text{xb6} \) (D)

The d5-pawn is hanging and White must defend it by 20 \( \text{c4} \) if he hopes to get any advantage. But then 20...\( \text{h5} \)!

\[\text{B22)}\]

\[13 \text{b3} \text{b4} 14 \text{b2} (D)\]

14...\( \text{xc3} \)!

In Beliavsky-B. Vučković, European Ch, Budva 2009 Black continued 14...\( \text{ac8} \)?! 15 \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{a6} \). Then Beliavsky chose 16 \( \text{e2} \) b5 17 a3 \( \text{f8} \) 18 \( \text{d2} \), when Black could have obtained a safe position with 18...\( \text{b7} \) = and taking on d5 (instead of 18...\( \text{e5} \)!, which he actually played). But the problem is that White can secure a clear edge by 16 a4!? \( \text{b6} \) (16...\( \text{c5} \)?? 17 \( \text{a2} \) a5 18 \( \text{xa5} \) \( \text{xa5} \) 19 \( \text{xf6} \) gxf6 20 b4 ++) 17 \( \text{a2} \) \( \text{xc4} \) 18 \( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 19 bxc4 \( \pm \) and \( \text{b3} \). That’s why I prefer the text-move, which is untested so far.

15 \( \text{xc3} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 16 \( \text{d4} \) \( \text{e6} \)

Black has solved all his opening problems, and we can assess the game as equal. The black rooks have enough open lines, the f5-bishop and queen support the e4-pawn and control the situation on the kingside, while the knights have a variety of squares at their disposal.
1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 c5 3 ♜f3 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 e5 5 ♜b5 d5 6 cxd5 ♛c5 7 e3

This is the most common choice in practice, even though the lines with g3 in the previous chapter may be a more critical test of Black’s gambit. The main drawback of playing e3 (rather than fianchettoing) is that the b8-h2 diagonal remains open for future play against the white king.

7...0-0 8 ♛c3

White can also reach this position using the move-order 7 ♛c3 0-0 8 e3.

Or:

a) 8 ♛c4?! does not make any sense since it does not disturb Black’s plans but rather provokes them – when the knight moves to e5, it will win a tempo by attacking this bishop. Also, the white bishop is much better on e2 in these positions, since it covers f3 and g4. 8...a6 9 ♛c3 e4 10 ♛d2 ♜e7 followed by ...♗f5 and ...♗bd7-e5 leads to similar play to the main line, but substantially improved for Black.

b) 8 ♛c1c3 suffers from the same defects as the analogous line (7 ♛c1c3) that we saw in the previous chapter. After 8...a6 9 ♛a3 b5 10 ♛c2 b4 11 ♛a4 ♜e7 12 ♛c4 ♛b7 Black regained the pawn with a comfortable position in Benderac-T.Vasilevich, Belgrade (women) 1997.

8...e4 (D)

As always, this thrust is a major part of Black’s plans. He stakes out a space advantage, cuts off support for the d5-pawn, frees the e5-square for a black knight, and opens the b8-h2 diagonal.

Now we consider:

A: 9 a3 92
B: 9 ♛d2 94
C: 9 ♛e2 97

A)

9 a3

Although this move does not look so logical (White advances a rook’s pawn while his king is still uncastled), it is quite dangerous. White intends b4 followed by ♖b2, which is an excellent place for the bishop. Control of the long diagonal will be a major
factor if White manages to simplify the position.

9...\texttt{We7}

My general advice is not to be too scared by White’s b4 idea. Often Black can allow this advance and exploit it later by playing ...a5.

10 b4 \texttt{g6} 11 \texttt{g2} \texttt{e5}

11...\texttt{f5}?! is not good because of 12 \texttt{c4} ± followed by \texttt{b5}. Black should almost never allow the exchange of his dark-squared bishop since this leaves the b2-bishop unopposed and sharply reduces Black’s attacking chances on the kingside.

12 \texttt{g2} \texttt{d8} 13 \texttt{b3} (D)

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_board.png}
\caption{Board position after 12 \texttt{b2} \texttt{d8} 13 \texttt{b3}.}
\end{figure}

13...a5!

With this new move, Black gets either an outpost on c5 for his queen’s knight or creates a weakness on b4 to attack.

13...\texttt{f5}?! allows the exchange of the e5-bishop and gets nothing in return: 14 \texttt{c4} \texttt{xc3}+ 15 \texttt{xc3} \texttt{xd5} 16 \texttt{a5} ± followed by \texttt{c4} with advantage, A. Onischchuk-Summerscale, Hastings 1995.

\textbf{14 \texttt{c4}}

In case of 14 bxa5 \texttt{xa5}, we have the following lines:

\begin{enumerate}
\item a) 15 \texttt{c2}! \texttt{xc3}+ 16 \texttt{xc3} \texttt{xd5} 17 \texttt{b6} (17 \texttt{e2}?! \texttt{g5} 18 \texttt{g3} \texttt{h3} \texttt{T} shuts the h1-rook in) 17...\texttt{g5} stops the f1-bishop’s development, and Black is OK.
\item b) 15 \texttt{c4} \texttt{a6} gives Black sufficient compensation since 0-0 is impossible:
\begin{enumerate}
\item b1) 16 0-0? \texttt{xh2}+! 17 \texttt{xh2}? (better is 17 \texttt{h1} \texttt{c5} 18 \texttt{c2} \texttt{e5} \texttt{T}) 17...\texttt{g4}+ 18 \texttt{g1} (18 \texttt{g3} \texttt{e5}+ 19 \texttt{f4} \texttt{xf3}+ 20 \texttt{h4} \texttt{h2}+ 21 \texttt{g5} \texttt{g6}#) 18...\texttt{f4} 19 \texttt{fd1} \texttt{xf2}+ 20 \texttt{h1} \texttt{d6} leads to checkmate.
\item b2) 16 \texttt{c1} \texttt{c5} 17 \texttt{b4} \texttt{a8} gives Black very good compensation. His pieces have taken up ideal squares and now the question is what White can do. Castling is still impossible because of ...\texttt{xh2}+, while there are no objects for White to attack or pieces for him to improve. White’s game is more difficult, which is why I prefer Black here.
\end{enumerate}
\end{enumerate}

14...axb4 15 axb4

Or:

\begin{enumerate}
\item a) 15 \texttt{xb4} \texttt{xb4} 16 axb4 \texttt{xa1}+ 17 \texttt{xal} \texttt{xc3}+ 18 \texttt{xc3} \texttt{xd5} 19 \texttt{d2} \texttt{e6} \texttt{T}. With his rook playing no active role, White hardly can hope to maintain the balance.
\item b) 15 \texttt{x5} (here the exchange of the dark-squared bishop is no big deal for Black since he has other advantages, most notably the uncastled king on e1) 15...\texttt{xc3} 16 \texttt{xc3} \texttt{xd5} and then:
\begin{enumerate}
\item b1) After the slow 17 \texttt{b2}?! , Black gets strong play by 17...\texttt{a6}! 18 \texttt{e2}
(18 \text{\underline{\text{\textit{a6}}}} \text{\underline{\text{\textit{x6}}}} 19 \text{\textit{0-0}} \text{\underline{\text{\textit{e6}}}}! \mp \text{intending \ldots f6 and \ldots \underline{\text{\textit{b6}}}}) 18 \ldots \text{f6 19 \underline{\text{\textit{c4}}} \underline{\text{\textit{c5}}} 20 \underline{\text{\textit{c2}}} \underline{\text{\textit{d3}}}+ 21 \underline{\text{\textit{x}} \text{\underline{\text{\textit{xd3}}} \text{exd3 \mp}} \text{with a crushing attack.})

b2) 17 \underline{\text{\textit{c4}}} (hurrying to castle) 17 \ldots \underline{\text{\textit{e6}}} 18 \text{\textit{0-0}} \underline{\text{\textit{a6}}}. The e5-knight feels especially uncomfortable with \ldots f6 threatened.

\textbf{15...\underline{\text{\textit{xa1}}}+ 16 \underline{\text{\textit{xa1}}} \underline{\text{\textit{c7}}} (D)}

Black’s main idea now is to attack the b4-pawn with \ldots \underline{\text{\textit{a6}}}. If White plays b5, the knight uses another route: via d7 to c5.

\textbf{17 \text{\underline{\text{\textit{b5}}}}}

This is the safest for White, exchanging off Black’s dark-squared bishop as it is likely to become his main attacking piece later.

White can stubbornly defend the extra pawn by a somewhat awkward knight manoeuvre from c4 to c2, but in this case he can expect serious problems: 17 \underline{\text{\textit{a3}}}?! (freeing the c4-square for the f1-bishop) 17 \ldots \underline{\text{\textit{a6}}} 18 \underline{\text{\textit{c2}}} (exchanging the light-squared bishop by 18 \underline{\text{\textit{x}} \text{\underline{\text{\textit{xa6}}}?! b\text{\textit{x}} \text{\underline{\text{\textit{a6}}}} \mp} is very risky for White – as it often is in this gambit – as his light squares are left undefended) 18 \ldots \text{e5} 19 \underline{\text{\textit{c4}}} \underline{\text{\textit{f5}}} \text{and now:}

a) 20 \text{\textit{0-0}? is still impossible, due to 20 \ldots \underline{\text{\textit{xh2+}}}! 21 \underline{\text{\textit{xh2}}} (21 \underline{\text{\textit{h1}}} \underline{\text{\textit{g4}}} \rightarrow) 21 \ldots \underline{\text{\textit{g4}}}+ 22 \underline{\text{\textit{g3}}} (22 \underline{\text{\textit{g1}}} \underline{\text{\textit{h4}}} 23 \underline{\text{\textit{d1}}} \underline{\text{\textit{xf2+}}} 24 \underline{\text{\textit{h1}}} \underline{\text{\textit{d6}}} \rightarrow) 22 \ldots \underline{\text{\textit{d6}}}+ 23 \text{f4} \underline{\text{\textit{h6}}}.+

b) 20 \text{h3 prevents tactics involving \ldots \underline{\text{\textit{xh2+}} and also rules out \ldots \underline{\text{\textit{g4}}}}. After 20 \ldots \underline{\text{\textit{c7}}}, 21 \text{0-0}, Black must choose carefully:

b1) Regaining the sacrificed pawn by 21 \ldots \underline{\text{\textit{xh3}}}? 22 \underline{\text{\textit{xc3}}} \underline{\text{\textit{cxd5}} leads to rather an unpleasant endgame of a type Black should usually avoid in this opening: 23 \underline{\text{\textit{xd5}}} \underline{\text{\textit{xd5}}} 24 \underline{\text{\textit{c4}}} \underline{\text{\textit{d8}}} 25 \underline{\text{\textit{xf6}}}! \underline{\text{\textit{xf6}}} 26 \underline{\text{\textit{d4}}} \mp. The knight dominates the bishop.

b2) 21 \ldots \underline{\text{\textit{c6}}}! intends \ldots \underline{\text{\textit{e5}}, attacking h2}. White’s move h3 was a good way to prepare castling, but it also weakened the b8-h2 diagonal, and now Black makes use of this. Black’s attack almost plays itself. White can try 22 \text{h4}, planning to meet \ldots \underline{\text{\textit{e5}} with g3. But naturally this gives Black new possibilities, such as 22 \ldots \underline{\text{\textit{h5}}} 23 \text{g3} \underline{\text{\textit{h3}}}! followed by \ldots \underline{\text{\textit{g3}}} with a practically decisive attack – all White’s pieces are on the other side of the board.

\textbf{17 \ldots \underline{\text{\textit{d5}}} 18 \underline{\text{\textit{xc7}}}}

Now 18 \ldots \underline{\text{\textit{xc7}}}? 19 \underline{\text{\textit{e5}} \rightarrow} costs Black his b8-knight, but 18 \ldots \underline{\text{\textit{xc7}}}, 19 \underline{\text{\textit{e2}}} \underline{\text{\textit{a6}}} = gives him easy play on the queenside.

\textbf{B)}

\textbf{9 \underline{\text{\textit{d2}}} \underline{\text{\textit{e7}}} 10 \text{a3}}

Compared with Line A (9 \text{a3}), the extra moves \underline{\text{\textit{d2}} and \ldots \underline{\text{\textit{e7}}} have been made. This difference means that
White can prevent the ...\textcolor{red}{\textit{e}}5 idea that Black used in that line.

\textbf{10...\textcolor{green}{\textit{d}}8 11 b4}
11 \textcolor{red}{\textit{e}}2 transposes to Line C11.

\textbf{11...\textcolor{green}{\textit{d}}6 12 \textcolor{red}{\textit{c}}4}
This is the point of White’s move-order. For 12 \textcolor{red}{\textit{b}}2 \textcolor{red}{\textit{e}}5, see Line A.

\textbf{12...\textcolor{green}{\textit{c}}7 (D)}

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

As we already know, Black should avoid the exchange of his dark-squared bishop unless he gets something really substantial in return.

\textbf{13 \textcolor{red}{\textit{b}}2}

Or:

a) 13 \textcolor{green}{\textit{a}}2?! (an awkward and unnatural idea) 13...\textcolor{red}{\textit{g}}4! 14 \textcolor{red}{\textit{e}}2 \textcolor{red}{\textit{x}}e2 15 \textcolor{green}{\textit{x}}e2 \textcolor{red}{\textit{c}}6! and the knight moves to e5 with obvious compensation, Krassenkov-Smirin, Vilnius 1988 (note that Black could not develop this knight by 15...\textcolor{red}{\textit{b}}d7?? because of 16 d6 +—).

b) 13 \textcolor{green}{\textit{c}}2?! is not good because it allows Black to regain the pawn under good circumstances right away: 13...\textcolor{red}{\textit{x}}d5! (this new move improves over the 13...\textcolor{red}{\textit{f}}5?! played in Bouaziz-Othman, Arab Ch, Dubai 1995) and unfortunately for White he can’t take the e4-pawn either way:

b1) 14 \textcolor{green}{\textit{x}}e4?? surprisingly leads to a quick mate: 14...\textcolor{red}{\textit{x}}c3 15 \textcolor{green}{\textit{x}}e7? \textcolor{green}{\textit{d}}1#.

b2) 14 \textcolor{red}{\textit{x}}e4? is bad because it opens attacking lines for the black pieces. After 14...\textcolor{red}{\textit{f}}5 15 \textcolor{red}{\textit{d}}3 \textcolor{red}{\textit{c}}6, intending to take on b4, Black is probably winning already; e.g., 16 \textcolor{red}{\textit{d}}2 \textcolor{red}{\textit{b}}6! (planning to take on d3) 17 f3 \textcolor{green}{\textit{h}}4+ 18 \textcolor{red}{\textit{e}}2 \textcolor{red}{\textit{x}}d3! 19 \textcolor{green}{\textit{x}}d3 \textcolor{green}{\textit{d}}8 20 \textcolor{green}{\textit{c}}2 \textcolor{red}{\textit{x}}e4 21 \textcolor{green}{\textit{x}}e4 (21 \textcolor{red}{\textit{x}}e4 \textcolor{red}{\textit{xc}4} 22 \textcolor{green}{\textit{xc}}4 \textcolor{green}{\textit{g}}4+ —+) 21...\textcolor{green}{\textit{xe}4} 22 \textcolor{red}{\textit{fxe}4} \textcolor{red}{\textit{xc}4} —.

b3) 14 \textcolor{red}{\textit{b}}2 appears best, but of course White’s unintentional generosity can’t bring him any dividends. 14...\textcolor{red}{\textit{x}}c3 15 \textcolor{green}{\textit{xc}}3 f6 followed by ...\textcolor{red}{\textit{c}}6, ...\textcolor{red}{\textit{e}}6, etc., gives Black comfortable equality.

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

c) 13 \textcolor{green}{\textit{b}}3 a6! (intending ...b5 to push the c4-knight to a less comfortable square; the idea behind White putting his queen on b3 is shown by 13...\textcolor{red}{\textit{xd}5}? 14 \textcolor{red}{\textit{xd}5} \textcolor{green}{\textit{xd}5} 15 \textcolor{red}{\textit{b}6}! \textcolor{red}{\textit{axb}6} 16 \textcolor{green}{\textit{xd}5} \pm) 14 a4 \textcolor{red}{\textit{xd}5}! (this is a new move; with pawns on a4 and a6, Black can already sacrifice an exchange; 14...\textcolor{red}{\textit{f}5}?! 15 \textcolor{red}{\textit{a}3} \textcolor{red}{\textit{bd}7} 16 \textcolor{green}{\textit{d}1} gave White strong pressure in A.Donchenko-Kotainy, German Under-18 Ch, Oberhof 2011) 15 \textcolor{red}{\textit{xd}5} \textcolor{green}{\textit{xd}5} 16 \textcolor{red}{\textit{b}6} \textcolor{red}{\textit{xb}6} 17 \textcolor{green}{\textit{xd}5} \textcolor{red}{\textit{xc}6} gives Black enough for the exchange: the uncastled white king, Black’s better development and the weaknesses on b4 and d3. Here I shall show just a few lines that demonstrate how Black develops his initiative. 18 \textcolor{red}{\textit{d}2} \textcolor{red}{\textit{g}4}!? (D) (preparing ...\textcolor{green}{\textit{d}8}) and now:
96 ATTACK WITH BLACK

13...\textbf{e}6

Black is ready to exchange the d5-pawn for the e4-pawn to get more open lines.

14 \textbf{wc}2 (D)

\textbf{B}

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

14...\textbf{xd}5!

This new move improves over the previously played 14...\textbf{xd}5?! 15 \textbf{d}d1 \textbf{d}6 16 \textbf{xd}5 \textbf{xd}5 17 \textbf{xd}5 \textbf{xd}5 18 \textbf{e}2 \pm Bartels-Mainka, Luxembourg 1989.

Now White can take the e4-pawn in two ways but neither leads to an advantage:

15 \textbf{xe}4

15 \textbf{xe}4 \textbf{c}6 leaves Black far ahead in development, and his compensation is rather convincing; e.g., 16 \textbf{e}2 \textbf{ac}8 17 0-0 \textbf{xc}3 18 \textbf{xc}3 \textbf{xc}4! 19 \textbf{xc}4 (19 \textbf{xe}7? loses one of the bishops: 19...\textbf{xe}7 20 \textbf{xc}4 \textbf{d}6 \pm) 19...\textbf{d}4! 20 \textbf{xd}4 (20 \textbf{xd}4? \textbf{eh}2+ 21 \textbf{eh}2 \textbf{xc}4 22 \textbf{xc}4 \textbf{c}7+ 23 \textbf{g}1 \textbf{xc}4 is somewhat better for Black) 20...\textbf{xd}4 21 \textbf{xd}4 b6 =.

15...\textbf{d}7
White hasn’t castled yet, and this provides Black enough time to secure good compensation. The most natural plan is ...\(\text{a}c8\), threatening ...b5 followed by a move by the c7-bishop. Unfortunately for White, there is no quick way to get castled. Let’s see a few example lines:

a) 16 \(\text{d}3\)?! \(\text{a}c8\) (intending ...b5) and then:

a1) 17 \(\text{e}2\) offers Black a choice of good replies: 17...b5! (17...\(\text{a}b4\) 18 axb4 \(\text{x}c4\) 19 \(\text{x}c4\) \(\text{xe}4\) is also good) 18 \(\text{cd}2\) (or 18 \(\text{a}5\) \(\text{e}5\) 19 0-0 \(\text{g}4\) 20 f3 \(\text{xd}3\) 21 \(\text{xd}3\) \(\text{xe}3\)! –+) 18...\(\text{e}5\)! 19 \(\text{f}3\) \(\text{xb}4\)!

a2) 17 \(\text{cl}1\) b5 18 \(\text{cd}2\) \(\text{e}5\) 19 \(\text{wb}1\) (19 \(\text{x}c8\) \(\text{xb}2\) 20 \(\text{c}2\) \(\text{xa}3\)) 21 \(\text{al}1\) \(\text{xb}4\) 22 \(\text{bl}\) \(\text{xd}3+\) 23 \(\text{xd}3\) \(\text{xb}4\) 24 0-0 \(\text{f}5\)! 25 \(\text{xb}5\) \(\text{xe}4\) 26 \(\text{xe}4\) a5 \(\text{f}5\) \(\text{xb}2\) and here:

a21) 20 \(\text{xb}2\) \(\text{xc}1+\) 21 \(\text{xc}1\) \(\text{f}5\) (a critical idea for Black: the pawn advances to f4 with tempo) 22 \(\text{g}3\) (22 \(\text{c}5\) \(\text{xc}5\) 23 bxc5 \(\text{xe}3\) \(\text{f}5\) 22...f4 with an attack.

a22) 20 \(\text{xc}8\) \(\text{xc}8\) 21 \(\text{xb}2\) \(\text{f}5\) 22 \(\text{g}3\) f4 gives Black an obvious initiative.

b) 16 \(\text{d}1\)?! \(\text{a}c8\) 17 \(\text{bl}\) b5 18 \(\text{cd}2\) f5 19 \(\text{c}3\) \(\text{xc}3\) 20 \(\text{xc}3\) \(\text{b}6\) \(\text{f}5\) followed by ...f4 again brings Black a strong initiative.

c) 16 \(\text{c}1\) \(\text{ac}8\) 17 \(\text{bl}\) b5 18 \(\text{cd}2\) (18 \(\text{a}5\)? \(\text{xa}5\) 19 bxa5 \(\text{f}5\) 20 \(\text{xc}8\) \(\text{xc}8\) 21 \(\text{d}3\) \(\text{e}8\) \(\text{f}5\) followed by ...\(\text{xe}3\)) 18...f5 19 \(\text{c}5\) \(\text{xc}5\) 20 \(\text{xc}5\) (the only move, since 20 bxc5? \(\text{a}5\) leaves the d2-knight in big trouble) 20...f4! \(\text{f}5\) with strong pressure.

Here White has a choice of three main continuations: 10 a3, 10 \(\text{d}2\) and 10 0-0. There are mostly not very serious differences between them and often they lead to the same positions. We take two of them as main lines:

- **C1**: 10 \(\text{d}2\)

- **C2**: 10 a3
...\(\text{\textit{f}}5\) in order to bring the knight to \(\text{e}5\) more quickly. 11...\(\text{\textit{bd}}7\) 12 \(\text{b}4\) \(\text{\textit{d}}6\) 13 \(\text{\textit{b}}2\) and then:

\(c1\) 13...\(\text{\textit{b}}6\)?! is unconvincing because it gives White an opportunity to remove Black’s dark-squared bishop by 14 \(\text{\textit{b}}5\)! (rather than 14 \(\text{\textit{d}}2\), Oathotse-Ezat, African Ch, Windhoek 2007), securing good prospects for White.

\(c2\) After 13...\(\text{\textit{e}}5\)! 14 \(\text{\textit{b}}3\) \(\text{\textit{b}}6\) 15 \(\text{\textit{d}}1\) White has defended the pawn three times but because the white queen is overloaded, Black can nevertheless play 15...\(\text{\textit{b}}x\text{\textit{d}}5\)! 16 \(\text{\textit{xd}}5\) \(\text{\textit{xd}}5\), when the position is equal; e.g., 17 \(\text{\textit{d}}2\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{\textit{xb}}2\) 18 \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{\textit{xb}}2\) \(\text{\textit{d}}7\)!(an important move: if the white knight comes to \(d4\), White can hope for some advantage; that’s why Black brings his bishop to \(a4\) to eliminate the knight) 19 \(\text{\textit{b}}3\) \(\text{\textit{a}}4\) =.

\(C1)\)

10 \(\text{\textit{d}}2\)

White first attacks the enemy \(\text{e}4\)-pawn.

10...\(\text{\textit{d}}8\)

Now we have two main sections:

\(C11\): 11 \(\text{a}3\) \(99\)

\(C12\): 11 \(\text{\textit{c}}2\) \(100\)

Or:

\(a\) 11 0-0 \(\text{\textit{a}}6\) (Black will capture on \(d5\) without any complications; 11...\(\text{\textit{f}}5\)?! 12 \(\text{\textit{b}}3\)! {Altini-Matamoros, Forni di Sopra 2011} followed by \(\text{\textit{d}}4\) looks too good for White; at least, I could not find any smart ideas there) 12 \(\text{\textit{b}}3\) \(\text{\textit{b}}6\) = followed by ...\(\text{\textit{c}}7/\text{\textit{b}}4\text{\textit{xd}}5\); Black is OK.

\(b\) With 11 \(\text{\textit{b}}3\)?!, the knight moves towards the \(d4\)-square, but takes the pressure off the \(e4\)-pawn. Black can get the advantage by simply taking on \(d5\). Now I prefer 11...\(\text{\textit{d}}6\) over the two other options (11...\(\text{\textit{d}}6\) and 11...\(\text{\textit{b}}4\)) because the \(d5\)-pawn remains attacked by the \(d8\)-rook, and from \(b6\), the bishop controls \(d4\) and \(e3\) and can switch to the \(b8\)-h2 diagonal. After 12 0-0 \(\text{\textit{c}}6\)! the knight is ready to move to either \(b4\) or \(e5\). Then:

\(b1\) 13 \(\text{\textit{h}}1\)?! (this strange move does not help White at all) 13...\(\text{\textit{b}}4\) 14 \(\text{\textit{c}}4\) \(\text{\textit{b}}x\text{\textit{d}}5\) 15 \(\text{\textit{xd}}5\) \(\text{\textit{xd}}5\)!(the alternative 15...\(\text{\textit{e}}6\)?! \(\text{\textit{f}}\) gave Black less in Luczak-Tomaszewski, Porabka 1986) 16 \(\text{\textit{xd}}5\) \(\text{\textit{g}}5\) \(\text{\textit{f}}\).

\(b2\) 13 \(a4\)! plans to push the \(b6\)-bishop back, but after 13...\(\text{\textit{b}}4\) 14 \(\text{a}5\) \(\text{\textit{c}}7\) 15 \(\text{\textit{d}}4\) \(\text{\textit{b}}x\text{\textit{d}}5\) \(\text{\textit{f}}\) Black is simply better.

\(c\) 11 \(\text{\textit{b}}3\) \(\text{\textit{a}}6\) and here:

\(c1\) 12 \(\text{a}3\)?! \(\text{\textit{c}}7\) 13 \(\text{\textit{c}}2\)?! \(\text{\textit{f}}5\) 14 \(\text{b}4\) \(\text{\textit{d}}6\) 15 \(\text{\textit{c}}4\) \(\text{\textit{c}}x\text{\textit{d}}5\) 16 \(\text{\textit{xd}}6\) \(\text{\textit{xd}}6\) 17 \(\text{\textit{b}}2\)?! \(\text{\textit{c}}8\) 18 \(\text{\textit{xd}}5\) \(\text{\textit{xd}}5\) 19 \(\text{\textit{a}}4\) occurred in Stepak-Birnboim, Tel Aviv 1988. Black has played very well so far, but now gave his opponent a last-minute reprieve by 19...\(\text{\textit{b}}6\)!. Instead, 19...\(\text{\textit{g}}5\)! 20 0-0 (20 \(\text{f}1\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{\textit{xe}}3\)#! 21 \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{\textit{e}}3\) \(\text{\textit{d}}2\) 22 \(\text{c}1\) \(\text{\textit{cd}}8\) \(\text{\textit{f}}\)-) 20...\(\text{\textit{h}}3\) \(\text{\textit{f}}\) is strong.

\(c2\) Black can meet the untried 12 0-0 with 12...\(\text{\textit{c}}7\) 13 \(\text{\textit{d}}1\) \(\text{\textit{b}}6\)?!, intending ...\(\text{\textit{b}}7\) and ...\(\text{\textit{c}}x\text{\textit{d}}5\) (and not 13...\(\text{\textit{c}}x\text{\textit{d}}5\)? 14 \(\text{\textit{d}}x\text{\textit{e}}4\)! \(\text{\textit{f}}\)). Usually, Black does not develop his pieces like this, but since the white queen is blocking its own pawns, it works well here; e.g., 14 \(\text{\textit{a}}4\) (attacking \(e4\)) 14...\(\text{\textit{d}}7\) 15
\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{7 e3 b5! 16 b3 f5 17 cxb5 cxd5 and Black obtains good compensation.} \\
&C11)
\end{align*}
\]

This move provokes an opening of the position, which in principle favours the better-developed player.

\begin{align*}
&\text{11 a3 (D)} \\
&\text{12 cxd5 12 cxd5} \\
&\text{12 cxe4 attempts to justify White’s play by exchanging the d5-pawn for the one on e4. However, it does not lead to desirable simplifications. After 12...b6! Black develops his pieces naturally and strongly – the knight goes to c6, the queen’s bishop can be brought to e6 or f5 and g6, while the queen’s rook will move to c8. Then White’s pieces will be even more uncomfortable. For instance, after 13 0-0 c6 it’s not clear what White should do, and Black’s game feels good. And 13 c3?! is extremely risky:} \\
&\text{a) 13 cxe3?! has been successfully tried in practice, but may not be objectively best because White has enough defensive resources to hold the balance, though you’d probably need to be a computer to find them over the board: 14 fxe3 xe3 15 f1 c6 16 b3 (16 a4? e5! 17 d1 e6 = Postny-Smirin, Israeli Team Ch 1999) 16...e6 17 c4 d4 18 b5 c5 (18...h4+ 19 g3 xg3+ 20 hxg3 xc4 21 xc4 d7! 22 xf7! xf7 23 d6 e5 24 a2 =) 19 e3! xc4 20 xc4 xxe3+ 21 xxe3 xxe3 22 xf7+ h8 =.} \\
&\text{b) The less dramatic 13...xc3! 14 bxc3 f5 gives Black very strong play for the pawn.} \\
&\text{12...xd5 13 b4} \\
&\text{13 a4?! is most energetically met with 13...d7! followed by 14 c6, f5, etc. Then White can’t take on e4: 14 cxe4? (also not 14 xe4? xd2 15 xe7 xe2+ 16 xe2 xe7 =) 14...b6 15 c2 f5 16 f3 c8 =. Instead, 13 f5?! proved less effective in Vakhidov-Nesterov, Bishkek Zonal 1993.} \\
&\text{13 b6 14 b2 c6 15 b3} \\
&\text{Another queen move, 15 c2, transposes after 15...f5 to a well-known game by the young Kasparov. After 16 0-0, he chose 16 g5?! (16 c8 17 c4 c7 18 ad1 cd8 is better, with equality, while 16 c7 and 16 e5 can also be tried), which from a human perspective looks very natural, as the black pieces move closer to the white king. But in the cold light of day, and under computer scrutiny, this plan does not look so scary:} \\
&\text{a) 17 h1?! d6 (17 c8!!) 18 c4 xe4? (Black should prefer 18...g6 19 f3 xe3 with an unclear position) 19 xe4 d2 and in}
\end{align*}
Mikhalchishin-Kasparov, USSR Ch, Frunze 1981 White played 20 b5? and Black later won. Both players evidently missed 20 a6! bxa6 21 wxc6 ad8 22 c3 ±, when White has an extra pawn with good chances to realize it.

b) 17 c4!? even helps Black complete his plan. After 17...d6 18 fd1 (continuing to ignore Black!) 19 g6 19 g3 we see the point. Black spent three tempi to create a mating threat, but White just played g3, and it’s not easy to see how Black should proceed. 19...e8 20 b3 e7 21 e2 ± leaves White’s pieces more harmonious.

We now return to 15 b3 (D):

15...e6!

This is a new move. 15...g5 (as played in Panno-Gravina Rossi, Argentine Ch 1989) is also interesting, but there is a strong case for developing the queenside pieces without delay.

16 dxe4 c8!

Now the white queen has serious problems:

a) 17 c4 xb4! and then:
   a1) 18 axb4? xc4 19 wxc4 d1+ 20 xd1 xc4 21 d6 a6 ±.
   a2) 18 xd5? xd5 (intending ...xe3) 19 wd1 h4! 20 g3 wc4! (planning ...a5+) 21 e2 d8 + followed by ...f4.
   a3) 18 0-0 d3! 19 wb4 wb4 20 axb4 xc4 21 c5 xc5 22 bxc5 a6 23 d4 f6 with a slightly better endgame for Black.

b) 17 c1 d2! 18 xd2 (18 c4 a5! 19 bxa5 xb2! 20 wb2 xa5+ ± and ...xc4) 18...xb3 19 xb3 d8 ±.

C12)

11 wc2 f5 12 a3

White does not rush to castle kingside since the king cannot expect any real safety on that wing. Other possibilities:

a) 12 g4 leads to another opening of the position that Black definitely likes. 12...xd4 13 xg4 xg4 14 wxe4 (avoiding the queen exchange would favour Black since the white king is still in the centre: 14 dxe4? b4 15 d2 d7 ± followed by ...e5, etc.) 14...xe4 15 dxe4 (after 15 cxe4 b4 Black will soon capture on d5 with a better endgame) 15...b4! (a new move; 15...a6?! is less aggressive, though it’s enough for equal chances, Morovic-Liew Chee Meng, Dubai Olympiad 1986) 16 g1 f3 17 d2 d7. Black is a pawn down but his pieces are much better organized and his chances are better in this endgame.

b) 12 0-0 bd7 (D) and then:
b1) 13 ๑c4 ๑ac8 14 ๑d1 ๑e5! (an instructive moment: Black gets the d6- and e5-squares for his bishop and queen) 15 ๑xe5 ๑xe5 16 ๑d2 ๑xd5! ๑f (16...๑g4?!), as in Servat-A. Hoffman, Argentine Ch 1995, is a very ‘human’ move but there is no need for creative measures when it’s possible simply to win the pawn back while keeping all Black’s positional advantages. The trick is that White can’t take on d5: 17 ๑xd5?? ๑d6 -=.

b2) 13 ๑d1 ๑ac8 14 ๑f1 ๑d6!? (better than 14...๑e5?!, as in Chernin-Hebden, London 1989, because Black needs to keep the b8-h2 diagonal open so he can line up his bishop and queen on it) 15 ๑g3 ๑g6 followed by ...h5-h4, etc. White’s pieces are cramped and can hardly expect any harmony in the near future.

12...๑bd7?!

The rook will move to c8 and the knight heads for e5. The d5-pawn will most likely be taken later anyway.

12...๑xd5?! is less effective. In my opinion, there is no need to take the pawn at once, and rapid development is more important. After 13 ๑xd5 ๑xd5 14 b4 ๑b6 15 g4 ๑g6 16 h4 h6 17 ๑c4!? (this new move improves over the 17 h5?! played in Karasev-Montero Martinez, World Seniors Ch, Rijeka 2011) 17...๑d8 18 ๑b2 White has escaped from the pressure and the game is unclear.

13 b4 ๑d6 14 ๑b2 ๑ac8 15 ๑b3 ๑e5?!

Black should generally preserve his dark-squared bishop since it’s a key piece in his kingside attack. 15...๑b6 16 ๑b5?! (a new move improving over 16 0-0?!, Goldsztejn-Degraeve, La Fere 2008) 16...a6 (16...๑b8?! 17 d6 ๑xd6 18 ๑xa7 ๑a8 19 ๑b5 ±) 17 ๑xd6 ๑xd6 18 0-0 ๑bxd5 19 ๑fd1 is unclear.

16 ๑d3!

Now:

a) 17 ๑xd3? ๑hxh2+! is a typical idea – the bishop has been distracted from e2 by ...๑d3, and ...๑hxh2+ wins. 18 ๑h2?? loses at once to 18...๑g4+ 19 ๑g1 (19 ๑g3 ๑e5+ ++) 19...๑h4 20 ๑fc1 ๑xf2+ 21 ๑h1 ๑d6 --, while 18 ๑h1 ๑e5! (18...exd3?? 19 ๑hxh2 ๑g4+ 20 ๑g1 ๑h4 21 ๑f3 ++) 19 ๑c4 (19 ๑e2? ๑xd5! -- threatens both ...๑xc3 and ...๑h4+) 19...๑g4 20 g3 ๑g5 gives Black a decisive attack.

b) 17 ๑b5 ๑xb2 18 ๑xd6 ๑xd6 19 ๑xb2 ๑xd5 =.

C2)

10 a3

This is the most popular move. White aims for a quick b4 followed by developing his queenside pieces.
10...\textit{d}8
My feeling is that Black still should not worry about the b4 advance because it gives Black possibilities of ...a5 with play on the queenside.

11 b4
For 11 \textit{d}2, see Line C11.
11 0-0 transposes to note ‘c’ to White’s 10th move in Line C.

11...\textit{d}6 (D)

From here, the bishop keeps an eye on two pawns: b4 and h2.

12 \textit{b}2
White has two main ideas, both connected with exchanges:

1) To swap Black’s dark-squared bishop and remain with an unopposed bishop on b2;

2) To exchange all the minor pieces except for a white knight that will come to d4, and Black’s light-squared bishop.

Many of the following variations will make more sense if you keep these two ideas in mind.

White can also defend the d5-pawn with the rook, but it takes a lot of time and Black obtains good play without real problems. 12 \textit{a}2 \textit{b}7 13 \textit{d}2 \textit{e}5 (Black’s main idea is ...\textit{g}4) and now:

a) After the manoeuvre \textit{a}2-d2, White gains little from exchanging the d6-bishop: 14 \textit{b}5 \textit{g}4! and then:

a1) 15 \textit{x}d6? is not good because of the zwischenzug 15...\textit{xe}2 16 \textit{xe}2 (16 \textit{f}5 \textit{d}7 17 \textit{h}6+ gxh6 18 \textit{xe}2 \textit{f}5! 19 0-0 \textit{f}3+! \textit{f}1 16...\textit{xd}6 17 0-0 \textit{xd}5 \textit{f} followed by ...\textit{d}3.

a2) 15 0-0 \textit{xe}2 16 \textit{xe}2 \textit{d}3 17 \textit{c}3 (17 \textit{xd}6 \textit{xd}6 18 \textit{b}2 \textit{xd}5 19 \textit{f}5 leaves Black OK) 17 \textit{ac}8 18 \textit{c}2 (18 \textit{xd}6? \textit{xc}3 19 \textit{b}2 \textit{xb}2 20 \textit{b}5 \textit{a}4 \textit{f}) 18...\textit{b}8 with obvious compensation for Black.

b) The cold-blooded 14 0-0 is also possible, but then White must defend against an attack on his king after 14...\textit{g}4! Incidentally, 14...\textit{f}3+! is also quite interesting; e.g., 15 \textit{xf}3 (15 gxf3? loses immediately to 15...\textit{xf}3 16 \textit{xf}3 \textit{e}5 17 \textit{e}1 \textit{h}3! --) 15...\textit{xf}3 16 gxf3 (16 \textit{xf}3?? \textit{g}4++ traps the queen) 16...\textit{h}3 17 \textit{e}1. Black has no direct ways to break through to the white king at the moment but its cover is so weak that I’m pretty sure a new wave of attack will come at some point. Right away even 17...a5 can be played, with reasonable compensation.

c) 14 \textit{h}3 (in order to prevent ...\textit{g}4)
14...\textit{f}5 15 \textit{d}4 (15 0-0 \textit{ac}8 16 \textit{b}2 \textit{b}8 gives Black compensation) and here Black must choose between taking an exchange for two pawns or keeping his positional advantages and developing his initiative:
c1) Playing to win an exchange by 15...\textit{\underline{\textbf{Qd3}}}+ 16 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxd3}}} exd3 is not so good in my view. Then 17 0-0 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qe5}}} 18 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxd3}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxd3}}} 19 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Wxd3}}} was at best unclear for Black in Peng Zhaoqin-V. Mikhailovski, Dieren 1998.

c2) 15...\textit{\underline{\textbf{Qac8}}}!? 16 0-0 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qb8}}} gives Black pleasant compensation. ...\textit{\underline{\textbf{Qd3}}} can be played at practically any moment, and in addition Black has the idea of ...a6 (preventing \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qb5}}}) and ...\textit{\underline{\textbf{Wd6}}} with threats to the white king.

12...\textit{\underline{\textbf{Qe5}}}

12...a5?! appears to lead to problems after 13 bxa5 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qe5}}} (Timman-Topalov, Wijk aan Zee 1996) 14 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Od2}}}! (a new move), when White’s main aim is to exchange off the e5-bishop:

a) 14...\textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxc3}}} 15 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxc3}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxd5}}} 16 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qb2}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxa5}}} 17 0-0 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qc6}}} 18 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qc1}}} ±.

b) 14...\textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxa5}}} 15 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qb3}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxc3}}} (or 15...\textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxd5}}} 16 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxe4}}} ±) 16 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxc3}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qaxd5}}} 17 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qd1}}} ± and 0-0.

c) 14...\textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxd5}}} 15 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxd5}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxd5}}} 16 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxe5}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Wxe5}}} 17 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qc1}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qe6}}} 18 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qc2}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qd7}}} 19 0-0 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxa5}}} 20 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Wxe4}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxe4}}} 21 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxe4}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxa3}}} 22 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qfd1}}} gives White an obvious edge in the endgame.

13 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Wb3}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qbd7}}} 14 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qd2}}}

14 0-0 transposes to note ‘c2’ to White’s 10th move in Line C.

14...\textit{\underline{\textbf{Qb6}}} (D)

15 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qd1}}}

Black has strong play after 15 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qc4}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxc4}}} 16 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxc4}}} a6?! (a new move; 16...\textit{\underline{\textbf{Qf5}}} lets White execute his plan of exchanging dark-squared bishops by 17 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qb5}}}, as in Khodos-Gofshtein, Daugavpils 1978) 17 a4 (17 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qe2}}??} b5 −+) 17...\textit{\underline{\textbf{Qf5}}} 18 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qe2}}} (18 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qc1}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qac8}}} 19 h3 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qd6}}} 20 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qa3}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qd7}}}! ± with ...\textit{\underline{\textbf{Qe5}}} to follow) 18...\textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxb2}}} 19 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Wxb2}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qac8}}}! and then:

a) 20 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qc1}}}?! \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxd5}}} 21 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxd5}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxc1}}}+ 22 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Wxc1}}} (after 22 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxc1}}}?! \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxd5}}} 23 0-0 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Wd6}}}! ± White cannot bring his knight to d4) 22...\textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxb4+}}} 23 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qd2}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxd2+}}} 24 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxd2}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxd5+}}} 25 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qd4}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qf8}}} ±.

b) 20 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qa2}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qg4}}}! 21 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qd4}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxd5}}} 22 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxd5}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxd5}}} 23 0-0 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qh4}}} ±. Although White has achieved his aim (d4-knight vs light-squared bishop) Black has a powerful attack on the white king.

15...\textit{\underline{\textbf{Qf5}}} 16 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qc4}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxc4}}} 17 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxc4}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qac8}}} 18 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Wb3}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qg4}}}!?

Black prepares for the endgame by exchanging his worst piece.

18...a6?! 19 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qa4}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxb2}}} 20 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxb2}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxd5}}} 21 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxd5}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxd5}}} 22 0-0 ± Lautier-Illescas, Linares 1995. Black has some problems with his light-squared bishop, which tends to be bad in this type of endgame.

19 h3 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxe2}}} 20 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxe2}}}

After 20 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxe2}}}? \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qd7}}}! ± Black plans to take on c3 and check from b5.

20...\textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxb2}}} 21 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxb2}}} \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qxd5}}} 22 0-0 \textit{\underline{\textbf{Qb6}}}

The game is totally equal.
Finally, we have reached the main topic of this book – the Benko Gambit. Before we start analysing the variations, let me make some brief historical notes. The first article about 3...b5 was published by Argunov, a chessmaster from Kuibyshev (which is nowadays called Samara) in the magazine *Shakhmaty v SSSR* in 1946. Since this city is on the Volga River, the opening was named the Volga Gambit in Russian-language literature. Some time later, the Hungarian/American GM Pal Benko made a huge contribution to the development of this gambit line, in particular by showing that Black can rely on long-term positional compensation rather than quickly opening the centre with ...e6. He also published an influential book, *The Benko Gambit*, in 1974. The opening then quickly found followers, both at club level and among grandmasters. White’s attempts to refute the gambit kept running into brick walls, while the ease and elegance with which Black’s ideas worked in practice, without White appearing to do anything wrong, made a strong impression on the chess world. As White started to lower his ambitions, and merely seek a workable edge, the Benko began to acquire a more normal body of opening theory, but still one with more than its fair share of spectacular and dynamic variations.

Although the Benko Gambit is not so common at present in games between the world elite, many of the top players have this opening in their arsenal, including Carlsen, Ponomariov, Ivanchuk, Vachier-Lagrave and Caruana.

The main idea of the gambit is to create an initiative on the queenside. By sacrificing a pawn, Black opens the a- and b-files for his rooks and queen. At the same time, the g7-bishop takes control of the a1-h8 diagonal. There are also pleasant prospects for the black knights: there are so many good squares for them on the queenside that it is hard for White to
cover them all: a4, c4, d3 (after White plays e4 or e3), b5 and d4. Besides piece-play, very often Black blows apart the centre with ...e6 or ...f5, intending to advance his centre pawns or create a weakness on d5.

It’s not easy for White to counter all Black’s manoeuvres, which is why many players prefer not to accept this sacrifice. But acceptance is certainly critical, and if White adopts a logical plan, Black needs to be very accurate if he is to retain a strong enough initiative to compensate for the pawn.

On move 4 White has a large choice of continuations if he does not want to take on b5. We shall analyse the following moves:

A: 4 b3
B: 4 f3
C: 4 a4
D: 4 Ng5
E: 4 Nc2
F: 4 Nd2
G: 4 Nf3

A)

4 b3

This is one of the less ambitious moves against the Benko Gambit. White spends time defending the c4-pawn but does very little for his own development, since b2 will not be a safe or effective post for the bishop with an open b-file. There are better and more natural ways to defend the pawn, especially considering that the structure after an exchange on c4 isn’t ideal for White, as the c4-pawn will be somewhat vulnerable in the long term.

4...e6!

Black uses the respite granted by the slow move b3 to seize the centre. This seems very logical to me.

5 dxe6 fxe6 (D)

In the case of 6 cxb5 a6! White is unable to defend b5 normally. 7 bxa6 Nxa6 gives Black a pleasant merged version of the Benko and Blumenfeld Gambits; e.g., 8 Nf3 Nc6 and now:

a) 9Nb2 Ne7 10 g3 Na5+ and now 11 Nd2 Nxd2+! 12 Nfxd2 (12 Nbd2 Nxb4??) 12...Nd4! 13 Ng2 d5?? or 11 Nbd2 0-0 12 Ng2 c4! 13 bxc4 Nxb8 14 Nc2 Nxc4 15 Nxc4 Nxb2 16 0-0 Nh8 with at least enough compensation.

b) 9 g3 c4! exposes White’s weak dark squares on the queenside. After 10 bxc4 Nb4+ 11 Nd2 Nxc4 12 Ng2 Nf6 12...Nxb4 13 Nxb4 Ncxb4, Black has a strong initiative.

6...bxc4

This new move improves over 6...d5, which was played in M.Jovanovich-R.Garcia, Argentine Ch, Santa Fe 1973.
7 bxc4  
Now:

a) White can stop ...d5 by playing 9 e4 but it weakens his dark squares in the centre. After 9...bxb8 10 e2 0-0 11 0-0 g4 intending ...c7 or ...f6, Black is better.

b) 9 e3 0-0 10 e2 d5! (if White does not prevent ...d5, just play it!) 11 cxd5 exd5 12 0-0 b8  

c) 9 g3 0-0 10 g2 b8 11 0-0 b4 (the c4-pawn is undefended and Black exploits this fact to sow disorder in White’s camp) 12 d2 b6!? (freeing the b4-square for the c6-knight and avoiding the tempo-gaining a3; the idea is to play ...d5 – the immediate 12...d5?! is poor due to 13 a3 b8 14 cxd5 exd5 15 b3 c4 16 d4! 13 a3 e8!? leaves Black with no problems. The queen is headed for h5, when ...g4 becomes an idea.

B)

4 f3

This move looks odd because the pawn takes a natural square away from the king’s knight and gets little benefit in return – Black is not made to pay any real ‘price’ for playing the aggressive ...b5. There are more harmonious ways to support the e4 advance, such as 4 c2 or 4 d2.

If White wants to play f3 and e4, then a better option is 4 cxb5 a6 5 f3 (see Line B of Chapter 10), when the move e4 will come with greater force.

4...bxc4

Black can also play 4...a5+ 5 d2 b4; e.g., 6 e4 d6 7 a3 g6 8 c2 b6 9 d3 bd7 10 f4 g7 11 f3 0-0 12 0-0 b7 intending ...e6 with unclear play.

5 e4 d6

Black simply develops his pieces to natural squares. 5...e6!? is a worthy alternative.

6 xc4 g6 (D)

White needs to decide where his king’s knight will be developed.

7 e2

This knight heads for c3, while the queen’s knight will move to a3 to support c4.

Another option is to play f4 and f3, but this costs more time. 7 c3 g7 8 f4 0-0 9 f3 a6!? 10 x6 a6 11 e2 a5 12 0-0 c7 13 d1 fd8! (preventing the e5 advance) 14 d2 a6! 15 e1 ab8 gives Black somewhat the better chances, L.Davis-D.Gurevich, Palo Alto 1981.

7...g7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ec3

9 bc3?! is wrong for two reasons: it fails to cover the c4-square, and it leaves the e2-knight with no prospects. After 9...bd7 it’s already not so clear what White should do. 10 b1
\[ \text{BENKO GAMBIT DECLINED} \]

\[ \text{107} \]

\[ \text{lt'e5 11 } \text{b3 a6 } \text{f was Dalmau Comas-Lanka, Badalona 1994, while 10 } \text{g3 (Sieciechowicz-Tokarski, Poland Zdroj 2008) fails to improve the knight's prospects of finding a useful role. Black can reply 10...h8 } \text{f followed by ...h5, ...a6, ...e5, etc.} \]

\[ 9...\text{fd7} \]

Black can also play the more regular 9...bd7 (Liang Chong-Zhou Jianchao, Beijing Zonal 2005) but the text-move gives him more options: the queen's knight can be developed via a6 to b4 (if White plays a4) or to c7; also ...a6 is still an idea.

\[ 10 \text{a4} \]

10 \text{a3 a6 11 e2 b8 12 c4 c7} = followed by ...a6 is fine for Black.

\[ 10...\text{a6!} \]

Now 11 \text{a3 b4 12 g5 e5 13 e2 f5!? gave Black an active position in Segura Ariza-Minzer, Palma de Mallorca 2002.} \]

\[ \text{C) 4a4} \]

This move was popularized by Sossonko. White spends a move to force a resolution of the queenside tension.

\[ 4...b4 (D) \]

The most solid move. Black’s play is simple and guarantees equality.

