beating
1 e4 e5
a repertoire for White in the Open Games
John Emms

beating

1 e4 e5
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Introduction

Returning to the Italian Game
The Italian Game (1 e4 e5 2 f3 c6 3 c4) occupies a very special place in the order of chess openings. Not only is it one of the oldest recorded openings in chess history – its existence has been recognized for hundreds of years; it's also the first opening that many players learn, especially those who begin chess at an early age. (For the record, I don’t count Scholar’s Mate as an opening!)

As we progress and mature, we tend to move on to more sophisticated openings. I say 'more sophisticated' only because young players will naturally play the Italian Game in an unsophisticated way. As we now know, there are plenty of ways of playing the Italian Game which are anything but unsophisticated.

This book examines the Italian Game and the Bishop's Opening and aims to provide a repertoire for White in the Open Games. The backbone of the repertoire is based on what is now considered to be the main line of the Italian Game:

1 e4 e5 2 f3 c6 3 c4 c5 4 c3 f6
and now 5 d3 (rather than 5 d4, which releases the tension and usually leads to more simplified positions).

This wasn’t always the case though. Only 30 years ago (not a long time when you consider the long history of
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this opening) the view on 5 d3 was generally quite dismissive. For example, in Understanding the Open Games, a book I grew up with and greatly admired, this is what American grandmaster Edmar Mednis wrote:

“[5 d4 is] the only logical follow-up to 4 c3. Of course, the solid 5 d3 is playable, but what then is the point of White’s fourth move.

“Often there is more than one good plan in a given opening position. Yet once a particular plan has been chosen, one must be consistent in executing it. Skipping to and fro between various courses will only lead to indigestion!”

I remember being surprised by 5 d3 when playing a fellow junior Nick Thomas (he was obviously ahead of his time in comparison to other juniors!). I had only ever faced 5 d4 previously, and like Mednis I was left wondering about the logic of such a follow-up. More to the point, I also remember I wasn’t able to find an easy solution for Black.

Even though 5 d3 is an old move, it was only during the 1980s that grandmasters really began to appreciate that the ‘quiet Italian’ was a viable option for White, one which could easily be compared to various d3 lines in the Ruy Lopez. Practitioners during this period included players such as John Nunn, Lev Psakhis, Sergey Dolmatov and Sergey Kudrín, while even Anatoly Karpov played it very occasionally, most notably in his 1981 world championship match against Viktor Korchnoi.

In the 1990s there were some new discoveries, adding an extra string to White’s bow. A group of players demonstrated that White could play the Italian Game more aggressively. Delaying kingside castling provided more options, including launching a sustained attack against the black king using a combination of pieces and pawns. In this book I’ve decided to cover both approaches (the Classical Main Line and the Modern Variation) to give the reader a choice, depending on his style and mood. In any case, even if you wish to add just one line to your repertoire, some knowledge of the other is useful in order to recognize and appreciate overlapping plans and tactical ideas, as well as the numerous transpositional possibilities.

Can you count on a theoretical advantage using the Italian Game? I don’t think you can. I could say “Where can you? Good luck trying to prove an edge against the Marshall Gambit!” , but I better stop myself at this point. Basically, there are many lines in the Italian Game which do lead to an advantage for White, but there are also many which ‘only’ lead to interesting positions, with level chances. I don’t think this matters. After all, when all is said and done, it’s worth remembering that understanding the position better than your opponent is much more important than any theoretical edge the position may offer. In this book my aim is
to help you to really understand the Italian Game and Bishop’s Opening.

In recent years there have been a number of players whose creative efforts over the board have enriched the theory and ideas of the Italian Game. They have made the task of studying, playing and writing about the Italian Game a lot easier than it might have been, and for this they deserve a huge amount of credit and gratitude. The list of Italian Game heroes includes players such as Sergei Tiviakov, Viktor Bologan, Sergei Movsesian, Alexander Areshchenko, Zahar Efimenko, Michael Adams, Boris Gelfand, Evgeny Alekseev and Vladimir Kramnik. I could on, but however long the list was, it would always miss out someone who deserved to be there. Throughout this book there are many games and game snippets involving these players, but you don’t need to stop there. You could do much worse than check out players such as Tiviakov and Bologan on an online database, and play through all of their games in the Italian Game, as I’m sure this would help you to get a good feel for the opening.

As for my own experiences in this opening, I returned to the Italian Game in 2000 so that I would have another weapon to go with the Ruy Lopez. Since then I have avidly studied and played the Italian Game – fortunately with good results. I’m finding that even now I’m learning new things. For example, just a few days ago I played a game and my opponent surprised me with a completely new idea. Having said that, after 10 years of studying the opening it’s probably getting to the stage where I’m learning fewer things, so this seems like a good time to share my thoughts.

**Arriving via the Bishop’s Opening**

While considering a 1 e4 e5 repertoire for White for this book, one decision I had to make was how to reach the Italian Game. I didn’t have much hesitation about choosing a route via the Bishop’s Opening. Using the move order 1 e4 e5 2 d4 f3 d4 c3 3 dxc4 would require coverage of the Petroff Defence, which I decided against for two reasons. Firstly, the Petroff leads to completely different positions to those in the Italian Game, whereas the Bishop’s Opening and Italian Game are closely linked as White uses very similar development patterns. Combining the Italian Game and the Bishop’s Opening provides a ‘system’ type of repertoire, and this seemed like a logical step to take. The second problem is a practical one. The Petroff is a unique opening, in that the theory it has generated vastly outweighs its popularity at anything under 2600 level – it’s almost inversely proportional to it. I wasn’t attracted by the idea of a considerable percentage of the book being taken up by an opening which readers would face only occasionally.

By including the Bishop’s Opening, I hope that the repertoire options will be
Beating 1 e4 e5 useful in more than one way. Firstly, and most obviously, there’s the option of always choosing the Bishop’s Opening move order in your games. Secondly, those of you who are always prepared to face the Petroff might wish to use only the Italian Game part of the repertoire. Finally, some players like to keep their opponents guessing by using a combination of 2  ♜f3 and 2 ♝c4, choosing one or the other for specific occasions, depending on factors such as the opponent’s repertoire.

**Chapters at a Glance**
Throughout the book I’ve generally presented the material using the traditional move orders. For example, I refer to the Italian Game as 1 e4 e5 2 ♝f3 ♝c6 3 ♝c4, rather than 1 e4 e5 2 ♝c4 ♝c6 3 ♝f3. I’ve sometimes tweaked move orders within games, normally in order to cover early alternatives in a convenient way.

Before plunging in, I think it’s worth laying down a brief summary of the chapters, on this occasion using the Bishop’s Opening move order:

1 e4 e5 2 ♝c4

2 ♝f3 ♝c6 3 ♝c4 is the Italian Game (Chapters 1-5).

If Black answers 2 ♝f3 with 2...d6, White can play 3 ♝c4, which is covered in Chapter 6 (Game 46).

White cannot play an Italian Game set-up with ♝c4 and d3 if Black chooses 2...f6, 2...d5 or 2...f5 — basically moves which attack the e4-pawn.

2...♗f6

If 2...♗c6, White replies 3 ♝f3 with a direct transposition to the Italian Game (Chapters 1-5). Second move alternatives are considered in Chapter 6.

3 d3

Now:

a) 3...♗c6 (the most common choice) 4 ♝f3 transposes to the Italian Game: 4...♗c5 5 c3 is covered in Chapters 1-3, while other moves (4...♗e7, 4...h6, 4...d5 etc) belong in Chapter 4.

b) 3...c6 is the main alternative for Black (see Chapter 6).

c) Other moves, like 3...♗c5 and 3...♗e7, are also covered in Chapter 6.

Now, without further ado, it’s time to plunge in! It just remains for me to wish you every success with the Italian Game and Bishop’s Opening.


John Emms
Hildenborough

May 2010
Before the early 1990s, the automatic way to play this line as White involved early castling, usually on move 6. Around this time, however, a few players began experimenting with the plan of delaying castling. Over the years this idea has really caught on, so much so that nowadays some would argue that it’s the main line of the Italian Game.

One key advantage of delaying castling is that White can carry out the typical $\text{bd2-f1-g3}$ manoeuvre more efficiently, simply because of the trivial reason that there’s no obstacle of a rook on f1. Sometimes this tempo-saving is the height of White’s ambitions, and once the knight lands on g3 White is happy to castle. However, another option – one that is more ambitious – is to delay castling further, or even dispense with the idea completely, in favour of launching an attack on the kingside. Of course the World Champion Wilhelm Steinitz had been doing something similar more than a hundred years earlier, but that was in the Ruy Lopez rather than the Italian Game.

Let’s begin by playing through a few early moves:
$1 \text{e4 e5} 2 \text{f3 c6} 3 \text{c4 c5} 4 \text{c3 f6} 5 \text{d3 a6}$

This little pawn move has been Black’s most popular choice in recent
Beating 1 e4 e5

years. It pre-empts any possible b2-b4 advance by giving the bishop a useful hideaway on a7. On a7 the bishop is completely out of harm’s way, whereas on b6 Black has to be wary of \( \text{bd2-c4} \) ideas.

6 \( \text{b3} \)

White normally plays this move sooner or later, regardless of whether he wants to delay castling or not. Though it’s not a threat at this precise moment, at some point White needs to takes measures against \( \text{a5} \), which can now be answered by \( \text{c2} \). If White carelessly allows this exchange of knight for bishop, he has no chance of gaining any advantage.

6...\( \text{a7} \)

Again this is the modern choice. Black maintains maximum flexibility over where to place his d-pawn and also doesn’t commit his king yet.

7 \( \text{h3} \)

Continuing the theme of maximum flexibility! White not only delays castling but also the \( \text{bd2-f1} \) plan. The reason: to keep the option of \( \text{g5} \) open for one further move in case Black castles. The immediate 7 \( \text{bd2} \) is of course playable, and this move is covered in Chapter Two.

A key possibility for Black is to advance in the centre with ...d5, and this move can be played in numerous positions. Paradoxically, in the main line Black plays ...d6, only to play ...d5 just a couple of moves later! Confused? Don’t worry. Everything will hopefully become clearer once you’ve played through a few of the games.

If Black does play ...d5 in the near future, White must choose between two plans. These will be covered in depth within the games, but in a nutshell they are:

**Plan A:** White holds the centre, keeps things as blocked as possible and slowly builds up an attack on the kingside.

**Plan B:** White exchanges pawns on d5, castles kingside, pressures Black’s centre and searches for dynamic piece play.

White can also execute Plan A if Black settles for ...d6.

Returning to the position in the diagram, 7 \( \text{h3} \) is a multi-functional move regardless of which plan White chooses. Let’s list a few things it does:

1. It prevents ...\( \text{g4} \), something White usually needs to do before playing \( \text{bd2-f1} \).

2. It facilitates action on the kingside when White chooses Plan A: either
the \( \text{Qh2-g4} \) manoeuvre or the aggressive \( \text{g2-g4} \) lunge.

3. It prevents \( \text{...g4} \). As we’ll see throughout this book, White doesn’t usually need to fear the pin on the f3-knight. However \( \text{...g4} \) is a useful option for Black in lines where White chooses Plan B.

I could go on, but I think the simplest solution is to go straight into the illustrative games. Let’s begin with some games where White successfully carries out Plan A.

**Game 1**

D. Howell-A. Ashton  
British Rapidplay Championship, Halifax 2008

\[
\begin{array}{l}
1 \text{e4 e5} 2 \text{\text{Qf3 c6}} 3 \text{\text{c4 f6}} 4 \text{d3 c5} \\
5 \text{c3 a6} 6 \text{b3 a7} 7 \text{h3}
\end{array}
\]

The main advantage of the 7 \( h3 \) move order is that, in contrast to 7 \( \text{bd2} \), White maintains the option of meeting 7...0-0 with 8 \( \text{g5!} \) (see Tiviakov-El Taher, Game 10).

\[
\begin{array}{l}
7...d6 \\
7...d5 is covered in Roy Chowdhury-Skjoldborg (Game 9).
\end{array}
\]

8 \( \text{\text{bd2}} \)

8... \( \text{\text{c7}} \) is covered in Games 7-8.

9 \( \text{\text{f1}} \)

9...d5

9...d5 has been the popular choice in practice and it is certainly Black’s most challenging response to White’s \( \text{\text{d2-f1}} \) plan. It can’t be denied that Black has lost a tempo by playing \( \text{...d6} \) and then \( \text{...d5} \) in quick succession, but there’s a cast-iron logic for doing so. Once White’s knight moves from d2 to f1, White is in a much less favourable position to answer \( \text{...d5} \) with \( \text{exd5, 0-0, e1, c4 etc, to attack the centre and the e5-pawn in particular. Black often follows the rule of thumb to play ...d5 only after White’s knight is committed to f1.} \)

9...e6 is covered in Yemelin-Klimov (Game 6).

10 \( \text{\text{e2!}} \)

In response, White usually meets this advance by protecting the strongpoint on e4 rather than exchanging on d5. That is, he chooses Plan A instead of Plan B.

10 \( \text{exd5} \) 11 \( \text{g3} \) is too slow and gives Black enough time to get organized. For example, 11...\( \text{e6} \) 12 0-0
Beating 1 e4 e5

f6! 13 ✧e1 (maybe White should play 13 ✧e3!? , an approach considered in Emms-Greet, Game 11) 13...✤d7 14 d4 exd4 15 cxd4 ✧f7 16 ✧c2 ✤ae8 and White had less than nothing in S.Movsesian-V.Akopian, Carlsbad 2007.

Returning to 10 ✧e2, Black must decide whether to clarify the situation in the centre immediately or keep the tension for at least one more move.

10...♗xe4

The option of keeping the tension with moves such as 10...♖e6 or 10...♕e8 is discussed in Games 4-5.

11 dxe4 ♤e7

11...♘h5 is covered in Gonzalez Vidal-Gomez, (Game 3)

12 ♤g3 h6?

The natural follow-up to 11...♕e7 must be 12...♖e6 (see Tiviakov-Sargissian, Game 2), and I can see no reason to delay this move.

Is Black’s choice of 12...h6 the first sign that he is unaware of the danger in this position? True, it’s desirable to eliminate the possibility of ♤g5 or ♤g5, but the drawback is that Black’s kingside has been weakened. Is this weakness significant?

13 ♤h4!

Yes it is! And it’s immediately apparent why. Not only does White threaten 14 ♤g6, but when a knight reaches the juicy f5 outpost it’s going to be mightily difficult for Black to dislodge it, even more so now that ...g6 would leave the h6-pawn hanging.

Black’s defence from this position could probably be improved upon, but it’s already clear that he is experiencing much discomfort.

13...♗h7

If 13...♖e6 both knight moves to f5 look enticing, but 14 ♤gf5 has the advantage of vacating g3 for the queen. For example, 14...♕d7 15 ♤f3 and the threats of 16 ♤xh6 and 16 ♤xh6+ are not easy to meet.

14 ♤hf5 ♤e8?

It’s not good in any case, but Black has to play 14...♕d8.

15 ♤f3 ♤g8

This defends against the ♤xh6 threat, but...
16 \( \text{dxg7} \! \) !

...Howell had another idea up his sleeve!

16...\( \text{hxg7} \) 17 \( \text{h5}+ \) 1-0

White forces mate after 17...\( \text{g6} \) 18 \( \text{g3}+! \) \( \text{hxh5} \) 19 \( \text{d1}+! \), or 17...\( \text{h8} \) 18 \( \text{g3} \) followed by \( \text{g7} \).

A crushing win for White. Perhaps the quiet Italian is not so quiet after all!

One question you might ask is, does White’s attack offer chances for success against a 2600+ grandmaster? Let’s see...

**Game 2**

*S.Tiviakov-G.Sargissian*

FIDE World Championship,

Tripoli 2004

1 \( e4 \) \( e5 \) 2 \( \text{d4} \) \( \text{c6} \) 3 \( \text{dxc6} \) \( \text{dxc6} \) 4 c3 \( \text{e6} \) 5 d3 d6 6 \( \text{b3} \) a6 7 h3 \( \text{a7} \) 8 \( \text{bd2} \) 0-0 9 \( \text{f1} \) d5 10 \( \text{e2} \) dx e 11 dx e \( \text{e7} \) 12 \( \text{g3} \) \( \text{e6} \)

This is much stronger than 12...h6?.

Black’s bishop move already brings about a key moment, with White facing a question which arises time and time again in the Italian Game. Should he allow the exchange of the light-squared bishops or avoid it? In general this question is very difficult to answer, and in many situations the correct choice may ultimately depend on a player’s style.

Let’s see what Tiviakov does:

13 \( \text{c2}+? \)
Well, maybe this retreat could be compared to some extent with White's automatic \( \text{b3-c2} \) when faced with \( \ldots \text{a5} \) in the Ruy Lopez. The bishop becomes temporarily passive, but White is counting on its long-term potential. Furthermore, despite the symmetrical pawn structure it does seem as though Black enjoys slightly less manoeuvring space for his pieces, and so in general he would welcome an exchange of minor pieces. Of course, in the Lopez scenario there's an extra incentive – to leave Black with a less than ideal knight on \( a5 \). This is why there \( \text{c2} \) is an 'automatic' choice, whereas here the decision requires some agonizing.

Let's see how Black should defend if White allows the exchange and continues action on the kingside: \( 13 \text{h4} \) (planning \( \text{f5} \)) \( 13\ldots\text{xb3} 14\text{xb3} \text{e6!} \) (with the bishops off the board, the queen sits very comfortably on this square – it's now her job to patrol the light squares) \( 15\text{b4 e8} \) (this knight will go to \( d6 \) to battle for control of \( f5 \)) \( 16\text{0-0 d6} 17\text{h5} \) (or \( 17\text{h2 e7} 18\text{f4 exf4} 19\text{xf4 g6} \) with a roughly equal position, G.Ardelean-I.Chirila, Eforie Nord 2009).

In this position Black should avoid \( 17\ldots\text{xf5?!} 18\text{exf5!} \) which gives White a great square on \( e4 \) for his knight and the possibility to break up Black's kingside with \( f6 \). \( 17\ldots\text{e7} \) is a wiser choice, and here \( 18\text{xd6 \text{xd6} 19\text{d1 \text{c6}} \) leaves Black close to equality.

Let's return to the position after \( 13 \text{c2} \). White's immediate plan is \( \text{h4} \) followed by \( \text{f5} \) and possibly \( \text{f3} \). How should Black react?

\( 13\ldots\text{e8} \)

If Black wants to activate a rook, isn't \( 13\ldots\text{ad8} \) more desirable? Yes it is, especially since after \( 14\text{h4} \) the rook on \( d8 \) helps with the tactical shot \( 14\ldots\text{b4!} \).

This seems to solve Black's problems. For example, \( 15\text{b1} \) (White should avoid \( 15\text{xb4 \text{xb4+} 16\text{d2 xd2!} 17\text{xd2 \text{f2+} 18\text{d1 \text{d2+} 19\text{xd2 xg3, while 15\text{hf5 xc2+ 16\text{xc2 xf5 17 xf5 e6 18 0-0 reaches an equal position}) 15...d6!} 16} \)
\[ \text{Italian Game: Modern Variation (Part I)} \]

\[ \text{...h4+ 17 ...d3} \text{...xd3} 18 gx5 \text{...ex4!?} 19 \text{...xe4} \text{...xe4+} 20 \text{...xe4} f6! \text{etc. White might be better off playing 14 0-0 instead.} \]

Another idea for Black is to prevent \text{...h4} with 13 ...e8, when again the knight is ready to hop into d6. 14 0-0 \text{d6} 15 e1 f6 16 h2 \text{ad8} 17 g4 \text{f7} 18 b1 h8 19 e3 d7 20 b3 \text{ad8}, as played in V.Nevednichy-L.Fressinet, Khanty Mansiysk 2007, provides a good demonstration of a successful Black strategy – White’s kingside play has come to nothing and Black is slowly improving his position.

White needs more dynamism here, and his play in D.Howell-P.Svidler, Dresden Olympiad 2008, provides more of a challenge: 14 g5 d7 15 f5 f6 (15 ...xf5 16 exf5 reveals the point behind moving the knight to g5, as the e4-square is now beckoning) 16 h4 (16 f3 intending g5 followed by 0-0-0 is also possible) 16 ...d6.

Now there is absolutely nothing to dissuade White from carrying out this desirable idea. It’s surprising just how quickly Black’s position worsens from here on.

14 h4!

A move earlier, if Black plays 16...h6 (instead of 16...d6) White could ignore the attack on the knight, since 17 d2 hxg5? 18 hxg5 g6 19 0-0-0 looks to me like a very strong attack down the h-file.

In this position my feeling is that 17 g4!? as suggested in \text{Chess Today}, looks more ambitious than Howell’s 17 e3.

\[ \text{In this position my feeling is that 17 g4!?}, \text{as suggested in \text{Chess Today}, looks more ambitious than Howell’s 17 e3.} \]

14...f8

14...g6 prevents an entry into f5 for the moment, but the pin with 15 g5 is obviously going to hurt Black.

14...c5 offers Black more possibilities, such as ...c4, ...b5 or ...c4. Here Lukacs feels that 15 g5!, intending 15...c4 16 f3 e6 17 hf5, is White’s best option and I agree with him. White is threatening 18 xg7! xg7 19 xf6+ xf6 20 h5.  

15 hf5 e7!

Black has to challenge this powerfully placed knight as quickly as possible.
Beating 1 e4 e5

16 ♗g5 ♗xf5?

Black really needed to keep this bishop in order to oppose its counterpart, whose scope is about to be increased with the change of pawn structure. Having said that, 16...♗xf5 isn’t a bed of roses for Black either: 17 exf5! (17 ♗xf5 ♗d7! followed by ...f6 minimizes Black’s disadvantage) 17...♗d5 18 0-0-0!? intending to meet 18...♗xa2 with 19 ♗xf6 gxf6 20 ♗e4.

17 exf5 ♗ed5 18 0-0-0!

Excellent play! Tiviakov exploits to the full his earlier decision to delay castling. Indeed, 0-0-0 is now the natural choice, with White’s active pieces, powerful bishops and pawn spearhead on f5 providing ample ammunition for a kingside attack. White enjoys a significant advantage in this position.

18...h6 19 ♗h4 ♗c5 20 ♗e4 ♗c6 21 ♗b3 ♗f4!? 22 ♗xf6+ ♗xf6 23 ♗g4 ♗c6 24 f6! ♗xg2?

24...g6 is more resilient, even though White is in complete control after 25 ♗d7 ♗e6 26 ♗hd1.

25 ♗g3! g5

26 ♗d7?

26 ♗xf4! was much stronger. White wins after 26...♗xg4 27 hxg4 exf4 28 ♗xh6 ♗xf2 29 ♗g6+ ♗f8 30 ♗g7, as indicated by Lukacs.

26...♗f8?

Missing a big chance to get back into the game with 26...♗e6!.

27 ♗xf4!

Tiviakov rarely wastes a second opportunity!

27...exf4 28 ♗f5! ♗d8 29 ♗g6+ 1-0

The next game demonstrates just how much flexibility White’s position contains. Early on it looks like White is aiming for a typical pawn storm on the kingside, but somewhat surprisingly he ends up castling that side.

Game 3

Y. Gonzalez Vidal-F. Gomez
Cuban Championship, Holguin City 2002

1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 ♗c6 3 ♗c4 ♗f6 4 d3 ♗c5
5 c3 a6 6 b3 a7 7 bd2 d6 8 h3 0-0 9 f1 d5 10 wxe4 dxe4 11 dxe4 h5!

This knight move is an important idea – both here and in similar positions – because it more or less prevents 12 g3, which has become undesirable in view of 12...f4 or 12...xg3. So White has to amend his original plan.

Whenever Black plays ...h5, both sides need to be wary of tactics involving xe5 uncovering an attack on the knight by the white queen. On this occasion 12 xe5?? is a blunder. White wins a pawn after 12...xe5 13 xh5, but then Black wins the game with 13...d3+

12 g3!

Preventing any ...f4 ideas. While it’s certainly true that White’s kingside structure has become compromised to some extent, White can usually get away with accepting this because kingside castling only rarely features in his plans.

White can allow ....f4 in some positions, but he doesn’t want to force the knight there: 12 g4?! f4 13 xf4 exf4 and White has weakened his position for no compensating factors. What’s more, that knight on f1 is no longer such a happy piece!

If White wants to allow ...f4, a better way to do so would be 12 g5 w6d6 13 e3, as played in K. Landa-V. Akopian, Sochi 2006. I’m sure that White plans to meet 13...f4 with 14 xf4 exf4 15 d5; or 13..h6 with 14 g4 f4 (14...hxg5??) 15 xf4 exf4 16 d5, when in comparison to 12 g4?! White has found an excellent square for the knight. In the game, Akopian chose 13...xe3 and Landa managed to gain a small advantage after 14 xe3 f4 15 xf4 exf4 16 e5 w6h6 17 w4 e6 18 xe6 wxe6 19 0-0 xe8 20 fe1 f6 21 xf4 fxe5 22 w3 in view of the isolated e-pawn, although Black’s play was perhaps a bit too simplistic.

12...f6!

The knight has done its job – g3 is no longer possible. Now it returns to hit the e4-pawn so that White cannot plan e3 either.

13 g4!
Beating 1 e4 e5

White has other options but clearly this is the most ambitious. The good thing about delaying castling is that White can consider aggressive ideas such as lunging forward with pawns on the kingside.

13 \(\text{\textit{g}5} \text{ h6 \textit{d}1 \text{\textit{w}e}7\) reveals a problem with having a pawn on g3. White would like to play 15 \(\text{\textit{h}4}\) but then he would always have to worry about \(\ldots\text{\textit{g}5}\) trapping the bishop. Even if an immediate 15...\(\text{\textit{g}5}\) is considerably risky in view of 16 \(\text{\textit{\textit{x}g}5\text{ h}x\text{\textit{g}5} 17 \text{\textit{x}g}5\), the fact that Black has this possibility in reserve, say after 15...\(\text{\textit{e}6}\), is somewhat annoying for White (although not annoying enough to prevent some bold players choosing to play like this – see the Howell-Mchedlishvili reference in Game 10).

After 13 \(\text{\textit{g}4}\) Black needs to come up with an effective plan, which is easier said than done...

13...\(\text{\textit{d}7}\)

Sensibly removing the knight out of the firing line of White’s kingside advance, and eyeing the possibility of exploiting the hole on f4 via \(\text{\textit{c}5}\)-e6.

13...\(\text{\textit{w}e}7\) intending \(\ldots\text{\textit{\textit{e}6}\) is, as always, a key defensive idea. Against this, White could play 14 \(\text{\textit{g}3}\) and meet 14...\(\text{\textit{e}6}\) with 15 \(\text{\textit{f}5}\).

The immediate 13...\(\text{\textit{e}6}\) is also interesting, and White faces one of those typical dilemmas regarding the light-squared bishops. 14 \(\text{\textit{\textit{x}e}6\text{ fxe}6}\) leaves the e-pawns doubled and isolated, but it could be argued with some justification that Black’s gain in control of \(d5\) and \(f5\), plus the use of the open f-file, more than compensates him for this. I would be much more tempted to continue with 14 \(\text{\textit{\textit{g}3}\).

14 \(\text{\textit{e}3}\) \(\text{\textit{c}5}\) 15 \(\text{\textit{c}2}\)

Preventing the exchange and also \(\ldots\text{\textit{d}3}\+.

15...\(\text{\textit{a}5}\)

Black’s idea is \(\ldots\text{\textit{b}6}\) followed by \(\ldots\text{\textit{a}6}\), but White can easily negate this threat after which Black is left awkwardly placed.

Motwani suggests 15...\(\text{\textit{e}6}\), planning to meet 16 \(\text{\textit{d}5}\) with 16...\(\text{\textit{f}6}\) “followed by \(\ldots\text{\textit{e}7}\) to challenge White’s

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chess_board.png}
\end{center}
Italian Game: Modern Variation (Part I)

d5-knight, which is a key guardian of the f4-square”. This does look like a wise defence to me, although I still prefer White’s position after 17 e3 xe3 18 xe3 e7 19 0-0-0. Another enticing option is 16 f5, intending to answer 16...g6 with 17 h6+ followed by M, again with some initiative.

16 0-0!

It’s sometimes easy to forget that White can still castle this side! Black is hardly in a position to exploit any weaknesses, especially as most of his pieces are labouring on the queenside.

16...b6 17 d1 a6 18 e1 f6 19 g2

Black had to do something about the obvious idea of d5 or f5.

19 g5?

This advance is quite committal, but White’s initiative becomes very strong.

20...e6 21 b4 axb4 22 cxb4 b7?

It has become abundantly clear that Black’s plan involving ...a5, ...b6 and ...a6 was a misguided one. He should have at least consulted his poor bishop on a7!

20...d7

White wins a piece after 25...xb5 26 xd5 and 27 xb7.

The next game highlights a problem that Black often encounters in this line: how does he create meaningful counterplay? My opponent plays quite imaginatively on the queenside, but he still finds it very difficult to do anything constructive. In contrast, White’s moves on the kingside didn’t seem to require too much thought.

Game 4

J.Emms-D.Ledger
British League (4NCL) 2006

1 e4 e5 2 d3 c6 3 c4 c5 4 c3 f6
Beating 1 e4 e5

5 d3 a6 6 b3 d6 7 bd2 0-0 8 h3 a7 9 f1 d5 10 e2 d6

Black adds support to e5 in preparation for his next move.

11 g3

11...a5

11...e6 is certainly possible, but perhaps it makes more sense to play it a move earlier without the queen committed to d6 (see the next game). Now:

a) 12 h4 dxe4 13 dxe4 xb3 14 axb3 e6 transposes to the note to White’s 13th move in Game 2.

b) 12 g5!? e7 13 0-0 g6 (13...d7!?) 14 h5 d7 15 xe6 fxe6 16 e3 f6 17 xf6+ xf6 18 xa7 a7 19 g3 c6 20 d4 looked a touch better for White in B. Macieja-P.Acs, Budapest 1996.

c) 12 0-0 h6 13 h4 dxe4 14 dxe4 e7! (14...xb3 15 gf5!? is interesting, planning to answer 15...e6 16 axb3 xb3 by 17 f3 with threats on h6) 15 f3 h7 16 hf5 xf5 17 xf5 xf5 18 xf5+ g6 19 f3 g7 and Black has equalized, I.Brandis-S.Vajda, Sovata 1998.

11...d4 is another reasonable idea for Black, although not many players have been willing to alter the tension in this way.

One of Black’s ideas is to play ...dxc3 in combination with ...b5-b4 to gain control of d4, but this plan is not easy to carry out if White plays with purpose: 12 0-0 e6 13 h4 (again this idea suggests itself as the most dangerous) 13...e7 14 g5 e8 15 cxd4!? xd4 16 xe7! xe7 17 hf5 wd7 18 xe6 fxe6 (or 18...xe6 19 xd4 exd4 20 f5) 19 xd4 xd4 20 wc2 and White enjoyed a slight edge in B.Macieja-l.Sokolov, Elista Olympiad 1998 – Black’s pawn weaknesses are more serious than White’s.

12 c2 dxe4

Golubev suggests 12...d4!? here, and this is certainly a worthwhile idea. After 13 0-0 White’s plan is similar to the one employed after 11...d4.

13 dxe4 d7!

This is the point of Black’s previous play. With the knight vacating c6, Black
gains the possibility of doing some damage with ...\textit{\textsc{b}b5}.

Should White play \textit{\textsc{b}3}, to meet ...\textit{\textsc{b}b5} with \textit{\textsc{c}4}? This is what \textit{\textsc{Rybka}} wants to do...

\textbf{14 \textit{\textsc{h}4}!}

No!

\textbf{14...\textit{\textsc{b}5} 15 \textit{\textsc{w}f3}}

Computers, at least initially, assess that Black is well placed here. Perhaps they are taking into consideration the fact that White is unable to castle either side at this moment. My feeling, though, is that White’s king stuck in the centre may well be safer than Black’s king tucked behind those three kingside pawns, at least in human vs. human battles!

\textbf{15...\textit{\textsc{f}e8}?}

Perhaps the main problem for Black is not the assessment of the position, but rather the fact that it’s more difficult for him to handle. After just one seemingly natural move by Black, the computers begin to acknowledge White’s attacking potential.

\textbf{15...\textit{\textsc{w}e6}!} pre-empts \textit{\textsc{f}f5} ideas and, although I prefer White, there’s everything still to play for.

\textbf{16 \textit{\textsc{h}f5} \textit{\textsc{w}f8}}

The problem with 16...\textit{\textsc{w}e6} here is that 17 \textit{\textsc{g}5}! threatens 18 \textit{\textsc{d}xg7} \textit{\textsc{d}xg7} 19 \textit{\textsc{xf}6+} \textit{\textsc{w}xf6} 20 \textit{\textsc{h}5+}, and also exploits a downside to 17...\textit{\textsc{f}e8} – the \textit{\textsc{f}6}-knight no longer has \textit{\textsc{e}8} available.

Against 17...\textit{\textsc{d}d7}? I had planned 18 \textit{\textsc{h}5!}, which exploits another drawback to Black’s rook move!

\textbf{17 \textit{\textsc{h}4}!}

This move creates a major threat, and it also introduces \textit{\textsc{h}5-\textsc{h}6} ideas.

I had analysed the immediate 17 \textit{\textsc{d}xg7} \textit{\textsc{w}xg7} 18 \textit{\textsc{f}5} but couldn’t find a follow up after 18...\textit{\textsc{w}g6}. With a pawn on \textit{\textsc{h}4} instead of \textit{\textsc{h}3}, though, White could win here by playing \textit{\textsc{h}5}.

\textbf{17...\textit{\textsc{e}e6}?}

Initially this move seems to discourage \textit{\textsc{d}xg7} because it appears to give Black a second option of capturing on \textit{\textsc{g}7}, with the king. However, this proves to be worse than capturing with the queen!

\textbf{17...\textit{\textsc{h}8}!} was the only decent way
to meet White's threat. The point behind the king move is that 18 özxg7
wxg7 19 of5 wg6 20 h5 wg4 no longer works for White because it's not check
on h6. Instead I had planned to keep up the pressure with 18 h5.

18 özg7! özg7

18...wxg7 is more resilient but still winning for White: 19 of5 wg6
(19...of8 is met by 20 ah6; or 19...wh8
20 ah6 with the point that 20...wh8 21 w3+ cg6 allows 22 oh7 mate) 20 h5.
Here 20... wg4 21 oh6+ wins the queen, while 20... özh5 21 wxh5 is hopeless for
Black in the long run.

19 ah6+!

David Ledger looked a bit shocked when I played this move, which either
wins the queen or forces mate. Perhaps he had been expecting 19 of5+? ah8.
Sportingly, he allowed me to execute the mate.

19... özh6 20 of5+ ag6 21 ag3+ ah5
22 wg5 mate (1-0)

Sergei Tiviakov is one of the Italian Game’s greatest advocates. He’s always
coming up with new and interesting ideas, and it’s no coincidence that his
games are featured more than anyone else’s in this book.

Game 5
S.Tiviakov-R.Buhmann
Neustadt an der Weinstrasse 2009

1 e4 e5 2 of3 oc6 3 oc4 of6 4 d3 oc5
5 c3 a6 6 ab3 ob7 7 h3 d6 8 ab2 0-0
9 of1 d5 10 we2 ae6

This is a good move. Black increases
the tension by introducing the possibility of a bishop exchange after a trade
on e4. White can react either solidly or aggressively.

If 10...h6, White can continue with
11 ag3 but 11 a4!? is an attractive alternative, especially now that Black has
given White’s attack a ‘hook’ with ...h6. The game V.Komliakov-I.Yagupov, Rus-
sia 1995, demonstrates some of White’s attacking possibilities: 11...dxe4 12 dxe4 ad7 (the typical reac-
tion to g2-g4 – Black’s knight heads for e6) 13 ...g3 (I quite like 13 ...e3!? ...c5 14 ...c2, when the knight can also go to d5 – compare Gonzalez-Gomez, Game 3) 13 ...c5 14 ...c2 ...e6 15 ...f5 ...e8 16 h4 ...f4 17 ...xf4 exf4 18 ...d1 ...f6 19 g5 hxg5 20 hxg5 ...g6 21 ...h4 ...h5 22 ...d2 ...c5 23 g6 ...d6

24 ...xf7+!? (Rybka prefers the paradoxical 24 ...d5!, because even after an exchange of queens White keeps an initiative: 24... ...xd5 25 ...xd5 ...e6 26 ...h5 etc) 24... ...e7 25 ...h4 ...g4 26 ...b3+ ...f6 27 ...xg4!? ...xg4 28 ...d5 ...e5 29 ...xe5 ...xe5?? (after 29... ...xe5 there’s nothing obvious for White; now the attack is decisive) 30 ...f7+ ...g5 31 ...d2! ...h6 32 ...h1 ...h5 33 ...f5+ ...xf5 34 ...f5 and Black resigned.

10... ...e8 is more solid. Black doesn’t fear 11 ...g5 because he plans to meet it with 11... ...xe4 12 dxe4 ...e6, followed typically by an exchange of bishops on b3 and the queen working her way to e6. For example, 13 ...d1 (I haven’t found any games with 13 ...c2!? , but this looks like the sort of move Tiviakov might choose) 13 ... ...e7 14 ...e3 ...e3 15 ...xe3 ...xb3 16 axb3 ...e6 17 ...xf6 ...xf6 18 0-0 ...e6 19 ...d6 f6 with a level position, V.lordachescu-Z.Gyimesi, Romania 2004.

If 10... ...e8 is met by 11 ...g3, Black can play 11...h6 safe in the knowledge that White no longer has aggressive g2-g4 ideas at his disposal. Even so, there are some interesting possibilities here:

a) 12 0-0 ...e6 13 ...d1 (otherwise Black might play ... ...a5, ...dxe4 and ... ...c4) 13... ...e7 14 ...h4 dxe4 15 ...f5 ...f8 16 dxe4 ...xb3 17 axb3 ...e7 18 ...f3 (threatening ...xh6+) 18... ...xf5 19 ...xf5 ...e6 (K.Landa-M.Adams, Enschede 2006) and here 20 b4 introduces the possibility of b5 at some point. White’s position is the more comfortable, even if Black might be able to equalize with accurate play.

b) White can also begin kingside action with 12 ...h2!?

This move offers more chances for both sides to unbalance the position. For example, 12... ...e6 13 ...g4 dxe4 14
Beating 1 e4 e5
dxe4 \(\Box\)xb3 15 axb3 \(\text{\&}\)e6!? (15...\(\text{\&}\)d7? allows 16 \(\text{\&}\)xh6! gxh6 17 \(\text{\&}\)xh6+ \(\text{\&}\)f8 18 \(\text{\&}\)g4 – Kobalija – which is very good for White) 16 \(\text{\&}\)d2 \(\text{\&}\)e7 17 0-0-0!? \(\text{\&}\)e8 (M.Kobalija-M.Sorokin, Russian Championship 2005) and here Kobalija gives 18 \(\text{\&}\)f5!? \(\text{\&}\)d8 19 \(\text{\&}\)e3 \(\text{\&}\)xe3+ 20 \(\text{\&}\)xe3 with an unclear and roughly level position.
c) After 12 \(\text{\&}\)h4 White has to watch out for ...\(\text{\&}\)xe4 tricks. For example, 12...\(\text{\&}\)a5 13 \(\text{\&}\)c2 \(\text{\&}\)xe4!? 14 dxe4 \(\text{\&}\)xh4 15 exd5 \(\text{\&}\)c4.

Let's return to 10...\(\text{\&}\)e6. What should White play? 11 \(\text{\&}\)c2!?

Here's that 'mysterious' bishop move again!

11 \(\text{\&}\)g3 has been White's most popular choice in practice. With accurate play Black has very good chances of reaching a level position, but this move might still appeal to those who prefer more simplified positions. Play normally continues 11...dxe4 (there's also 11...\(\text{\&}\)a5!? 12 \(\text{\&}\)c2 dxe4 13 dxe4 \(\text{\&}\)c4! 14 \(\text{\&}\)d2 \(\text{\&}\)xd2+ 15 \(\text{\&}\)xd2 \(\text{\&}\)e6 16 \(\text{\&}\)f3 \(\text{\&}\)d7, as in E.Vorobiov-V. Diu, Krasnodar 2002; this looks fairly level and I'm surprised we haven't seen it more often) 12 dxe4 \(\text{\&}\)xb3 13 axb3

\[\text{Diagram} 24\]

\begin{align*}
\text{and now:} \\
&\text{a) 13...\(\text{\&}\)d7 14 0-0 \(\text{\&}\)e6 15 b4 h6 and here the plan of 16 \(\text{\&}\)h4 intending \(\text{\&}\)f5 forces Black to defend with some accuracy: 16...\(\text{\&}\)h7! 17 \(\text{\&}\)f5 \(\text{\&}\)e7 18 \(\text{\&}\)e3 (perhaps 18 \(\text{\&}\)xe7 \(\text{\&}\)xe7 19 \(\text{\&}\)f5 \(\text{\&}\)e6 20 \(\text{\&}\)f3) 18...\(\text{\&}\)xe4!? (18...\(\text{\&}\)xe3 looks wiser, and equal) 19 \(\text{\&}\)g4 g6 20 \(\text{\&}\)xe4 \(\text{\&}\)xf5?! (better is 20...gx\(\text{\&}\)f5! 21 \(\text{\&}\)xb7 \(\text{\&}\)xe3 22 fxe3 c6 with g-file counterplay) 21 \(\text{\&}\)xf5 \(\text{\&}\)xf5 22 \(\text{\&}\)xb7 \(\text{\&}\)xe3 23 fxe3 \(\text{\&}\)d3 24 \(\text{\&}\)xc7 \(\text{\&}\)xe3+ 25 \(\text{\&}\)h2 \(\text{\&}\)g8 26 \(\text{\&}\)f6 with some advantage for White, L.McShane-Z.Gyimesi, German League 2006. \\
&\text{b) 13...\(\text{\&}\)e8! again reroutes the knight to d6, a more favourable square. This seems to be a reliable option for Black:} \\
&\text{b1) 14 \(\text{\&}\)f5 \(\text{\&}\)d6 15 0-0 (15 \(\text{\&}\)g4 is aggressive, but after 15...\(\text{\&}\)f6 16 h4 \(\text{\&}\)e6 17 b4 f6! 18 h5 \(\text{\&}\)ad8 19 \(\text{\&}\)h4 \(\text{\&}\)d7, V.Bologan-V.Malakhov, Kemer 2007, it's} \\
\end{align*}
Italian Game: Modern Variation (Part I)

not clear what White does next) 15...e7 16 dxe6 dxe6 17 d1 e6 18 c4 xc4 19 bxc4 ad8 with equality, V.Bologan-V.Georgiev, Wijk aan Zee 2007.

b2) 14 d2!? d6 15 c4 xc4 16 bxc4 e7 17 0-0 d6 18 b3 fd8 19 a3 f6, again with a level position, L.McShane-J.Werle, London 2009.

Against 11 g5 Black can employ a similar plan to reach a level position: 11...dxe4 12 dxe4 xb3 13 axb3 d6 14 g3 e6 15 b4 e8 16 0-0 f6, S.Movsesian-V.Topalov, Tripoli (rapid) 2004.

Finally, although in some positions White can contemplate meeting ...e6 with g5, I don't think this is one of them. There are various pros and cons to weigh up about an exchange of knight for bishop on e6, but here the debate might even be redundant, due to tactical reasons: 11 g5

16 xe2 dxe7 14 xf7+ xf7 with good compensation for the exchange.

11...dxe4

11...d4 must be a consideration here. There's also 11...b5!? with the intention of playing ...c4 – after exchanging pawns – to force a queen exchange: 12 g3 dxe4 13 dxe4 c4 14 d2, as in A.Maier-A.Stoer, Augsburg 2003. White could try 12 g5, the idea being that after 12...e7 13 g3 the queen now has space on f3: 13...dxe4 14 dxe4 c4 15 f5 d7 16 f3 etc.

12 dxe4 h5

We've already seen this idea in a similar position (Game 3), and White's response is the same.

12...e7 13 g3 would transpose to Tiviakov-Sargissian (Game 2).

13 g3

13...h6

This move certainly has its uses, but Black must always be a bit wary about playing it unprovoked.

In D.Howell-M.Mchedlishvili, Dresden Olympiad 2008, Black instead
chose 13...\(\text{\texttt{c}}\)\texttt{f}6. The young English grandmaster responded with the bold 14 \(\text{\texttt{g}}\)\texttt{g}5!? h6 15 \(\text{\texttt{h}}\)\texttt{h}4!? - bold, because it gives Black the opportunity to trap the bishop with ...g5. Having said that, it’s possible that the execution is weaker than the threat, because 15...g5 16 \(\text{\texttt{d}}\)\texttt{x}g5 hgxg5 17 \(\text{\texttt{x}}\)\texttt{x}g5 \(\text{\texttt{g}}\)\texttt{g}7 18 f4! left White with tremendous play for the piece. Indeed, after 18...\(\text{\texttt{w}}\)\texttt{d}6 19 f5! \(\text{\texttt{c}}\)\texttt{c}8 20 \(\text{\texttt{d}}\)\texttt{d}1 \(\text{\texttt{w}}\)\texttt{c}5 21 \(\text{\texttt{e}}\)\texttt{e}3 \(\text{\texttt{h}}\)\texttt{h}8 22 \(\text{\texttt{d}}\)\texttt{d}5 \(\text{\texttt{c}}\)\texttt{x}d5 23 \(\text{\texttt{d}}\)\texttt{x}d5 \(\text{\texttt{w}}\)\texttt{b}6 24 \(\text{\texttt{b}}\)\texttt{b}3 \(\text{\texttt{f}}\)\texttt{f}8 25 h4 \(\text{\texttt{g}}\)\texttt{g}8?, White could have reached a winning position with 26 \(\text{\texttt{w}}\)\texttt{h}5!.

Tiviakov carries on with the typical attacking plan on the kingside.

15...\(\text{\texttt{f}}\)\texttt{f}6 16 \(\text{\texttt{h}}\)\texttt{f}5 \(\text{\texttt{e}}\)\texttt{e}7

Black can try to change the character of the position by playing 16...\(\text{\texttt{g}}\)\texttt{x}e3!? Exchanging the a7-bishop for a knight on e3 is an underrated defensive resource in many lines. The bishop on a7 looks impressive, but when White goes for an all-out assault on the kingside there’s a danger it might become an uncomfortable spectator. It’s a fierce battle between the bishop and knight pairs after 17 \(\text{\texttt{x}}\)\texttt{x}e3 \(\text{\texttt{x}}\)\texttt{x}f5 18 exf5 \(\text{\texttt{w}}\)\texttt{d}5 19 0-0 e4 20 f3!? Alternatively, if White is unwilling to alter the pawn structure, the slower 17 \(\text{\texttt{g}}\)\texttt{x}e3 is possible, planning \(\text{\texttt{f}}\)\texttt{f}1-g2 and/or g3-g4 followed by \(\text{\texttt{f}}\)\texttt{f}5.

17 g4

Black doesn’t have a decent defence to the threat against f7 after the d5-rook moves: for example, 26...\(\text{\texttt{e}}\)\texttt{e}8 27 \(\text{\texttt{d}}\)\texttt{d}6!! \(\text{\texttt{f}}\)\texttt{f}8 28 \(\text{\texttt{x}}\)\texttt{x}f7+! \(\text{\texttt{x}}\)\texttt{x}f7 29 \(\text{\texttt{f}}\)\texttt{f}6 \(\text{\texttt{f}}\)\texttt{f}2+ 30 \(\text{\texttt{d}}\)\texttt{d}1 etc. It’s very possible that Black should avoid ...g5 at that moment and instead choose something like 15...\(\text{\texttt{w}}\)\texttt{e}7 (or 14...\(\text{\texttt{w}}\)\texttt{e}7 a move earlier) when the position remains doubled edged.

14 \(\text{\texttt{e}}\)\texttt{e}3

White must avoid 14 \(\text{\texttt{d}}\)\texttt{x}e5? \(\text{\texttt{x}}\)\texttt{e}5 15 \(\text{\texttt{w}}\)\texttt{x}h5 \(\text{\texttt{d}}\)\texttt{d}3+ 16 \(\text{\texttt{h}}\)\texttt{h}3 \(\text{\texttt{w}}\)\texttt{x}d3. 14...b5 15 \(\text{\texttt{h}}\)\texttt{h}4!

It’s still possible to castle kingside, but Tiviakov senses blood!

17...\(\text{\texttt{g}}\)\texttt{g}6 18 \(\text{\texttt{g}}\)\texttt{g}2!

Preventing ...\(\text{\texttt{f}}\)\texttt{f}4 - sometimes you have to go one step backward before going two steps forward.

Black is afflicted by a typical mal-
aise. His pieces look well placed and there seems to be nothing much wrong with his position. In fact, objectively maybe there’s isn’t; it’s just irritatingly difficult to come up with an effective plan. In the game, Buhmann begins to drift. Meanwhile, Tiviakov slowly edges forward on the kingside.

18...d7

18...d7 intending ...ad8 looks stronger.

19 h4 c5 20 f3 e8 21 d2 c6 22 b3!

White wants to castle queenside before going any further, so he blocks the attack on a2. This seems to invite ...a5, but Tiviakov has calculated that his attack will be the quicker.

22...a5 23 0-0-0 a4

This doesn’t work, but after 23...c7 24 h5 White’s attack is breaking through very quickly: 24...f8 25 xg7! xg7 26 xh6+ xh6 27 f6+ h7 28 h6 and g7 mate; or 24...e7 25 xh6+! gxh6 26 xh6 c8 27 f6 e6, and now 28 f4! is the move Rybka wants to win with!

24 xh6 b6 25 xg7 xb3 26 xe8 bxa2

Or 26...xe8 27 f6.

27 f6+ h8 28 d2!

This is much stronger than 28 b2? b4!

28...f4

Perhaps Buhmann had initially thought that 28 d2 was impossible because of 28...d8+. Here 29 d5! is the only move, but it’s a very effective one.

29 xf4 exf4 30 xf4 c4 31 e1 d8
32 a1 a5 33 d5! 1-0

A wonderful attacking display by Tiviakov, and a great advert for the Modern Variation. There’s no doubt that this opening requires a certain amount of subtlety. But if you get it right, as Tiviakov does here, it can be very rewarding.

Next we consider three games in which Black chooses to delay, or completely dispense with, the ...d6-d5 advance. In this first game, White goes all out for an attack – and succeeds!
Beating 1 e4 e5

Game 6
V.Yemelin-S.Klimov
St Petersburg 2009

1 e4 e5 2 d3 d6 3 c4 c5 4 c3 f6
5 d3 a6 6 b3 a7 7 h3 d6 8 d2 0-0
9 f1 e6

The ...d6 and ...e6 idea is seen in many lines of the Italian Game. It’s a solid option for Black and is favoured by many strong players. In this particular position, for example, both Carlsen and Aronian have played 9...e6.

10 xe6?! fxe6 needs to be avoided, here and in many similar positions after ...e6, for obvious reasons. White shouldn’t present Black with an open f-file and extra control of centre squares unless there is a good reason to do so.

One good reason is if White can trade his f3-knight instead of his light-squared bishop. Black still gets an open file and some central control, but this time White gains the bishop pair and Black loses some influence over the light-squares. For example, if Black plays 8...e6 (a move earlier), White has the possibility of 9 g5!?, if Black has already castled this move makes little sense. But here 9...xb3 10 xb3 0-0 11 wins a pawn, as indicated by Ivanchuk, even though Black is not completely devoid of compensation. Instead, the imbalances caused by 9...d7 10 xe6 fx6 are not easy to assess. I’m still not 100% certain which side has been favoured more by the exchange on e6. However, White’s play in R.Slobodjan-Z.Gyimesi, German League 1997, is certainly worth noting, especially the way he slowly shuts the a7-bishop out of the game: 11 f3 0-0 12 0-0 e8 13 h2 e7 14 h4 h6 15 g3! g5 16 g2 g6

17 f4! gxf4 18 xf4 exf4 19 xf4 xf4 20 xf4 h7 21 we2 xf7 22 d4! wh5 23 xh5 xh5 24 e3 f6 25 xf6 xf6 26 f1 f8 27 g2 g8+ 28 f3 d5 29 exd5 exd5 30 c2+ g7 31 f5 b6 32 f4 c6 33 e1 e8 34 g1+ and Black resigned.

Black sometimes prefaces ...e6 with 9...h6, perhaps to avoid the possi-
bility of 9...e6 10 g5 (see below). Here 10 g3 e6 would transpose to
the main game, but White has another
option in 10 g4!?. As we’ve already
seen, this aggressive lunge is often a
promising way to respond to ...h6.
Here’s a young Viktor Bologan de­
monstrating White’s attacking po­
tential and making it all look very easy:
10...h7 (10...d5 11 e2 transposes to
the note on 10...h6 in Tiviakov-
Buhmann, Game 5) 11 g3 e6 12
13...dxe4 14 dxe4 xb3 15 axb3 d7 followed by ...e6
12 ld5 13 e4 xb3 16 axb3 (I prefer
White here) 16b6 17 h4 h8 18 e3
e3 19 xe3 w5 20 0-0-0!

10 g5 is rare in this position, but
part of me is tempted by it. This move
is a standard way of trying to exploit
Black’s lack of ...h6. However, compared
to the similar position reached in
Emms-Flear (see Game 11) it might not
be so effective, since h2-h3 isn’t such a
vital move here. Even so, I think it de­
serves attention. It certainly worked
out well for White in A.Purtov-
R.Farakhov, Alushta 2004: 10...e7
(preparing ...xb3 followed by e6;
10...h6 11 h4 g5 12 g3 h5 is un­
clear, and I don’t trust 12 xg5 hxg5
13 xg5, if nothing else because of
13...xf2+! 11 c2 (11 e3?) 11...h6
12 h4 d5 (12...g5?) 13 e2 dxe4 14
dxe4 c5!? 15 xf6 gxf6 (15...c4 16
d2 gxf6 17 e3 fd8 18 c1 is a
critical line – I think I prefer White
here) 16 e3 fd8 17 b3 a5? (a
blunder, although by now White’s ad­
advantage cannot be disputed) 18 xe6
fxe6 19 h4!.

This wins a vital pawn: 19...e7 20
g4+ g7 21 xe6+ f7 22 g4+
g7? 23 hf5 and Black resigned.

Let’s return to the position after
9...e6:

10 g3
Beating 1 e4 e5

Finally, 10 c2 is also possible. For example, if 10...d5 11 we2 we have transposed to Tiviakov-Buhmann (Game 5).

10...h6

The most popular choice. Black decides to prevent the possibility of g5, and this makes it easier for him to play ...d5 if needed (see the note to Black’s 11th move, below).

The immediate 10...d5 is risky because it invites the pin with 11 g5!? (11 we2 is, of course, also possible). Here 11...dxe4 12 cxe4 xb3 13 axb3 appears to be precarious for Black, and it would be without the resource 13...c4! 14 xd8 xf2, as played in F.Nemeth-I.Danilov, Eforie Nord 2008.

Even so, White kept an edge in the game after 15 wc2 axd8 16 0-0 g4+ 17 wh1 c3 18 we2 xf1 19 xf1.

There’s a strong case for Black to exchange bishops immediately, and perhaps significantly 10...xb3 is what both Carlsen and Aronian have chosen to do when reaching this position:

a) After 11 axb3 c7 12 c4 h8 13 0-0 d5 14 we2 wd6 15 g5 we6 16 b4 h6 17 c3 c3 18 xe3 ad8 19 g5 xf5 20 xf5 d7 21 fe1 dxe4 22 dxe4 h7 (22...fd8 23 g3 c8 also looks okay) 23 a5 b6!? 24 xa6 fd8 25 wf3 g6 26 c3 g7 Black had sufficient play for the pawn to hold the balance in L.Nepomniachtchi-L.Aronian, Mainz (rapid) 2009.

b) However, 11 wb3 wc8 (11...b8!??) 12 0-0 c7 13 d4 g6 14 g5 d7 15 f5 gave Black more problems to solve in K.Kulaots-M.Carlsen, Gausdal 2007.

Returning to the game, and 10...h6, how should White proceed from here?

11 h2!

Operations on the kingside begin! This knight can hop into g4, offering a trade of minor pieces. Black has to be careful because an exchange on g4 gives White the opportunity to open the h-file for his rook.

One significant advantage White enjoys is that, in contrast to several positions where the queen has to go to e2 and only later f3, here she can reach the more desirable attacking post in one jump.

Note that this is one of those positions where 11 c4? is impossible – it simply loses a pawn to the typical tactic 11...c4!!.

11...c7

Black responds by moving another minor piece to the kingside, to help out in defence. Just like White’s d2-f1-g3, Black’s ...c6-e7-g6 is a typical ma-
noeuvre in the Italian Game.

Action in the centre with 11...d5 is still a serious option here. White replies with 12 ♕f3 and now:

\[\text{12 } \text{♕g4} \]

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{a) 12...♕a5 13 ♕c2 dxe4 14 dxe4 ♕c4 15 ♕g4 ♕d7 16 0-0 (16 ♕f5!?) 16...♕h4 17 ♕f5 ♕xf5 18 exf5 ♕d6 19 f6! ♕xf6 20 ♕xf6+!? (20 ♕xe5) 20...gxf6 21 ♕h2 f5 22 g3 ♕f6 23 ♕h5 ♕g7 24 g4 f4? (Black has promising compensation for the pawn) 25 g5! ♕e6 26 ♕xf4! with a big advantage for White in view of 26...exf4 27 ♕ae1, A.Morozevich-M.Adams, Yerevan 2008. \\

b) 12...dxe4 is more solid: 13 dxe4 ♕xb3 14 axb3 ♕h7 15 h4 (perhaps White can apply more pressure with 15 ♕g4 ♕g5 16 ♕f5) 15...♕d7! (Black loses quickly after 15...♕xh4? 16 ♕g4 ♕d8 17 ♕f5 – a nasty accident is going to happen on h6 or g7, or both!) 16 ♕g4 ♕ad8 17 0-0 ♕d3!, V.Tkachiev-G.Flear, Clichy 1995. This defensive resource with ...♕d3, offering the exchange of queens, is well worth remembering, and Black is very close to equality here.}

I think White’s best chance is 18 ♕e3 ♕xe3 19 ♕xe3 when the possibilities of ♕f5 and ♕d5 still give Black something to think about.

\[\text{12 } \text{♕g4} \]

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{12...♕g6} \]

The Brazilian grandmaster Vescovi has played 12...♕h7 here, but in a later game he preferred the text move (see below). I wonder whether this is because of 13 ♕h5!? (13 ♕f3 ♕c8 14 ♕e3 ♕xe3! 15 ♕xe3 ♕xb3 16 axb3 f5 was okay for Black in V.lordachescu-G.Vescovi, Bermuda 2004). For example, 13...♕d7? 14 ♕xh6! ♕xg4 (if 14...gxh6, White plays 15 ♕gf6+) 15 hgx4 gxh6 16 ♕d2 ♕xg4 17 ♕xh6 ♕g6 18 ♕f6+!; or 13...♕xb3 14 ♕xb3! with pressure (White must avoid 14 axb3 f5!). If 14...♕h8, White could consider 15 ♕xg7!? ♕xg7 16 ♕xh6+ ♕h8 and now 17 ♕xf8 or 17 0-0-0!?.

\[\text{13 ♕f5 ♕h7} \]

The game J.Cubas-G.Vescovi, Sao Paulo 2006, provides another example illustrating the problems Black can face here: 13...♕e8 14 ♕f3 h5 15 ♕xf6+
Beat 1 e4 e5

\[ \text{\textit{xf6 16 g4! (16 \textit{xf5 xf5 17 xf5 xf5 18 exf5 f4 is okay for Black)}}} \]

16...\textit{xb3} 17 axb3 \textit{h4 18 \textit{g3 xf5} 19 gxf5 d5 20 \textit{g1 c5? (this should lose, but with g5 on the cards Black was already under some pressure) 21 g5 b6 (or 21...\textit{c6 22 e7!) 22 e3! (preventing ...f8!) 22...g6 23 fxe6 f6 24 xc5 xc5 25 h4 dxe4 26 \textit{h5 e7, and here White could have forced an immediate win with 27 h4.}}}

The risky attempt to win a pawn with 13...\textit{xf5} 14 exf5 \textit{h4 backfires after 15 g3! \textit{xf5 16 f3 xg4 17 h4 g5! etc.}}

14 h4!

White is slowly beginning to turn the screw. 14 \textit{xe6 fxe6 15 xg7 is tempting, but 15...\textit{g7 16 h6+ h8 17 xf8 xf8 looks unclear to me and lets Black off the hook to some extent.}}

14...\textit{d7}

Against 14...h5 I prefer 15 \textit{h2 to 15 ge3, so that after 15...f6 White can set up an annoying pin by playing 16 g5.}

15 h5

White’s attack seems to be building up steam, but surely it’s not yet hopeless for Black?

15...\textit{e7?}

It is now!

It looks like Black’s only chance lies with 15...\textit{xf5 16 exf5 f4! (16...e7 is strongly met by 17 f6!) Perhaps Klimov was worried about the knight being trapped with 17 g3 but Black can save himself here with 17...\textit{c6!}, even though White must still be better after 18 f1 h3 19 e2 g5 20 xg5 xg5 21 0-0-0. In any case, this is infinitely superior for Black compared to what happens in the game.

16 \textit{gxh6+ h8}

Of course! Somehow Black had missed that 16...gxh6 is met by the crushing 17 \textit{g4+. Unfortunately for Black, declining the knight is no help at all.}}

17 \textit{g4 g6 18 xe6}

18 f7+! xf7 19 hxg6 is even more decisive: 19...xg6 20 xg6 xb3 21 axb3 g8 22 xh7+! xh7 23
Italian Game: Modern Variation (Part I)

\[f6+ gg7 24 h6 etc.\]

18...\[\text{w}\]xe6 19 \[\text{d}\]e7 \[\text{w}\]xe7 20 hgx6 fxg6 21 \[f\]3 1-0

White is just going to play \[d\]2 and 0-0-0, with a good extra pawn and a decisive advantage.

Black seemed to put up very little resistance in this game, and you would be forgiven for thinking this was the work of an inexperienced player. Yet Sergey Klimov is a grandmaster, rated over 2500. It just goes to show that it’s not that easy for players, even very strong ones, to deal with the pressure of having to defend against White’s obvious attacking intentions on the kingside.

As I mentioned in the previous game, the knight manoeuvre from c6 to g6 is a typical plan for Black, mirroring White’s own knight manoeuvre to g3. Black’s knight definitely prefers the g6-square to c6. One merit of the c3-pawn which is often forgotten is how well it restricts Black’s knight when it is on c6.

If 8...0-0 9 \[d\]f1 and only then 9...\[e\]e7, I think White should just transpose to the main game with 10 \[g\]3 \[g\]6. I don’t think 10 \[g\]5 \[g\]6 gives White anything.

9 \[d\]f1 \[g\]6 10 \[g\]3 0-0

This is an important moment. Black’s knight on g6 is very well placed to battle against any typical kingside action from White. 11 \[h\]4 is prevented; 11 \[g\]5?! achieves less than nothing after simply 11...h6!; and finally, 11 \[h\]2 with the plan of \[g\]4 and...
Beating 1 e4 e5

\[ \text{\textit{\textbf{W}}f3} \text{ is well met by } 11 \ldots \text{d5 when White has to avoid } 12 \text{\textit{\textbf{W}}f3?? \textit{\textbf{Q}}h4!}. \text{ He can play } 12 \textit{\textbf{Q}}g4, \text{ but } 12 \ldots \text{dxe4} 13 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xf6+ \textit{\textbf{W}}xf6 14 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xe4 \textit{\textbf{W}}f5, \text{ as in S.Yudin-V.Belov, St Petersburg 2006, is basically level.} \]

So what does White do?

11 0-0!

He changes plan! Let’s call this one ‘Plan C’.

The position is virtually symmetrical now, but the advantage of the first move still counts for something. White is the first to be able to push in the centre, and this is often enough to give him a small advantage.

11...h6

Black usually plays this move, either here or a bit later, to prevent both \textit{\textbf{A}}g5 (as a reply to \ldots d5) and \textit{\textbf{Q}}g5 (as a reply to \ldots \textit{\textbf{Q}}e8). He usually follows up, in some order, with \ldots \textit{\textbf{Q}}e8, \ldots \textit{\textbf{Q}}e6, \ldots c6, \ldots \textit{\textbf{W}}c7 etc. Meanwhile, White will build up the pressure with \textit{\textbf{Q}}e1, d4, \textit{\textbf{Q}}e3 etc.

Alternatively:

a) If 11...d5?! 12 \textit{\textbf{A}}g5! and the pin on the knight causes Black some problems, but after 11...h6 Black is ready to advance in the centre.

b) 11...\textit{\textbf{Q}}e6 12 d4 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e8 13 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e1 h6 transposes to the main game.

c) 11...b5 is Black’s main alternative here, and this is covered in the next game.

12 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e1

This prevents 12...d5?, which fails tactically to 13 exd5 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xd5 14 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xe5 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xe5 15 \texti{\textbf{Q}}xe5 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xf2+ 16 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xf2 \textit{\textbf{W}}f6+ 17 \textit{\textbf{W}}f3 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xe5 18 \textit{\textbf{W}}xd5.

The immediate 12 d4 is also possible, with a likely transposition.