An alternative is 4...bxc4; e.g., 5 \text{c3 d6 6 e4 g6 (if Black defends c4 with 6...a6?!), then White grabs the centre by 7 f4 bd7 8 cf3, with pleasant prospects)} 7 xc4 \text{g7 8 cf3 (Wojtaszek-Jianu, World Junior Ch, Kochin 2004) with a typical Benko position. Black will play on the b-file, while White will defend his queenside and try to make progress in the centre.}
5...g6 6 e4 d6 7 \textcircled{g}f3

Or 7 b3 \textcircled{g}g7 8 \textcircled{b}b2 0-0, and now:

a) 9 g3?! is an unfortunate move-order since Black immediately blows apart the centre by 9...e6!, when it’s already not easy to give good advice to White:

a1) 10 \textcircled{g}g2? is a tactical miscalculation that almost finishes the game on the spot. 10...exd5 11 cxd5 \textcircled{e}e8 12 \textcircled{e}e2 \textcircled{x}e4! 13 \textcircled{x}g7 \textcircled{x}d2 14 \textcircled{h}h6 \textcircled{g}g4! 15 \textcircled{e}e3 \textcircled{f}f3+ 16 \textcircled{xf}3 \textcircled{xf}3 \textcircled{f}f6 + Mileika-Tal, Latvian Ch, Riga 1953 and Surjadnji-Ponomariov, Swidnica rapid 1998.

a2) 10 dxe6 \textcircled{b}b7! (10...fxe6? 11 e5!) 11 \textcircled{g}g2 (after 11 exf7+? \textcircled{xf}7 12 \textcircled{g}g2 \textcircled{f}f7 \textcircled{f}f6 followed by ...\textcircled{c}c6-d4.)

b) After 9 \textcircled{d}d3, I feel 9...e5! is the most comfortable way to equalize. Then:

b1) 10 dxe6? is a typical mistake due to an idea that everyone should remember: after 10...fxe6! \textcircled{f}f6 Black’s plan is ...\textcircled{c}c6, ...e5! and ...\textcircled{d}d4 with the better game.

b2) 10 \textcircled{g}f3?! is a poor choice of square because of 10...\textcircled{h}h5. White can prevent ...\textcircled{f}4 by playing g3, but this invites ...\textcircled{h}h3; both are equally unpleasant.

b3) 10 \textcircled{d}e2 prevents ...\textcircled{f}4 ideas and supports the f4 advance. After 10...\textcircled{h}h5 11 0-0, 11...a5 was played in Kanakaris-Mastrovasilis, Thessaloniki 2001, but Black should take the initiative on the kingside by 11...\textcircled{g}g4! (a new move, renewing ideas of ...\textcircled{f}4). Then:

b31) 12 h3?! \textcircled{f}f4! (this is the point of 11...\textcircled{g}g4) 13 h\texttimes g4 \textcircled{x}xd3 14 \textcircled{b}b1 \textcircled{x}xb2 15 \textcircled{x}xb2 \textcircled{h}h4 16 \textcircled{c}c1 \textcircled{d}d7 \textcircled{f}f6 and ...\textcircled{h}h5 gives Black a strong position on the kingside.

b32) 12 f3 pushes the bishop back, but the calm 12...\textcircled{c}c8 \textcircled{f}f6 leaves the f3-pawn looking ugly. Black’s main idea is play on the kingside with moves like ...a5, ...f5, ...\textcircled{a}7-f7, etc. Meanwhile, White can’t do anything active.

b33) 12 \textcircled{c}2 \textcircled{g}5 gives Black some pressure on the kingside.

7...\textcircled{g}7 8 \textcircled{d}d3 0-0 9 0-0 e5! (D)

Again I recommend the ...e5 idea. This position has not been played very often, so there is no detailed theory – just general thoughts.

Black has closed the queenside and centre and now has a free hand on the kingside. The main plan is naturally ...\textcircled{h}h5 and ...f5. The queen’s rook can be transported to f7 via a7 (after ...a5). The knight can remain on b8 for some time, or it can move to b6 to attack the
a4-pawn (if the white knight is on b3, this can constitute unpleasant pressure). ...h6 and ...g5-g4 is also a possible idea. White’s plan tends to be e1, f1 (anticipating ...f4), b3, e3, d2, etc. Objectively the position is probably equal. Let’s see some lines.

10 e1

In my opinion, 10 dx{e6?! is again a strategic mistake. Then:

a) 10...fx{e6?! (intending ...e5) does not work here because of the typical central break 11 e5! dx{e5 12 e4!, when White’s initiative causes Black problems.

b) I like Black’s position after 10...{e6 since he controls the dark squares in the centre and has free play. 11 h3 c6 12 b3 d7 13 g5 e5!? (this new move varies from 13...h6 14 {x{e6 fx{e6 15 f4, which was unclear in Hübner-Hodgson, Bundesliga 1995/6) 14 f4 {xd3 15 {xe6! (after 15 {xd3?! Black has the very strong 15...c8! †, leaving the knight on g5 and bringing the bishop to a better place on b7 or a6) 15...fx{e6 16 {xd3 h8?! (Black wants his opponent to commit to how he is going to develop his queenside; the immediate 16...g5?! achieves little: 17 fx{g5 e5 18 xf8+ xf8 19 e2 ±) 17 e2 (another way to defend b2 is 17 xf8+ which works well: 18 fx{g5 xf8 19 e5 20 e5 d5! † with a strong position) 17...e7 18 e3 e5! †. Black seizes the e5- and d4-squares.

10...h5!? 

I suggest this untried move. The following line is instructive: 10...a5 11 b3 h5 12 a2 f5? (Black is fine after the quiet 12 f4 13 f1 a7; the point is that Black is not ready for an immediate opening of the position) 13 exf5! (this gives White a large advantage; 13 b1? was played in Ambroswi-J.Horvath, Montecatini Terme 1999) 13...gx{f5 (13...f4 14 b1 gx{f5 15 f1 g6 16 g5 ± intending e6) 14 f1! e4 15 g5 f6 16 b1 ±. Black’s queenside pieces are not ready for the coming battle in the centre.

11 f1 f4 

Intending ...h3+ if White plays g3; after 11...a5 White can improve his position by 12 g3 and g2.

12 b3 a5 

I like Black’s game thanks to his f4-knight. The plan is a general advance on the kingside – all three pawns can be advanced with suitable preparation.

D)

4 g5 

This is a rare but interesting reply to the Benko, with some ideas in common with the Trompowsky Attack: White invites the knight into e4, hoping it will proved misplaced.

Even though I have played the Benko since 1993, I had not come across this move until my work on this book in 2012! But the move looks healthy enough and could easily become more popular as players seek new paths.

4...e4 5 f4 a5+ 6 d2 g5!

White gets a pleasant position in case of the quiet 6...bxc4?! 7 c2 f6
8 e4 d6 9 ¤xc4 g6 10 ¤f3 ¤g7 11 0-0 ±. The queen is then doing nothing on a5; if Black is to justify his aggressive posturing, he needs to make use of his active queen and knight immediately.

7 ¤e5

A few games continued 7 ²c2?! gxf4 8 ²xe4 but this position can be awkward only for White; Black rapidly develops his pieces and gets the advantage. 8...bxc4 9 ²xc4 d6 10 ²c3 (10 ²xf4 ²d7 ⊥ followed by...²b8 and...²g7; an exchange of queens is relatively safer for White) 10...²xc3 11 bxc3 ²g7 12 ²c1 (M.Maksimović-Vučinić, Belgrade tt 2012) 12...²d7 13 ²h3 ²e5 ⊥ followed by...²f6 and...²b8.

7...²g8! (D)

Mostly Black prefers 7...f6 but after 8 ²c3 ²xc3 9 bxc3 (Ivanisević-B.Vučković, Valjevo 2011) his pawn-structure looks miserable – Black’s f8-bishop is closed in, the e8-h5 diagonal is weakened, while there is also a problem with the b5-pawn. Meanwhile, White’s position looks more healthy; he only needs to make a few more moves to bring new pieces into the game. Of course, this position is playable for Black, but the text-move looks stronger since it avoids most of these problems.

8 ²f3

Besides this natural (but untried!) move, White can also play in gambit style with 8 b4 but Black is ready for this as well. 8...²xb4 9 ²f3 and then:

a) 9...g4? was chosen in Murshed-Hodgson, London 1992, the only game so far in which 7...²g8 was played.

b) I propose 9...ªa5!, sidestepping the rook’s attack, so that 10 ²bl can be met by 10...ªa6, defending the pawn. Now White needs to think up something special to prove he has a good position. However, I couldn’t find anything interesting for him. 11 ²c2 (or 11 ²c7 ²xc7 12 ²xe4 ²a5+ 13 ²xd2 d6 with an extra pawn) 11...f5 12 e3 d6 13 ²al g4 14 ²h4 ²xd2+ (this simple move clarifies the position) 15 ²xd2 ²xd2 16 ²xd2 e5! 17 dxe6 (or 17 cxb5?! axb5 18 ²xb5+ ²d8 ⊥; the only chance for White is to break up the enemy pawn-centre) 17...²xe6 18 ²d3 ²g5! (the only way to defend the pawn; conveniently, the rook also heads for h5) 19 cxb5 ²h5 20 g3 axb5 21 ²xb5+ ²d8 22 a4 ²d5 ⊥ and 23...²e7 leaves White fighting for a draw.

After 10 ²b1 ²c3 11 ²xb4 ²xd1 12 ²xb5 gxf3 13 exf3! (the d1-knight can be taken later) 13...d6 14 ²a1 ²xf2 15 ²xf2 ²h6 16 ²e4 ± intending ²d3, ²e1 or ²hb1, White’s pieces were better coordinated and Black had a tough task ahead of him.
8...\(\textit{\&}\text{xd2}!\)

This is the easiest way to get a safe position.

Black can expect some trouble after 8...g4?! 9 b4!, which now works better since Black can’t move the queen back to a5 (as in the 8 b4 line). We already saw the consequences of 9...\(\textit{\&}\text{x}b4?!\) in Murshed-Hodgson above, while after 9...\(\textit{\&}\text{xe}4\) 10 gxf3 e5 11 exf3 d6 12 \(\textit{\&}\text{f}4\) Black’s position has a lot of long-term strategic disadvantages: his uncastled king, the lack of prospects for the g8-rook, and the fact that the c- and e-files are going to be opened and used by the white rooks and queen; generally the white pieces are more harmonious.

9 \(\textit{\&}\text{xd2}\)

9 \(\textit{\&}\text{xd2}\)? makes no sense. 9...d6 and now:

a) 10 \(\textit{\&}\text{c}3\) b4 11 \(\textit{\&}\text{b}3\) \(\textit{\&}\text{a}6\) 12 \(\textit{\&}\text{d}2\) \(\textit{\&}\text{x}c4\) ? and White needs to defend d5, delaying his development further.

b) After 10 b4 the simplest path is 10...\(\textit{\&}\text{a}3\)!, avoiding complications. After 11 \(\textit{\&}\text{g}3\) \(\textit{\&}\text{g}7\) 12 \(\textit{\&}\text{c}1\) (or 12 \(\textit{\&}\text{b}1\)?) cx b4 13 cxb5 \(\textit{\&}\text{d}7\) ? 12...\(\textit{\&}\text{a}6\) 13 bxc5 \(\textit{\&}\text{xc}5\) 14 cxb5 \(\textit{\&}\text{d}7\) 15 e3 \(\textit{\&}\text{c}3\) (intending ...\(\textit{\&}\text{e}4\)) 16 f3 a6!, planning to meet bxa6 with ...\(\textit{\&}\text{a}4\), Black seizes a strong initiative.

c) 10 \(\textit{\&}\text{g}3\) \(\textit{\&}\text{g}7\) 11 cxb5 \(\textit{\&}\text{xb}2\) 12 \(\textit{\&}\text{b}1\) \(\textit{\&}\text{c}3\) gives Black a slight advantage.

9...\(\textit{\&}\text{xd}2+\) 10 \(\textit{\&}\text{xd}2\) d6 11 \(\textit{\&}\text{g}3\) bx c4 12 e4 \(\textit{\&}\text{g}7\) 13 \(\textit{\&}\text{xc}4\) \(\textit{\&}\text{a}6\) 14 \(\textit{\&}\text{b}1\) \(\textit{\&}\text{xc}4\) 15 \(\textit{\&}\text{xc}4\) \(\textit{\&}\text{d}7\) 16 f3

With an equal position where Black has no particular problems.

E)

4 \(\textit{\&}\text{c}2\)

This move was strongly recommended by the influential writer John Watson in his book \textit{A Strategic Chess Opening Repertoire for White}, so you may find that quite a number of your opponents will be playing it.

4...\(\textit{\&}\text{xc}4\) 5 e4

Of course, White was not going to take on c4 with his queen: 5 \(\textit{\&}\text{xc}4?\) e6! 6 e4 exd5 7 exd5 \(\textit{\&}\text{a}6\) ? intending ...\(\textit{\&}\text{c}7\) or ...\(\textit{\&}\text{b}4\) to attack the d5-pawn; then ...\(\textit{\&}\text{a}6\) and ...\(\textit{\&}\text{e}7+\).

5...e6!  (D)

5...d6 6 \(\textit{\&}\text{xc}4\) g6 7 f3 \(\textit{\&}\text{g}7\) 8 0-0 0-0 is also playable, but the text-move is more ambitious.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\draw[help lines] (0,0) grid (8,8);
\draw[thick] (1,1) -- (7,7) (1,7) -- (7,1);
\draw[blue,thick] (1,2) -- (2,1) (2,1) -- (3,2) (3,2) -- (4,1) (4,1) -- (5,2) (5,2) -- (6,1) (6,1) -- (7,2) (7,2) -- (6,3) (6,3) -- (5,4) (5,4) -- (4,5) (4,5) -- (3,6) (3,6) -- (2,7) (2,7) -- (1,6) (1,6) -- (0,7);
\draw[black,thick] (1,1) -- (1,2) (1,2) -- (2,1) (2,1) -- (2,2) (2,2) -- (3,1) (3,1) -- (3,2) (3,2) -- (4,1) (4,1) -- (4,2) (4,2) -- (5,1) (5,1) -- (5,2) (5,2) -- (6,1) (6,1) -- (6,2) (6,2) -- (7,1) (7,1) -- (7,2) (7,2) -- (8,1) (8,1) -- (8,2) (8,2) -- (1,1);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

6 \(\textit{\&}\text{xc}4\)

Or:

a) 6 dx e6?! gives up the centre for free: 6...fx e6 7 \(\textit{\&}\text{xc}4\) (Walk-Michael, Mülheim 1993) 7...d5! 8 \(\textit{\&}\text{b}5+\) \(\textit{\&}\text{d}7\) 9 \(\textit{\&}\text{xd}7+\) \(\textit{\&}\text{bxd}7\) 10 exd5 exd5 11 \(\textit{\&}\text{f}3\) \(\textit{\&}\text{d}6\) 12 0-0 0-0 ?.

b) 6 \(\textit{\&}\text{c}3\) (a logical move) 6...exd5 and then:
b1) 7 exd5  \( \text{Be7} \) 8  \( \text{Qxc4} \) transposes to the note to White’s 8th move below.

b2) 7  \( \text{Qxd5} \) (E.Pogorellov-Sieglen, Deizisa 2009) 7...\( \text{Qc6}! \) (a new move; before capturing on d5, Black will drop his knight into d4) 8  \( \text{Qxc4} \)  \( \text{Qxd5} \) 9 exd5 (in case of 9  \( \text{Qxd5} \) Black can reply 9...\( \text{Qa6} \)) 9...\( \text{Qd4} \) 10  \( \text{Qd3} \)  \( \text{Qd6} \) 11  \( \text{Qe2} \)  \( \text{Qe7} \) with a comfortable position for Black.

b3) 7 e5  \( \text{Qg4} \) 8  \( \text{Qxd5} \) sharpens the game and demands an accurate response. In Mamedyarov-Bareev, Moscow blitz 2009, 8...\( \text{Qb7} \)? 9  \( \text{Qxc4} \) \( \text{Qc6} \) 10  \( \text{Qf3} \) ± was clearly unsatisfactory for Black. With a little more time to think, maybe Bareev would have tried 8...\( \text{Qxe5} \)!, when Black is going to get a lot of central pawns for the knight:

b31) 9 f4?  \( \text{Qd3+} \) ! (winning time for development and taking control of the light squares) 10  \( \text{Qxd3} \)  \( \text{Qxd3} \) 11  \( \text{Qe7} \) 12  \( \text{Qf3} \)  \( \text{Qa6} \) 13  \( \text{Qe4} \) \( \text{Qc6} \) ± and 0-0-0.

b32) 9  \( \text{Qe2} \) d6 10 f4  \( \text{Qe6} \) 11 fxe5  \( \text{Qxd5} \) 12 exd6+ and now 12...\( \text{Qd7} \)! is the fastest way to finish development: the knight goes to c6, the bishop takes on d6, and the king’s rook moves across to e8. The game is rather unclear, but it is White who needs to be accurate because his king is in even greater trouble.

b33) 9  \( \text{Qe4} \) d6 10 f4 (10  \( \text{Qf6+??} \) loses to 10...\( \text{Qxf6} \) 11  \( \text{Qxa8} \)  \( \text{Qec6} \) -- and ...\( \text{Qe7+} \) and ...\( \text{Qb7} \), trapping the queen) 10...f5 11  \( \text{Qe5} \)  \( \text{Qe6} \) 12  \( \text{Qc3} \) \( \text{Qbc6} \) 13 fxe5 d5 gives Black a nice position. I would not like to be White here.

6...\( \text{exd5} \) 7 exd5  \( \text{Be7} \) 8  \( \text{Qf3} \)

Or 8  \( \text{Qc3} \) d6 (D), and then:

a) 9  \( \text{Qf3} \) 0-0 10 0-0 transposes to the main line.

b) 9 h3 0-0 10  \( \text{Qf3} \)  \( \text{Qbd7} \) 11 0-0 can be found in the note to White’s 10th move below.

c) White can also bring his king’s knight to g3 but it does not change Black’s plans much: 9  \( \text{Qe2} \) 0-0 10 0-0  \( \text{Qbd7} \) 11  \( \text{Qg3} \)  \( \text{Qb6} \) 12 b3 and now:

c1) 12...\( \text{Qg4} \) !? 13  \( \text{Qd3} \) g6 14 h3  \( \text{Qe5} \) is somewhat risky because, as Watson points out in A Strategic Chess Opening Repertoire for White, White can seize the initiative by 15  \( \text{Qh6} \)! (15  \( \text{Qe2} \) ? f5 was fine for Black in Erdos-Bologan, Caleta 2011) 15...\( \text{Qe8} \) 16  \( \text{Qb5} \)  \( \text{Qd7} \); e.g., 17 f4  \( \text{Qxb5} \) 18  \( \text{Qxb5} \)  \( \text{Qd7} \) 19  \( \text{Qe4} \)  \( \text{Qxd5} \) 20  \( \text{Qxd6} \)  \( \text{Qxd6} \) 21  \( \text{Qxd6} \)  \( \text{Qe7} \) (21...\( \text{Qe6} \)? 22  \( \text{Qxf7} \) !  \( \text{Qxf7} \) 23 f5 with an attack) 22  \( \text{Qad1} \) ±.

c2) 12...\( \text{Qxc4} \) 13 bxc4  \( \text{Qb8} \) is quieter, and satisfactory; e.g., 14  \( \text{Qe1} \)  \( \text{Qe8} \) 15  \( \text{Qf4} \)  \( \text{Qb4} \)! 16  \( \text{Qce4} \) (in case of 16  \( \text{Qb5} \) Black readily sacrifices an exchange for a pawn and a pair of
connected passed pawns in the centre: 16...\texttt{xb}5! 17 \texttt{cxb}5 \texttt{xd}5 with a fine position) 16...\texttt{xe}4 17 \texttt{xe}4 (17 \texttt{xe}4 \texttt{d}7 = and ...\texttt{f}8; 17 \texttt{xe}4 \texttt{f}8 18 \texttt{ae}1 \texttt{xe}4 19 \texttt{xe}4 \texttt{f}5 =) 17...\texttt{f}5 =.

8...0-0 9 0-0 d6 (D)

10 \texttt{c}3

White sees no necessity to prevent ...\texttt{g}4, and although 10 \texttt{h}3 has been played, it appears unnecessary. Then after 10...\texttt{bd}7 11 \texttt{c}3 (this position can be achieved from a variety of move-orders) 11...\texttt{b}6 12 \texttt{b}3 \texttt{b}8 (Schiendorfer-Züger, Swiss Team Ch 2010), Black has solved his opening problems; e.g., 13 \texttt{f}4 \texttt{xc}4 14 \texttt{xc}4 \texttt{e}8 15 \texttt{fe}1 \texttt{h}6 = followed by ...\texttt{f}8 and ...\texttt{d}7. Black is a bit cramped but his position is solid enough and he has no real problems.

10...\texttt{bd}7

After 10...\texttt{g}4?! 11 \texttt{d}2! the black bishop appears misplaced: 11...\texttt{bd}7 12 \texttt{h}3 \texttt{h}5 13 \texttt{f}4! with an obvious advantage, Ju.Horvath-K.Rovid, Hungarian Team Ch 2003/4.

11 \texttt{f}4 \texttt{b}6 12 \texttt{d}2!?

This move (suggested by John Watson) looks more critical than 12 \texttt{b}3, when the black bishop reaches a secure post on \texttt{g}6: 12...\texttt{g}4 13 \texttt{d}2 \texttt{h}5 = Drozdovsky-S.Kasparov, Internet blitz 2006.

12...\texttt{b}7 13 \texttt{d}3 \texttt{h}5!? 14 \texttt{e}3

Black gains a comfortable position if the bishop retreats to \texttt{g}3: 14 \texttt{g}3?! \texttt{xc}3 15 \texttt{hx}3 \texttt{f}6.

14...\texttt{f}5

Black has a pleasant game:

a) 15 \texttt{xc}5?! does not work since after the forced 15...\texttt{d}x\texttt{c}5 16 \texttt{d}6+ \texttt{h}8 17 \texttt{xe}7 \texttt{xe}7 Black is better due to the activity of his pieces.

b) 15 \texttt{f}4?! \texttt{xc}4 16 \texttt{xc}4 and now 16...\texttt{d}7 followed by ...\texttt{f}6 gives Black the better chances due to his bishop-pair and superior pawn-structure: the weakness on \texttt{d}5 can be attacked later with ...\texttt{xc}3 and ...\texttt{f}6, while the ‘hole’ on \texttt{e}4 can later be used by knight or rook. Note that the immediate 16...\texttt{f}6?! leads to unnecessary complications after 17 \texttt{xf}5 \texttt{xc}3 18 \texttt{e}6+ \texttt{h}8 19 \texttt{xc}3.

c) 15 \texttt{ae}1?! is dubious since it locks in the rook on \texttt{f}1: 15...\texttt{f}6! (15...\texttt{f}4? 16 \texttt{xc}5! \texttt{xc}4 17 \texttt{xc}4 ±) 16 \texttt{xf}5? \texttt{xc}3 and in all variations White suffers because of the f1-rook’s poor location; e.g., 17 \texttt{hx}5 \texttt{xc}4 18 \texttt{xc}4 \texttt{e}2 19 \texttt{xd}2 \texttt{a}6 † or 17 \texttt{e}6+ \texttt{h}8 18 \texttt{xc}3 \texttt{c}8! 19 \texttt{e}4 \texttt{f}5 20 \texttt{f}3 \texttt{xc}4 21 \texttt{hx}5 (21 \texttt{xc}4 \texttt{d}3 22 \texttt{hx}5 \texttt{xc}4 †) 21...\texttt{xd}2 22 \texttt{xd}2 \texttt{d}3 †.

d) 15 \texttt{fe}1 is best, when 15...\texttt{g}5 leads to equal play. Here 15...\texttt{f}6?
A critical move. Black immediately attacks White’s pawn-centre, denying White time to reinforce it. White can either seek complications by sacrificing the d5-pawn or else exchange on e6 and then try to keep the initiative with an e5 advance.

**7 dx e 6**

This is the most popular, and deservedly so. 7 ♘ xc 4?! is suspect, as Black should get the better game with precise play. 7... exd 5 and now:

a) 8 ♗ b 3?! has never been played and the reason is that Black simply wins a pawn by 8... ♗ b 6! (White is fine after the natural 8... d c 4?! 9 ♗ b 7 ♘ c 6 10 0-0) 9 exd 5 ♗ b 3 10 ♗ b 3 ♘ xd 5 11 ♘ xd 5 ♘ xd 5 12 0-0 f 6! 1 2. The king has the f7-square at its disposal.

b) 8 exd 5 ♗ e 7+! (this important check cuts across White’s plans) 9 ♗ f 1 (9 ♗ e 2 ♗ a 6! and then Black exchanges on e2 and takes the d5-pawn practically for free) and here:

b1) 9... ♘ xd 5 is sound but unambitious: 10 g 3 ♗ b 6 (10... ♗ f 6?! 11 ♗ g 2 ♗ e 7 12 ♗ e 4 ♗ c 6 13 ♗ e 1 0-0 14 ♗ e 5 ♗ e 6 15 ♗ b 3! ♗ x e 5 16 ♗ b 7 ♗ b 6 17 ♗ f 4 ♗ f 5 18 ♗ d 6 ± Skachkov-Pliasunov, St Petersburg 2002) 11 ♗ g 2 ♗ d 8 12 ♗ b 3 ♗ e 7 and White has no useful moves. Flear-Milliet, Saint Affrique 2011 ended 13 ♗ d 1 ♗ d 8 14 ♗ b 3 ♗ e 7 1/2-1/2.

b2) I propose the new continuation 9... ♘ xd 5 !?, when I don’t see a way for White to maintain equality:

b21) 10 ♘ xd 5 ♘ xd 5 11 g 3 f 6!? (starting a promising regrouping by ... ♗ f 7, ... ♗ e 7 and ...0-0) 12 ♗ g 2 ♗ f 7 13 ♗ e 1+ ♗ e 7 14 ♗ e 4 0-0 15 ♗ c 3
\( b6 \) and \( \text{...e6} \) with an extra pawn for Black.

b22) 10 g3 \( \text{...} \) e6! 11 \( \text{g2} \) \( \text{d8} \) intending \( \text{...e7} \) and \( \text{...0-0} \); White does not have sufficient compensation for the pawn.

7...\( \text{dxe6} \)

In the case of 7...\( \text{fxe6}?! \), White’s superior pawn-structure in the centre is the most important factor in the position. After 8 e5 \( \text{d}5 \) 9 \( \text{xc4} \) \( \text{e7} \) 10 \( \text{d3} \) 0-0 11 0-0, White’s c4-knight and e5-pawn keep a firm grip on the game; for example, 11...\( \text{d}4 \) 12 \( \text{xf4} \) \( \text{xf4} \) (the main worry for White is the b7-bishop, so he now seeks its exchange) 13 \( \text{fd2} \) \( \text{c6} \) 14 g3 \( \text{d4} \) (14...\( \text{f8} \) 15 \( \text{e4} \) \( \text{c7} \) 16 f4 \( \text{ab8} \) 17 \( \text{e2} \) \pm ) 15 \( \text{f3} \) d5? (15...\( \text{c7} \) is better, but doesn’t hold the balance: 16 \( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 17 f3! \( \text{f8} \) 18 \( \text{e4} \) \( \text{a6} \) 19 b3 \( \text{xc4} \) 20 bxc4 \( \text{xe5} \) 21 \( \text{d3} \) \pm ) 16 exd6 \( \text{xd6} \) 17 \( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 18 \( \text{d2} \) ± Shariyazdanov-Zelić, Zadar 1998. White intends \( \text{e4} \), resolving the problem of the long light-square diagonal.

8 e5

White can also start with 8 \( \text{xc4} \), but this doesn’t change the nature of Black’s play a great deal: 8...\( \text{c6} \) 9 0-0 \( \text{e7} \) 10 \( \text{e2} \) 0-0 (D).

At a casual glance, it might seem that White should be better because Black has more pawn-islands. However, there are more important factors at work. Black is better developed – look at White’s queenside pieces! Black has the makings of a strong grip on the d-file, and especially the d4-square, which the isolated c-pawn does a fine job of staking out. So there is no need for Black to panic, and in positions like this (we shall see more of them later) he should quietly complete his development with moves like ...\( \text{c7} \), and bringing either rook to d8. In fact, it is White who needs to be careful to maintain the balance:

a) 11 e5 gains space but has some disadvantages: on e5, the pawn can come under attack, while the b7-bishop is now more potent. After 11...\( \text{d}7 \) 12 \( \text{e1} \) \( \text{b6} \) 13 \( \text{b5} \), as in Korchnoi-Collutiis, Bratto 1998, 13...\( \text{c7} \) \pm followed by \( ...\text{fd8} \) secures an advantage for Black.

b) 11 \( \text{b3} \) a5! (the most energetic – the b3-knight does not have a safe square) 12 \( \text{g5} \) (12 a4!? weakens the b4-square forever, although maybe it’s better than allowing ...a4; then 12...\( \text{c7} \) is unclear) 12...a4 and now:

b1) 13 \( \text{bd2} \) h6 14 \( \text{e3} \) (14 \( \text{h4} \) \( \text{d4} \) 15 \( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{xd4} \) \pm ) 14...\( \text{c7} \) \pm and then \( ...\text{fd8} \).

b2) 13 \( \text{xf6}! \) exploits the fact that Black can’t recapture with the bishop, and so doubles Black’s pawns. After
116  ATTACK WITH  BLACK

116 AITACK WITH BLACK

13...gxf6 (13...xf6? 14  dxc5 ±) 14  d5b2, there is no need to help White fix the c4-square by 14...a3?! 15 b3, as in Beliavsky-Fogarasi, Hungarian Team Ch 2000/1. I prefer 14...c7!? followed by ...d8, when the bishop-pair compensates for White's superior pawn-structure.

8...d5

Now White must choose which piece to place on c4: the bishop or knight. Both options are viable.

9  dxc4

9  dxc4  e7 10  c6 0-0 0-0 12 c5 d7 13  f8d8 14  c2  ac8 is OK for Black. We have already seen this type of position, where Black has three pawn-islands versus two, but his better piece coordination is ample compensation for this slight structural liability. For example, 15 a3?! (there was no real danger from ...d4b4 or ...cxb4 so White should ignore it by 15 f1; Black can still reply 15...b6, freeing lines for both the d8-rook and the b7-bishop) 15...c6! 16 f4  dxc4 (after 16...d4!? 17 xd4 cxd4  f Black's passed pawn may well be useful) 17  d4  d4 18 xd4 xd4 19 e3 g4 20 f3 g5! led to an interesting finish in Shariyazdanov-Averianov, Russia Cup, St Petersberg 2003: 21 f2? (21 b3 is better: 21...b6! 22 xg4  xb3 23  xe3+ 24 h1  xc5 25 xe1 g5 =) 21...xe5! 22 xe5  g5 23 f4?? (23 fd1  is more resilient, though White remains a pawn down) 23...xf4! 1-0. The queen is untouchable: 24 xf4  xg2+ 25 h1  g3+! 26 f3 xf3+ 27 xf3 xf3 +.

9...e7 10 0-0 0-0 (D)

11  d4

White aims to play  g5 to gain the d6-square for his knights.

Black has a comfortable position in the case of 11 b3 c7!? (this new move deviates from V.Georgiev-Leconte, French Team Ch 2003/4) 12 b2 c6 13 e4 d8 14 e2 a5 intending to grab the bishop-pair; besides this, c6 is a vacant square for the black queen now.

11...d7!

A strong prophylactic decision. If Black plays 11...c6?! White can improve his position by 12 g5! xg5 13 fxg5.

12 b3

12 g5? does not work now since the e5-pawn falls: 12...xg5 13 xg5 (13 xg5 xe5? 13...b6! (not 13...xe5? 14 h5 b6 15 xe6 ±) 14 d3 xe4 15 xe4 c4 16 e2 xe5 ±.

12...c7 13 b2 d8

Black avoids the unnecessary complications that arise after 13...e3?! 14
BENKO GAMBITDECLINED

\[ \text{1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6} \]


4. Ne2

This is the most important and popular way for White to decline the Benko Gambit. From the viewpoint of our repertoire, it is also the simplest to deal with, since by playing 4...e6, Black can transpose to the Blumenfeld Gambit, which we have already covered in Chapters 4 and 5.

However, I understand that some of my readers will not be adopting my proposed repertoire in its entirety, and may not wish to play the Blumenfeld for one reason or another. I shall therefore show you an alternative line against 4.Ne2 that stays within Benko territory.

But first let’s consider the ideas behind 4.Ne2. White makes a very useful developing move, and if Black replies 4...bxc4, then White will be able to re-capture the pawn without any inconvenience while developing naturally. If Black continues with the standard Benko move 4...g6, then White can belatedly accept the gambit by 5 cxb5.

After 5...a6, White can play 6 b6 or 6 e3, in both cases reaching standard lines of Benko theory, but having avoided some of Black’s alternative lines versus 4 cxb5 a6 5 b6 and 4 cxb5 a6 5 e3. As my recommendations against those two lines do indeed make use of these alternative ideas (namely 4 cxb5 a6 5 b6 e6 and 4 cxb5 a6 5 e3 axb5), we need to look for another move against 4.Ne2. I think the one that best fits the bill is...

4...b7 (D)

Black targets the d5-pawn, making it unappealing for White to take on b5. However, he still has a huge choice of continuations after this move.

5 a4

White insists on resolving the pawn-tension. Other moves:

a) 5 Bd2 bxc4 6 e4 transposes to Line F.

b) 5 b3 b6 (5...a6!? is also possible) 6 c3 b4 (safer than 6...bxc4 7 \( \text{\textit{w}}d1 \) and e4) 7 a4 c7 8 e4! d6 (8...\( \text{\textit{w}}x e4 \)!! 9 \( \text{\textit{w}}e3 \)) 9 d3 Bd7 10 0-0 g6 11 e1 \( \text{\textit{w}}g7 \) =.
c) 5 edx2 bxc4 6 e4 e6 dissolves White’s pawn-centre; for example, 7
dxe6 dxe6 8 dxc3 edx7 9 edx5 0-0 10
c6 f5 with ...c7 and ...fxd8.

d) 5 g5 dxc4 6 f4 bxc4 7 c3
wa5 8 d2 cxd2 9 dxe2 a6 10 e4
g6 11 xc4 g7 12 0-0 0-0 = Evseev-
Fominykh, Russia Cup, Nizhny
Novgorod 1998.

e) 5 c2 bxc4 6 e4 e6! attacks
White’s pawn-centre before it is ade-
quately supported:

e1) 7 g5?! e7 (D) and then:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
W \\
\end{array}
\]

11...d6?! leads to the win of a
piece, but White only creates trouble
for himself: 8...xd6 9 e5 xf3 10
ef6 gxf6 11 wc3 (only move) 11...e5
12 xe5 (again forced; 12 xf3?
fxg5 13 xa8 xb2 ++) 12...fxe5 13
xd8 xd8 14 gxf3 d5 with a pleas-
ant position for Black.

e12) 8 xf6 xf6 9 xc4 edx5 10
edx5 ed7+ 11 fl 0-0 12 bd2
(Kallai-Tirard, French Team Ch 2002)
12...d6 13 e1 wc7 14 e4 d7 15
g3 g6 intending ...g7 gives Black
chances of gaining an advantage.

e2) 7 xc4 edx5 8 edx5 xd5 9
xd5 edx5 (Black has grabbed a
pawn and now only needs to complete
his development) 10 0-0 e7 11 e1
a6 12 g5 (Zhu Chen-Solodovnichenko,
Paris Ch 2010; 12 c4 ac7 13 g5 0-0 14 xe7 xe7 comes to
the same thing) 12...0-0 13 xe7 xe7
14 c4 c7 15 xc5 xe6 16 a3 d5
=, Black has achieved his goal, but
needed to return the pawn.

5...wa5+

Before closing the queenside, Black
forces the c1-bishop to a poor square.
Of course, 5...bxc4 6 c3 followed by
e4 would grant White everything he
was hoping for.

6 d2 b4 7 c2 d6 8 e4 bd7 9
d3 g6 10 0-0 g7 11 h3 (D)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
B \\
\end{array}
\]

11...0-0 12 e3 (D)

After 12 f4 (Volkov-Perunović,
European Ch, Plovdiv 2008) Black
has the interesting idea 12...h5!?!;
e.g., 13 h2 h6 14 bd2 df4 15
fe1 e5 = or 13 e3 e5! (Black has
less space, so strategically it’s useful
to exchange some pieces) 14 e2
12...\( \mathcal{Q}h5 \)!

I feel this is an important new move that hinders White’s plan of advancing on the kingside.

The point is that after 12...\( \mathcal{Q}ae8 \) 13 \( \mathcal{Q}bd2 \) e5, which has been played many times, White has 14 g4 (14 dxe6? \( \mathcal{Q}xe6 \) \( \mathcal{Q}f3 \) gives Black a pleasant position with pressure on the e4-pawn and two excellent bishops), which prevents ...\( \mathcal{Q}h5 \), leaving Black short of active play. 14...\( \mathcal{Q}h8 \) 15 \( \mathcal{Q}g2 \) \( \mathcal{Q}g8 \) 16 \( \mathcal{Q}h1 \) \( \mathcal{Q}e7 \) 17 \( \mathcal{Q}f1 \) and now:

a) 17...f5? led to good counterplay for Black in Khenkin-Tregubov, Yugoslav Team Ch, Herceg Novi 2001 after 18 gxf5? gxf5 19 \( \mathcal{Q}xf5 \), exchanging his bad bishop and getting a big advantage as his knights will seize excellent posts.

b) Quiet play by 17...\( \mathcal{Q}c8 \) 18 \( \mathcal{Q}g3 \) \( \mathcal{Q}f6 \) is preferable, but 19 \( \mathcal{Q}ag1 \) (19 g5?! allows Black activity after 19...\( \mathcal{Q}fg8 \) 20 h4 f5) 19...\( \mathcal{Q}fg8 \) 20 \( \mathcal{Q}f1 \) \( \mathcal{Q}d7 \) 21 h3 \( \mathcal{Q}d8 \) (21...\( \mathcal{Q}h6 \)?) 22 g5 \( \mathcal{Q}g7 \) 23 h4 \( \pm \) 22 \( \mathcal{Q}g2 \) \( \mathcal{Q}c8 \) 23 \( \mathcal{Q}e2 \) is uncomfortable for Black. Here 23...f5? does not work due to the knight manoeuvre to e6: 24 gxf5 gxf5 25 exf5 \( \mathcal{Q}xf5 \) 26 \( \mathcal{Q}xf5 \) \( \mathcal{Q}xf5 \) 27 \( \mathcal{Q}xf5 \) \( \mathcal{Q}xf5 \) 28 \( \mathcal{Q}g5 \) \( \pm \). This means that Black must stay passive, and everything will depend on whether White can regroup and storm the black fortress. This is not such a pleasant prospect for Benko players, and certainly not in keeping with the title of this book!

13 \( \mathcal{Q}bd2 \)

13 g4 is possible but definitely less dangerous for Black with a pawn on e7. 13...\( \mathcal{Q}hf6 \) 14 \( \mathcal{Q}bd2 \) e6 gives him a fighting position.

13...e5

Now Black has secured the f4-square for his knight and made the g4 advance unlikely in the near future.

14 \( \mathcal{Q}fe1 \) \( \mathcal{Q}ae8 \) 15 \( \mathcal{Q}f1 \) \( \mathcal{Q}c8 \)

Here Black can feel absolutely safe. I’d assess this as equal.
10 Benko: Zaitsev, Dlugy and Modern Lines

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 a6

Here we examine three lines in which White takes the first pawn, but doesn’t capture on a6, at least not immediately. These lines start with the following moves, and vary greatly in their character:

A: 5 ♘c3 120
B: 5 f3 127
C: 5 e3 132

A) 5 ♘c3 (D)

B

This aggressive move is known as the Zaitsev line. It’s not very popular nowadays since if Black knows what he is doing, White’s attacking ideas don’t get very far, while the positional concessions he has made can often grant Black a significant advantage.

In the main line, White establishes a knight on b5, and hopes to break open lines by playing e5 so that other pieces can link up with the knight and create threats to the black king.

5...axb5 6 e4

This was Zaitsev’s idea. The alternative is 6 ♘xb5, but this is rare by this move-order since if White wanted to accept the gambit, he could have done so directly. Black can either transpose to standard lines, or try an independent path:

a) 6...♗a6 7 ♘c3 (not 7 e3?? ♘xb5 8 ♘xb5 ♙a5+ ++) 7...g6 leads to Benko Gambit Accepted lines – see Chapters 12-15.

b) 6...e6 is an ambitious move, attacking the centre while the knight is offside. Then:

b1) 7 ♘c3 seeks to maintain a grip on the central squares. 7...exd5 8 ♖xd5 ♗b7 9 ♘xf6+(after 9 ♘c3 Black plays 9...d5 10 e3 ♗d6 11 ♘f3 0-0 12 ♘e2 ♙e7 13 0-0 ♘c6 with an excellent position; of course 14 ♘xd5? is then impossible due to 14...♖xd5 15 ♙xd5 ♘d4 16 ♙c4 ♘a6 ++) 9...♖xf6 10 ♘f3 ♙e6!? (attacking a2) 11 b3 ♘e7 12 ♗b2 0-0 13 e3 ♘f6!? (Black creates
threats which leave White no time to complete his own development) 14
\(\text{\textit{c}}4\text{\textit{d}}5\ 15\ \text{\textit{x}}f6\ \text{\textit{dxc}}4\ 16\ \text{\textit{c}}3\ \text{\textit{d}}7\ 17\ 0-0\ \text{\textit{f}}d8\) gives Black compensation for the
pawn.

b2) 7 \text{\textit{dxe}}6 and now:

b21) 7...\text{\textit{fxe}}6 allows White to maintain his knight on \textit{b5}: 8 \text{\textit{e}}3! \text{\textit{d}}5 9 \text{\textit{f3}}
\text{\textit{c}}6\ 10 \text{\textit{e}}2\ \text{\textit{e}}7\ 11 0-0 0-0 12 \text{\textit{b}}3 \pm with \text{\textit{a}}4 and \text{\textit{b}}2 to follow; the \text{\textit{b}}5-

knight creates problems for Black.

b22) 7...\text{\textit{a}}5+! 8 \text{\textit{c}}3 \text{\textit{fxe}}6 9 \text{\textit{f3}} (9 \text{\textit{d}}2 \text{\textit{b}}6\ 10 \text{\textit{e}}4 \text{\textit{c}}6\ 11 \text{\textit{f3}} \text{\textit{e}}7\ 12 \text{\textit{e}}2 0-0 13 \text{\textit{b}}1\ \text{\textit{a}}6\ 14 0-0 \text{\textit{d}}4
with compensation for Black, C.Hernandez-Teran Alvarez, Caceres 1993)
9...\text{\textit{d}}5\ 10\ \text{\textit{e}}3\ \text{\textit{e}}7\ 11 \text{\textit{e}}2 (11 \text{\textit{b}}5+?! leads to the exchange of light-squared bishops and weakens the \textit{d}-3-square: 11...
\text{\textit{d}}7\ 12 \text{\textit{xd}}7+ \text{\textit{b}}xd7\ 13 0-0 0-0 gives Black sufficient compensation due to the ...\text{\textit{c}}4 and ...
\text{\textit{c}}5-\text{\textit{d}}3 idea) 11...0-0 12 0-0 \text{\textit{e}}6 gives Black comfortable Blumenfeld-type play.

6...\text{\textit{b}}4 7 \text{\textit{b}}5 \text{\textit{d}}6 (D)

As mentioned above, White’s principal tries here are based on the attempt
to justify the knight’s position on \textit{b5} by executing the \textit{e}5 advance. These are the three main moves, but his position looks rather suspicious in all cases:

A1: 8 \text{\textit{f4}}?! 121
A2: 8 \text{\textit{f3}} 123
A3: 8 \text{\textit{c}}4 125

8 \text{\textit{d}}3 is a rare continuation but compared with the other lines it seems the most solid. After 8...\text{\textit{g}}6\ 9 \text{\textit{f3}} \text{\textit{g}}7\ 10 \text{\textit{h}}3 0-0 11 0-0 \text{\textit{bd}}7 12 \text{\textit{e}}1 \text{\textit{b}}6 = Black is OK and has good prospects, G.Kuzmin-Sharapov, Ukrainian Team Ch, Alushta 2001.

A1)

8 \text{\textit{f4}}?!

With this blunt move, White directly supports the \textit{e}5 advance and seeks to break through to the \textit{c}7-square. But Black has a good reply that offers him very pleasant prospects:

A1)

8...\text{\textit{g5}}!

This move was recommended by Pal Benko himself.

9 \text{\textit{xc}}5

Or:

a) 9 \text{\textit{e}}5?! leads to a terrible position for White: 9...\text{\textit{gxf}}4\ 10 \text{\textit{exf}}6 \text{\textit{d}}7! 11
\text{\textit{fxe}}7 \text{\textit{xe}}7+ 12 \text{\textit{e}}2 (12 \text{\textit{e}}2 \text{\textit{e}}5 13
\text{\textit{f}}3 \text{\textit{g}}7 14 \text{\textit{xe}}5 \text{\textit{xe}}5 15 \text{\textit{d}}1 \text{\textit{f}}5
wins for Black, Allekand-V.Bagirov, Jyväskylä 1994) 12...\text{\textit{e}}5 13 \text{\textit{f}}1 \text{\textit{g}}7
\pm Rozum-Levin, Peterhof 2009.

b) 9 \text{\textit{e}}3 \text{\textit{g}}7 and then:

b1) 10 \text{\textit{d}}3?! is strongly met by 10...\text{\textit{g}}4!, attacking \textit{e}3 and \textit{b}2. 11 \text{\textit{c}}1
(passive, but what else is there? After 11 \text{\textit{xg}}5 \text{\textit{xb}}2 12 \text{\textit{b}}1 \text{\textit{g}}7 \pm the \textit{b}5-knight is in real trouble) 11...\text{\textit{b}}6
(putting pressure on the b5-knight; White’s position is critical) 12 će2 (12 ćh3 će5 13 će2, Chetverik-Stokke, Oslo 2006, 13...ćd7! 14 a4 bxa3 15 ćxa3 ćxa3 16 ćxa3 ćhxh3 17 ghxh3 ćb4+ 18 ćd2 ćxe4 ćf) 12...će5 and now:

b11) 13 ćxg5?! ćc4! gives White only unpleasant options:

b111) 14 ćd4 ćd3+ 15 ćxg5 ćxg4 16 ćc1 (forced in view of 16 će2? ćxb2 ćf) 16...ćxd3 17 ćxg4 cxd3 18 ćxc8+ ćd7 ćf, when the a2- and b2-pawns are helpless.

b112) 14 a4 bxa3 15 ćxa3 (15 ćxa3? ćxb2 ćf) 15...ćxa3 16 ćxa3 ćxb2 17 ćxc4? (but after 17 ćc1 c3 ćf White will definitely have problems with Black’s passed pawn) 17...ćxc4 18 ća4+ (18 ćxc4 ćc3+ and Black wins) 18...ćd7 19 ćxc4 ćc3+ 20 ćd1 (20 ćf1 ća1+ with checkmate) 20...0-0 ćg. The white king is in a hopeless situation.

b12) 13 a4 bxa3 14 ćxa3 ćxa3 15 bxa3 ćc4!, intending ...ća6/d7-c5, is slightly better for Black.

b2) 10 f3 h6 leaves Black fine; e.g., 11 a4 bxa3 12 ćxa3 ćxa3 13 ćxa3 ćbd7 14 će2 ćh5 15 ćd2 ća6 ćf Potapov-Degraeve, Cappelle la Grande 2002. Black has the better pawn-structure (look at the b2-pawn) and his pieces are more harmonious.

9...ćxe4

The knight gains a tempo by attacking the bishop that he lured to g5.

10 ćf4

After 10 ćf3 Black even doesn’t take on g5, but instead plays 10...ćg7. Then:

a) 11 ćd3 ćxg5 12 ćxg5 h6 13 će4 was tried in Hernando Rodrigo-Van Riemsdijk, Barbera del Valles 1999 (where 13...ćd7?? was played). However, this looks like a bluff, since Black can take the pawn: 13...ćxb2! 14 ćb1 ćg7 ćf followed by ...0-0, ...ćd7 and either ...će5 or ...ćf6. I don’t see any problems for Black.

b) 11 ćc1 ěd7 12 ćd3 ćef6 13 0-0 ěb7 ćf. The d5-pawn is too weak and Black will take it at some point.

10...ćf6! (D)

The most precise move – anticipating White’s će2 idea, the knight drops back to a secure square and puts pressure on White’s isolated d5-pawn. With White’s e-pawn gone, he will find it hard to open lines.

11 ćc4

Instead, 11 ćf3 ćg7 12 ćc4 transpose to line ‘b’ below, but 11 će2 is an independent idea, creating the threat of ćxd6+. Then 11...ća6! is forced, but good. Now White needs to regroup and defend the d5-pawn. After 12 ćd2, 12...ćbd7! is a critical move
that secures Black’s advantage – he prepares to meet \( \textcolor{red}{\text{c4}} \) with \( \textcolor{red}{\text{b6}} \) and so White can’t defend the d5-pawn (that’s why the immediate 12...\( \textcolor{red}{\text{b7}} \) is not so good: 13 \( \textcolor{red}{\text{c4}} \) \textcolor{red}{\text{bd7}} 14 \textcolor{red}{\text{we2}} \) was unclear in Abrashkin-Aveskulov, Saratov 2004). Then 13 \textcolor{red}{\text{we2}} (13 \( \textcolor{red}{\text{c4}} ? \) \textcolor{red}{\text{b6}} 14 \( \textcolor{red}{\text{b3}} \) \textcolor{red}{\text{d7}}! 15 \textcolor{red}{\text{d3}} \textcolor{red}{\text{bd5}}! \textcolor{red}{\text{e7}}; 13 g3 \textcolor{red}{\text{b7}} 14 \textcolor{red}{\text{g2}} \textcolor{red}{\text{b6}} \textcolor{red}{\text{e7}} \textcolor{red}{\text{e7}} and the pawn falls again, Kluss-Koch, Schön­eck 1988; 13 \textcolor{red}{\text{f3}} \textcolor{red}{\text{g7}} 14 \textcolor{red}{\text{e2}} \textcolor{red}{\text{b6}} 15 0-0 \textcolor{red}{\text{bd5}} 16 \textcolor{red}{\text{g3}} 0-0 \textcolor{red}{\text{e7}} \textcolor{red}{\text{e7}} gives Black a clear extra pawn) 13...\textcolor{red}{\text{a5}}! 14 \textcolor{red}{\text{x}}d6+ \textcolor{red}{\text{x}}d6 15 \textcolor{red}{\text{x}}d6 \textcolor{red}{\text{b3}}+ 16 \textcolor{red}{\text{d1}} \textcolor{red}{\text{bxa2}} 17 \textcolor{red}{\text{g3}} \textcolor{red}{\text{xd5}} gives Black strong com­pensation for the exchange.