12...\textit{\textbf{Q}}e6

12...\textit{\textbf{Q}}h7!? is interesting and certainly playable. Black is mirroring a plan which White often employs – holding the centre and advancing with the knights on the kingside. One game worth seeing is S.Kindermann-D.Sebastian, German League 2006. Kindermann demonstrated on his excellent DVD why White shouldn’t fear aggression from the black knights: 13 d4 \textit{\textbf{W}}e7 (13...\textit{\textbf{W}}f6 is a decent alternative) 14 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e3 (14 \textit{\textbf{Q}}f5 is also possible)
14...g5 15 h2!?. f4?! (this is very tempting, but Black should play something else here) 16 h4! h7 (after 16...ge6 17 f5 d8 18 g3 Black is driven back completely) 17 f5! xf5 18 exf5, and Black supposedly strong knight on f4 actually turned out to be a fatal weakness. If 18...xh4 19 g3 g5 20 h1 xf5 21 gxf4 exf4 22 f3 and White wins the knight for insufficient compensation. Or 18...f6 19 g3 h3+ (in the game Black chose 19...xf5 20 gxf4 exf4 21 d2 but White soon won) 20 g2 xf5 21 g4 xg4 22 xg4 and the knight is trapped on h3 (analysis by Kindermann). Obviously I wouldn't rule out 12...h7 on the basis of this game, as there are several alternatives for both sides early on.

13 d4

White finally advances in the centre. We’ll come across this structure quite a few times throughout the book. This central tension certainly favours White, and because of this he should look to maintain it as long as possible. He should only advance with d5 or capture on e5 if there is a concrete reason for doing so, as otherwise this would only help Black. Likewise, Black is usually reluctant to exchange on d4, as this gives White a powerful, mobile pawn centre.

13...e8 14 c2!

Once again we see this retreat, avoiding the exchange of bishops and the easing of Black’s position. In this instance, with White enjoying the initiative in the centre, it’s much easier to understand its merits. The bishop on e6, blocking the e-file, is not particularly well placed to help Black put pressure on White’s centre. Having said that, White probably doesn’t have to retreat immediately, since 14 e3 xb3 15 xb3 looks a bit better for him.

One word of warning: although f5 is undoubtedly a very tempting option, and one which should always be considered, White has to be careful not to play it too early otherwise he runs the risk of his central control being loosened. For example, here 14 f5?! exd4 15 cxd4 d5! leaves White in some trouble. It’s better to build up slowly and check out f5 possibilities later on.

14...c6 15 e3 c7 16 d2 ad8

16...h7 might be more accurate, since 17 f5 looks less threatening here: 17...xf5! 18 exf5 f8! 19 dxe5 xe3 20 xe3 dxe5, when 21 xe5 only brings about an equal position after 21...d6d7! 22 xd7 xe3 23 xf8+ xf8 24 xe3, as in R. Perez Gar-
Beating 1 e4 e5

cia-L. Henris, Charleroi 2005. The more patient 17 @ad1 @ad8 transposes to the note to Black’s 17th move – see below.

17 @ad1

17 Qf5! looks promising for White. Black has to be very careful. For example:

a) 17...Qxf5 18 exf5 @f8 19 @xh6! gxh6 20 Wxh6, C. Lamoureux-F. Forgues, French League 2008; or

b) 17...d5 18 Qxg7! Qxg7 19 @xh6+ Qg8 20 exd5 @xd5 21 Qxe5 @b8 22 Wg5 @h7 23 Wg3, A. Areshchenko-E. Sutovsky, Gibraltar 2007, with good play for White in both cases.

c) In A. Volokitin-Zhou Jianchao, Khanty Mansiysk 2007, Black chose 17...exd4 whereupon 18 cxd4 d5! 19 Qxg7 Qxg7 20 @xh6+ Qg8 21 Qg5 Qxe4 proved to be insufficient for White. However, 18 @xh6! looks much stronger: for example, 18...d3 19 Qxg7!, or 18...Qxf5 19 exf5 gxh6 20 Wxh6!.

17...d5?!

Black is trying to solve all his problems at once with this advance, but it looks like White can refute it with careful play. Therefore Black should just accept a manageable disadvantage with 17...Qh7. Then 18 Wc1 vacating the d-file looks sensible, after which there are still some Qf5 possibilities in the air. For example, 18...b5 (S. Jessel-Wang Li, Yerevan 2006) 19 Qf5! Qxf5? 20 exf5 @f8 21 dxe5 Qxe3 22 Wxe3 dxe5 23 Qxd8 Wxd8 24 Qb3 is good for White.

18 Qxe5! Qxe5 19 Qf4!

19...Qxe4

A much earlier game had continued 19...Qxh3 20 Qxe5? Qxe5 21 dxe5 Wxe5 with excellent play for Black, who threatens ...Wxg3, S. Kudrin-A. Kosten, London 1988. It’s possible that White players were discouraged by that game, but 20 exd5! appears to be a major improvement as far as I can see. For example, 20...Qf4 21 Wxe2!; or 20...Qg4 21 Qxe5!; or finally, 20...Qf3+ 21 gxf3 Qd7 22 Qe5 intending 22...Wxd5 23 Wd3!.

20 Qxe4 dxe4 21 Qxe5 Qe7 22 Qh5!

This is very strong, although even
the simple 22 \( \text{\textit{\texttt{Q}}x\text{\texttt{e}}4 \text{\texttt{L}}x\text{\texttt{e}}4 \text{\texttt{v}}e\text{\texttt{a}} \text{\texttt{v}}e \text{\texttt{b}} \text{\texttt{b}} \text{\texttt{w}}h\text{\texttt{h}}6.} \)

22...\textit{\texttt{f}}6 23 \textit{\texttt{f}}6! \textit{\texttt{g}}6 \textit{\texttt{f}}6 24 \textit{\texttt{w}}h6

White’s attack should be winning. The various threats of \( \textit{\texttt{Q}}x\text{\texttt{f}}6+, \textit{\texttt{e}}3 \) and \( \textit{\texttt{e}}4 \) cannot be met properly. If 24...\textit{\texttt{f}}5 25 \textit{\texttt{e}}3 \textit{\texttt{b}}8, White has the nice move 26 \textit{\texttt{f}}4! intending 26...\textit{\texttt{e}}xf5 27 \textit{\texttt{f}}xe6! and wins.

24...\textit{\texttt{f}}5

25 \textit{\texttt{Q}}x\textit{\texttt{f}}6+?

I’m not sure why Korineev avoided 25 \textit{\texttt{g}}4!, as it looks very strong: 25...\textit{\texttt{h}}7 26 \textit{\texttt{Q}}x\textit{\texttt{f}}6+ \textit{\texttt{h}}8 27 \textit{\texttt{Q}}x\textit{\texttt{e}4!} \textit{\texttt{w}}f7 (perhaps he had missed that after 27...\textit{\texttt{w}}xe4 28 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xe4 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xe4, White can play 29 \textit{\texttt{Q}}f6+\textit{\texttt{)} 28 \textit{\texttt{Q}}de1 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xe4 29 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xe4 must be winning for White.

25...\textit{\texttt{f}}7 26 \textit{\texttt{Q}}x\textit{\texttt{e}8 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xe8 27 \textit{\texttt{w}}f4

27 \textit{\texttt{g}}4 intending 27...\textit{\texttt{g}}6 28 \textit{\texttt{f}}4! is still good for White. The final position, where the players agreed a draw, is no longer so clear.

27...\textit{\texttt{w}}f6 28 \textit{\texttt{g}}4 \textit{\texttt{g}}6 29 \textit{\texttt{w}}f6+ \textit{\texttt{Q}}x\textit{\texttt{f}}6 30 \textit{\texttt{a}}4 \textit{\texttt{y}}\textit{\texttt{v}}2.-\textit{\texttt{v}}2
...b7, what else can White consider doing?

Well, if ...b7 does have a weakness, it’s the fact that on this square the bishop no longer controls some key light squares on the kingside. This encourages White to just hold back in the centre, restricting the bishop’s influence there, and to begin action on the kingside, where its lack of presence might be exploited.

Let’s see how Christian Bauer tries to do this:
12 a4 b7 13 e1 e8 14 h2?

White keeps the d-pawn firmly on d3, blunting the b7-bishop, and begins typical action on the kingside. He can now think about moves such as f3, g4 and f5. I’m not sure whether objectively this is a better way to play than 12 d4, but it does at least give Black something different to think about.

14 f5?! would be premature here, and after 14...d5! it’s not easy for White to hold his centre. Don’t rush with this move!

14...d5
With the pressure off his e-pawn, Black strikes in the centre with ...d5. This advance is such a natural reaction to a move like h2, although that doesn’t mean alternatives don’t exist. For example, 14...d7 planning ...c5 to hit the bishop and the a4-pawn. Let’s follow another game involving Bauer here, C.Bauer-M.Goden, Swiss League 2004: 15 f3 (normally White would be reluctant to give up his light-squared bishop, but after 15 f5!? c5 16 axb5 axb5 17 g4 xb3 18 xB3 White’s knights on the kingside pose a threat, and 18...xf2+?? 19 xf2 xa1 loses to 20 fh6+ gxh6 21 xh6+ g7 22 xf7+ h8 23 g5 etc) 15...f8 16 a5!? (White wants to answer ...c5 with a2, so he releases the tension; 16 f5 c5 17 c2 is also possible) 16...c5 17 a2 e6 18 f5 gf4 19 xf4 (19 d4?!) 19...xf4 20 d4 f6 21 ad1 with a tense position offering equal chances.

15 f3

White keeps the d-pawn firmly on d3, blunting the b7-bishop, and begins typical action on the kingside. He can now think about moves such as f3, g4 and f5. I’m not sure whether objectively this is a better way to play than 12 d4, but it does at least give Black something different to think about.

14 f5?! would be premature here, and after 14...d5! it’s not easy for White to hold his centre. Don’t rush with this move!

15 h4
This looks enticing, but in fact the knight is going back to g6 next move.

The game O.Eismont-S.Hirsch, Duisburg 2000, demonstrates a typical battle between White's kingside play and Black's advancing pawns in the centre: 15...h6 (to prevent \( \texttt{g5} \)) 16 \( \texttt{f5} \) c5 17 exd5 (17 \( \texttt{xh6}! ? \) gxh6 18 \( \texttt{xd5} \) \( \texttt{xd5} \) – 18...\( \texttt{xd5} \)?? loses to 19 \( \texttt{xd5} \) – 19 exd5 is an interesting piece sacrifice) 17...c4! (this thematic pawn sacrifice is forced, since 17...\( \texttt{xd5} \) fails to tactics on h6: 18 \( \texttt{xd5} \) \( \texttt{xd5} \) 19 \( \texttt{xd5} \), or 18 \( \texttt{xd5} \) \( \texttt{xd5} \) 19 axb5 axb5 20 \( \texttt{xd5} \)) 18 dxc4 e4 19 \( \texttt{e2} \) \( \texttt{d7} \) 20 \( \texttt{d4} \) (20 \( \texttt{xd5} \)?? loses to 22 g5! For example, 22...\( \texttt{b6} \) leads to a king hunt and a nice mate in the middle of the board: 23 \( \texttt{xf7}+! \) \( \texttt{xf7} \) 24 \( \texttt{h6}+ \) \( \texttt{e7} \) 25 \( \texttt{f7}+ \) \( \texttt{d6} \) 26 \( \texttt{f5}+ \) \( \texttt{c5} \) 27 \( \texttt{e3}+ \) \( \texttt{c6} \) 28 \( \texttt{d5} \) mate. This is worth a diagram!

20...\( \texttt{f6} \) 21 \( \texttt{f5} \) g6!

Nyback chooses to sacrifice his f-pawn, preferring complications over a passive position.

21...\( \texttt{g6} \)?? loses to 22 g5!. For example, 22...\( \texttt{b6} \) leads to a king hunt and a nice mate in the middle of the board: 23 \( \texttt{xf7}+! \) \( \texttt{xf7} \) 24 \( \texttt{h6}+ \) \( \texttt{e7} \) 25 \( \texttt{f7}+ \) \( \texttt{d6} \) 26 \( \texttt{f5}+ \) \( \texttt{c5} \) 27 \( \texttt{e3}+ \) \( \texttt{c6} \) 28 \( \texttt{d5} \) mate. This is worth a diagram!

21...\( \texttt{e6} \), blocking the diagonal, is a wiser choice, but White keeps an advantage here after 22 g5! \( \texttt{xd5} \) (or

\( \texttt{ad1} \))
22...\text{d}8 23 \text{\textit{g}3}) 23 \text{\textit{x}g5} \text{\textit{x}g5} 24 \text{axb5}. The point is that Black cannot recapture on b5, since 24...axb5?? loses to 25 \text{\textit{a}xa7!} (deflecting the rook from back rank duties) 25...\text{\textit{a}xa7} 26 \text{\textit{h}6+!} \text{\textit{gxh}6} 27 \text{\textit{x}f7+} \text{\textit{h}8} 28 \text{\textit{xe}8+} \text{\textit{g}7} 29 \text{\textit{g}8+} \text{\textit{f}6} 30 \text{\textit{f}7} mate. 

22 \text{\textit{h}6+} \text{\textit{g}7} 23 \text{\textit{x}f7} \text{\textit{xf}8} 24 \text{\textit{x}f4}

Possibly 24 \text{axb5} is more accurate. 24...\text{axb5} 25 \text{\textit{x}f4} \text{exf4} 26 \text{es!} would transpose to the note to Black’s 25th move, below, while after 24...\text{\textit{x}f7} 25 \text{\textit{x}f7} \text{\textit{x}f7} 26 \text{\textit{b}xa6} \text{\textit{e}c6} 27 \text{\textit{e}3} it’s still complicated but White must be better. 

24...\text{exf4} 25 \text{axb5} a5?

The point behind 25...a5 is that 25...\text{axb5} 26 e5! is very good for White: 26...\text{\textit{x}f7} 27 \text{\textit{xb}7} \text{\textit{xb}3} 28 \text{\textit{xa}7} \text{\textit{xa}7} 29 \text{\textit{xa}7} \text{\textit{xb}2} 30 \text{\textit{d}4!} and it will be very difficult for Black to cope with the passed e-pawn.

However, Black should play 25...\text{\textit{x}f7}! 26 \text{\textit{b}xa6} \text{\textit{c}6} 27 \text{\textit{x}f7} \text{\textit{xf}7}. White has a material advantage and should be better, but it won’t be easy to overcome those two powerful bishops. 

26 \text{\textit{g}5} \text{\textit{e}7}

27 \text{\textit{h}6}?

Here 27 \text{\textit{h}3!}, intending 27...\text{\textit{xf7}} 28 \text{\textit{xf7}} \text{\textit{xf7}} 29 \text{\textit{ad}1!}, would have been very strong: 29...\text{\textit{e}8} 30 \text{\textit{d}7} \text{\textit{e}7} 31 \text{\textit{ed}1!} \text{\textit{c}5} 32 \text{\textit{b}6!} \text{\textit{cxb}6} 33 \text{\textit{h}6+} \text{\textit{g}8} 34 \text{\textit{d}8+} \text{\textit{e}8} 35 \text{\textit{ad}7!} \text{\textit{xd}8} 36 \text{\textit{xf7}} \text{\textit{xf7}} 37 \text{\textit{wh}7+} is winning.

After 27 \text{\textit{h}6} Black is allowed right back into it. The rest of the game isn’t really important for our purposes. Here are the remaining moves:

27...\text{\textit{xf5}} 28 \text{\textit{g}4} \text{\textit{h}5} 29 \text{\textit{h}2} \text{\textit{xb}5} 30 \text{\textit{d}5} \text{\textit{c}6} 31 \text{\textit{a}2} \text{\textit{ad}8} 32 \text{\textit{ad}1} \text{\textit{xb}2} 33 \text{\textit{ad}8} \text{\textit{ad}8} 34 \text{\textit{b}1} \text{\textit{xf}2+} 35 \text{\textit{xf}2} \text{\textit{xf}2+} 36 \text{\textit{xf}2} \text{\textit{ad}2+} 37 \text{\textit{e}1} \text{\textit{xa}2} 38 \text{\textit{xb}7+} \text{\textit{f}6} 39 \text{\textit{f}3} \text{\textit{c}x} 40 \text{\textit{c}7} \text{\textit{g}5} 41 \text{\textit{xc}6+} \text{\textit{e}7} 42 \text{\textit{f}1} \text{\textit{g}3} 43 \text{\textit{d}4} \text{\textit{e}3} 44 \text{\textit{c}5} \text{\textit{f}6} 45 \text{\textit{xa}5} \text{\textit{xe}4} 46 \text{\textit{a}6+} \text{\textit{f}7} 47 \text{\textit{f}3} \text{\textit{g}7} 48 \text{\textit{c}x} 49 \text{\textit{c}4} 50 \text{\textit{f}3} \text{\textit{c}8} 51 \text{\textit{f}2} 52 \text{\textit{f}5} 53 \text{\textit{a}5+} \text{\textit{e}4} 54 \text{\textit{e}2} 1-0

In the final two games of this chapter we consider Black’s main alternatives to 7...d6. These are 7...\text{\textit{d}5}, 7...0-0 and 7...\text{\textit{h}6}.

Let’s begin with 7....\text{\textit{d}5}:

\textbf{Game 9}

S.Roy Chowdhury-J.Skjoldborg

Prague 2008

1 \textit{e}4 \textit{e}5 2 \textit{f}3 \textit{c}6 3 \textit{c}4 \textit{f}6 4 \textit{d}3 \textit{c}5 5 \textit{c}3 \textit{a}6 6 \textit{b}3 \textit{a}7 7 \textit{h}3 \textit{d}5

Black’s d-pawn advances straight-away to d5. The advantage of this approach is that Black doesn’t spend a
tempo on ...d6 before playing ...d5. The disadvantage is that White hasn’t committed himself to the Qd2-f1 plan, and he has other possibilities.

8 exd5

This is an important moment, with White choosing a completely different strategy – Plan B.

Instead of holding the centre, as we’ve seen in previous games, White chooses to open it. He will castle quickly and then try to combine pressure on the centre (in particular the e5-pawn) with dynamic piece play.

If White wants to stick to Plan A, there’s an argument here for 8 We2, and if 8...0-0 9 Qg5! utilizing the fact that White hasn’t had to play Qd2-f1 before developing this bishop.

S.Conquest-J.Parker, British League 2009, continued typically with 9...dxe4 10 dxe4 Qe6 11 Qbd2 Qxb3 12 axb3 Qd6 13 Qh4 Qe6 14 Qf5 Qe8 15 b4 f6 16 Qe3 Qxe3 17 Qxe3 Qd6 18 0-0 when you could only describe the chances as level. Even so, there is still plenty of scope for either side to out-play his opponent here, and it’s worth giving the rest of this grandmaster battle to show how Conquest slowly gained an advantage: 18...Qad8 19 Qfd1 Qe7 20 Qg4 Qf7 21 Qa5!? Qg6 22 g3 Qe8 23 Qd5

23...c6? (this seemingly imperceptible weakening of d6 is eventually fatal; there’s nothing wrong with Black’s position after 23...Qe7) 24 Qd3 Qc7 25 Qdc4 Qxc4 26 Qxd8 Qxd8 27 Qe6+! Qh8 28 Qxd8+ Qxd8 29 Qxc4 Qd1+ 30 Qg2 h5 31 h4 Qd3 32 Qd6 Qh7 33 Qf5! Qxd6 34 Qxh5+ Qg8 35 Qxg6 Qd2 36 h5 Qf8 37 Qf5 Qd8 38 Qe6 1-0.

8...Qxd5 9 0-0 0-0 10 Qe1
Quickly attacking the e5-pawn, White must continue with purpose, otherwise Black would soon reach a comfortable position.

10...f6

This move looks like a surprising way to defend the e5-pawn, but it’s not that easy for White to fully exploit the pin on the d5-knight and the temporary weakness of the a2-g8 diagonal. What’s more, defending the e5-pawn with pieces presents more problems for Black than you might think. Here are some alternatives:

a) 10...e8?! is met strongly by 11 d4!.

This is a key tactical theme to remember – Black loses a piece if he captures on d4. 11...e4 is the obvious choice, but 12 g5 leaves Black in difficulties. For example, 12...f5 (or 12...e3 13 xe3 xe3 14 xe3 xe3 15 wh5, winning) 13 xf7! xf7 (13...wd7 is met by 14 wh5 – Lukacs) 14 wh5+ g6 (14...e6 15 c4 regains the piece) 15 wxh7+ e6 (or 15...f6 16 wh4+ e6 17 g5 wd6 18 d2) 16 g4 with a big advantage for White, M. Kovalija-V. Petkov, European Ch., Plovdiv 2008.

b) 10...wd6 rather invites 11 bd2 intending c4 or e4. In this position 11...f4 looks critical: 12 e4 (12 c4 wxd3 13 xf4 wxd1 14 axd1 exf4 15 ce5 – Lukacs – also looks promising) 12...wxd3 (or 12...g6 13 xf4 exf4 14 f1 g8 15 w2 with an edge for White, V. Nevednichy-R. Dabo Peranik, Bizovac 2006 – after the exchange on f4, Black’s a7-bishop is in constant danger of being shut out by d3-d4) 13 xf4 wxd1 14 axd1 exf4 15 eg5.

I think that White’s activity is worth more than a pawn here. For example, 15 a5 16 xf7+ xf7 17 xf7 xf7 18 e5+ f6 19 d8 threatening g4+ followed by e8.

c) 10...e6 is a decent option for Black:

   c1) The tactical justification is 11 xe5? xe5 12 xe5 xf2+! intending 13 xf2? w6+. This theme is well worth remembering because it crops up in many similar positions.

   b) 11 a3 b5! 12 c2 w6 13 e2
Italian Game: Modern Variation (Part I)

10. h6 h5 11. a3 e3 a5 12. b4 c5 13. bxc5 bxc5 14. fxe3 dxe3 15. fxe3 ad8 was equal in F. Vallejo Pons-V. Topalov, Dos Hermanas (rapid) 2008, but I’m not totally convinced by 11 a3.

c) Lukacs’s suggestion of 11 w2!? looks more interesting. He gives 11...e8 (if 11...f6 12 we4 and ...d8 runs into g5; or 11...f6 12 d4 e8 13 dxe5 f7 14 d1 e5 15 e5 e5 16 e5 fxe5 17 d2 h4 18 e2 c6 19 f3) 12 g5 and assesses the position as “+1=”. It’s worth playing a few more moves after 12...f4, which looks critical to me: 13 xf4 xb3 14 xb3 exf4 15 e8+ xe8 16 xe8+ xe8 17 f1 e5 (otherwise White plays d4 to kill the a7-bishop) 18 d4 h6! (18...d3? 19 a3! leaves Black’s knight embarrassed, and it becomes trapped after 19...xb2 20 b1 d3 21 d1 b2 22 d2) 19 f3 xf3 20 xf3 c6 21 d2 b6 22 b4 with a level endgame position.

11 d4

11 bd2 is possible but I feel that White’s best chance of an edge might well be to clarify things in the centre, accept an isolated queen’s pawn (IQP) and then try to exploit the light-squared weaknesses in Black’s camp. If this is the case, the knight most certainly belongs on c3 rather than d2.

11...exd4

There was little choice, as White was threatening 12 dxe5 uncovering an attack on d5.

12 xd4?

12 cxd4 would be very promising for White after 12...h8 13 c3!, but 12 a5!, as played in F. De la Paz-N. Short, Ottawa 2007, is a stronger move. Black doesn’t mind investing a tempo or more if it means he can swap off White’s powerful light-squared bishop. That game continued 13 c3 (13 c2!? b4 14 e4 f5 forces the exchange, but this is worthy of consideration because ...f6-f5 is quite a concession from Black) 13...xb3 14 xb3 c6 15 f4 f7 16 g3 f5 and here White should have played 17 h4.

12...xd4 13 cxd4

The exchange of knights means that it’s easier for Black to support his re-
Beating 1 e4 e5

remaining knight on d5 with ...c6. On the other hand, it also means that White gets to keep his powerful light-squared bishop!

13...h8 14 c3 xc3?!  
I don’t like this move, and neither does Black’s bishop on a7!

The solid 14...c6 is the most obvious choice, although it’s entirely possible that White keeps a small edge in the symmetrical structure arising after 15 xd5 cxd5 16 f3 xd4 17 xd5, because of his slight lead in development and Black’s weaker king. At the very least Black will have to display some accuracy to equalize.

14...e7 is another try, and here White could consider building up the pressure with 15 d5 intending f3, f4 (or e3), ad1 etc.

15 bxc3 xe8 16 xe8+ xe8 17 f4 c6 18 d3 b8

19 xb8?!  
White begins to drift and lets Black off the hook.

19 d3! prepares e1 and keeps up the pressure. For example, 19...d7 20 e1 f8 21 c2 g6 22 f3 intending to meet 22...c7 with 23 h6! xh6 24 xf6+ g7 25 xg7+ xg7 26 e7+.

19...xb8 20 f1  
20 c2 g6 21 g3 is stronger.

20...f8 21 e1 d7 22 e3 e8 23 f4 xe1+ 24 xe1 e7+ 25 d2 c8 26 g4 g6 27 h4 g7 28 g5 e6?

White has no real advantage after 28...f5!.

29 xe6 xe6 30 c7+ f7 31 gxf6+ 1-0

I wonder whether Black lost on time here. His problem is that 31...xf6 allows 32 e5 mate. So 31...g8 is forced, and then White has excellent chances to convert his extra pawn after 32 c8+ f8 33 f7+ xf7 34 xb7+.

Game 10
S.Tiviakov-R.El Taher
Amman 2006

1 e4 e5 2 f3 c6 3 c4 c5 4 c3 f6 5 d3 a6  
Note that the actual move order of the game was 5...d6 6 b3 a6 7 h3 0-0 8 g5 h6 9 h4 e6 10 bd2 a7 11 h2.

6 b3 a7 7 h3 0-0  
Black commits himself to neither ...d6 nor ...d5. On the other hand, as we
already know, castling itself is commit­
tal!

As well as 7...d6 or 7...d5, there’s also
the flexible 7...h6!? , preventing the pin
and hoping to find out White’s inten­
tions before committing to a plan of
action. If 8 0bd2 0-0 9 0f1, 9...d5! 10
Me2 gives Black an extra ...h6 move in
the main lines (Games 1-5). This should
be at least partially useful to him, al­
though I’m not 100% sure – we’ve seen
previously how this pawn advance can
give White a hook to attack.

Looking at alternatives to 9 0f1, 9
0-0 d6 10 Me1 would transpose to the
0-0 lines of Chapter Three. More ag­
gressive players might prefer 9 g4!?

Again White is looking to exploit
Black’s early ...h6. The positions are
double-edged, but this certainly
worked well for White in the game
T.Stepovaia Dianchenko-I.Turova, Ka­
zan 2004: 9...d5 10 g1 (even 10 g5
hxg5 11 0xg5 is interesting; the open
g-file is always going to promise White
some action) 10...dxe4 11 dxe4 0e6 12
Me2 b5 13 0f1 0d7 14 0e3 0a5?! (14...c5!? looks better) 15 0xe6 fxe6
16 0-0-0 0e7 17 g5 0xe3+ 18 0xe3
hxg5 19 0xg5 0f6 20 0g3 and White’s
attack looked much more dangerous
than Black’s.

8 0g5!

One of the main points behind
White’s move order with 7 h3 is that
7...0-0 can be met by this move. This
typical pin is more annoying than
usual for Black for the following rea­
sons:

1. Black has already castled king­
side. Therefore, breaking the pin with
...h6 and ...g5 will compromise his
king’s safety.

2. White has yet to commit to king­
side castling. This might make it easier
for him to start an attack on the king­
side (for example, meeting ...g5 with
h4) without having to worry about his
own king’s safety.

3. With Black’s bishop back on a7,
there is no possibility in the foreseeable
future to break the pin with ...0e7.

In isolation, I don’t think any of
these factors carry such great signifi-
cance. When combined, though, they certainly seem to give Black a few headaches.

8...d6 9 ♜bd2 ♞e6

The alternative is to break the pin immediately. I.Kulish-O.Stjazhkina, Elista 2000, continued 9...h6 10 ♜h4 g5 11 ♝g3 (11 ♝xg5!? hxg5 12 ♝xg5 is a tempting piece sacrifice; compare Emms-Flear, Game 11) 11...♗e8 (or 11...♕h5 – planning ....♗f6 and ...♗f4 – 12 ♜h2!? and now 12...♗f4 13 ♗f3 followed by 0-0-0 and h4, or 12...♕xg3 13 fxg3 and White gains a useful open f-file) 12 ♝f1 ♗e7 13 ♗d2 ♗g7 14 0-0-0 ♗g6 (in view of what happens, Black should probably hold back with this move) 15 h4! g4 16 h5! ♝f8 (or 16...♗f4 17 ♝g1 ♖6xh5 18 ♜h4 f6 19 ♝g3) 17 ♜h4 and White is ready to make significant progress on the kingside with f4, ♝e3 etc. Black’s defences are beginning to creak.

10 ♜h2!

Threatening ♝g4 and thus encouraging Black to advance on the kingside.

Garry Kasparov played ♝g5 more than once against an early ...0-0, but in G.Kasparov-J.Timman, Rotterdam 1999, he failed to find the right plan: 10 ♜h4?! ♗h8 11 g4 ♗e7! 12 ♘xf6 gxf6 13 ♘h4 ♝g6 14 ♝g2 c6 15 ♘f3 d5 16 ♝f1 a5 17 ♝g3 ♘c5 18 a4 ♘e7 19 ♘a2 ♘a6 20 ♘h5 ♘b6 21 ♘e2 ♘d6 with reasonable counterplay for Black. Timman suggested 10 ♜h2 as an improvement for White.

10...♗f1 would transpose to the note to White’s 10th move in Yemelin-Klimov (Game 6).

10...h6

10...d5 is too slow here: 11 ♘f3! d4 12 ♝g4 ♝xg4 13 hxg4 dxc3 14 bxc3 ♖d6 15 ♘c4 ♘e7 16 ♘h3 and Black’s position was already critical in G.Hassell-S.Smith, correspondence 2000, since 16...h6 17 ♘xh6 gxh6 18 ♘xh6 forces mate.

11 ♝h4 g5

12 ♝g3

Timman assessed this position as ‘unclear’, but I would prefer to be White and evidently so would Tiviakov!

12...♗g7
Ideally Black would really like to shift the queen’s knight over to g6 in order to bolster defences on the kingside, but there’s not enough time to do so: 12...\textit{\texttt{d}}e7?! is met by 13 \textit{\texttt{d}}xe6 fxe6 14 \textit{\texttt{d}}g4! \textit{\texttt{d}}xg4 (if 14...\textit{\texttt{g}}7, White plays 15 \textit{\texttt{x}}xf6 \textit{\texttt{x}}xf6 16 \textit{\texttt{h}}4 \textit{\texttt{g}}6 17 hxg5 hxg5 18 \textit{\texttt{h}}5) 15 \textit{\texttt{w}}xg4, hitting e6 and answering 15...\textit{\texttt{w}}d7 with 16 \textit{\texttt{h}}4.

13 \textit{\texttt{d}}xe6 fxe6 14 \textit{\texttt{h}}4!

Direct play by Tiviakov – the idea of h4 is obvious and good. The g5-pawn becomes increasingly vulnerable and the h1-rook becomes active on its home square.

14...\textit{\texttt{h}}8 15 \textit{\texttt{d}}f3!

Enticing the pawn forward.

15...\textit{\texttt{g}}6

Probably best, although the fact that Black is having to make moves like this is not a good sign for him!

The ‘easy’ option would have been 15...g4 16 \textit{\texttt{d}}d2 h5, but then White would simply break with f2-f3 and Black’s king would never be completely safe.

16 \textit{\texttt{w}}e2 \textit{\texttt{h}}5 17 hxg5 hxg5 18 0-0-0 \textit{\texttt{e}}7 19 \textit{\texttt{g}}4 \textit{\texttt{a}}f8

Or 19...\textit{\texttt{f}}4 20 \textit{\texttt{x}}f4 and now either 20...\textit{\texttt{e}}xf4 21 d4! killing the a7-bishop, or 20...\textit{\texttt{g}}xf4 21 \textit{\texttt{g}}3! probably killing the king!

20 \textit{\texttt{d}}d2 \textit{\texttt{d}}8 21 d4!

The time is right for this advance. White hopes that once the centre is opened, Black’s king will become even more exposed.

21...\textit{\texttt{e}}xd4 22 cxd4 \textit{\texttt{f}}7 23 e5 \textit{\texttt{g}}7 24 \textit{\texttt{c}}h2

Perhaps 24 \textit{\texttt{b}}1 is stronger. I don’t think White should mind if Black trades on g3.

24...d5!

Black’s best chance is to keep the position as blocked as possible.

25 \textit{\texttt{b}}1 c5 26 dxc5 \textit{\texttt{x}}xc5 27 \textit{\texttt{c}}1 \textit{\texttt{c}}8 28 \textit{\texttt{d}}d4 \textit{\texttt{b}}6

28...\textit{\texttt{c}}xd4! 29 \textit{\texttt{w}}xd4 \textit{\texttt{xc}}1+ 30 \textit{\texttt{c}}x1 \textit{\texttt{d}}8 intending ...\textit{\texttt{c}}6 would have kept Black in the game.

29 \textit{\texttt{e}}3 \textit{\texttt{d}}7?

30 \textit{\texttt{e}}5+!

Now the bishop on h2 comes right back to life.
30...exf5 31 e6 ♜xa4 32 ♜e5+!
Perhaps El Taher overlooked this move. Now 32...♛xe5 33 ♜xg5+ mates quickly, so Black is lost.
32 ... ♜g6 33 exf7 ♜xd4 34 ♜xh8! ♜xh8 35 b3 ♜d7 36 ♜xd4 ♜f8 37 ♜b6+ 1-0

Key Notes

1. By delaying castling White is able to carry out the ♕b1-d2-f1-g3 plan more quickly and effectively. More to the point, he gains the option of attacking Black on the kingside using either pawns or pieces, or often a combination of both.

2. The main line, and the one theory usually recommends for Black, is 7...d6 8 ♕bd2 0-0 9 ♕f1 d5 (Games 1-5). White chooses Plan A and this leads to tense positions which are rich in possibilities.

3. Don’t be fooled by computer assessments! In some positions where White adopts Plan A, computers seem to underestimate his chances on the kingside, or overestimate Black’s outwardly active pieces, or perhaps a bit of both. In human vs. human encounters (the only ones that really matter to us!), the evidence suggests that White’s position is the easier to play.

4. If Black plays ...h6, look out for possibilities to use this pawn as a hook for a kingside attack. The most obvious way to exploit it is with g4-g5, but sacrifices on the h6-square also come into play (see, for example, Game 5). Remember that a knight on f5 is usually even more powerful once Black has played ...h6, since trying to force it back with ...g6 becomes problematic.

5. Regardless of whether Black plays ...d5 or ...d6, one of his main ideas is to oppose bishops with ...♛e6. Don’t underestimate the possibility of meeting this with ♕c2. It’s certainly not the only option, and there will be occasions where it’s not the best option, but overall players are beginning to fully appreciate the merits of this move. Even when playing the game in a forward gear, sometimes a temporary retreat is required.

6. If Black plays ...d6 followed by ...♕e7-g6 (Games 7-8), he’s ideally placed to meet any early kingside aggression. In this case we should change course and revert to short castling – Plan C.

7. If Black advances immediately in the centre with 7...d5 (Game 9), it’s a good time to choose Plan B: exchange on d5, castle, attack the centre and aim for active piece play.

8. If Black plays 7...0-0 (Game 10), White should certainly take the opportunity to pin the knight on f6 with 8 ♕g5. This pin is very awkward for Black to deal with.
In this chapter we consider early alternatives for both colours in the Modern Variation. The first, after 1 e4 e5 2 f3 c6 3 c4 c5 4 f6 5 d3 a6 6 b3 a7, is 7 bd2, a move with which I've enjoyed some success. 7 bd2 could easily lead to a transposition to main lines considered in the previous chapter. However, there's an independent option for White in 7...0-0 8 c4! (? see games 11-12); and also one for Black with 7...0-0 8 h3 d5 (see Oratovsky-Gozzoli, Game 13).

The rest of the chapter focuses on alternatives for Black on the 5th and 6th moves. In Bologan-Heberla (Game 14) Black plays the typical idea of 6...0-0 followed up by a quick ...d5, and White reacts by implementing Plan B. In Nun-Spesny (Game 15) Black castles a move earlier, again with the intention of advancing two squares with the d-pawn, but this time White prevents the advance with g5.

Black can also play 6...d6, leaving his bishop on c5. This move often transposes to main lines because ...a7 is usually played at some point, but not always. In Degraeve-Dorfman (Game 16) White invites complications by carrying out the d2-f1 manoeuvre without first playing h2-h3, so ...g4 becomes an option for Black.

Finally, Erenburg-Kreizberg (Game 17) gives us the opportunity to consider a number of different possibilities for Black, good and bad, if he dispenses with the usual ...a6 move.

**Game 11**

J.Emms-G.Flear

Jack Speigel Memorial,

Southend 2009

1 e4 e5 2 f3 c6 3 c4 c5 4 f6
Beating 1 e4 e5

5 d3 a6 6 b3 a7 7 bd2

So far we’ve only considered 7 h3. This knight move offers White some new possibilities.

7...0-0

The theoretically recommended response. Black keeps open the possibility of playing ...d5 in one jump.

If 7...d6, White can of course transpose to main lines with 8 h3, but there’s also 8 f1! inviting Black to play 8...g4. Now:

a) 9 e3 xe3 10 xe3 xe3?! 11 fxe3 0-0 12 0-0 left White with a useful open f-file in S.Tiviakov-E.Van den Doel, Dutch Championship 2000. However, as Tiviakov notes, Black would be okay after any reasonable move instead of 10...xe3.

b) 9 d4!? looks more testing from a theoretical viewpoint. For example, 9...exd4 10 cxd4 f6! (10...f6 11 h3! xf2 12 xf2 xd4+ worked out well for White after 13 xe3 xe3+ 14 xe3 xb2+ 15 d2 xd2+ 16 xd2 in J.Degraeve-D.Marciano, Belfort 1997 – White’s extra piece is worth more than the three pawns) 11 g3 g4 12 e3 d5 13 e5 (13 exd5 xd5 14 h3 e6 is equal) 13...e4 14 c2 (this might be too committal; perhaps simply 14 0-0 0-0 15 c1! is stronger) 14...f5 15 exf6 (15 h3!?) 15...xf6 16 h3 xf3 17 xf3 xd4 18 f5 xb2 19 b1 c3+ 20 f1 and White didn’t have enough for his material investment in J.Degraeve-V.Tkachiev, Corsica 1997. However, there is certainly some scope for improvement here.

8 c4!?

This move is quite rare but after spending some time studying it, I began to appreciate that it was trickier than it initially looked.

White normally chooses either 8 h3 (see Oratovsky-Gozzoli, Game 13) or 8 0-0, reaching the Classical Main Line.

8...d6

Can this natural move really be classed as a mistake? I’m not totally sure, but what is clear is that Black has to deal with some problems which aren’t easily solved.

It seems that Black experiences fewer difficulties after 8...d5 (see the next game).

9 g5!

The point. Black is forced to endure the usual pin on the knight, again in awkward circumstances. Compare Tiviakov-El Taher (Game 5), and the problems Black faced there. This current situation might be even more unfavourable for Black because ...h6 followed by ...g5 is even riskier (see below).
Italian Game: Modern Variation (Part II)

9...h6

Previously, Tony Miles had played 9...e7 against me (Mondariz, 2000), after which 10 0-0?! let Black off the hook following 10...g6 11 h4 h8!. Later on I realized that White would have more chance of an advantage by playing 10 e3!, which discourages 10...g6 in view of 11 d5.

10 h4 e6

Against 10...g5 I would have been very tempted to play just like in the game, with 11 xg5!? hxg5 12 xg5. However, there’s also nothing wrong with the simple 11 g3. Let’s see how this worked out well for White in the game V.Zhelmin-A.Kolev, Odessa 1989: 11...g4 (perhaps 11...e6 is wiser) 12 e3 xe3 13 fxe3 e7 14 h3 d7 15 h2 g7 16 e2 a5 17 a4 ab8 18 0-0 e6 19 c2 g8 20 f2 f6 21 f1 e8 22 h2 f7 23 g3 c7 24 d4 and White had built up a significant advantage without having to do anything spectacular.

10...e7 is also possible a move later. 11 e3 no longer makes sense because of 11...g6, but with the pawn on h6 rather than h7 weakening Black’s structure, 11 xf6! becomes more desirable: 11...gxf6 12 h4 (I quite like 12 d2!?) 12...d5 13 exd5 xd5

14 f3 (White mustn’t get too excited: 14 h5?? f4! 15 xh6 xh3! and it’s White’s king which is the terminally weak one) 14...f4 15 0-0 0-0 (White was threatening both 16 g3 and 16 d4) 16 xh5 xh5 17 xg6 xg6 18 bxc3 fxe5 19 d2 g7 (19...e8!? may be stronger) 20 e1 f6 21 d4! (now White is definitely better) 21...h5 (the problem for Black is that 21...exd4 allows mate with 22 e7+ h8 23 g6) 22 xh5 h6 23 xg3 g4 24 h3 exd4 (or 24...d7 25 g6+ h7 26 c2 h8 27 e3! etc) 25 hxd4 dxc3 26 f5+ g5 27 gxh5+ and Black resigned, G.Sax-M.Brancaleoni, Bratto 2003. Black might have been doing okay somewhere in that game, but it’s clear that he’s under some pressure.

11 e3!

Still not committing the king. However, if Black were to play 11...xe3 12
fxe3 then of course kingside castling and utilizing the newly-opened f-file suddenly becomes highly attractive.

11...g5?

The pin is very annoying and it’s difficult to refrain from playing this move, but it’s likely that Black is now in some trouble.

Glenn suggested 11...h7! intending ...g8 and only then ...g5 as a creative way for Black to solve some of his problems.

12 ♘xg5!

Again 12 ♗g3 was possible, but this sacrifice was simply too difficult to resist!

12...hxg5 13 ♘xg5

White has fabulous compensation for the piece: Black’s king is unsafe; the pinned knight on f6 is a constant source of concern; and the bishop on a7 is more or less out of the game. If Black ever takes on e3, White recaptures with the f-pawn after which ♘f1 is going to be decisive. True, Black can defend initially, but White’s initiative lasts for a very long time.

13...♗g7 14 ♔f3 ♗b8

To support the f6-knight with ...♗bd7.

In general Black would welcome an exchange on e6, to provide cover for f5 and d5, but he must still be wary of some concrete lines. For example, 14...♖h8? 15 ♘xe6! fxe6 16 ♔g4 ♔f8 17 ♗h3! and White wins.

15 ♔f5+ ♗xf5

The knight must be taken: 15...♕g6? loses to 16 ♘h4 (threatening ♗g3+) 16...♖g8 17 ♖g3+ ♗h7 18 ♘xf6! ♖xf6 (or 18...♖xg3 19 hxg3+ ♕g6 20 ♘h6 mate!) 19 ♒h3+ ♕g6 20 ♖h6 mate.

16 ♖xf5 ♔bd7 17 h4!
With two ideas: h5-h6+ and Nh3 followed by Nh3 or Ng3. White doesn’t have to castle kingside to activate the rook.

17...Ng8! 18 Nh3 Ne7 19 Nh3 Nh8!

The best try.

20 Ne2!

Planning to bring in the final piece with Nh1-h3-g3.

There’s no hurry to take on f6, and indeed 20Nxh6+?! Nh6 21 Nh6+ Nh6 22 Nxh6 Nxg2 23 Ne2 Nh8 would offer Black good chances for survival.

20...Ng6 21 h5 Nxg5

What else can Black do?

22 Nxg5 Nh7 23 Ng3 Nh8 24 Nh5+ Nh8

Or 27...Ng8 28 Nh3 Nh6 29 Nh3 Nh4+ 30 Nh4! exf4 31 Nh5 and White wins.

28 Nh3 Nb6 29 Ng3 Nh8

Finally Black’s dark-squared bishop is back in the action, but it’s too late to save him.

30 Nh7! d5 31 exd5 Nh5

31...cxd5 can be met simply by 32 Nh5. Glenn’s one remaining chance here was that both players were in some time trouble, but I managed to keep everything together.

32 dx6 Nh6b3 33 axb3 bx6 34 g4 e4 35 d4 e3 36 fxe3 Nh6 37 g5 Nh2+ 38 Nh3 Nh1 39 Nh2 Nh4+ 40 Nh4 Nh4 41 Nhxf7 Nh5 42 Nh3 1-0

Game 12

J.Emms-A.Greet

British Championship, Douglas 2005

1 e4 e5 2 Nh3 Nh6 3 Nh4 Nh4 4 Nh6 Nh6 5 d3 Nh6 6 Nh3 Nh4 7 Nh2 e4 8 Nh4 Nh4

Black makes the thematic ... Nh5 break, ignoring the double attack on the e5-pawn. To me this looks like the best way of meeting 8 Nh4.

9 Nh5

I don’t think Black has much to worry about after 9 Nh7 Nh7 9 Nh7 Nh7 10 Nh7 Nh7 Nh7 11 Nh7 Nh7 12 Nh7 Nh7 intending ...Nh6 is Black’s simplest route to a decent position.

9...Nh5 10 Nh0

With White’s king finally tucked away, the threat to e5 becomes real. How should Black deal with it?

10...Nh6!
strates that Black is not afraid of the temporary weakness on the a2-g8 diagonal. For example, 11 ♘e3 can be met by 11...♘e6 followed by ...♗h8.

10...♗e8 looks seemingly more attractive and is certainly playable, but I feel White can cause Black more problems after this move: 11 ♗e1 ♗g4 (Black must avoid 11...♗f6 12 d4! e4 13 ♘cd2!, attacking d5 and e4, P.Svidler-H.Steingrimsson, Gausdal 1991) 12 h3 ♘xf3 (if 12...♗h5 White can safely grab the pawn with 13 g4 ♘g6 14 ♗xe5 and follow up with d3-d4 to shut out the a7-bishop) 13 ♘xf3 ♗f6 14 ♘d2 ♘xf3 15 ♘xf3 ♗xf6 16 ♘g5 ♘ad8 17 ♘ad1 h6 18 ♗h4 with a nagging edge for White, P.Van der Houwen-J.Masek, correspondence 2003. The pawns on d3 and e5 are both weaknesses, but White’s two bishops might become a handful if the position opens up.

11 ♗e1

Given how effectively Black deals with this obvious move, there’s an argument here for trying something else. If I were to reach this position again, I would be tempted to play 11 ♘e3!?. It might seem strange to offer Black the chance to grab the two bishops, but actually I think White should be happy to get rid of his dark-squared bishop. It’s not easy to find a useful role for it; indeed, it’s in danger of becoming White’s worst minor piece. I won’t go as far as to claim that this gives White an advantage, but it can lead to some interesting positions. If 11...♗xe3 (this is certainly not the only move) 12 fxe3! ♗h8 13 d4, the position looks genuinely unclear.

White’s aim – not for the first time – is to keep the a7-bishop firmly out of play. The game Z.Hajnal-L.Vajda, Eger 2002, continued 13...e4 (this looks too committal) 14 ♘h4 ♘e7 15 g3 g5 (15...♗h3!? 16 ♘g2 b5 17 ♘d2 f5 18 ♘h5! ♘g6 and I prefer White’s position here. As well as the game’s 19 ♘c2, White could consider the pawn break g4 (now or later), or even 19 h4 intending to meet 19...gxh4 with 20 ♘xe4! fxe4? 21 ♘hx4! with a winning attack: 21...♖xh4 22 ♘xf8+ ♘xf8 23 ♘e5+ ♘g7 24 ♘e8+ and it’s mate next move.
11...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{h8}}!}

Other moves are possible, but vacating the a2-g8 diagonal is the simplest solution. I think Black is fully equal here.

12 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{h3}}}

White needs to prevent ...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{g4}}}. I wanted to play 12 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{h4}}} intending \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{Wh5}}}, but I couldn’t find a reason why Black should avoid the straightforward 12...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{g5}}}! 13 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{f3}}} b5 14 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e3}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{f4}}} when White is in serious danger of being worse.

12...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e8}}}

12...b5 13 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e3}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{f4}}} 14 d4 exd4 15 cxd4 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e7}}} was equal in A.Tzermiadianos-H.Gretarsson, Re-thymnon 2003, and even 15...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xd4}}}! is possible: 16 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xd4}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xd4}}} 17 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{f3}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e6}}} 18 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{c2}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xf2+}}} 19 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xf2}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xf2+}}} 20 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xf2}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{d3}}}+ 21 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{f3}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xe1+}}} 22 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xe1}}} is again equal.

13 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e3}}!}

Better late than never (see the note to White’s 11th move), even if the circumstances here are less favourable for White.

13 d4 looks like the only other logical continuation, but after 13...exd4 14 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xe8+}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xe8}}} 15 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xd4}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e6}}}, or 15 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xd4}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xd4}}} 16 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xd4}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e6}}}, Black is well coordinated and probably has an edge.

13...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xe3}}} 14 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xe3}}}

14 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{fxe3}}}?! makes much less sense with the rook on e1. Besides, after 14...b5! White’s knight would have to retreat to the ugly a3-square to avoid dropping the d3-pawn.

14...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{a5}}?!}

It is desirable to kick the bishop off the a2-g8 diagonal, but now Black’s knight is misplaced, he loses his grip on the centre and White can get in d3-d4.

14...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e6}}} 15 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xe6}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xe6}}} 16 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{b3}}} looks a bit awkward for Black, but 16...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{c8}}} should be okay for him. Alternatively, there’s 14...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{wd6}}} to prepare ...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e6}}}. White can try 15 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{h4}}} here, and 15...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e6}}} 16 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{ef5}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{wd7}}} 17 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{wh5}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xb3}}} 18 axb3 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{g8}}} 19 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{a4}}}! is the kind of thing White should be aiming for. Unfortunately, Black can spoil the fun with something like 15...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xe3}}} first, and only then ...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e6}}}.
Beating 1 e4 e5

15 d2 e6 16 d4! exd4 17 xd4 g8
18 g4 xd4 19 cxd4 c6 20 d5

Now White enjoys a small advantage. His pieces are the more active, and the isolated d-pawn, although requiring protection, does have a slight cramping effect on Black's position.
20...e5

20...e7 21 ed1 w6 is equally playable, but not 21...xd5?? 22 xd5 xd5 23 h5.
21 wh4 w6 22 ed1 f8 23 ac1 ad8 24 b1 e7 25 b4 c6 26 dx6 xc6 27 wb6

The c- and d-pawns have been exchanged, leaving a symmetrical structure. White's more active pieces still promise an edge, something which is maintained through to the endgame.
27...ed7 28 xd7 xd7 29 e4 w8 30 xd8 xd8 31 a3 g6 32 ac8 g7 33 f1 e6 34 e1 f7 35 f3 e7 36 c4 d1+ 37 xd1 xc8 38 d2 e6 39 c3 d7 40 d4 f7 41 c5 c7

During the game I was concerned about the defence 41...e6+ 42 b6 d4 43 a5? xf3 44 gxf3 e6! 45 h4 d5, but in fact 43 g4+! f5 44 e5+ e7 45 xf7 fxg4 46 g5 is still very good for White.
42 d5 e6+

Now White is probably winning. Passive defence with 42...e8! offers Black better chances of survival.
43 xe6! xe6 44 b6!

Intending d5+. The pawn endings are winning for White because his king is so far advanced and Black runs out of waiting moves.
44 g5 45 d5+ xd5 46 xd5 d7 47 g4! e7

Or, for example, 47...a5 48 b3 b6 49 b4 axb4 50 axb4 h6 51 b5 etc.
48 c5 d7 49 b6 c8 50 a4 b8 51 b4! c8

If 51...a8, White wins by 52 c7 a7 53 b5 axb5 (or 53...a5 54 f3 h6 55 c8 – but not 55 b6+?? a6! – 55...b6 56 b8, winning as in the game) 54 axb5 a8 55 b6 h6 56 f3 and it's mate in four.
52 a7 a5!

The last try. 53 bxa5? c7! 54 a6 b6! 55 a8 c8! is only a draw, but...
53 b5! c7 54 a8 1-0

After 54...h6 55 f3 b6 56 b8 White wins the crucial b-pawn and with it the game.

Game 13
M.Oratovsky-Y.Gozzoli
Tarragona 2007

1 e4 e5 2 f3 c6 3 c4 c5 4 d3 a6 5 bd2 a7 6 b3 0-0 7 h3

8 h3 is basically an attempt to transpose to the main lines discussed in the previous chapter, if Black plays 8...d6. But what happens if Black advances one square further?

8...d5!

In an ideal world, Black would like to play ...d5 in one jump and with White having played f1, but usually he can meet both these conditions only if White plays inaccurately (for example with the move order 8 f1! d5!). Even so, one out of two isn’t bad, and this looks like a reliable option for Black.

9 exd5?

White chooses Plan B: taking on d5 and relying on active piece play and pressure against Black’s centre.

9 e2 has been played many times, even by such players as Bologan, but the problem is that after 9...e8 10 f1 White is basically a tempo down on the main line, with Black having played ...d5 in one go.

If White wants to keep his options open in the centre, then committing to kingside casting with 9 0-0 is a reasonable choice, although 9...dxe4! 10 dxe4 e7 does leave Black with an equal share of the chances. For example, 11 h2 e6 12 c2 ad8 13 f3 d7 14 e1 f6 15 df1 ef7, K.Shanava-M.Kobalija, Tbilisi 2009.

9...xd5 10 c4!

This is the only move to challenge Black.

Note that one of the points behind playing ...d5 with the white knight on d2 is revealed after 10 0-0?! f4!, which is something White definitely needs to avoid. Compare Roy Chowd-
hury-Skjoldborg (Game 9), where White doesn’t have this problem because the knight is still on b1.

With the centre semi-open, 10 \( \text{Qf1?!} \) is far too slow. Either 10...\( \text{Qf4!} \) or 10...\( \text{xf4} \) followed by \( \text{Qe8+} \), is more than okay for Black. 

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

10...h6? is strongly met by 11 \( \text{Qxh6!} \).

This tactical shot, intending 11...gxh6 12 \( \text{Qxh6} \) \( \text{Qd5} \) 13 \( \text{Qf6+} \), is well worth remembering.

However, Black does have two decent alternatives here:

a) 10...f6! 11 0-0 (11 \( \text{Qe3} \)?) 11...\( \text{Qh8} \) is extremely solid (compare my game against Greet). After 12 \( \text{Qe1} \) \( \text{Qe6} \) 13 \( \text{Qg3} \) \( \text{Qd7} \) 14 \( \text{Qh4} \) \( \text{ad8} \) 15 \( \text{Wh5} \) \( \text{Qf7} \) 16 \( \text{Qf3} \) \( \text{de7} \) 17 \( \text{Qc2} \) \( \text{d5} \) 18 \( \text{Wh5} \) \( \text{Qf7} \) 19 \( \text{Qf3} \) the position was equal in Xu Yuhua-N.Short, Jinan 2003.

b) 10...f5!? is riskier but also playable. For example, 11 0-0! \( \text{Qh8} \) 12 \( \text{Qeg5} \) h6 13 \( \text{Qh4} \) hgx5! (13...\( \text{Qce7} \)) 14 \( \text{Qe1} \) is good for White — Quezada Perez) 14 \( \text{Wh5+} \) \( \text{Qg8} \) 15 \( \text{Qxg5} \) \( \text{Qd6} \) 16 c4 (R.Perez Garcia-O.Ruiz, Villa Clara 2007), and here Quezada Perez assesses 16...\( \text{Qd4} \)!

11 0-0

11 \( \text{Qg3} \) is also possible. 11...\( \text{Qg6} \) 12 0-0 \( \text{Qf4} \) 13 \( \text{xf4} \) \( \text{exf4} \) 14 \( \text{Qe4} \) \( \text{xe4} \) 15 dxe4 \( \text{Qf6} \) 16 \( \text{Qd5} \)! proved to be better for White in V.Bologan-M.Krasenkow, Spanish Team Championship 2006, but I prefer 12...\( \text{Qf6} \) when the position looks equal to me.

11...\( \text{Qg6} \) 12 \( \text{Qe1} \) \( \text{Qh8} \) 13 \( \text{Qa4} \)

White lures the b-pawn forward to create some light-squared weaknesses on the queenside, although this does consume some time. After the more typical 13 \( \text{Qg3} \) f6 14 \( \text{Qf4} \) \( \text{f7} \) 15 \( \text{Qf5} \) \( \text{d7} \) 16 \( \text{Qf3} \) \( \text{ad8} \) the position is similar to Xu Yuhua-Short, above, and the chances are level.

13...b5 14 \( \text{ab3} \)

14...\( \text{f5} \)!

This is too ambitious and too loosening; it certainly does the bishop on g6 no favours at all. Furthermore, White’s set-up is well geared to meet this advance. Having said that, while
looking through many games I have noticed a tendency for Black to lunge forward with ...f5 even when it’s not justified. This could be caused by the natural inclination amongst many players to be always doing something, even when the best course of action is to ‘do nothing’.

14...f6! is still the best move here.

15 e5 g6 16 h4!

Suddenly White’s pieces come to life, and Black has to deal with problems both on the kingside and in the centre.

16...d8 17 xg6+

17 d4! is a strong alternative, since 17...exd4? 18 e6! is immediately crushing. If Black plays 17...e4, the a7-bishop is once again shut out of the game. What’s more, after 18 xd5 xd5 19 xg6+ hxg6 20 f4 Black must be careful not to be mated down the h-file.

17...xg6 18 e2 h6 19 f3 f6 20 xe5? a4, leaves White with a solid edge – Black still has many light-squared weaknesses to defend.

20...d8?

A whole book could be written on the subject of ‘the wrong rook’.

20...fe8! prevents d7 ideas, and the resulting position after the long tactical sequence 21 g5! (21 d4 xd4!) 21...xe5! (21...hxg5?? 22 h5+ g8 23 xd5+) 22 xf6 xe2 23 xd8 xf2+ 24 f1 xe1+ 25 xe1 xe1 26 xd5 xd8 27 xe1 offers Black excellent drawing chances.

21 d7?

Missing an opportunity: 21 d4! xd4 and only then 22 d7 is stronger. White keeps some advantage after 22 xe2 23 xe2 d6 (23...xc3 24 bxc3 d6 25 xf8 xc3 26 e8!! xa1 27 g6+ h7 28 f7! wins) 24 xf8 e5 25 g6+.

21...xe2 22 xe2

Heading for complications.

20 d2, possibly followed up by a2-a4.
Beating 1 e4 e5

22...\( \text{\texttt{wd6}} \) 23 \( \text{\texttt{xf8}} \) would give White a decisive advantage.

23 \( \text{\texttt{bxc3 \texttt{wc3}}} \) 24 \( \text{\texttt{b2 \texttt{xd3}}} \) 25 \( \text{\texttt{xf8}} \)

If 25 \( \text{\texttt{e6}} \), not 25...\( \text{\texttt{xd7??}} \) 26 \( \text{\texttt{xh6}} \) mate(!) but instead 25...\( \text{\texttt{d2!}} \) (covering h6) 26 \( \text{\texttt{xf8}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xb2}} \) and again White will take the perpetual check.

25...\( \text{\texttt{xe2}} \) 26 \( \text{\texttt{g6+}} \) \( \text{\texttt{h7}} \) 27 \( \text{\texttt{xf8+}} \) \( \text{\texttt{h8}} \)

In the next two games we consider lines where Black castles quickly, either on move five or six.

Game 14
V.Bologan-B.Heberla
European Championship, Plovdiv 2008

1 e4 e5 2 \( \text{\texttt{c4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{f6}} \) 3 d3 \( \text{\texttt{c6}} \) 4 \( \text{\texttt{f3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{c5}} \)
5 c3 a6 6 \( \text{\texttt{b3}} \) 0-0

![Chess Diagram](image)

We’ve seen this idea of quick castling before, in Tiviakov-El Taher (Game 10). The only difference here is that h2-h3 and ...\( \text{\texttt{a7}} \) haven’t been played, but this slight change could be more significant than it initially appears to be.

6...d5 7 exd5 \( \text{\texttt{xd5}} \) 8 0-0 0-0 9 h3 (or 9 \( \text{\texttt{bd2}} \) transposes to lines considered below.

7 h3!?

White keeps all his options open, and this move is useful in preventing ...\( \text{\texttt{g4}} \) later on. Alternatively:

a) Judging by what we’ve seen in previous games, there’s a great temptation to play 7 \( \text{\texttt{g5!}} \) here. Indeed, after 7...h6 8 \( \text{\texttt{h4}} \) d6 9 \( \text{\texttt{bd2}} \) Black suffers the usual pains from the pin. For example, 9...\( \text{\texttt{e7}} \) 10 \( \text{\texttt{xf6}} \) (or 10 d4!?) 10...\( \text{\texttt{gx6}} \) 11 \( \text{\texttt{e2}} \) f5 12 0-0-0 \( \text{\texttt{h8}} \) 13 d4 exd4 14 cxd4 \( \text{\texttt{a7}} \) 15 e5 and Black’s king remains a concern, M.Kobalija-A.Kharlov, Internet 2004. Alternatively, 8...\( \text{\texttt{g5}} \) 9 \( \text{\texttt{g3}} \) d6 10 \( \text{\texttt{bd2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{g4}} \) (I prefer 10...\( \text{\texttt{h5}} \) 11 h3 \( \text{\texttt{h5}} \) 12 \( \text{\texttt{e2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{g6}} \) 13 h4 \( \text{\texttt{h5}} \) 14 hxg5 \( \text{\texttt{hxg5}} \) 15 fxg5 0-0-0, again with some advantage to White, V.Ivanchuk-M.Marin, Canada de Calatrava (blitz) 2007.

However, Black has a strong defensive resource in 8...\( \text{\texttt{e7}} \)!.

![Chess Diagram](image)

Even though this move breaks the
pin, it might not be easy at first to understand its real strength. After all, hasn’t Black just given up a tempo with ...B(f8)-c5-e7 in an otherwise normal looking position? That’s a fair question, but it’s not quite as simple as that. It could be argued in Black’s favour that White’s bishop on the h4-d8 diagonal is now somewhat misplaced, since it offers Black opportunities to relieve some pressure via exchanges.

S. Tiviakov-M. Marin, Reggio Emilia 2007, continued 9 Bd2 d6 (9...h5 10 g3 Qxg3 11 hxg3 d6, as indicated by Marin, bypasses White’s possibility on the next move) 10 g3!? (10 0-0 h5! 11 xe7 Wxe7 sees Black’s exchanging plan in action) 10...e8 (Tiviakov’s idea was to meet 10...h5 with 11 xe5! xe5 12 xe5 dx5 13 Wxh5 Wxd3 14 Wxe5 with some advantage, since 14...g4 can be answered safely by 15 c4). Here Tiviakov’s 11 f1!? looked too slow and cumbersome with the bishop on g3 blocking its natural route, and with 11...d5! (Marin) Black’s position already looks comfortable. I would prefer 11 0-0, planning typical central action with h3, e1, d4 etc. Black can grab the bishop pair with 11...e5 (but not 11...h5? 12 xe5!) 12 c2 h5, but as compensation White can gain space on the queenside after 13 b4 Qxg3 14 hxg3 (14 fxg3?! 14...c6 15 b3.

b1) We’ve seen previously that White must be wary of ...f4 ideas, but here 9...f4?! 10 e4! gains a key tempo attacking c5, and if 10...Qxd3?! there follows 11 Qg5!.

b2) 9...g4 is logical and has been played a few times: 10 h3 Qh5 11 e4 Qa7 12 e1 (or 12 Qg3?! Qg6 13 Qe1) 12...f6 13 e3! xe3 (if 13...h8, 14 xa7 xa7 15 Qg3 Qf7 16 d4! opens up the centre to White’s advantage) 14 fxe3 Qf7 15 Qd2 h6 16 d4 and White’s centre pawns promise him a slight advantage, P. Svidler-T. Ernst, Gausdal 1991.

Let’s return to the position after 7 h3:

7...d5

In many ways this is the consistent
follow up to 6...0-0, especially since 7 h3 appears to do little to discourage this advance (in comparison to, say, 7 0-0).

If 7...a7 White shouldn’t hesitate to reply with 8 g5! (see Tiviakov-El Taher, Game 10). Likewise, 7...d6 can and probably should be met by 8 g5!. In either case Black has lost the possibility to unpin with ...e7.

8 exd5!

Again we see White choosing Plan B.

If 8 e2 h6 9 bd2 e6 10 f1 Black has gained a tempo by playing ...d5 in one go, and he might even find a better move than the usual ...c5-a7.

8...xd5 9 0-0

This time White must avoid 9 bd2? f4!.

9...de7

By removing the knight from its potentially vulnerable post on d5, Black hopes to avoid some tactical possibilities and also expose the d3-pawn. What’s more, Black can now reinforce the e5-pawn if need be by playing ...g6.

Some other moves have been tried here:

a) 9 a7 transposes to Roy Chowdhury-Skjoldborg, (Game 9).

b) 9...f6 10 e1 d6 11 bd2! xd3 12 xe5 xe5 13 xe5 a7 (if 13...d6??, 14 c2! traps the queen in mid board!) 14 f3! xf3 15 xf3 with an edge for White, R.Mainka-R.Stern, Höckendorf 2004. The ‘exchange’ of pawns in the centre often benefits White, whose pieces tend to be a bit more actively placed. There’s pressure against f7, and possibilities of g5, e7 and f4 or g5.

c) 9 b6 10 e1 h6 11 bd2! (not 11 xe5?! xf2+! 12 xf2 xe5 13 xe5 f6+! 11...xd3 12 xe5 g3 13 f3! xf3 14 dxf3, as played in V.Kramnik-M.Krasenkow, Wijk aan Zee 2003, is similar to the previous note.

After Krasenkow’s 14...e7 I think Kramnik could have won a pawn with 15 xf7! xf7 16 xe7! xe7 17 e5 – I really can’t see anything wrong with this. Black can improve with 14...xe5 15 xe5 d6, but here 16 g6 d8 17
$\texttt{e7+ f8 18 xc8 axc8 19 e3}$, as indicated by Lukacs, gives White the advantage of the bishop pair in an open position.