11...\textcolor{red}{\text{g7}}

Now:

a) 12 \textcolor{red}{\text{e2}} (moving the knight to g3, where it poses some danger to Black) 12...\textcolor{red}{\text{bd7}} 13 \textcolor{red}{\text{g3}} \textcolor{red}{\text{b6}} 14 b3 h5! (this new move seizes space on the kingside; after the natural 14...0-0 15 0-0 \textcolor{red}{\text{d7}} 16 \textcolor{red}{\text{d2}} \textcolor{red}{\text{fxd5}} 17 \textcolor{red}{\text{h6}} White gets counterplay, Arencibia-Ivanchuk, Cap d’Agde rapid 1998) 15 h4 (White cannot allow the pawn to run to h3) 15...\textcolor{red}{\text{g4}} 16 f3 \textcolor{red}{\text{d7}} 17 0-0 \textcolor{red}{\text{f8}}! (in­tending ...\textcolor{red}{\text{xb5}} and ...\textcolor{red}{\text{bd5}}, which was impossible with the king on e8 because of ...\textcolor{red}{\text{xb5}}+) 18 \textcolor{red}{\text{g5}} (18 a4 does not help: 18...\textcolor{red}{\text{xb5}} 19 axb5 \textcolor{red}{\text{xa1}} 20 \textcolor{red}{\text{xa1}} \textcolor{red}{\text{fxd5}} 21 \textcolor{red}{\text{c1}} \textcolor{red}{\text{xf4}} 22 \textcolor{red}{\text{xf4}} \textcolor{red}{\text{d4}}+ 23 \textcolor{red}{\text{h2}} \textcolor{red}{\text{xc4}} 24 \textcolor{red}{\text{bxc4}} b3 \textcolor{red}{\text{e7}}) 18...\textcolor{red}{\text{h7}}! \textcolor{red}{\text{e7}}.

b) After 12 \textcolor{red}{\text{f3}} the knight can’t create real threats but it is more solid than putting it on e2. 12...0-0 13 0-0 \textcolor{red}{\text{bd7}} gives Black a clear edge due to the standard problems: the b5-knight and the d5-pawn. White’s only hope is to create some threats to the black king but it’s a tall order.

A2)

8 \textcolor{red}{\text{f3}}

This move dates back to the semi­nal encounter I.Zaitsev-Benko, Szol­nok 1975. Again White supports the e5 advance but here he does not ex­pose his bishop. On the other hand, the knight blocks the f-pawn.

8...\textcolor{red}{\text{xe4}}!?

The most popular line here is 8...g6, when one possibility is 9 e5 dxe5 10 \textcolor{red}{\text{xe5}} \textcolor{red}{\text{g7}} 11 \textcolor{red}{\text{c4}} 0-0, but it seems that Black is able to take the e4-pawn without White getting enough com­pensation. The fact that the move f3 is unavailable to White makes it harder for him to force open the e-file.

9 \textcolor{red}{\text{c4}} g6 10 \textcolor{red}{\text{e2}} (D)

10...\textcolor{red}{\text{f5}}!

Only this move gives Black pros­pects of an advantage. After 10...\textcolor{red}{\text{f6}}? a typical tactic works: 11 \textcolor{red}{\text{f4}} \textcolor{red}{\text{a6}} 12 \textcolor{red}{\text{xd6}}+! \textcolor{red}{\text{xd6}} 13 \textcolor{red}{\text{b5}}+! (the point!) 13...\textcolor{red}{\text{d7}} 14 \textcolor{red}{\text{xb8}} \textcolor{red}{\text{g7}} 15 d6! (saving
the pawn) 15...0-0 16 ∆xd7 ♗xd7 17 dxe7 ♗xe8 18 0-0 ♗xe7 19 ♗c2 ± with an extra exchange.

11 ∆g5!?

White stops ...∆d7-e5, but Black has an excellent way to give the pawn back. Alternatives:

a) 11 0-0 (S.Ivanov-Pisulinski, Cheljabinsk 1991) should be met by 11...∆d7!, transposing to Line A3. It's important for the knight to pass through the d7-square as quickly as possible since while it is on this square, it disrupts the c8-bishop's control of the e6-square.

b) 11 h4?! ∆d7! (again this move is more precise than 11...∆g7?! because of 12 ∆g5, when Black cannot reply 12...∆d7) and now:

b1) 12 ∆g5 ∆e5! 13 ∆xe4 fxe4 14 ♗xe4? (14 0-0 is a bit more stubborn, though still bad for White: 14...∆g7 ⃝) 14...∆xc4 15 ♗xc4 ♗b6 ↔ and ...∆d7 wins the knight.

b2) 12 h5 ∆g7 13 hxg6 hxg6 14 ♗xh8+ ♗xh8 ⃝ Efimov-Shytaj, Italian Team Ch, Senigallia 2009.

11...∆g7 (D)

11...∆xg5?! is not so convincing because after 12 ∆xg5 ∆g7 13 0-0 Black has to make some move like 13...f7.

12 0-0!

It is best for White not to rush with the capture on e4, since while the knight remains on g5 it is hard for Black to play his desired ...∆d7-e5 manoeuvre. But even here Black can claim an edge. Other moves:

a) 12 f3?! is simply too slow. After 12...∆xg5 13 ∆xg5 h6! White has a choice between sharpening the game or simply playing on a pawn down; in both cases Black is better. 14 ♗xe7 (14 ∆h4 g5 15 ∆f2 0-0 ⃝ followed by ...∆d7-e5 is miserable for White, who should prove he has at least something for the pawn) 14...∆xe7 15 ∆c7+ (the only move; 15 ∆xd6+? ∆d8 16 ♗xe7+ ♗xe7 17 ∆xc8+ ♗xc8 −+) 15...∆f7 16 ♗xe7+ ♗xe7 17 ∆xa8 ∆xb2 18 ∆b1 ∆c3+ 19 ∆e2 ∆d7 ⃝ (Black has a pawn for the exchange and strong play on the queenside; besides, the knight has real problems getting back from a8) 20 ∆c7 ∆b6 21 ∆d3 f4! 22 ♗be1+ and now 22...∆e5! ↔, leaving the f5-square available for the queen's bishop, is even better than 22...∆d7?! ⃝ Etchegaray-Pap, San Sebastian 2011.

b) 12 ∆xe4 fxe4 13 ♗xe4 0-0 ⃝ leaves Black better since his pieces are more harmonious: ...∆f5, ...∆d7-b6, etc.

12...0-0 13 ∆e1

13 ∆xe4? is still not good: 13...fxe4 14 ♗xe4 ∆d7 ⃝.

13...♗b6 14 a4
Supporting the knight. After 14 \( \squarexe4 \) \( fxe4 \) 15 \( \text{\$e}4 \) \( \squaref7 \) \( \neq \): Black’s ideas include ...\( \text{\$a}5 \), ...\( \text{\$a}6 \), ...\( \text{\$f}5 \) and ...\( \text{\$d}7-e5 \).

14...\( bx_a3 \) 15 \( \text{\$xa3} \) \( \text{\$xa3} \) (D)

\[ \text{**Diagram**} \]

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

16 \( bx_a3 \)

16 \( \text{\$xa3?} \) \( \text{\$d}4 \) 17 \( \text{\$f}1 \) \( \text{\$d}7 \) 18 \( \text{\$xe}4 \) \( fxe4 \) 19 \( \text{\$xe}4 \) \( \text{\$f}6 \) 20 \( \text{\$e}2 \) (20 \( \text{\$xe}7?? \) \( \text{\$e}8 \) \( \text{\$} + \)) 20...\( \text{\$g}4 \) 21 \( \text{\$c}2 \) \( \text{\$d}7 \) \( \neq \): intending ...\( \text{\$g}4 \).

16...\( \text{\$d}7 \) 17 \( \text{\$a}4 \) \( \text{\$a}5! \)

The queen attacks \( a4 \) and eyes the \( e1 \)-rook. 18 \( \text{\$xe}4 \) \( fxe4 \) 19 \( \text{\$d}1 \) (19 \( \text{\$xe}4 \) \( \text{\$xa}4 \) \( \neq \) with an extra pawn) 19...\( \text{\$b}4 \) 20 \( \text{\$xe}4 \) \( \text{\$xb}5 \) 21 \( \text{\$xb}5 \) \( \text{\$d}4 \) 22 \( \text{\$d}3 \) \( \text{\$xf}2 \) 23 \( \text{\$h}1 \) \( \text{\$f}7 \) \( \neq \) followed by ...\( \text{\$d}7-e5 \).

A3)

8 \( \text{\$c}4 \) (D)

This is a more subtle way to prepare \( e5 \), but also potentially the most violent. The bishop takes aim at the \( f7 \)-square, planning to smash open the \( a2-g8 \) diagonal with a double pawn sacrifice.

8...\( \text{\$bd}7 \)

White’s main idea is shown by 8...\( g6 \) 9 \( e5 \) \( dxe5 \) 10 \( d6 \) \( edx6 \) 11 \( \text{\$g}5 \), whipping up a dangerous initiative. It’s actually not so clear that this is good for White, but if you play this way as Black, you are walking through a minefield that your opponent will definitely have studied.

White has serious compensation after the immediate capture on \( e4 \): 8...\( \text{\$xe}4?! \) 9 \( \text{\$e}2 \) \( \text{\$f}6?! \) (9...\( \text{\$f}5 \) leaves \( e6 \) totally weak: 10 \( f3 \) \( \text{\$f}6 \) 11 \( \text{\$h}3 \) \( \text{\$} = \) intending \( \text{\$f}4-e6 \) 10 \( \text{\$f}4 \) \( \text{\$a}6 \) (Black looks superficially solid, but an effective tactic wins an exchange for White) 11 \( \text{\$d}6+! \) \( \text{\$xd}6 \) 12 \( \text{\$b}5+ \) \( \text{\$d}7 \) (12...\( \text{\$d}7 \) 13 \( \text{\$xd}6 \) \( \text{\$b}6 \) 14 \( \text{\$xd}7+ \) \( \text{\$xd}7 \) 15 \( \text{\$e}5 \) \( \text{\$} = \); 12...\( \text{\$bd}7 \) 13 \( \text{\$xd}6 \) \( \text{\$xd}5 \) 14 0-0-0 1+--) 13 \( \text{\$xb}8 \) \( \text{\$b}7 \) (Black does not solve his problems in the case of 13...\( \text{\$xd}5?! \) 14 0-0-0! \( \text{\$} = \) 14 \( \text{\$g}3 \) \( \text{\$xd}5 \) 15 \( \text{\$f}3 \) \( \text{\$} = \). Black simply does not have enough for the material damage.

The text-move reinforces the \( e5 \)-square, but does not abandon the idea of taking on \( e4 \) either.

9 \( \text{\$f}3 \)
White again wishes to play e5 (e.g., 9...g6 10 e5! with d6 to follow), but the knight blocks the f-pawn, which has consequences...

9...\(\text{\textit{\text{dx}}e4!}??\)

This move has been very rare in practice, but after considerable analysis I feel that it is good. It’s understandable that players are reluctant to grab a ‘hot’ pawn in such a position with no preliminary preparation, especially since 9...\(\text{\textit{\text{d}}b6}\) (the most popular move) gives Black a safe position; after 10 \(\text{\textit{\text{d}}d3}\) g6 11 b3 he is not going to be overrun by a e5 pawn sacrifice. The game is equal after 11...\(\text{\textit{\text{g}}}7\) 12 \(\text{\textit{\text{b}}}2\) 0-0 13 0-0 e6! (Black has developed all his pieces and now is ready to fight for the centre) 14 dxe6 \(\text{\textit{\text{xe}}6}\) = Breutigam-Fedorowicz, German Cup 1990.

10 \(\text{\textit{\text{we}}2}\) f5! (D)

This move is untested in a high-level game. After 10...\(\text{\textit{\text{df}}6}\) (Tancik Vučinić, Senta 2011) 11 0-0 the position remains more complicated.

\[
\text{W} \quad \text{B}
\]

We saw a similar idea in Line A2 (i.e. 8 \(\text{\textit{\text{f}}3}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{xe}}4}\)): Black takes the e4-pawn once White has put his knight on f3, and then defends the e4-knight with ...f5. He will give the pawn back by letting White exchange on e4, and quickly finish his development. The difference is that Black has played ...\(\text{\textit{\text{d}}7}\) instead of ...g6, which gives White an important extra option.

11 0-0?!

Of course, there is no point in taking on e4 with the bishop: 11 \(\text{\textit{\text{d}}d3}\) g6 12 \(\text{\textit{\text{xe}}4}\) fxe4 13 \(\text{\textit{\text{g}}5}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{e}}5}\) 14 \(\text{\textit{\text{xe}}4}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{g}}7}\) \(\text{=\textit{\text{f}}}\) with ...0-0 and ...\(\text{\textit{\text{a}}6}\) to follow.

But the critical test of Black’s idea is 11 g4!? Black shouldn’t be in real danger, but must be precise: 11...\(\text{\textit{\text{d}}f6}\) 12 \(\text{\textit{\text{g}}5}\) (12 g5? is bad because of the simple 12...\(\text{\textit{\text{d}}7}\), when e4 remains a good outpost for the black knight) 12...g6! (12...\(\text{\textit{\text{xf}}5}\)? is bad due to 13 \(\text{\textit{\text{h}}4}\) followed by f3, winning the e4-knight) 13...\(\text{\textit{\text{h}}4}\) (the natural 13 fxg6?! hxg6 is in Black’s favour since his bishop gets the f5-square) 13...g5 14 f3 \(\text{\textit{\text{d}}2}\)! (avoiding fxe4, which would improve White’s pawn-structure) 15 \(\text{\textit{\text{x}}d2}\) gxf4 with a very complicated position.

11...g6 12 \(\text{\textit{\text{g}}5}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{e}}5}\)! 13 \(\text{\textit{\text{e}}6}\)

In this line, this move makes some sense. After 13 \(\text{\textit{\text{xe}}4}\) fxe4 14 \(\text{\textit{\text{we}}4}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{g}}7}\) \(\text{=\textit{\text{f}}}\) followed by ...0-0 and ...\(\text{\textit{\text{f}}5}\) Black is typically better.

13...\(\text{\textit{\text{xe}}6}\) 14 dxe6 \(\text{\textit{\text{c}}4}\) 15 \(\text{\textit{\text{xc}}4}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{g}}7}\) 16 \(\text{\textit{\text{xd}}1}\)!

A prophylactic move against ...0-0.

16...\(\text{\textit{\text{b}}6}\)

16...0-0? loses a pawn to 17 f3 \(\text{\textit{\text{f}}6}\) 18 \(\text{\textit{\text{x}}d6}\)! \(\text{\textit{\text{a}}5}\) 19 \(\text{\textit{\text{d}}1}\). For the moment it seems Black can win the b5-knight, but it’s not so: 19...\(\text{\textit{\text{fb}}8}\) 20 a4
\[ \mathbb{B} \text{x} b5? \quad (20... \mathbb{B}e8!? \quad 21 \mathbb{B}f4 \text{ is less clear}) \quad 21 \mathbb{B}xb5 \mathbb{B}xb5 \quad 22 \text{axb5} \mathbb{B}xa1 \quad 23 \mathbb{B}d8+ \mathbb{B}f8 \quad 24 \text{b6} \mathbb{B}xc1+ \quad 25 \mathbb{B}f2 \mathbb{B}c2+ \quad 26 \mathbb{B}e1! \pm \text{queening the pawn.} \]

17 f3 \mathbb{B}f6 18 \mathbb{B}f4 0-0! (D)

Black is ready to cope with all possible captures on d6.

19 \mathbb{B}xd6!?

Or:

a) 19 \mathbb{B}xd6? allows Black a strong zwischenzug: 19... \mathbb{B}h5! 20 \mathbb{B}g5 \text{exd6} 21 e7+ \mathbb{B}f7 22 \mathbb{B}e6 \mathbb{B}e8 23 \mathbb{B}d6 \mathbb{B}d4+ 24 \mathbb{B}h1 \mathbb{B}b5. Black has an extra piece while White is unable to create any real threats.

b) 19 \mathbb{B}xd6 \mathbb{B}a5! (this exact move gives Black an advantage; 19... \text{exd6?} 20 \mathbb{B}xd6 \mathbb{B}a5 21 e7+ wins for White) 20 \mathbb{B}xe7 (White can insert 20 a4 before capturing on e7, but it doesn't hold the balance either: 20...bxa3 21 \mathbb{B}xe7 \mathbb{B}xb5 22 \mathbb{B}xb5 \mathbb{B}xb5 23 \mathbb{B}xf8 \mathbb{B}xf8 24 \mathbb{B}xa3 \mathbb{B}b7! \mp \text{ and } ... \mathbb{B}e7) 20...\mathbb{B}xb5 21 \mathbb{B}h4 (21 \mathbb{B}xb5? \mathbb{B}xb5 22 \mathbb{B}xf8 \mathbb{B}xf8 \mp) 21...\mathbb{B}e8 22 \mathbb{B}xf8 \mathbb{B}xf8 and White needs to defend the e6-pawn.

b1) 23 \mathbb{B}e1 \mathbb{B}e7 24 \mathbb{B}ad1 \mathbb{B}e8! (protecting the black king and preparing for the centralizing ...\mathbb{B}d4+) 25 \mathbb{B}xe7+ (after 25 \mathbb{B}c4 \mathbb{B}d4+ 26 \mathbb{B}h1 \mathbb{B}a8 \mp \text{White can't activate his pieces – the d4-bishop controls everything}) 25...\mathbb{B}xe7 26 \mathbb{B}d7+ \mathbb{B}f8 \text{(the only move; } 26...\mathbb{B}f6?? \text{walks into a mating-net: } 27 \mathbb{B}h4! \mathbb{B}g5 28 \mathbb{B}h5 \mathbb{B}g4 29 f4 \mp) 27 \mathbb{B}f7+ \mathbb{B}g8 \mp \text{Black’s pieces are ready to realize his advantage.}

b2) 23 \mathbb{B}c4 \mathbb{B}b5 24 \mathbb{B}h4 \text{(or } 24 \mathbb{B}c2?! \mathbb{B}e8! \mp \text{ and } ... \mathbb{B}d4+) 24...\mathbb{B}a8 \mp \text{followed by surrounding the e6-pawn.}

19...\text{exd6} 20 \mathbb{B}xd6!

Surprisingly, the idea of playing e7+ is very serious and Black must be extremely accurate. The immediate 20 e7+?? fails to 20...d5 21 exf8\mathbb{B}+ \mathbb{B}xf8 -+, when ...\mathbb{B}c4+ wins the b5-knight.

20...\mathbb{B}c6!

Black wants to play ...\mathbb{B}d5.

21 e7+

21 \mathbb{B}d1 leaves the a2-pawn undefended and Black can exploit this by 21...\mathbb{B}a6 22 e7+ (the only move) 22...\mathbb{B}xc4 23 exf8\mathbb{B}+ \mathbb{B}xf8 24 \mathbb{B}xc4 \mathbb{B}xa2 \mp \text{Black has won a pawn and has chances to realize it.}

21...\mathbb{B}d5 22 exf8\mathbb{B}+ \mathbb{B}xf8

Black is slightly better because with queens off the board, White’s vulnerable queenside pawns become a more significant factor.

B)

5 f3 (D)

With this move, White adopts a very aggressive stance, but with a clear positional aim: to capture space in the
centr by means of the e4 advance. It became prominent in the 1980s, with Max Dlugy a major protagonist on the white side.

5...axb5

After the natural-looking 5...g6?! White continues 6 e4 d6 and here one knight goes to a3 and the other to c3: 7 d2 8 d2 0-0 9 c3 with an unpleasant position for Black. In general, if White establishes an outpost on b5, Black can expect trouble. There is a simple explanation for this: in the Benko, Black sacrifices a pawn to get half-open a- and b-files; if he doesn't have access to both these files, then he doesn't achieve full compensation either! That's why in all lines I recommend, I seek to avoid this type of problem.

After 5...e6 the most critical lines start with 6 e4 exd5 7 e5 w7 8 w2 g8 9 c3 b7 10 h3 c4 and here White has a choice between 11 e3, with positional compensation for the pawn, and 11 f4 c5 12 fxd5! xdx5 13 e3 b4 14 a3 a5 15 d2 e6 16 d5 d8 17 xc4. This is the end of a forced line. The position is very complicated, but it seems that Black is running much greater risks here — any inaccurate move can lead to a lost position because of his uncastled king and White’s passed pawns on the queenside. That's why I recommend avoiding these variations by playing 5...axb5 instead.

6 e4

White threatens both xb5 and e5. Black has only one answer.

6...w5+ 7 d2

White also can try a gambit approach with 7 b4!? but Black is OK after 7...cxb4!:

a) 8 b2? is not good at all because after 8...e5! (a new move, improving over Csiszar-Mede, Zalakaros 2003) White has no time to prevent c5. For example, 9 xe5 c5 10 d2 b6 11 h3 d6 12 xf6 (12 b2?? xh3 13 gh3 f2+ 14 e2 e3#; 12 g3? xh3 13 gh3 bd7 ± followed by 0-0, ...h5 and ...e5 leaves White with a terrible structure) 12...gxf6 (Black's pawn-structure is destroyed but White has a lot of problems to solve; first of all, there is the threat of xh3 and ...f2+ leading to mate) 13 e2 xh3 14 gh3 d7 15 xb5 a7. The difference between the c5-bishop and its white counterpart on f1 is huge and determines the evaluation of the position.

b) 8 d2 (heading for b3) 8...e5! 9 b3 b6 10 d3 a6! (there is no point defending the b5-pawn: after 10...a6? 11 e3 d8 12 h3 ± followed by e2 and 0-0 Black's pieces are awkward) 11 xb5 (White should
take this pawn immediately since after 11 \( \text{e}3?! \) \( \text{c}5 \) 12 \( \text{w}2 \) \{12 \( \text{w}xb5?? \) \( \text{w}xb5 \) 13 \( \text{x}b5 \) \( \text{xb}3 \) \} 12...d6 13 \( \text{w}xb5+ \) \( \text{fd}7 \) \( \text{xb}3 \) Black has a strong initiative on the queenside) 11...\( \text{xb}5 \) 12 \( \text{xb}5 \) (Ksieski-Komljenović, Issy-les-Moulineaux 1997) 12...\( \text{d}6 \)? (a new move, leaving the e7-square for the king) 13 \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 14 \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{a}6 \) 15 \( \text{xa}6 \) \( \text{xa}6 \), planning ...\( \text{e}7 \) followed by ...\( \text{ha}8 \), leaves Black better due to the pressure on the a2-pawn.

**7...b4**

Now e5 is impossible since the d5-pawn is undefended.

**8 \( \text{a}3 \)**

This is definitely the most promising path for White. The knight heads for c4.

**8...d6 9 \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{d}8 \) (D)**

9...\( \text{c}7 \) is an alternative but I much prefer the retreat to d8 since with the queen on c7, the line 10 a3 e6 does not work so well for Black.

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**B1) 10 a3 e6!**

Thanks to this move, Black creates powerful play in the centre.

**11 dx e6**

After 11 \( \text{e}3 \) Black also gets a good position without much difficulty: 11...\( \text{d}5 \) 12 \( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{b}xa3 \) 13 \( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{b}3 \) 14 \( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 15 \( \text{c}b5+ \) \( \text{d}7 \) 16 \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{g}7 \) 17 \( \text{e}2 \) 0-0 18 \( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{e}8 \) 19 \( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{a}4 \) 20 \( \text{b}6 \) \( \text{fd}7 \) 21 \( \text{c}7 \) (21 \( \text{x}d6?? \) \( \text{e}5 \) \} 21...\( \text{e}5 \) 22 \( \text{x}d6?! \) (22 \( \text{b}1 \)?? \( \text{h}6 \) 23 \( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{g}7 \) 24 \( \text{e}3 \) =) 22...\( \text{b}5 \) 23 \( \text{x}b5 \) \( \text{x}b5 \) gives Black comfortable play for the pawn, Siedentopf-Mihok, Budapest 2011.

**11...\( \text{xe}6 \) (D)**

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**12 \( \text{e}3 \)**

Or:

a) With the black queen on c7, White would get the advantage by playing \( \text{f}4 \), but here it does not work: 12 \( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{xb}3 \) \} gives Black the advantage thanks to his better development.

b) 12 \( \text{xb}4?! \) is not good due to 12...\( \text{x}a1 \) 13 \( \text{x}a1 \) \( \text{d}5 \)!, continuing to dismantle White’s centre, though the
position still requires accurate handling:

b1) 14 \( \text{dxe5} \) dxe4 15 \( \text{a5}+ \) and now:

b11) 15...\( \text{b7} \) is wrong because it loses control of the a6-square: 16 \( \text{a6}! \) \( \text{e7} \) 17 \( \text{c6} \) \( \text{b6} \) 18 \( \text{a8}+ \) \( \text{d8} \) 19 \( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{xc5} \) 20 \( \text{xd8}+! \) (a new move, improving over 20 \( \text{a5} \), as in Capris-Husser, Württemberg (juniors) 1995) 20...\( \text{xb5} \) 21 \( \text{xe6}+ \) \( \text{e7} \) 22 \( \text{d4}! \) (this critical move was evidently missed by both players in their calculations) 22...\( \text{xa8} \) 23 \( \text{xb5} \) \( \text{b8} \) 24 \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{xb2} \) 25 \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{d3}+ \) 26 \( \text{f1} \) \( \pm \) and White should win thanks to his extra bishop.

b12) Thus I recommend 15...\( \text{fd7}! \) followed by ...\( \text{d6} \) and ...0-0. White must hurry to finish his development, but after 16 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{d6} \) 17 \( \text{xd7} \) \( \text{xd7} \) 18 \( \text{xd7}+ \) \( \text{xd7} \) 19 \( \text{a6} \) \( \text{b8} \) \( \mp \) the black pieces are more harmonious.

b2) 14 \( \text{exd5} \) \( \text{xd5} \) and then:

b21) 15 \( \text{b5} \) (Komljenović-Vaïsser, Oviedo rapid 1993) 15...\( \text{e7} \) (a new move; again it’s good to complete development) 16 \( \text{e2} \) (another way to develop, 16 \( \text{d3} ? \), loses to 16...\( \text{b4} \) 17 \( \text{xb4} \) \( \text{xd3} \) 16...0-0 17 \( \text{g3} \) \( \text{e8} \) 18 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{b4} \), preventing 0-0 (as it will be met by ...\( \text{xc4} \) and ...\( \text{xd2} \)), gives Black sufficient compensation.

b22) 15 \( \text{a4} \) \( \text{d7} \) and here:

b221) 16 \( \text{e5} \) \( \text{b5} \) 17 \( \text{c6} \) and now in Gelfand-Hertneck, Munich 1994, 17...\( \text{d5} ! \) 18 \( \text{b5} \) \( \text{h4}+ \) 19 \( \text{d1} ! \) \( \text{e7} \) 20 \( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{xc5} \) led to a crazy position that is very hard to evaluate. I propose a new move that appears to solve Black’s problems in an easier way: 17...\( \text{e7} ! \) followed by...0-0. After 18 \( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{xc5} \) Black has sufficient compensation due to the uncastled king on e1.

b222) 16 \( \text{b5} \) (Nickoloff-Hodgson, Winnipeg 1994) 16...\( \text{e7} ! \) (again I recommend this move, seeking to complete Black’s own development before taking further action) 17 \( \text{e2} \) 0-0 18 \( \text{f4} \) \( \text{xf4} \) 19 \( \text{xf4} \) \( \text{e8} \) 20 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{xc4} \) 21 \( \text{xc4} \) \( \text{b6} \) 22 \( \text{c2} \) c4! with a slight advantage for Black. He has caught the white king at the very last moment: 23 0-0?? is impossible due to 23...\( \text{d4}+ \) –.}

**12...d5 (D)**

![Diagram](image)

**13 \( \text{b5}+ \)**

13 \( \text{exd5} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 14 \( \text{b5}+ \) \( \text{d7} ! \) 15 \( \text{xd5} ! \) (15 \( \text{xd7}+ \) \( \text{xd7} \) 16 \( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 17 \( \text{h3} \) \( \text{e7} = \) Rogozenko-Wang Zili, Moscow Olympiad 1994) 15...\( \text{xb5} \) 16 \( \text{g5} \) and now 16...\( \text{xf5} \) 17 \( \text{c7+} \) \( \text{e7} \) 18 \( \text{xb5} \) \( \text{xf6} ! \) leads to a crazy position, while 16...\( \text{d7} \) 17 \( \text{f2} \) \( \text{f6} \) 18 \( \text{xf4} \) \( \text{f7} \) 19 \( \text{c7} \) \( \text{a5} \) 20 \( \text{xb5} \) \( \text{xd1} \) 21 \( \text{xd1} \) \( \text{xb5} \) 22 a4 \( \text{b7} \) 23 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{c6} \) is roughly equal.
13...\texttt{xd7}! 14 \texttt{xd7+ bxd7}
This temporary pawn sacrifice varies from C.Wagner-Verdier, Cannes 1997, where 14...\texttt{xd7} was played.

15 \texttt{exd5 e7!}
This is Black’s key idea for the whole line with 10 \texttt{a3 e6}: first he should complete his development and then exploit the awkwardness of White’s pieces. The following lines show how important development is in chess:

a) 16 \texttt{f5}?! 0-0 17 \texttt{d6 xd6! transposes to line ‘b’}.

b) Aggressive play by 16 \texttt{d6}?! \texttt{xd6} 17 \texttt{f5} can be met with a cold-blooded sacrifice: 17...0-0!. After 18 \texttt{xd6 e7+ 19 e4 xe4 20 fxe4 xe4+ 21 e2 g6} Black’s attack develops naturally.

c) 16 axb4?! \texttt{xa1} 17 \texttt{xa1 cb4} 18 \texttt{d6 xd6} 19 \texttt{f5} 0-0! (this method is already known to us) 20 \texttt{xd6 c5}! 21 \texttt{f5}. Here the black queen’s dream square is d4, so the best move is 21...\texttt{d7}!! 22 \texttt{g3 d4} ± with a very strong attack.

d) After 16 \texttt{e2} 0-0 17 0-0 \texttt{b6} the position is equal but only Black can fight for a win because of White’s pawn-structure on the kingside.

B2)
10 \texttt{d3 e6}
Black attacks White’s pawn-centre.

11 \texttt{dxe6 xe6} 12 \texttt{e2 c6}
Black quietly completes his development; it’s also possible to start with 12...\texttt{e7}. If instead he rushes into playing ...d5, trouble awaits: 12...d5?! 13 exd5 \texttt{xh5} 14 0-0 \texttt{e7} 15 \texttt{c2}! (the first problem: Black can’t castle)

15...\texttt{c6} 16 \texttt{e4 c8} 17 \texttt{fd1} ± gave Black problems on the d-file in Kasimdzhanov-Tregubov, FIDE Knock-out, New Delhi 2000.

13 \texttt{f4}

13 0-0 e7 14 \texttt{f4} comes to the same thing.

13...\texttt{e7} 14 0-0 0-0 (D)

Black has finished his development, and has no meaningful pawn weaknesses. The position is roughly equal; here are a few sample lines:

a) 15 \texttt{e3 c7} 16 \texttt{e2 d7}! is equal. The bishop goes to f6 and the knights move to e5 and d4.

b) 15 \texttt{e1 d7} (planning ...\texttt{f6}) 16 \texttt{xe6 fxe6} 17 f4 \texttt{h8} 18 \texttt{g3 d5} 19 exd5 exd5 20 \texttt{h3 f6} 21 \texttt{e5 xe5} 22 fxe5 \texttt{e4} = M.Gurevich-De Vreugt, Antwerp 1996.

c) 15 \texttt{e1} (M.Pavlović-B.Vučković, Belgrade 2007) 15...\texttt{xc4}?! 16 \texttt{xc4 e5} and then:

c1) 17 \texttt{c2 xc4} 18 \texttt{xc4 d7}! (freeing f6 for the e7-bishop; the knight will go to b6) 19 \texttt{e3} (19 \texttt{d5 b6}! and after the exchange of knights,
Black will be slightly better due to his superior bishop) 19...\f6=.

c2) 17 \f1 c4! 18 \e3 \a5 followed by ...\fc8 with a comfortable position.

d) After 15 a4 (Avrukh-Bologan, Biel 1995) Black needn’t fear the exchange of his light-squared bishop and can play 15...d5!? (a new move) 16 exd5 \xd5 and here:

d1) 17 \e3 c4! 18 \exd5 (not 18 \xc4?? \xc4 19 \xc4 \d4+ 20 \e3 \xf4--+ 18...\xd3 19 \xe7+ \xe7 20 \xd3 \fd8 21 \f2 \e5 with active play for the pawn.

d2) 17 \xd5 \xd5 18 \xe2 \fd8=.
The activity of Black’s pieces should compensate for the absence of his light-squared bishop.

C)

5 e3 (D)

White attempts to accept the gambit in a safe and solid way. His main idea is to establish control of the b5-square, which is a critical idea in the Benko – if White succeeds, then he will prevent the lion’s share of Black’s queenside counterplay. This system was dubbed the ‘Modern’ (or ‘Quiet’) line when it became popular in the late 1970s, and the name stuck, even though it is not quite so new (or quiet!) any more.

Rather than adopting a standard Benko posture and fighting with White for control of b5, I shall recommend a line where Black blows open the centre and seeks a sharp boardwide battle. After all, 5 e3 is a somewhat slow move, which fails to defend the d5-pawn or block the long light-square diagonal.

5...axb5

After 5...g6 White gets control of the b5-square by 6 \f3 \g7 7 \c3 0-0 8 a4 d6 9 e4 and it’s not easy to create typical Benko counterplay on the queenside (although it’s not impossible). That’s why I propose to play more concretely.

6 \xb5 \a5+ 7 \c3 \b7 (D)

White has a couple of ways to defend the d5-pawn (8 \d2 and 8 \c4) and two ideas based on giving up one
of the central pawns (8 ²e2 and 8 e4). We shall cover these moves as follows:

C1: 8 e4 133
C2: 8 ²e2 133
C3: 8 ²c4 134
C4: 8 ²d2 135

C1)

8 e4

White gives a pawn back in order to gain time for development.

8...²xe4 9 ²e2 ²d6

Black wins a tempo; later the knight will move to f5.

10 ²d3

10 a4 g6 11 0-0 ²g7 12 ²g5 h6 13 ²f4 ²f5 14 a3 0-0 15 ²b1 e5!? (more effective than 15...e6, which was played in Sulypa-Kolev, Collado Villalba 1995, because Black gets control of the d4-square) 16 ²d2 (16 dxe6 dxe6 ʃ) 16...²c7 ʃ followed by ...²d4.

10...²xd5 11 0-0 ²b7 (D)

Black has won a pawn, but White hopes for play against Black's uncastled king. I am unimpressed by White's compensation, since Black can easily play ...e6, ...²e7 and ...0-0, and White must work hard just to stay afloat:

a) 12 ²e1 e6 13 ²f4 ²b6 14 ²g3 (Nguyen Anh Dung-Kallio, Budapest 2000) 14...²e7! and ...0-0 gives Black a fully satisfactory position, still with an extra pawn.

b) 12 ²g3 e6 (12...²a6 was played in Hallias-Abdel Razik, Bled Olympiad 2002) 13 ²e1 ²e7 14 ²f4 ²b6 is the same as line 'a'.

c) 12 ²f4!? (a prophylactic measure against ...e6) 12...²b6 (Black's position is vulnerable after 12...e6?! 13 ²xd6! ²xd6 14 ²e4! ²xe4 15 ²xd6 ²c6 16 ²f4; the knight moves to h5, and the black king is trapped in the centre) 13 ²g3 (Hillarp Persson-Fogarasi, Budapest 1996) 13...e6 14 ²e2 (preventing ...²c6-d4; 14 a4 ²c6! ʃ and ...²d4; 14 ²e1 transposes to line 'a') 14...²e7 15 a4 0-0 16 a5 and now the game can end in a draw by repetition by 16...²c6 17 ²f3 ²a6 18 ²e2 ²c6.

C2)

8 ²e2 ²xd5 9 0-0 ²c7 10 a4!? (D)

Black has no problems in the case of 10 ²c4 e6 11 e4 ²e7 12 ²f4 0-0 13 ²d3 ²d8 14 ²g3 d6 15 ²fd1 ²e8 = Gonda-Stanodjoski, Zupanja 2009.

10...²xb5!

Black exchanges immediately so as not to allow White to recapture with the pawn.

10...e6?! allows White to establish a pawn on b5: 11 ²d2! (this new move improves over 11 e4, as played in
I. Novikov-Blees, Isle of Man 1996

11...\texttt{bx}b5 12 axb5! \texttt{b}b6 13 \texttt{xa}8 \texttt{xa}8 14 \texttt{a}4 b7 15 e4 \texttt{d}6 (or 15...\texttt{e}7?! 16 \texttt{a}1 \pm intending \texttt{a}7) 16 \texttt{e}3 \pm. Black has a problem with his b8-knight and the general coordination of his pieces.

11 \texttt{xb}5

Now Black should develop his kingside:

11...\texttt{e}6

I propose this new move, rather than 11...\texttt{c}6, which was used in Meins-T.Heinemann, Bundesliga 2000/1.

12 \texttt{g}3

Or:

a) 12 \texttt{d}2 \texttt{b}6 13 \texttt{c}3 \texttt{e}7 = and ...

b) After 12 \texttt{d}6+?! \texttt{x}d6 13 \texttt{xd}6 \texttt{a}6! (White can’t take on c5 because the e2-knight is hanging) 14 \texttt{c}7 0-0 15 \texttt{c}3 \texttt{c}6, intending ...

12...\texttt{b}6

Preventing \texttt{d}6+. 12...\texttt{e}7?! 13 \texttt{d}6+ \texttt{x}d6 14 \texttt{x}d6 \pm.

13 \texttt{g}4

White hinders Black’s kingside development. But there is a viable plan: 13...f6! intends ...\texttt{f}7, followed by ...\texttt{e}7 and ...\texttt{d}8, when Black might even get the better position thanks to his bishop-pair and mobile pawn-centre. After 14 \texttt{d}1 \texttt{f}7 15 \texttt{d}2 d5 the material is balanced, and while the black king is on a slightly strange square, it’s difficult for White to exploit this fact. The position is OK for Black, who holds the long-term trumps.

C3)

8 \texttt{c}4 \texttt{e}6 9 \texttt{d}2

Or:

a) 9 \texttt{f}1?! (an odd move) 9...

10 \texttt{b}3 (Afifi-Ermenkov, Tunis Interzonal 1985) 10...

b) 9 \texttt{b}3? \texttt{x}d5 10 \texttt{x}d5 \texttt{xd}5 11 \texttt{d}2? (better is 11 \texttt{e}2 \texttt{xc}3 12 \texttt{xc}3 \texttt{c}6 \mp) 11...

9...\texttt{b}6! (D)

White again has a wide choice of continuations.
10 e4
Or:
a) 10 \textit{Wf3}?! leads to a forced line where Black is a pawn up and White has insufficient resources to maintain the balance: 10...exd5 11 \textit{\textup{Qc}}xd5 \textit{\textup{Qc}}xd5 12 \textit{\textup{Qc}}xd5 \textit{\textup{Wc}}b2 13 \textit{\textup{Qd}}1 \textit{\textup{Qc}}xd5 14 \textit{\textup{Wc}}xd5 \textit{\textup{Wc}}xa2 15 \textit{\textup{Wc}}e4+ \textit{\textup{Cc}}7 16 \textit{\textup{Cc}}3 \textit{\textup{Wc}}a4! 17 \textit{\textup{Wc}}xa4 (or 17 \textit{\textup{Wc}}e5?! f6 18 \textit{\textup{Wc}}h5+ g6 19 \textit{\textup{Wc}}h6 \textit{\textup{Wh7}}+) 17...\textit{\textup{Wc}}xa4 18 \textit{\textup{Qc}}xg7 \textit{\textup{Qc}}b8 + Gibbons-Bruneliere, Shenyang tt 1999. Black is already mobilized for the endgame while White has not yet completed his development.

b) After 10 \textit{\textup{Qe}}ge2 exd5 11 \textit{\textup{Wb}}3 \textit{\textup{Wc}}xb3 12 \textit{\textup{Qc}}xb3 White plans 0-0 followed by attacking the d5-pawn with \textit{\textup{Wc}}f4, \textit{\textup{Qd}}1-f3, \textit{\textup{Qd}}f1, etc. However, Black can defend it by putting his knights on f6 and c7 and his bishop on b7: 12...\textit{\textup{Qa}}6 13 0-0 \textit{\textup{Cc}}7 14 \textit{\textup{Qf}}f4 c4 15 \textit{\textup{Qd}}1 0-0 (after 15...\textit{\textup{Qc}}5? 16 \textit{\textup{Qf}}3 \textit{\textup{Qc}}e4 17 \textit{\textup{Qd}}f1 \textit{\textup{Qb}}8 18 \textit{\textup{Cc}}1 ± the d5-pawn falls, Beliavsky-Mas, Dresden Olympiad 2008) 16 \textit{\textup{Qf}}3 \textit{\textup{Cc}}7 = followed by ...\textit{\textup{Qc}}6 and ...\textit{\textup{Qf}}b8 with play on the a- and b-files.

b) 10 \textit{\textup{Wb}}3 \textit{\textup{Wc}}xb3 11 \textit{\textup{Qc}}xb3 exd5 12 \textit{\textup{Qf}}f3 (12 \textit{\textup{Qe}}ge2 transposes to line ‘b’) 12...\textit{\textup{Qa}}6 13 0-0 \textit{\textup{Cc}}7 is at least OK for Black. Compared to line ‘b’, the white knight is worse placed since it is unable to attack Black’s pawn-centre.

10...\textit{\textup{Qc}}xe4!
Now:
a) 11 \textit{\textup{Qc}}xe4? exd5 ±.

b) 11 dx6? fx6 12 \textit{\textup{Qc}}xe4 \textit{\textup{Qc}}xe4 13 f3 \textit{\textup{Qf}}f5 ± with a pawn-majority in the centre.

c) 11 \textit{\textup{Qf}}f6 12 \textit{\textup{Qd}}f4 \textit{\textup{Cc}}6 13 0-0 0-0 ± Nguyen Huynh Minh-Tu Hoang Thai, Vietnamese Ch, Dong Thap 2003.

d) 11 \textit{\textup{Qf}}f3 \textit{\textup{Qf}}6 (Black doesn’t want to help the d2-bishop to reach the long diagonal) 12 0-0 \textit{\textup{Cc}}7 (12...exd5?! leaves Black more fragile as his king has problems after 13 \textit{\textup{Qc}}1+ \textit{\textup{Cc}}7 14 \textit{\textup{Qb}}3, S.Guliev-Khachian, USSR 1986) 13 \textit{\textup{Qf}}f4 0-0 14 b3 exd5 15 \textit{\textup{Qc}}xd5 \textit{\textup{Qc}}xd5! (simplifying) 16 \textit{\textup{Qc}}xd5 \textit{\textup{Qc}}6 17 \textit{\textup{Qc}}1 (White can’t preserve his bishop: 17 \textit{\textup{Qc}}4? d5! ±) 17...\textit{\textup{Qc}}xd5 18 \textit{\textup{Qc}}xd5 \textit{\textup{Qf}}6 19 \textit{\textup{Qd}}d1 \textit{\textup{Qd}}b4 20 \textit{\textup{Qd}}d7 \textit{\textup{Qc}}2! (20...\textit{\textup{Qd}}d8?!, as chosen in Grachev-Bareev, Russia Cup, St Petersburg 2009, loses a pawn: 21 \textit{\textup{Qc}}7! \textit{\textup{Qc}}d7 22 \textit{\textup{Qc}}xb6 \textit{\textup{Qxd}}1 23 \textit{\textup{Qxd}}1 \textit{\textup{Qxa}}2 24 \textit{\textup{Qc}}c5 ±) 21 \textit{\textup{Qf}}1 \textit{\textup{Qxa}}2 with total equality.

C4)
8 \textit{\textup{Qd}}2 \textit{\textup{Qb}}6 9 \textit{\textup{Qf}}3
Or:
a) 9 \textit{\textup{Qc}}4 e6 transposes to Line C3.

b) 9 \textit{\textup{Qg}}2 \textit{\textup{Qc}}d5 10 0-0 e6 and then:

b1) 11 a4 \textit{\textup{Qf}}6! leaves the white pieces in each other’s way. After 12 \textit{\textup{Qg}}3 \textit{\textup{Qc}}6 13 \textit{\textup{Qc}}e4 \textit{\textup{Qe}}4 14 \textit{\textup{Qe}}4 (Brenninkmeijer-Andruet, Amsterdam 1988) 14...d5 15 \textit{\textup{Qg}}5 \textit{\textup{Cc}}7 16 \textit{\textup{Qh}}5 \textit{\textup{Qg}}5 17 \textit{\textup{Qg}}5 0-0 = Black is OK.

b2) 11 e4 \textit{\textup{Qxc}}3 12 \textit{\textup{Qxc}}3 \textit{\textup{Qc}}e7 13 \textit{\textup{Qe}}1 (13 a4 0-0 14 \textit{\textup{Qf}}4 d6 =) 13...0-0 (Black has a pawn-majority in the centre and can hope for an advantage) 14 \textit{\textup{Qg}}4 f5 15 \textit{\textup{Qxf}}5 \textit{\textup{Qxf}}5 16 \textit{\textup{Qd}}3 (16 \textit{\textup{Qad1}} would be better) 16...\textit{\textup{Qf}}7 17 b3 (17 \textit{\textup{Qe}}4? \textit{\textup{Qc}}6 18 \textit{\textup{Qc}}3, Movsziszian-Klemm, German Ch, Dudweiler 1996,
11...\textit{e6} 12 \textit{c3} 0-0 (D)

Now:
\begin{itemize}
\item a) 13...0-0?! 14 \textit{e5} (14 \textit{d2}!?, with the same idea, is also possible, Vitiugov-Tseshkovsky, Biel 2007) 14...d6 15 \textit{c4} xc4 16 b4 g6 17 wb4 ± Fressinet-Bologan, Bundesliga 2011/12. With the exchange of the d5-bishop, Black’s position lost its flexibility.
\item b) 13...\textit{b7}!? is an important move that stops the \textit{d2-c4} regrouping. 14 \textit{e2} (14 \textit{e1} 0-0 15 \textit{g4} f6 16 \textit{f3} a6 led to an equal position in Portisch-Nogueiras, Reggio Emilia 1986/7) 14...0-0 15 \textit{f1} d6 16 e4 c6 with equal play.
\end{itemize}
11 Benko Gambit: 5 b6

1 d4 ♗f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 a6
5 b6 (D)

This is a popular way to give back the gambit pawn. In common with the lines we saw in the previous chapter, White takes the pawn on b5, but refuses to capture on a6. However, here he forcibly returns the pawn, making sure that there is a black pawn on the a-file, blocking Black’s standard Benko counterplay.

White’s trumps are his control of the c4-square and opportunities to play in the centre with the e4-e5 advance. Alexei Shirov, in particular, demonstrated White’s attacking potential in a number of attractive games in the early 1990s, and this helped make it into one of White’s most popular weapons against the Benko.

Black has two ways to reply. He can play slowly with a kingside fianchetto, capturing on b6 with queen or knight, playing ...a5 and fighting on the queenside with moves like ...♗a6, ...♖e8-c7, etc. Another possibility (which I recommend in this chapter) is to start a sharp battle immediately with 5...e6, dissolving White’s pawn-centre. This has its pros and cons, naturally. Black gains new squares for his pieces (c6 for the knight and e6 for the bishop), but he is also left with a backward d-pawn. With that in mind, Black must pay particular attention to the d5- and d6-squares in the ensuing play.

5...e6 6 ♗c3

6 dxe6?! is dubious since White gives up control of the centre and this makes it easier for Black to find comfortable locations for his pieces: 6...fxe6 7 ♗f3 ♔xb6 8 g3 d5 9 ♖g2 ♗c6 (a new move; for the time being the bishop is better placed on c8 since it defends the e6-pawn {in case of ♔h3} and does not block the b-file for the queen’s rook; the inferior 9...♗b7?! was chosen in Hébert-Degraeve, Montreal 2002) 10 0-0 ♔e7 (on d6, the bishop would invite the e4 advance) 11 ♗c3 0-0. Black has solved his opening problems; e.g., 12 ♗f4 ♔d7 13 ♖e5 ♗xe5 14 ♖xe5 ♔e8! planning ...♖f7 to defend the e6- and d5-pawns and
support the ...e5 advance; ...g6 is also an option, while ...d7 is now available too. After 15 wb3 wa7 (15...xb3?! 16 axb3 leaves Black with a weakness on a6) 16 h3 f7, Black threatens ...d7 and ...e5. Normally when Black gets a position like this, it comes at the cost of his a-pawn.

6...xd5 7 xd5 exd5 8 xd5 c6 (D)

White has a wide choice of moves here, of which three are important or complex enough to get their own sections:

A: 9 g5?!

Has Black blundered his rook? No! It’s a sacrifice based on his better development and the insecure location of the white king.

10 e4

Black has no choice at this point.

B: 9 e4

11 xe7 xe7 12 xa8

If White does not take the rook, Black would be simply better with ...b8, ...d5, ...f5, etc.

C: 9 f3

Now Black could be satisfied with a draw by perpetual check, but deep analysis shows us that he can seek more.