10 $\texttt{xe5}$?

10 $\texttt{e1}$ $\texttt{g6}$ 11 $\texttt{g5}$!? is another possibility. For example, 11...h6 12 $\texttt{h5! hxg5}$ (or 12...$\texttt{ce7}$ 13 $\texttt{e4}$ $\texttt{b6}$ 14 $\texttt{xh6!}$) 13 $\texttt{gxg6}$ $\texttt{a5}$!? (13...$\texttt{xf6!}$ keeps the material balance, and after 14 $\texttt{xf6}$ $\texttt{gxf6}$ 15 $\texttt{d2}$ $\texttt{b6}$ 16 $\texttt{e4}$ $\texttt{g7}$ 17 $\texttt{e3}$ $\texttt{d8}$ 18 $\texttt{ad1}$ the position looks equal to me) 14 $\texttt{gxg5}$ $\texttt{xb3}$ 15 $\texttt{axb3}$ $\texttt{xd3}$ 16 $\texttt{xe5}$ $\texttt{d6}$ 17 $\texttt{e3}$ $\texttt{c2}$ 18 $\texttt{d2}$ $\texttt{f5}$ 19 $\texttt{b4}$, R.Mainka-H.Bastian, Hoeckendorf 2004. White is threatening to unravel with $\texttt{c4}$ or $\texttt{f3}$-$\texttt{d4}$, and I don’t think Black has got quite enough compensation for the pawn.

10...$\texttt{xe5}$ 11 $\texttt{d4}$ $\texttt{xd4}$ 12 $\texttt{xd4}$ $\texttt{c5}$

We’ve reached an IQP position. Will White’s d-pawn be a strength or a weakness? In the game Black soon manages to capture it, but the cost of doing so it too great.

13 $\texttt{g5}$

I wonder about 13 $\texttt{d5}$ $\texttt{a5}$ 14 $\texttt{c3}$ here. White wants to increase the pressure with $\texttt{e1}$, $\texttt{g5}$ etc.

13...$\texttt{e6}$

I think Black can obtain a more favourable version of the game by flicking in 13...h6! here. If 14 $\texttt{h4}$ (14 $\texttt{xe7}$ $\texttt{xe7}$ 15 $\texttt{c3}$ $\texttt{f5}$ 16 $\texttt{d5}$ $\texttt{e5}$ looks equal) 14...$\texttt{e6}$, the insertion of ...h6 and $\texttt{h4}$ seems to help Black. For example, 15 $\texttt{c3}$ $\texttt{xb3}$ 16 $\texttt{xb3}$ $\texttt{xd4}$!? (or 16...$\texttt{d7}$) and because the bishop is attacked on h4, White has to settle for the less threatening 17 $\texttt{xe7}$ $\texttt{xe7}$ 18 $\texttt{ad1}$ (or 18 $\texttt{xb7}$).

14 $\texttt{c3}$ $\texttt{xb3}$

It’s a bit late for 14...h6 now, since 15 $\texttt{d5!}$ $\texttt{hxg5}$ 16 $\texttt{dxe6}$ $\texttt{f6}$ is something Black would rather avoid.

15 $\texttt{xb3}$

15...$\texttt{xd4}$?

Too greedy! Now Bologan is able to whip up a fierce initiative.

15...$\texttt{xd4}$ 16 $\texttt{xb7}$ is only a bit better for White, and there’s also nothing wrong with 15...$\texttt{d7}$: 16 $\texttt{xe7}$ (16 $\texttt{xb7}$?? $\texttt{fb8}$ traps the queen, or 16 $\texttt{d4}$ 17 $\texttt{c4}$ $\texttt{df5}$ and the knight...
Beating 1 e4 e5

heads for d6) 16...♕xe7 17 ♦xb7 ♦c6
18 d5 ♦d4 19 d6! ♦xd6 20 ♦ad1 ♦ab8
21 ♦e4 c5 and the position is equal.

16 ♦fe1! ♦a5 17 ♦a3 ♦ec6 18 ♦ad1! ♦a7

Not a pleasant move to have to play! With the black queen and both knights stranded on the queenside, Bologan isn’t slow to seek action on the other side of the board, with decisive results.

19 ♦d5 ♦c4

20 ♦f6+!

This striking sacrifice leads to a mating attack, although to be fair White is spoilt for choice here. 20 ♦c3! is also strong: 20...♦d6 21 ♦f6+! ♦h8
21...gx6 22 ♦xf6 (21...gx6 22 ♦xf6 is even quicker) 22 ♦d3 g6 23 ♦c3 ♦b5 and now the attack on the queen can be ignored with 24 ♦g4++! ♦xc3 25 ♦f6+ ♦g8 26 ♦h6
take. 21...gx6 22 ♦g3! fxg5 22 ♢xg5+ ♦h8
23 ♦f6+ ♦g8 24 ♦d5! ♦e4e5 25 ♢xe5 ♦xe5 26 ♢xe5

Despite being a rook ahead, Black’s position is hopeless.

If 26...♣fd8, White finishes Black off with 27 ♢g5+ ♦f8 28 ♢f5 ♢d7 29 ♦h8+
♣e7 30 ♦e5+ ♦d6 31 ♦f6 mate.

The only way to avoid mate is with 26...h6, but 27 ♦xh6 ♦b6 28 ♢g5+ ♢g6
29 ♢xg6+ fxg6 30 ♢xg6+ is an easy win.

26...♣fe8 27 ♢g5+ ♦f8 28 ♢f5 1-0

White mates after 28...♣e1+ (or 28...♣e7 29 ♢h8 mate) 29 ♦h2 ♦e8 30
♣xf7+ ♦d8 31 ♢d5+ ♦c8 32 ♢f8+. Plan B can be just as dangerous as Plan A!

Game 15
J.Nun-J.Spesny
Czech League 1998

1 e4 e5 2 ♦f3 ♦c6 3 ♦c4 ♦c5

Note: the actual move order of this game was 3...f6 4 d3 ♦c5 5 0-0 d6 6
c3 0-0 7 b4 ♦b6 8 a4 a6 9 ♦g5 ♦e7 10
♣bd2.

4 c3 ♦f6 5 d3 0-0!

Black castles even more quickly than in the previous game. If White reacts slowly, Black’s intention is almost certainly to play ...d5 here.
Can Black play ...d5 even sooner? The answer is no. 5 d3 actually sets a little trap, which has caught out a fair number of players. The immediate 5...d5? is a serious error which can be punished by 6 exd5 cxd5 7 wbx3!

The threat to capture on d5 is a surprisingly awkward one for Black to meet, given that 7...a5? runs into 8 wbx5+. If Black plays 7...e6, White can safely grab the pawn with 8 wxb7. Black still has problems with his c5-bishop (8...ce7 and 8...a5 both lose to 9 wbx5+), and if 8...de7 there follows 9 wbx5 xc4 10 wxc4 and White is simply a pawn up for nothing.

6 b4!? (see following diagram)

This move isn’t an attempt to win a pawn with b5. Instead the idea is to force Black’s bishop to make a decision and to gain some space on the queenside. The b2-b4 advance nearly always makes more sense if Black hasn’t yet played ...a6 allowing the bishop to drop back to a7 in one go. One thing White has to bear in mind when advancing with b4 and a4 is that queenside castling becomes less desirable, so White usually ends up castling short.

If 6 g5 Black should play 6...h6 7 h4 e7!. Compare the note on 7 g5 in the previous game.

6 bd2 is a decent alternative, planning to meet 6...d5 with 7 exd5 cxd5 8 e4 (or 8 0-0 g4 9 e4) 8...b6 9 0-0 – compare Oratovsky-Gozzoli (Game 13).

The most common choice for White here is actually 6 0-0, indicating a desire to play the Classical Main Line seen in Chapter Three (for example, after 6...d6 7 b3 a6). But what happens if Black insists upon 6...d5 here?
You would assume that it would be somewhat risky, given that White hasn’t spent any time on $\text{b3}$ or $h2-h3$, but that doesn’t seem to be the case and it’s noticeable that some very strong players have tried this recently. It’s early days, but I think a critical line is $7\text{ exd5 }\text{ cxd5 }8\text{ e7}$ transposes to $6...\text{e7}$ in the next note, while if $8...\text{b6}$? White can play $9\text{ exd5 }\text{ exd5 }10\text{ c4}$ and $11\text{ c5}$ trapping the bishop $8...\text{g4} 9\text{ h3 }\text{h5} 10\text{ bd2}$ ($10\text{ g4 }\text{g6} 11\text{ xe5 }\text{xe5} 12\text{ xe5 }c6$ is playable, but it does give Black considerable compensation for the pawn) $10...\text{d6}! (10...\text{f4}?! 11\text{ e4! }\text{e7} 12\text{ d3}$ is good for White) $11\text{ b4}!? (11\text{ b5 }\text{d6}$ has proved to be acceptable for Black: for example, $12\text{ e4 }f5 13\text{ g3 }\text{xf3} 14\text{ xf3 }\text{d7}$, Ni Hua-P.Harikrishna, Reggio Emilia 2007) $11...\text{d6} (11...\text{xc4? }12\text{ xc4 leaves e5-hanging}) 12\text{ b3 }\text{h8} 13\text{ e4 }f6 14\text{ a4}$ and White is slightly the more active, D.Vocaturo-M.Godena, Sarre 2009.

It will be interesting to see how this relatively fresh line progresses. If White wants to prevent or discourage $...d5$ and is happy to play the Classical Main Line with 0-0, he could try the move order $4\text{ d3 }\text{f6} 5\text{ 0-0 0-0 6 }\text{e1}$; or $6\text{ h3}$ intending $6...\text{d5} 7\text{ exd5 }\text{exd5 }8\text{ e1}$ transposing to Emms-Wittman (Game 34); or finally $6\text{ b3}!?$ as suggested by Kindermann.

6...$\text{b6}$

This is the most natural retreat, and also by far the most popular, but $6...\text{e7}!?$ isn’t silly. White should avoid the greedy $7\text{ b5}?! \text{a5} 8\text{ xe5}$, as $8...\text{xc4!} 9\text{ xc4 }\text{d5} 10\text{ cd2}$ (or $10\text{ exd5 }\text{xd5}$ hitting $g2$ and $\text{b5}$) $10...\text{dxe4} 11\text{ xe4 }\text{a6} 12\text{ bxa6 }\text{xa6}$, as played in S.Vysokin-M.Godena, Internet 2008, gives Black excellent compensation.

After the wiser $7\text{ 0-0 }\text{d5}! 8\text{ exd5 }\text{exd5}$, the idea is that White’s weaknesses on the queenside created by the $b$-pawn’s advance compensate Black for the problems he experiences defending $e5$. The critical line seems to be $9\text{ b5 }\text{a5}$
7 a4 a6

If 7...a5, White can safely grab the e5-pawn: 8 b5 \(d\)e7 9 \(d\)xe5! d5 10 exd5 \(d\)g6 11 \(d\)xg6 \(f\)e8+ 12 \(h\)f1 hxg6 13 \(d\)g5 \(d\)d6 14 \(d\)xf6 \(d\)xf6 15 d4 \(d\)e4 16 \(d\)d2 \(d\)f4 17 f3 with some advantage for White, A. Galliamova-E. Vasiukov, Moscow 1989. True, White’s king isn’t ideally placed, but Black’s dark-squared bishop is shut out and two extra pawns have to be worth something.

8 \(g\)5

Now that Black can no longer unpin with ...\(d\)e7, this move becomes much more desirable.

A typical continuation after 8 0-0 is 8...d6 (or 8...d5 9 exd5 \(d\)xd5 10 \(w\)b3 \(d\)f6 11 \(g\)5 \(w\)e8, B. Gelfand-A. Shirov, Munich 1993, and here Gelfand suggests 12 \(d\)e3 with an edge for White) 9 \(d\)bd2 \(d\)e7 10 \(d\)b3 (intending \(d\)c4 to hit the b6-bishop) 10...\(g\)6 11 \(d\)c4 \(d\)a7 12 \(d\)e3 \(d\)e6 13 \(d\)xa7 \(d\)xa7 14 \(d\)e1 \(d\)a8 with a roughly level position.

8...d6 9 \(d\)bd2 \(w\)e7

Planning to deal with the pin by playing ...\(d\)d8-e6. Black does something similar in a main line of the Four Knights Game. There it even has a name, ‘the Metger unpin’.

If 9...h6 10 \(h\)h4 g5 then 11 \(d\)g3 is of course okay, but 11 \(d\)xg5!? hxg5 12 \(d\)xg5 would be hugely tempting (compare Emms-Flear, Game 11).

10 0-0!

White is wise to castle kingside here, especially with the queenside pawns well advanced. Moreover, if White doesn’t play 10 \(d\)f1, there’s no chance of falling for a very nice trick. I was considering the variation 10...h6 11 \(h\)h4 g5 (11...\(d\)e6, planning an exchange of bishops followed by ...\(w\)e6, looks fine for Black) 12 \(d\)xg5? hxg5 13 \(d\)xg5 which at first seemed fairly promising for White. It would be, but for 13...\(d\)xe4!! 14 \(d\)xe7 \(d\)xf2+ 15 \(d\)e2 \(d\)g4, which is mate for Black!

Please watch out for this one!

10...\(d\)d8

10...h6 11 \(h\)h4 and only now 11...\(d\)d8 avoids \(d\)h4 and forces White to find another plan. On the other hand, ...\(d\)e6 no longer comes with tempo. In
Beating 1 e4 e5

L.Yudasin-R.Hess, New York 2004, White sensibly chose to start action in the centre: 12 a5 a7 13 d4 (now ...e6 would drop the e-pawn) 13...exd4 14 cxd4 (14 cxd4 is also interesting, intending 14...c6 15 e5 dxe5 16 dx e5 dxe5 17 xe1 xf3+ 18 xf3 with play for the pawn) 14...c6 15 f5?! (I prefer White’s position after 15 c6 bxc6 16 f3 – a6 is a constant worry for Black) 15...xf5 16 exf5 efe8 17 c2 ad8 18 b5!? d5? (I’m not sure why Black avoided the straightforward 18...e5!) 19 bxc6 dxc4 20 cxb7 we2 21 a2 wd3 22 f3 and White had a clear plus.

11 h4!

The right idea, interfering with Black’s unpinning plan. Flicking in 11 a5 a7 before playing 12 h4 is also good.

Any quiet move, like 11 e1, allows 11...e6 and after 12 h4 Black could even just play 12...h6 followed by ...f4-g6 to finally break the pin. 11 d4 e6 would also be fine for Black.

11...e6 12 f5 d8 13 h4 f4

Moving this knight to g6 is the right plan, but Black could consider 13...a5 14 b5 and only then 14...f4. Judging by what happens later, this insertion of pawns moves which gives Black more control of c5 might be a good idea.

14 e3!

Heading for d5.

14...g6 15 g5 h6 16 xf6 xf6 17 d5 d8 18 xb6 cxb6 19 g3!

Restricting the knight on g6.

19...h3 20 e1

Initially I had no idea why White induced ...h6 instead of just playing 15 xf6, but maybe it’s because Black now has to watch out for h5 ideas attacking g6 and h3.

20...e6 21 b3 xc4 22 xc4 d5 23 e3 dxe4 24 dxe4

I didn’t like Black’s plan of exchanging bishops (20...g5 looked less accommodating) and White enjoys a significant advantage now. His structure is healthier and his knight, eyeing outposts on f5 and d5, is clearly stronger than its counterpart.

24 c8 25 ad1 we7 26 d3 fd8 27 ed1 xd3 28 xd3 d8 29 d5 we6
30 \text{\texttt{h8}} 31 b5 axb5 32 axb5 \text{\texttt{d6}}

33 c4 \text{\texttt{f8}}? 34 \text{\texttt{a1}} \text{\texttt{d7}}

35 \text{\texttt{a3}}?

Missing a big chance: 35 \text{\texttt{a8}}+! \text{\texttt{h7}}

36 \text{\texttt{d8}}! threatens a devastating 37 \text{\texttt{e7}}. Black is forced to play 36...\text{\texttt{c5}} but then 37 \text{\texttt{f6}}+ \text{\texttt{xf6}} 38 \text{\texttt{xd6}} wins the exchange.

35...\text{\texttt{c5}} 36 f3 \text{\texttt{h7}} 37 \text{\texttt{a8}} f5!

Now Black is right back in the game.

8 \text{\texttt{xf1}}?

A bold move, inviting Black to play...

In the final two games we consider lines where Black dispenses with the modern treatment and delays or avoids ...\text{\texttt{a7}}, or even ...\text{\texttt{a6}}. These lines could be considered as ‘older’ but they are still very popular at all levels.

\textbf{Game 16}

\textbf{J.M.Degraeve-J.Dorfman}

\textit{French League 2007}

1 \text{\texttt{e4}} \text{\texttt{e5}} 2 \text{\texttt{f3}} \text{\texttt{c6}} 3 \text{\texttt{c4}} \text{\texttt{c5}} 4 \text{\texttt{c3}} \text{\texttt{f6}}

5 \text{\texttt{d3}} a6

The move order 5...\text{\texttt{d6}} 6 \text{\texttt{b3}} a6 is just as likely.

6 \text{\texttt{b3}} \text{\texttt{d6}}

Black forgoes the possibility of ...\text{\texttt{d5}} in one move, but commits neither his king nor his dark-squared bishop. There are many possibilities for transpositions into lines we’ve already covered, since Black often plays ...\text{\texttt{a7}} at some point. Here I’ll focus mainly on lines where Black delays or avoids this move.

7 \text{\texttt{bd2}}

Naturally White can play 7 \text{\texttt{h3}} (or 7 0-0 of course), with a likely transposition to main lines, but here he decides to play the \text{\texttt{d2-f1-g3}} manoeuvre as quickly as possible.

7...0-0

7...\text{\texttt{a7}} transposes to the note to Black’s 7th move in Emms-Flear (Game 11).

8 \text{\texttt{f1}}?
8...d5

As we’ve seen before on more than one occasion, this is the natural response to \( \text{\textit{f1}} \). Alternatively:

a) The critical continuation is 8...\( \text{\textit{g4}} \)? 9 d4!? (9 \( \text{\textit{e3 e3}} \) 10 \( \text{\textit{x}3} \) is just equal) 9...exd4 10 cxd4 and now:

\[ \text{\textit{xd4}} \]

a1) 10...\( \text{\textit{x}d4} \)? is dangerous and unclear, but White has good chances to emerge unscathed and with some advantage: 11 \( \text{\textit{x}d4} \) \( \text{\textit{h4}} \) (or 11...\( \text{\textit{e8}} \) 12 \( \text{\textit{e3 e4}} \) 13 \( \text{\textit{f3 x}3} \) 14 fxe3 \( \text{\textit{x}3} \) 15 \( \text{\textit{x}3} \) \( \text{\textit{e3+}} \) 16 \( \text{\textit{f2}} \) 12 \( \text{\textit{g3 f6}} \) 13 \( \text{\textit{e3 x}3} \) 14 fxe3 \( \text{\textit{b4+}} \) 15 \( \text{\textit{e2 g4+}} \) 16 \( \text{\textit{f3}} \) \( \text{\textit{xb2+}} \) 17 \( \text{\textit{c2}} \) etc.

a2) 10...\( \text{\textit{b4+}} \) 11 \( \text{\textit{d2 e8}} \) (or 11...\( \text{\textit{e7}} \) 12 \( \text{\textit{g3 f6}} \) 13 \( \text{\textit{x}b4 x}b4 \) 14 0-0 \( \text{\textit{g4}} \) 15 \( \text{\textit{h3 x}3} \) 16 \( \text{\textit{xf3}} \) with a clear plus for White, G.Sax-F.Berkes, Hungarian League 2003) 12 \( \text{\textit{g3 x}d2+} \) 13 \( \text{\textit{xd2 f6}} \) (or 13...d5 14 e5 f6 15 \( \text{\textit{h3 x}h6} \) 16 0-0-0?!?) 14 0-0! (9 d4 would be totally unplayable without this resource) 14...\( \text{\textit{x}e4} \) (otherwise White’s centre gives him an edge) 15 \( \text{\textit{x}e4 x}e4 \) 16 \( \text{\textit{xf7+}} \) \( \text{\textit{h8}} \) 17 \( \text{\textit{e1}} \) (17 d5! intending 17...\( \text{\textit{e5}} \) 18 \( \text{\textit{g5 g4}} \) 19 \( \text{\textit{f4}} \) looks even more promising) 17...\( \text{\textit{xe1+}} \) 18 \( \text{\textit{xe1 d7}} \) 19 d5 with an obvious advantage for White, G.Zentai-K.Valko, Hungarian League 2003.

8...\( \text{\textit{g4}} \) 9 d4 has had little practical testing so far, so it’s difficult to make a definitive assessment. The signs are looking quite promising for White, though. And as a back up, there’s always 7 h3!

b) 8...\( \text{\textit{e6}} \) 9 \( \text{\textit{g3}} \) (9 \( \text{\textit{g5?!}} \)) 9...h6 and now:

b1) 10 h3 d5 11 \( \text{\textit{we2 e8}} \) 12 \( \text{\textit{h2}} \) \( \text{\textit{d7}} \) 13 \( \text{\textit{f3}} \) is similar to positions we’ve seen before, but here Black can utilize the fact that his dark-squared bishop isn’t committed to a7 – it might instead drop back to defend on the kingside. For example, 13...\( \text{\textit{ad8}} \) (13...a5!? ) 14 \( \text{\textit{c2 b5}} \) 15 0-0 \( \text{\textit{e7}} \) 16 \( \text{\textit{e1 h7}} \) and Black was solidly placed in M.Kobalija-E.Inarkiev, Ramenskoe 2006.

b2) 10 0-0 \( \text{\textit{a7}} \) 11 h3 (11 \( \text{\textit{c2?!}} \) ) 11...d5 12 \( \text{\textit{we2 dx}e4} \) (12...\( \text{\textit{e8}} \) transposes to the note on 10...\( \text{\textit{e8}} \) in Tiviakov-Buhmann, Game 5) 13 \( \text{\textit{dx}e4 x}xb3 \) 14 axb3 \( \text{\textit{wd6}} \) 15 \( \text{\textit{f5}} \) \( \text{\textit{e6}} \),
and here 16 \( \text{hxg6} \) is interesting:

\[ \begin{array}{c}
16...\text{gxh6}! 17 \text{\textit{dxh6+}} \text{\textit{g8}} 18 \text{\textit{g5}} \text{\textit{e8}} \\
19 \text{\textit{f3 \textit{dh7}}} 20 \text{\textit{h5 \textit{f6}}} 21 \text{\textit{h7+ \textit{xf7}}} \\
22 \text{\textit{xh7+ \textit{g7}}} 23 \text{\textit{h6+ \textit{xh7}}} 24 \text{\textit{wh7+ \textit{e6}}} 25 \text{\textit{xc7}} \\
\end{array} \]

and White was on top in L.Ruan-Y.Shen, Beijing 2009.

Black might have better ways to defend here, but it seems wise not to allow this sacrifice. 14...\text{\textit{d7}} 15 \text{\textit{f5 \textit{h7}}}, as in I.Nepomniachtchi-Z.Almasi, Dresden 2007, looks safer, and Black was just about holding his own after 16 \text{\textit{xd1 \textit{e6}}} 17 \text{\textit{g5}}! \text{\textit{ad8}} 18 \text{\textit{b4 \textit{b6}}}!.

9 \text{\textit{exd5?!}}

Chess is not an easy game! I freely admit that previously I’ve questioned the strategy of combining the \text{\textit{d2-f1-g3}} manoeuvre with \text{\textit{exd5}}. Maybe I’ll try to justify this as the exception which proves the rule. Or maybe White’s case is helped by the fact that, with the omission of h2-h3, his development is a bit quicker than usual.

9 \text{\textit{we2 \textit{e6}}} is similar to note ‘b1’ above.

9...\text{\textit{xd5}} 10 \text{\textit{g3}}

There are some decent alternatives for Black here:

a) 10...\text{\textit{f6}} followed by ...\text{\textit{e6}} and ...\	ext{\textit{h8}} is what I’ve suggested for Black in similar positions. In this particular situation, though, White has just enough time after 11 \text{\textit{0-0 \textit{e6}}}, if 11...\text{\textit{h8}}, White should play 12 \text{\textit{e1}} discouraging ...	ext{\textit{e6}} in view of \text{\textit{d3-d4}} to get in the desirable 12 \text{\textit{e3}}!.

This makes at least some difference:

12...\text{\textit{e7}}? (12...\text{\textit{a7}}? 13 \text{\textit{xa7}}! \text{\textit{xa7}}) 14 \text{\textit{d4 \textit{exd4}}} 15 \text{\textit{xd4}} is the kind of position that Black must avoid; or 12...\text{\textit{exf3}} 13 \text{\textit{exf3 \textit{h8}}} 14 \text{\textit{we2}} and White will push with \text{\textit{d4}}) 13 \text{\textit{d4}}! \text{\textit{h8}} 14 \text{\textit{xe5 \textit{xe5}}} 15 \text{\textit{xe5 \textit{xd1}}} 16 \text{\textit{axd1 \textit{xb3}}} 17 \text{\textit{axb3 \textit{c5}}} 18 \text{\textit{f2 \textit{ae8}}} (18...\text{\textit{xe5}} 19 \text{\textit{xe5 \textit{fxe5+}}} 20 \text{\textit{e2}} is better for White; his king is well placed and the knight will come to \text{\textit{e4}}) 19 \text{\textit{b4 \textit{b6}}} 20 \text{\textit{cd5 \textit{e7}}} (or 20...\text{\textit{xe5}} 21 \text{\textit{xe5 \textit{exe5}}} 22 \text{\textit{exe5 \textit{fxe5+}}} 23 \text{\textit{e2 \textit{xf1}}} 24 \text{\textit{xf1}} followed by \text{\textit{d3-e4}}) 21 \text{\textit{xd7 \textit{g6}}} 22 \text{\textit{c4 \textit{exe5}}} (V.Malakhov-V.Georgiev, Solin 2006) and now 23 \text{\textit{e2 \textit{e4}}} 24 \text{\textit{g5 \textit{xf1}}} 25 \text{\textit{xf1}} would have kept an advantage.

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b) 10...h6 11 0-0 ♕e8 (11...♗f6 transpose to the main game) 12 ♔e4!? ♘e7! (if 12...♗f8 or 12...♕a7 you have to remember the standard trick 13 ♕xh6!) 13 ♕e1 ♗e6 14 ♗g3 ♔c5 was equal in S. Kudrin-M. Khachiyan, Las Vegas 2006. White could consider 14 h3!? instead of 14 ♗g3, and if 14...♗d7 then 15 ♗g3 ♖d6 16 ♘h5!? and possibly d3-d4.

c) 10...♗f4 11 ♕xf4 exf4 12 ♘e4 ♘e7 (after 12...♗b6 13 0-0 the bishop is once again in danger of being blocked out by d4) 13 0-0 ♗g4 14 d4 planning ♕d3. White’s strong centre promises him an edge here.

11 0-0 h6

Preparing ...♕e8, which at the moment would be strongly met by 12 ♗g5!.

12 ♗e3!

Again we see this move, and it’s the only one here which allows White to fight for an advantage. Black must make some kind of concession. Either he must spend time safeguarding his bishop or, as chosen in the game, ex-
change on e3 thereby strengthening White’s pawn structure and opening the f-file.

12...♕xe3

If 12...♖d6, 13 ♗h4!? aims for f2-f4 – White doesn’t always have to play ♕e1! This plan worked to perfection in T. Gharamian-D. Marholev, La Fere 2008: 13...♗g4 (13...♕e8!? ) 14 ♕d2! (lining up ♕xh6 possibilities) 14...♗e4?! (14...♕a5 15 ♗c2 ♕e8 16 ♕h5 ♗f8 17 b4, with an edge for White) 15 ♔xe4 ♕xh4 16 f4! ♗e7? 17 ♕xd6 cxd6 18 fxe5 dxe5 19 ♗c5 ♕ae8 20 ♕ae1 ♕h5 21 b4, when Black was tied up in knots and saw no reason to continue the struggle. Admittedly this was poor defence by Black, but even so White’s plan looks promising.

13 fxe3 ♕e8 14 ♗h4!

I prefer White here. At the very least his position is the easier to play.

14...♗e6 15 ♕h5 ♕xb3 16 ♕xb3 ♕e6!

16...♕xd3 17 ♕xh6+ is good for White.

There’s not enough time for 16...♗b8?, which is met by 17 ♕xg7!
\[ \text{xg7 18 xf6! xf6 (or 18...xf6 19 h5+) 19 f1+ g7 20 xf7+ h8 21 f6, winning.} \]

17 xb7!\

Bold play by Degraeve, and he is instantly rewarded.

17...a7?  \[ \text{This looks like a critical mistake. True, Black regains his pawn, but only at a cost of losing coordination.} \]

If 17...b8 18 xa6 and Black doesn’t have an effective discovered attack against the queen. Or 17...g6 18 xh6+ g7 19 xf7! xf7 20 e4, and White threatens g5+. However, after 17...h7! preparing...g6 the position is still very unclear.

18 b3 xd3 19 ad1 b5 20 c2!  \[ \text{White certainly isn’t about to ease Black’s position by exchanging queens.} \]

20...b7?  \[ \text{Black had to play 20...c4 preventing White’s next move.} \]

21 e4!  \[ \text{Threatening 22 xh6+.} \]

21...e8  \[ \text{If 21...xe4 22 xe4 and d7 is coming. Black’s can’t play 22...xb2 because of 23 b1.} \]

22 f2!  \[ \text{Again the threat is 23 xh6+. Black tries to prevent it with...} \]

22...h7

23 xh6! 1-0  \[ \text{...but it happens anyway! Dorfman resigned in view of the following lines:} \]

23...xh6 24 h4+ g6 25 g4 (threatening mate on h5) 25...f6 26 f5 xxe4 27 h5 mate; 23...xh6 24 xf7+ g7 25 d7 g6 26 f6+; or finally, 23...xh6 24 g5+ h8 25 xf7 with mate to follow.

Game 17  \[ \text{S.Erenburg-M.Kreizberg} \]

Tel Aviv 2002

1 e4 e5 2 f3 c6 3 c4 c5 4 c3 f6 5 d3 d6  \[ \text{5...d6 is still a very popular move order for Black, especially at club level. Again transpositions are frequent, since Black typically plays ...a6 at some} \]
point. In this game I’ll focus on lines where he doesn’t.

6 \( \textbf{\text{b3}} \text{ h6} \)

Black has quite a few alternatives:

a) What should White play against 6...0-0? Hopefully 7 \( \textbf{\text{g5}} \! \) should be an automatic reaction by now! Play is similar to Tiviakov-El Taher (Game 10) and in fact a transposition is possible after 7...\( \text{e6} \) 8 \( \text{bd2} \) a6 9 h3 \( \text{a7} \) 10 \( \text{h2} \) h6 11 \( \text{h4} \).

b) 6...\( \text{e6} \) can be met by 7 0-0, 7 \( \text{bd2} \), 7 \( \text{c2} \) or even 7 \( \text{a4} \! \), exploiting the fact that there is no ...\( \text{b5} \) available for Black. There’s also the possibility of 7 \( \text{g5} \! \),

c) 6...\( \text{g4} \! \), either here or in many other similar positions, is a move you are likely to meet quite often when facing less experienced players.

One of the key advantages for White is that while \( \text{g5} \) is nearly always a concern for Black, ...\( \text{g4} \) generally causes White no problems at all; in fact he positively welcomes the move! Why is this so?

1. With the c3-pawn covering d4, Black is never in a position to increase...
the pressure on the pin with ...\textit{d}d4.

2. \textit{bd}2 reinforces the defence of the f3-knight, but more importantly White has the basic plan (after h2-h3 and ...\textit{h}5) of \textit{f}1-g3. This forces Black to either spend time safeguarding his light-squared bishop or agree to an undesirable exchange. In effect, White can use Black’s bishop as a hook to gain momentum on the kingside.

I noticed a number of Kasparov games from simultaneous displays with his opponents choosing 6...\textit{g}4. They were all wins, with the longest game lasting just 34 moves!

Let’s see how White should proceed:
7 h3 \textit{h}5 8 \textit{bd}2 0-0 9 \textit{we}2 d5 (passive play is likely to get crushed: 9...\textit{d}7 10 g4! \textit{g}6 11 \textit{f}1 \textit{fe}8 12 \textit{g}3 \textit{e}7 13 \textit{g}5 h6 14 \textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 15 0-0-0 \textit{ed}8 16 \textit{h}4 \textit{h}7 17 \textit{h}5 \textit{c}6 18 \textit{xf}6+ \textit{f}8 19 \textit{xh}7+ \textit{g}7 20 g5 \textit{xh}7 21 \textit{h}5 \textit{g}8 22 \textit{xf}7+ \textit{h}8 23 \textit{g}6 mate, G.Kasparov-B.Guillot, Besancon 1999) 10 \textit{f}1 dxe4 11 dxe4 \textit{g}6 (if 11...h6, 12 \textit{g}3 \textit{g}6 13 \textit{h}4 gains more time) 12 \textit{g}3 \textit{h}5 13 \textit{xh}5 \textit{xh}5 14 g4 \textit{g}6 15 h4! h5 (or 15...h6 16 h5 \textit{h}7 17 g5!) 16 \textit{g}5!

16...\textit{we}7 (16...\textit{hxg}4 17 h5 \textit{h}7 18 h6 is very strong) 17 g\textit{xh}5 \textit{h}7 18 \textit{g}1 \textit{h}8 19 \textit{xh}7 \textit{xh}7 20 \textit{g}4 \textit{f}6 21 \textit{g}2 g6 22 \textit{xf}7! and 1-0, A.Kofidis-S.Beshukov, Greece 1995. It’s not easy defending against this type of attack, whether you are an amateur facing the mighty Kasparov, or a grandmaster with a rating of 2500!

d) Finally, there’s the solid option of 6...\textit{b}6.

\textbf{This is typical prophylaxis against d3-d4 and is usually combined with the manoeuvre \textit{e}7-g6. Compared to the}
...a6 and ...\texttt{a}7 plan, Black is saving a tempo. What's more, if White castles, plays \texttt{e}e3 and exchanges bishops, Black is happier to recapture with the a-pawn rather than having to play ...\texttt{a}xa7.

The ‘only’ problem for Black is that on b6, the bishop cannot escape capture if White plays \texttt{d}d2-c4. It therefore makes sense for White to choose this plan, and this gives him good chances of gaining an edge. For example, 7 \texttt{d}bd2! \texttt{e}e7 (7... 0-0 is also met by 8 \texttt{c}c4) 8 \texttt{c}c4 \texttt{g}6 9 0-0 0-0 10 \texttt{h}3 \texttt{h}6 11 \texttt{e}e1 \texttt{e}e6 12 \texttt{d}4 \texttt{xc}4 (12...\texttt{e}e8 13 d5! \texttt{d}d7 14 a4 – Kramnik – is a line which demonstrates why White isn’t always in a rush to trade on b6) 13 \texttt{xc}4 exd4 14 cxd4 \texttt{xe}4 (or 14...d5 15 exd5 \texttt{xd}5 16 \texttt{d}2 \texttt{c}6 17 \texttt{wb}3 \texttt{wd}7 18 a4 with an edge – Kramnik) 15 \texttt{d}5 \texttt{f}6 16 \texttt{xb}7 \texttt{xb}8 17 \texttt{ac}6 and again White is slightly better, D.Bojkov-K.Haznedaroglu, Istanbul 2001.

\texttt{7}\texttt{bd}2

Now that Black has played ...\texttt{h}6 to rule out \texttt{g}5, there’s no real need to hold back with this any longer, especially if White is planning on delaying castling in favour of \texttt{f}f1-g3 etc.

On the other hand, it’s worth remembering that in nearly all cases White can revert back to the Classical Main Line by castling at any stage. If, for example, White plays 7 0-0 here or on the next move, Black might be ‘tricked’ into a line where he is committed to ...\texttt{h}6; a perfectly respectable line, but not necessarily one he would have chosen had White castled earlier. For example, here 7... 0-0 8 \texttt{bd}2 a6 9 \texttt{e}1 \texttt{a}7 10 h3 would transpose to Games 18 and 21. Moreover, the move order chosen here means that White even has the option of playing 10 \texttt{f}1 and delaying \texttt{h}3 – 10...\texttt{g}4 achieves nothing after 11 d4!. See also Bronstein-Ivkov (Game 28), where Black delays ...\texttt{a}7.

\texttt{7}...\texttt{0-0} \texttt{8} \texttt{h}3 \texttt{h}5!?

\texttt{7}\texttt{bd}2

Aiming for ...\texttt{f}4 and ...\texttt{wf}6, which is one of Black’s main plans in the Classical Main Line (see Game 18).

\texttt{8}\texttt{e}6 is, as usual, a solid option
for Black. If White wants to avoid castling, transposing to the Classical Main Line, he can try one of the following:

a) If 9  \\&f1 d5 10  \\&w2 Black can try to utilize the tempi gained avoiding ...a6 and ...a7: 10..a5!? (or 10...a5!?) 11  \\&xd5! (White has to improvise, since the autopilot response 11  \\&c2? allows 11...dxe4 12 dxe4  \\&c4! which is embarrassing) 11... \\&xd5 12 exd5  \\&xd5 13  \\&g3  \\&f4!? 14  \\&xf4 exf4 15  \\&e4  \\&e8 16 b4  \\&b6 17 bxa5  \\&xa5 18 0-0 f5 19  \\&c2 fxe4 20 dxe4  \\&b6 21  \\&ad1  \\&w7 22 e5  \\&ad8 23  \\&w4  \\&xd1 24  \\&xd1  \\&w5 25  \\&g6  \\&xf2+?? 26  \\&h1 and Black resigned in I.Nepomniachtchi-E.Sutovsky Netanya (rapid) 2009, in view of 26...  \\&f8 27  \\&d7  \\&f1+ 28  \\&h2 with mate on g7. A win for White, but overall this line looks quite unclear.

b) 9  \\&c2 d5 10  \\&w2 and now:

b1) 10...d4 11  \\&f1 a5 12 g4 a4 13  \\&g3 with complex play.

b2) 10...  \\&e8 11  \\&f1  \\&d7 12  \\&g3 b5!? and White should play 13 0-0 dxe4 14  \\&xe4  \\&xe4 15  \\&wxe4 with a roughly equal position, since the typical 13  \\&h4?! allows a tactical trick with 13...dxe4 14 dxe4  \\&c4 15  \\&f3  \\&b4!.

9  \\&d4!?

White exploits tactics involving the unprotected knight on h5 (9...exd4 10 cxd4  \\&xd4 11  \\&xd4  \\&xd4 12  \\&w5) but this advance in the centre is quite committal.

Another option worth considering was 9  \\&f1  \\&w6 10 g3!?, preventing ...  \\&f4 and leaving the knight poorly placed, albeit at a cost of weakening the kingside. White can play  \\&e3, swap off bishops and then aim for  \\&e3- \\&d5/4 or  \\&h4.

9...  \\&b6 10  \\&c4

Erenburg suggests 10 0-0 here. If Black plays 10... \\&w6, 11  \\&c4! would transpose to the game. I think 10... \\&f6! is stronger, and the position looks equal to me.

10... \\&w6

Black can, and probably should, play 10...exd4 11  \\&xb6 axb6 12  \\&xd4 (12 cxd4  \\&f6 leaves White struggling to defend e4 properly) 12... \\&f6 13 f3, as indicated by Erenburg. Here 13...d5 should equalize.

11  \\&xb6 axb6 12 0-0  \\&f4 13  \\&h2

Superficially it looks like Black is doing pretty well. It seems that with the knight on f4 and the queen on f6 he enjoys some pressure on the kingside. Black’s position certainly isn’t bad, but perhaps a key point is that there are more opportunities for improvement in White’s (for example,  \\&e3,  \\&g1, g2-g3 and eventually f2-f4) and there’s the
long-term advantage of the bishop pair. Perhaps realizing this, Kreizberg chooses to go for an adventurous attack on White’s king, but it proves to be over-ambitious. Erenburg's precise play demonstrates both the resilience and potential in White’s position.

13...\textit{a}5!? 14 \textit{e}3 \textit{exd}4
Committal, but consistent with Black’s previous move.

15 \textit{cxd}4 \textit{h}5
There was still time to change tack with 15...\textit{e}8 (Erenburg), but Black wasn’t going to back down.

16 \textit{g}1!
Black was threatening the deadly 16...\textit{xh}3. Now \textit{f}3 becomes an important resource for White in some lines.

16...\textit{e}7?
This meets with a rather simple refutation.

\textit{Rybka} wants to play 16...\textit{h}4 intending to answer 17 \textit{g}3 with 17...\textit{g}4. However, Black’s attack has a desperate look to it after 17 \textit{f}3: for example, 17...\textit{h}5 18 \textit{d}2, or 17...\textit{xg}2 18 \textit{xg}2

\textbf{17 \textit{xf}4!}
I can only think that Black forgot this move was possible because White had avoided it for so long.

17...\textit{xf}4+ 18 \textit{g}3 \textit{g}4
The only other move to protect the rook was 18...\textit{g}5, but 19 \textit{f}4 \textit{g}6 20 \textit{f}5 \textit{g}5 21 \textit{f}3 intending \textit{d}1 is crushing.

19 \textit{xf}4 \textit{xf}4 20 \textit{f}4! \textit{c}8 21 \textit{f}5!

17...\textit{xf}4! I bet by now the rook was wishing it was back on the sleepy a8-square!

21...\textit{d}5 22 \textit{d}1 \textbf{1-0}
If 22...\textit{g}5, 23 \textit{h}4 puts the rook out of its misery.
**Key Notes**

1. 7 \( \text{bd}2 \ 0-0 \ 8 \text{c}4 \) is a tricky alternative to the main line, especially since Black seems to get into difficulties after 8...d6 (Game 11), which is his most natural reaction. 8...d5 (Game 12) looks like a wiser choice.

2. The \( \text{g}5 \) pin can be a very powerful weapon when the circumstances are favourable, for example in Games 11 and 15. The pin is not quite so effective if Black still has the option of \( ... \text{c}5-\text{e}7 \). The notes to Game 14 show that Black should be willing to break the pin in this way, even though it’s at a cost of a tempo.

3. If Black aims for a very quick \( ... \text{d}5 \), usually White should exchange pawns and execute Plan B (see Game 14 and some notes in Game 15). Remember that 5...d5? is too early and is answered by 6 exd5 \( \text{xd}5 \ 7 \text{b}3! \).

4. Executing the \( \text{bd}2-f1-g3 \) manoeuvre without a preparatory \( h2-h3 \) carries some risk, as Black always has the possibility of meeting \( \text{f}1 \) with \( ... \text{g}4 \) attacking the f2-pawn. However, as the notes to Games 11 and 16 demonstrate, White can sometimes answer \( ... \text{g}4 \) by playing \( d3-d4 \). If you think the resulting complications favour White, it might be worth tempting Black with this option.

5. If Black dispenses with the \( ... \text{a}6/\text{a}7 \) plan and instead chooses \( ... \text{b}6 \), the most natural reaction by White is to force a knight-for-bishop exchange with \( \text{bd}2-\text{c}4 \) (see Game 17, note on 6...\( \text{b}6 \)).

6. Less experienced players are often attracted by an early \( ... \text{g}4 \) pin. This move causes White no problems at all and he should be happy to face it (see Game 17, note on 6...\( \text{g}4 \)).
Chapter Three

Italian Game: Classical Main Line

In this chapter we’ll consider lines where White castles early and develops in a more traditional style. I was tempted to call it ‘the old main line’ because this is how White played when the Italian Game with c3 and d3 first came to prominence back in the 1980s. But despite a growing threat from the modern lines discussed in the previous two chapters, it remains sufficiently popular today not to be labelled with ‘old’.

Simply put, White’s primary plan after castling is to play $\texttt{e}1$, $\texttt{h}3$, $\texttt{bd}2$-$\texttt{f}1$-$\texttt{g}3$ and then, after all the necessary preparation, advance with $\texttt{d}3$-$\texttt{d}4$. Of course there are lines where Black cuts across this idea and White has to change course, but generally speaking this is what he wants to do.

Let’s take a brief look at the opening moves:

1 $\texttt{e}4$ $\texttt{e}5$ 2 $\texttt{df}3$ $\texttt{c}6$ 3 $\texttt{ac}4$ $\texttt{c}5$ 4 $\texttt{c}3$ $\texttt{af}6$
5 $\texttt{d}3$ $\texttt{a}6$ 6 0-0 $\texttt{d}6$ 7 $\texttt{b}3$ $\texttt{a}7$

Of course there are various other move orders here. For example 6 $\texttt{b}3$ $\texttt{a}7$ 7 0-0 $\texttt{d}6$, or 6 0-0 $\texttt{a}7$ 7 $\texttt{b}3$ $\texttt{d}6$. Basically, White plays $\texttt{b}3$ fairly early on for the usual reason— to avoid the possibility of $\ldots \texttt{a}5$ forcing its exchange.

8 $\texttt{e}1$

8 $\texttt{bd}2$ has actually been White’s most popular choice in practice, but I
prefer 8 \( \text{e}1 \). In many cases the two moves reach the same position, but 8 \( \text{e}1 \) offers White more possibilities in some of the key lines and also cuts out one or two options for Black. More to the point, it’s useful for White to maintain the possibility of \( \text{g}5 \) for as long as possible.

8...o-0 9 h3

This is a key move. If White plays 9 \( \text{bd}2?! \) Black can seize the initiative with 9...\( \text{g}4! \) 10 \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{h}8! \) and there’s no stopping \( \text{f}5 \). Practice has shown that after 11 h3 \( \text{h}6 \) 12 \( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{f}5! \) 13 \( \text{x}h6 \) gxh6 Black’s activity and open lines more than compensate for the structural damage to his kingside, and this is a variation White needs to avoid at all costs.

The resulting positions after 9 h3 are covered in the first five games of the chapter. There are three main options for Black here:

1. He can execute the plan of 9...\( \text{h}5 \), 10...\( \text{f}6 \) and 11...\( \text{f}4 \). This is covered in Frois-Korneev (Game 18).
2. He can play 9...\( \text{e}6 \), with or without 10...\( \text{h}6 \) first. This approach is covered in Games 19-21.
3. He can play 9...\( \text{e}7 \) followed by 10...\( \text{g}6 \) (see Felgaer-Hector, Game 22).

The final six games of this chapter deal with earlier options for both players and also some move-order issues. Warakomski-Bartel (Game 23), for example, shows how White can come unstuck if he doesn’t pay enough attention to these intricacies.

White’s chief alternative to the main line is to choose a plan involving \( \text{e}3 \) (see following diagram).

This approach has been a favourite of Tiviakov’s. Objectively Black should be okay but it’s not particularly easy to meet for the unsuspecting. It even caused Anand problems when he faced it (see Games 24-25).
If Black plays 7...0-0 instead of 7...a7, White has the interesting if double-edged possibility of 8 g5, which is covered in Tiviakov-Pavasovic (Game 26). After that we consider 7...g4 in Kindermann-Dietmayer Kraeutler (Game 27), and finally lines without ...a6 in Bronstein-Ivkov (Game 28). Note that 5...0-0 6 0-0 has already been covered in the notes to Nunn-Spesný (Game 15).

Without further ado, let's move on to the games:

**Game 18**

A.Frois-O.Korneev

Malaga 2005

1 e4 e5 2 f3 c6 3 c4 c5 4 c3 f6 5 d3 a6 6 0-0 d6 7 b3 a7 8 e1 0-0 9 h3 h6

Black plans aggressive action on the kingside with ...h5, ...f6 and ...f4. This is an appealing option and it's no surprise that it has been Black's most popular choice over the years.

9...h6 is a necessary precursor to the plan, because the immediate 9...h5 is met convincingly by 10 g5! forcing an awkward queen move. After 10...e8, if nothing else there's 11 d4 (11 h2?) 11...h6 12 e3 and White could end up a tempo ahead of the main lines: 12...e7 13 bd2 f6 14 f1 f4 15 g3 etc.

This demonstrates one of the advantages of playing 8 e1 instead of 8 bd2 – the immediate 9...h5 is a major possibility for Black after 8 bd2 0-0 9 h3.

10 bd2 h5 11 f1

Note that 11 xe5?? is a blunder because of 11...xe5 12 xh5 xd3 or, even worse, 11...h4!.

11...f6 12 e3!

12 e3 is also possible, but the feeling is that White's best chance of finding an advantage lies with this offer to trade the dark-squared bishops. However, it should be pointed out that White's isn't always going to force the exchange of these bishops. Indeed, if Black avoids exchanging on e3, which
he tends to do in practice, White will often play d3-d4. In this case, as we’ve seen before, a significant part of White’s strategy is to block the a7-bishop out of the action. What’s more, all the time White has the option to exchange bishops with dxe5 followed by a7xa7, whereas Black doesn’t. This tension in the centre undoubtedly favours White.

![Chessboard Diagram]

12...\(\text{\textit{f4}}\)

Occupying f4 straight away looks attractive, and this is Black’s most popular choice here. However, worthy alternatives do exist:

a) 12...\(\text{\textit{x}}\)xe3 is committed but it does at least clarify the position to some extent. If Black wants to exchange on e3, now is probably the time to do so; after ...\(\text{\textit{f4}}\), any exchange on e3 only encourages fxe3 to force the knight to retreat. White can recapture in either way:

a1) 13 \(\text{\textit{x}}\)xe3 \(\text{\textit{f4}}\) 14 \(\text{\textit{h2}}\) (14 \(\text{\textit{d5}}\) \(\text{\textit{xd5}}\) 15 exd5 \(\text{\textit{d7}}\) 16 d4 \(\text{\textit{g6}}\) is equal) 14...\(\text{\textit{e7}}\) 15 a4 \(\text{\textit{e6}}\) 16 \(\text{\textit{x}}\)xe6 fxe6?! (after 16...\(\text{\textit{x}}\)xe6! – Karpov – the position is equal) 17 \(\text{\textit{g1}}\). This knight retreat is one point of 14 \(\text{\textit{h2}}\); indeed it’s a typical plan for White. The idea is to kick the knight back with g3 and slowly make progress on the kingside: 17...\(\text{\textit{ad8}}\) 18 g3 \(\text{\textit{fg6}}\) (now this knight is a poor piece, restricted by the pawn on g3) 19 \(\text{\textit{f1}}\) d5 20 \(\text{\textit{e2}}\) c6 21 \(\text{\textit{g2}}\) \(\text{\textit{f7}}\) 22 h4 \(\text{\textit{df8}}\) 23 \(\text{\textit{ad1}}\) \(\text{\textit{ge7}}\) (A.Karpov-A.Yusupov, Bugojno 1986) and here 24 f4! (Karpov) would have maintained an edge for White.

a2) 13 fxe3!? is perhaps more challenging.

Black can no longer carry out his \(\text{\textit{f4}}\) plan and needs to regroup, while White will begin action on the kingside: 13...\(\text{\textit{e7}}\) (to give the knight a square) 14 g4 \(\text{\textit{f6}}\) 15 \(\text{\textit{g3}}\) \(\text{\textit{e6}}\) 16 d4 (I’d be tempted to hold the centre and continue with 16 \(\text{\textit{f1}}\)!, intending 16...d5 17 exd5 \(\text{\textit{xd5}}\) 18 \(\text{\textit{e2}}\) 16...\(\text{\textit{d7}}\)! 17 \(\text{\textit{e2}}\) \(\text{\textit{h7}}\) 18 \(\text{\textit{g2}}\) \(\text{\textit{h8}}\) 19 \(\text{\textit{f1}}\) with an unclear position, D.Svetushkin-C.Marcelin, Yerevan 1999. White is the more active but Black’s position is solid enough.
b) 12...\(\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{7}}\) (providing reinforcements for the kingside) 13 d4 (13 \(\text{\texttt{a}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{a}}\text{\texttt{7}}\) \(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{a}}\text{\texttt{7}}\) 14 \(\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{4}}\) 15 \(\text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{a}}\text{\texttt{8}}\) transposes to note ‘a1’, above) 13...\(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{4}}\) (13...\(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{6}}\) fails to the tactic 14 \(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{5}}\) dxe5 15 \(\text{\texttt{w}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{5}}\), since 15...exd4 16 cxd4 \(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{4}}\) loses to 17 \(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{w}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{4}}\) 18 \(\text{\texttt{w}}\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{6}}\)) 14 \(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{6}}\) 15 \(\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{2}}!\).

The decision to retreat the bishop looks strange at first sight (how many times have I said that?), but it’s actually a strong move. The key idea for White (see note ‘b2’) is to interfere with Black’s kingside action by playing \(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{5}}\):

b1) 15...\(\text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{4}}\) 16 \(\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{w}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{4}}\) 17 \(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{6}}\) 18 \(\text{\texttt{a}}\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{7}}\) 19 \(\text{\texttt{b}}\text{\texttt{3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{6}}\) 20 \(\text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{8}}\) 21 \(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{6}}\) 22 \(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{6}}\) (finally the time is right to release the tension) 22...\(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{6}}\) 23 dxe5 dxe5 24 \(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{7}}\) \(\text{\texttt{b}}\text{\texttt{6}}\) 25 \(\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{1}}\) and White’s control of the d-file gave him the edge in L.Dominguez Perez-Y.Quezada Perez, Havana 2008.

b2) 15...c6 16 \(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{8}}\) 17 \(\text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{2}}!\) h5 18 \(\text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{1}}\) (planning g3; returning with 18 \(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{3}}\)!!? now that g5 has been weakened may be stronger, and this position looks a bit better for White) 18...d5! 19 dxe5 \(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{5}}\) (Rybka wants to play 19...\(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{5}}\)!! 20 \(\text{\texttt{a}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{a}}\text{\texttt{7}}\) \(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{a}}\text{\texttt{7}}\) 21 \(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{4}}\) b6 22 \(\text{\texttt{w}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{b}}\text{\texttt{6}}\) \(\text{\texttt{b}}\text{\texttt{7}}\) 23 \(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{a}}\text{\texttt{6}}\) \(\text{\texttt{b}}\text{\texttt{8}}\) 24 \(\text{\texttt{w}}\text{\texttt{a}}\text{\texttt{4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{b}}\text{\texttt{2}}\) with counterplay) 20 \(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{3}}\) h4? 21 \(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{w}}\text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{6}}\) 22 \(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{5}}\) (White is already winning here, but according to the database there now came...) 22...\(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{5}}??\) 23 \(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{5}}\) and 1-0, Hou Yifan-W.Spoelman, Wijk aan Zee 2007.

c) 12...\(\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{6}}\) 13 \(\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{2}}\) could easily reach positions similar to those in note ‘b’ where White voluntarily plays \(\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{2}}\). For example, 13...\(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{4}}\) 14 d4 \(\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{7}}\) 15 \(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{3}}\) g5!!? (15...\(\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{6}}\) is met by 16 \(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{5}}\), and 15...g6 by 16 \(\text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{2}}\) h5 17 \(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{2}}\) 16 \(\text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{8}}\) (A.Olsson-K.Ong, Gothenburg 2005) and here 17 \(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{5}}\) is a good move, because 17...\(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{5}}\) is met by the strong zwischenzug 18 \(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{4}}\)!. Earlier, 13 \(\text{\texttt{a}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{a}}\text{\texttt{7}}\) \(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{a}}\text{\texttt{7}}\) 14 \(\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{4}}\) 15 \(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{5}}\) and 13 d4 \(\text{\texttt{a}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{b}}\text{\texttt{3}}\) 14 axb3 are also possible.

13 \(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{3}}\)

13 d4 is a good alternative. Black usually meets it with 13...\(\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{7}}\) which transposes to 12...\(\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{7}}\), above.

![Diagram](image-url)

After 13 \(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{3}}\), initially there appears to be no danger at all for Black, but
watch out for some hidden traps lurking in this position!

13...g6

Not the first idea you would think of, but this pawn move is almost a necessity!

The first thing to note is that an innocent move such as 13...e6 can be met by 14 xf4! (14 d4 is also good), when 14...xf4?? 15 h5, trapping the queen in mid-board, is easy to miss. (This explains the reasoning behind 13...g6.)

14...exf4? is also a mistake, losing a pawn after 15 h5! (or 15...g6 16 xf4 bx3 17 d2! g3 18 d4) 16 xf4. The well-known Spanish grandmaster Vallejo Pons once fell for this, albeit in a blindfold game.

Actually, Black can escape real harm with 14...xb3! 15 axb3 xf4 intending 16 h5 g6 17 xf4 g3 18 d2 xf2+ 19 xf2 xf4. But 16 f1! followed by d3-d4 allows White to achieve his positional goal of blocking out the a7-bishop, with some advantage.

13...e7 is met by a similar response: 14 xf4! exf4 15 h5 g6 16 xf4 g3 17 d2 xf2+ 18 xf2 xf4. Black has regained his pawn, but after 19 e5! White stands better.

Perhaps the most important alternative for Black is 13...g5!? further supporting the strong knight and thus eliminating any tricks. Black will hope to organize some action on the kingside, but 13...g5 does saddle him with light-squared weaknesses which White can justifiably expect to exploit after the logical response 14 h2!.

White's long-term goals are to occupy the 'real outpost' on f5 and to force the f4-knight from its 'pseudo outpost' with a timely g2-g3 advance. For example, 14...g6 15 d4 h8 16 c2 e7 (or 16...f6 17 f5! xf5 18 exf5 h5 19 g4! g7 20 b3 a5? 21 dxe5! fxe5, D.Svetushkin-K.Pilgaard, Ubeda 1999, and here 22 c2 intending xf4, d3 and f6+ looks precarious for Black) 17 f3 f6 18 h1 d7 19 ad1 c6 20 ad2 wh7 (Black is in no position to play 20...f5? – after 21 dxe5 dxe5 22 a7 xa7 xa7 23 e3! aa8 24
Beating 1 e4 e5

\(\text{\#f3 it's difficult for him to hold his position together) 21 b4 \text{\#eg6 22 \#f5 \#e7 23 \#xe7 \text{\#xe7 24 \#f1! (one knight replaces the other) 24...\#d7 25 \#g3 \text{\#h7 26 \#f5 \#g8 (V.Sikula-B.Marzolf, Metz 2007) and here 27 \#b3 \#g6 28 g3 \#xh3 29 \#g4 is complicated but might simply be good for White: 29...\#f4 30 dxe5! h5 31 \#d1 \#xe3 32 fxe3! \#h3 33 exd6 h4 34 g4! etc.}\n
14 d4!

This move, blocking out the a7-bishop, seems to give Black the most problems, certainly at least in practice.

14 \#h2 planning \#f3 and/or \#g4 is a decent alternative, but White should certainly avoid 14 \#xa7?! \#xa7 when there is no way to dislodge the f4-knight for the foreseeable future. As a rule of thumb, if White quickly exchanges on a7, the knight should go to e3 rather than g3.

By playing 14 d4, White introduces another positional threat which isn’t immediately apparent. Can you spot what it is?

14...\#a5?!

An innocent-looking move like 14...\#d7? allows White to carry out his threat: 15 \#xf4! \#xf4 (if 15...exf4, 16 e5! followed by \#e4 is strong – this is a reoccurring theme) 16 \#f5!!.

A bolt from the blue. Black was probably feeling very comfortable, but now his queen is trapped in mid-board! 16...\#xf5 (16...gxf5 is met in the same way) 17 g3! \#xe4 18 \#xe4 \#xe4 19 \#e2 with a clear advantage for White, G.Todorovic-M.Pavlovic, Belgrade 2009. The game ended 19...\#xf3 20 \#xf3 exd4 21 \#f6 \#h7 22 \#e1 \#g8 23 \#g2 dxc3 24 bxc3 \#e5 25 f4 \#d7 26 \#f7 \#c5 27 f5 and 1-0.

14...\#e8? meets the same fate: 15 \#xf4! \#xf4 (or 15...exf4 16 e5!) 16 \#f5! \#xf5 17 g3 \#xe4 18 \#xe4 \#xe4 19 \#d2 \#f5 20 g4! \#d7 21 \#f3 (Lukacs) and again White is clearly better. Note that the trap only works once White has played d4; without this Black could take the pawn on g3 exploiting the pin on the f-pawn.

There are a couple of moves Black can play to avoid the trick, and these
represent his best options:

a) 14...e7 (so that Black can meet 15 ♖xf4 ♕xf4 16 ♕f5 with 16...♖xf5!, but with ...♖eg6 no longer an option, it’s not clear whether e7 is such a good square for this knight) 15 ♖h2 (15 ♖e1!? 15...h5 and now:

a1) 16 ♕f3 ♕g7 17 ♖ad1 ♖h8 (17...♖c6!?) 18 ♕e2! g5! (if 18...♖xe2+ 19 ♕xe2 followed by ♕f3, when the g5-square is inviting) 19 dxe5 dxe5 was D.Howell-L.Johannessen, Oslo 2008, and here 20 ♕xf4 gxf4 21 ♕xa7 ♖xa7 22 ♖d3 ♖g6 23 ♕f3 ♖h4 24 ♖d2 looks unclear.

a2) 16 ♕d2!? is a promising alternative to 16 ♕f3. If Black carries on with 16...♖g7, White can play 17 ♕f3! increasing the pressure on e5 and f4.

The point is that 17...♖xh3+? fails here, to 18 g×h3 ♕xf3 19 ♕d1! ♕f6 20 ♕g5! ♕e6 21 ♕b3 ♕xh3 22 ♕h6+ ♕g8 23 ♕g5!.

b) 14...h5! is perhaps Black’s best move, and in all likelihood this limits White to a small edge: 15 a4 (planning to gain space on the queenside with a5; note that 15 ♕xf4 ♕xf4 16 ♕f5 g×f5 17 g3 no longer works – Black has sneakily vacated the h6-square!) 15...a5 (15...♖g7 can be met by 16 ♕d2! and again 16...♖xh3+? fails to 17 g×h3 ♕xf3 18 ♕h6+ ♕g8 19 ♕g5!) 16 ♕c4 ♕e7 17 ♕h2 ♕e6 18 ♕xe6 (this looks more challenging to me than 18 ♕a2 ♕xa2 19 ♕xa2 c5, which left White’s a2-rook slightly misplaced in A.Delchev-Z.Almasi, Sibenik 2006) 18...♖xe6 (or 18...fxe6 19 dxe5 dxe5 20 ♕xa7 ♕xa7 21 ♕e2! ♕c6 22 ♕xf4 intending 22...exf4 23 e5 ♕xe5 24 ♕d4 ♕c6 25 ♕c4 ♕e8 26 ♕e4) 19 ♕f3 and the tension in the centre still favours White.

If 19...♕f4 20 ♕d2! ♕xh3+ 21 g×h3 ♕xf3 22 ♕g5 f6 23 ♕e3! and Black’s queen is trapped.

15 ♕c2!?

Even here White can play 15 ♕xf4!, although in this instance the trick doesn’t lead to quite such an overwhelmingly favourable outcome: 15...♕xf4 (15...exf4 is once again met by 16 e5!) 16 ♕f5! g×f5 17 g3 ♕xe4 18 ♕xe4 f×e4 19 ♕d2 with some advan-
Beating 1 e4 e5
tage for White, as indicated by Lukacs.
Frois decides that the threat is stronger than the execution, and the evidence from this game suggests he's right!
15...\text{c}4 16 \text{c}1

True, White has been forced backwards temporarily, but Black's knight on c4 is on a poor circuit – it lacks protection and will soon be forced to retreat.
16...c5!?

It becomes clear after this move that Korneev was completely oblivious to White's idea. That makes it at the minimum two experienced grandmasters that have fallen for White's cleverly concealed trick.
16...h5! gives the queen the h6-square (compare 14...h5) and keeps Black in the game. White maintains some advantage with 17 a4.
17 b3 \text{a}5 18 \text{x}f4! \text{xf}4?

Good or bad (and it is probably bad), Black had to allow 18...exf4 19 e5!.
19 \text{f}5!

This version of the trap is simply winning for White, who gains the queen in return for only two minor pieces. Korneev battles on gamely but the result was never seriously in doubt from this moment.

19...\text{x}f5 20 g3 \text{xf}3 21 \text{xf}3 \text{d}7 22 dxe5 dxe5 23 \text{ad}1 \text{e}6 24 \text{d}6 \text{ae}8 25 \text{ed}1 \text{b}8 26 \text{ed}2 \text{c}6 27 \text{g}2 \text{g}7 28 \text{d}3 \text{b}5 29 \text{c}2 \text{b}4 30 \text{we}3 \text{c}8 31 \text{cx}b4 \text{cx}b4 32 \text{d}3 \text{a}7 33 \text{we}1 \text{d}4 34 \text{xa}6 \text{c}3 35 \text{d}3 \text{c}2 36 \text{d}1 \text{d}7 37 \text{b}2 \text{b}8 38 \text{d}1 \text{c}3 39 \text{c}1 \text{f}3 40 \text{d}1 \text{g}5 41 \text{h}4 \text{xe}4 42 \text{c}4 \text{c}8 43 \text{xc}3 \text{bx}c3 44 \text{e}2 \text{xc}4 45 \text{bx}c4 \text{d}2 46 \text{xe}5 \text{xc}4 47 \text{wc}2 \text{d}4 48 \text{d}5 \text{f}6 49 \text{d}7 \text{b}4 50 \text{d}3 \text{c}4 51 \text{c}7 \text{b}6 52 \text{d}6 \text{b}5 53 \text{we}6 1-0

It would be an understatement to say that the following encounter isn't a good advert for the Italian Game, but the reason for its inclusion is to provide a stark warning. Even though there's a 'system' feel to this opening, White certainly cannot get away with playing on auto-pilot. A plan which works well in a certain type of position might
backfire in those which contain seemingly insignificant differences. In this game, it backfires quite spectacularly!