12 d5! (D)

12...xb2?! 13 d1 c3+ 14 d2 c1+ ½-½ Raičević-Mastrokoukos, Athens 1992 (and numerous later games).
BENKO GAMBIT: 5 b6

The white queen is trapped in the corner and Black has the primitive idea of winning it with ...0-0 followed by a bishop move. Now:

a) 13 0-0-0-0-0-0 14 e3 (not 14 \( \text{d}d5 \) ? \( \text{f}f5 \)! 15 \( \text{w}xf8+ \text{g}xf8 16 \text{d}d1 \text{c}c6 \text{f} when the white king lacks protection) 14...\( \text{b}7 15 \text{w}xf8+ \text{xf}8 leaves Black better; for example, 16 \text{f}f3 (Züger-Hertneck, Nuremberg rapid 1990) may be met by 16...d4! 17 exd4 \( \text{x}f3 \) 18 gxf3 cxd4 \text{f} and the queen and knight cause White problems.

b) 13 \( \text{d}d1 \) 0-0-0 14 \( \text{d}d5 \) \( \text{w}xh2 \)! 15 f3 (15 \text{f}f3 c4! \text{f}; the idea is to give check on b1, then on b4 and when White interposes a rook or knight on d2, Black plays ...c3; White is in big trouble because the king’s rook and bishop are not helping their king) 15...\( \text{b}4+ 16 \text{f}f2 \text{b}6 (intending ...\text{b}7; White’s kingside is grotesque) 17 e3 \text{b}7 18 \text{w}xf8+ \text{xf}8 19 \text{d}d2 \text{d}5 \text{f} followed by ...c4 or ...\text{h}6, attacking e3.

c) 13 \text{f}f3 0-0 14 e3 \text{b}7 15 \text{w}xf8+ \text{xf}8. There’s no time to evacuate the white king to the kingside.

B)

9 e4

This is the second most popular move. White defends the d5-square one more time and prepares \( \text{c}4 \).

9...\text{e}7 10 \text{c}4 0-0

Black is in time to parry the threat of \( \text{w}xf7# \) without making concessions. White must now decide where he wants to develop his knight: e2 or f3.

11 \text{f}3

11 \text{e}2?! , planning to bring the knight to d5, looks too slow. 11...\text{b}8 12 0-0 \text{xb}6 gives Black free play:

a) 13 \text{d}d1 \text{f}6 14 \text{b}1 (after 14 \text{c}3 Black has the nice response 14...\text{d}4! = followed by ...\text{e}5, ...d6 and ...\text{e}6) 14...d6 15 b3 \text{c}e6 16 \text{xe}6 fxe6 17 \text{e}3 \text{b}4 18 f3 a5 = Moskalenko-Alterman, Ukrainian Ch, Lvov 1988.

b) 13 \text{c}3 d6 and then:

b1) The typical 14 \text{h}5? does not work here: 14...\text{e}5 15 \text{e}2 (not 15 \text{b}3?? \text{g}4 !) 15...f5! 16 f4 (16 \text{d}5 fxe4! 17 \text{xb}6 \text{xb}6 gives Black great compensation for the exchange: a pawn and a powerful centre) 16...g6 17 \text{h}3 fxe4 18 \text{e}3 \text{g}4 19 \text{xe}4 \text{f}6 \text{f}. White’s pieces are more active.

b2) 14 \text{d}1 \text{f}6 15 \text{d}5 \text{b}8 and now:

b21) After 16 \text{e}2 \text{e}8 White has a nice outpost on d5, but Black’s pressure on the two half-open files plus the d4-square are more important, and his game is preferable.

b22) White can grab a pawn by 16 \text{a}4 \text{d}7 17 \text{xa}6?? but his king is exposed to a strong attack with his
queen so far away. After 17...e5! Black intends to force a weakening of the kingside with ...\(\text{w}h4\), and then he will play ...\(\text{d}4\) and ...\(\text{e}5\), when the white king will feel uncomfortable.

11...\(\text{w}xb6\) 12 0-0 d6 13 \(\text{w}h5\) \(\text{e}6\)!

(D)

14 \(\text{d}5\)

After 14 \(\text{xe}6\) \(\text{fxe6}\) 15 \(\text{g}4\) (Chabanon-Waitzkin, Oakham 1992; or 15 \(\text{g}5\) \(\text{f}6\) 16 \(\text{ad}1\) \(\text{d}4\)! 17 \(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{xf}6\) 18 \(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{cxd}4\) with good chances for Black, Granero Roca-Hernando Rodri-
gigo, Villa de Albox 2002), 15...\(\text{e}5\)! = is an interesting positional decision: Black weakens the \(\text{d}5\)-square and ‘kills’ his own bishop, but in return he gets a superb square on \(\text{d}4\) that should compensate for those disadvantages.

14...\(\text{xd}5\) 15 \(\text{xd}5\)

15 \(\text{exd}5\)! is met by 15...\(\text{b}4\) \(\mp\) and then ...g6, ...\(\text{f}6\) and ...\(\text{ae}8\) with the better position.

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

Now:

a) 16 \(\text{f}5\) g6 17 \(\text{h}3\) \(\text{b}7\) and here blunt attacking ideas are not

dangerous for Black: 18 \(\text{h}6\)? \(\text{c}2\) 19 \(\text{g}5\)? (19 \(\text{b}1\) \(\text{xe}4\) \(\mp\)) 19...\(\text{xg}5\) 20 \(\text{xg}5\) \(\text{f}6\)! 21 \(\text{ac}1\) \(\text{d}4\) 22 \(\text{f}4\) \(\text{e}2\) 23 \(\text{h}1\) \(\text{xc}1\) 24 \(\text{xc}1\) \(\text{ad}8\) \(\rightarrow\) La Flair-Alburt, New York 1992.

b) 16 \(\text{b}3\) \(\text{b}5\)! (defending the queen and preventing the a3 threat) 17 \(\text{d}1\) a5 18 a3 a4 19 \(\text{c}3\) \(\text{c}6\) =. Black has made progress on the queenside and can feel safe.

C)

9 \(\text{f}3\) \(\text{b}8\) (D)

Black is worse after 9...\(\text{e}7\)?! 10 \(\text{e}5\) 0-0 11 \(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{dxc}6\) 12 \(\text{xd}8\) \(\text{xd}8\) (not 12...\(\text{xd}8\)? 13 \(\text{f}4\) \(\mp\), when the \(\text{b}6\)-pawn survives) 13 \(\text{e}3\) \(\pm\) Lputian-Annageldiev, USSR Team Ch, Azov 1991. In Line C2 we shall see a similar position but there Black will have more active pieces and his queen is still alive.

Now we have two main lines:

C1: 10 \(\text{e}4\) 141
C2: 10 \(\text{e}5\) 144

Or:
a) 10 g5?! f6! (Black isn’t worried about the weakening of the a2-g8 diagonal since the white queen will be pushed back by ...b4 or ...b7) 11 d2 xb6 (this move is stronger now that the e5-square is covered) 12 c3 d4 13 d1 and here Black has an interesting queen manoeuvre: 13...e6!? (the natural move 13...d5 is also good) 14 b3 (14 a3 d5 15 e3 xc3 16 bxc3, J. Nilssen-Skjoldberg, Copenhagen 2003, 16...d6 ?; this bishop goes to c7, and the other one moves to b7) 14...e4! 15 xb4 xb4+ 16 d2 (16 d2?! c4! 17 bxc4 wa3 is much better for Black) 16...b7 gives Black slightly the better position.

b) 10 d2 xb6 (10...xb6?! 11 e5! gives White more activity and the initiative, Dreev-Fominych, Russian Ch, Elista 1995) 11 c3. Here Black starts some slightly unusual play: 11...b4 12 d2 d6! 13 c1 (13 e3+ is not good because after 13...e7 ?; ...c2# is still a threat) 13...b7 14 e3 (Jedynak-Kucypera, Polish Junior Team Ch, Rowy 1998) 14...a8! (White’s light squares are weak) 15 e2 d3+ 16 xd3 xf3 17 gxf3 xf3 18 g1 xd3 19 xg7 g8 20 g3 d5 21 xf8 xf8 with a slight advantage for Black.

C1)

10 e4

Threatening c4; that’s why it’s time for Black to prepare castling. The main disadvantage of this move is the weakening of the d4-square, which we see Black exploiting repeatedly in the lines that follow.

10...e7 11 c4 0-0 (D)

One difference between 9 e4 and 9 f3 is that the latter forces Black to play 9...b8. If you look at 9 e4 e7 10 c4 0-0 11 f3 (Line B) you will see that there I recommended 11...xb6. In the present line Black has already played ...b8.

12 0-0

This is the most logical continuation. Other moves:

a) 12 d2 has been very successful in practice. The main response is 12...xb6, but I suggest 12...xb6, which leads to a more active position for Black:

a1) 13 0-0 has never been played but the idea is quite natural: White sacrifices a pawn and quickly develops his pieces. 13...xb2 14 fd1 d4! (the most accurate path to equality) 15 xd4 xd4 16 xd4 cxd4 17 f4 b4 18 ac1 (18 xd4?? d5! 19 exd5 f6 –+) 18...d6 =. Black prepares to develop his c8-bishop and f8-rook.

a2) 13 c3 b4 14 d2 g6 15 0-0 xe4 and then:
a21) There is nothing scary in case of 16 \( \texttt{Rx} e1 \texttt{Rxc}4 17 \texttt{Rx} e7 \texttt{Qd}5 18 \texttt{Rx} e7!? \) (a nice idea but it doesn’t bring an advantage; or 18 \texttt{Qe}5 \texttt{Wh}4 19 \texttt{Rx} d7 \texttt{Rx} c3 20 \texttt{Rx} c3 \texttt{Rx} d7 21 \texttt{Qxe}7 \texttt{Qc}4 18...\texttt{Rx} e7 (not 18...\texttt{Rx} e7??) 19 \texttt{Qg}5+ \texttt{Kh}8 20 \texttt{Qe}5 \texttt{Rxf}4 21 \texttt{Rxf}7+ \texttt{Rxf}7 22 \texttt{Qe}8+ \texttt{Rf}8 23 \texttt{Rxf}4 \texttt{Qxf}4 24 \texttt{Rxf}8+ \texttt{Qg}7 25 \texttt{Rxf}4 +-) 19 \texttt{Rxf}8 \texttt{Rxf}8 20 \texttt{Wh}6+ \texttt{Qg}8 21 \texttt{Qe}1! (Black can’t defend his e7-knight but can secure equal play) 21...\texttt{Qb}7 22 \texttt{Qxe}7 \texttt{Qxf}3 23 \texttt{gxf}3 \texttt{Qd}4 = M.Becker-Michalczak, Bundesliga 1999/00.

a22) 16 \texttt{Qb}3 would be a logical novelty for White, and we need to analyse it before we can say with much confidence whether Black is OK in this line. 16...\texttt{bx} b6 17 \texttt{Rxe}1 \texttt{Qg}6 (the f3-knight is hanging) 18 \texttt{Qe}3 \texttt{d}6! (defending the c5-pawn and the e5-square; not 18...\texttt{Qf}6? 19 \texttt{Qxf}6 \texttt{Qxf}6 20 \texttt{Qe}5!, when White creates very serious threats) 19 \texttt{Qa}1 a5 is unclear and requires practical testing.

b) 12 \texttt{Wh}5 \texttt{d}6 (this advance became possible after White’s last move) 13 0-0 \texttt{Qe}6 and here:

b1) Grabbing a pawn by 14 \texttt{Qxa}6?! allows Black pressure after 14...\texttt{Rxb}6 15 \texttt{Qe}2 \texttt{h}6! (an important defensive move) 16 \texttt{Qd}1 (16 \texttt{Qx} h6?? does not work because Black can play 16...\texttt{g}6 ++ rather than taking the bishop) 16...\texttt{Rb}4, attacking e4.

b2) After 14 b3 (as in M.Ginsburg-Waitzkin, New York 1993) Black can play for easy equality by 14...\texttt{Qxc}4 (a new move) 15 \texttt{bxc}4 \texttt{Qxb}6 16 \texttt{Qf}4 \texttt{Qd}7 17 \texttt{Qd}5 \texttt{Qe}6 18 \texttt{Qd}1 \texttt{Qb}4 19 \texttt{Qxe}6 \texttt{fxe}6 =.

b3) 14 \texttt{Qxe}6 is untried but after 14...\texttt{fxe}6 Black should not have any problems. For example, 15 b3 \texttt{Qf}6 16 \texttt{Qg}5 (Black is OK after 16 \texttt{Qg}5 \texttt{Rxb}6 17 \texttt{Qad}1 \texttt{Qd}4! = or 16 \texttt{Qb}1 \texttt{Rxb}6 = and the knight moves to d4) 16...\texttt{Qxg}5 17 \texttt{Qxg}5 \texttt{Rxb}6 = followed by...\texttt{Qd}4.

12...\texttt{Rxb}6 (D)

Here White has plenty of possibilities.

13 \texttt{Qh}5

Or:

a) 13 \texttt{Qd}1 \texttt{d}6 14 \texttt{Wh}5 \texttt{Qe}6 15 \texttt{Qxe}6 \texttt{fxe}6 16 b3 \texttt{Qe}8 = Dževlan-Von Bahr, Stockholm 1994. The standard idea...\texttt{e}5 and...\texttt{Qd}4 will come soon.

b) 13 \texttt{Qg}5 is an aggressive move that Black needs to be prepared for. 13...\texttt{Qe}8 14 \texttt{Qf}5 \texttt{Qxg}5!, and then:

b1) 15 \texttt{Qxg}5? looks natural but this capture only brings White problems. 15...\texttt{d}6 and now:

b11) 16 \texttt{Qf}4 \texttt{Qe}5 17 \texttt{Qd}5 \texttt{h}6 leaves White with no good choice: 18 \texttt{Qxh}6 (18 \texttt{Qh}4 \texttt{Qg}6 19 \texttt{Qg}3 \texttt{Qe}6 is much better for Black) 18...\texttt{gxh}6 19 \texttt{Qxh}6 \texttt{Qg}4! and Black escapes perpetual
check and can halt all of White’s attacking options; e.g., 20 \( \text{g}6+ \) \( \text{h}8 21 \text{g}5+ \text{h}7 23 \text{g}5+ \text{h}6 \).  

b12) 16 \text{xf3} \text{e}5 17 \text{xc}3 \text{xc}4 18 \text{xc4} \text{e}5 leads to a slight advantage for Black.  

b2) 15 \text{xf5} \text{d}6 = A. Mikhailievski-Calsetta Ruiz, European Ch, Saint Vincent 2000. Black has simple play with \( ... \text{d}4 \) and \( ... \text{e}6 \).  
c) After 13 \text{b}3 \text{a}5! Black plans \( ... \text{b}7 \) and \( ... \text{xc}4 \). Then:  
c1) 14 \text{b}2? \text{b}7 15 \text{d}3 \text{xc}4 16 \text{xc4} \text{d}5 17 \text{exd}5 \text{xd}5 18 \text{c}3 \text{f}6 19 \text{e}5 (forced) 19 \text{a}8 gives Black good play on the light squares.  
c2) 14 \text{f}4?! \text{b}7 15 \text{d}3 \text{xc}4 16 \text{xc4} (16 \text{xc4} \text{b}4) 16 \text{e}6 17 \text{fe}1 \text{a}8! (Black seizes the initiative) 18 \text{d}2 (18 \text{e}5?! \text{xf}3 19 \text{gxf}3 \text{c}6) 18 \text{f}6 19 \text{e}5?! (19 \text{ad}1 \text{d}4) 19 \text{fe}8 20 \text{f}3 \text{xf}3 21 \text{xf}3 \text{xf}3 22 \text{gxf}3 \text{d}6 \text{f} V. Mikhaili-ski-Manor, Israeli Ch, Tel Aviv 1994.  
c3) 14 \text{e}2 \text{b}7 15 \text{d}2 \text{e}6 16 \text{e}5 \text{d}6 17 \text{exd}6 \text{xd}6 is unclear, Doh-hoan-Hertneck, Bundesliga 1992/3.  
d) 13 \text{e}3 \text{d}6 and then:  
d1) After 14 \text{d}2?! Black can start to create threats by 14...\text{g}4?! (rather than 14...\text{f}6, Cori Tello-Pogonina, Moscow blitz 2010) 15 \text{e}2 (or 15 \text{ad}1 \text{c}8! {intending \( ... \text{xf}3 \) and \( ... \text{b}3 \}) 16 \text{e}2 \text{e}6 \text{f} attacking e4 and a2) 15...\text{f}6 16 \text{ab}1 \text{c}7 with the initiative.  
d2) 14 \text{b}3 \text{e}6 15 \text{d}3 \text{a}8?! (eyeing the e4-pawn) 16 \text{ac}1 \text{a}5 and Black is fine, Santos Santos-Mellado, Seville 2004.  

e) 13 \text{d}2?! has brought White very good results, so it’s important to know what to do in this case. After the natural sequence 13...\text{d}6 14 \text{c}3 \text{e}6 15 \text{d}3 \text{xc}4 16 \text{xc}4 \text{f}6 (D) White is seeking a positional edge, and we need to consider which exchanges are in Black’s interest:

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}
Or:

a) 14 d1 transposes to note ‘a’ to White’s 13th move.

b) 14 b3 e6 15 xe6 fxe6 16 g4 (or 16 b2 f6 17 xf6 xf6 18 ad1 e7 = Kobylin-Averianov, Ukrainian Team Ch, Alushta 2001; the plan of ...e5 and ...d4 is still in force) 16 c8 17 b2 f6 18 xf6 xf6 19 d2 f8 20 c4 b7 21 f4 bf7 = Gleizerov-Tregubov, Russian Ch, Krasnoiarsk 2003.

14...xg5 15 xg5 (D)

15...we8!

White’s initiative has burnt itself out and Black starts directing events:

a) 16 ad1 e5 17 e2 xb2 18 xd6 f6 19 xe8 xe8 leaves both white bishops under attack:

a1) 20 d2? f7 21 c4 (21 d5?? e6 22 d3 c4 23 d4 c3 -; 21 d3?? c4 22 d4 c3 -) 21 f8 22 xf7 xf7 + winning one pawn or the other.

a2) 20 d2 b4 21 e3 xe4 22 c1 c4 23 c3 f5 = Krivko-Kravtsov, Novosibirsk 1998.

b) 16 f4 d4 17 ae1 (17 fe1 c2 +) 17...e6 18 d3 f6 19 h4 g6! (a move mentioned by Lautier in his notes to Lautier-W.Richter, 2nd Bundesliga 1997/8, where 19...f7?! was played) 20 e3 g4 21 xg4 xg4 22 b3 (it is surprising that such a natural check as 22 c4+? can be a serious mistake, but after 22...e6 White can’t save the b2-pawn: 23 xe6+ xe6 24 g3 xb2 25 xd6 d8 + and ...xa2) 22...e6 = followed by ...a5-a4. Black is fine.

C2)

10 e5

A logical move.

10...f6! (D)

Black does not care about his pawn-structure: only time and the initiative matter!

11 xc6

11 c4?! is not a good retreat, as Black seizes the initiative by 11...b4. Then:

a) 12 wd2?! we6 13 b3 d5 14 e3 d4 15 c2 (15 c4 g6 + intending
...\(\mathcal{Q}c2+\) 15...\(\mathcal{Q}xc2+\) 16 \(\mathcal{W}xc2\) \(\mathcal{B}xb6\) \\

b) 12 \(\mathcal{W}e4+\) \(\mathcal{Q}e7\) (now ...d5 is threatened) 13 \(\mathcal{W}f4\) invites a strong exchange sacrifice: 13...\(\mathcal{B}xb6!\) 14 \(\mathcal{Q}xb6\) (Black has the better endgame after 14 \(\mathcal{W}xf6\) \(\mathcal{B}xf6\) 15 \(\mathcal{Q}e3\) \(\mathcal{B}b7\) \(\mathcal{W}+\)) 14...\(\mathcal{W}xb6\) (...\(\mathcal{Q}c2+\) is still threatened) 15 \(\mathcal{W}d2\) (Gaudron-Calzetta Ruiz, France tt (women) 1999; after 15 \(\mathcal{W}f5\) 0-0 Black also has powerful compensation for the exchange, with ...d5, ...g6, ...\(\mathcal{A}f5\), etc., coming) 15...c4! \(\mathcal{W}+\) intending ...\(\mathcal{Q}d3+\) and ...\(\mathcal{Q}b4\).

11...dxc6 (D)

12 \(\mathcal{W}e4+\)

Or:

a) 12 \(\mathcal{W}g5?!\) \(\mathcal{Q}e7\) and now:

a1) 13 \(\mathcal{W}xf6\) \(\mathcal{Q}xf6\) 14 e4 \(\mathcal{B}xb6\) 15 \(\mathcal{B}b1\) \(\mathcal{Q}e6\) \(\mathcal{W}+\) O.Andersen-K.Berg, Copenhagen 1993.

a2) 13 \(\mathcal{W}g3\) \(\mathcal{B}xb6\) 14 \(\mathcal{Q}d2\) (that’s the point of 13 \(\mathcal{W}g3\) – the bishop goes to c3; however, Black can cope with this problem) 14...\(\mathcal{W}xb2\) 15 \(\mathcal{Q}c3\) \(\mathcal{C}c2\) 16 \(\mathcal{W}xg7\) \(\mathcal{B}b1\) + 17 \(\mathcal{B}xb1\) \(\mathcal{W}xb1\) + 18 \(\mathcal{Q}d2\) \(\mathcal{Q}f8\) \(\mathcal{W}+\). Black will capture the a2-pawn and his passed pawn on the queenside looks more dangerous than his opponent’s.

a3) 13 \(\mathcal{W}f4\) appears to defend b6 indirectly, but Black just ignores this with 13...\(\mathcal{B}xb6!\) (D).

Since White’s main idea does not work, Black gets an advantage:

a31) 14 \(\mathcal{W}c7?\) \(\mathcal{Q}d8\) 15 \(\mathcal{W}xc8\) 0-0 (White’s undeveloped pieces can’t cope with Black’s well-coordinated army) 16 f3 (creating a flight-square on f2) 16...\(\mathcal{B}xb2!\) 17 \(\mathcal{B}xb2\) \(\mathcal{W}xb2\) (...\(\mathcal{Q}a5\) is a threat, so White must leave his rook on a1) 18 \(\mathcal{W}xa6\) \(\mathcal{W}xa1+\) 19 \(\mathcal{Q}f2\) (Kozakov-Rodriguez Guerrero, Granada 2006) 19...\(\mathcal{W}c1!\) supporting ...c4 and preparing ...\(\mathcal{Q}g5\). Black is winning.

a32) 14 g3 (more solid) 14...\(\mathcal{W}xf4\) and here:

a321) 15 \(\mathcal{Q}xf4?!\) \(\mathcal{Q}f6\) 16 \(\mathcal{Q}c1\) \(\mathcal{B}xb2\) 17 \(\mathcal{B}xc5\) \(\mathcal{Q}e7!\) 18 \(\mathcal{Q}c4\) (18 \(\mathcal{Q}e5\) \(\mathcal{Q}e6\) \(\mathcal{W}+\)) 18...0-0 19 \(\mathcal{Q}g2\) \(\mathcal{B}b4+\) 20 \(\mathcal{Q}f1\) \(\mathcal{B}d8\) \(\mathcal{W}+\).

a322) 15 gxf4 \(\mathcal{Q}f6\) 16 \(\mathcal{Q}g2\) \(\mathcal{B}xb2\) 17 \(\mathcal{B}xb2\) \(\mathcal{B}xb2\) 18 \(\mathcal{Q}xc6+\) \(\mathcal{Q}e7\) 19 \(\mathcal{Q}g1\) and now rather than 19...\(\mathcal{Q}d8?!\)
20 \text{\texttt{\textsf{x}}r}xg7 \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}dd2 21 \text{\texttt{\textsf{f}}}f3 \text{\texttt{\textsf{e}}}e6 22 \text{\texttt{\textsf{h}}}xh7 \text{\texttt{\textsf{a}}}xa2 23 \text{\texttt{\textsf{c}}}c1, which was equal in Tikkanen-Bellon, Swedish Team Ch 2005/6, I recommend 20...g6?! \text{\texttt{\textsf{f}}}f5 followed by ...\text{\texttt{\textsf{f}}}f5 or ...\text{\texttt{\textsf{e}}}e6, ...\text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d8, etc.

b) 12 \text{\texttt{\textsf{f}}}f3 (supporting the \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d2-c3 plan) 12...\text{\texttt{\textsf{e}}}e7 13 \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d2 (13 \text{\texttt{\textsf{f}}}f4?! transposes to line 'a3') 13...\text{\texttt{\textsf{b}}}xb2 14 \text{\texttt{\textsf{c}}}c3 \text{\texttt{\textsf{b}}}xb6 15 \text{\texttt{\textsf{g}}}xg7 was played in the game Hillarp Persson-Kallio, Stockholm 1999/00. But here Black has the strong new move 15...f6!, which cuts the g7-bishop off from defending the queenside. 16 \text{\texttt{\textsf{h}}}h5+ (not 16 \text{\texttt{\textsf{x}}}xh8?? \text{\texttt{\textsf{b}}}b4+ 17 \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d1 \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d4+ and Black wins) 16...\text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d8 and now:

b1) After 17 \text{\texttt{\textsf{h}}}h6 c4! (threatening ...\text{\texttt{\textsf{b}}}b4+ and after \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d2, ...c3) 18 \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d2 \text{\texttt{\textsf{b}}}b4! 19 \text{\texttt{\textsf{h}}}h6 (19 \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d1 \text{\texttt{\textsf{e}}}e7 wins for Black) 19...\text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d4 20 \text{\texttt{\textsf{c}}}c1 c3 21 \text{\texttt{\textsf{e}}}e3 c2+ 22 \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d2 \text{\texttt{\textsf{c}}}c7 Black should be winning.

b2) 17 \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d1+ \text{\texttt{\textsf{c}}}c7 18 \text{\texttt{\textsf{h}}}h6 (not 18 \text{\texttt{\textsf{x}}}xh8?? \text{\texttt{\textsf{b}}}b4+ 19 \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d2 \text{\texttt{\textsf{b}}}b1#) 18...\text{\texttt{\textsf{e}}}e6 19 \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d2 \text{\texttt{\textsf{b}}}bd8! gives Black an advantage after both 20 e4 \text{\texttt{\textsf{x}}}xd2 21 \text{\texttt{\textsf{x}}}xd2 c4 and 20 e3 \text{\texttt{\textsf{x}}}xd2 21 \text{\texttt{\textsf{x}}}xd2 c4.

\textbf{12...\text{\texttt{\textsf{e}}}e7 (D)}

13 \text{\texttt{\textsf{g}}}3

Or:

a) 13 \text{\texttt{\textsf{f}}}f4?! transposes to note 'a3' to White's 12th move above. Black was better there.

b) 13 \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d2?! is a dubious sacrifice. 13...\text{\texttt{\textsf{b}}}xb2 14 \text{\texttt{\textsf{b}}}bl \text{\texttt{\textsf{x}}}xa2 and then:

b1) 15 e3?? f5! (surprisingly, the queen can't defend the b1-rook any more) 16 \text{\texttt{\textsf{c}}}c4 (16 \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d3 c4 and Black wins) 16...\text{\texttt{\textsf{x}}}xd2+ 17 \text{\texttt{\textsf{x}}}xd2 fxe4 --+ F.Levin-Ellers, Schwerin 1999.

b2) 15 b7 (Gokhale-Ghaem Maghami, Dubai 2001) 15...\text{\texttt{\textsf{b}}}b7! 16 \text{\texttt{\textsf{x}}}xc6+ \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d7 17 \text{\texttt{\textsf{x}}}xc8+ \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d8 18 \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d1 (the only move) 18...\text{\texttt{\textsf{x}}}xd2 19 \text{\texttt{\textsf{c}}}c6+ (19 \text{\texttt{\textsf{x}}}xd2 \text{\texttt{\textsf{a}}}al+ 20 \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d1 \text{\texttt{\textsf{c}}}c3+ 21 \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d2 0-0 22 e3 \text{\texttt{\textsf{a}}}a5 23 \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d7 \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d8 24 \text{\texttt{\textsf{x}}}xd8+ \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d8 --+) 19...\text{\texttt{\textsf{f}}}f8 20 \text{\texttt{\textsf{x}}}xc5+ \text{\texttt{\textsf{g}}}g8 . The rook is untouchable due to 21 \text{\texttt{\textsf{x}}}xd2? \text{\texttt{\textsf{a}}}al+ 22 \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d1 \text{\texttt{\textsf{a}}}a5+ --+, but if White does not take the rook, Black just finishes his development by ...h5 and ...\text{\texttt{\textsf{h}}}h6 or ...g6, ...\text{\texttt{\textsf{g}}}g7, ...\text{\texttt{\textsf{f}}}f6 and ...\text{\texttt{\textsf{h}}}hd8 and gets a serious attack against the white king. Besides, the a6-pawn can run towards a1.

c) After 13 e3 \text{\texttt{\textsf{f}}}f5 14 \text{\texttt{\textsf{c}}}c4 \text{\texttt{\textsf{x}}}xb6 we may note that Black has doubled isolated c-pawns. In some positions such a structural weakness would give the opponent a huge advantage, but here Black has sufficient counterplay: pressure on the b2-pawn and a lot of open lines for his pieces, while the white king is still in the centre. Black has a long-lasting initiative in fact. 15 \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d3 0-0 16 0-0 \text{\texttt{\textsf{d}}}d8 17 \text{\texttt{\textsf{x}}}xf5 \text{\texttt{\textsf{x}}}xf5 18 b3! (18 e4?! allows Black to secure an advantage by 18...\text{\texttt{\textsf{e}}}e5 19 \text{\texttt{\textsf{c}}}c2 \text{\texttt{\textsf{b}}}b4 20 f3 c4 \text{\texttt{\textsf{\dagger}}} Tikkanen-Nybäck, World
BENKO GAMBIT: 5 b6

Under-18 Ch, Kallithea 2003) 18...\texttt{d5} (18...\texttt{f6} does not win the a1-rook: 19 \texttt{e4} \texttt{h5} 20 \texttt{b1} is unclear) 19 \texttt{c2} c4! (the most precise way to avoid problems with the isolated pawns) 20 bxc4 (not 20 \texttt{xc4}?? \texttt{xc4} 21 bxc4 \texttt{f6} \rightarrow) 20...\texttt{d3} 21 \texttt{xd3} \texttt{xd3} 22 \texttt{e4} \texttt{f6} 23 \texttt{e3} \texttt{xe3} 24 \texttt{fxe3} \texttt{xa1} 25 \texttt{b1} \texttt{f8} =. White's extra pawn does not play any role.

13...0-0 14 \texttt{g2} \texttt{xb6} 15 0-0 \texttt{e6} (D)

The opening is over and it is time to assess its outcome. Both kings are now safe, at last. Black has the worse pawn-structure, but exerts strong pressure on White's queenside. The e6-bishop, the black queen and rook(s) on the b-file are White's main problem. Moreover, the c5-pawn may advance at any moment, and one can question whether it is truly a weakness at all. Overall, it looks like dynamic equality.

Let's see a few examples from practice:

16 \texttt{a4}

Or:

a) 16 \texttt{d1} \texttt{d5} 17 \texttt{c2} \texttt{e6} 18 b3 c4! 19 bxc4 \texttt{xc4} 20 \texttt{e3} \texttt{b4} (Black wants to regroup by \ldots \texttt{b5} and \ldots\texttt{c4}) 21 \texttt{d2} \texttt{b7} 22 \texttt{h3} f5 23 \texttt{e3} \texttt{d5} = Lalić-P.Cramling, Manila Olympiad 1992.

b) 16 \texttt{c2} h6 (just a useful move) 17 \texttt{d1} c4! (putting more pressure on the b2-pawn) 18 \texttt{b1} \texttt{c5} and now rather than 19 e4? c3! 20 b3 \texttt{xf2}+! 21 \texttt{xf2} \texttt{xf2}+ 22 \texttt{xf2} c2 = Markus-Lazarev, Budapest 2000, White should play 19 \texttt{f3}; e.g., 19...\texttt{fb8} 20 b3 \texttt{xb3} 21 \texttt{xc5}! (21 axb3? \texttt{xb3} 22 \texttt{f4} \texttt{b5} \mp) 21...\texttt{bxa2} 22 \texttt{xb6} \texttt{xb6} 23 \texttt{xb6} a1\texttt{w} \mp. There is an unusual material balance, but Black is obviously better.

16...\texttt{d4}!

After 16...\texttt{d8}?! White secured the better position in Van Wely-Gelfand, Cap d'Agde rapid 1996: 17 \texttt{a5} (17 \texttt{xc6}? \texttt{d4} \rightarrow) 17...\texttt{db8} 18 \texttt{f4} \texttt{b7} 19 b3 \pm.

17 \texttt{a5} \texttt{b4} 18 \texttt{xb4} \texttt{xb4}

Black can also take with the pawn: 18...\texttt{xb4}?! 19 \texttt{e3} c5 20 \texttt{fc1} \texttt{b5} = and the rook goes to a5.

19 b3 \texttt{f6} 20 \texttt{a3} \texttt{xa1} 21 \texttt{xb4} \texttt{cxb4} 22 \texttt{xa1} c5 23 \texttt{c1} c4 24 bxc4 \texttt{c8}

The endgame is equal, Akobian-Ghaem Maghami, Moscow 2000.
Finally we have reached lines in which White bravely accepts the gambit pawn.

5...g6!

This precise move eliminates some troublesome lines in which White plays an early b3, such as 5...\( \text{dx}a6 \) 6 g3 g6 7 \( \text{g}g2 \) d6 8 b3.

6 \( \text{c}c3 \)

If White wants to play the Fianchetto line (Chapters 14 and 15), he can also start with 6 \( \text{f}f3 \) or 6 g3. With the text-move, he retains several other options too.

While White can play \( \text{c}c3 \), \( \text{f}f3 \), g3 and \( \text{g}g2 \) in a variety of sequences, Black needs to be a little careful with his move-order. The rule I urge you to keep in mind is this: take on a6 as soon as White plays \( \text{c}c3 \) (or even earlier but not later!). Otherwise, you can play ...g6, ...\( \text{g}7 \), ...d6 and ...\( \text{dx}a6 \) in whatever legal order you feel like. The key point is that White prepares e4 by playing \( \text{c}c3 \) and Black can’t allow that unless he has ...\( \text{xf}1 \) available in reply.

Let’s see why 6 b3?! is wrong. After 6...\( \text{g}7 \) 7 \( \text{b}2 \) 0-0 White can’t complete his development properly. 8 g3 (8 e3 \( \text{dx}a6 \) 9 \( \text{xf}3 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 10 \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{b}7 \) and the d5-pawn falls) 8...\( \text{dx}a6 \) 9 \( \text{x}g2 \) \( \text{b}7 \) 10 \( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 11 \( \text{f}4 \) (11 e4? \( \text{a}6 \) -+ leaves White’s king in a hopeless mess, Kosarev-Sivokho, St Petersburg 2005) 11...e6! (I like this new move, which is based on a nice tactical trick, though 11...\( \text{xa}2 \), as chosen in Napalkov-Hadzimanolis, St Petersburg 2010, is also playable) 12 dxe6 \( \text{xf}2 \) (D).

13 \( \text{xf}2 \) (not 13 \( \text{xf}7+ \), losing to 13...\( \text{xf}7 \) 14 \( \text{xf}2 \) \( \text{e}4 \) 15 \( \text{xf}7 \) \( \text{xf}2 \) 16 \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{xf}7 \) 17 \( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{fd}3+ \) ! 18 exd3 \( \text{e}7+ \) 19 \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{c}2+ \) -+)
13...fxe6 14 a3 (a modest attempt to keep a material advantage; after 14 0-0 \( \square \)xa2 \( \neq \) Black’s chances are better) 14...\( \square \)e4! 15 \( \square \)xg7 \( \square \)xg7 (the b4-knight is defended, the f2-pawn is hanging and ...\( \square \)f6 is threatened) 16 0-0 \( \square \)f6 17 \( \square \)f4 (17 \( \square \)d2? allows a strong forcing line: 17...\( \square \)c3 18 \( \square \)e4 \( \square \)xe4 19 axb4 \( \square \)xf2! 20 \( \square \)e1 \( \square \)h3+ 21 \( \square \)h1 \( \square \)xal 22 \( \square \)xal+ \( \square \)xal 23 \( \square \)xal cxb4 \( \neq \) 17...\( \square \)d5! (17...\( \square \)xal? lets White collect a few pawns by 18 \( \square \)xd7+ \( \square \)h8 19 axb4 cxb4 20 \( \square \)xe6, with unclear play) 18 \( \square \)d2 (18 \( \square \)xd5 \( \square \)xal 19 \( \square \)b6 \( \square \)a7 \( \neq \) 18...\( \square \)ec3 19 \( \square \)xd5 exd5 20 \( \square \)e1 \( \square \)fe8 21 e3 d4 \( \neq \). 6...\( \square \)xa6 (D)

As we already know, 6...\( \square \)g7?! is not good because of 7 e4!, when White retains his castling rights and develops normally. Compare the lines in Chapter 13, where the white king needs to walk to safety on g2 or h2.

In the Benko Accepted, White has two main approaches. One is to fianchetto his king’s bishop and develop his kingside pieces before taking further action in the centre (Chapters 14 and 15). The other is to play a quick e4, and recapture with the king on f1. In this chapter we examine two lines where White plays an early e4 but recaptures with a knight or rook on f1, which we may dub the Knight’s Tour and the Central Storm respectively:

A: 7 \( \square \)f3 \( \square \)g7 8 \( \square \)d2

B: 7 f4 152

A)

7 \( \square \)f3 \( \square \)g7 8 \( \square \)d2

White’s plan is to recapture with the knight on f1 so that he can save time by castling rather than walking his king over to g2 or h2. The main disadvantage of this plan is its slowness: he just spends time with his knight instead of his king.

8...d6 9 e4 \( \square \)xf1 10 \( \square \)xf1 \( \square \)a5 (D)

First, Black forces White to defend the e4-pawn. Actually, Black’s main idea is to get access to d3 and c4 for his knights.

11 \( \square \)d2

Or:

a) 11 \( \square \)d2 (the manoeuvre \( \square \)f3-d2xf1-d2 looks odd but it’s a legitimate
way for White to play) 11...0-0 12 0-0 \b 13 \c (or 13 \w e2 \f b8 14 \h e1 \b6 intending ...\a 4 and ...\d 7; Black has a nice position) 13...\w 14 \w e2 \f b8 gives Black good play:

a1) 15 a3 is a computer suggestion, but it does not help White solve all his problems: 15...\b 16 \d 2 (16 \x b6 \w e2 17 \x e2 \x b6 18 \c 3 \d 7 \f followed by ...\x c 3 and ...\a 4 with pressure on the pawns on a3, c3 and e4; the knight will come to c4) and now, while the slow 16...\w e2 17 \x e2 \f d 7 gives Black a comfortable position, I prefer 16...\a 4!. This is another typical Benko idea that everyone who plays this gambit should understand. Black exchanges the c3-knight and this helps him exert pressure on the b2-pawn (by his bishop) and the e4-pawn (with the f6-knight and by ...\a 4). Then 17 \w a6 \x a6 18 \x a 4 \x a 4 19 f3 \d 7 20 \b 1 \d 4+ 21 \h 1 \e 5 \f can follow.

a2) After 15 \h e1 \b 4 16 \a 3 \e 5 the white pieces are very hard to mobilize from their cramped locations. They can do little more than try to defend each other. I particularly like Black’s position here since he has achieved all that he could dream about when playing 3...b5. 17 \w a6 \x a6 18 \a 5?! (18 \c 2! is better, though Black has good compensation after 18...\b 8, also intending ...\d 7, ...\d 3, etc.) 18...\d 3 19 \h e2 \d 7 20 \b 1 \a 5! (20...\b 6! 21 a4! leaves Black without the move ...\b 6, Jelen-Mikac, Ljubljana 1992) 21 a4 \b 6 ?.

b) 11 f3?! also appears weird. 11...\f d 7 and now:

b1) 12 \a 3 \x c 3+!? (this new move seems more convincing than the typical Benko move 12...\w a 6, as in M.Schmid-Rogers, Zurich 1994, though this is also playable) 13 bxc3 \w c 3+ 14 \d 2 \w d 4 with great prospects for the black knights — ...\e 5-d 3 and ...\d 7-e 5.

b2) 12 \w d 2 \b 6 13 \a 3 \h d 7 14 0-0 c4?!. A common drawback to this advance is that White can reply with the manoeuvre \d 4-c 6, but here the white knights are in no position to occupy those squares, so Black just gains control of the d3-square for free. 15 \w c 2 0-0 16 \h d 2 \f c 8 17 \c 1 and now rather than 17...\w c 5 18 \c 3 \e 5 19 a4!, as in Gerusel-Knaak, Leipzig 1975, the new move 17...\w b 5?! is slightly better since it does not allow a4. After 18 \c 3 \e 5 followed by ...\a 4 Black has strong compensation.

11...\b 7 12 \a 3 0-0 13 0-0

Surprisingly, I could not find a single game played with the natural 13 \w e 2, even though it’s a logical way to counter Black’s plan of taking control
of the a6-f1 diagonal starting with ...aa6. 13...a6 14 e4 a6 and then:

a) 15 0-0? is not good because of 15...b6! 16 b3 (after 16 xb6? xxe2 17 xe2 xb6 ‡ Black regains one pawn and continues his play against White’s weak pawns) 16 xc4 17 bxc4 d7 18 ab1 b4! ‡. White loses one of his pawns and it’s still not clear how to cope with Black’s activity.

b) 15 c1!? e8! (the knight goes to b5 via c7 and frees the long diagonal for the g7-bishop) 16 c2 (defending b2 and preparing to castle; the immediate 16 0-0? is again not good due to 16...b6 ‡) 16...e5 17 xe5 xe5 18 xa6 xa6 19 e2 c7 (intending ...f5 and ...e6; White’s pawn-centre is not well defended) 20 b3 f5 21 f3 e6 is equal; for example, 22 d3 xc3 23 xc3 fx e4+ 24 fx e4 edx5 25 edx5 edx5. Of course, this is just an example line and there is plenty of scope for thinking up something new. But at the same time it’s clear that Black should not have any critical problems after 13 e2.

13...a6!

A strong move; the idea is to prevent e2 and take control of c4 and d3.

14 c2 (D)

Black grip on d3 gives him good compensation after 14 b3 a8 15 c2 e5; e.g., 16 f4 d3 17 c4 b4 18 b1 g4 and ...d4+, Andreikin-Aveskulov, Kharkov 2005.

14...c4!

I like this concrete and aggressive move, since it denies White time to seize the queenside light squares. The main point is that Black can indirectly defend c4. His next moves are ...c5, ...e8, ...fd7, etc.

I find the more popular 14...e5?! unconvincing because of 15 a4!, intending to place the knight on b5. After 15...d3 16 xd3 (16 b3?! is less good since Black is in time to create counterplay: 16...a8 17 fb1 xc2 18 xc2 d3 19 f3 d7! intending to weaken White’s centre with ...f5; Black is fine) 16...xd3 17 ab1 d7 (17...a8 18 b3 e8 19 b5 ± Tanner-D.Hoffman, Buenos Aires tt 1992) 18 b3 ±, followed by c4 and b5, White is obviously better.

15 e2

The knight sets off towards c6.

15...c5

Attacking e4.

16 f3

Black has good play after 16 xc4 fxe4 17 e3 fc8.

16...fd7

This is a new move, varying from Franić-I.Popović, Kastel Stari 1997.

17 c3
The only logical way for White.

17...\(\text{x}c3\) 18 \(\text{b}xc3\) \(\text{d}xe5\) (D)

18 \(\text{bxc3}\) \(\text{f}b8\) 19 \(\text{d}4\) \(\text{d}e5\) gives Black compensation. The c6-square is defended, and the attempt to push the e5-knight back by f4 only succeeds in hanging the e4-pawn (after \(\text{d}ed3\)). Also Black has the active idea \(\text{a}a3\).

18...\(\text{d}e5\) (D)

19 \(f4\)

19 \(\text{d}4?!\) gives Black too much compensation: 19...\(\text{a}4\) 20 \(\text{d}2\) \(\text{b}6\) 21 \(\text{ab}1\) \(\text{fb}8\) with a strong initiative.

19...\(\text{ed}3\) 20 \(\text{e}5\)

20 \(\text{xc}4\) \(\text{xb}2!\) is the key point behind the previous play – the c4-pawn is indirectly defended! After 21 \(\text{xb}2\) \(\text{xe}2\) 22 \(\text{fe}1\) \(\text{b}5\) Black’s compensation looks convincing.

20...\(\text{dxe}5\) 21 \(\text{f}xe5\)

After 21 \(\text{xc}4\) \(e4!\), the d3-knight becomes stronger and the d5-pawn weaker.

21...\(\text{d}7\) 22 \(\text{xc}4\)

22 \(\text{xc}4\) \(\text{xb}2\) 23 \(\text{xa}6\) \(\text{xa}6\) 24 \(\text{g}4\) \(\text{c}4\) leads to an equal endgame.

22...\(\text{xb}2!\) 23 \(\text{xb}2\) \(\text{xe}2\) 24 \(\text{fe}1\) \(\text{b}5\)

The weakness of a2 and the awkwardly placed knight on \(\text{b}2\) leave White with no hope of putting his extra pawn to use.

B)

7 \(f4\) (D)

Advancing the f-pawn before playing \(\text{f}3\) and \(e4\) is an interesting idea, as it gives White active options based on an e5 advance. However, it also means that it will require more time for White to evacuate his king from the centre, especially since it will still be exposed on f2 and g1. Black needs to play energetically to make the most of his chances.

7...\(\text{g}7\) 8 \(\text{f}3\) 0-0 9 \(\text{e}4\) \(\text{xf}1\) 10 \(\text{xf}1\)

Capturing with the king makes no sense; Black would continue in the same manner: ...\(d6\), ...\(\text{bd}7\)-\(b6\), etc.

10...\(d6\) (D)

The first critical position. White must decide if he wants to attack right...
now or first secure his king. Our main lines are:

**B1:** 11 $\text{c2}$ 153  
 **B2:** 11 e5 155

11 $\text{c2}$ is another possibility, but we shall deal with it more briefly, as it normally merges with Line B1: 11...$\text{a6}$ 12 $\text{f2}$ $\text{b6}$ 13 e5 (this is the only independent continuation, and it commits White to a king-walk; 13 $\text{g1}$ transposes to Line B1) 13...c4+ (this natural but untested move varies from Domsgen Hoelzlein-Sedina, Women's Bundesliga 2003/4) 14 $\text{g3}$ $\text{d7}$ and now:

a) 15 h3?! looks like a natural way to bring the king to safety, but doesn’t work well: 15...dxe5 16 fxe5 $\text{b4}$ 17 $\text{h2}$ $\text{d3}$ 18 e6 $\text{c5}$ 19 exf7+ $\text{xf7}$ $\text{f}$. Black has an excellent position.

b) 15 e6 $\text{dc5}$ 16 exf7+ $\text{xf7}$ 17 $\text{xc4}$ (at the moment, White has two extra pawns but almost all his pieces are badly placed; Black gets a dangerous initiative) 17...$\text{b4}$! (exchanging White’s most active piece) 18 $\text{xb4}$ $\text{xb4}$ 19 $\text{e3}$ and then:

b1) If Black plays 19...$\text{c2}$?, White successfully sacrifices an exchange: 20 $\text{xc5}$ $\text{xa1}$ 21 $\text{d4}$ $\text{c2}$ 22 $\text{xg7}$ $\text{g7}$ 23 a4 $\text{f7}$.

b2) 19...$\text{cd3}$!? 20 $\text{d4}$ $\text{c2}$ 21 $\text{xg7}$ $\text{xa1}$ 22 $\text{xa1}$ $\text{g7}$ =. The knight is much better placed on d3 compared to the c2-square from the variation after 19...$\text{c2}$?.

**B1) 11 $\text{f2}$**

The white king runs away. Black’s main target is the d3-square, which White can’t defend properly — ...c4 and ...$\text{d3}$ is a construction Black should achieve.

**11...$\text{a6}$!**

An important refinement. After 11...$\text{b6}$?! 12 $\text{g1}$ $\text{a6}$ 13 e5!, I don’t see a way for Black to equalize: 13...$\text{g4}$ (13...$\text{d7}$ 14 $\text{e2}$ $\text{f7}$ and 13...$\text{e8}$ 14 $\text{e2}$ $\text{ec7}$ 15 $\text{d1}$ $\text{f7}$ leave White in control) 14 $\text{e2}$ $\text{b4}$ (heading for d3) 15 h3 c4+ 16 $\text{h1}$ $\text{h6}$ 17 $\text{g4}$! keeps the h6-knight out of play; for example, 17...$\text{d3}$ 18 $\text{e1}$? $\text{xc1}$ 19 $\text{xc1}$ with a slight advantage for White. Fortunately, Black can adjust his move-order to keep more pressure on d5.

12 $\text{g1}$ $\text{b4}$ 13 $\text{e2}$

Or:

a) Now 13 e5? is bad because of 13...dxe5 and 14...$\text{fxd5}$.

b) 13 $\text{h1}$ (evacuating the king) 13...$\text{b6}$ (D) and now:

b1) 14 e5 can be met by 14...dxe5 15 fxe5 $\text{g4}$, attacking e5 and thinking of ...c4 with ideas of ...$\text{f2}$ or ...$\text{d3}$.
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b2) After 14 \textit{w}e2, the typical Benko idea 14...\textit{w}a6! works here too. Black exchanges queens to weaken the light squares on White's queenside: d3, c2 and c4. After 15 \textit{w}xa6 \textit{b}xa6 \textit{t} Black’s next few moves are easy: ...\textit{b}d7, ...\textit{b}b8 and ...\textit{d}d3 with very strong pressure. For example, 16 a3 \textit{d}d3 17 \textit{e}e1 \textit{xe}1 18 \textit{xe}1 \textit{d}d7 19 \textit{d}d2 \textit{b}b8 20 \textit{a}a2 \textit{b}b3 21 \textit{c}c1 \textit{b}6 (intending ...\textit{c}c4) 22 \textit{d}d1? (Black is better even after the more resilient 22 \textit{e}1 \textit{c}c4 \textit{t}) 22...\textit{a}a4! 23 e5 (after 23 \textit{c}c3 \textit{xc}3 24 \textit{xc}3 \textit{xc}3 25 \textit{xc}3 \textit{xe}4 \textit{t} Black wins a pawn on d5) 23...\textit{d}d4 24 \textit{c}c3 \textit{xf}4 \textit{t} Grabert-Delchev, Bled 1997.

b3) 14 a3 \textit{a}6! (securing the d3-square for the b4-knight) 15 \textit{e}e3? (White should sacrifice an exchange by 15 axb4 \textit{w}xa1 16 bxc5 dxc5 17 e5 \textit{d}d7 and ...\textit{b}b6 with an unclear position) 15...\textit{d}d3 16 \textit{d}d2 \textit{fb}8 17 \textit{fb}1 \textit{xb}2! (17...\textit{xb}2, as in Emma-Garcia, Mar del Plata 1976, is also possible but it allows 18 e5 with more complications since 18...\textit{c}c4 does not work as well here: 19 \textit{xb}8+ \textit{xb}8 20 \textit{d}3 \{the c4-knight is pinned\} 20...\textit{d}d7 \textit{t}) 18 \textit{xb}2 \textit{xb}2 19 e5 \textit{c}c4 20 \textit{e}1 \textit{xe}3 21 \textit{xe}3 \textit{g}4 22 \textit{e}1 \textit{c}c4 ...+

13...\textit{b}6 14 a4?!

White builds an outpost on b5.

14 a3?! does not really attack the b4-knight, so Black just ignores this move: 14...\textit{a}6! 15 \textit{xa}6 \textit{xa}6 16 \textit{d}d1 (defending d3) 16...\textit{c}c2 17 \textit{a}2 (17 \textit{b}1 \textit{d}d7 18 \textit{d}d2 \textit{b}8 19 \textit{dc}1 \textit{d}d4 20 \textit{f}f2 \textit{b}3 \textit{t}) 17...\textit{d}d7 18 \textit{f}f2 \textit{b}8 with strong compensation.

14...\textit{fb}8 15 \textit{b}5

White can also start with 15 \textit{a}3. Then Black can play 15...\textit{e}8?! (this new move improves over the unconvincing 15...\textit{a}6?! 16 \textit{b}5 \textit{b}7, Gorgliad-Bonin, Long Island 1990) 16 \textit{b}5 \textit{c}7! (exchanging the b5-knight and freeing the b-file for Black’s major pieces) 17 \textit{xc}7 \textit{xc}7 (here White can’t establish total control of the c-square) and now:

a) 18 \textit{c}c4 \textit{c}8! 19 b3 \textit{a}6 20 e5 has the logical idea of blocking the g7-bishop, but it’s too late now to yield any advantage since after 20...\textit{xc}4 21 bxc4 Black can play 21...\textit{c}c2 22 \textit{b}b4 23 \textit{a}a3 \textit{c}c2, repeating.

b) 18 b3 c4! (White will get very weak pawns on a4 and c4) 19 bxc4 (19 \textit{xc}4 \textit{xc}4 20 bxc4 \textit{c}2 21 \textit{a}2 \textit{b}4 22 \textit{a}3 \textit{c}2 =) 19...\textit{c}8 20 a5 (after 20 e5 \textit{xc}4 21 \textit{xc}4 \textit{xc}4 = the d5-pawn falls) 20...\textit{xa}5 21 \textit{xa}5 \textit{xa}5 22 \textit{e}3 \textit{a}4 intending ...\textit{c}2 or ...\textit{c}2. White has kept an extra pawn, but Black’s compensation is very obvious.

We now return to 15 \textit{b}5 (D):

If Black plays slowly, White will stabilize the position with moves like
\( b3, d2-c4, \), etc. That’s why Black needs to be precise.

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

The idea is to play ...\( \texttt{a6} \), attacking both the a4-pawn and the b5-knight. White has no fully satisfactory way to bolster his queenside outposts:

a) 16 \( \texttt{d2} \) \( \texttt{a6} \) 17 \( \texttt{c3} \) \( \texttt{d3!} \) leaves White’s queenside cramped.

b) 16 \( \texttt{d2} \) \( \texttt{a6!} \) (attacking a4) 17 \( b3 \) \( \texttt{xe4!} \) 18 \( \texttt{xe4} \) \( \texttt{xal} \) 19 \( \texttt{xe7} \) (19 \( \texttt{xal?} \) \( \texttt{xb5} \) \( \mp \)); 19 \( \texttt{xb4?!} \) \( \texttt{xd4} \) 20 \( \texttt{xe7} \) \( \texttt{xb5} \) 21 \( \texttt{axb5} \) \( \texttt{xb5} \) gives Black the better chances) 19...\( \texttt{g7} \) 20 \( \texttt{g5} \) (20 \( \texttt{xd6} \) \( \texttt{a7} \) \( \mp \)) 20...\( \texttt{f8} \) 21 \( \texttt{d7} \) \( \texttt{xb5!} \) 22 \( \texttt{axb5} \) (22 \( \texttt{xb5?} \) \( \texttt{xb5} \) 23 \( \texttt{axb5} \) \( \texttt{xd5} \) \( \mp \)) 22...\( \texttt{a3} \) \( \mp \). Black first takes on b3 and then on d5 with an equal position.

c) 16 \( \texttt{a3} \) \( \texttt{a6!} \) (White must defend a4) 17 \( b3 \) \( \texttt{a8!} \) (now ...\( \texttt{xb5} \) is a threat) 18 \( \texttt{c3} \) \( \texttt{a6!} \) 19 \( \texttt{xa6?!} \) (too ambitious; White should simply repeat the position by 19 \( \texttt{b5} \) \( \texttt{a8=} \)) 19...\( \texttt{xa6} \) (White’s pieces are uncoordinated) 20 \( \texttt{e1} \) (20 \( \texttt{d2} \) \( \texttt{c2} \) 21 \( \texttt{a2} \) \( \texttt{d4} \) \( \mp \)) 20...\( \texttt{e8} \) 21 \( \texttt{b5} \) and now 21...f5! is a typical pawn-break in the Benko Gambit, depriving the d5-pawn of its support. After 22 \( \texttt{xf5} \) \( \texttt{gxf5} \) \( \mp \) the next move is ...\( \texttt{xd5} \).

B2) 11 \( e5 \)

This move is played the most often.

11...\( \texttt{dxe5!} \)

This seems the best option for Black – he detonates the centre in order to take full advantage of the uncastled white king.

My conclusion from analysing other continuations is that they lead to a slight advantage for White. Here are just my main lines (without deep analysis) to show Black’s problems:

a) 11...\( \texttt{e8} \) 12 \( \texttt{f2} \) \( \texttt{c7} \) 13 \( \texttt{g1} \) \( \texttt{d7} \) 14 \( \texttt{e2} \) \( \texttt{b6} \) 15 \( \texttt{d1} \) \( \mp \) Chantsev-Aveskulov, Moscow 2004.

b) 11...\( \texttt{fd7} \) 12 \( e6! \) \( \texttt{xe6} \) 13 \( \texttt{g5} \) (otherwise the \( e5\)-e6 advance does not make any sense; after 13 \( \texttt{dxe6?} \) \( \texttt{b6} \) 14 \( \texttt{f2} \) \( \texttt{c8} \) 15 \( \texttt{b3} \) \( \texttt{c6!} \) \( \mp \) the knight is indirectly defended; for example, 16 \( \texttt{xb6??} \) \( \texttt{b8} \) and Black wins) 13...\( \texttt{xc3} \) 14 \( \texttt{bxc3} \) \( \texttt{a5} \) 15 \( \texttt{xe6} \) \( \texttt{f6} \) 16 \( \texttt{f3} \) \( \texttt{a6} \) 17 \( \texttt{f1} \) \( \texttt{c7} \) (A.Geler-Djukanović, Montenegrin Team Ch, Podgorica 2008) 18 \( \texttt{xc7!} \) \( \texttt{xc7} \) 19 \( c4 \) \( \mp \) intending \( \texttt{b2} \).

12 \( \texttt{fxe5} \) \( \texttt{fd7} \) (D)

More often Black plays 12...\( \texttt{g4} \). White has three ways to deal with the attack on his e5-pawn.

13 \( \texttt{e2} \)

Or:

a) After 13 \( \texttt{f4} \) \( \texttt{a6} \) Black’s main idea works well (i.e. to take control of d3 by ...c4 and ...\( \texttt{b4/c5-d3} \)): 14 \( \texttt{f2} \) \( c4 \) 15 \( \texttt{d4!} \) (after 15 \( \texttt{g1?} \) \( \texttt{b4} \) \( \mp \),
White cannot play \( \text{d}4 \) any more because of \( ... \text{d}3 \) (threatening simply to take on b2) \( 17 \text{e}4 \text{h}6 18 \text{x}4 \text{x}4 \text{x}4 \text{x}4 \text{x}c2 \) leaves Black fine. He is a pawn down but the a2-pawn is weak, and the c3-knight lacks secure outpost squares.

b) \( 13 \text{e}6 \) is not dangerous when there are no pawns on f4 and d6 (compare the 11...\( \text{c}7 \) line): \( 13 \text{b}6 \) \( 14 \text{f}7+ \) (otherwise Black can take on e6 and play \( ... \text{c}6 \) \( 14 \text{x}7 15 \text{f}2 \text{c}3 \) (Black exchanges the g7-bishop in order to take the pawn back; White is unable to create any threats to the black king, so this exchange is absolutely safe) \( 16 \text{e}3 \text{e}8 17 \text{d}3 \text{f}5 \) \( 19 \text{c}4 \) (after 19 \( \text{g}1? \text{c}3 \) White loses his bishop) 19...\( \text{c}4 \) 20 \( \text{d}2 \text{c}3 \) (again we see how readily Black can exchange his dark-squared bishop) \( 21 \text{e}3 \text{d}5 \) \( 22 \text{d}4 \text{c}7 \) \( 23 \text{e}1 \text{c}5 \) coming to e4; Black’s knights are excellent.

b) \( 16 \text{h}4 \text{d}5 \) and then:

b1) \( 17 \text{g}5? \) can be met by \( 17...\text{h}6! \) \( 18 \text{c}4 \) (the point is that 18 \( \text{e}6?? \) loses to 18...\( \text{c}3 \) \( 19 \text{d}8 \text{x}g2+ \) \( 18...\text{e}6! \) (improving over 18...\( \text{h}5?! \), as played in Zimmer-Molner, Internet 2006) \( 19 \text{d}8 \) \( 19 \text{xe}6?? \text{xe}3 \text{c}4 \text{x}e2 \text{e}8 \) \( 19...\text{ab}4 \)
b2) 17 0-0-0 (there is no time for the king to find shelter on the kingside) 17...e6! 18 \(\text{wc}4\) (White is worse after both natural captures: 18 \(\text{xd}8\)?! \(\text{fxd}8\) \(+=\) or 18 \(\text{xd}5\)? \(\text{wh}4\) 19 \(\text{hx}4\) \(\text{exd}5\) 20 \(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{b}4\) 21 \(\text{d}7\) \(\text{xa}2\) \(+=\) 18...\(\text{ab}4\) 19 \(\text{xc}5\) \(\text{wc}7\) gives Black a strong attack on the white king.

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

This improves over 15...f6?!., which was played in Ipatov-Vus, Kharkov (juniors) 2004.

16 \(\text{le}3\)

This is probably best, seeking simplifications. Further complicating the game is not in White’s interest.

The natural defence 16 \(\text{d}1\) is met with the typical 16...c4! 17 \(\text{g}1\) \(\text{d}3\), when Black is ready to attack any of White’s central pawns (by \(\text{xa}5\) or \(\text{d}7\)). Let me show some variations here:

a) 18 \(\text{le}3\) \(\text{d}7\)! 19 e6 f5 20 \(\text{h}4\) \(\text{f}6\) \(+=\).

b) 18 a4 \(\text{a}5\)! 19 \(\text{g}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) and then:

b1) 20 \(\text{xc}4\)?! \(\text{b}6\)+ 21 \(\text{d}4\) (this is forced; 21 \(\text{d}4\)? \(\text{xd}4\)+ 22 \(\text{d}4\) \(\text{xb}2\) 23 \(\text{dc}1\) \(\text{xe}5\) 24 \(\text{c}6\) \(\text{xc}3\) 25 \(\text{xc}3\) \(\text{xc}3\) 26 \(\text{xa}5\) f6 27 \(\text{d}2\) \(\text{cxa}4\) wins for Black) 21...\(\text{xc}3\) 22 \(\text{xb}3\) \(\text{xe}5\) with a slight advantage for Black.

b2) 20 \(\text{d}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) \(+=\) 21 \(\text{xe}7\)?? \(\text{w}6\)+ \(+=\).

c) 18 \(\text{d}4\) \(\text{d}7\) 19 \(\text{c}6\) e6! (D) and now:

\begin{itemize}
  \item c1) After 20 \(\text{d}6\) \(\text{xe}6\) \(\text{xe}6\) \(+=\) the e5-pawn and c6-knight become more vulnerable.
  \item c2) 20 d6 f5! 21 \(\text{e}7\) \(\text{f}7\)! (not 21...\(\text{h}8\)??, which leads to problems on the g6-square: 22 \(\text{h}4\) \(\text{exe}5\) 23 \(\text{f}4\) \(\text{xe}6\) 22 \(\text{h}4\) \(\text{c}8\)! (the knight frees the way for the queen check from a7 and eliminates the strong e7-knight) 23 \(\text{g}5\) (23 \(\text{xc}8\) \(\text{fxc}8\) \(+=\) 23...\(\text{xe}7\) 24 \(\text{dxe}7\) (24 \(\text{xe}7\)?? \(\text{a}7\)+ 25 \(\text{f}1\) \(\text{fb}8\) \(+=\)) 24...\(\text{fb}8\) 25 \(\text{d}2\) \(\text{xb}2\) 26 \(\text{xb}2\) \(\text{xb}2\) \(+=\). White’s pawns are weak and his other pieces are not much better. Of course, White can play differently in the middle of this line but it demonstrates that with a knight on d3, Black always has strong compensation.
\end{itemize}

16...\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{xd}5\) 17 \(\text{d}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 18 \(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{d}5\) 19 \(\text{xc}5\) \(\text{fb}8\) 20 \(\text{fb}1\)

Black equalizes in the case of 20 b3 as well: 20...\(\text{a}5\) 21 \(\text{d}4\) \(\text{b}4\) =.

20...\(\text{f}4\)

The endgame is equal.
1 d4 \&f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 a6 5 bxa6 g6 6 \&c3 \&xa6

Here we shall examine lines where White plays an early e4, allowing an exchange on f1 and recapturing with his king. The king will then generally ‘walk’ to g2 or h2, completing a ‘castling by hand’ manoeuvre. The standard way for White to do so is 7 \&f3 followed by 8 e4, but there are also two other ideas:

1) Bringing the knight to e2 to back up the c3-knight.

2) Advancing White’s g-pawn two squares to gain space on the kingside as well as giving the king a square.

Thus at this point we need to look at two moves:

A: 7 e4 158
B: 7 \&f3 161

In Line A we only examine lines without an early \&f3.

A)

7 e4 \&xf1 8 \&xf1 d6 9 \&ge2

After 9 g4 \&g7 (D) White has two main continuations:

a) 10 \&g2 0-0 and then:

a1) 11 f3 was played in Seirawan-Fedorowicz, USA Ch, Long Beach 1989. Then I like the look of the untried 11...\&fd7!. Since White has prevented the knight from reaching e5 via g4, there is no reason to keep it on f6, so it moves to d7; the other knight can take its place later (after ...\&b6 or ...\&e5) or be developed via a6. White’s kingside pawn-structure provides some vague hopes of creating a kingside attack but can easily become a weakness in an endgame. After 12 \&ge2 \&e5 13 b3 \&a5 14 \&c2 \&bd7 followed by ...c4 Black has sufficient compensation.

a2) 11 g5 \&h5 12 \&ge2 f5 13 gxf6 (White gets a bad pawn-structure after 13 \&g3 f4! 14 \&xh5 f3+ 15 \&f1 gxh5 followed by ...\&d7-e5 with an advantage for Black, Denayer-Krivoruchko, Cappelle la Grande 2005) 13...\&xf6 14 \&g5 \&f7 15 \&d2 \&f8 16 \&af1 ?!
(this rook is needed on the queenside; White should prefer 16 h1f1 d7 17 f4 c4, intending to bring the knight to d3) 16...d7 17 f4 (Haba-Andruet, Toulouse 1990) 17...xc3 18 bxc3 (18 xc3 xa2 leaves Black better in all parts of the board) 18...h6 19 h4 a4. Black wins one of the pawns back, with the advantage.

b) 10 g5 h5 11 ge2 c8! (the queen eyes the kingside and leaves the d7-square available for the queen’s knight) 12 g2 (12 g3? is extremely bad because of 12...h3+ 13 g1, when the white king and rook will be trapped for a long time; after 13...d7 14 xh5 gxh5 15 ffl h4 16 g2 xc3! 17 bxc3 Black won back the pawn with a much better position in Kaminik-Zso.Polgar, Israeli Team Ch 1996) 12...h6! (Black naturally attacks the far-advanced pawn). Now:

b1) 13 h4 and then:

b11) Julian Hodgson opted for an endgame by 13...hxg5 14 hxg5 c4+ 15 ge2 xd1 16 xd1 xc3 17 xh8+ xh8 18 xg3 a6 but it does not look very convincing: 19 xd2 b4 (Suba-Hodgson, Spanish Team Ch 1993) 20 a4!? c2 21 a2 ±.

b12) I prefer 13...d7!?, intending ...e5-d3 (after ...c4). White’s pawn-structure looks awkward while Black has two unusual features compared with normal lines: the knight on h5 and the uncastled king, but both pieces are quite comfortable in their ‘new’ locations.

b2) Black has a comfortable position after 13 g1xh6 xh6 14 xh6 xh6 with compensation, Seirawan-Alburt, USA Ch, Estes Park 1986.

9...g7 (D)

Now White must decide where to put his king: h2 or g2.

10 h3

After 10 g3 0-0 11 g2, Benko himself demonstrated a viable plan for Black (although there are other good options too): 11...b6 12 b1 a6. The reasoning behind this is that the long light-square diagonal is weakened by the knight’s absence from f3, so Black will bring his knight to c7 to prepare to break it open by...e6. Then:

a) After 13 f3 it’s not yet a good moment to play...e6, and Black should prefer 13...d7, with good compensation. It’s instructive to see why 13...e6?! is not so good: 14 dxe6 fxe6 15 g5 (now Black cannot make the...d5 advance) 15...c6 16 d2 ad8 17 h1d1 d7 18 f4 c7 19 c2 ± Narciso Dublan-Rodriguez Guerrero, Calvia tt 2007. Then 19...d5? fails to 20 xf6 xf6 21 exd5 exd5 22 cxd5!
\[ \text{\textit{Attack with Black}} \]

10...\textit{exd5} 23 \textit{exd5} \textit{exd5} 24 \textit{wc4} \textit{fd8} 25 \textit{dd1} +--.

b) 13 b3 \textit{c7} 14 \textit{f3} e6! (now everything works well for Black because ...d5 is guaranteed) 15 dx\textit{e6} fxe6 16 \textit{e3} \textit{wc6} followed by ...d5, Gross-Benko, Aspen 1968.

10...0-0 11 \textit{g1} \textit{bd7} 12 \textit{h2}

We have a position very similar to the main lines but the knight is on e2. What are the fundamental differences? First of all, White is less scared by the idea of ...\textit{a4}, since the e2-knight is ready to replace the knight on c3 (one of the main ideas of White’s scheme), although this is not so crucial for the evaluation of the position. On the other hand, there are fewer tools for White to fight for the c4-square since on e2 the knight is a long way from this square (whereas from f3 it can get there quickly via d2).

12...\textit{wa5}

Black can also play 12...\textit{wb6}.

13 \textit{wc2}

13 \textit{xf1}?! does not actually weaken White’s position, but I don’t understand what point it might have. Perhaps White feels it is useful to defend the f2-pawn in some variations but it looks weird to me. 13...\textit{fb8} 14 \textit{c2} \textit{a6} 15 \textit{d1} (now 13 \textit{f1} looks even more strange) 15...\textit{e5}?! (the knight moves towards c4; Black mistakenly blew up the centre in Akobian-L.Martinez, Las Vegas blitz 2005: 15...e6? 16 dx\textit{e6} fxe6 17 \textit{g1} ±, when he couldn’t play ...d5 but the d6- and e6-pawns come under pressure) 16 b3 (16 a4 \textit{b4} with compensation) 16...c4 17 \textit{e3} \textit{d3} (17...\textit{xb3}?! 18 axb3 \textit{xa1}

19 \textit{xa1} \textit{xa1} 20 \textit{d4} ±, the b3-pawn is quite dangerous, while the c6-square will soon be a good outpost for the white knight) 18 \textit{d4} \textit{b4} 19 \textit{wb2} \textit{h6}! (unpinning the f6-knight and so intending ...\textit{d7}) gives Black strong pressure on the queenside.

13...\textit{b6} (D)

Preventing both ...\textit{a4} and ...\textit{c4}, but which knight move will be better depends on the precise details of the position.

14 \textit{dd1}

Or 14 \textit{b1}, and now:

a) 14...\textit{c4}?! can be met with 15 a4! (intending b3; the immediate 15 b3? allows 15...\textit{a3} 16 \textit{xa3} \textit{xa3} with good compensation) 15...\textit{b4} 16 b3 ±, when 16...\textit{a3}? does not work because of 17 \textit{xa3} \textit{xa3} 18 b4! ± and \textit{b3} wins the queen.

b) 14...\textit{a4}! 15 \textit{d2} \textit{xc3} 16 \textit{xc3} \textit{fb8} 17 \textit{he1} (17 b3 \textit{a3}! blocks White’s a4 advance) 17...\textit{d7} 18 \textit{g5} \textit{f8} gives Black solid compensation as White is unable to make progress with any of his queenside
pawns, Shulman-Khalifman, World Cup, Khanty-Mansiisk (rapid) 2005.

After the text-move, however, it is better to put the knight on c4.

14...\(\text{c}4\)!

I feel this new move is better than 14...\(\text{a}4\)!, because after 15 \(\text{d}2\) \(\text{xc}3\) 16 \(\text{xc}3\) \(\text{fb}8\), as in Shulman-Khalifman, World Cup, Khanty-Mansiisk 2005 (where 17 \(\text{e}1\) was played), White can play the straightforward 17 \(\text{a}4\)!. This is the main difference between 14 \(\text{d}1\) and 14 \(\text{b}1\). With the rook on a1, White can follow this pawn advance up with \(\text{a}2\). After 17...\(\text{b}4\) 18 \(\text{a}2\)! \(\text{c}4\) 19 \(\text{a}5\) \(\text{d}7\) 20 \(\text{g}1\) ± Black’s play is complicated by the a5-pawn.

15 a3!?

Intending to play b3 and then a4. Black is at least OK after 15 b3 \(\text{a}3\), when he blocks the a2-pawn, or 15 a4 \(\text{b}4\) 16 \(\text{b}5\) \(\text{fb}8\) 17 \(\text{ec}3\) \(\text{d}7\), when his pieces are active enough.

15...\(\text{b}6\) 16 b3 \(\text{a}5\) 17 \(\text{b}1\) c4!

Black uses a tactical motif to secure counterplay. 18 b4 \(\text{xf}2\)! 19 \(\text{f}1\)! (Black gets a decisive attack after 19 bxa5? \(\text{h}5\) –+; 19 e5? \(\text{h}5\) 20 \(\text{e}4\) \(\text{xe}5\)+ 21 \(\text{h}1\) \(\text{a}7\) 22 bxa5 \(\text{f}5\) + and then ...\(\text{xf}2\)) 19...\(\text{xf}1\) 20 \(\text{e}3\) \(\text{g}4\)+ (forced) 21 hxg4 \(\text{e}5\)+ 22 \(\text{h}3\) \(\text{f}6\) 23 g5 \(\text{g}7\) 24 bxa5 \(\text{f}6\)! is unclear because the white king is highly vulnerable.

B)

7 \(\text{f}3\) \(\text{g}7\)

Now we move on to the main lines of the King Walk.

8 e4 \(\text{xf}1\) 9 \(\text{xf}1\) d6 (D)

White has two main options: to evacuate his king to g2 (after \(\text{g}3\)) or h2 (after h3). We discuss these lines as follows:

B1: 10 h3 161
B2: 10 g3 165

B1)

10 h3 \(\text{bd}7\) 11 \(\text{g}1\)

11 g3 0-0 12 \(\text{g}2\) transposes to Line B22.

11...0-0 12 \(\text{h}2\)

The main disadvantage of this plan is that it takes three moves instead of two (g3 and \(\text{g}2\)). The advantage is that the white king will not be attacked on the long diagonal after Black breaks with ...e6 or ...f5.

12...\(\text{a}5\) 13 \(\text{e}1\) \(\text{fb}8\)

Now White should think about developing his queen’s bishop. For this he needs to defend the b2-pawn, and there are two ways he can do so:

B11: 14 \(\text{c}2\) 161
B12: 14 \(\text{e}2\) 163

B11)

14 \(\text{c}2\) \(\text{e}8\) (D)

The knight heads for b5 to remove the white knight from c3.
15  \textbf{\textit{d2}}

The bishop defends c3 and so prevents any tactical accidents. 15  \textbf{g5}? (Koczko-Blasko, Hungarian Junior Ch, Paks 2002) allows Black a nice tactic: 15...\textbf{xb2}! 16  \textbf{xb2}  \textbf{xc3} 17  \textbf{b7}  \textbf{a7}! 18  \textbf{xa7}  \textbf{xa7} with equal material and a much better endgame for Black since 19  \textbf{xe7}? f6 traps the bishop.

15...\textbf{c7}

The purpose of ...\textbf{b5} is to exchange the c3-knight and clear the way to the b2- and a2-pawns.

16  \textbf{a4}

This logical move stops Black’s idea. Alternatively:

a) 16 b3 intends a4 in more comfortable circumstances, but Black can prevent it by the typical 16...\textbf{a3} 17  \textbf{c1} (Karpov-Ponomariov, Moscow blitz 2009) 17...\textbf{b4} 18  \textbf{b2} (the only way to continue the fight; 18  \textbf{d2}  \textbf{a3} repeats) 18...\textbf{e5}, when he has compensation after 19  \textbf{d2} c4! or 19  \textbf{xe5}  \textbf{xe5}+ 20 g3 c4!.

b) 16  \textbf{d1}?! intends  \textbf{c3} but allows the immediate 16...\textbf{a4}! 17  \textbf{c1} (17  \textbf{xa4}  \textbf{xa4} 18  \textbf{c3}, Gabriel-Züger, Zurich tt 1999, 18...\textbf{b5}! 19  \textbf{xg7}  \textbf{xg7} 20  \textbf{d2}  \textbf{d4} 21  \textbf{f1}  \textbf{a6}!  \textbf{f}; the idea is to avoid tempo-gaining moves like  \textbf{c3} or b3) 17...\textbf{b5} 18  \textbf{c3}  \textbf{a6} 19 a4  \textbf{d4} (19...\textbf{c7}?! was chosen in Gabriel-Sermek, Pula Zonal 2000, but it does not look logical to play ...\textbf{b5} and then meekly retreat) 20  \textbf{xd4}  \textbf{xd4} 21 f4  \textbf{c4}! intending ...\textbf{b3} with compensation.

16...\textbf{b4}!

I propose this new move. 16...\textbf{b6}?! is worse since from here the queen has fewer options, and after 17  \textbf{a2}  \textbf{b3}?! 18  \textbf{xb3}  \textbf{xb3} 19 a5!  \textbf{f}, intending  \textbf{d1}-e3 and  \textbf{c3}, White has neutralized the threats and can start thinking about active plans of his own.

17  \textbf{d1}

With the queen on b4, 17  \textbf{a2} does not help due to 17...\textbf{c4}! 18  \textbf{a3}  \textbf{a6}, intending to bring the knight to d3.

17...\textbf{b3} 18  \textbf{xb3}  \textbf{xb3} 19  \textbf{a2} (D)

19 a5?! just gives the pawn back: 19...\textbf{xb2} 20  \textbf{b1}  \textbf{b8} = (20...\textbf{e5}+? 21  \textbf{xe5}  \textbf{xb1} 22  \textbf{xd7}  \textbf{f}).
19...\texttt{e}6!

Since the route via b5 is closed, the knight moves in a different direction.

Black can also try 19...\texttt{b}6 20 a5 \texttt{c}c4, another typical manoeuvre, but here White can keep some of his pluses: 21 \texttt{g}5! \texttt{x}a5 (21...\texttt{f}8 lets White exchange the c4-knight, which is an obvious achievement for him: 22 \texttt{d}2! \texttt{x}d2 23 \texttt{x}d2 = and then \texttt{c}3 or \texttt{e}3) 22 \texttt{xa}5 \texttt{xa}5 23 \texttt{x}e7 \texttt{b}7 (intending ...\texttt{f}6) 24 \texttt{g}5 \texttt{xb}2 25 \texttt{xb}2 \texttt{xb}2 26 \texttt{f}6 =.

20 \texttt{e}3

20 a5 \texttt{b}4 21 \texttt{xb}4 \texttt{xb}4 22 \texttt{e}3 \texttt{a}6! = intending ...\texttt{b}6-c4; the white rooks are unable to look after the pawns on e4 and a5 at the same time.

20...\texttt{x}e3 21 \texttt{xe}3

The odd-looking 21 fxe3 also does not help: 21...c4! 22 a5 \texttt{dc}5 23 \texttt{f}2 \texttt{b}3 24 \texttt{c}3 \texttt{xc}3 25 \texttt{xc}3 \texttt{ac}5 = and ...\texttt{xa}5.

21...\texttt{f}6!

Surprisingly, the e4-pawn is in trouble. Now 22 e5 \texttt{dx}5 23 \texttt{c}3 (not 23 \texttt{xe}5? \texttt{e}4! 24 \texttt{c}5c4 \texttt{xd}2 25 \texttt{xd}2 \texttt{b}4 26 \texttt{a}3 \texttt{xb}2 27 \texttt{b}3 \texttt{e}5+ 28 \texttt{g}3 \texttt{xa}4 =) 23...\texttt{e}4 24 \texttt{xe}5 \texttt{b}4 25 \texttt{a}1 \texttt{xf}2 26 \texttt{xg}7 \texttt{xg}7 reaches an equal endgame.

It's more difficult for White to keep control of d3 and c4 without queens on the board.

17 \texttt{xa}6

Or:

\begin{itemize}
\item a) 17 \texttt{e}3?! \texttt{a}4! (this looks more aggressive than 17...\texttt{c}4, which was chosen in Wilhelmi-Mainka, Bad Wörishofen 2000) 18 \texttt{xa}4 \texttt{xa}4 19 \texttt{d}3 \texttt{b}4 20 a3! (this is a nice idea to reduce the tension, but it does not solve all White's problems) 20...\texttt{xe}4 21 b3 \texttt{d}7 22 \texttt{xe}4 \texttt{e}1 followed by \texttt{f}6 and...\texttt{c}7. Black is better due to his more solid pawn-structure.
\item b) 17 e5?! weakens the d5-pawn for no good reason. 17...\texttt{xe}2 18 \texttt{xe}2 \texttt{c}4! 19 exd6 exd6 20 a4 \texttt{c}7 21 \texttt{e}7
\end{itemize}

\textbf{B12)}

14 \texttt{e}2 \texttt{e}8

The knight still heads for b5.

15 \texttt{c}2

This is a typical idea for White: bringing the rook to c2 to defend the critical squares c3, c4 and b2. But here Black easily gets good counterplay.
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ATTACK WITH BLACK

\( \text{\textcopyright{S.Ivanov-Sivokho, St Petersburg Ch 1999.}} \)

c) 17 \text{g5}?! also fails to counter Black's play: 17...\text{\textit{Wxe2}} 18 \text{\textit{xe2}} \text{\textit{c4}}!
(this is even better than equalizing by 18...\textit{xc3 19 bxc3 f6 20 \textit{xc1 c4 = A.Graf-Züger, Geneva 1999}}) 19 \text{\textit{xe7}}
\textit{xb2} 20 e5 \text{\textit{d3}} 21 \text{\textit{d1}} and now 21...\text{\textit{xe5}}?! 22 \text{\textit{xe5}} \text{\textit{xe5}}+ 23 \text{\textit{xe5}}!
\text{dxe5} 24 d6 \text{\textit{g7}} 25 d7 \text{\textit{e6}} 26 \text{\textit{f6}} gives White sufficient compensation for the exchange thanks to the d7-pawn. However, the e5-pawn can be taken later, and Black should play 21...c4! \text{\textcopyright{Pune 2004.}}

17...\text{\textit{xa6} (D)}

18 \text{\textit{xb1}}?!

White's idea is to play b4.

Or 18 \text{\textit{g5}}?! \text{\textit{a4}}! (18...\text{\textit{c4}}?! is no doubt viable, but ...\text{\textit{a4}} is almost always more effective, since exchanging off White's c3-knight weakens a2, e4 and a4, while the greater exposure of b2 is also useful for Black), and then:

a) 19 \text{\textit{c1}}? (such moves can't even maintain equality) 19...\text{\textit{c7}} 20 \text{\textit{d2}} f5! 21 f3 e6! (improving over 21...\textit{b4}, Becking-Van der Weide, Saarlouis 2002) 22 dxe6 \text{\textit{xe6}} with a slight advantage for Black.

b) 19 \text{\textit{xa4}} \text{\textit{xa4}} (Black has opened all the lines he needs) 20 e5 (there is no other way to defend both b2 and e4; 20 \text{\textit{xe7}}? \text{\textit{xe4}} 21 \text{\textit{g5}} \text{\textit{xb2}} 22 \text{\textit{d1}}
\text{\textit{f6}} \text{\textcopyright{leaves White with weaknesses on a2 and d5}}) 20...f6! 21 exf6 \text{\textit{xf6}} 22
\text{\textit{xe1}} \text{\textit{xa2}} 23 \text{\textit{xe7}} \text{\textit{xd5}} 24 \text{\textit{d7}} and now 24...\text{\textit{f8}}?! is best. Black will take on b2 for free; instead, 24...\text{\textit{axb2}}?
only led to an equal position after 25 \text{\textit{xb2}} \text{\textit{xb2}} 26 \text{\textit{xd6}} \text{\textit{b4}} in Gold-Van der Weide, Hoogeveen 1998.

18...\text{\textit{a4}}!?

This is untried but logical. Black makes a planned move and prevents b4.

Instead, 18...\text{\textit{c7}}?! allows White to demonstrate his idea: 19 b4! c4 20 b5! \text{\textit{a5}} 21 \text{\textit{e3}} f5? (allowing a typical idea: 21...\textit{xc3} is more resilient, though after 22 \textit{xc3} \textit{xa2} 23 \textit{d4} ±,
\text{\textit{c6}} is coming anyway) 22 \text{\textit{d4}}!
\text{\textit{xd4}} 23 \text{\textit{xd4}} \text{\textit{fxe4}} 24 \text{\textit{xb6}}! \text{\textit{b6}} 25 a4 with a lost endgame for Black, Poobesh Anand-R.Scherbakov, Pune 2004.

19 \text{\textit{d1}}

Or 19 \text{\textit{d2}} f5! 20 \text{\textit{xa4}} \text{\textit{xa4}} 21 b3
\text{\textit{a7}} 22 f3 \text{\textit{f4}} 23 \text{\textit{fxe4}} \text{\textit{c7}}, with compensation.

19...\text{\textit{c7}} 20 \text{\textit{b3}} f5!

Again ...f5 works! After 21 exf5 \text{\textit{xd5}}! 22 fxg6 \text{\textit{ac3}} 23 gxh7+ \text{\textit{h8}} 24 \text{\textit{g5}}+ \text{\textit{g8}} 25 \text{\textit{xc3}} \text{\textit{xc3}} 26
\text{\textit{bb2}} Black can, if he wishes, take a draw by repetition with 26...\text{\textit{d1}} 27
\text{\textit{bl}} \text{\textit{c3}}.
It's also possible for Black to start with 10...0-0 11 g2 bd7, reaching the same position.

11 g2 0-0 (D)

Here White has two main moves:

B21: 12 e1 165
B22: 12 h3 168

The latter prevents ...g4, while the former just ignores this idea.

12 e1 g4

Now White has many possibilities.

13 e2

Or:

a) 13 f4 is a strange move. The best squares for this bishop are g5 (to attack e7) and d2 (to prepare b3 by defending the c3-knight). There is not much for it to do on f4 with knights on g4 and d7. It can potentially take a black knight on e5, but such an exchange rarely gives White much hope of any serious advantage. 13...a5 14 h3 ge5 15 xe5 xe5 (D) and now:

a1) 16 c1 c4 17 e2 b4 18 a3 b3 19 d1 a4 20 c2 b8 21 xb3 xb3 = Van der Sterren-Van Wely, Dutch Team Ch, Breda 1997. White can’t escape from Black’s pressure, while Black has no way to turn the screw at the moment.

a2) 16 e2 fb8 17 ac1 a6! (the threat of ...d3 virtually forces White to take on e5) 18 xe5 xe5 19 c2 xe2 20 xe2 b4 21 a3 b3 22 d1 d4! 23 e3 xe3! (preventing c4) 24 xe3 xe3 25 fxe3 b8 26 f3 b3 = Karpov-Salov, Belgrade 1996. White is a pawn up, but the activity of Black’s rook provides full compensation.

b) 13 c2 b6 14 a4!? (this logical move, seeking to place the knight on b5, has not been suggested before; Black got sufficient compensation in Spiess-Vogt, Leipzig 1997 after 14 f4 fb8 15 ab1 a6 16 h3 ge5 17 xe5 xe5 18 xe5 xe5 19 b3 c4) 14...b4! 15 d2 (or 15 h5 fb8 16 a3 b6 {attacking a4} 17 b3 c4 with compensation) 15...fb8 16 d1 b7 (16...b3?! is not good
since after 17 $\mathcal{W}xb3$ $\mathcal{Q}xb3$ 18 a5 $\pm$ Black can’t do anything real; White plays $\mathcal{Q}c3$ and $\mathcal{Q}e2$, and enjoys his material advantage) 17 h3 $\mathcal{Q}ge5$ 18 $\mathcal{Q}xe5$ $\mathcal{Q}xe5$ 19 $\mathcal{Q}c3$ (after 19 $\mathcal{Q}a2$ f5! the d5-pawn becomes vulnerable) 19...$\mathcal{Q}xc3$ and here:

b1) 20 $\mathcal{W}xc3$ $\mathcal{W}a6$ 21 $\mathcal{Q}e3$ $\mathcal{B}b4$ 22 $\mathcal{B}b3$ $\mathcal{W}b7$ (not 22...$\mathcal{Q}xe4$? 23 $\mathcal{Q}g4!$ $\mathcal{X}xg4$ (23...$\mathcal{Q}xe1$?? 24 $\mathcal{Q}h6+$ $\mathcal{Q}f8$ 25 $\mathcal{W}h8#$) 24 $\mathcal{H}xg4$ $\pm$) 23 $\mathcal{Q}g4$ f6 intending ...h5 and ...$\mathcal{B}b8$. Black is OK.

b2) 20 $\mathcal{B}xc3$ $\mathcal{Q}a5$ followed by ...$\mathcal{W}a6$, ...$\mathcal{Q}e5$, etc. The black pieces dominate.

c) The idea of advancing with h3 and f4 should not be good since White weakens his kingside too much with all these pawn moves: 13 h3 $\mathcal{Q}ge5$ 14 $\mathcal{Q}xe5$ $\mathcal{Q}xe5$ 15 f4 (15 $\mathcal{W}e2$?! doesn’t halt Black’s plans because of 15...c4! followed by ...$\mathcal{Q}d3$) 15...$\mathcal{Q}d7$ (D) (in case of 15...$\mathcal{Q}c4$ the black knight is pushed back by 16 $\mathcal{W}d3$).

with good compensation, while 16 a4 has never been played but looks a logical try, as White hopes to post his knight firmly on b5. 16...$\mathcal{W}b8$! looks the most convincing reply: the f8-rook will go to c8 to support the ...c4 advance, while the knight will jump to c5 and the queen is ready to be deployed to various squares on the b-file. Then:

c1) Trying to block the b-file by 17 $\mathcal{Q}b5$ does not work due to 17...$\mathcal{Q}b6$!, intending to take on a4 with this knight (that’s why the queen moved to b8 – the b6-square was reserved for the knight). After 18 $\mathcal{W}b3$ $\mathcal{W}b7$ Black intends ...$\mathcal{B}b8$ and ...$\mathcal{Q}xa4$.

c2) 17 $\mathcal{W}c2$ c4 18 $\mathcal{Q}e3$ $\mathcal{W}b4$ 19 $\mathcal{Q}ec1$ $\mathcal{Q}fc8$ gives Black sufficient compensation.

d) 13 $\mathcal{Q}e2$ $\mathcal{B}b6$ (13...$\mathcal{Q}a5$?! is also fine for Black: 14 $\mathcal{Q}c2$ $\mathcal{Q}ge5$ 15 $\mathcal{Q}xe5$ $\mathcal{Q}xe5$ 16 $\mathcal{W}e2$ $\mathcal{W}a6$! 17 $\mathcal{W}xa6$ $\mathcal{X}xa6$ 18 $\mathcal{Q}d2$ $\mathcal{B}b8$ with compensation, Gavrilov-Andreikin, Moscow 2012) 14 $\mathcal{Q}f4$ $\mathcal{B}b8$ 15 $\mathcal{Q}c1$ $\mathcal{A}a6$ 16 $\mathcal{Q}cc2$ (the white rooks have safely defended the b2- and c3-squares) 16...$\mathcal{B}b4$ 17 $\mathcal{W}d2$ (Milanovic-Pap, Belgrade 2001; I don’t see any reason to force the g4-knight away: 17 h3?! $\mathcal{Q}ge5$ 18 $\mathcal{Q}xe5$ $\mathcal{Q}xe5$ 19 $\mathcal{Q}xe5$ $\mathcal{Q}xe5$ 20 b3 c4 gave Black good compensation in Kaidanov-Wang Zili, Erevan Olympiad 1996) 17...$\mathcal{G}ab8$ (17...$\mathcal{Q}ge5$?! is also possible) 18 b3 c4 19 bxc4 $\mathcal{G}xc4$ leaves Black’s pieces active enough to compensate for the material imbalance.

e) 13 $\mathcal{Q}d2$ $\mathcal{Q}ge5$ 14 $\mathcal{W}e2$ (threatening to trap the knight by f4) 14...$\mathcal{Q}b6$ 15 f4 $\mathcal{Q}ed7$ (D) and then:
e1) 16 \( \varnothing f3 \varnothing a4\)! (usually, if Black plays \( \varnothing a4 \) there are no problems for him any more, and this position is not an exception) 17 \( \varnothing d1 \) (Black is OK after 17 \( \varnothing x a4 \) \( \varnothing x a4 \) 18 \( a3 \) \( \varnothing a8 \) 19 \( \varnothing b1 \) \( c4 \) followed by \( \varnothing c5-d3, \) \( \varnothing b8, \) etc.) 17...\( \varnothing b6 \) and here:

18...\( \varnothing b7 \) 19 \( \varnothing e4 \) \( \varnothing fc8\)!? (this is a new move, intending \( \ldots c4 \) and bringing one of the knights to \( c5; \) 19...\( \varnothing h8 \) was played in Yusupov-Baklan, Bundesliga 1997/8) 20 \( b3 \) (20 \( e6? \) is not good in view of 20...\( \varnothing f5! \) 21 \( \varnothing d3 \) \( \varnothing f6 \) \( ? \) 20...\( \varnothing ab6 \) 21 \( \varnothing c3 \) \( dxe5 \) 22 \( fxe5 \) \( c4! \) 23 \( b4 \) \( \varnothing a4\)! (one knight removes the \( c3-knight, \) while the other will come to \( b6 \) to attack the \( d5-pawn) \) 24 \( \varnothing x a4 \) \( \varnothing x a4 \) with sufficient compensation.

12) 18 \( \varnothing b1 \) permits a rather unusual tactic: 18...\( \varnothing c3\)! (18...\( \varnothing a6 \) was chosen in M.Gurevich-Banikas, Korinthos rapid 2002) 19 \( \varnothing x c3 \) \( \varnothing x c3 \) (the \( a2-pawn falls) \) 20 \( \varnothing d1 \) \( \varnothing x a2 \) 21 \( e5 \) and now 21...\( \varnothing b8\)! = is an important move as White intended to launch an attack on the black king by playing \( e6. \) Now the \( e6 \) advance will be met by \( \ldots \varnothing f5. \)

e2) After 16 \( a4 \) (stopping \( \varnothing a4) \) 16...\( \varnothing x c3\)!? Black regains the pawn and while the long dark-square diagonal may look worrying, he has ideas of blocking it by playing \( \ldots e5 \) (twice, if necessary!), and other resources too. 17 \( bxc3 \) \( \varnothing x a4 \) 18 \( c4 \) and now:

121) 18...\( \varnothing ab6 \) is possible, though it is not the safest move. Then:

1211) 19 \( \varnothing b2 \) \( \varnothing a4 \) 20 \( \varnothing ab1\)!? (20 \( \varnothing c1 \) \( \varnothing ab6 \) = \( \) Lalic-Bures, Pardubice 2010) 20...\( \varnothing e5! \) 21 \( dxe6 \) \( fx e6 \) 22 \( \varnothing a1 \) \( \varnothing ab6 \) 23 \( \varnothing d3 \) \( \varnothing e7 = \) White can’t profit from his control of the long diagonal since Black is ready to block it by \( \ldots e5. \) Moreover, Black controls the \( a\)-file.

1212) 19 \( \varnothing a3 \) \( \varnothing e5 \) 20 \( dxe6 \) \( fxe6 = \) followed by \( \ldots \varnothing e7 \) and \( \ldots \varnothing e5. \)

e22) I agree with Alterman’s advice to play 18...\( \varnothing c3, \) as from here the knight can transfer to \( b4 \) via \( a2, \) securing an equal position: 19 \( \varnothing x a8 \) \( \varnothing x a8 \) 20 \( \varnothing e3 \) \( \varnothing a2 \) 21 \( \varnothing b2 \) \( \varnothing b8 \) 22 \( \varnothing a1 \) \( \varnothing b4 \) 23 \( \varnothing c3 \) \( f6 \) 24 \( e5 \) \( \varnothing x e5 \) 25 \( fxe5 \) \( \varnothing xd5\)! (the only move, but good enough) 26 \( \varnothing x d5 \) \( \varnothing x d5\) and \( \ldots \varnothing x e5 \) with full equality; White seemingly can’t remove the knight from this central outpost.

13...\( \varnothing a5\)!
A strong move; Black wants to take on \( c3. \)

14 \( \varnothing d2 \)
After \( 14 \varnothing g5, \) the move \( 14...\varnothing x c3!? \) (rather than \( 14...\varnothing fe8, \) Lalic-Aikhoje, British Ch, Scarborough 1999) has not yet been tested, but it is a typical strategic idea: Black exchanges his
dark-squared bishop and blocks the long diagonal by ...f6. 15 bxc3 f6 16 \( \text{\texttt{d}d2} \) \( \text{\texttt{w}a4} \) (securing the c4-square for one of the knights; the natural 16...\( \text{\texttt{f}b8} \) leads to an unpleasant position with an awkward knight on f7 after 17 \( \text{\texttt{h}h4} \) \( \text{\texttt{g}e5} \) 18 f4 \( \text{\texttt{f}f7} \) 19 a4 \( \pm \)) 17 \( \text{\texttt{e}b1} \) \( \text{\texttt{f}b8} \) = followed by ...\( \text{\texttt{g}e5-c4} \). White has no plan for improving his position.

14...\( \text{\texttt{x}c3} \) 15 \( \text{\texttt{c}c4} \)

15 \( \text{\texttt{w}xg4} \) is not dangerous for Black: 15...\( \text{\texttt{x}d2} \) 16 \( \text{\texttt{h}xd2} \) \( \text{\texttt{w}xd2} \) 17 \( \text{\texttt{w}xd7} \) \( \text{\texttt{f}e8} \) 18 b3 \( \text{\texttt{f}f8} \) 19 a4 \( \text{\texttt{ab}8} \) (leaving the e8-rook free to fend off the white queen; 19...\( \text{\texttt{eb}8} \) was played in Tallaksen-Haugli, Norwegian Team Ch 2010/11) 20 \( \text{\texttt{ed}1} \) \( \text{\texttt{w}c2} \) 21 e5 (the only way to seek any advantage) 21...\( \text{\texttt{ed}8} \) 22 \( \text{\texttt{c}c6} \) \( \text{\texttt{w}xb3} \) leaves the position equal since after 23 \( \text{\texttt{b}b1} \) \( \text{\texttt{w}xb1} \) 24 \( \text{\texttt{x}b1} \) \( \text{\texttt{x}b1} \) = the black rooks easily contain White’s a-pawn.

15...\( \text{\texttt{w}a6} \) 16 bxc3 \( \text{\texttt{g}e5} \) 17 \( \text{\texttt{xe}5} \) \( \text{\texttt{exe}5} \) (\( D \))

18 \( \text{\texttt{h}h6} \)

Now:

a) 18...\( \text{\texttt{f}b8} \)?! loses control of the b-file: 19 \( \text{\texttt{xa6} \text{\texttt{xa6}} \) 20 \( \text{\texttt{eb}1} \) ± intending \( \text{\texttt{b}b7} \).

b) The natural 18...\( \text{\texttt{w}xe2} \) 19 \( \text{\texttt{xe2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{f}b8} \) allows White to secure some chances by 20 a4 \( \text{\texttt{c}c4} \) 21 a5 \( \text{\texttt{xa5}} \) 22 \( \text{\texttt{xa5} \text{\texttt{xa5}} \) 23 e5, though this isn’t too much, Moiseenko-Tukhaev, Ukrainian Ch, Kharkov 2004.

c) I propose the new continuation 18...\( \text{\texttt{fe8}} \)!. Then 19 a4? \( \text{\texttt{d}d3} \)! costs White the exchange since 20 \( \text{\texttt{ed}1} \)?? loses the queen to 20...\( \text{\texttt{f}f4} \), while 19 \( \text{\texttt{xa6} \text{\texttt{xa6}} \) leaves Black with no problems since he controls c4, d3 and a4 (after ...\( \text{\texttt{ea}8} \)). After 20 \( \text{\texttt{eb}1} \) f6! = Black intends to use his king to defend e7. This is the point of playing 18...\( \text{\texttt{fe8}} \) instead of 18...\( \text{\texttt{f}b8} \) – there after 20 \( \text{\texttt{eb}1} \) Black had no time for 20...f6.