**Game 19**

**D.Svetushkin-S.Haslinger**

**Palma de Mallorca 2008**

1 e4 e5 2 ∆f3 ∆c6 3 ∆c4 ∆c5 4 c3 ∆f6
5 d3 a6 6 0-0 ∆a7 7 e1 0-0 8 h3 d6 9 ∆b3 ∆e6

This bishop move needs no introduction, as we've already seen it many times in similar positions. Korchnoi chose ...∆e6 against Karpov back in 1981 (with ∆bd2 played instead of ∆e1), and more recently it has been favoured by grandmasters such as Levon Aronian and Vishy Anand. Suffice to say, it's regarded as a reliable choice for Black.

Now White must make that typical decision again: does he allow an exchange on b3 if Black wants it, or retreat the bishop to c2? Remember that White needs to avoid 10 ∆xe6?! fxe6, as this just gives Black an open f-file and more control of the centre.

10 ∆c2

This is definitely the most challenging move.

Players who enjoy quiet positions may want to choose 10 ∆bd2, but accurate play by Black in practice has shown this to be fairly harmless. Let's follow the game E.Bacrot-L.Aronian, Mainz (rapid) 2007: 10...∆xb3 11 ∆xb3 ∆b8 (the immediate 11...∆d7 is also good, since 12 ∆xb7?? loses to the queen to 12...∆f8b8) 12 ∆f1 ∆d7! 13 ∆g3 ∆e8 14 ∆d2 (White can reroute the queen to avoid an exchange with 14 ∆h2 ∆e6 15 ∆d1, but 15...d5 16 ∆f3 dxe4 17 dxe4 ∆e7 18 ∆g5 ∆d7 19 ∆ad1 f6 20 ∆c1 ∆f8 21 b3 ∆bd8 22 ∆g4 ∆h8, as played in Z.Andriasian-B.Socko, Kallithea 2008, is objectively equal) 14...h6 15 ∆ad1 ∆e6! and Black has equalized.

As usual, bringing the queen to e6 to contest the light squares is an excellent idea after the exchange of bishops.

There's also 11 axb3 to consider.
Once again 11...d5 is the most logical equalizing try, although Black can also choose 11...d7 aiming for ...f5. For example, 12 f1 (or 12 c4 f5 13 exf5 xf5 14 e3) 12...f5 13 exf5 xf5 14 g3 f8 15 a4 f6 16 e4 wd7 17 xf6+ xf6 18 g4 af8 19 e3 xe3 20 xe3 with a roughly equal position, Z.Efimenko-A.Bezgodov, Sochi 2006.

Returning to 11 axb3 d5, I wonder what the likes of Efimenko would have planned against this. One possibility is 12 h2 preparing ef3 and d1-f3-g3, but then 12...dxe4 13 dxe4 wd3! is annoying. Perhaps it’s simply 12 wd2, which did give White a tiny bit of pressure after 12...dxe4 (12...d7!? ) 13 dx4 h5 14 c4 wf6 15 e3 xe3 16 xe3 df4 (16...fd8!? ) 17 g3! e6 (17...xh3+ 18 g2 traps the knight) 18 a5 in M.Klinova-M.Ferguson, Port Erin 2007.

To sum up, 10 bd2 isn’t a move to really challenge Black theoretically, but it might appeal to those who are confident of outplaying opponents in quiet positions.

10...d5

There’s no need for Black to hold back. If he does, White should most certainly push with d3-d4. For example, 10 e7 11 d4 g6 12 e3 h6 13 bd2 with an edge. Note that if Black plays 13 h5? here, White can win a pawn with 14 d5! xe3 15 xe3 d7 16 xe5!.

10...h6 11 bd2 transposes to Areshchenko-Aleksandrov (Game 21), but 11 d4 threatening d5 might be more promising. Kaidanov gives 11 exd4 12 cxd4 b4 13 d5 xc2 14 wc2 d7 15 c3 h5 16 e3 xe3 17 xe3 wf6 with a slight advantage for White, and I agree with his assessment.

There’s no need for Black to hold back. If he does, White should most certainly push with d3-d4. For example, 10 e7 11 d4 g6 12 e3 h6 13 bd2 with an edge. Note that if Black plays 13 h5? here, White can win a pawn with 14 d5! xe3 15 xe3 d7 16 xe5!.

10...h6 11 bd2 transposes to Areshchenko-Aleksandrov (Game 21), but 11 d4 threatening d5 might be more promising. Kaidanov gives 11 exd4 12 cxd4 b4 13 d5 xc2 14 wc2 d7 15 c3 h5 16 e3 xe3 17 xe3 wf6 with a slight advantage for White, and I agree with his assessment.

11 bd2?!

In many respects the most natural-looking move, but this is a mistake!

White should play 11 exd5!, which is covered in the next game.

11...dxe4! 12 dxe4 h5!

This is the point. Black returns to the obvious and enticing plan of ...wf6 and ...f4, as seen in the previous game. But this version is so much more
favourable for Black because he is better developed and, just as importantly, White no longer has the option of shutting out the dark-squared bishop with the d3-d4 advance. Compare also Gonzalez Vidal-Gomez (Game 3), where White was in a much stronger position to meet ...\( \text{h5} \). Here g2-g3 just isn’t on! 13 \( \text{h2} \)!

White wants to play all the usual moves: \( \text{f3} \), \( \text{g4} \), \( \text{N(d2)-f1} \) etc. The trouble is, Black has some moves too, and they are pretty good ones!

Karpov chose 13 \( \text{f1} \) against Korchnoi in their 1981 world championship match, and for some reason Korchnoi dispensed with the possibility of 13...\( \text{f6} \)! in favour of exchanging queens. White can aim to occupy d5 with 14 \( \text{e3} \), but after 14...\( \text{ad8} \) (or even just 14...\( \text{xe3} \) 15 \( \text{xe3} \) \( \text{f4} \) 15 \( \text{d5} \) \( \text{g6} \) (threatening ...\( \text{xh3} \)) 16 \( \text{f1} \) f5 (Keene, cited by Marin) Black is very active and it’s impossible to recommend this for White. Even so, it’s better than 13 \( \text{h2} \)!

There’s no need to settle for the f6-square when h4 is available. Black already has the advantage.

14 \( \text{f3} \) g6!

Planning to seize the initiative with ...f5, which would be Black’s answer to most of White’s moves here...

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

...except this one! This was clearly not a good day at the office for Svetushkin.

15...\( \text{xg4} \) 16 hxg4 \( \text{g3} \) 0-1

Black is mating on h1. The a7-bishop reigns supreme. To be fair, given how much grief it’s been caused by White’s play in previous games, it is difficult to begrudge it one moment of glory.

Game 20

B.Predojevic-G.Jones
European Championship,
Plovdiv 2008

1 e4 e5 2 \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{c6} \) 3 \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{c5} \) 4 c3 \( \text{f6} \) 5 d3 a6 6 \( \text{b3} \) \( \text{a7} \) 7 0-0 d6 8 \( \text{e1} \)
Beating 1 e4 e5

Note that with the move order 8 \( \text{b}6 \text{d}2 \ 0-0 \ 9 \text{h}3 \text{e}6, \ 10 \text{c}2 \text{d}5 \) 11.exd5 is less effective since it can be met simply by 11...\( \text{xd}5 \) – another reason for choosing 8 \( \text{e}1 \) over 8 \( \text{b}6 \text{d}2 \).

8...0-0 9 \text{h}3 \text{e}6 10 \text{c}2 \text{d}5 11.exd5!

This move is much stronger than 11 \( \text{b}6 \text{d}2 \)!

11...\( \text{xd}5 \)

The queen recapture has been Black's usual choice, and it's the only way to defend \text{e}5 directly.

The ideal way to recapture on \text{d}5 would be with the bishop, but this leaves the \text{e}5-pawn en prise and White should certainly accept the Marshall Gambit style offer: 11...\( \text{xd}5 \) 12 \( \text{xe}5 \text{xe}5 \) 13 \( \text{xe}5 \text{xd}6 \) 14 \text{d}4 (watch out for 14 \( \text{e}1?? \text{g}3!) 14...\text{c}5 was A.Delchev-A.Stefanova, Benidorm 2005. In the game 15 \( \text{xe}3 \text{c}6 \) 16 \( \text{xf}5 \text{g}6 \) 17 \( \text{g}5 \text{ad}8 \) left Black with good compensation, especially in view of White's awkwardly placed rook. 15 \( \text{g}5\text{!} \) looks stronger to me, and I think Black is struggling to prove equality after 15...\( \text{ad}8 \) (or 15...\( \text{cxd}4 \) 16 \( \text{xf}6 \)) 16 \( \text{d}3 \) \text{g}6 17 \( \text{d}2 \text{cxd}4 \) 18 \text{cxd}4.

I can find only one game with 11...\( \text{xd}5 \), but this move can't be ruled out. For example, 12 \( \text{b}6 \text{d}2 \) (if 12 \( \text{xe}5?? \text{xe}5 \) 13 \text{xe}5, Black once again has the trick 13...\( \text{xf}2+! \)) 12...\( \text{f}4 \) (if 12...\text{f}6, White plays 13 \text{d}4! intending either \text{dxe}5 or \text{c}4 followed by \text{d}5) 13 \( \text{f}3 \) (or 13 \( \text{e}4?! \text{g}6 \) 14 \( \text{f}5 \text{d}5 \) 15 \( \text{h}5 \text{h}6 \) 16 \( \text{f}3 \)) 13...\( \text{g}6 \) 14 \( \text{g}5 \text{d}7 \) (14...\( \text{d}5?? \)) 15 \text{d}4! \( \text{f}6 \) (15...\text{exd}4 is met by 16 \( \text{h}5 \text{h}6 \) 17 \( \text{xf}7 \)) 16 \( \text{e}4 \text{e}7 \) 17 \text{d}5 \text{d}8 (A.Shlakich-V.Frolochkin, St Petersburg 2007) and now 18 \( \text{e}3 \) with some advantage for White.

12 \( \text{g}5\)

This is a key move. Black probably doesn't want to give White the opportunity to play \( \text{xf}6 \), and ...\( \text{d}7 \) is the natural retreat. But this leaves the queen on \text{d}5 somewhat awkwardly placed, and to have any chance of gaining an advantage White must try to exploit this to the maximum.

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

12...\text{c}5 looks strange, and 13 \( \text{e}2 \) (13 \( \text{h}4?? \)) is an interesting alter-
native) 13...\d7 seems to invite 14 \bd2 followed by \e4 gaining more time. However, Black has the resource 14...\d4! 15 cxd4 \xc2, as played in A.Brkic-M.Pap, Bosnjaci 2009. This isn't entirely clear, but White should probably choose either 16 dxe5 \c5 17 \ac1 \xd3 18 \e3, or 16 \e7!? \fe8 17 \a3 exd4 18 \ac1 \a4 19 \xc7.

13 \bd2 \fe8

Could this logical move actually be a mistake? Let's explore alternatives:

a) 13...\ae8 helps Black in some lines if White plays 14 \e4, because with the other rook on f8 Black is better placed for ...f5. However, in A.Delchev-M.Kazhgaleyev, Gonfreville 2006, White began harassing the black queen to good effect: 14 c4! \c5 (or 14...\w5 15 a3 intending b4) 15 \e4 \b6 16 \a4 \d4 17 \xd4 exd4, and here 18 c5! obliged Black to give up the exchange with 18...\xc5 since 18...\xb2 19 \e2! \b4 20 a3 \a5 21 \d2 traps the black queen.

b) The tempting 13...f6 is answered convincingly by 14 d4!.

White has every chance of gaining an advantage here. For example, 14...\f7 (or 14...\fxg5 15 \b3 \d6 16 \e4 \e7 17 d5) 15 \e3 exd4 16 cxd4 \d8 17 \e4 \d6 18 \c2! \xd4 19 \xd4 \ edx4 20 \hx7+ \h8 21 \e4! was played in T.L.Petrosian-H.Melkumyan, Yerevan 2010. Here Black felt obliged to give up a piece for insufficient compensation after 21...\xf2+ 22 \xf2 \b6+ 23 \e3 \fe8 24 \ae1. If Black plays 21...c5 instead, 22 \h4 gives White a promising attack. He is already threatening mate with 23 \g8+ \xg8 24 \wh7.

c) 13...h6 has been played by Nigel Short. It's a move Black would like to play and it might even be his best option. Where should White retreat his bishop?

C1) If 14 \h4, Black can claim he has gained something because the bishop can no longer come back down the c1-h6 diagonal to annoy the black queen in certain lines.

c2) 14 \e3 is a decent response, and 14...\xe3 15 fxe3!? \d6 16 d4 f5 17
Beating 1 e4 e5

b3 h8 was roughly equal in Z.Efimenko-N.Short, Kemer 2007.

After studying this position for quite some time, I realized that there was a third option: White doesn’t have to move the bishop at all:

c3) 14 Æe4!? is a very interesting possibility for White here. If Black takes the bishop it looks to me like White gets a fierce attack in return. Here’s just a sample of the many possible lines: 14...hxg5 15 Æb3 Æb5 16 Æfxg5

16...æxb3 (or 16...f5 17 Æc4 Æxb2 18 Æh5 Æd8 19 Æab1 Æc2 20 Æxf7) 17 Æh5! Æe8 18 axb3 Æd8 (18...æxb3? is met by 19 Æa3! Æd5 20 c4) 19 Æh7+ Æf8 20 Æg3 Æf6 21 Æh8+ Æe7 22 Æxg7 and the attack is still burning strongly.

It’s still early days in the development of this line. With accurate play Black might well be okay, but it does seem easy to go wrong. Initially Short’s 12...h6 looked like the most reliable move to me, but I can no longer say this with any certainty in view of 14 Æe4!?

14 Æe4!

14...Æc5

Desperately trying to ease congestion by exchanging a pair of knights, but White is having none of it.

Predojevic’s analysis in Chess Informant 102, given below, suggests that there is no easy way out for Black, but he can minimize White’s advantage:

a) 14...f5? 15 Æb3 Æb5 16 Æxe6+ Æxe6 17 a4 Æd5 (or 17...Æxb2 18 Æe2 Æb6 19 Æe3 Æd4 20 cxd4 fxe4 21 dxe4 exd4 22 Æxd4) 18 c4 Æa5 19 Æd2 Æb6 20 a5 Æxb2 21 Æc3 Æxf2+ 22 Æf1 Æxa1 23 Æxa1 Æxe1 24 Æeg5 Æe7 25 Æxe1 Æxa5 26 Æc2 with a clear advantage for White.
b) 14...\( \text{f8!} \) 15 \( \text{we2} \) h6 16 \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{g6} \)
17 \( \text{xa7} \) \( \text{xa7} \) 18 \( \text{we3} \) b6 19 \( \text{b3} \) \( \text{wd7} \)
20 \( \text{a4!} \) \( \text{aa8} \) 21 \( \text{ad1} \) with an edge for White. If 21...f5?, 22 d4! is a strong reply: for example, 22...b5 23 \( \text{c5} \) \( \text{wf7} \)
24 \( \text{xe6} \) bxa4 25 d5 etc.
15 \( \text{g3!} \)

No trades! White is planning d4, or even b4 to force the knight back to d7.
15...h6 16 \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{d7} \)
16...\( \text{ad8} \) looks more natural, but even here 17 d4 exd4 18 cxd4 \( \text{b4} \) 19 \( \text{b1!} \) (19 dxc5 \( \text{c4} \)) 19...\( \text{d7} \) 20 a3 \( \text{c6} \) (Predojevic) 21 \( \text{a2} \) followed by d5 looks very strong.
17 \( \text{xa7} \) \( \text{xa7} \) 18 d4! exd4 19 cxd4

This is an extremely favourable IQP position for White: Black's rooks are momentarily disconnected and his minor pieces could be in better positions. The immediate threat is 20 \( \text{b3} \) followed by 21 d5, and in fact this isn't easy to meet.
19...\( \text{f6} \)

Covering the d5-square (and h7 after \( \text{wd3} \)), but is it enough?
20 \( \text{b3} \) \( \text{a5} \) 21 \( \text{xe6?} \)

Missing a huge opportunity.
White can still play 21 d5!, and indeed Predojevic's analysis suggests that it leads to a decisive advantage:
21...\( \text{d8} \) (or 21...\( \text{xd5} \) 22 \( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{d8} \) 23 \( \text{xe6!} \) 22 dxe6! \( \text{xd1} \) 23 exf7+ \( \text{f8} \) 24 \( \text{xe1} \) \( \text{a8} \) 25 \( \text{h4} \) \( \text{g5} \) 26 \( \text{gf5} \).

It's difficult for Black to meet White's many ideas, including \( \text{d3-g3} \).
21...\( \text{xe6} \) 22 \( \text{xe6} \) fxe6 23 a3 \( \text{d5} \) 24 \( \text{c1} \) \( \text{a8} \)

White still has a small edge here, but Black is certainly over the worst and the game soon ends in a draw.
25 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{d8} \) 26 \( \text{c2} \) \( \text{e4} \) 27 \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{d5} \)
28 \( \text{c2} \) \( \text{e4} \) 29 \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{d5} \) 30 \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{d6} \)
Beating 1 e4 e5

31 \( \text{wb}3 \) \( \text{da}5 \) 32 \( \text{wc}2 \) \( \text{dc}6 \) 33 \( \text{wb}3 \) \( \text{da}5 \)
34 \( \text{wc}2 \) \( \text{dc}6 \) 35 \( \text{dc}3 \) \( \text{wf}4 \) 36 \( \text{de}2 \) \( \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} \)

Game 21

A.Areshchenko-A.Aleksandrov
Aeroflot Open, Moscow 2007

1 e4 e5 2 \( \text{df}3 \) \( \text{dc}6 \) 3 \( \text{dc}4 \) \( \text{dc}5 \) 4 c3 \( \text{df}6 \)
5 d3 a6 6 \( \text{db}3 \) \( \text{a}7 \) 7 0-0 d6 8 \( \text{ec}1 \)

The game’s actual move order was 8 \( \text{bd}2 \) 0-0 9 h3 \( \text{e}6 \) 10 \( \text{ee}1 \) \( \text{ee}8 \) 11 \( \text{f}1 \) h6 12 \( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{de}7 \) 13 \( \text{c}2 \) d5 14 \( \text{we}2 \).

8...0-0 9 h3 h6

As we have seen previously, this pawn move is often a precursor to \( \text{dh}5 \). However, it’s also a useful waiting move if Black wants to play \( \ldots \text{e}6 \).

10 \( \text{bd}2 \) \( \text{e}6 \)

We are faced with that perennial choice again: do we allow an exchange of bishops or avoid it with \( \text{c}2 \)?

11 \( \text{c}2 \)

In comparison to the position after 9...\( \text{e}6 \), it seems to me that there’s slightly more appeal to allowing an exchange here. White is one move further down the road with his kingside plans, whereas Black’s extra \( \ldots \text{h}6 \) may only prove to be semi-useful, or even a hindrance if White is lucky. In truth, the difference is fairly insignificant and Black’s position is solid. Even so, this remains an option for those preferring quieter positions: 11 \( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{e}8 \) (or 11...\( \text{xb}3 \) 12 axb3 \( \text{e}8 \), if Black doesn’t want to allow White to change his mind and play 12 \( \text{c}2 \)!) 12 \( \text{h}2 \) (so that White can answer \( \ldots \text{d}5 \) with \( \text{f}3 \); both 12 \( \text{g}3 \) and 12 \( \text{e}3 \) are also possible) 12...\( \text{xb}3 \) 13 axb3 \( \text{d}7 \) 14 \( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{e}6 \) 15 \( \text{g}3 \)

15...\( \text{e}7 \)! (avoiding 15...\( \text{xb}3 \)?) 16 \( \text{f}5 \)! when White threatens both 17 \( \text{xh}6+ \) and 17 \( \text{xe}6 \) 16 b4 c6 17 \( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{xg}4 \) 18 hxg4 d5 19 \( \text{f}5 \) \( \text{ad}8 \) 20 g3 f6 21 \( \text{g}2 \) dxe4 22 dxe4 \( \text{xf}5 \) 23 gxf5 \( \text{c}4 \) 24 \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{xe}3 \) and \( \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} \), P.Leko-V.Kramnik, World Championship, Mexico City 2007.

This was model defence by Kramnik, and objectively Black must be okay in this line. However, perhaps it’s not as easy as Kramnik makes it look. Indeed,
when Leko decided to switch sides he wasn’t able to display the same accuracy: 14 \textit{\textit{\text{g3} (instead of 14 \textit{\text{wdf3})}}
\textit{14...\textit{\text{e7} 15 b4 c6 16 \textit{\text{d4 \textit{\text{w6} 17 \textit{\text{xe3?! (17 \textit{\text{wdf3 would transpose to Leko-}}}
\textit{Kramnik) 17...\textit{\text{xe3} 18 \textit{\text{cxe3 d5 19 \textit{\text{exd5 \textit{\text{c4! \textit{\text{d7} 21 \textit{\text{d4 \textit{\text{f4} 22 \textit{\text{wdf3 b5 23}}}
\textit{\text{a5 (23 \textit{\text{cd6!?) 23...f5 24 \textit{\text{c5 \textit{\text{x}c5 25}}}
\textit{\text{bxc5 \textit{\text{d5 26 \textit{\text{b7! e4 27 dxe4 fxe4 28}}}
\textit{\text{w}g3 \textit{\text{f6} 29 \textit{\text{d6 \textit{\text{e7} 30 b4 with a clear}}}
\textit{\text{advantage, V.Ivanchuk-P.Leko, Nice}}
\textit{(rapid) 2009. As I’ve stressed previously,}}
\textit{Black should be okay but there is certainly enough scope in these positions}}
\textit{to outplay your opponents.}}}
\textit{11...\textit{\text{e8}}}
\textit{This move, in conjunction with ...d5, is Black’s most consistent follow-up.}
\textit{If Black plays 11...\textit{\text{e7 it’s White who advances in the centre. Here 12}}}
\textit{\text{f1 \textit{\text{g6} 13 \textit{\text{g3 \textit{\text{e8} 14 d4 reaches Korneev-Campora (Game 7). This is an}}}
\textit{example of how the Modern Variation can transpose to the Classical Main}}
\textit{Line, and vice-versa.}}}
\textit{12 \textit{\text{f1 d5}}}
\textit{Another typical decision to make: capture or keep the tension?}}
\textit{13 \textit{\text{w2}}}
\textit{13 exd5!? looks like a totally innocuous version of the pawn capture, but even here there is a drop of poison in the position: 13...\textit{\text{xe3} (the two other recaptures are also possible, but this looks the most natural) 14 \textit{\text{g3 \textit{\text{w}d7 15 \textit{\text{e3 \textit{\text{xe3} 16 \textit{\text{xe3 \textit{\text{e7?! 17}}}
\textit{\text{h4! \textit{\text{e6 18 \textit{\text{h5! \textit{\text{xh5 19 \textit{\text{w}h5 \textit{\text{w}d6 20 \textit{\text{g3! \textit{\text{f8} 21 \textit{\text{e1 and suddenly}}}
\textit{White has drummed up a fierce attack from seemingly nowhere.}}}
\textit{13...\textit{\text{d7}}}
\textit{Black must also decide when or if he should release the tension. In}
\textit{H.Hamdouchi-P.Van Hoolandt, Nice 2002, concluded 21...\textit{\text{d7} 22 \textit{\text{ee3 e4}}}
\textit{23 dxe4 \textit{\text{w}d2 24 \textit{\text{b3 \textit{\text{xb2} 25 \textit{\text{ef3 \textit{\text{e5 26 \textit{\text{g6+ \textit{\text{xg6 27 \textit{\text{w}xg6 1-0.}}}
\textit{Black showed much greater accuracy in J.Degraeve-J.Votava, Erfurt 2009: 16...\textit{\text{ad8! (instead of 16...\textit{\text{e7?!) 17 \textit{\text{w}e2 \textit{\text{xf3 18 \textit{\text{w}xf3 \textit{\text{d5} 19 \textit{\text{ee1 \textit{\text{e6} 20 \textit{\text{ad1, with a roughly level position.}}}
\textit{13...\textit{\text{w}d7}}}
\textit{Black must also decide when or if he should release the tension. In
\textit{97}
E. Alekseev-F. Caruana, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009, Black did so straight away: 13...dxe4 14 dxe4 b5 (14...\h5? can be safely answered by 15 \xe5 here) 15 \h2 (15 \g3 would allow Black the option of forcing a queen exchange with 15...\c4) 15...\e7 16 \d1 \c8 17 \f3 \h7 18 \g4 \g6 19 \f3 \d8 20 \f5 \xd1+ 21 \xd1 \d8 22 \e1 \h5 23 \h2 \f4 24 \xf4 \xf4 25 \d1 \e8 26 \d2 \xf5 27 \xf5 and White was better. There might well be some possible improvements here, but to me 13...\d7 followed by ...\ad8 looks more flexible.

14 \g3 \ad8

15 \h2?

The idea behind this move is to prepare \h4 – the immediate 15 \h4 allows 15...\xh3! 16 \xh3 \xh3 17 \hf5 \g4 18 \e3 \wh2+ 19 \f1 \wh3+ 20 \g1 with perpetual check, N.Sedlak-B.Predojevic, Zlatibor 2007. However, Black has nothing to fear providing he finds the right response, and it is possible that 15 \h2 isn’t the best move objectively, even though it works very well in this game.

Blitz games aren’t always helpful pointers but when they involve the World’s elite, they do at least reveal the first move which goes through a super-grandmaster’s mind. Here are a couple of recent examples from this position:

a) 15 \d2 \c5 (a typical move – if White begins action on the kingside, this bishop may want to return to f8 to provide cover...) 16 \d1 d4!? (...especially if White plays an eventual c4, when the bishop would look silly on a7) 17 \b1 \b5 18 \c1! \xc3 (this is committal – perhaps Black didn’t want to be left with a pawn on d4 after 18...\f8 19 cxd4; 18...\b6!? is an alternative) 19 \xc3 \f8 20 \e3 and White’s plan now is d3-d4, B.Gelfand-V.Kramnik, Moscow (blitz) 2008.

b) 15 \h2 \b5 16 \f3 (threatening \xh6) 16...\h7 17 \g4 d4 18 \f5 \xf5 19 \xf5, as played in L.Dominguez Perez-S.Mamedyarov, World Blitz Ch., Almaty 2008, is the kind of promising kingside action White is looking for. 15...\e7!, intending to meet 16 \e1 with 16...\g6, looks like a stronger defence to me.

15...\h8

Is it possible that Aleksandrov was unaware of the significance of 15 \h2, and thought it was just a waiting move?

15...\e7!, as played in A.Minasian-S.Galdunts, Yerevan 1982, cuts across White’s plan (16 \h4?? is rudely met by 16...\g4+!) and forces him to rethink.
Now things begin to run like clockwork on the kingside. White gradually strengthens his position and Black drifts into passive defence.

16...\( \text{g}8\)!

Perhaps Aleksandrov was worried about 16...\( \text{e}7\) 17 \( \text{f}3\), but this still looks tenable for Black after 17...dxe4 18 dxe4 \( \text{g}6\).

17 \( \text{f}3\) \( \text{c}5\) 18 \( \text{g}5\) \( \text{f}8\) 19 \( \text{g}4\) \( \text{g}6\)

Black’s previous play (...\( \text{g}8\) and \( \text{c}5\)-f8) clearly showed that he was basing his hopes on kicking the knight away from f5. But...

20 \( \text{g}1\)!

A star move. Areshchenko is in no mood to retreat!

It’s difficult for Black to do anything apart from accept the piece sacrifice, but then he runs into a fierce and ultimately decisive attack, perfectly executed by the Ukrainian grandmaster.

20...dxe4 21 dxe4 gxf5 22 gxf5 \( \text{c}4\) 23 f6! \( \text{e}6\) 24 \( \text{x}g8\)+! \( \text{x}g8\) 25 \( \text{e}3\) \( \text{e}7\)

White was threatening simply 26 \( \text{g}1\)+ \( \text{h}8\) 27 \( \text{g}4\) and mate on either g8 or g7.

26 fxe7 \( \text{xe}7\) 27 \( \text{g}1\)+ \( \text{g}5\) 28 \( \text{h}5\) \( \text{f}6\) 29 b3! \( \text{b}5\) 30 a4! \( \text{c}6\) 31 \( \text{x}g5\)+ \( \text{x}g5\)

The light-squared bishop joins the party and there’s simply no defence for Black.

34...\( \text{e}8\) 35 \( \text{b}3\)+ \( \text{h}8\) 36 \( \text{h}4\)+ \( \text{h}7\) 37 \( \text{h}6!\) \( \text{f}8\) 38 \( \text{g}5!\) \( \text{xf}2\)+ 39 \( \text{g}3\) \( \text{f}7\) 40 \( \text{xe}5\)+ \( \text{g}7\) 41 \( \text{g}5\) \( \text{e}8\) 42 \( \text{g}7\)+ \( \text{g}7\) 43 \( \text{h}4\)+ \( \text{h}7\) 44 \( \text{f}6\)+ \( \text{g}7\) 45 e5 g5 46 a5 \( \text{xf}6\) 47 exf6 \( \text{d}7\) 48 \( \text{d}5\) \( \text{c}8\) 49 \( \text{f}3\) b6 50 \( \text{g}4\) \( \text{b}7\) 51 \( \text{f}5\) 1-0

Game 22
R.Felgaer-J.Hector
Politiken Cup,
Copenhagen 2002

1 e4 e5 2 \( \text{f}3\) \( \text{c}6\) 3 \( \text{c}4\) \( \text{f}6\) 4 d3 \( \text{c}5\) 5 c3 a6 6 0-0 \( \text{a}7\) 7 \( \text{b}3\) d6 8 \( \text{e}1\) 0-0 9 \( \text{h}3\) \( \text{e}7\)

Again we see the typical ...\( \text{e}7\)-g6 manoeuvre by Black.

One other idea worth mentioning is
Beating 1 e4 e5

9...\textit{h}8!?, breaking the pin on the f-pawn and planning ...\textit{g}8 (or ...\textit{h}5) and ...f5.

White can certainly continue with 10 \textit{bd}2, but against such a non-developing move 10 d4!? seems justified. With action happening in the centre, Black is distracted from his plan, and a bonus for White is that ...\textit{e}8 isn’t possible with the f-pawn hanging.

10...\textit{e}7 11 \textit{e}3 \textit{h}6 (11...\textit{xe}4? 12 d5! wins material) 12 \textit{bd}2 \textit{d}7 13 \textit{f}1 (13 \textit{c}2!? pre-empting ...\textit{a}5 looks sensible) 13...\textit{a}5 14 \textit{c}2 \textit{b}5 15 \textit{g}3 (15 \textit{a}4!?) 15...\textit{c}5 16 \textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 17 \textit{h}4 \textit{c}4 18 \textit{c}1 \textit{d}6 19 \textit{f}3 \textit{c}4 20 \textit{a}4 was solid for Black in V.Nevednichy-V.Tkachiev, Manila 1992, but White may have stronger options and even here he might still have a slight edge.

10 \textit{bd}2 \textit{g}6 11 \textit{f}1

Now if Black chooses a move such as 11...\textit{e}6, 11...\textit{e}8 or 11...\textit{h}6, White replies with 12 \textit{g}3 and we transpose to positions seen in Korneev-Campora (Game 7). With this move order, though, Black has a serious alternative:

11...\textit{h}5!?  

Clearly ruling out \textit{g}3 for the moment!

There are certainly some similarities here to the lines discussed in Frois-Korneev (Game 18). Black’s basic plan is once more ...\textit{hf}4 and ...\textit{f}6. He might even be able save a tempo by avoiding ...\textit{h}6. Or maybe not...

12 d4

This is again White’s most effective plan. The d4 advance creates central tension and blocks out the a7-bishop.

12 \textit{g}5 more or less forces 12...\textit{e}8. It looks tempting but in reality White doesn’t gain a great deal from this insertion of moves, as the bishop is vulnerable to ...\textit{h}6 possibilities. Also, 13 \textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 14 d4 \textit{f}6 15 \textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 16 \textit{dxe}5 \textit{fxe}5 17 \textit{g}3 \textit{h}8 is okay for Black, A.Grosar-S.Polgar, Bled 1994.

12...\textit{hf}4

Of course Black has to avoid 12...\textit{f}6?? 13 \textit{g}5!.

12...\textit{e}8 has been played a few times, and even by Shirov, but it does look a bit strange to move the queen
here without being forced to by $\triangle g5$. True, White is discouraged from playing $\triangle g3$, but 13 $\triangle e3!$ planning $\triangle d5$ or $\triangle f5$ does the job just as well. 13...$\triangle h4$f4 (13...exd4 14 $\triangle d5$!) 14 $\triangle f5$ exd4 15 $\triangle 3$x$d4$ (15 $\triangle x$d4 also looks promising) 15...$\triangle d8$ 16 $\triangle f3$ $\triangle e6$ was Z.Efimenko-A.Shirov, German League 2006, and here White looks pretty active after 17 $\triangle e3$.

13 $\triangle g3$ $\triangle f6$?

This is certainly Black's most natural follow-up to his previous play. What's more, it's worth noting that, according to databases, 13...$\triangle f6$ has been Black's most popular choice here. Everything seems to be looking rosy: the e5-point is securely defended, the knights seem well placed and the queen enjoys being on the f6-square. But...

14 $\triangle h5$!

A shocking move for Black to face. Since 14...$\triangle x$h5 allows 15 $\triangle g5$! winning the queen, Black is forced to retreat and must allow a damaging exchange of pieces on f4. 13...$\triangle f6$ is simply a blunder, and evidently White's two-move trap is sophisticated enough to have snared a number of highly-rated victims!

Let's return for a moment to Black's 13th move to consider better options. In view of this trap, it's clear now that ...$\triangle f6$ requires some preparation. 13...h6! is a logical move, preventing the $\triangle g5$ idea. It's worth comparing this to the 12...$\triangle e7$ variation in Frois-Korneev (Game 18), and indeed it leads to a direct transposition after 14 $\triangle e3$! $\triangle f6$ 15 $\triangle c2$. This might be White's best option, since 14 $\triangle x$f4 $\triangle x$f4! 15 dxe5 dxe5 16 $\triangle x$d8 (16 $\triangle x$e5? $\triangle g5$!) 16...$\triangle x$d8 17 $\triangle x$e5 $\triangle d2$ 18 $\triangle x$f7+ $\triangle f8$ (Marin) is unclear, while the immediate 14 $\triangle f5$ can be met by 14...exd4 intending 15 $\triangle x$d4 d5.

Another possibility is 13...$\triangle d7$?! but after 14 $\triangle e3$ Black is no nearer to playing 14...$\triangle f6$ as it still runs into 15 $\triangle h5$!

In the game V.Ivannikov-E.Gafner, St Petersburg 2000, Black decided he couldn't do without 14...h6 anyway, but this admission really questions the value of 13...$\triangle d7$. After 15 $\triangle d2$ Black still has problems to solve:
After the game’s 15...\texttt{c8}?! White could have even gained an advantage with the simple 16 \texttt{xf4} exf4 17 \texttt{h5} \texttt{xh3} 18 \texttt{xf4} \texttt{xf4} 19 \texttt{xf4}. Note also that 15...\texttt{f6}? 16 dxe5! highlights another problem with Black’s 13th move.

Finally, one of the earliest games reaching this position featured a very young Vladimir Kramnik displaying his understanding of the intricacies in this line. V. Kramnik-D. Campora, Moscow 1989, went 13...\texttt{e7}?! 14 \texttt{e3} \texttt{d8} 15 \texttt{c2!} h6 16 \texttt{f5} \texttt{f6} with a clear plus for White – Black has basically wasted a tempo with his queen. Here 17 g3! forced the knight to retreat, since 17...\texttt{xh3}+? 18 \texttt{g2} \texttt{g5} 19 \texttt{xg5} hxg5 20 \texttt{h5} would have been virtually winning for White.

Incidentally, the earliest game I could find reaching 13 \texttt{g3} featured a similarly young Gata Kamsky. His opponent played 13...\texttt{f6}?; but Kamsky didn’t punish him with 14 \texttt{h5}!

Now let’s return to the position after 14 \texttt{h5}:

14...\texttt{e7}

15 \texttt{xf4}!

Black’s e5-pawn will end up on f4, and this will leave him with no pressure on the d4-pawn and a miserable bishop on a7. It’s payback time for what happened in Svetushkin-Haslinger!

15...\texttt{xf4}

Black even loses the f-pawn after 15...exf4 16 \texttt{d2}.

16 \texttt{xf4} exf4 17 \texttt{d2} \texttt{f6}

Or 17...\texttt{g5} 18 e5 h6 19 exd6 \texttt{xd6} 20 h4 \texttt{g4} 21 \texttt{d3} \texttt{xf3} 22 \texttt{xf3}, V. Belikov-M. Novik, Sochi 1990. In all of these lines White is enjoying a power play with one black piece ‘sitting on the bench’.

18 e5 dxe5 19 \texttt{xe5}

19 \texttt{xe5} is also pretty good, but this move looks even stronger.

19...\texttt{c6}

A desperate defensive try based on \texttt{b8} ideas. It’s hardly a surprise that there’s a refutation, and there’s probably more than one.

19...\texttt{d7} 20 \texttt{ae1} c5, as played in P. Tishin-J. Geller, Samara 2002, also
tries to reawaken the dark-squared bishop before it’s too late. But 21 1xe4! (instead of the game’s 21 d5? 22 c2 b8) 21...b8 22 xf4, if not quite as destructive as the main game, should still give White a near decisive advantage.

20 1ae1 h6 21 1e4! b8

If 21...g5 22 h4 and Black’s position collapses: for example, 22...f5 23 hxg5 hxg5 24 xg5.

22 1xf4

White is happy to self-skewer (is that the right term?). Even if Black were able to win the exchange, White’s pressure on f7 would more than compensate. As it is, White gets to play a decisive combination on that square.

22...g6 23 xf7! xf7 24 e7 wb1+ 25 e1 f4 26 e2!

Not falling for 26 xf4?, when the amazing defensive resource of 26...e6!, intending 27 xe6?? xe1+ 28 h2 xe6!, allows Black to fight on.

26...f5 27 xf7 h8 28 g4 d3 29 xd3 xe1+ 30 g2 1-0

But not this!

30...g5, 31 c2 mates quickly. Don’t be fooled by these apparently quiet lines. There are many traps lurking.

The previous five games covered the ‘main line’ with 1e1 and h3. In the next few games we consider alternative options for both colours, beginning with some kingside aggression from Black:
Suddenly it becomes clear that Black doesn’t have to castle kingside after all, and White’s early h3 has provided enough encouragement for this aggressive pawn lunge. The roles have been reversed: Black is trying to do to White what White often did to him in Chapter One!

10...\texttt{c3}

10...\texttt{h2} tries to prevent ...\texttt{g4}, but fails. This move hasn’t fared well in practice: 10...\texttt{g8} (Black can also play 10...\texttt{g4} immediately: 11 hxg4 \texttt{g8} 12 \texttt{f3} \texttt{e7} 13 \texttt{e3} \texttt{xe3} 14 fxe3 \texttt{xe4} 15 \texttt{xf4} \texttt{xe4} with at least equality for Black, M.Adams-A.Shirov, Elista 2007) 11 \texttt{e3} \texttt{g4} 12 \texttt{xa7} \texttt{gxh3}! was played in Hou Yifan-P.H.Nielsen, Amsterdam 2009.

In the game the young Chinese grandmaster accepted a clear disadvantage after 13 \texttt{g3} \texttt{xa7} 14 \texttt{d2} \texttt{h5} 15 \texttt{h1} \texttt{e7}. Let’s see what might happen if White’s tries to hold on to the extra piece: 13 \texttt{e3} \texttt{xe4} 14 \texttt{h1} \texttt{g4}! 15 \texttt{xf4} (15 \texttt{f3} is met by 15...\texttt{xf2}! followed by 16...\texttt{f6}) 15...\texttt{f4} 16 \texttt{c1} (16 \texttt{f3} \texttt{h4}! is crushing) 16...\texttt{f6} 17 \texttt{d2} 0-0-0 18 \texttt{d1} \texttt{g8} 19 \texttt{xf4}+\texttt{xf4}. With ...\texttt{h2}, ...\texttt{h4} and ...\texttt{f1}+ on the horizon, it’s difficult to see how White can escape unharmed.

10...\texttt{xe3} 11 \texttt{xe3} \texttt{g4}!

Simple, direct and very strong.

12 \texttt{hxg4} \texttt{xe4} 13 \texttt{xe2} \texttt{f6} 14 \texttt{bd2} \texttt{d7} 15 \texttt{d5}

Getting out of the way of the b-pawn and thus enabling the plan of \texttt{b4}, \texttt{a4} and \texttt{b5}.

15...0-0-0

Let’s take stock of the position. The players have castled on opposite sides, and as usual the key factor is how quickly each side can organize his attack. Black enjoys a clear advantage simply because the open g-file gives him a significant head start.

16 \texttt{b4} \texttt{d7}! 17 \texttt{e1}

A sad retreat. White would rather avoid an exchange on \texttt{d5}, but after 17 \texttt{b3} \texttt{g6} (threatening ...\texttt{f4}) 18 \texttt{g3} \texttt{h5} followed by ...\texttt{h4} things are going to turn ugly.

17...\texttt{d5} 18 \texttt{exd5} \texttt{h5}
Planning ...h4 and ...\textit{h4}, and also the following piece sacrifice:

\textbf{19 f3} \textit{f4}! \textbf{20} \textit{f1}

If White accepts the knight, the attack down the newly opened h-file proves to be too strong. For example, 20 fxg4 hxg4 21 \textit{e4} \textit{h2+} 22 \textit{f2} f5 23 \textit{c4} f4 24 \textit{f1} g3+ etc.

\textbf{20...\textit{f6} 21 \textit{b3} \textit{dg8} 22 a4 h4}

Now it’s full steam ahead for Black. In contrast, White’s demonstration on the queenside looks a bit lame.

\textbf{23 b5 h3} \textbf{24 bxa6 bxa6} \textbf{25} \textit{wc4}

Or 25 \textit{b1} \textit{d8} and White’s ‘attack’ reaches a dead end.

\textbf{25...hxg2} \textbf{26 \textit{xcg2}}

If 26 \textit{xf4}, 26...\textit{h1+}! 27 \textit{f2} g1\textit{w} mate is a good zwischenzug!

\textbf{26...\textit{xcg2+} 27 \textit{xcg2} \textit{xf3} 28 \textit{b1} \textit{g4} 29 \textit{c1} 0-1}

Not waiting for the inevitable 29...\textit{f2} mate.

Clearly this is a line we need to avoid, at least if we are playing White! But how should we do this? As far as I can see, the safest way – assuming our aim is to reach the main lines – is to play 8 \textit{e1} instead of 8 h3. If Black plays 8...h6 we can reply with 9 \textit{bd2}! It’s true that Black can still insist on kingside aggression by playing 9...g5, but the key difference here is that White has avoided presenting Black with a ‘hook’ (h2-h3) and this means Black has to work that much harder to engineer activity on the kingside.

\textit{Italian Game: Classical Main Line}

Here’s an example: 10 \textit{f1} g4 11 \textit{d3d2} (if 11 \textit{h4}, Black has 11...\textit{xe4})

11...h5 12 \textit{c4} h4 13 \textit{e3} \textit{xe3} 14 \textit{cxe3} \textit{d7} 15 a4 \textit{g8} (if 15...h3, White blocks things up with the simple 16 g3)

16 \textit{a2} \textit{e7} 17 d4 h3 (17...\textit{xe4} 18 dxe5 dxe5 19 \textit{d5} opens the centre up, which can only be in White’s favour) 18 hxe5 (the safer 18 g3 still looks good)

18...hxg2 19 \textit{g3!} dxe5 20 \textit{b3} \textit{g7} 21 \textit{xb7} \textit{c6} 22 \textit{b4} \textit{b8} 23 \textit{c4} and White was clearly on top in the game A.Minasian-A.Aleksandrov, Podolsk 1990.

After 8 \textit{e1}, there’s another caveman-style approach to consider: 8...\textit{g4}?!.
I must confess that until a couple of days ago I didn’t think much of this move at all. I realized that White needed to avoid 9 d4 exd4 10 cxd4, on account of the typical trick 10 ... liJxd4! 11 liJxd4 Wh4, when White is in some trouble. However, after 9 l:.e2, surely Black’s knight is misplaced on g4 and he will lose time in the long run, won’t he?

Judging by a severe lack of games with 9 ... liJg4, many players must have agreed with me on this point, and when Sam Collins played it against me (British League, 2010) I was genuinely surprised. More to the point, as far as I can see, he has found a way to make this playable for Black!

The game went 9 l:.e2 Wh6! (if 9 ... 0-0, White plays 10 .i.g5! intending 10...We8 11 h3) 10 liJbd2 (Mickey Adams suggested 10 liJa3 to prevent Black’s next move) 10...g5! This is a key idea, without which White would just play liJd2-f1 and then h2-h3 only when the time is right. The point is that Black is now simply threatening to win materia with 11...liJf2! 12 liJxf2 liJf2+ 13 liJxf2 g4, and this forced me to take action in centre earlier than I might have wanted to. The game continued 11 d4! l:.d7 (11...exd4 12 e5! dxe5 13 l:.e4 is very promising for White) 12 l:.f1 l:.g8. At this moment I was tempted by the idea of getting a knight to d5, but 13 l:.e3?! 0-0-0 14 l:.d5? l:.h6 took too much time. The knight was achieving little on d5 and Black was developing some nasty threats on the kingside. I should have kept the knight on f1 and chosen 13 l:.e3!, when White can meet 13...liJxe3 with 14 fxe3! strengthening d4, blocking the a7-bishop and preparing to use the f-file. There are alternatives for both sides earlier on, but judging from this evidence 9...liJg4 cannot be dismissed as a bad move.

Let’s consider yet another option. This time it’s for White, if he has played 8 h3:

**Game 24**
T.Radjabov-V.Anand
Baku (rapid) 2009

1 e4 e5 2 liJf3 liJc6 3 c4 liJc5 4 c3 liJf6 5 d3 a6 6 liJb3 d6 7 0-0 liJa7 8 h3 h6 9 l:.e3!

If Black is going to play ...g5, then l:.e3 is a much better move than l:.e1.

It was Tiviakov more than anybody who showed that the plan with l:.e3 is
not a harmless one, although he usu­
ally plays it a move earlier (see the next
game).
Beating 1 e4 e5

13 ∇h4!

This is a key move and almost an automatic response to ∇e7.

13...∇e8

Anand begins to drift. In fact this and his following two moves make a very strange impression. Perhaps he was initially planning on the supersolid ...g6 and ...∇g7 but then decided against it.

13...∇g6 looks more natural, against which White replies with 14 ∇f5. What is clear is that Black has no easy solution in his search for equality.

14 d4 ∇d7?!

This definitely feels wrong.

If 14...g6 there follows 15 ∇df3 f6 16 ∇b3 (or 16 ∇h2!? ) 16...∇g7 17 ∇xe6+ ∇xe6 18 ∇b3 and Black is still under some pressure. Perhaps he should try to create some action in the centre with 14...c5!?

15 ∇b3!

Why not?

15...∇f6

This allows a promising exchange sacrifice, but it’s too late to go back with 15...∇e6? because of 16 ∇xe6 fxe6 17 ∇xf8+ ∇xf8 18 ∇b3 ∇c8 19 dxe5 dxe5 20 ∇c4.

16 ∇xf6!

I wouldn’t have thought Radjabov spent too long on this move. It looks, and is, a very dangerous sacrifice.

16...gx f6 17 ∇h5 ∇g7 18 ∇f1

18...∇e6

If 18...∇g6 there follows 19 ∇f5+ ∇xf5 20 exf5 ∇e7 21 ∇e4! ∇g8 (or 21...d5 22 ∇xf6!) 22 ∇f3 d5 23 ∇g3+ ∇h7 24 ∇g4 and mate with ∇g7.

19 ∇f3! c5

Black needs to keep his bishop on e6 to provide at least some protection for his shaky light squares. After 19...∇xb3 20 ∇g3+! (20 axb3 ∇h8!) 20...∇h7 21 axb3 it’s extremely difficult for Black to defend: 21...∇d7 22 ∇df3! planning ∇h2-g4, or 21...exd4 22 ∇g4! dxe3 23 ∇f5 ∇xf5 24 ∇xf5+ ∇h8 25 ∇h5 ∇h7 26 ∇h4 and White mates.

20 ∇g3+

White could have kept some advantage with 20 ∇xe6 fxe6 21 ∇g4+. Black has to allow 21...∇h7 22 ∇xe6, since
21...f7? 22 d5! exd5 23 exd5 intending qe4 is very strong.

20...h7

21 xe6?

Missing a great chance. Although 21 xe6 is undoubtedly tempting, it only leads to perpetual check.

Radjabov could have played 21 xf5! xf5 22 exf5 xb3 23 axb3, which would have given him a very dangerous attack, and probably a winning one. For example, 23...exd4 (or 23...e7 24 g4 g8 25 h4 f8 26 e4) 24 e4! dx3 25 g4! e2 26 f2!,

21...fxe6 22 g6 xg6 23 xg6+ h8 24 xh6+ g8 25 g6+

The winning try for White is 25 g6 threatening 26 h8+ f7 27 h7+ e8 28 g7!. The only defence for Black is 25...d7! but it’s good enough. A key point is that after 26 h8+ f7 27 h7+ e8 28 xf8 xh7 29 xh7 e7, as indicated by Malcolm Pein in CHESS, White’s knight on h7 is trapped. 25...h8 26 h6+ ½-½

It seems only right to include a Tiviakov game with xe3, since he was the one player who really put this move on the map.

Game 25
S.Tiviakov-D.De Vreugt
Dieren 2003

1 e4 e5 2 c4 c6 3 d3 c5 4 f3 d6 5 c3 d6 6 b3 a6 7 0-0 a7 8 e3

With this move order, if White wants to play xe3 there’s no reason to hesitate. As we see in this game and in
Beating 1 e4 e5

some sub-variations, White might not have to play h3 at all.

However, it’s also worth mentioning the move order 5...a6 6 0-0 bable7 7 d3 0-0 where Black holds back with his d-pawn and can consider meeting 8 e3 with 8...d5!?. For example, 9 exd5 0xd5 10 0xa7 bxa7 11 e1 f4 12 d4 exd4 13 cxd4 g4, as played in S.Zagrebelsky-A.Aleksandrov, Moscow 2004. If White wishes to avoid this possibility, he can play 8 h3 intending 9 e3 only after 8...d6.

8 0-0 9 b2 e7

This typical knight move has been Black’s most popular choice, but it does allow White to carry out his intended plan. In particular, White can now play h4 without worrying about dxe4 tactics.

Let’s look at some alternatives in this position:

a) 9...e3 10 fxe3 reaches a structure similar to the previous game, with White having an open-file for his rook. As I mentioned there, these positions are usually easier for White to play, because his plans – usually involving action on the kingside – are more obvious. An example: 10 h5 11 c2 c5 12 01 0h5 13 a3!? g6 14 b4 0c6 15 b3 0g7 16 d5 (16 d4!?) 16...cxb4 17 axb4 0e6 18 0c4 with a bit of pressure, F.Vallejo Pons-A.Shirov, Dos Hermanas 2008.

b) 9...e6 is solid, but 10 0xe6 fxe6 11 0xa7 bxa7 12 b3 0e7 13 d4 still offers White chances of an advantage.

The structure is reversed from the previous note; this time Black possesses the open f-file. However, White has been able to advance in the centre and activate his queen, and furthermore Black’s rook on a7 is misplaced – all of this makes a difference. S.Tiviakov-H.Jonkman, Santo Domingo 2002, continued 13 0d7 14 a4 a5 15 b5 f6 16 d5 with an edge for White.

c) Black’s best move might well be 9...h6!. This prepares 0e8 and, if White does nothing, ...d5. The problem for White is that 10 0h4? is met simply by 10...dxe4!. Typical play from here is 10 h3 0e8 and now:

   c1) If 11 0h4!? 0xe4? White has 12 0h5!. However, Black can play 11 0a5! intending 12 0c2? (12 0f3! is best) 12...dxe4!.

   c2) Tiviakov has played 11 0e1 0xe3! 12 fxe3!?, but of course the rook is not ideally placed on e1 here.

   c3) 11 0xa7 bxa7 12 0e7 13 d4 0g6 14 f4 0e6 15 dxe5 0xc4 16 0xc4 0xe5 17 dxe5 dxe5 18 b3 0e7 19 a4 c6 20 a5 0aa8 with an equal po-

In summary, 9...h6! is a very solid option which seems to promise Black a position with level chances.

10 a4!

So simple! White plans a7xa7 followed by f2-f4, after which the position will resemble a King’s Gambit Declined – and a good version for White – rather than an Italian Game.

Tiviakov has noted that the move order 10 a7xa7 a7xa7 11 a4 allows Black the possibility of 11...g5 preventing f4. Still, even this position looks quite promising for White after 12 f3! d7 (Black must avoid 12...gxh4 13 xf6 g6?! 14 xf7! 13 f5 (and White should probably avoid 13 e3 gxh4! 14 a7xa7 b6!) 13...xf5 14 exf5. 10...c6?!

This looks a bit slow and it does nothing to challenge White’s basic plan. Let’s consider alternatives:

a) 10...g6 11 xg6 hxg6 12 a7xa7 a7xa7 13 f4 c6 transposes to the main game, and this was actually the move order adopted in both games in the note to White’s 14th move.

b) With f4 coming, 10...e6 in order to relieve some of the pressure against f7 looks sensible. Even so, White still keeps an edge with 11 a7xa7 a7xa7 12 f4, and he gradually built up some pressure on the kingside after 12...exf4 13 xf4 d5 14 d4 c5 15 e5 d7 16 c2 in Z.Efimenko-B.Avrukh, Saint Vincent 2005.

c) 10...g4!? 11 e1! is not even a minor inconvenience, unless Black continues with 11...h5! to prevent f4.

B.Michiels-P.Vandevoort, Pays de Charleroi 2003, continued 12 h3 e6 13 d1 (perhaps 13 xxe6 fxe6 14 a7xa7 a7xa7 15 g3 a8 16 e2 f6 17 h2 and slowly building for f4, à la Karpov-Yusupov) 13...f4 (Black is close to equality after 13...g6! 14 xg6 xg6 15 xbx3 hgx6 16 d4 b8) 14 xf4! exf4 15 f3 xbx3 16 axb3 g6 17 xg6 fxg6 18 g4 f6 19 f3 e8 20 f1 c6 21 b4 e7 22 e2 fe8 23 ae1 with an edge – d4 and e5 will eventually arrive.
Beating 1 e4 e5
d) There’s still time to play 10...\text{\textit{exf3}} here: 11 \text{\textit{exf3}} \text{\textit{h5}} (or 11...\text{\textit{g6}} 12 \text{\textit{f5}} c6 13 d4 d5 14 \text{\textit{w3}} \text{\textit{e6}} 15 \text{\textit{ae1}} with a small advantage for White, D.Barua-K.Sasikiran, Nagpur 2002) 12 h3 \text{\textit{eg8}} 13 \text{\textit{we1}} g6 14 g4?! \text{\textit{we7}} 15 \text{\textit{g3}} \text{\textit{e8}} 16 \text{\textit{f2}} \text{\textit{g7}} 17 \text{\textit{af1}} \text{\textit{e6}} 18 d4 \text{\textit{ae8}} 19 h2 \text{\textit{f3}} f6, as played in I.Khamrakulov-A.Rizouk, Lorca 2005, demonstrates good defence by Black. White enjoys more freedom, but Black’s position is difficult to break down.

11 \text{\textit{axa7!}} \text{\textit{xa7}} 12 f4!

Of course! I definitely prefer White’s chances here.

12...\text{\textit{g6}} 13 \text{\textit{xg6 hgx6}}

14 \text{\textit{fxe5}}

It’s possible that 14 \text{\textit{w3}} might be even stronger. What is certainly true is that it has led to three easy wins for White. Strangely (and promisingly from our perspective!), in all three games Black fell for the same trap: 14...\text{\textit{b6+}} (this plan is flawed; Simon Williams’ suggestion of 14...\textit{b5} offering protection to f7 would have been wiser) 15 \text{\textit{h1}} \text{\textit{g4}} 16 \text{\textit{g3!} \text{\textit{xe2?}} (intending \text{\textit{h5}} after rook moves, but...)

17 \text{\textit{fxe5!} \text{\textit{xf1}} (or 17...\textit{dxex} 18 \text{\textit{xf6! gxf6}} 19 \text{\textit{xg6+}} \text{\textit{h8}} 20 \text{\textit{xf6+} \text{\textit{g8}} 21 \text{\textit{e1}} \text{\textit{e3}} 22 \textit{c4} \text{\textit{xd3}} 23 \textit{xe5} and 1-0, V.Sikula-M.Hrenic, Latschach 2006) 18 exf6 \text{\textit{exg2+}} (Black chose to suffer less in W.Hendriks-D.Ledger, Hastings 2008/09, with 18...\text{\textit{e2}} 19 \text{\textit{gxg6 xb3}} 20 \text{\textit{galg7 mate}) 19 \text{\textit{exg2 d5}} 20 \text{\textit{fxg7 e8}} 21 \text{\textit{f1}} and White soon won in D.Sadvakasov-H.Melkumyan, Dubai 2007.

14...\textit{dxex} 15 \textit{f3} \textit{g4!}

If 15...\textit{we7}, 16 \textit{g5} planning \textit{we1-h4} looks promising for White.

16 \text{\textit{we1 d7?}}
This is a blunder. Black would still be fighting after 16...}*xf3 17}*xf3 a5! intending 18}*g3?! a4!.
17}*g3!}*xf3 18}*xf3

The pressure against f7, g6 and e5 is too much to handle, and Black loses a pawn by force.
18...}*c5 19}*xf7+!*xf7 20}*xf7}*xf7 21}*f2+ 1-0

Resignation is a bit premature, but perhaps De Vreugt didn’t wish to experience Tiviakov’s renowned technique. After 21...}*g8 22}*xc5}*a8 23 d4 White should win in the long run.

So far we have concentrated on Black’s most popular choice, 7...}*a7, but in the next two games we consider 7...0-0 and 7...}*g4.

**Game 26**

**S.Tiviakov-D.Pavasovic**

European Championship, Plovdiv 2008

1 e4 e5 2}*c4}*f6 3 d3}*c6 4}*f3}*c5

5 c3 d6 6}*b3 a6 7 0-0 0-0

Perhaps one the main reasons 7...}*a7 is played so often is because it really does discourage 8}*g5?! Given that Black has yet to commit his king, and furthermore White has committed his, Black shouldn’t hesitate to advance on the kingside: 8...h6! 9}*h4?! (it’s not too late for 9}*e3!) 9...g5! 10}*g3 (it’s pretty obvious that the piece sacrifice 10}*xg5? hgx5 11}*xg5 shouldn’t work, and 11...}*g8! 12 h4}*g4 is a good reply) 10...w7.

Black will castle queenside, and the time gained attacking the white bishop with ...h6 and ...g5 will give him a vital head start in the race of pawn storms. For example, 11}*bd2}*d7 12 d4 0-0 0 13 d5}*b8 14}*a4}*dg8 15}*xd7+}*bxd7 16}*h1}*f8 17}*g1 h5 18 f3 h4 19}*f2}*xf2 20}*xf2 g4 and Black is the only one attacking, G.Carames-G.Flear, San Sebastian 1995. This is certainly a line that White needs to avoid.

Incidentally, if you really want to warn someone about the dangers of combining}*g5 and 0-0 when Black
Beating 1 \(e4\) \(e5\) hasn’t castled, then the following, often quoted and quite beautiful line usually does the trick: 5 0-0 \(d6\) 6 \(\text{g}5?!\) \(h6\) 7 \(\text{h}4?!\) \(g5!\) 8 \(\text{g}3\) h5?! (8...\(\text{g}4\) is a good alternative, with a safe edge for Black) 9 \(\text{d}xg5\) h4 10 \(\text{xf}7\)

10...hxg3!! 11 \(\text{xd}8\) \(\text{g}4\) 12 \(\text{d}2\) \(\text{d}4\) 13 \(\text{c}3\) \(\text{f}3+!\) 14 \(\text{xf3}\) \(\text{xf3}\) and, faced with an inevitable mate, White resigned in V.Knorre-M.Chigorin, St Petersburg 1874.

Returning to the game, and the position after 7...0-0:

8 \(\text{g}5?!\)

If \(\text{g}5\) is a good idea when only Black has castled, and a bad idea when only White has castled, what about when both sides have castled?

‘Doubled-edged’ is probably an accurate assessment. Once the bishop is forced back to \(g3\), White must work hard to avoid it being shut out of the game. On the other hand, Black’s weaknesses on the kingside won’t go away.

If White wants to reach lines identical or similar to those we’ve already covered in this chapter, he can simply play 8 \(\text{e}1\). Black will nearly always retreat prophylactically with ...\(\text{a}7\) to transpose directly, either here or a bit later. Occasionally, though, Black keeps his bishop on \(c5\), and after a subsequent ...\(d5\) there’s the option of retreating it to \(f8\) to cover the kingside.

Here are some possibilities: 8...\(h6\) 9 \(\text{bd}2\) \(\text{e}6\) (note that if 9...\(\text{g}4\) 10 \(\text{e}2\) \(\text{h}8\), 11 \(\text{h}3!\) forces the knight back to \(f6\) and thwarts Black’s ...\(f5\) plan – this is one drawback of ...\(h6\)).

Warning! White must avoid 10 \(\text{c}2?!\) here, in view of the tactic 10...\(\text{g}4!\) 11 \(\text{e}2\) \(\text{xf}2+!\) 12 \(\text{xf}2\) \(\text{e}3\)
13 \( \text{We}2 \text{xc}2 14 \text{xb}1 \text{xa}2 \) when 15 b3 \( \text{xb}1 \) 16 \( \text{xb}1 \text{xb}4 \) 17 \( \text{xc}b4 \text{xb}4 \) favours Black.

10 h3 should be played. For example, 10...\( \text{e}8 \) 11 \( \text{h}2 \) (or 11 \( \text{f}1 \text{xb}3 \) 12 \( \text{axb}3 \text{d}5 \) 13 \( \text{we}2 \text{f}8 \) 14 \( \text{g}3 \text{g}6 \) 15 b4 \( \text{d}7 \) with an equal position, M.Erdogdu-L.Aronian, Bursa 2010) 11...\( \text{d}5 \) (11...\( \text{xb}3 \) 12 \( \text{axb}3 \text{d}5 \) 13 b4 \( \text{f}8 \) 14 \( \text{f}3 \text{dxe}4 \) 15 dxe4 \( \text{d}7 \) 16 \( \text{c}4 \text{ad}8 \) 17 \( \text{g}4 \text{g}4 \) 18 hxg4 \( \text{e}6 \) 19 \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 20 \( \text{we}2 \text{c}6 \) 21 \( \text{c}4 \text{c}8 \) 22 \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{d}6 \) also offers equal chances, A.Shchekachev-R.Kholmov, Omsk/Perm 1998) 12 \( \text{f}3 \text{d}7 \) 13 \( \text{df}1 \text{h}7 \) 14 \( \text{g}3 \text{ad}8 \) 15 \( \text{c}2 \text{d}4! \) 16 c4!? and there’s a tense battle in prospect, with White attacking the kingside and Black seeking action on the other wing.

D.Lobzhanidze-D.Svetushkin, Dresden Olympiad 2008, continued 16...b5 17 \( \text{cx}b5 \text{xb}4 \) 18 \( \text{b}1 \text{axb}5 \) 19 a3 \( \text{a}6 \) 20 \( \text{f}5 \text{g}8 \) 21 \( \text{g}4 \text{f}6 \) 22 \( \text{a}2! \) (it’s definitely worth getting rid of the Italian bishop here!) 22...\( \text{xa}2 \) 23 \( \text{xa}2 \text{we}6 \) 24 \( \text{a}1 \text{f}8 \) 25 \( \text{g}3 \text{c}5 \) 26 a4 \( \text{b}4 \) 27 \( \text{d}2 \text{e}7 \) 28 f4! \( \text{xf}5 \) 29 \( \text{ex}f5 \) \( \text{xf}5 \)

f\( e5 \) h5? (30...fxe5 31 \( \text{f}1 \text{g}6 \) 32 \( \text{h}6! \) is unclear) 31 \( \text{f}1 \text{g}6 \) 32 \( \text{xf}6 \) (32 \( \text{xf}6 \!+ \) \( \text{xf}6 \) 33 \( \text{yg}6 \!+ \) \( \text{yg}6 \) 34 \( \text{xf}6 \!+ \) is good for White) 32...\( \text{xf}6 \) 33 \( \text{xf}6 \!+ \) \( \text{g}7 \) 34 \( \text{h}5 \!+ \) \( \text{h}7 \) 35 \( \text{f}6 \!+ \) \( \text{g}7 \) 36 \( \text{h}5 \!+ \) with a draw by perpetual check.

One further point worth mentioning here is that 8 \( \text{e}3 \), although still playable, lacks a bit of punch. Because Black has not yet played ...\( \text{a}7 \), 8...\( \text{xe}3 \) 9 fxe3 leaves him a tempo ahead of lines considered in Games 24-25. If White is really keen to play the \( \text{e}3 \) plan, 8 h3 intending to meet 8...\( \text{a}7 \) with 9 \( \text{e}3 \) is a wiser option.

8...\( \text{h}6 \) 9 \( \text{h}4 \) g5!

At some point Black is going to have to take action against the pin, and now is as good a time as any. One strong reason not to delay ...g5 is that 10 \( \text{g}5 \) fails here: 10...hxg5 11 \( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{g}7 \) 12 \( \text{f}3 \text{h}8 \) intending 13 \( \text{g}3 \text{h}5 \!+ \) (Karpov).

If Black delays ...g5 there might well be occasions where \( \text{g}5 \) is a promising sacrifice. For example, 9...\( \text{e}6 \) 10
Beating 1 e4 e5

\( \text{\#bd2} \text{\#e8} \quad 11 \text{\#h1}!? \) (A.Cherniaev-S.Haslinger, Hastings 2006/07) 11...g5 12 \( \text{\#xg5}!? \text{hxg5} \) 13 \( \text{\#xg5} \), intending f4. Moreover, if White chooses the safe 12 \( \text{\#g3} \), Black’s ...\( \text{\#e6} \) and ...\( \text{\#e8} \) don’t really fit in with the ...g5 plan.

Finally, if 9...\( \text{\#g4} \) 10 h3 \( \text{\#h5} \) 11 g4!\( \text{\#g6} \) 12 \( \text{\#bd2} \) and Black has lost his chance to play ...g5 altogether.

10 \( \text{\#g3} \)

10...\( \text{\#g4} \)

If Black could quickly reroute his c6-knight to g6 he really would be doing well (compare this with the next game, with colours reversed). Fortunately for White, 10...\( \text{\#e7} \) can be met strongly by 11 d4! when the pressure on e5 brings the g3-bishop right back to life.

Something that Black must also avoid is 10...\( \text{\#h5} \)!, as the 11 \( \text{\#xe5} \)! trick works here: 11...\( \text{\#xg3} \) 12 \( \text{\#xc6} \text{bxc6} \) 13 \( \text{hxg3} \) etc.

10...\( \text{\#a7} \) 11 \( \text{\#bd2} \) \( \text{\#g4} \) transposes to the note to Black’s 11th move, below.

11 \( \text{\#bd2} \)

I wonder whether White should consider 11 h3!? here. After 11...\( \text{\#h5} \) (if

11...\( \text{\#d7}!? \), 12 d4 \( \text{\#a7} \) 13 \( \text{\#e1} \) or 13 \( \text{\#d3} \) 12 \( \text{\#bd2} \) White adopts the same plan seen in the next note, with \( \text{\#c4} \)-e3. J.Nun-J.Franzen, Trnava 1985, continued 12...\( \text{\#d7} \) 13 \( \text{\#c4} \) \( \text{\#a7} \) 14 \( \text{\#e2} \) \( \text{\#g7} \) 15 \( \text{\#e3} \) \( \text{\#e7} \) 16 \( \text{\#ad1} \) \( \text{\#h7} \)? 17 d4!\( \text{f5} \) 18 \( \text{\#xf5} \) + \( \text{\#xf5} \) 19 exf5 \( \text{\#xf5} \) and here \text{Rybka’s suggestion of} 20 dx\( \text{e5} \) \( \text{\#xf3} \) 21 \( \text{\#h2} \)! looks very good for White, intending 21...\( \text{\#xg3} \) 22 \( \text{\#xh5} \).

Experience is scarce at the moment, but this looks like a line worth pursuing.

11...\( \text{\#h5} \)!

10...\( \text{\#g4} \)

Early on there was a high-profile game, M.Chandler-A.Karpov, Bath 1983, which probably discouraged some players from using this line: 11...\( \text{\#a7} \) 12 \( \text{\#h1} \) (intending to meet 12...\( \text{\#h5} \) with 13 h3! \( \text{\#xg3} \!+ \) 14 fx\( \text{g3} \)) 12...\( \text{\#h5} \)! 13 \( \text{\#e1} \) (13 \( \text{\#c4} \)!?) 13...\( \text{\#g7} \) 14 \( \text{\#d1} \) \( \text{\#g6} \) 15 \( \text{\#c4} \) \( \text{\#e8} \) 16 \( \text{\#c2} \) \( \text{\#d7} \) 17 \( \text{\#d2} \) \( \text{\#ad8} \) when Karpov had a rock-solid position and went on to win.

However, I really don’t see a reason for White to delay the \( \text{\#c4} \)-e3 plan seen in the previous note, and this pre-
sents Black with more of a challenge: 12 h3 â€¢h5 (if 12... âd7 White can play 13 c4 âh5 14 âh2 âf4 15 âe3 with an unclear position, or perhaps 13 âh2 preventing 13... âh5 in view of 14 âxe5) 13 c4! âg6 14 âe3

14...âg7 (I think Black should play 14... âh5 15 âh2 âf4 16 w2 âg7 17 âd5 with unclear play) 15 w2 âe7 16 h4! g4 17 âh2 w8 18 d1 h5 19 c2 âc6 20 âae1! w7 21 âh1 âg8 22 f4! exf4 23 wxf4 âxe3 24 wxe3 w7 25 âf1 âd8 26 âf2 âe8 27 w2 âd7 28 âe3 âb6 29 âf5 w8 30 e5 d5 31 âf1 âh8 32 b3 with a dominating position for White, B.Philippeit-A.Beyer, correspondence 2004 (in fact, Black resigned here). Okay, Black’s defence was far from perfect, but this c4-e3 plan does give him something to think about.

12 âh1!

Releasing the pin on the f-pawn so that White can play h3. White definitely should avoid 12 c4 w6! 13 e3 âxf3 14 wxf3 wxf3 15 gxf3, as played in A.Vajda-Z.Gyimesi, Nagykanizsa 2003. It’s hard to see the bishop on g3 taking any further part in the game!

12...w6

The most natural follow-up to 11... âh5, but Black has other decent options here:

a) 12...âg7 13 h3 d7 14 d2 e4 xe3+ 15 fxg3 f5! (one of the points of 12...âg7) 16 exf5 âxf5 17 e4 âb6 18 g4 âxe4 19 dxe4 with an equal position, S.Tiviakov-E.Van den Doel, Wolvenga 2008.

b) 12...âg7!? (providing lightquared cover on the kingside) 13 h3 âh5 14 âh2 âh8 15 c4 w6 16 g4 âg6 17 e3 e6 18 f5 a7 19 w2 with an almost symmetrical position, again roughly level, K.Shanava-G.Sargissian, European Championship, Dresden 2007.

13 h3 d7

14 d4

14 d4!? is critical but Black seems to be okay: 14...exd4 (14...a7? 15 xe5!) 15 e5!? (15 d4 f4 16 xc6 xc6 17 wxf3 was agreed drawn in J. Nunn-J.Pinter, Helsinki 1983) 15...w6
Beating 1 e4 e5

(15...dxe5?! 16 ¤e4 ¤e7 17 ¤fxg5 §xg3+ 18 fxg3 hxg5 19 ¤h5 wins for White – Nunn; or 15...§xg3+ 16 fxg3 ¥g6 17 cxd4 ©xd4 18 ©xd4 ©xd4 19 ©f6! ¥g7 20 ¥h5!) 16 cxd4 ©xd4 17 ©xd4 ©xd4 and it's not clear whether White has enough play for his pawn investment, although this could do with a test.

14...¥f4

After 14...exd4 15 ¥xh5 Black has some problems to solve, with f4 or e5/¥e4 ideas in the air.

15 ©xc6 ©xc6 16 ©c4 d5!

This seems to equalize.

17 ©xe5!? ¥xe5 18 d4 ©xd4

18...¥xe4 19 f3 ¥e7 20 ¥e1 ¥d6 21 dxc5 ¥xc5 22 ©xf4 gxf4 23 ¥d3 is a risky pawn for Black to take.

19 exd5 ©xd5 20 ©xf4 ¥xf4 21 ©xd5 ¥e5

Here the database gives 21...¥f5?? 22 g3??, but 21...©e5 is a thousand times more likely!

22 g3 ¥1-¥3

We've seen that pinning with ¥g5 is sometimes good, sometimes bad and occasionally somewhere in-between – it all depends on the specifics of the position. The same cannot be said about ...¥g4. Although it might be stretching things to call this outwardly enticing move an outright mistake, White is usually more than happy to see it arrive on the board.

In the notes to Game 17 we saw how White can deal effectively with an early ...¥g4 if he hasn't castled. In the following game White has committed his king, but a similar plan should still promise him some advantage.

**Game 27**

S.Kindermann-M.Dietmayer Kraeutler
Austrian League 2007

1 e4 e5 2 ¥f3 ©c6 3 ¥c4 ¥c5 4 c3 ¥f6 5 d3 a6 6 0-0 d6 7 ¥b3 ¥g4

8 ©bd2!

Black has yet to commit his king, and he shouldn't be encouraged to at-
tack on the kingside. So White should avoid giving Black a ‘hook’ with 8 h3?! \( \triangle h5 \) 9 \( \square bd2 \), when 9...h6 followed by ...g5 would be a tempting plan.

8...0-0

If Black insists on castling long, White leaves the kingside alone and just organizes action on the other wing. For example, 8...\( \square d7 \) 9 \( \triangle e1 \) 0-0-0 10 \( \triangle c2! \) d5 11 b4 \( \triangle a7 \) 12 a4! etc.

9 h3

Now it’s okay to put the question to the bishop, although there’s also nothing wrong with playing 9 \( \triangle e1 \) first.

9...\( \triangle h5 \)

It might be better just to accept the loss of time and retreat to e6.

10 \( \triangle e1 \)

There’s no point delaying the strong \( \triangle f1-g3 \) plan.

10...\( \square e8 \)

10...d5 can be met by 11 exd5 \( \triangle xd5 \) 12 \( \triangle e4 \). This can be compared to similar positions arising in Chapter Two, but here White’s tempo gain, caused by ...d7-d6-d5, leaves him in control: 12...\( \triangle a7 \) 13 \( \triangle g3 \) \( \triangle g6 \) 14 \( \triangle xe5 \) \( \triangle xe5 \) 15 \( \triangle xe5 \) left White a pawn up for nothing in P.Lyrberg-J.Barkhagen, Budapest 1993, but giving up the bishop pair with 13...\( \triangle xf3 \) 14 \( \triangle xf3 \) is hardly fun for Black either.

11 \( \triangle f1 \) h6

11...d5 is again premature: 12 exd5 \( \triangle xd5 \) 13 \( \triangle g3 \) \( \triangle g6 \) 14 d4! wins a pawn with a tactic we’ve seen before.

11...\( \square d7 \) 12 \( \triangle g5! \) is also awkward for Black: 12...\( \triangle g6 \) 13 \( \triangle xf6 \) gxf6 14 \( \triangle g3 \) f5 15 exf5 \( \triangle xf5 \) 16 \( \triangle g5 \) \( \triangle g6 \) 17 \( \triangle f3 \) \( \triangle e7 \) 18 \( \triangle se4 \) \( \triangle h8 \) 19 \( \triangle f5 \) \( \triangle f8 \) 20 \( \triangle f6 \) \( \triangle ed8 \) 21 h4 \( \triangle b6 \) 22 \( \triangle d5 \) \( \triangle ab8 \) 23 h5 with a dominating position, V.Spasov-M.Mitkov, Istanbul 2001.

12 \( \triangle g3 \)

This is good enough, but White can play with even more ambition: 12 g4! \( \triangle g6 \) (White is well enough protected after 12...\( \triangle xg4 \) 13 h\( xg4 \) \( \triangle xg4 \) 14 \( \triangle g2 \) \( \triangle f6 \) 15 \( \triangle e3 \)) 13 \( \triangle g3 \).

The h3/g4 set-up is particularly effective when reinforced by a knight on g3, which is useful both in defence and attack. White has a firm grip on the kingside and if he isn’t careful Black
Beating 1 e4 e5

can easily get squashed, as in the following example: 13...\textit{d}d7 14 \textit{h}4 \textit{h}8 15 \textit{g}2 \textit{e}7 (15...\textit{d}8 planning ...\textit{e}6 looks wiser) 16 g5! (16 \textit{f}3 \textit{h}7 17 \textit{h}f5 is solid and good) 16...\textit{f}g8 17 \textit{g}4! \textit{x}g4 18 h\textit{x}g4 a5 (or 18...hx\textit{g}5 19 \textit{x}g6+ \textit{x}g6 20 \textit{x}g5 and \textit{h}1+ is coming) 19 \textit{h}1 a4 20 \textit{c}2 \textit{h}7 21 gx\textit{h}6 gx\textit{h}6 22 g5 and White soon won, T.Halmeenmaeki-G.Buchhauser, correspondence 2000.

12...\textit{g}6

12...\textit{x}f3 13 \textit{xf}3 would just be an admission that the whole plan with ...\textit{g}4 was misguided. \textit{f}5 is coming and White has a ready-made attack.

13 \textit{h}4!

\textbf{If White doesn’t want to sacrifice the exchange and enter the following complications, 13 \textit{h}2 intending \textit{f}3 is reasonable, or just 13 \textit{e}2. One nice line, certainly not forced, is 13 \textit{e}2 \textit{h}7 (13...\textit{d}7 is met by 14 \textit{h}4!) 14 \textit{h}2 d5 15 \textit{g}4 \textit{x}g4 16 \textit{w}x\textit{g}4 \textit{w}f6 17 \textit{h}5! \textit{w}xf2+ 18 \textit{h}2 \textit{g}6 19 \textit{x}h6! (over-protecting g1!) 19...gx\textit{h}6 20 \textit{e}2 and White wins!}

\textbf{13...\textit{x}e4!}

Definitely the best. After 13...\textit{h}7 14 \textit{f}3 Black is already under considerable pressure on the kingside and he has absolutely no counterplay.

14 \textit{x}e4! \textit{x}e4 15 \textit{g}4 \textit{xd}3 16 \textit{h}5 \textit{g}5 17 \textit{w}f3 \textit{h}8

17...d5 18 \textit{w}xd3 gx\textit{h}4 19 \textit{f}3 is good for White.

18 \textit{w}xd3 gx\textit{h}4 19 \textit{f}5 \textit{g}8 20 \textit{h}x\textit{h}6

20 \textit{x}f7 might be stronger. Rybka’s main line is 20...\textit{w}e7 21 \textit{x}g8 \textit{x}g8 22 \textit{x}h6 \textit{d}8 23 \textit{f}6 \textit{w}f7 24 \textit{g}5 \textit{e}6 25 \textit{x}h4 and White is better, although the position remains complicated.

20...\textit{w}e7?

After 20...\textit{g}6! White might well be advised to accept the perpetual line 21 \textit{g}7+ \textit{x}g7 22 \textit{x}g7 \textit{x}g7 23 \textit{w}xf7+ \textit{h}8 24 \textit{w}h5+ \textit{g}7 25 \textit{f}7+ etc.

21 \textit{f}6!

Now White is firmly back in control.

21...\textit{w}g6 22 \textit{w}h5 \textit{w}xf6

22...\textit{x}f2+! 23 \textit{h}1 \textit{w}xf6 24 \textit{g}5+ \textit{g}7 25 \textit{xf}6+ \textit{xf}6 would have been a tougher nut to crack.

23 \textit{g}5+ \textit{g}7 24 \textit{xf}6+ \textit{xf}6 25 \textit{w}g5+ \textit{g}6 26 \textit{w}xh4 \textit{h}8

And here Black should have tried 26...f5.

27 \textit{w}e4 \textit{w}h3 28 \textit{w}f5!

Now it really is over as a contest.

28...\textit{w}h7 29 \textit{w}xf7+ \textit{w}h6 30 \textit{w}f8+ \textit{w}g7 31 \textit{w}h8+ \textit{w}h7 32 \textit{w}f8+ \textit{w}g7 33 \textit{d}5 \textit{g}4 34 \textit{w}f6+ \textit{g}76 35 \textit{w}h8+ \textit{g}5 36 \textit{d}1 \textit{f}4 37 \textit{d}2 \textit{b}6 38 \textit{g}3 \textit{g}4 39 \textit{g}2 \textit{e}4 40 \textit{e}2 \textit{f}5 41 \textit{xe}4+ \textit{xe}4 42 \textit{w}h5+ 1-0
Game 28
D.Bronstein-B.Ivkov
Amsterdam 1968

1 e4 e5 2 d3 f3 d6 3 c4 c5 4 c3 f6
5 d3 d6 6 c3

Even if White is planning to castle kingside under most circumstances, I think 6 c3 is a good move against d5 because:
1. It forces Black to be careful with move orders. More specifically, 6...0-0 can be answered by 7 g5!.
2. With ...d5 much less likely after 6...d6, White can afford to delay castling for a move or two.

5...h6 7 0-0
6...c6 7 bd2, together with sixth-move alternatives for Black, was discussed in Erenburg-Kreizburg (Game 17), where White delayed castling.

5...0-0 8 bd2

Of course there's nothing wrong with 8 e1, but in this game White tries something a bit different.

6...e6

Even here Black often plays 8...a6, when 9 e1 would transpose to normal lines.

If Black plays 8...b6, 9 c4 is a logical reply after which 9...e6 transposes to the main game.

9 c4!

This is an attempt to both utilize the early bd2 and exploit Black's omission of ...a6 and ...a7. White avoids the exchange of bishops and now Black must be wary of d4-d5.

9...b6

9...b5!? is double-edged: it forces the exchange of light-squared bishops but at a cost of offering White something to attack on the queenside. 10 e3 b6 (10...d7! is better) 11 xe6! fxe6 12 a4 a6 13 axb5 axb5 14 xa8 xa8 15 b3, forking b5 and e6, is the type of line that Black has to avoid.

Strangely enough, the risky-looking 9...a6 is actually playable here. If 10 d4 (10 e1 and 10 a4 are decent alternatives) 10...exd4 11 cxd4, Black doesn't have to play 11...xc4 to avoid losing a piece – he can play 11...b5!? Here 12 dxc5 bxc4 13 a4 e5 14 xe5 dxe5 was roughly level in M.Marc-F.Izeta Txabarri, Oviedo (rapid) 1993.

10 a4

10 xb6 axb6 is less challenging for Black because White cannot keep the bishop pair; for example, 11 e1 xb3 12 xb3 e8 13 c2 d7 with a level position, K.Asrian-V.Korchnoi, Dagomys 2008.

10 e8
Beating 1 e4 e5

Lining up the possibility of...d5.

The impatient 10...\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\texttt{xc4?!}}}}\) is inad­visable, and in R.Ramesh-M.Lodhi, New Delhi 2007, Black was soon regretting his loss of control of the light squares: 11 \(\text{\textit{\texttt{xc4 a5 12 e1 e7 13 h4! \texttt{\texttt{d7}}}}\) 14 h3 g5 (if 14...c6, White plays 15 a2 and f3) 15 f3 g6 16 d4 g7 17 e3 \(\texttt{\texttt{e7}}\) 18 d2 f4 19 f1 d7 20 c4 f6 21 g3 e6 22 e2 h8 23 h2 h6 24 h5 h7 25 g4 f6 26 f5+ g7 27 b3 with a large advantage.

10...d7 11 \(\texttt{\texttt{d7}}\) 11 \(\texttt{\texttt{xc4}}\) 12 a2 \(\texttt{\texttt{d7}}\) 11 \(\texttt{\texttt{xc4}}\) 12 a2 \(\texttt{\texttt{d7}}\) was level in Y.Kosashvili-Y.Kraidman, Tel Aviv 1989, but I think White again took on b6 too readily. 11 a2 intending b4 looks stronger to me. 11 a2!

This is unusual, and a nice example of Bronstein’s renowned creativity. Black is invited to double White’s c-pawns, but at a cost of ceding the light squares and giving White a bind on d5.

Another point is to protect e4, so that if 11...d5 White can safely take a pawn with 12 cxe5 dxe5 13 cxe5 dxe4 14 dxe4 \(\texttt{\texttt{xd1}}\) 15 \(\texttt{\texttt{xd1}}\) etc.

11 e1 c5!? 12 a5 (12 a2!?) 12...g4! 13 e3 \(\texttt{\texttt{xe3}}\) resulted in a quick draw in S.Movsesian-A.Morozevich, Sarajevo 2008. I wonder whether either player was aware of this earlier game. 11...d7?!

In his notes for *Chess Informant 6*, Ivkov prefers 11...\(\texttt{\texttt{xc4}}\) 12 dxc4, although he still evaluates this position as a clear advantage for White. I’m not convinced that Black’s position is so bad – he is after all quite solid. That said, I do still prefer White, who can slowly improve his position and also think about h4-f5 ideas.

12 a5! \(\texttt{\texttt{xc4}}\) 13 axb6 a6 14 bxc7 \(\texttt{\texttt{xc7}}\) 15 d4

Ivkov also evaluates this as a clear advantage for White. The two bishops, central control and better structure indicate that this time there’s no argument from me!

15...g4 16 d5 f3?!

16...e7 is better, but 17 h3 h5 18 g4 g6 19 h4 (Ivkov) is still very promising for White.

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17 \( \text{Wxf3!} \) \( \text{Qd4} \) 18 \( \text{cxd4} \) \( \text{Wxc2} \) 19 \( \text{axh6!} \)

Winning a pawn, in view of 19...gxh6 20 \( \text{Wg4+} \).

White has a virtually decisive advantage here but Bronstein begins to let it slip; and the final position, where the players agreed a draw, is genuinely unclear.

19...\( \text{f6} \) 20 \( \text{g3} \) \( \text{h5} \) 21 \( \text{g4} \) \( \text{g6} \)

22 \( \text{dxe5?} \)

22 \( \text{Ac1!} \) \( \text{Wxb2} \) 23 \( \text{Ac7} \) intending 23...\( \text{Wxd4} \) 24 \( \text{d7} \) (lvkov) should be winning for White.

22...\( \text{xe5} \) 23 \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{Wxb2} \) 24 \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{e7} \) 25 \( \text{Wh4} \) \( \text{c7} \) 26 \( \text{g4?} \)

And here 26 \( \text{g5} \) keeps an edge.

26...\( \text{f6} \) 27 \( \text{ab1} \) \( \text{we5} \) 28 \( \text{fd1} \) \( \text{h7} \) 29 \( \text{bc1} \) \( \text{xc1} \) \( 1/2-1/2 \)

**Key Notes**

1. Remember to play 9 \( \text{h3} \) instead of 9 \( \text{bd2?!} \), which allows Black to seize the initiative with 9...\( \text{g4!} \), ...\( \text{h8} \) and ...\( \text{f5} \).
2. White needs to prepare \( \text{d3-d4} \) properly. A premature advance can lead to the centre coming under too much pressure, making it difficult for White to develop his queenside. Normally it’s best to wait until the queen’s knight has reached the kingside before thinking about this advance.
3. In the main line with 9...\( \text{h6} \), 10...\( \text{h5} \) and 11...\( \text{Wf6} \) (Game 18), White’s most promising plan is to play \( \text{e3} \) and then \( \text{d3-d4} \). The position looks deceptively quiet, but there are some cleverly concealed traps for Black to negotiate.
4. White should always be looking for ways to shut the a7-bishop out of the game. There are often tactical means to achieve this aim (see, for example, Game 22).
5. Whenever Black plays ...\( \text{h5} \), both sides must be wary of possible tactics involving a discovered attack with \( \text{xe5} \).
6. The most ambitious way of meeting the popular ...\( \text{e6} \) plan is with \( \text{c2} \) (see Games 20-21).
7. Be careful to avoid playing on auto-pilot – White’s position doesn’t play by itself. Games 19 and 23 are included to provide a stern warning for those who think otherwise!
8. The \( \text{e3} \) plan is a good second option for White (see Games 24-25). If Anand can struggle against it, then maybe your opponents will too!
9. An early ...\( \text{g4} \) is seemingly an enticing option for Black, especially for inexperienced players, but White should be very happy to face this move (see Game 27).
Chapter Four

Italian Game:
Two Knights Defence

When White plays 4 d3 against the Two Knights Defence, there’s an invitation for Black to transpose to the main lines with 4...c5 5 c3. Indeed, this is something which very often happens. In this chapter we’ll focus on alternatives to this bishop development.

Black’s most popular alternative by some distance is 4...e7. I suspect that this move is favoured by those who normally play the closed main lines with ...e7 against the Ruy Lopez, as Black’s system of development is very similar.

A key position, which has arisen in literally thousands of games, is reached after the following moves:

1 e4 e5 2 f3 c6 3 c4 f6 4 d3 e7
5 0-0 0-0 6 b3

White can also play 6 e1 or 6 c3, and these are perfectly good options, but for repertoire purposes I’ve chosen to focus entirely on 6 b3.

6...d6 7 c3

Black has arrived at a major crossroads, and there are numerous options for him:

a) The most popular choice in practice is the typical Ruy Lopez plan of gaining space in the centre and on the queenside, with 7 a5 8 c2 c5. This is covered in Tiviakov-Werle (Game 29).

b) The little pawn move 7 h6 has more uses than you might think. This option is considered in Nevednic-
Mitkov (Game 30), along with 7...\(\text{c}d7\) and 7...\(\text{h}8\) in the notes.

c) Developing the light-squared bishop to e6 is just as much an option here as it is in ...\(\text{c}c5\) lines. 7...\(\text{e}6\) is covered in Malakhov-Carlsen (Game 31), as well as 7...\(\text{g}4\) in the notes.

The following three games cover lines where Black plays an early ...d5. The most significant of these is undoubtedly 6...d5 (instead of 6...d6). There are obvious similarities to the ...d5 lines we’ve considered in previous chapters; the only noteworthy difference is the placement of Black’s dark-squared bishop.

White’s most promising option is Plan B: 7 exd5 \(\text{c}xd5\).

In this position White must decide between two possibilities:

a) The challenging 8 \(\text{e}1\), leading to sharp, forcing play, is the subject of Tiviakov-Ivanisevic (Game 32).

b) 8 h3 prevents the ...\(\text{g}4\) pin and can be considered the safer option. This is covered in Kramnik-Kasparov, Game 33.

We also take a look at two other lines involving an early ...d5. The paradoxical 6...d6 7 c3 d5! is considered in the notes to Game 33, while the sharp but theoretically dubious 4...d5 is covered in Emms-Wittmann (Game 34).

Finally, in Bologan-Tomashevsky (Game 35) we consider 4...h6, which is Black’s best alternative to the main moves, 4...\(\text{c}c5\) and 4...\(\text{e}7\).

Game 29
S.Tiviakov-J.Werle
Dutch Championship, Leeuwarden 2005

Many of the notes in this game are based on Tiviakov’s own excellent notes for ChessBase.

1 e4 e5 2 \(\text{c}c4\) \(\text{f}6\) 3 d3 \(\text{c}c6\) 4 \(\text{f}3\) \(\text{e}7\) 5 0-0 0-0 6 \(\text{b}3\) d6 7 c3 \(\text{a}5\) 8 \(\text{c}2\) c5

7...\(\text{a}5\) is a popular move, and one that is likely to be played by anyone who uses the Chigorin Defence (9...\(\text{a}5\)) in the mainline Ruy Lopez; or the ...\(\text{a}5\) plan against a variety of d3 Lopez lines, for example 1 e4 e5 2 \(\text{f}3\) \(\text{c}6\) 3 \(\text{b}5\) a6 4 \(\text{a}4\) \(\text{f}6\) 5 0-0 \(\text{e}7\) 6 \(\text{e}1\) b5 7 \(\text{b}3\) d6 8 c3 0-0 9 d3 \(\text{a}5\) 10 \(\text{c}2\) c5. Note that this position can also be reached from the main game, if White chooses 6 \(\text{e}1\) (instead of our 6 \(\text{b}3\)) and then 6...d6 7 c3 \(\text{a}5\) 8 \(\text{b}5\) (White saves the bishop in a roundabout route) 8...a6 9 \(\text{a}4\) b5 10 \(\text{c}2\) c5.

In our line, the positions reached are similar to those in the d3 Lopez,
Beating 1 e4 e5

with just a couple of slight differences. A positive for White is that his bishop has reached c2 in less time (c4-b3-c2 instead of b5-a4-b3-c2). On the other hand, Black isn’t committed to ...a6 and ...b5 and might be able to use these two tempi more effectively elsewhere.

9 a3!

The plan of a3 and b4 to gain space is not exactly new, but it’s noticeable that many of the leading Italian Game experts are favouring this approach. It’s certainly a way of trying to exploit Black’s lack of ...a6 and ...b5 – White’s plan would be less effective in the analogous d3 Lopez positions.

One advantage of this plan is that it can be implemented at quite a few different moments. For example, White can play 9 Ke1 c6 10 bd2 Ke8 and now, instead of the traditional 11 Kf1 intending Kg3, h3 and d4 (or Ke3, h3, Kh2-g4 etc), White can switch with 11 a3 Kf8 12 b4 when 12...a6 reaches the note to move 12 in the main game. In S.Tiviakov-L.Bruzon Bautista, Calvia Olympiad 2004, Black instead chose 12...g6, but then 13 Ke4! cxb4 14 axb4 Kd7 15 Kc4 h6 would have been favourable for White had he continued with 16 b5! Ke5 17 Ke3, as indicated by Bruzon.

9...Kc6 10 b4 a6

Black normally prevents the pawn advancing to b5. If, for example, 10...Kc7 White could consider 11 b5!? Ke5 12 a4! (Lukacs) when suddenly the b1-knight changes course and will be very effectively developed on c3, whereas Black’s knight on a5 will take a while to rejoin the action.

Black is usually reluctant to swap pawns on b4 unless he really has to: 10...cxb4 11 axb4! increases White’s central control and activates the rook on a1.

11 Ke1 Ke8

At first sight the apparently loose 11...d5 looks like it shouldn’t work at all, but it’s actually playable because Black can use tactics to avoid losing his e-pawn:

a) 12 exd5 Kxd5 (if 12...Kxd5 13 Kbd2 and Kc4-b6 becomes an idea) 13 h3!? (preventing...Kg4; 13 Kxe5? Kxe5 14 Kxe5 Kf6 is Black’s idea, while 13 Kxb2 Kg4! 14 Kbd2 cxb4 15 axb4 Ke4 left Black quite active in Zhang Zhong-L.Bruzon Bautista, Calvia Olympiad 2004) 13...Kf6!? 14 bxc5 (Dolmatov suggests 14 Kfd2!? planning Ke4) 14...f5 was V.Belikov-S.Smagin, Kazan 1995, and now White should consider 15 Ka2 preparing d4 to hold on to the extra pawn.
b) There's something to be said for 12 \( \text{bd2} \), intending 12...d4 13 cxd4 cxd4 and now 14 \( \text{b3} \) reactivating the bishop: 14...\( \text{d6} \) 15 \( \text{h4} \) \( \text{e7} \) 16 \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{g4} \) 17 \( \text{g3} \) etc, R.Picard-T.Calisti, Guingamp 2006.

12 \( \text{h3} \)

White often chooses the plan of \( \text{bd2} \) and \( \text{b2} \), aiming for d3-d4, but Tiviakov tries something a bit different.

The position after 12 \( \text{bd2} \) \( \text{f8} \) 13 \( \text{b2} \) has been seen in a few games. Some examples:

a) 13...\( \text{b5} \) 14 \( \text{d4} \) c4 (14...exd4 15 cxd4 cxb4 is met by 16 d5! and here 16...bxa3? loses material to 17 \( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 18 dxc6; or 14...cxd4 15 cxd4 exd4 16 \( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 17 \( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{b7} \) 18 \( \text{f3} \) with an edge for White, R.Schmaltz-R.Berzinsh, German League 2002) 15 a4 \( \text{b7} \) 16 d5 \( \text{e7} \) 17 \( \text{f1} \) g6 18 \( \text{c1} \) \( \text{g7} \) 19 \( \text{g3} \) \( \text{d7} \) 20 \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{ec8} \) 21 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{e8} \) 22 \( \text{a3} \) \( \text{c7} \) 23 \( \text{ea1} \) was a typically complex Lopez-style battle in Z.Efimenko-I.Saric, Kemer 2007. With White beginning to press on the a-file, Black hit back with 23...f5!? and the unclear complications continued after 24 exf5 \( \text{cxd5} \) 25 \( \text{h4} \) \( \text{f4} \) 26 \( \text{g4} \).

b) 13...\( \text{h5} \) 14 \( \text{f1} \) (this time 14 d4!? offers a gambit, and 14...exd4 15 cxd4 cxb4 16 d5 bxa3 17 \( \text{xa3} \) promises decent compensation) 14...\( \text{g6} \) 15 \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{f4} \)! (this wastes time; Hebden prefers 15...\( \text{g7} \) aiming for an eventual ...f5) 16 g3 \( \text{h5} \) 17 \( \text{g2} \) \( \text{g7} \) 18 \( \text{b3} \) (d5 is firmly under White's control) 18...\( \text{d7} \) 19 h3 \( \text{f8} \) 20 \( \text{d5} \) \( \text{c8} \) 21 d4 with some advantage for White, C.Bauer-M.Hebden, Escaldes 1998.

c) 13...\( \text{e6} \) 14 \( \text{h3} \) d5 (otherwise it's White who advances in the centre: 14...\( \text{d7} \) 15 d4 cxd4 16 cxd4 exd4 17 \( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 18 \( \text{xd4} \) with a small advantage, A.Areshchenko-A.Abdulla, Moscow 2008) 15 \( \text{g5} \)!
12...\textit{f8}

If Black chooses to prevent \textit{g5} by playing 12...\textit{h6}, White can revert back to the \textit{b2/bd2/d4} plan: 13 \textit{b2 f8} 14 \textit{bd2 b5} 15 d4 exd4 16 cxd4 cxd4 17 \textit{xd4} \textit{b7} 18 \textit{xc6} \textit{xc6} 19 \textit{f3} with a comfortable position for White, A.Sitnikov-D.Antic, Kavala 2005.

13 \textit{e3}!?

Now we see why Tiviakov delayed \textit{bd2} for so long – he wanted to put his bishop on \textit{e3}! Actually, \textit{e3} is normally a slightly unusual square for the bishop in this line, but here the pressure against \textit{c5} provides at least some justification for it, and it certainly works well in the game.

Tiviakov also mentions the more natural-looking 13 \textit{g5}?!: “After the exchange on \textit{f6} the \textit{d5}-square will become weak and White can hope for the advantage because of the bad bishop on \textit{f8}.” This move is always a serious consideration if Black plays ...\textit{f8} without first playing ...\textit{h6}.

13...\textit{cxb4}

If Black is forced to release the tension so quickly, maybe 12 \textit{e3} really is an effective move.

Tiviakov believes that Black should prefer 13...\textit{b5}. After 14 \textit{bd2} White has the possibility of increasing the pressure on \textit{c5} with \textit{b3}.

14 \textit{axb4} \textit{b5}

15 \textit{bd2}

Now White is ready to take the initiative in the centre by playing \textit{d4}, so Black takes steps to discourage him from doing so.

15...\textit{b7} 16 \textit{g5}

If 16 \textit{d4}, 16...\textit{exd4} 17 \textit{xd4} \textit{d5} equalizes.

16...\textit{h6} 17 \textit{h4} \textit{c8}
17...\(\text{e7}\) is an idea we’ve seen previously, with Black intending to relieve some pressure with ...\(\text{h5}\) or ...\(\text{d7}\). I think White keeps a small plus after 18 \(\text{f1 d7}\) 19 \(\text{g3}\), or 18...\(\text{h5}\) 19 \(\text{xe7}\) \(\text{xe7}\) (19...\(\text{xe7}\)? 20 \(\text{xe5!}\) ) 20 \(\text{e3}\), intending 20...\(\text{f4}\) 21 \(\text{d5}\).

18 \(\text{f1}\)

It’s quite instructive witnessing how Tiviakov eventually uses all of his minor pieces to take control of the d5-square. He also considered 18 \(\text{b3}\)?, which has the advantage of preventing ...a5 for the foreseeable future.

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

Rerouting the knight to d7. The battle for the d5-square is in full swing.

19 \(\text{a3 bd7}\) 20 \(\text{e3 wc7}\) 21 \(\text{b3}\)

However, winning a game of chess against a strong grandmaster is rarely easy. Werle refuses to let his position slide into passivity. Instead he wisely chooses to gain some activity and practical chances by sacrificing a pawn, ironically on the very same square White was aiming to dominate.

22...\(\text{d5}\)! 23 \(\text{xd5 xd5}\) 24 \(\text{xd5 xd5}\) 25 exd5 a5! 26 \(\text{xa5 xc3}\) 27 \(\text{xb5 xb4}\) 28 \(\text{f3}\) keeps White’s advantage under control.

23 \(\text{f3}\)

If Black does nothing special White will increase the pressure with \(\text{hg4}\), after which all his minor pieces are either directly or indirectly controlling the key d5-square! This is brilliant strategy from Tiviakov – he has basically won the key battle to control d5.

21...\(\text{g6}\)

Black misses a chance to eliminate a weakness and free his position with 21...a5!. White can only expect a very slight advantage after 22 \(\text{xa5}\) (22 bxa5 d5!) 22...\(\text{xc3}\) 23 \(\text{xf6 xf6}\) 24 \(\text{xb5 c6}\) 25 \(\text{b6 d7}\) 26 \(\text{a6 xb4}\) 27 \(\text{d5}\).

22 \(\text{h2 g7}\)

And here the pawn sacrifice 22...d5!? 23 \(\text{xd5 xd5}\) 24 \(\text{xd5 xd5}\) 25 exd5 a5! 26 \(\text{xa5 xc3}\) 27 \(\text{xb5 xb4}\) 28 \(\text{f3}\) keeps White’s advantage under control.

23 \(\text{f3}\)

However, winning a game of chess against a strong grandmaster is rarely easy. Werle refuses to let his position slide into passivity. Instead he wisely chooses to gain some activity and practical chances by sacrificing a pawn, ironically on the very same square White was aiming to dominate.

23...\(\text{d5}\)! 24 \(\text{xd5 xd5}\) 25 \(\text{xd5 xd5}\) 26 exd5 \(\text{wd6}\) 27 \(\text{ea1 b8}\) 28 \(\text{g4}\)

Tiviakov discarded 28 \(\text{f1}\) in view of 28...f5 29 \(\text{d2 f4}\) trapping the bishop, but later he realized that 30 \(\text{e4 f8}\) 31 \(\text{g4 g5}\) 32 \(\text{g5 h5}\) hxg5 33 \(\text{g5}\)
Beating 1 e4 e5 would give White a strong attack.

28...g5 29 g3 h6d8

Now Black wins back the d5-pawn, but his position remains compromised. If White brings his knight to f5 it will be very difficult for Black to save the position.

30 w2e2 wxd5 31 d1

At first sight it looks like there has been a shift in momentum: Black has regained his pawn and White has retreated. But in fact Black still has major issues to solve here. His position is full of weaknesses, especially the light squares on the kingside, and White has a very straightforward plan of manoeuvring the knight to the very juicy outpost on f5. To make matters worse, Werle was experiencing time trouble problems.

31...c6

Tiviakov believes that staying active was Black’s best chance: 31...e4 32 d4 f5 33 gxf5 wxf5 34 hxb8 wxb8 35 wxa6 hbc8 36 w3 and “White has an extra pawn with advantage”. With passive defence, Black is probably losing.

32 f1!

Here it comes!

32...d7 33 e3 w6e6 34 f5 f8?! 35 d4!

Now Black is unable to avoid losing material.

35...exd4 36 wxe6 fxe6

After 36...wxe6 37 w4xd4 w6c6 38 w3, the pin on the d-file is fatal and White follows up with R(a3)-a1-d1.

37 wxd4 w6f6 38 wda1!

The first pawn drops, and for the rest of the game Tiviakov never loses his grip.

38 wxc8 39 wxe6 w3d3 40 wxa6 wxd3 41 w5g5 w3c6 42 w6e6 wxb4 43 wxc6
A great performance from Tiviakov and a hugely instructive game. It's reassuring to be reminded that even strong grandmasters can be outplayed in these 'quiet' positions.

**Game 30**

**V.Nevednichy-M.Mitkov**

European Championship, Ohrid 2001

1 e4 e5 2 d4 c6 3 c4 f6 4 d3 c7 5 0-0 d6 6 b3 0-0 7 c3 h6

This little pawn move is sometimes played just to prevent g5 when Black is planning the typical regrouping manoeuvre ...e8, ...f8 and possibly ...g6 and ...g7, so that he is better placed to fight in the centre (the rook adds pressure down the e-file; the bishop influences events down the long diagonal).

In this particular line, though, 7...h6 is normally used in a different way – to free h7 for the knight! It might not be the first idea that comes to mind, but there's some solid logic behind it. Black wants to play h7-g5 to exchange at least one pair of minor pieces, and maybe two, in order to ease the congestion in his position and also to loosen White's control of the dark squares in the centre.

Black has also tried other plans involving moving the f6-knight:

a) 7...d7 frees f6 for the bishop and also aims for c5. With the pressure off e4, 8 d4 is a logical response. Now:

a1) The tempo-losing 8...f6!? is actually not as bad as it looks, since 9 bd2 g4 pressures White's centre. Even so, I was slightly worse after 10 d5 b8 11 h3! c8 (if 11...h5, White plays 12 e1 followed by f1-g3, or g2-g4) 12 e1 bd7 13 f1 e8 14 c2 g6 15 h6 g7 16 g4! f6 17 d2 h8 18 g3 g8 19 e3 in A.Minasian-J.Emms, Paris 1994.

a2) 8...f6 9 e3 a5 (or 9...e8 10
Beating 1 e4 e5

1. Beating 1 e4 e5
d4 
11 c4 g6 12 c3 h4 13 a4 (with an edge for White, L.Psakhis-E.Geller, Soviet Championship 1983) 10 c2 c4 11 c1 and White can build slowly here because there’s not a huge amount of pressure on his centre. The continuation of the game D.Pikula-S.Smagnin, Biel 1996, is worth noting: 11...e8 12 a4! f8 13 b3 b6 14 a5 bd7 15 b2 dg6 16 b4 a6 17 c4 exd4 18 cxd4 b8 19 e3 c6 20 b1. White has gradually seized more and more space whereas Black seems to have been going round in circles.

b) 7...h8 unpins the f-pawn in preparation for ...dh8 and ...f5. White must react energetically in the centre to have a chance of gaining an advantage: 8 b2 (development is key; 8 h3?! gh8! 9 d4 f5 is what Black is hoping for) 8...dh8 9 b3 f5 (everything else is too slow and Black just breaks with ...f5).

Here Black has a choice:

b1) 9...f5 (consistent, but...) 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 c4 (or even 11 exf5 xf5 12 c2 df7 13 e1) 11...xd1 12 xd1 ef6 13 xf5 (or 13 e3 fxe4 14 d2) 13...xf5 14 e3 dg5 15 d5 ac8 16 e3 a6 17 h3 h5 18 c2 xe7 19 e4 with some advantage for White in view of his greater activity and better structure, D.Sermek-N.Pedersen, Groningen 1993.

b2) Black can change course with 9...f6 but then even the simple 10 dxe5 is enough for some advantage, because of Black’s less than optimally placed pieces: 10...xe5 11 xe5 dxe5 12 c4 (M.Magomedov-V.Malaniuk, Koszalin 1999) 12...e6! 13 e3 (13 e3?) 13...xd1 14 xd1 ad8 15 xd4 xe8 16 xe6 fxe6 17 f1 (Magomedov). White will organize himself with e2 and d2 etc, and the weakness of Black’s doubled e-pawns isn’t going away.

8 b2

8 e1 and 8 h3 are also viable, and indeed there are transpositional possibilities if Black follows up with ...e8 and ...f8. However, with 8 b2 White has something else in mind against Black’s main plan.

8 e1 h7 9 b2 g5 10 xg5 xg5 11 c4 e6 12 d4 xc4 13 xc4 xc1 14 xc1 f6 15 d5 e7 16 b3 was ever so slightly better for White in L.Psakhis-O.Romanishin, L’viv 1984.

8...h7

8...e8 is Black’s other main choice here. For example, 9 e1 f8 10 h3 g6 (if 10...a5 11 c2 c5, White can again consider the a3 and b4 plan) 11 d4 (White could play more slowly with 11
not 15...g1? 15...xg5 16 f4 xf4 17 xf4 exf4 18 xf4 wf6 in C.Gorals-P.Haba, Internet (freestyle) 2006.

10 xg5 xg5 11 f4!

This is the point and the justification behind White’s previous play (avoiding e1 and not spending a move on h3). It’s easy to forget that d3-d4 isn’t White’s only pawn break!

11 e1 would transpose to Psakhis-Romanishin, above.

11...exf4 12 xf4 xf4

A.Onischuk-P.Blatny, Elista Olympiad 1998, instead continued 12...e6 13 e3!? (13 d4 xf4 14 xf4 wg5 15 wf3 reaches the main line) 13...xf4 14 xf4 wg5 (Onischuk prefers 14...e7 but still assesses 15 d4 g6 16 f3 wh4 17 c2 as a clear advantage for White) 15 f3 h5?! 16 d4 e7 17 wd3 c6 18 c2 and White was slowly building up the pressure in the centre and on the kingside. This King’s Gambit pawn structure is certainly favourable for White, which is why it’s worth keeping in mind the idea of f2-f4.

13 xf4 wg5 14 f3
Beating 1 e4 e5

14...b5!

Black wants to kick the knight away so that he can land his own knight on e5. White must react vigorously otherwise he loses his advantage.

14...e6 is more solid, but White’s exchange sacrifice in S. Roy Chowdhury-A. Filippov, Manama 2009, looks very promising: 15 d4 e7 16 h4!? (this is committal, and 16 f2 intending 16...g6 17 f3 is a decent alternative) 16...b5 17 d5 d7 18 f1 c5+ 19 h1 f6 20 e5! (not allowing Black to consolidate) 20...g6

\[ \text{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{h7+ f8 and now the brilliant 26 \textbf{xf6!! and White wins – Golubev}}} 23 e3 g6 24 f5 ae8 25 f3 xf5 (or 25...h7 26 h5! xh5 27 h3 g6 28 xh6+) 26 xf5 e7 27 c2 g6 (if 27...g5, 28 hxg5 hgx5 29 h3! b5 30 h7 e8 31 h3 wins – Golubev) 28 xg6+ g7 29 xh6 f5 30 e7! e8 31 e6+ h8 32 xf5 and Black resigned.}

15 h4!

15 e3?! e5! 16 f1 xd3!, overloading the queen, was Black’s idea. White can save himself with 17 xf7! xe3+ 18 h1, and here 18...e6 19 xf8+ xf8 20 xe6+ h7 21 xf8 f2+ 22 g1 g4+ 23 h1 f2+ is perpetual check.

15...g6 16 e3 e5 17 e2 g3

The immediate 17...e6, accepting a disadvantage, is the safer option.

18 af1 e6 19 d4!

\[ \text{White is happy to sacrifice the h-pawn, as he is fully coordinated and ready to attack fiercely on the kingside.}

19...g6 20 xf3 xh4 21 f5! d8

After 21...xf5 22 xf5, Rybka wants to play 22...h8 which sums up...}
Black’s position!

22 \( \text{wx}b5 \text{xb}8 \) 23 \( \text{we}2! \)

White could have played 23 \( \text{wa}4 \), but this pawn sacrifice looks even stronger.

\[ \text{23... } \text{xb}3 \text{ 24 axb3 } \text{xb}3 \text{ 25 } \text{g}3! \]

The threats on the kingside begin to mount. The first one Black has to prevent is 26 \( \text{wc}4 \) threatening the rook and the knight. 25...\( \text{h}7 \) would be the most natural try, but then 26 \( \text{axh6!} \) is very strong: 26...\( \text{g}xh6 \) (26...\( \text{axh6} \) 27 \( \text{wg}4!) \) 27 \( \text{wh}5 \) \( \text{g}7 \) (if 27...\( \text{we}7 \), White plays 28 \( \text{h}3 \)) 28 \( \text{xf7+!} \) \( \text{xf7} \) 29 \( \text{xg6+} \) \( \text{f}8 \) 30 \( \text{wg}4 \) \( \text{b}8 \) (30...\( \text{wd}7 \) loses to 31 \( \text{gg}8+ \) \( \text{e}7 \) 32 \( \text{wh}4+ \) \( \text{e}6 \) 33 \( \text{gg}6+) \) 31 \( \text{axh6!} \) (White doesn’t need to rush to win the queen) 31...\( \text{e}8 \) 32 \( \text{h}8+ \) \( \text{e}7 \) (or 32...\( \text{xf}8 \) 33 \( \text{h}7!) \) 33 \( \text{xd}8 \) \( \text{xd}8 \) 34 \( \text{b}4 \) with good winning chances.

Black’s choice in the game allows him to defend on the kingside for the moment, but only at a cost of giving back the pawn, and a powerful central one at that.

\[ \text{25...d}5 \text{ 26 exd}5 \text{ } \text{b}6 \text{ 27 c}4! \) \( \text{h}7 \) 28 \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 29 \( \text{b}4 \) \( \text{e}8 \) 30 \( \text{gf}3 \)

Black can hardly make a move here. 30...\( \text{d}7 \) doesn’t lose immediately, but 31 \( \text{b}5 \) keeps up the intense pressure. If 31...\( \text{h}8 \), White can even play the simple 32 \( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{xf}3 \) 33 \( \text{xf}3 \) \( \text{g}8 \) 34 \( \text{f}5 \) followed by \( \text{c}5 \).

Black’s choice in the game fails to meet White’s main threat.

\[ \text{30... } \text{h}8? \text{ 31 } \text{xf}7! \]

This is winning.

\[ \text{31... } \text{xf}3 \text{ 32 } \text{xf}3 \text{ } \text{g}8 \text{ 33 } \text{f}5 \text{ } \text{g}5 \text{ 34 } \text{d}6 \text{ cxd}6 \text{ 35 } \text{xd}6 \text{ wh}4 \text{ 36 } \text{f}6+ \text{ xf}6 \text{ 37 } \text{xf}6 \text{ 1-0} \]

**Game 31**

V.Malakhov-M.Carlsen
World Cup (rapid), Khanty-Mansiysk 2005

1 \( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 2 \( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 3 \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 4 \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{e}7 \)

5 \( \text{c}0-\text{c}0 \) \( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{d}6 \) 7 \( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{e}6 \)

Black’s other bishop move, 7...\( \text{g}4 \), has more merit here than in similar positions (**see following diagram**).

The reason is that Black has a clear plan to release some pressure via ex-
Beating 1 e4 e5 changes with ...\(\text{\texttt{\texttt{d7-c5}}\}(-e6)\) and, depending on the situation, ...\(\text{\texttt{g5}}\), ....\(\text{\texttt{g5}}\), or ....\(\text{\texttt{xf3}}\) followed by something to g5.

For example, 8 h3 \(\text{\texttt{h5}}\) 9 \(\text{\texttt{e1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{d7}}\) 10 \(\text{\texttt{e3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xf3}}\)! (if 10...\(\text{\texttt{c5}}\), White’s idea is 11 \(\text{\texttt{x}}\)xc5 dxc5 12 g4 \(\text{\texttt{g6}}\) 13 \(\text{\texttt{d5}}\) followed by \(\text{\texttt{xc6}}\) to ruin Black’s pawns, leading to an edge) 11 \(\text{\texttt{Wxf3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{g5}}\) 12 \(\text{\texttt{a4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xe3}}\) 13 \(\text{\texttt{Wxe3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e7}}\) 14 d4, S.Dolmatov-V.Kupreichik, Sverdlovsk 1984. Black has succeeded in his aim of exchanging some minor pieces, although White is still slightly more comfortably placed.

More recently, Tiviakov has dispensed with \(\text{\texttt{e1}}\) to good effect: 9 \(\text{\texttt{e3}}\)! \(\text{\texttt{d7}}\) 10 \(\text{\texttt{bd2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{c5}}\) (it’s too late for 10...\(\text{\texttt{xf3}}\) 11 \(\text{\texttt{xf3}}\)!, when ....\(\text{\texttt{g5}}\) is prevented) 11 \(\text{\texttt{xc5!}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xf3}}\) (or 11...dxc5 12 ...\(\text{\texttt{d5}}\)!) 12 \(\text{\texttt{xf3}}\) dxc5 13 ...\(\text{\texttt{d5}}\)! \(\text{\texttt{d6}}\) 14 \(\text{\texttt{xc6}}\) bxc6, S.Tiviakov-E.Bacrot, Ajaccio (rapid) 2008.

The only thing standing between White and a decisive positional advantage is his d3-pawn. There might be other ways to proceed, but even Tiviakov’s radical solution – just to give it up! – has some promise: 15 \(\text{\texttt{Wc2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{fd8}}\) 16 \(\text{\texttt{fd1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{f6}}\) 17 ...\(\text{\texttt{d2}}\)!? \(\text{\texttt{xd3}}\) 18 \(\text{\texttt{Wxd3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xd3}}\) 19 ...\(\text{\texttt{c4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{d8}}\) 20 \(\text{\texttt{xd3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xd3}}\) 21 ...\(\text{\texttt{f1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{f8}}\) 22 ...\(\text{\texttt{e2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{d8}}\) 23 ...\(\text{\texttt{d1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{b8}}\) 24 ...\(\text{\texttt{d7}}\) \(\text{\texttt{c8}}\) 25 ...\(\text{\texttt{a5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e8}}\) 26 ...\(\text{\texttt{d2}}\) and only White has chances to win this position. (I should add that in the game Tiviakov went horribly wrong and ended up fortunate to draw!)

Judging by that evidence, 9 ...\(\text{\texttt{e3}}\) looks like a good way to cut across the ...\(\text{\texttt{d7-c5}}\) plan. Should Black consider changing plans with 9...d5 here? If White captures on d5, his bishop isn’t ideally placed on e3. Development with 10 ...\(\text{\texttt{bd2}}\) makes more sense.

For example, 10...d4!? (if 10...a6, White could play 11 \(\text{\texttt{we2}}\) and then, say, 11...\(\text{\texttt{d7}}\) 12 \(\text{\texttt{fd1}}\) h6 13 ...\(\text{\texttt{f1}}\) d4 14 ...\(\text{\texttt{d2}}\) ...\(\text{\texttt{ad8}}\) 15 ...\(\text{\texttt{g3}}\) 11 cxd4 exd4 (11...\(\text{\texttt{xd4}}\) 12 g4!) 12 ...\(\text{\texttt{f4}}\) ...\(\text{\texttt{d6}}\) (12...\(\text{\texttt{d7}}\)?) 13 ...\(\text{\texttt{xd6}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xd6}}\) 14 ...\(\text{\texttt{c2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xf3}}\) 15 ...\(\text{\texttt{f3}}\), as played in E.Torre-C.Becx, Lugano 1989. White is better here because of his strong bishop, the open c-file and pressure against d4 and c7.
Let’s return to the position after 7...\(\text{\textipa{e}6}\). Once again White is faced with a familiar conundrum: should he keep the bishop on b3 or avoid the possibility of an exchange?

\[8 \text{\textipa{c}2}\]

In earlier times players tended to keep the bishop on b3, at least for the moment, but it’s noticeable that grandmasters such as Malakhov and Tiviakov prefer to hide the bishop on c2.

After 8 \(\text{\textipa{b}d2}\) (8 \(\text{\textipa{e}1}\) often transposes) here are some typical lines:

a) 8...\(\text{\textipa{x}b3}\) 9 \(\text{\textipa{w}xb3}\) \(\text{\textipa{b}8}\) 10 \(\text{\textipa{e}1}\) \(\text{\textipa{d}7}\) 11 \(\text{\textipa{c}4}\) h6 12 d4 \(\text{\textipa{f}6}\) 13 \(\text{\textipa{e}3}\) (White has a slight edge here) 13...exd4?! (Lukacs prefers 13...\(\text{\textipa{b}6}\)) 14 cxd4 \(\text{\textipa{b}6}\) (S.Dolmatov-S.Agdestein, Tilburg 1993) and now 15 d5 (Lukacs) would have left White in control.

b) 8...\(\text{\textipa{d}7}\) followed by centralizing the rooks is a typical plan. 9 \(\text{\textipa{e}1}\) and now:

b1) 9...\(\text{\textipa{a}e}8\) intending ...\(\text{\textipa{d}8}\) followed by ...\(\text{\textipa{e}7-g6}\), has been played a few times but it looks a bit artificial: 10 \(\text{\textipa{f}1}\) (or 10 \(\text{\textipa{a}4}\) a6 11 d4 exd4 12 \(\text{\textipa{xd}4}\) with a slight advantage – Yudasin) 10...\(\text{\textipa{d}8}\) 11 \(\text{\textipa{g}3}\) d5 (after 11...a6 12 \(\text{\textipa{c}2}\) \(\text{\textipa{c}8}\) 13 d4 \(\text{\textipa{g}4}\) 14 \(\text{\textipa{e}3}\) d5 15 h3 exd4 16 cxd4 dxe4 17 hxg4 exf3 18 \(\text{\textipa{f}5}\) the position had opened up nicely for White’s bishops in J.Nunn-E.Geller, London 1982) 12 \(\text{\textipa{a}4}\)!

This is a key idea, and a recurring theme. I can say from experience that it’s not so easy to remember this possibility over the board (especially if the bishop has previously retreated to c2). The pin on the c6-knight can cause Black grief, and for this reason he often spends a tempo on ...a6 so as to answer \(\text{\textipa{a}4}\) with ...b5.

A.Cherniaev-Ma.Tseitlin, Biel 1999, continued 12...\(\text{\textipa{wd}6}\) 13 d4! dxe4 14 \(\text{\textipa{xe}5}\) and Black could find nothing better than to give up material with 14...\(\text{\textipa{xe}5}\) 15 dxe5 \(\text{\textipa{xe}5}\) 16 \(\text{\textipa{xe}8}\) \(\text{\textipa{xe}8}\).

b2) 9...\(\text{\textipa{ad}8}\) 10 \(\text{\textipa{a}4}\)?! (here it is again; this time White’s aim is to play d4 while avoiding the exchange of bishops) 10...a6 11 d4 b5 12 \(\text{\textipa{c}2}\) \(\text{\textipa{g}4}\) 13 h3 \(\text{\textipa{h}5}\) 14 d5 \(\text{\textipa{b}8}\) (Lukacs prefers
Beating 1 e4 e5

14...d5 which does look more natural; perhaps Balashov was concerned about 15 a4) 15 f1 c6! (Black must fight back in the centre; play is similar to that in the 9 d4 Lopez, except that Black’s light-squared bishop is a bit misplaced) 16 dxc6 bxc6 17 g3 g6 (A.Jakubiec-Y.Balashov, Wisla 1992) and here 18 h4 d5 19 xg6 hxg6 20 exd5 xd5 looks good enough for a slight advantage for White, in view of his bishop pair.

8...d5

This advance is Black’s most natural response to 8 c2, and also the most popular choice.

If 8...d7 preparing ...f5, White strikes in the centre with 9 d4! and Black has to deal with the threat of d5. L.Totsky-V.Golod, Moscow 1991, continued 9...edx4 10 xd4 (also possible is 10 cxd4 d5 11 c3 dxe4 12 xe4) 10...xg4 11 cxd4 b6 12 c3 c5 (if 12...d5, White advances with 13 e5) 13 c8 14 f4 (White can also play more positionally with 14 a4) 14...f6 15 e5? dxe5 16 fxe5 xe5 17 xh7+ xh7 18 h5+ g8 19 xe5 and White maintained an edge.

9 bd2

In comparison to some of the ...e6, c2 lines of previous chapters, White could argue that Black’s dark-squared bishop is more passively placed on e7 and it’s not so straightforward for Black to organize his forces. This is at least partially true, although one way for Black to try to remedy the problem is to play ...e8, ...h6 (to prevent g5 or g5) and ...f8.

Tiviakov has played 9 we2, and this move has the merit of accelerating d1 if Black chooses to release the tension.

For example, 9...dxe4 10 dxe4 d7! (the best way to reorganize) 11 d1 (11 bd2 would transpose to the main game) 11...c8 (11...we8! 12 g5 xg5 13 xg5 f6 14 e3 we7, as played in M.Ohme-C.Billing, Kelheim 2007, effectively gains a tempo and White’s advantage based on the two bishops is small) 12 g5! xg5 13 xg5 f6 14 e3 we8 15 d2 a5 16 c4 wf7 17 a3 b6 18 d2 fc8?! 19 a4 a7 20
and White was in total control, S.Tiviakov-M.Van der Werf, Dieren 2006.

What happens if Black tries to keep the tension in the centre? Let’s see:

9...\(\text{dxe}4\) 10 ::\text{bd}2 (10 \text{a}4!??) 10...a6 (prophylaxis against \text{a}4) 11 h3 h6

12 exd5!? (12 \text{d}1 \text{f}8 13 \text{f}1 \text{d}7 14 \text{g}3 \text{d}ad8 is roughly equal) 12...\text{xd}5 (12...\text{xd}5 intending 13 \text{e}1 \text{f}8 looks like a decent alternative) 13 \text{c}4 and now:

a) 13...f6 is met by 14 d4!.

b) If 13...\text{d}6, I wonder whether White can grab the pawn: 14 \text{c}xe5 \text{xe}5 (or 14...\text{f}5 15 \text{xc}6! \text{xe}2 16 \text{xd}8 \text{xc}2 17 \text{xb}7) 15 \text{xe}5 \text{f}5 16 \text{f}4, intending 16...f6 17 \text{h}5!.

c) 13...\text{f}4 14 \text{xf}4! \text{xf}4 15 d4 \text{d}5 16 \text{fe}1 \text{f}6 17 \text{d}3 g6 18 \text{xe}8+ \text{xe}8 19 \text{cd}2, when White’s strong centre and better structure is worth more than Black’s bishop pair, L.Hoyos Mil- lan-V.Nasybullin, correspondence 2007.

Overall, I feel that Black should be okay if he is careful but I would still prefer to be White.

\text{Italian Game: Two Knights Defence}

9...\text{dxe}4

Black can also consider keeping the tension here:

a) 9...\text{d}7 10 \text{e}1 \text{d}8 11 \text{a}4! (this move, again!) 11...\text{d}6 12 h3 (I don’t see anything terribly wrong with 12 exd5 \text{xd}5 13 \text{xe}5) 12...a6 13 \text{g}5!? b5 14 \text{b}3 \text{e}7 (14...\text{c}5!?) 15 d4! \text{g}6 16 \text{xe}6 \text{fxe}6 17 exd5 exd5 18 \text{e}4! c6 19 \text{xd}6 \text{xd}6 20 \text{xe}5 \text{xe}5 21 \text{f}4 \text{fd}7 22 \text{g}3 \text{de}8 23 \text{e}3 \text{f}6 24 \text{e}2 \text{e}7 25 a4! and Black was beginning to feel the pressure in D.Sermek-M.Zelić, Pula 2001.

b) 9...\text{e}8 10 \text{e}1 (10 \text{we}2 transposes to 9 \text{we}2, above) 10...\text{f}8 11 h3 h6 (11...a6 12 \text{g}5!) 12 \text{a}4 (expanding Philidor-style with 12 b4!? a6 13 \text{b}2 looks interesting, intending a3, exd5 and c4) 12...\text{dxe}4 13 \text{dxe}4 \text{d}7! 14 \text{f}1 (I’m tempted by 14 \text{we}2 followed by \text{xc}6 and \text{c}4) 14...\text{a}5 (Lukac suggests 14...\text{f}6 aiming for ...\text{c}5 and ...\text{e}8) 15 \text{e}3 c6 16 \text{ac}2 \text{c}4 17 \text{g}4! h5 18 \text{gh}2 f6 19 \text{we}2 \text{f}7 20 \text{h}4 (White is marginally better, but the game ends dramatically...) 20...\text{g}6?? 21
Beating 1 e4 e5

\( \triangleleft xg6! \) and 1-0, A.Lutikov-A.Tuzovsky, Frunze 1973.

10 dxe4

10...\( \triangleleft d7! \)

It might appear that Black has quite a few decent options here, but in reality it’s difficult to find another way to reorganize effectively and to deal with White’s plan of \( \triangleleft e2, \triangleleft c4, \triangleleft d1 \) and possibly \( \triangleleft a4 \).

The plan of \( ...\triangleleft c5 \) and \( ...\triangleleft e7 \) has some appeal, but it seems that Black doesn’t have enough time to arrange this together with the necessary prophylactic moves like \( ...h6 \) and \( ...a6/...a5 \). For example, 10...\( \triangleleft c5 \) 11 \( \triangleleft e2 \) \( \triangleleft e7 \) 12 \( \triangleleft c4 \) \( \triangleleft d7 \) 13 b4 (or 13 \( \triangleleft g5 \)) 13...\( \triangleleft d6 \) 14 \( \triangleleft d1 \) \( \triangleleft b6 \) 15 \( \triangleleft e3! \), or 10...a5 11 \( \triangleleft e2 \) \( \triangleleft c5 \) 12 \( \triangleleft c4 \) \( \triangleleft d7 \) 13 \( \triangleleft g5 \); in both cases White can count on at least a small advantage.

11 \( \triangleleft e2 \) \( \triangleleft e8 \)

Planning \( ...f6 \), usefully preventing \( \triangleleft g5 \), followed by \( ...\triangleleft f7 \), after which Black’s pieces enjoy some coordination.

11...\( \triangleleft b6 \) prevents \( \triangleleft c4 \), but there’s still \( \triangleleft f1-e3 \) (or \( g3 \)). I think that White’s most challenging plan here involves a pawn advance on the queenside: 12 b4 \( \triangleleft d6 \) 13 \( \triangleleft d1 \) a5 14 b5 \( \triangleleft e7 \) (L.Mazi-V.Srebrnic, Aschach 1994). Here, I was engrossed by a long Rybka-inspired line: 15 \( \triangleleft g5 \) \( \triangleleft d7 \) 16 \( \triangleleft xh7! \)

16...\( \triangleleft xh7 \) 17 \( \triangleleft h5+ \) \( \triangleleft g8 \) 18 \( \triangleleft f3 \) g6! (18...f6 19 \( \triangleleft b3+ \) 19 \( \triangleleft h6 \) f6 20 \( \triangleleft b3+ \) \( \triangleleft f7 \) 21 \( \triangleleft g5! \) (21 \( \triangleleft e3 \) \( \triangleleft bd5! \) 22 \( \triangleleft xd5 \) \( \triangleleft xd5 \) \( \triangleleft h7! \) 24 \( \triangleleft xg6+ \) \( \triangleleft g7 \) 25 \( \triangleleft h6 \) \( \triangleleft h7 \) is a draw by repetition) 21...\( \triangleleft f8! ? \) 22 \( \triangleleft h4! \) \( \triangleleft ed5! \) 23 \( \triangleleft xd5 \) a4! 24 \( \triangleleft xd6 \) axb3 25 \( \triangleleft xf6 \) \( \triangleleft g7 \) 26 \( \triangleleft xf7 \) \( \triangleleft xf7 \) and who knows what is happening? A bit of tangent, I realize, but fun to analyse!