B22)

12 \( \text{\texttt{h}h3} \) \( \text{\texttt{w}a5} \) (\( D \))

This and 12...\( \text{\texttt{a}a6} \) are Black’s two most popular choices after 12 \( \text{\texttt{h}h3} \).
Before we start to look at theoretical variations, let’s consider some general themes that will help us to understand events on the board. It’s clear that Black’s main idea remains the same – pressure on the a- and b-files from his rooks and queen backed up by the g7-bishop and both knights (mostly via c4 but possibly from other squares). How should White counter his opponent’s plan? There are two main ideas. The first is 13 $e1$ followed by e5. However, almost all the variations have already been analysed in depth and often end with drawish positions. Another option is to create a blockade on the queenside light squares with pawns on a4 and b3 and pieces defending them and preventing ...c4. This is a similar concept to the plans we see White adopting in Chapters 14 and 15. Black naturally tries to disrupt this plan; possible ways to do so are ...$c4$, exchanging queens (usually in Black’s favour), setting up a blockade on the a3-square after b3 is played, etc.

13 $e1$

White’s usual plan with this move is the e5 advance; he can also follow up with $e2$ (and even $c2$), defending b2 so that the queen’s bishop can be developed. In my opinion, Black should be quite safe in these lines, since the e5 idea is not dangerous, while $e2$ looks awkward (or at least not aggressive) and Black can simply get on with his own plans and secure good play. Moreover, it very often turns out that the rook would be more useful on other squares (d1, c1 or even b1). My main reason for having 13 $e1$ as the main line is that it is the most popular in practice.

White’s principal alternatives both fit in with his queenside plans:

a) 13 $d2$ (D) and now:

![Chess Diagram]

a1) 13...$e8$?! is unconvincing as it lets White continue his own plan: 14 $c2$ $c7$ (Kelečević-Hertneck, Austrian Team Ch 1996/7) 15 a4!? ± followed by $b5$ (or $d1$-$e3$), $c3$, etc.

a2) 13...$b6$ (the knight immediately sets off to cause trouble for White on the queenside) 14 $e2$ (stopping ...$c4$; another way to do this is 14 b3, but after 14...$fc8$ 15 $e2$ $a6$! the exchange of queens will give Black long-lasting compensation) 14...$a6$! 15 $xa6$ $xa6$ 16 b3 $fd7$ intending ...f5, ...c4, ...$fa8$, etc., gave Black compensation in Tyda-Jaroch, Gdansk 2009.

b) 13 $c2$ and now:

b1) Here is a good illustration of White’s dream in this line: 13...$fb8$ 14 $d2$ $e8$ 15 $hb1$! (that’s why White left his rook on h1!) 15...$b7$ 16 a4 $a6$ 17 $d1$! (preparing $c3$)
17...ab8 18 a3 xc3 axc3?! (Black could try 18...h6?!, to avoid bringing the d1-knight to an active post) 19 \\xc3 b4 20 b3 ef6 21 \xd2 ± Gligorić-Tseshkovsky, Bled/Portorož 1979. Black achieved nothing on the queenside.

b2) 13...b6 and here:

b21) 14 b1 fd7 (Black has prevented b3, and exerts pressure on White’s queenside; now Black can gradually improve his pieces) 15 g5 fe8 16 hc1 xc3! 17 bxc3 (17 xc3?! xc3 18 xc3 xa2 19 b4 a4 20 cc1 f6 21 e3 a8 ± Adamantidis-Pikula, Zurich 2011) 17...f6 18 h6 wa4 19 wb2 wa4 with equality.

b22) 14 e1 (D) and now:

b221) After 14...fd7?! 15 g5 fe8 16 d1!, intending d2-c3, Black’s position again looks suspicious; e.g., 16...a6 17 d2 a4 18 c3 c4 19 b4! db6 20 a3 ± Belmonte-Karatekin, Calicut 1998.

b222) That’s why I am proposing 14...c4?!:

b2221) White can’t push the knight back by 15 wb3 because of another queen-exchange idea: 15...wb4?! 16 xb4 cxb4 17 b5 d7 and Black’s pieces (the a8-rook, g7-bishop, c4-knight and the b4-pawn) are perfectly placed.

b2222) After 15 a4 fb8 16 b5 (an important tactical motif is revealed by 16 e5 e8 17 exd6 xb2! 18 xb2 xb2 19 xb2 xc3 20 wb7 xa1 21 xa1 exd6 with equal chances) 16...xb5 17 axb5 xa1 18 xc4 d7 all the black pieces are more active than their white counterparts and Black has sufficient compensation.

13...fb8 (D)

Now the coverage divides as follows:

B221: 14 e2 171
B222: 14 c2 172
B223: 14 e5 174

The thinking behind the move 14 e5 is self-evident: White carries out the central pawn-break that his previous move prepared. But as I have already
mentioned, Black has little to fear. With the other two moves, White seeks a light-squared blockade on the queenside by \( \text{c2, d2, a4, b3, etc.} \) If Black does not disrupt this plan, White usually gets the better position.

**B221)**

**14 \( \text{e2} \)**

I am unimpressed by this move on general grounds, since these little rook moves seem awkward and fail to advance White’s main plan, i.e. a4 and b3. Anyway, the queen or rook will need to move to c2 to defend the c3-knight.

14...\( \text{e8} \) 15 \( \text{c2} \)

White completes the second-rank rook manoeuvre. Other moves:

- a) 15 \( \text{g5?!} \) has achieved a good score in practice, but Black has a safe way to secure at least enough compensation: 15...\( \text{xc3!} \) 16 bxc3 f6! 17 \( \text{d2 a4!} \) (gaining control of c4) 18 \( \text{e1 c7} \) (in Example 21 of Chapter 18 – ‘Tactical Exercises’ – you can see the game Grabiauskas-Khalifman, Vilnius 1997, where Black chose 18...\( \text{c4, also with good play} \) 19 h4 \( \text{c4} \) 20 h5 (Grabiauskas-Oleksiensko, Lvo 10) and here the cold-blooded 20...g5! \( \text{f} \) would stop White’s attack and fix Black’s advantage.

- b) 15 \( \text{c2} \) (combining \( \text{e2} \) with \( \text{c2} \) looks especially strange since it’s not clear why White played \( \text{e2} \)): 15...\( \text{c7} \) 16 \( \text{d2} \) and now:

  - b1) 16...\( \text{b5?!} \) is unconvincing, since 17 a4 (17 \( \text{xb5?!} \) \( \text{xb5} \) 18 \( \text{c3 xc3} \) \( \text{a3} \) 19 bxc3 \( \text{a3} \) 20 c4 \( \text{b4} \) with compensation) 17...\( \text{d4!} \) (17...\( \text{a6?} \)

18 \( \text{xb5 xb5} \) 19 \( \text{c3 b7} \) 20 \( \text{g7} \)

Servat-Panno, Argentine Ch 1995, 21 \( \text{e3!} \) \( \text{±} \) followed by b3) 18 \( \text{xd4 cxd4} \) 19 \( \text{b5} \) gives White two connected passed pawns, which could easily become a decisive factor; e.g., 19...\( \text{d8} \) 20 \( \text{ee1 c5} \) 21 b4! (White sacrifices an exchange to advance his pawns a little further) 21...d3 22 \( \text{c4 xe4} \) (22...\( \text{xa1?} \) 23 bxc5 \( \text{f6} \) 24 c6 \( \text{±} \); 22...\( \text{xa4} \) 23 \( \text{d4 c8} \) 24 \( \text{c6 xa1} \) 25 \( \text{xa1 d7} \) 26 \( \text{xd3} \) \( \text{±} \) 23 \( \text{xe4 xa1} \) 24 \( \text{xa1 xb5} \) 25 \( \text{c3 bb8} \) 26 a5 \( \text{±} \) with a promising endgame for White.

b2) 16...\( \text{a6!} \) (the black queen eyes the e2-rook) 17 \( \text{g5} \) (17 \( \text{e1, Morovic-A.Hoffman, Argentine Ch 1995, 17...\( \text{xb5} \) 18 \( \text{xb5} \) \( \text{xb5} \) 19 \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{xc3} \) 20 bxc3 \( \text{a5} \) gives Black the better chances thanks to the activity of his major pieces) and now Black has a choice between immediate simplification or playing for long-lasting compensation:

  - b21) 17...\( \text{xb2} \) 18 \( \text{xb2 xc3} \) 19 \( \text{xc3 xe2} \) 20 \( \text{e1 xa2} \) 21 \( \text{xe7 e8} \) 22 \( \text{f6} \) (22 \( \text{xd6?} \) \( \text{b5} \) \( \text{±} \))

22...\( \text{b5} \) 23 \( \text{b2} \) \( \text{xb2} \) 24 \( \text{xb2 f5} \) with an equal endgame.

b22) 17...\( \text{b5} \) 18 \( \text{xb5 xb5} \) gave Black a pleasant game in Markus-L. Vajda, Hungarian Team Ch 2001/2.

- c) With 15 \( \text{f4} \) White prepares \( \text{e5} \) but the natural 15...\( \text{xc3?!} \) (deviating from Doriç-Brumen, Zagreb 2011) 16 bxc3 \( \text{xc3} \) wins back the pawn and leaves Black with nothing to worry about. 17 \( \text{c1 a3} \) 18 \( \text{e5 f6!} \) (regaining control of \( \text{e5} \)) 19 exd6 exd6 20 \( \text{e7 a7} \) 21 \( \text{b1} \) \( \text{ba8} \) and ...\( \text{e5} \) =.
15...\(\textit{\&}b6\)

The knight heads towards both the a4- and c4-squares.

16 \(\textit{\&}e2 \textit{\&}a6!\) (\(D\))

Exchanging the queens is the easiest way for Black to retain good play. It nullifies White’s active plans, and enables Black gradually to develop an initiative on the queenside.

17 \(\textit{\&}x a6\)

17 \(\textit{\&}g1\) can be met in two good ways:

a) 17...\(\textit{\&}a4\) is a perfectly reasonable ‘human’ decision, exchanging off a good defensive piece (the c3-knight). After 18 \(\textit{\&}xa6 \textit{\&}xa6\) 19 \(\textit{\&}ge2 \textit{\&}c7\) 20 a3 f5! Black had ideal compensation in Beliaovsky-Khalifman, Linares 1995. This is Example 22 from Chapter 18 (‘Tactical Exercises’), and further explanations can be found there.

b) A more concrete continuation is 17...\(\textit{\&}xc3\)! 18 \(\textit{\&}xc3 \textit{\&}xe2\) 19 \(\textit{\&}xe2\) f5! 20 exf5 \(\textit{\&}xd5\) 21 \(\textit{\&}f3 \textit{\&}b4!\), with good chances for Black thanks to his mass of pawns in the centre.

White intends b4. 18 b3?! f5! 19 exf5 \(\textit{\&}xc3\)! 20 \(\textit{\&}xc3 \textit{\&}xd5\) 21 \(\textit{\&}d3 \textit{\&}b4\) 22 \(\textit{\&}d2\) gxf5 23 \(\textit{\&}e2\) e5 \(\textit{\&}\) Rustemov-Tregubov, FIDE Knockout, New Delhi 2000. Black’s pawns look scary.

18...\(\textit{\&}c4\)

Not:

a) 18...\(\textit{\&}a4\)? (this typical move does not work here) 19 \(\textit{\&}d1!\) (the b3 advance is coming) 19...\(\textit{\&}c7\) 20 b3 f5 21 \(\textit{\&}d2 \textit{\&}b6\) 22 b4! ± Neverov-Van der Weide, Hoogeveen 1999.

b) 18...\(\textit{\&}c7?!\) 19 b4! c4 20 b5 (20 \(\textit{\&}e3?!\) \(\textit{\&}xc3\) 21 \(\textit{\&}xc3 \textit{\&}b5\) 22 \(\textit{\&}cc1\) c3 and ...\(\textit{\&}c4\) 20...\(\textit{\&}a5\) 21 \(\textit{\&}e3 \textit{\&}xc3\) 22 \(\textit{\&}xc3 \textit{\&}xa2\) 23 \(\textit{\&}d4\) ±. Black has won the pawn back, but the ‘hole’ on c6 is now a problem.

19 b3

19 b4!? is surprisingly still possible, though I’m not sure if any human player would choose it. 19...\(\textit{\&}xb4\) 20 \(\textit{\&}e2!\) (White wants the c6-square for one of his knights) 20...\(\textit{\&}a3\) 21 \(\textit{\&}xa3\) \(\textit{\&}xa3\) 22 \(\textit{\&}ed4\) \(\textit{\&}f6\) 23 \(\textit{\&}c6\) \(\textit{\&}ba8\) (the a2-, e4-, b4- and e7-pawns are hanging; although White is the first to make a capture, he can’t get an advantage) 24 \(\textit{\&}xb4\) \(\textit{\&}f8\) = and ...\(\textit{\&}xa2\). The c6-knight is of course strong, but White has nothing else that is very special.

19...\(\textit{\&}a3\) 20 \(\textit{\&}xa3\) \(\textit{\&}xa3\)

Black is fine, Borsuk-Calzetta Ruiz, European Women’s Team Ch, Khersonissos 2007. The a2-pawn is blockaded and White’s dark-squared bishop has been exchanged.

B222)

14 \(\textit{\&}c2 \textit{\&}b6!\) (\(D\))
Black immediately brings this knight closer to the critical squares.

I could not find a good way forward for Black after 14...\(\mathcal{Q}e8?!\)
15 a4!? (Motoc-Kadziolka, World Under-16 Girls Ch, Oropesa del Mar 2001; the inaccurate 15 \(\mathcal{Q}f4?\) allows a typical tactic: 15...\(\mathcal{Q}xb2)!\) 16 \(\mathcal{Q}xb2\) \(\mathcal{Q}xc3\) 17 \(\mathcal{Q}b7\), Novichkov-Timofeeva, Serpukhov 2002, 17...\(\mathcal{Q}d8)!\) 18 e5 \(\mathcal{Q}a8\!\,\!\uparrow\) 15...\(\mathcal{Q}b6\) (15...c4 is probably more resilient: 16 \(\mathcal{Q}d2\) \(\mathcal{Q}c5\) 17 \(\mathcal{Q}b5\) \(\mathcal{Q}a6\) 18 \(\mathcal{Q}eb1\) \(\mathcal{Q}c8\) 19 \(\mathcal{Q}fd4\!\,\!\uparrow\) 16 \(\mathcal{Q}d2\) \(\mathcal{Q}c4\) 17 \(\mathcal{Q}b5\) \(\mathcal{Q}xd2\) 18 \(\mathcal{Q}xd2\) with a poor position for Black.

15 \(\mathcal{Q}d1!\)

This seems the most dangerous line for Black. White prepares the tempo-gaining \(\mathcal{Q}d2\) while defending b2; he also covers the c4-square. White’s other ideas offer Black fewer problems:

a) 15 \(\mathcal{Q}b1?!\) looks useless in these positions, since it makes the a4 advance more difficult. Black can reply with 15...\(\mathcal{Q}fd7\) 16 \(\mathcal{Q}g5\) \(\mathcal{Q}xc3\!\,\!\uparrow\), which is a typical strategic device. Black exchanges his dark-squared bishop, plays ...f6 to keep the centre closed and creates weaknesses on White’s queenside. 17 bxc3 f6 18 \(\mathcal{Q}h6\) \(\mathcal{Q}xa2\) 19 \(\mathcal{Q}b2\) \(\mathcal{Q}a4\!\,\!\uparrow\) Anastasian-Alternman, Komotini 1992.

b) 15 \(\mathcal{Q}d2\) \(\mathcal{Q}c4\) 16 b3 \(\mathcal{Q}xd2\) (as we already know, the exchange of the knight for White’s dark-squared bishop is generally in Black’s favour, though in the line after 14...\(\mathcal{Q}e8?!\) it didn’t help because White had control of all the key squares on the queenside: a4, b5 and c4) 17 \(\mathcal{Q}xd2\) \(\mathcal{Q}d7\) 18 \(\mathcal{Q}e3\) (Haba-Hess, Hohenloh 1994) 18...\(\mathcal{Q}d4\) 19 \(\mathcal{Q}c4\) \(\mathcal{Q}b4\) 20 \(\mathcal{Q}f3\) \(\mathcal{Q}e5\) 21 \(\mathcal{Q}xe5\) \(\mathcal{Q}xe5\!\,\!\uparrow\).

After the text-move (15 \(\mathcal{Q}d1!\)) for a long time I could not find a fully acceptable continuation for Black. Finally, I figured out that Black’s queen is not well placed on a6 since it allows White to play a4. This is the logic behind the new move that I propose here:

15...\(\mathcal{Q}b5\)! 

Here is a brief summary of the variations I analysed before finding this idea:

a) 15...\(\mathcal{Q}fd7\) 16 \(\mathcal{Q}d2\) \(\mathcal{Q}a6\) (White has a larger advantage after 16...\(\mathcal{Q}a4?!\) 17 b3 \(\mathcal{Q}a3\) 18 \(\mathcal{Q}c3\) \(\mathcal{Q}xc3\) 19 \(\mathcal{Q}xc3\!\,\!\uparrow\) 17 \(\mathcal{Q}c3\!\,\!\uparrow\).

b) 15...\(\mathcal{Q}a6\) 16 \(\mathcal{Q}d2\) \(\mathcal{Q}a4\) (16...\(\mathcal{Q}a7\) 17 a4 \(\mathcal{Q}c4\) 18 \(\mathcal{Q}c3\) \(\mathcal{Q}d7\) 19 \(\mathcal{Q}xg7\) \(\mathcal{Q}xg7\) 20 b3 \(\mathcal{Q}a5\) 21 \(\mathcal{Q}d2\) \(\mathcal{Q}ab7\) 22 \(\mathcal{Q}b1\!\,\!\uparrow\); 16...\(\mathcal{Q}fd7\) 17 \(\mathcal{Q}c3\) \(\mathcal{Q}xc3\) 18 \(\mathcal{Q}xc3\!\,\!\uparrow\) 17 b3 \(\mathcal{Q}d7\) 18 \(\mathcal{Q}c3\) \(\mathcal{Q}ab6\) 19 a4 \(\mathcal{Q}e5\) 20 \(\mathcal{Q}xe5\) \(\mathcal{Q}xe5\) 21 \(\mathcal{Q}a2\) \(\mathcal{Q}d7\) 22 \(\mathcal{Q}f4\) \(\mathcal{Q}g7\) 23 \(\mathcal{Q}e2\) and although a draw was agreed in A.Shneider-Kostiuk,
Cappelle la Grande 2012, the final position is definitely better for White.

c) 15...c4 and now 16 $\texttt{\textbf{d}}d2?$ $\texttt{\textbf{a}}4 17 $\texttt{\textbf{e}}c1 $\texttt{\textbf{b}}d7 18 $\texttt{\textbf{e}}e3 $\texttt{\textbf{c}}c5 gave Black good compensation in Uhlmann-Espig, Dresden 1985. However, once more White can seize the advantage by 16 a4! $\pm$, planning $\texttt{\textbf{d}}d2, $\texttt{\textbf{e}}e3, $\texttt{\textbf{c}}c3, etc.

16 $\texttt{\textbf{d}}d2$

There are no other useful moves for White, so the bishop heads for c3.

16...$\texttt{\textbf{e}}e8!$

Moving the queen away in order to make a4 impossible. 16...$\texttt{\textbf{a}}7?$ allows 17 a4! $\mp$.

17 $\texttt{\textbf{c}}c3$

After 17 $\texttt{\textbf{c}}c3 $\texttt{\textbf{c}}c4 18 b3 $\texttt{\textbf{a}}3$ (the knight blockades the a2-pawn; this is another case where it’s bad for Black to exchange his knight for White’s dark-squared bishop: 18...$\texttt{\textbf{d}}d2?$ 19 $\texttt{\textbf{d}}d2$ $\pm$ planning a quick a4, $\texttt{\textbf{b}}5, $\texttt{\textbf{c}}c4, etc.) 19 $\texttt{\textbf{d}}d1 $\texttt{\textbf{d}}d7, followed by ...c4, Black has sufficient compensation.

17...$\texttt{\textbf{a}}4 18 $\texttt{\textbf{e}}xf6 $\texttt{\textbf{xf}}6 19 $\texttt{\textbf{b}}b1 $\texttt{\textbf{b}}b6 20 b3 $\texttt{\textbf{a}}3$

Black is OK here.

B223)

14 $\texttt{\textbf{e}}5$

This is the main move, and obviously a critical test. If it worked well, Black would need to choose something different on move 12 or 13. But Black has no problems here.

14...$\texttt{\textbf{d}}xe5 15 $\texttt{\textbf{d}}xe5 $\texttt{\textbf{d}}xe5 16 $\texttt{\textbf{e}}xe5 $\texttt{\textbf{b}}7? (D)

This quiet move leaves all the black pieces well harmonized for defence and counterplay.

17 $\texttt{\textbf{f}}3$

The queen eyes the b7-rook and defends c3. White has a couple of other interesting possibilities:

a) 17 d6!? e6! (hoping to prove the d6-pawn weak) 18 $\texttt{\textbf{e}}e2 $\texttt{\textbf{a}}6 19 $\texttt{\textbf{f}}4 $\texttt{\textbf{c}}6+ 20 $\texttt{\textbf{g}}1 and now 20...$\texttt{\textbf{d}}d5?! 21 $\texttt{\textbf{d}}xd5 exd5 (Shirov-Tregubov, French Team Ch 2004) 22 $\texttt{\textbf{b}}b1! is awkward for Black; e.g., 22...c4 (22...$\texttt{\textbf{x}}a2? 23 $\texttt{\textbf{a}}1! $\texttt{\textbf{x}}a1 24 $\texttt{\textbf{x}}a1 $\texttt{\textbf{b}}8 25 $\texttt{\textbf{a}}7 $\texttt{\textbf{d}}8 26 $\texttt{\textbf{e}}7 +) 23 $\texttt{\textbf{d}}d2 $\texttt{\textbf{x}}a2 24 $\texttt{\textbf{x}}d5 is unpleasant. I prefer 20...$\texttt{\textbf{d}}d7?!, intending ...$\texttt{\textbf{d}}d4 and ...e5, while ...$\texttt{\textbf{x}}xb2 is a threat in some lines.

b) 17 $\texttt{\textbf{e}}e2 $\texttt{\textbf{a}}a7! (the black rooks are well-placed here, doubled on their second rank) 18 a4 $\texttt{\textbf{e}}e8 (now the knight moves to d6) 19 $\texttt{\textbf{e}}e3 $\texttt{\textbf{d}}d6 20 $\texttt{\textbf{g}}4 (preventing ...$\texttt{\textbf{f}}5-d4; or 20 $\texttt{\textbf{a}}3 $\texttt{\textbf{f}}5 21 $\texttt{\textbf{d}}d3 $\texttt{\textbf{d}}d4 22 $\texttt{\textbf{d}}d1 $\texttt{\textbf{b}}4 with compensation, Real de Azua-Coppola, Montevideo 2011) 20...c4 21 $\texttt{\textbf{f}}3 and now:

b1) The immediate 21...$\texttt{\textbf{b}}b3?! is not well-prepared because of 22 $\texttt{\textbf{e}}4!.

b2) 21...$\texttt{\textbf{b}}b8 22 $\texttt{\textbf{a}}3 $\texttt{\textbf{a}}b7 is one way to double rooks. After 23 $\texttt{\textbf{e}}4?!
BENKO ACCEPTED: KING WALK

\( \text{\texttt{xb2}} 24 \text{\texttt{xb2}} \text{\texttt{xb2}} 25 \text{\texttt{xd6}} \text{\texttt{exd6}} \)

Black equalized with no worries in A. Shneider-Khalifman, Moscow 1995. However, the slow \( 23 \text{\texttt{e2!}?} \) gives White some chances to develop his pieces without having to return the pawn.

b3) 21...\text{\texttt{b4!}?} is the most active way to double rooks. One rook stays on the second rank to defend the e7-pawn while the b4-rook is free to create problems for White. After 22 \text{\texttt{a3}} \text{\texttt{ab7}} Black intends ...\text{\texttt{xc3}} and ...\text{\texttt{xa4}}.

17...

The knight repositions to d6, both unleashing the g7-bishop and creating the threat of ...\text{\texttt{xc4}}. There is also the possibility of ...\text{\texttt{f5-d4}}.

18 \text{\texttt{e2}} \text{\texttt{d6}} (D)

19 \text{\texttt{e4}} (D)

19 \text{\texttt{e4}}

A possible alternative for White is 19 g4 (stopping ...\text{\texttt{f5-d4}}) 19...\text{\texttt{d8}}
20 a4 (E. Lund-Gunnarsson, Reykjavik 2007), when Black has 20...\text{\texttt{f6!}?}, defending e7 and freeing the b7-rook. After 21 \text{\texttt{xe4}} \text{\texttt{xe4}} 22 \text{\texttt{xe4}} (or 22 \text{\texttt{xe4}} \text{\texttt{bd7}} 23 g5 \text{\texttt{g7}} 24 \text{\texttt{f4}} \text{\texttt{xd5}} 25 \text{\texttt{xe7}} \text{\texttt{a6}}, preventing \text{\texttt{b7}} and so preparing ...\text{\texttt{f8}}) 22...\text{\texttt{a6}} the queen eyes f1; the idea is to play 23...\text{\texttt{xd5}}, when after 24 \text{\texttt{xe7}}? \text{\texttt{xe7}} 25 \text{\texttt{xd5}} Black can win by 25...\text{\texttt{e1}}. Instead, 22...\text{\texttt{bd7}} allows White more chances, while the immediate 22...\text{\texttt{xd5}}? 23 \text{\texttt{xe7}} \text{\texttt{xe7}} 24 \text{\texttt{xd5}} ± leaves Black with an unpleasant game.

19...\text{\texttt{e4}} (D)

W

20 \text{\texttt{xe4}}

White can also take on e4 with the rook. 20 \text{\texttt{xe4}} has been successfully played a few times by the Ukrainian GM Vadim Shishkin (e.g., Shishkin-Jianu, Bucharest 2008). However, Black has a variety of options to keep the balance, of which I prefer 20...\text{\texttt{d8}} (attacking d5) 21 \text{\texttt{e2}} \text{\texttt{a7!}} (an improving/waiting move: Black overprotects e7, the usefulness of which is shown by the continuation 21...\text{\texttt{d7}} 22 \text{\texttt{f4}} \text{\texttt{xd5}} 23 \text{\texttt{xe7}}), challenging White to demonstrate a useful plan. The most critical is 22 \text{\texttt{f4}} \text{\texttt{xb2}}! (the inaccurate 22...\text{\texttt{d7}}? invites the strong reply 23 d6! \text{\texttt{exd6}} 24 \text{\texttt{ae1}}, while
22...\( \text{Bxb2} \)?! leads to trouble in lines like 23 \( \text{b1} \) \( \text{f6} \) 24 \( \text{xB7} \) \( \text{xb7} \) 25 d6 \( \text{d7} \) 26 dxe7 \( \text{xe7} \) 27 \( \text{xe7} \) \( \text{xe7} \) 28 a4 \( \pm \), when the a-pawn is dangerous) 23 \( \text{xb2} \) \( \text{xb2} \) 24 \( \text{b1} \) \( \text{a3} \)! (a key move; 24...\( \text{xa2} \) 25 \( \text{b3} \) costs Black his bishop) 25 \( \text{e4} \) (another important point is 25 \( \text{d1} \) e5! 26 dxe6 \( \text{xd1} \) 27 exf7+ \( \text{xf7} \) 28 \( \text{xd1} \) c4 =) 25...\( \text{xa2} \) and although the a2-rook is stuck defending a pinned bishop, White can’t do anything; e.g., 26 \( \text{h2} \) \( \text{d4} \)! 27 \( \text{b8} \) \( \text{f2+} \) 28 \( \text{h1} \) \( \text{f1+} \) with a perpetual check, or 26 \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{a8} \) 27 \( \text{xc5} \) h5 =.

20...\( \text{a6} \)

A good square for the queen: it attacks e2, defends b7 (important in case White plays d6) and controls the d6-square.

21 a4 \( \text{f6} \) (D)

The e7-pawn is securely defended and the b7-rook is free to move along the b-file.

22 \( \text{f3} \)

Another possibility is the untried 22 \( \text{c2} \) attacking c5. But then the b7-rook plays a major role: 22...\( \text{b4} \) 23 \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{d4} \) and then:

a) 24 \( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{d1} \) (intending ...\( \text{f1+} \)) 25 \( \text{b5} \) \( \text{c8} \)! (planning ...\( \text{c4-f1+} \); also, the c1-bishop is attacked) 26 \( \text{c5} \) (after 26 \( \text{c5} \) \( \text{f5} \) Black threatens mate by ...\( \text{e4+} \), and 27 \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{c8} \) intending ...\( \text{c2} \) leaves White worse) 26...\( \text{a6} \) 27 \( \text{b5} \) with a practically forced repetition.

b) 24 \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{d3} \) 25 \( \text{e3} \) (25 \( \text{e4} \) \( \text{d4} \) 26 \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{d3} \) is equal) 25...\( \text{d4} \) leaves Black with enough compensation.

22...\( \text{d8} \) 23 \( \text{c2} \) \( \text{d4} \)

Now the bishop defends the c5-pawn, while the d5-pawn starts to look beleaguered.

24 a5

After 24 \( \text{g5} \) (A.Shneider-Lazarov, Paris 1998) 24...\( \text{bd7} \) intending ...f6 (to defend e7) and then ...\( \text{xd5} \), the position is equal.

24...\( \text{bd7} \) 25 \( \text{e3} \)

Or: 25 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{f6} \) 26 \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{d4} \) =; 25 \( \text{e4} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 26 \( \text{xe7} \) \( \text{e5} \)! intending ...\( \text{a8} \) and ...\( \text{d1} \).

25...\( \text{xd5} \)

Now:

a) 26 \( \text{xd4} \)?! is dubious since it creates a well-supported passed pawn for Black: 26...\( \text{xd4} \) 27 b4 (27 \( \text{c7} \)?) 27...\( \text{d3} \) Beliavsky-Leko, Čačak 1996.

b) 26 \( \text{h2} \)?! e5 keeps the position equal.
14 Benko Accepted: Fianchetto Lines

1 d4 ∆f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 a6 5 bxa6 g6 6 ∆c3 ∆xa6 7 g3 (D)

We now begin our coverage of lines where White fianchettoes his king’s bishop. They are considered the most dangerous for Black in the Benko Gambit, so we need to pay close attention to them.

7...d6 8 ∆g2

White can play an ‘extended fianchetto’ by 8 ∆f3 ∆g7 9 ∆h3, when Black should play by analogy with the main lines: 9...∆bd7 and now:

a) 10 ∆b1 is untried, but as in Chapter 15, the idea is to meet 10...∆b6 with 11 b3. However, with the bishop on h3, this is less effective: 11...∆c8! 12 ∆xc8 ∆xc8 13 0-0 ∆f5 (attacking d5)

b1) 14 ∆f1 transposes to Line B43.

b2) 14 ∆xd7 has scored well for White, but I find it hard to understand this exchange when White has a bunch of weak light squares. 14...∆xd7 15 b3 ∆e5 (a good alternative is 15...∆b6!? 16 ∆b2 ∆g4 (the f3-knight feels uncomfortable) 17 ∆g2 ∆h5 intending ...∆c8 or ...f5) 16 ∆xe5 ∆xe5 17 ∆b2 f5! (17...∆fd8? gives White time to make an important exchange: 18 ∆d1! ∆xb2 19 ∆xb2 = Beliavsky-Palatnik,
Kiev 1978) 18 exf5 (after 18 \textit{d}d1 \textit{xb}2 19 \textit{xb}2 f4 20 \textit{c}4 \textit{h}3 21 \textit{d}3, as in Kakageldiev-Alburt, Ashkhabad 1978, Black can reach a type of endgame where he has no problems by 21...f3 22 \textit{xf}1 \textit{xf}1+ 23 \textit{xf}1 \textit{xc}4+ 24 \textit{bx}c4 \textit{a}4 =) 18.\textit{xf}5 19 \textit{a}4 \textit{xb}2 20 \textit{xb}2 \textit{af}8 21 f4 and then:

b21) 21...\textit{b}7?! 22 \textit{ad}1 e6! (not 22...\textit{xd}5? 23 \textit{b}6 \textit{b}7 24 \textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 25 \textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 26 \textit{xe}7 ++) gave Black counterplay in Darznieks-Shereshevsky, Daugavpils 1973, but it’s objectively just enough compensation.

b22) 21...g5! is a new move that my editor Graham Burgess pointed out. It gives Black a strong initiative: 22 \textit{e}4 (22 \textit{fxg}5? \textit{f}2 23 \textit{xf}2 \textit{xf}2 24 \textit{xf}2 \textit{f}5+ 25 \textit{g}1 \textit{xd}5 ++) 22...\textit{xf}4 23 \textit{ae}1 \textit{g}5! (23...\textit{bf}7?? is also worth a try) 24 \textit{xe}7 \textit{g}4 25 \textit{c}2 \textit{g}6 with the better game for Black.

8...\textit{g}7 (D)

Now we consider two knight moves, of which the latter is by far the more important:

A: 9 \textit{h}3

B: 9 \textit{f}3

A)

9 \textit{h}3

Of course, the knight on h3 looks a bit ugly but it has its logic: the bishop defends d5 while the knight aims to go to f4. The main disadvantage is that the knight is a long way from the c6-square, and this makes Black’s counterplay with ...c4 much easier and effective.

9...\textit{bd}7 10 0-0 0-0 (D)

Here White has plenty of possibilities, but his main idea is to play \textit{b}1, \textit{c}2, b3 and \textit{b}2. Black’s task is to prevent this arrangement, and his principal tools in this effort are the ...c4 advance, putting pressure on the c3-knight with ...\textit{a}5 and by unmasking the g7-bishop, and bringing a knight to c4.

11 \textit{b}1

Or:

a) 11 \textit{c}2 \textit{a}5 12 \textit{b}1 is another way to reach the main line.
b) 11 \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{wa}5 \) 12 \( \text{wc}2 \) \( \text{fb}8 \) 13 \( \text{b}3 \) (for 13 \( \text{ab}1 \) see the main line) 13...c4 14 \( \text{ab}1 \) transposes to the note to White’s 13th move below.

c) 11 \( \text{f}4 \) does not assist with White’s main idea and Black can continue developing his counterplay: 11...\( \text{c}7 \) 12 \( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{fb}8 \) 13 \( \text{bl} \) (after 13 \( \text{b}3 \) c4! 14 \( \text{d}2 \) cx\( \text{b}3 \) 15 axb3 \( \text{b}6 \) 16 \( \text{ab}1 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 17 \( \text{fc}1 \) \( \text{c}8 \) we have a picture of typical compensation for the pawn: Black’s pieces are so active that White can’t free his game; however, at the moment it’s no more than sufficient compensation) 13...c4 and then:

c1) 14 \( \text{h}3 \)?! \( \text{c}5 \) 15 \( \text{g}5 \) is an attempt to bring the knight back to a normal square, but it is thwarted by 15...\( \text{c}8 \)! (preventing \( \text{f}3 \) due to ...\( \text{f}5 \)) 16 f3? (this allows a typical manoeuvre in untypical form; even after the superior 16 \( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{f}5 \) 17 e4 \( \text{d}7 \) \( \text{f} \) Black is still better, since d3 is weak) 16...\( \text{a}4 \)!(the d5- and a2-pawns are in danger) 17 \( \text{xa}4 \) \( \text{a}7+ \) 18 \( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{xa}4 \) \( \text{f} \) Yanofsky-Gheorghiu, Siegen Olympiad 1970.

c2) 14 \( \text{d}2 \) (intending \( \text{fc}1 \) and an advance by the b-pawn) 14...\( \text{e}5 \) 15 \( \text{fc}1 \) \( \text{c}8 \)!? (Black aims to weaken the d3-square by ...\( \text{f}5 \)) 16 \( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{f}5 \) 17 e4 \( \text{d}7 \) 18 \( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{a}7 \)! (counterattacking a2) 19 bxc4 \( \text{xb}1 \) 20 \( \text{xb}1 \) \( \text{xa}2 \) 21 \( \text{xa}2 \) \( \text{xa}2 \) 22 \( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{h}6 \)! 23 \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{xf}4 \) 24 gxf4 \( \text{d}3 \) 25 \( \text{al} \) \( \text{xa}1+ \) 26 \( \text{xa}1 \) \( \text{xf}4 \) with an equal endgame.

c3) With 14 \( \text{e}3 \) (Koploy-Cusi, Californian Ch 1996), White wants to place his bishop on d4. Black should naturally disrupt this plan: 14...\( \text{g}4 \)!

15 \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{a}7 \) (preparing to double rooks and put pressure on the b2-pawn) 16 \( \text{e}4 \) (this is why White pro­voked ...\( \text{g}4 \); now the \( \text{e}4 \) and \( \text{c}3 \) idea is available) 16...\( \text{ab}7 \) 17 \( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{c}5 \) 18 \( \text{xg}7 \) \( \text{xg}7 \). White has ex­changed off the g7-bishop but Black has advanced his pawn to c4 and achieved pressure on b2.

d) 11 \( \text{e}1 \)?! also fails to assist White’s queenside plans. Moreover, it looks pointless since advancing the e-pawn would be a strategic mistake with the ‘hole’ on d3. It’s more logical for White to bring this rook to d1 (to defend d5) or c1 (to defend the c3-knight and create pressure on the c4-pawn later). 11...\( \text{c}7 \) 12 \( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{fb}8 \) and now:

d1) 13 \( \text{b}3 \) c4! gives Black compensation.

d2) 13 \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{e}5 \) (intending ...\( \text{c}4 \)) 14 \( \text{b}3 \) c4 again offers Black typical compensation. In this line White could not even prepare the b4 advance.

d3) 13 \( \text{b}1 \) \( \text{h}6 \)!? (Black restricts the h3-knight; now it has only the f4-square, from which it also can be pushed by ...\( g5 \) 14 \( \text{b}3 \) c4! (Black’s main idea works again) 15 \( \text{b}4 \) \( \text{c}8 \) 16 \( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{e}5 \). Now Black wants to play ...\( \text{f}5 \) which has two possible consequences: first, White plays e4, Black takes on h3 and ...\( \text{df}3+ \) wins the exchange, or the f5-bishop retreats and the knight enters on d3; the second is White removes his queen and b1-rook from that diagonal, Black replies with ...\( \text{d}7/c8 \) and the h3-knight is in trouble.

11...\( \text{wa}5 \) 12 \( \text{c}2 \)
After 12 \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{fb8} \) 13 \( \text{b3} \) (Golovchenko-Papenin, Serpukhov 2004; 13 \( \text{wc2} \) transposes to the main line), the immediate 13...c4?! makes the most sense: 14 \( \text{da4} \) (or 14 \text{bxc4} \( \text{xb1} \) 15 \( \text{xb1} \) \( \text{xc4} \) 16 \( \text{c2} \) \( \text{b6} \) followed by ...\( \text{fd7-c5} \)) 14...\( \text{b5} \) (attacking e2 and d5) 15 \( \text{f4} \) (15 \( \text{e1} \) \( \text{xd5} \) \( \mp \)) 15...g5 16 \( \text{h3} \) h6 (again e2 and d5 are hanging) 17 \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{a5} \) 18 \( \text{a4} \) \( \text{b5} \) =.

12...\( \text{fb8} \) (D)

13 \( \text{d2} \)

13 \( \text{b3} \) c4! 14 \( \text{d2} \) cxb3 (14...\( \text{e5} \) transposes to the main line) 15 axb3 (after 15 \( \text{xb3} \) \( \text{c8} \) Black’s compensation is unquestionable, Aseev-Sivokho, St Petersburg Ch 1996) and now:

a) 15...\( \text{c8} \)?! is unconvincing since this move lets White advance his pawn quite far: 16 b4 \( \text{c7} \) 17 b5 \( \text{b7} \) 18 \( \text{b3} \) \( \text{b6} \) (A.Guseinov-Ristić, Athens 1999) 19 \( \text{fc1} \) ? ±.

b) 15...\( \text{a3} \)! is an important move that prevents the b4 advance and gives Black enough compensation. Next is ...\( \text{c5} \) or ...\( \text{c8} \).

13...\( \text{e5} \)

The knight wants to move to c4.

14 \( \text{b3} \) c4! 15 \( \text{fc1} \)

Unfortunately for White, 15 b4? does not work due to 15...\( \text{xb4} \) 16 \( \text{e4} \) \( \text{a4} \) \( \mp \). This is a critical theme for every Benko player to remember.

15...\( \text{xb3} \) 16 \( \text{axb3} \) (D)

This position occurred in Aseev-Weber, Bad Wiessee 2002. Now:

a) 16...\( \text{c8} \)?! again gives White more than is necessary. 17 b4 \( \text{c7} \) 18 b5 \( \text{b7} \) 19 \( \text{b3} \) ? ±.

b) I recommend 16...\( \text{b6} \)! to avoid White’s b4 advance; only then does Black play ...\( \text{c8} \), maintaining sufficient compensation. Now 17 b4 is met with 17...\( \text{c4} \) 18 b5 \( \text{b7} \) followed by capturing on d2 and ...\( \text{d7} \), etc.

B)

9 \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{bd7} \) (D)

This position can be reached via many different move-orders. But here we see a significant nuance: Black plays ...\( \text{bd7} \) before ...0-0 so that he has the option of 10...\( \text{b6} \) if White plays 10 0-0.
Now White has an important choice: 10 0-0 or 10 \( \text{b}1 \). Nowadays, 10 \( \text{b}1 \) is considered White’s main weapon against the Benko Gambit – it is examined in the next chapter. Its main idea is to fight against 10...\( \text{b}6 \) by 11 b3. But from a strategic viewpoint there are no crucial differences between these lines, so let’s discuss the typical ideas.

White’s main idea is to restrict Black’s queenside counterplay by putting pawns on b3 and a4 and controlling the c4- and b5-squares by \( \text{f}1 \), \( \text{d}2 \) and \( \text{b}5 \) or with his rooks. If White achieves this, Black is usually worse, which is why Black’s main idea is to get in first with his counterplay. This normally involves ...c4 (typically once White has played b3, but sometimes even with the pawn on b2), after which there are three main scenarios:

1) White takes on c4 and Black gets three open or half-open files;

2) White plays b4 and Black tries to blockade the pawns on the a4- and b5-squares;

3) White ignores ...c4 and carries on with his plan. Then the main worry for Black is the \( \text{d}4 \)-c6 manoeuvre; if it’s impossible then usually Black is fine.

But sometimes (usually in 10 0-0 lines) Black can counter the b3 idea either by placing his knight on c4, intending to meet b3 with ...\( \text{a}3 \), or creating pressure on the c3-knight with his queen and bishop. For White it’s highly desirable to prevent the black knight from reaching c4. But if it is already there, he can try to force it away with b3 (he may first play a3 to avoid the a-pawn being blockaded by ...\( \text{a}3 \)). Another way to prevent the white pawns from advancing is to place a queen or rook on a3 or b3 (after b3 or a3 is played). Of course, Black also has the idea of ...f5 to undermine the d5-pawn, which tends to be especially effective after a certain amount of simplification. Black also has plenty of tactical possibilities, which I shall highlight throughout the text and in the exercises in Chapter 18.

10 0-0 \( \text{b}6 \)! (D)
This move is the reason why White mostly prefers 10 $\textit{b}1$ instead of 10 0-0. The nuance is that White can’t prevent $...\textit{d}c4$ by playing $b3$. While he can also counter this idea by $\textit{d}2$, it looks a bit too awkward to give White an advantage. Here are our main lines:

**B1:** 11 $\textit{d}2$ 182

**B2:** 11 $\textit{e}1$ 183

**B3:** 11 $\textit{b}1$ 184

**B4:** 11 $\textit{e}1$ 186

The last of these is the most popular continuation.

White hasn’t even tried 11 $b3$?! in practice, but we should first verify that this move doesn’t work:

a) The natural 11...$\textit{e}4$? is met with a typical sacrifice: 12 $\textit{xe}4$! $\textit{x}a1$ 13 $\textit{h}6$, when the black bishop can only avoid exchange by moving to a3, which is obviously unattractive. Then 13...$\textit{xf}6$ 14 $\textit{xf}6+$ $\textit{xf}6$ 15 $\textit{d}2 \pm$ is unpleasant for Black; his king is trapped in the centre, the h8-rook is out of play for a long time, and White has no weaknesses that might provide targets for counterplay. Alternatively, after 13...$\textit{b}2$ 14 $\textit{d}2$ $\textit{a}3$ 15 $\textit{d}1 \pm$ White defends d5 and plans $\textit{c}3$.

b) 11...$\textit{b}7$! is the most precise reply, as White can’t defend the d5-pawn. Now 12 $e4$? does not work because Black takes on a2 at the end of the line: 12...$\textit{xe}4$ 13 $\textit{xe}4$ $\textit{xa}1$ 14 $\textit{h}6$ $\textit{xa}2 \rightarrow$ followed by $...\textit{xd}5$. That leaves White nothing better than 12 $\textit{b}2$ $\textit{fxd}5 \mp$, when Black is better because of his central pawn-majority.

**B1)**

11 $\textit{d}2$

White seeks to prevent $...\textit{c}4$.

11...0-0 12 $\textit{c}2$

12 $\textit{e}1$ transposes to Line B42.

White has the interesting idea 12 $\textit{b}1$ (introduced in Dydyshko-Shereshevsky, Minsk 1978), preparing $b3$. But Black has the typical idea of capturing the d3-square; with the new move 12...$\textit{b}7$!? Black encourages his opponent to play e4:

a) 13 $\textit{b}3$?! leaves the knight even clumsier than it is on d2. Then I like 13...$\textit{d}7$! and 14...$\textit{a}4$ with a strong initiative. The game Ju Wenjun-Khairullin, Moscow 2012 (played after I wrote this section of the book) featured instead 13...$\textit{c}7$, which turned out OK, but seems less pointed.

b) 13 $e4$ $\textit{a}6$ 14 $\textit{e}1$ $\textit{fd}7$ directs the knight to the d3-square; meanwhile the c3-knight is attacked and White can’t play $b3$. 15 $a4$ (preparing $\textit{f}1$, which is impossible right now: after 15 $\textit{f}1$?! $\textit{xf}1$ 16 $\textit{xf}1$ $\textit{xc}3$ 17 $\textit{xc}3$ $\textit{xa}2 \mp$ Black is better) 15...$\textit{e}5$ 16 $\textit{f}1$ $\textit{d}7$! (intending $...\textit{xf}1$ and $...\textit{xa}4$) 17 $b3$ $\textit{xf}1$ and then:

b1) 18 $\textit{xf}1$ $f5$! and here:

b11) 19 $\textit{xf}5$! $\textit{xf}5$ 20 $\textit{f}4$ $\textit{g}4$ $\mp$ and the d5-pawn falls. Here’s what happens if White tries to defend it: 21 $\textit{d}2$? (better is 21 $\textit{c}1$!!) 21...$g5$ 22 $\textit{e}3$ (22 $\textit{e}3$ $\textit{e}5$ --) 22...$\textit{g}6$! 23 $\textit{xe}4$ $\textit{xf}4$ 24 $h3$ $h5$ --.

b12) 19 $f4$ $\textit{g}4$ 20 $\textit{b}5$ $\textit{xe}4$ 21 $\textit{c}2$ $\textit{f}5$ 22 $\textit{xe}4$ $\textit{xe}4$ 23 $\textit{xe}4$ $\textit{xd}5$ =.

b2) 18 $\textit{xf}1$ $f5$! 19 $f3$ $c4$. Black undermines everything and stands well.
12...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{b7}}!
Again Black forces a weakening of the d3-square.

\textbf{13 \textcolor{red}{e4} a6 14 d1 \textcolor{red}{g4} (D) }

14...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{f7}}?! is not so good since it allows 15 b3, as in Burmakin-Khalifman, Russian Ch, St Petersburg 1998.