12 \( \triangleleft c4 \) f6 13 \( \triangleleft e3 \)

Heading for d5. 13 \( \triangleleft d1 \) \( \triangleleft f7 \) 14 \( \triangleleft e3 \) comes to the same thing.

13...\( \triangleleft f7 \) 14 \( \triangleleft d1 \) \( \triangleleft fd8 \) 15 \( \triangleleft d5 \) \( \triangleleft ac8 \)

Lukacs suggests that 15...\( \triangleleft b6 \) 16 \( \triangleleft xe7+ \) \( \triangleleft xe7 \) restricts White’s advantage to a minimum, and it’s hard to argue with this. White can play 17 b3 followed by \( \triangleleft e3 \) and hope to slowly make some inroads using his bishop pair.
Carlsen clearly believed in Black’s position to some extent, because he was happy to repeat the line right up to this point against the same opponent in the same mini-match. Having said that, I guess there would have been precious little opportunity to prepare thoroughly between the rapidplay games.

16...c5?

This is a blunder, which loses material to a simple tactic.

Carlsen’s improvement in the next game was simply 16...f8, but after 17 d2 a6?! 18 ad1 he was under some pressure. If 18...c5, 19 xc5 xc5 20 b4 d7 21 b3 keeps White on top. Black has problems to solve even after 17...e7 18 ad1, but this looks like a wiser choice.

17 xc5 xc5 18 b5!

If the knight moves, White just takes on b7. Carlsen’s creative attempt to trap the queen is met by a solid refutation.

18...b6!? 19 b4 a6 20 xc6 d6

21 xf6+!

Winning.

21...gx6 22 xd6 cxd6 23 xb6 d7
24 xd6 xc3 25 b3 xb3 26 axb3
xb3 27 h3 f8 28 xa6 g6 29 a8+
g7 30 c8 h6 31 c7 d3 32 c6
f8 33 b5 1-0

In the next three games we consider lines where Black plays an early ...d5, the most popular of which is 6...d5.

Game 32

S.Tiviakov-I.Ivanisevic
Greek Team Championship,
Kallithea 2009

1 e4 e5 2 f3 c6 3 c4 f6 4 d3 e7
5 0-0 0-0 6 b3 d5 7 exd5

Capturing is definitely the most challenging response to 6...d5.

If 7 bd2, Black’s most straightforward course of action is 7...dxe4 8 dxe4
c5! 9 c3 e7 reaching a position with equal chances. I should stress that, as we’ve seen in similar positions, there’s
still plenty of scope for either side to outplay his opponent.

7...\textit{\textbackslash d}xd5 8 \textit{\textbackslash e}e1

This is White’s sharpest try, and perhaps the most critical. The safer 8 h3 is considered in the next game.

8...\textit{\textbackslash g}4

8...\textit{\textbackslash f}6 looks like the only decent alternative, although even here Black soon feels obliged to pin the f3-knight: 9 \textit{\textbackslash d}bd2 (9 h3 is also possible, transposing to 8 h3 \textit{\textbackslash f}6 9 \textit{\textbackslash e}e1) 9...\textit{\textbackslash g}4 10 h3 \textit{\textbackslash h}5 11 \textit{\textbackslash e}e4 \textit{\textbackslash f}4 (if 11...\textit{\textbackslash e}e8 I like 12 c3 \textit{\textbackslash g}6 13 a3 with \textit{\textbackslash a}2/\textit{\textbackslash b}3 ideas, while 11...\textit{\textbackslash d}4 is met by 12 g4) 12 \textit{\textbackslash g}3 \textit{\textbackslash x}f3 (12...\textit{\textbackslash g}6 13 d4! undermines the knight on f4) 13 \textit{\textbackslash w}xf3 \textit{\textbackslash d}d4!? (13...\textit{\textbackslash b}8 14 \textit{\textbackslash w}e4 \textit{\textbackslash g}6 15 c3 \textit{\textbackslash g}5 16 \textit{\textbackslash f}5 left White with strong light-squared control in A.Beliavsky-G.Agzamov, Spartakiad 1981) 14 \textit{\textbackslash w}xb7 \textit{\textbackslash b}8 (“intending ...\textit{\textbackslash x}b3” – Beliavsky) and now I think White has a promising queen-for-pieces exchange: 15 \textit{\textbackslash w}e4 \textit{\textbackslash b}4 (or 15...\textit{\textbackslash x}b3 16 cxb3 \textit{\textbackslash c}2 17 \textit{\textbackslash e}e3 \textit{\textbackslash x}a1 18 \textit{\textbackslash x}a1 \textit{\textbackslash x}d3 19 \textit{\textbackslash x}f4 \textit{\textbackslash x}e4 20 \textit{\textbackslash x}e4 exf4 21 \textit{\textbackslash x}xf6+ gxf6 22 \textit{\textbackslash c}1) 16 \textit{\textbackslash d}2!

\textit{\textbackslash d}e2+ 17 \textit{\textbackslash x}e2 \textit{\textbackslash x}e4 18 \textit{\textbackslash x}e4.

8...\textit{\textbackslash f}6?! is unwise. Both 9 d4! exd4 10 \textit{\textbackslash x}d4 and 9 \textit{\textbackslash c}3 \textit{\textbackslash e}6 10 d4! should lead to at least some advantage for White.

As a rule of thumb, Black should avoid \textit{\textbackslash f}6 if White can answer immediately with d4.

9 h3

If White wishes to avoid the sharp positions arising after this move, he can play 9 \textit{\textbackslash d}bd2!? This shouldn’t lead to any significant advantage as long as Black is careful, but again there are enough possibilities to keep things interesting.

9 \textit{\textbackslash d}bd2 \textit{\textbackslash f}6 10 h3 \textit{\textbackslash h}5 11 c3 (White must prevent ...\textit{\textbackslash d}4) 11...\textit{\textbackslash h}8 12 \textit{\textbackslash e}4 \textit{\textbackslash w}d7? (instead Black should play something like 12...\textit{\textbackslash a}5 13 \textit{\textbackslash c}2 \textit{\textbackslash c}5) was D.Pikula-Z.Petronijevic, Cetinje 1993, and here both players overlooked the possibility of 13 \textit{\textbackslash x}e5! winning a pawn – 13...\textit{\textbackslash x}e5 14 \textit{\textbackslash w}xh5 \textit{\textbackslash x}d3 loses to 15 \textit{\textbackslash x}d1.

After 9 h3 Black has to make a big decision: should he exchange on f3 and...
enter a long forcing sequence, or retreat and sacrifice his e-pawn to induce a weakness on White’s kingside? Both choices lead to very complicated positions, albeit ones which are quite different in character.

9...\texttt{\textit{xf}}3

9...\texttt{\textit{h}}5 offers a Marshall-style gambit: 10 \texttt{g}4! (10 \texttt{\textit{bd}}2 is likely to lead to the 10 \texttt{\textit{bd}}2 note, after 10...f6) 10...\texttt{g}6 11 \texttt{\textit{xe}}5 \texttt{\textit{xe}}5 12 \texttt{\textit{xe}}5 c6.

White’s kingside is compromised because of the advanced g-pawn. On the other hand, in contrast to the Marshall Gambit in the Ruy Lopez, White is able to develop his queenside much more quickly. Indeed, a recurring theme here is how White tries to overcome his weaknesses by striving for piece activity. Accurate play is required, but objectively White could be doing well here. For example, 13 \texttt{\textit{h}}6! \texttt{\textit{d}}6! (13...\texttt{f}6 14 \texttt{\textit{e}}2 \texttt{h}8 15 \texttt{\textit{xd}}5 \texttt{cxd}5 16 \texttt{c}3 \texttt{xc}3 17 \texttt{bxc}3 \texttt{c}8 was seen in no lesser game than V.Kramnik-G.Kasparov, Novgorod 1995, and here Kramnik indicates that White can maintain an advantage with either 18 \texttt{d}2 or 18 \texttt{e}3 \texttt{xc}3 19 \texttt{d}4 \texttt{c}6 20 \texttt{a}e1) 14 \texttt{e}2! and now:

a) 14...\texttt{\textit{h}}4 15 \texttt{\textit{xd}}5 \texttt{cxd}5 16 \texttt{c}3 \texttt{h}8 (16...d4 17 \texttt{b}5) 17 \texttt{\textit{xd}}5! \texttt{\textit{ad}}8 18 \texttt{g}5 \texttt{\textit{xh}}3 19 \texttt{g}2 \texttt{\textit{xg}}2+ 20 \texttt{\textit{xg}}2 with an extra pawn and a significant advantage for White, J.Nunn-J.Fernandez Garcia, Lugano 1983.

b) 14...\texttt{h}8 15 \texttt{c}3 \texttt{xc}3 16 \texttt{bxc}3 f5 (16...\texttt{\textit{h}}4 17 \texttt{\textit{d}}2 f5 18 \texttt{\textit{ae}}1 \texttt{fxg}4 19 \texttt{\textit{xg}}4 forces Black to lose time retreating his queen, V.Dimitrov-M.Vucic, Elenite 1986) 17 g5 (Dolmatov assesses 17 \texttt{\textit{g}}2 as a “+/-” but I prefer this more active move) 17...f4 18 h4. If Black now plays 18...h6, White can go on the offensive: 19 \texttt{b}2! hxg5 20 c4 gxh4 21 \texttt{\textit{h}}1.

Suddenly, with \texttt{\textit{g}}1 and c5 looming, it’s Black’s king which is being attacked!

c) 14...f5 15 \texttt{c}3! (again active development is key) 15...\texttt{\textit{fxg}}4 (or 15...\texttt{\textit{h}}8 16 \texttt{\textit{xd}}5 \texttt{cxd}5 17 g5!) 16 \texttt{\textit{xg}}4 \texttt{\textit{f}}5 (16...\texttt{f}5 17 \texttt{\textit{h}}5) 17 \texttt{\textit{e}}4! (this is a strong square for the knight...) 17...\texttt{e}5
Beating 1 e4 e5

18 d4!? (...not so strong now, but this move is tactically justified) 18...\textit{\texttt{\textbullet}}xd4 19 Qg3! Whf6 20 Qxf5 Qxf5 21 Whg2 wh8 22 Qg5 Whg6 23 Whd5 cxd5 24 c3 Qb6 25 Whh4 Qc6 26 Qe7 Qg8 27 Wha1 Wha4 28 Whg4 Qc5 29 Whd7 b5 30 Whc7 Qb6 31 Whd6 Qc5 32 Whc5 Whf8 33 Whxa7 and 1-0, M.Mathias-K.Elison, correspondence 1997.

Because the positions are so complicated it would be nice to see some more games, preferably involving someone like Tiviakov, before making a definitive judgement. At the moment, though, the signs are looking promising for White.

\textbf{10 Whxf3}

10...Whd4!

If Black just retreats the knight from d5, White can count on some advantage due to his gain of the bishop pair and light-squared control.

\textbf{11 Whxd5}

Other queen moves allow Black comfortable equality. For example, 11 We4 Qxb3 12 axb3 Qf6, or 11...c6!? 12 Whxe5 Qf6 13 Whh5 Qb4 14 Whd1 a5 15 Qa3 b5 with decent compensation, I.Nepomniachtchi-A.Naiditsch, European Championship, Dresden 2007.

\textbf{11...Whxd5 12 Whd5 Qxc2 13 Qxe5!}

It's the discovery of this move which has breathed new life into 8 We1, although at the time of writing I have found only three games with it, two by Tiviakov. Instead of trying to win the a1-bound knight straightaway, White grabs two key pawns (e5 and b7). He will be the exchange down, but the knight on a1 will remain trapped and White will still hope to capture it at a later stage. Furthermore, it will be difficult for Black's rooks to enter the game.

It's difficult to make a judgement with any certainty because the material is still quite scarce, but it's reassuring for us that Tiviakov has been willing to enter this position more than once. Just as reassuring is the fact that 13 Qxe5 is \textit{Rybka}'s preference!

Previously White has chosen 13 Qd2, but 13...Qxa1 14 Qc1 Qad8 15 Qc3 c6 16 Qf3 Qxd3 17 Qe3 Qb4 18 Qe2 (maybe 18 Qe4?!), intending
18...\texttt{d7} 19 \texttt{f5}, is an improvement) 18...\texttt{d7} 19 \texttt{xa1} \texttt{a5!}, intending ...\texttt{b6}, probably ensures Black of at least equality, S.Dizdar-A.Mihalchishin, Zenica 1989.

13...\texttt{d6}

Alternatively:

a) 13...\texttt{ae8} 14 \texttt{e2} \texttt{xa1} 15 \texttt{xb7} \texttt{d6} 16 \texttt{e3} transposes to the game.

b) 13...\texttt{fe8} 14 \texttt{e2} \texttt{xa1} 15 \texttt{xb7} \texttt{g5} (! – Naiditsch) 16 \texttt{e3} \texttt{ad8} is assessed as unclear by Naiditsch.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{chess_board.png}
\caption{Italian Game: Two Knights Defence}
\end{figure}

14 \texttt{e2} \texttt{ae8} 14...\texttt{xa1} 15 \texttt{xb7} \texttt{ae8} 16 \texttt{e3} comes to the same thing.

15 \texttt{e3} \texttt{xa1} 16 \texttt{xb7}

As far as I can see, White’s best course of action is to play the position ‘normally’, just ignoring the trapped knight on a1 for the moment. For example, 17 \texttt{a6} g6 18 \texttt{c4} \texttt{g7} 19 \texttt{c3} \texttt{xe3} 20 \texttt{fxe3} \texttt{b8} 21 b3 f5 22 \texttt{f2} and now White is finally ready to win the knight with \texttt{e1-d2} and \texttt{e1}. It’s not clear what Black can do to prevent this, and \texttt{Rybka’s} evaluation increases once it begins to appreciate Black’s problem.

c) 13...\texttt{f6} 14 \texttt{e2} \texttt{xa1} 15 \texttt{xb7} \texttt{ab8} (if 15...\texttt{ae8}, White must of course avoid a rook exchange by playing 16 \texttt{e4}) 16 \texttt{e4} \texttt{b6} 17 \texttt{a3}! \texttt{fb8}

18 \texttt{c4} \texttt{a6} 19 b3 \texttt{xb3} (this looks like a radical solution, but it’s difficult to suggest what else Black should do) 20 \texttt{axb3} \texttt{a1} 21 \texttt{cc2} \texttt{xb3} 22 \texttt{h2} a5 23 \texttt{f4} a4 24 \texttt{e5} \texttt{xe1} 25 \texttt{xf6} \texttt{xf6} 26 \texttt{e3} a3 27 \texttt{xc7} \texttt{b8} 28 \texttt{a7} \texttt{e2} 29 \texttt{xa3} \texttt{xf2} 30 \texttt{g3} \texttt{fb2} 31 \texttt{a7} h5 32 \texttt{f5} \texttt{d8} 33 \texttt{h6}+ and 1-0, G. Souleidis-J.De Jong, Dutch League 2007.

14 \texttt{e2} \texttt{ae8} 14...\texttt{xa1} 15 \texttt{xb7} \texttt{ae8} 16 \texttt{e3} comes to the same thing.

15 \texttt{e3} \texttt{xa1} 16 \texttt{xb7}

16...\texttt{e5}?

Tiviakov’s previous outing in this line went 16...f5 17 \texttt{d5}+ \texttt{h8} 18 g3 f4 19 \texttt{xf4} \texttt{xf4} 20 \texttt{a3} \texttt{e5} 21 \texttt{g2} \texttt{xe3} 22 \texttt{fxe3} \texttt{d8} 23 \texttt{e1} \texttt{xd3} 24 \texttt{c4}! \texttt{c2} 25 \texttt{c1} \texttt{exe3} 26 \texttt{xc2} \texttt{e7} and White definitely has winning chances, although Black eventually managed to hold in S.Tiviakov-J.Hector, Helsingor 2008. In any case, this looks like a better defence for Black than the game continuation.

17 \texttt{c3} \texttt{b8} 18 \texttt{c6} \texttt{a5} 19 g3 \texttt{f8} 20 d4

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Beating 1 e4 e5

This reminds me of the Souledis-De Jong game. White slowly improves his position, doesn’t even acknowledge the knight’s existence in the corner and simply pretends that he has an extra piece. Black, whose rooks are not making any headway at all, soon runs out of patience, but I think he is already in some trouble here.

20...h6 21 a4 g5 22 b3! axb3 23 b2! a6 24 d5 1-0

Game 33  
V.Kramnik-G.Kasparov  
PCA/Intel Grand Prix (rapid), New York 1995

1 e4 e5 2 f3 c6 3 c4 f6 4 d3 e7 5 0-0 0-0 6 b3 d5

Another idea which is worth mentioning is Romanishin’s 6...d6 7 c3 and now 7...d5!?

Paradoxical? Yes, but certainly not to be underestimated. A key point to appreciate is that in some lines – those in which White targets the e5-pawn, White’s extra move c2-c3 may do more harm than good. The d3-pawn lacks protection and White’s queen’s knight is denied access to c3.

For example, 8 exd5 cxd5 9 e1 (9 h3 f5 10 e1 f6 11 a3 b6! equalizes, S.Belkhodja-L.Fressinet, Cergy Pontoise 2004; or 9 b2?! f4! 9...g4! 10 h3 h5 11 g4 g6 12 e5 e5 13 xe5 c6 and White’s knight is denied use of the c3-square (compare the note to Black’s 9th move in the previous game).

Rather than exchanging on d5, in this instance it might be wiser to build up more slowly. At least here the extra c2-c3 is going to be useful. For example, 8 e2 dxe4 (or 8...d4 9 a4! g4 10 bd2 dxc3 11 bxc3 a5 12 h3 d7 13 c2 d6 14 d4 with some advantage, S.Kudrin-G.Kuzmin, Kusadasi 1990) 9 dxe4 c5 (or 9...g4 10 h3 h5 11 bd2 d7 12 d1) 10 g5 h6 11 h4 e7 12 bd2 (Lukacs suggests 12 d5 g5 13 g3) 12...a6 13 c4 (13 d5!? is an interesting alternative) 13...e6 14 c2 g5 15 g3 g4

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16 b4 (if 16 h3 Black has 16...\[\text{h}5!?,

and here 17 \[\text{h}1 \[\text{f}4 18 \[\text{x}f4 \text{xf}3 19
\text{xf}3 \text{exf}4 20 \text{e}5! is worth investigat-
ing) 16...b5, S.Tiviakov-L.Fressinet, Wijk
aan Zee 2004. Here \textit{Rybka} likes the idea
of 17 \textit{cd}2 intending 17...\[\text{b}6 18 a4!
when Black has problems with his b-
pawn. In the game Tiviakov lost after
17 \textit{e}3 \[\text{xe}3 18 \text{xe}3 \[\text{h}5 19 \[\text{b}3
\textit{ad}8 20 \textit{d}5 \textit{d}6 21 \textit{wc}5? (21 h3!)
21...\[\text{xf}3 22 \[\text{xc}6?? \[\text{f}4! 23 \text{xf}3 \text{we}6!
24 \[\text{xf}4 \text{gxf}4 25 \[\text{h}1 \text{wh}3 26 \textit{g}1+
\[\text{h}7, with a decisive attack for Black.

\[\text{exd}5 \textit{xd}5 8 \text{h}3

The solid option. Now there is no
annoying pin on the knight to worry
about, and next up White will pressure
the e5-pawn with \[\text{e}1. On the other
hand, Black does have an extra tempo
to organize his position in another way.

8...a5

A surprising move, but actually this
has become the main line. It’s the sort
of move that many players would dis-
regard over the board unless they knew
of its merits beforehand.

Black’s idea is to force the bishop on b3

off the diagonal and into a kind of no
man’s land.

For example, 9 \[\text{e}1 is met by 9...a4
intending 10 c4 b6! 11 b5 d4!
and it doesn’t take long to realize that
things are not going White’s way. So
White normally makes sure the bishop
can stay on the diagonal, either by
playing 9 a3 or 9 a4.

The alternative approach for Black is
to reinforce the defence of his e5-
pawn, either with ...f6/...e8 or ...f6:

a) 8...f6 9 \[\text{e}1

and now:

a1) 9...\[\text{e}8 10 \text{bd}2 \text{f}5 (or 10...\[\text{b}6
11 \text{e}4 \f5 12 \text{fg}5 intending 12...g6

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Beating 1 e4 e5

13 h4!? 11 ∆e4 ∆xe4 (the ‘careful’ 11...h6 turns out to be careless after 12 ∆xh6!) 12 dxe4 (12 ∆xe4 is a decent alternative) 12...∆f4 (S.Vratanjic-B.Lajthajm, Vrnjacka Banja 2006) and now instead of taking the knight on f4, which looks too accommodating to me, why not 13 ∆e3 intending 13...∆e7 14 c3 ∆ad8 15 ∆c2? I admit we’re not talking about a clear edge, but White’s bishop pair must count for something.

a2) 9...∆e6 10 ∆bd2 ∆f4 11 ∆a4!? ∆d4 (Bologan thinks that 11...∆g6 12 ∆xc6 bxc6 13 ∆e4 ∆e7 gives Black counterplay, but I still prefer White’s position after 14 ∆fg5 ∆d5 15 ∆h5 h6 16 ∆f3) 12 ∆e4 ∆g6 13 ∆xd4 exd4 14 ∆h5 ∆e7 15 ∆g5 ∆d5 (Bologan suggests 15...f6, but White can win a pawn here with 16 ∆xf6+! ∆xf6 17 ∆xe6 ∆xg5 18 ∆xg6! 16 ∆xe7 ∆xe7 17 ∆e2 left White the more active in V.Bologan-V.Malaniuk, Novgorod 1995. Moreover 17 ∆c5! might be even stronger.

b) 8...∆e6 9 ∆e1 ∆f6 transposes to note ‘a2’, above.

c) 8...∆h8 9 ∆e1 f6 10 c3!? (the typical answer to ...f6, 10 d4, is good enough for an edge after 10...exd4 11 ∆xd4 ∆c5 12 ∆xc6 bxc6 13 ∆h5, as in S.Martinovic-C.Micic, Pancevo 2003) 10...∆b6?! (Bologan gives 10...∆f5 11 d4! exd4 12 ∆h4 ∆xb1 13 ∆xb1 f5 14 ∆f3 ∆f6 15 cxd4 ∆d6 16 ∆g5! ∆ad8 17 ∆xf6 ∆xf6 18 ∆e5 ∆d5 19 ∆c1 with a small advantage for White) 11 d4 exd4 12 cxd4 ∆b4 13 ∆c3 c6 14 ∆e2, V.Bologan-G.Garcia, Wijk aan Zee 1996.

White has a dream IQP position, and a significant advantage, simply because of Black’s chronic weakness down the a2-g8 diagonal.

9 a3!

9 a4 ∆d4! 10 ∆xd4 (10 ∆xe5? ∆xb3 11 cxb3 cripples White’s pawns) 10...exd4 is proving to be very solid for Black. White has been making no headway here. For example, 11 ∆f3 ∆e6 12 ∆d2 ∆b4 with equality, A.Dyakov-P.Leisebein, correspondence 2004.

Karjakin played 11 ∆e1 against Gelfand (Khanty-Mansiysk, 2009) but this was answered by some inspiration: 11...∆a6!!.
The point behind this piece offer is that after 12 \textit{\texttt{exd5 \texttt{wx}}5 13 \textit{\texttt{xe7 \texttt{g6}}} White is in some trouble – analysis suggests that Black has at least perpetual check. In the game Karjakin chose 12 \textit{\texttt{wh5}}, but after 12...\textit{\texttt{b4}} 13 \textit{\texttt{a3 \texttt{g6}}} it was Black who held the initiative.

Overall, giving Black the b4-square seems to make life too easy for him.

9...\textit{\texttt{a4}}

The difference here is that 9...\textit{\texttt{d4}} can be met by 10 \textit{\texttt{a2!}} and there is no \textit{\texttt{b4}} to worry about. Black appears to be active but this is only temporary, and there remain long-term issues regarding the safety of the e5-pawn. White has good chances of an advantage here. For example, 10...\textit{\texttt{xf3+}} 11 \textit{\texttt{xf3}} \textit{\texttt{c6}} 12 \textit{\texttt{e1 \texttt{c7}}} 13 \textit{\texttt{g3 \texttt{f6}}} 14 \textit{\texttt{d2 \texttt{g6}}} 15 \textit{\texttt{f3 \texttt{e8}}} 16 \textit{\texttt{d4! e4}} 17 \textit{\texttt{xc7 \texttt{xc7}}} 18 \textit{\texttt{g5 \texttt{xe5}}} 19 \textit{\texttt{xg5}} with the bishop pair and some weak dark squares to target, I.Almasi-R.Shabtai, Budapest 1994.

9...\textit{\texttt{e6}} 10 \textit{\texttt{e1 \texttt{f6}}} is similar to 8...\textit{\texttt{f6}}, above: 11 \textit{\texttt{bd2 \texttt{h6}}} (I think 11...\textit{\texttt{a4!}}? 12 \textit{\texttt{a2 \texttt{f4}}} is a better chance for equality) 12 \textit{\texttt{e4 \texttt{e7}}} 13 \textit{\texttt{c3 \texttt{d6}}} 14 \textit{\texttt{a4}} (this move, again!) 14...\textit{\texttt{de7}} 15 \textit{\texttt{e3 \texttt{b8}}} (or 15...\textit{\texttt{f5}} 16 \textit{\texttt{c5!}}) 16 \textit{\texttt{d4 exd4}} 17 \textit{\texttt{xd4 \texttt{xd4}}} 18 \textit{\texttt{xd4}} (White will take on d6 and rely on his bishop pair for an edge, which increases quite quickly...) 18...\textit{\texttt{f5}} 19 \textit{\texttt{xd6 \texttt{xd6}}} 20 \textit{\texttt{f3 \texttt{h4}}}? 21 \textit{\texttt{e5! \texttt{c4?}}} 22 \textit{\texttt{h5 \texttt{e7}}} 23 \textit{\texttt{g7! \texttt{g7}}} 24 \textit{\texttt{g3+ \texttt{h7}}} 25 \textit{\texttt{f4}} and Black resigned, Z.Efimenko-M.Kravtsiv, Alushta 2007.

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

10 \textit{\texttt{a2}}

10...\textit{\texttt{h8}}

Preparing ...f6.

10...\textit{\texttt{f5}}? too ambitious, and in fact White has a nice trick which wins a pawn: 11 \textit{\texttt{c3 \texttt{e6}}} 12 \textit{\texttt{xe5! \texttt{xe5}}} 13 \textit{\texttt{e1}}, and now 13...\textit{\texttt{f6}} 14 \textit{\texttt{d4}} or 13...\textit{\texttt{d6}} 14 \textit{\texttt{b5}}.

11 \textit{\texttt{e1 \texttt{f6}}} 12 \textit{\texttt{d4}}

As usual, meeting ...\textit{\texttt{f6}} with \textit{\texttt{d4}} is the best chance to gain an edge, albeit a slight one. 12 \textit{\texttt{bd2 \texttt{c5}}} 13 \textit{\texttt{e4 \texttt{b6}}} 14 \textit{\texttt{c3 \texttt{f5}}} 15 \textit{\texttt{h4 \texttt{e6}}} is typically solid for Black, S.Martinovic-A.Kizov, Zlatibor 2007.

12...\textit{\texttt{exd4}} 13 \textit{\texttt{xd4 \texttt{db4}}}

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14 axb4

I wonder whether White can pose more problems with 14 Qxc6 here. After 14...Qxc6 15 Qc3 Black’s slight weaknesses remain, and the knight is more actively placed on c3. There’s the issue of what to do about 15...Qxd1 16 Qxd1 Qf5, but I think 17 f4 still gives Black some work to do. If 17...Qxc2 there follows 18 Qd2 (or 18 Qd7) 18...Qb3 19 Qxb3 axb3 20 Qc7 and Black still hasn’t fully equalized.

14...Qxd4 15 c3 Qxd1 16 Qxd1 Qf5 17 a3

With slight weaknesses on a4 and c7, Black has to be careful. However, with accurate defence, as Kasparov displays here, it looks like he should be okay.

17...Qe5 18 Qb5 c5 19 bxc5 Qxc5 20 Qd4 Qfd8 21 Qe3 Qg6 22 Qd2 Qf7 23 Qxf7 Qxf7 24 Qe2 Qxd4 25 Qxd4 Qd6 26 Qb6 Qdc8 27 Qe7 h6 28 Qd4 b5 29 Qae1 Qf5 30 Qb7 Qxd4 31 Qxd4 Qcb8!

32 Qee7 b4 33 Qxg7 Qxb7 34 Qxb7 a3 35 Qxa3 Qxa3 36 Qb1 a2 37 Qa1 Qg7 38 Qf1 Qf7 39 Qe2 Qe6 40 Qd3 Qd5 41 Qc3 ½-½

**Game 34**

**J.Emms-J.Wittman**

**London League 2006**

1 e4 e5 2 Qf3 Qc6 3 Qc4 Qf6 4 d3 d5?  
This move shouldn’t really work, because White hasn’t ‘wasted’ any time with moves such as c2-c3 and Qb3 and, as a consequence, he is able to attack the e5-pawn very quickly. In fact Black is more or less obliged to give up the e5-pawn, and from an objective viewpoint it’s very likely he doesn’t gain enough compensation. On the other hand, White has to remember a few key tactical lines. Bearing in mind you are unlikely to face 4...d5 very often, there’s even an argument for playing it safe and not grabbing the pawn, especially as I think White keeps and advantage here too.

5 exd5 Qxd5 6 0-0 Qc5 7 Qe1  
7 Qg5!? is an interesting alternative, although I think Black can equalize if he defends accurately: 7...0-0 8 Qc3! Qf6! (if 8...Qxc3? White ignores the knight: 9 Wh5! Qe2+ 10 Qh1! – and again! – 10...h6 11 Qxf7 Qxf7 12 Qxf7+ Qf8 13 Qb3 Qf6 14 Qxe2 with a decisive material advantage) 9 Qce4 Qxe4 10 Qxe4 Qe7 11 Wh5 Qd7! planning ...Qf5 or ...Qg4 is okay for Black, V.Inkiov-B.Toth, Rome 1984.

7...0-0  
Trying to hold on to the e5-pawn
only brings Black trouble. For example, 7...f6? 8 d4!, or 7...g4 8 h3 h5 9 d4! (9 dxe5! xf2+ 10 xf2 wh4+ 11 g3 is also good) 9...xd4 10 g4.

During the game I was aware that 8 dxe5 was supposed to be good for White, but I felt a little bit uncomfortable with idea of plunging into any possible preparation from my opponent – Black needs to at least know all the tricks if he wants to risk playing this line. So I took an 'easy' option. I counted on the fact that even after a quiet (but useful) move White would still hold an edge.

If you want to grab the pawn with 8 dxe5, you need to be prepared for some tactical lines but the rewards are high. Here's a brief summary of what to expect:

a) 8...xf2+ 9 xf2 xe5 10 xe5 wh4+ 11 f1! wf6+ 12 wf3 xe5 13 xd5 c6 14 b3 wh2 15 e3 e6 16 g1 wh4 17 c3 a5 18 e1 a4 19 f2 wh1+ 20 e2 wh6 21 xe6 xe8 22 d1 xe6 23 e4 and White had successfessfully negotiated the complications to reach an advantage in R.Tischbierek-I.Dönev, Liechtenstein 1995.

b) 8...h4

During the game I was aware that 8 dxe5 was supposed to be good for White, but I felt a little bit uncomfortable with idea of plunging into any possible preparation from my opponent – Black needs to at least know all the tricks if he wants to risk playing this line. So I took an ‘easy’ option. I counted on the fact that even after a quiet (but useful) move White would still hold an edge.

If you want to grab the pawn with 8 dxe5, you need to be prepared for some tactical lines but the rewards are high. Here's a brief summary of what to expect:

a) 8...xf2+ 9 xf2 xe5 10 xe5 wh4+ 11 f1! wf6+ 12 wf3 xe5 13 xd5 c6 14 b3 wh2 15 e3 e6 16 g1 wh4 17 c3 a5 18 e1 a4 19 f2 wh1+ 20 e2 wh6 21 xe6 xe8 22 d1 xe6 23 e4 and White had successfessfully negotiated the complications to reach an advantage in R.Tischbierek-I.Dönev, Liechtenstein 1995.

b) 8...h4

Italian Game: Two Knights Defence

8 h3

During the game I was aware that 8 dxe5 was supposed to be good for White, but I felt a little bit uncomfortable with idea of plunging into any possible preparation from my opponent – Black needs to at least know all the tricks if he wants to risk playing this line. So I took an ‘easy’ option. I counted on the fact that even after a quiet (but useful) move White would still hold an edge.

If you want to grab the pawn with 8 dxe5, you need to be prepared for some tactical lines but the rewards are high. Here's a brief summary of what to expect:

a) 8...xf2+ 9 xf2 xe5 10 xe5 wh4+ 11 f1! wf6+ 12 wf3 xe5 13 xd5 c6 14 b3 wh2 15 e3 e6 16 g1 wh4 17 c3 a5 18 e1 a4 19 f2 wh1+ 20 e2 wh6 21 xe6 xe8 22 d1 xe6 23 e4 and White had successfessfully negotiated the complications to reach an advantage in R.Tischbierek-I.Dönev, Liechtenstein 1995.

b) 8...h4

I get the impression that those who play this gambit as Black are counting on White either chickening out – as I
Beating 1 e4 e5
did – or losing their way in the heat of battle. I’m sure there are some further tricky lines to negotiate, but I’m equally sure that objectively White must be able to keep an advantage, and probably a significant one.

The further good news is that, as far as I can see, ‘chickening out’ still probably leads to an edge for White – and it also spoils Black’s fun!

**8...b6**

If 8...e6 White has the intriguing 9 d4!? (9 g5 is a decent alternative). After 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 hxg4 11 d5! (not 11 c3? xf2+ 12 xf2 wh4+) 11...xd5 12 c3 White wins a piece for two pawns and some (but probably not enough) compensation, following 12...d7 13 cxd4 exd4 14 f4.

**9 b3**

**9...h6**

Black wants to play ...e8, but he needs to prevent g5 first. He can leave the e-pawn hanging for the moment, since 10 cxe5 can be answered by 10...xe5 11 xe5 xf2+!

9...f6 led to a quick win for White in the game P.Jaracz-R.Forster, Guarapuava 1991, although the move itself isn’t bad: 10 c3 g6 (threatening ...xh3, but...) 11 d4! (if 11...xh3?, 12 h4 wins a piece) 12 g3 d6? (Black needs to patrol h4, so 12...f6 was required). Here White missed the chance to play 13 h4! (not 14...xh4 15 g5 traps the queen, and 14...d8 15 h5! gives White a fierce initiative. One possibility is 15...e8 16 g6! intending 16...hxg6 17 f6+! exf6 18 xg6+ hxg8 19 e4! (diagram please!)

19...fxg6 20 h4+ g7 21 h6+ h7 22 xf8 mate.

Instead the game continued 13 c3? h8? (13...e6!) 14 h4! (White doesn’t miss his second chance) 14...f6 15 d4 e7? 16 h5 and Black resigned as there are too many threats: for example, 16...e6 17 g5 h6 18 xe6 fxe6 19 h6+.

9...a5 10 a3 reminds me a bit of our previous game (Kramnik-Kasparov), but a better version for White because Black has voluntarily retreated his
knight to b6. Here's one example:
10...\(d4\) 11 \(\text{exd4}\) (11 \(\text{a2!}\)?) 11...\(\text{xd4}\) (11...\(\text{exd4}\) can be met by 12 \(\text{wh5}\) \(\text{d6}\) 13 \(\text{e3}\) \(\text{f6}\) 13 \(\text{wh5!}\) \(\text{xe3}\) 14 \(\text{xe3}\) a4 15 \(\text{d2}\) \(\text{d7}\) (hardly ideal, but the e-pawn required protection) 16 \(\text{d2}\) \(\text{g6}\) 17 \(\text{wh6}\) \(\text{f6}\) 18 \(\text{xe3}\) \(\text{g7}\) 19 \(\text{wh4}\) and Black was struggling to untangle his position in S.B.Hansen-M.Santos, Havana 2008.

10 \(\text{c3}\)

Moving the knight to e4 as quickly as possible is the most obvious plan here, and despite ...h6 I hadn't entirely ruled out the possibility of \(g5\)...

10...\(\text{e8}\) 11 \(\text{e4}\) \(\text{f8}\)?

This is clearly the most desirable retreat for the bishop (on d6 it can be captured at any moment, while on e7 it blocks the e-file) but it loses — because Black's king requires this square!

Against 11...\(\text{d6}\) I was considering the line 12 \(d4\) \(\text{exd4}\) 13 \(\text{d6}\) \(\text{xe1}\) 14 \(\text{xe1}\) \(\text{xd6}\) (14...\(\text{xd6}\)? 15 \(\text{e8}\)+) 15 \(\text{e4}\) \(d5\) 16 \(\text{f4}\) \(g5\) 17 \(\text{g3}\) with good compensation for the pawn, but there may be even better options for White.

If 11...\(\text{e7}\) White could spend a tempo on 12 \(a3\) to safeguard his bishop against ...\(a5\) ideas, since it's unclear how Black further develops his position (for example, ...\(f5\) is met by \(g3\)). It's true that Black's position remains solid, but White may be able to increase the pressure with ideas like \(d2\)-c3. 12 \(\text{fg5!}\)

Sometimes ...h6 isn't enough to discourage \(g5!\)

12...\(\text{hxg5?}\)

Black's only real chance is 12...\(\text{d5}\). After 13 \(\text{f3}\) \(\text{e6}\) (not 13...\(\text{hxg5}\)? 14 \(\text{xd5}\) \(\text{xd5}\)? 15 \(\text{f6}\)+) 14 \(\text{xe6}\) \(\text{f6}\) 15 \(\text{g4}\) White has 'only' a virtually decisive positional advantage.

13 \(\text{d5}\)?

13 \(\text{wh5!}\) is more forcing (mate is threatened!) and more decisive. Black must protect f7, but after 13...\(\text{e6}\) White can win with 14 \(\text{b4}\) (had the bishop retreated to d6 instead of f8 on move 11, Black could have played 14...\(\text{xb3}\) followed by ...\(\text{f6}\)+) 15 \(\text{xe6}\) \(\text{f6}\) 16 \(\text{f7}\) \(\text{h8}\) 17 \(\text{e4}\).

13...\(\text{e6}\)?
Black can fight on with 13...g6! 14 \( \texttt{\texttt{xf7}} \) \( \texttt{\texttt{xf6}} \). White must be winning after 15 \( \texttt{\texttt{g5}} \) but this certainly isn’t as clear cut as 13 \( \texttt{\texttt{h5}} \).

14 \( \texttt{\texttt{h5}} \)

![Diagram of chessboard with moves played]

Now it’s easy.

14...\( \texttt{\texttt{c5}} \) 15 \( \texttt{\texttt{xf7+ \texttt{h8}}} \) 16 \( \texttt{\texttt{h5+ \texttt{h6}}} \)
17 \( \texttt{\texttt{f7+ \texttt{h7}}} \) 18 \( \texttt{\texttt{e6 h6 \texttt{g6}}} \) 19 \( \texttt{\texttt{g5+ \texttt{h8}}} \)
20 \( \texttt{\texttt{xg6 1-0}} \)

Game 35
V.Bologan-E.Tomashevsky
Aeroflot Open, Moscow 2006

1 e4 e5 2 \( \texttt{\texttt{f3}} \) \( \texttt{\texttt{c6}} \) 3 \( \texttt{\texttt{c4 \texttt{f6}}} \) 4 d3 h6

Black wants to develop with ...\( \texttt{g6} \), ...\( \texttt{g7} \), ...d6 etc. Although it’s unusual for Black to fianchetto in 1 e4 e5 openings, it’s not difficult to appreciate the merits of this approach, especially when you consider that ...\( \texttt{\texttt{fe8}} \), ...\( \texttt{\texttt{e7-f8}} \), ...\( \texttt{g7-g6} \) and ...\( \texttt{\texttt{g7}} \) is a typical re-grouping manoeuvre in the main lines. Why not save time by playing ...\( \texttt{g6} \) and ...\( \texttt{\texttt{g7}} \) straightaway?

Of course, it’s not quite as straightforward as that. For one thing, after 4 d3 Black first has to deal with a serious threat. Yes, it hasn’t been mentioned before, but 4 d3 carries a threat!

For example, 4...\( \texttt{\texttt{d6?}} \), which is not such a rare blunder, can be punished by 5 \( \texttt{\texttt{g5!}} \). The best Black can do is 5...\( \texttt{d5} \) 6 exd5 when he is a whole tempo down on the ultra-sharp 4 \( \texttt{\texttt{g5}} \) variation of the Two Knights. If 6...\( \texttt{\texttt{xd5}} \) 7 0-0 and Black is already in big trouble, or 6...\( \texttt{\texttt{a5}} \) 7 \( \texttt{\texttt{b5+}} \) (or even 7 0-0) 7...\( \texttt{c6} \) 8 dxc6 bxc6 9 \( \texttt{\texttt{a4 \texttt{h6}}} \) 10 \( \texttt{\texttt{e4 \texttt{e6}}} \) with zero compensation for the pawn. Similarly, 4...\( \texttt{\texttt{g6?}} \) is also met by 5 \( \texttt{\texttt{g5!}} \), and this is the reason Black spends a move on ...\( \texttt{h6} \).

5 0-0 \( \texttt{\texttt{d6}} \)

I think that this is Black’s most accurate move order.

If Black plays 5...\( \texttt{\texttt{g6}} \), White has no need to prepare d4 with c3 because the immediate 6 d4! looks even stronger. This reminds me of 4 d4 against the Two Knights. True, White has wasted a tempo by spending two moves instead of one advancing his pawn to d4, but
Black has arguably wasted two tempi on ...g6 and ...h6.

Here's one example: 6...exd4 7 cxd4 (7 e5 d5 8 b5 e4 9 cxd4 also looks reasonable) 7...g7 8 c6 bxc6 9 e5! h7 10 d3! (preventing 10...0-0) 10...e7 was A.Tuznik-G.Evtushenko, Novosibirsk 2007, and in this position 11 c3 looks good. Black can hardly contemplate playing 11...xe5, in view of 12 e1 g5 13 f4.

6 c3 g6 7 d4!

A quick d3-d4 is the most challenging response to Black's slow development. What's more, playing d4 here and now more or less obliges Black to make a further prophylactic move (...e7, to go with ...h6) that he wouldn't have chosen to do in an ideal world.

After the slower 7 e1 g7 8 d4 Black can probably dispense with ...e7, at least for the moment, in favour of the more desirable 8...0-0.

7...e7

By defending e5 (and f7) Black cuts out any tricks and is now able to finish his development in relative peace. Let's take a look at other moves:

a) Black must avoid 7...g7? 8 dxes!.

b) 7...xe4?! 8 dxes must also be good for White.

c) 7...g4 is very strongly met by 8 h3!

For example, 8...d7 9 xf7+! xf7 10 xbx7 d7 11 d5 e7 12 xa8 xe4 13 bd2 and White already enjoys a decisive advantage, S.Fedorchuk-S.Bednarek, Warsaw 2005.

I recently reached this position (against Gavin Wall, London League 2010) but failed to spot 11 d5 in my calculations. Instead I chose 8 b5?!, which is good enough for an edge, but nothing like 8 b3!. I got lucky with a trick after 8...d7!? 9 d5 e7? (Black should play 9...xf3 10 xf3 e7) 10 xe5!.

d) The paradoxical 7...exd4 isn't as bad as it looks: 8 cxd4 g7 (8...xe4? is met by 9 e1 d5 10 xd5!) 9 c3 0-0 10 b5!? (10 d5 e7 11 h3 c6 12 dxes bxc6 was V.Genba-V.Malniuk, Moscow
Beating 1 e4 e5

1995, and now 13 \( \text{Ke1} \) gives White an edge; but 10 h3?! \( \text{Qxe4}! \) is something to avoid) 10...\( \text{Qg4} \) 11 \( \text{Qxc6} \) bxc6 12 h3 \( \text{Qd7} \) 13 \( \text{Qe3} \) \( \text{Qb8} \) 14 b3 with a small advantage, R.Kuczynski-M.Bartel, Bydgoszcz 2001.

e) 7...\( \text{Qd7}! ? \) is another move which you would think Black shouldn’t be able to get away with, but again it’s not bad at all – certainly good enough to have been used by grandmasters Alexander Graf and David Howell:

8 \( \text{Qe3} \) (to prevent Black from castling easily; 8 dxe5 \( \text{Qdxe5} \) 9 \( \text{Qxe5} \) \( \text{Qxe5} \) 10 \( \text{Qb3} \) \( \text{Qg7} \) 11 f4 is a decent alternative) 8...\( \text{Qg7} \) 9 \( \text{Qc1} \) \( \text{We7} \) 10 \( \text{Qe1} \) \( \text{Qf6} \) 11 \( \text{Qd5}! ? \) \( \text{Qb8}! ? \) (this came as a shock; I was counting on something like 11...g5 12 \( \text{Qxc6+} \) bxc6 13 dxe5 dxe5 14 \( \text{Qbd2} \) 12 \( \text{Qa3} \) g5 13 dxe5 dxe5 14 \( \text{Qc2} \) \( \text{Qxd5} \) 15 exd5 0-0 16 \( \text{Qc4} \) f6! with an unclear position, J.Emms-D.Howell, Southend 2008. Black’s kingside pawns are not only rock-solid, they also possess considerable potential to expand. After the game David suggested that 13 \( \text{Qb3} \) was a better try for White. If Black cannot capture on e4, White must have a typical edge, but 13...\( \text{Qxe4} \) does look risky in view of 14 \( \text{Qc2} \) f5 (or 14...\( \text{Qf5} \) 15 \( \text{Qd5}! \) 15 dxe5 dxe5 16 \( \text{Qd5} \).

8 \( \text{Qe1} \) \( \text{Qg7} \) 9 \( \text{Qbd2} \) 0-0 10 h3

Let’s try to briefly sum up this position. Black has employed a King’s Indian/Pirc set-up, and the natural pawn break to gain counterplay is ...f5. However, as it stands it’s difficult for Black to arrange this move effectively. It requires at least two moves’ preparation. What’s more, even when the move becomes legal, Black must be careful he isn’t simply opening the position in White’s favour.

The ...f5 break becomes much more desirable and practical if White closes the centre with d5. Therefore, White must try as hard as possible to maintain the tension in the centre, and should not be tempted by d5 unless the rewards are significant.

10...\( \text{Qd7} \)

Black has tried many moves here, although the plans are all quite similar. Here are a few possibilities:
a) 10...\(\text{h8}\) 11 \(\text{f1}\) \(\text{d7}\) 12 \(\text{g3}\) \(\text{h7}\) 13 \(\text{e3}\) \(\text{ae8}\) 14 \(\text{d2}\) h5, as played in V.Bologan-S.Halkias, Plovdiv 2008, is similar to the main game.

b) The plan of 10...\(\text{h5}\) followed by ...\(\text{f6}\) and ...\(\text{f4}\) backfires here: 11 \(\text{e3}\) (eyeing both d5 and g4) 12...\(\text{e7}\) (12...\(\text{f4}\) 13 \(\text{d5}\)!) 13 \(\text{g4}\) \(\text{hxg4}\) (forced, but not what Black would have wanted) 14 \(\text{hxg4}\) \(\text{f4}\) 15 \(\text{g3}\) \(\text{e6}\) 16 \(\text{d5}\) \(\text{g5}\) 17 \(\text{hxg5}\) \(\text{hxg5}\) 18 \(\text{g2}\) \(\text{g4}\) (I’ve seen better black queens!) 18...\(\text{h6}\) 19 \(\text{h1}\) \(\text{g7}\) 20 \(\text{e3}\) \(\text{h8}\) 21 \(\text{d2}\) \(\text{g8}\) 22 \(\text{h6!}\) \(\text{hxh6}\) 23 \(\text{hxg5}\) and White won, B.Heberla-I.Cheparinov, Litohoto 1999.

c) 10...\(\text{h7}\) intends ...\(\text{g5}\), an idea we’ve seen previously in Nevednichy-Mitkov (Game 30). Black wants to add pressure to d4 and induce the d5 advance, but White doesn’t have to comply: 11 \(\text{f1}\) \(\text{g5}\)

and now:

c1) 12 \(\text{h2}\) \(\text{xf3+}\) 13 \(\text{xf3}\) \(\text{h7}\) 14 a4 f5 15 dxe5 dxe5 was M.Ghinda-A.Beliavsky, Liviv 1981, and I think Parma’s suggestion of 16 \(\text{d5}\) looks best.

c2) 12 \(\text{g5}\)!! (an interesting decision; by taking with the bishop on g5 rather than the knight, White is able to hold d4 and at the same time try to exploit the weakness of g5 – something Black fails to prevent...) 12...\(\text{hxg5}\) 13 \(\text{e3}\) \(\text{b8}\) (Atlas suggests 13...\(\text{a5}\) as an improvement, although after 14 \(\text{f1}\) it’s not clear how Black proceeds; while Rybka suggests the paradoxical 13...\(\text{f6}\)!! intending 14 \(\text{d5}\) \(\text{d8}\) 15 \(\text{d2}\)!) 14 \(\text{d2}\)! b5? 15 \(\text{b3}\) \(\text{a5}\) 16 \(\text{d5}\) \(\text{d8}\) 17 dxe5 \(\text{e5}\) 18 \(\text{xe5}\) \(\text{xe5}\) 19 \(\text{xe5}\) c6 20 f4 \(\text{cxd5}\) 21 fxe5 \(\text{xb3}\) 22 axb3 dxe5 23 exd5 and White soon won in S.Tiviakov-D.Sermek, Beijing 1997.

11 \(\text{f1}\) \(\text{ae8}\) 12 \(\text{g3}\) \(\text{d8}\)

12...\(\text{h8}\) 13 a4 \(\text{h7}\) 14 dxe5! \(\text{xe5}\) (or, similarly, 14...dxe5 15 b3!) 15 \(\text{xe5}\) dxe5 (if 15...\(\text{xe5}\), White plays 16 \(\text{e3}\) intending \(\text{d4}\) or f2-f4) 16 b3! followed by \(\text{a3}\) is annoying for Black. 16...\(\text{d8}\) 17 \(\text{a3}\) c5 18 \(\text{d5}\)! b6 19 \(\text{b7}\) \(\text{f6}\) was J.Nunn-L.Christiansen, London 1982, and here 20 \(\text{xa7}\) \(\text{h3}\) 21 a5! (Nunn) is very strong.
13 b3

Notice how Bologan patiently improves his position. On b3 the bishop is less prone to an attack, and in fact next move it goes to c2 to further protect e4 and thus enable e3.

13 d5?! is exactly what Black is hoping for, and something that should be avoided. After 13...e7 everything is in place for a typical King's Indian style attack on the kingside, whereas White will take a while to get going on the other wing.

13...a6

Tomashovsky waits, and also it's useful to have the a-pawn away from a7 in some lines after e3. Even so, Black should probably be trying to play a bit more actively.

The more direct 13...h7 14 a3 g8 was played in L.Yudasin-I.Efimov, Reggio Emilia 1997. It's worth seeing how this game progresses, as it demonstrates how difficult it is for Black to organize f5 unless White plays d5: 15 c2! (indirectly pointing at the black king) 15...a6 (if 15...f5?! 16 exf5 gxf5 17 dxe5 dxe5 18 h4 e4 19 w5 e7 20 g5! and some nasty sacrifice on e4 is likely) 16 b1 c8 17 b4 (White gradually expands on the queenside) 17...d8 18 e3 d6 (18...f5 is again unwise: 19 exf5 gxf5 20 dxe5 dxe5 21 c5 f7 22 h4 e4 23 w5 e7 24 b3 and Black is getting hit from all angles...) 19 d2 f6 (...so he settles for f6) 20 bd1 e7 21 h2 w8

22 d5 (finally White advances, but only after much preparation on the queenside, and even here there were many other ways to play it) 22...d8 23 c4 h8 24 c5 (White's attack is quicker, but there's still much to play for) 24...f5 25 exf5 gxf5 26 f4! (killing the d7-bishop) 26...g6 27 f2 e4 28 h1 f6 29 e3 g7 30 h2 e7 31 g1 fg8 32 a4 f7 33 w2 e5? 34 h1 e8 (this sacrifice feels a bit desperate, but 34...f7 is answered strongly by 35 h5!) 35 fxe5 xex5 36 g1 g5 37 c4 h5 38 g4 fxg4 39 xex5 g3 40 f7+ (40 xex4 should win) 40...xf7 41 d4+ gg7 42 xex4?? (42 xg7+! xg7 43 xg3! wins) 42...f3+ (oh
dear!) 43 $xf3 $xf3 44 $xg7+ $xg7 45
e4 $c3 46 $g2 $f2 47 cxd6 cxd6 48 b5 axb5 49 axb5 $f5 and White re-
signed.

14 $c2

Continuing the plan. Now White is ready to increase the pressure with $e3, $d2 and $ad1.

Whereas a premature d5 should be avoided, exchanging on e5 can be con-
sidered, especially if White prefers a position without tension. Here 14 dxe5
$xe5 15 $xe5 dxe5 (or 15...$xe5 16
$f4 $e8 17 $d2) 16 $e3, as sug-
gested by Lukacs, promises White a small advantage.

14...$h7 15 $e3

15...$h5

White is quite happy to see Black weaken the g5-square, and this makes any subsequent ...f5 less desirable.

Lukacs suggests 15...$g5!? as an improvement. I think Bologan would have reacted with 16 $xg5 hxg5 17 d5. The advance is justified here because Black is denied the possibility of ...$e7, and on b8 the knight is very poorly placed. Furthermore, after 17...$b8 18 b4 Black still can’t play 18...f5, as 19
exf5 gxf5 20 $h5 is a strong reply.

Note that 15...f5? 16 exf5 gxf5 17
dxe5 dxe5 18 $c5! (or even 18 $h5!) leaves Black struggling.

16 $d2 $f6 17 $h2

Black was threatening 17...$xh3.

17...$c8 18 $ad1

18 a3!? followed by b4 would be a typical idea to gain space on the queenside, but Bologan’s plan proves to be very effective indeed.

18...$h8 19 $e2 $e7 20 $g5!

White wants to free up the f-pawn and is happy to accept an exchange of knights to do so.

20...$xg5 21 $xg5 f6

Or 21...$f6 22 $xf6+ $xf6 23 f4 (Lu-
kacs).

22 $e3 f5 23 $g5 $f6 24 $xg6+ $xf6
25 f4!

At first sight it may look like this po-
sition, full of tension, offers equal chances for both sides, but there are two key factors which swing the game almost decisively in White’s favour:
Beating 1 e4 e5

1. White’s pieces are better positioned than their counterparts. For example, Black’s rook on f6 would prefer to be on f8 defending its partner; and his queen is uncomfortable on the e-file, as demonstrated by 25...exf4 26 exf5.

2. Black’s king is weaker than White’s. His decision to play ...h5 has done him no favours at all, and he experiences some problems with dark-squared weaknesses, especially after the exchange of dark-squared bishops.

Let’s see how Bologan ruthlessly exploits his advantages:

25...\(\text{\textit{g7}}\) 26 fxe5 dxe5 27 exf5 \(\text{\textit{xf5}}\) 28 \(\text{\textit{xf5}}\) \(\text{\textit{xf5}}\)

28...gxsf 29 dxe5 \(\text{\textit{xe5}}\) 30 \(\text{\textit{f4}}\) (Lu-kacs) is even worse.

29 \(\text{\textit{g3}}\) eff8 30 d5! \(\text{\textit{d8}}\) 31 \(\text{\textit{e4}}\)

Now White has a juicy outpost for his knight to add to all his other advantages.

31...\(\text{\textit{f4}}\) 32 \(\text{\textit{e3}}\) eff8 33 \(\text{\textit{c5!}}\) e4

33...\(\text{\textit{f4f5}}\) hangs on to the e5-pawn, but 34 d6 is a strong reply and so is 34 \(\text{\textit{e6}}\) \(\text{\textit{xe6}}\) 35 dxe6 \(\text{\textit{xe6}}\) 36 \(\text{\textit{d7}}\) \(\text{\textit{f8}}\) 37 \(\text{\textit{xc7}}\) \(\text{\textit{xe6}}\) 38 \(\text{\textit{xb7}}\).

34 \(\text{\textit{xe4}}\) \(\text{\textit{e5}}\) 35 g3 \(\text{\textit{f7}}\)

35...\(\text{\textit{f3}}\) loses to 36 \(\text{\textit{h6+}}\).

36 \(\text{\textit{g2}}\) \(\text{\textit{g7}}\) 37 \(\text{\textit{d2}}\) c6 38 c4 cxd5 39 cxd5 h4 40 gxh4 \(\text{\textit{h5}}\) 41 \(\text{\textit{c3+}}\) \(\text{\textit{g8}}\) 42 \(\text{\textit{g3}}\) \(\text{\textit{f4}}\) 43 \(\text{\textit{d2}}\) 1-0

Black’s position is hopeless. If 43...\(\text{\textit{h4}}\) there’s 44 \(\text{\textit{f2}}\) \(\text{\textit{xf2+}}\) 45 \(\text{\textit{xf2}}\) with no decent defence to the threat of 46 \(\text{\textit{f6+}}\).

An exceptionally well played game from Bologan. He didn’t seem to give his opponent any chances at all.

Key Notes

1. The space-gaining plan of a3 and b4 looks like a promising way for White to play against ...\(\text{\textit{a5}}\) and ...c5. It’s worth going through Game 29 more than once to really appreciate Tivia-kov’s brilliant strategical play. This is a model game from White’s point of view.

2. Game 30 demonstrates that White doesn’t always have to play for the d3-d4 advance, and he sometimes leaves the rook on f1 for a reason – to play f2-f4!

3. When Black plays ...d5, as he does in Game 31, don’t forget about the possibility of playing \(\text{\textit{a4}}\), which adds pressure to the centre by hitting the knight on c6. Often this move comes as a surprise. Played at the right moment, it can be annoyingly difficult for Black to meet.

4. The best answer to 6...d5 is Plan B:
exchange on d5 and then hit the e5-pawn. 8 h3 (Game 32) is the sharpest try and an attempt at a direct refutation; 8 h3 (Game 33) is the safe option.

5. Black’s gambit after 4...d5 (Game 34) is probably unsound in the final analysis, but bear in mind that your opponent is likely to be prepared. If you are also prepared for some forcing lines, by all means take the pawn. Alternatively, White has good chances of keeping some advantage without entering the complications.

6. Against 4...h6 (Game 35) White should try to play c3 and d4 as quickly as possible. He should then try to keep the tension in the centre, since this makes it very difficult for Black to arrange his main pawn break ...f5. White shouldn’t be tempted to close the centre with d5 unless there is a concrete reason for doing so.

7. Be ready to punish 4...d6? with 5 \texttt{g5}. It’s easy to forget that 4 d3 sets up a threat!
Chapter Five

Italian Game:
Other Lines

Now it’s time to consider alternatives for Black in the Italian Game, on his third and fourth moves. This chapter isn’t particularly long for a couple of reasons. $3...\textsf{c5}$ and $3...\textsf{f6}$ are the overwhelmingly popular choices in practice, and alternatives are quite rare. Likewise, after $3...\textsf{c5}$ 4 c3, only a small percentage of games continue with anything other than 4...\textsf{f6}. More to the point, most of Black’s rare options do nothing to prevent White from carrying on with the usual system of development. Indeed, transpositions to previous chapters are possible in some places.

Having said all that, there are reasons why many of Black’s options in this chapter remain rare, and I have covered a few theoretical recommendations in which White tries to punish Black rather than settling for a slow build-up. In particular, White can often play the d4 advance much earlier than normal, and this puts pressure on Black’s position from an early stage. I should stress, though, that many of Black’s options are playable in the sense that White can only expect a small advantage, and one or two have perhaps been unfairly dismissed.

In Tanti-Sutton (Game 36) we consider various options for Black on his fourth move: 4...\textsf{e7}, 4...\textsf{f6}, 4...\textsf{b6}
and 4...d6. Bokar-Nasybullin (Game 37) covers some third-move options: 3...e7, 3...d6, 3...g6, 3...f5 and 3...d4.

Game 36
J. Tanti-J. Sutton
Correspondence 2003

1 e4 e5 2 d4 c6 3 c4 c5 4 c3

4...\text{\textit{W}}e7

This move isn’t an attempt to prevent or discourage d4 – as we shall see, accepting the gambit carries too much risk. Black’s idea is to offer the e5-pawn extra protection so that he doesn’t have to give up the centre after White’s advance.

Here’s a brief round up of other rare moves:

a) 4...\text{\textit{B}}b6 5 \text{\textit{d}}d4 \text{\textit{W}}e7 is another move order to reach the same position (in fact, this was the one chosen in the game). White can also choose to play with \text{\textit{d}}2-\text{\textit{d}}3, probably transposing to lines we’ve previously covered. For example, 5 0-0 \text{\textit{f}}f6 6 d3 d6 7 \text{\textit{b}}bd2 0-0 8 \text{\textit{b}}b3 intending \text{\textit{d}}c4; or 5 \text{\textit{d}}3 \text{\textit{f}}f6 6 \text{\textit{b}}b3 d6 7 \text{\textit{b}}bd2 with the same idea, which is a logical way to meet an early ...\text{\textit{b}}b6.

b) Does 4...\text{\textit{W}}f6 prevent White’s advance? 5 \text{\textit{d}}4! (No it doesn’t! There’s nothing wrong with 5 0-0 d6 6 d3, though.)

Now:

b1) If 5...exd4, 6 e5! is strong: 6...\text{\textit{W}}g6 (6...\text{\textit{d}}xe5 is met by 7 \text{\textit{w}}e2) 7 cxd4 \text{\textit{b}}b4+ 8 \text{\textit{c}}c3 d6 (or 8...\text{\textit{w}}xg2 9 \text{\textit{g}}g1 \text{\textit{h}}h3 10 \text{\textit{xf}}7+!) 9 0-0 \text{\textit{g}}4 10 h3 (10 \text{\textit{b}}b5?! 10...\text{\textit{x}}xf3 11 \text{\textit{x}}xf3 dxe5 12 \text{\textit{b}}b5 0-0-0 13 \text{\textit{d}}d3 \text{\textit{f}}f6 14 \text{\textit{g}}g4+ \text{\textit{b}}b8 15 \text{\textit{g}}g5 \text{\textit{w}}e6 16 \text{\textit{d}}xd8 and 1-0, V. Karavaev-D. Metlyakhin, Moscow 1994.

b2) 5...\text{\textit{b}}b6 has similar motives to 4...\text{\textit{w}}e7 5 \text{\textit{d}}4 \text{\textit{b}}6, but the queen is more vulnerable on the f6-square and Black has to lose more time: 6 0-0 h6 (if 6...\text{\textit{d}}d6 White has 7 \text{\textit{g}}g5 \text{\textit{g}}g6 8 dxe5 dxe5 9 \text{\textit{x}}xe5! and here 9...\text{\textit{w}}xg5 10 \text{\textit{x}}xf7 \text{\textit{c}}c5 11 \text{\textit{d}}d5 \text{\textit{f}}f6 12 \text{\textit{x}}h8 \text{\textit{g}}g4 13 \text{\textit{b}}b3 – Bilguer – looks very good for White) 7 a4 a6 8 dxe5!? \text{\textit{x}}xe5 9 \text{\textit{x}}xe5 \text{\textit{w}}xe5 10 \text{\textit{b}}b3, V. Egin-B. Saidov, Tashkent 2009.

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Black has some problems here. 10...\texttt{We}7 is the natural way to defend f7, but how does Black continue after 11 e5?

c) 4...d6 is usually condemned on the grounds that Black is forced to give up the centre after 5 d4, since 5...\texttt{b}6 6 dxe5! wins a pawn. However, I feel that 5...\texttt{exd}4 6 cxd4 \texttt{b}6! isn’t quite as attractive for White as it first looks, as his centre could easily come under some pressure.

I think White still needs to play one or two accurate moves, and this should be enough to give him some advantage: 7 \texttt{b}5! (7 h3 – to prevent ...\texttt{g}4 – 7...\texttt{f}6 8 \texttt{c}3 0-0 9 0-0 \texttt{xe}4! 10 \texttt{xe}4 d5 is the kind of thing White needs to avoid, but 7 \texttt{c}3 \texttt{f}6 8 d5 \texttt{e}5 9 \texttt{xe}5 dxe5 10 \texttt{g}5 might be sufficient for an edge) 7...d7 8 0-0 \texttt{ge}7 (or 8...\texttt{f}6 9 \texttt{c}3 – or 9 e5!? – 9...0-0 10 h3 \texttt{e}8, J.Szabo-L.Hazai, Hungarian League 1996, and now just 11 \texttt{e}1) 9 \texttt{c}3 0-0 10 h3 and White’s classical centre must count for something, M.Krakops-J.Pinter, Elista Olympiad 1998.

Of course White doesn’t have to play d4. He can settle for d3 and reach positions similar to those in previous chapters, and indeed this is something Tiviakov has done. White can even argue that in this case Black has committed his queen to e7, something he wouldn’t necessarily want to do in the main lines. This probably isn’t a huge issue for Black, but a tempo does count for something, and furthermore Black is deprived of the typical ...\texttt{e}7-g6 idea.