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

15 \textcolor{red}{f3}
This prevents ...\textcolor{red}{e5} but allows ...\textcolor{red}{c4}. 15 b3?? loses to 15...\textcolor{red}{d4} 16 \textcolor{red}{f3} \textcolor{red}{xf2}+ 17 \textcolor{red}{h1} \textcolor{red}{e3} –+. 15 ...\textcolor{red}{c4}

Black’s pieces are very active while White has managed to play neither b3 nor a4. 16 h3 \textcolor{red}{ge5} 17 \textcolor{red}{xe5} \textcolor{red}{xe5} (17...\textcolor{red}{xe5} is also possible, although it gives White an important tempo to develop his pieces: 18 \textcolor{red}{h6} \textcolor{red}{e8} 19 \textcolor{red}{ac1} \textcolor{red}{a5}) 18 \textcolor{red}{b1} (or 18 b3 \textcolor{red}{a5} 19 \textcolor{red}{b2} c4 with compensation) 18...\textcolor{red}{a5} 19 \textcolor{red}{g5} \textcolor{red}{f6} (Iordachescu-Grischuk, European Team Ch, Porto Carras 2011) and White again prepares b3, slowly pushing Black’s pieces back), and now:

\textbf{11 \textcolor{red}{f7}!}

Rapidly transferring the f6-knight to c4 looks the most logical response. You’d expect 11...0–0 also to work well, but White may gain some advantage by 12 \textcolor{red}{c2} \textcolor{red}{c4} (bringing the second knight to c4 is a bit late now: 12...\textcolor{red}{fd7} 13 \textcolor{red}{e3} \textcolor{red}{c4} 14 \textcolor{red}{xc4} \textcolor{red}{xc4} 15 \textcolor{red}{c2} \textcolor{red}{a5} 16 \textcolor{red}{d2} ± and White prepares to push Black back with the typical plan of b3 and a4) 13 \textcolor{red}{e3} \textcolor{red}{b6} (13...\textcolor{red}{a5} 14 \textcolor{red}{xc4} \textcolor{red}{xc4} 15 \textcolor{red}{d2} \textcolor{red}{d7} 16 \textcolor{red}{c2} ± is the same position as we saw in the previous bracket; 13...\textcolor{red}{xe3} 14 \textcolor{red}{xe3} \textcolor{red}{g4} 15 \textcolor{red}{d2} ± and White again prepares b3, slowly pushing Black’s pieces back), and now:

\begin{itemize}
\item a) 14 \textcolor{red}{xc4} \textcolor{red}{xc4} 15 b3? \textcolor{red}{xb3} ±.
\item b) 14 b3!? is possible, but Black copes with it here thanks to some tricky tactics: 14...\textcolor{red}{xe3} 15 \textcolor{red}{xe3} \textcolor{red}{g4} 16 \textcolor{red}{d2} c4! and now:
\begin{itemize}
\item b1) 17 \textcolor{red}{b1}? \textcolor{red}{xc3} 18 \textcolor{red}{xc3} \textcolor{red}{e3}!
\item 19 fxe3 (with the rook on b1, 19 \textcolor{red}{d4}?
\end{itemize}
\end{itemize}
is less successful for White: 19...\( \text{a7} \times d1 \)
20 \( \text{a7} \times b6 \) \( \text{a7} \times c3 \) 21 \( \text{a7} \times b2 \) \( \text{a7} \times e2+ \! \! + \) 22 \( \text{a7} \times e2 \) \( \text{a7} \times b3 \) \( \text{a7} \times e2+ \! \! + \) 19...\( \text{c7} \times e3 \! \! \! + \) 20 \( \text{a7} \times h1 \) \( \text{a7} \times c3 \) \( \text{a7} \times e2 \)

b2) 17 \( \text{a7} \times c4 \) \( \text{a7} \times c4 \) 18 \( \text{a7} \times c4 \) \( \text{a7} \times e3! \) 19 \( \text{a7} \times d4 \) (19 \( \text{f7} \times e3? \) \( \text{a7} \times e3+ \! \! \! + \) 20 \( \text{a7} \times h2 \) \( \text{a7} \times c3 \) \( \text{a7} \times e2 \)
19...\( \text{a7} \times d1 \) 20 \( \text{a7} \times b6 \) \( \text{a7} \times c3 \) 21 \( \text{a7} \times b2 \) \( \text{a7} \times b3 \) = and then ...\( \text{a7} \times b7 \) and ...\( \text{a7} \times b5 \) with a safe endgame.

c) 14 \( \text{a7} \times c2 \) \( \text{a7} \times f8 \) and now 15 \( \text{a7} \times b3 \) \( \text{a7} \times e3 \) \( \text{a7} \times g4 \) 17 \( \text{a7} \times d2 \) \( \text{a7} \times f6 \) \( \text{a7} \times e3 \) \( \text{a7} \times d4 \) gave Black sufficient compensation in Ljubojević-Carlsen, Amsterdam 2006. However, the new move 15 \( \text{a7} \times b1 \)!?, intending to take on c4 and then play b3, looks promising for White. As always, when planning your repertoire, you must be on the lookout for improvements for the opponent over standard theory.

12 \( \text{a7} \times c2 \) \( \text{a7} \times c4 \) 13 \( \text{a7} \times e3 \) \( \text{a7} \times d6 \) \( \text{a7} \times d \)

Right on time! Let me repeat: the main reason why 10 \( \text{a7} \times b1 \) is more dangerous than 10 0-0-0 is that it does not allow Black to bring his knight to c4. After 10 0-0 he has time to do so, which changes the whole nature of the position. That’s why I propose to take full advantage by substituting one knight for the other.

14 \( \text{a7} \times c2 \)

14 \( \text{a7} \times c4 \) \( \text{a7} \times c4 \) 15 \( \text{a7} \times a4+ \) is not dangerous in view of 15...\( \text{a7} \times d7 \) 16 \( \text{a7} \times c2 \) \( \text{a7} \times b7 \), and now:

a) 17 \( \text{a7} \times a4+ \) \( \text{a7} \times d7 \) repeats.

b) 17 \( \text{a7} \times b1 \) 0-0 18 \( \text{a7} \times b3 \) \( \text{a7} \times b4 \) 19 \( \text{a7} \times c4 \) \( \text{a7} \times x3 \) 20 \( \text{a7} \times x3 \) \( \text{a7} \times c3 \) is a fully acceptable endgame for Black because of White’s weak pawns. For example, 21 \( \text{a7} \times g5 \) \( \text{a7} \times f6 \) 22 \( \text{a7} \times f1 \) \( \text{a7} \times b8 \) 23 \( \text{a7} \times b8+ \) \( \text{a7} \times b8 \) 24 \( \text{a7} \times x3 \) \( \text{a7} \times xg5 \) = followed by ...\( \text{a7} \times b7 \) or ...\( \text{a7} \times b4 \).

c) 17 a3!? (since b3 is answered by ...\( \text{a7} \times b4 \), White defends the b4-square and prepares b3) 17...0-0 18 \( \text{a7} \times f8! \) (this nice piece of tactics maintains the balance in convincing fashion) 19 \( \text{a7} \times b1 \) (19 \( \text{a7} \times c4? \) \( \text{a7} \times b3 \) 20 \( \text{a7} \times b3 \) \( \text{a7} \times b3 \) \( \text{a7} \times e2 \)
19...\( \text{a7} \times d1 \) 20 \( \text{a7} \times b4 \) (the only way to defend the pawn) 20...\( \text{a7} \times x3 \) 21 \( \text{a7} \times b4 \) \( \text{a7} \times c7! \) 22 \( \text{a7} \times b5 \) \( \text{a7} \times b1 \) 23 \( \text{a7} \times b1 \) \( \text{a7} \times x3 \) \( \text{a7} \times c3 \) = Kiriakov-R.Adamson, Minneapolis 2005.

14...\( \text{a7} \times e3 \) 15 \( \text{a7} \times e3 \) \( \text{a7} \times c4 \) 16 \( \text{a7} \times f4 \) \( \text{a7} \times a5 \)

Again Black postpones castling but prevents b3. 17 \( \text{a7} \times c1 \) 0-0 18 \( \text{a7} \times e1 \) (or 18 \( \text{a7} \times b3 \) \( \text{a7} \times a3 \) 19 \( \text{a7} \times d2 \) \( \text{a7} \times b8 \) intending ...\( \text{a7} \times c4 \) 18...\( \text{a7} \times b8 \) 19 \( \text{a7} \times b3 \) \( \text{a7} \times a3 \) 20 \( \text{a7} \times d2 \) \( \text{a7} \times c4 \) with compensation, Doroshkevich-Platonov, Cheliabinsk 1975.

B3)

11 \( \text{a7} \times b1 \)

Now this move comes too late due to...
Black attacks both the a2-pawn and the d5-pawn.

11...\( \text{\textit{c4}} \) \((D)\)

\begin{center}
\textbf{W}
\end{center}

... 

12 \( \text{\textit{d2}} \)

Or:

a) 12 \( \text{\textit{e1}} \text{\textit{xa2}} \) 13 \( \text{\textit{xa2}} \text{\textit{xa2}} \) 14 \( \text{\textit{c2}} \text{\textit{a8}} \)? (a new move; White gets an initiative after 14...\( \text{\textit{a8}} \)?! 15 \( \text{\textit{b4}} \text{\textit{e4}} \) 16 \( \text{\textit{d2}} \) 0-0 17 \( \text{\textit{bxc5}} \text{\textit{xc5}} \) 18 \( \text{\textit{b4}} \) \( \text{\textit{dxthe e6}} \) Khurtsidze-Izoria, Batumi 2003, but it’s not clear why Black should bring his rook back instead of making a more useful move) 15 \( \text{\textit{b4}} \text{\textit{a4}} \) 16 \( \text{\textit{d2}} \) 0-0 17 \( \text{\textit{bxc5}} \text{\textit{xc5}} \) 18 \( \text{\textit{b4}} \) \( \text{\textit{d7}} \) Khurtsidze-Izoria, Batumi 2003, but it’s not clear why Black should bring his rook back instead of making a more useful move) 16...\( \text{\textit{c4}} \) is somewhat unclear, but this position looks much more promising for Black than the one that Izoria got.

b) 12 \( \text{\textit{b3}} \)?! \( \text{\textit{fxd5}} \) 13 \( \text{\textit{xd5}} \text{\textit{xd5}} \) 14 \( \text{\textit{c2}} \) 0-0 15 \( \text{\textit{e4}} \text{\textit{e6}} \) Cacho Reigadas-Vallejo Pons, Spanish Ch, Palma de Mallorca 2009. Black’s chances are better due to his superior pawn-structure.

c) 12 \( \text{\textit{b4}} \text{\textit{bxd5}} \) 13 \( \text{\textit{xd5}} \text{\textit{xd5}} \) and now:

\begin{itemize}
  \item c1) White does not have any real prospects of advancing his queenside pawns, so 14 \( \text{\textit{a4}} \)?! just wastes time. After 14...\( \text{\textit{e4}} \) 15 \( \text{\textit{b3}} \) 0-0 16 \( \text{\textit{bxc5}} \) (\( \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} \) Sosonko-Ree, Dutch Ch, Eindhoven 1993) 16...\( \text{\textit{dxthe}} \) Black’s pieces are clearly more active.
  \item c2) After 14 \( \text{\textit{bxc5}} \)?! \( \text{\textit{dxthe}} \) 15 \( \text{\textit{e3}} \) \( \text{\textit{c4}} \) Black is fine.
  \item d) 12 \( \text{\textit{g5}} \)?! leads to an interesting position after the forcing line 12...\( \text{\textit{xa2}} \) 13 \( \text{\textit{xa2}} \text{\textit{xa2}} \) 14 \( \text{\textit{b3}} \text{\textit{a7}} \) 15 \( \text{\textit{b5}} \) !? \( \text{\textit{bd7}} \) 16 \( \text{\textit{e6}} \) !? \( \text{\textit{fxe6}} \) 17 \( \text{\textit{dxthe}} \) 0-0 18 \( \text{\textit{exd7}} \text{\textit{xd7}} \). White’s main hopes here are pinned on the pawn-break b4, which would open new lines for his pieces. After 19 \( \text{\textit{c4+}} \) (19 \( \text{\textit{xd7}} \text{\textit{xd7}} \) 20 \( \text{\textit{b4}} \text{\textit{b8}} \) 21 \( \text{\textit{e3}} \) \( \text{\textit{d4}} = \) 19...\( \text{\textit{e6}} \)?! (this new move has the idea of rearranging Black’s central pawns onto light squares; 19...\( \text{\textit{h8}} \) 20 \( \text{\textit{d2}} \) intending b4 gave White the initiative in Fochtlter-Ristić, Schwäbisch Gmünd 1996). Here is a sample line: 20 \( \text{\textit{f4}} \text{\textit{c8}} \) 21 \( \text{\textit{e4}} \text{\textit{d5}} \) 22 \( \text{\textit{exd5}} \text{\textit{xd5}} \) 23 \( \text{\textit{we2}} \) c4 24 \( \text{\textit{fd1}} \) \( \text{\textit{b7}} \) with unclear play.
\end{itemize}
18 b4 17 e5 dxe5 18 \( \text{\texttt{d}d1} \) b8 19 e8 \( \text{\texttt{a}xa8} \) xa8 20 e3 is much better for White) 16 d3 \( \text{\texttt{c}c4} \) 17 xc4 a5 18 b4! xb4 19 xb4 xb4 20 xb4 cxb4 21 d2 0-0 =.

15...\( \text{\texttt{d}d7} \) 16 b4?! \( \text{\texttt{a}a4}! \)

Now:

a) 17 \( \text{\texttt{e}e4} \) f5! (a new move, improving over the 17...0-0 chosen in Wang Rui-Situru, Singapore 2006; the weakening of the e6-square is no big deal since Black is going to win material) 18 g5 \( \text{\texttt{c}c3} \) 19 d3 f6 20 e6 b6 \( = \). Black wins a pawn or an exchange.

b) 17 b3 \( \text{\texttt{c}c3} \) 18 d3 cxb4 19 xb4 c5 20 e3 a5 \( = \) Stojanović-Perunović, Serbian Ch, Belgrade 2007. Black has pressure.

B4)

11 e1 0-0 (D)

Again White has a wide choice. We examine:

B41: 12 h3?! 186
B42: 12 d2 187
B43: 12 e4 188
B44: 12 f4 190

12 b1 allows Black to win a pawn back by 12...c4 13 e4 xxa2 14 xxa2 (14 a1? xd5! \( = \)) 14...xaxa2 15 b3 a4 16 d3 c7 \( = \), with a comfortable position.

B41)

12 h3?!

Here this move is inappropriate since the f6-knight can reach the e5-square via both d7 and g4.

12...\( \text{\texttt{d}d7} \)

Unfortunately, Black is unable to keep a knight on c4: 12...\( \text{\texttt{c}c4}?! \) 13 c2 d7 14 d2 b6 (14...db6 15 b3 xd2 16 xd2 \( = \) followed by a4) 15 xc4 xc4 16 d2 a6 17 b1 (intending b3 and a4) 17...c4 (Black has prevented b3 but now White has another plan) 18 e3 a5 19 ed1 \( = \) and d4, Turova-A.Muzychuk, Bucharest (women) 2011.

13 c2 c7!

Black now threatens ...xc3. He cannot grab the d5-pawn immediately: 13...xc3? 14 bxc3 xd5 15 h6 e8 16 d2 f6 17 e4 b6 18 e5 dxe5 19 xxa8 xa8 20 xe5 \( \pm \).
14  \( \text{\check{d}} \text{d2} \)

Or:

a) 14 4a4?! \( \text{\check{a}} \text{c}3 \) 15 bxc3 \( \text{\check{x}} \text{d}5 \) 16 \( \text{\check{h}} \text{h}6 \) \( \text{\check{f}} \text{b}8 \) 17 \( \text{\check{d}} \text{d2} \) and now Black has
17...\( \text{\check{b}} \text{b7} \). In the line after 13...\( \text{\check{a}} \text{c}3 \) this move was impossible because
White could reply c4, exploiting the loose bishop on b7.

b) 14 \( \text{\check{d}} \text{d1} \) \( \text{\check{f}} \text{b}8 \) (Black can’t main-tain a knight on c4: 14...\( \text{\check{c}} \text{c}4 \)?! 15 \( \text{\check{d}} \text{d2} \) \( \text{\check{d}} \text{b}6 \) 16 b3! \( \text{\check{x}} \text{d}2 \) 17 \( \text{\check{x}} \text{d}2 \) \( \text{\check{c}} \text{c}4 \) followed by a4, \( \text{\check{a}} \text{ab}1 \), etc.) 15 \( \text{\check{d}} \text{d2} \)
\( \text{\check{b}} \text{b7} \) (intending to take on c3 and then
don d5) 16 \( \text{\check{d}} \text{e}4 \) \( \text{\check{f}} \text{f}6 \) 17 \( \text{\check{x}} \text{f}6+ \) \( \text{\check{x}} \text{f}6 \) 18 \( \text{\check{h}} \text{h}6 \) (18 b3? \( \text{\check{a}} \text{x}2 \) 17)
18...\( \text{\check{c}} \text{c}4 \) 19 b3 and here:

b1) After 19...\( \text{\check{a}} \text{a}3 \) 20 \( \text{\check{c}} \text{c}1! \) (20 \( \text{\check{d}} \text{d2} \) \( \text{\check{b}} \text{b}5 \) 21 \( \text{\check{e}} \text{e}4 \) \( \text{\check{x}} \text{a}1 \) 22 \( \text{\check{x}} \text{a}1 \)
\( \text{\check{d}} \text{d}4 \) 23 e3 \( \text{\check{f}} \text{f}5 \) 24 \( \text{\check{g}} \text{g}5 \) \( \text{\check{b}} \text{b}4 \) Hort-
P-Cramling, London {Veterans vs La-dies 1996} 20...\( \text{\check{b}} \text{b}5 \) 21 \( \text{\check{d}} \text{d2} \) \( \text{\check{d}} \text{d}4 \) 22
\( \text{\check{f}} \text{f}1 \) \( \text{\check{c}} \text{c}7 \) 23 \( \text{\check{b}} \text{b}1 \) it’s not so clear what
to do for Black, though his position is
fine.

b2) 19...\( \text{\check{b}} \text{b}4 \) is clearer. After 20
\( \text{\check{a}} \text{a}1 \) \( \text{\check{a}} \text{a}3 \) 21 \( \text{\check{d}} \text{d}2 \) c4 22 \( \text{\check{e}} \text{e}4 \) \( \text{\check{h}} \text{h}8 \)
Black has definite compensation.

We now return to 14 \( \text{\check{d}} \text{d2} \) (\( D \)):

14...\( \text{\check{b}} \text{b7} \)

I recommend this new move (vary-ing from the game Hort-Ristic, Bun-
desliga 1998/9). Black forces White to play e4, since otherwise there would follow ...\( \text{\check{a}} \text{c}3 \) and ...
\( \text{\check{x}} \text{d}5 \).

15 e4 \( \text{\check{a}} \text{a}6 \)

We see this idea repeatedly in the
Benko Gambit – first ...\( \text{\check{b}} \text{b7} \) provokes
White to play e4 and then the bishop
moves back to a6 to probe the weak-
ened d3-square. After 16 \( \text{\check{f}} \text{f}1 \) c4 fol-
lowed by ...\( \text{\check{e}} \text{e}5 \), ...
\( \text{\check{f}} \text{c}8 \) and ...
\( \text{\check{d}} \text{d}3 \), Black is OK.

B42)

12 \( \text{\check{d}} \text{d2} \)

White immediately stops ...
\( \text{\check{c}} \text{c}4 \).

12...\( \text{\check{f}} \text{d}7 \) 13 \( \text{\check{c}} \text{c}2 \) \( \text{\check{b}} \text{b}7 \)

This is a new move, deviating from
Antonsen-Skytte, Borup 2010. Black
threatens ...
\( \text{\check{a}} \text{c}3 \).

14 \( \text{\check{b}} \text{b3} \) ?

Or:

a) After 14 e4 Black again gets
typical play by 14...\( \text{\check{a}} \text{a}6 \), intending to
capture the d3-square. After 15 \( \text{\check{f}} \text{f}1 \)
\( \text{\check{x}} \text{f}1 \) 16 \( \text{\check{x}} \text{f}1 \) \( \text{\check{e}} \text{e}5 \), intending ...
\( \text{\check{c}} \text{c}4 \) or ...
\( \text{\check{d}} \text{d}3 \), Black is OK.

b) 14 a4!? is interesting: White re-
turns a pawn and tries to seize the ini-
tiative. However, 14...\( \text{\check{a}} \text{x}3 \) 15 bxc3
\( \text{\check{x}} \text{d}5 \) 16 e4 \( \text{\check{e}} \text{e}6 \) 17 a5 \( \text{\check{e}} \text{e}5 \)!
(intend-ing ...
\( \text{\check{c}} \text{c}4 \)) 18 f4 \( \text{\check{c}} \text{c}6 \) (18...
\( \text{\check{e}} \text{c}4 \) loses to 19 f5! – )
19 f5 \( \text{\check{d}} \text{d}7 \) 20 a6
\( \text{\check{c}} \text{c}8 \) (Black is OK) 21 fxg6 hxg6 22 e5
\( \text{\check{x}} \text{e}5 \) 23 \( \text{\check{a}} \text{a}8 \) \( \text{\check{a}} \text{x}8 \) gives Black
strong compensation for the exchange.

14...\( \text{\check{c}} \text{c}7 \)

Connecting rooks.

15 a4 c4 16 \( \text{\check{b}} \text{b}5 \)
Otherwise Black takes on c3 and d5.

16...a6 17 c6
17 b4 c5 followed by ...bd7 and ...fb8 gives Black sufficient compensation.
17...a7! (D)

Black traps the queen but White collects enough material for it:

a) 18 b5? b8 19 a5 c8 20 c3 (20 axb6? xb6 ⊕) 20...xc3 21 bxc3 xc6 22 dxc6 b5! ⊕.

b) 18 a5 xc3 19 axb6 xb6 20 bxc3 fc8 21 f1 xc6 22 dxc6 c7 23 e3 e6 24 eb1 c8 with a complicated position.

B43)
12 e4
This is a logical consequence of White’s previous move. White defends d5 but weakens the a6-f1 diagonal (especially the d3-square).
12...fd7 13 c2
An alternative is 13 f1 c4:

a) 14 xc4 xc4 15 f4 xc3! 16 bxc3 and then:

a1) 16...f6?! (too optimistic) 17 d2 a6 (there is no immediate tactical punishment for 17...xa2?! ± but I wouldn’t be happy about playing a position with such a bishop) 18 h6 f7 19 f4 ± Antić-Rogers, Tuggeranong 2007.

a2) 16...a3!? is (or should be – the move is untried!) the whole idea of exchanging the g7-bishop – Black blockades all White’s pawns. 17 e5 (17 d2?! a5 ⊕) 17...dxe5 18 xe5 xe5 19 xe5 f6 20 e1 xd5 21 c7! xc7 22 xd5+ g7 with an equal endgame.

b) 14 c2 de5 15 xe5 xe5 16 g2 c4 gives Black ideal compensation as his position has no flaws, Escobedo Tinajero-Aldama, Linares 1997.
13...c4 (D)

Black has placed a knight on c4 and just two moves are left before he can be completely happy: ...a5 and ...fb8. Let’s see how White can interfere with this plan:
14 f1
Or:

a) There is no sense in playing 14 a4?! at such a late stage of Black’s initiative. This idea can be effective when White can support the a4-pawn by playing b3, but here he has no such option. 14...\=wa5 15 \=e5 \=fb8 (Black creates the threat of ...\=xb2) 16 \=e2 (16 \=f1? \=xb2! 17 \=xe6 \=xc3 18 \=c2 \=xa1 20 \=xa1 \=xf1 21 \=xf1 \=b6 \=i and ...\=xa4 with an extra pawn) 16...\=b4?! (Black plans ...\=b3 with a better endgame) 17 \=e1 \=b3 \=f Mulyar-Gareev, Philadelphia 2011.

b) 14 \=d1?! (moving the rook from f1 to e1 and then to d1 creates a strange impression) 14...\=wa5 15 \=d2? (missing a typical tactic; 15 a4 transposes to line ‘a’) 15...\=a3! 16 bxa3 \=xc3 17 \=xc3 \=xc3 18 \=b1 c4 19 \=f3 \=fb8 \=f Vijayalakshmi-Tregubov, Gibraltar 2007) 17...\=la3 18 \=d2 \=lb5! 18...\=xb5 \=b6 \=i and ...\=xa4 with an extra pawn) 16...\=b4?! (Black plans ...\=b3 with a better endgame) 17 \=e1 \=b3 \=f Mulyar-Gareev, Philadelphia 2011.

c) 14 \=f4?! weakens the b2-square and gains nothing to make up for this. After 14...\=wa5 it’s important to evacuate the rook from a1:

c1) 15 \=e1! \=fb8 16 b3 (16 \=ab1 \=b4! {attacking b2} 17 \=f1 \=xb2 18 \=xa6 \=xa6 \=f Vijayalakshmi-Tregubov, Gibraltar 2007) 16...\=a3 17 \=d2 \=b5! 18 \=xb5 \=xb5 19 \=xa5 \=xa5 \=f. Black wins the pawn back and gets a better endgame.

c2) 15 \=ac1 \=fb8 16 b3 (White finally forces the c4-knight back, but now ...c4 is coming) 16...\=ce5 (threatening ...\=d3) and now:

c21) 17 \=ce5 \=ce5 and here:

c211) 18 \=ce5 (when White exchanges his dark-squared bishop like this, it is usually a signal that he has decided to fight for a draw) 18...\=xe5 19 f4 \=d4+ 20 \=h1 c4?! (20...\=xc3 21 \=xc3 \=xa2 \=f is also possible) 21 \=e2? (21 \=d2?) 21...cxb3 22 ab3 \=c8 23 \=d1 \=xc1 24 \=xc1 \=c8! (24...\=xe2? 25 \=xe2 \=b4 \=f Topover-Vasiukov, Voronezh 1997) 25 \=d1 \=e3 \=f with total domination and inevitable threats.

c212) 18 \=ed1 c4! 19 bxc4 \=xc4 20 \=f1 \=c8 \=f Sriram-Ganguly, New Delhi 2007.

c22) 17 \=ed1 \=xf3+ 18 \=xf3 c4! (Black develops his initiative) 19 bxc4 \=xc4 20 \=e2 (Ruck-Ehlvest, European Ch, Ohrid 2001) 20...\=xa2! 21 \=d4 \=xd4 22 \=xd4 \=c5 \=f intending ...\=b3; Black still has an initiative.

d) After 14 \=g5 h6 15 \=f4 \=wa5, if we compare with line ‘c’ (14 \=f4?!) Black has played the extra move...h6. This may provide an extra object for White to attack, but on the other hand Black gets the option of ...g5 to push the f4-bishop back. 16 \=ac1 g5! 17 \=e3 (or 17 \=d2 \=de5 18 \=xe5 \=xe5 19 \=e3 \=d4 20 \=ee1 \=fb8 21 b3 \=xd2 22 \=xd2 c4! gives Black sufficient compensation) 17...\=fb8 18 b3 \=xe3 19 \=xe3 \=d4! 20 \=ee1 \=e5 21 \=xe5 \=xe5 followed by ...c4 leaves Black fine, Garza Marco-Vallejo Pons, Spanish Ch, Palma de Mallorca 2009.

14...\=wa5 15 \=xc4

Or 15 \=d2 \=xd2 16 \=xd2, and now:

a) 16...\=fb8?! is too slow due to 17 \=xa6 \=xa6 18 a4! (intending \=b5 to cover the sensitive spots on White’s queenside) 18...\=b4 19 b3 \=ab8 20 \=ab1 \=xc3 21 \=xc3 f6 22 \=g2...

b) I propose the new continuation 16...\( \text{\textit{d5!}} \), aiming to occupy the d3-square. After 17 f4 (17 a4 c4! followed by ...\( \text{\textit{d3}} \) gives Black a very promising position) 17...\( \text{\textit{x}} \)xf1 18 \( \text{\textit{x}} \)xf1 \( \text{\textit{g4}} \) 19 \( \text{\textit{c4}} \) \( \text{\textit{a6}} \) 20 b3 White appears to have blocked his opponent’s play on the queenside but now problems come from the other side: 20...\( \text{\textit{d4}} \) 21 \( \text{\textit{h1}} \) (not 21 \( \text{\textit{g2??}} \) \( \text{\textit{xc4}} \) 22 bxc4 \( \text{\textit{e3}} + - + \) ) 21...f5! 22 exf5 \( \text{\textit{xf5}} \) intending ...\( \text{\textit{h5}} \).

15...\( \text{\textit{xc4}} \) 16 \( \text{\textit{g5}} \)

The e7-pawn is attacked, but this is the only threat White can create here.

16 \( \text{\textit{d2}} \) \( \text{\textit{a6}} \) 17 \( \text{\textit{f4}} \) \( \text{\textit{f8}} \) 18 e5 \( \text{\textit{d3}} \)?! (in Gerusel-Miles, Bad Lauterberg 1977 Black played 18...\( \text{\textit{b7?!}} \) and White for some reason believed that the pawn was untouchable; in fact it can be taken: 19 exd6! exd6 20 \( \text{\textit{xd6}} \) \( \text{\textit{e8}} \) 21 \( \text{\textit{x}} \)xe8+ \( \text{\textit{xe8}} \) 22 \( \text{\textit{a4}} \) ±) 19 \( \text{\textit{d2}} \) \( \text{\textit{f5}} \) with multiple ideas: ...

19...\( \text{\textit{g4}} \) (to force White to take on d6), ...

...c4, ...

18...\( \text{\textit{c5}} \)-d3 or doubling rooks on the b-file. Black has sufficient compensation.

16...\( \text{\textit{fe8}} \) 17 \( \text{\textit{ac1}} \) (D)

White wants to play b3, and Black should react to this.

17...\( \text{\textit{xc3}} \)!

A Benko player should always remember the option of exchanging the dark-squared bishop! His pawn-structure is generally solid enough that the weakness of the dark squares around his king can be patched up before it becomes a problem. Of course, Black should be certain that the gains he is making are worth surrendering such a beautiful bishop.

17...h6?! does not disturb White’s plan: 18 \( \text{\textit{e3}} \) \( \text{\textit{h7}} \) 19 b3 \( \text{\textit{a6}} \) 20 \( \text{\textit{d2}} \) ± Grabarczyk-Heberla, Polish Ch, Krakow 2006.

18 \( \text{\textit{xc3}} \) \( \text{\textit{xa2}} \)

Next comes...f6 to block the a1-h8 diagonal and stop e5. Black is fine.

B44)

12 \( \text{\textit{f4}} \) \( \text{\textit{h5}} \) 13 \( \text{\textit{g5}} \) h6 14 \( \text{\textit{c1}} \)

White has also tried 14 \( \text{\textit{d2}} \) \( \text{\textit{c4}} \), but without his dark-squared bishop, he cannot expect any advantage:

a) 15 b3 \( \text{\textit{cxd2}} \) 16 \( \text{\textit{xd2}} \) \( \text{\textit{f6}} \) 17 \( \text{\textit{ac1}} \) h5 (with this new move, Black removes the pawn from the gaze of White’s queen and awaits White’s next move before deciding on further action; 17...\( \text{\textit{d7}} \) was chosen instead in Engqvist-T. Ernst, Swedish Ch, Sundsvall 1989) 18 e3 (18 e4?! \( \text{\textit{g4}} \) intending ...\( \text{\textit{h6}} \) ) 18...\( \text{\textit{a5}} \) gives Black full compensation; for example, 19 \( \text{\textit{e4}} \) \( \text{\textit{xd2}} \) 20 \( \text{\textit{fxd2}} \) \( \text{\textit{d7}} \).

b) 15 \( \text{\textit{c1}} \) \( \text{\textit{xd2}} \) (a new move, deviating from K. Kakhiani-J. Polgar,
World Under-16 Girls Ch, Rio Gallegos 1986) 16 \text{\texttt{\texttt{W}}x}d2 (16 \text{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}xd2 \text{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}a5 with compensation) 16...\text{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}f6 17 e4 \text{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}d7 intending ...\text{\texttt{W}}b6 and ...\text{\texttt{Q}}f8.

We now return to 14 \text{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}c1 (D):

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
% Chessboard setup
% ...}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

16...\text{\texttt{Q}}f8 (D)

White has no safe and effective way to relieve the pressure on his position and develop his pieces.

17 b3

With 17 \text{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}b1 White hopes to play b3 without making moves like \text{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}db1. However, 17...\text{\texttt{W}}a5! prevents this idea. After 18 \text{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}f3 \text{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}f6 19 b3 White has achieved his basic aim, but at the cost of his dark-squared bishop. 19...\text{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}a3 20 \text{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}xa3 \text{\texttt{W}}xa3 leaves Black with a pleasant game; with the g7-bishop unopposed, White can hardly claim an advantage in these variations.

17...\text{\texttt{W}}a5 18 \text{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}db1

Having covered a3, White will push back the knight from c4. But the price now is two tempi, as the knight will move back to d2 from b1 in due course.

18...\text{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}e5 19 \text{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}b2 c4! 20 \text{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}d2 \text{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}f6

Black can be content with the outcome of the opening. For example, he has healthy compensation after 21 \text{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}ec1 \text{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}fd7 22 \text{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}ab1 \text{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}c5 23 \text{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}a1 h5 (this move emphasizes that White cannot do too much).
15 Benko Main Line with 10 $\text{b}1$

1 d4 $\text{f}6$ 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 a6 5 bxa6 g6 6 $\text{c}3$ $\text{xa}6$ 7 $\text{f}3$ d6 8 g3 $\text{g}7$ 9 $\text{g}2$ $\text{bd}7$

From the previous chapter we are familiar with the main themes of this position and already know that the most precise move for White here is...

10 $\text{b}1$ ($D$)

With this move, White prevents the $\text{b}6$-c4 manoeuvre. Now 10...$\text{b}6$ is going to be met by 11 b3, preventing $\text{c}4$, but I still would recommend this!

10...$\text{b}6$

Since many hours and days were spent on the analysis of other lines, seeking to find a reliable course for Black, let me share with you my thoughts about some of Black’s other options.

In his detailed and highly regarded books, Boris Avrukh discusses the line 10...0-0 11 0-0 $\text{a}5$, but I disagree with some of his conclusions:

a) After 12 $\text{c}2$ $\text{b}6$! Black is able to bring his knight to c4. As we already saw in the previous chapter, this almost always provides enough compensation for the pawn; e.g., 13 $\text{d}1$ $\text{c}4$ 14 $\text{d}2$ $\text{d}7$ 15 $\text{xc}4$ $\text{xc}4$ 16 $\text{d}2$ $\text{xc}3$! 17 $\text{xc}3$ $\text{xa}2$ 18 $\text{d}2$ $\text{b}6$ = Yusupov-Tregubov, Bundesliga 2006/7. The c3-bishop is not really dangerous since the long dark-square diagonal can be blocked at any moment by ...f6.

b) 12 $\text{d}2$ is a more precise move.
12...$\text{fb}8$ 13 $\text{c}2$ and then:

b1) 13...$\text{g}4$ and here:

b11) Avrukh recommends 14 b3, claiming an advantage for White after 14...$\text{a}3$ 15 h3 $\text{ge}5$ 16 $\text{e}1$ $\text{b}6$ 17 $\text{d}1$ $\text{c}8$ 18 $\text{c}2$ $\text{a}5$ 19 a3 $\text{f}5$ 20 $\text{e}4$ $\text{a}6$ 21 g4 (Tunik-Shevelev, Israel 2003). However, here the natural 21...$\text{xe}4$ 22 $\text{xe}4$ c4 appears to give Black sufficient compensation; e.g., 23 $\text{g}2$ $\text{xb}3$ 24 $\text{xb}3$ $\text{bc}4$ 25 $\text{xb}8+\text{xb}8$ 26 $\text{c}1$ $\text{b}2$ 27 $\text{e}1$ $\text{ec}4$. However, any hopes that this might be
the start of a dependable repertoire were dashed when I finally came to the conclusion that (again contrary to Avrukh’s view) White should start with 14 a4!.

b12) Avrukh considers 14 a4! less convincing due to 14...\(\text{\&}g5\) 15 \(\text{\&}xe5 \text{\&}xe5\) 16 b3 \(\text{\&}b4\) (D), when the entry of the queen into a3 threatens to spread disorder among the white forces.

But what happens after 17 \(\text{\&}fc1\)!? (a new move; Avrukh only looks at 17 \(\text{\&}e4\))? White gradually strengthens his queenside before pushing the black queen back; for example, 17...\(\text{\&}a3\) 18 \(\text{\&}f1 \text{\&}b6\) (18...c4? does not help: 19 b4! \(\text{\&}xb4\) 20 \(\text{\&}b5\) \(\text{\&}xb5\) 21 \(\text{\&}xb4\) \(\text{\&}xa4\) 22 \(\text{\&}xa4\) \(\text{\&}xa4\) 23 \(\text{\&}a1\) and White wins) 19 \(\text{\&}g2\)! (in order to avoid checks from f3) 19...\(\text{\&}ab8\) 20 \(\text{\&}b5\)! \(\text{\&}xb5\) 21 \(\text{\&}a1\) \(\text{\&}d3\) (the only move) 22 \(\text{\&}xa3\) \(\text{\&}xc2\) 23 \(\text{\&}xc2\) \(\text{\&}xb3\) 24 \(\text{\&}xb3\) \(\text{\&}xb3\) 25 a5 \(\text{\&}a3\) 26 e3 and White should probably win with accurate play.

b2) On the other hand, I found Avrukh’s line after 13...\(\text{\&}c7\) rather convincing: 14 b3 \(\text{\&}b6\) 15 \(\text{\&}h4 \text{\&}b7\) 16 e4 \(\text{\&}a6\) 17 \(\text{\&}fd1\) (D) and now:

b21) Alterman recommends playing 17...\(\text{\&}g4\), meeting 18 \(\text{\&}f3\) with 18...\(\text{\&}e5?!\) (18...\(\text{\&}d7\) is better, transposing to line ‘b22’) but now White executes his typical plan: 19 \(\text{\&}xe5\) \(\text{\&}xe5\) 20 a4 ± intending \(\text{\&}f1\), again winning control of the b5-square. ...c4 is also impossible due to b4. Black should avoid this type of position.

b22) 17...\(\text{\&}bd7\) 18 \(\text{\&}f3\) \(\text{\&}g4\) 19 a4 \(\text{\&}de5\) 20 \(\text{\&}xe5\) \(\text{\&}xe5\) 21 \(\text{\&}e1\) \(\text{\&}a7\) 22 h3! (D) intending f4.
Although Black has an interesting idea in 22...g5?!, White is still able to get an advantage by 23 f4 gxf4 24 gxf4 \( \mathcal{D} g6 \) 25 \( \mathcal{D} g3! \) \( \mathcal{A} ab7 \) (25...c4?! 26 b4 ±) 26 \( \mathcal{D} f1! \) ±, gaining control of the b5-square. There may be some practical chances here for Black, but it’s not the type of position on which to base your repertoire.

Besides these concrete variations, I tried a lot of other moves for Black, trying to exploit the weakness of d3 but every idea could be met advantageously by White. That’s why I decided to look for the best solution elsewhere. So we return to 10...\( \mathcal{D} b6 \) (D).

Here we consider two main lines, of which the second is the more critical:

A: 11 a4
B: 11 b3

11 0-0 transposes to Line B3 of Chapter 14.

A)
11 a4 (D)

White follows the basic plan of putting pawns on a4 and b3 to block Black’s play on the queenside. The young Magnus Carlsen did very well in the following game where Black didn’t fight against this plan: 11...0-0 12 0-0 \( \mathcal{A} a7 \) 13 b3 \( \mathcal{A} a8 \) 14 \( \mathcal{A} h4 \) \( \mathcal{D} e8 \) 15 \( \mathcal{A} b2 \) \( \mathcal{A} c7 \) 16 \( \mathcal{A} d2 \) \( \mathcal{A} b8 \) 17 \( \mathcal{A} e1 \) \( \mathcal{A} c8 \) 18 e4 c4 19 e5! ± Carlsen-Calzetta Ruiz, Taormina 2003. A more pointed approach is needed:

11...\( \mathcal{A} b7 \)

Black first of all attacks d5 to see how White defends it. If he plays e4, then the a6-f1 diagonal is opened, so the bishop can return to a6, preventing 0-0. If the knight moves to h4, it’s a signal to prepare ...c4 since the knight is further from c6.

12 e4

12 \( \mathcal{A} h4 \) has never been played according to my database. Then:

a) At first I thought Black could get good play by 12...\( \mathcal{W} d7?! \) (attacking a4) but White appears to get the better game by 13 b3 0-0 14 0-0 \( \mathcal{A} fc8 \) (intending ...c4; the immediate 14...c4? does not work because of 15 \( \mathcal{A} e3! \) ±)
15  b2! (after 15 e4  a6 16 e1 g4 the knight heads for d3 via e5, and 17 e2 c4! achieves Black’s basic aim of executing the ...c4 advance in good circumstances; his compensation is obvious) 15...c4 and now 16 a1! ± is a critical move after which I cannot find anything attractive for Black.

b) After 12...0-0 13 0-0 fd7 it becomes clear that White’s a4 advance was premature, as now Black’s pieces easily find targets; e.g., 14 e1 c4 (intending ...c5) 15 c3 c8 16 f3 a5! = and the d5-pawn falls.

12... a6

Now:

a) 13 e5!? needs to be tried out in practice. My analysis runs 13...g4 14 e6 f5 15 a5 c4 16 a4+ f8 17 d1 (defending a5), when I like Black’s compensation after 17...b8, attacking b2. Instead, White appears better after 17...e5?! 18 xe5 xe5 19 f1 f3+ 20 d1 xf1 21 xf1 ±.

b) 13 f1 c8!? (this new move, improving over Epishin-Jones, Deizisau 2003, enables the queen to jump to a6 or h3) 14 b5+ xb5 15 axb5 h3 gives Black sufficient compensation.

B)

11 b3 b7

Again White has two ways to defend his d5-pawn:

B1: 12 e4 195
B2: 12 h4 197

B1)

12 e4 (D)

This looks like a poor decision because of...

12 a6

Now White has two main ways to evacuate his king to the kingside: f1 or c2 followed by e2.

13 f1

Or 13 c2 0-0 14 e2, when Black has two good options:

a) 14 b7!? gives Black a good position thanks to a variety of tactical motifs. 15 d2 a6 16 f3 b7 and 15 c3 a6 merely repeat the position, which leaves only:

   a1) 15 0-0? e6! ± and the d5-pawn falls.

   a2) 15 b4? allows 15...xe4!, demonstrating a key idea behind putting the bishop on b7. 16 xe4 xd5 17 h4 (otherwise Black would take on a2 with his bishop) and now White can’t properly complete his development: 17...xa2! (17...xa2? is unconvincing because 18 b2! xb2 19 xb2 f6 20 xc5 dxc5 21 0-0 leaves Black’s pieces poorly coordinated) 18 f4 (18 g5 h6 19 xd5 xd5 20 e4 xd7! ± intending ...f5 or ...e6) 18 a4 19 d2 c3! ± gives Black a very strong initiative.
a3) 15 \( \triangleleft h4 \triangle e8 \) (a preparatory move) 16 0-0 e6 17 dx e6 \( \triangle x e6 \) 18 \( \triangle c3 \) \( \triangle e8 \) =. Black wins back the e4-pawn since 19 f3?! is dubious due to 19...d5! 🅳.

b) 14...\( \triangle d7 \) 15 0-0 (D).

15...\( \triangle g4 \) creates a serious threat to the e4-pawn, as both white knights are pinned. 16 \( \triangle f4 \) \( \triangle h5 \! \) 17 h3 (Black has no problems after 17 \( \triangle fc1 \) \( \triangle xe2 \) 18 h3! \( \triangle d7 \) 19 \( \triangle xe2 \) \( \triangle xf4 \) 20 \( gxf4 \) \( a3 \))

17...\( \triangle d7 \) and now:

b1) 18 \( \triangle e3 \) f5! 19 exf5 \( \triangle xf5 \) 20 \( \triangle xf5 \) \( gxf5 \) 21 \( \triangle fe1 \) \( \triangle xe2 \) 22 \( \triangle xe2 \) f4! 23 \( gxf4 \) \( \triangle xd5 \) 🅳 leaves White with a shattered pawn-structure.

b2) 18 \( \triangle g5 \) f6! (this new move, pushing back the g5-bishop, improves over A.Grigorian-Iturrizaga Bonelli, World Junior Ch, Puerto Madryn 2009) 19 \( \triangle f4 \) (19 \( \triangle e3 \) f5 transposes to line ‘b1’) 19...\( \triangle xf4 \) 20 \( gxf4 \) \( \triangle h6 \) 🅳. Black wins the f4-pawn and gains control of all the dark squares in the centre.

13...\( \triangle c8 \! \) 14 \( \triangle d2 \)

After 14 \( \triangle e2 \) \( \triangle xe2 \) 15 \( \triangle xe2 \) we have a good example of how important it is to look for new ideas not just for ‘our’ side, but also for the opponent, as I have sought to do throughout my work on this book:

a) 15...\( \triangle a6 \)?! was played in Bluvshtein-Brandenburg, Groningen 2010, in which, after 16 \( \triangle d2 \)?! 0-0 17 \( \triangle b2 \) \( \triangle fd7 \) 18 a4 \( \triangle fc8 \) 19 \( \triangle a2 \) \( \triangle xe2 \) + 20 \( \triangle xe2 \) \( \triangle xb2 \) 21 \( \triangle xb2 \) c4, Black had a very acceptable position and drew rather comfortably against his higher-rated opponent. From a quick glance at this game in the database, one might conclude that there is no need to seek an improvement for Black here. However, White could have established control of the queenside by the new move 16 a4!, since Black’s counterplay with ...c4 doesn’t work in this position: 16...\( \triangle xe2 \) + 17 \( \triangle xe2 \) ± c4? 18 \( \triangle e3 \) \( \triangle fd7 \) 19 \( \triangle xb6 \) \( \triangle xb6 \) 20 bxc4 \( \triangle xc4 \) 21 \( \triangle b4 \) ± with a clear extra pawn for White.

b) Therefore I propose that Black gets his novelty in first: 15...\( \triangle h3 \)! traps the white king in the centre. Then:

b1) After 16 \( \triangle f1 \)?! \( \triangle xf1+ \) 17 \( \triangle xf1 \) \( \triangle fd7 \) 18 \( \triangle d2 \) 0-0, intending ...f5 or ...c4, the a2- and d5-pawns are perfect targets.

b2) 16 \( \triangle g5 \) \( \triangle g2 \) 17 \( \triangle f3 \) \( \triangle xf3 \) 18 \( \triangle xf3 \) \( \triangle fd7 \) 19 \( \triangle d2 \) 0-0 has the same ideas (...f5 and ...c4).

b3) 16 a4 0-0 17 \( \triangle b5 \) (17 \( \triangle f1 \) \( \triangle xf1+ \) 18 \( \triangle xf1 \) \( \triangle fd7 \) also gives Black compensation) 17...c4! with sufficient compensation — Black has already started his own play while White is still thinking how to complete his development.
Now:

a) 15 a4 (this natural move is untried) 15...\texttt{xf}1 16 \texttt{xf}1 \texttt{h}3+ 17 \texttt{g}1 h6 (to prevent \texttt{g}5) 18 \texttt{f}1 \texttt{xf}1+ 19 \texttt{xf}1 c4! 20 bxc4 \texttt{fd}7! (the c4-pawn can be attacked by a rook; after 20...\texttt{xc}4 White has the solid reply 21 \texttt{e}2) 21 \texttt{e}2 \texttt{fc}8 = with no problems for Black.

b) 15 \texttt{xa}6 \texttt{xa}6 16 \texttt{e}2 \texttt{e}8! (intending ...f5) 17 a4 \texttt{xe}2+ 18 \texttt{xe}2 f5 19 e5f5 \texttt{xc}3 20 \texttt{xc}3 \texttt{xd}5 21 \texttt{a}1 gxf5 22 \texttt{he}1 \texttt{ec}7 = Cvitan-Matamoros, Cannes 1996.

\textbf{B2)}

\textbf{12 \texttt{h}4 0-0 (D)}

White has two main continuations:

\textbf{B21:} 13 \texttt{b}2 197

\textbf{B22:} 13 0-0 198

\textbf{B21)}

13 \texttt{b}2 \texttt{d}7!?

This is my number one choice. Here is why I don't like two other plausible-looking moves:

a) Black has nothing good in case of 13...\texttt{e}8?! 14 0-0 \texttt{c}7 15 \texttt{d}2 ± Timoshenko-Deriabin, Ukrainian Ch, Alushta 2001.

b) 13...c4?! is also unpalatable, due to 14 0-0! (now White is ready to play b4; after the immediate 14 b4?! Black blocks the a2-pawn by 14...\texttt{d}7! 15 0-0 \texttt{a}4 and thanks to the poorly defended a2- and d5-pawns he immediately gets good play: 16 \texttt{xa}4 \texttt{xa}4 17 a3 \texttt{b}5 18 e4 c3 19 \texttt{xc}3 \texttt{xa}3 20 \texttt{b}3 \texttt{a}2) 14...\texttt{d}7 15 e4 \texttt{fc}8 16 \texttt{d}2 \texttt{d}8 (Sriram-Alsina Leal, Paris 2009) 17 \texttt{f}3 ±. Remember that the h4-knight is always ready to come back towards the centre!

14 0-0 g5

There is no time for slow moves like 14...h6?! 15 e4 \texttt{a}6 16 \texttt{e}1 \texttt{g}4 (Bluvshtein-Perez Mitjans, La Bordeta 2010) 17 \texttt{f}3! ±. Again the h4-knight returns to the fray at the first opportunity.

15 \texttt{f}3 \texttt{fxd}5 16 \texttt{xd}5 \texttt{xd}5 17 \texttt{xe}5 \texttt{f}5 (D)

After the natural 17...\texttt{xe}2?, White has a surprising way to defend a2: 18
The g5-knight and the a2-pawn are hanging.

18 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{xg7}}}

Or:

a) 18 e4 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{xg5}}} 19 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{xg7}} \texttt{\textit{\textbf{w}}xg7}} 20 exd5 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{w}}xa2}. With the black queen on g7, the idea of playing b4 is not effective.

b) 18 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{df3}}} \texttt{\textit{\textbf{xa2}}} 19 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{xg7}}} \texttt{\textit{\textbf{w}}xg7} 20 b4 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{xf3}}} 21 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{xf3}}} \texttt{\textit{\textbf{dd7}}} 22 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{wb3}}} \texttt{\textit{\textbf{a7}}} \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} H. Grünberg-Polischtschuk, Germany 2003/4. The game could continue 23 bxc5 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{wc5}}} 24 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{f}}c1} \texttt{\textit{\textbf{b8}}} 25 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{wd3}}} \texttt{\textit{\textbf{xb1}}} 26 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{xb1}}} \texttt{\textit{\textbf{d4}}} =.

18...\texttt{\textit{\textbf{w}}xg2}!

I am proposing this novelty, which I feel is an important zwischenzug. The point is that after 18...\texttt{\textit{\textbf{w}}xg7}?! 19 e4 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{w}}xg5} 20 exd5 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{w}}xa2} 21 b4! White seizes the initiative: 21...\texttt{\textit{\textbf{wd7}}} (21...\texttt{\textit{\textbf{da4}}} 22 bxc5 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{xc5}}} leads to the same variation) 22 bxc5 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{xc5}}} 23 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{bb4}}}! f5 24 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{e1}}} \texttt{\textit{\textbf{f7}}} 25 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{f4}}}, Mohota-Turov, New Delhi 2010. That’s why I recommend sidestepping White’s e4 advance.