Let’s take a look at an example: 5 0-0 \texttt{f}6 6 d3 (6 d4 \texttt{b}6 transposes to the main game) 6...d6 7 \texttt{bd}2 0-0 (if 7...a6 8 \texttt{b}3 0-0 9 \texttt{e}1 \texttt{e}6 10 \texttt{f}1 \texttt{xb}3 11 axb3!?, Black’s queen isn’t well placed for the typical ...d5 advance: 11...d5? 12 exd5 \texttt{xd}5 13 d4!) 8 b4!? \texttt{b}6 9 \texttt{b}3 (intending \texttt{c}4) 9...a6 10 \texttt{c}4 \texttt{a}7 11 \texttt{g}5 h6 12 \texttt{h}4 \texttt{d}8 13 \texttt{e}3! c6 14 \texttt{h}1 \texttt{h}8 15 \texttt{f}5! \texttt{xf}5 16 exf5 g5 (otherwise how does Black get his knight on d8 back into the game?) 17 fxg6 fxg6 18 d4! e4 19 \texttt{d}2 g5 20 \texttt{g}3 and Black’s position was begin-
ning to look shaky in S.Smagin-Duong Thanh Nha, Montreal 2000. After 20...\textit{f7} 21 f3 e3 22 \textit{e1} \textit{ae8} 23 \textit{e2} \textit{h5} 24 \textit{f1} White won a pawn.

\textbf{5...\textit{b6}!}

5...\textit{exd4} 6 0-0! is known to be promising for White. It’s basically a Scotch Gambit where Black’s queen has found herself on e7!

a) If 6...dxc3 7 \textit{xc3} d6 White plays the obvious and strong 8 \textit{d5}.

b) 6...\textit{e5} 7 \textit{xe5} \textit{xe5} 8 f4! dxc3+ 9 \textit{h1} cxb2 10 fxe5 bx\textit{a1} \textit{w} 11 \textit{d5} \textit{h6} 12 \textit{xh6} \textit{f8} 13 \textit{xc5} (F.Wiltonburg-K.Woschkat, correspondence 1999), intending 13...gxh6 14 \textit{a3} \textit{b2} 15 \textit{b5}.

c) 6...d3 7 e5! (not allowing Black to consolidate) 7...d6 8 \textit{g5} f6 9 exf6 \textit{xf6} 10 \textit{bd2} \textit{g4} 11 b4 \textit{b6} 12 a4 a5 13 \textit{h3} \textit{xg3} 14 \textit{xf3} was V.Chekhov-V.Panov, Tbilisi 1937. Black has no option but to castle long, but this is hardly ideal given that it’s likely to open up there in the near future.

\textbf{6 0-0}

A few sources give a ‘refutation’

based on d5 followed by d6, a pawn sacrifice to clog up Black’s queenside. While I agree that this is an attractive idea, I’m not 100% convinced it’s so great for White, or even his best option. A centre pawn is a centre pawn after all!

One line is 6 \textit{g5} \textit{f6} 7 d5 \textit{d8} (7...\textit{b8} 8 d6! is a more favourable version for White – compare below) 8 d6 cxd6 9 \textit{a3}! (if 9 0-0, Black plays 9...\textit{e5} justifying his decision to choose d8 instead of b8, and here 10 \textit{xf6} \textit{xf6}! 11 \textit{xf6} \textit{c7} looks okay for him)

\textbf{6...\textit{f6}}

6...d6 7 h3 \textit{f6} 8 \textit{e1} would transpose.

\textit{Italian Game: Other Lines}
I don’t think White can dispense with this move, as ...\(\text{g}4\) would be too annoying. It’s no longer easy for Black to find an effective role for his lightsquared bishop, especially since White is ready to meet ...\(\text{e}6\) with \(\text{d}5\).

**8...\(\text{h}6!\)?**

Shades of Warakomski-Bartel (Game 23). Black’s idea is not to prevent ...\(\text{g}5\), but rather to play ...\(\text{g}5\)-\(\text{g}4\)!

Before you get too nervous, I should say that this is under much less favourable circumstances for Black, as the game amply demonstrates.

If 8...0-0 White has to solve the typical problem of how to develop his queenside while keeping his centre intact. Let’s see how Bologan achieves this: 9 \(\text{a}3\) (planning \(\text{c}2\) to support \(\text{d}4\); 9 \(\text{g}5\) isn’t effective here, and 9...\(\text{h}6 \ 10 \text{h}4 \text{g}5 \ 11 \text{g}3 \text{h}7 \ 12 \text{d}3 \text{h}5 \ 13 \text{h}2 \text{g}8 \ 14 \text{bd}2 \text{f}6 \ 15 \text{d}5 \text{f}4 \ 16 \text{xf}4 \text{gx}f4 \ 17 \text{h}1 \text{e}7, M.Della Vallet-M.Eckstein, correspondence 1999, provides a good reason why this is so) 9...\(\text{d}8 \ 10 \text{c}2 \text{c}6 \ 11 \text{d}3 \text{e}6

12 \(\text{a}4! \text{a}5 \ 13 \text{b}3! \text{d}8 \ 14 \text{a}3 \text{c}7 \ 15 \text{d}2 \text{f}4 \ 16 \text{f}1 \text{e}6 \ 17 \text{c}4 \text{h}6 \ 18 \text{ad}1\) with a pleasant space advantage for White in V.Bologan-D.Sekulic, Igalo 1994.

**9 \(\text{a}4\)**

Threatening to win a piece with 10 \(\text{d}5 \text{a}5 \ 11 \text{a}2\) followed by \(\text{b}2-\text{b}4\).

**9...\(\text{a}6\)**

If 9...\(\text{a}5\) I think White should play 10 \(\text{a}3\), as in the game.

**10 \(\text{a}3\)**

10 \(\text{b}4?!\) worked tremendously well in D.Tyomkin-I.Zugic, Montreal 2004.

After 10...\(\text{g}5?! \ 11 \text{a}5 \text{a}7 \ 12 \text{b}5! \text{d}8 \ 13 \text{a}3 \text{d}7 \ 14 \text{dxe}5 \text{xe}5 \ 15 \text{xe}5 \text{xe}5 \ 16 \text{b}6!\) Black’s position was already verging on the point of collapse.

Against 10 \(\text{b}4\) Black should probably abandon any aggressive ideas on the kingside. After 10...0-0! 11 \(\text{a}3 \text{d}7 \ 12 \text{b}5 \text{a}5 \ 13 \text{a}2 \text{f}6\), as played in E.Torre-R.Ekstroem, Lugano 1989, it looks like White should be a bit better, although it’s not totally clear how effective his queenside advance really is.

**10...\(\text{g}5\)**
It's possible that Black was just following previous games, perhaps unsurprisingly if you consider that Black won the earliest six games I could find reaching this position! On the evidence of this particular game, though, I have to say I favour the idea of reverting back to the solid approach with 10...0-0. After all, ...h6 can hardly be considered a wasted tempo. Still, White can fight for the advantage if he develops in a similar way to Bologan, above: 11 c2 e8 12 d3 w.f8!? 13 e3 (I quite like 13 b4!? or even 13 b3) 13...exd 4 14 cxd4 d5! (14...exxe4? loses to 15 d5!) 15 e5 e4 16 h2 a5 17 e2 f6 18 exxe4 dxe4 19 exf6 wxf6 20 b4 a6 21 d5 exxe3 22 exxe3 e5 23 exxe4 f5 with compensation for the pawn, G.Sax-E.Nagy, Balatonlelle 2003.

11 f1!

Logical and very strong. On f1 the bishop provides rock-solid support for the g2-pawn, which is important in view of the impending ...g4. What's more, the c4-square becomes available and c4 is a move White really wants to play. All of this overrides any “passive” barbs which could be aimed at the bishop retreat.

11 c5? hxg5 12 xg5 gg8 13 h4 exd4, A.Reggio-S.Tarrasch, Monte Carlo 1903, is just an unsound sacrifice.

11 dxe5? dxe5 12 h2?! g4! 13 hxg4 gg8 14 g5 hxg5 15 e3 xe3 16 xe3 h8, K.Honfi-M.Damjanovic, Sarajevo 1966, is an example of another success for Black.

11...g4

There’s no going back. After 11...0-0 12 c4 a7 13 e3, Black would have a half decent position only if he were allowed to play ...g5-g7!

12 hxg4 xg4 13 c4 a7

In V.Spasov-D.Kontic, Niksic 1991, Black took the plunge with 13...xd4!? 14 cxd4 cxd4 15 e2 xe2+ 16 xe2 gg8. I don’t quite believe in Black’s compensation, and neither does Rybka.

I wonder why Kontic chose to go ‘all in’ like this. Did he overestimate the objective value of the sacrifice? Did he consider Black’s practical chances to be reasonable? Or did he become aware
Beating 1 e4 e5

that Black is in some trouble if he just plays ‘normally’.

14...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash e}3!}

Simple stuff, and a huge improvement over 14 b4!? exd4 15 e5? (15 b5! is still quite promising) 15...\texttt{\textbackslash xe}5 16 cxd4? \texttt{\textbackslash xf}3 17 gxf3 \texttt{\textbackslash g}8+ 18 \texttt{\textbackslash g}2 \texttt{\textbackslash xf}3+! and Black wins, N. Rossolimo-M. Campos Lopez, Skopje 1972.

14...\texttt{\textbackslash xf}3

Taking on f3 is positional suicide, but Black does at least win a pawn. The problem for Black is that his position is more difficult than it looks. Natural moves don’t seem to work for various reasons:

a) 14...\texttt{\textbackslash xe}4? loses a piece to 15 d5.

b) 14...0-0-0 15 d5! \texttt{\textbackslash xe}3 16 dxc6! \texttt{\textbackslash a}7 17 \texttt{\textbackslash a}5 and Black is facing serious problems on the queenside.

c) 14...\texttt{\textbackslash g}8 15 dxe5 (15 d5 \texttt{\textbackslash b}8 16 \texttt{\textbackslash xa}7 \texttt{\textbackslash xa}7 17 \texttt{\textbackslash e}3 also looks good) 15...\texttt{\textbackslash xe}5 (or 15...dxe5 16 \texttt{\textbackslash xa}7 \texttt{\textbackslash xa}7 17 b4) 16 \texttt{\textbackslash cx}e5 dxe5 17 \texttt{\textbackslash xa}7 \texttt{\textbackslash xa}7 18 \texttt{\textbackslash d}3 \texttt{\textbackslash a}8 19 \texttt{\textbackslash w}e3 and Black is worse, although this line might represent his best bet. The key thing to remember here is that castling is illegal!

15 \texttt{\textbackslash wxf}3 exd4 16 cxd4 \texttt{\textbackslash xd}4

16...\texttt{\textbackslash xd}4? is worse: 17 \texttt{\textbackslash xd}4 \texttt{\textbackslash xd}4 18 \texttt{\textbackslash c}3 \texttt{\textbackslash c}6 (or 18...\texttt{\textbackslash e}6 19 \texttt{\textbackslash e}3! and either \texttt{\textbackslash d}5 or \texttt{\textbackslash f}5) and here 19 e5! is very strong.

17 \texttt{\textbackslash d}1

17...\texttt{\textbackslash e}6?

17...\texttt{\textbackslash c}6 was Black’s best chance for survival: 18 e5! dxe5 (if 18...\texttt{\textbackslash xe}5, 19 \texttt{\textbackslash xa}7 \texttt{\textbackslash xa}7 20 f4 wins the knight) 19 \texttt{\textbackslash xa}7 \texttt{\textbackslash xa}7 20 \texttt{\textbackslash xe}5! \texttt{\textbackslash xe}5 21 \texttt{\textbackslash d}4 c5 22 \texttt{\textbackslash xe}5 \texttt{\textbackslash xe}5 23 \texttt{\textbackslash xe}5+ \texttt{\textbackslash f}8 24 \texttt{\textbackslash xc}5 and White’s advantages (stronger minor piece, better structure) offer him good winning chances.

18 \texttt{\textbackslash xa}7 \texttt{\textbackslash xa}7 19 e5! dxe5 20 \texttt{\textbackslash xe}5

Black has no hope of surviving. The position has been blown open and White is ready to unleash a series of threats. There will be no good way of dealing with them because Black’s pieces are totally uncoordinated.

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

If 20...0-0, White plays 21 \texttt{\textbackslash c}4 intending \texttt{\textbackslash xf}7 or \texttt{\textbackslash g}6.

21 \texttt{\textbackslash b}3
21...f8

Maybe Black just couldn't bring himself to castle kingside - it would have been a final admission that his strategy had been a complete failure. In any case, it also loses immediately to 21...0-0 22g3+ h8 23e3.

22g6+! fxg6 23xe6 d8 24d1 1-0

24...d5 25f3+ g7 26d3 wins.

**Game 37**

J.Bokar-V.Nasybullin

Correspondence 2006

1 e4 e5 2f3 c6 3c4 e7

This is the Hungarian Defence, and it's quite a rare choice for Black (I haven't yet faced it). Black wants to play ...f6 without fear of g5, and he is also ready to meet d4 with ...d6.

For one game I'm going to break away from the book's central theme of c2-c3, to examine the main choice in this position, 4 d4. Of course there is nothing wrong with playing 4 0-0 f6 5 d3, with a direct transposition to Chapter Four. However, attempts to play a quick c2-c3 and d2-d4 don't seem to be justified. For example, if 5 e1 0-0 6 c3?!,

the typical fork trick 6...xe4! ensures Black of at least equality.

Let's look at one or two other rare moves for Black. I don't plan to cover every option (e.g. 3...h6?!, 3...f6?!, 3...e7?!) etc). I feel at some stage it must be best to just play some chess and use common sense at the board, rather than try to be booked up against every single possibility.

a) 3...d6 looks similar to 3...e7, but a key difference is that Black is plan-
Beating 1 e4 e5

ning to fianchetto his king’s bishop. Black can also begin with 3...g6, which often transposes. After 3...d6, Black can meet 4 d4 with 4...exd4 5 cxd4 g6 and the bishop will be much more active on g7 than it would be on e7. It’s basically the Larsen Variation of the Philidor but with an early c4 and ...c6.

But what about 4 c3 here, followed by d4? Let’s see:

For example, 8...xf7 9 f3+ e6 10-0 a5 11 d3 f8 12 e4 d6 13 dxe5 e7 14 b4 and White won, D.Langier-R.Acosta, Buenos Aires 1993. Black can probably defend better, but who would want to play like this?

a3) The innocent-looking 4...e7 might also be a mistake:

a1) 4...g6 is the most solid option for Black. 5 d4 g7 (or 5...e7 6 0-0 g7) 6 0-0 e7 7 f6 8 bd2 0-0 9 h3 should be compared directly to 3...f6 4 d3 h6 (Bologan-Tomashevsky, Game 35) and the typical ideas for White must be very similar. The only detail here is that Black is missing the move ...h6, but I don’t think this should make much difference.

a2) 4...f6?! looks risky in view of 5 g5! d5 6 exd5, when surely the extra c2-c3 makes a difference. After 6...xd5 (6...a5 7 a4+) 7 d4 e7 we actually transpose to a line of the Two Knights (4 g5 d5 5 exd5 cxd5 6 d4 b4+ 7 c3 e7) and here 8 xf7! is known to be good for White.

a4) 4...g4 must surely be the most sensible option if Black isn’t planning a
kingside fianchetto, and this is reflected by the fact that it’s the most common choice after 4 c3. If Black follows up with ...\(\text{\textit{...}}\)f6, and I think this is his best option, something similar to lines seen in Chapter Four is more than likely and this of course suits our repertoire. For example, 5 h3 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)h5 6 d3 and:

a41) The plausible 6...\(\text{\textit{...}}\)f6?? loses to 7 g4! \(\text{\textit{...}}\)g6 8 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)g5 trapping the queen – this is why we inserted 5 h3!.

a42) After 6...\(\text{\textit{...}}\)d7 7 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)bd2 White need not be afraid of 7...\(\text{\textit{...}}\)a5, as the trick 8 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)xe5! wins a pawn – another good reason for 5 h3!

a43) 6...\(\text{\textit{...}}\)f6! 7 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)bd2 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)e7 8 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)b3 0-0 9 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)f1 (there’s nothing wrong with 9 0-0 but with f1 still vacant, why not this more aggressive approach?) 9...d5 (if 9...\(\text{\textit{...}}\)d7, 10 g4 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)g6 11 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)g3 is tempting) 10 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)e2 and then \(\text{\textit{...}}\)g3, or g4 followed by \(\text{\textit{...}}\)g3.

b) 3...\(\text{\textit{...}}\)d4?! is known as the Blackburne-Shilling Gambit, because the English player Joseph Henry Blackburne reputedly used it to win shillings from amateurs.

It’s also known in some circles, especially in junior chess, as the “Oh my god!” trick. For maximum effect, after playing the move you are meant to hold your head in your hands and exclaim those words, all to give the impression that you have just blundered a pawn. Then you hope for 4 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)xe5?! \(\text{\textit{...}}\)g5! 5 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)xf7?? \(\text{\textit{...}}\)xg2 6 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)f1 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)xe4+ 7 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)e2 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)f3 mate. It works with some frequency at junior tournaments!

The problem (for Black, not us!) is that after any half-decent reply, we can’t escape the fact that Black has moved his only developed piece twice, and it gets exchanged. After something like 4 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)xd4 exd4 5 c3 White can already count on a significant advantage, especially since 5...\(\text{\textit{...}}\)c5? loses to 6 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)xf7+!.

c) 3...f5 is the kind of move you probably shouldn’t spend hours fretting over, simply because the chances of facing it are quite slim. The sensible reply, especially if you are surprised over the board, is 4 d3, which I would have thought compares quite favourably to 4 d3 against the Schliemann. Is the bishop better on c4 than on b5? Just ask Black’s king! 4...\(\text{\textit{...}}\)f6 5 0-0 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)c5 6 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)c3 d6 7 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)g5 is a King’s Gambit Declined with reversed colours, and 7...\(\text{\textit{...}}\)a5 8 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)xf6! \(\text{\textit{...}}\)xf6 9 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)d5 \(\text{\textit{...}}\)d8 10 b4! \(\text{\textit{...}}\)xc4 11 bxc5 was somewhat better for White in D.Fryer-M.Lyell, Hastings 2003/04.

Even so, when considering a move like 3...f5, it’s always tempting to look
for something approaching a direct refutation. I suspect that 4 d4! is the most critical move.

4 d4 d6

Black’s other main option here is 4...exd4, after which 5 Qxd4 Qf6 6 Qc3 0-0 7 0-0 d6 8 Qe1 is a kind of Scotch Game, but one where Black has developed passively with his bishop on e7 instead of b4 or c5. This position can also be reached via the Philidor Defence. Although Black’s set-up is solid, White’s extra space and central superiority promise at least a small edge. For example, 8...Qe5 9 Qf1! (if 9 Qb3, 9...c5! suddenly gives Black good counterplay) 9...Qe8 10 Qg5 Qfg4 11 Qf4 Qg6 12 Qg3 Qh4 13 Qd2 Qxg3 14 hxg3 Qd7 15 a4 Q6e5 16 a5 a6 17 Qe2 Qf6 18 f4 Qc6 19 Qf3, M.Stolz-G.Braun, German League 2009.

5 Qxe5!

Even though ...Qe7 ensures that Black’s king isn’t displaced after the exchange of queens on d8 (or indeed that Black doesn’t lose either the f7- or the e5-pawn!), I still think that the resulting position is quite uncomfortable for Black and I’m not sure why anyone would be in a rush to accept it.
Note that 5 c3 is not the most effective approach, as Black gains quick counterplay in the centre. For example, 5...dxe5 6 dx/e5 0-0 7 0-0 exd4 8 cxd4 d5! 9 exd5 cxd5.

There’s no reason not to, but if White really wants to avoid an exchange of queens, he should play a King’s Indian structure with 5 d5 b8 6 d3 and c2-c4. Alternatively, 5 h3 f6 6 c3 0-0 7 0-0 exd4 8 cxd4 is similar to 4...exd4.

5...dxe5
Forced, since 5...xe5? 6 xe5 dxe5 7 Wh5! is disastrous for Black.

6 Wxd8+ 0xd8 7 c3

This queenless middlegame has always been considered better for White, because of his active pieces and lead in development. I imagine that over the board it’s quite difficult for Black to defend. As this game demonstrates, it’s no easier in correspondence chess, where you have a lot more time to solve your problems (or, perhaps, to wallow in a miserable position).

7...f6

7...g4 8 e3 f6 9 0-0-0 would transpose.

8 e3 g4

If 8...0-0 White plays 9 c5! e8 10 g5 e6 11 xe6 fxe6 12 b5! d7 13 xe6 bxc6 and Black’s pawns are not a pretty sight, E.Vasiukov-G.Gheorghiu, Manila 1974.

9 0-0-0 0-0 10 h3 h5

White is not worried about 10...xf3 11 gxf3, since f3-f4 is always an option and meanwhile the bishop pair promises good long-term chances.

Bearing in mind what happens to Black’s bishop in the game, there’s an argument here for 10...e6. But even here White can either saddle Black with permanently weak doubled pawns with 11 xe6 or choose the possibly even stronger 11 d5!?

11 g4 g6 12 d2 e7 13 f3!

Now Black’s light-squared bishop will struggle to get back into the game.

13...a5 14 e2 f8

The first new move! The stem game, N.Rossolimo-S.Bernstein, US Ch., New York 1954, had continued 14...c6 15...
Beating 1 e4 e5

\( \text{\#b3? } \text{\#xb3+ 16 axb3 b5 and Black managed to equalize.} \)

However, there is no reason for White to relieve Black’s position by exchanging knights, especially such a poor knight on the rim. 15 h4!, as in the main game, would keep the pressure firmly on Black.

15 h4! h5 16 g5 \( \text{\#e8 17 a3} \)

By pushing the knight back to e8, White opens up possibilities of \( \text{\#d5.} \)

The problem for Black is that \( ...c6 \) can be met by b4 trapping the knight on a5 – a good reason for White to avoid its exchange.

17 \( \text{\#f8} \) 18 \( \text{\#f2} \) a6

18...\( \text{\#d6} \) is strongly answered by 19 \( \text{\#d5} \) intending 19...c6? 20 \( \text{\#c7} \) \( \text{\#ac8} \) 21 \( \text{\#xa7} \) \( \text{\#xc7} \) 22 \( \text{\#b6.} \)

19 \( \text{\#d5} \) \( \text{\#d6} \) 20 \( \text{\#he1!} \) b5 21 f4!

22 e5! \( \text{\#c5} \)

22...\( \text{\#xe5} \) is met by 23 \( \text{\#e7+} \) \( \text{\#f8} \) 24 \( \text{\#xg6+} \) \( \text{\#xg6} \) 25 b4 \( \text{\#c6} \) 26 \( \text{\#f3,} \) winning material. Or if 22...\( \text{\#f8} \) 23 \( \text{\#xf4} \) and Black is getting squashed.

23 \( \text{\#xc5} \) \( \text{\#xd5} \) 24 \( \text{\#b4!} \)

Winning an exchange.

24...\( \text{\#c6} \) 25 \( \text{\#f3} \) \( \text{\#xb4} \) 26 axb4 c6 27 \( \text{\#xd5} \) \( \text{\#xd5} \) 28 e6! \( \text{\#c8} \) 29 \( \text{\#xf7+} \) \( \text{\#xf7} \) 30 \( \text{\#c7} \)

30...d4 fails to 31 \( \text{\#f3} \) \( \text{\#xc3} \) 32 \( \text{\#e5+}. \)

31 \( \text{\#e5} \) \( \text{\#e8} \)

Again 31...d4 is no good: 32 \( \text{\#f3} \) \( \text{\#xc3} \) 33 \( \text{\#d7+} \) \( \text{\#g8} \) 34 \( \text{\#c5!} \) etc.

32 \( \text{\#xe8} \) \( \text{\#xe8} \) 33 \( \text{\#b3} \) \( \text{\#e7} \) 34 \( \text{\#f1} \) \( \text{\#d6} \)

35 \( \text{\#xf4} \) \( \text{\#e6} \) 36 \( \text{\#f2} \) \( \text{\#e5} \) 37 \( \text{\#d2} \) \( \text{\#f5} \)

38 \( \text{\#e3} \) g6 39 \( \text{\#d4} \) \( \text{\#xd4} \) 40 cxd4+ 1-0

Key Notes

1. Against 4...\( \text{\#e7,} \) 4...\( \text{\#b6} \) or 4...d6 (Game 36), White can if he wishes just develop as in previous chapters to reach similar positions. However, an early d2-d4 is more critical as it puts Black under immediate pressure. In contrast to positions after 4...\( \text{\#f6,} \) White is much better placed to maintain his centre.

2. The critical response to the Hungarian, 3...\( \text{\#e7,} \) is the immediate 4 d4!. An early c2-c3 and d2-d4 plan is less effective here. This is a rare occasion in this book where the d-pawn doesn’t require protection from its partner.

3. If your opponent plays 3...\( \text{\#d4} \) and cries out “Oh my god!”, remember to take the knight, not the pawn.
Chapter Six

Bishop's Opening

1 e4 e5 2 \textit{c}4

The only way White can guarantee obtaining a system of development with $\textit{c}$c4, d3 and $\textit{f}$f3 is by using the Bishop's Opening move order. If White plays 2 $\textit{f}$f3, the vast majority of the time he will be able to force it, but if Black does choose the Petroff, 2...$\textit{f}$f6, he needs to be prepared for something entirely different.

The only drawback with the Bishop's Opening move order is that, because there is no immediate pressure on his e5-pawn, Black is not obliged to play ...$\textit{c}$c6 any time soon. In practice there is a considerable chance that he will choose to do so anyway. For example, he might play 2...$\textit{c}$c6, after which 3 $\textit{f}$f3 transposes directly to the Italian Game. A more likely scenario is 2...$\textit{f}$f6 3 d3 $\textit{c}$c6 4 $\textit{f}$f3, again with a transposition. But Black does have some decent alternatives to this move order, and these will be considered in this chapter.

The most significant option is undoubtedly 2...$\textit{f}$f6 3 d3 c6 intending ...d5, and the vast majority of this chapter is devoted to this idea. To have any chance of obtaining an advantage, White needs to put Black's centre under pressure as quickly as possible. The main line runs 4 $\textit{f}$f3 d5 5 $\textit{b}$b3 $\textit{d}$d6 and now White has a choice between two equally playable moves:
a) 6 ¼c3 is the traditional main line. In Delchev-Jovanic (Game 38) Black chooses to maintain the tension with 6...¼e6, but his centre soon comes under heavy pressure. A more reliable solution for Black is to release the tension with 6...dxe4, and this is covered in Games 39-40.

b) 6 exd5!? has been gaining in popularity in recent times, and for good reason. White still intends to put pressure on the centre, but by capturing on d5 so quickly he eliminates Black’s ‘easy option’ of ...dxe4. Either recapture on d5 is possible: 6...cx:d5 is covered in Mitkov-Timoshenko (Game 41), while 6...¼xd5 is covered in Nevednichy-Beliavsky (Game 42).

There are also options to consider earlier on in the 3...c6 line. As well as 5...¼d6, Black can play 5...a5 or 5...¼b4+, and these two moves are covered in Papp-Ippolito (Game 43). Black doesn’t even have to play ...d5; the more restrained 4...¼e7 intending ...d6 is seen in Sebag-Stefanova (Game 44).

The final two games of this chapter, and of the book, deal with possibilities on the second and third moves: 3...¼c5, 3...¼e7 and 3...d5 in Shaposhnikov-Lastin (Game 45); and then 2...d6, 2...¼c5, 2...c6 and 2...f5 in Mrva-Klemanic (Game 46).

Game 38
A.Delchev-O.Jovanic
Zadar 2004

1 e4 e5 2 ¼c4 ¼f6 3 d3 c6 4 ¼f3 d5 5 ¼b3 ¼d6 6 ¼c3

The game’s actual move order was 6 exd5 cxd5 7 ¼g5 ¼e6 8 ¼c3 ¼a5 9 0-0 ¼bd7. See Mitkov-Timoshenko (Game 41) for coverage of the 6 exd5 move order.

6...¼e6

6...¼e6 was the original ‘main line’, but more recently it has been overtaken by 6...dxe4. Black tries to keep his centre intact, which in many ways is the most ambitious approach. However, practice has shown that this is difficult for him to do, and with accu-
rate play White can place considerable pressure on Black’s centre pawns.

Apart from 6...dxe4, the other main option for Black here is 6...d4 closing the centre. 7 ²e2, planning ²g3, is clearly the best reply, and now:

a) 7...²a6 intends ...²c5 to swap off White’s strong bishop, but 8 c3! is a good reply: 8...dxc3 (conceding the centre; the problem with 8...c5 is that it makes Black’s previous move look silly) 9 bxc3 0-0 10 0-0 ²c5 11 ²c2! ²g4 12 ²g3 ²h5 13 h3 ²xg3 14 fxg3 ²h5 15 g4 ²g6 16 h4 f6 17 h5 ²f7 18 d4 ²e6 19 ²b3 ²a5 20 ²d2 exd4 21 cxd4 ²b4 22 ²e3 with a clear advantage for White, J.Nunn-V.Korchnoi, Johannesburg 1981.

b) 7...c5! followed by ...²c6 looks like the most logical follow-up for Black. A natural sequence is 8 ²g3 ²c6 9 0-0 and now:

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

b1) 9...0-0 10 ²g5!? (White encourages ...h6, so that later on Black will find it more difficult to arrange ...g6; the immediate 10 ²h4 is a good alternative) 10...h6 11 ²d2 ²e6 12 ²h4!

(Black cannot play ...g6, either to prevent ²f5 or to attack the knight once it reaches that square) 12...²h7?! (battling for control of f5 with 12...²e7 looks like a better idea) 13 ²hf5 ²g8 (planning ...²f8 and ...g6) 14 ²xd6 ²xd6 15 f4 ²xb3?! 16 axb3 g6 17 ²c1 h5 18 f5 a6 19 ²g5 with strong pressure on the kingside, R.Berzinsh-K.Kalnins, Riga 2005.

b2) 9...h6!? is interesting. Black plans to meet ²h2 with ...g6. Indeed, he wants to play this move anyway. The rook stays on h8 to protect h6 and Black can castle 'by hand' with ...²f8-g7. The whole idea is to keep White’s knights at an arm’s length.

10 h3 g6 11 c3 (11 a3!, intending ²h2 and possibly f4, might be better) 11...²d7 12 cxd4 cxd4 13 ²e1?! (13 ²d2!) 13...²e7 14 a3 ²f8 15 ²f1 ²g7 16 ²d1d2 b5 was a successful application of Black’s plan in M.Schlosser-V.Ivanchuk, Adelaide 1988, but White has improvements to make life less comfortable for Black.

Moreover, 10 ²d2 worked out well for White in W.Hendriks-F.Kroeze, Enschede 1998, after 10...g6 (I think Black should abort the plan here, and simply play 10...0-0) 11 ²c4 ²c7 12 a4 ²f8 13 f4 ²g7 14 f5, and once again White exerts pressure.

7 ²g5!

White must put pressure on Black’s centre pawns as quickly as possible. There’s an immediate threat to capture on d5.
Beating 1 e4 e5

7...\texttt{a}5

7...d4 is again answered by 8 \texttt{e}2, with similar play to the previous note.

If 7...\texttt{bd}7? White wins a pawn with 8 exd5 cxd5 9 \texttt{xd}5! (remember to avoid 9 \texttt{xd}5?? \texttt{xd}5 10 \texttt{xd}5 \texttt{a}5+!).

8 0-0 \texttt{bd}7

Black has managed to keep his pawn centre intact, but to do so he’s had to play the less-than-ideal ...\texttt{a}5. In fact, White can exploit the position of Black’s queen in a rather surprising way:

9 exd5 cxd5 10 \texttt{e}1!

Creating an X-ray effect on the black queen. Because the queen is undefended, this lines up tactical possibilities based on \texttt{xd}5 and \texttt{e}4. Of course White’s queen also attacks the e5-pawn. Not bad for an awkward-looking move!

10...\texttt{c}8

This was a critical moment, with Black having to decide between a few options:

a) The problem with the straightforward 10...0-0? is that it allows White to win a pawn with 11 \texttt{xf}6 \texttt{xf}6 12 \texttt{xd}5!

b) 10...d4 11 \texttt{e}4 \texttt{b}6 (if 11...\texttt{xe}1? 12 \texttt{xd}6+ \texttt{e}7, 13 \texttt{f}5+! \texttt{xf}5 14 \texttt{fxe}1 wins at least a pawn) 12 \texttt{xe}6 \texttt{fxe}6 13 \texttt{xd}6+ \texttt{xd}6 14 \texttt{h}4 \texttt{c}8 15 \texttt{g}3? \texttt{xc}2 16 \texttt{xe}5 \texttt{xe}5 17 \texttt{xe}5 gave White just a slight edge in A.Fedorov-T.Mamedjarova, Baku 2008, but 13 \texttt{fd}2! planning \texttt{c}4 looks more promising to me.

c) Moving the queen out of the X-ray with 10...\texttt{c}5! might well be Black’s wisest course, but White still has good chances of keeping some advantage after 11 \texttt{xf}6! and now:
c1) 11...\texttt{xf6} 12 \texttt{xe5} 0-0 13 \texttt{f3} \texttt{fe8} was played in S. Taulbut-P. Scheeren, Copenhagen 1981. I don’t think that Black has enough for the pawn here, especially if White plays 14 \texttt{wd2} intending 14...\texttt{g4} 15 d4 \texttt{c8} 16 \texttt{e5}.

c2) 11...gx f6 12 d4!? exd4 13 \texttt{xd5} 0-0-0 14 \texttt{we4} \texttt{e5} 15 \texttt{f4} f5 16 \texttt{xe6} fxe4 17 \texttt{xc5} exf3 18 \texttt{d3} was a touch better for White in S. Tiviakov-R. Swinkels, Vlissingen 2004. There’s also 12 \texttt{d1}!, which might be more promising. I like White’s position after either 12...0-0-0 13 d4 exd4 14 \texttt{xd4}, or 12...d4 13 \texttt{e4} \texttt{b6} 14 c3! when Black’s king won’t be safe on either side.

11 d4!?

White can win a pawn with 11 \texttt{xf6} \texttt{xf6} (or 11...gx f6 12 \texttt{xd5} \texttt{xe1} 13 \texttt{xe1}) 12 \texttt{xd5}! (Black gets some compensation after 12 \texttt{xe5}! 0-0, since ...\texttt{c8} is more useful than ...\texttt{c5}) 12...\texttt{xe1} 13 \texttt{xf6}+ gx f6 14 \texttt{xe1} (or 14 \texttt{xe1}) 14...\texttt{xb3} 15 cxb3. Presumably Delchev thought that Black would have drawing chances and preferred to keep the tension. Or perhaps he missed Black’s defensive resource in the note on 12...exd4.

11...\texttt{b4}!

Of course Black would love to be able to reply with 11...e4?, but this loses to 12 \texttt{xe4}!.

12 \texttt{d2}

White is also better after 12 \texttt{xe5} \texttt{e4} 13 \texttt{xd7} \texttt{xd7} 14 \texttt{d2} \texttt{d2} 15 \texttt{xd2}. Black will regain the pawn by capturing twice on c3, but White will keep the queens on and aim to exploit Black’s slightly shaky king.

12...\texttt{xc3}?

Black panics and makes a losing blunder.

12...exd4 13 \texttt{xd4} 0-0! keeps Black in the game in view of the resource 14 \texttt{xe6} \texttt{fe8}!. I prefer 14 a3 \texttt{xc3} 15 \texttt{x c3} \texttt{b6} 16 f3, when White’s strong bishop on c3 and control of the dark squares must count for something. If 16...\texttt{xc5} White can choose between 17 \texttt{f2} \texttt{xb3} 18 \texttt{xb3} (or 18 cxb3!) and 17 \texttt{a5} \texttt{a6} 18 \texttt{a2}; in either case he has an advantage.
Beating 1 e4 e5

13 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{x}c}3}}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{x}c}3}}

If 13...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{w}c}7}}}} White just wins a good pawn with 14 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{dxe}5}}}).

14 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{bxc}3 \textsf{e}4 \textsf{15 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{g}5}}}} 0-0 16 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{c}4}}}}}

Delchev plays the rest of the game energetically to avoid any problems. Delaying this move might have allowed Black to get a grip on the c4-square after which he would have some compensation.

16...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{w}xe}1}} 17 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{axe}1}}}

This is the ‘right rook’ – see White’s 19th move.

17...h6

Or 17...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{dxc}4}} 18 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{dxe}6 \textsf{xc}8}} 19 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{a}4 fxe}6}} 20 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{xd}7 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{xd}7}}}}}} 21 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{xe}4}} with a winning endgame for White.

18 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{dxe}6 fxe}6}} 19 f3! \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{xf}3}} 20 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{xf}3 \textsf{xc}8}} 21 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{cxd}5 exd}5}} 22 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{e}7 \textsf{d}8}} 23 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{g}3 g}5}} 24 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{f}3}} 1-0

\textbf{Game 39}
Z.Efimenko-V.Golod
Montreal 2005

1 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{e}4 \textsf{e}5}} 2 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{c}4 \textsf{f}6}} 3 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{d}3 \textsf{c}6}} 4 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{f}3 \textsf{d}5}}}

\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{b}3 \textsf{d}6 \textsf{c}3 \textsf{dxe}4}}}

Ever since Kramnik demonstrated that Black has seriously good equalizing chances with this move, it has become Black’s most popular choice at grandmaster level. Black is not worried about giving up the centre, nor about conceding the bishop pair a bit later. Although 6...dxe4 is clearly unambitious, if Black’s goal is to limit White’s chances as much as possible, it certainly succeeds in achieving this.

7 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{g}5}}}

7 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{xe}4}} is covered in the next game.

7...0-0 8 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{cxe}4 \textsf{xe}4}} 9 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{xe}4}}}

9...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{f}5!}}}

A key move – Black simply wants to play ...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textsf{xe}4}}. Initially it looks like a strange idea to trade the light-squared bishop for the knight, but this knight is a strong piece and practice has shown that White has found it tough going trying to prove that his bishop pair gives him a meaningful edge. On the other hand, it should be said that this line isn’t exactly much fun to play as Black.
More ‘interesting’ alternatives are also, almost by definition, riskier:

a) 9...d6 10 h5! c7 11 g5! h6 12 e4 (lining up xh6 and/or g6) 12...e7

13 xh6! gxh6 14 g6+ h8 15 xh6+ g8 16 h4 with a fierce attack, R.Tischbierek-A.Beliavsky, Novi Sad Olympiad 1990.

b) 9...a5 10 h5! (again this move) 10...b4+ 11 f1! (avoiding a weakness on d3) 11...e7 (11...h6? 12 xh6! is crushing) 12 a4 d7 (A.Fedorov-A.Shirov, European Team Ch., Leon 2001) and here Shirov assesses 13 e3 b6 14 h4 e8 as a slight plus for White.

c) 9...b4+ 10 c3 e7 11 f4!? (or 11 0-0 f5 12 h5 xe4 13 dxe4, which looks like a favourable version – for White – of the main game) 11...exf4 12 xf4 d7 13 f3 f6 14 0-0 xe4 15 xe4 and White is the more active, H.Stefansson-I.Krush, Reykjavik 2004. 10 f3

10 g3 g6 11 h4 h6 12 g4 is tempting but Black’s play in V.Nevednichy-A.Raetsky, Lucerne 1994, is quite convincing. I haven’t been able to come up with a significant improvement over 12...h8 13 h5 h7 14 f5 f6 15 xd6 xd6, when it’s not clear if White has achieved anything positive from his kingside action.

10 0-0 a6 11 xd6 xd6 12 f3 e6 gave Black comfortable equality in V.Anand-V.Kramnik, Frankfurt (rapid) 1998, but note that 11 f3 xe4 12 dxe4 would transpose to the main game.

10...xe4

10...g6 is met by 11 h4!

If 11...xe4 12 dxe4 the extra move h2-h4, facilitating g5, helps White. For example, 12...d7 13 c3 c5 14 c2 e7 15 g5 f6 16 d2 with an edge for White, K.Georgiev-B.Altermann, Recklinghausen 1998. Alternatively, 11...h6 12 e3 a5 13 a3 a6 14 0-0-0 h8 15 g4! and White is ahead in the race to attack the kings.

11 dxe4 d7 12 0-0

White has also played 12 c3 here, so that the bishop can drop back to c2 after ...c5. Black’s typical plan of gain-
Beating 1 e4 e5

ing space on the queenside while White completes his development ensures equality. For example, 12...a5 13 0-0 (or 13 a4 c5 14 c2 e7 15 0-0 e6! 16 e3 fd8 17 e2 e7 18 g3 g6 19 b4 axb4 20 cxb4 b3, D.Howell-J.Smeets, Staunton Memorial, London 2009) 13...a4 14 c2 e7 15 d1 fd8 16 h4 h6 17 g3 b5 18 d2 f8 19 g4 e6 20 xe6 xe6, S.Movsesian-Bu Xiangzhi, Nanjing 2008.

12...c5

13 c4!

The best chance. White’s one advantage in this position is his bishop pair. If he wants to cause Black any problems at all he mustn’t give it up.

13...b5 14 e2 e7

A key point here is that after 14...h4 White can ignore the attack on the e4-pawn: 15 e3! xe4 (15...e6 16 g3 e7 17 c3, as played in S.Tiviakov-E.Rozentalis, Kallithea 2009, is safer, but then why give White a tempo with g2-g3?) 16 fd1! e7 17 xc5 xf3 18 xf3 xc5 19 xc6 with an edge for White, who answers 19...ab8? with 20 d5 (Golod).

Golod’s assessment of the ending we reach in the main game is in between ‘+/-’ and ‘=’, which seems just about right. At grandmaster level Black should draw fairly comfortably as long as he plays accurately, and this is reflected by the high percentage of draws.

Here is one of the few wins that White has enjoyed: 14...e6 15 c3 c5 16 g3 (White slowly improves his position on the kingside) 16...a5 17 g2 e7 (this looks a bit passive; why not 17...e7 here?) 18 h4 c8 19 f5!? g6 20 f3 (White simply wanted to induce a weakness; 20 xe5?? f6 would trap the queen) 20...g7 21 h6 e6 22 g4 (I like 22 a4 here) 22...fd8 23 fd1 a4 24 h5!? xd1 25 xe6 xe6 26 xd1 d8 27 xd8+ xd8 28 f4 exf4 29 gxf4 g5 30 fxg5

30...f4+? (Black must have thought that White couldn’t make progress with his bishop incarcerated on h6, but White finds a way; 30...xg5! had to be played, and after 31 xg5...
White has some winning chances) 31 "f3 "xe2 32 "xe2 c7 33 b3 axb3 34 axb3 "f4 35 "f3 "d2 36 c4 bxc4 37 bxc4 c1 38 "g4 c3 39 "f5 "d2 40 e5 c5 41 "e4 c1 42 "d5 c3 43 "d6 (zugzwang!) 43..."f4 (43..."h8 44 g6! "xh6 45 gxf7 "xg8 46 "d7 "g7 47 "e8 wins) 44 "xc5 "xe5 45 "d5 "f4 46 c5 f6 47 c6 fxg5 48 "e6 "c7 49 "xg5 "g7 50 "d7 "b8 51 c7 "xc7 52 "xc7 and 1-0, E.Ghaem Maghami-Datu, Kolkata 2001.

Of course at lower levels, less accurate play will ensure that White (and of course Black!) has more winning chances.

15 c3 a5!

Once more we see Black gaining as much space as possible on the queenside, his best attempt at neutralizing White’s advantage of the bishop pair.

16 e3 a4 17 ad1 ffd8 18 g3

Likewise, White gains space on the kingside. Soon there’s an almost inevitable exchange of major pieces on the d-file.

18...e6 19 h4 c5 20 c1

Remember, White must keep the two bishops!

20...xd1 21 xbd1 xd8 22 xbd8+ xxd8 23 g2 f8 24 d3 xd3 25 xd3 d6 26 h5 h6!

Golod felt it was risky to allow White’s pawn to reach h6.

27 c2

Perhaps White could have given Black more problems with the immediate 27 h3 intending g4-f5. Golod suggests 27...c5 28 c2 d7 planning ...f6, but here White can switch plans with 29 c4!?.

27...f8!

Now Black is in time to bring his king to f6. There’s still some play left in this position, and certainly scope to outplay an opponent, but objectively Black’s solid structure and queenside space holds the balance against White’s bishop pair. The remaining moves were:

28 h3 e7 29 g4 f6 30 f4 c7 31 d2 d6 32 c4 d4 33 d1 a3 34 bxa3 xa3 35 cxb5 cxb5 36 c3 e6 37 h3 f6 38 a5 d6 39 b6 e7 40 g4
Beating 1 e4 e5

1 e4 e5 2 Ąc4 Ąf6 3 d3 c6 4 Ąf3 d5 5 Ąb3 Ąd6 6 Ąc3 dxe4 7 Ąxe4

This shouldn’t be anything for White, should it? With accurate play Black must surely be okay, but it’s interesting to note that in practice White has been more successful with 7 Ąxe4 than he has with the main move 7 Ąg5. Moreover, when a 2700+ grandmaster plays a move like this, we have to sit up and take some notice.

7...Ąxe4 8 dxe4

10...Ąxh7 11 Ąh5+ Ąg8 12 Ąg5 Ąc7 13 Ąd1 with a powerful attack, N.Mitkov-C.Gabriel, Pula 2000. The game continued 13...Ąd7 14 Ąd3 (14 Ąg6 is also strong) 14...Ąc5 15 Ąg3 Ąe7 16 Ąh6 Ąf6 17 Ąg6 Ąa5+ 18 c3 Ąd8 19 Ąxg7 Ąxb3? (Black’s best chance of survival was 19...Ąd2+! 20 Ąxd2 Ąxb3+ 21 axb3 fxg6 22 Ąxf8 Ąxf8 23 Ąxg6 – Lukacs) 20 Ąh6 Ąd2+ 21 Ąxd2 Ąxd2 22 Ąxf6+ Ąh7 23 Ąxd2 and White won.
b) 8...0-0 also seems to invite trouble: 9 a5 c7 10 d2! (White uses the open d-file as quickly as possible, before Black gets coordinated) 10...g4 11 0-0-0 e7 12 xe7 xe7 13 d6! xd6 14 xd6 with some pressure, V.Zhe lnin-P.Tishin, Tula 2000.

c) 8...g4! is stronger. For example, 9 h3 h5 10 g5! f6 (10...xf3? 11 xf3 xg5? 12 xf7+ d8 13 xb7 xg2 14 0-0-0 is winning for White) 11 e3 a6 12 e2 e7 13 0-0-0 c5 14 xc5! xc5 15 g4 f7 16 xf7+ xf7 17 b1 0-0 18 h4 b5 19 h5 with a roughly equal position, but one with plenty of play, I.Rogers-V.Tseshkovsky, Vrsac 1987.

d) 8...b4+! is perhaps Black’s simplest solution. If White enjoys playing queenless middlegame positions, there’s nothing wrong with 9 c3 (9 d2 avoids the exchange, but this must be level) 9...xd1+ 10 xd1 d6, but with accurate play it looks like Black should neutralize White’s slight development edge and reach equality.

For example, 11 e2 f6 12 d1 e7

13 d2 a6 14 a4 c5 15 c4 a5, N.Short-H.Westerinen, Brighton 1982; or 11 g5 0-0 12 e2 d7 13 d1 c5 14 e3 xe3 15 xe3 c5 16 c4 (16 d6?!) 16...h6 17 f3 e8 18 ac1 a5 19 a3 a4 20 h4 f8 21 d6 e6 22 xe6 xe6, D.Pikula-A.Raetsky, Zürich 1998.

9 e3

The most challenging move, planning d2 and 0-0-0. It’s true that...h6 prevents a piece from coming to g5, but if Black castles kingside White can think about pushing a pawn to that square!

9...e7

Black suffers in the game from some congestion with her minor pieces. In particular, the light-squared bishop becomes blocked in and doesn’t see the light of day until it’s too late. I feel that Black can avoid some of the later problems by playing 9...a6!. The intention is to meet 10 d2 with 10...f6 and then 11 0-0-0 with 11...b4! 12 c3 e7, when Black is far better placed than in the game.

10 d2! d7 11 0-0-0

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Beating 1 e4 e5

11...c7

The difference here is that after 11...b4 12 c3 a5 there is nothing to prevent White from launching into kingside action with 13 g4!. It looks crude, and it is, but it's also quite dangerous for Black. For example, 13...f6 14 g5 dxe4 15 w.c2 xg5 (or 15...f5 16 h4 g6 17 xf5 gxf5 18 f3 xg5 19 w.xf5) 16 xg5 hxg5 17 xxe5!

If 11...c5 12 xc5 wxc5 (or 12...xc5 13 xe5!) White again gets going with 13 g4!

12 w.c3 b6 13 g4!

Here it comes! This would have also been White's answer to 12...0-0.

13...xe3+ 14 fxe3!

It's more important to keep pressure on e5 than it is to maintain a perfect structure. 14 wxe3 would allow Black to play 14...c5 followed by ...a5, with counterplay.

14...f6?!

It's hard to believe that Zatonskih overlooked White's 16th move. It's more likely that she mistakenly felt her position was already bad enough that sacrificing material was the best practical chance.

After 14...0-0 15 w.g1! g6 (trying to block things up) 16 g5 h5 17 h4! w.g7 White has 18 f5+! gxf5 19 exf5 when Black will struggle to survive. However, Black could try to bail out to a pawn-down ending with 15...c5 16 wxe5 wxe5 17 xe5 dxb3+ 18 axb3.

15 xe5 0-0?

15...e6 is strongly met by 16 xc6!, but this was Black's best chance since there is still some hope for survival after 16...wc7.

16 g6

This is winning for White.

16...wxe4 17 xf8 xg4

18 w.g1

*(Rybka)* likes 18 d7!, which wins for White after 18...xd7 19 w.g1 f6 20 d4 w.f3 21 f4 w.e2 22 xf7+! xf7 23 g.xg4 or 18...xd7 19 w.g1 f8 20 xd7 xd7 21 w.xg7+ e7 22 xf7+. Vallejo's choice, however, is ultimately good enough.

18 xf8

If 18...xd1, White plays 19 d7!
19 \text{c}d4 \text{f}f3 20 \text{f}f4 \text{g}3 21 \text{d}2 \text{h}5 22 \text{x}g3 \text{h}4 23 \text{a}4 \text{e}8 24 \text{b}1 \text{e}4 25 \text{x}xf7+ \text{h}8 26 \text{g}2 \text{x}g3 27 \text{x}e8 \text{f}5 28 \text{g}6 \text{w}e1+ 29 \text{a}2 \text{a}5 30 \text{w}e4 1-0

\textbf{Game 41}
\textbf{N. Mitkov-G. Timoschenko}
Ljubljana 2003

1 \text{e}4 \text{e}5 2 \text{c}4 \text{f}6 3 \text{d}3 \text{c}6 4 \text{f}3 \text{d}5 5 \text{b}3 \text{d}6 6 \text{exd}5!\text{cxd}5

By capturing on \text{d}5 so quickly, White prevents Black from releasing the tension with 6 \text{c}3 \text{dxe}4 (or indeed 6 \text{c}3 \text{d}4). If Black is not careful he could easily end up transposing to Delchev-Jovanovic (Game 38). On the other hand, the early pawn exchange does give Black extra options for development, the most significant of which is the possibility of ...\text{c}6.

6...\text{c}xd5 is examined in the next game.
7 \text{g}5

For example, 10...0-0 11 \text{xf}6 \text{gx}f6 12 \text{cxd}5 \text{xd}5 13 \text{e}4 with strong pressure against Black’s kingside weaknesses; or 10...\text{d}4 11 \text{c}5! \text{xc}5 (11...\text{xc}5? loses a piece to 12 \text{xe}6

7 0-0 \text{c}6 8 \text{g}5 transposes to the main game after 8...\text{e}6 9 \text{c}3. In
Beating 1 e4 e5
fxe6 13 \( \text{xf} \) \( \text{xf} \) 14 \( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 15 a3) 12 \( \text{xe} \) \( \text{xe} \) \( \text{c}3 \), again with some advantage to White.

7...\( \text{xc} \) 8 0-0 \( \text{e}6 \) 9 \( \text{c}3 \) is another way to transpose to the main game, but in this line White has the possibility of 8 \( \text{c}3 \)!? forcing Black to make a commitment in the centre with 8...d4, since 8...\( \text{e}6 \) 9 \( \text{xf} \) \( \text{xf} \) 10 \( \text{xe} \) \( \text{xe} \) \( \text{d}5 \) 11 \( \text{xe} \) \( \text{e} \) \( \text{xa} \) 12 \( \text{b}4 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 13 0-0 \( \text{xe} \) \( \text{c}3 \) 14 \( \text{bxc} \) \( \text{c}3 \) 15 \( \text{d}2 \) looks good for White. V.Ivanchuk-L.Dominguez, Havana 2005, continued 9 \( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{e}6 \) 10 0-0 \( \text{xe} \) \( \text{xc} \) 11 \( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 12 \( \text{xf} \) \( \text{xf} \) \( \text{c}6 \) 13 \( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{c}3 \) 14 \( \text{bxc} \) 0-0 15 \( \text{c}1 \) with an edge for White, mainly because of his excellent bishop on d5.

In his notes to Chess Informant 93, Ivanchuk gives 9...h6!? (instead of the game’s 9...\( \text{e}6 \)) 10 \( \text{xe} \) \( \text{g}6 \) 11 \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{b}8 \)?, and now either 12 \( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 13 0-0 \( \text{b}8 \) 14 f4 f5, or 12 \( \text{wh} \) \( \text{g}6 \) 13 0-0 \( \text{e}6 \) 14 \( \text{ae} \) \( \text{xe} \) \( \text{d}5 \) 15 \( \text{xe} \) \( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{dxc} \) 14 \( \text{bxc} \) 0-0 15 \( \text{b}1 \) with an edge for White, mainly because of his excellent bishop on d5.

Now Black needs to protect d5, since 9...d4 10 \( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 11 \( \text{xe} \) \( \text{e} \) \( \text{xe} \) 12 \( \text{f} \) \( \text{e} \) 0-0 looks better for White.

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

This is definitely the correct bishop retreat. 9...\( \text{e}7 \) would protect d5 and also break the pin on the f6-knight, but White could then gang up on the newly vulnerable e5-pawn.

9...\( \text{w}5 \)!? is a decent alternative for Black, though:

a) White has replied with 10 \( \text{w}1 \) in a handful of games, but to me this move looks rather toothless when Black’s queen is protected, and there’s nothing wrong with 10...d4 here. For example, 11 \( \text{xe} \) \( \text{dxc} \) 12 \( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{cxb} \) 13 \( \text{b}1 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 14 \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{dxc} \) 15 \( \text{xd} \) \( \text{c} \) 16 \( \text{xb} \) 0-0 with equality, J.Degraeve-
b) Instead of 10 ♗e1, I suggest a less forcing approach. If Black castles kingside White will split his pawns with ♘xf6, and in that scenario it’s not totally clear what the queen is doing on a5. For example, 10 a3!? (lining up the possibility of ♘a2 and b4)

10...0-0 (if 10...d4, White has 11 ♘xe6 intending 11...dxc3 12 b4!) 11 ♘a2 (White can also consider 11 ♘xf6 gxf6 12 ♗c1!? intending to meet 12...♕g7 with 13 ♘xd5! ♘xd5 14 b4; and also just 11 ♗e1) 11...d4 (11...♕c5!? 12 b4 ♗d8 13 ♘xe6 fxe6 14 ♗e4 ♗e7 15 ♗e1 reaches a complex and roughly equal position in which White will look to exploit Black’s vulnerable centre pawns and squares.

10 ♗e1

In G.Kamsky-B.Gelfand, Bazna 2009, White threw in 10 ♗b5 but I don’t think this is worth doing. After 10...♗b6 11 ♗e1 a6 12 ♗c3 Black could just transpose to the main game by playing 12...♕c7 if he wanted to. More to the point, Gelfand’s ambitious 12...♗d6 13 ♘h4 0-0 14 ♘xf6 gxf6 15 ♗d2 ♗g7 leaves Black with a more favourable version of the type of positions we see later on in the main game.

10...a6

A very useful move, which eliminates the possibility of ♗b5 and also ♘a4 – the latter can now be answered by ...b5.

10...0-0 has also been played, but 10...a6 looks more flexible. In any case, if White plays 11 ♘h4 Black is likely to play ...a6 sooner or later: for example, 11...♗e8 12 h3 a6 transposing to the main game.

11 ♘h4

This position is full of tension and it requires subtle play from both sides. The possibility of ♘xf6 is always hanging in the air, but White has to be careful with the timing of this move. If played too early, Black might switch to castling queenside when it is he who will benefit from the opened kingside. Even if Black castles kingside, a premature ♘xf6 might allow Black to coordinate with a quick ...♗h8 and ...♗g8.
11 \( \text{h4} \) is a useful move, as the new possibility of \( \text{g3} \) hitting the e5-pawn gives Black something more to think about.

11...0-0 12 h3

More finesse from White, who introduces the possibility of \( \text{h2-g4} \).

The immediate 12 \( \text{xf6}?! \) is unwise, since 12...\( \text{gxf6} \) 13 \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{h8} \) followed by 12...\( \text{c1}?! \) is more promising, and contains a nasty trick. 12...\( \text{c8} \) 13 \( \text{xf6} \) (13 \( \text{h3}?! \)) 13...\( \text{gf6} \) 14 \( \text{wh6} \) is, according to Lukacs, “not frightening because of the cold-blooded 14...\( \text{a5} \).

But Black’s blood would indeed run cold if White unleashes 15 \( \text{xd5} \), which is crushing: 15...\( \text{xd5} \) 16 \( \text{h4} \) \( \text{e6} \) 17 \( \text{e4} \) etc.

It looks like Black can survive, though, with 14...\( \text{h8}?! \). If White does nothing amazing, \( \text{g8} \) will be strong, but after 15 \( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 16 \( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 17 \( \text{xf6}+ \) \( \text{g8} \) White has nothing better than perpetual check.

Finally, White has to keep in mind the possibility of \( \text{g3} \), but played here it is toothless: 12 \( \text{g3}?! \) d4! (Black exploits the fact that the f6-knight is no longer pinned to free his position) 13 \( \text{b1} \) (or 13 \( \text{xe6}?! \) dxc3 14 \( \text{b3} \) \( \text{xb2} \) 15 \( \text{b1} \) e4!, D.Howell-E.Bacrot, Antwerp 2009) 13...\( \text{xb3} \) 14 \( \text{xb3} \) \( \text{d7} \) with no problems for Black, A.Needleman-G.Soppe, Ezeiza 2000.

12...\( \text{e8} \) 13 \( \text{h2} \)

13 \( \text{c1}?! \) is again possible, and if 13...\( \text{d6} \) White must grab the bull by the horns and continue with 14 \( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{gxf6} \) 15 \( \text{wh6} \). Play is extremely complicated, and probably roughly equal, but I would fancy White’s chances more over the board. Here are just a few possible lines: 15...\( \text{d8} \) (if 15...\( \text{d8} \) 16 \( \text{h2} \) and Black cannot prevent \( \text{g4} \) with 16...f5? because of 17 \( \text{xd5}! \) exploiting the pin) 16 d4 (after 16 \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{h8} \) 17 \( \text{xd5}?! \) \( \text{xd5} \) 18 \( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 19 \( \text{xf6}+ \) \( \text{g8} \) 20 \( \text{g5}?! \) Black can save himself with 20...\( \text{d8}! \) intending 21 \( \text{e4} \) \( \text{xe4}! \) 22 \( \text{g3}+ \) \( \text{g6} \) 23 \( \text{g6}+ \) \( \text{gx6} \) 16...e4

17 \( \text{xe4}! \) dxe4 18 \( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{xb3} \) 19 \( \text{xf6}+ \) \( \text{xf6} \) 20 \( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{xc2} \) 21 \( \text{c1} \) \( \text{d8} \) 22 \( \text{d6} \) \( \text{e7} \) 23 \( \text{g3}+ \) \( \text{g6} \) 24 d5 \( \text{b4} \)

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25 d6 f8 26 d7 ed8 27 c7 and it’s not easy to judge for sure, but White is certainly on the front foot here.

13...d6

If 13...d4 14 g4 xg4 15 hxg4, Black cannot keep his strong knight on d4 without losing the d5-pawn. After 15...xb3 16 axb3 d6 17 xf6 gxf6 18 f3 ad8 19 g3 White can hope to increase the pressure with g2 and h1.

13...a5, planning ...d4, is a critical alternative. After looking at this for a while I decided that White could sacrifice the exchange here: 14 g4! xg4 15 hxg4 d4 16 e4 xe1 17 xe1 and I like White’s compensation.

14 xf6

Finally, with White in a better position to exploit the consequences, it is time for this capture.

14...gxf6 15 h5 d4

15...f5!? is possible here, and it might be better than Black’s choice in the game. After 16 g5+ Black is forced to play 16...f8, as 16...h8? runs into 17 f6+ g8 18 xd5!. In this position 17 f3 e4? 18 h6+ is very good for White after either 18...g8 19 dxe4 dxe4 20 xe4!, or 18...e7 19 dxe4 fxe4 20 ad1!. However, 17...d4! is stronger after which the position remains very unclear.

16 g4 d8

Timoschenko clearly wanted to avoid giving up the light squares with 16 xg4 17 hxg4 xb3 18 axb3.

17 xe3?

Mitkov errs at a critical moment, and the consequences are fatal. The rook does need to get involved in the attack, but White chooses the wrong move order.

17 h6+! would have left Black with all the problems:

a) If 17...g7, 18 xe3! gives White a much better version of the game – basically he gains a crucial tempo. Here 18 f8 loses to 19 xd5! xd5 20 g3+ h8 21 g4 forcing mate.

b) Moreover, against 17 f8 White can still play 18 e3 planning g3-g8+. Rybka is equally keen on 18 xd5! xd5 19 xd5 xd5 20 c3,
Beating 1 e4 e5

intending 20...c6 21 c4 ♕d7 22 ♔f5! when Black is forced to give up his queen to avoid mate.

In summary, 17 ♔h6+ looks very promising and seems to give White a clear advantage. After 17 ♕e3?, however, the tables turn very quickly.

17...♔h8! 18 ♔h6 ♕f8 19 ♕g3?

Threatening ♕xd5, but here it’s Black to move...

19...f5!

...and this makes all the difference. White’s attack is stopped in its tracks and he finds his pieces, in particular the rook on g3, in very awkward positions.

20 ♕e1 f4 21 ♕g4 f5! 22 ♕g5 ♕xg5 23 ♕xg5 ♔f3+!

Winning. The rest is of no interest.

24 ♕xf3 ♕g8 25 ♕xg8 ♕xg8 26 ♕xg8+ ♕xg8 27 d4 e4 28 ♕f1 ♕f8 29 ♕e2 ♕f7 30 ♕g1 ♕h5 31 ♕xd5 ♕xf3+ 32 ♕f1 ♕f6 33 ♕g8+ ♕e7 34 ♕b3 e3 35 fxe3 ♕xh4+ 36 ♕d2 ♕f2+ 37 ♕d3 ♕e2+ 38 ♕xe2 ♕xe3+ 39 ♕c4 ♕xe2+ 40 ♕b4 f3 41 ♕g7+ ♕f6 42 ♕xb7 f2 43 ♕c4 f1♕ 44 ♕b6+ ♕g5 45 ♕xe2 ♕xe2 46 ♕e2 f4 47

h4+ ♕f5 48 ♕c5 f3 49 ♕b7 f2 50 ♕f7+ ♕e6 0–1

Game 42

V.Nevednichy-A.Beliavsky
European Championship, Plovdiv 2008

1 e4 e5 2 ♕c4 ♕f6 3 d3 c6 4 ♕f3 d5 5 ♕b3 ♕d6 6 exd5 ♕xd5

This move somehow feels inconsistent – why play ...c6 before ...d5 if you are going to recapture with the knight? – but it’s actually quite a solid option for Black. The resulting positions can be compared to similar ones reached in the ...d5 lines of the Italian Game.

How do they compare? With the knight on d5 firmly protected, Black’s position here has a more solid feel, but on the other hand his pieces are likely to be more passively placed. In particular, the queen’s knight cannot use c6 and as a consequence Black enjoys less control of the d4-square.

7 0-0 0-0
8 $\text{Be1}$

8 $\text{Bbd2}$ is an alternative move order which is well worth considering. The likelihood for transpositions into lines considered below is very high: for example, 8...$\text{c7}$ 9 $\text{Be1} \text{d7}$ (or 9...$\text{Be8}$), 8...$\text{Be8}$ 9 $\text{Be1}$, or 8...$\text{d7}$ 9 $\text{Be1}$. More to the point, if Black plays 8...$\text{g4}$ 9 $\text{h3}$ $\text{h5}$ White might keep the rook on f1 for the moment and continue with 10 $\text{e4}$ (or 10 $\text{c4}$?) 10...$\text{c7}$ 11 $\text{g3} \text{g6}$ 12 $\text{g5}$ $\text{f6}$ 13 $\text{d2}$ planning $\text{h4}$.

8...$\text{d7}$

This has been the most popular choice for Black, but attempts have also been made to avoid blocking in the c8-bishop:

a) The most active try is 8...$\text{g4}$, but here Black must be willing to gambit a pawn in return for weakening White’s kingside. This is an idea we’ve seen previously, for example in the note to Black’s 9th move in Tiviakov-Ivanisevic (Game 32). The critical line runs 9 $\text{h3}$ $\text{h5}$ 10 $\text{g4} \text{g6}$ 11 $\text{xe5}$, as played in E.Alekseev-A.Shirov, German League 2007.

Shirov claimed that he “failed to find the full compensation for a pawn both in the game and the analysis”, but it is worth noting that since then he has been willing to offer the gambit again, so perhaps he has changed his mind. The game continued 11...$\text{xe5}$ (11...$\text{d7}$?) 12 $\text{xe5} \text{d7}$ 13 $\text{e1} \text{Wh4}$ 14 $\text{f3} \text{Be8}$. Here Shirov gives 15 $\text{d2}$! (rather than Alekseev’s 15 $\text{f1}$) 15...$\text{xe1}$+ (or 15...$\text{e5}$ 16 $\text{g2} \text{f4}$ 17 $\text{xf4} \text{f3}$+ 18 $\text{xf3} \text{xe1}$+ 19 $\text{g2} \text{f6}$ 20 $\text{g3}$! $\text{xb2}$ 21 $\text{d2} \text{xa1}$ 22 $\text{xe1}$ $\text{xb1}$ 23 $\text{c3}$! and “White is clearly better despite being the exchange down” – Shirov) 16 $\text{xe1} \text{e8}$ 17 $\text{c3}$! “and Black seems worse to me”. (Here 17 $\text{c3} \text{e5}$ 18 $\text{g3}$ also looks good for White.) It will be interesting to see further developments in this line.

If White doesn’t want to grab the pawn he can play 10 $\text{Bbd2} \text{d7}$ 11 $\text{e4} \text{c7}$, but objectively this should be okay for Black because he has solved the problem of activating his light-squared bishop. For example, 12 $\text{g3} \text{g6}$ 13 $\text{a3} \text{h6}$ 14 $\text{d4} \text{exd4}$ 15 $\text{xd4} \text{b6}$ with level chances, S.Tiviakov-A.Shirov, Benidorm 2008.

b) Black’s other main option is 8...$\text{Be8}$ which both protects the e5-pawn and keeps the c8-h3 diagonal open for the bishop (it does commit the rook, but you can’t have everything!). A typical continuation is 9 $\text{Bbd2} \text{c7}$ 10 $\text{e4}$ (10 $\text{h3}$?) 10...$\text{g4}$ 11 $\text{h3} \text{h5}$ 12 $\text{g3} \text{g6}$ 13 $\text{g5} \text{d7}$ (Lukacs prefers 13...$\text{f6}$ 14 $\text{d2} \text{f7}$ when I think White
Beating 1 e4 e5

should still continue with 15 ∅h4 and ∅hf5) 14 ∅h4 ∅a6 15 ∅xg6 hxg6 and even though Black remains solid, White's bishop pair counts for something, V.Tseshkovsky-G.Agzamov, Yerevan 1982.

Looking at alternatives, 9 ∅g5 as played in S.Sulskis-D.Semcesen, Borup 2009, is an interesting way to try and exploit the temporary weakening of f7:

\[ \text{9...} ∅e7 (\text{if 9...h6, the critical try is 10 ∅xf7!? ∅xf7 11 c4 ∅f6 - or 11...∅b4 12 ∅e4! - 12 c5+ ∅e6 13 cxd6 ∅xd6 14 ∅e3 ∅bd7 15 ∅c3) 10 ∅h5 ∅f5 11 ∅e4 (11 ∅c3!?) 11...∅g6 12 ∅h4 ∅d7 13 ∅bd2 (again 13 ∅bc3!? comes into the reckoning) 13...∅a6 14 ∅f3 ∅c7 15 ∅g5 ∅e8 (15...f6!? is answered by 16 ∅xf6!) 16 ∅ad1 ∅d8 (16...f5!? might be stronger) 17 ∅xd8 ∅xd8 18 ∅g3 f6 19 d4 exd4 20 ∅xe8+ ∅xe8 21 ∅xd4 b5 22 a4! and by now White was doing very well.) 9 ∅bd2

White can also change the character of the position entirely by playing 9 d4!? exd4 10 ∅xd5! cxd5 11 ∅xd4, leaving Black with an IQP.

From the evidence so far, it looks like Black's best chance of equality is to offer to sacrifice the pawn for some activity: 11...∅c5! (11...∅b6 12 ∅f4 ∅f5 13 ∅xd6 ∅xd6 14 ∅a3 leaves White with a small but comfortable edge, S.Tiviakov-J.Granda Zuniga, El Sauzal 2008) 12 ∅d3!? (after 12 ∅xd5 ∅b6 13 ∅e2 ∅f6 14 ∅b3 ∅a6 15 ∅c3 ∅e6 16 ∅a4 ∅b6 Black's activity provided sufficient compensation in S.Tiviakov-A.Stefanova, Wijk aan Zee 2004) 12...∅b6 13 ∅e2 ∅f6 14 ∅c3 ∅g4 (Mikhailovsky prefers 14...∅d7! 15 ∅e3 ∅xe3 16 ∅xe3 ∅ae8, and I agree that this just about equalizes) 15 ∅a4 ∅c6 16 ∅xc5 ∅xc5 17 ∅e3 ∅c4 18 ∅d2! ∅xd3 19 ∅xd3 ∅xf3 20 gxf3 was A.Morozovich-B.Gelfand, Biel 2009.

This is a good position for White, who has a much stronger minor piece. Let's see how Morozovich nurtured his advantage: 20...∅fe8 21 ∅b3 ∅e7 22 ∅d1 ∅c8 23 ∅xa7!? ∅xc2 24 ∅e3 (White's pawn majority has great potential, whereas Black's d-pawn can't
get going and is just a liability) 24...\( \text{d7} \) 25 \( \text{b5} \) \( \text{h6} \) 26 \( \text{a4} \) \( \text{c4} \) 27 \( \text{b3} \) \( \text{h4} \) 28 \( \text{f4} \) \( \text{h5} \) 29 \( \text{g2} \) \( \text{e4} \) 30 \( \text{d4} \) \( \text{d6} ?? \) (a blunder, but Black was already struggling) 31 \( \text{exe4} \) and Black resigned.

Overall, 9 \( \text{d4} \) is certainly worth considering if you enjoy playing against the IQP.

9...\( \text{c7} \)

Black takes prophylactic action against either \( \text{e4} \) or \( \text{c4} \).

The alternative is to drop the bishop back to f8. The game S.Conquest-R.Cifuentes Parada, Olot 1994, provides a good advert for White’s chances:

9...\( \text{e8} \) 10 \( \text{e4} \) \( \text{f8} \) (10...\( \text{c7} \) transposes to the main game) 11 \( \text{d2} \) b6? (Black should play 11...\( \text{h6} \) – Cifuentes) 12 \( \text{d4} \) ! (Black is not well placed to meet this pawn break) 12...\( \text{b7} \) 13 \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{f6} \) 14 \( \text{xf6} \) + \( \text{xf6} \) 15 \( \text{dxe5} \) ! \( \text{exe5} \) 16 \( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 17 \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{d6} \) 18 \( \text{c5} \) ! (this is very strong) 18...\( \text{bxc5} \) 19 \( \text{exxe5} \) \( \text{exe5} \) 20 \( \text{d7} \) \( \text{xc3} \) 21 \( \text{xb7} \) and White won.

10 \( \text{e4} \)

Regardless of whether or not Black is going to play ...\( \text{e8} \), it might be more accurate to begin with 10...\( \text{h6} \) which eliminates the possibility of \( \text{g5} \) (see the next note). Also, after 11 \( \text{d2} \) Black has alternatives to transposing to the main game:

a) 11...\( \text{h8} \) (planning ...\( \text{f5} \)) 12 \( \text{h3} \) !? (12 \( \text{g3} \) ?! a5 13 a3 \( \text{f5} \) is fine for Black, M.Kobalija-A.Motylev, Sochi 2007) 12...a5 13 a3 \( \text{f5} \) ?! (but this is premature)

14 \( \text{c3} \) ! (explaining White’s decision to keep the knight on e4; after a knight exchange, the bishop will come to c3 to pressure the e5-pawn)

b) 11...\( \text{d7} \) 6 12 \( \text{g3} \) (12 \( \text{xf6} \) + \( \text{xf6} \) 13 \( \text{d4} \) !? is interesting, the idea being to meet 13...\( \text{exd4} \) ?? with 14 \( \text{xd5} \) ! \( \text{cxd5} \) 15 \( \text{b4} \) \( \text{d6} \) 16 \( \text{xd6} \) \( \text{xd6} \) 17 \( \text{xd4} \) with a clear positional edge) 12...\( \text{e8} \) 13 \( \text{h3} \)
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a5 14 a3 a4 15 a2 d7! 16 h4?! (White should continue with 16 c3 intending wC2) 16...e4! was Z.Efimenko-T.Paehtz, European Ch., Dresden 2007. Black is at least equal at this point, since neither capture on e4 helps White: 17 dxe4 xg3 18 fxg3 xxe4, or 17 xxe4 xxe4 18 xxe4 xxe4 19 dxe4 wxh4 20 exd5 xh3!.

11 h3

11 xg5!? induces 11...f6 and following 12 d2 h8 13 h3 f8 14 d4! exd4 15 xxd4 White has a typical small advantage (better king position, slightly more active pieces), M.Bosboom-A.Raetsky, Hafnarfjordur 1998.

11...h6 12 d2 f8

Black can still play 12...e7f6 but Beliavsky’s choice is also reasonable as the knight can reroute to g6. It’s only the next move where Black starts to go wrong.

13 h2?!

13...f5?!

This advance looks tempting, and I’m sure Beliavsky must have felt it was justified after White’s previous move which temporarily took some pressure off the centre, but Nevednichy’s convincing response demonstrates that it’s premature.

After 13...g6 White can continue actively with 14 wh5 or 14 g4!?, but in truth there’s not a great deal wrong with Black’s position.

14 wh5!

Of course White isn’t obliged to move the knight, since 14...fxe4 15 dxe4 regains the piece in view of the pin. Naturally Beliavsky realized this, but probably he underestimated White’s piece activity after...f5.

14...h7?!

It’s possible that Black’s best bet is in fact to take the knight. After 14...fxe4 15 dxe4 e6 16 exd5 cxd5 17 ad1 White’s position is the more favourable, as the centre pawns could come under heavy pressure, but this is far better for Black than what he gets in the game.

15 f3!

15...f8?

Sheer panic! Moving the rook back
to f8 looks wrong, and it is. Good or bad, Black should probably try 15...\textcolor{red}{e}6 16 \textcolor{blue}{c}5 \textcolor{red}{f}6.

16 \textcolor{blue}{c}3!

Simple, and very strong. White wins a pawn by force: for example, 16...\textcolor{red}{h}f6 17 \textcolor{blue}{g}6 \textcolor{red}{e}8 18 \textcolor{blue}{x}e8 \textcolor{red}{x}e8 19 \textcolor{blue}{x}d5 \textcolor{red}{x}d5 (or 19...\textcolor{blue}{c}xd5 20 \textcolor{red}{c}3!) 20 \textcolor{red}{f}4!.

However, the game provides another twist.

16...f4 17 \textcolor{blue}{h}4?

17 \textcolor{blue}{x}e5! is completely crushing. My only guess is that both players overlooked that 17...\textcolor{red}{f}5 loses to 18 \textcolor{blue}{x}c6!: for example, 18...\textcolor{blue}{b}xc6 19 \textcolor{red}{e}8+ \textcolor{blue}{f}8 20 \textcolor{blue}{x}d5 \textcolor{blue}{c}xd5 21 \textcolor{red}{x}d8 \textcolor{red}{x}h5 22 \textcolor{blue}{x}d5!.

17...\textcolor{red}{g}5

Even though 17 \textcolor{blue}{h}4 was a mistake, there was a beautiful point to it. If Black plays 17...\textcolor{blue}{x}h4?, White is not obliged to recapture the queen.

Instead 18 \textcolor{blue}{x}d5!! leaves Black with no good reply: 18...\textcolor{red}{h}5 19 \textcolor{blue}{f}6+, or 18...\textcolor{red}{d}8 19 \textcolor{blue}{e}7+ \textcolor{red}{h}8 20 \textcolor{blue}{g}6 mate.

18 \textcolor{blue}{x}g5 \textcolor{red}{h}xg5 19 \textcolor{blue}{h}5 \textcolor{red}{f}5?

All in all, this was not a good day at the office for Beliavsky. While it’s true that 19...\textcolor{red}{e}6 20 \textcolor{blue}{e}4 \textcolor{red}{f}5 isn’t a great deal of fun for Black, White still has some work to do.

20 \textcolor{blue}{x}d5! \textcolor{blue}{c}xd5 21 \textcolor{blue}{c}3 \textcolor{red}{e}8 22 \textcolor{red}{f}3

Winning a key centre pawn, after which Black’s position soon collapses.

22...\textcolor{red}{e}6 23 \textcolor{blue}{x}e5 \textcolor{red}{a}5 24 \textcolor{red}{c}3 \textcolor{blue}{f}7 25 \textcolor{blue}{g}4 \textcolor{red}{e}6 26 \textcolor{blue}{d}4 \textcolor{blue}{w}e7 27 \textcolor{red}{x}e6 1-0

27...\textcolor{red}{x}e6 28 \textcolor{red}{e}1! is pretty convincing.

Apart from the slight slip on move 17, this was a very nice game from Nevednichy. The good news – from our perspective – is that this game demonstrates it’s easy even for a world-class grandmaster to misplay Black’s position.

\textit{Game 43}

G.Papp-D.Ippolito

Lubbock 2009

1 e4 e5 2 \textcolor{blue}{c}4 \textcolor{red}{c}4 3 d3 d6 4 \textcolor{blue}{f}3 d5 5 \textcolor{red}{b}3 \textcolor{red}{a}5

By threatening to trap White’s bishop, Black succeeds in gaining some

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space on the queenside. Although he lost the game, this move became popular for a while after it was used by Evgeny Bareev against Garry Kasparov.

Black’s other main alternative to 5...d6 is 5...b4+.

At first sight you could easily accuse this of being a beginners’ move: patzer sees a check, patzer plays a check. But 5...b4+ actually contains a subtle idea. The point is to provoke c2-c3, after which Black retreats to d6 safe in the knowledge that, in contrast to previous games in this chapter, White can no longer attack the d5-pawn with c3. The key debate is whether or not it’s worth spending a tempo to achieve this.

White has two options:

a) 6 d2 often leads to simplified positions which are marginally better for White. Some examples: 6...xd2+ 7 bxd2 bd7 (or 7...dxe4 8 xe5 0-0 9 dxe4 xe4 10 df3 d7 11 0-0 xe5 12 xe5 with a persistent edge because of the pressure on f7, B.Larsen-J.Nunn, London 1986) 8 0-0 0-0 9 e1 e8 (after 9...d4 10 c3! c5 11 cxd4 cxd4 12 c4 e7 13 d2 b6 14 a3 c5 15 c2 fd7 16 b4 b7 17 a4 d6 18 ac1 White was better in R.Berzinsh-Z.Gyimesi, Stockerau 1993) 10 d4!? exd4! (10...dxe4?! 11 g5! e7 12 dxe4 e4 13 xe4 leaves Black in trouble, with f7 difficult to defend) 11 exd5 xe1+ 12 xe1 cxd5 (or 12...xd5 13 xd5 cxd5 14 xd4 f6 15 e3 b6 16 e1 d7 17 b3, W.So-E.Torre, Manila 2006) 13 xd4 c5 14 c3 d7 15 f3 b6 16 d2, R.Kasimdzhanov-L.Christiansen, Yerevan 1996. Black is very close to equality in these IQP positions, but I would still rather be White.

b) 6 c3 leads to more tension-filled positions after 6...d6, and now:

b1) Warning! The idea of delaying castling in favour of the typical e2 and bd2-f1 plan is flawed here, as Tiviakov found to his cost: 7 bd2 0-0 8 e2 bd7 9 f1?! c5! 10 c2 b6! (planning ... a6) 11 b3?! dxe4 12 dxe4 a6 13 c4 e6 14 g3 b4+! 15 f1 b5!,

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and White’s position was not a happy one in S.Tiviakov-K.Lahno, Benidorm (rapid) 2008, although Tiviakov did turn the game around later.

b2) More recently, Tiviakov has chosen the modest plan 7 0-0 0-0 8 e1 (S.Tiviakov-A.Pridorozhni, Moscow 2009). It’s likely that Black will have to capture on e4 sooner or later, leaving a symmetrical structure. In this case White’s gained tempo with c2-c3 must make a difference, and he can also point to a more active king’s bishop. Let’s see a few more moves of the game: 8...dxe4 9 dxe4 a6 10 g5 c5 11 c2 h6 12 h4 a5 13 bd2 b5 14 f1 g5.

Tiviakov is pretty scathing about this move: “I would have never made this move, critically weakening the kingside. Of course, now (and in the immediate future) White has no means to exploit it by organizing a direct attack; but since all the pieces are still on board, White can later exploit this weakness which is what eventually came about in this game.” The game continued 15 g3 w7 16 d3d2 e6 17 e3 ad8 18 w2 c7 19 f5 xf5 20 exf5 with a significant advantage for White.

5...bd7 is less flexible than 5...d6, although in practice it usually ends up transposing. For example, 6 0-0 d6 7 exd5! xd5 (if 7...cxd5 the premature knight development is felt after 8 g5!, and here 8...d4 9 bd2 0-0 10 c4 c7 11 e1 e8 12 a4! causes Black problems, as indicated by Cifuentes) 8 bd2 0-0 9 e1 reaches Nevednichy-Beliavsky (Game 42).

Finally, 5...dxe4?! 6 g5 is known to be good for White. After 6...e6 White has a pleasant choice between 7 xe6 fx6 8 xe6 and 7 xe6 fx6 8 xe4; or if 6...g4 White plays 7 xf7+ e7 8 d2, when 8...h6 fails to 9 b4+.

6 a3

Kasparov’s choice was 6 c3 and this remains a critical option even though improvements have been found for Black. The main line runs 6...b4 (6...d4 7 xe5! is good for White) 7 a3 xc3+ 8 bxc3 and now we have:
Beating 1 e4 e5

a) The stem game, G.Kasparov-E.Bareev, Linares 1993, went 8...\text{bd}7 9 exd5 \text{xd}5 10 0-0 0-0 11 \text{e}1! \text{e}8 (if 11...\text{xc}3 there follows 12 \text{d}2 \text{b}5 13 \text{b}2 \text{e}4 14 \text{g}5 with a strong initiative, as indicated by Kasparov) 12 c4 \text{e}7 13 \text{g}5 \text{h}6 14 \text{e}4 and the potential of the bishop pair gave White some advantage.

b) 8...a4! (this is useful as it fixes the a3-pawn and prevents a4 and a\text{a}3) 9 \text{a}2 \text{d}6 10 0-0 0-0 11 exd5 cxd5 (against 11...\text{xd}5 Tiviakov suggests 12 \text{e}1 \text{d}7 13 c4 or 13 \text{b}1 with an edge for White) 12 h3 \text{c}6 13 \text{e}1 (or 13 \text{b}1? – Tiviakov) 13...\text{e}8 14 \text{g}5 with a complex and roughly equal position, S.Tiviakov-K.Landa, Reggio Emilia 2007.

White’s other option is 6 a4. The main thing to remember here is that Black is likely to meet exd5 with ...\text{xd}5 rather than ...cxd5, as the latter would leave a hole on b5. For example, 6...\text{bd}7 (if 6...\text{b}4+ White should play 7 c3 – compare 5...\text{b}4+) 7 exd5 \text{xd}5 8 0-0 \text{d}6 9 \text{c}3!? (White can of course play more typically with 9 \text{bd}2 0-0 10 \text{c}1, as in our main game) 9...\text{xc}3 10 bxc3 0-0 11 \text{e}1 \text{c}7 12 d4 b6 (M.Adams-A.Shirov, Sarajevo 1999) and here one possibility is 13 \text{d}3 intending 13...\text{a}6 14 \text{f}5.

6...a4

The two main advantages of 6 a3 are that White’s bishop can rest peacefully on a2 and he no longer has to worry about ...\text{b}4. The disadvantage is that in some lines Black finds the extra space on the queenside useful.

If 6...d6 White goes ahead with 7 exd5 or 7 \text{c}3, reaching either similar positions or ones which directly transpose. I don’t see a convincing reason for Black to delay ...a4.

7 \text{a}2 \text{d}6

8 exd5

White’s main choice here has been 8 \text{c}3 and now:

a) 8...dxe4 9 \text{g}5 0-0 10 \text{cxe}4 \text{xe}4 11 \text{xe}4 \text{f}5! Black follows the same formula we saw in the main line – Efimenko-Golod, Game 39, but White gains slightly in comparison because his light-squared bishop is safe from...
harassment by ...\(\text{c}5\): 12 \(\text{w}f3 \text{xe}4\) 13 \(\text{dxe}4 \text{d}7\) 14 0-0 \(\text{c}5\) 15 \(\text{d}1\) with a small edge, B.Michiels-K.Maslak, Par­
dubice 2009. Other moves for Black are inferior: for example, 11...\(\text{e}7?!\) 12 \(\text{wh}5!\) \(\text{d}7\) 13 0-0 intends \(f4\) and is good for White, G.Lane-L.Henris, Brus­
sells 1995.

b) 8...\(\text{d}4\) is similar to 5...\(\text{d}6\) 6 \(\text{c}3\) \(\text{d}4\). After 9 \(\text{e}2\) \(\text{c}5\) 10 \(\text{g}3\) \(\text{c}6\) 11 0-0 it’s difficult to tell which side, if any, has benefitted from the extra moves. Black is further advanced on the queenside, but White's bishop is once again safer from harassment on \(a2\) than on \(b3\).

c) 8...\(\text{e}6!?!\) has been Black’s main choice. 9 \(\text{g}5\) and now:

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

11...\(\text{h}6\) (I think White has an advan-
tage after either 11...\(\text{exd}4\) 12 \(\text{wx}d4\) or 
11...0-0 12 \(\text{ex}d5\) \(\text{cx}d5\) 13 \(\text{dx}e5\) \(\text{xe}5\) 14 
\(\text{e}1\) 12 \(\text{xf}6\) (12 \(\text{ex}d5?!\)) 12...\(\text{xf}6\) 13 
\(\text{e}1?!\) (this is interesting, but 13 \(\text{wd}2!\) 
with similar ideas looks stronger to me) 
13...\(\text{b}6\) 14 \(\text{dx}e5\) \(\text{xe}5\) 15 \(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{xe}5\) 16 
\(\text{ex}d5\) \(\text{cx}d5\) 17 \(\text{xd}5\) 0-0 (17...\(\text{xd}5!\) 18 
\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{cx}d5\) 19 \(\text{f}4\) 0-0 20 \(\text{fx}e5\) \(\text{xe}5\) 
must be equal) 18 \(\text{xe}6\) \(\text{fx}e6\) 19 \(\text{d}1\) 
\(\text{hx}2+?!\) (White is only slightly better 
after 19...\(\text{xc}3\) 20 \(\text{bx}c3\) 20 \(\text{hx}2\) \(\text{h}5+\) 
21 \(\text{g}1\) \(\text{f}4\) 22 \(\text{xe}6+\) \(\text{h}8\) 23 \(\text{d}6\) and 

Returning to 8 \(\text{ex}d5\), Black must 
make the usual decision: whether to 
recapture with the pawn or the knight.
8...\texttt{\textbackslash xd5}

8...cxd5 seems fully playable too. For example, 9 \texttt{\textbackslash d}c3 \texttt{\textbackslash e}6 10 \texttt{\textbackslash g}5 (or 10 0-0 \texttt{\textbackslash d}c6 11 \texttt{\textbackslash g}5 \texttt{\textbackslash a}5!?) 10...d4?! (I’m not convinced by this; Black should certainly consider 10...\texttt{\textbackslash a}5 here, or 10...\texttt{\textbackslash a}5) 11 \texttt{\textbackslash e}4 \texttt{\textbackslash x}a2 12 \texttt{\textbackslash x}f6! \texttt{\textbackslash g}xf6 13 \texttt{\textbackslash x}a2 \texttt{\textbackslash f}5 14 \texttt{\textbackslash g}3! \texttt{\textbackslash f}6 15 \texttt{\textbackslash c}d3 \texttt{\textbackslash x}c3 16 \texttt{\textbackslash b}xc3 \texttt{\textbackslash c}6! 17 0-0 0-0 18 \texttt{\textbackslash d}2 \texttt{\textbackslash h}8 19 \texttt{\textbackslash w}e2 \texttt{\textbackslash f}4?! 20 \texttt{\textbackslash g}e4 \texttt{\textbackslash w}e6 21 \texttt{\textbackslash c}4 \texttt{\textbackslash e}7 22 \texttt{\textbackslash b}2 and White was beginning to take control in M. Sebag-S. Prudnikova, Rethymnon 2003.

9 0-0 0-0 10 \texttt{\textbackslash e}1

10 \texttt{\textbackslash b}d2 first is also possible.

We’ve now reached a position very similar to the one seen in the previous game, Nevednichy-Beliavsky. The extra moves on the queenside don’t change things significantly.

10...\texttt{\textbackslash c}7?!

At first sight there doesn’t appear to be anything wrong with this move at all, but I can’t escape the feeling that Black’s queen isn’t particularly well placed on c7, or at least Black should use the tempo elsewhere. He should probably choose one of 10...\texttt{\textbackslash d}7, 10...\texttt{\textbackslash e}8 or 10...\texttt{\textbackslash g}4 – compare the Nevednichy-Beliavsky game.

11 \texttt{\textbackslash b}d2 \texttt{\textbackslash g}4 12 \texttt{\textbackslash h}3 \texttt{\textbackslash h}5 13 \texttt{\textbackslash e}4 \texttt{\textbackslash d}7

\texttt{\textbackslash g}3!

This is much better than 14 \texttt{\textbackslash x}d6. White wants to eliminate a black bishop, but he is going after the stronger one!

14...\texttt{\textbackslash g}6 15 \texttt{\textbackslash h}4!

If White can force this knight-for-bishop exchange without having to make any concessions, the chances are he will come out with at least a slight advantage.

15...\texttt{\textbackslash f}e8 16 \texttt{\textbackslash x}g6 hxg6 17 \texttt{\textbackslash h}4!
Papp’s play in this game provides an excellent demonstration of how to exploit White’s edge in this type of position. The h5 push will nibble away at Black’s kingside pawn cover and further expose some light-squared weaknesses.

\[
17 \ldots \text{h7f6} \ 18 \ \text{h5} \ \text{hxh5} \ 19 \ \text{gxh5} \ \text{gxh5} \ 20 \ \text{wXh5} \ \text{f4} \ 21 \ \text{wXf5}!
\]

Even though the bishop on c1 has yet to play a part in the game, White wasn’t about to give up his bishop pair.

\[21 \ldots \text{e6} \ 22 \ \text{e4}\]

The major pieces are beginning to land on strong outposts. White is exploiting to the full Black’s lack of light-squared control.

\[22 \ldots \text{e7} \ 23 \ \text{h3} \ \text{f6} \ 24 \ \text{h4} \ \text{g6} \ 25 \ \text{h7}!\]

I really like Papp’s focussed plan of action on the kingside. Some players may have been tempted to take a time out to develop the queen’s bishop and rook, but Papp appreciated that it was more important to firstly tie Black down to passive defence.

\[25 \ldots \text{c5}?\]

In a difficult position to play, Ippolito falters. 25...\text{f8}! provides much needed support for the king and would have kept Black firmly in the contest.

\[26 \ \text{e3}!\]

It’s possible that Ippolito had overlooked that this move was possible, due to the tactic 26...\text{xe3} 27 fxe3 (threatening \text{f1}) 27...\text{g5} 28 \text{xf7+}! \text{xf7} 29 \text{f1}.

\[26 \ldots \text{a5}?\]

As so often happens, one error ‘logically’ follows another. Even here, 26...\text{f8} is Black’s best move.

\[27 \ \text{f1}\]

The threats are beginning to mount. One idea is 28 g4! and then 29 \text{xe6} \text{xe6} 30 g5 followed by mate down the h-file.

It’s too late for passive defence. For example, 27...\text{f8} 28 \text{f4!} \text{exf4} 29 \text{xf4} (or 29...\text{f5} 30 \text{xe6} \text{xe6} 31 \text{d4!}) 30 \text{xf7+} \text{xf7} 31 \text{h8+} \text{g7} 32 \text{d4+} \text{ae5} 33 \text{xe5+} \text{xe5} 34 \text{h6+} \text{f6} 35 \text{xf8} and White wins. Black’s attempt to gain counterplay is met by a convincing refutation:
Beating 1 e4 e5

27 ...e4 28 dxe4 ♕xb2 29 ♖d2!

Game over: White threatens both 30 ♖xa5 and 30 ♖c3.

29 ...b5 30 ♖c3 ♕xc3 31 ♕xc3 ♖h7 32 ♖c4! ♖d4 33 ♖d3 ♖c5 34 ♖xb5 cxb5 35 ♕xb5 ♖e7 36 ♖xa4 b6 37 ♖d1 ♖g5 38 ♖e1 f5 39 e5 ♖e4 40 ♕xe4 fxe4 41 ♕xe4 ♖xa3 42 ♖h4+ ♖g7 43 ♕f6+ ♖h6 44 f4 ♖c5+ 45 ♖f1 ♖h7 46 g4 ♖g7 47 c4 1-0

Game 44
M.Sebag-A.Stefanova
Rethymnon 2003

1 e4 e5 2 ♖c4 ♖f6 3 d3 c6 4 ♕f3 ♖e7

By playing this move, Black is settling for a set-up with ...d6 instead of ...d5. In fact the immediate 4...d6 is sometimes played and virtually always transposes (but it’s always worth laying a trap!).

In contrast to the critical 4...d5, general ideas become more important than move sequences. The resulting positions are similar to those reached in the Two Knights Defence with 4 d3 (Chapter Four). The difference, of course, is that Black has a pawn on c6 rather than a knight. To some extent this means his position is more flexible. The flipside is that often he exerts less pressure on White’s centre. Indeed, in the notes to this game we see several examples of White being able to arrange the d3-d4 advance much earlier than in analogous positions with ...♕c6.

5 0-0

Make sure you don’t get caught out by 5 ♕xe5?? ♖a5+!

5...d6

Ivan Sokolov once played 5...b5 against me, claiming some space on the queenside. This idea doesn’t look bad, but it hasn’t caught on: 6 ♖b3 d6 7 c3 a5!? 8 ♖bd2 (8 a4!?, preventing Black’s expansion plans on the queenside, is a suggestion from Lukacs; he gives 8...b4 9 ♕e1 0-0 10 d4 ♖bd7 11 ♖bd2 with a slight advantage for White) 8...a4 9 ♕c2 0-0 10 d4 ♖bd7 11 ♕e1 ♕e8 12 ♖f1 ♕f8 13 ♕g3 ♖c7 14 h3 g6 15 ♕e3 ♕g7 (15...♕b7!?) 16 ♖d2 ♕f8 17 ♕d3 ♖e6 18 ♕a1 ♕d7 (J.Emms-I.Sokolov, Hastings 2000/01).

In this position, instead of 19 c4?! allowing 19...exd4 20 ♖xd4 bxc4 21 ♖xe6 ♕xe6 22 ♕xc4 with equality, I could have kept a small plus with 19 ♕b1 c5 20 d5 ♖d8.

Black has also played 5...♕c7, seemingly keeping the option open of either ...d6 or ...d5. There’s nothing wrong
with this move per se, but after 6...e5 0-0 7 b3 Black really has nothing better than ...d6, in which case why commit the queen so early?

6 c3

White has numerous ways to play this position, but I'm going to stick with the book's philosophy and choose c2-c3 lines where suitable.

Those looking for something slightly different could do worse than investigate 6...e5 0-0 7 b2 b7 8 a3!?.

Here are two examples, from many: 8...c7 9 a2 b5 10 f1 a5 11 g3 c5 12 c3 e6 13 d4 x a2 14 x a2 e6 15 b3 e8 16 d2 f8 17 b2 ad8 with a typical edge for White, V.Anand-I.Sokolov, London (rapid) 1995; or 8...c5 9 f1 d5!? 10 exd5 cxd5 11 a2 e4 12 dxe4 cxe4 13 e3 a6 (J.Nunn-E.Rozentalis, Hastings 1997/98) and here 14 d4 followed by e3 pressures the d5-pawn.

6...0-0

Black has occasionally delayed castling to carry out the ...e8(b8)-d7-f8-g6 plan, against which White should manoeuvre his own queen's knight to g3: 6...bd7 7 e5 f8 8 bd2 g6 9 f1 0-0 10 b3.

To me, this looks a bit like some positions from Chapter Three, with the difference that Black's dark-squared bishop is less actively posted. The game A.Fedorov-V.Iurdachescu, Romanian Team Ch. 2006, continued 10...h6 (or 10...h5 11 d4 hf4 12 g3) 11 g3 h7 (Fedorov prefers 11...e8) 12 d4 g5 13 f5 xf3+? (and here 13...f6 is better) 14 xf3 e6 15 h5 xb3 16 axb3 e8 17 dxe5 dxe5 18 d1 (White is firmly in control now) 18...c8 19 xh6 gxh6 20 xh6+ f8 21 f5 g8 22 d3 with a winning attack: 22...f6 23 h3 d8 24 g4! e6 25 g5 d7 26 gxf6 xf6 27 h1 d8 28 g1 f8 29 h6+ e8, and here 30 h8+! capped off a very nice game for White.

7 b3 bd7

7...g4 transposes to the note on 8...c5, below, after 8 h3 h5 9 e1 bd7 10 bd2 c5 11 c2. Tiviakov has tried 9 e3!? (in place of 9 e1), adopting the same plan of discouraging
Beating 1 e4 e5

...c5 as the one he has chosen in a similar position (see the note on 9 e3 in Malakhov-Carlsen, Game 31). Let’s follow the game S.Tiviakov-P.Haba, Neustadt an den Weinstrasse 2008: 9...bd7 10 bd2 d5! (10...c5? loses a pawn to 11 xc5 dxc5 12 g4 – the point behind 9 e3) 11 w2 dxe4 12 dxe4 wc7 13 fe1 c5 14 g5!? h6 15 h4 (this looks equal, but just watch how once again Tiviakov works his magic and squeezes something from the position) 15...g6 16 g3 h5 17 h2 f4 18 xf4 exf4 19 e5 ae8 20 wc4 wb6 21 e2 wb5 22 xb5 cxb5 23 d5 de7 24 e6 b6 25 xf7+ xf7 26 xe7 xe7 27 xb7 a4 28 c6 a6 29 c4 xf6 30 cxb5 xb2 31 b1 xa2? 32 xb2 33 bxa6 fc7 34 ec5 wc7? (34...e7 is the only chance) 35 b7 c1+ 36 h2 a4 37 a7 b6 38 d7! a8 39 x8 xc7 40 b7 and Black resigned.

8 e1 e8

Planning the typical ...h6, ...f8 and ...g6 regrouping idea.

8...c5 9 c2 g4 is perhaps Black’s most solid option here.

The idea, one that we’ve seen before in Chapter Four, is to relieve pressure by exchanging two sets of minor pieces. If Black achieves his aim he is very close to gaining full equality. As far as I can see, B.Gelfand-A.Yusupov, Munich 1994, remains a key game, and I’m surprised Black hasn’t chosen this route more often: 10 h3 h5 11 bd2 e6 12 f1 d7! 13 g3 xf3 14 wxf3 g6! (the immediate 14...g5 is met by 15 f5 and here 15 xc1 16 xac1 xf6 17 d4 is slightly awkward for Black) 15 e3 (or 15 h6 e8 16 had1 g5) 15...g5 16 had1 xe3 17 wxe3 and here Yusupov suggests 17...wb6 with an equal position.

One alternative worth considering is 11 e3 d6 12 bd2. True, in comparison to Tiviakov’s plan White has ‘missed the boat’ with xc5. On the other hand, after 12...d7 White can play 13 wc1!?. This worked well in W.Kruimer-G.Shell, correspondence 2001, after 13...f6 14 d4 db6 15 a4 c5 16 dxc5 dxc5 17 a5 d7 18 a4. Checking this again, though, I’m not really sure why Black avoided the obvious 13...g5. Perhaps White’s idea is to play 14 d1!?

Looking at other ways to interfere with Black’s plan, it’s also worth considering 10 d4!?. For example, 10...e6 11 dxe5! xf3 12 wxf3 dxe5 13 g3 e8 14 d2 g6 15 c4 wc7 16 a4 with a comfortable edge for White, D.Pikula-D.Brandovic, Nis 1995. 10....edx4! 11 cxd4 e6 is stronger, and here I think
White’s best chance of an advantage is with 12 d5! (rather than 12 e3 d5!) 12...xf3 13 gxf3 c5 14 c3.

As I mentioned in the introduction to this game, White finds it easier to carry out the d3-d4 advance if Black chooses ...c6 and ...bd7 over ...c6. Without a knight on c6 and with no ...g4 available, there is significantly less pressure on d4.

Note that White shouldn’t delay d4 for very long, otherwise the risk is Black will play ...d5 himself. For example, 9 bd2 h6 10 f1 (play 10 d4!) 10...f8 11 g3 d5! 12 h3 dxe4 13 dxe4 c7 14 h4 c5 15 c2 g6 16 e3 a5 17 c1 h7 with an equal position, V.Nevednichy-V.Iordachescu, Budva 2003.

9...h6 10 bd2 f8 11 c2

A.Shchekachev-N.Nikcevic, Royan 1997, is a crushing win for White: 11 h3 g6 12 c2 h5 (this turns out to be premature) 13 f1 g7 14 e3 e7 15 d2 h7 16 g4! hf6 17 g3 f8 18 h2 g8 19 g1 f6 20 ae1 b6 21 g2 d7 22 eg1 e6 23 f5!
Beating 1 e4 e5

13...\textit{\texttt{h7}}

Planning ...\textit{\texttt{g5}}, to exchange a pair of knights and relieve some of Black’s congestion problems. Just like 12...\textit{\texttt{h5}} in the previous note, I don’t find this idea fully convincing, at least on the evidence of this game.

A more typical approach, and one I feel offers Black better chances of equality, is 13...\textit{\texttt{c7}} followed by queenside development. For example, 14 h3 b5! (after 14...\textit{\texttt{f8}} 15 \textit{\texttt{e3}} \textit{\texttt{e6}} 16 \textit{\texttt{d2}} \textit{\texttt{h7}} 17 \textit{\texttt{ad1}} \textit{\texttt{ad8}} 18 \textit{\texttt{c1}} White keeps an edge, Hou Yifan-R.Reinaldo Castineira, Zürich 2009) 15 \textit{\texttt{e3}} (15 a4!?) 15...\textit{\texttt{b7}} 16 \textit{\texttt{d2}} \textit{\texttt{h7}} 17 \textit{\texttt{ad1}} c5! 18 d5 \textit{\texttt{b6}} 19 b3 c4 20 b4 a5 and Black still suffers from cramp, but opening the a-file offers him just about enough counterplay to hold the balance, D.Moldovan-J.Lechtynsky, Stara Zagora 1990.

14 \textit{\texttt{e3}} \textit{\texttt{g5}} 15 \textit{\texttt{xg5}} hxg5 16 \textit{\texttt{d2}} \textit{\texttt{f6}}

In view of what happens, maybe Black should play 16...g4!? here.

17 \textit{\texttt{ad1}} \textit{\texttt{g7}} 18 \textit{\texttt{f3}}!

Fixing the g5-pawn.

18...\textit{\texttt{h8}}

19 \textit{\texttt{h1}}!

I must confess that I chose to include the whole of this game partially because this stylish retreat really caught my eye. White is planning \textit{\texttt{h1-f2}}-g4. Black can hardly allow the knight to reach its ideal destination, so the knight on d7 has to move. This in turn means that Black’s centre comes under more pressure.

19...\textit{\texttt{b6}} 20 \textit{\texttt{b3}} \textit{\texttt{e7}}

Black would like to play 20...g4 here. It’s positionally desirable but also appears to be tactically flawed: 21 dxe5 dxex5 (or 21...\textit{\texttt{xex5}} 22 f4!) 22 \textit{\texttt{f2}} \textit{\texttt{e7}} 23 fxg4 \textit{\texttt{g4}} 24 \textit{\texttt{c5}}! \textit{\texttt{e8}} 25 \textit{\texttt{f1}} and Black’s position collapses.

21 \textit{\texttt{f2}}

Now the avenue for counterplay via ...g4 is firmly closed, and White enjoys a significant positional advantage. Black is far too distracted with events in the centre to ever hope to get any action down the h-file.

21...\textit{\texttt{c5}} 22 \textit{\texttt{h3}} cxd4?

Opening the position only helps White. Black’s best chance for survival
was to sit tight with 22...\(\text{\&}d7\).

23 \(\text{x}d4 \text{ex}d4\) 24 \(\text{\&}x\text{d}4 \text{\&}e5\) 25 \(\text{\&}c3\) \(\text{f}6\)
26 \(\text{\&}d3! \text{\&}x\text{d}4+\)

This couldn’t have been Black’s original intention, but White was threatening to take on e5 in many lines: for example, 26...\(\text{\&}d7\) 27 \(\text{\&}x\text{e}5\) \(\text{dxe}5\) 28 \(\text{\&}c5\) \(\text{\&}d8\) 29 \(\text{\&}d6\) etc.

27 \(\text{\&}x\text{d}4 \text{\&}e6\) 28 \(\text{\&}b4 \text{\&}x\text{b}3\) 29 axb3 \(\text{\&}x\text{d}8\) 30 \(\text{\&}d5\) \(\text{\&}e5?\)

Black had to try to survive after 30...\(\text{\&}x\text{d}5\) 31 exd5 \(\text{\&}f8\) 32 \(\text{\&}e6\).

31 \(\text{\&}c7!\)

Winning an exchange, and ultimately the game.

31...\(\text{\&}x\text{d}4+\) 32 \(\text{\&}x\text{d}4 \text{\&}f7\) 33 \(\text{\&}x\text{a}8\) \(\text{\&}x\text{a}8\) 34 \(\text{\&}a1\) a6 35 \(\text{\&}b4 \text{\&}d7\) 36 \(\text{\&}c1\) b5
37 \(\text{\&}c6\) \(\text{\&}c7\) 38 \(\text{\&}d4 \text{\&}e7\) 39 b4 \(\text{\&}e6\) 40 \(\text{\&}d3\) \(\text{\&}e5\) 41 \(\text{\&}d3\) \(\text{\&}e6\) 42 \(\text{\&}x\text{a}6 \text{\&}d4\) 43 \(\text{\&}f2\) f5 44 \(\text{\&}a8\) fxe4 45 \(\text{\&}e8+\) \(\text{\&}e6\) 46
fxe4 \(\text{\&}f7+\) 47 \(\text{\&}e2\) g4 48 \(\text{\&}d3\) gxc3 49
\(\text{\&}x\text{c}3\) \(\text{\&}f6\) 50 \(\text{\&}f3\) g5 51 \(\text{\&}x\text{f}6\) \(\text{\&}x\text{f}6\) 52
\(\text{\&}e3\) \(\text{\&}f4\) 53 \(\text{\&}f8+\) \(\text{\&}e7\) 54 \(\text{\&}x\text{f}4\) 1-0

Alternatively:

a) 3...d5 features surprisingly often here. Perhaps Black players are encouraged by White’s quiet, non-forcing play to ‘go for it’. However, after 4 exd5 \(\text{\&}x\text{d}5\) 5 \(\text{\&}f3\) \(\text{\&}c6\) we have just transposed to Emms-Wittman (Game 34), a theoretically dubious line for Black.

b) There’s nothing wrong with 3...\(\text{\&}e7\), but a transposition to lines previously considered is virtually inevitable. For example, 4 \(\text{\&}f3\) d6 (4...\(\text{\&}c6\) is the Two Knights) 5 0-0 0-0 6 c3 and here 6...c6 reaches Sebag-Stefanova (Game 44) whereas 6...\(\text{\&}c6\) 7 \(\text{\&}b3\) transposes to The Two Knights (Chapter Four).

**Game 45**

E. Shaposhnikov-A. Lastin
Russian Championship,
Moscow 1999

1 e4 e5 2 \(\text{\&}c4\) \(\text{\&}f6\) 3 d3 \(\text{\&}c5\)

3...\(\text{\&}c5\) is Black’s third most popular choice, behind 3...\(\text{\&}c6\) and 3...c6. Many games after 4 \(\text{\&}f3\) transpose directly to the Italian Game when Black plays ...\(\text{\&}c6\), either immediately or soon after. In this game we consider lines where Black chooses ...c6 instead.

4 \(\text{\&}f3\) d6

4...\(\text{\&}c6\) 5 c3 does of course take us back into the Italian Game.

4...0-0!? is rare but by no means bad. White shouldn’t be tempted to grab the pawn, as 5 \(\text{\&}x\text{e}5?!\) leads to trouble after 5...d5!. For example, 6 exd5 \(\text{\&}e8\) 7 d4 \(\text{\&}x\text{d}4!\) 8 \(\text{\&}x\text{d}4\) \(\text{\&}c6\). White should settle instead for 5 0-0 or 5 \(\text{\&}b3\). Against the latter, Black could
try 5...d5!? 6 exd5 ♞xd5 7 0-0 ♞c6 leading to positions very similar to those discussed in Chapter Two (compare Bologan-Heberla, Game 14). Here’s one example: 8 h3 a5 9 c3 ♞f5 (9...♗b6 and 9...♗f6 are decent alternatives) 10 ♞e1 ♞e8? (Black should play 10...♕d6!) 11 d4! (a trick we’ve seen before; even players rated 2500 keep falling for it!) 11...a7 12 dxe5 ♘b6 13 ♕xd8 ♞xd8 14 ♖g5 ♖d3 15 ♘a3 ♘xh3 16 ♙b5! with advantage, K. Shanava-L. Babujian, Izmir 2009.

5 c3 0-0

There are so many different possible move orders in this line. For example, the game’s actual move order was 5...♗b6 6 ♙bd2 0-0 7 0-0 c6 8 ♙b3 h6 9 ♞e1 ♞e8 10 ♘f1 ♙bd7 11 ♘g3 ♘f8 12 h3 ♘e6 13 ♛c2 ♘g6 14 d4 ♕c7, but in practice Black has tended to prefer 5...0-0, or 5...♗c6 transposing to the Italian Game.

Black is happy to commit to castling because 6 ♖g5 holds no fears for him. The key point is that he can exploit the delayed development of his queen’s knight to negate the effect of the pin with ...♗bd7. Compare this to similar positions we’ve seen with ...♗c6, in which Black experiences long-term difficulties with the pin.

6 0-0

6 ♙b3 is a useful alternative for White, especially if he prefers to play lines with delayed castling in the Italian Game – useful because don’t forget Black can transpose at any time with ...♗c6. After 6...♗b6 7 ♙bd2 c6 8 0-0 we transpose to the main game, with White castling only once Black is committed to ...c6.

One final point: it’s worth remembering that the accelerated ♖f1-g3 plan often doesn’t work well against ...c6. For example, 8 h3 (in place of 8 0-0) 8...♗bd7 9 ♘f1?! d5 10 ♛c2 (if 10 ♕e2, Black might even play 10...dxe4 11 dxe4 ♘xe4!? 12 ♕xe4 ♛c5!) 10...♗e8 11 ♘g3 ♘f8 followed by ...♗g6 and Black is at least equal.

6...♗b6 7 ♙bd2 c6 8 ♙b3 ♞e8 9 ♞e1 ♙bd7

Black has aped White’s develop-
ment and we have reached a completely symmetrical position. The question in all symmetrical position is, can White exploit the move to put any pressure on Black? I think the best chance is to aim for the d3–d4 advance to set up a favourable tension in the centre.

10 \( \text{d}f1 \)

This has been the main choice, but in view of Black’s possibility in the next note, White should consider advancing in the centre without delay: 10 d4 \( \text{d}f8 \) (or 10...\( \text{c}c7 \) 11 h3 \( \text{d}f8 \) 12 \( \text{c}c2 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 13 \( \text{f}1 \) h6 14 \( \text{g}3 \), as in S.Karjakin-J.Smeets, Nice (rapid) 2010) 11 h3 \( \text{g}6 \) 12 \( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{e}6 \) 13 \( \text{f}1 \) h6 14 \( \text{g}3 \) and we have reached the main game.

10...

\( \text{d}f8 \)

I think Black should quit copying and aim to push his d-pawn before White does. In fact, after 10...h6 11 \( \text{g}3 \) d5! I don’t see any real problems for him. For example, 12 h3 \( \text{c}7 \) 13 \( \text{h}2 \) \( \text{c}5 \) 14 \( \text{c}2 \) dxe4 15 dxe4 \( \text{w}d1 \) 16 \( \text{x}d1 \) with equality, J.Degraeve-B.Finegold, Ostend 1990; or 12 exd5 cxd5! 13 \( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{g}4 \) 14 d4?! (14 \( \text{e} \) e2 is better) 14...e4 15 h3 \( \text{g}f6 \), M.Bosboom-B.Finegold, Wijk aan Zee 1991, intending 16 \( \text{e}5 \)?! \( \text{x}e5 \) 17 \( \text{x}e8 \) \( \text{d}3 \).

11 \( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 12 \( \text{h}3 \)

The immediate 12 d4 is met by 12...\( \text{g}4 \). Likewise, 12...d5 is met by 13 \( \text{g}5 \).

12...

h6 13 d4!

Finally White gets his advance in, and now he stands slightly better.

13...\( \text{w}c7 \) 14 \( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{e}6 \)

If nothing else, it seems like this game has provided me with a testing exercise in transpositions! The position we have in front of us has also been reached via the Italian Game: 1 e4 e5 2 \( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 3 \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 4 d3 \( \text{c}5 \) 5 0-0 0-0 6 c3 \( \text{b}6 \) 7 \( \text{e}1 \) d6 8 \( \text{b}d2 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 9 \( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 10 \( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{e}6 \) 11 \( \text{b}3 \) h6 12 h3 \( \text{e}8 \) 13 d4 c6 14 \( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{c}7 \) (A.Beliavsky-B.Gulko, Frunze 1981) and, perhaps more surprisingly, the Ruy Lopez(!): 1 e4 e5 2 \( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 3 \( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 4 d3 \( \text{c}5 \) 5 c3 0-0 6 0-0 d6 7 \( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 8 h3 \( \text{e}7 \) 9 \( \text{b}d2 \) c6 10 \( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 11 \( \text{f}1 \) h6 12 \( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{e}8 \) 13 d4 \( \text{c}7 \) 14 \( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{e}6 \). This
Beating 1 e4 e5

latter move order was used in the Dominguez-Aleksiev game, below.

15 1.e3 1.ad8 16 1.wc1

16 1.wd2 followed by 1.ad1 is also possible, but after 16 1.wc1 White doesn't have to worry about tactics down the d-file.

16...a6?

This move is an irrelevance. In fact it might be worse than that because now the b6-bishop lacks pawn protection. Clearly Lastin didn't sense any danger and was just marking time. Should he have known better? Perhaps, but again we can view this as a positive: if even a 2550-rated grandmaster can fail to spot the danger, surely this position poses Black more problems than it might appear to, especially when applied to players without stratospheric ratings.

Some players would be reluctant to play 16...1.h7 simply because of the X-ray effect of White's c2-bishop. But it does at least provide support to the h6-pawn, preventing possible bishop sacrifices. The game L.Dominguez Perez-E.Aleksiev, Biel 2008, continued 17 1.d3 c5 18 1.f5 1.xf5 19 exf5 1.f8, and here I would have chosen 20 dxe5 dxe5 21 1.c4. Alternatively, 17 b4 a5 18 a3 axb4 19 cxb4 1wc8 20 1wb2, as played in S.Kudrin-M.Cornejo, Sao Paulo 2009, also looks a bit better for White.

In another super-grandmaster clash, Black managed to equalize after 16...1.g8 17 a3 d5! 18 1.xe5 1.xe5 19 dxe5 1.xe4 20 1.xe4 dxe4 21 1.xe4 f5! (a key defensive resource; 21...1.xe5 would be met by 22 1.f4) 22 1.xb6 axb6 23 1.c2 1.xe5 and ½-½, M.Adams-V.Kramnik, Dortmund 1999. But surely 17 1.xf5!?, with similar ideas to the main game, is more critical?

17 1.f5!

This is very strong. Suddenly sacrifices on h6 are looming large: for example, 17...1.xd4 18 1.xh6! gxh6 19 1.wxh6 1.xf5 20 exf5 etc. Lastin chooses to get rid of the knight straightaway, but this doesn't succeed in discouraging White from sacrificing.

17...1.xf5 18 exf5 1.f8

If 18...e4!? White has a pleasant choice between 19 1.d2 1.h4 20 1.f4
First White misses a win; then he lets Black right back into the game; and finally, Black blunders on move 40. Sound familiar?

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

33 g4?
33 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}d}x}d}3! \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}x}d}3} 34 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}f}f}7}+! wins:
34...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}f}f}7} 35 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}e}e}8}+ \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}e}e}8} 36 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{h}h}7}+} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}f}8} 37 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}e}6}+ \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}e}7} 38 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}c}x}c5 \texttt{d}2 39 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{h}h}5} etc.
33...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}f}4} 34 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}f}f}7}! \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}f}f}7 35 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}f}f}7+}?
35 \texttt{\texttt{g}g}5! is stronger.
35...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}f}f}7} 36 \texttt{\texttt{g}g}5 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{h}h}6}h}5 37 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}d}7}+ \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}f}8} 38 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{g}g}4} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}e}5} 39 \texttt{\texttt{f}f}6? \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{g}x}f}6 40 \texttt{\texttt{g}g}6

40...\texttt{\texttt{f}f}5??
If 40...	exttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}e}7}! Black is right back in the game. Now 'order is restored'!
41 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}f}7+} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{g}g}8} 42 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}f}f}5} 1-0
Beating 1 e4 e5

In this final game, we consider second move alternatives for Black after 2 Ʌc4.

Game 46

M. Mrva-E. Klemanic
Slovakian League 1997

1 e4 e5 2 Ʌc4 d6

Alternatively:

a) If 2... Ʌc6 we transpose to the Italian Game with 3 Ʌf3!.

b) 2... Ʌc5 is Black’s third most popular choice against 2 Ʌc4 (behind 2... Ʌf6 and 2... Ʌc6). After 3 Ʌf3 d6 4 c3 Ʌf6 5 d3 we transpose to the previous game.

c) 2...c6 aims for a quick counter in the centre with ...d5. White should react with the direct 3 d4! and now:

3 Ʌf3

c1) 3...exd4?! 4 Ʌxd4 exploits the fact that ... Ʌc6 is no longer available. The queen is well placed in the centre here.

c2) 3... Ʌf6 4 dxe5 Ʌa5+ (or 4... Ʌxe4 5 Ʌe2!) 5 Ʌc3 (5 Ʌd2 Ʌxe5 6 Ʌg5 also looks good) 5... Ʌxe4 6 Ʌf3 d5 7 exd6 Ʌxd6 8 Ʌb3 and I prefer White.

c3) 3...d5 is consistent and best, but White still keeps an edge. For example, 4 exd5 cxd5 5 Ʌb5+ Ʌd7 6 Ʌxd7+ Ʌxd7 7 Ʌc3 Ʌgf6 8 dxe5 Ʌxe5 9 Ʌe2 Ʌe7 10 Ʌe3 Ʌc6 11 0-0 0-0 0-0 0-0 12 Ʌf3 Ʌc7 13 Ʌd4 Ʌa5 14 Ʌb3 with strong pressure against the d5-pawn, C. Marcelin-I. Boim, Herzeliya 2000.

d) 2...f5!? is very similar to 1 e4 e5 2 Ʌf3 Ʌc6 3 Ʌc4 f5 – compare the analysis in Game 37. White again has two options. The safe 3 d3 Ʌf6 4 Ʌf3 Ʌc6 actually transposes to the line in the Italian Game. The more ambitious 3 d4!? exd4 4 e5 is a promising gambit: for example, 4...d5 5 exd6 Ʌxd6 6 Ʌe2 Ʌc6 7 0-0 Ʌa5 8 Ʌxg8 Ʌxg8 9 Ʌxd4 with advantage, J. Pietrasanta-K. Shirazi, Pau 2008.

This position is often reached via the Philidor Defence: 1 e4 e5 2 Ʌf3 d6 3 Ʌc4. Of course with the Bishop’s Opening move order there’s a temptation for White to aim for a favourable King’s
Gambit with d3 followed by f4, or even the immediate 3 f4!? , and this partially explains why 2...d6 is a rare choice against 2 c4. But let’s stick to the book’s repertoire!

3...e6

This isn’t Black’s best option but it is the most independent one, and that’s why I’ve chosen it to be the ‘main line’. There’s real justification for White to break away from our normal system of development against 3...e6.

Most other moves will more than likely transpose to something that’s been covered previously:

a) 3...c6 transposes to the Italian Game (see the notes to Game 37).

b) 3...e7 has been Black’s most popular choice. The position after 4 0-0 f6 5 d3 was covered in the notes to the previous game.

c) 3...f6 4 d3 e7 5 0-0 is another move order to reach the same position. Actually, 3...f6 is frowned upon by theory because of 4 g5 forcing Black to gambit a pawn with 4...d5 5 exd5.

However, I’m not 100% certain it’s that clear. To me, Black seems to get at least a bit of compensation after 5...h6 6 ef3 e4! For example, 7 ef2 ef7 8 ef5 0-0 9 ed3 ef6 10 d4 exd3 11 edx3 ef8 12 ef3, J.Benjamin-D.John, Kona 1998, or 7 ef2 eb4!? 8 0-0 0-0 9 ed4 ef8, J.Tayar-S.Fruebing, Batumi 2006.

d) 3...g4 4 c3 f6 (4...c6 is the Italian Game again) and here White can either play 5 d3 heading for normal lines or try to punish Black for his move order with 5 ed4!?

4 xe6!

I wouldn’t normally recommend exchanging on e6, but on this occasion there are special circumstances that cannot be ignored.

The ‘system’ way to play would be 4 d3 and then, for example, 4...f6 5 bd2 ef7 6 c3 0-0 7 0-0 c6 (compare Malakhov-Carlsen, Game 31).

4...fxe6 5 d4!

Full steam ahead! In this instance there’s neither the need, nor the time, to prepare this with c2-c3. White needs to play this position with some urgency to exploit his early initiative.
5...exd4 6 cxd4 Bd7

6..e5?! offers White's knight an invitation it should certainly accept: 7 c6 e7 8 h5+ g6 9 Wh3 and already White enjoys a big advantage. After 9...a6 10 c3 d7 11 f4 exf4 12 xf4 f6 13 0-0 Black is in real trouble, M.Chandler-P.Large, Hastings 1986/87.

6...f6! is a wiser choice, and this move seems to limit White's advantage. For example, 7 c3 (7 cxe6 e7 is okay for Black, but 7 d3!? is an interesting suggestion from Taylor and Hayward – if 7..e5 White can play 8 b5+! cd7 9 c6) 7...d7 8 0-0 c6 9 e3 e7 10 e2 cxd4 11 xd4 c5 12 xe3 c6 13 g5 0-0 14 ad1 with some pressure for White, S.Videki-V.Sutorikhin, Kecskemet 1991.

7 Wh5+

7 c3 f6 transposes to the previous note but this queen check, a common theme in this line, presents Black with greater problems. Again the idea is to hit the e6-pawn (and the e6-square) before Black can consolidate. 7...g6

7..f7? 8 Wh3 forced Black into the really ugly 8...d7 in P.H.Nielsen-S.Pedersen, Budapest 1993.

8 Wh3 e5 9 ed6 c6 10 b3!

Who said you shouldn't move your queen too many times in the opening? This is much stronger than the autopilot choice of 10 c3?! which allows Black to force a swap of queens with 10...d4!. By breaking the pin White frees his knight on e6.

10...b6?

This is too slow and is rightfully punished.

Even though White wins a pawn after 10...a5 11 d5 c6 12 xf8 cxd5 13 xd7xd7 14 exd5, as in J.Van der Wiel-R.Cifuentes Parada, Novi Sad Olympiad 1990, it's not a straightforward task for White to convert his advantage. I have a feeling that 10...a5 is Black's best choice, certainly at least in a practical sense.

11 c3!

Threatening to join its teammate to form a deadly attack with d5. Black's position is critical and may already be
beyond salvation.

11...\textit{d}8

Unfortunately for Black, 11...\textit{f}6 is met very strongly by 12 \textit{g}5!. For example, 12...\textit{e}7 (or 12...\textit{a}5 13 \textit{xc}7+) \textit{xc}7 14 \textit{e}6+ 13 \textit{xf}6! \textit{xf}6 14 \textit{d}5, intending to answer 14...\textit{d}8 with 15 \textit{exc}7+! overloading the bishop.

Perhaps the best bet is 11...\textit{a}5 12 \textit{d}5 \textit{c}6 13 \textit{xf}8 \textit{xf}8 14 \textit{d}3, but even here Black’s chances for survival are slim.

12 \textit{xf}8 \textit{xf}8 13 \textit{f}4!

Black may have succeeded in exchanging off White’s powerful knight, but he is still horribly undeveloped and there will be no surviving the second wave of attack.

13...\textit{exf}4 14 \textit{xf}4 \textit{e}6 15 0-0 \textit{g}7 16 \textit{d}5!

Threatening 17 \textit{c}3+.

16...\textit{h}5 17 \textit{ad}1 \textit{g}5 18 \textit{c}3+ \textit{h}7 19 \textit{e}5!

Winning: Black has to give up his queen.

19...\textit{dxe}5 20 \textit{f}6+ \textit{xf}6 21 \textit{xd}7+ \textit{xd}7 22 \textit{xf}7+ \textit{g}6 23 \textit{xd}7 \textit{ae}8 24 \textit{xe}5 \textit{hf}8 25 \textit{h}3 \textit{f}6 26 \textit{h}2 \textit{h}4 27 \textit{a}4 \textit{a}5 28 \textit{c}3 \textit{f}7 29 \textit{xf}7 \textit{xf}7 30 \textit{b}4 \textit{d}8 31 \textit{bxa}5 \textit{bxa}5 32 \textit{xa}5 \textit{d}3 33 \textit{f}5+ \textit{e}7 34 \textit{e}5 1-0

An impressive attacking performance from Mrva. I’ve just noticed that 8 \textit{h}3 was the only backwards move he played in the entire game!

\textbf{Key Notes}

1. In the main line with 6 \textit{c}3, if Black plays 6...\textit{e}6 (Game 38) White has excellent chances of attacking the centre and gaining an advantage. 6...\textit{dxe}4! (Games 39-40) is much more reliable and it seems to restrict White to a very small edge.

2. 6 \textit{exd}5 is a more ambitious option for White, and Game 41 (with 6...\textit{cx}d5) demonstrates the wealth of possibilities for both sides. Even though White eventually ended up losing this game, there were some promising attacking opportunities for him.

3. 6 \textit{exd}5 \textit{d}xd5 is a decent alternative for Black. These positions can certainly be compared to those in the Italian Game where White adopts Plan B. Game 42 is well worth replaying, if nothing else because it’s unusual for a player of Beliavsky’s calibre to get into so much trouble at such an early stage.

4. If Black chooses a system of development with ...\textit{e}7, ...\textit{d}6 and ...\textit{c}6 (Game 44), White should look to advance quickly in the centre with \textit{d}3-\textit{d}4. Black’s set-up is flexible, but without a
Beating 1 e4 e5

knight on c6 he finds it hard to exert any pressure on d4, and White should be aiming to exploit this feature.

5. 3...c5 can lead to a virtually symmetrical position, as it does in Game 45. Again White’s best chance of gaining an advantage is by trying to force through d3-d4. Any delay may give Black the initiative, as he is aiming for the same with ...d6-d5.

6. After 2...d6 3  c4, a transposition to lines previously covered is more than likely. Black’s choice of 3...e6 in Game 46 is convincingly met by 4  xe6 fxe6 5 d4!
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Italian Game: Modern Variation

1 e4 e5 2 ∆f3 ∆c6 3 ∆c4 ∆c5 4 c3 ∆f6
5 d3 a6

5...d6 – 73
5...d5 – 65
5...0-0 – 64

6 ∆b3 ∆a7

6...d6 – 69
6...0-0 – 60
6...d5 – 60

7 h3

7 ∆bd2 0-0
8 h3 d5 – 57
8 ∆c4
8...d6 – 50
8...d5 – 53

7...d6

7...d5 – 40
7...0-0 – 44
7...h6 – 45
8 ∆bd2 0-0

8...∆e6 – 28
8...∆e7 9 ∆f1 ∆g6 10 ∆g3 0-0
11 0-0
11...h6 – 34
11...b5 – 37

9 ∆f1 d5
9...∆e6 – 28
9...h6 – 28

10 ∆e2 dxe4
10...∆e6 – 22
10...h6 – 22
10...∆e8 – 23

11 dxe4 ∆e7
11...∆h5 – 17

12 ∆g3 h6 – 12
12...∆e6 – 13

Italian Game: Classical Main Line

1 e4 e5 2 ∆f3 ∆c6 3 ∆c4 ∆c5 4 c3 ∆f6
5 d3 a6
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5...d6 – 121
5...0-0 6 0-0 d5 – 65

6 0-0 d6

6...a7 7 b3 0-0 8 e3 – 110

7 b3 a7

7...0-0 8 g5 – 114
7...g4 – 118

8 e1

8 e3 – 109
8 h3 h6

9 e1 g5 – 103
9 e3 – 106

8 bd2 – 80
8 g5 – 113

8...0-0

8...h6 9 bd2 g5 – 105
8...g4 – 105

9 h3

9 bd2 – 81

9...h6

9...h8 – 100
9...e7 – 99
9...e6

10 bd2 – 89
10 c2 d5

11 bd2 – 90
11 exd5 – 91

10 bd2 h5 – 82
10...e6 – 96

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3...d4 – 171
3...f5 – 171

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4...f6 – 163
4...b6 – 163
4...d6 – 164

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2...c5 – 214
2...d6– 214
2...f5– 214

3 d3 c6

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4  \( \text{Nf3 d5} \)
   4...\( \text{Ne7} \) – 204

5  \( \text{b3 d6} \)
   5...a5 – 197
   5...\( \text{b4+} \) – 198
   5...\( \text{bd7} \) – 199

6  \( \text{c3} \)
   6 exd5

6...\( \text{cx}d5 \) – 187
   6...\( \text{Nxd5} \) – 192

6...\( \text{dxe4} \)
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