19 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{w}}xg2} \texttt{\textit{\textbf{w}}xg7}

Now everything is fine. After 20 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{wd2}}} \texttt{\textit{\textbf{w}}d5+}! the exchange of queens helps to weaken White’s pawns, and 21 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{w}}xd5} \texttt{\textit{\textbf{xd5}}} 22 \texttt{\textit{\textbf{bb2}}} \texttt{\textit{\textbf{c3}}}! offers Black a comfortable endgame.
16 e4 (D)

After 16 b4 c4 the c4-pawn can become either strong or weak. 17 \( \text{\textit{b}d}4 \) (17 e4 \( \text{\textit{c}e}5 \) 18 \( \text{\textit{a}a}1 \) \( \text{\textit{x}a}1 \) 19 \( \text{\textit{x}a}1 \) \( \text{\textit{c}7} = \) leaves Black OK) 17...\( \text{\textit{f}6 \) 18 e4 and now:

a) 18...\( \text{\textit{a}4} \)?! (the knight is better placed on b6, where it defends the c4-pawn) 19 \( \text{\textit{f}c}1 \)! (19 \( \text{\textit{x}c}4 \) \( \text{\textit{xc}3} \) 20 \( \text{\textit{xc}3} \) \( \text{\textit{b}6} \) gave Black compensation in Lautier-Koch, French Team Ch 1999/00) 19...\( \text{\textit{c}7} \) 20 \( \text{\textit{d}2} \) \( \text{\textit{c}8} \) 21 \( \text{\textit{h}3} \) \( \text{\textit{b}8} \) 22 \( \text{\textit{f}3} \) is slightly better for White. The c4-pawn is too vulnerable.

b) Here I propose a new move, 18...\( \text{\textit{c}7} \)!, intending to double rooks. White can point to some strategic pluses here, but Black has enough counterplay: e.g., 19 \( \text{\textit{a}1} \) \( \text{\textit{fa}8} \) 20 \( \text{\textit{f}3} \) \( \text{\textit{c}2} \) (threatening ...\( \text{\textit{a}4} \) or even ...\( \text{\textit{x}c}3 \) 21 \( \text{\textit{d}2} \) \( \text{\textit{a}4} \) 22 \( \text{\textit{a}3} \) \( \text{\textit{xc}3} \) 23 \( \text{\textit{x}c}3 \) \( \text{\textit{xc}3} \) 24 \( \text{\textit{x}c}3 \) \( \text{\textit{a}2} \) 25 \( \text{\textit{x}c}4 \) \( \text{\textit{xc}4} \) 26 \( \text{\textit{xc}4} \) \( \text{\textit{a}6} \) 27 \( \text{\textit{c}1} \) \( \text{\textit{a}4} \) 28 \( \text{\textit{a}5} \) \( \text{\textit{xb}4} \) 29 \( \text{\textit{c}6} \) \( \text{\textit{b}7} \) with an equal endgame.

This is my attempt to improve over 16...\( \text{\textit{f}6} \)!, as played in Baburin-Koch, French Team Ch 2002, when 17 b4! would have made a lot of sense since the f6-knight is a long way from the d3-outpost. Then White has an edge after 17...c4 18 \( \text{\textit{a}1} \) \( \text{\textit{x}a}1 \) 19 \( \text{\textit{x}a}1 \) \( \text{\textit{c}7} \) 20 \( \text{\textit{d}4} \) \( \text{\textit{a}8} \) 21 \( \text{\textit{b}2} \) \( \text{\textit{fd}7} \) 22 f4 ±.

17 f4

Or 17 \( \text{\textit{a}1} \) \( \text{\textit{x}a}1 \) 18 \( \text{\textit{x}a}1 \) \( \text{\textit{bd}7} \) 19 \( \text{\textit{f}3} \) \( \text{\textit{xf}3} \) + 20 \( \text{\textit{xf}3} \) \( \text{\textit{b}6} \) 21 \( \text{\textit{b}2} \) \( \text{\textit{a}6} \) 22 \( \text{\textit{a}1} \) f6 = intending ...\( \text{\textit{e}5} \).

17...\( \text{\textit{ed}7} \) 18 \( \text{\textit{f}2} \)!

It makes sense to exchange off Black’s most active piece. 18 b4? allows a strong and unusual tactical idea: 18...\( \text{\textit{a}4} \) 19 \( \text{\textit{a}1} \) \( \text{\textit{xa}1} \) 20 \( \text{\textit{xa}1} \) \( \text{\textit{c}3} \) \( \text{\textit{x}c}3 \) followed by ...\( \text{\textit{xb}4} \), ...\( \text{\textit{b}6} \), ...\( \text{\textit{c}8} \), ...\( \text{\textit{c}5} \), etc. White must avoid 21 \( \text{\textit{b}3} ? \) \( \text{\textit{b}6} \)!

18...\( \text{\textit{xf}2} \) 19 \( \text{\textit{xf}2} \) \( \text{\textit{c}7} \) 20 \( \text{\textit{a}1} \) \( \text{\textit{a}8} \) (D)

White still has some pressure but Black can be satisfied with the result of the opening – he has won back his pawn while keeping a solid enough position.
I have presented many variations in this book, and it would be very hard to memorize them all, especially by rote learning. If the lines make logical sense to you, then you will remember them far better, and be better equipped to ‘ad lib’ when necessary. Throughout the previous chapters, I sought to explain the motivations behind the moves, and the main plans for both sides. This and the next two chapters are intended to help further with your Benko ‘education’.

To feel comfortable playing an opening, in addition to knowing concrete lines, it’s important to be familiar with typical ideas, and situations that you need to avoid and things you should aim for. In the Benko Gambit Accepted, this is particularly important, as many of the moves don’t make much sense unless you understand both sides’ intentions. In the current chapter I shall show you some ‘dream’ positions for Black and explain why they are so desirable. The next chapter highlights types of positions that Black should avoid (i.e. White’s ‘dream’ positions), and the final chapter of the book challenges you to find the best move in typical Benko set-ups that require a tactical solution or a positional transformation.

1)  

![Chess Diagram]

**Banikas – Tregubov**  
*Greek Team Ch, Kallithea 2009*

Black has placed his knight on c4, which prevents b3 (since ...\( \text{d}a3 \) would follow). The b5-square is covered, so White can’t put his knight there. That leaves White without an effective way to improve his queenside set-up. White’s a4- and b2-pawns are disconnected and Black has an entry-square on b3. At the very least, Black has no problems.

17 \( \text{W}e4 \)

After 17 \( \text{d}c1 \) Black could still play 17...\( \text{W}b3! \) with pressure on the b-file.

17...\( \text{d}f6 \) 18 \( \text{W}h4 \) \( \text{W}b3 \) 19 \( \text{d}d2 \) \( \text{d}xd2 \) 20 \( \text{x}d2 \) \( \text{b}4 \)
Black starts an attack on the white queen.

21 \( \textcolor{red}{\text{W}}^g5 \) h6 22 \( \textcolor{red}{\text{W}}^e3 \) \( \textcolor{blue}{\text{Q}}^g4! \) 23 \( \textcolor{red}{\text{W}}^x e7 \) \( \textcolor{blue}{\text{Q}}^f8 \) 24 \( \textcolor{red}{\text{W}}^c7 \) \( \textcolor{blue}{\text{B}}^b7 \) 25 \( \textcolor{red}{\text{W}}^a5 \) \( \textcolor{blue}{\text{B}}^b8 \) 26 \( \textcolor{red}{\text{W}}^c7 \) \( \textcolor{blue}{\text{Q}}^e5! \)

Intending \( ...\textcolor{blue}{\text{B}}^b7; \) White is forced to give up his bishop.

27 \( \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}^x h6 \) \( \textcolor{blue}{\text{Q}}^x h6 \) 28 \( \textcolor{red}{\text{W}}^x d6 \) \( \textcolor{blue}{\text{Q}}^c4 \) 29 \( \textcolor{red}{\text{W}}^e7 \) \( \textcolor{blue}{\text{Q}}^f8 \) 30 \( \textcolor{red}{\text{W}}^h4 \) \( \textcolor{blue}{\text{Q}}^d6 \)

Black is somewhat better.

2)

\[ 
\text{Vijayalakshmi – Tregubov} \\
\text{Gibraltar 2007} 
\]

Black’s pieces are all perfectly placed. White has no prospects of advancing with e5, b3 or a4, so he has no active plans at the moment.

17...\( \textcolor{red}{\text{W}}^b4! \) 18 \( \textcolor{blue}{\text{Q}}^f1 \) \( \textcolor{red}{\text{Q}}^x b2 \) 19 \( \textcolor{blue}{\text{Q}}^x a6 \) \( \textcolor{blue}{\text{Q}}^x a6 \) 20 \( e5 \) \( dxe5 \) 21 \( \textcolor{blue}{\text{Q}}^d2 \) \( \textcolor{red}{\text{W}}^a3 \)

Black is a pawn up, with a large advantage.

3)

\[ 
\text{Portisch – Vasiukov} \\
\text{Manila 1974} 
\]

Black’s doubled rooks and d4-bishop create strong pressure. The e8-knight looks inactive right now, but it can quickly find useful work, attacking d5 after \( ...f5 \) is played.

29...\( f6! \)

To stop White’s e5 advance.

30 \( h4 \) \( \textcolor{red}{\text{B}}^c7 \) 31 \( \textcolor{red}{\text{B}}^d1 \) \( \textcolor{blue}{\text{Q}}^f7 \) 32 \( g3 \) \( f5! \)

Black is much better, since White can’t salvage his pawn-centre.
4) Erdogdu – Caruana  
*European Ch, Aix-les-Bains 2011*

Here Black made the ...c4 advance and then exchanged on b3, and White recaptured with his a-pawn. We should note that on e4, the white knight is far from c6, and meanwhile Black’s major pieces are ready to seize the open files. Black has plenty to attack, starting with the pawns on b3, d5 and e2.

21 *e3 b5 22 *fe1 g4 23 c1 b7 24 h3 fc8 25 *d1 e5 26 b2 b4
Not 26...xd5?? 27 c3 +-.

27 f4 *d7 28 *xg7 xg7 29 *b2?
29 *d2! is better, although after 29...xd2 30 *xd2 c2 31 *c4 *aa2 Black has sufficient compensation.

29...xd5!
Now Black is somewhat better.

5) Aspler – Benko  
*Vancouver 1971*

Black has taken control of the a6-f1 diagonal and White can’t even play *f1 because of the check on f3.

16 b3 *d3 17 *d1! c4! 18 *e3 b4 19 *d2 c5 20 *f1 *xb3 21 *xb3 *b4 22 *b2 c8
Black has a decisive advantage.
Black is exerting maximum pressure on White’s position, tying him up almost completely.

21 $\triangleleft $ed2 $\mathit{a}a4$!

a2 is weak.

22 $\triangleleft $xc4 $\triangleleft $xc4 23 $\triangleleft $g5 $\mathit{xb}3$! 24 $\mathit{ax}b3$ $\triangleleft $xb3 25 $\mathit{wd}2$ $\triangleleft $xd1 26 $\mathit{xd}1$ $\triangleleft $f6

Now the b2-pawn is hopelessly weak, and Black is winning.

White can’t relieve the pressure – Black’s pieces are on their best possible squares.

20 g4?!

It is unclear what White is trying to do, but this type of move is not uncommon when White has no truly constructive plan. He at least avoids 20 $\mathit{dd}3$? $\triangleleft $xb2! +.

20...$\mathit{wa}5$ 21 $\mathit{dd}3$ $\triangleleft $e5 22 $\mathit{dd}1$ $\triangleleft $c4 23 $\mathit{dd}3$ $\triangleleft $e5 24 $\mathit{dd}1$ $\mathit{wb}4$ 25 $\mathit{bb}1$ $\triangleleft $c4 26 $\mathit{dd}3$ $\triangleleft $xc3! 27 $\mathit{ww}xc3$

27 $\mathit{xx}c3$ $\triangleleft $a3 28 $\mathit{xa}3$ $\mathit{xa}3$ 29 b3 $\mathit{xa}4$! +.

27...$\triangleleft $a3

27...$\mathit{xa}2$! + would be even more convincing.

28 $\mathit{bx}a3$?

Better is 28 $\mathit{wb}4$ $\mathit{xb}4$ 29 $\mathit{dd}2$ $\mathit{bb}8$ 30 $\mathit{a}1$ $\triangleleft $c4 +.

28...$\mathit{wx}e4+$

Black is now winning.
This is a typical Benko endgame. Black has pressure on the a-file and a useful outpost on c4. White lacks an active plan and needs to defend very carefully.

18 $\texttt{f1} \texttt{b5} 19 \texttt{d2} \texttt{a3} 20 \texttt{c1} \texttt{e5} 21 \texttt{h6} \texttt{f6}! 

An important move. Very often the black king needs to escape from the back rank or to defend e7. In passing, Black also creates a threat to trap the white bishop.

22 $\texttt{h4} \texttt{a4} 23 \texttt{f3} \texttt{f7} 24 \texttt{f1}$

In the game Black played a typical move, 24...f5, with a pleasant but not necessarily decisive advantage. He could instead have targeted the h6-bishop by 24...g5! 25 hxg5 $\texttt{g6} 26 \texttt{f4} \texttt{d3} 27 \texttt{f5}+ \texttt{f7} 28 \texttt{d1} \texttt{c2}$, winning an exchange.

Again we see a picture of domination: the a2-pawn is fixed and weak, while the c4-square is guaranteed for one of the black knights.

19 $\texttt{d3} \texttt{a6} 20 \texttt{h3} \texttt{ge5} 21 \texttt{xe5} \texttt{xe5} 22 \texttt{f4} \texttt{c4} 23 \texttt{e4} \texttt{a3} 24 \texttt{c1} \texttt{d3} 25 \texttt{f2} \texttt{c4} 26 \texttt{e5} \texttt{b2}$

Black has good practical winning chances.
The a2-pawn is safety blockaded and ...c4 is coming inevitably.  
22 \( \texttt{a1c} \) c4 23 bxc4 \( \texttt{xc} \) 24 e4 \( \texttt{b2} \) 25 \( \texttt{f1} \) \( \texttt{c2} \) 26 \( \texttt{ed1} \) \( \texttt{xf1} \) 27 \( \texttt{d2} \)?  
White could maintain the balance by 27 \( \texttt{xf1} \) \( \texttt{a3} \) 28 \( \texttt{bl} \) \( \texttt{xb1} \) 29 \( \texttt{xb1} \) \( \texttt{xa2} \) 30 \( \texttt{d2} \)!.  
27...\( \texttt{c8} \)! 28 \( \texttt{dxc2} \) \( \texttt{xc2} \) 29 \( \texttt{xc2} \) \( \texttt{d3} \) 30 \( \texttt{c1} \) \( \texttt{xe4} \)  
Black has the advantage thanks to his better pawn-structure.

This is a typical situation where Black has exchanged his dark-squared bishop for a knight in order to win his pawn back. He has the advantage thanks to his better pawn-structure, while White’s bishop-pair is not a major factor here.  
25 \( \texttt{f3} \)  
25 b4?! doesn’t help because after 25...\( \texttt{xb4} \) 26 \( \texttt{xb4} \) \( \texttt{xb4} \) 27 \( \texttt{xb4} \) \( \texttt{b5} \) the f2-pawn falls.  
25...\( \texttt{f6} \) 26 \( \texttt{f2} \)  
26 b4 \( \texttt{xe4} \) 27 \( \texttt{fxe4} \) \( \texttt{c2} \) 28 \( \texttt{f3} \) \( \texttt{h3} \) \( \texttt{f} \) intending ...\( \texttt{a8-a2} \).  
Now Black allowed White to maintain the material balance by 26...\( \texttt{a3} \) 27 \( \texttt{xf6} \) \( \texttt{exf6} \) 28 \( \texttt{fb2} \), although Black was still better and later won. Instead, he could have won a pawn: 26...\( \texttt{xe4} \)! 27 \( \texttt{fxe4} \) \( \texttt{a3} \) 28 \( \texttt{fb2} \) \( \texttt{b5} \) (intending ...\( \texttt{d3} \)) 29 \( \texttt{e1} \) \( \texttt{a6} \) \( \texttt{f} \) and the b3-pawn drops off.
Without his dark-squared bishop, White rarely has much hope of any serious advantage; usually, when he makes this exchange, he is just seeking to build a solid defensive fortress.

18...\(\text{ec1}\) \(\text{ab4}\) 19 \(a3\) \(\text{bb7}\) 20 \(\text{ab1}\)?! 20 \(b4\)! \(\text{cxb4}\) 21 \(\text{axb4}\) \(\text{wxa1}\) 22 \(\text{xal}\) \(\text{xa1}\) =.

20...\(\text{ab8}\) 21 \(\text{d1}\)

White’s plan is to bring the knight to \(c4\), where it will securely defend \(b2\), and Black should prevent this with 21...\(\text{d4}\)! \(\text{=}\) followed by ...\(\text{b3}\) and ...\(\text{b5}\). In the game he played 21...\(\text{b3}\) but White squandered his chance by playing 22 \(\text{we2}\)? (rather than 22 \(\text{e3}\)! \(\text{xb2}\) 23 \(\text{c4}\) \(\text{xc2}\) 24 \(\text{xb8+}\) \(\text{g7}\) 25 \(\text{xa5}\) \(\text{xc1}\) 26 \(\text{c6}\) with an equal endgame) when Black now saw 22...\(\text{d4}\), with an advantage.

Black’s pieces are dancing on the weak squares: \(d3\), \(c4\), \(d4\), etc.

18 \(\text{ab5}\) \(\text{d3}\) 19 \(\text{e2}\) \(\text{d7}\) 20 \(\text{b1}\) \(\text{a5}\) 21 \(\text{g5}\) \(\text{f8}\) 22 \(a4\) \(c4\)!

Fixing the weaknesses on \(b3\) and \(d3\).

23 \(\text{c2}\) \(\text{c5}\) 24 \(\text{d2}\)

Now one of the black rooks must move, and it should be the one on \(b4\): 24...\(\text{b3}\)! and after 25 \(\text{a3}\) \(\text{xc3}\) 26 \(\text{xc3}\) Black can simply take on \(a4\) with total domination: 26...\(\text{xa4}\) \(\text{=}\). In the game Black chose the less accurate 24...\(\text{a8}\)?! 25 \(\text{a3}\), when 25...\(\text{xc3}\) 26 \(\text{xc3}\) \(\text{bxa4}\) would not have left Black so much better.
This is the flipside of the previous chapter: here we see what White is aiming for, and what Black should therefore avoid. This is very useful knowledge for Black, since if you can’t steer the game towards a dream position, then maybe you can at least evade the opposite fate.

1) Strategically, the main scenario Black needs to avoid is one where White has captured the light squares on the queenside by putting pawns on a4 and b3, and a knight on b5 and/or c4. This set-up blocks three files on the queenside and Black can only wait for his opponent to break through in the centre. That’s why Black must prevent this set-up before it is too late. Here 1...c4 does not help because of 2 b4!, since the pawn is untouchable: 2...\text{xa}4 3 b5 \text{a}7 4 \text{a}1 costs Black material.

2) Barsov – S. Kasparov
Cairo 2001

Again White has managed to block the queenside. Black has no counterplay since 24...c4? does not work: 25 b4! \text{xb}4 26 \text{xb}4 \text{xb}4 27 \text{b}5 wins an exchange. White will play \text{a}2, \text{c}3, \text{f}3-e2 and slowly put his extra pawn to use.
3) Kotanjian – Averianov  
Moscow 2004

With his last move, 18 a3!, White stopped the ...c4 idea for a long time. Black’s queenside play has got bogged down; he can achieve nothing real. White has a lot of time to manoeuvre his pieces to better squares.

18...\textsf{xf5} 19 e4 \textsf{g4} 20 h3 \textsf{xf3} 21 \textsf{xf3} \textsf{c7} 22 \textsf{e2} \textsf{b7} 23 \textsf{g2} \textsf{ab8} 24 a4 \textsf{c8} 25 \textsf{a1}

White has defended b3 and is ready to occupy b5 and c4.

4) Černoušek – Krivoruchko  
Olomouc 2006

Even with a knight oddly placed on f4, putting pawns on a4 and b3 can sometimes provide White with an advantage.

17...\textsf{fb8}

After 17...c4? 18 bxc4 \pm, the b7-bishop is hanging.

18 \textsf{d2} \textsf{a7} 19 \textsf{c2}

White prevents ...c4, and once again Black can’t do anything.

19...\textsf{c8} 20 \textsf{c3} \textsf{xc3} 21 \textsf{xc3} f6 22 \textsf{d3}

White has a large advantage.
Malakhatko – Aveskulov
Alushta 2001

With his last move, 25 \( \text{f3-d2} \), White defended b3, prevented ...c4 and prepared a pawn-storm in the centre. Black’s main problem is that he lacks any active play.

25...\( \text{d4} \) 26 f4 \( \text{f8} \) 27 e5 \( \text{g7} \) 28 \( \text{d1} \) \( \text{xb2} \) 29 \( \text{xb2} \) \( \text{b6} \) 30 \( \text{bc4} \) \( \text{xc4} \) 31 bxc4

The a6-knight is especially miserable.

31...\( \text{ab7} \) 32 \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{c7} \) 33 \( \text{ab1} \)

White is much better.

This is a variation arising from the game Wojtaszek-Rasulov, European Ch, Budva 2009. White wants to play \( \text{d3} \) and \( \text{c3} \) and turn his extra pawn to account. Black’s only chance is to play ...c4 right now but it is not fully satisfactory: 21...c4 22 bxc4 \( \text{xb1} \) 23 \( \text{xb1} \) \( \text{xa4} \) (23...\( \text{xc4} \) 24 \( \text{d3} \) ± and \( \text{c1} \) 24 \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{f6} \) 25 c5 ± with a clear extra pawn.
Black has no pieces in the area bounded by b3-b4-d4-d3, and very little activity. White simply puts his own pieces on desirable squares and realizes his advantage.

17 \texttt{c}4 \texttt{d}7 18 \texttt{e}d2 \texttt{e}5 19 b3 \texttt{b}8 20 \texttt{b}1 \texttt{b}7

Now 21 b4! would be the shortest path to victory: 21...\texttt{c}xb4 22 \texttt{xb}4 \texttt{c}8 23 \texttt{xb}8 \texttt{xb}8 24 \texttt{x}e5 \texttt{x}e5 25 \texttt{b}3 \texttt{d}8 26 a5 +-. In the game White played 21 \texttt{a}5 and won in more drawn-out fashion.

Again White has played a4 and b3 and is well on the way to his ideal setup.

\textbf{18...c4}

Black tries the standard disruptive thrust, but White has a strong reply:

\textbf{19 e5! cxb3 20 exd6 exd6}

In the game Carlsen played 21 \texttt{e}7, which is strong, but less convincing than 21 \texttt{d}b5! \texttt{c}4 (21...\texttt{xb}5? 22 \texttt{e}8+ \texttt{f}8 23 \texttt{h}6 with mate next move) 22 \texttt{g}5 \texttt{d}7 23 \texttt{x}g7 \texttt{x}g7 24 \texttt{xa}7 \texttt{xa}7 25 \texttt{e}7 +-. 
Here we see a situation where Black made the ...c4 advance, but it had little impact on the game. White’s knight is ready to occupy the c6-square, the b3-pawn is safe enough, and Black has no other sources of counterplay. Even though it is Black to play, he is worse.

**Kuljašević – Daskevics**

*World Under-18 Ch, Kallithea 2003*

To be completely happy, White only needs to gain control of the b5-square. For this purpose, 18 f4! ± is ideal. After the exchange of the a6-bishop, White’s knight will be free to move to b5. In the game White allowed some counterplay by 18 b5 xe5 19 axb5 e5 20 a2, with a less clear position.
Now it is your turn to practice. Most of these positions are of a tactical nature (1-19), but it is up to you to decide whether you are looking for a concrete way to win, secure an advantage or maintain sufficient counterplay. Exercises 20-25 feature positional ideas that are typical for the Benko Gambit. In every case, Black is to play.

Please note that these exercises don’t necessarily have neat and tidy solutions like you will find in tactical textbooks. In many cases White has counterplay and the outcome may not be clear, so just try to choose the best option for Black. If you wish, simply study each position and decide what you think about it, and then compare your answer with mine. All that matters is how much you learn that you can use in your future games.

I hope that these last three chapters have helped to deepen your understanding of the Benko Gambit and that your Benko games will include positions suitable only for the ‘dream’ chapter!
ATTACK WITH BLACK

Chessboard positions for moves 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25.
Solutions

1) This is one of the most common tactical motifs in the Benko Gambit:

1...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}b2!} 2 \texttt{\texttt{x}}xb2 \texttt{\texttt{x}}xb2 3 \texttt{\texttt{x}}xb2 \texttt{\texttt{x}}c3 4 \texttt{\texttt{c}}2 \texttt{\texttt{x}}a1 5 \texttt{\texttt{x}}a6 \texttt{\texttt{x}}a6 6 \texttt{\texttt{x}}a1 \texttt{\texttt{b}}6

After ...\texttt{\texttt{b}}4, the a4-pawn falls, leaving Black with the advantage.

2) This is another version of the same idea.

15...\texttt{\texttt{x}}b2! 16 \texttt{\texttt{c}}xb2 \texttt{\texttt{x}}c3 17 \texttt{\texttt{d}}xc2 \texttt{\texttt{x}}a1 18 \texttt{\texttt{x}}xa6 \texttt{\texttt{x}}a6 19 \texttt{\texttt{x}}a1 \texttt{\texttt{b}}6

After this important move, White is really in trouble.

18 \texttt{\texttt{a}}7

18 \texttt{\texttt{d}}c6 \texttt{\texttt{f}}6! (to stop e5 forever) 19 \texttt{\texttt{e}}4 \texttt{\texttt{a}}4! \texttt{f}. Black forces an exchange of queens and a much better endgame.

18...\texttt{\texttt{d}}xa7

It’s hard to find a good move for White.

19 \texttt{\texttt{d}}a4

19 \texttt{\texttt{e}}xe7? \texttt{\texttt{f}}6! 20 e5 \texttt{\texttt{x}}xe5 21 \texttt{\texttt{g}}g5 \texttt{\texttt{x}}xe1 22 \texttt{\texttt{e}}xe1 \texttt{\texttt{a}}6 \texttt{b}—.

19...\texttt{\texttt{e}}xe1 20 \texttt{\texttt{e}}xe1 \texttt{\texttt{b}}6 21 \texttt{\texttt{a}}5 \texttt{\texttt{c}}4 22 \texttt{\texttt{a}}6 \texttt{f}6

After ...\texttt{\texttt{c}}7 and ...\texttt{\texttt{x}}a6 Black has a clear extra pawn and a technically winning position.

3) Trikaliotis – Toran Albero

Siegen Olympiad 1970

The e2-rook is defended twice, but this is not enough to keep it safe!

19...\texttt{\texttt{x}}b2! 20 \texttt{\texttt{x}}xb2 \texttt{\texttt{x}}c3 21 \texttt{\texttt{x}}c3 \texttt{\texttt{x}}xe2 22 \texttt{\texttt{e}}e1 \texttt{\texttt{x}}a2

Black has a useful extra pawn.

4) This was the first game played by my South African student François Oberholzer in the Benko Gambit.

18...\texttt{\texttt{x}}d2 19 \texttt{\texttt{x}}d2 \texttt{\texttt{x}}xb2! 20 \texttt{\texttt{x}}xb2 \texttt{\texttt{x}}c3 21 \texttt{\texttt{c}}1 \texttt{\texttt{x}}e1 22 \texttt{\texttt{x}}e1 \texttt{\texttt{x}}e1+ 23 \texttt{\texttt{x}}e1 \texttt{\texttt{c}}4 24 \texttt{\texttt{f}}f1 \texttt{\texttt{x}}f1 25 \texttt{\texttt{x}}f1 \texttt{\texttt{x}}a2

Black has a practically winning rook endgame. Well done, François!

5) Markos – Ponizil

Czech Team Ch 2011/12

Sometimes even GMs are trapped by standard Benko tactics.

17...\texttt{\texttt{x}}b2! 18 \texttt{\texttt{x}}xb2 \texttt{\texttt{x}}c3 19 \texttt{\texttt{x}}xc3 \texttt{\texttt{x}}c3 20 \texttt{\texttt{a}}b1 \texttt{\texttt{x}}xb2 21 \texttt{\texttt{x}}xb2 \texttt{\texttt{f}}6 22 \texttt{\texttt{d}}2

White has defended the a2-pawn and it might seem that a long endgame lies ahead. But Black denies him any hope:

22...\texttt{\texttt{a}}4 23 \texttt{\texttt{f}}f3 \texttt{\texttt{f}}7

23...\texttt{\texttt{f}}5? loses the lion’s share of Black’s advantage: 24 exf5 gxf5 25 \texttt{\texttt{g}}g5 \texttt{\texttt{f}}7 26 \texttt{\texttt{e}}2! \texttt{\texttt{f}}6 27 \texttt{\texttt{x}}f6 \texttt{\texttt{x}}f6 \texttt{f}.

24 \texttt{\texttt{g}}4

White tries to prevent ...\texttt{\texttt{f}}5 but it’s already too late:

24...\texttt{\texttt{f}}5! 25 gxf5 gxf5

The d5-pawn is doomed and Black gets connected passed pawns and an easily winning position.

6) Averkin – Alburt

Odessa 1974

21...\texttt{\texttt{x}}c2!

Black can also get a big advantage by 21...\texttt{\texttt{x}}b2 but it provides White with an extra option: 22 \texttt{\texttt{x}}b2 (22 \texttt{\texttt{x}}b2 \texttt{\texttt{x}}c2 23 \texttt{\texttt{x}}c2 transposes to
the game) 22...\textit{\texttt{wx}x}c3 23 \textit{\texttt{wx}x}c3 \textit{\texttt{dx}c}3 24 \textit{\texttt{dx}c}2 \textit{\texttt{g}g}7 25 \textit{\texttt{d}d}3 \textit{\texttt{f}f} and White retains some defensive chances.

22 \textit{\texttt{dx}c}2 \textit{\texttt{dx}b}2! 23 \textit{\texttt{dx}b}2

23 \textit{\texttt{dx}b}2 \textit{\texttt{dx}c}3 24 \textit{\texttt{lx}x}b8+ \textit{\texttt{dx}b}8 25 \textit{\texttt{d}d}3 c4 26 \textit{\texttt{c}c}2 \textit{\texttt{c}c}5 ↔ with total domination.

23...\textit{\texttt{c}c}4 24 \textit{\texttt{d}d}a1 \textit{\texttt{lx}x}b2!

Clearer than 24...\textit{\texttt{dx}a}2 25 \textit{\texttt{xa}2 \textit{\texttt{lx}x}b}2 26 \textit{\texttt{dx}b}2 \textit{\texttt{xa}3}!.

25 \textit{\texttt{dx}b}2 \textit{\texttt{dx}c}3 26 \textit{\texttt{lx}x}b7 \textit{\texttt{xa}1 27 \textit{\texttt{ld}d}7 \textit{\texttt{lx}x}e}2

Black has an extra pawn and a winning position.

7) \textbf{Laver – Benko}

\textit{Santa Monica 1967}

Black has a very pleasant game; the h4-rook is out of play, there is strong pressure on b2, but a concrete idea is needed for how to proceed.

27...\textit{\texttt{a}a}2!

Black wins the pawn back with a better position.

28 \textit{\texttt{xa}2 \textit{\texttt{lx}x}b}2 29 \textit{\texttt{lx}x}b2 \textit{\texttt{lx}x}b2

Objectively, Black’s advantage may not be overwhelming, but in practice White’s defensive task is rather unpleasant.

8) Black’s pieces are well placed but it is not obvious how he should make progress.

18...\textit{\texttt{lx}x}b2!

Yes, sometimes even Black’s queen takes on b2!

19 \textit{\texttt{lx}x}b2 \textit{\texttt{lx}x}b2 20 \textit{\texttt{lx}x}b2 \textit{\texttt{dx}c}3 21 \textit{\texttt{db}7}!

The best try: this leads to a rook endgame with some saving chances. 21 \textit{\texttt{ab}1} is worse: 21...\textit{\texttt{lx}x}b2 22 \textit{\texttt{lx}x}b2 f5! (it often happens that a tactical sequence finishes with this pawn move) 23 e5 \textit{\texttt{dx}a}6! followed by ...\textit{\texttt{lb}6xd5 with a big advantage for Black.

21...\textit{\texttt{xa}1 22 \textit{\texttt{ld}d}7 \textit{\texttt{xa}2}+ 23 \textit{\texttt{fx}f}3 \textit{\texttt{xa}3 24 \textit{\texttt{fe}2 \textit{\texttt{fx}f}8 25 \textit{\texttt{d}d}8+ \textit{\texttt{g}g}7 26 \textit{\texttt{ld}d7

26 \textit{\texttt{lx}e}8? \textit{\texttt{xa}7} ≠.

26...\textit{\texttt{d}d}4 27 \textit{\texttt{lx}x}d4+ cxd4 28 \textit{\texttt{xe}7 \textit{\texttt{lx}x}f8

Forcing the rook to leave the e4-pawn unprotected.

29 \textit{\texttt{ld}d7 \textit{\texttt{x}x}g3 30 \textit{\texttt{xe}2 \textit{\texttt{xe}3 31 \textit{\texttt{ld}d}d6 \textit{\texttt{xe}4

Black is much better; the only question is whether he can win.

9) \textbf{Averkin – Miles}

\textit{Dubna 1976}

15...\textit{\texttt{dx}a}3!

This little piece of tactics does not regain the pawn, but changes the structure in a vital way: Black obtains a passed pawn.

16 bxa3 \textit{\texttt{lx}x}c3 17 \textit{\texttt{lx}x}c3 \textit{\texttt{dx}c}3 18 \textit{\texttt{xb}1 c}4

Black has the advantage. He plans ...\textit{\texttt{fc}8 followed by a retreat of the c3-bishop and ...c3, etc.

10) \textbf{Garza Marco – Perez Mitjans}

\textit{Zaragoza 2011}

White had just played 26 \textit{\texttt{xe}1-c}3? to provide the b3-knight with a way to reach the c6-square. However, this natural strategic plan has a tactical refutation:

26...\textit{\texttt{de}3! 27 fxe3 \textit{\texttt{xe}3+ 28 \textit{\texttt{fx}f}2 \textit{\texttt{lx}x}c3

Black has won back the pawn with a decisive advantage.
11) This is a variation from the game Polugaevsky-Seirawan, Amber Rapid, Monte Carlo 1993. The position could have occurred if White had tried a logical-looking simplifying manoeuvre that fails because of the following combination:

22...\(\text{x}b2\) 23 \(\text{xb2} \text{xa4!} \) 24 \(\text{bxa4} \text{xa4} \) 25 \(\text{xa4} \text{xb2}\)

Already White must be thinking about his own safety.

12) Zilberman – Greenfeld

Israel 1995

White has just attacked the \(e_5\)-knight by 20 \(f2-f4\)!. However, this weakens the \(e3\)-square, which Black exploits in masterful fashion:

20...\(\text{d}d7!\)

20...\(\text{d}d7?\) would maintain merely sufficient compensation.

21 \(\text{fxe5}\)

This zwischenzug turns out not to help White. Or 21 \(\text{xb2} \text{xb2} 22 \text{a4} \text{xc3!} 23 \text{fxe5} \text{xe5} +=\).

21...\(\text{xe5}\)

Not 21...\(\text{xc2??} 22 \text{xb8+} \text{f8} 23 \text{h6} +=\).

22 \(\text{xb2} \text{xb2} 23 \text{d3} \text{d2!}\)

This precise move practically finishes the game.

24 \(\text{xd2}\)

24 \(\text{e3} \text{xf1} 25 \text{xf1} \text{c2} +=\).

24...\(\text{xd2} 25 \text{xe2} \text{xe2} 26 \text{xe2} \text{a4}\)

Black is winning.

13) Neverov – Baklan

Ordzhonikidze Zonal 2000

White needs one more move (\(\text{b2}\)) to cement his position and secure at least some advantage. But Black has different opinion on this:

15...\(\text{d}d3!\) 16 \(\text{exd3} \text{xc3} 17 \text{xc3} \text{xc3} 18 \text{c4}\)

In the game Black played 18...\(\text{0-0?}\), allowing White to defend the \(a2\)-pawn by 19 \(\text{b2} \text{f6} 20 \text{xf6} \text{xf6} 21 \text{fe1 fe8} 22 \text{b2} \pm\). The correct path is 18...\(\text{xc4} 19 \text{bxc4} \text{xa2} 20 \text{b7} \text{d8} =\) intending ...\(\text{c8}\).

14) Hort – Alburt

Dečin 1977

With his last move, 16 \(\text{d}d2-f1\), White attacked the \(d5\)-knight. But Black has no need to defend it:

16...\(\text{c}c3!\)

A typical and in this case necessary combination. The more natural 16...\(\text{e}6?!\) lets White win a pawn for insufficient compensation: 17 \(\text{e}3 \text{b5} 18 \text{xd5 exd5} 19 \text{xc5 c6} 20 \text{xc6 xc6} 21 \text{c2} \pm\).

17 \(\text{xb7} \text{xb7}\)

The point is that Black wins the \(b1\)-rook for free now.

18 \(\text{d}d3 \text{e4} 19 \text{e3} \text{d4} 20 \text{h6} \text{xb1}\)

Black has enough compensation for the queen. Later he even managed to win the game.

15) White simply wants to pick up the \(c4\)-pawn, so Black needs something radical in reply, and the following fits the bill:

1...\(\text{xb2} 2 \text{xb2}\)

After 2 \(\text{xb2?} \text{c5} \text{d}\) Black wins the pawn back and retains some pressure.

2...\(\text{xa2}\)!
I don’t recall seeing this tactical motif in practice, but I’m sure it must have occurred somewhere.

3 \( \text{axa2} \)

3 \( \text{bxxc4} \) does not give Black any problems: 3 ... \( \text{xaxa1} \) 4 \( \text{xaxa1} \) \( \text{c5} \) 5 \( \text{a7} \) \( \text{b6} \) 6 \( \text{a3} \) \( \text{b4} \) 7 \( \text{a7} \) =.

3 ... \( \text{cxb3} \) 4 \( \text{bxxc7} \) \( \text{bxa2} \)

Black is a knight down but his pawn is just one move away from queening. My analysis of this position didn’t reveal any advantage for White.

5 \( \text{dxd3} \)

Or 5 \( \text{xd7} \) \( \text{xb2} \) 6 \( \text{xe7} \) \( \text{xf2} \) 7 \( \text{c1} \) \( \text{e3} \) 8 \( \text{xd6} \) (forced) 8 ... \( \text{xc1} \) 9 \( \text{xb8+} \) \( \text{g7} \) 10 \( \text{e5+} \) \( \text{h6} \) 11 \( \text{g5!} \) \( \text{xf5} \) 12 \( \text{b2} \) with a drawish queen endgame.

5 ... \( \text{b5} \) 6 \( \text{f4} \) \( \text{a4} \) 7 \( \text{e6?} \) \( \text{a1} \) 8 \( \text{xa1} \) \( \text{xa1} \) 9 \( \text{xd7} \) \( \text{fxe6} \) 10 \( \text{xe7} \) \( \text{exd5} \) 11 \( \text{xd6} \) \( \text{a7} \) 12 \( \text{xd5+} \) \( \text{e7} \) 13 ... \( \text{e4} \) Black is a knight down but his pawn is just one move away from queening. My analysis of this position didn’t reveal any advantage for White.

16) Arlandi – Väisser

Athens rapid 1997

White’s position looks favourable: everything is defended and he has the typical plan to strengthen his control of the queenside by a4, \( \text{d2-c3} \), \( \text{b2} \), etc. But if you look more carefully, you see that the white queen and e2-rook are overloaded by the need to defend the a2- and e4-pawns. That just leaves the question of how to exploit this.

19 ... \( \text{dxe4!} \) 20 \( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{xa2} \) 21 \( \text{d3} \)

And what now? Black is a piece down, after all.

21 ... \( \text{xd5!} \)

Black simply takes a second pawn and thanks to his better coordination maintains dynamic equality.

22 \( \text{xb4?} \)

White immediately loses control of the situation, whereas a few moves earlier his game looked trouble-free. Better is 22 \( \text{c1}! \) \( \text{d4} \) followed by ...e5 with a rather unclear position.

22 ... \( \text{xb4} \) 23 \( \text{b5} \) \( \text{c2!} \)

Black intends ...\( \text{e1} + \).

24 \( \text{g1} \)

24 \( \text{f1} \) e5 25 \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{e4} \) -- .

24 ... \( \text{a3} \)

Black is winning.

17) Brunner – Landenbergue

Biel 1994

White just needs to make practically any reasonable move to stabilize the situation. But it is Black to play, and in the Benko Gambit very often one move decides everything.

15 ... \( \text{xe4!} \) 16 \( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{xd5!} \)

The point of Black’s combination! Now there are many threats and White can’t fend them all off.

17 \( \text{ed2} \)

17 \( \text{e1} \) \( \text{b4} \) 18 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{xa1} \) 19 \( \text{xa1} \) \( \text{xa2} \) 20 \( \text{xa2} \) \( \text{xa2} \) +.

17 ... \( \text{b4} \) 18 \( \text{c4} \) e5! 19 \( \text{g5} \) e4 20 \( \text{e1} \) d5 21 \( \text{e2} \)

21 \( \text{c1} \) \( \text{xa2} \) 22 \( \text{c2} \) \( \text{c3} \) 23 \( \text{xa5} \) \( \text{xa5} \) -- .

21 ... \( \text{xa2!} \)

Black totally dominates.

18) Aleksandrov – P. Cramling

Erevan Olympiad 1996

It’s easy to see that the last moves were ...c4 and b4. It might appear that there is no scope for tactics, but Black does have a way to smash through.

18 ... \( \text{d3!} \) 19 \( \text{d2?} \)
Even after the superior 19 exd3 Black is better: 19...cxd3 20 wxd3 exd3 21 we2 wb7 = intending ...e5!.  
19...dxe2 20 a4 xc3! 21 xg6 A desperate throw. 21 xc3 de4 22 wc2 xd2 23 wxd2 e3+ =-.  
21...f6 Black is winning.

19) Korchnoi – Baklan  
*European Clubs Cup, Neum 2000*  
White's position looks a bit strange (more often a knight is on h3 and a bishop on g2) but it still appears solid enough. However, the following combination totally destroys the position of a legendary chess-player.  
17...xe2! 18 dxex2 xa2 The loose minor pieces on d2 and e2 are the problem for White. 19 wa2 19...tbcl le3+ 20 wb1 ld2 -+.  
19...xa2 20 f4 f5 21 fxe5 xe2 22 exd6 exd6 -- and ...xd5 with two extra pawns.  
21...d3+ 22 ee3 xb4 23 xb2 xb2  
Black has a decisive advantage.

20) Black can’t make serious progress on the queenside since White has blocked it with the a4 and b3 set-up. So instead he exploits another standard source of counterplay: undermining the d5-pawn.  
1...e8! 2 ee2 Or:  
a) 2 b5 f5! 3 exf5 gxf5 = and ...xd5.  
b) 2 d2 d4+ (2...f5 = followed by ...f6 is also possible, but Black’s idea is more ambitious – he wants to pick up both the e4- and the d5-pawns) 3 h1 f6 4 g3 xc3 5 xc3 xe4 6 xb4 cxb4 7 a2 c3 8 d2 a5 f and the d5-pawn falls.  
2...f5 3 e5 xf5 4 g3 d4+ 5 h1 g7!  
That’s why the knight moved to e8 and not d7. The next move is ...xd5, and Black is somewhat better.

21) Grabiauskas – Khalifman  
*Vilnius 1997*  
Here Khalifman applies a typical idea: he exchanges on c3, closes the centre and occupies the weak squares on White’s queenside.  
15...xc3! 16 bxc3 f6!  
This is an important move. Now White can forget about the e5 advance.  
17 d2 a4!  
Black has good squares for his pieces: a4, b5 and c4; also, the a2-pawn is extremely weak. White has no active plan, which is why I prefer Black here.  
18 e1 c4 19 c1 c7 20 a3 b6 21 h4 b5 22 e3 b3 23 h5 c4  
Black is much better. In the subsequent play, White sacrificed material for insufficient compensation, but went on to draw thanks to his opponent’s inaccuracies.

22) Beliavsky – Khalifman  
*Linares 1995*  
This is another example from Alexander Khalifman – one of the best Benko players. Black’s pieces are
clearly active enough to compensate for the gambit pawn, but it is always important to choose the right moment for concrete measures. He could now play 20...b3, maintaining the pressure, but the Russian GM decided on a plan to extend the g7-bishop’s diagonal.

20...f5!
First the e4-pawn is weakened.
21 f3 fxe4 22 fxe4 Qxc3 23 Qxc3 Qb5! 24 Qxb5 Qxb5
Now Black has strong pressure on b2. White must make a tricky decision: continue to defend passively, or give the pawn back and seek drawing chances in the rook endgame.

25 Qc4?!
It seems that passive defence was a better option. After 25 Qe2 Qb3 26 a2 Qa4 27 Qf4 Black has merely sufficient compensation, and White should survive.

25...Qxb2 26 Qb1 Qab6 27 a4 Qb3 28 a5?!
28 Qxb2 is better: 28...Qxb2+ 29 Qxb2 Qxb2+ 30 Qf3 Qb3+ 31 Qf2 Qa3 ⊥.

28...Qxc1! 29 Qxc1 Qb2+ 30 Qc2 Qb6 31 a6 Qb6 32 e5 Qc2+ 33 Qxc2 Qxa6 34 exd6 exd6
The rook ending clearly favours Black, who went on to win.

23) Bunzmann – Halkias
World Junior Ch, Erevan 1999
Black finds a way for both his knights to make good use of the d3-square.

16...c4! 17 Qb1 Qac8 18 Qe2 Qc5 19 Qf1 ed3

The evaluation of the position is indisputable now – Black enjoys a definite advantage.

24) Gavrilov – Andreikin
Moscow 2012
This is a typical Benko position where White has defended b2 and e4 very securely. Black’s pieces are very well placed – but how should he make progress? The 2010 World Junior Champion solves the problem with a typical exchanging operation.

16...Qa6! 17 Qxa6 Qxa6
Now the e5-knight has more prospects.

18 Qd2 Qb8 19 Qdl Qd3 20 b3 Qb4 21 Qb2 Qa3 22 Qe1 f5!
Another theme to remember! Black seizes a strong initiative, and at least some advantage.

25) Camara – Benko
São Paulo 1973
White is trying to establish some control of the queenside, but Black takes decisive action to prevent this.

17...Qe5! 18 Qxe5 Qxe5+ 19 f4
Otherwise the b2-pawn falls, but the move f4 has a serious disadvantage: the e4- and d5-pawns become more vulnerable to the ...f5 idea, as f3 is no longer possible.

19...Qd4 20 Qc1 Qxe2 21 Qxe2 Qf8
Defending e7 and preparing ...f5.

22 Qd1 f5! 23 exf5 gxf5 24 Qe3 Qxd5 25 Qxd4 cxd4
Black has a large advantage and went on to win. It is fitting to end the book with one of Benko’s games.
Index of Variations

A: 1 d4 ♙f6 2 c4 c5
B: 1 d4 ♙f6: Other Lines

A)

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2  c4             c5  
3  d5      

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3  e3 66 3...g6 4 ♙c3 ♙g7:  
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a) 10 a3 129  
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5 e3 132 5...axb5 6 ♙xb5 ♛a5+ 7 ♙c3 ♙b7:  
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7 ... \textit{d} 6

8 \textit{gg} 2

8 \textit{gf} 3 \textit{g} 7:

a) 9 \textit{gg} 2 180
b) 9 \textit{gh} 3 177

8 ... \textit{g} 7

9 \textit{gf} 3 180

9 \textit{gh} 3 178

9 ... \textit{bd} 7

10 \textit{b} 1 192

10 0-0 181 10...\textit{b} 6:

a) 11 \textit{gd} 2 182
b) 11 \textit{Ge} 1 183
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10 ... \textit{b} 6

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12 \textit{gh} 4 197

12 e4 195

12 ... 0-0

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13 \textit{b} 2 197

13 0-0 198

\textbf{B)}

1 \textit{d} 4 \textit{f} 6

2 2 \textit{f} 3

2 g3 7

2 c3 7

2 \textit{f} 4 31

2 \textit{c} 3 \textit{d} 5:

a) 3 e4 7

b) 3 \textit{gg} 5 8

2 \textit{gg} 5 12 2 ... \textit{e} 4:

a) 3 \textit{gh} 4 13

b) 3 \textit{f} 4 15

2 ... \textit{c} 5

3 \textit{d} 5 37

3 dxc5 e6 4 c4 65

3 c4 80

3 \textit{e} 3 27 3...\textit{g} 6:

a) 4 c4 67

b) 4 \textit{d} 3 \textit{g} 7 5 0-0 0-0 6 b3 29

3 \textit{c} 3 22 3...\textit{e} 6:

a) 4 \textit{f} 4 31

b) 4 \textit{gg} 5 34

c) 4 e3 23

3 ... \textit{e} 6

4 \textit{c} 4

4 \textit{c} 3 37

4 ... \textit{b} 5 42

5 \textit{gg} 5 55

5 a4 43

5 \textit{c} 3 44

5 \textit{d} x 6 47 5...\textit{f} x 6 6 cxb 5 \textit{d} 5:

a) 7 \textit{f} 4 48

b) 7 e3 49

c) 7 \textit{c} 3 50

d) 7 g3 52

5 ... \textit{exd} 5

6 cxd 5 \textit{d} 6

Now:

a) 7 e3 56

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c) 7 e4 58
Sick of defending with Black? Never found a reliable way to fight for the initiative when White plays 1 d4?

Allow Grandmaster Aveskulov to assist. He has put together a sound but ultra-aggressive repertoire based on gambits that have proved their worth in grandmaster play over many years. The Benko Gambit is dreaded by many 1 d4 players. Black gets very active piece-play, and even if White reaches a pawn-up endgame, he is often shocked to find he is worse due to Black’s intense positional pressure! If White avoids the Benko, that’s when we hit him with the Blumenfeld, sacrificing a pawn to set up a strong pawn-centre and attacking chances.

Aveskulov examines all of White’s options and move-orders after 1 d4 ♘f6, and shows an aggressive reply to each of them. He is never willing to take existing theory on faith, and throughout the book presents an extraordinary wealth of new analysis and ideas. He also explains typical plans in depth, so you will always know how to turn the screw once you have your opponent on the run.

At the age of 21, Grandmaster Valery Aveskulov won the championship of Ukraine, one of the world’s strongest chess nations. He has represented his country in junior and team events, winning three medals in 2008 at the World Sports Mind Games in Beijing. He is an experienced trainer, and has acted as a second for the top-class grandmaster Alexander Moiseenko.